

英语文学系列教材

英国文学史

王松林 朱卫红 主编

 华东师范大学出版社



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王松林 朱卫红 主编

陈智平 王晓兰 刘富丽 副主编



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前 言

《英国文学史》是一部为我国高校英语专业学生编写的教材。进入二十一世纪后,高校英语专业的英美文学教学观念有了重大的变化,网络时代的学生有了更多获取文学史信息的渠道,也具有更强的自主学习能力。教师和学生对文学史教材的设计理念有了更高的要求,传统的教材在编写体系、观念和信息量上已不能完全满足教学的需求。新的世纪行将走完头十年,有必要对过去一个世纪的英国文学进行一番重点的梳理和总结,并对新世纪英国文学的发展进行展望。本教材正是在这一背景下编写的。

为了适应新世纪高校英国文学教学的需要,也为了更充分地体现文学史教材在文学教学和学术研究中的作用,我们根据下列四个原则编写了本书。第一,突出问题意识。教材力求体现新形势下研究型教学的要求和探究式学习的特点。为引导学生进一步阅读、思考和研究,编者在每一章节后面,根据不同作家和作品的特点、不同文学思潮和文学流派的特征设计出相关思考题,并提供进一步研读书目,这既突出了教材的重点,也为学生今后的毕业论文写作提供了参考。第二,注重对现当代文学的描述。本书在作家作品的选择上既顾及对文学经典的描述,又特别强调现当代英国文学的重要地位,教材对二十世纪的英国文学做了较为详尽的介绍,这是对传统英国文学史教材的有力补充。第三,力求编写体系有所创新。适度打破传统文学史的时间框架,按照文学流派和文学体裁建构章节,帮助学生更好地把握作家作品的共性与个性。第四,兼顾教材的讲义性和资料性。本书选材丰富、内容系统、体系完整,适度超过教学时数的限定,供教师根据实际选择使用和供学生进行拓展学习,同时也可以作为英国文学研究者的参考书。个别章节还对一些重要作家在中国的学术研究状况做了简要介绍。

本书由来自国内近 10 所高校的专业教师共同编写而成。第一章由张扬莉编写,第二章由刘慧编写,第三章由刘锦丽编写,第四章由王晓兰编写,第五章由刘富丽编

写,第六章由胡红霞编写,第七章由孟宪华和辛志娟等编写,第八章由虞颖编写。此外,姜仁凤、王薇、刘玉波等也参加了编写工作。本书统稿工作由王松林、朱卫红共同完成。本书的编辑出版得到了华中师范大学出版社范军社长、段维总编、曾巍副社长以及高校教材编辑室刘晓嘉主任、李郭倩编辑等的大力支持,我们在此一并致谢。

英国文学史源远流长,名家辈出。英国文学在世界文学中占有重要的地位,对包括中国文学在内的世界文学产生了重大影响。客观地、完整地向读者呈现一幅英国文学的画卷是一件十分有意义却又十分艰难的事情。学界对英国文学史阶段的划分、作家和作品的取舍、文学流派的界定等问题多有争议。我们认为,文学史就像一条川流不息的河流,很难用某一具体的年代来标识某一文学潮流的开端或结束,更不能人为地抽象出某一文学规律或脱离历史的语境来评判文学现象。但是,为方便教学,教材还是采用了以时间为主的线性叙述方法。本教材在编写过程中参考了国内外诸多同类教材和专著的编写体系,编者在广泛吸收其他著作成果的基础上,力图在结构和设计理念上有所突破。但是由于时间仓促,编者水平有限,书中谬误在所难免,敬请读者批评指正。

编 者

2010年6月

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Chapter 1 Literature of Old and Middle English Periods (450—1485)

1. Introduction

English literature has a long history of about 1,300 years up to the present. Chaucer is often described as the beginning of it, but actually it had undergone more than six centuries before Chaucer was born. English literature began with Anglo-Saxon literature. Anglo-Saxon England emerged after the Anglo-Saxon conquest of England about 450 A. D. ①. The language spoken by Anglo-Saxon is called Old English, and English literature in this period is called Anglo-Saxon Literature or Old English Literature. The French-speaking Normans led by Duke William conquered England in 1066. The Norman Conquest marked the ending of Old English Literature and the beginning of Middle English Literature. Modern English, founded on the dialect of the East Midland English, extends from 1500 to the present day. The English language in the transitional stage from Old English to Modern English, through some four centuries from about 1100 to about 1500, is called Middle English, thus English literature in this period is called Middle English Literature. Middle English Literature ended with the establishment of the House of Tudor in 1485 when Henry Tudor was crowned King Henry VII.

The Celts first migrated to Britain about 400 B. C. and may be regarded as the original inhabitants of the British Isles, and their literature continues to the present day in Ireland and Wales②. From 55 B. C. to the year of 1066, the British Isles

① Clayton Roberts & David Roberts. *A History of England*, Vol. 1. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985:34.

