

## APPENDIX A

### Specimens of the Middle English Dialects

The discussion of the Middle English dialects in the text (§ 147) is necessarily general. The subject may be further illustrated by the following specimens. It is not to be expected that students without philological training will be able to follow all the details in the accompanying observations, but these observations may serve to acquaint the reader with the nature of the differences that distinguish one dialect from another. Some of them, such as the endings of the verb or the voicing of initial *f* in Southern and Kentish, are easily enough recognized.

#### Northern

*The Cursor Mundi*, c. 1300.

**P**is are þe maters redde on raw  
**P**at i thynk in þis bok to draw,  
Schortly rimand on þe dede,  
For mani er þai her-of to spede.  
Notful me thinc it ware to man 5  
To know him self how he began,—  
How [he] began in werld to brede,  
How his oxspring began to sprede,  
Bath o þe first and o þe last,  
In quatking curs þis world es past. 10  
Efter haly kyrc[es] state  
**P**is ilk bok it es translate  
In to Inglis tong to rede  
For þe love of Inglis lede,  
Inglis lede of Ingland, 15  
For þe commun at understand.  
Frankis rimes here I redd,  
Comunlik in ilk[a] sted:  
Mast es it wroght for frankis man.  
Ouat is for him na frankis can? 20

Of Ingland þe nacion—  
 Es Inglis man þar in commun—  
**Þe**speche þat man wit mast may spede,  
 Mast þar-wit to speke war nede.  
 Selden was for ani chance 25  
 Praised Inglis tong in france.  
 Give we ilkan þare langage,  
 Me think we do þam non outrage.  
 To laud and Inglis man i spell  
**Þat**understandes þat i tell.... 30

TRANSLATION: These are the matters explained in a row that I think in this book to draw, shortly riming in the doing, for many are they who can profit thereby. Methinks it were useful to man to know himself, how he began,—how he began to breed in the world, how his offspring began to spread, both first and last, through what kind of course this world has passed. After Holy Church's state this same book is translated into the English tongue to read, for the love of English people, English people of England, for the commons to understand. French rimes I commonly hear read in every place: most is it wrought for Frenchmen. What is there for him who knows no French? Concerning England the nation—the Englishman is common therein—the speech that man may speed most with, it were most need to speak therewith. Seldom was by any chance English tongue praised in France. Let us give each their language: methinks we do them no outrage. To layman and Englishman I speak, that understand what I tell.

OBSERVATIONS: The most distinctive feature of the Northern dialect is the retention of OE *ā* as an *a*, whereas it became an *o* in all the other dialects: *raw* (1), *knew* (6), *bath* (9), *haly* (11), *mast* (19, etc.: Northumbrian *māst*), *na* (20). Northern shares with all non-W.S. dialects *ē* for W.S. *æ* (= Gmc. *ǣ*): *dede* (3) rhyming with *spede* (OE *spēdan*), *rede* (13) rhyming with *lede* (OE *lēod*), etc. Characteristic of the Northern is the spelling *qu-* for *hw-*: *quatking* (10), *quat* (20); the retention of a hard consonant in *kyrces* (11), *ilk* (12), *ilka(n)* (18, 27); *s* for *sh* in *Inglis* (13, 14), *Frankis* (17). The pres. participle ends in *-and*: *rimand* (3), the 3rd pers. sing. pres. indic. in *-es*: *understandes* (30). The verb *to be* shows typical Northern forms in *es* (10, 12, etc.) for *is*, *er* (4) and *are* (1), and the pret. plur. *ware* (5), with *a* from Scandinavian influence, corresponding to Midland *wēren*, Southern *wēren*. With this may be compared *þar* (22: ON *þar*)=Southern *þer*. The infinitive *at understand* (16) likewise points to Scandinavian influence and the north. The 3rd pers. pronoun in *th-* is a Northern characteristic at this date, especially in the oblique cases: *þai* (4) *þare* (27), *þam* (28).

