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**Geoffrey Chaucer**  
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# Geoffrey Chaucer(c. 1343 – 25 October 1400)

Geoffrey Chaucer known as the Father of English literature, is widely considered the greatest English poet of the Middle Ages and was the first poet to have been buried in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. While he achieved fame during his lifetime as an author, philosopher, alchemist and astronomer, composing a scientific treatise on the astrolabe for his ten year-old son Lewis, Chaucer also maintained an active career in the civil service as a bureaucrat, courtier and diplomat. Among his many works, which include *The Book of the Duchess*, *the House of Fame*, *the Legend of Good Women* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, he is best known today for *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer is a crucial figure in developing the legitimacy of the vernacular, Middle English, at a time when the dominant literary languages in England were French and Latin.

## <b>Life</b>

Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London sometime around 1343, though the precise date and location of his birth remain unknown. His father and grandfather were both London vintners; several previous generations had been merchants in Ipswich. (His family name derives from the French *chasseur*, meaning "shoemaker".) In 1324 John Chaucer, Geoffrey's father, was kidnapped by an aunt in the hope of marrying the twelve-year-old boy to her daughter in an attempt to keep property in Ipswich. The aunt was imprisoned and the £250 fine levied suggests that the family was financially secure—bourgeois, if not elite. John Chaucer married Agnes Copton, who, in 1349, inherited properties including 24 shops in London from her uncle, Hamo de Copton, who is described in a will dated April 3, 1354 and listed in the City Hustings Roll as "moneyer"; he was said to be moneyer at the Tower of London. In the City Hustings Roll 110, 5, Ric II, dated June 1380, Geoffrey Chaucer refers to himself as *me Galfridum Chaucer, filium Johannis Chaucer, Vinetarii, Londonie'* .

While records concerning the lives of his contemporary poets, William Langland and the Pearl Poet are practically non-existent, since Chaucer was a public servant, his official life is very well documented, with nearly five hundred written items testifying to his career. The first of the "Chaucer Life Records" appears in 1357, in the household accounts of Elizabeth de Burgh, the Countess of Ulster, when he became the noblewoman's page through his father's connections. She was married to Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the second surviving son of the king, Edward III, and the position brought the teenage Chaucer into the close court circle, where he was to remain for the rest of his life. He also worked as a courtier, a diplomat, and a civil servant, as well as working for the king,

collecting and inventorying scrap metal.

In 1359, in the early stages of the Hundred Years' War, Edward III invaded France and Chaucer travelled with Lionel of Antwerp, 1st Duke of Clarence, Elizabeth's husband, as part of the English army. In 1360, he was captured during the siege of Rheims. Edward paid £16 for his ransom, a considerable sum, and Chaucer was released.

After this, Chaucer's life is uncertain, but he seems to have travelled in France, Spain, and Flanders, possibly as a messenger and perhaps even going on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. Around 1366, Chaucer married Philippa (de) Roet. She was a lady-in-waiting to Edward III's queen, Philippa of Hainault, and a sister of Katherine Swynford, who later (ca. 1396) became the third wife of John of Gaunt. It is uncertain how many children Chaucer and Philippa had, but three or four are most commonly cited. His son, Thomas Chaucer, had an illustrious career, as chief butler to four kings, envoy to France, and Speaker of the House of Commons. Thomas's daughter, Alice, married the Duke of Suffolk. Thomas's great-grandson (Geoffrey's great-great-grandson), John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, was the heir to the throne designated by Richard III before he was deposed. Geoffrey's other children probably included Elizabeth Chaucy, a nun at Barking Abbey. Agnes, an attendant at Henry IV's coronation; and another son, Lewis Chaucer.

Chaucer probably studied law in the Inner Temple (an Inn of Court) at this time. He became a member of the royal court of Edward III as a varlet de chambre, yeoman, or esquire on 20 June 1367, a position which could entail a wide variety of tasks. His wife also received a pension for court employment. He travelled abroad many times, at least some of them in his role as a valet. In 1368, he may have attended the wedding of Lionel of Antwerp to Violante Visconti, daughter of Galeazzo II Visconti, in Milan. Two other literary stars of the era were in attendance: Jean Froissart and Petrarch. Around this time, Chaucer is believed to have written *The Book of the Duchess* in honour of Blanche of Lancaster, the late wife of John of Gaunt, who died in 1369.

Chaucer travelled to Picardy the next year as part of a military expedition, and visited Genoa and Florence in 1373. Numerous scholars such as Skeat, Boitani, and Rowland suggested that, on this Italian trip, he came into contact with [Petrarch](http://www.poemhunter.com/francesco-petrarch/) or [Boccaccio](http://www.poemhunter.com/giovanni-boccaccio/). They introduced him to medieval Italian poetry, the forms and stories of which he would use later. The purposes of a voyage in 1377 are mysterious, as details within the historical record conflict. Later documents suggest it was a mission, along with Jean Froissart, to arrange a marriage between the future King Richard

II and a French princess, thereby ending the Hundred Years War. If this was the purpose of their trip, they seem to have been unsuccessful, as no wedding occurred.

In 1378, Richard II sent Chaucer as an envoy (secret dispatch) to the Visconti and to Sir John Hawkwood, English condottiere (mercenary leader) in Milan. It has been speculated that it was Hawkwood on whom Chaucer based his character the Knight in the Canterbury Tales, for a description matches that of a fourteenth-century condottiere.

A possible indication that his career as a writer was appreciated came when Edward III granted Chaucer "a gallon of wine daily for the rest of his life" for some unspecified task. This was an unusual grant, but given on a day of celebration, St George's Day, 1374, when artistic endeavours were traditionally rewarded, it is assumed to have been another early poetic work. It is not known which, if any, of Chaucer's extant works prompted the reward, but the suggestion of him as poet to a king places him as a precursor to later poets laureate. Chaucer continued to collect the liquid stipend until Richard II came to power, after which it was converted to a monetary grant on 18 April 1378.

Chaucer obtained the very substantial job of Comptroller of the Customs for the port of London, which he began on 8 June 1374. He must have been suited for the role as he continued in it for twelve years, a long time in such a post at that time. His life goes undocumented for much of the next ten years, but it is believed that he wrote (or began) most of his famous works during this period. He was mentioned in law papers of 4 May 1380, involved in the raptus of Cecilia Champaigne. What raptus means is unclear, but the incident seems to have been resolved quickly and did not leave a stain on Chaucer's reputation. It is not known if Chaucer was in the city of London at the time of the Peasants' Revolt, but if he was, he would have seen its leaders pass almost directly under his apartment window at Aldgate.

While still working as comptroller, Chaucer appears to have moved to Kent, being appointed as one of the commissioners of peace for Kent, at a time when French invasion was a possibility. He is thought to have started work on The Canterbury Tales in the early 1380s. He also became a Member of Parliament for Kent in 1386. There is no further reference after this date to Philippa, Chaucer's wife, and she is presumed to have died in 1387. He survived the political upheavals caused by the Lords Appellants, despite the fact that Chaucer knew some of the men executed over the affair quite well.

On 12 July 1389, Chaucer was appointed the clerk of the king's works, a sort of foreman organising most of the king's building projects. No major works were

begun during his tenure, but he did conduct repairs on Westminster Palace, St. George's Chapel, Windsor, continue building the wharf at the Tower of London, and build the stands for a tournament held in 1390. It may have been a difficult job, but it paid well: two shillings a day, more than three times his salary as a comptroller. Chaucer was also appointed keeper of the lodge at the King's park in Feckenham, which was a largely honorary appointment.

In September 1390, records say that he was robbed, and possibly injured, while conducting the business, and it was shortly after, on 17 June 1391, that he stopped working in this capacity. Almost immediately, on 22 June, he began as deputy forester in the royal forest of North Petherton, Somerset. This was no sinecure, with maintenance an important part of the job, although there were many opportunities to derive profit. He was granted an annual pension of twenty pounds by Richard II in 1394. It is believed that Chaucer stopped work on the *Canterbury Tales* sometime towards the end of this decade.

Not long after the overthrow of his patron, Richard II, in 1399, Chaucer's name fades from the historical record. The last few records of his life show his pension renewed by the new king, and his taking of a lease on a residence within the close of Westminster Abbey on 24 December 1399. Although Henry IV renewed the grants assigned to Chaucer by Richard, Chaucer's own *The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse* hints that the grants might not have been paid. The last mention of Chaucer is on 5 June 1400, when some monies owed to him were paid.

He is believed to have died of unknown causes on 25 October 1400, but there is no firm evidence for this date, as it comes from the engraving on his tomb, erected more than one hundred years after his death. There is some speculation—most recently in Terry Jones' book *Who Murdered Chaucer? : A Medieval Mystery*—that he was murdered by enemies of Richard II or even on the orders of his successor Henry IV, but the case is entirely circumstantial. Chaucer was buried in Westminster Abbey in London, as was his right owing to his status as a tenant of the Abbey's close. In 1556, his remains were transferred to a more ornate tomb, making Chaucer the first writer interred in the area now known as Poets' Corner.

## <b>Works</b>

Chaucer's first major work, *The Book of the Duchess*, was an elegy for Blanche of Lancaster (who died in 1369). It is possible that this work was commissioned by her husband John of Gaunt, as he granted Chaucer a £10 annuity on 13 June 1374. This would seem to place the writing of *The Book of the Duchess* between

the years 1369 and 1374. Two other early works by Chaucer were *Anelida and Arcite* and *The House of Fame*. Chaucer wrote many of his major works in a prolific period when he held the job of customs comptroller for London (1374 to 1386). His *Parlement of Foules*, *The Legend of Good Women* and *Troilus and Criseyde* all date from this time. Also it is believed that he started work on *The Canterbury Tales* in the early 1380s. Chaucer is best known as the writer of *The Canterbury Tales*, which is a collection of stories told by fictional pilgrims on the road to the cathedral at Canterbury; these tales would help to shape English literature.

*The Canterbury Tales* contrasts with other literature of the period in the naturalism of its narrative, the variety of stories the pilgrims tell and the varied characters who are engaged in the pilgrimage. Many of the stories narrated by the pilgrims seem to fit their individual characters and social standing, although some of the stories seem ill-fitting to their narrators, perhaps as a result of the incomplete state of the work. Chaucer drew on real life for his cast of pilgrims: the innkeeper shares the name of a contemporary keeper of an inn in Southwark, and real-life identities for the Wife of Bath, the Merchant, the Man of Law and the Student have been suggested. The many jobs that Chaucer held in medieval society—page, soldier, messenger, valet, bureaucrat, foreman and administrator—probably exposed him to many of the types of people he depicted in the *Tales*. He was able to shape their speech and satirise their manners in what was to become popular literature among people of the same types.

Chaucer's works are sometimes grouped into first a French period, then an Italian period and finally an English period, with Chaucer being influenced by those countries' literatures in turn. Certainly *Troilus and Criseyde* is a middle period work with its reliance on the forms of Italian poetry, little known in England at the time, but to which Chaucer was probably exposed during his frequent trips abroad on court business. In addition, its use of a classical subject and its elaborate, courtly language sets it apart as one of his most complete and well-formed works. In *Troilus and Criseyde* Chaucer draws heavily on his source, Boccaccio, and on the late Latin philosopher Boethius. However, it is *The Canterbury Tales*, wherein he focuses on English subjects, with bawdy jokes and respected figures often being undercut with humour, that has cemented his reputation.

Chaucer also translated such important works as Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* and *The Romance of the Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris (extended by Jean de Meun). However, while many scholars maintain that Chaucer did indeed translate part of the text of *Roman de la Rose* as *The Romaunt of the Rose*, others claim that this has been effectively disproved. Many of his other works were very loose translations of, or simply based on, works from continental

Europe. It is in this role that Chaucer receives some of his earliest critical praise. Eustache Deschamps wrote a ballade on the great translator and called himself a "nettle in Chaucer's garden of poetry". In 1385 Thomas Usk made glowing mention of Chaucer, and John Gower, Chaucer's main poetic rival of the time, also lauded him. This reference was later edited out of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and it has been suggested by some that this was because of ill feeling between them, but it is likely due simply to stylistic concerns.

One other significant work of Chaucer's is his *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, possibly for his own son, that describes the form and use of that instrument in detail and is sometimes cited as the first example of technical writing in the English language. Although much of the text may have come from other sources, the treatise indicates that Chaucer was versed in science in addition to his literary talents. Another scientific work discovered in 1952, *Equatorie of the Planetis*, has similar language and handwriting compared to some considered to be Chaucer's and it continues many of the ideas from the *Astrolabe*. Furthermore, it contains an example of early European encryption. The attribution of this work to Chaucer is still uncertain.

**<b>Influence</b>**

**<b>Linguistic</b>**

Chaucer wrote in continental accentual-syllabic meter, a style which had developed since around the twelfth century as an alternative to the alliterative Anglo-Saxon metre. Chaucer is known for metrical innovation, inventing the rhyme royal, and he was one of the first English poets to use the five-stress line, a decasyllabic cousin to the iambic pentameter, in his work, with only a few anonymous short works using it before him. The arrangement of these five-stress lines into rhyming couplets, first seen in his *The Legend of Good Women*, was used in much of his later work and became one of the standard poetic forms in English. His early influence as a satirist is also important, with the common humorous device, the funny accent of a regional dialect, apparently making its first appearance in *The Reeve's Tale*.

The poetry of Chaucer, along with other writers of the era, is credited with helping to standardise the London Dialect of the Middle English language from a combination of the Kentish and Midlands dialects. This is probably overstated; the influence of the court, chancery and bureaucracy—of which Chaucer was a part—remains a more probable influence on the development of Standard English. Modern English is somewhat distanced from the language of Chaucer's poems owing to the effect of the Great Vowel Shift some time after his death.

This change in the pronunciation of English, still not fully understood, makes the reading of Chaucer difficult for the modern audience. The status of the final -e in Chaucer's verse is uncertain: it seems likely that during the period of Chaucer's writing the final -e was dropping out of colloquial English and that its use was somewhat irregular. Chaucer's versification suggests that the final -e is sometimes to be vocalised, and sometimes to be silent; however, this remains a point on which there is disagreement. When it is vocalised, most scholars pronounce it as a schwa. Apart from the irregular spelling, much of the vocabulary is recognisable to the modern reader. Chaucer is also recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary as the first author to use many common English words in his writings. These words were probably frequently used in the language at the time but Chaucer, with his ear for common speech, is the earliest manuscript source. Acceptable, alkali, altercation, amble, angrily, annex, annoyance, approaching, arbitration, armless, army, arrogant, arsenic, arc, artillery and aspect are just some of the many English words first attested in Chaucer.

### <b>Literary</b>

Widespread knowledge of Chaucer's works is attested by the many poets who imitated or responded to his writing. <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/john-lydgate/">John Lydgate</a> was one of the earliest poets to write continuations of Chaucer's unfinished Tales while <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/robert-henryson/">Robert Henryson's</a> Testament of Cresseid completes the story of Cressida left unfinished in his Troilus and Criseyde. Many of the manuscripts of Chaucer's works contain material from these poets and later appreciations by the romantic era poets were shaped by their failure to distinguish the later "additions" from original Chaucer. Seventeenth and eighteenth century writers, such as John Dryden, admired Chaucer for his stories, but not for his rhythm and rhyme, as few critics could then read Middle English and the text had been butchered by printers, leaving a somewhat unadmirable mess. It was not until the late 19th century that the official Chaucerian canon, accepted today, was decided upon, largely as a result of Walter William Skeat's work. Roughly seventy-five years after Chaucer's death, The Canterbury Tales was selected by William Caxton to be one of the first books to be printed in England.

### <b>English</b>

Chaucer is sometimes considered the source of the English vernacular tradition and the "father" of modern English literature. His achievement for the language can be seen as part of a general historical trend towards the creation of a vernacular literature, after the example of <a



<http://www.poemhunter.com/dante-alighieri/>>Dante</a>, in many parts of Europe. A parallel trend in Chaucer's own lifetime was underway in Scotland through the work of his slightly earlier contemporary, <http://www.poemhunter.com/john-barbour/>>John Barbour</a> and was likely to have been even more general, as is evidenced by the example of the Pearl Poet in the north of England.

Although Chaucer's language is much closer to modern English than the text of Beowulf, it differs enough that most publications modernise his idiom. Following is a sample from the prologue of "The Summoner's Tale" that compares Chaucer's text to a modern translation:

#### Original Text Modern Translation

<p>&lt;I&gt;This frere bosteth that he knoweth helle, And God it woot, that it is litel wonder; Freres and feendes been but lyte asonder. For, pardee, ye han ofte tyme herd telle How that a frere ravysched was to helle In spirit ones by a visioun; And as an angel ladde hym up and doun, To shewen hym the peynes that the were, In al the place saugh he nat a frere; Of oother folk he saugh ynowe in wo. Unto this angel spak the frere tho: Now, sire, quod he, han freres swich a grace That noon of hem shal come to this place? Yis, quod this aungel, many a millioun! And unto sathanas he ladde hym doun. --And now hath sathanas,--seith he,--a tayl Brodder than of a carryk is the sayl. Hold up thy tayl, thou sathanas!--quod he; --shewe forth thyn ers, and lat the frere se Where is the nest of freres in this place!-- And er that half a furlong wey of space, Right so as bees out swarmen from an hyve, Out of the develes ers ther gonne dryve Twenty thousand freres on a route, And thurghout helle swarmed al aboute, And comen agayn as faste as they may gon,</p>	<p>This friar boasts that he knows hell, And God knows that it is little wonder; Friars and fiends are seldom far apart. For, by God, you have oftentimes heard tell How a friar was taken to hell In spirit, once by a vision; And as an angel led him up and down, To show him the pains that were there, In all the place he saw not a friar; Of other folk he saw enough in woe. Unto this angel spoke the friar thus: "Now sir", said he, "Have friars such a grace That none of them come to this place?" "Yes", said the angel, "many a million!" And unto Satan the angel led him down. "And now Satan has", he said, "a tail, broader than a galleon's sail. "Hold up your tail, Satan!" said he. "Show forth your arse, and let the friars see where the nest of friars is in this place!" And before half a furlong of space, Just as bees swarm out from a hive, Out of the devil's arse there were driven Twenty thousand friars on a rout, And throughout hell swarmed all about, And came again as fast as they could</p>
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go,

And in his ers they crepten everychon. And every one crept into his arse.

He clapte his tayl agayn and lay ful stille. He shut his tail again and lay very still. </I>

Critical reception

<b>Early criticism</b>

The poet <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/thomas-hoccleve/">Thomas Hoccleve</a>, who may have met Chaucer and considered him his role model, hailed Chaucer as "the firste fyndere of our fair langage." John Lydgate referred to Chaucer within his own text *The Fall of Princes* as the "lodesterre ... off our language". Around two centuries later, <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/sir-philip-sidney/">Sir Philip Sidney</a> greatly praised *Troilus and Criseyde* in his own *Defence of Poesie*.

<b>Manuscripts and audience</b>

The large number of surviving manuscripts of Chaucer's works is testimony to the enduring interest in his poetry prior to the arrival of the printing press. There are 83 surviving manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* (in whole or part) alone, along with sixteen of *Troilus and Criseyde*, including the personal copy of Henry IV. Given the ravages of time, it is likely that these surviving manuscripts represent hundreds since lost. Chaucer's original audience was a courtly one, and would have included women as well as men of the upper social classes. Yet even before his death in 1400, Chaucer's audience had begun to include members of the rising literate, middle and merchant classes, which included many Lollard sympathisers who may well have been inclined to read Chaucer as one of their own, particularly in his satirical writings about friars, priests, and other church officials. In 1464, John Baron, a tenant farmer in Agmondesham, was brought before John Chadworth, the Bishop of Lincoln, on charges he was a Lollard heretic; he confessed to owning a "boke of the Tales of Caunterburie" among other suspect volumes.

<b>Printed editions</b>

William Caxton, the first English printer, was responsible for the first two folio editions of *The Canterbury Tales* which were published in 1478 and 1483. Caxton's second printing, by his own account, came about because a customer complained that the printed text differed from a manuscript he knew; Caxton obligingly used the man's manuscript as his source. Both Caxton editions carry the equivalent of manuscript authority. Caxton's edition was reprinted by his

successor, Wynkyn de Worde, but this edition has no independent authority.

Richard Pynson, the King's Printer under Henry VIII for about twenty years, was the first to collect and sell something that resembled an edition of the collected works of Chaucer, introducing in the process five previously printed texts that we now know are not Chaucer's. (The collection is actually three separately printed texts, or collections of texts, bound together as one volume.) There is a likely connection between Pynson's product and William Thynne's a mere six years later. Thynne had a successful career from the 1520s until his death in 1546, when he was one of the masters of the royal household. His editions of Chaucer's Works in 1532 and 1542 were the first major contributions to the existence of a widely recognised Chaucerian canon. Thynne represents his edition as a book sponsored by and supportive of the king who is praised in the preface by Sir Brian Tuke. Thynne's canon brought the number of apocryphal works associated with Chaucer to a total of 28, even if that was not his intention. As with Pynson, once included in the Works, pseudepigraphic texts stayed within it, regardless of their first editor's intentions.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Chaucer was printed more than any other English author, and he was the first author to have his works collected in comprehensive single-volume editions in which a Chaucer canon began to cohere. Some scholars contend that sixteenth-century editions of Chaucer's Works set the precedent for all other English authors in terms of presentation, prestige and success in print. These editions certainly established Chaucer's reputation, but they also began the complicated process of reconstructing and frequently inventing Chaucer's biography and the canonical list of works which were attributed to him.

Probably the most significant aspect of the growing apocrypha is that, beginning with Thynne's editions, it began to include medieval texts that made Chaucer appear as a proto-Protestant Lollard, primarily the Testament of Love and The Plowman's Tale. As "Chaucerian" works that were not considered apocryphal until the late nineteenth century, these medieval texts enjoyed a new life, with English Protestants carrying on the earlier Lollard project of appropriating existing texts and authors who seemed sympathetic—or malleable enough to be construed as sympathetic—to their cause. The official Chaucer of the early printed volumes of his Works was construed as a proto-Protestant as the same was done, concurrently, with William Langland and Piers Plowman. The famous Plowman's Tale did not enter Thynne's Works until the second, 1542, edition. Its entry was surely facilitated by Thynne's inclusion of Thomas Usk's Testament of Love in the first edition. The Testament of Love imitates, borrows from, and thus resembles Usk's contemporary, Chaucer. (Testament of Love also appears to borrow from

Piers Plowman.) Since the Testament of Love mentions its author's part in a failed plot (book 1, chapter 6), his imprisonment, and (perhaps) a recantation of (possibly Lollard) heresy, all this was associated with Chaucer. (Usk himself was executed as a traitor in 1388.) Interestingly, John Foxe took this recantation of heresy as a defence of the true faith, calling Chaucer a "right Wiclevian" and (erroneously) identifying him as a schoolmate and close friend of John Wycliffe at Merton College, Oxford. (Thomas Speght is careful to highlight these facts in his editions and his "Life of Chaucer.") No other sources for the Testament of Love exist—there is only Thynne's construction of whatever manuscript sources he had.

John Stow (1525–1605) was an antiquarian and also a chronicler. His edition of Chaucer's Works in 1561 brought the apocrypha to more than 50 titles. More were added in the seventeenth century, and they remained as late as 1810, well after Thomas Tyrwhitt pared the canon down in his 1775 edition. The compilation and printing of Chaucer's works was, from its beginning, a political enterprise, since it was intended to establish an English national identity and history that grounded and authorised the Tudor monarchy and church. What was added to Chaucer often helped represent him favourably to Protestant England.

In his 1598 edition of the Works, Speght (probably taking cues from Foxe) made good use of Usk's account of his political intrigue and imprisonment in the Testament of Love to assemble a largely fictional "Life of Our Learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer." Speght's "Life" presents readers with an erstwhile radical in troubled times much like their own, a proto-Protestant who eventually came around the king's views on religion. Speght states that "In the second year of Richard the second, the King tooke Geffrey Chaucer and his lands into his protection. The occasion wherof no doubt was some daunger and trouble whereinto he was fallen by favouring some rash attempt of the common people." Under the discussion of Chaucer's friends, namely John of Gaunt, Speght further explains:

Yet it seemeth that [Chaucer] was in some trouble in the daies of King Richard the second, as it may appeare in the Testament of Loue: where hee doth greatly complaine of his owne rashnesse in following the multitude, and of their hatred of him for bewraying their purpose. And in that complaint which he maketh to his empty purse, I do find a written copy, which I had of Iohn Stow (whose library hath helped many writers) wherein ten times more is adjoined, then is in print. Where he maketh great lamentation for his wrongfull imprisonment, wishing death to end his daies: which in my iudgement doth greatly accord with that in the Testament of Love. Moreover we find it thus in Record.

Later, in "The Argument" to the Testament of Love, Speght adds:

Chaucer did compile this booke as a comfort to himselfe after great griefs conceiued for some rash attempts of the commons, with whome he had ioyned, and thereby was in feare to loose the fauour of his best friends.

Speght is also the source of the famous tale of Chaucer being fined for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet Street, as well as a fictitious coat of arms and family tree. Ironically—and perhaps consciously so—an introductory, apologetic letter in Speght's edition from Francis Beaumont defends the unseemly, "low", and bawdy bits in Chaucer from an elite, classicist position. Francis Thynne noted some of these inconsistencies in his *Animadversions*, insisting that Chaucer was not a commoner, and he objected to the friar-beating story. Yet Thynne himself underscores Chaucer's support for popular religious reform, associating Chaucer's views with his father William Thynne's attempts to include *The Plowman's Tale* and *The Pilgrim's Tale* in the 1532 and 1542 Works.

The myth of the Protestant Chaucer continues to have a lasting impact on a large body of Chaucerian scholarship. Though it is extremely rare for a modern scholar to suggest Chaucer supported a religious movement that didn't exist until more than a century after his death, the predominance of this thinking for so many centuries left it for granted that Chaucer was at least extremely hostile toward Catholicism. This assumption forms a large part of many critical approaches to Chaucer's works, including neo-Marxism.

Alongside Chaucer's Works, the most impressive literary monument of the period is John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.... As with the Chaucer editions, it was critically significant to English Protestant identity and included Chaucer in its project. Foxe's Chaucer both derived from and contributed to the printed editions of Chaucer's Works, particularly the pseudepigrapha. Jack Upland was first printed in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, and then it appeared in Speght's edition of Chaucer's Works. Speght's "Life of Chaucer" echoes Foxe's own account, which is itself dependent upon the earlier editions that added the Testament of Love and *The Plowman's Tale* to their pages. Like Speght's Chaucer, Foxe's Chaucer was also a shrewd (or lucky) political survivor. In his 1563 edition, Foxe "thought it not out of season ... to couple ... some mention of Geoffrey Chaucer" with a discussion of John Colet, a possible source for John Skelton's character Colin Clout.

Probably referring to the 1542 Act for the Advancement of True Religion, Foxe said that he "marvel[s] to consider ... how the bishops, condemning and abolishing all manner of English books and treatises which might bring the people to any light of knowledge, did yet authorise the works of Chaucer to remain still

and to be occupied; who, no doubt, saw into religion as much almost as even we do now, and uttereth in his works no less, and seemeth to be a right Wicklevian, or else there never was any. And that, all his works almost, if they be thoroughly advised, will testify (albeit done in mirth, and covertly); and especially the latter end of his third book of the Testament of Love ... Wherein, except a man be altogether blind, he may espy him at the full: although in the same book (as in all others he useth to do), under shadows covertly, as under a visor, he suborneth truth in such sort, as both privily she may profit the godly-minded, and yet not be espied of the crafty adversary. And therefore the bishops, belike, taking his works but for jests and toys, in condemning other books, yet permitted his books to be read."

It is significant, too, that Foxe's discussion of Chaucer leads into his history of "The Reformation of the Church of Christ in the Time of Martin Luther" when "Printing, being opened, incontinently ministered unto the church the instruments and tools of learning and knowledge; which were good books and authors, which before lay hid and unknown. The science of printing being found, immediately followed the grace of God; which stirred up good wits aptly to conceive the light of knowledge and judgment: by which light darkness began to be espied, and ignorance to be detected; truth from error, religion from superstition, to be discerned."

Foxe downplays Chaucer's bawdy and amorous writing, insisting that it all testifies to his piety. Material that is troubling is deemed metaphoric, while the more forthright satire (which Foxe prefers) is taken literally.

John Urry produced the first edition of the complete works of Chaucer in a Latin font, published posthumously in 1721. Included were several tales, according to the editors, for the first time printed, a biography of Chaucer, a glossary of old English words, and testimonials of author writers concerning Chaucer dating back to the 16th century. According to A.S.G Edwards, "This was the first collected edition of Chaucer to be printed in roman type. The life of Chaucer prefixed to the volume was the work of the Reverend John Dart, corrected and revised by Timothy Thomas. The glossary appended was also mainly compiled by Thomas. The text of Urry's edition has often been criticised by subsequent editors for its frequent conjectural emendations, mainly to make it conform to his sense of Chaucer's metre. The justice of such criticisms should not obscure his achievement. His is the first edition of Chaucer for nearly a hundred and fifty years to consult any manuscripts and is the first since that of William Thynne in 1534 to seek systematically to assemble a substantial number of manuscripts to establish his text. It is also the first edition to offer descriptions of the manuscripts of Chaucer's works, and the first to print texts of 'Gamelyn' and 'The

Tale of Beryn', works ascribed to, but not by, Chaucer."

### <b>Modern Scholarship</b>

Although Chaucer's works were admired for many years, serious scholarly work on his legacy did not begin until the nineteenth century. Scholars such as Frederick James Furnivall, who founded the Chaucer Society in 1868, pioneered the establishment of diplomatic editions of Chaucer's major texts, along with careful accounts of Chaucer's language and prosody. Walter William Skeat, who like Furnivall was closely associated with the Oxford English Dictionary, established the base text of all of Chaucer's works with his edition, published by Oxford University Press. Later editions by John H. Fisher and Larry D. Benson have offered further refinements, along with critical commentary and bibliographies.

With the textual issues largely addressed, if not solved, the questions of Chaucer's themes, structure, and audience were addressed. In 1966, the Chaucer Review was founded, and has maintained its position as the preeminent journal of Chaucer studies.

### <b>Popular Culture</b>

Powell and Pressburger's 1944 film *A Canterbury Tale* opens with a re-creation of Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims; the film itself takes place on the road to, and in, wartime Canterbury.

The plot of the detective novel *Landscape with Dead Dons* by Robert Robinson centres on the apparent rediscovery of *The Book of the Leoun*, and a passage from it (eleven lines of good Chaucerian pastiche) turn out to be the vital murder clue as well as proving that the "rediscovered" poem is an elaborate, clever forgery by the murderer (a Chaucer scholar).

In Rudyard Kipling's story "Dayspring Mishandled", a writer plans an elaborate revenge on a former friend, a Chaucer expert, who has insulted the woman he loves, by fabricating a "medieval" manuscript sheet containing an alleged fragment of a lost Canterbury Tale (actually his own composition).

Both an asteroid and a lunar crater have been named for Chaucer.

Chaucer was portrayed by Paul Bettany in the movie *A Knight's Tale*.

Kafka's *Soup*, a literary pastiche in the form of a cookbook, contains a recipe for

onion tart à la Chaucer.



# A Balade Of Complaint

Compleyne ne koude, ne might myn herte never,  
My peynes halve, ne what torment I have,  
Though that I sholde in your presence ben ever,  
Myn hertes lady, as wisly he me save  
That Bountee made, and Beautee list to grave  
In your persone, and bad hem bothe in-fere  
Ever t'awayte, and ay be wher ye were.

As wisly he gye alle my joyes here  
As I am youres, and to yow sad and trewe,  
And ye, my lyf and cause of my gode chere,  
And deeth also, whan ye my peynes newe,  
My worldes joye, whom I wol serve and sewe,  
Myn heven hool, and al my suffisaunce,  
Whom for to serve is set al my plesaunce.

Beseching yow in my most humble wyse  
T'accepte in worth this litel pore dyte,  
And for my trouthe my servyce not despyse,  
Myn observaunce eke have not in despyte,  
Ne yit to longe to suffren in this plyte;  
I yow beseche, myn hertes lady, here,  
Sith I yow serve, and so wil yeer by yere.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# A Ballad Of Gentleness

The firste stock-father of gentleness,  
What man desireth gentle for to be,  
Must follow his trace, and all his wittes dress,  
Virtue to love, and vices for to flee;  
For unto virtue longeth dignity,  
And not the reverse, safely dare I deem,  
All wear he mitre, crown, or diademe.

This firste stock was full of righteousness,  
True of his word, sober, pious, and free,  
Clean of his ghost, and loved business,  
Against the vice of sloth, in honesty;  
And, but his heir love virtue as did he,  
He is not gentle, though he riche seem,  
All wear he mitre, crown, or diademe.

Vice may well be heir to old richness,  
But there may no man, as men may well see,  
Bequeath his heir his virtuous nobless;  
That is appropriated to no degree,  
But to the first Father in majesty,  
Which makes his heire him that doth him queme,  
All wear he mitre, crown, or diademe.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# A Ballad Sent To King Richard

Sometime this world was so steadfast and stable,  
That man's word was held obligation;  
And now it is so false and deceivable,  
That word and work, as in conclusion,  
Be nothing one; for turned up so down  
Is all this world, through meed and wilfulness,  
That all is lost for lack of steadfastness.

What makes this world to be so variable,  
But lust that folk have in dissension?  
For now-a-days a man is held unable  
But if he can, by some collusion,  
Do his neighbour wrong or oppression.  
What causeth this but wilful wretchedness,  
That all is lost for lack of steadfastness?

Truth is put down, reason is holden fable;  
Virtue hath now no domination;  
Pity exil'd, no wight is merciabile;  
Through covetise is blent discretion;  
The worlde hath made permutation  
From right to wrong, from truth to fickleness,  
That all is lost for lack of steadfastness.

L'Envoy.

O Prince! desire to be honourable;  
Cherish thy folk, and hate extortion;  
Suffer nothing that may be reprovabile  
To thine estate, done in thy region;  
Show forth the sword of castigation;  
Dread God, do law, love thorough worthiness,  
And wed thy folk again to steadfastness.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# A Complaint To His Lady

In the long night, when every creature should naturally take some rest, or else his life cannot long hold out, then it falls most into my woeful thoughts how I have dropped so far behind that except death nothing can comfort me, so do I despair of all happiness. This thought remains with me until morning, and forth from morning until eve. I need borrow no grief; I have both leisure and leave to mourn. There is no creature who will take my woe or forbid me to weep enough and wail my fill; the sore spark of pain destroys me.

This love has so placed me that he will never fulfill my desire; for neither pity, mercy, nor grace can I find. Yet even for fear of death can I not root out love from my sorrowful heart. The more I love, the more my lady pains me; through which I see, without remedy, that I may in no way escape death.

Now in truth I will rehearse her name. She is called Goodness-set-in-womanhood, Staidness-in-youth, and Beauty-without-pride, and Pleasure-under-control-and-fear. Her surname is Fair-ruthless, Wisdom-knit-to-fortune. Because I love her she slays me guiltless. Her I love best, and shall as long as I live, better an hundred thousand times than myself, better than all the riches and created beings of this world. Now has not Love bestowed me well, to love where I shall never have part or lot! Alas, so is Fortune's wheel turned for me, so am I slain with Love's fiery arrow! I can only love her best, my sweet foe. Love has taught me no more of his art than ever to serve, and cease for no sorrow.

Within my true, care-worn heart there is so much woe, and so little joy as well, that woe is me that ever I was born. For all that I desire I lack, and all that ever I would not have, that, in truth, I ever find ready to my hand. And of all this I know not to whom to complain, for she who might bring me out of this cares not whether I weep or sing, so little pities she my pain. Alas! In sleeping-time I wake; when I

should dance I tremble with fear.

This heavy life I lead for your sake, though you pay no heed thereto, my heart's lady, all my life's queen! For truly I dare say it, as I see it: I seem to me that your sweet heart of steel is now whetted against me too keenly. My dear heart, my best-beloved, why will you do me all this sorrow? What have I done or said to grieve you, except that I serve and love you and nobody else, and as long as I live will ever?

Therefore, sweet, be not displeased. You are so good and fair, it would be a very great wonder if you did not have suitors of all kinds, both good and bad; and the least worthy of all, I am he.

Nevertheless, my own sweet lady, though I be unskillful and unfit ever to serve your highness, even as best I knew how, yet this I swear, there is nobody more glad than I to do your pleasure or to cure whatever I know to distress you. And had I as much power as will, then should you feel whether it were so or not; for in this world is no living being who would more gladly fulfill your heart's desire. For I both love and fear you so sorely, and ever must and have done right long, that none is better loved, and never shall be. And yet I would only beg you to believe me well, and be not angry, and let me continue to serve you. Lo, this is all! For I am not so bold or mad as to desire that you should love me; for alas! Well I know that may not be; I have so little worth, and you so much. For you are one of the most excellent of the living, and I the most unlikely to prosper. Yet, for all this, know you right well you shall not so drive me from your service that I shall not ever serve you faithfully, with all my five wits, whatever woe I feel. For I am so set upon you that though you never pity me, I must love you and ever be as true as any man living can be.

The more I love you, goodly and noble one, the less I find you love me. Alas! When will that obduracy soften? Where now is all your womanly pity, your noble gentleness, your graciousness? Will you spend nothing of it on me? And as wholly as I am your, sweet, and as great will I have to serve you, if thus

you let me die, you have gained but little from it. For I believe I have given no cause. And this I beseech you heartily, that if ever you find, so long as you live, a servant more true to you than I, then leave me and boldly slay me, and I will forgive you all my death. And if you find no truer man, why will you allow me to perish thus, and for no type of guilt except my good desire? As good then be untrue as true. But to your will I submit my life and death, and with a fully obedient heart I pray, do with me as is your pleasure. Much rather had I please you and die than to think or say anything to offend you at any time. Therefore, pity my bitter pains, sweet, and of your grace grant me some drop; for else neither hope nor happiness may remain with me, nor linger in my troubled, careworn heart.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# A Cook

They had a cook with them who stood alone  
For boiling chicken with a marrow-  
bone, Sharp flavouring powder and a spice for savour. He could distinguish  
London ale by flavour, And he could roast and boil and seethe and fry, Make  
good thick soup and bake a tasty pie... As for blancmange, he made it with the  
best.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# A Rondel Of Merciless Beauty - The Original

I. 1.

Youre two eyn will sle me sodenly  
I may the beaute of them not sustene,  
So wendeth it thorowout my herte kene.

2.

And but your words will helen hastely  
My hertis wound, while that it is grene,  
Youre two eyn will sle me sodenly.

3.

Upon my trouth I sey yow feithfully,  
That ye ben of my liffe and deth the quene;  
For with my deth the trouth shal be sene.  
Youre two eyn will sle me sodenly  
I may the beaute of them not sustene,  
So wendeth it thorowout my herte kene.

II. 1.

So hath youre beauty fro your herte chased  
Pitee, that me n'availeth not to pleyn:  
For daunger halt your mercy in his cheyne.

2.

Giltless my deth thus have ye purchased;  
I sey yow soth, me nedeth not to fayn:  
So hath your beaute fro your herte chased.

3.

Alas, that nature hath in yow compassed  
So grete beaute, that no man may atteyn  
To mercy, though he sterve for the peyn.  
Youre two eyn will sle me sodenly  
I may the beaute of them not sustene,  
So wendeth it thorowout my herte kene.

III. 1.

Syn I fro love escaped am so fat,  
I nere thinke to ben in his prison lene;



Syn I am fre, I counte hym not a bene.

2.

He may answeere and sey this and that,  
I do no fors, I speak ryght as I mene;  
Syn I fro love escaped am so fat.

3.

Love hath my name i-strike out of his sclat,  
And he is strike out of my bokes clene:  
For ever mo 'ther' is non other mene,  
Syn I fro love escaped am so fat.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Against Women Unconstant

Madame, for youre newefangelnesse,  
Many a servant have ye put out of grace.  
I take my leve of your unstedefastnesse,  
For wel I woot, whil ye have lives space,  
Ye can not love ful half yeer in a place,  
To newe thing youre lust is ay so keene;  
In stede of blew, thus may ye were al greene.  
Right as a mirour nothing may enpresse,  
But, lightly as it cometh, so mote it pace,  
So fareth youre love, youre werkes bereth witesse.  
Ther is no faith that may your herte embrace;  
But, as a wedercok, that turneth his face  
With every wind, ye fare, and this is seene;  
In stede of blew, thus may ye were al greene.

Ye might be shrined, for youre brothelnesse,  
Bet that Dalida, Criseide or Candace;  
For ever in chaunging stant youre sikernesse;  
That tache may no wight fro yuor herte arace.  
If ye lese oon, ye can wel twain purchase;  
Al light for somer, ye woot wel what I mene,  
In stede of blew, thus may ye were al greene.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# An Abc

Incipit carmen secundum ordinem litterarum alphabeti.

Almighty and al merciable queene,  
To whom that al this world fleeth for socour,  
To have relees of sinne, of sorwe, and teene,  
Glorious virgine, of alle floures flour,  
To thee I flee, confounded in errour.  
Help and releeve, thou mighti debonayre,  
Have mercy on my perilous langour.  
Venquished me hath my cruel adversaire.

Bountee so fix hath in thin herte his tente  
That wel I wot thou wolt my socour bee;  
Thou canst not warne him that with good entente  
Axeth thin helpe, thin herte is ay so free.  
Thou art largesse of pleyn felicitee,  
Haven of refut, of quiete, and of reste.  
Loo, how that theeves sevene chasen mee.  
Help, lady bright, er that my ship tobreste.[Riv., p. 638]

Comfort is noon but in yow, ladi deere;  
For loo, my sinne and my confusioun,  
Which oughten not in thi presence appeere,  
Han take on me a greevous accioun  
Of verrey right and desperacioun;  
And as hi right thei mighten wel susteene  
That I were wurthi my dampnacioun,  
Nere merci of you, blisful hevene queene.

Dowte is ther noon, thou queen of misericorde,  
That thou n'art cause of grace and merci heere;  
God vouched sauf thurgh thee with us to accorde.  
For certes, Crystes blisful mooder deere,  
Were now the bowe bent in swich maneere  
As it was first of justice and of ire,  
The rightful God nolde of no mercy heere;  
But thurgh thee han we grace as we desire.

Evere hath myn hope of refut been in thee,  
For heer-biforn ful ofte in many a wyse  
Hast thou to misericorde receyved me.  
But merci, ladi, at the grete assyse  
Whan we shule come bifore the hye justyse.  
So litel fruit shal thanne in me be founde  
That, but thou er that day correcte [vice],  
Of verrey right my werk wol me confounde.

Fleeinge, I flee for socour to thi tente  
Me for to hide from tempeste ful of dreede,  
Biseeching yow that ye you not absente  
Thouh I be wikke. O, help yit at this neede!  
Al have I ben a beste in wil and deede,  
Yit, ladi, thou me clothe with thi grace.  
Thin enemy and myn-- ladi, tak heede--  
Unto my deth in poynt is me to chace!

Glorious mayde and mooder, which that nevere  
Were bitter, neither in erthe nor in see,  
But ful of swetnesse and of merci evere,  
Help that my Fader be not wroth with me.  
Spek thou, for I ne dar not him ysee,  
So have I doon in erthe, allas the while,  
That certes, but if thou my socour bee,  
To stink eterne he wole my gost exile.

He vouched sauf, tel him, as was his wille,  
Bicome a man, to have oure alliaunce,  
And with his precious blood he wrot the bille  
Upon the crois as general acquitaunce  
To every penitent in ful creaunce;  
And therefore, ladi bright, thou for us praye.  
Thanne shalt thou bothe stinte al his grevaunce,  
And make oure foo to failen of his praye.

I wot it wel, thou wolt ben oure socour,  
Thou art so ful of bowntee, in certeyn,  
For whan a soule falleth in errour  
Thi pitee goth and haleth him ayein.  
Thanne makest thou his pees with his sovereyn  
And bringest him out of the crooked strete.

Whoso thee loveth, he shal not love in veyn,  
That shal he fynde as he the lyf shal lete.

Kalenderes enlumyned ben thei  
That in this world ben lighted with thi name,  
And whoso goth to yow the righte wey,  
Him thar not drede in soule to be lame.  
Now, queen of comfort, sith thou art that same  
To whom I seeche for my medicyne,  
Lat not my foo no more my wounde entame;  
Myn hele into thin hand al I resygne.

Ladi, thi sorwe kan I not portreye  
Under the cros, ne his greevous penaunce;  
But for youre bothes peynes I yow preye,  
Lat not oure alder foo make his bobaunce  
That he hath in his lystes of mischaunce  
Convict that ye bothe have bought so deere.  
As I seide erst, thou ground of oure substaunce,  
Continue on us thi pitous eyen cleere!

Moises, that saugh the bush with flawmes rede  
Brenninge, of which ther never a stikke brende,  
Was signe of thin unwemmed maidenhede.[Riv., p. 639]  
Thou art the bush on which ther gan descende  
The Holi Gost, the which that Moyses wende  
Had ben a-fyr, and this was in figure.  
Now, ladi, from the fyr thou us defende  
Which that in helle eternalli shal dure.

Noble princesse, that nevere haddest peere,  
Certes if any comfort in us bee,  
That cometh of thee, thou Cristes mooder deere.  
We han noon oother melodye or glee  
Us to rejoyse in oure adversitee,  
Ne advocat noon that wole and dar so preye  
For us, and that for litel hire as yee  
That helpen for an Ave-Marie or tweye.

O verrey light of eyen that ben blynde,  
O verrey lust of labour and distresse,  
O tresoreere of bountee to mankynde,

Thee whom God ches to mooder for humblesse!  
From his ancille he made the maistresse  
Of hevne and erthe, oure bille up for to beede.  
This world awaiteth evere on thi goodnesse  
For thou ne failest nevere wight at neede.

Purpos I have sum time for to enquere  
Wherfore and whi the Holi Gost thee soughte  
Whan Gabrielles vois cam to thin ere.  
He not to werre us swich a wonder wroughte,  
But for to save us that he sithen boughte.  
Thanne needeth us no wepen us for to save,  
But oonly ther we dide not, as us oughte,  
Doo penitence, and merci axe and have.

Queen of comfort, yit whan I me bithinke  
That I agilt have bothe him and thee,  
And that my soule is worthi for to sinke,  
Allas, I caityf, whider may I flee?  
Who shal unto thi Sone my mene bee?  
Who, but thiself, that art of pitee welle?  
Thou hast more reuthe on oure adversitee  
Than in this world might any tonge telle.

Redresse me, mooder, and me chastise,  
For certeynly my Faderes chastisinge,  
That dar I nouht abiden in no wise,  
So hidous is his rightful rekenyng.  
Mooder, of whom oure merci gan to springe,  
Beth ye my juge and eek my soules leche;  
For evere in you is pitee haboundinge  
To ech that wole of pitee you biseeche.

Soth is that God ne granteth no pitee  
Withoute thee; for God of his goodnesse  
Foryiveth noon, but it like unto thee.  
He hath thee made vicaire and maistresse  
Of al this world, and eek governouresse  
Of hevne, and he represseth his justise  
After thi wil; and therefore in witesse  
He hath thee crowned in so rial wise.

Temple devout, ther God hath his woninge,  
Fro which these misbileeved deprived been,  
To you my soule penitent I bringe.  
Receyve me-- I can no ferther flee.  
With thornes venymous, O hevne queen,  
For which the eerthe acursed was ful yore,  
I am so wounded, as ye may wel seen,  
That I am lost almost, it smert so sore.

Virgine, that art so noble of appaile,  
And ledest us into the hye tour  
Of Paradys, thou me wisse and counsaile  
How I may have thi grace and thi socour,  
All have I ben in filthe and in errour.  
Ladi, unto that court thou me ajourne  
That cleped is thi bench, O freshe flour,  
Ther as that merci evere shal sojourne.

Xristus, thi sone, that in this world alighte  
Upon the cros to suffre his passioun,  
And eek that Longius his herte pighte  
And made his herte blood to renne adoun,  
And al was this for my salvacioun;  
And I to him am fals and eek unkynde,  
And yit he wole not my dampnacioun--  
This thanke I yow, socour of al mankynde!

Ysaac was figure of his deth, certeyn,  
That so fer forth his fader wolde obeye  
That him ne roughte nothing to be slayn;[Riv., p. 640]  
Right soo thi Sone list as a lamb to deye.  
Now, ladi ful of merci, I yow preye,  
Sith he his merci mesured so large,  
Be ye not skant, for alle we singe and seye  
That ye ben from vengeaunce ay oure targe.

Zacharie yow clepeth the open welle  
To wasshe sinful soule out of his gilt.  
Therefore this lessoun oughte I wel to telle,  
That, nere thi tender herte, we were spilt.  
Now, ladi bryghte, sith thou canst and wilt  
Ben to the seed of Adam merciabile,

Bring us to that palais that is bilt  
To penitentes that ben to merci able. Amen.

Geoffrey Chaucer



# Anelida And Arcite

Thou ferse god of armes, Mars the rede,  
That in the frosty contre called Trace,  
Within thy grisly temple ful of drede  
Honoured art as patroun of that place;  
With thy Bellona, Pallas, ful of grace,  
Be present and my song contynue and guye;  
At my begynnyng thus to the I crye.

For hit ful depe is sonken in my mynde,  
With pitous hert in Englyssh to endyte  
This olde storie, in Latyn which I fynde,  
Of quene Anelida and fals Arcite,  
That elde, which that al can frete and bite,  
As hit hath freten mony a noble storie,  
Hath nygh devoured out of oure memorie.

Be favorable eke, thou Polymya,  
On Parnaso that with thy sustres glade,  
By Elycon, not fer from Cirrea,  
Singest with vois memorial in the shade,  
Under the laurer which that may not fade,  
And do that I my ship to haven wyne.  
First folowe I Stace, and after him Corynne.

The Story.

Iamque domos patrias Cithice post aspera gentis  
Prelia laurigero subeunte Thesea curru  
Letifici plausus missusque ad sidera vulgi

When Theseus with werres longe and grete  
The aspre folk of Cithe had overcome,  
With laurer corouned, in his char gold-bete,  
Hom to his contre-houses is he come,  
For which the peple, blisful al and somme,  
So cry{:e}den that to the sterres hit wente,  
And him to honouren dide al her entente.

Beforn this duk, in signe of victorie,  
The trompes come, and in his baner large  
The ymage of Mars, and in tokenyng of glorie  
Men myghte sen of tresour many a charge,  
Many a bright helm, and many a spere and targe,  
Many a fresh knyght, and many a blysfyl route,  
On hors, on fote, in al the feld aboute.

Ipolita his wif, the hardy quene  
Of Cithia, that he conquered hadde,  
With Emelye her yonge suster shene,  
Faire in a char of gold he with him ladde,  
That al the ground about her char she spradde  
With brightnesse of the beaute in her face,  
Fulfilled of largesse and of alle grace.

With his tryumphe and laurer-corouned thus,  
In al the flour of Fortunes yevynge,  
Let I this noble prince Theseus  
Toward Athenes in his wey rydinge,  
And founde I wol in shortly for to bringe  
The slye wey of that I gan to write,  
Of quene Anelida and fals Arcite.

Mars, which that through his furious cours of ire,  
The olde wrathe of Juno to fulfille,  
Hath set the peples hertes bothe on fire  
Of Thebes and Grece, everich other to kille  
With bloody speres, ne rested never stille,  
But throng now her, now ther, among hem bothe,  
That everych other slough, so were they wrothe.

For when Amphiorax and Tydeus,  
Ipomedon, Parthonope also  
Were ded, and slayn proude Campaneus,  
And when the wrecched Thebans, bretheren two,  
Were slayn, and kyng Adrastus hom ago,  
So desolat stod Thebes and so bare  
That no wight coude remedie of his fare.

And when the olde Creon gan espye  
How that the blood roial was brought a-doun,

He held the cite by his tyrannye  
And dyde the gentils of that regioun  
To ben his frendes and wonnen in the toun.  
So, what for love of him and what for awe,  
The noble folk were to the toun idrawe.

Among al these Anelida, the quene  
Of Ermony, was in that toun dwellynge,  
That fairer was then is the sonne shene.  
Thurghout the world so gan her name springe  
That her to seen had every wyght likyng,  
For, as of trouthe, is ther noon her lyche  
Of al the women in this worlde riche.

Yong was this quene, of twenty yer of elde,  
Of mydel stature, and of such fairenesse  
That Nature had a joye her to behelde;  
And for to speken of her stidfastnesse,  
She passed hath Penelope and Lucesse;  
And shortly, yf she shal be comprehended,  
In her ne myghte no thing been amended.

This Theban knyght [Arcite] eke, soth to seyn,  
Was yong and therwithal a lusty knyght,  
But he was double in love and no thing pleyn,  
And subtil in that craft over any wyght,  
And with his kunnyng wan this lady bryght;  
For so ferforth he gan her trouthe assure  
That she him trusted over any creature.

What shuld I seyn? She loved Arcite so  
That when that he was absent any throwe,  
Anon her thoghte her herte brast a-two;  
For in her sight to her he bar hym lowe,  
So that she wende have al his hert yknowe;  
But he was fals; hit nas but feyned chere  
As nedeth not to men such craft to lere.

But nevertheles ful mykel besynesse  
Had he er that he myghte his lady wynne,  
And swor he wolde dyen for distresse  
Or from his wit he seyde he wolde twynne.

Alas, the while! For hit was routhe and synne  
That she upon his sorowes wolde rewe;  
But nothing thinketh the fals as doth the trewe.

Her fredom fond Arcite in such manere  
That al was his that she hath, moche or lyte;

Ne to no creature made she chere  
Ferther then that hit lyked to Arcite.  
Ther nas no lak with which he myghte her wite;  
She was so ferforth yeven hym to plese  
That al that lyked hym hit dyde her ese.

Ther nas to her no maner lettre sent  
That touched love, from any maner wyght,  
That she ne shewed hit him er hit was brent;  
So pleyn she was and dide her fulle myght  
That she nyl hiden nothing from her knyght,  
Lest he of any untrouthe her upbreyde.  
Withoute bode his heste she obeyde.

And eke he made him jelous over here,  
That what that any man had to her seyde  
Anoon he wolde preyen her to swere  
What was that word or make him evel apaid.  
Then wende she out of her wyt have breyde;  
But al this nas but sleght and flaterie;  
Withoute love he feyned jelousye.

And al this tok she so debonerly  
That al his wil her thoghte hit skilful thing,  
And ever the lenger she loved him tendirly  
And dide him honour as he were a kyng.  
Her herte was to him wedded with a ring;  
So ferforth upon trouthe is her entente  
That wher he gooth her herte with him wente.

When she shal ete, on him is so her thought  
That wel unnethe of mete tok she kep;  
And when that she was to her reste broght,  
On him she thoghte alwey til that she slep;  
When he was absent, prevely she wep:

Thus lyveth feire Anelida the quene  
For fals Arcite, that dide her al this tene.

This fals Arcite, of his newfanglenesse,  
For she to him so lowly was and trewe,  
Tok lesse deynte of her stidfastnesse  
And saw another lady, proud and newe,  
And ryght anon he cladde him in her hewe--  
Wot I not whethir in white, rede, or grene--  
And falsed fair Anelida the quene.

But neverthesse, gret wonder was hit noon  
Thogh he were fals, for hit is kynde of man  
Sith Lamek was, that is so longe agoon,  
To ben in love as fals as evere he can;  
He was the firste fader that began  
To loven two, and was in bigamye,  
And he found tentes first, but yf men lye.

This fals Arcite, sumwhat moste he feyne,  
When he wex fals, to covere his traitorie,  
Ryght as an hors that can both bite and pleyne,  
For he bar her on honde of trecherie,  
And swor he coude her doublenesse espie,  
And al was falsnes that she to him mente.  
Thus swor this thef, and forth his way he wente.

Alas, what herte myght endure hit,  
For routhe and wo, her sorwe for to telle?  
Or what man hath the cunnyng or the wit?  
Or what man mighte within the chambre dwelle,  
Yf I to him rehersen sholde the helle  
That suffreth fair Anelida the quene  
For fals Arcite, that dide her al this tene.

She wepith, wailleth, swowneth pitously;  
To grounde ded she falleth as a ston;  
Craumpyssheth her lymes crokedly;  
She speketh as her wit were al agon;  
Other colour then asshen hath she noon;  
Non other word speketh she, moche or lyte,  
But 'Merci, cruel herte myn, Arcite!'

And thus endureth til that she was so mat  
That she ne hath foot on which she may sustene,  
But forth languisshing evere in this estat,  
Of which Arcite hath nouthen routhe ne tene.  
His herte was elleswhere, newe and grene,  
That on her wo ne deyneth him not to thinke;  
Him rekketh never wher she flete or synke.

His newe lady holdeth him so narowe  
Up by the bridil, at the staves ende,  
That every word he dredeth as an arowe;  
Her daunger made him bothe bowe and bende,  
And as her liste, made him turne or wende,  
For she ne graunted him in her lyvyng  
No grace whi that he hath lust to singe,

But drof hym forth. Unnethe liste her knowe  
That he was servaunt unto her ladishippe;  
But lest that he were proud, she held him lowe.  
Thus serveth he withoute fee or shipe;  
She sent him now to londe, now to shippe;  
And for she yaf him daunger al his fille,  
Therfor she hadde him at her owne wille.

Ensample of this, ye thrifty wymmen alle,  
Take her of Anelida and Arcite,  
That for her liste him 'dere herte' calle  
And was so meke, therfor he loved her lyte.  
The kynde of mannes herte is to delyte  
In thing that straunge is, also God me save!  
For what he may not gete, that wolde he have.

Now turne we to Anelida ageyn,  
That pyneth day be day in langwisshinge,  
But when she saw that her ne gat no geyn,  
Upon a day, ful sorowfully wepyng,  
She caste her for to make a compleynyng,  
And of her owne hond she gan hit write,  
And sente hit to her Theban knyght, Arcite.

The compleynt of Anelida the quene upon fals Arcite.

### Proem

So thirleth with the poynt of remembraunce  
The swerd of sorowe, ywhet with fals plesaunce,  
Myn herte, bare of blis and blak of hewe,  
That turned is in quakyng al my daunce,  
My surete in awhaped countenaunce,  
Sith hit availeth not for to ben trewe;  
For whoso trewest is, hit shal hir rewe  
That serveth love and doth her observaunce  
Alwey til oon, and chaungeth for no newe.

### Strophe

I wot myself as wel as any wight,  
For I loved oon with al myn herte and myght,  
More then myself an hundred thousand sithe,  
And called him myn hertes lif, my knyght,  
And was al his, as fer as hit was ryght;  
And when that he was glad, then was I blithe,  
And his diseas was my deth as swithe;  
And he ayein his trouthe hath me plyght  
For evermore, his lady me to kythe.

Now is he fals, alas, and causeles,  
And of my wo he is so routheles  
That with a word him list not ones deyne  
To bringe ayen my sorowful herte in pes,  
For he is caught up in another les.  
Ryght as him list, he laugheth at my peyne,  
And I ne can myn herte not restreyne  
For to love him alwey neveretheles;  
And of al this I not to whom me pleyne.

And shal I pleyne--alas, the harde stounde!--  
Unto my foo that yaf myn herte a wounde  
And yet desireth that myn harm be more?  
Nay, certis, ferther wol I never founde

Non other helpe, my sores for to sounde.  
My destinee hath shapen hit so ful yore;  
I wil non other medecyne ne lore;  
I wil ben ay ther I was ones bounde.  
That I have seid, be seid for evermore!

Alas! Wher is become your gentillesse,  
Youre wordes ful of plesaunce and humblesse,  
Youre observaunces in so low manere,  
And your awayting and your besynesse  
Upon me, that ye calden your maistresse,  
Your sovereyne lady in this world here?  
Alas! Is ther now nother word ne chere  
Ye vouchen sauf upon myn hevynesse?  
Alas! Youre love, I bye hit al to dere.

Now, certis, swete, thogh that ye  
Thus causeles the cause be  
Of my dedly adversyte,  
Your manly resoun oghte hit to respite  
To slen your frend, and namely me,  
That never yet in no degre  
Offended yow, as wisly He  
That al wot, out of wo my soule quyte!  
But for I shewed yow, Arcite,  
Al that men wolde to me write,  
And was so besy yow to delyte--  
Myn honor save--meke, kynde, and fre,  
Therfor ye put on me this wite,  
And of me rekke not a myte,  
Thogh that the swerd of sorwe byte  
My woful herte through your cruelte.

My swete foo, why do ye so, for shame?  
And thenke ye that furthered be your name  
To love a newe, and ben untrewed? Nay!  
And putte yow in sclaunder now and blame,  
And do to me adversite and grame,  
That love yow most--God, wel thou wost--alway?  
Yet come ayein, and yet be pleyn som day,  
And than shal this, that now is mys, be game,  
And al foryive, while that I lyve may.



## Antistrophe

Lo, herte myn, al this is for to seyne  
As whether shal I preve or elles pleyne?  
Which is the way to doon yow to be trewe?  
For either mot I have yow in my cheyne  
Or with the deth ye mote departe us tweyne;  
Ther ben non other mene weyes newe.  
For God so wisly upon my soule rewe,  
As verrayly ye sleen me with the peyne;  
That may ye se unfeyned of myn hewe.

For thus ferforth have I my detb [y-]soght?  
Myself I mordre with my privy thoght;  
For sorowe and routhe of your unkyndenesse  
I wepe, I wake, I faste; al helpeth noght;  
I weyve joye that is to speke of oght,  
I voyde companye, I fle gladnesse.  
Who may avaunte her beter of hevynesse  
Then I? And to this plyte have ye me broght,  
Withoute gilt--me nedeth no witenesse.

And shal I preye, and weyve womanhede?--  
Nay! Rather deth then do so foul a dede!--  
And axe merci, gilteles--what nede?  
And yf I pleyne what lyf that I lede,  
Yow rekketh not; that knowe I, out of drede;  
And if that I to yow myne othes bede  
For myn excuse, a skorn shal be my mede.  
Your chere floureth, but it wol not sede;  
Ful longe agoon I oghte have taken hede.

For thogh I hadde yow to-morowe ageyn,  
I myghte as wel holde Aperill fro reyn  
As holde yow, to make yow be stidfast.  
Almyghty God, of trouthe sovereyn,  
Wher is the trouthe of man? Who hath hit slayn?  
Who that hem loveth, she shal hem fynde as fast  
As in a tempest is a roten mast.  
Is that a tame best that is ay feyn

To flee away when he is lest agast?

Now merci, swete, yf I mysseye!  
Have I seyde oght amys, I preyde?  
I noot; my wit is al aweye.  
I fare as doth the song of Chaunte-pleure  
For now I pleyne, and now I pleye;  
I am so mased that I deye;  
Arcite hath born away the key  
Of al my world, and my good aventure.  
For in this world nis creature  
Wakyng in more discomfiture  
Then I, ne more sorowe endure.  
And yf I slepe a furlong wey or tweye,  
Then thynketh me that your figure  
Before me stont, clad in asure,  
To profren eft and newe assure  
For to be trewe, and merci me to preyde.

The longe nyght this wonder sight I drye,  
And on the day for thilke afray I dye,  
And of al this ryght noght, iwys, ye reche.  
Ne nevere mo myn yen two be drie,  
And to your routhe, and to your trouthe, I crie.  
But welaway! To fer be they to feche;  
Thus holdeth me my destinee a wreche.  
But me to rede out of this drede, or guye,  
Ne may my wit, so weyk is hit, not streche.

Conclusion.

Then ende I thus, sith I may do no more.  
I yeve hit up for now and evermore,  
For I shal never eft putten in balaunce  
My sekernes, ne lerne of love the lore.  
But as the swan, I have herd seyde ful yore,  
Ayeins his deth shal singen his penaunce,  
So singe I here my destinee or chaunce,  
How that Arcite Anelida so sore  
Hath thirled with the poynt of remembraunce.

The Story continued

When that Anelida, this woful quene,  
Hath of her hand ywriten in this wise,  
With face ded, betwixe pale and grene,  
She fel a-swowe; and sith she gan to rise,  
And unto Mars avoweth sacrificise  
Withinne the temple, with a sorowful chere,  
That shapen was as ye shal after here.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Balade

HYD, Absolon, thy gilte tresses clere;  
Ester, ley thou thy meknesse al a-doun;  
Hyd, Jonathas, al thy frendly manere;  
Penalopee, and Marcia Catoun,  
Mak of your wyfhod no comparisoun;  
Hyde ye your beautes, Isoude and Eleyne;  
My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne.

Thy faire body, lat hit nat appere,  
Lavyne; and thou, Lucesse of Rome toun,  
And Polixene, that boghten love so dere,  
And Cleopatre, with al thy passioun,  
Hyde ye your trouthe of love and your renoun;  
And thou, Tisbe, that hast of love swich peyne;  
My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne.

Herro, Dido, Laudomia, alle y-fere,  
And Phyllis, hanging for thy Demophoun,  
And Canace, espyed by thy chere,  
Ysiphile, betrayed with Jasoun,  
Maketh of your trouthe neyther boost ne soun;  
Nor Ypermistre or Adriane, ye tweyne;  
My lady cometh, that al this may distevne.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Book Of The Duchesse

## THE PROEM

I have gret wonder, be this lighte,  
How that I live, for day ne nighte  
I may nat slepe wel nigh noght,  
I have so many an ydel thoght  
Purely for defaute of slepe  
That, by my trouthe, I take no kepe  
Of no-thing, how hit cometh or goth,  
Ne me nis no-thing leef nor loth.

Al is y-liche good to me --  
Ioye or sorowe, wherso hyt be --  
For I have feling in no-thinge,  
But, as it were, a mased thing,  
Alway in point to falle a-down;  
For sorwful imaginacioun  
Is alway hoolly in my minde.

And wel ye wite, agaynes kynde  
Hit were to liven in this wyse;  
For nature wolde nat suffyse  
To noon erthely creature  
Not longe tyme to endure  
Withoute slepe, and been in sorwe;  
And I ne may, ne night ne morwe,  
Slepe; and thus melancolye  
And dreed I have for to dye,  
Defaute of slepe and hevinesse  
Hath sleyn my spirit of quiknesse,  
That I have lost al lustihede.  
Suche fantasies ben in myn hede  
So I not what is best to do.

But men myght axe me, why soo  
I may not slepe, and what me is?  
But natheles, who aske this  
Leseth his asking trewely.  
My-selven can not telle why  
The sooth; but trewely, as I gesse,  
I holde hit be a siknesse  
That I have suffred this eight yere,

And yet my bote is never the nere;  
For ther is phisicien but oon,  
That may me hele; but that is doon.  
Passe we over until eft;  
That wil not be, moot nede be left;  
Our first matere is good to kepe.

So whan I saw I might not slepe,  
Til now late, this other night,  
Upon my bedde I sat upright  
And bad oon reche me a book,  
A romaunce, and he hit me took  
To rede and dryve the night away;  
For me thoghte it better play  
Then playen either at chesse or tables.

And in this boke were writen fables  
That clerkes hadde, in olde tyme,  
And other poets, put in ryme  
To rede, and for to be in minde  
Whyl men loved the lawe of kinde.  
This book ne spak but of such thinges,  
Of quenes lyves, and of kinges,  
And many othere thinges smale.  
Amonge al this I fond a tale  
That me thoughte a wonder thing.

This was the tale: There was a king  
That hight Seys, and hadde a wyf,  
The beste that mighte bere lyf;  
And this quene hight Alcyone.  
So hit befel, therafter sone,  
This king wolde wenden over see.  
To tellen shortly, whan that he  
Was in the see, thus in this wyse,  
Soche a tempest gan to ryse  
That brak hir mast, and made it falle,  
And clefted her ship, and dreinte hem alle,  
That never was founden, as it telles,  
Bord ne man, ne nothing elles.  
Right thus this king Seys loste his lyf.

Now for to speken of his wife: --  
This lady, that was left at home,  
Hath wonder, that the king ne come  
Hoom, for hit was a longe terme.

Anon her herte gan to erme;  
And for that hir thoughte evermo  
Hit was not wel he dwelte so,  
She longed so after the king  
That certes, hit were a pitous thing  
To telle hir hertely sorwful lyf  
That hadde, alas! this noble wyfe;  
For him she loved alderbest.

Anon she sente bothe eest and west  
To seke him, but they founde nought.

`Alas!' quoth she, `that I was wrought!  
And wher my lord, my love, be deed?  
Certes, I nil never ete breed,  
I make a-vowe to my god here,  
But I mowe of my lord here!'  
Such sorwe this lady to her took  
That trewely I, which made this book,  
Had swich pite and swich rowthe  
To rede hir sorwe, that, by my trowthe,  
I ferde the worse al the morwe  
After, to thenken on her sorwe.

So whan she coude here no word  
That no man mighte fynde hir lord,  
Ful ofte she swouned, and saide `Alas!'  
For sorwe ful nigh wood she was,  
Ne she coude no reed but oon;  
But down on knees she sat anoon,  
And weep, that pite was to here.

`A! mercy! swete lady dere!  
Quod she to Iuno, hir goddessse;  
`Help me out of this distresse,  
And yeve me grace my lord to see  
Sone, or wite wher-so he be,  
Or how he fareth, or in what wyse,  
And I shal make you sacrifyse,  
And hoolly youres become I shal  
With good wil, body, herte, and al;  
And but thou wilt this, lady swete,  
Send me grace to slepe, and mete  
In my slepe som certeyn sweven,  
Wher-through that I may knowen even  
Whether my lord be quik or deed.'

With that word she heng doun the heed,  
And fil a-swown as cold as ston;  
Hir women caught her up anon,  
And broghten hir in bed al naked,  
And she, forweped and forwaked,  
Was wery, and thus the dede sleep  
Fil on hir, or she toke keep,  
Through Iuno, that had herd hir bone,  
That made hir to slepe sone;  
For as she prayde, so was don,  
In dede; for Iuno, right anon,  
Called thus her messagere  
To do her erande, and he com nere.  
Whan he was come, she bad him thus:  
'Go bet,' quod Iuno, 'to Morpheus,  
Thou knowest hym wel, the god of sleep;  
Now understond wel, and tak keep.  
Sey thus on my halfe, that he  
Go faste into the grete see,  
And bid him that, on alle thing,  
He take up Seys body the king,  
That lyth ful pale and no-thing rody.  
Bid him crepe into the body,  
Aud do it goon to Alcyone  
The quene, ther she lyth alone,  
And shewe hir shortly, hit is no nay,  
How hit was dreynt this other day;  
And do the body speke so  
Right as hit was wont to do,  
The whyles that hit was on lyve.  
Go now faste, and hy thee blyve!'

This messenger took leve and wente  
Upon his wey, and never ne stente  
Til he com to the derke valeye  
That stant bytwene roches tweye,  
Ther never yet grew corn ne gras,  
Ne tree, ne nothing that ought was,  
Beste, ne man, ne nothing elles,  
Save ther were a fewe welles  
Came renning fro the cliffes adoun,  
That made a deedly sleping soun,  
And ronnen doun right by a cave



That was under a rokke y-grave  
Amid the valey, wonder depe.  
Ther thise goddes laye and slepe,  
Morpheus, and Eclympasteyre,  
That was the god of slepes heyre,  
That slepe and did non other werk.

This cave was also as derk  
As helle pit over-al aboute;  
They had good leyser for to route  
To envye, who might slepe beste;  
Some henge hir chin upon hir breste  
And slepe upright, hir heed y-hed,  
And some laye naked in hir bed,  
And slepe whyles the dayes laste.

This messenger come flying faste,  
And cryed, `O ho! awake anon!  
Hit was for noght; ther herde him non.  
`Awak!' quod he, `who is, lyth there?'  
And blew his horn right in hir ere,  
And cryed `awaketh!' wonder hye.  
This god of slepe, with his oon ye  
Cast up, axed, `who clepeth there?'  
`Hit am I,' quod this messagere;  
`Iuno bad thou shuldest goon' --  
And tolde him what he shulde doon  
As I have told yow here-tofore;  
Hit is no need reherse hit more;  
And wente his wey, whan he had sayd.

Anon this god of slepe a-brayd  
Out of his slepe, and gan to goon,  
And did as he had bede him doon;  
Took up the dreynte body sone,  
And bar hit forth to Alcyone,  
His wif the quene, ther-as she lay,  
Right even a quarter before day,  
And stood right at hir beddes fete,  
And called hir, right as she hete,  
By name, and sayde, `my swete wyf,  
Awak! let be your sorwful lyf!  
For in your sorwe there lyth no reed;  
For certes, swete, I nam but deed;  
Ye shul me never on lyve y-see.

But good swete herte, look that ye  
Bury my body, at whiche a tyde  
Ye mowe hit finde the see besyde;  
And far-wel, swete, my worldes blisse!  
I praye god your sorwe lisse;  
To litel whyl our blisse lasteth!

With that hir eyen up she casteth,  
And saw noght; `A!' quod she, `for sorwe!  
And deyed within the thridde morwe.  
But what she sayde more in that swow  
I may not telle yow as now,  
Hit were to longe for to dwelle;  
My first matere I wil yow telle,  
Wherfor I have told this thing  
Of Alcione and Seys the king.

For thus moche dar I saye wel,  
I had be dolven everydel,  
And deed, right through defaute of sleep,  
If I nad red and taken keep  
Of this tale next before:  
And I wol telle yow wherfore:  
For I ne might, for bote ne bale,  
Slepe, or I had red this tale  
Of this dreynte Seys the king,  
And of the goddes of sleping.  
Whan I had red this tale wel  
And over-loked hit everydel,  
Me thoughte wonder if hit were so;  
For I had never herd speke, or tho,  
Of no goddes that coude make  
Men for to slepe, ne for to wake;  
For I ne knew never god but oon.  
And in my game I sayde anoon --  
And yet me list right evel to pleye --  
`Rather then that I shulde deye  
Through defaute of sleping thus,  
I wolde yive thilke Morpheus,  
Or his goddesse, dame Iuno,  
Or som wight elles, I ne roghte who --  
To make me slepe and have som reste --  
I wil yive him the alder-beste  
Yift that ever he aboode his lyve,

And here on warde, right now, as blyve;  
If he wol make me slepe a lyte,  
Of downe of pure dowves whyte  
I wil yive him a fether-bed,  
Rayed with golde, and right wel cled  
In fyn blak satin doutremere,  
And many a pilow, and every bere  
Of clothe of Reynes, to slepe softe;  
Him thar not nede to turnen ofte.  
And I wol yive him al that falles  
To a chambre; and al his halles  
I wol do peynte with pure golde,  
And tapite hem ful many folde  
Of oo sute; this shal he have,  
Yf I wiste wher were his cave,  
If he can make me slepe sone,  
As did the goddesse Alcione.  
And thus this ilke god, Morpheus,  
May winne of me mo fees thus  
Than ever he wan; and to Iuno,  
That is his goddesse, I shal so do,  
I trow that she shal holde her payd.'

I hadde unneth that word y-sayd  
Right thus as I have told hit yow,  
That sodeynly, I niste how,  
Swich a lust anoon me took  
To slepe, that right upon my book  
I fil aslepe, and therwith even  
Me mette so inly swete a sweven,  
So wonderful, that never yit  
I trowe no man hadde the wit  
To conne wel my sweven rede;  
No, not Ioseph, withoute drede,  
Of Egipte, he that redde so  
The kinges meting Pharao,  
No more than coude the leste of us;  
Ne nat scarsly Macrobeus,  
(He that wroot al thavisoun  
That he mette, Kyng Scipioun,  
The noble man, the Affrican --  
Swiche marvayles fortunéd than)  
I trowe, a-rede my dremes even.

Lo, thus hit was, this was my sweven.

## THE DREAM

Me thoughte thus: -- that hit was May,  
And in the dawning ther I lay,  
Me mette thus, in my bed al naked: --  
I loked forth, for I was waked  
With smale foules a gret hepe,  
That had affrayed me out of slepe  
Through noyse and swetnesse of hir song;  
And, as me mette, they sate among,  
Upon my chambre-roof withoute,  
Upon the tyles, al a-boute,  
And songen, everich in his wise,  
The moste solempne servyse  
By note, that ever man, I trowe,  
Had herd; for som of hem song lowe,  
Som hye, and al of oon acorde.  
To telle shortly, at oo worde,  
Was never y-herd so swete a steven,  
But hit had be a thing of heven; --  
So mery a soun, so swete entunes,  
That certes, for the toun of Tewnes,  
I nolde but I had herd hem singe,  
For al my chambre gan to ringe  
Through singing of hir armony.  
For instrument nor melodye  
Was nowher herd yet half so swete,  
Nor of acorde half so mete;  
For ther was noon of hem that feyned  
To singe, for ech of hem him peyned  
To finde out mery crafty notes;  
They ne spared not hir throtes.  
And, sooth to seyn, my chambre was  
Ful wel depeynted, and with glas  
Were al the windowes wel y-glased,  
Ful clere, and nat an hole y-crased,  
That to beholde hit was gret Ioye.  
For hoolly al the storie of Troye  
Was in the glasing y-wroght thus,  
Of Ector and of king Priamus,

Of Achilles and king Lamedon,  
Of Medea and of Iason,  
Of Paris, Eleyne, and Lavyne.  
And alle the walles with colours fyne  
Were peynted, bothe text and glose,  
Of al the Romaunce of the Rose.  
My windowes weren shet echon,  
And through the glas the sunne shon  
Upon my bed with brighte bemes,  
With many glade gilden stremes;  
And eek the welken was so fair,  
Blew, bright, clere was the air,  
And ful atempre, for sothe, hit was;  
For nother cold nor hoot hit nas,  
Ne in al the welken was a cloude.

And as I lay thus, wonder loude  
Me thoughte I herde an hunte blowe  
Tassaye his horn, and for to knowe  
Whether hit were clere or hors of soun.

I herde goinge, up and doune,  
Men, hors, houndes, and other thing;  
And al men speken of hunting,  
How they wolde slee the hert with strengthe,  
And how the hert had, upon lengthe,  
So moche embosed, I not now what.  
Anon-right, whan I herde that,  
How that they wolde on hunting goon,  
I was right glad, and up anoon;  
I took my hors, and forth I wente  
Out of my chambre; I never stente  
Til I com to the feld withoute.  
Ther overtook I a gret route  
Of hunttes and eek of foresteres,  
With many relayes and lymeres,  
And hyed hem to the forest faste,  
And I with hem; -- so at the laste  
I asked oon, ladde a lymere: --  
'Say, felow, who shal hunten here'  
Quod I, and he answerde ageyn,  
'Sir, themperour Octovien,'  
Quod he, 'and is heer faste by.'  
'A goddes halfe, in good tyme,' quod I,

`Go we faste!' and gan to ryde.  
Whan we came to the forest-syde,  
Every man dide, right anoon,  
As to hunting fil to doon.  
The mayster-hunte anoon, fot-hoot,  
With a gret horne blew three moot  
At the uncoupling of his houndes.  
Within a whyl the hert y-founde is,  
Y-halowed, and rechased faste  
Longe tyme; and so at the laste,  
This hert rused and stal away  
Fro alle the houndes a prevy way.  
The houndes had overshote hem alle,  
And were on a defaute y-falle;  
Therwith the hunte wonder faste  
Blew a forloyn at the laste.

I was go walked fro my tree,  
And as I wente, ther cam by me  
A whelp, that fauned me as I stood,  
That hadde y-folowed, and coude no good.  
Hit com and creep to me as lowe,  
Right as hit hadde me y-knowe,  
Hild down his heed and Ioyned his eres,  
And leyde al smothe doun his heres.  
I wolde han caught hit, and anoon  
Hit fledde, and was fro me goon;  
And I him folwed, and hit forth wente  
Doun by a floury grene wente  
Ful thikke of gras, ful softe and swete,  
With floures fele, faire under fete,  
And litel used, hit seemed thus;  
For bothe Flora and Zephirus,  
They two that make floures growe,  
Had mad hir dwelling ther, I trowe;  
For hit was, on to beholde,  
As thogh the erthe envye wolde  
To be gayer than the heven,  
To have mo floures, swiche seven  
As in the welken sterres be.  
Hit had forgete the povertie  
That winter, through his colde morwes,  
Had mad hit suffren, and his sorwes;

Al was forgeten, and that was sene.  
For al the wode was waxen grene,  
Swetnesse of dewe had mad it waxe.

Hit is no need eek for to axe  
Wher ther were many grene greves,  
Or thikke of trees, so ful of leves;  
And every tree stood by him-selve  
Fro other wel ten foot or twelve.  
So grete trees, so huge of strengthe,  
Of fourty or fifty fadme lengthe,  
Clene withoute bough or stikke,  
With croppes brode, and eek as thikke --  
They were nat an inche a-sonder --  
That hit was shadwe over-al under;  
And many an hert and many an hinde  
Was both before me and bihinde.  
Of founes, soures, bukkes, does  
Was ful the wode, and many roes,  
And many squirelles that sete  
Ful hye upon the trees, and ete,  
And in hir maner made festes.  
Shortly, hit was so ful of bestes,  
That thogh Argus, the noble countour,  
Sete to rekene in his countour,  
And rekened with his figures ten --  
For by tho figures mowe al ken,  
If they be crafty, rekene and noumbre,  
And telle of every thing the noumbre --  
Yet shulde he fayle to rekene even  
The wondres, me mette in my sweven.

But forth they romed wonder faste  
Doun the wode; so at the laste  
I was war of a man in blak,  
That sat and had y-turned his bak  
To an oke, an huge tree.  
'Lord,' thoghte I, 'who may that be?  
What ayleth him to sitten here?'  
Anoon-right I wente nere;  
Than fond I sitte even upright  
A wonder wel-faringe knight --  
By the maner me thoughte so --  
Of good mochel, and yong therto,

Of the age of four and twenty yeer.  
 Upon his berde but litel heer,  
 And he was clothed al in blakke.  
 I stalked even unto his bakke,  
 And ther I stood as stille as ought,  
 That, sooth to saye, he saw me nought,  
 For-why he heng his heed adoune.  
 And with a deedly sorwful soun  
 He made of ryme ten vers or twelve  
 Of a compleynt to him-selve,  
 The moste pite, the moste rowthe,  
 That ever I herde; for, by my trowthe,  
 Hit was gret wonder that nature  
 Might suffren any creature  
 To have swich sorwe, and be not deed.  
 Ful pitous, pale, and nothing reed,  
 He sayde a lay, a maner song,  
 Withoute note, withoute song,  
 And hit was this; for wel I can  
 Reherse hit; right thus hit began. --  
 `I have of sorwe so grete woon,  
 That Ioye gete I never noon,  
 Now that I see my lady bright,  
 Which I have loved with al my might,  
 Is fro me dedd, and is a-goon.  
 And thus in sorwe lefte me alone.  
 `Allas, o deeth! what ayleth thee,  
 That thou noldest have taken me,  
 `Whan that thou toke my lady swete?  
 That was so fayr, so fresh, so free,  
 So good, that men may wel y-see  
 `Of al goodnesse she had no mete!' --  
 Whan he had mad thus his complaynte,  
 His sorowful herte gan faste faynte,  
 And his spirites wexen dede;  
 The blood was fled, for pure drede,  
 Doun to his herte, to make him warm --  
 For wel hit feled the herte had harm --  
 To wite eek why hit was a-drad,  
 By kinde, and for to make hit glad;  
 For hit is membre principal  
 Of the body; and that made al



His hewe chaunge and wexe grene  
And pale, for no blood was sene  
In no maner lime of his.

Anoon therwith whan I saw this,  
He ferde thus evel ther he sete,  
I wente and stood right at his fete,  
And grette him, but he spak noght,  
But argued with his owne thoght,  
And in his witte disputed faste  
Why and how his lyf might laste;  
Him thoughte his sorwes were so smerte  
And lay so colde upon his herte;  
So, through his sorwe and hevy thoght,  
Made him that he ne herde me noght;  
For he had wel nigh lost his minde,  
Thogh Pan, that men clepe god of kinde,  
Were for his sorwes never so wrooth.

But at the laste, to sayn right sooth,  
He was war of me, how I stood  
Before him, and dide of myn hood,  
And grette him, as I best coude.  
Debonairly, and no-thing loude,  
He sayde, `I prey thee, be not wrooth,  
I herde thee not, to sayn the sooth,  
Ne I saw thee not, sir, trewely.'

`A! goode sir, no fors,' quod I,  
`I am right sorry if I have ought  
Destroubled yow out of your thought;  
For-yive me if I have mis-take.'

`Yis, thamendes is light to make,'  
Quod he, `for ther lyth noon ther-to;  
Ther is no-thing missayd nor do,'

Lo! how goodly spak this knight,  
As it had been another wight;  
He made it nouter tough ne queynte  
And I saw that, and gan me aqueynte  
With him, and fond him so trefable,  
Right wonder skilful and resonable,  
As me thoghte, for al his bale.  
Anoon-right I gan finde a tale  
To him, to loke wher I might ought  
Have more knowing of his thought.

`Sir,' quod I, `this game is doon;  
 I holde that this hert be goon;  
 These hunttes conne him nowher see.'  
 `I do no fors therof,' quod he,  
 `My thought is ther-on never a del.'  
 `By our lord,' quod I, `I trow yow wel,  
 Right so me thinketh by your chere.  
 But, sir, oo thing wol ye here?  
 Me thinketh, in gret sorwe I yow see;  
 But certes, good sir, yif that ye  
 Wolde ought discure me your wo,  
 I wolde, as wis god help me so,  
 Amende hit, yif I can or may;  
 Ye mowe preve hit by assay.  
 For, by my trouthe, to make yow hool,  
 I wol do al my power hool;  
 And telleth me of your sorwes smerte,  
 Paraventure hit may ese your herte,  
 That semeth ful seke under your syde.'  
 With that he loked on me asyde,  
 As who sayth, `Nay, that wol not be.'  
 `Graunt mercy, goode frend,' quod he,  
 `I thanke thee that thou woldest so,  
 But hit may never the rather be do,  
 No man may my sorwe glade,  
 That maketh my hewe to falle and fade,  
 And hath myn understanding lorn,  
 That me is wo that I was born!  
 May noght make my sorwes slyde,  
 Nought the remedies of Ovyde;  
 Ne Orpheus, god of melodye,  
 Ne Dedalus, with playes slye;  
 Ne hele me may phisicien,  
 Noght Ypocras, ne Galien;  
 Me is wo that I live houres twelve;  
 But who so wol assaye him-selve  
 Whether his herte can have pite  
 Of any sorwe, lat him see me.  
 I wrecche, that deeth hath mad al naked  
 Of alle blisse that ever was maked,  
 Y-worthe worste of alle wightes,  
 That hate my dayes and my nightes;

My lyf, my lustes be me lothe,  
For al welfare and I be wrothe.  
The pure deeth is so my fo  
Thogh I wolde deye, hit wolde not so;  
For whan I folwe hit, hit wol flee;  
I wolde have hit, hit nil not me.  
This is my peyne withoute reed,  
Always deinge and be not deed,  
That Sesiphus, that lyth in helle,  
May not of more sorwe telle.  
And who so wiste al, be my trouthe,  
My sorwe, but he hadde routhe  
And pite of my sorwes smerte,  
That man hath a feendly herte.  
For who so seeth me first on morwe  
May seyn, he hath y-met with sorwe;  
For I am sorwe and sorwe is I.

    `Allas! and I wol telle the why;  
My song is turned to pleyning,  
And al my laughter to weping,  
My glade thoghtes to hevinesse,  
In travaile is myn ydelnesse  
And eek my reste; my wele is wo,  
My goode is harm, and ever-mo  
In wrathe is turned my pleying,  
And my delyt in-to sorwing.  
Myn hele is turned into seeknesse,  
In drede is al my sikernesse.  
To derke is turned al my light,  
My wit is foly, my day is night,  
My love is hate, my sleep waking,  
My mirthe and meles is fasting,  
My countenance is nycete,  
And al abaved wher-so I be,  
My pees, in pleding and in werre;  
Allas! how mighte I fare werre?

    `My boldnesse is turned to shame,  
For fals Fortune hath pleyd a game  
Atte ches with me, allas! the whyle!  
The trayteresse fals and ful of gyle,  
That al behoteth and no-thing halt,  
She goth upryght and yet she halt,

That baggeth foule and loketh faire,  
 The dispitouse debonaire,  
 That scorneth many a creature!  
 An ydole of fals portraiture  
 Is she, for she wil sone wryen;  
 She is the monstres heed y-wryen,  
 As filth over y-strawed with floures;  
 Hir moste worship and hir flour is  
 To lyen, for that is hir nature;  
 Withoute feyth, lawe, or mesure.  
 She is fals; and ever laughinge  
 With oon eye, and that other wepinge.  
 That is broght up, she set al doun.  
 I lykne hir to the scorioun,  
 That is a fals, flateringe beste;  
 For with his hede he maketh feste,  
 But al amid his flateringe  
 With his tayle he wol stinge,  
 And envenyme; and so wol she.  
 She is thenvyouse charite  
 That is ay fals, and seemeth wele,  
 So turneth she hir false whele  
 Aboute, for it is no-thing stable,  
 Now by the fyre, now at table;  
 Ful many oon hath she thus y-blent;  
 She is pley of enchauntement,  
 That semeth oon and is not so,  
 The false theef! what hath she do,  
 Trowest thou? By our lord, I wol thee seye.  
 Atte ches with me she gan to pleye;  
 With hir false draughtes divers  
 She stal on me, and took my fers.  
 And whan I saw my fers aweye,  
 Alas! I couthe no lenger playe,  
 But seyde, 'Farewel, swete, y-wis,  
 And farwel al that ever ther is!  
 Therwith Fortune seyde, 'Chek here!  
 And 'Mate!' in mid pointe of the chekkere  
 With a poune erraunt, allas!  
 Ful craftier to pley she was  
 Than Athalus, that made the game  
 First of the ches: so was his name.

But God wolde I had ones or twyes  
Y-koud and knowe the Ieupardyes  
That coude the Grek Pithagores!  
I shulde have pleyd the bet at ches,  
And kept my fers the bet therby;  
And thogh wherto? for trewely,  
I hold that wish nat worth a stree!  
Hit had be never the bet for me.  
For Fortune can so many a wyle,  
Ther be but fewe can hir begyle,  
And eek she is the las to blame;  
My-self I wolde have do the same,  
Before god, hadde I been as she;  
She oghte the more excused be.  
For this I say yet more therto,  
Hadde I be god and mighte have do  
My wille, whan she my fers caughte,  
I wolde have drawe the same draughte.  
For, also wis god yive me reste,  
I dar wel swere she took the beste!  
` But through that draughte I have lorn  
My blisse; allas! that I was born!  
For evermore, I trowe trewely,  
For al my wil, my lust hoolly  
Is turned; but yet what to done?  
Be oure lord, hit is to deye sone;  
For no-thing I ne leve it noght,  
But live and deye right in this thought.  
There nis planete in firmament,  
Ne in air, ne in erthe, noon element,  
That they ne yive me a yift echoon  
Of weping, whan I am aloon.  
For whan that I avyse me wel,  
And bethenke me every-del,  
How that ther lyth in rekening,  
In my sorwe for no-thing;  
And how ther leveth no gladnesse  
May gladde me of my distresse,  
And how I have lost suffisance,  
And therto I have no plesance,  
Than may I say, I have right noght.  
And whan al this falleth in my thought,

Allas! than am I overcome!  
For that is doon is not to come!  
I have more sorowe than Tantale.'  
And whan I herde him telle this tale  
Thus pitously, as I yow telle,  
Unnethe mighte I lenger dwelle,  
Hit dide myn hert so moche wo.

`A! good sir!' quod I, `say not so!  
Have som pite on your nature  
That formed yow to creature,  
Remembre yow of Socrates;  
For he ne counted nat three strees  
Of noght that Fortune coude do.`

`No,' quod he, `I can not so.'  
`Why so? good sir! parde!' quod I;  
`Ne say noght so, for trewely,  
Thogh ye had lost the ferses twelve,  
And ye for sorwe mordred your-selve,  
Ye sholde be dampned in this cas  
By as good right as Medea was,  
That slow hir children for Iason;  
And Phyllis als for Demophon  
Heng hir-self, so weylaway!  
For he had broke his terme-day  
To come to hir. Another rage  
Had Dydo, quene eek of Cartage,  
That slow hir-self for Eneas  
Was fals; a whiche a fool she was!  
And Ecquo dyed for Narcisus.  
Nolde nat love hir; and right thus  
Hath many another foly don.  
And for Dalida died Sampson,  
That slow him-self with a pilere.  
But ther is noon a-lyve here  
Wolde for a fers make this wo!

`Why so?' quod he; `hit is nat so,  
Thou woste ful litel what thou menest;  
I have lost more than thow wenest.'  
`Lo, sir, how may that be?' quod I;  
`Good sir, tel me al hoolly  
In what wyse, how, why, and wherfore  
That ye have thus your blisse lore,'

`Blythly,' quod he, `com sit adoun,  
 I telle thee up condicioun  
 That thou hoolly, with al thy wit,  
 Do thyn entent to herkene hit.'  
 `Yis, sir.' `Swere thy trouthe ther-to.'  
 `Gladly.' `Do than holde her-to!'  
 `I shal right blythly, so god me save,  
 Hoolly, with al the witte I have,  
 Here yow, as wel as I can,'  
 `A goddes half!' quod he, and began: --  
 `Sir,' quod he, `sith first I couthe  
 Have any maner wit fro youthe,  
 Or kyndely understanding  
 To comprehende, in any thing,  
 What love was, in myn owne wit,  
 Dredeles, I have ever yit  
 Be tributary, and yiven rente  
 To love hoolly with goode entente,  
 And through plesaunce become his thral,  
 With good wil, body, herte, and al.  
 Al this I putte in his servage,  
 As to my lorde, and dide homage;  
 And ful devoutly prayde him to,  
 He shulde besette myn herte so,  
 That it plesaunce to him were,  
 And worship to my lady dere.  
 `And this was longe, and many a yeer  
 Or that myn herte was set o-wher,  
 That I did thus, and niste why;  
 I trowe hit cam me kindely.  
 Paraunter I was therto most able  
 As a whyt wal or a table;  
 For hit is redy to cacche and take  
 Al that men wil therin make,  
 Wher-so so men wol portreye or peynte,  
 Be the werkes never so queynte.  
 `And thilke tyme I ferde so  
 I was able to have lerned tho,  
 And to have coud as wel or better,  
 Paraunter, other art or letter.  
 But for love cam first in my thought,  
 Therefore I forgat hit nought.

I chees love to my firste craft,  
Therfor hit is with me y-laft.  
Forwhy I took hit of so yong age,  
That malice hadde my corage  
Nat that tyme turned to no-thing  
Through to mochel knowleching.  
For that tyme youthe, my maistresse,  
Governed me in ydelnesse;  
For hit was in my firste youthe,  
And tho ful litel good I couthe,  
For al my werkes were flittinge,  
And al my thoghtes varyinge;  
Al were to me y-liche good,  
That I knew tho; but thus hit stood.

`Hit happed that I cam on a day  
Into a place, ther I say,  
Trewly, the fayrest companye  
Of ladies that ever man with ye  
Had seen togedres in oo place.  
Shal I clepe hit hap other grace  
That broght me ther? nay, but Fortune,  
That is to lyen ful comune,  
The false trayteresse, pervers,  
God wolde I coude clepe hir wers!  
For now she worcheth me ful wo,  
And I wol telle sone why so.

`Among thise ladies thus echoon,  
Soth to seyn, I saw ther oon  
That was lyk noon of al the route;  
For I dar swere, withoute doute,  
That as the someres sonne bright  
Is fairer, clere, and hath more light  
Than any planete, is in heven,  
The mone, or the sterres seven,  
For al the worlde so had she  
Surmounted hem alle of beaute,  
Of maner and of comlinessse,  
Of stature and wel set gladnesse,  
Of goodlihede so wel beseye --  
Shortly, what shal I more seye?  
By god, and by his halwes twelve,  
It was my swete, right al hir-selve!



She had so stedfast countenance,  
 So noble port and meyntenance.  
 And Love, that had herd my bone,  
 Had espyed me thus sone,  
 That she ful sone, in my thoght,  
 As helpe me god, so was y-caught  
 So sodenly, that I ne took  
 No maner reed but at hir look  
 And at myn herte; for-why hir eyen  
 So gladly, I trow, myn herte seyden,  
 That purely tho myn owne thoght  
 Seyde hit were bet serve hir for noght  
 Than with another to be wel.  
 And hit was sooth, for, everydel,  
 I wil anoon-right telle thee why.  
 I saw hir daunce so comlily,  
 Carole and singe so swetely,  
 Laughe and pleye so womanly,  
 And loke so debonairly,  
 So goodly speke and so frendly,  
 That certes, I trow, that evermore  
 Nas seyn so blisful a tresore.  
 For every heer upon hir hede,  
 Soth to seyn, hit was not rede,  
 Ne nouthen yelw, ne broun hit nas;  
 Me thoghte, most lyk gold hit was.  
 And whiche eyen my lady hadde!  
 Debonair, goode, glade, and sadde,  
 Simple, of good mochel, noght to wyde;  
 Therto hir look nas not a-syde,  
 Ne overthwert, but beset so wel,  
 Hit drew and took up, everydel,  
 Alle that on hir gan beholde.  
 Hir eyen semed anoon she wolde  
 Have mercy; fooles wenden so;  
 But hit was never the rather do.  
 Hit nas no countrefeted thing,  
 It was hir owne pure loking,  
 That the goddessse, dame Nature,  
 Had made hem opene by mesure,  
 And close; for, were she never so glad,  
 Hir loking was not foly sprad,

Ne wildely, thogh that she pleyde;  
But ever, me thoght, hir eyen seyde,  
'By god, my wrathe is al for-yive!  
` Therwith hir liste so wel to live,  
That dulnesse was of hir a-drad.  
She nas to sobre ne to glad;  
In alle thinges more mesure  
Had never, I trowe, creature.  
But many oon with hir loke she herte,  
And that sat hir ful lyte at herte,  
For she knew no-thing of her thoght;  
But whether she knew, or knew hit noght,  
Algate she ne roghte of hem a stree!  
To gete hir love no ner was he  
That woned at home, than he in Inde;  
The formest was alway behinde.  
But goode folk, over al other,  
She loved as man may do his brother;  
Of whiche love she was wonder large,  
In skilful places that bere charge.  
` Which a visage had she ther-to!  
Allas! myn herte is wonder wo  
That I ne can discryven hit!  
Me lakketh bothe English and wit  
For to undo hit at the fulle;  
And eek my spirits be so dulle  
So greet a thing for to devyse.  
I have no wit that can suffyse  
To comprehenden hir beaute;  
But thus moche dar I seyn, that she  
Was rody, fresh, and lyvely hewed;  
And every day hir beaute newed.  
And negh hir face was alder-best;  
For certes, Nature had swich lest  
To make that fair, that trewly she  
Was hir cheef patron of beautee,  
And cheef ensample of al hir werke,  
And moustre; for, be hit never so derke,  
Me thinketh I see hir ever-mo.  
And yet more-over, thogh alle tho  
That ever lived were not a-lyve,  
They ne sholde have founde to discryve

In al hir face a wikked signe;  
 For hit was sad, simple, and benigne.  
 `And which a goodly, softe speche  
 Had that swete, my lyves leche!  
 So frendly, and so wel y-grounded,  
 Up al resoun so wel y-founded,  
 And so trefable to alle gode,  
 That I dar swere by the rode,  
 Of eloquence was never founde  
 So swete a sowninge facounde,  
 Ne trewer tonged, ne scorned lasse,  
 Ne bet coude hele; that, by the masse,  
 I durste swere, thogh the pope hit songe,  
 That ther was never yet through hir tonge  
 Man ne woman gretly harmed;  
 As for hir, ther was al harm hid;  
 Ne lasse flatering in hir worde,  
 That purely, hir simple recorde  
 Was founde as trewe as any bonde,  
 Or trouthe of any mannes honde.  
 Ne chyde she coude never a del,  
 That knoweth al the world ful wel.  
 `But swich a fairnesse of a nekke  
 Had that swete that boon nor brekke  
 Nas ther non sene, that mis-sat.  
 Hit was whyt, smothe, streght, and flat,  
 Withouten hole; and canel-boon,  
 As by seming, had she noon.  
 Hir throte, as I have now memoire,  
 Semed a round tour of yvoire,  
 Of good gretnesse, and noght to grete.  
 `And gode faire Whyte she hete,  
 That was my lady name right.  
 She was bothe fair and bright,  
 She hadde not hir name wrong.  
 Right faire shuldres, and body long  
 She hadde, and armes; every lith  
 Fattish, flesshy, not greet therwith;  
 Right whyte handes, and nayles rede,  
 Rounde brestes; and of good brede  
 Hyr hippes were, a streight flat bake.  
 I knew on hir non other lak

That al hir limmes nere sewing,  
In as fer as I had knowing.

`Therto she coude so wel pleye,  
Whan that hir liste, that I dar seye,  
That she was lyk to torche bright,  
That every man may take of light  
Ynogh, and hit hath never the lesse.

`Of maner and of comlinessse  
Right so ferde my lady dere;  
For every wight of hir manere  
Might cacche ynogh, if that he wolde,  
If he had eyen hir to beholde.  
For I dar sweren, if that she  
Had among ten thousand be,  
She wolde have be, at the leste,  
A cheef mirour of al the feste,  
Thogh they had stonden in a rowe,  
To mennes eyen coude have knowe.  
For wher-so men had pleyd or waked,  
Me thoghte the felawship as naked  
Withouten hir, that saw I ones,  
As a coroune withoute stones.  
Trewly she was, to myn ye,  
The soley n fenix of Arabye,  
For ther liveth never but oon;  
Ne swich as she ne know I noon.

`To speke of goodnesse; trewly she  
Had as moche debonairte  
As ever had Hester in the bible  
And more, if more were possible.  
And, soth to seyne, therwith-al  
She had a wit so general,  
So hool enclyned to alle gode,  
That al hir wit was set, by the rode,  
Withoute malice, upon gladnesse;  
Therto I saw never yet a lesse  
Harmul, than she was in doing.  
I sey nat that she ne had knowing  
What harm was; or elles she  
Had coud no good, so thinketh me.

`And trewly, for to speke of trouthe,  
But she had had, hit had be routhe.

Therof she had so moche hir del --  
And I dar seyn and swere hit wel --  
That Trouthe him-self, over al and al,  
Had chose his maner principal  
In hir, that was his resting-place.  
Ther-to she hadde the moste grace,  
To have stedfast perseveraunce,  
And esy, atempre governaunce,  
That ever I knew or wiste yit;  
So pure suffraunt was hir wit.  
And reson gladly she understood,  
Hit folowed wel she coude good.  
She used gladly to do wel;  
These were hir maners every-del.

`Therwith she loved so wel right,  
She wrong do wolde to no wight;  
No wight might do hir no shame,  
She loved so wel hir owne name.  
Hir luste to holde no wight in honde;  
Ne, be thou siker, she nolde fonde  
To holde no wight in balaunce,  
By half word ne by countenaunce,  
But-if men wolde upon hir lye;  
Ne sende men in-to Walakye,  
To Pruyse, and in-to Tartarye,  
To Alisaundre, ne in-to Turkye,  
And bidde him faste, anoon that he  
Go hoodles to the drye see,  
And come hoom by the Carrenare;  
And seye, 'Sir, be now right ware  
That I may of yow here seyn  
Worship, or that ye come ageyn!'  
She ne used no suche knakkes smale.

`But wherfor that I telle my tale?  
Right on this same, as I have seyde,  
Was hoolly al my love leyde;  
For certes, she was, that swete wyf,  
My suffisaunce, my lust, my lyf,  
Myn hap, myn hele, and al my blisse,  
My worldes welfare, and my lisse,  
And I hires hoolly, everydel.'

`By our lord,' quod I, `I trowe yow wel!

Hardely, your love was wel beset,  
I not how ye mighte have do bet.'  
'Bet? ne no wight so wel!' quod he.  
'I trowe hit, sir,' quod I, 'parde!'  
'Nay, leve hit wel!' 'Sir, so do I;  
I leve yow wel, that trewely  
Yow thoghte, that she was the beste,  
And to beholde the alderfaireste,  
Who so had loked hir with your eyen.'

'With myn? Nay, alle that hir seyen  
Seyde and sworn hit was so.  
And thogh they ne hadde, I wolde tho  
Have loved best my lady fre,  
Thogh I had had al the beautee  
That ever had Alcipyades,  
And al the strengthe of Ercules,  
And therto had the worthinesse  
Of Alisaundre, and al the richesse  
That ever was in Babiloyne,  
In Cartage, or in Macedoyne,  
Or in Rome, or in Ninive;  
And therto al-so hardy be  
As was Ector, so have I Ioye,  
That Achilles slow at Troye --  
And therfor was he slayn also  
In a temple, for bothe two  
Were slayn, he and Antilegius,  
And so seyth Dares Frigijs,  
For love of hir Polixena --  
Or ben as wys as Minerva,  
I wolde ever, withoute drede,  
Have loved hir, for I moste nede!  
'Nede!' nay, I gabbe now,  
Noght 'nede', and I wol telle how,  
For of good wille myn herte hit wolde,  
And eek to love hir I was holde  
As for the fairest and the beste.

'She was as good, so have I reste,  
As ever was Penelope of Grece,  
Or as the noble wyf Lucrece,  
That was the beste -- he telleth thus,  
The Romayn Tytus Livius --

She was as good, and no-thing lyke,  
Thogh hir stories be autentyke;  
Algate she was as trewe as she.

`But wherfor that I telle thee  
Whan I first my lady say?  
I was right yong, the sooth to sey,  
And ful gret need I hadde to lerne;  
Whan my herte wolde yerne  
To love, it was a greet empryse.  
But as my wit coude best suffyse,  
After my yonge childly wit,  
Withoute drede, I besette hit  
To love hir in my beste wise,  
To do hir worship and servyse  
That I tho coude, be my trouthe,  
Withoute feyning outhere slouthe;  
For wonder fayn I wolde hir see.  
So mochel hit amended me,  
That, whan I saw hir first a-morwe,  
I was warished of al my sorwe  
Of al day after, til hit were eve;  
Me thoghte no-thing mighte me greve,  
Were my sorwes never so smerte.  
And yit she sit so in myn herte,  
That, by my trouthe, I nolde noghte,  
For al this worlde, out of my thought  
Leve my lady; no, trewly!

`Now, by my trouthe, sir,' quod I,  
`Me thinketh ye have such a chaunce  
As shrift withoute repentaunce.'

`Repentaunce! nay, fy,' quod he;  
`Shulde I now repente me  
To love? nay, certes, than were I wel  
Wers than was Achitofel,  
Or Anthenor, so have I Ioye,  
The traytour that betrayes Troye,  
Or the false Genelon,  
He that purchased the treson  
Of Rowland and of Oliver.  
Nay, why! I am a-lyve here  
I nil foryete hir never-mo.'

`Now, goode sir,' quod I right tho,

`Ye han wel told me her-before.  
It is no need rehearse hit more  
How ye sawe hir first, and where;  
But wolde ye telle me the manere,  
To hir which was your firste speche --  
Therof I wolde yow be-seche --  
And how she knewe first your thoght,  
Whether ye loved hir or noght,  
And telleth me eek what ye have lore;  
I herde yow telle her-before.'

`Ye,' seyde he, `thow nost what thou menest;  
I have lost more than thou wenest.'

`What los is that, sir?' quod I tho;  
`Nil she not love yow? Is hit so?  
Or have ye oght y-doon amis,  
That she hath left yow? is hit this?  
For goddes love, telle me al.'

`Before god,' quod he, `and I shal.  
I saye right as I have seyde,  
On hir was al my love leyde;  
And yet she niste hit never a del  
Noght longe tyme, leve hit wel.  
For be right siker, I durste noght  
For al this worlde telle hir my thoght,  
Ne I wolde have wratthed hir, trewely.  
For wostow why? she was lady  
Of the body; she had the herte,  
And who hath that, may not asterte.

`But, for to kepe me fro ydelnesse,  
Trewly I did my besinesse  
To make songes, as I best coude,  
And ofte tyme I song hem loude;  
And made songes a gret del,  
Al-thogh I coude not make so wel  
Songes, ne knowe the art al,  
As coude Lamekes sone Tubal,  
That fond out first the art of songe;  
For, as his brothers hamers ronge  
Upon his anvelt up and down,  
Therof he took the firste soun;  
But Grekes seyn, Pictagoras,  
That he the firste finder was



Of the art; Aurora telleth so,  
But therof no fors, of hem two.  
Algates songes thus I made  
Of my feling, myn herte to glade;  
And lo! this was the alther-firste,  
I not wher that hit were the werst. --

'Lord, hit maketh myn herte light,  
Whan I thenke on that swete wight  
That is so semely on to see;  
And wisshe to god hit might so be,  
That she wolde holde me for hir knight,  
My lady, that is so fair and bright!' --

`Now have I told thee, sooth to saye,  
My firste song. Upon a daye  
I bethoghte me what wo  
And sorwe that I suffred tho  
For hir, and yet she wiste hit noght,  
Ne telle hir durste I nat my thoght.

`Allas!' thoghte I, `I can no reed;  
And, but I telle hir, I nam but deed;  
And if I telle hir, to seye sooth,  
I am a-dred she wol be wrooth;  
Allas! what shal I thanne do?'

`In this debat I was so wo,  
Me thoghte myn herte braste a-tweyn!  
So atte laste, soth to sayn,  
I me bethoghte that nature  
Ne formed never in creature  
So moche beaute, trewely,  
And bounte, withouten mercy.

`In hope of that, my tale I tolde,  
With sorwe, as that I never sholde;  
For nedes, and, maugree my heed,  
I moste have told hir or be deed.  
I not wel how that I began,  
Ful evel rehersen hit I can;  
And eek, as helpe me god with-al,  
I trowe hit was in the dismal,  
That was the ten woundes of Egipte;  
For many a word I over-skipte  
In my tale, for pure fere  
Lest my wordes mis-set were.

With sorweful herte, and woundes dede,  
Softe and quaking for pure drede  
And shame, and stinting in my tale  
For ferde, and myn hewe al pale,  
Ful ofte I wex bothe pale and reed;  
Bowing to hir, I heng the heed;  
I durste nat ones loke hir on,  
For wit, manere, and al was gon.  
I seyde 'mercy!' and no more;  
Hit nas no game, hit sat me sore.

    `So atte laste, sooth to seyn,  
Whan that myn herte was come ageyn,  
To telle shortly al my speche,  
With hool herte I gan hir beseche  
That she wolde be my lady swete;  
And swor, and gan hir hertely hete  
Ever to be stedfast and trewe,  
And love hir alwey freshly newe,  
And never other lady have,  
And al hir worship for to save  
As I best coude; I swor hir this --  
'For youres is al that ever ther is  
For evermore, myn herte swete!  
And never false yow, but I mete,  
I nil, as wis god helpe me so!'

    `And whan I had my tale y-do,  
God wot, she acounted nat a stree  
Of al my tale, so thoghte me.  
To telle shortly as hit is,  
Trewly hir answe, hit was this;  
I can not now wel counterfete  
Hir wordes, but this was the grete  
Of hir answe: she sayde, 'nay'  
Al-outerly. Allas! that day  
The sorwe I suffred, and the wo!  
That trewly Cassandra, that so  
Bewayled the destruccioun.  
Of Troye and of Ilioun,  
Had never swich sorwe as I tho.  
I durste no more say therto  
For pure fere, but stal away;  
And thus I lived ful many a day;

That trewely, I hadde no need  
 Ferther than my beddes heed  
 Never a day to seche sorwe;  
 I fond hit redy every morwe,  
 For-why I loved hir in no gere.  
 ` So hit befel, another yere,  
 I thoughte ones I wolde fonde  
 To do hir knowe and understonde  
 My wo; and she wel understood  
 That I ne wilned thing but good,  
 And worship, and to kepe hir name  
 Over al thing, and drede hir shame,  
 And was so besy hir to serve; --  
 And pite were I shulde sterve,  
 Sith that I wilned noon harm, y-wis.  
 So whan my lady knew al this,  
 My lady yaf me al hoolly  
 The noble yift of hir mercy,  
 Saving hir worship, by al weyes;  
 Dredles, I mene noon other weyes.  
 And therwith she yaf me a ring;  
 I trowe hit was the firste thing;  
 But if myn herte was y-waxe  
 Glad, that is no need to axe!  
 As helpe me god, I was as blyve,  
 Reysed, as fro dethe to lyve,  
 Of alle happes the alder-beste,  
 The gladdest and the moste at reste.  
 For trewely, that swete wight,  
 Whan I had wrong and she the right,  
 She wolde alway so goodely  
 For-yeve me so debonairly.  
 In alle my youthe, in alle chauce,  
 She took me in hir governaunce.  
 ` Therwith she was alway so trewe,  
 Our Ioye was ever y-liche newe;  
 Our hertes wern so even a payre,  
 That never nas that oon contrayre  
 To that other, for no wo.  
 For sothe, y-liche they suffred tho  
 Oo blisse and eek oo sorwe bothe;  
 Y-liche they were bothe gladde and wrothe;

Al was us oon, withoute were.

And thus we lived ful many a yere

So wel, I can nat telle how.'

`Sir,' quod I, `where is she now?'

`Now!' quod he, and stinte anoon.

Therwith he wex as deed as stoon,

And seyde, `allas! that I was bore,

That was the los, that her-before

I tolde thee, that I had lorn.

Bethenk how I seyde her-beforn,

'Thou wost ful litel what thou menest;

I have lost more than thou wenest' --

God wot, allas! right that was she!'

`Allas! sir, how? what may that be?'

`She is deed!' `Nay!' `Yis, by my trouthe!'

`Is that your los? By god, hit is routhe!'

And with that worde, right anoon,

They gan to strake forth; al was doon,

For that tyme, the hert-hunting.

With that, me thoghte, that this king

Gan quickly hoomward for to ryde

Unto a place ther besyde,

Which was from us but a lyte,

A long castel with walles whyte,

Be seynt Iohan! on a riche hil,

As me mette; but thus it fil.

Right thus me mette, as I yow telle,

That in the castel was a belle,

As hit had smiten houres twelve. --

Therwith I awook my-selve,

And fond me lying in my bed;

And the book that I had red,

Of Alcyone and Seys the king,

And of the goddes of sleping,

I fond it in myn honde ful even.

Thoghte I, `this is so queynt a sweven,

That I wol, be processe of tyme,

Fonde to putte this sweven in ryme

As I can best'; and that anoon. --

This was my sweven; now hit is doon.

Explicit the Boke of the Duchesse.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Canterbury Tales, The Knight's Tale, Book I [Excerpt]

In days of old there lived, of mighty fame,  
A valiant Prince, and Theseus was his name;  
A chief, who more in feats of arms excelled,  
The rising nor the setting sun beheld.  
Of Athens he was lord; much land he won,  
And added foreign countries to his crown.  
In Scythia with the warrior Queen he strove,  
Whom first by force he conquered, then by love;  
He brought in triumph back the beauteous dame,  
With whom her sister, fair Emilia, came.  
With honour to his home let Theseus ride,  
With Love to friend, and Fortune for his guide,  
And his victorious army at his side.  
I pass their warlike pomp, their proud array,  
Their shouts, their songs, their welcome on the way;  
But, were it not too long, I would recite  
The feats of Amazons, the fatal fight  
Betwixt the hardy Queen and hero Knight;  
The town besieged, and how much blood it cost  
The female army, and the Athenian host;  
The spousals of Hippolyta the Queen;  
What tilts and turneys at the feast were seen;  
The storm at their return, the ladies' fear:  
But these and other things I must forbear.

The field is spacious I design to sow  
With oxen far unfit to draw the plough:  
The remnant of my tale is of a length  
To tire your patience, and to waste my strength;  
And trivial accidents shall be forborn,  
That others may have time to take their turn,  
As was at first enjoined us by mine host,  
That he, whose tale is best and pleases most,  
Should win his supper at our common cost.  
And therefore where I left, I will pursue  
This ancient story, whether false or true,  
In hope it may be mended with a new.  
The Prince I mentioned, full of high renown,  
In this array drew near the Athenian town;

When, in his pomp and utmost of his pride  
 Marching, he chanced to cast his eye aside,  
 And saw a quire of mourning dames, who lay  
 By two and two across the common way:  
 At his approach they raised a rueful cry,  
 And beat their breasts, and held their hands on high,  
 Creeping and crying, till they seized at last  
 His courser's bridle and his feet embraced.  
 'Tell me,' said Theseus, 'what and whence you are,  
 And why this funeral pageant you prepare?  
 Is this the welcome of my worthy deeds,  
 To meet my triumph in ill-omened weeds?  
 Or envy you my praise, and would destroy  
 With grief my pleasures, and pollute my joy?  
 Or are you injured, and demand relief?  
 Name your request, and I will ease your grief.'  
 The most in years of all the mourning train  
 Began; but swounded first away for pain;  
 Then scarce recovered spoke: 'Nor envy we  
 Thy great renown, nor grudge thy victory;  
 'Tis thine, O King, the afflicted to redress,  
 And fame has filled the world with thy success:  
 We wretched women sue for that alone,  
 Which of thy goodness is refused to none;  
 Let fall some drops of pity on our grief,  
 If what we beg be just, and we deserve relief;  
 For none of us, who now thy grace implore,  
 But held the rank of sovereign queen before;  
 Till, thanks to giddy Chance, which never bears  
 That mortal bliss should last for length of years,  
 She cast us headlong from our high estate,  
 And here in hope of thy return we wait,  
 And long have waited in the temple nigh,  
 Built to the gracious goddess Clemency.  
 But reverence thou the power whose name it bears,  
 Relieve the oppressed, and wipe the widows' tears.  
 I, wretched I, have other fortune seen,  
 The wife of Capaneus, and once a Queen;  
 At Thebes he fell; cursed be the fatal day!  
 And all the rest thou seest in this array  
 To make their moan their lords in battle lost,  
 Before that town besieged by our confederate host.

But Creon, old and impious, who commands  
The Theban city, and usurps the lands,  
Denies the rites of funeral fires to those  
Whose breathless bodies yet he calls his foes.  
Unburned, unburied, on a heap they lie;  
Such is their fate, and such his tyranny;  
No friend has leave to bear away the dead,  
But with their lifeless limbs his hounds are fed.&quot;  
At this she shrieked aloud; the mournful train  
Echoed her grief, and grovelling on the plain,  
With groans, and hands upheld, to move his mind,  
Besought his pity to their helpless kind.

The Prince was touched, his tears began to flow,  
And, as his tender heart would break in two,  
He sighed; and could not but their fate deplore,  
So wretched now, so fortunate before.  
Then lightly from his lofty steed he flew,  
And raising one by one the suppliant crew,  
To comfort each, full solemnly he swore,  
That by the faith which knights to knighthood bore,  
And whate'er else to chivalry belongs,  
He would not cease, till he revenged their wrongs;  
That Greece should see performed what he declared,  
And cruel Creon find his just reward.  
He said no more, but shunning all delay  
Rode on, nor entered Athens on his way;  
But left his sister and his queen behind,  
And waved his royal banner in the wind,  
Where in an argent field the God of War  
Was drawn triumphant on his iron car.  
Red was his sword, and shield, and whole attire,  
And all the godhead seemed to glow with fire;  
Even the ground glittered where the standard flew,  
And the green grass was dyed to sanguine hue.  
High on his pointed lance his pennon bore  
His Cretan fight, the conquered Minotaur:  
The soldiers shout around with generous rage,  
And in that victory their own presage.  
He praised their ardour, inly pleased to see  
His host, the flower of Grecian chivalry.  
All day he marched, and all the ensuing night,



And saw the city with returning light.  
The process of the war I need not tell,  
How Theseus conquered, and how Creon fell;  
Or after, how by storm the walls were won,  
Or how the victor sacked and burned the town;  
How to the ladies he restored again  
The bodies of their lords in battle slain;  
And with what ancient rites they were interred;  
All these to fitter time shall be deferred:  
I spare the widows' tears, their woful cries,  
And howling at their husbands' obsequies;  
How Theseus at these funerals did assist,  
And with what gifts the mourning dames dismissed.

Thus when the victor chief had Creon slain,  
And conquered Thebes, he pitched upon the plain  
His mighty camp, and when the day returned,  
The country wasted and the hamlets burned,  
And left the pillagers, to rapine bred,  
Without control to strip and spoil the dead.

There, in a heap of slain, among the rest  
Two youthful knights they found beneath a load oppressed  
Of slaughtered foes, whom first to death they sent,  
The trophies of their strength, a bloody monument.  
Both fair, and both of royal blood they seemed,  
Whom kinsmen to the crown the heralds deemed;  
That day in equal arms they fought for fame;  
Their swords, their shields, their surcoats were the same:  
Close by each other laid they pressed the ground,  
Their manly bosoms pierced with many a grisly wound;  
Nor well alive nor wholly dead they were,  
But some faint signs of feeble life appear;  
The wandering breath was on the wing to part,  
Weak was the pulse, and hardly heaved the heart.  
These two were sisters' sons; and Arcite one,  
Much famed in fields, with valiant Palamon.  
From these their costly arms the spoilers rent,  
And softly both conveyed to Theseus' tent:  
Whom, known of Creon's line and cured with care,  
He to his city sent as prisoners of the war;  
Hopeless of ransom, and condemned to lie

In durance, doomed a lingering death to die.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Chaucer's Prophecy

When priestes failen in their saws,  
And lordes turne Godde's laws  
Against the right;  
And lechery is holden as privy solace,  
And robbery as free purchase,  
Beware then of ill!  
Then shall the Land of Albion  
Turne to confusion,  
As sometime it befell.

Ora pro Anglia Sancta Maria, quod Thomas Cantuarua.

Sweet Jesus, heaven's King,  
Fair and best of all thing,  
You bring us out of this mourning,  
To come to thee at our ending!

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Chaucer's Tale Of Meliboeus

'No more of this, for Godde's dignity!  
Quoth oure Hoste; 'for thou makest me  
So weary of thy very lewedness,\*      \*stupidity, ignorance &1>  
That, all so wisly\* God my soule bless,      \*surely  
Mine eares ache for thy drafty\* speech.      \*worthless &2>  
Now such a rhyme the devil I beteche:\*      \*commend to  
This may well be rhyme doggerel,' quoth he.  
'Why so?' quoth I; 'why wilt thou lette\* me      \*prevent  
More of my tale than any other man,  
Since that it is the best rhyme that I can? '\*      \*know  
'By God!' quoth he, 'for, plainly at one word,  
Thy drafty rhyming is not worth a tord:  
Thou dost naught elles but dispendest\* time.      \*wastest  
Sir, at one word, thou shalt no longer rhyme.  
Let see whether thou canst tellen aught \*in gest,\*      \*by way of  
Or tell in prose somewhat, at the least, narrative\*  
In which there be some mirth or some doctrine.'  
'Gladly,' quoth I, 'by Godde's sweete pine,\*      \*suffering  
I will you tell a little thing in prose,  
That oughte like\* you, as I suppose,      \*please  
Or else certes ye be too dangerous.\*      \*fastidious  
It is a moral tale virtuous,  
\*All be it\* told sometimes in sundry wise      \*although it be\*  
By sundry folk, as I shall you devise.  
As thus, ye wot that ev'ry Evangelist,  
That telleth us the pain\* of Jesus Christ,      \*passion  
He saith not all thing as his fellow doth;  
But natheless their sentence is all soth,\*      \*true  
And all accorden as in their sentence,\*      \*meaning  
All be there in their telling difference;  
For some of them say more, and some say less,  
When they his piteous passion express;  
I mean of Mark and Matthew, Luke and John;  
But doubteless their sentence is all one.  
Therefore, lordinges all, I you beseech,  
If that ye think I vary in my speech,  
As thus, though that I telle somedeal more  
Of proverbes, than ye have heard before  
Comprehended in this little treatise here,

\*T'enforce with\* the effect of my mattere,                      \*with which to  
 And though I not the same wordes say enforce\*  
 As ye have heard, yet to you all I pray  
 Blame me not; for as in my sentence  
 Shall ye nowhere finde no difference  
 From the sentence of thilke\* treatise lite,\*\*                      \*this \*\*little  
 After the which this merry tale I write.  
 And therefore hearken to what I shall say,  
 And let me tellen all my tale, I pray.'

A young man called Meliboeus, mighty and rich, begat upon his wife, that called was Prudence, a daughter which that called was Sophia. Upon a day befell, that he for his disport went into the fields him to play. His wife and eke his daughter hath he left within his house, of which the doors were fast shut. Three of his old foes have it espied, and set ladders to the walls of his house, and by the windows be entered, and beaten his wife, and wounded his daughter with five mortal wounds, in five sundry places; that is to say, in her feet, in her hands, in her ears, in her nose, and in her mouth; and left her for dead, and went away. When Meliboeus returned was into his house, and saw all this mischief, he, like a man mad, rending his clothes, gan weep and cry. Prudence his wife, as farforth as she durst, besought him of his weeping for to stint: but not forthy [notwithstanding] he gan to weep and cry ever longer the more.

This noble wife Prudence remembered her upon the sentence of Ovid, in his book that called is the 'Remedy of Love,' & where he saith: He is a fool that disturbeth the mother to weep in the death of her child, till she have wept her fill, as for a certain time; and then shall a man do his diligence with amiable words her to recomfort and pray her of her weeping for to stint [cease]. For which reason this noble wife Prudence suffered her husband for to weep and cry, as for a certain space; and when she saw her time, she said to him in this wise: 'Alas! my lord,' quoth she, 'why make ye yourself for to be like a fool? For sooth it appertaineth not to a wise man to make such a sorrow. Your daughter, with the grace of God, shall warish [be cured] and escape. And all [although] were it so that she right now were dead, ye ought not for her death yourself to destroy. Seneca saith, 'The wise man shall not take too great discomfort

for the death of his children, but certes he should suffer it in patience, as well as he abideth the death of his own proper person."

Meliboeus answered anon and said: 'What man,' quoth he, 'should of his weeping stint, that hath so great a cause to weep? Jesus Christ, our Lord, himself wept for the death of Lazarus his friend.' Prudence answered, 'Certes, well I wot, attempered [moderate] weeping is nothing defended [forbidden] to him that sorrowful is, among folk in sorrow but it is rather granted him to weep. The Apostle Paul unto the Romans writeth, 'Man shall rejoice with them that make joy, and weep with such folk as weep.' But though temperate weeping be granted, outrageous weeping certes is defended. Measure of weeping should be conserved, after the lore [doctrine] that teacheth us Seneca. 'When that thy friend is dead,' quoth he, 'let not thine eyes too moist be of tears, nor too much dry: although the tears come to thine eyes, let them not fall. And when thou hast forgone [lost] thy friend, do diligence to get again another friend: and this is more wisdom than to weep for thy friend which that thou hast lorn [lost] for therein is no boot [advantage]. And therefore if ye govern you by sapience, put away sorrow out of your heart. Remember you that Jesus Sirach saith, 'A man that is joyous and glad in heart, it him conserveth flourishing in his age: but soothly a sorrowful heart maketh his bones dry.' He said eke thus, 'that sorrow in heart slayth full many a man.' Solomon saith 'that right as moths in the sheep's fleece annoy [do injury] to the clothes, and the small worms to the tree, right so annoyeth sorrow to the heart of man.' Wherefore us ought as well in the death of our children, as in the loss of our goods temporal, have patience. Remember you upon the patient Job, when he had lost his children and his temporal substance, and in his body endured and received full many a grievous tribulation, yet said he thus: 'Our Lord hath given it to me, our Lord hath bereft it me; right as our Lord would, right so be it done; blessed be the name of our Lord.'"

To these foresaid things answered Meliboeus unto his wife Prudence: 'All thy words,' quoth he, 'be true, and thereto [also] profitable, but truly mine heart is troubled with this sorrow so grievously, that I know not what to do.' 'Let call,' quoth Prudence, 'thy true friends all, and thy lineage, which be

wise, and tell to them your case, and hearken what they say in counselling, and govern you after their sentence [opinion]. Solomon saith, 'Work all things by counsel, and thou shall never repent.' Then, by counsel of his wife Prudence, this Meliboeus let call [sent for] a great congregation of folk, as surgeons, physicians, old folk and young, and some of his old enemies reconciled (as by their semblance) to his love and to his grace; and therewithal there come some of his neighbours, that did him reverence more for dread than for love, as happeneth oft. There come also full many subtle flatterers, and wise advocates learned in the law. And when these folk together assembled were, this Meliboeus in sorrowful wise showed them his case, and by the manner of his speech it seemed that in heart he bare a cruel ire, ready to do vengeance upon his foes, and suddenly desired that the war should begin, but nevertheless yet asked he their counsel in this matter. A surgeon, by licence and assent of such as were wise, up rose, and to Meliboeus said as ye may hear. 'Sir,' quoth he, 'as to us surgeons appertaineth, that we do to every wight the best that we can, where as we be withholden, [employed] and to our patient that we do no damage; wherefore it happeneth many a time and oft, that when two men have wounded each other, one same surgeon healeth them both; wherefore unto our art it is not pertinent to nurse war, nor parties to support [take sides]. But certes, as to the warishing [healing] of your daughter, albeit so that perilously she be wounded, we shall do so attentive business from day to night, that, with the grace of God, she shall be whole and sound, as soon as is possible.' Almost right in the same wise the physicians answered, save that they said a few words more: that right as maladies be cured by their contraries, right so shall man warish war (by peace). His neighbours full of envy, his feigned friends that seemed reconciled, and his flatterers, made semblance of weeping, and impaired and aggregated [aggravated] much of this matter, in praising greatly Meliboeus of might, of power, of riches, and of friends, despising the power of his adversaries: and said utterly, that he anon should wreak him on his foes, and begin war.

Up rose then an advocate that was wise, by leave and by counsel of other that were wise, and said, 'Lordings, the need [business] for which we be assembled in this place, is a full heavy thing, and an high matter, because of the wrong and of

the wickedness that hath been done, and eke by reason of the great damages that in time coming be possible to fall for the same cause, and eke by reason of the great riches and power of the parties both; for which reasons, it were a full great peril to err in this matter. Wherefore, Meliboeus, this is our sentence [opinion]; we counsel you, above all things, that right anon thou do thy diligence in keeping of thy body, in such a wise that thou want no espy nor watch thy body to save. And after that, we counsel that in thine house thou set sufficient garrison, so that they may as well thy body as thy house defend. But, certes, to move war or suddenly to do vengeance, we may not deem [judge] in so little time that it were profitable. Wherefore we ask leisure and space to have deliberation in this case to deem; for the common proverb saith thus; 'He that soon deemeth soon shall repent.' And eke men say, that that judge is wise, that soon understandeth a matter, and judgeth by leisure. For albeit so that all tarrying be annoying, algates [nevertheless] it is no reproof [subject for reproach] in giving of judgement, nor in vengeance taking, when it is sufficient and, reasonable. And that shewed our Lord Jesus Christ by example; for when that the woman that was taken in adultery was brought in his presence to know what should be done with her person, albeit that he wist well himself what he would answer, yet would he not answer suddenly, but he would have deliberation, and in the ground he wrote twice. And by these causes we ask deliberation and we shall then by the grace of God counsel the thing that shall be profitable.'

Up started then the young folk anon at once, and the most part of that company have scorned these old wise men and begun to make noise and said, 'Right as while that iron is hot men should smite, right so men should wreak their wrongs while that they be fresh and new:' and with loud voice they cried. 'War! War!' Up rose then one of these old wise, and with his hand made countenance [a sign, gesture] that men should hold them still, and give him audience. 'Lordings,' quoth he, 'there is full many a man that crieth, 'War! war!' that wot full little what war amounteth. War at his beginning hath so great an entering and so large, that every wight may enter when him liketh, and lightly [easily] find war: but certes what end shall fall thereof it is not light to know. For soothly when war is once begun, there is full many a child unborn of his mother, that shall sterve [die] young



by cause of that war, or else live in sorrow and die in wretchedness; and therefore, ere that any war be begun, men must have great counsel and great deliberation.' And when this old man weened [thought, intended] to enforce his tale by reasons, well-nigh all at once began they to rise for to break his tale, and bid him full oft his words abridge. For soothly he that preacheth to them that list not hear his words, his sermon them annoyeth. For Jesus Sirach saith, that music in weeping is a noyous [troublesome] thing. This is to say, as much availeth to speak before folk to whom his speech annoyeth, as to sing before him that weepeth. And when this wise man saw that him wanted audience, all shamefast he sat him down again. For Solomon saith, 'Where as thou mayest have no audience, enforce thee not to speak.' 'I see well,' quoth this wise man, 'that the common proverb is sooth, that good counsel wanteth, when it is most need.' Yet [besides, further] had this Meliboeus in his council many folk, that privily in his ear counselled him certain thing, and counselled him the contrary in general audience. When Meliboeus had heard that the greatest part of his council were accorded [in agreement] that he should make war, anon he consented to their counselling, and fully affirmed their sentence [opinion, judgement].

(Dame Prudence, seeing her husband's resolution thus taken, in full humble wise, when she saw her time, begins to counsel him against war, by a warning against haste in requital of either good or evil. Meliboeus tells her that he will not work by her counsel, because he should be held a fool if he rejected for her advice the opinion of so many wise men; because all women are bad; because it would seem that he had given her the mastery over him; and because she could not keep his secret, if he resolved to follow her advice. To these reasons Prudence answers that it is no folly to change counsel when things, or men's judgements of them, change - especially to alter a resolution taken on the impulse of a great multitude of folk, where every man crieth and clattereth what him liketh; that if all women had been wicked, Jesus Christ would never have descended to be born of a woman, nor have showed himself first to a woman after his resurrection and that when Solomon said he had found no good woman, he meant that God alone was supremely good; &lt;3&gt; that her husband would not seem to give her the mastery by following her counsel, for he had his

own free choice in following or rejecting it; and that he knew well and had often tested her great silence, patience, and secrecy. And whereas he had quoted a saying, that in wicked counsel women vanquish men, she reminds him that she would counsel him against doing a wickedness on which he had set his mind, and cites instances to show that many women have been and yet are full good, and their counsel wholesome and profitable. Lastly, she quotes the words of God himself, when he was about to make woman as an help meet for man; and promises that, if her husband will trust her counsel, she will restore to him his daughter whole and sound, and make him have honour in this case. Meliboeus answers that because of his wife's sweet words, and also because he has proved and assayed her great wisdom and her great truth, he will govern him by her counsel in all things. Thus encouraged, Prudence enters on a long discourse, full of learned citations, regarding the manner in which counsellors should be chosen and consulted, and the times and reasons for changing a counsel. First, God must be besought for guidance. Then a man must well examine his own thoughts, of such things as he holds to be best for his own profit; driving out of his heart anger, covetousness, and hastiness, which perturb and pervert the judgement. Then he must keep his counsel secret, unless confiding it to another shall be more profitable; but, in so confiding it, he shall say nothing to bias the mind of the counsellor toward flattery or subserviency. After that he should consider his friends and his enemies, choosing of the former such as be most faithful and wise, and eldest and most approved in counselling; and even of these only a few. Then he must eschew the counselling of fools, of flatterers, of his old enemies that be reconciled, of servants who bear him great reverence and fear, of folk that be drunken and can hide no counsel, of such as counsel one thing privily and the contrary openly; and of young folk, for their counselling is not ripe. Then, in examining his counsel, he must truly tell his tale; he must consider whether the thing he proposes to do be reasonable, within his power, and acceptable to the more part and the better part of his counsellors; he must look at the things that may follow from that counselling, choosing the best and waiving all besides; he must consider the root whence the matter of his counsel is engendered, what fruits it may bear, and from what causes they be sprung. And having thus examined his counsel and approved it by many wise folk and

old, he shall consider if he may perform it and make of it a good end; if he be in doubt, he shall choose rather to suffer than to begin; but otherwise he shall prosecute his resolution steadfastly till the enterprise be at an end. As to changing his counsel, a man may do so without reproach, if the cause cease, or when a new case betides, or if he find that by error or otherwise harm or damage may result, or if his counsel be dishonest or come of dishonest cause, or if it be impossible or may not properly be kept; and he must take it for a general rule, that every counsel which is affirmed so strongly, that it may not be changed for any condition that may betide, that counsel is wicked.

Meliboeus, admitting that his wife had spoken well and suitably as to counsellors and counsel in general, prays her to tell him in especial what she thinks of the counsellors whom they have chosen in their present need. Prudence replies that his counsel in this case could not properly be called a counselling, but a movement of folly; and points out that he has erred in sundry wise against the rules which he had just laid down. Granting that he has erred, Meliboeus says that he is all ready to change his counsel right as she will devise; for, as the proverb runs, to do sin is human, but to persevere long in sin is work of the Devil. Prudence then minutely recites, analyses, and criticises the counsel given to her husband in the assembly of his friends. She commends the advice of the physicians and surgeons, and urges that they should be well rewarded for their noble speech and their services in healing Sophia; and she asks Meliboeus how he understands their proposition that one contrary must be cured by another contrary. Meliboeus answers, that he should do vengeance on his enemies, who had done him wrong. Prudence, however, insists that vengeance is not the contrary of vengeance, nor wrong of wrong, but the like; and that wickedness should be healed by goodness, discord by accord, war by peace. She proceeds to deal with the counsel of the lawyers and wise folk that advised Meliboeus to take prudent measures for the security of his body and of his house. First, she would have her husband pray for the protection and aid of Christ; then commit the keeping of his person to his true friends; then suspect and avoid all strange folk, and liars, and such people as she had already warned him against; then beware of presuming on his strength, or the weakness of his adversary, and neglecting to guard his person - for every wise man dreadeth his enemy; then he should evermore be on the watch

against ambush and all espial, even in what seems a place of safety; though he should not be so cowardly, as to fear where is no cause for dread; yet he should dread to be poisoned, and therefore shun scorners, and fly their words as venom. As to the fortification of his house, she points out that towers and great edifices are costly and laborious, yet useless unless defended by true friends that be old and wise; and the greatest and strongest garrison that a rich man may have, as well to keep his person as his goods, is, that he be beloved by his subjects and by his neighbours. Warmly approving the counsel that in all this business Meliboeus should proceed with great diligence and deliberation, Prudence goes on to examine the advice given by his neighbours that do him reverence without love, his old enemies reconciled, his flatterers that counselled him certain things privily and openly counselled him the contrary, and the young folk that counselled him to avenge himself and make war at once. She reminds him that he stands alone against three powerful enemies, whose kindred are numerous and close, while his are fewer and remote in relationship; that only the judge who has jurisdiction in a case may take sudden vengeance on any man; that her husband's power does not accord with his desire; and that, if he did take vengeance, it would only breed fresh wrongs and contests. As to the causes of the wrong done to him, she holds that God, the causer of all things, has permitted him to suffer because he has drunk so much honey & of sweet temporal riches, and delights, and honours of this world, that he is drunken, and has forgotten Jesus Christ his Saviour; the three enemies of mankind, the flesh, the fiend, and the world, have entered his heart by the windows of his body, and wounded his soul in five places - that is to say, the deadly sins that have entered into his heart by the five senses; and in the same manner Christ has suffered his three enemies to enter his house by the windows, and wound his daughter in the five places before specified. Meliboeus demurs, that if his wife's objections prevailed, vengeance would never be taken, and thence great mischiefs would arise; but Prudence replies that the taking of vengeance lies with the judges, to whom the private individual must have recourse. Meliboeus declares that such vengeance does not please him, and that, as Fortune has nourished and helped him from his childhood, he will now assay her, trusting, with God's help, that she will aid him to avenge his shame. Prudence warns him against trusting to Fortune, all the

less because she has hitherto favoured him, for just on that account she is the more likely to fail him; and she calls on him to leave his vengeance with the Sovereign Judge, that avengeth all villainies and wrongs. Meliboeus argues that if he refrains from taking vengeance he will invite his enemies to do him further wrong, and he will be put and held over low; but Prudence contends that such a result can be brought about only by the neglect of the judges, not by the patience of the individual. Supposing that he had leave to avenge himself, she repeats that he is not strong enough, and quotes the common saw, that it is madness for a man to strive with a stronger than himself, peril to strive with one of equal strength, and folly to strive with a weaker. But, considering his own defaults and demerits, - remembering the patience of Christ and the undeserved tribulations of the saints, the brevity of this life with all its trouble and sorrow, the discredit thrown on the wisdom and training of a man who cannot bear wrong with patience - he should refrain wholly from taking vengeance. Meliboeus submits that he is not at all a perfect man, and his heart will never be at peace until he is avenged; and that as his enemies disregarded the peril when they attacked him, so he might, without reproach, incur some peril in attacking them in return, even though he did a great excess in avenging one wrong by another. Prudence strongly deprecates all outrage or excess; but Meliboeus insists that he cannot see that it might greatly harm him though he took a vengeance, for he is richer and mightier than his enemies, and all things obey money. Prudence thereupon launches into a long dissertation on the advantages of riches, the evils of poverty, the means by which wealth should be gathered, and the manner in which it should be used; and concludes by counselling her husband not to move war and battle through trust in his riches, for they suffice not to maintain war, the battle is not always to the strong or the numerous, and the perils of conflict are many. Meliboeus then curtly asks her for her counsel how he shall do in this need; and she answers that certainly she counsels him to agree with his adversaries and have peace with them. Meliboeus on this cries out that plainly she loves not his honour or his worship, in counselling him to go and humble himself before his enemies, crying mercy to them that, having done him so grievous wrong, ask him not to be reconciled. Then Prudence, making semblance of wrath, retorts that she loves his honour and profit as she loves her own, and

ever has done; she cites the Scriptures in support of her counsel to seek peace; and says she will leave him to his own courses, for she knows well he is so stubborn, that he will do nothing for her. Meliboeus then relents; admits that he is angry and cannot judge aright; and puts himself wholly in her hands, promising to do just as she desires, and admitting that he is the more held to love and praise her, if she reproveth him of his folly)

Then Dame Prudence discovered all her counsel and her will unto him, and said: 'I counsel you,' quoth she, 'above all things, that ye make peace between God and you, and be reconciled unto Him and to his grace; for, as I have said to you herebefore, God hath suffered you to have this tribulation and disease [distress, trouble] for your sins; and if ye do as I say you, God will send your adversaries unto you, and make them fall at your feet, ready to do your will and your commandment. For Solomon saith, 'When the condition of man is pleasant and liking to God, he changeth the hearts of the man's adversaries, and constraineth them to beseech him of peace of grace.' And I pray you let me speak with your adversaries in privy place, for they shall not know it is by your will or your assent; and then, when I know their will and their intent, I may counsel you the more surely.' "Dame,' quoth Meliboeus, "do your will and your liking, for I put me wholly in your disposition and ordinance.'

Then Dame Prudence, when she saw the goodwill of her husband, deliberated and took advice in herself, thinking how she might bring this need [affair, emergency] unto a good end. And when she saw her time, she sent for these adversaries to come into her into a privy place, and showed wisely unto them the great goods that come of peace, and the great harms and perils that be in war; and said to them, in goodly manner, how that they ought have great repentance of the injuries and wrongs that they had done to Meliboeus her Lord, and unto her and her daughter. And when they heard the goodly words of Dame Prudence, then they were surprised and ravished, and had so great joy of her, that wonder was to tell. 'Ah lady!' quoth they, 'ye have showed unto us the blessing of sweetness, after the saying of David the prophet; for the reconciling which we be not worthy to have in no manner, but we ought require it with great contrition and humility, ye of your great goodness

have presented unto us. Now see we well, that the science and conning [knowledge] of Solomon is full true; for he saith, that sweet words multiply and increase friends, and make shrews [the ill-natured or angry] to be debonair [gentle, courteous] and meek. Certes we put our deed, and all our matter and cause, all wholly in your goodwill, and be ready to obey unto the speech and commandment of my lord Meliboeus. And therefore, dear and benign lady, we pray you and beseech you as meekly as we can and may, that it like unto your great goodness to fulfil in deed your goodly words. For we consider and acknowledge that we have offended and grieved my lord Meliboeus out of measure, so far forth that we be not of power to make him amends; and therefore we oblige and bind us and our friends to do all his will and his commandment. But peradventure he hath such heaviness and such wrath to usward, [towards us] because of our offence, that he will enjoin us such a pain [penalty] as we may not bear nor sustain; and therefore, noble lady, we beseech to your womanly pity to take such advisement [consideration] in this need, that we, nor our friends, be not disinherited and destroyed through our folly.'

'Certes,' quoth Prudence, 'it is an hard thing, and right perilous, that a man put him all utterly in the arbitration and judgement and in the might and power of his enemy. For Solomon saith, 'Believe me, and give credence to that that I shall say: to thy son, to thy wife, to thy friend, nor to thy brother, give thou never might nor mastery over thy body, while thou livest.' Now, since he defendeth [forbiddeth] that a man should not give to his brother, nor to his friend, the might of his body, by a stronger reason he defendeth and forbiddeth a man to give himself to his enemy. And nevertheless, I counsel you that ye mistrust not my lord: for I wot well and know verily, that he is debonair and meek, large, courteous and nothing desirous nor envious of good nor riches: for there is nothing in this world that he desireth save only worship and honour. Furthermore I know well, and am right sure, that he shall nothing do in this need without counsel of me; and I shall so work in this case, that by the grace of our Lord God ye shall be reconciled unto us.'

Then said they with one voice, "Worshipful lady, we put us and our goods all fully in your will and disposition, and be ready

to come, what day that it like unto your nobleness to limit us or assign us, for to make our obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto your goodness, that we may fulfil the will of you and of my lord Meliboeus.'

When Dame Prudence had heard the answer of these men, she bade them go again privily, and she returned to her lord Meliboeus, and told him how she found his adversaries full repentant, acknowledging full lowly their sins and trespasses, and how they were ready to suffer all pain, requiring and praying him of mercy and pity. Then said Meliboeus, 'He is well worthy to have pardon and forgiveness of his sin, that excuseth not his sin, but acknowledgeth, and repenteth him, asking indulgence. For Seneca saith, 'There is the remission and forgiveness, where the confession is; for confession is neighbour to innocence.' And therefore I assent and confirm me to have peace, but it is good that we do naught without the assent and will of our friends.' Then was Prudence right glad and joyful, and said, 'Certes, Sir, ye be well and goodly advised; for right as by the counsel, assent, and help of your friends ye have been stirred to avenge you and make war, right so without their counsel shall ye not accord you, nor have peace with your adversaries. For the law saith, 'There is nothing so good by way of kind, [nature] as a thing to be unbound by him that it was bound.'"

And then Dame Prudence, without delay or tarrying, sent anon her messengers for their kin and for their old friends, which were true and wise; and told them by order, in the presence of Meliboeus, all this matter, as it is above expressed and declared; and prayed them that they would give their advice and counsel what were best to do in this need. And when Meliboeus' friends had taken their advice and deliberation of the foresaid matter, and had examined it by great business and great diligence, they gave full counsel for to have peace and rest, and that Meliboeus should with good heart receive his adversaries to forgiveness and mercy. And when Dame Prudence had heard the assent of her lord Meliboeus, and the counsel of his friends, accord with her will and her intention, she was wondrous glad in her heart, and said: 'There is an old proverb that saith, 'The goodness that thou mayest do this day, do it, and abide not nor delay it not till to-morrow:' and therefore I counsel you that ye send your



messengers, such as be discreet and wise, unto your adversaries, telling them on your behalf, that if they will treat of peace and of accord, that they shape [prepare] them, without delay or tarrying, to come unto us.' Which thing performed was indeed. And when these trespassers and repenting folk of their follies, that is to say, the adversaries of Meliboeus, had heard what these messengers said unto them, they were right glad and joyful, and answered full meekly and benignly, yielding graces and thanks to their lord Meliboeus, and to all his company; and shaped them without delay to go with the messengers, and obey to the commandment of their lord Meliboeus. And right anon they took their way to the court of Meliboeus, and took with them some of their true friends, to make faith for them, and for to be their borrows [sureties].

And when they were come to the presence of Meliboeus, he said to them these words; 'It stands thus,' quoth Meliboeus, 'and sooth it is, that ye causeless, and without skill and reason, have done great injuries and wrongs to me, and to my wife Prudence, and to my daughter also; for ye have entered into my house by violence, and have done such outrage, that all men know well that ye have deserved the death: and therefore will I know and weet of you, whether ye will put the punishing and chastising, and the vengeance of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wife, or ye will not?' Then the wisest of them three answered for them all, and said; 'Sir,' quoth he, 'we know well, that we be I unworthy to come to the court of so great a lord and so worthy as ye be, for we have so greatly mistaken us, and have offended and aguilt [incurred guilt] in such wise against your high lordship, that truly we have deserved the death. But yet for the great goodness and debonaire [courtesy, gentleness] that all the world witnesseth of your person, we submit us to the excellence and benignity of your gracious lordship, and be ready to obey to all your commandments, beseeching you, that of your merciable [merciful] pity ye will consider our great repentance and low submission, and grant us forgiveness of our outrageous trespass and offence; for well we know, that your liberal grace and mercy stretch them farther into goodness, than do our outrageous guilt and trespass into wickedness; albeit that cursedly [wickedly] and damnably we have aguilt [incurred guilt] against your high lordship.' Then Meliboeus took them up from the ground full benignly, and received their obligations

and their bonds, by their oaths upon their pledges and borrows, [sureties] and assigned them a certain day to return unto his court for to receive and accept sentence and judgement, that Meliboeus would command to be done on them, by the causes aforesaid; which things ordained, every man returned home to his house.

And when that Dame Prudence saw her time she freined [inquired] and asked her lord Meliboeus, what vengeance he thought to take of his adversaries. To which Meliboeus answered, and said; 'Certes,' quoth he, 'I think and purpose me fully to disinherit them of all that ever they have, and for to put them in exile for evermore.' 'Certes,' quoth Dame Prudence, 'this were a cruel sentence, and much against reason. For ye be rich enough, and have no need of other men's goods; and ye might lightly [easily] in this wise get you a covetous name, which is a vicious thing, and ought to be eschewed of every good man: for, after the saying of the Apostle, covetousness is root of all harms. And therefore it were better for you to lose much good of your own, than for to take of their good in this manner. For better it is to lose good with worship [honour], than to win good with villainy and shame. And every man ought to do his diligence and his business to get him a good name. And yet [further] shall he not only busy him in keeping his good name, but he shall also enforce him alway to do some thing by which he may renew his good name; for it is written, that the old good los [reputation &5&gt;] of a man is soon gone and passed, when it is not renewed. And as touching that ye say, that ye will exile your adversaries, that thinketh ye much against reason, and out of measure, [moderation] considered the power that they have given you upon themselves. And it is written, that he is worthy to lose his privilege, that misuseth the might and the power that is given him. And I set case [if I assume] ye might enjoin them that pain by right and by law (which I trow ye may not do), I say, ye might not put it to execution peradventure, and then it were like to return to the war, as it was before. And therefore if ye will that men do you obeisance, ye must deem [decide] more courteously, that is to say, ye must give more easy sentences and judgements. For it is written, 'He that most courteously commandeth, to him men most obey.' And therefore I pray you, that in this necessity and in this need ye cast you [endeavour, devise a way] to overcome your heart.

For Seneca saith, that he that overcometh his heart, overcometh twice. And Tullius saith, 'There is nothing so commendable in a great lord, as when he is debonair and meek, and appeaseth him lightly [easily].' And I pray you, that ye will now forbear to do vengeance, in such a manner, that your good name may be kept and conserved, and that men may have cause and matter to praise you of pity and of mercy; and that ye have no cause to repent you of thing that ye do. For Seneca saith, 'He overcometh in an evil manner, that repenteth him of his victory.' Wherefore I pray you let mercy be in your heart, to the effect and intent that God Almighty have mercy upon you in his last judgement; for Saint James saith in his Epistle, 'Judgement without mercy shall be done to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.'

When Meliboeus had heard the great skills [arguments, reasons] and reasons of Dame Prudence, and her wise information and teaching, his heart gan incline to the will of his wife, considering her true intent, he conformed him anon and assented fully to work after her counsel, and thanked God, of whom proceedeth all goodness and all virtue, that him sent a wife of so great discretion. And when the day came that his adversaries should appear in his presence, he spake to them full goodly, and said in this wise; 'Albeit so, that of your pride and high presumption and folly, an of your negligence and unconning, [ignorance] ye have misborne [misbehaved] you, and trespassed [done injury] unto me, yet forasmuch as I see and behold your great humility, and that ye be sorry and repentant of your guilts, it constraineth me to do you grace and mercy. Wherefore I receive you into my grace, and forgive you utterly all the offences, injuries, and wrongs, that ye have done against me and mine, to this effect and to this end, that God of his endless mercy will at the time of our dying forgive us our guilts, that we have trespassed to him in this wretched world; for doubtless, if we be sorry and repentant of the sins and guilts which we have trespassed in the sight of our Lord God, he is so free and so merciable [merciful], that he will forgive us our guilts, and bring us to the bliss that never hath end.' Amen.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Chaucer's Tale Of Sir Thopas

WHEN said was this miracle, every man  
 As sober\* was, that wonder was to see,                     \*serious  
 Till that our Host to jopen\* he began,                     \*talk lightly  
 And then \*at erst\* he looked upon me,                    \*for the first time\*  
 And saide thus; 'What man art thou?' quoth he;  
 'Thou lookest as thou wouldest find an hare,  
 For ever on the ground I see thee stare.

'Approache near, and look up merrily.  
 Now ware you, Sirs, and let this man have place.  
 He in the waist is shapen as well as I; &2>  
 This were a puppet in an arm t'embrace  
 For any woman small and fair of face.  
 He seemeth elvish\* by his countenance,                    \*surly, morose  
 For unto no wight doth he dalliance.

'Say now somewhat, since other folk have said;  
 Tell us a tale of mirth, and that anon.'  
 'Hoste,' quoth I, 'be not evil apaid,\*                    \*dissatisfied  
 For other tale certes can\* I none,                         \*know  
 Eut of a rhyme I learned yore\* agone.'                    \*long  
 'Yea, that is good,' quoth he; 'now shall we hear  
 Some dainty thing, me thinketh by thy cheer.'

THE TALE &1>

The First Fit\*   \*part  
  
 Listen, lordings, in good intent,  
 And I will tell you verrament\*                             \*truly  
 Of mirth and of solas,\*                                     \*delight, solace  
 All of a knight was fair and gent,\*                     \*gentle  
 In battle and in tournament,  
 His name was Sir Thopas.

Y-born he was in far country,  
 In Flanders, all beyond the sea,  
 At Popering &2> in the place;

His father was a man full free,  
And lord he was of that country,  
As it was Godde's grace. &lt;3&gt;

Sir Thopas was a doughty swain,  
White was his face as paindemain, &lt;4&gt;  
His lippes red as rose.

His rode\* is like scarlet in grain,  
And I you tell in good certain  
He had a seemly nose.

\*complexion

His hair, his beard, was like saffroun,  
That to his girdle reach'd adown,  
His shoes of cordewane:&lt;5&gt;  
Of Bruges were his hosen brown;  
His robe was of ciclatoun,&lt;6&gt;  
That coste many a jane.&lt;7&gt;

He coulde hunt at the wild deer,  
And ride on hawking \*for rivere\*  
With gray goshawk on hand: &lt;8&gt;  
Thereto he was a good archere,  
Of wrestling was there none his peer,  
Where any ram &lt;9&gt; should stand.

\*by the river\*

Full many a maiden bright in bow'r  
They mourned for him par amour,  
When them were better sleep;  
But he was chaste, and no lechour,  
And sweet as is the bramble flow'r  
That beareth the red heep.\*

\*hip

And so it fell upon a day,  
For sooth as I you telle may,  
Sir Thopas would out ride;  
He worth\* upon his steede gray,  
And in his hand a launcegay,\*  
A long sword by his side.

\*mounted  
\*spear &lt;10&gt;

He pricked through a fair forest,  
Wherein is many a wilde beast,  
Yea, bothe buck and hare;

And as he pricked north and east,  
I tell it you, him had almost  
Betid\* a sorry care.

\*almost  
\*befallen

There sprange herbes great and small,  
The liquorice and the setewall,\*  
And many a clove-gilofre, &12&gt;  
And nutemeg to put in ale,  
Whether it be moist\* or stale,  
Or for to lay in coffer.

\*valerian

\*new

The birdes sang, it is no nay,  
The sperhawk\* and the popinjay,\*\*  
That joy it was to hear;  
The throstle-cock made eke his lay,  
The woode-dove upon the spray  
She sang full loud and clear.

\*sparrowhawk \*\*parrot &13&gt;

Sir Thopas fell in love-longing  
All when he heard the throstle sing,  
And \*prick'd as he were wood;\*  
His faire steed in his pricking were mad\*  
So sweated, that men might him wring,  
His sides were all blood.

\*rode as if he

Sir Thopas eke so weary was  
For pricking on the soft grass,  
So fierce was his corage,\*  
That down he laid him in that place,  
To make his steed some solace,  
And gave him good forage.

\*inclination, spirit

'Ah, Saint Mary, ben'dicite,  
What aileth thilke\* love at me  
To binde me so sore?  
Me dreamed all this night, pardie,  
An elf-queen shall my leman\* be,  
And sleep under my gore.\*

\*this

\*mistress

\*shirt

An elf-queen will I love, y-wis,\*  
For in this world no woman is  
Worthy to be my make\*

\*assuredly

\*mate

In town;  
All other women I forsake,  
And to an elf-queen I me take  
By dale and eke by down.'

Into his saddle he clomb anon,  
And pricked over stile and stone  
An elf-queen for to spy,  
Till he so long had ridden and gone,  
That he found in a privy wonne\*  
The country of Faery,  
So wild;  
For in that country was there none  
That to him durste ride or gon,  
Neither wife nor child.

\*haunt

Till that there came a great giaunt,  
His name was Sir Oliphaunt,  
A perilous man of deed;  
He saide, 'Child,\* by Termagaunt, &lt;16&gt;  
\*But if\* thou prick out of mine haunt,  
Anon I slay thy steed  
With mace.  
Here is the Queen of Faery,  
With harp, and pipe, and symphony,  
Dwelling in this place.'

\*young man  
\*unless

The Child said, 'All so may I the,\*  
To-morrow will I meete thee,  
When I have mine armor;  
And yet I hope, \*par ma fay,\*  
That thou shalt with this launcegay  
Abyen\* it full sore;  
Thy maw\*  
Shall I pierce, if I may,  
Ere it be fully prime of day,  
For here thou shalt be slaw.'

\*thrive

\*by my faith\*

\*suffer for

\*belly

\*slain

Sir Thopas drew aback full fast;  
This giant at him stones cast  
Out of a fell staff sling:  
But fair escaped Child Thopas,

And all it was through Godde's grace,  
And through his fair bearing. &lt;17&gt;

Yet listen, lordings, to my tale,  
Merrier than the nightingale,  
For now I will you rown,\*  
How Sir Thopas, with sides smale,\*  
Pricking over hill and dale,  
Is come again to town.

\*whisper  
\*small &lt;18&gt;

His merry men commanded he  
To make him both game and glee;  
For needes must he fight  
With a giant with heades three,  
For paramour and jollity  
Of one that shone full bright.

'\*Do come,\*' he saide, 'my minstrales  
And gestours\* for to telle tales.  
Anon in mine arming,  
Of romances that be royales, &lt;19&gt;  
Of popes and of cardinales,  
And eke of love-longing.'

\*summon\*  
\*story-tellers

They fetch'd him first the sweete wine,  
And mead eke in a maseline,\*  
And royal spicery; of maple wood &lt;20&gt;  
Of ginger-bread that was full fine,  
And liquorice and eke cumin,  
With sugar that is trie.\*

\*drinking-bowl  
  
  
\*refined

He didde,\* next his white lere,\*\*  
Of cloth of lake\* fine and clear,  
A breech and eke a shirt;  
And next his shirt an haketon,\*  
And over that an habergeon,\*  
For piercing of his heart;

\*put on \*\*skin  
\*fine linen  
  
\*cassock  
\*coat of mail

And over that a fine hauberk,\*  
Was all y-wrought of Jewes'\* werk,  
Full strong it was of plate;  
And over that his coat-armour,\*

\*plate-armour  
\*magicians'  
  
\*knight's surcoat



As white as is the lily flow'r, &21&gt;  
In which he would debate.\*

\*fight

His shield was all of gold so red  
And therein was a boare's head,  
A charboucle\* beside;  
And there he swore on ale and bread,  
How that the giant should be dead,  
Betide whatso betide.

\*carbuncle &22&gt;

His jambeaux\* were of cuirbouly, &23&gt;  
His sworde's sheath of ivory,  
His helm of latoun\* bright,  
His saddle was of rewel &24&gt; bone,  
His bridle as the sunne shone,  
Or as the moonelight.

\*boots

\*brass

His speare was of fine cypress,  
That bodeth war, and nothing peace;  
The head full sharp y-ground.  
His steede was all dapple gray,  
It went an amble in the way  
Full softely and round  
In land.

Lo, Lordes mine, here is a fytt;  
If ye will any more of it,  
To tell it will I fand.\*

\*try

## The Second Fit

Now hold your mouth for charity,  
Bothe knight and lady free,  
And hearken to my spell;\*  
Of battle and of chivalry,  
Of ladies' love and druerie,\*  
Anon I will you tell.

\*tale &25&gt;

\*gallantry

Men speak of romances of price\*  
Of Horn Child, and of Ipotis,

\* worth, esteem

Of Bevis, and Sir Guy, &26&gt;  
Of Sir Libeux, &27&gt; and Pleindamour,  
But Sir Thopas, he bears the flow'r  
Of royal chivalry.

His goode steed he all bestrode,  
And forth upon his way he glode,\*  
As sparkle out of brand;\*  
Upon his crest he bare a tow'r,  
And therein stick'd a lily flow'r; &28&gt;  
God shield his corse\* from shand!\*\*

\*shone  
\*torch  
  
\*body \*\*harm

And, for he was a knight auntrous,\*  
He woulde sleepen in none house,  
But liggen\* in his hood,  
His brighte helm was his wanger,\*  
And by him baited\* his destrer\*\*  
Of herbes fine and good.

\*adventurous  
  
\*lie  
\*pillow &29&gt;  
\*fed \*\*horse &30&gt;

Himself drank water of the well,  
As did the knight Sir Percivel, &31&gt;  
So worthy under weed;  
Till on a day - . . .

Geoffrey Chaucer

## Chaucers Wordes Unto Adam

Adam sciveyn, if ever it thee bifalle  
Boece or Troylus for to wryten newe,  
Under thy long lokkes thou most have the scalle,  
But after my makyng thow wryte more trewe;  
So ofte adaye I mot thy werk renewe,  
It to correcte and eke to rubbe and scrape,

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Chaucer's Words To His Scrivener

Adam Scrivener, if ever it thee befall  
Boece or Troilus for to write anew,  
Under thy long locks thou may'st have the scall  
But after my making thou write more true!  
So oft a day I must thy work renew,  
It to correct, and eke to rub and scrape;  
And all is through thy negligence and rape.

Geoffrey Chaucer

## Controlling the Tongue -

My son, keep well thy tongue, and keep thy friend.  
A wicked tongue is worse than a fiend;  
My son, from a fiend men may them bless.  
My son, God of his endless goodness  
Walled a tongue with teeth and lips eke,  
For man should him advise what he speak.  
My son, full oft, for too much speech  
Hath many a man been spilt, as clerkes teach;  
But for little speech avisely  
Is no man shent, to speak generally.  
My son, thy tongue shouldst thou restrain  
At all time, but when thou dost thy pain  
To speak of God, in honour and prayer.  
The first virtue, son, if thou wilt lere,  
Is to restrain and keep well thy tongue;  
Thus learn children when that they been young.  
My son, of muckle speaking evil-avised,  
Where less speaking had enough sufficed,  
Cometh muckle harm; thus was me told and taught.  
In muckle speech sin wanteth nought.  
Wost thou whereof a rakel tongue serveth?  
Right as a sword forcutteth and forcarveth  
An arm a-two, my dear son, right so  
A tongue cutteth friendship all a-two.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Fortune

This wrecched worldes transmutacioun,  
As wele or wo, now povre and now honour,  
Withouten ordre or wys discrecioun  
Governed is by Fortunes errorr.  
But natheles, the lak of hir favour  
Ne may nat don me singen though I dye,  
Jay tout perdu mon temps et mon labour;  
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye.

Yit is me left the light of my resoun  
To knowen frend fro fo in thy mirour.  
So muchel hath yit thy whirling up and down  
Ytaught me for to knowen in an hour.  
But trewely, no force of thy reddour  
To him that over himself hath the maystrye.  
My suffisaunce shal be my socour,  
For fynally Fortune, I thee defye.

O Socrates, thou stidfast champioun,  
She never mighte be thy tormentour;  
Thou never dreddest hir oppressioun,  
Ne in hir chere founde thou no savour.  
Thou knewe wel the deceit of hir colour,  
And that hir moste worshipe is to lye.  
I knowe hir eek a fals dissimulour,  
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye!

La respounse de Fortune au Pleintif

No man is wrecched but himself it wene,  
And he that hath himself hath suffisaunce.  
Why seystow thanne I am to thee so kene,  
That hast thyself out of my governaunce?  
Sey thus: 'Graunt mercy of thyn haboundaunce  
That thou hast lent or this.' Why wolt thou stryve?  
What wostow yit how I thee wol avaunce?  
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve.

I have thee taught divisioun bitwene

Frend of effect and frend of countenance;  
Thee nedeth nat the galle of noon hyene,  
That cureth eyen derked for penaunce;  
Now seestow cleer that were in ignoraunce.  
Yit halt thyn ancre and yit thou mayst arryve  
Ther bountee berth the keye of my substaunce,  
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve.

How many have I refused to sustene  
Sin I thee fostred have in thy plesaunce.  
Woltow than make a statut on thy quene  
That I shal been ay at thyn ordinaunce?  
Thou born art in my regne of variaunce,  
Aboute the wheel with other most thou dryve.  
My lore is bet than wikke is thy grevaunce,  
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve.

La respounse du Pleintif countre Fortune

Thy lore I dampne; it is adversitee.  
My frend maystow nat reven, blind goddessse;  
That I thy frendes knowe, I thanke it thee.  
Tak hem agayn, lat hem go lye on presse.  
The negardye in keping hir richesse  
Prenostik is thou wolt hir tour assayle;  
Wikke appetyt comth ay before syknesse.  
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

La respounse de Fortune countre le Pleintif

Thou pinchest at my mutabilitee  
For I thee lente a drope of my richesse,  
And now me lyketh to withdrawe me.[Riv., p. 653]  
Why sholdestow my realtee oppresse?  
The see may ebbe and flowen more or lesse;  
The welkne hath might to shyne, reyne, or hayle;  
Right so mot I kythen my brotelnesse.  
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

Lo, th'execucion of the majestee  
That al purveyeth of his rightwysnesse,  
That same thing 'Fortune' clepen ye,

Ye blinde bestes ful of lewdednesse.  
The hevne hath propretee of sikernesse.  
This world hath ever resteles travayle;  
Thy laste day is ende of myn intresse.  
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

Lenvoy de Fortune

Princes, I prey you of your gentillesse  
Lat nat this man on me thus crye and pleyne,  
And I shal quyte you your businesse  
At my requeste, as three of you or tweyne,  
And but you list releve him of his peyne,  
Preyeth his beste frend of his noblesse  
That to som beter estat he may atteyne.

Geoffrey Chaucer



# Gentillesse

The firste stok, fader of gentillesse --  
What man that desireth gentil for to be  
Must folowe his trace, and alle his wittes dresse  
Vertu to love and vyces for to flee.  
For unto vertu longeth dignitee  
And noght the revers, saufly dar I deme,  
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.

This firste stok was ful of rightwisnesse,  
Trewe of his word, sobre, pitous, and free,  
Clene of his gost, and loved besinesse,  
Ayeinst the vyce of slouthe, in honestee;  
And, but his heir love vertu as dide he,  
He is noght gentil, thogh he riche seme,  
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.

Vyce may wel be heir to old richesse,  
But ther may no man, as men may wel see,  
Bequethe his heir his vertuouse noblesse  
(That is appropred unto no degree  
But to the firste fader in magestee,  
That maketh hem his heyres that him queme),

Geoffrey Chaucer

## Good Counsel Of Chaucer

Flee from the press, and dwell with soothfastness;  
Suffice thee thy good, though it be small;  
For hoard hath hate, and climbing tickleness,  
Press hath envy, and weal is blent o'er all,  
Savour no more than thee behove shall;  
Read well thyself, that other folk canst read;  
And truth thee shall deliver, it is no dread.

Paine thee not each crooked to redress,  
In trust of her that turneth as a ball;  
Great rest standeth in little business:  
Beware also to spurn against a nail;  
Strive not as doth a crocke with a wall;  
Deeme thyself that deemest others' deed,  
And truth thee shall deliver, it is no dread.

What thee is sent, receive in buxomness;  
The wrestling of this world asketh a fall;  
Here is no home, here is but wilderness.  
Forth, pilgrim! Forthe beast, out of thy stall!  
Look up on high, and thank thy God of all!  
Weive thy lust, and let thy ghost thee lead,  
And truth thee shall deliver, it is no dread.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# La Priere De Nostre Dame

A.

Almighty and all-merciable Queen,  
To whom all this world fleeth for succour,  
To have release of sin, of sorrow, of teen!  
Glorious Virgin! of all flowers flow'r,  
To thee I flee, confounded in errour!  
Help and relieve, almighty debonair,  
Have mercy of my perilous languour!  
Vanquish'd me hath my cruel adversair.

B.

Bounty so fix'd hath in thy heart his tent,  
That well I wot thou wilt my succour be;  
Thou canst not warne that with good intent  
Asketh thy help, thy heart is ay so free!  
Thou art largess of plein felicity,  
Haven and refuge of quiet and rest!  
Lo! how that thieves seven chase me!  
Help, Lady bright, ere that my ship to-brest!

C.

Comfort is none, but in you, Lady dear!  
For lo! my sin and my confusion,  
Which ought not in thy presence to appear,  
Have ta'en on me a grievous action,  
Of very right and desperation!  
And, as by right, they mighte well sustene  
That I were worthy my damnation,  
Ne were it mercy of you, blissful Queen!

D.

Doubt is there none, Queen of misericorde,  
That thou art cause of grace and mercy here;  
God vouchesaf'd, through thee, with us t'accord;  
For, certes, Christe's blissful mother dear!

Were now the bow y-bent, in such mannere  
As it was first, of justice and of ire,  
The rightful God would of no mercy hear;  
But through thee have we grace as we desire.

E.

Ever hath my hope of refuge in thee be';  
For herebefore full oft in many a wise  
Unto mercy hast thou received me.  
But mercy, Lady! at the great assize,  
When we shall come before the high Justice!  
So little fruit shall then in me be found,  
That, thou ere that day correcte me,  
Of very right my work will me confound.

F.

Flying, I flee for succour to thy tent,  
Me for to hide from tempest full of dread;  
Beseeching you, that ye you not absent,  
Though I be wick'. O help yet at this need!  
All have I been a beast in wit and deed,  
Yet, Lady! thou me close in with thy grace;  
Thine enemy and mine, -- Lady, take heed! --  
Unto my death in point is me to chase.

G.

Gracious Maid and Mother! which that never  
Wert bitter nor in earthe nor in sea,  
But full of sweetness and of mercy ever,  
Help, that my Father be not wroth with me!  
Speak thou, for I ne dare Him not see;  
So have I done in earth, alas the while!  
That, certes, but if thou my succour be,  
To sink etern He will my ghost exile.

H.

He vouchesaf'd, tell Him, as was His will,  
Become a man, as for our alliance,

And with His blood He wrote that blissful bill  
Upon the cross, as general acquittance  
To ev'ry penitent in full creance;  
And therefore, Lady bright! thou for us pray;  
Then shalt thou stenten alle His grievance,  
And make our foe to failen of his prey.

I.

I wote well thou wilt be our succour,  
Thou art so full of bounty in certain;  
For, when a soule falleth in errour,  
Thy pity go'th, and haleth him again;  
Then makest thou his peace with his Sov'reign,  
And bringest him out of the crooked street:  
Whoso thee loveth shall not love in vain,  
That shall he find as he the life shall lete.

K.

Kalendares illumined be they  
That in this world be lighted with thy name;  
And whoso goeth with thee the right way,  
Him shall not dread in soule to be lame;  
Now, Queen of comfort! since thou art the same  
To whom I seeke for my medicine,  
Let not my foe no more my wound entame;  
My heal into thy hand all I resign.

L.

Lady, thy sorrow can I not portray  
Under that cross, nor his grievous penance;  
But, for your bothe's pain, I you do pray,  
Let not our aller foe make his boastance,  
That he hath in his listes, with mischance,  
Convicte that ye both have bought so dear;  
As I said erst, thou ground of all substance!  
Continue on us thy piteous eyen clear.

