**Two Phonetic Transcriptions of Part of Chaucer's Prologue**

**Text:**
When that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droghte/droghte of March hath perced to the roote
And bathed euery/every veyne/veyn in swich icour
Of which vertue engendered is the flour;
When Zephirus eek w1/with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in euery/every holt and heeth
The tendre/cropes, and the yonge/sonne
Hath in the Ram his half/halve cours yronne,
And smale foweles/fowles maken melodye,
that slepen al the nyght with open eye
(So priketh hem nature/nature in hir corages)

**Transcription 1:**

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whan ṣat april wθ his ʂʊrəς soto
ðə druxt ʃf martʃ haθ persəd to: ðə roʊtə
and ʰædəd ɛvəri væm in swıtʃ likur
ɔf hwitʃ vertu endʒəndəd is ðə flur
whan zɛfɪrəs eik wθ his swɛtə bræθ
inspiɾəd haθ in ɛvəri hɔlt and hæθ
ðə ʊnḍər krəpəs and ðə jʊŋgə sʊnnə
haθ in ðə ram ɪz ʰælvo kʊrs ɪrʌnənə
and smaɿə fʊələs mækən mɛlɔdiːə
ðæt ʂlepən al ðə nɪxt wθ ɻɛŋd ɪə;
so; prikəθ hem nɑtʃur in hɪr kʊrədʒəs
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An examination of the [lines above] from the Canterbury Tales will make apparent both the uses and the limitations of pronunciation clues. The phonetic transcriptions represent a fairly conservative pronunciation of Middle English: some of the words might have been written differently because there is not complete agreement among scholars about Chaucer's pronunciation. Unstressed syllables and words are particularly susceptible to changes. For example, final ə in unstressed syllables may have been voiced; initial ʰ in unstressed words like him, hem, hir was probably silent; unstressed words like l and to probably had short vowels.

**Transcription 2:**

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whan θət april wθ ɪs ʂʊrəς soto
θə druxt ʃf martʃ haθ persəd to: θə roʊtə
and ʰədəd ɛvəri væm in swıtʃ likur
ɔf hwitʃ vertu endʒəndəd ɪz θə flur
whan zɛfɪrəs eik wθ ɪs swɛtə bræθ
inspiɾəd haθ ɪn ɛvəri hɔlt ənd hæθ
θə ʊnḍər krəpəs ənd θə jʊŋgə sʊnnə
haθ ɪn θə ram ɪz ʰælvo kʊrs ɪrʌnənə
and smaɿə fʊələs mækən mɛlɔdiːə
θət ʂlepən al θə nɪxt wθ ɻɛŋd ɪə;
so; prikəθ ɦem nɑtʃur ɪn hɪr kʊrədʒəs
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Unaccented e, as in sonne, saide, swete, etc., is called “final e.” In the selection from Chaucer (above), when final e is written but not pronounced in reading, it is printed as e. Such unpronounced e’s are side to be elided when the occur before a word beginning with a vowel or “weak h” and apocopated when they occur before a word beginning with a consonant. Unaccented e occurring between two consonants of the same word is also printed as e when it is not pronounced in reading. Such e’s are said to be syncopated.

Moore Historical Outlines of English Sounds and Inflections (revised by Marckwardt) : 37-39