## East Midland

*The Bestiary, c. 1250.*

Cethegrande is a fis  
 ðe moste ðat in water is;  
 ðat tu wuldes seien get,  
 gef ðu it soge wan it flet,  
 ðat it were an eilond 5  
 ðat sete one ðe se sond.  
 ðis fis ðat is unride,  
 ðanne him hungreð he gapeð wide;  
 ut of his ðrote smit an onde,  
 ðe swetteste ðing ðat is on londe; 10  
 ðer-fore oðre fisse to him dragen;  
 wan he it felen he aren fagen;  
 he cumen and hoven in his muð;  
 of his swike he arn uncuð  
 ðis cete ðenne hise chaveles lukeð, 15  
 ðise fisses alle in sukeð;  
 ðe smale he wile ðus biswiken,  
 ðe grete maig he nogt bigripen.  
 ðis fis wuneð wið ðe se grund,  
 and liveð ðer evre heil and sund, 20  
 til it cumeð ðe time  
 ðe storm stireð al ðe se,  
 ðanne sumer and winter winnen;  
 ne mai it wunen ðer Ser-inne,  
 So drovi is te sees grund, 25  
 ne mai he wunen ðer ðat stund,  
 oc stireð up and hoveð stille;  
 wiles [ðat] weder is so ille,  
 ðe sipes ðat arn on se fordriven,—  
 loð hem is ded, and lef to liven,—30  
 biloken hem and sen ðis fis;  
 an eilond he wenen it is,  
 ðer-of he aren swiðe fagen,  
 and mid here miȝt ðat-to he dragen.

sipes on festen, 35  
 and alle up gangen;  
 Of ston mid stel in ðe tunder  
 wel[m] to brennen one ðis wunder,  
 warmen hem wel and heten and drinken;  
 ðe fir he and doð hem sinken, 40  
 for sone he diveð dun to grunde,  
 he drepeð hem alle wið-uten wunde.

*Significacio*

Ðis devel is mikel wið and magt,  
 So wicches haven in here craft;  
 he doð men hungren and haven ðrist, 45  
 and mani oðer sinful list,  
 tolleð men to him wið his onde:  
 wo so him he folegeð he findeð sonde;  
 ðo arn ðe little in leve lage;  
 ðe mikle ne maig he to him dragen,—50  
 ðe mikle, i mene ðe stedefast  
 in rigte leve mid fles and gast.  
 wo so listneð develes lore,  
 on lengðe it sal him rewen sore;  
 wo so festcð hope on him, 55  
 he sal him folgen to helle dim.

TRANSLATION: The cetegrande (whale) is a fish, the greatest that is in water; so that thou wouldst say, if thou saw it when it floats, that it was an island that set on the sea-sand. This fish, that is enormous, when hungry gapes wide; out of its throat it casts a breath, the sweetest thing that is on land; therefore other fishes draw to it. When they perceive it they are glad; they come and linger in its mouth—of its deceit they are ignorant. This whale then shuts its jaws, sucks all these fishes in; the small he will thus deceive, the great can he not catch. This fish dwells on the sea-bottom and lives there ever hale and sound till it comes the time that a storm stirs up all the sea, when summer and winter contend. Nor may it dwell therein; so troubled is the bottom of the sea, he can not abide there that hour, but comes to the surface and remains still. Whilst the weather is so ill, the ships (seamen) that are tossed about on the sea—loath to them is death, and to live dear—look about them and see this fish. They think it is an island; thereof they are very glad and draw thereto with all their might, moor fast the ships and all go up (on land) to light a fire on this wonder, from stone with steel in the tinder, to warm themselves well and eat and drink. He feels the fire and doth sink them, for soon he dives

down to the ground and kills them all without wound. *Significatio*. This Devil is so great with will and might, as witches have in their craft, that he makes men to hunger and have thirst and many other sinful desires. He draws men to him with his breath. Whoso follows him finds shame: those are the little (who are) low (weak) in faith; the great he can not draw to him,—the great, I mean the steadfast in right belief with flesh and ghost (body and soul). Whoso listeneth to the Devil's lore, at length shall rue it sorely. Whoso finds hope in him shall follow him to Hell dim.

