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

Helen S. Ward

University of Louisville

Follow this and additional works at: http://ir.library.louisville.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/1529

This Master’s Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. This title appears here courtesy of the author, who has retained all other copyrights. For more information, please contact thinkir@louisville.edu.
"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.
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 stroye to make the language plain. Yet such a word as gyn, shortened form of French engen (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 chasm 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 knowl-
edge 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, Alissaunber, 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 digni-
fied thoughts and refinement of feelings expressed in the verse.

Note the skilful discrimination in the use of words, the wonder-
ful grace and smoothness of the rythme, 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 smale fawtes maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye,
So priketh hem nature in hir corages;
Thankes longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to seken straunges strondes.
To ferne halwes kowthe in sondry londes,
And specially from every shires ende.
Of England to Caunterbury 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 un-
attractiveness of its subject matter the rustic, monotonous quality
of the movement is felt:

Nu brotherr Walter, brotherr min
afterr the flesshess hinde;
and brotherr min i Christendom
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 honour, counter, colour 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 syllable of the word, thus conforming to the laws of English stress; armée 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. *Honure* became in verse *honur* 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.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line 222</th>
<th>Ab so lu ci oun</th>
<th>ac'cord'</th>
<th>ac'cord'</th>
<th>ac'haat'</th>
<th>ad'ver'si tee,</th>
<th>a poth' e cari es</th>
<th>a queyn taunce</th>
<th>ar'ray'(tharray)</th>
<th>ar'rai/</th>
<th>ar'rai'</th>
<th>ar'rai'</th>
<th>ar rer age</th>
<th>as tron' o maye;</th>
<th>as sent'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line 222</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>777</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
as sent,

"as sent,

'au di tour'

"au en ture

au en tures

"bach el er'

bai liff,'

"bar gaynes'

"beg gest ere'

ben e fice'

"ben e fice',

"ben e fice'

be ny gn e

"be nign e

blank mon ger,'

bok e ler,

bo ras,'

bur doun,'

bur geys,'

Cat el'

car pen ter,'

"cer teyn,'

cer uc e,

cham pe oun,

chap e leyn e'

char i têe,'

'char i tee,'

"chev ys saunc e'

chv a chie e
curious,
cur teis ie,
cur teis,
cur tel sye,
dag ger e
dag ger
daunc e
daun ger'ous
de cre' e
de gre'e,
de gre'e,
de gre'e,
de gre'e,
de lit,
de lit,
des deyn,
des pit ous,
dit te lees,
dez ye,
de voit,
di ges tibl e
dign e
diligent,
dil i gent,
di o cis e,
dis creet,
dis penc e,
dis port,
dy uyn e,
in fleet,
ing ge men, 778.
ing ge men, 805.
ing ge men, 833.
ing ge men, 818.
just ice, 314.
kep ere, 172.
lan gage, 211.
let u ari es, 426.
li cour 3.
lo de men age, 403.
ly ver ie, 363.
mais trie, 165.
ma l a dye, 419.
man ere, 140.
mar i age, 212.
mat ere, 727.
mel o dye, 9.
mer cen ari e, 514.
mon eye, 703.
mort reux 384.
mot tel le, 271.
mys ter, 613.
na cions, 53.
nat ure, 11.
nat u reel, 416.
ô be di ent. 815.
pil grim ages,
  "  "
pi ances,
  "  "
pi tous,
  "  "
plen teous,
  "  "
ple saunt,
  "  "
pauraille,
  "  "
poyuaut,
  "  "
prak ti sour,
  "  "
pre last,
  "  "
prey eres,
  "  "
pre or esse,
  "  "
pul trye,
  "  "
pur treye,
  "  "
pur chase,
  "  "
pur chas yng,
  "  "
re lig i oun,
  "  "
re likes,
  "  "
rem e dies,
  "  "
re noun,
  "  "
re soun,
  "  "
re soun,
  "  "
re pen tant,
  "  "
re ver ence,
  "  "
re ver ence,
  "  "
re ver ence,
  "  "
re ver ence,
  "  "
rever ence,
  "  "
rud e liche,
As early as 1200 the German stress, or the first syllable if the word accented, began to assert itself in French words.

English Stress.
bur geys,
cat el,
cer teyn,
chap'el,
chaun trie,
con seil,
con seil,
con seil,
cos yn,
daun ger,
daun gers,
deyn tee,
doc tor,
feyn ed,
fors' ter,
gen'til,
gen til,
gen til,
gob'et,
gip ser,
ger' ner,
ger land,
hon'our,
har' lot,
iang'ler,
laz'ars,
lat'oun,
les'soun,
log yk,

ly targe,

mag yk,

maun ciple,

maun ciple,

man ciple,

man tel,

mar chant,

mar chant,

mar chal,

med lee,

mor mal,

oyn ons,

par doun,

par fit,

pal frey,

par ishle,

par ishle,

par ishle,

pat ente,

per sone,

per son,

per son,

per son,

per gun,

per soun,

phi sik,
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cat el</td>
<td>540.</td>
<td>cat el</td>
<td>373.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bok e ler</td>
<td>112.</td>
<td>bok e ler</td>
<td>558.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burgeys</td>
<td>369.</td>
<td>burgeys</td>
<td>754.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cer teym</td>
<td>451.</td>
<td>cer teym</td>
<td>815.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hon our</td>
<td>46.</td>
<td>hon our</td>
<td>582.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>par fit</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>par fit</td>
<td>72.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phi sik</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>phi sik</td>
<td>413.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pur chase</td>
<td>608.</td>
<td>Pur chase</td>
<td>256.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re soun</td>
<td>37.</td>
<td>re soun</td>
<td>276.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re soun</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>re soun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>san gwyn</td>
<td>333.</td>
<td>san gwyn</td>
<td>439.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ser vysc</td>
<td>250.</td>
<td>ser vysc</td>
<td>122.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sop er</td>
<td>348.</td>
<td>sop er</td>
<td>799.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tab ard</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>tab ard</td>
<td>719.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vit ail le</td>
<td>248.</td>
<td>vit ail le</td>
<td>749.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vit ail e</td>
<td>569.</td>
<td>vit ail e</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acor dant.