M.

Moses, that saw the bush of flames red  
Burning, of which then never a stick brenn'd,  
Was sign of thine unwemmed maidenhead.  
Thou art the bush, on which there gan descend  
The Holy Ghost, the which that Moses wend  
Had been on fire; and this was in figure.  
Now, Lady! from the fire us do defend,  
Which that in hell eternally shall dure.

N.

Noble Princess! that never haddest peer;  
Certes if any comfort in us be,  
That cometh of thee, Christe's mother dear!  
We have none other melody nor glee,  
Us to rejoice in our adversity;  
Nor advocate, that will and dare so pray  
For us, and for as little hire as ye,  
That helpe for an Ave-Mary or tway.

O.

O very light of eyen that be blind!  
O very lust of labour and distress!  
O treasurer of bounty to mankind!  
The whom God chose to mother for humbless!  
From his ancill he made thee mistress  
Of heav'n and earth, our billes up to bede;  
This world awaiteth ever on thy goodness;  
For thou ne failedst never wight at need.

P.

Purpose I have sometime for to enquire  
Wherefore and why the Holy Ghost thee sought,  
When Gabrielis voice came to thine ear;  
He not to war us such a wonder wrought,  
But for to save us, that sithens us bought:  
Then needeth us no weapon us to save,  
But only, where we did not as we ought,  
Do penitence, and mercy ask and have.

Q.

Queen of comfort, right when I me bethink  
That I aguilt have bothe Him and thee,  
And that my soul is worthy for to sink,  
Alas! I, caitiff, whither shall I flee?  
Who shall unto thy Son my meane be?  
Who, but thyself, that art of pity well?  
Thou hast more ruth on our adversity  
Than in this world might any tongue tell!

R.

Redress me, Mother, and eke me chastise!  
For certainly my Father's chastising  
I dare not abiden in no wise,  
So hideous is his full reckoning.  
Mother! of whom our joy began to spring,  
Be ye my judge, and eke my soule's leach;  
For ay in you is pity abounding  
To each that will of pity you beseech.

S.

Sooth is it that He granteth no pity  
Withoute thee; for God of his goodness  
Forgiveth none, but it like unto thee;  
He hath thee made vicar and mistress  
Of all this world, and eke governess  
Of heaven; and represseth his justice  
After thy will; and therefore in witness  
He hath thee crowned in so royal wise.

T.

Temple devout! where God chose his wonning,  
From which, these misbeliev'd deprived be,  
To you my soule penitent I bring;  
Receive me, for I can no farther flee.  
With thornes venomous, O Heaven's Queen!  
For which the earth accursed was full yore,  
I am so wounded, as ye may well see,

That I am lost almost, it smart so sore!

V.

Virgin! that art so noble of apparail,  
That ledest us into the highe tow'r  
Of Paradise, thou me wiss and counsail  
How I may have thy grace and thy succour;  
All have I been in filth and in errour,  
Lady! \*on that country thou me adjourn,  
That called is thy bench of freshe flow'r,  
There as that mercy ever shall sojourn.

X.

Xpe thy Son, that in this world alight,  
Upon a cross to suffer his passioun,  
And suffer'd eke that Longeus his heart pight,  
And made his hearte-blood to run adown;  
And all this was for my salvatioun:  
And I to him am false and eke unkind,  
And yet he wills not my damnation;  
This thank I you, succour of all mankind!

Y.

Ysaac was figure of His death certain,  
That so farforth his father would obey,  
That him ne raughte nothing to be slain;  
Right so thy Son list as a lamb to dey:  
Now, Lady full of mercy! I you pray,  
Since he his mercy 'sured me so large,  
Be ye not scant, for all we sing and say,  
That ye be from vengeance alway our targe.

Z.

Zachary you calleth the open well  
That washed sinful soul out of his guilt;  
Therefore this lesson out I will to tell,  
That, n'ere thy tender hearte, we were spilt.  
Now, Lady brighte! since thou canst and wilt,



Be to the seed of Adam merciable;  
Bring us unto that palace that is built  
To penitents that be \*to mercy able!

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Lak Of Stedfastnesse

Somtyme the world was so stedfast and stable  
That mannes word was obligacioun,  
And now it is so fals and deceivable  
That word and deed, as in conclusioun,  
Ben nothing lyk, for turned up-so-doun  
Is al this world for mede and wilfulnesse,  
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse.

What maketh this world to be so variable  
But lust that folk have in dissensioun?  
For among us now a man is holde unable,  
But if he can by som collusioun  
Don his neighbour wrong or oppressioun.  
What causeth this but wilful wrecchednesse,  
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse?

Trouthe is put doun, resoun is holden fable,  
Vertu hath now no dominacioun;  
Pitee exyled, no man is merciabe.  
Through covetyse is blent discrecioun.  
The world hath mad a permutacioun  
Fro right to wrong, fro trouthe to fikelnesse,  
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse.

O prince, desyre to be honourable,  
Cherish thy folk and hate extorcioun.  
Suffre nothing that may be reprevable  
To thyn estat don in thy regioun.  
Shew forth thy swerd of castigacioun,  
Dred God, do law, love trouthe and worthinesse,  
And wed thy folk agein to stedfastnesse.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# L'Envoy Of Chaucer To Bukton

My Master Bukton, when of Christ our King  
Was asked, What is truth or soothfastness?  
He not a word answer'd to that asking,  
As who saith, no man is all true, I guess;  
And therefore, though I highte to express  
The sorrow and woe that is in marriage,  
I dare not write of it no wickedness,  
Lest I myself fall eft in such dotage.

I will not say how that it is the chain  
Of Satan, on which he gnaweth ever;  
But I dare say, were he out of his pain,  
As by his will he would be bounden never.  
But thilke doated fool that eft had lever  
Y-chained be, than out of prison creep,  
God let him never from his woe dissever,  
Nor no man him bewaile though he weep!

But yet, lest thou do worse, take a wife;  
Bet is to wed than burn in worse wise;  
But thou shalt have sorrow on thy flesh thy life,  
And be thy wife's thrall, as say these wise.  
And if that Holy Writ may not suffice,  
Experience shall thee teache, so may hap,  
That thee were lever to be taken in Frise,  
Than eft to fall of wedding in the trap.

This little writ, proverbes, or figure,  
I sende you; take keep of it, I read!  
"Unwise is he that can no weal endure;  
If thou be sicker, put thee not in dread."  
The Wife of Bath I pray you that you read,  
Of this matter which that we have on hand.  
God grante you your life freely to lead  
In freedom, for full hard is to be bond.

Geoffrey Chaucer





# Proverbs

Proverbe of Chaucer

What shul these clothes thus manyfold,  
Lo this hote somers day?  
After grete hete cometh cold;  
No man caste his pilche away.

Of al this world the large compas  
Yt wil not in myn armes tweyne;  
Who so mochel wol embrace,

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Proverbs Of Chaucer

Proverbe of Chaucer

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Geoffrey Chaucer

## Rondeau Iii

Syn I fro love escaped am so fat,  
I nere thinke to ben in his prison lene;  
Syn I am fre, I count hym not a bene.

He may answer, and sey this and that,  
I do no fors, I speke ryght as I mene ;  
Syn I fro love escaped am so fat.

Love hath my name i-strike out of his sclat,  
And he is strike out of my bokes clene :  
For ever mo ther is non other mene,  
Syn I fro love escaped &c.

Geoffrey Chaucer



## Rondel Of Merciless Beauty

Your two great eyes will slay me suddenly;  
Their beauty shakes me who was once serene;  
Straight through my heart the wound is quick and keen.

Only your word will heal the injury  
To my hurt heart, while yet the wound is clean -  
Your two great eyes will slay me suddenly;  
Their beauty shakes me who was once serene.

Upon my word, I tell you faithfully  
Through life and after death you are my queen;  
For with my death the whole truth shall be seen.  
Your two great eyes will slay me suddenly;  
Their beauty shakes me who was once serene;  
Straight through my heart the wound is quick and keen.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Roundel

Now welcome Summer with thy sunne soft,  
That hast this winter`s weathers overshake,  
And driven away the longe nighties black.

Saint Valentine, that art full high aloft,  
Thus singen smalle fowles for thy sake:  
Now welcome Summer with tye sunne soft,  
That hast this winter`s weathers overshake.

Well have they cause for to gladden oft,  
Wince each of them recovered hath his make.  
Full blissful may they singe when they wake:  
Now welcome Summer with they sunne soft,  
That has this winters weathers overshake,  
And driven away the longe nighties black.

Geoffrey Chaucer

## Since I From Love

Since I from Love escaped am so fat,  
I ne'er think to be in his prison ta'en;  
Since I am free, I count him not a bean.

He may answer, and saye this and that;  
I do no force, I speak right as I mean;  
Since I from Love escaped am so fat.

Love hath my name struck out of his slat,  
And he is struck out of my bookes clean,  
For ever more; there is none other mean;  
Since I from Love escaped am so fat.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canon's Yeoman's Tale

## THE PROLOGUE.

WHEN ended was the life of Saint Cecile,  
Ere we had ridden fully five mile, &2>  
At Boughton-under-Blee us gan o'ertake  
A man, that clothed was in clothes black,  
And underneath he wore a white surplice.  
His hackenay,\* which was all pomely-gris,\*\* \*nag \*\*dapple-gray  
So sweated, that it wonder was to see;  
It seem'd as he had pricked\* miles three. \*spurred  
The horse eke that his yeoman rode upon  
So sweated, that unnethes\* might he gon.\*\* \*hardly \*\*go  
About the peytrel &3> stood the foam full high;  
He was of foam, as \*flecked as a pie.\* \*spotted like a magpie\*  
A maile twyfold &4> on his crupper lay;  
It seemed that he carried little array;  
All light for summer rode this worthy man.  
And in my heart to wonder I began  
What that he was, till that I understood  
How that his cloak was sewed to his hood;  
For which, when I had long advised\* me, \*considered  
I deemed him some Canon for to be.  
His hat hung at his back down by a lace,\* \*cord  
For he had ridden more than trot or pace;  
He hadde pricked like as he were wood.\* \*mad  
A clote-leaf\* he had laid under his hood, \* burdock-leaf  
For sweat, and for to keep his head from heat.  
But it was joye for to see him sweat;  
His forehead dropped as a stillatory\* \*still  
Were full of plantain or of paritory.\* \*wallflower  
And when that he was come, he gan to cry,  
'God save,' quoth he, 'this jolly company.  
Fast have I pricked,' quoth he, 'for your sake,  
Because that I would you overtake,  
To riden in this merry company.'  
His Yeoman was eke full of courtesy,  
And saide, 'Sirs, now in the morning tide  
Out of your hostelry I saw you ride,

And warned here my lord and sovereign,  
 Which that to ride with you is full fain,  
 For his disport; he loveth dalliance.'  
 'Friend, for thy warning God give thee good chance,'\*      \*fortune  
 Said oure Host; 'certain it woulde seem  
 Thy lord were wise, and so I may well deem;  
 He is full jocund also, dare I lay;  
 Can he aught tell a merry tale or tway,  
 With which he gladden may this company?'  
 'Who, Sir? my lord? Yea, Sir, withoute lie,  
 He can\* of mirth and eke of jollity      \*knows  
 \*Not but\* enough; also, Sir, truste me,      \*not less than\*  
 An\* ye him knew all so well as do I,      \*if  
 Ye would wonder how well and craftily  
 He coulde work, and that in sundry wise.  
 He hath take on him many a great emprise,\*      \*task, undertaking  
 Which were full hard for any that is here  
 To bring about, but\* they of him it lear.\*\*      \*unless \*\*learn  
 As homely as he rides amonges you,  
 If ye him knew, it would be for your prow:\*      \*advantage  
 Ye woulde not forego his acquaintance  
 For mucche good, I dare lay in balance  
 All that I have in my possession.  
 He is a man of high discretion.  
 I warn you well, he is a passing\* man.'      \*surpassing, extraordinary  
 Well,' quoth our Host, 'I pray thee tell me than,  
 Is he a clerk,\* or no? Tell what he is.'      \*scholar, priest  
 'Nay, he is greater than a clerk, y-wis,'\*      \*certainly  
 Saide this Yeoman; 'and, in wordes few,  
 Host, of his craft somewhat I will you shew,  
 I say, my lord can\* such a subtlety      \*knows  
 (But all his craft ye may not weet\* of me,      \*learn  
 And somewhat help I yet to his working),  
 That all the ground on which we be riding  
 Till that we come to Canterbury town,  
 He could all cleane turnen up so down,  
 And pave it all of silver and of gold.'  
 And when this Yeoman had this tale told  
 Unto our Host, he said; 'Ben'dicite!  
 This thing is wonder marvellous to me,  
 Since that thy lord is of so high prudence,  
 Because of which men should him reverence,

That of his worship\* recketh he so lite;\*\* \*honour \*\*little  
 His \*overest slop\* it is not worth a mite \*upper garment\*  
 As in effect to him, so may I go;  
 It is all baudy\* and to-tore also. \*slovenly  
 Why is thy lord so sluttish, I thee pray,  
 And is of power better clothes to bey,\* \*buy  
 If that his deed accordeth with thy speech?  
 Telle me that, and that I thee beseech.'

'Why?' quoth this Yeoman, 'whereto ask ye me?  
 God help me so, for he shall never the\* \*thrive  
 (But I will not avowe\* that I say, \*admit  
 And therefore keep it secret, I you pray):  
 He is too wise, in faith, as I believe.  
 Thing that is overdone, it will not preve\* \*stand the test  
 Aright, as clerkes say; it is a vice;  
 Wherefore in that I hold him \*lewd and nice.'\* \*ignorant and foolish\*  
 For when a man hath over great a wit,  
 Full oft him happens to misusen it;  
 So doth my lord, and that me grieveth sore.  
 God it amend; I can say now no more.'

'Thereof \*no force,\* good Yeoman, 'quoth our Host; \*no matter\*  
 'Since of the conning\* of thy lord, thou know'st, \*knowledge  
 Tell how he doth, I pray thee heartily,  
 Since that be is so crafty and so sly.\* \*wise  
 Where dwelle ye, if it to telle be?'  
 'In the suburbes of a town,' quoth he,  
 'Lurking in hernes\* and in lanes blind, \*corners  
 Where as these robbers and these thieves by kind\* \*nature  
 Holde their privy fearful residence,  
 As they that dare not show their presence,  
 So fare we, if I shall say the soothe.'\* \*truth  
 'Yet,' quoth our Hoste, 'let me talke to thee;  
 Why art thou so discolour'd of thy face?'  
 'Peter!' quoth he, 'God give it harde grace,  
 I am so us'd the hote fire to blow,  
 That it hath changed my colour, I trow;  
 I am not wont in no mirror to pry,  
 But swinke\* sore, and learn to multiply. &lt;5&gt; \*labour  
 We blunder\* ever, and poren\*\* in the fire, \*toil \*\*peer  
 And, for all that, we fail of our desire

For ever we lack our conclusion  
 To muche folk we do illusion,  
 And borrow gold, be it a pound or two,  
 Or ten or twelve, or many summes mo',  
 And make them weenen,\* at the leaste way, \*fancy  
 That of a pounce we can make tway.  
 Yet is it false; and aye we have good hope  
 It for to do, and after it we grope:\* \*search, strive  
 But that science is so far us befor,  
 That we may not, although we had it sworn,  
 It overtake, it slides away so fast;  
 It will us make beggars at the last.'  
 While this Yeoman was thus in his talking,  
 This Canon drew him near, and heard all thing  
 Which this Yeoman spake, for suspicion  
 Of menne's speech ever had this Canon:  
 For Cato saith, that he that guilty is, &6gt;  
 Deemeth all things be spoken of him y-wis;\* \*surely  
 Because of that he gan so nigh to draw  
 To his Yeoman, that he heard all his saw;  
 And thus he said unto his Yeoman tho\* \*then  
 'Hold thou thy peace, and speak no wordes mo':  
 For if thou do, thou shalt \*it dear abie.\* \*pay dearly for it\*  
 Thou slanderest me here in this company  
 And eke discoverest that thou shouldest hide.'  
 'Yea,' quoth our Host, 'tell on, whatso betide;  
 Of all his threatening reck not a mite.'  
 'In faith,' quoth he, 'no more do I but lite.'\* \*little  
 And when this Canon saw it would not be  
 But his Yeoman would tell his privity,\* \*secrets  
 He fled away for very sorrow and shame.

'Ah!' quoth the Yeoman, 'here shall rise a game;\* \*some diversion  
 All that I can anon I will you tell,  
 Since he is gone; the foule fiend him quell!\* \*destroy  
 For ne'er hereafter will I with him meet,  
 For penny nor for pound, I you behete.\* \*promise  
 He that me broughte first unto that game,  
 Ere that he die, sorrow have he and shame.  
 For it is earnest\* to me, by my faith; \*a serious matter  
 That feel I well, what so any man saith;  
 And yet for all my smart, and all my grief,

For all my sorrow, labour, and mischief,\*  
I coulde never leave it in no wise.  
Now would to God my witte might suffice  
To tellen all that longeth to that art!  
But natheless yet will I telle part;  
Since that my lord is gone, I will not spare;  
Such thing as that I know, I will declare.'

\*trouble

Geoffrey Chaucer



# The Canon's Yeoman's Tale

## THE PROLOGUE.

WHEN ended was the life of Saint Cecile,  
Ere we had ridden fully five mile, &2gt;  
At Boughton-under-Blee us gan o'ertake  
A man, that clothed was in clothes black,  
And underneath he wore a white surplice.  
His hackenay,\* which was all pomely-gris,\*\* \*nag \*\*dapple-gray  
So sweated, that it wonder was to see;  
It seem'd as he had pricked\* miles three. \*spurred  
The horse eke that his yeoman rode upon  
So sweated, that unnethes\* might he gon.\*\* \*hardly \*\*go  
About the peytrel &3> stood the foam full high;  
He was of foam, as \*flecked as a pie.\* \*spotted like a magpie\*  
A maile twyfold &4> on his crupper lay;  
It seemed that he carried little array;  
All light for summer rode this worthy man.  
And in my heart to wonder I began  
What that he was, till that I understood  
How that his cloak was sewed to his hood;  
For which, when I had long advised\* me, \*considered  
I deemed him some Canon for to be.  
His hat hung at his back down by a lace,\* \*cord  
For he had ridden more than trot or pace;  
He hadde pricked like as he were wood.\* \*mad  
A clote-leaf\* he had laid under his hood, \* burdock-leaf  
For sweat, and for to keep his head from heat.  
But it was joye for to see him sweat;  
His forehead dropped as a stillatory\* \*still  
Were full of plantain or of paritory.\* \*wallflower  
And when that he was come, he gan to cry,  
'God save,' quoth he, 'this jolly company.  
Fast have I pricked,' quoth he, 'for your sake,  
Because that I would you overtake,  
To riden in this merry company.'  
His Yeoman was eke full of courtesy,  
And saide, 'Sirs, now in the morning tide  
Out of your hostelry I saw you ride,

And warned here my lord and sovereign,  
 Which that to ride with you is full fain,  
 For his disport; he loveth dalliance.'  
 'Friend, for thy warning God give thee good chance,'\*      \*fortune  
 Said oure Host; 'certain it woulde seem  
 Thy lord were wise, and so I may well deem;  
 He is full jocund also, dare I lay;  
 Can he aught tell a merry tale or tway,  
 With which he gladden may this company?'  
 'Who, Sir? my lord? Yea, Sir, withoute lie,  
 He can\* of mirth and eke of jollity      \*knows  
 \*Not but\* enough; also, Sir, truste me,      \*not less than\*  
 An\* ye him knew all so well as do I,      \*if  
 Ye would wonder how well and craftily  
 He coulde work, and that in sundry wise.  
 He hath take on him many a great emprise,\*      \*task, undertaking  
 Which were full hard for any that is here  
 To bring about, but\* they of him it lear.\*\*      \*unless \*\*learn  
 As homely as he rides amonges you,  
 If ye him knew, it would be for your prow:\*      \*advantage  
 Ye woulde not forego his acquaintance  
 For mucche good, I dare lay in balance  
 All that I have in my possession.  
 He is a man of high discretion.  
 I warn you well, he is a passing\* man.'      \*surpassing, extraordinary  
 Well,' quoth our Host, 'I pray thee tell me than,  
 Is he a clerk,\* or no? Tell what he is.'      \*scholar, priest  
 'Nay, he is greater than a clerk, y-wis,'\*      \*certainly  
 Saide this Yeoman; 'and, in wordes few,  
 Host, of his craft somewhat I will you shew,  
 I say, my lord can\* such a subtlety      \*knows  
 (But all his craft ye may not weet\* of me,      \*learn  
 And somewhat help I yet to his working),  
 That all the ground on which we be riding  
 Till that we come to Canterbury town,  
 He could all cleane turnen up so down,  
 And pave it all of silver and of gold.'  
 And when this Yeoman had this tale told  
 Unto our Host, he said; 'Ben'dicite!  
 This thing is wonder marvellous to me,  
 Since that thy lord is of so high prudence,  
 Because of which men should him reverence,

That of his worship\* recketh he so lite;\*\* \*honour \*\*little  
 His \*overest slop\* it is not worth a mite \*upper garment\*  
 As in effect to him, so may I go;  
 It is all bauty\* and to-tore also. \*slovenly  
 Why is thy lord so sluttish, I thee pray,  
 And is of power better clothes to bey,\* \*buy  
 If that his deed accordeth with thy speech?  
 Telle me that, and that I thee beseech.'

'Why?' quoth this Yeoman, 'whereto ask ye me?  
 God help me so, for he shall never the\* \*thrive  
 (But I will not avowe\* that I say, \*admit  
 And therefore keep it secret, I you pray):  
 He is too wise, in faith, as I believe.  
 Thing that is overdone, it will not preve\* \*stand the test  
 Aright, as clerkes say; it is a vice;  
 Wherefore in that I hold him \*lewd and nice.'\* \*ignorant and foolish\*  
 For when a man hath over great a wit,  
 Full oft him happens to misusen it;  
 So doth my lord, and that me grieveth sore.  
 God it amend; I can say now no more.'

'Thereof \*no force,\* good Yeoman, 'quoth our Host; \*no matter\*  
 'Since of the conning\* of thy lord, thou know'st, \*knowledge  
 Tell how he doth, I pray thee heartily,  
 Since that be is so crafty and so sly.\* \*wise  
 Where dwelle ye, if it to telle be?'  
 'In the suburbes of a town,' quoth he,  
 'Lurking in hernes\* and in lanes blind, \*corners  
 Where as these robbers and these thieves by kind\* \*nature  
 Holde their privy fearful residence,  
 As they that dare not show their presence,  
 So fare we, if I shall say the soothe.'\* \*truth  
 'Yet,' quoth our Hoste, 'let me talke to thee;  
 Why art thou so discolour'd of thy face?'  
 'Peter!' quoth he, 'God give it harde grace,  
 I am so us'd the hote fire to blow,  
 That it hath changed my colour, I trow;  
 I am not wont in no mirror to pry,  
 But swinke\* sore, and learn to multiply. &lt;5&gt; \*labour  
 We blunder\* ever, and poren\*\* in the fire, \*toil \*\*peer  
 And, for all that, we fail of our desire

For ever we lack our conclusion  
 To muche folk we do illusion,  
 And borrow gold, be it a pound or two,  
 Or ten or twelve, or many summes mo',  
 And make them weenen,\* at the leaste way, \*fancy  
 That of a pounce we can make tway.  
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 Since he is gone; the foule fiend him quell!\* \*destroy  
 For ne'er hereafter will I with him meet,  
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 Ere that he die, sorrow have he and shame.  
 For it is earnest\* to me, by my faith; \*a serious matter  
 That feel I well, what so any man saith;  
 And yet for all my smart, and all my grief,

For all my sorrow, labour, and mischief,\*  
I coulde never leave it in no wise.  
Now would to God my witte might suffice  
To tellen all that longeth to that art!  
But natheless yet will I telle part;  
Since that my lord is gone, I will not spare;  
Such thing as that I know, I will declare.'

THE TALE. &lt;1&gt;

With this Canon I dwelt have seven year,  
And of his science am I ne'er the near\*  
All that I had I have lost thereby,  
And, God wot, so have many more than I.  
Where I was wont to be right fresh and gay  
Of clothing, and of other good array  
Now may I wear an hose upon mine head;  
And where my colour was both fresh and red,  
Now is it wan, and of a leaden hue  
(Whoso it useth, sore shall he it rue):  
And of my swink\* yet bleared is mine eye;  
Lo what advantage is to multiply!  
That sliding\* science hath me made so bare,  
That I have no good,\* where that ever I fare;  
And yet I am indebted so thereby  
Of gold, that I have borrow'd truely,  
That, while I live, I shall it quite\* never;  
Let every man beware by me for ever.  
What manner man that casteth\* him thereto,  
If he continue, I hold \*his thrift y-do;\* \*prosperity at an end\*  
So help me God, thereby shall he not win,  
But empty his purse, and make his wittes thin.  
And when he, through his madness and folly,  
Hath lost his owen good through jupartie,\*  
Then he exciteth other men thereto,  
To lose their good as he himself hath do'.  
For unto shrewes\* joy it is and ease  
To have their fellows in pain and disease.\*  
Thus was I ones learned of a clerk;  
Of that no charge;\* I will speak of our work.

\*trouble

\*nearer

\*labour

\*slippery, deceptive

\*property

\*repay

\*betaketh

\*prosperity at an end\*

\*hazard &2&gt;

\*wicked folk

\*trouble

\*matter

When we be there as we shall exercise  
 Our elvish\* craft, we seeme wonder wise,      \*fantastic, wicked  
 Our termes be so \*clergial and quaint.\*      \*learned and strange  
 I blow the fire till that mine hearte faint.  
 Why should I tellen each proportion  
 Of thinges, whiche that we work upon,  
 As on five or six ounces, may well be,  
 Of silver, or some other quantity?  
 And busy me to telle you the names,  
 As orpiment, burnt bones, iron squames,\*      \*scales &3>  
 That into powder grounden be full small?  
 And in an earthen pot how put is all,  
 And, salt y-put in, and also peppere,  
 Before these powders that I speak of here,  
 And well y-cover'd with a lamp of glass?  
 And of much other thing which that there was?  
 And of the pots and glasses engluting,\*      \*sealing up  
 That of the air might passen out no thing?  
 And of the easy\* fire, and smart\*\* also,      \*slow \*\*quick  
 Which that was made? and of the care and woe  
 That we had in our matters subliming,  
 And in amalgaming, and calcining  
 Of quicksilver, called mercury crude?  
 For all our sleightes we can not conclude.  
 Our orpiment, and sublim'd mercury,  
 Our ground litharge\* eke on the porphyry,      \*white lead  
 Of each of these of ounces a certain,\*      \*certain proportion  
 Not helpeth us, our labour is in vain.  
 Nor neither our spirits' ascensioun,  
 Nor our matters that lie all fix'd adown,  
 May in our working nothing us avail;  
 For lost is all our labour and travail,  
 And all the cost, a twenty devil way,  
 Is lost also, which we upon it lay.

There is also full many another thing  
 That is unto our craft appertaining,  
 Though I by order them not rehearse can,  
 Because that I am a lewed\* man;      \*unlearned  
 Yet will I tell them as they come to mind,  
 Although I cannot set them in their kind,  
 As sal-armoniac, verdigris, borace;

And sundry vessels made of earth and glass; &4>  
 Our urinales, and our descensories,  
 Phials, and croslets, and sublimatories,  
 Cucurbites, and alembikes eke,  
 And other suche, \*dear enough a leek,\*                    \*worth less than a leek\*  
 It needeth not for to rehearse them all.  
 Waters rubifying, and bulles' gall,  
 Arsenic, sal-armoniac, and brimstone,  
 And herbes could I tell eke many a one,  
 As egremoine,\* valerian, and lunary,\*\*                    \*agrimony \*\*moon-wort  
 And other such, if that me list to tarry;  
 Our lampes burning bothe night and day,  
 To bring about our craft if that we may;  
 Our furnace eke of calcination,  
 And of waters albification,  
 Unslaked lime, chalk, and \*glair of an ey,\*                    \*egg-white  
 Powders diverse, ashes, dung, piss, and clay,  
 Seared pokettes,&5>; saltpetre, and vitriol;  
 And divers fires made of wood and coal;  
 Sal-tartar, alkali, salt preparate,  
 And combust matters, and coagulate;  
 Clay made with horse and manne's hair, and oil  
 Of tartar, alum, glass, barm, wort, argoil,\*                    \*potter's clay&6>;  
 Rosalgar,\* and other matters imbibing;                    \*flowers of antimony  
 And eke of our matters encorporing,\*                    \*incorporating  
 And of our silver citrination, &7>;  
 Our cementing, and fermentation,  
 Our ingots,\* tests, and many thinges mo'.                    \*moulds &8>;  
 I will you tell, as was me taught also,  
 The foure spirits, and the bodies seven,  
 By order, as oft I heard my lord them neven.\*                    \*name  
 The first spirit Quicksilver called is;  
 The second Orpiment; the third, y-wis,  
 Sal-Armoniac, and the fourth Brimstone.  
 The bodies sev'n eke, lo them here anon.  
 Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe\*                    \*name &9>;  
 Mars iron, Mercury quicksilver we clepe;\*                    \*call  
 Saturnus lead, and Jupiter is tin,  
 And Venus copper, by my father's kin.

This cursed craft whoso will exercise,  
 He shall no good have that him may suffice;

For all the good he spendeth thereabout,  
 He lose shall, thereof have I no doubt.  
 Whoso that list to utter\* his folly,                                 \*display  
 Let him come forth and learn to multiply:  
 And every man that hath aught in his coffer,  
 Let him appear, and wax a philosopher;  
 Ascaunce\* that craft is so light to lear.\*\*                         \*as if \*\*learn  
 Nay, nay, God wot, all be he monk or frere,  
 Priest or canon, or any other wight;  
 Though he sit at his book both day and night;  
 In learning of this \*elvish nice\* lore,                         \* fantastic, foolish  
 All is in vain; and pardie muche more,  
 Is to learn a lew'd\* man this subtlety;                                 \*ignorant  
 Fie! speak not thereof, for it will not be.  
 And \*conne he letterure,\* or conne he none,                         \*if he knows learning\*  
 As in effect, he shall it find all one;  
 For bothe two, by my salvation,  
 Concluden in multiplication\*                                 \*transmutation by alchemy  
 Alike well, when they have all y-do;  
 This is to say, they faile bothe two.  
 Yet forgot I to make rehearsale  
 Of waters corrosive, and of limaile,\*                                 \*metal filings  
 And of bodies' mollification,  
 And also of their induration,  
 Oiles, ablutions, metal fusible,  
 To tellen all, would passen any Bible  
 That owhere\* is; wherefore, as for the best,                                 \*anywhere  
 Of all these names now will I me rest;  
 For, as I trow, I have you told enough  
 To raise a fiend, all look he ne'er so rough.

Ah! nay, let be; the philosopher's stone,  
 Elixir call'd, we seeke fast each one;  
 For had we him, then were we sicker\* enow;                                 \*secure  
 But unto God of heaven I make avow,\*                                 \*confession  
 For all our craft, when we have all y-do,  
 And all our sleight, he will not come us to.  
 He hath y-made us spende muche good,  
 For sorrow of which almost we waxed wood,\*                                 \*mad  
 But that good hope creeped in our heart,  
 Supposing ever, though we sore smart,  
 To be relieved by him afterward.



Such supposing and hope is sharp and hard.  
 I warn you well it is to seeken ever.  
 That future temps\* hath made men dissever,\*\* \*time \*\*part from  
 In trust thereof, from all that ever they had,  
 Yet of that art they cannot waxe sad,\* \*repentant  
 For unto them it is a bitter sweet;  
 So seemeth it; for had they but a sheet  
 Which that they mighte wrap them in at night,  
 And a bratt\* to walk in by dayelight, \*cloak&10&gt;  
 They would them sell, and spend it on this craft;  
 They cannot stint,\* until no thing be laft. \*cease  
 And evermore, wherever that they gon,  
 Men may them knowe by smell of brimstone;  
 For all the world they stinken as a goat;  
 Their savour is so rammish and so hot,  
 That though a man a mile from them be,  
 The savour will infect him, truste me.  
 Lo, thus by smelling and threadbare array,  
 If that men list, this folk they knowe may.  
 And if a man will ask them privily,  
 Why they be clothed so unthriftily,\* \*shabbily  
 They right anon will rownen\* in his ear, \*whisper  
 And sayen, if that they espied were,  
 Men would them slay, because of their science:  
 Lo, thus these folk betrayen innocence!

Pass over this; I go my tale unto.  
 Ere that the pot be on the fire y-do\* \*placed  
 Of metals, with a certain quantity  
 My lord them tempers,\* and no man but he \*adjusts the proportions  
 (Now he is gone, I dare say boldly):  
 For as men say, he can do craftily,  
 Algate\* I wot well he hath such a name, \*although  
 And yet full oft he runneth into blame;  
 And know ye how? full oft it happ'neth so,  
 The pot to-breaks, and farewell! all is go'.\* \*gone  
 These metals be of so great violence,  
 Our walles may not make them resistance,  
 \*But if\* they were wrought of lime and stone; \*unless\*  
 They pierce so, that through the wall they gon;  
 And some of them sink down into the ground  
 (Thus have we lost by times many a pound),

And some are scatter'd all the floor about;  
 Some leap into the roof without doubt.  
 Though that the fiend not in our sight him show,  
 I trowe that he be with us, that shrew;\*                      \*impious wretch  
 In helle, where that he is lord and sire,  
 Is there no more woe, rancour, nor ire.  
 When that our pot is broke, as I have said,  
 Every man chides, and holds him \*evil apaid.\*                      \*dissatisfied\*  
 Some said it was \*long on\* the fire-making;                      \*because of &lt;11&gt;;\*  
 Some saide nay, it was on the blowing  
 (Then was I fear'd, for that was mine office):  
 'Straw!' quoth the third, 'ye be \*lewed and \*\*nice, \*ignorant \*\*foolish  
 It was not temper'd\* as it ought to be.'                      \*mixed in due proportions  
 'Nay,' quoth the fourthe, 'stint\* and hearken me;                      \*stop  
 Because our fire was not y-made of beech,  
 That is the cause, and other none, \*so the'ch.\*                      \*so may I thrive\*  
 I cannot tell whereon it was along,  
 But well I wot great strife is us among.'  
 'What?' quoth my lord, 'there is no more to do'n,  
 Of these perils I will beware eftsoon.\*                      \*another time  
 I am right sicker\* that the pot was crazed.\*\*                      \*sure \*\*cracked  
 Be as be may, be ye no thing amazed.\*                      \*confounded  
 As usage is, let sweep the floor as swithe;\*                      \*quickly  
 Pluck up your heartes and be glad and blithe.'

The mullok\* on a heap y-sweeped was,                      \*rubbish  
 And on the floor y-cast a canevas,  
 And all this mullok in a sieve y-throw,  
 And sifted, and y-picked many a throw.\*                      \*time  
 'Pardie,' quoth one, 'somewhat of our metal  
 Yet is there here, though that we have not all.  
 And though this thing \*mishapped hath as now,\*                      \*has gone amiss  
 Another time it may be well enow. at present\*  
 We muste \*put our good in adventure; \*                      \*risk our property\*  
 A merchant, pardie, may not aye endure,  
 Truste me well, in his prosperity:  
 Sometimes his good is drenched\* in the sea,                      \*drowned, sunk  
 And sometimes comes it safe unto the land.'  
 'Peace,' quoth my lord; 'the next time I will fand\*                      \*endeavour  
 To bring our craft \*all in another plight,\* \*to a different conclusion\*  
 And but I do, Sirs, let me have the wite;\*                      \*blame  
 There was default in somewhat, well I wot.'

Another said, the fire was over hot.  
 But be it hot or cold, I dare say this,  
 That we concluden evermore amiss;  
 We fail alway of that which we would have;  
 And in our madness evermore we rave.  
 And when we be together every one,  
 Every man seemeth a Solomon.  
 But all thing, which that shineth as the gold,  
 It is not gold, as I have heard it told;  
 Nor every apple that is fair at eye,  
 It is not good, what so men clap\* or cry.                   \*assert  
 Right so, lo, fareth it amonges us.  
 He that the wisest seemeth, by Jesus,  
 Is most fool, when it cometh to the prefe;\*               \*proof, test  
 And he that seemeth truest, is a thief.  
 That shall ye know, ere that I from you wend;  
 By that I of my tale have made an end.

There was a canon of religioun  
 Amonges us, would infect\* all a town,                   \*deceive  
 Though it as great were as was Nineveh,  
 Rome, Alisandre,\* Troy, or other three.               \*Alexandria  
 His sleightes\* and his infinite falseness               \*cunning tricks  
 There coulde no man writen, as I guess,  
 Though that he mighte live a thousand year;  
 In all this world of falseness n'is\* his peer.           \*there is not  
 For in his termes he will him so wind,  
 And speak his wordes in so sly a kind,  
 When he commune shall with any wight,  
 That he will make him doat\* anon aright,               \*become foolishly  
 But it a fiende be, as himself is. fond of him\*  
 Full many a man hath he beguil'd ere this,  
 And will, if that he may live any while;  
 And yet men go and ride many a mile  
 Him for to seek, and have his acquaintance,  
 Not knowing of his false governance.\*               \*deceitful conduct  
 And if you list to give me audience,  
 I will it telle here in your presence.  
 But, worshipful canons religious,  
 Ne deeme not that I slander your house,  
 Although that my tale of a canon be.  
 Of every order some shrew is, pardie;

And God forbid that all a company  
Should rue a singular\* manne's folly.  
To slander you is no thing mine intent;  
But to correct that is amiss I meant.  
This tale was not only told for you,  
But eke for other more; ye wot well how  
That amonges Christe's apostles twelve  
There was no traitor but Judas himselve;  
Then why should all the remenant have blame,  
That guiltless were? By you I say the same.  
Save only this, if ye will hearken me,  
If any Judas in your convent be,  
Remove him betimes, I you rede,\*  
If shame or loss may causen any dread.  
And be no thing displeased, I you pray;  
But in this case hearken what I say.

\*individual

\*counsel

In London was a priest, an annualere, &lt;12&gt;  
That therein dwelled hadde many a year,  
Which was so pleasant and so serviceable  
Unto the wife, where as he was at table,  
That she would suffer him no thing to pay  
For board nor clothing, went he ne'er so gay;  
And spending silver had he right enow;  
Thereof no force;\* will proceed as now,  
And telle forth my tale of the canon,  
That brought this prieste to confusion.  
This false canon came upon a day  
Unto the prieste's chamber, where he lay,  
Beseeching him to lend him a certain  
Of gold, and he would quit it him again.  
'Lend me a mark,' quoth he, 'but dayes three,  
And at my day I will it quite thee.  
And if it so be that thou find me false,  
Another day hang me up by the halse.'\*  
This priest him took a mark, and that as swithe,\*  
And this canon him thanked often sithe,\*  
And took his leave, and wente forth his way;  
And at the thirde day brought his money;  
And to the priest he took his gold again,  
Whereof this priest was wondrous glad and fain.\*  
'Certes,' quoth he, '\*nothing annoyeth me\*

\*no matter

\*neck

\*quickly

\*times

\*pleased

\*I am not unwilling\*

To lend a man a noble, or two, or three,  
 Or what thing were in my possession,  
 When he so true is of condition,  
 That in no wise he breake will his day;  
 To such a man I never can say nay.'  
 'What,' quoth this canon, 'should I be untrue?  
 Nay, that were \*thing y-fallen all of new!\*      \*a new thing to happen\*  
 Truth is a thing that I will ever keep,  
 Unto the day in which that I shall creep  
 Into my grave; and elles God forbid;  
 Believe this as sicker\* as your creed.                      \*sure  
 God thank I, and in good time be it said,  
 That there was never man yet \*evil apaid\*      \*displeased, dissatisfied\*  
 For gold nor silver that he to me lent,  
 Nor ever falsehood in mine heart I meant.  
 And Sir,' quoth he, 'now of my privity,  
 Since ye so goodly have been unto me,  
 And kithed\* to me so great gentleness,                      \*shown  
 Somewhat, to quite with your kindness,  
 I will you shew, and if you list to lear,\*                      \*learn  
 I will you teache plainly the mannere  
 How I can worken in philosophy.  
 Take good heed, ye shall well see \*at eye\*                      \*with your own eye\*  
 That I will do a mas'try ere I go.'  
 'Yea,' quoth the priest; 'yea, Sir, and will ye so?  
 Mary! thereof I pray you heartily.'  
 'At your commandement, Sir, truely,'  
 Quoth the canon, 'and elles God forbid.'  
 Lo, how this thiefe could his service bedel!\*                      \*offer

Full sooth it is that such proffer'd service  
 Stinketh, as witesse \*these olde wise;\*                      \*those wise folk of old\*  
 And that full soon I will it verify  
 In this canon, root of all treachery,  
 That evermore delight had and gladness  
 (Such fiendly thoughtes \*in his heart impress\*) \*press into his heart\*  
 How Christe's people he may to mischief bring.  
 God keep us from his false dissimuling!  
 What wiste this priest with whom that he dealt?  
 Nor of his harm coming he nothing felt.  
 O sely\* priest, O sely innocent!                                      \*simple  
 With covetise anon thou shalt be blent;\*                      \*blinded; beguiled

O graceless, full blind is thy conceit!  
 For nothing art thou ware of the deceit  
 Which that this fox y-shapen\* hath to thee;                   \*contrived  
 His wily wrenches\* thou not mayest flee.                    \*snares  
 Wherefore, to go to the conclusioun  
 That referreth to thy confusion,  
 Unhappy man, anon I will me hie\*                                \*hasten  
 To telle thine unwitting\* and thy folly,                        \*stupidity  
 And eke the falseness of that other wretch,  
 As farforth as that my conning\* will stretch.                \*knowledge  
 This canon was my lord, ye woulde ween;\*                    \*imagine  
 Sir Host, in faith, and by the heaven's queen,  
 It was another canon, and not he,  
 That can\* an hundred fold more subtlety.                    \*knows  
 He hath betrayed folkes many a time;  
 Of his falseness it doleth\* me to rhyme.                        \*paineth  
 And ever, when I speak of his falsehead,  
 For shame of him my cheekes waxe red;  
 Algates\* they beginne for to glow,                                \*at least  
 For redness have I none, right well I know,  
 In my visage; for fumes diverse  
 Of metals, which ye have me heard rehearse,  
 Consumed have and wasted my redness.  
 Now take heed of this canon's cursedness.\*                    \*villainy

'Sir,' quoth he to the priest, 'let your man gon  
 For quicksilver, that we it had anon;  
 And let him bringen ounces two or three;  
 And when he comes, as faste shall ye see  
 A wondrous thing, which ye saw ne'er ere this.'  
 'Sir,' quoth the priest, 'it shall be done, y-wis.'\*                \*certainly  
 He bade his servant fetche him this thing,  
 And he all ready was at his bidding,  
 And went him forth, and came anon again  
 With this quicksilver, shortly for to sayn;  
 And took these ounces three to the canoun;  
 And he them laide well and fair adown,  
 And bade the servant coales for to bring,  
 That he anon might go to his working.  
 The coales right anon weren y-fet,\*                                \*fetchd  
 And this canon y-took a crosselet\*                                \*crucible  
 Out of his bosom, and shew'd to the priest.

'This instrument,' quoth he, 'which that thou seest,  
Take in thine hand, and put thyself therein  
Of this quicksilver an ounce, and here begin,  
In the name of Christ, to wax a philosopher.  
There be full few, which that I woulde proffer  
To shewe them thus much of my science;  
For here shall ye see by experience  
That this quicksilver I will mortify,&lt;13&gt;  
Right in your sight anon withoute lie,  
And make it as good silver, and as fine,  
As there is any in your purse, or mine,  
Or elleswhere; and make it malleable,  
And elles holde me false and unable  
Amonge folk for ever to appear.

I have a powder here that cost me dear,  
Shall make all good, for it is cause of all  
My conning,\* which that I you shewe shall.  
Voide\* your man, and let him be thereout;  
And shut the doore, while we be about  
Our privity, that no man us espy,  
While that we work in this phiosophy.'  
All, as he bade, fulfilled was in deed.  
This ilke servant right anon out yede,\*  
And his master y-shut the door anon,  
And to their labour speedily they gon.

\*knowledge

\*send away

\*went

This priest, at this cursed canon's biddIng,  
Upon the fire anon he set this thing,  
And blew the fire, and busied him full fast.  
And this canon into the croslet cast  
A powder, I know not whereof it was  
Y-made, either of chalk, either of glass,  
Or somewhat elles, was not worth a fly,  
To blinden\* with this priest; and bade him hie\*\* \*deceive \*\*make haste  
The coales for to couchen\* all above lay in order  
The croslet; 'for, in token I thee love,'  
Quoth this canon, 'thine owen handes two  
Shall work all thing that here shall be do'.'  
'Grand mercy,'\* quoth the priest, and was full glad, \*great thanks\*  
And couch'd the coales as the canon bade.  
And while he busy was, this fiendly wretch,  
This false canon (the foule fiend him fetch),

Out of his bosom took a beechen coal,  
 In which full subtily was made a hole,  
 And therein put was of silver limaile\*      \*filings  
 An ounce, and stopped was withoute fail  
 The hole with wax, to keep the limaile in.  
 And understande, that this false gin\*      \*contrivance  
 Was not made there, but it was made before;  
 And other thinges I shall tell you more,  
 Hereafterward, which that he with him brought;  
 Ere he came there, him to beguile he thought,  
 And so he did, ere that they \*went atwin\*;  
 Till he had turned him, could he not blin.\*      \*separated\*  
 It doleth\* me, when that I of him speak;      \*cease & 14&gt;  
 On his falsehood fain would I me awreak,\*      \*paineth  
 If I wist how, but he is here and there;      \*revenge myself  
 He is so variant,\* he abides nowhere.      \*changeable

But take heed, Sirs, now for Godde's love.  
 He took his coal, of which I spake above,  
 And in his hand he bare it privily,  
 And while the prieste couched busily  
 The coales, as I tolde you ere this,  
 This canon saide, 'Friend, ye do amiss;  
 This is not couched as it ought to be,  
 But soon I shall amenden it,' quoth he.  
 'Now let me meddle therewith but a while,  
 For of you have I pity, by Saint Gile.  
 Ye be right hot, I see well how ye sweat;  
 Have here a cloth, and wipe away the wet.'  
 And while that the prieste wip'd his face,  
 This canon took his coal, - \*with sorry grace,\* -      \*evil fortune  
 And layed it above on the midward attend him!\*  
 Of the croslet, and blew well afterward,  
 Till that the coals beganne fast to brenn.\*      \*burn  
 'Now give us drinke,' quoth this canon then,  
 'And swithe\* all shall be well, I undertake.      \*quickly  
 Sitte we down, and let us merry make.'  
 And whenne that this canon's beechen coal  
 Was burnt, all the limaile out of the hole  
 Into the crosselet anon fell down;  
 And so it muste needes, by reasoun,  
 Since it above so \*even couched\* was;      \*exactly laid\*



But thereof wist the priest no thing, alas!  
He deemed all the coals alike good,  
For of the sleight he nothing understood.

And when this alchemister saw his time,  
'Rise up, Sir Priest,' quoth he, 'and stand by me;  
And, for I wot well ingot\* have ye none;  
Go, walke forth, and bring me a chalk stone;  
For I will make it of the same shape  
That is an ingot, if I may have hap.

\*mould

Bring eke with you a bowl, or else a pan,  
Full of water, and ye shall well see than\*  
How that our business shall \*hap and preve\*  
And yet, for ye shall have no misbelieve\*  
Nor wrong conceit of me, in your absence,  
I wille not be out of your presence,  
But go with you, and come with you again.'

\*then

\*succeed\*

\*mistrust

The chamber-doore, shortly for to sayn,  
They opened and shut, and went their way,  
And forth with them they carried the key;  
And came again without any delay.

Why should I tarry all the longe day?

He took the chalk, and shap'd it in the wise  
Of an ingot, as I shall you devise;\*

\*describe

I say, he took out of his owen sleeve

A teine\* of silver (evil may he cheve!\*\*)

\*little piece \*\*prosper

Which that ne was but a just ounce of weight.

And take heed now of his cursed sleight;

He shap'd his ingot, in length and in brede\*

\*breadth

Of this teine, withouten any drede,\*

\*doubt

So slily, that the priest it not espied;

And in his sleeve again he gan it hide;

And from the fire he took up his mattere,

And in th' ingot put it with merry cheer;

And in the water-vessel he it cast,

When that him list, and bade the priest as fast

Look what there is; 'Put in thine hand and grope;

There shalt thou finde silver, as I hope.'

What, devil of helle! should it elles be?

Shaving of silver, silver is, pardie.

He put his hand in, and took up a teine

Of silver fine; and glad in every vein

Was this priest, when he saw that it was so.  
 'Godde's blessing, and his mother's also,  
 And alle hallows,\* have ye, Sir Canon!  
 Saide this priest, 'and I their malison\*  
 But, an'\* ye vouchesafe to teache me  
 This noble craft and this subtilty,  
 I will be yours in all that ever I may.'  
 Quoth the canon, 'Yet will I make assay  
 The second time, that ye may take heed,  
 And be expert of this, and, in your need,  
 Another day assay in mine absence  
 This discipline, and this crafty science.  
 Let take another ounce,' quoth he tho,\*  
 'Of quicksilver, withoute wordes mo',  
 And do therewith as ye have done ere this  
 With that other, which that now silver is. '

\*saints  
 \*curse  
 \*if

\*then

The priest him busied, all that e'er he can,  
 To do as this canon, this cursed man,  
 Commanded him, and fast he blew the fire  
 For to come to th' effect of his desire.  
 And this canon right in the meanwhile  
 All ready was this priest eft\* to beguile,  
 and, for a countenance,\* in his hande bare  
 An hollow sticke (take keep\* and beware):  
 Of silver limaile put was, as before  
 Was in his coal, and stopped with wax well  
 For to keep in his limaile every deal.\*  
 And while this priest was in his business,  
 This canon with his sticke gan him dress\*  
 To him anon, and his powder cast in,  
 As he did erst (the devil out of his skin  
 Him turn, I pray to God, for his falsehead,  
 For he was ever false in thought and deed),  
 And with his stick, above the crosselet,  
 That was ordained\* with that false get,\*\*  
 He stirr'd the coales, till relente gan  
 The wax against the fire, as every man,  
 But he a fool be, knows well it must need.  
 And all that in the sticke was out yede,\*  
 And in the croslet hastily\* it fell.  
 Now, goode Sirs, what will ye bet\* than well?

\*again  
 \*stratagem  
 \*heed

\*particle

\*apply

\*provided \*\*contrivance

\*went  
 \*quickly  
 \*better

When that this priest was thus beguil'd again,  
 Supposing naught but truthe, sooth to sayn,  
 He was so glad, that I can not express  
 In no mannere his mirth and his gladness;  
 And to the canon he proffer'd eftsoon\*      \*forthwith; again  
 Body and good. 'Yea,' quoth the canon soon,  
 'Though poor I be, crafty\* thou shalt me find;      \*skilful  
 I warn thee well, yet is there more behind.  
 Is any copper here within?' said he.  
 'Yea, Sir,' the prieste said, 'I trow there be.'  
 'Elles go buy us some, and that as swithe.\*      \*swiftly  
 Now, goode Sir, go forth thy way and hie\* thee.'      \*hasten  
 He went his way, and with the copper came,  
 And this canon it in his handes name,\*      \*took &lt;15&gt;  
 And of that copper weighed out an ounce.  
 Too simple is my tongue to pronounce,  
 As minister of my wit, the doubleness  
 Of this canon, root of all cursedness.  
 He friendly seem'd to them that knew him not;  
 But he was fiendly, both in work and thought.  
 It wearieth me to tell of his falseness;  
 And natheless yet will I it express,  
 To that intent men may beware thereby,  
 And for none other cause truely.  
 He put this copper in the crosselet,  
 And on the fire as swithe\* he hath it set,      \*swiftly  
 And cast in powder, and made the priest to blow,  
 And in his working for to stoope low,  
 As he did erst,\* and all was but a jape;\*\*      \*before \*\*trick  
 Right as him list the priest \*he made his ape.\*      \*befooled him\*  
 And afterward in the ingot he it cast,  
 And in the pan he put it at the last  
 Of water, and in he put his own hand;  
 And in his sleeve, as ye beforehand  
 Hearde me tell, he had a silver teine;\*      \*small piece  
 He silly took it out, this cursed heine\*      \*wretch  
 (Unweeting\* this priest of his false craft),      \*unsuspecting  
 And in the panne's bottom he it laft\*      \*left  
 And in the water rumbleth to and fro,  
 And wondrous privily took up also  
 The copper teine (not knowing thilke priest),  
 And hid it, and him hente\* by the breast,      \*took

And to him spake, and thus said in his game;  
'Stoop now adown; by God, ye be to blame;  
Helpe me now, as I did you whilere;\*' \*before  
Put in your hand, and looke what is there.'

This priest took up this silver teine anon;  
And thenne said the canon, 'Let us gon,  
With these three teines which that we have wrought,  
To some goldsmith, and \*weet if they be aught:\* \*find out if they are  
For, by my faith, I would not for my hood worth anything\*  
\*But if\* they were silver fine and good, \*unless  
And that as swithe\* well proved shall it be.' \*quickly  
Unto the goldsmith with these teines three  
They went anon, and put them in assay\* \*proof  
To fire and hammer; might no man say nay,  
But that they weren as they ought to be.  
This sotted\* priest, who gladder was than he? \*stupid, besotted  
Was never bird gladder against the day;  
Nor nightingale in the season of May  
Was never none, that better list to sing;  
Nor lady lustier in carolling,  
Or for to speak of love and womanhead;  
Nor knight in arms to do a hardy deed,  
To standen in grace of his lady dear,  
Than had this priest this craft for to lear;  
And to the canon thus he spake and said;  
'For love of God, that for us alle died,  
And as I may deserve it unto you,  
What shall this receipt coste? tell me now.'  
'By our Lady,' quoth this canon, 'it is dear.  
I warn you well, that, save I and a frere,  
In Engleland there can no man it make.'  
\*'No force,'\* quoth he; 'now, Sir, for Godde's sake, \*no matter  
What shall I pay? telle me, I you pray.'  
'Y-wis,'\* quoth he, 'it is full dear, I say. \*certainly  
Sir, at one word, if that you list it have,  
Ye shall pay forty pound, so God me save;  
And n'ere\* the friendship that ye did ere this \*were it not for  
To me, ye shoulde paye more, y-wis.'  
This priest the sum of forty pound anon  
Of nobles fet,\* and took them every one \*fetched  
To this canon, for this ilke receipt.

All his working was but fraud and deceit.  
 'Sir Priest,' he said, 'I keep\* to have no los\*\* \*care \*\*praise &16&gt;  
 Of my craft, for I would it were kept close;  
 And as ye love me, keep it secre:  
 For if men knewen all my subtlety,  
 By God, they woulde have so great envy  
 To me, because of my philosophy,  
 I should be dead, there were no other way.'  
 'God it forbid,' quoth the priest, 'what ye say.  
 Yet had I lever\* spenden all the good \*rather  
 Which that I have (and elles were I wood\*), \*mad  
 Than that ye shoulde fall in such mischief.'  
 'For your good will, Sir, have ye right good prefe,'\* \*results of your  
 Quoth the canon; 'and farewell, grand mercy.' \*experiments\*  
 He went his way, and never the priest him sey \* \*saw  
 After that day; and when that this priest should  
 Maken assay, at such time as he would,  
 Of this receipt, farewell! it would not be.  
 Lo, thus bejaped\* and beguil'd was he; \*tricked  
 Thus made he his introduction  
 To bringe folk to their destruction.

Consider, Sirs, how that in each estate  
 Betwixte men and gold there is debate,  
 So farforth that \*unnethes is there none.\* \*scarcely is there any\*  
 This multiplying blint\* so many a one, \*blinds, deceive  
 That in good faith I trowe that it be  
 The cause greatest of such scarcity.  
 These philosophers speak so mistily  
 In this craft, that men cannot come thereby,  
 For any wit that men have how-a-days.  
 They may well chatter, as do these jays,  
 And in their termes set their \*lust and pain,\* \*pleasure and exertion\*  
 But to their purpose shall they ne'er attain.  
 A man may lightly\* learn, if he have aught, \*easily  
 To multiply, and bring his good to naught.  
 Lo, such a lucre\* is in this lusty\*\* game; \*profit \*\*pleasant  
 A manne's mirth it will turn all to grame,\* \*sorrow &17&gt;  
 And empty also great and heavy purses,  
 And make folke for to purchase curses  
 Of them that have thereto their good y-lent.  
 Oh, fy for shame! they that have been brent,\* \*burnt

Alas! can they not flee the fire's heat?  
 Ye that it use, I rede\* that ye it lete,\*\*      \*advise \*\*leave  
 Lest ye lose all; for better than never is late;  
 Never to thrive, were too long a date.  
 Though ye prowle aye, ye shall it never find;  
 Ye be as bold as is Bayard the blind,  
 That blunders forth, and \*peril casteth none;\*      \*perceives no danger\*  
 He is as bold to run against a stone,  
 As for to go beside it in the way:  
 So fare ye that multiply, I say.  
 If that your eyen cannot see aright,  
 Look that your minde lacke not his sight.  
 For though you look never so broad, and stare,  
 Ye shall not win a mite on that chaffare,\*      \*traffic, commerce  
 But wasten all that ye may \*rape and renn.\*      \*get by hook or crook\*  
 Withdraw the fire, lest it too faste brenn;\*      \*burn  
 Meddle no more with that art, I mean;  
 For if ye do, your thrift\* is gone full clean.      \*prosperity  
 And right as swithe\* I will you telle here      \*quickly  
 What philosophers say in this matter.

Lo, thus saith Arnold of the newe town, &lt;18&gt;  
 As his Rosary maketh mentioun,  
 He saith right thus, withouten any lie;  
 'There may no man mercury mortify,&lt;13&gt;  
 But\* it be with his brother's knowledging.'      \*except  
 Lo, how that he, which firste said this thing,  
 Of philosophers father was, Hermes;&lt;19&gt;  
 He saith, how that the dragon doubtless  
 He dieth not, but if that he be slain  
 With his brother. And this is for to sayn,  
 By the dragon, Mercury, and none other,  
 He understood, and Brimstone by his brother,  
 That out of Sol and Luna were y-draw.\*      \*drawn, derived  
 'And therefore,' said he, 'take heed to my saw.      \*saying  
 Let no man busy him this art to seech,\*      \*study, explore  
 \*But if\* that he th'intention and speech      \*unless  
 Of philosophers understande can;  
 And if he do, he is a lewed\* man.      \*ignorant, foolish  
 For this science and this conning,\* quoth he,      \*knowledge  
 'Is of the secret of secrets &lt;20&gt; pardie.'  
 Also there was a disciple of Plato,

That on a time said his master to,  
 As his book, Senior, &21&gt; will bear witness,  
 And this was his demand in soothfastness:  
 'Tell me the name of thilke\* privy\*\* stone.'      \*that \*\*secret  
 And Plato answer'd unto him anon;  
 'Take the stone that Titanos men name.'  
 'Which is that?' quoth he. 'Magnesia is the same,'  
 Saide Plato. 'Yea, Sir, and is it thus?  
 This is ignotum per ignotius. &22&gt;  
 What is Magnesia, good Sir, I pray?'  
 'It is a water that is made, I say,  
 Of th' elementes foure,' quoth Plato.  
 'Tell me the roote, good Sir,' quoth he tho,\*      \*then  
 'Of that water, if that it be your will.'  
 'Nay, nay,' quoth Plato, 'certain that I n'ill.\*      \*will not  
 The philosophers sworn were every one,  
 That they should not discover it to none,  
 Nor in no book it write in no mannere;  
 For unto God it is so lefe\* and dear,      \*precious  
 That he will not that it discover'd be,  
 But where it liketh to his deity  
 Man for to inspire, and eke for to defend'\*      \*protect  
 Whom that he liketh; lo, this is the end.'

Then thus conclude I, since that God of heaven  
 Will not that these philosophers never\*      \*name  
 How that a man shall come unto this stone,  
 I rede\* as for the best to let it gon.      \*counsel  
 For whoso maketh God his adversary,  
 As for to work any thing in contrary  
 Of his will, certes never shall he thrive,  
 Though that he multiply term of his live. &23&gt;  
 And there a point;\* for ended is my tale.      \*end  
 God send ev'ry good man \*boot of his bale.\*

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales

## PROLOGUE

Here bygynneth the Book of the tales of Caunterbury.

Whan that Aprille, with hise shoures soote,  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,  
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;  
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth

Inspired hath in every holt and heeth  
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,  
And smale foweles maken melodye,  
That slepen al the nyght with open eye-

So priketh hem Nature in hir corages-  
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages  
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes  
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;  
And specially, from every shires ende

Of Engelond, to Caunturbury they wende,  
The hooly blisful martir for the seke  
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seeke.

Bifil that in that seson, on a day,  
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,

Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage  
To Caunterbury, with ful devout corage,  
At nyght were come into that hostelrye  
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye  
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle

In felawshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,  
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.  
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,  
And wel we weren esed atte beste;  
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,



So hadde I spoken with hem everychon  
That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,  
And made forward erly for to ryse  
To take our wey, ther as I yow devyse.  
But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,

Er that I ferther in this tale pace,  
Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun  
To telle yow al the condicioun  
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,  
And whiche they weren, and of what degree,

And eek in what array that they were inne;  
And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.  
A knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,  
That fro the tyme that he first bigan  
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,

Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.  
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,

And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,  
As wel in Cristendom as in Hethenesse,  
And evere honoured for his worthynesse.

At Alisaundre he was, whan it was wonne;  
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne  
Aboven alle nacions in Pruce;  
In Lettow hadde he reysed, and in Ruce,  
No cristen man so ofte of his degree.

In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be  
Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye;  
At Lyveys was he, and at Satalye,  
Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See  
At many a noble arive hadde he be.

At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,  
And foughten for oure feith at Tramysse  
In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.  
This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also

Somtyme with the lord of Palatye

Agayn another hethen in Turkye,  
And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.  
And though that he were worthy, he was wys,  
And of his port as meeke as is a mayde;  
He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde

In al his lyf unto no maner wight;  
He was a verray parfit gentil knyght.

But for to tellen yow of his array,  
His hors weren goode, but he was nat gay.  
Of fustian he wered a gypoun,

Al bismotered with his habergeoun;  
For he was late ycome from his viage,  
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.

With hym ther was his sone, a yong Squier,  
A lovyere and a lusty bachelor,

With lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse.  
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.  
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,  
And wonderly delyvere, and of greet strengthe.  
And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie

In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,  
And born hym weel, as of so litel space,  
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.  
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede,  
Al ful of fresshe floures whyte and reede;

Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day,  
He was as fressh as is the monthe of May.  
Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde.  
Wel koude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde,  
He koude songes make, and wel endite,

Juste, and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.  
So hote he lovede, that by nyghtertale  
He slepte namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.  
Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable,

And carf biforn his fader at the table.

A Yeman hadde he, and servantz namo  
At that tyme, for hym liste ride soo;  
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene,  
A sheef of pecok arwes bright and kene  
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily-

Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly,  
Hise arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe-  
And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.  
A not -heed hadde he, with a broun visage,  
Of woodecraft wel koude he al the usage.

Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,  
And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,  
And on that oother syde a gay daggere,  
Harneised wel, and sharpe as point of spere.  
A Cristophere on his brest of silver sheene,

An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene.  
A Forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.

Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioressse,  
That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy.  
Hir gretteste ooth was but by Seinte Loy,

And she was cleped Madame Eglentyne.  
Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,  
Entuned in hir nose ful semely;  
And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly  
After the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe,

For Frenssh of Parys was to hir unknowe.  
At mete wel ytaught was she withalle;  
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,  
Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe.  
Wel koude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe

That no drope ne fille upon hir brist.  
In curteisie was set ful muche hir list;  
Hire over-lippe wyped she so clene,  
That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene

Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.

Ful semely after hir mete she raughte;  
And sikerly, she was of greet desport,  
And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,  
And peyned hir to countrefete cheere  
Of court, and been estatlich of manere,

And to ben holden digne of reverence.  
But for to speken of hir conscience,  
She was so charitable and so pitous,  
She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous  
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.

Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde

With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel-breed.  
But soore weep she if oon of hem were deed,  
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;  
And al was conscience, and tendre herte.

Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was,  
Hire nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,  
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;  
But sikerly, she hadde a fair forheed,  
It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe,

For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.  
Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war;  
Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar  
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,  
An theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,

On which ther was first write a crowned `A,'  
And after, `Amor vincit omnia.'  
Another Nonne with hir hadde she,  
That was hire Chapeleyne, and preestes thre.  
A Monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,

An outridere, that lovede venerie,  
A manly man, to been an abbot able.  
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable;

And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere  
Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere,

And eek as loude, as dooth the chapel belle,  
Ther as this lord was keper of the celle.  
The reule of Seint Maure, or of Seint Beneit,  
Bycause that it was old and somdel streit-  
This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,

And heeld after the newe world the space.  
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,  
That seith that hunters beth nat hooly men,  
Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,  
Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees-

This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre-  
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre!  
And I seyde his opinioun was good,  
What sholde he studie, and make hymselfen wood,  
Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,

Or swynken with his handes and laboure  
As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?  
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved;  
Therefore he was a prikasour aright,  
Grehoundes he hadde, as swift as fowel in flight;

Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare  
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.  
I seigh his sleves ypurfiled at the hond  
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;  
And for to festne his hood under his chyn

He hadde of gold ywroght a curious pyn;  
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.  
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,  
And eek his face, as it hadde been enoynt.  
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt,

Hise eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed,  
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;  
His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat;

Now certainly he was a fair prelaat!  
He was nat pale as a forpyned goost,

A fat swan loved he best of any roost.  
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye,  
A Frere ther was, a wantowne and a merye,  
A lymytour, a ful solempne man,  
In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan

So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.  
He hadde maad ful many a mariage  
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.  
Unto his ordre he was a noble post,  
And wel biloved and famulier was he

With frankeleyns overal in his contree  
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun,  
For he hadde power of confessioun,  
As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,  
For of his ordre he was licenciat.

Ful swetely herde he confessioun,  
And plesaunt was his a absolucioun,  
He was an esy man to yeve penaunce  
Ther as he wiste to have a good pitaunce;  
For unto a povre ordre for to yive

Is signe that a man is wel yshryve;  
For, if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,  
He wiste that a man was repentaunt.  
For many a man so harde is of his herte,  
He may nat wepe, al thogh hym soore smerte;

Therefore, in stede of wepyng and preyeres,  
Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.  
His typpet was ay farsed ful of knyves  
And pynnes, for to yeven yonge wyves.  
And certainly he hadde a murye note,

Wel koude he synge, and pleyen on a rote,  
Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.  
His nekke whit was as the flour delys;

Therto he strong was as a champioun,  
He knew the tavernes wel in every toun

And everich hostiler and tappestere  
Bet than a lazar or a beggestere.  
For unto swich a worthy man as he  
Acorded nat, as by his facultee,  
To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce;

It is nat honeste, it may nat avaunce,  
For to deelen with no swich poraille,  
But al with riche and selleres of vitaille;  
And overal, ther as profit sholde arise,  
Curteis he was, and lowely of servyse.

Ther nas no man nowher so vertuouus;  
He was the beste beggere in his hous,  
(And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt  
Noon of his brethren cam ther in his haunt;)  
For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,  
So plesaunt was his `In principio'  
Yet wolde he have a ferthyng er he wente;

His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.  
And rage he koude, as it were right a whelpe;  
In love-dayes ther koude he muchel helpe;  
For there he was nat lyk a cloysterer,  
With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scoler,

But he was lyk a maister or a pope;  
Of double worstede was his semycope,  
That rounded as a belle out of the presse.  
Somwhat he lipped for his wantownesse  
To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge,  
□

And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,  
Hise eyen twynkled in his heed aryght  
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.  
This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.

A Marchant was ther, with a forkek berd,

In mottelee, and hye on horse he sat,

Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bevere hat,  
His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.  
Hise resons he spak ful solempnely,  
Sownyng alway thencrees of his wynnyng.

He wolde the see were kept for any thyng  
Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.  
Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.  
This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette;  
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,

So estatly was he of his governaunce,  
With his bargaynes and with his chevysaunce.  
Forsothe, he was a worthy man with-alle,  
But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.

A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,

That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.  
As leene was his hors as is a rake,  
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,  
But looked holwe and therto sobrelly.  
Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy,

For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,  
Ne was so worldly for to have office,  
For hym was levere have at his beddes heed  
Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,  
Of Aristotle and his pilosophie,

Than robes riche, or fithelle, or gay sautrie.  
But al be that he was a philosophre,  
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;  
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,  
On bookes and his lernynge he it spente,

And bisily gan for the soules preye  
Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.  
Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede,  
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,  
And that was seyde in forme and reverence,

And short and quyk, and ful of hy sentence.



Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,  
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

A Sergeant of the Lawe, war and wys,  
That often hadde been at the parvys,

Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.  
Discreet he was, and of greet reverence,-  
He semed swich, hise wordes weren so wise.  
Justice he was ful often in assise,  
By patente, and by pleyn commissioun.

For his science, and for his heigh renoun,  
Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.  
So greet a purchasour was nowher noon,  
Al was fee symple to hym in effect,  
His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.

□

Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,  
And yet he semed bisier than he was;  
In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle,  
That from the tyme of Kyng William were falle.  
Therto he koude endite, and make a thyng,

Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng.  
And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.  
He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote  
Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;-  
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

A Frankeleyn was in his compaignye;  
Whit was his berd as is a dayesye.  
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.  
Wel loved he by the morwe a sope in wyn,  
To lyven in delit was evere his wone;

For he was Epicurus owene sone,  
That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit  
Was verrailly felicitee parfit,  
An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;  
Seint Julian was he in his contree.

His breed, his ale, was always after oon,

A better envyned man was nowher noon.  
Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,  
Of fish and flesh, and that so plentevous,  
It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke,

Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke.  
After the sondry sesons of the yeer  
So chaunged he his mete and his soper.  
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,  
And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.

Who was his cook, but if his sauce were  
Poynaunt, and sharp, and redy al his geere.  
His table dormant in his halle alway  
Stood redy covered al the longe day.  
At session ther was he lord and sire;

Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.  
An anlaas and a gipser al of silk  
Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.  
A shirreve hadde he been, and a countour,  
Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour.

An Haberdasshere and a Carpenter,  
A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapycer-  
And they were clothed alle in o lyveree  
Of a solempne and a greet fraternitee.  
Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was,

Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras,  
But al with silver wrought ful clene and weel,  
Hir girdles and hir pouches everydeel.  
Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys  
To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys.

Everich for the wisdom that he kan  
Was shaply for to been an alderman;  
For catel hadde they ynogh, and rente,  
And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente-  
And eles, certeyn, were they to blame!

□

It is ful fair to been ycleped `ma Dame,'

And goon to vigilies al bifore,  
And have a mantel roialliche ybore.

A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones,  
To boille the chiknes with the marybones,

And poudre-marchant tart, and galyngale.  
Wel koude he knowe a draughte of London ale;  
He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,  
Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.  
But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,

That on his shyne a mormal hadde he!  
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.

A Shipman was ther, wonyng fer by weste;  
For aught I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.  
He rood upon a rouncy, as he kouthe,

In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.  
A daggere hangyng on a laas hadde he  
Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.  
The hoot somer hadde maad his hewe al broun,  
And certainly he was a good felawe.

Ful many a draughte of wyn had he ydrawe  
Fro Burdeuxward, whil that the chapman sleep.  
Of nyce conscience took he no keep;  
If that he faught, and hadde the hyer hond,  
By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.

But of his craft, to rekene wel his tydes,  
His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,  
His herberwe and his moone, his lodemenage,  
Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.  
Hardy he was, and wys to undertake,

With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake;  
He knew alle the havenes as they were  
From Gootlond to the Cape of Fynystere,  
And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne.  
His barge yeleped was the Maudelayne.

With us ther was a Doctour of Phisik;

In al this world ne was ther noon hym lik,  
To speke of phisik and of surgerye;  
For he was grounded in astronomye.  
He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel

In houres, by his magyk natureel.  
Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent  
Of hisc ymages for his pacient.  
He knew the cause of everich maladye,  
Were it of hoot or coold, or moyste, or drye,

And where they engendred, and of what humour.  
He was a verray parfit praktisour;  
The cause yknowe, and of his harm the roote,  
Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.  
Ful redy hadde he hise apothecaries

To sende him drogges and his letuaries,  
For ech of hem made oother for to wynne,  
Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.  
Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,  
And Deyscorides and eek Rufus,  
□  
Olde Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,  
Serapioun, Razis, and Avycen,  
Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,  
Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.  
Of his diete mesurable was he,

For it was of no superfluitee,  
But of greet norissyng, and digestible.  
His studie was but litel on the Bible.  
In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,  
Lyned with taffata and with sendal-

And yet he was but esy of dispence;  
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.  
For gold in phisik is a cordial,  
Therefore he lovede gold in special.

A good wif was ther, of biside Bathe,

He was to synful man nat despitous,

Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,  
But in his techyng discreet and benygne;  
To drawn folk to hevne by fairnesse,  
By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.

But it were any persone obstinat,  
What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,  
Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.  
A bettre preest, I trowe, that nowher noon ys.  
He waited after no pompe and reverence,

Ne maked him a spiced conscience,  
But Cristes loore, and Hise apostles twelve  
He taughte, but first he folwed it hym-selve.

With hym ther was a Plowman, was his brother,  
That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother.

A trewe swybnker and a good was he,  
Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee.  
God loved he best with al his hoole herte  
At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,  
And thanne his neighebore right as hym-selve;

He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,  
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight  
Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.  
Hise tithes payed he ful faire and wel,  
Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.

In a tabard he rood, upon a mere.

Ther was also a Reve and a Millere,  
A Somnour and a Pardoner also,  
A Maunciple, and myself, ther were namo.  
The Millere was a stout carl for the nones,

Ful byg he was of brawn and eek of bones-  
That proved wel, for overal ther he cam  
At wrastlyng he wolde have alwey the ram.  
He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre,  
Ther was no dore that he nolde heve of harre,

Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.

His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,  
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.  
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade  
A werte, and thereon stood a toft of heres  
□

Reed as the brustles of a sowes eres;  
Hise nosethirles blake were and wyde.  
A swerd and bokeler bar he by his syde.  
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys,  
He was a janglere and a goliardeys,

And that was moost of synne and harlotries.  
Wel koude he stelen corn, and tollen thries,  
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.  
A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.  
A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,

And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.  
A gentil Maunciple was ther of a temple,  
Of which achatours myghte take exemple  
For to be wise in byynge of vitaille;  
For wheither that he payde or took by taille,

Algate he wayted so in his achaat  
That he was ay biforn, and in good staat.  
Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace,  
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace  
The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?

Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,  
That weren of lawe expert and curious,  
Of whiche ther weren a duszeyne in that hous  
Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond  
Of any lord that is in Engelond,

To maken hym lyve by his propre good,  
In honour dettelees, but if he were wood;  
Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire,  
And able for to helpen al a shire  
In any caas that myghte falle or happe-

And yet this manciple sette hir aller cappe!

The Reve was a sclendre colerik man;  
His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan,  
His heer was by his erys ful round yshorn,  
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.

Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,  
Ylyk a staf, ther was no calf ysene.  
Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne,  
Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.  
Wel wiste he, by the droghte, and by the reyn,

The yeldyng of his seed and of his greyn.  
His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,  
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye,  
Was hooly in this reves governyng  
And by his covenant yaf the rekenyng,

Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age;  
Ther koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.  
Ther nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,  
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne,  
They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.

His wonyng was ful faire upon an heeth,  
With grene trees shadwed was his place.  
He koude better than his lord purchace.  
Ful riche he was astored pryvely;  
His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly

□

To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,  
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hook.  
In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster,  
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.  
This reve sat upon a ful good stot,

That was al pomely grey, and highte Scot.  
A long surcote of pers upon he hade,  
And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.  
Of Northfolk was this reve, of which I telle,  
Bisyde a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.

Tukked he was, as is a frere, aboute,

And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.

A Somonour was ther with us in that place,  
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,  
For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.

As hoot he was, and lecherous, as a sparwe,  
With scalled browes blake, and piled berd,  
Of his visage children were aferd.  
Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,  
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,

Ne oynement, that wolde clense and byte,  
That hym myghte helpen of his wheldes white,  
Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.  
Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,  
And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood;

Thanne wolde he speke and crie as he were wood.  
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,  
Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.  
A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,  
That he had lerned out of som decree-

No wonder is, he herde it al the day,  
And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay  
Kan clepen `watte' as wel as kan the Pope.  
But who so koude in oother thyng hym grope,  
Thanne hadde he spent al his pilosophie;

Ay `questio quid juris' wolde he crie.  
He was a gentil harlot and a kynde,  
A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde;  
He wolde suffre, for a quart of wyn,  
A good felawe to have his concubyn

A twelf-monthe, and excuse hym atte fulle-  
Ful prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.  
And if he foond owher a good felawe,  
He wolde techen him to have noon awe,  
In swich caas, of the erchedekeness curs,

But if a mannes soule were in his purs;



For in his purs he sholde ypunysshed be,  
`Purs is the erchedekenes helle,' seyde he.  
But wel I woot he lyed right in dede;  
Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede-

For curs wol slee, right as assoillyng savith-  
And also war him of a Significavit.

In daunger hadde he at his owene gise  
The yonge girles of the diocise,  
And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.

□

A gerland hadde he set upon his heed  
As greet as it were for an ale-stake;  
A bokeleer hadde he maad him of a cake.

With hym ther rood a gentil Pardoner  
Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,

That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.  
Ful loude he soong `com hider, love, to me.'  
This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun,  
Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.  
This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,

But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;  
By ounces henge hise lokkes that he hadde,  
And therwith he hise shuldres overspradde;  
But thynne it lay by colpons oon and oon.  
But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,

For it was trussed up in his walet.  
Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet,  
Dischevele, save his cappe, he rood al bare.  
Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.  
A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.

His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe  
Bret-ful of pardoun come from Rome al hoot.  
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot,  
No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have,  
As smothe it was as it were late shave,

I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.

But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware,  
Ne was ther swich another Pardoner;  
For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,  
Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl;

He seyde, he hadde a gobet of the seyl  
That Seinte Peter hadde, whan that he wente  
Upon the see, til Jesu Crist hym hente.  
He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,  
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones;

But with thise relikes whan that he fond  
A povre persoun dwellyng up-on-lond,  
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye  
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye,  
And thus with feyned flaterye and japes

He made the persoun and the peple his apes.  
But trewely to tellen atte laste,  
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste;  
Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,  
But alderbest he song an offertorie,

For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe  
He moste preche, and wel affile his tonge;  
To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude,  
Therefore he song the murierly and loude.

Now have I toold you shortly in a clause

Thestaat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause  
Why that assembled was this compaignye  
In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye,  
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.  
But now is tyme to yow for to telle

□

How that we baren us that ilke nyght  
Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght,  
And after wol I telle of our viage,  
And all the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.  
But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye

That ye narette it nat my vileynye,

Thogh that I pleyntyly speke in this mateere  
To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,  
Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.  
For this ye knowen also wel as I,

Who-so shal telle a tale after a man,  
He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan  
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,  
Al speke he never so rudeliche or large;  
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewed,

Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.  
He may nat spare, al thogh he were his brother,  
He moot as wel seye o word as another.  
Crist spak hym-self ful brode in Hooly Writ,  
And, wel ye woot, no vileynye is it.

Eek Plato seith, who so kan hym rede,  
The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede.  
Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,  
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree  
Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde-

My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.  
Greet chiere made oure hoost us everichon,  
And to the soper sette he us'anon.  
He served us with vitaille at the beste;  
Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us lestel

A semely man oure Hooste was withalle  
For to been a marchal in an halle.  
A large man he was, with eyen stepe,  
A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe;  
Boold of his speche, and wys, and well ytaught,

And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.  
Eek therto he was right a myrie man;  
And after soper pleyen he bigan,  
And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,  
Whan that we hadde maad our rekenynges,

And seyde thus: 'Now lordynges, trewely,

Ye been to me right welcome hertely,  
For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,  
I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye  
Atones in this herberwe, as is now.

Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how-  
And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght  
To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.  
Ye goon to Caunterbury, God yow speede-  
The blisful martir quite yow youre meede-

And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,  
Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye,  
For trewely, confort ne myrthe is noon  
To ride by the weye doumb as stoon,  
And therefore wol I maken yow disport,  
□

As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort;  
And if yow liketh alle by oon assent  
For to stonden at my juggement,  
And for to werken as I shal yow seye,  
To-morwe, whan ye riden by the weye,

Now, by my fader soule that is deed,  
But ye be myrie I wol yeve yow myn heed!  
Hoold up youre hond, withouten moore speche.'  
Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche-  
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys-

And graunted hym, withouten moore avys,  
And bad him seye his voidit, as hym leste.  
'Lordynges,' quod he, 'now herkneth for the beste,  
But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn.  
This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,

That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye,  
In this viage shal telle tales tweye,  
To Caunterburyward I mene it so,  
And homward he shal tellen othere two,  
Of adventures that whilom han bifalle.

And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle-

That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas  
Tales of best sentence and moost solaa-  
Shal have a soper at oure aller cost,  
Heere in this place, sittynge by this post,

Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.  
And for to make yow the moore mury  
I wol my-selven goodly with yow ryde  
Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde.  
And who so wole my juggement withseye

Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.  
And if ye vouchesauf that it be so,  
Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,  
And I wol erly shape me therfore.'  
This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore

With ful gald herte, and preyden hym also  
That he wolde vouchesauf for to do so,  
And that he wolde been oure governour,  
And of our tales juge and reportour,  
And sette a soper at a certeyn pris,

And we wol reuled been at his devys  
In heigh and lough; and thus by oon assent  
We been acorded to his juggement;  
And therupon the wyn was fet anon,  
We dronken, and to reste wente echon

Withouten any lenger taryynge.

Amorwe, whan that day bigan to sprynge,  
Up roos oure Hoost, and was oure aller cok,  
And gadrede us to gidre, alle in a flok,  
And forth we riden, a litel moore than paas,

Unto the wateryng of Seint Thomas.  
And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste,  
And seyde, 'Lordynges, herkneth if yow leste,  
Ye woot youre foreward, and I it yow recorde;  
If even-song and morwe-song accorde,

□

Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.

As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,  
Whoso be rebel to my juggement  
Shal paye for al that by the wey is spent.  
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne,

He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.  
Sire knyght,' quod he, 'my mayster and my lord,  
Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord,  
Cometh neer,' quod he, 'my lady Prioressse,  
And ye, Sir Clerk, lat be your shamefastnesse,

Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man.'  
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,  
And shortly for to tellen as it was,  
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,  
The sothe is this, the cut fil to the knyght,

Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght.  
And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,  
By foreward and by composicioun,-  
As ye han herd, what nedeth wordes mo?  
And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,

As he that wys was and obedient  
To kepe his foreward by his free assent,  
He seyde, 'Syn I shal bigynne the game,  
What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!  
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye.'

And with that word we ryden forth oure weye,  
And he bigan with right a myrie cheere  
His tale anon, and seyde in this manere.

Part 2

THE KNYGHTES TALE.

Iamque domos patrias Scithice post aspera gentis prelia  
laurigero &c. Thebaid, xii, 519.

Heere bigynneth the knyghtes tale.

Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,  
Ther was a duc that highte Theseus;

Of Atthenes he was lord and governour,  
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.  
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne,  
What with his wysdom and his chivalrie;

He conquered al the regne of Femenye,  
That whilom was ycleped Scithia,  
And weddede the queene Ypolita,  
And broghte hir hoom with hym in his contree,  
With muchel glorie and greet solempnytee,

And eek hir yonge suster Emelye.  
And thus with victorie and with melodye  
Lete I this noble duk to Atthenes ryde,  
And al his hoost, in armes hym bisyde.  
And certes, if it nere to long to heere,

I wolde have toold yow fully the manere  
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye  
By Theseus, and by his chivalrye,  
And of the grete bataille for the nones  
Bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones,

And how asseged was Ypolita  
The faire hardy queene of Scithia,  
And of the feste that was at hir weddyng,  
And of the tempest at hir hoom-comyng;  
But al the thyng I moot as now forbere,

I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,  
And wayke been the oxen in my plough,  
The remenant of the tale is long ynough.  
I wol nat letten eek noon of this route,  
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,

And lat se now who shal the soper wynne;-  
And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne.

This duc of whom I make mencion,  
Whan he was come almoost unto the toun,  
In al his wele and in his mooste pride,

He was war, as he caste his eye aside,

Where that ther kneled in the hye weye  
A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,  
Ech after oother, clad in clothes blake;  
But swich a cry and swich a wo they make,

That in this world nys creature lyvyng  
That herde swich another waymentyng!  
And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten,  
Til they the reynes of his brydel henten.  
'What folk been ye, that at myn hom-comyng

Perturben so my feste with cryng?'  
Quod Theseus, 'hav ye so greet envye  
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?  
Or who hath yow mysboden or offended?  
And telleth me if it may been amended,

And why that ye been clothed thus in blak?'  
The eldeste lady of hem alle spak-  
Whan she hadde swowned with a deedly cheere,  
That it was routhe for to seen and heere-  
And seyde, 'Lord, to whom Fortune hath yeven

Victorie, and as a conqueror to lyven,  
Nat greveth us youre glorie and youre honour,  
But we biseken mercy and socour.  
Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse,  
Som drope of pitee thurgh thy gentillesse

Upon us wrecched wommen lat thou falle;  
For certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle  
That she ne hath been a duchesse or a queene.  
Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene-  
Thanked be Fortune, and hir false wheel,

That noon estat assureth to be weel.  
And certes, lord, to abyden youre presence,  
Heere in the temple of the goddessse Clemence  
We han ben waityng al this fourtenyght;  
Now help us, lord, sith it is in thy myght!

I wrecche, which that wepe and waille thus,



Was whilom wyf to kyng Cappaneus,  
That starf at Thebes, cursed be that day!  
And alle we that been in this array  
And maken al this lamentacioun,

We losten alle oure housbondes at that toun,  
Whil that the seege therabout lay.  
And yet now the olde Creon, weylaway!  
That lord is now of Thebes the Citee,  
Fulild of ire and of iniquitee,

He, for despit and for his tirannye,  
To do the dede bodyes vileynye,  
Of alle oure lordes, whiche that been slawe,  
He hath alle the bodyes on an heep ydrawe,  
And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent,

Neither to been yburyed nor ybrent,  
But maketh houndes ete hem in despit.'  
And with that word, withouten moore respit,  
They fillen gruf, and criden pitously,  
'Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy

And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte.'

This gentil duk doun from his courser sterte  
With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke;  
Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke,  
Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,

That whilom weren of so greet estaat.  
And in his armes he hem alle up hente,  
And hem conforteth in ful good entente,  
And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,  
He solde doon so ferforthyl his myght

Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke,  
That all the peple of Grece sholde speke  
How Creon was of Theseus yserved,  
As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.  
And right anoon, withouten moore abood,

His baner he desplayeth, and forth rood

To Thebesward, and al his hoost beside,  
No neer Atthenes wolde he go ne ride,  
Ne take his ese fully half a day,  
But onward on his wey that nyght he lay-

And sente anon Ypolita the queene,  
And Emelye, hir yonge suster sheene,  
Unto the toun of Atthenes to dwelle-  
And forth he rit; ther is namoore to telle.  
The rede statue of Mars, with spere and targe,

So shyneth, in his white baner large,  
That alle the feeldes gliteren up and doun,  
And by his baner gorn is his penoun  
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete  
The Mynotaur which that he slough in Crete.

Thus rit this duc, thus rit this conquerour,  
And in his hoost of chivalrie the flour,  
Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte  
Faire in a feeld, ther as he thoughte fighte.  
But shortly for to speken of this thyng,

With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,  
He faught, and slough hym manly as a knyght  
In pleyn bataille, and putte the folk to flyght,  
And by assaut he wan the citee after,  
And rente adoun bothe wall, and sparre, and rafter.

And to the ladyes he sestored agayn  
The bones of hir housbondes that weren slayn,  
To doon obsequies as was tho the gyse.  
But it were al to longe for to devyse  
The grete clamour and the waymentyng

That the ladyes made at the brennyng  
Of the bodies, and the grete honour  
That Theseus, the noble conquerour,  
Dooth to the ladyes, whan they from hym wente;  
But shortly for to telle is myn entente.

Whan that his worthy duc, this Theseus,

Hath Creon slayn, and wonne Thebes thus,  
Stille in that feeld he took al nyght his reste  
And dide with al the contree as hym leste.  
To ransake in the taas of bodyes dede,

Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,  
The pilours diden bisynesse and cure,  
After the bataille and disconfiture;  
And so bifel, that in the taas they founde  
Thurgh-girt with many a grevous bloody wounde,

Two yonge knyghtes liggyng by and by,  
Bothe in oon armes wroght ful richely,  
Of whiche two Arcita highte that oon,  
And that oother knyght highte Palamon.  
Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were,

But by here cote-armures, and by hir gere,  
The heraudes knewe hem best, in special,  
As they that weren of the blood roial  
Of Thebes, and of sustren two yborn.  
Out of the taas the pilours han hem torn,

And had hem caried softe unto the tente  
Of Theseus, and he ful soone hem sente  
To Atthenes to dwellen in prisoun  
Perpetuely, he nolde no raunsoun.  
And whan this worthy due hath thus ydon,

He took his hoost, and hoom he rood anon,  
With laurer crowned, as a conquerour,  
And ther he lyveth in joye and in honour

Terme of his lyve, what nedeth wordes mo?  
And in a tour, in angwissh and in wo,

Dwellen this Palamon and eek Arcite  
For evermoore, ther may no gold hem quite.

This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,  
Till it fil ones, in a morwe of May,  
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene

Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,  
And fressher than the May with floures newe-  
For with the rose colour stroof hir hewe,  
I noot which was the fairer of hem two-  
Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,

She was arisen, and al redy dight-  
For May wole have no slogardrie a-nyght;  
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,  
And maketh hym out of his slepe to sterte,  
And seith, `arys and do thyn observaunce,'

This maked Emelye have remembraunce  
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.  
Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse,  
Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse,  
Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse,

And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,  
She walketh up and doun, and as hir liste  
She gadereth floures, party white and rede,  
To make a subtil gerland for hir hede,  
And as an aungel hevenyssshly she soong.

The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong,  
Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun,  
Ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun,  
Of whiche I tolde yow, and tellen shal,  
Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal

Ther as this Emelye hadde hir pleyynge.  
Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morwenynge,  
And Palamoun, this woful prisoner,  
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,  
Was risen, and romed in a chambre on heigh,

In which he al the noble citee seigh,  
And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene,  
Ther as this fresshe Emelye the shene  
Was in hire walk, and romed up and doun.  
This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun,

Goth in the chambre romynge to and fro,  
And to hym-self compleynyng of his wo.  
That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, `allas!'  
And so bifel, by aventure or cas,  
That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre

Of iren greet, and square as any sparre,  
He cast his eye upon Emelya,

And therwithal he bleynte, and cryede 'A!'  
As though he stongen were unto the herte.  
And with that cry Arcite anon upsterte

And seyde, 'Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,  
That art so pale and deedly on to see?  
Why cridestow? who hath thee doon offence?  
For Goddess love, taak al in pacience  
Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be;

Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.  
Som wikke aspect or disposicioun  
Of Saturne by sum constellacioun  
Hath yeven us this, al though we hadde it sworn.  
So stood the hevene, whan that we were born.

We moste endure it, this the short and playn.'  
This Palamon answerde and seyde agayn,  
'Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun  
Thow hast a veyn ymaginacioun.  
This prison caused me nat for to crye,

But I was hurt right now thurgh-out myn eye  
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.  
The fairnesse of that lady, that I see  
Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro,  
Is cause of al my cryng and my wo.

I noot wher she be womman or goddessse,  
But Venus is it, soothly as I gesse.'  
And therwithal, on knees down he fil,  
And seyde, 'Venus, if it be thy wil,  
Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure

Bifore me, sorweful wrecche creature,  
Out of this prisoun helpe that we may scapen!  
And if so be my destyne be shapen  
By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,  
Of oure lynage have som compassioun,

That is so lowe ybrought by tirannye.'

And with that word Arcite gan espye  
Wher-as this lady romed to and fro,  
And with that sighte hir beautee hurte hym so,  
That if that Palamon was wounded sore,

Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or moore.  
And with a sigh he seyde pitously,  
'The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly  
Of hir, that rometh in the yonder place!  
And but I have hir mercy and hir grace

That I may seen hir atte leeste weye,  
I nam but deed, ther is namoore to seye.'  
This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,  
Dispitously he looked and answerde,  
'Wheither seistow this in earnest or in pley?'

'Nay,' quod Arcite, 'in earnest by my fey,  
God helpe me so, me list ful yvele pleye.'  
This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye;  
'It nere,' quod he, 'to thee no greet honour  
For to be fals, ne for to be traitour

To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother,  
Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til oother,  
That nevere for to dyen in the peyne,  
Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,  
Neither of us in love to hyndre other,

Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother,  
But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me  
In every cas, as I shal forthren thee.  
This was thyn ooth, and myn also certeyn,  
I woot right wel thou darst it nat withseyn.

Thus artow of my conseil, out of doute;  
And now thou woldest falsly been aboute  
To love my lady, whom I love and serve  
And evere shal, til that myn herte sterve.  
Nay, certes, false Arcite, thow shalt nat so!

I loved hir first, and tolde thee my wo  
As to my conseil, and to my brother sworn,  
To forthre me as I have toold biforn,  
For which thou art ybounden as a knyght  
To helpen me, if it lay in thy myght,

Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn.'

This Arcite ful proudly spak ageyn,  
'Thow shalt,' quod he, 'be rather fals than I.  
But thou art fals, I telle thee outrely,  
For paramour I loved hir first er thow.

What, wiltow seyn thou wistest nat yet now  
Wheither she be a womman or goddesse?  
Thyn is affeccoun of hoolynesse,  
And myn is love as to a creature;  
For which I tolde thee myn aventure

As to my cosyn and my brother sworn.  
I pose, that thow lovedest hir biforn;  
Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe  
That `who shal yeve a lovere any lawe?'  
Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,

Than may be yeve of any erthely man.  
And therefore positif lawe and swich decree  
Is broken al day for love in ech degree.  
A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed,  
He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,

Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf.  
And eek it is nat likly, al thy lyf,  
To stonden in hir grace, namoore shal I,  
For wel thou woost thyselven, verraily,  
That thou and I be dampned to prisoun

Perpetuelly, us gayneth no faunsoun.  
We stryven as dide the houndes for the boon,  
They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon.  
Ther cam a kyte, whil they weren so wrothe,  
And baar away the boon bitwixe hem bothe.

And therefore at the kynges court, my brother,  
Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother.  
Love if thee list, for I love, and ay shal;  
And soothly, leeve brother, this is al.  
Heere in this prisoun moote we endure,

And everich of us take his aventure.'

Greet was the strif and long bitwix hem tweye,  
If that I hadde leyser for to seye-  
But to theeffect; it happed on a day,  
To telle it yow as shortly as I may,

A worthy duc, that highte Perotheus,  
That felawe was unto duc Theseus  
Syn thilke day that they were children lite,  
Was come to Atthenes his felawe to visite,  
And for to pleye as he was wont to do-

For in this world he loved no man so,  
And he loved hym als tendrely agayn.  
So wel they lovede, as olde bookes sayn,  
That whan that oon was deed, soothly to telle,  
His felawe wente and soughte hym down in helle.

But of that storie list me nat to write;  
Duc Perotheus loved wel Arcite,  
And hadde hym knowe at Thebes yeer by yere,  
And finally, at requeste and preyere  
Of Perotheus, withouten any raunsoun

Duc Theseus hym leet out of prisoun  
Frely to goon, wher that hym liste overal,  
In swich a gyse as I you tellen shal.  
This was the forward, pleyedly for tendite,  
Bitwixen Theseus and hym Arcite,



That if so were that Arcite were yfounde  
Evere in his lif, by day or nyght or stounde,  
In any contree of this Theseus,  
And he were caught, it was acorded thus,  
That with a swerd he sholde lese his heed;

Ther nas noon oother remedie ne reed,  
But taketh his leve and homward he him spedde;  
Lat hym be war, his nekke lith to wedde!

How greet a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!  
The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte,

He wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously,  
To sleen hymself he waiteth prively.  
He seyde, 'Allas, that day that he was born!  
Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;  
Now is me shape eternally to dwelle

Nat in purgatorie but in helle.  
Allas, that evere knew I Perotheus!  
For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus,  
Yfetered in his prisoun evermo;  
Thanne hadde I been in blisse, and nat in wo.

Oonly the sighte of hire whom that I serve,  
Though that I nevere hir grace may deserve,  
Wolde han suffised right ynough for me.  
O deere cosyn Palamon,' quod he,  
'Thyn is the victorie of this aventure.

Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure.-  
In prisoun? certes, nay, but in Paradys!  
Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,  
That hast the sighte of hir, and I thabsence;  
For possible is, syn thou hast hir presence,

And art a knyght, a worthy and an able,  
That by som cas, syn Fortune is changeable,  
Thow maist to thy desir som tyme atteyne.  
But I, that am exiled and bareyne  
Of alle grace, and in so greet dispeir

That ther nys erthe, water, fir, ne eir,  
Ne creature, that of hem maked is,  
That may me heelp, or doon confort in this,  
Wel oughte I sterve in wanhope and distresse,  
Farwel, my lif, my lust, and my galdnesse!

Allas, why pleynten folk so in commune  
On purveyaunce of God or of Fortune,  
That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse  
Wel bettre than they kan hem-self devyse?  
Som man desireth for to han richesse,

That cause is of his moerdre of greet siknesse.  
And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,  
That in his hous is of his meynee slayn.  
Infinite harmes been in thai mateere,  
We witen nat what thing we preyen here.

We faren as he that dronke is as a mous;  
A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,  
But he noot which the righte wey is thider,  
And to a dronke man the wey is slider.  
And certes, in this world so faren we;

We seken faste after felicitee,  
But we goon wrong ful often trewely.  
Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,  
That wende and hadde a greet opinioun  
That if I myghte escapen from prisoun,

Thanne hadde I been in joye and perfit heele,  
Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.  
Syn that I may nat seen you, Emelye,  
I nam but deed, ther nys no remedye.'  
Upon that oother syde, Palamon,

Whan that he wiste Arcite was agon,  
Swich sorwe he maketh, that the grete tour  
Resouneth of his youlyng and clamour.  
The pure fettres on his shynes grete

Weren of his bittre salte teeres wete.

'Allas,' quod he, 'Arcite, cosyn myn!  
Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thyn.  
Thow walkest now in Thebes at thy large,  
And of my wo thow yevest litel charge.  
Thou mayst, syn thou hast wysdom and manhede,

Assemblen alle the folk of oure kynrede,  
And make a werre so sharp on this citee,  
That by som aventure, or som tretee,  
Thow mayst have hir to lady and to wyf,  
For whom that I moste nedes lese my lyf.

For as by wey of possibilittee,  
Sith thou art at thy large of prisoun free,  
And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage  
Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage.  
For I moot wepe and wayle, whil I lyve,

With al the wo that prison may me yeve,  
And eek with peyne that love me yeveth also,  
That doubleth al my torment and my wo.'  
Therwith the fyr of jalousie up-sterete  
Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte

So woodly, that he lyk was to biholde  
The boxtree, or the asshen dede and colde.  
Thanne seyde he, 'O cruel goddes, that governe  
This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,  
And writen in the table of atthamaunt

Youre parlement and youre eterne graunt,  
What is mankynde moore unto you holde  
Than is the sheep that rouketh in the folde?  
For slayn is man right as another beeste,  
And dwelleth eek in prison and arreeste,

And hath siknesse, and greet adversitee,  
And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee!  
What governance is in this prescience  
That giltelees tormenteth innocence?

And yet encresseth this al my penaunce,

That man is bounden to his observaunce,  
For Goddes sake, to letten of his wille,  
Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfille.

And whan a beest is deed, he hath no peyne,  
But man after his deeth moot wepe and pleyne,

Though in this world he have care and wo.  
Withouten doute it may stonden so.  
The answeere of this lete I to dyvynys,  
But well I woot, that in this world greet pyne ys.  
Allas, I se a serpent or a theef,

That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,  
Goon at his large, and where hym list may turne!  
But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,  
And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,  
That hath destroyed wel ny al the blood

Of Thebes, with hise waste walles wyde.  
And Venus sleeth me on that oother syde  
For jalousie and fere of hym Arcite.'

Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,  
And lete hym in his prisoun stille dwelle,

And of Arcita forth I wol yow telle.  
The somer passeth, and the nyghtes longe  
Encressen double wise the peynes stronge  
Bothe of the lovere and the prisoner;  
I noot which hath the wofuller mester.

For shortly for to seyn, this Palamoun  
Perpetuelly is dampned to prisoun  
In cheynes and in fettres to been deed,  
And Arcite is exiled upon his heed  
For evere mo as out of that contree,

Ne nevere mo he shal his lady see.  
Yow loveres axe I now this questioun,  
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?  
That oon may seen his lady day by day,

But in prison he moot dwelle alway;

That oother wher hym list may ride or go,  
But seen his lady shal he nevere mo.  
Now demeth as yow liste ye that kan,  
For I wol telle forth, as I bigan.

Explicit prima pars.

Sequitur pars secunda.

Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,  
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde `allas,'  
For seen his lady shal he nevere mo;  
And shortly to concluden al his wo,  
So muche sorwe hadde nevere creature,  
That is, or shal whil that the world may dure.

His sleep, his mete, his drynke is hym biraft,  
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft.  
Hise eyen holwe and grisly to biholde,  
His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde;  
And solitarie he was and evere allone

And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone.  
And if he herde song or instrument,  
Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.  
So feble eek were hise spiritz, and so lowe,  
And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe

His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.  
And in his geere for al the world he ferde  
Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye  
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye  
Engendred of humour malencolik

Biforen in his celle fantastik,  
And shortly turned was al up-so-doun  
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun  
Of hym, this woful love daun Arcite.  
What sholde I al day of his wo endite?

Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two  
This cruell torment, and this peyne and woo,  
At Thebes in his contree, as I seyde,  
Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,  
Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie

Biforn hym stood, and bad hym to be murie.  
His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte,  
An hat he werede upon hise heris brighte.  
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,  
As he was whan that Argus took his sleep;

And seyde hym thus, 'To Atthenes shaltou wende,  
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende.'  
And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.  
'Now trewely, how soore that me smerte,'  
Quod he, 'to Atthenes right now wol I fare,

Ne for the drede of deeth shal I nat spare  
To se my lady that I love and serve,  
In hir presence I recche nat to sterve.'  
And with that word he caughte a greet mirour,  
And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,

And saugh his visage al in another kynde.  
And right anon it ran hym in his mynde,  
That sith his face was so disfigured  
Of maladye, the which he hadde endured,  
He myghte wel, if that he bar hym lowe,

Lyve in Atthenes, everemoore unknowe,  
And seen his lady wel ny day by day.  
And right anon he chaunged his array,  
And cladde hym as a povre laborer,  
And al allone, save oonly a squier

That knew his privetee and al his cas,  
Which was disgised povrely, as he was,  
To Atthenes is he goon, the nexte way.  
And to the court he wente, upon a day,  
And at the gate he profreth his servyse,

To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse.  
And shortly of this matere for to seyn,  
He fil in office with a chamberleyn,  
The which that dwellynge was with Emelye,  
For he was wys and koude soone espye

Of every servant which that serveth here.  
Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere,  
For he was yong and myghty for the nones,  
And therto he was strong and big of bones  
To doon that any wight kan hym devyse.

A yeer or two he was in this servyse  
Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte;  
And Philostrate he seyde that he highte.  
But half so wel biloved a man as he  
Ne was ther nevere in court, of his degree;

He was so gentil of condicioun  
That thurghout al the court was his renoun.  
They seyden, that it were a charitee,  
That Theseus wolde enhaunsen his degree,  
And putten hym in worshipful servyse

Ther as he myghte his vertu exercise.  
And thus withinne a while his name is spronge  
Bothe of hise dedes and his goode tonge,  
That Theseus hath taken hym so neer  
That of his chambre he made hym a Squier,

And gaf hym gold to mayntene his degree.  
And eek men broghte hym out of his contree  
From yeer to yeer, ful pryvely, his rente.  
But honestly and slyly he it spente,  
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.

And thre yeer in this wise his lif he ladde,

And bar hym so in pees, and eek ibn werre,  
Ther was no man that Theseus hath derre.  
And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,  
And speke I wole of Palamon a lite.

In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun  
Thise seven yeer hath seten Palamoun,  
Forpynded, what for wo and for distresse.  
Who feeleth double soor and hevynesse  
But Palamon, that love destreyneth so,

That wood out of his wit he goth for wo?  
And eek therto he is a prisoner,  
Perpetuelly, nocht oonly for a yer.  
Who koude ryme in Englyssh proprely  
His martirdom? Forsothe it am nat I,

Therefore I passe as lightly as I may.  
It fel that in the seventhe yer, in May,  
The thridde nyght, as olde bookes seyn,  
That al this storie tellen moore pleyn,  
Were it by aventure or destyne-

As, whan a thyng is shapen, it shal be-  
That soone after the mydnyght, Palamoun  
By helpyng of a freend, brak his prisoun  
And fleeth the citee faste as he may go;  
For he hade yeve his gayler drynke so

Of a clarree maad of a certeyn wyn,  
With nercotikes and opie of Thebes fyn,  
That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him shake,  
The gayler sleep, he myghte nat awake.  
And thus he fleeth as faste as evere he may;

The nyght was short and faste by the day,  
That nedes-cost he moot hymselfen hyde;  
And til a grove, faste ther bisyde,  
With dredeful foot thanne stalketh Palamoun.  
For shortly this was his opinioun,

That in that grove he wolde hym hyde al day,  
And in the nyght thanne wolde he take his way  
To Thebesward, his freendes for to preye  
On Theseus to helpe hym to werreye;  
And shortly, outhere he wolde lese his lif,



Or wynnem Emelye unto his wyf;  
This is the effect and his entente pleyn.  
Now wol I turne to Arcite ageyn,  
That litel wiste how ny that was his care  
Til that Fortune had broght him in the snare.

The bisy larke, messenger of day,  
Salueth in hir song the morwe gray,  
And firy Phebus riseth up so brighte  
That al the orient laugheth of the lighte,  
And with hise stremes dryeth in the greves

The silver dropes hangynge on the leves;  
And Arcita, that is in the court roial  
With Theseus, his squier principal,  
Is risen, and looketh on the myrie day.  
And for to doon his observaunce ot May,

Remembrynge on the poynt of his desir  
He on a courser startlynge as the fir  
Is riden into the feeldes, hym to pleye,  
Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.  
And to the grove of which that I yow tolde

By aventure his wey he gan to holde,  
To maken hym a gerland of the greves,  
Were it of wodebynde or hawethorn-leves.  
And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene,  
'May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,

Welcome be thou, faire fresshe May,  
In hope that I som grene gete may.'  
And from his courser, with a lusty herte,  
Into a grove ful hastily he sterte,  
And in a path he rometh up and doun

Ther as by aventure this Palamoun  
Was in a bussh, that no man myghte hym se;  
For soore afered of his deeth was he.  
No thyng ne knew he that it was Arcite,  
God woot, he wolde have trowed it ful lite!

But sooth is seyde, gon sithen many yeres,  
That feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres.  
It is ful fair a man to bere hym evene,  
For al day meeteth men at unset stevene.  
Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe,

That was so ny to herknen al his sawe,  
For in the bussh he sitteth now ful stille.

Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille  
And songen al the roundel lustily,  
Into a studie he fil al sodeynly,

As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,  
Now in the croppe, now down in the breres,  
Now up, now down as boket in a welle.  
Right as the Friday, soothly for to telle,  
Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste,

Right so kan geery Venus overcaste  
The hertes of hir folk; right as hir day  
Is gerefule, right so chaungeth she array.  
Selde is the Friday al the wowke ylike.  
Whan that Arcite had songe, he gan to sike,

And sette hym doun withouten any moore;  
'Allas,' quod he, 'that day that I was bore!  
How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee  
Woltow werreyen Thebes the Citee?  
Allas, ybrought is to confusioun

The blood roial of Cadme and Amphioun!  
Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man  
That Thebes bulde, or first the toun bigan,  
And of the citee first was crowned kyng,  
Of his lynage am I, and his ofspryng,

By verray ligne, as of the stok roial,  
And now I am so caytyf and so thral  
That he that is my mortal enemy  
I serve hym as his squier povrely.  
And yet dooth Juno me wel moore shame,

For I dar noght biknowe myn owene name,  
But theras I was wont to highte Arcite,  
Now highte I Philostrate, noght worth a myte.  
Allas, thou felle Mars! allas, Juno!  
Thus hath youre ire oure kynrede al fordo,

Save oonly me, and wrecched Palamoun  
That Theseus martireth in prisoun.  
And over al this, to sleen me outrely,  
Love hath his firy dart so brennyngly  
Ystiked thurgh my trewe careful herte,

That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.  
Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye,  
Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye.  
Of al the remenant of myn oother care  
Ne sette I nat the montance of a tare,

So that I koude doon aught to youre plesaunce.'  
And with that word he fil down in a traunce  
A longe tyme, and after he upsterte.

This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte  
He felte a coold swerd sodeynliche glyde,

For ire he quook, no lenger wolde he byde.  
And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,  
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,  
He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke,  
And seide, 'Arcite, false traytour wikke!

Now artow hent that lovest my lady so,  
For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,  
And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,  
As I ful ofte have seyde thee heer-biforn,  
And hast byjaped heere duc Theseus,

And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus.  
I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye;  
Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,  
But I wol love hire oonly, and namo,  
For I am Palamon, thy mortal foo!

And though that I no wepene have in this place,  
But out of prison am astert by grace,  
I drede noght that outhere thou shalt dye,  
Or thou ne shalt nat loven Emelye.  
Chees which thou wolt, for thou shalt nat asterte!

This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,  
Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,  
As fiers as leoun pulled out his swerd,  
And seyde thus: 'By God that sit above,  
Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love,

And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,  
Thou sholdest nevere out of this grove pace,  
That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond.  
For I defye the seurete and the bond  
Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.

What, verray fool, thynk wel that love is free!  
And I wol love hir, maugree al thy myght!  
But for as muche thou art a worthy knyght,  
And wilnest to darreyne hire by bataille,  
Have heer my trouthe; tomorwe I wol nat faille

Withoute wityng of any oother wight  
That heere I wol be founden as a knyght,  
And bryngen harneys right ynough for thee,  
And chese the beste, and leve the worste for me.  
And mete and drynke this nyght wol I brynge

Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddyng;  
And if so be that thou my lady wynne,  
And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,  
Thou mayst wel have thy lady as for me.'  
This Palamon answerde, 'I graunte it thee.'

And thus they been departed til amorwe,  
Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.

O Cupide, out of alle charitee!  
O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!  
Ful sooth is seyde that love ne lordshipe

Wol noght, hir thankes, have no felaweshipe.  
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun:  
Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,  
And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,  
Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,

Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreyne  
The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne.  
And on his hors, allone as he was born,  
He carieth al this harneys hym biforn,  
And in the grove, at tyme and place yset,

This Arcite and this Palamon ben met.  
Tho chaungen gan the colour in hir face  
Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,  
That stondesth at the gappe with a spere,  
Whan hunted is the leoun and the bere,

And hereth hym come russhyng in the greves,  
And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,  
And thynketh, 'Heere cometh my mortal enemy,  
Withoute faille he moot be deed or I,  
For outhur I moot sleen hym at the gappe,

Or he moot sleen me, if that me myshappe'-  
So ferden they in chaungyng of hir hewe,  
As fer as everich of hem oother knewe.  
Ther nas no good day ne no saluyng,  
But streight withouten word or rehersyng

Everich of hem heelp for to armen oother,  
As freendly as he were his owene brother.  
And after that with sharpe speres stronge  
They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.  
Thou myghtest wene that this Palamoun

In his fightyng were a wood leoun,  
And as a crueel tigre was Arcite.  
As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,  
That frothen white as foom for ire wood.  
Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood;

And in this wise I lete hem fightyng dwelle,  
And forth I wole of Theseus yow telle.

The destinee, ministre general,  
That executeth in the world overal  
The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,

So strong it is, that though the world had sworn  
The contrarie of a thyng, by ye or nay,  
Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day  
That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeere.  
For certainly, oure appetites heere,

Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,  
Al is this reuled by the sighte above.  
This mene I now by myghty Theseus,  
That for to hunten is so desirus  
And namely at the grete hert in May,

That in his bed ther daweth hym no day  
That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde  
With hunte and horn, and houndes hym bisyde.  
For in his huntyng hath he swich delit  
That it is al his joye and appetit

To been hymself the grete hertes bane-  
For after Mars he serveth now Dyane.

Cleer was the day, as I have toold er this,  
And Theseus, with alle joye and blis,  
With his Ypolita, the faire quene,

And Emelye, clothed al in grene,  
On huntyng be they riden roially,  
And to the grove, that stood ful faste by,  
In which ther was an hert, as men hym tolde,  
Duc Theseus the streighte wey hath holde,

And to the launde he rideth hym ful right,  
For thider was the hert wont have his flight,  
And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.  
This duc wol han a cours at hym, or tweye,  
With houndes swiche as that hym list comaunde.

And whan this duc was come unto the launde,  
Under the sonne he looketh, and anon  
He was war of Arcite and Palamon,  
That foughten breme, as it were bores two;  
The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro

So hidously, that with the leeste strook  
It semed as it wolde felle an ook;  
But what they were, nothyng he ne woot.  
This duc his courser with his spores smoot,  
And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,

And pulled out a swerd, and cride, 'Hoo!  
Namoore, up peyne of lesyng of youre heed!  
By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed  
That smyteth any strook, that I may seen!  
But telleth me what myster men ye been,

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; The Milleres Tale

## PROLOGUE TO THE MILLERES TALE

Heere folwen the wordes bitwene the Hoost and the Millere

Whan that the Knyght had thus his tale ytoold,  
In al the route ne was ther yong ne oold

That he ne seyde it was a noble storie,  
And worthy for to drawen to memorie;  
And namely the gentils everichon.  
Oure Hooste lough, and swoor, 'So moot I gon,  
This gooth aright, unboked is the male,

Lat se now who shal telle another tale,  
For trewely the game is wel bigonne.  
Now telleth on, sir Monk, if that ye konne  
Somwhat to quite with the Knyghtes tale.'  
The Miller that for-dronken was al pale,

So that unnethe upon his hors he sat,  
He nolde avalen neither hood ne hat,  
Ne abyde no man for his curteisie,  
But in Pilates voys he gan to crie,  
And swoor by armes and by blood and bones,

'I kan a noble tale for the nones,  
With which I wol now quite the Knyghtes tale.'  
Oure Hooste saugh that he was dronke of ale,  
And seyde, 'Abyd, Robyn, my leeve brother,  
Som better man shal telle us first another,

Abyd, and lat us werken thriftily.'  
'By Goddes soule,' quod he, 'that wol nat I,  
For I wol speke, or elles go my wey.'  
Oure Hoost answerde, 'Tel on, a devele wey!  
Thou art a fool, thy wit is overcome!

'Now herkneth,' quod the Miller, 'alle and some,  
But first I make a protestacioun



That I am dronke, I knowe it by my soun;  
And therefore, if that I mysspeke or seye,  
Wyte it the ale of Southwerk I you preye.

For I wol telle a legende and a lyf  
Bothe of a carpenter and of his wyf,  
How that a clerk hath set the wrightes cappe.'  
The Rev answerde and seyde, 'Stynt thy clappe,  
Lat be thy lewed dronken harlotrye,

It is a synne and eek a greet folye  
To apeyren any man or hym defame,  
And eek to bryngen wyves in swich fame;  
Thou mayst ynogh of othere thynges seyn.'  
This dronke Miller spak ful soone ageyn,

And seyde, 'Leve brother Osewold,  
Who hath no wyf, he is no cokewold.  
But I sey nat therefore that thou art oon,  
Ther been ful goode wyves many oon,  
And evere a thousand goode ayeyns oon badde;

That knowestow wel thyself, but if thou madde.  
Why artow angry with my tale now?  
I have a wyf, pardee, as wel as thow,  
Yet nolde I for the oxen in my plogh  
Take upon me moore than ynogh,

As demen of myself that I were oon;  
I wol bileve wel, that I am noon.  
An housbonde shal nat been inquisityf  
Of Goddes pryvetee, nor of his wyf.  
So he may fynde Goddes foyssoun there,

Of the remenant nedeth nat enquere.'  
What sholde I moore seyn, but this Miller  
He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,  
But tolde his cherles tale in his manere;  
Me thynketh that I shal reherce it heere.

And therefore every gentil wight I preye,  
For Goddes love, demeth nat that I seye

Of yvel entente, but that I moot reherce  
Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse,  
Or elles falsen som of my mateere.

And therfore who-so list it nat yheere,  
Turne over the leef, and chese another tale;  
For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,  
Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,  
And eek moralitee, and hoolynesse.

Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys;  
The Miller is a cherl, ye knowe wel this,  
So was the Reve, and othere manye mo,  
And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.  
Avyseth yow, and put me out of blame,

And eek men shal nat maken ernest of game.

#### THE TALE

(One John, a rich and credulous carpenter of Oxford, is beguiled by his wife Alison, through Nicholas, a poor scholar boarding with them. Absolon, the parish clerk, is slighted by Alison; but wreaks vengeance on Nicholas.)

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; The Seconde Nonnes Tale

Part 27

GROUP G.

THE SECONDE NONNES TALE

The Prologe of the Seconde Nonnes Tale.

The ministre and the norice unto vices,  
Which that men clepe in Englissh ydelnesse,  
That porter of the gate is of delices,  
To eschue, and by hir contrarie hir oppresse,  
(That is to seyn by leueful bisynesse),  
Wel oghten we to doon al oure entente,  
Lest that the feend thurgh ydelnesse us shente.

For he, that with hise thousand cordes slye  
Continuelly us waiteth to biclappe,  
Whan he may man in ydelnesse espye,  
He kan so lightly cacche hym in his trappe,  
Til that a man be hent right by the lappe,  
He nys nat war the feend hath hym in honde.  
Wel oghte us werche, and ydelnesse withstonde.

And though men dradden nevere for to dye,  
Yet seen men wel by resoun, dotelees,  
That ydelnesse is roten slogardye,  
Of which ther nevere comth no good encrees;  
And seen that slouthe hir holdeth in a lees,  
Oonly to slepe, and for to ete and drynke,  
And to devouren al that othere swynke.

And for to putte us fro swich ydelnesse,  
That cause is of so greet confusioun,  
I have heer doon my feithful bisynesse,  
After the legende, in translacioun  
Right of thy glorious lyf and passioun,  
Thou with thy gerland wroght with rose and lilie,  
Thee meene I, mayde and martir, seint Cecilie.

Invocacio ad Mariam.

And thow that flour of virgines art alle,  
Of whom that Bernard list so wel to write,  
To thee at my bigynnyng first I calle,  
Thou confort of us wrecches, do me endite  
Thy maydens deeth, that wan thurgh hir merite

The eterneel lyf, and of the feend victorie,  
As man may after reden in hir storie.

Thow mayde and mooder, doghter of thy sone,  
Thow welle of mercy, synful soules cure,  
In whom that God for bountee chees to wone,  
Thow humble and heigh, over every creature  
Thow nobledest so ferforth oure nature,  
That no desdeyn the makere hadde of kynde,  
His sone in blood and flessh to clothe and wynde,

Withinne the cloistre blisful of thy sydis  
Took mannes shape the eterneel love and pees,  
That of the tryne compas lord and gyde is,  
Whom erthe and see and hevене out of relees  
Ay heryen, and thou, virgine wemmelees,  
Baar of thy body, and dweltest mayden pure,  
The creatour of every creature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence  
With mercy, goodnesse, and with swich pitee  
That thou, that art the sonne of excellence,  
Nat oonly helpst hem that preyen thee,  
But oftentyme, of thy benygnytee,  
Ful frely, er that men thyn help biseche,  
Thou goost biforn, and art hir lyves leche.

Now help, thow meeke and blisful faire mayde,  
Me, flemed wrecche in this desert of galle;  
Thynk on the womman Cananee, that sayde  
That whelpes eten somme of the crommes alle,  
That from hir lordes table been yfalle,  
And though that I, unworthy sone of Eve,

Be synful, yet accepte my bileve.

And for that feith is deed withouten werkis,  
So for to werken yif me wit and space,  
That I be quit fro thennes that moost derk is.  
O thou, that art so fair and ful of grace,  
Be myn advocat in that heighe place  
Ther as withouten ende is songe Osanne,  
Thow Cristes mooder, doghter deere of Anne!

And of thy light my soule in prison lighte,  
That troubled is by the contagioun  
Of my body, and also by the wighte  
Of erthely lust and fals affeccoun,  
O havene of refut, O salvacioune  
Of hem that been in sorwe and in distresse,  
Now help, for to my werk I wol me dresse.

Yet preye I yow that reden that I write,  
Foryeve me, that I do no diligence  
This ilke storie subtilly to endite,  
For bothe have I the wordes and sentence  
Of hym that at the seintes reverence  
The storie wroot, and folwe hir legende.  
I pray yow, that ye wole my werk amende.

First wolde I yow the name of seinte Cecile  
Expowne, as men may in hir storie see.  
It is to seye in Englissh, `hevenes lillie'  
For pure chaastnesse of virginitee,  
Or for she whitenesse hadde of honestee  
And grene of conscience, and of good fame  
The soote savour, lillie was hir name.

Or Cecilie is to seye, `the way to blynde,'  
For she ensample was by good techynge;  
Or elles, Cecile, as I writen fynde  
Is joynd by a manere conjoynyng  
Of `hevene' and `lia,' and heere in figuryng  
The `hevene' is set for thoght of hoolynesse,  
And `lia' for hir lastyng bisynesse.

Cecile may eek be seyde, in this manere,  
`Wantynge of blyndnesse,' for hir grete light  
Of sapience, and for hire thewes cleere  
Or elles, loo, this maydens name bright  
Of `hevene' and `leos' comth, for which by right  
Men myghte hir wel `the hevene of peple' calle,  
Ensample of goode and wise werkes alle.

For `leos' `peple' in Englissh is to seye,  
And right as men may in the hevene see  
The sonne and moone and sterres every weye,  
Right so men goostly, in this mayden free,  
Syen of feith the magnanymytee,  
And eek the cleernesse hool of sapience,  
And sondry werkes, brighte of excellence.

And right so as thise philosophres write  
That hevene is swift and round and eek brennynge,  
Right so was faire Cecilie the white  
Ful swift and bisy evere in good werkyng,  
And round and hool in good perseveryng,  
And brennyng evere in charite ful brighte.  
Now have I yow declared what she highte.

Here bigynneth the Seconde Nonnes tale of the lyf of Seinte Cecile.

This mayden, bright Cecilie, as hir lyf seith,  
Was comen of Romayns, and of noble kynde,  
And from hir cradel up fostred in the feith  
Of Crist, and bar his gospel in hir mynde.  
She nevere cessed, as I writen fynde,  
Of hir preyere, and God to love and drede,  
Bisekyng hym to kepe hir maydenhede.

And whan this mayden sholde unto a man  
Ywedded be, that was ful yong of age,  
Which that ycleped was Valerian,  
And day was comen of hir mariage,  
She, ful devout and humble in hir corage,  
Under hir robe of gold, that sat ful faire,  
Hadde next hir flessch yclad hir in an haire.

And whil the orgnes maden melodie,  
To God allone in herte thus sang she:  
'O Lord, my soule and eek my body gye  
Unwemmed, lest that I confounded be.'  
And for his love that dyde upon a tree,  
Every secunde and thridde day she faste,  
Ay biddyng in hir orisons ful faste.

The nyght cam, and to bedde moste she gon  
With hir housbonde, as ofte is the manere,  
And pryvely to hym she seyde anon,  
'O sweete and wel biloved spouse deere,  
Ther is a conseil, and ye wolde it heere,  
Which that right fayn I wolde unto yow seye,  
So that ye swere ye shul me nat biwreye.'

Valerian gan faste unto hire swere  
That for no cas, ne thyng that myghte be,  
He sholde nevere mo biwreyen here,  
And thanne at erst to hym thus seyde she,  
'I have an Aungel which that loveth me,  
That with greet love, wher so I wake or sleepe,  
Is redy ay my body for to kepe.

And if that he may feelen out of drede  
That ye me touche, or love in vileynye,  
He right anon wol sle yow with the dede,  
And in youre yowthe thus ye sholden dye.  
And if that ye in clene love me gye,  
He wol yow loven as me for youre clenness,  
And shewen yow his joye and his brightnesse.'

Valerian, corrected as God wolde,  
Answerde agayn, 'If I shal trusten thee,  
Lat me that aungel se, and hym biholde,  
And if that it a verray aungel bee,  
Thanne wol I doon as thou hast prayed me;  
And if thou love another man, forsothe  
Right with this swerd thanne wol I sle yow bothe.'

Cecile answerde anon right in this wise,  
'If that yow list, the aungel shul ye see,

So that ye trowe in Crist, and yow baptize.  
Gooth forth to Via Apia,' quod she,  
'That fro this toun ne stant but miles thre;  
And to the povre folkes that ther dwelle  
Sey hem right thus as that I shal yow telle.

Telle hem, that I Cecile yow to hem sente,  
To shewen yow the goode Urban the olde,  
For secree thynges and for good entente;  
And whan that ye Seint Urban han biholde,  
Telle hym the wordes whiche that I to yow tolde,  
And whan that he hath purged yow fro synne,  
Thanne shul ye se that aungel er ye twynne.'

Valerian is to the place ygon,  
And right as hym was taught by his lernynge,  
He foond this hooly olde Urban anon  
Among the seintes buryeles lotynge.  
And he anon, withouten tariynge,  
Dide his message, and whan that he it tolde,  
Urban for joye his handes gan up holde.

The teeris from hise eyen leet he falle.  
'Almyghty lord, O Jesu Crist,' quod he,  
'Sower of chaast conseil, hierde of us alle,  
The fruyt of thilke seed of chastitee  
That thou hast sowe in Cecile, taak to thee.  
Lo, lyk a bisy bee, withouten gile,  
Thee serveth ay thyn owene thral Cecile!

For thilke spouse that she took but now  
Ful lyk a fiers leoun, she sendeth heere  
As meke as evere was any lomb, to yow.'  
And with that word anon ther gan appeere  
An oold man clad in white clothes cleere,  
That hadde a book with lettre of gold in honde,  
And gan bifore Valerian to stonde.

Valerian as deed fil doun for drede  
Whan he hym saugh, and he up hente hym tho,  
And on his book right thus he gan to rede,  
'O lord, o feith, o god, withouten mo,



O Cristendom, and fader of alle also,  
Aboven alle, and over alle, everywhere.-'  
These wordes al with gold ywriten were.

Whan this was rad, thanne seyde this olde man,  
'Leevestow this thyng or no? sey ye or nay?'  
'I leeve al this thyng,' quod Valerian,  
'For oother thyng than this, I dar wel say,  
Under the hevne no wight thynke may.'  
Tho vanysshed this olde man, he nyste where;  
And Pope Urban hym cristned right there.

Valerian gooth hoom, and fynt Cecile  
Withinne his chambre with an aungel stonde.  
This aungel hadde of roses and of lillie  
Corones two, the whiche he bar in honde;  
And first to Cecile, as I understonde,  
He yaf that oon, and after gan he take  
That oother to Valerian hir make.

'With body clene and with unwemmed thoght  
Kepeth ay wel these corones,' quod he,  
'Fro Paradys to yow have I hem broght,  
Ne nevere mo ne shal they roten bee,  
Ne lese hir soote savour, trusteth me,  
Ne nevere wight shal seen hem with his eye  
But he be chaast and hate vileynye.

And thow Valerian, for thow so soone  
Assentedest to good conseil also,  
Sey what thee list, and thou shalt han thy boone.'  
'I have a brother,' quod Valerian tho,  
'That in this world I love no man so.  
I pray yow that my brother may han grace,  
To knowe the trouthe, as I do in this place.'

The aungel seyde, 'God liketh thy requeste,  
And bothe with the palm of martirdom  
Ye shullen com unto his blisful feste.'  
And with that word Tiburce his brother coom;  
And whan that he the savour undernoom,

Which that the roses and the lilies caste,  
Withinne his herte he gan to wondre faste,

And seyde, 'I wondre, this tyme of the yeer,  
Whennes that soote savour cometh so  
Of rose and lilies that I smelle heer.  
For though I hadde hem in myne handes two,  
The savour myghte in me no depper go,  
The sweete smel that in myn herte I fynde  
Hath chaunged me al in another kynde.'

Valerian seyde, 'Two corones han we,  
Snow-white and rose-reed that shynen cleere,  
Whiche that thyne eyen han no myght to see,  
And as thou smellest hem thurgh my preyere,  
So shaltow seen hem, leeve brother deere,  
If it so be thou wolt, withouten slouthe,  
Bileve aright and knowen verray trouthe.'

Tiburce answerde, 'Seistow this to me?  
In soothnesse or in dreem I herkne this?'  
'In dremes,' quod Valerian, 'han we be  
Unto this tyme, brother myn, ywes;  
But now at erst in trouthe oure dwellyng is.'  
'How woostow this,' quod Tiburce, 'in what wyse?'  
Quod Valerian, 'That shal I thee devyse.'

The aungel of God hath me the trouthe ytaught  
Which thou shalt seen, if that thou wolt reneye  
The ydoles and be clene, and elles naught.'  
And of the myracle of these corones tweye  
Seint Ambrose in his preface list to seye.  
Solempnely this noble doctour deere  
Commendeth it, and seith in this manere;

The palm of martirdom for to receyve  
Seinte Cecile, fulfild of Goddes yifte,  
The world and eek hire chambre gan she weyve,  
Witnessse Tyburces and Valerians shrifte,  
To whiche God of his bountee wolde shifte  
Corones two, of floures wel smellynge,  
And made his aungel hem the corones brynge.

The mayde hath broght thise men to blisse above;  
The world hath wist what it is worth, certeyn,  
Devocioun of chastitee to love. . . .  
Tho shewed hym Cecile, al open and pleyn,  
That alle ydoles nys but a thyng in veyn,  
For they been dombe and therto they been deve,  
And charged hym hise ydoles for to leve.

'Whoso that troweth, nat this, a beest he is,'  
Quod tho Tiburce, 'if that I shal nat lye.'  
And she gan kisse his brest, that herde this,  
And was ful glad he koude trouthe espye.  
'This day I take thee for myn allye,'  
Seyde this blisful faire mayde deere,  
And after that she seyde as ye may heere.

'Lo, right so as the love of Crist,' quod she,  
'Made me thy brotheres wyf, right in that wise  
Anon for myn allye heer take I thee,

Syn that thou wolt thyne ydoles despise.  
Go with thy brother now, and thee baptise,  
And make thee clene, so that thou mowe biholde  
The aungels face of which thy brother tolde.'

Tiburce answerde and seyde, 'Brother deere,  
First tel me whider I shal, and to what man?'  
'To whom?' quod he, 'com forth with right good cheere,  
I wol thee lede unto the Pope Urban.'  
'Til Urban? brother myn Valerian,'  
Quod tho Tiburce, 'woltow me thider lede?  
Me thynketh that it were a wonder dede.'

'Ne menestow nat Urban,' quod he tho,  
'That is so ofte dampned to be deed,  
And woneth in halkes alwey to and fro,  
And dar nat ones putte forth his heed;  
Men sholde hym brennen in a fyr so reed,  
If he were founde, or that men myghte hym spye;  
And we also, to bere hym compaignye,

And whil we seken thilke divinitee,  
That is yhid in hevne pryvely,  
Algate ybrend in this world shul we be!  
To whom Cecile answerde boldely,  
'Men myghten dreden wel and skilfully  
This lyf to lese, myn owene deere brother,  
If this were lyvyng oonly and noon oother.

But ther is bettre lyf in oother place,  
That nevere shal be lost, ne drede thee noght,  
Which Goddes sone us tolde thurgh his grace.  
That fadres sone hath alle thyng ywroght,  
And al that wroght is with a skilful thoght,  
The goost, that fro the fader gan procede,  
Hath sowled hem, withouten any drede.

By word and by myracel Goddes Sone,  
Whan he was in this world, declared heere  
That ther was oother lyf ther men may wone.'  
To whom answerde Tiburce, 'O suster deere,  
Ne seydestow right now in this manere,  
Ther nys but o God, lord in soothfastnesse,  
And now of thre how maystow bere witnessse?'

'That shal I telle,' quod she, 'er I go.  
Right as a man hath sapiences thre,  
Memorie, engyn, and intellect also,  
So, in o beyng of divinitee  
Thre persones may ther right wel bee.'  
Tho gan she hym ful bisily to preche  
Of Cristes come, and of hise peynes teche,

And many pointes of his passioun;  
How Goddes sone in this world was withholde  
To doon mankynde pleyn remissioun,  
That was ybunde in synne and cares colde . . .  
Al this thyng she unto Tiburce tolde;  
And after this, Tiburce in good entente  
With Valerian to Pope Urban he wente;

That thanked God, and with glad herte and light  
He cristned hym, and made hym in that place

Parfit in his lernynge, Goddes knyght.  
And after this Tiburce gat swich grace  
That every day he saugh in tyme and space  
The aungel of God, and every maner boone  
That he God axed, it was sped ful soone.

It were ful hard by ordre for to seyn  
How manye wondres Jesu for hem wroghte.  
But atte laste, to tellen short and pleyn,  
The sergeantz of the toun of Rome hem soghte,  
And hem biforn Almache the Prefect broghte,  
Which hem opposed, and knew al hire entente,  
And to the ymage of Juppiter hem sente,

And seyde, 'Whoso wol nat sacrifice,  
Swap of his heed, this my sentence heer.'  
Anon these martirs that I yow devyse,  
Oon Maximus, that was an officer  
Of the prefectes, and his corniculer,  
Hem hente, and whan he forth the seintes ladde,  
Hymself he weepe, for pitee that he hadde.

Whan Maximus had herd the seintes loore,  
He gat hym of the tormentoures leve,  
And ladde hem to his hous withoute moore.  
And with hir prechyng, er that it were eve,  
They gonnen fro the tormentours to reve,  
And fro Maxime, and fro his folk echone  
The fals feith, to trowe in God allone.

Cecile cam whan it was woxen nyght,  
With preestes that hem cristned alle yfeere,  
And afterward, whan day was woxen light,  
Cecile hem seyde, with a ful stedefast cheere,  
'Now Cristes owene knyghtes, leeve and deere,  
Cast alle away the werkes of derkness  
And armeth yow in armure of brightnesse.

Ye han forsothe ydoon a greet bataille,  
Youre cours is doon, youre feith han ye conserved,  
Gooth to the corone of lyf that may nat faille.  
The rightful juge which that ye han served

Shal yeve it yow as ye han it deserved.'  
And whan this thyng was seyde as I devyse,  
Men ledde hem forth to doon the sacrificise.

But whan they weren to the place broght,  
To tellen shortly the conclusioun,  
They nolde encense ne sacrificise right noght,  
But on hir knees they setten hem adoun  
With humble herte and sad devocioun,  
And losten bothe hir hevedes in the place.  
Her soules wenten to the kyng of grace.

This Maximus that saugh this thyng bityde,  
With pitous teeris tolde it anon-right,  
That he hir soules saugh to hevne glyde,  
With aungels ful of cleernesse and of light;  
And with this word converted many a wight.  
For which Almachius dide hym so bete  
With whippe of leed, til he the lyf gan lete.

Cecile hym took, and buryed hym anon  
By Tiburce and Valerian softely,  
Withinne hir buriyng place under the stoon,  
And after this Almachius hastily  
Bad hise ministres fecchen openly  
Cecile, so that she myghte in his presence  
Doon sacrifice, and Juppiter encense.

But they, converted at hir wise loore,  
Wepten ful soore, and yaven ful credence  
Unto hire word, and cryden moore and moore,  
'Crist, Goddes sone, withouten difference,  
Is verray God, this is al oure sentence,  
That hath so good a servant hym to serve  
This with o voys we trowen, thogh we sterve.'

Almachius, that herde of this doynge,  
Bad fecchen Cecile, that he myghte hir see,  
And alderfirst, lo, this was his axynge:  
'What maner womman artow?' tho quod he.  
'I am a gentil womman born,' quod she.  
'I axe thee,' quod he, 'though it thee greeve,

Of thy religioun and of thy bileeve.'

'Ye han bigonne youre question folily,'  
Quod she, 'that wolden two answeres conclude  
In o demande; ye axed lewedly.'  
Almache answerde unto that similitude,  
'Of whennes comth thyn answeyng so rude?'  
'Of whennes?' quod she, whan that she was freyned,  
'Of conscience and of good feith unfeyned.'

Almachius seyde, 'Ne takestow noon heede  
Of my power?' and she answerde hym,  
'Youre myght,' quod she, 'ful litel is to dreede,  
For every mortal mannes power nys  
But lyke a bladdre ful of wynd, ywys;  
For with a nedles poynt, whan it is blowe,  
May al the boost of it be leyd ful lowe.'

'Ful wrongfully bigonne thow,' quod he,  
'And yet in wrong is thy perseveraunce;  
Wostow nat how oure myghty princes free  
Han thus comanded and maad ordinaunce  
That every cristen wight shal han penaunce,  
But if that he his cristendom withseye-  
And goon al quit, if he wole it reneye?'

'Youre princes erren, as youre nobleye dooth,'  
Quod tho Cecile, 'and with a wood sentence  
Ye make us gilty, and it is nat sooth,  
For ye, that knowen wel oure innocence,  
For as mucche as we doon a reverence  
To Crist, and for we bere a cristen name,  
Ye putte on us a cryme, and eek a blame.'

But we that knowen thilke name so  
For vertuous, we may it nat withseye.'  
Almache answerde, 'Chees oon of thise two,  
Do sacrifice, or cristendom reneye,  
That thou mowe now escapen by that weye.'  
At which the hooly blisful faire mayde  
Gan for to laughe, and to the juge sayde,

'O Juge, confus in thy nycetee,  
Woltow that I reneye innocence,  
To make me a wikked wight,' quod shee;  
'Lo, he dissymuleth heere in audience,  
He stareth, and woodeth in his advertence.'  
To whom Almachius, 'Unsely wrecche,  
Ne woostow nat how far my myght may strecche?

Han noght oure myghty princes to me yeven  
Ye, bothe power and auctoritee  
To maken folk to dyen or to lyven?  
Why spekestow so proudly thanne to me?'  
'I speke noght but stedfastly,' quod she,  
'Nat proudly, for I speke as for my syde,  
We haten deedly thilke vice of pryde.

And if thou drede nat a sooth to heere,  
Thanne wol I shewe al openly by right  
That thou hast maad a ful grete lesyng heere,  
Thou seyst, thy princes han thee yeven myght  
Bothe for to sleen, and for to quyken a wight.  
Thou that ne mayst but oonly lyf bireve,  
Thou hast noon oother power, ne no leve!

But thou mayst seyn thy princes han thee maked  
Ministre of deeth, for if thou speke of mo,  
Thou lyst, for thy power is ful naked.'  
'Do wey thy booldnesse,' seyde Almachius tho,  
'And sacrifice to oure goddes er thou go.  
I recche na twhat wrong that thou me profre,  
For I can suffre it as a philosophre.

But thilke wronges may I nat endure  
That thou spekest of oure goddes heere,' quod he.  
Cecile answerde, 'O nyce creature,  
Thou seydest no word, syn thou spak to me,  
That I ne knew therwith thy nycetee,  
And that thou were in every maner wise  
A lewed officer and a veyn justise.

Ther lakketh no thyng to thyne outter eyen  
That thou nart blynd, for thyng that we seen alle



That it is stoon, that men may wel espyen,  
That ilke stoon a god thow wolt it calle.  
I rede thee lat thyn hand upon it falle,  
And taste it wel, and stoon thou shalt it fynde,

Syn that thou seest nat with thyne eyen blynde.

It is a shame that the peple shal  
So scorne thee, and laughe at thy folye,  
For comunly men woot it wel overal  
That myghty God is in hise hevenes hye,  
And thise ymages, wel thou mayst espye,  
To thee ne to hemself mowen noght profite,  
For in effect they been nat worth a myte.'

Thise wordes and swiche othere seyde she,  
And he weex wrooth, and bad men sholde hir lede  
Hom til hir hous, and 'in hire hous,' quod he,  
'Brenne hire right in a bath of flambes rede.'  
And as he bad, right so was doon in dede,  
For in a bath they gonne hire faste shetten,  
And nyght and day greet fyre they underbetten.

The longe nyght and eek a day also  
For al the fyr and eek the bathes heete  
She sat al coold, and feelede no wo;  
It made hir nat a drope for to sweete.  
But in that bath hir lyf she moste lete,  
For he Almachius, with a ful wikke entente,  
To sleen hir in the bath his sonde sente.

Thre strokes in the nekke he smoot hir tho,  
The tormentour, but for no maner chaunce  
He myghte noght smyte al hir nekke atwo.  
And for ther was that tyme an ordinaunce  
That no man sholde doon men swich penaunce  
The ferthe strook to smyten, softe or soore,  
This tormentour ne dorste do namoore.

But half deed, with hir nekke ycorven there,  
He lefte hir lye, and on his wey is went.  
The cristen folk, which that aboute hir were,

With sheetes han the blood ful faire yhent.  
Thre dayes lyved she in this torment,  
And nevere cessed hem the feith to teche;  
That she hadde fostred, hem she gan to preche.

And hem she yaf hir moebles, and hir thyng,  
And to the Pope Urban bitook hem tho,  
And seyde, 'I axed this at hevne kyng  
To han respit thre dayes, and namo,  
To recomende to yow er that I go  
These soules, lo, and that I myghte do werche  
Heere of myn hous perpetuelly a chirche.'

Seint Urban with hise deknes prively  
This body fette, and buryed it by nyghte,  
Among hise othere seintes, honestly.  
Hir hous the chirche of seinte Cecilie highte;  
Seint Urban halwed it, as he wel myghte,  
In which, into this day, in noble wyse  
Men doon to Crist and to his seinte servyse.

Heere is ended the Seconde Nonnes tale.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; Chaucer's Tale Of Sir Thopas

Part 10

## PROLOGUE TO CHAUCER'S TALE OF SIR THOPAS

Bihould the murye wordes of the Hoost to Chaucer.

Whan seyde was al this miracle, every man  
As sobre was, that wonder was to se,  
Til that oure Hooste japen tho bigan,  
And thanne at erst he looked upon me,  
And seyde thus, 'What man artow,' quod he,  
'Thow lookest as thou woldest fynde an hare,  
For ever upon the ground I se thee stare.

Approche neer, and looke up murily;  
Now war yow, sires, and lat this man have place.  
He in the waast is shape as wel as I;  
This were a popet in an arm tenbrace  
For any womman smal, and fair of face.  
He semeth elvyssh by his contenance,  
For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce.

Sey now somewhat, syn oother folk han sayd,  
Telle us a tale of myrthe, and that anon.'  
'Hooste,' quod I, 'ne beth nat yvele apayed,  
For oother tale certes kan I noon  
But of a ryme I lerned longe agoon.'  
'Ye, that is good,' quod he, 'now shul we heere  
Som deyntee thyng, me thynketh by his cheere.'

Part 11

## SIR THOPAS

Heere bigynneth Chaucers tale of Thopas.

Listeth, lordes, in good entent,  
And I wol telle verrayment  
Of myrthe and of solas,  
Al of a knyght was fair and gent

In bataille and in tourneyment,  
His name was Sir Thopas.

Yborn he was in fer contree,  
In Flaundres, al biyonde the see,  
At Poperyng in the place;  
His fader was a man ful free,  
And lord he was of that contree,  
As it was Goddes grace.

Sir Thopas wax a doghty swayn,  
Whit was his face as payndemayn,  
Hise lippes rede as rose;  
His rode is lyk scarlet in grayn,  
And I yow telle, in good certayn,  
He hadde a semely nose.

His heer, his berd, was lyk saffroun,  
That to his girdel raughte adoun;  
Hise shoon of Cordewane.  
Of Brugges were his hosen broun,  
His robe was of syklatoun  
That coste many a jane.

He koude hunte at wilde deer,  
And ride an haukyng for river,  
With grey goshawk on honde,  
Therto he was a good archeer,  
Of wrastlyng was ther noon his peer,  
Ther any ram shal stonde.

Ful many a mayde, bright in bour,  
They moorne for hym, paramour,  
Whan hem were bet to slepe;  
But he was chaast and no lechour,  
And sweete as is the brembulflour  
That bereth the rede hepe.

And so bifel upon a day,  
Frosothe as I yow telle may,  
Sir Thopas wolde out ride;  
He worth upon his steede gray,

And in his hand a launcegay,  
A long swerd by his side.

The priketh thurgh a fair forest,  
Therinne is many a wilde best,  
Ye, both bukke and hare,  
And as he priketh north and est,  
I telle it yow, hym hadde almost  
Bitidde a sory care.

Ther spryngen herbes, grete and smale,  
The lycorys and cetewale,  
And many a clowe-gylofre,  
And notemuge to putte in ale,  
Wheither it be moyste or stale,  
Or for to leye in cofre.

The briddes synge, it is no nay,  
The sparhawk and the papejay  
That joye it was to heere,  
The thrustelcok made eek hir lay,  
The wodedowve upon a spray  
She sang ful loude and cleere.

Sir Thopas fil in love-longynge,  
Al whan he herde the thrustel synge,  
And pryked as he were wood;  
His faire steede in his prikyng  
So swatte that men myghte him wryng,  
His sydes were al blood.

Sir Thopas eek so wery was  
For prikyng on the softe gras,  
So fiers was his corage,  
That doun he leyde him in that plas  
To make his steede som solas,  
And yaf hym good forage.

'O seinte Marie, benedicite,  
What eyleth this love at me  
To bynde me so soore?  
Me dremed al this nyght, pardee,

An elf-queene shal my lemman be,  
And slepe under my goore.

An elf-queene wol I love, ywis,  
For in this world no womman is  
Worthy to be my make  
In towne;  
Alle othere wommen I forsake,  
And to an elf-queene I me take  
By dale and eek by downe.'

Into his sadel he clamb anon,  
And priketh over stile and stoon  
An elf-queene for tespye,  
Til he so longe hadde riden and goon  
That he foond, in a pryve woon,  
The contree of Fairye  
So wilde;  
For in that contree was ther noon  
That to him dorste ryde or goon,  
Neither wyf ne childe,

Til that ther cam a greet geaunt,  
His name was Sir Olifaunt,  
A perilous man of dede;  
He seyde 'Child, by Termagaunt,  
But if thou prike out of myn haunt,  
Anon I sle thy steede  
With mace.  
Heere is the queene of Fayerye,  
With harpe and pipe and symphonye,  
Dwellyng in this place.'

The child seyde, 'Also moote I thee,  
Tomorwe wol I meete with thee,  
Whan I have myn armoure.  
And yet I hope, par ma fay,  
That thou shalt with this launcegay  
Abyen it ful sowre.  
Thy mawe  
Shal I percen if I may  
Er it be fully pryme of day,

For heere thow shalt be slawe.'

Sir Thopas drow abak ful faste,  
This geant at hym stones caste  
Out of a fel staf-slynge;  
But faire escapeth Child Thopas,  
And al it was thurgh Goddes gras,  
And thurgh his fair berynge.

Yet listeth, lordes, to my tale,  
Murier than the nightyngale,  
For now I wol yow rowne  
How Sir Thopas, with sydes smale,  
Prikyng over hill and dale  
Is comen agayn to towne.

His murie men comanded he  
To make hym bothe game and glee,  
For nedes moste he fighte  
With a geaunt with hevedes three,  
For paramour and jolitee  
Of oon that shoon ful brighte.

'Do come, he seyde, 'my mynstrales,  
And geestours, for to tellen tales  
Anon in myn armynge;  
Of romances that been roiales,  
Of Popes and of Cardinales,  
And eek of love-likyng.'

They fette hym first the sweete wyn,  
And mede eek in a mazelyn,  
And roial spicerye,  
And gyngebreed that was ful fyn,  
And lycorys, and eek comyn,  
With sugre that is so trye.

He dide next his white leere  
Of clooth of lake, fyn and cleere,  
A breech, and eek a sherte,  
And next his sherte an aketoun,  
And over that an haubergeoun,

For percynge of his herte.

And over that a fyn hawberk,  
Was al ywroght of Jewes werk,  
Ful strong it was of plate.  
And over that his cote-armour  
As whit as is a lilye flour,  
In which he wol debate.

His sheeld was al of gold so reed,  
And therinne was a bores heed,  
A charbocle bisyde;  
And there he swoor on ale and breed,  
How that 'the geaunt shal be deed  
Bityde what bityde!'

Hise jambeux were of quyrboilly,  
His swerdes shethe of yvory,  
His helm of laton bright,  
His sadel was of rewel-boon,  
His brydel as the sonne shoon,  
Or as the moone light.

His spere it was of fyn ciprees,  
That bodeth werre, and no thyng pees,  
The heed ful sharpe ygrounde;  
His steede was al dappull-gray,  
It gooth an ambil in the way  
Ful softely and rounde  
In londe.  
Loo, lordes myne, heere is a fit;  
If ye wol any moore of it,  
To telle it wol I fonde.

The Second Fit.

Now holde youre mouth, par charitee,  
Bothe knyght and lady free,  
And herkneth to my spelle;  
Of batailles and of chivalry  
And of ladyes love-drury  
Anon I wol yow telle.



Men speken of romances of prys,  
Of Hornchild, and of Ypotys,  
Of Beves and Sir Gy,  
Of Sir Lybeux and Pleyndamour,  
But Sir Thopas, he bereth the flour  
Of roial chivalry.

His goode steede al he bistrood,  
And forth upon his wey he glood  
As sparcle out of the bronde.  
Upon his creest he bar a tour,  
And therinne stiked a lillie-flour;  
God shilde his cors fro shonde!

And for he was a knyght auntrous,  
He nolde slepen in noon hous,  
But liggen in his hoode.  
His brighte helm was his wonger,  
And by hym baiteth his dextrer  
Of herbes fyne and goode.

Hym-self drank water of the well,  
As dide the knyght sir Percyvell  
So worly under wede,  
Til on a day-----

Heere the Hoost stynteth Chaucer of his Tale of Thopas.

'Na moore of this, for Goddes dignitee,'  
Quod oure hooste, 'for thou makest me  
So wery of thy verray lewednesse,  
That also wisly God my soule blesse,  
Min eres aken of thy drasty speche.

Now swich a rym the devel I biteche!  
This may wel be rym dogerel,' quod he.  
'Why so?' quod I, 'why wiltow lette me  
Moore of my tale than another man  
Syn that it is the beste tale I kan?'

'By God,' quod he, 'for pleynly at a word

Thy drasty rymyng is nat worth a toord,  
Thou doost nocht elles but despendest tyme.  
Sir, at o word thou shalt no lenger ryme.  
Lat se wher thou kanst tellen aught in geeste,

Or telle in prose somewhat, at the leeste,  
In which ther be som murthe or som doctryne.'  
'Gladly,' quod I, 'by Goddes sweete pyne,  
I wol yow telle a litel thyng in prose,  
That oghte liken yow as I suppose,

Or elles, certes, ye been to daungerous.  
It is a moral tale vertuouus,  
Al be it take somtyme in sondry wyse  
Of sondry folk as I shal yow devyse.  
As thus; ye woot that every Evaungelist

That telleth us the peyne of Jesu Crist  
Ne seith nat alle thyng as his felawe dooth,  
But, nathelees, hir sentence is al sooth,  
And alle acorden as in hir sentence,  
Al be her in hir tellyng difference.

For somme of hem seyn moore, and somme seyn lesse,  
Whan they his pitous passioun expresse;  
I meene of Marke, Mathew, Luc, and John,  
But doutelees hir sentence is al oon,  
Therefore, lordynges alle, I yow biseche

If that yow thynke I varie as in my speche,  
As thus, though that I telle somewhat moore  
Of proverbes, than ye han herd bifoore,  
Comprehended in this litel tretys heere,  
To enforce with theeffect of my mateere,

And though I nat the same wordes seye  
As ye han herd, yet to yow alle I preye,  
Blameth me nat; for, as in my sentence  
Ye shul nat fynden moche difference  
Fro the sentence of this tretys lyte

After the which this murye tale I write.

And therfore herkneth what that I shal seye,  
And lat me tellen al my tale, I preye.'

THE TALE (in prose).

(A young man called Melibeus, whose wife Prudence and daughter Sophie (Wisdom) are maltreated by his foes in his absence, is counseled with many wise sayings uttered by his wife tending toward peace and forgiveness, instead of revenge.)

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; Epilogue

Part 17

## EPILOGUE

The wordes of the Hooste to the Phisicien and the Pardoner.

Oure Hooste gan to swere as he were wood;  
'Harrow!' quod he, 'by nayles and by blood!  
This was a fals cherl and a fals justice!  
As shameful deeth as herte may devyse  
Come to thise juges and hire advocatz!

Algate this sely mayde is slayn, allas!  
Allas! to deere boughte she beautee!  
Wherfore I seye al day, as men may see  
That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature  
Been cause of deeth to many a creature.

(Hir beautee was hir deeth, I dar wel sayn;  
Allas, so pitously as she was slayn!)  
Of bothe yiftes that I speke of now  
Men han ful ofte moore harm than prow.  
But trewely, myn owene maister deere,

This is a pitous tale for to heere.  
But nathelees, passe over is no fors;  
I pray to God so save thy gentil cors,  
And eek thyne urynals and thy jurdanes,  
Thyn ypocras and eek thy Galianes

And every boyste ful of thy letuarie,  
God blesse hem, and oure lady Seinte Marie!  
So moot I theen, thou art a propre man,  
And lyk a prelat, by Seint Ronyan.  
Seyde I nat wel? I kan nat speke in terme;

But wel I woot thou doost myn herte to erme,  
That I almost have caught a cardyacle.  
By corpus bones, but I have triacle,

Or elles a draughte of moyste and corny ale,  
Or but I heere anon a myrie tale,

Myn herte is lost, for pitee of this mayde!  
Thou beelamy, thou Pardoner,' he sayde,  
'Telle us som myrthe or japes right anon.'  
'It shal be doon,' quod he, 'by Seint Ronyon;  
But first,' quod he, 'heere at this ale-stake,

I wol bothe drynke and eten of a cake.'  
And right anon the gentils gonne to crye,  
'Nay, lat hym telle us of no ribaudye!  
Telle us som moral thyng that we may leere  
Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly heere!'

'I graunte, ywis,' quod he, 'but I moot thynke  
Upon som honeste thyng, while that I drynke.'

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; The Chanouns Yemannes Tale

Part 28

## PROLOGUE TO THE CHANOUNS YEMANNES TALE

The prologe of the Chanouns yemannes tale.

Whan ended was the lyf of seinte Cecile,  
Er we hadde riden fully fyve mile,  
At Boghtoun under Blee us gan atake  
A man, that clothed was in clothes blake,  
And undernethe he wered a whyt surplys.

His hakeney, which that was al pomely grys,  
So swatte, that it wonder was to see,  
It wemed as he had priked miles thre.  
The hors eek that his yeman rood upon  
So swatte, that unnethe myghte it gon.

Aboute the peytrel stood the foom ful hye,  
He was of fome al flekked as a pye.  
A male tweyfoold upon his croper lay,  
It semed that he caried lite array.  
Al light for somer rood this worthy man,

And in myn herte wondren I bigan  
What that he was, til that I understood  
How that his cloke was sowed to his hood;  
For which, whan I hadde longe avysed me,  
I demed hym som Chanoun for to be.

His hat heeng at his bak down by a laas,  
For he hadde riden moore than trot or paas;  
He hadde ay priked lik as he were wood.  
A clote-leef he hadde under his hood  
For swoot, and for to kepe his heed from heete.

But it was joye for to seen hym swete!  
His forheed dropped as a stillatorie  
Were ful of plantayne and of paritorie.

And whan that he was come, he gan to crye,  
'God save,' quod he, 'this joly compaignye!

Faste have I priked,' quod he, 'for youre sake,  
By cause that I wolde yow atake,  
To riden in this myrie compaignye.'  
His Yeman eek was ful of curteisye,  
And seyde, 'Sires, now in the morwe tyde

Out of youre hostelrie I saugh yow ryde,  
And warned heer my lord and my soverayn  
Which that to ryden with yow is ful fayn  
For his desport; he loveth daliaunce.'  
'Freend, for thy warnyng God yeve thee good chaunce,'

Thanne seyde oure Hoost, 'for certein, it wolde seme  
Thy lord were wys, and so I may wel deme.  
He is ful jocunde also, dar I leye.  
Can he oght telle a myrie tale or tweye  
With which he glade may this compaignye?'

'Who, sire, my lord? ye, ye, with-outen lye!  
He kan of murthe and eek of jolitee  
Nat but ynough, also, sire, trusteth me.  
And ye hym knewen as wel as do I,  
Ye wolde wondre how wel and craftily

He koude werke, and that in sondry wise.  
He hath take on hym many a greet emprise,  
Which were ful hard for any that is heere  
To brynge aboute, but they of hym it leere.  
As hoomly as he rit amonges yow,

If ye hym knewe, it wolde be for youre prow,  
Ye wolde nat forgoon his aqueyntaunce  
For muchel good, I dar leye in balaunce  
Al that I have in my possessioun.  
He is a man of heigh discrecioun,

I warne yow wel, he is a passyng man.'  
'Wel,' quod oure Hoost, 'I pray thee, tel em than,  
Is he a clerk, or noon? telle what he is?'

'Nay, he is gretter than a clerk, ywis,'  
Seyde this Yeman, 'and in wordes fewe,

Hoost, of his craft somewhat I wol yow shewe.  
I seye my lord kan swich subtilitee-  
But al his craft ye may nat wite for me,  
And somewhat helpe I yet to his wirkyng-  
That al this ground on which we been rydyng

Til that we come to Caunterbury toun,  
He koude al clene turne it up so doun  
And pave ti al of silver and of gold.'  
And whan this Yeman hadde this tale ytold  
Unto oure Hoost, he seyde, 'Benedicitee,

This thyng is wonder merveillous to me,  
Syn that thy lord is of so heigh prudence,  
By cause of which men sholde hym reverence,  
That of his worship rekketh he so lite.  
His overslope nys nat worth a myte

As in effect to hym, so moot I go.  
It is al baudy and to-tore also,  
Why is thy lord so sluttissh, I the preye,  
And is of power bettre clooth to beye,  
If that his dede accorde with thy speche?

Telle me that, and that I thee biseche.'  
'Why,' quod this Yeman, 'wherto axe ye me?  
God help me so, for he shal nevere thee!  
But I wol nat avowe that I seye,  
And therefore keepe it secree, I yow preye;

He is to wys, in feith, as I bileeve!  
That that is overdoon, it wol nat preeve  
Aright; as clerkes seyn, it is a vice.  
Wherfore in that I holde hym lewed and nyce;  
For whan a man hath over-greet a wit,

Ful oft hym happeth to mysusen it.  
So dooth my lord, and that me greveth soore.  
God it amende, I kan sey yow namoore.'



'Therof no fors, good Yeman,' quod oure Hoost,  
'Syn of the konnyng of thy lord thow woost,

Telle how he dooth, I pray thee hertely,  
Syn that he is so crafty and so sly.  
Wher dwelle ye, if it to telle be?'  
'In the suburbes of a toun,' quod he,  
'Lurkyng in hernes and in lanes blynde,

Where as thise robbours and thise theves by kynde  
Holden hir pryvee fereful residence,  
As they that dar nat shewen hir presence.  
So faren we if I shal seye the sothe.'  
'Now,' quod oure Hoost, 'yit lat me talke to the,

Why artow so discoloured of thy face?'  
'Peter,' quod he, 'God yeve it harde grace,  
I am so used in the fyr to blowe,  
That it hath chaunged my colour, I trowe.  
I am nat wont in no mirrour to prie,

But swynke soore, and lerne multiplie.  
We blondren evere, and pouren in the fir,  
And, for al that, we faille of oure desir.  
For evere we lakke of oure conclusioun;  
To muchel folk we doon illusioun,

And borwe gold, be it a pound or two,  
Or ten, or twelve, or manye sommes mo,  
And make hem wenen at the leeste weye  
That of a pound we koude make tweye.  
Yet is it fals, but ay we han good hope

It for to doon, and after it we grope.  
But that science is so fer us biforn,  
We mowen nat, although we hadden sworn,  
It over-take, it slit away so faste.  
It wole us maken beggars atte laste.'

Whil this yeman was thus in his talkyng,  
This Chanoun drough hym neer, and herde al thyng  
Which this Yeman spak, for suspecioun

Of mennes speche evere hadde this Chanoun.  
For Catoun seith, that he that gilty is

Demeth alle thyng be spoke of hym, ywis.  
That was the cause he gan so ny hym drawe  
To his yeman, to herknen al his sawe.  
And thus he seyde unto his yeman tho,  
'Hoold thou thy pees, and spek no wordes mo,

For it thou do, thou shalt it deere abyen.  
Thou sclaundrest me heere in this compaignye,  
And eek discoverest that thou sholdest hyde.'  
'Ye,' quod oure Hoost, 'telle on, what so bityde,  
Of al his thretyng rekke nat a myte.'

'In feith,' quod he, 'namoore I do but lyte.'  
And whan this Chanoun saugh it wolde nat bee,  
But his Yeman wolde telle his pryvetee,  
He fledde away for verray sorwe and shame.  
'A!' quod the Yeman, 'heere shal arise game.'

Al that I kan, anon now wol I telle,  
Syn he is goon, the foule feend hym quelle!  
For nevere heer after wol I with hym meete,  
For peny ne for pound, I yow biheete.  
He that me broghte first unto that game,

Er that he dye, sorwe have he and shame.  
For it is ernest to me, by my feith,  
That feele I wel, what so any man seith.  
And yet, for al my smert and al my grief,  
For al my sorwe, labour, and meschief,

I koude never leve it in no wise.  
Now wolde God, my wit myghte suffise  
To tellen al that longeth to that art,  
And nathelees yow wol I tellen part.  
Syn that my lord is goon, I wol nat spare,  
Swich thyng as that I knowe, I wol declare.

Heere endeth the prologe of the Chanouns yemannes tale.

(After a lengthy account of the practice of alchemy by his master, the yeoman tells how a priest is beguiled of his money by a certain canon through trickery of a hollow rod.)

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; The Clerkes Tale (A)

Part 22

GROUP E.

THE CLERKES TALE-PROLOGUE

Heere folweth the Prologe of the clerkes tale of Oxenford.

'Sire clerk of Oxenford,' oure Hooste sayde,  
'Ye ryde as coy and stille as dooth a mayde,  
Were newe spoused, sittynge at the bord.  
This day ne herde I of youre tonge a word.  
I trowe ye studie about som sophyme;

But Salomon seith, `every thyng hath tyme.'  
For Goddes sake, as beth of bettre cheere;  
It is no tyme for to studien heere,  
Telle us som myrie tale, by youre fey.  
For what man that is entred in a pley,

He nedes moot unto the pley assente;  
But precheth nat as freres doon in Lente,  
To make us for oure olde synnes wepe,  
Ne that thy tale make us nat to slepe.  
Telle us som murie thyng of adventures;

Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures,  
Keep hem in stoor, til so be that ye endite  
Heigh style, as whan that men to kynges write.  
Speketh so pleyn at this tyme, we yow preye,  
That we may understonde what ye seye.'

This worthy clerk benignely answerde,  
'Hooste,' quod he, 'I am under youre yerde.  
Ye han of us as now the governance;  
And therefore wol I do yow obeisance  
As fer as resoun axeth, hardily.

I wol yow telle a tale, which that I

Lerned at Padwe of a worthy clerk,  
As preved by his wordes and his werk.  
He is now deed, and nayled in his cheste;  
I prey to God so yeve his soule reste.

Fraunceys Petrark, the lauriat poete,  
Highte this clerk, whos rethorike sweete  
Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie,  
As Lynyan dide of philosophie,  
Or lawe, or oother art particuler.

But deeth, that wol nat suffre us dwellen heer  
But as it were a twynklyng of an eye,  
Hem bothe hath slayn, and alle shul we dye.  
But forth to tellen of this worthy man,  
That taughte me this tale as I bigan,

I seye, that first with heigh stile he enditeth  
Er he the body of his tale writeth,  
A prohemye in the which discryveth he  
Pemond, and of Saluces the contree,  
And speketh of Apennyn, the hilles hye,

That been the boundes of Westlumbardye;  
And of Mount Vesulus in special,  
Where as the Poo out of a welle smal  
Taketh his firste spryngyng and his sours,  
That estward ay encresseth in his cours

To Emeleward, to Ferrare, and Venyse;  
The which a long thyng were to devyse.  
And trewely, as to my juggement,  
Me thynketh it a thyng impertinent,  
Save that he wole convoyen his mateere;  
But this his tale, which that ye may heere.'

Part 23

## THE CLERKES TALE

Heere bigynneth the tale of the Clerk of Oxenford.

Ther is, at the west syde of Ytaille,  
Doun at the roote of Vesulus the colde,  
A lusty playne, habundant of vitaille,  
Where many a tour and toun thou mayst biholde  
That founded were in tyme of fadres olde,  
And many another delitable sighte,  
And Saluces this noble contree highte.

A markys whilom lord was of that lond,  
As were hise worthy eldres hym bifore,  
And obeisant and redy to his hond  
Were alle hise liges, bothe lasse and moore.  
Thus in delit he lyveth, and hath doon yoore,  
Biloved and drad thurgh favour of Fortune,  
Bothe of hise lordes and of his commune.

Therwith he was, to speke as of lynage,  
The gentilleste yborn of Lumbardye;  
A fair persone, and strong, and yong of age,  
And ful of honour and of curteisye,  
Discreet ynogh his contree for to gye,  
Save that in somme thynges that he was to blame,  
And Walter was this yonge lordes name.

I blame hym thus, that he considereth noght  
In tyme comynge what hym myghte bityde,  
But in his lust present was al his thoght,  
As for to hauke and hunte on every syde.  
Wel ny alle othere cures leet he slyde;  
And eek he nolde,-and that was worst of alle-  
Wedde no wyf, for noght that may bifalle.

Oonly that point his peple bar so soore,  
That flokmeele on a day they to hym wente,  
And oon of hem, that wisest was of loore,  
Or elles that the lord best wolde assente,  
That he sholde telle hym what his peple mente,  
Or elles koude he shewe wel swich mateere,  
He to the markys seyde as ye shul heere:

'O noble Markys, youre humanitee  
Asseureth us, and yeveth us hardinesse,

As ofte as tyme is of necessitee  
That we to yow mowe telle oure hevynesse.  
Accepteth, lord, now for youre gentillesse  
That we with pitous herte unto yow pleyne,  
And lat youre eres nat my voys desdeyne,

Al have I noght to doone in this mateere  
Moore than another man hath in this place;  
Yet for as muche as ye, my lord so deere,  
Han alwey shewed me favour and grace,  
I dar the bettre aske of yow a space  
Of audience to shewen oure requeste,  
And ye, my lord, to doon right as yow leste.

For certes, lord, so wel us liketh yow  
And al youre werk, and evere han doon that we  
Ne koude nat us-self devysen how  
We myghte lyven in moore felicitee,  
Save o thyng, lord, if it youre wille be,  
That for to been a wedded man yow leste,  
Thanne were youre peple in sovereyn hertes reste.

Boweth youre nekke under that blisful yok  
Of soveraynetee, noght of servyse,  
Which that men clepeth spousaille or wedlock;  
And thenketh, lord, among youre thoghtes wyse  
How that oure dayes passe in sondry wyse,  
For thogh we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ryde,  
Ay fleeth the tyme, it nyl no man abyde.

And thogh youre grene youthe floure as yit,  
In crepeth age alwey, as stille as stoon,  
And deeth manaceth every age, and smyt  
In ech estaat, for ther escapeth noon;  
And al so certein as we knowe echoon  
That we shul deye, as uncerteyn we alle  
Been of that day, whan deeth shal on us falle.

Accepteth thanne of us the trewe entente  
That nevere yet refuseden thyn heeste;  
And we wol, lord, if that ye wole assente,  
Chese yow a wyf in short tyme atte leeste,

Born of the gentilleste and of the meeste  
Of al this land, so that it oghte seme  
Honour to God, and yow, as we kan deeme.

Delivere us out of al this bisy drede,  
And taak a wyf for hye Goddes sake,  
For if it so bifelle, as God forbede,  
That thurgh your deeth your lyne sholde slake,  
And that a straunge successour sholde take  
Youre heritage, o wo were us alyve!  
Wherfore we pray you hastily to wyve.'

Hir meeke preyere and hir pitous cheere  
Made the markys herte han pitee.  
'Ye wol,' quod he, 'myn owene peple deere,  
To that I nevere erst thoughte, streyne me.  
I me rejoysed of my liberte,  
That seelde tyme is founde in mariage.  
Ther I was free, I moot been in servage.

But nathelees I se youre trewe entente,  
And truste upon youre wit, and have doon at;  
Wherfore of my free wyl I wole assente  
To wedde me, as soone as evere I may.  
But ther as ye han profred me this day  
To chese me a wyf, I yow relesse  
That choys, and prey yow of that profre cesse.

For God it woot, that children ofte been  
Unlyk hir worthy eldres hem bifore.  
Bountee comth al of God, nat of the streen,  
Of which they been engendred and ybore.  
I truste in Goddes bontee; and therfore  
My mariage, and myn estaat and reste,  
I hym bitake, he may doon as hym leste.

Lat me allone in chesyng of my wyf,  
That charge upon my bak I wole endure;  
But I yow preye, and charge upon youre lyf  
That what wyf that I take, ye me assure  
To worshipe hir, whil that hir lyf may dure,  
In word and werk, bothe heere and everywheere,



As she an emperoures doghter weere.

And forthermoore, this shal ye swere, that ye  
Agayn my choys shul neither grucche ne stryve,  
For sith I shal forgoon my libertee  
At youre requeste, as evere moot I thryve,  
Ther as myn herte is set, ther wol I wyve!  
And but ye wole assente in this manere,  
I prey yow, speketh namoore of this matere.'

With hertely wyl they sworn and assenten  
To al this thyng, ther seyde no wight nay,  
Bisekyng hym of grace er that they wenten,  
That he wolde graunten hem a certein day  
Of his spousaille, as soone as evere he may,  
For yet alwey the peple somewhat dredde  
Lest that this markys no wyf wolde wedde.

He graunten hem a day, swich as hym leste,  
On which he wolde be wedded sikerly,  
And seyde he dide al this at hir requeste;  
And they with humble entente, buxomly,  
Knelyng upon hir knees ful reverently  
Hym thonken alle, and thus they han an ende  
Of hir entente, and hoom agayn they wende.

And heerupon he to hise officeres  
Comaundeth for the feste to purveye,  
And to hise privee knyghtes and squieres  
Swich charge yaf, as hym liste on hem leye.  
And they to his comandement obeye,  
And ech of hem dooth al his diligence  
To doon unto the feeste reverence:

Explicit prima pars.

Incipit secunda pars.

Noght fer fro thilke paleys honorable  
Ther as this markys shoop his mariage,  
Ther stood a throop, of site delitable,

In which that povre folk of that village  
Hadden hir beestes and hir herbergage,  
And of hir labour tooke hir sustenance,  
After that the erthe yaf hem habundance.

Amonges thise povre folk ther dwelte a man  
Which that was holden povrest of hem alle;  
(But hye God somtyme senden kan  
His grace into a litel oxes stalle)  
Janicula men of that throop hym calle.  
A doghter hadde he, fair ynogh to sighte,  
And Grisildis this yonge mayden highte.

But for to speke of vertuous beautee,  
Thanne was she oon the faireste under sonne,  
For povreliche yfostred up was she,  
No likerous lust was thurgh hir herte yronne.  
Wel offer of the welle than of the tonne  
She drank, and for she wolde vertu plese  
She knew wel labour but noon ydel ese.

But thogh this mayde tendre were of age,  
Yet in the brest of hire virginitee  
Ther was enclosed rype and sad corage;  
And in greet reverence and charitee  
Hir olde povre fader fostred shee.  
A fewe sheepe, spynnyng on feeld she kepte,  
-She wolde noght been ydel, til she slepte.

And whan she homward cam, she wolde brynge  
Wortes, or othere herbes tymes ofte,  
The whiche she shredde and seeth for hir lyvyng,  
And made hir bed ful harde and no thyng softe;  
And ay she kepte hir fadres lyf on lofte  
With everich obeisaunce and diligence  
That child may doon to fadres reverence.

