

# The Poetics of the Tragic in the Work of Geoffrey Chaucer

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## Abstract:

This article informs readers about the life of Geoffrey Chaucer and his works. Because nowadays most of the students want to know about famous writers that are from English-speaking countries and their work, poetics, style of his writing. So that's why in this article readers may generalize their knowledge about Geoffrey Chaucer life and his poetics as well as this article was written for finding new data about the works of Geoffrey Chaucer. This article can discuss the tragic works of the writer as well.

**Keywords:** The life of Geoffrey Chaucer, tragic works of writer, the Canterbury Tales".

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays most of the young generation try to learn foreign languages especially english languages so that they look for interesting works and novels that were written by famous english writer in the past centuries. Because the tongue of these writers is very understandable and the works of these writers are meaningful. One of these kind of writer is Geoffrey Chaucer. Because scentists admitted that Geoffrey Chaucer is the father of english language. Due to this writer used more english words than other writers and also crated some new phrases to add english language in his period.

### The life of Geoffrey Chaucer

For six centuries Geoffrey Chaucer has retained his status in the highest rank of the English poets. As many-sided as William Shakespeare, he did for English narrative what Shakespeare did for drama. If he lacks the profundity of Shakespeare, he excels in playfulness of mood and simplicity of expression. His foremost characteristics are his skillful creation of realistic characters and his humor: by turns twinkling, quietly glowing, or loudly robust. Although his language, Middle English, is difficult to read and his usage often seems quaint he was an essentially modern writer,

and his works still speak to modern readers. Geoffrey Chaucer lived in busy period. Although he created an amazing works. Chaucer became an intelligent person. Because people knew him as a soldier, diplomat, justice of the peace, member of Parliament, and man of affairs It is as a writer, however, that he is remembered today. Many of the people he met in the course of his career influenced his writing, and his familiarity with and mastery of all genres of medieval literature gave him the means to communicate his view of the world with humor and intelligence.

Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London, probably in 1342 or 1343. He was the son of Agnes de Copton and John Chaucer, a prosperous wine merchant. In 1357, while he was in his teens, Geoffrey was a page in the household of Prince Lionel, son of King Edward III. This is known from an entry in the household account book of Countess Elizabeth, Lionel's wife, that records the purchase of a suit of clothes for Geoffrey Chaucer. Two years later Chaucer was with an army that King Edward led into France during the Hundred Years' War. He was taken prisoner by the French but was soon ransomed by the king for a large sum.

Of his next seven years, nothing definite is known, but there is reason to believe that he may have been studying law in London. By 1367 he was married and a member of the royal household with the rank of yeoman. Later he became a squire, with a regular pension, or salary. His wife, Philippa, was a member of the queen's household. Thus as a young man Chaucer had already embarked on the career as an official that he was to follow for the remainder of his life. He wrote his first significant poem, *The Book of the Duchess*, in 1369 or 1370, on the occasion of the death from plague of the first wife of John of Gaunt, another of Edward's sons. The poem was written as a dream allegory, or dream vision, in which an allegorical tale is presented in the narrative framework of a dream.

Between 1370 and 1378 Chaucer was sent on seven missions to France, Flanders, and Italy. In Italy he came into contact with the works of three writers who were to influence him profoundly: Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. In his best poem of the decade, *House of Fame* (1374–79; unfinished), he established the light, bantering tone that is his signature style. In 1374 he assumed the office of comptroller of the customs and subsidy of wools, skins, and tanned hides for the Port of London. In 1382 he became comptroller for wine and other merchandise. During this time he wrote a work on love, *Parliament of Fowls* (1380). In 1385 he was appointed justice of the peace, and in 1386 he sat for one term in Parliament. His other works of this period are *Troilus and Criseyde* (1382–86), from a story by Boccaccio, and *Legend of Good Women* (1385–87). Chaucer's life was difficult during the period from 1386 to 1389, when the political situation in England was unsettled. Adding to his difficulty was the death of his wife in 1387. When Richard II gained control of the country in 1389, Chaucer's fortunes changed for the better. During this period he began his masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*.

From 1389 to 1391 he had a succession of responsible posts. As clerk of the king's works, he was put in charge of Westminster Palace, the Tower of London, and other palaces and manors. He was given a commission to survey the roads, bridges, and ditches along the Thames near London, and he was put in charge of repairs to St. George's Chapel at Windsor. A less exacting post fell to him in 1391, when he was made subforester of one of the king's parks. He held this position until his death on Oct. 25, 1400. Not long before his death he purchased a house in the garden of Westminster Abbey. He was buried in the abbey—a great honor for a commoner—in a section that came to be known in later centuries as the Poets' Corner.

## **MAIN BODY**

### **Chaucer language**

Several languages and dialects were in use in Chaucer's England. Latin was the language of the church. Most learned books were written in Latin and copied out by scribes, as the printing press did not yet exist. An Anglo-Norman dialect of the French language was used in the royal court and

the courts of law. An early form of English—now called Middle English—was the language of the common people. Chaucer chose to write in English and was the first court writer to do so. As a Londoner he used the English of the Midland counties. This was one of several regional dialects that coexisted then because there was so little contact between the various parts of the country. Modern English has more in common with Chaucer's dialect than with the other dialects of Middle English, perhaps due in part to the influence of his literary works. Everyone knows each writer has their individual characteristics of their poetry. For instance, Geoffrey Chaucer, considered the first poet of English literature, brings many changes to the table in regard to English literature. His prose is realistic, simple, clear, and harmonious. He is also humorous, detailed (sometimes too detailed for modern readers) and well researched. His works are both romantic and dramatic.

