
The Influence of Chaucer and Ben Jonson On: The Metamorphosis of Poetic Communication

Revant Gautam¹, M.A. English (Gold Medalist)

Dr. Geeta Lakhotra², Assistant Professor, G G M Science College, Canal, Road, Jammu

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Abstract: The genre of English poetry has evolved through the ages, with different takes on redefining the nature of poetry and eventually the English literature. English as a language has changed through the ages, its transformations being the most prominent in the ages marked as Middle English and Early Modern English. Geoffrey Chaucer and Ben Jonson are two eminent poets that have reshaped English poetry with their skills and prowess in the English language. The study has explored their contributions to English poetry and styles of poetic communication.

Keywords: English language, Chaucer, Ben Jonson, poetry

1. Introduction

Geoffrey Chaucer, known as the Father of English, was an immense contributor to the evolution of the English language and the genre of poetry. Chaucer brought forth the glory of the language of English and comedy in poetry that he shaped for his audience of cultured readers by conquering the complex fourteenth-century English making it comprehensible and popular. Ben Jonson is another vivid genius with significant contributions to the genre of poetry in the seventeenth century. He was considered an intellectual playwright and poet with his beliefs of didactic realism and satire. This paper looks into the transformation of poetry from the poetic era of Chaucer to Jonson and their wondrous influence on the genre of poetry and in effect the English literature.

Aim of the study

This study intends to explore the realm of Chaucer's and eventually Jonson's contribution to shaping the course of English poetry and its phenomenal alteration in the Middle English period. This study also aims to elucidate the power of both the poets and their eventful mastery in redefining the practices in the genre of poetry.

Discussion

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400) is identified as a phenomenal laureate with the prowess of shaping English literature through the medium of his poetry. He is an eminent individual in 14th-century English literature and its development. With his illustrious gifts of mastery of 14th-century English and shaping the scope of English literature through his poems, he had outshone his peers. The poet had, through his meticulous flair for the English language of his time, built on the image of poetry later to the classist development of English literature. During the period of Middle English, which stretched from around the 1100s to the late 1400s, English as a language was exerted for communication rather locally among people (KU, 2023). The prevalence of English as a language was much lower than the languages of French and Latin, the latter being implemented as preferred languages for law and government. Chaucer also initially used these languages for composing his poetries and literature. In terms of languages, Chaucer's works can be divided as starting initially in French, then being influenced by Italian models of poetry and lastly shifting his focal language to English.

Chaucer during his era of French and Italian poetry shaped his works under the stark influence of his masters. His emulation of the French and Italian models of poetry has been developed to be present in the case of his works with foreign languages.

The impact of French and Italian poetry can be strongly detected through his earlier works. Chaucer had originally started his journey as a poet with the French language and a knack for it. He later shifted to composing Italian works, presumably being influenced by Petrarch whom he regarded as his master of Italian poetry (Lakhotra, 2017). As time advanced, his era of Italian poetry also came to an end, with his ensuing adoption of English as a language for poetry. He is

considered the Father of English Literature, given that he redefined English poetry, making a major contribution to the history of English literature through his poetry.

During Chaucer's time, the languages French and Latin were used for official purposes such as administration and law. Middle English was existent and prominent for regional and local communication with the dialect being rather diverse in terms of writing and speech regionally (Milroy, 1992). Chaucer's poetry and presence in the context of English literature is an extremely significant part of not only English poetry and literature but also the case of the English language. His remarkable work, "*The Canterbury Tales*" is a milestone for the poet and English literature in the 14th century. Chaucer was a court poet, dedicating his skill and penmanship to writing for the refined society and its sophisticated audience (Lakhotra, 2017). His works, most prominently "*The Canterbury Tales*" illustrated the luminous instances of the glory of his time and society that was the 14th century English society. His poetry was a transforming phenomenon that influenced the English language to gain mass popularity and eventually become the national language of England.

English as a language and consequently English literature and poetry had shifted massively during the 15th and 17th centuries. This was mainly due to the advent of the English language turning towards progression through the trend of foreign loan words and expansion of the English vocabulary. Ben Jonson (1573-1637), a genius contemporary of Shakespeare, and his works have a strong reflection of this eventful linguistic shift from Middle English to Early Modern English. Jonson is identified as a laureate with a realistic approach to the art of composing poetry and literature. The poet is widely acclaimed for his works of satirical comedies and literary elements of intellect (Pearlman, 1979). His poetry and literature works aligned with his aim of illustrating and doing so with the intention of amusement were one of his driving forces for shaping and delivering satire and intellectual comedies in his poetries.

Jonson's works are distinguished from his peers, particularly his takes on the genre of poetry and its illustration of satire and

comedy. His works are an instance of the comedic caricature of his contemporary London society (Pritchard, 2012). His works are present with the element of portraying manners, flaws, shortages and warmth, as the elements of London life and 17th century English society. His works were not satires of individuals rather they were his manner of expressing his aim of comedies being subjects of elements that are not present in romances (Williams, 1978). The poet has been consistent in establishing his style of poetry as satirical literature that acted as comedies. His works, for instance, his satires and remarks on the works of his peers, are a broad example of his takes on intellectual comedy with satirical developments within its literature.

This is different from the works of his predecessor Chaucer, a poet who used his skill for the portrayal of the English society in its glory. Jonson is known for his intent of being a poet with intellect rather than being romantic, a trait that was rather unique from his contemporaries. Chaucer's poetry acted as an illustrious image of the poetic depiction of society and its vigour instead of showing its flaws. Chaucer played an influential role in shaping the history of English literature and portraying his poetry for the court, whilst Jonson was realistic and showed his poetic alignment with an intellect for depicting society's manners, qualities, flaws, and strengths.

Conclusion

The above study sheds some light on the phenomenal shifts in English poetry from the age of Chaucer to Jonson. Both laureates were significant to the sway of English poetry and literature. Chaucer made a stellar contribution to making Middle English a popular language among the sophisticated folk and the masses thus transforming the history of English literature through his poetry. Chaucer has been a remarkable force, his poetry being crafted for the refined public in courts, singing the glimpses of the lustrous image of English society in the 14th century. Jonson was a poet of the Early Modern English language. He was an intellectual genius in writing satirical comedies that spoke of the society's manner, both the weaknesses and the positives of contemporary London society.

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