Upon Grisilde, this povre creature,  
Ful ofte sithe this markys caste his eye,  
As he on huntynge rood paraventure.  
And whan it fil that he myghte hire espye,  
He noght with wantowne lookyng of folye

Hise eyen caste on hir, but in sad wyse,  
Upon hir chiere he wolde hym ofte avyse,

Commendynge in his herte hir wommanhede  
And eek hir vertu, passynge any wight  
Of so yong age, as wel in chiere as dede.  
For thogh the peple hadde no greet insight  
In vertu, he considered ful right  
Hir bountee, and disposed that he wolde  
Wedde hir oonly, if evere he wedde sholde.

The day of weddyng cam, but no wight kan  
Telle what womman that it sholde be,  
For which merveille wondred many a man,  
And seyden, whan that they were in privetee,  
'Wol nat oure lord yet leve his vanytee?  
Wol he nat wedde? allas, allas, the while!  
Why wole he thus hymself and us bigile?'

But nathelees this markys hath doon make  
Of gemmes set in gold and in asure  
Brooches and rynges, for Grisildis sake,  
And of hir clothyng took he the mesure,  
By a mayde lyk to hir stature,  
And eek of othere ornementes alle  
That unto swich a weddyng sholde falle.

The time of undren of the same day  
Approcheth, that this weddyng sholde be;  
And al the paleys put was in array,  
Bothe halle and chambres, ech in his degree;  
Houses of office stuffed with plentee  
Ther maystow seen, of deyntevous vitaille,  
That may be founde as fer as last Ytaille.

This roial markys, richely arrayed,  
Lordes and ladyes in his compaignye,  
The whiche that to the feeste weren yprayed,  
And of his retenue the bachelrye,  
With many a soun of sondry melodye  
Unto the village, of the which I tolde,  
In this array the righte wey han holde.

Grisilde (of this, God woot, ful innocent,  
That for hir shapen was al this array)  
To fecchen water at a welle is went,  
And cometh hoom as soone as ever she may;  
For wel she hadde herd seyde, that thilke day  
The markys sholde wedde, and if she myghte,  
She wolde fayn han seyn som of that sighte.

She thoghte, 'I wole with othere maydens stonde,  
That been my felawes, in oure dore, and se  
The markysesse, and therefore wol I fonde  
To doon at hoom as soone as it may be  
The labour, which that longeth unto me,  
And thanne I may at leyser hir biholde,  
If she this wey unto the castel holde.'

And as she wolde over hir thresshfold gon  
The markys cam and gan hire for to calle,  
And she set down hir water pot anon  
Biside the thresshfold in an oxes stalle,  
And down up-on hir knes she gan to falle,  
And with sad contenance kneleth stille,  
Til she had herd what was the lordes will.

This thoughtful markys spak unto this mayde  
Ful sobrelly, and seyde in this manere,  
'Where is youre fader, O Grisildis?' he sayde,  
And she with reverence in humble cheere  
Answerde, 'Lord, he is al redy heere.'  
And in she gooth, withouten lenger lette,  
And to the markys she hir fader fette.

He by the hand thanne took this olde man,  
And seyde thus, whan he hym hadde asyde,  
'Janicula, I neither may ne kan  
Lenger the plesance of myn herte hyde;  
If that thou vouchsauf, what so bityde,  
Thy doghter wol I take, er that I wende,  
As for my wyf unto hir lyves ende.

Thou lovest me, I woot it wel certeyn,

And art my feithful lige man ybore,  
And all that liketh me, I dar wel seyn,  
It liketh thee; and specially therfore  
Tel me that poynt that I have seyde bifore,  
If that thou wolt unto that purpos drawe,  
To take me as for thy sone-in-lawe.'

This sodeyn cas this man astonyed so,  
That reed he wax abayst and al quakyng  
He stood, unnethes seyde he wordes mo,  
But oonly thus, 'Lord,' quod he, 'my willynge  
Is as ye wole, ne ayeyns youre likyng  
I wol no thyng, ye be my lord so deere;  
Right as yow lust governeth this mateere.'

'Yet wol I,' quod this markys softly,  
'That in thy chambre I and thou and she  
Have a collacioun, and wostow why?  
For I wol axe, if it hir wille be  
To be my wyf, and reule hir after me;  
And al this shal be doon in thy presence,  
I wol noght speke out of thyn audience.'

And in the chambre whil they were aboute  
Hir tretys which as ye shal after heere,  
The peple cam unto the hous withoute,  
And wondred hem in how honeste manere  
And tentifly she kepte hir fader deere.  
But outrely Grisildis wondre myghte  
For nevere erst ne saugh she swich a sighte.

No wonder is thogh that she were astoned  
To seen so greet a grete come in that place;  
She nevere was to swiche gestes woned,  
For which she looked with ful pale face-  
But shortly forth this tale for to chace,  
These arn the wordes that the markys seyde  
To this benigne verray feithful mayde.

'Grisilde,' he seyde, 'ye shal wel understonde  
It liketh to youre fader and to me  
That I yow wedde, and eek it may so stonde,

As, I suppose, ye wol that it so be.  
But thise demandes axe I first,' quod he,  
'That sith it shal be doon in hastif wyse,  
Wol ye assente, or elles yow avyse?

I seye this, be ye redy with good herte  
To al my lust, and that I frely may,  
As me best thynketh, do yow laughe or smerte,  
And nevere ye to grucche it nyght ne day,  
And eek whan I sey ye, ne sey nat nay,  
Neither by word, ne frownyng contenance?  
Swere this, and heere I swere yow alliance.'

Wondrynge upon this word, quakyng for drede,  
She seyde, 'Lord, undigne and unworthy  
Am I to thilke honour, that ye me beede,  
But as ye wole yourself, right so wol I.  
And heere I swere, that nevere willyngly  
In werk ne thoght I nyl yow disobeye,  
For to be deed, though me were looth to deye.'

'This is ynogh, Grisilde myn,' quod he,  
And forth he gooth with a ful sobre cheere  
Out at the dore, and after that cam she;  
And to the peple he seyde in this manere,  
'This is my wyf,' quod he, 'that standeth heere;  
Honoureth hir, and loveth hir, I preye,  
Whoso me loveth; ther is namoore to seye.'

And for that nothyng of hir olde geere  
She sholde brynge into his hous, he bad  
That wommen sholde dispoillen hir right there;-  
Of which thise ladyes were nat right glad  
To handle hir clothes, wherinne she was clad-  
But nathelees, this mayde bright of hewe  
Fro foot to heed they clothed han al newe.

Hir heris han they kembd, that lay untressed  
Ful rudely, and with hir fyngres smale  
A corone on hir heed they han ydressed,  
And sette hir ful of nowches grete and smale.  
Of hir array what sholde I make a tale?

Unnethe the peple hire knew for hir fairnesse  
Whan she translated was in swich richesse.

This markys hath hir spoused with a ryng  
Broght for the same cause, and thanne hir sette  
Upon an hors, snow-whit and wel amblyng,  
And to his paleys, er he lenger lette,  
With joyful peple that hir ladde and mette  
Convoyed hir; and thus the day they spende  
In revel, til the sonne gan descende.

And shortly forth this tale for to chace,  
I seye, that to this newe markysesse  
God hath swich favour sent hir of his grace,  
That it ne semed nat by liklynesse  
That she was born and fed in rudenesse  
As in a cote or in an oxe-stalle,  
But norissed in an emperoures halle.

To every wight she woxen is so deere  
And worshipful, that folk ther she was bore  
And from hir birthe knewe hir yeer by yeere,  
Unnethe trowed they, but dorste han swore  
That she to Janicle, of which I spak bifore,  
She doghter nere, for as by conjecture,  
Hem thoughte she was another creature.

For though that evere vertuous was she,  
She was encressed in swich excellence,  
Of thewes goode, yset in heigh bountee,  
And so discreet and fair of eloquence,  
So benigne, and so digne of reverence,  
And koude so the peples herte embrace,  
That ech hir lovede, that looked on hir face.

Noght oonly of Saluces in the toun  
Publiced was the bountee of hir name,  
But eek biside in many a regioun,  
If oon seide wel, another seyde the same;  
So spradde of hir heighe bountee the fame  
That men and wommen, as wel yonge as olde,  
Goon to Saluce upon hir to biholde.

Thus Walter lowely, nay! but roially  
Wedded with fortunat honestetee,  
In Goddes pees lyveth ful esily  
At hoom, and outward grace ynogh had he,  
And for he saugh that under low degree  
Was ofte vertu hid, the peple hym heelde  
A prudent man, and that is seyn ful seelde.

Nat oonly this Grisildis thurgh hir wit  
Koude al the feet of wyfly humblenessse,  
But eek, whan that the cas required it,  
The commune profit koude she redresse.  
Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse  
In al that land, that she ne koude apese,  
And wisely brynge hem alle in reste and ese.

Though that hir housbonde absent were anon  
If gentil men, or othere of hir contree  
Were wrothe, she wolde bryngen hem aton.  
So wise and rype wordes hadde she,  
And juggementz of so greet equitee,  
That she from hevene sent was, as men wende,  
Peple to save and every wrong tamende.

Nat longe tyme after that this Grisild  
Was wedded, she a doghter hath ybore-  
Al had hir levere have born a man child;  
Glad was this markys and the folk therfore,  
For though a mayde child coome al bifore,  
She may unto a knave child atteyne  
By liklihedde, syn she nys nat bareyne.

Explicit secunda pars.

Incipit tercia pars.

Ther fil, as it bifalleth tymes mo,  
Whan that this child had souked but a throwe,  
This markys in his herte longeth so  
To tempte his wyf, hir sadnesse for to knowe,



That he ne myghte out of his herte throwe  
This merveillous desir his wyf tassaye.  
Nedelees, God woot, he thoghte hir for taffraye.

He hadde assayed hir ynogh bifore,  
And foond hir evere good; what neded it  
Hir for to tempte and alwey moore and moore?  
Though som men preise it for a subtil wit,  
But as for me, I seye that yvele it sit  
To assaye a wyf, whan that it is no nede,  
And putten hir in angwyssh and in drede.

For which this markys wroghte in this manere;  
He cam allone a nyght, ther as she lay,  
With stierne face and with ful trouble cheere,  
And seyde thus, 'Grisilde,' quod he, 'that day  
That I yow took out of your povere array,  
And putte yow in estaat of heigh noblesse,  
Ye have nat that forgeten, as I gesse.

I seye, Grisilde, this present dignitee  
In which that I have put yow, as I trowe  
Maketh yow nat foryetful for to be  
That I yow took in povre estaat ful lowe  
For any wele ye moot youreselven knowe.  
Taak heede of every word that y yow seye,  
Ther is no wight that hereth it but we tweye.

Ye woot yourself wel how that ye cam heere  
Into this hous, it is nat longe ago.  
And though to me that ye be lief and deere,  
Unto my gentils ye be no thyng so.  
They seyn, to hem it is greet shame and wo  
For to be subgetz, and to been in servage,  
To thee that born art of a smal village.

And namely, sith thy doghter was ybore,  
These wordes han they spoken, doutelees;  
But I desire, as I have doon bifore,  
To lyve my lyf with hem in reste and pees.  
I may nat in this caas be recchelees,  
I moot doon with thy doghter for the beste,

Nat as I wolde, but as my peple leste.

And yet God woot, this is ful looth to me!  
But nathelees, withoute youre wityng  
I wol nat doon, but this wol I,' quod he,  
'That ye to me assente as in this thyng.  
Shewe now youre pacience in youre werkyng,  
That ye me highte and swore in youre village,  
That day that maked was oure mariage.'

Whan she had herd al this, she noght ameved  
Neither in word, or chiere, or countenance;  
For as it semed she was nat agreved.  
She seyde, 'Lord, al lyth in youre plesaunce,  
My child, and I, with hertely obeisaunce  
Been youre al, and ye mowe save and spille  
Your owene thyng, werketh after youre wille.

Ther may no thyng, God so my soule save,  
Liken to yow, that may displese me,  
Ne I ne desire no thyng for to have,  
Ne drede for to leese save oonly yee;  
This wyl is in myn herte, and ay shal be;  
No lengthe of tyme or deeth may this deface,  
Ne chaunge my corage to another place.'

Glad was this markys of hir answeryng,  
But yet he feyned as he were nat so.  
Al drery was his cheere and his lookyng,  
Whan that he sholde out of the chambre go.  
Soone after this, a furlong wey or two,  
He prively hath toold al his entente  
Unto a man, and to his wyf hym sente.

A maner sergeant was this privee man,  
The which that feithful ofte he founden hadde  
In thynges grete, and eek swich folk wel kan  
Doon execucioun on thynges badde.  
The lord knew wel that he hym loved and dradde;-  
And whan this sergeant wiste the lordes wille,  
Into the chambre he stalked hym ful stille.

'Madame,' he seyde, 'ye moote foryeve it me  
Though I do thyng to which I am constreyned,  
Ye been so wys, that ful wel knowe ye  
That lordes heestes mowe nat been yfeyned,  
They mowe wel been biwailed and compleyned,  
But men moote nede unto hir lust obeye;  
And so wol I, ther is namoore to seye.

This child I am comanded for to take.'  
And spak namoore, but out the child he hente  
Despitously, and gan a cheere make  
As though he wolde han slayn it er he wente.  
Grisildis moot al suffren and consente,  
And as a lamb she sitteth meke and stille,  
And leet this cruuel sergeant doon his wille.

Suspicious was the diffame of this man,  
Suspect his face, suspect his word also,  
Suspect the tyme in which he this bigan.  
Allas, hir doghter that she loved so!  
She wende he wolde han slawen it right tho;  
But nathelees she neither weep ne syked,  
Consentyng hir to that the markys lyked.

But atte laste speken she bigan,  
And mekely she to the sergeant preyde,  
So as he was a worthy gentil man,  
That she moste kisse hire child, er that it deyde,  
And in hir barm this litel child she leyde,  
With ful sad face, and gan the child to kisse,  
And lulled it, and after gan it blisse.

And thus she seyde in hir benigne voys,  
'Fareweel, my child, I shal thee nevere see,  
But sith I thee have marked with the croys  
Of thilke fader blessed moote thou be,  
That for us deyde upon a croys of tree.  
Thy soule, litel child, I hym bitake,  
For this nyght shaltow dyen for my sake.'

I trowe, that to a norice in this cas  
It had been hard this reuthe for to se;

Wel myghte a mooder thanne han cryd `allas!'  
But nathelees so sad and stidefast was she,  
That she endured al adversitee,  
And to the sergeant mekely she sayde,  
'Have heer agayn your litel yonge mayde.'

'Gooth now,' quod she, 'and dooth my lordes heeste;  
But o thyng wol I prey yow of youre grace,  
That, but my lord forbad yow atte leeste,  
Burieth this litel body in son place  
That beestes ne no briddes it torace.'  
But he no word wol to that purpos seye,  
But took the child, and wente upon his weye.

This sergeant cam unto his lord ageyn,  
And of Grisildis wordes and hir cheere  
He tolde hym point for point, in short and pleyn,  
And hym presenteth with his doghter deere.  
Somwhat this lord hath routhe in his manere,  
But nathelees his purpos heeld he stille,  
As lordes doon whan they wol han hir wille;

And bad his sergeant, that he pryvely  
Sholde this child ful softe wynde and wrappe,  
With alle circumstanes tendrely,  
And carie it in a cofre or in a lappe,  
But upon peyne his heed of for to swappe  
That no man sholde knowe of his entente,  
Ne whenne he cam, ne whider that he wente.

But at Boloigne to his suster deere,  
That thilke tyme of Panik was Countesse,  
He sholde it take, and shewe hir this mateere,  
Bisekyng hir to doon hir bisynesse  
This child to fostre in alle gentillesse,  
And whos child that it was, he bad hire hyde  
From every wight, for oght that may bityde.

The sergeant gooth, and hath fulfilled this thyng,  
But to this markys now retourne we,  
For now gooth he ful faste ymaginyng,  
If by his wyves cheere he myghte se

Or by hir word aperceyve that she  
Were chaunged, but he nevere hir koude fynde,  
But evere in oon ylike sad and kynde.

As glad, as humble, as bisy in servyse,  
And eek in love, as she was wont to be,  
Was she to hym in every maner wyse,  
Ne of hir doghter noght a word spak she.  
Noon accident for noon adversitee  
Was seyn in hir, ne nevere hir doghter name  
Ne nempned she, in ernest nor in game.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; The Maunciples Tale

Part 29

## PROLOGUE TO THE MAUNICIPLES TALE

Heere folweth the Prologe of the Maunciples tale.

Woot ye nat where ther stant a litel toun,  
Which that ycleped is Bobbe-up-and-doun  
Under the Blee, in Caunterbury weye?  
Ther gan oure Hooste for to jape and pleye,  
And seyde, 'Sires, what, Dun is in the Myre!

Is ther no man for preyere ne for hyre,  
That wole awake oure felawe al bihynde?  
A theef myghte hym ful lightly robbe and bynde.  
See how he nappeth, see how for Cokkes bones,  
That he wol falle fro his hors atones.

Is that a Cook of London, with meschaunce?  
Do hym com forth, he knoweth his penaunce,  
For he shal telle a tale, by my fey,  
Although it be nat worth a botel hey.  
Awake, thou Cook,' quod he, 'God yeve thee sorwe,

What eyleth thee, to slepe by the morwe?  
Hastow had fleen al nyght, or artow dronke?  
Or hastow with som quene al nyght yswonke  
So that thow mayst nat holden up thyn heed?'  
This Cook that was ful pale, and no thyng reed,

Seyde to oure Hoost, 'So God my soule blesse,  
As ther is falle on me swich hevynesse,  
Noot I nat why, that me were levere slepe  
Than the beste galon wyn in Chepe.'  
'Wel,' quod the Maunciple, 'if it may doon ese

To thee, Sire Cook, and to no wight displese  
Which that heere rideth in this compaignye,

And that oure Hoost wole of his curteisye,  
I wol as now excuse thee of thy tale,  
For, in good feith, thy visage is ful pale.

Thyne eyen daswen eek, as that me thynketh,  
And wel I woot, thy breeth ful soure stynketh.  
That sheweth wel thou art nat wel disposed,  
Of me, certeyn, thou shalt nat been yglosed.  
See how he ganeth, lo, this dronken wight!

As though he wolde swolwe us anonright.  
Hooold cloos thy mouth, man, by thy fader kyn,  
The devel of helle sette his foot therin.  
Thy cursed breeth infecte wole us alle,  
Fy, stynkyng swyn! fy, foule moothe thou falle!

A, taketh heede, sires, of this lusty man!  
Now, sweete sire, wol ye justen atte fan?  
Therto me thynketh ye been wel yshape,  
I trowe that ye dronken han wyn-ape,  
And that is, whan men pleyen with a straw.'

And with this speche the Cook wax wrooth and wraw,  
And on the Manciple he gan nodde faste,  
For lakke of speche, and doun the hors hym caste,  
Where as he lay til that men up hym took;  
This was a fair chyvachee of a Cook!

Allas, he nadde holde hym by his ladel!  
And er that he agayn were in his sadel  
Ther was greet showvyng bothe to and fro,  
To lifte hym up, and muchel care and wo,  
So unweeldy was this sory palled goost.

And to the Manciple thanne spak oure hoost,  
'By cause drynke hath dominacioun,  
Upon this man, by my savacioun,  
I trowe he lewedly wolde telle his tale.  
For were it wyn, or oold or moysty ale,

That he hath dronke, he speketh in his nose,  
And fneseth faste, and eek he hath the pose.

He hath also to do moore than ynough  
To kepen hym and his capul out of slough,  
And if he falle from his capul eftsoone,

Thanne shal we alle have ynogh to doone  
In lifyng up his hevy dronken cors.  
Telle on thy tale, of hym make I no fors;  
But yet, Manciple, in feith thou art to nyce,  
Thus openly repreve hym of his vice.

Another day he wole peraventure  
Reclayme thee and brynge thee to lure.  
I meene he speke wole of smale thynges,  
As for to pynchen at thy rekenynges,  
That were nat honeste, if it cam to preef.'

'No,' quod the Manciple, 'that were a greet mescheef,  
So myghte he lightly brynge me in the snare;  
Yet hadde I levere payen for the mare,  
Which that he rit on, than he sholde with me stryve  
I wol nat wratthen hym, al so moot I thryve;

That that I speke, I seyde it in my bourde.  
And wite ye what, I have heer in a gourde  
A draghte of wyn, ye, of a ripe grape,  
And right anon ye shul seen a good jape.  
This Cook shal drynke therof if that I may,

Up peyne of deeth, he wol nat seye me nat.'  
And certeynly, to tellen as it was,  
Of this vessel the Cook drank faste; allas,  
What neded hym? he drank ynough biforn!  
And whan he hadde pouped in this horn,

To the Manciple he took the gourde agayn,  
And of that drynke the Cook was wonder fayn,  
And thanked hym in swich wise as he koude.  
Thanne ganoure Hoost to laughen wonder loude,  
And seyde, 'I se wel it is necessarie

Where that we goon, that drynke we with us carie.  
For that wol turne rancour and disese



Tacord and love and many a wrong apese.  
O thou Bacus, yblessed be thy name,  
That so kanst turnen earnest into game!

Worship and thank be to thy deitee!  
Of that mateere ye gete namoore of me,  
Telle on thy tale, Manciple, I thee preye.'  
'Wel, sire,' quod he, 'now herkneth what I seye.'

#### THE MAUNCIPLES TALE

Heere bigynneth the Maunciples tale of the Crowe.

Whan Phebus dwelled heere in this world adoun,  
As olde bookes maken mencion,  
He was the mooste lusty bachiler  
In al this world, and eek the beste archer.  
He slow Phitoun the serpent, as he lay

Slepyng agayn the sonne upon a day;  
And many another noble worthy dede  
He with his bowe wroghte, as men may rede.  
Pleyen he koude on every mynstralcie,  
And syngen, that it was a melodie

To heeren of his cleere voys the soun.  
Certes, the kyng of Thebes, Amphioun,  
That with his syngyng walled that citee,  
Koude nevere syngen half so wel as hee.  
Therto he was the semelieste man,

That is or was sith that the world bigan.  
What nedeth it hise fetures to discryve?  
For in this world was noon so fair on lyve.  
He was therwith fulfild of gentillesse,  
Of honour, and of parfit worthynesse.

This Phebus that was flour of bachilrie,  
As wel in fredom as in chivalrie,  
For his desport, in signe eek of victorie  
Of Phitoun, so as telleth us the storie,  
Was wont to beren in his hand a bowe.

Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a crowe,  
Which in a cage he fostred many a day,  
And taughte it speken as men teche a jay.  
Whit was this crowe, as is a snow-whit swan,  
And countrefete the speche of every man

He koude, whan he sholde telle a tale.  
Therwith in al this world no nyghtngale  
Ne koude, by an hondred thousand deel,  
Syngen so wonder myrily and weel.  
Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a wyf

Which that he lovede moore than his lyf;  
And nyght and day dide evere his diligence  
Hir for to plesse and doon hire reverence.  
Save oonly, if the sothe that I shal sayn,  
Jalous he was, and wolde have kept hire fayn,

For hym were looth byjaped for to be-  
And so is every wight in swich degree;  
But al in ydel, for it availleth noght.  
A good wyf that is clene of werk and thoght  
Sholde nat been kept in noon awayt, certayn.

And trewely the labour is in vayn  
To kepe a shrewe, for it wol nat bee.  
This holde I for a verray nycetee,  
To spille labour for to kepe wyves,  
Thus writen olde clerkes in hir lyves.

But now to purpos, as I first bigan:  
This worthy Phebus dooth al that he kan  
To plesen hir, wenyng that swich plesaunce,  
And for his manhede and his governaunce,  
That no man sholde han put hym from hire grace.

But God it woot, ther may no man embrace  
As to destreyne a thyng, which that nature  
Hath natureelly set in a creature.  
Taak any bryd, and put it in a cage,  
And do al thyn entente and thy corage

To fostre it tendrely with mete and drynke,  
Of alle deyntees that thou kanst bithynke;  
And keepe it al so clenly as thou may,  
Al though his cage of gold be nevere so gay,  
Yet hath this bryd, by twenty thousand foold,

Levere in a forest that is rude and coold  
Goon ete wormes, and swich wrecchednesse;  
For evere this bryd wol doon his bisynesse  
To escape out of his cage, whan he may.  
His libertee this bryd desireth ay.

Lat take a cat, and fostre hym wel with milk,  
And tendre flessh, and make his couche of silk,  
And lat hym seen a mous go by the wal,  
Anon he weyveth milk and flessh and al,  
And every deyntee that is in that hous,

Swich appetit he hath to ete a mous.  
Lo, heere hath lust his dominacioun,  
And appetit fleemeth discrecioun.  
A she wolf hath also a vileyns kynde,  
The lewedeste wolf that she may fynde,

Or leest of reputacioun wol she take,  
In tyme whan hir lust to han a make.  
Alle these ensamples speke I by these men,  
That been untrewe, and no thyng by wommen,  
For men han evere a likerous appetit

On lower thyng to parfourne hire delit,  
Than on hire wyves, be they nevere so faire,  
Ne nevere so trewe, ne so debonaire.  
Flessh is so newefangel, with meschaunce,  
That we ne konne in no thyng han plesaunce

That sowneth into vertu any while.  
This Phebus, which that thoghte upon no gile,  
Deceyved was, for al his jolitee;  
For under hym another hadde shee,  
A man of litel reputacioun,

Nat worth to Phebus in comparisoun.  
The moore harm is, it happeth ofte so,  
Of which ther cometh muchel harm and wo.  
And so bifel, whan Phebus was absent,  
His wyf anon hath for hir lemman sent;

Hir lemman? certes, this is a knavyssh speche,  
Foryeveth it me, and that I yow biseche.  
The wise Plato seith, as ye may rede,  
'The word moot nede accorde with the dede.'  
If men shal telle proprely a thyng,

The word moot cosyn be to the werkyng.  
I am a boystous man, right thus seye I.  
Ther nys no difference trewely  
Bitwixe a wyf that is of heigh degree-  
If of hire body dishoneste she bee-

And a povre wenche, oother than this,  
If it so be they werke bothe amys,  
But that the gentile in hire estaat above,  
She shal be cleped his lady as in love,  
And for that oother is a povre womman,

She shal be cleped his wenche, or his lemman;  
And God it woot, myn owene deere brother,  
Men leyn that oon as lowe as lith that oother.  
Right so bitwixe a titlelees tiraunt  
And an outlawe, or a thief erraunt,

The same I seye, ther is no difference.  
To Alisaundre was toold this sentence,  
That for the tiraunt is of gretter myght,  
By force of meynee for to sleen downright,  
And brennen hous and hoom, and make al playn,

Lo, therefore is he cleped a capitayn!  
And for the outlawe hath but smal meynee,  
And may nat doon so greet an harm as he,  
Ne brynge a contree to so greet mescheef,  
Men clepen hym an outlawe or a thief.

But for I am a man noght textueel,  
I wol noght telle of textes nevere a deel;  
I wol go to my tale as I bigan.  
Whan Phebus wyf had sente for hir lemman,  
Anon they wroghten al hir lust volage.

The white crowe that heeng ay in the cage  
Biheeld hire werk, and seyde nevere a word,  
And whan that hoom was com Phebus the lord,  
This crowe sang, 'Cokkow! Cokkow! Cokkow!'  
'What bryd!' quod Phebus, 'what song syngestow?

Ne were thow wont so myrily to synge  
That to myn herte it was a rejoysynge  
To heere thy voys? allas, what song is this?'  
'By God,' quod he, 'I synge nat amys.  
Phebus,' quod he, 'for al thy worthynesse,

For al thy beautee and thy gentillesse,  
For al thy song and al thy mynstralcye,  
For al thy waityng, blered is thyn eye  
With oon of litel reputacioun  
Noght worth to thee, as in comparisoun

The montance of a gnat, so moote I thryve,  
For on thy bed thy wyf I saugh hym swyve.'  
What wol ye moore? the crowe anon hym tolde,  
By sadde tokenes and by wordes bolde,  
How that his wyf han doon hire lecherye,

Hym to greet shame and to greet vileynye,  
And tolde hym ofte, he asugh it with hise eyen.  
This Phebus gan awayward for to wryen,  
And thoughte his sorweful herte brast atwo,  
His bowe he bente and sette ther inne a flo,

And in his ire his wyf thanne hath he slayn.  
This is theeffect, ther is namoore to sayn,  
For sorwe of which he brak his mynstralcie,  
Bothe harpe, and lute, and gyterne, and sautrie,  
And eek he brak hise arwes and his bowe,

And after that thus spak he to the crowe.  
'Traitous,' quod he, 'with tonge of scorioun,  
Thou hast me broght to my confusioun,  
Allas, that I was wroght! why nere I deed?  
O deere wyf, O gemme of lustiheed,

That were to me so sad and eek so trewe,  
Now listow deed with face pale of hewe,  
Ful giltelees, that dorste I swere, ywys.  
O rakel hand, to doon so foule amys!  
O trouble wit, O ire recchelees!

That unavysed smyteth gilteles.  
O wantrust, ful of fals suspecioun,  
Where was thy wit and thy discrecioun?  
O, every man, be war of rakelnesse,  
Ne trowe no thyng withouten strong witesse.

Smyt nat to soone, er that ye witen why,  
And beeth avysed wel and sobrelly,  
Er ye doon any execucioun  
Upon youre ire for suspecioun.  
Allas, a thousand folk hath rakel ire

Fully fordoon, and broght hem in the mire!  
Allas, for sorwe I wol myselven slee!  
And to the crowe, 'O false theef,' seyde he,  
'I wol thee quite anon thy false tale;  
Thou songe whilom lyk a nyghtngale,

Now shaltow, false theef, thy song forgon,  
And eek thy white fetheres everichon.  
Ne nevere in al thy lyf ne shaltou speke,  
Thus shal men on a traytour been awreke.  
Thou and thyn ofspryng evere shul be blake,

Ne nevere sweete noyse shul ye make,  
But evere crie agayn tempest and rayn,  
In tokenyng that thurgh thee my wyf is slayn.'  
And to the crowe he stirte, and that anon,  
And pulled hise white fetheres everychon,

And made hym blak, and refte hym al his song,  
And eek his speche, and out at dore hym slong,  
Unto the devel-which I hym bitake!-  
And for this caas been alle Crowes blake.  
Lordynges, by this ensample I yow preye,

Beth war and taketh kepe what I seye:  
Ne telleth nevere no man in youre lyf  
How that another man hath dight his wyf;  
He wol yow haten mortally, certeyn.  
Daun Salomon, as wise clerkes seyn,

Techeth a man to kepen his tonge weel.  
But as I seyde, I am noght textueel;  
But nathelees, thus taughte me my dame;  
'My sone, think on the crowe, on Goddes name.  
My sone, keepe wel thy tonge and keepe thy freend,

A wikked tonge is worse than a feend.  
My sone, from a feend men may hem blesse.  
My sone, God of his endelees goodnesse  
Walled a tonge with teeth and lippes eke,  
For man sholde hym avyse what he speeke.

My sone, ful ofte for to mucche speche  
Hath many a man been spilt, as clerkes teche.  
But for litel speche, avysely,  
Is no man shent, to speke generally.  
My sone, thy tonge sholdestow restreyne

At alle tymes, but whan thou doost thy peyne  
To speke of God in honour and in preyere;  
The firste vertu sone, if thou wolt leere,  
Is to restreyne and kepe wel thy tonge.  
Thus lerne children, whan that they been yonge,

My sone, of muchel spekyng yvele avysed,  
Ther lasse spekyng hadde ynough suffised,  
Comth muchel harm-thus was me toold and taught.-  
In muchel speche synne wanteth naught.  
Wostow wherof a rakel tonge serveth?

Right as a swerd forkutteth and forkerveth  
An arme atwo, my deere sone, right so  
A tonge kutteth freendshipe al atwo.  
A jangler is to God abhomynable;  
Reed Salomon, so wys and honourable,

Reed David in hise psalmes, reed Senekke!  
My sone, spek nat, but with thyn heed thou bekke;  
Dissimule as thou were deaf, it that thou heere  
A jangler speke of perilous mateere.  
The Flemyng seith, and lerne it if thee leste,

That litel janglyng causeth muchel reste.  
My sone, if thou no wikked word hast seyde,  
Thee thar nat drede for to be biwreyde;  
But he that hath mysseyde, I dar wel sayn,  
He may by no wey clepe his word agayn.

Thyng that is seyde is seyde, and forth it gooth;  
Though hym repente, or be hym leef or looth,  
He is his thral to whom that he hath sayde  
A tale, of which he is now yvele apayde.  
My sone, be war, and be noon auctour newe

Of tidynyges, wheither they been false or trewe,  
Wherso thou com, amonges hye or lowe,  
Kepe wel thy tonge, and thenk upon the Crowe.'

Heere is ended the Maunciples tale of the Crowe.

Geoffrey Chaucer



# The Canterbury Tales; The Persouns Tale

Part 30

## PROLOGUE TO THE PERSOUNS TALE

Heere folweth the Prologe of the Persouns tale.

By that the Maunciple hadde his tale al ended,  
The sonne fro the south lyne was descended  
So lowe, that he nas nat to my sighte  
Degrees nyne and twenty as in highte.  
Ten of the klokke it was tho, as I gesse,

For ellevene foot, or litel moore or lesse,  
My shadwe was at thilke tyme as there,  
Of swiche feet as my lengthe parted were  
In sixe feet equal of proporcioun.  
Therwith the moones exaltacioun,

I meene Libra, alwey gan ascende,  
As we were entryng at a thropes ende.  
For which our Hoost, as he was wont to gye,  
As in this caas, oure joly compaignye,  
Seyde in this wise, 'Lordynges everichoon,

Now lakketh us no tales mo than oon,  
Fulfilled is my sentence and my decree;  
I trowe that we han herd of ech degree.  
Almoost fulfild is al myn ordinaunce,  
I pray to God, so yeve hym right good chauce

That telleth this tale to us lustily!  
'Sire preest,' quod he, 'artow a vicary,  
Or arte a person? sey sooth by thy fey.  
Be what thou be, ne breke thou nat oure pley;  
For every man save thou hath toold his tale.

Unbokele and shewe us what is in thy male,  
For trewely, me thynketh by thy cheere

Thou sholdest knytte up wel a greet mateere.  
Telle us a fable anon, for Cokkes bones.'  
This Persoun him answerede, al atones,

'Thou getest fable noon ytoold for me,  
For Paul, that writeth unto Thymothee,  
Repreveth hem that weyveth soothfastnesse,  
And tellen fables, and swich wrecchednesse.  
Why sholde I sowen draf out of my fest

Whan I may sowen whete, if that me lest?  
For which I seye, if that yow list to heere,  
Moralitee and vertuous mateere;  
And thanne that ye wol yeve me audience,  
I wol ful fayn, at Cristes reverence,

Do yow plesaunce leefful, as I kan.  
But trusteth wel I am a southren man,  
I kan nat geeste Rum, Ram, Ruf by lettre,  
Ne, God woot, rym holde I but litel bettre,  
And therefore if yow list, I wol nat glose,

I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose  
To knytte up al this feeste, and make an ende,  
And Jesu, for his grace, wit me sende  
To shewe yow the wey, in this viage,  
Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage

That highte Jerusalem celestial.  
And if ye vouchesauf, anon I shal  
Bigynne upon my tale, for which I preye,  
Telle youre avys, I kan no bettre seye.  
But nathelees, this meditacioun

I putte it ay under correccioun  
Of clerkes, for I am nat textueel;  
I take but sentence, trusteth weel.  
Therefore I make a protestacioun  
That I wol stonde to correccioun.'

Upon this word we han assented soone;  
For, as us semed, it was for to doone

To enden in som vertuous sentence,  
And for to yeve hym space and audience;  
Adn bedeoure Hoost he sholde to hym seye

That alle we to telle his tale hym preye.  
Oure Hoost hadde the wordes for us alle:  
'Sire preest,' quod he, 'now faire yow bifalle,  
Sey what yow list, and we wol gladly heere.'  
And with that word he seyde in this manere,

'Telleth,' quod he, 'yours meditacioun;  
But hasteth yow, the sonne wole adoun.  
Beth fructuous, and that in litel space,  
And to do wel God sende yow his grace.'

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; The Phisiciens Tale

Part 16

## THE PHISICIENS TALE

Heere folweth the Phisiciens tale.

Ther was, as telleth Titus Livius,  
A knyght that called was Virginius,  
Fulfilde of honour and of worthynesse,  
And strong of freendes, and of greet richesse.  
This knyght a doghter hadde by his wyf,

No children hadde he mo in al his lyf.  
Fair was this mayde in excellent beautee  
Aboven every wight that man may see.  
For Nature hath with sovereyn diligence  
Yformed hir in so greet excellence,

As though she wolde seyn, 'Lo, I, Nature,  
Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature  
Whan that me list; who kan me countrefete?  
Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bete,  
Or grave, or peynte, for I dar wel seyn

Apelles, Zanzis sholde werche in veyn  
Outher to grave or peynte, or forge, or bete,  
If they presumed me to countrefete.  
For He that is the former principal  
Hath maked me his vicaire general

To forme and peynten erthely creaturis  
Right as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is  
Under the Moone, that may wane and waxe,  
And for my werk right nothyng wol I axe.  
My lord and I been ful of oon accord;

I made hir to the worship of my lord,  
So do I alle myne othere creatures,

What colour that they han, or what figures.'  
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde seye.  
This mayde of age twelf yeer was and tweye,

Is which that Nature hadde swich delit.  
For right as she kan peynte a lillie whit,  
And reed a rose, right with swich peynture  
She peynted hath this noble creature,  
Er she were born, upon hir lymes fre,

Where as by right swiche colours sholde be.  
And Phebus dyed hath hir treses grete,  
Lyk to the stremes of his burned heete;  
And if that excellent was hir beautee,  
A thousand foold moore vertuous was she.

In hire ne lakked no condicioun  
That is to preyse, as by discrecioun;  
As wel in goost as body chast was she,  
For which she floured in virginitee  
With alle humylitee and abstinence,

With alle attemperaunce and pacience,  
With mesure eek of beryng and array.  
Discreet she was in answeyng alway,  
Though she were wise Pallas, dar I seyn,  
Hir facound eek ful wommanly and pleyn,

No countrefeted termes hadde she  
To seme wys, but after hir degree  
She spak, and alle hir wordes, moore and lesse,  
Sownynge in vertu and in gentillesse.  
Shamefast she was in maydens shamefastnesse,

Constant in herte, and evere in bisynesse  
To dryve hir out of ydel slogardye.  
Bacus hadde of hire mouth right no maistrie;  
For wyn and youthe dooth Venus encresse,  
As man in fyr wol casten oille or gresse.

And of hir owene vertu unconstreynd,  
She hath ful ofte tyme syk hir feyned,

For that she wolde fleen the compaignye  
Wher likly was to treten of folye,  
As is at feestes, revels, and at daunces

That been occasions of daliaunces.  
Swich thynges maken children for to be  
To soone rype and boold, as men may se,  
Which is ful perilous, and hath been yoore;  
For al to soone may they lerne loore

Of booldnesse, whan she woxen is a wyf.  
And ye maistresses, in youre olde lyf,  
That lordes doghtres han in governaunce,  
Ne taketh of my wordes no displesaunce;  
Thenketh that ye been set in governynges

Of lordes doghtres, oonly for two thynges;  
Outher for ye han kept youre honestee,  
Or elles ye han falle in freletee,  
And knowen wel ynough the olde daunce,  
And han forsaken fully swich meschaunce

For everemo; therefore for Cristes sake,  
To teche hem vertu looke that ye ne slake.  
A thief of venysoun, that hath forlaft  
His likerousnesse, and al his olde craft,  
Kan kepe a forest best of any man.

Now kepeth wel, for if ye wole, ye kan.  
Looke wel that ye unto no vice assente,  
Lest ye be dampned for your wikke entente.  
For who so dooth, a traitour is, certeyn;  
And taketh kepe of that that I shal seyn,

Of alle tresons, sovereyn pestilence  
Is whan a wight bitrayseth innocence.  
Ye fadres and ye moodres, eek also,  
Though ye han children, be it oon or two,  
Youre is the charge of al hir surveiaunce

Whil that they been under youre governaunce.  
Beth war, if by ensample of youre lyvynges,

Or by youre necligence in chastisyng,  
That they perisse, for I dar wel seye,  
If that they doon ye shul it deere abeye;

Under a shepherde soft and necligent  
The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb to-rent.  
Suffyseth oon ensample now as here,  
For I moot turne agayn to my mateere.  
This mayde, of which I wol this tale expresse,

So kepte hirself, hir neded no maistresse.  
For in hir lyvyng maydens myghten rede,  
As in a book, every good word or dede  
That longeth to a mayden vertuous,  
She was so prudent and so bountevous.

For which the fame out-sprong on every syde  
Bothe of hir beautee and hir bountee wyde,  
That thurgh that land they preised hire echone  
That loved vertu; save encye allone,  
That sory is of oother mennes wele,

And glad is of his sorwe and his unheelee-  
The doctour maketh this descripcioun.  
This mayde upon a day wente in the toun  
Toward a temple, with hir mooder deere,  
As is of yonge maydens the namere.

Now was ther thanne a justice in that toun,  
That governour was of that regioun,

And so bifel this juge hise eyen caste  
Upon this mayde, avysynge hym ful faste  
As she cam forby, ther as this juge stood.

Anon his herte chaunged and his mood,  
So was he caught with beautee of this mayde,  
And to hymself ful pryvely he sayde,  
'This mayde shal be myn, for any man.'  
Anon the feend into his herte ran,

And taughte hym sodeynly, that he by slyghte

The mayden to his purpos wyne myghte.  
For certes, by no force, ne by no meede,  
Hym thoughte he was nat able for to speede;  
For she was strong of freends, and eek she

Confermed was in swich soverayn bountee,  
That wel he wiste he myghte hir nevere wyne,  
As for to maken hir with hir body synne.  
For which, by greet deliberacioun,  
He sente after a cherl, was in the toun,

Which that he knew for subtil and for boold.  
This Juge unto this cherl his tale hath toold  
In secree wise, and made hym to ensure  
He sholde telle it to no creature,  
And if he dide, he sholde lese his heed.

Whan that assented was this cursed reed,  
Glad was this juge, and maked him greet cheere,  
And yaf hym yiftes precieuse and deere.  
Whan shapen was al hir conspiracie  
Fro point to point, how that his lecherie

Parfourned sholde been ful subtilly,  
(As ye shul heere it after openly)  
Hoom gooth the cherl, that highte Claudius.  
This false juge, that highte Apius,  
So was his name-for this is no fable,

But knowen for historial thyng notable;  
The sentence of it sooth is out of doute-  
This false juge gooth now faste aboute  
To hasten his delit al that he may.  
And so bifel soone after on a day,

This false juge, as telleth us the storie,  
As he was wont, sat in his consistorie,  
And yaf his doomes upon sondry cas.  
This false cherl cam forth a ful greet pas  
And seyde, 'Lord, if that it be youre wille,

As dooth me right upon this pitous bille



In which I pleyne upon Virginius;  
And if that he wol seyn it is nat thus,  
I wol it preeve, and fynde good witnessse  
That sooth is, that my bille wol expresse.'

The juge answerde, 'Of this in his absence,  
I may nat yeve diffynytyve sentence.  
Lat do hym calle, and I wol gladly heere.  
Thou shalt have al right and no wrong heere.'  
Virginius cam to wite the juges wille,

And right anon was rad this cursed bille.  
The sentence of it was, as ye shul heere:  
'To yow, my lord, Sire Apius so deere,  
Sheweth youre povre servant Claudius,  
How that a knyght called Virginius

Agayns the lawe, agayn al equitee,  
Holdeth expres agayn the wyl of me  
My servant, which that is my thral by right,  
Which fro myn hous was stole upon a nyght,  
Whil that she was ful yong; this wol I preeve

By witnessse, lord, so that it nat yow greeve.  
She nys his doghter, nat what so he seye.  
Wherfore to yow, my lord the Juge, I preye  
Yeld me my thral, if that it be youre wille.'  
Lo, this was al the sentence of his bille.

Virginius gan upon the cherl biholde,  
But hastily, er he his tale tolde,  
And wolde have preeved it as sholde a knyght,  
And eek by witnessyng of many a wight,  
That it was fals, that seyde his adversarie,

This cursed juge wolde no thyng tarie,  
Ne heere a word moore of Virginius,  
But yaf his juggement and seyde thus:  
'I deeme anon this cherl his servant have,  
Thou shalt no lenger in thyn hous hir save.

Go, bryng hir forth, and put hir in our warde.

The cherl shal have his thral, this I awarde.'  
And whan this worthy knyght Virginius,  
Thurgh sentence of this justice Apius,  
Moste by force his deere doghter yeven

Unto the juge in lecherie to lyven,  
He gooth hym hoom, and sette him in his halle,  
And leet anon his deere doghter calle,  
And with a face deed as asshen colde,  
Upon hir humble face he gan biholde

With fadres pitee stikyng thurgh his herte,  
Al wolde he from his purpos nat converte.  
'Doghter,' quod he, 'Virginia, by thy name,  
Ther been two weyes, outhere deeth or shame  
That thou most suffre, allas, that I was bore!

For nevere thou deservedest wherfore  
To dyen with a swerd, or with a knyf.  
O deere doghter, ender of my lyf,  
Which I have fostred up with swich plesaunce,  
That thou were nevere out of my remembraunce.

O doghter, which that art my laste wo,  
And in my lyf my laste joye also,  
O gemme of chastitee, in pacience  
Take thou thy deeth, for this is my sentence,  
For love and nat for hate, thou most be deed;

My pitous hand moot smyten of thyn heed.  
Allas, that evere Apius the say!  
Thus hath he falsly jugged the to day.'  
And tolde hir al the cas, as ye bifore  
Han herd, nat nedeth for to telle it moore.

'O mercy, deere fader,' quod this mayde,  
And with that word she bothe hir armes layde  
About his nekke, as she was wont to do.  
The teeris bruste out of hir eyen two,  
And seyde, 'Goode fader, shal I dye?

Is ther no grace? is ther no remedye?'

'No certes, deere doghter myn,' quod he.  
'Thanne yif me leyser, fader myn,' quod she,  
'My deeth for to compleyne a litel space,  
For, pardee, Jepte yaf his doghter grace

For to compleyne, er he hir slow, allas!  
And God it woot, no thyng was hir trespas  
But for she ran hir fader for to see  
To welcome hym with greet solemnitee.'  
And with that word she fil aswowne anon;

And after whan hir swownyng is agon  
She riseth up and to hir fader sayde,  
'Blissed be God that I shal dye a mayde;  
Yif me my deeth, er that I have a shame.  
Dooth with youre child youre wyl, a Goddes name.'

And with that word she preyed hym ful ofte  
That with his swerd he wolde smyte softe,  
And with that word aswowne doun she fil.  
Hir fader with ful sorweful herte and wil  
Hir heed of smoot, and by the top it hente,

And to the juge he gan it to presente  
As he sat yet in doom, in consistorie.  
And whan the juge it saugh, as seith the storie,  
He bad to take hym and anhange hym faste.  
But right anon a thousand peple in thraste

To save the knyght for routhe and for pitee;  
For knowen was the false iniquitee.  
The peple anon hath suspect of this thyng,  
By manere of the cherles chalangyng,  
That it was by the assent of Apius-

They wisten wel that he was lecherus;  
For which unto this Apius they gon  
And caste hym in a prisoun right anon,  
Ther as he slow hymself, and Claudius  
That servant was unto this Apius,

Was demed for to hange upon a tree,

But that Virginius, of his pitee,  
So preyde for hym, that he was exiled;  
And elles, certes, he had been bigyled.  
The remenant were ananged, moore and lesse,

That were consentant of this cursednesse.  
Heere men may seen, how synne hath his merite.  
Beth war, for no man woot whom God wol smyte  
In no degree, ne in which manere wyse  
The worm of conscience may agryse

Of wikked lyf, though it so pryvee be  
That no man woot therof but God and he.  
For be he lewed man, or ellis lered,  
He noot how soone that he shal been afered.  
Therefore I rede yow this conseil take,  
Forsaketh synne, er synne yow forsake.

Heere endeth the Phisiciens tale.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; The Prioresses Tale

## THE PRIORESSES TALE

The prologe of the Prioresses tale.

Domine dominus noster.

O lord oure lord, thy name how merveillous  
Is in this large world ysprad-quod she-  
For noght oonly thy laude precious  
Parfourned is by men of dignitee,  
But by the mouth of children thy bountee  
Parfourned is, for on the brest soukyng  
Somtyme shewen they thyn heriyng.

Wherfore in laude, as I best kan or may,  
Of thee, and of the whyte lylve flour  
Which that the bar, and is a mayde alway,  
To telle a storie I wol do my labour;  
Nat that I may encreessen hir honour,  
For she hirself is honour, and the roote  
Of bountee, next hir sone, and soules boote.

O mooder mayde! O mayde mooder fre!  
O bussh unbrent, brennyng in Moyses sighte,  
That ravysedest down fro the deitee  
Thurgh thyn humblesse, the goost that in thalighte,  
Of whos vertu, whan he thyn herte lighte,  
Conceyved was the Fadres sapience,  
Help me to telle it in thy reverence.

Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,  
Thy vertu, and thy grete humylitee,  
Ther may no tonge expresse in no science,  
For somtyme, lady, er men praye to thee,  
Thou goost biforn of thy benyngnytee  
And getest us the lyght, thurgh thy preyere,  
To gyden us unto thy sone so deere.

My konnyng is so wayk, O blisful queene,

For to declare thy grete worthynesse,  
That I ne may the weighte nat susteene,  
But as a child of twelf monthe oold, or lesse,  
That kan unnethes any word expresse,  
Right so fare I; and therefore I yow preye,  
Gydeth my song that I shal of yow seye.

Heere begynneth the Prioresses Tale.

Ther was in Asye, in a greet citee,  
Amonges cristene folk a Jewerye,  
Sustened by a lord of that contree  
For foule usure and lucre of vileynye,  
Hateful to Crist and to his compaignye,  
And thurgh this strete men myghte ride or wende,  
For it was free and open at eyther ende.

A litel scole of cristen folk ther stood  
Doun at the ferther ende, in which ther were  
Children an heep, ycomen of cristen blood,  
That lerned in that scole yeer by yeer  
Swich manere doctrine as men used there,  
This is to seyn, to syngen and to rede,  
As smale children doon in hir childhede.

Among these children was a wydwe sone,  
A litel clergeoun, seven yeer of age,  
That day by day to scole was his wone,  
And eek also, wher as he saugh thymage  
Of Cristes mooder, he hadde in usage  
As hym was taught, to knele adoun, and seye  
His Ave Marie, as he goth by the weye.

Thus hath this wydwe hir litel sone ytaught  
Oure blisful lady, Cristes mooder deere,  
To worshipe ay; and he forgate it naught,  
For sely child wol alday soone leere.  
But ay, whan I remembre on this mateere,  
Seint Nicholas stant evere in my presence,  
For he so yong to Crist dide reverence.

This litel child, his litel book lernynge,

As he sat in the scole at his prymer,  
He 'Alma redemptoris' herde synge  
As children lerned hir anthiphoner;  
And as he dorste, he drough hym ner and ner,  
And herkned ay the wordes and the noote,  
Til he the firste vers koude al by rote.

Noght wiste he what this Latyn was to seye,  
For he so yong and tendre was of age,  
But on a day his felawe gan he preye  
Texpounden hym this song in his langage,  
Or telle hym why this song was in usage;  
This preyde he hym to construe and declare  
Ful often tyme upon hise knowes bare.

His felawe, which that elder was than he,  
Answerde hym thus, 'This song, I have herd seye,  
Was maked of oure blisful Lady free,  
Hir to salue, and eek hir for to preye  
To been our help, and socour whan we deye.  
I kan namoore expounde in this mateere,  
I lerne song, I kan but smal grammere.'

'And is this song maked in reverence  
Of Cristes mooder?' seyde this innocent.  
'Now, certes, I wol do my diligence  
To konne it al, er Cristemasse is went;  
Though that I for my prymer shal be shent  
And shal be beten thries in an houre,  
I wol it konne, oure lady for to honoure.'

His felawe taughte hym homward prively  
Fro day to day, til he koude it by rote;  
And thanne he song it wel and boldely  
Fro word to word acordynge with the note.  
Twies a day it passed thurgh his throte,  
To scoleward, and homward whan he wente;  
On Cristes mooder set was his entente.

As I have seyde, thurghout the Jewerie  
This litel child, as he cam to and fro,  
Ful murily than wolde he synge and crie

'O Alma redemptoris' evere-mo.  
The swetnesse hath his herte perced so  
Of Cristes mooder, that to hir to preye  
He kan nat stynte of syngyng by the weye.

Oure firste foo, the serpent Sathanas,  
That hath in Jewes herte his waspes nest,  
Up swal, and seyde, 'O Hebrayk peple, allas,  
Is this to yow a thyng that is honest,  
That swich a boy shal walken as hym lest  
In youre despit, and synge of swich sentence,  
Which is agayn oure lawes reverence?'

Fro thennes forth the Jewes han conspired  
This innocent out of this world to chace.  
An homycide therto han they hyred  
That in an aleye hadde a privee place;  
And as the child gan forby for to pace,  
This cursed Jew hym hente and heeld hym faste,  
And kitte his throte, and in a pit hym caste.

I seye that in a wardrobe they hym threwe,  
Where as this Jewes purgen hire entraille.  
O cursed folk of Herodes al newe,  
What may youre yvel entente yow availle?  
Mordre wol out, certeyn, it wol nat faille,  
And namely ther thonour of God shal sprede,  
The blood out crieth on youre cursed dede.

O matir, sowed to virginitee,  
Now maystow syngen, folwyng evere in oon  
The white lamb celestial-quod she-  
Of which the grete Evaungelsit Seint John  
In Pathmos wroot, which seith that they that goon  
Biforn this lamb and synge a song al newe,

That never, fleshly, wommen they ne knewe.

This povre wydwe awaiteth al that nyght  
After hir litel child, but he cam noght;  
For which, as soone as it was dayes light,  
With face pale of drede and bisy thoght,



She hath at scole and elles-where hym soght,  
Til finally she gan so fer espie,  
That he last seyn was in the Jewerie.

With moodres pitee in hir brest enclosed,  
She gooth, as she were half out of hir mynde,  
To every place where she hath supposed  
By liklihede hir litel child to finde,  
And evere on Cristes mooder, meeke and kynde  
She cride, and atte laste thus she wroghte,  
Among the cursed Jewes she hym soghte.

She frayneth, and she preyeth pitously  
To every Jew that dwelte in thilke place,  
To telle hir if hir child wente oght forby.  
They seyde nay; but Jesu, of his grace,  
Yaf in hir thoght, inwith a litel space,  
That in that place after hir sone she cryde,  
Wher he was casten in a pit bisyde.

O grete God, that parfournest thy laude  
By mouth of innocentz, lo, heer thy myght!  
This gemme of chastite, this emeraude,  
And eek of martirdom the ruby bright,  
Ther he with throte ykorven lay upright,  
He 'Alma redemptoris' gan to synge  
So loude, that al the place gan to rynge.

The cristene folk that thurgh the strete wente  
In coomen, for to wondre upon this thyng,  
And hastily they for the Provost sente.  
He cam anon withouten tariyng,  
And herieth Crist that is of hevene kyng,  
And eek his mooder, honour of mankynde;  
And after that, the Jewes leet he bynde.

This child, with pitous lamentacioun,  
Uptaken was, syngyng his song alway,  
And with honour of greet processiou  
They carien hym unto the nexte abbay;  
His mooder swownyng by his beere lay,  
Unnethe myghte the peple that was there

This newe Rachel brynge fro his beere.

With torment and with shameful deeth echon  
This Provost dooth the Jewes for to sterve,  
That of this mordre wiste, and that anon.  
He nolde no swich cursednesse observe;  
Yvele shal have that yvele wol deserve.  
Therefore with wilde hors he dide hem drawe,  
And after that he heng hem, by the lawe.

Upon his beere ay lith this innocent  
Biforn the chief auter, whil masse laste,  
And after that, the abbot with his covent  
Han sped hem for to burien hym ful faste,  
And whan they hooly water on hym caste,  
Yet spak this child, whan spreynd was hooly water,  
And song 'O Alma redemptoris mater.'

This abbot, which that was an hooly man,  
As monkes been-or elles oghte be-  
This yonge child, 'and, as by wey of kynde,  
I sholde have dyed, ye, longe tyme agon,  
But Jesu Crist, as ye in bookes fynde,  
Wil that his glorie laste and be in mynde,  
And for the worship of his mooder deere,  
Yet may I synge 'O Alma' loude and cleere.

This welle of mercy, Cristes mooder swete,  
I loved alwey as after my konnynge;  
And whan that I my lyf sholde forlete,  
To me she cam, and bad me for to synge  
This antheme, verraily, in my deyynge,  
As ye han herd, and whan that I hadde songe,  
Me thoughte she leyde a greyn upon my tonge.

Wherfore I synge, and synge I moot certeyn  
In honour of that blisful mayden free,  
Til fro my tonge oftaken is the greyn.  
And afterward thus seyde she to me,  
'My litel child, now wol I fecche thee,  
Whan that the greyn is fro thy tonge ytake;  
Be nat agast, I wol thee nat forsake.'

This hooly monk, this Abbot, hym meene I,  
His tonge out-caughte, and took away the greyn,  
And he yaf up the goost ful softely;  
And whan this Abbot hadde this wonder seyn,  
Hise salte teeris trikled doun as reyn,  
And gruf he fil al plat upon the grounde,  
And stille he lay, as he had been ybounde.

The covent eek lay on the pavement,  
Wepyng, and heryen Cristes mooder deere.  
And after that they ryse, and forth been went,  
And taken away this martir from his beere,  
And in a temple of marbul stonys cleere  
Enclosen they his litel body sweete.  
Ther he is now, God leve us for to meete!

O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln, slayn also  
With cursed Jewes, as it is notable,  
For it nis but a litel while ago,  
Preye eek for us, we synful folk unstable,  
That of his mercy God so merciablen  
On us his grete mercy multiplien,  
For reverence of his mooder Marie. Amen.

Heere is ended the Prioresses Tale.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; The Reves Tale

## PROLOGUE TO THE REVES TALE

The prologe of the Reves Tale.

Whan folk hadde laughen at this nyce cas  
Of Absolon and hende Nicholas,  
Diverse folk diversely they seyde,  
But for the moore part they loughe and pleyde,  
Ne at this tale I saugh no man hym greve,

But it were oonly Osewold the Reve;  
Bycause he was of carpenteres craft,  
A litel ire is in his herte ylaft;  
He gan to grucche, and blamed it a lite.  
'So theek,' quod he, 'ful wel koude I you quite,

With bleryng of a proud milleres eye,  
If that me liste speke of ribaudye.  
But ik am oold, me list no pley for age,  
Gras-tyme is doon, my fodder is now forage,  
This white top writeth myne olde yeris,

Myn herte is also mowled as myne heris,  
But if I fare as dooth an openers;  
That ilke fruyt is ever leng the wers,  
Til it be roten in mullok or in stree.  
We olde men, I drede, so fare we,

Til we be roten kan we nat be rype.  
We hoppen ay whil that the world wol pype,  
For in oure wyl ther stiketh evere a nayl  
To have an hoor heed and a grene tayl,  
As hath a leek, for thogh oure myght be goon,

Oure wyl desireth folie evere in oon.  
For whan we may nat doon, than wol we speke,  
Yet in oure asshen olde is fyr yreke.  
Foure gleedes han we whiche I shal devyse,  
Avauntyng, liyng, anger, coveitise;

Thise foure sparkles longen unto eelde.  
Oure olde lemes mowe wel been unweelde,  
But wyl ne shal nat failen, that is sooth.  
And yet ik have alwey a coltes tooth,  
As many a yeer as it is passed henne

Syn that my tappe of lif bigan to renne.  
For sikerly whan I was bore, anon  
Deeth drough the tappe of lyf, and leet it gon,  
And ever sithe hath so the tappe yronne,  
Til that almost al empty is the tonne.

The streem of lyf now droppeth on the chymbe;  
The sely tonge may wel ryng and chymbe  
Of wrecchednesse that passed is ful yoore.  
With olde folk, save dotage, is namoore.'  
Whan that oure Hoost hadde herd this sermonyng,

He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng,  
He seide, 'What amounteth al this wit?  
What shul we speke alday of hooly writ?  
The devel made a reve for to preche,  
And of a soutere, shipman, or a leche.

Sey forth thy tale, and tarie nat the tyme.  
Lo Depeford, and it is half-wey pryme;  
Lo, Grenewych, ther many a shrewe is inne;  
It were al tyme thy tale to bigynne.'  
'Now sires,' quod this Osewold the Reve,

'I pray yow alle, that ye nat yow greve,  
Thogh I answeere, and somdeel sette his howve,  
For levelful is with force force of-showve.  
This dronke Millere hath ytoold us heer,  
How that bigyled was a Carpenter,

Peraventure in scorn, for I am oon;  
And by youre leve I shal hym quite anoon.  
Right in his cherles termes wol I speke,  
I pray to God his nekke mote breke!  
He kan wel in myn eye seen a stalke,

But in his owene he kan nat seen a balke.'

(Simkin, a rich thieving miller of Trumpington Mill, near Cambridge, is well served by two Cambridge clerks of the north country, who beguile his wife and daughter, recover the stolen meal which he had hid, and leave him well beaten.)

Part 5

THE PROLOGUE TO THE COKES TALE.

The prologe of the Cokes Tale.

The Cook of London, whil the Reve spak,  
For joye him thoughte, he clawed him on the bak.  
'Ha! ha!' quod he, 'for Criste passioun,  
This miller hadde a sharp conclusioun  
Upon his argument of herbergage.

Wel seyde Salomon in his langage,  
'Ne brynge nat every man into thyn hous,'  
For herberwyng by nyghte is perilous.  
Wel oghte a man avysed for to be,  
Whom that be broghte into his pryvetee.

I pray to God so yeve me sorwe and care,  
If evere sitthe I highte Hogge of Ware,  
Herde I a millere bettre yset awerk.  
He hadde a jape of malice in the derk.  
But God forbede that we stynte heere,

And therefore, if ye vouche-sauf to heere  
A tale of me that am a povre man,  
I wol yow telle, as wel as evere I kan,  
A litel jape that fil in oure citee.'  
Oure Hoost answerde and seide, 'I graunte it thee,

Now telle on, Roger, looke that it be good,  
For many a pastee hastow laten blood,  
And many a Jakke of Dovere hastow soold  
That hath been twies hoot and twies cold.

Of many a pilgrim hastow Cristes curs,

For of thy percely yet they fare the wors,  
That they han eten with thy stubbel-goos,  
For in thy shoppe is many a flye loos.  
Now telle on, gentil Roger, by thy name,  
But yet I pray thee, be nat wroth for game,

A man may seye ful sooth in game and pley.'  
'Thou seist ful sooth,' quod Roger, 'by my fey;  
But `sooth pley quaad pley,' as the Flemyng seith.  
And ther-fore, Herry Bailly, by thy feith,  
Be thou nat wrooth, er we departen heer,

Though that my tale be of an hostileer.  
But nathelees I wol nat telle it yit,  
But er we parte, ywis, thou shalt be quit.'  
And ther-with-al he lough and made cheere,  
And seyde his tale, as ye shul after heere.

THE TALE (Unfinished).

(Perkin, a London apprentice, being dismissed by his  
master, seeks his companions in dice, revel and disport.)

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; The Shipmannes Tale

Part 8

## PROLOGUE TO THE SHIPMANNES TALE

Here endith the man of lawe his tale. And next folwith  
the Shipman his prolog.

Oure Ost upon his stiropes stood anoon,  
And seide, 'Good men, herkeneth everychoon;  
This was a thrifty tale for the nonys.

Sir parisshe preste,' quod he, 'for Godis bonys,  
Telle us a tale, as was thi forward yore;  
I se wel, that ye lernede men in lore  
Can meche good, bi Godis dignite.'  
The parson him answerde, 'Benedicite,

What eyleth the man so synfully to swere?'  
Oure Ost answerde, 'O Jankyn, be ye there?  
I smelle a Lollere in the wynde,' quod he,  
'Howe, goodmen,' quod oure Hoste, 'herkeneth me,  
Abyde for Godis digne passioun,

For we shul han a predicacioun,  
This Lollere here wol prechen us somewhat.'  
'Nay, bi Godis soule, that shal he nat,'  
Seyde the Shipman, 'here shal he not preche,  
He shal no gospel glosen here, ne teche.

We leven alle in the grete God,' quod he,  
'He wolde sowen som difficulte  
Or sprengen cokkel in oure clene corn.  
And therfore, Ost, I warne the biforn,  
My joly body shal a tale telle

And I shal clynkyn yow so mery a belle  
That I shal wakyn al this companye;  
But it shal not ben of Philosophie,  
Ne phislyas, ne termes queynte of lawe;



Ther nis but litil Latyn in my mawe.'

Here endith the Shipman his prolog. And next folwyng  
he bigynneth his tale.

#### THE TALE.

(Daun John, a monk of Paris, beguiles the wife of a  
merchant of St. Denis by money borrowed from her husband.  
She saves herself, on the point of discovery, by a ready  
answer.)

#### END-LINK

Bihoold the murie wordes of the Hoost to the Shipman  
and to the lady Prioressse.

'Wel seyde, by corpus dominus,' quod our Hoost,  
'Now longe moote thou saille by the cost,  
Sir gentil maister, gentil maryneer.  
God yeve this monk a thousand last quade yeer!  
A ha! felawes, beth ware of swich a jape.

The monk putte in the mannes hood an ape,  
And in his wyves eek, by Seint Austyn;  
Draweth no monkes moore unto your in.  
But now passe over, and lat us seke aboute  
Who shal now telle first of al this route

Another tale?' and with that word he sayde,  
As curteisly as it had ben a mayde,  
'My lady Prioressse, by youre leve,  
So that I wiste I sholde yow nat greve,  
I wolde demen that ye tellen sholde

A tale next, if so were that ye wolde.  
Now wol ye vouchesauf, my lady deere?'  
'Gladly,' quod she, and seyde as ye shal heere.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; The Wyves Tale Of Bathe

Part 19

## PROLOGUE OF THE WYVES TALE OF BATH

The Prologe of the Wyves tale of Bathe.

Experience, though noon auctoritee  
Were in this world, were right ynogh to me  
To speke of wo that is in mariage;  
For, lordynges, sith I twelf yeer was of age,  
Thonked be God, that is eterne on lyve,

Housbondes at chirche-dore I have had fyve-  
For I so ofte have ywedded bee-  
And alle were worthy men in hir degree.  
But me was toold, certeyn, nat longe agoon is,  
That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but onis

To weddyng in the Cane of Galilee,  
That by the same ensample, taughte he me,  
That I ne sholde wedded be but ones.  
Herkne eek, lo, which a sharpe word for the nones,  
Biside a welle Jesus, God and Man,

Spak in repreeve of the Samaritan.  
'Thou hast yhad fyve housbondes,' quod he,  
'And thilke man the which that hath now thee  
Is noght thyn housbonde;' thus seyde he, certeyn.  
What that he mente ther by, I kan nat seyn;

But that I axe, why that the fifthe man  
Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan?  
How manye myghte she have in mariage?  
Yet herde I nevere tellen in myn age  
Upon this nombre diffinicioun.

Men may devyne, and glosen up and doun,  
But wel I woot expres withoute lye,

God bad us for to wexe and multiplie;  
That gentil text kan I wel understonde.  
Eek wel I woot, he seyde, myn housbonde

Sholde lete fader and mooder, and take me;  
But of no nombre mencioun made he,  
Of bigamye, or of octogamye;  
Why sholde men speke of it vileynye?  
Lo, heere the wise kyng, daun Salomon;

I trowe he hadde wyves mo than oon-  
As, wolde God, it leveful were to me  
To be refreshed half so ofte as he-  
Which yifte of God hadde he, for alle hise wyvys?  
No man hath swich that in this world alyve is.

God woot, this noble kyng, as to my wit,  
The firste nyght had many a myrie fit  
With ech of hem, so wel was hym on lyve!  
Blessed be God, that I have wedded fyve;  
Welcome the sixte, whan that evere he shal.

For sothe I wol nat kepe me chaast in al;  
Whan myn housbonde is fro the world ygon  
Som cristen man shal wedde me anon.  
For thanne thapostle seith that I am free,  
To wedde a Goddes half where it liketh me.

He seith, that to be wedded is no synne,  
Bet is to be wedded than to brynne.  
What rekketh me, thogh folk seye vileynye  
Of shrewed Lameth and of bigamye?  
I woot wel Abraham was an hooly man,

And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I kan,  
And ech of hem hadde wyves mo than two,  
And many another holy man also.  
Whanne saugh ye evere in any manere age  
That hye God defended mariage

By expres word? I pray you, telleth me,

Or where comanded he virginitee?  
I woot as wel as ye it is no drede,  
Thapostel, whan he speketh of maydenhede;  
He seyde, that precept therof hadde he noon.

Men may conseille a womman to been oon,  
But conseillyng is no comandement;  
He putte it in oure owene juggement.  
For hadde God comanded maydenhede,  
Thanne hadde he dampned weddyng with the dede;

And certein, if ther were no seed ysowe,  
Virginitee, wherof thanne sholde it growe?  
Poul dorste nat comanden, atte leeste,  
A thyng of which his maister yaf noon heeste.  
The dart is set up of virginitee;

Cacche who so may, who renneth best lat see.  
But this word is nat taken of every wight,  
But ther as God lust gyve it of his myght.  
I woot wel, the apostel was a mayde;  
But nathelees, thogh that he wroot and sayde

He wolde that every wight were swich as he,  
Al nys but conseil to virginitee;  
And for to been a wyf, he yaf me leve  
Of indulgence, so it is no repreve  
To wedde me, if that my make dye,

Withouten excepcioun of bigamy.  
'Al were it good no womman for to touche,'  
He mente, as in his bed or in his couche;  
For peril is bothe fyr and tow tasseble;  
Ye knowe what this ensample may resemble.

This is al and som, he heeld virginitee  
Moore parfit than weddyng in freletee.  
Freletee clepe I, but if that he and she  
Wolde leden al hir lyf in chastitee.  
I graunte it wel, I have noon envie,

Thogh maydenhede preferre bigamy;

Hem liketh to be clene, body and goost.  
Of myn estaat I nyl nat make no boost,  
For wel ye knowe, a lord in his household,  
He nath nat every vessel al of gold;

Somme been of tree, and doon hir lord servyse.  
God clepeth folk to hym in sondry wyse,  
And everich hath of God a propre yifte,  
Som this, som that, as hym liketh shifte.  
Virginitee is greet perfeccioun,

And continence eek with devocioun.  
But Crist, that of perfeccioun is welle,  
Bad nat every wight he sholde go selle  
Al that he hadde, and gyve it to the poore,  
And in swich wise folwe hym and his foore.

He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfitly,  
And lordynges, by youre leve, that am nat I.  
I wol bistowe the flour of myn age  
In the actes and in fruyt of mariage.  
An housbonde I wol have, I nyl nat lette,

Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,  
And have his tribulacioun withal  
Upon his flessh whil that I am his wyf.  
I have the power durynge al my lyf  
Upon his propre body, and noght he.

Right thus the Apostel tolde it unto me,  
And bad oure housbondes for to love us weel.  
Al this sentence me liketh every deel,-  
Up stirte the Pardoner, and that anon,  
'Now, dame,' quod he, 'by God and by Seint John,

Ye been a noble prechour in this cas.  
I was aboute to wedde a wyf, allas!  
What sholde I bye it on my flessh so deere?  
Yet hadde I levere wedde no wyf to-yeere!  
'Abyde,' quod she, 'my tale in nat bigonne.

Nay, thou shalt drynken of another tonne,

Er that I go, shal savoure wors than ale.  
And whan that I have toold thee forth my tale  
Of tribulacioun in mariage,  
Of which I am expert in al myn age,

(This to seyn, myself have been the whippe),  
Than maystow chese wheither thou wolt sippe  
Of thilke tonne that I shal abroche,  
For I shal telle ensamples mo than ten.  
Whoso that nyl be war by othere men,

By hym shul othere men corrected be.  
The same wordes writeth Ptholomee;  
Rede it in his Almageste, and take it there.'  
'Dame, I wolde praye yow, if youre wyl it were,'  
Seyde this Pardoner, 'as ye bigan,

Telle forth youre tale, spareth for no man,  
And teche us yonge men of your praktike.'  
'Gladly,' quod she, 'sith it may yow like.  
But yet I praye to al this compaignye,  
If that I speke after my fantasye,

As taketh not agrief of that I seye,  
For myn entente nis but for to pleye.'  
-Now sire, now wol I telle forth my tale,  
As evere moote I drynken wyn or ale,  
I shal seye sooth, tho housbondes that I hadde,

As thre of hem were goode, and two were badde.  
The thre men were goode, and riche, and olde;  
Unnethe myghte they the statut holde  
In which that they were bounden unto me-  
Ye woot wel what I meene of this, pradee!

As help me God, I laughe whan I thynke  
How pitously anyght I made hem swynke.  
And by my fey, I tolde of it no stoor,  
They had me yeven hir gold and hir tresoor;  
Me neded nat do lenger diligence

To wynne hir love, or doon hem reverence,

They loved me so wel, by God above,  
That I ne tolde no deyntee of hir love.  
A wys womman wol sette hire evere in oon  
To gete hire love, ther as she hath noon.

But sith I hadde hem hoolly in myn hond,  
And sith they hadde me yeven all hir lond,  
What sholde I taken heede hem for to plese,  
But it were for my profit and myn ese?  
I sette hem so a-werke, by my fey,

That many a nyght they songen weilawey.  
The bacoun was nat fet for hem, I trowe,  
That som men han in Essex at Dunmowe.  
I governed hem so wel after my lawe,  
That ech of hem ful blisful was, and fawe

To brynge me gaye thynges fro the fayre.  
They were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire,  
For God it woot, I chidde hem spitously.  
Now herkneth hou I baar me proprely,  
Ye wise wyves, that kan understonde.

Thus shul ye speke and bere hem wrong on honde;  
For half so boldely kan ther no man  
Swere and lyen, as a womman kan.  
I sey nat this by wyves that been wyse,  
But if it be whan they hem mysavyse.

A wys wyf, it that she kan hir good,  
Shal beren hym on hond the cow is wood,  
And take witesse of hir owene mayde,  
Of hir assent; but herkneth how I sayde.  
'Sir olde kaynard, is this thyn array?

Why is my neighebores wyf so gay?  
She is honoured overal ther she gooth;  
I sitte at hoom, I have no thrifty clooth.  
What dostow at my neighebores hous?  
Is she so fair? artow so amorous?

What rowne ye with oure mayde? benedicite,

Sir olde lecchour, lat thy japes be!  
And if I have a gossib or a freend  
Withouten gilt, thou chidest as a feend  
If that I walke or pleye unto his hous.

Thou comest hoom as dronken as a mous  
And prechest on thy bench, with yvel preef!  
Thou seist to me, it is a greet meschief  
To wedde a povre womman, for costage,  
And if she be riche and of heigh parage,

Thanne seistow it is a tormentrie  
To soffren hir pride and hir malencolie.  
And if she be fair, thou verray knave,  
Thou seyst that every holour wol hir have;  
She may no while in chastitee abyde

That is assailed upon ech a syde.  
Thou seyst, som folk desiren us for richesse,  
Somme for oure shape, and somme for oure fairnesse,  
And som for she kan outhur synge or daunce,  
And som for gentillesse and daliaunce,

Som for hir handes and hir armes smale;  
Thur goth al to the devel by thy tale.  
Thou seyst, men may nat kepe a castel wal,  
It may so longe assailed been overal.  
And if that she be foul, thou seist that she

Coveiteth every man that she may se;  
For as a spaynel she wol on hym lepe  
Til that she fynde som man hir to chepe;  
Ne noon so grey goos gooth ther in the lake  
As, seistow, wol been withoute make;

And seyst, it is an hard thyng for to welde  
A thyng that no man wole, his thanks, helde.  
Thus seistow, lorel, whan thow goost to bedde,  
And that no wys man nedeth for to wedde,  
Ne no man that entendeth unto hevене-

With wilde thonderdynt and firy levne



Moote thy welked nekke be to-broke!  
Thow seyst that droppynge houses, and eek smoke,  
And chidyng wyves maken men to flee  
Out of hir owene hous, a benedicitee!

What eyleth swich an old man for to chide?  
Thow seyst, we wyves wol oure vices hide  
Til we be fast, and thanne we wol hem shewe.  
Wel may that be a proverbe of a shrewe!  
Thou seist, that oxen, asses, hors, and houndes,

They been assayd at diverse stoundes;  
Bacyns, lavours, er that men hem bye,  
Spoones and stooles, and al swich housbondrye,  
And so been pottes, clothes, and array;  
But folk of wyves maken noon assay

Til they be wedded, olde dotard shrewe!  
Thanne, seistow, we wol oure vices shewe.  
Thou seist also, that it displeseth me  
But if that thou wolt preyse my beautee,  
And but thou poure alwey upon my face,

And clepe me `faire dame' in every place,  
And but thou make a feeste on thilke day  
That I was born, and make me fressh and gay,  
And but thou do to my norice honour,  
And to my chamberere withinne my bour,

And to my fadres folk and hise allyes-  
Thus seistow, olde baryl ful of lyes!  
And yet of oure apprentice Janekyn,  
For his crisp heer, shynyng as gold so fyn,  
And for he squiereth me bothe up and doun,

Yet hastow caught a fals suspecioun.  
I wol hym noght, thogh thou were deed tomorwe.  
But tel me this, why hydestow, with sorwe,  
The keyes of my cheste away fro me?  
It is my good as wel as thyn, pardee;

What wenestow make an ydiot of oure dame?

Now, by that lord that called is seint Jame,  
Thou shalt nat bothe, thogh that thou were wood,  
Be maister of my body and of my good;  
That oon thou shalt forgo, maugree thyne eyen.

What nedeth thee of me to enquere or spyen?  
I trowe thou woldest loke me in thy chiste.  
Thou sholdest seye, `Wyf, go wher thee liste,  
Taak youre disport, I wol not leve no talys,  
I knowe yow for a trewe wyf, dame Alys.'

We love no man that taketh kepe or charge  
Wher that we goon, we wol ben at our large.  
Of alle men yblessed moot he be,  
The wise astrologien, Daun Ptholome,  
That seith this proverbe in his Almageste:

`Of alle men his wysdom is the hyste,  
That rekketh nevere who hath the world in honde.'  
By this proverbe thou shalt understonde,  
Have thou ynogh, what thar thee recche or care  
How myrily that othere folkes fare?

He is to greet a nygard, that wolde werne  
A man to lighte his candle at his lanterne;  
He shal have never the lasse light, pardee,  
Have thou ynogh, thee thar nat pleyne thee.  
Thou seyst also, that if we make us gay

With clothyng and with precious array,  
That it is peril of oure chastitee;  
And yet, with sorwe, thou most enforce thee,  
And seye these wordes in the apostles name,  
`In habit, maad with chastitee and shame,

Ye wommen shul apparaille yow,' quod he,  
`And noght in tressed heer and gay perree,  
As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche.'  
After thy text, ne after thy rubriche  
I wol nat wirche, as muchel as a gnat!

Thou seydest this, that I was lyk a cat;

For whoso wolde senge a cattles skyn,  
Thanne wolde the cat wel dwellen in his in.  
And if the cattles skyn be slyk and gay,  
She wol nat dwelle in house half a day,

But forth she wole, er any day be dawed,  
To shewe hir skyn, and goon a caterwawed.  
This is to seye, if I be gay, sire shrewe,  
I wol renne out, my borel for to shewe.  
Sire olde fool, what eyleth thee to spyen,

Thogh thou preye Argus, with hise hundred eyen,  
To be my wardecors, as he kan best,  
In feith he shal nat kepe me but me lest;  
Yet koude I make his berd, so moot I thee.  
Thou seydest eek, that ther been thynges thre,

The whiche thynges troublen al this erthe,  
And that no wight ne may endure the ferthe.  
O leeve sire shrewe, Jesu shorte thy lyf!  
Yet prechestow, and seyst, an hateful wyf  
Yrekened is for oon of these meschances.

Been ther none othere maner resemblances  
That ye may likne youre parables to,  
But if a sely wyf be oon of tho?  
Thou likenest wommenes love to helle,  
To bareyne lond, ther water may nat dwelle.

Thou liknest it also to wilde fyr;  
The moore it brenneth, the moore it hath desir  
To consume every thyng that brent wole be.  
Thou seyst, right as wormes shendeth a tree,  
Right so a wyf destroyeth hir housbond.

This knowe they, that been to wyves bonde.'  
Lordynges, right thus, as ye have understonde,  
Baar I stifly myne olde housbondes on honde,  
That thus they seyden in hir dronkenesse,  
And al was fals, but that I took witnessse

On Janekyn and on my nece also.

O lord, the pyne I dide hem, and the wo  
Ful giltelees, by Goddes sweete pyne!  
For as an hors I koude byte and whyne,  
I koude pleyne, thogh I were in the gilt,

Or elles often tyme hadde I been spilt.  
Who so that first to mille comth first grynt;  
I pleynd first, so was oure werre ystynt.  
They were ful glad to excuse hem ful blyve  
Of thyng of which they nevere agilte hir lyve.

Of wenchis wolde I beren hym on honde,  
Whan that for syk unnethes myghte he stonde,  
Yet tikled it his herte, for that he  
Wende that I hadde of hym so greet chiertee.  
I swoor that al my walkynge out by nyghte

Was for tesphe wenchis that he dighte.  
Under that colour hadde I many a myrthe;  
For al swich thyng was yeven us in oure byrthe,  
Deceite, wepyng, spynnyng, God hath yeve  
To wommen kyndely whil they may lyve.

And thus of o thyng I avaunte me,  
Atte ende I hadde the bettre in ech degree,  
By sleighte, or force, or by som maner thyng,  
As by continueel murmure or grucchyng.  
Namely a bedde hadden they meschaunce;

Ther wolde I chide and do hem no plesaunce,  
I wolde no lenger in the bed abyde,  
If that I felte his arm over my syde  
Til he had maad his raunsoun unto me;  
Thanne wolde I suffre hym do his nycetee.

And therefore every man this tale I telle,  
Wynne who so may, for al is for to selle.  
With empty hand men may none haukes lure,-  
For wynnyng wolde I al his lust endure  
And make me a feyned appetit;

And yet in bacoun hadde I nevere delit;

That made me that evere I wolde hem chide.  
For thogh the pope hadde seten hem biside,  
I wolde nat spare hem at hir owene bord,  
For by my trouthe I quitte hem word for word.

As help me verray God omnipotent,  
Though I right now sholde make my testament,  
I ne owe hem nat a word, that it nys quit.  
I broghte it so aboute by my wit,  
That they moste yeve it up as for the beste,

Or elles hadde we nevere been in reste.  
For thogh he looked as a wood leoun,  
Yet sholde he faille of his conclusioun.  
Thanne wolde I seye, 'Goode lief, taak keepe,  
How mekely looketh Wilkyn oure sheepe!

Com neer, my spouse, lat me ba thy cheke,  
Ye sholde been al pacient and meke,  
And han a sweete spiced conscience,  
Sith ye so preche of Jobes pacience.  
Suffreth alwey, syn ye so wel kan preche,

And but ye do, certein we shal yow teche  
That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.  
Oon of us two moste bowen, doutelees,  
And sith a man is moore resonable,  
Than womman is, ye moste been suffrable.'

Swiche maneer wordes hadde we on honde.  
Now wol I speken of my fourthe housbonde.  
My fourthe housbonde was a revelour,  
This is to seyn, he hadde a paramour,  
And I was yong and ful of ragerye,

Stibourne and strong, and joly as a pye.  
Wel koude I daunce to an harpe smale,  
And synge, ywis, as any nyghtyngale,  
Whan I had dronke a draughte of sweete wyn.  
Metellius, the foule cherl, the swyn,

That with a staf birafte his wyf hire lyf,

For she drank wyn, thogh I hadde been his wyf,  
He sholde nat han daunted me fro drynke.  
And after wyn on Venus moste I thynke,  
For al so siker as cold engendreth hayl,

A likerous mouth moste han a likerous tayl.  
In wommen vinolent is no defence,  
This knowen lecchours by experience.  
But, Lord Crist! whan that it remembreth me  
Upon my yowthe and on my jolitee,

It tikleth me aboute myn herte-roote.  
Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote  
That I have had my world, as in my tyme.  
But age, allas, that al wole envenyme,  
Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith!

Lat go, fare-wel, the devel go therwith!  
The flour is goon, ther is namoore to telle,  
The bren as I best kan, now moste I selle;  
But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde.  
Now wol I tellen of my fourthe housbonde.

I seye, I hadde in herte greet despit  
That he of any oother had delit;  
But he was quit, by God and by Seint Joce!  
I made hym of the same wode a croce;  
Nat of my body in no foul manere,

But certainly, I made folk swich cheere  
That in his owene grece I made hym frye  
For angre and for verray jalousye.  
By God, in erthe I was his purgatorie,  
For which I hope his soule be in glorie,

For God it woot, he sat ful ofte and song  
Whan that his shoo ful bitterly hym wrong!  
Ther was no wight save God and he, that wiste  
In many wise how soore I hym twiste.  
He deyde whan I cam fro Jerusalem,

And lith ygrave under the roode-beem,

Al is his tombe noght so curyus  
As was the sepulcre of hym Daryus,  
Which that Appelles wroghte subtilly.  
It nys but wast to burye hym preciously,

Lat hym fare-wel, God yeve his soule reste,  
He is now in his grave, and in his cheste.  
Now of my fifthe housbonde wol I telle.  
God lete his soule nevere come in helle!  
And yet was he to me the mooste shrewe;

That feele I on my ribbes al by rewe,  
And evere shal, unto myn endyng day.  
But in oure bed he was ful fressh and gay,  
And therwithal so wel koude he me glose  
Whan that he solde han my bele chose,

That thogh he hadde me bet on every bon  
He koude wynne agayn my love anon.  
I trowe I loved hym beste, for that he  
Was of his love daungerous to me.  
We wommen han, if that I shal nat lye,

In this matere a queynte fantasye;  
Wayte what tthyng we may nat lightly have,  
Ther-after wol we crie al day and crave.  
Forbode us thyng, and that desiren we;  
Presse on us faste, and thanne wol we fle;

With daunger oute we al oure chaffare.  
Greet prees at market maketh deere ware,  
And to greet cheep is holde at litel prys;  
This knoweth every womman that is wys.  
My fifthe housbonde, God his soule blesse,

Which that I took for love and no richesse,  
He somtyme was a clerk of Oxenford,  
And hadde left scole, and wente at hom to bord  
With my gossib, dwellynge in oure toun,  
God have hir soule! hir name was Alisoun.

She knew myn herte and eek myn privetee

Bet than oure parisshe preest, as moot I thee.  
To hir biwreyed I my conseil al,  
For hadde myn housbonde pissed on a wal,  
Or doon a thyng that sholde han cost his lyf,

To hir, and to another worthy wyf,  
And to my nece, which that I loved weel,  
I wolde han toold his conseil every deel.  
And so I dide ful often, God it woot!  
That made his face ful often reed and hoot

For verray shame, and blamed hym-self, for he  
Had toold to me so greet a pryvetee.  
And so bifel that ones, in a Lente-  
So often tymes I to my gossyb wente,  
For evere yet I loved to be gay,

And for to walke in March, Averill, and May,  
Fro hous to hous to heere sondry talys-  
That Jankyn Clerk and my gossyb, dame Alys,  
And I myself into the feeldes wente.  
Myn housbonde was at London al that Lente;

I hadde the bettre leyser for to pleye,  
And for to se, and eek for to be seye  
Of lusty folk; what wiste I, wher my grace  
Was shapen for to be, or in what place?  
Therefore I made my visitaciouns

To vigilies and to processions,  
To prechyng eek, and to thise pilgrimages,  
To pleyes of myracles, and to mariages;  
And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes.  
These wormes ne these motthes, ne these mytes,

Upon my peril, frete hem never a deel-  
And wostow why? for they were used weel!  
Now wol I tellen forth what happed me.  
I seye, that in the feeldes walked we,  
Til trewely we hadde swich daliance,

This clerk and I, that of my purveiance



I spak to hym, and seyde hym, how that he,  
If I were wydwe, sholde wedde me.  
For certainly, I sey for no bobance,  
Yet was I nevere withouten purveiance

Of mariage, nof othere thynges eek.  
I holde a mouses herte nat worth a leek  
That hath but oon hole for to sterte to,  
And if that faille, thanne is al ydo.  
I bar hym on honde, he hadde enchanted me-

My dame taughte me that soutiltee.  
And eek I seyde, I mette of hym al nyght,  
He wolde han slayn me as I lay upright,  
And al my bed was ful of verray blood;  
But yet I hope that he shal do me good,

For blood bitokeneth gold, as me was taught-  
And al was fals, I dremed of it right naught,  
But as I folwed ay my dames loore  
As wel of this, as of othere thynges moore.  
But now sir, lat me se, what I shal seyn?

A ha, by God! I have my tale ageyn.  
Whan that my fourthe housbonde was on beere,  
I weep algate, and made sory cheere,  
As wyves mooten-for it is usage-  
And with my coverchief covered my visage;

But for that I was purveyed of a make,  
I wepte but smal, and that I undertake.  
To chirche was myn housbonde born amorwe  
With neighebores that for hym maden sorwe;  
And Janekyn oure clerk was oon of tho.

As help me God, whan that I saugh hym go  
After the beere, me thoughte he hadde a paire  
Of legges and of feet so clene and faire,  
That al myn herte I yaf unto his hoold.  
He was, I trowe, a twenty wynter oold,

And I was fourty, if I shal seye sooth,

But yet I hadde alwey a coltes tooth.  
Gat-tothed I was, and that bicam me weel,  
I hadde the prente of Seinte Venus seel.  
As help me God, I was a lusty oon,

And faire, and riche, and yong, and wel bigon,  
And trewely, as myne housbondes tolde me,  
I hadde the beste quonyam myghte be.  
For certes, I am al Venerien  
In feelynge, and myn herte is Marcien.

Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,  
And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardynesse.  
Myn ascendent was Taur, and Mars therinne,  
Allas, allas, that evere love was synne!  
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun

By vertu of my constellacioun;  
That made me I koude noght withdrawe  
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.  
Yet have I Martes mark upon my face,  
And also in another privee place.

For God so wys be my savacioun,  
I ne loved nevere by no discrecioun,  
But evere folwede myn appetit,  
Al were he short, or long, or blak, or whit.  
I took no kepe, so that he liked me,

How poore he was, ne eek of what degree.  
What sholde I seye, but at the monthes ende  
This joly clerk Jankyn, that was so hende,  
Hath wedded me with greet solempnytee,  
And to hym yaf I al the lond and fee

That evere was me yeven therbifoore;  
But afterward repented me ful soore,  
He nolde suffre nothyng of my list.  
By God, he smoot me ones on the lyst  
For that I rente out of his book a leef,

That of the strook myn ere wax al deef.

Stibourne I was as is a leonesse,  
And of my tonge a verray jangleresse,  
And walke I wolde, as I had doon biforn,  
From hous to hous, although he had it sworn,

For which he often-tymes wolde preche,  
And me of olde Romayn geestes teche,  
How he Symplicius Gallus lefte his wyf,  
And hir forsook for terme of al his lyf,  
Noght but for open-heveded he hir say,

Lookynge out at his dore, upon a day.  
Another Romayn tolde he me by name,  
That for his wyf was at a someres game  
Withoute his wityng, he forsook hir eke.  
And thanne wolde he upon his Bible seke

That like proverbe of Ecclesiaste,  
Where he comandeth, and forbedeth faste,  
Man shal nat suffre his wyf go roule aboute,  
Thanne wolde he seye right thus, withouten doute:  
'Who so that buyldeth his hous al of salwes,

And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,  
And suffreth his wyf to go seken halwes,  
Is worthy to been hanged on the galwes!  
But al for noght, I sette noght an hawe  
Of his proverbes, nof his olde lawe,

Ne I wolde nat of hym corrected be.  
I hate hym that my vices telleth me;  
And so doo mo, God woot, of us than I!  
This made hym with me wood al outrely,  
I nolde noght forbere hym in no cas.

Now wol I seye yow sooth, by seint Thomas,  
Why that I rente out of his book a leef,  
For which he smoot me so that I was deaf.  
He hadde a book that gladly, nyght and day,  
For his desport he wolde rede alway.

He cleped it `Valerie and Theofraste,'

At whiche book he lough alwey ful faste.  
And eek ther was som tyme a clerk at Rome,  
A cardinal that highte Seint Jerome,  
That made a book agayn Jovinian,

In whiche book eek ther was Tertulan,  
Crisippus, Trotula, and Helowys,  
That was abbesse nat fer fro Parys,  
And eek the Parables of Salomon,  
Ovides Art, and bookes many on,

And alle these were bounden in o volume,  
And every nyght and day was his custume  
Whan he hadde leyser and vacacioun  
From oother worldly occupacioun  
To reden on this book of wikked wyves.

He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves  
Than been of goode wyves in the Bible.  
For trusteth wel, it is an impossible  
That any clerk wol speke good of wyves,  
But if it be of hooly seintes lyves,

Ne noon oother womman never the mo.  
Who peyntede the leoun, tel me, who?  
By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,  
As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,  
They wolde han writen of men moore wikkednesse

Than all the mark of Adam may redresse.  
The children of Mercurie and Venus  
Been in hir wirkyng ful contrarius,  
Mercurie loveth wysdam and science,  
And Venus loveth ryot and dispence.

And for hire diverse disposicioun  
Ech falleth in otheres exaltacioun,  
And thus, God woot, Mercurie is desolat  
In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltat;  
And Venus falleth ther Mercurie is reysed.

Therefore no womman of no clerk is preysed.

The clerk, whan he is oold and may nocht do  
Of Venus werkes worth his olde sho,  
Thanne sit he doun, and writ in his dotage  
That wommen kan nat kepe hir mariage.

But now to purpos, why I tolde thee  
That I was beten for a book, pardee.  
Upon a nyght Jankyn, that was oure sire,  
Redde on his book as he sat by the fire  
Of Eva first, that for hir wikkednesse

Was al mankynde broght to wrecchednesse,  
For which that Jesu Crist hymself was slayn,  
That boghte us with his herte-blood agayn.  
Lo, heere expres of womman may ye fynde,  
That womman was the los of al mankynde.

Tho redde he me how Sampson loste hise heres,  
Slepyng, his lemman kitte it with hir sheres,  
Thurgh whiche tresoun loste he bothe hise eyen.  
Tho redde he me, if that I shal nat lyen,  
Of Hercules and of his Dianyre,

That caused hym to sette hymself afyre.  
No thyng forgat he the penaunce and wo  
That Socrates hadde with hise wyves two,  
How Xantippa caste pisse up-on his heed.  
This sely man sat stille as he were deed;

He wiped his heed, namoore dorste he seyn  
But, 'er that thonder stynte, comth a reyn.'  
Of Phasifpha, that was the queene of Crete,  
For shrewednesse hym thoughte the tale swete-  
Fy, speke namoore! it is a grisly thyng

Of hir horrible lust and hir likyng.  
Of Clitermystra for hire lecherye,  
That falsly made hir housbonde for to dye,  
He redde it with ful good devocioun.  
He tolde me eek for what occasioun

Amphiorax at Thebes loste his lyf.

Myn housbonde hadde a legende of his wyf  
Eriphilem, that for an ouche of gold  
Hath prively unto the Grekes told  
Wher that hir housbonde hidde hym in a place,

For which he hadde at Thebes sory grace.  
Of Lyma tolde he me, and of Lucye,  
They bothe made hir housbondes for to dye,  
That oon for love, that oother was for hate.  
Lyma hir housbonde, on an even late,

Empoysoned hath, for that she was his fo.  
Lucia likerous loved hir housbonde so,  
That for he sholde alwey upon hire thynke,  
She yaf hym swich a manere love-drynke  
That he was deed, er it were by the morwe.

And thus algates housbondes han sorw.  
Thanne tolde he me, how that Latumyus  
Compleyned unto his felawe Arrius,  
That in his gardyn growed swich a tree,  
On which he seyde how that hise wyves thre

Hanged hemself, for herte despitus.  
'O leeve brother,' quod this Arrius,  
'Yif me a plante of thilke blissed tree,  
And in my gardyn planted it shal bee.'  
Of latter date of wyves hath he red,

That somme han slayn hir housbondes in hir bed,  
And lete hir lecchour dighte hir al the nyght,  
Whan that the corps lay in the floor upright.  
And somme han dryve nayles in hir brayn  
Whil that they slepte, and thus they han hem slayn.

Somme han hem yeve poysoun in hir drynke.  
He spak moore harm than herte may bithynke,  
And therwithal he knew of mo proverbes  
Than in this world ther growen gras or herbes.  
'Bet is,' quod he, 'Thyn habitacioun

Be with a leoun, or a foul dragoun,

Than with a womman usynge for to chyde.'  
'Bet is,' quod he, 'hye in the roof abyde  
Than with an angry wyf doun in the hous,  
They been so wikked and contrarious.

They haten that hir housbondes loveth ay.'  
He seyde, 'a womman cast hir shame away  
Whan she cast of hir smok,' and forther mo,  
'A fair womman, but she be chaast also,  
Is lyk a goldryng in a sowes nose.'

Who wolde leeve, or who wolde suppose  
The wo that in myn herte was, and pyne?  
And whan I saugh he wolde nevere fyne  
To reden on this cursed book al nyght,  
Al sodeynly thre leves have I plyght

Out of his book, right as he radde, and eke  
I with my fest so took hym on the cheke,  
That in oure fyr he ril bakward adoun.  
And he up-stirte as dootha wood leoun,  
And with his fest he smoot me on the heed

That in the floor I lay, as I were deed.  
And whan he saugh how stille that I lay,  
He was agast, and wolde han fled his way,  
Til atte laste out of my swogh I breyde.  
'O, hastow slayn me, false theef,' I seyde,

'And for my land thus hastow mordred me?  
Er I be deed, yet wol I kisse thee.'  
And neer he cam and kneled faire adoun,  
And seyde, 'deere suster Alisoun,  
As help me God, I shal thee nevere smyte.

That I have doon, it is thysel to wyte,  
Foryeve it me, and that I thee biseke.'  
And yet eftsoones I hitte hym on the cheke,  
And seyde, 'theef, thus muchel am I wreke;  
Now wol I dye, I may no lenger speke.'

But atte laste, with muchel care and wo,

We fille acorded by us selven two.  
He yaf me al the bridel in myn hond,  
To han the governance of hous and lond,  
And of his tonge, and of his hond also,

And made hym brenne his book anon right tho.  
And whan that I hadde geten unto me  
By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,  
And that he seyde, 'myn owene trewe wyf,  
Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf,

Keepe thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat,'  
After that day we hadden never debaat.  
God help me so, I was to hym as kynde  
As any wyf from Denmark unto Ynde,  
And also trewe, and so was he to me.

I prey to God, that sit in magestee,  
So blesse his soule for his mercy deere.  
Now wol I seye my tale, if ye wol heere.

Biholde the wordes bitwene the Somonour and the Frere.

The Frere lough whan he hadde herd al this.-  
'Now dame,' quod he, 'so have I joye or blis,  
This is a long preamble of a tale.'  
And whan the Somonour herde the Frere gale,  
'Lo,' quod the Somonour, 'Goddess armes two,

A frere wol entremette hym evere-mo.  
Lo goode men, a flye and eek a frere  
Wol falle in every dyssh and eek mateere.  
What spekestow of preambulacioun?  
What, amble, or trotte, or pees, or go sit doun,

Thou lettest oure disport in this manere.'  
'Ye, woltow so, sire Somonour?' quod the frere,  
'Now by my feith, I shal er that I go  
Telle of a Somonour swich a tale or two  
That alle the folk shal laughen in this place.'

'Now elles, frere, I bishrewe thy face,'



Quod this Somonour, 'and I bishrewe me,  
But if I telle tales two or thre  
Of freres, er I come to Sidyngborne,  
That I shal make thyn herte for to morne,

For wel I woot thy pacience in gon.'  
Oure Hooste cride, 'Pees, and that anon!  
And seyde, 'lat the womman telle hire tale,  
Ye fare as folk that dronken were of ale.  
Do, dame, telle forth youre tale, and that is best.'

'Al redy, sire,' quod she, 'right as yow lest,  
If I have licence of this worthy frere.'  
'Yis, dame,' quod he, 'tel forth, and I wol heere.'

Heere endeth the Wyf of Bathe hir Prologe.

Part 20

#### THE TALE OF THE WYF OF BATH

Here bigynneth the Tale of the Wyf of Bathe.

In tholde dayes of the Kyng Arthour,  
Of which that Britons speken greet honour,  
All was this land fulfilled of Fayerye.  
The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye,  
Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede;

This was the olde opinion, as I rede.  
I speke of manye hundred yeres ago;  
But now kan no man se none elves mo,  
For now the grete charitee and prayeres  
Of lymytours, and othere hooly freres,

That serchen every lond and every strem  
As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem,  
Blessynge halles, chambres, kichenes, boures,  
Citees, burghes, castels, hye toures,  
Thropes, bernes, shipnes, dayeryes,

This maketh that ther been no Fayeryes.

For ther as wont to walken was an elf,  
Ther walketh now the lymytour hymself  
In undermeles and in morwenynges,  
And seyth his matyns and his hooly thynges

As he gooth in his lymytacioun.  
Wommen may go saufly up and doun;  
In every bussh or under every tree  
Ther is noon oother incubus but he,  
And he ne wol doon hem but dishonour.

And so bifel it that this kyng Arthour  
Hadde in his hous a lusty bachelor,  
That on a day cam ridynge fro ryver;  
And happed that, allone as she was born,  
He saugh a mayde walkynge hym biforn,

Of whiche mayde anon, maugree hir heed,  
By verray force he rafte hir maydenhed;  
For which oppressioun was swich clamour  
And swich pursute unto the kyng Arthour,  
That dampned was this knyght for to be deed

By cours of lawe, and sholde han lost his heed,  
Paraventure, swich was the statut tho,  
But that the queene and othere ladyes mo  
So longe preyeden the kyng of grace,  
Til he his lyf hym graunted in the place,

And yaf hym to the queene al at hir wille,  
To chese, wheither she wolde hym save or spille.  
The queene thanketh the kyng with al hir myght,  
And after this thus spak she to the knyght,  
Whan that she saugh hir tyme, upon a day,

'Thou standest yet,' quod she, 'in swich array  
That of thy lyf yet hastow no suretee.  
I grante thee lyf, if thou kanst tellen me  
What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren.  
Be war and keep thy nekke-boon from iren,

And if thou kanst nat tellen it anon,

Yet shal I yeve thee leve for to gon  
A twelf-month and a day to seche and leere  
An answeere suffisant in this mateere;  
And suretee wol I han, er that thou pace,

Thy body for to yelden in this place.'  
Wo was this knyght, and sorwefully he siketh,  
But what! he may nat do al as hym liketh;  
And at the laste he chees hym for to wende,  
And come agayn right at the yeres ende,

With swich answeere as God wolde hym purveye;  
And taketh his leve, and wendeth forth his weye.  
He seketh every hous and every place,  
Where as he hopeth for to fynde grace  
To lerne what thyng wommen loven moost;

But he ne koude arryven in no coost  
Wher as he myghte fynde in this mateere  
Two creatures accordyng in feere.  
Somme seyde, wommen loven best richesse,  
Somme seyde honour, somme seyde jolynesse,

Somme riche array, somme seyden lust abedde,  
And oftetyme to be wydwe and wedde.  
Somme seyde, that oure hertes been moost esed  
Whan that we been yflatered and yplesed-  
He gooth ful ny the sothe, I wol nat lye,

A man shal wynne us best with flaterye;  
And with attendance and with bisynesse  
Been we ylymed, bothe moore and lesse.-  
And somme seyn, how that we loven best  
For to be free, and do right as us lest,

And that no man repreve us of oure vice,  
But seye that we be wise, and nothyng nyce.  
For trewely, ther is noon of us alle,  
If any wight wol clawe us on the galle,  
That we nel kike; for he seith us sooth;

Assay, and he shal fynde it that so dooth.

For be we never so vicious withinne,  
We sol been holden wise, and clene of synne.  
And somme seyn, that greet delit han we  
For to been holden stable and eke secree,

And in o purpos stedefastly to dwelle,  
And nat biwerye thyng that men us telle.  
But that tale is nat worth a rake-stele,  
Pardee, we wommen konne no thyng hele.  
Witnesse on Myda-wol ye heere the tale?

Ovyde, amonges othere thynges smale,  
Seyde, Myda hadde under his longe heres  
Growynge upon his heed two asses eres,  
The whiche vice he hydde, as he best myghte,  
Ful subtilly from every mannes sighte;

That, save his wyf, ther wiste of it namo,  
He loved hir moost and trusted hir also.  
He preyede hir, that to no creature  
She sholde tellen of his disfigure.  
She swoor him nay, for al this world to wyne,

She nolde do that vileynye or synne,  
To make hir housbonde han so foul a name,  
She nolde nat telle it for hir owene shame!

But nathelees, hir thoughte that she dyde,  
That she so longe sholde a conseil hyde,

Hir thoughte it swal so soore aboute hir herte  
That nedely som word hir moste asterte.  
And sith she dorste telle it to no man,  
Doun to a mareys faste by she ran,  
Til she came there, hir herte was afyre,

And as a bitore bombleth in the myre,  
She leyde hir mouth unto the water doun;-  
'Biwreye me nat, thou water, with thy soun,'  
Quod she, 'to thee I telle it and namo,  
Myn housbonde hath longe asses erys two!

Now is myn herte al hool, now is it oute,  
I myghte no lenger kepe it, out of doute.'  
Heere may ye se, thogh we a tyme abyde,  
Yet out it moot, we kan no conseil hyde.-  
The remenant of the tale, if ye wol heere,

Redeth Ovyde, and ther ye may it leere.-  
This knyght, of which my tale is specially,  
Whan that he saugh he myghte nat come therby,  
This is to seye, what wommen love moost,  
Withinne his brest ful sorweful was the goost.

But hoom he gooth, he myghte nat sojourne;  
The day was come that homward moste he tourne,  
And in his wey it happed hym to ryde  
In al this care under a forest syde,  
Wher as he saugh upon a daunce go

Of ladyes foure and twenty, and yet mo;  
Toward the whiche daunce he drow ful yerne,  
In hope that som wysdom sholde he lerne.  
But certeinly, er he came fully there,  
Vanysshed was this daunce, he nyste where;

No creature saugh he that bar lyf,  
Save on the grene he saugh sittyng a wyf,  
A fouler wight ther may no man devyse.  
Agayn the knyght this olde wyf gan ryse,  
And seyde, 'Sire knyght, heer-forth ne lith no wey;

Tel me what that ye seken, by your fey.  
Paraventure it may the bettre be,  
Thise olde folk kan muchel thyng,' quod she.  
'My leeve mooder,' quod this knyght, 'certeyn,  
I nam but deed, but if that I kan seyn

What thyng it is, that wommen moost desire.  
Koude ye me wisse, I wolde wel quite youre hire.'  
'Plight me thy trouthe, heere in myn hand,' quod she,  
'The nexte thyng that I requere thee,  
Thou shalt it do, if it lye in thy myght,

And I wol telle it yow, er it be nyght.'  
'Have heer my trouthe,' quod the knyght, 'I grante.'  
'Thanne,' quod she, 'I dar me wel avante,  
Thy lyf is sauf, for I wol stonde therby  
Upon my lyf, the queene wol seye as I.

Lat se which is the proudeste of hem alle,  
That wereth on a coverchief or a calle,  
That dar seye nay of that I shal thee teche.  
Lat us go forth withouten lenger speche.'  
Tho rowned she a pistel in his ere,

And bad hym to be glad and have no fere.  
Whan they be comen to the court, this knyght  
Seyde he had holde his day, as he hadde hight,  
And redy was his answeere, as he sayde.  
Ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,

And many a wydwe, for that they been wise,  
The wueene hirsself sittyng as a justise,  
Assembled been, his answeere for to heere;  
And afterward this knyght was bode appeere.  
To every wight comanded was silence,

And that the knyght sholde telle in audience  
What thyng that worldly wommen loven best.  
This knyght ne stood nat stille, as doth a best,  
But ot his questioun anon answerde  
With manly voys, that al the court it herde:

'My lige lady, generally,' quod he,  
'Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee  
As wel over hir housbond as hir love,  
And for to been in maistrie hym above.  
This is youre mooste desir, thogh ye me kille,

Dooth as yow list, I am heer at youre wille.'  
In al the court ne was ther wyf ne mayde  
Ne wydwe that contraried that he sayde,  
But seyden he was worthy han his lyf.  
And with that word up stirte the olde wyf,

Which that the knyght saugh sittynge in the grene.  
'Mercy,' quod she, 'my sovereyn lady queene,  
Er that youre court departe, do me right.  
I taughte this answeere unto the knyght,  
For which he plighte me his trouthe there,

The firste thyng I wolde of hym requere,  
He wolde it do, if it lay in his myght.  
Bifor the court thanne preye I thee, sir knyght,'  
Quod she, 'that thou me take unto thy wyf,  
For wel thou woost that I have kept thy lyf.

If I seye fals, sey nay, upon thy fey!'  
This knyght answerde, 'Allas and weylawey!  
I woot right wel that swich was my biheste!  
For Goddes love, as chees a newe requeste,  
Taak al my good, and lat my body go!'

'Nay, thanne,' quod she, 'I shrewe us bothe two,  
For thogh that I be foul, and oold, and poore,  
I nolde for al the metal, ne for oore,  
That under erthe is grave, or lith above,  
But if thy wyf I were, and eek thy love.'

'My love?' quod he, 'nay, my dampnacioun!  
Allas, that any of my nacioun  
Sholde evere so foule disparaged be!'  
But al for noght, the ende is this, that he  
Constreyned was, he nedes moste hir wedde,

And taketh his olde wyf, and gooth to bedde.  
Now wolden som men seye, paraventure,  
That for my necligence I do no cure  
To tellen yow the joye and al tharray,  
That at the feeste was that ilke day;

To whiche thyng shortly answeere I shal.  
I seye, ther nas no joye ne feeste at al,  
Ther nas but hevynesse and mucche sorwe,  
For prively he wedde hir on a morwe,  
And al day after hidde hym as an owle,

So wo was hym, his wyf looked so foule.  
Greet was the wo the knyght hadde in his thoght,  
Whan he was with his wyf abedde ybrought,  
He walweth and he turneth to and fro.  
His olde wyf lay smylynge everemo,

And seyde, 'O deere housbonde, benedicitee,  
Fareth every knyght thus with his wyf, as ye?  
Is this the lawe of Kyng Arthures hous?  
Is every knyght of his so dangerous?  
I am youre owene love, and eek your wyf;

I am she which that saved hath youre lyf.  
And certes, yet dide I yow nevere unright;  
Why fare ye thus with me this firste nyght?  
Ye faren lyk a man had lost his wit.  
What is my gilt? for Goddes love, tel it,

And it shal been amended, if I may.'  
'Amended,' quod this knyght, 'allas! nay! nay!  
It wol nat been amended nevere mo;  
Thou art so loothly and so oold also  
And therto comen of so lough a kynde,

That litel wonder is thogh I walwe and wynde.  
So wolde God, myn herte wolde breste!  
'Is this,' quod she, 'the cause of youre unreste?'  
'Ye certainly,' quod he, 'no wonder is!  
'Now, sire,' quod she, 'I koude amende al this,

If that me liste, er it were dayes thre,  
So wel ye myghte bere yow unto me.  
But for ye speken of swich gentillesse  
As is descended out of old richesse,  
That therefore sholden ye be gentil men,

Swich arrogance nis nat worth an hen.  
Looke who that is moost vertuouse alway,  
Pryvee and apert, and moost entendeth ay  
To do the gentil dedes that he kan,  
Taak hym for the grettest gentil-man.



Crist wole, we clayme of hym oure gentillesse,  
Nat of oure eldres for hire old richesse.  
For thogh they yeve us al hir heritage,  
For which we clayme to been of heigh parage,  
Yet may they nat biquethe for no thyng

To noon of us hir vertuous lyvyng,  
That made hem gentil men ycalled be,  
And bad us folwen hem in swich degree.  
Wel kan the wise poete of Florence,  
That highte Dant, speken in this sentence.

Lo in swich maner rym is Dantes tale:  
' Ful selde upriseth by his branches smale  
Prowesse of man, for God of his goodnesse  
Wole, that of hym we clayme oure gentillesse.'  
For of oure eldres may we no thyng clayme

But temporel thyng, that man may hurte and mayme.  
Eek every wight woot this as wel as I,  
If gentillesse were planted natureelly  
Unto a certeyn lynage down the lyne,  
Pryvee nor apert, thanne wolde they nevere fyne

To doon of gentillesse the faire office,  
They myghte do no vileynye or vice.  
Taak fyr, and ber it in the derkeste hous  
Bitwix this and the mount of Kaukasous,  
And lat men shette the dores and go thenne,

Yet wole the fyr as faire lye and brenne  
As twenty thousand men myghte it biholde;  
His office natureel ay wol it holde,  
Up peril of my lyf, til that it dye.  
Heere may ye se wel, how that genterye

Is nat annexed to possessioun,  
Sith folk ne doon hir operacioun  
Alwey, as dooth the fyr, lo, in his kynde.  
For God it woot, men may wel often fynde  
A lordes sone do shame and vileynye,

And he that wole han pris of his gentrye,  
For he was boren of a gentil hous,  
And hadde hise elders noble and vertuous,  
And nel hym-selven do no gentil dedis,  
Ne folwen his gentil auncestre that deed is,

He nys nat gentil, be he duc or erl;  
For vileyns synful dedes make a cherl.  
For gentillesse nys but renomee  
Of thyne auncestres for hire heigh bountee,  
Which is a strange thyng to thy persone.

Thy gentillesse cometh fro God allone,  
Thanne comth oure verray gentillesse of grace,  
It was no thyng biquethe us with oure place.  
Thenketh hou noble, as seith Valerius,  
Was thilke Tullius Hostillius,

That out of poverte roos to heigh noblesse.  
Reedeth Senek, and redeth eek Boece,  
Ther shul ye seen expres that it no drede is,  
That he is gentil that dooth gentil dedis.  
And therefore, leeve housbonde, I thus conclude,

Al were it that myne auncestres weren rude,  
Yet may the hye God-and so hope I,-  
Grante me grace to lyven vertuously.  
Thanne am I gentil whan that I bigynne  
To lyven vertuously, and weyve synne.

And ther as ye of poverte me repreeve,  
The hye God, on whom that we bileeve  
In wilful poverte chees to lyve his lyf.  
And certes every man, mayden or wyf,  
May understonde that Jesus, hevene kyng,

Ne wolde nat chesen vicious lyvyng.  
Glad poverte is an honeste thyng, certeyn,  
This wole Senec and othere clerkes seyn.  
Who so that halt hym payd of his poverte,  
I holde hym riche, al hadde he nat a sherte;

He that coveiteth is a povre wight,  
For he wolde han that is nat in his myght,  
But he that noght hath, ne coveiteth have,  
Is riche, although ye holde hym but a knave.  
Verray poverte, it syngeth proprely.

Juvenal seith of poverte myrily,  
'The povre man, whan he goth by the weye,  
Bifore the theves he may synge and pleye.'  
Poverte is hateful good, and, as I gesse,  
A ful greet bryngere out of bisynesse;

A greet amender eek of sapience  
To hym that taketh it in pacience.  
Poverte is this, although it seme elenge;  
Possessioun, that no wight wol challenge.  
Poverte ful ofte, whan a man is lowe,

Maketh his God and eek hymself to knowe;  
Poverte a spectacle is, as thynketh me,  
Thurgh which he may hise verray freendes see.  
And therefore, sire, syn that I noght yow greve,  
Of my poverte namoore ye me repreve.

Now sire, of elde ye repreve me,  
And certes, sire, thogh noon auctoritee  
Were in no book, ye gentils of honour  
Seyn, that men sholde an oold wight doon favour,  
And clepe hym fader for youre gentillesse,

And auctours shal I fynden, as I gesse.  
Now, ther ye seye that I am foul and old,  
Than drede you noght to been a cokewold;  
For filthe and eelde, al so moot I thee,  
Been grete wardeyns upon chastitee;

But nathelees, syn I knowe youre delit,  
I shal fulfille youre worldly appetit.'  
'Chese now,' quod she, 'oon of thise thynges tweye:  
To han me foul and old til that I deye,  
And be to yow a trewe humble wyf,

And nevere yow displese in al my lyf;  
Or elles ye wol han me yong and fair,  
And take youre aventure of the repair  
That shal be to youre hous, by cause of me,  
Or in som oother place may wel be.

Now chese yourselven wheither that yow liketh.'  
This knyght avyseth hym and sore siketh,  
But atte laste, he seyde in this manere:  
'My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,  
I put me in youre wise governance.

Cheseth yourself, which may be moost plesance  
And moost honour to yow and me also.  
I do no fors the wheither of the two,  
For, as yow liketh, it suffiseth me.'  
'Thanne have I gete of yow maistrie,' quod she,

'Syn I may chese and governe as me lest?'  
'Ye, certes, wyf,' quod he, 'I holde it best.'  
'Kys me,' quod she, 'we be no lenger wrothe,  
For, by my trouthe, I wol be to yow bothe!  
This is to seyn, ye, bothe fair and good.

I prey to God that I moote sterven wood  
But I to yow be al so good and trewe  
As evere was wyf, syn that the world was newe.  
And but I be tomorn as fair to seene  
As any lady, emperice or queene,

That is bitwixe the est and eke the west,  
Dooth with my lyf and deth right as yow lest.  
Cast up the curtyn, looke how that it is.'  
And whan the knyght saugh verraily al this,  
That she so fair was, and so yong therto,

For joye he hente hire in hise armes two.  
His herte bathed in a bath of blisse,  
A thousand tyme arewe he gan hir kisse,  
And she obeyed hym in every thyng  
That myghte doon hym plesance or likyng.

And thus they lyve unto hir lyves ende  
In parfit joye;-and Jesu Crist us sende  
Housbondes meeke, yonge, fressh abedde,  
And grace toverbyde hem that we wedde.  
And eek I praye Jesu shorte hir lyves,

That nat wol be governed by hir wyves;  
And olde and angry nygardes of dispence,  
God sende hem soone verray pestilence!

Heere endeth the Wyves tale of Bathe.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Canterbury Tales; The Knyghtes Tale

THE KNYGHTES TALE.

Iamque domos patrias Scithice post aspera gentis prelia  
laurigero &c. Thebaid, xii, 519.

Heere bigynneth the knyghtes tale.

Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,  
Ther was a duc that highte Theseus;  
Of Atthenes he was lord and governour,  
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.  
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne,  
What with his wysdom and his chivalrie;

He conquered al the regne of Femenye,  
That whilom was ycleped Scithia,  
And weddede the queene Ypolita,  
And broghte hir hoom with hym in his contree,  
With muchel glorie and greet solempnytee,

And eek hir yonge suster Emelye.  
And thus with victorie and with melodye  
Lete I this noble duk to Atthenes ryde,  
And al his hoost, in armes hym bisyde.  
And certes, if it nere to long to heere,

I wolde have toold yow fully the manere  
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye  
By Theseus, and by his chivalrye,  
And of the grete bataille for the nones  
Bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones,

And how asseged was Ypolita  
The faire hardy queene of Scithia,  
And of the feste that was at hir weddyng,  
And of the tempest at hir hoom-comyng;  
But al the thyng I moot as now forbere,

I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,

And wayke been the oxen in my plough,  
The remenant of the tale is long ynough.  
I wol nat letten eek noon of this route,  
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,

And lat se now who shal the soper wynne;-  
And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne.  
This duc of whom I make mencionun,  
Whan he was come almoost unto the toun,  
In al his wele and in his mooste pride,

He was war, as he caste his eye aside,  
Where that ther kneled in the hye weye  
A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,  
Ech after oother, clad in clothes blake;  
But swich a cry and swich a wo they make,

That in this world nys creature lyvyng  
That herde swich another waymentyng!  
And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten,  
Til they the reynes of his brydel henten.  
'What folk been ye, that at myn hom-comyng

Perturben so my feste with cryyng?'  
Quod Theseus, 'hav ye so greet envye  
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?  
Or who hath yow mysboden or offended?  
And telleth me if it may been amended,

And why that ye been clothed thus in blak?'  
The eldeste lady of hem alle spak-  
Whan she hadde swowned with a deedly cheere,  
That it was routhe for to seen and heere-  
And seyde, 'Lord, to whom Fortune hath yeven

Victorie, and as a conqueror to lyven,  
Nat greveth us youre glorie and youre honour,  
But we biseken mercy and socour.  
Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse,  
Som drope of pitee thurgh thy gentillesse

Upon us wrecched wommen lat thou falle;

For certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle  
That she ne hath been a duchesse or a queene.  
Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene-  
Thanked be Fortune, and hir false wheel,

That noon estat assureth to be weel.  
And certes, lord, to abyden youre presence,  
Heere in the temple of the goddesse Clemence  
We han ben waitynge al this fourtenyght;  
Now help us, lord, sith it is in thy myght!

I wrecche, which that wepe and waille thus,  
Was whilom wyf to kyng Cappaneus,  
That starf at Thebes, cursed be that day!  
And alle we that been in this array  
And maken al this lamentacioun,

We losten alle oure housbondes at that toun,  
Whil that the seege therabout lay.  
And yet now the olde Creon, weylaway!  
That lord is now of Thebes the Citee,  
Fulfilde of ire and of iniquitee,

He, for despit and for his tirannye,  
To do the dede bodyes vileynye,  
Of alle oure lordes, whiche that been slawe,  
He hath alle the bodyes on an heep ydrawe,  
And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent,

Neither to been yburyed nor ybrent,  
But maketh houndes ete hem in despit.'  
And with that word, withouten moore respit,  
They fillen gruf, and criden pitously,  
'Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy

And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte.'  
This gentil duk doun from his courser sterte  
With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke;  
Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke,  
Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,

That whilom weren of so greet estaat.



And in his armes he hem alle up hente,  
And hem conforteth in ful good entente,  
And swear his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,  
He solde doon so ferforthyl his myght

Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke,  
That all the peple of Grece sholde speke  
How Creon was of Theseus yserved,  
As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.  
And right anon, withouten moore abood,

His baner he desplayeth, and forth rood  
To Thebesward, and al his hoost beside,  
No neer Atthenes wolde he go ne ride,  
Ne take his ese fully half a day,  
But onward on his wey that nyght he lay-

And sente anon Ypolita the queene,  
And Emelye, hir yonge suster sheene,  
Unto the toun of Atthenes to dwelle-  
And forth he rit; ther is namoore to telle.  
The rede statue of Mars, with spere and targe,

So shyneth, in his white baner large,  
That alle the feeldes gliteren up and doun,  
And by his baner gorn is his penoun  
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete  
The Mynotaur which that he slough in Crete.

Thus rit this duc, thus rit this conquerour,  
And in his hoost of chivalrie the flour,  
Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte  
Faire in a feeld, ther as he thoughte fighte.  
But shortly for to speken of this thyng,

With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,  
He faught, and slough hym manly as a knyght  
In pleyn bataille, and putte the folk to flyght,  
And by assaut he wan the citee after,  
And rente adoun bothe wall, and sparre, and rafter.

And to the ladyes he sestored agayn

The bones of hir housbondes that weren slayn,  
To doon obsequies as was tho the gyse.  
But it were al to longe for to devyse  
The grete clamour and the waymentynge

That the ladyes made at the brennyng  
Of the bodies, and the grete honour  
That Theseus, the noble conquerour,  
Dooth to the ladyes, whan they from hym wente;  
But shortly for to telle is myn entente.

Whan that his worthy duc, this Theseus,  
Hath Creon slayn, and wonne Thebes thus,  
Stille in that feeld he took al nyght his reste  
And dide with al the contree as hym leste.  
To ransake in the taas of bodyes dede,

Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,  
The pilours diden bisynesse and cure,  
After the bataille and disconfiture;  
And so bifel, that in the taas they founde  
Thurgh-girt with many a grevous bloody wounde,

Two yonge knyghtes liggyng by and by,  
Bothe in oon armes wroght ful richely,  
Of whiche two Arcita highte that oon,  
And that oother knyght highte Palamon.  
Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were,

But by here cote-armures, and by hir gere,  
The heraudes knewe hem best, in special,  
As they that weren of the blood roial  
Of Thebes, and of sustren two yborn.  
Out of the taas the pilours han hem torn,

And had hem caried softe unto the tente  
Of Theseus, and he ful soone hem sente  
To Atthenes to dwellen in prisoun  
Perpetuelly, he nolde no raunsoun.  
And whan this worthy due hath thus ydon,

He took his hoost, and hoom he rood anon,

With laurer crowned, as a conquerour,  
And ther he lyveth in joye and in honour

Terme of his lyve, what nedeth wordes mo?  
And in a tour, in angwissh and in wo,

Dwellen this Palamon and eek Arcite  
For evermoore, ther may no gold hem quite.  
This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,  
Till it fil ones, in a morwe of May,  
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene

Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,  
And fressher than the May with floures newe-  
For with the rose colour stroof hir hewe,  
I noot which was the fairer of hem two-  
Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,

She was arisen, and al redy dight-  
For May wole have no slogardrie a-nyght;  
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,  
And maketh hym out of his slepe to sterte,  
And seith, `arys and do thyn observaunce,'

This maketh Emelye have remembraunce  
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.  
Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse,  
Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse,  
Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse,

And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,  
She walketh up and doun, and as hir liste  
She gadereth floures, party white and rede,  
To make a subtil gerland for hir hede,  
And as an aungel hevenyssshly she soong.

The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong,  
Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun,  
Ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun,  
Of whiche I tolde yow, and tellen shal,  
Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal

Ther as this Emelye hadde hir pleyynge.  
Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morwenynge,  
And Palamoun, this woful prisoner,  
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,  
Was risen, and romed in a chambre on heigh,

In which he al the noble citee seigh,  
And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene,  
Ther as this fresshe Emelye the shene  
Was in hire walk, and romed up and doun.  
This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun,

Goth in the chambre romynge to and fro,  
And to hym-self compleynyng of his wo.  
That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, `allas!'  
And so bifel, by aventure or cas,  
That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre

Of iren greet, and square as any sparre,  
He cast his eye upon Emelya,

And therwithal he bleynte, and cryede 'A!'  
As though he stongen were unto the herte.  
And with that cry Arcite anon upsterte

And seyde, 'Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,  
That art so pale and deedly on to see?  
Why cridestow? who hath thee doon offence?  
For Goddess love, taak al in pacience  
Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be;

Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.  
Som wikke aspect or disposicioun  
Of Saturne by sum constellacioun  
Hath yeven us this, al though we hadde it sworn.  
So stood the hevене, whan that we were born.

We moste endure it, this the short and playn.'  
This Palamon answerde and seyde agayn,  
'Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun  
Thow hast a veyn ymaginacioun.  
This prison caused me nat for to crye,

But I was hurt right now thurgh-out myn eye  
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.  
The fairnesse of that lady, that I see  
Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro,  
Is cause of al my cryng and my wo.

I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,  
But Venus is it, soothly as I gesse.'  
And therwithal, on knees down he fil,  
And seyde, 'Venus, if it be thy wil,  
Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure

Bifore me, sorweful wrecche creature,  
Out of this prisoun helpe that we may scapen!  
And if so be my destynee be shapen  
By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,  
Of oure lynage have som compassioun,

That is so lowe ybrought by tirannye.'  
And with that word Arcite gan espye  
Wher-as this lady romed to and fro,  
And with that sighte hir beautee hurte hym so,  
That if that Palamon was wounded sore,

Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or moore.  
And with a sigh he seyde pitously,  
'The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly  
Of hir, that rometh in the yonder place!  
And but I have hir mercy and hir grace

That I may seen hir atte leeste weye,  
I nam but deed, ther is namoore to seye.'  
This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,  
Dispitously he looked and answerde,  
'Wheither seistow this in ernest or in pley?'

'Nay,' quod Arcite, 'in ernest by my fey,  
God helpe me so, me list ful yvele pleye.'  
This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye;  
'It nere,' quod he, 'to thee no greet honour  
For to be fals, ne for to be traitour

To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother,  
Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til oother,  
That nevere for to dyen in the peyne,  
Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,  
Neither of us in love to hyndre other,

Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother,  
But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me  
In every cas, as I shal forthren thee.  
This was thyn ooth, and myn also certeyn,  
I woot right wel thou darst it nat withseyn.

Thus artow of my conseil, out of doute;  
And now thou woldest falsly been aboute  
To love my lady, whom I love and serve  
And evere shal, til that myn herte sterve.  
Nay, certes, false Arcite, thow shalt nat so!

I loved hir first, and tolde thee my wo  
As to my conseil, and to my brother sworn,  
To forthre me as I have toold biforn,  
For which thou art ybounden as a knyght  
To helpen me, if it lay in thy myght,

Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn.'  
This Arcite ful proudly spak ageyn,  
'Thow shalt,' quod he, 'be rather fals than I.  
But thou art fals, I telle thee outrely,  
For paramour I loved hir first er thow.

What, wiltow seyn thou wistest nat yet now  
Wheither she be a womman or goddesse?  
Thyn is affeccoun of hoolynesse,  
And myn is love as to a creature;  
For which I tolde thee myn aventure

As to my cosyn and my brother sworn.  
I pose, that thow lovedest hir biforn;  
Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe  
That `who shal yeve a love any lawe?'  
Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,

Than may be yeve of any erthely man.  
And therefore positif lawe and swich decree  
Is broken al day for love in ech degree.  
A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed,  
He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,

Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf.  
And eek it is nat likly, al thy lyf,  
To stonden in hir grace, namoore shal I,  
For wel thou woost thyselven, verrailly,  
That thou and I be dampned to prisoun

Perpetuelly, us gayneth no faunsoun.  
We stryven as dide the houndes for the boon,  
They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon.  
Ther cam a kyte, whil they weren so wrothe,  
And baar away the boon bitwixe hem bothe.

And therefore at the kynges court, my brother,  
Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother.  
Love if thee list, for I love, and ay shal;  
And soothly, leeve brother, this is al.  
Heere in this prisoun moote we endure,

And everich of us take his aventure.'  
Greet was the strif and long bitwix hem tweye,  
If that I hadde leyser for to seye-  
But to theeffect; it happed on a day,  
To telle it yow as shortly as I may,

A worthy duc, that highte Perotheus,  
That felawe was unto duc Theseus  
Syn thilke day that they were children lite,  
Was come to Atthenes his felawe to visite,  
And for to pleye as he was wont to do-

For in this world he loved no man so,  
And he loved hym als tendrely agayn.  
So wel they lovede, as olde bookes sayn,  
That whan that oon was deed, soothly to telle,  
His felawe wente and soughte hym doun in helle.

But of that storie list me nat to write;  
Duc Perotheus loved wel Arcite,  
And hadde hym knowe at Thebes yeer by yere,  
And finally, at requeste and preyere  
Of Perotheus, withouten any raunsoun

Duc Theseus hym leet out of prisoun  
Frely to goon, wher that hym liste overal,  
In swich a gyse as I you tellen shal.  
This was the forward, pleyedly for tendite,  
Bitwixen Theseus and hym Arcite,

That if so were that Arcite were yfounde  
Evere in his lif, by day or nyght or stounde,  
In any contree of this Theseus,  
And he were caught, it was acorded thus,  
That with a swerd he sholde lese his heed;

Ther nas noon oother remedie ne reed,  
But taketh his leve and homward he him spedde;  
Lat hym be war, his nekke lith to wedde!  
How greet a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!  
The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte,

He wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously,  
To sleen hymself he waiteth prively.  
He seyde, 'Allas, that day that he was born!  
Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;  
Now is me shape eternally to dwelle

Nat in purgatorie but in helle.  
Allas, that evere knew I Perotheus!  
For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus,  
Yfetered in his prisoun evermo;  
Thanne hadde I been in blisse, and nat in wo.

Only the sighte of hire whom that I serve,  
Though that I nevere hir grace may deserve,  
Wolde han suffised right ynough for me.  
O deere cosyn Palamon,' quod he,  
'Thyn is the victorie of this aventure.



Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure.-  
In prisoun? certes, nay, but in Paradys!  
Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,  
That hast the sighte of hir, and I thabsence;  
For possible is, syn thou hast hir presence,

And art a knyght, a worthy and an able,  
That by som cas, syn Fortune is chaungeable,  
Thow maist to thy desir som tyme atteyne.  
But I, that am exiled and bareyne  
Of alle grace, and in so greet dispeir

That ther nys erthe, water, fir, ne eir,  
Ne creature, that of hem maked is,  
That may me heelp, or doon confort in this,  
Wel oughte I sterve in wanhope and distresse,  
Farwel, my lif, my lust, and my galdnesse!

Allas, why pleynten folk so in commune  
On purveyaunce of God or of Fortune,  
That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse  
Wel bettre than they kan hem-self devyse?  
Som man desireth for to han richesse,

That cause is of his moerdre of greet siknesse.  
And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,  
That in his hous is of his meynee slayn.  
Infinite harmes been in thai mateere,  
We witen nat what thing we preyen here.

We faren as he that dronke is as a mous;  
A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,  
But he noot which the righte wey is thider,  
And to a dronke man the wey is slider.  
And certes, in this world so faren we;

We seken faste after felicitee,  
But we goon wrong ful often trewely.  
Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,  
That wende and hadde a greet opinioun  
That if I myghte escapen from prisoun,

Thanne hadde I been in joye and perfit heele,  
Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.  
Syn that I may nat seen you, Emelye,  
I nam but deed, ther nys no remedye.'  
Upon that oother syde, Palamon,

Whan that he wiste Arcite was agon,  
Swich sorwe he maketh, that the grete tour  
Resouneth of his youlyng and clamour.  
The pure fettres on his shynes grete  
Weren of his bittre salte teeres wete.

'Allas,' quod he, 'Arcite, cosyn myn!  
Of al oure straf, God woot, the fruyt is thyn.  
Thow walkest now in Thebes at thy large,  
And of my wo thow yevest litel charge.  
Thou mayst, syn thou hast wysdom and manhede,

Assemblen alle the folk of oure kynrede,  
And make a werre so sharp on this citee,  
That by som aventure, or som tretee,  
Thow mayst have hir to lady and to wyf,  
For whom that I moste nedes lese my lyf.

For as by wey of possibilitee,  
Sith thou art at thy large of prisoun free,  
And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage  
Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage.  
For I moot wepe and wayle, whil I lyve,

With al the wo that prison may me yeve,  
And eek with peyne that love me yeveth also,  
That doubleth al my torment and my wo.'  
Therwith the fyr of jalousie up-sterter  
Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte

So woodly, that he lyk was to biholde  
The boxtree, or the asshen dede and colde.  
Thanne seyde he, 'O cruel goddes, that governe  
This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,

And writen in the table of atthamaunt

Youre parlement and youre eterne graunt,  
What is mankynde moore unto you holde  
Than is the sheep that rouketh in the folde?  
For slayn is man right as another beeste,  
And dwelleth eek in prison and arreeste,

And hath siknesse, and greet adversitee,  
And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee!  
What governance is in this prescience  
That giltelees tormenteth innocence?  
And yet encresseth this al my penaunce,

That man is bounden to his observaunce,  
For Goddes sake, to letten of his wille,  
Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfillle.  
And whan a beest is deed, he hath no peyne,  
But man after his deeth moot wepe and pleyne,

Though in this world he have care and wo.  
Withouten doute it may stonden so.  
The answeere of this lete I to dyvynys,  
But well I woot, that in this world greet pyne ys.  
Allas, I se a serpent or a theef,

That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,  
Goon at his large, and where hym list may turne!  
But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,  
And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,  
That hath destroyed wel ny al the blood

Of Thebes, with hise waste walles wyde.  
And Venus sleeth me on that oother syde  
For jalousie and fere of hym Arcite.'  
Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,  
And lete hym in his prisoun stille dwelle,

And of Arcita forth I wol yow telle.  
The somer passeth, and the nyghtes longe  
Encressen double wise the peynes stronge  
Bothe of the lovere and the prisoner;

I noot which hath the wofuller mester.

For shortly for to seyn, this Palamoun  
Perpetually is dampned to prisoun  
In cheynes and in fettres to been deed,  
And Arcite is exiled upon his heed  
For evere mo as out of that contree,

Ne nevere mo he shal his lady see.  
Yow loveres axe I now this questioun,  
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?  
That oon may seen his lady day by day,  
But in prison he moot dwelle alway;

That oother wher hym list may ride or go,  
But seen his lady shal he nevere mo.  
Now demeth as yow liste ye that kan,  
For I wol telle forth, as I bigan.

Explicit prima pars.

Sequitur pars secunda.

Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,  
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde `allas,'  
For seen his lady shal he nevere mo;  
And shortly to concluden al his wo,  
So muche sorwe hadde nevere creature,  
That is, or shal whil that the world may dure.

His sleep, his mete, his drynke is hym biraft,  
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft.  
Hise eyen holwe and grisly to biholde,  
His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde;  
And solitarie he was and evere allone

And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone.  
And if he herde song or instrument,  
Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.  
So feble eek were hise spiritz, and so lowe,  
And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe

His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.  
And in his geere for al the world he ferde  
Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye  
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye  
Engendred of humour malencolik

Biforen in his celle fantastik,  
And shortly turned was al up-so-doun  
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun  
Of hym, this woful love-re daun Arcite.  
What sholde I al day of his wo endite?

Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two  
This crueel torment, and this peyne and woo,  
At Thebes in his contree, as I seyde,  
Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,  
Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie

Biforn hym stood, and bad hym to be murie.  
His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte,  
An hat he werede upon hise heris brighte.  
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,  
As he was whan that Argus took his sleep;

And seyde hym thus, 'To Atthenes shaltou wende,  
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende.'  
And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.  
'Now trewely, how soore that me smerte,'  
Quod he, 'to Atthenes right now wol I fare,

Ne for the drede of deeth shal I nat spare  
To se my lady that I love and serve,  
In hir presence I recche nat to sterve.'  
And with that word he caughte a greet mirour,  
And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,

And saugh his visage al in another kynde.  
And right anon it ran hym in his mynde,  
That sith his face was so disfigured  
Of maladye, the which he hadde endured,  
He myghte wel, if that he bar hym lowe,

Lyve in Atthenes, everemoore unknowe,  
And seen his lady wel ny day by day.  
And right anon he chaunged his array,  
And cladde hym as a povre laborer,  
And al allone, save oonly a squier

That knew his privetee and al his cas,  
Which was disgised povrely, as he was,  
To Atthenes is he goon, the nexte way.  
And to the court he wente, upon a day,  
And at the gate he profreth his servyse,

To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse.  
And shortly of this matere for to seyn,  
He fil in office with a chamberleyn,  
The which that dwellynge was with Emelye,  
For he was wys and koude soone espye

Of every servant which that serveth here.  
Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere,  
For he was yong and myghty for the nones,  
And therto he was strong and big of bones  
To doon that any wight kan hym devyse.

A yeer or two he was in this servyse  
Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte;  
And Philostrate he seyde that he highte.  
But half so wel biloved a man as he  
Ne was ther nevere in court, of his degree;

He was so gentil of condicioun  
That thurghout al the court was his renoun.  
They seyden, that it were a charitee,  
That Theseus wolde enhausen his degree,  
And putten hym in worshipful servyse

Ther as he myghte his vertu exercise.  
And thus withinne a while his name is spronge  
Bothe of hise dedes and his goode tonge,  
That Theseus hath taken hym so neer  
That of his chambre he made hym a Squier,

And gaf hym gold to mayntene his degree.  
And eek men broghte hym out of his contree  
From yeer to yeer, ful pryvely, his rente.  
But honestly and slyly he it spente,  
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.

And thre yeer in this wise his lif he ladde,

And bar hym so in pees, and eek ibn werre,  
Ther was no man that Theseus hath derre.  
And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,  
And speke I wole of Palamon a lite.

In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun  
Thise seven yeer hath seten Palamoun,  
Forpynd, what for wo and for distresse.  
Who feeleth double soor and hevynesse  
But Palamon, that love destreyneth so,

That wood out of his wit he goth for wo?  
And eek therto he is a prisoner,  
Perpetually, noght oonly for a yer.  
Who koude ryme in Englyssh proprely  
His martirdom? Forsothe it am nat I,

Therefore I passe as lightly as I may.  
It fel that in the seventhe yer, in May,  
The thridde nyght, as olde bookes seyn,  
That al this storie tellen moore pleyn,  
Were it by aventure or destynee-

As, whan a thyng is shapen, it shal be-  
That soone after the mydnyght, Palamoun  
By helpyng of a freend, brak his prisoun  
And fleeth the citee faste as he may go;  
For he hade yeve his gayler drynke so

Of a clarree maad of a certeyn wyn,  
With nercotikes and opie of Thebes fyn,  
That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him shake,  
The gayler sleep, he myghte nat awake.  
And thus he fleeth as faste as evere he may;

The nyght was short and faste by the day,  
That nedes-cost he moot hymselfen hyde;  
And til a grove, faste ther bisyde,  
With dredeful foot thanne stalketh Palamoun.  
For shortly this was his opinioun,

That in that grove he wolde hym hyde al day,  
And in the nyght thanne wolde he take his way  
To Thebesward, his freendes for to preye  
On Theseus to helpe hym to werreye;  
And shortly, outhere he wolde lese his lif,

Or wynnen Emelye unto his wyf;  
This is theeffect and his entente pleyn.  
Now wol I turne to Arcite ageyn,  
That litel wiste how ny that was his care  
Til that Fortune had broght him in the snare.

The bisy larke, messenger of day,  
Salueth in hir song the morwe gray,  
And firy Phebus riseth up so brighte  
That al the orient laugheth of the lighte,  
And with hise stremes dryeth in the greves

The silver dropes hangynge on the leves;  
And Arcita, that is in the court roial  
With Theseus, his squier principal,  
Is risen, and looketh on the myrie day.  
And for to doon his observaunce ot May,

Remembrynge on the poynt of his desir  
He on a courser startlynge as the fir  
Is riden into the feeldes, hym to pleye,  
Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.  
And to the grove of which that I yow tolde

By aventure his wey he gan to holde,  
To maken hym a gerland of the greves,  
Were it of wodebynde or hawethorn-leves.  
And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene,  
'May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,



Welcome be thou, faire fresshe May,  
In hope that I som grene gete may.'  
And from his courser, with a lusty herte,  
Into a grove ful hastily he sterte,  
And in a path he rometh up and doun

Ther as by aventure this Palamoun  
Was in a bussh, that no man myghte hym se;  
For soore afered of his deeth was he.  
No thyng ne knew he that it was Arcite,  
God woot, he wolde have trowed it ful lite!

But sooth is seyde, gon sithen many yeres,  
That feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres.  
It is ful fair a man to bere hym evene,  
For al day meeteth men at unset stevene.  
Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe,

That was so ny to herknen al his sawe,  
For in the bussh he sitteth now ful stille.  
Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille  
And songen al the roundel lustily,  
Into a studie he fil al sodeynly,

As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,  
Now in the crophe, now doun in the breres,  
Now up, now doun as boket in a welle.  
Right as the Friday, soothly for to telle,  
Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste,

Right so kan geery Venus overcaste  
The hertes of hir folk; right as hir day  
Is gereful, right so chaungeth she array.  
Selde is the Friday al the wowke ylike.  
Whan that Arcite had songe, he gan to sike,

And sette hym doun withouten any moore;  
'Allas,' quod he, 'that day that I was bore!  
How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee  
Woltow werreyen Thebes the Citee?  
Allas, ybrought is to confusioun

The blood roial of Cadme and Amphioun!  
Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man  
That Thebes bulte, or first the toun bigan,  
And of the citee first was crouned kyng,  
Of his lynage am I, and his ofspryng,

By verray ligne, as of the stok roial,  
And now I am so caytyf and so thral  
That he that is my mortal enemy  
I serve hym as his squier povrely.  
And yet dooth Juno me wel moore shame,

For I dar noght biknowe myn owene name,  
But theras I was wont to highte Arcite,  
Now highte I Philostrate, noght worth a myte.  
Allas, thou felle Mars! allas, Juno!  
Thus hath youre ire oure kynrede al fordo,

Save oonly me, and wrecched Palamoun  
That Theseus martireth in prisoun.  
And over al this, to sleen me outrely,  
Love hath his firy dart so brennyngly  
Ystiked thurgh my trewe careful herte,

That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.  
Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye,  
Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye.  
Of al the remenant of myn oother care  
Ne sette I nat the montance of a tare,

So that I koude doon aught to youre plesaunce.'  
And with that word he fil down in a traunce  
A longe tyme, and after he upsterte.  
This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte  
He felte a coold swerd sodeynliche glyde,

For ire he quook, no lenger wolde he byde.  
And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,  
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,  
He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke,  
And seide, 'Arcite, false traytour wikke!

Now artow hent that lovest my lady so,  
For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,  
And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,  
As I ful ofte have seyde thee heer-biforn,  
And hast byjaped heere duc Theseus,

And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus.  
I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye;  
Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,  
But I wol love hire oonly, and namo,  
For I am Palamon, thy mortal foo!

And though that I no wepene have in this place,  
But out of prison am astert by grace,  
I drede noght that outhere thou shalt dye,  
Or thou ne shalt nat loven Emelye.  
Chees which thou wolt, for thou shalt nat asterte!

This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,  
Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,  
As fiers as leoun pulled out his swerd,  
And seyde thus: 'By God that sit above,  
Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love,

And eek that thou no wepene hast in this place,  
Thou sholdest nevere out of this grove pace,  
That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond.  
For I defye the seurete and the bond  
Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.

What, verray fool, thynk wel that love is free!  
And I wol love hir, maugree al thy myght!  
But for as muche thou art a worthy knyght,  
And wilnest to darreyne hire by bataille,  
Have heer my trouthe; tomorwe I wol nat faille

Withoute wityng of any oother wight  
That heere I wol be founden as a knyght,  
And bryngen harneys right ynough for thee,  
And chese the beste, and leve the worste for me.  
And mete and drynke this nyght wol I brynge

Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddyng;  
And if so be that thou my lady wynne,  
And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,  
Thow mayst wel have thy lady as for me.'  
This Palamon answerde, 'I graunte it thee.'

And thus they been departed til amorwe,  
Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.  
O Cupide, out of alle charitee!  
O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!  
Ful sooth is seyde that love ne lordshipe

Wol noght, hir thankes, have no felaweshipe.  
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun:  
Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,  
And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,  
Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,

Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreyne  
The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne.  
And on his hors, allone as he was born,  
He carieth al this harneys hym biforn,  
And in the grove, at tyme and place yset,

This Arcite and this Palamon ben met.  
Tho chaungen gan the colour in hir face  
Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,  
That stondest at the gappe with a spere,  
Whan hunted is the leoun and the bere,

And hereth hym come russhyng in the greves,  
And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,  
And thynketh, 'Heere cometh my mortal enemy,  
Withoute faille he moot be deed or I,  
For outhur I moot sleen hym at the gappe,

Or he moot sleen me, if that me myshappe'-  
So ferden they in chaungyng of hir hewe,  
As fer as everich of hem oother knewe.  
Ther nas no good day ne no saluyng,  
But streight withouten word or rehersyng

Everich of hem heelp for to armen oother,  
As freendly as he were his owene brother.  
And after that with sharpe speres stronge  
They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.  
Thou myghtest wene that this Palamoun

In his fightyng were a wood leoun,  
And as a cruuel tigre was Arcite.  
As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,  
That frothen white as foom for ire wood.  
Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood;

And in this wise I lete hem fightyng dwelle,  
And forth I wole of Theseus yow telle.  
The destinee, ministre general,  
That executeth in the world overal  
The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,

So strong it is, that though the world had sworn  
The contrarie of a thyng, by ye or nay,  
Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day  
That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeere.  
For certainly, oure appetites heere,

Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,  
Al is this reuled by the sighte above.  
This mene I now by myghty Theseus,  
That for to huntten is so desirus  
And namely at the grete hert in May,

That in his bed ther daweth hym no day  
That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde  
With hunte and horn, and houndes hym bisyde.  
For in his huntyng hath he swich delit  
That it is al his joye and appetit

To been hymself the grete hertes bane-  
For after Mars he serveth now Dyane.  
Cleer was the day, as I have toold er this,  
And Theseus, with alle joye and blis,  
With his Ypolita, the faire quene,

And Emelye, clothed al in grene,  
On huntyng be they riden roially,  
And to the grove, that stood ful faste by,  
In which ther was an hert, as men hym tolde,  
Duc Theseus the streighte wey hath holde,

And to the launde he rideth hym ful right,  
For thider was the hert wont have his flight,  
And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.  
This duc wol han a cours at hym, or tweye,  
With houndes swiche as that hym list comaunde.

And whan this duc was come unto the launde,  
Under the sonne he looketh, and anon  
He was war of Arcite and Palamon,  
That foughten breme, as it were bores two;  
The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro

So hidously, that with the leeste strook  
It semed as it wolde felle an ook;  
But what they were, nothyng he ne woot.  
This duc his courser with his spores smoot,  
And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,

And pulled out a swerd, and cride, 'Hoo!  
Namoore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed!  
By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed  
That smyteth any strook, that I may seen!  
But telleth me what myster men ye been,

That been so hardy for to fighten heere  
Withouten juge or oother officere,  
As it were in a lystes roially?'  
This Palamon answerde hastily,  
And seyde, 'Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?

We have the deeth disserved, bothe two.  
Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,  
That been encombred of oure owene lyves,  
And as thou art a fightful lord and juge,  
Ne yeve us neither mercy ne refuge,

But sle me first for seinte charitee;  
But sle my felawe eek as wel as me-  
Or sle hym first, for, though thow knowest it lite,  
This is thy mortal foo, this is Arcite,  
That fro thy lond is banysshed on his heed,

For which he hath deserved to be deed.  
For this is he, that cam unto thy gate,  
And seyde that he highe Philostrate.  
Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yer,  
And thou hast maked hym thy chief Squier,

And this is he that loveth Emelye.  
For sith the day is come that I shal dye,  
I make pleyedly my confessioun  
That I am thilke woful Palamoun,  
That hath thy prisoun broken wikkedly.

I am thy mortal foo, and it am I  
That loveth so hoote Emelye the grighte,  
That I wol dye present in hir sighte;  
Wherfore I axe deeth and my juwise-  
But sle my felawe in the same wise

For bothe han we deserved to be slayn.'  
This worthy duc answered anon agayn,  
And seyde, 'This is a short conclusioun,  
Youre owene mouth, by your confessioun,  
Hath dampned yow, and I wol it recorde.

It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde,  
Ye shal be deed, by myghty Mars the rede!'  
The queene anon, for verray wommanhede,  
Gan for to wepe, and so dide Emelye,  
And alle the ladyes in the compaignye.

Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,  
That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle.  
For gentilmen they were of greet estaat,  
And no thyng but for love was this debaat,  
And saugh hir bloody woundes wyde and soore,

And alle crieden, both lasse and moore,  
'Have mercy, lord, upon us wommen alle!'  
And on hir bare knees adoun they falle,  
And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood;  
Til at the laste aslaked was his mood,

For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.  
And though he first for ire quook and sterte,  
He hath considered shortly in a clause  
The trespas of hem bothe, and eek the cause,  
And although that his ire hir gilt accused,

Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused.  
As thus, he thoghte wel, that every man  
Wol helpe hym-self in love, if that he kan,  
And eek delivere hym-self out of prisoun;  
And eek his herte hadde compassioun

Of wommen, for they wepen evere in oon.  
And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,  
And softe unto hym-self he seyde, 'Fy  
Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,  
But been a leoun, bothe in word and dede,

To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,  
As wel as to a proud despitous man,  
That wol maynteyne that he first bigan!  
That lord hath litel of discrecioun  
That in swich cas kan no divisioun,

But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon.'  
And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon,  
He gan to looken up with eyen lighte,  
And spak thise same wordes al on highte:  
'The God of love, A! benedicite!

How myghty and how greet a lord is he!  
Ayeyns his myght ther gayneth none obstacles,  
He may be cleped a god for hise myraclis,  
For he kan maken at his owene gyse  
Of everich herte as that hym list divyse.



Lo heere, this Arcite and this Palamoun

That quitly weren out of my prisoun,  
And myghte han lyved in Thebes roially,  
And witen I am hir mortal enemy,  
And that hir deth lith in my myght also;

And yet hath love, maugree hir eyen two,  
Ybrought hem hyder bothe for to dye!  
Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?  
Who may been a fole, but if he love?  
Bihoold, for Goddes sake that sit above,

Se how they blede? Be they noght wel arrayed?  
Thus hath hir lord, the God of Love, ypayed  
Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!  
And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse,  
That serven love, for aught that may bifalle!

But this is yet the beste game of alle,  
That she, for whom they han this jolitee,  
Kan hem therfore as mucche thank, as me!  
She woot namoore of al this hoothe fare,  
By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare!

But all moot ben assayed, hoot and coold;  
A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold;  
I woot it by myself ful yore agon,  
For in my tyme a servant was I oon.  
And therefore, syn I knowe of loves peyne,

And woot how soore it kan a man distreyne,  
As he that hath ben caught ofte in his laas,  
I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespaas,  
At requeste of the queene that kneleth heere,  
And eek of Emelye, my suster deere.

And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere,  
That nevere mo ye shal my contree dere,  
Ne make werre upon me, nyght ne day,  
But been my freendes in al that ye may,

I yow foryeve this trespas, every deel.'

And they hym sworn his axyng, faire and weel,  
And hym of lordship and of mercy preyde,  
And he hem graunteth grace, and thus he seyde:  
'To speke of roial lynage and richesse,  
Though that she were a queene or a princesse,

Ech of you bothe is worthy doutelees  
To wedden whan tyme is, but nathelees  
I speke as for my suster Emelye,  
For whom ye have this strif and jalousye:  
Ye woot yourself, she may nat wedden two

Atones, though ye fighten everemo!  
That oon of you, al be hym looth or lief,  
He moot go pipen in an yvy-leef-  
This is to seyn, she may nat now han bothe,  
Al be ye never so jalouse, ne so wrothe.

And forthy, I yow putte in this degree;  
That ech of yow shal have his destyne  
As hym is shape, and herkneth in what wyse;  
Lo, heere your ende of that I shal devyse.  
My wyl is this, for plat conclusioun,

Withouten any repplicacioun,  
If that you liketh, take it for the beste,  
That everich of you shal goon where hym leste,  
Frely, withouten raunson, or daunger,  
And this day fifty wykes fer ne ner,

Everich of you shal brynge an hundred knyghtes  
Armed for lystes up at alle rightes,  
Al redy to darreyne hire by bataille.  
And this bihote I yow withouten faille,  
Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knyght,

That wheither of yow bothe that hath myght,  
This is to seyn, that wheither he, or thow  
May with his hundred, as I spak of now,  
Sleen his contrarie, or out of lystes dryve,

Thanne shal I yeve Emelya to wyve,

To whom that Fortune yeveth so fair a grace.  
Tho lystes shal I maken in this place,  
And God so wisly on my soule rewe,  
As I shal evene juge been, and trewe.  
Ye shul noon oother ende with me maken,

That oon of yow ne shal be deed or taken.  
And if yow thynketh this is weel ysayd,  
Seyeth youre avys and holdeth you apayd;  
This is youre ende and youre conclusioun.'  
Who looketh lightly now but Palamoun?

Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite?  
Who kouthe tellen, or who kouthe endite  
The joye that is maked in the place,  
Whan Theseus hath doon so fair a grace?  
But doun on knees wente every maner wight,

And thonken hym with al hir herte and myght,  
And namely the Thebans, often sithe.  
And thus with good hope and with herte blithe  
They taken hir leve, and homward gonne they ride  
To Thebes with hise olde walles wyde.

Explicit secunda pars

Sequitur pars tercia

I trowe men wolde deme it necligence,  
If I foryete to tellen the dispence  
Of Theseus, that gooth so bisily  
To maken up the lystes roially;  
That swich a noble theatre as it was,

I dar wel seyen, in this world ther nas.  
The circuit a myle was aboute,  
Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.  
Round was the shap, in manere of compas,  
Ful of degrees the heighte os sixty pas,

That whan a man was set on o degree,  
He lette nat his felawe for to see.  
Estward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,  
Westward, right swich another in the opposit;  
And shortly to concluden, swich a place

Was noon in erthe, as in so litel space.  
For in the lond ther was no crafty man  
That geometrie or ars-metrik kan,  
Ne portreitour, ne kervere of ymages,  
That Theseus ne yaf him mete and wages

The theatre for to maken and devyse.  
And for to doon his ryte and sacrificise  
He estward hath upon the gate above,  
In worship of Venus, goddessse of love,  
Doon make an auter and an oratorie.

And on the gate westward, in memorie  
Of Mars, he maketh hath right swich another,  
That coste largely of gold a fother.  
And northward, in a touret on the wal  
Of alabastre whit, and reed coral,

An oratorie, riche for to see,  
In worship of Dyane, of chastitee,  
Hath Theseus doon wroght in noble wyse.  
But yet hadde I foryeten to devyse  
The noble kervyng and the portreitures,

The shap, the contenance, and the figures,  
That weren in thise oratories thre.  
First in the temple of Venus maystow se  
Wroght on the wal, ful pitous to biholde,  
The broken slepes and the sikes colde,

The sacred teeris and the waymentyng,  
The firy strokes, and the desiryng  
That loves servauntz in this lyf enduren;  
The othes that her covenantz assuren;  
Plesaunce and Hope, Desir, Foolhardynesse,

Beautee and Youthe, Bauderie, Richesse,  
Charmes and Force, Lesynges, Flaterye,  
Despense, Bisynesse, and Jalousye,  
That wered of yelewe gooldes a gerland,  
And a cokkow sittynge on hir hand;

Festes, instrumentz, caroles, daunces,  
Lust and array, and alle the circumstaunces  
Of love, whiche that I rekned, and rekne shal,  
By ordre weren peynted on the wal,  
And mo than I kan make of mencioung;

For soothly, al the mount of Citheroun,  
Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellynge,  
Was shewed on the wal in portreyynge,  
With al the gardyn and the lustynesse.  
Nat was foryeten the Porter Ydelnesse,

Ne Narcisus the faire, of yore agon,  
Ne yet the folye of kyng Salamon,  
And eek the grete strengthe of Ercules,  
Thenchaumentz of Medea and Circes,  
Ne of Turnus, with the hardy fiers corage,

The riche Cresus, kaytyf in servage;  
Thus may ye seen, that wysdom ne richesse,  
Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe, hardynesse,  
Ne may with Venus holde champartie,  
For as hir list, the world than may she gye.

Lo, alle thise folk so caught were in hir las,  
Til they for wo ful ofte seyde `allas!'  
Suffiseth heere ensamples oon or two-  
And, though, I koude rekene a thousand mo.  
The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,

Was naked, fletynge in the large see,  
And fro the navele doun al covered was  
With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas.  
A citole in hir right hand hadde she,  
And on hir heed, ful semely for to se,

A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge;  
Above hir heed hir dowves flikerynge.  
Biforn hir stood hir sone, Cupido,  
Upon his shuldres wynges hadde he two,  
And blynd he was, as it was often seene.

A bowe he bar, and arwes brighte and kene.  
Why sholde I noght as wel eek telle yow al  
The portreiture, that was upon the wal  
Withinne the temple of myghty Mars the rede?  
Al peynted was the wal in lengthe and brede

Lyk to the estres of the grisly place  
That highte the grete temple of Mars in Trace,  
In thilke colde frosty regioun  
Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mansioun.  
First on the wal was peynted a forest

In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,  
With knotty knarry bareyne trees olde,  
Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde,  
In which ther ran a rumbel and a swough  
As though a storm sholde bresten every bough.

And downward from an hille, under a bente,  
Ther stood the temple of Mars Armypotente,  
Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree  
Was long and streit, and gastly for to see,  
And therout came a rage and suche a veze,

That it made al the gate for to rese.  
The northren lyght in at the dores shoon,  
For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon,  
Thurgh which men myghten any light discernen.  
The dore was al of adamant eterne,

Yclenched overthwart and endelong  
With iren tough, and for to make it strong  
Every pyler, the temple to sustene,  
Was tonne-greet of iren bright and shene.  
Ther saugh I first the dirke ymaginyng

Of felonye, and al the compassyng,  
The crueel ire, reed as any gleede,  
The pykepurs, and eek the pale drede,  
The smyler with the knyfe under the cloke,  
The shepne brennyng with the blake smoke,

The tresoun of the mordryng in the bedde,  
The open werre, with woundes al bibledde,  
Contek, with blody knyf and sharp manace,  
Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.  
The sleer of hymself yet saugh I ther,

His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer;  
The nayl ydryven in the shode a nyght,  
The colde deeth, with mouth gapyng upright.  
Amyddes of the temple sat Meschaunce,  
With Disconfort and Sory Contenaunce.

Yet saugh I Woodnesse laughynge in his rage,  
Armed Compleint, Outhees, and fiers Outrage;  
The careyne in the busk with throte ycorve,  
A thousand slayn, and nat of qualm ystorve,  
The tiraunt with the pray by force yraft,

The toun destroyed, ther was nothyng laft.  
Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres,  
The hunte strangled with the wilde beres,  
The sowe freten the child right in the cradel,  
The cook yscalded, for al his longe ladel.

Noght was foryeten by the infortune of Marte,  
The cartere over-ryden with his carte,  
Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.  
Ther were also, of Martes divisioun,  
The barbour, and the bocher, and the smyth

That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his styth.  
And al above, depeynted in a tour,  
Saugh I Conquest sittynge in greet honour,  
With the sharpe swerd over his heed  
Hangynge by a soutil twyned threed.

Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius,  
Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;  
Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,  
Yet was hir deth depeynted therbiforn  
By manasyng of Mars, right by figure;

So was it shewed in that portreiture,  
As is depeynted in the sterres above  
Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.  
Suggiseth oon ensample in stories olde,  
I may nat rekene hem alle though I wolde.

The statue of Mars upon a carte stood  
Armed, and looked grym as he were wood,  
And over his heed ther shynen two figures  
Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures  
That oon Puella, that oother Rubeus.

This god of armes was arrayed thus:  
A wolf ther stood biforn hym at his feet,  
With eyen rede, and of a man he eet.  
With soutil pencil was depeynt this storie,  
In redoutyng of Mars and of his glorie.

Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste  
As shortly as I kan I wol me haste,  
To telle yow al the descripsioun.  
Depeynted been the walles up and doun  
Of huntyng and of shamefast chastitee.

Ther saugh I, how woful Calistopee  
Whan that Diane agreved was with here,  
Was turned from a womman til a bere,  
And after was she maad the loode-sterre;-  
Thus was it peynted, I kan sey yow no ferre-

Hir sone is eek a sterre, as men may see.  
Ther saugh I Dane, yturned til a tree,  
I mene nat the goddesse Diane,  
But Penneus doughter which that highte Dane.  
Ther saugh I Attheon an hert ymaked,



For vengeaunce that he saugh Diane al naked.  
I saugh how that hise houndes have hym caught  
And freeten hym, for that they knewe hym naught.  
Yet peynted was a litel forthermoor  
How Atthalante hunted the wilde boor,

And Meleagree, and many another mo,  
For which Dyane wroghte hym care and wo.  
Ther saugh I many another wonder storie,  
The whiche me list nat drawen to memorie.  
This goddesse on an hert ful hye seet,

With smale houndes al aboute hir feet;  
And undernethe hir feet she hadde a moone,  
Wexyng it was, and sholde wanye soone.  
In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,  
With bowe in honde, and arwes in a cas.

Hir eyen caste she ful lowe adoun,  
Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.  
A womman travailyng was hir biforn;  
But for hir child so longe was unborn  
Ful pitously Lucyna gan she calle,

And seyde, 'Help, for thou mayst best of alle!'  
Wel koude he peynten lyfly, that it wroghte,  
With many a floryn he the hewes boghte.  
Now been thise listes maad, and Theseus,  
That at his grete cost arrayed thus

The temples, and the theatre every deel,  
Whan it was doon, hym lyked wonder weel.-  
But stynte I wole of Theseus a lite,  
And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.  
The day approacheth of hir retournyng,

That everich sholde an hundred knyghtes bryng  
The bataille to darreyne, as I yow tolde.  
And til Atthenes, hir covenantz for to holde,  
Hath everich of hem broght an hundred knyghtes,  
Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.

And sikerly, ther trowed many a man,  
That nevere sithen that the world bigan,  
As for to speke of knyghthod of hir hond,  
As fer as God hath maked see or lond,  
Nas of so fewe so noble a compaignye.

For every wight that lovede chivalrye,  
And wolde, his thankes, han a passant name,  
Hath preyed that he myghte been of that game;  
And wel was hym that therto chosen was.  
For if ther fille tomorwe swich a cas

Ye knowen wel, that every lusty knyght  
That loveth paramours, and hath his myght,  
Were it in Engelond or elles where,  
They wolde, hir thankes, wilnen to be there,  
To fighte for a lady, benedicitee!

It were a lusty sighte for to see.  
And right so ferden they with Palamon,  
With hym ther wenten knyghtes many on.  
Som wol ben armed in an haubergeoun,  
In a bristplate, and in a light gypoun,

And somme woln have a paire plates large,  
And somme woln have a Pruce sheeld, or a targe,  
Somme woln ben armed on hir legges weel,  
And have an ax, and somme a mace of steel.  
Ther is no newe gyse, that it nas old;

Armed were they, as I have yow told,  
Everych after his opinioun.  
Ther maistow seen comyng with Palamoun  
Lygurge hym-self, the grete kyng of Trace.  
Blak was his berd, and manly was his face,

The cercles of hise eyen in his heed,  
They gloweden bitwyxen yelow and reed,  
And lik a griff on looked he aboute,  
With kempe heeris on hise browes stoute,  
Hise lymes grete, hise brawnes harde and stronge,

Hise shuldres brode, hise armes rounde and longe;  
And as the gyse was in his contree,  
Ful hye upon a chaar of gold stood he,  
With foure white boles in the trays.  
In stede of cote-armure, over his harnays

With nayles yelewe and brighte as any gold  
He hadde a beres skyn, colblak, for-old;  
His longe heer was kembd bihynde his bak,  
As any ravenes fethere it shoon for-blak.  
A wrethe of gold arm-greet, of huge wighte,

Upon his heed, set ful of stones brighte,  
Of fyne rubyes and of dyamauntz.  
Aboute his chaar ther wenten white alauntz,  
Twenty and mo, as grete as any steer,  
To hunten at the leoun or the deer,

And folwed hym, with mosel faste ybounde,  
Colored of gold, and tourettes fyled rounde.  
An hundred lordes hadde he in his route,  
Armed ful wel, with hertes stierne and stoute.  
With Arcita, in stories as men fynde,

The grete Emetreus, the kyng of Inde,  
Upon a steede bay, trapped in steel,  
Covered in clooth of gold dyapred weel,  
Cam ridyng lyk the god of armes, Mars.  
His cote-armure was of clooth of Tars,

Couched with perles white and rounde and grete.  
His sadel was of brend gold newe ybete;  
A mantelet upon his shuldre hangyng  
Bret-ful of rubyes rede, as fyr sparklyng.  
His crispe heer lyk rynges was yronne,

And that was yelow, and glytered as the sonne.  
His nose was heigh, hise eyen bright citryn,  
Hise lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn;  
A fewe frakenes in his face yspreynd,  
Bitwixen yelow and somdel blak ymeynd,

And as a leoun he his looking caste.  
Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste;  
His berd was wel bigonne for to sprynge,  
His voys was as a trompe thonderynge.  
Upon his heed he wered of laurer grene

A gerland, fressh and lusty for to sene.  
Upon his hand he bar for his deduyt  
An egle tame, as any lilye whyt.  
An hundred lordes hadde he with hym there,  
Al armed, save hir heddes, in al hir gere,

Ful richely in alle maner thynges.  
For trusteth wel, that dukes, erles, kynges,  
Were gadered in this noble compaignye,  
For love, and for encrees of chivalrye.  
Aboute this kyng ther ran on every part

Ful many a tame leoun and leopard,  
And in this wise thise lordes alle and some  
Been on the sonday to the citee come,  
Aboute pryme, and in the toun alight.  
This Theseus, this duc, this worthy knyght,

Whan he had broght hem into his citee,  
And inned hem, everich in his degree,  
He festeth hem, and dooth so greet labour  
To esen hem and doon hem al honour,  
That yet men weneth that no maner wit

Of noon estaat ne koude amenden it.  
The mynstralcy, the service at the feeste,  
The grete yiftes to the mooste and leeste,  
The riche array of Theseus paleys,  
Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,

What ladyes fairest been, or best daunsynge,  
Or which of hem kan dauncen best and synge,  
Ne who moost felyngly speketh of love,  
What haukes sitten on the perche above,  
What houndes ligen in the floor adoun-

Of al this make I now no mencioun;  
But, al theeffect, that thynketh me the beste,  
Now cometh the point, and herkneth if yow leste.  
The sonday nyght, er day bigan to sprynge,  
Whan Palamon the lsrke herde synge,

Al though it nere nat day by houres two,  
Yet song the larke, and Palamon also.  
With hooly herte and with an heigh corage  
He roos, to wenden on his pilgrymage,  
Unto the blisful Citherea benigne,

I mene Venus, honorable and digne.  
And in hir houre he walketh forth a pas  
Unto the lystes, ther hire temple was,  
And doun he kneleth, with ful humble cheer,  
And herte soor, and seyde in this manere.

'Faireste of faire, O lady myn, Venus,  
Doughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,  
Thow glader of the Mount of Citheron,  
For thilke love thow haddest to Adoon,  
Have pitee of my bittre teeris smerte,

And taak myn humble preyere at thyn herte.  
Allas, I ne have no langage to telle  
Theeffectes, ne the tormentz of myn helle!  
Myn herte may myne harmes nat biwreie,  
I am so confus that I kan noght seye.

But mercy, lady bright! that knowest weele  
My thought, and seest what harmes that I feele.  
Considerere al this, and rewe upon my soore,  
As wisly, as I shal for everemoore,  
Emforth my myght, thy trewe servant be,

And holden werre alwey with chastitee.  
That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe.  
I kepe noght of armes for to yelpe,  
Ne I ne axe nat tomorwe to have victorie,  
Ne renoun in this cas, ne veyne glorie

Of pris of armes blowen up and doun,  
But I wolde have fully possessioun  
Of Emelye, and dye in thy servyse.  
Fynd thow the manere how, and in what wyse-  
I recche nat, but it may bettre be

To have victorie of hem, or they of me-  
So that I have my lady in myne armes.  
For though so be, that Mars is god of armes,  
Youre vertu is so greet in hevne above  
That if yow list, I shal wel have my love.

Thy temple wol I worshipe everemo,  
And on thyn auter, where I ride or go,  
I wol doon sacrifice and fires beete.  
And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,  
Thanne preye I thee, tomorwe with a spere

That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.  
Thanne rekke I noght, whan I have lost my lyf,  
Though that Arcita wynne hir to his wyf.  
This is theeffect and ende of my preyere,  
Yif me my love, thow blisful lady deere!

Whan the orison was doon of Palamon,  
His sacrifice he dide, and that anon,  
Ful pitously with alle circumstaunce;  
Al telle I noght as now his observaunce.  
But atte laste, the statue of Venus shook,

And made a signe wherby that he took  
That his preyere accepted was that day.  
For thogh the signe shewed a delay,  
Yet wiste he wel that graunted was his boone,  
And with glad herte he wente hym hoom ful soone.

The thridde houre inequal, that Palamon  
Bigan to Venus temple for to gon,  
Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye,  
And to the temple of Dyane gan hye.  
Hir maydens that she thider with hir ladde,

Ful redily with hem the fyr they ladde,  
Thencens, the clothes, and the remenant al  
That to the sacrifice longen shal.  
The hornes fulle of meeth, as was the gyse,  
Ther lakked noght to doon hir sacrificise,

Smokyng the temple, ful of clothes faire.  
This Emelye, with herte debonaire,  
Hir body wessh with water of a welle-  
But how she dide hir ryte I dar nat telle,  
But it be any thing in general;

And yet it were a game to heeren al,  
To hym that meneth wel it were no charge,  
But it is good a man been at his large.-  
Hir brighte heer was kempt untressed al,  
A coroune of a grene ook cerial

Upon hir heed was set, ful fair and meete.  
Two fyres on the suter gan she beete,  
And dide hir thynges as men may biholde  
In Stace of Thebes, and thise bookes olde.  
Whan kyndled was the fyr, with pitous cheere

Unto Dyane she spak as ye may heere.  
'O chaste goddess of the wodes grene,  
To whom bothe hevne and erthe and see is sene,  
Queene of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,  
Goddess of maydens, that myn herte hast knowe

Ful many a yeer, and woost what I desire,  
As keep me fro thy vengeaunce and thyn ire,  
That Attheon aboughte cruelly.  
Chaste goddess, wel wostow that I  
Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,

Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.  
I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,  
A mayde, and love huntyng and venerye,  
And for to walken in the wodes wilde,  
And noght to ben a wyf, and be with childe.