② David Damrosch & Kevin J. H. Dettmar. *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006:4.

experienced several conquests in history, and the conquerors established the Roman Britain (55 B. C. —450 A. D.), Anglo-Saxon England (450—1066), and Norman England (1066—1485).

Led by Julius Caesar in 55 B. C. , the Romans reached Dover and began their invasion of the British Isles. Finally Claudius conquered this place in 43 A. D. and the British Isles became a part of the Roman Empire. During the Roman occupation of Britain till the beginning of the 5th century, the Britons were Romanized, but at the same time survived Roman civilisation, so a Romano-British culture emerged.

The Anglo-Saxon Conquest of England is also called the Germanic or English Conquest. In 449 A. D. Jutes crossed the North Sea and reached Britain; then came Angles and Saxons about 450A. D. Together they created the Anglo-Saxon England which lasted until 1066. During the Anglo-Saxon period, England was divided into separate kingdoms: Kent, Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex^①. Beginning from the late 8th century, Danes came to invade England. In the late 9th century led by King Alfred the Great (849—901?) of the kingdom of Wessex, the English people successfully repulsed the Danish invaders and then all the kingdoms in England were united into one.

A significant event in the Anglo-Saxon history was the conversion of the English to Christianity. In 597 Augustine came from Rome and began to convert the Jutes in Kent, while about the same time monks from Ireland were setting up monasteries in Northumbria; within a century all England was Christianised. The Angles, Saxons and Jutes were originally heathen, and believed in German heathenism, a religion compounded of animism and magic. The Anglo-Saxons worshipped trees, wells, rivers and mountains. They felt themselves surrounded by ogres, elves, demons and goblins; and they had their gods, Tiw, Woden, Thunor and Frig; but they had no ethical system, no answer to such questions as concerning life and death, and no cosmology that explained the mysteries of human existence. Christianity did offer answers to their questions. It provided a cosmology of heaven and hell, offered the promise of eternal life, and preached that eternity could be won through belief and obedience. It also offered a social discipline useful

① Clayton Roberts & David Roberts. *A History of England*, Vol. 1. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. , 1985:41.

to a settled, agrarian society: the Church opposed violence, condemned sexual license, defended marriage, defined rights of inheritance, and urged submission to one's lot in this world. The kings of England welcomed a church whose scriptures described and whose government illustrated kingship in action. Monotheism fit better with monarchy than did the many gods and the many local shrines of paganism.

Anglo-Saxon culture reflected the complex interaction of pagan elements and Christian values. Most English poems composed in the early Anglo-Saxon period, whether the stories were brought over by Anglo-Saxons from their Continental Germanic home or not, carried a keen interest in Bible stories, Christianity and Christian values. The heathen mythology was gradually replaced by the Christian religion, though heathen concepts of nature and the supernatural persisted for a considerable period of time and were often curiously mixed with Christian views and expressions. The earliest and national epic *Beowulf* of the Anglo-Saxons is a typical example to illustrate the conflict between the two traditions. The Angles brought the story of *Beowulf* with them to England in the 6th century. It carries symbolic, religious and mythological values under the apparent simple themes, and mixes pagan elements with Christian colouring. Besides the narrative epic *Beowulf*, there are other narrative verses and lyric poems in Anglo-Saxon Literature which were brought to England by the Germanic conquerors from their continental homes; these poems reflect their experience and adventure—of war and of exile, of the sea with its hardship and its fascination, of ruined cities, and of minstrel life, and express their Germanic tradition—of heroic motives, ideals, endurance and courage in the heroic age. Of the short narrative poems, there are *Waldere* and *The Fight at Finnsburge* based on Germanic legends brought from the Continent. The first deals with events connected with the story of Waldhere in the “Nibelungenlied,” and the latter is about legendary materials in *Beowulf*. Of the lyrics, there are “The Seafarer,” “The Wanderer,” “Deor’s Lament,” “Widsith” and “The Ruin.” “The Seafarer” can be considered a masterpiece in the lyrics in the Anglo-Saxon period. Most of the aforementioned poems were very likely written by some anonymous authors before the entering of Christianity into Britain, and preserved for a time in oral tradition. After the entering of Christianity into Britain, the Christian poets copied and revised these poems and reintroduced

Christian themes and values into them. Thus the poetry of the pagan origin is constantly overlaid with Christian sentiment. There are other verse narratives of later date having to do with battles fought on the English soil, and narrating about the Anglo-Saxon's heroic fighting against the Danish invaders, such as *Brunanburg* and *The Battle of Maldon*. These two stories, which were not brought over by Anglo-Saxon from the Continental Germanic home, also contained the Germanic heroic fighting spirits. Old English Literature reveals at wide intervals of time the outlook and temper of the Germanic mind. Thus the two streams of the pagan elements and the Christian colouring mingled in Old English Literature, and can never quite be separated from one another.

