Stress of romance words in Chaucer's prologue to The Knight's Tale.

Helen S. Ward

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"STRESS OF ROMANCE WORDS IN CHANCER'S PROLOGUE TO THE KNIGHT'S TALE."

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF "MASTER OF ARTS."

by
HELEN S. WARD
1909.
Stress of Romance Words in Chaucer’s Prologue to the Knight’s Tale.

The effect of the Norman-French Conquest on the vocabulary of the English language was profound. Prior to the Twelfth Century the language contained but few word forms foreign to the Old English. The vocabulary of the Eleventh Century contained about thirty words of French origin and these must have come into the language previous to the conquest.

The Twelfth Century marks the beginning of an important era in the language of the Islanders—the commencement of a rapid linguistic change. In the English of the Thirteenth Century about twelve per cent of the words were Romanic. If we take the writers of this period the proportion will be smaller. The North Midland Ormulum written about 1200 is almost entirely free from foreign words. The author intended his work to be recited to the illiterate and so strove to make the language plain. Yet such a word as gyn, shortened form of French engin (in genuity) shows that even in his environment the vocabulary of the humbler classes had been affected by these words of foreign importation. While on the other hand the Ancren Riwle of this period, by an unknown writer, owing possibly to the nature of its subject, contains a considerable number of borrowed words.

The Norman French were a Scandanavian tribe with a changed
nature, Christianized in the Mediaeval sense of the term, and highly civilized. A peculiar quality of the race was their suppleness—living among Frenchmen they easily acquired the customs and language of the people. The advent of this foreign element into England was not followed by the breaking down of existing institutions, suppression of the native language, but rather a coalescence of foreign and native customs and word forms.

The difference between the English of 1300 and 1350 marks the time when the higher Norman classes in England became familiar with the English. Up to this time there had been two races in England, having each a language of its own. The Nobility of the Normans retained their French and only in rare instances acquired the English. But the events of the Thirteenth Century were gradually narrowing the channel which had separated the two races. When the French possessions of the English in France were wrested from the hands of King John the political ties which bound the Norman-French in England to their brethren across the channel were severed. Henceforth they were Englishmen not Frenchmen. They fought side by side with their neighbors against their French enemies. Social barriers were breaking down. Marriage ties were connecting the two races. Englishmen were acquiring wealth and high social position. The feeling of a common nationality was beginning to prevail over the estranging memories of subjugation and race. It was only natural that the French-speaking aristocracy should begin to learn the English. It is said that during the first half of the Fourteenth Century French was the language used in the schools, but during the last half English
took its place. Of the vernacular literature from the Conquest to the middle of the Fourteenth Century by far the larger part consisted of translations from the French and Latin. All that was written down to the Thirteenth Century was for the comparatively unlearned and even these would reasonably be supposed to have some knowledge of the language of the higher classes, since the one who had no knowledge of French could not read at all. But when English became again the medium through which the educated were addressed, the writer could borrow, without fear of being unintelligible, from the French. In the writings of the end of the Thirteenth Century and the first half of the Fourteenth, the proportion of French words was so great that the English of this period can well be called a mixed language. The group of poems, *Alisaunder*, *Coeur de Lion*, *Arthur* and *Merlin* of this period contain many long passages in which every noun, adjective and verb of importance is French. In the *Cursor Mundi* of the same period there is an average of at least one Romance word in every two lines. The Alliterative Poems of the Midland and Northern dialects (1350) have a great abundance of French words. Chaucer's style abounds in words of French origin. It is less marked by Gallicisms than any other writings of his day, and it cannot be absolutely proven that he has used even in his translations foreign words which had not gained a recognized place in the English vocabulary. His verse is among the smoothest in all literature. The Romance forms are smoother, longer, more subtle, more fitted than the native ones, to the dignified thoughts and refinement of feelings expressed in the verse.

Note the skilful discrimination in the use of words, the wonderful grace and smoothness of the rhythm, accomplished largely by the
use of foreign elements with their great breadth of vowel sound in the opening lines of the Prologue:

When that Aprille with his shoures scote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
When Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halue cours yronne,
And make styltes maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye,
So priketh hem nature in hir corages;
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to seken straunge strondes.
To ferme halwes kowthe in sondry londes,
And specially from every shires ende.
Of Engelond to Caunturbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they seeke.

