

# ***The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions***

***John Lydgate's Prologue to the Siege of Thebes***  
(BL Arundel 119)

***The Ploughman's Tale***  
(Christ Church Oxford MS 152)

***The Cook's Tale***  
(Bodley MS 686)

***Spurious Links***  
(BL Lansdowne 851 and BL Royal 18.C.ii)

***The Canterbury Interlude and Merchant's Tale of Beryn***  
(Northumberland MS 455)

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## *General Introduction*

When Geoffrey Chaucer died in 1400 at his residence in the precincts of the Benedictine monastery at Westminster and his body was buried in that part of the Abbey's south transept later known as "Poet's Corner," the body of his poetry remained to take on a life of its own. Since not a single manuscript of his works can confidently be dated prior to 1400, it seems likely that Chaucer invested little energy in publishing during his lifetime. Courtly masterpieces like *The Book of the Duchess* and *Troilus and Criseyde* seem to have had limited circulation, whereas unfinished pieces like *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women* were probably never released. In all likelihood *The Canterbury Tales*, his last major poetic project, falls into this category of unfinished, unpublished works.

The task of sorting through the hoard of literary materials — which may have included many stages of rough drafts, working drafts, fair-copies, and fair-copies rendered "foul papers" by Chaucer's further retouching of details — and arranging the ten disconnected fragments of *The Canterbury Tales* in a presentable order fell to a shadowy group of individuals, most likely the poet's son Thomas Chaucer (c. 1370–1434) in concert with the remnants of his literary circle and various professional scribes, maybe even younger poets and admirers such as Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate (Strohm). Their efforts in the first two decades of the fifteenth century produced the landmark manuscripts, notably Ellesmere, upon which Chaucer's reputation was established for an ever-widening reading public. The success of their project is reflected in the fact that eighty-two manuscripts survive, whole or partial, from the century following the poet's death.

The enterprise of these medieval "editors" reveals their considerable dissatisfaction with the unfinished state of *The Canterbury Tales*. Scribes took great pains to search for missing materials, leaving room in their manuscripts for continuations to incomplete pieces like *The Cook's Tale* and *The Squire's Tale*. In the long run, they exercised their ingenuity in concealing these gaps when no additional poetry was forthcoming. Business is business: if a scribe were producing a copy for some aristocratic patron, he would want to deliver a volume that at least had the appearance of completeness.

Efforts at supplementing Chaucer's work can be divided into four types. (1) The pilgrimage narrative was expanded to allow the pilgrims to reach Canterbury, then begin their return trip toward Southwark, in Lydgate's Prologue to the *Siege of*

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*Thebes* and in the anonymous *Canterbury Interlude* and *Merchant's Tale* of Beryn. (2) The intermediate frame-narrative was patched together with "spurious links" for tales lacking authentic prologues. (3) Tales without endings were provided with make-do conclusions, most fully in the version of *The Cook's Tale* printed here. And (4) a pilgrim who never told a tale, the *Plowman*, was given a chance to make his contribution.

Besides commercial considerations, the production of Chaucerian manuscripts during the early fifteenth century, along with these supplements to *The Canterbury Tales*, may also have been underwritten by various political motives. The Lancastrian dynasty was not securely installed following the deposition of Richard II and his suspicious death in 1400, and Thomas Chaucer was one of the mainstays of this shaky regime as courtier, diplomat, and leader of the parliament (Ruud; McFarlane) — particularly under Henry V, the first English monarch since 1066 to conduct his correspondences in English instead of French. The promotion of Chaucer's poetry coincides with the promotion of the English language as part of a burgeoning nationalism during the headier days of the Hundred Years War, centering on the victory at Agincourt in 1415. A deliberate program to engage the support of parliament and the citizenry was mobilized by Henry V while still Prince of Wales, with the assistance of his uncles Henry and Thomas Beaufort (sons of John of Gaunt by Katherine Swynford) and his cousin Thomas Chaucer (son of Katherine's sister Philippa).

The Lancastrians also had a domestic agenda. The first two decades of the fifteenth century witnessed ever-increasing anxiety over the growth and strength of the Lollards, the reforming followers of John Wyclif (d. 1384). The enactment of *De Heretico Comburendo* in 1401 introduced the death penalty for adherents to this heresy, and the precise terms of violation were spelled out by Archbishop Arundel's *Constitutions* in 1407 and 1409. Though the targeting of a religious minority was as useful for justifying repressive tactics during the early fifteenth century as it would become in Hitler's Germany during the 1930s, the threat was not entirely invented by royal propagandists. In 1414 Sir John Oldcastle (the model for Shakespeare's Falstaff) actually staged an abortive London coup, the failure of which deprived Lollardy of all social and academic respectability, driving its believers into a virtual underground society (Hudson 120–73). Since the use of homely English instead of elitist Latin had become an essential feature of the entire Wycliffite project — with an English translation of the Bible, English sermon cycles, and appropriation of English religious works such as Langland's *Piers Plowman* — the Lancastrian establishment was placed in the position of responding by sponsoring the production of its own courtly texts, in English, committed to social stability and religious orthodoxy. To these ends, the poems of Geoffrey Chaucer were ideally suited — especially

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since his personal affiliation with John of Gaunt, the patriarch of the Lancastrians, can be traced back to *The Book of the Duchess* commemorating the death of Blanche of Lancaster, Henry IV's mother. And since the Lollards fiercely criticized the custom of pilgrimage, particularly the cult of St. Thomas à Becket, *The Canterbury Tales* provided a ready-made retort.

Thus the unfinished state of *The Canterbury Tales* was more than an aesthetic embarrassment and commercial drawback. It was also a grave liability in respect to the various roles the book was called upon to play in this arena of cultural contests. Efforts by medieval scribe-editors to close gaps and conceal signs of incompleteness by including apocryphal tales, spurious links, and large-scale continuations can be read as a commentary on larger dynastic imperatives in which Thomas Chaucer and his Lancastrian kinsmen were thoroughly implicated. Social anxiety is reflected, for example, in the reworking of the Host as the undisputed master of ceremonies throughout these later continuations. In keeping with a more authoritarian age, Harry Bailly holds center stage as the object of universal reverence and obedience, the policeman who regulates the smooth flow of traffic from one tale to the next, the voice of order and harmony to which all members of the pilgrim-community give their immediate assent.

These supplemental writings are also marked, rather surprisingly, by their ties to Benedictine monasticism. John Lydgate was a monk-priest belonging to the great Benedictine foundation of Bury St. Edmunds. The Christ Church MS 152 Ploughman's Tale celebrates the piety of a young monk rewarded by the Virgin Mary with elevation to the rank of abbot. And The Canterbury Interlude and Merchant's Tale of Beryn were quite possibly written by a Christ Church monk attached to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. Since the fortunes of the monasteries were inextricably linked to the fortunes of the kingdom — and the King — it would not be surprising to find Benedictine writers lending their support to the stability of the Lancastrian regime, especially against Lollards who had targeted the "private religion" of the monasteries for especially savage criticism, to the point of advocating disendowment (Hudson 347–51; Brown 158–60). We are perhaps witnessing in these texts the solidarity between the ancient institutions of monarchy and monasticism to safeguard the status quo.

In this complex network of cultural negotiations, Thomas Chaucer emerges as the agent primarily responsible for producing copies of his father's works for aristocratic families forming the cobbled support for the Lancastrian dynasty, as well as affording patronage to the next generation of writers, particularly Lydgate, for developing a well-defined Chaucerian poetic committed to social stability and religious orthodoxy. By helping to establish an official succession of named poets — Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, John Lydgate — as a counterpart to the orderly

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succession of monarchs to which his political career was so energetically directed — Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI — Thomas was a true entrepreneur in the business of what today we call “canon-formation,” a project as politically freighted then as now (Harris 1991). The primacy of Geoffrey Chaucer in this line-up was proclaimed by Hoccleve and Lydgate, then echoed by those like William Caxton and John Skelton who came later. Thus was Geoffrey installed as the patriarch of English letters by Thomas, a father very much created by his own son, to fill for the first time in English history the role, later imposed upon Shakespeare, of the officially named National Poet.

## *Editorial Approaches*

There are as many editorial methods operative in this volume as there are texts, because the circumstances of manuscript survival differ considerably from one work to another. My general goal has been to represent each text in a state *closer* to its author’s original than the state of the literary work preserved in any scribally transmitted copy. I have therefore not settled for a diplomatic transcription retaining all the substantive and accidental features of a single document. Nor have I sought to retrieve the archetype of surviving texts by means of recension, much less to restore by means of conjectural emendation what the author might have originally intended in every detail.

This reluctance to go beyond documentary testimony to reconstitute the author’s lost original is grounded in a skepticism about the ideal nature of the text even in the finished form in which the author might have presented it to his habitual audience. My work with Thomas Hoccleve’s autograph manuscripts (Bowers 1989) has demonstrated that the author himself in his own fair copies could leave lines unfinished, produce faulty meter, vary his spelling practices, mis-rhyme, and even mis-write. In short, even an accomplished poet and professional copyist like Hoccleve could commit all the faults usually assessed as “scribalisms,” thereby authorizing a text far less ideal than the one which an editor might seek to restore. I have therefore been conservative in my efforts, undertaking only the degree of alteration in my copy-texts that can be supported by documentary evidence subjected to the most reliable textual analysis to correct obvious substantive errors (whatever their source along the lines of transmission) and to repair accidentals of spelling and grammar that are demonstrably the copyist’s. Thus I have followed Vinaver’s principles (19–39), refined by Kane in his edition of Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (1960, 115–72), for detecting scribal errors, and I have regarded them as “textual blemishes,” a term used by Zeller (1975) for describing those obvious linguistic faults requiring common-sense corrections.

### *Select Bibliography*

In keeping with the guidelines of this series, I have expanded abbreviations and adopted modern paragraphing, punctuation, capitalization, and word-division. Modern conventions have also been applied to the uses of i/j and u/v; thorns have been transcribed as *th*, and yoghs as *y*, *g*, or *gh*. Where a noun's *-e* ending represents *-ee*, it is indicated with the acute accent *-é*. All substantive alterations in my copy-texts have been recorded in the Notes. All citations from *The Canterbury Tales* [CT] and other Chaucer works come from the third edition of *The Riverside Chaucer* (1987).

My overall goal has been the delicate balance of three concerns — to do justice to what these Chaucerian imitators originally wrote, to respect the limits of documentary evidence, and to serve the practical needs of student readers.

### *Select Bibliography*

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## *John Lydgate's Prologue to the Siege of Thebes*

### *Introduction*

John Lydgate was born c. 1370 when Chaucer was completing *The Book of the Duchess*; he was admitted to the monastery at Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, in 1385 when Chaucer was finishing *Troilus and Criseyde*; and he was ordained a priest in 1397 when Chaucer was in the final phase of *The Canterbury Tales*. Probably while studying at Oxford in the late 1390s, he made contact with Thomas Chaucer, who resided at Ewelme in the neighboring Oxfordshire countryside (Schirmer 59–65). The conjunction of these two rising stars, the one with political ambitions and the other with poetic aspirations, led to a great outpouring of Chaucerian versifications spanning the entire first half of the fifteenth century, until Lydgate's death c. 1450 (Pearsall 1970, 49–82).

The *Siege of Thebes* falls about midway in Lydgate's career. An allusion near the end of the poem to the Treaty of Troyes means it was concluded after May 1420; its general address to Henry V indicates it was completed before the monarch's premature death in August 1422. The Prologue's portrayal of Lydgate as a monk adhering to the strict regulations of his order seems to be a direct, almost point-by-point reply to the king's formal list of complaints against laxness among the Benedictines, leading to a special convocation of Black Monks at Westminster in May 1421 (Pantin 98–134). It is possible that Lydgate wrote the *Siege* first, then backed up to compose the Prologue.

The work's chief interest has been its relationship to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, whose decasyllabic or "heroic" couplets were adapted by Lydgate with mixed success. Based on some version of the French *Roman de Thèbes* (c. 1175) and entitled in several manuscripts "The Destruction of Thebes," the main body of the work is a sprawling 4540-line exemplum chronicling the disastrous careers of a series of deeply flawed kings: Edippus, his sons Ethyocles and Polymyte, and finally Creon (Spearing 66–88; Allen). The end of the three-part Theban tragedy is extended to those episodes treated by Chaucer at the beginning of *The Knight's Tale*. Indeed, Lydgate drew material directly from his master in ten specific passages, intent on making the two histories dovetail with one another, using narrative congruence and

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verbal echoes to knit up the end of his tale with the beginning of Chaucer's (Bowers 1985, 45–49).

The Prologue, printed here, offers even greater interest because it attempts to revive and extend the frame-narrative of *The Canterbury Tales* left vexingly incomplete by Chaucer. Here we are offered a springtime setting reckoned by the Zodiac, the arrival of the pilgrims at their sacred destination, the robust figure of the Host, the beginning of the journey back to Southwark, and a continuation of the tale-telling. With Chaucer dead for two decades, Lydgate replaces him by projecting himself into the story as the new pilgrim-narrator. Though he says he had come to Canterbury on the devout mission of giving thanks to St. Thomas for helping him recover from a recent illness, he is drawn into the company by the Host — here descending into vulgar caricature in his references to haggis-eating and farting — and persuaded to offer the first tale for the homeward journey. For better or worse, Lydgate chose not to include a close-frame episode bringing the pilgrims back to the Tabard Inn.

The work was popular enough to survive in twenty-nine manuscripts, mostly quality texts produced for aristocratic patrons. The organizers of at least five manuscripts interpreted Lydgate's intentions very literally, including the *Siege* in the same volume with Chaucer's original collection of *Tales*. In 1561 the editor John Stow printed the work in his edition of Chaucer, as did Thomas Speght in 1598 — and for the most part it lingered as a ghost-presence in the Chaucer canon until the nineteenth century.

#### *The Text*

The edition of *Siege of Thebes* prepared for the Early English Text Society (EETS) by Erdmann affords a critical apparatus with full corpus of variants indicating a textual stability that accords with what we know about Lydgate as a poet who wrote on commission and supervised presentation copies for his patrons. It is therefore not surprising that British Library [BL] Arundel 119, the manuscript selected by Erdmann as his copy-text, bears the coat-of-arms of William de la Pole (d. 1450), Duke of Suffolk and husband of Alice Chaucer, Thomas's daughter and Geoffrey's only known grandchild. Since this ownership bestows a social authority that complements the textual authority established by the editors, I too have used Arundel 119 (fols. 1a–4a) as copy-text for the opening section of the poem printed here, granting it the status of “best text” for its substantive readings as well as its accidentals of spelling and grammar (see Hanna).

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(BL Arundel 119, fols. 1a–4a)

	Whan brighte Phebus passed was the Ram	<i>i.e., sun; Aries</i>
	Myd of Aprille and into Bole cam,	<i>In middle; Taurus</i>
	And Satourn old with his frosty face	
	In Virgyne taken had his place,	<i>Virgo</i>
5	Malencolik and slowgh of mocion,	<i>slow; motion</i>
	And was also in thoposicioun	<i>the opposition</i>
	Of Lucina, the mone moyst and pale,	<i>Diana; moon</i>
	That many shour fro hevene made avale;	<i>many a shower; fall</i>
	Whan Aurora was in the morowe red,	<i>Dawn; morning</i>
10	And Jubiter in the Crabbes hed	<i>Jupiter; Cancer's</i>
	Hath take his paleys and his mansioun,	<i>palace</i>
	The lusty tyme and joly fressh sesoun	
	Whan that Flora, the noble myghty quene,	
	The soyl hath clad in newe tendre grene	
15	With her floures craftyly y-meynt,	<i>artfully combined</i>
	Braunch and bough with red and whit depeynt,	<i>decorated</i>
	Fleting the bawme on hilles and on valys —	<i>Suffusing; balm-scent</i>
	The tyme in soth whan Canterbury talys	<i>indeed; tales</i>
	Complet and told at many sondry stage	<i>Are performed</i>
20	Of estatys in the pilgrimage,	<i>ranks</i>
	Everich man lik to his degré,	<i>Every; social estate</i>
	Some of desport, some of moralité,	<i>amusement</i>
	Some of knyghthode, love and gentillesse,	<i>nobility</i>
	And some also of perfit holynesse,	<i>perfect</i>
25	And some also in soth of ribaudye	<i>coarseness</i>
	To make laughter in the companye —	
	Ech admitted, for non wold other greve —	<i>included; insult</i>
	Lich as the Cook, the Millere and the Reve	<i>Such</i>
	Aquytte hemsilf, shortly to conclude,	<i>Conducted themselves</i>
30	Boystously in her teermes rude,	<i>their expressions</i>
	Whan thei hadde wel dronken of the bolle;	<i>bowl</i>
	And ek also with his pyllid nolle,	<i>balding scalp</i>

*John Lydgate's Prologue to the Siege of Thebes*

	The Pardowner, beerdlees al his chyn,	<i>beardless</i>
	Glasseyed, and face of Cherubyn,	
35	Tellyng a tale to angre with the Frere,	<i>against</i>
	As opynly the storie can yow lere,	<i>teach</i>
	Word for word with every circumstaunce,	
	Echon y-write and put in remembraunce	
	By hym that was, yif I shal not feyne,	<i>if; falsify</i>
40	Floure of poetes thorghout al Breteyne,	
	Which sothly hadde most of excellence	
	In rethorike and in eloquence —	
	Rede his making, who list the trouthe fynde! —	<i>poetry; whoever desires</i>
	Which never shal appallen in my mynde,	<i>fade</i>
45	But alwey fressh ben in my memoyre,	<i>memory</i>
	To who be gove pris, honure, and gloyre	<i>given praise</i>
	Of wel seyinge, first in oure language,	
	Chief registrer of this pilgrimage,	<i>recorder</i>
	Al that was tolde, forgetting noght at al	
50	Feyned talis nor thing historial,	<i>Fictional</i>
	With many proverbe divers and unkouth,	<i>little-known</i>
	Be rehearsaile of his sugrid mouth,	<i>By narration</i>
	Of eche thyng keping in substaunce	
	The sentence hool withoute variance,	<i>meaning whole</i>
55	Voyding the chaf, sothly for to seyn,	<i>Eliminating; say</i>
	Enlumynyng the trewe piked greyn	<i>selected kernels</i>
	Be crafty writinge of his sawes swete,	<i>By artful; expressions</i>
	Fro the tyme that thei ded mete	<i>did</i>
	First the pylgrimes, sothly everichon,	
60	At the Tabbard assembled, on be on,	<i>one by one</i>
	And fro Suthwerk, shortly forto saye,	
	To Canterbury ridyng on her weie,	<i>their way</i>
	Tellynge a tale, as I reherce can,	<i>repeat</i>
	Lich as the Hoste assigned every man,	<i>Such</i>
65	None so hardy his biddyng disobeye.	<i>courageous</i>
	And this whil that the pilgrymes leye	<i>resided</i>
	At Canterbury, wel louged on and all,	<i>lodged one</i>
	I not in soth what I may it call —	<i>don't know</i>
	Hap or Fortune — in conclusioun	
70	That me byfil to entren into toun,	<i>happened</i>
	The holy seynt pleynty to visite	<i>(St. Thomas à Becket) sincerely</i>

*John Lydgate's Prologue to the Siege of Thebes*

	Aftere siknesse, my vowes to aquyte,	<i>vows to fulfil</i>
	In a cope of blak and not of grene,	<i>cloak</i>
	On a palfrey slender, long and lene,	<i>riding-horse</i>
75	With rusty brydel mad nat for the sale,	<i>not worth selling</i>
	My man toforn with a voide male	<i>servant in front; empty purse</i>
	Which of Fortune took myn inne anon	<i>Who by chance arranged my lodging</i>
	Where the pylgrymes were logged everichon.	<i>every one</i>
	The same tyme her governour, the Host,	<i>their; (Harry Bailly)</i>
80	Standing in hall, ful of wynde and bost,	<i>boastful speech</i>
	Lich to a man wonder sterne and fers,	<i>Like; fierce</i>
	Which spake to me and seide anon, "Daun Pers,	<i>Who; Don</i>
	Daun Domynyk, Daun Godfrey or Clement,	
	Ye be welcom newly into Kent,	
85	Thogh youre bridel have neither boos ne belle.	<i>ornament</i>
	Besechinge you that ye wil me telle	
	First youre name, and of what contré —	
	Withoute mor, shortly that ye be —	<i>concisely</i>
	That loke so pale, al devoyde of blood,	
90	Upon youre hede a wonder thred-bare hood,	<i>amazingly</i>
	Wel araied for to ride late."	<i>outfitted</i>
	I answerde my name was Lydgate,	
	Monk of Bery, nygh fyfty yere of age —	<i>(Bury St. Edmunds); nearly</i>
	"Come to this toune to do my pilgrimage,	
95	As I have hight. I ha therof no shame!"	<i>vowed; have</i>
	"Daun John," quod he, "wel broke ye youre name!	<i>broached</i>
	Thogh ye be soul, beth right glad and light,	<i>alone; happy</i>
	Preiying you soupe with us tonyght,	<i>dine</i>
	And ye shal han made at youre devis	<i>have; desire</i>
100	A gret puddyng or a rounde hagys,	<i>haggis</i>
	A Franch-mole, a tansey, or a froyse.	<i>French-cake; omelette; pancake</i>
	To ben a monk, sclender is youre koyse!	<i>slender; body</i>
	Ye han be seke, I dar myn hede assure,	<i>sick; guarantee</i>
	Or late fed in a feynt pasture.	<i>sparse</i>
105	Lift up youre hed, be glad, tak no sorowe!	
	And ye shal hom ride with us tomorowe,	
	I seye, whan ye rested han your fille.	
	Aftere soper, slepe wol do non ille.	
	Wrappe wel youre hede clothes rounde about.	
110	Strong notty ale wol mak you route.	<i>nutty; snore</i>



*John Lydgate's Prologue to the Siege of Thebes*

	Tak a pylow that ye lye not lowe;	
	Yif nede be, spar not to blowe!	<i>If; fart</i>
	To holde wynde, be myn opynyoun,	<i>by</i>
	Wil engendre collis passioun	<i>colic's</i>
115	And make men to greven on her roppys	<i>in their guts</i>
	Whan thei han filled her mawes and her croppys.	<i>bellies; gullets</i>
	But toward nyght, ete some fenel rede,	<i>red fennel</i>
	Annys, comyn, or coriandre sede,	<i>anise; cumin</i>
	And lik as I pouer have and myght,	<i>power</i>
120	I charge yow rise not at mydnyght,	
	Thogh it so be the moone shyne cler.	
	I wol mysilf be youre orloger	<i>clock</i>
	Tomorow erly, whan I se my tyme,	
	For we wol forth parcel afore pryme;	<i>as a group; 6 a.m.</i>
125	A company, parde, shal do you good!	<i>certainly</i>
	What? Look up, monk! For by kokkis blood,	<i>i.e., God's blood</i>
	Thow shalt be mery, whoso that sey nay.	
	For tomorowe, anoon as it is day,	<i>as soon as</i>
	And that it gynne in the est to dawe,	<i>east; dawn</i>
130	Thow shalt be bound to a newe lawe	
	Att goyng oute of Canterbury toune,	
	And leyn aside thy professioun.	<i>lay</i>
	Thou shalt not chese nor thisilf withdrawe,	<i>have no choice</i>
	Yif eny myrth be founden in thy mawe,	<i>If; stomach</i>
135	Lyk the custom of this compenye.	
	For non so proude that dar me denye,	
	Knight nor knave, chanon, prest ne nonne,	<i>canon; priest</i>
	To telle a tale pleynty as thei konne,	<i>fully; know how</i>
	Whan I assigne and se tyme opportune.	
140	And for that we our purpoos wil contune,	<i>continue</i>
	We wil homward the same custome use,	
	And thow shalt not platly the excuse.	<i>flatly yourself</i>
	Be now wel war; stody wel tonyght!	<i>alert; study</i>
	But for al this, be of herte light;	
145	Thy wit shal be the sharper and the bet!"	<i>better</i>
	And we anon were to soper set	
	And served wel unto oure plesaunce;	
	And sone after, be good governaunce,	<i>soon; by</i>
	Unto bed goth every maner wight.	<i>person</i>

*John Lydgate's Prologue to the Siege of Thebes*

150	And towarde morowe anon as it was light,	<i>morning</i>
	Every pilgryme both bet and wors,	
	As bad our Hoste, toke anon his hors	<i>ordered</i>
	Whan the sonne roos in the est ful clyere,	
	Fully in purpoos to come to dynere	<i>day's first meal</i>
155	Unto Osspryng and breke there oure faste.	
	And whan we weren from Canterbury paste	<i>passed</i>
	Noght the space of a bowe draught,	<i>draw (arrow's flight)</i>
	Our Hoost in hast hath my bridel raught	<i>seized</i>
	And to me seide, as it were in game:	
160	"Come forth, Daun John, be your Cristene name,	<i>by</i>
	And lat us make some manere myrth or play!	
	Shet youre portooos, a twenty devel way!	<i>Shut; breviary</i>
	Is no disport so to patere and seie.	<i>[It] is; say paternosters</i>
	It wol make youre lippes wonder dreye.	<i>dry</i>
165	Tel some tale, and make therof jape,	<i>jest</i>
	For be my rouncy, thow shalt not eskape.	<i>by; horse</i>
	But prech not of non holynesse;	
	Ginne some tale of myrth or of gladnesse,	<i>Begin</i>
	And nodde not with thyn hevvy bekke.	<i>beak (nose)</i>
170	Telle us somethyng that draweth to effekke	<i>effect</i>
	Only of joye. Make no lenger lette!"	<i>delay</i>
	And whan I saugh it wolde be no bette,	<i>better</i>
	I obeyde unto his biddynge,	
	So as the lawe me bonde in al thinge,	
175	And as I coude with a pale cheere,	<i>expression</i>
	My tale I gan anon, as ye shal here.	<i>hear</i>

EXPLICIT PROLOGUS

INCIPIT PARS PRIMA

	"Sirs," quod I, "sith of your curteseye	<i>since</i>
	I entred am into your companye	
	And admitted, a tale for to telle,	
180	By hym that hath pouer to compelle —	
	I mene our Host, governour and guyde —	
	Of yow echon ridyng her beside,	<i>each; here</i>
	Thogh that my wit barayn be and dull,	<i>sterile</i>
	I wol reherce a story wonderful	<i>relate</i>

*John Lydgate's Prologue to the Siege of Thebes*

185	Towchinge the siege and destruccioun Of worthy Thebes, the myghty royal toun, Bylt and begonne of olde antiquité Upon the tyme of worthy Josué Be dyligence of Kyng Amphioun,	<i>Pertaining to</i>  <i>founded</i> <i>Joshua (see note)</i> <i>By</i>
190	Chief cause first of his fundacioun, For which his fame which never shal away, In honure floureth yit unto this day, And in story remembred is and preised . . .	<i>its</i>

## *Notes*

- 1–17 The opening is an elaborate imitation of Chaucer's *CT* I, 1–11 with its description of springtime based on astrology and planetary positions in the Zodiac; yet the first sixty-five lines can scarcely be punctuated, since this wayward sentence never quite manages to yield a main clause. The Middle English encyclopedia *On the Properties of Things* provides traditional lore concerning the Sun (pp. 484–89), Saturn (pp. 479–80), the Moon (pp. 489–97), and Jupiter (p. 480) as well as the workings of the *zodiacus* (pp. 460–73). An exact date of April 27, 1421, has been calculated by Johnstone Parr, "Astronomical Dating for Some of Lydgate's Poems," *PMLA* 67 (1952), 253–56. "Olde colde Saturnus" is mentioned in Chaucer's *Boece* (IV, m 1), though more fully described in *The Knight's Tale* (*CT* I, 2443–69) as a destructive force, here befitting Lydgate's Theban tragedy that will follow.
- 18–37 Lydgate recalls the mixed company of Chaucer's original pilgrims and the variety of their tales, some courtly, some religious, and some bawdy, told at various stages in their journey from Southwark to Canterbury.
- 28 The Miller, the Reeve, and the Cook offered a trio of low-brow fabliaux following the Knight's account of Thebes's defeat at the hands of Duke Theseus, an account which Lydgate will supplement in his own tale for the homeward journey.
- 32–36 Lydgate conflates the Pardoner with his traveling companion, the Summoner. The Pardoner was beardless and glassy-eyed from drinking (*CT* I, 684–90) — see Bowers (1990) — but it was the Summoner who had a "piled berd" and "a fyr-reed cherubynnes face" (*CT* I, 624–27) symptomatic of venereal leprosy. It was also the Summoner who told a tale to anger the Friar (*CT* III, 1665–2294).
- 40–57 Chaucer, who died in 1400, is absent from the pilgrim company in this continuation. Granting him instead a memorial presence, Lydgate praises Chaucer as the first great national poet of Britain, one chiefly admired in the early fifteenth century for his elegant style and sententious materials. See Lois Ebin,

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"Lydgate's Views on Poetry," *Annuaire Mediaevale* 18 (1977), 76-105. That Chaucer could avoid "the chaf" and offer "the trewe piked greyn" recalls the Nun's Priest's advice at the end of his tale: "Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille" (*CT* VII, 3443).

- 58-65 The pilgrims originally convened at the Tabard Inn in Southwark (*CT* I, 19-27) where the Host, Harry Bailly, initiated a tale-telling competition to enliven the journey to Canterbury, offering himself as the guide and judge (*CT* I, 788-809).
- 67 Chaucer's pilgrims never actually arrived in Canterbury; the last recognizable place-name was "Bobbe-up-and-down" or Harbledown, two miles outside of town (*CT* IX, 2).
- 71-72 Lydgate indicates he undertook this pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket in fulfillment of a vow to do so if he recovered from an illness, perhaps by medicating himself with Canterbury Water, also known as "Becket Water," a bizarre medicinal concoction of well-water and minute traces of St. Thomas's blood and brains sponged from the cathedral floor after his murder. See *CT* I, 17-18: "The hooly blisful martir for to seke / That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke."
- 73-76 In contrast to Chaucer's Monk, who had rich clothes and a fine horse sporting a bridle outfitted with jingling bells (*CT* VII, 2794-95), Lydgate's exaggeration of his scant means (also lines 85-91 and 102-04) may form a plea for more generous patronage, but is more likely a response to contemporary criticism of monastic luxury, particularly Henry V's efforts at reforming the Benedictines in 1421; see Pantin (1933), pp. 111-15, and E. F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), pp. 196-97. Lydgate is habited in the black of the Benedictine order.
- 79 This characterization of the Host as "her governour" is picked up from the General Prologue where Harry Bailly offered "that he wolde been oure governour" (*CT* I, 813).
- 82-84 The Host had originally addressed Chaucer's Monk: "Wher shal I calle yow my lord daun John / Or daun Thomas, or elles daun Albou?" (*CT* VII, 1929-30). "Daun" or Don was a title appropriate to a monk who had earned the university degree of Master of Arts (*Dominus*). It is generally believed Lydgate stud-

### Notes

ied at Oxford during the 1390s and again about 1406, most likely at Gloucester College, the Benedictine institution with close ties to his home monastery. Since Bury St. Edmunds was located in Suffolk, the Host makes the point of welcoming the monk into Kent.

- 90–91    Wearing a thread-bare hood as does the Clerk of Oxford (*CT* I, 290), Lydgate can travel after dark without fear of being robbed by highwaymen, as Chaucer himself was robbed along the Canterbury road in 1390. Harry Bailly had warned stragglers to beware of thieves (*CT* IX, 6–8).
- 92–95    Lydgate gives his actual name and identifies himself as a monk of Bury. If he is also truthful about being nearly fifty, and if the poem was composed between 1420 and 1422, then we have better internal evidence for dating his birth than we have for Chaucer himself. Lydgate is quick to add he is not ashamed to be on pilgrimage, a ritual criticized only by heretic Lollards; see Hudson, pp. 301–09.
- 98–104    Gluttonous monks were much criticized for indulgence in rich cuisine; for example, Chaucer's Monk, *CT* I, 200–06. Here the Host urges these delicacies upon Lydgate, who seems to have fed in a "feynt pasture" (line 104), whereas originally the Host chided the Monk for grazing in a "gentil pasture" (*CT* VII, 1933).
- 109–18    The Host's crude remarks on diet and sleep recall his brusque personality throughout Chaucer's *Tales* and, also, Pertelote's comments on the causes of Chauntecleer's dream (*CT* VII, 2923–69). *Hede clothes* that wrap around (line 109) suggest scarves worn turban-like around the head, much the fashion for slumber-attire in Lydgate's day; see plate A (BL Royal MS 15.D.I) in Dorothy Hartley, *Medieval Costume and Life* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1931), p. 130.
- 114–18    On "colic's passion" as intestinal blockage, see *On the Properties of Things*, p. 252: "And in this gut [the colon] is bred a wel gret sikeness that hatte *colica passio*, and cometh of grete streitnes of that gut othir of gadrenge of grete and of coolde humours, and so of stoppage of that gut withinne." The encyclopedia also describes the medicinal values of spices including fennel (pp. 959–60), anise (p. 909), and coriander (p. 933).
- 120–25    The Host's orders that Lydgate not rise at midnight for Matins and that he observe Prime by departing with the other pilgrims indicate the tale-telling

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project is taking precedence over the monk's Divine Office. Thus the Host insists that Lydgate lay aside his profession (line 132). The *orloger* was a mechanical clock which chimed the hours so that monks would know when to rise to sing their offices at night.

- 128–45 The Host insists they continue the tale-telling game when they proceed the next morning out of Canterbury, as they had agreed in Southwark (*CT* I, 794–95). Now subject to a new rule and a “newe lawe” (line 130), Lydgate is informed that he must prepare to offer a tale.
- 150–55 Setting out at dawn, the pilgrims intend to break their fast with an early dinner around noon at Ospringe, which was approximately ten miles along the road toward London, less than midway between Boughton-under-Blean (*CT* VIII, 556) and Sittingbourne (*CT* III, 847), a standard stopping-place for meals.
- 165–68 Harry Bailly had told the Clerk “precheth nat, as freres doon in Lente” (*CT* IV, 12) and had asked Chaucer the pilgrim for “a tale of myrthe” (*CT* VII, 706). Here the Host will be granted only half of his request; while Lydgate does not tell a religious tale, the destruction of Thebes hardly qualifies as a “tale of myrthe.”
- 169 Lydgate apparently had a big nose.
- 183 The poet's admission of unworthiness forms a gesture of humility typical of other pilgrim-narrators; see the Franklin, *CT* V, 716–28.
- 188–90 The Theban events are given parallel dating with the Old Testament career of Joshua, in a manner avoided by Chaucer in his Greek narratives, *The Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde*; David Anderson, “Theban History in Chaucer's *Troilus*,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 4 (1982), 109–33. King Amphion was said to have raised the walls of the city through the powerful music of his lyre; see *CT* I, 1545–49 and IV, 1716.

## *The Ploughman's Tale*

### *Introduction*

Of the thirty pilgrims introduced in the General Prologue, the Plowman, the Knight's Yeoman, and the Five Guildsmen drop from sight and never reappear to tell their tales. This exclusion does not necessarily mean that Chaucer lacked world enough and time, since late in the compositional process, toward the end of the trip to Canterbury, he chose to include the tale of the Canon's Yeoman, a new arrival not earlier present at the Tabard Inn. Of the seven original pilgrims left out, it is noteworthy that only the Plowman was later provided with *two* apocryphal tales (Cooper 415–18).

The plowman-figure had become the focus of considerable controversy beginning in the fourteenth century, accused by some preachers of opportunism during the labor shortage in the wake of the Black Death, praised by Wycliffite writers as the image of the ideal Christian. The title-character of Langland's *Piers Plowman* had become the most famous of these literary representations by the early 1380s, and the resemblance between Piers and Chaucer's Plowman has long been recognized (Coghill 89–94). During the English Rising of 1381, the rebel priest John Ball invoked the name of "Peres Ploughman" in his seditious letters, and since Ball was later accused of being an agent of John Wyclif, the literary plowman was to some extent tarred with the same brush of revolution and heresy (Dobson 372–83). One chronicle actually listed "Per Plowman" alongside John Ball and Jack Straw as leaders of the revolt (Hudson 399–400). Since the Host jokingly accuses the Plowman's brother, the Parson, of being a "Lollere" in the Man of Law's Endlink (*CT* II, 1163–90) — a section prudently canceled by Chaucer when in the 1390s jokes about Lollards were no longer funny, or even safe — the same sense of prudence in all likelihood persuaded the poet to render his Plowman silent.

By the mid-fifteenth century, the agents responsible for organizing the Christ Church manuscript of *The Canterbury Tales* apparently felt that even a mute Plowman was not altogether desirable. This collection, which also includes the *Siege of Thebes*, gave the Plowman a tale and positioned it fourth from the end, between the Squire and the Second Nun. Provided with a makeshift prologue fitting the work into the pilgrimage narrative, this rhyme-royal Miracle of the Virgin originally



### *The Ploughman's Tale*

written by Thomas Hoccleve (d. c. 1426) was placed in the mouth of the Plowman as a story of unimpeachable orthodoxy. In fact, the exemplum of a young monk rewarded by the Virgin for praying his Latin *Pater Noster* was implicitly anti-Lollard, since Wycliffites had insisted that it was better to say the prayer "Our Father" in English without Mary's mediation (Hudson 310–13).

The subversive potential of the Plowman as a spokesman for radical change was fully realized during the Protestant Reformation of the next century. An anti-fraternal work, most of which was composed about 1400 and kept alive in the Lollard literary underground throughout the fifteenth century, surfaced to be printed with official sanction about 1536. The piece was then inserted as *The Plowman's Tale* immediately after *The Parson's Tale*, the two brothers side by side as they had been in the General Prologue, in William Thynne's 1542 edition of *The Canterbury Tales* dedicated to Henry VIII (Wawn; Heffernan). Since this Wycliffite Plowman's Tale, a vituperative debate between a Pelican and a Griffin, has already been published in the Middle English Text Series (James Dean, ed., *Six Ecclesiastical Satires* [Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1991], pp. 51–114), I have chosen not to include a separate edition in this volume. No fifteenth-century manuscript of the poem survives.

#### *The Text*

The complete text of *The Ploughman's Tale* exists only in Christ Church Oxford MS 152 (fols. 228b–231a), dated c. 1460–70, on pages originally left blank at the end of the quire after the unfinished *Squire's Tale*. Apparently the primary scribe had hoped that the missing Part III of Chaucer's Oriental romance would turn up, but when time passed and no conclusion was found, this Marian tale assigned to the Plowman was inserted by a second scribe, who also corrected the Canterbury text throughout. Following an augmented prologue, the body of the tale itself is a version of Hoccleve's eighteen-stanza poem entitled "Item de Beata Virgine" in the autograph manuscript Huntington Library HM 744. Another scribal version is preserved in Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R.3.21, bringing to three the total number of surviving copies (Boyd 119–22).

Because the variant readings shared by Christ Church and Trinity suggest that these two manuscripts represent a slightly different version of the text probably stemming from the poet himself — as is demonstrably the case with Hoccleve's two autograph fair-copies of *Lerne to Dye* in HM 744 and Durham Cosin V.III.9 (Bowers 1989) — I have not used the Huntington text as a basis for emending Christ Church, except in eight cases where it serves as a control for correcting mechanical errors; significant variants are nonetheless recorded in the Notes. Out of respect for

### *Introduction*

the originality of the first two stanzas of the prologue, which provides a context of “recomposition” for the source material, I have also retained the scribe’s accidentals rather than regularizing to Hoccleve’s well-documented orthographic practice (see Greetham). Because the scribe corrected his text by inserting words carelessly omitted from this new two-stanza section of the prologue, he was apparently copying from some exemplar in which the narrative had already been adapted as a supplementary Canterbury tale.

## *The Ploughman's Tale*

(Christ Church Oxford MS 152, fols. 228b–231a)

### The Prologe of the Ploughman

	As the pylgrymys forth ded ryde,	<i>did</i>
	Owr Host began to loke aboute	
	And seyde, "Felawys, we most provyde	<i>must determine</i>
	Hoo that best of alle thys route	<i>Who; company</i>
5	Kan telle hys tale, as lot comyth aboute.	
	Ploughman Tylyer, drawe the nere	<i>Tiller; yourself</i>
	And telle thy tale, and we wyl here."	
	"Syr," he seyde, "I shalle telle, as I can,	
	A tale of Crystys modyr dere,	<i>Christ's mother</i>
10	Mary that bare bothe God and man,	<i>bore</i>
	How to a monk she ded apere,	
	That every day seyde here sautere,	<i>Who; her psalter</i>
	And hevene blysse had to his mede.	<i>reward</i>
	Hoo servyth owr Lady, the better shalle spede.	<i>Who; prosper</i>
15	"Whoso desyryth to gete and conquere	
	The blysse of hevene, holsom ys a guyde	<i>healthy</i>
	Hym to condue and hym to brynge there;	<i>conduct</i>
	And so good knowe Y noon for mannys syde,	<i>I; man's part</i>
	As the rote of humblesse and fo to pryde —	<i>root; enemy</i>
20	That Lady of whos tetys virginalle	<i>breasts</i>
	Sook owr redemptour, the maker of alle.	<i>Suckled</i>
	"Betwyxt God and man ys she meadiatrice	<i>intermediary</i>
	For owr offences, mercy to purchase;	
	She owr sheld ys agayns the malyce	
25	Of the Fende, that owr soulys wold embrace	<i>Devil</i>
	And cary hem unto that horryble place	
	Whereas peyne ay-duryng ys and turment,	<i>ever-lasting</i>

## *The Ploughman's Tale*

	More than may be spoken of or ment.	<i>conceived</i>
30	<p>“Now syn that Lady noble and glorious          To alle mankynde hath so grete cheerté          That in thys slypyr lyf and peryllous          Staff of comfort and help to man ys she,          Convenyent ys that to that Lady fre          We do servyce, honour, and plesaunce —          And to that ende, here ys a remembraunce.”</p>	<p><i>since</i>  <i>charity</i>  <i>slippery</i>  <i>Appropriate; generous</i>  <i>pleasure</i>  <i>reminder</i></p>
	HERE BEGYNNYTH THE PLOUGHMANNYS TALE OF OWR LADY	
40	<p>There was whilom, as that seyth the scripture,          In Fraunce a ryche man and a worthy          That, God and Holy Church to honure          And plese, enforced hym ful bysyly;          And unto Crystys modyr specyally,          That noble Lady, that blessyd virgyne,          For to worchype he dyde hys myght and pyne.</p>	<p><i>once; written source</i>    <i>exerted himself</i>    <i>pain</i></p>
45	<p>Hyt shop so that thys man had a yonge sone          Unto whyche he yaf informacioun          Every day to have in custome and wone          For to sey, at hys excitacioun,          The angelyk salutacioun          Fifty sythys in worchyp and honoure          Of Cristys modyr, of vertu myrroure.</p>	<p><i>It happened</i>  <i>gave</i>  <i>habit</i>  <i>spiritual exercise</i>  <i>i.e., Ave Maria (see note)</i>  <i>times</i></p>
50	<p>By hys faderys wyl, a monk afterward          In the abbey of Seint Gyle made was hee,          Whereas he in penaunce sharp and hard          Observyd wel hys ordres douté,          Lyvyng in vertuous religiousté;</p>	<p><i>father's</i>  <i>Giles (St. Aegidius)</i>    <i>duty</i></p>
55	<p>And on a tyme, hym to play and solace,          Hys fadyr made hym come home to hys place.</p>	<p><i>relax</i></p>
60	<p>Now was there at oure Ladyes reverence          A chapel in hyt made and edefyed,          In the whyche the monk, when convenyence          Of tyme he had awayted and espyed,</p>	<p><i>it; established</i></p>

*The Ploughman's Tale*

	Hys fadrys lore to fulfyllen hym hied, And fifty sythys wyth devoute corage Seyd Ave Mary, as was hys usage.	<i>instruction; hurried times; spirit</i>
65	And when he had y-endyd hys prayere, Owr Lady clothyd in a garnement Sleveles byfor hym he sey appere, Whereof the monk toke goode avysement, Mervaylyng hym what that thys myght have ment, And seyde, "Good Lady, by yowr leve, 70 What garnement hys thys and hath no sleve?"	<i>ended garment Without sleeves; saw notice is; that has</i>
	She answerd and seyde, "Thys clothyng Thow hast me gevyn, for thow every day Fifty sithe Ave Mary seying Honouryd hast me. Hensforth, Y the pray, 75 Use to treble that by any way; To every tenthe Ave joyne also A Pater Noster, do ryght evene so.	<i>given I thee Try to triple</i>
80	"The first fifty wil Y that seyde be In the memory of the joy and honoure That I had when the aungel gret me, Which was ryght a wondrous comfortoure To me when he seyde the redemptoure Of alle mankynd Y conceyve sholde: Grete was my joy when he so me tolde.	<i>(Gabriel) greeted</i>
85	"Thow shalt eke seyn the secound fyfti In honour and in mynd of the gladnesse That Y had when Y bare of my body God and man withowtyn woo or duresse. The thirde fyfti in thyne hert enpresse, 90 And sey it eek with good devocioun In the memory of myne assumpcioun,	<i>also say without woe imprint</i>
	"When Y was crounyd Quene of Heven In whyche my sone regnyth and shal aye." Al thys was doon that I speke of and neven,	<i>forever name</i>

## *The Ploughman's Tale*

- 95      As the book seyth, upon an halydaye; *holiday*  
 And then seyde owr Lady, that glorious maye, *maid*  
 "The nexte halyday wyl I resorte  
 To thys place, the to glade and conforte." *thee to gladden*
- 100      And therwithalle fro thens departyd she,  
 The monk in hys devociouns dwellyng.  
 And every day suyng, her psalter he *following*  
 Seyde aftyr here doctryne and enformyng. *instruction*  
 And the next halyday aftyr folwyng,  
 Owr Lady, fresshly arayd and welle,  
 105      To the monk cam, beyng in the chapelle,
- And to hym seyde shee, "Beholde nowe  
 Howe good clothyng and how good apparaylle  
 That, thys wyke, to me yevyn hast thowe:  
 Sleves to my clothyng now not faylle — *week; given*
- 110      The thank I, and ful welle, for thy travaylle;  
 Shalt thou be qwyte here in thys lyf present, *Thee; efforts*  
 And in that other whan thou hens art went. *rewarded*  
*i.e., when you die*
- "Walk now and goo hom to the abbey.  
 When thou comyst, abbot chosyn shalt thou be,  
 115      And to the covent teche thou for to sey *chapter; say*  
 My psalter, as byfore taught have I the. *thee*  
 The peple also thou shalt in generalté *universally*  
 The same lessoun unto myne honoure preche,  
 And of here hurtys wil I ben here leche. *their; physician*
- 120      "Seven yere lyfe shalt thou for to doo  
 Thys charge, and when the yerys be agoon, *years; gone*  
 Thou passe shalt hens, and me come untoo,  
 And hereof dowte have thou ryght noon.  
 By my psalter shal there be many oon
- 125      Saved and had up to eternall blysse  
 That, yef that nere, sholdyn therof mysse." *if that weren't*
- When she had seyde what her lyked to sey,  
 She up to heven ascendyd and stye, *it pleased her*  
*climbed*

*The Ploughman's Tale*

	And sone after, abbot of that abbey	<i>soon</i>
130	He maad was, as that hym told owr Ladye. The covent and the peple devoutlye Thys monk enformyd and taughte her psalter, For to be seyde after that seven yere.	
	Thoo yerys past, hys soule was betaught	<i>Those; entrusted</i>
135	To God — he Heven had unto hys mede. Who servyth owr Lady, lesyth ryght naughte; She sofficiently qwytyth every dede, And now hereafter the bettyr to spede, And in her grace cherly for to stonde,	<i>reward</i> <i>loses</i> <i>repays</i>
140	Her psalter for to sey let us fonde. Amen.	<i>joyously</i> <i>strive</i>

HERE ENDYTH THE PLOUGHMANNYS TALE

## Notes

**Note on spelling.** The scribe of this manuscript was prone to use -y- where Chaucer was likely to use -e- in the plural and possessive -es, the third-person -eth, and the past tense -ed. Examples in the first two stanzas include *pylgrymys* for “pilgrims,” *felawys* for “fellows,” *comyth* for “come,” and *Crystys modyr* for “Christ’s mother.”

- 5        The Host’s reference to the “lot” recalls the method for determining the order of tale-tellers initiated in the General Prologue (CT I, 835–45).
- 6        Chaucer gave the Plowman no name in the General Prologue (CT I, 529–41). Perhaps he is given the name *Tylyer* to avoid confusion with the more famous literary tiller, Piers Plowman.
- 16       *holsom*. HM (Huntington HM 744): *needful*.
- 24       *owr sheld*. HM: *our seur sheeld*.
- 27       *peyne ay-duryng*. HM: *eternel peyne*.
- 47       Gabriel’s angelic salutation is recorded in Luke 1:28: Et ingressus angelus ad eam dixit: “Ave gratia plena: Dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus!” [And the angel being come in, said unto her: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women!” — Douay translation.]
- 49       *Of Cristys modyr, of vertu myrroure*. HM: *Of goddes modir / of vertu the flour*.
- 63       Known as the Rosary in modern times, Our Lady’s Psalter was the prayerful recitation of Ave Marias, usually in multiples of 150, the number of psalms in the Psalter. Originating in the monasteries as a devotion for illiterate brothers who could not otherwise participate in the Divine Office, the practice spread beyond the monastic communities and became a popular form of lay piety. See Beverly Boyd, “Hoccleve’s Miracle of the Virgin,” *Texas Studies in English* 35 (1956), 116–22. Hoccleve’s note in HM 744 (fol. 36a) that “Ce feust faite a linstance de T. Marleburgh” — the London stationer Thomas Marleburgh being master of the guild of Limners and Textwriters in 1423 — indicates his poem was intended for a lay readership.



*The Ploughman's Tale*

- 76      *Ave*, as in HM; omitted in Ch.
- 85      *Thow*, as in HM; Ch: *Though*.
- 90      *with*, as in HM; Ch: *which*.
- 94      *doon*, as in HM; Ch *doo*. Note that Ch: *and neven* makes a better rhyme than HM: *and meene*, suggesting this text derives from a different version by Hoccleve himself.
- 101     *suyng, her psalter*. HM: *Aue Maria*.
- 103     *folwyng*. HM: *suynge*; this substitution to avoid repetition of the word *suyng* in line 101 again suggests authorial revision in Ch.
- 107     *good apparaylle*. HM: *fressh apparaille*.
- 114     *chosyn shalt thow be*. HM: *shalt thow chosen be*.
- 123     *And hereof*. HM: *And of this*. HM: *thow*, omitted in Ch.
- 128     HM: *up*, omitted in Ch.
- 130     HM: *that*, omitted in Ch.
- 135     *unto*, as in HM; Ch: *to*.

## *The Cook's Tale*

### *Introduction*

Breaking off abruptly after only fifty-seven lines, *The Cook's Tale* offers the first instance of a "loose end" in Chaucer's grand scheme. In the Hengwrt manuscript, probably the earliest attempt at organizing the fragments of the *Tales*, the scribe left room to fill in the missing conclusion, apparently with the hope that stray pages might turn up among the author's papers. When it was clear that no additional poetry would be delivered, the copyist made a note in the blank: "Of this cokes tale maked Chaucer na moore." Medieval scribes — and modern critics (Kolve 257–96) — have been struggling with this unhappy circumstance ever since.

Twenty-five manuscripts, including the landmark collections Harley 7334 and Corpus Christi 198, remedied the problem by continuing with the 902-line romance *Gamelyn* (dating probably from the middle of the fourteenth century) sometimes with a brief bridge such as the couplet in Royal 18.C.ii: "But here-of I will passe as now / And of yong Gamelyne I wil telle yow." Since all texts of *Gamelyn* derive from a single written source (Daniel 34–35) and all of them except one eccentric, mutilated collection place the apocryphal tale in the same position after the Cook's fragment, and since the work survives nowhere else independent of a Canterbury collection, it is possible that Chaucer's literary executors found the work inserted at this point in the poet's final drafts of *The Canterbury Tales*, put there by him as a potential source for a tale, never written, to replace the abandoned account of Perkyn Revelour. The early scribe who executed both the Harley and Corpus manuscripts elected to include the source-text as a substitute tale, with later derivative manuscripts following his lead.

Manuscripts without *Gamelyn* were left to manage as best they could. Some scribes pretended *The Cook's Tale* was complete as it stood, then went on to the next pilgrim, usually the Man of Law, in a few instances the Wife of Bath. The enterprising scribe of Rawlinson Poetry 141 (fol. 29a) patched together a four-line conclusion:

And thus with horedom and bryberye  
Togeder thei used till thei honged hye.

### *The Cook's Tale*

For whoso evel byeth shal make a sory sale;  
And thus I make an ende of my tale.

In ten manuscripts, the Cook's fragment has simply disappeared altogether.

Only in Bodley 686 has the tale been subjected to a thorough revision to add forty-five new lines padding out Chaucer's narrative, then bringing the story to an apt, if predictable, conclusion almost identical in nature to the four-line outcome printed above. The Bodley manuscript is a deliberately constructed poetic anthology, omitting the prose tales of Melibee and The Parson's Tale, but continuing with eleven moral and religious poems by John Lydgate. The supplemental sections of The Cook's Tale accord with these pious inclinations, although the verses themselves seem to owe less to Chaucer (or even Lydgate) and more to Langland, with longer four-stress lines, heavy alliteration, and the introduction of allegorical personifications such as Light-hand, Lecherous-mouth, and Drink-more. The reviser's delicacy is revealed in other smaller changes, notably in the character of the friend's wife: in this version she *pleyed* rather than *swyved* for her sustenance.

#### *The Text*

This padded-out version of The Cook's Tale survives only in Bodley MS 686 (fols. 54b–55b). Since this manuscript, dated c. 1430–40, might preserve the text in the anonymous reviser's autograph, I have emended only three substantive errors and have otherwise preserved the accidentals of the scribe's personal dialect rather than normalizing to standard Chaucerian. The entire text of the Bodley Cook's Tale is printed with the supplemental lines and phrases in boldface.