Noght wol I knowe the compaignye of man;  
Now helpe me, lady, sith ye may and kan,  
For tho thre formes that thou hast in thee.  
And Palamon, that hath swich love to me,  
And eek Arcite, that loveth me so sore,

This grace I preye thee, withoute moore,  
As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two,  
And fro me turne away hir hertes so,  
That al hir hote love and hir desir,  
And al hir bisy torment and hir fir,

Be queynt, or turned in another place.  
And if so be thou wolt do me no grace,  
And if my destyne be shapen so  
That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,  
As sende me hym that moost desireth me.

Bihood, goddesse, of clene chastitee,  
The bittre teeris that on my chekes falle.  
Syn thou art mayde and kepere of us alle,  
My maydenhede thou kepe and wel conserve,  
And whil I lyve a mayde, I wol thee serve.'

The fires brenne upon the auter cleere,  
Whil Emelye was thus in hir preyere;  
But sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte,  
For right anon oon of the fyres queynte,  
And quyked agayn, and after that anon

That oother fyr was queynt and al agon.  
And as it queynte, it made a whistelynge  
As doon thise wete brondes in hir brennynge;  
And at the brondes ende out ran anon  
As it were bloody dropes many oon;

For which so soore agast was Emelye  
That she was wel ny mad, and gan to crye;  
For she ne wiste what it signyfyed.  
But oonly for the feere thus hath she cried,  
And weep that it was pitee for to heere;



And therewithal Dyane gan appeere,  
With bowe in honde, right as an hunteresse,  
And seyde, 'Doghter, stynt thyn hevynesse.  
Among the goddes hye it is affermed,  
And by eterne word writen and confermed,

Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho  
That han for thee so muchel care and wo.  
But unto which of hem I may nat telle,  
Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.  
The fires whiche that on myn auter brenne

Shule thee declaren, er that thou go henne,  
Thyn aventure of love, as in this cas.'  
And with that word, the arwes in the caas  
Of the goddesse clateren faste and rynges,  
And forth she wente, and made a vanysshynge,

For which this Emelye astoned was,  
And seyde, 'What amounteth this, allas!  
I putte me in thy proteccioun,  
Dyane, and in thy disposicioun!'  
And hoom she goth anon the nexte weye.

This is theeffect, ther is namoore to seye.  
The nexte houre of Mars folwyng this  
Arcite unto the temple walked is  
Of fierse Mars, to doon his sacrificise  
With alle the rytes of his payen wyse.

With pitous herte and heigh devocioun  
Right thus to Mars he seyde his orisoun.  
'O stronge god, that in the regnes colde  
Of Trace honoured art and lord yholde,  
And hast in every regne and every lond

Of armes al the brydel in thyn hond,  
And hem fortunest as thee lyst devyse,  
Accepte of me my pitous sacrificise.  
If so be that my youthe may deserve,  
And that my myght be worthy for to serve

Thy godhede, that I may been oon of thyne,  
Thanne preye I thee to rewe upon my pyne.  
For thilke peyne, and thilke hoothe fir,  
In which thou whilom brendest for desir  
Whan that thow usedest the greet beautee

Of faire yonge fresshe Venus free,  
And haddest hir in armes at thy wille-  
Al though thee ones on a tyme mysfille  
Whan Vulcanus hadde caught thee in his las,  
And foond thee liggyng by his wyf, allas!-

For thilke sorwe that was in thyn herte  
Have routhe as wel, upon my peynes smerte!  
I am yong and unkonnyng as thow woost,  
And, as I trowe, with love offended moost  
That evere was any lyves creature;

For she that dooth me al this wo endure,  
Ne reccheth nevere wher I synke or fleete.  
And wel I woot, er she me mercy heete,  
I moot with strengthe wynne hir in the place.  
And wel I woot, withouten help or grace

Of thee, ne may my strengthe nocht availle.  
Thanne help me, lord, tomorwe in my bataille  
For thilke fyr that whilom brente thee,  
As wel as thilke fyr now brenneth me!  
And do that I tomorwe have victorie,

Myn be the travaille and thyn be the glorie.  
Thy sovereyn temple wol I moost honouren  
Of any place, and alwey moost labouren  
In thy plesaunce, and in thy craftes stronge,  
And in thy temple I wol my baner honge,

And alle the armes of my compaignye;  
And evere-mo, unto that day I dye,  
Eterne fir I wol biforn thee fynde.  
And eek to this avow I wol me bynde;  
My beard, myn heer, that hongeth long adoun,

That nevere yet ne felte offensioun  
Of rasour, nor of shere, I wol thee yeve,  
And ben thy trewe servant whil I lyve.  
Now lord, have routhe upon my sorwes soore;  
Yif me the victorie, I aske thee namoore!

The preyere stynt of Arcita the stronge;  
The rynges on the temple dore that honge,  
And eek the dores clatereden ful faste,  
Of which Arcita somewhat hym agaste.  
The fyres brenden upon the auter brighte,

That it gan al the temple for to lighte,  
And sweete smel the ground anon upyaf,  
And Arcita anon his hand uphaf,  
And moore encens into the fyr he caste,  
With othere rytes mo, and atte laste

The statue of Mars bigan his hauberk rynges,  
And with that soun he herde a murmurynges,  
Ful lowe and dym, and seyde thus, `Victorie!'  
For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie;  
And thus with joye and hope wel to fare,

Arcite anon unto his in is fare,  
As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne.  
And right anon swich strif ther is bigonne  
For thilke grauntyng in the hevene above  
Bitwixe Venus, the Goddesse of Love,

And Mars the stierne God armypotente,  
That Jupiter was bisy it to stente;  
Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,  
That knew so manye of adventures olde,  
Foond in his olde experience an art

That he ful soone hath plesed every part.  
As sooth is seyde, elde hath greet advantage;  
In elde is bothe wysdom and usage;  
Men may the olde atrenne, and nocht atrede.  
Saturne anon, to stynten strif and drede,

Al be it that it is agayn his kynde,  
Of al this strif he gan remedie fynde.  
'My deere doghter Venus,' quod Saturne,  
'My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,  
Hath moore power than woot any man.

Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan,  
Myn is the prison in the derke cote,  
Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte,  
The murmure, and the cherles rebellyng,  
The groynynge, and the pryvee empoysonyng.

I do vengeance and pleyn correccioun,  
Whil I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.  
Myn is the ruyne of the hye halles,  
The fallynge of the toures and of the walles  
Upon the mynour, or the carpenter.

I slow Sampson shakynge the piler,  
And myne be the maladyes colde,  
The derke tresons, and the castes olde;  
My lookyng is the fader of pestilence.  
Now weep namoore, I shal doon diligence

That Palamon, that is thyn owene knyght,  
Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.  
Though Mars shal helpe his knyght, yet nathelees  
Bitwixe yow ther moot be somtyme pees,  
Al be ye noght of o compleccioun-

That causeth al day swich divisioun.  
I am thyn aiel, redy at thy wille,  
Weep now namoore, I wol thy lust fulfillle.'  
Now wol I stynten of the goddes above,  
Of Mars and of Venus, goddessse of Love,

And telle yow, as pleynly as I kan,  
The grete effect for which that I bygan.

Explicit tercia pars.

Sequitur pars quarta.

Greet was the feeste in Atthenes that day,  
And eek the lusty seson of that May  
Made every wight to been in such plesaunce

That al that Monday justen they and daunce,  
And spenten it in Venus heigh servyse.  
And by the cause that they sholde ryse  
Eerly for to seen the grete fight,  
Unto hir rest wenten they at nyght.

And on the morwe, whan that day gan sprynge,  
Of hors and harneys, noyse and claterynge  
Ther was in hostelryes al aboute.  
And to the paleys rood ther many a route  
Of lordes, upon steedes and palfreys.

Ther maystow seen divisynge of harneys  
So unkouth and so riche, and wroght so weel,  
Of goldsmythrye, of browdyngge, and of steel;  
The sheeldes brighte, testeres, and trappures;  
Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;

Lordes in parementz on hir courseres,  
Knyghtes of retenue and eek squieres,  
Nailyngge the speres, and helmes bokelyngge,  
Giggyngge of sheeldes, with layneres lacyngge.  
There as nede is, they weren nothyng ydel.

The fomy steedes on the golden brydel  
Gnawynge, and faste the armurers also  
With fyle and hamer prikyngge to and fro;  
Yemen on foote and communes many oon,  
With shorte staves thikke as they may goon,

Pypes, trompes, nakerers, clariounes,  
That in the bataille blowen bloody sounes;  
The paleys ful of peples up and doun,  
Heere thre, ther ten, holdyngge hir questioun,  
Dyvynyngge of thise Thebane knyghtes two.

Somme seyden thus, somme seyde it shal be so,

Somme helden with hym with the blake berd,  
Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke-herd,  
Somme seyde he looked grymme, and he wolde fighte,  
He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte,

Thus was the halle ful of divynyng  
Longe after that the sonne gan to spryng.  
The grete Theseus, that of his sleep awaked  
With mynstralcie and noyse that was maked,  
Heeld yet the chambre of his paleys riche,

Til that the Thebane knyghtes, bothe yliche  
Honored, were into the paleys fet.  
Due Theseus was at a wyndow set,  
Arrayed, right as he were a god in trone.  
The peple preeseth thiderward ful soone,

Hym for to seen and doon heigh reverence.  
And eek to herkne his heste and his sentence.  
An heraud on a scaffold made an 'Oo!'  
Til al the noyse of peple was ydo,  
And whan he saugh the peple of noyse al stille,

Tho shewed he the myghty dukes wille.  
'The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun  
Considered, that it were destruccioun  
To gentil blood, to fighten in the gyse  
Of mortal bataille, now in this emprise;

Wherfore, to shapen that they shal nat dye,  
He wolde his firste purpos modifye.  
No man therfore, up peyne of los of lyf,  
No maner shot, ne polax, ne short knyf  
Into the lystes sende, ne thider bryng.

Ne short swerd for to stoke, with poynt bityng,  
No man ne drawe, ne bere by his syde;  
Ne no man shal unto his felawe ryde  
But o cours, with a sharpe ygrounde spere.  
Foyne if hym list on foote, hym-self to were;

And he that is at meschief shal be take,

And nocht slayn, but be broght unto the stake  
That shal ben ordeyned on either syde,  
But thider he shal by force, and there abyde.  
And if so be the chevetayn be take

On outhur syde, or elles sleen his make,  
No lenger shal the turneiyng laste.  
God spede you, gooth forth, and ley on faste!  
With long swerd and with maces fight youre fille;  
Gooth now youre wey, this is the lordes wille.'

The voys of peple touchede the hevене,  
So loude cride they with murie stevene,  
'God save swich a lord, that is so good  
He wilneth no destruccion of blood.'  
Up goon the trompes and the melodye,

And to the lystes rit the compaignye,  
By ordinance, thurgh-out the citee large  
Hanged with clooth of gold, and nat with sarge.  
Ful lik a lord this noble duc gan ryde,  
Thise two Thebanes upon either syde,

And after rood the queene and Emelye,  
And after that another compaignye,  
Of oon and oother, after hir degre;  
And thus they passen thurgh-out the citee  
And to the lystes come they by tyme.

It nas nat of the day yet fully pryme  
Whan set was Theseus ful riche and hye,  
Ypolita the queene, and Emelye,  
And othere ladys in degrees aboute.  
Unto the seettes preesseth al the route,

And westward thurgh the gates under Marte,  
Arcite, and eek the hondred of his parte,  
With baner reed is entred right anon.  
And in that selve moment Palamon  
Is under Venus estward in the place,

With baner whyt, and hardy chiere and face.

In al the world to seken up and doun  
So evene withouten variacioun  
Ther nere swiche compaignyes tweye!  
For ther was noon so wys, that koude seye

That any hadde of oother avauntage,  
Of worthynesse ne of estaat ne age,  
So evene were they chosen, for to gesse.  
And in two renges faire they hem dresse,  
Whan that hir names rad were everichon,

That in hir nombre gyle were ther noon.  
Tho were the gates shet and cried was loude,  
'Do now youre devoir, yonge knyghtes proude!'  
The heraudes lefte hir prikyng up and doun;  
Now ryingen trompes loude and clarioun.

Ther is namoore to seyn, but west and est  
In goon the speres ful sadly in arrest,  
In gooth the sharpe spore into the syde.  
Ther seen men who kan juste, and who kan ryde,  
Ther shyveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke;

He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.  
Up spryngen speres twenty foot on highte;  
Out gooth the swerdes as the silver brighte.  
The helmes they tohewen and toshrede,  
Out brest the blood, with stierne stremes rede,

With myghty maces the bones they tobreste.  
He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste;  
Ther stomblen steedes stronge, and doun gooth al;  
He rolleth under foot as dooth a bal,  
He foyneth on his feet with his tronchoun,

And he hym hurtleth with his hors adoun.  
He thurgh the body is hurt and sithen ytake,  
Maugree his heed, and broght unto the stake,  
As forward was, right there he moste abyde;  
Another lad is on that oother syde.

And som tyme dooth hem Theseus to reste,



Hem to refresshe, and drynken if hem leste.  
Ful ofte a day han thise Thebanes two  
Togydre ymet, and wroght his felawe wo.  
Unhorsed hath ech oother of hem tweye,

Ther nas no tygre in the vlae of Galgopheye  
Whan that hir whelp is stole, whan it is lite,  
So crueel on the hunte, as is Arcite  
For jelous herte upon this Palamoun;  
Ne in Belmarye ther nys so fel leoun

That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,  
Ne of his praye desireth so the blood,  
As Palamoun to sleen his foo Arcite.  
The jelous strokes on hir helmes byte,  
Out renneth blood on bothe hir sydes rede.

Som tyme an ende ther is of every dede;  
For er the sonne unto the reste wente,  
The stronge kyng Emetreus gan hente  
This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,  
And made his swerd depe in his flessh to byte.

And by the force of twenty is he take  
Unyolden, and ydrawe unto the stake.  
And in the rescous of this Palamoun  
The stronge kyng Lygurge is born adoun,  
And kyng Emetreus, for al his strengthe,

Is born out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,  
So hitte him Palamoun er he were take;  
But al for noght, he was broght to the stake.  
His hardy herte myghte hym helpe naught,  
He moste abyde, whan that he was caught,

By force, and eek by composicioun.  
Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,  
That moot namoore goon agayn to fighte?  
And whan that Theseus hadde seyn this sighte  
Unto the folk that foghten thus echon

He cryde, 'Hoo! namoore, for it is doon.  
I wol be trewe juge, and no partie;  
Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelie,  
That by his fortune hath hir faire ywonne!  
Anon ther is a noyse of peple bigonne

For joye of this so loude and heighe withalle  
It semed that the lystes sholde falle.  
What kan now faire Venus doon above?  
What seith she now, what dooth this queene of Love,  
But wepeth so, for wantynge of hir wille,

Til that hir teeres in the lystes fille.  
She seyde, 'I am ashamed, doutelees.'  
Saturnus seyde, 'Doghter, hoold thy pees,  
Mars hath his wille, his knyght hath al his boone,  
And, by myn heed, thow shalt been esed soone.'

The trompes with the loude mynstralcie,  
The heraudes that ful loude yolle and crie,  
Been in hir wele for joye of Daun Arcite.  
But herkneith me, and stynteth now a lite,  
Which a myracle ther bifel anon.

This fierse Arcite hath of his helm ydon,  
And on a courser for to shewe his face  
He priketh endelong the large place,  
Lokyng upward upon this Emelye,  
And she agayn hym caste a freendlich eye,

(For wommen, as to speken in commune,  
They folwen al the favour of Fortune)  
And she was al his chiere, as in his herte.  
Out of the ground a furie infernal sterte,  
From Pluto sent, at requeste of Saturne,

For which his hors for fere gan to turne,  
And leep aside and foundred as he leep.  
And er that Arcite may taken keep,  
He pighte hym on the pomel of his heed,  
That in the place he lay as he were deed,

His brest tobrosten with his sadel-bowe.  
As blak he lay as any cole or crowe,  
So was the blood yronnen in his face.  
Anon he was yborn out of the place,  
With herte soor, to Theseus paleys.

Tho was he korven out of his harneys,  
And in a bed ybrought ful faire and blyve,  
For he was yet in memorie and alyve,  
And alwey crynge after Emelye.  
Duc Theseus, with al hes compaignye,

Is comen hoom to Atthenes his citee,  
With alle blisse and greet solempnitee;  
Al be it that this aventure was falle,  
He nolde nocht disconforten hem alle.  
Men seyde eek that Arcite shal nat dye,

He shal been heeled of his maladye.  
And of another thyng they weren as fayn,  
That of hem alle was ther noon yslayn,  
Al were they soore yhurt, and namely oon,  
That with a spere was thirled his brest-boon.

To othere woundes, and to broken armes,  
Somme hadden salves, and somme hadden charmes,  
Fermacies of herbes and eek save  
They dronken, for they wolde hir lymes have.  
For which this noble duc as he wel kan,

Conforteth and honoureth every man,  
And made revel al the longe nyght  
Unto the straunge lordes, as was right.  
Ne ther was holden no disconfitynge  
But as a justes or a tourneyng,

For soothly ther was no disconfiture-  
For fallyng nys nat but an aventure-  
Ne to be lad by force unto the stake  
Unyolden, and with twenty knyghtes take,  
O persone allone, withouten mo,

And haryed forth by arme, foot, and too,  
And eke his steede dryven forth with staves,  
With footmen, bothe yemen and eek knaves,  
It nas aretted hym no vileynye,  
Ther may no man clepen it cowardye.

For which anon duc Theseus leet crye,  
To stynten alle rancour and envye,  
The gree, as wel of o syde as of oother,  
And eyther syde ylik as ootheres brother,  
And yaf hem yiftes after hir degree,

And fully heeld a feeste dayes three,  
And convoyed the kynges worthily  
Out of his toun a journee, largely;  
And hoom wente every man, the righte way,  
Ther was namoore but `fare-wel, have good day.'

Of this bataille I wol namoore endite,  
But speke of Palamoun and of Arcite.  
Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the soore  
Encreesseth at his herte moore and moore.  
The clothered blood for any lechecraft

Corrupteth, and is in his bouk ylaft,  
That neither veyne-blood, ne ventusyng,  
Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpyng.  
The vertu expulsif, or animal,  
Fro thilke vertu cleped natural

Ne may the venym voyden, ne expelle.  
The pipes of his longes gonne to swelle,  
And every lacerte in his brest adoun  
Is shent with venym and corrupcioun.  
Hym gayneth neither for to gete his lif

Vomyt upward, ne dounward laxatif;  
Al is tobrosten thilke regioun,  
Nature hath now no dominacioun.  
And certainly, ther Nature wol nat wirche,  
Fare-wel phisik, go ber the man to chirche!

This al and som, that Arcita moot dye;  
For which he sendeth after Emelye  
And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.  
Thanne seyde he thus, as ye shal after heere:  
'Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte

Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte  
To yow, my lady, that I love moost.  
But I biquethe the servyce of my goost  
To yow aboven every creature.  
Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure,

Allas, the wo! alas, the peynes stronge  
That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!  
Allas, the deeth! alas, myn Emelye!  
Allas, departynge of our compaignye!  
Allas, myn hertes queene! alas, my wyf!

Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!  
What is this world? what asketh men to have?  
Now with his love, now in his colde grave,  
Allone, withouten any compaignye.  
Fare-wel, my swete foo, myn Emelye,

And softe taak me in youre armes tweye,  
For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.  
'I have heer with my cosyn Palamon  
Had strif and rancour many a day agon,  
For love of yow, and for my jalousye.

And Juppiter so wys my soule gye  
To speken of a servaunt proprely,  
With alle circumstancs trewely,  
That is to seyn, trouthe, honour, and knyghthede,  
Wysdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kynrede,

Fredom, and al that longeth to that art,  
So Juppiter have of my soule part  
As in this world right now ne knowe I non  
So worthy to ben loved, as Palamon  
That serveth yow, and wol doon al his lyf;

And if that evere ye shul ben a wyf,  
Foryet nat Palamon, the gentil man.'  
And with that word his speche faille gan,  
And from his herte up to his brest was come  
The coold of deeth, that hadde hym overcome.

And yet moreover in hise armes two  
The vital strengthe is lost and al ago.  
Oonly the intellect, withouten moore,  
That dwelled in his herte syk and soore  
Gan faille, when the herte felte deeth.

Dusked hise eyen two, and failed breeth,  
But on his lady yet caste he his eye.  
His laste word was 'mercy, Emelye!'  
His spirit chaunged hous, and wente ther  
As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher,

Therefore I stynte; I nam no divinistre,  
Of soules fynde I nat in this registre,  
Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle  
Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.  
Arcite is coold, ther Mars his soule gye:

Now wol I speken forthe of Emelye.  
Shrighte Emelye, and howleth Palamon,  
And Theseus his suster took anon  
Swownynge, and baar hir fro the corps away.  
What helpeth it to tarien forth the day

To tellen how she weep bothe eve and morwe?  
For in swich cas wommen have swich sorwe  
Whan that hir housbond is from hem ago,  
That for the moore part they sorwen so,  
Or ellis fallen in swich maladye,

That at the laste certainly they dye.  
Infinite been the sorwes and the teeres  
Of olde folk, and eek of tendre yeeres  
In al the toun, for deeth of this Theban.  
For hym ther wepeth bothe child and man;

So greet a wepyng was ther noon, certayn,  
Whan Ector was ybrought al fressh yslayn  
To Troye, allas, the pitee that was ther!  
Cracchyng of chekes, rentyng eek of heer;  
'Why soldestow be deed,' these wommen crye,

'And haddest gold ynough, and Emelye?'  
No man myghte gladen Theseus,  
Savyng his olde fader, Egeus,  
That knew this worldes transmutacioun,  
As he hadde seyn it chaungen up and doun,

Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse,  
And shewed hem ensamples and liknesse.  
'Right as ther dyed nevere man,' quod he,  
'That he ne lyvede in erthe in som degree,  
Right so ther lyvede never man,' he seyde,

'In al this world that somtyme he ne deyde.  
This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,  
And we been pilgrymes passyng to and fro.  
Deeth is an ende of every worldes soore.'  
And over al this yet seyde he muchel moore,

To this effect ful wisely to enhort  
The peple, that they sholde hem reconforte.  
Duc Theseus, with al his bisy cure,  
Caste now, wher that the sepulture  
Of goode Arcite may best ymaked be,

And eek moost honorable in his degree.  
And at the laste he took conclusioun  
That ther as first Arcite and Palamoun  
Hadden for love the bataille hem bitwene,  
That in that selve grove swoote and grene

Ther as he hadde hise amoureuse desires,  
His compleynte, and for love hise hote fires  
He wolde make a fyr, in which the office  
Funeral he myghte al accomplice;  
And leet comande anon to hakke and hewe

The okes olde, and leye hem on a rewe  
In colpons, wel arrayed for to brenne.  
Hise officers with swifte feet they renne  
And ryden anon at his comandement;  
And after this Theseus hath ysent

After a beere, and it al over-spradde  
With clooth of gold, the richeste that he hadde.  
And of the same suyte he cladde Arcite,  
Upon his hondes hadde he gloves white,  
EEk on his heed a coroune of laurer grene,

And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.  
He leyde hym bare the visage on the beere,  
Ther-with he weep that pitee was to heere.  
And for the peple sholde seen hym alle,  
Whan it was day, he broghte hym to the halle,

That roreth of the cryng and the soun.  
Tho cam this woful Theban, Palamoun,  
With flotery berd and rugged asshy heeres,  
In clothes blake, ydropped al with teeres,  
And passynge othere of wepyng Emelye,

The rewefulleste of al the compaignye.  
In as muche as the servyce sholde be  
The moore noble and riche in his degree,  
Duc Theseus leet forth thre steedes bryng  
That trapped were in steel al gliteryng,

And covered with the armes of daun Arcite.  
Upon these steedes that weren grete and white  
Ther sitten folk, of whiche oon baar his sheeld,  
Another his spere up in his hondes heeld,  
The thridde baar with hym his bowe Turkeys,

Of brend gold was the caas, and eek the harneys;  
And riden forth a paas, with sorweful cheere,  
Toward the grove, as ye shul after heere.  
The nobleste of the Grekes that ther were  
Upon hir shuldres caryeden the beere,



With slakke paas, and eyen rede and wete,  
Thurghout the citee by the maister-strete,  
That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye  
Right of the same is the strete ywrye.  
Upon the right hond wente olde Egeus,

And on that oother syde duc Theseus,  
With vessel in hir hand of gold ful fyn,  
Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn.  
Eek Palamon, with ful greet compaignye,  
And after that cam woful Emelye,

With fyr in honde, as was that tyme the gyse,  
To do the office of funeral servyse.  
Heigh labour, and ful greet apparaillynge,  
Was at the service and the fyr makynge,  
That with his grene top the heven raughte,

And twenty fadme of brede the armes straughte;  
This is to seyn, the bowes weren so brode.  
Of stree first ther was leyd ful many a lode,  
But how the fyr was maked upon highte,  
Ne eek the names that the trees highte,

As, ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popeler,  
Wylugh, elm, plane, asshe, box, chasteyn, lynde, laurer,  
Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippeltre,  
How they weren fild shal nat be toold for me,  
Ne how the goddes ronnen up and doun

Disherited of hir habitacioun,  
In whiche they woneden in reste and pees,  
Nymphes, Fawnes, and Amadrides;  
Ne how the beestes and the briddes alle  
Fledden for fere, whan the wode was falle;

Ne how the ground agast was of the light,  
That was nat wont to seen the sonne bright;  
Ne how the fyr was couched first with stree,  
And thanne with drye stokkes clovena thre,  
And thanne with grene wode and spicerye,

And thanne with clooth of gold and with perrye,  
And gerlandes hangyng with ful many a flour,  
The mirre, thencens, with al so greet odour;  
Ne how Arcite lay among al this,  
Ne what richesse aboute his body is,

Ne how that Emelye, as was the gyse,  
Putte in the fyr of funeral servyse;  
Ne how she swowned whan men made the fyr,  
Ne what she spak, ne what was hir desir,  
Ne what jeweles men in the fyr caste,

Whan that the fyr was greet and brente faste;  
Ne how somme caste hir sheeld, and somme hir spere,  
And of hire vestimentz whiche that they were,  
And coppes full of wyn, and milk, and blood,  
Into the fyr, that brente as it were wood,

Ne how the Grekes, with an huge route,  
Thryes riden al the place aboute,  
Upon the left hand with a loud shoutyng,  
And thries with hir speres clateryng,  
And thries how the ladyes gonne crye,

And how that lad was homward Emelye;  
Ne how Arcite is brent to asshen colde,  
Ne how that lychewake was yholde  
Al thilke nyght, ne how the Grekes pleye  
The wakepleyes ne kepe I nat to seye,

Who wrastleth best naked, with oille enoynt,  
Ne who that baar hym best in no disjoynt;  
I wol nat tellen eek, how that they goon  
Hoom til Atthenes, whan the pley is doon;  
But shortly to the point thanne wol I wende,

And maken of my longe tale an ende.  
By processe, and by lengthe of certeyn yeres,  
Al stynted is the moornyng and the teres  
Of Grekes, by oon general assent.  
Thanne semed me ther was a parlement

At Atthenes, upon certein pointz and caas,  
Among the whiche pointz yspoken was  
To have with certein contrees alliaunce,  
And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce,  
For which this noble Theseus anon

Leet senden after gentil Palamon,  
Unwist of hym what was the cause and why.  
But in hise blake clothes sorwefully  
He cam at his comandement in hye;  
Tho sente Theseus for Emelye.

Whan they were set, and hust was al the place,  
And Theseus abiden hadde a space  
Er any word cam fram his wise brest,  
Hise eyen sette he ther as was his lest,  
And with a sad visage he siked stille,

And after that right thus he seyde his wille.  
'The firste moevere of the cause above  
Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,  
Greet was theeffect, and heigh was his entente;  
Wel wiste he, why, and what therof he mente,

For with that faire cheyne of love he bond  
The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond,  
In certeyn boundes that they may nat flee.  
That same prince and that same moevere,' quod he,  
'Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun

Certeine dayes and duracioun  
To al that is engendred in this place,  
Over the whiche day they may nat pace;  
Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge,  
Ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee allegge,

For it is preeved by experience-  
But that me list declaren my sentence.  
Thanne may men by this ordre wel discernen  
That thilke moevere stable is and eterne.  
Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,

That every part deryveth from his hool;  
For nature hath nat taken his bigynnyng  
Of no partie nor cantel of a thyng,  
But of a thyng that parfit is and stable,  
Descendynge so til it be corrumpable;

And therefore, of his wise purveiaunce,  
He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce,  
That speses of thynges and progressiouns  
Shullen endure by successiouns,  
And nat eterne, withouten any lye.

This maystow understonde and seen at eye.  
Lo the ook, that hath so long a norisshynge  
From tyme that it first bigynneth sprynge,  
And hath so long a lif, as we may see,  
Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.

Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon  
Under oure feet, on which we trede and goon,  
Yit wasteth it, as it lyth by the weye.  
The brode ryver somtyme wexeth dreye,  
The grete toures se we wane and wende,

Thanne may ye se that al this thyng hath ende.  
Of man and womman seen we wel also,  
That nedeth, in oon of thise termes two,  
This is to seyn, in youthe or elles age,  
He moot be deed, the kyng as shal a page.

Som in his bed, som in the depe see,  
Som in the large feeld, as men may se;  
Ther helpeth noght, al goth that ilke weye,  
Thanne may I seyn that al this thyng moot deye.  
What maketh this, but Juppiter the kyng,

That is prince and cause of alle thyng  
Converting al unto his propre welle  
From which it is deryved, sooth to telle,  
And heer agayns no creature on lyve  
Of no degree availleth for to stryve.

Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me,  
To maken vertu of necessitee,  
And take it weel, that we may nat eschue;  
And namely, that to us alle is due.  
And who so gruccheth ought, he dooth folye,

And rebel is to hym that al may gye.  
And certainly, a man hath moost honour  
To dyen in his excellence and flour,  
Whan he is siker of his goode name,  
Thanne hath he doon his freend ne hym no shame.

And galdder oghte his freend been of his deeth,  
Whan with honour upyolden in his breeth,  
Than whan his name apalled is for age;  
For al forgeten is his vassellage.  
Thanne is it best as for a worthy fame,

To dyen whan that he is best of name.  
The contrarie of al this is wilfulnesse:  
Why grucchen heere his cosyn and his wyf  
That goode Arcite, of chivalrie flour,  
Departed is with duetee and honour

Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?  
Why grucchen heere his cosyn and his wyf  
Of his welfare, that loved hem so weel?  
Kan he hem thank? Nay, God woot never a deel!  
That bothe his soule and eek hemself offende,

And yet they mowe hir lustes nat amende.  
What may I concluden of this longe serye,  
But after wo I rede us to be merye,  
And thanken Juppiter of al his grace?  
And er that we departen from this place

I rede that we make, of sorwes two,  
O parfit joye lastyng everemo.  
And looketh now, wher moost sorwe is her inne,  
Ther wol we first amenden and bigynne.  
'Suster,' quod he, 'this is my fulle assent,

With all thavys heere of my parlement,  
That gentil Palamon thyn owene kynght,  
That serveth yow with wille, herte, and myght,  
And evere hath doon, syn that ye first hym knewe,  
That ye shul of your grace upon hym rewe,

And taken hym for housbonde and for lord.  
Lene me youre hond, for this is oure accord.  
Lat se now of youre wommanly pitee;  
He is a kynges brother sone, pardee,  
And though he were a povre bacheler,

Syn he hath served yow so many a yeer,  
And had for yow so greet adversitee,  
It moste been considered, leeveth me,  
For gentil mercy oghte to passen right.'  
Thanne seyde he thus to Palamon ful right:

'I trowe ther nedeth litel sermonyng  
To make yow assente to this thyng.  
Com neer, and taak youre lady by the hond.'  
Bitwixen hem was maad anon the bond  
That highte matrimoigne, or mariage,

By al the conseil and the baronage.  
And thus with alle blisse and melodye  
Hath Palamon ywedded Emelye;  
And God, that al this wyde world hath wroght,  
Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght!

For now is Palamon in alle wele,  
Lyvyng in blisse, in richesse, and in heele,  
And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,  
And he hir serveth al so gentilly,  
That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene,

Of jalousie, or any oother teene.  
Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye,  
And God save al this faire compaignye!-Amen-

Heere is ended the knyghtes tale.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Complaint Of Chaucer To His Purse

To yow, my purse, and to noon other wight  
Complayne I, for ye be my lady dere!  
I am so sorry, now that ye been lyght;  
For certes, but ye make me hevy chere,  
Me were as leef be layd upon my bere;  
For which unto your mercy thus I crye:  
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye!

Now voucheth sauf this day, or yt be nyght,  
That I of yow the blisful soun may here,  
Or see your colour lyk the sonne bryght,  
That of yelownesse hadde never pere.  
Ye be my lyf, ye be myn hertes stere,  
Quene of comfort and of good companye:  
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles moote I dye!

Now purse, that ben to me my lyves lyght  
And saveour, as doun in this world here,  
Out of this toune helpe me thurgh your myght,  
Syn that ye wole nat ben my tresorere;  
For I am shave as nye as any frere.  
But yet I pray unto your curtesye:  
Beth hevy agen, or elles moote I dye!

Lenvoy de Chaucer

O conquerour of Brutes Albyon,  
Which that by lyne and free eleccion  
Been verray kyng, this song to yow I sende;  
And ye, that mowen alle oure harmes amende,  
Have mynde upon my supplicacion!

Geoffrey Chaucer



# The Complaint Unto Pity

Pite, that I have sought so yore agoo  
With herte soore and ful of besy peyne,  
That in this world was never wight so woo  
Withoute deth-- and yf I shal not feyne,  
My purpos was to Pite to compleyne  
Upon the crueltee and tirannye  
Of Love, that for my trouthe doth me dye.

And when that I, be lengthe of certeyne yeres,  
Had evere in oon a tyme sought to speke,  
To Pitee ran I al bespreynt with teres  
To prayen hir on Cruelte me awreke.  
But er I myghte with any word outbreke  
Or tellen any of my peynes smerte,  
I fond hir ded, and buried in an herte.

Adoun I fel when that I saugh the herse,  
Ded as a ston while that the swogh me laste;  
But up I roos with colour ful dyverse  
And pitously on hir myn eyen I caste,  
And ner the corps I gan to presen faste,  
And for the soule I shop me for to preye.  
I was but lorn, ther was no more to seye.

Thus am I slayn sith that Pite is ded.  
Allas, that day, that ever hyt shulde falle.  
What maner man dar now hold up his hed?  
To whom shal any sorwful herte calle?  
Now Cruelte hath cast to slee us alle,  
In ydel hope, folk redeless of peyne,  
Syth she is ded, to whom shul we compleyne?

But yet encreseth me this wonder newe,  
That no wight woot that she is ded, but I--  
So many men as in her tyme hir knewe--  
And yet she dyed not so sodeynly,  
For I have sought hir ever ful besely  
Sith first I hadde wit or mannes mynde,  
But she was ded er that I koude hir fynde.

Aboute hir herse there stoden lustely,  
Withouten any woo as thoughte me,  
Bounte parfyt, wel armed and richely,  
And fresshe Beaute, Lust, and Jolyte,  
Assured Maner, Youthe, and Honeste,  
Wisdom, Estaat, Drede, and Governauce,  
Confedred both by honde and alliaunce.

A compleynt had I, writen in myn hond,  
For to have put to Pite as a bille;  
But when I al this companye ther fond,  
That rather wolden al my cause spille  
Then do me help, I held my pleynte stille,  
For to that folk, withouten any fayle,  
Withoute Pitee ther may no bille availe.

Then leve I al these vertues, sauf Pite,  
Kepyng the corps as ye have herd me seyn,  
Confedered alle by bond of Cruelte[Riv., p. 641]  
And ben assented when I shal be sleyn.  
And I have put my complaynt up ageyn,  
For to my foes my bille I dar not shewe,  
Th'effect of which seith thus, in wordes fewe:

(The Bill of Complaint)

Humblest of herte, highest of reverence,  
Benygne flour, coroune of vertues alle,  
Sheweth unto youre rial excellence  
Youre servaunt, yf I durste me so calle,  
Hys mortal harm in which he is yfalle,  
And noght al oonly for his evel fare,  
But for your renoun, as he shal declare.

Hit stondeth thus: your contraire, Crueltee,  
Allyed is ayenst your regalye  
Under colour of womanly Beaute--  
For men shulde not, lo, knowe hir tirannye--  
With Bounte, Gentillesse, and Curtesye,  
And hath depryved yow now of your place  
That hyghte 'Beaute apertenant to Grace.'

For kyndely by youre herytage ryght  
Ye ben annexed ever unto Bounte;  
And verrayly ye oughte do youre myght  
To helpe Trouthe in his adversyte.  
Ye be also the corowne of Beaute,  
And certes yf ye wanten in these tweyne,  
The world is lore; ther is no more to seyne.

Eke what availeth Maner and Gentillesse  
Withoute yow, benygne creature?  
Shal Cruelte be your governeresse?  
Allas, what herte may hyt longe endure?  
Wherfore, but ye the rather take cure  
To breke that perilouse alliaunce,  
Ye sleen hem that ben in your obeisaunce.

And further over yf ye suffre this,  
Youre renoun ys fordoo than in a throwe;  
Ther shal no man wite well what Pite is.  
Allas, that your renoun is falle so lowe!  
Ye be than fro youre heritage ythrowe  
By Cruelte that occupieth youre place,  
And we despeyred that seken to your grace.

Have mercy on me, thow Herenus quene,  
That yow have sought so tendirly and yore;  
Let som strem of youre lyght on me be sene  
That love and drede yow ever lenger the more;  
For sothly for to seyne I bere the soore,  
And though I be not konnyng for to pleyne,  
For Goddis love have mercy on my peyne.

My peyne is this, that what so I desire  
That have I not, ne nothing lyk therto;  
And ever setteth Desir myn hert on fire.  
Eke on that other syde where so I goo,  
What maner thing that may encrease my woo,  
That have I redy, unsoght, everywhere;  
Me lakketh but my deth and than my here.

What nedeth to shewe parcel of my peyne?

Syth every woo that herte may bethynke  
I suffre and yet I dar not to yow pleyne;  
For wel I wot although I wake or wynke,  
Ye rekke not whether I flete or synke.  
But natheles yet my trouthe I shal sustene  
Unto my deth, and that shal wel be sene.

This is to seyne I wol be youres evere,  
Though ye me slee by Crueltee your foo,  
Algate my spirit shal never dissevere  
Fro youre servise for any peyne or woo.  
Sith ye be ded-- alas that hyt is soo--  
Thus for your deth I may wel wepe and pleyne  
With herte sore and ful of besy peyne.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Cook's Tale

THE Cook of London, while the Reeve thus spake,  
For joy he laugh'd and clapp'd him on the back:  
'Aha!' quoth he, 'for Christes passion,  
This Miller had a sharp conclusion,  
Upon this argument of herbergage.\* \*lodging  
Well saide Solomon in his language,  
Bring thou not every man into thine house,  
For harbouring by night is perilous.  
\*Well ought a man avised for to be\* \*a man should take good heed\*  
Whom that he brought into his privity.  
I pray to God to give me sorrow and care  
If ever, since I highte\* Hodge of Ware, \*was called  
Heard I a miller better \*set a-work\*; \*handled  
He had a jape\* of malice in the derk. \*trick  
But God forbid that we should stinte\* here, \*stop  
And therefore if ye will vouchsafe to hear  
A tale of me, that am a poore man,  
I will you tell as well as e'er I can  
A little jape that fell in our city.'

Our Host answer'd and said; 'I grant it thee.  
Roger, tell on; and look that it be good,  
For many a pasty hast thou letten blood,  
And many a Jack of Dover&lt;1&gt; hast thou sold,  
That had been twice hot and twice cold.  
Of many a pilgrim hast thou Christe's curse,  
For of thy parsley yet fare they the worse.  
That they have eaten in thy stubble goose:  
For in thy shop doth many a fly go loose.  
Now tell on, gentle Roger, by thy name,  
But yet I pray thee be not \*wroth for game\*; \*angry with my jesting\*  
A man may say full sooth in game and play.'  
'Thou sayst full sooth,' quoth Roger, 'by my fay;  
But sooth play quad play,&lt;2&gt; as the Fleming saith,  
And therefore, Harry Bailly, by thy faith,  
Be thou not wroth, else we departe\* here, \*part company  
Though that my tale be of an hostelere.\* \*innkeeper  
But natheless, I will not tell it yet,  
But ere we part, y-wis\* thou shalt be quit.'&lt;3&gt; \*assuredly

And therewithal he laugh'd and made cheer,&lt;4&gt;  
And told his tale, as ye shall after hear.

#### THE TALE.

A prentice whilom dwelt in our city,  
And of a craft of victuallers was he:  
Galliard\* he was, as goldfinch in the shaw\*\*, \*lively \*\*grove  
Brown as a berry, a proper short fellow:  
With lockes black, combed full fetisly.\* \*daintily  
And dance he could so well and jollily,  
That he was called Perkin Revellour.  
He was as full of love and paramour,  
As is the honeycomb of honey sweet;  
Well was the wenche that with him might meet.  
At every bridal would he sing and hop;  
He better lov'd the tavern than the shop.  
For when there any riding was in Cheap,&lt;1&gt;  
Out of the shoppe thither would he leap,  
And, till that he had all the sight y-seen,  
And danced well, he would not come again;  
And gather'd him a meinie\* of his sort, \*company of fellows  
To hop and sing, and make such disport:  
And there they \*sette steven\* for to meet \*made appointment\*  
To playen at the dice in such a street.  
For in the towne was there no prentice  
That fairer coulde cast a pair of dice  
Than Perkin could; and thereto \*he was free \*he spent money liberally  
Of his dispence, in place of privity.\* where he would not be seen\*  
That found his master well in his chaffare,\* \*merchandise  
For oftentime he found his box full bare.  
For, soothely, a prentice revellour,  
That haunteth dice, riot, and paramour,  
His master shall it in his shop abie\*, \*suffer for  
All\* have he no part of the minstrelsy. \*although  
For theft and riot they be convertible,  
All can they play on \*giterne or ribible.\* \*guitar or rebeck\*  
Revel and truth, as in a low degree,  
They be full wroth\* all day, as men may see. \*at variance

This jolly prentice with his master bode,

Till he was nigh out of his prenticehood,  
All were he snubbed\* both early and late, \*rebuked  
And sometimes led with revel to Newgate.  
But at the last his master him bethought,  
Upon a day when he his paper&2sought,  
Of a proverb, that saith this same word;  
Better is rotten apple out of hoard,  
Than that it should rot all the remenant:  
So fares it by a riotous servant;  
It is well lesse harm to let him pace\*, \*pass, go  
Than he shend\* all the servants in the place. \*corrupt  
Therefore his master gave him a quittance,  
And bade him go, with sorrow and mischance.  
And thus this jolly prentice had his leve\*: \*desire  
Now let him riot all the night, or leave\*. \*refrain  
And, for there is no thief without a louke,&3s  
That helpeth him to wasten and to souk\* \*spend  
Of that he bribe\* can, or borrow may, \*steal  
Anon he sent his bed and his array  
Unto a compere\* of his owen sort, \*comrade  
That loved dice, and riot, and disport;  
And had a wife, that held \*for countenance\* \*for appearances\*  
A shop, and swived\* for her sustenance. \*prostituted herself

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Court Of Love

With timorous heart, and trembling hand of dread,  
Of cunning\* naked, bare of eloquence, \*skill  
Unto the \*flow'r of port in womanhead\* \*one who is the perfection  
I write, as he that none intelligence of womanly behaviour\*  
Of metres hath, <1> nor flowers of sentence,  
Save that me list my writing to convey,  
In that I can, to please her high nobley.\* \*nobleness

The blossoms fresh of Tullius'\* garden swoot\*\* \*Cicero \*\*sweet  
Present they not, my matter for to born:\* <2> \*burnish, polish  
Poems of Virgil take here no root,  
Nor craft of Galfrid <3> may not here sojourn;  
Why \*n'am I\* cunning? O well may I mourn, \*am I not\*  
For lack of science, that I cannot write  
Unto the princess of my life aright!

No terms are dign\* unto her excellence, \*worthy  
So is she sprung of noble stirp\* and high; \*stock <4>  
A world of honour and of reverence  
There is in her, this will I testify.  
Calliope, <5> thou sister wise and sly,\* \*skilful  
And thou, Minerva, guide me with thy grace,  
That language rude my matter not deface!

Thy sugar droppes sweet of Helicon  
Distil in me, thou gentle Muse, I pray;  
And thee, Melpomene, <6> I call anon  
Of ignorance the mist to chase away;  
And give me grace so for to write and say,  
That she, my lady, of her worthiness,  
Accept \*in gree\* this little short treatess,\* \*with favour\* \*treatise

That is entitled thus, The Court of Love.  
And ye that be metricians,\* me excuse, \*skilled versifiers  
I you beseech, for Venus' sake above;  
For what I mean in this ye need not muse:  
And if so be my lady it refuse  
For lack of ornate speech, I would be woe  
That I presume to her to write so.



But my intent, and all my busy cure,\* \*care  
Is for to write this treatise, as I can,  
Unto my lady, stable, true, and sure,  
Faithful and kind, since first that she began  
Me to accept in service as her man;  
To her be all the pleasure of this book,  
That, when \*her like,\* she may it read and look. \*it pleases her\*

When [he] was young, at eighteen year of age,  
Lusty and light, desirous of pleasance,  
Approaching\* full sad and ripe corage,<7> \*gradually attaining

Then -- says the poet -- did Love urge him to do  
him obeisance, and to go "the Court of Love to  
see, a lite [little] beside the Mount of Citharee."  
<8> Mercury bade him, on pain of death, to  
appear; and he went by strange and far countries  
in search of the Court. Seeing at last a crowd of  
people, "as bees," making their way thither, the  
poet asked whither they went; and "one that  
answer'd like a maid" said that they were bound to  
the Court of Love, at Citheron, where "the King  
of Love, and all his noble rout [company],

"Dwelleth within a castle royally."  
So them apace I journey'd forth among,  
And as he said, so found I there truly;  
For I beheld the town -- so high and strong,  
And high pinnacles, large of height and long,  
With plate of gold bespread on ev'ry side,  
And precious stones, the stone work for to hide.

No sapphire of Ind, no ruby rich of price,  
There lacked then, nor emerald so green,  
Balais, Turkeis, <9> nor thing, \*to my devise,\* \*in my judgement\*  
That may the castle make for to sheen;\* \*be beautiful  
All was as bright as stars in winter be'n;  
And Phoebus shone, to make his peace again,  
For trespass\* done to high estates twain, -- \*offence

When he had found Venus in the arms of Mars, and hastened to

tell Vulcan of his wife's infidelity <10>. Now he was shining brightly on the castle, "in sign he looked after Love's grace;" for there is no god in Heaven or in Hell "but he hath been right subject unto Love." Continuing his description of the castle, Philogenet says that he saw never any so large and high; within and without, it was painted "with many a thousand daisies, red as rose," and white also, in signification of whom, he knew not; unless it was the flower of Alcestis <11>, who, under Venus, was queen of the place, as Admetus was king;

To whom obey'd the ladies good nineteen <12>, With many a thousand other, bright of face. And young men fele\* came forth with lusty pace, \*many <13> And aged eke, their homage to dispose; But what they were, I could not well disclose.

Yet nere\* and nere\* forth in I gan me dress, \*nearer Into a hall of noble apparail,\* \*furnishings With arras <14> spread, and cloth of gold, I guess, And other silk \*of easier avail;\* \*less difficult, costly, to attain\* Under the \*cloth of their estate,\* sans fail, \*state canopy\* The King and Queen there sat, as I beheld; It passed joy of \*Elysee the feld.\* \*The Elysian Fields\*

There saintes\* have their coming and resort, \*martyrs for love To see the King so royally beseen,\* \*adorned In purple clad, and eke the Queen \*in sort;\* \*suitably\* And on their heades saw I crownes twain, With stones fret,\* so that it was no pain, \*adorned Withoute meat or drink, to stand and see The Kinge's honour and the royalty.

To treat of state affairs, Danger <15> stood by the King, and Disdain by the Queen; who cast her eyes haughtily about, sending forth beams that seemed "shapen like a dart, sharp and piercing, and small and straight of line;" while her hair shone as gold so fine, "dishevel, crisp, down hanging at her back a yard in length." <16> Amazed and dazzled by her beauty, Philogenet stood perplexed, till he spied a Maid, Philobone -- a chamberwoman of the Queen's -- who asked how and on what errand he came thither.

Learning that he had been summoned by Mercury, she told him that he ought to have come of his free will, and that he "will be shent [rebuked, disgraced]" because he did not.

"For ye that reign in youth and lustiness,  
Pamper'd with ease, and jealous in your age,  
Your duty is, as far as I can guess,  
To Love's Court to dresse\* your voyage, \*direct, address  
As soon as Nature maketh you so sage  
That ye may know a woman from a swan, <17>  
Or when your foot is growen half a span.

"But since that ye, by wilful negligence,  
This eighteen year have kept yourself at large,  
The greater is your trespass and offence,  
And in your neck you must bear all the charge:  
For better were ye be withoute barge\* \*boat  
Amid the sea in tempest and in rain,  
Than bide here, receiving woe and pain

"That ordained is for such as them absent  
From Love's Court by yeares long and fele.\* many  
I lay\* my life ye shall full soon repent; \*wager  
For Love will rive your colour, lust, and heal:\* \*health  
Eke ye must bait\* on many a heavy meal: \*feed  
\*No force,\* y-wis; I stirr'd you long agoe \*no matter\*  
To draw to Court," quoth little Philobone.

"Ye shall well see how rough and angry face  
The King of Love will show, when ye him see;  
By mine advice kneel down and ask him grace,  
Eschewing\* peril and adversity; \*avoiding  
For well I wot it will none other be;  
Comfort is none, nor counsel to your ease;  
Why will ye then the King of Love displease?"

Thereupon Philogenet professed humble repentance,  
and willingness to bear all hardship and chastisement  
for his past offence.

These wordes said, she caught me by the lap,\* \*edge of the garment

And led me forth into a temple round,  
Both large and wide; and, as my blessed hap  
And good. adventure was, right soon I found  
A tabernacle <18> raised from the ground,  
Where Venus sat, and Cupid by her side;  
Yet half for dread I gan my visage hide.

And eft\* again I looked and beheld, \*afterwards  
Seeing \*full sundry people\* in the place, \*people of many sorts\*  
And \*mister folk,\* and some that might not weld \*craftsmen <19>\*  
Their limbés well, -- me thought a wonder case. \*use  
The temple shone with windows all of glass,  
Bright as the day, with many a fair image;  
And there I saw the fresh queen of Carthage,

Dido, that brent\* her beauty for the love \*burnt  
Of false Aeneas; and the waimenting\* \*lamenting  
Of her, Annelide, true as turtle dove  
To Arcite false; <20> and there was in painting  
Of many a Prince, and many a doughty King,  
Whose martyrdom was show'd about the walls;  
And how that fele\* for love had suffer'd falls.\*\* \*many \*\*calamities

Philogenet was astonished at the crowd of people that he saw, doing sacrifice to the god and goddess. Philobone informed him that they came from other courts; those who knelt in blue wore the colour in sign of their changeless truth <21>; those in black, who uttered cries of grief, were the sick and dying of love. The priests, nuns, hermits, and friars, and all that sat in white, in russet and in green, "wailed of their woe;" and for all people, of every degree, the Court was open and free. While he walked about with Philobone, a messenger from the King entered, and summoned all the new-come folk to the royal presence. Trembling and pale, Philogenet approached the throne of Admetus, and was sternly asked why he came so late to Court. He pleaded that a hundred times he had been at the gate, but had been prevented from entering by failure to see any of his acquaintances, and by shamefacedness. The King pardoned him, on condition that thenceforth he should

serve Love; and the poet took oath to do so, "though  
Death therefor me thirle [pierce] with his spear."  
When the King had seen all the new-comers, he  
commanded an officer to take their oaths of  
allegiance, and show them the Statutes of the Court,  
which must be observed till death.

And, for that I was letter'd, there I read  
The statutes whole of Love's Court and hail:  
The first statute that on the book was spread,  
Was, To be true in thought and deedes all  
Unto the King of Love, the lord royal;  
And, to the Queen, as faithful and as kind  
As I could think with hearte, will, and mind.

The second statute, Secretly to keep  
Counsel\* of love, not blowing\*\* ev'rywhere \*secrets \*\*talking  
All that I know, and let it sink and fleet;\* \*float  
It may not sound in ev'ry wighte's ear:  
Exiling slander ay for dread and fear,  
And to my lady, which I love and serve,  
Be true and kind, her grace for to deserve.

The third statute was clearly writ also,  
Without change to live and die the same,  
None other love to take, for weal nor woe,  
For blind delight, for earnest nor for game:  
Without repent, for laughing or for grame,\* \*vexation, sorrow  
To bide still in full perseverance:  
All this was whole the Kinge's ordinance.

The fourth statute, To \*purchase ever to her,\* \*promote her cause\*  
And stirre folk to love, and bete\* fire \*kindle  
On Venus' altar, here about and there,  
And preach to them of love and hot desire,  
And tell how love will quite\* well their hire: \*reward  
This must be kept; and loth me to displeas:  
If love be wroth, pass; for thereby is ease.

The fifth statute, Not to be dangerous,\* \*fastidious, angry  
If that a thought would reave\* me of my sleep: \*deprive  
Nor of a sight to be over squaimous;\* \*desirous

And so verily this statute was to keep,  
To turn and wallow in my bed and weep,  
When that my lady, of her cruelty,  
Would from her heart exilen all pity.

The sixth statute, It was for me to use  
Alone to wander, void of company,  
And on my lady's beauty for to muse,  
And thinken it \*no force\* to live or die; \*matter of indifference\*  
And eft again to think\* the remedy, \*think upon  
How to her grace I might anon attain,  
And tell my woe unto my sovereign.

The sev'nth statute was, To be patient,  
Whether my lady joyful were or wroth;  
For wordes glad or heavy, diligent,  
Whether that she me helde \*lefe or loth:\* \*in love or loathing\*  
And hereupon I put was to mine oath,  
Her for to serve, and lowly to obey,  
And show my cheer,\* yea, twenty times a day. \*countenance

The eighth statute, to my rememberance,  
Was, For to speak and pray my lady dear,  
With hourly labour and great entendance,\* \*attention  
Me for to love with all her heart entere,\* \*entire  
And me desire and make me joyful cheer,  
Right as she is, surmounting every fair;  
Of beauty well,\* and gentle debonair. \*the fountain

The ninth statute, with letters writ of gold,  
This was the sentence, How that I and all  
Should ever dread to be too overbold  
Her to displease; and truly so I shall;  
But be content for all thing that may fall,  
And meekly take her chastisement and yerd,\* \*rod, rule  
And to offend her ever be afear'd.

The tenth statute was, Equally\* to discern \*justly  
Between the lady and thine ability,  
And think thyself art never like to earn,  
By right, her mercy nor her equity,  
But of her grace and womanly pity:

For, though thyself be noble in thy strene,\* \*strain, descent  
A thousand fold more noble is thy Queen.

Thy life's lady and thy sovereign,  
That hath thine heart all whole in governance,  
Thou may'st no wise it take to disdain,  
To put thee humbly at her ordinance,  
And give her free the rein of her pleasance;  
For liberty is thing that women look,\* \*look for, desire  
And truly else \*the matter is a crook.\* \*things go wrong\*

Th' eleventh statute, Thy signes for to know  
With eye and finger, and with smiles soft,  
And low to couch, and alway for to show,  
For dread of spies, for to winken oft:  
And secretly to bring a sigh aloft,  
But still beware of over much resort;  
For that peradventure spoileth all thy sport.

The twelfth statute remember to observe:  
For all the pain thou hast for love and woe,  
All is too lite\* her mercy to deserve, \*little  
Thou muste think, where'er thou ride or go;  
And mortal woundes suffer thou also,  
All for her sake, and think it well beset\* \*spent  
Upon thy love, for it may not be bet.\* \*better (spent)

The thirteenth statute, Whilom is to think  
What thing may best thy lady like and please,  
And in thine heart's bottom let it sink:  
Some thing devise, and take for it thine ease,  
And send it her, that may her heart appease:  
Some heart, or ring, or letter, or device,  
Or precious stone; but spare not for no price.

The fourteenth statute eke thou shalt assay  
Firmly to keep, the most part of thy life:  
Wish that thy lady in thine armes lay,  
And nightly dream, thou hast thy night's wife  
Sweetly in armes, straining her as blife:\* \*eagerly <22>  
And, when thou seest it is but fantasy,  
See that thou sing not over merrily;

For too much joy hath oft a woeful end.  
It \*longeth eke this statute for to hold,\* \*it belongs to the proper  
To deem thy lady evermore thy friend, observance of this statute\*  
And think thyself in no wise a cuckold.  
In ev'ry thing she doth but as she sho'ld:  
Construe the best, believe no tales new,  
For many a lie is told, that seems full true.

But think that she, so bounteous and fair,  
Could not be false: imagine this algate;\* \*at all events  
And think that wicked tongues would her apair,\* \*defame  
Sland'ring her name and \*worshipful estate,\* \*honourable fame\*  
And lovers true to setten at debate:  
And though thou seest a fault right at thine eye,  
Excuse it blife, and glose\* it prettily. \*gloss it over

The fifteenth statute, Use to swear and stare,  
And counterfeit a leasing\* hardily,\*\* \*falsehood \*\*boldly  
To save thy lady's honour ev'rywhere,  
And put thyself for her to fight boldly;  
Say she is good, virtuous, and ghostly,\* \*spiritual, pure  
Clear of intent, and heart, and thought, and will;  
And argue not for reason nor for skill

Against thy lady's pleasure nor intent,  
For love will not be counterpled\* indeed: \*met with counterpleas  
Say as she saith, then shalt thou not be shent;\* \*disgraced  
"The crow is white;" "Yea truly, so I rede:"\* \*judge  
And aye what thing that she will thee forbid,  
Eschew all that, and give her sov'reignty,  
Her appetite to follow in all degree.

The sixteenth statute, keep it if thou may: <23>  
Sev'n times at night thy lady for to please,  
And sev'n at midnight, sev'n at morrow day,  
And drink a caudle early for thine ease.  
Do this, and keep thine head from all disease,  
And win the garland here of lovers all,  
That ever came in Court, or ever shall.

Full few, think I, this statute hold and keep;



But truly this my reason \*gives me feel,\* \*enables me to perceive\*  
That some lovers should rather fall asleep,  
Than take on hand to please so oft and weel.\* \*well  
There lay none oath to this statute adele,\* \*annexed  
But keep who might \*as gave him his corage:\* \*as his heart  
Now get this garland, folk of lusty age! inspired him\*

Now win who may, ye lusty folk of youth,  
This garland fresh, of flowers red and white,  
Purple and blue, and colours full uncouth,\* \*strange  
And I shall crown him king of all delight!  
In all the Court there was not, to my sight,  
A lover true, that he was not adread,  
When he express\* had heard the statute read. \*plainly

The sev'nteenth statute, When age approacheth on,  
And lust is laid, and all the fire is queint,\* \*quenched  
As freshly then thou shalt begin to fon,\* \*behave fondly  
And doat in love, and all her image paint  
In thy remembrance, till thou gin to faint,  
As in the first season thine heart began:  
And her desire, though thou nor may nor can

Perform thy living actual and lust;  
Register this in thine remembrance:  
Eke when thou may'st not keep thy thing from rust,  
Yet speak and talk of pleasant dalliance;  
For that shall make thine heart rejoice and dance;  
And when thou may'st no more the game assay,  
The statute bids thee pray for them that may.

The eighteenth statute, wholly to commend,  
To please thy lady, is, That thou eschew  
With sluttishness thyself for to offend;  
Be jolly, fresh, and feat,\* with thinges new, \*dainty <24>  
Courtly with manner, this is all thy due,  
Gentle of port, and loving cleanliness;  
This is the thing that liketh thy mistress.

And not to wander like a dulled ass,  
Ragged and torn, disguised in array,  
Ribald in speech, or out of measure pass,

Thy bound exceeding; think on this alway:  
For women be of tender heartes ay,  
And lightly set their pleasure in a place;  
When they mighthink,\* they lightly let it pace. \*think wrongly

The nineteenth statute, Meat and drink forget:  
Each other day see that thou fast for love,  
For in the Court they live withoute meat,  
Save such as comes from Venus all above;  
They take no heed, \*in pain of great reprove,\* \*on pain of great  
Of meat and drink, for that is all in vain, reproach\*  
Only they live by sight of their sov'reign.

The twentieth statute, last of ev'ry one,  
Enrol it in thy hearte's privy;  
To wring and wail, to turn, and sigh, and groan,  
When that thy lady absent is from thee;  
And eke renew the wordes all that she  
Between you twain hath said, and all the cheer  
That thee hath made thy life's lady dear.

And see thy heart in quiet nor in rest  
Sojourn, till time thou see thy lady eft,\* \*again  
But whe'er\* she won\*\* by south, or east, or west, \*whether \*\*dwell  
With all thy force now see it be not left  
Be diligent, \*till time\* thy life be reft, \*until the time that\*  
In that thou may'st, thy lady for to see;  
This statute was of old antiquity.

The officer, called Rigour -- who is incorruptible by  
partiality, favour, prayer, or gold -- made them swear  
to keep the statutes; and, after taking the oath,  
Philogenet turned over other leaves of the book,  
containing the statutes of women. But Rigour sternly  
bade him forbear; for no man might know the statutes  
that belong to women.

"In secret wise they kepte be full close;  
They sound\* each one to liberty, my friend; \*tend, accord  
Pleasant they be, and to their own purpose;  
There wot\* no wight of them, but God and fiend, \*knows  
Nor aught shall wit, unto the worlde's end.

The queen hath giv'n me charge, in pain to die,  
Never to read nor see them with mine eye.

"For men shall not so near of counsel be'n  
With womanhead, nor knowen of their guise,  
Nor what they think, nor of their wit th'engine;\* \*craft  
\*I me report to\* Solomon the wise, <25> \*I refer for proof to\*  
And mighty Samson, which beguiled thrice  
With Delilah was; he wot that, in a throw,  
There may no man statute of women know.

"For it peradventure may right so befall,  
That they be bound by nature to deceive,  
And spin, and weep, and sugar strew on gall, <26>  
The heart of man to ravish and to reave,  
And whet their tongue as sharp as sword or gleve:\* \*glaive, sword  
It may betide this is their ordinance,  
So must they lowly do their observance,

"And keep the statute given them \*of kind,\* \*by nature\*  
Of such as Love hath giv'n them in their life.  
Men may not wit why turneth every wind,  
Nor waxe wise, nor be inquisitive  
To know secret of maid, widow, or wife;  
For they their statutes have to them reserved,  
And never man to know them hath deserved."

Rigour then sent them forth to pay court to Venus,  
and pray her to teach them how they might serve and  
please their dames, or to provide with ladies those  
whose hearts were yet vacant. Before Venus knelt a  
thousand sad petitioners, entreating her to punish "the  
false untrue," that had broken their vows, "barren of  
ruth, untrue of what they said, now that their lust and  
pleasure is allay'd." But the mourners were in a  
minority;

Yet eft again, a thousand million,  
Rejoicing, love, leading their life in bliss:  
They said: "Venus, redress\* of all division, \*healer  
Goddess eternal, thy name heried\* is! \*glorified  
By love's bond is knit all thing, y-wis,\* \*assuredly

Beast unto beast, the earth to water wan,\* \*pale  
Bird unto bird, and woman unto man; <27>

"This is the life of joy that we be in,  
Resembling life of heav'nly paradise;  
Love is exiler ay of vice and sin;  
Love maketh heartes lusty to devise;  
Honour and grace have they in ev'ry wise,  
That be to love's law obedient;  
Love maketh folk benign and diligent;

"Aye stirring them to dreade vice and shame:  
In their degree it makes them honourable;  
And sweet it is of love to bear the name,  
So that his love be faithful, true, and stable:  
Love pruneth him to seemen amiable;  
Love hath no fault where it is exercis'd,  
But sole\* with them that have all love despis'd:" \*only

And they conclude with grateful honours to the goddess  
-- rejoicing hat they are hers in heart, and all inflamed  
with her grace and heavenly fear. Philogenet now  
entreats the goddess to remove his grief; for he also  
loves, and hotly, only he does not know where --

"Save only this, by God and by my troth;  
Troubled I was with slumber, sleep, and sloth  
This other night, and in a vision  
I saw a woman roamen up and down,

"Of \*mean stature,\* and seemly to behold, \*middling height\*  
Lusty and fresh, demure of countenance,  
Young and well shap'd, with haire sheen\* as gold, \*shining  
With eyne as crystal, farced\* with pleasance; \*crammed  
And she gan stir mine heart a lite\* to dance; \*little  
But suddenly she vanish gan right there:  
Thus I may say, I love, and wot\* not where." \*know

If he could only know this lady, he would serve and obey her  
with all benignity; but if his destiny were otherwise, he would  
gladly love and serve his lady, whosoever she might be. He  
called on Venus for help to possess his queen and heart's life,

and vowed daily war with Diana: "that goddess chaste I keepen  
[care] in no wise to serve; a fig for all her chastity!" Then he  
rose and went his way, passing by a rich and beautiful shrine,  
which, Philobone informed him, was the sepulchre of Pity. "A  
tender creature," she said,

"Is shrined there, and Pity is her name.  
She saw an eagle wreak\* him on a fly, \*avenge  
And pluck his wing, and eke him, \*in his game;\* \*for sport\*  
And tender heart of that hath made her die:  
Eke she would weep, and mourn right piteously,  
To see a lover suffer great distress.  
In all the Court was none, as I do guess,

"That could a lover half so well avail,\* \*help  
Nor of his woe the torment or the rage  
Aslake;\* for he was sure, withoute fail, \*assuage  
That of his grief she could the heat assuage.  
Instead of Pity, speedeth hot Courage  
The matters all of Court, now she is dead;  
\*I me report in this to womanhead.\* \*for evidence I refer to the  
behaviour of women themselves.\*

"For wail, and weep, and cry, and speak, and pray, --  
Women would not have pity on thy plaint;  
Nor by that means to ease thine heart convey,  
But thee receive for their own talent:\* \*inclination  
And say that Pity caus'd thee, in consent  
Of ruth,\* to take thy service and thy pain, \*compassion  
In that thou may'st, to please thy sovereign."

Philobone now promised to lead Philogenet to "the fairest lady  
under sun that is," the "mirror of joy and bliss," whose name is  
Rosial, and "whose heart as yet is given to no wight;"  
suggesting that, as he also was "with love but light advanc'd,"  
he might set this lady in the place of her of whom he had  
dreamed. Entering a chamber gay, "there was Rosial, womanly  
to see;" and the subtle-piercing beams of her eyes wounded  
Philogenet to the heart. When he could speak, he threw himself  
on his knees, beseeching her to cool his fervent woe:

For there I took full purpose in my mind,

Unto her grace my painful heart to bind.

For, if I shall all fully her describe,\* \*describe  
Her head was round, by compass of nature;  
Her hair as gold, she passed all alive,  
And lily forehead had this creature,  
With lively \*browes flaw,\* of colour pure, \*yellow eyebrows <28>  
Between the which was mean disseverance  
From ev'ry brow, to show a due distance.

Her nose directed straight, even as line,  
With form and shape thereto convenient,  
In which the \*goddess' milk-white path\* doth shine; \*the galaxy\*  
And eke her eyne be bright and orient  
As is the smaragd,\* unto my judgment, \*emerald  
Or yet these starres heav'nly, small, and bright;  
Her visage is of lovely red and white.

Her mouth is short, and shut in little space,  
Flaming somedeal,\* not over red I mean, \*somewhat  
With pregnant lips, and thick to kiss, percase\* \*as it chanced  
(For lippes thin, not fat, but ever lean,  
They serve of naught, they be not worth a bean;  
For if the bass\* be full, there is delight; \*kiss <29>  
Maximian <30> truly thus doth he write).

But to my purpose: I say, white as snow  
Be all her teeth, and in order they stand  
Of one stature; and eke her breath, I trow,  
Surmounteth all odours that e'er I fand\* \*found  
In sweetness; and her body, face, and hand  
Be sharply slender, so that, from the head  
Unto the foot, all is but womanhead.\* \*womanly perfection

I hold my peace of other thinges hid:  
Here shall my soul, and not my tongue, bewray;  
But how she was array'd, if ye me bid,  
That shall I well discover you and say:  
A bend\* of gold and silk, full fresh and gay, \*band  
With hair \*in tress, y-broidered\* full well, \*plaited in tresses\*  
Right smoothly kempt,\* and shining every deal. \*combed

About her neck a flow'r of fresh device  
With rubies set, that lusty were to see'n;  
And she in gown was, light and summer-wise,  
Shapen full well, the colour was of green,  
With \*aureate seint\* about her sides clean, \*golden cincture\*  
With divers stones, precious and rich:  
Thus was she ray'd,\* yet saw I ne'er her lich,\*\* \*arrayed \*\*like

If Jove had but seen this lady, Calisto and Alcmena had never  
lain in his arms, nor had he loved the fair Europa, nor Danae,  
nor Antiope; "for all their beauty stood in Rosial; she seemed  
like a thing celestial." By and by, Philogenet presented to her his  
petition for love, which she heard with some haughtiness; she  
was not, she said, well acquainted with him, she did not know  
where he dwelt, nor his name and condition. He informed her  
that "in art of love he writes," and makes songs that may be  
sung in honour of the King and Queen of Love. As for his name  
--

"My name? alas, my heart, why mak'st thou strange?\* \*why so cold  
Philogenet I call'd am far and near, or distant?\*"  
Of Cambridge clerk, that never think to change  
From you, that with your heav'nly streames\* clear \*beams, glances  
Ravish my heart; and ghost, and all in fere:\* \*all together  
Since at the first I writ my bill\* for grace, \*petition  
Me thinks I see some mercy in your face;"

And again he humbly pressed his suit. But the lady disdained the  
idea that, "for a word of sugar'd eloquence," she should have  
compassion in so little space; "there come but few who speede  
here so soon." If, as he says, the beams of her eyes pierce and  
fret him, then let him withdraw from her presence:

"Hurt not yourself, through folly, with a look;  
I would be sorry so to make you sick!  
A woman should beware eke whom she took:  
Ye be a clerk: go searche well my book,  
If any women be so light\* to win: \*easy  
Nay, bide a while, though ye were \*all my kin."\* \*my only kindred\*

He might sue and serve, and wax pale, and green, and dead,  
without murmuring in any wise; but whereas he desired her

hastily to lean to love, he was unwise, and must cease that language. For some had been at Court for twenty years, and might not obtain their mistresses' favour; therefore she marvelled that he was so bold as to treat of love with her. Philogenet, on this, broke into pitiful lamentation; bewailing the hour in which he was born, and assuring the unyielding lady that the frosty grave and cold must be his bed, unless she relented.

With that I fell in swoon, and dead as stone,  
With colour slain,\* and wan as ashes pale; \*deathlike  
And by the hand she caught me up anon:  
"Arise," quoth she; "what? have ye drunken dwale?\*" \*sleeping potion <31>  
Why sleepe ye? It is no nightertale."\* \*night-time  
"Now mercy! sweet," quoth I, y-wis afraid;  
"What thing," quoth she, "hath made you so dismay'd?"

She said that by his hue she knew well that he was a lover; and if he were secret, courteous, and kind, he might know how all this could be allayed. She would amend all that she had missaid, and set his heart at ease; but he must faithfully keep the statutes, "and break them not for sloth nor ignorance." The lover requests, however, that the sixteenth may be released or modified, for it "doth him great grievance;" and she complies.

And softly then her colour gan appear,  
As rose so red, throughout her visage all;  
Wherefore methinks it is according\* her \*appropriate to  
That she of right be called Rosial.  
Thus have I won, with wordes great and small,  
Some goodly word of her that I love best,  
And trust she shall yet set mine heart in rest.

Rosial now told Philobone to conduct Philogenet all over the Court, and show him what lovers and what officers dwelt there; for he was yet a stranger.

And, stalking soft with easy pace, I saw  
About the king standen all environ,\* \*around <32>  
Attendance, Diligence, and their fellow  
Furtherer, Esperance,\* and many one; \*Hope  
Dread-to-offend there stood, and not alone;  
For there was eke the cruel adversair,



The lover's foe, that called is Despair;

Which unto me spake angrily and fell,\* \*cruelly  
And said, my lady me deceive shall:  
"Trow'st thou," quoth she, "that all that she did tell  
Is true? Nay, nay, but under honey gall.  
Thy birth and hers they be no thing egal:\* \*equal  
Cast off thine heart, <33> for all her wordes white,  
For in good faith she loves thee but a lite.\* \*little

"And eke remember, thine ability  
May not compare with her, this well thou wot."  
Yea, then came Hope and said, "My friend, let be!  
Believe him not: Despair he gins to doat."  
"Alas," quoth I, "here is both cold and hot:  
The one me biddeth love, the other nay;  
Thus wot I not what me is best to say.

"But well wot I, my lady granted me  
Truly to be my wounde's remedy;  
Her gentleness\* may not infected be \*noble nature  
With doubleness,\* this trust I till I die." \*duplicity  
So cast I t' avoid Despair's company,  
And take Hope to counsel and to friend.  
"Yea, keep that well," quoth Philobone, "in mind."

And there beside, within a bay window,  
Stood one in green, full large of breadth and length,  
His beard as black as feathers of the crow;  
His name was Lust, of wondrous might and strength;  
And with Delight to argue there he think'th,  
For this was alway his opinion,  
That love was sin: and so he hath begun

To reason fast, and \*ledge authority:\* \*allege authorities  
"Nay," quoth Delight, "love is a virtue clear,  
And from the soul his progress holdeth he:  
Blind appetite of lust doth often steer,\* \*stir (the heart)  
And that is sin; for reason lacketh there:  
For thou dost think thy neighbour's wife to win;  
Yet think it well that love may not be sin;

"For God, and saint, they love right verily,  
Void of all sin and vice: this know I weel,\* \*well  
Affection of flesh is sin truly;  
But very\* love is virtue, as I feel; \*true  
For very love may frail desire akele:\* \*cool  
For very love is love withoute sin."  
"Now stint,"\* quoth Lust, "thou speak'st not worth a pin." \*cease

And there I left them in their arguing,  
Roaming farther into the castle wide,  
And in a corner Liar stood talking  
Of leasings\* fast, with Flattery there beside; \*falsehoods  
He said that women \*ware attire of pride, \*wore  
And men were found of nature variant,  
And could be false and \*showe beau semblant.\* \*put on plausible  
appearances to deceive\*  
Then Flattery bespake and said, y-wis:  
"See, so she goes on pattens fair and feat;\* \*pretty, neat  
It doth right well: what pretty man is this  
That roameth here? now truly drink nor meat  
Need I not have, my heart for joy doth beat  
Him to behold, so is he goodly fresh:  
It seems for love his heart is tender and nesh."\* \*soft <34>

This is the Court of lusty folk and glad,  
And well becomes their habit and array:  
O why be some so sorry and so sad,  
Complaining thus in black and white and gray?  
Friars they be, and monkes, in good fay:  
Alas, for ruth! great dole\* it is to see, \*sorrow  
To see them thus bewail and sorry be.

See how they cry and ring their handes white,  
For they so soon\* went to religion!, \*young  
And eke the nuns with veil and wimple plight,\* \*plaited  
Their thought is, they be in confusion:  
"Alas," they say, "we feign perfection, <35>  
In clothes wide, and lack our liberty;  
But all the sin must on our friendes be. <36>

"For, Venus wot, we would as fain\* as ye, \*gladly  
That be attired here and \*well beseen,\* \*gaily clothed\*

Desire man, and love in our degree,  
Firm and faithful, right as would the Queen:  
Our friendes wick', in tender youth and green,  
Against our will made us religious;  
That is the cause we mourn and waile thus."

Then said the monks and friars \*in the tide,\* \*at the same time\*  
"Well may we curse our abbeys and our place,  
Our statutes sharp to sing in copes wide, <37>  
Chastely to keep us out of love's grace,  
And never to feel comfort nor solace;\* \*delight  
Yet suffer we the heat of love's fire,  
And after some other haply we desire.

"O Fortune cursed, why now and wherefore  
Hast thou," they said, "bereft us liberty,  
Since Nature gave us instrument in store,  
And appetite to love and lovers be?  
Why must we suffer such adversity,  
Dian' to serve, and Venus to refuse?  
Full \*often sith\* these matters do us muse. \*many a time\*

"We serve and honour, sore against our will,  
Of chastity the goddess and the queen;  
\*Us liefer were\* with Venus bide still, \*we would rather\*  
And have regard for love, and subject be'n  
Unto these women courtly, fresh, and sheen.\* \*bright, beautiful  
Fortune, we curse thy wheel of variance!  
Where we were well, thou reavest\* our pleasance." \*takest away

Thus leave I them, with voice of plaint and care,  
In raging woe crying full piteously;  
And as I went, full naked and full bare  
Some I beheld, looking dispiteously,  
On Poverty that deadly cast their eye;  
And "Well-away!" they cried, and were not fain,  
For they might not their glad desire attain.

For lack of riches worldly and of good,  
They ban and curse, and weep, and say, "Alas!  
That povert' hath us hent,\* that whilom stood \*seized  
At hearte's ease, and free and in good case!

But now we dare not show ourselves in place,  
Nor us embold\* to dwell in company, \*make bold, venture  
Where as our heart would love right faithfully."

And yet againward shrieked ev'ry nun,  
The pang of love so strained them to cry:  
"Now woe the time," quoth they, "that we be boun'!\* \*bound  
This hateful order nice\* will do us die! \*into which we foolishly  
We sigh and sob, and bleeden inwardly, entered  
Fretting ourselves with thought and hard complaint,  
That nigh for love we waxe wood\* and faint." \*mad

And as I stood beholding here and there,  
I was ware of a sort\* full languishing, \*a class of people  
Savage and wild of looking and of cheer,  
Their mantles and their clothes aye tearing;  
And oft they were of Nature complaining,  
For they their members lacked, foot and hand,  
With visage wry, and blind, I understand.

They lacked shape and beauty to prefer  
Themselves in love: and said that God and Kind\* \*Nature  
Had forged\* them to worshippe the sterre,\*\* \*fashioned \*\*star  
Venus the bright, and leften all behind  
His other workes clean and out of mind:  
"For other have their full shape and beauty,  
And we," quoth they, "be in deformity."

And nigh to them there was a company,  
That have the Sisters warray'd and missaid,  
I mean the three of fatal destiny, <38>  
That be our workers: suddenly abraid,\* \*aroused  
Out gan they cry as they had been afraid;  
"We curse," quoth they, "that ever hath Nature  
Y-formed us this woeful life t'endure."

And there eke was Contrite, and gan repent,  
Confessing whole the wound that Cythere <39>  
Had with the dart of hot desire him sent,  
And how that he to love must subject be:  
Then held he all his scornes vanity,  
And said that lovers held a blissful life,

Young men and old, and widow, maid, and wife.

"Bereave me, Goddess!" quoth he, "of thy might,  
My scornes all and scoffes, that I have  
No power for to mocken any wight  
That in thy service dwell: for I did rave;  
This know I well right now, so God me save,  
And I shall be the chief post\* of thy faith, \*prop, pillar  
And love uphold, the reverse whoso saith."

Dissemble stood not far from him in truth,  
With party\* mantle, party hood and hose; \*parti-coloured  
And said he had upon his lady ruth,\* \*pity  
And thus he wound him in, and gan to glose,  
Of his intent full double, I suppose:  
In all the world he said he lov'd her weel;  
But ay me thought he lov'd her \*ne'er a deal.\* \*never a jot\*

Eke Shamefastness was there, as I took heed,  
That blushed red, and durst not be y-know  
She lover was, for thereof had she dread;  
She stood and hung her visage down alow;  
But such a sight it was to see, I trow,  
As of these roses ruddy on their stalk:  
There could no wight her spy to speak or talk

In love's art, so gan she to abash,  
Nor durst not utter all her privity:  
Many a stripe and many a grievous lash  
She gave to them that woulde lovers be,  
And hinder'd sore the simple commonalty,  
That in no wise durst grace and mercy crave,  
For \*were not she,\* they need but ask and have; \*but for her\*

Where if they now approche for to speak,  
Then Shamefastness \*returneth them\* again: \*turns them back\*  
They think, "If we our secret counsel break,  
Our ladies will have scorn us certain,  
And peradventure thinke great disdain:"  
Thus Shamefastness may bringen in Despair;  
When she is dead the other will be heir.

"Come forth Avaunter! now I ring thy bell!" <40>  
I spied him soon; to God I make avow,\* \*confession  
He looked black as fiendes do in Hell:  
"The first," quoth he, "that ever I did wou,\* \*woo  
\*Within a word she came,\* I wot not how, \*she was won with  
So that in armes was my lady free, a single word\*  
And so have been a thousand more than she.

"In England, Britain,\* Spain, and Picardy, \*Brittany  
Artois, and France, and up in high Holland,  
In Burgoyne,\* Naples, and in Italy, \*Burgundy  
Navarre, and Greece, and up in heathen land,  
Was never woman yet that would withstand  
To be at my commandment when I wo'ld:  
I lacked neither silver coin nor gold.

"And there I met with this estate and that;  
And her I broach'd, and her, and her, I trow:  
Lo! there goes one of mine; and, wot ye what?  
Yon fresh attired have I laid full low;  
And such one yonder eke right well I know;  
I kept the statute <41> when we lay y-fere:\* \*together  
And yet\* yon same hath made me right good cheer." \*also

Thus hath Avaunter blowen ev'rywhere  
All that he knows, and more a thousand fold;  
His ancestry of kin was to Lier,\* \*Liar  
For first he maketh promise for to hold  
His lady's counsel, and it not unfold; --  
Wherefore, the secret when he doth unshit,\* \*disclose  
Then lieth he, that all the world may wit.\* \*know

For falsing so his promise and behest,\* \*trust  
I wonder sore he hath such fantasy;  
He lacketh wit, I trow, or is a beast,  
That can no bet\* himself with reason guy\*\* \*better \*\*guide  
By mine advice, Love shall be contrary  
To his avail,\* and him eke dishonour, \*advantage  
So that in Court he shall no more sojour.\* \*sojourn, remain

"Take heed," quoth she, this little Philobone,  
"Where Envy rocketh in the corner yond,\* \*yonder

And sitteth dark; and ye shall see anon  
His lean body, fading both face and hand;  
Himself he fretteth,\* as I understand devoureth  
(Witness of Ovid Metamorphoseos); <42>  
The lover's foe he is, I will not glose.\* \*gloss over

"For where a lover thinketh \*him promote,\* \*to promote himself\*  
Envy will grudge, repining at his weal;  
It swelleth sore about his heart's root,  
That in no wise he cannot live in heal;\* \*health  
And if the faithful to his lady steal,  
Envy will noise and ring it round about,  
And say much worse than done is, out of doubt."

And Privy Thought, rejoicing of himself, --  
Stood not far thence in habit marvellous;  
"Yon is," thought I, "some spirit or some elf,  
His subtile image is so curious:  
How is," quoth I, "that he is shaded thus  
With yonder cloth, I n'ot\* of what color?" \*know not  
And near I went and gan \*to lear and pore,\* \*to ascertain and  
gaze curiously\*  
And frained\* him a question full hard. \*asked  
"What is," quoth I, "the thing thou lovest best?  
Or what is boot\* unto thy paines hard? \*remedy  
Me thinks thou livest here in great unrest,  
Thou wand'rest aye from south to east and west,  
And east to north; as far as I can see,  
There is no place in Court may holde thee.

"Whom followest thou? where is thy heart y-set?  
But \*my demand assoil,\* I thee require." \*answer my question\*  
"Me thought," quoth he, "no creature may let\* \*hinder  
Me to be here, and where as I desire;  
For where as absence hath out the fire,  
My merry thought it kindleth yet again,  
That bodily, me thinks, with \*my sov'reign\* \*my lady\*

"I stand, and speak, and laugh, and kiss, and halse;\* \*embrace  
So that my thought comforteth me full oft:  
I think, God wot, though all the world be false,  
I will be true; I think also how soft

My lady is in speech, and this on loft  
Bringeth my heart with joy and great gladness;  
This privy thought allays my heaviness.

"And what I think, or where, to be, no man  
In all this Earth can tell, y-wis, but I:  
And eke there is no swallow swift, nor swan  
So wight\* of wing, nor half so yern\*\* can fly; \*nimble \*\*eagerly  
For I can be, and that right suddenly,  
In Heav'n, in Hell, in Paradise, and here,  
And with my lady, when I will desire.

"I am of counsel far and wide, I wot,  
With lord and lady, and their privity  
I wot it all; but, be it cold or hot,  
They shall not speak without licence of me.  
I mean, in such as seasonable\* be, \*prudent  
Tho\* first the thing is thought within the heart, \*when  
Ere any word out from the mouth astart."\* \*escape

And with the word Thought bade farewell and yede:\* \*went away  
Eke forth went I to see the Courte's guise,  
And at the door came in, so God me speed,  
Two courtiers of age and of assise\* \*size  
Like high, and broad, and, as I me advise,  
The Golden Love and Leaden Love <43> they hight:\* \*were called  
The one was sad, the other glad and light.

At this point there is a hiatus in the poem, which abruptly ceases  
to narrate the tour of Philogenet and Philobone round the  
Court, and introduces us again to Rosial, who is speaking thus  
to her lover, apparently in continuation of a confession of love:

"Yes! draw your heart, with all your force and might,  
To lustiness, and be as ye have said."

She admits that she would have given him no drop of favour,  
but that she saw him "wax so dead of countenance;" then Pity  
"out of her shrine arose from death to life," whisperingly  
entreating that she would do him some pleasance. Philogenet  
protests his gratitude to Pity, his faithfulness to Rosial; and the  
lady, thanking him heartily, bids him abide with her till the



season of May, when the King of Love and all his company will hold his feast fully royally and well. "And there I bode till that the season fell."

On May Day, when the lark began to rise,  
To matins went the lusty nightingale,  
Within a temple shapen hawthorn-wise;  
He might not sleep in all the nightertale,\* \*night-time  
But "Domine" <44> gan he cry and gale,\* \*call out  
"My lippes open, Lord of Love, I cry,  
And let my mouth thy praising now bewry."\* \*show forth

The eagle sang "Venite," <45> bodies all,  
And let us joy to love that is our health."  
And to the desk anon they gan to fall,  
And who came late he pressed in by stealth  
Then said the falcon, "Our own heartes' wealth,  
'Domine Dominus noster,' <46> I wot,  
Ye be the God that do\* us burn thus hot." \*make

"Coeli enarrant," <47> said the popinjay,\* \*parrot  
"Your might is told in Heav'n and firmament."  
And then came in the goldfinch fresh and gay,  
And said this psalm with heartly glad intent,  
"Domini est terra;" <48> this Latin intent,\* \*means  
The God of Love hath earth in governance:  
And then the wren began to skip and dance.

"Jube Domine; <49> O Lord of Love, I pray  
Command me well this lesson for to read;  
This legend is of all that woulde dey\* \*die  
Martyrs for love; God yet their soules speed!  
And to thee, Venus, sing we, \*out of dread,\* \*without doubt\*  
By influence of all thy virtue great,  
Beseeching thee to keep us in our heat."

The second lesson robin redbreast sang,  
"Hail to the God and Goddess of our lay!"\* \*law, religion  
And to the lectern amorously he sprang:  
"Hail now," quoth be, "O fresh season of May,  
\*Our moneth glad that singen on the spray!\* \*glad month for us that  
Hail to the flowers, red, and white, and blue, sing upon the bough\*

Which by their virtue maken our lust new!"

The third lesson the turtle-dove took up,  
And thereat laugh'd the mavis\* in a scorn: \*blackbird  
He said, "O God, as might I dine or sup,  
This foolish dove will give us all a horn!  
There be right here a thousand better born,  
To read this lesson, which as well as he,  
And eke as hot, can love in all degree."

The turtle-dove said, "Welcome, welcome May,  
Gladsome and light to lovers that be true!  
I thank thee, Lord of Love, that doth purvey  
For me to read this lesson all \*of due;\* \*in due form\*  
For, in good sooth, \*of corage\* I pursue \*with all my heart\*  
To serve my make\* till death us must depart:" \*mate  
And then "Tu autem" <50> sang he all apart.

"Te Deum amoris" <51> sang the throstel\* cock: \*thrush  
Tubal <52> himself, the first musician,  
With key of harmony could not unlock  
So sweet a tune as that the throstel can:  
"The Lord of Love we praise," quoth he than,\* \*then  
And so do all the fowles great and lite;\* \*little  
"Honour we May, in false lovers' despite."

"Dominus regnavit," <53> said the peacock there,  
"The Lord of Love, that mighty prince, y-wis,  
He is received here and ev'rywhere:  
Now Jubilate <54> sing:" "What meaneth this?"  
Said then the linnet; "welcome, Lord of bliss!"  
Out start the owl with "Benedicite," <55>  
"What meaneth all this merry fare?"\* quoth he. \*doing, fuss

"Laudate," <56> sang the lark with voice full shrill;  
And eke the kite "O admirable;" <57>  
This quire\* will through mine eares pierce and thrill; \*choir  
But what? welcome this May season," quoth he;  
"And honour to the Lord of Love must be,  
That hath this feast so solemn and so high:"  
"Amen," said all; and so said eke the pie.\* \*magpie

And forth the cuckoo gan proceed anon,  
With "Benedictus" <58> thanking God in haste,  
That in this May would visit them each one,  
And gladden them all while the feast shall last:  
And therewithal a-laughter\* out he brast;"\*\* \*in laughter \*\*burst  
"I thanke God that I should end the song,  
And all the service which hath been so long."

Thus sang they all the service of the feast,  
And that was done right early, to my doom;\* \*judgment  
And forth went all the Court, both \*most and least,\* \*great and small  
To fetch the flowers fresh, and branch and bloom;  
And namely\* hawthorn brought both page and groom, \*especially  
With freshe garlands party\* blue and white, <59> \*parti-coloured  
And then rejoiced in their great delight.

Eke each at other threw the flowers bright,  
The primerose, the violet, and the gold;  
So then, as I beheld the royal sight,  
My lady gan me suddenly behold,  
And with a true love, plighted many a fold,  
She smote me through the very heart \*as blive;\* \*straightway\*  
And Venus yet I thank I am alive.

Explicit\* \*The End

## Notes to The Court of Love

1. So the Man of Law, in the prologue to his Tale, is made to say that Chaucer "can but lewedly (ignorantly or imperfectly) on metres and on rhyming craftily." But the humility of those apologies is not justified by the care and finish of his earlier poems.

2. Born: burnish, polish: the poet means, that his verses do not display the eloquence or brilliancy of Cicero in setting forth his subject-matter.

3. Galfrid: Geoffrey de Vinsauf to whose treatise on poetical composition a less flattering allusion is made in The Nun's

Priest's Tale. See note 33 to that Tale.

4. Stirp: race, stock; Latin, "stirps."

5. Calliope is the epic muse -- "sister" to the other eight.

6. Melpomene was the tragic muse.

7. The same is said of Griselda, in The Clerk's Tale; though she was of tender years, "yet in the breast of her virginity there was inclos'd a sad and ripe corage"

8. The confusion which Chaucer makes between Cithaeron and Cythera, has already been remarked. See note 41 to the Knight's Tale.

9. Balais: Bastard rubies; said to be so called from Balassa, the Asian country where they were found. Turkeis: turquoise stones.

10. Spenser, in his description of the House of Busirane, speaks of the sad distress into which Phoebus was plunged by Cupid, in revenge for the betrayal of "his mother's wantonness, when she with Mars was meint [mingled] in joyfulness"

11. Alcestis, daughter of Pelias, was won to wife by Admetus, King of Pherae, who complied with her father's demand that he should come to claim her in a chariot drawn by lions and boars. By the aid of Apollo -- who tended the flocks of Admetus during his banishment from heaven -- the suitor fulfilled the condition; and Apollo further induced the Moirae or Fates to grant that Admetus should never die, if his father, mother, or wife would die for him. Alcestis devoted herself in his stead; and, since each had made great efforts or sacrifices for love, the pair are fitly placed as king and queen in the Court of Love.

12. In the prologue to the "Legend of Good Women," Chaucer says that behind the God of Love, upon the green, he "saw coming in ladies nineteen;" but the stories of only nine good women are there told. In the prologue to The Man of Law's Tale, sixteen ladies are named as having their stories written in the "Saints' Legend of Cupid" -- now known as the "Legend of

Good Women" -- (see note 5 to the Prologue to the Man of Law's Tale); and in the "Retractation," at the end of the Parson's Tale, the "Book of the Twenty-five Ladies" is enumerated among the works of which the poet repents -- but there "xxv" is supposed to have been by some copyist written for "xix."

13. fele: many; German, "viele."

14. Arras: tapestry of silk, made at Arras, in France.

15. Danger, in the Provençal Courts of Love, was the allegorical personification of the husband; and Disdain suitably represents the lover's corresponding difficulty from the side of the lady.

16. In The Knight's Tale, Emily's yellow hair is braided in a tress, or plait, that hung a yard long behind her back; so that, both as regards colour and fashion, a singular resemblance seems to have existed between the female taste of 1369 and that of 1869.

17. In an old monkish story -- reproduced by Boccaccio, and from him by La Fontaine in the Tale called "Les Oies de Frere Philippe" -- a young man is brought up without sight or knowledge of women, and, when he sees them on a visit to the city, he is told that they are geese.

18. Tabernacle: A shrine or canopy of stone, supported by pillars.

19. Mister folk: handicraftsmen, or tradesmen, who have learned "mysteries."

20. The loves "Of Queen Annelida and False Arcite" formed the subject of a short unfinished poem by Chaucer, which was afterwards worked up into The Knight's Tale.

21. Blue was the colour of truth. See note 36 to the Squire's Tale.

22. Blife: quickly, eagerly; for "blive" or "belive."

23. It will be seen afterwards that Philogenet does not relish it, and pleads for its relaxation.
24. Feat: dainty, neat, handsome; the same as "fetis," oftener used in Chaucer; the adverb "featly" is still used, as applied to dancing, &c.
25. Solomon was beguiled by his heathenish wives to forsake the worship of the true God; Samson fell a victim to the wiles of Delilah.
26. Compare the speech of Proserpine to Pluto, in The Merchant's Tale.
27. See note 91 to the Knight's Tale for a parallel.
28. Flaw: yellow; Latin, "flavus," French, "fauve."
29. Bass: kiss; French, "baiser;" and hence the more vulgar "buss."
30. Maximian: Cornelius Maximianus Gallus flourished in the time of the Emperor Anastasius; in one of his elegies, he professed a preference for flaming and somewhat swelling lips, which, when he tasted them, would give him full kisses.
31. Dwale: sleeping potion, narcotic. See note 19 to the Reeve's Tale.
32. Environ: around; French, "a l'environ."
33. Cast off thine heart: i.e. from confidence in her.
34. Nesh: soft, delicate; Anglo-Saxon, "nese."
35. Perfection: Perfectly holy life, in the performance of vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and other modes of mortifying the flesh.
36. All the sin must on our friendes be: who made us take the vows before they knew our own dispositions, or ability, to keep them.

37. Cope: The large vestment worn in singing the service in the choir. In Chaucer's time it seems to have been a distinctively clerical piece of dress; so, in the prologue to *The Monk's Tale*, the Host, lamenting that so stalwart a man as the Monk should have gone into religion, exclaims, "Alas! why wearest thou so wide a cope?"

38. The three of fatal destiny: The three Fates.

39. Cythere: Cytherea -- Venus, so called from the name of the island, Cythera, into which her worship was first introduced from Phoenicia.

40. Avaunter: Boaster; Philobone calls him out.

41. The statute: i.e. the 16th.

42. "Metamorphoses" Lib. ii. 768 et seqq., where a general description of Envy is given.

43. Golden Love and Leaden Love represent successful and unsuccessful love; the first kindled by Cupid's golden darts, the second by his leaden arrows.

44. "Domine, labia mea aperies -- et os meum annunciabit laudem tuam" ("Lord, open my lips -- and my mouth will announce your praise") Psalms li. 15, was the verse with which Matins began. The stanzas which follow contain a paraphrase of the matins for Trinity Sunday, allegorically setting forth the doctrine that love is the all-controlling influence in the government of the universe.

45. "Venite, exultemus," ("Come, let us rejoice") are the first words of Psalm xcv. called the "Invitatory."

46. "Domine Dominus noster:" The opening words of Psalm viii.; "O Lord our Lord."

47. "Coeli enarrant:" Psalm xix. 1; "The heavens declare (thy glory)."

48. "Domini est terra": Psalm xxiv. I; "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." The first "nocturn" is now over, and the lessons from Scripture follow.

49. "Jube, Domine:" "Command, O Lord;" from Matthew xiv. 28, where Peter, seeing Christ walking on the water, says "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water."

50: "Tu autem:" the formula recited by the reader at the end of each lesson; "Tu autem, Domine, miserere nobis." ("But do thou, O Lord, have pity on us!")

51. "Te Deum Amoris:" "Thee, God of Love (we praise)."

52. Not Tubal, who was the worker in metals; but Jubal, his brother, "who was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ" (Genesis iv. 21).

53. "Dominus regnavit:" Psalm xciii. 1, "The Lord reigneth." With this began the "Laudes," or morning service of praise.

54. "Jubilate:" Psalm c. 1, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord."

55. "Benedicite:" "Bless ye the Lord;" the opening of the Song of the Three Children

56. "Laudate:" Psalm cxlvii.; "Praise ye the Lord."

57. "O admirabile:" Psalm viii 1; "O Lord our God, how excellent is thy name."

58. "Benedictus": The first word of the Song of Zacharias (Luke i. 68); "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel"

59. In *The Knight's Tale* we have exemplifications of the custom of gathering and wearing flowers and branches on May Day; where Emily, "doing observance to May," goes into the garden at sunrise and gathers flowers, "party white and red, to make a sotel garland for her head"; and again, where Arcite rides to the fields "to make him a garland of the greves; were it of woodbine, or of hawthorn leaves"



Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Franklin's Tale

'IN faith, Squier, thou hast thee well acquit,  
And gentilly; I praise well thy wit,'  
Quoth the Franklin; 'considering thy youthe  
So feelingly thou speak'st, Sir, I aloue\* thee,       \*allow, approve  
\*As to my doom,\* there is none that is here       \*so far as my judgment  
Of eloquence that shall be thy peer, goes\*  
If that thou live; God give thee goode chance,  
And in virtue send thee continuance,  
For of thy speaking I have great dainty.\*       \*value, esteem  
I have a son, and, by the Trinity;  
\*It were me lever\* than twenty pound worth land,       \*I would rather\*  
Though it right now were fallen in my hand,  
He were a man of such discretion  
As that ye be: fy on possession,  
\*But if\* a man be virtuous withal.       \*unless  
I have my sone snibbed\* and yet shall,       \*rebuked; 'snubbed.'  
For he to virtue \*listeth not t'intend,\*       \*does not wish to  
But for to play at dice, and to dispend, apply himself\*  
And lose all that he hath, is his usage;  
And he had lever talke with a page,  
Than to commune with any gentle wight,  
There he might learen gentilless aright.'

Straw for your gentillesse! ' quoth our Host.  
'What? Frankelin, pardie, Sir, well thou wost\*       \*knowest  
That each of you must tellen at the least  
A tale or two, or breake his behest.\*       \*promise  
'That know I well, Sir,' quoth the Frankelin;  
'I pray you have me not in disdain,  
Though I to this man speak a word or two.'  
'Tell on thy tale, withoute wordes mo'.  
'Gladly, Sir Host,' quoth he, 'I will obey  
Unto your will; now hearken what I say;  
I will you not contrary\* in no wise,       \*disobey  
As far as that my wittes may suffice.  
I pray to God that it may please you,  
Then wot I well that it is good enow.

'These olde gentle Bretons, in their days,

Of divers adventures made lays,&2&gt;  
 Rhymeden in their firste Breton tongue;  
 Which layes with their instruments they sung,  
 Or elles reade them for their pleasance;  
 And one of them have I in remembrance,  
 Which I shall say with good will as I can.  
 But, Sirs, because I am a borel\* man,                    \*rude, unlearned  
 At my beginning first I you beseech  
 Have me excused of my rude speech.  
 I learned never rhetoric, certain;  
 Thing that I speak, it must be bare and plain.  
 I slept never on the mount of Parnasso,  
 Nor learned Marcus Tullius Cicero.  
 Coloures know I none, withoute dread,\*                    \*doubt  
 But such colours as growen in the mead,  
 Or elles such as men dye with or paint;  
 Colours of rhetoric be to me quaint; \*                    \*strange  
 My spirit feeleth not of such mattere.  
 But, if you list, my tale shall ye hear.'

In Armoric', that called is Bretagne,  
 There was a knight, that lov'd and \*did his pain\*        \*devoted himself,  
 To serve a lady in his beste wise; strove\*  
 And many a labour, many a great emprise,\*            \*enterprise  
 He for his lady wrought, ere she were won:  
 For she was one the fairest under sun,  
 And eke thereto come of so high kindred,  
 That \*well unnethes durst this knight for dread,\*        \*see note &1&gt;\*  
 Tell her his woe, his pain, and his distress  
 But, at the last, she for his worthiness,  
 And namely\* for his meek obeisance,                    \*especially  
 Hath such a pity caught of his penance,\*                \*suffering, distress  
 That privily she fell of his accord  
 To take him for her husband and her lord  
 (Of such lordship as men have o'er their wives) :  
 And, for to lead the more in bliss their lives,  
 Of his free will he swore her as a knight,  
 That never in all his life he day nor night  
 Should take upon himself no mastery  
 Against her will, nor kithe\* her jealousy,                \*show  
 But her obey, and follow her will in all,  
 As any lover to his lady shall;

Save that the name of sovereignty  
 That would he have, for shame of his degree.  
 She thanked him, and with full great humbles  
 She saide; 'Sir, since of your gentleness  
 Ye proffer me to have so large a reign,  
 \*Ne woulde God never betwixt us twain,  
 As in my guilt, were either war or strife:\*      \*see note &lt;2&gt;\*

Sir, I will be your humble true wife,  
 Have here my troth, till that my hearte brest.\*      \*burst

Thus be they both in quiet and in rest.

For one thing, Sires, safely dare I say,  
 That friends ever each other must obey,  
 If they will longe hold in company.  
 Love will not be constrain'd by mastery.  
 When mast'ry comes, the god of love anon  
 Beateth &lt;3&gt; his wings, and, farewell, he is gone.  
 Love is a thing as any spirit free.

Women \*of kind\* desire liberty,      \*by nature\*

And not to be constrained as a thrall,\*      \*slave

And so do men, if soothly I say shall.  
 Look who that is most patient in love,  
 He \*is at his advantage all above.\*      \*enjoys the highest

Patience is a high virtue certain, advantages of all\*

For it vanquisheth, as these clerkes sayn,  
 Things that rigour never should attain.  
 For every word men may not chide or plain.  
 Learne to suffer, or, so may I go,\*      \*prosper

Ye shall it learn whether ye will or no.  
 For in this world certain no wight there is,  
 That he not doth or saith sometimes amiss.  
 Ire, or sickness, or constellation,\*      \*the influence of

Wine, woe, or changing of complexion, the planets\*

Causeth full oft to do amiss or spoken:  
 On every wrong a man may not be wroken.\*      \*revenged

After\* the time must be temperance      \*according to

To every wight that \*can of\* governance.      \*is capable of\*

And therefore hath this worthy wise knight  
 (To live in ease) sufferance her behight; \*      \*promised

And she to him full wisly\* gan to swear      \*surely

That never should there be default in her.  
 Here may men see a humble wife accord;

Thus hath she ta'en her servant and her lord,  
 Servant in love, and lord in marriage.  
 Then was he both in lordship and servage?  
 Servage? nay, but in lordship all above,  
 Since he had both his lady and his love:  
 His lady certes, and his wife also,  
 The which that law of love accordeth to.  
 And when he was in this prosperrity,  
 Home with his wife he went to his country,  
 Not far from Penmark,&4&gt; where his dwelling was,  
 And there he liv'd in bliss and in solace.\*                   \*delight  
 Who coulde tell, but\* he had wedded be,                   \*unless  
 The joy, the ease, and the prosperity,  
 That is betwixt a husband and his wife?  
 A year and more lasted this blissful life,  
 Till that this knight, of whom I spake thus,  
 That of Cairrud &5&gt; was call'd Arviragus,  
 Shope\* him to go and dwell a year or twain                   \*prepared, arranged  
 In Engleland, that call'd was eke Britain,  
 To seek in armes worship and honour  
 (For all his lust\* he set in such labour) :                   \*pleasure  
 And dwelled there two years; the book saith thus.

Now will I stint\* of this Arviragus,                   \*cease speaking  
 And speak I will of Dorigen his wife,  
 That lov'd her husband as her hearte's life.  
 For his absence weepeth she and siketh,\*                   \*sigheth  
 As do these noble wives when them liketh;  
 She mourneth, waketh, waileth, fasteth, plaineth;  
 Desire of his presence her so distraineth,  
 That all this wide world she set at nought.  
 Her friendes, which that knew her heavy thought,  
 Comforte her in all that ever they may;  
 They preache her, they tell her night and day,  
 That causeless she slays herself, alas!  
 And every comfort possible in this case  
 They do to her, with all their business,\*                   \*assiduity  
 And all to make her leave her heaviness.  
 By process, as ye knowen every one,  
 Men may so longe graven in a stone,  
 Till some figure therein imprinted be:  
 So long have they comforted her, till she

Received hath, by hope and by reason,  
 Th' imprinting of their consolation,  
 Through which her greate sorrow gan assuage;  
 She may not always duren in such rage.  
 And eke Arviragus, in all this care,  
 Hath sent his letters home of his welfare,  
 And that he will come hastily again,  
 Or elles had this sorrow her hearty-slain.  
 Her friendes saw her sorrow gin to slake,\*      \*slacken, diminish  
 And prayed her on knees for Godde's sake  
 To come and roamen in their company,  
 Away to drive her darke fantasy;  
 And finally she granted that request,  
 For well she saw that it was for the best.

Now stood her castle faste by the sea,  
 And often with her friendes walked she,  
 Her to disport upon the bank on high,  
 There as many a ship and barge sigh,\*      \*saw  
 Sailing their courses, where them list to go.  
 But then was that a parcel\* of her woe,      \*part  
 For to herself full oft, 'Alas! ' said she,  
 Is there no ship, of so many as I see,  
 Will bringe home my lord? then were my heart  
 All warish'd\* of this bitter paine's smart.'      \*cured &6gt;  
 Another time would she sit and think,  
 And cast her eyen downward from the brink;  
 But when she saw the grisly rockes blake,\*      \*black  
 For very fear so would her hearte quake,  
 That on her feet she might her not sustene\*      \*sustain  
 Then would she sit adown upon the green,  
 And piteously \*into the sea behold,\*      \*look out on the sea\*  
 And say right thus, with \*careful sikes\* cold:      \*painful sighs\*  
 'Eternal God! that through thy purveyance  
 Leadest this world by certain governance,  
 \*In idle,\* as men say, ye nothing make;      \*idly, in vain\*  
 But, Lord, these grisly fiendly rockes blake,  
 That seem rather a foul confusion  
 Of work, than any fair creation  
 Of such a perfect wise God and stable,  
 Why have ye wrought this work unreasonable?  
 For by this work, north, south, or west, or east,

There is not foster'd man, nor bird, nor beast:  
 It doth no good, to my wit, but \*annoyeth.\* \*works mischief\* &7&gt;  
 See ye not, Lord, how mankind it destroyeth?  
 A hundred thousand bodies of mankind  
 Have rockes slain, \*all be they not in mind; \* \*though they are  
 Which mankind is so fair part of thy work, forgotten\*  
 Thou madest it like to thine owen mark.\* \*image  
 Then seemed it ye had a great cherte\* \*love, affection  
 Toward mankind; but how then may it be  
 That ye such meanes make it to destroy?  
 Which meanes do no good, but ever annoy.  
 I wot well, clerkes will say as them lest,\* \*please  
 By arguments, that all is for the best,  
 Although I can the causes not y-know;  
 But thilke\* God that made the wind to blow, \*that  
 As keep my lord, this is my conclusion:  
 To clerks leave I all disputation:  
 But would to God that all these rockes blake  
 Were sunken into helle for his sake  
 These rockes slay mine hearte for the fear.'  
 Thus would she say, with many a piteous tear.

Her friendes saw that it was no disport  
 To roame by the sea, but discomfort,  
 And shope\* them for to playe somewhere else. \*arranged  
 They leade her by rivers and by wells,  
 And eke in other places delectables;  
 They dancen, and they play at chess and tables.\* \*backgammon  
 So on a day, right in the morning-tide,  
 Unto a garden that was there beside,  
 In which that they had made their ordinance\* \*provision, arrangement  
 Of victual, and of other purveyance,  
 They go and play them all the longe day:  
 And this was on the sixth morrow of May,  
 Which May had painted with his softe showers  
 This garden full of leaves and of flowers:  
 And craft of manne's hand so curiously  
 Arrayed had this garden truely,  
 That never was there garden of such price,\* \*value, praise  
 \*But if\* it were the very Paradise. \*unless\*  
 Th'odour of flowers, and the freshe sight,  
 Would have maked any hearte light

That e'er was born, \*but if\* too great sickness                    \*unless\*  
Or too great sorrow held it in distress;  
So full it was of beauty and pleasance.  
And after dinner they began to dance  
And sing also, save Dorigen alone  
Who made alway her complaint and her moan,  
For she saw not him on the dance go  
That was her husband, and her love also;  
But natheless she must a time abide  
And with good hope let her sorrow slide.

Upon this dance, amonge other men,  
Danced a squier before Dorigen  
That fresher was, and jollier of array  
\*As to my doom,\* than is the month of May.                    \*in my judgment\*  
He sang and danced, passing any man,  
That is or was since that the world began;  
Therewith he was, if men should him describe,  
One of the \*beste faring\* men alive,                    \*most accomplished\*  
Young, strong, and virtuous, and rich, and wise,  
And well beloved, and holden in great price.\*                    \*esteem, value\*  
And, shortly if the sooth I telle shall,  
\*Unweeting of\* this Dorigen at all,                    \*unknown to\*  
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,  
Which that y-called was Aurelius,  
Had lov'd her best of any creature  
Two year and more, as was his aventure; \*                    \*fortune\*  
But never durst he tell her his grievance;  
Withoute cup he drank all his penance.  
He was despaired, nothing durst he say,  
Save in his songes somewhat would he wray\*                    \*betray\*  
His woe, as in a general complaining;  
He said, he lov'd, and was belov'd nothing.  
Of suche matter made he many lays,  
Songes, complaintes, roundels, virelays & & &  
How that he durste not his sorrow tell,  
But languished, as doth a Fury in hell;  
And die he must, he said, as did Echo  
For Narcissus, that durst not tell her woe.  
In other manner than ye hear me say,  
He durste not to her his woe bewray,  
Save that paraventure sometimes at dances,



Where younge folke keep their observances,  
 It may well be he looked on her face  
 In such a wise, as man that asketh grace,  
 But nothing wiste she of his intent.  
 Nath'less it happen'd, ere they thennes\* went,      \*thence (from the  
 Because that he was her neighebour, garden) \*  
 And was a man of worship and honour,  
 And she had knowen him \*of time yore,\*      \*for a long time\*  
 They fell in speech, and forth aye more and more  
 Unto his purpose drew Aurelius;  
 And when he saw his time, he saide thus:  
 Madam,' quoth he, 'by God that this world made,  
 So that I wist it might your hearte glade,\*      \*gladden  
 I would, that day that your Arviragus  
 Went over sea, that I, Aurelius,  
 Had gone where I should never come again;  
 For well I wot my service is in vain.  
 My guerdon\* is but bursting of mine heart.      \*reward  
 Madame, rue upon my paine's smart,  
 For with a word ye may me slay or save.  
 Here at your feet God would that I were grave.  
 I have now no leisure more to say:  
 Have mercy, sweet, or you will \*do me dey.'\*      \*cause me to die\*

She gan to look upon Aurelius;  
 'Is this your will,' quoth she, 'and say ye thus?  
 Ne'er erst,\* quoth she, 'I wiste what ye meant:      \*before  
 But now, Aurelius, I know your intent.  
 By thilke\* God that gave me soul and life,      \*that  
 Never shall I be an untrue wife  
 In word nor work, as far as I have wit;  
 I will be his to whom that I am knit;  
 Take this for final answer as of me.'  
 But after that \*in play\* thus saide she.      \*playfully, in jest\*  
 'Aurelius,' quoth she, 'by high God above,  
 Yet will I grante you to be your love  
 (Since I you see so piteously complain) :  
 Looke, what day that endelong\* Bretagne      \*from end to end of  
 Ye remove all the rockes, stone by stone,  
 That they not lette\* ship nor boat to gon,      \*prevent  
 I say, when ye have made this coast so clean  
 Of rockes, that there is no stone seen,

Then will I love you best of any man;  
 Have here my troth, in all that ever I can;  
 For well I wot that it shall ne'er betide.  
 Let such folly out of your hearte glide.  
 What dainty\* should a man have in his life      \*value, pleasure  
 For to go love another manne's wife,  
 That hath her body when that ever him liketh? '  
 Aurelius full often sore siketh; \*                      \*sigheth  
 Is there none other grace in you? ' quoth he,  
 'No, by that Lord,' quoth she, 'that maked me.  
 Woe was Aurelius when that he this heard,  
 And with a sorrowful heart he thus answer'd.  
 'Madame, quoth he, 'this were an impossible.  
 Then must I die of sudden death horrible.'  
 And with that word he turned him anon.

Then came her other friends many a one,  
 And in the alleys roamed up and down,  
 And nothing wist of this conclusion,  
 But suddenly began to revel new,  
 Till that the brighte sun had lost his hue,  
 For th' horizon had reft the sun his light  
 (This is as much to say as it was night) :  
 And home they go in mirth and in solace;  
 Save only wretch'd Aurelius, alas  
 He to his house is gone with sorrowful heart.  
 He said, he may not from his death astart.\*                      \*escape  
 Him seemed, that he felt his hearte cold.  
 Up to the heav'n his handes gan he hold,  
 And on his knees bare he set him down.  
 And in his raving said his orisoun.\*                      \*prayer  
 For very woe out of his wit he braid; \*                      \*wandered  
 He wist not what he spake, but thus he said;  
 With piteous heart his plaint hath he begun  
 Unto the gods, and first unto the Sun.  
 He said; 'Apollo God and governour  
 Of every plante, herbe, tree, and flower,  
 That giv'st, after thy declination,  
 To each of them his time and his season,  
 As thine herberow\* changeth low and high;                      \*dwelling, situation  
 Lord Phoebus: cast thy merciable eye  
 On wretched Aurelius, which that am but lorn.\*                      \*undone

Lo, lord, my lady hath my death y-sworn,  
 Withoute guilt, but\* thy benignity  
 Upon my deadly heart have some pity.  
 For well I wot, Lord Phoebus, if you lest,\*  
 Ye may me helpe, save my lady, best.  
 Now vouchsafe, that I may you devise\*  
 How that I may be holp,\* and in what wise.  
 Your blissful sister, Lucina the sheen, &9&gt;  
 That of the sea is chief goddess and queen, -  
 Though Neptunus have deity in the sea,  
 Yet emperess above him is she; -  
 Ye know well, lord, that, right as her desire  
 Is to be quick'd\* and lighted of your fire,  
 For which she followeth you full busily,  
 Right so the sea desireth naturally  
 To follow her, as she that is goddess  
 Both in the sea and rivers more and less.  
 Wherefore, Lord Phoebus, this is my request,  
 Do this miracle, or \*do mine hearte brest; \*  
 That flow, next at this opposition, to burst\*  
 Which in the sign shall be of the Lion,  
 As praye her so great a flood to bring,  
 That five fathom at least it overspring  
 The highest rock in Armoric Bretagne,  
 And let this flood endure yeares twain:  
 Then certes to my lady may I say,  
 'Holde your hest,' the rockes be away.  
 Lord Phoebus, this miracle do for me,  
 Pray her she go no faster course than ye;  
 I say this, pray your sister that she go  
 No faster course than ye these yeares two:  
 Then shall she be even at full alway,  
 And spring-flood laste bothe night and day.  
 And \*but she\* vouchesafe in such mannere  
 To grante me my sov'reign lady dear,  
 Pray her to sink every rock adown  
 Into her owen darke regioun  
 Under the ground, where Pluto dwelleth in  
 Or nevermore shall I my lady win.  
 Thy temple in Delphos will I barefoot seek.  
 Lord Phoebus! see the teares on my cheek  
 And on my pain have some compassioun.'

\*unless

\*please

\*tell, explain

\*helped

\*quickened

\*cause my heart

\*if she do not\*

And with that word in sorrow he fell down,  
And longe time he lay forth in a trance.  
His brother, which that knew of his penance,\*                    \*distress  
Up caught him, and to bed he hath him brought,  
Despaired in this torment and this thought  
Let I this woeful creature lie;  
Choose he for me whe'er\* he will live or die.                    \*whether

Arviragus with health and great honour  
(As he that was of chivalry the flow'r)  
Is come home, and other worthy men.  
Oh, blissful art thou now, thou Dorigen!  
Thou hast thy lusty husband in thine arms,  
The freshe knight, the worthy man of arms,  
That loveth thee as his own hearte's life:  
\*Nothing list him to be imaginatif\*                    \*he cared not to fancy\*  
If any wight had spoke, while he was out,  
To her of love; he had of that no doubt; \*                    \*fear, suspicion  
He not intended\* to no such mattere,                    \*occupied himself with  
But danced, jousted, and made merry cheer.  
And thus in joy and bliss I let them dwell,  
And of the sick Aurelius will I tell  
In languor and in torment furious  
Two year and more lay wretch'd Aurelius,  
Ere any foot on earth he mighte gon;  
Nor comfort in this time had he none,  
Save of his brother, which that was a clerk.\*                    \*scholar  
He knew of all this woe and all this work;  
For to none other creature certain  
Of this matter he durst no worde sayn;  
Under his breast he bare it more secree  
Than e'er did Pamphilus for Galatee.&lt;10&gt;  
His breast was whole withoute for to seen,  
But in his heart aye was the arrow keen,  
And well ye know that of a sursanure &lt;11&gt;  
In surgery is perilous the cure,  
But\* men might touch the arrow or come thereby.                    \*except  
His brother wept and wailed privily,  
Till at the last him fell in remembrance,  
That while he was at Orleans &lt;12&gt; in France, -  
As younge clerkes, that be likerous\* -                    \*eager  
To readen artes that be curious,

Seeken in every \*halk and every hern\*      \*nook and corner\* &lt;13&gt;  
 Particular sciences for to learn,-  
 He him remember'd, that upon a day  
 At Orleans in study a book he say\*      \*saw  
 Of magic natural, which his fellow,  
 That was that time a bachelor of law  
 All\* were he there to learn another craft,      \*though  
 Had privily upon his desk y-laft;  
 Which book spake much of operations  
 Touching the eight and-twenty mansions  
 That longe to the Moon, and such folly  
 As in our dayes is not worth a fly;  
 For holy church's faith, in our believe,\*      \*belief, creed  
 Us suff'reth none illusion to grieve.  
 And when this book was in his remembrance  
 Anon for joy his heart began to dance,  
 And to himself he saide privily;  
 'My brother shall be warish'd\* hastily      \*cured  
 For I am sicker\* that there be sciences,      \*certain  
 By which men make divers apparences,  
 Such as these subtle tregetoures play.      \*tricksters &lt;14&gt;  
 For oft at feaste's have I well heard say,  
 That tregetours, within a halle large,  
 Have made come in a water and a barge,  
 And in the halle rowen up and down.  
 Sometimes hath seemed come a grim lioun,  
 And sometimes flowers spring as in a mead;  
 Sometimes a vine, and grapes white and red;  
 Sometimes a castle all of lime and stone;  
 And, when them liked, voided\* it anon:      \*vanished  
 Thus seemed it to every manne's sight.  
 Now then conclude I thus; if that I might  
 At Orleans some olde fellow find,  
 That hath these Moone's mansions in mind,  
 Or other magic natural above.  
 He should well make my brother have his love.  
 For with an appearance a clerk\* may make,      \*learned man  
 To manne's sight, that all the rockes blake  
 Of Bretagne were voided\* every one,      \*removed  
 And shippes by the brinke come and gon,  
 And in such form endure a day or two;  
 Then were my brother warish'd\* of his woe,      \*cured

Then must she needes \*holde her behest,\*      \*keep her promise\*  
Or elles he shall shame her at the least.'  
Why should I make a longer tale of this?  
Unto his brother's bed he comen is,  
And such comfort he gave him, for to gon  
To Orleans, that he upstart anon,  
And on his way forth-ward then is he fare,\*      \*gone  
In hope for to be lissed\* of his care.      \*eased of &lt;15&gt;

When they were come almost to that city,  
\*But if it were\* a two furlong or three,      \*all but\*  
A young clerk roaming by himself they met,  
Which that in Latin \*thriftily them gret.\*      \*greeted them  
And after that he said a wondrous thing; civilly\*  
I know,' quoth he, 'the cause of your coming; '  
Aud ere they farther any foote went,  
He told them all that was in their intent.

The Breton clerk him asked of fellows  
The which he hadde known in olde daws,\*      \*days  
And he answer'd him that they deade were,  
For which he wept full often many a tear.  
Down off his horse Aurelius light anon,  
And forth with this magician is be gone  
Home to his house, and made him well at ease;  
Them lacked no vitail\* that might them please.      \*victuals, food

So well-array'd a house as there was one,  
Aurelius in his life saw never none.  
He shewed him, ere they went to suppere,  
Forestes, parkes, full of wilde deer.  
There saw he hartes with their hornes high,  
The greatest that were ever seen with eye.  
He saw of them an hundred slain with hounds,  
And some with arrows bleed of bitter wounds.  
He saw, when voided\* were the wilde deer,      \*passed away  
These falconers upon a fair rivere,  
That with their hawkes have the heron slain.  
Then saw he knightes jousting in a plain.  
And after this he did him such pleasance,  
That he him shew'd his lady on a dance,  
In which himselfe danced, as him thought.  
And when this master, that this magic wrought,  
Saw it was time, he clapp'd his handes two,

And farewell, all the revel is y-go.\*                    \*gone, removed  
And yet remov'd they never out of the house,  
While they saw all the sightes marvellous;  
But in his study, where his bookes be,  
They satte still, and no wight but they three.  
To him this master called his squier,

And said him thus, 'May we go to supper?  
Almost an hour it is, I undertake,  
Since I you bade our supper for to make,  
When that these worthy men wente with me  
Into my study, where my bookes be.'  
'Sir,' quoth this squier, 'when it liketh you.  
It is all ready, though ye will right now.'  
'Go we then sup,' quoth he, 'as for the best;  
These amorous folk some time must have rest.'

At after supper fell they in treaty  
What summe should this master's guerdon\* be,                    \*reward  
To remove all the rockes of Bretagne,  
And eke from Gironde & to the mouth of Seine.  
He made it strange,\* and swore, so God him save,                    \*a matter of  
Less than a thousand pound he would not have, difficulty\*  
\*Nor gladly for that sum he would not gon.\*                    \*see note & ;\*

Aurelius with blissful heart anon  
Answered thus; 'Fie on a thousand pound!  
This wide world, which that men say is round,  
I would it give, if I were lord of it.  
This bargain is full-driv'n, for we be knit; \*                    \*agreed  
Ye shall be payed truly by my troth.  
But looke, for no negligence or sloth,  
Ye tarry us here no longer than to-morrow.'

'Nay,' quoth the clerk, \*'have here my faith to borrow.'\* \*I pledge my  
To bed is gone Aurelius when him lest, faith on it\*  
And well-nigh all that night he had his rest,  
What for his labour, and his hope of bliss,  
His woeful heart \*of penance had a liss.\*                    \*had a respite  
from suffering\*

Upon the morrow, when that it was day,  
Unto Bretagne they took the righte way,  
Aurelius and this magician beside,  
And be descended where they would abide:  
And this was, as the bookes me remember,

The colde frosty season of December.  
 Phoebus wax'd old, and hued like latoun,\* \*brass  
 That in his hote declinatioun  
 Shone as the burned gold, with streames\* bright; \*beams  
 But now in Capricorn adown he light,  
 Where as he shone full pale, I dare well sayn.  
 The bitter frostes, with the sleet and rain,  
 Destroyed have the green in every yard. \*courtyard, garden  
 Janus sits by the fire with double beard,  
 And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine:  
 Before him stands the brawn of tusked swine  
 And 'nowel'\* crieth every lusty man \*Noel &18&gt;  
 Aurelius, in all that ev'r he can,  
 Did to his master cheer and reverence,  
 And prayed him to do his diligence  
 To bringe him out of his paines smart,  
 Or with a sword that he would slit his heart.  
 This subtle clerk such ruth\* had on this man, \*pity  
 That night and day he sped him, that he can,  
 To wait a time of his conclusion;  
 This is to say, to make illusion,  
 By such an appearance of jugglery  
 (I know no termes of astrology) ,  
 That she and every wight should ween and say,  
 That of Bretagne the rockes were away,  
 Or else they were sunken under ground.  
 So at the last he hath a time found  
 To make his japes\* and his wretchedness \*tricks  
 Of such a \*superstitious cursedness.\* \*detestable villainy\*  
 His tables Toletanes &19&gt; forth he brought,  
 Full well corrected, that there lacked nought,  
 Neither his collect, nor his expanse years,  
 Neither his rootes, nor his other gears,  
 As be his centres, and his arguments,  
 And his proportional convenients  
 For his equations in everything.  
 And by his eighte spheres in his working,  
 He knew full well how far Alnath &20&gt; was shove  
 From the head of that fix'd Aries above,  
 That in the ninthe sphere consider'd is.  
 Full subtilly he calcul'd all this.  
 When he had found his firste mansion,



He knew the remnant by proportion;  
And knew the rising of his moone well,  
And in whose face, and term, and every deal;  
And knew full well the moone's mansion  
Accordant to his operation;  
And knew also his other observances,  
For such illusions and such meschances,\*            \*wicked devices  
As heathen folk used in thilke days.  
For which no longer made he delays;  
But through his magic, for a day or tway, &lt;21&gt;  
It seemed all the rockes were away.

Aurelius, which yet despaired is  
Whe'er\* he shall have his love, or fare amiss,            \*whether  
Awaited night and day on this miracle:  
And when he knew that there was none obstacle,  
That voided\* were these rockes every one,            \*removed  
Down at his master's feet he fell anon,  
And said; 'I, woeful wretch'd Aurelius,  
Thank you, my Lord, and lady mine Venus,  
That me have holpen from my cares cold.'  
And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,  
Where as he knew he should his lady see.  
And when he saw his time, anon right he  
With dreadful\* heart and with full humble cheer\*\*            \*fearful \*\*mien  
Saluteth hath his sovereign lady dear.  
'My rightful Lady,' quoth this woeful man,  
'Whom I most dread, and love as I best can,  
And lothest were of all this world displease,  
Were't not that I for you have such disease,\*            \*distress, affliction  
That I must die here at your foot anon,  
Nought would I tell how me is webegone.  
But certes either must I die or plain; \*            \*bewail  
Ye slay me guilteless for very pain.  
But of my death though that ye have no ruth,  
Advise you, ere that ye break your truth:  
Repente you, for thilke God above,  
Ere ye me slay because that I you love.  
For, Madame, well ye wot what ye have hight; \*            \*promised  
Not that I challenge anything of right  
Of you, my sovereign lady, but of grace:  
But in a garden yond', in such a place,







Honoured is throughout all Barbarie.  
O Teuta &27&gt; queen, thy wifely chastity  
To alle wives may a mirror be.' &28&gt;

Thus plained Dorigen a day or tway,  
Purposing ever that she woulde dey; \* \*die  
But natheless upon the thirde night  
Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight,  
And asked her why that she wept so sore.  
And she gan weepen ever longer more.  
'Alas,' quoth she, 'that ever I was born!  
Thus have I said,' quoth she; 'thus have I sworn. '  
And told him all, as ye have heard before:  
It needeth not rehearse it you no more.  
This husband with glad cheer,\* in friendly wise, \*demeanour  
Answer'd and said, as I shall you devise.\* \*relate  
'Is there aught elles, Dorigen, but this? '  
'Nay, nay,' quoth she, 'God help me so, \*as wis\* \*assuredly\*  
This is too much, an\* it were Godde's will.' \*if  
'Yea, wife,' quoth he, 'let sleepe what is still,  
It may be well par'venture yet to-day.  
Ye shall your trothe holde, by my fay.  
For, God so wisly\* have mercy on me, \*certainly  
\*I had well lever sticked for to be,\* \*I had rather be slain\*  
For very love which I to you have,  
But if ye should your trothe keep and save.  
Truth is the highest thing that man may keep.'  
But with that word he burst anon to weep,  
And said; 'I you forbid, on pain of death,  
That never, while you lasteth life or breath,  
To no wight tell ye this misaventure;  
As I may best, I will my woe endure,  
Nor make no countenance of heaviness,  
That folk of you may deeme harm, or guess.'  
And forth he call'd a squier and a maid.  
'Go forth anon with Dorigen,' he said,  
'And bringe her to such a place anon.'  
They take their leave, and on their way they gon:  
But they not wiste why she thither went;  
He would to no wight telle his intent.

This squier, which that hight Aurelius,

On Dorigen that was so amorous,  
 Of aventure happen'd her to meet  
 Amid the town, right in the quickest\* street,  
 As she was bound\* to go the way forthright  
 Toward the garden, there as she had hight.\*  
 And he was to the garden-ward also;  
 For well he spied when she woulde go  
 Out of her house, to any manner place;  
 But thus they met, of aventure or grace,  
 And he saluted her with glad intent,  
 And asked of her whitherward she went.  
 And she answered, half as she were mad,  
 'Unto the garden, as my husband bade,  
 My trothe for to hold, alas! alas! '  
 Aurelius gan to wonder on this case,  
 And in his heart had great compassion  
 Of her, and of her lamentation,  
 And of Arviragus, the worthy knight,  
 That bade her hold all that she hadde hight;  
 So loth him was his wife should break her truth\*  
 And in his heart he caught of it great ruth,\*  
 Considering the best on every side,  
 \*That from his lust yet were him lever abide,\*  
 Than do so high a churlish wretchedness\*  
 Against franchise,\* and alle gentleness;  
 For which in fewe words he saide thus;  
 'Madame, say to your lord Arviragus,  
 That since I see the greate gentleness  
 Of him, and eke I see well your distress,  
 That him were lever\* have shame (and that were ruth) \*\* \*rather \*\*pity  
 Than ye to me should breake thus your truth,  
 I had well lever aye\* to suffer woe,  
 Than to depart\* the love betwixt you two.  
 I you release, Madame, into your hond,  
 Quit ev'ry surement\* and ev'ry bond,  
 That ye have made to me as herebeforn,  
 Since thilke time that ye were born.  
 Have here my truth, I shall you ne'er reprove\*  
 \*Of no behest; \* and here I take my leave,  
 As of the truest and the beste wife promise\*  
 That ever yet I knew in all my life.  
 But every wife beware of her behest;

\*nearest  
 \*prepared, going &29&gt;  
 \*promised

\*troth, pledged word  
 \*pity

\*see note &30&gt;\*

\*wickedness

\*generosity

\*forever

\*sunder, split up

\*surety

\*reproach

\*of no (breach of)

On Dorigen remember at the least.  
Thus can a squier do a gentle deed,  
As well as can a knight, withoute drede.'\*

\*doubt

She thanked him upon her knees bare,  
And home unto her husband is she fare,\*  
And told him all, as ye have hearde said;  
And, truste me, he was so \*well apaid,\*  
That it were impossible me to write.  
Why should I longer of this case indite?  
Arviragus and Dorigen his wife  
In sov'reign blisse ledde forth their life;  
Ne'er after was there anger them between;  
He cherish'd her as though she were a queen,  
And she was to him true for evermore;  
Of these two folk ye get of me no more.

\*gone

\*satisfied\*

Aurelius, that his cost had \*all forlorn,\*  
Cursed the time that ever he was born.  
'Alas! ' quoth he, 'alas that I behight\*  
Of pured\* gold a thousand pound of weight  
To this philosopher! how shall I do?  
I see no more, but that I am fordo.\*  
Mine heritage must I needes sell,  
And be a beggar; here I will not dwell,  
And shamen all my kindred in this place,  
But\* I of him may gette better grace.  
But natheless I will of him assay  
At certain dayes year by year to pay,  
And thank him of his greate courtesy.  
My trothe will I keep, I will not he.'  
With hearte sore he went unto his coffer,  
And broughte gold unto this philosopher,  
The value of five hundred pound, I guess,  
And him beseeched, of his gentleness,  
To grant him \*dayes of\* the remenant;  
And said; 'Master, I dare well make avaunt,  
I failed never of my truth as yet.  
For sickerly my debte shall be quit  
Towardes you how so that e'er I fare  
To go a-begging in my kirtle bare:  
But would ye vouchesafe, upon surety,

\*utterly lost\*

\*promised

\*refined

\*ruined, undone

\*unless

\*time to pay up\*

Two year, or three, for to respite me,  
Then were I well, for elles must I sell  
Mine heritage; there is no more to tell.'

This philosopher soberly\* answer'd,  
And saide thus, when he these wordes heard;

\*gravely

'Have I not holden covenant to thee? '

'Yes, certes, well and truely,' quoth he.

'Hast thou not had thy lady as thee liked? '

'No, no,' quoth he, and sorrowfully siked.\*

\*sighed

'What was the cause? tell me if thou can.'

Aurelius his tale anon began,

And told him all as ye have heard before,

It needeth not to you rehearse it more.

He said, 'Arviragus of gentleness

Had lever\* die in sorrow and distress,

\*rather

Than that his wife were of her trothe false.'

The sorrow of Dorigen he told him als',\*

\*also

How loth her was to be a wicked wife,

And that she lever had lost that day her life;

And that her troth she swore through innocence;

She ne'er erst\* had heard speak of apparence\*\* \*before \*\*see note &lt;31&gt;

That made me have of her so great pity,

And right as freely as he sent her to me,

As freely sent I her to him again:

This is all and some, there is no more to sayn.'

The philosopher answer'd; 'Leve\* brother,

\*dear

Eveeach of you did gently to the other;

Thou art a squier, and he is a knight,

But God forbidde, for his blissful might,

But if a clerk could do a gentle deed

As well as any of you, it is no drede\*

\*doubt

Sir, I release thee thy thousand pound,

As thou right now were crept out of the ground,

Nor ever ere now haddest knowen me.

For, Sir, I will not take a penny of thee

For all my craft, nor naught for my travail; \*

\*labour, pains

Thou hast y-payd well for my vitaille;

It is enough; and farewell, have good day.'

And took his horse, and forth he went his way.

Lordings, this question would I aske now,



Which was the moste free,\* as thinketh you?  
Now telle me, ere that ye farther wend.  
I can\* no more, my tale is at an end.

\*generous &32&gt;

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Friar's Tale

This worthy limitour, this noble Frere,  
He made always a manner louring cheer\* \*countenance  
Upon the Sompnour; but for honesty\* \*courtesy  
No villain word as yet to him spake he:  
But at the last he said unto the Wife:  
'Dame,' quoth he, 'God give you right good life,  
Ye have here touched, all so may I the,\* \*thrive  
In school matter a greate difficulty.  
Ye have said muche thing right well, I say;  
But, Dame, here as we ride by the way,  
Us needeth not but for to speak of game,  
And leave authorities, in Godde's name,  
To preaching, and to school eke of clergy.  
But if it like unto this company,  
I will you of a Sompnour tell a game;  
Pardie, ye may well knowe by the name,  
That of a Sompnour may no good be said;  
I pray that none of you be \*evil paid;\* \*dissatisfied\*  
A Sompnour is a runner up and down  
With mandements\* for fornicatioun, \*mandates, summonses\*  
And is y-beat at every towne's end.'  
Then spake our Host; 'Ah, sir, ye should be hend\* \*civil, gentle  
And courteous, as a man of your estate;  
In company we will have no debate:  
Tell us your tale, and let the Sompnour be.'  
'Nay,' quoth the Sompnour, 'let him say by me  
What so him list; when it comes to my lot,  
By God, I shall him quiten\* every groat! \*pay him off  
I shall him telle what a great honour  
It is to be a flattering limitour  
And his office I shall him tell y-wis'.  
Our Host answered, 'Peace, no more of this.'  
And afterward he said unto the frere,  
'Tell forth your tale, mine owen master dear.'

THE TALE.

Whilom\* there was dwelling in my country \*once on a time  
An archdeacon, a man of high degree,  
That boldely did execution,  
In punishing of fornication,  
Of witchecraft, and eke of bawdery,  
Of defamation, and adultery,  
Of churche-reeves,\* and of testaments, \*churchwardens  
Of contracts, and of lack of sacraments,  
And eke of many another manner\* crime, \*sort of  
Which needeth not rehearsen at this time,  
Of usury, and simony also;  
But, certes, lechours did he greatest woe;  
They shoulde singen, if that they were hent;\* \*caught  
And smale tithers&1> were foul y-shent,\* \*troubled, put to shame  
If any person would on them complain;  
There might astert them no pecunial pain.&2>  
For smalle tithes, and small offering,  
He made the people piteously to sing;  
For ere the bishop caught them with his crook,  
They weren in the archdeacon's book;  
Then had he, through his jurisdiction,  
Power to do on them correction.

He had a Sompnour ready to his hand,  
A slier boy was none in Engleland;  
For subtly he had his espaille,\* \*espionage  
That taught him well where it might aught avail.  
He coulde spare of lechours one or two,  
To teache him to four and twenty mo'.  
For, - though this Sompnour wood\* be as a hare, - \*furious, mad  
To tell his harlotry I will not spare,  
For we be out of their correction,  
They have of us no jurisdiction,  
Ne never shall have, term of all their lives.

'Peter; so be the women of the stives,'\* \*stews  
Quoth this Sompnour, 'y-put out of our cure.'\* \*care

'Peace, with mischance and with misaventure,'  
Our Hoste said, 'and let him tell his tale.  
Now telle forth, and let the Sompnour gale,\* \*whistle; bawl  
Nor spare not, mine owen master dear.'

This false thief, the Sompnour (quoth the Frere),  
 Had always bawdes ready to his hand,  
 As any hawk to lure in Engleland,  
 That told him all the secrets that they knew, -  
 For their acquaintance was not come of new;  
 They were his approvers\* privily. \*informers  
 He took himself at great profit thereby:  
 His master knew not always what he wan.\* \*won  
 Withoute mandement, a lewed\* man \*ignorant  
 He could summon, on pain of Christe's curse,  
 And they were inly glad to fill his purse,  
 And make him greate feastes at the nale.\* \*alehouse  
 And right as Judas hadde purses smale,\* \*small  
 And was a thief, right such a thief was he,  
 His master had but half \*his duety.\* \*what was owing him\*  
 He was (if I shall give him his laud)  
 A thief, and eke a Sompnour, and a bawd.  
 And he had wenches at his retinue,  
 That whether that Sir Robert or Sir Hugh,  
 Or Jack, or Ralph, or whoso that it were  
 That lay by them, they told it in his ear.  
 Thus were the wench and he of one assent;  
 And he would fetch a feigned mandement,  
 And to the chapter summon them both two,  
 And pill\* the man, and let the wenche go. \*plunder, pluck  
 Then would he say, 'Friend, I shall for thy sake  
 Do strike thee out of oure letters blake;\* \*black  
 Thee thar\* no more as in this case travail; \*need  
 I am thy friend where I may thee avail.'  
 Certain he knew of bribers many mo'  
 Than possible is to tell in yeare's two:  
 For in this world is no dog for the bow,&lt;3&gt;  
 That can a hurt deer from a whole know,  
 Bet\* than this Sompnour knew a sly lechour, \*better  
 Or an adult'rer, or a paramour:  
 And, for that was the fruit of all his rent,  
 Therefore on it he set all his intent.

And so befell, that once upon a day.  
 This Sompnour, waiting ever on his prey,  
 Rode forth to summon a widow, an old ribibe,&lt;4&gt;

Feigning a cause, for he would have a bribe.  
 And happen'd that he saw before him ride  
 A gay yeoman under a forest side:  
 A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen,  
 He had upon a courtepy\* of green, \*short doublet  
 A hat upon his head with fringes blake.\* \*black  
 'Sir,' quoth this Sompnour, 'hail, and well o'ertake.'  
 'Welcome,' quoth he, 'and every good fellow;  
 Whither ridest thou under this green shaw?\*' \*shade  
 Saide this yeoman; 'wilt thou far to-day?'  
 This Sompnour answer'd him, and saide, 'Nay.  
 Here faste by,' quoth he, 'is mine intent  
 To ride, for to raisen up a rent,  
 That longeth to my lorde's duety.'  
 'Ah! art thou then a bailiff?' 'Yea,' quoth he.  
 He durste not for very filth and shame  
 Say that he was a Sompnour, for the name.  
 'De par dieux,' & quoth this yeoman, 'leve\* brother, \*dear  
 Thou art a bailiff, and I am another.  
 I am unknowen, as in this country.  
 Of thine acquaintance I will praye thee,  
 And eke of brotherhood, if that thee list.\* \*please  
 I have gold and silver lying in my chest;  
 If that thee hap to come into our shire,  
 All shall be thine, right as thou wilt desire.'  
 'Grand mercy,'\* quoth this Sompnour, 'by my faith.' \*great thanks  
 Each in the other's hand his trothe lay'th,  
 For to be sworne brethren till they dey.\* \*die&6gt;  
 In dalliance they ride forth and play.

This Sompnour, which that was as full of jangles,\* \*chattering  
 As full of venom be those wariangles,\* \* butcher-birds &7>  
 And ev'r inquiring upon every thing,  
 'Brother,' quoth he, 'where is now your dwelling,  
 Another day if that I should you seech?\*' \*seek, visit  
 This yeoman him answered in soft speech;  
 Brother,' quoth he, 'far in the North country,&8>  
 Where as I hope some time I shall thee see  
 Ere we depart I shall thee so well wiss,\* \*inform  
 That of mine house shalt thou never miss.'  
 Now, brother,' quoth this Sompnour, 'I you pray,  
 Teach me, while that we ride by the way,

(Since that ye be a bailiff as am I,)  
Some subtilty, and tell me faithfully  
For mine office how that I most may win.  
And \*spare not\* for conscience or for sin, \*conceal nothing\*  
But, as my brother, tell me how do ye.'  
Now by my trothe, brother mine,' said he,  
As I shall tell to thee a faithful tale:  
My wages be full strait and eke full smale;  
My lord is hard to me and dangerous,\* \*niggardly  
And mine office is full laborious;  
And therefore by extortion I live,  
Forsooth I take all that men will me give.  
Algate\* by sleighte, or by violence, \*whether  
From year to year I win all my dispenche;  
I can no better tell thee faithfully.'  
Now certes,' quoth this Sompnour, 'so fare\* I; \*do  
I spare not to take, God it wot,  
\*But if\* it be too heavy or too hot. \*unless\*  
What I may get in counsel privily,  
No manner conscience of that have I.  
N'ere\* mine extortion, I might not live, \*were it not for  
For of such japes\* will I not be shrive.\*\* \*tricks \*\*confessed  
Stomach nor conscience know I none;  
I shrew\* these shrifte-fathers\*\* every one. \*curse \*\*confessors  
Well be we met, by God and by St Jame.  
But, leve brother, tell me then thy name,'  
Quoth this Sompnour. Right in this meane while  
This yeoman gan a little for to smile.

'Brother,' quoth he, 'wilt thou that I thee tell?  
I am a fiend, my dwelling is in hell,  
And here I ride about my purchasing,  
To know where men will give me any thing.  
\*My purchase is th' effect of all my rent\* \*what I can gain is my  
Look how thou ridest for the same intent sole revenue\*  
To winne good, thou reckest never how,  
Right so fare I, for ride will I now  
Into the worlde's ende for a prey.'

'Ah,' quoth this Sompnour, 'benedicite! what say y'?  
I weened ye were a yeoman truly. \*thought  
Ye have a manne's shape as well as I

Have ye then a figure determinate  
 In helle, where ye be in your estate?'\* \*at home  
 'Nay, certainly,' quoth he, there have we none,  
 But when us liketh we can take us one,  
 Or elles make you seem\* that we be shape \*believe  
 Sometime like a man, or like an ape;  
 Or like an angel can I ride or go;  
 It is no wondrous thing though it be so,  
 A lousy juggler can deceive thee.  
 And pardie, yet can I more craft\* than he.' \*skill, cunning  
 'Why,' quoth the Sompnour, 'ride ye then or gon  
 In sundry shapes and not always in one?'  
 'For we,' quoth he, 'will us in such form make.  
 As most is able our prey for to take.'  
 'What maketh you to have all this labour?'  
 'Full many a cause, leve Sir Sompnour,'  
 Saide this fiend. 'But all thing hath a time;  
 The day is short and it is passed prime,  
 And yet have I won nothing in this day;  
 I will intend\* to winning, if I may, \*apply myself  
 And not intend our thinges to declare:  
 For, brother mine, thy wit is all too bare  
 To understand, although I told them thee.  
 \*But for\* thou askest why laboure we: \*because\*  
 For sometimes we be Godde's instruments  
 And meanes to do his commandements,  
 When that him list, upon his creatures,  
 In divers acts and in divers figures:  
 Withoute him we have no might certain,  
 If that him list to stande thereagain.\* \*against it  
 And sometimes, at our prayer have we leave  
 Only the body, not the soul, to grieve:  
 Witness on Job, whom that we did full woe,  
 And sometimes have we might on both the two, -  
 This is to say, on soul and body eke,  
 And sometimes be we suffer'd for to seek  
 Upon a man and do his soul unrest  
 And not his body, and all is for the best,  
 When he withstandeth our temptation,  
 It is a cause of his salvation,  
 Albeit that it was not our intent  
 He should be safe, but that we would him hent.\* \*catch

And sometimes be we servants unto man,  
 As to the archbishop Saint Dunstan,  
 And to th'apostle servant eke was I.'  
 'Yet tell me,' quoth this Sompnour, 'faithfully,  
 Make ye you newe bodies thus alway  
 Of th' elements?' The fiend answered, 'Nay:  
 Sometimes we feign, and sometimes we arise  
 With deade bodies, in full sundry wise,  
 And speak as reas'nably, and fair, and well,  
 As to the Pythoness&lt;9&gt; did Samuel:  
 And yet will some men say it was not he.  
 I \*do no force of\* your divinity. \*set no value upon\*  
 But one thing warn I thee, I will not jape,\* jest  
 Thou wilt \*algates weet\* how we be shape: \*assuredly know\*  
 Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother dear,  
 Come, where thee needeth not of me to lear.\* \*learn  
 For thou shalt by thine own experience  
 \*Conne in a chair to rede of this sentence,\* \*learn to understand  
 Better than Virgil, while he was alive, what I have said\*  
 Or Dante also. &lt;10&gt; Now let us ride blive,\* \*briskly  
 For I will holde company with thee,  
 Till it be so that thou forsake me.'  
 'Nay,' quoth this Sompnour, 'that shall ne'er betide.  
 I am a yeoman, that is known full wide;  
 My trothe will I hold, as in this case;  
 For though thou wert the devil Satanus,  
 My trothe will I hold to thee, my brother,  
 As I have sworn, and each of us to other,  
 For to be true brethren in this case,  
 And both we go \*abouten our purchase.\* \*seeking what we  
 Take thou thy part, what that men will thee give, may pick up\*  
 And I shall mine, thus may we bothe live.  
 And if that any of us have more than other,  
 Let him be true, and part it with his brother.'  
 'I grante,' quoth the devil, 'by my fay.'  
 And with that word they rode forth their way,  
 And right at th'ent'ring of the towne's end,  
 To which this Sompnour shope\* him for to wend,\*\* \*shaped \*\*go  
 They saw a cart, that charged was with hay,  
 Which that a carter drove forth on his way.  
 Deep was the way, for which the carte stood:  
 The carter smote, and cried as he were wood,\* \*mad



'Heit Scot! heit Brok! what, spare ye for the stones?  
 The fiend (quoth he) you fetch body and bones,  
 As farforthly\* as ever ye were foal'd, \*sure  
 So muche woe as I have with you tholed.\* \*endured &11&gt;  
 The devil have all, horses, and cart, and hay.'  
 The Sompnour said, 'Here shall we have a prey,'  
 And near the fiend he drew, \*as nought ne were,\* \*as if nothing  
 Full privily, and rowned\* in his ear: were the matter\*  
 'Hearken, my brother, hearken, by thy faith, \*whispered  
 Hearest thou not, how that the carter saith?  
 Hent\* it anon, for he hath giv'n it thee, \*seize  
 Both hay and cart, and eke his capels\* three.' \*horses &12&gt;  
 'Nay,' quoth the devil, 'God wot, never a deal,\* whit  
 It is not his intent, trust thou me well;  
 Ask him thyself, if thou not trowest\* me, \*believest  
 Or elles stint\* a while and thou shalt see.' \*stop  
 The carter thwack'd his horses on the croup,  
 And they began to drawen and to stoop.  
 'Heit now,' quoth he; 'there, Jesus Christ you bless,  
 And all his handiwork, both more and less!  
 That was well twight,\* mine owen liart,\*\* boy, \*pulled \*\*grey&13&gt;  
 I pray God save thy body, and Saint Loy!  
 Now is my cart out of the slough, pardie.'  
 'Lo, brother,' quoth the fiend, 'what told I thee?  
 Here may ye see, mine owen deare brother,  
 The churl spake one thing, but he thought another.  
 Let us go forth abouten our voyage;  
 Here win I nothing upon this carriage.'

When that they came somewhat out of the town,  
 This Sompnour to his brother gan to rown;  
 'Brother,' quoth he, 'here wons\* an old rebeck,&14&gt; \*dwells  
 That had almost as lief to lose her neck.  
 As for to give a penny of her good.  
 I will have twelvecence, though that she be wood,\* \*mad  
 Or I will summon her to our office;  
 And yet, God wot, of her know I no vice.  
 But for thou canst not, as in this country,  
 Winne thy cost, take here example of me.'  
 This Sompnour clapped at the widow's gate:  
 'Come out,' he said, 'thou olde very trate;\* \*trot &15&gt;  
 I trow thou hast some friar or priest with thee.'

'Who clappeth?' said this wife; 'benedicite,  
God save you, Sir, what is your sweete will?'  
'I have,' quoth he, 'of summons here a bill.  
Up\* pain of cursing, looke that thou be \*upon  
To-morrow before our archdeacon's knee,  
To answer to the court of certain things.'  
'Now Lord,' quoth she, 'Christ Jesus, king of kings,  
So wisly\* helpe me, \*as I not may.\* \*surely \*as I cannot\*  
I have been sick, and that full many a day.  
I may not go so far,' quoth she, 'nor ride,  
But I be dead, so pricketh it my side.  
May I not ask a libel, Sir Sompnour,  
And answer there by my procuratour  
To such thing as men would appose\* me?' \*accuse  
'Yes,' quoth this Sompnour, 'pay anon, let see,  
Twelvepence to me, and I will thee acquit.  
I shall no profit have thereby but lit:\* \*little  
My master hath the profit and not I.  
Come off, and let me ride hastily;  
Give me twelvepence, I may no longer tarry.'

'Twelvepence!' quoth she; 'now lady Sainte Mary  
So wisly\* help me out of care and sin, \*surely  
This wide world though that I should it win,  
No have I not twelvepence within my hold.  
Ye know full well that I am poor and old;  
\*Kithe your almes\* upon me poor wretch.' \*show your charity\*  
'Nay then,' quoth he, 'the foule fiend me fetch,  
If I excuse thee, though thou should'st be spilt.\* \*ruined  
'Alas!' quoth she, 'God wot, I have no guilt.'  
'Pay me,' quoth he, 'or, by the sweet Saint Anne,  
As I will bear away thy newe pan  
For debte, which thou owest me of old, -  
When that thou madest thine husband cuckold, -  
I paid at home for thy correction.'  
'Thou liest,' quoth she, 'by my salvation;  
Never was I ere now, widow or wife,  
Summon'd unto your court in all my life;  
Nor never I was but of my body true.  
Unto the devil rough and black of hue  
Give I thy body and my pan also.'  
And when the devil heard her curse so

Upon her knees, he said in this mannere;  
'Now, Mabily, mine owen mother dear,  
Is this your will in earnest that ye say?'  
'The devil,' quoth she, 'so fetch him ere he dey,\* \*die  
And pan and all, but\* he will him repent.' \*unless  
'Nay, olde stoat,\* that is not mine intent,' \*polecat  
Quoth this Sompnour, 'for to repente me  
For any thing that I have had of thee;  
I would I had thy smock and every cloth.'  
'Now, brother,' quoth the devil, 'be not wroth;  
Thy body and this pan be mine by right.  
Thou shalt with me to helle yet tonight,  
Where thou shalt knowen of our privy\* \*secrets  
More than a master of divinity.'

And with that word the foule fiend him hent.\* \*seized  
Body and soul, he with the devil went,  
Where as the Sompnours have their heritage;  
And God, that maked after his image  
Mankinde, save and guide us all and some,  
And let this Sompnour a good man become.  
Lordings, I could have told you (quoth this Frere),  
Had I had leisure for this Sompnour here,  
After the text of Christ, and Paul, and John,  
And of our other doctors many a one,  
Such paines, that your heartes might agrise,\* \*be horrified  
Albeit so, that no tongue may devise,\* - \*relate  
Though that I might a thousand winters tell, -  
The pains of thilke\* cursed house of hell \*that  
But for to keep us from that cursed place  
Wake we, and pray we Jesus, of his grace,  
So keep us from the tempter, Satanas.  
Hearken this word, beware as in this case.  
The lion sits \*in his await\* alway \*on the watch\* &lt;16&gt;  
To slay the innocent, if that he may.  
Disposen aye your heartes to withstond  
The fiend that would you make thrall and bond;  
He may not tempte you over your might,  
For Christ will be your champion and your knight;  
And pray, that this our Sompnour him repent  
Of his misdeeds ere that the fiend him hent.\* \*seize



# The House Of Fame

BOOK I Incipit liber primus.

God turne us every dreem to gode!  
For hit is wonder, be the rode,  
To my wit, what causeth swevens  
Either on morwes, or on evens;  
And why the effect folweth of somme,  
And of somme hit shal never come;  
Why that is an avisioun,  
And this a revelacioun,  
Why this a dreem, why that a sweven,  
And nat to every man liche even;  
Why this a fantom, these oracles,  
I noot; but who-so of these miracles  
The causes knoweth bet than I,  
Devyne he; for I certainly  
Ne can hem nocht, ne never thinke  
To besily my wit to swinke,  
To knowe of hir signifiounce  
The gendres, neither the distaunce  
Of tymes of hem, ne the causes,  
For-why this more than that cause is;  
As if folkes complexiouns  
Make hem dreem of reflexiouns;  
Or ellis thus, as other sayn,  
For to greet feblenesse of brayn,  
By abstinence, or by seeknesse,  
Prison, stewe, or greet distresse;  
Or elles by disordinaunce  
Of naturel acustomaunce,  
That som man is to curious  
In studie, or melancolious,  
Or thus, so inly ful of drede,  
That no man may him bote bede;  
Or elles, that devocioun  
Of somme, and contemplacioun  
Causeth swiche dremes ofte;  
Or that the cruel lyf unsofte  
Which these ilke lovers leden

That hopen over muche or dreden,  
That purely hir impressiouns  
Causeth hem avisiouns;  
Or if that spirites have the might  
To make folk to dreem a-night  
Or if the soule, of propre kinde  
Be so parfit, as men finde,  
That hit forwot that is to come,  
And that hit warneth alle and somme  
Of everiche of hir adventures  
Be avisiouns, or by figures,  
But that our flesh ne hath no might  
To understonden hit aright,  
For hit is warned to derkly; --  
But why the cause is, noght wot I.  
Wel worthe, of this thing, grete clerkes,  
That trete of this and other werkes;  
For I of noon opinioun  
Nil as now make mensiou, n  
But only that the holy rode  
Turne us every dreem to gode!  
For never, sith that I was born,  
Ne no man elles, me biforn,  
Mette, I trowe stedfastly,  
So wonderful a dreem as I  
The tenthe day dide of Decembre,  
The which, as I can now remembre,  
I wol yow tellen every del,

#### The Invocation

But at my ginninge, trusteth wel,  
I wol make invocacioun,  
With special devocioun,  
Unto the god of slepe anoon,  
That dwelleth in a cave of stoon  
Upon a streem that cometh fro Lete,  
That is a flood of helle unswete;  
Besyde a folk men clepe Cimerie,  
Ther slepeth ay this god unmerie  
With his slepy thousand sones  
That alway for to slepe hir wone is --

And to this god, that I of rede,  
 Prey I, that he wol me spede  
 My sweven for to telle aright,  
 If every dreem stonde in his might.  
 And he, that mover is of al  
 That is and was, and ever shal,  
 So yive hem Ioye that hit here  
 Of alle that they dreme to-yere,  
 And for to stonden alle in grace  
 Of hir loves, or in what place  
 That hem wer levest for to stonde,  
 And shelde hem fro poverte and shonde,  
 And fro unhappe and eche disese,  
 And sende hem al that may hem plese,  
 That take hit wel, and scorne hit noght,  
 Ne hit misdemen in her thoght  
 Through malicious entencioun.  
 And who-so, through presumpcioun,  
 Or hate or scorne, or through envye,  
 Dispyt, or Iape, or vilanye,  
 Misdeme hit, preye I Iesus god  
 That (dreme he barfoot, dreme he shod),  
 That every harm that any man  
 Hath had, sith that the world began,  
 Befalle him therof, or he sterve,  
 And graunte he mote hit ful deserve,  
 Lo! with swich a conclusioun  
 As had of his avisioun  
 Cresus, that was king of Lyde,  
 That high upon a gebet dyde!  
 This prayer shal he have of me;  
 I am no bet in charite!  
 Now herkneth, as I have you seyde,  
 What that I mette or I abreyde.

### The Dream

Of Decembre the tenthe day,  
 Whan hit was night, to slepe I lay  
 Right ther as I was wont to done,  
 And fil on slepe wonder sone,  
 As he that wery was for-go

On pilgrimage myles two  
To the corseynt Leonard,  
To make lythe of that was hard.

But as I sleep, me mette I was  
Within a temple y-mad of glas;  
In whiche ther were mo images  
Of gold, stondinge in sondry stages,  
And mo riche tabernacles,  
And with perre mo pinacles,  
And mo curious portreytures,  
And queynte maner of figures  
Of olde werke, then I saw ever.  
For certeynly, I niste never  
Wher that I was, but wel wiste I,  
Hit was of Venus redely,  
The temple; for, in portreyture,  
I sawgh anoon-right hir figure  
Naked fleting in a see.

And also on hir heed, parde,  
Hir rose-garlond whyt and reed,  
And hir comb to kembe hir heed,  
Hir dowves, and daun Cupido  
Hir blinde sone, and Vulcano,  
That in his face was ful broun.

But as I romed up and doun,  
I fond that on a wal ther was  
Thus writen, on a table of bras:  
'I wol now singe, if that I can,  
The armes, and al-so the man,  
That first cam, through his destinee,  
Fugitif of Troye contree,  
In Itaile, with ful moche pyne,  
Unto the strondes of Lavyne.'  
And tho began the story anoon,  
As I shal telle yow echoon.

First saw I the destruccioun  
Of Troye, through the Greek Sinoun,  
That with his false forsweringe,  
And his chere and his lesinge  
Made the hors broght into Troye,  
Thorgh which Troyens loste al hir Ioye.  
And after this was grave, allas!



How Ilioun assailed was  
And wonne, and King Priam y-slayn,  
And Polites his sone, certayn,  
Dispitously, of dan Pirrus.

And next that saw I how Venus,  
Whan that she saw the castel brende,  
Doun fro the hevene gan descende,  
And bad hir sone Eneas flee;  
And how he fledde, and how that he  
Escaped was from al the pres,  
And took his fader, Anchises,  
And bar him on his bakke away,  
Cryinge, `Allas, and welaway!'  
The whiche Anchises in his honde  
Bar the goddes of the londe,  
Thilke that unbrende were.

And I saw next, in alle this fere,  
How Creusa, daun Eneas wyf,  
Which that he lovede as his lyf,  
And hir yonge sone Iulo,  
And eek Ascanius also,  
Fledden eek with drery chere,  
That hit was pitee for to here;  
And in a forest, as they wente,  
At a turninge of a wente,  
How Creusa was y-lost, allas!  
That deed, but noot I how, she was;  
How he hir soughte, and how hir gost  
Bad him to flee the Grekes ost,  
And seyde he most unto Itaile,  
As was his destinee, sauns faille;  
That hit was pitee for to here,  
Whan hir spirit gan appere,  
The wordes that she to him seyde,  
And for to kepe hir sone him preyde.  
Ther saw I graven eek how he,  
His fader eek, and his meynee,  
With his shippes gan to sayle  
Toward the contree of Itaile,  
As streight as that they mighte go.

Ther saw I thee, cruel Iuno,  
That art daun Iupiteres wyf,

That hast y-hated, al thy lyf,  
Al the Troyanisshe blood,  
Renne and crye, as thou were wood,  
On Eolus, the god of windes,  
To blowen out, of alle kindes,  
So loude, that he shulde drenche  
Lord and lady, grome and wenche,  
Of al the Troyan nacioun,  
Withoute any savacioun.

Ther saw I swich tempeste aryse,  
That every herte mighte agryse,  
To see hit peynted on the walle.

Ther saw I graven eek withalle,  
Venus, how ye, my lady dere,  
Wepinge with ful woful chere,  
Prayen Iupiter an hye  
To save and kepe that navye  
Of the Troyan Eneas,  
Sith that he hir sone was.

Ther saw I Ioves Venus kisse,  
And graunted of the tempest lisse.  
Ther saw I how the tempest stente,  
And how with alle pyne he wente,  
And prevely took arrivage  
In the contree of Cartage;  
And on the morwe, how that he  
And a knight, hight Achatee,  
Metten with Venus that day,  
Goinge in a queynt array,  
As she had ben an hunteresse,  
With wind blowinge upon hir tresse;  
How Eneas gan him to pleyne,  
Whan that he knew hir, of his peyne;  
And how his shippes dreynte were,  
Or elles lost, he niste where;  
How she gan him comforte tho,  
And bad him to Cartage go,  
And ther he shulde his folk finde  
That in the see were left behinde.

And, shortly of this thing to pace,  
She made Eneas so in grace  
Of Dido, quene of that contree,

That, shortly for to tellen, she  
Becam his love, and leet him do  
That that wedding longeth to.  
What shulde I speke more queynte,  
Or peyne me my wordes peynte,  
To speke of love? hit wol not be;  
I can not of that facultee.

And eek to telle the manere  
How they aqueynteden in-fere,  
Hit were a long proces to telle,  
And over long for yow to dwelle.

Ther sawgh I grave how Eneas  
Tolde Dido every cas,  
That him was tid upon the see.

And after grave was, how shee  
Made of him, shortly, at oo word,  
Hir lyf, hir love, hir luste, hir lord;  
And dide him al the reverence,  
And leyde on him al the dispence,  
That any woman mighte do,  
Weninge hit had al be so,  
As he hir swoor; and her-by demed  
That he was good, for he swich semed.  
Allas! what harm doth apparence,  
Whan hit is fals in existence!  
For he to hir a traitour was;  
Wherfor she slow hir-self, allas!

Lo, how a woman doth amis,  
To love him that unknowen is!  
For, by Crist, lo! thus hit fareth;  
'Hit is not al gold, that glareth.'  
For, al-so brouke I wel myn heed,  
Ther may be under goodliheed  
Kevered many a shrewed vyce;  
Therfor be no wight so nyce,  
To take a love only for chere,  
For speche, or for frendly manere;  
For this shal every woman finde  
That som man, of his pure kinde,  
Wol shewen outward the faireste,  
Til he have caught that what him leste;  
And thanne wol he causes finde,

And swere how that she is unkinde,  
Or fals, or prevy, or double was.  
Al this seye I by Eneas  
And Dido, and hir nyce lest,  
That lovede al to sone a gest;  
Therfor I wol seye a proverbe,  
That `he that fully knoweth therbe  
May saufly leye hit to his ye';  
Withoute dreed, this is no lye.

But let us speke of Eneas,  
How he betrayed hir, allas!  
And lefte hir ful unkindely.  
So whan she saw al-utterly,  
That he wolde hir of trouthe faile,  
And wende fro hir to Itaile,  
She gan to wringe hir hondes two.

`Allas!' quod she, `what me is wo!  
Allas! is every man thus trewe,  
That every yere wolde have a newe,  
If hit so longe tyme dure,  
Or elles three, peraventure?  
As thus: of oon he wolde have fame  
In magnifying of his name;  
Another for frendship, seith he;  
And yet ther shal the thridde be,  
That shal be taken for delyt,  
Lo, or for singular profyt.'

In swiche wordes gan to pleyne  
Dido of hir grete peyne,  
As me mette redely;  
Non other auctour alegge I.

`Allas!' quod she, `my swete herte,  
Have pitee on my sorwes smerte,  
And slee me not! go noght away!  
O woful Dido, wel away!  
Quod she to hir-selve tho.

`O Eneas! what wil ye do?  
O that your love, ne your bonde,  
That ye han sworn with your right honde,  
Ne my cruel deeth,' quod she,  
'May holde yow still heer with me!  
O, haveth of my deeth pitee!

Y-wis, my dere herte, ye  
Knowen ful wel that never yit,  
As fer-forth as I hadde wit,  
Agilte I yow in thoght ne deed.  
O, have ye men swich goodliheed  
In speche, and never a deel of trouthe?  
Allas, that ever hadde routhe  
Any woman on any man!  
Now see I wel, and telle can,  
We wrecched wimmen conne non art;  
For certeyn, for the more part,  
Thus we be served everichone.  
How sore that ye men conne grone,  
Anoon as we have yow receyved!  
Certeinly we ben deceyved;  
For, though your love laste a sesoun,  
Wayte upon the conclusioun,  
And eek how that ye determynen,  
And for the more part diffynen.

    `O, welawey that I was born!  
For through yow is my name lorn,  
And alle myn actes red and songe  
Over al this lond, on every tonge.  
O wikke Fame! for ther nis  
Nothing so swift, lo, as she is!  
O, sooth is, every thing is wist,  
Though hit be kevered with the mist.  
Eek, thogh I mighte duren ever,  
That I have doon, rekever I never,  
That I ne shal be seyde, allas,  
Y-shamed be through Eneas,  
And that I shal thus Iuged be --

    `Lo, right as she hath doon, now she  
Wol do eftsones, hardily;  
Thus seyth the peple prevely.' --  
But that is doon, nis not to done;  
Al hir compleynt ne al hir mone,  
Certeyn, availeth hir not a stre.

    And when she wiste sothly he  
Was forth unto his shippes goon,  
She in hir chambre wente anoon,  
And called on hir suster Anne,

And gan hir to compleyne thanne;  
And seyde, that she cause was  
That she first lovede Eneas,  
And thus counseilled hir therto.  
But what! when this was seyde and do,  
She roof hir-selve to the herte,  
And deyde through the wounde smerte.  
But al the maner how she deyde,  
And al the wordes that she seyde,  
Who-so to knowe hit hath purpos,  
Reed Virgile in Eneidos  
Or the Epistle of Ovyde,  
What that she wroot or that she dyde;  
And nere hit to long to endyte,  
By god, I wolde hit here wryte.

But, welaway! the harm, the routhe,  
That hath betid for swich untrouthe,  
As men may ofte in bokes rede,  
And al day seen hit yet in dede,  
That for to thenken hit, a tene is.

Lo, Demophon, duk of Athenis,  
How he forswor him ful falsly,  
And trayed Phillis wikkedly,  
That kinges doghter was of Trace,  
And falsly gan his terme pace;  
And when she wiste that he was fals,  
She heng hir-self right by the hals,  
For he had do hir swich untrouthe;  
Lo! was not this a wo and routhe?

Eek lo! how fals and reccheles  
Was to Breseida Achilles,  
And Paris to Enone;  
And Iason to Isiphile;  
And eft Iason to Medea;  
And Ercules to Dyanira;  
For he left hir for Iole,  
That made him cacche his deeth, parde.

How fals eek was he, Theseus;  
That, as the story telleth us,  
How he betrayed Adriane;  
The devel be his soules bane!  
For had he laughed, had he loured,

He moste have be al devoured,  
If Adriane ne had y-be!  
And, for she had of him pitee,  
She made him fro the dethe escape,  
And he made hir a ful fals Iape;  
For aftir this, within a whyle  
He lefte hir slepinge in an yle,  
Deserte alone, right in the see,  
And stal away, and leet hir be;  
And took hir suster Phedra tho  
With him, and gan to shippe go.  
And yet he had y-sworn to here,  
On al that ever he mighte swere,  
That, so she saved him his lyf,  
He wolde have take hir to his wyf;  
For she desired nothing elles,  
In certein, as the book us telles.

But to excusen Eneas  
Fulliche of al his greet trespas,  
The book seyth, Mercurie, sauns faile,  
Bad him go into Itaile,  
And leve Auffrykes regioun,  
And Dido and hir faire toun.

Tho saw I grave, how to Itaile  
Daun Eneas is go to saile;  
And how the tempest al began,  
And how he loste his steresman,  
Which that the stere, or he took keep,  
Smot over-bord, lo! as he sleep.

And also saw I how Sibyle  
And Eneas, besyde an yle,  
To helle wente, for to see  
His fader, Anchises the free.  
How he ther fond Palinurus,  
And Dido, and eek Deiphebus;  
And every tourment eek in helle  
Saw he, which is long to telle.  
Which who-so willeth for to knowe,  
He most rede many a rowe  
On Virgile or on Claudian,  
Or Daunte, that hit telle can.

Tho saw I grave al tharivaile

That Eneas had in Itaile;  
 And with King Latine his tretee,  
 And alle the batailles that he  
 Was at him-self, and eek his knightes,  
 Or he had al y-wonne his rightes;  
 And how he Turnus refte his lyf,  
 And wan Lavyna to his wyf;  
 And al the mervelous signals  
 Of the goddes celestials;  
 How, maugre Iuno, Eneas,  
 For al hir sleighte and hir compas,  
 Acheved al his aventure;  
 For Iupiter took of him cure  
 At the prayere of Venus;  
 The whiche I preye alwey save us,  
 And us ay of our sorwes lighte!  
 Whan I had seyen al this sighte  
 In this noble temple thus,  
 `A, Lord!' thoughte I, `that madest us,  
 Yet saw I never swich noblesse  
 Of images, ne swich richesse,  
 As I saw graven in this chirche;  
 But not woot I who dide hem wirche,  
 Ne wher I am, ne in what contree.  
 But now wol I go out and see,  
 Right at the wiket, if I can  
 See o-wher stering any man,  
 That may me telle wher I am.'  
 When I out at the dores cam,  
 I faste aboute me beheld.  
 Then saw I but a large feld,  
 As fer as that I mighte see,  
 Withouten toun, or hous, or tree,  
 Or bush, or gras, or ered lond;  
 For al the feld nas but of sond  
 As smal as man may see yet lye  
 In the desert of Libye;  
 Ne I to maner creature,  
 That is y-formed by nature,  
 Ne saw, me for to rede or wisse.  
 `O Crist,' thoughte I, `that art in blisse,  
 Fro fantom and illusioun



Me save!' and with devocioun  
Myn yen to the heven I caste.

Tho was I war, lo! at the laste,  
That faste be the sonne, as hye  
As kenne mighte I with myn ye,  
Me thoughte I saw an egle sore,  
But that hit semed moche more  
Then I had any egle seyn.

But this as sooth as deeth, certeyn,  
Hit was of golde, and shoon so bright,  
That never saw men such a sighte,  
But-if the heven hadde y-wonne  
Al newe of golde another sonne;  
So shoon the egles fethres brighte,  
And somewhat downward gan hit lighte.

