



## Hearing, smelling, savoring, and touching in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

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HEARING, SMELLING, SAVORING, AND TOUCHING  
IN CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES

by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the faculty of the

Department of English

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Graduate College

University of Arizona

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
ABBREVIATIONS OF THE WRITINGS OF CHAUCER . . . . .	v
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
History of the problem . . . . .	1
Procedure of the thesis . . . . .	5
II. ANALYSIS OF THE SENSES HEARING, SMELLING, SAVORING, AND TOUCHING IN THE CANTERBURY TALES . . . . .	8
Hearing . . . . .	8
Language, style, meter, and evidence of Chaucer's ear for the rythms of other poets . . . . .	8
The speaking voice . . . . .	13
The singing voice . . . . .	18
Crying, shrieking, clamoring . . . . .	21
Weeping, wailing, and sobbing . . . . .	23
Sighing . . . . .	25
Laughing . . . . .	26
Whispering, groaning, and other miscellaneous vocal sounds . . . . .	28
Melody of instruments . . . . .	33
Miscellaneous sounds . . . . .	35

219145

CHAPTER	PAGE
Smelling . . . . .	41
Savoring . . . . .	48
Touching . . . . .	54
III. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF RESULT . . . . .	58
IV. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	64
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	65
APPENDIX . . . . .	67

# ABBREVIATIONS OF THE CANTERBURY TALES

CkProl	The Cook's Prologue
CkT	The Cook's Tale
ClProl	The Clerk's Prologue
ClT	The Clerk's Tale
CT	The Canterbury Tales
CYProl	The Canon's Yeoman's Prologue
CYT	The Canon's Yeoman's Tale
FranklProl	The Franklin's Prologue
FranklT	The Franklin's Tale
FrProl	The Friar's Prologue
FrT	The Friar's Tale
GenProl	The General Prologue
HF	The House of Fame
KnT	The Knight's Tale
LGW	The Legend of Good Women
MancProl	The Manciple's Prologue
MancT	The Manciple's Tale
MelProl	The Prologue of Melibee
MelT	The Tale of Melibee
MerchProl	The Merchant's Prologue
MerchT	The Merchant's Tale
MillProl	The Miller's Prologue
MillT	The Miller's Tale
MkProl	The Monk's Prologue
MkT	The Monk's Tale
MLEpi	Epilogue to Man of Law's Tale
MLInt	Man of Law's Introduction
MLProl	Man of Law's Prologue
MLT	Man of Law's Tale
NPProl	The Nun's Priest's Prologue
NPT	The Nun's Priest's Tale
PardProl	The Pardoner's Prologue
PardT	The Pardoner's Tale
ParsProl	The Parson's Prologue
ParST	The Parson's Tale
PhT	The Physician's Tale
PrInt	The Prioress' Introduction
PrProl	The Prioress' Prologue
PrT	The Prioress' Tale
RvProl	The Reeve's Prologue
RvT	The Reeve's Tale
SNProl	The Second Nun's Prologue
SNT	The Second Nun's Tale

ShT	The Shipman's Tale
SqProl	The Squire's Prologue
SqT	The Squire's Tale
STProl	The Prologue of Sir Thopas
STT	Sir Thopas' Tale
SumProl	The Summoner's Prologue
SumT	The Summoner's Tale
WBProl	The Wife of Bath's Prologue
WBT	The Wife of Bath's Tale

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Chaucer scholars have long recognized the poet's keen sense of observation and have commented upon the poet's ability to transfer his visual images to his writing. Articles and theses and chapters of books have been devoted to analyzing and interpreting his imagery and conscious effort has been exercised to rebuild medieval pictures from his descriptive detail. Since so much research has been done and so many studies have been made concerning Chaucer's unusual sensitiveness to his surroundings, it is surprising that so little attention has been given to his sensitiveness in the remaining four senses, hearing, smelling, savoring, and touching.

#### I. HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

No comprehensive paper has been written to affirm or to disaffirm Chaucer's interest in these senses or his accuracy in defining them. However, in discussion of Chaucer's particular genius as a story teller, numerous scholars have repeatedly mentioned his life-like characters and his realistic settings. Marchette Chute calls



the Wife of Bath "a living breathing woman"<sup>1</sup> and concludes that "anyone who meets her can hear the tones of her voice and recognize the turns of her mind."<sup>2</sup> Miss Chute seems to feel that Chaucer has been able to convey a sense of sound, even to the tone of the voice, in his portrayal of the Wife of Bath. Patch, Cowling, French and others have indicated their admiration of Chaucer's style, a style that enables the reader to interpret the different characters' speaking voices. Percy van Dyke Shelly says of Alan and John:

Their speech throughout has the vigor and tang of youth and the hearty cheer of country folk.<sup>3</sup>

At another time he refers to "the oily tongue of the friar."<sup>4</sup> Mr. Lowes points out in his book Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of His Genius some of the delicate handlings of conversation reflecting Chaucer's "good ear." He mentions that the Host changes tone fitly to address particular pilgrims, that, for example, he is courteous to the clerk of Oxford; and he detects a note of malicious triumph in the Reeve's voice as he closes the tale of the Miller and

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<sup>1</sup> Marchette Chute, Geoffrey Chaucer of England, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Percy van Dyke Shelly, The Living Chaucer, p. 249.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

breaks out into a prayer for all the company.<sup>5</sup> Robert Root, agreeing with Mr. Lowes,<sup>6</sup> adds that the Host also speaks courteously to the Monk; and he remarks further that:

The Host, a complete tavern-keeper, knows not only the deference to be paid men of rank, but also the more delicate diplomacy of dealing with a drunken man.<sup>7</sup>

In studies of Chaucer's meter and language certain technical points concerning one or more of these four senses have been illuminated. Fletcher Collins, Jr. mentions that when Chaucer writes of Absolon's visiting taverns with "solas" (MillT 3335), the word "solas" is not used in its usual sense of "pleasure, solace," but is likely to have some musical significance. Mr. Collins suggests that it refers to the notes of the hexachord, which were known by the syllables "ah, re, mi, fa, sol, la" and that Chaucer's word is derived from the last two of these. The line would mean, therefore, that "he did not visit with his singing, his sol-las."<sup>8</sup> In Henry Barrett Hinkley's Notes on Chaucer there is a clarification of the word "sownynge" as used in line 307. The phrase "sownynge in moral vertu"

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<sup>5</sup> John Livingston Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of His Genius, pp. 89-92.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Kilburn Root, The Poetry of Chaucer: a Guide to Its Study and Appreciation, p. 173.

<sup>7</sup> Loc. Cit.

<sup>8</sup> Fletcher Collins, Jr., "'Solas' in the Miller's Tale," Modern Language Notes, p. 49.

is translated "making for righteousness."<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> In another section of the book, Mr. Hinckley states that "moyste" refers to the suppleness of new leather rather than to the presence of moisture<sup>11</sup> and this definition might indicate Chaucer's sensitiveness to touch.

Brief discussions of subjects pertaining to "herynge, smellynge, savorynge, and touchynge," (Parst 206) or relating to these subjects have occurred in Chaucer studies, but as yet there has been no attempt to collect Chaucer's references to these senses or his descriptions of them. Therefore this paper intends to search the text of the Canterbury Tales for the purpose of ascertaining Chaucer's alertness in these senses and the amount of interest he had in them as indicated by his actual descriptions in the various parts of the Canterbury Tales. The choice of the Canterbury Tales as an example of Chaucer's writings was made only after much thought and deliberation and reading of the opinions of scholars in the field. In the light of the investigation preceding the choice, it seems fair to assume that if Chaucer did

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<sup>9</sup> Henry Barrett Hinckley, Notes on Chaucer, p. 307.

<sup>10</sup> "Sownynge" in the sense of "tending to" still survives in the legal phrase "sounding in damages" used in a suit for the recovery of damages.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 457.

not show an unusual alertness to the senses of hearing, smelling, savoring, and touching, in the Canterbury Tales, he did not portray that alertness in other of his writings.

## II. PROCEDURE OF THE THESIS

The choice of this subject came from a natural desire to know, and the information in this thesis is entirely unbiased. The preparation of this thesis began with the setting up of an objective, with consideration given to scope and limitations of the study and to its possible value to students in the field; a tentative outline was made for the purpose of establishing the approximate boundaries within which the work was to be done.

All of the parts and the connecting links of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales as found in Robinson's edition<sup>12</sup> have been read and have been carefully examined for every reference to each of the four senses, hearing, smelling, savoring, and touching and to any element suggestive of them. The instances of mention only, of the senses or related words, are not treated since the number is far out of proportion to the limitations of this essay and since mere mention is not indicative of interest or degree of sensitivity. However, all references to the senses that may have bearing upon matters in the thesis or that may

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<sup>12</sup> F. W. Robinson, ed., The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer.

add to better understanding of the thesis as a whole have been compiled and recorded in a categorical listing to be found in the appendix.<sup>13</sup> All references to these four senses that include a descriptive, limiting, or suggestive element have been fully treated in the body of this thesis in the proper subordinate division.

In addition to the Canterbury Tales, every available source of writing about the subject has been searched, and careful records have been kept of the findings.<sup>14</sup> Conscientious effort has been made to consider seriously all of the notes and records in order that every important fragment of information be used and used so as to bring accurate and easily understood results.

Material that is cited in more than one division is repeated for the purpose of indicating a possibility of more than one interpretation or for the purpose of examining a separate part of the same quotation. All quotations are identified in the first citing in each division by abbreviation of the name of the particular part of the Canterbury Tales and by line as numbered in Robinson's

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<sup>13</sup> Omission has been made of sense-words often repeated in the same manner and with the same meaning. For example: "wepyng" in Chaucer's Tale of Melibee.

<sup>14</sup> Since the amount of work dealing directly with the subject is unexpectedly small, there are comparatively few references to sources outside Robinson's text.

edition.<sup>15</sup> The four main divisions separate the collection of data and place references under the sense heading to which they belong. The sub-divisions are based upon classifications of the particular properties of the sense being discussed.<sup>16</sup>

Footnotes carry sources used in the text of the thesis and explanatory material which, if included in the text, would impair its continuity.

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<sup>15</sup> All abbreviations may be found in the list on pages v and vi preceding the introduction.

<sup>16</sup> The sub-divisions are clearly defined by second indentation in the Table of Contents.

## CHAPTER II

### ANALYSIS OF THE SENSES HEARING, SMELLING, SAVORING, AND TOUCHING IN THE CANTERBURY TALES

#### I. HEARING

A. Language, Style, Meter, and Evidence of Chaucer's Ear For the Rythmns of Other Poets.<sup>17</sup> Chaucer, in his diversity, has presented in different writings a variety of dialects, an example of the period of transition from the Old Middle English grammatical forms to the New Middle English forms, words and phrases quoted casually from other languages, and wide background knowledge of the workings of his native tongue. It is not unusual, then, that he has deliberately written in a certain dialect in order to characterize a particular person or group of people. In the Reeve's Tale Chaucer makes evident his sensitiveness to idiosyncrasies of speech; he has the Northumbrian students, Alan and John, speak in the northern dialect. Spelling is changed to meet the needs of the dialect and the northern men swear by the Northumbrian saint, Guthbert. In the Summoner's Tale Chaucer takes pains consistently to present a wheedling tone for the

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<sup>17</sup> This Part I does not presume to be comprehensive research but intends to briefly introduce the influence of these elements upon the sound impressions gained of characters and/or passages.

friar, and in the Wife of Bath's Prologue Chaucer gives the impression that he is mimicking living speech. Mr. Patch mentions that the Wife of Bath "shouts at everybody."<sup>18</sup> And why not? She is deaf, and she is also of the type that thinks noise means revelry and mirth. In the Lawyer's Tale he produces a vocabulary and sentence structure befitting a man of the lawyer's position; similarly he assigns to the drunken Miller a loud, insistent voice and words to emphasize it.

