ENGL310A Chaucer I
The Dream Visions and Troilus and Criseyde
Fall Term 2009
MWF 12:30-1:20 EV350
Prof. Sarah Tolmie

CONTACT INFORMATION:
Office Hours Monday and Wednesday 2:00-3:00
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University extension 36795
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Course Description
This course is an introduction to the poetic work of Geoffrey Chaucer, the fourteenth-century poet often hailed as the father of the English literary tradition. All texts will be read in Middle English, and ongoing instruction in the language will be provided. The course will examine Chaucer’s earlier literary works, a series of dream vision poems based on French and Italian models, and his longest single work, the romance Troilus and Criseyde, a virtuoso performance in the most prestigious genre of his day. We will examine his professional life as a poet, and its attendant problems, largely those of generic entrapment, leading up to the great experiment of writing the Canterbury Tales.

PLEASE NOTE: Middle English is almost a foreign language to modern readers. Regular attendance in class and work at home on translation during the first weeks of the course will be necessary to achieve comfortable reading proficiency. Without this initial investment, you will not be able to keep up with the scheduled readings.

Course Objectives
By the end of the course you should have achieved a comfortable reading knowledge of Chaucer’s Middle English, an overview of the many genres and styles of writing in which he participated, and gained a sense of his place in the vernacular literary canon.

Required Textbook
The Riverside Chaucer

Assignments
Midterm (translation) 20%
Oral presentation 10%
Research essay 30% (5% for proposal; essay due Fri 20 November)
Exam 30%
Participation 10%

Midterm test
This will consist of two passages of Middle English, approximately 10 lines each, to be translated into modern English prose paragraphs. It will take the full class time, and cannot be rescheduled unless a doctor’s note is provided.
Oral presentation
These will be ten minutes in length, with time limits strictly enforced. They can be on any topic related to Chaucer, either on a subject pertinent to the day’s reading, or not. Ideas first presented here can be further developed into essay topics, if desired. They should involve secondary scholarship — a class handout with a bibliography is advisable, but not required — but can also be an independent close reading of a section of text. Content of the presentation should be primarily analytical. Missed presentations cannot be rescheduled without a doctor’s note and will be given a grade of zero.

Research essay
Essays must be 2500-3000 words, formatted throughout in MLA style, and include a bibliography of at least five items, only two of which can be from the internet. Topics must be developed by students individually in consultation with the instructor. One meeting in office hours or a conversation by e-mail is required as part of this process and students are responsible for scheduling this. At this meeting, the student must submit a paragraph-length essay proposal and a preliminary bibliography of three items. This proposal and bibliography is worth 5% of the course grade. Essays will be marked for grammar and formatting as well as intellectual content. Plagiarized essays will be given a grade of zero and may result in a grade of zero for the course. Late essays will be marked down 10% (one letter grade) and will not be accepted after seven days beyond the final deadline. Essays must be submitted in class or to the English department drop box the day before the due date for date-stamping. They will be returned in class. It is also possible for students to devise creative assignments in lieu of essays for this course. These must involve both a creative and a methodological component and require the same process of consultation with the instructor, and a detailed written proposal.

Exam
This will be during the scheduled examination period. It will involve all of the material on the course, and will be in essay format. There will be no translation on the exam.

Participation
Regular attendance in class, competence in in-class reading and translating, and considered responses to the text are critical to success in the course.

Academic Offenses and Grievance
Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.] Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity [check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/] to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate Associate Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to
Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm. **Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals) www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm.

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm. When in doubt please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Students Registered with the Disabilities Office**
Please inform me if you are registered with the office and have specific requirements, or will be taking tests and exams under their supervision.

**Schedule of classes and topics**

**Week 1**
- Mon Sept 14: Introduction to Chaucer; introduction to Middle English
- Wed Sept 16: Reading Practice: *Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse*, *Adam Scrivyn*
- Fri Sept 18: *The Book of the Duchess*

**Week 2**
- Mon Sept 21: *The Book of the Duchess*
- Wed Sept 23: *The Book of the Duchess*
- Fri Sept 25: *The Book of the Duchess*

**Week 3**
- Mon Sept 28: *The Book of the Duchess*
- Wed Sept 30: *The Book of the Duchess*
- Fri Sept 30: *The House of Fame*