## *The Cook's Tale*

(Bodley 686, fols. 54b–55b)

### HERE BEGYNNETH THE COOKES TALE

	A prentys whilom dwelled in oure sitee, And of a crafte of vitellers was he. Gaylerd he was as gyldfynch in the shawe, Broun as a bery, a propre short folawe	<i>apprentice once; city food-sellers Merry; thicket well-proportioned; fellow</i>
5	With lokkys blake y-kemmed ful fetisly. Dauncen he kowde so wel and jolyly That he was cleped Perkyn Reveloure. He was as ful of love and paramoure As is the hyve ful of hony swete.	<i>locks; combed; neatly knew how Peter (dim.) womanizing</i>
10	Wel was the wench that hym myght mete, And at every bridale wolde he synge and hoppe. He loved bet the taverne than he dede the shoppe, For when ther was eny rydyng in Chepe,	<i>wedding party better; did horse display; Cheapside</i>
15	Out of the shoppe theder wolde he lepe, Til that he hedde al the sight y-seyn, And daunced wel — he nold not come agayn — And gadered hym a mayny of his sort To hoppe and synge and make such disport.	<i>thither wouldn't company sport</i>
20	<b>With Rech-never and Recheles this lessoun he lerys <sup>1</sup></b> <b>With Waste and with Wranglere, his owne pley-ferys,</b> <b>With Lyght-honde and with Likorouse-mowth, with Unschamfast;</b> <b>With Drynke-more and with Drawe-abak, her thurst is y-past,</b> <b>With Malaperte and with Mysseavysed — such meyny they hight, <sup>2</sup></b> <b>That wolde do but a lytull tulle her dyner be dyght.</b>	<i>playmates Shameless their thirst their; prepared</i>
25	<b>Thus they stevyn whan they myght mete</b> <b>To pley at the dyse in suche a prevey strete,</b> <b>For in Londoun ther was none apprentyse</b>	<i>arranged dice; secret</i>

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<sup>1</sup> *With Care-never and Reckless this lesson he learns*

<sup>2</sup> *With Impudent and with Ill-advised — such a gang were they named*

## *The Cook's Tale*

	That feirer couth caste a scharpe peir of dyse	<i>could; tricky</i>
	Than couthe Perkyn, and therto he was free,	<i>generous</i>
30	Large of his dispenche in place of prevytee	<i>spending; private places</i>
	With Magot and with Mylsent, whan that he mette.	
	The bagge with the powder anon was unknette.	<i>opened up</i>
	His purs was inperfit, he couthe not welle kepe:	<i>could</i>
	"Yet let us be mery, while oure sire is aslepe!"	<i>i.e., the master</i>
35	With pyes and with pykrels, with wynes moste swete,	<i>young pikes</i>
	With loche and with lamprey the childe myght not ete.	<i>loach; eel-like fish</i>
	The tapster, the taverner, the koke was nedy,	<i>cook</i>
	Wolde clepe on Perkyn, for his purs was so redy —	<i>call; since</i>
	And that fownde his Maister welle in his chaffare,	<i>business</i>
40	For every other day his boxe was lefte bare.	<i>money-coffer</i>
	An unthryfty begynnyng, for yong or for olde,	
	A prentyse to be a reveloure and paramours to holde.	<i>profligate</i>
	That bargeyn no man so sore schalle aby	<i>pay for</i>
	As his Maister that hath no parte of his melodye.	<i>who; entertainment</i>
45	For theft and ryot, they beth inconvertible,	<i>interchangeable</i>
	Alle-thogh he can pley on getern and rybible;	<i>guitar; fiddle</i>
	Ravelle and trouthe as in a lowe degree,	<i>Revelry; honesty</i>
	They mow not acorde; al day men it see.	
	When thy purs is penyles, where schalt thou have more,	
50	Thou that wylt not the occupie no thyng therfore?	<i>yourself</i>
	Revell ys ordeyned to hem that mow pay,	<i>them who may</i>
	But prentise ne pore man, they mowe not away;	<i>don't move on</i>
	Evelle-sponne woole at the laste wolde come oute,	<i>Badly spun; unravel</i>
	Though thou kepe it never so prevey in a lytelle cloute.	<i>securely; rag</i>
55	Thus the joly prentyse with his maister abode,	<i>remained</i>
	Tylle he was nye oute of his prenteshode,	<i>apprenticeship</i>
	Alle-thogh he were snybbyd both erly and late.	<i>scolded</i>
	Yet sometye he was ladde with revell to Newgate.	<i>led; Newgate Prison</i>
	But at the laste as his Maister hym bethought	<i>thought to himself</i>
60	To over-se his papire and hym thorow sought	<i>indenture contract; presently</i>
	Uppon a proverbe that seith this same worde:	
	"Better ys rotten appulle out of an hurde	<i>barrel</i>
	Than for to let hem rote alle the remenaunte."	
	And ryght so it fareth by a ryotes servaunte;	<i>unruly</i>
65	It is lasse harme for to let hym pace	<i>go away</i>
	Then for to schende al the servaunts in the place.	<i>corrupt</i>

## *The Cook's Tale*

- Even as a scabbed schepe in the folde *skin-diseased*  
 Alle a flocke wolle defyle, both yonge and olde, *infect*  
 Ryght even so a febel servaunt may  
 70 Distruye fourty of his felaws in a day.  
 Therfore his Maister gaffe hym acquytaunce *gave; document of discharge*  
 And bade hym goe with sorowe and meschaunce: *misfortune*  
 "Better ys betyme to voyde suche a clerke; *speedily*  
 The lenger he abydeth, the wors is his werke.  
 75 He that his maister no profite wolle wynne,  
 Y holde hym better out of the hous than withynne." *within*  
 And thus the joly prentys had leve; *permission to leave*  
 Now let hym revell alle the nyght, or leve. *leave off*  
 Ther ys no thiffe without a lowke *thief; accomplice*  
 80 That helpeth hym to waste and to sowke, *Who; suck*  
 Or that he brybe can or oght borowe may. *steal*  
 Anon he sent his bedde and alle his araye *baggage*  
 Unto a compere of his owne sorte *companion*  
 That loved welle the dyse, ryot and disporte.  
 85 A wife he hadde that helde her contenaunce *for appearance*  
 A schoppe, and ever sche played for his sustenaunce.  
 What thorowe hymselfe and his felawe that sought, *Whatever presently*  
 Unto a myschefe bothe they were broght.  
 The tone y-dampned to presoun perpetually, *The one condemned*  
 90 The tother to deth for he couthe not of clergie. *The other; could not read*  
 And therfore, yonge men, lerne while ye may  
 That with mony dyvers thoghtes beth prycked al the day. *Who; agitated*  
 Remembre you what myschefe cometh of mysgovernaunce.  
 Thus mowe ye lerne worschep and come to substaunce. *wealth*  
 95 Thenke how grace and governaunce hath broght hem a boune, *them a reward*  
 Many pore mannys sonn, chefe state of the towne. *man's; highest office*  
 Ever rewle the after the beste man of name, *model yourself; reputation*  
 And God may grace the to come to the same. *thee*

HERE ENDETH THE COKES TALE  
 HERE FOLOWEN THE WORDES OF THE HOOST  
 UNTO THE MAN OF LAWE

Oure Host saugh wel that the bryght sonne  
 The arke of his artificial day hath y-ronne . . .

### Notes

- 3 Goldfinches are lively, happy creatures. See *Canterbury Interlude*, line 476 (note).
- 13 Cheapside was a busy London thoroughfare that served as a favorite site for processions and festivals, including the notorious “lords of misrule.”
- 19–24 This interpolation with its alliteration and moralized personifications is reminiscent of Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (e.g., B.4.16–21, 5.566–93, and 6.69–82). The playmate “Drawe-abak,” as a companion to “Drynke-more,” embodies the habit of drawing ale from a barrel.
- 31 The alliterative duo of Margot and Millicent might be taken as typical names for loose women.
- 32 When a powder-bag was untied, its contents were quickly dispersed.
- 36 Presumably a child, then as now, was not allowed to eat fish because of the small bones.
- 41–44 The anonymous reviser has thoroughly rewritten these boldface lines based on CT I, 4391–95.
- 48 *mow not*. MS: *mow mow not*.
- 53 *woole*. MS: *wolle*.
- 54 *Though*. MS: *They*.
- 58 When disorderly persons were conducted to the celebrated prison at Newgate, they were sometimes preceded by minstrels attracting more spectators to complete the criminal’s disgrace.

### *Notes*

- 85–86 The moralizing intentions of the reviser are clearly exposed in this couplet, which concluded Chaucer's fragment with the authentic reading: "And hadde a wyf that heeld for contenance / A shoppe, and *swyved* for hir sustenance."
- 90 Originally, a member of a religious order could plead "benefit of clergy" to be tried by an ecclesiastical rather than a secular court; later, a felon could plead exemption from his first conviction merely by virtue of the fact he could read. Since Perkyn Reveler had neglected his education, he could not escape execution.





## *Spurious Links*

### *Introduction*

A large number of manuscripts of the *Tales* contain what Manly (1928, 82–86) dubbed “spurious links,” which are really non-authorial *prologues* — Chaucer’s own preferred term (see *CT* III, 1708) — created to conceal gaps in the sequence by supplying obvious deficiencies, either where the poet never wrote prologues or where they were lost early in the transmission of the text, usually through rearrangement of the tales (Dempster 466–84). For example, whereas Chaucer provided no clear connection between the tales of the Nun’s Priest and the Second Nun, the Cardigan MS (fol. 194a) smoothed over this break by rewriting the final line of Fragment VII — “Seide unto another, as ye shuln heere” becomes “Sayd unto *the Nonne* as y[e] shall here” — and prefacing Fragment VIII with a brief conversation initiated by the Host:

“Madame, and Y durst, Y wold you pray,  
To tell us a talle y[n] furtheryng of oure way.  
Then myght ye do unto us gret ease.”  
“Gladly,” quod she, “so that Y myght you please,  
You and this wurthy company!” —  
And began here tale ryght thus full sobyrly.

There are twenty-two such passages that can be divided into three basic types: (1) altered authorial texts in which usually the pilgrim’s name has been changed; (2) non-authorial lines added to authentic Chaucerian materials; (3) entirely new sections. I have selected two fairly complete series and printed them, in boldface type, within context of Chaucer’s authentic lines.

The term *link*, while supported nowhere in the manuscripts, does justly describe the common narrative strategy throughout these later bridge-passages. Though some of Chaucer’s own prologues, such as those for the Man of Law and the Wife of Bath, start abruptly without giving any indication of a previous pilgrim, the apocryphal prologues were more thoroughly influenced by those sections of the frame-narrative that served as transitions from one tale-teller to the next, as when the

### *Spurious Links*

Host decides that the Prioress's sobering "miracle" of the murdered student ought to be followed with something jollier from Chaucer the pilgrim. Thus the fifteenth-century scribes seemed intent upon tying together and unifying, invariably through the strong guiding presence of the Host, fragments that had been left maddeningly disconnected by the poet himself for reasons that can only be guessed at: intention, disinterest, physical or mental disability, or sudden death.

#### *The Text*

**Series 1.** The earliest introduction of four links is found uniquely in BL Lansdowne 851 (c. 1400–25), a landmark manuscript roughly contemporary with Ellesmere. Because its text seems to have been subject to a minimum of scribal corruption, I have represented the substantives as well as the spellings as they appear in the manuscript.

**Series 2.** Four other non-authorial prologues are preserved in three closely related manuscripts: BL Royal 18.C.ii (c. 1425–1440), Bodleian Barlow 20 (c. 1450–80), and Bodleian Laud Misc. 739 (c. 1450–75). Petworth 7 (c. 1420–30) is also related, containing three of these prologues, but not in the same order. I have used the Royal manuscript as the copy-text, granting it "best text" status because it is early and generally agrees with Laud against Barlow in offering acceptable readings.

While the Merchant-Wife of Bath link survives only in these three manuscripts, other individual links appear in a large number of copies. For example, the spurious Shipman's prologue occurs in thirteen manuscripts as a link between the Pardoner and the Shipman; in four manuscripts it connects *Gamelyn* with The Shipman's Tale; and in Bodleian Hatton Donat. 1 it links the Clerk and the Shipman. The full collation of manuscript readings undertaken by Norem (123–49) indicates few significant variants, probably because the pedestrian quality of the language offered few challenges to the copyists.

## *Spurious Links*

### *Series 1: BL Lansdowne 851*

#### **Cook-Gamelyn Link (fols. 54a–54b)**

	Anone he sent his bedde and his araie	
	Unto a conper of his owen sorte	<i>companion</i>
	That loved dis and revel and disporte,	<i>dice</i>
	And had a wife that helde for countinace	
5	A schoppe, and swyved for his sustenance.	<i>fornicated</i>
	<b>Fye therone, it is so foule! I wil nowe tell no forthere</b>	<i>thereon</i>
	<b>For schame of the harlotrie that seweth after.</b>	<i>misbehavior; follows</i>
	<b>A velany it were thareof more to spell,</b>	<i>thereof; tell</i>
	<b>Bot of a knyghte and his sonnes, my tale I wil forthe tell.</b>	
10	And therefore listeneth and herkeneth this tale ariht,	
	And ye schullen here of a douhté knyght,	<i>hear; valiant</i>
	Sir Johan of Boundys was his name;	
	He couthe of nortur and muchel of game.	

#### **Squire-Wife of Bath Link (fol. 87a)**

	First wil I tell yowe of Cambyuskan	<i>(king in the tale)</i>
	That in his time mony a cité wan;	<i>won</i>
	And after wil I speke of Algarsif,	<i>(son of Cambyuskan)</i>
	Howe that he wanne Theodora to his wif,	
5	For whan ful oft in grete perile he was	
	Ne had he ben holpen by the hors of bras;	
	And after wil I speke of Camballo	<i>(another son)</i>
	That fauht in listes with the bretherne tuo	<i>fought; two</i>
	For Canace are that he myht hir wyne,	<i>(heroine); before</i>
10	And there I left, I thenke ageine begynne.	<i>where</i>
	<b>Bot I wil here nowe maake a knotte</b>	<i>But; stopping-point</i>
	<b>To the time it come next to my lotte.</b>	<i>Till</i>

*Spurious Links*

For here be felawes behinde, an hepe treulye,  
That wolden talke ful besilye  
15 And have her sporte as wele as I. *their*  
And the daie passeth fast, certainly.  
Therefore, Hoste, taketh nowe goode heede  
Who schall next tell, and late him speede. *let*

EXPLICIT FABULA ARMIGERI INCIPIT PROLOGUS UXORIS DE BATH

Than schortly ansewarde the Wife of Bathe  
20 And swore a wonder grete hathe, *oath*  
“Be Goddes bones, I wil tel next! *By*  
I will nouht glose, bot saye the text: *not*  
Experiment, thouhe none auctorité *Experience*  
Were in this werlde, is riht ynouhe for me *enough*  
25 To speke of woo that is in mariage. *woe*  
For, lordeinges, sen I twelve yere was of age, *since*  
Thonked be God that eterne alyve,  
Hosbondes att the cherche dor I have hadde five.

**Canon’s Yeoman-Physician Link (fol. 169a–b)**

For whoso maketh God his adversarie,  
As for to worche any thinge in contrarye  
Unto His wil, certes never schal he thrive, *surely*  
Thouhe that he multiplie terme of his live; *Though; life*  
5 And there a pointe, for endid is my tale. *period*  
God sende every trew man bote of his bale. *relief for his pain*

PROLOGUS MAGISTRI PHISICI

“Nowe trewly,” quod oure Hoste, “this is a prati tale. *cunning*  
For litel merveile it is that thou lokest so pale,  
Sethen thou hast medeled with so mony thinges, *Since*  
10 With bloweinge att the cole to melte bothe brochez and ringes *coals*  
And othere many jewels, dar I undertake.  
And that thi lorde couthe us tel, if we myht him overetake. *(the Canon)*  
Bot lat him go, a devel waye; the compaigny is never the wers,  
And al suche fals harlotes I sette not be hem a kers. *scoundrels; by them; curse*

### *Spurious Links*

- 15     **Bot latt pas overe nowe al thes subtilitees,** *craftinesses*  
**And sume worthi man tel us summe veritees,** *truths*  
**As ye, worschipful Maister of Phisike.**  
**Telleth us somme tale that is a cronyke** *history*  
**That we may of yowe leren sum witte."** *wisdom*  
20     **Quod the Maister of Phisik, "A tale that I finde writte** *written*  
**In cronyke passed of olde tyme**  
**Herkeneth, for I wil tel it yow in rime."**  
  
EXPLICIT PROLOGUS / INCIPIT FABULA  
  
Ther was as telleth us Titus Liveus,  
A knyht that cleped was Virgineus,  
25     **Fulfilled of honour and worthinesse,**  
**And stronge of frendes and of richesse.**  
**A douhter he hadd be his wyf,** *by*  
**And never hadde he mo in al his lif.**

### **Pardoner-Shipman Link (fol. 180b)**

- Whan that he sawhe that al the peple louhe, *(the Knight); laughed*  
"No more of this, for it is riht ynouhe. *enough*  
Sire Pardoner, be meri and glad of chere,  
And ye, Sire Hoste, that bene to me so dere.  
5     **I pray yowe that ye kisse the Pardonere.**  
**And Pardoner, I praie the that thou drau the nere,** *thee; draw near*  
**And as we dide, now late us lauhe and pleie!"**  
**Anone thei kisse and reden forthe theire weye.**  
  
EXPLICIT FABULA QUESTORIS / INCIPIT PROLOGUS  
  
**Bot than spak oure Hoste unto Maister Schipman.**  
10     **"Maister," quod he, "to us summe tale tel ye can,**  
**Wherewithe ye myht glad al this company,** *amuse*  
**If it were youre pleseinge, I wote wele sekurlye."** *certainly*  
**"Sertes," quod this Schipman, "a tale I can tell,** *Surely*  
**And therfore, herkeneth hyderward how that I wil spell."** *narrate*  
  
EXPLICIT PROLOGUS / INCIPIT FABULA NAUTE

*Spurious Links*

- 15     A marchant whilom dwelled att Sein Denys,  
         That riche was, for which men helde him wys.  
         A wif he hadde of excellent beauté,  
         And compinable and reverent was sche,  
         Which is a thinge that causeth more dispence  
20     Then worthe is al the chier and reverence.

*Series 2: BL Royal 18.C.ii*

**Merchant-Wife of Bath Link (fol. 105a)**

- “Beth war, I pray yow, for by Hevene Kyng  
         Ful many man wenyth for to see a thing *believes*  
         And it is all another than it semeth.  
         He that mysconceyveth mysdemeth.” *misjudges*  
5     And with that word, sche leep down fro the tree. *i.e., Maye*  
         This Januare, who is glad but he?  
         He kisseth hir and clippeth hir ful ofte, *embraces*  
         And on hir wombe he stroketh hir ful softe,  
         And to his paleys hoom he hath hir lad.  
10     Now, good men, I pray yow to be glad.  
         Thus endeth here my tale of Januarie.  
         God blesse us and his moder Seynt Marie. Amen.
- THE PROLOG OF THE WYF OF BATHE
- Oure Hoost gan tho to loke up anon. *then*  
         “Gode men,” quod he, “herkeneth everichon. *every one*  
15     As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,  
         This Marchande hath i-tolde a mery tale,  
         How Januarie hadde a lither jape; *cruel joke*  
         His wyf put in his hood an ape. *i.e., made a fool of him*  
         But hereof I wil leve off as now.  
20     Dame Wyf of Bathe,” quod he, “I pray yow,  
         Telle us a tale now next after this.”

*Spurious Links*

“Sire Hoost,” quod she, “so God my soule blis,  
As I fully therto wil consente  
And also it is myn hole entente  
25 To done yow alle disporte, as that I can.  
But holde me excused — I am a woman;  
I can not rehearse as these clerkes kune.”  
And right anon she hath hir tale bygone.

*bless*

*whole*

*amusement*

*recite; know how*

HERE ENDITH THE PROLOG AND BEGYNNETH THE TALE

Experience, though noon auctorité  
30 Were in this world, is right inowgh for me  
To speke of woo that is in mariage.  
For, lordynges, sethen I twelfe yere hadde of age,  
Thanked be God that is eterne alyve,  
Housbondes at chirche dore I have had fyve.

*enough*

**Clerk-Franklin Link (fols. 145b–146a)**

“Ye arche-wyfes standeth at youre defence,  
Sith ye ben stronge as is a grete camayle  
Ne suffreth not that man don you offence,  
And sclendre wyfes fieble as in bataile  
5 Beth egre as a tygre yonde in Ynde;  
Ay clappeth as a mylle, I yow counsaile.”

*camel*

*slender*

*fierce; India*

*chatter; mill*

HERE ENDITH THE CLERKE OF OXENFORD

AND HERE BEGYNNETH THE PROLOG OF THE FRankeleyn

This worthi Clerk, whan endid was his tale,  
Oure Host seide and swor, “By Goddes bones,  
Me weere levere than a barel ale  
10 My wyf at home hadde herd this legend once!  
This is a gentil tale for the nonce.  
As to my purpos, wiste ye my wylle;  
But thing that will not be, lat it be stille.

*I’d rather; barrel of ale*

*saint’s life*

*for the occasion*

*you know*

I have a wyf, though she pore be,  
15 Yit she hath an heepe of vyces, lo,



*Spurious Links*

For of hire tonge a moche shrewe is she, *bitch*  
And to my wylle the contrarye wil she do.  
Therof no force! Lete alle suche thinges go. *never mind*  
But wyte ye what? In consail be it saide, *know*  
20 Me rewyth sore that I am to hire taide. *regret; tied*

Sire Frankeleyn, cometh nere, yif hit youre wil be, *near, if it*  
And telle us a tale, as ye are a worthi man.”  
“Hit schal be do, truly, Hoost,” quod he. *It; done*  
“I wil yow telle as hertely as I can.  
25 Holdeth me excused, though I unworthi am  
To telle you a tale, for I wole not rebelle  
Agens youre wille — a tale wole I telle.

HERE ENDITH THE PROLOG AND BEGYNNETH THE TALE

These olde gentil Bretouns in here dayes, *their*  
Of divers adventures maden layes,  
30 Remayed in here first Briton tunge, *Rhymed*  
Which layes with here instrumentz they songe,  
Or elles redder hem for here plesaunce,  
And oon of hem have in remembraunce,  
Which I shal sayn with good wille, as I can.”

**Canon's Yeoman-Physician Link (fol. 174a)**

For whoso maketh God his adversarie,  
As for to worche enything in contrarye *work*  
Unto his wille, certes, nevere schal he thryfe, *thrive*  
Thogh that he multiplie terme of his lyfe.  
5 And there a poynt, for endid is my tale.  
God sende every trewe man bote of his bale. *relief for his pain*

THE PROLOG OF THE DOCTOR OF PHECYK

When that this Yoman his tale endid hadde *Canon's Yeoman*  
Of this fals chanon whiche that was so badde, *canon*  
Oure Hoost gan seie, “Truly and certayn,  
10 This preest was begyled sothely forto sayn;

*Spurious Links*

- He wenyng for to be a philosophre  
Til he right no gold lefte in his cofre.  
And sothely this prest had a lyther jape.  
This cursed chanon put in his hood an ape.  
15 But all this passe I over as now.  
Sire Doctour of Phisik, I pray yow,  
Telle us a tale of som honest matere.”  
“It schall be don, yif that ye wole hit here,”  
Saide this Doctor, and his tale bygan anon.  
20 “Now, gode men,” quod he, “herkeneth everychon.”  
HERE ENDITH THE PROLOG / AND BEGYNNETH THE TALE  
Ther was, as telleth us Tytus Lyveus,  
A knyght that cleped was Virgineus,  
Fulfilled of honoures and worthinesse,  
And strong of frendes and of richesse.  
25 A dougher he hadde by his wyf,  
And nevere had he mo in al his lyf.
- believing  
strong-box  
cruel joke  
made a fool of him  
  
respectable  
if; it hear  
  
  
Livy  
called*

**Pardoner-Shipman Link (fol. 185a)**

- But right anone the worthi Knyght bygan,  
Whan that he sawh that alle the peple lowhe,  
“No more of this, for it is right inowhe.  
Sire Pardoner, be mery and glad of chere,  
5 And ye, Sire Hoost, that ben to me so dere,  
I pray yow that ye kysse the Pardoner.  
And, Pardoner, I pray you draw you nere,  
And as we did, lete us lawh and play.”  
And anoon thei kissed and riden forth her way.  
THE PROLOG OF THE SHIPMAN  
10 “Now frendes,” saide oure Hoost so dere,  
“How lyketh you, by John, the Pardoner?  
For he hath unboked wel the male;  
He hath us told right a thrifty tale  
As touching of mysgovernaunce.
- laughed  
enough  
  
laugh  
their way  
  
bag  
profitable*

*Spurious Links*

- 15     I pray to God, geve hym good chaunce.  
      As ye have herde of thise riotoures thre,  
      Now gentil Maryner, hertly I pray the, *thee*  
      Telle us a good tale and that right anone.”  
      “Hit schal be don, by God and by Seynt John,” *It*  
20     Seide this Maryner, “as wel as ever I can.”  
      And right anone his tale he bygan.
- HERE ENDITH [THE PROLOG] AND BEGYNETH THE TALE
- A [marchant w]hilom duelled at Seynt Denys,  
      That [riche was], for whiche men held him wys.  
      A wyf [he] had of excellent beauté,  
25     And compaynable and reverent was she. *sociable*

## Notes

### Series 1: BL Lansdowne 851

#### Cook's Tale-Gamelyn Link

- 6–7     Heavy alliteration marks this expression of moral repugnance at the wife's work as a whore. Note that the reviser alleges there was more to the tale, only he chose not to relay it.
- 8        The word *spell* is used only once by Chaucer, appropriately in his parody of popular verse romances, *Sir Thopas* (CT VII, 893).

#### Squire-Wife of Bath Link

- 11–12   Not interrupted in this version, the Squire makes his own stopping-point (*knotte*) until his turn comes around once more, according to their drawing of lots. A similar sense of turn-taking is expressed in the Summoner's threat to the Friar: "whan it comth to my lot, / By God, I shal hym quiten every grot" (CT III, 1291–92).
- 13–15   In the Lansdowne MS, the Squire comes early in the sequence, directly after the Man of Law, with seventeen other pilgrims after him telling their tales.
- 19–21   Not waiting for the Host's decision, the Wife of Bath insists on being next. *Hathe* is a Northern spelling of the Chaucerian *oth*. Though sexually daring, the Wife is not normally given to oaths like "By God's bones," which is more characteristic of the Host (CT II, 1166; IV, 1212b; VII, 1897).
- 22        Chaucer's Wife is well aware of the difference between text and gloss. See Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 113–31 — "'Glose/bele chose': The Wife of Bath and Her Glossators."

### *Spurious Links*

#### **Canon's Yeoman-Physician Link**

- 7-11 The Host has a vivid recollection of the previous tale, picking up the term *medel* (CT VIII, 1184 and 1424) and recalling the Yeoman's duty to blow on the fire (CT VIII, 753 and 923).
- 12-14 The Host recalls the hasty departure of the Canon, afraid of being exposed as a scoundrel (CT VIII, 700-02).
- 15 Chaucer had associated the term *subtiltee* with the Canon's alchemical skills (CT VIII, 620-27).
- 18 The term *cronyke* (also line 21) is more archaic than the Chaucerian *cronycle* (CT VII, 3208).

#### **Pardoner-Shipman Link**

- 9-10 "Maister" is the form of address used by the Host to the Shipman at the end of his tale (CT VII, 437).
- 11 The phrase "glad al this company" is picked up from CT VIII, 598.

### *Series 2: BL Royal 18.C.ii*

#### **Merchant-Wife of Bath Link**

- 13-14 This couplet echoes the opening of the Man of Law's Epilogue: "Owre Hoost upon his stiropes stood anon / And seyde, "Goode men, herkeneth everych on!" (CT II, 1163-64).
- 15 The Host speaks this same line in the General Prologue (CT I, 832).
- 17-18 Chaucer uses the *jape/ape* couplet four times in CT: I, 705-06; I, 3389-90; I, 4201-02; VIII, 1312-13.

### Notes

- 26–27 The Wife's apology, echoing the Squire and the Franklin (*CT* V, 7–8 and 716–18), is framed to be disingenuous in light of the barrage of scriptural references that follow in her tale.

#### Clerk-Franklin Link

- 14–20 The murderous fury and blistering tongue of the Host's wife, ironically named Goodelief, are more fully described in *CT* VII, 1891–1923.

#### Canon's Yeoman-Physician Link

- 10 “This preest” refers back to the London chantry priest (*CT* VIII, 1012–21) who served as the dupe of the Yeoman's master, the alchemist canon.
- 11 The word *philosophre* had become synonymous with alchemist and magician.

#### Pardoner-Shipman Link

- 11 It is unclear whether the phrase *by John* is an oath by St. John, such as the Shipman swears below (line 19), or a reference to the Pardoner by way of the generic cant name for a priest or cleric (see *CT* VII, 1929 and 2810).
- 12–13 This phrase, also rhyming *male/tale*, is used in *CT* I, 3115–16.
- 16 The Host's reference to “thise riotoures thre” alludes back to the three nameless drunkards of the Pardoner's Tale. The term *riotoures* is used nowhere else in Chaucer's writings.



## *The Canterbury Interlude and Merchant's Tale of Beryn*

### *Introduction*

The Northumberland manuscript, executed after the middle of the fifteenth century, offers a specialized arrangement of *The Canterbury Tales* in which a lengthy Interlude has been inserted describing the pilgrims' arrival in the city of Canterbury, their visit to the shrine of St. Thomas in the cathedral, their overnight stay at a local inn, the Pardoner's misadventures with a cunning tapster, and the party's departure the next morning for the return to London. At this point the Host invites the Merchant to tell The Tale of Beryn (his second offering in this collection) as the initial tale for the homeward journey, to be followed by Chaucer the pilgrim with *Melibee* (his second offering, separate from *Sir Thopas*), the Monk, the Nun's Priest, the Manciple, and finally the Parson. The entire arrangement, that is, has been altered and enlarged to fulfill the design of the round trip projected in the General Prologue (Bowers 1985, 27–38). Unfortunately, the manuscript itself is missing pages at the end, so we do not know whether this enterprising collection might also have included a return to the Tabard Inn for the Host's verdict on the tale of "best sentence and moost solaas."

The anonymous author of the Interlude reveals a knowledge of *The Canterbury Tales* more intimate and wide-ranging than even Lydgate's. He was familiar with the General Prologue and the fabliau tales of Fragment I as well as the later performances of the Friar, the Summoner, the Merchant, the Canon's Yeoman, and the Pardoner (Bashe; Kohn; Winstead). Chaucer's pilgrims have been revived with considerable ingenuity and charm, behaving much as we would expect, or veering in directions we find comically inappropriate. Who would have expected the Wife of Bath to prefer sitting in a kitchen garden with the Prioress to exploring the town?

Episodes tracking the Pardoner's overnight escapade with Kit the Tapster are offered in cross-cut fashion to form a fabliau adventure, somewhat like the one told by the Reeve (Darjes and Rendall). Chaucer's Pardoner, that magnificent grotesque, seems to have been the one pilgrim who lingered most strongly in the memory of the fifteenth-century audience. Here, however, he possesses both a sexual potency and a heterosexual inclination, as well as a temperance in drinking ale, at odds with what modern readers have been led to expect (Curry 54–70; McAlpine; Bowers



### *The Canterbury Interlude and Merchant's Tale of Beryn*

1990). Throughout the Pardoner's failed attempts to romance and rob the tapster, when he ends up instead beaten, bloodied, and shivering all night in the dog's kennel, we may be so distracted that we fail to notice what else the continuator has totally omitted from his portrayal. Nowhere is there the slightest reference to the Pardoner as a self-enriching purveyor of indulgences and exploiter of sham relics. It is as if such crooked practices do not even merit mentioning in the holy city of Canterbury, where a visit to the authentic relics of St. Thomas earned a plenary indulgence for the pilgrim — and where the corrupt Pardoner justly deserved to be swindled, beaten, and sexually humiliated.

The Tale of Beryn is absolutely appropriate as an offering from the Merchant — more so, really, than the tale given him by Chaucer — since its hero is a young nobleman who chooses to be a merchant instead of a knight, only to encounter a series of storms and legal entrapments that would have been the real-life nightmare of any medieval merchant. In Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), the citizens of the ideal nation puzzled over exactly the hazards encountered by Beryn: "when the merchants of one country are subjected to unjust persecution in another country under the pretense of justice, either under cover of iniquitous law or the manipulation of good laws." The French source-work *Bérinus* (ed. Bossuat) has been reduced and crafted in such a way as to emphasize these legal abuses, so much so that Green (1989) has proposed that the work was primarily a satire on contemporary problems with "law merchant," while Tamanini (40–48) suggested the author might have been a lawyer writing for an audience at one of the Inns of Court.

The larger and more significant an anonymous literary work, the more pressing becomes the question of authorship. A Latin couplet at the end of The Tale of Beryn says the work was translated by a "son of the church of St. Thomas" (*Filius ecclesie Thome*), evidence that would seem to contradict Tamanini's claims for a lawyer. Judging from the Southeastern dialect and the precision of local references, Furnivall (p. vii) long ago decided that the author was most likely a Canterbury monk. Despite the enticing suggestion from Green (61–62) that the author might have been Thomas Astell — rector of St. Thomas the Martyr in Winchelsea, a student of civil law at Oxford, and a kinsman of Henry Chichele, archbishop of Canterbury — the evidence marshaled by Brown (148–60), particularly the author's detailed knowledge of pilgrim rituals at Canterbury, points more persuasively to a Christ Church monk charged with custodial responsibilities for the cathedral's shrine of St. Thomas. If so, this monk had a much wider scope and keener eye than Lydgate for the pilgrims' high jinks before and after their visits to the shrine. Nonetheless, the special bias of his order would account for his aggressive hostility toward the Pardoner, whose sale of indulgences would have represented a serious

## Introduction

threat to those Benedictines responsible for promulgating and sustaining the cult of St. Thomas.

The work's date offers a further problem. Since the Northumberland manuscript is much later than the Beryn text that it alone preserves, internal evidence must be used as the basis for speculation. A reference to the recent devastation of Winchelsea and Rye led Tamanini (73–76) to suggest a date as early as the 1390s, clearly too early for the author to have known Chaucer's final work as well as he did. Since the poetry shares a certain amount of vocabulary with *Mum and the Sothsegger*, completed between 1403 and 1406, Pearsall (1977, 298) proposed c. 1410 as the date of composition for Beryn. The Canterbury Interlude itself — which may have been written later than the tale it prefaces — has been plausibly connected by Brown (152–53) with the year 1420, which was the most recent Canterbury jubilee celebrated every half-century since the martyrdom of St. Thomas in 1170. This was a great money-making “tourist” event as well as a prime occasion to reassert the validity of pilgrimage rituals against the Lollards. It is therefore tempting to believe that the 1420 jubilee provided this monastic author, as well as John Lydgate, with the religious occasion for reviving Chaucer's literary pilgrimage to Canterbury.

## The Text

Though preserved only in Northumberland MS 455 (fols. 180a–235a), dated c. 1450–70, this 4022-line section appears to have been composed considerably earlier. Removed from its original by as much as half a century, this transcription of a text by an otherwise unknown author offers a number of editorial challenges.

Furnivall in his edition for the Chaucer Society (1887), later reissued by EETS (1909), undertook a radical restoration of the text with the aim of improving the verse by supplying “missing” syllables, words, and phrases; where lines appear to have been omitted by the scribe, the editor even undertook to compose his own speculative replacements. I have rejected the aims of such a reconstruction, since it is not clear that the Beryn poet originally executed verses with the strict regularity assumed by Furnivall or adhered to grammatical practices deemed correct according to familiar Chaucerian standards. I have therefore been very conservative in emending only those readings that seem to be the results of scribal mistakes, many of them already detected by Furnivall and Vipan (1909) and Tamanini (1969). For example, the Northumberland scribe was particularly given to *c/t* confusion and error by anticipation of copy.

In respect to the accidentals, my approach has been informed by Tanselle's discussion (1983) of single-manuscript editing of medieval texts when a unique copy is accorded the status of copy-text. The term *copy-text* normally refers to the physical

### *The Canterbury Interlude and Merchant's Tale of Beryn*

copy chosen by an editor from among several candidates because it most faithfully represents the author's practice in regard to spelling, punctuation, capitalization and other such features classed as accidentals. According to Greg's influential "rationale" (1950), the editor then establishes the substantives by separate methods, letting the readings of the copy-text stand whenever there is no compelling reason to alter them. The case of Beryn is all too common in the annals of medieval literature, since the unique surviving text of the poem in the Northumberland manuscript, so much later than the original, offers no authority in representing the original in regard to accidentals. Thus it does not qualify as a copy-text, although an editor might perforce treat it as such simply because there is no other candidate. Working with Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*, Greetham (1985) has proposed ways in which the editor of a medieval text can free himself from this "tyranny of the copy-text" in regard to accidentals when means are available for establishing practices closer to the author's original.

Because The Tale of Beryn survives within the larger context of the Northumberland *Canterbury Tales* copied by the same scribe, it is possible to analyze the neighboring texts, specifically The Canon's Yeoman's Tale and The Summoner's Tale, to identify spellings and other orthographic practices which consistently deviate from Chaucer's usages and are therefore likely the copyist's. Kane (1989) has used a similar method to form a "profile" of the immediate scribe of the G Prologue to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* by examining the unique unoriginal variants of Cambridge University Library [CUL] MS Gg.4.27 in that part of the poem where revision is not presumed, namely the *Legend* itself which survives in a superior line of transmission represented by the family of manuscripts designated as F (after Bodley MS Fairfax 16). Kane then uses this scribal profile to identify non-authorial features which might be removed from a subsequent edition of the G Prologue.

Proceeding on this distinction between the author's and the copyist's *usus scribendi* or "writing practice," I have implemented such alterations in spelling only when they have been confirmed by a secondary control, namely, the rhymes in the Interlude and Beryn couplets. The copyist often retained in the rhyme position a spelling that he altered to personal practice elsewhere in the text. Guided by the dual constraints of (1) the scribal profile in the surrounding Chaucer texts and (2) preservations of authorial usages in the rhyme-words, I have proceeded in a very conservative manner, for example, altering the ending *-ir/-yr* to *-er/-re*, the plural *-is/-ys* to *-es*, the past tense *-id/-yd* to *-ed*, and the third-person singular *-ith/-yth* to *-eth*. In accord with the classic concept of the copy-text, I have retained the Northumberland scribe's usages when a substitution cannot be supported by my twin criteria. For example, the rhymes *lott/not* (703–04) and *not/spot* (3465–66) argue for normalizing the negative *nat* > *not* throughout the text, but since the surrounding

### *Introduction*

*Canterbury* text with the Chaucerian spelling *nat* does not confirm this change, I have retained the manuscript's use of *nat*. In short, I have not undertaken a wholesale restoration of the text, one that might otherwise have included retrieving forms belonging to the poem's original Southeastern dialect, as was proposed by Onions (1936) for the *Owl and the Nightingale*. However, I have taken liberties in normalizing proper names, which vary widely and sometimes erratically in the copyist's practice.

*The Canterbury Interlude and Merchant's Tale of Beryn*

(Northumberland MS 455, fols. 180a–235a)

- When all this fressh feleship were com to Caunterbury, *lively*  
As ye have herd tofore, with tales glad and mery, *before*  
Som of sotill centence, of vertu and of lore, *lofty meaning*  
And som of other myrthes for hem that hold no store *them; put no stock in*  
5 Of wisdom, ne of holynes, ne of chivalry,  
Nether of vertuose matere, but to foly *Nor*  
Leyd wit and lustes all, to such japes *Applied; tricks*  
As Hurlewaynes meyné in every hegg that capes *company; gapes*  
Thurh unstabill mynde, ryght as the leves grene  
10 Stonden ageyn the weder, ryght so by hem I mene. *weather; them*  
Butt no more hereof nowe at this ilch tyme, *same*  
In saving of my centence, my prolog and my ryme. *In keeping with my theme*  
They toke hir in and logged hem at mydmorowe, I trowe, *their inn; mid-morning*  
Atte Cheker of the Hope, that many a man doth knowe.  
15 Hir Hoost of Southwork that with hem went, as ye have herd tofore, *Their*  
That was rewler of hem al, of las and eke of more, *ruler; less*  
Ordeyned hir dyner wisely or they to chirch went *Ordered; lunch; before*  
Such vitailles as he fond in town and for noon other sent. *food*  
The Pardonere beheld the besynes, howe states were i-served,<sup>1</sup>  
20 Diskennyng hym al pryvely and asyde swerved. *Withdrawing; secretly*  
The hostelere was so halowed from o plase to another, *innkeeper; shouted at; one*  
He toke his staff to the tapstere. — “Welcom, myne owne brothere,”<sup>2</sup>  
Quod she with a frendly look, al redy for to kys. *Said*  
And he, as a man i-lerned of such kyndnes,  
25 Braced hir by the myddill and made hir gladly chere, *Embraced; waist; expression*  
As thoughe he had i-knowe hir al the rather yeer. *previous*  
She haled hym into the tapstry, there hir bed was maked. *hauled; taproom; where*  
“Lo, here I ligg,” quod she, “myselff al nyght al naked, *lie*

<sup>1</sup> *The Pardoner beheld the activity, how various people (social ranks) behaved (see note)*

<sup>2</sup> *He (the Pardoner) gave his staff to the barmaid. “Welcome, my dear brother.”*

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

	Without mannes company, syn my love was dede —	<i>since; lover</i>
30	Jenkyn Harpour, yf ye hym know. From fete to the hede, Was nat a lustier persone to daunce ne to lepe Then he was, thoughe I it sey."— And therewith she to wepe She made, and with hir napron feir and white i-wassh, She wyped sofft hir eyen, for teres that she out lassh	<i>feet livelier; leap Than started; apron eyes; poured</i>
35	As grete as eny mylstone, upward gon they stert For love of hir swetyng that sat so nyghe hir hert. She wept and wayled and wrong hir hondes, and made much to done, For they that loven so passyngly, such trowes they have echon. <sup>1</sup> She snyffeth, sigheth, and shooke hire hede, and made rouful chere.	<i>millstone sweetheart; near ado sad expression</i>
40	"Benedicite!" quod the Pardonere, and toke hir by the swere. "Ye make sorowe inowgh," quod he, "yeur lyff thoughe ye shuld lese." "It is no wonder," quod she than, and therewith she gan to fnese. "Aha! Al hole!" quod the Pardonere. "Yeur penaunce is somewhat passed." <sup>2</sup> "God forbede it els," quod she; "but it were somewhat lassed,	<i>Bless us; neck enough; lose sneeze unless; lessened</i>
45	I myght nat lyve els, thowe wotest, and it shuld long endure." "Now blessed be God of mendement, of hele and eke of cure," Quod the Pardonere tho anoon and toke hir by the chynne, And seyde to hir these wordes tho: "Allas, that love ys syn! So kynde a lover as ye be oon, and so trew of hert,	<i>otherwise; know, if recovery; health then then faithful</i>
50	For by my trewe conscience, yit for yewe I smert And shall this month hereafter for yeur soden disese. Now wele were hym ye loved, so he coude yewe plese. I durst swere oppon a book that trewe he shuld yewe fynd, For he that is so yore dede is green in yeur mynde.	<i>feel pain acute distress  Bible long dead; fresh</i>
55	Ye made me a sory man; I dred ye wold have sterved." "Graunt mercy, gentil sir," quod she, "that ye unaserved. <sup>3</sup> Ye be a nobill man, i-blessed mut ye be. Sit down, ye shul drynk."— "Nay, iwis!" quod he; "I am fastyng yit, myne own hertes rote."	<i>sorrowful; died  must surely root</i>
60	"Fasting yit? Allas!" quod she. "Therof I can good bote." She stert into the town and fet a py al hote	<i>know; remedy hurried; fetched; pie</i>

<sup>1</sup> *For those who love so surpassingly, such fancies they each one have*

<sup>2</sup> *"Aha! All whole (Good health)," said the Pardonere. "Your penance (mourning for your dead husband) is just about over."*

<sup>3</sup> *"Many thanks, gentle sir," she said; "Pain on my behalf you didn't deserve."*

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

	And set tofore the Pardoner. "Jenken, I ween? I note.	<i>guess; don't know</i>
	Is that your name, I yow prey?" — "Yee, iwis, myne own suster,	<i>indeed</i>
	So was I enformed of hem that me did foster.	<i>by them</i>
65	And what is yours?" — "Kit, iwis, so cleped me my dame."	<i>called; mother</i>
	"And Goddes blessing have thou, Kit, now broke we thy name,"	<i>do credit to</i>
	And pryvelich unlased his both eyen-liddes	<i>furtively opened; eyelids</i>
	And loked hir in the visage paramour amyddes,	<i>face amorously direct</i>
	And sighed therewith a litil tyme, that she it here myghte,	<i>hear</i>
70	And gan to trown and feyn this song, "Now love, thou do me righte!"	<i>croon; sing</i>
	"Ete and be mery," quod she. "Why breke ye nat your fast?	
	To waite more feleshipp it were but work in wast.	<i>await; vain</i>
	Why make ye so dull chere? For your love at home?"	<i>sad looks</i>
	"Nay forsooth, myne own hert, it is for yewe aloon."	
75	"For me? Allas, what sey ye? That were a sympill prey."	<i>say; trick</i>
	"Trewlich yit," quod the Pardoner, "it is as I yewe sey."	
	"Ye eteth and beth mery. We woll speke thereof sone.	<i>soon</i>
	Brenned cat dredeth feir; it is mery to be aloon.	<i>Burned; dreads fire</i>
	For, by Our Lady Mary that bare Ihesu on hir arm,	<i>who bore</i>
80	I could never love yit, but it did me harm,	<i>unless</i>
	For ever my maner hath be to love over-much."	<i>excessively</i>
	"Now, Cristes blessing," quod the Pardoner, "go with al such.	<i>do away</i>
	Lo, howe the clowdes worchen eche man to mete his mach.	<i>heavens cause; match</i>
	For trewly, gentil Cristian, I use the same tach	<i>well-born; practice; habit</i>
85	And have i-do many a yere. I may it nat forber,	<i>done; resist</i>
	For Kynde woll have his cours, though men the contrary swer."	<i>Nature; swear</i>
	And therewith he stert up smertly and cast down a grote.	<i>groat (coin)</i>
	"What shal this do, gentill sir? Nay, sir! For my cote,	<i>surcoat</i>
	I nold ye payde a peny here and so sone pas."	<i>would not; soon leave</i>
90	The Pardoner swore his gretter othe; he wold pay no las.	<i>oath; less</i>
	"Iwis, sir, it is over-do. But sith it is your will,	<i>excessive; since</i>
	I woll put it in my purs, lest ye it take in ill	
	To refuse your curtesy!" — and therewith she gan to bowe.	
	"Now trewly," quod the Pardoner, "your maners been too alowe.	<i>humble</i>
95	For had ye counted streytly and nothing lefft behynde,	<i>strictly</i>
	I myghte have wele i-demed that ye be unkynde	<i>judged</i>
	And eke untrewe of hert and sonner me forgete,	<i>unfaithful; sooner</i>
	But ye list be my tresorer, for we shull offer mete."	<i>wish; more often</i>
	"Now certen," quod the Tapster, "ye have ared ful even.	<i>explained completely</i>
100	As wold to God ye couth as wele undo my sweven,	<i>could; interpret; dream</i>

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

	That I myselff did mete this nyght that is i-passed —	<i>dream</i>
	How I was in a chirch when it was al i-massed	<i>mass was said</i>
	And was in my devocioune tyl service was al doon,	
	Tyll the preest and the clerk boystly bad me goon	<i>rudely ordered</i>
105	And put me out of the chirch with an eger mode.”	<i>angrily</i>
	“Now Seynt Danyel,” quod the Pardoner, “yeur sweven turne to good!	<i>dream</i>
	And I woll halsow it to the best, have it in yeur mynd,	<i>explain</i>
	For comenly of these swevenes the contrary men shul fynde.	<i>often; dreams</i>
	Ye have be a lover glad, and litil joy i-had.	<i>been; eager</i>
110	Pluk up a lusty hert and be mery and glad,	<i>cheerful</i>
	For ye shul have a husbond that shal yewe wed to wyve	<i>as wife</i>
	That shal love yewe as hertly as his own lyve.	<i>heartily; life</i>
	The preest that put yewe out of chirch shal lede yew in ageyn	
	And help to yeur mariage with al his myghte and mayn.	<i>power</i>
115	This is the sweven, al and som. Kit, how liketh thee?”	<i>sum; does it please you?</i>
	“By my trowth, wonder wele! Blessed mut thowe be!”	<i>may</i>
	Then toke he leve at that tyme, tyll he com efftsone,	<i>returned again</i>
	And went to his feleshipp, as it was to doon.	
	Thoughe it be no grete holynes to prech this ilk matere	<i>particular event</i>
120	And that som list nat to here it, yit sirs, ner-the-latter,	<i>nevertheless</i>
	Endureth for a while and suffreth hem that woll,	<i>allow; want to</i>
	And ye shull here howe the Tapster made the Pardoner pull	<i>peel</i>
	Garlik al the long nyghte, til it was nerend day,	<i>Garlic; nearly</i>
	For the more cher she made of love, the falsher was hir lay.	<i>look; falser; talk</i>
125	But litil charge gaff she therof, thoughe she aquyt his while,	<i>gave; repaid; efforts</i>
	For etheres thought and tent was other to begile,	<i>each one's; intention</i>
	As ye shull here hereafter, when tyme cometh and spase	<i>hear; opportunity</i>
	To meve such mater. But nowe a litill spase	<i>To bring up</i>
	I woll retourn me ageyn to the company.	
130	The Knyght and al the feleshipp, and nothing for to ly,	<i>lie</i>
	When they were all i-logged, as skill wold and reson,	<i>lodged</i>
	Everich after his degre, to chirch then was seson	<i>social rank; time</i>
	To pas and to wend, to make hir offringes,	<i>go</i>
	Righte as hir devocioune was, of sylver broch and rynges.	<i>broaches</i>
135	Then atte chirch dorr the curtesy gan to ryse,	<i>at the; social custom</i>
	Tyl the Knyght of gentilnes that knewe righte wele the guyse	<i>who; proper form</i>
	Put forth the prelates, the Person and his fere.	<i>clergymen; companion (Plowman)</i>
	A monk that toke the spryngill with a manly cher	<i>sprinkler</i>
	And did as the maner is, moilled al hir pates,	<i>wetted all their heads</i>



### *The Canterbury Interlude*

- 140 Everich after other, righte as they were of states. *Every; ranks*  
The Frere feynded fetously the spryngil for to hold *acted winsomely*  
To spryng oppon the remnaunt, that for his cope he nold *sprinkle; cloak; wouldn't*  
Have lafft that occupacioun in that holy plase, *left*  
So longed his holy conscience to se the Nonnes fase! *face*
- 145 The Knyghte went with his compers toward the holy shryne *companions*  
To do that they were com fore, and after for to dyne. *what*  
The Pardoner and the Miller and other lewde sotes *low-born fools*  
Sought hemselff in the chirch, right as lewd gotes, *Placed; goats*  
Pyred fast and poured highe oppon the glase, *Looked intently; peered; stained-glass*
- 150 Counterfeting gentilmen, the armes for to blase, *Posing as; heraldic arms; identify*  
Diskyveryng fast the peyntour, and for the story mourned <sup>1</sup>  
And ared also — right as rammes horned! *interpreted; straight*  
“He bereth a balstaff,” quod the toon, “and els a rakes ende.” <sup>2</sup>  
“Thow faillest,” quod the Miller, “thowe hast nat wel thy mynde. *are wrong*
- 155 It is a spere, yf thowe canst se, with a prik tofore *point on top*  
To bussh adown his enmy and thurh the sholder bore.” *push; enemy; pierce*  
“Pese!” quod the Hoost of Southwork. “Let stond the wyndow glased. *glased*  
Goth up and doth your offerynge. Ye semeth half amased. *dazed*  
Sith ye be in company of honest men and good, *Since*
- 160 Worcheth somewhat after, and let the kynd of brode <sup>3</sup>  
Pas for a tyme. I hold it for the best,  
For who doth after company may lyve the bet in rest.” *does so in public*  
Then passed they forth boystly, goglyng with hir hedes, *boisterously; oggling*  
Kneled adown tofore the shryne, and hertlich hir bedes *devoutly; rosaries*
- 165 They preyd to Seynt Thomas, in such wise as they couth. *manner; knew how*  
And sith the holy relikes ech man with his mowth *then; mouth*  
Kissed, as a goodly monke the names told and taught. *while*  
And sith to other places of holynes they raughte *then; reached*  
And were in hir devocioun tyl service were al doon,
- 170 And sith they drowgh to dyneward, as it drew to noon. *then; went to lunch*  
Then, as manere and custom is, signes there they boughte, *souvenir tokens*  
For men of contre shuld know whom they had soughte. *So that neighbors*  
Ech man set his sylver in such thing as they liked. *purchased with his money*

<sup>1</sup> *Explicating swiftly the depiction, and upon the story meditated*

<sup>2</sup> *“That one bears a stout stick,” said the one, “just like a rake handle.”*

<sup>3</sup> *Behave with more reserve, and hide your native (gauche) manner*

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

- And in the meenwhile, the Miller had i-piked *stuffed*  
 175 His bosom ful of signes of Caunterbury broches, *tokens*  
 Huch the Pardoner and he pryvely in hir pouches *Which; secretly; pockets*  
 They put hem afterward, that noon of hem it wist, *them; knew*  
 Save the Sompnour seid somewhat and seyde to hem, "List, *Except; saw; Listen*  
 Halff part!" quod he pryvely, rownyng on hir ere. *Give half; whispering in*  
 180 "Husht! Pees!" quod the Miller. "Seist thoue nat the Frere, *Don't you see*  
 Howe he lowreth under his hood with a doggissh ey? *lowers; greedy eye*  
 Hit shuld be a pryvy thing that he coude nat aspy. *It*  
 Of every crafft he can somewhat, Our Lady gyve hym sorowe!" *trick; knows*  
 "Amen," tho quod the Sompnour, "on eve and eke on morowe!"  
 185 So cursed a tale he told of me, the devil of hell hym spede — *treat*  
 And me! — but yf I pay hym wele and quyte wele his mede, *me too; repay; fee*  
 Yf it hap homward that ech man tell his tale,  
 As we did hiderward, thoughe I shuld set at sale *on display*  
 Al the shrewdnes that I can, I wol hym nothing spare *knavery*  
 190 That I nol touch his taberd somewhat of his care." *wouldn't; garment; sorrow*  
 They set hir signes oppon hir hedes, and som oppon hir capp, *their badges*  
 And sith to the dynerward they gan for to stapp. *then; walk*  
 Every man in his degre wissh and toke his sete, *washed; seat*  
 As they were wont to doon at soper and at mete, *do; meal*  
 195 And were in scilence for a tyme, till girdill gon arise. *silence; waist-sash*  
 But then as Nature axeth, as these old wise *wise men*  
 Knownen wele, when veynes been somewhat replete, *veins; full*  
 The spirites wol stere, and also metes swete *stir; foods*  
 Causen oft myrthes for to be i-meved. *amusements; motivated*  
 200 And eke it was no tyme tho for to be i-greved; *also; gloomy*  
 Every man in his wise made hertly chere, *manner*  
 Talyng his felowe of sportes and of chere, *Telling; jolliness*  
 And of other myrthes that fylle by the wey, *befell*  
 As custom is of pilgryms — and hath been many a day.  
 205 The Hoost leyde to his ere, of Southwork as ye knowe, *listened carefully*  
 And thenked al the company, both highe and lowe, *thanked*  
 So wele kepeing the coveaunt in Southwork that was made, *agreement*  
 That every man shuld by the wey with a tale glade *gladden*  
 Al the hole company in shorting of the wey: *whole; shortening; journey*  
 210 "And al is wele perfourmed, but than nowe thus I sey  
 That we must so homward, eche man tel another.  
 Thus we were accorded, and I shuld be a rother, *agreed; rudder*

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

	To set yewe in governaunce by rightful jugement."	<i>proper</i>
	"Trewly, Hoost," quod the Frere, "that was al our assent	
215	With a litill more that I shal sey thereto.	
	Ye graunted of yeur curtesy that we shuld also,	
	Al the hole company, sope with yewe at nyghte.	<i>dine</i>
	Thus I trow that it was. What sey ye, Sir Knyght?"	<i>believe</i>
	"It shal nat nede," quod the Hoost, "to axe no witnes.	<i>be necessary; ask</i>
220	Yeur record is good inowe, and of yeur gentilnes	<i>recollection; good manners</i>
	Yit I prey yewe efft ageyn, for by Seynt Thomas shryne,	<i>once again</i>
	And ye woll hold covenaut, I wol hold myne."	<i>If; your agreement</i>
	"Now trewly, Hoost," quod the Knyght, "ye have right wel i-sayd.	<i>spoken</i>
	And as towching my persone, I hold me payde,	<i>pertaining to; satisfied</i>
225	And so I trowe that al doth. Sirs, what sey ye?"	<i>believe</i>
	The Monke and eke the Marchaunte and al seid "Yee!"	<i>also</i>
	"Then al this aftermete I hold it for the best	<i>afternoon</i>
	To sport and pley us," quod the Hoost, "eche man as hym lest,	<i>pleases</i>
	And go bytyme to soper and to bed also,	<i>promptly</i>
230	So mowe we erly rysen our journey for to do."	<i>may</i>
	The Knyght arose therewithal and cast on a fressher gown,	<i>put</i>
	And his sone another, to walk in the town.	
	And so did al the remnaunt that were of that aray	<i>company</i>
	That had hir chaunges with hem; they made hem fressh and gay,	<i>extra clothes</i>
235	Sorted hem togider righte as hir lustes lay,	<i>Grouped; pleasures</i>
	As they were more used traveling by the wey.	<i>accustomed to</i>
	The Knyght with his meyné went to se the wall	<i>company</i>
	And the wardes of the town, as to a knyght befall,	<i>defenses</i>
	Devising ententiflich the strengthes al about,	<i>Describing attentively</i>
240	And apoynted to his sone the perell and the dout	<i>pointed out; peril; risk</i>
	For shot of arblast and of bowe, and eke for shot of gonne,	<i>crossbow; gun</i>
	Unto the wardes of the town, and howe it myght be wone.	<i>fortifications; won</i>
	And al defence therageyn, after his entent,	<i>against that</i>
	He declared compendiously. And al that ever he ment,	<i>exhaustively; meant</i>
245	His sone perseyved every poynt, as he was ful abill	
	To armes and to travaill, and persone covenabill.	<i>struggle; accomplished</i>
	He was of al factur after fourm of Kynde,	<i>feature; Nature</i>
	And for to deme his governaunce, it semed that his mynde	<i>judge; composure</i>
	Was much in his lady that he loved best,	<i>whom</i>
250	That made hym offt to wake when he shuld have his rest.	
	The Clerk that was of Oxenforth onto the Sompnore seyde,	<i>Oxford; unto</i>

## *The Canterbury Interlude*

	"Me semeth of grete clerge that thow art a mayde, For thow putttest on the Frere in maner of repreff That he knoweth falshede, vice, and eke a theff.	<i>education; innocent accuse; reproof</i>
255	And I it hold vertuouse and right commendabill, To have verry knowleche of thinges reprovabill. For whoso hath may eschew it and let it pas by. And els he myghte fall thereon, unware and sodenly. And thoughe the Frere told a tale of a sompnour,	<i>true avoid Otherwise; unware</i>
260	Thowe oughtest for to take it for no dishonour, For of all craffttes and of eche degré They be nat al perfite, but som nyce be." "Lo, what is worthy," seyde the Knyght, "for to be a clerk! To sommon among us hem, this mocione was ful derk. <sup>1</sup>	<i>Thou professions; social rank perfect; foolish</i>
265	I comend his wittes and eke his clergé For of ether parte he saveth honesté." The Monke toke the Person then and the Grey Frere, And preyd hem ful curteysly for to go in fere: "I have there a queyntaunce that al this yeres thre	<i>intelligence; learning preserves reputation begged; together acquaintance; these</i>
270	Hath preyd me by his lettres that I hym wold se, And ye, my brother in habit and in possessioun. And now I am here, me thinketh it is to doon To preve it in dede what cher he wold me make, And to yewe, my frendes, also for my sake."	<i>implored attire; endowment fitting test; welcome</i>
275	They went forth togider, talking of holy matere, But woot ye wele in certeyn, they had no mynd on water To drynk at that tyme, when they were met in fere, For of the best that myght be found, and therwith mery cher They had, it is no doute, for spyces and eke wyne	<i>subjects know; for certain together entertainment</i>
280	Went round about, the Gascoyn and eke the Ruyn. The Wyff of Bath was so wery, she had no will to walk. She toke the Prioress by the hond: "Madam, wol ye stalk Pryvely into the garden to se the herbes growe, And after with our hostes wyff in hir parlour rowe?	<i>Gascon (red); Rhine (white) desire (see note) stroll plants</i>
285	I woll gyve yewe the wyne, and ye shull me also, For tyll we go to soper, we have naught elles to do."	<i>afterwards; innkeeper's; rest supper; nothing</i>

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<sup>1</sup> "Lo, how worthwhile," said the Knight, "it is to be a scholar! / To summon such scholars among us, this motive was quite obscure."