These are only a few of the many instances in which Chaucer has used language to represent sound or has used sound to represent a certain type of person or group of persons. In the word "phislyes," Chaucer introduces a trace of native tongue of the Basque country into the Shipman's speech,<sup>19</sup> and Chaucer proves that he is interested in dialect when he says "God waat (instead of "wot") and thou is a fonne."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Howard Rollin Patch, On Rereading Chaucer, p. 161.

<sup>19</sup> "Phislyes" is the Basque singular noun phizlea, pluralized in the English way. This has been used by some in support of the theory that the Shipman represents a Basque pirate named John Piers.

<sup>20</sup> The use of "waat" instead of "wot" would be enough to make any of Chaucer's Londoners laugh, especially to hear it read aloud. Such tricks in language have contributed to the belief that Chaucer concentrated on style in order to gain a more favorable effect from oral reading.



George H. Cowling says that Chaucer's style "is coloured by classical allusions,"<sup>21</sup> but that "he rarely allowed his learning to become ponderous."<sup>22</sup> Instead, he attempted to adapt the style to the speaker or the story. The clerks, Alan and John (SumT), are given a shorter, quicker speech to comply with the youth and energy Chaucer has assigned them; and by having the Wife of Bath diverted from the tale of her fourth husband to the memories of her youth when she could dance and sing, Chaucer succeeds in attaining a tone of reminiscence. In the General Prologue Chaucer passes from grand style to that of familiar conversation in addressing his readers (GenProl 19-42), using the tag "ther as I you devyse" (GenProl 34) as a springboard from which to plunge into a tête à tête with them. At another time Chaucer is caught teasing in a "dig" at the "moral Gower," clucking his tongue in solemn reproof over the "cursed stories" of his equally sinful fellow poet.

Chaucer provides a rowdy style for the Miller, a simple style for the Clerk of Oxford, a pleasant dignity for the Lawyer, a pulpit style for the friar, a chatter-chatter for the Wife of Bath, and a warm delicate tone for the Prioress. Chaucer achieves a delightful piece

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<sup>21</sup> George H. Cowling, Chaucer, p. 134.

<sup>22</sup> Loc. Cit.

of comedy by turning a tale of a cock and hen into a mock epic through elegant, emotional, lofty writing. In the rhyme royal account of the woes of noble Constance, Chaucer has presented a typically medieval story portraying virtue and endurance.

Whatever it is he wishes to say, Chaucer has a style to match the spirit of the words; whichever type of person it is that Chaucer wishes to present, he has a style to complement the personality.

Chaucer's use of metrical prose in particular places in his writings has always been a subject for argument and study. Did he have a purpose? The opening paragraph of Melibee contains a very large proportion of blank verse, so large that it is difficult to believe that the blank verse was accidental. It is more reasonable to credit Chaucer with adopting the meter to introduce a tale of weeping and of argument, yet filled with serious personal and political advice, proverbs from the wise, and a council of war. In his tale of Sir Thopas, Chaucer deliberately uses the tail-rhyme stanza to produce his effect of mimicry and burlesque of the Metrical Romance. In the Parson's Tale he employs prose to accentuate ponderous thought and ponderous speech and yet lets roll the fiery words and the heavy rhythm smoothly enough to typify the fervent Evangelist preaching a people out of their sins, and consequently, out of the hell of torment.

Although Chaucer introduces other meters for the sake of variety or for the sake of characterization, in the Prologue, in the links between the tales, and in most of the tales themselves, he uses the heroic couplet. Chaucer manages to suggest the rhythms of ordinary speech in what is, after all, a stylized verse form. The five-stress iambic line has a plain style, and "even when the verse forms are most intricate, his actual style is kept close to the ground."<sup>23</sup> Chaucer manages to set down in iambic pentameter the tone of a Miller plaintively discussing his drunkenness, the courteous comments of a gentleman like the knight and the vulgar bleatings of the Reeve, the friendly good humor of the Franklin and the wonderful in-elegance of the Wife of Bath.<sup>24</sup>

There is evidence of Chaucer's "good ear" for the rhythms of other poets. In an article in MLN, Stuart Robertson analyzes the verse of the description of the tournament in the Knight's Tale and finds that alliteration is used frequently in it. He claims that some lines can be scanned not only according to the rules for the heroic line but also according to those for Old English poetry. He suggests that Chaucer may have for the moment half consciously drawn upon "his English inheritance" in the

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<sup>23</sup> Marchette Chute, op. cit., p. 246.

<sup>24</sup> Loc. cit.

matter of versification.<sup>25</sup> Also, as has been stated before, the rhythm and form in Sir Thopas is a mimicry of the metrical romance.<sup>26</sup>

B. The Speaking Voice. Perhaps the most familiar description of the speech of a Canterbury pilgrim is that of the Friar's. Chaucer tells us that he lisped somewhat to make his English sweet upon his tongue (GenProI 264-265). The lisp was not the result of a physical defect but a habit achieved from conscious practice of the more fetching manner of speech. In the introduction to his tale, the Pardoner admits to his traveling companions that:

. . . in Chirches when I preche,  
I peyne me to han an hauteyn speche,  
And rynge it out as round as gooth a belle,  
For I kan al by rote that I telle. (ll. 3329-3332)

The Pardoner realizes the influence his voice has upon his "Chirche" audience and he uses it to beg more money from them. According to Chaucer's description in the General Prologue another Canterbury pilgrim thought it better to improve her way of speaking. Madame Englantine takes pains to counterfeit the ways of the court:

And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,  
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,  
For Frenssh of Parys was to hir unknowe. (ll. 124-126)

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<sup>25</sup> Stuart Robinson, "Old English Verse in Chaucer," Modern Language Notes (April, 1928), pp. 23-25.

<sup>26</sup> An echo of Dante in Parliament of Foules may be found in ll. 127 ff.

One of the Canterbury characters had a change in his voice, but it was entirely unpremeditated. Arcite, after his years of exile, found that his spirits were so feeble and so low that no man could know his speech when they heard it (KnT 1369-1371).

In Chaucer's prose tale, Melibee has a sudden and temporary change in his voice. He has earlier witnessed the scene of his daughter's murder and as he is ready to decide the punishment for those guilty, we are told that "by the manere of his speche" (Melt 2199) it seemed that in his heart he bore a cruel ire, ready to do vengeance upon his foes. Chaucer, rather than describing the exact manner of Melibee's voice, implies it. He employs the same technique when he has the Miller, in his Prologue remark with dignity:

3138 I am dronke, I know it by my soun

There is no further enlightenment as to the sound itself. Chaucer seems to have recognized the fact that a reader can sometimes recall from memory of first hand knowledge a more accurate sound than a writer can describe in words. Again, in the Summoner's Tale, Chaucer refuses to define a sound. He has the Summoner say:

. . . that on a day this frere  
Hadde preched at a chirche in his manere,  
And specially, aboven every thyng,  
Excited he the peple in his prechyng  
To trentals, . . . (ll. 1713-1717)

He does not explain in what manner the Friar preached, but he implies that it was an effective one since the Friar was able to excite the people.

In other passages, however, Chaucer indicates particular type of sound by comparison. The Host speaks, in the Reeve's Prologue, "as lordly as a king." (3900), and in the words of the Host to the Shipman and the Lady Prioress, the Host speaks "as curteisly as it had been a mayde" (446 or 1636). The fiend in the Friar's Tale "speke as renably and faire and wel" (1509) as did the Summoner, and after Palamon's return from the year of preparation for the tournament, "his voys was as a trompe thonderynge" (KnT 2174).

In other instances Chaucer has the speaking voice modified as to manner by use of an adverb. In the Clerk's Tale the thoughtful Marquis speaks to Griselda "ful soberly" (295-296), and another time he answers her "softely" (323). Also "in soft speche," the devil answers the summoner in the Friar's Tale (108).

When Theseus comes marching into the city and meets the women weeping, he is disturbed and says "softe unto hymself . . . Fy . . ." for such a greeting (KnT 1773), and the friar speaks "curteisly and softe" (SumT 1771) in his "good day!" (1770) to Thomas. The Franklin commends the Squire for dramatic recital of the falcon deserted by her love, because he speaks so "feelyngly" (SqT 676), considering his youth. Another of the pilgrims could "wel . . . rede a lessoun or a storie" (PardT 709) in his Sunday sermons, and the Parson, who sermonizes on the pilgrimage,

declares against sinful acts and predicts that should one commit these acts, Christ would "answeren hokerly and angrily" (ParST 583). In the Clerk's Tale the Marquis tells Griselda that the voice of the people murmuring against their marriage comes to his ears "so smerte" (so bitterly) that it has "wel ny destroyeed" his heart (CLT IV, 628-630). Nicholas, in his pursuit of Alison, "spak so faire, and profred him so faste" (MillT 3289) that Alison had no opportunity to refuse him.

"Pitous" and "pitously" seem to be favorite descriptive words for Chaucer since he uses them many times in the Canterbury Tales alone; and of these he uses them seven times to indicate manner of speaking. In the Knight's Tale "ful, pitously Lucyna gan she (Emily) calle" (2085), and twice the Pardoner uses "with pitous voys" in contemplating what the apostle would say (PardT 529; 531). When the Sultan's Mother puts Constance adrift in a "steerelees" boat, Constance cries "with ful pitous voys" (MLT 449-450) unto the cross of Christ; when she is set adrift the second time she kneels in the boat and speaks "pitously" to the child she holds in her arms (MLT 834-835). In another tragic setting, the mother searches the Jewry in vain for her choir-boy son who has been murdered, and she "frayneth and she preyeth pitously" (PrT 600). Nero, too, prays "pitously" (MkT 3729) to his gods for succor when his people turn against him.

When the knight of the Squire's Tale comes to the Court of King Cambiusken:

He with a manly voys seith his message,  
 After the forme used in his language,  
 Withouten vice of silable or of lettre;  
 And, for his tale sholde seme the bettre.  
 Accordant to his wordes was his cheere,  
 As techeth art of speche hem that it leere.  
 Al be it that I kan nat sowne his stile, (ll. 99-105)

Chaucer frankly admits that although he can describe in detail the knight's person and his gifts, he is not able to describe or to duplicate the style of the knight's message. Chaucer uses the same phrases "with manly voys" when the knight of the Wife of Bath's Tale answers the question of what it is that women like best (1035-1036). In the Clerk's Tale, after the sergeant tells Griselde that he must take her child, she speaks "in hire benign voys" (ClT III, 554). Later when her two children are returned to her:

VI, 1086 O which a pitous thyng it was . . .  
 1087 . . . hire humble voys to heere!

Chaucer employs another technique in suggesting sound for a speaking voice; he substitutes a descriptive word. In the Physician's Tale Virginia begs Virginius to give her a little time "my death for to compleyne" (239) and the Parson admonishes that one should never do a thing for which he will have to "biwayle or to compleyne." (Parst 87). Although neither of these quotations is satisfactory in conveying an exact meaning, there is faint suggestion of tone. The same suggestiveness may be found in the words "swoor" and "cursen." Sir Thopas, in his mock heroism "swoor" on



ale and bread that he would kill the great giant Olifaunt come what would! (STT 2062-2064). The oaths of the company of young folk in the tavern in Flaunders are so great and so damnable that "it is grisly for to heere hem swere" (PardT 472-473), and as the peasants follow Griselda back to her old home, they weep and "cursen" Fortune as they go (ClT 898-900). In the same Tale, the marquis "commandeth" his officers "for the feste to purveye," possibly implying a stronger and shorter tone of voice (ClT 190-191).