**Week 4**
- Mon Oct 5: *The House of Fame*
- Wed Oct 7: *The House of Fame*
- Fri Oct 9: *The House of Fame*

**Week 5**
- Mon Oct 12: THANKSGIVING (NO CLASS)
- Wed Oct 14: *The House of Fame*
- Fri Oct 16: *The House of Fame*

**Week 6**
- Mon Oct 19: *The House of Fame*
- Wed Oct 21: *The House of Fame*
- Fri Oct 23: MIDTERM TRANSLATION TEST
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Mon Oct 26</td>
<td><em>Troilus and Criseyde</em> Book 1</td>
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<td>Wed Oct 28</td>
<td><em>Troilus and Criseyde</em> Book I</td>
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<td>Fri Oct 30</td>
<td><em>Troilus and Criseyde</em> Book 1</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Mon Nov 2</td>
<td><em>Troilus</em> Book 2</td>
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<td>Wed Nov 4</td>
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<td>Fri Nov 6</td>
<td><em>Troilus</em> Book 2</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Mon Nov 9</td>
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<td>Wed Nov 11</td>
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<td>Fri Nov 13</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Mon Nov 16</td>
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<td>Fri Nov 20</td>
<td><em>Troilus</em> Book 4 <em><strong>DUE DATE FOR ESSAYS</strong></em></td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Mon Nov 23</td>
<td><em>Troilus</em> Book 5</td>
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<td>Wed Nov 25</td>
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<td>Fri Nov 27</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Mon Nov 30</td>
<td><em>Troilus</em>, the whole text</td>
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<td>Wed Dec 2</td>
<td><em>Troilus</em>, the whole text and Chaucer’s career</td>
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<td>Fri Dec 4</td>
<td>Exam Review</td>
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Chaucers Wordes Unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn

Adam Scriveyn, if it ever thee bifalle
Boece or Troylus for to writen newe,
Under thy long lkokkes thou most have the scalle,
But after my makyng thow wryte more trewe;
So ofte aday I mot thy werke renewe,
It to correcte and eke to rubbe and scrape,
And all is thorough thy negligence and rape.

The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse

To yow, my purse, and to noon other wight
Complayne I, for ye be my lady dere.
I am so sory, now that ye been lyght;
For certes but yf ye make me hevy chere,
Me were as leef be layd upon my bere;
For which unto your mercy thus I crye,
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye.

Now voucheth sauf this day or hhit be nyght
That I of yow the blisful soune may here
Or see your color lyl the sonne bryght
That of yelownesse hadde never pere.
Ye ben my lyfe, ye be myn hertes stere.
Quene of comfort and of good companye,
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles moot I dye.

Now purse that ben to me my lyves lyght
And saveour as doun in this world here,
Syn that ye wole nat ben my tresorere;
For I am shave as nye as any freere.
But yet I pray unto your curtesye,
Beth hevy agen, or elles moot I dye.

Lenvoy de Chaucer

O conquerour of Brutes Albyon,
Which that by lyne and free eleccion
Been verray kyng, this song to yow I sende,
And ye, that mowen all oure harmes amende,
Have mynde upon my supplicacion.
The following is a sample translation passage. You will need to complete two of these on your midterm test.

The Book of the Duchess
ll. 616-31

. . . Allas, how myghte I fare werre?
My boldnesse ys turned to shame,
For fals Fortune hath pleyd a game
Atte ches with me, allas the while!
The trayteresse fals and ful of gyhe,
That al behoteth and nothing halt,
She goth upryght and yet she halt,
That baggeth foule and loketh faire,
The dispitous debonaire
That skorneth many a creature!
An ydole of fals portrayture
Is she, for she wol sone wrien;
She is the monstres hed ywrien,
As fylthe over-ystrawed with floures.
Her moste worshippe and hir flour is
To lyen, for that is her nature. . .

Vocabulary: behoteth, promises wrien, turn or change ywrien, hidden

Samples from the History of English

Old English: Beowulf, ll. 1-25 (8th-10th c.)
Hwæt, we Gar-Dena in geardagum,
þeodcyninga þrym gefrunon,
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon!
Oft Scyld Seefing sceapena þreamum,
monegum mægþum meodosetla
ofteah,
egsode corlas, syðdan ærest weard
fæsceaf funden; he þæs frofre gebad,
weox under wolcum weorðmyndum þah,
oð þæt him æghwylc ymbstartra
ofer hronrade hyran scolde,
gomban gyldan; þæt wæs god cyning!