Explicit liber primus.

Book II Incipit liber secundus.

Proem.

Now herkneth, every maner man  
That English understonde can,  
And listeth of my dreem to lere;  
For now at erste shul ye here  
So selly an avisioun,  
That Isaye, ne Scipioun,  
Ne King Nabugodonosor,  
Pharo, Turnus, ne Elcanor,  
Ne mette swich a dreem as this!  
Now faire blisfull, O Cipris,  
So be my favour at this tyme!  
And ye, me to endyte and ryme  
Helpeth, that on Parnaso dwelle  
By Elicon the clere welle.

O Thought, that wroot al that I mette,  
And in the tresorie hit shette  
Of my brayn! now shal men see  
If any vertu in thee be,  
To tellen al my dreem aright;  
Now kythe thyn engyne and might!

## The Dream.

This egle, of which I have yow told,  
That shoon with fethres as of gold,  
Which that so hye gan to sore,  
I gan beholde more and more,  
To see hir the beautee and the wonder;  
But never was ther dint of thonder,  
Ne that thing that men calle foudre,  
That smoot somtyme a tour to poudre,  
And in his swifte coming brende,  
That so swythe gan descende,  
As this foul, whan hit behelde  
That I a-roume was in the felde;  
And with his grimme pawes stronge,  
Within his sharpe nayles longe,  
Me, fleinge, at a swappe he hente,  
And with his sours agayn up wente,  
Me caryinge in his clawes starke  
As lightly as I were a larke,  
How high I can not telle yow,  
For I cam up, I niste how.  
For so astonied and a-sweved  
Was every vertu in my heved,  
What with his sours and with my drede,  
That al my feling gan to dede;  
For-why hit was to greet affray.

Thus I longe in his clawes lay,  
Til at the laste he to me spak  
In mannes vois, and seyde, `Awak!  
And be not so a-gast, for shame!  
And called me tho by my name,  
And, for I sholde the bet abreyde --  
Me mette -- `Awak,' to me he seyde,  
Right in the same vois and stevene  
That useth oon I coude nevene;  
And with that vois, soth for to sayn,  
My minde cam to me agayn;  
For hit was goodly seyde to me,  
So nas hit never wont to be.

And herewithal I gan to stere,

And he me in his feet to bere,  
 Til that he felte that I had hete,  
 And felte eek tho myn herte bete.  
 And tho gan he me to disporte,  
 And with wordes to comforte,  
 And sayde twyes, `Seynte Marie!  
 Thou art noyous for to carie,  
 And nothing nedeth hit, parde!  
 For al-so wis god helpe me  
 As thou non harm shalt have of this;  
 And this cas, that betid thee is,  
 Is for thy lore and for thy prow; --  
 Let see! darst thou yet loke now?  
 Be ful assured, boldely,  
 I am thy frend.' And therwith I  
 Gan for to wondren in my minde.  
 `O god,' thoughte I, `that madest kinde,  
 Shal I non other weyes dye?  
 Wher Ioves wol me stellifye,  
 Or what thing may this signifye?  
 I neither am Enok, ne Elye,  
 Ne Romulus, ne Ganymede  
 That was y-bore up, as men rede,  
 To hevne with dan Iupiter,  
 And maad the goddes boteler.'  
 Lo! this was tho my fantasye!  
 But he that bar me gan espie  
 That I so thoghte, and seyde this: --  
 `Thou demest of thy-self amis;  
 For Ioves is not ther-about --  
 I dar wel putte thee out of doute --  
 To make of thee as yet a sterre.  
 But er I bere thee moche ferre,  
 I wol thee telle what I am,  
 And whider thou shalt, and why I cam  
 To done this, so that thou take  
 Good herte, and not for fere quake.'  
 `Gladly,' quod I. -- `Now wel,' quod he: --  
 `First I, that in my feet have thee,  
 Of which thou hast a feer and wonder,  
 Am dwellinge with the god of thonder,  
 Which that men callen Iupiter,

That dooth me flee ful ofte fer  
To do al his comaundement.  
And for this cause he hath me sent  
To thee: now herke, by thy trouthe!  
Certeyn, he hath of thee routhe,  
That thou so longe trewely  
Hast served so ententifly  
His blinde nevew Cupido,  
And fair Venus goddesses also,  
Withoute guerdoun ever yit,  
And nevertheles has set thy wit --  
Although that in thy hede ful lyte is --  
To make bokes, songes, dytees,  
In ryme, or elles in cadence,  
As thou best canst, in reverence  
Of Love, and of his servants eke,  
That have his servise soght, and seke;  
And peynest thee to preyse his art,  
Although thou haddest never part;  
Wherfor, al-so god me blesse,  
Ioves halt hit greet humblesse  
And vertu eek, that thou wolt make  
A-night ful ofte thyn heed to ake,  
In thy studie so thou wrytest,  
And ever-mo of love endytest,  
In honour of him and preysinges,  
And in his foIkes furtheringes,  
And in hir matere al devysest,  
And noght him nor his folk despysed,  
Although thou mayst go in the daunce  
Of hem that him list not avaunce.

`Wherfor, as I seyde, y-wis,  
Iupiter considereth this,  
And also, beau sir, other thinges;  
That is, that thou hast no tydinges  
Of Loves folk, if they be glade,  
Ne of noght elles that god made;  
And noght only fro fer contree  
That ther no tyding comth to thee,  
But of thy verray neyghebores,  
That dwellen almost at thy dores,  
Thou herest neither that ne this;

For whan thy labour doon al is,  
And hast y-maad thy rekeninges,  
In stede of reste and newe thinges,  
Thou gost hoom to thy hous anoon;  
And, also domb as any stoon,  
Thou sittest at another boke,  
Til fully daswed is thy loke,  
And livest thus as an hermyte,  
Although thyn abstinence is lyte.

And therfor Ioves, through his grace,  
Wol that I bere thee to a place,  
Which that hight THE HOUS OF FAME,  
To do thee som disport and game,  
In som recompensacioun  
Of labour and devocioun  
That thou has had, lo! causeles,  
To Cupido, the reccheles!  
And thus this god, thorgh his meryte,  
Wol with som maner thing thee quyte,  
So that thou wolt be of good chere.  
For truste wel, that thou shalt here,  
When we be comen ther I seye,  
Mo wonder thinges, dar I leye:  
Of Loves folke mo tydinges,  
Both soth-sawes and lesinges;  
And mo loves newe begonne,  
And longe y-served loves wonne,  
And mo loves casuelly  
That been betid, no man wot why,  
But as a blind man stert an hare;  
And more Iolytee and fare,  
Whyl that they finde love of stele,  
As thinketh hem, and over-al wele;  
Mo discords, mo Ielousyes,  
Mo murmurs, and mo novelryes,  
And mo dissimulaciouns;  
And feyned reparaciouns;  
And mo berdes in two houres  
Withoute rasour or sisoures  
Y-maad, then greynes be of sondes;  
And eke mo holdinge in hondes,  
And also mo renovelaunces

Of olde forleten aqueyntaunces;  
Mo love-dayes and acordes  
Then on instruments ben cordes;  
And eke of loves mo eschaunges  
Than ever cornes were in graunges;  
Unnethe maistow trowen this?' --  
Quod he. `No, helpe me god so wis!' --  
Quod I. `No? why?' quod he. `For hit  
Were impossible, to my wit,  
Though that Fame hadde al the pyes  
In al a realme, and al the spyes,  
How that yet she shulde here al this,  
Or they espye hit.' `O yis, yis!  
Quod he to me, `that can I preve  
By resoun, worthy for to leve,  
So that thou yeve thyn advertence  
To understonde my sentence.

`First shalt thou heren wher she dwelleth,  
And so thyn owne book hit telleth;  
Hir paleys stant, as I shal seye,  
Right even in middes of the weye  
Betwixen hevene, erthe, and see;  
That, what-so-ever in al these three  
Is spoken, in privee or aperte,  
The way therto is so overte,  
And stant eek in so Iuste a place,  
That every soun mot to hit pace,  
Or what so comth fro any tonge,  
Be hit rouned, red, or songe,  
Or spoke in seurtee or in drede,  
Certein, hit moste thider nede.

`Now herkne wel; for-why I wille  
Tellen thee a propre skile,  
And worthy demonstracioun  
In myn imagynacioun.

`Geffrey, thou wost right wel this,  
That every kindly thing that is,  
Hath a kindly stede ther he  
May best in hit conserved be;  
Unto which place every thing,  
Through his kindly enclyning,  
Moveth for to come to,

Whan that hit is away therfro;  
As thus; lo, thou mayst al day see  
That any thing that hevy be,  
As stoon or leed, or thing of wighte,  
And ber hit never so hye on highte,  
Lat goo thyn hand, hit falleth doun.

`Right so seye I by fyre or soun,  
Or smoke, or other thinges lighte,  
Alwey they seke upward on highte;  
Whyl ech of hem is at his large,  
Light thing up, and dounward charge.

`And for this cause mayst thou see,  
That every river to the see  
Enclyned is to go, by kinde.  
And by these skilles, as I finde,  
Hath fish dwellinge in floode and see,  
And trees eek in erthe be.  
Thus every thing, by this resoun,  
Hath his propre mansioun,  
To which hit seketh to repaire,  
As ther hit shulde not apaire.  
Lo, this sentence is knowen couthe  
Of every philosophres mouthe,  
As Aristotle and dan Platon,  
And other clerkes many oon;  
And to confirme my resoun,  
Thou wost wel this, that speche is soun,  
Or elles no man mighte hit here;  
Now herkne what I wol thee lere.

`Soun is noght but air y-broken,  
And every speche that is spoken,  
Loud or privee, foul or fair,  
In his substaunce is but air;  
For as flaumbe is but lighted smoke,  
Right so soun is air y-broke.  
But this may be in many wyse,  
Of which I wil thee two devise,  
As soun that comth of pype or harpe.  
For whan a pype is blowen sharpe,  
The air is twist with violence,  
And rent; lo, this is my sentence;  
Eke, whan men harpe-stringes smyte,

Whether hit be moche or lyte,  
Lo, with the strook the air to-breketh;  
Right so hit breketh whan men speketh.  
Thus wost thou wel what thing is speche.

` Now hennesforth I wol thee teche,  
How every speche, or noise, or soun,  
Through his multiplicacioun,  
Thogh hit were pyped of a mouse,  
Moot nede come to Fames House.  
I preve hit thus -- tak hede now --  
Be experience; for if that thou  
Throwe on water now a stoon,  
Wel wost thou, hit wol make anoon  
A litel roundel as a cercle,  
Paraventer brood as a covercle;  
And right anoon thou shalt see weel,  
That wheel wol cause another wheel,  
And that the thridde, and so forth, brother,  
Every cercle causinge other,  
Wyder than himselve was;  
And thus, fro roundel to compas,  
Ech aboute other goinge,  
Caused of othres steringe,  
And multiplying ever-mo,  
Til that hit be so fer ygoo  
That hit at bothe brinkes be.  
Al-thogh thou mowe hit not y-see,  
Above, hit goth yet alway under,  
Although thou thenke hit a gret wonder.  
And who-so seith of trouthe I varie,  
Bid him proven the contrarie.  
And right thus every word, y-wis,  
That loude or privee spoken is,  
Moveth first an air aboute,  
And of this moving, out of doute,  
Another air anoon is meved,  
As I have of the water preved,  
That every cercle causeth other.  
Right so of air, my leve brother;  
Everich air in other stereth  
More and more, and speche up bereth,  
Or vois, or noise, or word, or soun,



Ay through multiplicacioun,  
Til hit be atte House of Fame; --  
Tak hit in earnest or in game.

` Now have I told, if thou have minde,  
How speche or soun, of pure kinde,  
Enclyned is upward to meve;  
This, mayst thou fele, wel I preve.  
And that the mansioun, y-wis,  
That every thing enclyned to is,  
Hath his kindeliche stede:  
That sheweth hit, withouten drede,  
That kindly the mansioun  
Of every speche, of every soun,  
Be hit either foul or fair,  
Hath his kinde place in air.  
And sin that every thing, that is  
Out of his kinde place, y-wis,  
Moveth thider for to go  
If hit a-weye be therfro,  
As I before have preved thee,  
Hit seweth, every soun, pardee,  
Moveth kindeIy to pace  
Al up into his kindely place.  
And this place of which I telle,  
Ther as Fame list to dwelle,  
Is set amidde of these three,  
Heven, erthe, and eek the see,  
As most conservatif the soun.  
Than is this the conclusioun,  
That every speche of every man,  
As I thee telle first began,  
Moveth up on high to pace  
Kindely to Fames place.

` Telle me this feithfully,  
Have I not preved thus simply,  
Withouten any subtiltee  
Of speche, or gret prolixitee  
Of termes of philosophye,  
Of figures of poetrye,  
Or colours of rethoryke?  
Pardee, hit oghte thee to lyke;  
For hard langage and hard matere

Is encombrous for to here  
 At ones; Wost thou not wel this?  
 And I answerde, and seyde, `Yis.'  
 `A ha!' quod he, `lo, so I can,  
 Lewedly to a lewed man  
 Speke, and shewe him swiche skiles,  
 That he may shake hem by the biles,  
 So palpable they shulden be.  
 But tel me this, now pray I thee,  
 How thinkth thee my conclusioun?'  
 Quod he. `A good persuasioun,'  
 Quod I, `hit is; and lyk to be  
 Right so as thou hast preved me.'  
 `By god,' quod he, `and as I leve,  
 Thou shalt have yit, or hit be eve,  
 Of every word of this sentence  
 A preve, by experience;  
 And with thyn eres heren wel  
 Top and tail, and everydel,  
 That every word that spoken is  
 Comth into Fames Hous, y-wis,  
 As I have seyde; what wilt thou more?'  
 And with this word upper to sore  
 He gan, and seyde, `Be Seynt Iame!  
 Now wil we speken al of game.' --  
 `How farest thou?' quod he to me,  
 `Wel,' quod I. `Now see,' quod he,  
 `By thy trouthe, yond adoun,  
 Wher that thou knowest any toun,  
 Or hous, or any other thing.  
 And whan thou hast of ought knowing,  
 Loke that thou warne me,  
 And I anoon shal telle thee  
 How fer that thou art now therfro.'  
 And I adoun gan loken tho,  
 And beheld felde and plaines,  
 And now hilles, and now mountaines,  
 Now valeys, and now forestes,  
 And now, unethes, grete bestes;  
 Now riveres, now citees,  
 Now tounes, and now grete trees,  
 Now shippes saillinge in the see.

But thus sone in a whyle he  
Was flowen fro the grounde so hye,  
That al the world, as to myn ye,  
No more semed than a prikke;  
Or elles was the air so thikke  
That I ne mighte not discerne.  
With that he spak to me as yerne,  
And seyde: `Seestow any toun  
Or ought thou knowest yonder doun?'

I seyde, `Nay.' `No wonder nis,'  
Quod he, `for half so high as this  
Nas Alexander Macedo;  
Ne the king, dan Scipio.  
That saw in dreame, at point devys,  
Helle and erthe, and paradys;  
Ne eek the wrecche Dedalus,  
Ne his child, nyce Icarus,  
That fleigh so highe that the hete  
His winges malt, and he fel wete  
In-mid the see, and ther he dreynte,  
For whom was maked moch compleynte.

`Now turn upward,' quod he, `thy face,  
And behold this large place,  
This air; but loke thou ne be  
Adrad of hem that thou shalt see;  
For in this regioun, certein,  
Dwelleth many a citezein,  
Of which that speketh dan Plato.  
These ben the eyrish bestes, lo!  
And so saw I al that meynee  
Bothe goon and also flee.

`Now,' quod he tho, `cast up thyn ye;  
See yonder, lo, the Galaxye,  
Which men clepeth the Milky Wey,  
For hit is whyt: and somme, parfey,  
Callen hit Watlinge Strete:  
That ones was y-brent with hete,  
Whan the sonnes sone, the rede,  
That highte Pheton, wolde lede  
Algate his fader cart, and gye.  
The cart-hors gonne wel espye  
That he ne coude no governaunce,

And gonne for to lepe and launce,  
And beren him now up, now down,  
Til that he saw the Scorpioun,  
Which that in heven a signe is yit,  
And he, for ferde, loste his wit,  
Of that, and leet the reynes goon  
Of his hors; and they anoon  
Gonne up to mounthe, and doun descende  
Til bothe the eyr and erthe brende;  
Til Iupiter, lo, atte laste,  
Him slow, and fro the carte caste.  
Lo, is it not a greet mischaunce,  
To lete a fole han governaunce  
Of thing that he can not demeine?'

And with this word, soth for to seyne,  
He gan alway upper to sore,  
And gladded me ay more and more,  
So feithfully to me spak he.

Tho gan I loken under me,  
And beheld the eyrish bestes,  
Cloudes, mistes, and tempestes,  
Snowes, hailes, reines, windes,  
And thengendring in hir kindes,  
And al the wey through whiche I cam;  
'O god,' quod I, 'that made Adam,  
Moche is thy might and thy noblesse!'

And tho thoughte I upon Boece,  
That writ, 'a thought may flee so hye,  
With fetheres of Philosophye,  
To passen everich element;  
And whan he hath so fer y-went,  
Than may be seen, behind his bak,  
Cloud, and al that I of spak.'

Tho gan I wexen in a were,  
And seyde, 'I woot wel I am here;  
But wher in body or in gost  
I noot, y-wis; but god, thou wost!'  
For more cleer entendement  
Nadde he me never yit y-sent.  
And than thoughte I on Marcian,  
And eek on Anleclaudian,  
That sooth was hir descripcioun

Of al the hevenes regioun,  
 As fer as that I saw the preve;  
 Therfor I can hem now beleve.  
 With that this egle gan to crye:  
 `Lat be,' quod he, `thy fantasye;  
 Wilt thou lere of sterres aught?'  
 `Nay, certainly,' quod I, `right naught;  
 `And why? for I am now to old.'  
 `Elles I wolde thee have told,'  
 Quod he, `the sterres names, lo,  
 And al the hevenes signes to,  
 And which they been.' `No fors,' quod I.  
 `Yis, pardee,' quod he; `wostow why?  
 For when thou redest poetrye,  
 How goddes gonne stellifye  
 Brid, fish, beste, or him or here,  
 As the Raven, or either Bere,  
 Or Ariones harpe fyn,  
 Castor, Pollux, or Delphyn,  
 Or Atlantes doughtres sevene,  
 How alle these arn set in hevene;  
 For though thou have hem ofte on honde,  
 Yet nostow not wher that they stonde.'  
 `No fors,' quod I, `hit is no nede;  
 I leve as wel, so god me spede,  
 Hem that wryte of this matere,  
 As though I knew hir places here;  
 And eek they shynen here so brighte,  
 Hit shulde shenden al my sighte  
 To loke on hem.' `That may wel be,'  
 Quod he. And so forth bar he me  
 A whyl, and than he gan to crye,  
 That never herde I thing so hye,  
 `Now up the heed; for al is wel;  
 Seynt Iulyan, lo, bon hostel!  
 See here the Hous of Fame, lo!  
 Maistow not heren that I do?'  
 `What?' quod I. `The grete soun,'  
 Quod he, `that rumbleth up and doun  
 In Fames Hous, full of tydinges,  
 Bothe of fair speche and chydinges,  
 And of fals and soth compounded.

Herke wel; hit is not rounded.  
 Herestow not the grete swogh?'  
 `Yis, pardee,' quod I, `wel y-nogh.'  
 `And what soun is it lyk?' quod he.  
 `Peter! lyk beting of the see,'  
 Quod I, `again the roches holowe,  
 Whan tempest doth the shippes swalowe;  
 And lat a man stonde, out of doute,  
 A myle thens, and here hit route;  
 Or elles lyk the last humblinge  
 After the clappe of oo thundringe,  
 Whan Ioves hath the aire y-bete;  
 But hit doth me for fere swete.'  
 `Nay, dred thee not thereof,' quod he,  
 `Hit is nothing wil byten thee;  
 Thou shalt non harme have, trewely.'  
 And with this word bothe he and I  
 As nigh the place arryved were  
 As men may casten with a spere.  
 I niste how, but in a strete  
 He sette me faire on my fete,  
 And seyde, `Walke forth a pas,  
 And tak thyn aventure or cas,  
 That thou shalt finde in Fames place.'  
 `Now,' quod I, `whyl we han space  
 To speke, or that I go fro thee,  
 For the love of god, tel me,  
 In sooth, that wil I of thee lere,  
 If this noise that I here  
 Be as I have herd thee tellen,  
 Of folk that doun in erthe dwellen,  
 And cometh here in the same wyse  
 As I thee herde or this devyse;  
 And that ther lyves body nis  
 In al that hous that yonder is,  
 That maketh al this loude fare?'  
 `No,' quod he, `by Seynte Clare,  
 And also wis god rede me!  
 But o thinge I wil warne thee  
 Of the which thou wolt have wonder.  
 Lo, to the House of Fame yonder  
 Thou wost how cometh every speche,

Hit nedeth noght thee eft to teche.  
But understand now right wel this;  
Whan any speche y-comen is  
Up to the paleys, anon-right  
Hit wexeth lyk the same wight,  
Which that the word in erthe spak,  
Be hit clothed red or blak;  
And hath so verray his lyknesse  
That spak the word, that thou wilt gesse  
That hit the same body be,  
Man or woman, he or she,  
And is not this a wonder thing?'  
'Yis,' quod I tho, 'by hevene king!'  
And with this worde, 'Farwel,' quod he,  
'And here I wol abyden thee;  
And god of hevene sende thee grace,  
Som good to lernen in this place,'  
And I of him took leve anoon,  
And gan forth to the paleys goon.

Explicit liber secundus.

Book III Incipit liber tercius.

Invocation.

O god of science and of light,  
Apollo, through thy grete might,  
This litel laste book thou gye!  
Nat that I wilne, for maistrye,  
Here art poetical be shewed;  
But, for the rym is light and lewed,  
Yit make hit sumwhat agreable,  
Though som vers faile in a sillable;  
And that I do no diligence  
To shewe craft, but o sentence.  
And if, divyne vertu, thou  
Wilt helpe me to shewe now  
That in myn hede y-marked is --  
Lo, that is for to menen this,  
The Hous of Fame for to descryve --  
Thou shalt see me go, as blyve,

Unto the nexte laure I see,  
And kisse hit, for hit is thy tree;  
Now entreth in my brest anoon!

The Dream.

Whan I was fro this egle goon,  
I gan beholde upon this place.  
And certein, or I ferther pace,  
I wol yow al the shap devyse  
Of hous and site; and al the wyse  
How I gan to this place aproche  
That stood upon so high a roche,  
Hyer stant ther noon in Spaine.  
But up I clomb with alle paine,  
And though to climbe hit greved me,  
Yit I ententif was to see,  
And for to pouren wonder lowe,  
If I coude any weyes knowe  
What maner stoon this roche was;  
For hit was lyk a thing of glas,  
But that hit shoon ful more clere;  
But of what congeled matere  
Hit was, I niste redely.

But at the laste espyed I,  
And found that hit was, every deel,  
A roche of yse, and not of steel.  
Thoughte I, `By Seynt Thomas of Kent!  
This were a feble foundement  
To bilden on a place hye;  
He ought him litel glorifye  
That her-on bilt, god so me save!'

Tho saw I al the half y-grave  
With famous folkes names fele,  
That had y-been in mochel wele,  
And hir fames wyde y-blowe.  
But wel unethes coude I knowe  
Any lettres for to rede  
Hir names by; for, out of drede,  
They were almost of-thowed so,  
That of the lettres oon or two  
Was molte away of every name,



So unfamous was wexe hir fame;  
 But men seyn, `What may ever laste?'  
 Tho gan I in myn herte caste,  
 That they were molte away with hete,  
 And not away with stormes bete.  
 For on that other syde I sey  
 Of this hille, that northward lay,  
 How hit was writen ful of names  
 Of folk that hadden grete fames  
 Of olde tyme, and yit they were  
 As fresshe as men had writen hem there  
 The selve day right, or that houre  
 That I upon hem gan to poure.  
 But wel I wiste what hit made;  
 Hit was conserved with the shade --  
 Al this wrytinge that I sy --  
 Of a castel, that stood on hy,  
 And stood eek on so cold a place,  
 That hete mighte hit not deface.  
 Tho gan I up the hille to goon,  
 And fond upon the coppe a woon,  
 That alle the men that ben on lyve  
 Ne han the cunning to descryve  
 The beautee of that ilke place,  
 Ne coude casten no compace  
 Swich another for to make,  
 That mighte of beautee be his make  
 Ne be so wonderliche y-wrought;  
 That hit astonieth yit my thought,  
 And maketh al my wit to swinke  
 On this castel to bethinke.  
 So that the grete craft, beautee,  
 The cast, and curiositee  
 Ne can I not to yow devyse,  
 My wit ne may me not suffyse.  
 But natheles al the substance  
 I have yit in my remembrance;  
 For-why me thoughte, by Seynt Gyle!  
 Al was of stone of beryle,  
 Bothe castel and the tour,  
 And eek the halle, and every bour,  
 Withouten peces or Ioininges,

But many subtil compassinges,  
Babewinnes and pinacles,  
Imageries and tabernacles,  
I saw; and ful eek of windowes,  
As flakes falle in grete snowes.  
And eek in ech of the pinacles  
Weren sondry habitacles,  
In whiche stoden, al withoute --  
Ful the castel, al aboute --  
Of alle maner of minstrales,  
And gestiours, that tellen tales  
Bothe of weping and of game,  
Of al that longeth unto Fame.

Ther herde I pleyen on an harpe  
That souned bothe wel and sharpe,  
Orpheus ful craftely,  
And on his syde, faste by,  
Sat the harper Orion,  
And Eacides Chiron,  
And other harpers many oon,  
And the Bret Glascurion;  
And smale harpers with her glees  
Saten under hem in sees,  
And gunne on hem upward to gape,  
And countrefete hem as an ape,  
Or as craft countrefeteth kinde.

Tho saugh I stonden hem behinde,  
A-fer fro hem, al by hemselve,  
Many thousand tymes twelve,  
That maden loude menstralcyes  
In cornemuse and shalmyes,  
And many other maner pype,  
That craftely begunne pype  
Bothe in doucet and in rede,  
That ben at festes with the brede;  
And many floute and liling-horne,  
And pypes made of grene corne,  
As han thise litel herde-gromes  
That kepen bestes in the bromes.

Ther saugh I than Atiteris,  
And of Athenes dan Pseustis,  
And Marcia that lost her skin,

Bothe in face, body, and chin,  
For that she wolde envyen, lo!  
To pypen bet than Apollo.  
Ther saugh I famous, olde and yonge,  
Pypers of the Duche tonge,  
To lerne love-daunces, springes,  
Reyes, and these straunge thinges.

Tho saugh I in another place  
Stonden in a large space,  
Of hem that maken bloody soun  
In trumpe, beme, and clarioun;  
For in fight and blood-shedinge  
Is used gladly clarioninge.

Ther herde I trumpen Messenus,  
Of whom that speketh Virgilius.  
Ther herde I Ioab trumpe also,  
Theodomas, and other mo;  
And alle that used clarion  
In Cataloigne and Aragon,  
That in hir tyme famous were  
To lerne, saugh I trumpe there.

Ther saugh I sitte in other sees,  
Pleyinge upon sondry glees,  
Whiche that I cannot nevene,  
Mo then sterres been in hevne,  
Of whiche I nil as now not ryme,  
For ese of yow, and losse of tyme:  
For tyme y-lost, this knowen ye,  
By no way may recovered be.

Ther saugh I pleyen Iogelours,  
Magiciens and tregetours,  
And phitonesses, charmeresses,  
Olde wicches, sorceresses,  
That use exorsisaciouns,  
And eek thise fumigaciouns;  
And clerkes eek, which conne wel  
Al this magyke naturel,  
That craftely don hir ententes,  
To make, in certeyn ascendentes,  
Images, lo, through which magyk  
To make a man ben hool or syk.  
Ther saugh I thee queen Medea,

And Circes eke, and Calipsa;  
Ther saugh I Hermes Ballenus,  
Lymote, and eek Simon Magus.  
Ther saugh I, and knew hem by name,  
That by such art don men han fame.  
Ther saugh I Colle tregetour  
Upon a table of sicamour  
Pleye an uncouthe thing to telle;  
I saugh him carien a wind-melle  
Under a walsh-note shale.

What shuld I make lenger tale  
Of al the peple that I say,  
Fro hennes in-to domesday?

Whan I had al this folk beholde,  
And fond me lous, and noght y-holde,  
And eft y-mused longe whyle  
Upon these walles of beryle,  
That shoon ful lighter than a glas,  
And made wel more than hit was  
To semen, every thing, y-wis,  
As kinde thing of fames is;  
I gan forth romen til I fond  
The castel-yate on my right hond,  
Which that so wel corven was  
That never swich another nas;  
And yit hit was by aventure  
Y-wrought, as often as by cure.

Hit nedeth noght yow for to tellen,  
To make yow to longe dwellen,  
Of this yates florissinges,  
Ne of compasses, ne of kervinges,  
Ne how they hatte in masoneries,  
As, corbetz fulle of imageries.  
But, lord! so fair hit was to shewe,  
For hit was al with gold behewe.  
But in I wente, and that anoon;  
Ther mette I crying many oon, --  
'A larges, larges, hold up wel!  
God save the lady of this pel,  
Our owne gentil lady Fame,  
And hem that wilnen to have name  
Of us!' Thus herde I cryen alle,

And faste comen out of halle,  
And shoken nobles and sterlinges.  
And somme crouned were as kinges,  
With crounes wroght ful of losenges;  
And many riban, and many frenges  
Were on hir clothes trewely.

Tho atte laste aspyed I  
That pursevauntes and heraudes,  
That cryen riche folkes laudes,  
Hit weren alle; and every man  
Of hem, as I yow tellen can,  
Had on him throwen a vesture,  
Which that men clepe a cote-armure,  
Enbrowded wonderliche riche,  
Al-though they nere nought y-liche.  
But noght nil I, so mote I thryve,  
Been aboute to discryve  
Al these armes that ther weren,  
That they thus on her cotes beren,  
For hit to me were impossible;  
Men mighte make of hem a bible  
Twenty foot thikke, as I trowe.  
For certeyn, who-so coude y-knowe  
Mighte ther alle the armes seen  
Of famous folk that han y-been  
In Auffrike, Europe, and Asye,  
Sith first began the chevalrye,

Lo! how shulde I now telle al this?  
Ne of the halle eek what nede is  
To tellen yow, that every wal  
Of hit, and floor, and roof and al  
Was plated half a fote thikke  
Of gold, and that nas no-thing wikke,  
But, for to prove in alle wyse,  
As fyn as ducat in Venyse,  
Of whiche to lyte al in my pouche is?  
And they wer set as thikke of nouchis  
Fulle of the fynest stones faire,  
That men rede in the Lapidaire,  
As greses growen in a mede;  
But hit were al to longe to rede  
The names; and therefore I pace.

But in this riche lusty place,  
That Fames halle called was,  
Ful moche prees of folk ther nas,  
Ne crouding, for to mochil prees.  
But al on hye, above a dees,  
Sitte in a see imperial,  
That maad was of a rubee al,  
Which that a carbuncle is y-called,  
I saugh, perpetually y-stalled,  
A feminyne creature;  
That never formed by nature  
Nas swich another thing y-seye.  
For altherfirst, soth for to seye,  
Me thoughte that she was so lyte,  
That the lengthe of a cubyte  
Was lenger than she semed be;  
But thus sone, in a whyle, she  
Hir tho so wonderliche streighte,  
That with hir feet she therthe reighte,  
And with hir heed she touched hevене,  
Ther as shynen sterres sevene.  
And ther-to eek, as to my wit,  
I saugh a gretter wonder yit  
Upon hir eyen to beholde;  
But certeyn I hem never tolde;  
For as fele eyen hadde she  
As fetheres upon foules be,  
Or weren on the bestes foure  
That goddes trone gunne honoure,  
As Iohn writ in th'Apocalips.  
Hir heer, that oundy was and crips,  
As burned gold hit shoon to see.  
And sooth to tellen, also she  
Had also fele up-standing eres  
And tonges, as on bestes heres;  
And on hir feet wexen saugh I  
Partriches winges redely.

But, lord! the perrie and the richesse  
I saugh sitting on this goddessse!  
And, lord! the hevenish melodye  
Of songes, ful of armonye,  
I herde aboute her trone y-songe,

That al the paleys-walles ronge!  
So song the mighty Muse, she  
That cleped is Caliopee,  
And hir eighte sustren eke,  
That in hir face semen meke;  
And evermo, eternally,  
They songe of Fame, as tho herde I: --  
'Heried be thou and thy name,  
Goddesse of renoun and of fame!'

Tho was I war, lo, atte laste,  
As I myn eyen gan up caste,  
That this ilke noble quene  
On hir shuldres gan sustene  
Bothe tharmes and the name  
Of tho that hadde large fame;  
Alexander, and Hercules  
That with a sherte his lyf lees!  
Thus fond I sitting this goddesse,  
In nobley, honour, and richesse;  
Of which I stinte a whyle now,  
Other thing to tellen yow.

Tho saugh I stonde on either syde,  
Streight doun to the dores wyde,  
Fro the dees, many a pileer  
Of metal, that shoon not ful cleer;  
But though they nere of no richesse,  
Yet they were maad for greet noblesse,  
And in hem greet and hy sentence,  
And folk of digne reverence,  
Of whiche I wol yow telle fonde,  
Upon the piler saugh I stonde.

Alderfirst, lo, ther I sigh,  
Upon a piler stonde on high,  
That was of lede and yren fyn,  
Him of secte Saturnyn,  
The Ebrayk Iosephus, the olde,  
That of Iewes gestes tolde;  
And bar upon his shuldres hye  
The fame up of the Iewerye.  
And by him stoden other sevene,  
Wyse and worthy for to nevene,  
To helpen him bere up the charge,

Hit was so hevye and so large.  
And for they writen of batailes,  
As wel as other olde mervailles,  
Therfor was, lo, this pileer,  
Of which that I yow telle heer,  
Of lede and yren bothe, y-wis,  
For yren Martes metal is,  
Which that god is of bataille;  
And the leed, withouten faille,  
Is, lo, the metal of Saturne,  
That hath ful large wheel to turne.  
Tho stoden forth, on every rowe,  
Of hem which that I coude knowe,  
Thogh I hem noght be ordre telle,  
To make yow to long to dwelle.

These, of whiche I ginne rede,  
Ther saugh I stonden, out of drede:  
Upon an yren piler strong,  
That peynted was, al endelonge,  
With tygres blode in every place,  
The Tholosan that highte Stace,  
That bar of Thebes up the fame  
Upon his shuldres, and the name  
Also of cruel Achilles.

And by him stood, withouten lees,  
Ful wonder hye on a pileer  
Of yren, he, the gret Omeer;  
And with him Dares and Tytus  
Before, and eek he Lollius,  
And Guido eek de Columpnis,  
And English Gaufride eek, y-wis;  
And ech of these, as have I Ioye,  
Was besy for to bere up Troye.  
So hevye ther-of was the fame,  
That for to bere hit was no game.

But yit I gan ful wel espye,  
Betwix hem was a litil envye.  
Oon seyde, Omere made lyes,  
Feyninge in his poetryes,  
And was to Grekes favorable;  
Therfor held he hit but fable.

Tho saugh I stonde on a pileer,



That was of tinned yren cleer,  
That Latin poete, dan Virgyle,  
That bore hath up a longe whyle  
The fame of Pius Eneas.

And next him on a piler was,  
Of coper, Venus clerk, Ovyde,  
That hath y-sowen wonder wyde  
The grete god of Loves name.  
And ther he bar up wel his fame,  
Upon his piler, also hye  
As I might see hit with myn ye:  
For-why this halle, of whiche I rede  
Was woxe on highte, lengthe and brede,  
Wel more, by a thousand del,  
Than hit was erst, that saugh I wel.

Tho saugh I, on a piler by,  
Of yren wroght ful sternely,  
The grete poete, daun Lucan,  
And on his shuldres bar up than,  
As highe as that I mighte see,  
The fame of Iulius and Pompee.  
And by him stoden alle these clerkes,  
That writen of Romes mighty werkes,  
That, if I wolde hir names telle,  
Al to longe most I dwelle.

And next him on a piler stood  
Of soulfre, lyk as he were wood,  
Dan Claudian, the soth to telle,  
That bar up al the fame of helle,  
Of Pluto, and of Proserpyne,  
That quene is of the derke pyne.

What shulde I more telle of this?  
The halle was al ful, y-wis,  
Of hem that writen olde gestes,  
As ben on trees rokes nestes;  
But hit a ful confus matere  
Were al the gestes for to here,  
That they of write, and how they highte.  
But whyl that I beheld this sighte,  
I herde a noise aprochen blyve,  
That ferde as been don in an hyve,  
Agen her tyme of out-fleyinge;

Right swiche a maner murmuringe,  
For al the world, hit semed me.

Tho gan I loke aboute and see,  
That ther come entring in the halle  
A right gret company with-alle,  
And that of sondry regiouns,  
Of alleskinnes condiciouns,  
That dwelle in erthe under the mone,  
Pore and ryche. And also sone  
As they were come into the halle,  
They gonne doun on knees falle  
Before this ilke noble quene,  
And seyde, `Graunte us, lady shene,  
Ech of us, of thy grace, a bone!  
And somme of hem she graunted sone,  
And somme she werned wel and faire;  
And somme she graunted the contraire  
Of hir axing utterly,  
But thus I seye yow trewely,  
What hir cause was, I niste.  
For of this folk, ful wel I wiste,  
They hadde good fame ech deserved,  
Although they were diversly served;  
Right as hir suster, dame Fortune,  
Is wont to serven in comune.

Now herkne how she gan to paye  
That gonne hir of hir grace praye;  
And yit, lo, al this companye  
Seyden sooth, and noght a lye.  
`Madame,' seyden they, `we be  
Folk that heer besechen thee,  
That thou graunte us now good fame,  
And let our werkes han that name;  
In ful recompensacioun  
Of good werk, give us good renoun.'

`I werne yow hit,' quod she anoon,  
`Ye gete of me good fame noon,  
By god! and therfor go your wey.'

`Alas,' quod they, `and welaway!  
Telle us, what may your cause be?'

`For me list hit noght,' quod she;  
`No wight shal speke of yow, y-wis,

Good ne harm, ne that ne this.'  
And with that word she gan to calle  
Hir messenger, that was in halle,  
And bad that he shulde faste goon,  
Up peyne to be blind anoon,  
For Eolus, the god of winde; --  
'In Trace ther ye shul him finde,  
And bid him bringe his clarioun,  
That is ful dyvers of his soun,  
And hit is cleped Clere Laude,  
With which he wont is to heraude  
Hem that me list y-preised be:  
And also bid him how that he  
Bringe his other clarioun,  
That highte Sclaundre in every toun,  
With which he wont is to diffame  
Hem that me list, and do hem shame.'

This messenger gan faste goon,  
And found wher, in a cave of stoon,  
In a contree that highte Trace,  
This Eolus, with harde grace,  
Held the windes in distresse,  
And gan hem under him to presse,  
That they gonne as beres rore,  
He bond and pressed hem so sore.

This messenger gan faste crye,  
'Rys up,' quod he, 'and faste hye,  
Til that thou at my lady be;  
And tak thy clarions eek with thee,  
And speed the forth.' And he anon  
Took to a man, that hight Triton,  
His clariouns to bere tho,  
And leet a certeyn wind to go,  
That blew so hidously and hye,  
That hit ne lefte not a skye  
In al the welken longe an brood.

This Eolus no-wher abood  
Til he was come at Fames feet,  
And eek the man that Triton heet;  
And ther he stood, as still as stoon.  
And her-withal ther com anoon  
Another huge companye

Of gode folk, and gunne crye,  
 `Lady, graunte us now good fame,  
 And lat our werkes han that name  
 Now, in honour of gentillesse,  
 And also god your soule blesse!  
 For we han wel deserved hit,  
 Therefore is right that we ben quit.'  
 `As thryve I,' quod she, `ye shal faile,  
 Good werkes shal yow noght availe  
 To have of me good fame as now.  
 But wite ye what? Y graunte yow,  
 That ye shal have a shrewed fame  
 And wikked loos, and worse name,  
 Though ye good loos have wel deserved.  
 Now go your wey, for ye be served;  
 And thou, dan Eolus, let see!  
 Tak forth thy trumpe anon,' quod she,  
 `That is y-cleped Sclaunder light,  
 And blow her loos, that every wight  
 Speke of hem harm and shrewednesse,  
 In stede of good and worthinesse.  
 For thou shalt trumpe al the contraire  
 Of that they han don wel or faire.'  
 `Alas,' thoughte I, `what adventures  
 Han these sory creatures!  
 For they, amonges al the pres,  
 Shul thus be shamed, gilteles!  
 But what! hit moste nedes be.'  
 What did this Eolus, but he  
 Tok out his blakke trumpe of bras,  
 That fouler than the devil was,  
 And gan this trumpe for to blowe,  
 As al the world shulde overthrowe;  
 That through-out every regioun  
 Wente this foule trumpes soun,  
 As swift as pelet out of gonne,  
 Whan fyr is in the poudre ronne.  
 And swiche a smoke gan out-wende  
 Out of his foule trumpes ende,  
 Blak, blo, grenissh, swartish reed,  
 As doth wher that men melte leed,  
 Lo, al on high fro the tuel!

And therto oo thing saugh I wel,  
That, the ferther that hit ran,  
The gretter wexen hit began,  
As doth the river from a welle,  
And hit stank as the pit of helle.  
Alas, thus was hir shame y-ronge,  
And giltelees, on every tonge.

Tho com the thridde companye,  
And gunne up to the dees to hye,  
And doun on knees they fille anon,  
And seyde, `We ben everichon  
Folk that han ful trewely  
Deserved fame rightfully,  
And pray yow, hit mot be knowe,  
Right as hit is, and forth y-blowe.'  
`I graunte,' quod she, `for me list  
That now your gode werk be wist;  
And yet ye shul han better loos,  
Right in dispyt of alle your foos,  
Than worthy is; and that anoon:  
Lat now,' quod she, `thy trumpe goon,  
Thou Eolus, that is so blak;  
And out thyn other trumpe tak  
That highte Laude, and blow it so  
That through the world hir fame go  
Al esely, and not to faste,  
That hit be knowen atte laste.'

`Ful gladly, lady myn,' he seyde;  
And out his trumpe of golde he brayde  
Anon, and sette hit to his mouthe,  
And blew hit est, and west, and southe,  
And north, as loude as any thunder,  
That every wight hadde of hit wonder,  
So brode hit ran, or than hit stente,  
And, certes, al the breeth that wente  
Out of his trumpes mouthe smelde  
As men a pot-ful bawme helde  
Among a basket ful of roses;  
This favour dide he til hir loses.

And right with this I gan aspye,  
Ther com the ferthe companye --  
But certeyn they were wonder fewe --

And gonne stonden in a rewe,  
And seyden, ` Certes, lady brighte,  
We han don wel with al our mighte;  
But we ne kepen have no fame.  
Hyd our werkes and our name,  
For goddes love! for certes we  
Han certeyn doon hit for bountee,  
And for no maner other thing.'  
`I graunte yow al your asking,'  
Quod she; `let your werk be deed.'

With that aboute I clew myn heed,  
And saugh anoon the fifte route  
That to this lady gonne loute,  
And doun on knes anoon to falle;  
And to hir tho besoughten alle  
To hyde hit gode werkes eek,  
And seyde, they yeven noght a leek  
For fame, ne for swich renoun;  
For they, for contemplacioun  
And goddes love, hadde y-wrought;  
Ne of fame wolde they nought.

`What?' quod she, `and be ye wood?  
And wene ye for to do good,  
And for to have of that no fame?  
Have ye dispyt to have my name?  
Nay, ye shul liven everichoon!  
Blow thy trumpe and that anoon,'  
Quod she, `thou Eolus, I hote,  
And ring this folkes werk by note,  
That al the world may of hit here.'  
And he gan blowe hir loos so clere  
In his golden clarioun  
That through the world wente the soun,  
Also kenely, and eek so softe;  
But atte laste hit was on-lofte.

Thoo com the sexte companye,  
And gonne faste on Fame crye.  
Right verraily, in this manere  
They seyden: `Mercy, lady dere!  
To telle certain, as hit is,  
We han don neither that ne this,  
But ydel al our lif y-be.

But, natheles, yit preye we,  
 That we mowe han so good a fame,  
 And greet renoun and knowen name,  
 As they that han don noble gestes,  
 And acheved alle hir lestes,  
 As wel of love as other thing;  
 Al was us never broche ne ring,  
 Ne elles nought, from wimmen sent,  
 Ne ones in hir herte y-ment  
 To make us only frendly chere,  
 But mighte temen us on bere;  
 Yit lat us to the peple seme  
 Swiche as the world may of us deme,  
 That wimmen loven us for wood.  
 Hit shal don us as moche good,  
 And to our herte as moche availe  
 To countrepeise ese and travaile,  
 As we had wonne hit with labour;  
 For that is dere boght honour  
 At regard of our grete ese.  
 And yit thou most us more plese  
 Let us be holden eek, therto,  
 Worthy, wyse, and gode also,  
 And riche, and happy unto love.  
 For goddes love, that sit above,  
 Thogh we may not the body have  
 Of wimmen, yet, so god yow save!  
 Let men glewe on us the name;  
 Suffyceth that we han the fame.'  
 `I graunte,' quod she, `by my trouthe!  
 Now, Eolus, with-outen slouthe.  
 Tak out thy trumpe of gold, let see,  
 And blow as they han axed me,  
 That every man wene hem at ese,  
 Though they gon in ful badde lese.'  
 This Eolus gan hit so blowe  
 That through the world hit was y-knowe.  
 Tho come the seventh route anoon,  
 And fel on knees everichoon,  
 And seyde, `Lady, graunte us sone  
 The same thing, the same bone,  
 That ye this nexte folk han doon.'

`Fy on yow,' quod she, `everichoon!  
Ye masty swyn, ye ydel wrecches,  
Ful of roten slowe tecches!  
What? false theves! wher ye wolde  
Be famous good, and no-thing nolde  
Deserve why, ne never roughete?  
Men rather yow to-hangen oughte!  
For ye be lyk the sweynte cat,  
That wolde have fish; but wostow what?  
He wolde no-thing wete his clowes.  
Yvel thrift come to your Iowes,  
And eek on myn, if I hit graunte,  
Or do yow favour, yow to avaunte!  
Thou Eolus, thou king of Trace!  
Go, blow this folk a soo grace,  
Quod she, `anoon; and wostow how?  
As I shal telle thee right now;  
Sey: 'These ben they that wolde honour  
Have, and do noskinnes labour,  
Ne do no good, and yit han laude;  
And that men wende that bele Isaude  
Ne coude hem noght of love-werne;  
And yit she that grint at a querne  
Is al to good to ese hir herte."

This Eolus anon up sterte,  
And with his blakke clarioun  
He gan to blasen out a soun,  
As loude as belweth wind in helle.  
And eek therwith, the sooth to telle,  
This soun was al so ful of Iapes,  
As ever mowes were in apes.  
And that wente al the world aboute,  
That every wight gan on hem shoute,  
And for to laughe as they were wode;  
Such game fonde they in hir hode.

Tho com another companye,  
That had y-doon the traiterye,  
The harm, the grettest wikkednesse  
That any herte couthe gesse;  
And prayed hir to han good fame,  
And that she nolde hem doon no shame,  
But yeve hem loos and good renoun,



And do hit blowe in clarioun.

`Nay, wis!' quod she, `hit were a vyce;

Al be ther in me no Iustyce

Me listeth not to do hit now,

Ne this nil I not graunte you.'

Tho come ther lepinge in a route,

And gonne choppen al aboute

Every man upon the croune,

That al the halle gan to soun,

And seyden: `Lady, lefe and dere

We ben swich folk as ye mowe here.

To tellen al the tale aright,

We ben shrewes, every wight,

And han delyt in wikkednes,

As gode folk han in goodnes;

And Ioye to be knowen shrewes,

And fulle of vyce and wikked thewes;

Wherfor we prayen yow, a-rowe,

That our fame swich be knowe

In alle thing right as hit is.'

`I graunte hit yow,' quod she, `y-wis.

But what art thou that seyst this tale,

That werest on thy hose a pale,

And on thy tipet swiche a belle!

`Madame,' quod he, `sooth to telle,

I am that ilke shrewe, y-wis,

That brende the temple of Isidis

In Athenes, lo, that citee.'

`And wherfor didest thou so?' quod she.

`By my thrift,' quod he, `madame,

I wolde fayn han had a fame,

As other folk hadde in the toun,

Al-thogh they were of greet renoun

For hir vertu and for hir thewes;

Thoughte I, as greet a fame han shrewes,

Thogh hit be but for shrewednesse,

As gode folk han for goodnesse;

And sith I may not have that oon,

That other nil I noght for-goon.

And for to gette of Fames hyre,

The temple sette I al a-fyre.

Now do our loos be blowen swythe,

As wisly be thou ever blythe.'  
 ` Gladly,' quod she; ` thou Eolus,  
 Herestow not what they prayen us?'  
 ` Madame, yis, ful wel,' quod he,  
 And I wil trumpen hit, parde!'  
 And tok his blakke trumpe faste,  
 And gan to puffen and to blaste,  
 Til hit was at the worldes ende.  
 With that I gan aboute wende;  
 For oon that stood right at my bak,  
 Me thoughte goodly to me spak,  
 And seyde, ` Frend, what is thy name?  
 Artow come hider to han fame?'  
 ` Nay, for-sothe, frend!' quod I;  
 I cam noght hider, graunt mercy!  
 For no swich cause, by my heed!  
 Suffyceth me, as I were deed,  
 That no wight have my name in honde.  
 I woot my-self best how I stonde;  
 For what I drye or what I thinke,  
 I wol my-selven al hit drinke,  
 Certeyn, for the more part,  
 As ferforth as I can myn art.'  
 ` But what dost thou here than?' quod he.  
 Quod I, ` that wol I tellen thee,  
 The cause why I stonde here: --  
 Som newe tydings for to lere: --  
 Som newe thinges, I not what,  
 Tydinges, other this or that,  
 Of love, or swiche thinges glade.  
 For certeynly, he that me made  
 To comen hider seyde me,  
 I shulde bothe here and see,  
 In this place, wonder thinges;  
 But these be no swiche tydinges  
 As I mene of.' ` No?' quod he,  
 And I answerde, ` No, pardee!  
 For wel I wiste, ever yit,  
 Sith that first I hadde wit,  
 That som folk han desyred fame  
 Dyversly, and loos, and name;  
 But certeynly, I niste how

Ne wher that Fame dwelte, er now;  
 Ne eek of hir descripcioun,  
 Ne also hir condicioun,  
 Ne the ordre of hir dome,  
 Unto the tyme I hider come.'  
 `Whiche be, lo, these tydinges,  
 That thou now thus hider bringes,  
 That thou hast herd?' quod he to me;  
 `But now, no fors; for wel I see  
 What thou desyrest for to here.  
 Com forth, and stonde no longer here,  
 And I wol thee, with-outhe drede,  
 In swich another place lede,  
 Ther thou shalt here many oon,'  
 Tho gan I forth with him to goon  
 Out of the castel, soth to seye.  
 Tho saugh I stonde in a valeye,  
 Under the castel, faste by,  
 An hous, that Domus Dedali,  
 That Laborintus cleped is,  
 Nas maad so wonderliche, y-wis,  
 Ne half so queynteliche y-wrought.  
 And evermo, so swift as thought,  
 This queynt hous aboute wente,  
 That never-mo hit stike stente.  
 And ther-out com so greet a noise,  
 That, had hit stonden upon Oise,  
 Men mighte hit han herd esely  
 To Rome, I trowe sikerly.  
 And the noyse which that I herde,  
 For al the world right so hit ferde,  
 As doth the routing of the stoon  
 That from thengyn is leten goon.  
 And al this hous, of whiche I rede,  
 Was made of twigges, falwe, rede,  
 And grene eek, and som weren whyte,  
 Swiche as men to these cages thwyte,  
 Or maken of these paniers,  
 Or elles hottes or dossers;  
 That, for the swough and for the twigges,  
 This hous was also ful of gigges,  
 And also ful eek a chirkinges,

And of many other werkinges;  
And eek this hous hath of entrees  
As fele as of leves been on trees  
In somer, whan they grene been;  
And on the roof men may yit seen  
A thousand holes, and wel mo,  
To leten wel the soun out go.

And by day, in every tyde,  
Ben al the dores open wyde,  
And by night, echoon unshette;  
Ne porter ther is non to lette  
No maner tydings in to pace;  
Ne never reste is in that place,  
That hit nis fild ful of tydinges,  
Other loude, or of whispringes;  
And, over alle the houses angles,  
Is ful of rouninges and of Iangles  
Of werre, of pees, of mariages,  
Of reste, of labour, of viages,  
Of abood, of deeth, of lyfe,  
Of love, of hate, acorde, of stryfe,  
Of loos, of lore, and of winninges,  
Of hele, of sekenesse, of bildinges,  
Of faire windes, of tempestes,  
Of qualme of folk, and eek of bestes;  
Of dyvers transmutaciouns  
Of estats, and eek of regiouns;  
Of trust, of drede, of Ielousye,  
Of wit, of winninge, of folye;  
Of plentee, and of greet famyne,  
Of chepe, of derth, and of ruyne;  
Of good or mis governement,  
Of fyr, of dyvers accident.

And lo, this hous, of whiche I wryte,  
Siker be ye, hit nas not lyte;  
For hit was sixty myle of lengthe;  
Al was the timber of no strengthe,  
Yet hit is founded to endure  
Whyl that hit list to Aventure,  
That is the moder of tydinges,  
As the see of welles and springes, --  
And hit was shapen lyk a cage.

`Certes,' quod I, `in al myn age,  
Ne saugh I swich a hous as this.'  
And as I wondred me, y-wis,  
Upon this hous, tho war was I  
How that myn egle, faste by,  
Was perched hye upon a stoon;  
And I gan streighte to him goon,  
And seyde thus: `I preye thee  
That thou a whyl abyde me  
For goddes love, and let me seen  
What wondres in this place been;  
For yit, paraventure, I may lere  
Som good ther-on, or sumwhat here  
That leef me were, or that I wente.'

`Peter! that is myn entente,'  
Quod he to me; `therfor I dwelle;  
But certein, oon thing I thee telle,  
That, but I bringe thee ther-inne,  
Ne shalt thou never kunne ginne  
To come in-to hit, out of doute,  
So faste hit whirleth, lo, aboute.  
But sith that Ioves, of his grace,  
As I have seyde, wol thee solace  
Fynally with swiche thinges,  
Uncouthe sightes and tydinges,  
To passe with thyn hevinesse;  
Suche routhe hath he of thy distresse,  
That thou suffrest debonairly --  
And wost thy-selven utterly  
Disesperat of alle blis,  
Sith that Fortune hath maad a-mis  
The fruit of al thyn hertes reste  
Languisshe and eek in point to breste --  
That he, through his mighty meryte,  
Wol do thee ese, al be hit lyte,  
And yaf expres commaundement,  
To whiche I am obedient,  
To furthre thee with al my might,  
And wisse and teche thee aright  
Wher thou maist most tydinges here;  
Shaltow anoon heer many oon lere.'

With this worde he, right anoon,

Hente me up bitwene his toon,  
 And at a windowe in me broghte,  
 That in this hous was, as me thoghte --  
 And ther-withal, me thoughte hit stente,  
 And no-thing hit aboute wente --  
 And me sette in the flore adoun.  
 But which a congregacioun  
 Of folk, as I saugh rome aboute  
 Some within and some withoute,  
 Nas never seen, ne shal ben eft;  
 That, certes, in the world nis left  
 So many formed by Nature,  
 Ne deed so many a creature;  
 That wel unnethe, in that place,  
 Hadde I oon foot-brede of space;  
 And every wight that I saugh there  
 Rouned ech in others ere  
 A newe tyding prevely,  
 Or elles tolde al openly  
 Right thus, and seyde: `Nost not thou  
 That is betid, lo, late or now?'  
 `No,' quod the other, `tel me what;' --  
 And than he tolde him this and that,  
 And swoor ther-to that hit was sooth --  
 `Thus hath he seyde,'-- and `Thus he dooth' --  
 `Thus shal hit be,' -- `Thus herde I seye' --  
 `That shal he found' -- `That dar I leye:' --  
 That al the folk that is a-lyve  
 Ne han the cunning to discryve  
 The thinges that I herde there,  
 What aloude, and what in ere.  
 But al the wonder-most was this: --  
 Whan oon had herd a thing, y-wis,  
 He com forth to another wight,  
 And gan him tellen, anoon-right,  
 The same that to him was told,  
 Or hit a furlong-way was old,  
 But gan somewhat for to eche  
 To this tyding in this speche  
 More than hit ever was.  
 And nat so sone departed nas  
 That he fro him, that he ne mette

With the thridde; and, or he lette  
Any stoude, he tolde him als;  
Were the tyding sooth or fals,  
Yit wolde he telle hit nathelees,  
And evermo with more encrees  
Than hit was erst. Thus north and southe  
Went every word fro mouth to mouthe,  
And that encresing ever-mo,  
As fyr is wont to quikke and go  
From a sparke spronge amis,  
Til al a citee brent up is.

And whan that was ful y-spronge,  
And woxen more on every tonge  
Than ever hit was, hit wente anoon  
Up to a windowe, out to goon;  
Or, but hit mighte out ther pace,  
Hit gan out crepe at som crevace,  
And fleigh forth faste for the nones.

And somtyme saugh I tho, at ones,  
A lesing and a sad soth-sawe,  
That gonne of aventure drawe  
Out at a windowe for to pace;  
And, when they metten in that place,  
They were a-chekked bothe two,  
And neither of hem moste out go;  
For other so they gonne croude,  
Til eche of hem gan cryen loude,  
'Lat me go first!' -- 'Nay, but let me!  
And here I wol ensuren thee  
With the nones that thou wolt do so,  
That I shal never fro thee go,  
But be thyn owne sworn brother!  
We wil medle us ech with other,  
That no man, be he never so wrothe,  
Shal han that oon of two, but bothe  
At ones, al beside his leve,  
Come we a-morwe or on eve,  
Be we cryed or stille y-rouned.'  
Thus saugh I fals and sooth compouned  
Togeder flee for oo tydinge.

Thus out at holes gonne wringe  
Every tyding streight to Fame;

And she gan yeven eche his name,  
After hir disposicioun,  
And yaf hem eek duracioun,  
Some to wexe and wane sone,  
As dooth the faire, whyte mone,  
And leet hem gon. Ther might I seen  
Wenged wondres faste fleen,  
Twenty thousand in a route,  
As Eolus hem blew aboute.

And, lord! this hous, in alle tymes,  
Was ful of shipmen and pilgrymes,  
With scrippes Bret-ful of lesinges,  
Entremedled with tydinges,  
And eek alone by hem-selve.  
O, many a thousand tymes twelve  
Saugh I eek of these pardoneres,  
Curroures, and eek messangeres,  
With boistes crammed ful of lyes  
As ever vessel was with lyes.  
And as I alther-fastest wente  
Aboute, and dide al myn entente  
Me for to pleye and for to lere,  
And eek a tyding for to here,  
That I had herd of som contree  
That shal not now be told for me; --  
For hit no nede is, redely;  
Folk can singe hit bet than I;  
For al mot out, other late or rathe,  
Alle the sheves in the lathe; --  
I herde a gret noise withalle  
In a corner of the halle,  
Ther men of love tydings tolde,  
And I gan thiderward beholde;  
For I saugh renninge every wight,  
As faste as that they hadden might;  
And everich cryed, `What thing is that?'  
And som seyde, `I not never what,'  
And whan they were alle on an hepe,  
Tho behinde gonne up lepe,  
And clamben up on othere faste,  
And up the nose and hye caste,  
And troden faste on othere heles,



And stampe, as men don after eles.  
Atte laste I saugh a man,  
Which that I nevene naught ne can;  
But he semed for to be  
A man of greet auctoritee...

[the work is unfinished]

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Love Unfeigned

O YONGE fresshe folkes, he or she,  
In which that love up groweth with your age,  
Repeyreth hoom from worldly vanitee,  
And of your herte up-casteth the visage  
To thilke god that after his image  
Yow made, and thinketh al nis but a fayre  
This world, that passeth sone as floures fayre.

And loveth him, the which that right for love  
Upon a cros, our soules for to beye,  
First starf, and roos, and sit in hevne a-bove;  
For he nil falsen no wight, dar I seye,  
That wol his herte al hoolly on him leye.  
And sin he best to love is, and most meke,  
What nedeth feyned loves for to seke?

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Merchant's Tale

'Weeping and wailing, care and other sorrow,  
I have enough, on even and on morrow,'  
Quoth the Merchant, 'and so have other mo',  
That wedded be; I trow\* that it be so;                   \*believe  
For well I wot it fareth so by me.  
I have a wife, the worste that may be,  
For though the fiend to her y-coupled were,  
She would him overmatch, I dare well swear.  
Why should I you rehearse in special  
Her high malice? she is \*a shrew at all.\*                   \*thoroughly, in  
There is a long and large difference everything wicked\*  
Betwixt Griselda's greate patience,  
And of my wife the passing cruelty.  
Were I unbounden, all so may I the,\*                   \*thrive  
I woulde never eft\* come in the snare.                   \*again  
We wedded men live in sorrow and care;  
Assay it whoso will, and he shall find  
That I say sooth, by Saint Thomas of Ind,&2&gt;  
As for the more part; I say not all, -  
God shielde\* that it shoulde so befall.                   \*forbid  
Ah! good Sir Host, I have y-wedded be  
These moneths two, and more not, pardie;  
And yet I trow\* that he that all his life                   \*believe  
Wifeless hath been, though that men would him rive\*                   \*wound  
Into the hearte, could in no mannere  
Telle so much sorrow, as I you here  
Could tellen of my wife's cursedness.\*                   \*wickedness

'Now,' quoth our Host, 'Merchant, so God you bless,  
Since ye so mucche knowen of that art,  
Full heartily I pray you tell us part.'  
'Gladly,' quoth he; 'but of mine owen sore,  
For sorry heart, I telle may no more.'

THE TALE.

Whilom there was dwelling in Lombardy

A worthy knight, that born was at Pavie,  
 In which he liv'd in great prosperity;  
 And forty years a wifeless man was he,  
 And follow'd aye his bodily delight  
 On women, where as was his appetite,  
 As do these fooles that be seculeres.&lt;2&gt;  
 And, when that he was passed sixty years,  
 Were it for holiness, or for dotage,  
 I cannot say, but such a great corage\*                    \*inclination  
 Hadde this knight to be a wedded man,  
 That day and night he did all that he can  
 To espy where that he might wedded be;  
 Praying our Lord to grante him, that he  
 Mighte once knowen of that blissful life  
 That is betwixt a husband and his wife,  
 And for to live under that holy bond  
 With which God firste man and woman bond.  
 'None other life,' said he, 'is worth a bean;  
 For wedlock is so easy, and so clean,  
 That in this world it is a paradise.'  
 Thus said this olde knight, that was so wise.  
 And certainly, as sooth\* as God is king,                    \*true  
 To take a wife it is a glorious thing,  
 And namely\* when a man is old and hoar,                    \*especially  
 Then is a wife the fruit of his treasure;  
 Then should he take a young wife and a fair,  
 On which he might engender him an heir,  
 And lead his life in joy and in solace;\*                    \*mirth, delight  
 Whereas these bachelors singen 'Alas!'  
 When that they find any adversity  
 In love, which is but childish vanity.  
 And truely it sits\* well to be so,                    \*becomes, befits  
 That bachelors have often pain and woe:  
 On brittle ground they build, and brittleness  
 They finde when they \*weene sickerness:\*                    \*think that there  
 They live but as a bird or as a beast, is security\*  
 In liberty, and under no arrest;\*                    \*check, control  
 Whereas a wedded man in his estate  
 Liveth a life blissful and ordinate,  
 Under the yoke of marriage y-bound;  
 Well may his heart in joy and bliss abound.  
 For who can be so buxom\* as a wife?                    \*obedient

Who is so true, and eke so attentive  
 To keep\* him, sick and whole, as is his make? \*\* \*care for \*\*mate  
 For weal or woe she will him not forsake:  
 She is not weary him to love and serve,  
 Though that he lie bedrid until he sterve.\* \*die  
 And yet some clerkes say it is not so;  
 Of which he, Theophrast, is one of tho:\* \*those  
 \*What force\* though Theophrast list for to lie? \*what matter\*

'Take no wife,' quoth he, &lt;3&gt; 'for husbandry,\* \*thrift  
 As for to spare in household thy dispence;  
 A true servant doth more diligence  
 Thy good to keep, than doth thine owen wife,  
 For she will claim a half part all her life.  
 And if that thou be sick, so God me save,  
 Thy very friendes, or a true knave,\* \*servant  
 Will keep thee bet than she, that \*waiteth aye \*ahways waits to  
 After thy good,\* and hath done many a day.' inherit your property\*  
 This sentence, and a hundred times worse,  
 Writeth this man, there God his bones curse.  
 But take no keep\* of all such vanity, \*notice  
 Defy\* Theophrast, and hearken to me. \*distrust

A wife is Godde's gifte verily;  
 All other manner giftes hardily,\* \*truly  
 As handes, rentes, pasture, or commune,\* \*common land  
 Or mebles,\* all be giftes of fortune, \*furniture &lt;4&gt;  
 That passen as a shadow on the wall:  
 But dread\* thou not, if plainly speak I shall, \*doubt  
 A wife will last, and in thine house endure,  
 Well longer than thee list, paraventure.\* \*perhaps  
 Marriage is a full great sacrament;  
 He which that hath no wife, I hold him shent;\* \*ruined  
 He liveth helpless, and all desolate  
 (I speak of folk \*in secular estate\*): \*who are not  
 And hearken why, I say not this for nought, - of the clergy\*  
 That woman is for manne's help y-wrought.  
 The highe God, when he had Adam maked,  
 And saw him all alone belly naked,  
 God of his greate goodness saide then,  
 Let us now make a help unto this man  
 Like to himself; and then he made him Eve.

Here may ye see, and hereby may ye prove,\* \*prove  
 That a wife is man s help and his comfort,  
 His paradise terrestre and his disport.  
 So buxom\* and so virtuous is she, \*obedient, complying  
 They muste needes live in unity;  
 One flesh they be, and one blood, as I guess,  
 With but one heart in weal and in distress.  
 A wife? Ah! Saint Mary, ben'dicite,  
 How might a man have any adversity  
 That hath a wife? certes I cannot say  
 The bliss the which that is betwixt them tway,  
 There may no tongue it tell, or hearte think.  
 If he be poor, she helpeth him to swink;\* \*labour  
 She keeps his good, and wasteth never a deal;\* \*whit  
 All that her husband list, her liketh\* well; \*pleaseth  
 She saith not ones Nay, when he saith Yea;  
 'Do this,' saith he; 'All ready, Sir,' saith she.  
 O blissful order, wedlock precious!  
 Thou art so merry, and eke so virtuous,  
 And so commended and approved eke,  
 That every man that holds him worth a leek  
 Upon his bare knees ought all his life  
 To thank his God, that him hath sent a wife;  
 Or elles pray to God him for to send  
 A wife, to last unto his life's end.  
 For then his life is set in sickerness,\* \*security  
 He may not be deceived, as I guess,  
 So that he work after his wife's rede;\* \*counsel  
 Then may he boldly bear up his head,  
 They be so true, and therewithal so wise.  
 For which, if thou wilt worken as the wise,  
 Do alway so as women will thee rede. \* \*counsel  
 Lo how that Jacob, as these clerkes read,  
 By good counsel of his mother Rebecc'  
 Bounde the kiddes skin about his neck;  
 For which his father's benison\* he wan. \*benediction  
 Lo Judith, as the story telle can,  
 By good counsel she Godde's people kept,  
 And slew him, Holofernes, while he slept.  
 Lo Abigail, by good counsel, how she  
 Saved her husband Nabal, when that he  
 Should have been slain. And lo, Esther also

By counsel good deliver'd out of woe  
 The people of God, and made him, Mardoche,  
 Of Assuere enhanced\* for to be.                   \*advanced in dignity  
 There is nothing \*in gree superlative\*                   \*of higher esteem\*  
 (As saith Senec) above a humble wife.  
 Suffer thy wife's tongue, as Cato bit;\*                   \*bid  
 She shall command, and thou shalt suffer it,  
 And yet she will obey of courtesy.  
 A wife is keeper of thine husbandry:  
 Well may the sicke man bewail and weep,  
 There as there is no wife the house to keep.  
 I warne thee, if wisely thou wilt wirch,\*                   \*work  
 Love well thy wife, as Christ loveth his church:  
 Thou lov'st thyself, if thou lovest thy wife.  
 No man hateth his flesh, but in his life  
 He fost'reth it; and therefore bid I thee  
 Cherish thy wife, or thou shalt never the.\*                   \*thrive  
 Husband and wife, what \*so men jape or play,\*                   \*although men joke  
 Of worldly folk holde the sicker\* way; and jeer\* \*certain  
 They be so knit there may no harm betide,  
 And namely\* upon the wife's side.                   \* especially

For which this January, of whom I told,  
 Consider'd hath within his dayes old,  
 The lusty life, the virtuous quiet,  
 That is in marriage honey-sweet.  
 And for his friends upon a day he sent  
 To tell them the effect of his intent.  
 With face sad,\* his tale he hath them told:                   \*grave, earnest  
 He saide, 'Friendes, I am hoar and old,  
 And almost (God wot) on my pitte's\* brink,                   \*grave's  
 Upon my soule somewhat must I think.  
 I have my body foolishly dispended,  
 Blessed be God that it shall be amended;  
 For I will be certain a wedded man,  
 And that anon in all the haste I can,  
 Unto some maiden, fair and tender of age;  
 I pray you shape\* for my marriage                   \* arrange, contrive  
 All suddenly, for I will not abide:  
 And I will fond\* to espy, on my side,                   \*try  
 To whom I may be wedded hastily.  
 But forasmuch as ye be more than,

Ye shalle rather\* such a thing espy  
 Than I, and where me best were to ally.  
 But one thing warn I you, my friendes dear,  
 I will none old wife have in no mannere:  
 She shall not passe sixteen year certain.  
 Old fish and younge flesh would I have fain.  
 Better,' quoth he, 'a pike than a pickerel,\*                   \*young pike  
 And better than old beef is tender veal.  
 I will no woman thirty year of age,  
 It is but beanestraw and great forage.  
 And eke these olde widows (God it wot)  
 They conne\* so much craft on Wade's boat,&lt;5&gt;                   \*know  
 \*So muche brooke harm when that them lest,\*           \*they can do so much  
 That with them should I never live in rest. harm when they wish\*  
 For sundry schooles make subtle clerkes;  
 Woman of many schooles half a clerk is.  
 But certainly a young thing men may guy,\*                   \*guide  
 Right as men may warm wax with handes ply.\*           \*bend,mould  
 Wherefore I say you plainly in a clause,  
 I will none old wife have, right for this cause.  
 For if so were I hadde such mischance,  
 That I in her could have no pleasance,  
 Then should I lead my life in avoutrie,\*                   \*adultery  
 And go straight to the devil when I die.  
 Nor children should I none upon her getten:  
 Yet \*were me lever\* houndes had me eaten                   \*I would rather\*  
 Than that mine heritage shoulde fall  
 In strange hands: and this I tell you all.  
 I doubte not I know the cause why  
 Men shoulde wed: and farthermore know I  
 There speaketh many a man of marriage  
 That knows no more of it than doth my page,  
 For what causes a man should take a wife.  
 If he ne may not live chaste his life,  
 Take him a wife with great devotion,  
 Because of lawful procreation  
 Of children, to th' honour of God above,  
 And not only for paramour or love;  
 And for they shoulde lechery eschew,  
 And yield their debte when that it is due:  
 Or for that each of them should help the other  
 In mischief,\* as a sister shall the brother,                   \*trouble





Aboute lordes of full high estate;  
 Yet had I ne'er with none of them debate;  
 I never them contraried truely.  
 I know well that my lord can\* more than I;                      \*knows  
 What that he saith I hold it firm and stable,  
 I say the same, or else a thing semblable.  
 A full great fool is any counsellor  
 That serveth any lord of high honour  
 That dare presume, or ones thinken it;  
 That his counsel should pass his lorde's wit.  
 Nay, lordes be no fooles by my fay.  
 Ye have yourselfe shewed here to day  
 So high sentence,\* so holily and well                      \*judgment, sentiment  
 That I consent, and confirm \*every deal\*                      \*in every point\*  
 Your wordes all, and your opinioun  
 By God, there is no man in all this town  
 Nor in Itale, could better have y-said.  
 Christ holds him of this counsel well apaid.\*                      \*satisfied  
 And truely it is a high courage  
 Of any man that stopen\* is in age,                      \*advanced &6&gt;  
 To take a young wife, by my father's kin;  
 Your hearte hangeth on a jolly pin.  
 Do now in this matter right as you lest,  
 For finally I hold it for the best.'

Justinus, that aye stille sat and heard,  
 Right in this wise to Placebo answer'd.  
 'Now, brother mine, be patient I pray,  
 Since ye have said, and hearken what I say.  
 Senec, among his other wordes wise,  
 Saith, that a man ought him right well advise,\*                      \*consider  
 To whom he gives his hand or his chattel.  
 And since I ought advise me right well  
 To whom I give my good away from me,  
 Well more I ought advise me, pardie,  
 To whom I give my body: for alway  
 I warn you well it is no childe's play  
 To take a wife without advisement.  
 Men must inquire (this is mine assent)  
 Whe'er she be wise, or sober, or dronkelew,\*                      \*given to drink  
 Or proud, or any other ways a shrew,  
 A chidester,\* or a waster of thy good,                      \*a scold

Or rich or poor; or else a man is wood.\* \*mad  
 Albeit so, that no man finde shall  
 None in this world, that \*trotteth whole in all,\* \*is sound in  
 No man, nor beast, such as men can devise,\* every point\* \*describe  
 But natheless it ought enough suffice  
 With any wife, if so were that she had  
 More goode thewes\* than her vices bad: \* qualities  
 And all this asketh leisure to inquire.  
 For, God it wot, I have wept many a tear  
 Full privily, since I have had a wife.  
 Praise whoso will a wedded manne's life,  
 Certes, I find in it but cost and care,  
 And observances of all blisses bare.  
 And yet, God wot, my neighebour about,  
 And namely\* of women many a rout,\*\* \*especially \*\*company  
 Say that I have the moste steadfast wife,  
 And eke the meekest one, that beareth life.  
 But I know best where wringeth\* me my shoe, \*pinches  
 Ye may for me right as you like do  
 Advise you, ye be a man of age,  
 How that ye enter into marriage;  
 And namely\* with a young wife and a fair, \* especially  
 By him that made water, fire, earth, air,  
 The youngest man that is in all this rout\* \*company  
 Is busy enough to bringen it about  
 To have his wife alone, truste me:  
 Ye shall not please her fully yeares three,  
 This is to say, to do her full pleasance.  
 A wife asketh full many an observance.  
 I pray you that ye be not \*evil apaid.\*' \*displeased\*

'Well,' quoth this January, 'and hast thou said?  
 Straw for thy Senec, and for thy proverbs,  
 I counte not a pannier full of herbs  
 Of schoole termes; wiser men than thou,  
 As thou hast heard, assented here right now  
 To my purpose: Placebo, what say ye?'  
 'I say it is a cursed\* man,' quoth he, \*ill-natured, wicked  
 'That letteth\* matrimony, sickerly.' \*hindereth  
 And with that word they rise up suddenly,  
 And be assented fully, that he should  
 Be wedded when him list, and where he would.

High fantasy and curious business  
 From day to day gan in the soul impress\*      \*imprint themselves  
 Of January about his marriage  
 Many a fair shape, and many a fair visage  
 There passed through his hearte night by night.  
 As whoso took a mirror polish'd bright,  
 And set it in a common market-place,  
 Then should he see many a figure pace  
 By his mirror; and in the same wise  
 Gan January in his thought devise  
 Of maidens, which that dwelte him beside:  
 He wiste not where that he might abide.\*      \*stay, fix his choice  
 For if that one had beauty in her face,  
 Another stood so in the people's grace  
 For her sadness\* and her benignity,      \*sedateness  
 That of the people greatest voice had she:  
 And some were rich and had a badde name.  
 But natheless, betwixt earnest and game,  
 He at the last appointed him on one,  
 And let all others from his hearte gon,  
 And chose her of his own authority;  
 For love is blind all day, and may not see.  
 And when that he was into bed y-brought,  
 He pourtray'd in his heart and in his thought  
 Her freshe beauty, and her age tender,  
 Her middle small, her armes long and slender,  
 Her wise governance, her gentleness,  
 Her womanly bearing, and her sadness.\*      \*sedateness  
 And when that he \*on her was condescended,\*      \*had selected her\*  
 He thought his choice might not be amended;  
 For when that he himself concluded had,  
 He thought each other manne' s wit so bad,  
 That impossible it were to reply  
 Against his choice; this was his fantasy.  
 His friendes sent he to, at his instance,  
 And prayed them to do him that pleasance,  
 That hastily they would unto him come;  
 He would abridge their labour all and some:  
 Needed no more for them to go nor ride,&lt;7&gt;  
 \*He was appointed where he would abide.\*      \*he had definitively

Placebo came, and eke his friendes soon, made his choice\*  
 And \*alderfirst he bade them all a boon,\*      \*first of all he asked  
 That none of them no arguments would make a favour of them\*  
 Against the purpose that he had y-take:  
 Which purpose was pleasant to God, said he,  
 And very ground of his prosperity.  
 He said, there was a maiden in the town,  
 Which that of beauty hadde great renown;  
 All\* were it so she were of small degree,      \*although  
 Sufficed him her youth and her beauty;  
 Which maid, he said, he would have to his wife,  
 To lead in ease and holiness his life;  
 And thanked God, that he might have her all,  
 That no wight with his blisse parte\* shall;      \*have a share  
 And prayed them to labour in this need,  
 And shape that he faile not to speed:  
 For then, he said, his spirit was at ease.  
 'Then is,' quoth he, 'nothing may me displease,  
 Save one thing pricketh in my conscience,  
 The which I will rehearse in your presence.  
 I have,' quoth he, 'heard said, full yore\* ago,      \*long  
 There may no man have perfect blisses two,  
 This is to say, on earth and eke in heaven.  
 For though he keep him from the sinne's seven,  
 And eke from every branch of thilke tree,&8&gt;  
 Yet is there so perfect felicity,  
 And so great \*ease and lust,\* in marriage,      \*comfort and pleasure\*  
 That ev'r I am aghast,\* now in mine age      \*ashamed, afraid  
 That I shall head now so merry a life,  
 So delicate, withoute woe or strife,  
 That I shall have mine heav'n on earthe here.  
 For since that very heav'n is bought so dear,  
 With tribulation and great penance,  
 How should I then, living in such pleasance  
 As alle wedded men do with their wives,  
 Come to the bliss where Christ \*etern on live is?\*      \*lives eternally\*  
 This is my dread;\* and ye, my brethren tway,      \*doubt  
 Assoile\* me this question, I you pray.'      \*resolve, answer

Justinus, which that hated his folly,  
 Answer'd anon right in his japery;\*      \*mockery, jesting way  
 And, for he would his longe tale abridge,

He woulde no authority\* allege, \*written texts  
 But saide; 'Sir, so there be none obstacle  
 Other than this, God of his high miracle,  
 And of his mercy, may so for you wurch,\* \*work  
 That, ere ye have your rights of holy church,  
 Ye may repent of wedded manne's life,  
 In which ye say there is no woe nor strife:  
 And elles God forbid, \*but if\* he sent \*unless  
 A wedded man his grace him to repent  
 Well often, rather than a single man.  
 And therefore, Sir, \*the beste rede I can,\* \*this is the best counsel  
 Despair you not, but have in your memory, that I know\*  
 Paraventure she may be your purgatory;  
 She may be Godde's means, and Godde's whip;  
 And then your soul shall up to heaven skip  
 Swifter than doth an arrow from a bow.  
 I hope to God hereafter ye shall know  
 That there is none so great felicity  
 In marriage, nor ever more shall be,  
 That you shall let\* of your salvation; \*hinder  
 So that ye use, as skill is and reason,  
 The lustes\* of your wife attemperly,\*\* \*pleasures \*\*moderately  
 And that ye please her not too amorously,  
 And that ye keep you eke from other sin.  
 My tale is done, for my wit is but thin.  
 Be not aghast\* hereof, my brother dear, \*aharmed, afraid  
 But let us waden out of this mattere,  
 The Wife of Bath, if ye have understand,  
 Of marriage, which ye have now in hand,  
 Declared hath full well in little space;  
 Fare ye now well, God have you in his grace.'

And with this word this Justin' and his brother  
 Have ta'en their leave, and each of them of other.  
 And when they saw that it must needs be,  
 They wroughte so, by sleight and wise treaty,  
 That she, this maiden, which that \*Maius hight,\* \*was named May\*  
 As hastily as ever that she might,  
 Shall wedded be unto this January.  
 I trow it were too longe you to tarry,  
 If I told you of every \*script and band\* \*written bond\*  
 By which she was feoffed in his hand;

Or for to reckon of her rich array  
But finally y-comen is the day  
That to the church bothe be they went,  
For to receive the holy sacrament,  
Forth came the priest, with stole about his neck,  
And bade her be like Sarah and Rebecc'  
In wisdom and in truth of marriage;  
And said his orisons, as is usage,  
And crouched\* them, and prayed God should them bless, \*crossed  
And made all sicker\* enough with holiness. \*certain

Thus be they wedded with solemnity;  
And at the feaste sat both he and she,  
With other worthy folk, upon the dais.  
All full of joy and bliss is the palace,  
And full of instruments, and of vitaille, \* \*victuals, food  
The moste dainteous\* of all Itale. \*delicate  
Before them stood such instruments of soun',  
That Orpheus, nor of Thebes Amphion,  
Ne made never such a melody.  
At every course came in loud minstrelsy,  
That never Joab trumped for to hear,  
Nor he, Theodomas, yet half so clear  
At Thebes, when the city was in doubt.  
Bacchus the wine them skinked\* all about. \*poured &lt;9&gt;  
And Venus laughed upon every wight  
(For January was become her knight,  
And woulde both assaye his courage  
In liberty, and eke in marriage),  
And with her firebrand in her hand about  
Danced before the bride and all the rout.  
And certainly I dare right well say this,  
Hymeneus, that god of wedding is,  
Saw never his life so merry a wedded man.  
Hold thou thy peace, thou poet Marcian,&lt;10&gt;  
That writest us that ilke\* wedding merry \*same  
Of her Philology and him Mercury,  
And of the songes that the Muses sung;  
Too small is both thy pen, and eke thy tongue  
For to describen of this marriage.  
When tender youth hath wedded stooping age,  
There is such mirth that it may not be writ;

Assay it youreself, then may ye wit\*  
If that I lie or no in this mattere.

\*know

Maius, that sat with so benign a cheer,\*  
Her to behold it seemed faerie;  
Queen Esther never look'd with such an eye  
On Assuere, so meek a look had she;  
I may you not devise all her beauty;  
But thus much of her beauty tell I may,  
That she was hike the bright morrow of May  
Full filled of all beauty and pleasance.  
This January is ravish'd in a trance,  
At every time he looked in her face;  
But in his heart he gan her to menace,  
That he that night in armes would her strain  
Harder than ever Paris did Helene.  
But natheless yet had he great pity  
That thilke night offende her must he,  
And thought, 'Alas, O tender creature,  
Now woulde God ye mighte well endure  
All my courage, it is so sharp and keen;  
I am aghast\* ye shall it not sustene.  
But God forbid that I did all my might.  
Now woulde God that it were waxen night,  
And that the night would lasten evermo'.  
I would that all this people were y-go.'\*  
And finally he did all his labour,  
As he best mighte, saving his honour,  
To haste them from the meat in subtle wise.

\*countenance

\*afraid

\*gone away

The time came that reason was to rise;  
And after that men dance, and drinke fast,  
And spices all about the house they cast,  
And full of joy and bliss is every man,  
All but a squire, that highte Damian,  
Who carv'd before the knight full many a day;  
He was so ravish'd on his lady May,  
That for the very pain he was nigh wood;\*  
Almost he swelt\* and swooned where he stood,  
So sore had Venus hurt him with her brand,  
As that she bare it dancing in her hand.  
And to his bed he went him hastily;

\*mad

\*fainted



No more of him as at this time speak I;  
 But there I let him weep enough and plain,\*                      \*bewail  
 Till freshe May will rue upon his pain.  
 O perilous fire, that in the bedstraw breedeth!  
 O foe familiar,\* that his service bedeth!\*\*    \*domestic &11&gt; \*\*offers  
 O servant traitor, O false homely hewe,\*                      \*servant &12&gt;  
 Like to the adder in bosom shy untrue,  
 God shield us alle from your acquaintance!  
 O January, drunken in pleasance  
 Of marriage, see how thy Damian,  
 Thine owen squier and thy boren\* man,                      \*born &13&gt;  
 Intendeth for to do thee villainy:\*                      \*dishonour, outrage  
 God grante thee thine \*homehy foe\* t' espy.    \*enemy in the household\*  
 For in this world is no worse pestilence  
 Than homely foe, all day in thy presence.

Performed hath the sun his arc diurn,\*                      \*daily  
 No longer may the body of him sojourn  
 On the horizon, in that latitude:  
 Night with his mantle, that is dark and rude,  
 Gan overspread the hemisphere about:  
 For which departed is this \*lusty rout\*                      \*pleasant company\*  
 From January, with thank on every side.  
 Home to their houses lustily they ride,  
 Where as they do their thinges as them lest,  
 And when they see their time they go to rest.  
 Soon after that this hasty\* January                      \*eager  
 Will go to bed, he will no longer tarry.  
 He dranke hippocras, clarre, and vernage &14&gt;  
 Of spices hot, to increase his courage;  
 And many a lectuary\* had he full fine,                      \*potion  
 Such as the cursed monk Dan Constantine&15&gt;  
 Hath written in his book \*de Coitu;\*                      \*of sexual intercourse\*  
 To eat them all he would nothing eschew:  
 And to his privy friendes thus said he:  
 'For Godde's love, as soon as it may be,  
 Let \*voiden all\* this house in courteous wise.'                      \*everyone leave\*  
 And they have done right as he will devise.  
 Men drinken, and the travers\* draw anon;                      \*curtains  
 The bride is brought to bed as still as stone;  
 And when the bed was with the priest y-bless'd,  
 Out of the chamber every wight him dress'd,

And January hath fast in arms y-take  
 His freshe May, his paradise, his make.\* \*mate  
 He lulled her, he kissed her full oft;  
 With thicke bristles of his beard unsoft,  
 Like to the skin of houndfish,\* sharp as brere\*\* \*dogfish \*\*briar  
 (For he was shav'n all new in his mannere),  
 He rubbed her upon her tender face,  
 And saide thus; 'Alas! I must trespace  
 To you, my spouse, and you greatly offend,  
 Ere time come that I will down descend.  
 But natheless consider this,' quoth he,  
 'There is no workman, whatsoe'er he be,  
 That may both worke well and hastily:  
 This will be done at leisure perfectly.  
 It is \*no force\* how longe that we play; \*no matter\*  
 In true wedlock coupled be we tway;  
 And blessed be the yoke that we be in,  
 For in our actes may there be no sin.  
 A man may do no sinne with his wife,  
 Nor hurt himselfe with his owen knife;  
 For we have leave to play us by the law.'

Thus labour'd he, till that the day gan daw,  
 And then he took a sop in fine clarre,  
 And upright in his bedde then sat he.  
 And after that he sang full loud and clear,  
 And kiss'd his wife, and made wanton cheer.  
 He was all coltish, full of ragerie \* \*wantonness  
 And full of jargon as a flecked pie.&lt;16&gt;  
 The slacke skin about his necke shaked,  
 While that he sang, so chanted he and craked.\* \*quavered  
 But God wot what that May thought in her heart,  
 When she him saw up sitting in his shirt  
 In his night-cap, and with his necke lean:  
 She praised not his playing worth a bean.  
 Then said he thus; 'My reste will I take  
 Now day is come, I may no longer wake;  
 And down he laid his head and slept till prime.  
 And afterward, when that he saw his time,  
 Up rose January, but freshe May  
 Helde her chamber till the fourthe day,  
 As usage is of wives for the best.

For every labour some time must have rest,  
Or elles longe may he not endure;  
This is to say, no life of creature,  
Be it of fish, or bird, or beast, or man.

Now will I speak of woeful Damian,  
That languisheth for love, as ye shall hear;  
Therefore I speak to him in this manneare.

I say. 'O silly Damian, alas!

Answer to this demand, as in this case,  
How shalt thou to thy lady, freshe May,  
Telle thy woe? She will alway say nay;  
Eke if thou speak, she will thy woe bewray; \*  
God be thine help, I can no better say.

\*betray

This sicke Damian in Venus' fire

So burned that he died for desire;

For which he put his life \*in aventure,\*

\*at risk\*

No longer might he in this wise endure;

But privily a penner\* gan he borrow,

\*writing-case

And in a letter wrote he all his sorrow,

In manner of a complaint or a lay,

Unto his faire freshe lady May.

And in a purse of silk, hung on his shirt,

He hath it put, and laid it at his heart.

The moone, that at noon was thilke\* day

\*that

That January had wedded freshe May,

In ten of Taure, was into Cancer glided;&lt;17&gt;

So long had Maius in her chamber abided,

As custom is unto these nobles all.

A bride shall not eaten in the ball

Till dayes four, or three days at the least,

Y-passed be; then let her go to feast.

The fourthe day complete from noon to noon,

When that the highe masse was y-done,

In halle sat this January, and May,

As fresh as is the brighte summer's day.

And so befell, how that this goode man

Remember'd him upon this Damian.

And saide; 'Saint Mary, how may this be,

That Damian attendeth not to me?

Is he aye sick? or how may this betide?'

His squiers, which that stode there beside,  
 Excused him, because of his sickness,  
 Which letted\* him to do his business:                     \*hindered  
 None other cause mighte make him tarry.  
 'That me forthinketh,'\* quoth this January                 \*grieves, causes  
 'He is a gentle squier, by my truth; uneasiness  
 If that he died, it were great harm and ruth.  
 He is as wise, as discreet, and secre',\*                     \*secret, trusty  
 As any man I know of his degree,  
 And thereto manly and eke serviceble,  
 And for to be a thrifty man right able.  
 But after meat, as soon as ever I may  
 I will myself visit him, and eke May,  
 To do him all the comfort that I can.'  
 And for that word him blessed every man,  
 That of his bounty and his gentleness  
 He woulde so comforten in sickness  
 His squier, for it was a gentle deed.

'Dame,' quoth this January, 'take good heed,  
 At after meat, ye with your women all  
 (When that ye be in chamb'r out of this hall),  
 That all ye go to see this Damian:  
 Do him disport, he is a gentle man;  
 And telle him that I will him visite,  
 \*Have I nothing but rested me a lite:\*                     \*when only I have rested  
 And speed you faste, for I will abide me a little\*  
 Till that ye sleepe faste by my side.'  
 And with that word he gan unto him call  
 A squier, that was marshal of his hall,  
 And told him certain thinges that he wo'ld.  
 This freshe May hath straight her way y-hold,  
 With all her women, unto Damian.  
 Down by his beddes side sat she than,\*                     \*then  
 Comforting him as goodly as she may.  
 This Damian, when that his time he say,\*                     \*saw  
 In secret wise his purse, and eke his bill,  
 In which that he y-written had his will,  
 Hath put into her hand withoute more,  
 Save that he sighed wondrous deep and sore,  
 And softely to her right thus said he:  
 'Mercy, and that ye not discover me:

For I am dead if that this thing be kid.'\*      \*discovered &lt;18&gt;  
 The purse hath she in her bosom hid,  
 And went her way; ye get no more of me;  
 But unto January come is she,  
 That on his bedde's side sat full soft.  
 He took her, and he kissed her full oft,  
 And laid him down to sleep, and that anon.  
 She feigned her as that she muste gon  
 There as ye know that every wight must need;  
 And when she of this bill had taken heed,  
 She rent it all to cloutes\* at the last,      \*fragments  
 And in the privy softely it cast.  
 Who studieth\* now but faire freshe May?      \*is thoughtful  
 Adown by olde January she lay,  
 That slepte, till the cough had him awaked:  
 Anon he pray'd her strippe her all naked,  
 He would of her, he said, have some pleasance;  
 And said her clothes did him incumbrance.  
 And she obey'd him, be her \*lefe or loth.\*      \*willing or unwilling\*  
 But, lest that precious\* folk be with me wroth,      \*over-nice &lt;19&gt;  
 How that he wrought I dare not to you tell,  
 Or whether she thought it paradise or hell;  
 But there I let them worken in their wise  
 Till evensong ring, and they must arise.

Were it by destiny, or aventure,\*      \* chance  
 Were it by influence, or by nature,  
 Or constellation, that in such estate  
 The heaven stood at that time fortunate  
 As for to put a bill of Venus' works  
 (For alle thing hath time, as say these clerks),  
 To any woman for to get her love,  
 I cannot say; but greate God above,  
 That knoweth that none act is causeless,  
 \*He deem\* of all, for I will hold my peace.      \*let him judge\*  
 But sooth is this, how that this freshe May  
 Hath taken such impression that day  
 Of pity on this sicke Damian,  
 That from her hearte she not drive can  
 The remembrance for \*to do him ease.\*      \*to satisfy  
 'Certain,' thought she, 'whom that this thing displease his desire\*  
 I recke not, for here I him assure,

To love him best of any creature,  
 Though he no more hadde than his shirt.'  
 Lo, pity runneth soon in gentle heart.  
 Here may ye see, how excellent franchise\*  
 In women is when they them \*narrow advise.\*  
 Some tyrant is, - as there be many a one, -  
 That hath a heart as hard as any stone,  
 Which would have let him sterven\* in the place  
 Well rather than have granted him her grace;  
 And then rejoicen in her cruel pride.  
 And reckon not to be a homicide.  
 This gentle May, full filled of pity,  
 Right of her hand a letter maked she,  
 In which she granted him her very grace;  
 There lacked nought, but only day and place,  
 Where that she might unto his lust suffice:  
 For it shall be right as he will devise.  
 And when she saw her time upon a day  
 To visit this Damian went this May,  
 And subtilly this letter down she thrust  
 Under his pillow, read it if him lust.\*  
 She took him by the hand, and hard him twist  
 So secretly, that no wight of it wist,  
 And bade him be all whole; and forth she went  
 To January, when he for her sent.  
 Up rose Damian the nexte morrow,  
 All passed was his sickness and his sorrow.  
 He combed him, he proined & him and picked,  
 He did all that unto his lady liked;  
 And eke to January he went as low  
 As ever did a dogge for the bow.&21&gt;  
 He is so pleasant unto every man  
 (For craft is all, whoso that do it can),  
 Every wight is fain to speak him good;  
 And fully in his lady's grace he stood.  
 Thus leave I Damian about his need,  
 And in my tale forth I will proceed.

\*generosity  
 \*closely consider\*

\*die

\*pleased

Some clerke\* holde that felicity  
 Stands in delight; and therefore certain he,  
 This noble January, with all his might  
 In honest wise as longeth\* to a knight,

\*writers, scholars

\*belongeth

Shope\* him to live full deliciously:                   \*prepared, arranged  
 His housing, his array, as honestly\*                   \*honourably, suitably  
 To his degree was maked as a king's.  
 Amonges other of his honest things  
 He had a garden walled all with stone;  
 So fair a garden wot I nowhere none.  
 For out of doubt I verily suppose  
 That he that wrote the Romance of the Rose &22&gt;  
 Could not of it the beauty well devise;\*                   \*describe  
 Nor Priapus &23&gt; mighte not well suffice,  
 Though he be god of gardens, for to tell  
 The beauty of the garden, and the well\*                   \*fountain  
 That stood under a laurel always green.  
 Full often time he, Pluto, and his queen  
 Proserpina, and all their faerie,  
 Disported them and made melody  
 About that well, and danced, as men told.  
 This noble knight, this January old  
 Such dainty\* had in it to walk and play,                   \*pleasure  
 That he would suffer no wight to bear the key,  
 Save he himself, for of the small wicket  
 He bare always of silver a cliket,\*                   \*key  
 With which, when that him list, he it unshet.\*                   \*opened  
 And when that he would pay his wife's debt,  
 In summer season, thither would he go,  
 And May his wife, and no wight but they two;  
 And thinges which that were not done in bed,  
 He in the garden them perform'd and sped.  
 And in this wise many a merry day  
 Lived this January and fresh May,  
 But worldly joy may not always endure  
 To January, nor to no creatucere.

O sudden hap! O thou fortune unstable!  
 Like to the scorpion so deceivable,\*                   \*deceitful  
 That fhatt'rest with thy head when thou wilt sting;  
 Thy tail is death, through thine evenoming.  
 O brittle joy! O sweete poison quaint!\*                   \*strange  
 O monster, that so subtilly canst paint  
 Thy giftes, under hue of steadfastness,  
 That thou deceivest bothe \*more and less!\*                   \*great and small\*  
 Why hast thou January thus deceiv'd,

That haddest him for thy full friend receiv'd?  
 And now thou hast bereft him both his eyen,  
 For sorrow of which desireth he to dien.  
 Alas! this noble January free,  
 Amid his lust\* and his prosperity  
 Is waxen blind, and that all suddenly.  
 He weeped and he wailed piteously;  
 And therewithal the fire of jealousy  
 (Lest that his wife should fall in some folly)  
 So burnt his hearte, that he woulde fain,  
 That some man bothe him and her had slain;  
 For neither after his death, nor in his life,  
 Ne would he that she were no love nor wife,  
 But ever live as widow in clothes black,  
 Sole as the turtle that hath lost her make.\*  
 But at the last, after a month or tway,  
 His sorrow gan assuage, soothe to say.  
 For, when he wist it might none other be,  
 He patiently took his adversity:  
 Save out of doubt he may not foregon  
 That he was jealous evermore-in-one:\*  
 Which jealousy was so outrageous,  
 That neither in hall, nor in none other house,  
 Nor in none other place never the mo'  
 He woulde suffer her to ride or go,  
 \*But if\* that he had hand on her alway.  
 For which full often wepte freshe May,  
 That loved Damian so burningly  
 That she must either dien suddenly,  
 Or elles she must have him as her lest:\*  
 She waited\* when her hearte woulde brest.\*\*  
 Upon that other side Damian  
 Becomen is the sorrowfullest man  
 That ever was; for neither night nor day  
 He mighte speak a word to freshe May,  
 As to his purpose, of no such mattere,  
 \*But if\* that January must it hear,  
 That had a hand upon her evermo'.  
 But natheless, by writing to and fro,  
 And privy signes, wist he what she meant,  
 And she knew eke the fine\* of his intent.

\*pleasure

\*mate

\*continually

\*unless

\*pleased

\*expected \*\*burst

\*unless\*

\*end, aim



O January, what might it thee avail,  
 Though thou might see as far as shippes sail?  
 For as good is it blind deceiv'd to be,  
 As be deceived when a man may see.  
 Lo, Argus, which that had a hundred eyen, &24&gt;  
 For all that ever he could pore or pryen,  
 Yet was he blent;\* and, God wot, so be mo',                   \*deceived  
 That \*weene wisly\* that it be not so:                   \*think confidently\*  
 Pass over is an ease, I say no more.  
 This freshe May, of which I spake yore,\*                   \*previously  
 In warm wax hath \*imprinted the cliket\*                   \*taken an impression  
 That January bare of the small wicket of the key\*  
 By which into his garden oft he went;  
 And Damian, that knew all her intent,  
 The cliket counterfeited privily;  
 There is no more to say, but hastily  
 Some wonder by this cliket shall betide,  
 Which ye shall hearen, if ye will abide.

O noble Ovid, sooth say'st thou, God wot,  
 What sleight is it, if love be long and hot,  
 That he'll not find it out in some mannere?  
 By Pyramus and Thisbe may men lear;\*                   \*learn  
 Though they were kept full long and strait o'er all,  
 They be accorded,\* rowning\*\* through a wall,                   \*agreed☐\*whispering  
 Where no wight could have found out such a sleight.  
 But now to purpose; ere that dayes eight  
 Were passed of the month of July, fill\*                   \*it befell  
 That January caught so great a will,  
 Through egging\* of his wife, him for to play                   \*inciting  
 In his garden, and no wight but they tway,  
 That in a morning to this May said he: &25&gt;  
 'Rise up, my wife, my love, my lady free;  
 The turtle's voice is heard, mine owen sweet;  
 The winter is gone, with all his raines weet.\*                   \*wet  
 Come forth now with thine \*eyen columbine\*                   \*eyes like the doves\*  
 Well fairer be thy breasts than any wine.  
 The garden is enclosed all about;  
 Come forth, my white spouse; for, out of doubt,  
 Thou hast me wounded in mine heart, O wife:  
 No spot in thee was e'er in all thy life.  
 Come forth, and let us taken our disport;

I choose thee for my wife and my comfort.'

Such olde lewed\* wordes used he.

\*foolish, ignorant

On Damian a signe made she,

That he should go before with his cliket.

This Damian then hath opened the wicket,

And in he start, and that in such mannere

That no wight might him either see or hear;

And still he sat under a bush. Anon

This January, as blind as is a stone,

With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo',

Into this freshe garden is y-go,

And clapped to the wicket suddenly.

'Now, wife,' quoth he, 'here is but thou and I;

Thou art the creature that I beste love:

For, by that Lord that sits in heav'n above,

Lever\* I had to dien on a knife,

\*rather

Than thee offende, deare true wife.

For Godde's sake, think how I thee chees,\*

\*chose

Not for no covetise\* doubtless,

\* covetousness

But only for the love I had to thee.

And though that I be old, and may not see,

Be to me true, and I will tell you why.

Certes three thinges shall ye win thereby:

First, love of Christ, and to yourself honour,

And all mine heritage, town and tow'r.

I give it you, make charters as you lest;

This shall be done to-morrow ere sun rest,

So wisly\* God my soule bring to bliss!

\*surely

I pray you, on this covenant me kiss.

And though that I be jealous, wite\* me not;

\*blame

Ye be so deep imprinted in my thought,

That when that I consider your beauty,

And therewithal \*th'unlikely eld\* of me,

\*dissimilar age\*

I may not, certes, though I shoulde die,

Forbear to be out of your company,

For very love; this is withoute doubt:

Now kiss me, wife, and let us roam about.'

This freshe May, when she these wordes heard,

Benignely to January answer'd;

But first and forward she began to weep:

'I have,' quoth she, 'a soule for to keep



Following his wife, the queen Proserpina, -  
 Which that he ravished out of Ethna,&lt;26&gt;  
 While that she gather'd flowers in the mead  
 (In Claudian ye may the story read,  
 How in his grisly chariot he her fet\*), - \*fetched  
 This king of Faerie adown him set  
 Upon a bank of turfes fresh and green,  
 And right anon thus said he to his queen.  
 'My wife,' quoth he, 'there may no wight say nay, -  
 Experience so proves it every day, -  
 The treason which that woman doth to man.  
 Ten hundred thousand stories tell I can  
 Notable of your untruth and brittleness \* \*inconstancy  
 O Solomon, richest of all richness,  
 Full fill'd of sapience and worldly glory,  
 Full worthy be thy wordes of memory  
 To every wight that wit and reason can. \* \*knows  
 Thus praised he yet the bounte\* of man: \*goodness  
 'Among a thousand men yet found I one,  
 But of all women found I never none.' &lt;27&gt;  
 Thus said this king, that knew your wickedness;  
 And Jesus, Filius Sirach, &lt;28&gt; as I guess,  
 He spake of you but seldom reverence.  
 A wilde fire and corrupt pestilence  
 So fall upon your bodies yet to-night!  
 Ne see ye not this honourable knight?  
 Because, alas! that he is blind and old,  
 His owen man shall make him cuckold.  
 Lo, where he sits, the lechour, in the tree.  
 Now will I granten, of my majesty,  
 Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,  
 That he shall have again his eyen sight,  
 When that his wife will do him villainy;  
 Then shall be knowen all her harlotry,  
 Both in reproof of her and other mo'.'  
 'Yea, Sir,' quoth Proserpine,' and will ye so?  
 Now by my mother Ceres' soul I swear  
 That I shall give her suffisant answer,  
 And alle women after, for her sake;  
 That though they be in any guilt y-take,  
 With face bold they shall themselves excuse,  
 And bear them down that woulde them accuse.

For lack of answer, none of them shall dien.

All\* had ye seen a thing with both your eyen,                   \*although  
Yet shall \*we visage it\* so hardily,                   \*confront it\*  
And weep, and swear, and chide subtilly,  
That ye shall be as lewed\* as be geese.           \*ignorant, confounded  
What recketh me of your authorities?  
I wot well that this Jew, this Solomon,  
Found of us women fooles many one:  
But though that he founde no good woman,  
Yet there hath found many another man  
Women full good, and true, and virtuous;  
Witness on them that dwelt in Christes house;  
With martyrdom they proved their constance.  
The Roman gestes & make remembrance  
Of many a very true wife also.  
But, Sire, be not wroth, albeit so,  
Though that he said he found no good woman,  
I pray you take the sentence\* of the man:       \*opinion, real meaning  
He meant thus, that in \*sovereign bounte\*       \*perfect goodness  
Is none but God, no, neither \*he nor she.\*       \*man nor woman\*  
Hey, for the very God that is but one,  
Why make ye so much of Solomon?  
What though he made a temple, Godde's house?  
What though he were rich and glorious?  
So made he eke a temple of false goddes;  
How might he do a thing that more forbode\* is?       \*forbidden  
Pardie, as fair as ye his name emplaster,\* \*plaster over, 'whitewash'  
He was a lechour, and an idolaster,\*               \*idohater  
And in his eld he very\* God forsook.             \*the true  
And if that God had not (as saith the book)  
Spared him for his father's sake, he should  
Have lost his regne\* rather\*\* than he would.       \*kingdom \*\*sooner  
I \*sette not of\* all the villainy                   \*value not\*  
That he of women wrote, a butterfly.  
I am a woman, needes must I speak,  
Or elles swell until mine hearte break.  
For since he said that we be jangleresses,\*       \*chatterers  
As ever may I brooke\* whole my tresses,        \*preserve  
I shall not spare for no courtesy  
To speak him harm, that said us villainy.'  
'Dame,' quoth this Pluto, 'be no longer wroth;

I give it up: but, since I swore mine oath  
 That I would grant to him his sight again,  
 My word shall stand, that warn I you certain:  
 I am a king; it sits\* me not to lie.'                   \*becomes, befits  
 'And I,' quoth she, 'am queen of Faerie.  
 Her answer she shall have, I undertake,  
 Let us no more wordes of it make.  
 Forsooth, I will no longer you contrary.'

Now let us turn again to January,  
 That in the garden with his faire May  
 Singeth well merrier than the popinjay:\*                   \*parrot  
 'You love I best, and shall, and other none.'  
 So long about the alleys is he gone,  
 Till he was come to \*that ilke perry,\*                   \*the same pear-tree\*  
 Where as this Damian satte full merry  
 On high, among the freshe leaves green.  
 This freshe May, that is so bright and sheen,  
 Gan for to sigh, and said, 'Alas my side!  
 Now, Sir,' quoth she, 'for aught that may betide,  
 I must have of the peares that I see,  
 Or I must die, so sore longeth me  
 To eaten of the smalle peares green;  
 Help, for her love that is of heaven queen!  
 I tell you well, a woman in my plight &30&gt;  
 May have to fruit so great an appetite,  
 That she may dien, but\* she of it have. '                   \*unless  
 'Alas!' quoth he, 'that I had here a knave\*                   \*servant  
 That coulde climb; alas! alas!' quoth he,  
 'For I am blind.' 'Yea, Sir, \*no force,'\* quoth she;                   \*no matter\*  
 'But would ye vouchesafe, for Godde's sake,  
 The perry in your armes for to take  
 (For well I wot that ye mistruste me),  
 Then would I climbe well enough,' quoth she,  
 'So I my foot might set upon your back.'  
 'Certes,' said he, 'therein shall be no lack,  
 Might I you helpe with mine hearte's blood.'  
 He stooped down, and on his back she stood,  
 And caught her by a twist,\* and up she go'th.                   \*twig, bough  
 (Ladies, I pray you that ye be not wroth,  
 I cannot glose,\* I am a rude man):                   \*mince matters  
 And suddenly anon this Damian



How that this Damian had by thee lain,  
 And that thy smock had lain upon his breast.'  
 'Yea, Sir,' quoth she, 'ye may \*ween as ye lest:\*           \*think as you  
 But, Sir, a man that wakes out of his sleep, please\*  
 He may not suddenly well take keep\*                           \*notice  
 Upon a thing, nor see it perfectly,  
 Till that he be adawed\* verily.                                 \*awakened  
 Right so a man, that long hath blind y-be,  
 He may not suddenly so well y-see,  
 First when his sight is newe come again,  
 As he that hath a day or two y-seen.  
 Till that your sight establish'd be a while,  
 There may full many a sighte you beguile.  
 Beware, I pray you, for, by heaven's king,  
 Full many a man weeneth to see a thing,  
 And it is all another than it seemeth;  
 He which that misconceiveth oft misdeemeth.'  
 And with that word she leapt down from the tree.  
 This January, who is glad but he?  
 He kissed her, and clipped\* her full oft,                     \*embraced  
 And on her womb he stroked her full soft;  
 And to his palace home he hath her lad.\*                     \*led  
 Now, goode men, I pray you to be glad.  
 Thus endeth here my tale of January,  
 God bless us, and his mother, Sainte Mary.

Geoffrey Chaucer



# The Miller's Tale

In Oxford there once lived a rich old lout  
Who had some guest rooms that he rented out,  
And carpentry was this old fellow's trade.  
A poor young scholar boarded who had made  
His studies in the liberal arts, but he  
Had turned his fancy to astrology  
And knew the way, by certain propositions,  
To answer well when asked about conditions,  
Such as when men would ask in certain hours  
If they should be expecting drought or showers,  
Or if they asked him what was to befall  
Concerning such I can't recount it all.

This student's name was Nicholas the Handy.  
He led a secret love life fine and dandy,  
In private always, ever on the sly,  
Though meek as any maiden to the eye.  
With Nicholas there were no other boarders,  
He lived alone, and had there in his quarters  
Some fragrant herbs, arranged as best to suit,  
And he himself was sweeter than the root  
Of licorice or any herb at all.  
His Almagest and books both great and small,  
An astrolabe for plotting outer space,  
And counters used in math were all in place  
On shelves between the headposts of his bed.  
His storage chest was draped with cloth of red,  
And on its top there lay a psaltery  
On which at night he'd play a melody,  
So sweet a sound that all the chamber rang;  
And Angelus ad virginem he sang,  
And after that would follow 'The King's Note.'  
Folks often praised him for his merry throat.  
And this was how this sweet clerk's time was spent,  
While friends provided money for his rent.

The carpenter had newly wed a wife,  
One whom he loved more than his very life;  
Her age was eighteen years. He jealously  
Kept her as if inside a cage, for she  
Was one both young and wild, and he had fears

Of being a cuckold, so advanced in years.  
Not educated, he had never read  
Cato: one like himself a man should wed,  
He ought to marry mindful of his state,  
For youth and age are often at debate.  
But since he had been captured in the snare,  
Like others folks he had his cross to bear.  
And fair this young wife was! She had withal  
A body like a weasel, slim and small.  
She wore a belt with little stripes of silk;  
An apron was as white as morning milk  
Upon her loins, pleated daintily.  
Her white smock, too, had fine embroidery;  
The collar was embellished round about  
With lovely coal-black silk inside and out,  
And ribbons on the snowy cap she wore  
Were of the same silk that her collar bore.  
She wore a silken headband, broad and high.  
And certainly she had a wanton eye;  
Her brows were thinly plucked, and like a bow  
Each one was arched, and black as any sloe.  
Indeed she was a blissful sight to see,  
Moreso than any pear tree that could be  
And softer than the wool upon a wether.  
Upon her belt was hung a purse of leather,  
Silk-tasseled and with brassy spangles pearled.  
And there's no man so wise in all this world,  
Though you may go and search it every inch,  
Could dream a doll so lovely, such a wench.  
And brighter far did shine her lovely hue  
Than gold coins in the Tower when they're new.  
Her song was loud and lively as the call  
Of any swallow perching on the wall.  
She'd skip about and play some game or other  
As any kid or calf behind its mother.  
Her mouth was sweet as any mead whatever  
Or as a hoard of apples on the heather.  
Skittish she was, just like a jolly colt,  
Tall as a mast, straight as an archer's bolt.  
The brooch on her low collar was as large  
As is the boss upon a shield or targe.  
Her shoes, well laced, high up her legs would reach.

She really was a primrose, quite a peach,  
One fit for any lord to lay in bed  
Or any worthy working man to wed.  
Now sir, and sir again, it came to pass  
That one fine day this Handy Nicholas  
With this young wife began to flirt and play,  
Her husband off at Osney (anyway  
These clerks are cunning when it comes to what  
They want), and slyly caught her by the twat;  
'Surely,' he said, 'if I don't have my will,  
For secret love, dear, I'll have quite a spill.'  
He held her hips as he went on to say,  
'My darling, you must love me right away  
Or I will die, God save me!' Like a colt  
Inside a shoeing frame she tried to bolt,  
She turned her face away defiantly.  
'Upon my faith, you'll get no kiss from me!  
Why, let me go,' she said, 'stop, Nicholas,  
Or I will cry 'Out!', 'Help me!' and 'Alas!'  
Unhand my body, show some courtesy!  
But then for mercy he made such a plea  
And spoke so fairly, offering so fast  
His all to her, that she agreed at last  
To grant to him her love: she made her promise  
To be at his commandment, by Saint Thomas  
Of Kent, when she saw opportunity.  
'My husband is so full of jealousy,  
If you don't wait and privy be,' she said,  
'I know right well that I'm as good as dead.  
You must be secret, keep this matter quiet.'  
'Nay,' Handy said, 'don't you be worried by it.  
A clerk has for his time not much to show  
If he can't fool a carpenter.' And so  
The two were in accord and gave their word  
To wait awhile as you've already heard.  
When Nicholas got through with all of this  
And felt her good below the waist, a kiss  
He gave her sweetly, took his psaltery,  
And played it hard, a lively melody.  
Now to the parish church it came to pass  
That in her Christian works and for the mass  
This good wife went upon one holy day.

Her forehead shone as bright as day, the way  
She'd scrubbed it so when washing after work.  
Now in that church there was a parish clerk  
Whose name was Absalon. His curly hair  
Was shiny, bright as gold found anywhere,  
And spread out like a broad fan on his head  
With straight and even part. A healthy red  
Was his complexion, eyes gray as a gander.  
The tracery of Saint Paul's was no grander  
Than his shoes' openwork, with fine red hose.  
The lad was trimly dressed from head to toes;  
He wore a sky-blue tunic that in places  
Was tricked out with the loveliest of laces,  
And over it his surplice was as bright  
As any blossom seen, a purest white.  
A merry child he was, as God may save.  
He well could let your blood, and clip and shave,  
And draw you up a deed and quittance too.  
Some twenty different ways the fellow knew  
To demonstrate the latest Oxford dance;  
He'd kick his heels about and blithely prance  
And play some merry tunes upon the fiddle.  
Loud treble he was known to sing a little  
And he could play as well on the guitar.  
In Oxford there was not a single bar  
That he did not go visit with his act  
To tell the truth, a fart would make him squeamish,  
And he was always proper in his English.  
This Absalon so jolly, fond of play,  
Went with a censer on that holy day  
To cense the parish wives. And as he passed,  
Many a longing look on them he cast-  
Especially on this carpenter's wife.  
Just looking at her made a merry life.  
She was so neat and sweet, this wanton spouse,  
That if he'd been a cat and she a mouse  
At once he would have caught her. Absalon,  
This parish clerk so jolly, full of fun,  
Could not, for the love longing in his heart,  
Take offerings from wives, he'd take no part,  
For courtesy, he said, and never might.  
The moon, when night had come, was full and bright

As Absalon took guitar under arm,  
His thoughts upon whom he might wake and charm;  
Thus amorous and jolly, off he strode  
Until he reached the carpenter's abode  
Soon after cockcrow. He then took his station  
Beside a casement window, its location  
Right in the old man's bedroom wall. And there  
He daintily began to sing his air:  
'Now, dearest lady, if your will it be,  
It is my prayer that you will pity me.'  
He sang and played the guitar right in tune.  
The carpenter awoke and heard him croon  
And said then to his wife, 'Why, Alison,  
What's going on? Is that not Absalon  
Who's chanting there below our bedroom wall?'  
And she replied, 'Yes, John, no doubt at all,  
As God knows, I can hear him tone for tone.'  
Now shouldn't one leave well enough alone?  
From day to day this jolly parish clerk  
Wooed her till he was woebegone. He'd work  
Upon it night and day and never rest;  
He'd comb his spreading locks, he smartly dressed;  
By go-betweens and proxies he would woo  
And swore he'd be her servant ever true;  
He warbled to her like a nightingale;  
He sent her honeyed wine, some mead, spiced ale,  
And cakes still piping hot. And since she knew  
Of city ways, he offered money too;  
For some folks can be won by such largess,  
And some by blows, and some by kindness.  
To show her his abilities so varied,  
He even went on stage, portraying Herod.  
But what would this avail him with the lass?  
For she so loved this Handy Nicholas  
That Absalon could elsewhere toot his horn;  
He had for all his labor only scorn.  
And so she made poor Absalon an ape,  
Made all his earnest efforts but a jape.  
The proverb tells the truth, it's not a lie,  
Here's how it goes: 'The one nearby and sly  
Will always make the distant dear one hated.'  
Though Absalon go mad, wrath unabated

Because he was so far out of her sight,  
Nigh Nicholas was standing in his light.  
Well may you fare, O Handy Nicholas,  
For Absalon must wail and sing 'Alas'!  
And so it was that on one Saturday  
The carpenter to Osney made his way,  
And Handy Nicholas and Alison  
Were in accord on what was to be done,  
That Nicholas should now devise a wile,  
This simple jealous husband to beguile;  
And if their little game turned out all right,  
She then could sleep in Handy's arms all night,  
As this was his desire and hers as well.  
So right away- no further words to tell,  
For Nicholas no longer meant to tarry-  
He slyly to his room began to carry  
Both food and drink to last a day or two.  
He told her what to lead her husband through  
If he should ask for Nicholas: she'd say  
She didn't know his whereabouts, all day  
Upon the lad she had not laid an eye;  
She thought some malady he had was why,  
For though her maid cried out, the lad to call,  
He wouldn't answer any way at all.  
So this went on for all that Saturday;  
This Nicholas up in his chamber lay,  
And ate and slept, or did what he thought best,  
Till Sunday when the sun went to its rest.  
This simple carpenter began to wonder  
About him, if some ailment had him under.  
'By dear Saint Thomas, I'm now full of dread  
That things aren't right with Nicholas,' he said.  
'O God forbid that suddenly he's died!  
For sure a ticklish world's where we abide;  
Today I saw 'em tote a corpse to kirk  
Though Monday last I saw the man at work.  
'Go up,' he told his knave at once. 'Go on,  
Call at his door, knock on it with a stone,  
See how it is, and tell me truthfully.'  
The knave went up the stairway sturdily  
And cried out at the chamber door; he stood  
There pounding like a madman on the wood.

'What are you at, O Master Nicholay?  
How can you sleep for all the livelong day?'  
All was for naught, for he heard not a sound.  
But then a hole low in the door he found  
(The one through which the cat was wont to creep),  
And through this hole he took a thorough peep  
Until at last he had the lad in sight.  
This clerk sat gaping upward as he might  
If he were staring off at the new moon.  
He went back down the stairs, and none too soon,  
To tell his master how he'd seen the man.  
To cross himself the carpenter began,  
And said, 'Help us, I pray, Saint Frideswide!  
A man knows little of what shall betide.  
This man has fallen with his astromy  
Into some madness or some malady.  
I always figured it would end just so!  
God's privacy's a thing men shouldn't know.  
Yea, blessed always is the simple man  
Who knows his creed and that is all he can!  
So fared another clerk with astromy:  
He walked out through the fields to try to see  
The future in the stars, and got for it  
A fall into a fertilizer pit, 3460  
One he had not foreseen. Yet by Saint Thomas,  
I pity Handy Nicholas. I promise,  
He shall be scolded for such studying,  
If that I may, by Jesus, heaven's King!  
Get me a staff, and neath the door I'll pry  
While you heave on it, Robin. By and by  
He'll come out of his studying, I'll bet.'  
Then at the chamber door he got all set.  
His knave was very strong in any case  
And by the hasp he heaved it from its place,  
The door went falling in right to the floor.  
Nicholas sat as stonily as before,  
Continuing to gape into the air.  
The carpenter assumed it was despair;  
He took him by the shoulders mightily  
And shook him hard, and cried reproachingly,  
'What is it, Nicholay? Look down! Awake,  
Think on Christ's passion! Here the sign I make

Now of the cross, from elf and evil sprite  
To keep you.' He began then to recite  
At once a night spell on the walls about  
As well as on the threshold leading out:  
'O Jesus and Saint Benedict, we pray  
You'll bless this house from every demon's sway.  
Night falls- White Paternoster, help defeat her!  
Where have you gone, O sister of Saint Peter?'  
And then at last this Handy Nicholas  
Began to sorely sigh, and said, 'Alas!  
Shall all the world so soon be swept away?'  
The carpenter replied, 'What's that you say?  
On God, like we hard workers do, now think.'  
And Nicholas then said, 'I need a drink,  
And afterwards we'll speak in privacy  
Of certain things concerning you and me.  
I'll surely tell no other what I've learned.'  
The carpenter went down, then soon returned,  
With a full quart of strong ale, up the stairs;  
And when they both had finished up their shares,  
Nick tightly shut the door. As to confide,  
This carpenter he set down by his side.  
He said, 'Now, John, my host both kind and dear,  
Your word of honor you must give me here  
That to no man this secret you'll disclose;  
For it is Christ's own secret that I pose,  
And if you tell it, sad will be your fate.  
There's such a vengeance if you should relate  
What I'm to say, you'll reap insanity.'  
'By Christ's own holy blood, it shall not be,'  
Old John replied, 'for I am not a blabber,  
No, I must say, I'm not an idle gabber.  
Say what you will, which I will never tell  
To child nor wife, by him who harrowed hell!'  
'Now, John,' said Nicholas, 'believe you me,  
I found this out through my astrology  
As I looked on the moon when it was bright.  
This Monday at a quarter of the night  
There shall come down so furious a rain  
Not half its force did Noah's flood contain.  
This world,' he said, 'in less than one small hour  
Shall all be drowned, so hideous the shower.



Mankind shall thus be drowned and lose all life.'  
The carpenter replied, 'Alas, my wife!  
My Alison, alas! She too will drown?'  
And in his sorrow nearly falling down,  
He said, 'No remedy will make it pass?'  
'Why, yes, by God,' said Handy Nicholas,  
'If you'll work by sound learning and advice.  
Don't work from your own head, that won't suffice.  
As Solomon once said (and it is true),  
'Work all by counsel and you'll never rue.' 3530  
If you'll work by good counsel, I've no doubt  
That mast and sail we then can do without,  
For I will save your wife and you and me.  
Have you not heard how Noah came to be  
Saved by our Lord, who warned him beforehand  
That water was to devastate the land?'  
'Yes,' said the carpenter, 'quite long ago.'  
'Have you not heard,' said Nicholas, 'also  
Of Noah's troubles with his fellowship  
Until he finally got his wife to ship?  
There is no doubt, I daresay, as to whether  
He would have given up his last black wether  
That she might have a vessel to herself.  
Do you know, then, what's best to do yourself?  
Haste is required, and for a hasty thing  
No time for preaching nor for tarrying.  
'Be off at once and fetch into this inn  
Three kneading troughs or tubs- we'll have one then  
For each of us; but see that each is large,  
So each of us may float as on a barge.  
And have therein some victuals too, at best  
Enough to last a day- fie on the rest!  
The waters will subside and go away  
At nine or so on the following day.  
But Robin must not know of this, your knave,  
And Jill your maid I also cannot save;  
Don't ask me why, for though you ask of me  
I will not tell a soul God's privy.  
Suffice it, John, lest you go raving mad,  
To have the same good grace that Noah had;  
Your wife I'll surely save without a doubt.  
Be on your way, get busy hereabout.

'But when you have, for her and you and me,  
Secured these kneading tubs, then hang the three  
Up in the roof- and hang them very high,  
That our provision no man may espy.  
And when you have accomplished what I've said,  
And stored enough good fare to keep us fed,  
An ax besides to whack the cord in two  
When comes the rain, so we can ride it through;  
And when you've knocked a hole up in the gable,  
Toward the garden and above the stable,  
That we may freely pass upon our way  
Until the mighty shower's gone away,  
Then merrily we'll float, I undertake,  
Just as the white duck floats behind the drake.  
'How, Alison! How, John!' I'll call to you.  
'Be merry, for the flood will soon be through!'  
And you will say, 'Hail, Master Nicholay!  
Good morning, I can see you, it is day!'  
And then we shall be lords, throughout this life,  
Of all the world, like Noah and his wife.  
'But of one thing you must be warned about:  
Be well advised, on that night never doubt  
That when each one of us has gone on board,  
We must not speak a word. We can't afford  
One call or cry but only silent prayer,  
For it's God's own dear will that I declare.  
'Your wife and you, therefore, hang far apart;  
That twixt you two no sinful play may start  
(And I refer to sight as well as deed)  
This ordinance is said. God give you speed!  
Tomorrow night when everyone's asleep,  
Into our kneading tubs we then shall creep  
And there we'll sit awaiting God's good grace.  
Be on your way, I have no longer space  
To sermonize on this, and so I'll cease.  
It's said, 'But send the wise and hold your peace.'  
Well, you are wise, so you I needn't teach.  
Get going now and save us, I beseech.'

3600

This simple carpenter went on his way  
With many an 'Alas' and 'Wellaway,'  
And to his wife he told his privy.  
Now she was well aware, much more than he,

Of what this cunning plan was to imply.  
She acted, though, as if about to die;  
'Alas! go now immediately,' she said,  
'Help us escape or all of us are dead!  
I am the truest of devoted wives,  
So go, dear spouse, and help to save our lives.'  
See what a great thing is emotion! Why,  
Of what one may imagine one can die,  
So deep is the impression it can make.  
This silly carpenter began to shake;  
He feared he was to witness verily  
Old Noah's flood come rolling like the sea  
To drown young Alison, his honey dear.  
He weeps and wails, he looks so sad and drear  
As many a sigh he heaves, a mournful sough.  
He goes and gets a kneading trough somehow,  
One tub and then another, which he then  
Has privately transported to the inn;  
In privacy he hangs them as instructed.  
Three ladders with his own hands he constructed  
By which they would go climbing rung by rung  
Up to the rafters where the tubs were hung.  
He put in each of them some cheese and bread  
And good ale in a jug, to keep them fed  
Sufficiently for what would be a day.  
Before beginning, though, all this array  
He had his knave and maid as well to go  
Upon an errand to London. And so  
Upon that Monday, as it drew to night,  
He shut the door, lit not one candlelight,  
Arranged all things to look as they should be,  
And up into their tubs then climbed the three.  
They sat the time a furlong takes to walk.  
Said Nick, 'Now Paternoster, then no talk!'  
And 'Mum,' said John, and 'Mum,' said Alison.  
The carpenter's devotions were begun,  
He stilly sat, prayed to the Holy Spirit,  
And waited for the rain, intent to hear it.  
But dead asleep from all his weariness  
The carpenter soon fell- it was, I guess,  
Around the curfew time. Yet even then  
He sorely groaned, such pain his soul was in.

(He also snored, the way his noggin lay.)  
Then down his ladder crept young Nicholay,  
And Alison down hers as softly sped;  
Without a single word they went to bed  
Right where the carpenter was wont to be.  
And there the revel and the melody!  
For there lay Alison and Nicholas-  
What mirth and pleasant business came to pass!-  
Until the bell of Lauds began to ring  
And friars in the chancel were to sing.  
Now Absalon, the amorous parish clerk  
(Still woebegone from being so lovestruck),  
Upon that Monday was down Osney way  
To join companions for some sport and play.  
While there he chanced to ask a cloisterer  
In private about John the carpenter.  
They went outside the church, and to this clerk  
The monk said, 'I've not seen him here at work  
Since Saturday. I'd say, as best I have it,  
He's been sent out for timber by the abbot.  
For timber he will very often go  
And stay out at the grange a day or so.  
If not, he's surely at his house today.  
Which place he's at I can't for certain say.'  
This Absalon was thrilled, his heart was light.  
'It's time,' he thought, 'to stay awake all night,  
For I saw not one stirring of the man  
About his door, not once since day began.  
'As I may thrive, at crowing of the cock  
Privately at his window I will knock,  
The one so low there in his bedroom wall.  
To Alison I'll speak and tell her all  
About my longing. This time I won't miss  
But at the least will get from her a kiss.  
That will be, by my faith, some consolation;  
My mouth has itched all day, a situation  
That is a sign of kissing at the least.  
And, too, last night I dreamt about a feast.  
Therefore I'll go and sleep an hour or two,  
Then I will stay up all the night and woo.'  
At first cockcrow, at once from his repose  
This jolly lover Absalon arose

And donned attire as smart as any viewed.  
 Some cardamon and licorice he chewed,  
 To scent his breath, before he combed his hair.  
 A true-love herb as well he chose to bear  
 Beneath his tongue, thereby to be exquisite.  
 Then to the old man's house he made his visit.  
 There quietly he stood beneath the casement  
 (It reached down to his breast, so low its placement):  
 He cleared his throat and spoke in softest voice:  
 'What are you doing, honeycomb, my choice  
 And fairest bird, my sweetest cinnamon?  
 Awake and speak to me, sweet Alison.  
 How little do you think upon my woe;  
 I sweat for your love everywhere I go.  
 No wonder that I sweat and slave for it:  
 I'm longing as the lamb longs for the tit.  
 Yes, darling, I have for you such a love  
 You've got me mourning like a turtledove,  
 My appetite's that of a maid,' he cried.  
 'Get from the window, jackass,' she replied.  
 'So help me God, there'll be no 'come and kiss me.'  
 I love another and, by Jesus, he  
 Is better far than you or I'm to blame.  
 Unless you want a stoning, in the name  
 Of twenty devils, let me sleep. Away!  
 'Alas,' said Absalon, 'and welladay,  
 That my true love is ever so beset!  
 At least then kiss me, if that's all I get,  
 For Jesus' love and for the love of me.'  
 'Will you then go,' she said, 'and let me be?'  
 'Yes, darling, surely,' he was quick to say.  
 'Get ready, then,' she said, 'I'm on my way.'  
 To Nicholas she whispered, 'Shh, be still;  
 Of laughter you're about to get your fill.'  
 Now Absalon got down upon his knees  
 And said, 'I am a lord by all degrees,  
 For after this I hope there's more to follow.  
 Come, grace me, darling, my sweet little swallow!  
 She opened up the window then with haste.  
 'Come on,' she said, 'be quick, no time to waste,  
 We don't want neighbors seeing you've come by.'  
 Absalon wiped his mouth till it was dry.

The night was dark as pitch, as black as coal,  
And from the window she stuck out her hole;  
And Absalon, not knowing north from south,  
Then kissed her naked ass with eager mouth  
Before he was aware of all of this.

Then back he started, something seemed amiss:  
A woman has no beard, he knew as much,  
Yet this was rough and hairy to the touch.

'O fie!' he said. 'Alas! what did I do?'

'Tee hee,' said she, and clapt the window to. 3740

Poor Absalon had reached a sorry pass.

'A beard, a beard!' laughed Handy Nicholas.

'God's body, this is really going swell.'

Poor Absalon heard all this very well,

In anger had to give his lip a bite,

And to himself he said, 'I'll set you right.'

Who's rubbing now, who's scrubbing now his lips  
With dust, with sand, with straw, with cloth, with chips,  
But Absalon, who's crying out 'Alas!

May Satan take my soul if I'd not pass

Up owning this whole town that I might be  
Avenged for this despite they've done to me.

Alas,' he cried, 'I didn't turn aside!'

His hot love then was cold, indeed had died;

For from the time he kissed her naked ass

He didn't give one cress for any lass,

For he'd been cured of all his malady;

All lovers he denounced repeatedly

And wept just like a child who has been whipped.

Across the street a little ways he slipped

To see a blacksmith, Master Gervase, who

Was known for plow parts, shares and coulter too,

And at his forge was busy making more.

This Absalon knocked softly at his door

And said, 'Quick, Gervase, get this door undone.'

'Who's there?' he asked. 'It's me, it's Absalon.'

'Why, Absalon! By Christ's sweet tree, I say,

Why up so early? Benedicite!

What's ailing you? God knows, some merry girl

Is what brings you out prowling in a whirl,

And by Saint Neot you follow what I mean.'

But Absalon was caring not a bean

For all his play, he didn't speak or laugh,  
For he had much more tow on his distaff  
Than Gervase knew. He said, 'My friend so dear,  
This red-hot coulter in the chimney here-  
Lend it to me. There's something I must do  
And then right soon I'll bring it back to you.'  
'Why, surely,' Gervase said, 'if it were gold  
Or a poke of nobles in a sum untold,  
As I'm a smith, 'twould be yours every bit.  
But what the devil will you do with it?'  
'Let that,' said Absalon, 'be as it may.  
I'll tell you all about it when it's day.'  
He grabbed it by the handle, which was cool,  
And quietly went out, and with the tool  
He went again to the carpenter's wall.  
He cleared his throat to give a little call  
And knocked upon the window as before.  
'Who's there?' he heard young Alison once more.  
'Who's knocking there? It is a thief, I'll bet.'  
'Why, no,' he said, 'God knows, my little pet,  
It's Absalon. My darling little thing,  
I've brought for you,' said he, 'a golden ring.  
So help me God, my mother gave it to me.  
It's well engraved, it is a fine thing truly.  
I'll let you have it for another kiss.'  
Now Nicholas was up to take a piss,  
And thought he would improve upon the jape  
And have him kiss his ass ere he escape.  
He hastened to the window, turned around,  
And stuck his bottom out without a sound,  
Both buttocks and beyond, right to the thighs.  
Then Absalon, who had to strain his eyes,  
Said, 'Speak, sweet bird, I know not where thou art.'  
And Nicholas at this let fly a fart  
So great it sounded like a thunderclap-  
It nearly blinded Absalon, poor chap.  
But he was set with his hot iron to move,  
And Nicholas was smote right in the groove.  
Off came the skin a handbreadth wide and some,  
The hot iron had so burnt him in his bum,  
And from the smart he thought that he would die.  
Just like a madman he began to cry,

'Help! Water, water! Help me, for God's sake!'

The carpenter by then had stirred awake;  
He heard mad cries of 'Water!' loud and clear,  
And thought, 'Alas, the Flood of Noel's here!'  
He sat right up without the least ado  
And grabbed his ax and whacked the cord in two,  
Then down went everything- no time for sale  
Of any of his bread or any ale:  
He hit the floor, and there unconscious lay.

Then Alison and Handy right away  
Cried out 'Help!' and 'Disaster!' in the street.  
The neighbors, high and low, ran there to meet,  
They stood and stared at poor unconscious John  
Who lay there on the floor so pale and wan,  
For from the fall he had a broken arm.  
But he himself was blamed for all his harm;  
For when he spoke, each word was then denied  
By Nicholas and Alison his bride.

They made the claim to all that he was mad:  
Some ghastly fear of 'Noel's flood' he had,  
A fantasy that had him so deranged  
Three kneading tubs the old man had arranged  
To buy and hang there in the roof above;  
And then he had implored them, for God's love,  
To sit up there and keep him company.

The people laughed at such a fantasy;  
Up at the roof they all began to gape,  
And turned the old man's harm into a jape.  
No matter what the carpenter insisted,  
It was for naught, his reasons were resisted.  
With such great oaths the fellow was put down,  
He was considered mad throughout the town;  
Each learned man agreed with every other,  
Saying, 'The man is mad, beloved brother,'  
And everyone just laughed at all his strife.  
So she was screwed, the carpenter's young wife,  
Despite all jealous safeguards he could try;  
And Absalon has kissed her nether eye,  
And Nicholas is scalded in the rear.  
This tale is done, God save all who are here!





# The Monk's Tale

WHEN ended was my tale of Melibee,  
And of Prudence and her benignity,  
Our Hoste said, 'As I am faithful man,  
And by the precious corpus Madrian,&lt;1&gt;  
I had lever\* than a barrel of ale,                    \*rather  
That goode lefe\* my wife had heard this tale;                    \*dear  
For she is no thing of such patience  
As was this Meliboeus' wife Prudence.  
By Godde's bones! when I beat my knaves  
She bringeth me the greate clubbed staves,  
And crieth, 'Slay the dogges every one,  
And break of them both back and ev'ry bone.'  
And if that any neighebour of mine  
Will not in church unto my wife incline,  
Or be so hardy to her to trespace,\*                    \*offend  
When she comes home she rampeth\* in my face,                    \*springs  
And crieth, 'False coward, wreak\* thy wife                    \*avenge  
By corpus Domini, I will have thy knife,  
And thou shalt have my distaff, and go spin.'  
From day till night right thus she will begin.  
'Alas! ' she saith, 'that ever I was shape\*                    \*destined  
To wed a milksop, or a coward ape,  
That will be overlad\* with every wight!                    \*imposed on  
Thou darest not stand by thy wife's right.'

'This is my life, \*but if\* that I will fight;                    \*unless  
And out at door anon I must me dight,\*                    \*betake myself  
Or elles I am lost, but if that I  
Be, like a wilde lion, fool-hardy.  
I wot well she will do\* me slay some day                    \*make  
Some neighebour and thenne \*go my way; \*                    \*take to flight\*  
For I am perilous with knife in hand,  
Albeit that I dare not her withstand;  
For she is big in armes, by my faith!  
That shall he find, that her misdoth or saith. &lt;2&gt;  
But let us pass away from this mattere.  
My lord the Monk,' quoth he, 'be merry of cheer,  
For ye shall tell a tale truely.  
Lo, Rochester stands here faste by.

Ride forth, mine owen lord, break not our game.  
 But by my troth I cannot tell your name;  
 Whether shall I call you my lord Dan John,  
 Or Dan Thomas, or elles Dan Albon?  
 Of what house be ye, by your father's kin?  
 I vow to God, thou hast a full fair skin;  
 It is a gentle pasture where thou go'st;  
 Thou art not like a penant\* or a ghost.                      \*penitent  
 Upon my faith thou art some officer,  
 Some worthy sexton, or some cellarer.  
 For by my father's soul, \*as to my dome,\*                      \*in my judgement\*  
 Thou art a master when thou art at home;  
 No poore cloisterer, nor no novice,  
 But a governor, both wily and wise,  
 And therewithal, of brawnes\* and of bones,                      \*sinews  
 A right well-faring person for the nonce.  
 I pray to God give him confusion  
 That first thee brought into religion.  
 Thou would'st have been a treade-fowl\* aright;                      \*cock  
 Hadst thou as greate leave, as thou hast might,  
 To perform all thy lust in engendrure,\*                      \*generation, begettting  
 Thou hadst begotten many a creature.  
 Alas! why wearest thou so wide a cope? &lt;3&gt;  
 God give me sorrow, but, an\* I were pope,                      \*if  
 Not only thou, but every mighty man,  
 Though he were shorn full high upon his pan,\* &lt;4&gt;                      \*crown  
 Should have a wife; for all this world is lorn; \*                      \*undone, ruined  
 Religion hath ta'en up all the corn  
 Of treading, and we borel\* men be shrimps:                      \*lay  
 Of feeble trees there come wretchedimps.\*                      \*shoots &lt;5&gt;  
 This maketh that our heires be so slender  
 And feeble, that they may not well engender.  
 This maketh that our wives will assay  
 Religious folk, for they may better pay  
 Of Venus' payementes than may we:  
 God wot, no lusheburghes &lt;6&gt; paye ye.  
 But be not wroth, my lord, though that I play;  
 Full oft in game a sooth have I heard say.'

This worthy Monk took all in patience,  
 And said, 'I will do all my diligence,  
 As far as \*souneth unto honesty,\*                      \*agrees with good manners\*

To telle you a tale, or two or three.  
And if you list to hearken hitherward,  
I will you say the life of Saint Edward;  
Or elles first tragedies I will tell,  
Of which I have an hundred in my cell.

Tragedy *\*is to say\** a certain story,  
As olde bookes maken us memory,  
Of him that stood in great prosperity,  
And is y-fallen out of high degree  
In misery, and endeth wretchedly.

*\*means\**

And they be versified commonly  
Of six feet, which men call hexametron;  
In prose eke *\*be indited\** many a one,  
And eke in metre, in many a sundry wise.

*\*also\**

Lo, this declaring ought enough suffice.

Now hearken, if ye like for to hear.

But first I you beseech in this mattere,  
Though I by order telle not these things,

Be it of popes, emperors, or kings,

*\*After their ages,\** as men written find, *\*in chronological order\**

But tell them some before and some behind,

As it now cometh to my remembrance,

Have me excused of mine ignorance.'

THE TALE. &lt;1&gt;

I will bewail, in manner of tragedy,  
The harm of them that stood in high degree,  
And felle so, that there was no remedy  
To bring them out of their adversity.  
For, certain, when that Fortune list to flee,  
There may no man the course of her wheel hold:  
Let no man trust in blind prosperity;  
Beware by these examples true and old.

At LUCIFER, though he an angel were,

And not a man, at him I will begin.

For though Fortune may no angel dere, *\**

*\*hurt\**

From high degree yet fell he for his sin  
Down into hell, where as he yet is in.  
O Lucifer! brightest of angels all,  
Now art thou Satanas, that may'st not twin\*                   \*depart  
Out of the misery in which thou art fall.

Lo ADAM, in the field of Damascene &2&gt;  
With Godde's owen finger wrought was he,  
And not begotten of man's sperm unclean;  
And welt\* all Paradise saving one tree:                   \*commanded  
Had never worldly man so high degree  
As Adam, till he for misgovernance\*                   \*misbehaviour  
Was driven out of his prosperity  
To labour, and to hell, and to mischance.

Lo SAMPSON, which that was annunciate  
By the angel, long ere his nativity; &3&gt;  
And was to God Almighty consecrate,  
And stood in nobless while that he might see;  
Was never such another as was he,  
To speak of strength, and thereto hardiness; \*                   \*courage  
But to his wives told he his secre,  
Through which he slew himself for wretchedness.

Sampson, this noble and mighty champion,  
Withoute weapon, save his handes tway,  
He slew and all to-rente\* the lion,                   \*tore to pieces  
Toward his wedding walking by the way.  
His false wife could him so please, and pray,  
Till she his counsel knew; and she, untrue,  
Unto his foes his counsel gan bewray,  
And him forsook, and took another new.

Three hundred foxes Sampson took for ire,  
And all their tailes he together band,  
And set the foxes' tailes all on fire,  
For he in every tail had knit a brand,  
And they burnt all the combs of that lend,  
And all their oliveres\* and vines eke.                   \*olive trees &4&gt;  
A thousand men he slew eke with his hand,

And had no weapon but an ass's cheek.

When they were slain, so thirsted him, that he  
Was \*well-nigh lorn,\* for which he gan to pray      \*near to perishing\*  
That God would on his pain have some pity,  
And send him drink, or elles must he die;  
And of this ass's check, that was so dry,  
Out of a wang-tooth\* sprang anon a well,      \*cheek-tooth  
Of which, he drank enough, shortly to say.  
Thus help'd him God, as Judicum &5gt; can tell.

By very force, at Gaza, on a night,  
Maugre\* the Philistines of that city,      \*in spite of  
The gates of the town he hath up plight,\*      \*plucked, wrenched  
And on his back y-carried them hath he  
High on an hill, where as men might them see.  
O noble mighty Sampson, lefe\* and dear,      \*loved  
Hadst thou not told to women thy secre,  
In all this world there had not been thy peer.

This Sampson never cider drank nor wine,  
Nor on his head came razor none nor shear,  
By precept of the messenger divine;  
For all his strengthes in his haire were;  
And fully twenty winters, year by year,  
He had of Israel the governance;  
But soone shall he weepe many a tear,  
For women shall him bringe to mischance.

Unto his leman\* Dalila he told,      \*mistress  
That in his haire all his strengthe lay;  
And falsely to his foemen she him sold,  
And sleeping in her barme\* upon a day      \*lap  
She made to clip or shear his hair away,  
And made his foemen all his craft espie.  
And when they founde him in this array,  
They bound him fast, and put out both his eyen.

But, ere his hair was clipped or y-shave,  
There was no bond with which men might him bind;  
But now is he in prison in a cave,  
Where as they made him at the querne\* grind.      \*mill &6gt;

O noble Sampson, strongest of mankind!  
O whilom judge in glory and richness!  
Now may'st thou weepe with thine eyen blind,  
Since thou from weal art fall'n to wretchedness.

Th'end of this caitiff\* was as I shall say;                    \*wretched man  
His foemen made a feast upon a day,  
And made him as their fool before them play;  
And this was in a temple of great array.  
But at the last he made a foul affray,  
For he two pillars shook, and made them fall,  
And down fell temple and all, and there it lay,  
And slew himself and eke his foemen all;

This is to say, the princes every one;  
And eke three thousand bodies were there slain  
With falling of the great temple of stone.  
Of Sampson now will I no more sayn;  
Beware by this example old and plain,  
That no man tell his counsel to his wife  
Of such thing as he would \*have secret fain,\*                    \*wish to be secret\*  
If that it touch his limbes or his life.

Of HERCULES the sov'reign conquerour  
Singe his workes' land and high renown;  
For in his time of strength he bare the flow'r.  
He slew and reft the skin of the lion  
He of the Centaurs laid the boast adown;  
He Harpies & slew, the cruel birdes fell;  
He golden apples reft from the dragon  
He drew out Cerberus the hound of hell.

He slew the cruel tyrant Busirus. & slew;  
And made his horse to fret\* him flesh and bone;                    \*devour  
He slew the fiery serpent venomous;  
Of Achelous' two hornes brake he one.  
And he slew Cacus in a cave of stone;  
He slew the giant Antaeus the strong;  
He slew the grisly boar, and that anon;  
And bare the heav'n upon his necke long. &;

Was never wight, since that the world began,  
That slew so many monsters as did he;  
Throughout the wide world his name ran,  
What for his strength, and for his high bounte;  
And every realme went he for to see;  
He was so strong that no man might him let; \* \*withstand  
At both the worlde's ends, as saith Trophee, &lt;10&gt;  
Instead of boundes he a pillar set.

A leman had this noble champion,  
That highte Dejanira, fresh as May;  
And, as these clerkes make mention,  
She hath him sent a shirte fresh and gay;  
Alas! this shirt, alas and well-away!  
Envenomed was subtilly withal,  
That ere that he had worn it half a day,  
It made his flesh all from his bones fall.

But natheless some clerkes her excuse  
By one, that highte Nessus, that it maked;  
Be as he may, I will not her accuse;  
But on his back this shirt he wore all naked,  
Till that his flesh was for the venom blaked.\* \*blackened  
And when he saw none other remedy,  
In hote coals he hath himselfe raked,  
For with no venom deigned he to die.

Thus sterf\* this worthy mighty Hercules. \*died  
Lo, who may trust on Fortune \*any throw? \* \*for a moment\*  
For him that followeth all this world of pres,\* \*near &lt;11&gt;  
Ere he be ware, is often laid full low;  
Full wise is he that can himselfe know.  
Beware, for when that Fortune list to glose  
Then waiteth she her man to overthrow,  
By such a way as he would least suppose.

The mighty throne, the precious treasure,  
The glorious sceptre, and royal majesty,  
That had the king NABUCHODONOSOR  
With tongue unnethes\* may described be. \*scarcely  
He twice won Jerusalem the city,



The vessels of the temple he with him lad; \*                    \*took away  
At Babylone was his sov'reign see,\*                                \*seat  
In which his glory and delight he had.

The fairest children of the blood royal  
Of Israel he \*did do geld\* anon,                    \*caused to be castrated\*  
And maked each of them to be his thrall.\*                                \*slave  
Amonges others Daniel was one,  
That was the wisest child of every one;  
For he the dreames of the king expounded,  
Where in Chaldaea clerkes was there none  
That wiste to what fine\* his dreames sounded.                                \*end

This proude king let make a statue of gold  
Sixty cubites long, and seven in bread',  
To which image hathe young and old  
Commanded he to lout,\* and have in dread,                                \*bow down to  
Or in a furnace, full of flames red,  
He should be burnt that woulde not obey:  
But never would assente to that deed  
Daniel, nor his younge fellows tway.

This king of kinges proud was and elate; \*                                \*lofty  
He ween'd\* that God, that sits in majesty,                                \*thought  
Mighte him not bereave of his estate;  
But suddenly he lost his dignity,  
And like a beast he seemed for to be,  
And ate hay as an ox, and lay thereout  
In rain, with wilde beastes walked he,  
Till certain time was y-come about.

And like an eagle's feathers wax'd his hairs,  
His nailes like a birde's clawes were,  
Till God released him at certain years,  
And gave him wit; and then with many a tear  
He thanked God, and ever his life in fear  
Was he to do amiss, or more trespac:  
And till that time he laid was on his bier,  
He knew that God was full of might and grace.

His sone, which that highte BALTHASAR,

That \*held the regne\* after his father's day, \*possessed the kingdom\*  
He by his father could not beware,  
For proud he was of heart and of array;  
And eke an idolaster was he aye.  
His high estate assured\* him in pride; \*confirmed  
But Fortune cast him down, and there he lay,  
And suddenly his regne gan divide.

A feast he made unto his lordes all  
Upon a time, and made them blithe be,  
And then his officeres gan he call;  
'Go, bringe forth the vessels,' saide he,  
'Which that my father in his prosperity  
Out of the temple of Jerusalem reft,  
And to our highe goddes thanks we  
Of honour, that our elders\* with us left.' \*forefathers

His wife, his lordes, and his concubines  
Aye dranke, while their appetites did last,  
Out of these noble vessels sundry wines.  
And on a wall this king his eyen cast,  
And saw an hand, armless, that wrote full fast;  
For fear of which he quaked, and sighed sore.  
This hand, that Balthasar so sore aghast,\* \*dismayed  
Wrote Mane, tekem, phares, and no more.

In all that land magician was there none  
That could expounde what this letter meant.  
But Daniel expounded it anon,  
And said, 'O King, God to thy father lent  
Glory and honour, regne, treasure, rent; \* \*revenue  
And he was proud, and nothing God he drad; \* \*dreaded  
And therefore God great wreche\* upon him sent, \*vengeance  
And him bereft the regne that he had.

'He was cast out of manne's company;  
With asses was his habitation  
And ate hay, as a beast, in wet and dry,  
Till that he knew by grace and by reason  
That God of heaven hath domination  
O'er every regne, and every creature;  
And then had God of him compassion,

And him restor'd his regne and his figure.

'Eke thou, that art his son, art proud also,  
And knowest all these thinges verily;  
And art rebel to God, and art his foe.

Thou drankest of his vessels boldely;

Thy wife eke, and thy wenches, sinfully

Drank of the same vessels sundry wines,

And heried\* false goddes cursedly;

\*praised

Therefore \*to thee y-shapen full great pine is.\*  
prepared for thee\*

\*great punishment is

'This hand was sent from God, that on the wall

Wrote Mane, tekem, phares, truste me;

Thy reign is done; thou weighest naught at all;

Divided is thy regne, and it shall be

To Medes and to Persians giv'n,' quoth he.

And thilke same night this king was slaw\*

\*slain

And Darius occupied his degree,

Though he thereto had neither right nor law.

Lordings, example hereby may ye take,

How that in lordship is no sickerness; \*

\*security

For when that Fortune will a man forsake,

She bears away his regne and his richness,

And eke his friendes bothe more and less,

For what man that hath friendes through fortune,

Mishap will make them enemies, I guess;

This proverb is full sooth, and full commune.

ZENOBIA, of Palmyrie the queen, &lt;12&gt;

As write Persians of her nobless,

So worthy was in armes, and so keen,

That no wight passed her in hardiness,

Nor in lineage, nor other gentleness.\*

\*noble qualities

Of the king's blood of Perse\* is she descended;

\*Persia

I say not that she hadde most fairness,

But of her shape she might not be amended.

From her childhood I finde that she fled

Office of woman, and to woods she went,

And many a wilde harte's blood she shed

With arrows broad that she against them sent;  
She was so swift, that she anon them hent.\*                   \*caught  
And when that she was older, she would kill  
Lions, leopards, and beares all to-rent,\*                   \*torn to pieces  
And in her armes wield them at her will.

She durst the wilde beastes' dennes seek,  
And runnen in the mountains all the night,  
And sleep under a bush; and she could eke  
Wrestle by very force and very might  
With any young man, were he ne'er so wight; \*                   \*active, nimble  
There mighte nothing in her armes stond.  
She kept her maidenhood from every wight,  
To no man deigned she for to be bond.

But at the last her friendes have her married  
To Odenate, &13&gt; a prince of that country;  
All were it so, that she them longe tarried.  
And ye shall understande how that he  
Hadde such fantasies as hadde she;  
But natheless, when they were knit in fere,\*                   \*together  
They liv'd in joy, and in felicity,  
For each of them had other lefe\* and dear.                   \*loved

Save one thing, that she never would assent,  
By no way, that he shoulde by her lie  
But ones, for it was her plain intent  
To have a child, the world to multiply;  
And all so soon as that she might espy  
That she was not with childe by that deed,  
Then would she suffer him do his fantasy  
Eftsoon,\* and not but ones, \*out of dread.\*                   \*again \*without doubt\*

And if she were with child at thilke\* cast,                   \*that  
No more should he playe thilke game  
Till fully forty dayes were past;  
Then would she once suffer him do the same.  
All\* were this Odenatus wild or tame,                   \*whether  
He got no more of her; for thus she said,  
It was to wives lechery and shame  
In other case\* if that men with them play'd. on other terms

Two sones, by this Odenate had she,  
 The which she kept in virtue and lettrure.\* \*learning  
 But now unto our tale turne we;  
 I say, so worshipful a creature,  
 And wise therewith, and large\* with measure,\*\* \*bountiful \*\*moderation  
 So penible\* in the war, and courteous eke, \*laborious  
 Nor more labour might in war endure,  
 Was none, though all this worlde men should seek.

Her rich array it mighte not be told,  
 As well in vessel as in her clothing:  
 She was all clad in pierrie\* and in gold, \*jewellery  
 And eke she \*lefte not,\* for no hunting, \*did not neglect\*  
 To have of sundry tongues full knowing,  
 When that she leisure had, and for t'intend\* \*apply  
 To learne bookes was all her liking,  
 How she in virtue might her life dispend.

And, shortly of this story for to treat,  
 So doughty was her husband and eke she,  
 That they conquered many regnes great  
 In th'Orient, with many a fair city  
 Appertinent unto the majesty  
 Of Rome, and with strong hande held them fast,  
 Nor ever might their foemen do\* them flee, \*make  
 Aye while that Odenatus' dayes last'.

Her battles, whoso list them for to read,  
 Against Sapor the king, &14&gt; and other mo',  
 And how that all this process fell in deed,  
 Why she conquer'd, and what title thereto,  
 And after of her mischief\* and her woe, \*misfortune  
 How that she was besieged and y-take,  
 Let him unto my master Petrarch go,  
 That writes enough of this, I undertake.

When Odenate was dead, she mightily  
 The regne held, and with her proper hand  
 Against her foes she fought so cruelly,  
 That there n'as\* king nor prince in all that land, \*was not  
 That was not glad, if be that grace fand  
 That she would not upon his land warray; \* \*make war

With her they maden alliance by bond,  
To be in peace, and let her ride and play.

The emperor of Rome, Claudius,  
Nor, him before, the Roman Gallien,  
Durste never be so courageous,  
Nor no Armenian, nor Egyptien,  
Nor Syrian, nor no Arabien,  
Within the fielde durste with her fight,  
Lest that she would them with her handes slen,\*                   \*slay  
Or with her meinie\* putte them to flight.                   \*troops

In kinges' habit went her sones two,  
As heires of their father's regnes all;  
And Heremanno and Timolao  
Their names were, as Persians them call  
But aye Fortune hath in her honey gall;  
This mighty queene may no while endure;  
Fortune out of her regne made her fall  
To wretchedness and to misadventure.

Aurelian, when that the governance  
Of Rome came into his handes tway, &lt;15&gt;  
He shope\* upon this queen to do vengeance;                   \*prepared  
And with his legions he took his way  
Toward Zenobie, and, shortly for to say,  
He made her flee, and at the last her hent,\*                   \*took  
And fetter'd her, and eke her children tway,  
And won the land, and home to Rome he went.

Amonges other thinges that he wan,  
Her car, that was with gold wrought and pierrie,\*                   \*jewels  
This greate Roman, this Aurelian  
Hath with him led, for that men should it see.  
Before in his triumphe walked she  
With gilte chains upon her neck hanging;  
Crowned she was, as after\* her degree,                   \*according to  
And full of pierrie her clothing.

Alas, Fortune! she that whilom was  
Dreadful to kinges and to emperours,  
Now galeth\* all the people on her, alas!                   \*yelleth

And she that \*helmed was in starke stowres,\* \*wore a helmet in  
And won by force townes strong and tow'rs, obstinate battles\*  
Shall on her head now wear a vitremite; &16&gt;  
And she that bare the sceptre full of flow'rs  
Shall bear a distaff, \*her cost for to quite.\* \* to make her living\*

Although that NERO were so vicious  
As any fiend that lies full low adown,  
Yet he, as telleth us Suetonius,&17&gt;  
This wide world had in subjection,  
Both East and West, South and Septentrioun.  
Of rubies, sapphires, and of pearles white  
Were all his clothes embroider'd up and down,  
For he in gemmes greatly gan delight.

More delicate, more pompous of array,  
More proud, was never emperor than he;  
That \*ilke cloth\* that he had worn one day, \*same robe\*  
After that time he would it never see;  
Nettes of gold thread had he great plenty,  
To fish in Tiber, when him list to play;  
His lustes\* were as law, in his degree, \*pleasures  
For Fortune as his friend would him obey.

He Rome burnt for his delicacy; \* \*pleasure  
The senators he slew upon a day,  
To heare how that men would weep and cry;  
And slew his brother, and by his sister lay.  
His mother made he in piteous array;  
For he her wombe slitte, to behold  
Where he conceived was; so well-away!  
That he so little of his mother told.\* \*valued

No tear out of his eyen for that sight  
Came; but he said, a fair woman was she.  
Great wonder is, how that he could or might  
Be doomesman\* of her deade beauty: \*judge  
The wine to bringe him commanded he,  
And drank anon; none other woe he made,  
When might is joined unto cruelty,  
Alas! too deepe will the venom wade.

In youth a master had this emperour,  
 To teache him letrure\* and courtesy; \*literature, learning  
 For of morality he was the flow'r,  
 As in his time, \*but if\* bookes lie. \*unless  
 And while this master had of him mast'ry,  
 He made him so conning and so souple,\* \*subtle  
 That longe time it was ere tyranny,  
 Or any vice, durst in him uncouple.\* \*be let loose

This Seneca, of which that I devise,\* \*tell  
 Because Nero had of him suche dread,  
 For he from vices would him aye chastise  
 Discreetly, as by word, and not by deed;  
 'Sir,' he would say, 'an emperor must need  
 Be virtuous, and hate tyranny.'  
 For which he made him in a bath to bleed  
 On both his armes, till he muste die.

This Nero had eke of a custumance\* \*habit  
 In youth against his master for to rise; \* \*stand in his presence  
 Which afterward he thought a great grievance;  
 Therefore he made him dien in this wise.  
 But natheless this Seneca the wise  
 Chose in a bath to die in this mannere,  
 Rather than have another tormentise; \* \*torture  
 And thus hath Nero slain his master dear.

Now fell it so, that Fortune list no longer  
 The highe pride of Nero to cherice; \* \*cherish  
 For though he were strong, yet was she stronger.  
 She thoughte thus; 'By God, I am too nice\* \*foolish  
 To set a man, that is full fill'd of vice,  
 In high degree, and emperor him call!  
 By God, out of his seat I will him trice! \* \*thrust & 18&gt;  
 When he least weeneth,\* soonest shall he fall.' \*expecteth

The people rose upon him on a night,  
 For his default; and when he it espied,  
 Out of his doors anon he hath him dight\* \*betaken himself  
 Alone, and where he ween'd t'have been allied,\* \*regarded with  
 He knocked fast, and aye the more he cried friendship



The faster shutte they their doores all;  
Then wist he well he had himself misgied,\* \*misled  
And went his way, no longer durst he call.

The people cried and rumbled up and down,  
That with his eares heard he how they said;  
'Where is this false tyrant, this Neroun? '  
For fear almost out of his wit he braid,\* \*went  
And to his goddes piteously he pray'd  
For succour, but it mighte not betide  
For dread of this he thoughte that died,  
And ran into a garden him to hide.

And in this garden found he churles tway,  
That satte by a fire great and red;  
And to these churles two he gan to pray  
To slay him, and to girdon\* off his head, \*strike  
That to his body, when that he were dead,  
Were no despite done for his defame.\* \*infamy  
Himself he slew, \*he coud no better rede; \* \*he knew no better  
Of which Fortune laugh'd and hadde game. counsel\*

Was never capitain under a king,  
That regnes more put in subjection,  
Nor stronger was in field of alle thing  
As in his time, nor greater of renown,  
Nor more pompous in high presumption,  
Than HOLOFERNES, whom Fortune aye kiss'd  
So lik'rously, and led him up and down,  
Till that his head was off \*ere that he wist.\* \*before he knew it\*

Not only that this world had of him awe,  
For losing of richness and liberty;  
But he made every man \*reny his law.\* \*renounce his religion &lt;19&gt;  
Nabuchodonosor was God, said he;  
None other Godde should honoured be.  
Against his hest\* there dare no wight trespase, \*command  
Save in Bethulia, a strong city,  
Where Eliachim priest was of that place.

But take keep\* of the death of Holofern; \*notice

Amid his host he drunken lay at night  
Within his tente, large as is a bern; \* \*barn  
And yet, for all his pomp and all his might,  
Judith, a woman, as he lay upright  
Sleeping, his head off smote, and from his tent  
Full privily she stole from every wight,  
And with his head unto her town she went.

What needeth it of king ANTIOCHUS &20&gt;  
To tell his high and royal majesty,  
His great pride, and his workes venomous?  
For such another was there none as he;  
Reade what that he was in Maccabee.  
And read the proude wordes that he said,  
And why he fell from his prosperity,  
And in an hill how wretchedly he died.

Fortune him had enhanced so in pride,  
That verily he ween'd he might attain  
Unto the starres upon every side,  
And in a balance weighen each mountain,  
And all the floodes of the sea restrain.  
And Godde's people had he most in hate  
Them would he slay in torment and in pain,  
Weening that God might not his pride abate.

And for that Nicanor and Timothee  
With Jewes were vanquish'd mightily, &21&gt;  
Unto the Jewes such an hate had he,  
That he bade \*graith his car\* full hastily, \*prepare his chariot\*  
And swore and saide full dispiteously,  
Unto Jerusalem he would eftsoon,\* \*immediately  
To wreak his ire on it full cruelly  
But of his purpose was he let\* full soon. \*prevented

God for his menace him so sore smote,  
With invisible wound incurable,  
That in his guttes carf\* it so and bote,\*\* \*cut \*\*gnawed  
Till that his paines were importable; \* \*unendurable  
And certainly the wreche\* was reasonable, \*vengeance  
For many a manne's guttes did he pain;

But from his purpose, curs'd\* and damnable,  
For all his smart he would him not restrain;  
But bade anon appaile\* his host.

\*impious

\*prepare

And suddenly, ere he was of it ware,  
God daunted all his pride, and all his boast  
For he so sore fell out of his chare,\*  
That it his limbes and his skin to-tare,  
So that he neither mighte go nor ride  
But in a chaire men about him bare,  
Alle forbruised bothe back and side.

\*chariot

The wreche\* of God him smote so cruelly,  
That through his body wicked wormes crept,  
And therewithal he stank so horribly  
That none of all his meinie\* that him kept,  
Whether so that he woke or elles slept,  
Ne mighte not of him the stink endure.  
In this mischief he wailed and eke wept,  
And knew God Lord of every creature.

\*vengeance

\*servants

To all his host, and to himself also,  
Full wlatsem\* was the stink of his carrain; \*\*  
No manne might him beare to and fro.  
And in this stink, and this horrible pain,  
He starf\* full wretchedly in a mountain.  
Thus hath this robber, and this homicide,  
That many a manne made to weep and plain,  
Such guerdon\* as belongeth unto pride.

\*loathsome \*\*body

\*dies

\*reward

The story of ALEXANDER is so commune,  
That ev'ry wight that hath discretion  
Hath heard somewhat or all of his fortune.  
This wide world, as in conclusion,  
He won by strength; or, for his high renown,  
They were glad for peace to him to send.  
The pride and boast of man he laid adown,  
Whereso he came, unto the worlde's end.

Comparison yet never might be maked  
Between him and another conqueror;

For all this world for dread of him had quaked  
He was of knighthood and of freedom flow'r:  
Fortune him made the heir of her honour.  
Save wine and women, nothing might assuage  
His high intent in arms and labour,  
So was he full of leonine courage.

What praise were it to him, though I you told  
Of Darius, and a hundred thousand mo',  
Of kings, princes, dukes, and earles bold,  
Which he conquer'd, and brought them into woe?  
I say, as far as man may ride or go,  
The world was his, why should I more devise? \* \*tell  
For, though I wrote or told you evermo',  
Of his knighthood it mighte not suffice.

Twelve years he reigned, as saith Maccabee  
Philippe's son of Macedon he was,  
That first was king in Greece the country.  
O worthy gentle\* Alexander, alas \*noble  
That ever should thee falle such a case!  
Empoison'd of thine owen folk thou were;  
Thy six & fortune hath turn'd into an ace,  
And yet for thee she wepte never a tear.

Who shall me give teares to complain  
The death of gentiless, and of franchise,\* \*generosity  
That all this worlde had in his demaine,\* \*dominion  
And yet he thought it mighte not suffice,  
So full was his corage\* of high emprise? \*spirit  
Alas! who shall me helpe to indite  
False Fortune, and poison to despise?  
The whiche two of all this woe I wite.\* \*blame

By wisdom, manhood, and by great labour,  
From humbleness to royal majesty  
Up rose he, JULIUS the Conquerour,  
That won all th' Occident,\* by land and sea, \*West  
By strength of hand or elles by treaty,  
And unto Rome made them tributary;  
And since\* of Rome the emperor was he, \*afterwards

Till that Fortune wax'd his adversary.

O mighty Caesar, that in Thessaly  
Against POMPEIUS, father thine in law, &23&gt;  
That of th' Orient had all the chivalry,  
As far as that the day begins to daw,  
That through thy knighthood hast them take and slaw,\* slain\*  
Save fewe folk that with Pompeius fled;  
Through which thou put all th' Orient in awe; &24&gt;  
Thanke Fortune that so well thee sped.

But now a little while I will bewail  
This Pompeius, this noble governor  
Of Rome, which that fled at this battaile  
I say, one of his men, a false traitor,  
His head off smote, to winne him favor  
Of Julius, and him the head he brought;  
Alas! Pompey, of th' Orient conqueror,  
That Fortune unto such a fine\* thee brought! \*end

To Rome again repaired Julius,  
With his triumphe laureate full high;  
But on a time Brutus and Cassius,  
That ever had of his estate envy,  
Full privily have made conspiracy  
Against this Julius in subtle wise  
And cast\* the place in which he shoulde die, \*arranged  
With bodekins,\* as I shall you devise.\*\* \*daggers \*\*tell

This Julius to the Capitole went  
Upon a day, as he was wont to gon;  
And in the Capitol anon him hent\* \*seized  
This false Brutus, and his other fone,\* \*foes  
And sticked him with bodekins anon  
With many a wound, and thus they let him lie.  
But never groan'd he at no stroke but one,  
Or else at two, \*but if\* the story lie. \*unless

So manly was this Julius of heart,  
And so well loved \*estately honesty \*dignified propriety\*  
That, though his deadly woundes sore smart,\* \*pained him  
His mantle o'er his hippes caste he,

That ne man shoulde see his privity  
And as he lay a-dying in a trance,  
And wiste verily that dead was he,  
Of honesty yet had he remembrance.

Lucan, to thee this story I recommend,  
And to Sueton', and Valerie also,  
That of this story write \*word and end\*                    \*the whole\* &lt;25&gt;  
How that to these great conquerores two  
Fortune was first a friend, and since\* a foe.                    \*afterwards  
No manne trust upon her favour long,  
But \*have her in await for evermo'; \*                    \*ever be watchful against her\*  
Witness on all these conquerores strong.

The riche CROESUS, &lt;26&gt; whilom king of Lyde, -  
Of which Croesus Cyrus him sore drad,\* -                    \*dreaded  
Yet was he caught amiddes all his pride,  
And to be burnt men to the fire him lad;  
But such a rain down \*from the welkin shad,\*                    \*poured from the sky\*  
That slew the fire, and made him to escape:  
But to beware no grace yet he had,  
Till fortune on the gallows made him gape.

When he escaped was, he could not stint\*                    \*refrain  
For to begin a newe war again;  
He weened well, for that Fortune him sent  
Such hap, that he escaped through the rain,  
That of his foes he mighte not be slain.  
And eke a sweven\* on a night he mette,\*\*                    \*dream \*\*dreamed  
Of which he was so proud, and eke so fain,\*                    \*glad  
That he in vengeance all his hearte set.

Upon a tree he was set, as he thought,  
Where Jupiter him wash'd, both back and side,  
And Phoebus eke a fair towel him brought  
To dry him with; and therefore wax'd his pride.  
And to his daughter that stood him beside,  
Which he knew in high science to abound,  
He bade her tell him what it signified;  
And she his dream began right thus expound.

'The tree,' quoth she, 'the gallows is to mean,  
And Jupiter betokens snow and rain,  
And Phoebus, with his towel clear and clean,  
These be the sunne's streames\* sooth to sayn;                    \*rays  
Thou shalt y-hangeth be, father, certain;  
Rain shall thee wash, and sunne shall thee dry.'  
Thus warned him full plat and eke full plain  
His daughter, which that called was Phanie.

And hanged was Croesus the proude king;  
His royal throne might him not avail.  
Tragedy is none other manner thing,  
Nor can in singing crien nor bewail,  
But for that Fortune all day will assail  
With unaware stroke the regnes\* that be proud:&27&gt;                    \*kingdoms  
For when men truste her, then will she fail,  
And cover her bright face with a cloud.

O noble, O worthy PEDRO, &28&gt; glory OF SPAIN,  
Whem Fortune held so high in majesty,  
Well oughte men thy piteous death complain.  
Out of thy land thy brother made thee flee,  
And after, at a siege, by subtlety,  
Thou wert betray'd, and led unto his tent,  
Where as he with his owen hand slew thee,  
Succeeding in thy regne\* and in thy rent.\*\*                    \*kingdom \*revenues

The field of snow, with th' eagle of black therein,  
Caught with the lion, red-colour'd as the glede,\*                    \*burning coal  
He brew'd this cursedness,\* and all this sin;                    \*wickedness, villainy  
The wicked nest was worker of this deed;  
Not Charles' Oliver, &29&gt; that took aye heed  
Of truth and honour, but of Armorike  
Ganilien Oliver, corrupt for meed,\*                    \*reward, bribe  
Broughte this worthy king in such a brike.\*                    \*breach, ruin

O worthy PETRO, King of CYPRE &30&gt; also,  
That Alexandre won by high mast'ry,  
Full many a heathnen wroughtest thou full woe,  
Of which thine owen lieges had envy;

And, for no thing but for thy chivalry,  
They in thy bed have slain thee by the morrow;  
Thus can Fortune her wheel govern and gie,\* \*guide  
And out of joy bringe men into sorrow.

Of Milan greate BARNABO VISCOUNT,&lt;30&gt;  
God of delight, and scourge of Lombardy,  
Why should I not thine clomben\* wert so high? \*climbed  
Thy brother's son, that was thy double ally,  
For he thy nephew was and son-in-law,  
Within his prison made thee to die,  
But why, nor how, \*n'ot I\* that thou were slaw.\* \*I know not\* \*slain\*

Of th' Earl HUGOLIN OF PISE the languour\* \*agony  
There may no tongue telle for pity.  
But little out of Pisa stands a tow'r,  
In whiche tow'r in prison put was he,  
Aud with him be his little children three;  
The eldest scarcely five years was of age;  
Alas! Fortune, it was great cruelty  
Such birdes for to put in such a cage.