In the Knight's Tale Chaucer asks, "Why grucchen heere" (KnT IV, 3062-3063) his (Arcite's ) bride and cousin at the welfare of him who loved them so well? The people at Cambiuskan's court, upon seeing the strange knight, "murmured as dooth a swarm of been" (SqT 204), and Oswald, in the Reeve's Tale, began to "grucche, and blamed it a little" (3863). The Parson preaches that sometimes murmur comes "of Pride, as whan Simon the Pharisee gruced agayn the Magdalyne" (Parst 503), and again the Parson explains that people will say harm, "and grucche, and mumure prively for verray despit" (505). By use of the word "grucche" (murmur) itself, Chaucer manages to convey a low voice speaking somewhat indistinctly.

C. The Singing Voice. Chaucer mentions "singing" or "song" quite often in the Canterbury Tales, but he seldom qualifies the singing or the song. However, the friar had mass "hastily yeonge" (SumT 113); Arcite "songen al the

roundel lustily" while he "romed al his fille" in the forest (KnT 1228-1229); and the canon's yeoman says of the "sotted preest" (CYT 343):

. . . who was gladder than he?  
Was nevere noon that luste bet to synge;  
Ne lady lustier in carolynges . . . (ll. 343-345)

In six out of the twenty-one descriptions of the singing voice, Chaucer uses the word "loude" to denote degree of sound. The "little clergeon" who once sang "wel and boldely" (PrT 546) as he walked through the streets of the Jewry is murdered, but with his neck cut he continues singing his "Alma Redemptoris . . . so loude that al the place gan to rynges" (PrT 655); and his last words before he reveals the secret of the grain are:

655 Yet may I synge O Alma loude and cleere!

January also sings "ful loude and cleere" (MerchT 184), and Alison sings "as loude and yerne" as any swallow sitting on a "berne" (MillT 3257-3258). In the General Prologue Chaucer introduces a duet with the Pardoner singing "'come hider, love, to me!'. . . ful loude" (672) and:

673 This sumonour bar hum a stif burdoun;  
674 Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.

This same Pardoner "song murierly and loude" (GenPro1 709-714) during the "offertorie," preparing the members of his congregation for his sermon and hoping to win silver from them. The Friar, too, had a merry note and could sing well (GenPro1 235-237), and January, strolling in the garden

with his fair wife, sings "murier than a papejay" (MerchT 2320-2323).

Chaucer uses the same words for describing the singing of fowls as he does for the singing of people. The lark sings "loude . . . ayen the sonne shene" (KnT 1509); "foweles . . . ful loude songen hir affeccions" (SqT 552-557); and all the birds in Sir Thopas sing "that joy it was to heere" (767), especially the "wodedowve," who sings "ful loude and cleere." Chanticleer's father, according to the fox, could sing louder than any man save Chanticleer, and he would try so hard to make his voice "the moore strong . . . that with both yen he moste wyne," he would cry "so loude" (NPT 3301-3306). Chanticleer himself sings "murier than the mermayde in the see" (3270) until the fox enters the scene. When Chanticleer discovers the fox and is frightened, the fox beguiles him with his soothing tone and his flattery:

Was oonly for to herkne how that ye synge.  
For trewely, ye have as myrie a stevene  
As any aungel hath that is in hevne.  
Therwith he han in musyk moore feelynge  
Than had Baece, or any that kan synge. (ll. 3290-3294)

Another fowl sings merrily also:

Therewith in al this world no nyghtyngale  
Ne konde, by an hondred thousand deel,  
Syngen so wonder myrily and well. (ll. 236-238)

as Phebus' crow (ManCT 236-238). The crow sings so merrily that Phebus rejoices to hear its voice (243-247).

Phebus also has musical talent. He can play on every instrument and sing so that it is melody to hear his clear voice. Even the king of Thebes, Amphious, could never sing half so well as he (ManoT 113-118). But Aurelius the squire "syngeth, daunceth, passynge any man" that is, or was, since the world began. The Prioress sings the divine service well, intoned full seemly in her nose (GenPro1 122-123); Emily sings as heavenly as an angel (KnT 1055); Absolon accompanied by his guitar sings to Alison in a gentle, small voice (MillT 3360-3367), "brokkyng as a nyghtyngale" (3377); and January "so chaunteth . . . and craketh" that the loose skin about his neck shakes when he sings.

D. Crying, Shrieking, and Clamoring. Again Chaucer employs the word "pitously" to define a variety of sounds made by different characters. The carpenter cries "pitously" (MillT 3476), and Arcite "wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously" (KnT 1221). During the struggle with the thief, Constance prays to Mother Mary and cries "pitously" (MLT II, 919). The old women "fillen gruf and criden pitously" before Theseus (KnT 948-949); they make such a cry and such a "wo:"

That in this world nys creature lyvyng  
 That herde swich another waymentyng.  
 And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten . . .  
 (ll. 901-903)

In another comparison, Chaucer writes that Palamon "bleynte and cride, 'A!'" As though he were stung unto the heart (KnT 1078-1080). January, immediately after regaining his sight in the garden, "yaf a roryng and a cry"

as a mother does when her child dies (Mercht 2364-2365). Nicholas for woe begins to cry "as he were wood" (MillT 3814), and another time "crien 'water' as he were wood" (3817). In the Knight's Tale, the voice of the people "touchede the hevене" they cried so loud in praise of The-  
seus (KnT IV, 2561-2565), and at Arcite's victory the:

. . . noyse of peple bigonne  
For joy of this so loude and heighe with alle,  
It seemed that the lystes sholde falle. (ll. 2660-2662)

The longest comparison showing the quality of sound is found in the Nun's Priest's Tale:

Certes, swich cry ne lamentacion  
Was nevere of ladyes maad when Ilion  
Was wonne, and Pirus with his striete swerd,  
Whan he hadde hent kying Priam by the berd,  
And slayn hym, as seith us Eneydos,  
As maden alle the hennes in the clos,  
Whan they had seyn of Chantecleer the sighte.  
But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighthe,  
Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,  
Whan that his housbonde hadde lost his cartage.  
She was so ful of torment and of rage  
That wilfully into the fyr she sterte,  
And brende hirselven with a stedfast herte.  
O woful hennes, right so criden ye,  
As, whan that Ners brende the citee  
Of Rome, cryden senatoures wyves  
For that his husbondes losten alle hir lyves;  
Withouten gilt this Nero hath hen slayn.  
(ll. 3355-3372)

Chaucer uses "shrighthe" to indicate the intensity of Pertelote's grief. The falcon also "cryde alwey and shrighthe" and "shrighthe alwey so loude" that anyone, even the cruel and the hard of heart, would weep for pity of her (SqT 417-422); and as the falcon progresses in the story of her desertion she "shrighthe" yet more pitiously (472).

At the death of Arcite, Emily "shrighte" and Palamon "howleth" for pain and sorrow (KnT 2817). Palamon makes such sorrow that the greater tower resounds with his "yowling and clamour" (1277-1278). After the tragedy in the tournament, Theseus has Arcite's body brought to the hall so that all may see him, and the hall "roreth of the crying and the soun" of the people in their lamentation. At the funeral the "ladyes gonne crye" and there is "loud shou-tynge" at the height of the fervor of the people's grief (2953-2955). The picture is quite different from that of Arcite's victory when:

2672 The heraudes, that ful loude yelle and crie,  
2673 Ben in hir wele for joye of daun Arcite.

In the same tale, Chaucer does not attempt to describe the great clamor and the "waymentynge" that the ladies made at the burning of the bodies. He excuses himself by saying that it would take too long to tell it, but by that very excuse he implies the greatness of the lamentation. It is a technique that Chaucer often employs; he uses it frequently in Troilus and Creseyde and thereby gains swift-ness in the movement of his story as well as implication of an emotion so great that it is far beyond his powers to describe.

E. Weeping, Wailing, and Sobbing. Chaucer uses the word "weeping" rather liberally throughout the Canterbury Tales. He does not signify whether the weeping is silent

or aloud, except when he follows the mention by "waille" or "waillynge." The occasion, at times, indicates a particular value; but the majority of the "weeping" passages are left to the interpretation of the reader. An elaborate comparison in the Man of Law's Tale (about Constance) influences one toward believing that sound accompanied the tears:

I trowe at Troye, whan Pirrus brak the wal,  
Or Ilion brende, at Thebes the citee,  
Not Rome, for the harm thurgh Hanybal  
That Romayns hath venguysshed tymes thre,  
Nas herd swich tendre wepyng for pitee  
As in the chambre was for hire departynge;  
But forth she moot, wher-so she wepe or synge.  
(11. 288-294)

Another comparison, in the Knight's Tale, immediately after the death of Arcite, leads to the same conclusion:

Far hym ther wepeth bothe child and man;  
So grete a wepyng was ther noon, certayn,  
Whan Ector was ybrought, al fresh slayn  
To Troye. Allas, the pitee that was ther,  
Cracchyng of chekes, rentyne eek of heer.  
"Why woldestow be deed," thise wommen crye, . . .  
(IV, 11. 2830-2835)

Again, when Melibee returns to his house and sees all the "meschief" that has been done, he, like a mad man, rent-ing his clothes, "gan wepe and crie" (Melt 976). Arcite, in his exile, grows lean and dry, with hollow eyes and pale colour in his skin, and alone and friendless is "waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone" (Knt 1361-1366). Absolon, unsuccessful in his suit for Alison despite his persistence and endurance, must "waille and synge allas" (MillT 3398); and Aurelius' brother "weep and wayled pryvely" (FranklT 1116) upon hearing of Aurelius' unfortunate circumstances

in relation to Dorigen. Dorigen later "wepeth, wailleth, al a day or two" (FranklT B48) because of her bargain with Aurelius and the unbelievable reality that confronts her. January "wepeth and . . . wayleth pitously" (MerchtT 149) when he is suddenly stricken blind, and the old woman in the Knight's Tale calls herself a "wrecche" because she "wepe and wayle" so (931). The monk tells of the fall from happiness and success to sorrow and woe of De Rege Antiocho, who in "this mechief . . . wayled and eek wepte" (MkT 3811).

The preceding illustrations of the use of the sounds "weeping and wailling" are hardly indicative of intensity or of quality of the weeping; they serve only to point out that Chaucer, in some instances, thought of weeping as sound. However, Chaucer properly designates the exact kind of weeping and feeling behind it when he uses the word "sobbing." He uses it to describe the meeting and reunion of Constance and Alla in the Man of Law's Tale and applies it to both of them:

Long was the sobbing and the bitter peyne,  
 Er that hir woful hertes myghte cesse;  
 Greet was the pitte for to heere hem pleyne . . .  
 (ll. 1065-1067)

F. Sighing. A sigh, in Chaucer, seems to indicate the sound of a deep single audible respiration, especially as an expression of grief. It is in "sorwe" that most of Chaucer's characters sigh. Dorigen, worried for the safety of her husband and praying for his return accompanies her



speech "with sorweful sikes colde" (FranklT 864). Aurelius pursues Dorigen in the husband's absence and seeks a way to accomplish a miracle in order to have Dorigen; then, when the miracle becomes reality, he relinquishes his hold. As he tells the story to the philosopher, "sorwefully he siketh" (1590).

The knight in the Wife of Bath's Tale is granted his life if he can in twelve months and a day tell the queen what it is that women most desire. Upon hearing the condition of his reprieve:

913 Wo was the knight, and sorwefully he siken . . .  
 Later he is tested a second time when his "old woman" wife asks him to choose between "foulness" and faithfulness or beauty and unfaithfulness. He considers "and sore siketh" (1228). Other characters sigh "soore." As Damyan gives May the note he has prepared for her, he says nothing more, but "siketh wonder depe and soore" (MerchT 1939-1940). Nicholas "sike soore" also (MillT 3488); and the wicked king Belshazzar<sup>27</sup> is feasting and dancing in his banquet hall when the handwriting appears:

MkT 2204 For feere of which he quook and siked  
 soore.