In Old English Literature, more than half of Anglo-Saxon poems concern Christian subjects and these poems are named as religious or Christian poetry.

Two poets should be mentioned. One is the earliest English poet, the first representative of the English Christian poetry, Caedmon^①. The other poet is Cynewulf, who was an Anglican poet, and in the second half of the 8th century wrote at least four poems on religious subjects, into which he ingeniously wove his name by means of runes. Two of these poems, *Juliana* and *Elene*, tell well-known legends of saints. The third, *Christ*, Cynewulf's best known poem, deals with Advent, the Ascension, and the Last Judgment. The fourth, *The Fates of the Apostles*, touches briefly on where and how the various apostles died. There are other religious poems besides these mentioned, such as *The Andreas*, two poems on the life of St. Guthlac, a part of a fine poem on the story of *Judith* in the Apocrypha; *The Phoenix*, in which the bird is taken as a symbol of the Christian life; and *Christ and Satan* which treats the expulsion of Satan from Paradise together with the Harrowing of Hell and Satan's tempting of Christ^②. All of these poems show England in its cultural contact with Rome and being drawn into the general current of ideas on the continent, no longer simply Germanic, but cosmopolitan.

The Germanic tribes brought to England the Germanic language. In Old English there existed dialectal differentiation until the latter half of the 9th century.

① Ifor Evans. *A Short History of English Literature*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978:43.

② Albert C. Baugh & Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2001: 69.

Alfred the Great, who established an independent Anglo-Saxon kingdom, contributed to an Old English cultural renaissance through his support of learning, and more specifically, through his own English translations of important Latin texts^①. With the effort of King Alfred the Great, their dialect of the West Saxon grew into the literary language standardisation of the whole Anglo-Saxon England. During the Anglo-Saxon period, there were three other languages that made contribution to the English vocabulary and widened the English language. The first was the language spoken by the Celtic population of Britain. The second was Latin which contributed words to Old English. The third was Old Norse, the language of the Danish invaders^②.

The Old English period was the period of the creation of English literature, and instability of the society was often reflected in the literature of this period. The foreign invaders came to England together with their religion, culture and language. However, the most important influence on the creation of English literature came from the working people, for most of the subject matters of the English literature were collected from their daily lives.

In the year of 1066, William, Duck of Normandy, claimed the Crown of England, raised a powerful army, transported it across the English Channel, met King Harold and defeated him decisively. William's conquest of England in 1066 gave an abrupt turn to the path of English history, changed the whole course of the English language, and marked the ending of Old English Literature and the beginning of Middle English Literature. During the Middle English period, England experienced terrible internal turmoil and instability in the Hundred Years' War between England and France (1337—1453) and the Wars of the Roses (1455—1485) between the two dominant aristocratic houses, the Yorks and the Lancasters. In 1485, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, defeated the York King Richard III at Bosworth Field and was crowned King Henry VII (1485—1509) and ended the Middle English period.

The conquerors from the Normandy were the descendants of Scandinavians

① Jay Ruud. *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*. New York: Fact On File, Inc. , 2006; 16.

② Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. *Adventures in English Literature*. Orando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985; 30.

who had landed on the north coast of France a century and a half before. Nominally subjects of the French king and speaking the French language, the Normans whose name derived from “Northman” comprised virtually an independent state, with territorial ambitions and a Viking joy in war^①. After more than 100 years in France, the Normans adopted many French customs and had their own variation of the French language, Norman-French. The coming of the Normans to England was not a hit-and-run raid, but a full-fledged invasion and occupation. The occupation was imposed systematically. There was an inventory and seizure of property; martial law was put into effect. A strong central government was set up with lines of authority clearly defined.

After the Norman Conquest, Roman Catholicism, French culture and French customs were gradually brought into England by the Normans in the following 300 years. For 200 years after 1066, there existed together in England native English, Norman French and Latin. The common people and the lower-middle class people generally spoke the Anglo-Saxon Old English, whereas French was spoken in the palace, court and universities, and Latin was used by many scholars and monks. The situation was well described, about the year 1300, by the author of a chronicle entitled *Robert of Gloucester*:

Thus came, lo! England into Normandy's hand.
And the Normans didn't know how to speak then but their own speech
And spoke French as they did at home, and their children did also teach;
So that high men of this land that of their blood come
Hold all that same speech that they took from them.
For but a man know French men count of him little.
But low men hold to English and to their own speech yet.^②

Only in the 14th century was English once again generally adopted by everyone. Much of the polite literature of English until a generation or two before had been in French, but now writers seemed to feel the call of justifying their use of English.

① Frank Kermode. *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980: 5.

② Albert C. Baugh & Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2001: 111-112.