Compare the above lines with the following quotation from the Ormulum. Aside from its utter lack of literary appeal and the unattractiveness of its subject matter the rustic, monotonous quality of the movement is felt:

Nu brotherr Walterr,brotherr min
afterr the floeshess hinde;
and brotherr min i Christendom
thurrh fulluhht and thurrh trowrothe,
and brotethr min i Godess has,
set o the threda wise,
thurrh thatt witt hafenn takenn ba
and rephill buoo to folllahenn
unnderr hanunhiss had and lif,
swa summ Samt Awwsten sette,
icc hafe don swa summ thee badd,
and forthedd tc then wille
icc hafe wennd inntill Emglissah
Goddspelles hallhe lare,
afterr thatt little witt tatt me
min Drinhten hafeth lenedd.

The foreign words which have come into our language do not stand
apart from native words as a distinct and independent class—they
are Anglicized, subjected to English laws and analogies and conform
to native ones. The conformity of foreign elements to native stress
laws was a gradual process. In the early English verse we find hon-
our, cuntree'coulour etc accented as in Old French. The usage of
Chaucer in this respect is variable; for example, we find hon'our as
well as hon our. Again about thirty per cent of the Norman-French
words have in Chaucer's Prologue shifted the accent to the first syll-
able of the word, thus conforming to the laws of English stress;
armed bat ailles etc. But long before the end of the Fourteenth
Century, Chaucer's period, some of these Romance forms, either from
long and constant usage or to suit the requirements of the verse, have
acquired in addition to their original Romance stress, English stress.
It would seem from the following words, appended as a verification of above statement, that some words on the contrary shortly after their introduction into the vernacular language were subjected to English stress conditions. Honore became in verse honore as early as 1275. This is the first reference in the Oxford to the word.

In the Fourteenth Century the French and English accents are still to be seen but with greater prevalence of the Romance.

Words of French origin were, when first introduced into English stressed in accordance to their native system of accentuation.

Words with French Stress in Chaucer's Prologue to Knight's Tale.

Ab so lu ci oum
ac'cord'e
ac'cord'
ac'haat'
ad'ver'si tee,' a poth'e ca ries
a que yn'taunce
ar'ray'(tharray)
ar'rai/
ar'rai'
ar'rai'
ar'rai'
ar rer'age'
as'trom'o maye'
as'sen't
as sent,

au di livre
au en ture
au en tures
bach el er
bai liff,
bar gaymes
beg gest ere
ben e fice
ben e fise,
be ny gn e
be nigh e
blank man ger,
bok e ler,
bo ras,
bur doun,
bur geys,
Cl el'
car pen ter,
certeym,
cercue e,
cham pe oon,
chap e leym e
char i tee,
char i tee,
curious,
curteis ie,
curteis,
curteis yse,
dug ger e
dug ger
daunc e
daung oys
decre e
degre e,
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ex ample,
es change
es tat,
ex cel lance
ex pert,
fac ultee,
felic itee,
flattery ee,
frater ni tee,
gal yng gale,
gol iarde eye,
gournance,
gournour,
gournyng,
hab er geon,
harlot ries,
non est e,
non our,
hostel rye,
hostel rye,
hostel rye,
hos til er,
har mour,
im ages,
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<td>pat' rich',</td>
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<tr>
<td>pes ti lence,</td>
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<td>phil os'o phié</td>
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<td>295</td>
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<tr>
<td>phi sik',</td>
<td>411</td>
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<tr>
<td>pil' grim age,</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pil' grim age,</td>
<td>724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pil' grim ages,</td>
<td>12</td>
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As early as 1200 the German stress, or the first syllable if the word accented, began to assert itself in French words.