G. Laughing. Although Chaucer does not describe the laughing in the Canterbury Tales, the very mention of the

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<sup>27</sup> Biblical reference. Belshazzar was the last king of Babylon. His doom was foretold by the prophet Daniel.

word itself brings a particular sound to the reader's mind. Ten times Chaucer has his characters laugh. The "folk gan laughen" (MillT 3840) at the fantasy of the poor beguiled carpenter who has prepared for a flood in the time of dryest weather, and the more the mislead carpenter tries to explain, the more the people "laughen at his stryf" (3849). When the pilgrims have heard the Miller's Tale of the foolish carpenter and have "laughen at this nyce cas" (RvProl 3855) of Absolon and "hende" Nicholas, different pilgrims say different things about it, but for the most part they "loughe and pleyde" (3858). In the Miller's Prologue the Host "lough and swoor," and the clerk-husband of the Wife of Bath read a book of wicked wives and "lough alwey ful faste" (WBPro1 672).

In the Wordes Between the Summoner and the Friar, at the end of the Wife of Bath's Prologue, the Friar "lough" (829) and teases Alice of Bath about so long a preamble. The Summoner hears the Friar "gale" (832) and takes exception to his attitude; he swears by "Goddes" two arms that a Friar will always meddle in everything. The Friar meets his rebuke, and thereupon the argument begins.

Another churchman laughs in the Shipman's Tale. The monk, as he walks in the garden after saying his "thynges," meets the greeting of the merchant's wife with a naughty remark and "lough ful murily" (110). Valerian, who has received orders from Almachius to appear in his

court for judgement, "gan for to laughe" when she is given a choice between denial of her Christian faith or death. She answers him boldly and belittles his power and prophecies that one day his people shall scorn him and laugh at his folly (505-506).

H. Whispering, Groaning, and other Miscellaneous Vocal Sounds. Chaucer uses a number of onomatopoeic words throughout the Canterbury Tales. Some of the sounds described in the preceding pages have been of that quality, although they are not strictly onomatopoeic. To sing is to produce musical tones by means of the voice; to cry out is to make a loud call, and to cry, in the sense of weeping, is to lament audibly. Sighing is sound in itself, expressing grief or fatigue or wistfulness or futility; wailing is a sorrowful mourning; and laughing is the explosion of chuckling sounds from the throat. However, none of these is described as to quality or degree. A singing voice may be high or low, shrill or well-modulated, with liquid melody or rasping monotone; a cry may be a shriek or a yell or a call or a lament; a sigh may be heavy or soft; and a wail may be an angry one or a helpless one.

In Friar's Tale Chaucer uses "rowne" (whisper) to represent a low, sibilant, rustling sound as he has the summoner "rowne" to his companion the devil (1571) and again to "rowne" in his ear covertly, in conspiratorial manner (1550). When the knight in the Wife of Bath's Tale

is trying to discover what women most desire, the old woman "rowned she a pistel" (whispered a message) in the knight's ear (1201). The whispering continues in the story of the strange knight in Cambiuskan's court. The men wonder at the sight of him and at his steed, and at his gifts and speech. One inquires curiously, and "another rowned to his felawe lowe" (SqT 216).

Chaucer uses "groaning" to describe sounds made both by people and by fowles. The type of sound is presumably the same, a low throat sound resembling a prolonged "grunt" of guttural quality. Thomas' wife tells the friar that Thomas groans "lyk oure boor, lith in our sty" (SumT 1829), and in the Nun's Priest's Tale:

This Chaunticleer gan gronen in his throte,  
As man that in his dreem is drecched soore.  
And whan that Pertelote thus herde hym roore,<sup>28</sup>  
She was agast, and seyde, "Herte deere,  
What eyleth you, to grone in this manere?"  
(ll. 2886-2890)

Thereupon Chanticleer began to tell her of his dream in which a beast like a hound had grabbed him while he was walking in the yard and would have killed him. Chanticleer, in his dream, almost died for fear of the look in the beast's eyes, and that "caused me my gronyng,<sup>29</sup> douteless" (NPT 2907).

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28 "Roore" is a mock-heroic touch. In the same vein Chanticleer is likened to a "grym leoun" in 4368.

29 "Gronyng" is not connected with the word "groynyng" (GenProl 2460), (OF, >"grogner">L."grunnire") which is equivalent to the English "murmur," but is from the Anglo-Saxon "granian" and is identical with the English "groan."

The Wife of Bath asks her old husband what aileth him to "gracche thus and grone" (WBPro1 443), and the carpenter "For travaille of his goost . . . grone . . . soore" (MillT 3646).

Chaucer describes another vocal sound by the word "coughe." May "coughen" when she sees Damyan in the bush (MerchT 2208), and Absolon "cougheth" softly "with a semysoun" (MillT 3697).

In describing the vocal sounds of animals, Chaucer adds to the oft-repeated adjectives and adverbs several new words depicting sound. Chanticleer is an especially gifted cock, for in the Nun's Priest's Tale Chaucer tells us that:

In al the land of crowyng nas his peer.  
His voys was murrier than the murie orgon.  
On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon. (ll. 2850-2852)

When day breaks, Chanticleer flies down from his perch and with a "chuk" begins to call his hens (3174); and again he "chukketh" when he finds a grain of corn, and all the hens run to him. One day in the month of March, Chanticleer arises and crows "with blissful stevene" "the time for waking. (3197); he is gay and joyful, and listens with Pertelote to "these blisful briddes how they syng" (3201). But this is the fateful day. The fox spies him, flatters him about the strength and beauty of his voice and tricks him into stretching his neck and crowing "loude for the nones" (3333). At once the fox grabs him and takes him to the woods. The widow and her daughters see the fox and run after him.

The passage describing the pursuit of the fox is filled with "noyse" and "shoutyng:"

Ran caw and calf, and eek the verray hogges,  
 So fered for the berkyng of the dogges  
 And shoutyng of the men and wommen eeke,  
 They ronne so hem thoughte hir herte bruke.  
 They yolleden as feendes doon in helle;  
 The dokes cryden as men wolde hem quelle;  
 The gees for feere flowen over the trees;  
 Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees.  
 So hyd was the noyse, a, benedicite!  
 Certes, he Jakke Straw and his meynee  
 Ne made never shouts half so shrille,  
 Whan that they wolden any Flemyng kille,  
 As thilke day was maad upon the fox.  
 Of bras they broghten bemes, and of box,  
 Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe and powped  
 And therwithal they skriked and they howped.<sup>31</sup>  
 It seemed as that hevene sholde falle. (ll. 3385-3401)

When the messenger stops at Donegild's on his return from Alla's camp, he starts drinking; he imbibes so much that when he sleeps that night, "he snorteth in his gyse" (MLT II, 789-791). The Parson speaks of "gryntyng of teeth" (ParST 207), and the friar in the Summoner's Tale "grynte with his teeth, so was he wrooth" (2161).

Another sound word is introduced as Constance takes her child in her arms for the last time, when the sergeant tells her that he has come for it. Chaucer tells us that she kissed it and "lulled" it. (CLT III 551-553), implying a soft, "humming" sound. Two times in the Canterbury Tales

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<sup>30</sup> Trumpets. The word "beme" is from the Anglo-Saxon word "beme" (Kentish for byme) and means "a trumpet."

<sup>31</sup> Whooped.

he has characters counterfeit animal sounds. The Wife of Bath "as an hors . . . koude byte and whyne" (WBPro1 386); and the friar, in his welcome to Thomas' wife, kissed her "sweete" and "chirketh as a sparwe with his lypes" (SumT 1804-1805).

In a number of Chaucer's exclamations there is some indication of sound. Most of these are hidden in the meanings of the exclamations themselves. In the Nun's Priest's Tale, for example, after Chanticleer has told Pertelote of his dream and his fear, she answers with an exclamation of reproof:<sup>32</sup>

2908 "Avoy!" quod she, "fy on you, herteless! . . ."  
Then later when Chanticleer glances up and sees the fox, although:

3276 Nothyng ne liste hym thanne for to crowe,  
3277 (He) cride anon, "cok! cok!" and up he sterte  
. . .

"To cry 'cock!'" is to admit defeat or inferiority, whether it is used literally or figuratively;<sup>33</sup> therefore, it would seem that the startled cry of Chanticleer would be somewhat shrill and uncertain.

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Roman du Renart 1427-1428:  
Avoil! dist Pintain, biax doz sire,  
Ce ne devriez vos pas dire.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Barrett Hinkley, Notes on Chaucer, pp. 42-43.

H. Melody of Instruments. Chaucer seems to be well acquainted with musical instruments of medieval England, and he seems consciously to associate certain types of instruments and musical talents with particular pilgrims and characters in the pilgrims' tales. However, in most instances he only mentions the musical instrument and does not classify the sound or interpret the artistry with which the character plays the instrument. There are only eight times in the entirety of the Canterbury Tales that he designates the instrument or the player, and those are more or less general.

In the Second Nun's Tale, the "Organ Maden Melodie" (1134), but there is no indication that it is soft music, loud music, fast music, or slow music. We do know that it is a wind instrument, consisting of one or more sets of pipes, sounded by compressed air, and played by means of a keyboard. The medieval organ was a much less complicated instrument than the modern organ, but the sound would be easily recognized by a present-day listening audience. Therefore, the word "organ" serves, at least, as a clue to the general type of sound.

In the General Prologue, Chaucer tells us of the Miller:



565 A baggepipe<sup>34</sup> wel koude he blowe and sowne,  
 567 And therewithal he broghte us out of towne.

Absolon plays songs on a small "rubible"<sup>35</sup> and "as wel koude he pleye on a giterne" (MillT 3331; 3333). By the comparative element of the second quotation, the reader recognizes that Absolon plays both instruments well; but he does not know how well since there is no discussion of Absolon's ability to play the "rubible." Nicholas keeps above his bed a psalter which he "made a nyhtes melodie" so sweetly that all the chambre rang (MillT 3213-3218); and after being quite successful in his encounter with Alison, he kisses her "sweete," takes his psalter, and "pleyeth faste, and maketh melodie" (3305-3307).

At the marriage feast for January and May in the Merchant's Tale, many instruments sound; and Chaucer is elaborate in his description:

Al ful of joye and blisse is the paleys,  
 And ful of instrumentz and of vitaille,  
 The mooste deyntevous of al Ytaille.  
 Biforn hem stoode instrumentz of swich soun  
 That Orpheus, ne Thebes Amphioun,  
 Ne maden nevere swich a melodye.  
 At every cours thanne cam loud mynstralcy,  
 That nevere tromped Joab for to heere,  
 Nor he Theodomas, yet half so cleere, (ll. 1712-1720)

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<sup>34</sup> It seems this instrument was not uncommon on pilgrimages, where noise and ribaldry like Miller's were more or less the accepted thing. See "The Examination of William Thorpe," in Pollard's Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse, p. 141.

<sup>35</sup> Rebeck; lute or fiddle.

At Thebes, whan the citee was in doute.  
 Bacus the wyn hem shynketh al aboute,  
 And Venus laugheth upon every wight, . . .  
 (ll. 1721-1723)

At another feast, King Cambiuskan, sitting with his nobleman after the third course of the meal, listens to the minstrels play their instruments "biforn hym at the bord deliciously" (SqT 77-79); later, the loud minstrelsy go before him as he proceeds to the presence-chamber, and there they sound diverse instruments until it is "lyk an hevene for to heere" (268; 270-271). In the Knight's Tale, the great Theseus is waked from his sleep by the "mynstralcie and noyse that was maked" (IV, 2523-2524) in advance of the approach of the two Theban knights; and when the contest is ready to begin then "ryngen trompes loude and clarioun" (2600) as a signal to fight.