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

1315- Acor daunt—Shoreham 89

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

1374- A cor daunt.

Chaucer. Prol 37.

1393- Ac cor daunt:

Gower Conf. III. 163.

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

Bataille-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 y-cluped
in Engelond, abbey of be bast ayle.

1297- R. Glouc. 514 Bataille

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

1300- Bat el.

Cursor M. -3463.

Bituix Wh/born a batel blind.
Whenne bat bai to bataile ȝede

Yon es a stalworth bat aile wright.

Alle his burns blize in X batailes he setts.

Durst nane of Walis in bataill ride.

Bokeler, bokeleer.

Bokeler, bokeleer.

Saddes, That sweord and bockler hadde.
1386- boc'ler

Chaucer Prol. 558.

A sword and a boole ar baar he by his side.

Bok'e leer" Prol. 668

Bok'e ler," 471

Bok'e ler,' 112.

Catel:-

Latin Capitalei, neuter of adj. capitalis, O. F. (Central)

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

M. E. cathel, caital, catayl.

1275- Cate'el.

Say 30673.

He nam tonnes (gode) and pat cate1 (1205ste) daide (per)ine.

1300- Cate'el.

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

6 Sippat pe world nis nort and cate'el nis bot vanite.

1300- Cate'el.

Cursor M. 27934.

It wastes bodi and als cate1.

1300- Cat'ell.

Cursor M. 6002.

Hors, asse, mule, ox, camell
Dunpan deid al pair cateell.
1325 - Cat. el.

Metr. Hom.(1862) 131.

An unsenli knafe
That wald gladli katel have.

1330 - Cat. el.

Amis. & Amil. 1885.

Al her catel than was spent
Save twelf pans.

1340 - Cat. el.

Ayenb. 36.

Pet hi hadde huet cas yualle-hire catel sauf.

1375 - Cat. tel.

Barbour Bruce XVIII, 274.

Bot cattell ha sundyn nane,
Outane a kow that was haltand.

1393 - Cat. el.

Gower Conf.II 128.

Of golde, of catel, or of londe.

1394 - Cat. el.


Oper catell oper clop to coveren with our bohes.

Certeyn.

Late Latin or Romanic type,
certānus, certāno. O. E. certain.
To a man to bere more a certeyn rente by penger.

To bring from certain ti pander.

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

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

His stede, that certeyn was and gode at nede.

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

Coer de 3028.

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

1330- Cer tayn.

R. Brunne Chron. (1810) 39.

For yer he pam bisouht to to gy ets a cer tayn.

1330- Cer tayn.

R. Brunne Chron. (1810) 82.

My boke sais cer tayn pat he gach neuer pat rede.

1340- Cer tayn.

Cursor M. 11577 (Lanl.)

This was pe somme in cer tayn
Of the childryn pat was slayne.

1340- Cer tain.

Cursor M. 19507 (Fairf.)

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

1362- Cer tyn.


pei timbre not so lye,
Ne bowte none
Borgages beas cer tyn.

1377- Cer tyn.


It is an unreasonable Religions
pat hath right nowte of cer tyn.
1374- Certeyn.

Chaucer Troylus III, 547.
She to soper come., With a certeyn of her owene men.

1386- Certeyn.

Biseching 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 wrang wishe.

1340-

Gaw and Gr. Knt. 1196.
Pe lede lay.
Compast in his conscience toquat
Pat case my ȝt Mene o per amount.

1340/ Conscience.
Pe tendre payne es gnawyng within
Of conscience pat bites als vermyll.

1385 Conscience.

Chaucer I.C.W. 1253.

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

1386 Conscience.

Chaucer Prol. 150.
Al was conscience.

1393 Conscience.

Pompeie sigh his peciens
And toke pite with conscience.

1393 Conscience.

Gower Conf. II, 108.
But upon youre conscience
Min holy Fader, di meth ye.

Honour—honour.
Latin, honorem, O.F. onor, onur.
Early M.E. anur, 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.
Hie leide hine mid honure Hegge in pan toure.
1300 - Honour.

Cursor M. 23586.

Heaven and earth as creature
Salve et virum capite et honore.

1300 - Honour.

Cursor M. 437.

And thus he (Lucifer) loses his great honor.

1320 - On ouré.

R. Brunne Medit. 1131.

We noly hym plakki and do hym honoure.

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. Prolr. 81.

You see I do yt in honour of love.

1385 - Honour.

Chaucer Prolr. 582.

1385-(or 1386)
Honour.

Chaucer Prolr. 46.

1388 - Honour.

King Allis.

Haste lording gret honoure
And parted we hem his fader treasure.
1390- Hon our.

Gower Conf. III. 24.

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

Helen S. Ward.