Damned was he to die in that prison;  
For Roger, which that bishop was of Pise,  
Had on him made a false suggestion,  
Through which the people gan upon him rise,  
And put him in prison, in such a wise  
As ye have heard; and meat and drink he had  
So small, that well unneth\* it might suffice, \*scarcely  
And therewithal it was full poor and bad.

And on a day befell, that in that hour  
When that his meate wont was to be brought,  
The jailor shut the doores of the tow'r;  
He heard it right well, but he spake nought.  
And in his heart anon there fell a thought,  
That they for hunger woulde \*do him dien; \* \*cause him to die\*  
'Alas! ' quoth he, 'alas that I was wrought! '\* \*made, born  
Therewith the teares fell from his eyen.



His youngest son, that three years was of age,  
Unto him said, 'Father, why do ye weep?  
When will the jailor bringen our pottage?  
Is there no morsel bread that ye do keep?  
I am so hungry, that I may not sleep.  
Now woulde God that I might sleepen ever!  
Then should not hunger in my wombe\* creep;                   \*stomach  
There is no thing, save bread, that one were lever.\*       \*dearer

Thus day by day this child begun to cry,  
Till in his father's barme\* adown he lay,                   \*lap  
And saide, 'Farewell, father, I must die; '  
And kiss'd his father, and died the same day.  
And when the woeful father did it sey,\*                   \*see  
For woe his armes two he gan to bite,  
And said, 'Alas! Fortune, and well-away!  
To thy false wheel my woe all may I wite.\*               \*blame

His children ween'd that it for hunger was  
That he his armes gnaw'd, and not for woe,  
And saide, 'Father, do not so, alas!  
But rather eat the flesh upon us two.  
Our flesh thou gave us, our flesh take us fro',  
And eat enough; ' right thus they to him said.  
And after that, within a day or two,  
They laid them in his lap adown, and died.

Himself, despaired, eke for hunger starf.\*                   \*died  
Thus ended is this Earl of Pise;  
From high estate Fortune away him carf.\*                   \*cut off  
Of this tragedy it ought enough suffice  
Whoso will hear it \*in a longer wise,\*                   \*at greater length\*  
Reade the greate poet of Itale,  
That Dante hight, for he can it devise &32&gt;  
From point to point, not one word will he fail.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Nun's Priest's Tale

## THE PROLOGUE.

'Ho! ' quoth the Knight, 'good sir, no more of this;  
That ye have said is right enough, y-wis,\*                   \*of a surety  
And muche more; for little heaviness  
Is right enough to muche folk, I guess.  
I say for me, it is a great disease,\*   \*source of distress, annoyance  
Where as men have been in great wealth and ease,  
To hearken of their sudden fall, alas!  
And the contrary is joy and great solas,\*                   \*delight, comfort  
As when a man hath been in poor estate,  
And climbeth up, and waxeth fortunate,  
And there abideth in prosperity;  
Such thing is gladsome, as it thinketh me,  
And of such thing were goodly for to tell.'

'Yea,' quoth our Hoste, 'by Saint Paule's bell.  
Ye say right sooth; this monk hath clapped\* loud;                   \*talked  
He spake how Fortune cover'd with a cloud  
I wot not what, and als' of a tragedy  
Right now ye heard: and pardie no remedy  
It is for to bewaile, nor complain  
That that is done, and also it is pain,  
As ye have said, to hear of heaviness.  
Sir Monk, no more of this, so God you bless;  
Your tale annoyeth all this company;  
Such talking is not worth a butterfly,  
For therein is there no sport nor game;  
Therefore, Sir Monke, Dan Piers by your name,  
I pray you heart'ly, tell us somewhat else,  
For sickerly, n'ere\* clinking of your bells,                   \*were it not for the  
That on your bridle hang on every side,  
By heaven's king, that for us alle died,  
I should ere this have fallen down for sleep,  
Although the slough had been never so deep;  
Then had your tale been all told in vain.  
For certainly, as these clerkes sayn,  
Where as a man may have no audience,  
Nought helpeth it to telle his sentence.  
And well I wot the substance is in me,

If anything shall well reported be.  
Sir, say somewhat of hunting, &lt;1&gt; I you pray.'

'Nay,' quoth the Monk, 'I have \*no lust to play; \* \*no fondness for  
Now let another tell, as I have told.' jesting\*  
Then spake our Host with rude speech and bold,  
And said unto the Nunne's Priest anon,  
'Come near, thou Priest, come hither, thou Sir John, &lt;2&gt;  
Tell us such thing as may our heartes glade.\* \*gladden  
Be blithe, although thou ride upon a jade.  
What though thine horse be bothe foul and lean?  
If he will serve thee, reck thou not a bean;  
Look that thine heart be merry evermo'.'

'Yes, Host,' quoth he, 'so may I ride or go,  
But\* I be merry, y-wis I will be blamed.' \*unless  
And right anon his tale he hath attamed\* \*commenced &lt;3&gt;  
And thus he said unto us every one,  
This sweete priest, this goodly man, Sir John.

THE TALE. &lt;1&gt;

A poor widow, \*somedéal y-stept\* in age, \*somewhat advanced\*  
Was whilom dwelling in a poor cottage,  
Beside a grove, standing in a dale.  
This widow, of which I telle you my tale,  
Since thilke day that she was last a wife,  
In patience led a full simple life,  
For little was \*her chattel and her rent.\* \*her goods and her income\*  
By husbandry\* of such as God her sent, \*thrifty management  
She found\* herself, and eke her daughters two. \*maintained  
Three large sowes had she, and no mo';  
Three kine, and eke a sheep that highte Mall.  
Full sooty was her bow'r,\* and eke her hall, \*chamber  
In which she ate full many a slender meal.  
Of poignant sauce knew she never a deal.\* \*whit  
No dainty morsel passed through her throat;  
Her diet was \*accordant to her cote.\* \*in keeping with her cottage\*  
Repletion her made never sick;  
Attemper\* diet was all her phisic, \*moderate  
And exercise, and \*hearte's suffisance.\* \*contentment of heart\*

The goute \*let her nothing for to dance,\* \*did not prevent her  
 Nor apoplexy shente\* not her head. from dancing\* \*hurt  
 No wine drank she, neither white nor red:  
 Her board was served most with white and black,  
 Milk and brown bread, in which she found no lack,  
 Seind\* bacon, and sometimes an egg or tway; \*singed  
 For she was as it were \*a manner dey.\* \*kind of day labourer\* &2&gt;  
 A yard she had, enclosed all about  
 With stickes, and a drye ditch without,  
 In which she had a cock, hight Chanticleer;  
 In all the land of crowing \*n'as his peer.\* \*was not his equal\*  
 His voice was merrier than the merry organ,\* \*organ &3&gt;  
 On masse days that in the churches gon.  
 Well sickerer\* was his crowing in his lodge, \*more punctual\*  
 Than is a clock, or an abbay horloge.\* \*clock &4&gt;  
 By nature he knew each ascension  
 Of th' equinoctial in thilke town;  
 For when degrees fiftene were ascended,  
 Then crew he, that it might not be amended.  
 His comb was redder than the fine coral,  
 Embattell'd &5&gt; as it were a castle wall.  
 His bill was black, and as the jet it shone;  
 Like azure were his legges and his tone; \* \*toes  
 His nailes whiter than the lily flow'r,  
 And like the burnish'd gold was his colour,  
 This gentle cock had in his governance  
 Sev'n hennes, for to do all his pleasance,  
 Which were his sisters and his paramours,  
 And wondrous like to him as of colours.  
 Of which the fairest-hued in the throat  
 Was called Damoselle Partelote,  
 Courteous she was, discreet, and debonair,  
 And companiable,\* and bare herself so fair, \*sociable  
 Since the day that she sev'n night was old,  
 That truely she had the heart in hold  
 Of Chanticleer, locked in every lith; \* \*limb  
 He lov'd her so, that well was him therewith,  
 But such a joy it was to hear them sing,  
 When that the brighte sunne gan to spring,  
 In sweet accord, \*'My lefe is fare in land.'\* &6&gt; \*my love is  
 For, at that time, as I have understand, gone abroad\*  
 Beastes and birdes coulde speak and sing.

And so befell, that in a dawening,  
 As Chanticleer among his wives all  
 Sat on his perche, that was in the hall,  
 And next him sat this faire Partelote,  
 This Chanticleer gan groanen in his throat,  
 As man that in his dream is dretched\* sore, \*oppressed  
 And when that Partelote thus heard him roar,  
 She was aghast,\* and saide, 'Hearte dear, \*afraid  
 What aileth you to groan in this mannere?  
 Ye be a very sleeper, fy for shame! '  
 And he answer'd and saide thus; 'Madame,  
 I pray you that ye take it not agrief; \* \*amiss, in umbrage  
 By God, \*me mette\* I was in such mischief,\*\* \*I dreamed\* \*\*trouble  
 Right now, that yet mine heart is sore affright'.  
 Now God,' quoth he, 'my sweven\* read aright \*dream, vision.  
 And keep my body out of foul prisoun.  
 \*Me mette,\* how that I roamed up and down \*I dreamed\*  
 Within our yard, where as I saw a beast  
 Was like an hound, and would have \*made arrest\* \*siezed\*  
 Upon my body, and would have had me dead.  
 His colour was betwixt yellow and red;  
 And tipped was his tail, and both his ears,  
 With black, unlike the remnant of his hairs.  
 His snout was small, with glowing eyen tway;  
 Yet of his look almost for fear I dey; \* \*died  
 This caused me my groaning, doubtless.'  
  
 'Away,' & quoth she, 'fy on you, hearteless! \* \*coward  
 Alas! ' quoth she, 'for, by that God above!  
 Now have ye lost my heart and all my love;  
 I cannot love a coward, by my faith.  
 For certes, what so any woman saith,  
 We all desiren, if it mighte be,  
 To have husbandes hardy, wise, and free,  
 And secret,\* and no niggard nor no fool, \*discreet  
 Nor him that is aghast\* of every tool,\*\* \*afraid \*\*rag, trifle  
 Nor no avantour,\* by that God above! \*braggart  
 How durste ye for shame say to your love  
 That anything might make you afear'd?  
 Have ye no manne's heart, and have a beard?  
 Alas! and can ye be aghast of swevenes? \* \*dreams

Nothing but vanity, God wot, in sweven is,  
 Swevens \*engender of repletions,\*      \*are caused by over-eating\*  
 And oft of fume,\* and of complexions,      \*drunkenness  
 When humours be too abundant in a wight.  
 Certes this dream, which ye have mette tonight,  
 Cometh of the great supefluity  
 Of youre rede cholera,\* pardie,      \*bile  
 Which causeth folk to dreaden in their dreams  
 Of arrows, and of fire with redde beams,  
 Of redde beastes, that they will them bite,  
 Of conteke,\* and of whelpes great and lite; \*\*      \*contention \*\*little  
 Right as the humour of melancholy  
 Causeth full many a man in sleep to cry,  
 For fear of bulles, or of beares blake,  
 Or elles that black devils will them take,  
 Of other humours could I tell also,  
 That worke many a man in sleep much woe;  
 That I will pass as lightly as I can.  
 Lo, Cato, which that was so wise a man,  
 Said he not thus, \*'Ne do no force of\* dreams,'&8gt; \*attach no weight to\*  
 Now, Sir,' quoth she, 'when we fly from these beams,  
 For Godde's love, as take some laxatife;  
 On peril of my soul, and of my life,  
 I counsel you the best, I will not lie,  
 That both of choler, and melancholy,  
 Ye purge you; and, for ye shall not tarry,  
 Though in this town is no apothecary,  
 I shall myself two herbes teache you,  
 That shall be for your health, and for your prow; \*      \*profit  
 And in our yard the herbes shall I find,  
 The which have of their property by kind\*      \*nature  
 To purge you beneath, and eke above.  
 Sire, forget not this for Godde's love;  
 Ye be full choleric of complexion;  
 Ware that the sun, in his ascension,  
 You finde not replete of humours hot;  
 And if it do, I dare well lay a groat,  
 That ye shall have a fever tertiane,  
 Or else an ague, that may be your bane,  
 A day or two ye shall have digestives  
 Of wormes, ere ye take your laxatives,  
 Of laurel, centaury, &9&gt; and fumeterere, &10&gt;

Or else of elder-berry, that groweth there,  
Of catapuce, &11&gt; or of the gaitre-berries, &12&gt;  
Or herb ivy growing in our yard, that merry is:  
Pick them right as they grow, and eat them in,  
Be merry, husband, for your father's kin;  
Dreade no dream; I can say you no more.'

'Madame,' quoth he, 'grand mercy of your lore,  
But natheless, as touching \*Dan Catoun,\* \*Cato  
That hath of wisdom such a great renown,  
Though that he bade no dreames for to dread,  
By God, men may in olde bookes read  
Of many a man more of authority  
Than ever Cato was, so may I the,\* \*thrive  
That all the reverse say of his sentence,\* \*opinion  
And have well founden by experience  
That dreames be significations  
As well of joy, as tribulations  
That folk endure in this life present.  
There needeth make of this no argument;  
The very preve\* sheweth it indeed. \*trial, experience  
One of the greatest authors that men read &13&gt;  
Saith thus, that whilom two fellowes went  
On pilgrimage in a full good intent;  
And happen'd so, they came into a town  
Where there was such a congregatioun  
Of people, and eke so \*strait of herbergage,\* \*without lodging\*  
That they found not as much as one cottage  
In which they bothe might y-lodged be:  
Wherefore they musten of necessity,  
As for that night, departe company;  
And each of them went to his hostelry,\* \*inn  
And took his lodging as it woulde fall.  
The one of them was lodged in a stall,  
Far in a yard, with oxen of the plough;  
That other man was lodged well enow,  
As was his aventure, or his fortune,  
That us governeth all, as in commune.  
And so befell, that, long ere it were day,  
This man mette\* in his bed, there: as he lay, \*dreamed  
How that his fellow gan upon him call,  
And said, 'Alas! for in an ox's stall

This night shall I be murder'd, where I lie  
 Now help me, deare brother, or I die;  
 In alle haste come to me,' he said.  
 This man out of his sleep for fear abraid; \*                    \*started  
 But when that he was wak'd out of his sleep,  
 He turned him, and \*took of this no keep; \*                    \*paid this no attention\*  
 He thought his dream was but a vanity.  
 Thus twies\* in his sleeping dreamed he,                    \*twice  
 And at the thirde time yet his fellow again  
 Came, as he thought, and said, 'I am now slaw; \*                    \*slain  
 Behold my bloody woundes, deep and wide.  
 Arise up early, in the morning, tide,  
 And at the west gate of the town,' quoth he,  
 'A carte full of dung there shalt: thou see,  
 In which my body is hid privily.  
 Do thilke cart arroste\* boldely.                    \*stop  
 My gold caused my murder, sooth to sayn.'  
 And told him every point how he was slain,  
 With a full piteous face, and pale of hue.

'And, truste well, his dream he found full true;  
 For on the morrow, as soon as it was day,  
 To his fellowes inn he took his way;  
 And when that he came to this ox's stall,  
 After his fellow he began to call.  
 The hostelere answered him anon,  
 And saide, 'Sir, your fellow is y-gone,  
 As soon as day he went out of the town.'  
 This man gan fallen in suspicioun,  
 Rememb'ring on his dreames that he mette,\*                    \*dreamed  
 And forth he went, no longer would he let,\*                    \*delay  
 Unto the west gate of the town, and fand\*                    \*found  
 A dung cart, as it went for to dung land,  
 That was arrayed in the same wise  
 As ye have heard the deade man devise; \*                    \*describe  
 And with an hardy heart he gan to cry,  
 'Vengeance and justice of this felony:  
 My fellow murder'd in this same night  
 And in this cart he lies, gaping upright.  
 I cry out on the ministers,' quoth he.  
 'That shoulde keep and rule this city;  
 Harow! alas! here lies my fellow slain.'





Gan for to laugh, and scorned him full fast.  
 'No dream,' quoth he, 'may so my heart aghast,\*                    \*frighten  
 That I will lette\* for to do my things.\*                                \*delay  
 I sette not a straw by thy dreamings,  
 For swevens\* be but vanities and japes.\*\*                    \*dreams \*\*jokes,deceits  
 Men dream all day of owles and of apes,  
 And eke of many a maze\* therewithal;                                \*wild imagining  
 Men dream of thing that never was, nor shall.  
 But since I see, that thou wilt here abide,  
 And thus forslothe\* wilfully thy tide,\*\*                    \*idle away \*\*time  
 God wot, \*it rueth me; \* and have good day.'                    \*I am sorry for it\*  
 And thus he took his leave, and went his way.  
 But, ere that he had half his course sail'd,  
 I know not why, nor what mischance it ail'd,  
 But casually\* the ship's bottom rent,                                \*by accident  
 And ship and man under the water went,  
 In sight of other shippes there beside  
 That with him sailed at the same tide.

'And therefore, faire Partelote so dear,  
 By such examples olde may'st thou lear,\*                                \*learn  
 That no man shoulde be too reckeless  
 Of dreames, for I say thee doubtless,  
 That many a dream full sore is for to dread.  
 Lo, in the life of Saint Kenelm &15&gt; I read,  
 That was Kenulphus' son, the noble king  
 Of Mercenrike, &16&gt; how Kenelm mette a thing.  
 A little ere he was murder'd on a day,  
 His murder in his vision he say.\*                                \*saw  
 His norice\* him expounded every deal\*\*                                \*nurse \*\*part  
 His sweven, and bade him to keep\* him well                                \*guard  
 For treason; but he was but seven years old,  
 And therefore \*little tale hath he told\*                                \*he attached little  
 Of any dream, so holy was his heart. significance to\*  
 By God, I hadde lever than my shirt  
 That ye had read his legend, as have I.  
 Dame Partelote, I say you truely,  
 Macrobius, that wrote the vision  
 In Afric' of the worthy Scipion, &17&gt;  
 Affirmeth dreames, and saith that they be  
 'Warnings of thinges that men after see.  
 And furthermore, I pray you looke well

In the Old Testament, of Daniel,  
 If he held dreames any vanity.  
 Read eke of Joseph, and there shall ye see  
 Whether dreams be sometimes (I say not all)  
 Warnings of thinges that shall after fall.  
 Look of Egypt the king, Dan Pharaoh,  
 His baker and his buteler also,  
 Whether they felte none effect\* in dreams.      \*significance  
 Whoso will seek the acts of sundry remes\*      \*realms  
 May read of dreames many a wondrous thing.  
 Lo Croesus, which that was of Lydia king,  
 Mette he not that he sat upon a tree,  
 Which signified he shoulde hanged be? &lt;18&gt;  
 Lo here, Andromache, Hectore's wife, &lt;19&gt;  
 That day that Hector shoulde lose his life,  
 She dreamed on the same night beforne,  
 How that the life of Hector should be lorn,\*      \*lost  
 If thilke day he went into battaile;  
 She warned him, but it might not avail;  
 He wente forth to fighte natheless,  
 And was y-slain anon of Achilles.  
 But thilke tale is all too long to tell;  
 And eke it is nigh day, I may not dwell.  
 Shortly I say, as for conclusion,  
 That I shall have of this avision  
 Adversity; and I say furthermore,  
 That I ne \*tell of laxatives no store,\*      \*hold laxatives  
 For they be venomous, I wot it well; of no value\*  
 I them defy,\* I love them never a del.\*\*      \*distrust \*\*whit

'But let us speak of mirth, and stint\* all this;      \*cease  
 Madame Partelote, so have I bliss,  
 Of one thing God hath sent me large\* grace; liberal  
 For when I see the beauty of your face,  
 Ye be so scarlet-hued about your eyen,  
 I maketh all my dreade for to dien,  
 For, all so sicker\* as In principio,&lt;20&gt;      \*certain  
 Mulier est hominis confusio.&lt;21&gt;  
 Madam, the sentence\* of of this Latin is,      \*meaning  
 Woman is manne's joy and manne's bliss.  
 For when I feel at night your softe side, -  
 Albeit that I may not on you ride,

For that our perch is made so narrow, Alas!  
 I am so full of joy and of solas,\* \*delight  
 That I defy both sweven and eke dream.'  
 And with that word he flew down from the beam,  
 For it was day, and eke his hennes all;  
 And with a chuck he gan them for to call,  
 For he had found a corn, lay in the yard.  
 Royal he was, he was no more afear'd;  
 He feather'd Partelote twenty time,  
 And as oft trode her, ere that it was prime.  
 He looked as it were a grim lion,  
 And on his toes he roamed up and down;  
 He deigned not to set his feet to ground;  
 He chucked, when he had a corn y-found,  
 And to him ranne then his wives all.  
 Thus royal, as a prince is in his hall,  
 Leave I this Chanticleer in his pasture;  
 And after will I tell his aventure.

When that the month in which the world began,  
 That highte March, when God first maked man,  
 Was complete, and y-passed were also,  
 Since March ended, thirty days and two,  
 Befell that Chanticleer in all his pride,  
 His seven wives walking him beside,  
 Cast up his eyen to the brighte sun,  
 That in the sign of Taurus had y-run  
 Twenty degrees and one, and somewhat more;  
 He knew by kind,\* and by none other lore,\*\* \*nature \*\*learning  
 That it was prime, and crew with blissful steven.\* \*voice  
 'The sun,' he said, 'is clomben up in heaven  
 Twenty degrees and one, and more y-wis.\* \*assuredly  
 Madame Partelote, my worlde's bliss,  
 Hearken these blissful birdes how they sing,  
 And see the freshe flowers how they spring;  
 Full is mine heart of revel and solace.'  
 But suddenly him fell a sorrowful case; \* \*casualty  
 For ever the latter end of joy is woe:  
 God wot that worldly joy is soon y-go:  
 And, if a rhetor\* coulde fair indite, \*orator  
 He in a chronicle might it safely write,  
 As for \*a sov'reign notability\* \*a thing supremely notable\*

Now every wise man, let him hearken me;  
This story is all as true, I undertake,  
As is the book of Launcelot du Lake,  
That women hold in full great reverence.  
Now will I turn again to my sentence.

A col-fox, &22&gt; full of sly iniquity,  
That in the grove had wonned\* yeares three, \*dwelt  
By high imagination forecast,  
The same night thorough the hedges brast\* \*burst  
Into the yard, where Chanticleer the fair  
Was wont, and eke his wives, to repair;  
And in a bed of wortes\* still he lay, \*cabbages  
Till it was passed undern &23&gt; of the day,  
Waiting his time on Chanticleer to fall:  
As gladly do these homicides all,  
That in awaite lie to murder men.  
O false murd'rer! Rouking\* in thy den! \*crouching, lurking  
O new Iscariot, new Ganilion! &24&gt;  
O false dissimuler, O Greek Sinon,&25&gt;  
That broughtest Troy all utterly to sorrow!  
O Chanticleer! accursed be the morrow  
That thou into thy yard flew from the beams; \* \*rafters  
Thou wert full well y-warned by thy dreams  
That thilke day was perilous to thee.  
But what that God forewot\* must needes be, \*foreknows  
After th' opinion of certain clerkes.  
Witness on him that any perfect clerk is,  
That in school is great altercation  
In this matter, and great disputation,  
And hath been of an hundred thousand men.  
But I ne cannot \*boulit it to the bren,\* \*examine it thoroughly &26&gt; \*  
As can the holy doctor Augustine,  
Or Boece, or the bishop Bradwardine,&27&gt;  
Whether that Godde's worthy foreweeting\* \*foreknowledge  
\*Straineth me needly\* for to do a thing \*forces me\*  
(Needly call I simple necessity) ,  
Or elles if free choice be granted me  
To do that same thing, or do it not,  
Though God forewot\* it ere that it was wrought; \*knew in advance  
Or if \*his weeting straineth never a deal,\* \*his knowing constrains  
But by necessity conditionel. not at all\*

I will not have to do of such mattere;  
 My tale is of a cock, as ye may hear,  
 That took his counsel of his wife, with sorrow,  
 To walken in the yard upon the morrow  
 That he had mette the dream, as I you told.  
 Womane's counsels be full often cold; \*            \*mischievous, unwise  
 Womane's counsel brought us first to woe,  
 And made Adam from Paradise to go,  
 There as he was full merry and well at case.  
 But, for I n'ot\* to whom I might displease            \*know not  
 If I counsel of women woulde blame,  
 Pass over, for I said it in my game.\*            \*jest  
 Read authors, where they treat of such mattere  
 And what they say of women ye may hear.  
 These be the cocke's wordes, and not mine;  
 I can no harm of no woman divine.\*            \*conjecture, imagine  
 Fair in the sand, to bathe\* her merrily,            \*bask  
 Lies Partelote, and all her sisters by,  
 Against the sun, and Chanticleer so free  
 Sang merrier than the mermaid in the sea;  
 For Physiologus saith sickerly,\*            \*certainly  
 How that they singe well and merrily. &lt;28&gt;  
 And so befell that, as he cast his eye  
 Among the wortes,\* on a butterfly,            \*cabbages  
 He was ware of this fox that lay full low.  
 Nothing \*ne list him thenne\* for to crow,            \*he had no inclination\*  
 But cried anon 'Cock! cock! ' and up he start,  
 As man that was affrayed in his heart.  
 For naturally a beast desireth flee  
 From his contrary,\* if be may it see,            \*enemy  
 Though he \*ne'er erst\* had soon it with his eye            \*never before\*  
 This Chanticleer, when he gan him espy,  
 He would have fled, but that the fox anon  
 Said, 'Gentle Sir, alas! why will ye gon?  
 Be ye afraid of me that am your friend?  
 Now, certes, I were worse than any fiend,  
 If I to you would harm or villainy.  
 I am not come your counsel to espy.  
 But truely the cause of my coming  
 Was only for to hearken how ye sing;  
 For truely ye have as merry a steven,\*            \*voice  
 As any angel hath that is in heaven;

Therewith ye have of music more feeling,  
 Than had Boece, or any that can sing.  
 My lord your father (God his soule bless)  
 And eke your mother of her gentleness,  
 Have in mnine house been, to my great ease:\*                   \*satisfaction  
 And certes, Sir, full fain would I you please.  
 But, for men speak of singing, I will say,  
 So may I brooke\* well mine eyen tway,                   \*enjoy, possess, or use  
 Save you, I hearde never man so sing  
 As did your father in the morrowning.  
 Certes it was of heart all that he sung.  
 And, for to make his voice the more strong,  
 He would \*so pain him,\* that with both his eyen \*make such an exertion\*  
 He muste wink, so loud he woulde cryen,  
 And standen on his tiptoes therewithal,  
 And stretche forth his necke long and small.  
 And eke he was of such discretion,  
 That there was no man, in no region,  
 That him in song or wisdom mighte pass.  
 I have well read in Dan Burnel the Ass, &lt;29&gt;  
 Among his verse, how that there was a cock  
 That, for\* a prieste's son gave him a knock                   \*because  
 Upon his leg, while he was young and nice,\*                   \*foolish  
 He made him for to lose his benefice.  
 But certain there is no comparison  
 Betwixt the wisdom and discretion  
 Of youre father, and his subtilty.  
 Now singe, Sir, for sainte charity,  
 Let see, can ye your father counterfeit? '

This Chanticleer his wings began to beat,  
 As man that could not his treason espy,  
 So was he ravish'd with his flattery.  
 Alas! ye lordes, many a false flattour\*                   \*flatterer &lt;30&gt;  
 Is in your court, and many a losengeour, \*                   \*deceiver &lt;31&gt;  
 That please you well more, by my faith,  
 Than he that soothfastness\* unto you saith.                   \*truth  
 Read in Ecclesiast' of flattery;  
 Beware, ye lordes, of their treachery.  
 This Chanticleer stood high upon his toes,  
 Stretching his neck, and held his eyen close,  
 And gan to crowe loude for the nonce

And Dan Russel &32&gt; the fox start up at once,  
 And \*by the gorge hente\* Chanticleer, \*seized by the throat\*  
 And on his back toward the wood him bare.  
 For yet was there no man that him pursu'd.  
 O destiny, that may'st not be eschew'd! \* \* \* \* \* \*escaped  
 Alas, that Chanticleer flew from the beams!  
 Alas, his wife raughte\* nought of dreams! \* \* \* \* \* \*regarded  
 And on a Friday fell all this mischance.  
 O Venus, that art goddess of pleasance,  
 Since that thy servant was this Chanticleer  
 And in thy service did all his powere,  
 More for delight, than the world to multiply,  
 Why wilt thou suffer him on thy day to die?  
 O Gaufrid, deare master sovereign, &33&gt;  
 That, when thy worthy king Richard was slain  
 With shot, complainedest his death so sore,  
 Why n'had I now thy sentence and thy lore,  
 The Friday for to chiden, as did ye?  
 (For on a Friday, soothly, slain was he) ,  
 Then would I shew you how that I could plain\* \* \* \* \* \*lament  
 For Chanticleere's dread, and for his pain.

Certes such cry nor lamentation  
 Was ne'er of ladies made, when Ilion  
 Was won, and Pyrrhus with his straighte sword,  
 When he had hent\* king Priam by the beard, \*seized  
 And slain him (as saith us Eneidos\*) ,&34&gt; \*The Aeneid  
 As maden all the hennes in the close,\* \*yard  
 When they had seen of Chanticleer the sight.  
 But sov'reignly\* Dame Partelote shrigh, \*\* \*above all others  
 Full louder than did Hasdrubale's wife, \*\*shrieked  
 When that her husband hadde lost his life,  
 And that the Romans had y-burnt Carthage;  
 She was so full of torment and of rage,  
 That wilfully into the fire she start,  
 And burnt herselfe with a steadfast heart.  
 O woeful hennes! right so cried ye,  
 As, when that Nero burned the city  
 Of Rome, cried the senatores' wives,  
 For that their husbands losten all their lives;  
 Withoute guilt this Nero hath them slain.  
 Now will I turn unto my tale again;







# The Parlement Of Fowls

Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne soft{.e},  
That hast this wintr{.e}s wedr{.e}s overshak{.e},  
And driven away the long{.e} nyght{.e}s blak{.e}!

Saynt Valentyn, that art ful hy on-lofte,  
Thus syngen smal{.e} foul{.e}s for thy sak{.e}:  
Now welcome, somer, with thy sonn{.e} soft{.e},  
That hast this wintr{.e}s wedr{.e}s overshak{.e}.

Wel han they caus{.e} for to gladen oft{.e},  
Sith ech of hem recover{.e}d hath hys mak{.e};  
Ful blissful mowe they syng{.e} when they wak{.e}:  
Now welcome, somer, with thy sonn{.e} soft{.e}  
That hast this wintr{.e}s wedr{.e}s overshak{.e}  
And driven away the long{.e} nyght{.e}s blak{.e}!

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Parliament Of Fowles

Here begynyth the Parlement of Foulyls

## THE PROEM

The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,  
Thassay so hard, so sharp the conquering,  
The dredful Ioy, that alwey slit so yerne,  
Al this mene I by love, that my feling  
Astonyeth with his wonderful worching  
So sore y-wis, that whan I on him thinke,  
Nat wot I wel wher that I wake or winke.

For al be that I knowe nat love in dede,  
Ne wot how that he quytheth folk hir hyre,  
Yet happeth me ful ofte in bokes rede  
Of his miracles, and his cruel yre;  
Ther rede I wel he wol be lord and syre,  
I dar not seyn, his strokes been so sore,  
But God save swich a lord! I can no more.

Of usage, what for luste what for lore,  
On bokes rede I ofte, as I yow tolde.  
But wherfor that I speke al this? not yore  
Agon, hit happed me for to beholde  
Upon a boke, was write with lettres olde;  
And ther-upon, a certeyn thing to lerne,  
The longe day ful faste I radde and yerne.

For out of olde feldes, as men seith,  
Cometh al this newe corn fro yeer to yere;  
And out of olde bokes, in good feith,  
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.  
But now to purpos as of this matere --  
To rede forth hit gan me so delyte,  
That al the day me thoughte but a lyte.

This book of which I make of mencion,  
Entitled was al thus, as I shal telle,  
'Tullius of the dreame of Scipioun.';

Chapitres seven hit hadde, of hevene and helle,  
And erthe, and soules that therinnr dwelle,  
Of whiche, as shortly as I can hit trete,  
Of his sentence I wol you seyn the grete.

First telleth hit, whan Scipion was come  
In Afrik, how he mette Massinisse,  
That him for Ioye in armes hath y nome.  
Than telleth hit hir speche and al the blisse  
That was betwix hem, til the day gan misse;  
And how his auncestre, African so dere,  
Gan in his slepe that night to him appere.

Than telleth hit that, fro a sterry place,  
How African hath him Cartage shewed,  
And warned him before of al his grace,  
And seyde him, what man, lered other lewed,  
That loveth comun profit, wel y-thewed,  
He shal unto a blisful place wende,  
Ther as Ioye is that last withouten ende.

Than asked he, if folk that heer be dede  
Have lyf and dwelling in another place;  
And African seyde, `ye, withoute drede,'  
And that our present worldes lyves space  
Nis but a maner deth, what wey we trace,  
And rightful folk shal go, after they dye,  
To heven; and shewed him the galaxye.

Than shewed he him the litel erthe, that heer is,  
At regard of the hevenes quantite;  
And after shewed he him the nyne speres,  
And after that the melodye herde he  
That cometh of thilke speres thryes three,  
That welle is of musyk and melodye  
In this world heer, and cause of armony.

Than bad he him, sin erthe was so lyte,  
And ful of torment and of harde grace,  
That he ne shulde him in the world delyte.  
Than tolde he him, in certeyn yeres space,  
That every sterre shulde come into his place

Ther hit was first; and al shulde out of minde  
That in this worlde is don of al mankinde.

Than prayde him Scipioun to telle him al  
The way to come un-to that hevене blisse;  
And he seyde, `know thy-self first immortal,  
And loke ay besily thou werke and wisse  
To comun profit, and thou shalt nat misse  
To comen swiftly to that place dere,  
That ful of blisse is and of soules clere.

But brekers of the lawe, soth to seyne,  
And lecherous folk, after that they be dede,  
Shul alwey whirle aboute therthe in peyne,  
Til many a world be passed, out of drede,  
And than, for-yeven alle hir wikked dede,  
Than shul they come unto that blisful place,  
To which to comen god thee sende his grace!' --

The day gan failen, and the derke night,  
That reveth bestes from her besinesse,  
Berafte me my book for lakke of light,  
And to my bedde I gan me for to dresse,  
Fulfilde of thought and besy hevinesse;  
For bothe I hadde thing which that I nolde,  
And eek I ne hadde that thing that I wolde.

But fynally my spirit, at the laste,  
For-wery of my labour al the day,  
Took rest, that made me to slepe faste,  
And in my slepe I mette, as I lay,  
How African, right in the selfe aray  
That Scipioun him saw before that tyde,  
Was comen and stood right at my bedes syde.

The wery hunter, slepinge in his bed,  
To wode ayein his minde goth anoon;  
The Iuge dremeth how his plees ben sped;  
The carter dremeth how his cartes goon;  
The riche, of gold; the knight fight with his foon;  
The seke met he drinketh of the tonne;  
The lover met he hath his lady wonne.

Can I nat seyn if that the cause were  
For I had red of African beforne,  
That made me to mete that he stood there;  
But thus seyde he, `thou hast thee so wel born  
In loking of myn olde book to-torn,  
Of which Macrobie roghte nat a lyte,  
That somdel of thy labour wolde I quyte!' --

Citherea! thou blisful lady swete,  
That with thy fyr-brand dauntest whom thee lest,  
And madest me this sweven for to mete,  
Be thou my help in this, for thou mayst best;  
As wisly as I saw thee north-north-west,  
When I began my sweven for to wryte,  
So yif me might to ryme and endyte!

#### THE STORY

This forseid African me hente anoon,  
And forth with him unto a gate broghte  
Right of a parke, walled of grene stoon;  
And over the gate, with lettres large y-wroghte,  
Ther weren vers y-writen, as me thoghte,  
On eyther halfe, of ful gret difference,  
Of which I shal yow sey the pleyn sentence.

`Thorgh me men goon in-to that blisful place  
Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure;  
Thorgh me men goon unto the welle of Grace,  
Ther grene and lusty May shal ever endure;  
This is the wey to al good aventure;  
Be glad, thou reder, and thy sorwe of-caste,  
Al open am I; passe in, and hy the faste!'

`Thorgh me men goon,' than spak that other syde,  
`Unto the mortal strokes of the spere,  
Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,  
Ther tre shal never fruyt ne leves bere.  
This stream yow ledeth to the sorwful were,  
Ther as the fish in prison is al drye;  
Theschewing is only the remedye.'

Thise vers of gold and blak y-writen were,  
Of whiche I gan a stounde to beholde,  
For with that oon encreased ay my fere,  
And with that other gan myn herte bolde;  
That oon me hette, that other did me colde,  
No wit had I, for errour, for to chese  
To entre or flee, or me to save or lese.

Right as, betwixen adamauntes two  
Of even might, a pece of iren y-set,  
That hath no might to meve to ne fro --  
For what that on may hale, that other let --  
Ferde I; that niste whether me was bet,  
To entre or leve, til African my gyde  
Me hente, and shoof in at the gates wyde,

And seyde, `hit stondesth writen in thy face,  
Thyn errour, though thou telle it not to me;  
But dred the nat to come in-to this place,  
For this wryting is no-thing ment by thee,  
Ne by noon, but he Loves servant be;  
For thou of love hast lost thy tast, I gesse,  
As seek man hath of swete and bitternesse.

But natheles, al-though that thou be dulle,  
Yit that thou canst not do, yit mayst thou see;  
For many a man that may not stonde a pulle,  
Yit lyketh him at the wrastling for to be,  
And demeth yit wher he do bet or he;  
And if thou haddest cunning for tendyte,  
I shal thee shewen mater of to wryte.'

With that my hond in his he took anoon,  
Of which I comfort caughte, and went in faste;  
But, lord! so I was glad and wel begoon!  
For over-al, wher that I myn eyen caste,  
Were trees clad with leves that ay shal laste,  
Eche in his kinde, of colour fresh and grene  
As emeraude, that Ioye was to sene.

The bilder ook, and eek the hardy asshe;



The piler elm, the cofre unto careyne;  
The boxtree piper; holm to whippes lasshe;  
The sayling firr; the cipres, deth to pleyne;  
The sheter ew, the asp for shaftes pleyne;  
The olyve of pees, and eek the drunken vyne,  
The victor palm, the laurer to devyne.

A gardyn saw I, ful of blosmy bowes,  
Upon a river, in a grene mede,  
Ther as swetnesse evermore y-now is,  
With floures whyte, blewe, yelow, and rede;  
And colde welle-stremes, no-thing dede,  
That swommen ful of smale fisses lighte,  
With finnes rede and scales silver-brighte.

On every bough the briddes herde I singe,  
With voys of aungel in hir armonye,  
Som besyed hem hir briddes forth to bringe;  
The litel conyes to hir pley gunne hye.  
And further al aboute I gan espye  
The dredful roo, the buk, the hert and hinde,  
Squerels, and bestes smale of gentil kinde.

Of instruments of strenges in acord  
Herde I so pleye a ravissing swetnesse,  
That god, that maker is of al and lord,  
Ne herde never better, as I gesse;  
Therwith a wind, unnethe hit might be lesse,  
Made in the leves grene a noise softe  
Acordaunt to the foules songe on-lofte.

The air of that place so attempre was  
That never was grevaunce of hoot ne cold;  
Ther wex eek every holsum spyce and gras,  
Ne no man may ther wexe seek ne old;  
Yet was ther Ioye more a thousand fold  
Then man can telle; ne never wolde it nighte,  
But ay cleer day to any mannes sighte.

Under a tree, besyde a welle, I say  
Cupyde our lord his arwes forge and fyle;  
And at his fete his bowe al redy lay,

And wel his doghter tempred al this whyle  
The hedes in the welle, and with hir wyle  
She couched hem after as they shulde serve,  
Some for to slee, and some to wounde and kerve.

Tho was I war of Plesaunce anon-right,  
And of Aray, and Lust, and Curtesye,  
And of the Craft that can and hath the might  
To doon by force a wight to do folye --  
Disfigurat was she, I nil not lye;  
And by him-self, under an oke, I gesse,  
Saw I Delyt, that stood with Gentilnesse.

I saw Beautee, withouten any atyr,  
And Youthe, ful of game and Iolyte,  
Fool-hardinesse, Flatery, and Desyr,  
Messagerye, and Mede, and other three --  
Hir names shul noght here be told for me --  
And upon pilers grete of Iasper longe  
I saw a temple of bras y-founded stronge.

Aboute the temple daunceden alway  
Wommen y-nowe, of whiche some ther were  
Faire of hem-self, and somme of hem were gay;  
In kirtels, al disshevele, wente they there --  
That was hir office alway, yeer by yere --  
And on the temple, of doves whyte and faire  
Saw I sittinge many a hunderede paire.

Before the temple-dore ful soberly  
Dame Pees sat, with a curteyn in hir hond:  
And hir besyde, wonder discretly,  
Dame Pacience sitting ther I fond  
With face pale, upon an hille of sond;  
And alder-next, within and eek with-oute,  
Behest and Art, and of hir folke a route.

Within the temple, of syghes hote as fyr  
I herde a swogh that gan aboute renne;  
Which syghes were engendred with desyr,  
That maden every auter for to brenne  
Of newe flaume; and wel aspyed I thenne

That al the cause of sorwes that they drye  
Com of the bitter goddesse Ialousye.

The god Priapus saw I, as I wente,  
Within the temple, in soverayn place stonde,  
In swich aray as whan the asse him shente  
With crye by night, and with ceptre in honde;  
Ful besily men gunne assaye and fonde  
Upon his hede to sette, of sondry hewe,  
Garlondes ful of fresshe floures newe.

And in a privee corner, in disporte,  
Fond I Venus and hir porter Richesse,  
That was ful noble and hauteyn of hir porte;  
Derk was that place, but afterward lightnesse  
I saw a lyte, unnethe hit might be lesse,  
And on a bed of golde she lay to reste,  
Til that the hote sonne gan to weste.

Hir gilte heres with a golden threde  
Y-bounden were, untressed as she lay,  
And naked fro the breste unto the hede  
Men might hir see; and, sothly for to say,  
The remenant wel kevered to my pay  
Right with a subtil kerchef of Valence,  
Ther was no thikker cloth of no defence.

The place yaf a thousand savours swote,  
And Bachus, god of wyn, sat hir besyde,  
And Ceres next, that doth of hunger bote;  
And, as I seide, amiddes lay Cipryde,  
To whom on knees two yonge folkes cryde  
To ben hir help; but thus I leet hir lye,  
And ferther in the temple I gan espye

That, in dispyte of Diane the chaste,  
Ful many a bowe y-broke heng on the wal  
Of maydens, suche as gunne hir tymes waste  
In hir servyse; and peynted over al  
Of many a story, of which I touche shal  
A fewe, as of Calixte and Athalaunte,  
And many a mayde, of which the name I wante;

Semyramus, Candace, and Ercules,  
Biblis, Dido, Thisbe, and Piramus,  
Tristram, Isoude, Paris, and Achilles,  
Eleyne, Cleopatre, and Troilus,  
Silla, and eek the moder of Romulus --  
Alle these were peynted on that other syde,  
And al hir love, and in what plyte they dyde.

Whan I was come ayen unto the place  
That I of spak, that was so swote and grene,  
Forth welk I tho, my-selven to solace.  
Tho was I war wher that ther sat a quene  
That, as of light the somer-sonne shene  
Passeth the sterre, right so over mesure  
She fairer was than any creature.

And in a launde, upon an hille of floures,  
Was set this noble goddessse Nature;  
Of braunches were hir halles and hir boures,  
Y-wrought after hir craft and hir mesure;  
Ne ther nas foul that cometh of engendrure,  
That they ne were prest in hir presence,  
To take hir doom and yeve hir audience.

For this was on seynt Valentynes day,  
Whan every foul cometh ther to chese his make,  
Of every kinde, that men thenke may;  
And that so huge a noyse gan they make,  
That erthe and see, and tree, and every lake  
So ful was, that unnethe was ther space  
For me to stonde, so ful was al the place.

And right as Aleyn, in the Pleynt of Kinde,  
Devyseth Nature of aray and face,  
In swich aray men mighten hir ther finde.  
This noble emperesse, ful of grace,  
Bad every foul to take his owne place,  
As they were wont alwey fro yeer to yere,  
Seynt Valentynes day, to stonden there.

That is to sey, the foules of ravyne

Were hiest set; and than the foules smale,  
That eten as hem nature wolde enclyne,  
As worm or thing of whiche I telle no tale;  
And water-foul sat loweste in the dale;  
But foul that liveth by seed sat on the grene,  
And that so fele, that wonder was to sene.

There mighte men the royal egle finde,  
That with his sharpe look perceth the sonne;  
And other egles of a lower kinde,  
Of which that clerkes wel devysen conne.  
Ther was the tyraunt with his fethres donne  
And greye, I mene the goshawk, that doth pyne  
To briddes for his outrageous ravyne.

The gentil faucoun, that with his feet distreyneth  
The kinges hond; the hardy sperhawk eke,  
The quayles foo; the merlion that payneth  
Him-self ful ofte, the larke for to seke;  
Ther was the douve, with hir eyen meke;  
The Ialous swan, ayens his deth that singeth;  
The oule eek, that of dethe the bode bringeth;

The crane the geaunt, with his trompes sounes;  
The theef, the chogh; and eek the Iangling pye;  
The scorning Iay; the eles foo, heroune;  
The false lapwing, ful of trecherye;  
The stare, that the counseyl can bewrye;  
The tame ruddok; and the coward kyte;  
The cok, that orloge is of thorpes lyte;

The sparrow, Venus sone; the nightingale,  
That clepeth forth the fresshe leves newe;  
The swallow, mordrer of the flyes smale  
That maken honny of floures fresshe of hewe;  
The wedded turtel, with hir herte trewe;  
The pecok, with his aungels fethres brighte;  
The fesaunt, scorner of the cok by nighte;

The waker goos; the cukkitow ever unkinde;  
The popiniay, ful of delicasye;  
The drake, stroyer of his owne kinde;

The stork, the wreker of avouterye;  
The hote cormeraunt of glotonye;  
The raven wys, the crow with vois of care;  
The throstel olde; the frosty feldefare.

What shulde I seyn? of foules every kinde  
That in this world han fethres and stature,  
Men mighten in that place assembled finde  
Before the noble goddessse Nature,  
And everich of hem did his besy cure  
Benignely to chese or for to take,  
By hir acord, his formel or his make.

But to the poynt -- Nature held on hir honde  
A formel egle, of shap the gentileste  
That ever she among hir werkes fonde,  
The moste benigne and the goodlieste;  
In hir was every vertu at his reste,  
So ferforth, that Nature hir-self had blisse  
To loke on hir, and ofte hir bek to kisse.

Nature, the vicaire of thalmighty lorde,  
That hoot, cold, hevvy, light, and moist and dreye  
Hath knit by even noumbre of acorde,  
In esy vois began to speke and seye,  
`Foules, tak hede of my sentence, I preye,  
And, for your ese, in furthering of your nede,  
As faste as I may speke, I wol me spede.

Ye knowe wel how, seynt Valentynes day,  
By my statut and through my governaunce,  
Ye come for to chese -- and flee your way --  
Your makes, as I prik yow with plesaunce.  
But natheles, my rightful ordenaunce  
May I not lete, for al this world to winne,  
That he that most is worthy shal beginne.

The tercel egle, as that ye knowen wel,  
The foul royal above yow in degree,  
The wyse and worthy, secree, trewe as stel,  
The which I formed have, as ye may see,  
In every part as hit best lyketh me,

Hit nedeth noght his shap yow to devyse,  
He shal first chese and speken in his gyse.

And after him, by order shul ye chese,  
After your kinde, everich as yow lyketh,  
And, as your hap is, shul ye winne or lese;  
But which of yow that love most entryketh,  
God sende him hir that sorest for him syketh.'  
And therwith-al the tercel gan she calle,  
And seyde, `my sone, the choys is to thee falle.

But natheles, in this condicioun  
Mot be the choys of everich that is here,  
That she agree to his eleccioun,  
What-so he be that shulde be hir fere;  
This is our usage alwey, fro yeer to yere;  
And who so may at this time have his grace,  
In blisful tyme he com in-to this place.'

With hed enclyned and with ful humble chere  
This royal tercel spak and taried nought:  
`Unto my sovereyn lady, and noght my fere,  
I chese, and chese with wille and herte and thought,  
The formel on your hond so wel y-wrought,  
Whos I am al and ever wol hir serve,  
Do what hir list, to do me live or sterve.

Beseching hir of mercy and of grace,  
As she that is my lady sovereyne;  
Or let me dye present in this place.  
For certes, long may I not live in peyne;  
For in myn herte is corven every veyne;  
Having reward only to my trouthe,  
My dere herte, have on my wo som routhe.

And if that I to hir be founde untrewe,  
Disobeysaunt, or wilful negligent,  
Avauntour, or in proces love a newe,  
I pray to you this be my Iugement,  
That with these foules I be al to-rent,  
That ilke day that ever she me finde  
To hir untrewe, or in my gilte unkinde.

And sin that noon loveth hir so wel as I,  
Al be she never of love me behette,  
Than oghte she be myn thourgh hir mercy,  
For other bond can I noon on hir knette.  
For never, for no wo, ne shal I lette  
To serven hir, how fer so that she wende;  
Sey what yow list, my tale is at an ende.'

Right as the fresshe, rede rose newe  
Ayen the somer-sonne coloured is,  
Right so for shame al wexen gan the hewe  
Of this formel, whan she herde al this;  
She neyther answerde `Wel', ne seyde amis,  
So sore abasshed was she, til that Nature  
Seyde, `doghter, drede yow noght, I yow assure.'

Another tercel egle spak anoon  
Of lower kinde, and seyde, `that shal nat be;  
I love hir bet than ye do, by seynt Iohn,  
Or atte leste I love hir as wel as ye;  
And lenger have served hir, in my degree,  
And if she shulde have loved for long loving,  
To me allone had been the guerdoninge.

I dar eek seye, if she me finde fals,  
Unkinde, Iangler, or rebel in any wyse,  
Or Ialous, do me hongen by the hals!  
And but I bere me in hir servyse  
As wel as that my wit can me suffyse,  
From poynt to poynt, hir honour for to save,  
Tak she my lyf, and al the good I have.'

The thridde tercel egle answerde tho,  
`Now, sirs, ye seen the litel leyser here;  
For every foul cryeth out to been a-go  
Forth with his make, or with his lady dere;  
And eek Nature hir-self ne wol nought here,  
For taryng here, noght half that I wolde seye;  
And but I speke, I mot for sorwe deye.

Of long servyse avaunte I me no-thing,



But as possible is me to dye to-day  
For wo, as he that hath ben languisshing  
Thise twenty winter, and wel happen may  
A man may serven bet and more to pay  
In half a yere, al-though hit were no more,  
Than som man doth that hath served ful yore.

I ne sey not this by me, for I ne can  
Do no servyse that may my lady plese;  
But I dar seyn, I am hir trewest man  
As to my dome, and feynest wolde hir ese;  
At shorte wordes, til that deth me sese,  
I wol ben hires, whether I wake or winke,  
And trewe in al that herte may bethinke.'

Of al my lyf, sin that day I was born,  
So gentil plee in love or other thing  
Ne herde never no man me beforne,  
Who-so that hadde leyser and cunning  
For to rehearse hir chere and hir speking;  
And from the morwe gan this speche laste  
Til downward drow the sonne wonder faste.

The noyse of foules for to ben delivered  
So loude rong, `have doon and let us wende!'  
That wel wende I the wode had al to-shivered.  
`Come of!' they cryde, `allas! ye wil us shende!  
Whan shal your cursed pleding have an ende?  
How shulde a Iuge eyther party leve,  
For yee or nay, with-outen any preve?'

The goos, the cokkow, and the doke also  
So cryden, `kek, kek!' `kukkow!' `quek, quek!' hye,  
That thorgh myn eres the noyse wente tho.  
The goos seyde, `al this nis not worth a flye!  
But I can shape hereof a remedye,  
And I wol sey my verdit faire and swythe  
For water-foul, who-so be wrooth or blythe.'

`And I for worm-foul,' seyde the fool cukkow,  
`For I wol, of myn owne auctorite,  
For comune spede, take the charge now,

For to delivere us is gret charite.'  
`Ye may abyde a whyle yet, parde!'  
Seide the turtel, `if hit be your wille  
A wight may speke, him were as good be stille.

I am a seed-foul, oon the unworthieste,  
That wot I wel, and litel of kunninge;  
But bet is that a wightes tonge reste  
Than entermeten him of such doinge  
Of which he neyther rede can nor singe.  
And who-so doth, ful foule himself acloyeth,  
For office uncommitted ofte anoyeth.'

Nature, which that alway had an ere  
To murmour of the lewednes behinde,  
With facound voys seide, `hold your tonges there!  
And I shal sone, I hope, a counseyl finde  
You to delivere, and fro this noyse unbinde;  
I Iuge, of every folk men shal oon calle  
To seyn the verdict for you foules alle.'

Assented were to this conclusioun  
The briddes alle; and foules of ravyne  
Han chosen first, by pleyn eleccioun,  
The tercelet of the faucon, to diffyne  
Al hir sentence, and as him list, termyne;  
And to Nature him gonnen to presente,  
And she accepteth him with glad entente.

The tercelet seide than in this manere:  
`Ful hard were it to preve hit by resoun  
Who loveth best this gentil formel here;  
For everich hath swich replicacioun,  
That noon by skillles may be broght a-doun;  
I can not seen that argumentes avayle;  
Than semeth hit ther moste be batayle.'

`Al redy!' quod these egles tercels tho.  
`Nay, sirs!' quod he, `if that I dorste it seye,  
Ye doon me wrong, my tale is not y-do!  
For sirs, ne taketh noght a-gref, I preye,  
It may noght gon, as ye wolde, in this weye;

Oure is the voys that han the charge in honde,  
And to the Iuges dome ye moten stonde;

`And therfor, pees! I seye, as to my wit,  
Me wolde thinke how that the worthieste  
Of knighthode, and lengest hath used hit,  
Moste of estat, of blode the gentileste,  
Were sittingest for hir, if that hir leste;  
And of these three she wot hir-self, I trowe,  
Which that he be, for hit is light to knowe.'

The water-foules han her hedes leyd  
Togeder, and of short avysement,  
Whan everich had his large golee seyde,  
They seyden sothly, al by oon assent,  
How that `the goos, with hir facounde gent,  
That so desyreth to pronounce our nede,  
Shal telle our tale,' and preyde `god hir spede.'

And for these water-foules tho began  
The goos to speke, and in hir cakeling  
She seyde, `pees! now tak kepe every man,  
And herkeneth which a reson I shal bringe;  
My wit is sharp, I love no taryinge;  
I seye, I rede him, though he were my brother,  
But she wol love him, lat him love another!'

`Lo here! a parfit reson of a goos!  
Quod the sperhawk; `never mot she thee!  
Lo, swich hit is to have a tonge loos!  
Now parde, fool, yet were hit bet for thee  
Have holde thy pees, than shewed thy nycete!  
Hit lyth not in his wit nor in his wille,  
But sooth is seyde, 'a fool can nocht be stille.'

The laughter aroos of gentil foules alle,  
And right anoon the seed-foul chosen hadde  
The turtel trewe, and gunne hir to hem calle,  
And preyden hir to seye the sothe sadde  
Of this matere, and asked what she radde;  
And she answerde, that pleyedly hir entente  
She wolde shewe, and sothly what she mente.

`Nay, god forbede a lover shulde chaunge!  
The turtle seyde, and wex for shame al reed;  
`Thogh that his lady ever-more be straunge,  
Yet let him serve hir ever, til he be deed;  
For sothe, I preyse nocht the gooses reed;  
For thogh she deyed, I wolde non other make,  
I wol ben hires, til that the deth me take.'

`Wel bourded!' quod the doke, `by my hat!  
That men shulde alwey loven, causeles,  
Who can a reson finde or wit in that?  
Daunceth he mury that is mirtheles?  
Who shulde recche of that is reccheles?  
Ye, quek!' yit quod the doke, ful wel and faire,  
`There been mo sterres, god wot, than a paire!'

`Now fy, cherl!' quod the gentil tercelet,  
`Out of the dunghil com that word ful right,  
Thou canst nocht see which thing is wel be-set:  
Thou farest by love as oules doon by light,  
The day hem blent, ful wel they see by night;  
Thy kind is of so lowe a wrechednesse,  
That what love is, thou canst nat see ne gesse.'

Tho gan the cuckow putte him forth in prees  
For foul that eteth worm, and seide blyve,  
`So I,' quod he, `may have my make in pees,  
I recche not how longe that ye stryve;  
Lat ech of hem be soley n al hir lyve,  
This is my reed, sin they may not acorde;  
This shorte lesson nedeth nocht recorde.'

`Ye! have the glotoun fild ynogh his paunche,  
Than are we wel!' seyde the merlioun;  
`Thou mordrer of the heysugge on the braunche  
That broghte thee forth, thou rewthelees glotoun!  
Live thou soley n, wormes corrupcioun!  
For no fors is of lakke of thy nature;  
Go, lewed be thou, whyl the world may dure!'

`Now pees,' quod Nature, `I comaunde here;

For I have herd al your opinioun,  
And in effect yet be we never the nere;  
But fynally, this is my conclusioun,  
That she hir-self shal han the eleccioun  
Of whom hir list, who-so be wrooth or blythe,  
Him that she cheest, he shal hir have as swythe.

For sith hit may not here discussed be  
Who loveth hir best, as seide the tercelet,  
Than wol I doon hir this favour, that she  
Shal have right him on whom hir herte is set,  
And he hir that his herte hath on hir knet.  
Thus Iuge I, Nature, for I may not lye;  
To noon estat I have non other ye.

But as for counseyl for to chese a make,  
If hit were reson, certes, than wolde I  
Counseyle yow the royal tercel take,  
As seide the tercelet ful skilfully,  
As for the gentilest and most worthy,  
Which I have wroght so wel to my plesaunce;  
That to yow oghte been a suffisaunce.'

With dredful vois the formel hir answerde,  
'My rightful lady, goddesse of Nature,  
Soth is that I am ever under your yerde,  
Lyk as is everiche other creature,  
And moot be youres whyl that my lyf may dure;  
And therfor graunteth me my firste bone,  
And myn entente I wol yow sey right sone.'

'I graunte it you,' quod she; and right anoon  
This formel egle spak in this degree,  
'Almighty quene, unto this yeer be doon  
I aske respit for to avysen me.  
And after that to have my choys al free;  
This al and sum, that I wolde speke and seye;  
Ye gete no more, al-though ye do me deye.

I wol noght serven Venus ne Cupyde  
For sothe as yet, by no manere wey.'  
'Now sin it may non other wyse betyde,'

Quod tho Nature, ` here is no more to sey;  
Than wolde I that these foules were a-vey  
Ech with his make, for tarying lenger here' --  
And seyde hem thus, as ye shul after here.

` To you speke I, ye tercelets,' quod Nature,  
` Beth of good herte and serveth, alle three;  
A yeer is not so longe to endure,  
And ech of yow peyne him, in his degree,  
For to do wel; for, god wot, quit is she  
Fro yow this yeer; what after so befalle,  
This entremes is dressed for you alle.'

And whan this werk al broght was to an ende,  
To every foule Nature yaf his make  
By even acorde, and on hir wey they wende.  
A! lord! the blisse and Ioye that they make!  
For ech of hem gan other in winges take,  
And with hir nekkes ech gan other winde,  
Thanking alwey the noble goddessse of kinde.

But first were chosen foules for to singe,  
As yeer by yere was alwey hir usaunce  
To singe a roundel at hir departinge,  
To do to Nature honour and plesaunce.  
The note, I trowe, maked was in Fraunce;  
The wordes wer swich as ye may heer finde,  
The nexte vers, as I now have in minde.

Qui bien aime a tard oublie.

` Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast this wintres weders over-shake,  
And driven away the longe nightes blake!

` Saynt Valentyn, that art ful hy on-lofte; --  
Thus singen smale foules for thy sake --  
Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast this wintres weders over-shake.

` Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,  
Sith ech of hem recovered hath his make;

Ful blisful may they singen whan they wake;  
Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast this wintres weders over-shake,  
And driven away the longe nightes blake.'

And with the showting, whan hir song was do,  
That foules maden at hir flight a-way,  
I wook, and other bokes took me to  
To rede upon, and yet I rede alway;  
In hope, y-wis, to rede so som day  
That I shal mete som thing for to fare  
The bet; and thus to rede I nil not spare.

Parliamentum avium in die Sancti Valentini tentum secundum  
Galfridum Chaucer. Deo gracias.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Parson's Tale

## THE PROLOGUE.

By that the Manciple his tale had ended,  
The sunne from the south line was descended  
So lowe, that it was not to my sight  
Degrees nine-and-twenty as in height.  
Four of the clock it was then, as I guess,  
For eleven foot, a little more or less,  
My shadow was at thilke time, as there,  
Of such feet as my lengthe parted were  
In six feet equal of proportion.

Therewith the moone's exaltation,\*

\*In meane\* Libra, gan alway ascend,

As we were ent'ring at a thorp's\* end.

For which our Host, as he was wont to gie,\*

As in this case, our jolly company,

Said in this wise; 'Lordings every one,

Now lacketh us no more tales than one.

Fulfill'd is my sentence and my decree;

I trow that we have heard of each degree.\* from each class or rank

Almost fulfilled is mine ordinance; in the company

I pray to God so give him right good chance

That telleth us this tale lustily.

Sir Priest,' quoth he, 'art thou a vicary?\*

Or art thou a Parson? say sooth by thy fay.\*

Be what thou be, breake thou not our play;

For every man, save thou, hath told his tale.

Unbuckle, and shew us what is in thy mail.\*

For truely me thinketh by thy cheer

Thou shouldest knit up well a great mattere.

Tell us a fable anon, for cocke's bones.'

\*rising

\*in the middle of\*

\*village's

\*govern

\*vicar

\*faith

\*wallet

This Parson him answered all at ones;

'Thou gettest fable none y-told for me,

For Paul, that writeth unto Timothy,

Reproveth them that \*weive soothfastness,\*

And telle fables, and such wretchedness.

Why should I sowe draff\* out of my fist,

\*forsake truth\*

\*chaff, refuse



When I may sowe wheat, if that me list?  
 For which I say, if that you list to hear  
 Morality and virtuous mattere,  
 And then that ye will give me audience,  
 I would full fain at Christe's reverence  
 Do you pleasance lawful, as I can.  
 But, truste well, I am a southern man,  
 I cannot gest,\* rom, ram, ruf, &lt;1&gt; by my letter;        \*relate stories  
 And, God wot, rhyme hold I but little better.  
 And therefore if you list, I will not glose,\*        \*mince matters  
 I will you tell a little tale in prose,  
 To knit up all this feast, and make an end.  
 And Jesus for his grace wit me send  
 To shewe you the way, in this voyage,  
 Of thilke perfect glorious pilgrimage, &lt;2&gt;  
 That hight Jerusalem celestial.  
 And if ye vouchesafe, anon I shall  
 Begin upon my tale, for which I pray  
 Tell your advice,\* I can no better say.        \*opinion  
 But natheless this meditation  
 I put it aye under correction  
 Of clerkes,\* for I am not textuel;        \*scholars  
 I take but the sentence,\* trust me well.        \*meaning, sense  
 Therefore I make a protestation,  
 That I will stande to correction.'  
 Upon this word we have assented soon;  
 For, as us seemed, it was \*for to do'n,\*        \*a thing worth doing\*  
 To enden in some virtuous sentence,\*        \*discourse  
 And for to give him space and audience;  
 And bade our Host he shoulde to him say  
 That alle we to tell his tale him pray.  
 Our Hoste had. the wordes for us all:  
 'Sir Priest,' quoth he, 'now faire you befall;  
 Say what you list, and we shall gladly hear.'  
 And with that word he said in this mannere;  
 'Telle,' quoth he, 'your meditatioun,  
 But hasten you, the sunne will adown.  
 Be fructuous,\* and that in little space;        \*fruitful; profitable  
 And to do well God sende you his grace

[The Parson begins his 'little treatise' -(which, if given at length, would extend to about thirty of these pages, and which cannot by any stretch of courtesy or fancy be said to merit the title of a 'Tale') in these words: -]

Our sweet Lord God of Heaven, that no man will perish, but will that we come all to the knowledge of him, and to the blissful life that is perdurable [everlasting], admonishes us by the prophet Jeremiah, that saith in this wise: 'Stand upon the ways, and see and ask of old paths, that is to say, of old sentences, which is the good way, and walk in that way, and ye shall find refreshing for your souls,' &lt;2&gt; &c. Many be the spiritual ways that lead folk to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the reign of glory; of which ways there is a full noble way, and full convenable, which may not fail to man nor to woman, that through sin hath misgone from the right way of Jerusalem celestial; and this way is called penitence. Of which men should gladly hearken and inquire with all their hearts, to wit what is penitence, and whence it is called penitence, and in what manner, and in how many manners, be the actions or workings of penitence, and how many species there be of penitences, and what things appertain and behove to penitence, and what things disturb penitence.

[Penitence is described, on the authority of Saints Ambrose, Isidore, and Gregory, as the bewailing of sin that has been wrought, with the purpose never again to do that thing, or any other thing which a man should bewail; for weeping and not ceasing to do the sin will not avail - though it is to be hoped that after every time that a man falls, be it ever so often, he may find grace to arise through penitence. And repentant folk that leave their sin ere sin leave them, are accounted by Holy Church sure of their salvation, even though the repentance be at the last hour. There are three actions of penitence; that a man be baptized after he has sinned; that he do no deadly sin after receiving baptism; and that he fall into no venial sins from day to day. 'Thereof saith St Augustine, that penitence of good and humble folk is the penitence of every day.' The species of penitence are three: solemn, when a man is openly expelled

from Holy Church in Lent, or is compelled by Holy Church to do open penance for an open sin openly talked of in the country; common penance, enjoined by priests in certain cases, as to go on pilgrimage naked or barefoot; and privy penance, which men do daily for private sins, of which they confess privately and receive private penance. To very perfect penitence are behoveful and necessary three things: contrition of heart, confession of mouth, and satisfaction; which are fruitful penitence against delight in thinking, reckless speech, and wicked sinful works.

Penitence may be likened to a tree, having its root in contrition, biding itself in the heart as a tree-root does in the earth; out of this root springs a stalk, that bears branches and leaves of confession, and fruit of satisfaction. Of this root also springs a seed of grace, which is mother of all security, and this seed is eager and hot; and the grace of this seed springs of God, through remembrance on the day of judgment and on the pains of hell. The heat of this seed is the love of God, and the desire of everlasting joy; and this heat draws the heart of man to God, and makes him hate his sin. Penance is the tree of life to them that receive it. In penance or contrition man shall understand four things: what is contrition; what are the causes that move a man to contrition; how he should be contrite; and what contrition availeth to the soul. Contrition is the heavy and grievous sorrow that a man receiveth in his heart for his sins, with earnest purpose to confess and do penance, and never more to sin. Six causes ought to move a man to contrition: 1. He should remember him of his sins; 2. He should reflect that sin putteth a man in great thralldom, and all the greater the higher is the estate from which he falls; 3. He should dread the day of doom and the horrible pains of hell; 4. The sorrowful remembrance of the good deeds that man hath omitted to do here on earth, and also the good that he hath lost, ought to make him have contrition; 5. So also ought the remembrance of the passion that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for our sins; 6. And so ought the hope of three things, that is to say, forgiveness of sin, the gift of grace to do well, and the glory of heaven with which God shall reward man for his good deeds. - All these points the Parson illustrates and enforces at length; waxing especially eloquent under the third head, and plainly setting forth the sternly realistic notions regarding future

punishments that were entertained in the time of Chaucer:-] &3>

Certes, all the sorrow that a man might make from the beginning of the world, is but a little thing, at retard of [in comparison with] the sorrow of hell. The cause why that Job calleth hell the land of darkness; &4> understand, that he calleth it land or earth, for it is stable and never shall fail, and dark, for he that is in hell hath default [is devoid] of light natural; for certes the dark light, that shall come out of the fire that ever shall burn, shall turn them all to pain that be in hell, for it sheweth them the horrible devils that them torment. Covered with the darkness of death; that is to say, that he that is in hell shall have default of the sight of God; for certes the sight of God is the life perdurable [everlasting]. The darkness of death, be the sins that the wretched man hath done, which that disturb [prevent] him to see the face of God, right as a dark cloud doth between us and the sun. Land of misease, because there be three manner of defaults against three things that folk of this world have in this present life; that is to say, honours, delights, and riches. Against honour have they in hell shame and confusion: for well ye wot, that men call honour the reverence that man doth to man; but in hell is no honour nor reverence; for certes no more reverence shall be done there to a king than to a knave [servant]. For which God saith by the prophet Jeremiah; 'The folk that me despise shall be in despite.' Honour is also called great lordship. There shall no wight serve other, but of harm and torment. Honour is also called great dignity and highness; but in hell shall they be all fortrodden [trampled under foot] of devils. As God saith, 'The horrible devils shall go and come upon the heads of damned folk;' and this is, forasmuch as the higher that they were in this present life, the more shall they be abated [abased] and defouled in hell. Against the riches of this world shall they have misease [trouble, torment] of poverty, and this poverty shall be in four things: in default [want] of treasure; of which David saith, 'The rich folk that embraced and oned [united] all their heart to treasure of this world, shall sleep in the sleeping of death, and nothing shall they find in their hands of all their treasure.' And moreover, the misease of hell shall be in default of meat and drink. For God saith thus by Moses, 'They shall be wasted with hunger, and the birds of hell shall devour them with bitter death, and the gall of the dragon shall be their drink, and the venom of the dragon their morsels.' And

furthermore, their miseries shall be in default of clothing, for they shall be naked in body, as of clothing, save the fire in which they burn, and other filths; and naked shall they be in soul, of all manner virtues, which that is the clothing of the soul. Where be then the gay robes, and the soft sheets, and the fine shirts? Lo, what saith of them the prophet Isaiah, that under them shall be strewed moths, and their covertures shall be of worms of hell. And furthermore, their miseries shall be in default of friends, for he is not poor that hath good friends: but there is no friend; for neither God nor any good creature shall be friend to them, and evereach of them shall hate other with deadly hate. The Sons and the daughters shall rebel against father and mother, and kindred against kindred, and chide and despise each other, both day and night, as God saith by the prophet Micah. And the loving children, that whom loved so fleshly each other, would each of them eat the other if they might. For how should they love together in the pains of hell, when they hated each other in the prosperity of this life? For trust well, their fleshly love was deadly hate; as saith the prophet David; 'Whoso loveth wickedness, he hateth his own soul:' and whoso hateth his own soul, certes he may love none other wight in no manner: and therefore in hell is no solace nor no friendship, but ever the more kindreds that be in hell, the more cursing, the more chiding, and the more deadly hate there is among them. And furthermore, they shall have default of all manner delights; for certes delights be after the appetites of the five wits [senses]; as sight, hearing, smelling, savouring [tasting], and touching. But in hell their sight shall be full of darkness and of smoke, and their eyes full of tears; and their hearing full of waimenting [lamenting] and grinting [gnashing] of teeth, as saith Jesus Christ; their nostrils shall be full of stinking; and, as saith Isaiah the prophet, their savouring [tasting] shall be full of bitter gall; and touching of all their body shall be covered with fire that never shall quench, and with worms that never shall die, as God saith by the mouth of Isaiah. And forasmuch as they shall not ween that they may die for pain, and by death flee from pain, that may they understand in the word of Job, that saith, 'There is the shadow of death.' Certes a shadow hath the likeness of the thing of which it is shadowed, but the shadow is not the same thing of which it is shadowed: right so fareth the pain of hell; it is like death, for the horrible anguish; and why? for it paineth them ever as though they should die anon; but

certes they shall not die. For, as saith Saint Gregory, 'To wretched caitiffs shall be given death without death, and end without end, and default without failing; for their death shall always live, and their end shall evermore begin, and their default shall never fail.' And therefore saith Saint John the Evangelist, 'They shall follow death, and they shall not find him, and they shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.' And eke Job saith, that in hell is no order of rule. And albeit that God hath created all things in right order, and nothing without order, but all things be ordered and numbered, yet nevertheless they that be damned be not in order, nor hold no order. For the earth shall bear them no fruit (for, as the prophet David saith, 'God shall destroy the fruit of the earth, as for them'): nor water shall give them no moisture, nor the air no refreshing, nor the fire no light. For as saith Saint Basil, 'The burning of the fire of this world shall God give in hell to them that be damned, but the light and the clearness shall be given in heaven to his children; right as the good man giveth flesh to his children, and bones to his hounds.' And for they shall have no hope to escape, saith Job at last, that there shall horror and grisly dread dwell without end. Horror is always dread of harm that is to come, and this dread shall ever dwell in the hearts of them that be damned. And therefore have they lost all their hope for seven causes. First, for God that is their judge shall be without mercy to them; nor they may not please him; nor none of his hallows [saints]; nor they may give nothing for their ransom; nor they have no voice to speak to him; nor they may not flee from pain; nor they have no goodness in them that they may shew to deliver them from pain.

[Under the fourth head, of good works, the Parson says: -]

The courteous Lord Jesus Christ will that no good work be lost, for in somewhat it shall avail. But forasmuch as the good works that men do while they be in good life be all amortised [killed, deadened] by sin following, and also since all the good works that men do while they be in deadly sin be utterly dead, as for to have the life perdurable [everlasting], well may that man that no good works doth, sing that new French song, J'ai tout perdu - mon temps et mon labour &lt;5&gt;. For certes, sin bereaveth a man both the goodness of nature, and eke the goodness of grace. For soothly the grace of the Holy Ghost fareth like fire, that

may not be idle; for fire faileth anon as it forleteth [leaveth] its working, and right so grace faileth anon as it forleteth its working. Then loseth the sinful man the goodness of glory, that only is to good men that labour and work. Well may he be sorry then, that oweth all his life to God, as long as he hath lived, and also as long as he shall live, that no goodness hath to pay with his debt to God, to whom he oweth all his life: for trust well he shall give account, as saith Saint Bernard, of all the goods that have been given him in his present life, and how he hath them dispended, insomuch that there shall not perish an hair of his head, nor a moment of an hour shall not perish of his time, that he shall not give thereof a reckoning.

[Having treated of the causes, the Parson comes to the manner, of contrition - which should be universal and total, not merely of outward deeds of sin, but also of wicked delights and thoughts and words; 'for certes Almighty God is all good, and therefore either he forgiveth all, or else right naught.' Further, contrition should be 'wonder sorrowful and anguishous,' and also continual, with steadfast purpose of confession and amendment. Lastly, of what contrition availeth, the Parson says, that sometimes it delivereth man from sin; that without it neither confession nor satisfaction is of any worth; that it 'destroyeth the prison of hell, and maketh weak and feeble all the strengths of the devils, and restoreth the gifts of the Holy Ghost and of all good virtues, and cleanseth the soul of sin, and delivereth it from the pain of hell, and from the company of the devil, and from the servage [slavery] of sin, and restoreth it to all goods spiritual, and to the company and communion of Holy Church.' He who should set his intent to these things, would no longer be inclined to sin, but would give his heart and body to the service of Jesus Christ, and thereof do him homage. 'For, certes, our Lord Jesus Christ hath spared us so benignly in our follies, that if he had not pity on man's soul, a sorry song might we all sing.'

The Second Part of the Parson's Tale or Treatise opens with an explanation of what is confession - which is termed 'the second part of penitence, that is, sign of contrition;' whether it ought needs be done or not; and what things be convenable to true confession. Confession is true shewing of sins to the priest, without excusing, hiding, or forwrapping [disguising] of anything, and without vaunting of good works. 'Also, it is

necessary to understand whence that sins spring, and how they increase, and which they be.' From Adam we took original sin; 'from him fleshly descended be we all, and engendered of vile and corrupt matter;' and the penalty of Adam's transgression dwelleth with us as to temptation, which penalty is called concupiscence. 'This concupiscence, when it is wrongfully disposed or ordained in a man, it maketh him covet, by covetise of flesh, fleshly sin by sight of his eyes, as to earthly things, and also covetise of highness by pride of heart.' The Parson proceeds to shew how man is tempted in his flesh to sin; how, after his natural concupiscence, comes suggestion of the devil, that is to say the devil's bellows, with which he bloweth in man the fire of concupiscence; and how man then bethinketh him whether he will do or no the thing to which he is tempted. If he flame up into pleasure at the thought, and give way, then is he all dead in soul; 'and thus is sin accomplished, by temptation, by delight, and by consenting; and then is the sin actual.' Sin is either venial, or deadly; deadly, when a man loves any creature more than Jesus Christ our Creator, venial, if he love Jesus Christ less than he ought. Venial sins diminish man's love to God more and more, and may in this wise skip into deadly sin; for many small make a great. 'And hearken this example: A great wave of the sea cometh sometimes with so great a violence, that it drencheth [causes to sink] the ship: and the same harm do sometimes the small drops, of water that enter through a little crevice in the thurrok [hold, bilge], and in the bottom of the ship, if men be so negligent that they discharge them not betimes. And therefore, although there be difference betwixt these two causes of drenching, algates [in any case] the ship is dreint [sunk]. Right so fareth it sometimes of deadly sin,' and of venial sins when they multiply in a man so greatly as to make him love worldly things more than God. The Parson then enumerates specially a number of sins which many a man peradventure deems no sins, and confesses them not, and yet nevertheless they are truly sins: - ]

This is to say, at every time that a man eateth and drinketh more than sufficeth to the sustenance of his body, in certain he doth sin; eke when he speaketh more than it needeth, he doth sin; eke when he heareth not benignly the complaint of the poor; eke when he is in health of body, and will not fast when other folk fast, without cause reasonable; eke when he sleepeth more than



needeth, or when he cometh by that occasion too late to church, or to other works of charity; eke when he useth his wife without sovereign desire of engendrure, to the honour of God, or for the intent to yield his wife his debt of his body; eke when he will not visit the sick, or the prisoner, if he may; eke if he love wife, or child, or other worldly thing, more than reason requireth; eke if he flatter or blandish more than he ought for any necessity; eke if he minish or withdraw the alms of the poor; eke if he apparail [prepare] his meat more deliciously than need is, or eat it too hastily by likerousness [gluttony]; eke if he talk vanities in the church, or at God's service, or that he be a talker of idle words of folly or villainy, for he shall yield account of them at the day of doom; eke when he behighteth [promiseth] or assureth to do things that he may not perform; eke when that by lightness of folly he missayeth or scorneth his neighbour; eke when he hath any wicked suspicion of thing, that he wot of it no soothfastness: these things, and more without number, be sins, as saith Saint Augustine.

[No earthly man may eschew all venial sins; yet may he refrain him, by the burning love that he hath to our Lord Jesus Christ, and by prayer and confession, and other good works, so that it shall but little grieve. 'Furthermore, men may also refrain and put away venial sin, by receiving worthily the precious body of Jesus Christ; by receiving eke of holy water; by alms-deed; by general confession of Confiteor at mass, and at prime, and at compline [evening service]; and by blessing of bishops and priests, and by other good works.' The Parson then proceeds to weightier matters:- ]

Now it is behovely [profitable, necessary] to tell which be deadly sins, that is to say, chieftains of sins; forasmuch as all they run in one leash, but in diverse manners. Now be they called chieftains, forasmuch as they be chief, and of them spring all other sins. The root of these sins, then, is pride, the general root of all harms. For of this root spring certain branches: as ire, envy, accidie &lt;6&gt; or sloth, avarice or covetousness (to common understanding), gluttony, and lechery: and each of these sins hath his branches and his twigs, as shall be declared in their chapters following. And though so be, that no man can tell utterly the number of the twigs, and of the harms that come of pride, yet will I shew a part of them, as ye shall understand.

There is inobedience, vaunting, hypocrisy, despite, arrogance, impudence, swelling of heart, insolence, elation, impatience, strife, contumacy, presumption, irreverence, pertinacity, vain-glory and many another twig that I cannot tell nor declare. . . .]

And yet [moreover] there is a privy species of pride that waiteth first to be saluted ere he will salute, all [although] be he less worthy than that other is; and eke he waiteth [expecteth] or desireth to sit or to go above him in the way, or kiss the pax, &7&gt; or be incensed, or go to offering before his neighbour, and such semblable [like] things, against his duty peradventure, but that he hath his heart and his intent in such a proud desire to be magnified and honoured before the people. Now be there two manner of prides; the one of them is within the heart of a man, and the other is without. Of which soothly these foresaid things, and more than I have said, appertain to pride that is within the heart of a man and there be other species of pride that be without: but nevertheless, the one of these species of pride is sign of the other, right as the gay levesell [bush] at the tavern is sign of the wine that is in the cellar. And this is in many things: as in speech and countenance, and outrageous array of clothing; for certes, if there had been no sin in clothing, Christ would not so soon have noted and spoken of the clothing of that rich man in the gospel. And Saint Gregory saith, that precious clothing is culpable for the dearth [dearness] of it, and for its softness, and for its strangeness and disguising, and for the superfluity or for the inordinate scantness of it; alas! may not a man see in our days the sinful costly array of clothing, and namely [specially] in too much superfluity, or else in too disordinate scantness? As to the first sin, in superfluity of clothing, which that maketh it so dear, to the harm of the people, not only the cost of the embroidering, the disguising, indenting or barring, ounding, paling, &8&gt; winding, or banding, and semblable [similar] waste of cloth in vanity; but there is also the costly furring [lining or edging with fur] in their gowns, so much punching of chisels to make holes, so much dagging [cutting] of shears, with the superfluity in length of the foresaid gowns, trailing in the dung and in the mire, on horse and eke on foot, as well of man as of woman, that all that trailing is verily (as in effect) wasted, consumed, threadbare, and rotten with dung, rather than it is given to the poor, to great damage of the foresaid poor folk, and that in sundry wise: this is to say, the more that cloth is

wasted, the more must it cost to the poor people for the scarceness; and furthermore, if so be that they would give such punched and dagged clothing to the poor people, it is not convenient to wear for their estate, nor sufficient to boot [help, remedy] their necessity, to keep them from the distemperance [inclemency] of the firmament. Upon the other side, to speak of the horrible disordinate scantness of clothing, as be these cutted slops or hanselines [breeches] , that through their shortness cover not the shameful member of man, to wicked intent alas! some of them shew the boss and the shape of the horrible swollen members, that seem like to the malady of hernia, in the wrapping of their hosen, and eke the buttocks of them, that fare as it were the hinder part of a she-ape in the full of the moon. And more over the wretched swollen members that they shew through disguising, in departing [dividing] of their hosen in white and red, seemeth that half their shameful privy members were flain [flayed]. And if so be that they depart their hosen in other colours, as is white and blue, or white and black, or black and red, and so forth; then seemeth it, by variance of colour, that the half part of their privy members be corrupt by the fire of Saint Anthony, or by canker, or other such mischance. And of the hinder part of their buttocks it is full horrible to see, for certes, in that part of their body where they purge their stinking ordure, that foul part shew they to the people proudly in despite of honesty [decency], which honesty Jesus Christ and his friends observed to shew in his life. Now as of the outrageous array of women, God wot, that though the visages of some of them seem full chaste and debonair [gentle], yet notify they, in their array of attire, likerousness and pride. I say not that honesty [reasonable and appropriate style] in clothing of man or woman unconvenable but, certes, the superfluity or disordinate scarcity of clothing is reprovab. Also the sin of their ornament, or of apparel, as in things that appertain to riding, as in too many delicate horses, that be holden for delight, that be so fair, fat, and costly; and also in many a vicious knave, [servant] that is sustained because of them; in curious harness, as in saddles, cruppers, peytrels, [breast-plates] and bridles, covered with precious cloth and rich bars and plates of gold and silver. For which God saith by Zechariah the prophet, 'I will confound the riders of such horses.' These folk take little regard of the riding of God's Son of heaven, and of his harness, when he rode upon an ass, and had no other harness but the poor clothes of his

disciples; nor we read not that ever he rode on any other beast. I speak this for the sin of superfluity, and not for reasonable honesty [seemliness], when reason it requireth. And moreover, certes, pride is greatly notified in holding of great meinie [retinue of servants], when they be of little profit or of right no profit, and namely [especially] when that meinie is felonous [violent ] and damageous [harmful] to the people by hardiness [arrogance] of high lordship, or by way of office; for certes, such lords sell then their lordship to the devil of hell, when they sustain the wickedness of their meinie. Or else, when these folk of low degree, as they that hold hostelries, sustain theft of their hostellers, and that is in many manner of deceits: that manner of folk be the flies that follow the honey, or else the hounds that follow the carrion. Such foresaid folk strangle spiritually their lordships; for which thus saith David the prophet, 'Wicked death may come unto these lordships, and God give that they may descend into hell adown; for in their houses is iniquity and shrewedness, [impiety] and not God of heaven.' And certes, but if [unless] they do amendment, right as God gave his benison [blessing] to Laban by the service of Jacob, and to Pharaoh by the service of Joseph; right so God will give his malison [condemnation] to such lordships as sustain the wickedness of their servants, but [unless] they come to amendment. Pride of the table apaireth [worketh harm] eke full oft; for, certes, rich men be called to feasts, and poor folk be put away and rebuked; also in excess of divers meats and drinks, and namely [specially] such manner bake-meats and dish-meats burning of wild fire, and painted and castled with paper, and semblable [similar] waste, so that it is abuse to think. And eke in too great preciousness of vessel, [plate] and curiosity of minstrelsy, by which a man is stirred more to the delights of luxury, if so be that he set his heart the less upon our Lord Jesus Christ, certain it is a sin; and certainly the delights might be so great in this case, that a man might lightly [easily] fall by them into deadly sin.

[The sins that arise of pride advisedly and habitually are deadly; those that arise by frailty unadvised suddenly, and suddenly withdraw again, though grievous, are not deadly. Pride itself springs sometimes of the goods of nature, sometimes of the goods of fortune, sometimes of the goods of grace; but the Parson, enumerating and examining all these in turn, points out

how little security they possess and how little ground for pride they furnish, and goes on to enforce the remedy against pride - which is humility or meekness, a virtue through which a man hath true knowledge of himself, and holdeth no high esteem of himself in regard of his deserts, considering ever his frailty.]

Now be there three manners [kinds] of humility; as humility in heart, and another in the mouth, and the third in works. The humility in the heart is in four manners: the one is, when a man holdeth himself as nought worth before God of heaven; the second is, when he despiseth no other man; the third is, when he reckoneth not though men hold him nought worth; the fourth is, when he is not sorry of his humiliation. Also the humility of mouth is in four things: in temperate speech; in humility of speech; and when he confesseth with his own mouth that he is such as he thinketh that he is in his heart; another is, when he praiseth the bounte [goodness] of another man and nothing thereof diminisheth. Humility eke in works is in four manners: the first is, when he putteth other men before him; the second is, to choose the lowest place of all; the third is, gladly to assent to good counsel; the fourth is, to stand gladly by the award [judgment] of his sovereign, or of him that is higher in degree: certain this is a great work of humility.

[The Parson proceeds to treat of the other cardinal sins, and their remedies: (2.) Envy, with its remedy, the love of God principally and of our neighbours as ourselves: (3.) Anger, with all its fruits in revenge, rancour, hate, discord, manslaughter, blasphemy, swearing, falsehood, flattery, chiding and reproving, scorning, treachery, sowing of strife, doubleness of tongue, betraying of counsel to a man's disgrace, menacing, idle words, jangling, japery or buffoonery, &c. - and its remedy in the virtues called mansuetude, debonairte, or gentleness, and patience or sufferance: (4.) Sloth, or 'Accidie,' which comes after the sin of Anger, because Envy blinds the eyes of a man, and Anger troubleth a man, and Sloth maketh him heavy, thoughtful, and peevish. It is opposed to every estate of man - as unfallen, and held to work in praising and adoring God; as sinful, and held to labour in praying for deliverance from sin; and as in the state of grace, and held to works of penitence. It resembles the heavy and sluggish condition of those in hell; it will suffer no hardness and no penance; it prevents any

beginning of good works; it causes despair of God's mercy, which is the sin against the Holy Ghost; it induces somnolency and neglect of communion in prayer with God; and it breeds negligence or recklessness, that cares for nothing, and is the nurse of all mischiefs, if ignorance is their mother. Against Sloth, and these and other branches and fruits of it, the remedy lies in the virtue of fortitude or strength, in its various species of magnanimity or great courage; faith and hope in God and his saints; surety or sickness, when a man fears nothing that can oppose the good works he has under taken; magnificence, when he carries out great works of goodness begun; constancy or stableness of heart; and other incentives to energy and laborious service: (5.) Avarice, or Covetousness, which is the root of all harms, since its votaries are idolaters, oppressors and enslavers of men, deceivers of their equals in business, simoniacs, gamblers, liars, thieves, false swearers, blasphemers, murderers, and sacrilegious. Its remedy lies in compassion and pity largely exercised, and in reasonable liberality - for those who spend on 'fool-largesse,' or ostentation of worldly estate and luxury, shall receive the malison [condemnation] that Christ shall give at the day of doom to them that shall be damned: (6.) Gluttony; - of which the Parson treats so briefly that the chapter may be given in full: - ]

After Avarice cometh Gluttony, which is express against the commandment of God. Gluttony is unmeasurable appetite to eat or to drink; or else to do in aught to the unmeasurable appetite and disordered covetousness [craving] to eat or drink. This sin corrupted all this world, as is well shewed in the sin of Adam and of Eve. Look also what saith Saint Paul of gluttony: 'Many,' saith he, 'go, of which I have oft said to you, and now I say it weeping, that they be enemies of the cross of Christ, of which the end is death, and of which their womb [stomach] is their God and their glory;' in confusion of them that so savour [take delight in] earthly things. He that is usant [accustomed, addicted] to this sin of gluttony, he may no sin withstand, he must be in servage [bondage] of all vices, for it is the devil's hoard, [lair, lurking-place] where he hideth him in and resteth. This sin hath many species. The first is drunkenness, that is the horrible sepulture of man's reason: and therefore when a man is drunken, he hath lost his reason; and this is deadly sin. But soothly, when that a man is not wont to strong drink, and

peradventure knoweth not the strength of the drink, or hath feebleness in his head, or hath travailed [laboured], through which he drinketh the more, all [although] be he suddenly caught with drink, it is no deadly sin, but venial. The second species of gluttony is, that the spirit of a man waxeth all troubled for drunkenness, and bereaveth a man the discretion of his wit. The third species of gluttony is, when a man devoureth his meat, and hath no rightful manner of eating. The fourth is, when, through the great abundance of his meat, the humours of his body be distempered. The fifth is, forgetfulness by too much drinking, for which a man sometimes forgetteth by the morrow what he did at eve. In other manner be distinct the species of gluttony, after Saint Gregory. The first is, for to eat or drink before time. The second is, when a man getteth him too delicate meat or drink. The third is, when men take too much over measure [immoderately]. The fourth is curiosity [nicety] with great intent [application, pains] to make and apparel [prepare] his meat. The fifth is, for to eat too greedily. These be the five fingers of the devil's hand, by which he draweth folk to the sin.

Against gluttony the remedy is abstinence, as saith Galen; but that I hold not meritorious, if he do it only for the health of his body. Saint Augustine will that abstinence be done for virtue, and with patience. Abstinence, saith he, is little worth, but if [unless] a man have good will thereto, and but it be enforced by patience and by charity, and that men do it for God's sake, and in hope to have the bliss in heaven. The fellows of abstinence be temperance, that holdeth the mean in all things; also shame, that escheweth all dishonesty [indecenty, impropriety], sufficiency, that seeketh no rich meats nor drinks, nor doth no force of [sets no value on] no outrageous apparelling of meat; measure [moderation] also, that restraineth by reason the unmeasurable appetite of eating; soberness also, that restraineth the outrage of drink; sparing also, that restraineth the delicate ease to sit long at meat, wherefore some folk stand of their own will to eat, because they will eat at less leisure.

[At great length the Parson then points out the many varieties of the sin of (7.) Lechery, and its remedy in chastity and continence, alike in marriage and in widowhood; also in the abstaining from all such indulgences of eating, drinking, and sleeping as inflame the passions, and from the company of all

who may tempt to the sin. Minute guidance is given as to the duty of confessing fully and faithfully the circumstances that attend and may aggravate this sin; and the Treatise then passes to the consideration of the conditions that are essential to a true and profitable confession of sin in general. First, it must be in sorrowful bitterness of spirit; a condition that has five signs - shamefastness, humility in heart and outward sign, weeping with the bodily eyes or in the heart, disregard of the shame that might curtail or garble confession, and obedience to the penance enjoined. Secondly, true confession must be promptly made, for dread of death, of increase of sinfulness, of forgetfulness of what should be confessed, of Christ's refusal to hear if it be put off to the last day of life; and this condition has four terms; that confession be well pondered beforehand, that the man confessing have comprehended in his mind the number and greatness of his sins and how long he has lain in sin, that he be contrite for and eschew his sins, and that he fear and flee the occasions for that sin to which he is inclined. - What follows under this head is of some interest for the light which it throws on the rigorous government wielded by the Romish Church in those days -]

Also thou shalt shrive thee of all thy sins to one man, and not a parcel [portion] to one man, and a parcel to another; that is to understand, in intent to depart [divide] thy confession for shame or dread; for it is but strangling of thy soul. For certes Jesus Christ is entirely all good, in him is none imperfection, and therefore either he forgiveth all perfectly, or else never a deal [not at all]. I say not that if thou be assigned to thy penitencer &9; for a certain sin, that thou art bound to shew him all the remnant of thy sins, of which thou hast been shriven of thy curate, but if it like thee [unless thou be pleased] of thy humility; this is no departing [division] of shrift. And I say not, where I speak of division of confession, that if thou have license to shrive thee to a discreet and an honest priest, and where thee liketh, and by the license of thy curate, that thou mayest not well shrive thee to him of all thy sins: but let no blot be behind, let no sin be untold as far as thou hast remembrance. And when thou shalt be shriven of thy curate, tell him eke all the sins that thou hast done since thou wert last shriven. This is no wicked intent of division of shrift. Also, very shrift [true confession] asketh certain conditions. First, that thou shrive thee by thy



free will, not constrained, nor for shame of folk, nor for malady [sickness], or such things: for it is reason, that he that trespasseth by his free will, that by his free will he confess his trespass; and that no other man tell his sin but himself; nor he shall not nay nor deny his sin, nor wrath him against the priest for admonishing him to leave his sin. The second condition is, that thy shrift be lawful, that is to say, that thou that shrivest thee, and eke the priest that heareth thy confession, be verily in the faith of Holy Church, and that a man be not despaired of the mercy of Jesus Christ, as Cain and Judas were. And eke a man must accuse himself of his own trespass, and not another: but he shall blame and wite [accuse] himself of his own malice and of his sin, and none other: but nevertheless, if that another man be occasion or else enticer of his sin, or the estate of the person be such by which his sin is aggravated, or else that he may not plainly shrive him but [unless] he tell the person with which he hath sinned, then may he tell, so that his intent be not to backbite the person, but only to declare his confession. Thou shalt not eke make no leasings [falsehoods] in thy confession for humility, peradventure, to say that thou hast committed and done such sins of which that thou wert never guilty. For Saint Augustine saith, 'If that thou, because of humility, makest a leasing on thyself, though thou were not in sin before, yet art thou then in sin through thy leasing.' Thou must also shew thy sin by thine own proper mouth, but [unless] thou be dumb, and not by letter; for thou that hast done the sin, thou shalt have the shame of the confession. Thou shalt not paint thy confession with fair and subtle words, to cover the more thy sin; for then beguilest thou thyself, and not the priest; thou must tell it plainly, be it never so foul nor so horrible. Thou shalt eke shrive thee to a priest that is discreet to counsel thee; and eke thou shalt not shrive thee for vain-glory, nor for hypocrisy, nor for no cause but only for the doubt [fear] of Jesus' Christ and the health of thy soul. Thou shalt not run to the priest all suddenly, to tell him lightly thy sin, as who telleth a jape [jest] or a tale, but advisedly and with good devotion; and generally shrive thee oft; if thou oft fall, oft arise by confession. And though thou shrive thee oftener than once of sin of which thou hast been shriven, it is more merit; and, as saith Saint Augustine, thou shalt have the more lightly [easily] release and grace of God, both of sin and of pain. And certes, once a year at the least way, it is lawful to be houseled, &10&gt; for soothly once a year all

things in the earth renouelen [renew themselves].

[Here ends the Second Part of the Treatise; the Third Part, which contains the practical application of the whole, follows entire, along with the remarkable 'Prayer of Chaucer,' as it stands in the Harleian Manuscript:-]

De Tertia Parte Poenitentiae. [Of the third part of penitence]

Now have I told you of very [true] confession, that is the second part of penitence: The third part of penitence is satisfaction, and that standeth generally in almsdeed and bodily pain. Now be there three manner of almsdeed: contrition of heart, where a man offereth himself to God; the second is, to have pity of the default of his neighbour; the third is, in giving of good counsel and comfort, ghostly and bodily, where men have need, and namely [specially] sustenance of man's food. And take keep [heed] that a man hath need of these things generally; he hath need of food, of clothing, and of herberow [lodging], he hath need of charitable counsel and visiting in prison and malady, and sepulture of his dead body. And if thou mayest not visit the needful with thy person, visit them by thy message and by thy gifts. These be generally alms or works of charity of them that have temporal riches or discretion in counselling. Of these works shalt thou hear at the day of doom. This alms shouldest thou do of thine own proper things, and hastily [promptly], and privily [secretly] if thou mayest; but nevertheless, if thou mayest not do it privily, thou shalt not forbear to do alms, though men see it, so that it be not done for thank of the world, but only for thank of Jesus Christ. For, as witnesseth Saint Matthew, chap. v., 'A city may not be hid that is set on a mountain, nor men light not a lantern and put it under a bushel, but men set it on a candlestick, to light the men in the house; right so shall your light lighten before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father that is in heaven.'

Now as to speak of bodily pain, it is in prayer, in wakings, [watchings] in fastings, and in virtuous teachings. Of orisons ye shall understand, that orisons or prayers is to say a piteous will of heart, that redresseth it in God, and expresseth it by word outward, to remove harms, and to have things spiritual and

durable, and sometimes temporal things. Of which orisons, certes in the orison of the Pater noster hath our Lord Jesus Christ enclosed most things. Certes, it is privileged of three things in its dignity, for which it is more digne [worthy] than any other prayer: for Jesus Christ himself made it: and it is short, for [in order] it should be coude the more lightly, [be more easily conned or learned] and to withhold [retain] it the more easy in heart, and help himself the oftener with this orison; and for a man should be the less weary to say it; and for a man may not excuse him to learn it, it is so short and so easy: and for it comprehendeth in itself all good prayers. The exposition of this holy prayer, that is so excellent and so digne, I betake [commit] to these masters of theology; save thus much will I say, when thou prayest that God should forgive thee thy guilts, as thou forgivest them that they guilt to thee, be full well ware that thou be not out of charity. This holy orison aminisheth [lesseneth] eke venial sin, and therefore it appertaineth specially to penitence. This prayer must be truly said, and in very faith, and that men pray to God ordinally, discreetly, and devoutly; and always a man shall put his will to be subject to the will of God. This orison must eke be said with great humbleness and full pure, and honestly, and not to the annoyance of any man or woman. It must eke be continued with the works of charity. It availeth against the vices of the soul; for, assaith Saint Jerome, by fasting be saved the vices of the flesh, and by prayer the vices of the soul

After this thou shalt understand, that bodily pain stands in waking [watching]. For Jesus Christ saith 'Wake and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' Ye shall understand also, that fasting stands in three things: in forbearing of bodily meat and drink, and in forbearing of worldly jollity, and in forbearing of deadly sin; this is to say, that a man shall keep him from deadly sin in all that he may. And thou shalt understand eke, that God ordained fasting; and to fasting appertain four things: largeness [generosity] to poor folk; gladness of heart spiritual; not to be angry nor annoyed nor grudge [murmur] for he fasteth; and also reasonable hour for to eat by measure; that is to say, a man should not eat in untyme [out of time], nor sit the longer at his meal for [because] he fasteth. Then shalt thou understand, that bodily pain standeth in discipline, or teaching, by word, or by writing, or by ensample. Also in wearing of hairs [haircloth] or

of stamin [coarse hempen cloth], or of habergeons [mail-shirts] &11&gt; on their naked flesh for Christ's sake; but ware thee well that such manner penance of thy flesh make not thine heart bitter or angry, nor annoyed of thyself; for better is to cast away thine hair than to cast away the sweetness of our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore saith Saint Paul, 'Clothe you, as they that be chosen of God in heart, of misericorde [with compassion], debonaire [gentleness], sufferance [patience], and such manner of clothing,' of which Jesus Christ is more apaid [better pleased] than of hairs or of hauberks. Then is discipline eke in knocking of thy breast, in scourging with yards [rods], in kneeling, in tribulations, in suffering patiently wrongs that be done to him, and eke in patient sufferance of maladies, or losing of worldly catel [chattels], or of wife, or of child, or of other friends.

Then shalt thou understand which things disturb penance, and this is in four things; that is dread, shame, hope, and wanhope, that is, desperation. And for to speak first of dread, for which he weeneth that he may suffer no penance, thereagainst is remedy for to think that bodily penance is but short and little at the regard of [in comparison with] the pain of hell, that is so cruel and so long, that it lasteth without end. Now against the shame that a man hath to shrive him, and namely [specially] these hypocrites, that would be holden so perfect, that they have no need to shrive them; against that shame should a man think, that by way of reason he that hath not been ashamed to do foul things, certes he ought not to be ashamed to do fair things, and that is confession. A man should eke think, that God seeth and knoweth all thy thoughts, and all thy works; to him may nothing be hid nor covered. Men should eke remember them of the shame that is to come at the day of doom, to them that be not penitent and shriven in this present life; for all the creatures in heaven, and in earth, and in hell, shall see apertly [openly] all that he hideth in this world.

Now for to speak of them that be so negligent and slow to shrive them; that stands in two manners. The one is, that he hopeth to live long, and to purchase [acquire] much riches for his delight, and then he will shrive him: and, as he sayeth, he may, as him seemeth, timely enough come to shrift: another is, the surquedrie [presumption &12&gt;] that he hath in Christ's

mercy. Against the first vice, he shall think that our life is in no sickness, [security] and eke that all the riches in this world be in adventure, and pass as a shadow on the wall; and, as saith St Gregory, that it appertaineth to the great righteousness of God, that never shall the pain stint [cease] of them, that never would withdraw them from sin, their thanks [with their goodwill], but aye continue in sin; for that perpetual will to do sin shall they have perpetual pain. Wanhope [despair] is in two manners [of two kinds]. The first wanhope is, in the mercy of God: the other is, that they think they might not long persevere in goodness. The first wanhope cometh of that he deemeth that he sinned so highly and so oft, and so long hath lain in sin, that he shall not be saved. Certes against that cursed wanhope should he think, that the passion of Jesus Christ is more strong for to unbind, than sin is strong for to bind. Against the second wanhope he shall think, that as oft as he falleth, he may arise again by penitence; and though he never so long hath lain in sin, the mercy of Christ is always ready to receive him to mercy. Against the wanhope that he thinketh he should not long persevere in goodness, he shall think that the feebleness of the devil may nothing do, but [unless] men will suffer him; and eke he shall have strength of the help of God, and of all Holy Church, and of the protection of angels, if him list.

Then shall men understand, what is the fruit of penance; and after the word of Jesus Christ, it is the endless bliss of heaven, where joy hath no contrariety of woe nor of penance nor grievance; there all harms be passed of this present life; there as is the sickness [security] from the pain of hell; there as is the blissful company, that rejoyce them evermore each of the other's joy; there as the body of man, that whilom was foul and dark, is more clear than the sun; there as the body of man that whilom was sick and frail, feeble and mortal, is immortal, and so strong and so whole, that there may nothing apair [impair, injure] it; there is neither hunger, nor thirst, nor cold, but every soul replenished with the sight of the perfect knowing of God. This blissful regne [kingdom] may men purchase by poverty spiritual, and the glory by lowliness, the plenty of joy by hunger and thirst, the rest by travail, and the life by death and mortification of sin; to which life He us bring, that bought us with his precious blood! Amen.





Thou maid and mother, daughter of thy Son,  
Thou well of mercy, sinful soules' cure,  
In whom that God of bounte chose to won;\* \*dwell  
Thou humble and high o'er every creature,  
Thou nobilest, \*so far forth our nature,\* \*as far as our nature admits\*  
That no disdain the Maker had of kind,\* \*nature  
His Son in blood and flesh to clothe and wind.\* \*wrap

Within the cloister of thy blissful sides  
Took manne's shape th' eternal love and peace,  
That of \*the trine compass\* Lord and guide is \*the trinity\*  
Whom earth, and sea, and heav'n, \*out of release,\* \*unceasingly  
\*Aye hery;\* and thou, Virgin wemmeless,\* \*forever praise\* \*immaculate  
Bare of thy body, and dweltest maiden pure,  
The Creator of every creature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence &4>  
With mercy, goodness, and with such pity,  
That thou, that art the sun of excellence,  
Not only helpest them that pray to thee,  
But oftentime, of thy benignity,  
Full freely, ere that men thine help beseech,  
Thou go'st before, and art their lives' leech.\* \*healer, saviour.

Now help, thou meek and blissful faire maid,  
Me, flemed\* wretch, in this desert of gall; \*banished, outcast  
Think on the woman Cananee that said  
That whelpes eat some of the crumbes all  
That from their Lorde's table be y-fall;&5>  
And though that I, unworthy son of Eve,&6>  
Be sinful, yet accepte my believe.\* \*faith

And, for that faith is dead withoute werkes,  
For to worke give me wit and space,  
That I be \*quit from thennes that most derk is;\* \*freed from the most  
O thou, that art so fair and full of grace, dark place (Hell)\*  
Be thou mine advocate in that high place,  
Where as withouten end is sung Osanne,  
Thou Christe's mother, daughter dear of Anne.

And of thy light my soul in prison light,



That troubled is by the contagion  
Of my body, and also by the weight  
Of earthly lust and false affection;  
O hav'n of refuge, O salvation  
Of them that be in sorrow and distress,  
Now help, for to my work I will me dress.

Yet pray I you, that reade what I write, &lt;6&gt;  
Forgive me that I do no diligence  
This ilke\* story subtilly t' indite. \*same  
For both have I the wordes and sentence  
Of him that at the sainte's reverence  
The story wrote, and follow her legend;  
And pray you that you will my work amend.

First will I you the name of Saint Cecilie  
Expound, as men may in her story see.  
It is to say in English, Heaven's lily,&lt;7&gt;  
For pure chasteness of virginity;  
Or, for she whiteness had of honesty,\* \*purity  
And green of conscience, and of good fame  
The sweete savour, Lilie was her name.

Or Cecilie is to say, the way of blind;&lt;7&gt;  
For she example was by good teaching;  
Or else Cecilie, as I written find,  
Is joined by a manner conjoining  
Of heaven and Lia, &lt;7&gt; and herein figuring  
The heaven is set for thought of holiness,  
And Lia for her lasting business.

Cecilie may eke be said in this mannere,  
Wanting of blindness, for her greate light  
Of sapience, and for her thewes\* clear. \*qualities  
Or elles, lo, this maiden's name bright  
Of heaven and Leos &lt;7&gt; comes, for which by right  
Men might her well the heaven of people call,  
Example of good and wise workes all;

For Leos people in English is to say;  
And right as men may in the heaven see  
The sun and moon, and starres every way,

Right so men ghostly,\* in this maiden free,                   \*spiritually  
Sawen of faith the magnanimity,  
And eke the clearness whole of sapience,  
And sundry workes bright of excellence.

And right so as these philosophers write,  
That heav'n is swift and round, and eke burning,  
Right so was faire Cecilie the white  
Full swift and busy in every good working,  
And round and whole in good persevering, &8&gt;  
And burning ever in charity full bright;  
Now have I you declared \*what she hight.\*                   \*why she had her name\*

This maiden bright Cecile, as her life saith,  
Was come of Romans, and of noble kind,  
And from her cradle foster'd in the faith  
Of Christ, and bare his Gospel in her mind:  
She never ceased, as I written find,  
Of her prayere, and God to love and dread,  
Beseeching him to keep her maidenhead.

And when this maiden should unto a man  
Y-wedded be, that was full young of age,  
Which that y-called was Valerian,  
And come was the day of marriage,  
She, full devout and humble in her corage,\*                   \*heart  
Under her robe of gold, that sat full fair,  
Had next her flesh y-clad her in an hair.\*                   \*garment of hair-cloth

And while the organs made melody,  
To God alone thus in her heart sang she;  
'O Lord, my soul and eke my body gie\*                   \*guide  
Unwemmed,\* lest that I confounded be.'                   \*unblemished  
And, for his love that died upon the tree,  
Every second or third day she fast',  
Aye bidding\* in her orisons full fast.                   \*praying

The night came, and to bedde must she gon  
With her husband, as it is the mannere;  
And privily she said to him anon;  
'O sweet and well-beloved spouse dear,  
There is a counsel,\* an'\* ye will it hear,                   \*secret \*\*if

Which that right fain I would unto you say,  
So that ye swear ye will it not bewray.'\* \*betray

Valerian gan fast unto her swear  
That for no case nor thing that mighte be,  
He never should to none bewrayen her;  
And then at erst\* thus to him saide she; \*for the first time  
'I have an angel which that loveth me,  
That with great love, whether I wake or sleep,  
Is ready aye my body for to keep;

'And if that he may feelen, \*out of dread,\* \*without doubt\*  
That ye me touch or love in villainy,  
He right anon will slay you with the deed,  
And in your youthe thus ye shoulde die.  
And if that ye in cleane love me gie,\* \*guide  
He will you love as me, for your cleanness,  
And shew to you his joy and his brightness.'

Valerian, corrected as God wo'ld,  
Answer'd again, 'If I shall truste thee,  
Let me that angel see, and him behold;  
And if that it a very angel be,  
Then will I do as thou hast prayed me;  
And if thou love another man, forsooth  
Right with this sword then will I slay you both.'

Cecile answer'd anon right in this wise;  
'If that you list, the angel shall ye see,  
So that ye trow\* Of Christ, and you baptise; \*know  
Go forth to Via Appia,' quoth she,  
That from this towne stands but miles three,  
And to the poore folkes that there dwell  
Say them right thus, as that I shall you tell,

'Tell them, that I, Cecile, you to them sent  
To shewe you the good Urban the old,  
For secret needes,\* and for good intent; \*business  
And when that ye Saint Urban have behold,  
Tell him the wordes which I to you told  
And when that he hath purged you from sin,  
Then shall ye see that angel ere ye twin\* \*depart

Valerian is to the place gone;  
And, right as he was taught by her learning  
He found this holy old Urban anon  
Among the saintes' burials louting;\*            \*lying concealed &lt;9&gt;  
And he anon, withoute tarrying,  
Did his message, and when that he it told,  
Urban for joy his handes gan uphold.

The teares from his eyen let he fall;  
'Almighty Lord, O Jesus Christ,'  
Quoth he, 'Sower of chaste counsel, herd\* of us all;            \*shepherd  
The fruit of thilke\* seed of chastity            \*that  
That thou hast sown in Cecile, take to thee  
Lo, like a busy bee, withoute guile,  
Thee serveth aye thine owen thrall\* Cicile,            \*servant

'For thilke spouse, that she took \*but now,\*            \*lately\*  
Full like a fierce lion, she sendeth here,  
As meek as e'er was any lamb to owe.'  
And with that word anon there gan appear  
An old man, clad in white clothes clear,  
That had a book with letters of gold in hand,  
And gan before Valerian to stand.

Valerian, as dead, fell down for dread,  
When he him saw; and he up hent\* him tho,\*\*            \*took \*\*there  
And on his book right thus he gan to read;  
'One Lord, one faith, one God withoute mo',  
One Christendom, one Father of all also,  
Aboven all, and over all everywhere.'  
These wordes all with gold y-written were.

When this was read, then said this olde man,  
'Believ'st thou this or no? say yea or nay.'  
'I believe all this,' quoth Valerian,  
'For soother\* thing than this, I dare well say,            \*truer  
Under the Heaven no wight thinke may.'  
Then vanish'd the old man, he wist not where  
And Pope Urban him christened right there.

Valerian went home, and found Cecilie



And, as thou smellst them through my prayere,  
So shalt thou see them, leve\* brother dear,                   \*beloved  
If it so be thou wilt withoute sloth  
Believe aright, and know the very troth. '

Tiburce answered, 'Say'st thou this to me  
In soothness, or in dreame hear I this?'  
'In dreames,' quoth Valorian, 'have we be  
Unto this time, brother mine, y-wis  
But now \*at erst\* in truth our dwelling is.'           \*for the first time\*  
How know'st thou this,' quoth Tiburce; 'in what wise?'  
Quoth Valerian, 'That shall I thee devise\*                   \*describe

'The angel of God hath me the truth y-taught,  
Which thou shalt see, if that thou wilt reny\*           \*renounce  
The idols, and be clean, and elles nought.'  
[And of the miracle of these crownes tway  
Saint Ambrose in his preface list to say;  
Solemnely this noble doctor dear  
Commendeth it, and saith in this mannere

'The palm of martyrdom for to receive,  
Saint Cecilie, full filled of God's gift,  
The world and eke her chamber gan to weive;\*                   \*forsake  
Witness Tiburce's and Cecilie's shrift,\*                   \*confession  
To which God of his bounty woulde shift  
Corones two, of flowers well smelling,  
And made his angel them the crownes bring.

'The maid hath brought these men to bliss above;  
The world hath wist what it is worth, certain,  
Devotion of chastity to love.'] &lt;10&gt;  
Then showed him Cecilie all open and plain,  
That idols all are but a thing in vain,  
For they be dumb, and thereto\* they be deave;\*\*           \*therefore \*\*deaf  
And charged him his idols for to leave.

'Whoso that troweth\* not this, a beast he is,'           \*believeth  
Quoth this Tiburce, 'if that I shall not lie.'  
And she gan kiss his breast when she heard this,  
And was full glad he could the truth espy:  
'This day I take thee for mine ally.\*                   \*chosen friend



\*\*doubt

By word and by miracle, high God's Son,  
When he was in this world, declared here.  
That there is other life where men may won.\*  
To whom answer'd Tiburce, 'O sister dear,  
Saidest thou not right now in this mannere,  
There was but one God, Lord in soothfastness,\*  
And now of three how may'st thou bear witness?'

\*dwell

\*truth

'That shall I tell,' quoth she, 'ere that I go.  
Right as a man hath sapiences\* three,  
Memory, engine,\* and intellect also,  
So in one being of divinity  
Three persones there maye right well be.'  
Then gan she him full busily to preach  
Of Christe's coming, and his paines teach,

\*mental faculties

\*wit &lt;11&gt;

And many pointes of his passion;  
How Godde's Son in this world was withhold\*  
To do mankinde plein\* remission,  
That was y-bound in sin and cares cold.\*  
All this thing she unto Tiburce told,  
And after that Tiburce, in good intent,  
With Valerian to Pope Urban he went.

\*employed

\*full

\*wretched &lt;12&gt;

That thanked God, and with glad heart and light  
He christen'd him, and made him in that place  
Perfect in his learning, and Godde's knight.  
And after this Tiburce got such grace,  
That every day he saw in time and space  
Th' angel of God, and every manner boon\*  
That be God asked, it was sped\* full anon.

\*request, favour

\*granted, successful

It were full hard by order for to sayn  
How many wonders Jesus for them wrought,  
But at the last, to telle short and plain,  
The sergeants of the town of Rome them sought,  
And them before Almach the Prefect brought,  
Which them apposed,\* and knew all their intent,  
And to th'image of Jupiter them sent.

\*questioned

And said, 'Whoso will not do sacrifice,



Swap\* off his head, this is my sentence here.' \*strike  
Anon these martyrs, \*that I you devise,\* \*of whom I tell you\*  
One Maximus, that was an officere  
Of the prefect's, and his corniculere &lt;13&gt;  
Them hent,\* and when he forth the saintes lad,\*\* \*seized \*\*led  
Himself he wept for pity that he had.

When Maximus had heard the saintes lore,\* \*doctrine, teaching  
He got him of the tormentores\* leave, \*torturers  
And led them to his house withoute more;  
And with their preaching, ere that it were eve,  
They gonnen\* from the tormentors to reave,\*\* \*began \*\*wrest, root out  
And from Maxim', and from his folk each one,  
The false faith, to trow\* in God alone. \*believe

Cecilia came, when it was waxen night,  
With priestes, that them christen'd \*all in fere;\* \*in a company\*  
And afterward, when day was waxen light,  
Cecile them said with a full steadfast cheer,\* \*mien  
'Now, Christe's owen knightes lefe\* and dear, \*beloved  
Cast all away the workes of darkness,  
And arme you in armour of brightness.

Ye have forsooth y-done a great battaile,  
Your course is done, your faith have ye conserved; &lt;14&gt;  
O to the crown of life that may not fail;  
The rightful Judge, which that ye have served  
Shall give it you, as ye have it deserved.'  
And when this thing was said, as I devise,\* relate  
Men led them forth to do the sacrifice.

But when they were unto the place brought  
To telle shortly the conclusion,  
They would incense nor sacrifice right nought  
But on their knees they sette them adown,  
With humble heart and sad\* devotion, \*steadfast  
And loste both their heades in the place;  
Their soules wente to the King of grace.

This Maximus, that saw this thing betide,  
With piteous teares told it anon right,  
That he their soules saw to heaven glide

With angels, full of clearness and of light  
Andt with his word converted many a wight.  
For which Almachius \*did him to-beat\* \*see note &15&gt;\*  
With whip of lead, till he his life gan lete.\* \*quit

Cecile him took, and buried him anon  
By Tiburce and Valerian softely,  
Within their burying-place, under the stone.  
And after this Almachius hastily  
Bade his ministers fetchen openly  
Cecile, so that she might in his presence  
Do sacrifice, and Jupiter incense.\* \*burn incense to

But they, converted at her wise lore,\* \*teaching  
Wepte full sore, and gave full credence  
Unto her word, and cried more and more;  
'Christ, Godde's Son, withoute difference,  
Is very God, this is all our sentence,\* \*opinion  
That hath so good a servant him to serve  
Thus with one voice we trowe,\* though we sterve.\*\* \*believe \*\*die

Almachius, that heard of this doing,  
Bade fetch Cecilie, that he might her see;  
And alderfirst,\* lo, this was his asking; \*first of all  
'What manner woman arte thou?' quoth he,  
'I am a gentle woman born,' quoth she.  
'I aske thee,' quoth he,'though it thee grieve,  
Of thy religion and of thy believe.'

'Ye have begun your question foolishly,'  
Quoth she, 'that wouldest two answers conclude  
In one demand? ye aske lewedly.\* \*ignorantly  
Almach answer'd to that similitude,  
'Of whence comes thine answering so rude?'  
'Of whence?' quoth she, when that she was freined,\* \*asked  
'Of conscience, and of good faith unfeigned.'

Almachius saide; 'Takest thou no heed  
Of my power?' and she him answer'd this;  
'Your might,' quoth she, 'full little is to dread;  
For every mortal manne's power is  
But like a bladder full of wind, y-wis;\* \*certainly

For with a needle's point, when it is blow',  
May all the boast of it be laid full low.'

'Full wrongfully begunnest thou,' quoth he,  
'And yet in wrong is thy perseverance.  
Know'st thou not how our mighty princes free  
Have thus commanded and made ordinance,  
That every Christian wight shall have penance,\*  
But if that he his Christendom withsay,\*  
And go all quit, if he will it renay?'

\*punishment  
\*deny  
\*renounce

'Your princes erren, as your nobley\* doth,'  
Quoth then Cecile, 'and with a \*wood sentence\*  
Ye make us guilty, and it is not sooth:\*  
For ye that knowe well our innocence,  
Forasmuch as we do aye reverence  
To Christ, and for we bear a Christian name,  
Ye put on us a crime and eke a blame.

\*nobility  
\*mad judgment\*  
\*true

'But we that knowe thilke name so  
For virtuous, we may it not withsay.'  
Almach answered, 'Choose one of these two,  
Do sacrifice, or Christendom renay,  
That thou may'st now escape by that way.'  
At which the holy blissful faire maid  
Gan for to laugh, and to the judge said;

'O judge, \*confused in thy nicety,\*      \*confounded in thy folly\*  
Wouldest thou that I reny innocence?  
To make me a wicked wight,' quoth she,  
'Lo, he dissimuleth\* here in audience;      \*dissembles  
He stareth and woodeth\* in his advertence.'\*\* \*grows furious \*\*thought  
To whom Almachius said, 'Unsely\* wretch,      \*unhappy  
Knowest thou not how far my might may stretch?

'Have not our mighty princes to me given  
Yea bothe power and eke authority  
To make folk to dien or to liven?  
Why speakest thou so proudly then to me?'  
'I speake not but steadfastly,' quoth she,  
Not proudly, for I say, as for my side,  
We hate deadly\* thilke vice of pride.

\*mortally

'And, if thou dreade not a sooth\* to hear,                   \*truth  
Then will I shew all openly by right,  
That thou hast made a full great leasing\* here.                \*falsehood  
Thou say'st thy princes have thee given might  
Both for to slay and for to quick\* a wight, -                \*give life to  
Thou that may'st not but only life bereave;  
Thou hast none other power nor no leave.

'But thou may'st say, thy princes have thee maked  
Minister of death; for if thou speak of mo',  
Thou liest; for thy power is full naked.'  
'Do away thy boldness,' said Almachius tho,\*                \*then  
'And sacrifice to our gods, ere thou go.  
I recke not what wrong that thou me proffer,  
For I can suffer it as a philosopher.

'But those wronges may I not endure,  
That thou speak'st of our goddes here,' quoth he.  
Cecile answer'd, 'O nice\* creature,                                \*foolish  
Thou saidest no word, since thou spake to me,  
That I knew not therewith thy nicety,\*                        \*folly  
And that thou wert in \*every manner wise\*                \*every sort of way\*  
A lewed\* officer, a vain justice.                                \*ignorant

'There lacketh nothing to thine outward eyen  
That thou art blind; for thing that we see all  
That it is stone, that men may well espyen,  
That ilke\* stone a god thou wilt it call.                    \*very, selfsame  
I rede\* thee let thine hand upon it fall,                        \*advise  
And taste\* it well, and stone thou shalt it find;             \*examine, test  
Since that thou see'st not with thine eyen blind.

'It is a shame that the people shall  
So scorne thee, and laugh at thy folly;  
For commonly men \*wot it well over all,\*                \*know it everywhere\*  
That mighty God is in his heaven high;  
And these images, well may'st thou espy,  
To thee nor to themselves may not profite,  
For in effect they be not worth a mite.'

These wordes and such others saide she,

And he wax'd wroth, and bade men should her lead  
Home to her house; 'And in her house,' quoth he,  
'Burn her right in a bath, with flames red.'  
And as he bade, right so was done the deed;  
For in a bath they gan her faste shetten,\*        \*shut, confine  
And night and day great fire they under betten.\*        \*kindled, applied

The longe night, and eke a day also,  
For all the fire, and eke the bathe's heat,  
She sat all cold, and felt of it no woe,  
It made her not one droppe for to sweat;  
But in that bath her life she must lete.\*        \*leave  
For he, Almachius, with full wick' intent,  
To slay her in the bath his sonde\* sent.        \*message, order

Three strokes in the neck he smote her tho,\*        \*there  
The tormentor,\* but for no manner chance        \*executioner  
He might not smite her faire neck in two:  
And, for there was that time an ordinance  
That no man should do man such penance,\*        \*severity, torture  
The fourthe stroke to smite, soft or sore,  
This tormentor he durste do no more;

But half dead, with her necke carven\* there        \*gashed  
He let her lie, and on his way is went.  
The Christian folk, which that about her were,  
With sheetes have the blood full fair y-hent;        \*taken up  
Three dayes lived she in this torment,  
And never ceased them the faith to teach,  
That she had foster'd them, she gan to preach.

And them she gave her mebles\* and her thing,        \*goods  
And to the Pope Urban betook\* them tho;\*\*        \*commended \*\*then  
And said, 'I aske this of heaven's king,  
To have respite three dayes and no mo',  
To recommend to you, ere that I go,  
These soules, lo; and that \*I might do wurch\*        \*cause to be made\*  
Here of mine house perpetually a church.'

Saint Urban, with his deacons, privily  
The body fetch'd, and buried it by night  
Among his other saintes honestly;

Her house the church of Saint Cecillie hight;\*  
Saint Urban hallow'd it, as he well might;  
In which unto this day, in noble wise,  
Men do to Christ and to his saint service.

\*is called

Geoffrey Chaucer

# The Squire's Tale

'HEY! Godde's mercy!' said our Hoste tho,\*  
'Now such a wife I pray God keep me fro'.  
Lo, suche sleightes and subtilities  
In women be; for aye as busy as bees  
Are they us silly men for to deceive,  
And from the soothe\* will they ever weive,\*\* \*truth \*\*swerve, depart  
As this Merchante's tale it proveth well.  
But natheless, as true as any steel,  
I have a wife, though that she poore be;  
But of her tongue a labbing\* shrew is she; \*chattering  
And yet\* she hath a heap of vices mo'. \*moreover  
Thereof \*no force;\* let all such thinges go. \*no matter\*  
But wit\* ye what? in counsel\*\* be it said, \*know \*\*secret, confidence  
Me rueth sore I am unto her tied;  
For, an'\* I shoulde reckon every vice \*if  
Which that she hath, y-wis\* I were too nice;\*\* \*certainly \*\*foolish  
And cause why, it should reported be  
And told her by some of this company  
(By whom, it needeth not for to declare,  
Since women connen utter such chaffare &lt;1&gt;),  
And eke my wit sufficeth not thereto  
To tellen all; wherefore my tale is do.\* \*done  
Squier, come near, if it your wille be,  
And say somewhat of love, for certes ye  
\*Conne thereon\* as much as any man.' \*know about it\*  
'Nay, Sir,' quoth he; 'but such thing as I can,  
With hearty will, - for I will not rebel  
Against your lust,\* - a tale will I tell. \*pleasure  
Have me excused if I speak amiss;  
My will is good; and lo, my tale is this.'

At Sarra, in the land of Tartary,  
There dwelt a king that warrayed\* Russie, &lt;2&gt; \*made war on  
Through which there died many a doughty man;  
This noble king was called Cambuscan,&lt;3&gt;  
Which in his time was of so great renown,  
That there was nowhere in no regioun  
So excellent a lord in alle thing:

Him lacked nought that longeth to a king,  
 As of the sect of which that he was born.  
 He kept his law to which he was y-sworn,  
 And thereto\* he was hardy, wise, and rich,      \*moreover, besides  
 And piteous and just, always y-lich;\*      \*alike, even-tempered  
 True of his word, benign and honourable;  
 \*Of his corage as any centre stable;\*      \*firm, immovable of spirit\*  
 Young, fresh, and strong, in armes desirous  
 As any bachelor of all his house.  
 A fair person he was, and fortunate,  
 And kept alway so well his royal estate,  
 That there was nowhere such another man.  
 This noble king, this Tartar Cambuscan,  
 Hadde two sons by Elfeta his wife,  
 Of which the eldest highte Algarsife,  
 The other was y-called Camballo.  
 A daughter had this worthy king also,  
 That youngest was, and highte Canace:  
 But for to telle you all her beauty,  
 It lies not in my tongue, nor my conning;\*      \*skill  
 I dare not undertake so high a thing:  
 Mine English eke is insufficient,  
 It muste be a rhetor\* excellent,      \*orator  
 \*That couth his colours longing for that art,\*      \* see &lt;4&gt; \*  
 If he should her describen any part;  
 I am none such, I must speak as I can.

And so befell, that when this Cambuscan  
 Had twenty winters borne his diadem,  
 As he was wont from year to year, I deem,  
 He let \*the feast of his nativity\*      \*his birthday party\*  
 \*Do crye,\* throughout Sarra his city,      \*be proclaimed\*  
 The last Idus of March, after the year.  
 Phoebus the sun full jolly was and clear,  
 For he was nigh his exaltation  
 In Marte's face, and in his mansion &lt;5&gt;  
 In Aries, the choleric hot sign:  
 Full lusty\* was the weather and benign;      \*pleasant  
 For which the fowls against the sunne sheen,\*      \*bright  
 What for the season and the younge green,  
 Full loude sange their affections:  
 Them seemed to have got protections





And after this, before the high board, by one word\*  
 He with a manly voice said his message,  
 After the form used in his language,  
 Without vice\* of syllable or letter. \*fault  
 And, for his tale shoulde seem the better,  
 Accordant to his worde's was his cheer,\* \*demeanour  
 As teacheth art of speech them that it lear.\* \*learn  
 Albeit that I cannot sound his style,  
 Nor cannot climb over so high a stile,  
 Yet say I this, as to \*commune intent,\* \*general sense or meaning\*  
 \*Thus much amounteth\* all that ever he meant, \*this is the sum of\*  
 If it so be that I have it in mind.  
 He said; 'The king of Araby and Ind,  
 My liege lord, on this solemne day  
 Saluteth you as he best can and may,  
 And sendeth you, in honour of your feast,  
 By me, that am all ready at your hest,\* \*command  
 This steed of brass, that easily and well  
 Can in the space of one day naturel  
 (This is to say, in four-and-twenty hours),  
 Whereso you list, in drought or else in show'rs,  
 Beare your body into every place  
 To which your hearte willeth for to pace,\* \*pass, go  
 Withoute wem\* of you, through foul or fair. \*hurt, injury  
 Or if you list to fly as high in air  
 As doth an eagle, when him list to soar,  
 This same steed shall bear you evermore  
 Withoute harm, till ye be where \*you lest\* \*it pleases you\*  
 (Though that ye sleepe on his back, or rest),  
 And turn again, with writhing\* of a pin. \*twisting  
 He that it wrought, he coude\* many a gin;\*\* \*knew \*\*contrivance &10&gt;  
 He waited\* in any a constellation, \*observed  
 Ere he had done this operation,  
 And knew full many a seal &11&gt; and many a bond  
 This mirror eke, that I have in mine hond,  
 Hath such a might, that men may in it see  
 When there shall fall any adversity  
 Unto your realm, or to yourself also,  
 And openly who is your friend or foe.  
 And over all this, if any lady bright  
 Hath set her heart on any manner wight,  
 If he be false, she shall his treason see,

His newe love, and all his subtlety,  
 So openly that there shall nothing hide.  
 Wherefore, against this lusty summer-tide,  
 This mirror, and this ring that ye may see,  
 He hath sent to my lady Canace,  
 Your excellent daughter that is here.  
 The virtue of this ring, if ye will hear,  
 Is this, that if her list it for to wear  
 Upon her thumb, or in her purse it bear,  
 There is no fowl that flyeth under heaven,  
 That she shall not well understand his steven,\*      \*speech, sound  
 And know his meaning openly and plain,  
 And answer him in his language again:  
 And every grass that groweth upon root  
 She shall eke know, to whom it will do boot,\*      \*remedy  
 All be his woundes ne'er so deep and wide.  
 This naked sword, that hangeth by my side,  
 Such virtue hath, that what man that it smite,  
 Throughout his armour it will carve and bite,  
 Were it as thick as is a branched oak:  
 And what man is y-wounded with the stroke  
 Shall ne'er be whole, till that you list, of grace,  
 To stroke him with the flat in thilke\* place      \*the same  
 Where he is hurt; this is as much to sayn,  
 Ye muste with the flatte sword again  
 Stroke him upon the wound, and it will close.  
 This is the very sooth, withoute glose;\*      \*deceit  
 It faileth not, while it is in your hold.'

And when this knight had thus his tale told,  
 He rode out of the hall, and down he light.  
 His steede, which that shone as sunne bright,  
 Stood in the court as still as any stone.  
 The knight is to his chamber led anon,  
 And is unarmed, and to meat y-set.\*      \*seated  
 These presents be full richely y-fet,\* -      \*fetched  
 This is to say, the sword and the mirrour, -  
 And borne anon into the highe tow'r,  
 With certain officers ordain'd therefor;  
 And unto Canace the ring is bore  
 Solemnely, where she sat at the table;  
 But sickerly, withouten any fable,

The horse of brass, that may not be remued.\*      \*removed &12&gt;  
 It stood as it were to the ground y-glued;  
 There may no man out of the place it drive  
 For no engine of windlass or polive; \*      \*pulley  
 And cause why, for they \*can not the craft;\*      \*know not the cunning  
 And therefore in the place they have it laft, of the mechanism\*  
 Till that the knight hath taught them the mannere  
 To voide\* him, as ye shall after hear.      \*remove

Great was the press, that swarmed to and fro  
 To gauren\* on this horse that stoode so:      \*gaze  
 For it so high was, and so broad and long,  
 So well proportioned for to be strong,  
 Right as it were a steed of Lombardy;  
 Therewith so horsely, and so quick of eye,  
 As it a gentle Poileis &13&gt; courser were:  
 For certes, from his tail unto his ear  
 Nature nor art ne could him not amend  
 In no degree, as all the people wend.\*      \*weened, thought  
 But evermore their moste wonder was  
 How that it coude go, and was of brass;  
 It was of Faerie, as the people seem'd.  
 Diverse folk diversely they deem'd;  
 As many heads, as many wittes been.  
 They murmured, as doth a swarm of been,\*      \*bees  
 And made skills\* after their fantasies,      \*reasons  
 Rehearsing of the olde poetries,  
 And said that it was like the Pegasee,\*      \*Pegasus  
 The horse that hadde winges for to flee;\*      \*fly  
 Or else it was the Greeke's horse Sinon,&14&gt;  
 That broughte Troye to destruction,  
 As men may in the olde gestes\* read.      \*tales of adventures  
 Mine heart,' quoth one, 'is evermore in dread;  
 I trow some men of armes be therein,  
 That shape\* them this city for to win:      \*design, prepare  
 It were right good that all such thing were know.'  
 Another rowned\* to his fellow low,      \*whispered  
 And said, 'He lies; for it is rather like  
 An apparence made by some magic,  
 As jugglers playen at these feastes great.'  
 Of sundry doubts they jangle thus and treat.  
 As lewed\* people deeme commonly      \*ignorant

Of things that be made more subtilly  
 Than they can in their lewdness comprehend;  
 They \*deeme gladly to the badder end.\*                    \*are ready to think  
 And some of them wonder'd on the mirrour, the worst\*  
 That borne was up into the master\* tow'r,                    \*chief &lt;15&gt;;  
 How men might in it suche thinges see.  
 Another answer'd and said, it might well be  
 Naturally by compositions  
 Of angles, and of sly reflections;  
 And saide that in Rome was such a one.  
 They speak of Alhazen and Vitellon,&lt;16&gt;;  
 And Aristotle, that wrote in their lives  
 Of quainte\* mirrors, and of prospectives,                    \*curious  
 As knowe they that have their bookes heard.  
 And other folk have wonder'd on the swerd,\*                    \*sword  
 That woulde pierce throughout every thing;  
 And fell in speech of Telephus the king,  
 And of Achilles for his quainte spear, &lt;17&gt;;  
 For he could with it bothe heal and dere,\*                    \*wound  
 Right in such wise as men may with the swerd  
 Of which right now ye have yourselves heard.  
 They spake of sundry hard'ning of metal,  
 And spake of medicines therewithal,  
 And how, and when, it shoulde harden'd be,  
 Which is unknowen algate\* unto me.                    \*however  
 Then spake they of Canacee's ring,  
 And saiden all, that such a wondrous thing  
 Of craft of rings heard they never none,  
 Save that he, Moses, and King Solomon,  
 Hadden \*a name of conning\* in such art.                    \*a reputation for  
 Thus said the people, and drew them apart. knowledge\*  
 Put natheless some saide that it was  
 Wonder to maken of fern ashes glass,  
 And yet is glass nought like ashes of fern;  
 \*But for\* they have y-knowen it so ferne\*\*                    \*because \*\*before &lt;18&gt;;  
 Therefore ceaseth their jangling and their wonder.  
 As sore wonder some on cause of thunder,  
 On ebb and flood, on gossamer and mist,  
 And on all things, till that the cause is wist.\*                    \*known  
 Thus jangle they, and deemen and devise,  
 Till that the king gan from his board arise.





Until well nigh the day began to spring.

\*Pars Secunda.\*

\*Second Part\*

The norice\* of digestion, the sleep,  
Gan on them wink, and bade them take keep,\*  
That muche mirth and labour will have rest.  
And with a gaping\* mouth he all them kest,\*\*  
And said, that it was time to lie down,  
For blood was in his dominatioun: &lt;26&gt;  
'Cherish the blood, nature's friend,' quoth he.  
They thanked him gaping, by two and three;  
And every wight gan draw him to his rest;  
As sleep them bade, they took it for the best.  
Their dreames shall not now be told for me;  
Full are their heades of fumosity,&lt;27&gt;  
That caused dreams \*of which there is no charge:\* \*of no significance\*  
They slepte; till that, it was \*prime large,\* \*late morning\*  
The moste part, but\* it was Canace; \*except  
She was full measurable,\* as women be: \*moderate  
For of her father had she ta'en her leave  
To go to rest, soon after it was eve;  
Her liste not appalled\* for to be; \*to look pale  
Nor on the morrow \*unfeastly for to see;\* \*to look sad, depressed\*  
And slept her firste sleep; and then awoke.  
For such a joy she in her hearte took  
Both of her quainte a ring and her mirrour,.  
That twenty times she changed her colour;  
And in her sleep, right for th' impression  
Of her mirror, she had a vision.  
Wherefore, ere that the sunne gan up glide,  
She call'd upon her mistress'\* her beside,  
And saide, that her liste for to rise.

These olde women, that be gladly wise  
As are her mistresses answer'd anon,  
And said; 'Madame, whither will ye gon  
Thus early? for the folk be all in rest.'  
'I will,' quoth she, 'arise; for me lest  
No longer for to sleep, and walk about.'



Her mistresses call'd women a great rout,  
 And up they rose, well a ten or twelve;  
 Up rose freshe Canace herselfe,  
 As ruddy and bright as is the yonng sun  
 That in the Ram is four degrees y-run;  
 No higher was he, when she ready was;  
 And forth she walked easily a pace,  
 Array'd after the lusty\* season swoot,\*\*      \*pleasant \*\*sweet  
 Lightely for to play, and walk on foot,  
 Nought but with five or six of her meinie;  
 And in a trench\* forth in the park went she.      \*sunken path  
 The vapour, which up from the earthe glode,\*      \*glided  
 Made the sun to seem ruddy and broad:  
 But, natheless, it was so fair a sight  
 That it made all their heartes for to light,\*      \*be lightened, glad  
 What for the season and the morrowning,  
 And for the fowles that she hearde sing.  
 For right anon she wiste\* what they meant      \*knew  
 Right by their song, and knew all their intent.  
 The knotte,\* why that every tale is told,      \*nucleus, chief matter  
 If it be tarried\* till the list\* be cold      \*delayed \*\*inclination  
 Of them that have it hearken'd \*after yore,\*      \*for a long time\*  
 The savour passeth ever longer more;  
 For fulsomness of the prolixity:  
 And by that same reason thinketh me.  
 I shoulde unto the knotte condescend,  
 And maken of her walking soon an end.

Amid a tree fordry\*, as white as chalk,      \*thoroughly dried up  
 There sat a falcon o'er her head full high,  
 That with a piteous voice so gan to cry;  
 That all the wood resounded of her cry,  
 And beat she had herself so piteously  
 With both her winges, till the redde blood  
 Ran endelong\* the tree, there as she stood      \*from top to bottom  
 And ever-in-one\* always she cried and shrigh; \*\*      \*incessantly \*\*shrieked  
 And with her beak herselfe she so pight,\*      \*wounded  
 That there is no tiger, nor cruel beast,  
 That dwelleth either in wood or in forest;  
 But would have wept, if that he weepe could,  
 For sorrow of her; she shriek'd always so loud.  
 For there was never yet no man alive,



And, as I am a kinge's daughter true,  
 If that I verily the causes knew  
 Of your disease,\* if it lay in my might,                    \*distress  
 I would amend it, ere that it were night,  
 So wisly help me the great God of kind.\*\*                    \*surely \*\*nature  
 And herbes shall I right enoughe find,  
 To heale with your hurtes hastily.'  
 Then shriek'd this falcon yet more piteously  
 Than ever she did, and fell to ground anon,  
 And lay aswoon, as dead as lies a stone,  
 Till Canace had in her lap her take,  
 Unto that time she gan of swoon awake:  
 And, after that she out of swoon abraid,\*                    \*awoke  
 Right in her hawke's leden thus she said:

'That pity runneth soon in gentle heart  
 (Feeling his simil'tude in paines smart),  
 Is proved every day, as men may see,  
 As well \*by work as by authority;\*                    \*by experience as by doctrine\*  
 For gentle hearte kitheth\* gentleness.                    \*sheweth  
 I see well, that ye have on my distress  
 Compassion, my faire Canace,  
 Of very womanly benignity  
 That nature in your principles hath set.  
 But for no hope for to fare the bet,\*                    \*better  
 But for t' obey unto your hearte free,  
 And for to make others aware by me,  
 As by the whelp chastis'd\* is the lion,                    \*instructed, corrected  
 Right for that cause and that conclusion,  
 While that I have a leisure and a space,  
 Mine harm I will confessen ere I pace.'\*                    \*depart  
 And ever while the one her sorrow told,  
 The other wept, \*as she to water wo'ld,\*                    \*as if she would dissolve  
 Till that the falcon bade her to be still, into water\*  
 And with a sigh right thus she said \*her till:\*                    \*to her\*  
 'Where I was bred (alas that ilke\* day!)                    \*same  
 And foster'd in a rock of marble gray  
 So tenderly, that nothing ailed me,  
 I wiste\* not what was adversity,                    \*knew  
 Till I could flee\* full high under the sky.                    \*fly  
 Then dwell'd a tercelet & me faste by,  
 That seem'd a well of alle gentleness;

\*All were he\* full of treason and falseness,  
 It was so wrapped \*under humble cheer,\*  
 And under hue of truth, in such mannere, of humility\*  
 Under pleasance, and under busy pain,  
 That no wight weened that he coulde feign,  
 So deep in grain he dyed his colours.  
 Right as a serpent hides him under flow'rs,  
 Till he may see his time for to bite,  
 Right so this god of love's hypocrite  
 Did so his ceremonies and obeisances,  
 And kept in semblance all his observances,  
 That \*souden unto\* gentleness of love.      \*are consonant to\*  
 As on a tomb is all the fair above,  
 And under is the corpse, which that ye wet,  
 Such was this hypocrite, both cold and hot;  
 And in this wise he served his intent,  
 That, save the fiend, none wiste what he meant:  
 Till he so long had weeped and complain'd,  
 And many a year his service to me feign'd,  
 Till that mine heart, too piteous and too nice,\*      \*foolish, simple  
 All innocent of his crowned malice,  
 \*Forfeared of his death,\* as thoughte me,      \*greatly afraid lest  
 Upon his oathes and his surety he should die\*  
 Granted him love, on this conditioun,  
 That evermore mine honour and renown  
 Were saved, bothe \*privy and apert;\*      \*privately and in public\*  
 This is to say, that, after his desert,  
 I gave him all my heart and all my thought  
 (God wot, and he, that \*other wayes nought\*),      \*in no other way\*  
 And took his heart in change of mine for aye.  
 But sooth is said, gone since many a day,  
 A true wight and a thiefe \*think not one.\*      \*do not think alike\*  
 And when he saw the thing so far y-gone,  
 That I had granted him fully my love,  
 In such a wise as I have said above,  
 And given him my true heart as free  
 As he swore that he gave his heart to me,  
 Anon this tiger, full of doubleness,  
 Fell on his knees with so great humbleness,  
 With so high reverence, as by his cheer,\*      \*mien  
 So like a gentle lover in mannere,  
 So ravish'd, as it seemed, for the joy,

That never Jason, nor Paris of Troy, -  
 Jason? certes, nor ever other man,  
 Since Lamech &31&gt; was, that alderfirst\* began       \*first of all  
 To love two, as write folk beforne,  
 Nor ever since the firste man was born,  
 Coude no man, by twenty thousand  
 Counterfeit the sophimes\* of his art;       \*sophistries, beguilements  
 Where doubleness of feigning should approach,  
 Nor worthy were t'unbuckle his galoche,\*       \*shoe &32&gt;;  
 Nor could so thank a wight, as he did me.  
 His manner was a heaven for to see  
 To any woman, were she ne'er so wise;  
 So painted he and kempt,\* \*at point devise,\*       \*combed, studied  
 As well his wordes as his countenance.       \*with perfect precision\*  
 And I so lov'd him for his obeisance,  
 And for the truth I deemed in his heart,  
 That, if so were that any thing him smart,\*       \*pained  
 All were it ne'er so lite,\* and I it wist,       \*little  
 Methought I felt death at my hearte twist.  
 And shortly, so farforth this thing is went,\*       \*gone  
 That my will was his wille's instrument;  
 That is to say, my will obey'd his will  
 In alle thing, as far as reason fill,\*       \*fell; allowed  
 Keeping the boundes of my worship ever;  
 And never had I thing \*so lefe, or lever,\*       \*so dear, or dearer\*  
 As him, God wot, nor never shall no mo'.

'This lasted longer than a year or two,  
 That I supposed of him naught but good.  
 But finally, thus at the last it stood,  
 That fortune woulde that he muste twin\*       \*depart, separate  
 Out of that place which that I was in.  
 Whe'er\* me was woe, it is no question;       \*whether  
 I cannot make of it description.  
 For one thing dare I telle boldely,  
 I know what is the pain of death thereby;  
 Such harm I felt, for he might not byleve.\*       \*stay &33&gt;;  
 So on a day of me he took his leave,  
 So sorrowful eke, that I ween'd verily,  
 That he had felt as muche harm as I,  
 When that I heard him speak, and saw his hue.  
 But natheless, I thought he was so true,

And eke that he repaire should again  
 Within a little while, sooth to sayn,  
 And reason would eke that he muste go  
 For his honour, as often happ'neth so,  
 That I made virtue of necessity,  
 And took it well, since that it muste be.  
 As I best might, I hid from him my sorrow,  
 And took him by the hand, Saint John to borrow,\*      \*witness, pledge  
 And said him thus; 'Lo, I am youres all;  
 Be such as I have been to you, and shall.'  
 What he answer'd, it needs not to rehearse;  
 Who can say bet\* than he, who can do worse?      \*better  
 When he had all well said, then had he done.  
 Therefore behoveth him a full long spoon,  
 That shall eat with a fiend; thus heard I say.  
 So at the last he muste forth his way,  
 And forth he flew, till he came where him lest.  
 When it came him to purpose for to rest,  
 I trow that he had thilke text in mind,  
 That alle thing repairing to his kind  
 Gladdeth himself; & thus say men, as I guess;  
 \*Men love of [proper] kind newfangleness,\*      \*see note &35&gt;\*&34&gt;  
 As birdes do, that men in cages feed.  
 For though thou night and day take of them heed,  
 And strew their cage fair and soft as silk,  
 And give them sugar, honey, bread, and milk,  
 Yet, \*right anon as that his door is up,\*      \*immediately on his  
 He with his feet will spurne down his cup, door being opened\*  
 And to the wood he will, and wormes eat;  
 So newefangle be they of their meat,  
 And love novelties, of proper kind;  
 No gentleness of bloode may them bind.  
 So far'd this tercelet, alas the day!  
 Though he were gentle born, and fresh, and gay,  
 And goodly for to see, and humble, and free,  
 He saw upon a time a kite flee,\*      \*fly  
 And suddenly he loved this kite so,  
 That all his love is clean from me y-go:  
 And hath his trothe falsed in this wise.  
 Thus hath the kite my love in her service,  
 And I am lorn\* withoute remedy.'      \*lost, undone

And with that word this falcon gan to cry,  
 And swooned eft\* in Canacee's barme\*\* \*again \*\*lap  
 Great was the sorrow, for that hawke's harm,  
 That Canace and all her women made;  
 They wist not how they might the falcon glade.\* \*gladden  
 But Canace home bare her in her lap,  
 And softely in plasters gan her wrap,  
 There as she with her beak had hurt herselfe.  
 Now cannot Canace but herbes delve  
 Out of the ground, and make salves new  
 Of herbes precious and fine of hue,  
 To heale with this hawk; from day to night  
 She did her business, and all her might.  
 And by her bedde's head she made a mew,\* \*bird cage  
 And cover'd it with velouettes\* blue,&lt;36&gt; \*velvets  
 In sign of truth that is in woman seen;  
 And all without the mew is painted green,  
 In which were painted all these false fowls,  
 As be these tidifes,\* tercelets, and owls; \*titmice  
 And pies, on them for to cry and chide,  
 Right for despite were painted them beside.

Thus leave I Canace her hawk keeping.  
 I will no more as now speak of her ring,  
 Till it come eft\* to purpose for to sayn \*again  
 How that this falcon got her love again  
 Repentant, as the story telleth us,  
 By mediation of Camballus,  
 The kinge's son of which that I you told.  
 But henceforth I will my process hold  
 To speak of adventures, and of battailes,  
 That yet was never heard so great marvailles.  
 First I will telle you of Cambuscan,  
 That in his time many a city wan;  
 And after will I speak of Algarsife,  
 How he won Theodora to his wife,  
 For whom full oft in great peril he was,  
 \*N'had he\* been holpen by the horse of brass. \*had he not\*  
 And after will I speak of Camballo, &lt;37&gt;  
 That fought in listes with the brethren two  
 For Canace, ere that he might her win;  
 And where I left I will again begin.

Geoffrey Chaucer



# To Life's Pilgrim

FLY from the press, and dwell with soothfastness;

Suffice unto thy good, though it be small,  
For hoard hath hate, and climbing tickleness ;

Preise hath envie, and weal is blent o'er all.

Savor no more than thee behoven shall,  
Rede well thy self that other folk can'st rede,  
And Truth thee shalt deliver 'tis no drede.

That thee is sent receive in buxomness :  
The wrestling of this world, asketh a fall.

Here is no home, here is but wilderness.  
Forth, pilgrim, forth on, best out of thy stall;  
Look up on high, and thank the God of all!

Weivith thy lust, and let thy ghost thee lead,

And Truth thee shalt deliver 'tis no drede.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# To Rosemounde

A Balade.

Ma dame, ye ben of al beaute shryne  
As fer as cercled is the mapamonde;  
For as the cristall glorious ye shyne,  
And lyke ruby ben your chekys rounde.  
Therwyth ye ben so mery and so iocunde  
That at a reuell whan that I se you dance,  
It is an oynement vnto my wounde,  
Thoght ye to me ne do no daliance.

For thogh I wepe of teres ful a tyne,  
Yet may that wo myn herte nat confounde;  
Your semy voys that ye so small out twyne  
Makyth my thoght in ioy and blys habounde.  
So curtaysly I go, wyth loue bounde,  
That to my self I sey, in my penaunce,  
Suffyseth me to loue you, Rosemounde,  
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliance.

Nas neuer pyk walwed in galauntyne  
As I in loue am walwed and iwounde;  
For whych ful ofte I of my self deuyne  
That I am trew Tristam the secunde.  
My loue may not refreyde nor affounde;  
I brenne ay in an amoureuse plesaunce.  
Do what you lyst, I wyl your thral be founde,  
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliance.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Troilus And Criseyde: Book 01

The double 12 sorwe of Troilus to tellen,  
That was the king Priamus sone of Troye,  
In lovinge, how his adventures fellen  
Fro wo to wele, and after out of Ioye,  
My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye.  
Thesiphone, thou help me for tendyte  
Thise woful vers, that wepen as I wryte!

To thee clepe I, thou goddesse of torment,  
Thou cruel Furie, sorwing ever in peyne;  
Help me, that am the sorwful instrument  
That helpeth lovers, as I can, to pleyne!  
For wel sit it, the sothe for to seyne,  
A woful wight to han a drery fere,  
And, to a sorwful tale, a sory chere.

For I, that god of Loves servaunts serve,  
Ne dar to Love, for myn unlyklinesse,  
Preyen for speed, al sholde I therfor sterve,  
So fer am I fro his help in derknesse;  
But nathelees, if this may doon gladnesse  
To any lover, and his cause avayle,  
Have he my thank, and myn be this travayle!

But ye loveres, that bathen in gladnesse,  
If any drope of pitee in yow be,  
Remembreth yow on passed hevinesse  
That ye han felt, and on the adversitee  
Of othere folk, and thenketh how that ye  
Han felt that Love dorste yow displese;  
Or ye han wonne hym with to greet an ese.

And preyeth for hem that ben in the cas  
Of Troilus, as ye may after here,  
That love hem bringe in hevene to solas,  
And eek for me preyeth to god so dere,  
That I have might to shewe, in som manere,  
Swich peyne and wo as Loves folk endure,  
In Troilus unsely aventure.

And biddeth eek for hem that been despeyred  
In love, that never nil recovered be,  
And eek for hem that falsly been apeyred  
Thorough wikked tonges, be it he or she;  
Thus biddeth god, for his benignitee,  
So graunte hem sone out of this world to pace,  
That been despeyred out of Loves grace.

And biddeth eek for hem that been at ese,  
That god hem graunte ay good perseveraunce,  
And sende hem might hir ladies so to plese,  
That it to Love be worship and plesaunce.  
For so hope I my soule best avaunce,  
To preye for hem that Loves servaunts be,  
And wryte hir wo, and live in charitee.

And for to have of hem compassioun  
As though I were hir owene brother dere.  
Now herkeneth with a gode entencioun,  
For now wol I gon streight to my matere,  
In whiche ye may the double sorwes here  
Of Troilus, in loving of Criseyde,  
And how that she forsook him er she deyde.

It is wel wist, how that the Grekes stronge  
In armes with a thousand shippes wente  
To Troyewardes, and the citee longe  
Assegeden neigh ten yeer er they stente,  
And, in diverse wyse and oon entente,  
The ravisshing to wreken of Eleyne,  
By Paris doon, they wroughten al hir peyne.

Now fil it so, that in the toun ther was  
Dwellinge a lord of greet auctoritee,  
A gret devyn that cleped was Calkas,  
That in science so expert was, that he  
Knew wel that Troye sholde destroyed be,  
By answeere of his god, that highte thus,  
Daun Phebus or Apollo Delphicus.

So whan this Calkas knew by calculinge,

And eek by answeere of this Appollo,  
That Grekes sholden swich a peple bringe,  
Thorugh which that Troye moste been for-do,  
He caste anon out of the toun to go;  
For wel wiste he, by sort, that Troye sholde  
Destroyed ben, ye, wolde who-so nolde.

For which, for to departen softely  
Took purpos ful this forknowinge wyse,  
And to the Grekes ost ful prively  
He stal anon; and they, in curteys wyse,  
Hym deden bothe worship and servyse,  
In trust that he hath conning hem to rede  
In every peril which that is to drede.

The noyse up roos, whan it was first aspyed,  
Thorugh al the toun, and generally was spoken,  
That Calkas traytor fled was, and allyed  
With hem of Grece; and casten to ben wroken  
On him that falsly hadde his feith so broken;  
And seyden, he and al his kin at ones  
Ben worthy for to brennen, fel and bones.

Now hadde Calkas left, in this meschaunce,  
Al unwist of this false and wikked dede,  
His doughter, which that was in gret penaunce,  
For of hir lyf she was ful sore in drede,  
As she that niste what was best to rede;  
For bothe a widowe was she, and allone  
Of any freend to whom she dorste hir mone.

Criseyde was this lady name a-right;  
As to my dome, in al Troyes citee  
Nas noon so fair, for passing every wight  
So aungellyk was hir natyf beautee,  
That lyk a thing immortal semed she,  
As doth an hevenish parfit creature,  
That doun were sent in scorning of nature.

This lady, which that al-day herde at ere  
Hir fadres shame, his falsnesse and tresoun,  
Wel nigh out of hir wit for sorwe and fere,

In widewes habit large of samit broun,  
On knees she fil biforn Ector a-doun;  
With pitous voys, and tendrely wepinge,  
His mercy bad, hir-selven excusinge.

Now was this Ector pitous of nature,  
And saw that she was sorwfully bigoon,  
And that she was so fair a creature;  
Of his goodnesse he gladed hir anoon,  
And seyde, 'Lat your fadres treson goon  
Forth with mischaunce, and ye your-self, in Ioye,  
Dwelleth with us, whyl you good list, in Troye.

'And al thonour that men may doon yow have,  
As ferforth as your fader dwelled here,  
Ye shul han, and your body shal men save,  
As fer as I may ought enquere or here.'  
And she him thonked with ful humble chere,  
And offer wolde, and it hadde ben his wille,  
And took hir leve, and hoom, and held hir stille.

And in hir hous she abood with swich meynee  
As to hir honour nede was to holde;  
And whyl she was dwellinge in that citee,  
Kepte hir estat, and bothe of yonge and olde  
Ful wel beloved, and wel men of hir tolde.  
But whether that she children hadde or noon,  
I rede it naught; therefore I late it goon.

The thinges fellen, as they doon of werre,  
Bitwixen hem of Troye and Grekes ofte;  
For som day boughten they of Troye it derre,  
And eft the Grekes founden no thing softe  
The folk of Troye; and thus fortune on-lofte,  
And under eft, gan hem to wheelen bothe  
After hir cours, ay whyl they were wrothe.

But how this toun com to destruccioun  
Ne falleth nought to purpos me to telle;  
For it were a long digressioun  
Fro my matere, and yow to longe dwelle.  
But the Troyane gestes, as they felle,

In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dyte,  
Who-so that can, may rede hem as they wryte.

But though that Grekes hem of Troye shetten,  
And hir citee bisegede al a-boute,  
Hir olde usage wolde they not letten,  
As for to honoure hir goddes ful devoute;  
But aldermost in honour, out of doute,  
They hadde a relik hight Palladion,  
That was hir trist a-boven everichon.

And so bifel, whan comen was the tyme  
Of Aperil, whan clothed is the mede  
With newe grene, of lusty Ver the pryme,  
And swote smellen floures whyte and rede,  
In sondry wyses shewed, as I rede,  
The folk of Troye hir observaunces olde,  
Palladiones feste for to holde.

And to the temple, in al hir beste wyse,  
In general, ther wente many a wight,  
To herkennen of Palladion servyse;  
And namely, so many a lusty knight,  
So many a lady fresh and mayden bright,  
Ful wel arayed, bothe moste and leste,  
Ye, bothe for the seson and the feste.

Among thise othere folk was Criseyda,  
In widewes habite blak; but nathelees,  
Right as our firste lettre is now an A,  
In beautee first so stood she, makelees;  
Hir godly looking gladede al the prees.  
Nas never seyn thing to ben preysed derre,  
Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre

As was Criseyde, as folk seyde everichoon  
That hir behelden in hir blake wede;  
And yet she stood ful lowe and stille alloon,  
Bihinden othere folk, in litel brede,  
And neigh the dore, ay under shames drede,  
Simple of a-tyr, and debonaire of chere,  
With ful assured loking and manere.

This Troilus, as he was wont to gyde  
His yonge knightes, ladde hem up and doun  
In thilke large temple on every syde,  
Biholding ay the ladyes of the toun,  
Now here, now there, for no devocioun  
Hadde he to noon, to reven him his reste,  
But gan to preyse and lakken whom him leste.

And in his walk ful fast he gan to wayten  
If knight or squyer of his companye  
Gan for to syke, or lete his eyen bayten  
On any woman that he coude aspye;  
He wolde smyle, and holden it folye,  
And seye him thus, 'god wot, she slepeth softe  
For love of thee, whan thou tornest ful ofte!

'I have herd told, pardieux, of your livinge,  
Ye lovers, and your lewede observaunces,  
And which a labour folk han in winninge  
Of love, and, in the keping, which doutaunces;  
And whan your preye is lost, wo and penaunces;  
O verrey foles! nyce and blinde be ye;  
Ther nis not oon can war by other be.'

And with that word he gan cast up the browe,  
Ascaunces, 'Lo! is this nought wysly spoken?'  
At which the god of love gan loken rowe  
Right for despyt, and shoop for to ben wroken;  
He kidde anon his bowe nas not broken;  
For sodeynly he hit him at the fulle;  
And yet as proud a pekok can he pulle.

O blinde world, O blinde entencioun!  
How ofte falleth al theeffect contraire  
Of surquidrye and foul presumpcioun;  
For caught is proud, and caught is debonaire.  
This Troilus is clomben on the staire,  
And litel weneth that he moot descenden.  
But al-day falleth thing that foles ne wenden.

As proude Bayard ginneth for to skippe



Out of the wey, so priketh him his corn,  
Til he a lash have of the longe whippe,  
Than thenketh he, 'Though I prounce al biforn  
First in the trays, ful fat and newe shorn,  
Yet am I but an hors, and horses lawe  
I moot endure, and with my feres drawe.'

So ferde it by this fers and proude knight;  
Though he a worthy kinges sone were,  
And wende nothing hadde had swiche might  
Ayens his wil that sholde his herte stere,  
Yet with a look his herte wex a-ferre,  
That he, that now was most in pryde above,  
Wex sodeynly most subget un-to love.

For-thy ensample taketh of this man,  
Ye wyse, proude, and worthy folkes alle,  
To scornen Love, which that so sone can  
The freedom of your hertes to him thralle;  
For ever it was, and ever it shal bifalle,  
That Love is he that alle thing may binde;  
For may no man for-do the lawe of kinde.

That this be sooth, hath preved and doth yet;  
For this trowe I ye knowen, alle or some,  
Men reden not that folk han gretter wit  
Than they that han be most with love y-nome;  
And strengest folk ben therwith overcome,  
The worthiest and grettest of degree:  
This was, and is, and yet men shal it see.

And trewelich it sit wel to be so;  
For alderwysest han ther-with ben plesed;  
And they that han ben aldermost in wo,  
With love han ben conforted most and esed;  
And ofte it hath the cruel herte apesed,  
And worthy folk maad worthier of name,  
And causeth most to dreden vyce and shame.

Now sith it may not goodly be withstonde,  
And is a thing so vertuouus in kinde,  
Refuseth not to Love for to be bonde,

Sin, as him-selven list, he may yow binde.  
The yerde is bet that bowen wole and winde  
Than that that brest; and therfor I yow rede  
To folwen him that so wel can yow lede.

But for to tellen forth in special  
As of this kinges sone of which I tolde,  
And leten other thing collateral,  
Of him thenke I my tale for to holde,  
Both of his Ioye, and of his cares colde;  
And al his werk, as touching this matere,  
For I it gan, I wol ther-to refere.

With-inne the temple he wente him forth pleyinge,  
This Troilus, of every wight aboute,  
On this lady and now on that lokinge,  
Wher-so she were of toune, or of with-oute:  
And up-on cas bifel, that thorough a route  
His eye perced, and so depe it wente,  
Til on Criseyde it smoot, and ther it stente.

And sodeynly he wax ther-with astoned,  
And gan hire bet biholde in thrifty wyse:  
'O mercy, god!' thoughte he, 'wher hastow woned,  
That art so fair and goodly to devyse?'  
Ther-with his herte gan to sprede and ryse,  
And softe sighed, lest men mighte him here,  
And caughte a-yein his firste pleyinge chere.

She nas nat with the leste of hir stature,  
But alle hir limes so wel answeringe  
Weren to womanhode, that creature  
Was neuer lasse mannish in seminge.  
And eek the pure wyse of here meninge  
Shewede wel, that men might in hir gesse  
Honour, estat, and wommanly noblesse.

To Troilus right wonder wel with-alle  
Gan for to lyke hir meninge and hir chere,  
Which somdel deynous was, for she leet falle  
Hir look a lite a-side, in swich manere,  
Ascaunces, 'What! May I not stonden here?'

And after that hir loking gan she lighte,  
That never thoughte him seen so good a sighte.

And of hir look in him ther gan to quiken  
So greet desir, and swich affeccioun,  
That in his herte botme gan to stiken  
Of hir his fixe and depe impressioun:  
And though he erst hadde poured up and doun,  
He was tho glad his hornes in to shrinke;  
Unnethes wiste he how to loke or winke.

Lo, he that leet him-selven so konninge,  
And scorned hem that loves peynes dryen,  
Was ful unwar that love hadde his dwellinge  
With-inne the subtile stremes of hir yen;  
That sodeynly him thoughte he felte dyen,  
Right with hir look, the spirit in his herte;  
Blissed be love, that thus can folk converte!

She, this in blak, likinge to Troylus,  
Over alle thyng, he stood for to biholde;  
Ne his desir, ne wherfor he stood thus,  
He neither chere made, ne worde tolde;  
But from a-fer, his maner for to holde,  
On other thing his look som-tyme he caste,  
And eft on hir, whyl that servyse laste.

And after this, not fulliche al awhaped,  
Out of the temple al esiliche he wente,  
Repentinge him that he hadde ever y-iaped  
Of loves folk, lest fully the descente  
Of scorn fille on him-self; but, what he mente,  
Lest it were wist on any maner syde,  
His wo he gan dissimulen and hyde.

Whan he was fro the temple thus departed,  
He streyght anoon un-to his paleys torneth,  
Right with hir look thurgh-shoten and thurgh-darted,  
Al feyneth he in lust that he soiorneth;  
And al his chere and speche also he borneth;  
And ay, of loves servants every whyle,  
Him-self to wrye, at hem he gan to smyle.

And seyde, 'Lord, so ye live al in lest,  
Ye loveres! For the conningest of yow,  
That serveth most ententiflich and best,  
Him tit as often harm ther-of as prow;  
Your hyre is quit ayein, ye, god wot how!  
Nought wel for wel, but scorn for good servyse;  
In feith, your ordre is ruled in good wyse!

'In noun-certein ben alle your observaunces,  
But it a sely fewe poyntes be;  
Ne no-thing asketh so grete attendaunces  
As doth youre lay, and that knowe alle ye;  
But that is not the worste, as mote I thee;  
But, tolde I yow the worste poynt, I leve,  
Al seyde I sooth, ye wolden at me greve!

'But tak this, that ye loveres ofte eschuwe,  
Or elles doon of good entencioun,  
Ful ofte thy lady wole it misconstrue,  
And deme it harm in hir opinioun;  
And yet if she, for other enchesoun,  
Be wrooth, than shalt thou han a groyn anoon:  
Lord! wel is him that may be of yow oon!'

But for al this, whan that he say his tyme,  
He held his pees, non other bote him gayned;  
For love bigan his fetheres so to lyme,  
That wel unnethe un-to his folk he fayned  
That othere besye nedes him destrayned;  
For wo was him, that what to doon he niste,  
But bad his folk to goon wher that hem liste.

And whan that he in chaumbre was allone,  
He doun up-on his beddes feet him sette,  
And first be gan to syke, and eft to grone,  
And thoughte ay on hir so, with-uten lette,  
That, as he sat and wook, his spirit mette  
That he hir saw a temple, and al the wyse  
Right of hir loke, and gan it newe avyse.

Thus gan he make a mirour of his minde,

In which he saugh al hoolly hir figure;  
And that he wel coude in his herte finde,  
It was to him a right good aventure  
To love swich oon, and if he dide his cure  
To serven hir, yet mighte he falle in grace,  
Or elles, for oon of hir servaunts pace.

Imagininge that travaille nor grame  
Ne mighte, for so goodly oon, be lorn  
As she, ne him for his desir ne shame,  
Al were it wist, but in prys and up-born  
Of alle lovers wel more than biforn;  
Thus argumented he in his ginninge,  
Ful unavysed of his wo cominge.

Thus took he purpos loves craft to suwe,  
And thoughte he wolde werken prively,  
First, to hyden his desir in muwe  
From every wight y-born, al-outrely,  
But he mighte ought recovered be therby;  
Remembring him, that love to wyde y-blowe  
Yelt bittre fruyt, though swete seed be sowe.

And over al this, yet muchel more he thoughte  
What for to speke, and what to holden inne,  
And what to arten hir to love he soughte,  
And on a song anoon-right to biginne,  
And gan loude on his sorwe for to winne;  
For with good hope he gan fully assente  
Criseyde for to love, and nought repente.

And of his song nought only the sentence,  
As writ myn autour called Lollius,  
But pleynly, save our tonges difference,  
I dar wel sayn, in al that Troilus  
Seyde in his song, lo! every word right thus  
As I shal seyn; and who-so list it here,  
Lo! next this vers, he may it finden here.

Cantus Troili.

'If no love is, O god, what fele I so?

And if love is, what thing and whiche is he!  
If love be good, from whennes comth my wo?  
If it be wikke, a wonder thinketh me,  
Whenne every torment and adversitee  
That cometh of him, may to me savory thinke;  
For ay thurst I, the more that I it drinke.

'And if that at myn owene lust I brenne,  
Fro whennes cometh my wailing and my pleynte?  
If harme agree me, wher-to pleyne I thenne?  
I noot, ne why unwery that I feynte.  
O quike deeth, O swete harm so queynte,  
How may of thee in me swich quantitee,  
But-if that I consente that it be?

'And if that I consente, I wrongfully  
Compleyne, y-wis; thus possed to and fro,  
Al sterelees with inne a boot am I  
A-mid the see, by-twixen windes two,  
That in contrarie stonden ever-mo.  
Allas! what is this wonder maladye?  
For hete of cold, for cold of hete, I deye.'

And to the god of love thus seyde he  
With pitous voys, 'O lord, now youres is  
My spirit, which that oughte youres be.  
Yow thanke I, lord, that han me brought to this;  
But whether goddesse or womman, y-wis,  
She be, I noot, which that ye do me serve;  
But as hir man I wole ay live and sterve.

'Ye stonden in hire eyen mightily,  
As in a place un-to youre vertu digne;  
Wherfore, lord, if my servyse or I  
May lyke yow, so beth to me benigne;  
For myn estat royal here I resigne  
In-to hir hond, and with ful humble chere  
Bicome hir man, as to my lady dere.'

In him ne deynd sparen blood royal  
The fyr of love, wher-fro god me blesse,  
Ne him forbar in no degree, for al

His vertu or his excellent prowesse;  
But held him as his thral lowe in distresse,  
And brende him so in sondry wyse ay newe,  
That sixty tyme a day he loste his hewe.

So mucche, day by day, his owene thought,  
For lust to hir, gan quiken and encrese,  
That every other charge he sette at nought;  
For-thy ful ofte, his hote fyr to cese,  
To seen hir goodly look he gan to prese;  
For ther-by to ben esed wel he wende,  
And ay the ner he was, the more he brende.

For ay the ner the fyr, the hotter is,  
This, trowe I, knoweth al this companye.  
But were he fer or neer, I dar seye this,  
By night or day, for wisdom or folye,  
His herte, which that is his brestes ye,  
Was ay on hir, that fairer was to sene  
Than ever were Eleyne or Polixene.

Eek of the day ther passed nought an houre  
That to him-self a thousand tyme he seyde,  
'Good goodly, to whom serve I and laboure,  
As I best can, now wolde god, Criseyde,  
Ye wolden on me rewe er that I deyde!  
My dere herte, allas! myn hele and hewe  
And lyf is lost, but ye wole on me rewe.'

Alle othere dredes weren from him fledde,  
Both of the assege and his savacioun;  
Ne in him desyr noon othere fownes bredde  
But argumentes to his conclusioun,  
That she on him wolde han compassioun,  
And he to be hir man, whyl he may dure;  
Lo, here his lyf, and from the deeth his cure!  
The sharpe shoures felle of armes preve,  
That Ector or his othere bretheren diden,  
Ne made him only ther-fore ones meve;  
And yet was he, wher-so men wente or riden,  
Founde oon the beste, and lengest tyme abiden  
Ther peril was, and dide eek such travayle

In armes, that to thenke it was mervayle.

But for non hate he to the Grekes hadde,  
Ne also for the rescous of the toun,  
Ne made him thus in armes for to madde,  
But only, lo, for this conclusioun,  
To lyken hir the bet for his renoun;  
Fro day to day in armes so he spedde,  
That alle the Grekes as the deeth him dredde.

And fro this forth tho refte him love his sleep,  
And made his mete his foo; and eek his sorwe  
Gan multiplie, that, who-so toke keep,  
It shewed in his hewe, bothe eve and morwe;  
Therfor a title he gan him for to borwe  
Of other syknesse, lest of him men wende  
That the hote fyr of love him brende,

And seyde, he hadde a fever and ferde amis;  
But how it was, certayn, can I not seye,  
If that his lady understood not this,  
Or feyned hir she niste, oon of the tweye;  
But wel I rede that, by no maner weye,  
Ne semed it as that she of him roughte,  
Nor of his peyne, or what-so-ever he thoughte.