**English Stress.**

```
x/  
a co r daunt,
```

```
x/
a cha tours,
```

```
amb' lere,
```

```
ar mee,
```

```
bat ailles,
```

```
be g
```

```
bok e ler,
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bok e leer,
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bok e ler,
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Line 37.

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568.
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569.
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469.
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60.
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61.
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252.
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558.
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668.
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471.
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log yk,
ly targe,
mag yk,
maun ciple,
maun ciple,
man ciple,
man tel,
man chant,
man chant,
man chant,
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phi sik,
pil grim es,
pom ely,
pro fit,
pur chas,
reb el,
rem e naunt,
re sons,
roun cy,
san gwyne,
ser geant,
ser vice,
se sons,
se son,
som nour,
so m nour,
so m nour,
sop er,
sop er,
sop er,
sop er,
sop er,
st at ut,
stor ie,
stu die,
tab ard,
tau emes,
ver tu,
Chaucer and other writers of his period took advantage of the circumstance of the accent being unfixed and stressed some words of Romance origin in two ways.

Words with both Romance and English Stress:

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<th>Word</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Line</th>
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<td>tab'ard</td>
<td>541.</td>
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<td>719.</td>
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<td>vit'ail le</td>
<td>248.</td>
<td>vit'ail le</td>
<td>749.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Acor dant.

O. F. acor dant pr.pple. of acorder.

1315- Acor daunt—Shoreham 89

Acor daunt to thy trausyl,
Lord; grant me thy coroune.

1374- A cor daunt.

Chaucer- Parlt. Foules 203

1393- A cor daunt:

Gower Conf.III.163.

So thy prince for to queme
Is nought to reson accordaunt.

Battælia-Latin.

O.F. battaille.
M.E. batayle, bataile, bataille.

1297- Bat a yle
R. Glouc.369.

pere, as be batayle was, an
abbey he let rere bat yys y-cluped
in Engelond, abbey of be bast ayhe.

1297- R. Glouc. 514 Battaille

H' mette hom atte laste.
at yn colne & smete there an bataile.

1300- Bat el.

Cursor M.-3463.

Bituix Wh/born a batel blind.
1300- Battail e

Cursor M. 6970.
Whenne bat dei to bataile yede
1300- Battail.

Cursor M. 7495.
Yon es a stalworth bat ail wright.

1300- Battail.

Cursor M. 471.
Aseyn him yaf he batail grym.

1380-
R Brunne Chron. 276.
Ise an oste--comand bi bitailes ten.

1380- Battail.

William of Palerne 3562.
Alle his burnes blize in X batailes he setts.

1375- Battail

Barbour Bruce I, 105.
Durst name of Walis in bataill ride.

1386- Battailles.

Chaucer Prol. 61.

Bokeler, bokeleer.

Latin type Buccularius, adj.
O.F. boucler, buckler.

1300- Buckler

K. Alis 1190.

Saddes,
That sweord and bockler hadde.
1386- boole

Chaucer Prol. 558.

A sword and a boole baar he by his side.

Bok' e leer" Prol. 668
Bok' e ler, " 471
Bok’ e ler, 112.

Catel:-

Latin Capitāli, neuter of adj. capitālis, O. F. (Central)

Chatel. Pr. Captal, capdal O. F., had also according to dialect
and date, catel, ketal, cateul, cathel, catel.

M. E. cathel, catelyl, catelyl.

1275- Catel.

Say 30673.

He nam tonnes (gode) and pat catel (1205 hte) hade (per)ine.

1300- Catel.

Samun 46 in E. E. P. (1862)

6 Sip' pat pe world nis nort and cat' el nis bot vanite.

1300- Cat' el.

Cursor M. 27934.

It wastes bodi and als catel.

1300- Cat' ell.

Cursor M. 6002.