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

	The Prioress, as womman taught of gentil blood and hend,	<i>nurtured; courteous</i>
	Assented to hir counsell, and forth gon they wend,	<i>plan; depart</i>
	Passyng forth sofftly into the herbery,	<i>herb-garden</i>
290	For many a herbe grewe for sew and surgery,	<i>soup; medicine</i>
	And al the aleyes feir i-pared, i-rayled and i-maked,	<i>paths; trimmed; fenced; made</i>
	The sauge and the isope i-frethed and i-staked,	<i>sage; hyssop enclosed; staked</i>
	And other beddes by and by fressh i-dight,	<i>side by side newly cultivated</i>
	For comers to the hoost righte a sportful sight.	<i>visitors; hostelry; entertaining</i>
295	The Marchaunt and the Mancipill, the Miller and the Reve,	
	And the Clerk of Oxenforth to townward gon they meve,	<i>toward town; move</i>
	And al the other meyné, and lafft noon at home —	<i>company; left</i>
	Save the Pardoner that pryvelich, when al they were goon,	<i>Except; who secretly</i>
	Stalked into the tapstry, for nothing wold he leve	<i>Crept; taproom</i>
300	To make his covenante in certen that same eve:	<i>agreement</i>
	He wold be logged with hir — that was his hole entencioun.	<i>lodged; whole</i>
	But hap and eke fortune and al the constellacioun	<i>chance; astrological forces</i>
	Was clene hym agayns, as ye shull after here.	<i>hear</i>
	For hym had better be i-logged al nyght in a myere	<i>swamp</i>
305	Then he was the same nyghte or the sonne was up.	<i>Than; before</i>
	For such was his fortune, he drank without the cupp!	<i>i.e., had difficulty</i>
	But thereof wist he no dele, ne no man of us all	<i>knew; part</i>
	May have that highe connyng to know what shal befall.	<i>knowledge</i>
	He stapped into the tapstry wonder pryvely,	<i>stepped; taproom</i>
310	And fond hir liggyng liryng, with half sclepy eye —	<i>lying full-length; sleepy</i>
	Poured fellich under hir hood and saw al his comyng,	<i>[She] peered slyly</i>
	And lay ay still, as naught she knewe, but feyned hir scleping.	<i>as if; sleeping</i>
	He put his hond to hir brest. “Awake,” quod he, “Awake!”	
	“A, Benedicite! Sir, who wist yewe here? Out! Thus I myght be take	<i>knows</i>
315	Prisoner,” quod the tapstere, “being al aloon!” —	<i>alone</i>
	And therwith breyd up in a frighte and began to groon.	<i>[she] started</i>
	“Nowe sith ye be my prisoner, yeld yewe now,” quod he.	<i>since; surrender</i>
	“I must nedes,” quod she. “I may nothing fle,	
	And eke I have no strength and am but yong of age,	
320	And also it is no mastry to cach a mouse in a cage	<i>victory</i>
	That may nowhere stert out, but closed wonder fast.	<i>enclosed</i>
	And eke, sir, I tell yewe, though ye had grete hast,	
	Ye shuld have coughed when ye com. Where lern ye curtesy?	
	Now trewlich I must chide, for of righte pryvyté	
325	Wommen been som tyme of day when they be aloon.	

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

	Where coud I, I yewe prey, when ye com efttson?"	<i>return so soon</i>
	"Nowe mercy, dere sweting, I wol do so no more.	<i>sweetheart</i>
	I thank yew an hundred sithes, and also by yeur lore	<i>times; instruction</i>
	I woll do hereafter in what place that I com.	<i>whatever</i>
330	But lovers, Kit, been evill avised ful oft and too lom.	<i>poorly advised; frequently</i>
	Wherfor, I prey yew hertlich, hold me excused.	<i>Therefore</i>
	And I behote yew trewly, it shal no more be used.	<i>promise</i>
	But nowe to our purpose: how have ye fare	
	Sith I was with yew last? That is my most care,	<i>Since; prime concern</i>
335	For yf ye eyled eny thing otherwise then good,	<i>suffered</i>
	Trewly it wold chaunge my cher and my blood."	<i>complexion</i>
	"I have i-fared the wers for yewe," quod Kit. "Do ye no drede	<i>on account of</i>
	God that is above? And eke ye had no nede	
	For to conger me, God woot, with yeur nygromancy	<i>conjure; necromancy</i>
340	That have no more to vaunce me but oonly my body;	<i>Who (Kit); advance</i>
	And yf it were disteyned, then were I ondo.	<i>dishonored; undone</i>
	Iwis I trowe, Jenken, ye be nat to trust to,	<i>Surely I believe</i>
	For evermore ye clerkes con so much in book,	<i>know</i>
	Ye woll wyn a womman atte first look."	<i>at the</i>
345	Thought the Pardoner, "This goth wele!" and made hir better cher	
	And axed of hir sofftly, "Lord! Who shall ligg here	<i>asked; lie</i>
	This nyghte that is to comyng? I prey yewe tell me."	
	"Iwis, it is grete nede to tell yew," quod she;	
	"Make it nat over queynt, thoughe ye be a clerk.	<i>overly subtle</i>
350	Ye know wel inowgh iwis by loke, by word, by work."	<i>enough surely</i>
	"Shal I com then, Cristian, and fese away the cat?"	<i>drive</i>
	"Shul ye com, sir? Benedicite! What question is that?	
	Wherfore I prey yew hertly, do by my counsaill.	<i>Therefore; follow my advice</i>
	Cometh somewhat late, and for nothing fail.	
355	The dorr shall stond char up. Put it from yew sofft,	<i>ajar; Push</i>
	But be wel avised ye wake nat hem on lofft."	<i>careful; them upstairs</i>
	"Care ye nat," quod Jenken. "I can thereon atte best;	<i>Don't worry; know</i>
	Shall no man for my stering be waked of his rest."	<i>stirring</i>
	Anoon they dronk the beverage and were of oon accord,	<i>agreement</i>
360	As it semed by hir cher and also by hir word.	<i>expression</i>
	And al ascaunce she loved hym wele, she toke hym by the swere,	<i>all as if; neck</i>
	As thoughe she had lerned cury favel of som old frere.	<i>[to] curry favor</i>
	The Pardoner plukked out of his purs, I trow, the dowry	<i>funds</i>
	And toke it Kit in hir hond, and bad hir pryvely	<i>gave</i>

*The Canterbury Interlude*

- And toke it Kit in hir hond, and bad hir pryvely  
365 To ordene a rene soper for hem both to: *gave late supper; two*  
"A cawdell i-made with swete wyne and with suger also; *hot toddy*  
For trewly I have no talent to ete in your absence, *inclination*  
So longeth my hert toward yewe to be in your presence."  
He toke his leve and went his wey, as thoughe nothing were,  
370 And met with al the feleshipp. But in what plase ne where, *i.e., where he'd been*  
He spak no word therof but held hym close and still, *silent*  
As he that hoped sikerlich to have had al his will, *certainly; desire*  
And thought many a mery thought by hymself aloon:  
"I am i-logged," thought he, "best, howsoever it gone!" *lodged*  
375 And thoughe it have costed me, yit wol I do my peyn *take pains*  
For to pike hir purs tonyghte and wyn my cost ageyn." *steal*  
Now leve I the Pardonere till that it be eve,  
And woll retourn me ageyn right there as I did leve.  
When al were com togider in hir herbage, *their lodgings*  
380 The Hoost of Southwerk, as ye knowe, that had no spice of rage *speck of rashness*  
But al thing wrought prudencially, as sober man and wise:  
"Nowe woll we to the souper? Sir Knyght, seith your avyse," *speak; advice*  
Quod the Hoost ful curteisly. And in the same wise *manner*  
The Knyght answerd hym ageyn, "Sir, as ye devise, *in reply; decide*  
385 I must obey, ye woot wele, but yf I faille witt." *know; unless I lack*  
"Then taketh these prelates to yewe and wassheth and go sit, *clergymen*  
For I woll be your marchall and serve yewe echone, *master of ceremonies*  
And then the officers and I to soper shull we goon."  
They wissh and sett righte as he bad, ech man with his fere, *washed*  
390 And begonne to talk of sportes and of chere *games; entertainment*  
That they had the aftermete whils they were out; *afternoon*  
For other occupacioun til they were served about,  
They had nat at that tyme, but eny man kith a loff. *unless; cut a loaf*  
But the Pardonere kept hym close and told nothing of *quiet*  
395 The myrth and hope that he had, but kept it for hymself. *to*  
And thoughe he did, it is no fors, for he had nede to solve *sing a different tune*  
Long or it were mydnyght, as ye shul here sone, *before; hear soon*  
For he met with his love in crokeing of the moon. *crescent (i.e., unlucky phase)*  
They were i-served honestly, and ech man held hym payde, *felt satisfied*  
400 For of o maner of service hir soper was araide, *one; their; presented*  
As skill wold and reson, sith the lest of all *since; least*  
Payed ilich much, for growing of the gall. *equally; to avert ill-humor*

## *The Canterbury Interlude*

- The states that were above had of the feyrest endreyte. *estates; seating at table*
- 405 Wherfor they did hir gentilnes ageyn to al the rout; *Therefore; in return; company*  
 They dronken wyne at hir cost ones round aboute. *their; once*  
 Nowe pass I lightly over: When they souped had, *quickly; dined*  
 Tho that were of governaunce, as wise men and sad, *Those; regular habits; sober*  
 Went to hir rest and made no more to doon.
- 410 Butte Miller and the Coke dronken by the moon *But the; Cook; drank*  
 Twyes to ech other in the repenyng, *Twice; still of the night*  
 And when the Pardoner hem aspied, anoon he gan to syng *them; at once*  
 “Doubil me this bourdon,” chokelyng in his throte, *Accompany; duet; yodeling*  
 For the tapster shuld here of his mery note. *So that; hear; tune*
- 415 He cleped to hym the Sompnore, that was his own discipill, *called; Summoner, who*  
 The Yeman and the Reve and the Mauncipill, *Yeoman*  
 And stoden so holowing, for nothing wold they leve *stood; hollering; stop*  
 Tyl the tyme that it was wel within eve.  
 The Hoost of Southwork herd hem wele, and the Marchaunt both,
- 420 As they were at acountes and wexen somewhat wroth, *record-keeping; grew; angry*  
 But yit they preyd hem curteysly to rest for to wend. *travel*  
 And so they did, al the route, they dronk and made an ende, *group*  
 And eche man droughe to cusky to slepe and take his rest — <sup>1</sup>  
 Save the Pardoner that drewe apart and weyted hym a trest, *Except; spotted; nook*
- 425 For to hyde hymselff till the candill were out.  
 And in the meenwhile — have ye no doute —  
 The tapster and hir paramour and the hosteler of the house *lover; innkeeper*  
 Sit togider pryvelich, and of the best gouse *goose*  
 That was i-found in town and i-set at sale
- 430 They had thereof sufficiaunt, and dronk but litill ale, *hot toddy*  
 And sit and ete the cawdell for the Pardoner that was made *ordered*  
 With suger and with swete wyne, right as hymselff bade. *all together; bit*  
 So he that payd for all in feer had nat a twynt. *stamped than minted*  
 For offt is more better i-merked then i-mynt, *heard*
- 435 And so fared there, ful righte as ye have i-herd. *heard*  
 But who is that a womman coud nat make his berd *i.e., cheat him*  
 And she were thereabout and set hir wit thereto? *If; mind*  
 Ye woot wele I ly nat, and where I do or no, *know; lie; whether*  
 I woll nat here termyn it, lest ladies stond in plase, *determine; be present*

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<sup>1</sup> And each person withdrew to settle down to sleep and take his rest



## *The Canterbury Interlude*

440	Or els gentil women, for lesing of my grace Of daliaunce and of sportes and of goodly chere. Therefor, anenst hir estates I woll in no manere Deme ne determyn, but of lewd Kittes As tapsters and other such that hath wyly wittes	<i>losing; privilege sociability; entertainment against their Judge; uncouth barmaids</i>
445	To pik mennes purses and eke to bler hir eye; So wele they make seme soth when they falssest ly. Now of Kit Tapster and of hir paramour And the hosteler of the house that sit in Kittes bour, When they had ete and dronk, right in the same plase,	<i>i.e., deceive them seem truth innkeeper; bedroom</i>
450	Kit began to render out al thing as it was, The wowing of the Pardoner and his cost also, And howe he hoped for to lygg al nyght with hir also — But therof he shall be siker as of Goddes cope! — And sodenly kissed hir paramour and seyde, “We shul sclope	<i>explain wooing; payment lie as certain; garment sleep</i>
455	Togider hul by hul as we have many a nyghte, And yf he com and make noyse, I prey yew dub hym knyght.” “Yis, dame,” quod hir paramour, “be thow nat agast. This is his own staff, thow seyest; thereof he shal atast.” “Now trewly,” quod the hosteler, “and he com by my lot,	<i>side by side i.e., beat him afraid you say; taste if; way</i>
460	He shall drynk for Kittes love without cup or pot. And he be so hardy to wake eny gist, I make a vowe to the pecok, there shal wake a foul myst!” — And arose up therwithal and toke his leve anon. It was a shrewed company; they had served so many oon.	<i>i.e., have trouble If; rash; guest be made a stink nasty; treated</i>
465	With such maner of feleshipp ne kepe I never to dele, <sup>1</sup> Ne no man that loveth his worshipp and his hele. Quod Kit to hir paramour, “Ye must wake a while, For trewlich I am siker that within this myle The Pardoner wol be comyng, his hete to aswage.	<i>honor; health stay awake i.e., time it takes to go a mile passion to quench</i>
470	But loke ye pay hym redelich to kele his corage. And therfor, love, dischauce yewe nat til this chek be do.” “No, for God! Kit, that woll I no!” Then Kit went to bed and blew out al the lighte, And by that tyme it was nerhond quarter nyght.	<i>immediately; cool; ardor disrobe; feat is done not nearly 9:00 p.m.</i>
475	When al was still, the Pardoner gan to walk,	

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<sup>1</sup> Nor, with such sorts of people, would I care ever to deal again

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

	As glad as eny goldfynch that he herd no man talk,	
	And drowghe to Kittes dordward to herken and to list,	<i>drew; to the door; listen</i>
	And went to have fond the dor up, but the hasp and eke the twist <sup>1</sup>	
	Held hym out a whils, and the lok also.	<i>lock</i>
480	Yit trowed he no gyle, but went nere to	<i>believed; near</i>
	And scraped the dorr welplich and wyned with his mowth	<i>dog-like; whined</i>
	After a dogges lyden, as nere as he couth.	<i>Like; manner</i>
	“Away, dogg, with evil deth!” quod he that was within,	
	And made hym al redy the dorr to unpyn.	<i>unlock</i>
485	“A!” thought the Pardoner tho. “I trow my berd be made!	<i>i.e., I am tricked</i>
	The tapster hath a paramour and hath made him glade	
	With the cawdell that I ordeyned for me, as I ges.	<i>toddy; ordered; guess</i>
	Now the devill hir spede, such oon as she is!	<i>help; a one</i>
	She said I had i-congered hir. Our Lady gyve hir sorow!	<i>enchanted</i>
490	Now wold to God she were in stokkes til I shuld hir borowe,	<i>stocks; make bail</i>
	For she is the falssest that ever yit I knewe,	
	To pik the mony out of my purs! Lord, she made hir trew!”	<i>acted as if she were</i>
	And therwith he caught a cardiakill and a cold sot.	<i>heart-ache; sweat</i>
	For who hath love-longing and is of corage hote,	<i>whoever; passion</i>
495	He hath ful many a mery thought tofore his delyte,	<i>before</i>
	And right so had the Pardoner and was in evil plighte.	<i>situation</i>
	For fayling of his purpose he was nothing in ese.	<i>ease</i>
	Wherfor he fill sodenlich into a wood rese,	<i>Therefore; insane rage</i>
	Entryng wonder fast into a frensy	<i>frenzy</i>
500	For pure verry anger and for gelousy.	<i>true; jealousy</i>
	For when he herd a man within, he was almost wood.	<i>insane</i>
	And because the cost was his, no mervel though his mood	
	Were turned into vengauce, yf it myght be.	
	But this was the myscheff: al so strong as he,	<i>difficulty; just as</i>
505	Was he that was within, and lighter man also,	<i>quicker</i>
	As preved wel the batell betwene hem both to.	<i>proved; two</i>
	The Pardoner scraped efft ageyn, for nothing wold he blyn,	<i>knocked; cease</i>
	So feyn he wold have herd more of hym that was within.	<i>eagerly</i>
	“What dogg is that?” quod the paramour. “Kit, wost thou ere?”	<i>hear</i>
510	“Have God my trowth,” quod she, “it is the Pardoner.”	
	“The Pardoner with myscheff, God gyve hym evil preff!”	<i>misfortune; outcome</i>

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<sup>1</sup> And expected to have found the door open, but the latch and also the hinge

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

	<p>“Sir,” she seid, “by my trowth, he is the same theff.”</p> <p>“Thereof thou liest,” quod the Pardoner, and myght nat long forbere.</p> <p>“A! Thy fals body!” quod he. “The devill of hell thee tere!</p>	<p><i>thief</i></p> <p><i>hold back</i></p> <p><i>treacherous; tear</i></p>
515	<p>For by my trowth, a falsher sawe I never noon!” —</p> <p>And nempned hir names, many mo then oon,</p> <p>Huch to rech here were noon honesté</p> <p>Among men of good, of worship and degré.</p> <p>But shortly to conclude, when he had chid inowe,</p>	<p><i>falsher</i></p> <p><i>[he] called; more than</i></p> <p><i>Which; tell; decency</i></p> <p><i>substance; rank</i></p> <p><i>chided enough</i></p>
520	<p>He axed his staff spitouslich with wordes sharp and rowe.</p> <p>“Go to bed,” quod he within, “No more noyse thou make.</p> <p>Thy staff shall be redy tomorrow, I undertake.”</p> <p>“In soth,” quod he, “I woll nat fro the dorr wend</p>	<p><i>asked for; spitefully; rough</i></p> <p><i>declare</i></p> <p><i>go</i></p> <p><i>thief; the other</i></p>
525	<p>Quod he that was within, and leyed it on his bak,</p> <p>Right in the same plase as chapmen bereth hir pak.</p> <p>And so he did too mo, as he coude arede,</p> <p>Graspyng after with the staff in length and eke in brede,</p> <p>And fond hym otherwhile redlich inowghe</p>	<p><i>applied</i></p> <p><i>salesmen; their</i></p> <p><i>two more; reckon</i></p> <p><i>Reaching; breadth</i></p> <p><i>sometimes ready enough</i></p>
530	<p>With the staffes ende highe oppon his browe.</p> <p>The hosteler lay oppon his bedd and herd of this affray,</p> <p>And stert hym up lightlich and thought he wold asay.</p> <p>He toke a staff in his hond and highed wonder blyve,</p> <p>Tyll he were with the felesshipp that shuld never thryve.</p>	<p><i>disturbance</i></p> <p><i>quickly; investigate</i></p> <p><i>hurried; fast</i></p>
535	<p>“What be ye?” quod the hosteler, and knew hem both wele.</p> <p>“Huyst! Pese!” quod the paramour. “Jak, thou must be fele.</p> <p>There is a theff, I tell thee, within this hall dorr.”</p> <p>“A theff!” quod Jak. “This is a nobill chere</p>	<p><i>them; well</i></p> <p><i>Hush; careful</i></p> <p><i>lucky break</i></p> <p><i>capture</i></p>
540	<p>“Yis, yis! Care thee naught! With hym we shul mache</p> <p>Wel inowghe or he be go, yf so we had lighte,</p> <p>For we too be strong inowgh with o man for to fighte.”</p> <p>“The devill of hell,” quod Jak, “breke this theves bones!</p>	<p><i>Don’t worry; contend</i></p> <p><i>enough before; gone</i></p> <p><i>two; one</i></p> <p><i>thief’s</i></p> <p><i>so happens</i></p>
545	<p>The key of the kychen, as it were for the nones,</p> <p>Is above with our dame, and she hath such usage</p> <p>And she be wake of hir slepe, she falleth in such a rage</p> <p>That al the wook after there may no man hir plese,</p> <p>So she stereth aboute this house in a wood rese.</p>	<p><i>tendency</i></p> <p><i>If</i></p> <p><i>week</i></p> <p><i>stirs; mad rage</i></p> <p><i>have a better idea</i></p>
550	<p>But now I am avised bet how we shull have lyghte:</p> <p>I have too gistes aryn that this same nyghte</p>	<p><i>two guests herein</i></p>

# *The Canterbury Interlude*

	Soped in the hall and had a litill feir.	<i>Dined; fire</i>
	Go up," quod Jak, "and loke and in the asshes pire,	<i>search</i>
	And I woll kepe the dorr. He shal nat stert out!"	<i>escape</i>
	"Nay, for God, that wol I nat, lest I cach a cloute,"	<i>blow</i>
555	Seid the toder to Jak. "For thow knowest better then I	<i>other</i>
	Al the estres of this house. Go up thyselff and spy."	<i>rooms; look</i>
	"Nay, for soth!" quod Jak. "That were grete unryghte	<i>mistake</i>
	To aventur oppon a man that with hym did nat fighte.	<i>happen</i>
	Sithens thow hast hym bete and with thy staff i-pilt,	<i>Since; hit</i>
560	Me thinketh it were no reson that I shuld bere the gilt.	<i>guilt</i>
	For by the blysyng of the cole, he myght se myne hede	<i>glowing</i>
	And lightly leve me such a stroke nyhond to be dede."	<i>swiftly; nearly</i>
	"Then woll we do by comon assent sech hym al aboute.	<i>act; seek</i>
	Who that meteth hym first, pay hym on the snoute.	<i>Whoever; strike</i>
565	For me thought I herd hym here last among the pannes.	
	Kepe thow the toder syde, but ware the water cannes!	<i>watch out for</i>
	And yf he be herein, right sone we shul hym fynd,	
	And we to be strong inowghe o theff for to bynd."	<i>two; one</i>
	"Aha-ha!" thought the Pardoner; "beth there pannes aryn?"	<i>herein</i>
570	And droughe oppon that side and thought oppon a gynne.	<i>scheme</i>
	So atte last he fond oon and set it on his hede,	
	For as the case was fall, thereto he had grete nede.	
	But yit he grasped ferthermore to have somewhat in honde,	
	And fond a grete ladill right as he was gonde,	<i>ladle; going</i>
575	And thought for to stert out between hem both to;	<i>bolt out; two</i>
	And wayted wele the paramour that had doon hym wo,	<i>But [he] spied</i>
	And set hym with the ladill on the grustill on the nose	<i>gristle (i.e., bridge)</i>
	That al the wook after he had such a pose	<i>week; nasal problem</i>
	That both his eyen watered erlich by the morowe.	<i>eyes; early; morning</i>
580	But she that cause was of al had therof no sorowe.	<i>who</i>
	But nowe to the Pardoner: as he wold stert away,	<i>escape</i>
	The hosteler met with hym, but nothing to his pay.	<i>profit</i>
	The Pardoner ran so swith, the pan fil hym fro,	<i>swiftly; fell</i>
	And Jak Hosteler after hym as blyve as he myght go,	<i>fast</i>
585	And stapped oppon a bronde, al unware,	<i>stepped; cinder</i>
	That hym had been better to have goon more asware,	<i>aside</i>
	For the egge of the panne met with his shyn	<i>edge</i>
	And karff a-too a veyn and the next syn.	<i>cut in two; nearest sinew</i>
	But whils that it was grene, he thought litil on,	<i>fresh</i>

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

590	But when the oeptas was apast, the greff sat nere the boon. <sup>1</sup>	
	Yet Jak leyd to his hond to grope where to sete,	<i>sit</i>
	And when he fond he was i-hurt, the Pardoner he gan to thrett	<i>threaten</i>
	And swore by Seynt Thomas that he shuld abigg	<i>pay for it</i>
	With strokes hard and sore even oppon the rigg;	<i>back</i>
595	Yff he hym myghte fynde, he nothing wold hym spare.	<i>If</i>
	That herd the Pardoner wele and held hym better asquare	<i>aside</i>
	And thought that he had strokes ryghte inowghe,	<i>enough</i>
	Witnes on his armes, his bak, and his browe.	
	“Jak,” then quod the paramour, “where is this theff ago?”	<i>gone</i>
600	“I note,” quod tho Jak, “right now he lept me fro.	<i>don't know; then</i>
	That Cristes curs go with hym, for I have harm and spite.”	<i>injury</i>
	“By my trowth, and I also, and he goth nat al quyte!	<i>if; repaid</i>
	But and we myght hym fynd, we wold aray hym so,	<i>if; treat</i>
	That he shuld have legg ne foot tomorow on to go!”	<i>walk</i>
605	“But howe shull we hym fynd? The moon is adown.”	
	As grace was for the Pardoner, and eke when they did roun,	<i>luck; whisper</i>
	He herd hem ever wel inowghe and went the more aside,	
	And droughe hym ever bakward and lete the strokes glyde.	<i>withdrew; miss</i>
	“Jak,” quod the paramour, “I hold it for the best,	
610	Sith the moon is down, for to go to rest	<i>Since</i>
	And make the gates fast; he may nat then astert.	<i>secure; escape</i>
	And eke of his own staff he bereth a redy mark	
	Whereby thow maist hym know among al the route,	<i>group</i>
	And thow bere a redy ey and weyt wele aboute	<i>If; eye; look</i>
615	Tomorowe when they shull wend. This is the best rede.	<i>leave; plan</i>
	Jak, what seyst thowe thereto? Is this wel i-seyd?”	<i>spoken</i>
	“Thy wit is clere,” quod Jak. “Thy wit mut nedes stonde.”	<i>must necessarily</i>
	He made the gates fast. There is no more to doon.	
	The Pardoner stood asyde, his chekes ron on bleed,	<i>ran with blood</i>
620	And was right evil at ese al nyght in his hede.	
	He must of force lige lyke a Colyn swerd,	<i>perforce lie; Cologne sword</i>
	Yit it greved hym wonder sore for makeing of his berd.	<i>i.e., being tricked</i>
	He paid atte ful therefore thurh a womman art	<i>in full; woman's</i>
	For wyne and eke for cawdill, and had therof no part.	<i>hot toddy</i>
625	He therfor preyd Seynt Juliane, as ye mowe understonde,	<i>(see note)</i>

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<sup>1</sup> But when eight days had passed, the infection was located nearer the bone

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

	That the devill hir shuld spede on water and on londe,	
	So to disseyve a traveling man of his herbegage,	<i>deceive; lodging</i>
	And coude nat els save curs, his anger to aswage,	<i>except to curse; lessen</i>
	And was distract of his wit and in grete dispeyr.	<i>despair</i>
630	For after his hete, he caughte a cold thurh the nyghtes eyr	<i>heated exertion; air</i>
	That he was nere afounded and coude noon other help.	<i>nearly exhausted; knew</i>
	But as he sought his logging, he apped oppon a whelp	<i>happened</i>
	That lay under a steyr, a grete Walssh dogg	<i>stairs; Welsh</i>
	That bare aboute his nek a grete huge clogg,	<i>wood-block</i>
635	Because that he was spetouse and wold sone bite.	<i>ferocious</i>
	The clogg was honged about his nek for men shuld nat wite	<i>blame</i>
	Nothing the dogges master yf he did eny harm;	<i>In no way</i>
	So for to excuse hem both, it was a wyly charm.	<i>them; clever device</i>
	The Pardoner wold have logged hym there and lay somewhat ny.	<i>close</i>
640	The warrok was awaked and caught hym by the thy	<i>monster; thigh</i>
	And bote hym wonder spetously, defendyng wele his couch,	<i>bit; fiercely</i>
	That the Pardoner myght nat nere hym nethere touch,	<i>approach; nor</i>
	But held hym asquare by that other syde	<i>stayed away</i>
	As holsom was, at that tyme, for tereing of his hyde.	<i>healthy; to avert; skin</i>
645	He coude noon other help, but leyd adown his hede	<i>knew; remedy</i>
	In the dogges litter, and wissed after brede	<i>bread</i>
	Many a tyme and offt, the dogg for to plese,	
	To have i-ley more nere for his own ese.	
	But wissh what he wold, his Fortune seyde nay.	<i>whatever</i>
650	So trewly for the Pardoner, it was a dismol day.	<i>unlucky</i>
	The dogg lay ever grownyng, redy for to snache;	<i>growling; bite</i>
	Wherfor the Pardoner durst nat with hym mache,	<i>Therefore; struggle</i>
	But lay as styll as eny stone, remembryng his foly,	
	That he wold trust a tapster of a comon hostry,	<i>public inn</i>
655	For comenly for the most part, they been wyly echon.	<i>usually; each one</i>
	But nowe to all the company: amorow when they shuld goon,	<i>in the morning</i>
	Was noon of al the feleshipp half so sone i-dighte	<i>prepared</i>
	As was the gentil Pardoner, for al tyme of the nyghte	
	He was aredy in his aray and had nothing to doon	<i>already</i>
660	Saff shake a lite his eres, and trus and be goon.	<i>Except; little; pack</i>
	Yet or he cam in company, he wissh away the blood,	<i>before; washed</i>
	And bond the sores to his hede with the typet of his hood,	<i>bound; wounds; tippet</i>
	And made lightsom chere for men shuld nat spy	<i>merry</i>
	Nothing of his turment ne of his luxury.	<i>suffering; lust</i>

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

665	And the hosteler of the house, for nothing he coude pry, He coude nat knowe the Pardoner among the company Amorowe when they shuld wend, for aught that he coude pour, So wisely went the Pardoner out of the dogges bour, And blynched from the hosteler and turned offt aboute.	<i>innkeeper; search</i> <i>Next day; peer</i> <i>cleverly; bed</i> <i>avoided</i>
670	And evermore he held hym amyrdward the route And was ever synging to make al thing good, But yit his notes were somewhat lowe, for akyng of his hede. So at that tyme he had no more grame, But held hym to his harmes to scape shame.	<i>amidst the group</i> <i>soft; aching</i> <i>grief</i> <i>kept to himself; avoid</i>
675	The Knyght and al the felesship, forward gon they wende, Passing forth merely to the townes ende. And by that tyme they were there, the day began to rype, And the sonne merely upward gan she pipe, Pleying under the egge of the firmament.	<i>depart</i> <i>merrily</i> <i>dawn</i> <i>cheerfully; peep</i> <i>horizon</i>
680	"Now," quod the Hoost of Southwork, and to the feleshipp bent, "Who sawe ever so feir or so glad a day? And how sote this seson is entring into May! [ . . . . . ] The thrusteles and the thrushes in this glad mornyng,	<i>inclined</i> <i>sweet</i> <i>song-thrushes</i>
685	The ruddok and the goldfynch, but the nyghtyngale His amorous notes, lo, how he twyneth smale! Lo, how the trees greneth that naked were and nothing Barre this month afore, but now hir somer clothing. Lo, how Nature maketh for hem everichone,	<i>robin</i> <i>spins gracefully</i> <i>Bore; before; their</i> <i>provides</i>
690	And as many as there been, he forgeteth noon. Lo, howe the seson of the yere and Averell shoures Doth the busshes burgyn out blosoms and floures! Lo, the prymeroses, how fressh they been to seen! And many other floures among the grasses green,	<i>she</i> <i>April</i> <i>burgeon with</i> <i>primroses</i>
695	Lo, howe they spryng and sprede of divers hewe! Beholdeth and seeth both rede, white and blewe, That lusty been and confortabill for mannes sighte, For I sey for myselff it maketh my hert to lighte.	<i>colors</i> <i>pleasant</i> <i>to quicken</i>
700	Now sith Almyghty Sovereyn hath sent so feir a day, Let se nowe, as covenaut is, in shorting of the way, Who shall be the first that shall unlace his male In confort of us all, and gyn som mery tale? For and we shuld now begyn to draw lott,	<i>prior agreement</i> <i>bag</i> <i>begin</i> <i>For if; lots</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	Peraventur it myght fall there it ought not	<i>Perhaps; where</i>
705	On som unlusty persone that were nat wele awaked,	<i>cranky; wide awake</i>
	Or semy-bousy over eve, and had i-song and craked	<i>half-drunk last night; croaked</i>
	Somwhat over much. Howe shuld he than do?	<i>then</i>
	For who shuld tell a tale, he must have good will therto.	
	And eke som men fasting beth nothing jocounde,	<i>(without breakfast?); jolly</i>
710	And som hir tungen fasting beth glewed and i-bound	<i>stuck</i>
	To the palet of the mowth as offt as they mete.	<i>roof; meet</i>
	So yf the lott fell on such, no thonk shuld they gete.	<i>gratitude</i>
	And som in the mornyng, hir mouthes beth adoun;	<i>frowning</i>
	Till that they be charmed, hir wordis woll nat soun.	<i>enchanted; sound</i>
715	So this is my conclusioun and my last knot:	<i>point</i>
	It were grete gentilnes to tell without lott."	<i>discretion; drawing lots</i>
	"By the Rood of Bromholm," quod the Marchaunte tho,	<i>Cross; then</i>
	"As fer as I have sayled, riden and i-go,	<i>walked</i>
	Sawe I never man yit tofore this ilch day	<i>same</i>
720	So well coude rewle a company as our Hoost in fay.	<i>faith</i>
	His wordes been so comfortabill and cometh so in seson	<i>proper time</i>
	That my wit is overcom to make eny reson	<i>argument</i>
	Contrary to his counsaill at myne ymaginacioun.	
	Wherefor I woll tell a tale to yeur consolacioun,	
725	In ensaumpill to yewe that when that I have do,	<i>As an example; done</i>
	Another be all redy then for to tell right so	
	To fulfill our Hoostes will and his ordinaunce.	<i>plan</i>
	There shall no fawte be found in me; good will shal be my chaunce.	<i>fault; occasion</i>
	With this I be excused of my rudines,	<i>ignorance</i>
730	Allthoughe I cannat peynt my tale but tell as it is,	<i>embroider</i>
	Lepyng over no centence, as ferforth as I may,	<i>essential point, to the extent</i>
	But tell yewe the yolke and put the white away."	<i>[of an egg]</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	Whilom, yeres passed in the old dawes,	<i>Once; days</i>
	When rightfullich by reson governed were the lawes,	
735	And principally in the ceté of Rome that was so rich,	<i>city</i>
	And worthiest in his dayes and noon to hym ilich	<i>like</i>
	Of worshipp ne of wele, ne of governaunce,	<i>honor; wealth</i>
	For all londes Cristened therof had dotaunce,	<i>reverence</i>
	And all other naciouns, of what feith they were.	<i>whatever</i>



### *The Tale of Beryn*

740	Whils the Emperour was hole and in his paleyse there, I-mayntened in honour and in popes se, Rome was then obeyed in all Cristienté. But it fareth thereby as it doth by other thinges, For burh nether ceté, regioun ne kynges	<i>healthy</i> <i>territory</i>  <i>town nor city</i>
745	Beth nat nowe so worthy as were by old tyme, As we fynde in romaunces, in gestes and in ryme. For all thing doth wast, and eke mannes lyffe Ys more shorter then it was, and our wittes fyve Mow nat comprehende nowe in our dietes	<i>heroic tales</i> <i>decay</i> <i>five senses</i> <i>Might; lifestyles</i>
750	As somtyme myghte these old wise poetes. But sith that terrene thinges been nat perdurabill, No mervell is thoughe Rome be somewhat variabill Fro honour and fro wele, sith his frendes passed, As many another town is payred and i-lassed	<i>earthly; permanent</i> <i>altered</i> <i>wealth; its supporters</i> <i>ruined; degraded</i>
755	Within these fewe yeres, as we mowe se at eye: Lo, sirs, here fast by Wynchelse and Ry. But yit the name is ever oon of Rome, as it was grounde After Romus and Romulus that first that ceté founded, That brithern weren both to, as old bookes writen.	<i>singular</i> <i>Remus; city</i> <i>brothers; two</i>
760	But of hir lyff and governaunce I wol nat nowe enditen, But of other mater that falleth to my mynde. Wherfor, gentill sirs, ye that beth behynde, Draweth somewhat nere, thikker to a route, That my wordes mowe soune to ech man aboute.	<i>relate</i>  <i>i.e., other pilgrims</i> <i>closer in a group</i> <i>sound</i>
765	After these too bretheren, Romulus and Romus, Julius Cezar was Emperour, that rightfull was of domus. This ceté he governed nobilich wele And conquerd many a regioun, as cronicul doth us tell. For shortly to conclude, al tho were adversaries	<i>two</i> <i>Caesar; judgment</i> <i>city</i> <i>history</i> <i>those who</i>
770	To Rome in his dayes, he made hem tributories; So had he in subjeccioun both frende and foon, Of wich I tell yew trewly, Englund was oon. Yet after Julius Cezar, and sith that Criste was bore, Rome was governed as wele as it was tofore,	<i>foes</i> <i>since</i>
775	And namelich in that tyme and in tho same yeres When it was governed by the Doseperes. As semeth wele by reson, whoso can entende, That o mannes witt ne will may nat comprehend	<i>particularly; those</i> <i>Twelve Peers</i> <i>understand</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	The boncheff and the myscheff as mowe many hedes.	<i>good fortune</i>
780	Therfor hir operaciouns, hir domes and hir deedes	<i>judgments</i>
	Were so egallich i-doon, for in al Cristen londes	<i>justly</i>
	Was noon that they spared for to mend wronges.	
	Then Constantyne the Third, after these Doseperes,	
	Was Emperour of Rome and regned many yeres.	
785	So shortly to pas over, after Constantynes dayes	
	Philippus Augustinus, as songen is in layes,	
	That Constantynes sone and of plener age	<i>Who [as]; maturer</i>
	Was emperour i-chose, as fil by heritage,	<i>fell by inheritance</i>
	In whose tyme sikerlich the Seven Sages were	<i>certainly</i>
790	In Rome dwelling dessantly. And yf ye lust to lere	<i>permanently; desire</i>
	Howe they were i-cleped or I ferther goon,	<i>called before</i>
	I woll tell yewe the names of hem everychoon,	
	And declare yewe the cause why they hir names bere.	<i>bore</i>
	The first was i-cleped Sother Legifeer:	
795	This is thus much for to sey as "man bereing the lawe";	
	And so he did trewly, for lever he had be sclawe	<i>rather; slain</i>
	Then do or sey enything that sowned out of reson,	<i>sounded</i>
	So cleen was his conscience i-set in trowth and reson.	
	Marcus Stoycus, the second, so pepill him highte:	<i>called</i>
800	That is to mene in our conscit "a keper of the righte";	<i>interpretation</i>
	And so he did ful trewe, for the record and the plees,	<i>legal actions</i>
	He wrote hem ever trewly and took noon other fees,	<i>i.e., bribes</i>
	But such as was ordeyned to take by the yere.	
	Now, Lord God, in Cristendon I wold it were so clere!	<i>clean</i>
805	The third, Crassus Asulus, among men cleped was	
	"An hous of rest and ese and counsell in every case;"	
	For to understand, that was his name ful righte,	
	For evermore the counsalles he helped with all his myghte.	<i>defenseless</i>
	Antonyus Judeus the ferth was i-cleped,	<i>fourth</i>
810	That was as much to meen, as wele men might have cleped:	
	As enything purposed of al the long yeer	
	That myght have made hym sory or chonged ones chere, <sup>1</sup>	
	But evermore rejoyssing what-that-ever betid,	<i>happened</i>
	For his hert was ever mery right as the somer bridd.	<i>bird</i>

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<sup>1</sup> *That might have made him sorrowful or ever once have altered his cheerfulness*

## *The Tale of Beryn*

- 815 Sumus Philopater was the fiftes name, *fifth man's*  
 That thoughe men wold sclee hym or do hym al the shame, *Who; slay; dishonor*  
 Anger or disese, as evill as men couthe, *sorrow*  
 Yit wold he love hem never the wers in hert ne in mowth. *speech*  
 His will was cleen under his foot and nothing hym above; *completely under control*  
 820 Therfor he was cleped "fader of perfite love."  
 The sixt and the seveneth of these Seven Sages  
 Was Scypio and Sichero, as the word "Astrolages"  
 Was surname to hem both after hir sciences,  
 For of astronomy sikerlich, the cours and al the fences, *certainly; orbits; limits*  
 825 Both they knowe hit wele inowghe and were righte sotil of art. *it; cunning*  
 But nowe to other purpose, for here I woll departe  
 As lightly as I can and drawe to my matere. *speedily; subject*  
 In that same tyme that these sages were  
 Dwellyng thus in Rome, a litill without the walles *outside*  
 830 In the subbarbes of the town, of chambres and of halles *suburbs*  
 And al other howsing that to a lord belonged *buildings*  
 Was noon within the ceté, ne noon so wele behonged *city; draped*  
 With docers of highe pryse, ne walled so aboute *wall-hangings; value*  
 As was a cenatours hous, within and eke without; *senator's*  
 835 Faunus was his name, a worthy man and riche,  
 And for to sey shortlych, in Rome was noon hym lych. *in brief; like*  
 His sportes and his estres were ful evenaute *chambers; adorned*  
 Of tresour and of lordshipp; also the most vaillant *valorous*  
 He was and eke i-com of highe lynage. *lineage*  
 840 And atte last he toke a wyff like to his parage, *at the; parentage*  
 For noriture and connyng, bewté and parentyne *upbringing; education; ancestry*  
 Were tho counted more with then gold or sylver fyne. *then; than*  
 But nowe it is al other in many mannes thought,  
 For muk is nowe i-maried and vertu set at nought. *trash; wedded; zero*  
 845 Faunus and his worthy wyff were togider aloon  
 Fiftene wynter fullich, and issu had they noon. *offspring*  
 Wherfor hir joyes were nat halff perfite, *nearly complete*  
 For utterlich to have a child was al hir delite, *truly*  
 That myghte enjoy hir heritage and weld hir honour, *their; possess*  
 850 And eke when they were febill, to be hir trew socoure. *elderly; steady aid*  
 Hir fasting and hir preyer and al that ever they wroughte,  
 As pilgremage and almes-ded, ever they besoughte *charity*  
 That God wold of his goodnes som fruyte betwene hem send. *offspring*

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	For gynnyng of hir spousaill, the myddil and the ende,	<i>beginning; wedlock</i>
855	This was hir most besynes, and al other delites	<i>chief concern; delights</i>
	And eke this worldes riches they set at litil pris.	<i>value</i>
	So atte last, as God wold, it fill oppon a day	<i>fell</i>
	As this lady fro chirchward went in the way,	
	A child gan stere in hir wombe, as Goddes will was,	<i>stir</i>
860	Wherof she gan to mervill and made shorter pas,	<i>took smaller steps</i>
	With colour pale and eke wanne, and fyll in hevynes,	<i>fell; illness</i>
	For she had never tofore that day such manere seknes.	
	The wymmen that with hir were gon to behold	<i>who; began</i>
	The lady and hir chere, but nothing they told,	<i>expression; said</i>
865	But feir and sofft with ese homward they hir led,	
	For hir soden seknes ful sore they were adred.	<i>afraid</i>
	For she was inlich gentil, kinde and amyabill,	<i>thoroughly</i>
	And eke trewe of hert and nothing variabill.	<i>in no way fickle</i>
	She loved God above al thyng, and dred syn and shame —	<i>feared</i>
870	And Agea sikerly was hir rightful name.	<i>&lt;Agatha, "the Good"</i>
	And after, in breff tyme, when it was perseyved	<i>afterwards</i>
	That she had done a wommans dede and had a child conseved,	<i>conceived</i>
	The joy that she made, there may no tung tell.	<i>tongue</i>
	And also much or more, yf I ne ly shell,	<i>Just as; shall not lie</i>
875	Faunus made in his behalf for this glad tyding,	<i>news</i>
	That I trow I leve the Emperour ne the Kyng	<i>believe</i>
	Made no better chere to wyff ne no more myrth	<i>treatment</i>
	Then Faunus to Agea. And when the tyme of birth	<i>Than</i>
	Nyghed nere and nere, after cours of kynde,	<i>Drew nearer; nature</i>
880	Weteth wele in certen that al the wit and mynde	<i>Know</i>
	Of Faunus was continuell of feir delyveraunce	<i>delivery</i>
	Betwene Agea and his child, and made grete ordenaunce	<i>preparation</i>
	Ageyn the tyme it shuld be bore, as it was for to doon.	<i>In advance of</i>
	So as God wold, when tyme cam, Agea had a son.	
885	Butte joy that Faunus made was dobil tho tofore,	<i>double than</i>
	When that he knewe in certen she had a sone i-bore,	
	And sent anoon for nursses, four and no les,	
	To reule this child afterward as yeres did pas.	<i>nurture</i>
	The child was kept so tenderly that it throff wel the bett,	<i>thrived; better</i>
890	For what the norisshe axed, anoon it was i-fett.	<i>whatever; nurses; fetched</i>
	In his chamber it norisshe was; to town it mut nat go.	<i>he</i>
	Faunus loved it so chere, hit myght nat part hym fro.	<i>dearly; it (the baby)</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	It was so feir a creature as myght be on lyve	<i>alive</i>
	Of lymes and of fetour, and growe wonder blyve.	<i>limbs; figure; quickly</i>
895	This child that I of tell — Berinus was his name —	
	Was over-mych chersshed, wich turned hym into grame,	<i>pampered; grief</i>
	As ye shull here after when tyme cometh and spase,	<i>later</i>
	For after swete the soure cometh ful offt in many a plase;	<i>sweet</i>
	For as sone as he coude go and also speke,	<i>walk</i>
900	All that he set his eye on or after list to keke,	<i>wanted; look upon</i>
	Anoon he shuld it have, for no man hym werned.	<i>admonished</i>
	But it had be wel better he had be wele i-lerned	<i>been; [if] he; taught</i>
	Noriture and gentilnes, and had i-had som hey,	<i>restraint</i>
	For it fill so after with what child he did pley,	<i>later; whatever</i>
905	Yf the pley ne liked hym, he wold breke his hede	
	Or with a knyff hym hurt, right nighehond to be dede.	<i>nearly</i>
	For there nas knyght ne squyer in his faders house	<i>wasn't</i>
	That thought his own persone most coraious	<i>courageous</i>
	That did or seid enything Berinus to displese,	
910	That he nold spetously anoon oppon hym rese.	<i>wouldn't angrily; attack</i>
	Wherof his fader had joy and his moder also,	
	Yit it semeth to many a man it was nat wisely do.	<i>done</i>
	When Beryn passed was seven yeer and grewe in more age,	
	He wrought ful many an evill chek, for such was his corage	<i>deed; inclination</i>
915	That there he wist or myghte do eny evill dede,	<i>wherever he knew</i>
	He wold never sese for aught that men hym seyde.	<i>cease; said to him</i>
	Wherfor many a pore man ful offt was agreved,	
	But Faunus and Agea ful lite theron beleved.	
	And thoughe men wold pleyne, ful short it shuld avail,	<i>complain; little</i>
920	For Faunus was so myghty and cheff of all counsaill	<i>chief</i>
	With Augustyn the Emperour that al men hym dradd	<i>dreaded</i>
	And lete pas over mischeff and harmes that they had.	<i>injuries</i>
	Berinus ferthermore loved wele the dise	<i>dice</i>
	And for to pley at hazard, and held therof grete pryse,	<i>gambling; esteem</i>
925	And al other games that losery was in,	<i>risk of loss</i>
	And evermore he lost and never myghte wyn.	
	Berinus atte hazard many a nyghte he waked,	
	And offt tyme it fill so that he cam home al naked.	<i>befell; i.e., lost his shirt</i>
	And that was al his joy, for ryghte wele he knewe	
930	That Agea his moder wold cloth hym newe.	<i>anew</i>
	Thus Berinus lyved, as I have told tofore,	

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	Tyll he was of the age of eightene yeer or more.	
	But other whils amonges for pleyntes that were grete,	<i>over and over again</i>
	Faunus made amendes and put hem in quyete.	
935	So was the fader cause the sone was so wild,	<i>the cause [that]</i>
	And so have many mo such of his own child	<i>more</i>
	Because of his undoyng, as we mowe se al day.	<i>every day</i>
	For thing i-take in is hard to put away.	<i>internalized</i>
	As hors that ever trotted, trewlich I yew tell,	
940	It were hard to make hym after to ambill well;	<i>afterwards</i>
	Right so by Beryn when he had his lust and will when he was lite,	<i>little</i>
	It shuld be hevye afterward to reve his old delite,	<i>deprive</i>
	Save the whele of Fortune that no man may withstonde,	<i>Except that</i>
	For every man on lyve thereon he is gond;	<i>alive; going</i>
945	O spoke she turned bakward right atte highe noon	<i>One spoke [of the wheel]</i>
	All ageyn Berinus, as ye shull here sone.	<i>against</i>
	Agea his moder fil in grete sekenes	<i>fell; sickness</i>
	And sent after husbond with wordes hir to lis,	<i>comfort</i>
	And for she wold tell hym hir hole hertes will,	<i>whole</i>
950	Er she out of the world parted, as it was righte and skill.	<i>Before; reasonable</i>
	When Faunus was i-come and sawe so rodylese	<i>colorless</i>
	His wyff that was so dere, that for love he chese,	<i>whom; chose</i>
	No mervell thoughe his hert were in grete mournyng,	
	For he perseyved fullich she drewe to hir ending.	
955	Yit made he other chere then in his hert was,	<i>expression than</i>
	To put away discomforte, dissimilyng with his fase	<i>disguising</i>
	The hevynes of his hert, with chere he did it close.	<i>conceal</i>
	For such a maner crafft there is with hem can glose,	<i>[who] can cover over</i>
	Save that tourneth al to cautele — but Faunus did nat so,	<i>deception</i>
960	For weteth wele in certeyn, his hert was ful of woo	<i>know; woe</i>
	For his wyff, Agea, and yit for crafft he couthe,	<i>despite the skill</i>
	The teres fro his eyen ran down by his mowth;	
	When he sawe the panges of deth comyng so fast	
	Oppon his wyff, Agea, almost his hert tobrast.	<i>Upon; burst</i>
965	Agea lyfft up hir eyen and beheld the chere	<i>lifted; eyes</i>
	Of hir husbond, Faunus, that was so trewe a fere,	<i>who; companion</i>
	And seyde, “Sir, why do ye thus? This is an elyng fare.	<i>ailing manner</i>
	In comfort of us both, yf ye myghte spare	
	And put away this hevenes whils that ye and I	<i>gloom</i>
970	Myghte speke of other thinges, for Deth me nygheth nyghe.	<i>approaches near</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	For to body ne to soule, this vayleth nat a krase.”	<i>matters; cress-leaf</i>
	“Now telleth on,” quod Faunus, “and I wol lete it pase For the tyme of talkyng, as wele as I may. But out of my remembraunce onto my endyng day	
975	Yeur deth wol never, I woot it wele, but ever be in mynde.”	<i>know</i>
	“Then, good sir,” quod Agea, “beth to my soule kynde, When my body is out of sighte, for therto have I nede, For truer make then ye be, in word ne in dede,	<i>mate than</i>
	Had never womman, ne more kyndnes	
980	Hath shewed onto his make, I knowe right wele iwis.	<i>shown; mate</i>
	Now wold ye so hereafter in hert be as trewe To lyve without make and on yeur sone rewe	<i>spouse; take pity</i>
	That litill hath i-learned sithens he was bore.	<i>Who; since</i>
	Let hym have no stepmoder, for children had tofore	<i>i.e., from a previous marriage</i>
985	Comelich they loveth nat. Wherefore with hert I prey,	<i>Usually; i.e., stepmothers</i>
	Have chere onto yeur sone after my endyng day.	<i>Be kind</i>
	For so God me help, and yew lafft me behynde,	<i>if you left</i>
	Shuld never man on lyve bryng it in my mynde,	<i>alive</i>
	To be no more i-wedded but lyve soule aloon.	<i>i.e., unmarried</i>
990	Nowe ye knowe al my will. Good sir, think thereon.”	
	“Certes,” quod Faunus, “whils I have wittes fyve, I thynk never after yewe to have another wyff.”	
	The preest was com therwithal for to do hir rightes.	<i>last rites</i>
	Faunus toke his leve, and all the other knyghtes;	
995	Hir kyn and all hir frendes kissed hir echone.	<i>family; each one</i>
	It is no nede to axe where there was dole or noon.	<i>ask whether; sorrow</i>
	Agea cast hir eye up and loked al aboute, And wold have kissed Beryn, but then was he withoute,	<i>away</i>
	Pleyng to the hazard as he was wont to doon,	<i>Gambling</i>
1000	For as sone as he had ete, he wold ren out anoon.	<i>run</i>
	And when she sawe he was nat there, that she thought most on,	<i>whom</i>
	Hire sekenes and hir mournyng berst hir hert anoon.	<i>broke</i>
	A damesell tofore that was ronne into the town	<i>maid-servant earlier</i>
	For to seche Beryn, that pleyd for his gown	<i>seek; who</i>
1005	And had almost i-lost it right as the damesel cam,	<i>just as</i>
	And swore and stared as he was wood, as longed to the game.	<i>mad; was befitting</i>
	The damesell seyde to Beryn, “Sir, ye must com home, For but ye highe blyve that ye were i-come,	<i>unless; hurry fast</i>
	Yeur moder woll be dede. She is yit on live;	<i>alive</i>

# *The Tale of Beryn*

1010	Yf ye woll speke with hir, ye must highe blyve!"	<i>make haste</i>
	"Who bad so, lewd Kit?" — "Yeur fader, sir," quod she.	<i>low-born</i>
	"Go home, lewde vise-nag, that evil mut thowe the!"	<i>vice-scolder; thrive</i>
	Quod Beryn to the damesell and gan hir fray and feer,	<i>frighten; scare</i>
	And bad the devill of Hell hir shuld totere.	<i>tear apart</i>
1015	"Hast thowe ought els to do but let me of my game?	<i>prevent</i>
	Now, by God in heven, by Peter and by Jame!"	
	Quod Beryn in grete anger and swore by book and bell,	
	Rehersing many names mo then me list to tell.	<i>Repeating</i>
	"Nere thow my faders messenger, thow shuldest never ete brede!	<i>Were not</i>
1020	I had lever my moder and also thowe were dede	<i>I'd prefer</i>
	Then I shuld lese the game that I am now in!" —	<i>Than; lose</i>
	And smote the damesell under the ere; the weet gon upward spyn. <sup>1</sup>	
	The deth of Agea he set at lital prise.	<i>value</i>
	So in that wrath frelich Beryn threwe the dise	<i>boldly</i>
1025	And lost with that same cast al was leyde adown,	<i>roll all [that]</i>
	And stert up in a wood rage and balled on his crown,	<i>mad frenzy; hammered</i>
	And so he did the remnaunte, as many as wold abide.	<i>did [strike]</i>
	But for drede of Faunus, his felawes gan to hide	
	And never had will ne lust with Beryn for to fighte,	
1030	But ever redy to pley and wyn what they myghte.	
	The deth of Agea sprang about the town,	<i>spread [as news]</i>
	And every man that herd the bell for hir sown	<i>toll</i>
	Bemened hir ful sore, saff Beryn toke noon hede,	<i>Lamented; except</i>
	But sought another feleshipp and quyklich to hem yede,	<i>went</i>
1035	To such maner company as shuld never thryve,	
	For such he loved better then his moders lyve.	<i>life</i>
	And evermore it shuld be nyghte or he wold home drawe,	<i>before</i>
	For of his fader in certen he had no maner awe.	<i>respect</i>
	For ever in his yowthe he had al his will	
1040	And was i-passed chastising, but men wold hym kill.	<i>unless</i>
	Faunus for Agea, as it was wele sitting,	<i>befitting</i>
	Made grete ordenaunce for hir burying,	<i>preparation</i>
	Of prelates and of prestes and of al other thing,	
	As thoughe she had be a wyff of a worthy kyng.	
1045	It myght nat have be mended, such was his gentilnes,	<i>improved</i>

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<sup>1</sup> And he struck the damsel under her ear; the blood spurted upward.