Yo! We have heard of the noble deeds of the Spear-Danes,
of the nation-kings, in days of yore,
how the princes performed courageous deeds.
Often Scyld Seefing [shield, son of sheaf] deprived troops of
enemies, many kindreds, of mead-benches,
[and] terrified warriors, after he was first
found destitute; he experience a compensation for that,
[he] grew under the skies, flourished in glories,
until each of the neighbouring kingdoms [lit. around-sitters]
over the whale-road had to obey him,
to give him treasure; that was a good king!
Old Norse: Snorri Sturluson, Prologue to *Edda* (early 13th century)

Almáttigr guð skapaði himin ok jörð
ok alla þa hluti er þeim fylgja,
ok síðarst menn tvá
er ættir eru frá konnar, Adam ok Evu,
ok fjölguðisk þeira kynslöð
ok dreifðisk um heim allan.
En er fram liðu stundir,
þá ójafnaðisk mannfólki:
þau sumir góðir ok rétt trúadir,
en myklu fleiri snerusk
eptir girndum heimsins
ok óræktu guðs bodórð,
ok fyrir því,
drekti guð heiminum í sjávargangi
ok öllum kvíkvendum heimsins
nema þeim er í ríkinnin váru með
Noa.

Almighty God created [“shaped”] heaven and earth
and all of the things [“lots”] that belong to it [“follow it”]
and last two people
from whom generations are descended, Adam and Eve,
and their progeny multiplied
and dispersed around the whole world.
But as the ages passed from this,
then mankind became unequal:
some were good and rightly orthodox,
but many more turned aside
after worldly desires
and ignored God’s commandment,
and on account of this,
God drowned the world in surgings of the sea
and all living things in the world
except those who were in the ark with Noah.

Early Middle English: La mon, *Brut*, ll. 10559-10573 (c. 1250)

Þa cleopede Arður ludere stæfne:
“Lou war her biforen us heðene hundes,
þe slo en ure alderen mid luðere heore craften,
and heo us beoð on londe læðest alre þinge.
Nu fusen we hom to and stærcliche heom leggen on,
and wraeken wunderliche ure cun and ure riche,
and wraeken þene muchele scome þat heo us iscend habbeoð
þat heo over uðen comen to Dertemuðen;
and alle heo beoð forsworene and alle heo beoð forlorene—
heo beoð fordedem alle mid Drihttenes fulste.”

Influence of French: *Sir Orfeo*, ll. 1-13 (c. 1300)

We redeþ oft and findeþ ywrite,
And þis clerkes wele it wite,
Layes þat ben in harping
Ben yfounde of ferli þing.
Sum beþe of wer and sum of wo,
And sum of joie and mirþe also,
And sum of trecherie and of gile,
Of old aventours þat fel while,
And sum of bourdes and ribaudy,
And mani þer beþ of fairy.
Of al þinges þat men seþ,
Mest o love, for soþe, þai beþ.
In Breteye ne pis layes were wro t,

West Midlands dialect: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ll. 1-19 (late 14th century)
Si þe sege and þe assaut watz sessed at Troye,
þe bor brittened and bren to bronde and askez,
þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wro t
Watz tred for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe,
Hit watz Ennias þe athel and his highe hynde
þat siþen depreed provindes and patrounes bicom
Welne e of al þe wele in þe west iles,
Fro riche Romulus to Rome ricchis hym swyþe,
With gret bobbaunce þat bur e he biges upon fyrst
And nevenes hit his aune nome as hit now hat;
Ticius to Tuskan and teldes bigynnes,
Langaberde in Lumbardie lyftes up homes,
And fer over þe French flod Felix Brutus
On mony bonkkes ful brode Bretayn he settez
Wyth wynne;
Where werre and wrake and wonder
Bi syþez hatz wont þerinne,
And oft boþe blysses and blunder
Ful skete hatz syfted synne.

Scots: William Dunbar, The Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo, ll. 1-6 (late 15th century)
Apon the Midsummer evin, mirriest of nichtis,
I muvit furth till ane meid, as midnight wes past,
Besyd ane gudlic grein garth, full of gay flouris,
Hegeit of ane huge hicht with hawthorne treis,
Quairson ane bird on ane bransche so birst out hir notis
That never ane blythefullar bird was on the beuche hard.