OBSERVATIONS: The East Midland character of this text is not so much indicated by distinctive features as by a combination of phonological characteristics that can be found individually in other dialects. Thus OE *ǣ* appears as *a*, as it does also at this date generally: *ðat* (2) *water* (2), *fagen* (12), *craft* (44), etc. As in the north OE *ȳ* appears generally as *i*: *unride* (7), *stireð* (22), *fir* (40), *diveð* (41), *ðrist* (45), *sinfull* (46), *list* (46), and *ēo* becomes *e*: *lef* (30), *sen* (31), *devel* (43, 53). But the development of OE *ā>ō* in *loð* (30), *wo* (48), *lore* (53), *sore* (54) indicates a district south of the Humber. Northern influence is possible in *gast* (52) although the *a* may be due to shortening. The morphology is typically East Midland. The 3rd pers. sing. pres. indic. always ends in *-eð* (except in contractions); *hungreð* (8), *gapeð* (8), *lukeð* (15), etc.; the pres. plur. always ends in *-en*: *dragen* (11), *felen* (12), *aren* (12), *cumen* (13), etc.; the strong past participle ends in *-en*: *fordriven* (29), as do all infinitives: *seien* (3), *biswiken* (17), *bigripen* (18), etc.; the 3rd pers. plur. of the pronoun is *he* (12, etc.), *here* (34, 44), *hem* (30, etc.). That the text belongs toward the northern part of the region is indicated by the frequent occurrence of *s* for OE *sc*: *fis*, *fisses* (1, etc.), *sipes* (29), *sonde* (4), *fles* (52), *sal* (54, 56); by the *-es* of the 2nd pers. sing.: *wuldes* (3); and by the more Northern *aren*, *arn* (12, 14, etc.) in place of the typical East Midland form *ben* (which occurs in other parts of the poem).

### West Midland

*St. Katherine, c. 1230.*

In þis ilke burh wes wuniende a meiden swiðe <sup>3ung</sup> of 3eres, <sup>3et</sup> <sup>þ</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>mare</sup> <sup>wurð</sup>, <sup>steðelfest</sup> wiðinnen, of treowe bileave, anes kinges Cost hehte anlepi dohter icuret clergesse Katerine inempnet. <sup>Pis</sup> <sup>3ung</sup> <sup>were</sup>, ha heold 5 hire aldrene hird wisliche & warliche i þe heritage & i þe herd <sup>þ</sup> com of hire burde: nawt for þi <sup>þ</sup> hire þhte god in hire heorte to habben monie under hire & beon icleopet lefdi, <sup>þ</sup> feole telleð wel to, ah ba ha wes offearet of scheome & of sunne, <sup>3ef</sup> þeo weren todreauet oðer misferden, <sup>þ</sup> hire forðfederes, hefden ifostret. For hire seolf ne kepte ha

10 nawt of þe worlde. **P**us, lo, for hare sake ane dale ha etheold of hire  
 caldrene god & spende al **þ** oðer in neodfule & in nakede. **P**eos milde,  
 meoke meiden þeos lufsume lefdi mid lastelese lates ne luvede heo nane  
 lihte plohen ne nane sotte songes. Nalde ha nane ronnes ne nane luve  
 runes leornin ne lustnen, ah eaver ha hefde on hali writ ehnen oðer 15  
 heorte, oftest ba togederes.

