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Theme: “An influence of Geoffrey Chaucer’s works on John Dryden’s literary activity”

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ABSTRACT
OF DISSERTATION FOR THE MASTER DEGREE OF PHILOLOGY

THEME

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Abstract

The object of the thesis is investigating the influence of Geoffrey Chaucer's works on John Dryden's literary activity.

The work consists of introduction, three main chapters, concluding remarks and references.

The purpose of the thesis is investigating characteristic features of Geoffrey Chaucer and John Dryden's period, literary trends of the period, analyzing the major facts of influences of Geoffrey Chaucer's works on John Dryden's literary style and activity.

The aims of the thesis are as follows:

1. To give the detailed description of 14th and the 15th century in which Chaucer lived and created masterpieces;
2. To identify writers, poets and genres of this period
3. To analyze Geoffrey Chaucer's works and his philosophy
4. To analyze "Canterbury tales"
5. To give the detailed description of 17th and the 18th century literary styles in which John Dryden lived.
6. To identify writers, poets and genres of this period
7. To analyze John Dryden's works and his philosophy
8. To analyze influences of Geoffrey Chaucer's works on John Dryden's literary activity

The method of the thesis is based on the analysis and comparison of the study. The research work contains the materials giving the compared features and results of the writers.

The introduction gives brief description of Chaucer and Dryden's life and literary career, Chaucer's influence on Dryden's literary activity.

The people of fourteenth century lived the period with great political, social, religious and literary changes. English people from political point of view began to be aware of patriotism which was the result of strengthened feelings of national consciousness. People began to realize that literacy and literature will save them from ignorance. So, this age

produced such great poets like that, even this age began to be called after the name of that poet who dominated the period. He was Chaucer, and the age was his - "Age of Chaucer". Chaucer is reckoned to be the father of English poetry. It doesn't mean that before Chaucer there was no other significant poet. Evidently, there was no national language except a number of regional languages. Chaucer preferred the East Midland- and raised it to the level of the national language of England. Therefore, he is thought to be both the father of English poetry and English language. He is the first national poet in the English literature and history. This period also produced poets as John Gower, William Langland, but their poetry is little read, whereas Chaucer's literary heritage is still enjoyed by modern readers and once was enjoyed by Glorious Dryden.

The timeline from 1660 to 1700 is known as the Restoration period. Other way, scholars call it "the Age of Dryden" as Dryden was the dominant writer and public figure of this period. New period in the social life and the literature of English people is calculated from the restoration of King Charles II in 1660. In this period there was a sudden development of science. With the purpose of developing science in England the Royal Society was established. People began to be much interested in science. The interest in science paved a way to a rational inquiry and formulated scientific and objective outlook in English people. Now let us write a few words about the political situation of the time. Generally, two political parties the Whigs and the Tories were in development stage. These parties had a great role in the formulation of English politics. The Whigs struggled for the limitation of kings' and parliament's powers and rise the interest of the people and the Parliament, while the Tories supported the Divine authority of the King, and strove to restrict the powers of the people in the interest of the authority. For the majority of the poets the rise of these political parties was an inspiration for their career and almost all the writers supported their own parties which expresses their views about their country and beliefs. Dryden supported Tories. Dryden's masterly reflected the period's religious and political conflicts in his famous poem "Absalom and Achitophel". Walter Scott was right to call him "Glorious John" as he produced marvels.

The followings are the chief feature of the period: a) Rise of Neo-classicism: b) Imitation of the Ancient Masters: c) Imitation of the French Masters: d) Realism and d) Formalism.

Dryden is the one who designated Chaucer as "The father of English language" and by his confirmation he defined a unique place for Chaucer in the English history for his special

service and achievement. Dryden in his preface to “Fables, Ancient and Modern” mentions that he venerates Chaucer in the degree of Grecians venerate Homer. Dryden adored the way Chaucer thought which was his philosophy and the way he wrote that was his philology. Dryden thinks of Chaucer to be learned in all fields of science who speaks properly in every way. Even while comparing Chaucer with Ovid he gives the priority to Chaucer by stating that he had never seen a simple work of Ovid’s own, whereas, Chaucer is known to be the author of “The Wife of Bath’s tale” and “The Cock and The Fox” which he translated later. As Dryden was a grand translator he also highly appreciated Chaucer’s skill of translation. Dryden’s view about Chaucer is considered a little bit controversial. He speaks of Chaucer as “the father of English language”, however, because of incomplete metre of his works Dryden considers Chaucer to be no longer a good poet and writer.

Glorious Dryden is the greatest of all poets who preached and transmitted Chaucer’s traditions for future generations. English literature is much indebted to Chaucer and Dryden for producing marvels which changed and shaped drift of English history.

Chapter I. Geoffrey Chaucer and his literary activity

The first chapter deals with the investigation of Chaucer’s period, its social and literary aspects; how Chaucer lived and created masterpieces which changed the drift of English literature.

Geoffrey Chaucer is considered to be the father of English poetry and greatest poet of Middle English who created masterpieces and dominated his age and is the first poet who is buried in Poet’s Corner of Westminster Abbey. He did not only achieve a success as an author, but also as an alchemist, a philosopher, and an astronomer, a bureaucrat, a courtier and a diplomat. Chaucer is the first writer who wrote in English. By this way he paved a way for English to be a standard language over the country.

His father was a famous wine merchant. It is very pity that we don’t know much information about his early life and education. His name comes from French origin and means “shoemaker”. Edward III sent him as a diplomat to have a mission in France, Genoa and Florence. His diplomatic mission to these countries provided him with materials of the authors such as Dante, Boccaccio and Froissart and later Chaucer enriched his literary heritage with the works of these authors.

He was elected for the membership of parliament for Kent district. At the same time he acted as a justice of the peace in these years. Later King made him his clerk for royal projects. As many poets of his age one of Chaucer's accomplishments was to write love songs and poems for the entertainment of a royal audience.

Majority of medieval works were meant for aristocratic audience, so Chaucer's were. Most probably Chaucer produced his works for royal audience being a good timeserver. His works reveals his character as a poet and public figure more detailed rather than his biography. We think the biggest achievement of Chaucer was to establish English as a vernacular language which later became major literary language.

Chaucer is mostly famous for his "Canterbury tales" which is still the object of investigation for the majority of scholars. It is a collection of stories told by pilgrims turn by turn. Chaucer telling these stories from the mouth of characters intended to display England's social and political situation ironically. He especially focused on Church as he blamed Church for the ignorance of the people.

"Canterbury Tales", "Troilus and Criseyde", "Book of the Duchess", "The House of Fame", "The Parliament of Fowles", "The Legend of Good Women", "Anelida and Arcite", "Treatise on the Astrolabe", "The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse", "Truth Gentillesse", "MercilesBeaute", "Lak of Stedfastnesse", "Against Women Unconstant" are his literary heritage which is adored by the world from Chaucer's time till modern world. Like his birth and life his death is also mysterious. It is believed that he died of unknown reason in 1400, but this is not an exact date.

Chapter II: John Dryden and his literary activity

The second chapter reflects the life and career of Glorious John Dryden. The chapter provides the reader with detailed information about Dryden's works.

John Dryden is one of the poets who was inspired by the works of Geoffrey Chaucer and in this thesis we aim to investigate the influence of Chaucer on Dryden's literary activity. So, how Dryden got influenced by Chaucer?! Who is Glorious John?! Dryden successfully changed the history of translation art and masterly created new genre which is called neo-classical heroic couplet that brought him a tremendous fame. Dryden's heroic couplet became dominant genre of the 17th century. Like Chaucer Dryden also had a great impact on his followers. As literary critic, translator, and a playwright he dominated the literary life of

Restoration period in England in such level that the period became to be called as the “Age of Dryden”. Walter Scott called him "Glorious John”.

Dryden was born on 9th August 1631 in Northamptonshire in an extended family. He got his first education at Westminster school. His family had close ties with Church and Parliament. Later he continued his education at Trinity College at Cambridge. After graduation he found work in the office of Oliver Cromwell and his first important poem was dedicated to this eminent historical figure. Due to coronation of Charles II Dryden produced a 300 lines “Astraea Redux”. Glorious Dryden wrote thirty tragedies, comedies, and dramatic operas. He also made a precious contribution to English criticism and Dr. Samuel Johnson called him as “the father of English criticism.”

After Dryden’s death his reputation was still felt among literary aristocracy and was still readable and enjoyable which is the same today. His works are still field of investigation from point of every aspect of life.

Chapter III: An influence of Geoffrey Chaucer’s works on John Dryden’s literary activity

The third chapter deals with an influence of Geoffrey Chaucer’s works on John Dryden’s literary activity.

Dryden, we can say surely that is the first one to say more about him than anyone else in the famous Preface of “Fables, Ancient and Modern”. Dryden makes some important statements about Chaucer’s language. This is what makes sense, however, as a translator Dryden's English had to do with Chaucer’s English in order to reach understandable common translation. Dryden writes:

“Chaucer, I confess, is a rough diamond, and must first be polish’d, ere he shines. I deny not, likewise, that, living in our early days of poetry, he writes not always of a piece, but sometimes mingles trivial things with those of greater moment. Sometimes also, tho’ not often, he runs riot, like Ovid, and knows not when he has said enough. But there are more great wits, beside Chaucer, whose fault is their excess of conceits, and those ill sorted. An author is not to write all he can, but only all he ought. Having observ’d this redundancy in Chaucer, (as it is an easy matter for a man of ordinary parts to find a fault in one of greater,) I have not tied myself to a literal translation; but have often omitted what I judg’d unnecessary, or not of dignity enough to appear in the company of better thoughts. I have presum’d farther,

in some places, and added somewhat of my own where I thought my author was deficient, and had not given his thoughts their true luster, for want of words in the beginning of our language. and to this I was the more embolden'd, because (if I may be permitted to say it of myself) I found I had a soul congenial to his, and that I had been conversant in the same studies”¹

The concluding remarks: Geoffrey Chaucer being the Father of English poetry led an amazing life and he is considered a true value for English literature. 1)He is one of the greats who changed the drift of English literature in so many ways by preserving and being loyal to medieval traditions. 2) He hammered his name into history as the "Father of English Poetry and Language". It is true that he admired many poets and got influenced by them. But it is the job of destiny that later English literature had more poets to admire him than he admired. Chaucer was and is going to be focus of respect and admiration for a long period of time and John Dryden was the greatest of his admirers. Dryden is what Chaucer means for English literature.3) By writing successful fables, satires, religious pieces, compliments epigrams, prologues, and plays he created the heroic couplet as a standard form of English poetry.He is the one who totally deserves the name of “the father of English criticism”

Today, what English literature owns is because of what Dryden and Chaucer presented to recordings of the history of the English literature.

¹John Dryden, “The Works of John Dryden: Poems 1697-1700”, University of California Press, 2000, p 39- 40

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Introduction

Chaucer being called “the father of English poetry” with his great masterpieces significantly made a great contribution to the improvement of English poetry. Writing “General Prologue” to “The Canterbury Tales” he popularized himself as the author of “the most perfect poem in the English language.” He was a master in French, English, Italian, and Latin literature and masterly used literary genres and techniques in his well – known “The Book of the Duchess”, “The Parlement of Foules”, “The House of Fame”, and “Troilus and Criseyde” which is the example of foreign literature. His poems are still among the most acclaimed works of the English-speaking countries which continue to gain praise of the readers. His language was rich and style was original. His way of exploring social cases easily attracts reader’s attention.

Chaucer's personality is great and mostly revealed delightfully and plainly in his writings. It must be hammered into brain that, like other greatest poets, he was not simply a poet, but also a courtier, a diplomat, and a government official. He always preached and loved external beauty and till to the end of his lifetime he never gave up his passion for romantic love. He always searched for moral qualities in the society. He very often condemned falsehood and hypocrisy. Chaucer himself was quiet and self-contained, moreover, sympathetic toward all people. Though he had so much positive characters he does not declare himself as an ideal person. He was always eager to accept the world as it is. His nature was easy going. He was the appropriate from all points of view for the Court circle. Though he worked hard through his life he also loved comfort.

In a word, Chaucer is kind of artist who has a broad artistic vision who considers art its own reason for being. And it must be accepted natural that few readers might understand it otherwise with him. We must mention that, religion was secondary and formal thing for him and he always was intellectually interested in the problems of medieval religious problems. He struggled for independent philosophic outlook rather than definite dogmas.

Chaucer is considered one of the greatest of all narrative poets. It is very pity that as a lyric poet very few of his lyrics have reached to our modern ages. Mostly his fame comes from narratives. Firstly, he possesses outstanding fluency which hardly anyone possesses. His long series gripping tales poured awesomely from Chaucer’s brain is a plain evidence of his fluency. Yes, it is a fact, in his early works he criticizes the medieval faults of wordiness, and abstract symbolism and of course, he like most medieval writers chose the way of reshaping

material store of literary history rather than to invent something from his own brain. But we don't want to make ourselves with such kind of minor matters.

Critics analyze Chaucer from different point of views. Modern critics focus on gender and sexuality in Chaucer's works as Chaucer depicts variety of female figures on different aspects and contexts. Some think that, Chaucer just emphasizes his age's assumptions about sexuality of females. In his tales Chaucer very often touches upon the issues of virginity. In Chaucer's time virgin girls stopped to be thought pure even if they were look with desire and passion. Middle Age authors either described women as a symbol of purity by being a virgin or blamed gentle creators for alluring men. On the other hand a part of critics claim that there is a relation between language and gender issues in Chaucer's works. Critics argue that there are some strange relations between controlling female language and male powers. "The Wife of Bath's Tale" is a bright example for this relation. In Chaucer's time since feminine speech allured men speaking women in public places was improper behavior.

James Russell Lowell rightly emphasized this feature and noted:

"It is commonly assumed that Chaucer did for English what Dante is supposed to have done for Italian and Luther for German, that he, in short, in some hitherto inexplicable way, created it. Dante, indeed, has told us that he chose to write in the tongue that might be learned of nurses and chafferers in the market. In this sense it hardly too much to say that Chaucer like Dante found his native tongue a dialect and left it a language."²

Chaucer's poetry falls into three distinct periods. First period is classified as the period of French poetry which is mainly inspired from rich French literature and Chaucer produced this period's work partly in France, partly in England in English language. Chaucer reshaped experimented lyric poems which the French poets had written with their fluent language. He also gave a new soul to some French narrative poems by translating them and one of them is the thirteenth century "Romance of the Rose" of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung, which is a satirical allegory containing many thousand lines. The poem narrates medieval love and religion. Chaucer's second period is formed under Italian influence which begins from his visit to Italy in 1372-3. At Padua he may have met the Italian poet Petrarch, and was influenced by Italian life and literature. He directly used works of Petrarch and Boccaccio and Dante. The finest poem of this period is "Troilus and Criseyde" which is based on a work of Boccaccio. In this poem Chaucer describes one tragedy of love of a main figure in the tale

²James RusselLowel, "My study Windows", University Press: Cambridge, 1871, p 257

of Troy in Middle Ages. His last fifteen years covers Chaucer's third period that is called his English period. "The Legend of Good Women" is the production of this age.