Chaucer invented a new method of versifying: the rime royal, which is a seven-line stanza rhyming ababbcc. He also borrowed heavily from Latin and French when English words would not suffice. Many of these words do not look foreign to modern readers because they have long since become part of the ordinary English vocabulary—thanks in large part to Chaucer's influence.

Chaucer's preferred literary form was poetry, and most of his works could be described as narrative poems. Chaucer frequently used heroic couplets, which are rhyming couplets composed in iambic pentameter.

### **Geoffrey Chaucer works**

Geoffrey Chaucer wrote a lot of works during his life. And these poetics and works have been read by book-lovers up to now. Because writer has various precious manuscripts. For instance, „Haus of Fame“, „Legend of Good Women“, „The book of the Duchess“, „The canon's Yeoman's Tale“, „The Canterbury Tales“, „The Clerk's Tale“, „The Cook's Tale“, „The Franklin's Tale“, „The Man of Law's Tale“, „Treatise on the Astrolabe“, „Troilus and Criseyde“ Geoffrey Chaucer's major literary works are Troilus and Criseyde, "The Book of the Duchess", "The House of Fame" and 'The Parliament of Fowls' and so on.

Chaucer's career was prospering, and his first important poem was „Book of the Duchess" that seems further evidence of his connection with persons in high places. As well as „Troilus and Criseyde" is considered to be one of Chaucer's best narrative works. It is the longest complete poem written by Chaucer spanning for 8000 lines.

### **About, the Canterbury Tales"**

The Canterbury Tales was Chaucer's last and most famous work, written mostly after 1387 and not completed at the time of his death. The original plan called for 120 tales, but he completed only 20 and left parts of four more. The order in which the tales were supposed to be presented is uncertain. About 90 manuscripts of the tales exist, but not all of them are complete. One of the best is the Ellesmere manuscript in the possession of the Huntington Library in San Marino, Calif. The book was first put into print in about 1476 by William Caxton, the first English printer. The Canterbury Tales (1375-1400) are a series of connected poems contained in an early version of the frame narrative. This frame narrative was influenced by Italian literature, particularly Boccaccio's The Decameron (1349-1351), which Chaucer drew heavy inspiration from for his own poetry. Unlike Boccaccio's wealthier characters, Chaucer's pilgrims are from a range of middle-class professions, such as Pardoners, Summoners, Squires and Men of Law. There's no definitive proof of the order in which each character's tale goes, however evidence and logic suggest that Chaucer structured the tales to allow characters to take jabs and argue with each other. For example, a tale from the Miller about a cuckolded carpenter prompts a tale from the Reeve, a former carpenter, to tell a tale about a cuckolded miller (who also gets beaten up after his daughter is 'deflowered'). Similarly, the Wife of Bath takes a jab at friars in the opening of her tale, so it would make sense that the Friar responds to this jab in his own tale directly afterwards. Main themes of Canterbury Tales are class, death, and corruption.

## **Class and money**

The pilgrims of *The Canterbury Tales* come from varying backgrounds and have a range of socioeconomic circumstances. Chaucer's portrayal of the interactions between the pilgrims is intended as a reflection of his own observations of the class struggle in his time. Chaucer lived in the wake of the Black Death, which killed a third of Europe's population, and decimated the lower classes. As a result, the surviving labourers of Chaucer's time found themselves in an advantageous position: since there was a shortage of labour, they could start charging more for their services and did not have to seek out work!

## **Corruption of the Church**

The pilgrims are all religious, hence their journey to Canterbury. However, as most of the tales reveal, many of the pilgrims claim to be Christian but are far from virtuous. Chaucer was writing in the wake of the Black Death, which was so devastating that many had lost faith in the Catholic Church's authority since it was seen as emblematic of the wealthy and corrupt. Chaucer expresses his frustration with the Church by portraying various religious pilgrims, such as the Pardoner, the Summoner and the Prioress. For example, the Pardoner is written as a morally corrupt character, who collects 'indulgences' on behalf of the Church in exchange for pardoning people's sins (hence the name). However, the Pardoner reveals that he keeps the money he makes from these indulgences instead of giving it to the church. Whilst this behaviour is in itself quite immoral, for Chaucer's audience this would have greater moral implications. Since the Pardoner's customer's money never reached the Church, they wouldn't be seen as fully repenting for their sins. Therefore, the Pardoner essentially condemns many people to hell in exchange for money!

## **CONCLUSION**

*Canterbury Tales* was written as a unique figure. It is widely regarded as Chaucer's magnum opus. The tales (mostly written in verse, although some are in prose) are presented as part of a story-telling contest by a group of pilgrims as they travel together from London to Canterbury to visit the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. The style of *The Canterbury Tales* is characterized by rhyming couplets. That means that every two lines rhyme with each other. So that's why, in my opinion nowadays readers of all over the world love reading the works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Because the description of his work is very clear and understandable for every book-lover although Geoffrey Chaucer has already died his books and works are published by publishers for being used and read by our young generation.

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