But than fel to this Troylus such wo,  
That he was wel neigh wood; for ay his drede  
Was this, that she som wight had loved so,  
That never of him she wolde have taken hede;  
For whiche him thoughte he felte his herte blede.  
Ne of his wo ne dorste he not biginne  
To tellen it, for al this world to winne.

But whanne he hadde a space fro his care,  
Thus to him-self ful ofte he gan to pleyne;  
He sayde, 'O fool, now art thou in the snare,  
That whilom Iapedest at loves peyne;  
Now artow hent, now gnaw thyn owene cheyne;  
Thou were ay wont eche lovere reprehende  
Of thing fro which thou canst thee nat defende.



'What wol now every lover seyn of thee,  
If this be wist, but ever in thyn absence  
Laughen in scorn, and seyn, 'Lo, ther gooth he,  
That is the man of so gret sapience,  
That held us lovers leest in reverence!  
Now, thonked be god, he may goon in the daunce  
Of hem that Love list febly for to avaunce!'  
'But, O thou woful Troilus, god wolde,  
Sin thou most loven thurgh thi destinee,  
That thou beset were on swich oon that sholde  
Knowe al thy wo, al lakkede hir pitee:  
But al so cold in love, towardses thee,  
Thy lady is, as frost in winter mone,  
And thou fordoon, as snow in fyr is sone.'

'God wolde I were aryved in the port  
Of deth, to which my sorwe wil me lede!  
A, lord, to me it were a gret comfort;  
Than were I quit of languisshing in drede.  
For by myn hidde sorwe y-blowe on brede  
I shal bi-Iaped been a thousand tyme  
More than that fool of whos folye men ryme.

'But now help god, and ye, swete, for whom  
I pleyne, y-caught, ye, never wight so faste!  
O mercy, dere herte, and help me from  
The deeth, for I, whyl that my lyf may laste,  
More than my-self wol love yow to my laste.  
And with som freendly look gladeth me, swete,  
Though never more thing ye me bi-hete!'

This wordes and ful manye an-other to  
He spak, and called ever in his compleynte  
Hir name, for to tellen hir his wo,  
Til neigh that he in salte teres dreynte.  
Al was for nought, she herde nought his pleynte;  
And whan that he bithoughte on that folye,  
A thousand fold his wo gan multiplie.

Bi-wayling in his chambre thus allone,  
A freend of his, that called was Pandare,  
Com ones in unwar, and herde him grone,

And say his freend in swich distresse and care:  
'Allas!' quod he, 'who causeth al this fare?  
O mercy, god! What unhap may this mene?  
Han now thus sone Grekes maad yow lene?

'Or hastow som remors of conscience,  
And art now falle in som devocioun,  
And waylest for thy sinne and thyn offence,  
And hast for ferde caught attricioun?  
God save hem that bi-seged han our toun,  
And so can leye our Iolyte on presse,  
And bring our lusty folk to holinesse!'

These wordes seyde he for the nones alle,  
That with swich thing he mighte him angry maken,  
And with an angre don his sorwe falle,  
As for the tyme, and his corage awaken;  
But wel he wist, as fer as tonges spaken,  
Ther nas a man of gretter hardinesse  
Than he, ne more desired worthinesse.  
'What cas,' quod Troilus, 'or what aventure  
Hath gyded thee to see my languisshinge,  
That am refus of euery creature?  
But for the love of god, at my preyinge,  
Go henne a-way, for certes, my deyinge  
Wol thee disese, and I mot nedes deye;  
Ther-for go wey, ther is no more to seye.

'But if thou wene I be thus sik for drede,  
It is not so, and ther-for scorne nought;  
Ther is a-nother thing I take of hede  
Wel more than ought the Grekes han y-wrought,  
Which cause is of my deeth, for sorwe and thought.  
But though that I now telle thee it ne leste,  
Be thou nought wrooth; I hyde it for the beste.'

This Pandare, that neigh malt for wo and routhe,  
Ful often seyde, 'Allas! what may this be?  
Now freend,' quod he, 'if ever love or trouthe  
Hath been, or is, bi-twixen thee and me,  
Ne do thou never swiche a crueltee  
To hyde fro thy freend so greet a care;

Wostow nought wel that it am I, Pandare?

'I wole parten with thee al thy peyne,  
If it be so I do thee no comfort,  
As it is freendes right, sooth for to seyne,  
To entreparten wo, as glad desport.  
I have, and shal, for trewe or fals report,  
In wrong and right y-loved thee al my lyve;  
Hyd not thy wo fro me, but telle it blyve.'

Than gan this sorwful Troilus to syke,  
And seyde him thus, "God leve it be my beste  
To telle it thee; for sith it may thee lyke,  
Yet wole I telle it, though myn herte breste;  
And wel wot I thou mayst do me no reste.  
But lest thow deme I truste not to thee,  
Now herkne, freend, for thus it stant with me.

'Love, a-yeins the which who-so defendeth  
Him-selven most, him alder-lest awayleth,  
With disespeir so sorwfully me offendeth,  
That streyght un-to the deeth myn herte sayleth.  
Ther-to desyr so brenningly me assaylleth,  
That to ben slayn it were a gretter Ioye  
To me than king of Grece been and Troye!

'Suffiseth this, my fulle freend Pandare,  
That I have seyde, for now wostow my wo;  
And for the love of god, my colde care  
So hyd it wel, I telle it never to mo;  
For harmes mighte folwen, mo than two,  
If it were wist; but be thou in gladnesse,  
And lat me sterve, unknowe, of my distresse.'

'How hastow thus unkindely and longe  
Hid this fro me, thou fool?' quod Pandarus;  
'Paraunter thou might after swich oon longe,  
That myn avys anoon may helpen us.'  
'This were a wonder thing,' quod Troylus,  
'Thou coudest never in love thy-selven wisse;  
How devel maystow bringen me to blisse?'

'Ye, Troilus, now herke,' quod Pandare,

'Though I be nyce; it happeth ofte so,  
That oon that exces doth ful yvele fare,  
By good counseyl can kepe his freend ther-fro.  
I have my-self eek seyn a blind man go  
Ther-as he fel that coude loke wyde;  
A fool may eek a wys man ofte gyde.

'A whetston is no kerving instrument,  
And yet it maketh sharpe kerving-tolis.  
And ther thou woost that I have ought miswent,  
Eschewe thou that, for swich thing to thee scole is;  
Thus ofte wyse men ben war by folis.  
If thou do so, thy wit is wel biwared;  
By his contrarie is every thing declared.

'For how might ever sweetnesse have be knowe  
To him that never tasted bitternesse?  
Ne no man may be inly glad, I trowe,  
That never was in sorwe or som distresse;  
Eek whyt by blak, by shame eek worthinesse,  
Ech set by other, more for other semeth;  
As men may see; and so the wyse it demeth.

'Sith thus of two contraries is a lore,  
I, that have in love so ofte assayed  
Grevauces, oughte conne, and wel the more  
Counsayllen thee of that thou art amayed.  
Eek thee ne oughte nat ben yvel apayed,  
Though I desyre with thee for to bere  
Thyn hevycharge; it shal the lasse dere.

'I woot wel that it fareth thus by me  
As to thy brother Parys an herdesse,  
Which that y-cleped was Oenone,  
Wrot in a compleynte of hir hevinesse:  
Ye say the lettre that she wroot, y gesse?'  
'Nay, never yet, y-wis,' quod Troilus.  
'Now,' quod Pandare, 'herkneth, it was thus. --

"Phebus, that first fond art of medicyne,'  
Quod she, 'and coude in every wightes care  
Remede and reed, by herbes he knew fyne,

Yet to him-self his conning was ful bare;  
For love hadde him so bounden in a snare,  
Al for the doughter of the kinge Admete,  
That al his craft ne coude his sorwe bete." --

'Right so fare I, unhappily for me;  
I love oon best, and that me smerteth sore;  
And yet, paraunter, can I rede thee,  
And not my-self; repreve me no more.  
I have no cause, I woot wel, for to sore  
As doth an hauk that listeth for to pleye,  
But to thyn help yet somewhat can I seye.

'And of o thing right siker maystow be,  
That certayn, for to deyen in the peyne,  
That I shal never-mo discoveren thee;  
Ne, by my trouthe, I kepe nat restreyne  
Thee fro thy love, thogh that it were Eleyne,  
That is thy brotheres wif, if ich it wiste;  
Be what she be, and love hir as thee liste.

'Therefore, as freend fullich in me assure,  
And tel me plat what is thyn enchesoun,  
And final cause of wo that ye endure;  
For douteth no-thing, myn entencioun  
Nis nought to yow of reprehencioun,  
To speke as now, for no wight may bireve  
A man to love, til that him list to leve.

'And witeth wel, that bothe two ben vyces,  
Mistrusten alle, or elles alle leve;  
But wel I woot, the mene of it no vyce is,  
For to trusten sum wight is a preve  
Of trouthe, and for-thy wolde I fayn remeve  
Thy wrong conseyte, and do thee som wight triste,  
Thy wo to telle; and tel me, if thee liste.

'The wyse seyth, "Wo him that is allone,  
For, and he falle, he hath noon help to ryse;"  
And sith thou hast a felawe, tel thy mone;  
For this nis not, certeyn, the nexte wyse  
To winnen love, as techen us the wyse,

To walwe and wepe as Niobe the quene,  
Whos teres yet in marbel been y-sene.

'Lat be thy weping and thi drerinesse,  
And lat us lissen wo with other speche;  
So may thy woful tyme seme lesse.  
Delyte not in wo thy wo to seche,  
As doon thise foles that hir sorwes eche  
With sorwe, whan they han misaventure,  
And listen nought to seche hem other cure.

'Men seyn, "To wrecche is consolacioun  
To have an-other felawe in his peyne;"  
That oughte wel ben our opinioun,  
For, bothe thou and I, of love we pleyne;  
So ful of sorwe am I, soth for to seyne,  
That certeynly no more harde grace  
May sitte on me, for-why ther is no space.  
'If god wole thou art not agast of me,  
Lest I wolde of thy lady thee bigyle,  
Thow wost thy-self whom that I love, pardee,  
As I best can, gon sithen longe whyle.  
And sith thou wost I do it for no wyle,  
And sith I am he that thou tristest most,  
Tel me sumwhat, sin al my wo thou wost.'

Yet Troilus, for al this, no word seyde,  
But longe he ley as stille as he ded were;  
And after this with sykinge he abreyde,  
And to Pandarus voys he lente his ere,  
And up his eyen caste he, that in fere  
Was Pandarus, lest that in frenesye  
He sholde falle, or elles sone dye;

And cryde 'A-wake' ful wonderly and sharpe;  
'What? Slombrestow as in a lytargye?  
Or artow lyk an asse to the harpe,  
That hereth soun, whan men the strenges plye,  
But in his minde of that no melodye  
May sinken, him to glade, for that he  
So dul is of his bestialitee?'

And with that, Pandare of his wordes stente;  
And Troilus yet him no word answerde,  
For-why to telle nas not his entente  
To never no man, for whom that he so ferde.  
For it is seyde, 'Man maketh ofte a yerde  
With which the maker is him-self y-beten  
In sondry maner,' as thise wyse treten,

And namely, in his counseyl tellinge  
That toucheth love that oughte be secree;  
For of him-self it wolde y-nough out-springe,  
But-if that it the bet governed be.  
Eek som-tyme it is craft to seme flee  
Fro thing which in effect men hunte faste;  
Al this gan Troilus in his herte caste.

But nathelees, whan he had herd him crye  
'Awake!' he gan to syke wonder sore,  
And seyde, 'Freend, though that I stille lye,  
I am not deef; now pees, and cry no more;  
For I have herd thy wordes and thy lore;  
But suffre me my mischef to biwayle,  
For thy proverbes may me nought avayle.

'Nor other cure canstow noon for me.  
Eek I nil not be cured, I wol deye;  
What knowe I of the quene Niobe?  
Lat be thyne olde ensaumples, I thee preye.'  
'No,' quod tho Pandarus, 'therfore I seye,  
Swich is delyt of foles to biwepe  
Hir wo, but seken bote they ne kepe.  
'Now knowe I that ther reson in the fayleth.  
But tel me, if I wiste what she were  
For whom that thee al this misaunter ayleth?  
Dorstestow that I tolde hir in hir ere  
Thy wo, sith thou darst not thy-self for fere,  
And hir bisoughte on thee to han som routhe?'  
'Why, nay,' quod he, 'by god and by my trouthe!'

'What, Not as bisily,' quod Pandarus,  
'As though myn owene lyf lay on this nede?'  
'No, certes, brother,' quod this Troilus,

'And why?' -- 'For that thou sholdest never spede.'  
'Wostow that wel?' -- 'Ye, that is out of drede,'  
Quod Troilus, 'for al that ever ye conne,  
She nil to noon swich wrecche as I be wonne.'

Quod Pandarus, 'Allas! What may this be,  
That thou dispeyred art thus causelees?  
What? Liveth not thy lady? Benedicite!  
How wostow so that thou art gracelees?  
Swich yvel is nat alwey botelees.  
Why, put not impossible thus thy cure,  
Sin thing to come is ofte in aventure.

'I graunte wel that thou endurest wo  
As sharp as doth he, Ticius, in helle,  
Whos stomak foules tyren ever-mo  
That highte volturis, as bokes telle.  
But I may not endure that thou dwelle  
In so unskilful an opinioun  
That of thy wo is no curacioun.

'But ones niltow, for thy coward herte,  
And for thyn ire and folish wilfulnesse,  
For wantrust, tellen of thy sorwes smerte,  
Ne to thyn owene help do businesse  
As mucche as speke a resoun more or lesse,  
But lyst as he that list of no-thing recche.  
What womman coude love swich a wrecche?

'What may she demen other of thy deeth,  
If thou thus deye, and she not why it is,  
But that for fere is yolden up thy breeth,  
For Grekes han biseged us, y-wis?  
Lord, which a thank than shaltow han of this!  
Thus wol she seyn, and al the toun at ones,  
"The wrecche is deed, the devel have his bones!"

'Thou mayst allone here wepe and crye and knele;  
But, love a woman that she woot it nought,  
And she wol quyte that thou shalt not fele;  
Unknowe, unkist, and lost that is un-sought.  
What! Many a man hath love ful dere y-bought



Twenty winter that his lady wiste,  
That never yet his lady mouth he kiste.  
'What? Shulde be therfor fallen in despeyr,  
Or be recreaunt for his owene tene,  
Or sleen him-self, al be his lady fayr?  
Nay, nay, but ever in oon be fresh and grene  
To serve and love his dere hertes quene,  
And thenke it is a guerdoun hir to serve  
A thousand-fold more than he can deserve.'

Of that word took hede Troilus,  
And thoughte anoon what folye he was inne,  
And how that sooth him seyde Pandarus,  
That for to sleen him-self mighte he not winne,  
But bothe doon unmanhod and a sinne,  
And of his deeth his lady nought to wyte;  
For of his wo, god woot, she knew ful lyte.

And with that thought he gan ful sore syke,  
And seyde, 'Allas! What is me best to do?'  
To whom Pandare answered, 'If thee lyke,  
The best is that thou telle me thy wo;  
And have my trouthe, but thou it finde so,  
I be thy bote, or that it be ful longe,  
To peces do me drawe, and sithen honge!'

'Ye, so thou seyst,' quod Troilus tho, 'allas!  
But, god wot, it is not the rather so;  
Ful hard were it to helpen in this cas,  
For wel finde I that Fortune is my fo,  
Ne alle the men that ryden conne or go  
May of hir cruel wheel the harm withstonde;  
For, as hir list, she pleyeth with free and bonde.'

Quod Pandarus, 'Than blamestow Fortune  
For thou art wrooth, ye, now at erst I see;  
Wostow nat wel that Fortune is commune  
To every maner wight in som degree?  
And yet thou hast this comfort, lo, pardee!  
That, as hir Ioyes moten over-goon,  
So mote hir sorwes passen everichoon.'

'For if hir wheel stinte any-thing to torne,  
Than cessed she Fortune anoon to be:  
Now, sith hir wheel by no wey may soiorne,  
What wostow if hir mutabilitee  
Right as thy-selven list, wol doon by thee,  
Or that she be not fer fro thyn helpinge?  
Paraunter, thou hast cause for to singe!

'And therfor wostow what I thee beseche?  
Lat be thy wo and turning to the grounde;  
For who-so list have helping of his leche,  
To him bihoveth first unwrye his wounde.  
To Cerberus in helle ay be I bounde,  
Were it for my suster, al thy sorwe,  
By my wil, she sholde al be thyn to-morwe.  
'Loke up, I seye, and tel me what she is  
Anoon, that I may goon aboute thy nede;  
Knowe ich hir ought? For my love, tel me this;  
Than wolde I hopen rather for to spede.'  
Tho gan the veyne of Troilus to blede,  
For he was hit, and wex al reed for shame;  
'A ha!' quod Pandare, 'Here biginneth game!'  
And with that word he gan him for to shake,  
And seyde, 'Theef, thou shalt hir name telle.'  
But tho gan sely Troilus for to quake  
As though men sholde han led him in-to helle,  
And seyde, 'Allas! Of al my wo the welle,  
Than is my swete fo called Criseyde!'  
And wel nigh with the word for fere he deyde.

And whan that Pandare herde hir name nevene,  
Lord, he was glad, and seyde, 'Freend so dere,  
Now fare a-right, for Ioves name in hevene,  
Love hath biset the wel, be of good chere;  
For of good name and wysdom and manere  
She hath y-nough, and eek of gentillesse;  
If she be fayr, thou wost thy-self, I gesse,

'Ne I never saw a more bountevous  
Of hir estat, ne a gladder, ne of speche  
A freendlier, ne a more gracious  
For to do wel, ne lasse hadde nede to seche

What for to doon; and al this bet to eche,  
In honour, to as fer as she may strecche,  
A kinges herte semeth by hirs a wrecche.

'And for-thy loke of good comfort thou be;  
For certainly, the firste poynt is this  
Of noble corage and wel ordeyne,  
A man to have pees with him-self, y-wis;  
So oughtest thou, for nought but good it is  
To loven wel, and in a worthy place;  
Thee oghte not to clepe it hap, but grace.

'And also thenk, and ther-with glade thee,  
That sith thy lady vertuous is al,  
So folweth it that ther is som pitee  
Amonges alle thise othere in general;  
And for-thy see that thou, in special,  
Requere nought that is ayein hir name;  
For vertue streccheth not him-self to shame.

'But wel is me that ever that I was born,  
That thou biset art in so good a place;  
For by my trouthe, in love I dorste have sworn,  
Thee sholde never han tid thus fayr a grace;  
And wostow why? For thou were wont to chace  
At Love in scorn, and for despyt him calle  
"Seynt Idiot, lord of thise foles alle."

'How often hastow maad thy nyce Iapes,  
And seyde, that loves servants everichone  
Of nycetee been verray goddes apes;  
And some wolde monche hir mete alone,  
Ligging a-bedde, and make hem for to grone;  
And som, thou seydest, hadde a blaunche fevere,  
And preydest god he sholde never kevere.  
'And som of hem tok on hem, for the colde,  
More than y-nough, so seydestow ful ofte;  
And som han feyned ofte tyme, and tolde  
How that they wake, whan they slepen softe;  
And thus they wolde han brought hem-self a-lofte,  
And nathelees were under at the laste;  
Thus seydestow, and Iapedest ful faste.

'Yet seydestow, that, for the more part,  
These loveres wolden speke in general,  
And thoughten that it was a siker art,  
For fayling, for to assayen over-al.  
Now may I iape of thee, if that I shal!  
But nathelees, though that I sholde deye,  
That thou art noon of tho, that dorste I seye.

'Now beet thy brest, and sey to god of love,  
"Thy grace, lord! For now I me repente  
If I mis spak, for now my-self I love:"  
Thus sey with al thyn herte in good entente.'  
Quod Troilus, 'A! Lord! I me consente,  
And prey to thee my Iapes thou foryive,  
And I shal never-more whyl I live.'

'Thou seyst wel,' quod Pandare, 'and now I hope  
That thou the goddes wraththe hast al apesed;  
And sithen thou hast wepen many a drope,  
And seyde swich thing wher-with thy god is plesed,  
Now wolde never god but thou were esed;  
And think wel, she of whom rist al thy wo  
Here-after may thy comfort been al-so.

'For thilke ground, that bereth the wedes wikke,  
Bereth eek these holsom herbes, as ful ofte  
Next the foule netle, rough and thikke,  
The rose waxeth swote and smothe and softe;  
And next the valey is the hil a-lofte;  
And next the derke night the glade morwe;  
And also Ioye is next the fyn of sorwe.

'Now loke that atempre be thy brydel,  
And, for the beste, ay suffre to the tyde,  
Or elles al our labour is on ydel;  
He hasteth wel that wysly can abyde;  
Be diligent, and trewe, and ay wel hyde.  
Be lusty, free, persevere in thy servyse,  
And al is wel, if thou werke in this wyse.  
'But he that parted is in every place  
Is no-wher hool, as writen clerkes wyse;

What wonder is, though swich oon have no grace?  
Eek wostow how it fareth of som servyse?  
As plaunte a tre or herbe, in sondry wyse,  
And on the morwe pulle it up as blyve,  
No wonder is, though it may never thryve.

'And sith that god of love hath thee bistowed  
In place digne un-to thy worthinesse,  
Stond faste, for to good port hastow rowed;  
And of thy-self, for any hevinesse,  
Hope alwey wel; for, but-if drerinesse  
Or over-haste our bothe labour shende,  
I hope of this to maken a good ende.

'And wostow why I am the lasse a-fered  
Of this matere with my nece trete?  
For this have I herd seyde of wyse y-lered,  
"Was never man ne woman yet bigete  
That was unapt to suffren loves hete,  
Celestial, or elles love of kinde;"  
For-thy som grace I hope in hir to finde.

'And for to speke of hir in special,  
Hir beautee to bithinken and hir youthe,  
It sit hir nought to be celestial  
As yet, though that hir liste bothe and couthe;  
But trewely, it sete hir wel right nouthe  
A worthy knight to loven and cheryce,  
And but she do, I holde it for a vyce.

'Wherefore I am, and wol be, ay redy  
To peyne me to do yow this servyse;  
For bothe yow to plese thus hope I  
Her-afterward; for ye beth bothe wyse,  
And conne it counseyl kepe in swich a wyse  
That no man shal the wyser of it be;  
And so we may be gladed alle three.

'And, by my trouthe, I have right now of thee  
A good conceyt in my wit, as I gesse,  
And what it is, I wol now that thou see.  
I thenke, sith that love, of his goodnesse,

Hath thee converted out of wikkednesse,  
That thou shalt be the beste post, I leve,  
Of al his lay, and most his foos to-greve.

'Ensample why, see now these wyse clerkes,  
That erren aldermost a-yein a lawe,  
And ben converted from hir wikked werkes  
Thorough grace of god, that list hem to him drawe,  
Than arn they folk that han most god in awe,  
And strengest-feythed been, I understonde,  
And conne an errour alder-best withstonde.'  
Whan Troilus had herd Pandare assented  
To been his help in loving of Criseyde,  
Wex of his wo, as who seyth, untormented,  
But hotter wex his love, and thus he seyde,  
With sobre chere, al-though his herte pleyde,  
'Now blisful Venus helpe, er that I sterve,  
Of thee, Pandare, I may som thank deserve.

'But, dere frend, how shal myn wo ben lesse  
Til this be doon? And goode, eek tel me this,  
How wiltow seyn of me and my destresse?  
Lest she be wrooth, this drede I most, y-wys,  
Or nil not here or trowen how it is.  
Al this drede I, and eek for the manere  
Of thee, hir eem, she nil no swich thing here.'

Quod Pandarus, 'Thou hast a ful gret care  
Lest that the cherl may falle out of the mone!  
Why, lord! I hate of the thy nyce fare!  
Why, entremete of that thou hast to done!  
For goddes love, I bidde thee a bone,  
So lat me alone, and it shal be thy beste.' --  
'Why, freend,' quod he, 'now do right as the leste.

'But herke, Pandare, o word, for I nolde  
That thou in me wendest so greet folye,  
That to my lady I desiren sholde  
That toucheth harm or any vilenye;  
For dredelees, me were lever dye  
Than she of me ought elles understode  
But that, that mighte sounen in-to gode.'

Tho lough this Pandare, and anoon answerde,  
'And I thy borw? Fy! No wight dooth but so;  
I roughte nought though that she stode and herde  
How that thou seyst; but fare-wel, I wol go.  
A-dieu! Be glad! God spede us bothe two!  
Yif me this labour and this besinesse,  
And of my speed be thyn al that swetnesse.'

Tho Troilus gan doun on knees to falle,  
And Pandare in his armes hente faste,  
And seyde, 'Now, fy on the Grekes alle!  
Yet, pardee, god shal helpe us at the laste;  
And dredelees, if that my lyf may laste,  
And god to-forn, lo, som of hem shal smerte;  
And yet me athinketh that this avaunt me astarte!

'Now, Pandare, I can no more seye,  
But thou wys, thou wost, thou mayst, thou art all!  
My lyf, my deeth, hool in thyn bonde I leye;  
Help now,' Quod he, 'Yis, by my trouthe, I shal.'  
'God yelde thee, freend, and this in special,'  
Quod Troilus, 'that thou me recomaunde  
To hir that to the deeth me may comaunde.'  
This Pandarus tho, desirous to serve  
His fulle freend, than seyde in this manere,  
'Far-wel, and thenk I wol thy thank deserve;  
Have here my trouthe, and that thou shalt wel here.' --  
And wente his wey, thenking on this matere,  
And how he best mighte hir beseche of grace,  
And finde a tyme ther-to, and a place.

For every wight that hath an hous to founde  
Ne renneth nought the werk for to biginne  
With rakel hond, but he wol byde a stounde,  
And sende his hertes lyne out fro with-inne  
Alderfirst his purpos for to winne.  
Al this Pandare in his herte thoughte,  
And caste his werk ful wysly, or he wroughte.

But Troilus lay tho no lenger doun,  
But up anoon up-on his stede bay,

And in the feld he pleyde tho leoun;  
Wo was that Greek that with him mette that day.  
And in the toun his maner tho forth ay  
So goodly was, and gat him so in grace,  
That ech him lovede that loked on his face.

For he bicom the frendlyeste wight,  
The gentileste, and eek the moste free,  
The thriftieste and oon the beste knight,  
That in his tyme was, or mighte be.  
Dede were his Iapes and his crueltee,  
His heighe port and his manere estraunge,  
And ech of tho gan for a vertu chaunge.

Now lat us stinte of Troilus a stounde,  
That fareth lyk a man that hurt is sore,  
And is somdel of akinge of his wounde  
Y-lissed wel, but heled no del more:  
And, as an esy pacient, the lore  
Abit of him that gooth aboute his cure;  
And thus he dryveth forth his aventure.

Explicit Liber Primus

Geoffrey Chaucer



## Troilus And Criseyde: Book 02

Incipit Prohemium Secundi Libri.

Out of these blake wawes for to sayle,  
O wind, O wind, the weder ginneth clere;  
For in this see the boot hath swich travayle,  
Of my conning, that unnethe I it stere:  
This see clepe I the tempestous matere  
Of desespeyr that Troilus was inne:  
But now of hope the calendes biginne.  
O lady myn, that called art Cleo,  
Thou be my speed fro this forth, and my muse,  
To ryme wel this book, til I have do;  
Me nedeth here noon other art to use.  
For-why to every lovere I me excuse,  
That of no sentement I this endyte,  
But out of Latin in my tonge it wryte.

Wherfore I nil have neither thank ne blame  
Of al this werk, but prey yow mekely,  
Disblameth me if any word be lame,  
For as myn auctor seyde, so seye I.  
Eek though I speke of love unfeelingly,  
No wondre is, for it no-thing of newe is;  
A blind man can nat Iuggen wel in hewis.

Ye knowe eek, that in forme of speche is change  
With-inne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho  
That hadden prys, now wonder nyce and straunge  
Us thinketh hem; and yet they spake hem so,  
And spedde as wel in love as men now do;  
Eek for to winne love in sondry ages,  
In sondry londes, sondry ben usages.

And for-thy if it happe in any wyse,  
That here be any lovere in this place  
That herkneeth, as the storie wol devyse,  
How Troilus com to his lady grace,  
And thenketh, so nolde I nat love purchace,  
Or wondreth on his speche or his doinge,

I noot; but it is me no wonderinge;

For every wight which that to Rome went,  
Halt nat o path, or alwey o manere;  
Eek in som lond were al the gamen shent,  
If that they ferde in love as men don here,  
As thus, in open doing or in chere,  
In visitinge, in forme, or seyde hire sawes;  
For-thy men seyn, ech contree hath his lawes.

Eek scarsly been ther in this place three  
That han in love seid lyk and doon in al;  
For to thy purpos this may lyken thee,  
And thee right nought, yet al is seyde or shal;  
Eek som men grave in tree, som in stoon wal,  
As it bitit; but sin I have begonne,  
Myn auctor shal I folwen, if I conne.

Exclipit prohemium Secundi Libri.

Incipit Liber Secundus.

In May, that moder is of monthes glade,  
That fresshe floures, blewe, and whyte, and rede,  
Ben quike agayn, that winter dede made,  
And ful of bawme is fleting every mede;  
Whan Phebus doth his brighte bemes sprede  
Right in the whyte Bole, it so bitidde  
As I shal singe, on Mayes day the thridde,

That Pandarus, for al his wyse speche,  
Felt eek his part of loves shottes kene,  
That, coude he never so wel of loving preche,  
It made his hewe a-day ful ofte grene;  
So shoop it, that hym fil that day a tene  
In love, for which in wo to bedde he wente,  
And made, er it was day, ful many a wente.

The swalwe Proigne, with a sorwful lay,  
Whan morwe com, gan make hir waymentinge,  
Why she forshapen was; and ever lay

Pandare a-bedde, half in a slomerige,  
Til she so neigh him made hir chiteringe  
How Tereus gan forth hir suster take,  
That with the noyse of hir he gan a-wake;

And gan to calle, and dresse him up to ryse,  
Remembringe him his erand was to done  
From Troilus, and eek his greet empryse;  
And caste and knew in good plyt was the mone  
To doon viage, and took his wey ful sone  
Un-to his neces paleys ther bi-syde;  
Now Ianus, god of entree, thou him gyde!

Whan he was come un-to his neces place,  
'Wher is my lady?' to hir folk seyde he;  
And they him tolde; and he forth in gan pace,  
And fond, two othere ladyes sete and she,  
With-inne a paved parlour; and they three  
Herden a mayden reden hem the geste  
Of the Sege of Thebes, whyl hem leste.

Quod Pandarus, 'Ma dame, god yow see,  
With al your book and al the companye!'  
'Ey, uncle myn, welcome y-wis,' quod she,  
And up she roos, and by the hond in hye  
She took him faste, and seyde, 'This night thrye,  
To goode mote it turne, of yow I mette!'  
And with that word she doun on bench him sette.

'Ye, nece, ye shal fare wel the bet,  
If god wole, al this yeer,' quod Pandarus;  
'But I am sory that I have yow let  
To herknen of your book ye preysen thus;  
For goddes love, what seith it? tel it us.  
Is it of love? O, som good ye me lere!'  
'Uncle,' quod she, 'your maistresse is not here!'

With that they gonnen laughe, and tho she seyde,  
'This romaunce is of Thebes, that we rede;  
And we han herd how that king Laius deyde  
Thurgh Edippus his sone, and al that dede;  
And here we stenten at these lettres rede,

How the bisshop, as the book can telle,  
Amphiorax, fil thurgh the ground to helle.'

Quod Pandarus, 'Al this knowe I my-selve,  
And al the assege of Thebes and the care;  
For her-of been ther maked bokes twelve: --  
But lat be this, and tel me how ye fare;  
Do wey your barbe, and shew your face bare;  
Do wey your book, rys up, and lat us daunce,  
And lat us don to May som observaunce.'

'A! God forbede!' quod she. 'Be ye mad?  
Is that a widewes lyf, so god you save?  
By god, ye maken me right sore a-drad,  
Ye ben so wilde, it semeth as ye rave!  
It sete me wel bet ay in a cave  
To bidde, and rede on holy seyntes lyves;  
Lat maydens gon to daunce, and yonge wyves.'

'As ever thryve I,' quod this Pandarus,  
'Yet coude I telle a thing to doon you pleye.'  
'Now, uncle dere,' quod she, 'tel it us  
For goddes love; is than the assege aweye?  
I am of Grekes so ferd that I deye.'  
'Nay, nay,' quod he, 'as ever mote I thryve!  
It is a thing wel bet than swiche fyve.'

'Ye, holy god,' quod she, 'what thing is that?  
What! Bet than swiche fyve? Ey, nay, y-wis!  
For al this world ne can I reden what  
It sholde been; som Iape, I trowe, is this;  
And but your-selven telle us what it is,  
My wit is for to arede it al to lene;  
As help me god, I noot nat what ye meene.'

'And I your borow, ne never shal, for me,  
This thing be told to yow, as mote I thryve!  
'And why so, uncle myn? Why so?' quod she.  
'By god,' quod he, 'that wole I telle as blyve;  
For prouder womman were ther noon on-lyve,  
And ye it wiste, in al the toun of Troye;  
I iape nought, as ever have I Ioye!'

Tho gan she wondren more than biforn  
A thousand fold, and doun hir eyen caste;  
For never, sith the tyme that she was born,  
To knowe thing desired she so faste;  
And with a syk she seyde him at the laste,  
'Now, uncle myn, I nil yow nought displese,  
Nor axen more, that may do yow disese.'

So after this, with many wordes glade,  
And freendly tales, and with mery chere,  
Of this and that they pleyde, and gunnen wade  
In many an unkouth glad and deep matere,  
As freendes doon, whan they ben met y-fere;  
Til she gan axen him how Ector ferde,  
That was the tounes wal and Grekes yerde.

'Ful wel, I thanke it god,' quod Pandarus,  
'Save in his arm he hath a litel wounde;  
And eek his fresshe brother Troilus,  
The wyse worthy Ector the secounde,  
In whom that ever vertu list abounde,  
As alle trouthe and alle gentillesse,  
Wysdom, honour, fredom, and worthinesse.'

'In good feith, eem,' quod she, 'that lyketh me;  
They faren wel, god save hem bothe two!  
For trewely I holde it greet deyntee  
A kinges sone in armes wel to do,  
And been of good condiciouns ther-to;  
For greet power and moral vertu here  
Is selde y-seye in o persone y-fere.'

'In good feith, that is sooth,' quod Pandarus;  
'But, by my trouthe, the king hath sones tweye,  
That is to mene, Ector and Troilus,  
That certainly, though that I sholde deye,  
They been as voyde of vyces, dar I seye,  
As any men that liveth under the sonne,  
Hir might is wyde y-knowe, and what they conne.

'Of Ector nedeth it nought for to telle:

In al this world ther nis a bettre knight  
Than he, that is of worthinesse welle;  
And he wel more vertu hath than might.  
This knoweth many a wys and worthy wight.  
The same prys of Troilus I seye,  
God help me so, I knowe not swiche tweye.'

'By god,' quod she, 'of Ector that is sooth;  
Of Troilus the same thing trowe I;  
For, dredelees, men tellen that he dooth  
In armes day by day so worthily,  
And bereth him here at hoom so gentilly  
To every wight, that al the prys hath he  
Of hem that me were levest preysed be.'

'Ye sey right sooth, y-wis,' quod Pandarus;  
'For yesterday, who-so hadde with him been,  
He might have wondred up-on Troilus;  
For never yet so thikke a swarm of been  
Ne fleigh, as Grekes fro him gonne fleen;  
And thorough the feld, in everi wightes ere,  
Ther nas no cry but "Troilus is there!"

'Now here, now there, he hunted hem so faste,  
Ther nas but Grekes blood; and Troilus,  
Now hem he hurte, and hem alle doun he caste;  
Ay where he wente, it was arayed thus:  
He was hir deeth, and sheld and lyf for us;  
That as that day ther dorste noon with-stonde,  
Whyl that he held his blody swerd in honde.

'Therto he is the freendlieste man  
Of grete estat, that ever I saw my lyve;  
And wher him list, best felawshipe can  
To suche as him thinketh able for to thryve.'  
And with that word tho Pandarus, as blyve,  
He took his leve, and seyde, 'I wol go henne.'  
'Nay, blame have I, myn uncle,' quod she thenne.

'What eyleth yow to be thus wery sone,  
And namelich of wommen? Wol ye so?  
Nay, sitteth down; by god, I have to done

With yow, to speke of wisdom er ye go.'  
And every wight that was a-boute hem tho,  
That herde that, gan fer a-wey to stonde,  
Whyl they two hadde al that hem liste in honde.

Whan that hir tale al brought was to an ende,  
Of hire estat and of hir governaunce,  
Quod Pandarus, 'Now is it tyme I wende;  
But yet, I seye, aryseth, lat us daunce,  
And cast your widwes habit to mischaunce:  
What list yow thus your-self to disfigure,  
Sith yow is tid thus fair an aventure?'

'A! Wel bithought! For love of god,' quod she,  
'Shal I not witen what ye mene of this?'  
'No, this thing axeth layser,' tho quod he,  
'And eek me wolde mucche greve, y-wis,  
If I it tolde, and ye it toke amis.  
Yet were it bet my tonge for to stille  
Than seye a sooth that were ayeins your wille.

'For, nece, by the goddesse Minerve,  
And Iuppiter, that maketh the thonder ringe,  
And by the blisful Venus that I serve,  
Ye been the womman in this world livinge,  
With-oute paramours, to my wittinge,  
That I best love, and lothest am to greve,  
And that ye witen wel your-self, I leve.'

'Y-wis, myn uncle,' quod she, 'grant mercy;  
Your freendship have I founden ever yit;  
I am to no man holden trewely,  
So mucche as yow, and have so litel quit;  
And, with the grace of god, emforth my wit,  
As in my gilt I shal you never offende;  
And if I have er this, I wol amende.

'But, for the love of god, I yow beseche,  
As ye ben he that I love most and triste,  
Lat be to me your fremde manere speche,  
And sey to me, your nece, what yow liste:'  
And with that word hir uncle anon hir kiste,

And seyde, 'Gladly, leve nece dere,  
Tak it for good that I shal seye yow here.'

With that she gan hir eiyen doun to caste,  
And Pandarus to coghe gan a lyte,  
And seyde, 'Nece, alwey, lo! To the laste,  
How-so it be that som men hem delyte  
With subtil art hir tales for to endyte,  
Yet for al that, in hir entencioun  
Hir tale is al for som conclusioun.

'And sithen thende is every tales strengthe,  
And this matere is so bihovely,  
What sholde I peynte or drawen it on lengthe  
To yow, that been my freend so feithfully?'  
And with that word he gan right inwardly  
Biholden hir, and loken on hir face,  
And seyde, 'On suche a mirour goode grace!'

Than thoughte he thus: 'If I my tale endyte  
Ought hard, or make a proces any whyle,  
She shal no savour han ther-in but lyte,  
And trowe I wolde hir in my wil bigyle.  
For tendre wittes wenen al be wyle  
Ther-as they can nat pleyntly understonde;  
For-thy hir wit to serven wol I fonde --'

And loked on hir in a besy wyse,  
And she was war that he byheld hir so,  
And seyde, 'Lord! So faste ye me avyse!  
Sey ye me never er now? What sey ye, no?'  
'Yes, yes,' quod he, 'and bet wole er I go;  
But, by my trouthe, I thoughte now if ye  
Be fortunat, for now men shal it see.

'For to every wight som goodly aventure  
Som tyme is shape, if he it can receyven;  
And if that he wol take of it no cure,  
Whan that it commeth, but wilfully it weyven,  
Lo, neither cas nor fortune him deceyven,  
But right his verray slouthe and wrecchednesse;  
And swich a wight is for to blame, I gesse.



'Good aventure, O bele nece, have ye  
Ful lightly founden, and ye conne it take;  
And, for the love of god, and eek of me,  
Cacche it anoon, lest aventure slake.  
What sholde I lenger proces of it make?  
Yif me your hond, for in this world is noon,  
If that yow list, a wight so wel begoon.

'And sith I speke of good entencioun,  
As I to yow have told wel here-biforn,  
And love as wel your honour and renoun  
As creature in al this world y-born;  
By alle the othes that I have yow sworn,  
And ye be wrooth therfore, or wene I lye,  
Ne shal I never seen yow eft with ye.

'Beth nought agast, ne quaketh nat; wher-to?  
Ne chaungeth nat for fere so your hewe;  
For hardely the werste of this is do;  
And though my tale as now be to yow newe,  
Yet trist alwey, ye shal me finde trewe;  
And were it thing that me thoughte unsittinge,  
To yow nolde I no swiche tales bringe.'

'Now, my good eem, for goddes love, I preye,'  
Quod she, 'com of, and tel me what it is;  
For bothe I am agast what ye wol seye,  
And eek me longeth it to wite, y-wis.  
For whether it be wel or be amis,  
Say on, lat me not in this fere dwelle:'  
'So wol I doon; now herkneth, I shal telle:

'Now, nece myn, the kinges dere sone,  
The goode, wyse, worthy, fresshe, and free,  
Which alwey for to do wel is his wone,  
The noble Troilus, so loveth thee,  
That, bot ye helpe, it wol his bane be.  
Lo, here is al, what sholde I more seye?  
Doth what yow list, to make him live or deye.

'But if ye lete him deye, I wol sterve;

Have her my trouthe, nece, I nil not lyen;  
Al sholde I with this knyf my throte kerve --'  
With that the teres braste out of his yen,  
And seyde, 'If that ye doon us bothe dyen,  
Thus giltelees, than have ye fisshed faire;  
What mende ye, though that we bothe apeyre?

'Allas! He which that is my lord so dere,  
That trewe man, that noble gentil knight,  
That nought desireth but your freendly chere,  
I see him deye, ther he goth up-right,  
And hasteth him, with al his fulle might,  
For to be slayn, if fortune wol assente;  
Allas! That god yow swich a beautee sente!

'If it be so that ye so cruel be,  
That of his deeth yow liste nought to recche,  
That is so trewe and worthy, as ye see,  
No more than of a Iapere or a wrecche,  
If ye be swich, your beautee may not strecche  
To make amendes of so cruel a dede;  
Avysement is good bifore the nede.

'Wo worth the faire gemme vertulees!  
Wo worth that herbe also that dooth no bote!  
Wo worth that beautee that is routhelees!  
Wo worth that wight that tret ech under fote!  
And ye, that been of beautee crop and rote,  
If therwith-al in you ther be no routhe,  
Than is it harm ye liven, by my trouthe!

'And also think wel that this is no gaude;  
For me were lever, thou and I and he  
Were hanged, than I sholde been his baude,  
As heyghe, as men mighte on us alle y-see:  
I am thyn eem, the shame were to me,  
As wel as thee, if that I sholde assente,  
Thorough myn abet, that he thyn honour shente.

'Now understond, for I yow nought requere,  
To binde yow to him thorough no beheste,  
But only that ye make him bettre chere

Than ye han doon er this, and more feste,  
So that his lyf be saved, at the leste;  
This al and som, and playnly our entente;  
God help me so, I never other mente.

'Lo, this request is not but skile, y-wis,  
Ne doute of reson, pardee, is ther noon.  
I sette the worste that ye dredden this,  
Men wolden wondren seen him come or goon:  
Ther-ayeins answer I thus a-noon,  
That every wight, but he be fool of kinde,  
Wol deme it love of freendship in his minde.

'What? Who wol deme, though he see a man  
To temple go, that he the images eteth?  
Thenk eek how wel and wysly that he can  
Governe him-self, that he no-thing foryeteth,  
That, wher he cometh, he prys and thank him geteth;  
And eek ther-to, he shal come here so selde,  
What fors were it though al the toun behelde?

'Swich love of freendes regneth al this toun;  
And wrye yow in that mantel ever-mo;  
And god so wis be my savacioun,  
As I have seyde, your beste is to do so.  
But alwey, goode nece, to stinte his wo,  
So lat your daunger sucred ben a lyte,  
That of his deeth ye be nought for to wyte.'

Criseyde, which that herde him in this wyse,  
Thoughte, 'I shal fele what he meneth, y-wis.'  
'Now, eem,' quod she, 'what wolde ye devyse?  
What is your reed I sholde doon of this?'  
'That is wel seyde,' quod he. 'certayn, best is  
That ye him love ayein for his lovinge,  
As love for love is skilful guerdoninge.

'Thenk eek, how elde wasteth every houre  
In eche of yow a party of beautee;  
And therefore, er that age thee devoure,  
Go love, for, olde, ther wol no wight of thee.  
Lat this proverbe a lore un-to yow be;

"To late y-war, quod Beautee, whan it paste;"  
And elde daunteth daunger at the laste.

'The kinges fool is woned to cryen loude,  
Whan that him thinketh a womman bereth hir hye,  
"So longe mote ye live, and alle proude,  
Til crowes feet be growe under your ye,  
And sende yow thanne a mirour in to pry  
In whiche that ye may see your face a-morwe!"  
Nece, I bidde wisse yow no more sorwe.'

With this he stente, and caste adoun the heed,  
And she bigan to breste a-wepe anoon,  
And seyde, 'Allas, for wo! Why nere I deed?  
For of this world the feith is al agoon!  
Allas! What sholden straunge to me doon,  
Whan he, that for my beste freend I wende,  
Ret me to love, and sholde it me defende?

'Allas! I wolde han trusted, dotelees,  
That if that I, thurgh my disaventure,  
Had loved other him or Achilles,  
Ector, or any mannes creature,  
Ye nolde han had no mercy ne mesure  
On me, but alwey had me in repreve;  
This false world, allas! Who may it leve?

'What? Is this al the Ioye and al the feste?  
Is this your reed, is this my blisful cas?  
Is this the verray mede of your beheste?  
Is al this peynted proces seyde, allas!  
Right for this fyn? O lady myn, Pallas!  
Thou in this dredful cas for me purveye;  
For so astonied am I that I deye!'

With that she gan ful sorwfully to syke;  
'A! May it be no bet?' quod Pandarus;  
'By god, I shal no-more come here this wyke,  
And god to-forn, that am mistrusted thus;  
I see ful wel that ye sette lyte of us,  
Or of our deeth! Allas! I woful wrecche!  
Mighte he yet live, of me is nought to recche.

'O cruel god, O dispitouse Marte,  
O Furies three of helle, on yow I crye!  
So lat me never out of this hous departe,  
If that I mente harm or vilanye!  
But sith I see my lord mot nedes dye,  
And I with him, here I me shryve, and seye  
That wikkedly ye doon us bothe deye.

'But sith it lyketh yow that I be deed,  
By Neptunus, that god is of the see,  
Fro this forth shal I never eten breed  
Til I myn owene herte blood may see;  
For certayn, I wole deye as sone as he --'  
And up he sterte, and on his wey he raughte,  
Til she agayn him by the lappe caughte.

Criseyde, which that wel neigh starf for fere,  
So as she was the ferfulleste wight  
That mighte be, and herde eek with hir ere,  
And saw the sorwful ernest of the knight,  
And in his preyere eek saw noon unright,  
And for the harm that mighte eek fallen more,  
She gan to rewe and dredde hir wonder sore;

And thoughte thus, 'Unhappes fallen thikke  
Alday for love, and in swich maner cas,  
As men ben cruel in hem-self and wikke;  
And if this man slee here him-self, allas!  
In my presence, it wol be no solas.  
What men wolde of hit deme I can nat seye;  
It nedeth me ful sleyly for to pleye.'

And with a sorwful syk she seyde thrye,  
'A! Lord! What me is tid a sory chaunce!  
For myn estat lyth in Iupartye,  
And eek myn emes lyf lyth in balaunce;  
But nathelees, with goddes governaunce,  
I shal so doon, myn honour shal I kepe,  
And eek his lyf;' and stinte for to wepe.

'Of harmes two, the lesse is for to chese;

Yet have I lever maken him good chere  
In honour, than myn emes lyf to lese;  
Ye seyn, ye no-thing elles me requere?'  
'No, wis,' quod he, 'myn owene nece dere.'  
'Now wel,' quod she, 'and I wol doon my peyne;  
I shal myn herte ayeins my lust constreyne.

'But that I nil not holden him in honde,  
Ne love a man, ne can I not, ne may  
Ayeins my wil; but elles wol I fonde,  
Myn honour sauf, plese him fro day to day;  
Ther-to nolde I nought ones have seyde nay,  
But that I dredde, as in my fantasye;  
But cesse cause, ay cesseth maladye.

'And here I make a protestacioun,  
That in this proces if ye depper go,  
That certaynly, for no savacioun  
Of yow, though that ye sterve bothe two,  
Though al the world on o day be my fo,  
Ne shal I never on him han other routhe. --'  
'I graunte wel,' quod Pandare, 'by my trouthe.

'But may I truste wel ther-to,' quod he,  
'That of this thing that ye han hight me here,  
Ye wol it holden trewly un-to me?'  
'Ye, doutelees,' quod she, 'myn uncle dere.'  
'Ne that I shal han cause in this matere,'  
Quod he, 'to pleyne, or after yow to preche?'  
'Why, no, parde; what nedeth more speche?'

Tho fillen they in othere tales glade,  
Til at the laste, 'O good eem,' quod she tho,  
'For love of god, which that us bothe made,  
Tel me how first ye wisten of his wo:  
Wot noon of hit but ye?' He seyde, 'No.'  
'Can he wel speke of love?' quod she, 'I preye,  
Tel me, for I the bet me shal purveye.'

Tho Pandarus a litel gan to smyle,  
And seyde, 'By my trouthe, I shal yow telle.  
This other day, nought gon ful longe whyle,

In-with the paleys-gardyn, by a welle,  
Gan he and I wel half a day to dwelle,  
Right for to speken of an ordenaunce,  
How we the Grekes myghte disavaunce.

'Sone after that bigonne we to lepe,  
And casten with our dartes to and fro,  
Til at the laste he seyde he wolde slepe,  
And on the gres a-doun he leyde him tho;  
And I after gan rome to and fro  
Til that I herde, as that I welk allone,  
How he bigan ful wofully to grone.

'Tho gan I stalke him softely bihinde,  
And sikerly, the sothe for to seyne,  
As I can clepe ayein now to my minde,  
Right thus to Love he gan him for to pleyne;  
He seyde, "Lord! Have routhe up-on my peyne,  
Al have I been rebel in myn entente;  
Now, MEA CULPA, lord! I me repente.

"O god, that at thy disposicioun  
Ledest the fyn by Iuste purveyaunce,  
Of every wight, my lowe confessioun  
Accepte in gree, and send me swich penaunce  
As lyketh thee, but from desesperaunce,  
That may my goost departe away fro thee,  
Thou be my sheld, for thy benignitee.

"For certes, lord, so soore hath she me wounded,  
That stod in blak, with loking of hir yen,  
That to myn hertes botme it is y-sounded,  
Thorugh which I woot that I mot nedes dyen;  
This is the worste, I dar me not bi-wryen;  
And wel the hotter been the gledes rede,  
That men hem wryen with asshen pale and dede."

'With that he smoot his heed adoun anoon,  
And gan to motre, I noot what, trewely.  
And I with that gan stille away to goon,  
And leet ther-of as no-thing wist hadde I,  
And come ayein anoon and stood him by,

And seyde, "A-wake, ye slepen al to longe;  
It semeth nat that love dooth yow longe,

"That slepen so that no man may yow wake.  
Who sey ever or this so dul a man?"  
"Ye, freend," quod he, "do ye your hedes ake  
For love, and lat me liven as I can."  
But though that he for wo was pale and wan,  
Yet made he tho as freshe a countenance  
As though he shulde have led the newe daunce.

'This passed forth, til now, this other day,  
It fel that I com roming al allone  
Into his chaumbre, and fond how that he lay  
Up-on his bed; but man so sore grone  
Ne herde I never, and what that was his mone,  
Ne wist I nought; for, as I was cominge,  
Al sodeynly he lefte his compleyninge.

'Of which I took somwat suspecioun,  
And neer I com, and fond he wepte sore;  
And god so wis be my savacioun,  
As never of thing hadde I no routhe more.  
For neither with engyn, ne with no lore,  
Unethes mighte I fro the deeth him kepe;  
That yet fele I myn herte for him wepe.

'And god wot, never, sith that I was born,  
Was I so bisy no man for to preche,  
Ne never was to wight so depe y-sworn,  
Or he me tolde who mighte been his leche.  
But now to yow rehersen al his speche,  
Or alle his woful wordes for to soune,  
Ne bid me not, but ye wol see me swowne.

'But for to save his lyf, and elles nought,  
And to non harm of yow, thus am I driven;  
And for the love of god that us hath wrought,  
Swich chere him dooth, that he and I may liven.  
Now have I plat to yow myn herte shriven;  
And sin ye woot that myn entente is clene,  
Tak hede ther-of, for I non yvel mene.



'And right good thrift, I prey to god, have ye,  
That han swich oon y-caught with-oute net;  
And be ye wys, as ye ben fair to see,  
Wel in the ring than is the ruby set.  
Ther were never two so wel y-met,  
Whan ye ben his al hool, as he is youre:  
Ther mighty god yet graunte us see that houre!'

'Nay, therof spak I not, a, ha!' quod she,  
'As helpe me god, ye shenden every deel!'  
'O mercy, dere nece,' anoon quod he,  
'What-so I spak, I mente nought but weel,  
By Mars the god, that helmed is of steel;  
Now beth nought wrooth, my blood, my nece dere.'  
'Now wel,' quod she, 'foryeven be it here!'

With this he took his leve, and hoom he wente;  
And lord, he was glad and wel bigoon!  
Criseyde aroos, no lenger she ne stente,  
But straught in-to hir closet wente anoon,  
And sette here doun as stille as any stoon,  
And every word gan up and doun to winde,  
That he hadde seyde, as it com hir to minde;

And wex somdel astonied in hir thought,  
Right for the newe cas; but whan that she  
Was ful avysed, tho fond she right nought  
Of peril, why she oughte afered be.  
For man may love, of possibilitee,  
A womman so, his herte may to-breste,  
And she nought love ayein, but-if hir leste.

But as she sat allone and thoughte thus,  
Thascry aroos at skarmish al with-oute,  
And men cryde in the strete, 'See, Troilus  
Hath right now put to flight the Grekes route!'  
With that gan al hir meynee for to shoute,  
'A! Go we see, caste up the latis wyde;  
For thurgh this strete he moot to palays ryde;

'For other way is fro the yate noon

Of Dardanus, ther open is the cheyne.'  
With that com he and al his folk anoon  
An esy pas rydinge, in routes tweyne,  
Right as his happy day was, sooth to seyne,  
For which, men say, may nought disturbed be  
That shal bityden of necessitee.

This Troilus sat on his baye stede,  
Al armed, save his heed, ful richely,  
And wounded was his hors, and gan to blede,  
On whiche he rood a pas, ful softly;  
But swych a knightly sighte, trewely,  
As was on him, was nought, with-outen faile,  
To loke on Mars, that god is of batayle.

So lyk a man of armes and a knight  
He was to seen, fulfild of heigh prowesse;  
For bothe he hadde a body and a might  
To doon that thing, as wel as hardinesse;  
And eek to seen him in his gere him dresse,  
So fresh, so yong, so weldy semed he,  
It was an heven up-on him for to see.

His helm to-hewen was in twenty places,  
That by a tissew heng, his bak bihinde,  
His sheld to-dashed was with swerdes and maces,  
In which men mighte many an arwe finde  
That thirled hadde horn and nerf and rinde;  
And ay the peple cryde, 'Here cometh our Ioye,  
And, next his brother, holdere up of Troye!'

For which he wex a litel reed for shame,  
Whan he the peple up-on him herde cryen,  
That to biholde it was a noble game,  
How sobreliche he caste doun his yen.  
Cryseyda gan al his chere aspyen,  
And leet so softe it in hir herte sinke,  
That to hir-self she seyde, 'Who yaf me drinke?'

For of hir owene thought she wex al reed,  
Remembringe hir right thus, 'Lo, this is he  
Which that myn uncle swereth he moot be deed,

But I on him have mercy and pitee;  
And with that thought, for pure a-shamed, she  
Gan in hir heed to pulle, and that as faste,  
Whyl he and al the peple for-by paste,

And gan to caste and rollen up and doun  
With-inne hir thought his excellent prowesse,  
And his estat, and also his renoun,  
His wit, his shap, and eek his gentillesse;  
But most hir favour was, for his distresse  
Was al for hir, and thoughte it was a routhe  
To sleen swich oon, if that he mente trouthe.

Now mighte som envyous Iangle thus,  
'This was a sodeyn love; how mighte it be  
That she so lightly lovede Troilus  
Right for the firste sighte; ye, pardee?'  
Now who-so seyth so, mote he never thee!  
For every thing, a ginning hath it nede  
Er al be wrought, with-outen any drede.

For I sey nought that she so sodeynly  
Yaf him hir love, but that she gan enclyne  
To lyke him first, and I have told yow why;  
And after that, his manhod and his pyne  
Made love with-inne hir for to myne,  
For which, by proces and by good servyse,  
He gat hir love, and in no sodeyn wyse.

And also blisful Venus, wel arayed,  
Sat in hir seventhe hous of hevene tho,  
Disposed wel, and with aspectes payed,  
To helpen sely Troilus of his wo.  
And, sooth to seyn, she nas not al a fo  
To Troilus in his nativitee;  
God woot that wel the soner spedde he.

Now lat us stinte of Troilus a throwe,  
That rydeth forth, and lat us tourne faste  
Un-to Criseyde, that heng hir heed ful lowe,  
Ther-as she sat allone, and gan to caste  
Wher-on she wolde apoynte hir at the laste,

If it so were hir eem ne wolde cesse,  
For Troilus, up-on hir for to presse.

And, lord! So she gan in hir thought argue  
In this matere of which I have yow told,  
And what to doon best were, and what eschue,  
That plyted she ful ofte in many fold.  
Now was hir herte warm, now was it cold,  
And what she thoughte somewhat shal I wryte,  
As to myn auctor listeth for to endyte.

She thoughte wel that Troilus persone  
She knew by sighte and eek his gentillesse,  
And thus she seyde, 'Al were it nought to done,  
To graunte him love, yet, for his worthinesse,  
It were honour, with pley and with gladnesse,  
In honestee, with swich a lord to dele,  
For myn estat, and also for his hele.

'Eek, wel wot I my kinges sone is he;  
And sith he hath to see me swich delyt,  
If I wolde utterly his sighte flee,  
Peraunter he mighte have me in dispyt,  
Thurgh which I mighte stonde in worse plyt;  
Now were I wys, me hate to purchace,  
With-outen nede, ther I may stonde in grace?

'In every thing, I woot, ther lyth mesure.  
For though a man forbede dronkenesse,  
He nought for-bet that every creature  
Be drinkelees for alwey, as I gesse;  
Eek sith I woot for me is his distresse,  
I ne oughte not for that thing him despyse,  
Sith it is so, he meneth in good wyse.

'And eek I knowe, of longe tyme agoon,  
His thewes goode, and that he is not nyce.  
Ne avauntour, seyth men, certein, he is noon;  
To wys is he to do so gret a vyce;  
Ne als I nel him never so cheryce,  
That he may make avaunt, by Iuste cause;  
He shal me never binde in swiche a clause.

'Now set a cas, the hardest is, y-wis,  
Men mighten deme that he loveth me;  
What dishonour were it un-to me, this?  
May I him lette of that? Why nay, pardee!  
I knowe also, and alday here and see,  
Men loven wommen al this toun aboute;  
Be they the wers? Why, nay, with-outen doute.

'I think eek how he able is for to have  
Of al this noble toun the thriftieste,  
To been his love, so she hir honour save;  
For out and out he is the worthieste,  
Save only Ector, which that is the beste.  
And yet his lyf al lyth now in my cure,  
But swich is love, and eek myn aventure.

'Ne me to love, a wonder is it nought;  
For wel wot I my-self, so god me spede,  
Al wolde I that noon wiste of this thought,  
I am oon the fayreste, out of drede,  
And goodlieste, who-so taketh hede;  
And so men seyn in al the toun of Troye.  
What wonder is it though he of me have Ioye?

'I am myn owene woman, wel at ese,  
I thank it god, as after myn estat;  
Right yong, and stonde unteyd in lusty lese,  
With-outen Ialousye or swich debat;  
Shal noon housbonde seyn to me "Chekmat!"  
For either they ben ful of Ialousye,  
Or maisterful, or loven novelrye.

'What shal I doon? To what fyn live I thus?  
Shal I nat loven, in cas if that me leste?  
What, par dieux! I am nought religious!  
And though that I myn herte sette at reste  
Upon this knight, that is the worthieste,  
And kepe alwey myn honour and my name,  
By alle right, it may do me no shame.'

But right as whan the sonne shyneth brighte,

In March, that chaungeth ofte tyme his face,  
And that a cloud is put with wind to flighte  
Which over-sprat the sonne as for a space,  
A cloudy thought gan thorough hir soule pace,  
That over-spradde hir brighte thoughtes alle,  
So that for fere almost she gan to falle.

That thought was this: 'Allas! Sin I am free,  
Sholde I now love, and putte in Iupartye  
My sikernesse, and thrallen libertee?  
Allas! How dorste I thenken that folye?  
May I nought wel in other folk aspye  
Hir dredful Ioye, hir constreynt, and hir peyne?  
Ther loveth noon, that she nath why to pleyne.

'For love is yet the moste stormy lyf,  
Right of him-self, that ever was bigonne;  
For ever som mistrust, or nyce stryf,  
Ther is in love, som cloud is over that sonne:  
Ther-to we wrecched wommen no-thing conne,  
Whan us is wo, but wepe and sitte and thinke;  
Our wreche is this, our owene wo to drinke.

'Also these wikked tonges been so prest  
To speke us harm, eek men be so untrewe,  
That, right anoon as cessed is hir lest,  
So cesseth love, and forth to love a newe:  
But harm y-doon, is doon, who-so it rewe.  
For though these men for love hem first to-rende,  
Ful sharp biginning breketh ofte at ende.

'How ofte tyme hath it y-knowen be,  
The treson, that to womman hath be do?  
To what fyn is swich love, I can nat see,  
Or wher bicometh it, whan it is ago;  
Ther is no wight that woot, I trowe so,  
Wher it bycomth; lo, no wight on it sporneth;  
That erst was no-thing, in-to nought it torneth.

'How bisy, if I love, eek moste I be  
To plesen hem that Iangle of love, and demen,  
And coye hem, that they sey non harm of me?

For though ther be no cause, yet hem semen  
Al be for harm that folk hir freendes quemen;  
And who may stoppen every wikked tonge,  
Or soun of belles whyl that they be ronge?'

And after that, hir thought bigan to clere,  
And seyde, 'He which that no-thing under-taketh,  
No thing ne acheveth, be him looth or dere.'  
And with an other thought hir herte quaketh;  
Than slepeth hope, and after dreed awaketh;  
Now hoot, now cold; but thus, bi-twixen tweye,  
She rist hir up, and went hir for to pleye.

Adoun the steyre anoon-right tho she wente  
In-to the gardin, with hir neces three,  
And up and doun ther made many a wente,  
Flexippe, she, Tharbe, and Antigone,  
To pleyen, that it Ioye was to see;  
And othere of hir wommen, a gret route,  
hir folwede in the gardin al aboute.

This yerd was large, and rayled alle the aleyes,  
And shadwed wel with blosmy bowes grene,  
And benched newe, and sonded alle the weyes,  
In which she walketh arm in arm bi-twene;  
Til at the laste Antigone the shene  
Gan on a Troian song to singe clere,  
That it an heven was hir voys to here. --

She seyde, 'O love, to whom I have and shal  
Ben humble subgit, trewe in myn entente,  
As I best can, to yow, lord, yeve ich al  
For ever-more, myn hertes lust to rente.  
For never yet thy grace no wight sente  
So blisful cause as me, my lyf to lede  
In alle Ioye and seurtee, out of drede.

'Ye, blisful god, han me so wel beset  
In love, y-wis, that al that bereth lyf  
Imaginen ne cowde how to ben bet;  
For, lord, with-uten Ialousye or stryf,  
I love oon which that is most ententyf

To serven wel, unwery or unfeyned,  
That ever was, and leest with harm distreyned.

'As he that is the welle of worthinesse,  
Of trouthe ground, mirour of goodliheed,  
Of wit Appollo, stoon of sikernesse,  
Of vertu rote, of lust findere and heed,  
Thurgh which is alle sorwe fro me deed,  
Y-wis, I love him best, so doth he me;  
Now good thrift have he, wher-so that he be!

'Whom sholde I thanke but yow, god of love,  
Of al this blisse, in which to bathe I ginne?  
And thanked be ye, lord, for that I love!  
This is the righte lyf that I am inne,  
To flemen alle manere vyce and sinne:  
This doth me so to vertu for to entende,  
That day by day I in my wil amende.

'And who-so seyth that for to love is vyce,  
Or thraldom, though he fele in it distresse,  
He outhere is envyous, or right nyce,  
Or is unmighty, for his shrewednesse,  
To loven; for swich maner folk, I gesse,  
Defamen love, as no-thing of him knowe;  
Thei speken, but they bente never his bowe.

'What is the sonne wers, of kinde righte,  
Though that a man, for feblesse of his yen,  
May nought endure on it to see for brighte?  
Or love the wers, though wrecches on it cryen?  
No wele is worth, that may no sorwe dryen.  
And for-thy, who that hath an heed of verre,  
Fro cast of stones war him in the werre!

'But I with al myn herte and al my might,  
As I have seyde, wol love, un-to my laste,  
My dere herte, and al myn owene knight,  
In which myn herte growen is so faste,  
And his in me, that it shal ever laste.  
Al dredde I first to love him to biginne,  
Now woot I wel, ther is no peril inne.'



And of hir song right with that word she stente,  
And therwith-al, 'Now, nece,' quod Criseyde,  
'Who made this song with so good entente?'  
Antigone answerde anoon, and seyde,  
'Ma dame, y-wis, the goodlieste mayde  
Of greet estat in al the toun of Troye;  
And let hir lyf in most honour and Ioye.'

'Forsothe, so it semeth by hir song,'  
Quod tho Criseyde, and gan ther-with to syke,  
And seyde, 'Lord, is there swich blisse among  
These lovers, as they conne faire endyte?'  
'Ye, wis,' quod freshe Antigone the whyte,  
'For alle the folk that han or been on lyve  
Ne conne wel the blisse of love discryve.

'But wene ye that every wrecche woot  
The parfit blisse of love? Why, nay, y-wis;  
They wenen al be love, if oon be hoot;  
Do wey, do wey, they woot no-thing of this!  
Men mosten axe at seyntes if it is  
Aught fair in hevене; Why? For they conne telle;  
And axen fendes, is it foul in helle.'

Criseyde un-to that purpos nought answerde,  
But seyde, 'Y-wis, it wol be night as faste.'  
But every word which that she of hir herde,  
She gan to prenten in hir herte faste;  
And ay gan love hir lasse for to agaste  
Than it dide erst, and sinken in hir herte,  
That she wex somewhat able to converte.

The dayes honour, and the hevenes ye,  
The nightes fo, al this clepe I the sonne,  
Gan westren faste, and dounward for to wrye,  
As he that hadde his dayes cours y-ronne;  
And whyte thinges wexen dimme and donne  
For lak of light, and sterres for to appere,  
That she and al hir folk in wente y-fere.

So whan it lyked hir to goon to reste,

And voyded weren they that voyden oughte,  
She seyde, that to slepe wel hir leste.  
Hir wommen sone til hir bed hir broughte.  
Whan al was hust, than lay she stille, and thoughte  
Of al this thing the manere and the wyse.  
Reherce it nedeth nought, for ye ben wyse.

A nightingale, upon a cedre grene,  
Under the chambre-wal ther as she lay,  
Ful loude sang ayein the mone shene,  
Paraunter, in his briddes wyse, a lay  
Of love, that made hir herte fresh and gay.  
That herkned she so longe in good entente,  
Til at the laste the dede sleep hir hente.

And as she sleep, anoon-right tho hir mette,  
How that an egle, fethered whyt as boon,  
Under hir brest his longe clawes sette,  
And out hir herte he rente, and that a-noon,  
And dide his herte in-to hir brest to goon,  
Of which she nought agroos, ne no-thing smerte,  
And forth he fleigh, with herte left for herte.

Now lat hir slepe, and we our tales holde  
Of Troilus, that is to paleys riden,  
Fro the scarmuch, of the whiche I tolde,  
And in his chaumbre sit, and hath abiden  
Til two or three of his messages yeden  
For Pandarus, and soughten him ful faste,  
Til they him founde and broughte him at the laste.

This Pandarus com leping in at ones,  
And seiyde thus: 'Who hath ben wel y-bete  
To-day with swerdes, and with slinge-stones,  
But Troilus, that hath caught him an hete?'  
And gan to Iape, and seyde, 'Lord, so ye swete!  
But rys, and lat us soupe and go to reste;'  
And he answerde him, 'Do we as thee leste.'

With al the haste goodly that they mighte,  
They spedde hem fro the souper un-to bedde;  
And every wight out at the dore him dighte,

And wher him liste upon his wey him spedde;  
But Troilus, that thoughte his herte bledde  
For wo, til that he herde som tydinge,  
He seyde, 'Freend, shal I now wepe or singe?'

Quod Pandarus, 'Ly stille and lat me slepe,  
And don thyn hood, thy nedes spedde be;  
And chese, if thou wolt singe or daunce or lepe;  
At shorte wordes, thow shal trowe me. --  
Sire, my nece wol do wel by thee,  
And love thee best, by god and by my trouthe,  
But lak of pursuit make it in thy slouthe.

'For thus ferforth I have thy work bigonne,  
Fro day to day, til this day, by the morwe,  
Hir love of freendship have I to thee wonne,  
And also hath she leyd hir feyth to borwe.  
Algate a foot is hameled of thy sorwe.'  
What sholde I lenger sermon of it holde?  
As ye han herd bifore, al he him tolde.

But right as floures, thorough the colde of night  
Y-closed, stoupen on hir stalke lowe,  
Redressen hem a-yein the sonne bright,  
And spreden on hir kinde cours by rowe,  
Right so gan tho his eyen up to throwe  
This Troilus, and seyde, 'O Venus dere,  
Thy might, thy grace, y-heried be it here!'

And to Pandare he held up bothe his hondes,  
And seyde, 'Lord, al thyn be that I have;  
For I am hool, al brosten been my bondes;  
A thousand Troians who so that me yave,  
Eche after other, god so wis me save,  
Ne mighte me so gladen; lo, myn herte,  
It spredeth so for Ioye, it wol to-sterete!

'But Lord, how shal I doon, how shal I liven?  
Whan shal I next my dere herte see?  
How shal this longe tyme a-wey be driven,  
Til that thou be ayein at hir fro me?  
Thou mayst answer, "A-byd, a-byd," but he

That hangeth by the nekke, sooth to seyne,  
In grete disese abydeth for the peyne.'

'Al esily, now, for the love of Marte,'  
Quod Pandarus, 'for every thing hath tyme;  
So longe abyd til that the night departe;  
For al so siker as thow lyst here by me,  
And god toforn, I wol be there at pryme,  
And for thy werk somewhat as I shal seye,  
Or on som other wight this charge leye.

'For pardee, god wot, I have ever yit  
Ben redy thee to serve, and to this night  
Have I nought fayned, but emforth my wit  
Don al thy lust, and shal with al my might.  
Do now as I shal seye, and fare a-right;  
And if thou nilt, wyte al thy-self thy care,  
On me is nought along thyn yvel fare.

'I woot wel that thow wyser art than I  
A thousand fold, but if I were as thou,  
God help me so, as I wolde outrely,  
Right of myn owene hond, wryte hir right now  
A lettre, in which I wolde hir tellen how  
I ferde amis, and hir beseche of routhe;  
Now help thy-self, and leve it not for slouthe.

'And I my-self shal ther-with to hir goon;  
And whan thou wost that I am with hir there,  
Worth thou up-on a courser right anoon,  
Ye, hardily, right in thy beste gere,  
And ryd forth by the place, as nought ne were,  
And thou shalt finde us, if I may, sittinge  
At som windowe, in-to the strete lokinge.

'And if thee list, than maystow us saluwe,  
And up-on me make thy contenance;  
But, by thy lyf, be war and faste eschuwe  
To tarien ought, god shilde us fro mischaunce!  
Ryd forth thy wey, and hold thy governaunce;  
And we shal speke of thee som-what, I trowe,  
Whan Thou art goon, to do thyne eres glowe!

'Touching thy lettre, thou art wys y-nough,  
I woot thow nilt it digneliche endyte;  
As make it with thise argumentes tough;  
Ne scrivenish or craftily thou it wryte;  
Beblotte it with thy teres eek a lyte;  
And if thou wryte a goodly word al softe,  
Though it be good, reherce it not to ofte.

'For though the beste harpoure upon lyve  
Wolde on the beste souned Ioly harpe  
That ever was, with alle his fingres fyve,  
Touche ay o streng, or ay o werbul harpe,  
Were his nayles poynted never so sharpe,  
It shulde maken every wight to dulle,  
To here his glee, and of his strokes fulle.

'Ne Iompre eek no discordaunt thing y-fere,  
As thus, to usen termes of phisyk;  
In loves termes, hold of thy matere  
The forme alwey, and do that it be lyk;  
For if a peyntour wolde peynte a pyk  
With asses feet, and hede it as an ape,  
It cordeth nought; so nere it but a Iape.'

This counseyl lyked wel to Troilus;  
But, as a dreedful lover, he seyde this: --  
'Allas, my dere brother Pandarus,  
I am ashamed for to wryte, y-wis,  
Lest of myn innocence I seyde a-mis,  
Or that she nolde it for despyt receyve;  
Thanne were I deed, ther mighte it no-thing weyve.'

To that Pandare answerde, 'If thee lest,  
Do that I seye, and lat me therwith goon;  
For by that lord that formed est and west,  
I hope of it to bringe answer anoon  
Right of hir hond, and if that thou nilt noon,  
Lat be; and sory mote he been his lyve,  
Ayeins thy lust that helpeth thee to thryve.'

Quod Troilus, 'Depardieux, I assente;

Sin that thee list, I will aryse and wryte;  
And blisful god preye ich, with good entente,  
The vyage, and the lettre I shal endyte,  
So spede it; and thou, Minerva, the whyte,  
Yif thou me wit my lettre to devyse:'  
And sette him doun, and wroot right in this wyse. --

First he gan hir his righte lady calle,  
His hertes lyf, his lust, his sorwes leche,  
His blisse, and eek these othere termes alle,  
That in swich cas these loveres alle seche;  
And in ful humble wyse, as in his speche,  
He gan him recomaunde un-to hir grace;  
To telle al how, it axeth muchel space.

And after this, ful lowly he hir prayde  
To be nought wrooth, though he, of his folye,  
So hardy was to hir to wryte, and seyde,  
That love it made, or elles moste he dye,  
And pitously gan mercy for to crye;  
And after that he seyde, and ley ful loude,  
Him-self was litel worth, and lesse he coude;

And that she sholde han his conning excused,  
That litel was, and eek he dredde hir so,  
And his unworthinesse he ay acused;  
And after that, than gan he telle his woo;  
But that was endeles, with-outen ho;  
And seyde, he wolde in trouthe alwey him holde; --  
And radde it over, and gan the lettre folde.

And with his salte teres gan he bathe  
The ruby in his signet, and it sette  
Upon the wex deliverliche and rathe;  
Ther-with a thousand tymes, er he lette,  
He kiste tho the lettre that he shette,  
And seyde, 'Lettre, a blisful destenee  
Thee shapen is, my lady shal thee see.'

This Pandare took the lettre, and that by tyme  
A-morwe, and to his neces paleys sterte,  
And faste he swoor, that it was passed pryme,

And gan to Iape, and seyde, 'Y-wis, myn herte,  
So fresh it is, al-though it sore smerte,  
I may not slepe never a Mayes morwe;  
I have a Ioly wo, a lusty sorwe.'

Criseyde, whan that she hir uncle herde,  
With dreedful herte, and desirous to here  
The cause of his cominge, thus answerde:  
'Now by your feyth, myn uncle,' quod she, 'dere,  
What maner windes gydeth yow now here?  
Tel us your Ioly wo and your penaunce,  
How ferforth be ye put in loves daunce.'

'By god,' quod he, 'I hoppe alwey bihinde!'  
And she to-laugh, it thoughte hir herte breste.  
Quod Pandarus, 'Loke alwey that ye finde  
Game in myn hood, but herkneth, if yow leste;  
Ther is right now come in-to toune a geste,  
A Greek espye, and telleth newe thinges,  
For which I come to telle yow tydinges.

'Into the gardin go we, and we shal here,  
Al prevely, of this a long sermoun.'  
With that they wenten arm in arm y-fere  
In-to the gardin from the chaumbre doun.  
And whan that he so fer was that the soun  
Of that he speke, no man here mighte,  
He seyde hir thus, and out the lettre plighte,

'Lo, he that is al hoolly youres free  
Him recomaundeth lowly to your grace,  
And sent to you this lettre here by me;  
Avyseth you on it, whan ye han space,  
And of som goodly answeere yow purchace;  
Or, helpe me god, so pleyedly for to seyne,  
He may not longe liven for his peyne.'

Ful dredfully tho gan she stonde stille,  
And took it nought, but al hir humble chere  
Gan for to change, and seyde, 'Scrit ne bille,  
For love of god, that toucheth swich matere,  
Ne bring me noon; and also, uncle dere,

To myn estat have more reward, I preye,  
Than to his lust; what sholde I more seye?

'And loketh now if this be resonable,  
And letteth nought, for favour ne for slouthe,  
To seyn a sooth; now were it covenable  
To myn estat, by god, and by your trouthe,  
To taken it, or to han of him routhe,  
In harming of my-self or in repreve?  
Ber it a-yein, for him that ye on leve!'

This Pandarus gan on hir for to stare,  
And seyde, 'Now is this the grettest wonder  
That ever I sey! Lat be this nyce fare!  
To deethe mote I smiten be with thonder,  
If, for the citee which that stondest yonder,  
Wolde I a lettre un-to yow bringe or take  
To harm of yow; what list yow thus it make?

'But thus ye faren, wel neigh alle and some,  
That he that most desireth yow to serve,  
Of him ye recche leest wher he bcome,  
And whether that he live or elles sterve.  
But for al that that ever I may deserve,  
Refuse it nought,' quod he, and hente hir faste,  
And in hir bosom the lettre doun he thraste,

And seyde hire, 'Now cast it away anoon,  
That folk may seen and gauren on us tweye.'  
Quod she, 'I can abyde til they be goon,'  
And gan to smyle, and seyde hym, 'Eem, I preye,  
Swich answeere as yow list, your-self purveye,  
For trewely I nil no lettre wryte.'  
'No? than wol I,' quod he, 'so ye endyte.'

Therwith she lough, and seyde, 'Go we dyne.'  
And he gan at him-self to iape faste,  
And seyde, 'Nece, I have so greet a pyne  
For love, that every other day I faste' --  
And gan his beste Iapes forth to caste;  
And made hir so to laughe at his folye,  
That she for laughter wende for to dye.



And whan that she was comen in-to halle,  
'Now, eem,' quod she, 'we wol go dine anon;'  
And gan some of hir women to hir calle,  
And streyght in-to hir chaumbre gan she goon;  
But of hir businesses, this was oon  
A-monges othere thinges, out of drede,  
Ful prively this lettre for to rede;

Avysed word by word in every lyne,  
And fond no lak, she thoughte he coude good;  
And up it putte, and went hir in to dyne.  
But Pandarus, that in a study stood,  
Er he was war, she took him by the hood,  
And seyde, 'Ye were caught er that ye wiste;'  
'I vouche sauf,' quod he. 'do what yow liste.'

Tho wessen they, and sette hem doun and ete;  
And after noon ful sleyly Pandarus  
Gan drawe him to the window next the strete,  
And seyde, 'Nece, who hath arayed thus  
The yonder hous, that stant afor-yeyn us?'  
'Which hous?' quod she, and gan for to biholde,  
And knew it wel, and whos it was him tolde,

And fillen forth in speche of thinges smale,  
And seten in the window bothe tweye.  
Whan Pandarus saw tyme un-to his tale,  
And saw wel that hir folk were alle awaye,  
'Now, nece myn, tel on,' quod he; 'I seye,  
How liketh yow the lettre that ye woot?  
Can he ther-on? For, by my trouthe, I noot.'

Therwith al rosy hewed tho wex she,  
And gan to humme, and seyde, 'So I trowe.'  
'Aqyute him wel, for goddes love,' quod he;  
'My-self to medes wol the lettre sowe.'  
And held his hondes up, and sat on knowe,  
'Now, goode nece, be it never so lyte,  
Yif me the labour, it to sowe and plyte.'

'Ye, for I can so wryte,' quod she tho;

'And eek I noot what I sholde to him seye.'  
'Nay, nece,' quod Pandare, 'sey nat so;  
Yet at the leste thanketh him, I preye,  
Of his good wil, and doth him not to deye.  
Now for the love of me, my nece dere,  
Refuseth not at this tyme my preyere.'

'Depar-dieux,' quod she, 'God leve al be well!  
God help me so, this is the firste lettre  
That ever I wroot, ye, al or any del.'  
And in-to a closet, for to avyse hir better,  
She wente allone, and gan hir herte unfettere  
Out of disdaynes prison but a lyte;  
And sette hir doun, and gan a lettre wryte,

Of which to telle in short is myn entente  
Theffect, as fer as I can understonde: --  
She thonked him of al that he wel mente  
Towardes hir, but holden him in honde  
She nolde nought, ne make hir-selven bonde  
In love, but as his suster, him to plese,  
She wolde fayn to doon his herte an ese.

She shette it, and to Pandarus in gan goon,  
There as he sat and loked in-to the strete,  
And doun she sette hir by him on a stoon  
Of Iaspere, up-on a quissin gold y-bete,  
And seyde, 'As wisly helpe me god the grete,  
I never dide a thing with more peyne  
Than wryte this, to which ye me constreyne;'

And took it him: He thonked hir and seyde,  
'God woot, of thing ful ofte looth bigonne  
Cometh ende good; and nece myn, Criseyde,  
That ye to him of hard now ben y-wonne  
Oughte he be glad, by god and yonder sonne!  
For-why men seyth, "Impressiounes lighte  
Ful lightly been ay redy to the flighte.'

'But ye han played tyraunt neigh to longe,  
And hard was it your herte for to grave;  
Now stint, that ye no longer on it honge,

Al wolde ye the forme of daunger save.  
But hasteth yow to doon him Ioye have;  
For trusteth wel, to longe y-doon hardnesse  
Causeth despyt ful often, for destresse.'

And right as they declamed this matere,  
Lo, Troilus, right at the stretes ende,  
Com ryding with his tenthe some y-fere,  
Al softely, and thiderward gan bende  
Ther-as they sete, as was his way to wende  
To paleys-ward; and Pandare him aspyde,  
And seyde, 'Nece, y-see who cometh here ryde!

'O flee not in, he seeth us, I suppose;  
Lest he may thinke that ye him eschuwe.'  
'Nay, nay,' quod she, and wex as reed as rose.  
With that he gan hir humbly to saluwe  
With dreedful chere, and oft his hewes muwe;  
And up his look debonairly he caste,  
And bekked on Pandare, and forth he paste.

God woot if he sat on his hors a-right,  
Or goodly was beseyn, that ilke day!  
God woot wher he was lyk a manly knight!  
What sholde I drecche, or telle of his aray?  
Criseyde, which that alle these thinges say,  
To telle in short, hir lyked al y-fere,  
His persone, his aray, his look, his chere,

His goodly manere, and his gentillesse,  
So wel, that never, sith that she was born,  
Ne hadde she swich routhe of his distresse;  
And how-so she hath hard ben her-biforn,  
To god hope I, she hath now caught a thorn,  
She shal not pulle it out this nexte wyke;  
God sende mo swich thornes on to pyke!

Pandare, which that stood hir faste by,  
Felte iren hoot, and he bigan to smyte,  
And seyde, 'Nece, I pray yow hertely,  
Tel me that I shal axen yow a lyte:  
A womman, that were of his deeth to wyte,

With-outen his gilt, but for hir lakked routhe,  
Were it wel doon?' Quod she, 'Nay, by my trouthe!'

'God help me so,' quod he, 'ye sey me sooth.  
Ye felen wel your-self that I not lye;  
Lo, yond he rit!' Quod she, 'Ye, so he dooth!'  
'Wel,' quod Pandare, 'as I have told yow thrye,  
Lat be youre nyce shame and youre folye,  
And spek with him in esing of his herte;  
Lat nycetee not do yow bothe smerte.'

But ther-on was to heven and to done;  
Considered al thing, it may not be;  
And why, for shame; and it were eek to sone  
To graunten him so greet a libertee.  
'For playnly hir entente,' as seyde she,  
'Was for to love him unwist, if she mighte,  
And guerdon him with no-thing but with sighte.'

But Pandarus thoughte, 'It shal not be so,  
If that I may; this nyce opinioun  
Shal not be holden fully yeres two.'  
What sholde I make of this a long sermoun?  
He moste assente on that conclusioun,  
As for the tyme; and whan that it was eve,  
And al was wel, he roos and took his leve.

And on his wey ful faste homward he spedde,  
And right for Ioye he felte his herte daunce;  
And Troilus he fond alone a-bedde,  
That lay as dooth these loveres, in a traunce,  
Bitwixen hope and derk desesperaunce.  
But Pandarus, right at his in-cominge,  
He song, as who seyth, 'Lo! Sumwhat I bringe,'

And seyde, 'Who is in his bed so sone  
Y-buried thus?' 'It am I, freend,' quod he.  
'Who, Troilus? Nay, helpe me so the mone,'  
Quod Pandarus, 'Thou shalt aryse and see  
A charme that was sent right now to thee,  
The which can helen thee of thyn accesse,  
If thou do forth-with al thy besinesse.'

'Ye, through the might of god!' quod Troilus.  
And Pandarus gan him the lettre take,  
And seyde, 'Pardee, god hath holpen us;  
Have here a light, and loke on al this blake.'  
But ofte gan the herte glade and quake  
Of Troilus, whyl that he gan it rede,  
So as the wordes yave him hope or drede.

But fynally, he took al for the beste  
That she him wroot, for somewhat he biheld  
On which, him thoughte, he mighte his herte reste,  
Al covered she the wordes under sheld.  
Thus to the more worthy part he held,  
That, what for hope and Pandarus biheste,  
His grete wo for-yede he at the leste.

But as we may alday our-selven see,  
Through more wode or col, the more fyr;  
Right so encrees hope, of what it be,  
Therwith ful ofte encreseth eek desyr;  
Or, as an ook cometh of a litel spyr,  
So through this lettre, which that she him sente,  
Encresen gan desyr, of which he brente.

Wherfore I seye alwey, that day and night  
This Troilus gan to desiren more  
Than he dide erst, thurgh hope, and dide his might  
To pressen on, as by Pandarus lore,  
And wryten to hir of his sorwes sore  
Fro day to day; he leet it not refreyde,  
That by Pandare he wroot somewhat or seyde;

And dide also his othere observaunces  
That to a love longeth in this cas;  
And, after that these dees turnede on chaunces,  
So was he outhere glad or seyde 'Allas!'  
And held after his gestes ay his pas;  
And aftir swiche answeres as he hadde,  
So were his dayes sory outhere gladde.

But to Pandare alwey was his recours,

And pitously gan ay til him to pleyne,  
And him bisoughte of rede and som socours;  
And Pandarus, that sey his wode peyne,  
Wex wel neigh deed for routhe, sooth to seyne,  
And bisily with al his herte caste  
Som of his wo to sleen, and that as faste;

And seyde, 'Lord, and freend, and brother dere,  
God woot that thy disese dooth me wo.  
But woltow stinten al this woful chere,  
And, by my trouthe, or it be dayes two,  
And god to-forn, yet shal I shape it so,  
That thou shalt come in-to a certayn place,  
Ther-as thou mayst thy-self hir preye of grace.

'And certainly, I noot if thou it wost,  
But tho that been expert in love it seye,  
It is oon of the thinges that furthereth most,  
A man to have a leyser for to preye,  
And siker place his wo for to biwreye;  
For in good herte it moot som routhe impresse,  
To here and see the giltles in distresse.

'Paraunter thenkestow: though it be so  
That kinde wolde doon hir to biginne  
To han a maner routhe up-on my wo,  
Seyth Daunger, "Nay, thou shalt me never winne;  
So reuleth hir hir hertes goost with-inne,  
That, though she bende, yet she stant on rote;  
What in effect is this un-to my bote?"

'Thenk here-ayeins, whan that the sturdy ook,  
On which men hakketh ofte, for the nones,  
Receyved hath the happy falling strook,  
The grete sweigh doth it come al at ones,  
As doon these rokkes or these milne-stones.  
For swifter cours cometh thing that is of wighte,  
Whan it descendeth, than don thinges lighte.

'And reed that boweth doun for every blast,  
Ful lightly, cesse wind, it wol aryse;  
But so nil not an ook whan it is cast;

It nedeth me nought thee longe to forbyse.  
Men shal reioysen of a greet emprise  
Acheved wel, and stant with-outen doute,  
Al han men been the lenger ther-about.

'But, Troilus, yet tel me, if thee lest,  
A thing now which that I shal axen thee;  
Which is thy brother that thou lovest best  
As in thy verray hertes privetee?'  
'Y-wis, my brother Deiphebus,' quod he.  
'Now,' quod Pandare, 'er houres twyes twelve,  
He shal thee ese, unwist of it him-selve.

'Now lat me allone, and werken as I may,'  
Quod he; and to Deiphebus wente he tho  
Which hadde his lord and grete freend ben ay;  
Save Troilus, no man he lovede so.  
To telle in short, with-outen wordes mo,  
Quod Pandarus, 'I pray yow that ye be  
Freend to a cause which that toucheth me.'

'Yis, pardee,' quod Deiphebus, 'wel thow wost,  
In al that ever I may, and god to-fore,  
Al nere it but for man I love most,  
My brother Troilus; but sey wherfore  
It is; for sith that day that I was bore,  
I nas, ne never-mo to been I thinke,  
Ayeins a thing that mighte thee for-thinke.'

Pandare gan him thonke, and to him seyde,  
'Lo, sire, I have a lady in this toun,  
That is my nece, and called is Criseyde,  
Which some men wolden doon oppressioun,  
And wrongfully have hir possessioun:  
Wherfor I of your lordship yow biseche  
To been our freend, with-oute more speche.'

Deiphebus him answerde, 'O, is not this,  
That thow spekest of to me thus straungely,  
Criseyda, my freend?' He seyde, 'Yis.'  
'Than nedeth,' quod Deiphebus, 'hardely,  
Na-more to speke, for trusteth wel, that I

Wol be hir champioun with spore and yerde;  
I roughte nought though alle hir foos it herde.

'But tel me how, thou that woost al this matere,  
How I might best avaylen? Now lat see.'  
Quod Pandarus; 'If ye, my lord so dere,  
Wolden as now don this honour to me,  
To preyen hir to-morwe, lo, that she  
Come un-to yow hir pleyntes to devyse,  
Hir adversaries wolde of it agryse.

'And if I more dorste preye as now,  
And chargen yow to have so greet travayle,  
To han som of your bretheren here with yow,  
That mighten to hir cause bet avayle,  
Than, woot I wel, she mighte never fayle  
For to be holpen, what at your instaunce,  
What with hir othere freendes governaunce.'

Deiphebus, which that comen was, of kinde,  
To al honour and bountee to consente,  
Answerde, 'It shal be doon; and I can finde  
Yet gretter help to this in myn entente.  
What wolt thou seyn, if I for Eleyne sente  
To speke of this? I trowe it be the beste;  
For she may leden Paris as hir leste.

'Of Ector, which that is my lord, my brother,  
It nedeth nought to preye him freend to be;  
For I have herd him, o tyme and eek other,  
Speke of Criseyde swich honour, that he  
May seyn no bet, swich hap to him hath she.  
It nedeth nought his helpes for to crave;  
He shal be swich, right as we wole him have.

'Spek thou thy-self also to Troilus  
On my bihalve, and pray him with us dyne.'  
'Sire, al this shal be doon,' quod Pandarus;  
And took his leve, and never gan to fyne,  
But to his neces hous, as streyt as lyne,  
He com; and fond hir fro the mete aryse;  
And sette him doun, and spak right in this wyse.



He seyde, 'O veray god, so have I ronne!  
Lo, nece myn, see ye nought how I swete?  
I noot whether ye the more thank me conne.  
Be ye nought war how that fals Poliphete  
Is now aboute eft-sones for to plete,  
And bringe on yow advocacyes newe?'  
'I? No,' quod she, and chaunged al hir hewe.

'What is he more aboute, me to drecche  
And doon me wrong? What shal I do, allas?  
Yet of him-self no-thing ne wolde I recche,  
Nere it for Antenor and Eneas,  
That been his freendes in swich maner cas;  
But, for the love of god, myn uncle dere,  
No fors of that; lat him have al y-fere;

'With-uten that I have ynough for us.'  
'Nay,' quod Pandare, 'it shal no-thing be so.  
For I have been right now at Deiphebus,  
And Ector, and myne othere lordes mo,  
And shortly maked eche of hem his fo;  
That, by my thrift, he shal it never winne  
For ought he can, whan that so he biginne.'

And as they casten what was best to done,  
Deiphebus, of his owene curtasye,  
Com hir to preye, in his propre persone,  
To holde him on the morwe companye  
At diner, which she nolde not denye,  
But goodly gan to his preyere obeye.  
He thonked hir, and wente up-on his weye.

Whanne this was doon, this Pandare up a-noon,  
To telle in short, and forth gan for to wende  
To Troilus, as stille as any stoon;  
And al this thing he tolde him, word and ende;  
And how that he Deiphebus gan to blende;  
And seyde him, 'Now is tyme, if that thou conne,  
To bere thee wel to-morwe, and al is wonne.

'Now spek, now prey, now pitously compleyne;

Lat not for nyce shame, or drede, or slouthe;  
Som-tyme a man mot telle his owene peyne;  
Bileve it, and she shal han on thee routhe;  
Thou shalt be saved by thy feyth, in trouthe.  
But wel wot I, thou art now in a drede;  
And what it is, I leye, I can arede.

'Thow thinkest now, "How sholde I doon al this?  
For by my cheres mosten folk aspye,  
That for hir love is that I fare a-mis;  
Yet hadde I lever unwist for sorwe dye."  
Now think not so, for thou dost greet folye.  
For I right now have founden o manere  
Of sleighte, for to coveren al thy chere.

'Thow shalt gon over night, and that as blyve,  
Un-to Deiphebus hous, as thee to pleye,  
Thy maladye a-wey the bet to dryve,  
For-why thou semest syk, soth for to seye.  
Sone after that, doun in thy bed thee leye,  
And sey, thow mayst no lenger up endure,  
And ly right there, and byde thyn aventure.

'Sey that thy fever is wont thee for to take  
The same tyme, and lasten til a-morwe;  
And lat see now how wel thou canst it make,  
For, par-dee, syk is he that is in sorwe.  
Go now, farwel! And, Venus here to borwe,  
I hope, and thou this purpos holde ferme,  
Thy grace she shal fully ther conferme.'

Quod Troilus, 'Y-wis, thou nedelees  
Conseylest me, that sykliche I me feyne,  
For I am syk in earnest, doutelees,  
So that wel neigh I sterve for the peyne.'  
Quod Pandarus, 'Thou shalt the bettre pleyne,  
And hast the lasse need to countrefete;  
For him men demen hoot that men seen swete.

'Lo, holde thee at thy triste cloos, and I  
Shal wel the deer un-to thy bowe dryve.'  
Therwith he took his leve al softely,

And Troilus to paleys wente blyve.  
So glad ne was he never in al his lyve;  
And to Pandarus reed gan al assente,  
And to Deiphebus hous at night he wente.

What nedeth yow to tellen al the chere  
That Deiphebus un-to his brother made,  
Or his accesse, or his siklych manere,  
How men gan him with clothes for to lade,  
Whan he was leyde, and how men wolde him glade?  
But al for nought; he held forth ay the wyse  
That ye han herd Pandare er this devyse.

But certeyn is, er Troilus him leyde,  
Deiphebus had him prayed, over night,  
To been a freend and helping to Criseyde.  
God woot, that he it grauntede anon-right,  
To been hir fulle freend with al his might.  
But swich a nede was to preye him thenne,  
As for to bidde a wood man for to renne.

The morwen com, and neighen gan the tyme  
Of meel-tyd, that the faire quene Eleyne  
Shoop hir to been, an houre after the pryme,  
With Deiphebus, to whom she nolde feyne;  
But as his suster, hoomly, sooth to seyne,  
She com to diner in hir playn entente.  
But god and Pandare wiste al what this mente.

Com eek Criseyde, al innocent of this,  
Antigone, hir sister Tarbe also;  
But flee we now prolixitee best is,  
For love of god, and lat us faste go  
Right to the effect, with-oute tales mo,  
Why al this folk assembled in this place;  
And lat us of hir saluinges pace.

Gret honour dide hem Deiphebus, certeyn,  
And fedde hem wel with al that mighte lyke.  
But ever-more, 'Allas!' was his refreyn,  
'My goode brother Troilus, the syke,  
Lyth yet"--and therwith-al he gan to syke;

And after that, he peyned him to glade  
Hem as he mighte, and chere good he made.

Compleyned eek Eleyne of his syknesse  
So feithfully, that pitee was to here,  
And every wight gan waxen for accesse  
A leche anoon, and seyde, 'In this manere  
Men curen folk; this charme I wol yow lere.'  
But ther sat oon, al list hir nought to teche,  
That thoughte, best coude I yet been his leche.

After compleynt, him gonnen they to preyse,  
As folk don yet, whan som wight hath bigonne  
To preyse a man, and up with prys him reyse  
A thousand fold yet hyer than the sonne: --  
'He is, he can, that fewe lordes conne.'  
And Pandarus, of that they wolde afferme,  
He not for-gat hir preysing to conferme.

Herde al this thing Criseyde wel y-nough,  
And every word gan for to notifye;  
For which with sobre chere hir herte lough;  
For who is that ne wolde hir glorifye,  
To mowen swich a knight don live or dye?  
But al passe I, lest ye to longe dwelle;  
For for o fyn is al that ever I telle.

The tyme com, fro diner for to ryse,  
And, as hem oughte, arisen everychoon,  
And gonne a while of this and that devyse.  
But Pandarus brak al this speche anoon,  
And seyde to Deiphebus, 'Wole ye goon,  
If youre wille be, as I yow preyde,  
To speke here of the nedes of Criseyde?'

Eleyne, which that by the hond hir held,  
Took first the tale, and seyde, 'Go we blyve;'  
And goodly on Criseyde she biheld,  
And seyde, 'Ioves lat him never thryve,  
That dooth yow harm, and bringe him sone of lyve!  
And yeve me sorwe, but he shal it rewe,  
If that I may, and alle folk be trewe.'

'Tel thou thy neces cas,' quod Deiphebus  
To Pandarus, 'for thou canst best it telle.' --  
'My lordes and my ladyes, it stant thus;  
What sholde I lenger,' quod he, 'do yow dwelle?'  
He rong hem out a proces lyk a belle,  
Up-on hir fo, that highte Poliphete,  
So heynous, that men mighte on it spete.

Answerde of this ech worse of hem than other,  
And Poliphete they gonnen thus to warien,  
'An-honged be swich oon, were he my brother;  
And so he shal, for it ne may not varien.'  
What sholde I lenger in this tale tarien?  
Pleyedly, alle at ones, they hir highten  
To been hir helpe in al that ever they mighten.

Spak than Eleyne, and seyde, 'Pandarus,  
Woot ought my lord, my brother, this matere,  
I mene, Ector? Or woot it Troilus?'  
He seyde, 'Ye, but wole ye now me here?  
Me thinketh this, sith Troilus is here,  
It were good, if that ye wolde assente,  
She tolde hir-self him al this, er she wente.

'For he wole have the more hir grief at herte,  
By cause, lo, that she a lady is;  
And, by your leve, I wol but right in sterte,  
And do yow wite, and that anoon, y-wis,  
If that he slepe, or wole ought here of this.'  
And in he lepte, and seyde him in his ere,  
'God have thy soule, y-brought have I thy bere!'

To smylen of this gan tho Troilus,  
And Pandarus, with-oute rekeninge,  
Out wente anoon to Eleyne and Deiphebus,  
And seyde hem, 'So there be no taryinge,  
Ne more pres, he wol wel that ye bringe  
Criseyda, my lady, that is here;  
And as he may enduren, he wole here.

'But wel ye woot, the chaumbre is but lyte,

And fewe folk may lightly make it warm;  
Now loketh ye, (for I wol have no wyte,  
To bringe in prees that mighte doon him harm  
Or him disesen, for my bettre arm),  
Wher it be bet she byde til eft-sones;  
Now loketh ye, that knowen what to doon is.

'I sey for me, best is, as I can knowe,  
That no wight in ne wente but ye tweye,  
But it were I, for I can, in a throwe,  
Reherce hir cas unlyk that she can seye;  
And after this, she may him ones preye  
To ben good lord, in short, and take hir leve;  
This may not muchel of his ese him reve.

'And eek, for she is straunge, he wol forbere  
His ese, which that him thar nought for yow;  
Eek other thing that toucheth not to here,  
He wol me telle, I woot it wel right now,  
That secret is, and for the tounes prow.'  
And they, that no-thing knewe of his entente,  
With-oute more, to Troilus in they wente.

Eleyne, in al hir goodly softe wyse,  
Gan him saluwe, and womanly to pleye,  
And seyde, 'Ywis, ye moste alweyes aryse!  
Now fayre brother, beth al hool, I preye!  
And gan hir arm right over his sholder leye,  
And him with al hir wit to recomforte;  
As she best coude, she gan him to disporte.

So after this quod she, 'We yow biseke,  
My dere brother, Deiphebus and I,  
For love of god, and so doth Pandare eke,  
To been good lord and freend, right hertely,  
Un-to Criseyde, which that certainly  
Receyveth wrong, as woot wel here Pandare,  
That can hir cas wel bet than I declare.'

This Pandarus gan newe his tunge affyle,  
And al hir cas reherce, and that anoon;  
Whan it was seyde, sone after, in a whyle,

Quod Troilus, 'As sone as I may goon,  
I wol right fayn with al my might ben oon,  
Have god my trouthe, hir cause to sustene.'  
'Good thrift have ye,' quod Eleyne the quene.

Quod Pandarus, 'And it your wille be  
That she may take hir leve, er that she go?'  
'O, elles god for-bede,' tho quod he,  
'If that she vouche sauf for to do so.'  
And with that word quod Troilus, 'Ye two,  
Deiphebus, and my suster leef and dere,  
To yow have I to speke of o matere,

'To been avysed by your reed the better': --  
And fond, as hap was, at his beddes heed,  
The copie of a tretis and a lettre,  
That Ector hadde him sent to axen reed,  
If swich a man was worthy to ben deed,  
Woot I nought who; but in a grisly wyse  
He preyede hem anon on it avyse.

Deiphebus gan this lettre to unfolde  
In earnest greet; so did Eleyne the quene;  
And rominge outward, fast it gan biholde,  
Downward a steyre, in-to an herber grene.  
This ilke thing they redden hem bi-twene;  
And largely, the mountaunce of an houre,  
Thei gonne on it to reden and to poure.

Now lat hem rede, and turne we anon  
To Pandarus, that gan ful faste pryde  
That al was wel, and out he gan to goon  
In-to the grete chambre, and that in hie,  
And seyde, 'God save al this companye!  
Com, nece myn; my lady quene Eleyne  
Abydeth yow, and eek my lordes tweyne.

'Rys, take with yow your nece Antigone,  
Or whom yow list, or no fors, hardily;  
The lesse prees, the bet; com forth with me,  
And loke that ye thonke humbly  
Hem alle three, and, whan ye may goodly

Your tyme y-see, taketh of hem your leve,  
Lest we to longe his restes him bireve.'

Al innocent of Pandarus entente,  
Quod tho Criseyde, 'Go we, uncle dere';  
And arm in arm inward with him she wente,  
Avysed wel hir wordes and hir chere;  
And Pandarus, in earnestful manere,  
Seyde, 'Alle folk, for goddes love, I preye,  
Stinteth right here, and softly yow pleye.

'Aviseth yow what folk ben here with-inne,  
And in what plyt oon is, god him amende!  
And inward thus ful softly biginne;  
Nece, I conjure and heighly yow defende,  
On his half, which that sowle us alle sende,  
And in the vertue of corounes tweyne,  
Slee nought this man, that hath for yow this peyne!

'Fy on the devel! Thenk which oon he is,  
And in what plyt he lyth; com of anoon;  
Thenk al swich taried tyd, but lost it nis!  
That wol ye bothe seyn, whan ye ben oon.  
Secoundelich, ther yet devyneth noon  
Up-on yow two; come of now, if ye conne;  
Whyl folk is blent, lo, al the tyme is wonne!

'In titering, and pursuite, and delayes,  
The folk devyne at wagginge of a stree;  
And though ye wolde han after merye dayes,  
Than dar ye nought, and why? For she, and she  
Spak swich a word; thus loked he, and he;  
Lest tyme I loste, I dar not with yow dele;  
Com of therfore, and bringeth him to hele.'

But now to yow, ye lovers that ben here,  
Was Troilus nought in a cankedort,  
That lay, and mighte whispringe of hem here,  
And thoughte, 'O lord, right now renneth my sort  
Fully to dye, or han anoon comfort';  
And was the firste tyme he shulde hir preye  
Of love; O mighty god, what shal he seye?



Explicit Secundus Liber.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Troilus And Criseyde: Book 03

Incipit prohemium tercii libri.

O blisful light of whiche the bemes clere  
Adorneth al the thridde hevene faire!  
O sonnes lief, O Ioves doughter dere,  
Plesaunce of love, O goodly debonaire,  
In gentil hertes ay redy to repaire!  
O verray cause of hele and of gladnesse,  
Y-heried be thy might and thy goodnesse!

In hevene and helle, in erthe and salte see  
Is felt thy might, if that I wel descerne;  
As man, brid, best, fish, herbe and grene tree  
Thee fele in tymes with vapour eterne.  
God loveth, and to love wol nought werne;  
And in this world no lyves creature,  
With-outen love, is worth, or may endure.

Ye Ioves first to thilke effectes glade,  
Thorugh which that thinges liven alle and be,  
Comeveden, and amorous him made  
On mortal thing, and as yow list, ay ye  
Yeve him in love ese or adversitee;  
And in a thousand formes doun him sente  
For love in erthe, and whom yow liste, he hente.

Ye fierse Mars apeysen of his ire,  
And, as yow list, ye maken hertes digne;  
Algates, hem that ye wol sette a-fyre,  
They dreden shame, and vices they resigne;  
Ye do hem corteys be, fresshe and benigne,  
And hye or lowe, after a wight entendeth;  
The Ioyes that he hath, your might him sendeth.

Ye holden regne and hous in unitee;  
Ye soothfast cause of frendship been also;  
Ye knowe al thilke covered qualitee  
Of thinges which that folk on wondren so,  
Whan they can not construe how it may io,

She loveth him, or why he loveth here;  
As why this fish, and nought that, comth to were.

Ye folk a lawe han set in universe,  
And this knowe I by hem that loveres be,  
That who-so stryveth with yow hath the werse:  
Now, lady bright, for thy benignitee,  
At reverence of hem that serven thee,  
Whos clerk I am, so techeth me devyse  
Som Ioye of that is felt in thy servyse.

Ye in my naked herte sentement  
Inhelde, and do me shewe of thy swetnesse. --  
Caliope, thy vois be now present,  
For now is nede; sestow not my destresse,  
How I mot telle anon-right the gladnesse  
Of Troilus, to Venus herynge?  
To which gladnes, who nede hath, god him bringe!

Explicit prohemium Tercii Libri.

Incipit Liber Tercius.

Lay al this mene whyle Troilus,  
Recordinge his lessoun in this manere,  
'Ma fey!' thought he, 'Thus wole I seye and thus;  
Thus wole I pleyne unto my lady dere;  
That word is good, and this shal be my chere;  
This nil I not foryeten in no wyse.'  
God leve him werken as he can devyse!

And, lord, so that his herte gan to quappe,  
Heringe hir come, and shorte for to syke!  
And Pandarus, that ledde hir by the lappe,  
Com ner, and gan in at the curtin pyke,  
And seyde, 'God do bote on alle syke!  
See, who is here yow comen to visyte;  
Lo, here is she that is your deeth to wyte.'

Ther-with it semed as he wepte almost;  
'A ha,' quod Troilus so rewfully,

'Wher me be wo, O mighty god, thow wost!  
Who is al there? I se nought trewely.'  
'Sire,' quod Criseyde, 'it is Pandare and I.'  
'Ye, swete herte? Allas, I may nought ryse  
To knele, and do yow honour in som wyse.'

And dressede him upward, and she right tho  
Gan bothe here hondes softe upon him leye,  
'O, for the love of god, do ye not so  
To me,' quod she, 'Ey! What is this to seye?  
Sire, come am I to yow for causes tweye;  
First, yow to thonke, and of your lordshipe eke  
Continuance I wolde yow biseke.'

This Troilus, that herde his lady preye  
Of lordship him, wex neither quik ne deed,  
Ne mighte a word for shame to it seye,  
Al-though men sholde smyten of his heed.  
But lord, so he wex sodeinliche reed,  
And sire, his lesson, that he wende conne,  
To preyen hir, is thurgh his wit y-ronne.

Cryseyde al this aspyede wel y-nough,  
For she was wys, and lovede him never-the-lasse,  
Al nere he malapert, or made it tough,  
Or was to bold, to singe a fool a masse.  
But whan his shame gan somewhat to passe,  
His resons, as I may my rymes holde,  
I yow wole telle, as techen bokes olde.

In chaunged vois, right for his verray drede,  
Which vois eek quook, and ther-to his manere  
Goodly abayst, and now his hewes rede,  
Now pale, un-to Criseyde, his lady dere,  
With look doun cast and humble yolden chere,  
Lo, the alderfirste word that him asterte  
Was, twyes, 'Mercy, mercy, swete herte!'

And stinte a whyl, and whan he mighte out-bringe,  
The nexte word was, 'God wot, for I have,  
As feyfully as I have had konninge,  
Ben youres, also god so my sowle save;

And shal til that I, woful wight, be grave.  
And though I dar ne can un-to yow pleyne,  
Y-wis, I suffre nought the lasse peyne.

'Thus muche as now, O wommanliche wyf,  
I may out-bringe, and if this yow displese,  
That shal I wreke upon myn owne lyf  
Right sone, I trowe, and doon your herte an ese,  
If with my deeth your herte I may apese.  
But sin that ye han herd me som-what seye,  
Now recche I never how sone that I deye.'

Ther-with his manly sorwe to biholde,  
It mighte han maad an herte of stoon to rewe;  
And Pandare weep as he to watre wolde,  
And poked ever his nece newe and newe,  
And seyde, 'Wo bigon ben hertes trewe!  
For love of god, make of this thing an ende,  
Or slee us bothe at ones, er that ye wende.'

'I? What?' quod she, 'By god and by my trouthe,  
I noot nought what ye wilne that I seye.'  
'I? What?' quod he, 'That ye han on him routhe,  
For goddes love, and doth him nought to deye.'  
'Now thanne thus,' quod she, 'I wolde him preye  
To telle me the fyn of his entente;  
Yet wist I never wel what that he mente.'

'What that I mene, O swete herte dere?'  
Quod Troilus, 'O goodly, fresshe free!  
That, with the stremes of your eyen clere,  
Ye wolde som-tyme freendly on me see,  
And thanne agreen that I may ben he,  
With-oute braunche of vyce on any wyse,  
In trouthe alwey to doon yow my servyse,

'As to my lady right and chief resort,  
With al my wit and al my diligence,  
And I to han, right as yow list, comfort,  
Under your yerde, egal to myn offence,  
As deeth, if that I breke your defence;  
And that ye deigne me so muche honoure,

Me to comaunden ought in any houre.

'And I to ben your verray humble trewe,  
Secret, and in my paynes pacient,  
And ever-mo desire freshly newe,  
To serven, and been y-lyke ay diligent,  
And, with good herte, al holly your talent  
Receyven wel, how sore that me smerte,  
Lo, this mene I, myn owene swete herte.'

Quod Pandarus, 'Lo, here an hard request,  
And resonable, a lady for to werne!  
Now, nece myn, by natal Ioves fest,  
Were I a god, ye sholde sterve as yerne,  
That heren wel, this man wol no-thing yerne  
But your honour, and seen him almost sterve,  
And been so looth to suffren him yow serve.'

With that she gan hir eyen on him caste  
Ful esily, and ful debonairly,  
Avysing hir, and hyed not to faste  
With never a word, but seyde him softely,  
'Myn honour sauf, I wol wel trewely,  
And in swich forme as he can now devyse,  
Receyven him fully to my servyse,

'Biseching him, for goddes love, that he  
Wolde, in honour of trouthe and gentillesse,  
As I wel mene, eek mene wel to me,  
And myn honour, with wit and besinesse  
Ay kepe; and if I may don him gladnesse,  
From hennes-forth, y-wis, I nil not feyne:  
Now beeth al hool; no lenger ye ne pleyne.

'But nathelees, this warne I yow,' quod she,  
'A kinges sone al-though ye be, y-wis,  
Ye shal na-more have soverainetee  
Of me in love, than right in that cas is;  
Ne I nil forbere, if that ye doon a-mis,  
To wrathen yow; and whyl that ye me serve,  
Cherycen yow right after ye deserve.

'And shortly, dere herte and al my knight,  
Beth glad, and draweth yow to lustinesse,  
And I shal trewely, with al my might,  
Your bittre tornen al in-to swetenesse.  
If I be she that may yow do gladnesse,  
For every wo ye shal recovere a blisse';  
And him in armes took, and gan him kisse.

Fil Pandarus on knees, and up his eyen  
To hevne threw, and held his hondes hye,  
'Immortal god!' quod he, 'That mayst nought dyen,  
Cupide I mene, of this mayst glorifye;  
And Venus, thou mayst maken melodye;  
With-outen hond, me semeth that in the towne,  
For this merveyle, I here ech belle sowne.

'But ho! No more as now of this matere,  
For-why this folk wol comen up anoon,  
That han the lettre red; lo, I hem here.  
But I coniure thee, Criseyde, and oon,  
And two, thou Troilus, whan thow mayst goon,  
That at myn hous ye been at my warninge,  
For I ful wel shal shape youre cominge;

'And eseth ther your hertes right y-nough;  
And lat see which of yow shal bere the belle  
To speke of love a-right!' ther-with he lough,  
'For ther have ye a layser for to telle.'  
Quod Troilus, 'How longe shal I dwelle  
Er this be doon?' Quod he, 'Whan thou mayst ryse,  
This thing shal be right as I yow devyse.'

With that Eleyne and also Deiphebus  
Tho comen upward, right at the steyses ende;  
And Lord, so than gan grone Troilus,  
His brother and his suster for to blende.  
Quod Pandarus, 'It tyme is that we wende;  
Tak, nece myn, your leve at alle three,  
And lat hem speke, and cometh forth with me.'

She took hir leve at hem ful thriftily,  
As she wel coude, and they hir reverence

Un-to the fulle diden hardely,  
And speken wonder wel, in hir absence,  
Of hir, in preysing of hir excellence,  
Hir governaunce, hir wit; and hir manere  
Commendeden, it Ioye was to here.

Now lat hir wende un-to hir owne place,  
And torne we to Troilus a-yein,  
That gan ful lightly of the lettre passe  
That Deiphebus hadde in the gardin seyn.  
And of Eleyne and him he wolde fayn  
Delivered been, and seyde that him leste  
To slepe, and after tales have reste.

Eleyne him kiste, and took hir leve blyve,  
Deiphebus eek, and hoom wente every wight;  
And Pandarus, as faste as he may dryve,  
To Troilus tho com, as lyne right;  
And on a paillet, al that glade night,  
By Troilus he lay, with mery chere,  
To tale; and wel was hem they were y-fere.

Whan every wight was voided but they two,  
And alle the dores were faste y-shette,  
To telle in short, with-oute wordes mo,  
This Pandarus, with-uten any lette,  
Up roos, and on his beddes syde him sette,  
And gan to speken in a sobre wyse  
To Troilus, as I shal yow devyse:

'Myn alderlevest lord, and brother dere,  
God woot, and thou, that it sat me so sore,  
When I thee saw so languisshing to-yere,  
For love, of which thy wo wex alwey more;  
That I, with al my might and al my lore,  
Have ever sithen doon my businesse  
To bringe thee to Ioye out of distresse,

'And have it brought to swich plyt as thou wost,  
So that, thorough me, thow stondest now in weye  
To fare wel, I seye it for no bost,  
And wostow which? For shame it is to seye,



For thee have I bigonne a gamen pleye  
Which that I never doon shal eft for other,  
Al-though he were a thousand fold my brother.

'That is to seye, for thee am I bicomem,  
Bitwixen game and earnest, swich a mene  
As maken wommen un-to men to comen;  
Al sey I nought, thou wost wel what I mene.  
For thee have I my nece, of vyces clene,  
So fully maad thy gentillesse triste,  
That al shal been right as thy-selve liste.

'But god, that al wot, take I to witesse,  
That never I this for coveityse wroughte,  
But only for to abregge that distresse,  
For which wel nygh thou deydest, as me thoughte.  
But, gode brother, do now as thee oughte,  
For goddes love, and kep hir out of blame,  
Sin thou art wys, and save alwey hir name.

'For wel thou wost, the name as yet of here  
Among the peple, as who seyth, halwed is;  
For that man is unbore, I dar wel swere,  
That ever wiste that she dide amis.  
But wo is me, that I, that cause al this,  
May thenken that she is my nece dere,  
And I hir eem, and trattor eek y-fere!

'And were it wist that I, through myn engyn,  
Hadde in my nece y-put this fantasye,  
To do thy lust, and hoolly to be thyn,  
Why, al the world up-on it wolde crye,  
And seye, that I the worste trecherye  
Dide in this cas, that ever was bigonne,  
And she for-lost, and thou right nought y-wonne.

'Wher-fore, er I wol ferther goon a pas,  
Yet eft I thee biseche and fully seye,  
That privetee go with us in this cas;  
That is to seye, that thou us never wreye;  
And be nought wrooth, though I thee ofte preye  
To holden secree swich an heigh matere;

For skilful is, thow wost wel, my preyere.

'And thenk what wo ther hath bitid er this,  
For makinge of avantes, as men rede;  
And what mischaunce in this world yet ther is,  
Fro day to day, right for that wikked dede;  
For which these wyse clerkes that ben dede  
Han ever yet proverbed to us yonge,  
That "Firste vertu is to kepe tonge."

'And, nere it that I wilne as now tabregge  
Diffusioun of speche, I coude almost  
A thousand olde stories thee alegge  
Of wommen lost, thorough fals and foles bost;  
Proverbes canst thy-self y-nowe, and wost,  
Ayeins that vyce, for to been a labbe,  
Al seyde men sooth as often as they gabbe.

'O tonge, allas! So often here-biforn  
Hastow made many a lady bright of hewe  
Seyd, "Welawey! The day that I was born!"  
And many a maydes sorwes for to newe;  
And, for the more part, al is untrewe  
That men of yelpe, and it were brought to preve;  
Of kinde non avauntour is to leve.

'Avauntour and a lyere, al is on;  
As thus: I pose, a womman graunte me  
Hir love, and seyth that other wol she non,  
And I am sworn to holden it secree,  
And after I go telle it two or three;  
Y-wis, I am avauntour at the leste,  
And lyere, for I breke my biheste.

'Now loke thanne, if they be nought to blame,  
Swich maner folk; what shal I clepe hem, what,  
That hem avaunte of wommen, and by name,  
That never yet bihighte hem this ne that,  
Ne knewe hem more than myn olde hat?  
No wonder is, so god me sende hele,  
Though wommen drede with us men to dele.

'I sey not this for no mistrust of yow,  
Ne for no wys man, but for foles nyce,  
And for the harm that in the world is now,  
As wel for foly ofte as for malyce;  
For wel wot I, in wyse folk, that vyce  
No womman drat, if she be wel avysed;  
For wyse ben by foles harm chastysed.

'But now to purpos; leve brother dere,  
Have al this thing that I have seyde in minde,  
And keep thee clos, and be now of good chere,  
For at thy day thou shalt me trewe finde.  
I shal thy proces sette in swich a kinde,  
And god to-forn, that it shall thee suffyse,  
For it shal been right as thou wolt devyse.

'For wel I woot, thou menest wel, parde;  
Therefore I dar this fully undertake.  
Thou wost eek what thy lady graunted thee,  
And day is set, the chartres up to make.  
Have now good night, I may no lenger wake;  
And bid for me, sin thou art now in blisse,  
That god me sende deeth or sone lisse.'

Who mighte telle half the Ioye or feste  
Which that the sowle of Troilus tho felte,  
Heringe theeffect of Pandarus biheste?  
His olde wo, that made his herte swelte,  
Gan tho for Ioye wasten and to-melte,  
And al the richesse of his sykes sore  
At ones fledde, he felte of hem no more.

But right so as these holtes and these hayes,  
That han in winter dede been and dreye,  
Revesten hem in grene, whan that May is,  
Whan every lusty lyketh best to pleye;  
Right in that selve wyse, sooth to seye,  
Wax sodeynliche his herte ful of Ioye,  
That gladder was ther never man in Troye.

And gan his look on Pandarus up caste  
Ful sobrelly, and frendly for to see,

And seyde, 'Freend, in Aprille the laste,  
As wel thou wost, if it remembre thee,  
How neigh the deeth for wo thou founde me;  
And how thou didest al thy businesse  
To knowe of me the cause of my distresse.

'Thou wost how longe I it for-bar to seye  
To thee, that art the man that I best triste;  
And peril was it noon to thee by-wreye,  
That wiste I wel; but tel me, if thee liste,  
Sith I so looth was that thy-self it wiste,  
How dorst I mo tellen of this matere,  
That quake now, and no wight may us here?

'But natheles, by that god I thee swere,  
That, as him list, may al this world governe,  
And, if I lye, Achilles with his spere  
Myn herte cleve, al were my lyf eterne,  
As I am mortal, if I late or yerne  
Wolde it biwreye, or dorste, or sholde conne,  
For al the good that god made under sonne;

'That rather deye I wolde, and determyne,  
As thinketh me, now stokked in presoun,  
In wrecchednesse, in filthe, and in vermyne,  
Caytif to cruel king Agamenoun;  
And this, in alle the temples of this toun  
Upon the goddes alle, I wol thee swere,  
To-morwe day, if that thee lyketh here.

'And that thou hast so mucche y-doon for me,  
That I ne may it never-more deserve,  
This knowe I wel, al mighte I now for thee  
A thousand tymes on a morwen sterve.  
I can no more, but that I wol thee serve  
Right as thy sclave, whider-so thou wende,  
For ever-more, un-to my lyves ende!

'But here, with al myn herte, I thee biseche,  
That never in me thou deme swich folye  
As I shal seyn; me thoughte, by thy speche,  
That this, which thou me dost for companye,

I sholde wene it were a bauderye;  
I am nought wood, al-if I lewed be;  
It is not so, that woot I wel, pardee.

'But he that goth, for gold or for richesse,  
On swich message, calle him what thee list;  
And this that thou dost, calle it gentillesse,  
Compassioun, and felawship, and trist;  
Depart it so, for wyde-where is wist  
How that there is dyversitee requered  
Bitwixen thinges lyke, as I have lered.

'And, that thou knowe I thenke nought ne wene  
That this servyse a shame be or Iape,  
I have my faire suster Polixene,  
Cassandre, Eleyne, or any of the frape;  
Be she never so faire or wel y-shape,  
Tel me, which thou wilt of everichone,  
To han for thyn, and lat me thanne allone.

'But, sith that thou hast don me this servyse  
My lyf to save, and for noon hope of mede,  
So, for the love of god, this grete empryse  
Performe it out; for now is moste nede.  
For high and low, with-outen any drede,  
I wol alwey thyne hestes alle kepe;  
Have now good night, and lat us bothe slepe.'

Thus held him ech of other wel apayed,  
That al the world ne mighte it bet amende;  
And, on the morwe, whan they were arayed,  
Ech to his owene nedes gan entende.  
But Troilus, though as the fyr he brende  
For sharp desyr of hope and of plesaunce,  
He not for-gat his gode governaunce.

But in him-self with manhod gan restreyne  
Ech rakel dede and ech unbrydled chere,  
That alle tho that liven, sooth to seyne,  
Ne sholde han wist, by word or by manere,  
What that he mente, as touching this matere.  
From every wight as fer as is the cloude

He was, so wel dissimulen he coude.

And al the whyl which that I yow devyse,  
This was his lyf; with al his fulle might,  
By day he was in Martes high servyse,  
This is to seyn, in armes as a knight;  
And for the more part, the longe night  
He lay, and thoughte how that he mighte serve  
His lady best, hir thank for to deserve.

Nil I nought swere, al-though he lay softe,  
That in his thought he nas sumwhat disesed,  
Ne that he tornede on his pilwes ofte,  
And wolde of that him missed han ben sesed;  
But in swich cas men is nought alwey plesed,  
For ought I wot, no more than was he;  
That can I deme of possibilitee.

But certeyn is, to purpos for to go,  
That in this whyle, as writen is in geste,  
He say his lady som-tyme; and also  
She with him spak, whan that she dorste or leste,  
And by hir bothe avys, as was the beste,  
Apoynteden ful warly in this nede,  
So as they dorste, how they wolde procede.

But it was spoken in so short a wyse,  
In swich awayt alwey, and in swich fere,  
Lest any wyght devynen or devyse  
Wolde of hem two, or to it leye an ere,  
That al this world so leef to hem ne were  
As that Cupido wolde hem grace sende  
To maken of hir speche aright an ende.

But thilke litel that they spake or wroughte,  
His wyse goost took ay of al swich hede,  
It semed hir, he wiste what she thoughte  
With-outen word, so that it was no nede  
To bidde him ought to done, or ought for-bede;  
For which she thought that love, al come it late,  
Of alle Ioye hadde opned hir the yate.

And shortly of this proces for to pace,  
So wel his werk and wordes he bisette,  
That he so ful stood in his lady grace,  
That twenty thousand tymes, or she lette,  
She thonked god she ever with him mette;  
So coude he him governe in swich servyse,  
That al the world ne might it bet devyse.

For-why she fond him so discret in al,  
So secret, and of swich obeisaunce,  
That wel she felte he was to hir a wal  
Of steel, and sheld from every displesaunce;  
That, to ben in his gode governaunce,  
So wys he was, she was no more afered,  
I mene, as fer as oughte ben requered.

And Pandarus, to quike alwey the fyr,  
Was evere y-lyke prest and diligent;  
To ese his frend was set al his desyr.  
He shof ay on, he to and fro was sent;  
He lettres bar whan Troilus was absent.  
That never man, as in his freendes nede,  
Ne bar him bet than he, with-outen drede.

But now, paraunter, som man wayten wolde  
That every word, or sonde, or look, or chere  
Of Troilus that I rehersen sholde,  
In al this whyle un-to his lady dere;  
I trowe it were a long thing for to here;  
Or of what wight that stant in swich disioynte,  
His wordes alle, or every look, to poynte.

For sothe, I have not herd it doon er this,  
In storye noon, ne no man here, I wene;  
And though I wolde I coude not, y-wis;  
For ther was som epistel hem bitwene,  
That wolde, as seyth myn auctor, wel contene  
Neigh half this book, of which him list not wryte;  
How sholde I thanne a lyne of it endyte?

But to the grete effect: than sey I thus,  
That standing in concord and in quiete,

These ilke two, Criseyde and Troilus,  
As I have told, and in this tyme swete,  
Save only often mighte they not mete,  
Ne layser have hir speches to fulfelle,  
That it befel right as I shal yow telle.

That Pandarus, that ever dide his might  
Right for the fyn that I shal speke of here,  
As for to bringe to his hous som night  
His faire nece, and Troilus y-fere,  
Wher-as at leyser al this heigh matere,  
Touching hir love, were at the fulle up-bounde,  
Hadde out of doute a tyme to it founde.

For he with greet deliberacioun  
Hadde every thing that her-to mighte avayle  
Forn-cast, and put in execucioun.  
And neither laft, for cost ne for travayle;  
Come if hem list, hem sholde no-thing fayle;  
And for to been in ought espyed there,  
That, wiste he wel, an impossible were.

Dredelees, it cleer was in the wind  
Of every pye and every lette-game;  
Now al is wel, for al the world is blind  
In this matere, bothe fremed and tame.  
This timbur is al redy up to frame;  
Us lakketh nought but that we witen wolde  
A certein houre, in which she comen sholde.

And Troilus, that al this purveyaunce  
Knew at the fulle, and waytede on it ay,  
Hadde here-up-on eek made gret ordenaunce,  
And founde his cause, and ther-to his aray,  
If that he were missed, night or day,  
Ther-whyle he was aboute this servyse,  
That he was goon to doon his sacrifyse,

And moste at swich a temple alone wake,  
Answered of Appollo for to be;  
And first to seen the holy laurer quake,  
Er that Appollo spak out of the tree,



To telle him next whan Grekes sholden flee,  
And forthy lette him no man, god forbede,  
But preye Apollo helpen in this nede.

Now is ther litel more for to doone,  
But Pandare up, and shortly for to seyne,  
Right sone upon the chaunging of the mone,  
Whan lightles is the world a night or tweyne,  
And that the welken shoop him for to reyne,  
He streight a-morwe un-to his nece wente;  
Ye han wel herd the fyn of his entente.

Whan he was come, he gan anoon to pleye  
As he was wont, and of him-self to Iape;  
And fynally, he swor and gan hir seye,  
By this and that, she sholde him not escape,  
Ne lengere doon him after hir to gape;  
But certeynly she moste, by hir leve,  
Come soupen in his hous with him at eve.

At whiche she lough, and gan hir faste excuse,  
And seyde, 'It rayneth; lo, how sholde I goon?'  
'Lat be,' quod he, 'ne stond not thus to muse;  
This moot be doon, ye shal be ther anoon.'  
So at the laste her-of they felle at oon,  
Or elles, softe he swor hir in hir ere,  
He nolde never come ther she were.

Sone after this, to him she gan to rowne,  
And asked him if Troilus were there?  
He swor hir, 'Nay, for he was out of towne,'  
And seyde, 'Nece, I pose that he were,  
Yow thurfte never have the more fere.  
For rather than men mighte him ther aspye,  
Me were lever a thousand-fold to dye.'

Nought list myn auctor fully to declare  
What that she thoughte whan he seyde so,  
That Troilus was out of town y-fare,  
As if he seyde ther-of sooth or no;  
But that, with-outen awayt, with him to go,  
She graunted him, sith he hir that bisoughte

And, as his nece, obeyed as hir oughthe.

But nathelees, yet gan she him biseche,  
Al-though with him to goon it was no fere,  
For to be war of goosish peples speche,  
That dremen thinges whiche that never were,  
And wel avyse him whom he broughte there;  
And seyde him, 'Eem, sin I mot on yow triste,  
Loke al be wel, and do now as yow liste.'

He swor hire, 'Yis, by stokkes and by stones,  
And by the goddes that in hevene dwelle,  
Or elles were him levere, soule and bones,  
With Pluto king as depe been in helle  
As Tantalus!' What sholde I more telle?  
Whan al was wel, he roos and took his leve,  
And she to souper com, whan it was eve,

With a certayn of hir owene men,  
And with hir faire nece Antigone,  
And othere of hir wommen nyne or ten;  
But who was glad now, who, as trowe ye,  
But Troilus, that stood and mighte it see  
Thurgh-out a litel windowe in a stewe,  
Ther he bishet, sin midnight, was in mewe,

Unwist of every wight but of Pandare?  
But to the poynt; now whan that she was y-come  
With alle Ioye, and alle frendes fare,  
Hir em anon in armes hath hir nome,  
And after to the souper, alle and some,  
Whan tyme was, ful softe they hem sette;  
God wot, ther was no deyntee for to fette.

And after souper gonnen they to ryse,  
At ese wel, with hertes fresshe and glade,  
And wel was him that coude best devyse  
To lyken hir, or that hir laughen made.  
He song; she pleyde; he tolde tale of Wade.  
But at the laste, as every thing hath ende,  
She took hir leve, and nedes wolde wende.

But O, Fortune, executrice of wierdes,  
O influences of thise hevenes hye!  
Soth is, that, under god, ye ben our hierdes,  
Though to us bestes been the causes wrye.  
This mene I now, for she gan hoomward hye,  
But execut was al bisyde hir leve,  
At the goddes wil, for which she moste bleve.

The bente mone with hir hornes pale,  
Saturne, and Iove, in Cancro ioyned were,  
That swich a rayn from hevne gan avale  
That every maner womman that was there  
Hadde of that smoky reyn a verray fere;  
At which Pandare tho lough, and seyde thenne,  
'Now were it tyme a lady to go henne!

'But goode nece, if I mighte ever plese  
Yow any-thing, than prey I yow,' quod he,  
'To doon myn herte as now so greet an ese  
As for to dwelle here al this night with me,  
For-why this is your owene hous, pardee.  
For, by my trouthe, I sey it nought a-game,  
To wende as now, it were to me a shame.'

Criseyde, which that coude as mucche good  
As half a world, tok hede of his preyere;  
And sin it ron, and al was on a flood,  
She thoughte, as good chep may I dwellen here,  
And graunte it gladly with a freendes chere,  
And have a thank, as grucche and thanne abyde;  
For hoom to goon, it may nought wel bityde.'

'I wol,' quod she, 'myn uncle leef and dere,  
Sin that yow list, it skile is to be so;  
I am right glad with yow to dwellen here;  
I seyde but a-game, I wolde go.'  
'Y-wis, graunt mercy, nece!' quod he tho;  
'Were it a game or no, soth for to telle,  
Now am I glad, sin that yow list to dwelle.'

Thus al is wel; but tho bigan aright  
The newe Ioye, and al the feste agayn;

But Pandarus, if goodly hadde he might,  
He wolde han hyed hir to bedde fayn,  
And seyde, 'Lord, this is an huge rayn!  
This were a weder for to slepen inne;  
And that I rede us sonE to biginne.

'And nece, woot ye wher I wol yow leye,  
For that we shul not ligger fer asonder,  
And for ye neither shullen, dar I seye,  
Heren noise of reynes nor of thondre?  
By god, right in my lyte closet yonder.  
And I wol in that outer hous allone  
Be wardeyn of your wommen everichone.

'And in this middel chaumbre that ye see  
Shal youre wommen slepen wel and softe;  
And ther I seyde shal your-selve be;  
And if ye ligger wel to-night, com ofte,  
And careth not what weder is on-lofte.  
The wyn anon, and whan so that yow leste,  
So go we slepe, I trowe it be the beste.'

Ther nis no more, but here-after sone,  
The voyde dronke, and travers drawe anon,  
Gan every wight, that hadde nought to done  
More in the place, out of the chaumber gon.  
And ever-mo so sternelich it ron,  
And blew ther-with so wonderliche loude,  
That wel neigh no man heren other coude.

Tho Pandarus, hir eem, right as him oughte,  
With women swiche as were hir most aboute,  
Ful glad un-to hir beddes syde hir broughte,  
And toke his leve, and gan ful lowe loute,  
And seyde, 'Here at this closet-dore with-oute,  
Right over-thwart, your wommen ligger alle,  
That, whom yow list of hem, ye may here calle.'

So whan that she was in the closet leyd,  
And alle hir wommen forth by ordenaunce  
A-bedde weren, ther as I have seyd,  
There was no more to skippen nor to traunce,

But boden go to bedde, with mischaunce,  
If any wight was steringe any-where,  
And late hem slepe that a-bedde were.

But Pandarus, that wel coude eche a del  
The olde daunce, and every poynt ther-inne,  
Whan that he sey that alle thing was wel,  
He thoughte he wolde up-on his werk biginne,  
And gan the stewe-dore al softe un-pinne;  
And stille as stoon, with-outen lenger lette,  
By Troilus a-doun right he him sette.

And, shortly to the poynt right for to gon,  
Of al this werk he tolde him word and ende,  
And seyde, 'Make thee redy right anon,  
For thou shalt in-to hevене blisse wende.'  
'Now blisful Venus, thou me grace sende,'  
Quod Troilus, 'for never yet no nede  
Hadde I er now, ne halvendel the drede.'

Quod Pandarus, 'Ne drede thee never a del,  
For it shal been right as thou wilt desyre;  
So thryve I, this night shal I make it wel,  
Or casten al the gruwel in the fyre.'  
'Yit blisful Venus, this night thou me enspyre,'  
Quod Troilus, 'as wis as I thee serve,  
And ever bet and bet shal, til I sterve.

'And if I hadde, O Venus ful of murthe,  
Aspectes badde of Mars or of Saturne,  
Or thou combust or let were in my birthe,  
Thy fader prey al thilke harm disturne  
Of grace, and that I glad ayein may turne,  
For love of him thou lovedest in the shawe,  
I mene Adoon, that with the boor was slawe.

'O Iove eek, for the love of faire Europe,  
The whiche in forme of bole away thou fette;  
Now help, O Mars, thou with thy bloody cope,  
For love of Cipris, thou me nought ne lette;  
O Phebus, think whan Dane hir-selven shette  
Under the bark, and laurer wex for drede,

Yet for hir love, O help now at this nede!

'Mercurie, for the love of Hierse eke,  
For which Pallas was with Aglauros wrooth,  
Now help, and eek Diane, I thee biseke  
That this viage be not to thee looth.  
O fatal sustren, which, er any clooth  
Me shapen was, my destene me sponne,  
So helpeth to this werk that is bi-gonne!'

Quod Pandarus, 'Thou wrecched mouses herte,  
Art thou agast so that she wol thee byte?  
Why, don this furred cloke up-on thy sherte,  
And folowe me, for I wol have the wyte;  
But byd, and lat me go bifore a lyte.'  
And with that word he gan un-do a trappe,  
And Troilus he broughte in by the lappe.

The sterne wind so loude gan to route  
That no wight other noyse mighte here;  
And they that layen at the dore with-oute,  
Ful sykerly they slepten alle y-fere;  
And Pandarus, with a ful sobre chere,  
Goth to the dore anon with-uten lette,  
Ther-as they laye, and softly it shette.

And as he com ayeinward prively,  
His nece awook, and asked, 'Who goth there?'  
'My dere nece,' quod he, 'it am I;  
Ne wondreth not, ne have of it no fere;'  
And ner he com, and seyde hir in hir ere,  
'No word, for love of god I yow biseche;  
Lat no wight ryse and heren of oure speche.'

'What! Which wey be ye comen, benedicite?'  
Quod she; 'And how thus unwist of hem alle?'  
'Here at this secre trappe-dore,' quod he.  
Quod tho Criseyde, 'Lat me som wight calle.'  
'Ey! God forbede that it sholde falle,'  
Quod Pandarus, 'that ye swich foly wroughte!  
They mighte deme thing they never er thoughte!'

'It is nought good a sleping hound to wake,  
Ne yeve a wight a cause to devyne;  
Your wommen slepen alle, I under-take,  
So that, for hem, the hous men mighte myne;  
And slepen wolen til the sonne shyne.  
And whan my tale al brought is to an ende,  
Unwist, right as I com, so wol I wende.

'Now, nece myn, ye shul wel understonde,'  
Quod he, 'so as ye wommen demen alle,  
That for to holde in love a man in honde,  
And him hir "leef" and "dere herte" calle,  
And maken him an howve above a calle,  
I mene, as love an other in this whyle,  
She doth hir-self a shame, and him a gyle.

'Now wherby that I telle yow al this?  
Ye woot your-self, as wel as any wight,  
How that your love al fully graunted is  
To Troilus, the worthieste knight,  
Oon of this world, and ther-to trouthe plyght,  
That, but it were on him along, ye nolde  
Him never falsen, whyle ye liven sholde.

'Now stant it thus, that sith I fro yow wente,  
This Troilus, right platly for to seyn,  
Is thurgh a goter, by a prive wente,  
In-to my chaumbre come in al this reyn,  
Unwist of every maner wight, certeyn,  
Save of my-self, as wisly have I Ioye,  
And by that feith I shal Pryam of Troye!

'And he is come in swich peyne and distresse  
That, but he be al fully wood by this,  
He sodeynly mot falle in-to wodnesse,  
But-if god helpe; and cause why this is,  
He seyth him told is, of a freend of his,  
How that ye sholde love oon that hatte Horaste,  
For sorwe of which this night shalt been his laste.'

Criseyde, which that al this wonder herde,  
Gan sodeynly aboute hir herte colde,

And with a syk she sorwfully answerde,  
'Allas! I wende, who-so tales tolde,  
My dere herte wolde me not holde  
So lightly fals! Allas! Conceytes wronge,  
What harm they doon, for now live I to longe!

'Horaste! Allas! And falsen Troilus?  
I knowe him not, god helpe me so,' quod she;  
'Allas! What wikked spirit tolde him thus?  
Now certes, eem, to-morwe, and I him see,  
I shal ther-of as ful excusen me  
As ever dide womman, if him lyke';  
And with that word she gan ful sore syke.

'O god!' quod she, 'So worldly selinesse,  
Which clerkes callen fals felicitee,  
Y-medled is with many a bitternesse!  
Ful anguisshous than is, god woot,' quod she,  
'Condicioun of veyn prosperitee;  
For either Ioyes comen nought y-fere,  
Or elles no wight hath hem alwey here.

'O brotel wele of mannes Ioye unstable!  
With what wight so thou be, or how thou pleye,  
Either he woot that thou, Ioye, art muable,  
Or woot it not, it moot ben oon of tweye;  
Now if he woot it not, how may he seye  
That he hath verray Ioye and selinesse,  
That is of ignoraunce ay in derknesse?

'Now if he woot that Ioye is transitorie,  
As every Ioye of worldly thing mot flee,  
Than every tyme he that hath in memorie,  
The drede of lesing maketh him that he  
May in no perfit selinesse be.  
And if to lese his Ioye he set a myte,  
Than semeth it that Ioye is worth ful lyte.

'Wherefore I wol deffyne in this matere,  
That trewely, for ought I can espye,  
Ther is no verray wele in this world here.  
But O, thou wikked serpent, Ialousye,



Thou misbeleved and envious folye,  
Why hastow Troilus me mad untriste,  
That never yet agilte him, that I wiste?

Quod Pandarus, 'Thus fallen is this cas.'  
'Why, uncle myn,' quod she, 'who tolde him this?  
Why doth my dere herte thus, allas?'  
'Ye woot, ye nece myn,' quod he, 'what is;  
I hope al shal be wel that is amis,  
For ye may quenche al this, if that yow leste,  
And doth right so, for I holde it the beste.'

'So shal I do to-morwe, y-wis,' quod she,  
'And god to-forn, so that it shal suffyse.'  
'To-morwe? Allas, that were a fair!' quod he,  
'Nay, nay, it may not stonden in this wyse;  
For, nece myn, thus wryten clerkes wyse,  
That peril is with drecching in y-drawe;  
Nay, swich abodes been nought worth an hawe.

'Nece, al thing hath tyme, I dar avowe;  
For whan a chaumber a-fyr is, or an halle,  
Wel more nede is, it sodeynly rescowe  
Than to dispute, and axe amonges alle  
How is this candele in the straw y-falle?  
A! Benedicite! For al among that fare  
The harm is doon, and fare-wel feldefare!

'And, nece myn, ne take it not a-greef,  
If that ye suffre him al night in this wo,  
God help me so, ye hadde him never leef,  
That dar I seyn, now there is but we two;  
But wel I woot, that ye wol not do so;  
Ye been to wys to do so gret folye,  
To putte his lyf al night in Iupertye.

'Hadde I him never leef? By god, I wene  
Ye hadde never thing so leef,' quod she.  
'Now by my thrift,' quod he, 'that shal be sene;  
For, sin ye make this ensample of me,  
If I al night wolde him in sorwe see  
For al the tresour in the toun of Troye,

I bidde god, I never mote have Ioye!

'Now loke thanne, if ye, that been his love,  
Shul putte al night his lyf in Iupartye  
For thing of nought! Now, by that god above,  
Nought only this delay comth of folye,  
But of malyce, if that I shal nought lye.  
What, platly, and ye suffre him in distresse,  
Ye neither bountee doon ne gentillesse!'

Quod tho Criseyde, 'Wole ye doon o thing,  
And ye therwith shal stinte al his disese?  
Have here, and bereth him this blewe ringe,  
For ther is no-thing mighte him bettre plese,  
Save I my-self, ne more his herte apese;  
And sey my dere herte, that his sorwe  
Is causeles, that shal be seen to-morwe.'

'A ring?' quod he, 'Ye, hasel-wodes shaken!  
Ye nece myn, that ring moste han a stoon  
That mighte dede men alyve maken;  
And swich a ring trowe I that ye have noon.  
Discrecioun out of your heed is goon;  
That fele I now,' quod he, 'and that is routhe;  
O tyme y-lost, wel maystow cursen slouthe!

'Wot ye not wel that noble and heigh corage  
Ne sorweth not, ne stinteth eek for lyte?  
But if a fool were in a Ialous rage,  
I nolde setten at his sorwe a myte,  
But feffe him with a fewe wordes whyte  
Another day, whan that I mighte him finde;  
But this thing stant al in another kinde.

'This is so gentil and so tendre of herte,  
That with his deeth he wol his sorwes wreke;  
For trusteth wel, how sore that him smerte,  
He wol to yow no Ialouse wordes speke.  
And for-thy, nece, er that his herte breke,  
So spek your-self to him of this matere;  
For with o word ye may his herte stere.

'Now have I told what peril he is inne,  
And his coming unwist is to every wight;  
Ne, pardee, harm may ther be noon, ne sinne;  
I wol my-self be with yow al this night.  
Ye knowe eek how it is your owne knight,  
And that, by right, ye moste upon him triste,  
And I al prest to fecche him whan yow liste.'

This accident so pitous was to here,  
And eek so lyk a sooth, at pryme face,  
And Troilus hir knight to hir so dere,  
His prive coming, and the siker place,  
That, though that she dide him as thanne a grace,  
Considered alle thinges as they stode,  
No wonder is, sin she dide al for gode.

Cryseyde answerde, 'As wisly god at reste  
My sowle bringe, as me is for him wo!  
And eem, y-wis, fayn wolde I doon the beste,  
If that I hadde grace to do so.  
But whether that ye dwelle or for him go,  
I am, til god me bettre minde sende,  
At dulcarnon, right at my wittes ende.'

Quod Pandarus, 'Ye, nece, wol ye here?  
Dulcarnon called is "fleminge of wrecches";  
It semeth hard, for wrecches wol not lere  
For verray slouthe or othere wilful tecches;  
This seyde by hem that be not worth two fecches.  
But ye ben wys, and that we han on honde  
Nis neither hard, ne skilful to withstonde.'

'Thanne, eem,' quod she, 'doth her-of as yow list;  
But er he come, I wil up first aryse;  
And, for the love of god, sin al my trist  
Is on yow two, and ye ben bothe wyse,  
So wircheth now in so discreet a wyse,  
That I honour may have, and he plesaunce;  
For I am here al in your governaunce.'

'That is wel seyde,' quod he, 'my nece dere'  
Ther good thrift on that wyse gentil herte!

But liggeth stille, and taketh him right here,  
It nedeth not no ferther for him sterte;  
And ech of yow ese otheres sorwes smerte,  
For love of god; and, Venus, I the herie;  
For sone hope I we shulle ben alle merie.'

This Troilus ful sone on knees him sette  
Ful sobrelly, right be hir beddes heed,  
And in his beste wyse his lady grette;  
But lord, so she wex sodeynliche reed!  
Ne, though men sholden smyten of hir heed,  
She coude nought a word a-right out-bringe  
So sodeynly, for his sodeyn cominge.

But Pandarus, that so wel coude fele  
In every thing, to pleye anoon bigan,  
And seyde, 'Nece, see how this lord can knele!  
Now, for your trouthe, seeth this gentil man!'  
And with that word he for a quisschen ran,  
And seyde, 'Kneleth now, whyl that yow leste,  
Ther god your hertes bringe sone at reste!'

Can I not seyn, for she bad him not ryse,  
If sorwe it putte out of hir remembraunce,  
Or elles that she toke it in the wyse  
Of duetee, as for his observaunce;  
But wel finde I she dide him this plesaunce,  
That she him kiste, al-though she syked sore;  
And bad him sitte a-doun with-outen more.

Quod Pandarus, 'Now wol ye wel biginne;  
Now doth him sitte, gode nece dere,  
Upon your beddes syde al there with-inne,  
That ech of yow the bet may other here.'  
And with that word he drow him to the fere,  
And took a light, and fond his contenance,  
As for to loke up-on an old romaunce.

Criseyde, that was Troilus lady right,  
And cleer stood on a ground of sikernesse,  
Al thoughte she, hir servaunt and hir knight  
Ne sholde of right non untrouthe in hir gesse,

Yet nathelees, considered his distresse,  
And that love is in cause of swich folye,  
Thus to him spak she of his Ialousye:

'Lo, herte myn, as wolde the excellence  
Of love, ayeins the which that no man may,  
Ne oughte eek goodly maken resistance  
And eek bycause I felte wel and say  
Youre grete trouthe, and servyse every day;  
And that your herte al myn was, sooth to seyne,  
This droof me for to rewe up-on your peyne.

'And your goodnesse have I founde alwey yit,  
Of whiche, my dere herte and al my knight,  
I thonke it yow, as fer as I have wit,  
Al can I nought as mucche as it were right;  
And I, emforth my conninge and my might,  
Have and ay shal, how sore that me smerte,  
Ben to yow trewe and hool, with a myn herte;

'And dredelees, that shal be founde at preve. --  
But, herte myn, what al this is to seyne  
Shal wel be told, so that ye noght yow greve,  
Though I to yow right on your-self compleyne.  
For ther-with mene I fynally the peyne,  
That halt your herte and myn in hevinesse,  
Fully to sleen, and every wrong redresse.

'My goode, myn, not I for-why ne how  
That Ialousye, allas! That wikked wivere,  
Thus causelees is copen in-to yow;  
The harm of which I wolde fayn deliver!  
Allas! That he, al hool, or of him slivere,  
Shuld have his refut in so digne a place,  
Ther Iove him sone out of your herte arace!

'But O, thou Iove, O auctor of nature,  
Is this an honour to thy deitee,  
That folk ungiltif suffren here iniure,  
And who that giltif is, al quit goth he?  
O were it leful for to pleyne on thee,  
That undeserved suffrest Ialousye,

Of that I wolde up-on thee pleyne and crye!

'Eek al my wo is this, that folk now usen  
To seyn right thus, "Ye, Ialousye is love!"  
And wolde a busshel venim al excusen,  
For that o greyn of love is on it shove!  
But that wot heighe god that sit above,  
If it be lyker love, or hate, or grame;  
And after that, it oughte bere his name.

'But certeyn is, som maner Ialousye  
Is excusable more than som, y-wis.  
As whan cause is, and som swich fantasye  
With pietee so wel repressed is,  
That it unnethe dooth or seyth amis,  
But goodly drinketh up al his distresse;  
And that excuse I, for the gentillesse.

'And som so ful of furie is and despyt  
That it sourmounteth his repressioun;  
But herte myn, ye be not in that plyt,  
That thanke I god, for whiche your passioun  
I wol not calle it but illusioun,  
Of habundaunce of love and bisy cure,  
That dooth your herte this disese endure.

'Of which I am right sory but not wrooth;  
But, for my devoir and your hertes reste,  
Wher-so yow list, by ordal or by ooth,  
By sort, or in what wyse so yow leste,  
For love of god, lat preve it for the beste!  
And if that I be giltif, do me deye,  
Allas! What mighte I more doon or seye?'

With that a fewe brighte teres newe  
Owt of hir eyen fille, and thus she seyde,  
'Now god, thou wost, in thought ne dede untrewed  
To Troilus was never yet Criseyde.'  
With that hir heed down in the bed she leyde,  
And with the shete it wreigh, and syghed sore,  
And held hir pees; not o word spak she more.

But now help god to quenchen al this sorwe,  
So hope I that he shal, for he best may;  
For I have seyn, of a ful misty morwe  
Folwen ful ofte a mery someres day;  
And after winter folweth grene May.  
Men seen alday, and reden eek in stories,  
That after sharpe shoures been victories.

This Troilus, whan he hir wordes herde,  
Have ye no care, him liste not to slepe;  
For it thoughte him no strokes of a yerde  
To here or seen Criseyde, his lady wepe;  
But wel he felte aboute his herte crepe,  
For every teer which that Criseyde asterte,  
The crampe of deeth, to streyne him by the herte.

And in his minde he gan the tyme acurse  
That he cam there, and that that he was born;  
For now is wikke y-turned in-to worse,  
And al that labour he hath doon biforn,  
He wende it lost, he thoughte he nas but lorn.  
'O Pandarus,' thoughte he, 'allas! Thy wyle  
Serveth of nought, so weylaway the whyle!'

And therwithal he heng a-doun the heed,  
And fil on knees, and sorwfully he sighte;  
What mighte he seyn? He felte he nas but deed,  
For wrooth was she that shulde his sorwes lighte.  
But nathelees, whan that he speken mighte,  
Than seyde he thus, 'God woot, that of this game,  
Whan al is wist, than am I not to blame!'

Ther-with the sorwe so his herte shette,  
That from his eyen fil there not a tere,  
And every spirit his vigour in-knette,  
So they astoned or oppressed were.  
The feling of his sorwe, or of his fere,  
Or of ought elles, fled was out of towne;  
And doun he fel al sodeynly a-swowne.

This was no litel sorwe for to see;  
But al was hust, and Pandare up as faste,

'O nece, pees, or we be lost,' quod he,  
'Beth nought agast;' But certeyn, at the laste,  
For this or that, he in-to bedde him caste,  
And seyde, 'O theef, is this a mannes herte?'  
And of he rente al to his bare sherte;

And seyde, 'Nece, but ye helpe us now,  
Allas, your owne Troilus is lorn!'  
'Y-wis, so wolde I, and I wiste how,  
Ful fayn,' quod she; 'Allas! That I was born!'  
'Ye, nece, wole ye pullen out the thorn  
That stiketh in his herte?' quod Pandare;  
'Sey "Al foryeve," and stint is al this fare!'

'Ye, that to me,' quod she, 'ful lever were  
Than al the good the sonne aboute gooth';  
And therwith-al she swoor him in his ere,  
'Y-wis, my dere herte, I am nought wrooth,  
Have here my trouthe and many another ooth;  
Now speak to me, for it am I, Cryseyde!'  
But al for nought; yet mighte he not a-breyde.

Therwith his pous and pawmes of his hondes  
They gan to frote, and wete his temples tweyne,  
And, to deliveren him from bittre bondes,  
She ofte him kiste; and, shortly for to seyne,  
Him to revoken she dide al hir peyne.  
And at the laste, he gan his breeth to drawe,  
And of his swough sone after that adawe,

And gan bet minde and reson to him take,  
But wonder sore he was abayst, y-wis.  
And with a syk, whan he gan bet a-wake,  
He seyde, 'O mercy, god, what thing is this?'  
'Why do ye with your-selven thus amis?'  
Quod tho Criseyde, 'Is this a mannes game?  
What, Troilus! Wol ye do thus, for shame?'

And therwith-al hir arm over him she leyde,  
And al foryaf, and ofte tyme him keste.  
He thonked hir, and to hir spak, and seyde  
As fil to purpos for his herte reste.



And she to that answerde him as hir leste;  
And with hir goodly wordes him disporte  
She gan, and ofte his sorwes to comforte.

Quod Pandarus, 'For ought I can espyen,  
This light, nor I ne serven here of nought;  
Light is not good for syke folkes yen.  
But for the love of god, sin ye be brought  
In thus good plyt, lat now non hevvy thought  
Ben hanginge in the hertes of yow tweye:'  
And bar the candele to the chimeneye.

Sone after this, though it no nede were,  
Whan she swich othes as hir list devyse  
Hadde of him take, hir thoughte tho no fere,  
Ne cause eek non, to bidde him thennes ryse.  
Yet lesse thing than othes may suffyse  
In many a cas; for every wight, I gesse,  
That loveth wel meneth but gentillesse.

But in effect she wolde wite anoon  
Of what man, and eek where, and also why  
He Ielous was, sin ther was cause noon;  
And eek the signe, that he took it by,  
She bad him that to telle hir bisily,  
Or elles, certeyn, she bar him on honde,  
That this was doon of malis, hir to fonde.

With-outen more, shortly for to seyne,  
He moste obeye un-to his lady heste;  
And for the lasse harm, he moste feyne.  
He seyde hir, whan she was at swiche a feste,  
She mighte on him han loked at the leste;  
Not I not what, al dere y-nough a risshe,  
As he that nedes moste a cause fisshe.

And she answerde, 'Swete, al were it so,  
What harm was that, sin I non yvel mene?  
For, by that god that boughte us bothe two,  
In alle thinge is myn entente clene.  
Swich arguments ne been not worth a bene;  
Wol ye the childish Ialous contrefete?

Now were it worthy that ye were y-bete.'

Tho Troilus gan sorrowfully to syke,  
Lest she be wrooth, him thoughte his herte deyde;  
And seyde, 'Allas! Up-on my sorwes syke  
Have mercy, swete herte myn, Cryseyde!  
And if that, in tho wordes that I seyde,  
Be any wrong, I wol no more trespace;  
Do what yow list, I am al in your grace.'

And she answerde, 'Of gilt misericorde!  
That is to seyn, that I foryeve al this;  
And ever-more on this night yow recorde,  
And beth wel war ye do no more amis.'  
'Nay, dere herte myn,' quod he, 'y-wis.'  
'And now,' quod she, 'that I have do yow smerte,  
Foryeve it me, myn owene swete herte.'

This Troilus, with blisse of that supprysed,  
Put al in goddes hond, as he that mente  
No-thing but wel; and, sodeynly avysed,  
He hir in armes faste to him hente.  
And Pandarus, with a ful good entente,  
Leyde him to slepe, and seyde, 'If ye ben wyse,  
Swowneth not now, lest more folk aryse.'

What mighte or may the sely larke seye,  
Whan that the sperhawk hath it in his foot?  
I can no more, but of this ilke tweye,  
To whom this tale sucre be or soot,  
Though that I tarie a yeer, som-tyme I moot,  
After myn auctor, tellen hir gladnesse,  
As wel as I have told hir hevynesse.

Criseyde, which that felte hir thus y-take,  
As writen clerkes in hir bokes olde,  
Right as an aspes leef she gan to quake,  
Whan she him felte hir in his armes folde.  
But Troilus, al hool of cares colde,  
Gan thanken tho the blisful goddes sevene;  
Thus sondry peynes bringen folk in hevene.

This Troilus in armes gan hir streyne,  
And seyde, 'O swete, as ever mote I goon,  
Now be ye caught, now is ther but we tweyne;  
Now yeldeth yow, for other boot is noon.'  
To that Criseyde answerde thus anoon,  
'Ne hadde I er now, my swete herte dere,  
Ben yolde, y-wis, I were now not here!'

O! Sooth is seyde, that heled for to be  
As of a fevre or othere greet syknesse,  
Men moste drinke, as men may often see,  
Ful bittre drink; and for to han gladnesse,  
Men drinken often peyne and greet distresse;  
I mene it here, as for this aventure,  
That thourgh a peyne hath founden al his cure.

And now swetnesse semeth more sweet,  
That bitternesse assayed was biforn;  
For out of wo in blisse now they flete;  
Non swich they felten, sith they were born;  
Now is this bet, than bothe two be lorn!  
For love of god, take every womman hede  
To werken thus, if it comth to the nede.

Criseyde, al quit from every drede and tene,  
As she that iuste cause hadde him to triste,  
Made him swich feste, it Ioye was to sene,  
Whan she his trouthe and clene entente wiste.  
And as aboute a tree, with many a twiste,  
Bitrent and wryth the sote wode-binde,  
Gan eche of hem in armes other winde.

And as the newe abaysshed nightingale,  
That stinteth first whan she biginneth to singe,  
Whan that she hereth any herde tale,  
Or in the hegges any wight steringe,  
And after siker dooth hir voys out-ringe;  
Right so Criseyde, whan hir drede stente,  
Opned hir herte and tolde him hir entente.

And right as he that seeth his deeth y-shapen,  
And deye moot, in ought that he may gesse,

And sodeynly rescous doth him escapen,  
And from his deeth is brought in sikernesse,  
For al this world, in swich present gladnesse  
Was Troilus, and hath his lady swete;  
With worse hap god lat us never mete!

Hir armes smale, hir streyghte bak and softe,  
Hir sydes longe, fleshly, smothe, and whyte  
He gan to stroke, and good thrift bad ful ofte  
Hir snowish throte, hir brestes rounde and lyte;  
Thus in this hevne he gan him to delyte,  
And ther-with-al a thousand tyme hir kiste;  
That, what to done, for Ioye unnethe he wiste.

Than seyde he thus, 'O, Love, O, Charitee,  
Thy moder eek, Citherea the swete,  
After thy-self next heried be she,  
Venus mene I, the wel-willy planete;  
And next that, Imeneus, I thee grete;  
For never man was to yow goddes holde  
As I, which ye han brought fro cares colde.

'Benigne Love, thou holy bond of thinges,  
Who-so wol grace, and list thee nought honouren,  
Lo, his desyr wol flee with-uten winges.  
For, noldestow of bountee hem socouren  
That serven best and most alwey labouren,  
Yet were al lost, that dar I wel seyn, certes,  
But-if thy grace passed our desertes.

'And for thou me, that coude leest deserve  
Of hem that nombred been un-to thy grace,  
Hast holpen, ther I lykly was to sterve,  
And me bistowed in so heygh a place  
That thilke boundes may no blisse pace,  
I can no more, but laude and reverence  
Be to thy bounte and thyn excellence!'

And therwith-al Criseyde anon he kiste,  
Of which, certeyn, she felte no disese,  
And thus seyde he, 'Now wolde god I wiste,  
Myn herte swete, how I yow mighte plese!

What man,' quod he, 'was ever thus at ese  
As I, on whiche the faireste and the beste  
That ever I say, deyneth hir herte reste.

'Here may men seen that mercy passeth right;  
The experience of that is felt in me,  
That am unworthy to so swete a wight.  
But herte myn, of your benignitee,  
So thenketh, though that I unworthy be,  
Yet mot I nede amenden in som wyse,  
Right thourgh the vertu of your heyghe servyse.

'And for the love of god, my lady dere,  
Sin god hath wrought me for I shal yow serve,  
As thus I mene, that ye wol be my stere,  
To do me live, if that yow liste, or sterve,  
So techeth me how that I may deserve  
Your thank, so that I, thurgh myn ignoraunce,  
Ne do no-thing that yow be displesaunce.

'For certes, fresshe wommanliche wyf,  
This dar I seye, that trouthe and diligence,  
That shal ye finden in me al my lyf,  
Ne wol not, certeyn, breken your defence;  
And if I do, present or in absence,  
For love of god, lat slee me with the dede,  
If that it lyke un-to your womanhede.'

'Y-wis,' quod she, 'myn owne hertes list,  
My ground of ese, and al myn herte dere,  
Graunt mercy, for on that is al my trist;  
But late us falle away fro this matere;  
For it suffyseth, this that seyde is here.  
And at o word, with-uten repentaunce,  
Wel-come, my knight, my pees, my suffisaunce!'

Of hir delyt, or Ioyes oon the leste  
Were impossible to my wit to seye;  
But iuggeth, ye that han ben at the feste,  
Of swich gladnesse, if that hem liste pleye!  
I can no more, but thus thise ilke tweye  
That night, be-twixen dreed and sikernesse,

Felten in love the grete worthinesse.

O blisful night, of hem so longe y-sought,  
How blithe un-to hem bothe two thou were!  
Why ne hadde I swich on with my soule y-bought,  
Ye, or the leeste Ioye that was there?  
A-wey, thou foule daunger and thou fere,  
And lat hem in this hevene blisse dwelle,  
That is so heygh, that al ne can I telle!

But sooth is, though I can not tellen al,  
As can myn auctor, of his excellence,  
Yet have I seyde, and, god to-forn, I shal  
In every thing al hoolly his sentence.  
And if that I, at loves reverence,  
Have any word in eched for the beste,  
Doth therwith-al right as your-selven leste.

For myne wordes, here and every part,  
I speke hem alle under correccioun  
Of yow, that feling han in loves art,  
And putte it al in your discrecioun  
To encrease or maken diminucioun  
Of my langage, and that I yow bi-seche;  
But now to purpos of my rather speche.

These ilke two, that ben in armes laft,  
So looth to hem a-sonder goon it were,  
That ech from other wende been biraft,  
Or elles, lo, this was hir moste fere,  
That al this thing but nyce dremes were;  
For which ful ofte ech of hem seyde, 'O swete,  
Clippe ich yow thus, or elles I it mete?'

And, lord! So he gan goodly on hir see,  
That never his look ne bleynte from hir face,  
And seyde, 'O dere herte, may it be  
That it be sooth, that ye ben in this place?'  
'Ye, herte myn, god thank I of his grace!'  
Quod tho Criseyde, and therwith-al him kiste,  
That where his spirit was, for Ioye he niste.

This Troilus ful ofte hir eyen two  
Gan for to kisse, and seyde, 'O eyen clere,  
It were ye that wroughte me swich wo,  
Ye humble nettes of my lady dere!  
Though ther be mercy writen in your chere,  
God wot, the text ful hard is, sooth, to finde,  
How coude ye with-outen bond me binde?'

Therwith he gan hir faste in armes take,  
And wel an hundred tymes gan he syke,  
Nought swiche sorwfull sykes as men make  
For wo, or elles whan that folk ben syke,  
But esy sykes, swiche as been to lyke,  
That shewed his affeccioun with-inne;  
Of swiche sykes coude he nought bilinne.

Sone after this they speke of sondry thinges,  
As fil to purpos of this aventure,  
And pleyinge entrechaungeden hir ringes,  
Of which I can nought tellen no scripture;  
But wel I woot, a broche, gold and asure,  
In whiche a ruby set was lyk an herte,  
Criseyde him yaf, and stak it on his sherte.

Lord! trowe ye, a coveitous, a wreccebe,  
That blameth love and holt of it despyt,  
That, of tho pens that he can mokre and kecche,  
Was ever yet y-yeve him swich delyt,  
As is in love, in oo poynt, in som plyt?  
Nay, doutelees, for also god me save,  
So parfit Ioye may no nigard have!

They wol sey 'Yis,' but lord! So that they lye,  
Tho bisy wrecches, ful of wo and drede!  
They callen love a woodnesse or folye,  
But it shal falle hem as I shal yow rede;  
They shul forgo the whyte and eke the rede,  
And live in wo, ther god yeve hem mischaunce,  
And every lover in his trouthe avaunce!

As wolde god, tho wrecches, that dispysse  
Servyse of love, hadde eres al-so longe

As hadde Myda, ful of coveityse,  
And ther-to dronken hadde as hoot and stronge  
As Crassus dide for his affectis wronge,  
To techen hem that they ben in the vyce,  
And loveres nought, al-though they holde hem nyce!

Thise ilke two, of whom that I yow seye,  
Whan that hir hertes wel assured were,  
Tho gonne they to speken and to pleye,  
And eek rehercen how, and whanne, and where,  
They knewe hem first, and every wo and fere  
That passed was; but al swich hevynesse,  
I thanke it god, was tourned to gladnesse.

And ever-mo, whan that hem fel to speke  
Of any thing of swich a tyme agoon,  
With kissing al that tale sholde breke,  
And fallen in a newe Ioye anoon,  
And diden al hir might, sin they were oon,  
For to recoveren blisse and been at ese,  
And passed wo with Ioye countrepeyse.

Reson wil not that I speke of sleep,  
For it accordeth nought to my matere;  
God woot, they toke of that ful litel keep,  
But lest this night, that was to hem so dere,  
Ne sholde in veyn escape in no manere,  
It was biset in Ioye and businesse  
Of al that souneth in-to gentilnesse.

But whan the cok, comune astrologer,  
Gan on his brest to bete, and after crowe,  
And Lucifer, the dayes messenger,  
Gan for to ryse, and out hir bemes throwe;  
And estward roos, to him that coude it knowe,  
Fortuna maior, than anoon Criseyde,  
With herte sore, to Troilus thus seyde: --

'Myn hertes lyf, my trist and my plesaunce,  
That I was born, allas! What me is wo,  
That day of us mot make desseveraunce!  
For tyme it is to ryse, and hennes go,



Or elles I am lost for evermo!  
O night, allas! Why niltow over us hove,  
As longe as whanne Almena lay by Iove?

'O blake night, as folk in bokes rede,  
That shapen art by god this world to hyde  
At certeyn tymes with thy derke wede,  
That under that men mighte in reste abyde,  
Wel oughte bestes pleyne, and folk thee chyde,  
That there-as day with labour wolde us breste,  
That thou thus fleest, and deynest us nought reste!

'Thou dost, allas! To shortly thyn offyce,  
Thou rakel night, ther god, makere of kinde,  
Thee, for thyn hast and thyn unkinde vyce,  
So faste ay to our hemi-spere binde.  
That never-more under the ground thou winde!  
For now, for thou so hyst out of Troye,  
Have I forgon thus hastily my Ioye!

This Troilus, that with tho wordes felte,  
As thoughte him tho, for pietous distresse,  
The bloody teres from his herte melte,  
As he that never yet swich hevinesse  
Assayed hadde, out of so greet gladnesse,  
Gan therwith-al Criseyde his lady dere  
In armes streyne, and seyde in this manere: --

'O cruel day, accusour of the Ioye  
That night and love han stole and faste y-wryen,  
A-cursed be thy coming in-to Troye,  
For every bore hath oon of thy bright yen!  
Envyous day, what list thee so to spyen?  
What hastow lost, why sekestow this place,  
Ther god thy lyght so quenche, for his grace?

'Allas! What han thise loveres thee agilt,  
Dispitous day? Thyn be the pyne of helle!  
For many a love-re hastow shent, and wilt;  
Thy pouring in wol no-wher lete hem dwelle.  
What proferestow thy light here for to selle?  
Go selle it hem that smale seles graven,

We wol thee nought, us nedeth no day haven.'

And eek the sonne Tytan gan he chyde,  
And seyde, 'O fool, wel may men thee dispyse,  
That hast the Dawing al night by thy syde,  
And suffrest hir so sone up fro thee ryse,  
For to disesen loveres in this wyse.  
What! Holde your bed ther, thou, and eek thy Morwe!  
I bidde god, so yeve yow bothe sorwe!'

Therwith ful sore he sighte, and thus he seyde,  
'My lady right, and of my wele or wo  
The welle and rote, O goodly myn, Criseyde,  
And shal I ryse, allas! And shal I go?  
Now fele I that myn herte moot a-two!  
For how sholde I my lyf an houre save,  
Sin that with yow is al the lyf I have?

'What shal I doon, for certes, I not how,  
Ne whanne, allas! I shal the tyme see,  
That in this plyt I may be eft with yow;  
And of my lyf, god woot, how that shal be,  
Sin that desyr right now so byteth me,  
That I am deed anoon, but I retourne.  
How sholde I longe, allas! Fro yow soiourne?

'But nathelees, myn owene lady bright,  
Yit were it so that I wiste outrely,  
That I, your humble servaunt and your knight,  
Were in your herte set so fermely  
As ye in myn, the which thing, trewely,  
Me lever were than thise worldes tweyne,  
Yet sholde I bet enduren al my peyne.'

To that Cryseyde answerde right anoon,  
And with a syk she seyde, 'O herte dere,  
The game, y-wis, so ferforth now is goon,  
That first shal Phebus falle fro his spere,  
And every egle been the dowves fere,  
And every roche out of his place sterte,  
Er Troilus out of Criseydes herte!

'Ye he so depe in-with myn herte grave,  
That, though I wolde it turne out of my thought,  
As wisly verray god my soule save,  
To dyen in the peyne, I coude nought!  
And, for the love of god that us bath wrought,  
Lat in your brayn non other fantasye  
So crepe, that it cause me to dye!

'And that ye me wolde han as faste in minde  
As I have yow, that wolde I yow bi-seche;  
And, if I wiste soothly that to finde,  
God mighte not a poynt my Ioyes eche!  
But, herte myn, with-oute more speche,  
Beth to me trewe, or elles were it routhe;  
For I am thyn, by god and by my trouthe!

'Beth glad for-thy, and live in sikernesse;  
Thus seyde I never er this, ne shal to mo;  
And if to yow it were a gret gladnesse  
To turne ayein, soone after that ye go,  
As fayn wolde I as ye, it were so,  
As wisly god myn herte bringe at reste!  
And him in armes took, and ofte keste.