The masterpiece that hammered Chaucer's fame into historical recordings is "The Canterbury Tales". We guess everyone who is interested in Chaucer's literary heritage would probably be familiar with the plan of the story. Geoffrey Chaucer wrote "The Canterbury Tales" between 1387 and 1400. Chaucer tells the story of a group of thirty people who intend to travel as pilgrims to Canterbury. In order to spend their time amusingly the pilgrims coming from all layers of society tell stories to each other while they travel to Canterbury.

If we believe the words written in the General Prologue, Chaucer intended to tell two tales from the mouth of each pilgrim on the way to Canterbury and two tales on the way back. Here we give an extract from the General Prologue:

You go to Canterbury, - good, Godspeed
Saint Thomas help you in your need
But nothing makes the way seem short
Like travellers' games or other sport
"Friends" he said, "I'd never dream"
Of drawing out my words in vain
Swear each of you will tell two tales
Along the Canterbury trail
Two more as you come back again
Four tales won't tax the lightest brain
Just tell of old things from the past³.

He was never able to finish his great project and even the completed tales were not finished totally. Scholars are not sure about the order of the tales. As the printing press had been invented newly when Chaucer wrote his works, his masterpiece has been passed down to our ages in several handwritten manuscripts.

³Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Canterbury Tales in Modern Verse", Hackett Publishing, 2005, p 40-41

The Catholic Church which gained governance in England by the late fourteenth century had become extremely wealthy. About unfairness of Church they created stories and anecdotes as irreligious monks bribed people while ignorant and poor people suffered from famine. Chaucer's religious figures symbolize the churchmen who were deviate in right way. Overall those monks' conducts correspond to medieval stereotypes, but it is difficult to make any generalized statement. Two copies of "The Canterbury Tales" were copied around the time of Chaucer's death by Adam Pinkhurst who was a scribe and seems to have worked closely with great poet and he gave a high confidence that Chaucer himself had written "The Canterbury Tales". Chaucer's literary heritage influenced many other poets, especially, John Dryden who is considered to be "Glorious".

Dryden was the poet who dominated his age and influential literary figure. By writing successful fables, satires, religious pieces, compliments epigrams, prologues, and plays he created the heroic couplet as a standard form of English poetry. He also introduced the "alexandrine" and "triplet" into the English literature. Auden called John Dryden "the master of the middle age style" and he was a role model for his contemporaries and for those who lived and created in the 18th century. After his death English literary community considerably felt his loss and his death inspired many elegies. Heroic couplet of Glorious John became the dominant poetic genre of the 18th century. One of the poets who was heavily influenced by Dryden is Alexander Pope and often borrowed from him. In his imitation of "Horace's Epistle II Pope" eminently praised Dryden's versification. Dryden's poems are widely read, and are often cited in Tom Jones and Johnson's essays.

The first critical attack on Dryden's reputation came by Wordsworth, who always complained that in Dryden's translations from Virgil his descriptions of natural objects were given inferior to the originals. However, Wordsworth's contemporaries, like George Crabbe, Lord Byron, and Walter Scott, were admirers of Dryden. Though Wordsworth criticized Dryden he admired many of Dryden's poems, and his famous "Intimations of Immortality" has something common stylistically to Dryden's "Alexander's Feast". John Keats was also the one who admired the "Fables" of Dryden and imitated them in his poem called "Lamia". It is believed that Dryden is the first person to claim that English sentences should not end in prepositions as Latin sentences do not end in prepositions. Dryden was the "first" of many initiatives. He is also considered to be the first one to declare London "metropolis of any nation." Dryden did an innovation by addressing to London as metropolis. He speaks of London in his "Annus Mirabilis" and "The Medal" much more than anyone did.

After the Restoration Age, Dryden quickly took the advantage and established himself as the dominant poet. He was a smart literary critic of his age and he cooperated with his new government. Dr. Johnson is the first critic who appreciated Dryden with the name of “the father of English criticism”. Johnson’s evaluation Dryden with the name of “father of English criticism” should not be understood as if before Dryden there was no literary criticism in England. Surely, there was, but was ill-organized. His accurate and superb criticism of “The Canterbury Tales” is still reckoned to be a rare value in the history of English criticism.

Meanwhile being a great critic John Dryden tried his hand at the art of translation. He is much indebted to Westminster school for his skill where he learned fundamental knowledge of translation science. He mostly translated from Roman and Greek poetry which he adored most of all. Dryden began his translation career in his last two decade of his life because of financial problems that he faced due to losing his position in court. Even Dryden sometimes is called “the theorist” of the translation. “Ovid’s Epistles”, “Sylvae”, “The Satires of Juvenal and Persius”, “Examen Poeticum”, “Virgil’s Aeneis”, “Fables Ancient and Modern” and “The Works of Lucian” are among his famous translation works.

In his poems Dryden was looking forward to court a patron, but he instead of it was making his own money writing for publishers, not for the royalty, and thus he was serving ultimately for the reading public with his enthusiasm. Dryden is the one who fed our curiosity with his delicate works in the literature of England. Glorious John is glorious as he defended and struggled for the future of his nation by using his powerful pen to express people’s views.

John Dryden is one of those who greatly admired Chaucer and translated masterpieces from his literary heritage. John Dryden called Chaucer "the father of English poetry," and always appreciated him in the level of Homer and Virgil. His Preface to “The Fables” is highly appreciated from point of criticism and admiration of Chaucer by Dryden. Dryden got much more to say than anyone else in his Preface to “The Fables”. Dryden translated “The Knight's Tale”, “The “Nun's Priest's Tale” and “The Wife of Bath's Tale” from “Canterbury Tales”. Chaucer greatly influenced the prestige and stream of English language and literature and John Dryden was heavily influenced by him. Alexander Pop in his “Essays on Criticism” masterly and at the same time very concretely expresses Dryden’s great admiration to Chaucer and as if with these lines he wants his readers to know Chaucer as Dryden’s master: “Such as Chaucer, Shall Dryden be”. By the time past, history is much inclined to acknowledge it.

Chapter I: Geoffrey Chaucer and his literary activity

“The life so brief, the art so long in the learning, the attempt so hard, the conquest so sharp, the fearful joy that ever slips away so quickly - by all this I mean love, which so sorely astounds my feeling with its wondrous operation, that when I think upon it I scarce know whether I wake or sleep.”

Geoffrey Chaucer

The first problem to deal with is the investigation of G. Chaucer's timeline that he lived and created masterpieces. The time that he lived is the period of 1343 – 1400 which coincides with the Middle English literature period. This period may be determined as the period from 1100 to 1500, whereas, some scholar prefer to define the beginning from 1150. Actually, the term Middle English literature includes literature materials written only in the form of the English Language.

During this period of four hundred years imposing factor that altered Middle English literature was the Norman Conquest. One of the world's prominent figures, William, the duke of Normandy captured England with the armed forces of Norman and French soldiers which were led by adventurers, aspiring nobles and sons of many important French families. King William during his authority years eliminated the English nobility. As a result of his policy, in England a new aristocracy was formed that was wholly French. Normans and French took all the important positions in country governing and Church.

It is proved by scholars that, Norman Conquest had a turning point in English language and literature. The origin of Normans was from Scandinavian tribes. In the 9th century they captured France and called it Normandy. When they occupied England in that time they themselves underwent some linguistic changes like they adopted French culture and language. In the eleventh century in spite of their Scandinavian origin they were real carriers of French culture and language.

During the rule of William the Conqueror (1066-1087) the language of the court, the government, the courts of law and the church was French. The English language status was cut down to lower social sphere. The West Saxon literary language was put to an end by William, duke of Normandy. In this case two languages – French and English struggled with each other and by this way they had mutual process of influencing between each other. This long process continued for three centuries. The result of this struggle and influence ended

with the victory of English, but during these three centuries the English language has undergone very strong changes.

There are three features of Middle English: grammatical inflections increased greatly; borrowing of the words from other languages like French and Latin; and a highly varied orthography.

When it comes to grammar, the most obvious change between Middle English was the loss of the second-person pronoun (thou, etc.) in everyday usage. Another is the loss of the subjunctive form. In relation to pronunciation, in Middle English words of Germanic origin were pronounced more or less with the values of Old English, words of Romance more or less as in Norman French.

The everyday vocabulary of Old English also has survived in Middle English and Modern English, for ex:brick, bragger, bridge; fustian, fasten, fasten; eglan, eland, island; langng, longine, longing; newe, new; streng, strange, strong.As a result of the Norman Conquest majority of Old English words fell wholly out of usage and were replaced by French words: nobilite, nobylte,(nobility), and larcwide by conseil, conseil, (counsel).

Alongside these two languages there was totally different language in use that was Latin, the international language of the Church.Because the English underclass cooked for the Norman upper class, the words describing majority of domestic animals are in English (ox, cow, calf, sheep, swine, deer) while the words for the meats derived from them are in French (beef, veal, mutton, pork, bacon, venison). Actually, Middle English had three languages in use: French – the language of governance, English – the language of common people and Latin – the language of church. Prior to the Norman Conquest, the Latin language had only a little influence on the English language. It is due to Roman occupation and conversion of Britain to Christianity.

If we look through the Middle English written materials we can easily come across French words which are the evidence of Norman's dominance over Anglo Saxons and we will understand few words from the text. But however, unlike Old English, Middle English is readable, though there are few difficult words to understand, by modern English-speaking people.

Middle English itself is divided into three periods:

- Early Middle English, from 1100 to 1250 and Old English system of writing was still in use.
- The Central Middle English, from about 1250 to about 1400. This period was especially marked by the borrowing of large numbers of Anglo-Norman words and the rise of the London dialect in the hands of such writers as John Gower and Geoffrey Chaucer.
- Late Middle English, from about 1400 to about 1500. During this period the basic lines of inflection as they appear in Modern English were first established. In Old English possession was shown by the use of genitive case endings. In the Middle English period there was genitive endings leveled out to one “-s”.

Complicated Old English Grammar also became simplified in Middle English. The Grammatical gender disappeared almost entirely, the case system and verb conjugations became much more simplified as we mentioned above.

In the 14th and 15th we find grouping of local dialects: Northern, East Midlands, West Midlands, Southern and Kentish. The most important event in the changing linguistic situation in Middle English period was the rise of the London dialect as dominant written form of language.

First of all we should remember that in the Old English period the capital of England was Winchester. Only after the Norman invasion London was raised to the status of capital. The formation of a standard language in London goes back to the eastern variety of midland Middle English. The evidence for the rise of London dialect is: Henry III's Proclamation of 1258, poems by Adam Devy, and the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, and John Wycliffe.

Despite the dominance of Normans over England the English language still was the literary language during this period. Northumbria, East Anglia and London dialects each had their turn as major sources of Middle English literature. The most famous example of Middle English is Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales". This book contains a collection of stories about a band of thirty people who travel as pilgrims to Canterbury, England. The characters and episodes that he describes in his tales give us clues of what life was like in that period. Chaucer was most popular for being heavily influenced by French and Italian traditions.

One of the critical results of Norman Conquest was the introduction of the French language into English society. The French language became the language of aristocracy. We

must bear into our head that conquerors invaded England to enrich themselves but not to get adopted to English people, thus, they made much effort to grasp English. But, nevertheless, the English language continued to be spoken by the majority of people that was the language of illiterates. In his “A literary history of England” book Albert C. Baugh writes about that time’s English language situation like this: “England was thus in the unhappy linguistic situation of a house divided again itself. As to some extent in Belgium today, two languages were in use side by side, one by the upper class, economically and socially, the other by the common people”⁴. But, from 1250 to 1300 English society began to make a shift from French to English.

Alongside with this process In England there developed another-the rise of a national language – London dialect. It was due to the great shifts in social structure. Development of trade and industry, increase of money circulation – were the evident of social changes. Upcoming social relations demanded unified national language which was available in all parts of the country. After the Norman Conquest London became the capital of England. The dialect of London holds a special position among the dialects. London is situated on the Thames and lies on the boundary line between the Midland and the Southern dialects. London dialect became dominant in other parts of the country at the end of the 14th century. It is strongly believed that, it was Chaucer who made London as a standard literary language. He just used London dialect so masterly.

The year of Chaucer's death, was marked by alliterative poetry. The ideal examples of this type are “Pearl”, “Purity” and “Patience”, they say that all these works were written by the same unknown poet. The best Arthurian romances in English are “Sir Gawain” and “The Green Knight” that were recorded in this period. “Piers Plowman” attributed to William Langland is reckoned second only to “The Canterbury Tales” as the greatest poem in the Middle English period.

The authors writing romances not later 1325 mention that all now know English, at the same time, aristocracy is able to speak in English. From 14th age having language skills in French was just fashionable achievement. It is quite natural that the linguistic situation of Middle English period had a vital impact on the production of literature in the native tongue.

⁴ Albert C. Baugh “A literary history of England”, Psychology Press, 1948, p 111

In order to investigate Middle English literature as a whole we have to divide it into certain periods⁵:

It would be in vein if we look for romances at the court in the first period during which English was spoken only by the lower classes. As writing in English had no use to the writer we have to look through the clergy in order to find out materials recorded in English which is intended for the common people. It is not accidental that, therefore, materials written in English contains religious context that is the effort of the Church to instruct the people and teach them the right and moral way of living. “The Ormulum” is a common work of the first period – The Period of Religious Record. Time passes when the aristocracy began to adopt English Middle English literature got much varied literature in the native language. The main concept of those times English literature was entertainment and betterment of morality of the people.

The fifty years from 1350 to 1400 in which Chaucer, Wycliffe, Langland and the Pearl poet came to the scene of literature has been named the Period of Great individual Writers. The remaining hundred years, the fifteenth century was dominated by the influenced writer Geoffrey Chaucer. This period of Middle English literature can be thought of as the Imitative or Transition Period.

Overall, English literature must be scanned through three languages: Latin, French, and English. Actually as already in Old English times Latin language was not only language of learning but the narrower field of scholarship. A large amount of poetry was written in French in England and substituted English for over two hundred years. It is quite natural to be interested in the literature in English as it is expressing English worldview and mirroring English social conditions. It is possible to distinguish between what was intended for upper class and what was written for the common people. All the thirteenth and much of fourteenth century’s English literature takes its origin from French language, even, King Arthur came English literature not from Celtic source but from French romances.

While talking about Middle English literature we must be aware of its general characteristic features. Overall, Middle English literature is characterized by being tri – lingual, having class distinction and taking its origin from French sources and models.⁶ One of the features of Middle English literature is its impersonality. It is anonymous. We don’t know their authors and just take a pleasure at it. Other peculiarity of this period is having

⁵Brandl, “MittelenglischeLiteratur”, Strassburg press, 1893, p 110.