## *The Tale of Beryn*

	For at hir enter yng was many a worthy messe.	<i>interring; mass</i>
	For four wookes full, or he did hir entere,	<i>weeks; before; bury</i>
	She lay in lede within his house. But Beryn cam nat there,	<i>lead [coffin]</i>
	Namelich onto the place there his moder lay,	<i>where</i>
1050	Ne ones wold he a pater-noster for hir soule say.	<i>once; Lord's Prayer</i>
	His thought was al in unthryfft, lechery and dyse,	<i>extravagance; dice</i>
	And drawing al to foly, for yowth is recheles	<i>reckless</i>
	But there it is refreyned and hath som maner eye.	<i>Except where; i.e., supervision</i>
	And therfor me thinketh that I may wele sey:	<i>what</i>
1055	A man i-passed yowth and is without lore	<i>instruction</i>
	May be wele i-likened to a tre without more	<i>roots</i>
	That may nat bowe ne bere fruyte, but root and ever wast;	<i>grow branches; rot</i>
	Right so every youthe fareth that no man list to chast.	<i>desires to discipline</i>
	This mowe we know verely by experience	<i>truly</i>
1060	That yerd maketh vertu and benevolence	<i>beating-rod</i>
	In childhode for to growe, as preveth imaginacioun;	<i>proves</i>
	A plant whils it is grene, or it have dominacioun,	<i>before; strength</i>
	A man may with his fyngers ply it where hym list	<i>bend; pleases</i>
	And make thereof a shakill, a withey or a twist,	<i>shackle; wreath; hinge</i>
1065	But let the plant stond, and yeres overgrowe,	<i>grow thicker</i>
	Men shall nat with both his hondes unnethes make it bowe.	<i>hardly; bend</i>
	No more myght Faunus make his sone Beryn,	
	When he growe in age, to his lore enclyne.	<i>advice</i>
	For every day when Beryn rose, unwassh he wold dyne	<i>unbathed</i>
1070	And drawe hym to his feleshipp as even as a lyne,	<i>directly</i>
	And then com home, and ete and soop, and sclepe at nyghte.	<i>sup; sleep</i>
	This was al his besynes, but yf that he did fighte.	<i>occupation; unless</i>
	Wherfor his faders hert, Faunus, gan for to blede,	
	That of his moder that lay at home he took no more hede.	<i>who</i>
1075	And so did all the pepill that dwelled in the town	
	Of Beryns wildnes gon speke and eke rounne.	<i>whisper</i>
	Faunus oppon a day, when Beryn cam at eve,	
	Was set oppon a purpose to make his sone leve	<i>forsake</i>
	All his shrewd tacches, with goodnes yf he myghte,	<i>wicked habits</i>
1080	And taughte hym feir and sofft. But Beryn toke it light	<i>slightly</i>
	And counted at litill price al his faders tale.	<i>words</i>
	Faunus saw it wold nat; with colour wan and pale	<i>wouldn't [succeed]</i>
	He parted from his sone, and with a sorowful hert.	
	I can ne write halffyndele howe sore he did smert	<i>half-part; suffer from</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

1085	The disobeying of his sone and his wyffes deth, That, as the book telleth, he wisshed that his breth Had i-been above the serkill celestyne, So fervent was his sorowe, his anger and his pyne.	<i>spirit</i> <i>heavenly circle (primum mobile)</i> <i>pain</i>
	So, shortly to conclude, Agea was entered,	<i>interred</i>
1090	And Faunus lyved wyffles — thre yeer were wered — Wherof there was grete spech for his highe honour, Tyll atte last, word cam onto the Emperour That Faunus was without wyff, and seld was jocounde, But mournyng for Agea that he was to i-bounde,	<i>wifeless; elapsed</i> <i>report</i> <i>seldom</i> <i>to whom; wedded</i>
1095	And lyved as an hermyte, soule and destitute, Without consolacioun, pensyff offt and mut. Wherfor Augustinus, of Rome the Emperour, Was inwardlich sory and in grete dolour. When the Seven Sages and Senatoures all	<i>unmarried; desolate</i> <i>mute</i>
1100	Were assembled to discryve what shuld therof fall, The wiche seyde shortly: for a molestacioun, There was noon other remedy but a consolacioun, For whoso were in enything displeased or agreved Must by a like thing egall be remeved.	<i>set forth; befall</i> <i>in short; annoyance</i>
1105	And when the Emperour knewe al hir determinacioun, Quiklich in his mynde he had imaginacioun That Faunus for Agea was in highe distres And must be i-cured with passing gentilnes Of som lusty lady that of pulcritude	<i>equal; removed</i> <i>their advice</i> <i>understanding</i>
1110	Were excellent al other. So, shortly to conclude, The Emperour had a love tofore he had a wyff That he loved as hertlich as his own lyff, As was as feir a creature as sone myghte beshyne, So excellent of bewté that she myght be shryne	<i>delightful; beauty</i> <i>surpassing</i>
1115	To all other wymmen that were tho livand. But for the Emperour had a wyff, ye shul wele understond, He cam nat in hir company to have his delite, For Cristendom and conscience was tho more perfite Then it is now-a-dayes, yf I durst tell.	<i>Whom; whole-heartedly</i> <i>creation; sun</i> <i>beauty</i>
	But I woll leve at this tyme. Than Faunus also snell Was after sent in hast of sekenes to be cured. So, what for drede and elles, they were both ensured In presence of the Emperour, so Faunus myght nat flee.	<i>then living</i> <i>because</i> <i>then; correct</i> <i>Than</i> <i>Then; quickly</i> <i>sickness</i> <i>so forth; betrothed</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

- It was the Emperours will; it myght noon other be.
- 1125     So within a tyme Agea was forgete, *forgotten*  
           For Faunus thought litill on that he hir behighte. *what; promised to her*  
           For as the Seven Sages had afore declared,  
           It cam al to purpos, for Faunus litill cared  
           For enything at all save his wyff to plese, *except*
- 1130     That Rame was i-cleped. For rest nether ese *Who; was called; nor ease*  
           Faunus never had out of hir presence,  
           So was his hert on hir i-set that he coude no defence, *knew*  
           Save evermore be with hir and stare on hir visage, *Except; face*  
           That the most parte of Rome held it for dotage, *considered; infatuation*
- 1135     And had much mervell of his variaunce. *fickleness*  
           But what is that Fortune cannat put in chaunce? *at risk*  
           For there nas man on lyve on womman more bedoted *wasn't; alive; obsessed*  
           Then Faunus was in Rame, ne halff so much i-soted. *Than; stupefied*
- When that Rame had knowleche that Faunus was i-smyt *smitten*
- 1140     With the dart of Love, ye mowe right wele it wyt *understand*  
           That all that ever she coude cast or bythynch *plot; devise*  
           Was al ageyn Berinus. For many a sotill wench *against; scheme*  
           She thought and wrought day by day, as meny wommen doon  
           Tyll they have of hir desire the full conclusioun.
- 1145     For the more that Faunus of Rame made,  
           The more daungerous was Rame and of chere sade, *aloof; sad expression*  
           And kept well hir purpose under coverture. *secrecy*  
           She was the las to blame — it grew of Nature — *less*  
           But thoughe that Rame wrought so, God forbede that all
- 1150     Were of that condicioun! Yet touch no man the gall, *sore spot*  
           It is my pleyn counsell, but doth as other doth:  
           Take yeur part as it cometh, of roughe and eke of smoth.  
           Yit noritur, wit and gentilnes, reson and perfite mynde, *Yet; correct*  
           Doth al thes worthy wommen to worch ageyns kynde, *work; nature*
- 1155     That thoughe they be agreved, they suffer and endure *annoyed*  
           And passeth over, for the best, and foloweth nothing nature. *in no way*  
           But now to Rames purpose and what was hir desire:  
           Shortly to conclude, to make debate and ire *conflict*  
           Betwene the fader and the sone, as it was likly tho. *then*
- 1160     What for his condicioun and what for love also  
           That Faunus owt to his wyff, the rather he must hir leve *owed; more readily; believe*  
           And graunt for to mend, yf ought hir did greve. *remedy; anything*

## *The Tale of Beryn*

- Berinus ever wrought ryght as he did tofore, *behaved exactly*  
 And Rame made hym chere of love, there myght no womman more, *semblance*  
 1165 And gaff hym gold and clothing ever as he did lese, *gave; lose*  
 Of the best that he couthe oughwhere in town chese, *anywhere; chose*  
 And spak ful feir with hym to make al thing dede. *spoke; secret*  
 Yit wold she have i-ete his hert without salt or brede! *eaten*  
 She hid so hir felony and spak so in covert *stealth*  
 1170 That Beryn myght nat spy it but lite of Rames hert. *little*  
 So, shortly to pas over, it fill oppon a nyghte *befell*  
 When Faunus and his fressh wyff were to bedd i-dighte, *new; prepared*  
 He toke hir on his armes and made hir hertly chere,  
 There myght no man better make to his fere, *companion*  
 1175 And seyde, "Myne erthly joy, myne hertes ful plesaunce,  
 My wele, my woo, my paradise, my lyves sustenaunce, *good fortune*  
 Why ne be ye mery? Why be ye so dull,  
 Sith ye knowe I am your own, right as your hert woll? *Since*  
 Now tell on, love, myne own hert, yf ye eyleth ought. *anything troubles you*  
 1180 For and it be in my power, anoon it shal be wrought." *For if; performed*  
 Rame with that gan sighe, and with a wepeing chere  
 Undid the bagg of trechery, and seid in this manere:  
 "No mervell thoughe myne hert be sore and full of dele, *sorrow*  
 For when that I to yew wedded was, wrong went my whele. *wheel [of Fortune]*  
 1185 But who may be ageyns hap and aventure? *happence; fate*  
 Therefor, as wele as I may, myne I mut endure."  
 With many sharp wordes, she set his hert on feir *fire*  
 To purchase with hir practik that she did desire. *cunning what*  
 But hoolich al hir wordes I cannat wele reherce, *wholly; repeat*  
 1190 Ne write ne endite howe she did perce *express; pierce*  
 Thurh Faunes hert and his scull also. *Faunus's*  
 For more petouse compleynt of sorow and of woo, *pitiful; woe*  
 Made never woman, ne more petously,  
 Then Rame made to Faunus; she smote ful bitterly *Than; struck*  
 1195 Into the veyn and thurh his hert blood.  
 She blodered so and wept, and was so highe and mode, *blubbered; shrill; distraught*  
 That unneth she myghte speke but otherwhile among *hardly; except*  
 Wordes of discomfort, and hir hondes wrong. *wrung*  
 For "Alas!" — and woo the tyme that she wedded was! —  
 1200 Was evermore the refreit when she myght have spase: *refrain; opportunity*  
 "I am i-wedded (yee, God woot best) in what maner and howe! *yes; knows*

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	For if it were so fall I had a child by yewe,	<i>to befall that</i>
	Lord, how shuld he lyve? Howe shuld he com away? —	
	Sith Beryn is your first sone and heir after your day,	
1205	But yf that he had grace to scole for to goo,	<i>Unless; school</i>
	To have som maner connyng that he myghte trust to.	<i>education</i>
	For as it now stondeth, it were the best rede,	<i>plan</i>
	For (so God me help) I had lever he were dede	<i>would prefer</i>
	Than were of such condicioun or of such lore	<i>training</i>
1210	As Beryn your sone is. It were better he were unbore!	<i>never born</i>
	For he doth nat elles save atte hazard pley	<i>i.e., Beryn; gambling</i>
	And cometh home al naked ech other day.	
	For within this month that I have with yew be,	<i>been</i>
	Fifftene sithes, for verry grete peté,	<i>times; truly; compassion</i>
1215	I have i-clothed hym al newe when he was totore,	<i>ripped to shreds</i>
	For evermore he seyde the old were i-lore.	<i>old [clothes]; lost</i>
	Now and he were my sone, I had lever he were i-sod.	<i>if; buried</i>
	For and he pley so long, halff our lyvlode	<i>if; livelihood</i>
	Wold scarsly suffise hymselff oon.	<i>alone</i>
1220	And nere ye wold be greved, I swere by Seynt John!”	<i>never</i>
	“He shuld after this day be clothed no more for me,	
	But he wold kepe hem better and drawe fro nyceté.	<i>Unless; folly</i>
	Nowe, gentill wyff, gromercy of your wise tale!”	<i>thank-you; words</i>
	“I thynk wel the more that I sey no fale,	<i>not many [words]</i>
1225	For towching my grevaunce, that Beryn goth al naked,	<i>considering</i>
	Treulich that grevaunce is somewhat asclaked.”	<i>decreased</i>
	“Let hym aloon, I prey yew, and I wol con yew thanke,	<i>be grateful to you</i>
	For in such losery he hath lost many a frank.	<i>gambling; franc</i>
	The devill hym spede that reche yf he be totore,	<i>who cares; torn apart</i>
1230	And he use it hereafter as he hath doon tofore!”	<i>If; behaves</i>
	Beryn arose amorowe and cried wonder fast,	<i>in the morning; immediately</i>
	And axed after clothes, but it was al in wast.	<i>in vain</i>
	There was no man-tendant for hym in al the house.	<i>man-servant</i>
	The whele was i-chaunged into another cours.	<i>wheel [of Fortune]</i>
1235	Faunus herd his sone wele, how he began to cry,	
	And rose up anoon and to hym did highe,	<i>hurry</i>
	And had forgete nothing that Rame had i-seyde,	<i>forgotten</i>
	For he boilled so his hert, he was nat wel apayde.	<i>toughened; (Beryn); contented</i>
	He went onto the chamber there his sone lay	<i>where</i>
1240	And set hym down in a chair, and thus he gan to sey:	

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	"My gentil sone, Beryn, now feir I woll thee tech.	
	Rew oppon thyselff and be thyn own leche.	<i>Have pity; physician</i>
	Manhode is i-com nowe, myne own dere sone.	
	It is tyme thow be aweyned of thyne old wone,	<i>weaned; habits</i>
1245	And thow art twenty wynter and naught hast of doctryne.	<i>education</i>
	Yit woldest thowe drawe to profite, the worshipp wold be thyne,	<i>honor</i>
	To noritur and goodshipp and al honest thing;	<i>virtue</i>
	There myght com to myne hert no more glad tyding.	
	Leve now al thy foly and thy rebawdry,	<i>vice</i>
1250	As tables and merelles and the hazardry,	<i>backgammon; morris; dice</i>
	And draw thee to the company of honest men and good.	
	Els leve thewe me, as wele as Criste died on the rode	<i>believe you; cross</i>
	And for al menkynde His gost pas lete,	<i>spirit let pass</i>
	Thow shalt for me hereafter stond on thyn own fete!	<i>feet</i>
1255	For I woll no longer suffer this aray	<i>conduct</i>
	To clothe thee al new ech other day.	
	Yff thow wolt drawe thee to wit and rebawdry withdrawe,	<i>reason</i>
	Of such good as God have sent, thy part shalt thow have.	
	And yf thow wolt nat, my sone, do as I thee tell,	<i>won't</i>
1260	Of me shalt thow naught have. Trust me right well!	<i>nothing</i>
	Wenest thow with thy dise-pleying hold mine honoure	<i>Expect; social station</i>
	After my deth-day?" — Then Beryn gan to loure	<i>scowl</i>
	And seid, "Is this a sermon or a prechement?	
	Ye were nat wont hereto. How is this i-went?	<i>accustomed; come about</i>
1265	Sendeth for som clothing that I were a-go.	<i>gone</i>
	My felawes loketh after me; I woot wele they do so.	<i>expect; know</i>
	I woll nat leve my feleshipp ne my rekelages,	<i>quit; wild ways</i>
	Ne my dise-pleying for all your hostages.	<i>properties</i>
	Doth your best with hem by your lyff-day,	<i>during your lifetime</i>
1270	For when they fall to me, I wol do as I may.	
	Benedicite, Fader! Who hath enfourmed yewe	
	And set yewe into ire to make me chere rowe?	<i>rough</i>
	But I know well inowgh whens this counsaill cam,	<i>whence</i>
	Trewlich of your own wyfe, that evil dame.	
1275	Curs com oppon hir body, that fals putaigne!	<i>Damnation; whore</i>
	For trewlich, Fader, ye dote on hir, and so al men seyn.	
	Allas that ever a man shuld, that is of highe counsaill,	<i>who</i>
	Set al his wisdom on his wyves tayll!	<i>fanny</i>
	Ye loveth hir so much, she hath benome your witt,	<i>destroyed your reason</i>

# *The Tale of Beryn*

1280	And I may curs the tyme that ever ye were i-knyt. For now I am in certen I have a stepmoder. They been shrewes som — there been but few other — Wel fikil flaptaill, such oon as she ys. For al my pleying atte dise, yit do ye more amys:	wedded     <i>Very; slut</i>
1285	Ye have i-lost yeur name, yeur worshipp and yeur feith, So dote ye on hir and leveth al she sayeth!” Faunus with the same word gaff the chayir a but, And lepe out of the chamber, as who seyde “Cut!” And swore in verry woodnes, by God omnipotent,	<i>mistakenly</i> <i>reputation</i> <i>believe</i> <i>gave; shove</i> <i>rushed</i> <i>real fury</i>
1290	That Beryn of his wordes shuld sore repent. Beryn set nought thereof with a proude hert, Answerd his fader, and axed a new shert. He groped al aboute to have found oon, As he was wont tofore, but there was noon.	  <i>demanded</i> <i>searched</i> <i>accustomed previously</i>
1295	Then toke he such willokes as he fond there And beheld hymselff, what man he were. For when he was arayde, then gan he first be wrothe, For his wombe loked and his rigg both. He stert after his fader and began to cry:	<i>rag-clothes</i>   <i>angry</i> <i>belly showed; backside</i>
1300	“For seeth myne aray! For thys vilany Ys as wele yeurs as it is myne!” Faunus lete hym clater, and cry wel and fyne, And passed forth still and spak nat a word. Then Beryn gan to think it was nat al bord	<i>hurried</i> <i>dishonor</i>  <i>chatter; fully</i> <i>exited silently</i> <i>a joke</i>
1305	That his fader seyde when he with hym was, And gan to think al about, and therwith seyde “Allas! Now know I wele forsoth that my moder is dede!” For tho gan he to glow first a sory mannes hede.	<i>What</i>   <i>indeed</i> <i>then; claw (see note)</i>
1310	Now kepe thy cut, Beryn, for thow shalt have a fit Somwhat of the world to lern better witt. For and thow wist sikerly what is for to com, Thow woldest wissh after thy deth ful offt and ilome. For there nys beting half so sore with staff nether swerd	<i>lot; bout</i> <i>wisdom</i> <i>if; i.e., future events</i> <i>frequently</i> <i>isn’t beating; nor</i>
1315	As man to be bete with his own yerd. The pyry is i-blowe — hop, Beryn, hop! — That ripe wol hereafter and on thyn hede dropp. Thow tokest noon hede whils it shoon hoot; Therfor wynter thee nygheth. Asay by thy cote!	<i>rod</i> <i>pear-tree is in bloom</i> <i>ripen</i> <i>paid no attention; (the sun)</i> <i>approaches; You can tell</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	Beryn for shame to town durst he nat go.	
1320	He toke his way to chirchward; his frend was made his foo. For anger, sorow and shame, and hevynes that he had, Unneth he myghte speke, but stode halff as mad.	foe  Hardly; almost
	“O, allas!” quod Beryn, “what wit had I That coude nat, tofore this day, knowe sikerly,	Who; certainly
1325	That my moder dede was? But nowe I knowe to sore And drede more that eche day hereafter, more and more, I shall knowe and fele that my moder is dede. Allas, I smote the messangere and toke of hir noon hede! Allas, I am right pore! Allas, that I am naked!	too sorely  realize struck; no
1330	Allas, I slept to fast till sorowe nowe hath me waked! Allas, I hunger sore! Allas, for dole and peyn! For eche man me seeth hath me in disdeyn!”	too soundly sorrow [who] sees me holds
	This was al his myrth to the chirchward, That of his moder, Agea, he toke so litill reward.	[as he went] regard
1335	When Beryn was within the chirch, then gan he wers fray; As sone he sawe the tombe where his moder lay, His coloure gan to chaunge into a dedely hewe. “Allas, gentill Moder, so kynd thow were and trewe! It is no mervell for thy deth, thoughe, I sore smert!”	shudder As soon as  then; suffer
1340	And therewithall the sorowe so fervent smote in his hert That sodenly he fil down stan-dede in swowe. That he had part of sorowe, me thinketh that myght avowe. Beryn lay so longe or he myghte awake, For al his fyve wittes had clene hym forsake.	fell; stone-dead; swoon his share; affirm before senses
1345	Wel myghte he by hymselff, when reson i-com were, Understond that Fortune had a sharp spere And eke grete power among highe and lowe, Som to avaunce and som to overthrowe. So atte last, when Beryn a litill waked were,	spear
1350	He trampeled fast with his feet, and al totare his ere And his visage both, ryght as a wood man, With many a bitter tere that from his eyen ran, And sighed many a sore sigh and had much hevynes. And evermore he cursed his grete unkyndnes	stamped; tore; hair face; insane eyes
1355	To foregit his moder whils she was alyve, And lened to hir tombe opon his tore sclyv, And wisshed a thowsand sithes he had i-be hir by,	unnaturalness neglect torn sleeve times; been



## *The Tale of Beryn*

- And beheld hir tombe with a petouse eye. *pitiful*  
 “Now, glorious God,” quod Beryn, “that al thing madest of nought,  
 1360 Heven and erth, man and best, sith I am mys wrought, *beast, since; guilty*  
 Of yewe I axe mercy, socour and help and grace,  
 For my mysdede and foly, unthryfft and trespase. *misconduct*  
 Set my sorowe and peyn somewhat in mesure  
 Fro dispeir and myscheff, as I may endure.  
 1365 Lord of all lordes, thoughe Fortune be my foo, *foe*  
 Yit is thy myghte above to turn hym to and fro. *(a man)*  
 First my moders lyff Fortune hath me bereved, *deprived*  
 And sith my faders love, and naked also me leved. *then; left*  
 What may he do more? Yis, take away my lyff! *she (Fortune)*  
 1370 But for that were myne ese and end of al stryff,  
 Therfor he doth me lyve for my wers, I sey, *she; worse [fate]*  
 That I shuld evermore lyve and never for to dey.” *die*  
 Now leve I Beryn with his moder tyl I com aye, *again*  
 And wol retourne me to Rame that of hir sotilté *craftiness*  
 1375 Bethought hir al aboute, when Beryn was agoon, *gone*  
 That it shuld be witted hir. Wherfor she anoon *blamed on*  
 In this wise seyde to Faunus, “Sir, what have ye do? *done*  
 Althoughe I speke a mery word to suffer your sone go *facetious; allow*  
 Naked into the town, it was nat my counsaill.  
 1380 What wol be seyde therof? Siker without faill, *Surely*  
 For I am his stepmoder, that I am cause of all; *Because*  
 The violence, the wrath, the anger and the gall *pain*  
 That is betwene yewe both, it wol be witted me. *blamed on*  
 Wherfor I prey yew hertly, doth hym com home aye.” *make; again*  
 1385 “Nay, by my trowth!” quod Faunus, “for me cometh he nat yit. *because of*  
 Sith he of my wordes so litil prise set, *Since; value*  
 As litill shall I charge his estate also. *increase*  
 Sorowe have that reccheth, thoughe he naked go! *take the troubled one*  
 For every man knoweth that he is nat wise;  
 1390 Wherfor may be supposed his pleying atte dise  
 Is cause of his aray, and nothing ye, my wyff.” *[ragged] attire*  
 “Yis, iwis,” quod Rame, “the tale wol be ryff *widespread*  
 Of me and of noon other, I knowe righte wel a fyne. *in full*  
 Wherfor I prey yewe, gentil sir, and for love myne,  
 1395 That he were i-fet home, and that in grete hast, *fetchd*  
 And let asay efft ageyn with feirnes hym to chast, *try; to correct*

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	And send Beryn clothes and a newe shert." —	<i>shirt</i>
	And made al wele in eche side, and kept close hir hert.	<i>[she]; secret</i>
	"Now sith it is your will," quod Faunus tho anon,	<i>since; then</i>
1400	"That Beryn shall home come, for your sake aloon	
	I wolle be the message, to put your hert in ese.	<i>messenger</i>
	And els, so God me help, were it nat yewe to please,	
	The gras shuld growe on pavement or I hym home bring!	<i>pavement before</i>
	Yit, netherles, forth he went with too or thre riding	<i>two</i>
1405	From o strete to another, enquiring to and fro,	<i>one</i>
	After Beryn in every place where he was wont to go,	
	Sheching every holk, howres to or thre,	<i>Searching; corner, hours two</i>
	With hazardours and other such, there as he was wont to be,	<i>gamblers; where</i>
	And fond hym nat there. But to chirch went echone,	<i>found; each one</i>
1410	And atte dorr they stode awhile and herd Beryn made his moon;	<i>at the; moan</i>
	They herd all his compleynt, that petouse was to here.	<i>pitiful; hear</i>
	Faunus into the chirch pryvely gan pise,	<i>discreetly; peer</i>
	But also sone as he beheld where Agea lay,	<i>just as soon</i>
	His teres ran down by his chekes, and thus he gan to say:	
1415	"A, Agea, myne old love, and my newe also!	<i>Ah</i>
	Allas, that ever our hertes shuld depart a-too,	<i>in two</i>
	For in your graciouse dayes, of hertes trobilnes	<i>disturbance</i>
	I had never knowlech, but of al gladnes!" —	
	Remembryng in his hert, and ever gan renewe	
1420	The goodnes betwene hem both and hir hert trewe,	
	And drewe hym nere to Beryn with an hevy mode.	<i>sad heart</i>
	But as sone as Beryn knew and understode	
	That it was his fader, he wold no lenger abide,	<i>longer</i>
	But anon he voided by the toder syde.	<i>left; other</i>
1425	And Faunus hym encountred and seyde, "We have thee soughte	<i>intercepted</i>
	Thurh the town, my gentill sone, and therfor void thee noughte.	<i>don't leave</i>
	Thoughe I seyde a word or to, as me thought for the best	<i>two</i>
	For thyne erudicioune to drawe thee to lyff honest,	<i>education; decent</i>
	Thow shuldest nat so fervently have take it to thyn hert.	
1430	But sith I knowe my wordes doth thee so sore smert,	
	I shall no more hereafter, and ech day our diete	<i>lifestyle</i>
	Shall be mery and solase, and this shal be forgete.	<i>pleasant</i>
	For wel I woot that for thy moder thow art tofore;	<i>torn apart</i>
	Also thow hast grete sorow, but ones nedeth and no more.	<i>once [it is] required</i>
1435	And therefor, sone, on my blessing to put sorow away,	

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	Drawe thee nowe hereafter to honest myrth and pley.	<i>decent</i>
	Lo, there is clothing for yewe, and yeur hors i-dighte	<i>arrayed</i>
	With harneyse al fressh newe. And yf ye list be knyght,	<i>want to</i>
	I shall yit or eve that bergeyn undertake	<i>before nightfall; bargain</i>
1440	That the Emperour for my love a knyght shall yew make.	
	And what-that-ever ye nede, anoon it shall be bought,	
	For whils that I have anything, ye shall lak naughte.”	
	“Graunte mercy,” quod Beryn with an hevvy chere,	<i>Thank you</i>
	“Of yeur worshipful profer that ye have profered me here,	<i>offer</i>
1445	But order of knyghthode to take is nat my likeing.	
	And sith yeur will is for to do somewhat my plesing,	
	Ye have a wyff ye love wele and so tenderlich	
	That, and she have children, I knowe right sikerlich	<i>if</i>
	Al that she can devise, both by nyghte and day,	
1450	Shall be to make hir childryn heirs, yf that she may,	
	And eke sowe sedes of infelicité	<i>seeds</i>
	Wherof wold growe devisioun betwene yewe and me.	
	For yf ye spend on me yeur good, and thus riallich,	<i>substance; royally</i>
	Leveth well in certen, yeur wyff woll sikerliche	<i>Believe; surely</i>
1455	Eche day for anger hir tuskes whet,	<i>fangs sharpen</i>
	And to smyte with hir tunge yeur hert in wrath to set	
	Toward me from day to day. But ye wold aply	<i>Unless; comply</i>
	Somwhat to hir purpose and after hir yewe guy,	<i>conduct yourself</i>
	She wold wexe so overtwart and of so lither tach,	<i>perverse; wicked intent</i>
1460	And ever lour under hir hood aredy for to snache;	<i>scowl; ever-ready</i>
	She wold be shortyng of yeur lyff, and that desire I naught.	<i>i.e., plotting your death</i>
	Wherfor to plese al aboute, my purpose and my thought	<i>Therefore</i>
	Is for to be a marchaunte and leve myne heritage,	<i>inheritance</i>
	And relese it forever, for shippes fyve of stage	<i>renounce; with decks</i>
1465	Ful of marchandise, the best of al this londe.	<i>land</i>
	And yff ye wol so, Fader, quyk let make the bonde.”	<i>let [us]; contract</i>
	Faunus was ryghte wele apayde that ilk word outstert,	<i>pleased; came forth</i>
	But yit he seid to Beryn, “I mervell in myne hert	
	Where haddest thow this counsell to leve thyne honoure	<i>social position</i>
1470	And lyve in grete aventur and in grete labour?” —	<i>uncertainty</i>
	And rid so forth talking a sofft esy pase	<i>[he] rode</i>
	Homward to his plase, there that Rame was.	<i>household; where</i>
	And as sone as Faunus was i-lighte adown	<i>dismounted</i>
	And highed fast to his wyff, and with hir gan to rown	<i>hurried; whisper</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

- 1475 And told hir al the purpose, she made Faunus chere.  
 She did hym nat halff so much the tyme she was his fere: *[during] the time; mate*  
 She hulled hym and molled hym and toke hym aboute the nekk, *hugged; caressed*  
 And went lowe for the kite and made many a bekk, *his belly; bow*  
 And seyde, "Sir, by yeur spech, nowe right wel I here *hear*  
 1480 That yf ye list, ye mowe do thing that I most desire, *wish*  
 And that is this: yeur heritage, there yewe best liked, *legacy, wherever*  
 That ye myght gyve." And ever among the brussh away she piked *lint; picked*  
 From hir clothes, here and there, and sighed therewithall.  
 Faunus, of his gentilnes, by hir myddil small  
 1485 Hertlich hir braced and seyde, "I wol nat leve, *embraced*  
 I suyr yew my trowth, that ones or it be eve *pledge; once before*  
 That I shall do my devoir without fentyse *duty; deceit*  
 For to plesse yeur hert fullich in al wise."  
 "Graunt mercy, myne own soverene," quod Rame tho mekerly, *more meekly*  
 1490 And made protestacioun that she wold sikerly  
 All the dayes of hir lyff be to hym as ende *gracious*  
 As ever woman was to man, as ferforth as hir mynde *fully*  
 And wit hir wold serve, and made grete othe. *oath*  
 Faunus bood no lenger, but forth therewith he goth. *stayed*  
 1495 A, precius God in heven, Kyng of magesté, *Ah; majesty*  
 So plentivouse this world is of iniquité! *abundant*  
 Why is it i-suffred that trowth is brought adown  
 With trechery and falshede, in feld and eke in town?  
 But now to Faunus and his entent. When he his sone met, *plan*  
 1500 He toke hym sofft by the hond; his tung he gan to whet. *sharpen*  
 Sotilly to engyne hym, first he gan to preche: *Craftily; manipulate*  
 "Leve thy foly, my dere sone, and do as I thee teche.  
 Sith thow hast wit and reson, and art of mannes age,  
 What nedeth thee be marchant and shal have heritage? *if [you] shall; inheritance*  
 1505 For and thy good were i-lost, the sorow wold be myne, *For if; merchandise*  
 To tell the soth, right nyghe peregall to thyne. *truth; nearly equal*  
 And yf that I were dede whils thow were oute, *away*  
 Lond and rent and all my good, have thow no doute,  
 It wold be plucked from thee; thy parte wold be lest. *lost*  
 1510 And also, ferthermore, I make oon beheest, *one request*  
 That I trowe my mobles wol nat suffice *personal property*  
 To charge fyve shippes ful of marchandise, *load*  
 But yf I leyde in morgage my lond and eke my rent, *Unless*

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	And that, I leve, be nat thy will ne thyne entent.	<i>believe; intention</i>
1515	Yit netherles, yf thy hert be so inly set	<i>thoroughly</i>
	For to be a marchant, for nothing woll I let	<i>hinder</i>
	That I nyl do thy plesaunce, as ferforth as I may,	<i>won't; fully</i>
	To go ryghte nyghe myne own estate. But lever I had nay!"	<i>rather; not</i>
	Hir wordes ne hir redes, ne maters hem betwene,	<i>Their; advice</i>
1520	I wol nat tary now thereon my parchemen to spene.	<i>parchmen to use up</i>
	But fynallich, to the ende of hir acordement,	<i>finally; agreement</i>
	Faunus had so goon about, i-turned and i-went,	
	That he had brought his sone tofore the Emperour	
	To relese his heritage and al his honour	<i>social position</i>
1525	That he shuld have, after his day, for shippes fyve and full	
	I-led of marchaundise, of lynnyn and of woll,	<i>Laden; linen; wool</i>
	And of other thinges that were i-used tho.	<i>then</i>
	Engrosed was the coveaunte between hem to,	<i>Concluded; contract; two</i>
	In presence of the Emperour, in opyn and no roun,	<i>i.e., no secrecy</i>
1530	Tofore the grettest senatours and eldest of the town.	<i>In front of</i>
	So when the relese seled was with a syde bonde,	<i>sealed</i>
	They were i-leyde both in a meen honde	<i>intermediary's custody</i>
	Into the tyme that Beryn fullich sesed were	<i>Until; in possession</i>
	In the five shippes, that I yew tolde ere.	<i>previously</i>
1535	But who was glad but Faunus, and to his wyff went	<i>except</i>
	And seyde, "Nowe, my hertes swete, al thyn hole entent	
	Is utterlich perfourmed. Us lakketh nowe no more	
	But marchandise and shippes, as I told tofore."	
	"That shall nat fail," quod Rame, and began to daunce;	
1540	And afterward they speken of the purveaunce.	<i>supplies</i>
	Allas, this fals world, so ful of trechery!	
	In whom shuld the sone have trust and feith sikerly	
	If his fader fayled hym? Whether myght he go	<i>To whom</i>
	For to fynde a siker frend that he myght trist to?	<i>steadfast; trust in</i>
1545	So when these fyve shippes were rayed and dighte,	<i>outfitted; readied</i>
	Faunus and his sone to the Emperour ful righte	
	They went, and many a grete man for the same case,	
	To see both in possessioun as hir coveaunte was:	
	Beryn first was sesed in the shippes fyve,	<i>took possession of</i>
1550	And Faunus had the relese and bare it to his wyff.	
	And eche held hem payde, and Rame best of all,	<i>himself paid (pleased)</i>
	For she had conquerd thing that caused most hir gall.	<i>irritation</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	Now leve I Faunus and his wyff, and of the governaunce Of Beryn I woll speke, and also of his chaunce.	<i>adventure</i>
1555	When lodesmen and maryneres in al thing redy was, This Beryn into Alisaunder, yf God wold send hym grace That wynde hym wold serve. He wold so on a day The wynde was good, and they seyled on hir wey, Too dayes fullich and a nyght therewithall	<i>pilots; navigators unto Alexandria (Egypt) (God) willed favorable Two</i>
1560	And had weder at will, till atte last gan fall Such a myst among hem that no man myght se other, That wele was hym that had there the blessing of his moder. For thre dayes dessantly the derknes among hem was That no shipp myghte se other; wherfor ful offt "Alas!"	<i>weather to their liking fog; see constantly</i>
1565	They seyde, and to the highe God they made hir preyere That He wold of His grace hem govern and sterve, So that hir lyves myghte i-saved be. For they were cleen in dispeyr because they myght nat se The loder, wherby these shipmen her cours toke echon.	<i>guide entirely loadstar; their their moan</i>
1570	So atte last, the ferth day, makeing thus hir moon, The day gan clere, and then such wynde arose That blew hir shippes elsewhere then was hir first purpose. The tempest was so huge and so strong also That wel was hym that coude bynd or ondo	<i>than untie belonged</i>
1575	Any rope within the shipp that longed to the crafft. Every man shewed his connyng tofore the shipp and bafft. The wynd awook, the see tobrast, it blew so gresly sore That Beryn and all his company, of synnes las and more, Eche man round aboute shroff hymselff to other,	<i>in front of; astern burst forth; horribly less</i>
1580	And put in Goddes governaunce lyff, shipp and strother. For there nas shippes meyné, for aught they coude hale, That myghte abate of the shipp the thiknes of a skale. The weder was so fervent, of wynd and eke of thunder, That every shipp from other was blowe of sighte asonder,	<i>confessed; one another steering-rudder wasn't; crew; haul strike sail; scale violent</i>
1585	And dured so al day and nyghte tyl on the morowe. I trow it was no questioune whether they had joy or sorowe. So afterward, as God wold, the wynd was somewhat sofft. Beryn cleped a maryner and bad hym, "Sty on lofft, And weyte after our four shippes that after us doth dryve,	<i>out of lasted; next morning Climb aloft look for</i>
1590	For it is butte grace of God yf they be alyve." A marynere anoon with that, ryght as Beryn bad,	<i>only by the grace ordered</i>

# *The Tale of Beryn*

	Styed into the topcastell and brought hym tydinges glad:	<i>Climbed; crow's nest</i>
	"Sir," he seith, "beth mery! Yeur shippes cometh echone,	<i>each one</i>
	Saff and sound, sayling as ye shul se anoon.	<i>see</i>
1595	And eke, sir, ferthermore, lond also I sigh!	<i>sight</i>
	Let draw our corse estward. This tyde wol bryng us ny."	<i>direct; near</i>
	"Blessed be God!" quod Beryn, "Then were our shippes com.	
	[ . . . . . ]	
	We have no nede to dout werr ne molestacioun,	<i>suspect war</i>
1600	For there nys within our shippes nothing of spoliacioun,	<i>isn't; plunder</i>
	But all trewe marchaundise. Wherfor, sir lodesman,	<i>legitimate; helmsman</i>
	Stere ones into the costes as wel as thowe can.	<i>at once unto the coast</i>
	When our shippes been i-com, that we mow pas in fere,	<i>as a company</i>
	Lace on a bonet or tweyn, that we mowe sail here."	<i>auxiliary sail or two</i>
1605	And when they were the costes nyghe, was noon of hem all	
	That wist what lond it was. Then Beryn gan to call	<i>Who knew</i>
	Out of every shipp anoon a marynere or tweyne	
	For to take counsell, and thus he gan to seyne:	<i>say</i>
	"The frountes of this ilch toun been wonder feir withall.	<i>appearances; same</i>
1610	Me thinketh it is the best rede, what that ever befall,	<i>plan</i>
	That I myselff aloon walk into the toun	
	And here and se both here and there, upward and down,	<i>hear and see</i>
	And enquire fullich of hir governaunce.	<i>enquire</i>
	What sey ye, sirs? Wol ye sent to this ordenaunce?"	<i>consent; plan</i>
1615	All they accorded wel thereto and held it for the best:	<i>agreed</i>
	"For thus yf it be profitabill, we mowe abide and rest;	<i>may</i>
	And yf it be otherwise, the rather shall we go.	
	For after that ye spede, we wol worch and do."	<i>succeed; work</i>
	But nowe mowe ye here right a wonder thing —	<i>hear</i>
1620	In al the world wyde, so fals of hir lyving	<i>treacherous; their</i>
	Was no pepill under sonne, ne noon so desseyvabill	<i>deceptive</i>
	As was the pepill of this town, ne more unstabill,	<i>untrustworthy</i>
	And had a cursed usage of sotill ymaginacioun:	<i>custom; crafty scheming</i>
	That yff so were the shippes of any straunge nacioun	<i>foreign</i>
1625	Were come into the porte, anoon they wold hem hyde	
	Within hir own howses, and no man go ne ryde	<i>walk</i>
	In no strete of al the town, ascaunce that they were lewde	<i>as if; ignorant</i>
	And coude no skill of marchandise. A skill it was, a shrewde,	<i>trick; wicked one</i>
	As ye shull here after of hir wrong and falshede.	<i>hear later</i>
1630	But yit it fill, as worthy was, oppon hir own hede.	<i>fell; deserving</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	Beryn arayd hym fresshly, as to a marchand longed, And set hym on a palfrey wel besey and honged; And a page rennyng by his hors feet, He rode endlong the town, but no man coud he mete.	<i>was befitting equipped; adorned running; horse's end to end</i>
1635	The dorres were i-closed in both too sides, Wherof he had mervell, yit ferthermore he rides And wayted on his ryght-hond a manciples plase, All fressh and newe, and thider gan he pase. The gates were wyde up, and thider gan he go,	<i>on both two farther observed; manciple's home thither</i>
1640	For thurhout the long town he fond so no mo. Therein dwelled a Burgeyse, the most scliper man Of al the town thurhout, and what so he wan With trechery and gile — as doth som freres — Right so must he part with his comperes.	<i>found devious won friars divide; accomplices</i>
1645	Beryn light down on his hors, and inward gan he dres, And fond the good man of the house pleying atte ches With his neyghbour, as trewe as he, that dwelled hym fast by. But as sone as this Burgeyse on Beryn cast his eye, Sodenly he stert up and put the ches hym fro,	<i>alighted from; move found; chess honest; who soon chessboard</i>
1650	And toke Beryn by the hond and seyde these wordes tho: “Benedicite! What manere wynd hath i-brought yewe here? Now wold to God I had wherof I coude make yew chere, But ye shall lowe my good will, and take such as there is, And of yeur gentill paciens suffer that is amys.”	<i>anything allow accept what knew; (Beryn's)</i>
1655	For well he wist, by his aray and by his contenaunce, That of the shippes that were i-com he had som governaunce. Wherfor he made hym chere, semeyng amyabill, I-colored all with cawteles, and wonder desseyvabill.	<i>deceptions; treacherous embraced</i>
1660	He braced hym by the middil and preyd hym sit adown, And lowly with much worshipp dressed his cosshoun. “Lord God,” seyde this Burgeyse, “I thank this ilk day That I shuld see yewe hole and sounde here in my contray. And yff ye list to tell the cause of yeur comyng, And yff ye have nede to eny maner thing,	<i>prepared his cushion whole wish</i>
1665	And it be in my power, and thoughe I shuld it seche, It shuld go right wonder streyte, I sey yew sikerlich, But ye it had in hast, therewith yewe to plese. For nowe I se yewe in my house, my hert is in grete ese.” The toder burgeyse rose hym up for to make rouse,	<i>If; seek strict; assuredly Unless other; mirth</i>



### *The Tale of Beryn*

- 1670 And axed of his felawe, that lord was of the house: *who*  
 “Whens is this worshipful man?” — with wordes end and lowe — *pleasant; humble*  
 “For it semeth by the manere that ye hym shuld knowe  
 And have sey hym tofore this tyme.” “I have seen hym,” quod the toder, *seen; other*  
 “Yee, iwis, an hundred sithes! And right as to my brother *Yes; times*
- 1675 I wold do hym plesaunce in al that ever I can,  
 For trewlich in his contray he is a worshipful man.”  
 “Forsoth, sir, and for yeur love, a thousand in this town  
 Wold do hym worshipp and be righte feyne and bown *glad; obedient*  
 To plese hym and availl, to have thonk of yewe. *assist*
- 1680 I woot wele, God hem yeld, so have they offt or nowel!” *know; pay; before*  
 And arose up therewithall and with his felaw spak *[he]; spoke*  
 Of such maner mater that fayled never of lakk. *defect*  
 So when hir counsell was i-do, this Burgeyse preyd his fere *companion*  
 To sit adown by Beryn and do hym sporte and chere:
- 1685 “And in the while, I woll se to his hors; *meantime*  
 For every gentill hert, afore his own cors, *well-born; body*  
 Desireth that his ryding best be served and i-dighte *beast; tended*  
 Rather then hymselff. Wherfor with al my myghte  
 I woll have an ey therto, and sith perce wyne, *then purple wine*
- 1690 Wich tonne or pipe is best and most fyne.” *cask*  
 Beryn was al abashed of his soden chere. *amazed by; unexpected*  
 But netherles the Burgeyse sat hym somewhat nere  
 And preyd hym, of his gentilnes, his name for to tell, *i.e., for sake of manners*  
 His contrey and his lynage. And he answerd snell: *immediately*
- 1695 “Berinus I am i-named, and in Rome i-bore, *born*  
 And have fyve shippes of myne own, las and more, *less*  
 Ful of marchaundise, ligging tofore the town. *anchored*  
 But much mervail have I the goodman is so boune *householder; ready*  
 To serve me and plese, and how it myghte be.”
- 1700 “Sir,” seyde the burgeyse, “no mervell it is to me, *i.e., the neighbor*  
 For many a tyme and offt — I cannat sey how lome — *often; frequently*  
 He hath be in yeur marches, and as I trowe, in Rome *territories; believe*  
 Also he was i-bore, yf I ne ly shall.” *lie*
- 1705 “Yf it be so,” quod Beryn, “no mervell it is at all *seen*  
 Though he me have i-sey, and eke his gentill chere *i.e., Christ; dearly*  
 Preveth it al opynly. But by Hym that bought me dere, *aware*  
 I have thereof no knowlech, as I am nowe avised.”  
 With that cam in the goodman with contenance disguised, *householder*

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	And had enquired of the child that with Beryn cam,	<i>i.e., the pageboy</i>
1710	From gynnyng to the ending, and told his mastres name	<i>[the page] told</i>
	And of Agea, his moder, and al thing as it was,	
	Wherethurh he was ful perfite to answe to every cas.	<i>expert</i>
	So entryng into the hall, the Burgeyse spak anoon:	
	“A, my gentill Beryn! Allas, that under stone	<i>gravestone</i>
1715	Myne own hert, Agea, thy moder leff and dere!	<i>beloved</i>
	Now God assoyll hir soule, for never better chere	<i>absolve</i>
	Had I of fremd womman, ne never halff so good.	<i>foreign</i>
	Benedicite, a marchaunt comyng over flood!	<i>God bless</i>
	Who brought yewe in this purpose, and beth yeur faders heir?	<i>[you who] be</i>
1720	Now, by my trewe conscience, ryght nyghe in dispeyr	
	I waxe for yeur sake, for now frendlese	<i>friendless</i>
	Ye mowe wel sey that ye been. But yit, sir, netherles,	
	Ye mut endure Fortune and hevynes put away.	
	There is noon other wisdom. Also, yeur shippes gay	
1725	That been i-com in saveté ought to amend yeur mode,	<i>safety; attitude</i>
	The wich when we have dyned, I swere, sir, by the rood,	<i>cross</i>
	We woll se hem trewly, within and eke withoute,	
	And have wyne with us and drynk al aboute.”	
	They set and wissh and fedd hem, and had wherof plenté.	<i>sat; washed; plenty</i>
1730	The Burgeyse was a stuffed man; there lakked noon deynté.	<i>prosperous; delicacy</i>
	So when they had i-dyned, the cloth was up i-take.	<i>tablecloth</i>
	A ches there was i-brought forth — but tho gan sorow to wake!	<i>chess-set</i>
	The ches was al of yvery, the meyné fressh and newe,	<i>ivory; pieces</i>
	I-pulsshed and i-piked of white, asure and blewe.	<i>polished; carved; azure</i>
1735	Beryn beheld the chekker; it semed passing feir.	<i>chessboard</i>
	“Sir,” quod the Bergeyse, “ye shull fynd here a peyr	<i>opponent</i>
	That woll mate yew trewly in las then half a myle!” —	<i>checkmate; less</i>
	And was i-sayd of sotilté, Beryn to begile.	<i>[it] was; trickery</i>
	“Now in soth,” quod Beryn, “it myghte wel hap nay,	<i>happen otherwise</i>
1740	And nere I must my shippes se, else I wold assay.”	<i>never; unless; try</i>
	“What nedeth that?” quod the Burgeyse. “Trewlich, I wol nat glose.	<i>waste words</i>
	They been nat yit i-seteled ne fixed in the wose,	<i>sunk; stuck; mud</i>
	For I have sent thries, sith ye hider cam,	<i>hither</i>
	To waite oppon hir governaunce. Wherfor lete set o game,	
1745	And I shall be the first that shall yewe atast.”	<i>test</i>
	The meyné were i-set up, and gon to play fast.	<i>chess-pieces; [they] began</i>
	Beryn wan the first, the second, and the third,	<i>won</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	And atte fourth game in the ches amyde,	<i>at the; in mid-board</i>
	The Burgeyse was i-mated — but that lust hym wele.	<i>pleased</i>
1750	And al was doon to bryng hym in, as ye shul here snel.	<i>i.e., Beryn; hear at once</i>
	“Sir,” then seyde Beryn, “ye woot wele howe it is.	
	Me list no more to pley, for ye know this:	<i>I prefer</i>
	Where is noon comparisoun, of what thing so it be,	<i>competition</i>
	Lust and likeing faileth there, as it semeth me;	<i>Pleasure</i>
1755	Ne myrth is nat commendabill that ay is by o syde,	<i>one-sided</i>
	But it rebound to the toder. Werfor tyme is to ryde,	<i>Unless; other</i>
	And as many thonkes as I can or may	
	Of my sport and chere, and also of your play.”	
	“Nay, iwys, gentill Beryn, I woot ye wol nat go.	
1760	For noritur wol it nat for to part so.	<i>good breeding; depart</i>
	And eke my condicioune, but I ley somthing,	<i>unless I lie somewhat</i>
	Is no more to pley then whoso shoke a rynge	<i>door-bell</i>
	There no man is within, the rynging to answer.	<i>Where</i>
	To shete a fetherles bolt, almost as good me were.	<i>shoot; arrow without a quill</i>
1765	But and ye wold this next game som manere wager legg,	<i>But if; place</i>
	And let the trowth on both sides be morgage and i-plegg	<i>security; pledged</i>
	That whoso be i-mated graunt and assent	
	To do the toders bidding; and whoso do repent,	<i>other's; renege</i>
	Drink al the water that salt is of the see.”	<i>sea</i>
1770	Beryn beleved that he coude pley better then he,	
	And sodenly assented with hond in hond assured.	<i>immediately; pledged</i>
	Men that stode besides, i-capped and i-hured,	<i>wearing caps and head-gear</i>
	Wist wele that Beryn shuld have the wers mes,	<i>Knew; portion</i>
	For the Burgeyse was the best pleyer atte ches	
1775	Of all the wyde marches or many a myle aboute.	<i>territories</i>
	But that ne wist Beryn of, ne cast thereof no doute.	
	He set the meyné efft ageyn, and toke better hede	<i>chess-set; care</i>
	Then he did tofore, and so he had nede.	<i>Than</i>
	The Burgeyse toke avisement long on every draughte,	<i>deliberation; move</i>
1780	So with an houre or to, Beryn he had i-caughte	<i>within; two</i>
	Somwhat oppon the hipp, that Beryn had the wers.	<i>i.e., had the upper hand</i>
	And albeit his mynde and will was for to curs,	<i>(Beryn's)</i>
	Yit must he dure his fortune when he was so fer i-go.	<i>endure; far gone</i>
	For who is that that Fortune may alwey undo?	<i>whom; eventually</i>
1785	And namelich stont even in eche side	<i>[he who] stands</i>
	Of pro and contra, but God help, down wol he glide.	<i>unless; down [the wheel]</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

- But nowe a word of Philosophy that falleth to my mynde:  
 Who take hede of the begynnyng what fal shal of the end, *[He] who; at the end*  
 He leyeth a bussh tofore the gap ther Fortune wold in ryde; *i.e., sets a trap*
- 1790 But comynlich yowth forgeteth that, thurhout the world wide.  
 Right so be Beryn, I may wele sey, that counsailes in raked, *ill-advised rushed in*  
 Likly to lese his marchandise and go hymselff al naked. *lose*
- Beryn studied on the ches, althoughe it naught availed.  
 The Burgeyse, in the menewhile, with other men counsailled *conspired*
- 1795 To fech the sergauntes in the town for thing he had ado. *law officers*  
 So when they com were, they walked to and fro,  
 Up and down in the hall as skaunce they knewe naughte, *as if*  
 And yit of all the purpose, wit and mynde and thought  
 Of this untrew Burgeyse, by his messengers *deceitful*
- 1800 They were ful enfourmed. Wherfor with ey and eres, *ears*  
 They lay awaite ful doggedly Beryn to arest,  
 For therefor they were affter sent, and was hir charge and hest. *command*
- Lord, howe shuld o sely lombe among wolves weld *one innocent; fare*  
 And scape un-i-harmed? It hath be seyn seld. *escape; seldom seen*
- 1805 Kepe thy cut nowe, Beryn, for thow art in the case! *position*  
 The hall was ful of pepill; the serjauntes shewed hir mase. *staff of authority*  
 Beryn kast up his hede and was ful sore amayed, *afraid*  
 For then he was in certen the Burgeyse had hym betrayde.  
 "Draw on," seyde the Burgeyse, "Beryn, ye have the wers!" *Go*
- 1810 And every man to other the covenaut gan rehers. *agreement; repeat*  
 The Burgeyse, whils that Beryn was in hevvy thought, *deep concentration*  
 The next draught after, he toke a roke for naughte. *move; rook*  
 Beryn swat for anger and was in hevvy plyghte, *sweated; serious condition*  
 And dred ful sore in hert, for wele he wist al quyte, *knew; repaid*
- 1815 He shuld nat escape, and was in highe distres.  
 And pryvlich in his hert, that ever he saw the ches,  
 He cursed the day and tyme. But what avayled that?  
 For wele he wist then that he shuld be mate. *checkmated*  
 He gan to chaunge his coloure both pale and wan.
- 1820 The Burgeyse seid, "Cometh nere. Ye shul se this man,  
 How he shall be mated with what man me list." *whatever chesspiece*  
 He droughe and seyde, "Chek mate!" The sergauntes were ful prest *moved; eager*  
 And sesed Beryn by the scleve. — "Sirs, what thynk ye for to do," *seized; sleeve*  
 Quod Beryn to the serjauntes, "that ye me handeth so? *arrest*
- 1825 Or what have I offended? Or what have I seyde?"

