

Chaucer's Contribution to English Language and Versification

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Chaucer made notable contribution to the English language and versification. In 1360 English was split in four dialects. Chaucer popularised, reshaped and reformed the East Midland dialect and gave it the form of the standard tongue. He imparted to his native tongue smoothness and suppleness which it had not known since the Norman times and breathed into this dialect a high poetical life.

In the sphere of versification, Chaucer made substantial contribution. He cast aside alliteration and doggerel rhyme, and employed three principle meters: the eight syllable line rhyming in couplets as in the "Book of the Duchess", the ten-syllable line also rhyming in couplets as in the "Book of the Duchess", "The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales", and the same line arranged in seven-line stanza (known as "rhyme royal") as in "Troilus and Criseyde". The heroic couplet he introduced in English verse; the rhyme

royal he invented. He had a firm grasp on the true way of wedding the stressed and syllabic system by accomodating metrical ictus to national accept. On his shorter ~~poems~~ he made, however, endless metrical experiments and showed a mastery of intricate verse form remarkable even in an age when the French had made verse-writing a matter of almost, gymnastic skill.

Chaucer kept the sense of melody. From his very earliest poems his work is almost faultless and as he progressed in skill his music became constantly more varied and flexible. He was an artist in verse effects, who not only wrote with a metrical accuracy, fluency and variety that have rarely been surpassed, but also peid constant and delicate heed to the necessities of rhythm and tone colour.

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