⁶Albert C. Baugh, “A literary history of England”, Psychology Press, 1948, p 114.

originality problem. Middle Ages authors were not tended toward to create something new and original. Originality was not major requirement for them. They preferred to translate old materials and it was done in a so perfect way that translation became original creation. Even Deschamps addresses a complimentary poem to Chaucer as “grand translator”.

As mentioned above religious recording were large and important part of this age. It is very important to note that, literature in Middle Age was intended to be listened rather than to be read. Up to the end of fifteenth century literacy was not so widespread, even, among upper class, as books were so expensive.

The Middle Age is considered the rebirth of literature. Medieval books were accurately hand-copied and illuminated by monks. Paper was a rarity. Students who wanted to learn writing used wooden tablets. Literate members of the society developed capital and lowercase letters with rules for each. Books were reckoned as treasures so that rarely shown in a library and kept safely. If someone gave you a book for present he or she thought to be a true friend.

While speaking about book we must touch upon the history of printing. It was Caxton who firstly introduced printing to English history. He was a translator and importer of books into England, successful and important member of the merchant community. In the early 1470s Caxton decided to spend his majority of time in Cologne learning the art of printing. In 1472 Caxton and Colard Mansion, a Flemish calligrapher set up a press in Bruges. The first book printed in the English language was Caxton's own translation of “The Recuyell of the Histories of Troye”.

In 1476 Caxton established a press at Westminster in London and it was the first printing press in England. Chaucer's “Canterbury Tales”, Gower's “Confession Amantis” and Malory's “Le Morted'Arthur” were among the books he printed. He printed more than 100 books in his lifetime. Among Caxton's projects we come across printing Chaucer's “The Parlement of Foules”, “The House of Fame”, “Troilus and Criseyde” and “The Canterbury Tales” and for each manuscript Caxton wrote an epilogue which reveals his skill as a writer. In the introduction given to the book of “House of Fame” Caxton praises Chaucer writing that, in my opinion, he excels all writers in our English. This conclusive sentence was shared by the majority of the critics until the English Renaissance. In “Epilogue” (1483) he thinks of Chaucer to be the first founder of ornate eloquence. So, who is that Chaucer to be the point of admiration for majority of his contemporaries and the critics?!!

Geoffrey Chaucer is the towering figure of Middle English literature writing in English, whose popular work is “The Canterbury Tales” and was the first poet who has been buried in Westminster Abbey in Poet’s Corner. Chaucer was the crucial person in making the English language vernacular when those times’ dominant literary language was French and Latin. In many sources he is estimated second only to Shakespeare as English literature’s greatest writer. No one was able to surpass Chaucer’s achievements. Geoffrey Chaucer led a wonderful life. He was not only a great poet, but also, alchemist and astronomer, philosopher and active public figure as a diplomat. Being “The Father of English poetry” he is reckoned to be a great and worthy figure of English literature. Furthermore, he affected the poetry world in so many ways by his versification and by using different variants of English language. During his lifetime the poet also traveled from one country to another and got acquainted with important Italian poets, including Dante and Petrarch. He was just a small English child and grew up like any ordinary English kids. But once he became full-grown he became “the Father of English Poetry”.

G.K. Chesterton speaks of Geoffrey Chaucer like this: “He is the true father of all our poets, but at the same time he is the grandfather of all our poets”. Translator L. Untermeyer once mentions about him: “Chaucer comes among us with uncontrolled, eminent, delicate talent which is lavishly inclusive... No poet could ever achieve his achievements. His works are still field of investigation and are going to be for a long time”⁷.

Notwithstanding we know so many facts about Geoffrey Chaucer’s life than his contemporaries who are William Langland, Wycliffe and the Pearl poet the exact year of his birth year is still under a question. Anyway it is predicted that Geoffrey Chaucer was born approximately in 1343 in London. His family was well-to-do merchant living in Ipswich. Skeat in his book by name “The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer” writes that Geoffrey’s surname comes from French language. The word “chasseur” means shoemaker.⁸

It is said that Geoffrey Chaucer was able to read and write before the school. He was thought by his father’s clerks. Probably, he got his primary education in Latin language. He also knew French and composed poems in this language. Therefore, French poet Eustace Deschamps praised Chaucer for being a great translator of “Romance of the Rose” in his ballad devoted to Geoffrey.

⁷Louis Untermeyer “Chaucer to Burns”, Touchstone press, 1955 p 35

⁸ Skeat, W. W., “The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer” Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899; Vol. I p. ix.

About his early life and education years we have so few facts in our hands. The only fact that we are sure of is that, he was a page to Elizabeth, wife of Edward III's third son in 1357. In 1359 he was sent to France with army. There he was taken as a prisoner, but the king ransomed him. After the year 1360 we lose his trace from historical recordings for the next six years. Some scholars guess that during these six years he was taken into the King's service. By 1366 he is married to Philippa, the damoselle in the Queen's service. After the Peasant's Revolt in 1381 he moved to Kent from London and there he was elected a member for the parliament for Kent in 1386. In his time he was pretty well-to-do one than many others as he was in the service of the royal family.

He was a great public figure rewarded by grants and special payments. The King frequently sent him for secret negotiations. Once he was sent to arrange a meeting between Richard II and the King's daughter of France. Mostly he travelled to France and Low Countries, but at least twice was in Italy. While being in Italy he had an opportunity to get acquainted with Italian literature, especially with the work of Dante and Boccaccio. When he was in Italy for the second time his business brought him in contact with Barnabo Visconti, lord of Milan. Later his stanza "Monk's Tale" will be dedicated to Barnabo Visconti's death. Great poet Geoffrey Chaucer disappears from historical recordings in 1400 and was buried in Westminster abbey.

The name of Chaucer and Gower were remembered together with the same respect and love throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth century since their great friendship, but, however, scholars are indebted to Geoffrey Chaucer for discovering Gower's larger works. Gower at the end of his "Confessio Amantis" from the mouth of character by name Venus calls Chaucer his disciple and his poet and instructs Amans who is another character to tell Chaucer to complete all his works. Critics do believe "Legend of Good Women" to be that unfinished work of great poet.

It is very pity that so little we know about Gower who is personally known to Henry IV and Richard II. Gower left us great body of poetry that can fill four large volumes. Gower was from Kentish family and was very rich man who earned his life from great trade. Actually, scholars know him for his friendship with Chaucer. He married Agnes Groundolf in 1398, perhaps she was his second wife. He died in October 24, 1408 and was buried in St. Saviour's church. He didn't mention about his children in his will that was probated in his death day.

Gower wrote three principal works: “Speculum Meditantis”, “VoxClamantis”, “ConfessioAmantis”. As it is seen from titles of the works the poems are in French, Latin and English. The first work “Speculum Meditantis” consists of 30.000 French verse. He writes about the Seven Deadly Sins and their “daughters” and mentions struggle between the two groups in all classes of the society. The second work called “VoxClamantis” is a Latin poem consisting of 10,000 lines that was written after the Peasants revolt in 1381. Gower gives a vivid description of so-called evils of those times society like peasantry, clergy and knighthood. Gower masterly borrows from previous Latin classical and medieval poets and as it is clear from his works he handles with Latin fluently. In his later years “ConfessioAmantis” was written in which Gower realized that entertaining lines does not win many readers:

Bot for men sein, and soth it is,
That who that al of wisdom writ
It dullethofte a mannes wit
To him that schal it aldairede
For thilke cause, if that ye rede,
I wolde go the middle weie
And wryte a bokbetwem the tweie.
Somewhat of lust, somewhat of lore⁹...

Actually, Gower is not considered a great poet by critics. He is so earnest man who tries to wake up his people with his messages. He supports the reformation in a society. He is terrified with Peasants’ Revolt. He admonishes the King in his works. What more can a real man do than all these?!

Between the contemporaries of Geoffrey Chaucer we see Sir John Mandeville. He is famous for his “The Travels of Sir John Mandeville” and this book is one of the best-known books of the Middle Ages. In this book we can see incredible creatures that have an eye in the middle of the forehead, people with no heads but with eyes in their shoulders. Mandeville intended to write a simple guide-book for the ones who want to visit Jerusalem; he gives the

⁹ John Gower, “ConfessioAmantis”, London Press, 1857, p 238

descriptions of towns, roads and place of interests. When he finishes this part of his plan he continues his travels to Asia Minor, Egypt, Persia, India and China. He professes to have been born at St. Albans, to have arrived at Liege, where he was persuaded to write down his experiences.¹⁰ The original version was in French, but it was soon translated into Latin and English. English version of this book has at least two versions: the one that was translated from Latin and the other one which was translated from the French original.

Among Chaucer's contemporaries we can also see less romantic but no less important works of John Trevisa. He was born in Cornwall and entered Oxford University in 1362, then became a fellow of Queen's College. John Trevisa for more than forty years was vicar of Berkley. Thomas and Lord Berkley made a real patronage for Trevisa. John's most important translations were made with the command of these two eminent figures. Trevisa died in 1402. Apart from his Bible Translation, a matter still in dispute, his translations of "Higden's Polychronicon" and of the "De Proprietatibus Rerum" of Bartholomew Anglicus. Trevisa is blamed for wordiness, but his aim was for clearness¹¹.

"Testament of Love" by Thomas Usk is the most popular one as it deserves to be. Thomas Usk used words from "Piers Plowman" and Chaucer's "Troilus" in his work and these borrowings made his works more useful and interesting as his work is the fix of the words of these poems. It is a political allegory and Thomas Usk wrote this prose while he was in prison. Thomas Usk at the same time notes in "Tastement of Love" that Chaucer is a true servant to love and his "Troilus and Criseyde" includes the world's best noble sayings about love. By writing that "Chaucer passes all the poets" Usk displays Chaucer's significance among other poets of his age in front of reader's eyes. He also writes the reason of his being in prison justifies his conduct and indicates that he should be released. Thomas Usk can do no more great service to English literature.

The most famous writer of English prose at the end of the fourteenth century was John Wycliffe. We do believe that he had very little hand in the translation of the Bible that deals with his name. His position in English literature must be evaluated by his sermons, tracts and canons that is not easy to determine.

John Wycliffe was born about 1328 at Wycliffe in the North Riding of Yorkshire. He entered Oxford about 1345 and in 1360 he had become Master of Balliol College. During these years he got strict education in scholasticism with grammar and logic. He got training

¹⁰ K.W. Cameron, "A Discovery in John de Mandevilles", *Speculum*, XI (1936), p 351-359

¹¹ Aaron J. Perry, "John Trevisa: A Fourteenth Century Translator", 1937, p 277

with its emphasis on Aristotle. He spent some years for the study of theology and after these years he lectured on the Bible and the sentences of Peter Lombard. In 1362 he was designated rector of Filingham. But, unfortunately, he didn't receive his degree as Doctor of Theology until 1372. In this year he was in the service of the king which is the second stage of his career. In 1374 he was sent to Bruges as a member of delegation to negotiate with the representatives of Pope.

In the next few years he began to write two Latin treatises the "De Dominio Divino" and "De Civili Dominio". In his religious books he claims that all the kings are under the overlordship of God. He mentions that the Church has nothing to deal with temporal matters, has no right to keep the property of the people¹². Such view, naturally, brought him head to head with the Church which led to conflicts. John of Gaunt for considering him to be useful enlisted him in his service. In 1377 Wycliffe was attacked by the Church and Gregory XI denounced his views and ordered his arrest. In this time he was supported by John of Gaunt. But in 1380 he was condemned by a group of Oxford scholars and was obliged to leave Oxford for good.

His rest of life which may be considered the third and last stage of his career was spent in Lutterworth. Nevertheless he was poor in health he continued to defend his views and hold gradual sermons, collected his writings in a "Summa" and sent the flock of "poor priests" who tried to spread his ideas all over the England.

Actually, it is not our aim to discuss Wycliffe's views. Majority of his views were mentioned in his Latin writings. His views deal with political and social matters rather than literature. His theory of "dominion" was presented in two basic works. He thought that, the material possession that the Church owned had made it to be secular and worldly. Wycliffe offered the king to take back all the endowments of the Church and the clergy to their original sense and activity. In his opinion the main duty of the Church is to minister to the people.

In true sense, it is hard to separate Wycliffe's writings from those of his followers. His two volume sermons are probably prepared for the guidance for priests. His works contain translations from Latin and some of them were collected by his followers. Some of them are "Ten Commandments", "The Seven Deadly Sins", and "The Seven Works of Mercy". More interesting is "De Papa" and "The Church and Her members" in which he criticizes the authority of the pope and objects to monastic orders. Two of his works are really gripping

¹² Herbert B. Workman, "John Wycliff", 2V, Oxford, 1926

because of putting forward social questions and they are not something translated and adapted from Latin. The work "Of the Servants and Lords" takes its inspiration from the Peasant's Revolt.

Among Wycliffe's works we see very useful and interesting book that deals with wholesome advice on marriage and rearing of children. Virginity is a higher state than the marriage, but matrimony is a holy thing in human's life. He is against celibacy and doesn't consider it the right way for priesthood.

The work that made Wycliffe popular in Middle English Literature is so called Wycliffe Bible. It appears to be the work of his companions and helpers - Nicholas and Hereford. We know it from a note in one of the manuscripts. These two helpers of Wycliffe translated about three-fourth of the Old Testament. The style of this translation is awkward, but idiomatic and doesn't coincide with the any translation style which Wycliffe gives in his sermons. It is so apparent that Wycliffe before his death felt that the translation had been unsatisfactory and the revision variant was undertaken by John Purvey who assisted Wycliffe in his last days at Lutterworth. Notwithstanding John Purvey was also assisted in this work his revision was not completed until about 1395. Purvey's version was in every way superior to the early versions.

May be Wycliffe have had no part in the work of Bible's translation, his brave and important step of putting the whole Bible into English for the first time must be appreciated highly and it is being appreciated. He believed that Bible was the only way for human's salvation from the evil.

Geoffrey Chaucer's works

O god of science and of light,
Apollo, through thy greater might
This latest little book, guide thee!
Not that I wish for mastery,
That here poetic art be viewed,
But, as the rhyme is slight and crude,
Make it yet somewhat agreeable¹³

From this short sketch that is taken from "House of Fame" we can understand his character as a poet. In the first place he was an active public figure. Actually, poetry was avocation, but not vocation for him. He wrote some lines, because, writing was something that came inside of him, as in every true poet, but sometimes he didn't take poetry seriously as it was some kind of pastime for Chaucer.

We may divide Chaucer's poetry into two periods. The first period is the French period which is formed by the being influenced classical French poets Deschamps and Froissart. With his "House of Fame" begins his Italian period. The "Divine Comedy" had some influence to some extent, but especially Boccaccio had great impact on Geoffrey Chaucer. With the "House of Fame" his Italian period begins. He never leaves his first love – French poetry which is full of love scenes.