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	"Trewlich," quod the serjauntes, "it vayleth nat to breyde.	<i>avails; resist</i>
	With us ye must a while, where ye woll or no,	<i>whether; will</i>
	Tofore the Steward of this town. Arise and trus and go!	<i>get ready</i>
	And there it shall be opened howe wisely thow hast wroughte.	<i>disclosed</i>
1830	This is the ende of our tale. Make it never so toughete."	<i>difficult</i>
	"Sirs, fareth feir! Ye have no nede to hale!"	<i>pull</i>
	"Pas forth!" quod the serjauntes. "We woll nat here thy tale."	<i>hear; excuse</i>
	"Yis, sirs, of yeur curtesy, I prey yewe of o word.	
	Althoughe my gentil hoost hath pleyd with me in borde	<i>on the chessboard</i>
1835	And i-wonne a wager, ye have naught to doon.	
	That is betwene hym and me. Ye have nothing to doon!"	
	The hoost made an hidouse cry in gesolreut the haut	<i>at the top of his voice</i>
	And set his hond in kenebowe. He lakked never a faute:	<i>akimbo; didn't miss a beat</i>
	"Wenest thowe," seid he to Beryn, "for to scorn me?"	<i>Expect; defraud</i>
1840	Whatever thow speke or stroute, certes it wol nat be.	<i>quarrel, certainly</i>
	Of me shalt thow have no wrong. Pas forth a better pase.	
	In presence of our Steward I wol tell my case."	
	"Why, hoost, sey ye this in earnest or in game?"	
	Ye know my contray and my moder, my lynage and my name,	
1845	And thus ye have i-seyd me ten sith on this day."	<i>to me ten times</i>
	"Yee, what thoughe I seyde so? I know wele it is nay.	<i>Yes; otherwise</i>
	There lieth no more thereto, but another tyme,	<i>next time</i>
	Leve me so much the les when thow comest by me.	<i>Believe; less</i>
	For al that ever I seyde was to bryng thee in care,	<i>crisis</i>
1850	And now I have my purpose, I wol nothyng thee spare."	<i>now [that]</i>
	Thus jangelyng to ech other, endenting every pase,	<i>bickering; zigzagging</i>
	They entred both into the hall there the Steward was.	<i>where</i>
	Evander was his name, that sotill was, and so fell	
	He must be wel avised tofore hym shuld tell. <sup>1</sup>	
1855	Another burgeyse with hym was, provost of the cité,	<i>city</i>
	That Hanybald was i-cleped, but of sotilté	<i>deceitfulness</i>
	He passed many another, as ye shul here sone.	<i>surpassed; hear</i>
	Beryns hoost gan to tell al thing as it was doon,	
	Fro gynnyng to the ending, the wordes with the dede,	

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<sup>1</sup> *His name was Evander, who was so devious and cruel / That a man must be well counseled who would speak before him*

### *The Tale of Beryn*

1860	And howe they made hir covenante, and wager howe they leyde.	<i>placed</i>
	"Now, Beryn," quod the Steward, "thow hast i-herd this tale,	<i>report</i>
	How and in what maner thow art i-brought in bale.	<i>misfortune</i>
	Thow must do his bidding — thow maist in no wise flee —	
	Or drynke al the water that salt is in the see.	<i>sea</i>
1865	Of these too thinges, thow must chese the toon.	<i>two; one</i>
	Now be wel avised, and sey thy will anoon.	<i>speak</i>
	To do ye both lawe, I may no better sey,	<i>render; justice</i>
	For thow shalt have no wrong, as ferforth as I may.	<i>insofar</i>
	Chese thyselff righte as thee list, and wit thow nothing me,	<i>Choose; please; blame</i>
1870	Thoughe thowe chese the wers and let the better be."	
	Beryn stood astoned, and no mervail was,	<i>stupefied</i>
	And preyd the Steward of a day to answere to the case:	<i>for</i>
	"For I myght lightlich in som word be i-caughte,	<i>carelessly</i>
	And eke it is righte hard to chese of to that beth righte naught.	<i>two</i>
1875	But and it were your likyng to graunt me day til tomorow,	<i>But if</i>
	I wold answere thurh Goddes help." — "Then must thow fynde a borow,"	<i>security</i>
	Seyd the Steward to Beryn, "and yit it is of grace."	<i>leniency</i>
	"Now hereth me," quod Hanybald, "I prey a litil space.	<i>time</i>
	He hath fyve shippes under the town, liggyng on the strond,	<i>anchored; shore</i>
1880	The wich been sufficient, i-sesed in our honde,	<i>seized</i>
	By me that am your provost, to execute the lawe."	
	"He must assent," quod Evander; "let us ones here his saw."	<i>at once; story</i>
	"I graunt wele," quod Beryn, "sith it may be noon other."	<i>since; other [way]</i>
	Then Hanybald arose hym up to sese both shipp and stroder,	<i>seize; rudder</i>
1885	And toke Beryn with hym, so talking on the wey:	<i>thus</i>
	"Beryn," quod Hanybald, "I suyr thee, by my fey,	<i>assure; faith</i>
	That thow art much i-bound to me this ilk day.	<i>very</i>
	So is thy plé amended by me, and eke of such a way	<i>remedied</i>
	I am avised in thy cause, yf thow wolt do by rede,	
1890	That lite or naught, by my counsaill, ought thee to drede.	<i>little</i>
	Ye knowe wele tomorowe the day of plee is set	
	That ye mut nedes answer, or els without lett	<i>delay</i>
	I must yeld hem your shippes. I may in no wise blyn,	<i>desist</i>
	So have I undertake; but the marchandise within	
1895	Is nat in my charge — ye know as wele as I —	
	To make therof no lyvery. Wherfor now wisely	<i>delivery</i>
	Worch and do after rede: let al your marchandise	<i>Work; advice</i>
	Be voided of your shippes, and atte hiest prise	<i>unloaded off; at the</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

- I wol have it everydele in covenant, yf ye list.
- 1900 To se myne house here ones tofore, I hold it for the best, *once*  
 Wher ye shul se, of divers londes, houses to or thre *two*  
 Ful of marchandise, that thurh this grete ceté, *city*  
 Is no such in preve, I may right wel avowe. *proof*  
 [ . . . . . ]
- 1905 So when ye have all seyn, and I have yeur vowe also,  
 Let som bargin be i-made betwen us both to.” *bargain; two*  
 “Graunt mercy, sir,” quod Beryn. “Yeur profer is feir and good. *Thanks; offer*  
 Feyn wold I do therafter, yf I understood *Gladly*  
 I myght without blame of breking of arest.” *[That]*
- 1910 “Yis,” quod Hanybald, “at my perell me trest!” *risk; trust*  
 So to Hanybaldes house togider both they rode  
 And fonde as Hanybald had i-seyd: an houghe house, long and brode, *huge*  
 Ful of marchandise as riche as it may be,  
 Passing al the marchantes that dwelled in that ceté. *city*
- 1915 Thus when al was shewed, they dronk and toke hir leve. *i.e., sealed the agreement*  
 To see Beryns shippes in hast they gon to meve. *move*  
 And when that Hanybald was avised what charg the shippes bere, *cargo; bore*  
 He gan to speke in high voise, ascaunce he rought nere *loud; as if; cared nothing*  
 Whether he bargeyned or no, and seyde thus: “Beryn, frend,
- 1920 Yeur marchandise is feir and good. Now let us make an ende.  
 If ye list, I can no more. Ye knoweth how it is.  
 Com of short, let tuk le meyn; me thinketh I sey nat mys,<sup>1</sup>  
 And then yeur meyné and ye and I, to my house shall we go. *crew*  
 And of the marchandise ye saw — I wol nat part therfro — *deviate*
- 1925 Chese of the best of that ye fynd there, *Choose*  
 Thurhout the long house, there shal no man yew dere, *where; injure*  
 And therwith shall yeur shippes be filled al fyve.  
 I can sey no better. If ye list to dryve  
 This bargeyn to the ende, counselleth with yeur men. *consult*
- 1930 I may nat long tary. I must nedes hen.” *go hence*  
 Beryn cleped his meyné, counsell for to take, *summoned; crew*  
 But his first mocioun was of the woo and wrake, *woe; injury*  
 And al the tribulacioun for pleying atte ches,  
 That he had everydele his shame and his dures. *entirely; suffering*

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<sup>1</sup> *In brief, let's shake hands on it; it seems to me I say nothing amiss*

## *The Tale of Beryn*

1935	Fro poynt to poynt, and how it stode, he told how it was. And then he axed counsell, what best was in the cas, To chaunge with the Burgeyse or els for to leve. Ech man seyde his avise, but al that they did meve, It were to long a tale for to tell it here.	<i>situation</i> <i>exchange</i> <i>advice; recommend</i> <i>too; account</i>
1940	But fynally atte end, they corded al in fere That the chaunge shuld stond; for as the case was fall, They held it clerly for the best, and went forth withall The next wey that they couth to Hanybaldes plase. But nowe shull ye here the most sotil fallace	<i>agreed unanimously</i> <i>exchange</i> <i>most direct; household</i> <i>hear; fraud</i>
1945	That ever man wrought till other, and highest trechery, Wich Hanybald had wrought hymselff to this company: “Go in,” quod Hanybald, “and chese as thy covenaut is.” In goon these Romeyns echoon, and fond amys, For there was nothing that eny man myghte se	<i>to another</i> <i>contract stipulates</i> <i>Romans</i>
1950	Saff the wall and tyle-stones and tymber made of tre, For Hanybald had do void it of al thing that was ther; Whils he was atte shippes, his men away it bere. When Beryn saw the house lere, that ful was thertofores Of riche marchandise, “Alas,” thought he, “I am lore!	<i>Except for</i> <i>emptied</i> <i>bore</i> <i>empty</i> <i>lost</i>
1955	I am in this world!” — and witeth wel his hert Was nat al in likeing, and outward gan he stert Like half a wood man, and bote both his lippes, And gan to hast fast toward his own shippes To kepe his good within, with al that ever he myghte,	<i>[he] knew</i> <i>rush</i> <i>insane man; bit</i> <i>hasten</i> <i>cargo</i>
1960	That it were nat discharged, as hym thought verry ryghte. But al for naught was his hast, for thre hundred men, As fast as they myghte the, bere the good then, Thurh ordenaunce of Hanybald that privelich tofore Had purposed and i-cast shuld be out i-bore.	<i>truly just</i> <i>thrive; cargo thence</i> <i>command; who</i> <i>plotted; determined [what]</i>
1965	Beryn made a swyff pase, there myght no man hym let. But Hanybald was ware inowgh and with Beryn met: “Al for nought, Beryn, thow knowest wel and fyne Thy shippes been arested and the good is myne. What woldest thow do there? Thow hast there naught to do.	<i>swift trip; prevent</i> <i>aware</i> <i>fully</i> <i>impounded; cargo</i>
1970	I wol hold thy covenaute, and thow shalt myne also. For yit sawe I never man that was of thy manere: Sometyme thowe wolt avaunte, and somtyme arere; Now thow wolt, and now thow nolt. Where shull men thee fynde?	<i>advance; retreat</i> <i>will; won't</i>



## *The Tale of Beryn*

	Now sey oon and sith another, so variant of mynde;	<i>[you] say; then; unstable</i>
1975	Saw I never tofore this day man so variabill.	
	Sith I thee fynde in suche plyte, our bargin for to stabill,	<i>condition; confirm</i>
	We woll tofore the Steward, there we both shull have righte."	<i>where; justice</i>
	"Nay, forsoth!" quod Beryn. — "Yis, trulich thee tite,"	<i>you are obliged</i>
	Quod Hanybald, "where thowe wolt or no, and so I thee charge	<i>whether</i>
1980	As provost. Knowe that yff me list, my warant is so large,	<i>authority; extensive</i>
	And thowe make eny diffence, to bynym thy lyff.	<i>If; resistance; destroy</i>
	Take thyn hors! It gayneth nat for to make stryffe."	
	So with sorowfull hert, Beryn toke his hors	
	And sofftly seyde to his men, "Of me," quod he, "no fors;	<i>no matter</i>
1985	But wend to your shippes. I wol com when I may.	<i>go</i>
	Ye seth wele, everichone, I may no bet away."	<i>see; better</i>
	Now here by this same tale, both fre and bonde	<i>hear; bondsmen</i>
	Mow fele in hir wittes and eke understonde	<i>Might; senses</i>
	That litil vailleth wisdom or els governaunce	
1990	There Fortune ever werreth, and eke hap and chaunce.	<i>Where; opposes; accident</i>
	Of what availeth bounté, beuté or riches?	
	Frendship or sotilté, or els hardines?	<i>cleverness; courage</i>
	Gold, good or catell, wit or hy lynage?	<i>possessions</i>
	Lond or lordes service, or els highe parage?	<i>birth</i>
1995	What may al this availl, there Fortune is a foo?	<i>where; enemy</i>
	Iwis, righte litill or never a dele, ful offt it falleth so.	<i>not a bit</i>
	So shortly to pas over, they fill to such an end	<i>fell; conclusion</i>
	That Beryn shuld have day ageyn amorow, and so to wend,	<i>his day [in court]; go</i>
	He set hym in ful purpose to his shippes ward.	<i>toward his ships</i>
2000	But yit or he cam there, he fond the passage hard.	<i>before; found</i>
	For how he was begiled, thurhout al the town,	
	Here and ther a coupill gon to speke and to rounne,	<i>couple; whisper</i>
	And every man his purpose was to have parte	<i>man's; a share</i>
	With falsnes and with soteltees; they coud noon other art.	<i>knew; profession</i>
2005	Beryn rode forth in his wey, his page ran hym by,	
	Ful sore adred in hert, and cast about his eye,	<i>afraid</i>
	Up and down even long the strete, and for anger swet.	<i>straight along; sweated</i>
	And er he had riden a stones cast, a blynd man with hym met	<i>throw</i>
	And spak no word, but sesed hym fast by the lap,	<i>seized; garment-flap</i>
2010	And cried "Out!" and "Harowe!" and nere hym gan to stap.	<i>nearer to him stepped</i>
	"Al for nought!" quod this Blynd. "What, wenest thou for to skape?"	<i>escape</i>
	Beryn had thought to prik forth and thought it had be jape.	<i>spur [his horse]</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	The Blynd Man cast away his staff and set on both his hondes:	
	“Nay, thow shalt nat void,” quod he, “for al thy rich londes,	<i>leave</i>
2015	Tyll I of thee have reson, lawe and eke righte.	<i>justice</i>
	For trewlich I may wit it thee that I have lost my sighte!”	<i>blame</i>
	So for aught that Beryn coude other speke or prey,	<i>either</i>
	He myght in no wise pas. Ful sore he gan to may,	<i>escape; be dismayed</i>
	And namelich for the pepill throng hym so aboute,	<i>particularly because</i>
2020	And ech man gan hym hond, and seyde without doute:	<i>grab; hesitation</i>
	“Ye must nedes stond and rest and bide the lawe,	<i>endure</i>
	Be ye never so grete a man!” — “So wold I wonder fawe,”	<i>gladly</i>
	Quod Beryn, “yf ye had cause, but I know noon.”	
	“No? Thow shalt knowe or thow go! Thow hast nat al i-doon,”	<i>before</i>
2025	The Blynd Man seyde to Beryn. “Tel on, then,” quod he.	
	“Here is no place to plete,” the Blynd Man seid aye.	<i>plead; in reply</i>
	“Also, we have no juge here of autorité,	<i>authority</i>
	But Evander the Steward shall deme both thee and me.	<i>judge</i>
	When I my tale have told, and thow hast made answer,	
2030	By that tyme men shal know how thow canst thee clere.	<i>clear yourself [of blame]</i>
	Nowe, soveren God, I thank Thee of this ilk day!	
	Then I may preve thee, by my lyve, of word and eke of fay,	<i>life; good faith</i>
	Fals and eke untrew of covenantaunt thowe hast i-maked.	<i>unfaithful; [which] thou</i>
	But litill is thy charge now, though that I go naked,	<i>concern</i>
2035	That somtyme were partinere and rekenedest never yit.	<i>partner; reckoned</i>
	But thow shalt here, or we depart, therof a litill witt,	<i>hear, before; bit of wisdom</i>
	For after comyn seying, ‘Ever atte ende	<i>common proverb</i>
	The trowth woll be preved, how so men ever trend’.”	<i>turn</i>
	Thus they talked to ech other till they com into the plase	<i>i.e., courthouse</i>
2040	And were i-entred in the hall there the Steward was.	<i>where</i>
	The Blynd Man first gan to speke: “Sir Steward, for Goddes sake,	
	Hereth me a litill while, for here I have i-take	<i>apprehended</i>
	He that hath do me wrong, most of man of mold.	<i>mortal men</i>
	Be my help, as law woll, for Hym that Judas sold.	<i>i.e., Christ</i>
2045	Ye know wele that offt-tyme I have to yew i-pleyned	
	How I was betrayed and how I was i-peyned,	<i>injured</i>
	And how a man somtyme and I our yen did chaunge.	<i>eyes; exchange</i>
	This is the same persone, though that he make it straunge.	<i>denies it</i>
	I toke hem hym but for a tyme and leved trewly,	<i>gave them; believed</i>
2050	Myne to have i-had ageyn, and so both he and I	
	Were ensured utterlich, and was our both will.	<i>pledged</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	But for myne the better were, wrongfullich and ill	<i>because</i>
	He hath hem kept hiderto, with much sorow and pyne	<i>misery</i>
	To me, as ye wele knoweth. Because I have nat myne,	
2055	I may nat se with his; wherfor me is ful woo.	<i>woeful</i>
	And evermore ye seyde that ye myght nothing do	<i>said</i>
	Without presence of the man that wrought me this unquert.	<i>annoyance</i>
	Nowe sith he is tofore yew, now let hym nat astert,	<i>escape</i>
	For many tyme and offt ye behete me,	<i>promised</i>
2060	And he myght be take, he shuld do me gre.	<i>If; arrested; favor</i>
	Sith ye of hym be sesed, however so ye tave,	<i>in custody; strain</i>
	Let hym never pas til I myne eyen have."	<i>leave until; eyes</i>
	"Beryn," quod Evander, "herest thou nat thyselfe	
	How sotilly he pleteth?" — And ware by eche halve,	<i>pleads; wary on all sides</i>
2065	Beryn stood al muet, and no word he spak.	<i>mute</i>
	And that was tho his grace: ful sone he had be take	<i>good luck; arrested</i>
	And he had misseyd ones or els i-seyd nay,	<i>If; misspoken</i>
	For then he had been negatyff and undo for ay.	<i>the defendant; ruined</i>
	For they were grete sevilious and used probat law,	<i>civil-law experts</i>
2070	Wher evermore affirmatyff shuld preve his own sawe.	<i>plaintiff; case</i>
	Wherfor they were so querelouse of al myght com in mynde;	<i>litigious; all [who]</i>
	Thoughe it were never in dede i-do, such mater they wold fynde	<i>evidence</i>
	To benym a man his good thurh som maner gile.	<i>deprive; possessions; guile</i>
	For the Blynd Man wist right wele he shuld have lost his while	<i>wasted his time</i>
2075	To make his pleynt on Beryn and sued oppon his good,	
	For shippes and eke marchandise in a balaunce stode.	
	Therfor he made his chalenge his eyen for to have,	<i>allegation; eyes</i>
	Or els he shuld for hem fyne, yf he wold hem have,	<i>pay a fine</i>
	And ligg for hem in hostage til the fynauce cam.	<i>security; settlement</i>
2080	This was al the sotilté of the Blynd Man.	
	Beryn stood al mewet, and no word he spak.	<i>mute</i>
	"Beryn," quod Evander, "lest thou be i-take	
	In defaute of answere, thou myghtest be condempned.	
	Be right wele avised, sith thou art examened."	
2085	"Sir," seyde Beryn, "it wold litill avail	
	To answere thus aloon without good consaill.	<i>i.e., legal counsel</i>
	And also, fethermore, ful litill I shuld be leved,	<i>believed</i>
	Whatever I answerd, thus stoned and reprevd.	<i>astonished</i>
	And eke my wit doth fail, and no wonder is.	
2090	Wherfor I wold prey yew of your gentilnes	<i>Therefore</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	To graunte me day til tomorow. I myght be avised	<i>advised [how]</i>
	To answeere forth with other that on me been surmysed."	<i>what; charged</i>
	"Depardeux," quod the Steward, "I graunt wel it be so."	<i>By God</i>
	Beryn toke his leve and hoped to pas and go.	
2095	But as sone as Beryn was on his hors rydyng,	<i>expression</i>
	He met a womman and a child with sad chere comyng,	<i>Who; securely</i>
	That toke hym by the reyn and held hym wonder fast,	<i>depart; It; hasten</i>
	And seyde, "Sir, voideth nat! Hit vailleth nat to hast.	<i>escape</i>
	Ye mow in no wise scape; ye must nedes abide.	<i>lain</i>
2100	For thoughe ye list to knowe me nat, yit lien by your side	<i>often</i>
	I have ful many a tyme, I cannat tell yewe howe lome.	<i>where; judgment</i>
	Come tofore the Steward, there shull ye here your dome	
	Of thing that I shal put on yew, and no word for to ly;	
	To leve me thus aloon, it is your vylany.	<i>abandon</i>
2105	Alas, the day and tyme that ever I was your make!	<i>spouse</i>
	Much have I endured this too yeer for your sake,	<i>these two</i>
	But now it shall be know who is in the wronge."	<i>known</i>
	Beryn was al abasshed. The pepil so thik thronge	<i>densely crowded</i>
	Aboute hym in eche syde; for ought that he couth peyn,	<i>on each; endeavor</i>
2110	He must to the Steward of fyne force ageyn.	<i>sheer necessity</i>
	Now shull ye here how sotillich this Womman gan hir tale	<i>hear; craftily</i>
	In presence of the Steward. With colour wan and pale,	
	Petously she gan to tell and seyde, "Sir, to yewe	<i>Pitifully</i>
	Ful oft I have compleyned in what manere and howe	
2115	My childes fader lefft me by myselff aloon,	<i>great [with child]</i>
	Without help or comforte, as grete as I myght goon,	<i>his [son]</i>
	With my sone here and his, that shame it is to tell	<i>perforce</i>
	The penury that I have i-had, that aforce sell	<i>wardrobe, whether</i>
	I must nedes myne aray, where me list or lothe,	<i>to provide for</i>
2120	Or els I must have begged for to fynd us both.	<i>deserted; guess</i>
	For there was never woman i-leve, as I ges,	<i>provision for</i>
	For lak of hede of lyvlode that lyved in more distres	<i>Than; food</i>
	Then I myselff, for oft-time for lak of mete and drynk.	<i>believe; more eager; work</i>
	And yit I trow no creatur was feyner for to swynke	
2125	My lyff to sustene, but as I mut nede,	
	Above al other thinges to his child take hede,	
	That wonder is and mervail that I am alyve.	
	For the sokeyng of his child, ryght as it were a knyve,	<i>nursing; knife</i>
	It ran into my hert, so lowe I was of mode;	<i>spirit</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

- 2130 That wel I woot in certen, with parcell of my blood  
 His child I have i-norissshed, and that is by me seen,  
 For my rede colour is turned into grene.  
 And he that cause is of all, here he stondeth by me. *beside*  
 To pay for the fosteryng, me thinketh it is tyme.
- 2135 And sith he is my husbond and hath on me no rowth, *pity*  
 Let hym make amendes in saving of his trowth. *bond*  
 And yf he to any word ones can sey nay, *once*  
 Lo, here my gage al redy to preve al that I say.” *pledge; prove*  
 The Steward toke the gage and spak in sofft wise: *mild manner*
- 2140 “Of this petouse compleynt a mannes hert may grise, *pathetic; be horrified*  
 For I know in parcell hir tale is nat al lese, *part; falsehood*  
 For many a tyme and oft this Womman that here is  
 Hath i-be tofore me and pleyned of hir greffe, *complained; grief*  
 But without a party, hir cause myght nat preff. *litigant; prove*
- 2145 Now thow art here present that she pleyneth on. *whom*  
 Make thy defence now, Beryn, as wele as thowe can.”  
 Beryn stood al mwet, and no word he spak. *mute*  
 “Beryn,” quod the Steward, “doest thow sclepe or wake? *sleep*  
 Sey ones oon or other: ys it soth or nay *at once; true*
- 2150 As she hath declareth? Tell on saunce delay!” *without*  
 “Lord God!” quod Beryn. “What shuld it me availe  
 Among so many wise, without right good counsaill, *clever [people]*  
 To tell eny tale? Ful litill, as I ges! *guess*  
 Wherfor, I wold prey yew of yeur gentilnes,
- 2155 Graunt me day till tomorow to answer forth with other.”  
 “I graunt wele,” quod the Steward, “but for fader and moder, *for [the sake of]*  
 Thow getest no lenger term, pleynly I thee tell.”  
 Beryn toke his leve. His hert gan to swell  
 For pure verry anguyssh, and no mervel was. *sheer authentic anguish*
- 2160 And who is that that nold and he were in such case? *that who wouldn't if*  
 For al his trist and hope in eny worldlich thing *trust*  
 Was cleen from hym passed, save sorow and myslikyng. *except*  
 For body, good and catell and lyff, he set at nought, *property*  
 So was his hert i-wounded for anger and for thought.
- 2165 Beryn passed sofftly and to his hors gan go, *walk*  
 And when he was without the gates, he loked to and fro *outside*  
 And coude noon other contenaunce, but to his page he seyde:  
 “Preciouse God in heven, howe falsly am I betrayde!

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	I trowe no man alyve stont in wors plighte,	<i>believe; stands</i>
2170	And all is for my synne and for my yong delite,	<i>youthful</i>
	And pryncipally, above al thing, for grete unkyndnes	<i>unnaturalness</i>
	That I did to my moder, for litill hede iwis	
	I toke of hir — this know I wele — whils she was alyve.	
	Therfor, al this turment is sent to me so ryve.	<i>abundantly</i>
2175	For there was never womman kynder to hir child	
	Then she was, and thereageyns never thing so wild	<i>in return</i>
	Ne so evill-thewed as I was myselff.	<i>ill-mannered</i>
	Therfor, sorow and happous environ me by eche helve	<i>mishaps surround; side</i>
	That I note whider ryde nether up ne down.	<i>don't know whither [to]</i>
2180	There been so many devilles dwelling in this town,	
	And so ful of gile and trechery also,	<i>deceit</i>
	That wele I woot in certeyn they woll me ondo.	<i>destroy</i>
	Now wold to God in heven what is my best rede!"	<i>[I knew] what; plan</i>
	He took his hors to his page, and thus to hym he seyde:	<i>gave</i>
2185	"Lede my hors to shipward, and take it to som man,	<i>give</i>
	And I woll go on foot as pryvyly as I can,	<i>inconspicuously</i>
	And assay yf I may in eny maner wise	<i>endeavor</i>
	Ascape unarested more in such maner wise."	<i>Escape</i>
	The child toke his mastres hors and lafft hym there alone,	<i>page; left</i>
2190	Walking forth on foot, makeing offt his moon.	<i>moan</i>
	And in his most musing — I cannat sey how lome —	<i>often</i>
	He wosshed naked as he was bore he had be in Rome.	<i>wished; been</i>
	And no mervaiill was it, as the case stode,	
	For he drad more to lese his eyen than he did his shippes or his good.	<i>dreaded</i>
2195	Now ye that listeth to dwell and here of aventure,	<i>wish; hear</i>
	How petously Dame Fortune, Beryn to amure,	<i>pitifully; ruin</i>
	Turneth hir whele about in the wers syde,	<i>wheel; worse</i>
	With hap of sorow and anguyssh she gynneth for to ride.	
	Beryn passed toward the stronde there his shippes were,	<i>shore where</i>
2200	But ye mow understond his hert was ful of fere,	
	Yit netherles he sat hym down sofftly on a stall,	<i>bench</i>
	Semy-vif for sorow, and lened to the wall.	<i>Half-dead</i>
	For turment that he had, so wery he was and feynt,	
	And to God above thus he made his pleynt:	
2205	"Glorious God in heven, that al thing madest of nought,	<i>who</i>
	Why sufferest thou these cursed men to stroy me for nought,	<i>permit; destroy</i>
	And knowest wel myne innocent, that I have no gilt	<i>innocence</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	Of al that they pursu me or on me is pilt?"	<i>pushed</i>
	And in the meenwhils that Beryn thus gan pleyn,	<i>complain</i>
2210	A cachepoll stode besides — his name was Macaign —	<i>(see note)</i>
	And herd all the wordes and knew also tofore	
	How Beryn was turmented, both with las and more;	<i>less</i>
	It was i-sprong thurh the toun. So was he ful ensensed	<i>fully informed</i>
	How he hym wold engyne, as he had purpensed,	<i>con; prepared</i>
2215	And had araid hym sotillich as man of contemplacioun,	<i>disguised himself</i>
	In a mantell with the lyste, with fals dissimilacioun,	<i>border</i>
	And a staff in his hond, as though he febill were,	
	And drow hym toward Beryn and seid in this manere:	<i>approached</i>
	“The highe God of heven, that al thing made of nought,	<i>who</i>
2220	Bles yew, gentil sir, for many an hevye thought,	
	Me thinketh that ye have, and no wonder is.	
	But, good sir, dismay yew nat, but leveth yeur hevynes.	<i>sadness</i>
	And yff ye list to tell me somewhat of yeur distres,	<i>choose</i>
	I hope to God almyghty in party it redres	<i>partially</i>
2225	Thurh my pore counsaill, and so I have many oon.	
	For I have peté on yew, by God and by Seynt Jon,	<i>pity</i>
	And eke pryvy hevynes doth eche man appeir,	<i>inward sorrow; impair</i>
	Sodenly or he be ware, and fall in dispeir.	<i>before</i>
	And who be in that plage, that man is incurabill,	<i>plague</i>
2230	For consequent cometh after sekenes abominabill.	<i>effects</i>
	And therfor, sir, diskevereth yewe and be nothing adrad.”	<i>disclose yourself</i>
	“Graunt mercy, sir,” quod Beryn. “Ye seme trewe and sad,	<i>Thank you; sober</i>
	But o thing lieth in my hert: I note to whom to trust,	<i>don't know</i>
	For tho that dyned me today ordeyned me to arest.”	<i>those who hosted</i>
2235	“A, sir, be ye that man? Of yew I have i-herd.	<i>Ah</i>
	Gentil sir, douteth nat, ne be nothing aferd	<i>afraid</i>
	Of me, for I shall counsell yewe as wel as I can,	
	For trulich in the ceté dwelleth many a fals man,	<i>city</i>
	And usen litill els but falshode, wrong and while,	<i>[Who]; guile</i>
2240	And how they myght straungours with trechery begile.	<i>foreigners</i>
	But ye shull do ryght wisely somewhat by my counsayll.	
	Speke with the Steward, that may yewe most availl,	<i>who</i>
	For there is a comyn byword, yf ye it herd haveth,	<i>common</i>
	‘Wele setteth he his peny that the pound saveth.’	<i>invests; penny (i.e., a bribe)</i>
2245	The Steward is a covetouse man that long hath desired	<i>who</i>
	A knyff I have in kepeing, wherewith his hert I wired,	<i>knife; worried</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	Shall be yewe to help, in covenante that ye	<i>[Which]; agreement</i>
	Shall gyve me fyv mark yeur trew frend to be.	<i>five</i>
	The knyff is feir, I tell yew, yit never tofore this day	
2250	Myght the Steward have it, for aught he coud prey.	
	The wiche ye shull gyve hym, the better for to spede,	<i>profit</i>
	And behote hym twenty pounds to help yewe in yeur nede.	<i>promise</i>
	And yf he graunteth, trusteth wele, ye stonde in good plichte,	
	For better is then lese all, the las the more quyt.	<i>lose; less; repays</i>
2255	And I woll go with yewe streyte to his plase,	<i>household</i>
	And knele doun and speke first to amend yeur case,	
	And sey ye be my cosyn, the better shull ye spede.	<i>prosper</i>
	And when that I have all i-told, the knyff to hym ye bede.”	<i>offer</i>
	Beryn thanked hym hertlich and on hym gan trust,	<i>heartily</i>
2260	With hond in hond ensured, and al for the best.	
	Beryn thought noon other, al that it other was.	<i>although</i>
	Macaign hym comforted, talking of hir case;	
	And passed forth styllly toward the Steward blyve	<i>quietly; at once</i>
	Beryn and Macaign. But Beryn bare the knyff,	
2265	And trust much in his felaw to have som help.	
	But or they departed were, he had no cause to yelp	<i>But before; boast</i>
	Of no maner comfort, as ye shull here anon.	<i>hear</i>
	For as sone as Macaign tofore the Steward come,	
	He fill plat to the erth; a grevous pleynt and an huge	<i>fell face-down; complaint</i>
2270	He made, and seyde, “Sir Steward, now be a trew juge	
	Ageyns this fals treytour that stonde me besyde.	<i>who</i>
	Let take of hym good hede, els he wol nat abyde.	
	Now mercy, good Steward, for ye have herd me yore	<i>long ago</i>
	For my fader, Melan, pleyn to yew ful sore	<i>complain</i>
2275	That with seven dromodaries, as I have told yewe lome,	<i>cargo ships; often</i>
	With marchandise charged went toward Rome.	
	And it is seven yeer ago, and a litil more,	
	Of hym or of his goodes that I herd les or more.	
	And yit I have enquired as bysely as I couthe,	<i>diligently</i>
2280	And met never man yit that me coude tell with mouth	
	Any tyding of hym, onto this same day.	
	But now I know to much, alas! I may wel say!”	<i>too</i>
	When Beryn herd these wordes, he kist doun his hede.	<i>cast</i>
	“Allas!” he thought in hert; “allas, what is my rede?” —	<i>plan</i>
2285	And wold feyn have voided and outward gan to stapp.	<i>[he]; departed; step</i>



## *The Tale of Beryn*

	But Macaign arose and sesed hym by the lapp:	<i>grabbed; garment-flap</i>
	"Nay, thow shalt nat void," he seid. "My tale is nat i-do.	<i>leave; done</i>
	For by trowth of my body, yf thow scapedest so,	<i>escaped</i>
	I shuld never have mery whils I were on lyve!" —	<i>enjoyment; alive</i>
2290	And set hond fast on Beryns other scleve,	<i>[he]</i>
	And seyde, "Good Sir Steward, my tale to the ende	
	I prey ye wold here, for wend how men wend,	<i>hear; fare</i>
	There may no man hele murder that it wolle out atte last.	<i>conceal</i>
	The same knyff my fader bere when he of contré past,	<i>bore; from; passed</i>
2295	Let serch wele this felon, and here ye shull hym fynde.	<i>it</i>
	I know the knyff wel inowgh; it is nat out of my mynde.	<i>memory</i>
	The cotelere dwelleth in this town that made the same knyff,	<i>cutler; who</i>
	And for to preve the trowth, he shall be here as blyve."	<i>immediately</i>
	Beryn swat for anger; his hert was ful of fere.	<i>sweated</i>
2300	He toke the knyff to the Steward or he serched were.	<i>gave; before</i>
	The Steward onto Beryn: "My frend, lo!" quod he.	
	"And thow think thee wel about, this is a foule plee.	<i>If; accusation</i>
	I can know noon other but thow must, or thow go,	<i>before</i>
	Yeld the body of Melan and his good also.	<i>property</i>
2305	Now be wel avised ageyn tomorow day;	<i>in anticipation of</i>
	Then shalt thow have thy jugement. There is no more to say."	
	When Beryn fro the Steward thus departed was	
	And was without the gate, he loked oppon the plase,	<i>outside</i>
	And cursed it wonder bitterly in a fervent ire,	
2310	And wisshed many tymes it had been afeir.	<i>on fire</i>
	"For I trow that man of lyve was never wors betrayed	<i>believe; alive</i>
	Then I am, and therewithall my hert is cleen dismayed,	<i>entirely</i>
	For here I have no frendship, but am al counselles,	<i>without legal advice</i>
	And they been falsher then Judas, and eke mercyles.	<i>falser</i>
2315	A, Lord God in hevyn, that my hert is woo!	<i>Ah; woeful</i>
	And yit suyrly I mervell nat, though that it be so,	<i>surely</i>
	For yit in al my lyve sith I ought understode,	
	Had I never will for to lern good.	
	Foly — I haunted it ever, there myght no man me let;	<i>practiced</i>
2320	And now he hath i-paid me; he is cleen out of my dett.	<i>she (Folly)</i>
	For whils I had tyme, wisdom I myght have lerned,	
	But I drowgh me to Foly and wold nat be governed,	<i>drew</i>
	But had al myne own will and of no man a-ferd.	<i>was respectful</i>
	For I was never chastised, but nowe myne own yerd	<i>stick</i>

# *The Tale of Beryn*

2325	Beteth me to sore, the strokes been to hard.	<i>too</i>
	For these devilles of this town taketh but litill reward	<i>regard</i>
	To sclee my body to have my good; the day is set tomorowe.	<i>kill; possessions</i>
	Now wold to God I were in grave, for it were end of sorow!	
	I was iwis to much a fole, for hate I had to Rame,	<i>too; fool; (his stepmother)</i>
2330	I wold forsake myne heritage; therfor sorow and shame	
	Is oppon me fall, and right wele deserved,	<i>befallen</i>
	For I tooke noon maner hede when my moder sterved,	<i>died</i>
	And disobeyed my fader and set hym at naught also.	<i>valued</i>
	What wonder is it than though that I have woo?	<i>then</i>
2335	Fortune and eke Wisdom have werred with me ever,	<i>fought</i>
	And I with hem in al my lyff, for Fortune was me lever	<i>to me preferable</i>
	Then eny Wit or Governaunce, for hem too I did hate.	<i>Discipline; those two</i>
	And thoughe I wold be at oon, now it is to late.	<i>in harmony; too</i>
	O myghtfull God in heven, where was ever man	
2340	That wrought hymselff more foly then I myselff did than?	<i>than; then</i>
	Acursed be the tyme that I out of Rome went,	
	That was my faders righte heir of lyvlode and of rent,	<i>Who; rightful; income</i>
	And al the riall lordshipp that he hath in the town.	<i>royal</i>
	Had I had wit and grace, and hold me lowe and boune,	<i>obedient</i>
2345	It were my kynd now among my baronage	<i>custom; peers</i>
	To hauke and to hunt, and eke to pley and rage	<i>flirt</i>
	With feir fressh ladies, and daunce when me lyst.	<i>it pleased me</i>
	But nowe it is to late to speke of 'Had I wist!'	<i>too late; known</i>
	But I fare like the man that for to swele his vlyes,	<i>exterminate; flies</i>
2350	He stert into the bern and after stre he hies,	<i>rushes; straw; hurries</i>
	And goth about the walles with a brennyng wase,	<i>burning torch</i>
	Tyll it was, atte last, that the leem and blase	<i>flame</i>
	Entred into the chynes where the whete was,	<i>chinks</i>
	And kissed so the evese that brent was al the plase;	<i>eaves; burned</i>
2355	But first in the begynnyng, til feer smote in the raftres,	<i>fire</i>
	He toke no maner kepe and thought of nothing after,	
	What perell there myghte fall — ne more did I, iwis,	<i>befall; indeed</i>
	That wold forsake myne honour for the unkyndnes	<i>because of</i>
	Of Rame that was my stepmoder, for yf I shal nat ly,	<i>who</i>
2360	They beth soure. Wherfor, the more wisely	<i>i.e., stepmothers; bitter</i>
	I shuld have wrought, had I had wit and suffred for a tyme,	<i>endured</i>
	And after com to purpose wel inowghe of myne.	<i>later; an outcome</i>
	But evil avenged he his deel that, for a litill mode	<i>sorrow who; petty outburst</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	And anger, to his neyghbour selleth away his good	<i>property</i>
2365	And goth hymselff abegging after in breff tyme.	<i>afterwards; brief</i>
	He mut be counted a lewd man in al maner ryme.	<i>i.e., satiric verses</i>
	So have I wrought, and wers, for I dout of my lyve	
	How that it shall stond, for plukking of my scleve,	<i>tugging at</i>
	The knyffe that was me take!" — as ye have herd tofore —	<i>given</i>
2370	"And yit it greveth myne hert also much more	
	Of myne own pepill that no disese aserved.	<i>crew; adversity deserved</i>
	I wote wele after pleding right nought wol be reserved	<i>being sued; left over</i>
	To sustene hir lyves; I trow ryght nought or lyte,	<i>their; little or nothing</i>
	And paraventur lightly stond in wors plyghte.	<i>perhaps quickly</i>
2375	Of me it is no force, thoughe I be thus arayed,	<i>no matter; treated</i>
	But it is dole and peté that they shul be betrayed	<i>sorrow; pity</i>
	That hath nought aserved, but for my gilt aloon."	<i>Who; deserved</i>
	And when that Beryn in this wise had i-made his mone,	<i>manner; complaint</i>
	A crepill he saw comyng with grete spede and hast,	<i>crippled man</i>
2380	Oppon a stilt under his kne bound wonder fast,	<i>peg-leg; tightly</i>
	And a crouch under his armes, with hondes al forskramed.	<i>crutch; contorted</i>
	"Allas!" quod this Beryn, "shall I be more examened?" —	
	And gan to turn aside onto the see-stronde,	<i>[he]; seashore</i>
	And the Cripill after, and wan oppon hym londe.	<i>gained distance upon him</i>
2385	Tho began Beryn to drede inwardlich sore,	<i>Then</i>
	And thought thus in his hert: "Shal I be combered more?	<i>encumbered</i>
	And it were Goddes will my sorowe for to cese,	<i>If; cease</i>
	Me thinketh I have inowe." The Cripill began to prece	<i>enough; press</i>
	And had i-raught nerehond Beryn by the scleve.	<i>seized nearly</i>
2390	Beryn turned as an hare and gan to ren blyve,	<i>run fast</i>
	But the Cripill knew better the pathes smale and grete	
	Then Beryn, so tofore hym he was and gan hym mete.	<i>Than; intercept</i>
	When Beryn saw it vayled nought to renne ne to lepe,	<i>availed; run</i>
	What for dole and anguyssh no word myght he speke,	
2395	But stode still amased and stared fast aboute.	
	The Cripill began to speke: "Sir, to drede or to dout	
	Of me wold ye righte light, and ye knewe myne hert.	<i>little, if you</i>
	So where ye like evil or il, fro me shull ye nat parte	<i>whether</i>
	Tyll I have treted with yew, and ye with me also,	<i>negotiated</i>
2400	Of all yeur soden happes, yeur myscheff and yeur woo.	<i>recent mishaps</i>
	For by the tyme that I have knowleche of yeur case,	
	Yeur rennyng and yeur trotting into any esy pase	<i>running</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	I shall turn, or that we twyn, so ye after my scole	<i>before; separate; school</i>
	Wol do, and as I rede yew. For ye were a fole	<i>advise</i>
2405	When ye cam first a londe. Wolde ye had met with me,	<i>on shore</i>
	For I wold have ensensed yewe al the iniquité	<i>informed</i>
	Of these fals marchandes that dwellen in this town,	
	And outed all yeur chaffare without gruch or groun.	<i>displayed; wares; complaint</i>
	For had ye dwelled within yeur shippes and nat go hem among,	<i>among them</i>
2410	Then had ye been undaungered and quyt of al hir wrong	<i>safe from</i>
	On yewe that been surmysed thurh fals suggestioun.	<i>charged; allegations</i>
	Beryn gan to sigh; unneth he myght soun	<i>hardly; speak</i>
	Saff o word or tweyn, and "Mercy!" was the first,	<i>Except one</i>
	Preying with all his hert that he myght have his rest	
2415	And be no more enpledged, but pas from hym quyte.	<i>sued; i.e., the Cripple</i>
	"Good sir," quod Beryn, "doth me no more dispite,	<i>resistance</i>
	And suffer me to pas, and have on me routhe,	<i>permit; pity</i>
	And I suyr yew feithfully, have here my trowth,	<i>assure; pledge</i>
	Tomorowe when I have pleded, and anything be lafft	<i>if; left</i>
2420	Of shipp or marchandise, afore the ship or bafft,	<i>in front of; astern</i>
	I woll shewe yew al i-fere and opyn every chest,	<i>together; open</i>
	And put it in yeur grace to do what ye lest."	<i>power; please</i>
	And in the meenwhile that Beryn gan to clapp,	<i>shout</i>
	The Cripill nyghed hym nere and nere, and hent hym by the lap,	<i>approached; caught</i>
2425	And as sone as Beryn knew that he was in honde,	
	He unlaced his mantell for drede of som comand,	<i>something coming</i>
	And pryveliche over his shuldres lete hym down glyde,	<i>stealthily; it</i>
	And had lever lese his mantell then abyde.	<i>rather lose</i>
	The Cripill all perceyved and hent hym by the scleve	<i>grabbed</i>
2430	Of his nether surcote. — "Alas, nowe mut Y stryve,"	<i>outer-coat; struggle</i>
	Thoughte Beryn by hymself; "nowe I am i-hent,	<i>caught</i>
	There helpeth naughte save strength!" — Therewith the scleve torent;	<i>tore</i>
	Beryn gan to scappe, he spared for no cost.	<i>escape</i>
	"Alas!" thought this Cripill. "This man woll be lost	
2435	And be undo forever, but he counsell have.	<i>ruined; unless</i>
	Iwis, thoughe he be lewde, my contreman to save	<i>unschooled; compatriot</i>
	Yit will my besynes do and peyn that I may	<i>diligence; action</i>
	Sith he is of Rome, for that is my contray."	<i>Since</i>
	This Cripill was an hundred yere ful of age	
2440	With a long thik berd, and a trewe visage	<i>honest face</i>
	He had and a manly, and july was he —	<i>gallant</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

- And Geffrey was his name i-knowe in that contré.  
 “Allas!” thought this Geffrey, “this man hath grete drede  
 Of me that by my power wold help hym in his nede.  
 2445 Iwis, thoughe he be nyce, untaught and unwise, *foolish*  
 I woll nat for his foly leve myne enpryse!” *enterprise*  
 And lept after Beryn, and that in right good spede. *[he]*  
 Beryn was so sore agast, he toke no maner hede *frightened*  
 To look ones bakward till he to the water cam;  
 2450 Then loked he behynd and saw Sir Clekam *i.e., Sir Crampleg (see note)*  
 Comannd wonder fast with staff and with his stilt. *Coming*  
 “Alas!” thought Beryn, “I nowe am i-spilt, *doomed*  
 For I may no ferther without I wold me droune — *unless; drown*  
 I note wich were the better! — or go ageyn to tounne.” *don’t know*  
 2455 Geffrey was so ny com that Beryn myght nat fle. *flee*  
 “Good sir,” quod this Geffrey, “why do ye void me? *i.e., Virgin Mary; womb*  
 For, by Heven Quene that bare Criste in hir barme,  
 But righte as to myselff I woll yewe no more harm.  
 Sitteth down here by me oppon this see-stronde, *seashore*  
 2460 And yff ye drede anything, clepe yeur men to londe *call*  
 And let hem be here with us all our speche-tyme,  
 For I woll nat feyn oon woord, as makers doon to ryme, *poets*  
 But counsell yewe as prudently as God woll send me grace.  
 Take comferte to yewe, and herk a litill spase.” *listen*  
 2465 And when that Beryn had i-herd his tale to the ende,  
 And how goodly Geffrey spak as he were his frende, *as if*  
 Nonobstant his drede, yet part of sapience *Notwithstanding*  
 Stremed into his hert for his eloquence, *on account of*  
 And seyde, “God me counsayll for His highe mercy!  
 2470 For I have herd, this same day, men as sotilly *cleverly*  
 Speke, and of yeur semblant and in such manere, *appearance*  
 And byhete me frendshipp outward by hir chere, *promised; expression*  
 But inward it was contrary hir intellectione. *intention*  
 Wherfor the blame is les, thoughe I suspecioune *For which reason*  
 2475 Have of yeur wordes, lest other be yeur entent. *otherwise*  
 For I note in whom to trust, by God omnipotent! *don’t know*  
 Yit netherles, yf yeur will is to come into the shipp with me,  
 I woll somewhat do by yeur rede, how so it ever be.” *advice*  
 Then quod Geffrey: “yf it be so that I in yeur power  
 2480 Enter into yeur shippes, and yewe help in yeur mystere, *profession*

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	That ye ageyn your adversaries shall have the better syde,	<i>against</i>
	And gyve yewe such counsell to bate down hir pride,	<i>beat; their</i>
	And that ye wyn in every pleynt, also much or more	<i>suit, just as much</i>
	As they purpose to have of yewe; yf they be doun i-bore	<i>overthrown</i>
2485	And ye have amendes for hir iniquité —	
	And I yewe bryng to this end — what shall my guerdon be?"	<i>reward</i>
	"In verry soth," quod Beryn, "yf I yewe may trust,	
	I woll quyte yewe trewly, I make yewe behest."	<i>repay; promise</i>
	"In feith then," quod Geoffrey, "I woll with yewe wende."	<i>go</i>
2490	"What is your name," seid Beryn tho, "my frend?"	<i>then</i>
	"Geffrey," he seyde; "but in this marches I was nat bore,	<i>these territories; born</i>
	But I have dwelled in this ceté yeeres heretofore	<i>city</i>
	Ful many, and turmented wors then were ye,	<i>than</i>
	And endured for my trowth much adversité,	<i>honesty</i>
2495	For I wold in no wise suffer hir falshedes.	<i>endorse their crimes</i>
	For in all the world, so corrupt of hir dedes	
	Been noon men alyve, I may ryghte wele avowe,	
	For they set all hir wittes in wrong, al that they mowe.	
	Wherfor ful many a tyme, the grettest of hem and I	
2500	Have stonden in altercacioun for hir trechery,	<i>because of</i>
	For I had in valowe in trewe marchandise	<i>value</i>
	A thousand pound — al have they take in such maner wise.	<i>taken</i>
	So ferforth to save my blood, no longer myght I dure.	<i>To such an extent; endure</i>
	For drede of wors, thus thought I myself to disfigure,	<i>i.e., pose as cripple</i>
2505	And have amonge hem twelve yer go right in this plichte,	
	And ever have had in memory howe I myght hem quyte.	<i>repay</i>
	And so I hope nowghe, as sotill as they be,	<i>now; crafty</i>
	With my wit engyne hem and help yewe and me.	<i>outsmart</i>
	My lymes been both hole and sound; me nedeth stilt ne crouch."	<i>limbs; healthy</i>
2510	He cast asyde hem both and lepe oppon an huche,	<i>chest</i>
	And adown ageynes, and walked too and fro,	<i>again</i>
	Up and down within the shipp, and shewed his hondes tho,	<i>then</i>
	Strecching forth his fyngers in sight over al aboute,	
	Without knot or knor or eny signe of goute,	<i>swelling</i>
2515	And clyghte hem efft ageyns right disfeterly,	<i>clinched; misshapenly</i>
	Som to ride eche other and som awayward wry.	<i>knot; twist</i>
	Geffrey was right myghty and wele his age did bere,	<i>strong</i>
	For natur was more substancial when tho dayes were	<i>sturdy</i>
	Then nowe in our tyme, for al thing doth wast	<i>decay</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

2520	Saffe vise and cursed lyving, that groweth al to wast.	<i>Except vice; to destroy all</i>
	What shuld I tell more? But Geffrey sat hym down	
	And Beryn hym besydes. The Romeyns gan to rown	<i>whisper</i>
	And mervelled much in Geffrey of his disgisenes.	<i>disguise</i>
	And Beryn had another thought and spak of his distres:	
2525	“Now, Geffrey,” seid this Beryn, “and I durst trust in yewe,	<i>if; dare</i>
	That and ye knewe eny man that is alyve anowe	<i>That if</i>
	That had of discrecioune so much influence	<i>sound judgment</i>
	To make my party good tomorowe in my defence	<i>suit successful</i>
	And delyver me of sorowe, as ye behote have,	<i>promised</i>
2530	I wold becom his legeman — as God my soule save!”	<i>follower</i>
	“That were to much,” quod Geffrey; “that woll I yew relese,	<i>too</i>
	But I desire of other thing to have your promes:	<i>promise</i>
	That and I bryng your enmyes into such a traunce	<i>That if; confusion</i>
	To make for your wronges to yew righte highe fenaunce,	<i>reparation</i>
2535	And so declare for yewe that with yew pas such dome,	<i>judgment</i>
	That ye oppon your feith bryng me at Rome,	
	Yf God woll send yew weder and grace to repase.”	<i>weather; return</i>
	Quod Beryn: “But I graunt yewe, I were lewder then an asse! <sup>1</sup>	
	But or I fullich trust yewe, holdeth me excused;	<i>But before</i>
2540	I woll go counsell with my men, lest they it refused.”	<i>consult</i>
	Beryn drewe asyde and spak with his meyné,	<i>crew</i>
	And expressed every word in what plight and degré	<i>situation</i>
	That he stood, from poynt to poynt, and of his fals arestes.	
	His meyné were astoned and stared forth as bestes.	<i>beasts</i>
2545	“Speketh som word,” quod Beryn, “sith I am betrayd;	<i>since</i>
	Ye have i-herd what Geffrey to me hath sayd.”	
	These Romeyns stood all still; o word ne coud they meve,	<i>overwhelmed; arise</i>
	And eke it passed hir wittes. Then Beryn gan releve,	<i>favor</i>
	And to Geffrey efft ageyn and mercy hym besought.	
2550	“Help me, sir,” quod Beryn, “for His love that us bought,	<i>i.e., Christ’s</i>
	Dying on the rood!” — and wept ful tenderly.	<i>cross; [he]</i>
	“For but ye help,” quod Beryn, “there is no remedy,	<i>unless</i>
	For comfort nether counsaill of my men have I noon.	<i>nor</i>
	Help me, as God yew help, and els I am undoon!”	
2555	When Geffrey sawe this Beryn so distract and wept,	<i>reduced to weeping</i>

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<sup>1</sup> Beryn replied: “Were I not to grant you that, I would be more stupid than an ass!”