I. Miscellaneous Sounds. Of all the various places and the multiple times that Chaucer mentions bells in the Canterbury Tales, only in four instances does he actually describe the sound of them. In the Friar's speech to Thomas about his mass, he tells Thomas that he began the song without noise or "clater yng of belles" (SumT 1865); the night of the poor carpenter's folly, Nicholas and Alison remain together until the "belle of laudes gan to ryng" (MillT 3654-3655). These two of the four descriptions are not at all indicative of Chaucer's "ear" for sound. In the first instance, the friar is not speaking of bells he has heard but is only suggesting what the noise would be should

the bells have been ringing. In the second instance, "rynge" has no definitive value, for there are many classifications of "ringing" sounds; Chaucer merely indicates that sound came from the bell, of the quality usually attributed to the striking of light metal against heavier metal. However, the rioters, sitting in the tavern drinking, "herde a belle clynke" (PardT 661-664). "Clynke" does imply a sound from lighter metal, with a shorter period of resonance. Again there is a "clynkyng" from the bells hanging on the sides of the Monk's bridle (NPT 2794-2795); the clinking must have been a rather loud sound at times, for it kept the Host awake when he would have fallen asleep (2796-2797). A better description of the Monk's bells is found in the General Prologue:

And when he rood, men myghte his bridel heere  
 Gynglen in a whistlynge wind als cleere  
 And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle.  
 (ll. 169-171)

In the Knight's Tale there is "noyse and claterynge" of horses and harness (IV, 2492), but Chaucer does not describe the noise. In the same tale, while Emily is in her prayers to the Goddess Diane and the fires are burning on the altar, suddenly one and then another of the fires goes out:

2337 And as it queynte it made a whistelynge,  
 2338 As doon thise wete brondes in hir brennynge,

After the fire is entirely out, Diane appears and gives the decree of the gods to Emily; and when she ends her

speech, the arrows in her quiver "clateren faste and rynges" (III, 2358-2359). For the fourth time Chaucer uses the word "clateren" to define sound when Arcite stops his prayer and:

III, 2422 The rynges on the temple dore that honge,  
 2423 And eek the dores, clatereden ful faste,  
 . . .

"Clattering" has been used to define the ringing of a bell, the ringing of arrows in a quiver, the closing of doors, and the noise of harness. Each time the word has stood alone, without qualification or limitation. In order to supply the differences in the sounds, the reader must rely upon the definition of the nouns. Therefore, although Chaucer has added a modifier for sound, the lack of differentiation has nullified its utility.

In the Reeve's Tale Chaucer repeats a realistic, life-like sound. When the Miller drives away Alan and John's mares, away the mares go, with "'wehee' thurgh thikke and thurgh thenne" (4065-4066).

In various passages in the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer uses "soft" to mean quietly. The word does not mean that there is an entire absence of sound but that the sound is at a minimum. In the Miller's Tale when Absolon and Alison come down the ladder, leaving the carpenter, Nicholas "stalketh" and Alison "ful soft" speeds down (3648-3649). At one time Absolon goes across the street with a "softe poss" (3760), and at another time he steals "ful soft" out

the door. The miller in the Reeve's Tale goes "softely" out the door to slip away from the Northumbrian students and stampedes their horses (4057-4058); and Don John is walking "softe" in the garden when the merchant's wife comes out to greet him (Sht 91-94).

Although there may appear to be an adequate number of illustrations of sound or hearing in the Canterbury Tales, the number of actual descriptions is few. Mention of a sound as "loud" does not seem to justify a sensitiveness to sound. The direct statement, suggestion, or implication of the varying degrees of loudness would be of much more supporting value. Chaucer seems content merely to note a "loude" sound in most instances. In a very few instances he emphasizes the loudness or the intensity of sound by comparing superlatively with other sounds or by associating it favorably with one other sound. Almost all sounds that are not loud, that are of average tonal quality, are mentioned by name of sound and left without further classification. Sounds that are particularly low, that are near to quietness, have the words "softe" or "softely" as descriptive modifiers.

In order to define the kind or type of sound Chaucer chooses a group of words with descriptive value as a part of their make-up. These words come, for the largest part,

under the speaking voice<sup>36</sup> and have very few qualifying or classifying terms used with them. Those sound words associated with the singing voice are more often and more fully qualified, usually by comparison with like sounds. Of all the "weeping" and "wailing" in the Canterbury Tales, only one time is there a word actually giving a sound sense impression that is life-like and indicative of the emotions with it and behind it; that one instance is with the word "sobbing."

Chaucer specifies a number of musical instruments but he rarely specifies the type of music played on them or the amount and kind of ability with which the various persons play the instruments.

The miscellaneous sounds, those of animals and of inanimate objects are few. These few are seldom limited or enlarged upon, and they are often repeated more than once in the same passage.

Despite the foregoing statements and suppositions, hearing or the sense of sound holds second place to sight in Chaucer's apparent sensitiveness as judged by his use in the Canterbury Tales. The senses of "smellynge, savorynge, and touchynge" are conspicuously less prominent.

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<sup>36</sup> These may be found in the Appendix, listed alphabetically as sub-divisions of "The Speaking Voice" under the section entitled "Hearing."

The words "sound," "sounded," "soundin'" and "sounds," as connected with the sense of sound and used in the Canterbury Tales are listed below:

### Sound

#### Prologue

565 A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,  
674 Was never trompe of half so greet a soun.

#### Knight's Tale

2432 And with that soun he herde a murmurynge  
2881 That roreth of the cryng and the soun

#### Miller's Tale

3138 That I am dronke, I knowe it by my soun;

#### Man of Law's Tale

563 This lady weex affrayed of the soun,

#### Pardoner's Tale

536 At either ende of thee foul is the soun;  
553 And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun,

#### Wife of Bath's Tale

974 'Biwreye me nat, thou water, with thy soun,'

#### Summoner's Tale

2151 That myghte have lete a fart of swich a soun.  
2226 As of the soun or savour of a fart.  
2233 The rumblyng of a fart, and every soun,  
2273 That equally the soun of it wol wende,

#### Clerk's Tale

271 With many a soun of sondry melodye,

#### Merchant's Tale

1715 Biforn hem stoode swich instrumentz of soun.

#### Squire's Tale

105 Al be it that I kan nat sowne his stile.  
270 Ther as they sownen diverse instrumentz,

#### Manciple's Tale

115 To heeren of his cleer voys the soun.

#### Parson's Tale

1085-90 Canterbury,--thilke that sownen in to synne;

### Sounded

#### Monk's Tale

3157 That wiste to what fyn his dremes sowned

#### Squire's Tale

517 That sowneth into gentillesse of love

#### Manciple's Tale

195 That sowneth into vertu, any while

#### Parson's Tale

160-5 Ever semeth me that the trompe sowneth.

Sounding

## Prologue

275 Sownynge alway then crees of his wynnyng.

307 Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche.

## Physician's Tale

54 So swete a sownynge facounde,

Sounds

## Knight's Tale

2512 That in the bataille blowen bloody sounes;

## II. SMELLING

Chaucer does not devote time or space to the sense of smell in his Canterbury Tales. Of the eleven times that he refers to the sense, only five words of identification are used and one of these is too general to be of consequence. Flowers are described as being sweet and "wel" smelling, and the breath is strong or sour or stinking.

In the Knight's Tale, Chaucer draws a vivid picture of the statue of Venus, a statue that is glorious to see. He speaks of the green waves and the bright glass and the citole in Venus' right hand. Then, with a touch of the real, he writes that she had:

1960 . . . on hir heed, ful semely for to se,  
1961 A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge;

Chaucer leaves the reader to imagine the fragrance of the rose. It could be merely satisfactory; it could be pleasing. On the other hand, "wel" could refer to the quantity of smell or the degree of smell. The fact that the rose garland is "fressh" indicates that the fragrance is still



strong in the flower. The garland has evidently been placed on the statue at a recent time and attracts as much attention by its beauty and "well smellynge" as does the statue itself, since Chaucer describes it as "ful semely for to se" (1960).

The flowers in the Second Nun's Tale are also "wel smellynge" (279). The flowers are made into two crowns of roses and lillies and are delivered to Cecile and Valerian by the angel. The angel asks them to keep the crowns of flowers always because:

Fro paradys to you have I hem broght,  
Ne nevere mo ne shal they roten bee,  
Ne lese hir soote savour, trusteth me; . . .  
(11. 227-229)

As the angel is talking, Tiburce, the brother, comes into the room:

And whan that he the savour undernoom,  
Which that the roses and the lillies caste  
Withinne his herte, he gan to wondre faste,  
And seyde, "I wondre, this tyme of the yeere,  
Whennes that soote savour cometh so  
Of roses and lillies that I smelle heer. (11. 243-248)

Tiburce concludes that the sweet smell of the roses and lillies has seeped into his heart and that he is changed into another person (250-252). Valerian tells Tiburce that she and Cecile wear crowns of roses that come to them through their prayers and that he, Tiburce, may see them if he will only believe (255-259).

Chaucer describes the month of May (FranklT 907-917), with its garden full of leaves and flowers. There was never

another garden of such beauty and the "odour" and the "fresshe sighte" of the flowers would make any heart fill with joy. Chaucer uses again the technique of naming the result and thereby implying some degree of greatness or sweetness leading to that result. He does not qualify the odor of the flowers, but leaves the qualification to the reader. In the Knight's Tale Chaucer refers to great odor (IV, 2938) and again leaves the degree of greatness and kind of greatness to be supplied by the reader. His suggestions of kind come from the nouns naming the source of the great odor:

2937 And gerlandes, hanging with ful many a flour;  
2938 The mirre, th' encens, with al so greet odour;

The picture of Arcite in the temple has one suggestion about smell in it. The fire is burning on the altar and Arcite is intermittently casting incense into it.

Then, in the Knight's Tale III, 2427, Chaucer says:

2427 A sweete smel the ground anon up yaf,  
The smell, apparently, is the result of the earth-smell itself, the wood-burning fire, and the incense.

Chaucer actually uses only one descriptive word in defining the odor or the smell of flowers and incense, the word "sweete" or "soote". He uses the same word when, in the Miller's Tale he compares Alison's breath to bragget<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> A drink made of ale and honey. The word "bragget" comes from the Welsh "bragowd."

or the "meeth"<sup>38</sup> or apples stored in the hay:

3261 Hir mouth was sweet as bragot or the meeth,  
3262 Or hoord of apples leyd in hey or heeth.

In the same tale, Nicholas takes pains to perfume his breath by using "swoote" herbs (3205), by chewing "licorys" or "any cetewale."<sup>39</sup>

Chaucer describes a different kind of breath in the Man of Law's Tale. The messenger who is sent by the carpenter to Ailla with the news of his new-born son stops by to tell Donegild also; she greets him cordially and offers him lodging and drink for the night. The excess drinking of ale and wine results in a "strong . . . breeth" (II, 771-773) and the exchange of letters; and Chaucer upbraids the messenger for it.

The Pardoner also upbraids those who drink to excess; he calls wine a "lecherous" thing (PardT 549), and declares that drunkenness in full of striving and wretchedness. He describes the drunken man's breath as sour:

552 Sour is thy breeth, foul art ow to embrace,  
The cook, too, has a sour breath. The Manciple says to him in his Prologue:

32 And, wel I woot, thy breeth ful soure stynketh,

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<sup>38</sup> Mead. AS. medu, meadu. This is due to the influence ON mjo r; or of W. medd in which dd has the sound of th. Mead is a fermented drink of water and honey with malt, yeast, etc.

<sup>39</sup> "Cetewale" is zedoary, a plant of the ginger tribe.

He becomes even more intolerant of the cook and rebukes him further:

39 Thy cursed breeth infecte wole us alle.  
40 Fy, stynking swyn! fy, foule moot thee falle!

In addition to the word "sour" the Manciple introduces another word indicative of undesirable odor.