"House of Fame" was written in about 1379. It is considered to be badly proportioned, but totally delightful poem. It contains three books. Chaucer begins "The House of Fame" begins with a prayer to God:

God turn every dream to good!
For it's a marvel, by the rood,
To my mind, what causes dreaming
Either at dawn or at evening,

¹³ "The poetical works of Geoffrey Chaucer, House of Fame", edited by Richard Morris 1891, p 242

And why truth appears in some
And from some shall never come;
Why this one is a vision,
And that one a revelation,
Why this a nightmare, that a dream,
And not to every man the same;¹⁴

He asks God to send dreams only with good results. At the same time the poet touches on what may cause dreams and why some are realized but some are not. He investigates whether they are caused by the character of the dreamer, external factors, or Heaven. The first book describes how the poet dreams. In his dreams poet is in the temple of Venus where he reads the story of Dido and Aeneas on the wall. Finally, he steps out of the door and sees great shining eagle flying toward him. As it is seen, it is the same eagle in Dante's ninth book of the "Purgatorio". The eagle tells him that Jove wants to reward him for his excellent service to Venus and cupid by taking him to the house of Fame. In the house of fame he will hear songs about wholly dedicated to the eagle's flight and the book is considered one of the humorous episodes in literature. Unfortunately, the third book describes the events about how the eagle set him down outside of fames' house. At this moment the poem is broken off.

Scholars have interpreted the poem in different ways; some consider it to be an allegory of the poet's life, others think of it as a love model of classic French literature¹⁵. Other theory holds that, Chaucer intended to introduce a series of stories as in the "Legend of Good Woman" and "the Canterbury Tales"¹⁶.

In this book, we learn names of musicians and poets. We have to remember that the musicians, in ancient and medieval times, played the role of a medium for circulating reports of a famous person or event. Singers told stories and sang songs of people and their deeds. In a way the singers travelled and felt about a particular subject greatly affected the stories he told. The center of earth, the heavens and sea is given as the location of Fame's house. The hall of "The House of Fame" is filled with group of people agitating to Lady Fame, a woman of many eyes and tongues, for their own account. Sometimes she becomes so kind to grant them,

¹⁴ "The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer" edited by Richard Morris, 1891, p 209-210

¹⁵ W. O. Sypherd, "Studies in Chaucer's House of Fame", 1907, p 39.

¹⁶ J. M. Manly, "What is Chaucer's Hous of Fame" Kittredge Anniversary Papers, Boston, 1913, pp 73 – 81

but sometimes she does not. In Chaucer's time the love poems were often addressed to the god Cupid, or they referred to the god of love.

"The Roman de la Rose" is the most influential poem of all French poetry in the Middle Ages and it created a new fashion on courtly poetry in Europe. It was styled as an allegorical dream vision. The purpose of the work is to both entertain and teach people about the art of love. The word "Rose" is seen as a symbol of female sexuality. We can accept "The Romance of the Rose" as an apprentice work of Geoffrey Chaucer. In this poem Chaucer tells us how he translated these verses. The poem is written in dream vision style. This poem passed to English literature via French literature. It is very pity that the version that we got in our hands covers only one part of the original. These are the lines from the "Romance of the Rose":

That it was May, thus dreamed me,
In time of love and jollity
That all things ginneth waxen gay
For there is neither busk nor hay
In May, that it nil shrouded been
And it with new leweswreen.¹⁷

Actually, this poem was previously written by Guillaume de Lorris in 4,058 lines. Guillaume de Lorris never was able to finish the first part. The poem was continued by Jean de Meun – an academic at the University of Paris for another 17,724 lines. These lines cover sex, woman, love, philosophy, religion, history and marriage issues.

One of the Chaucer's earliest original poems is the "Book of the Duchess". The poem is a work of literary art that written in delicate way. The book describes the sorrow of John of Gaunt who suffered from the death of his first wife, Blanche. After telling the tragic story of Ceys and Alcyone the poet falls asleep and dreams himself as a knight dressed in black sitting sorrowfully beneath a tree in the woods. The stranger speaks about his cause of grief: he played a game of chess with Fortune and it is very pity that god has taken his queen. The poet gives everything in details: the story of his love – how he met a lady one day, her beauty

¹⁷ "The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer" edited by Richard Morris, 1891, p 2

and soft speech. Her name was White. The stranger finally persuades White to accept his heart and they lived happily so many years. But he has lost her after some period of time.

“Alas, sir, how? How may that be?”

“She is dead.” “Nay!” “Yes, by my troth.”

“By God, then I pity you for your loss.”¹⁸

The poem is greatly influenced by Machout, Troissart, Ovid and other poets, but the fact is that the concept, the tone and the treatment are Chaucer’s own.

¹⁸ “ The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer” edited by Richard Morris, 1891, p 194

The Canterbury tales

Who knows something about Chaucer definitely knows his masterpiece “The Canterbury Tales”. The man who knows General Prologue that gives introduction about pilgrims probably knows about some of the tales. And we must admit that such a great work deserves closer attention and investigation.

About 1387 Chaucer laid aside “The Legend of Good Woman”. After finishing this book he conceived the idea of writing a collection of stories. So, naturally he had some materials like “The Palamon and Arcite” which was mentioned in the Prologue of “The Legend of Good Woman” and “The Lyf also of Seynt Cecile” in his hands.

The idea of collecting different themed stories under one name is not new one in literature. It comes from ancient India. Chaucer intended to retell 120 stories and tells them from the mouth of group of pilgrims which are thirty in number. They are travelling from London to Canterbury. Each pilgrim agrees to tell stories in turn. Chaucer and the other travellers assemble in the Tabard Inn. The host of the Tabard Inn agrees to act as a master of ceremonies. Chaucer shows his greatness in bringing together people of different social classes. The group includes a lawyer, a merchant, a shipman, various representatives of the religious field such as the prioress the monk, the honest parson and the friar, a miller, a reeve, a London cook and several craftsmen. Of course the list includes more, but not to attempt a complete list.

Some scholars suggest that Chaucer drew portraits of individuals from real life¹⁹. In some way, Boccaccio was amuse for Chaucer as Boccaccio had used this method in his “Decameron”. In “Decameron” he tells a collection of a hundred stories from the mouth of ten people of the gentle class.

It is supposed that Chaucer was not aware of the “Decameron”. Another analogy is found in the “Novelle” of Giovanni Sercambi written about 1374. The stories are told by the author. It is unlikely Chaucer knew something about this collection. But now we must best believe that Chaucer’s idea for the “Canterbury Tales” was a great idea of his own. It seems that Chaucer partially carried out the aim laid down in the General prologue. Canterbury Tales consists of twenty four stories; two of them are interrupted before the end. Possibly, he intended to tell only one story from each pilgrim. Chaucer indicates it at the beginning of the Parsons’s tale. The Host says: “Nowlekketh us no tales mo than oon” The troublesome issue

¹⁹ J.M. Manly, “Some New Light on Chaucer”, New York Press, 1926

in this work is the fact that scholars cannot tell in what order the tales had been arranged. When the group of pilgrims took a long distance from the town Harry Bailey the majority asks Knight to tell the first tale. Knight tells the tale of the love of two friends Palamon and Arcite for the same lady.

But yet hadde I foryeten to devyse

The noble kervyng and the portreitures,

The shap, the contenaunce, and the figures,

That weren in thise oratories thre.²⁰

Some critics say that that the Knight's Tale is an allegory. Each character represents an abstract theme. For example, we think that Arcite and Palamon may represent the active and the contemplative life. The essence of the tale is the joy and suffering. They are never apart from one another. Nobody is insured from disaster.

When the story is over the listeners all express their approvals. The Host calls the Monk to tell the next tale. The Monk's tells the collection of tragedies. These tragedies aim to advise men not to believe in blind prosperity as Fortune is ever-changing. Monk's tragedies include Lucifer, Sampson, Hercules, Nabugodonosor, Balthasar, Cenobia, Bernabo Visconti and Antiochus Epiphanes stories. The interesting fact about Monk's tale is that Chaucer in this tale provides us with one of the first-known definitions of tragedy in English literature. The Monk's tragedies are taken from different sources: Biblical, classical and historical. Monk gives the reasons of tragic figures' tragedy in his tale, for example:

Lucifer started as an angel but was sent to hell because of sin and became Satan.

Adam, was exiled from paradise for disobeying God.

Samson committed suicide as his wife betrayed him. His wife betrayed him by removing his hair which was the source of his strength.

Hercules was killed by a poisonous shirt given to him by his lover though did many great deeds.

Nebuchadnezzar, was a wealthy king who harassed the Israelites so, because of that he was deprived from his throne by God. His rest of live was driven in the society.

²⁰ "The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer" edited by Richard Morris, 1891, p 37

Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar's son and had a similar fate with his father. He lost his kingdom and was obliged to live with animals.

Zenobia, queen of Palmrya, was a strong woman. When she decided to marry, she rejected to mate with his husband with the exception of trying to have a child. She had two sons. She and her husband governed the country together. When the Roman Empire conquered her land she was forced to be a slave in that arm.

When the monk finishes the reeve who was carpentercraft takes offence and as a reply he tells a story about miller. The Cook offers to tell a joke about an apprentice in the city. But, we think that Chaucer might think that three funny stories would be too many so, he stopped after some lines. Till this point the sequence of the tales is definite, but after Cook's tale we lose the sequence of the tales.

If we consider The Canterbury Tales just a collection of tales definitely we will be mistaken about Chaucer's career. We think it is a comedyhumane that shows a group of different thirty people's private lives and habits, their qualities. Their lives are not only revealed by the stories but also their behaviors and comments while travelling.

In the center of these accidents stands Harry Bailey, the hearty, frank and boisterous Host. He always keeps the company in good spirits. There are, of course, incidents between pilgrims and Chaucer used such kind of quarrels to introduce stories. When some story seems to be tiresome the speaker is cut short by a humorous and realistic touch.

In one of his stories Chaucer also touches upon one of the social problems of that society – marriage. The discussion is opened by the Wife of Bath. She had five husbands and is not intended to take sixth one. She mentions that virginity naturally is preferable by all to matrimony. She so frankly describes her husbands and her dominance over his husbands. She claims that happiness in the marriage depends of husband's acceptance of his wife's mystery and philosophy. From this point of view she tells a story that supports this idea. The Wife of Bath retells the story of the knight and the loathly lady. This is the Prologue from her tale:

"Experience, though none authority were in this world, is right enough for me, to speak of woe that is in marriage; for, lordings, since I have twelve year was of age(thanked to God that is etern on live) Husbands at the church-door have I had five. For I so often have I y – wedded be. And all worthy men in their degree. But mewas told not longe time gone is. That sithenChriste went never but once. To a wedding, in the Cane of Galilee. That by that ilk

example taught he me that I not wedded shoulde be but once. Lo, hearken eke a sharp word for the nonce. Beside a welle Jesus, God and a man. Spake in reproof of the Samiratan. "Thou hast y-had five husbands" said she. And thilke man that now hatch wedded thee, is nor thine husband thus he said certain. What that he meant thereby I cannot sayn. Bu that I aske why the fifthe man was not husband to the Samiratan?²¹

Next tale comes from the Clerk, the story of Patient Griselda, whose patient was rewarded with happiness.

"Sir Clerk of Oxford, said our Host, you ride as still and coy as doth a maid, that were new spoused sitting at the board sitting. This day I heard not of your tongue a word, I trow you study about some sophie; but Solomon says everything hath time. For Godde's sake, be of better cheer; it is no the time for study here. Tell us some merry tale, by your fay. For what man that is entered into a playhe needs must unto that play assent. But preach not, as friars do in Lent, to make us for our oldesinnes weep, nor that thy tale makes us not to sleep. Tell us some merry thing of adventure"²².

The Clerk gets his tale from a grand literary source, Boccaccio's Decameron. The context of the tale is simple enough: a woman is terribly trialed by her husband, made to eventually, and is rewarded with happiness. But what does the tale expose? The women should obey to their husbands will. This sentence, of course, is against to the Wife of Bath opinions.

Another marriage problem is introduced by the Merchant. He tells the story of January and May. In this story an old man marries a young woman and deceived by her at the end. While analyzing the Merchant's tale we observe goodness slightly going bad, ripeness becoming slightly rotten. January, the noble knight, is also portrayed in details.

The Squire's Tale actually is not a story dealing with marriage but it contains fragments about Eastern romance. The Squire's Tale exists only in a fragmentary form, so it is very difficult to define what the essence of the tale is. We think that, the incompleteness of Squire's tale comes from broken manuscript. One thing deserves to be mentioned about these stories is that they are called "The Marriage group" by scholars and this group is ended by Franklins tale which contains lines about the marriage life of Arviragus and Dorigen. Their life

²¹ Geoffrey Chaucer "Canterbury Tales", p 179

²² Geoffrey Chaucer "Canterbury Tales", p 251

is so happy and harmonious that they seem to be the ideal solution of the marriage relationship. Here the Franklin voices their vows about their love:

Love wol not been constreyned by maistrye

Whanmaistriecomth, the God of Love anon

Beteth his wynges, and farewell, he is gon²³!

It is supposed that Franklin's views about marriage affairs were Chaucer's own opinions. Canterbury Tales as a collection of stories is a remarkable example of medieval literature. The Knight's tale represents courtly romance. The Physician's tale of Virginius and his daughter is a model old classical legend of old French literature.

The Wife of Bath's Tale is the literary form of famous folk-tale. In fact, Chaucer wrote for the period that he lived in.

Chaucer's great literary knowledge had a great impact on many poets who imitated his writing. John Lydgate was the one who took the advantage of continuation Chaucer's way of creating literary works. He was an admirer of Geoffrey Chaucer and was friend with his son - Thomas. John Lydgate wrote continuations of Chaucer's unfinished Tales. He was a monk and poet born in Lydgate. He spent most of his life in Bury St. Edmund's monastery and living here gave him a leisure time which was all poet's wish and this leisure time enabled him discover Chaucerian genre. In this period he fell in love with Chaucer's style.

"Troy Book" was Lydgate's first major poem. This work based on the *Historia Troiana* of Guido delle Colonne. It was dedicated to Henry V. Lydgate wrote *The Siege of Thebes*, a tribute to Geoffrey Chaucer between 1420 and 1422 and it was a continuation of "The Canterbury Tales".

John Lydgate was not the only one to be highly admired and influenced by great Chaucer and English history will be waiting for a long time for Glorious John who will be influenced by Chaucerian style and keep Chaucer's breath alive in his works.

To sum it up, Chaucer gives each character's occupation, personal features and clothes in an accurate and delicate manner and all these facts are valuable from historical point of view. From this aspect we consider "The Canterbury Tales" to be a common value for both historian and philologists as it displays great insight into the age of Chaucer. Not only a

²³ Jill Mann, "Feminizing Chaucer", Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2002, p 89

historian, but also an ordinary reader can get precious information about social changes, religious matters and gender problems which are typical with all times of humanity.

By means of social problems he accurately presents analysis of people from various social layers and their influence on the society. From religious aspect he masterly reveals the hypocrisy of the church and monks and mentions that monk love money more than God. By writing about women's trying to have at least minimal impact over society Chaucer touches upon gender issues in his masterpiece. So, "The Canterbury Tales" is not merely a work of art, but also a crucial historical document for all periods of time.