Agayns his wil, sin it mot nedes be,  
This Troilus up roos, and faste him cledde,  
And in his armes took his lady free  
An hundred tyme, and on his wey him spedde,  
And with swich wordes as his herte bledde,  
He seyde, 'Farewel, mr dere herte swete,  
Ther god us graunte sounde and sone to mete!'

To which no word for sorwe she answerde,  
So sore gan his parting hir destreyne;  
And Troilus un-to his palays ferde,  
As woo bigon as she was, sooth to seyne;  
So hard him wrong of sharp desyr the peyne  
For to ben eft there he was in plesaunce,  
That it may never out of his remembraunce.

Retorned to his real palais, sone  
He softe in-to his bed gan for to slinke,

To slepe longe, as he was wont to done,  
But al for nought; he may wel ligge and winke,  
But sleep ne may ther in his herte sinke;  
Thenkinge how she, for whom desyr him brende,  
A thousand-fold was worth more than he wende.

And in his thought gan up and doun to winde  
Hir wordes alle, and every countenaunce,  
And fermely impressen in his minde  
The leste poynt that to him was plesaunce;  
And verrayliche, of thilke remembraunce,  
Desyr al newe him brende, and lust to brede  
Gan more than erst, and yet took he non hede.

Criseyde also, right in the same wyse,  
Of Troilus gan in hir herte shette  
His worthinesse, his lust, his dedes wyse,  
His gentillesse, and how she with him mette,  
Thonkinge love he so wel hir bisette;  
Desyring eft to have hir herte dere  
In swich a plyt, she dorste make him chere.

Pandare, a-morwe which that comen was  
Un-to his nece, and gan hir fayre grete,  
Seyde, 'Al this night so reyned it, allas!  
That al my drede is that ye, nece swete,  
Han litel layser had to slepe and mete;  
Al night,' quod he, 'hath reyn so do me wake,  
That som of us, I trowe, hir hedes ake.'

And ner he com, and seyde, 'How stont it now  
This mery morwe, nece, how can ye fare?'  
Criseyde answerde, 'Never the bet for yow,  
Fox that ye been, god yeve youre herte care!  
God help me so, ye caused al this fare,  
Trow I,' quod she, 'for alle your wordes whyte;  
O! Who-so seeth yow knoweth yow ful lyte!'

With that she gan hir face for to wrye  
With the shete, and wex for shame al reed;  
And Pandarus gan under for to pryde,  
And seyde, 'Nece, if that I shal be deed,

Have here a swerd, and smyteth of myn heed.'  
With that his arm al sodeynly he thriste  
Under hir nekke, and at the laste hir kiste.

I passe al that which chargeth nought to seye,  
What! God foryaf his deeth, and she al-so  
Foryaf, and with hir uncle gan to pleye,  
For other cause was ther noon than so.  
But of this thing right to the effect to go,  
Whan tyme was, hom til hir hous she wente,  
And Pandarus hath fully his entente.

Now torne we ayein to Troilus,  
That resteles ful longe a-bedde lay,  
And prevely sente after Pandarus,  
To him to come in al the haste he may.  
He com anoon, nought ones seyde he 'nay,'  
And Troilus ful sobrely he grette,  
And doun upon his beddes syde him sette.

This Troilus, with al the affeccioun  
Of frendes love that herte may devyse,  
To Pandarus on knees fil adoun,  
And er that he wolde of the place aryse,  
He gan him thonken in his beste wyse;  
An hondred sythe he gan the tyme blesse,  
That he was born, to bringe him fro distresse.

He seyde, 'O frend of frendes the alderbeste  
That ever was, the sothe for to telle,  
Thou hast in hevne y-brought my soule at reste  
Fro Flegitoun, the fery flood of helle;  
That, though I mighte a thousand tymes selle,  
Upon a day, my lyf in thy servyse,  
It mighte nought a mote in that suffyse.

'The sonne, which that al the world may see,  
Saw never yet, my lyf, that dar I leye,  
So inly fayr and goodly as is she,  
Whos I am al, and shal, til that I deye;  
And, that I thus am hires, dar I seye,  
That thanked be the heighe worthinesse

Of love, and eek thy kinde businessse.

'Thus hastow me no litel thing y-yive,  
Fo which to thee obliged be for ay  
My lyf, and why? For thorough thyn help I live;  
For elles deed hadde I be many a day.'  
And with that word doun in his bed he lay,  
And Pandarus ful sobrelly him herde  
Til al was seyde, and than he thus answerde:

'My dere frend, if I have doon for thee  
In any cas, god wot, it is me leef;  
And am as glad as man may of it be,  
God help me so; but tak now a-greef  
That I shal seyn, be war of this myscheef,  
That, there-as thou now brought art in-to blisse,  
That thou thy-self ne cause it nought to misse.

'For of fortunes sharpe adversitee  
The worst kinde of infortune is this,  
A man to have ben in prosperitee,  
And it remembren, whan it passed is.  
Thou art wys y-nough, for-thy do nought amis;  
Be not to rakel, though thou sitte warme,  
For if thou be, certeyn, it wol thee harme.

'Thou art at ese, and holde the wel ther-inne.  
For also seur as reed is every fyr,  
As greet a craft is kepe wel as winne;  
Brydle alwey wel thy speche and thy desyr,  
For worldly Ioye halt not but by a wyr;  
That preveth wel, it brest alday so ofte;  
For-thy nede is to werke with it softe.'

Quod Troilus, 'I hope, and god to-forn,  
My dere frend, that I shal so me bere,  
That in my gilt ther shal no thing be lorn,  
Ne I nil not racle as for to greven here;  
It nedeth not this matere ofte tere;  
For wistestow myn herte wel, Pandare,  
God woot, of this thou woldest litel care.'

Tho gan he telle him of his glade night,  
And wher-of first his herte dredde, and how,  
And seyde, 'Freend, as I am trewe knight,  
And by that feyth I shal to god and yow,  
I hadde it never half so hote as now;  
And ay the more that desyr me byteth  
To love hir best, the more it me delyteth.

'I noot my-self not wisly what it is;  
But now I fele a newe qualitee,  
Ye, al another than I dide er this.'  
Pandare answerde, and seyde thus, that he  
That ones may in hevene blisse be,  
He feleth other weyes, dar I leye,  
Than thilke tyme he first herde of it seye.

This is o word for al: this Troilus  
Was never ful to speke of this matere,  
And for to preysen un-to Pandarus  
The bountee of his righte lady dere,  
And Pandarus to thanke and maken chere.  
This tale ay was span-newe to biginne,  
Til that the night departed hem a-twinne.

Sone after this, for that fortune it wolde,  
I-comen was the blisful tyme swete,  
That Troilus was warned that he sholde,  
Ther he was erst, Criseyde his lady mete;  
For which he felte his herte in Ioye flete;  
And feythfully gan alle the goddes herie;  
And lat see now if that he can be merie.

And holden was the forme and al the wyse,  
Of hir cominge, and eek of his also,  
As it was erst, which nedeth nought devyse.  
But playnly to the effect right for to go,  
In Ioye and suerte Pandarus hem two  
A-bedde broughte, whan that hem bothe leste,  
And thus they ben in quiete and in reste.

Nought nedeth it to yow, sin they ben met,  
To aske at me if that they blythe were;

For if it erst was wel, tho was it bet  
A thousand-fold, this nedeth not enquire.  
A-gon was every sorwe and every fere;  
And bothe, y-wis, they hadde, and so they wende,  
As muche Ioye as herte may comprende.

This is no litel thing of for to seye,  
This passeth every wit for to devyse;  
For eche of hem gan otheres lust obeye;  
Felicitee, which that thise clerkes wyse  
Commenden so, ne may not here suffyse.  
This Ioye may not writen been with inke,  
This passeth al that herte may bithinke.

But cruel day, so wel-away the stounde!  
Gan for to aproche, as they by signes knewe,  
For whiche hem thoughte felen dethes wounde;  
So wo was hem, that changen gan hir hewe,  
And day they goonnen to dispysse al newe,  
Calling it traytour, envyous, and worse,  
And bitterly the dayes light they curse.

Quod Troilus, 'Allas! Now am I war  
That Pirous and tho swifte stedes three,  
Whiche that drawn forth the sonnes char,  
Han goon som by-path in despyt of me;  
That maketh it so sone day to be;  
And, for the sonne him hasteth thus to ryse,  
Ne shal I never doon him sacrifysse!'

But nedes day departe moste hem sone,  
And whanne hir speche doon was and hir chere,  
They twinne anon as they were wont to done,  
And setten tyme of meting eft y-fere;  
And many a night they wroughte in this manere.  
And thus Fortune a tyme ladde in Ioye  
Criseyde, and eek this kinges sone of Troye.

In suffisaunce, in blisse, and in singinges,  
This Troilus gan al his lyf to lede;  
He spendeth, Iusteth, maketh festeynges;  
He yeveth frely ofte, and chaungeth wede,



And held aboute him alwey, out of drede,  
A world of folk, as cam him wel of kinde,  
The fressheste and the beste he coude fynde;

That swich a voys was of hym and a stevene  
Thorugh-out the world, of honour and largesse,  
That it up rong un-to the yate of hevene.  
And, as in love, he was in swich gladnesse,  
That in his herte he demede, as I gesse,  
That there nis lovere in this world at ese  
So wel as he, and thus gan love him plese.

The godlihede or beautee which that kinde  
In any other lady hadde y-set  
Can not the mountaunce of a knot unbinde,  
A-boute his herte, of al Criseydes net.  
He was so narwe y-masked and y-knet,  
That it undon on any manere syde,  
That nil not been, for ought that may betyde.

And by the hond ful ofte he wolde take  
This Pandarus, and in-to gardin lede,  
And swich a feste and swich a proces make  
Him of Criseyde, and of hir womanhede,  
And of hir beautee, that, with-uten drede,  
It was an hevene his wordes for to here;  
And thanne he wolde singe in this manere.

'Love, that of erthe and see hath governaunce,  
Love, that his hestes hath in hevene hye,  
Love, that with an holsom alliaunce  
Halt peples ioyned, as him list hem gye,  
Love, that knetteth lawe of companye,  
And couples doth in vertu for to dwelle,  
Bind this acord, that I have told and telle;

'That that the world with feyth, which that is stable,  
Dyverseth so his stoundes concordinge,  
That elements that been so discordable  
Holden a bond perpetuely duringe,  
That Phebus mote his rosy day forth bringe,  
And that the mone hath lordship over the nightes,

Al this doth Love; ay heried be his mightes!

'That, that the see, that gredy is to flowen,  
Constreyneth to a certeyn ende so  
His flodes, that so fersly they ne growen  
To drenchen erthe and al for ever-mo;  
And if that Love ought lete his brydel go,  
Al that now loveth a-sonder sholde lepe,  
And lost were al, that Love halt now to-hepe.

'So wolde god, that auctor is of kinde,  
That, with his bond, Love of his vertu liste  
To cerclen hertes alle, and faste binde,  
That from his bond no wight the wey out wiste.  
And hertes colde, hem wolde I that he twiste  
To make hem love, and that hem leste ay rewe  
On hertes sore, and kepe hem that ben trewe.'

In alle nedes, for the tounes werre,  
He was, and ay the firste in armes dight;  
And certeynly, but-if that bokes erre,  
Save Ector, most y-drad of any wight;  
And this encrees of hardinesse and might  
Cam him of love, his ladies thank to winne,  
That altered his spirit so with-inne.

In tyme of trewe, on haukinge wolde he ryde,  
Or elles huntten boor, bere, or lyoun;  
The smale bestes leet he gon bi-syde.  
And whan that he com rydinge in-to toun,  
Ful ofte his lady, from hir window down,  
As fresh as faucon comen out of muwe,  
Ful redy was, him goodly to saluwe.

And most of love and vertu was his speche,  
And in despyt hadde alle wrecchednesse;  
And doutelees, no nede was him biseche  
To honouren hem that hadde worthinesse,  
And esen hem that weren in distresse.  
And glad was he if any wight wel ferde,  
That lover was, whan he it wiste or herde.

For sooth to seyn, he lost held every wight  
But-if he were in loves heigh servyse,  
I mene folk that oughte it been of right.  
And over al this, so wel coude he devyse  
Of sentement, and in so unkouth wyse  
Al his array, that every lover thoughte,  
That al was wel, what-so he seyde or wroughte.

And though that he be come of blood royal,  
Him liste of pryde at no wight for to chase;  
Benigne he was to ech in general,  
For which he gat him thank in every place.  
Thus wolde love, y-heried be his grace,  
That Pryde, Envye, Ire, and Avaryce  
He gan to flee, and every other vyce.

Thou lady bright, the doughter to Dione,  
Thy blinde and winged sone eek, daun Cupyde;  
Ye sustren nyne eek, that by Elicone  
In hil Parnaso listen for to abyde,  
That ye thus fer han deynd me to gyde,  
I can no more, but sin that ye wol wende,  
Ye heried been for ay, with-outen ende!

Thourgh yow have I seyde fully in my song  
Theffect and Ioye of Troilus servyse,  
Al be that ther was som disese among,  
As to myn auctor listeth to devyse.  
My thridde book now ende ich in this wyse;  
And Troilus in luste and in quiete  
Is with Criseyde, his owne herte swete.

Explicit Liber Tercius.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Troilus And Criseyde: Book 04

Prohemium.

But al to litel, weylaway the whyle,  
Lasteth swich Ioye, y-thonked be Fortune!  
That semeth trewest, whan she wol bygyle,  
And can to foles so hir song entune,  
That she hem hent and blent, traytour comune;  
And whan a wight is from hir wheel y-throwe,  
Than laugheth she, and maketh him the mowe.

From Troilus she gan hir brighte face  
Awey to wrythe, and took of him non hede,  
But caste him clene out of his lady grace,  
And on hir wheel she sette up Diomedé;  
For which right now myn herte ginneth blede,  
And now my penne, allas! With which I wryte,  
Quaketh for drede of that I moot endyte.

For how Criseyde Troilus forsook,  
Or at the leste, how that she was unkinde,  
Mot hennes-forth ben matere of my book,  
As wryten folk through which it is in minde.  
Allas! That they sholde ever cause finde  
To speke hir harm; and if they on hir lye,  
Y-wis, hem-self sholde han the vilanye.

O ye Herines, Nightes doughtren three,  
That endeles compleynen ever in pyne,  
Megera, Alete, and eek Thesiphone;  
Thou cruel Mars eek, fader to Quiryne,  
This ilke ferthe book me helpeth fyne,  
So that the los of lyf and love y-fere  
Of Troilus be fully shewed here.

Explicit prohemium.

Incipit Quartus Liber.

Ligginge in ost, as I have seyde er this,

The Grekes stronge, aboute Troye toun,  
Bifel that, whan that Phebus shyning is  
Up-on the brest of Hercules Lyoun,  
That Ector, with ful many a bold baroun,  
Caste on a day with Grekes for to fighte,  
As he was wont to greve hem what he mighte.

Not I how longe or short it was bitwene  
This purpos and that day they fighte mente;  
But on a day wel armed, bright and shene,  
Ector, and many a worthy wight out wente,  
With spere in hond and bigge bowes bente;  
And in the herd, with-oute lenger lette,  
Hir fomen in the feld anoon hem mette.

The longe day, with speres sharpe y-grounde,  
With arwes, dartes, swerdes, maces felle,  
They fighte and bringen hors and man to grounde,  
And with hir axes out the braynes quelle.  
But in the laste shour, sooth for to telle,  
The folk of Troye hem-selven so misledden,  
That with the worse at night homward they fledden.

At whiche day was taken Antenor,  
Maugre Polydamas or Monesteo,  
Santippe, Sarpedon, Polynestor,  
Polyte, or eek the Troian daun Ripheo,  
And othere lasse folk, as Phebuseo.  
So that, for harm, that day the folk of Troye  
Dredden to lese a greet part of hir Ioye.

Of Pryamus was yeve, at Greek requeste,  
A tyme of trewe, and tho they gonnen trete,  
Hir prisoneres to chaungen, moste and leste,  
And for the surplus yeven sommes grete.  
This thing anoon was couth in every strete,  
Bothe in thassege, in toune, and every-where,  
And with the firste it cam to Calkas ere.

Whan Calkas knew this tretis sholde holde,  
In consistorie, among the Grekes, sone  
He gan in thringe forth, with lordes olde,

And sette him there-as he was wont to done;  
And with a chaunged face hem bad a bone,  
For love of god, to don that reverence,  
To stinte noyse, and yeve him audience.

Thanne seyde he thus, 'Lo! Lordes myne, I was  
Troian, as it is knowen out of drede;  
And, if that yow remembre, I am Calkas,  
That alderfirst yaf comfort to your nede,  
And tolde wel how that ye sholden spede.  
For dredelees, thorough yow, shal, in a stounde,  
Ben Troye y-brend, and beten down to grounde.

'And in what forme, or in what maner wyse  
This town to shende, and al your lust to acheve,  
Ye han er this wel herd it me devyse;  
This knowe ye, my lordes, as I leve.  
And for the Grekes weren me so leve,  
I com my-self in my propre persone,  
To teche in this how yow was best to done;

'Havinge un-to my tresour ne my rente  
Right no resport, to respect of your ese.  
Thus al my good I loste and to yow wente,  
Wening in this you, lordes, for to plese.  
But al that los ne doth me no disese.  
I vouche-sauf, as wisly have I Ioye,  
For you to lese al that I have in Troye,

'Save of a doughter, that I lafte, allas!  
Slepinge at hoom, whanne out of Troye I sterte.  
O sterne, O cruel fader that I was!  
How mighte I have in that so hard an herte?  
Allas! I ne hadde y-brought hir in hir sherte!  
For sorwe of which I wol not live to morwe,  
But-if ye lordes rewe up-on my sorwe.

'For, by that cause I say no tyme er now  
Hir to deliver, I holden have my pees;  
But now or never, if that it lyke yow,  
I may hir have right sone, doutelees.  
O help and grace! Amonges al this prees,

Rewe on this olde caitif in destresse,  
Sin I through yow have al this hevynesse!

'Ye have now caught and fettered in prisoun  
Troians y-nowe; and if your willes be,  
My child with oon may have redempcioun.  
Now for the love of god and of bountee,  
Oon of so fele, allas! So yeve him me.  
What nede were it this preyere for to werne,  
Sin ye shul bothe han folk and toun as yerne?

'On peril of my lyf, I shal nat lye,  
Appollo hath me told it feithfully;  
I have eek founde it be astronomye,  
By sort, and by augurie eek trewely,  
And dar wel seye, the tyme is faste by,  
That fyr and flaumbe on al the toun shal sprede;  
And thus shal Troye turne to asshen dede.

'For certeyn, Phebus and Neptunus bothe,  
That makeden the walles of the toun,  
Ben with the folk of Troye alwey so wrothe,  
That thei wol bringe it to confusioun,  
Right in despyt of king Lameadoun.  
By-cause he nolde payen hem hir hyre,  
The toun of Troye shal ben set on-fyre.'

Telling his tale alwey, this olde greye,  
Humble in speche, and in his lokinge eke,  
The salte teres from his eyen tweye  
Ful faste ronnen doun by eyther cheke.  
So longe he gan of socour hem by-seke  
That, for to hele him of his sorwes sore,  
They yave him Antenor, with-oute more.

But who was glad y-nough but Calkas tho?  
And of this thing ful sone his nedes leyde  
On hem that sholden for the tretis go,  
And hem for Antenor ful ofte preyde  
To bringen hoom king Toas and Criseyde;  
And whan Pryam his save-garde sente,  
Thembassadours to Troye streyght they wente.

The cause y-told of hir cominge, the olde  
Pryam the king ful sone in general  
Let here-upon his parlement to holde,  
Of which the effect rehersen yow I shal.  
Thembassadours ben answered for fynal,  
Theschaunge of prisoners and al this nede  
Hem lyketh wel, and forth in they procede.

This Troilus was present in the place,  
Whan axed was for Antenor Criseyde,  
For which ful sone chaungen gan his face,  
As he that with tho wordes wel neigh deyde.  
But nathelees, he no word to it seyde,  
Lest men sholde his affeccioun espye;  
With mannes herte he gan his sorwes drye.

And ful of anguiss and of grisly drede  
Abood what lordes wolde un-to it seye;  
And if they wolde graunte, as god forbede,  
Theschaunge of hir, than thoughte he thinges tweye,  
First, how to save hir honour, and what weye  
He mighte best theschaunge of hir withstonde;  
Ful faste he caste how al this mighte stonde.

Love him made al prest to doon hir byde,  
And rather dye than she sholde go;  
But resoun seyde him, on that other syde,  
'With-oute assent of hir ne do not so,  
Lest for thy werk she wolde be thy fo,  
And seyn, that thorough thy medling is y-blowe  
Your bother love, there it was erst unknowe.'

For which he gan deliberen, for the beste,  
That though the lordes wolde that she wente,  
He wolde lat hem graunte what hem leste,  
And telle his lady first what that they mente.  
And whan that she had seyde him hir entente,  
Ther-after wolde he werken also blyve,  
Though al the world ayein it wolde stryve.

Ector, which that wel the Grekes herde,



For Antenor how they wolde han Criseyde,  
Gan it withstonde, and sobrelly answerde: --  
'Sires, she nis no prisoner,' he seyde;  
'I noot on yow who that this charge leyde,  
But, on my part, ye may eft-sone hem telle,  
We usen here no wommen for to selle.'

The noyse of peple up-stirte thanne at ones,  
As brewe as blase of straw y-set on fyre;  
For infortune it wolde, for the nones,  
They sholden hir confusioun desyre.  
'Ector,' quod they, 'what goost may yow enspyre  
This womman thus to shilde and doon us lese  
Daun Antenor? -- a wrong wey now ye chese --

'That is so wys, and eek so bold baroun,  
And we han nede to folk, as men may see;  
He is eek oon, the grettest of this toun;  
O Ector, lat tho fantasyes be!  
O king Priam,' quod they, 'thus seggen we,  
That al our voys is to for-gon Criseyde;  
And to deliveren Antenor they preyde.

O Iuvenal, lord! Trewe is thy sentence,  
That litel witen folk what is to yerne  
That they ne finde in hir desyr offence;  
For cloud of errour let hem not descerne  
What best is; and lo, here ensample as yerne.  
This folk desiren now deliveraunce  
Of Antenor, that broughte hem to mischaunce!

For he was after traytour to the toun  
Of Troye; allas! They quitte him out to rathe;  
O nyce world, lo, thy discrecioun!  
Criseyde, which that never dide hem skathe,  
Shal now no lenger in hir blisse bathe;  
But Antenor, he shal com hoom to toune,  
And she shal out; thus seyden here and howne.

For which delibered was by parlement  
For Antenor to yelden out Criseyde,  
And it pronounced by the president,

Al-theigh that Ector 'nay' ful ofte preyde.  
And fynaly, what wight that it with-seyde,  
It was for nought, it moste been, and sholde;  
For substaunce of the parlement it wolde.

Departed out of parlement echone,  
This Troilus, with-oute wordes mo,  
Un-to his chaumbre spedde him faste allone,  
But-if it were a man of his or two,  
The whiche he bad out faste for to go,  
By-cause he wolde slepen, as he seyde,  
And hastely up-on his bed him leyde.

And as in winter leves been biraft,  
Eche after other, til the tree be bare,  
So that ther nis but bark and braunche y-laft,  
Lyth Troilus, biraft of ech wel-fare,  
Y-bounden in the blake bark of care,  
Disposed wood out of his wit to breyde,  
So sore him sat the chaunginge of Criseyde.

He rist him up, and every dore he shette  
And windowe eek, and tho this sorweful man  
Up-on his beddes syde a-doun him sette,  
Ful lyk a deed image pale and wan;  
And in his brest the heped wo bigan  
Out-breste, and he to werken in this wyse  
In his woodnesse, as I shal yow devyse.

Right as the wilde bole biginneth springe  
Now here, now there, y-darted to the herte,  
And of his death roreth in compleyninge,  
Right so gan he aboute the chaumbre sterte,  
Smyting his brest ay with his festes smerte;  
His heed to the wal, his body to the grounde  
Ful ofte he swapte, him-selven to confounde.

His eyen two, for pitee of his herte,  
Out stremeden as swifte welles tweye;  
The heighe sobbes of his sorwes smerte  
His speche him refte, unnethes mighte he seye,  
'O death, allas! Why niltow do me deye?

A-cursed be the day which that nature  
Shoop me to ben a lyves creature!

But after, whan the furie and the rage  
Which that his herte twiste and faste threste,  
By lengthe of tyme somewhat gan asswage,  
Up-on his bed he leyde him doun to reste;  
But tho bigonne his teres more out-breste,  
That wonder is, the body may suffyse  
To half this wo, which that I yow devyse.

Than seyde he thus, 'Fortune! Allas the whyle!  
What have I doon, what have I thus a-gilt?  
How mightestow for reuthe me bigyle?  
Is ther no grace, and shal I thus be spilt?  
Shal thus Criseyde away, for that thou wilt?  
Allas! How maystow in thyn herte finde  
To been to me thus cruel and unkinde?

'Have I thee nought honoured al my lyve,  
As thou wel wost, above the goddes alle?  
Why wiltow me fro Ioye thus de pryve?  
O Troilus, what may men now thee calle  
But wrecche of wrecches, out of honour falle  
In-to miserie, in which I wol biwayle  
Criseyde, allas! Til that the breeth me fayle?

'Allas, Fortune! If that my lyf in Ioye  
Displeased hadde un-to thy foule envye,  
Why ne haddestow my fader, king of Troye,  
By-raft the lyf, or doon my bretheren dye,  
Or slayn my-self, that thus compleyne and crye,  
I, combre-world, that may of no-thing serve,  
But ever dye, and never fully sterve?

'If that Criseyde allone were me laft,  
Nought roughte I whider thou woldest me stere;  
And hir, allas! Than hastow me biraft.  
But ever-more, lo! This is thy manere,  
To reve a wight that most is to him dere,  
To preve in that thy gerful violence.  
Thus am I lost, ther helpeth no defence!

'O verray lord of love, O god, allas!  
That knowest best myn herte and al my thought,  
What shal my sorwful lyf don in this cas  
If I for-go that I so dere have bought?  
Sin ye Cryseyde and me han fully brought  
In-to your grace, and bothe our hertes seled,  
How may ye suffre, allas! It be repeled?

'What I may doon, I shal, whyl I may dure  
On lyve in torment and in cruel peyne,  
This infortune or this disaventure,  
Allone as I was born, y-wis, compleyne;  
Ne never wil I seen it shyne or reyne;  
But ende I wil, as Edippe, in derknesse  
My sorwful lyf, and dyen in distresse.

'O wery goost, that errest to and fro,  
Why niltow fleen out of the wofulleste  
Body, that ever mighte on grounde go?  
O soule, lurking in this wo, unneste,  
Flee forth out of myn herte, and lat it breste,  
And folwe alwey Criseyde, thy lady dere;  
Thy righte place is now no lenger here!

'O wofulle eyen two, sin your disport  
Was al to seen Criseydes eyen brighte,  
What shal ye doon but, for my discomfort,  
Stonden for nought, and wepen out your sighte?  
Sin she is queynt, that wont was yow to lighte,  
In veyn fro-this-forth have I eyen tweye  
Y-formed, sin your vertue is a-weye.

'O my Criseyde, O lady sovereyne  
Of thilke woful soule that thus cryeth,  
Who shal now yeven comfort to the peyne?  
Allas, no wight; but when myn herte dyeth,  
My spirit, which that so un-to yow hyeth,  
Receyve in gree, for that shal ay yow serve;  
For-thy no fors is, though the body sterve.

'O ye loveres, that heighe upon the wheel

Ben set of Fortune, in good aventure,  
God leve that ye finde ay love of steel,  
And longe mot your lyf in Ioye endure!  
But whan ye comen by my sepulture,  
Remembreth that your felawe resteth there;  
For I lovede eek, though I unworthy were.

'O olde, unholsum, and mislyved man,  
Calkas I mene, allas! What eyleth thee  
To been a Greek, sin thou art born Troian?  
O Calkas, which that wilt my bane be,  
In cursed tyme was thou born for me!  
As wolde blisful Iove, for his Ioye,  
That I thee hadde, where I wolde, in Troye!'

A thousand sykes, hottere than the glede,  
Out of his brest ech after other wente,  
Medled with pleyntes newe, his wo to fede,  
For which his woful teres never stente;  
And shortly, so his peynes him to-rente,  
And wex so mat, that Ioye nor penaunce  
He feleth noon, but lyth forth in a traunce.

Pandare, which that in the parlement  
Hadde herd what every lord and burgeys seyde,  
And how ful graunted was, by oon assent,  
For Antenor to yelden so Criseyde,  
Gan wel neigh wood out of his wit to breyde,  
So that, for wo, he niste what he mente;  
But in a rees to Troilus he wente.

A certeyn knight, that for the tyme kepte  
The chaumbre-dore, un-dide it him anoon;  
And Pandare, that ful tendreliche wepte,  
In-to the derke chaumbre, as stille as stoon,  
Toward the bed gan softely to goon,  
So confus, that he niste what to seye;  
For verray wo his wit was neigh awaye.

And with his chere and loking al to-torn,  
For sorwe of this, and with his armes folden,  
He stood this woful Troilus biforn,

And on his pitous face he gan biholden;  
But lord, so often gan his herte colden,  
Seing his freend in wo, whos hevinesse  
His herte slow, as thoughte him, for distresse.

This woful wight, this Troilus, that felte  
His freend Pandare y-comen him to see,  
Gan as the snow ayein the sonne melte,  
For which this sorwful Pandare, of pitee,  
Gan for to wepe as tendreliche as he;  
And specheles thus been thise ilke tweye,  
That neyther mighte o word for sorwe seye.

But at the laste this woful Troilus,  
Ney deed for smert, gan bresten out to rore,  
And with a sorwful noyse he seyde thus,  
Among his sobbes and his sykes sore,  
'Lo! Pandare, I am deed, with-uten more.  
Hastow nought herd at parlement,' he seyde,  
'For Antenor how lost is my Criseyde?'

This Pandarus, ful deed and pale of hewe,  
Ful pitously answerde and seyde, 'Yis!  
As wisly were it fals as it is trewe,  
That I have herd, and wot al how it is.  
O mercy, god, who wolde have trowed this?  
Who wolde have wend that, in so litel a throwe,  
Fortune our Ioye wolde han over-throwe?

'For in this world ther is no creature,  
As to my doom, that ever saw ruyne  
Straungere than this, thorough cas or aventure.  
But who may al eschewe, or al devyne?  
Swich is this world; for-thy I thus defyne,  
Ne trust no wight to finden in Fortune  
Ay propretee; hir yeftes been comune.

'But tel me this, why thou art now so mad  
To sorwen thus? Why lystow in this wyse,  
Sin thy desyr al holly hastow had,  
So that, by right, it oughte y-now suffyse?  
But I, that never felte in my servyse

A frendly chere or loking of an ye,  
Lat me thus wepe and wayle, til I dye.

'And over al this, as thou wel wost thy-selve,  
This town is ful of ladies al aboute;  
And, to my doom, fairer than swiche twelve  
As ever she was, shal I finde, in som route,  
Ye, oon or two, with-outen any doute.  
For-thy be glad, myn owene dere brother,  
If she be lost, we shal recovere another.

'What, god for-bede alwey that ech plesaunce  
In o thing were, and in non other wight!  
If oon can singe, another can wel daunce;  
If this be goodly, she is glad and light;  
And this is fayr, and that can good a-right.  
Ech for his vertu holden is for dere,  
Bothe heroner and faucon for rivere.

'And eek, as writ Zanzis, that was ful wys,  
"The newe love out chaceth ofte the olde;"  
And up-on newe cas lyth newe avys.  
Thenk eek, thy-self to saven artow holde;  
Swich fyr, by proces, shal of kinde colde.  
For sin it is but casuel plesaunce,  
Som cas shal putte it out of remembraunce.

'For al-so seur as day cometh after night,  
The newe love, labour or other wo,  
Or elles selde seinge of a wight,  
Don olde affeccious alle over-go.  
And, for thy part, thou shalt have oon of tho  
To abrigge with thy bittre peynes smerte;  
Absence of hir shal dryve hir out of herte.'

Thise wordes seyde he for the nones alle,  
To helpe his freend, lest he for sorwe deyde.  
For douteles, to doon his wo to falle,  
He roughte not what unthrift that he seyde.  
But Troilus, that neigh for sorwe deyde,  
Tok litel hede of al that ever he mente;  
Oon ere it herde, at the other out it wente:

But at the laste answerde and seyde, 'Freend,  
This lechecraft, or heled thus to be,  
Were wel sitting, if that I were a feend,  
To traysen hir that trewe is unto me!  
I pray god, lat this consayl never y-thee;  
But do me rather sterve anon-right here  
Er I thus do as thou me woldest lere.

'She that I serve, y-wis, what so thou seye,  
To whom myn herte enhabit is by right,  
Shal han me holly hires til that I deye.  
For, Pandarus, sin I have trouthe hir hight,  
I wol not been untrewe for no wight;  
But as hir man I wol ay live and sterve,  
And never other creature serve.

'And ther thou seyst, thou shalt as faire finde  
As she, lat be, make no comparisoun  
To creature y-formed here by kinde.  
O leve Pandare, in conclusioun,  
I wol not be of thyn opinioun,  
Touching al this; for whiche I thee biseche,  
So hold thy pees; thou sleest me with thy speche.

'Thow biddest me I sholde love an-other  
Al freshly newe, and lat Criseyde go!  
It lyth not in my power, leve brother.  
And though I mighte, I wolde not do so.  
But canstow pleyen raket, to and fro,  
Netle in, dokke out, now this, now that, Pandare?  
Now foule falle hir, for thy wo that care!

'Thow farest eek by me, thou Pandarus,  
As he, that whan a wight is wo bi-goon,  
He cometh to him a pas, and seyth right thus,  
"Think not on smert, and thou shalt fele noon."  
Thou most me first transmuwen in a stoon,  
And reve me my passiounes alle,  
Er thou so lightly do my wo to falle.

'The deeth may wel out of my brest departe



The lyf, so longe may this sorwe myne;  
But fro my soule shal Criseydes darte  
Out never-mo; but doun with Proserpyne,  
Whan I am deed, I wol go wone in pyne;  
And ther I wol eternaly compleyne  
My wo, and how that twinned be we tweyne.

'Thow hast here maad an argument, for fyn,  
How that it sholde a lasse peyne be  
Criseyde to for-goon, for she was myn,  
And live in ese and in felicitee.  
Why gabbestow, that seydest thus to me  
That "him is wors that is fro wele y-throwe,  
Than he hadde erst non of that wele y-knowe?"

'But tel me now, sin that thee thinketh so light  
To chaungen so in love, ay to and fro,  
Why hastow not don bisily thy might  
To chaungen hir that doth thee al thy wo?  
Why niltow lete hir fro thyn herte go?  
Why niltow love an-other lady swete,  
That may thyn herte setten in quiete?

'If thou hast had in love ay yet mischaunce,  
And canst it not out of thyn herte dryve,  
I, that livede in lust and in plesaunce  
With hir as mucche as creature on-lyve,  
How sholde I that foryete, and that so blyve?  
O where hastow ben hid so longe in muwe,  
That canst so wel and formely arguwe?

'Nay, nay, god wot, nought worth is al thy reed,  
For which, for what that ever may bifalle,  
With-outen wordes mo, I wol be deed.  
O deeth, that endere art of sorwes alle,  
Com now, sin I so ofte after thee calle,  
For sely is that deeth, soth for to seyne,  
That, ofte y-cleped, cometh and endeth peyne.

'Wel wot I, whyl my lyf was in quiete,  
Er thou me slowe, I wolde have yeven hyre;  
But now thy cominge is to me so swete,

That in this world I no-thing so desyre.  
O deeth, sin with this sorwe I am a-fyre,  
Thou outhur do me anoon yn teres drenche,  
Or with thy colde strook myn hete quenche!

'Sin that thou sleest so fele in sondry wyse  
Ayens hir wil, unpreyed, day and night,  
Do me, at my requeste, this servyse,  
Delivere now the world, so dostow right,  
Of me, that am the wofulleste wight  
That ever was; for tyme is that I sterve,  
Sin in this world of right nought may I serve.'

This Troilus in teres gan distille,  
As licour out of alambyk ful faste;  
And Pandarus gan holde his tunge stille,  
And to the ground his eyen doun he caste.  
But nathelees, thus thoughte he at the laste,  
'What, parde, rather than my felawe deye,  
Yet shal I som-what more un-to him seye:'

And seyde, 'Freend, sin thou hast swich distresse,  
And sin thee list myn arguments to blame,  
Why nilt thy-selven helpen doon redresse,  
And with thy manhod letten al this grame?  
Go ravishe hir ne canstow not for shame!  
And outhur lat hir out of toune fare,  
Or hold hir stille, and leve thy nyce fare.

'Artow in Troye, and hast non hardiment  
To take a womman which that loveth thee,  
And wolde hir-selven been of thyn assent?  
Now is not this a nyce vanitee?  
Rys up anoon, and lat this weping be,  
And kyth thou art a man, for in this houre  
I wil be deed, or she shal bleven oure.'

To this answerde him Troilus ful softe,  
And seyde, 'Parde, leve brother dere,  
Al this have I my-self yet thought ful ofte,  
And more thing than thou devycest here.  
But why this thing is laft, thou shalt wel here;

And whan thou me hast yeve an audience,  
Ther-after mayst thou telle al thy sentence.

'First, sin thou wost this toun hath al this werre  
For ravissing of wommen so by might,  
It sholde not be suffred me to erre,  
As it stant now, ne doon so gret unright.  
I sholde han also blame of every wight,  
My fadres graunt if that I so withstode,  
Sin she is changed for the tounes goode.

'I have eek thought, so it were hir assent,  
To aske hir at my fader, of his grace;  
Than thenke I, this were hir accusement,  
Sin wel I woot I may hir not purchase.  
For sin my fader, in so heigh a place  
As parlement, hath hir eschaunge enseled,  
He nil for me his lettre be repeled.

'Yet drede I most hir herte to pertourbe  
With violence, if I do swich a game;  
For if I wolde it openly distourbe,  
It moste been disclaundre to hir name.  
And me were lever deed than hir defame,  
As nolde god but-if I sholde have  
Hir honour lever than my lyf to save!

'Thus am I lost, for ought that I can see;  
For certeyn is, sin that I am hir knight,  
I moste hir honour levere han than me  
In every cas, as loveere oughte of right.  
Thus am I with desyr and reson twight;  
Desyr for to destourben hir me redeth,  
And reson nil not, so myn herte dredeth.'

Thus wepinge that he coude never cesse,  
He seyde, 'Allas! How shal I, wrecche, fare?  
For wel fele I alwey my love encresse,  
And hope is lasse and lasse alwey, Pandare!  
Encressen eek the causes of my care;  
So wel-a-wey, why nil myn herte breste?  
For, as in love, ther is but litel reste.'

Pandare answerde, 'Freend, thou mayst, for me,  
Don as thee list; but hadde ich it so hote,  
And thyn estat, she sholde go with me;  
Though al this toun cryede on this thing by note,  
I nolde sette at al that noyse a grote.  
For when men han wel cryed, than wol they rounne;  
A wonder last but nyne night never in toune.

'Devyne not in reson ay so depe  
Ne curteysly, but help thy-self anoon;  
Bet is that othere than thy-selven wepe,  
And namely, sin ye two been al oon.  
Rys up, for by myn heed, she shal not goon;  
And rather be in blame a lyte y-founde  
Than sterve here as a gnat, with-oute wounde.

'It is no shame un-to yow, ne no vyce  
Hir to with-holden, that ye loveth most.  
Paraunter, she mighte holden thee for nyce  
To lete hir go thus to the Grekes ost.  
Thenk eek Fortune, as wel thy-selven wost,  
Helpeth hardy man to his enpryse,  
And weyveth wrecches, for hir cowardyse.

'And though thy lady wolde a litel hir greve,  
Thou shalt thy pees ful wel here-after make,  
But as for me, certayn, I can not leve  
That she wolde it as now for yvel take.  
Why sholde than for ferd thyn herte quake?  
Thenk eek how Paris hath, that is thy brother,  
A love; and why shaltow not have another?

'And Troilus, o thing I dar thee swere,  
That if Criseyde, whiche that is thy leef,  
Now loveth thee as wel as thou dost here,  
God helpe me so, she nil nat take a-greef,  
Though thou do bote a-noon in this mischeef.  
And if she wilneth fro thee for to passe,  
Thanne is she fals; so love hir wel the lasse.

'For-thy tak herte, and thenk, right as a knight,

Thourgh love is broken alday every lawe.  
Kyth now sumwhat thy corage and thy might,  
Have mercy on thy-self, for any awe.  
Lat not this wrecched wo thin herte gnawe,  
But manly set the world on sixe and sevene;  
And, if thou deye a martir, go to hevене.

'I wol my-self be with thee at this dede,  
Though ich and al my kin, up-on a stounde,  
Shulle in a strete as dogges ligen dede,  
Thourgh-girt with many a wyd and blody wounde.  
In every cas I wol a freend be founde.  
And if thee list here sterven as a wrecche,  
A-dieu, the devel spede him that it recche!'

This Troilus gan with tho wordes quiken,  
And seyde, 'Freend, graunt mercy, ich assente;  
But certaynly thou mayst not me so priken,  
Ne peyne noon ne may me so tormente,  
That, for no cas, it is not myn entente,  
At shorte wordes, though I dyen sholde,  
To ravisshe hir, but-if hir-self it wolde.'

'Why, so mene I,' quod Pandarus, 'al this day.  
But tel me than, hastow hir wil assayed,  
That sorwest thus?' And he answerde, 'Nay.'  
'Wher-of artow,' quod Pandare, 'than a-mayed,  
That nost not that she wol ben y-vel apayed  
To ravisshe hir, sin thou hast not ben there,  
But-if that Iove tolde it in thyn ere?

'For-thy rys up, as nought ne were, anoon,  
And wash thy face, and to the king thou wende,  
Or he may wondren whider thou art goon.  
Thou most with wisdom him and othere blende;  
Or, up-on cas, he may after thee sende  
Er thou be war; and shortly, brother dere,  
Be glad, and lat me werke in this matere.

'For I shal shape it so, that sikerly  
Thou shalt this night som tyme, in som manere,  
Com speke with thy lady prevely,

And by hir wordes eek, and by hir chere,  
Thou shalt ful sone aperceyve and wel here  
Al hir entente, and in this cas the beste;  
And fare now wel, for in this point I reste.'

The swifte Fame, whiche that false thinges  
Egal reporteth lyk the thinges trewe,  
Was thorough-out Troye y-fled with preste winges  
Fro man to man, and made this tale al newe,  
How Calkas doughter, with hir brighte hewe,  
At parlement, with-oute wordes more,  
I-graunted was in change of Antenore.

The whiche tale anoon-right as Criseyde  
Had herd, she, which that of hir fader roughte,  
As in this cas, right nought, ne whanne he deyde,  
Ful bisily to Iuppiter bisoughte  
Yeve hem mischaunce that this tretis broughte.  
But shortly, lest these tales sothe were,  
She dorste at no wight asken it, for fere.

As she that hadde hir herte and al hir minde  
On Troilus y-set so wonder faste,  
That al this world ne mighte hir love unbinde,  
Ne Troilus out of hir herte caste;  
She wol ben his, whyl that hir lyf may laste.  
And thus she brenneth bothe in love and drede,  
So that she niste what was best to rede.

But as men seen in toune, and al aboute,  
That wommen usen frendes to visyte,  
So to Criseyde of wommen com a route  
For pitous Ioye, and wenden hir delyte;  
And with hir tales, dere y-nough a myte,  
These wommen, whiche that in the cite dwelle,  
They sette hem doun, and seyde as I shal telle.

Quod first that oon, 'I am glad, trewely,  
By-cause of yow, that shal your fader see.'  
A-nother seyde, 'Y-wis, so nam not I,  
For al to litel hath she with us be.'  
Quod tho the thridde, 'I hope, y-wis, that she

Shal bringen us the pees on every syde,  
That, whan she gooth, almighty god hir gyde!'

Tho wordes and tho wommanisshes thinges,  
She herde hem right as though she thennes were;  
For, god it wot, hir herte on other thing is,  
Although the body sat among hem there.  
Hir advertence is alwey elles-where;  
For Troilus ful faste hir soule soughte;  
With-outen word, alwey on him she thoughte.

These women, that thus wenden hir to please,  
Aboute nought gonne alle hir tales spende;  
Swich vanitee ne can don hir non ese,  
As she that, al this mene whyle, brende  
Of other passioun than that they wende,  
So that she felte almost hir herte deye  
For wo, and wery of that companye.

For which no lenger mighte she restreyne  
Hir teres, so they gonnen up to welle,  
That yaven signes of the bitter peyne  
In whiche hir spirit was, and moste dwelle;  
Remembring hir, fro heven unto which helle  
She fallen was, sith she forgoth the sighte  
Of Troilus, and sorrowfully she sighte.

And thilke foles sittinge hir aboute  
Wenden, that she wepte and syked sore  
By-cause that she sholde out of that route  
Depart, and never pleye with hem more.  
And they that hadde y-knowen hir of yore  
Seye hir so wepe, and thoughte it kindenesse,  
And eche of hem wepte eek for hir destresse;

And bisily they gonnen hir conforten  
Of thing, god wot, on which she litel thoughte;  
And with hir tales wenden hir disporten,  
And to be glad they often hir bisoughte.  
But swich an ese ther-with they hir wroughte  
Right as a man is esed for to fele,  
For ache of heed, to clawen him on his hele!

But after al this nyce vanitee  
They took hir leve, and hoom they wenten alle.  
Criseyde, ful of sorweful pitee,  
In-to hir chaumbre up wente out of the halle,  
And on hir bed she gan for deed to falle,  
In purpos never thennes for to ryse;  
And thus she wroughte, as I shal yow devyse.

Hir ounded heer, that sonnish was of hewe,  
She rente, and eek hir fingres longe and smale  
She wrong ful ofte, and bad god on hir rewe,  
And with the deeth to doon bote on hir bale.  
Hir hewe, whylom bright, that tho was pale,  
Bar witnes of hir wo and hir constreynte;  
And thus she spak, sobbinge, in hir compleynte:

'Alas!' quod she, 'out of this regioun  
I, woful wrecche and infortuned wight,  
And born in corsed constellacioun,  
Mot goon, and thus departen fro my knight;  
Wo worth, allas! That ilke dayes light  
On which I saw him first with eyen tweyne,  
That causeth me, and I him, al this peyne!'

Therwith the teres from hir eyen two  
Doun fille, as shour in Aperill ful swythe;  
Hir whyte brest she bet, and for the wo  
After the deeth she cryed a thousand sythe,  
Sin he that wont hir wo was for to lythe,  
She mot for-goon; for which disaventure  
She held hir-self a forlost creature.

She seyde, 'How shal he doon, and I also?  
How sholde I live, if that I from him twinne?  
O dere herte eek, that I love so,  
Who shal that sorwe sleen that ye ben inne?  
O Calkas, fader, thyn be al this sinne!  
O moder myn, that cleped were Argyve,  
Wo worth that day that thou me bere on lyve!

'To what fyn sholde I live and sorwen thus?



How sholde a fish with-oute water dure?  
What is Criseyde worth, from Troilus?  
How sholde a plaunte or lyves creature  
Live, with-oute his kinde noriture?  
For which ful oft a by-word here I seye,  
That "rotelees, mot grene sone deye."

'I shal don thus, sin neither swerd ne darte  
Dar I non handle, for the crueltee,  
That ilke day that I from yow departe,  
If sorwe of that nil not my bane be,  
Than shal no mete or drinke come in me  
Til I my soule out of my breste unshethe;  
And thus my-selven wol I do to dethe.

'And, Troilus, my clothes everichoon  
Shul blake been, in tokeninge, herte swete,  
That I am as out of this world agoon,  
That wont was yow to setten in quiete;  
And of myn ordre, ay til deeth me mete,  
The observaunce ever, in your absence,  
Shal sorwe been, compleynte, and abstinence.

'Myn herte and eek the woful goost ther-inne  
Biquethe I, with your spirit to compleyne  
Eternally, for they shal never twinne.  
For though in erthe y-twinne be we tweyne,  
Yet in the feld of pitee, out of peyne,  
That hight Elysos, shul we been y-fere,  
As Orpheus and Erudice, his fere.

'Thus, herte myn, for Antenor, allas!  
I sone shal be chaunged, as I wene.  
But how shul ye don in this sorwful cas,  
How shal youre tendre herte this sustene?  
But herte myn, for-yet this sorwe and tene,  
And me also; for, soothly for to seye,  
So ye wel fare, I recche not to deye.'

How mighte it ever y-red ben or y-songe,  
The pleynte that she made in hir distresse?  
I noot; but, as for me, my litel tonge,

If I discreven wolde hir hevinesse,  
It sholde make hir sorwe seme lesse  
Than that it was, and childishly deface  
Hir heigh compleynte, and therfore I it pace.

Pandare, which that sent from Troilus  
Was to Criseyde, as ye han herd devyse,  
That for the beste it was accorded thus,  
And he ful glad to doon him that servyse,  
Un-to Criseyde, in a ful secree wyse,  
Ther-as she lay in torment and in rage,  
Com hir to telle al hoolly his message,

And fond that she hir-selven gan to trete  
Ful pitously; for with hir salte teres  
Hir brest, hir face, y-bathed was ful wete;  
The mighty tresses of hir sonnish heres,  
Unbroyden, hangen al aboute hir eres;  
Which yaf him verray signal of martyre  
Of deeth, which that hir herte gan desyre.

Whan she him saw, she gan for sorwe anoon  
Hir tery face a-twixe hir armes hide,  
For which this Pandare is so wo bi-goon,  
That in the hous he mighte unnethe abyde,  
As he that pitee felte on every syde.  
For if Criseyde hadde erst compleyned sore,  
Tho gan she pleyne a thousand tymes more.

And in hir aspre pleynte than she seyde,  
'Pandare first of Ioyes mo than two  
Was cause causinge un-to me, Criseyde,  
That now transmued been in cruel wo.  
Wher shal I seye to yow "wel come" or no,  
That alderfirst me broughte in-to servyse  
Of love, allas! That endeth in swich wyse?

'Endeth than love in wo? Ye, or men lyeth!  
And alle worldly blisse, as thinketh me.  
The ende of blisse ay sorwe it occupyeth;  
And who-so troweth not that it so be,  
Lat him upon me, woful wrecche, y-see,

That my-self hate, and ay my birthe acorse,  
Feling alwey, fro wikke I go to worse.

'Who-so me seeth, he seeth sorwe al at ones,  
Peyne, torment, pleynte, wo, distresse.  
Out of my woful body harm ther noon is,  
As anguish, langour, cruel bitternesse,  
A-noy, smert, drede, fury, and eek siknesse.  
I trowe, y-wis, from hevene teres reyne,  
For pitee of myn aspre and cruel peyne! '

'And thou, my suster, ful of discomfort,'  
Quod Pandarus, 'what thenkestow to do?  
Why ne hastow to thy-selven som resport,  
Why woltow thus thy-selve, allas, for-do?  
Leef al this werk and tak now hede to  
That I shal seyn, and herkne, of good entente,  
This, which by me thy Troilus thee sente.'

Torned hir tho Criseyde, a wo makinge  
So greet that it a deeth was for to see: --  
'Allas!' quod she, 'what wordes may ye bringe?  
What wol my dere herte seyn to me,  
Which that I drede never-mo to see?  
Wol he have pleynte or teres, er I wende?  
I have y-nowe, if he ther-after sende!'

She was right swich to seen in hir visage  
As is that wight that men on bere binde;  
Hir face, lyk of Paradys the image,  
Was al y-chaunged in another kinde.  
The pleye, the laughtre men was wont to finde  
On hir, and eek hir Ioyes everychone,  
Ben fled, and thus lyth now Criseyde allone.

Aboute hir eyen two a purpre ring  
Bi-trent, in sothfast tokninge of hir peyne,  
That to biholde it was a dedly thing,  
For which Pandare mighte not restreyne  
The teres from his eyen for to reyne.  
But nathelees, as he best mighte, he seyde  
From Troilus thise wordes to Criseyde.

'Lo, nece, I trowe ye han herd al how  
The king, with othere lordes, for the beste,  
Hath mad eschaunge of Antenor and yow,  
That cause is of this sorwe and this unreste.  
But how this cas doth Troilus moleste,  
That may non erthely mannes tonge seye;  
For verray wo his wit is al aweye.

'For which we han so sorwed, he and I,  
That in-to litel bothe it hadde us slawe;  
But thurgh my conseil this day, fynally,  
He somewhat is fro weping now with-drawe.  
And semeth me that he desyreth fawe  
With yow to been al night, for to devyse  
Remede in this, if ther were any wyse.

'This, short and pleyne, theeffect of my message,  
As ferforth as my wit can comprehende.  
For ye, that been of torment in swich rage,  
May to no long prologe as now entende;  
And her-upon ye may answer him sende.  
And, for the love of god, my nece dere,  
So leef this wo er Troilus be here.'

'Gret is my wo,' quod she, and sighte sore,  
As she that feleth dedly sharp distresse;  
'But yet to me his sorwe is muchel more,  
That love him bet than he him-self, I gesse.  
Allas! For me hath he swich hevinesse?  
Can he for me so pitously compleyne?  
Y-wis, his sorwe doubleth al my peyne.

'Grevous to me, god wot, is for to twinne,'  
Quod she, 'but yet it hardere is to me  
To seen that sorwe which that he is inne;  
For wel wot I, it wol my bane be;  
And deye I wol in certayn,' tho quod she;  
'But bidde him come, er deeth, that thus me threteth,  
Dryve out that goost which in myn herte beteth.'

These wordes seyde, she on hir armes two

Fil gruf, and gan to wepe pitously.  
Quod Pandarus, 'Allas! Why do ye so,  
Syn wel ye woot the tyme is faste by,  
That he shal come? Arys up hastely,  
That he yow nat biwopen thus ne finde,  
But ye wol have him wood out of his minde!

'For wiste he that ye ferde in this manere,  
He wolde him-selve slee; and if I wende  
To han this fare, he sholde not come here  
For al the good that Pryam may despende.  
For to what fyn he wolde anoon pretende,  
That knowe I wel; and for-thy yet I seye,  
So leef this sorwe, or platly he wol deye.

'And shapeth yow his sorwe for to abregge,  
And nought encresse, leve nece swete;  
Beth rather to him cause of flat than egge,  
And with som wysdom ye his sorwes bete.  
What helpeth it to wepen ful a strete,  
Or though ye bothe in salte teres dreynte?  
Bet is a tyme of cure ay than of pleynte.

'I mene thus; whan I him hider bringe,  
Sin ye ben wyse, and bothe of oon assent,  
So shapeth how distourbe your goinge,  
Or come ayen, sone after ye be went.  
Wommen ben wyse in short avysement;  
And lat sen how your wit shal now avayle;  
And what that I may helpe, it shal not fayle.'

'Go,' quod Criseyde, 'and uncle, trewely,  
I shal don al my might, me to restreyne  
From weping in his sighte, and bisily,  
Him for to glade, I shal don al my peyne,  
And in myn herte seken every veyne;  
If to this soor ther may be founden salve,  
It shal not lakken, certain, on myn halve.'

Goth Pandarus, and Troilus he soughte,  
Til in a temple he fond him allone,  
As he that of his lyf no lenger roughte;

But to the pitouse goddes everichone  
Ful tendrely he preyde, and made his mone,  
To doon him sone out of this world to pace;  
For wel he thoughte ther was non other grace.

And shortly, al the sothe for to seye,  
He was so fallen in despeyr that day,  
That outrely he shoop him for to deye.  
For right thus was his argument alwey:  
He seyde, he nas but loren, waylawey!  
'For al that comth, comth by necessitee;  
Thus to be lorn, it is my destinee.

'For certaynly, this wot I wel,' he seyde,  
'That for-sight of divyne purveyaunce  
Hath seyn alwey me to for-gon Criseyde,  
Sin god seeth every thing, out of doutaunce,  
And hem disponeth, thourgh his ordenaunce,  
In hir merytes sothly for to be,  
As they shul comen by predestinee.

'But nathelees, allas! Whom shal I leve?  
For ther ben grete clerkes many oon,  
That destinee thourgh argumentes preve;  
And som men seyn that nedely ther is noon;  
But that free chois is yeven us everichoon.  
O, welaway! So sleye arn clerkes olde,  
That I not whos opinion I may holde.

'For som men seyn, if god seth al biforn,  
Ne god may not deceyved ben, pardee,  
Than moot it fallen, though men hadde it sworn,  
That purveyaunce hath seyn bifore to be.  
Wherfor I seye, that from eterne if he  
Hath wist biforn our thought eek as our dede,  
We have no free chois, as these clerkes rede.

'For other thought nor other dede also  
Might never be, but swich as purveyaunce,  
Which may not ben deceyved never-mo,  
Hath feled biforn, with-outen ignoraunce.  
For if ther mighte been a variaunce

To wrythen out fro goddes purveyinge,  
Ther nere no prescience of thing cominge;

'But it were rather an opinioun  
Uncerteyn, and no stedfast forseinge;  
And certes, that were an abusioun,  
That god shuld han no parfit cleer witinge  
More than we men that han doutous weninge.  
But swich an error up-on god to gesse  
Were fals and foul, and wikked corsednesse.

'Eek this is an opinioun of somme  
That han hir top ful heighe and smothe y-shore;  
They seyn right thus, that thing is not to come  
For that the prescience hath seyn bifore  
That it shal come; but they seyn that therfore  
That it shal come, therfore the purveyaunce  
Wot it biforn with-outen ignoraunce;

'And in this manere this necessitee  
Retorneth in his part contrarie agayn.  
For needfully bihoveth it not to be  
That thilke thinges fallen in certayn  
That ben purveyed; but nedely, as they seyn,  
Bihoveth it that thinges, whiche that falle,  
That they in certayn ben purveyed alle.

'I mene as though I laboured me in this,  
To enqueren which thing cause of which thing be;  
As whether that the prescience of god is  
The certayn cause of the necessitee  
Of thinges that to comen been, pardee;  
Or if necessitee of thing cominge  
Be cause certeyn of the purveyinge.

'But now ne enforce I me nat in shewing  
How the ordre of causes stant; but wel wot I,  
That it bihoveth that the bifallinge  
Of thinges wist biforen certeynly  
Be necessarie, al seme it not ther-by  
That prescience put falling necessaire  
To thing to come, al falle it foule or faire.

'For if ther sit a man yond on a see,  
Than by necessitee bihoveth it  
That, certes, thyn opinioun soth be,  
That wenest or coniectest that he sit;  
And ferther-over now ayenward yit,  
Lo, right so it is of the part contrarie,  
As thus; (now herkne, for I wol not tarie):

'I seye, that if the opinioun of thee  
Be sooth, for that he sit, than seye I this,  
That he mot sitten by necessitee;  
And thus necessitee in either is.  
For in him nede of sittinge is, y-wis,  
And in thee nede of sooth; and thus, forsothe,  
Ther moot necessitee ben in yow bothe.

'But thou mayst seyn, the man sit not therefore,  
That thyn opinioun of sitting soth is;  
But rather, for the man sit ther bifore,  
Therefore is thyn opinioun sooth, y-wis.  
And I seye, though the cause of sooth of this  
Comth of his sitting, yet necessitee  
Is entrechaunged, bothe in him and thee.

'Thus on this same wyse, out of doutaunce,  
I may wel maken, as it semeth me,  
My resoninge of goddes purveyaunce,  
And of the thinges that to comen be;  
By whiche reson men may wel y-see,  
That thilke thinges that in erthe falle,  
That by necessitee they comen alle.

'For al-though that, for thing shal come, y-wis,  
Therefore is it purveyed, certaynly,  
Nat that it comth for it purveyed is:  
Yet nathelees, bihoveth it nedfully,  
That thing to come be purveyed, trewely;  
Or elles, thinges that purveyed be,  
That they bityden by necessitee.

'And this suffyseth right y-now, certeyn,



For to destroye our free chois every del. --  
But now is this abusion, to seyn,  
That fallinge of the thinges temporel  
Is cause of goddes prescience eternel.  
Now trewely, that is a fals sentence,  
That thing to come sholde cause his prescience.

'What mighte I wene, and I hadde swich a thought,  
But that god purveyth thing that is to come  
For that it is to come, and elles nought?  
So mighte I wene that thinges alle and some,  
That whylom been bifalle and over-come,  
Ben cause of thilke sovereyn purveyaunce,  
That for-wot al with-uten ignoraunce.

'And over al this, yet seye I more herto,  
That right as whan I woot ther is a thing,  
Y-wis, that thing mot nedefully be so;  
Eek right so, whan I woot a thing coming,  
So mot it come; and thus the bifalling  
Of thinges that ben wist bifore the tyde,  
They mowe not been eschewed on no syde.'

Than seyde he thus, 'Almighty Iove in trone,  
That wost of al this thing the soothfastnesse,  
Rewe on my sorwe, or do me deye sone,  
Or bring Criseyde and me fro this distresse.'  
And whyl he was in al this hevinesse,  
Disputinge with him-self in this matere,  
Com Pandare in, and seyde as ye may here.

'O mighty god,' quod Pandarus, 'in trone,  
Ey! Who seigh ever a wys man faren so?  
Why, Troilus, what thenkestow to done?  
Hastow swich lust to been thyn owene fo?  
What, parde, yet is not Criseyde a-go!  
Why list thee so thy-self for-doon for drede,  
That in thyn heed thyn eyen semen dede?

'Hastow not lived many a yeer biforn  
With-uten hir, and ferd ful wel at ese?  
Artow for hir and for non other born?

Hath kinde thee wroughte al-only hir to plese?  
Lat be, and thenk right thus in thy disese.  
That, in the dees right as ther fallen chaunces,  
Right so in love, ther come and goon plesaunces.

'And yet this is a wonder most of alle,  
Why thou thus sorwest, sin thou nost not yit,  
Touching hir goinge, how that it shal falle,  
Ne if she can hir-self distorben it.  
Thou hast not yet assayed al hir wit.  
A man may al by tyme his nekke bede  
Whan it shal of, and sorwen at the nede.

'For-thy take hede of that that I shal seye;  
I have with hir y-spoke and longe y-be,  
So as accorded was bitwixe us tweye.  
And ever-mor me thinketh thus, that she  
Hath som-what in hir hertes prevetee,  
Wher-with she can, if I shal right arede,  
Distorbe al this, of which thou art in drede.

'For which my counseil is, whan it is night,  
Thou to hir go, and make of this an ende;  
And blisful Iuno, thourgh hir grete mighte,  
Shal, as I hope, hir grace un-to us sende.  
Myn herte seyth, "Certeyn, she shal not wende;"  
And for-thy put thyn herte a whyle in reste;  
And hold this purpos, for it is the beste.'

This Troilus answerde, and sighte sore,  
'Thou seyst right wel, and I wil do right so;'  
And what him liste, he seyde un-to it more.  
And whan that it was tyme for to go,  
Ful prevely him-self, with-outen mo,  
Un-to hir com, as he was wont to done;  
And how they wroughte, I shal yow telle sone.

Soth is, that whan they gonne first to mete,  
So gan the peyne hir hertes for to twiste,  
That neither of hem other mighte grete,  
But hem in armes toke and after kiste.  
The lasse wofulle of hem bothe niste

Wher that he was, ne mighte o word out-bringe,  
As I seyde erst, for wo and for sobbinge.

Tho woful teres that they leten falle  
As bittre weren, out of teres kinde,  
For peyne, as is ligne aloes or galle.  
So bittre teres weep nought, as I finde,  
The woful Myrra through the bark and rinde.  
That in this world ther nis so hard an herte,  
That nolde han rewed on hir peynes smerte.

But whan hir woful wery gostes tweyne  
Retorned been ther-as hem oughte dwelle,  
And that som-what to wayken gan the peyne  
By lengthe of pleynte, and ebben gan the welle  
Of hire teres, and the herte unswelle,  
With broken voys, al hoors for-shright, Criseyde  
To Troilus thise ilke wordes seyde:

'O Iove, I deye, and mercy I beseche!  
Help, Troilus!' And ther-with-al hir face  
Upon his brest she leyde, and loste speche;  
Hir woful spirit from his propre place,  
Right with the word, alwey up poynt to pace.  
And thus she lyth with hewes pale and grene,  
That whylom fresh and fairest was to sene.

This Troilus, that on hir gan biholde,  
Clepinge hir name, (and she lay as for deed,  
With-oute answeere, and felte hir limes colde,  
Hir eyen throwen upward to hir heed),  
This sorwful man can now noon other reed,  
But ofte tyme hir colde mouth he kiste;  
Wher him was wo, god and him-self it wiste!

He rist him up, and long streight he hir leyde;  
For signe of lyf, for ought he can or may,  
Can he noon finde in no-thing on Criseyde,  
For which his song ful ofte is 'weylaway!'  
But whan he saugh that specheles she lay,  
With sorwful voys and herte of blisse al bare,  
He seyde how she was fro this world y-fare!

So after that he longe hadde hir compleyned,  
His hondes wrong, and seyde that was to seye,  
And with his teres salte hir brest bireyned,  
He gan tho teris wypen of ful dreye,  
And pitously gan for the soule preye,  
And seyde, 'O lord, that set art in thy trone,  
Rewe eek on me, for I shal folwe hir sone!'

She cold was and with-outen sentement,  
For aught he woot, for breeth ne felte he noon;  
And this was him a preignant argument  
That she was forth out of this world agoon;  
And whan he seigh ther was non other woon,  
He gan hir limes dresse in swich manere  
As men don hem that shul be leyd on bere.

And after this, with sterne and cruel herte,  
His swerd a-noon out of his shethe he twichte,  
Him-self to sleen, how sore that him smerte,  
So that his sowle hir sowle folwen mighte,  
Ther-as the doom of Mynos wolde it dighte;  
Sin love and cruel Fortune it ne wolde,  
That in this world he lenger liven sholde.

Thanne seyde he thus, fulfild of heigh desdayn,  
'O cruel Iove, and thou, Fortune adverse,  
This al and som, that falsly have ye slayn  
Criseyde, and sin ye may do me no werse,  
Fy on your might and werkes so diverse!  
Thus cowardly ye shul me never winne;  
Ther shal no deeth me fro my lady twinne.

'For I this world, sin ye han slayn hir thus,  
Wol lete, and folowe hir spirit lowe or hye;  
Shal never lover seyn that Troilus  
Dar not, for fere, with his lady dye;  
For certeyn, I wol bere hir companye.  
But sin ye wol not suffre us liven here,  
Yet suffreth that our soules ben y-fere.

'And thou, citee, whiche that I leve in wo,

And thou, Pryam, and bretheren al y-fere,  
And thou, my moder, farwel! For I go;  
And Attropos, make redy thou my bere!  
And thou, Criseyde, o swete herte dere,  
Receyve now my spirit!' wolde he seye,  
With swerd at herte, al redy for to deye

But as god wolde, of swough ther-with she abreyde,  
And gan to syke, and 'Troilus' she cryde;  
And he answerde, 'Lady myn Criseyde,  
Live ye yet?' and leet his swerd doun glyde.  
'Ye, herte myn, that thanked be Cupyde!  
Quod she, and ther-with-al she sore sighte;  
And he bigan to glade hir as he mighte;

Took hir in armes two, and kiste hir ofte,  
And hir to glade he dide al his entente;  
For which hir goost, that flikered ay on-lofte,  
In-to hir woful herte ayein it wente.  
But at the laste, as that hir eyen glente  
A-syde, anoon she gan his swerd aspye,  
As it lay bare, and gan for fere crye,

And asked him, why he it hadde out-drawe?  
And Troilus anoon the cause hir tolde,  
And how himself ther-with he wolde have slawe.  
For which Criseyde up-on him gan biholde,  
And gan him in hir armes faste folde,  
And seyde, 'O mercy, god, lo, which a dede!  
Allas! How neigh we were bothe dede!

'Thanne if I ne hadde spoken, as grace was,  
Ye wolde han slayn your-self anoon?' quod she.  
'Ye, douteless;' and she answerde, 'Allas!  
For, by that ilke lord that made me,  
I nolde a forlong wey on-lyve han be,  
After your death, to han been crowned quene  
Of al the lond the sonne on shyneth shene.

'But with this selve swerd, which that here is,  
My-selve I wolde han slayn!' -- quod she tho;  
'But ho, for we han right y-now of this,

And late us ryse and streight to bedde go  
And there lat ys speken of oure wo.  
For, by the mortar which that I see brenne,  
Knowe I ful wel that day is not fer henne.'

Whan they were in hir bedde, in armes folde,  
Nought was it lyk tho nightes here-biforn;  
For pitously ech other gan biholde,  
As they that hadden al hir blisse y-lorn,  
Biwaylinge ay the day that they were born.  
Til at the last this sorwful wight Criseyde  
To Troilus these ilke wordes seyde: --

'Lo, herte myn, wel wot ye this,' quod she,  
'That if a wight alwey his wo compleyne,  
And seketh nought how holpen for to be,  
It nis but folye and encrees of peyne;  
And sin that here assembled be we tweyne  
To finde bote of wo that we ben inne,  
It were al tyme sone to biginne.

'I am a womman, as ful wel ye woot,  
And as I am avysed sodeynly,  
So wol I telle yow, whyl it is hoot.  
Me thinketh thus, that nouthur ye nor I  
Oughte half this wo to make skilfully.  
For there is art y-now for to redresse  
That yet is mis, and sleen this hevinesse.

'Sooth is, the wo, the whiche that we ben inne,  
For ought I woot, for no-thing elles is  
But for the cause that we sholden twinne.  
Considered al, ther nis no-more amis.  
But what is thanne a remede un-to this,  
But that we shape us sone for to mete?  
This al and som, my dere herte swete.

'Now that I shal wel bringen it aboute  
To come ayein, sone after that I go,  
Ther-of am I no maner thing in doute.  
For dredeles, with-inne a wouke or two,  
I shal ben here; and, that it may be so

By alle right, and in a wordes fewe,  
I shal yow wel an heep of weyes shewe.

'For which I wol not make long sermoun,  
For tyme y-lost may not recovered be;  
But I wol gon to my conclusioun,  
And to the beste, in ought that I can see.  
And, for the love of god, for-yeve it me  
If I speke ought ayein your hertes reste;  
For trewely, I speke it for the beste;

'Makinge alwey a protestacioun,  
That now these wordes, whiche that I shal seye,  
Nis but to shewe yow my mocioun,  
To finde un-to our helpe the beste weye;  
And taketh it non other wyse, I preye.  
For in effect what-so ye me comaunde,  
That wol I doon, for that is no demaunde.

'Now herkneth this, ye han wel understonde,  
My goinge graunted is by parlement  
So ferforth, that it may not be with-stonde  
For al this world, as by my Iugement.  
And sin ther helpeth noon avysement  
To letten it, lat it passe out of minde;  
And lat us shape a bettre wey to finde.

'The sothe is, that the twinninge of us tweyne  
Wol us disease and cruelliche anoye.  
But him bihoveth som-tyme han a peyne,  
That serveth love, if that he wol have Ioye.  
And sin I shal no ferthere out of Troye  
Than I may ryde ayein on half a morwe,  
It oughte lesse causen us to sorwe.

'So as I shal not so ben hid in muwe,  
That day by day, myn owene herte dere,  
Sin wel ye woot that it is now a trewe,  
Ye shal ful wel al myn estat y-here.  
And er that truwe is doon, I shal ben here,  
And thanne have ye bothe Antenor y-wonne  
And me also; beth glad now, if ye conne;

'And thenk right thus, "Criseyde is now agoon,  
But what! She shal come hastely ayeyn;"  
And whanne, allas? By god, lo, right anoon,  
Er dayes ten, this dar I saufly seyn.  
And thanne at erste shul we been so fayn,  
So as we shulle to-gederes ever dwelle,  
That al this world ne mighte our blisse telle.

'I see that ofte, ther-as we ben now,  
That for the beste, our counseil for to hyde,  
Ye speke not with me, nor I with yow  
In fourtenight; ne see yow go ne ryde.  
May ye not ten dayes thanne abyde,  
For myn honour, in swich an aventure?  
Y-wis, ye mowen elles lite endure!

'Ye knowe eek how that al my kin is here,  
But-if that onliche it my fader be;  
And eek myn othere thinges alle y-fere,  
And nameliche, my dere herte, ye,  
Whom that I nolde leven for to see  
For al this world, as wyd as it hath space;  
Or elles, see ich never Ioves face!

'Why trowe ye my fader in this wyse  
Coveiteth so to see me, but for drede  
Lest in this toun that folkes me dispyse  
By-cause of him, for his unhappy dede?  
What woot my fader what lyf that I lede?  
For if he wiste in Troye how wel I fare,  
Us neded for my wending nought to care.

'Ye seen that every day eek, more and more,  
Men trete of pees; and it supposed is,  
That men the quene Eleyne shal restore,  
And Grekes us restore that is mis.  
So though ther nere comfort noon but this,  
That men purposen pees on every syde,  
Ye may the bettre at ese of herte abyde.

'For if that it be pees, myn herte dere,



The nature of the pees mot nedes dryve  
That men moste entrecomunen y-fere,  
And to and fro eek ryde and gon as blyve  
Alday as thikke as been flen from an hyve;  
And every wight han libertee to bleve  
Where-as him list the bet, with-uten leve.

'And though so be that pees ther may be noon,  
Yet hider, though ther never pees ne were,  
I moste come; for whider sholde I goon,  
Or how mischaunce sholde I dwelle there  
Among tho men of armes ever in fere?  
For which, as wisly god my soule rede,  
I can not seen wher-of ye sholden drede.

'Have here another wey, if it so be  
That al this thing ne may yow not suffyse.  
My fader, as ye knowen wel, pardee,  
Is old, and elde is ful of coveityse,  
And I right now have founden al the gyse,  
With-oute net, wher-with I shal him hente;  
And herkeneth how, if that ye wole assente.

'Lo, Troilus, men seyn that hard it is  
The wolf ful, and the wether hool to have;  
This is to seyn, that men ful ofte, y-wis,  
Mot spenden part, the remenant for to save.  
For ay with gold men may the herte grave  
Of him that set is up-on coveityse;  
And how I mene, I shal it yow devyse.

'The moeble which that I have in this toun  
Un-to my fader shal I take, and seye,  
That right for trust and for savacioun  
It sent is from a freend of his or tweye,  
The whiche freendes ferventliche him preye  
To senden after more, and that in hye,  
Whyl that this toun stant thus in Iupartye.

'And that shal been an huge quantitee,  
Thus shal I seyn, but, lest it folk aspyde,  
This may be sent by no wight but by me;

I shal eek shewen him, if pees bityde,  
What frendes that ich have on every syde  
Toward the court, to doon the wrathe pace  
Of Priamus, and doon him stonde in grace.

'So what for o thing and for other, swete,  
I shal him so enchaunten with my sawes,  
That right in hevene his sowle is, shal he mete!  
For al Appollo, or his clerkes lawes,  
Or calculinge avayleth nought three hawes;  
Desyr of gold shal so his sowle blende,  
That, as me lyst, I shal wel make an ende.

'And if he wolde ought by his sort it preve  
If that I lye, in certayn I shal fonde  
Distorben him, and plukke him by the sleve,  
Makinge his sort, and beren him on honde,  
He hath not wel the goddes understonde.  
For goddes speken in amphibologyes,  
And, for o sooth they tellen twenty lyes.

'Eek drede fond first goddes, I suppose,  
Thus shal I seyn, and that his cowarde herte  
Made him amis the goddes text to glose,  
Whan he for ferde out of his Delphos sterte.  
And but I make him sone to converte,  
And doon my reed with-inne a day or tweye,  
I wol to yow oblige me to deye.'

And treweliche, as writen wel I finde,  
That al this thing was seyde of good entente;  
And that hir herte trewe was and kinde  
Towardes him, and spak right as she mente,  
And that she starf for wo neigh, whan she wente,  
And was in purpos ever to be trewe;  
Thus writen they that of hir werkes knewe.

This Troilus, with herte and eres spradde,  
Herde al this thing devysen to and fro;  
And verraylich him semed that he hadde  
The selve wit; but yet to lete hir go  
His herte misforyaf him ever-mo.

But fynally, he gan his herte wreste  
To trusten hir, and took it for the beste.

For which the grete furie of his penaunce  
Was queynt with hope, and ther-with hem bitwene  
Bigan for Ioye the amoureuse daunce.  
And as the briddes, whan the sonne is shene,  
Delyten in hir song in leves grene,  
Right so the wordes that they spake y-fere  
Delyted hem, and made hir hertes clere.

But natheles, the wending of Criseyde,  
For al this world, may nought out of his minde;  
For which ful ofte he pitously hir preyde,  
That of hir heste he might hir trewe finde,  
And seyde hire, 'Certes, if ye be unkinde,  
And but ye come at day set in-to Troye,  
Ne shal I never have hele, honour, ne Ioye.

'For al-so sooth as sonne up-rist on morwe,  
And, god! So wisly thou me, woful wrecche,  
To reste bringe out of this cruel sorwe,  
I wol my-selven slee if that ye drecche.  
But of my deeth though litel be to recche,  
Yet, er that ye me cause so to smerte,  
Dwel rather here, myn owene swete herte!

'For trewely, myn owene lady dere,  
Tho sleightes yet that I have herd yow stere  
Ful shaply been to failen alle y-fere.  
For thus men seyn, "That oon thenketh the bere,  
But al another thenketh his ledere."  
Your sire is wys, and seyde is, out of drede,  
"Men may the wyse at-renne, and not at-rede."

'It is ful hard to halten unespied  
Bifore a crepul, for he can the craft;  
Your fader is in sleighte as Argus yed;  
For al be that his moeble is him biraft,  
His olde sleighte is yet so with him laft,  
Ye shal not blende him for your womanhede,  
Ne feyne a-right, and that is al my drede.

'I noot if pees shal ever-mo bityde;  
But, pees or no, for ernest ne for game,  
I woot, sin Calkas on the Grekis syde  
Hath ones been, and lost so foule his name,  
He dar no more come here ayein for shame;  
For which that weye, for ought I can espye,  
To trusten on, nis but a fantasye.

'Ye shal eek seen, your fader shal yow glose  
To been a wyf, and as he can wel preche,  
He shal som Grek so preyse and wel alose,  
That ravisshen he shal yow with his speche,  
Or do yow doon by force as he shal teche.  
And Troilus, of whom ye nil han routhe,  
Shal causeles so sterven in his trouthe!

'And over al this, your fader shal despise  
Us alle, and seyn this citee nis but lorn;  
And that thassege never shal aryse,  
For-why the Grekes han it alle sworn  
Til we be slayn, and doun our walles torn.  
And thus he shal yow with his wordes fere,  
That ay drede I, that ye wol bleve there.

'Ye shul eek seen so many a lusty knight  
A-mong the Grekes, ful of worthinesse,  
And eche of hem with herte, wit, and might  
To plesen yow don al his besinesse,  
That ye shul dullen of the rudenesse  
Of us sely Troianes, but-if routhe  
Remorde yow, or vertue of your trouthe.

'And this to me so grevous is to thinke,  
That fro my brest it wol my soule rende;  
Ne dredeles, in me ther may not sinke  
A good opinioun, if that ye wende;  
For-why your faderes sleighte wol us shende.  
And if ye goon, as I have told yow yore,  
So thenk I nam but deed, with-oute more.

'For which, with humble, trewe, and pitous herte,

A thousand tymes mercy I yow preye;  
So reweth on myn aspre peynes smerte,  
And doth somewhat, as that I shal yow seye,  
And lat us stele away bitwixe us tweye;  
And thenk that folye is, whan man may chese,  
For accident his substaunce ay to lese.

'I mene this, that sin we mowe er day  
Wel stele away, and been to-gider so,  
What wit were it to putten in assay,  
In cas ye sholden to your fader go,  
If that ye mighte come ayein or no?  
Thus mene I, that it were a gret folye  
To putte that sikernesse in Iupertye.

'And vulgarly to speken of substaunce  
Of tresour, may we bothe with us lede  
Y-nough to live in honour and plesaunce,  
Til in-to tyme that we shal ben dede;  
And thus we may eschewen al this drede.  
For everich other wey ye can recorde,  
Myn herte, y-wis, may not ther-with acorde.

'And hardily, ne dredeth no poverte,  
For I have kin and freendes elles-where  
That, though we comen in oure bare sherte,  
Us sholde neither lakke gold ne gere,  
But been honored whyl we dwelten there.  
And go we anoon, for, as in myn entente,  
This is the beste, if that ye wole assente.'

Criseyde, with a syk, right in this wyse  
Answerde, 'Y-wis, my dere herte trewe,  
We may wel stele away, as ye devyse,  
And finde swich unthrifty weyes newe;  
But afterward, ful sore it wol us rewe.  
And help me god so at my moste nede  
As causeles ye suffren al this drede!

'For thilke day that I for cherisshinge  
Or drede of fader, or of other wight,  
Or for estat, delyt, or for weddinge,

Be fals to yow, my Troilus, my knight,  
Saturnes doughter, Iuno, thorough hir might,  
As wood as Athamante do me dwelle  
Eternaly in Stix, the put of helle!

'And this on every god celestial  
I swere it yow; and eek on eche goddessse,  
On every Nympe and deite infernal,  
On Satiry and Fauny more and lesse,  
That halve goddes been of wildernesse;  
And Attropos my threed of lyf to-breste  
If I be fals; now trowe me if thow leste!

'And thou, Simoys, that as an arwe clere  
Thorough Troye rennest ay downward to the see,  
Ber witnessse of this word that seyde is here,  
That thilke day that ich untrewed be  
To Troilus, myn owene herte free,  
That thou retorne bakwarde to thy welle,  
And I with body and soule sinke in helle!

'But that ye speke, away thus for to go  
And leten alle your freendes, god for-bede,  
For any womman, that ye sholden so,  
And namely, sin Troye hath now swich nede  
Of help; and eek of o thing taketh hede,  
If this were wist, my lif laye in balaunce,  
And your honour; god shilde us fro mischaunce!

'And if so be that pees her-after take,  
As alday happeth, after anger, game,  
Why, lord! The sorwe and wo ye wolden make,  
That ye ne dorste come ayein for shame!  
And er that ye Iupartan so your name,  
Beth nought to hasty in this hote fare;  
For hasty man ne wanteth never care.

'What trowe ye the peple eek al aboute  
Wolde of it seye? It is ful light to arede.  
They wolden seye, and swere it, out of doute,  
That love ne droof yow nought to doon this dede,  
But lust voluptuous and coward drede.

Thus were al lost, y-wis, myn herte dere,  
Your honour, which that now shyneth so clere.

'And also thenketh on myn honestee,  
That floureth yet, how foule I sholde it shende,  
And with what filthe it spotted sholde be,  
If in this forme I sholde with yow wende.  
Ne though I livede un-to the worldes ende,  
My name sholde I never ayeinward winne;  
Thus were I lost, and that were routhe and sinne.

'And for-ty slee with reson al this hete;  
Men seyn, "The suffraunt overcometh," pardee;  
Eek "Who-so wol han leef, he lief mot lete;"  
Thus maketh vertue of necessitee  
By pacience, and think that lord is he  
Of fortune ay, that nought wol of hir recche;  
And she ne daunteth no wight but a wrecche.

'And trusteth this, that certes, herte swete,  
Er Phebus suster, Lucina the shene,  
The Leoun passe out of this Ariete,  
I wol ben here, with-uten any wene.  
I mene, as helpe me Iuno, hevenes quene,  
The tenthe day, but-if that deeth me assayle,  
I wol yow seen with-uten any fayle.'

'And now, so this be sooth,' quod Troilus,  
'I shal wel suffre un-to the tenthe day,  
Sin that I see that nede it moot be thus.  
But, for the love of god, if it be may,  
So lat us stele prively away;  
For ever in oon, as for to live in reste,  
Myn herte seyth that it wol been the beste.'

'O mercy, god, what lyf is this?' quod she;  
'Allas, ye slee me thus for verray tene!  
I see wel now that ye mistrusten me;  
For by your wordes it is wel y-sene.  
Now, for the love of Cynthia the shene,  
Mistrust me not thus causeles, for routhe;  
Sin to be trewe I have yow plight my trouthe.

'And thenketh wel, that som tyme it is wit  
To spende a tyme, a tyme for to winne;  
Ne, pardee, Iorn am I nought fro yow yit,  
Though that we been a day or two a-twinne.  
Dryf out the fantasies yow with-inne;  
And trusteth me, and leveth eek your sorwe,  
Or here my trouthe, I wol not live til morwe.

'For if ye wiste how sore it doth me smerte,  
Ye wolde cesse of this; for god, thou wost,  
The pure spirit wepeth in myn herte,  
To see yow wepen that I love most,  
And that I moot gon to the Grekes ost.  
Ye, nere it that I wiste remedye  
To come ayein, right here I wolde dye!

'But certes, I am not so nyce a wight  
That I ne can imaginen a wey  
To come ayein that day that I have hight.  
For who may holde thing that wol a-way?  
My fader nought, for al his queynte pley.  
And by my thrift, my wending out of Troye  
Another day shal torne us alle to Ioye.

'For-thy, with al myn herte I yow beseke,  
If that yow list don ought for my preyere,  
And for the love which that I love yow eke,  
That er that I departe fro yow here,  
That of so good a comfort and a chere  
I may you seen, that ye may bringe at reste  
Myn herte, which that is at point to breste.

'And over al this I pray yow,' quod she tho,  
'Myn owene hertes soothfast suffisaunce,  
Sin I am thyn al hool, with-outen mo,  
That whyl that I am absent, no plesaunce  
Of othere do me fro your remembraunce.  
For I am ever a-gast, for-why men rede,  
That "love is thing ay ful of bisy drede."

'For in this world ther liveth lady noon,



If that ye were untrewed, as god defende!  
That so bitraysed were or wo bigoon  
As I, that alle trouthe in yow entende.  
And douteles, if that ich other wende,  
I nere but deed; and er ye cause finde,  
For goddes love, so beth me not unkinde.'

To this answerde Troilus and seyde,  
'Now god, to whom ther nis no cause y-wrye,  
Me glade, as wis I never un-to Criseyde,  
Sin thilke day I saw hir first with ye,  
Was fals, ne never shal til that I dye.  
At shorte wordes, wel ye may me leve;  
I can no more, it shal be founde at preve.'

'Graunt mercy, goode myn, y-wis,' quod she,  
'And blisful Venus lat me never sterve  
Er I may stonde of plesaunce in degree  
To quyte him wel, that so wel can deserve;  
And whyl that god my wit wol me conserve,  
I shal so doon, so trewe I have yow founde,  
That ay honour to me-ward shal rebounde.

'For trusteth wel, that your estat royal  
Ne veyn delyt, nor only worthinesse  
Of yow in werre, or torney marcial,  
Ne pompe, array, nobley, or eek richesse,  
Ne made me to rewe on your distresse;  
But moral vertue, grounded upon trouthe,  
That was the cause I first hadde on yow routhe!

'Eek gentil herte and manhod that ye hadde,  
And that ye hadde, as me thoughte, in despyt  
Every thing that souned in-to badde,  
As rudenesse and poeplish appetyt;  
And that your reson brydled your delyt,  
This made, aboven every creature,  
That I was your, and shal, whyl I may dure.

'And this may lengthe of yeres not for-do,  
Ne remuable fortune deface;  
But Iuppiter, that of his might may do

The sorwful to be glad, so yeve us grace,  
Er nightes ten, to meten in this place,  
So that it may your herte and myn suffyse;  
And fareth now wel, for tyme is that ye ryse.'

And after that they longe y-pleyned hadde,  
And ofte y-kist, and streite in armes folde,  
The day gan ryse, and Troilus him cladde,  
And rewwfulliche his lady gan biholde,  
As he that felte dethes cares colde,  
And to hir grace he gan him recomaunde;  
Wher him was wo, this holde I no demaunde.

For mannes heed imaginen ne can,  
Ne entendement considere, ne tonge telle  
The cruel peynes of this sorwful man,  
That passen every torment doun in helle.  
For whan he saugh that she ne mighte dwelle,  
Which that his soule out of his herte rente,  
With-outen more, out of the chaumbre he wente.

Explicit Liber Quartus.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Troilus And Criseyde: Book 05

Incipit Liber Quintus.

Aprochen gan the fatal destinee  
That Ioves hath in disposicioun,  
And to yow, angry Parcas, sustren three,  
Committeth, to don execucioun;  
For which Criseyde moste out of the toun,  
And Troilus shal dwelle forth in pyne  
Til Lachesis his threed no lenger twyne. --

The golden-tressed Phebus heighe on-lofte  
Thryes hadde alle with his bemes shene  
The snowes molte, and Zephirus as ofte  
Y-brought ayein the tendre leves grene,  
Sin that the sone of Ecuba the quene  
Bigan to love hir first, for whom his sorwe  
Was al, that she departe sholde a-morwe.

Ful redy was at pryme Dyomedede,  
Criseyde un-to the Grekes ost to lede,  
For sorwe of which she felt hir herte blede,  
As she that niste what was best to rede.  
And trewely, as men in bokes rede,  
Men wiste never womman han the care,  
Ne was so looth out of a toun to fare.

This Troilus, with-uten reed or lore,  
As man that hath his Ioyes eek forlore,  
Was waytinge on his lady ever-more  
As she that was the soothfast crop and more  
Of al his lust, or Ioyes here-tofore.  
But Troilus, now farewell al thy Ioye,  
For shaltow never seen hir eft in Troye!

Soth is, that whyl he bood in this manere,  
He gan his wo ful manly for to hyde.  
That wel unnethe it seen was in his chere;  
But at the yate ther she sholde oute ryde  
With certeyn folk, he hoved hir tabyde,

So wo bigoon, al wolde he nought him pleyne,  
That on his hors unnethe he sat for peyne.

For ire he quook, so gan his herte gnawe,  
Whan Diomedes on horse gan him dresse,  
And seyde un-to him-self this ilke sawe,  
'Allas,' quod he, 'thus foul a wrecchednesse  
Why suffre ich it, why nil ich it redresse?  
Were it not bet at ones for to dye  
Than ever-more in langour thus to drye?

'Why nil I make at ones riche and pore  
To have y-nough to done, er that she go?  
Why nil I bringe al Troye upon a rore?  
Why nil I sleen this Diomedes also?  
Why nil I rather with a man or two  
Stele hir a-way? Why wol I this endure?  
Why nil I helpen to myn owene cure?'

But why he nolde doon so fel a dede,  
That shal I seyn, and why him liste it spare;  
He hadde in herte alweyes a maner drede,  
Lest that Criseyde, in rumour of this fare,  
Sholde han ben slayn; lo, this was al his care.  
And ellis, certeyn, as I seyde yore,  
He hadde it doon, with-outen wordes more.

Criseyde, whan she redy was to ryde,  
Ful sorwfully she sighte, and seyde 'Allas!'  
But forth she moot, for ought that may bityde,  
And forth she rit ful sorwfully a pas.  
Ther nis non other remedie in this cas.  
What wonder is though that hir sore smerte,  
Whan she forgoth hir owene swete herte?

This Troilus, in wyse of curteisye,  
With hauke on hond, and with an huge route  
Of knightes, rood and dide hir companye,  
Passinge al the valey fer with-oute,  
And ferther wolde han riden, out of doute,  
Ful fayn, and wo was him to goon so sone;  
But torne he moste, and it was eek to done.

And right with that was Antenor y-come  
Out of the Grekes ost, and every wight  
Was of it glad, and seyde he was wel-come.  
And Troilus, al nere his herte light,  
He peyned him with al his fulle might  
Him to with-holde of wepinge at the leste,  
And Antenor he kiste, and made feste.

And ther-with-al he moste his leve take,  
And caste his eye upon hir pitously,  
And neer he rood, his cause for to make,  
To take hir by the honde al sobrelly.  
And lord! So she gan wepen tendrelly!  
And he ful soft and sleighly gan hir seye,  
'Now hold your day, and dooth me not to deye.'

With that his courser torned he a-boute  
With face pale, and un-to Diomede  
No word he spak, ne noon of al his route;  
Of which the sone of Tydeus took hede,  
As he that coude more than the crede  
In swich a craft, and by the reyne hir hente;  
And Troilus to Troye homwarde he wente.

This Diomede, that ladde hir by the brydel,  
Whan that he saw the folk of Troye aweye,  
Thoughte, 'Al my labour shal not been on ydel,  
If that I may, for somewhat shal I seye,  
For at the worste it may yet shorte our weye.  
I have herd seyde, eek tymes twyes twelve,  
"He is a fool that wol for-yete him-selve."

But natheles this thoughte he wel ynough,  
'That certaynly I am aboute nought,  
If that I speke of love, or make it tough;  
For douteles, if she have in hir thought  
Him that I gesse, he may not been y-brought  
So sone away; but I shal finde a mene,  
That she not wite as yet shal what I mene.'

This Diomede, as he that coude his good,

Whan this was doon, gan fallen forth in speche  
Of this and that, and asked why she stood  
In swich dise, and gan hir eek biseche,  
That if that he encrease mighte or eche  
With any thing hir ese, that she sholde  
Comaunde it him, and seyde he doon it wolde.

For trewely he swoor hir, as a knight,  
That ther nas thing with whiche he mighte hir plese,  
That he nolde doon his peyne and al his might  
To doon it, for to doon hir herte an ese.  
And preyede hir, she wolde hir sorwe apese,  
And seyde, 'Y-wis, we Grekes con have Ioye  
To honouren yow, as wel as folk of Troye.'

He seyde eek thus, 'I woot, yow thinketh straunge,  
No wonder is, for it is to yow newe,  
Thaqueintaunce of these Troianis to chaunge,  
For folk of Grece, that ye never knewe.  
But wolde never god but-if as trewe  
A Greek ye shulde among us alle finde  
As any Troian is, and eek as kinde.

'And by the cause I swoor yow right, lo, now,  
To been your freend, and helply, to my might,  
And for that more aqueintaunce eek of yow  
Have ich had than another straunger wight,  
So fro this forth, I pray yow, day and night,  
Comaundeth me, how sore that me smerte,  
To doon al that may lyke un-to your herte;

'And that ye me wolde as your brother trete,  
And taketh not my frendship in despyt;  
And though your sorwes be for thinges grete,  
Noot I not why, but out of more respyt,  
Myn herte hath for to amende it greet delyt.  
And if I may your harmes not redresse,  
I am right sory for your hevynesse,

'And though ye Troians with us Grekes wrothe  
Han many a day be, alwey yet, pardee,  
O god of love in sooth we serven bothe.

And, for the love of god, my lady free,  
Whom so ye hate, as beth not wroth with me.  
For trewely, ther can no wight yow serve,  
That half so looth your wraththe wolde deserve.

'And nere it that we been so neigh the tente  
Of Calkas, which that seen us bothe may,  
I wolde of this yow telle al myn entente;  
But this enseled til another day.  
Yeve me your hond, I am, and shal ben ay,  
God help me so, whyl that my lyf may dure,  
Your owene aboven every creature.

'Thus seyde I never er now to womman born;  
For god myn herte as wisly glade so,  
I lovede never womman here-biforn  
As paramours, ne never shal no mo.  
And, for the love of god, beth not my fo;  
Al can I not to yow, my lady dere,  
Compleyne aright, for I am yet to lere.

'And wondreth not, myn owene lady bright,  
Though that I speke of love to you thus blyve;  
For I have herd or this of many a wight,  
Hath loved thing he never saugh his lyve.  
Eek I am not of power for to stryve  
Ayens the god of love, but him obeye  
I wol alwey, and mercy I yow preye.

'Ther been so worthy knightes in this place,  
And ye so fair, that everich of hem alle  
Wol peynen him to stonden in your grace.  
But mighte me so fair a grace falle,  
That ye me for your servaunt wolde calle,  
So lowly ne so trewely you serve  
Nil noon of hem, as I shal, til I sterve.'

Criseide un-to that purpos lyte answerde,  
As she that was with sorwe oppressed so  
That, in effect, she nought his tales herde,  
But here and there, now here a word or two.  
Hir thoughte hir sorwful herte brast a-two.

For whan she gan hir fader fer aspye,  
Wel neigh doun of hir hors she gan to sye.

But natheles she thonked Diomedede  
Of al his travaile, and his goode chere,  
And that him liste his friendship hir to bede;  
And she accepteth it in good manere,  
And wolde do fayn that is him leef and dere;  
And trusten him she wolde, and wel she mighte,  
As seyde she, and from hir hors she alighte.

Hir fader hath hir in his armes nome,  
And tweyntye tyme he kiste his doughter swete,  
And seyde, 'O dere doughter myn, wel-come!'  
She seyde eek, she was fayn with him to mete,  
And stood forth mewet, milde, and mansuete.  
But here I leve hir with hir fader dwelle,  
And forth I wol of Troilus yow telle.

To Troye is come this woful Troilus,  
In sorwe aboven alle sorwes smerte,  
With felon look, and face dispitous.  
Tho sodeinly doun from his hors he sterte,  
And thorough his paleys, with a swollen herte,  
To chambre he wente; of no-thing took he hede,  
Ne noon to him dar speke a word for drede.

And there his sorwes that he spared hadde  
He yaf an issue large, and 'Deeth!' he cryde;  
And in his throwes frenetyk and madde  
He cursed Iove, Appollo, and eek Cupyde,  
He cursed Ceres, Bacus, and Cipryde,  
His burthe, him-self, his fate, and eek nature,  
And, save his lady, every creature.

To bedde he goth, and weyleth there and torneth  
In furie, as dooth he, Ixion in helle;  
And in this wyse he neigh til day soiorneth.  
But tho bigan his herte a lyte unswelle  
Thorough teres which that gonnen up to welle;  
And pitously he cryde up-on Criseyde,  
And to him-self right thus he spak, and seyde: --



'Wher is myn owene lady lief and dere,  
Wher is hir whyte brest, wher is it, where?  
Wher ben hir armes and hir eyen clere,  
That yesternight this tyme with me were?  
Now may I wepe allone many a tere,  
And graspe aboute I may, but in this place,  
Save a pilowe, I finde nought tenbrace.

'How shal I do? Whan shal she com ayeyn?  
I noot, allas! Why leet ich hir to go?  
As wolde god, ich hadde as tho be sleyn!  
O herte myn, Criseyde, O swete fo!  
O lady myn, that I love and no mo!  
To whom for ever-mo myn herte I dowe;  
See how I deye, ye nil me not rescowe!

'Who seeth yow now, my righte lode-sterre?  
Who sit right now or stant in your presence?  
Who can conforten now your hertes werre?  
Now I am gon, whom yeve ye audience?  
Who speketh for me right now in myn absence?  
Allas, no wight; and that is al my care;  
For wel wot I, as yvel as I ye fare.

'How sholde I thus ten dayes ful endure,  
Whan I the firste night have al this tene?  
How shal she doon eek, sorwful creature?  
For tendernesse, how shal she this sustene,  
Swich wo for me? O pitous, pale, and grene  
Shal been your fresshe wommanliche face  
For langour, er ye torne un-to this place.'

And whan he fil in any slomeringes,  
Anoon biginne he sholde for to grone,  
And dremen of the dredfulleste thinges  
That mighte been; as, mete he were allone  
In place horrible, makinge ay his mone,  
Or meten that he was amonges alle  
His enemys, and in hir hondes falle.

And ther-with-al his body sholde sterte,

And with the stert al sodeinliche awake,  
And swich a tremour fele aboute his herte,  
That of the feer his body sholde quake;  
And there-with-al he sholde a noyse make,  
And seme as though he sholde falle depe  
From heighe a-lofte; and than he wolde wepe,

And rewen on him-self so pitously,  
That wonder was to here his fantasye.  
Another tyme he sholde mightily  
Conforte him-self, and seyn it was folye,  
So causeles swich drede for to drye,  
And eft biginne his aspre sorwes newe,  
That every man mighte on his sorwes rewe.

Who coude telle aright or ful discryve  
His wo, his pleynt, his langour, and his pyne?  
Nought al the men that han or been on-lyve.  
Thou, redere, mayst thy-self ful wel devyne  
That swich a wo my wit can not defyne.  
On ydel for to wryte it sholde I swinke,  
Whan that my wit is wery it to thinke.

On hevene yet the sterres were sene,  
Al-though ful pale y-waxen was the mone;  
And whyten gan the orisonte shene  
Al estward, as it woned is for to done.  
And Phebus with his rosy carte sone  
Gan after that to dresse him up to fare,  
Whan Troilus hath sent after Pandare.

This Pandare, that of al the day biforn  
Ne mighte han comen Troilus to see,  
Al-though he on his heed it hadde y-sworn,  
For with the king Pryam alday was he,  
So that it lay not in his libertee  
No-wher to gon, but on the morwe he wente  
To Troilus, whan that he for him sente.

For in his herte he coude wel devyne,  
That Troilus al night for sorwe wook;  
And that he wolde telle him of his pyne,

This knew he wel y-nough, with-oute book.  
For which to chaumbre streight the wey he took,  
And Troilus tho sobreliche he grette,  
And on the bed ful sone he gan him sette.

'My Pandarus,' quod Troilus, 'the sorwe  
Which that I drye, I may not longe endure.  
I trowe I shal not liven til to-morwe;  
For whiche I wolde alwey, on aventure,  
To thee devysen of my sepulture  
The forme, and of my moeble thou dispone  
Right as thee semeth best is for to done.

'But of the fyr and flaumbe funeral  
In whiche my body brenne shal to glede,  
And of the feste and pleyes palestral  
At my vigile, I prey thee tak good hede  
That be wel; and offre Mars my stede,  
My swerd, myn helm, and, leve brother dere,  
My sheld to Pallas yef, that shyneth clere.

'The poudre in which myn herte y-brend shal torne,  
That preye I thee thou take and it conserve  
In a vessel, that men clepeth an urne,  
Of gold, and to my lady that I serve,  
For love of whom thus pitously I sterve,  
So yeve it hir, and do me this plesaunce,  
To preye hir kepe it for a remembraunce.

'For wel I fele, by my maladye,  
And by my dremes now and yore ago,  
Al certainly, that I mot nedes dye.  
The owle eek, which that hight Ascaphilo,  
Hath after me shright alle these nightes two.  
And, god Mercurie! Of me now, woful wrecche,  
The soule gyde, and, whan thee list, it fecche!'

Pandare answerde, and seyde, 'Troilus,  
My dere freend, as I have told thee yore,  
That it is folye for to sorwen thus,  
And causeles, for whiche I can no-more.  
But who-so wol not trowen reed ne lore,

I can not seen in him no remedye,  
But lete him worthen with his fantasye.

'But Troilus, I pray thee tel me now,  
If that thou trowe, er this, that any wight  
Hath loved paramours as wel as thou?  
Ye, god wot, and fro many a worthy knight  
Hath his lady goon a fourtenight,  
And he not yet made halvendel the fare.  
What nede is thee to maken al this care?

'Sin day by day thou mayst thy-selven see  
That from his love, or elles from his wyf,  
A man mot twinnen of necessitee,  
Ye, though he love hir as his owene lyf;  
Yet nil he with him-self thus maken stryf.  
For wel thow wost, my leve brother dere,  
That alwey freendes may nought been y-fere.

'How doon this folk that seen hir loves wedded  
By freendes might, as it bi-tit ful ofte,  
And seen hem in hir spouses bed y-bedded?  
God woot, they take it wysly, faire and softe.  
For-why good hope halt up hir herte on-lofte,  
And for they can a tyme of sorwe endure;  
As tyme hem hurt, a tyme doth hem cure.

'So sholdestow endure, and late slyde  
The tyme, and fonde to ben glad and light.  
Ten dayes nis so longe not tabyde.  
And sin she thee to comen hath bihight,  
She nil hir hestes breken for no wight.  
For dred thee not that she nil finden weye  
To come ayein, my lyf that dorste I leye.

'Thy swevenes eek and al swich fantasye  
Dryf out, and lat hem faren to mischaunce;  
For they procede of thy malencolye,  
That doth thee fele in sleep al this penaunce.  
A straw for alle swevenes signifiaunce!  
God helpe me so, I counte hem not a bene,  
Ther woot no man aright what dremes mene.

'For prestes of the temple tellen this,  
That dremes been the revelaciouns  
Of goddes, and as wel they telle, y-wis,  
That they ben infernals illusiouns;  
And leches seyn, that of complexiouns  
Proceden they, or fast, or glotonye.  
Who woot in sooth thus what they signifye?

'Eek othere seyn that thorough impressiouns,  
As if a wight hath faste a thing in minde,  
That ther-of cometh swiche avisiouns;  
And othere seyn, as they in bokes finde,  
That, after tymes of the yeer by kinde,  
Men dreme, and that theeffect goth by the mone;  
But leve no dreem, for it is nought to done.

'Wel worth of dremes ay thise olde wyves,  
And troweliche eek augurie of thise foules;  
For fere of which men wenen lese her lyves,  
As ravenes qualm, or shryking of thise oules.  
To trowen on it bothe fals and foul is.  
Allas, allas, so noble a creature  
As is a man, shal drede swich ordure!

'For which with al myn herte I thee beseche,  
Un-to thy-self that al this thou foryive;  
And rys up now with-oute more speche,  
And lat us caste how forth may best be drive  
This tyme, and eek how freshly we may live  
Whan that she cometh, the which shal be right sone;  
God help me so, the beste is thus to done.

'Rys, lat us speke of lusty lyf in Troye  
That we han lad, and forth the tyme dryve;  
And eek of tyme cominge us reioye,  
That bringen shal our blisse now so blyve;  
And langour of these twyes dayes fyve  
We shal ther-with so foryete or oppresse,  
That wel unnethe it doon shal us duresse.

'This toun is ful of lordes al aboute,

And trewes lasten al this mene whyle.  
Go we pleye us in som lusty route  
To Sarpedon, not hennes but a myle.  
And thus thou shalt the tyme wel bigyle,  
And dryve it forth un-to that blisful morwe,  
That thou hir see, that cause is of thy sorwe.

'Now rys, my dere brother Troilus;  
For certes, it noon honour is to thee  
To wepe, and in thy bedde to iouken thus.  
For trewely, of o thing trust to me,  
If thou thus ligge a day, or two, or three,  
The folk wol wene that thou, for cowardyse,  
Thee feynest syk, and that thou darst not ryse.'

This Troilus answerde, 'O brother dere,  
This knowen folk that han y-suffred peyne,  
That though he wepe and make sorwful chere,  
That feleth harm and smert in every veyne,  
No wonder is; and though I ever pleyne,  
Or alwey wepe, I am no-thing to blame,  
Sin I have lost the cause of al my game.

'But sin of fyne force I moot aryse,  
I shal aryse as sone as ever I may;  
And god, to whom myn herte I sacrifysse,  
So sende us hastely the tenthe day!  
For was ther never fowl so fayn of May,  
As I shal been, whan that she cometh in Troye,  
That cause is of my torment and my Ioye.

'But whider is thy reed,' quod Troilus,  
'That we may pleye us best in al this toun?'  
'Bi god, my conseil is,' quod Pandarus,  
'To ryde and pleye us with king Sarpedoun.'  
So longe of this they speken up and doun,  
Til Troilus gan at the laste assente  
To ryse, and forth to Sarpedoun they wente.

This Sarpedoun, as he that honourable  
Was ever his lyve, and ful of heigh prowesse,  
With al that mighte y-served been on table,

That deyntee was, al coste it greet richesse,  
He fedde hem day by day, that swich noblesse,  
As seyden bothe the moste and eek the leste,  
Was never er that day wist at any feste.

Nor in this world ther is non instrument  
Delicious, through wind, or touche, of corde,  
As fer as any wight hath ever y-went,  
That tonge telle or herte may recorde,  
That at that feste it nas wel herd acorde;  
Ne of ladies eek so fayr a companye  
On daunce, er tho, was never y-seyn with ye.

But what avayleth this to Troilus,  
That for his sorwe no-thing of it roughte?  
For ever in oon his herte pietous  
Ful bisily Criseyde his lady soughte.  
On hir was ever al that his herte thoughte,  
Now this, now that, so faste imaginige,  
That glade, y-wis, can him no festeyinge.

These ladies eek that at this feste been,  
Sin that he saw his lady was a-weye,  
It was his sorwe upon hem for to seen,  
Or for to here on instrumentz so pleye.  
For she, that of his herte berth the keye,  
Was absent, lo, this was his fantasye,  
That no wight sholde make melodye.

Nor ther nas houre in al the day or night,  
Whan he was ther-as no wight mighte him here,  
That he ne seyde, 'O lufsom lady bright,  
How have ye faren, sin that ye were here?  
Wel-come, y-wis, myn owene lady dere.'  
But welaway, al this nas but a mase;  
Fortune his howve entended bet to glase.

The lettres eek, that she of olde tyme  
Hadde him y-sent, he wolde allone rede,  
An hundred sythe, a-twixen noon and pryme;  
Refigurige hir shap, hir womanhede,  
With-inne his herte, and every word and dede

That passed was, and thus he droof to an ende  
The ferthe day, and seyde, he wolde wende.

And seyde, 'Leve brother Pandarus,  
Intendestow that we shal here bleve  
Til Sarpedoun wol forth congeyen us?  
Yet were it fairer that we toke our leve.  
For goddes love, lat us now sone at eve  
Our leve take, and homward lat us torne;  
For trewely, I nil not thus soiourne.'

Pandare answerde, 'Be we comen hider  
To fecchen fyr, and rennen hoom ayeyn?  
God helpe me so, I can not tellen whider  
We mighten goon, if I shal soothly seyn,  
Ther any wight is of us more fayn  
Than Sarpedoun; and if we hennes hye  
Thus sodeinly, I holde it vilanye.

'Sin that we seyden that we wolde bleve  
With him a wouke; and now, thus sodeinly,  
The ferthe day to take of him oure leve,  
He wolde wondren on it, trewely!  
Lat us holde forth our purpos fermely;  
And sin that ye bihighten him to byde,  
Hold forward now, and after lat us ryde.'

Thus Pandarus, with alle peyne and wo,  
Made him to dwelle; and at the woukes ende,  
Of Sarpedoun they toke hir leve tho,  
And on hir wey they spedden hem to wende.  
Quod Troilus, 'Now god me grace sende,  
That I may finden, at myn hom-cominge,  
Criseyde comen!' And ther-with gan he singe.

'Ye, hasel-wode!' thoughte this Pandare,  
And to him-self ful softely he seyde,  
'God woot, refreyden may this hote fare,  
Er Calkas sende Troilus Criseyde!  
But natheles, he Iaped thus, and seyde,  
And swor, y-wis, his herte him wel bihighte,  
She wolde come as sone as ever she mighte.



Whan they un-to the paleys were y-comen  
Of Troilus, they doun of hors alighte,  
And to the chambre hir wey than han they nomen.  
And in-to tyme that it gan to nighte,  
They spaken of Cryseyde the brighte.  
And after this, whan that hem bothe leste,  
They spedde hem fro the soper un-to reste.

On morwe, as sone as day bigan to clere,  
This Troilus gan of his sleep tabrayde,  
And to Pandare, his owene brother dere,  
'For love of god,' ful pitously he seyde,  
'As go we seen the paleys of Criseyde;  
For sin we yet may have namore feste,  
So lat us seen hir paleys at the leste.'

And ther-with-al, his meyne for to blende,  
A cause he fond in toune for to go,  
And to Criseydes hous they gonnen wende.  
But lord! This sely Troilus was wo!  
Him thoughte his sorweful herte braste a-two.  
For whan he saugh hir dores sperred alle,  
Wel neigh for sorwe a-doun he gan to falle.

Therwith, whan he was war and gan biholde  
How shet was every windowe of the place,  
As frost, him thoughte, his herte gan to colde;  
For which with chaunged deedlich pale face,  
With-outen word, he forth bigan to pace;  
And, as god wolde, he gan so faste ryde,  
That no wight of his contenance aspyde.

Than seyde he thus; 'O paleys desolat,  
O hous, of houses whylom best y-hight,  
O paleys empty and disconsolat,  
O thou lanterne, of which queynt is the light,  
O paleys, whylom day, that now art night,  
Wel oughtestow to falle, and I to dye,  
Sin she is went that wont was us to gye!

'O paleys, whylom croune of houses alle,

Enlumined with sonne of alle blisse!  
O ring, fro which the ruby is out-falle,  
O cause of wo, that cause hast been of lisse!  
Yet, sin I may no bet, fayn wolde I kisse  
Thy colde dores, dorste I for this route;  
And fare-wel shryne, of which the seynt is oute!'

Ther-with he caste on Pandarus his ye  
With chaunged face, and pitous to biholde;  
And whan he mighte his tyme aright aspye,  
Ay as he rood, to Pandarus he tolde  
His newe sorwe, and eek his Ioyes olde,  
So pitously and with so dede an hewe,  
That every wight mighte on his sorwe rewe.

Fro thennesforth he rydeth up and doun,  
And every thing com him to remembraunce  
As he rood forbi places of the toun  
In whiche he whylom hadde al his plesaunce.  
'Lo, yond saugh I myn owene lady daunce;  
And in that temple, with hir eyen clere,  
Me coughte first my righte lady dere.

'And yonder have I herd ful lustily  
My dere herte laugh, and yonder pleye  
Saugh I hir ones eek ful blisfully.  
And yonder ones to me gan she seye,  
"Now goode swete, love me wel, I preye."  
And yond so goodly gan she me biholde,  
That to the deeth myn herte is to hir holde.

'And at that corner, in the yonder hous,  
Herde I myn alderlevest lady dere  
So wommanly, with voys melodious,  
Singen so wel, so goodly, and so clere,  
That in my soule yet me thinketh I here  
The blisful soun; and, in that yonder place,  
My lady first me took un-to hir grace.'

Thanne thoughte he thus, 'O blisful lord Cupyde,  
Whanne I the proces have in my memorie,  
How thou me hast werayed on every syde,

Men might a book make of it, lyk a storie.  
What nede is thee to seke on me victorie,  
Sin I am thyn, and hoolly at thy wille?  
What Ioye hastow thyn owene folk to spille?

'Wel hastow, lord, y-wroke on me thyn ire,  
Thou mighty god, and dredful for to greve!  
Now mercy, lord, thou wost wel I desire  
Thy grace most, of alle lustes leve,  
And live and deye I wol in thy bileve,  
For which I naxe in guerdon but a bone,  
That thou Criseyde ayein me sende sone.

'Distreyne hir herte as faste to retorne  
As thou dost myn to longen hir to see;  
Than woot I wel, that she nil nought soiorne.  
Now, blisful lord, so cruel thou ne be  
Un-to the blood of Troye, I preye thee,  
As Iuno was un-to the blood Thebane,  
For which the folk of Thebes caughte hir bane.'

And after this he to the yates wente  
Ther-as Criseyde out-rood a ful good paas,  
And up and doun ther made he many a wente,  
And to him-self ful ofte he seyde 'Allas!  
From hennes rood my blisse and my solas!  
As wolde blisful god now, for his Ioye,  
I mighte hir seen ayein come in-to Troye!

'And to the yonder hille I gan hir gyde,  
Allas! And there I took of hir my leve!  
And yond I saugh hir to hir fader ryde,  
For sorwe of which myn herte shal to-cleve.  
And hider hoom I com whan it was eve;  
And here I dwelle out-cast from alle Ioye,  
And shal, til I may seen hir eft in Troye.'

And of him-self imagened he ofte  
To ben defet, and pale, and waxen lesse  
Than he was wont, and that men seyden softe,  
'What may it be? Who can the sothe gesse  
Why Troilus hath al this hevinesse?'

And al this nas but his malencolye,  
That he hadde of him-self swich fantasye.

Another tyme imaginen he wolde  
That every wight that wente by the weye  
Had of him routhe, and that they seyen sholde,  
'I am right sory Troilus wole deye.'  
And thus he droof a day yet forth or tweye.  
As ye have herd, swich lyf right gan he lede,  
As he that stood bitwixen hope and drede.

For which him lyked in his songes shewe  
Thencheson of his wo, as he best mighte,  
And made a song of wordes but a fewe,  
Somwhat his woful herte for to lighte.  
And whan he was from every mannes sighte,  
With softe voys he, of his lady dere,  
That was absent, gan singe as ye may here.

'O sterre, of which I lost have al the light,  
With herte soor wel oughte I to bewayle,  
That ever derk in torment, night by night,  
Toward my deeth with wind in stere I sayle;  
For which the tenthe night if that I fayle  
The gyding of thy bemes brighte an houre,  
My ship and me Caribdis wole devoure.'

This song whan he thus songen hadde, sone  
He fil ayein in-to his sykes olde;  
And every night, as was his wone to done,  
He stood the brighte mone to beholde,  
And al his sorwe he to the mone tolde;  
And seyde, 'Y-wis, whan thou art horned newe,  
I shal be glad, if al the world be trewe!

'I saugh thyn hornes olde eek by the morwe,  
Whan hennes rood my righte lady dere,  
That cause is of my torment and my sorwe;  
For whiche, O brighte Lucina the clere,  
For love of god, ren faste aboute thy spere!  
For whan thyn hornes newe ginne springe,  
Than shal she come, that may my blisse bringe!'

The day is more, and lenger every night,  
Than they be wont to be, him thoughte tho;  
And that the sonne wente his course unright  
By lenger wey than it was wont to go;  
And seyde, 'Y-wis, me dredeth ever-mo,  
The sonnes sone, Pheton, be on-lyve,  
And that his fadres cart amis he dryve.'

Upon the walles faste eek wolde he walke,  
And on the Grekes ost he wolde see,  
And to him-self right thus he wolde talke,  
'Lo, yonder is myn owene lady free,  
Or elles yonder, ther tho tentes be!  
And thennes comth this eyr, that is so sote,  
That in my soule I fele it doth me bote.

'And hardely this wind, that more and more  
Thus stoundemele encreseth in my face,  
Is of my ladyes depe sykes sore.  
I preve it thus, for in non othere place  
Of al this toun, save onliche in this space,  
Fele I no wind that souneth so lyk peyne;  
It seyth, "Allas! Why twinned be we tweyne?"'

This longe tyme he dryveth forth right thus,  
Til fully passed was the nynthe night;  
And ay bi-syde him was this Pandarus,  
That bisily dide alle his fulle might  
Him to comforte, and make his herte light;  
Yevinge him hope alwey, the tenthe morwe  
That she shal come, and stinten al his sorwe.

Up-on that other syde eek was Criseyde,  
With wommen fewe, among the Grekes stronge;  
For which ful ofte a day 'Allas,' she seyde,  
'That I was born! Wel may myn herte longe  
After my deeth; for now live I to longe!  
Allas! And I ne may it not amende;  
For now is wors than ever yet I wende.

'My fader nil for no-thing do me grace

To goon ayein, for nought I can him queme;  
And if so be that I my terme passe,  
My Troilus shal in his herte deme  
That I am fals, and so it may wel seme.  
Thus shal I have unthank on every syde;  
That I was born, so weylaway the tyde!

'And if that I me putte in Iupartye,  
To stele away by nighte, and it bifalle  
That I be caught, I shal be holde a spye;  
Or elles, lo, this drede I most of alle,  
If in the hondes of som wrecche I falle,  
I am but lost, al be myn herte trewe;  
Now mighty god, thou on my sorwe rewe!'

Ful pale y-waxen was hir brighte face,  
Hir limes lene, as she that al the day  
Stood whan she dorste, and loked on the place  
Ther she was born, and ther she dwelt hadde ay.  
And al the night wepinge, allas! she lay.  
And thus despeired, out of alle cure,  
She ladde hir lyf, this woful creature.

Ful ofte a day she sighte eek for destresse,  
And in hir-self she wente ay portrayinge  
Of Troilus the grete worthinesse,  
And alle his goodly wordes recordinge  
Sin first that day hir love bigan to springe.  
And thus she sette hir woful herte a-fyre  
Through remembraunce of that she gan desyre.

In al this world ther nis so cruel herte  
That hir hadde herd compleynen in hir sorwe,  
That nolde han wopen for hir peynes smerte,  
So tendrely she weep, bothe eve and morwe.  
Hir nedede no teres for to borwe.  
And this was yet the worste of al hir peyne,  
Ther was no wight to whom she dorste hir pleyne.

Ful rewfully she loked up-on Troye,  
Biheld the toures heighe and eek the halles;  
'Allas!' quod she, 'The plesaunce and the Ioye

The whiche that now al tordned in-to galle is,  
Have I had ofte with-inne yonder walles!  
O Troilus, what dostow now,' she seyde;  
'Lord! Whether yet thou thenke up-on Criseyde?

'Allas! I ne hadde trowed on your lore,  
And went with yow, as ye me radde er this!  
Thanne hadde I now not syked half so sore.  
Who mighte han seyde, that I had doon a-mis  
To stele away with swich on as he is?  
But al to late cometh the letuarie,  
Whan men the cors un-to the grave carie.

'To late is now to speke of this matere;  
Prudence, allas! Oon of thyn eyen three  
Me lakked alwey, er that I come here;  
On tyme y-passed, wel remembred me;  
And present tyme eek coude I wel y-see.  
But futur tyme, er I was in the snare,  
Coude I not seen; that causeth now my care.

'But natheles, bityde what bityde,  
I shal to-morwe at night, by est or weste,  
Out of this ost stele on som maner syde,  
And go with Troilus wher-as him leste.  
This purpos wol I holde, and this is beste.  
No fors of wikked tonges Ianglerye,  
For ever on love han wrecches had envye.

'For who-so wole of every word take hede,  
Or rewlen him by every wightes wit,  
Ne shal he never thryven, out of drede.  
For that that som men blamen ever yit,  
Lo, other maner folk commenden it.  
And as for me, for al swich variaunce,  
Felicitee clepe I my suffisaunce.

'For which, with-uten any wordes mo,  
To Troye I wol, as for conclusioun.'  
But god it wot, er fully monthes two,  
She was ful fer fro that entencioun.  
For bothe Troilus and Troye toun

Shal knotteles through-out hir herte slyde;  
For she wol take a purpos for tabyde.

This Diomede, of whom yow telle I gan,  
Goth now, with-inne him-self ay arguinge  
With al the sleighte and al that ever he can,  
How he may best, with shortest taryinge,  
In-to his net Criseydes herte bringe.  
To this entente he coude never fyne;  
To fisshen hir, he leyde out hook and lyne.

But natheles, wel in his herte he thoughte,  
That she nas nat with-oute a love in Troye,  
For never, sithen he hir thennes broughte,  
Ne coude he seen her laughe or make Ioye.  
He nist how best hir herte for tacoye.  
'But for to assaye,' he seyde, 'it nought ne greveth;  
For he that nought nassayeth, nought nacheveth.'

Yet seide he to him-self upon a night,  
'Now am I not a fool, that woot wel how  
Hir wo for love is of another wight,  
And here-up-on to goon assaye hir now?  
I may wel wite, it nil not been my prow.  
For wyse folk in bokes it expresse,  
"Men shal not wowe a wight in hevinesse."

'But who-so mighte winnen swich a flour  
From him, for whom she morneth night and day,  
He mighte seyn, he were a conquerour.'  
And right anoon, as he that bold was ay,  
Thoughte in his herte, 'Happe how happe may,  
Al sholde I deye, I wole hir herte seche;  
I shal no more lesen but my speche.'

This Diomede, as bokes us declare,  
Was in his nedes prest and corageous;  
With sterne voys and mighty limes square,  
Hardy, testif, strong, and chevalrous  
Of dedes, lyk his fader Tideus.  
And som men seyn, he was of tunge large;  
And heir he was of Calidoine and Arge.



Criseyde mene was of hir stature,  
Ther-to of shap, of face, and eek of chere,  
Ther mighte been no fairer creature.  
And ofte tyme this was hir manere,  
To gon y-tressed with hir heres clere  
Doun by hir coler at hir bak bihinde,  
Which with a threde of gold she wolde binde.

And, save hir browes ioyneden y-fere,  
Ther nas no lak, in ought I can espyen;  
But for to speken of hir eyen clere,  
Lo, trewely, they writen that hir syen,  
That Paradys stood formed in hir yen.  
And with hir riche beautee ever-more  
Strof love in hir, ay which of hem was more.

She sobre was, eek simple, and wys with-al,  
The beste y-norissed eek that mighte be,  
And goodly of hir speche in general,  
Charitable, estatliche, lusty, and free;  
Ne never-mo ne lakkede hir pitee;  
Tendre-herted, slydinge of corage;  
But trewely, I can not telle hir age.

And Troilus wel waxen was in highte,  
And complet formed by proporcioun  
So wel, that kinde it not amenden mighte;  
Yong, fresshe, strong, and hardy as lyoun;  
Trewes as steel in ech condicioun;  
On of the beste enteched creature,  
That is, or shal, whyl that the world may dure.

And certainly in storie it is y-founde,  
That Troilus was never un-to no wight,  
As in his tyme, in no degree secoude  
In durring don that longeth to a knight.  
Al mighte a geaunt passen him of might,  
His herte ay with the firste and with the beste  
Stood paregal, to durre don that him leste.

But for to tellen forth of Diomedes: --

It fil that after, on the tenthe day,  
Sin that Criseyde out of the citee yede,  
This Diomedes, as fresshe as braunche in May,  
Com to the tente ther-as Calkas lay,  
And feyned him with Calkas han to done;  
But what he mente, I shal yow telle sone.

Criseyde, at shorte wordes for to telle,  
Welcomed him, and doun by hir him sette;  
And he was ethe y-nough to maken dwelle.  
And after this, with-uten longe lette,  
The spyces and the wyn men forth hem fette;  
And forth they speke of this and that y-fere,  
As freendes doon, of which som shal ye here.

He gan first fallen of the werre in speche  
Bitwixe hem and the folk of Troye toun;  
And of thassege he gan hir eek byseche,  
To telle him what was hir opinioun.  
Fro that demaunde he so descendeth doun  
To asken hir, if that hir straunge thoughte  
The Grekes gyse, and werkes that they wroughte?

And why hir fader tarieth so longe  
To wedden hir un-to som worthy wight?  
Criseyde, that was in hir peynes stronge  
For love of Troilus, hir owene knight,  
As fer-forth as she conning hadde or might,  
Answerde him tho; but, as of his entente,  
It semed not she wiste what he mente.

But natheles, this ilke Diomedes  
Gan in him-self assure, and thus he seyde,  
'If ich aright have taken of yow hede,  
Me thinketh thus, O lady myn, Criseyde,  
That sin I first hond on your brydel leyde,  
Whan ye out come of Troye by the morwe,  
Ne coude I never seen yow but in sorwe.

'Can I not seyn what may the cause be  
But-if for love of som Troyan it were,  
The which right sore wolde athinken me

That ye, for any wight that dwelleth there,  
Sholden spille a quarter of a tere,  
Or pitously your-selven so bigyle;  
For dredelees, it is nought worth the whyle.

'The folk of Troye, as who seyth, alle and some  
In preson been, as ye your-selven see;  
Nor thennes shal not oon on-lyve come  
For al the gold bitwixen sonne and see.  
Trusteth wel, and understondeth me.  
Ther shal not oon to mercy goon on-lyve,  
Al were he lord of worldes twyes fyve!

'Swich wreche on hem, for fecching of Eleyne,  
Ther shal be take, er that we hennes wende,  
That Manes, which that goddes ben of peyne,  
Shal been agast that Grekes wol hem shende.  
And men shul drede, un-to the worldes ende,  
From hennes-forth to ravisshe any quene,  
So cruel shal our wreche on hem be sene.

'And but-if Calkas lede us with ambages,  
That is to seyn, with double wordes slye,  
Swich as men clepe a "word with two visages,"  
Ye shal wel knowen that I nought ne lye,  
And al this thing right seen it with your ye,  
And that anoon; ye nil not trowe how sone;  
Now taketh heed, for it is for to done.

'What wene ye your wyse fader wolde  
Han yeven Antenor for yow anoon,  
If he ne wiste that the citee sholde  
Destroyed been? Why, nay, so mote I goon!  
He knew ful wel ther shal not scapen oon  
That Troyan is; and for the grete fere,  
He dorste not, ye dwelte lenger there.

'What wole ye more, lufsom lady dere?  
Lat Troye and Troyan fro your herte pace!  
Dryf out that bittre hope, and make good chere,  
And clepe ayein the beautee of your face,  
That ye with salte teres so deface.

For Troye is brought in swich a Iupartye,  
That, it to save, is now no remedye.

'And thenketh wel, ye shal in Grekes finde,  
A more parfit love, er it be night,  
Than any Troian is, and more kinde,  
And bet to serven yow wol doon his might.  
And if ye vouche sauf, my lady bright,  
I wol ben he to serven yow my-selve,  
Yee, lever than he lord of Greces twelve!'

And with that word he gan to waxen reed,  
And in his speche a litel wight he quook,  
And caste a-syde a litel wight his heed,  
And stinte a whyle; and afterward awook,  
And sobrelliche on hir he threw his look,  
And seyde, 'I am, al be it yow no Ioye,  
As gentil man as any wight in Troye.

'For if my fader Tydeus,' he seyde,  
'Y-lived hadde, I hadde been, er this,  
Of Calidoine and Arge a king, Criseyde!  
And so hope I that I shal yet, y-wis.  
But he was slayn, allas! The more harm is,  
Unhappily at Thebes al to rathe,  
Polymites and many a man to scathe.

'But herte myn, sin that I am your man,  
And been the ferste of whom I seche grace,  
To serven you as hertely as I can,  
And ever shal, whyl I to live have space,  
So, er that I departe out of this place,  
Ye wol me graunte, that I may to-morwe,  
At bettre leyser, telle yow my sorwe.'

What shold I telle his wordes that he seyde?  
He spak y-now, for o day at the meste;  
It preveth wel, he spak so that Criseyde  
Graunted, on the morwe, at his requeste,  
For to speken with him at the leste,  
So that he nolde speke of swich matere;  
And thus to him she seyde, as ye may here:

As she that hadde hir herte on Troilus  
So faste, that ther may it noon arace;  
And straungely she spak, and seyde thus;  
'O Diomedes, I love that ilke place  
Ther I was born; and Ioves, for his grace,  
Delivere it sone of al that doth it care!  
God, for thy might, so leve it wel to fare!

'That Grekes wolde hir wraththe on Troye wreke,  
If that they mighte, I knowe it wel, y-wis.  
But it shal not bifallen as ye speke;  
And god to-forn, and ferther over this,  
I wot my fader wys and redy is;  
And that he me hath bought, as ye me tolde,  
So dere, I am the more un-to him holde.

'That Grekes been of heigh condicioun,  
I woot eek wel; but certein, men shal finde  
As worthy folk with-inne Troye toun,  
As conning, and as parfit and as kinde,  
As been bitwixen Orcades and Inde.  
And that ye coude wel your lady serve,  
I trowe eek wel, hir thank for to deserve.

'But as to speke of love, y-wis,' she seyde,  
'I hadde a lord, to whom I wedded was,  
The whos myn herte al was, til that he deyde;  
And other love, as helpe me now Pallas,  
Ther in myn herte nis, ne nevere was.  
And that ye been of noble and heigh kinrede,  
I have wel herd it tellen, out of drede.

'And that doth me to han so gret a wonder,  
That ye wol scornen any womman so.  
Eek, god wot, love and I be fer a-sonder!  
I am disposed bet, so mote I go,  
Un-to my deeth, to pleyne and maken wo.  
What I shal after doon, I can not seye;  
But trewely, as yet me list not pleye.

'Myn herte is now in tribulacioun,

And ye in armes bisy, day by day.  
Here-after, whan ye wonnen han the toun,  
Paraunter, thanne so it happen may,  
That whan I see that I never er say,  
Than wole I werke that I never wroughte!  
This word to yow y-nough suffysen oughte.

'To-morwe eek wol I speken with yow fayn,  
So that ye touchen nought of this matere.  
And whan yow list, ye may come here ayeyn;  
And, er ye gon, thus mucche I seye yow here;  
As help me Pallas with hir heres clere,  
If that I sholde of any Greek han routhe,  
It sholde be your-selven, by my trouthe!

'I sey not therfore that I wol yow love,  
Ne I sey not nay, but in conclusioun,  
I mene wel, by god that sit above:' --  
And ther-with-al she caste hir eyen doun,  
And gan to syke, and seyde, 'O Troye toun,  
Yet bidde I god, in quiete and in reste  
I may yow seen, or do myn herte breste.'

But in effect, and shortly for to seye,  
This Diomedes al freshly newe ayeyn  
Gan pressen on, and faste hir mercy preye;  
And after this, the sothe for to seyn,  
Hir glove he took, of which he was ful fayn.  
And fynally, whan it was waxen eve,  
And al was wel, he roos and took his leve.

The brighte Venus folwede and ay taughte  
The wey, ther brode Phebus doun alighte;  
And Cynthea hir char-hors over-raughte  
To whirle out of the Lyon, if she mighte;  
And Signifer his candelse shewed brighte,  
Whan that Criseyde un-to hir bedde wente  
In-with hir fadres faire brighte tente.

Retorning in hir soule ay up and doun  
The wordes of this sodein Diomedes,  
His greet estat, and peril of the toun,

And that she was allone and hadde nede  
Of freendes help; and thus bigan to brede  
The cause why, the sothe for to telle,  
That she tok fully purpos for to dwelle.

The morwe com, and goostly for to speke,  
This Diomedes is come un-to Criseyde,  
And shortly, lest that ye my tale breke,  
So wel he for him-selve spak and seyde,  
That alle hir sykes sore adoun he leyde.  
And fynally, the sothe for to seyne,  
He refte hir of the grete of al hir peyne.

And after this the story telleth us,  
That she him yaf the faire baye stede,  
The which he ones wan of Troilus;  
And eek a broche (and that was litel nede)  
That Troilus was, she yaf this Diomedes.  
And eek, the bet from sorwe him to releve,  
She made him were a pencil of hir sleve.

I finde eek in stories elles-where,  
Whan through the body hurt was Diomedes  
Of Troilus, tho weep she many a tere,  
Whan that she saugh his wyde woundes blede;  
And that she took to kepen him good hede,  
And for to hele him of his sorwes smerte.  
Men seyn, I not, that she yaf him hir herte.

But trewely, the story telleth us,  
Ther made never womman more wo  
Than she, whan that she falsed Troilus.  
She seyde, 'Allas! For now is clene a-go  
My name of trouthe in love, for ever-mo!  
For I have falsed oon, the gentileste  
That ever was, and oon the worthieste!

'Allas, of me, un-to the worldes ende,  
Shal neither been y-writen nor y-songe  
No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.  
O, rolled shal I been on many a tonge;  
Through-out the world my belle shal be ronge;

And wommen most wol hate me of alle.  
Allas, that swich a cas me sholde falle!

'They wol seyn, in as muche as in me is,  
I have hem don dishonour, weylawey!  
Al be I not the first that dide amis,  
What helpeth that to do my blame away?  
But sin I see there is no bettre way,  
And that to late is now for me to rewe,  
To Diomedes algate I wol be trewe.

'But Troilus, sin I no better may,  
And sin that thus departen ye and I,  
Yet preye I god, so yeve yow right good day  
As for the gentileste, trewely,  
That ever I say, to serven feithfully,  
And best can ay his lady honour kepe:' --  
And with that word she brast anon to wepe.

'And certes yow ne haten shal I never,  
And freendes love, that shal ye han of me,  
And my good word, al mighte I liven ever.  
And, trewely, I wolde sory be  
For to seen yow in adversitee.  
And giltelees, I woot wel, I yow leve;  
But al shal passe; and thus take I my leve.'

But trewely, how longe it was bitwene,  
That she for-sook him for this Diomedes,  
Ther is non auctor telleth it, I wene.  
Take every man now to his bokes hede;  
He shal no terme finden, out of drede.  
For though that he bigan to wowe hir sone,  
Er he hir wan, yet was ther more to done.

Ne me ne list this sely womman chyde  
Ferther than the story wol devyse.  
Hir name, allas! Is publissed so wyde,  
That for hir gilt it oughte y-noe suffyse.  
And if I mighte excuse hir any wyse,  
For she so sory was for hir untrouthe,  
Y-wis, I wolde excuse hir yet for routhe.



This Troilus, as I biforn have told,  
Thus dryveth forth, as wel as he hath might.  
But often was his herte hoot and cold,  
And namely, that ilke nynthe night,  
Which on the morwe she hadde him byhight  
To come ayein: god wot, ful litel reste  
Hadde he that night; no-thing to slepe him leste.

The laurer-crouned Phebus, with his hete,  
Gan, in his course ay upward as he wente,  
To warmen of the est see the wawes wete,  
And Nisus doughter song with fresh entente,  
Whan Troilus his Pandare after sente;  
And on the walles of the toun they pleyde,  
To loke if they can seen ought of Criseyde.

Til it was noon, they stoden for to see  
Who that ther come; and every maner wight,  
That cam fro fer, they seyden it was she,  
Til that they coude knowen him a-right.  
Now was his herte dul, now was it light;  
And thus by-iaped stonden for to stare  
Aboute nought, this Troilus and Pandare.

To Pandarus this Troilus tho seyde,  
'For ought I wot, bi-for noon, sikerly,  
In-to this toun ne comth nought here Criseyde.  
She hath y-now to done, hardily,  
To winnen from hir fader, so trowe I;  
Hir olde fader wol yet make hir dyne  
Er that she go; god yeve his herte pyne!'

Pandare answerde, 'It may wel be, certeyn;  
And for-thy lat us dyne, I thee biseche;  
And after noon than maystw thou come ayeyn.'  
And hoom they go, with-oute more speche;  
And comen ayein, but longe may they seche  
Er that they finde that they after cape;  
Fortune hem bothe thenketh for to Iape.

Quod Troilus, 'I see wel now, that she

Is taried with hir olde fader so,  
That er she come, it wole neigh even be.  
Com forth, I wol un-to the yate go.  
Thise portours been unkonninge ever-mo;  
And I wol doon hem holden up the yate  
As nought ne were, al-though she come late.'

The day goth faste, and after that comth eve,  
And yet com nought to Troilus Criseyde.  
He loketh forth by hegge, by tree, by greve,  
And fer his heed over the wal he leyde.  
And at the laste he torned him, and seyde.  
'By god, I woot hir mening now, Pandare!  
Al-most, y-wis, al newe was my care.

'Now douteles, this lady can hir good;  
I woot, she meneth ryden prively.  
I comende hir wysdom, by myn hood!  
She wol not maken peple nycely  
Gaure on hir, whan she comth; but softly  
By nighte in-to the toun she thenketh ryde.  
And, dere brother, thenk not longe to abyde.

'We han nought elles for to don, y-wis.  
And Pandarus, now woltow trowen me?  
Have here my trouthe, I see hir! Yond she is.  
Heve up thyn eyen, man! Maystow not see?'  
Pandare answerde, 'Nay, so mote I thee!  
Al wrong, by god; what seystow, man, wher art?  
That I see yond nis but a fare-cart.'

'Allas, thou seist right sooth,' quod Troilus;  
'But, hardely, it is not al for nought  
That in myn herte I now reioyse thus.  
It is ayein som good I have a thought.  
Noot I not how, but sin that I was wrought,  
Ne felte I swich a confort, dar I seye;  
She comth to-night, my lyf, that dorste I leye!'

Pandare answerde, 'It may be wel, y-nough';  
And held with him of al that ever he seyde;  
But in his herte he thoughte, and softelough,

And to him-self ful sobrelly he seyde:  
'From hasel-wode, ther Ioly Robin pleyde,  
Shal come al that thou abydest here;  
Ye, fare-wel al the snow of ferne yere!'

The wardein of the yates gan to calle  
The folk which that with-oute the yates were,  
And bad hem dryven in hir bestes alle,  
Or al the night they moste bleven there.  
And fer with-in the night, with many a tere,  
This Troilus gan hoomward for to ryde;  
For wel he seeth it helpeth nought tabyde.

But natheles, he gladded him in this;  
He thoughte he misaccounted hadde his day,  
And seyde, 'I understonde have al a-mis.  
For thilke night I last Criseyde say,  
She seyde, "I shal ben here, if that I may,  
Er that the mone, O dere herte swete!  
The Lyon passe, out of this Ariete."

'For which she may yet holde al hir biheste.'  
And on the morwe un-to the yate he wente,  
And up and down, by west and eek by este,  
Up-on the walles made he many a wente.  
But al for nought; his hope alwey him blente;  
For which at night, in sorwe and sykes sore,  
He wente him hoom, with-outen any more.

This hope al clene out of his herte fledde,  
He nath wher-on now lenger for to honge;  
But for the peyne him thoughte his herte bledde,  
So were his throwes sharpe and wonder stronge.  
For when he saugh that she abood so longe,  
He niste what he iuggen of it mighte,  
Sin she hath broken that she him bihighte.

The thridde, ferthe, fifte, sixte day  
After tho dayes ten, of which I tolde,  
Bitwixen hope and drede his herte lay,  
Yet som-what trustinge on hir hestes olde.  
But whan he saugh she nolde hir terme holde,

He can now seen non other remedye,  
But for to shape him sone for to dye.

Ther-with the wikked spirit, god us blesse,  
Which that men clepeth wode Ialousye,  
Gan in him crepe, in al this hevinesse;  
For which, by-cause he wolde sone dye,  
He ne eet ne dronk, for his malencolye,  
And eek from every companye he fledde;  
This was the lyf that al the tyme he ledde.

He so defet was, that no maner man  
Unneth mighte him knowe ther he wente;  
So was he lene, and ther-to pale and wan,  
And feble, that he walketh by potente;  
And with his ire he thus himselven shente.  
But who-so axed him wher-of him smerte,  
He seyde, his harm was al aboute his herte.

Pryam ful ofte, and eek his moder dere,  
His bretheren and his sustren gonne him freyne  
Why he so sorwful was in al his chere,  
And what thing was the cause of al his peyne?  
But al for nought; he nolde his cause pleyne,  
But seyde, he felte a grevous maladye  
A-boute his herte, and fayn he wolde dye.

So on a day he leyde him doun to slepe,  
And so bifel that in his sleep him thoughte,  
That in a forest faste he welk to wepe  
For love of hir that him these peynes wroughte;  
And up and doun as he the forest soughte,  
He mette he saugh a boor with tuskes grete,  
That sleep ayein the brighte sonnes hete.

And by this boor, faste in his armes folde,  
Lay kissing ay his lady bright Criseyde:  
For sorwe of which, whan he it gan biholde,  
And for despyt, out of his slepe he breyde,  
And loude he cryde on Pandarus, and seyde,  
'O Pandarus, now knowe I crop and rote!  
I nam but deed; ther nis non other bote!

'My lady bright Criseyde hath me bitrayed,  
In whom I trusted most of any wight,  
She elles-where hath now hir herte apayed;  
The blisful goddes, through hir grete might,  
Han in my dreem y-shewed it ful right.  
Thus in my dreem Criseyde I have biholde' --  
And al this thing to Pandarus he tolde.

'O my Criseyde, allas! What subtiltee.  
What newe lust, what beautee, what science,  
What wratthe of iuste cause have ye to me?  
What gilt of me, what fel experience  
Hath fro me raft, allas! Thyn advertence?  
O trust, O feyth, O depe aseuraunce,  
Who hath me reft Criseyde, al my plesaunce?

'Allas! Why leet I you from hennes go,  
For which wel neigh out of my wit I breyde?  
Who shal now trowe on any othes mo?  
God wot I wende, O lady bright, Criseyde,  
That every word was gospel that ye seyde!  
But who may bet bigylen, yf him liste,  
Than he on whom men weneth best to triste?

'What shal I doon, my Pandarus, allas!  
I fele now so sharpe a newe peyne,  
Sin that ther is no remedie in this cas,  
That bet were it I with myn hondes tweyne  
My-selven slow, than alwey thus to pleyne.  
For through my deeth my wo sholde han an ende,  
Ther every day with lyf my-self I shende.'

Pandare answerde and seyde, 'Allas the whyle  
That I was born; have I not seyde er this,  
That dremes many a maner man bigyle?  
And why? For folk expounden hem a-mis.  
How darstow seyn that fals thy lady is,  
For any dreem, right for thyn owene drede?  
Lat be this thought, thou canst no dremes rede.

'Paraunter, ther thou dremest of this boor,

It may so be that it may signifye  
Hir fader, which that old is and eek hoor,  
Ayein the sonne lyth, on poynt to dye,  
And she for sorwe ginneth wepe and crye,  
And kisseth him, ther he lyth on the grounde;  
Thus shuldestow thy dreem a-right expounde.'

'How mighte I thanne do?' quod Troilus,  
'To knowe of this, ye, were it never so lyte?'  
'Now seystow wysly,' quod this Pandarus,  
'My reed is this, sin thou canst wel endyte,  
That hastely a lettre thou hir wryte,  
Thorough which thou shalt wel bringen it aboute,  
To knowe a sooth of that thou art in doute.

'And see now why; for this I dar wel seyn,  
That if so is that she untrewbe be,  
I can not trowe that she wol wryte ayeyn.  
And if she wryte, thou shalt ful sone see,  
As whether she hath any libertee  
To come ayein, or ellis in som clause,  
If she be let, she wol assigne a cause.

'Thou hast not writen hir sin that she wente,  
Nor she to thee, and this I dorste leye,  
Ther may swich cause been in hir entente,  
That hardely thou wolt thy-selven seye,  
That hir a-bood the beste is for yow tweye.  
Now wryte hir thanne, and thou shalt fele sone  
A sothe of al; ther is no more to done.'

Acorded been to this conclusioun,  
And that anoon, these ilke lordes two;  
And hastely sit Troilus adoun,  
And rolleth in his herte to and fro,  
How he may best discryven hir his wo.  
And to Criseyde, his owene lady dere,  
He wroot right thus, and seyde as ye may here.

'Right fresshe flour, whos I have been and shal,  
With-outen part of elles-where servyse,  
With herte, body, lyf, lust, thought, and al;

I, woful wight, in every humble wyse  
That tonge telle or herte may devyse,  
As ofte as matere occupyeth place,  
Me recomaunde un-to your noble grace.

'Lyketh it yow to witen, swete herte,  
As ye wel knowe how longe tyme agoon  
That ye me lefte in aspre peynes smerte,  
Whan that ye wente, of which yet bote noon  
Have I non had, but ever wers bigoon  
Fro day to day am I, and so mot dwelle,  
While it yow list, of wele and wo my welle.

'For which to yow, with dredful herte trewe,  
I wryte, as he that sorwe dryfth to wryte,  
My wo, that every houre encreseth newe,  
Compleynge as I dar or can endyte.  
And that defaced is, that may ye wyte  
The teres, which that fro myn eyen reyne,  
That wolde speke, if that they coude, and pleyne.

'Yow first biseche I, that your eyen clere  
To look on this defouled ye not holde;  
And over al this, that ye, my lady dere,  
Wol vouche-sauf this lettre to biholde.  
And by the cause eek of my cares colde,  
That sleeth my wit, if ought amis me asterte,  
For-yeve it me, myn owene swete herte.

'If any servant dorste or oughte of right  
Up-on his lady pitously compleyne,  
Than wene I, that ich oughte be that wight,  
Considered this, that ye these monthes tweyne  
Han taried, ther ye seyden, sooth to seyne,  
But dayes ten ye nolde in ost soiourne,  
But in two monthes yet ye not retourne.

'But for-as-muche as me mot nedes lyke  
Al that yow list, I dar not pleyne more,  
But humbely with sorwful sykes syke;  
Yow wryte ich myn unresty sorwes sore,  
Fro day to day desyryng ever-more

To knowen fully, if your wil it were,  
How ye han ferd and doon, whyl ye be there.

'The whos wel-fare and hele eek god encesse  
In honour swich, that upward in degree  
It growe alwey, so that it never cesse;  
Right as your herte ay can, my lady free,  
Devyse, I prey to god so mote it be.  
And graunte it that ye sone up-on me rewe  
As wisly as in al I am yow trewe.

'And if yow lyketh knowen of the fare  
Of me, whos wo ther may no wight discryve,  
I can no more but, cheste of every care,  
At wrytinge of this lettre I was on-lyve,  
Al redy out my woful gost to dryve;  
Which I delaye, and holde him yet in honde,  
Upon the sight of matere of your sonde.

'Myn eyen two, in veyn with which I see,  
Of sorweful teres salte arn waxen welles;  
My song, in pleynte of myn adversitee;  
My good, in harm; myn ese eek waxen helle is.  
My Ioye, in wo; I can sey yow nought elles,  
But turned is, for which my lyf I warie,  
Everich Ioye or ese in his contrarie.

'Which with your cominge hoom ayein to Troye  
Ye may redresse, and, more a thousand sythe  
Than ever ich hadde, encressen in me Ioye.  
For was ther never herte yet so blythe  
To han his lyf, as I shal been as swythe  
As I yow see; and, though no maner routhe  
Commeve yow, yet thinketh on your trouthe.

'And if so be my gilt hath deeth deserved,  
Or if yow list no more up-on me see,  
In guerdon yet of that I have you served,  
Biseche I yow, myn hertes lady free,  
That here-upon ye wolden wryte me,  
For love of god, my righte lode-sterre,  
Ther deeth may make an ende of al my werre.



'If other cause aught doth yow for to dwelle,  
That with your lettre ye me recomforte;  
For though to me your absence is an helle,  
With pacience I wol my wo comorte,  
And with your lettre of hope I wol desporte.  
Now wryteth, swete, and lat me thus not pleyne;  
With hope, or deeth, delivereth me fro peyne.

'Y-wis, myn owene dere herte trewe,  
I woot that, whan ye next up-on me see,  
So lost have I myn hele and eek myn hewe,  
Criseyde shal nought conne knowe me!  
Y-wis, myn hertes day, my lady free,  
So thursteth ay myn herte to biholde  
Your beautee, that my lyf unnethe I holde.

'I sey no more, al have I for to seye  
To you wel more than I telle may;  
But whether that ye do me live or deye,  
Yet pray I god, so yeve yow right good day.  
And fareth wel, goodly fayre fresshe may,  
As ye that lyf or deeth me may comaunde;  
And to your trouthe ay I me recomaunde

'With hele swich that, but ye yeven me  
The same hele, I shal noon hele have.  
In you lyth, whan yow liste that it so be,  
The day in which me clothen shal my grave.  
In yow my lyf, in yow might for to save  
Me from disese of alle peynes smerte;  
And fare now wel, myn owene swete herte!  
Le vostre T.'

This lettre forth was sent un-to Criseyde,  
Of which hir answeere in effect was this;  
Ful pitously she wroot ayein, and seyde,  
That also sone as that she might, y-wis,  
She wolde come, and mende al that was mis.  
And fynally she wroot and seyde him thanne,  
She wolde come, ye, but she niste whenne.

But in hir lettre made she swich festes,  
That wonder was, and swereth she loveth him best,  
Of which he fond but botmelees bihestes.  
But Troilus, thou mayst now, est or west,  
Pype in an ivy leef, if that thee lest;  
Thus gooth the world; god shilde us fro mischaunce,  
And every wight that meneth trouthe avaunce!

Encresen gan the wo fro day to night  
Of Troilus, for tarynge of Criseyde;  
And lessen gan his hope and eek his might,  
For which al doun he in his bed him leyde;  
He ne eet, ne dronk, ne sleep, ne word he seyde,  
Imaginge ay that she was unkinde;  
For which wel neigh he wex out of his minde.

This dreem, of which I told have eek biforn,  
May never come out of his remembraunce;  
He thoughte ay wel he hadde his lady lorn,  
And that Ioves, of his purveyaunce,  
Him shewed hadde in sleep the signifiaunce  
Of hir untrouthe and his disaventure,  
And that the boor was shewed him in figure.

For which he for Sibille his suster sente,  
That called was Cassandre eek al aboute;  
And al his dreem he tolde hir er he stente,  
And hir bisoughte assoilen him the doute  
Of the stronge boor, with tuskes stoute;  
And fynally, with-inne a litel stounde,  
Cassandre him gan right thus his dreem expounde.

She gan first smyle, and seyde, 'O brother dere,  
If thou a sooth of this desyrest knowe,  
Thou most a fewe of olde stories here,  
To purpos, how that fortune over-throwe  
Hath lordes olde; through which, with-inne a throwe,  
Thou wel this boor shalt knowe, and of what kinde  
He comen is, as men in bokes finde.

'Diane, which that wrooth was and in ire  
For Grekes nolde doon hir sacrificyse,

Ne encens up-on hir auter sette a-fyre,  
She, for that Grekes gonne hir so dispysse,  
Wrak hir in a wonder cruel wyse.  
For with a boor as greet as oxe in stalle  
She made up frete hir corn and vynes alle.

'To slee this boor was al the contree reysed,  
A-monges which ther com, this boor to see,  
A mayde, oon of this world the best y-preysed;  
And Meleagre, lord of that contree,  
He lovede so this fresshe mayden free  
That with his manhod, er he wolde stente,  
This boor he slow, and hir the heed he sente;

'Of which, as olde bokes tellen us,  
Ther roos a contek and a greet envye;  
And of this lord descended Tydeus  
By ligne, or elles olde bokes lye;  
But how this Meleagre gan to dye  
Thorugh his moder, wol I yow not telle,  
For al to long it were for to dwelle.'

[Argument of the 12 Books of Statius' "Thebais"]

Associat profugum Tideo primus Polimitem;  
Tidea legatum docet insidiasque secundus;  
Tercius Hemoniden canit et vates latitantes;  
Quartus habet reges ineuntes prelia septem;  
Mox furie Lenne quinto narratur et anguis;  
Archimori bustum sexto ludique leguntur;  
Dat Graios Thebes et vatem septimus vmbria;  
Octauo cecidit Tideus, spes, vita Pelasgia;  
Ypomodon nono moritur cum Parthonopeo;  
Fulmine percussus, decimo Capaneus superatur;  
Vndecimo sese perimunt per vulnera fratres;  
Argiuam flentem narrat duodenus et igneum.

She tolde eek how Tydeus, er she stente,  
Un-to the stronge citee of Thebes,  
To cleyme kingdom of the citee, wente,  
For his felawe, daun Polymites,  
Of which the brother, daun Ethyocles,

Ful wrongfully of Thebes held the strengthe;  
This tolde she by proces, al by lengthe.

She tolde eek how Hemonides asterte,  
Whan Tydeus slough fifty knightes stoute.  
She tolde eek al the prophesyes by herte,  
And how that sevene kinges, with hir route,  
Bisegeden the citee al aboute;  
And of the holy serpent, and the welle,  
And of the furies, al she gan him telle.

Of Archimoris buryinge and the pleyes,  
And how Amphiorax fil through the grounde,  
How Tydeus was slayn, lord of Argeyes,  
And how Ypomedoun in litel stounde  
Was dreynt, and deed Parthonope of wounde;  
And also how Cappaneus the proude  
With thonder-dint was slayn, that cryde loude.

She gan eek telle him how that either brother,  
Ethyocles and Polimyte also,  
At a scarmyche, eche of hem slough other,  
And of Argyves wepinge and hir wo;  
And how the town was brent she tolde eek tho.  
And so descendeth doun from gestes olde  
To Diomede, and thus she spak and tolde.

'This ilke boor bitokneth Diomede,  
Tydeus sone, that doun descended is  
Fro Meleagre, that made the boor to blede.  
And thy lady, wher-so she be, y-wis,  
This Diomede hir herte hath, and she his.  
Weep if thou wolt, or leef; for, out of doute,  
This Diomede is inne, and thou art oute.'

'Thou seyst nat sooth,' quod he, 'thou sorceresse,  
With al thy false goost of prophesye!  
Thou wenest been a greet devyneresse;  
Now seestow not this fool of fantasye  
Peyneth hir on ladyes for to lye?  
Away!' quod he. 'Ther Ioves yeve thee sorwe!  
Thou shalt be fals, paraunter, yet to-morwe!

'As wel thou mightest Iyen on Alceste,  
That was of creatures, but men Iye,  
That ever weren, kindest and the beste.  
For whanne hir housbonde was in Iupartye  
To dye him-self, but-if she wolde dye,  
She chees for him to dye and go to helle,  
And starf anoon, as us the bokes telle.'

Cassandre goth, and he with cruel herte  
For-yat his wo, for angre of hir speche;  
And from his bed al sodeinly he sterte,  
As though al hool him hadde y-mad a leche.  
And day by day he gan enquere and seche  
A sooth of this, with al his fulle cure;  
And thus he dryeth forth his aventure.

Fortune, whiche that permutacioun  
Of thinges hath, as it is hir committed  
Through purveyaunce and disposicioun  
Of heighe Iove, as regnes shal ben flitted  
Fro folk in folk, or whan they shal ben smitted,  
Gan pulle away the fetheres brighte of Troye  
Fro day to day, til they ben bare of Ioye.

Among al this, the fyn of the parodie  
Of Ector gan approchen wonder blyve;  
The fate wolde his soule sholde unbodie,  
And shapen hadde a mene it out to dryve;  
Ayeins which fate him helpeth not to stryve;  
But on a day to fighten gan he wende,  
At which, allas! He coughte his lyves ende.

For which me thinketh every maner wight  
That haunteth armes oughte to biwayle  
The deeth of him that was so noble a knight;  
For as he drough a king by thaventayle,  
Unwar of this, Achilles through the mayle  
And through the body gan him for to ryve;  
And thus this worthy knight was brought of lyve.

For whom, as olde bokes tellen us,

Was mad swich wo, that tonge it may not telle;  
And namely, the sorwe of Troilus,  
That next him was of worthinesse welle.  
And in this wo gan Troilus to dwelle,  
That, what for sorwe, and love, and for unreste,  
Ful ofte a day he bad his herte breste.

But natheles, though he gan him dispeyre,  
And dradde ay that his lady was untrewe,  
Yet ay on hir his herte gan repeyre.  
And as these loveres doon, he soughte ay newe  
To gete ayein Criseyde, bright of hewe.  
And in his herte he wente hir excusinge,  
That Calkas causede al hir tarynge.

And ofte tyme he was in purpos grete  
Him-selven lyk a pilgrim to disgyse,  
To seen hir; but he may not contrefete  
To been unknowen of folk that weren wyse,  
Ne finde excuse aright that may suffyse,  
If he among the Grekes knowen were;  
For which he weep ful ofte many a tere.

To hir he wroot yet ofte tyme al newe  
Ful pitously, he lefte it nought for slouthe,  
Biseching hir that, sin that he was trewe,  
She wolde come ayein and holde hir trouthe.  
For which Criseyde up-on a day, for routhe,  
I take it so, touchinge al this matere,  
Wrot him ayein, and seyde as ye may here.

'Cupydes sone, ensample of goodlihede,  
O swerd of knighthod, sours of gentillesse!  
How might a wight in torment and in drede  
And helelees, yow sende as yet gladnesse?  
I hertelees, I syke, I in distresse;  
Sin ye with me, nor I with yow may dele,  
Yow neither sende ich herte may nor hele.

'Your lettres ful, the papir al y-pleynted,  
Conceyved hath myn hertes pietee;  
I have eek seyn with teres al depeynted

Your lettre, and how that ye requeren me  
To come ayein, which yet ne may not be.  
But why, lest that this lettre founden were,  
No mencioune ne make I now, for fere.

'Grevous to me, god woot, is your unreste,  
Your haste, and that, the goddes ordenaunce,  
It semeth not ye take it for the beste.  
Nor other thing nis in your remembraunce,  
As thinketh me, but only your plesaunce.  
But beth not wrooth, and that I yow biseche;  
For that I tarie, is al for wikked speche.

'For I have herd wel more than I wende,  
Touchinge us two, how thinges han y-stonde;  
Which I shal with dissimulinge amende.  
And beth nought wrooth, I have eek understonde,  
How ye ne doon but holden me in honde.  
But now no fors, I can not in yow gesse  
But alle trouthe and alle gentillesse.

'Comen I wol, but yet in swich disioynte  
I stonde as now, that what yeer or what day  
That this shal be, that can I not apoynte.  
But in effect, I prey yow, as I may,  
Of your good word and of your frendship ay.  
For trewely, whyl that my lyf may dure,  
As for a freend, ye may in me assure.

'Yet preye I yow on yvel ye ne take,  
That it is short which that I to yow wryte;  
I dar not, ther I am, wel lettres make,  
Ne never yet ne coude I wel endyte.  
Eek greet effect men wryte in place lite.  
Thentente is al, and nought the lettres space;  
And fareth now wel, god have you in his grace!  
La vostre C.'

This Troilus this lettre thoughte al straunge,  
Whan he it saugh, and sorwefully he sighte;  
Him thoughte it lyk a kalendes of change;  
But fynally, he ful ne trowen mighte

That she ne wolde him holden that she highte;  
For with ful yvel wil list him to leve  
That loveth wel, in swich cas, though him greve.

But natheles, men seyn that, at the laste,  
For any thing, men shal the sothe see;  
And swich a cas bitidde, and that as faste,  
That Troilus wel understood that she  
Nas not so kinde as that hir oughte be.  
And fynally, he woot now, out of doute,  
That al is lost that he hath been aboute.

Stood on a day in his malencolye  
This Troilus, and in suspecioun  
Of hir for whom he wende for to dye.  
And so bifel, that through-out Troye toun,  
As was the gyse, y-bore was up and doun  
A maner cote-armure, as seyth the storie,  
Biforn Deiphebe, in signe of his victorie,

The whiche cote, as telleth Lollius,  
Deiphebe it hadde y-rent from Diomedes  
The same day; and whan this Troilus  
It saugh, he gan to taken of it hede,  
Avysing of the lengthe and of the brede,  
And al the werk; but as he gan biholde,  
Ful sodeinly his herte gan to colde,

As he that on the coler fond with-inne  
A broche, that he Criseyde yaf that morwe  
That she from Troye moste nedes twinne,  
In remembraunce of him and of his sorwe;  
And she him leyde ayein hir feyth to borwe  
To kepe it ay; but now, ful wel he wiste,  
His lady nas no lenger on to triste.

He gooth him hoom, and gan ful sone sende  
For Pandarus; and al this newe chaunce,  
And of this broche, he tolde him word and ende,  
Compleyninge of hir hertes variaunce,  
His longe love, his trouthe, and his penaunce;  
And after deeth, with-outen wordes more,



Ful faste he cryde, his reste him to restore.

Than spak he thus, 'O lady myn Criseyde,  
Wher is your feyth, and wher is your biheste?  
Wher is your love, wher is your trouthe,' he seyde;  
'Of Diomedede have ye now al this feste!  
Allas, I wolde have trowed at the leste.  
That, sin ye nolde in trouthe to me stonde,  
That ye thus nolde han holden me in honde!

'Who shal now trowe on any othes mo?  
Allas, I never wolde han wend, er this,  
That ye, Criseyde, coude han chaunged so;  
Ne, but I hadde a-gilt and doon amis,  
So cruel wende I not your herte, y-wis,  
To slee me thus; allas, your name of trouthe  
Is now for-doon, and that is al my routhe.

'Was ther non other broche yow liste lete  
To feffe with your newe love,' quod he,  
'But thilke broche that I, with teres wete,  
Yow yaf, as for a remembraunce of me?  
Non other cause, allas, ne hadde ye  
But for despyt, and eek for that ye mente  
Al-outrely to shewen your entente!

'Through which I see that clene out of your minde  
Ye han me cast, and I ne can nor may,  
For al this world, with-in myn herte finde  
To unloven yow a quarter of a day!  
In cursed tyme I born was, weylaway!  
That ye, that doon me al this wo endure,  
Yet love I best of any creature.

'Now god,' quod he, 'me sende yet the grace  
That I may meten with this Diomedede!  
And trewely, if I have might and space,  
Yet shal I make, I hope, his sydes blede.  
O god,' quod he, 'that oughtest taken hede  
To fortheren trouthe, and wronges to punyce,  
Why niltow doon a vengeaunce of this vyce?

'O Pandare, that in dremes for to triste  
Me blamed hast, and wont art oft up-breyde,  
Now maystow see thy-selve, if that thee liste,  
How trewe is now thy nece, bright Criseyde!  
In sondry formes, god it woot,' he seyde,  
'The goddes shewen bothe Ioye and tene  
In slepe, and by my dreme it is now sene.

'And certaynly, with-oute more speche,  
From hennes-forth, as ferforth as I may,  
Myn owene deeth in armes wol I seche;  
I recche not how sone be the day!  
But trewely, Criseyde, swete may,  
Whom I have ay with al my might y-served,  
That ye thus doon, I have it nought deserved.'

This Pandarus, that alle these thinges herde,  
And wiste wel he seyde a sooth of this,  
He nought a word ayein to him answerde;  
For sory of his frendes sorwe he is,  
And shamed, for his nece hath doon a-mis;  
And stant, astoned of these causes tweye,  
As stille as stoon; a word ne coude he seye.

But at the laste thus he spak, and seyde,  
'My brother dere, I may thee do no-more.  
What shulde I seyn? I hate, y-wis, Criseyde!  
And, god wot, I wol hate hir evermore!  
And that thou me bisoughtest doon of yore,  
Havinge un-to myn honour ne my reste  
Right no reward, I dide al that thee leste.

'If I dide ought that mighte lyken thee,  
It is me leef; and of this treson now,  
God woot, that it a sorwe is un-to me!  
And dredelees, for hertes ese of yow,  
Right fayn wolde I amende it, wiste I how.  
And fro this world, almighty god I preye,  
Delivere hir sone; I can no-more seye.'

Gret was the sorwe and pleynt of Troilus;  
But forth hir cours fortune ay gan to holde.

Criseyde loveth the sone of Tydeus,  
And Troilus mot wepe in cares colde.  
Swich is this world; who-so it can biholde,  
In eche estat is litel hertes reste;  
God leve us for to take it for the beste!

In many cruel batayle, out of drede,  
Of Troilus, this ilke noble knight,  
As men may in these olde bokes rede,  
Was sene his knighthod and his grete might.  
And dredelees, his ire, day and night,  
Ful cruelly the Grekes ay aboughte;  
And alwey most this Diomedede he soughte.

And ofte tyme, I finde that they mette  
With bloody strokes and with wordes grete,  
Assayinge how hir speres weren whette;  
And god it woot, with many a cruel hete  
Gan Troilus upon his helm to bete.  
But natheles, fortune it nought ne wolde,  
Of others hond that either deyen sholde. --

And if I hadde y-taken for to wryte  
The armes of this ilke worthy man,  
Than wolde I of his batailles endyte.  
But for that I to wryte first bigan  
Of his love, I have seyde as that I can.  
His worthy dedes, who-so list hem here,  
Reed Dares, he can telle hem alle y-fere.

Bisechinge every lady bright of hewe,  
And every gentil womman, what she be,  
That al be that Criseyde was untrewede,  
That for that gilt she be not wrooth with me.  
Ye may hir gilt in othere bokes see;  
And gladlier I wole wryten, if yow leste,  
Penolopees trouthe and good Alceste.

Ne I sey not this al-only for these men,  
But most for wommen that bitraysed be  
Through false folk; god yeve hem sorwe, amen!  
That with hir grete wit and subtiltee

Bitrayse yow! And this comveveth me  
To speke, and in effect yow alle I preye,  
Beth war of men, and herkeneth what I seye! --

Go, litel book, go litel myn tragedie,  
Ther god thy maker yet, er that he dye,  
So sende might to make in som comedie!  
But litel book, no making thou nenvye,  
But subgit be to alle poesye;  
And kis the steppes, wher-as thou seest pace  
Virgile, Ovyde, Omer, Lucan, and Stace.

And for ther is so greet diversitee  
In English and in wryting of our tonge,  
So preye I god that noon miswryte thee,  
Ne thee mismetre for defaute of tonge.  
And red wher-so thou be, or elles songe,  
That thou be understonde I god beseche!  
But yet to purpos of my rather speche. --

The wraththe, as I began yow for to seye,  
Of Troilus, the Grekes boughten dere;  
For thousandes his hondes maden deye,  
As he that was with-uten any pere,  
Save Ector, in his tyme, as I can here.  
But weylaway, save only goddes wille,  
Dispitously him slough the fiers Achille.

And whan that he was slayn in this manere,  
His lighte goost ful blisfully is went  
Up to the holownesse of the seventh spere,  
In convers letinge every element;  
And ther he saugh, with ful avysement,  
The erratik sterres, herkeninge armonye  
With sownes fulle of hevenish melodye.

And down from thennes faste he gan avyse  
This litel spot of erthe, that with the see  
Embraced is, and fully gan despyse  
This wrecched world, and held al vanitee  
To respect of the pleyn felicitee  
That is in hevene above; and at the laste,

Ther he was slayn, his loking doun he caste;

And in him-self he lough right at the wo  
Of hem that wepten for his deeth so faste;  
And dampned al our werk that folweth so  
The blinde lust, the which that may not laste,  
And sholden al our herte on hevene caste.  
And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,  
Ther as Mercurie sorted him to dwelle. --

Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love,  
Swich fyn hath al his grete worthinesse;  
Swich fyn hath his estat real above,  
Swich fyn his lust, swich fyn hath his noblesse;  
Swich fyn hath false worldes brotelnesse.  
And thus bigan his lovinge of Criseyde,  
As I have told, and in this wyse he deyde.

O yonge fresshe folkes, he or she,  
In which that love up groweth with your age,  
Repeyreth hoom from worldly vanitee,  
And of your herte up-casteth the visage  
To thilke god that after his image  
Yow made, and thinketh al nis but a fayre  
This world, that passeth sone as floures fayre.

And loveth him, the which that right for love  
Upon a cros, our soules for to beye,  
First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene a-bove;  
For he nil falsen no wight, dar I seye,  
That wol his herte al hoolly on him leye.  
And sin he best to love is, and most meke,  
What nedeth feyned loves for to seke?

Lo here, of Payens corsed olde rytes,  
Lo here, what alle hir goddes may availle;  
Lo here, these wrecched worldes appetytes;  
Lo here, the fyn and guerdon for travaille  
Of Iove, Appollo, of Mars, of swich rascaille!  
Lo here, the forme of olde clerkes speche  
In poetrye, if ye hir bokes seche. --

O moral Gower, this book I directe  
To thee, and to the philosophical Strode,  
To vouchen sauf, ther nede is, to corecte,  
Of your benignitees and zeles gode.  
And to that sothfast Crist, that starf on rode,  
With al myn herte of mercy ever I preye;  
And to the lord right thus I speke and seye:

Thou oon, and two, and three, eterne on-lyve,  
That regnest ay in three and two and oon,  
Uncircumscript, and al mayst circumscryve,  
Us from visible and invisible foon  
Defende; and to thy mercy, everichoon,  
So make us, Iesus, for thy grace digne,  
For love of mayde and moder thyn benigne! Amen.

Explicit Liber Troili et Criseydis.

[End of "Troilus and Criseyde"]

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Truth

Fle fro the pres, and dwelle with sothefastnesse,  
Suffise thin owen thing, thei it be smal;  
For hord hath hate, and clymbyng tykelnesse,  
Prees hath envye, and wele blent overal.  
Savour no more thanne the byhove schal;  
Reule weel thiself, that other folk canst reede;  
And trouthe schal delyvere, it is no drede.

Tempest the nought al croked to redresse,  
In trust of hire that tourneth as a bal.  
Myche wele stant in litel besynesse;  
Bywar therfore to spurne ayeyns an al;  
Stryve not as doth the crokke with the wal.  
Daunte thiself, that dauntest otheres dede;  
And trouthe shal delyvere, it is no drede.

That the is sent, receyve in buxumnesse;  
The wrestlyng for the worlde axeth a fal.  
Here is non home, here nys but wyldernesse.  
Forth, pylgryme, forth! forth, beste, out of thi stall!  
Know thi contré! loke up! thonk God of al!  
Hold the heye weye, and lat thi gost the lede;  
And trouthe shal delyvere, it is no drede.

[L'envoy.]

Therefore, thou Vache, leve thine olde wrechednesse;  
Unto the world leve now to be thral.  
Crie hym mercy, that of hys hie godnesse  
Made the of nought, and in espec{.i}al  
Draw unto hym, and pray in general  
For the, and eke for other, hevenelyche mede;  
And trouthe schal delyvere, it is no drede.

Geoffrey Chaucer

# Virelay

Alone walking  
In thought plaining,  
And sore sighing;  
All desolate,  
Me rememb'ring  
Of my living;  
My death wishing  
Both early and late.

Infortunate  
Is so my fate,  
That, wot ye what?  
Out of measure  
My life I hate;  
Thus desperate,  
In such poor estate,  
Do I endure.

Of other cure  
Am I not sure;  
Thus to endure  
Is hard, certain;  
Such is my ure,  
I you ensure;  
What creature  
May have more pain?

My truth so plain  
Is taken in vain,  
And great disdain  
In remembrance;  
Yet I full fain  
Would me complain,  
Me to abstain  
From this penance.

But, in substance,  
None alleggeance  
Of my grievance



Can I not find;  
Right so my chance,  
With displeasance,  
Doth me advance;  
And thus an end.

Geoffrey Chaucer