"Stynking" does not disclose the particular odor but it does imply an unpleasant odor in general, and along with "foul" is offensive to the senses. The Canon's Yeoman also uses the word "stinking" in reference to his trade. He says that one may recognize his business companions by their smell (CYT 886-891):

For al the world they stynken as a goot;  
Hir savour is so rammyssh and so hot  
That though a man grom hem a mile be,  
The savour wole infecte hym, trusteth me.  
And thus by smel, and by thredbare array,  
If that men liste, this folk they knowe may.  
(ll. 886-891)

In this passage, Chaucer not only presents the smell as an unpleasant one but states the strength of the smell and the intensity of the unpleasantness. It is also one of the few comparisons actually descriptive of smell and is one of the more definite ones. The particular odor associated with a goat allows the reader to bring to acuteness his sense of smell by memory of a scent familiar to the average medieval Englishman.

In the Summoner's Tale, "stynk" is used in connection with the trick that Thomas played on the Friar (2274).

The Pardoner, in expounding the many evils of drink, mentions that the white wine of Lepe<sup>40</sup> that is sold on Fish Street in Chepe emits such fumes<sup>41</sup> that when a man has drunk three drinks he is not where he supposes he is.

The Parson, in his long sermon, uses "stynkyng" in a different way (ParST 561):

561 Of Ire comen thise stynkyng engendures;  
First, hate, that is cold wrathe; . . .

The Parson employs the connotation of the word and the usual reaction to it in order to emphasize the ill repute of the "engendures" that come from "Ire."

There are few indications in the Canterbury Tales that Chaucer was sensitive to smells or that he was conscious of the smell of things as he wrote of them. With the exception of those lines cited in the preceding pages there seems to be no mention of nouns that connote, within themselves, a smell or smells. Chaucer often speaks of "soper" or of feasts or of courses served at the "bord," but he gives no impression that he does more than sees them or wishes the reader to do more than see them. In the passages listing foods, Chaucer seems always to have as his object the pointing out of richness or splendor of court (Cambiuskan's feasts), of subtly introducing irony

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<sup>40</sup> A town in Spain

<sup>41</sup> Chaucer uses "fumoitu" to represent fumes collectively.

(the friar's dinner menu for Thomas' wife), or of praising the craft of cooking (the General Prologue listing of the cooks special dishes). However, in the General Prologue, mention of the Summoner's favorite foods (634) leads one to conclude that the Summoner must have a breath heavy with the smell of garlic and onions, especially immediately following meals consisting of these. One might also imagine the smell of wine after the Miller's drinking party for Alan and John, but the suggestion does not come from Chaucer; it is a sensitiveness to odor that is entirely reader supplied.

The number of times the words "smell," "smellest," and "smelling" are used in connection with the sense of smell or smelling is as large as the number of indications of it by other methods. Those mentioned are listed below:

#### Smell

##### Knight's Tale

2427 And sweete smel the ground anon up yaf,

##### Miller's Tale

3691 To smellen sweete, er he hadde kembd his heer

##### Shipman's Tale

1113 I smelle a Loller in the wind, quod he

##### Summoner's Tale

2284 He hadde the firste smel of fartes three,

##### Second Nun's Tale

248 Of rose and lilies that I smelle heer;

251 The sweete smel that in myn herte I fynde.

##### Canon's Yeoman's Tale

885 Men may hem knowe by smel of brymstoon

890 (variant reading)

And thus by smel and threedbare array

##### Parson's Tale

635-40 To smelle the soote savour of the vyne

Smellest

## Second Nun's Tale

256 And as thou smellest hem thurgh my preyere,

Smelling

## Knight's Tale

1961 A rose garland, fressh and wel smellynge,

## Second Nun's Tale

279 Corones two of flowres wel smellynge,

## Canon's Yeoman's Tale

890 Lo thus by smellyng, and threedbare array.

## Parson's Tale

205-10 Five wittes, as sighte, herynge, smellynge,

955-60 That been sighte, herynge, smellynge,

III. SAVORING<sup>40</sup>

Savoring, or the sense of taste, receives very little consideration in the Canterbury Tales and the few descriptions referring to it are questionable in value. In the Knight's Tale, Chaucer supposedly defines the exact taste of Palamon's tears:

II, 1279 The pure fettres on his shynes grete  
1280 Weren of his bittre, salte teeres wete.

According to the passage, the tears are bitter and salty, but there is some doubt as to the emphasis in the sentence. Was Chaucer primarily concerned with savor of the tears or was he using mechanically the flavors ordinarily accorded

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<sup>40</sup> Chaucer uses the word "savoring" in two different ways, one in referring to smell and the other in referring to taste. The "savoring" used as the title for this Part III refers to taste and was translated directly from Chaucer's own list of the senses in the Parson's Tale, line 277: "sighte, herynge, smellynge, savorynge, and touchyng."

tears? According to grammatical construction, the sentence has as its main purpose the emphasis of "wete" as a descriptive word, thus supplying the picture of much weeping. It is quite possible, however, that Chaucer, in thinking of the lines before the actual writing, was aware of the sensory perception of tears. On the other hand, it is quite possible that no thought or feeling of the taste of tears preceded the writing, that an easy flowing and often used phrase came readily and almost unconsciously from Chaucer's pen. Chaucer uses "salt" to modify "tears" again just before the "little clergeon" of the Prioress' Tale dies:

674 His salte teeris triklled doun as reyn, . . .

The remaining descriptive phrases have to do with food and drink. Wine is classified as strong or sweet or of the grape, and ale is "moyste" and corny. The Summoner "liked for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood" (GenProl 635). At the Tabard, the Canterbury pilgrims are served "soper" by the Host, Harry Bailley, with the best of foods. "Strong was the wyne" (GenProl 748-750), and the company enjoyed it. Although "strong" tells something about the taste of the wine, its degree of potency, yet it does not tell what kind of taste.

Dame Alice defines the taste of wine as sweet; she interrupts her recital and turns back to the days of her younger years when she could dance to a harp and sing like a nightingale, especially when she "had dronke a draughte



of sweete wyn!" (WBPro1 447-449). After Sir Thopas has escaped from the giant and returned, his men wish him to celebrate: (STT 851-852)

851 They fette hym first the sweete wyn, and mede  
eek in a mazelyn, . . .

The Manciple, after rebuking the Cook, decides to pacify him, and since he has his gourd "a draghte of wyn, ye, of a repe grape," (MancPro1 82-83), he offers it to the Cook.

Earlier, when the Host has asked the Cook to tell his tale (and finds him asleep), the Cook answers that he'd rather sleep than have the best gallon of wine in Chepe (MancPro1 23-24). The Host remarks to the Manciple that whether the Cook has drunk wine or "cold or moysty ale," he is afraid that he will tell a "lewedly" story and thus the Host excuses him from this tale. "Ale" is mentioned a second time when the Host declares in the Introduction to the Pardoner's Tale that:

By corpus bones! but I have a triacle  
Or elles a draught of moyste and corny ale,<sup>41</sup>  
Or but anon I hear a mirie tale, . . . (ll. 314-316)

The Host calls upon the Pardoner who answers that he hopes his tale will be to the company's liking now that he has drunk a "draught of corny ale" (PardPro1 456), and Absolon, in hope of gaining Alison's favor, sends her "spiced ale" (MillT 3378). Alice of Bath suggests her idea of the taste

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<sup>41</sup> "Moyste and corny" has the meaning of fresh and strong of the corn or of the malt.

of ale when she warns the Pardoner that he shall "drynken of another tone" before she stops that "shal savore wors than ale" (WBPro1 170-171). "Wors" does not identify the taste, but it suggests an opinion of it.

The descriptions of food are limited to sauce and bread. Chaucer says of the widow in the Nun's Priest's Tale that:

2834 Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deal.  
In the General Prologue Chaucer describes the Franklin's devotion to good food and drink, and that "woe was the Franklin's Cook" if the sauce were not "pounant and sharp" (351-352). Absolon, in his persistent pursuit of the good will of Alison the Carpenter's wife, sends her "wafers, pipyng hoot out of the glude" (MillT 3379), and the Friar in the Summoner's Tale desires a "shyvere" of "softe bread" (1840) among a few other things.

The remaining examples are passages concerning particular foods that, although they are not described as to actual taste, provide some idea of what the taste might be to the reader. The first, from the General Prologue, exposes and praises the Cook's ability in his chosen profession; they took him with them to Canterbury to:

380 . . . broille the chickens with the marybones,  
381 And poudre-marchant tart<sup>42</sup> and galyngale<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> A powder used for flavoring.

<sup>43</sup> A flavor prepared from sweet cyperus.

Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.  
 He koude rooste, seth, and broille, and frye,  
 Maken morteux, and wel bake a pye. (ll. 380-384)

The Wife of Bath mentions bacon (WBPro1 217) and the Friar begs his people to give whatever they have, "mele and close, or elles corn" (SumT 1739) or:

1746 Yif us a busskel white, malt, or reye,  
 1747 A Goddes dechyl, or a troye of chese.  
 1753 Bacon or beef, or swich thyng as ye fynde.

January, on the night of his wedding, drinks:

1807 . . . Ypocras,<sup>44</sup> claree,<sup>45</sup> and vernage  
 1808 Of spices hoote, t'encreessen his carage;

At the court of Cambiuskan, wine and spices are brought for the company before the service, and after the service they "soupen" all day (SqT 290-297). Alan and John ask the Miller for meat and drink and the Miller had bread and ale and roasted goose for them (RvT 4132; 4137). According to the General Prologue sketch by the Franklin:

His breed, his ale, was always after con,  
 A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.  
 Withoute bake mete was never his hous  
 Of fissh and flessch, and that so plenteuous  
 It shewed in his house of mete and drynke,  
 Of alle deynteies that men koude thynke.  
 After the sondry sesons of the year,  
 So chaunged he his mete and his soper.  
 Ful many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.  
 (ll. 341-349)

None of these passages indicate the taste of the foods

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44 A cordial drink

45 A mixed drink. An old recipe, cited by Skeat, prescribes one gallon of boiled honey, eight gallons of red wine, a pound of cinnamon, a pound of pepper and a half pound of ginger; the spices to be powered.

concerned, they indicate only the kinds of foods. However, they do show that Chaucer knew and thought about foods and thus must have considered taste. The fact that he gives so few descriptions of taste itself seems to intimate that he was not as sensitive to taste and thus subordinated taste to the other senses, sight in particular.

There are numerous mentions pertaining to foods and drink that have no association with taste but merely carry the story. Nicholas instructs the Carpenter to prepare "mete and drynke" enough for a day or two (MillT 3411); Arcite tells Palamon that he will "mete and drynke this nyght . . . brynge ynough for thee" (KnT II, 1615-1616); and Theseus "ne yaf him (Arcite) mete and wages" (KnT III, 1900). The Host sets a "soper" at a certain price, (GenProl 815), and later remarks:

891 And lat se now who shal the soper wyne;  
The Franklin "wel loved . . . a sop in wyn" (GenProl 334),  
the Sommoner would "suffre for a guest of wyn" (GenProl 649), and the Pardoner and the Parson preach against excess of it.

References to eating, drinking, feasting, and to wine, ale, bread, and other words related to possibility for taste are not infrequent in the Canterbury Tales; but they are of little value in the study of taste since they do not contribute directly or indirectly. The majority of

these references serve to prove Chaucer's keen observation and his knowledge of foods and drinks of his time.

There are only two mentions of the word "taste" in the Canterbury Tales, one in the Second Nun's Tale:

503 And taste it wel, and stoon thou shalt it  
fynde . . .

The other is a reference to "tasting" found in the Parson's Tale:

955 Tastyng or savouryng, and feelyng . . .

All other mentions concerning taste come under the word "savouryng."