Chapter II: John Dryden and his literary activity

The age that Dryden lived and created masterpieces changes between 1660 – 1700 years of the history. The Restoration of the Stuart kings marks the conclusive changes in English life and literature. In the Restoration period monarchy was restored and some political systems were established. England, Wales and Scotland were united under a name of Great Britain by the 1707 Act of Union. In Britain global trade and commercial affairs were developed in this period. Some of the poor and the middle class began to become enlightened. People grasped the social idea which included a behavioral standard and they began to be aware of their liberty and rights. Theatre which was closed during Cromwell's Puritan regime was reopened and re-establishing Church gained the status of the National Church.

Charles had no children as a legitimate heir. So, his brother James (a Catholic) was supposed to be next to the king throne. Parliament pressured Charles not to allow his brother to be in the line of succession. Charles dissolved Parliament and ended this "Exclusion Crisis". In its turn The Exclusion Crisis created political parties: the Tories – the ones who supported the king, the Whigs – the ones who opposed him.

So, literature was formed in a special way in this period, especially at the end of the Stuart reign in England. Literature of this period centers on restored governance of Charles II. Poetry was the dominant form of the literature as it immediately mirrored the political events of the age. Alongside the poetry ariel, lyric, historical and epic poem was developed through the period. An epic poem was firstly used by Sir William Davenant. "Paradise Lost" by John Milton was also firstly published in this period. Women began to take a role on the stage of theatres in the role of females. Dogmatism which was the acceptance of religious beliefs without questioning was considered dangerous. With the aim of the Improving of Natural Knowledge in 1662 Charles II accepted the Royal Society. In that period there was not the "modern scientist". The Royal Society members investigated natural history, natural philosophy and natural religion.

The authors of the period did not introduce new exceptional literary wonders. They addressed to the ancient period writers especially to the Latin writers for inspiration. It was strongly believed that the ancients had reached the apogee of excellence and the modern poets cannot do better than those. So, in this way poets established the neo-classical school of poetry. The neo-classicists could not go into deep notes of human emotions. They focused their attention on imitation of rules. This habit was common and popular in the age of Dryden.

The concept of the period was empiricism. It was firstly founded on Francis Bacon's earlier work. Empiricism is the branch of philosophy that considers experience including experimentation a reliable source of knowledge. So, understanding the world goes through the direct observation of experience. John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume were representatives of the Empiricism and it is quite evident from the works of Restoration period that these omnipotent people's ideas had great impact on the society.

Writers began to build up the fundamental principles of woman rights. One of them was right for education which was advocated by Mary Astell. Around the year 1750 the word "sentiment" appeared in the stock of English lexicology. This was the word describing instinctual feeling. Sentiment and all the related words with feelings and sympathy had a contribution to the growing sense of people's philanthropy in the society.

The censorship was applied by The Stage Licensing Act in 1737. All plays were licensed for performance in London. In 1710 the first British copyright law was adopted not being dependent to governmental sanction. Copyright only belonged to booksellers. The term "public sphere" came to agenda concerning material text expressing matters of national interest and also readers circulated and discussed these texts in the public venues. Women began to publish widely. The laboring classes frequently shared reading material in the 1740s. The use of italics minimalized and printers began to use capital letters only at the beginnings of sentences and for proper names.

The literature of Restoration period is divided into three periods:

- 1660-1700: This is the period when people began to emphasize on "decorum," or critical principles based on what is elegant, fit, and right.
- 1700-1745: Writers commenced to emphasize on satire and on a wider public readership.
- 1745-1784: Writers emphasis on revolutionary ideas.

English writers living in the restoration period of King Charles II found themselves to be in a situation, in which the arts flourished. English writers endeavored to form rules of good writing modeled on classical works, but with the implication of simple, often highly visual language. The combination of new (neo) and old models called "neoclassicism" came to agenda. The writers of restoration period sought to learn genre of epic, tragedy, comedy, pastoral, satire, and ode. It was crucial to ensure a good fit between the genre and language,

and tone. In this period not just aristocrats and classically educated scholars wrote verse, but also, ordinary people also began to write poetry.

New way of thinking was brought to journalism and satire. It was the period when people began to base their thoughts and ideas on logic and reason rather than on religious beliefs. Middle class gained access to literature. Writers began to lighten the social and political problems in the format of different literary genre, satire. Journalism, Fiction and Romance was the dominant literary activity of the period.

Lyrical poetry was not so popular in this age; instead of it we can see the use of pastoral poetry, and ariel verse. Most popular poetry from of the Restoration age was rhyming couplets in iambic pentameter.

English Restoration cannot be discussed without its effects on public life. The most significant event was the formation of satirical theater known as the Restoration Comedy. The various social issues of the times were enlightened in restoration comedy. For the first time women were allowed to act in Restoration Comedy Theater. Like every monarchial period in England Restoration period also influenced the architecture. In the period of Restoration Style a lot of architectural changes happened. Some sources refer to the Restoration Style Architecture as Carolean Style.

We generally observe two kinds of improvement in this period called the Heroic plays and the Comedy of Manners. These plays were quite different from the previous Elizabethan plays. Heroic plays displayed the heroic characters in noble men, and the women were described as wonderful beautiful critters. The tragic drama of this period was mainly written in heroic couplet. The main character in these plays was in front of two choices: their country and their love. In these dramas we find brave heroes and beautiful women.

At the end of the seventeenth century a new type of comedy called the Comedy of Manners appeared in literature agenda. This type of comedy itself was very unique. The format of the comedy was prose. These comedies were witty and difficult, bright and heartless. They displayed the all sides of the life and manners of the aristocratic society of the period. The authors of the comedy of manners plays laughed at the fashionable society and their immoral behaviors. It was firstly introduced by Sir George Etherege.

William Congrevewas one of the famous dramatists who wrote Comedy of Manners His plays are not as rough as first plays written in earlier periods. His hero by name Old

Bachelor was an excellent comic picture of the hypocritical society. Old Bachelor is someone who pretends to hate women but marries to a bad lady. "The Double Dealer" is about furious lovers. "Love for Love" is much funnier and include clever speeches and foolish characters. William Congreve's best play is "The Way of the World". It is truly a real example of the comedy of manner of the period. Congreve gave up writing plays when this play was not well received.

John Vanbrugh is a professional architect who wrote three comedies. They are "The Relapse", "The Provoked Wife" and "The Confederacy". Goldsmith and Sheridan were one of the poets who later addressed to this type of comedy. "The Critic" is Sheridan's important satirical play. This satirical play attacks drama and literary in a funny way.

We also notice some development during the restoration period in prose works of John Dryden which is critical work named "Essay on Dramatic Poesy". In this work we see Dryden's comparison English drama with French drama. He mentions that there are some limitations of French drama and reckons English drama to be superior to French one. He has written this work in a clear and balanced way.

John Bunyan has written two allegorical prose works named "The Pilgrims Progress" and "The Holy War". "The Pilgrims Progress" speaks about Christian's troublesome travel to the door of heaven. The popular sentence extracted from the story is 'life is a journey'. English language is indebted to John Bunyan for creating some phrases and words in this work and they are frequently used in everyday talk such as "Vanity Fair", "Slough of Despond", "Mr. Great Heart". In the second book he has introduced his own opinions of the civil war. Bunyan created his individualistic way of writing prose in clear and simple style.

John Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding" is one of the most important works of English philosophy. It gave a new way of thought and understanding, not only in England but also in other countries of Europe.

Samuel Butler was born as a son of a farmer in Worcestershire, on February 14, 1612. He got his first education at King's School and was for passionate learning. After finishing school, he worked as justice's clerk. At age seventeen, he gained a position in the household of Countess of Kent. The exact duties of his service in that house are unknown. At the home of Countess, Butler obtained access to the family's library. In different times Butler served as secretary to different gentlemen.

In 1661 Butler married a well-to-do woman of some wealth; her wealth was soon lost in bad investments. Butler had begun his first work named "Hudibras" in 1658. The first part of "Hudibras" was published in 1663. In "Hudibras" the poet is satirizing the Puritans and it immediately met with great success. King Charles II appreciated it highly that he granted Butler with a pension of £100. But, King Charles promised pension was never paid. Butler published a second part of "Hudibras" in 1664 and a third in 1678. Butler soon after died in poverty in 1680.

In 1721 Mr. Barber, a printer and the Mayor of London, put a monument on his grave in Westminster Abbey.

He is the author of "Man is supreme lord and master", "Love is too great happiness", "How various and innumerable" and the "Elephant on the Moon" poems.

Samuel Pepys was the son of a London tailor and born in 1633. He was the fifth of eleven children. He got his first education attending the Huntingdon Free School, and St. Paul's School. He continued his further education life entering Trinity College in Cambridge in 1650.

Later Pepys became secretary to Sir Edward Montagu. After, Pepys held the position of a clerk of the Exchequer, and in 1655 married Elizabeth St. Michel. In 1660, Pepys became Clerk of the King's Ships on the Navy Board.

At the age of 27 Pepys began his "Diary". Samuel Pepys famous diary is popular for secrecy and considered as a prose work. This unique diary could not be read until 1852, because it was written in secret codes. It displays the real picture of the society of that time. It covered nine years not only of Pepys' life, but of London events happening in the seventeenth century. Pepys diary is an invaluable source for the history which gives detailed description of historical events like Plague (1665-1666), The Great Fire of London (1666), and the arrival of the Dutch fleet (1665-1667). Pepys ceased writing his diary at the age of 36 with the fear of losing his sight altogether. The rest of his life which followed 34 years brought him more fame and acclaim. Pepys soon after became a Member of Parliament and Secretary of the Admiralty in 1673, and took vital part in organizing governmental affairs in Dutch.

Pepys published his "Memoirs of the Royal Navy" in 1690. During his lifetime he made himself to be busy with building and cataloging a library of his own. In 1701, when his health problems began to seem problematic, he decided complete his collection of 3,000

books. After Pepys' death on May 26, 1703, his library and his Diary, was given to his nephew John Jackson under the condition that the content would never be changed. Samuel Pepys rests in St. Olave's Church.

Aphra Behn was born as Aphra Johnson in Canterbury in December of 1640. We almost know nothing about her education. And few things are known to us about her life. It is supposed that she married "Mr. Behn" in 1664, though we can find no records about this marriage. After his husband's death she is supposed not to marry for the second time. She only took the guise of "Mrs" for the sake of protection. Aphra Behn served as a spy in Antwerp to King Charles II in the Netherlands. As Charles II's latent payments she served as a stint in the prison of debtors.

After serving as a spy Aphra Behn left the world of spying for the theatre. Her first play that performed by The Duke's Company was "The Forc'd Marriage". The play itself was a financial success which was a brave start for the period. She is the author of many plays like "The Dutch Lover", "Abdelazar", "The Town Fop", "The Debauchee", "The Counterfeit Bridegroom". Women in the theatre have always been accepted with envy because of their success in this field. But nothing deterred Aphra Behn from her profession.

Behn like other writers of the time due to James II coming to the authority wrote verses on this occasion. Behn is famous for the work for which she is commonly known Oronoko. It is about a noble slave and his tragic love to a beautiful lady. It was the first work in print to introduce sympathy to slaves and for that reason the book gained great audience and became a great success.

In spite of the heavy pain Aphra Behn kept writing. She has been a devoted supporter of James. She severely suffered from rheumatoid arthritis and she herself gave the description of her lame hands. Aphra Behn died in 1689, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Aphra Behn has always been in the public eye for being a woman poet and she is still a current interest. She herself wanted to be remembered as a poet and she did it in a fabulous way. Her plays in modern age were edited for several times. Even Dryden had praised her for writing such marvelous plays. Lady Montagu like Aphra Behn is one of the woman writers of the period who is remembered for her plays up to now.

John Dryden

**“Happy the man, and happy he alone,
He who can call today his own:
He who, secure within, can say,
Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today.
Be fair or foul or rain or shine
The joys I have possessed, in spite of fate, are mine.
Not Heaven itself upon the past has power,
But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour”.**

The seventeenth century is commonly regarded as the age of prose writing in England. In England this fashion began with Hooker and Milton, but was carried to perfection by Sir William Temple and Dryden. John Dryden is considered to be the greatest English poet of the seventeenth century after John Donne and John Milton. He is reckoned to be the greatest playwright after William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. Dryden's genius personality that has given so many gifts to English literature stands in the front lines of the genius's list of the literature and his position is unique in the history of English poets. Dryden is one of those writers whose personality is commonly connected with the history of his age. T.S. Eliot writes about him in this way: "I may call Dryden "literary dictator" in English literary history"²⁴. Dryden had great influence on English verse in his own fashion. As Dryden's works were in the eye of public his life changed so much during a half century. John Dryden maintained his decided superiority from the period of Restoration till his death all over his contemporaries. Samuel Johnson says about him: "Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with such a variety of models" and "may properly be considered as the father of English criticism"²⁵. Before going into details of his life and literary career we think it would be better to introduce his rich literary heritage:

Dramatic works: "The Rival Ladies", "The Indian Queen", "The Indian Emperor", "Secret-Love or The Maiden-Queen", "Sir Martin Mar-all or the Feign'd Innocence", "The Wild Gallant", "The Tempest or "The Enchanted Island", "Tyrannick Love or The Royal Martyr", "An Evening's Love or, the Mock Astrologer", "Almanzor and Almahideor, The

²⁴T.S. Eliot, "John Dryden, The Poet, The Dramatist, The Critic", New York, 1932, p 5

²⁵ Samuel Johnson "Lives of the Poets", Oxford University Press, 2006, p 118, 155

Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards”, “Marriage à la Mode”, “The Assig nation or, Love in a Nunnery”, “Amboyna”, “Aureng-Zebe”, “The State of Innocence and Fall of Man”(An Opera), “All for Love or, The World Well Lost”, “Oedipus”(A Tragedy), “Troilus and Cressida or, Truth Found Too Late”, “Limberhamor, The Kind Keeper”, “The Spanish Fryar or, The Double Discovery”, “The Duke of Guise”, “Albion and Albanus”, “Don Sebastian, King of Portugal”, “Amphitryon or, The Two Sosias”, “King Arthur or, The British Worthy”, “Cleomenes, The Spartan Hero”, “Love Triumphant or, Nature Will Prevail”, “Contributions to Vanbrugh's adaptation of Fletcher's The Pilgrim”.

Prose: “Of Dramatic Poesie, An Essay”, “Notes and Observations on "The Empress of Morocco", “His Majesties Declaration Defended”, “The Vindication; or, The Parallel of the French Holy League and the English League and Covenant”, “A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire”.

