

TERM PAPER

Comparison of the two medieval poems "Lak of Stedfastnesse" and "The Former
Age" by Geoffrey Chaucer.

INTRODUCTION

Medieval debate poetry is a genre of poems which was very popular in England and France in the late medieval period. A debate poem displays a dialogue between two naturally opposing subjects e.g. light vs. darkness.

The debates are emotionally charged, emphasizing the divergent values and personal attribute of the participants, revealing their conflicting natures. Debate poems appear didactic on the surface, but under this lies a legitimate dialogue between two evenly paired opponents.

Geoffrey Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer was a famous English author, poet, philosopher, bureaucrat (courtier), and diplomat. He is best known as the author of *The Canterbury Tales*. In his career as an author, Chaucer is considered as the father of literature and also the English language.

His poetic writings proved English as a language capable of poetic greatness, and established many of the traditions and format in English poesy which is still in use today. Chaucer in his time as a writer was competent of influential psychological insights.

His poems inspired five of his shorter pieces which included *The Former Age*, *Truth*, *Fortune*, *Lak of Stedfastnesse* and *Gentilesse*, whose translation was only a partial victory. The translation is often hardly comprehensible without consulting the original, which makes it flow with rhythm. (Anniina Jokinen, 2009.)

LAK OF STEDFASTNESSE

Genre: This is a "balade," French lyric genre normally composed about a poet's beloved; it can be either approving her prettiness or complaining about her unfriendliness or nastiness. Chaucer's balades are distinguished in the frequency they focus on philosophical and the social issues, like "Truth," "Lenvoy a Bukton," "Gentilesse," and "A Complaint to His Purse."

Form: it has seven Stanzas with four-stress lines which rhymes *ababbcc*, and oftenly ending with an "Envoy," or an extra stanza which propel the poem as a further focused message to a lover or friend. The broad message of the poem's other stanzas are therefore deduced for the envoy's subject, and the envoy holds a position of innovative tension or a deconstructive resistance to the stanzas of the poem's main body.

Characters: The persona of this Chaucer's courtly lyric, not confusing Chaucer himself are mostly the courtly audience who have been conducting themselves badly for they cannot be transparent or be true to their word and even been loyal to their own friends. He addresses the *prince* directly in the *envoy*, asking her and instructing her to rectify the sorry state of the affairs.

Plot Summary: There is an argument with the persona that the *world* of the court and the country has deteriorated as a result of the people's willingness to transform in a number of ways to choose from. Differently from the modern mind, which takes change as inevitable and wanted, the persona dislikes the change which dislocates his culture and way of living. This includes those touching the language (first stanza), social affairs (second stanza), and a general practice of mistaking vices for virtues (third stanza).

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Issues and general research sources:

1) Lack of Stedfastnesse formation doesn't seem to require anything from its readers until the end, where he invokes a *Super reader*, in the persona of the *prince*, who is seen to have powers to change the world illustrated from stanza one to three by a sequence of seven actions or attitudes which allows him to wed *thy folk agein to stedfastnesse*. The balade seems like a poem with an audience of one

2) The perception that the world on one occasion was a better place and the modern age has diverted away from the ancestors' glories is a general place Chaucer inherited from conventional literature as well as from the Christian perception of the decrease. On the other hand, like many commonplace suggestions, its appearance is not universal, but somewhat it arises at times and in places where authors feel it once again has become appropriate.

3) This poem breaches a pattern seen in Chaucer's longer works. Chaucer's Readers of *Canterbury Tales* have seen the promptness within which Chaucer implements the persona of a dumpy, naive, shy, and even an uninformed man who was getting nowhere with the ladies and took the alternative to books since they're all the comfort he can find anywhere in the world. Donaldson tipped out that Chaucer's life records tell us he has been a customs inspector and a construction site superintendent for the king, jobs for which naiveté and shyness, at least, would be absurd qualifications. Instead of appealing ignorance, disregard, incompetence, or unoriginality, this poem expressly attacks the achievement of any person at court as resulting from the quest of *mede and wilfulnessse*, doing *his neighbour wrong or oppression by some*

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collusion, and accept vices as true have become virtues. This poem is doubted to have seriously challenging the social pretenses of the most influential people in England, Italy, France, and, upon whose Chaucer depends on his living.

According to John Scattergood Chaucer was personally involved in contemporary affairs at a high level and his attitude towards political issues emerge most clearly from his personal short poems. The lack of steadfastness has proved more difficult political theme and an envoy addressed to a *prince* have provoked speculation

THE FORMER AGE

This poem has 8 stanzas with 8 lines per stanza; It is concerned mainly with Chaucer's mention of the people of the The Former Age not dyeing their clothing. Authors argue that Chaucer may have portrayed that the corruption and intrigue associated with the dyeing industry at the time that this poem was written caused Chaucer to add this line to his poem. (L.O. Purdon, 1989)

An article on Chaucer entitled *A Note on The Former Age* focus chiefly on the links that Chaucer makes in *The Former Age* between the Greek and Roman mythologies, most distinguished being Nembrot/Nimrod and how the story of the Tower of Babel echoes the stories of the Giants who piled mountain upon mountain to reach Mt. Olympus. Also discusses how Nimrod is chosen as heralding the end of the golden age because he was the inventor of the city. (Medium Aevum 47, 1978).

The Major classical Resources for the poems as identified by Edgar Finley Shannon (1964) are the works of Boethius, *The Romance of The Rose*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. He Mentions how the former age equals the description that Ovid gave of the Golden Age of mankind.

Lyric poems are used here to date Chaucer's works, it is under the assumption that short lyrics were characteristic of schoolboy creations of a young courtier's instructions and that the more established works like the lengthy narrative poems date from his middle years or from his old age.

IN GENERAL

For the two poems they, indicated not only the familiar social disorder, but also a divine conclusion against corruption in the variety of estates, against lords and churls alike, but mostly against the dignified whose shameless abuse of power had encouraged the insurgence of the rabble. They brings out that the conditions had their necessary causes, and was expected to recur unless conditions got better.

They both go against the vices especially those linked to the well-off and powerful, greed, unhealthy ambition, self-pity, indolence, extortion, and the general misgovernance. The *permutacioun* of a world turned up-so-down consequences, as Chaucer says, in the "lak of stedfastnesse" and exposes it to view.

Chaucer borrowed mutually his stanza forms and his *decasyllabic* rhymes from Guillaume Machault, His music depended mostly on assignment of every syllable its appropriate

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full value, and particularly on the due articulation of the final -e like that of his French master and his heir, The time-consuming progress of change in Scotland gave time for Chaucer to implement a potent influence on Scottish poetry, but in England this final -e, to which most of the earlier grammatical forms by Chaucer's time had been reduced, itself fell rapidly into disuse during the 15th century, and a serious barrier was thus raised to the appreciation of the artistic value of his verse. His works found readers and lovers in every age band, and every development in his text has set his fame on a surer basis.

he experience of some magnificent lines in Chaucer's version, combined with evidence that he did not yet possess the skill to translate at all literally as soon as rhymes had to be considered, accounts for this poem having been dated sometimes earlier than the *Book of the Duchesse*, and sometimes several years later. A fine poem which yet, from its slight obscurity and absence of Chaucer's usual ease, may very well some day prove to be a translation from the French.

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