#### IV. TOUCHING<sup>46</sup>

Of all the senses, touch is the least recognized by use in the Canterbury Tales. There are only four instances of description that might be attributed to touch and one questionable implication. Chaucer relates, in his Tale of Sir Thopas, that:

His steede in his prikyng  
So swatte that men myght him wryng;  
His sydes wer al blood. (ll. 775-777)

The horse was wet with sweat, but the inference does not justify an assumption that the "feel" of wetness is

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<sup>46</sup> "Touch" is used by Chaucer in other meanings than that of perceiving by means of the tactile sense. For example: (1) To affect (one's heart, mind, etc.) so as to impress or influence (MellT 2735-2740); (2) To make allusion or slight reference to (Parst 610-615); (3) To relate to; to concern (MillT 3494).

concerned; the wetness might as easily be observed and recorded purely from the sense of sight. However, there is also the possibility that the sight stimulated the sensory perception to imagine "feel," to imagine the "wetness" under touch.

The use of soft in the meaning of a soothing or agreeable quality or as affecting the sense of touch in a gentle way comes in the Miller's Tale in the description of Alison:

3249 And softer than the walle is of a wether.  
Alison herself is softer. This is a definite indication of touch, whether through sense of actual touch or through knowledge of what the touch would be from the physical appearance.

January, as described in the Merchant's Tale, kisses May with:

1825 With thikke brustles of his berd unsofte,  
1826 Lyk to the skyn of houndfyssh, sharp as brere.

This is the only simile used in defining the sense of touch, and is the most definite in its purpose and the most real in its description. The word "bristle" itself brings to mind short, stiff, coarse hair; and "unsoft" suggests that it is displeasing to the touch. In line 1826, there is still further clarification by the word "sharp;" and the complete phrase "sharp as a brere" intensifies the idea of feeling gathered from the first phrase of comparison, "lyk to the skyn of houndfyssh."

Chaucer intimates the "feel" of hair again in the Knight's Tale as he speaks of the "grete Emetreus":

III, 2165 His crisp heer lyk rynges was yronne, . . .  
The word crisp followed by "lyke rynges was yronne" suggests that Chaucer's emphasis in the sentence is on the fact that his hair is curly, that it is in ringlets. There might, however, be implication the hair is rather brittle, friable. There is no factual information or basis for supposition that the word "crisp" actually implies a reference to the texture of the hair; it is only a possibility.

Chaucer does refer to texture of hair when he tells of the King of Thrace (in the Knight's Tale, also). He describes him with:

III, 2134 . . . kempe heeris on his browes stoute;  
2135 His lymes grete, his bawnes harde and  
stronge,

"Kempe" has the meaning of "coarse, stout;" the meaning of "stout" is further emphasized in "on his browes stout." In the same quotation there is the word "grete" to modify limbs, partially suggesting strength in texture as well as size. Brawn, or muscle, is described as "harde and stronge;" hardness is definite sense of touch and strong implies the same sense but with greater intensity.

There are more mentions of the word "touch" than there are statements or implications of the sense of touch, or touching, in the Canterbury Tales. These are listed

as follows:

### Touch

#### Reeve's Tale

3932 Ther was no man, for peril, dorste hym touche;  
 . . .

#### Monk's Tale

3284 If that it touch hir lymes or hir lyves . . .

#### Wife of Bath's Tale

87 Al wer it good no womman for to touch, -- . . .

#### Franklin's Tale

1115 But men myghte touche the arwe, or come therby  
 . . .

#### Second Nun's Tale

156 That ye me touche or love in Vileynye, . . .

#### Parson's Tale

325-330 . . . and not touchen it, lest peraventure  
 we sholde . . .

### Touched

#### Parson's Tale

545-550 They been touched with brymston. Right  
 so ire . . .

### Toucheth

#### Parson's Tale

850-855 Whoso toucheth and handleth a womman . . .  
 850-855 Whoso toucheth warm pych, it shent his . . .

### Touching

#### Parson's Tale

205-210 . . . . savorynge, and touchynge: but in . . .  
 210-215 . . . . and touchinge of al hir body ycovered  
 with fir . . .  
 850-855 . . . . fynger is the vileyns touchynge in  
 wikked manere; . . .



### CHAPTER III

#### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

##### I. SUMMARY

There is evidence that Chaucer was sensitive to sounds. Hearing, or the sense of sound, is demonstrated by the adaptation of particular styles and rhythms to particular tales; it is demonstrated by meter and language in the adaptation of these to particular Pilgrims and to particular characters in the Pilgrims' tales. Many of the leading scholars agree that Chaucer is sensitive to the effect of the sound of his words, his lines, and his passages upon the reader.

The greater number of the descriptions of sound or sensitiveness to hearing are concerned with the speaking voice and are intimately associated with the characters in the tales as well as the Canterbury Pilgrims. Many of the speaking voices are not natural or usual, but changed or affected. The Pardoner takes pains to speak in a haughty voice in services; Arcite's voice cannot be recognized on his return from exile; the Friar lisps because he finds it pleasing. Melibee suddenly changes his tone to one of grief and then one of anger; the Miller's voice is changed by drunkenness; and the Friar preaches in dramatic voice to persuade the people to give money and goods.

By comparison Chaucer describes the Host's speaking voice one time as lordly as a king, another time as courteously as though it were a maid. The Friar speaks well and the Summoner speaks as loudly as a trumpet sounding. By adverbial modification Chaucer has the Marquis speak softly and soberly; the Devil also speaks softly and Theseus and the Friar speak softly. The Squire speaks feelingly and the Pardoner reads aloud well. Many of the characters speak, say, answer, and pray pitiously--Emily, Constance, the "little Clergeon's" mother, and Nero.

Chaucer uses the verb "murmur" and the prepositional phrases "with manly voice" and "with benign voice" as description. He often uses a verb that describes, in itself, a sound. Some of the more common ones are "complain," "preach," "pray," "swear" and "command."

The singing voice is second in importance in Chaucer's use of sound in the Canterbury Tales. The Friar sings mass hastily; Arcite sings a "roundel lustily" and six characters sing "loude." January's singing is clear at one time and broken and cracking at another; the Pardoner sings merrily; and Absolon sings in a small gentle voice. The birds also sing loudly and merrily and well. Phebus sings better than Amphious, and Aurelius sings better than any other man.

Chaucer uses crying to represent crying out in a loud voice and to represent crying in the sense of lamenting.

He also uses shrieking in both of the preceding meanings. Most mixed noises are called "clamoring;" and the words "shouting," "yelling," and "roaring" represent, in most cases, a group noise of that particular type.

"Weeping" is a word often repeated in the Canterbury Tales; however it is very seldom descriptive of sound when it is used alone. When it is followed by wailing or "waymentynge" it indicates that particular noise enlarged upon by an adverb or adverbial phrase. Sobbing is the only truly descriptive word in the classification of weeping and is used to describe the reunion of Aella and Constance.

Sighing is connected with grief or sorrow in the Canterbury Tales and does not depict wistfulness or hopelessness. Laughing is not uncommon on the pilgrimage, but the type of laughter is seldom described. Chaucer uses the word "rowne" to indicate low voice, especially those used in a conspiratorial manner; and "rowne" is used four times in the Tales. Chaucer uses groaning to describe sounds made by both fowls and people. Chanticleer groans, the Carpenter groans, and, according to Thomas' wife, Thomas groans. Some of the miscellaneous vocal sounds come from animals, some from people. They include chucking, barking, crowing, coughing, groaning, howling, snorting, and whooping, and similar sounds.

In defining a particular musical sound, Chaucer refers to an instrument. Of all the mentions of melody,

minstrelsy, and instrumental music, however, the occasions of actual description are few. Absolon plays his "giterne" well and Nicholas plays his "giterne" well and Nicholas plays his psalter so sweetly that all the chamber rings with the sound of it.

Smelling is subordinate in importance to sound, as judged by use in the Canterbury Tales. Chaucer mentions "odor," "savor," "taste" and "fumes" without further evaluation. The only descriptive terms used to indicate degree or kind in these sense words are "strong," "sweet," "sour," "stinking" and "well smelling." For savoring, or tasting, Chaucer gives eight illustrations; five of these are of wine and ale, and he defines them as sweet, strong, corny, and of wild grape. There are, however, numerous references to different foods and drinks. Touching is the least used sense in the Canterbury Tales. There are only five occasions of description and one, or more, of these is questionable.

## II. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The results of this thesis were not entirely anticipated. The realization that almost all of the well-known passages lacked particular emphasis in the four senses, hearing (sound), smelling (smell), savoring (taste), and touching (touch), led to the desire to ascertain the exact degree of use that Chaucer actually makes of the senses. Before one-half of the study in

Robinson's book had been completed, the possibility of receiving a negative answer became apparent. After the careful perusal of such scholars as Skeet, Cowling, Tatlock, Root, and others with almost no evidence from them of work on the subject or of references to the subject, the direction of the results became evident. By the time books, magazine articles, reference books, translations, and Robinson's edition had been exhausted for material and suggestion and still there was little information, the result was obvious. Chaucer had not considered the senses of hearing, smelling, savoring, and touching to be as important as the sense of sight, if this might be surmised from his use of the senses in the Canterbury Tales. To find that hearing was the most used of the four senses was not surprising; to find that the sum total of the use of all four of these senses was not equal to the accurate and abundant descriptions of the sense of sight used in the General Prologue alone was surprising.

As a result of this research there seem to be only thirty actual illustrations of Chaucer's accurate and real sensitivity to sound; eight reliable references to smell; five direct descriptions of taste; and three identifications of touch with two other suggestions of touch. The total number is little more than forty-five descriptions of the four combined senses. This does not include questionable, suggestive, or "possible" illustrations, and does not

include mere mention of, or mention pertaining to, one or all of the four senses.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

The general conclusion following the research for and the writing of this thesis and drawn from the material in the body of this thesis and from the absence of the many more pages of illustrative material that would have resulted from a positive answer, is that Chaucer's use of the four senses, "herynge, smellynge, savorynge, and touchyng" (Parson's Tale, Part I, line 206) is extremely limited in the Canterbury Tales, and declines in the following order: hearing, smelling, savoring, touching.

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## A P P E N D I X

A CATALOGICAL LISTING OF SENSE WORDS,  
HEARING, SMELLING, SAVORING, AND TOUCHING  
THAT WERE FOUND USEFUL IN THIS STUDY<sup>47</sup>

I. HEARING

A. The Speaking Voice

1. Calling	Nicholas	MillT 3415
2. Commanding	Marquis	ClT 191
3. Complaining	Old Women	KnT I, 908
	Tercelet	SqT 523
	Aurelius	FranklT 945
	Virginia	PLT 239
	Dorigen	FranklT 991
4. Exclaiming	Cook	ChkProl 4327
	Chanticleer	NPT 3277
	Phebus' crow	ManoT 243
	Pertelate	NPT 2908
	Chanticleer	NPT 3277
5. Harping	Friar	GenProl 266
6. Lispig	Friar	GenProl 264
7. Murmuring	Peasants	ClT IV, 628
	Oswald	RvProl 3863
	People	SqT 204
8. Praying	Choir boy	PrT 141
	Knight	KnT I, 1204
	Nero	MLT 233
	Griselda	ClT 141
	Choir boy	PrT 600
	Arcite and Palamon	KnT II, 1827
9. Preaching	Friar	SumT 1714-
		1717
	Pardonér	GenProl 712
10. Reciting	Pardoner	GenProl 709
11. Requesting	Perotheus	KnT I, 1204
12. Speaking	Marquis	ClT 295-296
	Theseus	KnT II, 1773
	Squire	SqT 675-676

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<sup>47</sup> Only those lines found useful in the study are listed. Mere mention of sense words, unless offering suggestion or implication, are excluded.