Essays, Prefaces, and Dedications: “Heads of an Answer to Rymer's Remarks”, “Preface to Walsh's A Dialogue Concerning Women”, “The Character of Polybius from The History of Polybius”, “A Parallel of Poetry and Painting from De Arte Graphica”, “Preface to Fables Ancient and Modern”

Poetry: “Heroic Stanzas on the Death of Oliver Cromwell”, “Astraea Redux” , “To His Sacred Majesty”, “To My Lord Chancellor”, “Annus Mirabilis: The Year of Wonders” , “Absalom and Achitophel”, “The Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel” , “The Medal: A Satire Against Sedition”, “Mac Flecknoe: A Satire upon the Trew-Blue-Protestant Poet T.S”, “Religio Laici; Or, A Layman's Faith”, “Threnodia Augustalis: A Funeral Pindarique Poem, Sacred to the Happy Memory of King Charles II”, “The Hind and The Panther”, “A Song for St. Cecilia's Day”, “Britannia Rediviva: A Poem on the Birth of the Prince”, “Eleonora: A Panegyric Poem”, “An Ode, on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell”, “Alexander's Feast”, “Fables Ancient and Modern”.

Translations: “The Lives of Plutarch”, “The History of the League”, “The Life of St. Francis Xavier”, “The Satires of Juvenal”, “The Art of Painting”, “The Works of Virgil”.

Dryden's Letters: “Letter to Elizabeth Steward”,

As he wrote from necessity he was obliged to pay some deference to public opinion; for he, whose bread depends on the success of his volume, is compelled to study popularity: but, on the other hand, his better judgment was often directed to improve that of his

reader.²⁶Notwithstanding his contemporaries wrote much about him still his life is left unwritten and it is very pity that taste in poetry has changed in the 20th century that writers like John Dryden are practically unreadable. For the true lover of literature and poetry it is not like that. John Dryden is one of the most important figures of English poetry. He is so greatest one that his methods dominated for two centuries influencing Pope, Gray, Churchill, Byron. Keats and Eliot. Even majority of them just imitated him. Dryden's method is not that sort of romantic which touches the lovers' heart, it is impersonal and criticizes society's life. John Dryden's language is not language of emotions. It is the language of logic and reason. It seems Dryden knew what to write in his day and age. It was the requirement of his time.

Fundamentally, Dryden's school is loyal to a thought in control. He thought that one's product of imagination is controlled by the past time and thinking in terms of genre. His preference about genre was translation and satire. But in later years of his literary career he realized that translation and satire was lower genres. In some sense John felt himself obliged to produce a new kind of epic. Unfortunately, Dryden was never able to create his own epic, he run his life translating someone's work of poetry.

As Dryden was in love with control matters he also took action in the field of metrics and closed heroic couplet became his favorite metric for him and his disciples. But we must remember that John Dryden excelled all the other poets in the Cowleyan Pindaric. The essence of his verse was in couplet which he thought he did not invent it, but in fact he did. Dryden used triplets in verse in order to break the monotony. Alongside with metrical mannerisms he took the advantage of using parallelism, balance, antithesis, repetition and other similar metrics.

His poetic vocabulary was pretty restricted. He excluded neologisms, archaism, low and technical words from his poetry. Modern reader can hardly understand the use of Latinate words or idioms. He likes to end the adjectives with ending -y and repetition of epithets like sad, murmuring, trembling and etc.

As a historical and literary figure there is nothing extra ordinary about his life in the recording of historical datum. Like all others he came from ordinary country family. He had no advantages. He married the superior rank of woman who brought him no exceptional superiority and advantage, but made him happy. Dryden did not only shape the future, but also derived so lots of things from the past. We can't see anything new in his works, and we

²⁶ Walter Scott, "Memoirs of John Dryden", Galignani Press, Vol I, 1882, p 4

must not wait for something unexpected in his world. As a poet he solved all the paradoxes of the previous age and chose the elements that worth to be developed for the further time. What made Dryden to be great poet is not to write in artificial manner, because, he could not tolerate it, because he knew how to be distinguished from the bad writers. Dryden acted like reformer of the language. The more writer records something naturally the more he becomes complicated to be a natural poet as sincerity is always painful and unpleasant. We think that Dryden did it great and created new fashion of English verse. By writing successful satires, fables, epigrams, prologues, compliments and plays he created a heroic couplet as Standard English verse of poetry. He is also the first writer who wrote in alexandrine and triplet form. It is Dryden's success that his innovations were used through 18th century by his contemporaries. Next century's writers were greatly influenced by Dryden's literary career and they always borrowed from him. Dryden also is considered to posit for the first time that English sentences must not be ended with preposition as it is against Latin grammar rules. Many writers adored Dryden's way of creating verse like Wordsworth admired him so much that his "Intimations of Immortality" contains some lines stylistically alike to Dryden's "Alexander Feast". John Keats also admired Dryden's "Fables" and imitated his work in his "Lamia". T.S.Eliot wrote about him: "Dryden is the spring of good poetry in English literary history of the eighteenth century and we can only rightly evaluate the poetry of the eighteenth century when we fully understand and grasp idea of Dryden"²⁷

There are three stages in Dryden's literary career. First stage begins with the year of 1660 which is the year of the Restoration of Stuart dynasty. The second stage is the year 1686 in which he converted into Catholicism. The third phase of his career is the stage that he paid high price for his belief. Dryden's views about religion challenged many scholars. Perhaps religion was only real interest for Dryden. But it does not mean that religious factors did ever dominate his life. He commends about religion like this: "the religion that I believe to which all people who desire to be estimated good"²⁸. With the marriage with Elizabeth Howard he established a close contact with some aristocratic families of England society. As majority of Howard family were Catholic Dryden got entrée into English Catholic society group. Though Dryden was so devoted to the theatre it did not prevent him from writing comments on public and religious matters. In his "Indian Emperor" he discusses questions like "human beings must surprise in dark" and he make all pagans believe that Roman catholic is the best

²⁷ T.S. Eliot "John Dryden", Oxford University Press, 2013, 305-06

²⁸ , Steven N. Zwicker, "The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden", 2004, p 240

religious choice for them²⁹. Actually, it is too difficult to find some lines about his individual religious life. We can find some lines about God and human relations in his “ReligioLaici”:

“Let’s struggle at last to know God by his own fashion, at last so much of him as he is placed to reveal to us in the holy scriptures: to grasp them to be the sentences of God is all our goal has to do, before all it is the work of faith, which is the key to the heaven blessed upon our human understanding.”³⁰.

Dryden’s verses may not exactly echo our current way of speech. That may be because of those times high standards of good English of conversation. It is because of that in Dryden’s age spoken word meant much more than public speech than it does for us today. It meant eloquence and oratory. Dryden’s aim was to help new generation who were prepared to speak and listen in public.

None of his contemporaries composed the bibliography of Dryden and no materials were collected by them which could through some light on his opinions and sentiments. We only know some features about him from party pamphlets or from the lines that himself mentioned in his works. The first author who wrote the bibliography of Dryden was Doctor Johnson and he complained about this case in his book: “Nothing could be known of Dryden beyond what causal mention and uncertain tradition supplied³¹.”

John Dryden was born on 9th of August 1631, at Aldwinkle, in Northamptonshire though he was from Cumberland stock. Despite this fact, his family lived in Northamptonshire for three generations. The origin of the name Dryden comes from the North. There are still Drydens in one of the towns of Scotland³². Dryden’s ancestor named John moved from Staffhill to Northamptonshire. In Northamptonshire he succeeded to own estate of Canons Ashby by marrying with the daughter of Sir John Cope. John Dryden was a Puritan schoolmaster and it is said that he was honored to have a friendship with the scholar by name Erasmus and he named his son after his name. Sir Erasmus had three sons and the third one also was called Erasmus and he is the one who is the father of John Dryden. Her mother’s name was Mary. Dryden had 13 siblings, 10 sisters and two brothers and he was eldest. He was from Parliamentary Party from both parental sides and they were loyal supporters.

²⁹ Steven N. Zwicker, “The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden”, 2004, p 242

³⁰ John Dryden, “ReligioLaici”, p 8

³¹ Samuel Johnson “Lives of the English Poets”, Oxford University Press, 2006, Vol I, p 79

³² William. P. Nimmo, “The Poetical Works of John Dryden: With Life and Critical Dissertation, Volume1”, 1868, p1

Dryden got his first education in Tichmarsh, however, like all facts about him here too we have conflicting statements, but it is for sure that he attended Westminster school under the scholarship of Dr. Busby whom he always looked up to and admired. It was Dr. Busby who discovered poetical gift and skill in Dryden. Dr. Busby motivated him to write the translation of the third Satire of Persius as task. Dryden highly appreciated and mirrored Persius's who was precisely satirical and rhetorical. When he was eighteen years old he wrote the forth elegy on the occasion of sudden death of Henry Lord Hastings. Later he published it under the title of "LachryameMusarum" We are suspicious about Dryden's sincerity on the death of Hastings, but even the crocodile tears of the poet, if those tears fell into certain poetic shape we must preserve and transmit it to the future generation. After graduating from Westminster school he entered Trinity College on the 11th of May in 1650. Later for some reasons he preferred Oxford to Cambridge.

When his father died in June of 1654 and leaved two-thirds of his property in Northamptonshire which was not enough for Dryden's living. Because of the poor earnings he returned to Cambridge and lived there up to 1657 with troublesome way of life. It is very pity that we have only recordings of his college years and the lines on Hastings death. It is very difficult to search for his rest of life as we can hardly meet a fact or some papers.

When he was at Cambridge he fell in love with a young lady who was his own cousin by name Honor Dryden. Despite Miss Dryden rejected his suit Dryden continued to have close relationship with her family. Miss Dryden died unmarried after the death of Dryden and preserved Dryden's letter to her until her death.

As university lost Dryden London gained him. In 1657 he set all the motions to travel to London with so many projects in his head but no pence in his pocket. For the first time, hewas employed by his relativeas a clerk.In London he established a contact with Cromwell. After two years Dryden's coming to London Cromwell expired and he wrote "Heroic Stanzas" on the death of the hero. Scholars estimate heroic stanzas to be the earliest poem of his career. In 1662 he was elected for membership of the Royal Society.Later he was introduced to Sir Robert Howard through Herringman who was a bookseller in the New Exchange. The poet Sir Robert Howard was the one who assisted Dryden in the play named "The Indian Queen". Later Sir Robert Howard invites Dryden to the family seat at Charlton where Dryden meets Lady Elizabeth Howard – sister of Sir Robert. In 1663 they got married. The lady did not have that quality of respecting husband and obeying spouse's command and

had a weak understanding. Some scholars consider that the bitterness of Dryden's sarcasm comes from domestic unhappiness of the poet.

To improve his life circumstances he was obliged to produce more. To translate or write prefaces for the booksellers and satires was not in fashion in those times. Those times' demand was drama and Dryden knew how to meet this demand. His next poem was "Annus Mirabilis" published in 1667. It gives the description of Dutch War and the Great Fire in London. The post of Poet- Laureate became vacant with the death of Sir William Davenant and Dryden was appointed to this position in 1668. In the same year he published an "Essay on Dramatic Poetry". This essay is a vindication of Dryden's own heroic verse in plays.

In this timeline he was not only a mere poet, but also a playwright. He was also a Poet-Laureate. Later he was offered to share Theatre Royal's profits in return for his plays. He became popular for rhymed heroic tragedy. Dryden's most admired and financially successful work was "All for Love" which is about Antony and Cleopatra. He had too many contacts with nobilities and men of letter of his period. Actually, it is too hard to follow Dryden's life as he wrote from the beginning till the end of Restoration period. Following his literary career is like searching for every detail of the history of the period. It is true that, some scholars consider Restoration period to end with the death of great Dryden.

Dryden was much indulged in random reading among the other poets. We can safely say that he never wanted to be the poet of dimensions. He was much aware of what he read. He writes in his "Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco" (1674): "Mere poets are as sottish as mere drunkards are who live in a continual mist, without seeing or judging anything clearly. A man should be learned in many sciences and should have a reasonable, philosophical and in some manner mathematical head to be a complete and excellent poet; and besides this, should have experience in all sorts of humours and manners of men"³³

"For my own part, who must confess it to my shame...I never read anything but for pleasure"³⁴ he wrote in his "The Life of Plutarch". Although he adored having learning and arguments he could not refrain himself from literature and criticism. He loaded his poems with mythology and science. Dryden was not theologian but he had a great skill of oratorical persuasion. He was the first man to raise oratory to the dignity of poetry. He is the first one to attempt it and it is no small achievement.

³³ John Dryden, "Notes and observations on the Empress of Morocco", 1674 p 58

³⁴ John Dryden, Walter Scott, "The works of John Dryden: Prose" 1892, p56

It is not known exactly when Dryden attended Westminster school. Westminster school was famous for its Greek and Latin studies. The boys studying there kept notebook wherein they had translated English verses into Latin in order to avoid Anglicism. Latinism helped Dryden to be clear and powerful. Westminster School had provided Dryden with an excellent skill in translation field which was as popular as prose. Dryden in the stage of the literary world is acting as a poet, dramatist and a critic. Being a poet most of Dryden's prose is reckoned to be occasional. Dryden made himself busy with critical essays, dedications, prefaces and translations. In one of his notes he stated of his being poet like this:

“Mere poets and mere musicians are as sottish as mere drunkards are who live in a continual mist, without seeing or judging anything clearly. A man should be learned in several sciences, and should have a reasonable, philosophic, and in some measure a mathematical head, to be a complete and excellent poet: and besides this, should have experience in all sorts of humours and manners of men, should be thoroughly skilled in conversation, and should have a great knowledge of mankind in general”³⁵. (Notes and Observations on The Empress of Morocco.)

His dedications are addressed to some noble masters and sometimes to royalty. As a poet his first poem is considered to be “The Heroic Stanzas of 1659”:

But first, The Ocean, as a tribute, sent
That Giant Prince of all her watery herd.
And th’isle, when her protecting Genius went
Upon her obsequies loud sighs conferred³⁶.

During the years between 1631 –1660 he got familiar with the works of the poets like Milton, Herbert, Randolph, Carew, Suckling, Lovelace, Crashaw, Vaughan and Herrick and there were hundreds of play to be read. He tried to investigate the life and literary career of all Greek and Latin poets. He did not only investigate them, but also respected them. His philosophical dedications are full of Roman examples: “Methinks I behold in you another Caius Marius, who is in the extremity of his age, exercised himself almost every morning in the Campius Martius among the youthful nobility of Rome”³⁷. Dryden grew up in an age that different strain of verse was written by many poets. No poet was predominant over others.

³⁵ John Dryden, “Notes and observations on the Empress of Morocco”, 1674 p 58

³⁶ Mark Van Doren, “John Dryden, a study of his poetry”, Read Books, 1946, p 2

³⁷ Mark Van Doren, “John Dryden, a study of his poetry”, Read Books, 1946, p 11

When he became mature in poetry he became aware of creating “the new poetry”. The new poets then had great audiences and they needed to be understood by the listeners so that they tried to choose much understandable lines to create verse. What made Dryden to be great is outputting in both poetry and drama. In the seventeenth century Dryden mostly witnessed inequality between scholasticism and experimental science, between formal logic and common sense. The new and old philosophy was in the lips of Dryden and his contemporaries and new philosophy meanwhile with its new outlook brought a new language which interested Dryden.