Influence of Print: William Caxton, Prologue to Enydos (c. 1490)
And whan I had advysed me in this sayd boke, I celybered and concluded to translat it into
Englysshe, and forthwyth toke a penne and ynke and wrote a leef or twyne whyche I
oversawe agayn to corecte it. And whan I sawe the fayr and strangue termes therin, I doubted
that it sholde not please some gentylmen whiche late blamed me, sayeng that in my
translacyons I had over-curyous termes whiche coude not be understaundes of comyn peple and
desired me to use olde and homely termes in my translacyons. And fayn wolde I satysfye
every man, and so to doo toke an olde boke and redd therin; and certaynly the Englysshe
was so rude and brood that I coude not wele understande it. And also my lorde abbot of
Westmynder ded do shewe to me late certayn evyndences wyton in olde Englysshe for to
reduce it into our Englysshe now usid. And certaynly it was wretyn in suche wyse that it was
more lyke to Dutche than Englysshe: I coude not reduce ne brynge it to be understonden.
And certaynly our langage now used varyth ferre from that whiche was used and spoken
when I was borne, for we Englysshemen ben borne under the domynacyon of the mone, whiche is never stedfaste but ever waverynge, wexynge one season and waneth and dyscreaseth another season.

And that comyn Englysse that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from another. In so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn marchauntes were in a shipphe in Tamyse for to have sayled over the see into Zelande. And for lacke of wynde thai taryd atte forlond and wente to lande for to refreshe them. And one of theym named Sheffelde, a mercer, cam into an hows and axed for mete and specyally he axyd after eggys. And the goode wyf anwserede that she coude speke no Frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no Frenshe, but wolde hadde eggges; and she understode hym not. And thenne at laste another sayde that he wolde have eyren; then the good wyf sayd that she understod hym wel. Loo! What sholde a man in thys dayes now wryte, “eggges” or “eyren”? Certaynly it is harde to playse eery man bycause of dyversite and chaunge of langage.

Some Causes of Reading Difficulty

Abbreviations
ME = Middle English
ModE = Modern English
OE = Old English

1. Morphology
➢ history of English is one of simplification, first morphological (ME loses OE inflexions) and then syntactic: ME is morphologically more complex than ModE
➢ nouns:
  ➢ ModE plurals in -s or -es
  ➢ ME plurals can also end in -is (e.g., goddis = “gods,” not “goddess”)
  ➢ some nouns form plural with -(e)n: a few survivals in ModE (oxen, children), but rather more in ME (brethren, sustren, shoon, foon, eyen, eyren [“eggs”]) — some of these nouns alternate between -n forms and -s forms
➢ pronouns:
  ➢ I is normal form for 1st-person sing., but ich or ik sometime occur
  ➢ ME retains distinct forms of second-pers. pronoun: thou (thow) / thee / thyn for singular, you (yow) / ye / your for plural; like mod. French, ME uses plural for polite speech, even when referring to singular subject
  ➢ 3rd-person sing. as ModE, except that it can alternate with hit / hyt
    ➢ neuter it has no possessive, so his is used (“The lylie upon his stalke grene” — this is not personification)
    ➢ feminine possessive spelled hir / hire / here
  ➢ 3rd-person plural is they, but hem in object form
    ➢ possessive is hire or here, so there’s a possibility of confusion with 3rd-pers. sing. fem (e.g., hire shoon can mean “her shoes” or “their shoes”). In practice this won’t pose serious difficulties, since context will guide you.
  ➢ man / men = indefinite pronoun, as mod. German or Dutch: “one,” not “a male human being” (e.g. “What asketh men to have?” means “What does one want?” not “What do guys want?”)
adverbs:
- some formed by adding -ly or -liche, but most formed by adding -e to adjective
  - in translation, let context guide you as to whether an adjective or an adverb is needed
  - e.g. “The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun,” / “[he] That loveth so hoote Emelye the brighte”