TRANSLATION: In this same town was dwelling a maiden very young in years—two lacking of twenty—fair and noble in appearance and form, but yet, which is more worth, steadfast within, of true belief, only daughter of a king named Cost, a distinguished scholar named Katherine. This maiden was both fatherless and motherless from her childhood. But, though she was young, she kept her parents' servants wisely and discreetly in the heritage and in the household that came to her by birth: not because it seemed to her good in her heart to have many under her and be called lady, that many count important, but she was afraid both of shame and of sin if they were dispersed or went astray whom her forefathers had brought up. For herself, she cared naught of the world. Thus, lo, for their sake she retained one part of her parents' goods and spent all the rest on the needy and on the naked. This mild, meek maiden, this lovesome lady with faultless looks, loved no light playings or foolish songs. She would neither learn nor listen to any songs or love poems, but ever she had her eyes or heart on Holy Writ, oftenest both together.

OBSERVATIONS: The more significant West Midland characteristics of the above passage are: the preservation of OE **ȳ** as a rounded vowel, spelled *u*: *icuret*<*cyre* (4), *burde* (7), *sunne* (9), *lustnen* (15); the development of OE **ēo** as a rounded vowel, spelled *eo*, *u*: **3***ung* (1), *freolich* (2), *wurð* (2), etc.; the appearance of OE **ǣ**+nasal as *on*, *om*: *wone* (1), *monie* (8); the i-umlaut of OE **æ**l+cons. as *al*: *aldrene* (6); the feminine pronoun *ha* (5, etc.), *heo* (13) for *she*; the gen. plur. of the 3rd pers. pronoun *hare* (11); the form *nalde* (14) for *nolde*; the unvoicing of final *d* to *t* in the ending *-et*: *icuret* (4), *inempnet* (4), *ifostret* (10), etc. The ending *-ende* of the pres. participle (*wuniende*, 1) is common to East and West Midland, but the ending *-eð* of the plur. pres. indic. (*telleð*, 8), characteristic of the south, is found in West Midland where the East would commonly have *-en*.

### Southern

*The Owl and the Nightingale*, c. 1195 (MS. after 1216).

Al so þu dost on þire side:  
 vor wanne snou līþ þicke & wide,  
 an alle **wi**3tes habbeþ **sor**3e,  
 hu singest from eve fort **amor**3e.

Ac ich alle blisse mid me bringe: 5

ech **wi3t** is glad for mine þinge,  
 & blisseþ hit wanne ich cume,  
 & **hi3teþ a3en** mine kume.

**Þe** blostme ginneþ springe & sprede,  
 boþe inettro & ek on mede. 10

**Þe** lilie mid hire faire wlite  
 wolcumeþ me, þat þu hit w[i]te,  
 bit me mid hire faire blo  
 þat ich shulle to hire flo.

**Þe** rose also mid hire rude, 15  
 þat cumeþ ut of þe þorne wode,  
 bit me þat ich shulle singe  
 vor hire lueve one skenting:

& ich so do **þur3 ni3t** & dai,  
 þe more ich singe þe more I mai, 20  
 an skente hi mid mine songe,  
 ac nopeles **no3t** over-longe;  
 wane ich iso þat men boþ glade,  
 ich nelle þat hi bon to sade;  
 þan is ido vor wan ich com, 25  
 ich fare **a3en** & do wisdom.

Wane mon **ho3eþ** of his sheve,  
 an falewi cumeþ on grene leve,  
 ich fare hom & nime leve:

ne recche ich **no3t** of winteres reve.30  
 wan ich iso þat cumeþ þat harde,  
 ich fare hom to min erde  
 an habbe boþe lueve & þonc  
 þat ich her com & hider swonk.

\* \* \*

“Abid! abid!” þe ule seide,... 35  
 “bu seist bat bu singist mankunne.

& techest hom þat hi fundieþ honne  
 up to þe songe þat evre ilest:  
 ac hit is alre w[u]nder mest,  
 þat þu darst <sup>li3e</sup>so opeliche. 40  
 Wenest þu hi bringe so <sup>li3liche</sup>  
 to Godes riche al singin[d]e?  
 Nai! nai! hi shulle wel avinde  
 þat hi mid longe woþe mote  
 of hore sunnen bidde bote, 45  
 ar hi mote ever kume þare.”