Dryden’s philosophy of religion and way of believing has changed as time changed. “The Hind and Panther” is Dryden’s longest poem dedicated to the religious and political views. At the same time it is the only work in English literature which preaches that Roman Catholic Church is the only holy church formed by Christ. It is very pity that Dryden had to pay very high price for being true Catholic. When Catholic King James II has gone the attitude to catholic believers has also changed. In 1688 when king has gone Dryden lost his position as a poet laureate and Dryden was one of those suffered by new government’s new policy of religion. The new king William adopted a new law which intended to banish Baptist 10 miles from London. As his son was also a catholic he was fired from his governmental post and Dryden himself paid double taxes. Dryden really paid high price for his poem.

When Charles returned to the throne opened all the doors of the theaters closed for twelve years in the authority of Puritans. Notwithstanding opening theatres paved way for objections for drama genre of the Restoration period it gradually became quite national as it grew out of distinct country and age. Soon Dryden set himself for writing drama which he considered its father to be Chaucer. He had Spanish and French source materials for this purpose. “The Wild Gallant” and “The Rival Ladies” were written on the basis of Spanish sources. Later he get started for “The Assination or Love in Nunnery”. A little later he wrote “Leimberham , or the King Keeper” which was soon prohibited for being too offensive to the address of Charles. But nothing ever daunted Dryden; he set all his motions for new way of writing. The age of Dryden did not only demand comedy. He created new fashion of tragedy which later he called it “the heroic play”. Yes, he could not invent something new, but at least wrote something that created new stage in the literary history. “The Indian Queen”, “The Indian Emperor”, “Tyrannick Love; or, the Royal Martyr”, “Almanzor and Almahide” are high sounding names of his newly created genre. These plays are filled with emperor and princesses and their unbelievable claims, extravagant love episodes and supernatural powers.

Dryden being last Catholic Spokesman of England writes about important matters happening in England and of course crucial points of his life. From personal view Dryden strives for his own salvation, from the national view he thinks that his writings will bear in the minds of people and will formulate English history and the future opinions of England. His work displays the peculiarities of the world that he suffers from.

Dryden, like many other poets was much eager to celebrate the restoration of the monarchy with his poems and one of them is "Astrea Redux" which made him to gain enemies. In his "To Sir Robert Howard" he sums up his opinions and the attitudes of the nation and monarchy:

All will at length in this opinion rest:

"A sober prince's government is best"³⁸

The success of "Astrea Redux" covered all the country in a short period of time. Dryden wrote it in the genre of "heroic couplet". "Astrea Redux" was soon followed by "To his Sacred Majesty" on the occasion of the coronation of Charles II. After his great success as a playwright he became a courtier in the king palace and he was much respected by royalty himself. It was a good job, but not suitable for a good poet. His another epistle which is addressed to To Dr. Charleton about Stonehenge is more interesting from point of view of Dryden's attitude toward new science. He thinks that new science is opposed by the ancient sciences. And scholar reckons that this poem probable is meant for getting rewards in patronage.

In his "Annus Mirabilis" he shows concrete sympathy to the Royal Society, notwithstanding he never was paid by this institute. The poem provides us with details of the war against the Dutch and the great fire of London. In this poem he acts like a historian rather than a poet:

Then, we upon our globe's last verge shall go,
And view the ocean leaning on the sky:
From the thence our rolling neighbors we shall know,
And on the lunar world securely pry.³⁹

³⁸ Albert C. Baugh "A literary history of England", 1948, p724

Dryden in the preface of “Annus Mirabilis” gives his notion of poetic fantasy:

“The composition of all poems is, or ought to be, of wit; and wit in the poet.... Is no other than the faculty of imagination in the writer, which, like a nimble spaniel, beats over and ranges thro’ the field of memory, till it springs the quarry it hunted after... But to proceed... to the proper wit of a heroic or historical poem, I judge it chiefly to consist in the delightful imaging of persons, actions, passions, or things”⁴⁰

Between the years 1663 and 1681 he produced a number of plays which brought him popularity and fortune. In 1668 he gained the name of poet laureate. In his second period of literary activity which covers the years 1681 – 87 he produced political satires and religious works and translation.

“Absalom and Achitopel”, “The Medal” and “Mac Flecknoe” are included in the genre of literary satire. Some scholar think that these satires somewhat lacks in structure and Dryden “scolds” too much with prolonged words. In the preface he explains his political view like this:

“It is not my intention to make an apology for my poem: some will think it needs no excuse, and others will receive none. The design I am sure is honest: but he who draws his pen for one party, must expect to make enemies of the other. For wit and fool are consequence of Whig and Tory; and every man is a knave or an ass to the contrary side. There is a treasury of merits in the Fanatic church, as well as in the Popish; and a pennyworth to be had of saintship, honesty, and poetry, for the lewd, the factious, and the blockheads: but the longest chapter in Deuteronomy has not curses enough for an Anti-Bromingham. My comfort is, their manifest prejudice to my cause will render their judgment of less authority against me. Yet if a poem have genius, it will force its own reception in the world. For there is a sweetness in good verse, which tickles even while it hurts; and no man can be heartily angry with him who pleases him against his will. The commendation of adversaries is the greatest triumph of a writer, because it never comes unless extorted. But I can be satisfied on more easy terms: if I happen to please the more moderate sort, I shall be sure of an honest party, and, in all probability, of the best judges; for the least concerned are commonly the least corrupt. And I confess I have laid in for those, by rebating the satire (where justice would allow it), from carrying too sharp an edge. They who can criticise so weakly as to imagine I have done my worst, may be convinced, at their own cost, that I can write severely, with more

³⁹ Albert C. Baugh “A literary history of England”, 1948, p725

⁴⁰ “Annus Mirabilis” Edited by W. D. Christie, Clarendon Press, 1915, p 28

ease than I can gently. I have but laughed at some men's follies, when I could have declaimed against their vices; and other men's virtues I have commended, as freely as I have taxed their crimes. And now, if you are a malicious reader, I expect you should return upon me that I affect to be thought more impartial than I am. But if men are not to be judged by their professions, God forgive you Commonwealth's-men for professing so plausibly for the government. You cannot be so unconscionable as to charge me for not subscribing my name; for that would reflect too grossly upon your own party, who never dare, though they have the advantage of a jury to secure them. If you like not my poem, the fault may possibly be in my writing (though it is hard for an author to judge against himself); but more probably it is in your morals, which cannot bear the truth of it. The violent on both sides will condemn the character of Absalom, as either too favourably or too hardly drawn. But they are not the violent whom I desire to please. The fault on the right hand is to extenuate, palliate, and indulge; and to confess freely, I have endeavoured to commit it. Besides the respect which I owe his birth, I have a greater for his heroic virtues; and David himself could not be more tender of the young man's life, than I would be of his reputation. But since the most excellent natures are always the most easy, and, as being such, are the soonest perverted by ill counsels, especially when baited with fame and glory; it is no more a wonder that he withstood not the temptations of Achitophel, than it was for Adam not to have resisted the two devils, the serpent and the woman. The conclusion of the story I purposely forbore to prosecute, because I could not obtain from myself to show Absalom unfortunate. The frame of it was cut out but for a picture to the waist; and if the draught be so far true, it is as much as I designed. Were I the inventor, who am only the historian, I should certainly conclude the piece with the reconciliation of Absalom to David. And who knows but this may come to pass? Things were not brought to an extremity where I left the story: there seems yet to be room left for a composure; hereafter there may be only for pity. God is infinitely merciful; and his vicegerent is only not so, because he is not infinite. To conclude all; if the body politic have any analogy to the natural, in my weak judgment, an act of oblivion were as necessary in a hot distempered state, as an opiate would be in a raging fever."⁴¹

John Dryden was concerned with religion and expressed his religious view in his two poems and "Religio Laici" is one of them which were published in 1682. It is the translated variant of Father Simon's "Critical History of the Old Testament". The Critical History was accepted somewhat sensational, because people considered it to be attack on the textual integrity of Bible which is the only sacred book of Protestants. Dryden began to write

⁴¹ Macmillan, "Dryden's Satire", Martin's Press, 1966, p 11

“ReligioLaici” partly because of his doubtful interest in religious arguments and partly because of his friend’s translation of this book by name Henry Dickinson. It is considered a work which makes an effort to form universal and at the same time subjective truth about human beings and life.

Dryden is the Catholic of England in the belief of Spencer and Chaucer. Dryden generally touched upon the issues about the Church, faith and reason, and the fate of England and the English Church. In his world there is no conflict between theology and fields of science. So, here we have an extract from “ReligioLaici” in order to analyze it:

Dim, as the borrow'd beams of moon and stars

To lonely, weary, wand'ring travellers,

Is reason to the soul; and as on high

Those rolling fires discover but the sky,

Not light us here; so reason's glimmering ray

Was lent not to assure our doubtful way,

But guide us upward to a better day.

And as those nightly tapers disappear

When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere

So pale grows reason at religion's sight;

So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light⁴²

When we analyzed the poem, we assumed Dryden’s pose in this work was conservative. Through his poem he defends religion against universal knowledge. However, writing this poem, he was standing against the stereotypes of the society even against the church itself. Dryden wrote his earnest feelings about religious affairs happening in the country. The poem’s tone is smooth. Some may think that this poem is unpoetical, may be because of being written in sarcastic and debatable way. Evidently, to Dryden there was no border between eloquent prose and poetry. Dryden by writing this poem had primary and

⁴²W. D. Christie Dryden, “ReligioLaici”, Clarendon Press, 1915 p 131

personal motive. He wanted to trial himself whether he stood in the matter of religion and what was his position on this issue. Some kind, this poem was self testing of great poet.

The title of the poem actually is interesting. One can understand personal acknowledgment of the poet about religion from the name of the poem. But, on the contrary Dryden gives the full description of contemporary religious situation of England. Reader reading the poem can be aware of just general issues of Dryden's belief. Actually, there is a paradox in Dryden's view. On one hand he makes some sarcastic point on religion in England, on the other hand he expresses his adherence to English Church. The poem consists of 456 lines. Its genre is heroic couplet. The poet divided the poem into some logical sections.

After the accession of the Catholic King James II like majority Dryden became a Roman Catholic. Scholar regards this action of Dryden as time-serving. It is not exact that he remained Roman Catholic till his death. When he lost his support from Charles II he changed his faith. He argued his changed faith in his "Hind and the Panther". "Hind and the Panther" is an excellent blend of fable and religious tract. This poem is an illustration of Dryden's great courage. Dryden very masterly symbolizes Roman and Anglican Church as hind and panther. The hind is the Roman Church and the panther is the Anglican Church. Different religious sectors are also symbolized in animal shapes. Dryden has chosen Hindi as a symbol of innocence and purity. Dryden writes it like this:

A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchanged,
Fed on the lawns, and in the forest ranged;
Without unspotted, innocent within,
She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin.
Yet had she oft been chased with horns and hounds,
And Scythian shafts; and many winged wounds
Aim'd at her heart; was often forced to fly,
And doom'd to death, though fated not to die.⁴³

It is reckoned that Dryden got influenced by Chaucer's "Parliament of Fouls" and decided to test his hand in fable and religious context. The poem consists of dialogues

⁴³ Dryden, "the Hind and the panther", by W.H. Williams, 1900, p 9

between two animals which represents two opposite churches. The first part is general and narrates the events. The second part chiefly concerns with the Church authority. The third part speaks about commonly domestic conversations. "The Hind and The Panther" is considered to be in the same intellectual level as "ReligioLaici". In modern world this poem is for poem lovers rather than theologians. So, Dryden's ability is that he much masterly fused two elements which are poetic and religious in his work. By writing "The Hind and The Panther" Dryden mostly achieved to hammer his views of philosophy and religion into recordings of history.

Dryden also gives his short autobiography which is some kind "private reason" in some lines:

Thy throne is darkness in th' abyss of light
A blaze of glory that forbids the sight
O teach me to believe thee thus conceal'd
And search no father that thus selfreveald
But her alone for my director take
Whom thou hast promis'd never to forsake!
My thoughtless much youth was wing'd with vain desires
My manhood long misled by wand'ring fires
Follow'd false lights, and when their glimpse was gone
My pride struck out new sparkles of her own
Such was I, such by nature still I am
Be thine the glory and be mine the shame
Good life be now my task: my doubts are done⁴⁴

Dryden tried himself in translation with the aim of providing himself with the steady income. Studying at Westminster school taught him to be an excellent translator. Alongside with other works Dryden with his pot boiling ability and effort had a time to write modern

⁴⁴ Dryden, "the Hind and the panther", by W.H. Williams, 1900, p 11

version English fables which was published before his death in 1700 under the name "Fables Ancient and Modern". "Fables, Ancient and Modern" includes the first book of the Iliad, eight tales from Ovid, three from Chaucer and three Boccaccio and "Alexander's Feast" which is his own work. "Fables, Ancient and Modern" consists of collection number of translations of classical and medieval fables. Book also includes some of Dryden's own works. "Fables, Ancient and Modern" is the last and also one of the greatest works of Glorious Dryden.

In Dryden's "The Preface to Fables Ancient and Modern," he makes a comparison between Chaucer's gift and works and other well-known Greek and Roman writers. He writes it in explicit manner that he greatly respects and adores Chaucer. He writes:

"I hold him in the same Degree of Veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or the Romans Virgil: He is a perpetual Fountain of good Sense; learned in all Sciences; and therefore speaks properly on all Subjects: As he knew what to say, so he knows also when to leave off; a Continnence which is practiced by few Writers, and scarcely by any of the Ancients, excepting Virgil and Horace. One of our late great Poets is sunk in his Reputation, because he could never forgive any Conceit which came in his way; but swept like a Drag-net, great and small. There was plenty enough, but the Dishes were ill sorted; while Pyramids of Sweet-meats, for Boys and Women; but little of solid Meat, for Men: All this proceeded not from any want of Knowledge, but of Judgment; neither did he want that in discerning the Beauties and Faults of other Poets; but only indulged himself in the Luxury of Writing; and perhaps knew it was a Fault, but hoped the Reader would not find it. For this Reason, though he must always be thought a great Poet, he is no longer esteemed a good Writer: And for Ten Impressions, which his Works have had in so many successive Years, yet at present a hundred Books are scarcely purchased once a Twelvemonth: For, as my last Lord Rochester said, though somewhat profanely, Not being of God, he could not stand."⁴⁵ Dryden died two months later after the work. All the translations that he made are in the form of heroic couplet. By translating different authors' works Dryden aimed to increase people's literacy level as he wished to see his people to be aware of the entire poet's works.

⁴⁵ "Fables, Ancient and Modern: Translated into verse, From Homer, Ovid, Boccaccio and Chaucer; With original poems", Kinchad and Creech, 1773, p 29

Chapter III: An influence of Geoffrey Chaucer's works on John Dryden's literary activity

“Such as Chaucer is, Shall Dryden be”.