Hors, asse, mule, ox, camell
Dunyan deid a' al pair catell.
1325- Cat el.

Metr. Hom. (1862) 131.
An unseli knefe
That wald gladli katel have.

1330- Cat el.

Amis. & Amil. 1885.
Al her catel than was spent
Save twelf pans.

1340- Cat el.

Ayerb. 36.
Pet hi hadde huet cas yualle-hire catel sauf.

1375- Cat tel.

Barbour Bruce XVIII, 274.
Bot cattell haftundyn nane,
Outane a kow that wos haltand.

1393- Cat el.

Gower Conf. II 128.
Of golde, of catel, or of londe.

1394- Cat el.

Oper cattell oper clop to coveren wit/our bohes.

Certeyn.

Late Latin or Romanic type,
certānus, certāno. O. F. certain.
1297- Cer'teyn".

R. Glouc. (1724) 378.

To a man to bere remoure a certeyn rente by pagere.

1300- Cer'tain.'

Cursor M. 12785.

John

To bring fra certain ti band.

1300- Cer'tain.'

Cursor M. 8933.

Ilk dai: a certain hore if par lighted dun of heuen ture Angels.

Cursor M. 8933.

Sant paule sais of yr last dai,
Es man mai certain per-of sai.

1300- Cert ain er.

Cursor M. 23732.

Es nathing certainer pan dede,
Ne uncertainer pan es te tide.

1314- Cer'teyn".

Guy Warw. (A) 900.

His stede, that certeyn was and gode at nede.

1320- Ser'tayn.

Seuyn Sag. (W.) 2901.

Sir, for sertaym
That wald I here and that ful fayn.
1325- Ser tayn.

Coer de l. 3028.

Rychard bad his men seche
For some wys clerk and sertayn leche
For to loke hys yrm.

1330- Cer tayn.

R. Brunne Chron. (1810) 39.

For he pam hisouht to gyf

1330- Cer tayn.

R. Brunne Chron. (1810) 82.

My boke sais certayn pat he gaf neuer pat rede.

1340- Cer'tayn.

Cursor M. 11577 (Lati)

This was pe somme in certayn
Of the childryn pat was slayn.

1340- Cer'tain.

Cursor M. 19507 (Fairf)

Walcanda fra stede to stede in mare certain faippen ware are.

1362- Cer'teyne.


pei timbre not so lye,
Me bowte none
Borgages beacs certeyne.

1377- Certeune.


It is an Unreasonable Religione
pat hath rite howe te of certeune.
1374- Certeyn.

Chaucer Troylus III, 547.

She to soper come, With a certeyn of her owene men.

1386- Certeyn.


Bisiching him to lene him a certeyn of gold.

1386- Certeyn.

Chaucer Prol. 375.

Certeyn " " 815.

Conscience, Latin, conscientia.
O.F. conscience, Twelfth Century.

1393- Conscience.

Gower Conf. I. 62.

An ypoorite is this
A man which feigneth conscience.

1325- Conscience.

Metr. Hom. 32.

And my conscience gan me mald
It schawed thar ful openlye
That I led me life wrany wishe.

1340-

Gaw and Gr. Knt. 1196.

Pe lede lay.
Compast in his conscience to quat
Pat case my s o per amount.

1340/ Conscience.
Pe tendre payne es gnawynng within
Of conscience pat bites als vermyl.

1385 Conscience.

Chaucer I.C.W. 1253.

Dido
Osily wemen, a ful of pite of trouthe of conscience.

1386 Con science.

Chaucer Prol. 150.

Al was conscience.

1393 Conscience.


Pompeie sigh his peciens
And toke pite with conscience.

1393 Con science.

Gower Conf. II, 108.

But upon youre conscience
Min holy Fader, li meth ye.

Honor = honour.

Latin, honorum, O.F. onor, onur.
Early M.E. anor, anour.
Late M.E. honor, honour, honour.

1200 Onur.


Hie gwen here elmesse. o Fer onur to haven, o fer he maielles for shame.

1275 Honure.

Say 6085.

Hi leide hine mid honur Heze in pan toure.
1300- Honour.

Cursor M. 23586.

Heaven and earth as creature
Salber pam wis cap and honour.

1300 -Honour.

Cursor M. 437.

And bus he (Lucifer) leses his hret honour.

1320- On oure.

R. Brunne Medit.1131.

We onely hym bank and do hym oure.

1330- Honour.

Otuel 473.

It hadde be more honour to be.
For so be to habbe i-smite me

1385- Honour.

Chaucer L.G.W: Prol.81.

You see I do yt in honour Of love.

1385- Honour.

Chaucer Prol.582.

1385-(or 1386)

Honour.

Chaucer Prol. 46.

1388- Honour.

King All. 1388.

Hä. zaf: whe lordyn gret honoure
And parted we them his fader treasure.
Gower Conf. III. 24.

So as she may...
Her honour and her name save.

Helen S. Ward.