verbs:
- infinitives usually end in -(e)n, e.g., to loven, to singen, to ben
- present tense more inflected than ModE:
  - 2nd -person singular in -(e)st
  - 3rd sing. in -(e)th
  - plural usually in -(e)n
- in questions, pronouns sometimes assimilate to verb: artow = “art thou,” wiltow = “wilt thou,” thinkestow = “thinnest thou”
- some shortened forms: bit for biddeth, rit for rideth, worth for wortheth, etc.
- strong verbs (past tense indicated by vowel change; not -ed): vowel changes are often different from ModE, simply must be learned
  - ME sing, song, songe(n); ModE sing, sang, sung
  - some verbs are strong in ME but weak in ModE: strecchen → straughte, werken → wrought — hard to find in glossary
- irregular verbs: e.g., goon → went(e) or yede
  - hoten → highte = “to promise,” but also “to be called”
- past participles: end in -(e)n, optionally begin in i- / y- (reduced form of German & Dutch ge-): “He wol nat with his arwes been ywroken” — ywroken = ppl. of wreken, like ModE “wreak,” “to avenge”
- negation: ne before verb, nat / not after, intensifiers (noght, neve, in no wise)
  - multiple negation possible: “He nevere yet no vilenye ne seyd”
  - negative particle ne can assimilate to verbs beginning in vowels, h- or w- (I nadde = “I ne hadde,” I not = “I ne wot,” I nyste = “I ne wiste”)
- impersonal verbs
  - me seemeth = it seems to me
  - me thinketh (Shakespeare’s “methinks”) = it seems to me (thinken = “to seem,” not to be confused with thenken = “to think”)
  - me liketh = lit. “it likes to me,” i.e., “I approve” (“it liketh me wel” = OK)
  - me liste = lit. “it wants to me”, i.e., “I want”
- modal auxiliaries will, can, may etc. like ModE, but one very frequent auxiliary is unfamiliar: ginnen (gan, goon)
  - survives in ModE “begin,” but means something like “do”
  - “On her knees she gan to fall” = not “began to fall” but “fell”
  - “my herte ginnen blede” = my heart bleeds

2. Vocabulary

- Words that have disappeared must be memorized (e.g., whilom = long ago, eke = also, wrecchen = vengeance, myrme = remember (imperative))
- variations in spelling: this is a feature of manuscript culture, before printing technology fixed the written form of English into a more rigid convention
- *i* and *y* are interchangeable (*y* was used to avoid minim confusion)
- *u* and *v* are interchangeable
- sometimes initial *i*- where we would expect a *j*- (*Januarie*)
- watch out for metathesis: e.g., *axen* = “to ask”

- **False friends** (words that look the same as ModE equivalents but have a different meaning) pose greater problems for comprehension
- for example, many **words denoting moral condition in ME often narrow to a purely sexual meaning in ModE**
  - *buxom* = obedient
  - *lust* = desire, not necessarily sexual (“Lord, welcome by thy lust and thy plesaunce; / My lust I putte al in thyng ordinaunce,”)
  - *likerous* (mod. “lecherous”) = “eager,” “greedy” in addition to mod. sense
  - *pleye, disport* = relaxation, but can often connote amorous play

- **social terminology evolves into an attribution of value**
  - “noble” = aristocratic, but also innately superior in quality
  - *vilein* (mod. “villain”) > *vill* = rural estate
    - originally means “peasant,” inhabitant of *vill*
    - acquires connotation of base, ignoble, boorish, untrustworthy, contemptible
    - primary, value-neutral meaning co-exists in ME with pejorative meaning: “For now I wot wel uttirly / that thou art gentyll by thi speche. / For though a man fer wolde seche, / He shulde not fynden, in certeyn, / No sach answer of no vileyn; / For sich a word ne yghte nought / Isse out of a vilayns thought” (Chaucer, *Romant of the Rose* 1986-92).
  - *churl* = peasant, non-noble, but acquires pejorative sense of “rude,” “boorish” (“The Millere is a cherl; ye knowe wel this. / So was the Reve eek and othere mo, / And harlotrie they tolden bothe two,” *CT*1.3182-84)
  - *rude* = unformed, uneducated
  - *lewed* (mod. “lewd”) = uneducated
    - formulative phrase “the lerned and the lewed” (i.e., everyone)
    - when Chaucer says of himself, “I am a lewed man,” he doesn’t mean that he has a dirty mind!
  - *knave* = boy (cf. modern German *Knabe*), begins to acquire mod. sense of “rogue,” “crook”
    - boys often worked as servants in great houses, servants were assumed to be lower in class and therefore quality