Alexander Pope

In this work we aim to investigate Geoffrey Chaucer's influence over John Dryden's literary career. Both Dryden and Chaucer were prominent figures of their age. Chaucer's influenced so many poets either in his time or after his death. His style and techniques lived through centuries in the works of different Chaucer admirers and it is not surprise for us Shakespeare to borrow Chaucer's plot for his “Troilus and Cressida”.

John Dryden, we think was the greatest admirer of the poet. He worked Chaucer's tale in a way of his own by modernizing them for his age. For many years Dryden's “The Cock and the Fox” (Chaucer's version of “The Nun's Priest tale”), “Palamon and Arcite” (Chaucer's “The Knight's Tale”) “The character of a Good Person” and “The Flower and The Leaf” were considered even superior to Chaucer's own versions. So we can safely say that Dryden's versions of “Canterbury Tales” were retold throughout the 18th and even 19th century and one of the writers who tried his hand in retelling stories was Wordsworth. In order to prove Dryden's admiration of Chaucer we want to introduce an extract from his “Prefaces to Fables”:

“He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his Canterbury Tales the various manners and humors (as we now call them) of the whole English nation, in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other; and not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons. Baptista Porta could not have described their natures better, than by the marks which the poet gives them. The matter and manner of their tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different education, humours, and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity; their discourses are such as belonging to their age, their calling, and their breeding; such as are becoming of them and of them only. Some of his persons are vicious, and some virtuous; some are unlearned, or (as Chaucer calls them) lewd, and some are learned. Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different; the Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook, are several

men, and distinguished from each other as much as the mincing Lady Prioress, and the broad-speaking, gap-toothed wife of Bath. But enough of this; there is such a variety of game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my choice, and know not what to follow. It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty. We have our forefathers and great grand-dames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's days; their general characters are still remaining in mankind, and even in England, though they are called by other names than those of monks, and friars, and canons, and lady-abbesses, and nuns; for mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of nature, though everything is altered. May I have leave to do myself the justice (since my enemies will do me none, and are so far from granting me to be a good poet, that they will not allow me so much as to be a Christian, or a moral man), may I have leave, I say, to inform my reader, that I have confined my choice to such tales of Chaucer as savour nothing of immodesty. If I had desired more to please than to instruct, the Reeve, the Miller, the Shipman, the Merchant, the Sumner, and, above all, the wife of Bath, in the prologue to her tale, would have procured me as many friends and readers, as there are beaux and ladies of pleasure in the town. But I will no more offend against good manners. I am sensible, as I ought to be, of the scandal I have given by my loose writings; and make what reparation I am able, by this public acknowledgment. If anything of this nature, or of profaneness, be crept into these poems, I am so far from defending it, that I disown it, totum hoc indictum volo. Chaucer makes another manner of apology for his broad speaking, and Boccace makes the like: but I will follow neither of them. Our countryman, in the end of his characters, before the Canterbury Tales, thus excuses the ribaldry, which is very gross in many of his novels:

“But firste, I praie you of your curtesie,

That ye ne arette it not my vilanie,

Though that I plainly speke in this matere,

To tellen you hirwordes, and hirchere:

Ne though I spekehirwordespropely,

For this ye knowen al so well as I,

Who so shall telle a tale after a man,

He mostereherse as neighe as ever he can:

Everich word, if it be in his charge,
All speke he, never so rudely and so large:
Or elles he mostetellen his tale untrew,
Or feignenthinges, or findenwordesnewe:
He may not spare, although he were his brother,
He moste as welsayn o word as an other.
Crist spake himself full brode in holy writ,
And wel ye wote no vilanie is it,
Eke Plato sayeth, who so can him rede,
The wordesmoste ben cosin to the dede.”

Yet if a man should have inquired of Boccace or of Chaucer, what need they had of introducing such characters, where obscene words were proper in their mouths, but very indecent to be heard, I know not what answer they could have made; for that reason, such tale shall be left untold by me”⁴⁶.

As far as we are concerned with this case Dryden is the first one who gives detailed analysis of Chaucer’s heroes of “The Canterbury Tales” and by his analysis he defines a unique place for Chaucer in the English history for his special service and achievement. As it is clear from preface Dryden mentions that Chaucer gives each character’s occupation, personal features and clothes in an accurate and delicate manner. Dryden highly appreciates Chaucer’s presenting all the characteristics features of the whole English nation in the persona of pilgrims who truly reflect English people. All can get precious information about social changes, religious matters and gender problems which are typical with all times of humanity from the mouths of Chaucer’s pilgrims.

Dryden adored the way Chaucer thought which was his philosophy and the way he wrote that was his philology. Dryden thinks of Chaucer to be learned in all fields of science who speaks properly in every way and as he knows what to say and knows where to stop and leave. Dryden sees Chaucer as a perpetual fountain of good sense. So, we think, no one can

⁴⁶ John Dryden, “The Works of John Dryden: Poems 1697-1700”, University of California Press, 2000, p 37

express Chaucer in a way Dryden does. Even while comparing Chaucer with Ovid he gives the priority to Chaucer by stating that he had never seen a simple work of Ovid's own, whereas, Chaucer is known to be the author of "The Wife of Bath's tale" and "The Cock and The Fox" which he translated later. As Dryden was a grand translator he also highly appreciated Chaucer's skill of translation. Dryden's view about Chaucer is considered a little bit controversial. He speaks of Chaucer as "the father of English language", however, because of incomplete metre of his works and not being harmonious for readers Dryden considers Chaucer to be no longer a good poet and writer and may be this is the reason why Dryden thinks of Chaucer as a rough diamond to be polished first.

In the preface Dryden mentions that the purity of the English language comes from Chaucer and we think Dryden is right to consider himself to be the first one who venerates Chaucer much more than anyone else does and it would be right to think that Chaucer's fame was sustainable thanks to Dryden.

In his "Fables, Ancient and Modern" book he gives great details of aspects of Chaucer's literary activity. In the preface of the book Dryden writes about Chaucer much more than anyone would write. At same time Dryden mentions his some views of Chaucer's language repertoire:

"In the first place, as he is the father of English poetry, I hold him in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or the Romans Virgil. He is a perpetual fountain of good sense; learned in all sciences; and, therefore, speaks properly on all subjects. As he knew what to say, so he knows also when to leave off; a continence which is practiced by few writers, and scarcely by any of the ancients, excepting Virgil and Horace. Chaucer followed Nature everywhere, but was never so bold to go beyond her; and there is a great difference of being poeta and nimispoeta, if we may believe Catullus, as much as betwixt a modest behavior and affectation. The verse of Chaucer, I confess, is not harmonious to us; but 'tis like the eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends, it was *auribus istius temporis accommodata*: they who lived with him, and some time after him, thought it musical; and it continues so, even in our judgment, if compared with the numbers of Lydgate and Gower, his contemporaries; there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect. 'Tis true I cannot go so far as he who published the last edition of him; for he would make us believe the fault is in our ears, and that there were really ten syllables in a verse where we find but nine; but this opinion is not worth confuting; 'tis so gross and obvious an error that common sense (which is a rule in

everything but matters of faith and revelation) must convince the reader that equality of numbers in every verse which we call heroic was either not known, or not always practiced in Chaucer's age. It were an easy matter to produce some thousands of his verses which are lame for want of half a foot, and sometimes a whole one, and which no pronunciation can make otherwise. We can only say that he lived in the infancy of our poetry, and that nothing is brought to perfection at the first. He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his Canterbury Tales the various manners and humors (as we now call them) of the whole English nation in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other; and not only in their inclinations but in their very physiognomies and persons. Baptista Porta could not have described their natures better than by the marks which the poet gives them. The matter and manner of their tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different educations, humors, and callings that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity: their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling, and their breeding; such as are becoming of them, and of them only. Some of his persons are vicious, and some virtuous; some are unlearned, or (as Chaucer calls them) lewd, and some are learned. Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different: the Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook are several men, and distinguished from each other as much as the mincing Lady Prioress and the broad-speaking, gap-toothed Wife of Bath. But enough of this; there is such a variety of game springing up before me that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. 'Tis sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty. Chaucer, I confess, is a rough diamond, and must first be polish'd, ere he shines. I deny not, likewise, that, living in our early days of poetry, he writes not always of a piece, but sometimes mingles trivial things with those of greater moment. Sometimes also, tho' not often, he runs riot, like Ovid, and knows not when he has said enough. But there are more great wits, beside Chaucer, whose fault is their excess of conceits, and those ill-sorted. An author is not to write all he can, but only all he ought. Having observ'd this redundancy in Chaucer, (as it is an easy matter for a man of ordinary parts to find a fault in one of greater,) I have not tied myself to a literal translation; but have often omitted what I judg'd unnecessary, or not of dignity enough to appear in the company of better thoughts. I have presum'd farther, in some places, and added somewhat of my own where I thought my author was deficient, and had not given his thoughts their true luster, for want of words in the beginning of our language. and to this I was the more embolden'd, because (if I may be permitted to say it of

myself) I found I had a soul congenial to his, and that I had been conversant in the same studies

Another Poet, in another Age, may take the same Liberty with my Writings; if at least they live long enough to deserve Correction. It was also necessary sometimes to restore the Sense of Chaucer, which was lost or mangled in the Errors of the Press: Let this Example suffice at present in the Story of Palamon and Arcite, where the Temple of Diana is describ'd, you find these Verses, in all the Editions of our Author:

There saw I Danè turned unto a Tree,

I mean not the Goddess Diane,

But Venus Daughter, which that hightDanè.

Which after a little Consideration I knew was to be reform'd into this Sense, that Daphne the Daughter of Peneus was turn'd into a Tree. I durst not make thus bold with Ovid, lest some future Milbourn should arise, and say, I varied from my Author, because I understood him not. But there are other Judges who think I ought not to have translated Chaucer into English, out of a quite contrary Notion: They suppose there is a certain Veneration due to his old Language; and that it is little less than Profanation and Sacrilege to alter it. They are farther of opinion, that somewhat of his good Sense will suffer in this Transfusion, and much of the Beauty of his Thoughts will infallibly be lost, which appear with more Grace in their old Habit. Of this Opinion was that excellent Person, whom I mention'd, the late Earl of Leicester, who valu'd Chaucer as much as Mr. Cowley despis'd him.⁴⁷

The second work which is a plain evidence of Dryden's admiration to Chaucer is Alexander Pope's "Essay on Criticism, 1711". By writing "Such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be" he thinks of Chaucer to be Dryden's master to follow and carry out his principles with great respect and honor:

Short is the Date, alas, of Modern Rhymes;

And 'tes but just to let 'em live betimes.

No longer now that Golden Age appears,

⁴⁷ John Dryden, "The Works of John Dryden: Poems 1697-1700", University of California Press, 2000, p33

When Partiarck Wits surviv'd a thousand years.

No Length of Fame (our second life) is lost,

And bare Threescore is all even That can boast:

Our Sons their Father's failing Language see

*And Such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be.*⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Harold Bloom, "Geoffrey Chaucer", Chelsea House Publishers, 2009, p 71

Concluding Remarks

Geoffrey Chaucer... English poet, translator, philosopher, prose writer, alchemist, astronomer, bureaucrat, diplomat and courtier. He was so great to achieve so many fames in his short lifetime. He is the one who changed the drift of English literature and language. Not only in modern world, but also in his own time Chaucer's genius personality was highly recognized since it attracted an army of critics. Chaucer was praised and highly appreciated by French and English contemporaries for his great contribution to English literature and language. Indeed, there are set of two thousand English words which were firstly attested in Chaucer's manuscripts which currently exist in scholars' hands. Village, perpendicular, theatre, princess, wildness, universe, vacation, Valentine, utility, veal, vulgar, Persian and wallet are Chaucerian words which became inseparable part of everyday English.

He is the author of expressions like "Love is blind," "Time and tide wait for no man", "Love conquers all" and "Shaking like a leaf".

Though Geoffrey Chaucer is the master of "The Book of the Duchess", "The House of Fame", "The Legend of Good Women", "Troilus and Criseyde" and other great works he is mostly remembered for his "The Canterbury Tales" which is considered one of the great masterpieces of the world literature.

Chaucer was born in the early 1340s to a well-to-do but not to aristocratic family. We have little information about Chaucer's education, but in his writings he demonstrates his close familiarity with some important books of earlier times. Chaucer was fluent in French, Italian, and Latin. Wealthy London merchants in those times educated their children at home with the help of special tutors and there is one argument for us to believe that, if there is no recording about Chaucer's attendance to the schools then he got well education at home, however, it was atypical of his period.

Chaucer affected English language and literature in so many different ways and as a result variety of poets chose Chaucer as their muse who inspired their works. Chaucer was a muse for another one after a long period of his death who like Chaucer changed drift of the history. He was Glorious John.

John Dryden is the public figure of English society who dominated his contemporaries as a poet, critic, and playwright and as a translator and was the greatest of Chaucer's admirers who got highly influenced by him. He dictated in literary sphere as "the father of modern English poetry and criticism" for the four decades of the 17th century. Dryden is the first one who enriched English speech and grammar rules with his expressive diction that had an enlightening impact on English speaking countries language. Though Dryden initially was well-known for his comedies and heroic tragedies, he is also famous for his accomplishments such as critical essays, translations of works by Boccaccio, Virgil and Chaucer.

"Dryden's life in some way is the comprehension of the historical life of England with the concrete changes of the century." A great writer Sir Walter Scott with these words began his long investigation life of John Dryden. It is harsh true that, although Dryden means much in the history of English literature for us, but we know little of him. As a genius writer his influence on the age was tremendous. Personally, he is more mysterious than any other writers. Yes, we know Chaucer and Milton, but to know Dryden is really impossible job.

Dryden's influence and fame was such enormous that his age was named after him; "Age of Dryden and Walter Scott called him "Glorious John". Dryden began new school - a new school of poetry. This is what we call the classical school, and the rhyme which was the product of this period was called the heroic couplet.

His familiarity with classical literature began at Westminster where he got a classical education. He also gained his genius translation skills at this school.

Dryden is considered to be the father of modern criticism. He mostly introduced his critical interpretations on the prefaces to his texts. By writing "The Essay of Dramatic Poesy" Dryden established himself as the first historical, comparative, descriptive and the Independent English critic. While analyzing Dryden's criticism we found an interest on general critical subjects rather than detailed issues. Since Dryden raises and emphasis neoclassical issues we call him a neoclassical critic. Before Dryden we can't see any consistent critic in the historical recordings of England. Of course, it would be unfair not to mention the name of Sidney and Ben Jonson, but they did not produce any critical work or create any critical theory. Stating his own critical ideas effectively, Dryden left some gaps for difference of thoughts.

Dryden adored the way Chaucer thought which was his philosophy and the way he wrote that was his philology. Dryden thinks of Chaucer to be learned in all fields of science

who speaks properly in every way and as he knows what to say and knows where to stop and leave. Dryden sees Chaucer as a perpetual fountain of good sense. So, we think, no one can express Chaucer in a way Dryden does.

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