Middle English dialects. The London dialect.

the Southern group - Kentish and the South-Western dialects

the Midland or Central (corresponding to the OE Mercian dialect is divided into West Midland and East Midland as two main areas

the Northern group had developed from OE Northumbrian

Middle English dialects. The London dialect.

- The Early ME written records made in London – beginning with the PROCLAMATION of 1258 – show that the dialect of London was fundamentally East Saxon.

Phonetic processes in Middle English (the system of vowels).
Word Stress in ME and Early NE

- Word stress in OE was fixed: it never moved in inflection and seldom in derivation.

- the phonetic assimilation of thousands of loan-words adopted during the ME period

Phonetic processes in Middle English (the system of vowels).
Word Stress in ME and Early NE

- the "recessive" tendency, e.g. *vertu* [ver´tju:] became NE *virtue* [və:tʃə].
- In words of three or more syllables the shift of the stress could be caused by the **recessive tendency** and also by the **"rhythmic"** tendency.

Unstressed vowels

- five short vowels in unstressed position [e/i], [a] and [o/u], Late ME had only two vowels in unaccented syllables: [ə] and [i], e.g. OE *talu* – ME *tale* [´ta:lə] – NE *tale*, OE *bodiз* – ME *body* [´bodi] – NE *body*.

Unstressed vowels

- The final [ə] disappeared in Late ME though it continued to be spelt as *-e*.
- OE stān, rād – ME stone, rode [´stone], [´rode] – NE stone, rode.

Quantitative vowel changes in Early ME

- 1) Short vowels were lengthened before two consonants all vowels became long, e.g. OE *wild* – ME *wild* [wi:ld] – NE *wild*.
- 2) All other groups made the preceding long vowels short, all vowels in this position became or remained short, e.g. OE *cēpte* > ME *kepte* [ˊkeptə] – NE *kept*.
- 3) Short vowels became long in open syllables, e.g. OE *nama* > ME *name* [na:mə] – NE *name*.
- 4) No lengthening occurred in polysyllabic words and before some suffixes, OE *bodiз* > ME *body* [ˊbodi] – NE *body*.

Qualitative vowel changes. Development of monophthongs

- [y] and [y:] were replaced by [e], [e:] in Kentish and confused with [ie] and [ie:] or [i] and [i:]
- OE [y], [y:] developed into [e], [e:], changed to [i], [i:]; in the South-West and in the West Midlands
- OE *fyllan* – ME (Kentish) *fellen*, (West Midland and South Western) *fullen*, (East Midland and Northern) *fillen* – NE *fill*.

Qualitative vowel changes. Development of monophthongs

- OE *stān* – ME (Northern) *stan(e),* (other dialects) *stoon, stone* – NE *stone*.
- The short OE [æ] was replaced in ME by the back vowel [a], e.g. OE *þǽt* > ME *that* [Ɵat] > NE *that*

Development of diphthongs

- two symmetrical sets – long and short: [ea:], [eo:], [ie:] and [ea], [eo], [ie].
- all diphthongs were monophthongised before [xt], [x't] and after [sk']; the diphthongs [ie:], [ie] in Late WS fused with [y:], [y] or [i:], [i].
- In Early ME the remaining diphthongs were to monophthongs: [ea:] united with [ǽ:]
- ME [ε:]; [ea] distinguished from OE [æ] became [a];
- [eo:], [eo], [io:], [io] fell together with the monophthongs [e:], [e], [i:], [i].

In December 1376 he was sent abroad on the king's service in the retinue of Sir John Burley

In 1357 Geoffrey is found, apparently as a lad, in the service of Elizabeth, countess of Ulster, wife of [Lionel, Duke of Clarence](#)

In 1359, as we learn from his deposition in the Scrope suit, Chaucer went to the [war in France](#).

On the 1st of March 1360 the King [Edward III](#) contributed £16 to his ransom, and by a year or two later Chaucer must have entered the royal service, since on the 10th of June 1367 Edward granted him a pension of twenty marks for his past and future services.