TRANSLATION: All so thou dost [behave] on thy side: for when snow lies thick and wide, and all wights have sorrow, thou singest from evening until morning. But I bring all happiness with me: each wight is glad for my quality and rejoices when I come and hopes for my coming. The blossoms begin to burst forth and spread, both in tree and eke on meadow. The lily with her fair form welcomes me, as thou dost know, bids me with her fair countenance that I should fly to her. The rose also with her ruddy color, that comes out of the thorn-wood, bids me that I should sing something merry for her love. And I do so through night and day—the more I sing, the more I can—and delight her with my song, but none the less not over long; when I see that men are pleased I would not that they be surfeited. When that for which I came is done I go away and do wisely. When man is intent on his sheaves and russet comes on green leaf, I take leave and go home; I do not care for winter’s garb. When I see that the hard (weather) comes I go home to my native country and have both love and thanks that I came here and hither toiled...

“Abide! abide!” the owl said,...“Thou sayst that thou singest mankind and teachest them that they strive hence up to the song that is everlasting. But it is the greatest of all wonders that thou darest to lie so openly. Weenest thou to bring them so lightly to God’s kingdom all singing? Nay, Nay! They shall well find that they must ask forgiveness of their sins with long weeping ere they may ever come there.”

OBSERVATIONS: The Southern character of this text is evident from a number of

distinctive developments. Noteworthy is the retention of OE <sup>ȳ</sup> as a rounded vowel, characteristic of the west and southwest: *cume* (7), *cumeþ* (16), *mankunne* (36), *sunnen* (45). Likewise characteristic of west and southwest is the development of OE <sup>eo</sup> as a rounded vowel (*u*, *ue*, *o*), here spelled *o*: *tro* (10), *blo* (13), *flo* (14), *iso* (23), *boþ* (23: OE *beoþ*), *bon* (24: OE *beon*), *honne* (37). In the southwest OE <sup>ie</sup> developed into either *ü* or *i*, as contrasted with the *e* of all other dialects: *hi* (24, 41, etc.), *hire* (11, etc.). The 3rd pers. sing. pres. indic. of verbs has the characteristic Southern (and East Midland) ending *-eð* (sometimes contracted); *lip* (2), *blisseþ* (7), *hi3teþ* (8), *wolcumeþ* (12), *bit* (13, 17), *cumeþ* (16, 28), *ho3eþ* (27). The plural always has the Southern ending *-eð*, except *bon* (24), which shows Midland influence: *habbeþ* (3), *ginneþ* (9), *boþ* (23), *fundieþ* (37).



Characteristic of the south are the pres. participle in *-inde*: *singinde* (42); the forms of the plur. personal pronoun: *hi* (24, 37), *hore* (45), *hom* (37); the past participle with the prefix *i-* and loss of final *-n*: *ido* (25); and the infinitive with the usual Southern absence of final *-n*: *springe* (9), *sprede* (9), *flo* (14), etc. It is hardly necessary to point out that OE *ā* appears as *o*: *so* (1), *snou* (2), *bope* (10), *more* (20), etc. The distinctive Southern voicing of *f* at the beginning of syllables is evident in *vor* (18, etc.), *avinde* (43).

### Kentish

Dan Michel, *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, 1340.

**Pis** boc is dan Michelis of Northgate, y-write an englis of his **ozene** hand. **Pet** hatte: Ayenbyte of inwyt. And is of þe bockouse of saynt Austines of Canterberi...

Nou ich wille þet ye ywyte hou hit is y-went:  
 þet þis boc is y-write mid engliss of kent. 5  
**Pis** boc is y-mad vor lewede men,  
 Vor vader, and vor moder, and vor oþer ken,  
 ham vor to **berze** vram alle manyere zen,  
 þet ine hare inwytte ne bleve no voul wen.  
 ‘Huo ase god’ in his name yzed, 10  
 þet þis boc made god him yeve þet bread,  
 of angles of hevene and þerto his red,  
 and ondervonge his zaule huanne þet he is dyad. Amen.