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	Pité into eche veyn of his hert crept.	<i>Pity</i>
	“Alas,” quod Geffrey, “I myght nat do a more synfull dede, I leve by my trowth, then fayll yew in this nede. Faill me, God in heven, yf that I yewe faill	
2560	That I shall do my besines, my peyn and my travaill To help yew by my power. I may no ferther goo!”	<i>effort</i>
	“Yis, ye behete me more,” seyde Beryn tho, “That ye wold help me at all, that I shuld stond clere.”	<i>promise</i> <i>clear [of all charges]</i>
	Beryn gan to wepe and make wers chere.	
2565	“Stilleth yewe,” quod Geffrey, “for howsoever ye tire, More then my power ye ought nat desire. For thurh the grace of God, ye shull be holp wele, I have thereof no doute. But trewlich I yewe tell That ye woll hold me covenante, and I woll yew also,	<i>Quiet yourself; strain</i>  <i>helped</i>  <i>in agreement</i>
2570	To bryng me at Rome when it is al i-do. In signe of trowth of both sides of our acordement, Ech of us kis other of our comyn assent.”	<i>completed</i> <i>contract</i> <i>mutual</i>
	And all was do, and afterward Beryn comaunded wyne. They dronk, and then Geffrey seyde: “Sir Beryn, 2575 Ye mut declare yeur maters to myne intelligence That I may the bet perseyve al inconvenience, Dout, pro, contra and anbiguité Thurh yeur declaracioun, and enfourmed be. And with the help of our soverren Lord celestially,	<i>done</i>  <i>affairs</i> <i>better; obstacles</i> <i>questions; uncertainties</i> <i>testimony</i>
2580	They shull be behynd, and we shul have the ball! For nowe the tyme approacheth for hir cursednes, To be somewhat rewarded, and cause of yeur distres Hath my hert i-seced and fixed hem anye, As trowth woll and reson, for hir trechery.	<i>i.e., be on the offensive</i> <i>their</i> <i>redressed</i> <i>sickened; harm on them</i>
2585	For many a man, tofore this day, they have do out of daw, Distroid and turmented thurh hir fals lawe. For they think litill elles, and all hir wittes fyve, Save to have a mannes good and to benym his lyve, And hath a cursed custom, al ageyns reson,	<i>put to death</i>   <i>Except; take away</i>
2590	That what man they enpeche, they have noon encheson, Thoughe it be as fals a thing as God hymselff is trewe. And it touch a straunger that is com of newe, Atte first mocionne that he begynneth to meve, There stondeh up an hundred hym to repreve.	<i>whatever; accuse; grounds</i>  <i>If; foreigner; recently</i>  <i>condemn</i>



### *The Tale of Beryn*

- 2595 The lawes of the ceté stont in probacy; *affirmative proof (see note)*  
 They usen noon enquestes the wronges for to try, *official investigation*  
 And yf thow haddest eny wrong and woldest pleyn thee, *file a complaint*  
 And were as trewe a cause as eny myghte be,  
 Thow shuldest nat fynd o man to bere thee witnes,
- 2600 Though every man in the town knew it, more or les.  
 So burreth they togider and holdeth with ech other *cling*  
 That as to counterplede hem, though ye were my brothere, *argue against them*  
 I wold gyve yewe no counsell ne hir enpechement *accusation*  
 In no word to deny, for that were comberment. *disaster*
- 2605 For then were they in the affirmatyff and wold preve anoon, *i.e., the plaintiff*  
 And to yew that were negatyff the lawe woll graunte noon. *i.e., the defendant*  
 So for to plede ageyn hem, it woll litill availe. *against*  
 And yit to every mannes wit it ought be grete mervail,  
 For hir lawes been so streyt, and peynous ordinaunce *strict; severe decree*
- 2610 Is stalled for hir falshede; for this is hir fynaunce, *fixed; punishment*  
 To lese hir lyff for lesing, and Isope it may knowe, *forfeit; perjury, if*  
 That lord is riall of the town and holdeth hem so lowe. *royal; subordinate*  
 Wherfor they have a custom, a shrewed for the nones, *wicked one*  
 If eny of hem sey a thing, they cry all attones *unanimously*
- 2615 And ferm it for a soth, and it bere any charge. *affirm; truth; sustains*  
 Thus of the daunger of Isope, they kepe hem ever at large. *threat; free*  
 And therfore wisdom were, whoso myght eschewe, *escape*  
 Never to dele with hem, for were it wrong or trewe,  
 It shuld litill avail ageyns hir falshedes,
- 2620 For they been accursed and so been hir dedes.  
 Wherfor we must with al our wit sensibill  
 Such answers us purvey that they been insolibil, *irrefutable*  
 Tomorrow at our apparaunce, and shull be responsaill. *responsible*  
 For of wele and elles, it is thy day fynall!" *or otherwise; decisive*
- 2625 "Nowe, soveren Lord celestia!" with many sorowful sighes  
 Seyd Beryn to Geffrey, ymmemorat of lyes, *unmindful*  
 "Graunt me grace tomorowe, so that God be plesed,  
 Make so myne answer and I somewhat i-esed *helped*  
 By thee that art my counsaill, for other help is noon."
- 2630 "Reherce me then," quod Geffrey, "the causes of thy foon, *Repeat for; foes*  
 Fro poynt to poynt, al in fere on thee is surmysed, *in sum; charged*  
 Wherthurh I myght tomorowe the better be avised." *Through which; informed*  
 "Now in soth," quod Beryn, "thoughe I shuld dy,

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	I cannat tell the tenth part of hir trechery,	
2635	What for sorow and anger that they to me have wrought. So stond I clene desperat, but ye con help ought.”	<i>hopeless, unless</i>
	“Deupardeux,” seid Geffrey, “and I thee wol nat fail,	<i>By God</i>
	Sith I have ensured thee to be of thy counsaill,	<i>contracted with</i>
	And so much the more that thow art nat wise	
2640	And canst nat me enfourm of no maner avise.	<i>advice</i>
	Here therfor a while, and tend wel to my lore:	<i>Listen; attend; instructions</i>
	The lord that dwelleth in this town, whose name I told tofore,	
	Isope efft rehersed, is so inly wise	<i>mentioned; thoroughly</i>
	That no man alyve can pas his devise,	<i>surpass; judgment</i>
2645	And is so grow in yeres that sixty yeer ago	
	He saw nat for age, and yit it stondeth so	<i>i.e., went blind</i>
	That thurh his witt and wisdom and his governaunce,	
	Who maketh a fray or striveth aught or mel to much or praunce <sup>1</sup>	
	Within the same cyté, that he nys take anoon	<i>isn't arrested</i>
2650	And hath his penaunce forthwith, for pardon useth he noon.	<i>penalty</i>
	For there nys pore ne riche, ne what state he be,	<i>isn't; whatever</i>
	That he nys underfote for his iniquité.	<i>isn't subdued</i>
	And it be preved on hym, there shal no gold hym quyte,	<i>If; absolve</i>
	Right as the forfeite axeth, moch or lite.	<i>penalty demands; little</i>
2655	For geyns his comaundement is noon so hardy quek,	<i>against; courageous alive</i>
	So hard setteth he his fote in every mannes nek.	<i>on</i>
	For under sky and sterres, this day is noon alyve	
	That coude amend hym in o poynt, al thing to discryve.	<i>correct; discover</i>
	The Seven Sages of Rome, though al ageyn hym were,	
2660	They shuld be insufficient to make his answe.	
	For he can al langages: Grew, Ebrewe and Latyne,	<i>knows; Greek; Hebrew</i>
	Caldey, Frenssh and Lombard, ye knowe wel fyne,	<i>Chaldean; fully</i>
	And all maner that men in bokes write.	<i>all manner [of things]</i>
	In poysé and philosophé also he can endite,	<i>poetry; expound</i>
2665	Seville and canoun and al maner lawes,	<i>Civil; canon</i>
	Seneca and Sydrak and Salamones sawes,	<i>proverbs</i>
	And the seven sciences and eke lawe of armes,	<i>(see note)</i>
	Experimentes and pompery and al maner charmes,	<i>display; magic spells</i>
	As ye shull here after, er that I depart,	<i>later, before</i>

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<sup>1</sup> *Whoever creates a disturbance or causes strife or mingles too much or swaggers*

# *The Tale of Beryn*

2670	Of his imaginaciouns and of his sotill art. For he is of age thre hundred yeer and more; Wherfor of all sciences he hath the more lore. In Denmark he was goten and i-bore also, And in Grece i-norissed til he coud speke and go.	<i>knowledge conceived; born nurtured; walk</i>
2675	There was he put to scole and lerned wonder fast, For such was his grace that al other he past. But first in his begynnyng, litil good he had, But lerned ever passyngly and was wise and sad. Of stature and of feture, there was noon hym like	<i>talent; surpassed few possessions surpassingly; sober feature</i>
2680	Thurh the londe of Grece, though men wold hym seke. A kyng there was in tho yeres that had noon heir male, Saff a doughter that he loved as his own saal. Isope was his servaunt and did hym such plesaunce That he made hym his heir, and did hym so avaunce	<i>Throughout those Except; soul advance [in rank]</i>
2685	To wedd his doughter and after hym to bere crown, Thurh prowes and his port, so low he was and boun. So as Fortune wold, that was Isopes frend, This worthy kyng that same yere made his carnel ende. That seven score yeer is passed that Isope thus hath regned,	<i>ability; manner; obedient who bodily i.e., 140</i>
2690	And yit was there never for wrong on hym compleyned For no jugement that he gaff. Yit som ageyn hym wyled, A grete part of his pepill, and wold have hym exiled, But his grete wisdom and his manfulnes, His governaunce, with his bounté and his rightfulness,	<i>gave; against; plotted benevolence</i>
2695	Hath ever yit meyntened hym unto this ilch day — And woll whils that he lyveth, for aught that men can say. For who hath eny quarell or cause for to wonde, Within this same ceté quiklich woll he fonde, And it be sotil mater, to Isope for to fare,	<i>same fear city; disclose If; complicated</i>
2700	Fro gynnyng to the end his quarel to declare. And eve afore, as custom is, the plee shal be on the morowe. But whoso ly, he scapeth nat without shame or sorow. Beryn, thow must go thider where thyn enpechement Shull be i-meved, and therfor pas nat thens	<i>If the night; morning moved</i>
2705	Tyll thow have herd hem all, and report hem wele To me that am thy counsell, and repeir snele. But so riall mancione as Isope dwelleth in, There is noon in the world, ne so queynt of gyn.	<i>i.e., the charges return quickly royal a palace ingenious of design</i>

# *The Tale of Beryn*

	Wherfor, be wel avised how I enfourm thee	
2710	Of the wonder weyes, and of the pryvyté	wondrous; secrets
	That been within his paleyse, that thow must pas by.	
	And when thow approchest and art the castell nygh,	
	Blench fro the brode gate and enter thow nat there,	Turn
	For there been men to kepe it. Yit have thow no fere.	guard; fear
2715	Pas down on the right hond by the castell wall	
	Tyll thow fynd a wyndowe, and whatso thee byfall,	happens
	Enter there, yf thow may, and be nothing agast,	afraid
	But walk forth in that entré. Then shalt thow see in hast	passage; at once
	A port-colyse thee tofore. Pas in boldly	drop-grate
2720	Tyll thow com to an hall, the feyrest under sky.	
	The walles been of marbill i-joynd and i-closed,	constructed; enclosed
	And the pilours cristall, grete and wele purposed.	designed
	The keveryng above is of selondyn,	ceiling; celidony
	And the pament beneth of gold and asure fyne.	pavement; lapis lazuli
2725	But whoso passeth thurh this hall hath nede to ren blyve,	run fast
	Or els he myght be disware of his own lyve,	careless; life
	For there within lieth a stoon that is so hote of kynde	by nature
	That what thing com forby, anoon it woll atend,	nearby; catch fire
	As bryght as any candel leem, and consume anoon.	flame
2730	And so wold the hall also, nere coldnes of a stoon	were it not [for the]
	That is i-cleped dyonyse, that set is hym ageyn.	in opposition
	So and thow lepe lightly, thow shalt have no peyn,	if; quickly
	For ether stone in kynde proporciouned they be	by nature
	Of hete and eke of coldnes, of oon equalité.	
2735	Thow must pas thurh the hall, but tary nat, I rede,	linger; advise
	For thow shalt fynd a dur up right afore thyn hede.	door open
	When thow art entred there and the dor apast,	
	Whatso thow se ligg or stond, be thow nat agast,	lie; afraid
	And yf thow drede anything, do no more save blowe,	except breathe
2740	But yit I rede thee beware that it be somewhat lowe.	quietly
	There been to libardes loos and untied.	two leopards; unleashed
	If that thy blowing of that other in enything be spyed,	breathing; detected
	Anoon he raketh on thee to sese thee by thy pate,	rushes; seize; head
	For there nys thing in erth that he so much doth hate	isn't anything
2745	As breth of mannes mowth. Wherfor refreyn thee,	
	And blowe but fair and sofft, and when that nede be.	breathe
	When thow art passed this hall, anoon then shalt thowe com	

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	Into the fayrest gardyn that is in Cristendom, The wich thurh his clergy is made of such devise	<i>learnedness</i>
2750	That a man shall ween he is in paradise At his first comyng in, for melody and song And other glorious thinges and delectabill among, The wich Tholomeus, that somtyme paynym was, That of astronomy knew every poynt and case,	<i>think</i>  <i>Ptolemy; pagan</i>
2755	Did it so devise thurh his highe connyng That there nys best in erth ne bird that doth syng That he nys there in figur, in gold and sylver fyne, And move as they were quyk. Knewe the sotil engyne! <sup>1</sup> In mydward of this gardyn stant a feir tre,	<i>intelligence</i> <i>isn't beast</i> <i>it; replica; refined</i>  <i>the midst; stands</i>
2760	Of all maner leves that under sky be I-forged and i-fourmed, eche in his degré, Of sylver and of gold fyne, that lusty been to see. This gardeyn is ever green and ful of May floures Of rede, white and blewe, and other fressh coloures,	 <i>shaped</i> <i>delightful</i>
2765	The wich been so redolent and sentyn so aboute, That he must be ryghte lewd therin shuld route. These monstrefull thinges I devise to thee Because thow shuldest nat of hem abashed be; When that thowe comest there, so thow be strong in thought	<i>scented</i> <i>low-born; misbehave</i> <i>marvelous; describe</i> <i>astonished</i> <i>so that</i>
2770	And do by my counsell, drede thee right nought. For there beth eight tregetours that this gardyn kepeth — Four of hem doth waak whils the four sclepeth — The wich been so perfite of nygramancé, And the arte of apparence and of tregetrie,	<i>act</i> <i>conjurers</i> <i>stay awake</i> <i>expert; necromancy</i> <i>illusion; magic</i>
2775	That they make semen as to a mannes sight Abominabill wormes, that sore ought be afrighte The hertiest man on erth, but he warned were Of the grisly sightes that he shuld see there. Among al other ther is a lyon white,	<i>serpents; afraid</i> <i>bravest; unless</i> <i>apparitions</i>
2780	That and he se a straunger, he raumpeth for to bite And hath, tofore this tyme, five hundred men and mo Devoured and i-ete, that therforth have i-goo. Yit shalt thowe pas surly, so thow do as I tell.	<i>Which if; rears up</i>  <i>eaten; who</i> <i>safely, if</i>

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<sup>1</sup> *And they move as if they were alive. Acknowledge the subtle engineering!*

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	The tre I told tofore, that round as any bell,	<i>mentioned</i>
2785	Bereth bowe and braunce traylyng to the ground;	<i>branches</i>
	And thow touch oon of hem, thow art saff and sound.	<i>If</i>
	The tre hath such vertu, there shall nothing thee dere.	<i>power; injure</i>
	Loke that be the first when thow comest there.	<i>your priority</i>
	Then shalt thowe se an entré by the ferther syde;	<i>doorway</i>
2790	Thoughe it be streyt tofore, inner large and wyde	<i>narrow up front, on the inside</i>
	It groweth more and more, and as a dentour wrieth,	<i>indenture zigzags</i>
	Yit woll that wey thee bryng there that Isope lieth,	<i>where</i>
	Into the feyrest chamber that ever man sawe with eye.	
	When thow art therewithin, govern thee wisely,	
2795	For there shalt thow here al thyn enpechement	<i>hear; accusation</i>
	Opynly declared in Isopes present.	<i>presence</i>
	Report hem wele, and kepe hem in thy mynde,	<i>i.e., the charges</i>
	And after thy relacioune, we shall so turn and wend,	<i>account; go</i>
	Thurh help of God above, such help for to make	
2800	That they shall be acombred, and we ryght wel to scape.”	<i>defeated; escape</i>
	“Now in soth,” quod Beryn, “a mannes herte may grise	<i>be terrified</i>
	Of such wonder weyes! For al my marchandise	
	I had lever lese then oppon me take	<i>rather lose than</i>
	Such a wey to pas!” — “Then, sir, for yeur sake	
2805	I woll myselff,” quod Geffrey; “sith I am ensured	<i>will [go]; pledged</i>
	To help thee with my power, thowe shalt be amyred	<i>cheered</i>
	As ferforth as I may, that I woll do my peyn	<i>so far as</i>
	To bryng yewe plesaunt tyding and retourn ageyn	
	Yit or the cok crowe. And therfor let me se,	<i>before</i>
2810	Whils I am out, how mery ye can be.”	<i>cheerful</i>
	Geffrey tok his leve. But who was sory tho	<i>then</i>
	But Beryn and his company? For when he was go,	<i>i.e., Geffrey was gone</i>
	They had no maner joy, but dout and hevynes,	
	For of his repeyryng they had no sikernes.	<i>return; certainty</i>
2815	So every man to other made his compleynt	
	And wisshed that of felony they had been atteynt,	<i>convicted</i>
	And so hem thought better to end hevynes	<i>i.e., be executed</i>
	Then every day to lak brede atte first mes:	<i>meal</i>
	“For when our good is go, what shall fal of us?	<i>cargo; happen to</i>
2820	Ever to be hir thralles, and paraventure wers —	<i>slaves</i>
	To lese our lyff after, yf we displese hem ought!”	<i>later</i>
	After Geffrey went, this was al hir thought	

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	Thurhout all the long nyghte, till cokkes gan to syng.	<i>crow</i>
	But then encresed anguyssh, hir hondes gan to wryng,	
2825	And cursed wynd and water that hem brought there,	<i>[they]</i>
	And wisshed many tymes that they had been in bere,	<i>coffin</i>
	And were apassed hope and entred into dispeyr.	
	In as much as Geffrey did nat repeir,	<i>return</i>
	Eche man seyde to other, it myght nat be i-nayed	<i>denied</i>
2830	But Geffrey had utterlich falsly hem betrayd.	
	Tho went they to counsell a litill tofore the day	<i>Then; daybreak</i>
	And were all accorded for to sayll away,	<i>agreed</i>
	And so hem thought better, and leve hir good there	<i>merchandise</i>
	Then abyde thereoppon and have more fere.	<i>Than wait; fear</i>
2835	They made hir takelyng redy and wend the sail acros	<i>equipment; deployed</i>
	For to save hir lyves, and set nat of hir los,	<i>cared</i>
	So sore they were adrad to be in servitude,	<i>slavery</i>
	And hoped God above wold send hem som refute	<i>refuge</i>
	By som other costes, there wynd hem wold bryng.	<i>wherever</i>
2840	And therewithall cam Geffrey on his stilt lepeing	<i>crutch</i>
	And cried wonder fast by the water-syde.	
	When Beryn herd Geffrey, he bad his men abyde,	<i>remain</i>
	And to launch out a bote and bryng Geffrey in:	<i>boat</i>
	“For he may more availl me now then al my kyn,	
2845	And he be trewe and trusty, as myne hope is.”	<i>If</i>
	But yit thereof had Beryn no ful sikernes.	<i>certainty</i>
	These Romeyns fet in Geffrey with an hevy chere,	<i>fetched</i>
	For they had lever sail forth then put hem in were,	<i>rather; jeopardy</i>
	Both lyve and goodes. And evill suspicioune	<i>life</i>
2850	They had of this Geffery, wherfor they gon rounne,	<i>murmur</i>
	Talking to eche other, “This man woll us betray!”	
	Geffrey wist wel inowghe he was nat to hir pay,	<i>their satisfaction</i>
	And for verry anger he threw into the see	<i>real; sea</i>
	Both stilt and eke his cruch, that made were of tre,	<i>wood</i>
2855	And gan hem to comfort and seid in this manere:	
	“Benedicite, Beryn! Why make ye such chere?	
	For and ye wexe hevy, what shull yeur men do	<i>if; grow sad</i>
	But take ensaumpill of yewe, and have no cause to?	<i>example; reason</i>
	For yit or it be eve, yeur adversaries all	<i>before; nightfall</i>
2860	I shall make hem spurn and have a sore fall,	<i>stumble</i>
	And ye go quyte and al yeur good, and have of hers too,	<i>free; theirs</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	And they to be ryght feyn for to scape so,	<i>glad</i>
	Without more daunger, and yeur will be.	<i>if</i>
	For of the lawes here, such is the equityé	<i>justice</i>
2865	That who pursu other and his pleynt be wrong,	<i>false</i>
	He shall make amendes, be he never so strong,	
	Right as shuld the toder yf he condempned were;	<i>other; convicted</i>
	Right so shall the pleyntyff, right as I yew lere.	<i>instruct</i>
	And that shall preve by hem, have ye no doute,	<i>[I] shall prove</i>
2870	Yit or it be eve, right low to yew to loute	<i>bow</i>
	And submit hem to yew and put hem in yeur grace,	<i>at your mercy</i>
	By that tyme I have i-made al my wanlase.	<i>strategy</i>
	And in hope to spede wele, let shape us for to dyne."	<i>prepare ourselves</i>
	Geffrey axed water, and sith brede and wyne,	<i>ordered; then</i>
2875	And seid, "It is holsom to breke our fast betyme,	<i>beneficial; early</i>
	For the Steward wol to the court atte hour of pryme."	<i>6:00 a.m.</i>
	The sonne gan to shyne and shope a feir day,	<i>provided</i>
	But for aught that Geffrey coud do or say,	
	These Romeyns speken fast al the dyner while	<i>spoke intently</i>
2880	That Geffrey with his sotill wordes wold hem begile.	<i>crafty</i>
	So when they had i-dyned, they rysen up echoon	
	And drew hem to counsell what was best to doon.	<i>decide</i>
	Som seyde, "The best rede that we do may,	<i>advice we may do [is]</i>
	To throwe Geffrey over the bord and seyll forth our way."	<i>overboard</i>
2885	But for drede of Beryn, som wold nat so,	<i>respect</i>
	Yit the more party assented wele thereto.	<i>majority</i>
	Geffrey and Beryn and worthy Romeyns tweyn	<i>two</i>
	Stood apart within the shipp, tyll Geffrey gan to seyn:	
	"Beryn, beth avised! Yeur men beth in distaunce.	<i>quarrel</i>
2890	Sith ye been her soveren, put hem in governaunce.	<i>Since</i>
	For me thinketh they holdeth contrary opynyoun,	
	And grace fayleth comynlych where is dyvisioun."	<i>usually</i>
	In the meenwhile that they gan thus to stryve,	<i>argue</i>
	Hanybald was up and i-com as blyve	<i>quickly</i>
2895	To the brigg of the town, there the shippes rood,	<i>pier; rode [at anchor]</i>
	And herd much noyse. But litil while he bood,	<i>Only; hesitated</i>
	For when he sawe the sayles stonde al acros,	<i>deployed</i>
	"Alas!" quod Hanybald, "here groweth a smert los	<i>painful</i>
	To me that am provost, and have in charge and hest	<i>command</i>
2900	All these fyve shippes under myne arest!" —	<i>custody</i>



### *The Tale of Beryn*

	And ran into the toun and made an hidouse cry,	<i>[he]; terrible</i>
	And charged al the cetezins to armes for to hy,	<i>hasten</i>
	From o strete till another, and rered up al the town,	<i>to; rallied</i>
	And made the trompes blowe up and the belles soun,	<i>trumpets; sound</i>
2905	And seyde that the Romeyns were in poynt to pas,	<i>ready</i>
	Til there were a thowsand, rather mo then les,	
	Men i-armed cleen, walking to the strond.	<i>completely; shore</i>
	When Beryn hem aspied, "Now, Geffrey, in thy honde	
	Stont lyff and goodes! Doth with us what thee list,	<i>Stands; it pleases</i>
2910	For all our hope is on thee, comfort, help and trist.	<i>trust</i>
	For we must bide aventur such as God wolle shape,	<i>fortune</i>
	For nowe I am in certen we mow no wise scape."	<i>in no way escape</i>
	"Have no dout," quod Geffrey; "beth mery; let me aloon.	
	Geteth a peir sisours, shereth my berd anoon,	<i>pair of scissors, clip</i>
2915	And afterward lete top my hede hastilych and blyve."	<i>crop; quickly</i>
	Som went to with sesours, som with a knyfe,	<i>razor</i>
	So what for sorowe and hast, and for lewd tole,	<i>crude instruments</i>
	There was no man alyve bet like to a fole	<i>more; lunatic</i>
	Then Geffrey was, by that tyme they had al i-do.	
2920	Hanybald cleped out Beryn to motehall for to go,	<i>summoned; courthouse</i>
	And stood oppon the brigg with an huge route.	<i>pier; mob</i>
	Geffrey was the first to Hanybald gan to loute,	<i>bow</i>
	And loked out aforeshipp: "God bles yew, sir," quod he.	
	"Where art thou now, Beryn? Com nere, behold and se!	
2925	Here is an huge pepill i-rayd and i-dight.	<i>outfitted</i>
	All these been my children that been in armes bryghte.	
	Yisterday I gate hem! Is nat mervail	<i>fathered</i>
	That they been hider i-com to be of our counsaill	<i>hither</i>
	And to stond by us and help us in our plé?	<i>i.e., as compurgators</i>
2930	Al myne own childryn, blessed mut ye be!"	
	Quod Geffrey with an highe voise, and had a nyce visage,	<i>idiotic expression</i>
	And gan to daunce for joy in the forestage.	<i>forecastle</i>
	Hanybald loked on Geffrey as he were amased,	<i>insane</i>
	And beheld his contenance and howe he was i-rased,	<i>shaved</i>
2935	But evermore he thought that he was a fole,	<i>lunatic</i>
	Naturell of kynde, and had noon other tool,	<i>Simpleton by birth; means</i>
	As semed by his wordes and his visage both,	
	And thought it had been foly to wex with hym wroth,	<i>useless; angry</i>
	And gan to bord ageyn and axed hym in game:	

## *The Tale of Beryn*

2940	“Sith thow art our fader, who is then our dame? And howe and in what plase were we begete?”	<i>mother begotten</i>
	“Yisterday,” quod Geffrey, “pleying in the strete Atte gentill game that cleped is the quek, A long peny-halter was cast about my nekk	<i>upper-class noose</i>
2945	And i-knet fast with a ryding knot And cast over a perche and haled along my throte.”	<i>tied tightly peg; hauled</i>
	“Was that a game,” quod Hanybald, “for to hang thyselve?” “So they seyde about me, a thousand ech by hymselff.” “How scapeddest thou,” quod Hanybald, “that thou were nat dede?”	
2950	“Thereto can I answere without eny rede. I bare thre dise in myne own purs, For I go never without, fare I better or wors. I kist hem forth al thre and too fil amys-ase.	<i>prompting carry; dice cast; two; “snake eyes”</i>
	But here now what fill after, right a mervolouse case!	<i>hear; befell</i>
2955	There cam a mows lepe forth and ete the third boon, That puffed out hir skyn as grete as she myght goon, And in this maner wise, of the mouse and me, All ye be i-com my children fair and fre. And yit, or it be eve, fall wol such a chaunce,	<i>mouse; bone (die)</i>
2960	To stond in my power yew all to avaunce, For and we plede wele today, we shall be riche inowghe!” Hanybald of his wordes hertlich loughe, And so did al that herd hym, as they myghte wele, And had grete joy with hym for to tell,	<i>before profit if laughed</i>
2965	For they knewe hym noon other but a fole of kynde. And al was his discrecioun, and that preved the ende! Thus whils Geffrey japed to make hir hertes lighte, Beryn and his company were rayed and i-dighte, And londed hem in botes, ferefull how to spede,	<i>chat from birth shrewdness; outcome jested dressed; prepared anxious; succeed</i>
2970	For all hir thoughtes in balance stode betwene hope and drede. But yit they did hir peyn to make lightsom chere, As Geffrey hem had enfourmed, of port and al manere Of hir governaunce, al the long day Tyll hir plee were ended. So went they forth hir wey	<i>equally instructed; behavior their plea</i>
2975	To the court with Hanybald. Then Beryn gan to sey, “What nedeth this, Sir Hanybald, to make such aray, Sith we been pese-marchantes and use no spoliacioun?” “Forsoth, sir,” quod Hanybald, “to me was made relacioun	<i>peaceful traders; plunder report</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

- Ye were in poynt to void, and yf ye had do so, *on the verge; depart*  
 2980 Ye had lost yeur lyves without wordes mo.”  
     Beryn held hym still. Geffrey spak anon:  
     “‘No les wed then lyves? Why so, good Sir John? *pledge than lives*  
     That were somewhat to much, as it semeth me! *too*  
     But ye be over-wise that dwell in this ceté. *who; city*  
 2985 For ye have begonne a thing maketh yewe righte bold, *begun; [that] makes*  
     And yit, or it be eve, as foles shul ye be hold. *before; considered*  
     And eke ye devyne sor in shipmannes craft *perceive poorly*  
     And woteth litill what longeth to afore the shipp and bafft, *know; pertains; astern*  
     And namelich in the dawnyng, when shipmen first arise.” *particularly*  
 2990 “My good frend,” quod Hanybald in a scornynge wise, *manner*  
     “Ye must ones enfourm me thurh yeur discrecioun, *at once instruct; expertise*  
     But first ye must answer to a questioun:  
     Why make men cros-saill in myddes of the mast?” *the middle*  
     “For to talowe the shipp and fech more last.” *grease the bottom of; ballast*  
 2995 “Why goon the yemen to bote — ankers to hale?” *yeomen; anchors; haul up*  
     “For to make hem redy to walk to the ale.” *themselves; ale-house*  
     “Why hale they up stones by the crane-lyne?” *hoist*  
     “To make the tempest sese and the sonne shyne.” *cease*  
     “Why close they the port with the see bord?” *porthole; cover*  
 3000 “For the master shuld awake atte first word.”  
     “Thow art a redy reve,” quod Hanybald, “in fay!” *bailiff; faith*  
     “Yee, sir, trewly, for sothe is that ye sey!” *Yes; the truth; say*  
     Geffrey ever clapped as doth a watermyll, *chattered*  
     And made Hanybald to laughe al his hert fell. *heart's fill*  
 3005 “Beryn,” quod this Geffrey, “retourn thy men ageyn.  
     What shull they do with thee at court? No man on hem pleyn.  
     Plede thy case thyselfe, ryght as thow hast i-wrought.  
     To bide with the shippes, my purpos is and thought.” *[For the men] to stay*  
     “Nay, forsoth,” quod Hanybald, “thow shalt abyde on lond.  
 3010 We have no foles but thee!” — and toke hym by the hond — *jesters; him (Geffrey)*  
     “For thow art wise in lawe to plede al the case.”  
     “‘That can I better,” quod Geffrey, “then eny man in this plase.  
     What seyst thow therto, Beryn? Shall I tell thy tale?”  
     Hanybald liked his wordes wele and forward gan hym hale. *lead*  
 3015 Beryn made hym angry, and sighed wonder sore, *pretended to be sad*  
     For Geffrey hym had enfourmed of every poynt tofore *instructed*  
     How he hym shuld govern all the long day. *he himself*

### *The Tale of Beryn*

- Geffrey chasted hym ageyn: "Sey me yee or nay! *reproved; Tell; yea*  
 Maystowe nat i-here speke som maner word?" *Maybe you didn't hear me*
- 3020 "Leve thy blab, lewd fole! Me liketh nat thy bord! *jest*  
 I have another thought," quod Beryn, "wherof thowe carest lite."  
 "Clepest thou me a fole?" quod Geffrey. "Al that I may thee wite! *Call; blame*  
 But first, when we out of Rome sailled both in fere, *together*  
 Tho I was thy felawe and thy partynere; *Then*
- 3025 For tho the marchandise was more then halff myne, *since*  
 And sith that thowe com hider, thowe takest al for thyne.  
 But yit or it be eve, I woll make oon behest: *before; promise*  
 But thowe have my help, thy part shal be lest." *Unless; least*  
 "Thyn help!" quod Beryn. "Lewde fole, thou art more then mased! *crazed*
- 3030 Dres thee to the shippesward with thy crown i-rased, *Return; shaved head*  
 For I myght never spare thee bet! Trus, and be ago!" *better; Get ready*  
 "I wol go with thee," quod Geffrey, "where thou wolt or no, *whether*  
 And lern to plede lawe to wyn both house and londe."  
 "So thou shalt!" quod Hanybald, and led hym by the honde,
- 3035 And leyd his hond oppon his nek. But and he had i-knowe *But if*  
 Whom he had led, in sikernes he had wel lever in snowe *certainty; preferred*  
 Have walked forty myle, and rather then faill more,  
 For he wissed that Geffrey had i-be unbore *never been born*  
 Ful oft-tyme in that day or the plé were do, *before; done*
- 3040 And so did al that wrought Beryn shame and woo. *who; woe*  
 Now ye that list abide and here of sotilté, *wish to; hear; craftiness*  
 Mow knowe how that Beryn sped in his plé, *Might*  
 And in what aray to the court he went,  
 And howe Hanybald led Geffrey, disware of his entent. *unaware*
- 3045 But yit he axed of Geffrey, "What is thy name, I prey?"  
 "Gilhochet," quod Geffrey, "men cleped me yisterday." *(see note)*  
 "And where weer thou i-bore?" — "I note, I make avowe," *were; don't know*  
 Seyd Geffrey to this Hanybald; "I axe that of yewe,  
 For I can tell no more but here I stond nowe." *except here*
- 3050 Hanybald of his wordes hertlich lowghe *laughed*  
 And held hym for a passing fole to serve eny lord. *excellent jester*  
 Thus they romed janglyng into the court ward.  
 But or they com there, the Steward was i-set *But before; seated*  
 And the grettest of the town in company i-met, *assembled*
- 3055 And gon to stryve fast who shuld have the good, *cargo*  
 That com was with Beryn over the salt flood. *sea*

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	Som seyde oon, and som seyde another;	
	Som wold have the shippes, the parell and the rother;	<i>rigging; rudder</i>
	Som his eyen, som his lyff wold have, and no les,	<i>eyes</i>
3060	Or els he shuld for hem fyne or he did pas.	<i>pay a fine before</i>
	And in the menewhils they were in this afay,	<i>commotion</i>
	Beryn and these Romeyns were com in good aray,	<i>wardrobe</i>
	As myght be made of woll and of colour greyned.	<i>wool; dyed</i>
	They toke a syde bench that for hem was ordeyned.	<i>designated</i>
3065	When all was husst and still, Beryn rose anoon	<i>hushed</i>
	And stode in the myddes of the hal tofore hem everychon,	<i>midst</i>
	And seyde, "Sir Steward, in me shall be no let.	<i>delay</i>
	I am i-com to answer as my day is set.	
	Do me ryghte and reson — I axe yewe no more!"	<i>justice</i>
3070	"So shall I," quod the Steward, "for therto I am swore."	
	"He shall have ryght," quod Geffrey, "where thou wolt or no,	<i>whether</i>
	For and thou mys ones thy jugement ondo,	<i>For if; badly</i>
	I woll to the Emperour of Rome, my cosyn.	
	For of o cup he and I ful oft have dronk the wyne,	<i>from one cup</i>
3075	And yit we shull hereafter, as oft as we mete,	
	For he is long the gladder when I send hym to grete."	<i>greet</i>
	Thus Geffrey stode oppon a fourm, for he wold be sey	<i>bench; seen</i>
	Above all other, the shuldres and the cry,	<i>tumult</i>
	And stared al aboute, with his lewd berd,	<i>vulgar</i>
3080	And was i-hold a verry fole of ech man hym herd.	<i>real lunatic; [who] heard</i>
	The Steward and the officers and the burgeyssees all	
	Laughed at hym hertlich. The criour gan to call	<i>crier</i>
	The Burgeyse that had pleyd with Beryn atte ches,	
	And he aros quiklich and gan hym for to dres	<i>approach</i>
3085	Afore the Steward atte barr, as the maner is.	<i>custom</i>
	He gan to tell his tale with grete redynes:	
	"Here me, Sir Steward! This day is me set,	<i>Hear me</i>
	To have ryght and reson — I ax yewe no bet —	<i>justice; better</i>
	Of Beryn that here stondeth, that with me yisterday	<i>Beryn who</i>
3090	Made a certen covenaut, and atte ches we did pley,	<i>as at chess</i>
	That whoso were i-mated of us both too	<i>two</i>
	Shuld do the toders byddyng; and yf he wold nat so,	<i>other's</i>
	He must drynke al the water that salt were in the se.	
	Thus I to hym sured, and he also to me.	<i>pledged</i>
3095	To preve my tale trewe, I am nat al aloon."	<i>testimony</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

- Up rose ten burgeyses quylich anoon, *(see note)*  
 And affermed every word of his tale soth, *as truth*  
 And made hem al redy for to do hir othe. *their oath*
- Evander the Steward: "Beryn, now," quod he,  
 3100 "Thow must answeere nede, it wol noon other be.  
 Take thy counsell to thee. Spede on! Have i-doon!"
- Beryn held hym still. Geffrey spak anoon: *himself silent*  
 "Now, by my trowth," quod Geffrey, "I mervell much of yewe,  
 To bid us go to counsell and knoweth me wise inowgh  
 3105 And ever ful avised, in twynkelyng of an eye, *fully advised*  
 To make a short answer, but yf my mowth be dry. *unless*  
 Shuld we go to counsell for o word or tweyn? *two*  
 By my trowth we nyl! Let se mo that pleyn! *we won't; complaint*  
 And but he be i-answerd, and that right anoon, *And unless*
- 3110 I geve yewe leve to rise and walk out, everychoon,  
 And aspy redely yf ye fynd me there.  
 In the meenwhils, I wol abide here. *will remain*  
 Nay, I tell trewly, I am wiser then ye ween. *think*  
 For there nys noon of yewe woot redely what I meen." *isn't; [who] knows precisely*
- 3115 Every man gan lawghe al his hert fill *heart's fill*  
 Of Geffrey and his wordes, but Beryn held hym still *himself silent*  
 And was cleen astoned. But yit nere-the-latter *totally stunned*  
 He held it nat al foly that Geffrey did clater, *chatter*  
 But wisely hym governed, as Geffrey hym taughte,  
 3120 For parcell of his wisdom tofore he had smaught. *part; tasted*  
 "Sir Steward," quod Beryn, "I understond wele  
 The tale of this Burgeyse. Now let another tel *testimony*  
 That I may take counsell and answer al attones." *So that; at once*  
 "I graunt," quod the Steward, "thyn axing, for the nones,  
 3125 Sith thow wolt be rewled by thy foles rede, *guided; fool's advice*  
 For he is ryghte a wise man to help thee in thy nede."
- Up arose the accusours queyntlich anoon. *disdainfully*  
 Hanybald was the first of hem everichon,  
 And gan to tell his tale with a proud chere: *expression*
- 3130 "Yisterday, soverens, when I was here,  
 Beryn and this Burgeyse gon to plede fast  
 For pleying atte ches. So ferforth atte last, *So much so*  
 Thurh vertu of myne office, that I had in charge *power; custody*  
 Beryns fyve shippes, for to go at large *for [him] to go freely*

### *The Tale of Beryn*

- 3135 And to be in answer here this same day.  
 So walkyng to the strondward, we bargeyned by the wey *shoreline*  
 That I shuld have the marchaundise that Beryn with hym broughte,  
 Wherof I am sesed as ful sold and boughte, *I am in possession*  
 In covenaut that I shuld his shippes fill ageyn
- 3140 Of my marchandise, such as he tofore had seyn *seen*  
 In myne own plase, howses to or thre, *houses two*  
 Ful of marchandise as they myght be.  
 And I am ever redy, whensoever he woll,  
 Let hym go or sende, and charge his shippes full
- 3145 Of such marchandise as he fyndeth there.  
 For in such wordes, we accorded were.” *agreed*  
 Up rose ten burgeyses — not tho that rose tofore, *those who*  
 But other — and made hem redy to have swore  
 That every word of Hanybald, from the begynnyng to the ende,
- 3150 Was soth and eke trewe, and with all hir mende, *mind*  
 Ful prest they were to preve, and seyde they were present *Fully concentrated*  
 Atte covenante makeing, by God omnipotent.  
 “It shall nat nede,” quod Geffrey, “whils that I here stonde, *be unnecessary*  
 For I woll preve it myself with my right honde.
- 3155 For I have been in four batelles heretofore,  
 And this shall be the fifft, and therfor I am swore.  
 Beholdeth and seeth!” — and turned hym aboute. *[he] twirled himself*  
 The Steward and the Burgeyse gamed al aboute. *made merry*  
 The Romeyns held hem still and lawghed but a lite.
- 3160 With that cam the Blynd Man, his tale to endite, *declare*  
 That God hym graunte wynnyng, righte as he hath aserved. *deserved*  
 Beryn and his company stood al astryved *torn*  
 Betwene hope and drede, righte in highe distres,  
 For of wele or of woo they had no sikernes. *certainty*
- 3165 “Beryn,” quod the Blynd, “thoughe I may nat se,  
 Stond nere yit the barr. My comyng is for thee,  
 That wrongfullich thowe witholdest my both to eyen, *two eyes*  
 The wiche I toke thee for a tyme, and quyklich to me hyen *lent; hurry*  
 And take hem me ageyn, as our covenant was. *give*
- 3170 Beryn, I take no reward of other mennes case  
 But oonlich of myne own, that stont me most on hond. *But only*  
 Nowe blessed be God in heven that brought thee to this lond,  
 For sith our last parting, many bitter teres *For since*

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	Have I lete for thy love, that somtyme partineres	<i>expended; who</i>
3175	Of wynnyng and of lesing were, yeres fele.	<i>for many years</i>
	And ever I fond thee trewe, til at the last thow didest stele	<i>trustworthy</i>
	Away with my too eyen that I toke to thee	<i>two; lent</i>
	To se the tregitours pley, and hir sotilté,	<i>conjurers; illusions</i>
	As yisterday here in this same plase	
3180	Tofore yewe, Sir Steward, rehersed as it was.	
	Ful trewe is that byword, 'a man to servesabill	<i>too accommodating</i>
	Ledeth offt Beyard from his own stabill.'	
	Beryn, by thee I meen, thoughe thowe make it straunge.	<i>feign ignorance</i>
	For thow knowest trewly that I made no chaunge,	<i>exchange</i>
3185	Of my good eyen for thyne that badder were."	<i>worse</i>
	Therewith stood up bergeys four, witnes to bere.	
	Beryn held hym still, and Geffrey spak anoon:	
	"Nowe of thy lewde compleynt and thy mased moon,	<i>foolish; bewildered moan</i>
	By my trowth," quod Geffrey, "I have grete mervail.	
3190	For thoughe thow haddest eyen-sight, yit shuld it litil availl.	
	Thow shuldest never fare the bet, but the wors in fay,	<i>faith</i>
	For al thing may be stil nowe for thee in house and way,	<i>the same now</i>
	And yf thow haddest thyn eyen, thowe woldest no counsell hele.	<i>conceal</i>
	I knowe wele by thy fisnamy thy kynd were to stele.	<i>physiognomy; nature</i>
3195	And eke it is thy profite and thyne ese als	<i>leisure</i>
	To be blynd as thowe art, for nowe whereso thow go,	
	Thow hast thy lyvlode whils thow art alyve,	<i>livelihood</i>
	And yf thowe myghtest see, thow shuldest never thryve."	
	Al the house thurhout, save Beryn and his feres,	<i>except; companions</i>
3200	Lawghed of Geffrey that water on hir leres	<i>so that tears; cheeks</i>
	Ran down from hir eyen for his mased wit.	<i>because of his crazy</i>
	With that cam the Womman — hir tung was nat sclytt —	<i>not slit</i>
	With fiftene burgeyses and wommen also fele,	<i>just as many</i>
	Hir querell for to preve and Beryn to apele,	<i>accuse</i>
3205	With a feir knave child i-loke within hir armes,	<i>boy; clutched</i>
	And gan to tell hir tale of wronges and of harmes	
	And eke of unkyndnes, untrowth and falskede,	
	That Beryn had i-wrought to hir, that queyntlich from hir yede	<i>who cruelly; left</i>
	Anoon oppon hir wedding, when he his will had doon	<i>lust</i>
3210	And brought hir with child, and lete hir sit aloon	
	Without help and comfort from that day: "And nowegh	<i>now</i>
	He profered me nat to kis ones with his mowth!	<i>once</i>



## *The Tale of Beryn*

- As yisterday, Sir Steward, afore yewe eche word  
 Was rehersed here, my pleynt is of record,  
 3215 And this day is me set for to have reson. *justice*  
 Let hym make amendes, or els tell encheson *grounds*  
 Why hym ought nat fynd me as man ought his wyffe.” *provide for*  
 These fifftene burgeyses quyklich also blyve, *immediately; eagerly*  
 And as fele wymmen as stode by hir there, *many women*  
 3220 Seyd that they were present when they wedded were  
 And that every word that the Womman seyde  
 Was trewe, and eke Beryn had hir so betrayd.  
 “Benedicite!” quod Geffrey, “Beryn, hast thoue a wyff? *Blessings!*  
 Now, have God my trowth, the dayes of my lyff  
 3225 I shall trust thee the las! Thow toldest me nat tofore *less; previously*  
 As wele of thy wedding and of thy sone i-bore.  
 Go to and kis hem both, thy wyff and eke thyn heir.  
 Be thou nat ashamed, for they both be feyr. *handsome*  
 This wedding was right pryvy, but I shal make it couthe. *secret; known*  
 3230 Behold, thy sone (it semeth) crope out of thy mowth, *crept*  
 And eke of thy condicioune both sofft and some. *placid*  
 Now am I glad thyne heir shall with us to Rome, *shall [go]*  
 And I shall tech hym as I can, whils that he is yong,  
 Every day by the strete to gader houndes dounge, *gather dogs' shit*  
 3235 Tyll it be abill of prentyse to crafft of tanry, *he; apprentice*  
 And after I shall teche hym for to cache a fly, *later*  
 And to mend mytens when they been totore *gloves; torn*  
 And after to cloute shoon, when he is elder more. *mend shoes*  
 Yit for his parentyne, to pipe as doth a mowse *parentage; squeak*  
 3240 I woll hym tech, and for to pike a snayll out of his house, *pick; i.e., his shell*  
 And to berk as doth an hound and sey ‘Baw-bawe!’ *bark; bow-wow*  
 And turn round about as a cat doth with a strawe,  
 And to blete as doth a shepe, and ney as doth an hors,  
 And to lowe as doth a cowe. And as myne own corps *body*  
 3245 I woll cherissh hym every day, for his moders sake!” —  
 And gan to stapp nere the child to have i-take, *[he] started to approach*  
 As semed by his contenance, althoughe he thought nat so.  
 Butte moder was ever ware, and blenched to and fro, *But the; wary; dodged*  
 And leyd hir hond betwene and lokod somewhat wroth. *angry*  
 3250 And Geffrey in pure wrath beshrewed hem al bothe: *sheer anger cursed*  
 “For by my trowth,” quod Geffrey, “wel mased is thy pan. *dazed; skull*

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	For I woll teche thy sone the craftes that I can	
	That he in tyme to com myght wyn his lyvlood.	<i>earn; livelihood</i>
	To wex therfor angry, thow art verry wood!	<i>truly mad</i>
3255	Of husbond, wyff and sone — by the Trynyté —	<i>Holy Trinity</i>
	I note wiche is the wisest of hem al thre!”	<i>don't know</i>
	“No, sothly,” quod the Steward, “it lieth al in thy noll,	<i>skull</i>
	Both wit and wisdom, and preveth by thy poll!”	<i>[shaved] head</i>
	For al be that Geffrey worded sotilly,	<i>albeit; cleverly</i>
3260	The Steward and the burgeyses held it for foly	
	Al that ever he seyde, and toke it for good game,	
	And had ful litill knowleche he was Geffrey the lame.	
	Beryn and his company stode still as stone,	
	Betwene hope and drede, disware how it shuld goon,	<i>uncertain</i>
3265	Saff Beryn trist in party that Geffrey wold hym help,	<i>trusted partially</i>
	But yit into that hour he had no cause to yelpe.	<i>boast</i>
	Wherfor they made much sorow, that dole was and peté.	<i>pity</i>
	Geffrey herd hym sighe sore. “What devill is yewe?” quod he.	
	“What nede yew be sory whils I stonde here?”	<i>sorrowful</i>
3270	Have I nat enfourmed yewe how and in what manere	<i>instructed</i>
	That I yew wold help and bryng hem in the snare?	<i>trap</i>
	Yf ye coude plede as wele as I, ful litill wold ye care.	<i>worry</i>
	Pluke up thy hert,” quod Geffrey. “Beryn, I speke to thee!”	
	“Leve thy blab leude!” quod Beryn to hym aye.	<i>silly babble; in reply</i>
3275	“It doth nothing avail that sorowe com on thy hede.	
	It is nat worth a fly, al that thowe hast seyde.	<i>said</i>
	Have we nat els now for to thynk oppon	
	Saff here to jangill?” Macaign rose anon,	<i>chatter</i>
	And went to the barr and gan to tell his tale.	
3280	He was as fals as Judas, that set Criste at sale.	<i>who set</i>
	“Sir Steward,” quod this Macaign, “and the burgeyses all,	
	Knoweth wele how Melan, with purpill and with pall	<i>robes</i>
	And other marchandise, seven yere ago	
	Went toward Rome, and howe that I also	
3285	Have enquired sith, as reson woll and kynde,	<i>ever since; nature</i>
	Syth he was my fader, to knowe of his ende.	<i>Since</i>
	For yit sith his departyng til it was yisterday,	
	Met I never creature that me coude wisse or say	
	Reedynes of my fader, dede other alyve.	<i>Knowledge; or</i>
3290	But blessed be God in heven, in this theves slyve	<i>thief's sleeve</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	The knyff I gaff my fader was yisterday i-found.	<i>gave</i>
	Sith I hym apele, let hym be fast i-bound.	<i>accuse</i>
	The knyff I knowe wel inowe; also the man stont here	<i>enough; stands</i>
	And dwelleth in this town and is a cotelere,	<i>cutler</i>
3295	That made the same knyff with his too hondes,	<i>Who made; two hands</i>
	That wele I woot there is noon like, to sech al Cristen londes.	<i>search</i>
	For thre preciose stones been within the hafft	<i>hilt</i>
	Perfitlych i-couched and sotillich by crafft	<i>inlaid</i>
	Endended in the hafft, and that right coriously:	<i>Mounted; skillfully</i>
3300	A saphir and a salidone and a rich ruby."	<i>celidony</i>
	The coteler cam lepeing forth with a bold chere,	<i>expression</i>
	And seyde to the Steward, "That Macaign told now here,	<i>What Macaign</i>
	Every word is trewe; so beth the stones sett.	
	I made the knyff myself — who myght know it bet? —	<i>better</i>
3305	And toke the knyff to Macaign, and he me payd wele.	<i>gave</i>
	So is this felon guilty. There is no more to tell."	
	Up arose burgeyses by two, by thre, by four,	<i>by two</i>
	And seyde they were present the same tyme and hour	
	When Macaign wept sore and brought his faders gownd	<i>gown</i>
3310	And gaff hym the same knyff oppon the see-stronde.	<i>gave; seashore</i>
	"Bethere there eny mo pleyntes of record?"	<i>complaints</i>
	Quod Geffrey to the Steward. And he ageynward,	<i>he (Evander) in reply</i>
	"How semeth thee, Gilhochet? Beth there nat inowghe?	<i>does [it] seem to you</i>
	Make thyne answer, Beryn, case that thou mowe.	<i>[whatever] case</i>
3315	For oon or other thou must sey, althoughe it nat avail.	
	And but thouw lese or thouw go, me thinketh grete mervail."	<i>But unless; lose</i>
	Beryn goth to counsell and his company,	
	And Geffrey bode behynde to here more and se,	<i>remained; hear</i>
	And to shewe the Burgeyse somewhat of his hert,	
3320	And seyde, "But I make the pleyntyfs for to smert,	<i>Unless; suffer</i>
	And al that hem meynteneth for aught that is i-seyd,	<i>said</i>
	I woll graunte yewe to kut the eres fro my hede.	<i>cut the ears</i>
	My master is at counsell, but counsell hath he noon,	
	For but I hym help, he is cleen undoon.	<i>unless; totally</i>
3325	But I woll help hym al that I can, and meynten hym also	
	By my power and connyng, so I am bound thereto.	<i>cleverness</i>
	For I durst wage batell with yewe, thoughe ye be stronge,	<i>judicial duel</i>
	That my master is in the trowth and ye be in the wrong.	<i>right</i>
	For and we have lawe, I ne hold yew but destroyed	<i>For if; justice</i>

# *The Tale of Beryn*

- 3330 In yeur own falshede, so be ye now aspied. *discovered*  
 Wherfor, yit or eve, I shall abate yeur pride *before; shatter*  
 That som of yew shall be right feyn to sclynk away and hyde." *glad to sneak*  
 The burgeyses gon to lawghe and scorned hym thereto.  
 "Gilhochet," quod Evander, "and thow cowdest so *if thou*
- 3335 Bryng it thus about, it were a redy way!"  
 "He is a good fool," quod Hanybald, "in fay, *jester; faith*  
 To put hymselff aloon in strength and eke in witt  
 Ageyns al the burgeyses that on this bench sit."  
 "What clater is this," quod Macaign, "al day with a fole? *chatter*
- 3340 Tyme is now to worch with som other tole, *work; device*  
 For I am certeyn of hir answer that they woll faill.  
 And lyf for lyf of my fader, what may that availl?  
 Wherfor beth avised, for I am in no doute, *advised*  
 The goodes been sufficient to part al aboute, *cargo; divide*
- 3345 So may every party pleyntyff have his part." *his share*  
 "That is reason," quod the Blynd; "a trew man thow art! *reasonable*  
 And eke it were untrowth, and eke grete syn,  
 But ech of us that pleyneyth myght somewhat wyn." *Unless*  
 Hanybald bote his lypes and herd hem both wele: *bit*
- 3350 "Towching the marchandise, o tale I shall yew tell, *Regarding; one account*  
 And eke make a vowe and hold my behest, *promise*  
 That of the marchandise yeur part shall be lest. *least*  
 For I have made a bargeyn that may nat be undo. *undone*  
 I woll hold his covenaut, and he shall myne also."
- 3355 Up roos quyklik the burgeyse Syrophanes  
 "Hanybald," quod he, "the lawe goth by no lanes *byways*  
 But hold forth the streyt wey, even as doth a lyne.  
 For yisterday, when Beryn with me did dyne,  
 I was the first persone that put hym in arest.
- 3360 And for he wold go large, thow haddest in charge and hest *free; command*  
 To sese both shipp and goodes til I were answered. *To take custody of*  
 Then must I first be served. This knoweth al men i-lered." *educated*  
 The Womman stode besides and cried wonder fast:  
 "Ful soth is that byword, 'to pot who cometh last, *(see note)*
- 3365 He worst is served!' And so it fareth by me.  
 Yit netherles, Sir Steward, I trist to yeur leuté, *trust; good faith*  
 That knoweth best my cause and my trew entent. *Who*  
 I ax yewe no more but rightfull jugement.