In the grant of his pension Chaucer is called "*dilectus vallectus noster*," our beloved yeoman

The Book of the Duchesse

- a poem of 1334 lines in octosyllabic couplets

In June 1370 he went abroad on the king's service

Le Roman de la rose

- a poem written in some 4000 lines by Guillaume Lorris about 1237 and extended to over 22,000 by Jean Clopinel, better known as Jean de Meun, forty years later

he translated this poem, and the extant English fragment of 7698 lines was generally assigned to him from 1532, when it was first printed, till its authorship was challenged in the early years of the Chaucer Society

the *Canterbury Tales*

- The pilgrims whom he imagines to have assembled at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, where Harry Bailey was host, are said to have numbered "wel nyne and twenty in a company," and the Prologue gives full-length sketches of a Knight, a Squire (his son), and their Yeoman; of a Prioress, Monk, Friar, Oxford Clerk, and Parson.

The Pilgrims On The Road

The Canterbury Pilgrims. From the British Library MS Royal 18 D. II

Chaucer. "Litel Lowis my son"

- Litel Lowis my son," a treatise on the use of the Astrolabe, its short prologue being the prettiest specimen of his prose

Chaucer. "Litel Lowis my son"

- The wearisome tale of "Melibee and his wyf Prudence," which was perhaps as much admired in English as it had been in Latin and French, may have been translated at any time

The sermon on Penitence

used as the *Parson's Tale*, was probably the work of his old age. "Envoys" to his friends Scogan and Bukton, a translation of some balades by Sir Otes de Granson, and the *Compleynt to his Purs* complete the record of his minor poetry

- He neither corrupted it, as used to be said, by introducing French words which it would otherwise have avoided, nor bore any such part in fixing it as was afterwards played by the translators of the Bible.

- When he was growing up, educated society in England was still bilingual, and the changes in vocabulary and pronunciation which took place during his life were the natural results of a society, which had been bilingual with a bias towards French, giving an exclusive preference to English.

- Chaucer's service to the English language lies in his decisive success having made it impossible for any later English poet to attain fame, as Gower had done, by writing alternatively in Latin and French. The claim which should be made for him is that, at least as regards poetry, he proved that English was "sufficient."

- *The Canterbury Tales* have always been Chaucer's most popular work, and, including fragments, upwards of sixty 15th-century manuscripts of it still survive.

The *Canterbury Tales* were subsequently printed in 1492 (Pynson), 1498 (de Worde) and 1526 (Pynson); *Troilus* in 1517 (de Worde) and 1526 (Pynson); the *Hous of Fame* in 1526 (Pynson); the *Parlement of Foules* in 1526 (Pynson) and 1530 (de Worde) and the *Mars*, "Venus" and *Envoy to Bukton* by Julyan Notary about 1500

- In 1561 a reprint, with numerous additions, edited by John Stowe, was printed by J. Kyngston for J. Wight, and this was re-edited, with fresh additions by Thomas Speght, in 1598 for G. Bishop and again in 1602 for Adam Islip. In 1687 there was an anonymous reprint, and in 1721 John Urry produced the last and worst of the folios.
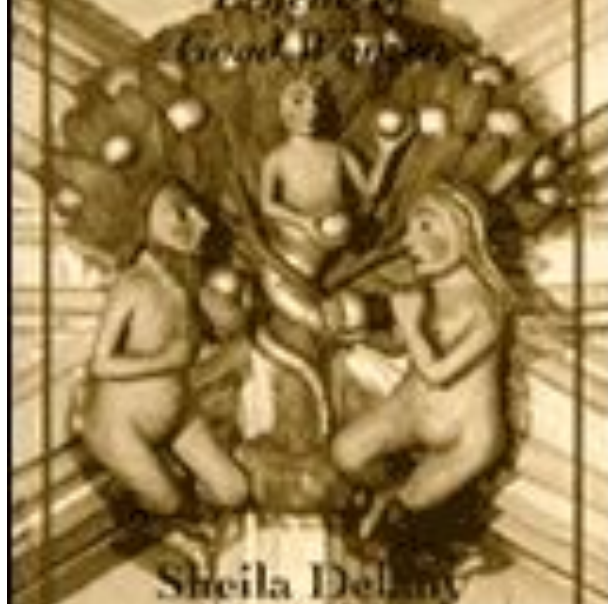
Chaucer's

OVIDIAN ARTS OF LOVE

MICHAEL A. CALABRESE

The Naked Text

Chaucer's
Legend of
Good Women

Sheila Delany