Ymende þet þis boc if volveld ine þe eve of þe holy apostles Symon an Iudas, of ane broþer of þe cloystre of saynt austin of Canterberi, Ine 15 þe yeare of oure Ihordes beringe, 1340.

Vader oure þet art ine hevenes, **y-halzed** by þi name, cominde þi riche, y-worþe þi wil ase ine hevene: an ine erþe. bread oure echedayes: yef ous to day, and vorlet ous oure yeldinges: ase and we vorleteþ oure yelderes. and ne ous led **naȝt**: in-to vondinge. ac vri ous 20 vram queade. zuo by hit.

TRANSLATION: This book is Dan Michel’s of Northgate, written in English with his own hand. It is called *Ayenbite of Inwit* (Remorse of Conscience) and belongs to the library of St. Augustine’s at Canterbury... Now I wish that ye know how it has come about that this book is written with English of Kent. This book is made for ignorant men,—for father and for mother and for other kin,—to protect them from all manner of sin, that in their conscience there may remain no foul blemish. “Who as God” is his name said [Michael in Hebrew means “Who is like God”], that made this book: God give him the bread of angels of heaven and thereto his counsel, and receive his soul when that he is

dead. Amen. Mind (note) that this book is fulfilled on the eve of the holy apostles Simon and Judas, by a brother of the cloister of Saint Augustine of Canterbury, in the year of our Lord's bearing, 1340. Our Father that art in heaven, etc.

OBSERVATIONS: Many of the characteristics of Southern English noted in the preceding specimen are likewise found in Kentish. Thus the Southern development of OE *æ* to *e* is better preserved in Kentish than in the southwest: *þet* (2, 5, 9, etc.). *Vader* (7) is commonly an exception in Kentish texts. The Southern voicing of *f* and *s* at the beginning of syllables is very pronounced in Kentish: *vor* (6, 7, 8), *vader* (7, 17), *vram* (8, 21), *voul* (9), *ondervonge* (13), *volveld* (14), *vorlet(ep)* (19, 20), *vondinge* (20), *vri* (20), *zen* (8), *yzed* (10), *zaule* (13), *zuo* (21). Kentish shares in the Southern *-eð* of the plur. pres. indic.: *vorleteþ* (20); the pres. participle in *-inde*: *cominde* (17); the past participle with the *y-* or *i-* prefix and loss of final *-n*: *y-write* (1, 5), *y-worþe* (18), etc.; and the loss of *-n* in the infinitive: *to berze* (8). Like the rest of the south, Kentish is marked by the absence of *th-* forms in the 3rd pers. plur. of the personal pronoun: *ham* (8), *hare* (9). The *a* in these forms is a Kentish characteristic. The most characteristic feature of Kentish is the appearance of *ȝ* for W.S. *ȝ*: *ken* (7), *zen* (8), *ymende* (14), *volveld* (14), with the complete absence of the Southwestern rounding (cf. preceding selection). Similar absence of rounding marks the development of OE *ēo*: *berze* (8), *hevene* (*s*) (12, 17, 18), *erþe* (18). The typical Kentish spelling for OE *ēa* appears in *dyad* (13). Here also it is hardly necessary to note the development of OE *ā>ō*: *oʒene* (1), *huo* (10), *holy* (14), etc.

### London

Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, c. 1387.

Whan that Aprille with his shoures sote  
 The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,  
 And bathed every veyne in swich licour,  
 Of which vertu engendred is the flour;  
 Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth 5  
 Inspired hath in every holt and heeth  
 The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
 Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,  
 And smale fowles maken melodye,  
 That slepen al the night with open yē, 10  
 (So priketh hem nature in hir corages):  
 Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages  
 (And palmers for to seken straunge strondes)  
 To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes;  
 And specially from every shires ende 15

Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,  
 The holy blisful martir for to seke,  
 That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke....

Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioress,  
 That of hir smyling was full simple and coy; 20  
 Hir gretteste ooth was but by sēynt Loy;  
 And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.  
 Ful wel she song the service divyne,  
 Entuned in hir nose ful semely;  
 And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly, 25  
 After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,  
 For Frensh of Paris was to hir unknowe.  
 At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle;  
 She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,  
 Ne wette hir fingres in hir sauce depe. 30  
 Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,  
 That no drope ne fille up-on hir brest.  
 In curteisye was set ful muche hir lest.  
 Hir over lippe wyped she so clene,  
 That in hir coppe was no ferthing sene 35  
 Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.  
 Ful semely after hir mete she raughte,  
 And sikerly she was of greet disport,  
 And ful plesaunt, and amiable of port,  
 And peyned hir to countrefete chere 40  
 Of court, and been estatlich of manere,  
 And to ben holden digne of reverence.  
 But, for to speken of hir conscience,  
 She was so charitable and so pitous,  
 She wolde wepe, if that she sawe a mous 45  
 Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.  
 Of smale houndes had she, that she fedde  
 With rosted flesh, or milk and wastel-breed.  
 But sore weep she if oon of hem were deed,  
 Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte: 50  
 And al was conscience and tendre herte.  
 Ful semelv hir wimple pinched was:

Hir nose tretys; hir eyen greye as glas;  
 Hir mouth ful smal, and ther-to softe and reed;  
 But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed; 55  
 It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe;  
 For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.  
 Ful fetis was hir cloke, as I was war.  
 Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar  
 A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene; 60  
 And ther-on heng a broche of gold ful shene,  
 On which ther was first write a crowned A,  
 And after, *Amor vincit omnia*.

OBSERVATIONS: The language of Chaucer may be taken as representing with enough accuracy the dialect of London at the end of the fourteenth century. It is prevailingly East Midland with some Southern and Kentish features. The latter are a little more prominent in Chaucer than in the nonliterary London documents of the same date. Among the usual East Midland developments may be noted OE *ā* as *ō*: *so* (11), *goon* (12), *holy* (17), etc.;

OE *ǣ* as *a*: *that* (1), *spak* (25), *smal* (54), *war* (58), *bar* (59); the unrounding of OE *ȳ* to *i*: *swich* (3), *which* (4) *first* (62), but Kentish *e* is to be noted in *lest* (33: OE *lyst*) and possible evidence of the Western and Southwestern rounding in the *u* of *Canterbury* (16)

and *much* (33) although the *u* in these words can be otherwise accounted for; OE *ĕo* as *e*: *seke* (18), *cleped* (22), *depe* (30), *brest* (32), *ferthing* (35), *weep* (49), *herte* (51). Since

the W.S.diphthong *īe* is replaced in all other districts by *e*, Chaucer has *yerde* (50). His inflectional forms are mostly East Midland. Thus he has the usual East Midland in *-eð* the 3rd pers. sing. pres. indic.: *hath* (2, 6, 8), *priketh* (11), and the plural in *-en* or *-e*: *maken* (9), *slepen* (10), *longen* (12), *wende* (16), *were* (18). The feminine pronoun in the nominative is *she*; the plural forms are *they* (16, 18), *hir* (11), *hem* (11). In his past participles he shows a mixture of Midland and Southern tendencies. Characteristic of East Midland is the loss of the prefix *y-* and the retention of the final *-n*: *holpen* (18), *dronken* (36), *holden* (42), but he has the Southern *y-* in *y-ronne* (8), *y-taught* (28), and the loss of *-n* in *unknowe* (27), *write* (62), etc. The infinitive has the usual Midland *-n* in *goon* (12), *seken* (13), *been* (41), *ben* (42), *speken* (43), but the Southern absence of *-n* in *falle* (29), *carie* (31), *kepe* (31), *countrefete* (40), *wepe* (45).