### *The Tale of Beryn*

- Let me have part with other, sith he my husbond is.  
 3370 Good sirs, beth avised, I axe yew nat amys.” *amiss*  
     Thus they gon to stryve and were of highe mode *i.e., emotions ran high*  
     For to depart among hem other mennes good, *divide; possessions*  
     Where they tofore had never properté  
     Ne never shuld thereafter, by doom of equityté;  
 3375 But they had other cause then they had tho. *judgment*  
     Beryn was at counsell, his hert was ful woo, *than they had then*  
     And his meyny sory, distrakt and al amayedé, *woeful*  
     For tho they leved noon other but Geffrey had hem trayde, *crew sad; afraid*  
     Because he was so long, they coude no manere rede — *believed; betrayed*  
 3380 But everich by hymselff wisshed he had be dede. *been dead*  
     “O myghtfull God!” they seyd, “we trow tofore this day *believe*  
     Was never gretter treson, fere ne affray *uproar*  
     I-wrought onto mankynde then now is to us here, *Enacted; than now*  
     And namelich by this Geffrey with his sotil chere. *crafty appearance*  
 3385 So feithfull he made it he wold us help echone, *pretended [that] he*  
     And nowe we be i-myred. He leteth us sit aloon!” *bogged down*  
     “Of Geffrey,” quod Beryn, “be as it be may;  
     We mut answer nede, there is noon other way. *must answer*  
     And therfor let me know yeur wit and yeur counsaill.” *reason*  
 3390 They wept and wrong hir hondés, and gan to waill *wrung; bewail*  
     The tyme that they were bore, and shortly of the lyve *soon dead*  
     They wisshed that they were. With that cam Geffrey blyve, *suddenly*  
     Passing hem towardses, and began to smyle.  
     Beryn axed Geffrey where he had be al the while:  
 3395 “Have mercy oppon us, and help us as thowe highte!” *promised*  
     “I woll help yew right wele thurh grace of Goddes myghte,  
     And I can tell yew tyding of hir governaunce.  
     They stond in altercacioune and stryff, in poynt to prauunce, *on the verge*  
     To depart yeur goodés, and leveth verriyly *divide; believe truly*  
 3400 That it were impossibill yewe to remedy.  
     But hir highe pryde and hir presumpcioune *their*  
     Shal be, yit or eve, hir confusioune, *before nightfall*  
     And to make amendes ech man for his pleynt. *accusation*  
     Let se, therfor, yeur good avise howe they myght be ateynt.” *brought to justice*  
 3405 The Romeyns stode still, as who had shore hir hed. *like [men]; shaved*  
     “In feith,” quod Beryn, “we con no manere rede, *know; strategy*  
     But in God and yewe we submit us all,

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	Body, lyffe and goodes, to stond or to fall, And never for to travers o word that thow seyst.	<i>contradict one word</i>
3410	Help us, good Geffrey, as wele as thow maist!" "Depardeux," quod Geffrey, "and I wol do me peyn To help yewe, as my connyng wol strech and ateyn." The Romeyns went to barr, and Geffrey al tofore With a nyce contenance, bare-fote and totore,	<i>By God; exert myself skill; achieve the courtroom idiotic; ragged</i>
3415	Pleyng with a yerd he bare in his honde And was ever wistlyng att every pase comand. The Steward and the burgeyses had game inowghe Of Geffreys nyce comyng, and hertlich lowghe, And eche man seyde, "Gilhochet, com nere.	<i>Playing; staff [which] whistling; successive step entertainment foolish; laughed nearer</i>
3420	Thowe art ryght welcom, for thowe makest us chere." "The same welcom," quod Geffrey, "that ye wol us, Fall oppon your hedes, I prey to God — and wers!" They held hym for a verry fole, but he held hem wel more,	<i>true madman brief; shorn</i>
3425	And so he made hem in breff tyme, although they were nat shore. "Stynteth now," quod Geffrey, "and let make pese. Of myrthes and of japes, tyme is now to cese And speke of other mater that we have to doon. For and we hewe amys eny maner spone,	<i>Stop jokes; cease</i>
	We knowe wele in certeyn what pardon we shull have;	<i>For if; cut; splinter</i>
3430	The more is our nede us to defend and save. My master hath bee at counsell and ful avised is That I shall have the wordes, speke I wele or mys. Wherfor, Sir Steward, and ye burgeyses all, Sitteth upryght and wrieth nat for auntres that may fall.	<i>i.e., Beryn badly</i>
3435	For and ye deme untrewly or do us eny wrong, Ye shull be reformed, be ye never so strong, Of every poynt and injury, and that in grete hast, For he is nat unknowe to us that may yewe chast. Hold forthe the right wey and by no side lanes!	<i>turn; events; befall For if; judge corrected</i>
3440	And as towching the first pleyntyfe, Syrophanes, That pleyde with my master yisterday atte ches And made a certen covenante, who that had the wers In the last game (althoughe I were nat there) Shuld do the toders bidding, whatsoever it were,	<i>regarding</i>
3445	Or drynk al the water that salt were in the see; Thus I trowe, Sir Steward, ye woll record the plé,	<i>other's sea believe; write down</i>

# *The Tale of Beryn*

	And yf I have i-myssed in letter or in word	<i>misstated</i>
	The lawe, wol I be rewled after yeur record.	<i>guided; transcript</i>
	For we be ful avised in this wise to answer."	<i>manner</i>
3450	Evander the Steward and al men that were there	
	Had mervill much of Geffrey that spak so redely,	<i>wisely</i>
	Whose wordes thertofo semed al foly,	<i>silliness</i>
	And were astonyed cleen and gan for to drede.	<i>[the men] were stunned; worry</i>
	And every man til other lened with his hede	<i>to other inclined</i>
3455	And seyde, "He reported the tale right formally.	
	He was no fool in certen, but wise, ware and scly,	<i>astute; sly</i>
	For he hath but i-japed us and scorned heretofore,	<i>jested with</i>
	And we have hold hym a fole, but we be wel more!"	<i>rated</i>
	Thus they stodied on Geffrey and laughed tho right naught.	<i>then</i>
3460	When Geffrey had aspied they were in such thought	<i>[that] they</i>
	And hir hertes trobeled, pensyff and anoyed,	<i>troubled</i>
	Hym list to dryv in bet the nayll til they were fully cloyed.	<i>pinned</i>
	"Soveren sirs," he seyde, "sith that it so is	<i>since</i>
	That in reportyng of our plé ye fynd nothing amys,	<i>mistaken</i>
3465	As preveth wele yeur scilence, eke ye withseyeth not	<i>contradict</i>
	O word of our tale, but fynde it clene without spot,	
	Then to our answer I prey yewe take hede,	
	For we wol sey al the trowth, right as it is in dede.	
	For this is soth and certeyn, it may nat be withseyd,	<i>denied</i>
3470	That Beryn that here stondeh was thus overpleid	<i>who; defeated</i>
	In the last game when wayer was opon.	
	But that was his sufferaunce, as ye shul here anon,	<i>acquiescence; hear</i>
	For in al this ceté there nys no maner man	<i>city; isn't</i>
	Can play better atte ches then my master can;	
3475	Ne bet then I, thoughe I it sey, cannat half so much.	
	Nowe how he lost it by his will, the cause I wol teche,	<i>intentionally</i>
	For ye went — and ween — that ye had hym engyned,	<i>thought; think; tricked</i>
	But ye shul fele in every veyn that ye be undermined	<i>feel</i>
	And i-brought at ground and eke overmused.	<i>outwitted</i>
3480	And agenst the first that Beryn is acused,	
	Hereth nowe entyntylich. When we were on the see,	<i>carefully; sea</i>
	Such a tempest on us fill that noon myght other se.	<i>fell</i>
	Of thunder, wynd and lightenyng, and stormes there among,	
	Fiftene dayes duryng, the tempest was so strong	<i>lasting</i>
3485	That ech man til other began hym for to shryve,	<i>to other; make confession</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	And made hir avowes yf they myghte have the lyve —	<i>vows; survive</i>
	Som to seche the Sepulker, and som to other plase	<i>seek; Holy Sepulcher</i>
	To sech holy seyntes for help and for grace,	
	Som to fast and do penaunce, and som do almes-dede —	
3490	Tyl atte last, as God wold, a voise to us seyde	<i>spoke</i>
	In our most turment, and desperate of mynde,	
	That yf we wold be saved, my master must hym bynde	<i>commit himself</i>
	By feith and eke by vowe, when he cam to londe,	
	To drynke al the salt water within the se-stronde	<i>seashore</i>
3495	Without drynkyng any sope of the fressh water;	<i>sip</i>
	And taught hym al the sotilté, how and in what manere	<i>[the voice]</i>
	That he shuld wirch by engyne and by a sotill charm	<i>work; trickery</i>
	To drynk al the salt water and have hymselff no harm,	
	But stop the fressh ryvers by every cost-side,	<i>Providing he; coastline</i>
3500	That they enter nat in the se thurh the world wyde.	<i>throughout</i>
	The voyse we herd, but naught we sawe, so were our wittes raved.	<i>ravished</i>
	For this was the end fynally, yf we lust be saved.	<i>conclusion; wished to</i>
	Wherfor my master Beryn, when he cam to this port,	
	To his avowe and promys he made his first resort,	<i>recourse</i>
3505	Ere that he wold bergeyn any marchandise.	<i>Before; negotiate</i>
	And right so doth these marchandes in the same wise	
	That maken hir avowes in saving of hir lyves;	
	They completen hir pilgremages or they se hir wyves.	<i>before</i>
	So mowe ye understond that my master Beryn	<i>might</i>
3510	Of fre will was i-mated, as he that was a pilgrym,	<i>checkmated</i>
	And myght nat perfourm by many thowsand part	<i>i.e., by the smallest fraction</i>
	His avowe and his hest without right sotil art,	
	Without help and strength of many mennes myghte.	
	Sir Steward and Sir Burgeyse, yf we shul have righte,	<i>justice</i>
3515	Syrophanes must do cost and aventure	<i>undertake</i>
	To stopp al the fressh ryvers into the see that enter.	
	For Beryn is redy in al thing hym to quyte,	<i>repay</i>
	So ho be in defaute must pay for the wite.	<i>whoever; at fault; guilt</i>
	Sith ye been wise all, what nede is much clater?	<i>Since; chatter</i>
3520	There was no covenante hem betwen to drynk fressh water.”	
	When Syrophanes had i-herd al Geffreyes tale,	
	He stode al abasshed with colour wan and pale,	
	And loked oppon the Steward with a rewfyl chere	<i>pitiful expression</i>
	And on other frendshipp and neyghbours he had there,	



# *The Tale of Beryn*

3525	And preyd hem of counsell the answe to reply. "These Romeyns," quod the Steward, "been wonder scly, And eke right ynmagytyff and of sotill art, That I am in grete dowte howe ye shull depart Without harm in oon side. Our lawes — wel thowe wost —	<i>sly</i> <i>inventive</i> <i>know</i>
3530	Is to pay damages and eke also the cost Of every party plentyff that failleth in his pleynt. Let hym go quyte, I counsell, yf it may so be queynt." "I mervell," quod Syrophanes, "of hir sotilté, But sith that it so stondeth and may noon other be,	<i>law suit</i> <i>free; concluded</i> <i>their cleverness</i> <i>since; otherwise</i>
3535	I do woll by counsell!" — and graunted Beryn quyte. But Geffrey thought another, and without respite: "Sirs," he seyde, "we weteth wele that ye wol do us righte. And so ye must nedes, and so ye have us highte. And therfor, Sir Steward, ye occupy our plase,	<i>[he]; acquitted</i> <i>pause</i> <i>know; justice</i> <i>summoned</i>
3540	And ye knowe wele what law woll in this case. My master is redy to perfourm his avowe." "Geffrey," quod the Steward, "I cannat wete howe To stop all the fressh water were possibilité." "Yis, in soth," quod Geffrey, "who had of gold plenté	<i>understand</i> <i>Yes; whoever</i> <i>done</i>
3545	As man coude wissh, and it myght wel be do. But that is nat our defaute he hath no tresour to. Let hym go to in hast, or fynd us suerté To make amendes to Beryn for his iniquité: Wrong and harm and trespas and undewe vexacioun,	<i>fault; to [do it]</i> <i>security bond</i>
3550	Lost of sale of marchandise, disese and tribulacioun, That we have sustened thurh his iniquité. What vayleth it to tary us? For though ye sotil pry, We shull have reson, where ye woll or no. So wol we that ye knowe what that we wol do:	<i>Loss; discomfort</i> <i>avails; search</i> <i>justice; whether</i>
3555	In certen, ful avised, to Isope for to pase And declare every poynt, the more and eke the lase, That of your opyn errors hath pleyn correccioun, And ageyns his jugement is noon proteccioun. He is your lord riall, and soveren jugg and lele,	<i>proceed</i> <i>less</i> <i>Who; obvious</i> <i>appeal</i> <i>royal; just</i>
3560	That and ye work in eny poynt, to hym lieth our apele." So when the Steward had i-herd, and the burgeyses all, Howe Geffrey had i-stered that went so nyghe the gall, What for shame and drede of more harm and repreff,	<i>if; belabor</i> <i>steered; sore spot</i> <i>reproof</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	They made Syrophanes — weer hym looth or leffe —	<i>if he liked it or not</i>
3565	To take Beryn gage and plegg fynd also,	<i>give; guarantee</i>
	To byde the ward and jugement of that he had mysdo.	<i>endure; award; injured</i>
	“Nowe ferthermore,” quod Geffrey, “sith that it so is	
	That of the first pleyntyff we have sikernes,	<i>security</i>
	Nowe to the marchant we must nedes answeere,	
3570	That bargayned with Beryn al that his shippes bere,	<i>Who</i>
	In covenante that he shuld his shippes fill ageyn	
	Of other marchandise that he tofore had seyn	<i>seen</i>
	In Hanybaldes plase, howses too or thre,	<i>two</i>
	Ful of marchandise as they myght be.	
3575	Let us pas thider yf anything be there	<i>proceed thither [to see] if</i>
	At our lust and likeing, as they accorded were.”	<i>pleasure</i>
	“I graunt wele,” quod Hanybald; “thow axest but righte.”	
	Up arose these burgeyses: “Thowe axest but righte.”	
	The Steward and his comperes entred first the house	<i>colleagues</i>
3580	And sawe nothing within, strawe ne leffe ne mowse,	<i>leaf</i>
	Save tymber and the tyle-stones and the walles white.	<i>Except</i>
	“I trowe,” quod the Steward, “the wynnynge woll be but lite	<i>believe; little</i>
	That Beryn wol nowe gete in Hanybaldes pleynte,	<i>suit</i>
	For I can se noon other but he wol be atteynt!” —	<i>convicted</i>
3585	And cleped hem in, echone, and went out hymselfe.	<i>[he] summoned</i>
	As soon as they were entred, they sawe no maner selve	<i>remedy</i>
	For sores of hir hert, but as tofore is seyde,	<i>their hearts</i>
	The house was cleen i-swept. Then Geffrey feir they preyde	
	To help yf he coude. — “Let me aloon,” quod he;	
3590	“Yit shull they have the wors, as sotill as they bee!”	
	Evander the Steward in the menewhile	
	Spak to the burgeyse and began to smyle:	
	“Thoughe Syrophanes be i-hold these Romeyns for to curs,	<i>committed</i>
	Yit I trow that Hanybald woll put hem to the wers.	
3595	For I am suyr and certeyn within they shul nat fynde.”	<i>sure</i>
	“What sey ye by my pleynt, sirs?” quod the Blynd.	
	“For I make a vowe I wol never cese,	<i>desist</i>
	Tyl Syrophanes have of Beryn a pleyn relese	<i>complete</i>
	And to make hym quyte of his submyssioun;	<i>free; claim</i>
3600	Els woll I have ne peté of his contricioun	<i>pity</i>
	But folow hym also fersly as I can or may,	<i>just as fiercely as</i>
	Tyl I have his eyen both to away.”	<i>two</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	"Now in feith," quod Macaign, "and I wol have his lyffe. For thoughe he scape yewe all, with me wol he nat stryffe,	<i>escape; contend</i>
3605	But be right feyn in hert al his good forsake, For to scape with his lyff and to me it take."	<i>[to] renounce give</i>
	Beryn and his feleshipp were within the house, And speken of hir answer and made but litill rouse, But ever preyd Geffrey to help yf he coude ought.	<i>mirth</i>
3610	"I woll nat faill," quod Geffrey, and was tofore bethought Of too boterflies as white as eny snowe. He lete hem flee within the house, that after on the wowe They cleved wonder fast, as hir kynde woll, After they had flowe to rest another pull.	<i>observant two butterflies wall clung; firmly; nature flown; period</i>
3615	When Geffrey sawe the boterflies cleving on the wall, The Steward and the Burgeyse in he gan call: "Lo, sirs!" he seyde, "whosoever repent, We have chose marchandise most to our talent, That we fynd herein. Behold, Sir Hanyball,	<i>regret desire</i>
3620	The yonder botterflyes that cleveth on the wall. Of such ye must fill our shippes al fyve! Pluk up thy hert, Beryn, for thow must nedes thryve, For when we out of Rome in marchant-fare went, To purchase butterflyes was our most entent.	<i>cling on business prime objective</i>
3625	Yit woll I tell the cause especial and why: There is a leche in Rome that hath i-made a cry, To make an oyntement to cure al tho been blynde And all maner infirmytees that groweth in mankynde. The day is short, the work is long — Sir Hanyball, ye mut hy!"	<i>physician; announcement those [who] must hurry</i>
3630	When Hanybald herd this tale, he seyde pryvely In counsell to the Steward: "In soth I have the wors, For I am siker by this pleynt that I shal litil purs."	<i>Truly profit</i>
	"So me semeth," quod the Steward, "for in the world rounde So many boterflyes wold nat be founde,	
3635	I trowe, o ship to charge. Wherfor me thinketh best, Lete hym have his good ageyn, and be in pese and rest. And yit it is an aunter and thowe scape so, Thy covenaut to relese without more ado."	<i>believe; load cargo miracle if commotion</i>
3640	The burgeyses, everichon that were of that ceté, Were anoyed sore when they herd of this plee. Geffrey with his wisdom held hem hard and streyte	

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	That they were accombred in hir own disceyte.	<i>defeated; deception</i>
	When Hanybald with his frendes had spoke of this mater,	
	They drowe hem toward Beryn and seid in this maner:	<i>approached</i>
3645	“Oonly for boterflyes ye com fro yeur contrey;	
	And we yewe tell, in sikernes and opon our fey,	<i>certainty; faith</i>
	That so many boterflyes we shul never gete.	
	Wherfor we be avised otherwise to trete:	<i>bargain</i>
	That Hanybald shall relese his covenaut that is maked,	<i>contract; made</i>
3650	And delyver the good ageyn that from yewe was ransaked,	<i>cargo; plundered</i>
	And vexe yewe no more, but let yew go in pese.”	
	“Nay, forsoth,” quod Geffrey; “us nedeth no relese!	
	Ye shull hold our covenaut and we shul yours also.	
	For we shull have reson, where ye wol or no.	<i>justice; whether</i>
3655	Whils Isope is alyve, I am nothing aferd,	
	For I can wipe al this plé cleen from yeur berd,	<i>i.e., win my case</i>
	And ye blench ones out of the hy wey.”	<i>If; turn once</i>
	They profered hym plegg and gage without more deley.	<i>guarantees</i>
	“Now ferthermore,” quod Geffrey, “us ought to procede.	
3660	For to the Blynd Mannes poynt we must answer nede,	
	That for to tel trowth, he lyveth al to long.	<i>entirely too long</i>
	For his own fawte and his own wrong	<i>crime</i>
	On Beryn he hath surmysed, as preveth by his plé,	<i>charged</i>
	And that ye shull opynlich knowe wele and se.	
3665	For as I understod hym, he seyde that fele yeres	<i>for many years</i>
	Beryn, that here stonde, and he were pertyneres	<i>who; partners</i>
	Of wynnyng and of lesyng, as men it use and doth,	<i>profit and loss</i>
	And that they chaunged eyen — and yit this is sothe.	<i>exchanged; true</i>
	But the cause of chaunging yit is to yewe onknow;	<i>unknown</i>
3670	Wherfor I wol declare it both to highe and lowe.	
	In that same tyme that this burgeyse blynde	
	And my master Beryn, as fast as feith myght bynde,	<i>securely</i>
	Were marchaundes in comyn of al that they myght wyn,	<i>earn</i>
	Saff of lyffe and lym and of dedely synne,	<i>Except; limb</i>
3675	There fill in tho marches of al thing such a derth	<i>those territories; famine</i>
	That joy, comfort and solas, and al maner myrth	
	Was exiled cleen, saff oonly molestacioun	<i>violence</i>
	That abood contenuell, and also dispiracioun.	<i>remained; despair</i>
	So when that the pepill were in most myscheff,	<i>misfortune</i>
3680	God that is above, that al thing doth releve,	<i>who</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	Sent hem such plenté of mony, fruyte and corn, Wich turned al to joy hir mournyng al toforn. Then gaff they hem to myrth, revel, pley and song, And thanked God above evermore among	<i>they gave themselves repeatedly their relief meal</i>
3685	Of hir relevacioun from woo into gladnes. For after sour, when swete is com, it is a plesant mes. So in the meenwhile of this prosperité, There cam such a pleyer into the same contré	<i>performer seen</i>
3690	That wele was the creature that born was of his moder That myght se the mirthes of this jogelour. For of the world wyde tho dayes he bare the floure. For there nas man ne womman in that regioun	<i>Who; entertainer [in] those; i.e., was supreme wasn't value; button seen</i>
3695	That set of hymselff the store of a boton Yf he had nat sey his myrthes and his game. So oppon a tyme, this pleyer did proclame That all maner of pepill his pleyes wold se	<i>people [who]</i>
	Shuld com oppon a certen day to the gret ceté. Then among other my master here, Beryn, 3700 And this same Blynd that pledeth now with hym Made a certen covenaut, that they wold see The mervelles of this pleyer and his sotilté. So what for hete of somer, age and febilnes, And eke also the long way, this Blynd for werynes	<i>craftiness heat fatigue Fell woeful Might Eucharistic Mass</i>
3705	Fil flat adown to the erth, o foot ne myght ne go. Wherfor my master Beryn in hert was ful woo, And seyde, 'My frend, how nowe? Mowe ye no ferther pas?' 'No,' he seyde, 'by Hym that first made mas! And yit I had lever, as God my soule save,	<i>possessions</i>
3710	Se these wonder pleyes then al the good I have.' 'I cannat els,' quod Beryn, 'but yf it may nat be, But that ye and I mut retourn aye Affter ye be refresshed of yeur werynes. For to leve yewe in this plyte, it were no gentilnes.'	<i>again fatigue good breeding</i>
3715	Then seyde this Blynd, 'I am avised bet. Beryn, ye shull wend thider without eny let, And have myne eyen with yewe that they the pley mowe se, And I woll have yeurs tyll ye com aye.'	<i>have a better idea delay</i>
	Thus was hir covenaut made, as I to yewe report,	<i>come again</i>

# *The Tale of Beryn*

3720	For ese of this Blynd and most for his comfort. But woteth wele, the hole science of al surgery Was uned or the chaunge was made of both eye, With many sotill enchauntours and eke nygramancers, That sent were for the nones, mastres and scoleres.	<i>know; whole united before; exchange necromancers occasion; students</i>
3725	So when al was complete, my master went his way With this mannes eyen and sawe al the pley, And hastily retourned into that plase aye, And fond this Blynd seching on hondes and on kne, Grasping al aboute to fynd that he had lore:	<i>again searching what; lost</i>
3730	Beryn his both eyen that he had tofore! But as sone as Beryn had pleyn knowleche That his eyen were i-lost, unneth he myght areche O word for pure anguyssh that he toke sodenly. And from that day till nowghe, ne myght he never spy	<i>Beryn's full hardly; utter sheer; suffered until now</i>
3735	This man in no plase there lawe was i-meved; But nowe in his presence the soth is ful i-preved, That he shall make amendes or he hens pas, Righte as the lawe wol deme, ether more or les. For my mastres eyen were better and more clere	<i>where; pleaded  before; hence judge</i>
3740	Then these that he hath nowe, to se both fer and nere. So wold he have his own, that proper were of kynde, For he is ever redy to take to the Blynd The eyen that he had of hym, as covenant was, So he woll do the same. Nowe, soverens, in this cas	<i>Than; far correct; by nature give from him lords</i>
3745	Ye mut take hede for to deme righte, For it were no reson my master shuld lese his sighte For his trew hert and his gentilnes.” “Beryn,” quod the Blynd tho, “I woll thee relese, My quarell and my cause, and fal fro my pleynt.”	<i>must take; to judge not just [that]; lose Because of; courtesy then desist</i>
3750	“Thow mut nede,” quod Geffrey, “for thow art atteynt. So mut thow profer gage, and borowes fynd also, For to make amendes, as other have i-do. Sir Steward, do us lawe, sith we desire but righte. As we been pese-marchandes, us longeth nat to fighte,	<i>convicted offer surety; guarantees done justice, since peaceful traders</i>
3755	But pleyn us to the lawe yf so we be agreed.” Anoon oppon that Geffrey these wordes had i-meved, The Blynd Man fond borowes for al his maletalent, And were i-entred in the court to byde the jugement.	<i>injured As soon as sureties; malevolence endure; verdict</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

- For thoughe that he blynd were, yit had he good plenté — *abundance*
- 3760 And more wold have wonne thurh his iniquité!  
       “Nowe hereth, sirs,” quod Geffrey, “thre pleyntyfs been assured. *pledged*  
 And as anenst the ferth, this Womman hath arered *regards; fourth; risen*  
 That pleyneth her on Beryn and seyeth she is his wyff, *Who*  
 And that she hath many a day led peynous lyff *painful*
- 3765 And much sorowe endured, his child to sustene;  
 And al is soth and trewe. Nowe rightfullich to deme  
 Whether of hem both shal other obey,  
 And folow wil and lustes, Sir Steward, ye mut sey.”  
 And therewith Geffrey loked asyde on this Woman, *to the side*
- 3770 Howe she chaunged colours, pale and eke wan.  
       “Al for nought!” quod Geffrey; “for ye mut with us go, *you must*  
 And endur with your husbond both wele and woo!” —  
 And wold have take hir by the hond, but she away did breyde, *[he] would; jump*  
 And with a grete sighing these wordes she seyde,
- 3775 That ageyns Beryn she wold plede no more,  
 But gaged with too borowes, as other had do tofore. *two sureties*  
       The Steward sat as still as who had shore his hede, *as if someone shaved*  
 And specially the pleyntifs were in much drede.  
 Geffrey set his wordes in such manere wise
- 3780 That wele they wist they myght nat scape in no wise,  
 Without los of goodes for damage and for cost.  
 For such were hir lawes where pleyntes were i-lost. *when*  
       Geffrey had ful perseyte of hir encomberment, *perception; penalties*  
 And eke he was in certen that the jugement
- 3785 Shuld pas with his master; wherfor he anoon: *in favor of*  
       “Soveren sirs,” he seyde, “yit must we ferther goon, *proceed*  
 And answeere to this Macaign that seith the knyff is his  
 That found was on Beryn. Thereof he seith nat amys.
- 3790 And for more pryvy, he seith in this manere *proof*  
 That here stondeth present the same cotelere *cutler*  
 That the knyffe made; and the precious stones thre  
 Within the hafft been couched that in Christyanyté, *hilt*  
 Thoughe men wold of purpose make serch and siche, *seek*  
 Men shuld nat fynd in al thing a knyff that were it lich. *like*
- 3795 And more opyn pryve than mannes own knowlech, *i.e., proof; confession*  
 Men of lawe ne clerkes con nat tell ne teche. *know*  
 Now sith we be in this manere thus ferforth ago, *so far gone*

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	Then were spedful for to knowe howe Beryn cam first tho	<i>profitable; then</i>
	To have possessioun of the knyff that Macaign seith is his.	
3800	To yewe unknowe, I shall enfourm the trowth as it is.	<i>unknown</i>
	Nowe seven yeer i-passed oppon a Tuesday	<i>years ago</i>
	In the Passion Woke, when men leven pley	<i>Week</i>
	And use more devosioun, fastyng and preyer	
	Then in other tyme or seson of the yeer,	<i>Than</i>
3805	This Beryns fader erlich wold arise	<i>early</i>
	And barefote go to chirch to Goddes service,	
	And lay hymselff aloon from his own wyff	<i>i.e., abstain from sex</i>
	In reverence of the tyme and mending of his lyff.	<i>amending</i>
	So on the same Tuesday that I tofore nempt,	<i>mentioned</i>
3810	This Beryn rose and rayd hym and to the chirch went,	<i>dressed himself</i>
	And merved in his hert his fader was nat there,	
	And homward went ageyn with drede and eke fere.	<i>fear</i>
	Into his faders chamber sodenlich he raked,	<i>instantly; rushed</i>
	And fond hym ligg stan-dede oppon the strawe, al naked,	<i>lying stone-dead</i>
3815	And the clothes haled from the bed away.	<i>covers pulled</i>
	'Out! Alas,' quod Beryn, 'that ever I sawe this day!'	
	The meyné herd the noyse, how Beryn cried 'Allas!'	<i>household staff</i>
	And cam into the chamber, al that therein was,	
	But the dole and the sorowe and anguyssh that was there,	
3820	It vayleth nat at this tyme to declare it here.	
	But Beryn had most of all, have ye no doute.	
	And anoon they serched the body al aboute,	
	And fond this same knyff, the poynt right at his hert	<i>found</i>
	Of Beryns fader, whose teres gan outstert	<i>[Beryn's] tears</i>
3825	When he drowgh out the knyff of his faders wound.	<i>drew; from</i>
	Then stan-dede I sawe hym fal doun to the ground	<i>[Beryn] as if stone-dead</i>
	In sighte of the most part that beth with hym nowe here."	<i>majority</i>
	And they affermed it for sothe, as Geffrey did hem lere.	<i>instruct</i>
	"And yit had I never suspicioun from that day til nowth	<i>now</i>
3830	Who did that cursed dede, till Macaign with his mowth	
	Afore yewe hath knowleched that the knyff is his.	<i>acknowledged</i>
	So mut he nedes answer for his deth, iwis."	<i>[Beryn's father's] death</i>
	When Macaign had i-herd al Geffreyes tale,	
	He rose of bench sodynly with colour wan and pale,	<i>from the</i>
3835	And seyde unto Beryn, "Sir, ageyn thee	<i>against</i>
	I woll plete no more, for it were gret peté	<i>plead; pity</i>



## *The Tale of Beryn*

	To comber yewe with accions, that beth of nobill kynde."	<i>encumber; lawsuits</i>
	"Graunte mercy, sir," quod Geffrey, "but yit ye shall fynde	<i>Thank you</i>
	Borowes or ye pas, amendes for to make	<i>Sureties before</i>
3840	For our undewe vexacioun, and gage also us take	<i>pledge; give</i>
	In signe of submissioun for your injury,	<i>token</i>
	As lawe woll and reson. For we woll utterly	<i>vigorously</i>
	Procede tyll we have jugement finall.	
	And therfor, Sir Steward, what that ever fall,	<i>happens</i>
3845	Delay us no lenger, but gyve us jugement.	<i>render</i>
	For tristeth ye noon other, but we be fullich bent	<i>trust; resolved</i>
	To Isope for to wend and in his highe presence	<i>to go</i>
	Reherce all our plees and have his sentence.	<i>verdict</i>
	Then shul ye make fynes and highlich be agreved."	<i>greatly</i>
3850	And as sone as the Steward herd these wordes meved,	<i>moved</i>
	"Reson, ryghte and lawe," seyde the Steward tho,	<i>justice; then</i>
	"Ye mut nedes have, where I woll or no,	<i>whether</i>
	And to preve my full will or we ferther goon."	<i>before</i>
	Quiklich he comaunded, and spared never oon,	
3855	Twenty-four burgeyses in lawe best i-lered,	<i>educated</i>
	Rehersyng hem the plees and how Geffrey answered,	<i>Reviewing</i>
	And on lyffe and lym and forfeitur of good —	<i>limb; merchandise</i>
	And as they wold nat lese the ball within hir hood —	<i>i.e., not lose advantage</i>
	To drawe apart togider and by hir al assent,	<i>unanimous</i>
3860	Spare no man on lyve to gyve trewe jugement.	<i>alive</i>
	And when these twenty-four burgeyses had i-herd	
	The charge of the Steward, right sore they were aferd	
	To lese hir own lyves, but they demed trowth.	<i>unless</i>
	And eke of hir neyghbours they had grete rowth,	<i>pity</i>
3865	For they perseyved clerelich in the plé thurhouthe	
	Hir frendes had the wors side — therof they had no doute!	
	"And yff we deme trewly, they wol be sore anoyed;	
	Yit it is better then we be shamed and destroyed."	<i>than</i>
	And anoon they were accorded, and seyde with Beryn,	<i>agreed; sided</i>
3870	And demed every pleyntyff to make a grete fyne	<i>decided</i>
	With Beryn, and hym submyt hoolich to his grace —	<i>wholly; mercy</i>
	Body, good and catell — for wrong and hir trespass,	<i>property</i>
	So ferforth till atte last it was so bouté i-bore	<i>So much so; concluded</i>
	That Beryn had the dobill good that he had tofore.	<i>twice as much</i>
3875	And with joy and myrth, with al his company,	

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	He droughe hym to his shippesward with song and melody.	<i>toward his ships</i>
	The Steward and the Burgeyse from the court bent	<i>hastened</i>
	Into hir own places, and ever as they went,	
	They talked of the Romeyns, howe sotil they were,	<i>crafty</i>
3880	To aray hym like a fole that for hem shuld answer.	<i>i.e., Geoffrey</i>
	“What vayleth it,” quod Hanybald, “to anger or to curs?	<i>avails it</i>
	And yit I am in certen I shall fare the wers	
	All the dayes of my lyff, for this dayes pleding;	<i>on account of</i>
	And so shall al the remnaunt, and hir hondes wryng,	
3885	Both Syrophanes and the Blynd, the Womman and Macaign,	
	And be bet avised er they efftsones pleyn;	<i>before; afterwards</i>
	And all other persones within this ceté	
	Mell the les with Romeyns whils they here be.	<i>Mingle</i>
	For such another fole was never yit i-born,	<i>i.e., Geoffrey</i>
3890	For he did naught elles but ever with us scorn,	
	Tyl he had us caught even by the shyn	<i>i.e., tripped us up</i>
	With his sotill wittes in our own gren.”	<i>scheme</i>
	Nowe woll I retourn to Beryn ageyn,	
	That of his grete luker in hert was righte feyn,	<i>profit; glad</i>
3895	And so was all his meyné, as hem oughte wele,	<i>crew</i>
	That they were so delyvered from turment like to hell,	
	And graciously releved out of hir grete myscheff,	<i>misfortune</i>
	And i-set above in comferte and boncheff.	<i>good fortune</i>
	“Now in soth,” quod Beryn, “it may nat be denyed,	
3900	Nad Geoffrey and his wit be, we had be distroyed.	<i>Had not</i>
	I-thanked be almyghty God omnipotent	
	That for our consolacioun Geoffrey to us sent!	
	And in protest opynly here among yewe all,	<i>proclamation publically</i>
	Halff my good whils that I lyve, whatever me befall,	<i>possessions</i>
3905	I graunt it here to Geoffrey to gyve or to sell,	
	And never to part from me, yf it were his will,	
	And fare as wele as I, amorowe and eke on eve,	<i>in the morning</i>
	And never for man on lyve his company for to leve.”	<i>alive</i>
	“Graunt mercy, sir,” quod Geoffrey; “yeur profer is feir and grete.	<i>Thank you</i>
3910	But I desir no more but as ye me behete —	<i>promised</i>
	To bryng me at Rome — for this is covenante.”	<i>the contract</i>
	“It shall be do,” quod Beryn, “and al the remnaunte.”	<i>the rest</i>
	“Depardeux,” quod Geoffrey, “therof we shull wele do!”	<i>God bless</i>
	He rayed hym otherwise, and without wordes mo	<i>changed clothes</i>

### *The Tale of Beryn*

3915	They went to the dyner, the hole company, With pipes and with trompes and other melody.	<i>dinner trumpets</i>
	And in the myddes of hir mete, gentil wommen fyve, Maydyns fressh atired as myght be on lyve, Com from the Duke Isope, lord of that regiounne,	<i>midst of their meal Maidens; alive</i>
3920	Everich with a present and that of grete renown. The first bare a cup of gold and of asure fyne, So corouse and so nobill that I cannat devyne. The second brought a swerd i-shethed with seynture, I-freted all with pereles, orient and pure.	<i>Every one lapis lazuli exquisite; describe belt Ornamented; pearls</i>
3925	The third had a mantell of lusty fressh coloure, The utter part of purpill, i-furred with pelour. The ferth a cloth of gold, a worthy and a riche, That never man tofore sawe cloth it liche. The fifft bare a palme that stode tofore the deyse	<i>gay outward; pelts fourth [bore] like dais</i>
3930	In tokyn and of signe of trowth and pese, For that was the custom thurh al the contray. The message was the lever and more plesant to pay: The cup was uncovered, the swerd was out i-brayed, The mantell was unfold, the cloth along aleyded.	<i>embassy; more precious drawn laid</i>
3935	They kneled adown eche oon, right tofore Beryn. The first did the message that taught was wel afyne: "Isope," she seyd, "Sir Beryn, that is our lord riall, And greteth yewe and sendeth yewe these presentes all, And joy hath of yeur wisdom and of yeur governaunce,	<i>delivered; perfectly royal</i>
3940	And preyd yewe to com and have with hym plesaunce Tomorowe, and se his palyse and to sport yewe there, Ye and all yeur company." Beryn made noon answer, But sat still and beheld the wommen and the sondes. And afterward avisely the swerd first he hondes,	<i>invited entertain gifts carefully; seizes</i>
3945	And comaunded therewithall the wymmen wassh and sitt And pryvelich charged officers that with al hir witt To serve hem of the best and make hem hertly chere, Resseyving al the presentes in worshipfull manere.	<i>ingenuity Receiving</i>
	I cannat wele expres the joy that they had,	
3950	But I suppose tofore that day that they were nat so glad That they were so ascaped Fortune and myscheff; And thonked God above, that al thing doth releff. For after mysty cloudes, there cometh a clere sonne,	<i>escaped [they] thanked; relieve</i>

## *The Tale of Beryn*

	So after bale cometh bote, whoso byde conne.	<i>harm; relief; endure</i>
3955	The joy and nobley that they had whils they were at mete, It vayleth nat at this tyme thereof long to trete. But Geffrey sat with Beryn, as he had served wele. Hir hedes they leyd togider and begon to tell	<i>pomp; at the banquet describe discuss</i>
3960	In what maner the wymmen shuld be answered. Geffrey ever avised Beryn thereof he lered, And of other thinges, howe he hym shuld govern. Beryn sавered wele thereon, and fast he gan to lern.	<i>taught understood</i>
	When all were up, the wymmen cam to take hir leve. Beryn, as sat hym wele of blode, hem toward gan releve	<i>breeding; arise</i>
3965	And preyd hem hertly hym to recomende: “Unto the worthy lordshipp of Isope, that yewe sende To me that am unworthy, save of his grete nobley; And thank hym of his gyfftes, as ye can best, and sey Tomorrow I woll be redy his hest to fulfill.	<i>requested; commend who sends you except; nobility for his gifts command</i>
3970	With this I have save-condit I may com hym till, For me and al my feleshipp saff to com and go, Trustyng in his discrecioune that thoughe I ax so, He wol nat be displesed. For in my contray It hath ever be the custom, and is into this day,	<i>safe-conduct; to him secure judgment; ask</i>
3975	That yf a lord riall desireth for to see Eny maner persone that is of las degré, Ere he approche his presence, he woll have in his honde A saff-condit enseled, or els som other bonde	<i>lower rank Before safe-conduct officially sealed</i>
3980	That he may com and pas without disturbaunce. Thurhoute all our marches, it is the observaunce.” Thes wymmen toke hir leve without wordes mo, Repeyryng onto Isope, and al as it was do, They rehersed redely and fayled never a word	<i>territories; custom Returning unto repeated wisely; omitted</i>
3985	To Isope with his baronage, there he sat at his borde, Talkyng fast of Romyngs and of hir highe prudence, That in so many daungers made so wise defence. But as sone as Isope had pleylich i-herd	<i>where; table intently completely</i>
	Of Beryns governaunce, that first sesed the swerd Afore all other presentes, he demed in his mynde	<i>conduct; who seized first Before; decided</i>
3990	That Beryn was i-com of som nobill kynde. The nyght was past, the morowe cam, Isope had nat forgete; He charged barons twelff with Beryn for to mete,	

### *The Tale of Beryn*

	To cond him saff, and his meyné — and al performed was.	<i>conduct; followers</i>
	Thre dayes there they sported hym in myrth and solas,	<i>entertained; comfort</i>
3995	That thurh the wise instruccioune of Geffrey nyght and day,	<i>So that</i>
	Beryn plesed Isope with wordes al to pay,	<i>satisfaction</i>
	And had hym so in port and in governaunce	<i>behavior</i>
	Of all honest myrthes and witty daliaunce	<i>respectable</i>
	That Isope cast his chere to Beryn so groundly	<i>favor; so completely</i>
4000	That atte last there was no man with Isope so pryvy.	<i>intimate</i>
	Resorting to his shippes, comyng to and fro,	
	Thurh the wit of Geffrey, it fil so	<i>wisdom; befell</i>
	That Isope coude no chere when Beryn was absent.	<i>happiness</i>
	So Beryn must nedes ech day be after sent,	<i>summoned</i>
4005	And chefe he was of counsell within the first yere —	<i>head</i>
	Thurh the wit of Geffrey, that ech day did hym lere.	<i>who; instruct</i>
	This Isope had a doughter between hym and his wyffe,	
	That was as feir a creature as myght bere lyff,	<i>Who</i>
	Wise and eke bountevouse and benyng withall,	<i>virtuous; goodly</i>
4010	That heir shuld be after his day of his lordshippes all.	<i>Who</i>
	So shortly to conclude, the mariage was made	
	Betwene hir and Beryn, many a man to glade —	<i>please</i>
	Saff the burgeyses of the town, of falshede that were rote.	<i>Except; who were root</i>
	But they were ever hold so lowe under foot	
4015	That they myghte nat regne, but atte last were fawe	<i>glad</i>
	To leve hir condicioune and hir fals lawe.	
	Beryn and Geffrey made hem so tame	
	That they amended ech day and gate a better name.	<i>earned; reputation</i>
	Thus Geffrey made Beryn his enmyes to overcom,	
4020	And brought hym to worshipp thurh his wisdom.	<i>honor</i>
	Now God us graunt grace to fynde such a frende	
	When we have nede — and thus I make an ende.	

Nomen Autoris presentis Cronica Rome  
Et translatoris Filius ecclesie Thome

## *Notes*

- 6–10 “but applied all their intellect and desires to foolishness, to such trickery as Harlequin’s company, with their wild minds, (performs) behind every hedge that opens up when the green leaves withstand the weather — in this way I refer to them.” Chaucer’s fabliau characters are compared to the goblin-like spirit Harlequin and his legendary band of demonic (or dead) spirits pursuing wild hunts in the woods. See the criticism of Richard II’s council in *Mum and the Sothsegger* (I, 90–91), p. 6: “Other hobbis ye hadden of Hurlewaynis kynne / Reffusynge the reule of realles kynde.” For studies of Chaucer’s revived characters, see Bashe (1933), Kohl (1983), and Winstead (1988) .
- 14 Brown (1991), p. 151, explains that the “Checker of the Hoop” was an inn built for the pilgrimage trade by Prior Chillenden between 1392 and 1395; its sign was a checkerboard enclosed in a metal or wooden hoop. Portions of the structure survive in Canterbury today at the west corner of Mercery Lane and High Street. Its preeminence as a pilgrim hostel went unchallenged until 1437–38, when “The Sun” was erected even closer to the cathedral.
- 15–18 The Host of Southwark is Harry Bailly, proprietor of the Tabard Inn, who proposed the tale-telling competition, accompanied Chaucer’s pilgrims at his own expense, and offered to act as judge to select a winner (*CT* I, 747–818). If the phrase *in town* (18) means “at hand,” the line indicates the Host settled for food served in the inn and did not send out for provisions.
- 19–22 The Pardoner had been described by Chaucer as a conniving con-artist (*CT* I, 669–714 and VI, 320–968). His misfortunes with Kit the Tapster figured as part of a contemporary stereotype. In 1407 the Lollard William Thorpe admitted to Archbishop Arundel that he had warned against the foolishness of pilgrims “spendynge these goodis upon vicious hosteleris which ben ofte unclene wymmen of her bodies” (*The Oxford Book of Late Medieval Verse and Prose*, ed. Douglas Gray [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988], p. 15). Much ironic symbolism is involved with the Pardoner’s staff, since the pilgrimage staff was suggestive of a tumescent phallus, for example, at the conclusion of *Le Roman de la Rose* (lines 21,552–88).

### *The Canterbury Interlude*

- 30        *Jenkyn* is a fairly generic man's name (see line 62), for instance, the Wife of Bath's apprentice and later her fifth husband (*CT* III, 303 and 628). "*Jenkyn Harpoure*" may recall *Perkyn Revelour* of the *Cook's Tale* (*CT* I, 4371).
- 43        The opening phrase, like *Gesundheit!*, is a response to the barmaid's sneeze. *On the Properties of Things*, p. 355, notes that "fnesinge" is sometimes caused by the brain's "superfluytees of smokes that beth cause of yvel othir of breeding of som vice."
- 59        It was customary for pilgrims to fast until they had visited the shrine; see lines 145–46.
- 65        Kit is not a name for a respectable woman, as indicated by Beryn's nasty reference to his father's maid-servant as "lewd Kit" (line 1011). See Tauno F. Mustanoja, "The Suggestive Use of Christian Names in Middle English Poetry," in *Medieval Literary and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley*, ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 51–76, at pp. 72–74.
- 66        This expression is also used by the Host in the Prologue to the *Siege of Thebes* (line 96): "'Daun John,' quod he, 'wel broke ye youre name!'"
- 71        *nat.* MS: *nowe*.
- 78        This proverb is equivalent to "Once burned, twice shy."
- 98        For the Pardoner to designate Kit as his treasurer is ironic, since a pardoner's ultimate treasurer was the Pope who drew upon the *thesaurus* or "treasury of merit" for dispensations; see John M. Steadman, "Chaucer's Pardoner and the *Thesaurus Meritorium*," *English Language Notes* 3 (1965), 4–7.
- 99–100    Chaucer used the same vocabulary of dream-interpretation in *The Book of the Duchess* when claiming even Macrobius could scarcely "arede myn dremes even" (284–89).
- 106       The prophet Daniel was reckoned to be expert at dream-interpretation, as cited in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* (*CT* VII, 3127–29), particularly for unraveling Nebuchadnezzar's dream (*Dan.* 4).

## Notes

- 120 *list nat.* MS: *list. yit sirs.* MS: *yit sir ne yit sirs.* This line recalls Chaucer's warnings for those "whoso list it nat yheere" in the Prologue to The Miller's Tale (CT I, 3170–85).
- 122–23 To "peel garlic" means to engage in a long, frustrating activity with an unhappy outcome.
- 133–34 Pilgrims typically made gifts of silver brooches and rings to the shrine, though such practices were criticized with increasing vehemence; see J. F. Davis, "Lollards, Reformers and St. Thomas of Canterbury," *University of Birmingham Historical Journal* 9 (1963), 1–15.
- 138 Chaucer described his Monk as "a manly man" (CT I, 167), though here the mildly flattering phrase "with a manly cher" is applied to a Canterbury monk, perhaps a confrere of the author. The Friar's attempt to usurp the office of sprinkler attests to the ongoing conflict between mendicants and monks (see lines 362 and 1643).
- 141–44 The Friar is depicted as a man of many appetites, including lechery (CT I, 208–69). The nun is probably the Second Nun, since the Prioress is named separately in line 287. Huberd's longing to see the Second Nun's face may be shared by many of Chaucer's readers, since this faceless pilgrim is given no real portrait in the General Prologue (CT I, 163–64).
- 145 The knight's *compers* or companions are the Squire (his son) and their Yeoman.
- 147–57 It would be appropriate if the image causing such confusion in interpretation — a man with a staff? or rake? or spear? — were the panel originally in the north window, opposite the main southwest entrance, showing Adam delving the earth, since the Miller and his friends so clearly belong to the unregenerated class of the Old Adam. See Madeline Harrison Caviness, *Early Stained Glass of Canterbury Cathedral, circa 1175–1220* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 113 and pl. 6 for Adam and his digging implement; the scene tends to confirm her statement (p. 104) that many of these windows, rather than betokening "a book to the lewyd peple" as commonly claimed by defenses of church art such as *Dives and Pauper* (ed. Priscilla Heath Barnum, EETS o.s. 275, 1976, p. 82), instead offered challenging, even esoteric images directed primarily at the monks of the cathe-



### *The Canterbury Interlude*

dral. The expression “straight as a ram’s horn” means crooked; that is, the low-born pilgrims have incorrectly interpreted the images. The line “And redith as right as the Ram is hornyd” carries much the same force in *Mum and the Sothsegger* (M 1725), p. 77. There was much heated controversy over church images at this time; see G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), pp. 126–48, and W. R. Jones, “Lollards and Images: The Defense of Religious Art in Later Medieval England,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34 (1973), 27–50.

- 158–67     The culmination of the pilgrimage was the ascent on one’s knees to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket in the Trinity Chapel behind the main altar, a gold-covered chest encrusted with jewels and supported on pink marble columns standing on a stepped plinth. See Daniel Knapp, “The Relyk of a Seint: A Gloss on Chaucer’s Pilgrimage,” *ELH* 39 (1972), 1–26.
  
- 168–69     The other holy sites would include the *corona* with a severed piece of St. Thomas’s scalp, the place of martyrdom, and the altar of the sword’s point broken off when Richard le Breton attacked the archbishop. The six major stations of the church, visited as a sort of pilgrimage within a pilgrimage, have been described by W. A. Scott Robertson, “The Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral,” *Archaeologia Cantiana* 13 (1880), 500–51, at 518–19.
  
