

喬叟與煉金術：「教士侍從的故事」(*The Canon's Yeoman's Tale*)

中世紀煉金術士所寫的煉金術文獻及以煉金術為題材之文學作品甚多，英國作家有 John Dastin, Thomas Norton, George Ripley, John Gower (見 Singer, Ferguson, 4. Elias Ashmole)。其中喬叟的「坎特伯里城的故事」中 *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale* 「教士侍從的故事」(暫譯) 是中世紀英國煉金術文學中最複雜、最費解的上乘詩作。侍從的故事包括三部份：序言 (Prologue)、第一部 (pars prima) 及第二部 (pars secunda)。序言中有老闆與侍從的對話，教士在旁監聽；第一部侍從敘述他做煉金術學徒的親身經驗；第二部是侍從講的故事，敘述一位據有雙重身份教士 — 煉金術士 (the canon-chemist)，利用煉金術士慣有的欺騙手法，假裝煉金成功賺了四十磅，如何欺騙一位神父的過程。

由於煉金術的特殊知識背景，「教士侍從的故事」在「坎特伯里城的故事」研究文獻中始終是敬陪末座。近三十年來，研究這則故事的重點多環繞在考據喬叟對煉金術了解及其所引用的文獻是否正確 (Edgar Duncan, Pauline Aiken)；他對煉金術的 "art" 是褒或貶；故事的版本、年代、問題 (Charles Muscatine)。喬叟學者對這些問題多少有些共識。但對喬叟為何 1) 在朝聖途中離坎特伯里城約五里路時插入兩個來去匆匆的人物——教士及其僕人 (Canon and Yeoman)；2) 為何要侍從講一則煉金術的故事去參加已進行的說故事比賽；3) 整個故事三部份彼此之間的關係及一致性；4) 「教士侍從的故事」與其它包含煉金術故事 (*The Second Nun's Tale, The Manciple's Tale*) 之相關性。喬叟學者的看法則眾說紛紜，各種詮釋都有可能但也頗具爭議性。

本研究主要目的有二：

- (一) 從中世紀宗教歷史背景來仔細探討教士的身份，這部份研究涉及中世紀天主教修會之組織、及修士神父之職責。以此歷史背景之知識試圖說明喬叟筆下的神職人士教士，如何得到煉金術的知識成為煉金術士，這雙重身份在表面上看來衝突的。
- (二) 由於「教士侍從的故事」所講的是一則很典型的煉金術故事，喬叟學者無法將此故事與其他朝聖者的故事連貫，多猜測喬叟寫這個諷刺煉金術故事，乃因為曾被煉金術士騙過，藉此故事一方面宣洩個人情緒，同時也警惕世人，不要因為貪圖小利而上當受騙。本研究發現「教士侍從的故事」在主題及敘述結構上，是一典型的煉金術言談 (alchemical discourse)，並且與其他故事都有前後呼應的關係。煉金術文獻及煉金術故事有兩大特色：文獻中多對煉金的祕密極度保密，唯恐祕密落入壞人手中，謀取不當錢財，此種高度的機密性，導致描述煉金術過程的混亂，藉此達到保密的效果。另一重要特色，也是本研究的重點與突破：煉金術文學本身是一據有高度道德寓意的故事，點鐵成金固然是煉金術士的美夢，煉金不成，至少可以借此故事警惕世人，不可貪心。教士侍從為了展現自己對煉金的知識，仔細運用煉金術術語，描寫教士煉金過程，企圖爭取一群無知天真也

頗富有的朝聖者對煉金術的信任，也許可趁機騙取他們的金錢。但在教士離開後，侍從則正式開講一位具有雙重身份教士及煉金術士，其煉金失敗的故事。這與第一部份描述煉金術成功，形成兩種相反的結果。此種矛盾、顯/隱、虛/實的煉金言談正可引起聽眾的興趣，pars prima 與 pars secunda 事實與虛構故事彼此瓦解，達到隱藏煉金術真相的目的。

(三) 將本故事架構在喬叟或客棧老闆所訂定的說故事比賽的標準：“And which of you that bereth him best of alle--/That is to sayn, that telleth in this case/Tales of best sentence and most solas/Shall have a soper at oure aller cost.”侍從接受說故事比賽的挑戰，就必須講一則亦娛亦教的故事。本研究將仔細分析這則故事，考察喬叟如何扭曲傳統煉金術使用的術語，並巧妙地運用煉金術術語中五個音節押韻的字彙，製造音響效果，使煉金術的複雜語言成為‘quasi-musical language’ (Hilberry, 440)，令朝聖者歡笑不已。而 pars secunda 描述煉金術士沉迷於點鐵成金的美夢，傾家蕩產，貧窮潦倒，足以警惕世人，成為警世故事 (exemplum) 的典範，達成道德訓誡的目的。從這觀點而言，pars prima 與 pars secunda 非但不矛盾反而相輔相成，使故事附合說故事比賽娛樂及訓誡的條件。從這個觀點來看，喬叟的「教士侍從的故事」超越一般傳統煉金術言談，也展現出喬叟高人一等的獨創性。這部份就筆者所知喬叟學者尚未注意，也是本研究的價值。

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關鍵詞

煉金術 喬叟 坎特伯里城的故事
 中世紀 教會歷史 天主教神父

中文摘要

喬叟「教士侍從的故事」是一則極為精彩奧妙的中世紀煉金術文學。近三十年來，研究喬叟「教士侍從的故事」重點多放在考據故事的版本、喬叟對煉金術是褒或貶、及他對煉金術知識及其引用的文獻正確如否。本計畫試圖從中世紀天主教修會歷史及煉金術言談兩方面來處理長久以來困擾研究「教士侍從的故事」的幾個問題。從教會歷史背景，試圖解釋喬叟在朝聖途中插入兩個人物教士及其侍從的功用及神職人士為何又兼具煉金術士的雙重身分；2)從煉金術言談的特色考察喬叟如何扭曲傳統煉金術使用的術語，使煉金術的複雜語言轉換成多重聲效的音樂語言，；而描述煉金術士沉迷於點鐵成金的美夢，乃為警世故事的典範，達成道德訓誡的目的。從這觀點而言，喬叟的「教士侍從的故事」超越一般傳統煉金術言談，也展現出喬叟高人一等的獨創性。這部份喬叟學者尚未注意，也是本研究計畫的價值。

英文摘要

The Canon's Yeoman's Tale by Geoffrey Chaucer is a spectacular piece of medieval alchemical literature. For the recent 30 years, the studying of the tale mostly focuses on the empirical research of its versions, Chaucer's attitude toward the alchemy, his deployment of the alchemical knowledge and the authenticity of such quoted texts. This program is intended to tackle several problems, which have been disturbing the researchers of the tale, from two aspects: the funding history of the Catholic Church and the alchemical discourse. From the historical background of the church, the author will try to explain the functioning of Chaucer's putting two characters, Canon and Yeoman, during the pilgrimage and why Canon keeps his dual identity as a clergyman and an alchemist. From the angle of the characteristics of alchemical discourse, the author will observe how Chaucer twists the traditional

terminology of alchemy and transforms the complicated alchemical language into the quasi-musical language. And the description of the alchemist who indulges himself in the dream of transmutation is an exemplar of moral tales, with the purpose of moral discipline attained. From such perspective, Chaucer's *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale* has superseded the ordinary alchemical discourse and demonstrates Chaucer's superlative originality. Chaucer scholars have taken little notice of this part, and it is the worth of the program.