12. Speaking (Continued)	Marquis	CLT 323
	Nicholas	MillT 3289
	Pardoner	PardT 531
	Constance	MLT I, 449
	Emily	KnT III, 2085
	Knight	SqT 99
	Devil	FrT 1414
	Host	ShT 446
	Friar	SumT 1771
	Host	RvProl 3900
	Devil	FrT 1509
	Constance	MLT II, 835
	Prioress	GenProl 124- 126
	Phebus' crow	ManoT 134- 135
	Don John	ShT 91
	Peasants	CLT IV, 131
	Knight	WBT 1036
	Griselda	CLT III, 553
	Melibee	MeIT 2199
	Pardoner	PardProl 1130-1131
	Griselda	CLT IV, 1087
	Miller	MillProl 3138
	Arcite	KnT II, 1370- 1371
	Emetreus	KnT III, 2174
	Constance	MLT II, 518
	Arcite and Palamon	KnT 1826
	Sir Thopas	STT 2062
	Young folk of Flaunders	PardT 473
	Peasants	CLT V, 899
	Host	MillProl 3114
13. Swearing		

B. The Singing Voice

1. Chanting	Absolon	MillT 3367
	January	MerchT 1849- 1850
2. Singing	Emily	KnT I, 1055
	Prioress	GenProl 122- 123
	Phebus	ManoT 114- 118
	Phebus' crow	ManoT 136- 138

2. Singing	Absolon	MillT 3360
(continued)	January	MerchT 184
	Friar	GenProl 235-
		236
	Crow	Manct 251
	Birds	NPT 3201
	January	MerchT 2320-
		2323
	Friar	MillT 3656
	Phebus' crow	Manct 244-
		247
	Absolon	MillT 3376-
		3378
	Crow	Manct 294
	Choir boy	PrT 546
	January	MerchT 184
	Choir boy	PrT 553
	Friar	GenProl 235-
		236
	Crow	Manct 251
	January	MerchT 2320-
		2323
	Crow	Manct 294
	Birds	NPT 3201
	Friar	MillT 3656
	Crow	Manct 300-
		301
	Squire	GenProl 91
	Palamon	KnT III,
		2210-2212
	Arcite	KnT II, 1540
	Second Nun	SNT 1135
	Nicholas	MillT 3216
	Constance	MLT 294
	Cook	CkProl 4375
	Arcite	KnT II, 1229
	Priest	CYT 344-345
	Chanticleer	NPT 4460
	Friar	SumT 1726-
		1728
	Choir boy	PrT 655
	Chanticleer	NPT 448-4484
	Alison	MillT 3257-
		3258
	Pardoner	GenProl 672
	Choir boy	PrT 72-73
	Summoner	GenProl 673-
		674
	Lark	KnT II, 1509
	Pardoner	GenProl 714
	Birds	SqT 555

2. Singing	Aurelius	FranklT 929-
(continued)	Chanticleer's father	930
	Birds	NPT 3301-
	Choir boy	3306
		SqT 766-771
		PrT 622

C. Crying, Shouting, Shrieking, and Clamoring

1. Clamoring	Palamon	KnT I, 1278
	Old women	KnT I, 995
2. Crying	Old women	KnT I, 949
	Palamon	KnT I, 1078
	January	MerchT 2364-
		2366
	Nicholas	MillT 3814
	People	KnT IV,
		2561-2562
	Emily	KnT III,
		2342
	Ducks	NPT 3390
	People	SNT 416
	Old women	KnT I, 901-
		903
	Palamon	KnT I, 1080
	Nicholas	MillT 3817
	Emily	KnT III,
		2344
	Falcon	SqT 630
	Constance	MLT 1111
	Romans	MkT 2481
	Melibee	MelT 976
	Carpenter's knave	MillT 3436
	Griselda	ClT III,
		563
	Theseus	KnT II, 1706
	John	RvT 4072
	Alan	RvT 4078
	Chanticleer	NPT 3039
	Palamon	KnT I, 1100
	Nicholas	MillT 3415
	Old woman	KnT I, 906
	Nicholas and Alison	MillT 3825
	Ladies	NPT 3355
	Romans	MkT 2535
	Chanticleer	NPT 3043
	Old women	KnT I, 908
	Falcon	SqT 417
	Herald	KnT IV, 2672
	Constance	MLT II, 850
	Carpenter	MillT 3476

2. Crying	Arcite	KnT 1221
(continued)	Ladies	KnT IV 2955
	People	KnT IV 2881
3. Shouting	People	KnT III,
		1922
	Men and women	NPT 3387
4. Shrieking	Falcon	SqT 417
	Emily	KnT IV, 2817
	Men, women and animals	NPT 3400
	Falcon	SqT 472; 422

D. Wailing, Weeping, and Sobbing

1. Wailing	Old women	KnT 931
	Dorigen	FranklT 1348
	Aurelius' brother	FranklT 1116
	Absolon	MillT 3398
	January	MerchT 2072
	Palamon	KnT 1295
	Merchant	MerchProl
		1213
	Arcite	KnT 1221
	De Rege Antiocho	MkT 2621
2. Weeping	Falcon	SqT 421
	Palamon	KnT IV 2878
	Apostle	PardT 529
	Women	KnT II, 1772
	Griselde	Cl VI, 1082
	People	PrT 1867-
		1868
	Constance's little child	MLT II, 834
	Arcite	KnT 1221
	Constance	MLT II, 919
	Aella	MLT II, 984
	Old women	KnT I, 931
	De Rege Antiocho	MkT 2621
	Dorigen	FranklT 1348
	Aurelius' brother	FranklT 1116
	Maximus	SNT 401
	People	SNT 415
	Griselde	ClT III, 545
	Arcite	KnT II, 1368
	Palamon	KnT IV, 2878
	Wife of Bath	WBPro1 588
	Canace	SqT 496
	The tercelet	SqT 523
	Emily	KnT IV, 2665-
		2666
	Dorigen	FranklT 1461-
		1462
	Averagus	FranklT 1480

2. Weeping (continued)	Dorigen and Averagus	FranklT 817
	De Rege Antiocho	MkT 2629
	Saturn	KnT III, 2470
	Constable	MLT I, 529
	Merchant	MerchProl
		1213
	Queen, Emily, and ladies	KnT II, 1749-1750
	January	MerchT 2072
	Wife of Bath	WBProI 592
	Justinus	MerchT 1544
	Aella	MLT II, 768
	Palamon	KnT I, 1295
	Constance	MLT I, 267
	Sampson	MkT 2061
	Melibee	Melt 976
	People	KnT IV, 2830-2831
	Romans	MkT 2481
	Constance	MLT 291-293
	Aella	MLT II, 1052
	May	MerchT 2092
	Marquis	CLT 914
	Peasants	CLT 898-901
	Emily	KnT IV, 2821
	Sampson	MkT 2077
	Constance	MLT II, 606
	Aella	MLT II, 1059
	Constance and Aella	MLT 1065
3. Sobbing	Arcite	KnT III, 1540
	Theseus	KnT IV, 2985
	Dorigen	FranklT 817
	May	MerchT 2329
	Dorigen	FranklT 865
	Aurelius	FranklT 1590
	Knight	WBT 913
	Damyas	MerchT 194
	Nicholas	MillT 3488
	Dorigen	FranklT 864
	Griselda	CLT III, 545
	Knight	WBT 1228
E. <u>Sighing</u>	Canterbury Pilgrims	PrProI 3855
	Don John	ShT 110
	Valerian	SNT 462
	Cecile	SNT 506
	Jankin	WBProI 672
	Friar	WBProI 829
	Host	MillProI 3114
	People	MillT 3849
F. <u>Laughing</u>		



F.	<u>Laughing</u> (continued)	Canterbury Pilgrims Folk	RvProl 3858 MillT 3840
G.	<u>Whispering, Groaning, and Other Miscellaneous Vocal Sounds</u>		
1.	Coughing	Absolon May Absolon	MillT 3697 Mercht 2208 MillT 3788
2.	Groaning	Thomas Carpenter Chanticleer Wife of Bath's Old husband Cherles Palamon and Emily Chanticleer	SumT 1829 MillT 3646 NPT 2886 WBPro1 443 KnT 2460 KnT IV, 3062 NPT 2907
3.	Howling	Palamon	KnT IV, 2817
4.	Roaring	January	Mercht 2364
5.	Snorting	Messenger	MLT III, 789-791
6.	Whispering	Old wife Summoner Fellow Summoner	WBT 1021 FrT 1550 SqT 216 FrT 1571
7.	Whooping	Men and women	NPT 3401
8.	Yelling	Palamon Men and women Heralds	KnT I, 1278 NPT 3389 KnT IV, 2672
H.	<u>Melody of Instruments</u>		
	Organ Pipes Instruments		SNT 1134 KnT IV, 2512 Mercht 1717- 1723
	Trumpets Rubible Harpe Trumpets		NPT 3398 MillT 3331 STT 845 KnT III, 2174
	Clarions Giterne Trumpets Rubible Harpe Giterne Trumpets Flute Instruments Giterne Trumpets Lutes		KnT IV, 2600 PardT 466 KnT IV, 2671 CkProl 4396 PardT 466 CkProl 4396 KnT IV, 2565 GenProl 91 SqT 77-79 MillT 3363 KnT IV, 2600 PardT 466

H. Melody of Instruments (continued)

Diverse instruments	SqT 268-271
Psaltery	MillT 3305-3307
Bagpipe	GenProl 565
Organ	SNT 1134
Trumpets	KnT IV, 2512
Pipes	STT 845
Trumpets	KnT IV, 2671
Giterne	MillT 3333; 3353

I. Miscellaneous Sounds

1. Barking	Dogs	NPT 3386
2. Chucking	Chanticleer	NPT 3174; 3182
3. Clattering	Spears	KnT IV, 2954
	Bells	SumT 1865
	Harness	KnT IV, 2492
	Arrows	KnT III, 2358-2359
	Doors	KnT III, 2423
4. Clinking	Bells	PardT 664
	Bells	NPProl 2794
5. Crowing	Chanticleer	NPT 3333
	Chanticleer	NPT 3197
	Chanticleer	NPT 2850
6. Gingling	Bridle	GenProl 169-171
7. Ringing	Bells	MillT 3655
	Hauberk	KnT III, 2431
8. Whistling	Bridle	GenProl 170
	Fire	KnT III, 2337-2340

II. SMELLING

A. <u>Fumes</u>	Wine	PardT 567
B. <u>Odor</u>	Flowers	FranklT 413
C. <u>Savor</u>	Lillies	SNT 243
D. <u>Sour</u>	Breath	PardT 552

E. <u>Stinking</u>	Canon Hell ----- Breath	CYT 885 Parst 840 SumT 2274 ManoProl 40
F. <u>Strong</u>	Breath	MLT II, 771- 773
G. <u>Sweet</u>	Flowers Roses and lillies Flowers Breath	SNT 227-228 SNT 247-249 SNT 250-251 MillT 3260- 3261
H. <u>Well Smelling</u>	Flowers Rose garland	SNT 279 KnT IV, 1961

### III. SAVORING

A. <u>Bitter, Salty</u>	Tears	KnT I, 1280
B. <u>Corny</u>	Ale	PardT 456
C. <u>Pungent</u>	Sauce	NPT 2834
D. <u>Ripe Grape</u>	Wine	MLProl 83
E. <u>Salty</u>	Tears	PrT 674
F. <u>Spiced</u>	Ale	MillT 3378
G. <u>Strong</u>	Wine	GenProl 635
H. <u>Sweet</u>	Wine	STT 851

### Mention of Foods That Contributed To The Study of "Taste" or "Savoring."

MillT 3822; 3497; 342	CYT 1193
RvT 4137; 3411	GenProl 379-384
KnT III, 1615-1616; 891	WBProI 217
GenProl 815; 799; 758;	SumT 1739; 1746; 1759; 1838-
819-820; 334; 649; 637	1841
SqT 290-297	Parst 444
	MerchT 1769; 1807-1811

## IV. TOUCHING

A. <u>Coarse</u>	Hair	KnT III, 2134
B. <u>Crisp</u>	Hair	KnT III, 2165
C. <u>Hard</u>	Muscle	KnT III, 2135
D. <u>Soft</u>	Allison	MillT 3249
E. <u>Sweat</u>	Steed Forehead	STT 775-777 CYT 579-581; 1186-1187