- 171–72     These tokens stamped with the image of St. Thomas or a Canterbury bell — as well as lead phials containing a portion of his “blood” — were sold as souvenirs of the pilgrimage. The Palmer is laden with such tokens in *Piers Plowman* (B.5.515–31). For discussion of the iconography of badges and other pilgrim lore, see John V. Fleming, “Chaucer and Erasmus on the Pilgrimage to Canterbury: An Iconographical Speculation,” in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville: Tennessee Studies in Literature, vol. 28, 1985), pp. 148–66.
  
- 184–90     The Summoner refers to The Friar’s Tale in which “the devil of hell” conveyed a fellow summoner to damnation. In the Northumberland manuscript the Friar has told his tale prior to the Canterbury Interlude; as a unique feature of this collection, the final section of The Summoner’s Tale (III, 2159–2294) with its account of the fart’s division has been re-positioned immediately after The Tale of Beryn (fols. 235b–236+b) to fulfil the Summoner’s threat here to “quyte wele his mede” by telling a retaliatory tale against the Friar on the homeward trip.

## Notes

- 188 I. MS: *wee*. “although I would reveal publicly all the maliciousness I know, I will not spare him in attacking his character, to do him harm.”
- 195 “Till their stomachs began to bulge.” Chaucer used a similar image in *The Man of Law’s Tale*: “He drank, and wel his girdel underpighte” (*CT* II, 789).
- 196–99 Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 40–55, reviews medieval commentaries on “nonnaturals” such as food and drink in promoting glad spirits, as background to his argument that mirthful tales, like Chaucer’s, have a hygienic justification.
- 207–11 The General Prologue (*CT* I, 790–94) stipulates that each pilgrim should tell two tales going to Canterbury, another two tales on the return trip, whereas the Parson’s Prologue (*CT* X, 25) suggests the plan had been reduced to one tale from each pilgrim. Here, in yet another revision, the Host implies one tale per pilgrim has already been told and another, a second per pilgrim, should be offered on the journey back to Southwark.
- 214–22 The Friar’s statement implies that the Host had agreed to pay for the meal back at the Tabard Inn, whereas originally the Host proposed that the winner alone “shal have a soper at oure aller cost” (*CT* I, 799), that is, purchased by all the others. The theme of “covenant” or contractual agreement will become central to *The Tale of Beryn* that follows.
- 231 Chaucer’s General Prologue noted that the Knight wore a tunic stained by the rust from his coat of mail (*CT* I, 75–78); here he finally changes to a “fressher gown.”
- 237–44 The Knight’s company (*meyné*) would have included the Squire and the Yeoman, the latter not mentioned here. In response to the French threat, Canterbury’s defenses were extensively rebuilt between 1378 and 1409 under supervision of Henry Yevele, the architectural genius also responsible for the cathedral’s nave. It is noteworthy that the Knight mentions attack by gunfire (“shot of gone”), since the West Gate, reconstructed at the expense of Archbishop Simon Sudbury, is the earliest surviving English fortification designed for defense with guns; see Brown, “Journey’s End,” p. 151. For the Knight to have “declared compendiously” is not surprising, as he offered by far the longest tale (*CT* I, 859–3108).

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- 245        *His.* MS: *He.*
- 245–50     Description of the Squire is very faithful to the General Prologue (*CT* I, 79–100), down to the insomnia he suffers on account of his lady-love.
- 251–54     This abrupt transition led Vipán (p. 179) to suggest lines have been lost after 250. The Clerk’s reference to the Summoner’s criticism of the Friar as a vicious thief recalls the wholesale indictment of mendicants in The Summoner’s Prologue and Tale (*CT* III, 1665–2294). The Clerk’s comment that the Summoner lacks higher education reflects the General Prologue’s portrait of him as a man, when drunk, parroting Latin phrases he does not understand (*CT* I, 637–46).
- 257        *whoso hath.* MS: *who so.*
- 268        *ful curteysly for.* MS: *for curteysly for.* See line 383 *ful curteysly.*
- 270        *me.* MS: *hym.*
- 271        The Monk’s “brother in habit” might be another Benedictine confrere of the author — perhaps a witty reference to the author himself! — whose conviviality extends to the Parson and even the Friar, here designated a Gray Friar or Franciscan, though Chaucer is not so specific about his order.
- 274        *frendes.* MS: *frende.*
- 281        It is ironic that the Wife of Bath, who now has “no will to walk,” was the great globe-trotter who previously boasted of knowing “muchel of wandrynge by the weye” (*CT* I, 467).
- 287        The Prioress, here described as “taught (nurtured? affected?) of gentil blood,” was portrayed as a lady of great courtly pretensions in the General Prologue (*CT* I, 118–62). Enthusiasm for a kitchen garden would therefore be as comically inappropriate for her as for the Wife of Bath. *On the Properties of Things*, pp. 882–1091, describes the medicinal powers of herbs; for example, hyssop “clensith and purgith alle maner yveles that cometh of colde if it is y-sode in wyn with drye figes and the wyn y-give to the pacient to drynke, and doth away ache of the stomak and of the guttes” (p. 975).

### Notes

- 306 The Franklin used a similar expression: "Withouten coppe he drank al his penaunce" (*CT* V, 942).
- 322 *ye*. MS: *I*.
- 326 *I yewe prey*. MS: *yewe prey*. "How could I know, I ask you, that you would return so soon?"
- 362 This unflattering comment on friars reflects an anti-mendicant sentiment typical of the age, as does line 1643 with its reference to the treachery and guile of friars. We should not be surprised by such snide references from a monk-poet with institutional bias against the mendicant orders.
- 370 *feleshipp*. MS: *felshipp*.
- 386–88 These lines are spoken by the Host. The "marchall" was the chief officer of a hall; Chaucer described the Host as worthy "to been a marchal in an halle" (*CT* I, 752). The other "officers" are the butler, pantry-keeper, and others who ate at the second-sitting.
- 396 He must sing the notes *sol fa*, that is, "go whistle."
- 410 Chaucer had cast both the Miller and the Cook as drunkards (*CT* I, 3120–50; IX, 15–93).
- 412–15 Chaucer's General Prologue remarked upon the Pardoner's singing skills (*CT* I, 672 and 710–14). The Summoner, here called the Pardoner's disciple, had a more suspicious role as "his freend and his compeer" in the General Prologue (*CT* I, 670).
- 422 *the*. MS: *they*.
- 434–35 People, like coins stamped at greater value than their worth, are not always what they seem.
- 453 This hyperbole relies upon the fabled elusiveness of Christ's garments as a holy relic for which even the Roman soldiers at the Crucifixion cast lots (Matthew 27:35). The Pardoner was a great purveyor of dubious relics (*CT* I, 694–704; VI, 347–84).

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- 462 To vow to the peacock at table was part of a chivalric ceremony involving love or knightly service.
- 471 The verb *dischauce* can mean to remove one's shoes or one's hose (leggings); the root word is immortalized in the family trade-name *Chaucer*. Kit's order "dischauce yewe nat" instructs her lover not to undress fully for bed till dealing with the Pardoner.
- 474 The last line on fol. 186a is repeated as the first line on fol. 186b: "And by that tyme it was nere quarter nyghte." The variant *nerhond/nere* is perhaps suggestive of the copyist's free handling of his text.
- 476 Here meaning a merry creature, the goldfinch in the visual arts had a wide range of interpretations; see Herbert Friedmann, *The Symbolic Goldfinch: Its History and Significance in European Devotional Art* (Washington, DC: Pantheon, Bollingen Series, no. 7, 1946).
- 478 *but*. MS: *by*.
- 480ff. The Pardoner's disappointment and anger at discovering Kit in bed with her lover is reminiscent of Absolon's response to finding Alison in bed with Nicholas in *The Miller's Tale* (CT I, 3687–3810). Likened to a dog as a creature of greed, the Pardoner will be beaten like a dog and end up spending the night in a dog's litter.
- 502 *his*. MS: *he*.
- 517 *here*. MS: *hire*.
- 520 The Pardoner, notoriously described by Chaucer as "a geldyng or a mare" (CT I, 691), here has been deprived of his phallic staff.
- 524ff. This fight in the dark bedroom, so typical of fabliau slapstick, recalls the chaotic brawl at the end of *The Reeve's Tale* (CT I, 4268–4310).
- 536 The half-line *Jak, thow must be fele* may be a warning preserved in the nursery rhyme "Jack, be nimble! Jack, be quick!"

## Notes

- 538 Vipani (p. 183) observed that if *chere* is given the American pronunciation *chore*, it then rhymes with *dorr* in the preceding line.
- 545–48 The wife’s foul temper may have been a popular commonplace in respect to the wives of innkeepers; Harry Bailly’s wife Goodelief could be roused to murderous fury (*CT* VII, 1893–1922).
- 563–68 These lines are spoken by Kit’s lover.
- 580 Like young Alison in *The Miller’s Tale*, Kit escapes unscathed from the violence involving the three men.
- 593 *Seynt Thomas*. MS: *Seynt Amyas*. The mysterious St. Amyas is not satisfactorily explained by the nearest candidates — St. Aimo, St. Aime, St. Amatus, St. Hamo, or St. Amos — and is more likely a thorough corruption of St. Thomas. On the controversies surrounding St. Thomas of Canterbury and pilgrimage to his shrine, see Bowers (1998), pp. 101–12.
- 621 *lyke*. MS: *lyle*. Cologne was famous for producing solid, heavy weapons.
- 622 Symkyn uses such an expression for outwitting John and Aleyn in the Reeve’s Tale: “Yet kan a millere make a clerkes berd” (*CT* I, 4096).
- 625–29 According to legend, St. Julian built a hospice beside a river where he and his wife tended the sick and poor, rowing travelers across the river, hence becoming the patron saint of travelers, innkeepers, and boatmen. The Pardoner’s stifled, frustrated anger was previously seen at the end of his Tale when he was insulted by the Host (*CT* VI, 956–57).
- 640 The word *warrok* referring to a bound creature (see *Piers Plowman* B.4.21 and *Patience* 80) combines with *warlock* as a devilish monster. *Mum and the Sothsegger* (M 1703), p. 76, uses the word in an expression meaning “let sleeping dogs lie.”
- 642 *nere*. MS: *ne*.
- 660 The scribe’s spelling *eres* makes it unclear whether the Pardoner shook his “ears” or his “hairs,” the former more likely, in keeping with the scoun-

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drel's canine character. See Maria to Malvolio in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (2.3.125): "Go shake your ears!"

- 667        *he*. MS: *they*.
- 675–79     This passage reverses the Parson's Prologue, where Chaucer had left his pilgrims "at a thropes ende" in the late afternoon when "the sonne wole adoun" (CT X, 12, 70).
- 678        *pipe*. MS: *pike*. Rhyme with *rype*.
- 680        *Southwork*. MS: *Southword*.
- 682        Though modern scholars usually reckon Chaucer's time-setting around April 17–19, when "the yonge sonne / Hath in the Ram his half course yronne" (CT I, 7–8), here the dating at the end of the month, "entring into May," agrees with Lydgate's Prologue to the *Siege of Thebes* (1–17) where the astrological description suggests that the poem opens on April 27, with the homeward trip the next morning, April 28.
- 683        The break in rhyme suggests that a line may be missing.
- 685        *ruddok*. MS: *oudduk*.
- 686        The phrase *twyneth smale* may mean to intertwine neatly or to cry with a small, high-pitched voice.
- 689–90     Since Nature is usually feminine, the pronoun *he* may be understood as *heo*, "she" (see line 86). The same pronoun ambiguity arises with Fortune (lines 1365–69; see also 943–45) and Folly (lines 2319–20). The poet specifically refers to "Dame Fortune" at line 2196.
- 703–16     In the General Prologue, a drawing of lots determined the Knight as the first tale-teller on the outward journey (CT I, 835–55).
- 717        The Holy Cross of Bromholm Priory, a supposed relic of the true cross, was brought to Norfolk from Constantinople in the early thirteenth century following the Fourth Crusade. Famed for its miraculous powers, it became

### Notes

a popular destination for pilgrims — and figured as a common oath; see *CT* I, 4286.

- 725–27 In the Northumberland manuscript, the Merchant's Tale of Beryn is in fact followed by contributions from the Summoner, Chaucer the pilgrim, the Monk, the Nun's Priest, the Manciple, and the Parson.
- 729–32 The Merchant's apology for ignorance and inability to "peynt" his tale is reminiscent of the Franklin's modest disclaimers (*CT* V, 716–28).
- 756 Two of the Cinque Ports towns, Winchelsea and Rye on the Sussex coast, were victims of naval raids by the French and their allies, notably the vicious attack of 1360 that included plunder and massacre of citizens in a useless attempt to free King Jean. Rye was again sacked and burned in 1377, Winchelsea in 1380; see Tamanini, pp. 73–74. The phrase "here fast by" further suggests that The Tale of Beryn was composed in the southeast, as does the poet's dialect and the Canterbury associations. Green, "Legal Satire in *The Tale of Beryn*," pp. 61–62, suggests that the two port cities declined because their economies had been depressed by a drop in foreign trade as a result of legal abuses of the sort described in the tale that follows.
- 758–59 The twins Romulus and Remus were the legendary founders of Rome according to "old bookes" such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (14.771–851).
- 762–64 The narrator maintains the pretense that he is speaking to an audience of pilgrims on horseback.
- 772 Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (1.2) recounts Julius Caesar's campaign to conquer Britain in 55–54 B.C.
- 776 The poet's sense of Roman history becomes confused. Here he equates the Senate with the Douzepers, the twelve peers of Charlemagne.
- 783–86 This account of imperial succession has no basis in Roman history; see Tamanini, pp. 296–97. Constantine the Great was emperor in 324–37; Constantine III was a Byzantine emperor who ruled briefly in 641. Philip-pus was emperor in Rome in 243–49, while Philippicus was a Byzantine usurper reigning 711–13.



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- 789        The Seven Sages, or advisors to the Roman emperor, appear in the romance tradition of *The Seven Sages of Rome*, ed. Karl Brunner, EETS o.s. 191, 1933; see Killis Campbell, "A Study of the Romance of the Seven Sages," *PMLA* 14 (1899), 1-107.
- 810        *men*. MS: *me*.
- 812        *myght*. MS: *mygth*.
- 822        *the*. MS: *thes*. Scribal confusion of *t* for *c* has led to the spellings *Stypio* for Scipio and *Sithero* for Sichero (Cicero); see Kane (1960), p. 120. Their common surname was Astrolage after their shared profession of astrology or "astonomy" (line 824); see *On the Properties of Things*, Book VIII, "De Mundo et Corporibus Supracelestibus," pp. 441-515.
- 837        *Sportes* may have been miswritten for *portes*, doorways.
- 850        *to be*. MS: *to*.
- 913        Seven was considered the first year of childhood, the transition from *infantia* (the "age of innocence") to *pueritia* (the "age of accountability"); see *On the Properties of Things*, pp. 291-93 and 298-301, and Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p. 74.
- 922        *over mischeff*. MS: *ovir*. Supply of this missing word "mischeff" is suggested by the French source.
- 938        *in is hard*. MS: *in hard*.
- 943-46     The wheel of Fortune is a traditional image of life's ups and downs; see Howard R. Patch, *The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927).
- 971        *krase*. MS: *karse*. Rhyme with *pase*.
- 984        *had*. MS: *have*.
- 987        *yew lafft me*. MS: *I lafft yew*.

### Notes

- 998        *kissed Beryn, but.* MS: *kissid but.*
- 1011       The Canterbury Interlude made clear that Kit was not a name befitting a respectable woman.
- 1015       *ought.* MS: *outgh.*
- 1017       Beryn swore by the mass book and the church bell.
- 1019       *thow.* MS: *were thow.* Beryn threatens to knock out her teeth.
- 1021       *now.* MS: *nowgh.*
- 1058       *every.* MS: *by.* The scribe was probably confused by the contracted form of *every*.
- 1064       *withey.* MS: *with.*
- 1065       *overgrowe.* MS: *ovir grove.*
- 1066       *bowe.* MS: *growe.*
- 1084       *ne write.* MS: *write.* *halffyndele.* MS: *halsfynde.*
- 1085       “[as a result of] his son’s disobedience and his wife’s death.”
- 1090       *And Faunus.* MS: *A ffawnus.*
- 1099       *When.* MS: *With.*
- 1114–15   See the opening line of Chaucer’s “To Rosemounde”: “Madame, ye ben of al beaute shryne.”
- 1120       *snell.* MS: *swell.*
- 1137       *nas.* MS: *was.*
- 1139       *When.* MS: *With.*

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- 1140 For the medieval imagery of Love with his arrows, see Erwin Panofsky, "Blind Cupid," in *Studies in Iconology*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 95–128, plates 69–106.
- 1145 *made*. MS: *did make*. Rhyme with *sade*; the word *make* is crossed out in the manuscript.
- 1148–56 The assumption that women are by nature treacherous is embedded in the clerical ideology that a monastic poet would share with the Wife of Bath's fifth husband, Jankyn, whose chief reading was his "book of wikked wyves" containing such "olde Romain geestes" as Beryn (see *CT* III, 642–787).
- 1150 *condicioune*. MS: *condicoune*.
- 1167 *spak*. MS: *spal*. This emendation resists the *difficilior lectio* or "harder reading" of the manuscript, where *spal* could be the preterite of *spell*, meaning to cast a spell or speak bewitchingly.
- 1175 *erthly*. MS: *ertly*.
- 1179 *own*. MS: *hown*.
- 1200 *refreit*. MS: *frefreit*.
- 1221–23 These lines are spoken by Faunus.
- 1229 *spede*. MS: *spech*. Anticipation of *reche*.
- 1249 *rebawdry*. MS: *rebawdy*. The rhyme is with *hazardry*; see line 1257.
- 1250 The two-man game *merelles* or morris is played on a board with an equal number of pebbles, pegs, pins, or disks.
- 1275 *Curs com*. MS: *Com*. Some noun has been omitted at the head of the line; Tamanini astutely emended to *Curse com*. See line 1280 for the spelling *curs*.
- 1300 *thys*. MS: *thy*.

### Notes

- 1308      “To claw a sorry man’s head” means to realize one’s own miserable condition.
- 1318      This reference to Beryn’s coat is mocking, since lines 1295–98 indicate his makeshift wardrobe does not cover his nakedness.
- 1340      *And. MS: Ant.*
- 1342      “I think that (his fainting) might prove he had his share of sorrow.”
- 1346      Dame Fortune typically carries a sceptre rather than a spear; for a survey of the iconographic tradition, see Kolve (1984), pp. 327–30 and 490–91. The poet may have been thinking of the spear carried by Death; see *CT* VI, 675–78.
- 1350      *totare his ere*: The spelling makes it unclear whether Beryn tore his ear or his hair; the latter is more likely.
- 1365–69      The copyist was confused by the pronoun *he* for *heo* (“she”) in reference to Fortune; the gender of the goddess is later clarified by the phrase “Dame Fortune” (line 2196).
- 1383      *witted*. MS: *wit*. Emended on the basis of line 1376.
- 1422      *as sone as*. MS: *as sone a*.
- 1423      *lenger*. MS: *legir*.
- 1425–42      Vipán (p. 190) observed that Faunus, warming to his repentant son, switches from the formal *thow* to the familiar *yewe*.
- 1431      *I shall*. MS: *Shall*.
- 1433      *that for thy moder*. MS: *for thy modir that*.
- 1463      In this tale told by the Merchant, it is apt that the protagonist prefers the life of a merchant to that of a knight.
- 1475      *she made*. MS: *& made*.

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- 1478 Besides “belly,” the word *kite* can also mean “bird of prey” or “rapacious person.” Thus the odd phrase *went lowe for the kite* might otherwise mean to dive like a bird avoiding a kite’s attack, or to swoop down as a kite does upon its prey. *On the Properties of Things*, p. 634, describes the cowardice and treachery of the kite: “And he is a ravyschinge foul and hardy among smale briddes and coward and fereful among grete briddes; . . . and lighth ofte in waite to take tame briddes and lith ofte in waite to take chekenes and to slee ham that he fyndith unwaar.”
- 1489 *mekerly*. MS: *mekely*. Rhyme with *sikerly*.
- 1531 A side bond, here a sealed document executed in the presence of witnesses, was given to the new owner when the release or conveyance of property was handed over to him. For such “conditional bonds,” see Simpson (1975), pp. 90–92.
- 1555–99 Whereas the French source does not describe the voyage or tempest in any detail, the English version expands the account with so much nautical terminology that Vipian (p. 191) speculated the author might have been a seafaring man earlier in life. Such fascination with nautical detail is in fact typical of English poets, as in *Patience* (97–244) and Chaucer’s Legend of Cleopatra (LGW 628–55).
- 1565 *They*. MS: *The*.
- 1581 *nas*. MS: *was*.
- 1582 The expression *the thiknes of a skale* means “in the least bit.”
- 1589 *shippes that*. MS: *shippis*.
- 1598 The break in rhyme suggests a line may be missing.
- 1631 *longed*. MS: *longeth*. Correct verb-tense, rhyming with *honged*.
- 1637 A manciple was a subordinate official who arranged provisions for some corporate institution, like Chaucer’s pilgrim who managed supplies for one of the inns of court, to his own advantage (CT I, 567–86).

### Notes

- 1641 A burgess was a freeman or citizen of a town, a term often used to describe a merchant.
- 1643–44 A friar's obligation to divide his ill-gotten gain with the other members of his convent became the topic of Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*, whose last section with the solution for dividing Thomas's donation (a fart) immediately follows Beryn in the Northumberland manuscript.
- 1646 *ches*. MS: *dise*. The rhyme with *dres* confirms this substitution for sense.
- 1652 *I*. MS: *or*.
- 1717 *fremd*. MS: *frend*.
- 1737 Distances such as a mile or a furlong are used to express durations of time, that is, how long it would take to walk a mile or a quarter-mile.
- 1754 *faileth*. MS: *fallith*.
- 1765–78 Beryn has rashly entered into a contractual agreement ("covenant") sealed with a handshake ("hond in hond") in front of witnesses. As opposed to the modern contract, the medieval covenant is best understood as a transaction promising reciprocal gifts; it was by definition an agreement to perform something in the future, so that failure to perform might result in "assumpsit," an action for the recovery of damages for the non-performance of a parol or unsealed contract. See William M. McGovern, "The Enforcement of Informal Contracts in the Later Middle Ages," *California Law Review* 59 (1971), 1145–93, and Simpson (1975), "Covenants," pp. 9–52 and 146–53.
- 1787–90 Dame Philosophy's advice on avoiding the snares of Fortune occupies Book II of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*.
- 1790 *world wide*. MS: *world*. Adjective supplied for rhyme with *ryde*.
- 1795 The "sergauntes" were not policemen in the modern sense but rather officers of the court, in the later Middle Ages a generic name for lawyers. See Chaucer's *Sergeant of the Lawe* (CT I, 309). The evolution of the term is outlined by Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 1:282–90.

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- 1823 *scleve*. — “*Sirs*. MS: *scleve and seyd sirs*.”
- 1837 The word *gesolreut* refers to the three musical pitches G (ge-sol), D (re) and high C (ut). In the medieval scale there were two *gesolreuts*, the lower and the upper, *the haut*. To cry “in *gesolreut the haut*” means to shout in the uppermost register or at an extremely high pitch.
- 1843 Chaucer makes this careful distinction, for example, in his warning about the vulgarity of the Miller: “And eek men shal nat maken ernest of game” (CT I, 3186). On the invalidity of Dorigen’s contract made “in pley” with Aurelius in *The Franklin’s Tale*, see Hornsby (1988), pp. 52–54.
- 1851 For the zigzag of an indenture, see *Black’s Law Dictionary*, p. 911: “if a deed was made by more parties than one, it was usual to make as many copies of it as there were parties, and each was cut or indented (either in acute angles, like the teeth of a saw, or in a wavering line) at the top or side, to tally or correspond with the others, and the deed so made was called an ‘indenture’.”
- 1858–60 The Burgeyse, as plaintiff, enters an oral plea before the court to describe the contract. The author invokes the same ancient dichotomy between words (*verba*) and deeds (*res*) that Chaucer uses in statements like “The word moot nede accorde with the dede” (CT IX, 208), which he derived from the Platonic philosophy of the *Boece* (III, prose 12.205–07).
- 1873 Beryn correctly understands that he can lose the case merely because his account of events is inaccurate or deficient in some small detail (“in som word”). See Pollock and Maitland, 2:602–05.
- 1876–81 Beryn’s “borow” was a piece of valuable property that served to secure a promise. The surety was forfeited if the contract were not fulfilled, that is, if Beryn were unable to drink all of the salt water in the sea. See Henry, *Contracts*, pp. 179–201. For the provost to have seized Beryn’s five ships (“i-sesed in our honde”) means that he has assumed legal possession of them while acting as Beryn’s custodian; see Pollock and Maitland, 2:29–80. For uses of the term *sesed* elsewhere in Middle English literature, see John A. Alford, “Literature and Law in Medieval England,” *PMLA* 92 (1977), 941–51, at 945–47. Beryn’s ineptitude as a merchant is reflected in his

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persistent failure to obtain a sealed covenant, an indenture, or a tally as evidence of his transactions.

- 1881 As provost or chief magistrate of the town, Hanybald can overrule Evander who, as steward, exercises less judicial authority.
- 1884–85 Besides seizing the ships, Hanybald undertakes the obligation of mainpernor to ensure the arrested defendant's appearance in court.
- 1891 *is*. MS: *it*.
- 1897ff. Hanybald appears to offer a scheme by which Beryn's cargo might be safeguarded against seizure by transfer of possession secured with merchandise stored in his own house, merchandise liable to forfeiture if Hanybald fails in his agreement. He solicits Beryn's "vowe" (line 1905). They signal good faith by drinking on the terms (line 1915), then Hanybald pushes for a handshake contract (line 1922). The subsequent emptying of the house is a breach of good faith, which could have served Beryn as the pretext for nullifying the contract. Hanybald preempts this tact by accusing Beryn himself of wavering (lines 1971–77).
- 1904 The break in rhyme suggests a missing line.
- 1905 *yeur vow also*. MS: *yeur also*.
- 1909 Here "arest" refers to the seizure of Beryn's ships as well as his own personal detention.
- 1918 *high*. MS: *his*. The copyist mistook the yogh for an *s*.
- 1924 *ye*. MS: *I*.
- 2002 *Here*. MS: *Ther*.
- 2010 The words "Out!" and "Harrowe!" were shouted to raise the hue and cry for neighbors to pursue and arrest a criminal. Chaucer uses these cries in the Miller's Tale (*CT* I, 3824–29) and The Nun's Priest's Tale (*CT* VII, 3375–82).



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- 2035        *never yit*. MS: *nevir*.
- 2063        *Evander*. MS: *Edwandir*.
- 2065–70    Probate proceedings involve establishing proof in civil law. Since the Blind Man alleges that his complaint has a history and he can produce witnesses or compurgators, including Evander himself, to establish his grievance, he has the advantage as plaintiff. Sir John Fortescue (1394?–1476?) in his *De Laudibus Legum Anglie* (XXI), ed. and trans. S. B. Chrimes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942), pp. 44–45, criticized this procedure: “By the civil law, the party who has taken the affirmative in the joinder of issue ought to produce the witnesses, whom he shall name at his pleasure. But a negative cannot be proven, that is, directly, though it may be indirectly. Feeble indeed . . . who cannot find, out of all the men he knows, two who are so lacking in conscience . . . they will contradict every truth. . . . And since their statements are in the affirmative, they are not easily disproved by circumstantial or other indirect evidence.”
- 2083–84    Vipian (pp. 192–93) notes *condempnyd/examened* would make a bad rhyme, but I have not judged this failing sufficient to emend to *examned*.
- 2098        *Hit*. MS: *Yit*.
- 2101        *howe lome*. MS: *lome*.
- 2128        *of his child*. MS: *of his*.
- 2130        *with*. MS: *without*.
- 2135–39    If Beryn were really her husband, his spousal bond (“trowth”) would oblige him to a marital debt comparable to commercial indebtedness; see Hornsby, pp. 100–03. The Woman apparently has a “gage” or pledge that she offers as security to be forfeited upon failure of her case (which should actually be tried in ecclesiastical court).
- 2139        *Steward*. MS: *Stwarge*.
- 2161        *worldlich*. MS: *wordlich*.

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- 2179      *ne down*. MS: *the down*.
- 2182      *they woll*. MS: *the woll*.
- 2194      Vipán (p. 193) suggests this hypermetric line be shortened by deleting *he did*.
- 2208      *they pursu*. MS: *the pursu*.
- 2210      A catchpoll, like a sergeant, was a constable or deputy officer whose duty it was to arrest persons. To detain and control prisoners he would place a yoke with pikes around the prisoner's neck. The yoke was attached to a pole which enabled the officer to direct the prisoner as he wished. If the prisoner struggled, the pikes would impale his throat.
- 2227      *eche man*. MS: *eke man*.
- 2260      Again Beryn enters into a rash handshake agreement.
- 2266      *he had*. MS: *they had*.
- 2273      *good*. MS: *God*. See line 2291.
- 2275      There appears to be some confusion between *dromodaries* meaning "camels" and *dromoundes* meaning "large ships." Camels are called *dromondaries* in *Morte Arthure* (line 2286), ed. Edmund Brock, EETS o.s. 8, 1871, p. 68.
- 2286      *sesed hym*. MS: *sesid*.
- 2293–98      Beryn, who has previously been accused only of violating various contracts, is now charged with the felony of murder. Distinct from *homicide* (which may have been man-slaughter with extenuating circumstances) the term *murder* designated those slayings committed in secret, at night, or by devious or clandestine means. Murder was a capital offense punishable by death. The wording *murder woll out* perhaps echoes Chaucer's Prioress (*CT* VII, 576) or the Nun's Priest's echoing of her phrase (*CT* VII, 3052).
- 2300      *were*. MS: *where*.

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- 2335–38 Beryn imagines himself in a morality play with Fortune, Wisdom, Wit, and Governance.
- 2340 *wrought hymselff*. MS: *wrought myselff*.
- 2357 *I, iwis*. MS: *I wis*
- 2363 *his*. MS: *is*.
- 2386 An incumbrance is a claim, charge, or liability attaching property as part of a writ or judgment. Beryn fears he is going to be sued by the Crippled Man, no doubt for causing his physical disability.
- 2388 *prece*. MS: *preche*. Rhyme with *cese*.
- 2394 *no word*. MS: *o word*.
- 2405 *Wolde ye had*. MS: *yee had*.
- 2408 Phrases like *outed all your chaffare* are used by the Wife of Bath (CT III, 521) and the Host (CT IV, 2438).
- 2436 *contreman*. MS: *contremen*.
- 2450 Vipian (p. 195) says the *cleiks* was a leg-cramp afflicting horses, hence the mocking name for the crippled-looking Geoffrey. Since *cleek* was a verb meaning to catch with a crook, here the lame man's crutch, the name might otherwise be understood as "Sir Snatch 'em."
- 2460–61 Geoffrey invites the crew to be summoned as witnesses to the conversation. One of Beryn's major legal problems has been his inability to produce witnesses to testify in his favor against his accusers and their array of witnesses.
- 2466 *how goodly Geoffrey spak*. MS: *how goodly as Geoffrey spak*.
- 2476 *in whom*. MS: *I whom*.

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- 2488 A “behest” is a legal promise creating an obligation. The Man of Law’s statement “Bihest is dette” (CT II, 41) reflects the fundamental idea behind the secular law of contracts that agreements must be kept.
- 2503 *I dure*. MS: *I dryve dure*.
- 2518–20 Looking back upon the longevity of the Old Testament patriarchs, readers in the Middle Ages believed that in ancient times men lived longer, with life-expectancy becoming shorter as the world itself became more corrupt. See Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, esp. pp. 79–92, for the ages of the world.
- 2530 Beryn offers to become the lawyer’s liegeman or sworn follower rendering service in exchange for protections, another rash promise which Geoffrey wisely refuses. For the legal workings of feudal service, see F. W. Maitland, *The Constitutional History of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), pp. 141–64.
- 2569–74 The contract between Geoffrey and Beryn is sealed “in signe of trowth” not with a handshake, but a kiss followed by wine.
- 2583 Vipian (p. 195) suggests *i-seclid* (sickened) may be the victim of another *c/t* confusion, hence *i-setled* for the doublet “settled and fixed” as in line 1742.
- 2595–2600 Green, “Legal Satire,” p. 57, notes that this prohibition of inquest (preferred by merchants) in favor of the old customary compurgation proof of witnesses (preferred by local burgesses) was practiced at this time by England’s Cinque Ports, much to the chagrin of foreign traders and, ultimately, the ports themselves when trade declined; see note for line 756.
- 2601 *togider*. MS: *togid*.
- 2602 *though ye were*. MS: *they ye were*.
- 2603 *wold gyve yewe*. MS: *wold gyve yeve yewe*.
- 2605–07 *Black’s Law Dictionary*, p. 82, gives this definition of *affirmative*: “The party who, upon the allegations of pleadings joining issue, is under the obligation of making proof, in the first instance, of matters alleged.” Thus the citizens sustain the burden of proof, which they accomplish by lining up witnesses

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willing to perjure themselves. Beryn sustains the burden of negative proof, that is, he must produce evidence or witnesses to prove the contrary — which he cannot do. Green, p. 53, describes Beryn's procedural bind: "In this legal catch-22, the defendant is guilty until proved innocent, but as soon as he denies his guilt, he forfeits the right to prove anything at all."

- 2616      *daunger*. MS: *daunser*.
- 2645      *that*. MS: *tha*.
- 2660      *They shuld*. MS: *The shuld*.
- 2666      Seneca (c. 4 B.C. – A.D. 65) was the Roman stoic philosopher and dramatist frequently cited by Chaucer. Sydrak was a philosopher to whom was attributed a medieval book of popular wisdom, *The Book of Sydrach*. "Salamones sawes" refers to the Proverbs of Solomon. This alliterative trio also appears in *Mum and the Sothsegger* (M 1212), p. 62.
- 2667      The seven sciences are the seven liberal arts of the Trivium (grammar, rhetoric, logic) and the Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music). The conduct of war was the subject of Vegetius's foundational *De Re Militari* (fourth century A.D.) and later Honoré Bonet's *Arbre des Batailles* (c. 1387), principal sources for Christine de Pizan's *Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye* (c. 1408–10), translated in 1489 by William Caxton (ed. A. T. P. Byles, EETS o.s. 189, 1932).
- 2673      The French source joins with several texts from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in which Denmark is cited as the birthplace of great men, saints as well as villains, whose origins are otherwise obscure.
- 2689      *That seven score*. MS: *Tha vii xx*.
- 2695      *this ilch day*. MS: *his ilch day*.
- 2702      *But whoso ly*. MS: *Both who so ly*.
- 2703      The correct reading may be *enpechements* to rhyme with *thens*.

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- 2723      *keveryng above*. MS: *keveryng of bove*. Celidony was a fabulous stone of two kinds, red or black, that was said to be found in the stomach of a swallow. *On the Properties of Things*, p. 841, describes how celidony “helpeth ageins the passioun lunatik and ageins woodnes and ageins old sorwe and maketh a man kynde and plesyng.” Since it is “a litel stoon and precious,” an entire ceiling of celidony would have been very impressive.
- 2731      *On the Properties of Things*, p. 843, says nothing about the coldness of the stone *dionisius*, only its power to prevent drunkenness.
- 2741–46      *On the Properties of Things*, pp. 1219–20, says much about the leopard’s violence and aggressiveness, but nothing about the animal’s irritation at human breathing.
- 2753–58      Ptolemy, originally known as Claudius Ptolomaïos (c. A.D. 100–170), was a Greek astronomer best known for his treatise *Almagest*. His renown as a scientist was so great that here he is credited with inventing robotic animals. On medieval automatons, see William Eamon, “Technology as Magic in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance,” *Janus* 70 (1983), 171–212. See also Rosemary Ascherl, “The Technology of Chivalry in Reality and Romance,” in *The Study of Chivalry: Resources and Approaches*, ed. Howell Chickering and Thomas H. Seiler (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1988), pp. 263–311, esp. 285–87 and bibliographies on pp. 310–11.
- 2758      *move*. MS: *mowe*.
- 2771–78      Chaucer showed great respect for the illusionist powers of “tregetours” in *The House of Fame* (1259–81) and *The Franklin’s Tale* (CT VII, 1138–51). See Laura Hibbard Loomis, “Secular Dramatics in the Royal Palace, Paris, 1378, 1389, and Chaucer’s ‘Tregetoures,’” *Speculum* 33 (1958), 242–55.
- 2774      *apparence*. MS: *apparene*.
- 2791      *wrieth*. MS: *wrighe*. On indenture (“dentour”), see note for line 1851.
- 2801      *herte*. MS: *hertis*.
- 2813      *They had*. MS: *The had*.

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- 2815–18 In desperation, the crew wishes to be convicted of a felony, which would carry the death penalty, rather than to be reduced to slavery through forfeiture of all their property in civil suits.
- 2823 *Thurhout all the long nyghte, till cokkes gan to syng.* MS: *Thurhout the nyghte till Cokkis gan to syng.* A fuller version of the first half-line is copied following line 2830 — *Thurh out all the long nyghte* — which I have conflated with line 2823, but which Furnivall (p. 86) reconstructed as a full couplet based on lines 2815–16: *Thurh-out all the long nyghte [this was hir compleynt], / They wisshid that of felony they had been atteynt* (2831–32).
- 2825 *wynd.* MS: *wyne.*
- 2826 *they had been.* MS: *he had been.*
- 2827 *apassed hope.* MS: *a passid.*
- 2872 Here meaning a crafty plot, *wanlase* was the circuit made in hunting to intercept game, especially deer.
- 2888 *tyll Geffrey gan.* MS: *to Geffrey gan.*
- 2925 *i-dight.* MS: *in dight.* See line 2968.
- 2943 Geoffrey will describe a nonsense game instead of the well-known board game called “quek.” *Quek* as a dialect variant for “neck” may account for the abrupt transition between images.
- 2946 *haled.* MS: *hale.*
- 2977 Beryn makes a point which he ought to have pressed harder, namely, that he is a merchant who should be accorded his rights under “law merchant” (*lex mercatoria*), a special legal code which extended to mercantile transactions and was internationally recognized by the fifteenth century. Though *ley marchaunt* normally differed from common law only in expeditious procedure, the merchants themselves could act as judges; if a civil case such as Beryn’s was tried by jury, half of the jury might consist of foreigners like the defendant himself. Beryn is placed at a decided disadvantage because law merchant denied wager of law (lining up of witnesses) as a means of

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establishing the negative and enabled plaintiffs to prove informal contracts by suit (“pleynt”); see note for lines 2605–07. See Frederic Rockwell Sanborn, *Origins of the Early English Maritime and Commercial Law* (New York: Century, 1930), pp. 324–401, and J. H. Baker, “The Law Merchant and the Common Law Before 1700,” *Cambridge Law Journal* 38 (1979), 295–322. Green, pp. 54–62, makes the case that Beryn is entangled in law-merchant proceedings throughout.

- 2979      *yf.* MS: *yef.*
- 2982      A “wed” was an object or even hostages given as security to guarantee a party’s intention to perform a promise in good faith. See Henry, *Contracts*, pp. 202–06. The address *Sir John* is used mockingly for “silly man.”
- 2987      *sor.* MS: *for.*
- 3003      Geffrey’s ceaseless chatter is compared, proverbially, to the clatter of a waterwheel.
- 3018      *chasted.* MS: *chased.*
- 3046      Gilhochet, the name that Geffrey assumes, appears in the French original as Guinehoches, formed from *guignol* for “hand-puppet clown” and *hochet* for “toy rattle,” according to Tamanini, p. 309.
- 3054      *in company.* MS: *a company.* The phrase “the grettest of the town” may mean the majority of the citizens or the most distinguished men of the town.
- 3070      *So shall I.* MS: *So shall.*
- 3074      A guest at a medieval banquet would often have a dinner companion, someone of equal social rank with whom to share servings of food and even the same wine cup, as Geffrey claims in asserting intimacy with the Emperor of Rome.
- 3096–98      In law merchant, these ten witnesses who are neighbors (unlike Beryn who is a foreigner) have the double function of affirming the truth of the Burgeyse’s testimony and acting as compurgators or “oath-helpers” who swear



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that the plaintiff can be believed. The irregularity of the procedure is underscored by the fact that eleven oath-helpers were normally required for wager of law. Green, pp. 54–56, details Beryn’s disadvantages as a non-citizen defendant barred from jury inquest:

- 3097      *every word.* MS: *evir word.*
- 3131      *this.* MS: *thes.*
- 3153      *shall nat nede.* MS: *shall nede.*
- 3154–57      Geoffrey offers to prove the justice of Beryn’s cause by ordeal of judicial combat, absurdly boasting a record of four previous victories as if he were the sort of professional champion sometimes in the employ of a prince for deciding such cases. See Henry C. Lea, *Superstition and Force: Essays on the Wager of Law, the Wager of Battle, the Ordeal, Torture*, 2nd ed. rev. (1870; rpt. New York: Greenwood, 1968), pp. 85–199, and M. J. Russell, “I. Trial by Battle and the Writ of Right” and “II. Trial by Battle and the Appeals of Felony,” *Journal of Legal History* 1 (1981), 111–34 and 135–64.
- 3171      *on hond.* MS: *an hond.*
- 3176      *til at the last.* MS: *til al the last.*
- 3178      For “tregitours,” see note for lines 2771–78; also Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, pp. 95–100.
- 3182      Bayard is used as a typical name for a horse in Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (B.4.53) and in a famous simile in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* (I, 218–24).
- 3190      *yit shuld it.* MS: *it shuld it.*
- 3202      Besides making it difficult for the Woman to talk, a slit tongue would have indicated punishment for some previous conviction of false accusation; Pollock and Maitland, 2:453.
- 3206      *harmes.* MS: *Armys.*
- 3221      *Womman.* MS: *vommen.*

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- 3229 Secret marriages formed a suspicious practice in the period; see Henry Ansgar Kelly, "Clandestine Marriage and Chaucer's *Troilus*," *Viator* 4 (1973), 435–57, and Hornsby, pp. 56–68.
- 3230 Geoffrey alludes to the proverb "The child is as much like the father as if he had been spit out of his mouth."
- 3235 *tanry*. MS: *tavener* crossed out and corrected to *tanry*. The line means "until he is old enough to be apprenticed to the tanner's trade."
- 3239–40 Geoffrey refers back to the insane notion that all the townspeople have a mouse for their mother (lines 2955–58).
- 3247 *he thought nat so*. MS: *he thought nat nat so*.
- 3287 *yit sith his departyng*. MS: *gift* crossed out after *sith*.
- 3300 On celidony, see note for line 2723; *On The Properties of Things* discusses the lore of rubies (pp. 839–40) and sapphires (pp. 869–71).
- 3327–28 On Geoffrey's offer of "wager of battle," see note for line 3153.
- 3350 This line is recopied by mistake after line 3356. The first time the scribe wrote *o tale I shall yew tell*, the second time *o tale I shall yewe tell*; the difference in spelling *yew/yewe* suggests the copyist's flexible attitude toward final *-e*.
- 3364–65 The proverb runs something like "He who arrives last to dinner (the cook-pot) is served the worst."
- 3381 *we*. MS: *I*.
- 3392 *They wisshed*. MS: *The wisshid*.
- 3416 *comand*. MS: *comyng*. Rhyme with *honde*.
- 3423 *hem*. MS: *hym*.

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- 3425ff. By playing the fool, Geoffrey has avoided entering any plea until he has heard all five complaints. He then pleads additional matter, a tactic known as confession and avoidance (*Black's Law Dictionary*, p. 369), which gives his client the advantage of being in the affirmative position.
- 3452 *thertofor*. MS: *therfor*. See line 3457 for *heretofore*.
- 3462 The expression "drive the nail to the head" refers to increasing a victim's agony.
- 3466 *but fynde it clene*. MS: *but clene*.
- 3475 This compressed line might be expanded thus: "Nor can anyone play chess better than I, though I myself say so, who knows not half so much as my master."
- 3476 *Nowe how he lost*. MS: *Ne how he lost*.
- 3477 *went*. MS: *wend*.
- 3487 *to seche the Sepulker*. MS: *to se the the sepulkir*. Another c/t confusion.
- 3502 *this was the end*. MS: *this was end*.
- 3531 *faillith*. MS: *fallith*.
- 3552 *though ye sotil pry*. MS: *thought sotil pry*. Vipán (p. 199) suggested emending *pry* > *be* for the sake of the rhyme with *iniquité*.
- 3565 The gage was a pawn given as security against the future delivery of a debt, while the pledge was usually a glove given as public acknowledgement of the debt.
- 3584 *he*. MS: *they*.
- 3594 *hem*. MS: *hym*.
- 3629 This proverbial expression is not as close to the Latin *Ars long, vita brevis* as it is to the opening line of Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*: "The lyf so

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short, the craft so long to lerne.” Geoffrey’s altered form of the name “Sir Hanyball,” here and in line 3619, seems to be mocking.

- 3637     *yit it is*. MS: *yit is*.
- 3656     The line combines two proverbial expressions, “wipe a man’s nose” and “shave a man’s beard,” both implying the party has been bested.
- 3658     *They profered*. MS: *The proferid*. For pledge and gage, see note for line 3565 above.
- 3723     For the practice of necromancy, see Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, pp. 151–75; and see line 339.
- 3751     For “borowes” or sureties, see note for lines 1876–81 above.
- 3761     *thre*. MS: *the*.
- 3769     *asyde*. MS: *a seyde*.
- 3777     The shaved head was the sign of a fool or lunatic.
- 3780     *they myght*. MS: *the myght*.
- 3795     *than*. MS: *that*.
- 3798–99     *first tho / To have*. MS: *first to / To have*.
- 3801     *i-passed*. MS: *& passid*.
- 3816     Beryn shouts “Out!” to raise the hue and cry; see note for line 2010 above.
- 3830–32     Customary law established that a weapon’s owner was responsible for any injury inflicted with it; Pollock and Maitland, 1:54.
- 3855     Normally composed of twelve men, a jury might be doubled in size to twenty-four to decide cases of unusual importance, hence literally a “grand jury.” Green, pp. 59–60, compares this to a “jury of attainr.”
- 3866     *therof*. MS: *therof therof*.

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- 3879        *they were.* MS: *the were.*
- 3912        *quod Beryn.* MS: *Beryn.*
- 3928        *cloth.* MS: *cloith.*
- 3930        *In tokyn.* MS: *I tokyn.*
- 3957        *with Beryn.* MS: *wit B.*
- 3981        *Thes wymmen.* MS: *This wymmen.*
- 3982        *as it was do.* MS: *at it was do.*
- 3987–90    Isope interprets Beryn's instinctive choice of the sword as a sign of well-bred nobility.
- 3993        *To cond him saff.* MS: *To cond his saff. performed.* MS: *perfomyd.*
- 4002        *Thurh the wit of Geffrey, it fil so.* MS: *Thurh the wit of Geffrey that ech day did hym lere it fil so.* The phrase *that ech day did hym lere* has been imported from line 4006, by mistake, though the corruption probably runs deeper.
- 4013        “Except the town's citizens, who were the source of falsehood.” Furnivall (p. 120) ignored the mid-line caesura and lack of capitalization in the manuscript to take *the town of falshede* as a proper noun; hence “Falsetown” figures in his commentary as the name of the port city where Beryn encounters so much fraud.
- 4015        *were fawe.* MS: *fawe.* The word *were* is added in the manuscript's right margin.

The Latin colophon forming a couplet at the bottom of the last page of *The Tale of Beryn* can be translated “The name of the author presenting the chronicle of Rome, and of the translator, is a son of the Church of St. Thomas.” Brown, “Journey's End,” pp. 148–50, proposes that the author might have been a monk charged with the care of the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket in the cathedral's Trinity Chapel, which was almost universally called the St. Thomas Chapel, hence “*Filius ecclesie Thome.*” The wording suggests that the clerical poet's name may also have been Thomas. Therefore worth noting is Green's suggestion, pp. 61–62 n. 49, that the author was Thomas Astell, rector of St. Thomas the Martyr in Winchelsea.

## *Glossary*

<b>A</b> <i>Ah</i>	<b>cut</b> <i>lot, portion, toss</i>
<b>afore</b> <i>before</i>	<b>degre(e)</b> <i>social station</i>
<b>after</b> <i>afterwards</i>	<b>deme</b> <i>judge</i>
<b>agayns, ageyn</b> <i>against</i>	<b>drad</b> <i>feared; dreaded</i>
<b>anon</b> <i>at once</i>	<b>droughe</b> <i>withdrawn</i>
<b>ariht</b> <i>correctly</i>	<b>dyght</b> <i>prepared</i>
<b>atte</b> <i>at the</i>	
<b>avised</b> <i>advised; observed</i>	<b>ech</b> <i>each</i>
<b>axe(d)</b> <i>ask(ed)</i>	<b>echon(e)</b> <i>each one, everyone</i>
<b>ay</b> <i>forever</i>	<b>efft</b> <i>again</i>
<b>aye</b> <i>again</i>	<b>efft ageyn</b> <i>once again</i>
	<b>eke</b> <i>also, too</i>
<b>be</b> <i>by</i>	<b>eny</b> <i>any</i>
<b>Benedicite</b> <i>Bless you, Bless us</i>	<b>ere</b> <i>ear</i>
<b>bet(t)</b> <i>better</i>	<b>estates</b> <i>social ranks</i>
<b>beth</b> <i>be</i>	<b>everich</b> <i>every</i>
<b>bot</b> <i>but</i>	<b>ey(en)</b> <i>eye(s)</i>
<b>but</b> <i>unless</i>	
<b>butte</b> <i>but the, only by the</i>	<b>fende</b> <i>devil</i>
	<b>fer</b> <i>far</i>
<b>certes</b> <i>certainly, surely</i>	<b>fere</b> <i>companion; in fere together</i>
<b>cher(e)</b> <i>cheer</i>	<b>forsoth</b> <i>indeed, truly</i>
<b>cherher (e)</b> <i>look, expression</i>	<b>fre</b> <i>generous</i>
<b>chese</b> <i>choose</i>	<b>fro</b> <i>from</i>
<b>cleped</b> <i>called, named; clepest call</i>	<b>ful</b> <i>very</i>
<b>clergye</b> <i>education</i>	
<b>clerk</b> <i>clergyman</i>	<b>gaf(fe)</b> <i>gave</i>
<b>comenly</b> <i>usually</i>	<b>gan</b> <i>began, did</i>
<b>con(ne)</b> <i>can, know</i>	<b>gentillesse</b> <i>nobility</i>
<b>coud(e)</b> <i>could, knew how</i>	<b>go</b> <i>walk</i>
<b>couth</b> <i>knew how, understood</i>	<b>gon</b> <i>began</i>
<b>craftyly</b> <i>artfully</i>	

## Glossary

**good** *goods, cargo, merchandise*  
**graunt(e)** *mercy thank you*  
**gynne** *begin*

**hed** *head*  
**hele** *health*  
**hem** *them, themselves*  
**himself** *themselves*  
**her** *here; their*  
**here** *hear; their*  
**hight(e)** *said, named*  
**hir** *her; their*  
**hit** *it*  
**hole** *health*  
**hond(e)** *hand*  
**honestly** *courteously, decently*  
**hosteler** *innkeeper*  
**huch** *which*  
**hyt** *it*

**ilch, ilk** *same*  
**inowe, inowgh(e)** *enough*  
**iwis** *indeed, certainly*

**jape** *joke*

**konne** *can, know*  
**kynde** *nature; natural*

**lap** *garment-flap, lapel*  
**las** *less*  
**lat** *let*  
**lere** *teach*  
**lese** *lose*  
**leve** *believe*  
**lever(e)** *rather*  
**lewde** *low-born, ignorant*  
**lich** *like*  
**lightly** *quickly*

**list** *like, please, prefer, desire*  
**lond** *land*  
**lore** *learning*  
**lyk** *like*

**maryner(e)** *sailor, seaman*  
**meve** *move*  
**meyné** *company, crew*  
**mo** *more*  
**moder** *mother*  
**morowe** *morning*  
**mow(e)** *may, can*  
**mut** *must*  
**myht** *might*  
**mynd** *memory*

**nas** *was not*  
**nat** *not*  
**naught** *nothing*  
**ne** *not, nor*  
**nere** *near; were not*  
**ner(e)-the-latter** *nevertheless*  
**no** *not*  
**nol(d)** *would not*  
**noon** *no, none*  
**not(e)** *don't know*  
**nye** *nearly*  
**nygh(e)** *near*  
**nys** *isn't*

**o** *one*  
**of** *off, from*  
**ones** *once, at once*  
**onto** *unto*  
**op(p)on** *upon*  
**or** *before*

**parde** *by God*  
**plase** *place*

## Glossary

**pleyne** *complain*  
**pleynt(e)** *complaint*  
**prevy, privy** *secret, secure*  
**pryvely** *privately, secretly*

**quod** *said*  
**quyte** *repay*

**rede** *plan, scheme*

**sad** *sober, sincere*  
**saff** *save, except*  
**save** *except*  
**schal** *shall*  
**sche** *she*  
**sech(e)** *seek*  
**se(e)** *sea; see*  
**seide** *said*  
**sey** *saw*  
**shul** *shall, should*  
**siker** *certain, sure*  
**sikerlich(e)** *certainly*  
**sith** *since, then*  
**sithens** *since*  
**sithes** *times*  
**sone** *soon*  
**sore** *sorely*  
**soth** *truth*  
**sotill** *subtle*  
**spake** *spoke*  
**sweven** *dream*  
**syn** *since*

**take** *give*  
**tale** *account, words, testimony*  
**than** *then*  
**that** *what*  
**the** *you; v. thrive*  
**thei** *they*

**then** *than*  
**thens** *thence*  
**there** *where*  
**thewe** *thou*  
**tho** *then; those*  
**thogh** *although*  
**thurh** *through*  
**thurhout(e)** *throughout*  
**thyn(e)** *your*  
**to** *too; two*  
**toder** *(the) other*  
**tofore, toforn** *before, previously*  
**togider** *together*  
**toke** *gave*  
**tone** *(the) one*  
**too** *two*  
**toon** *(the) one*  
**trew** *honest*  
**trouthe, trowth** *honesty*  
**trow(e)** *believe*  
**tydinge(s)** *news*

**usage** *habit*

**vailleth** *avails*  
**vertu** *virtue*

**wanne** *won*  
**war** *aware*  
**wele** *well*  
**wend(e)** *go*  
**weren** *were*  
**wers** *worse*  
**whan** *when*  
**whatso** *whatever*  
**where** *whether*  
**wherfor** *therefore*  
**whilom** *once*  
**wich** *which*



## *Glossary*

**wight** *person*  
**wist(e)** *know, knew*  
**wit(te)** *reason, wisdom*  
**wol** *will*  
**wold** *would*  
**wo(o)** *woe*  
**wood** *insane*  
**worche** *work*  
**wote** *know*

**yaf** *gave*  
**ye** *you*  
**yee** *yes*  
**yen** *eyes*  
**yeurs** *yours*  
**yeven** *given*  
**yew(e)** *you*  
**yewre** *your*  
**yf(f)** *if*  
**yif** *if*  
**yis** *yes*  
**yit** *yet*  
**ynouhe** *enough*  
**yowe** *you*