

The Assembly of Gods

*Le Assemble de Dyeus,
or Banquet of Gods and Goddesses,
with the Discourse of Reason and Sensuality*

*Edited by
Jane Chance*

Published for TEAMS
(The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages)
in Association with the University of Rochester

by

Medieval Institute Publications

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Kalamazoo, Michigan — 1999

The Assembly of Gods

Introduction

The importance of the fifteenth century in England has often been ignored by modern literary critics and historians. Douglas Bush described “the long interval between Chaucer and the early sixteenth century” as a “period of sterility” that might best be characterized as a “seedtime” for the “abundant promise of harvests to come.”¹ Certainly this vast century was a “seedtime,” but far from sterile. In the fifteenth century a large number of English poets, following the lead of John Lydgate, imitated Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower in their attempts to mediate in their poetry conflicting social, cultural, and religious value systems. In doing so, they created a substantial canon of literature highly ingenious in addressing concerns of the day, especially those of a new readership eager for education. As heirs of a long classical humanistic tradition passed down through schools and universities, the English writers of the fourteenth century introduced with remarkable vigor classical mythology into their settings, characterizations, and imagery. Some of the influences came directly from Latin traditions, some from Old and Middle French models such as the *Roman de la Rose* and the poetry of Froissart, Machaut, and Deschamps, but, in the fifteenth century, much of it came indirectly, from earlier English writers. These fifteenth-century English poets compose a philosophical poetry to juxtapose cultures both social and psychological. And they develop from old models new uses of rhetorical figures, particularly personification allegory, descriptions, and catalogues of information of the sort yearned for by a newly literate vernacular audience.

Lydgate, Hoccleve, and writers like the author of *The Kingis Quair* advance further uses of the classical theogony, particularly through the genre of dream vision and the personification of various moral categories. The poetic text becomes more expansive than before, often relying on lists and theological categories for dramatic substance. In keeping with the epistemological allegories of William Langland’s *Piers Plowman*, the subsequent narrative poems, like the mystery and morality plays, often attempt to deal with issues of the individual conscience in its pilgrimage through life. Written during a time of enormous social chaos and religious turmoil, the poems of the mid-fifteenth century are often

¹ See Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1932; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton, 1960), p. 46.

The Assembly of Gods

overlaid with didactic and moral functions overshadowed by crises within the church. It is not uncommon to find scenes from nature juxtaposed with allegorical landscapes inhabited by virtues and vices in debate over metaphysical issues. Allegory in general, of course, marks many Middle English poems of this era and the prior fourteenth century; the propensity for combining classical (Latinum) mythological allegory and the secularized dream-vision with the didactic and moralizing function of the sacramental and liturgical, whether performed by a cleric or by a Christian poet, as in the mystery and morality play, signals a trend to which John Gower, John Lydgate, and Christine de Pizan, among others, contributed. Although the poems often seem to be looking backward to the literary models of the fourteenth century, they also anticipate the Reformation in shrewdly original ways, by means of their emphasis on the individual through a kind of allegorical process of literary nominalism. The concept of a first person narrator within this context represents a literary desire to explore what might be termed subjectivity and the voice of the individual.

The Assembly of Gods, an anonymous English dream-vision allegory of 2107 lines arranged in 301 rime royal stanzas, appears at the end of the third quarter of the fifteenth century (c. 1478–83), just prior to Caxton’s introduction of the printing press to England. The poem follows closely the new “traditions” of English poetry that Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate introduced. Like Gower in his paradigmatic *Confessio Amantis* (1390), the *Assembly*-poet draws freely upon the classics in the redactions of various mythographers. In *Confessio Amantis* Gower provides the classical figure of Genius, priest of Venus, who shrives the courtly lover Amans for his sins against love and instructs him in the *remedia* for these sins and for the deadly sins of classical tales as well. Like Chaucer the poet draws freely upon the philosophical matter of Boethius and the *Roman de la Rose*. And from Lydgate the poet learns much about new uses of description and the dramatization of moral debate. But the poet also makes intelligent use of Franco-Italian poet Christine de Pizan through the mid-century translation of her *Epistre Othea* (1399) by Stephen Scrope (c. 1440). In this influential work, Christine combines classical myth, moral gloss, and allegory with biblical and liturgical contextualization: she introduces a hundred fables of the classical gods in what purports to be a letter of moral instruction written by Othea, goddess of prudence, to youthful Trojan hero Hector, exemplar of chivalry and founder of France through his nephew Francio. A similar conjoining of classical, courtly, and Christian appears in Christine’s *Epistre au Dieu d’Amours* (1401), in which the narrator Christine, behind the mask of the God of Love, Cupido, sues for a moral redress of courtly ills caused by the promiscuity and misogyny of chivalry. Following these models and others, *The Assembly of Gods* weds the didactic to the mythological and courtly within the dream vision of the narrator, who desires to bring Reson and Sensualyté into accord by means of a convention of the classical gods that will adjudicate the relative merits of Discorde’s desire to overthrow Vertu.

Introduction

Unusual in its combination of classical and Christian images, *The Assembly of Gods* has received little critical attention during the twentieth century, despite its association with Chaucer and its popularity in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries as a printed edition.² Once considered as a work within the Chaucer apocrypha,³ *Le Assemble de Dyeus* appears as the second of two tracts, the first of which is Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, in one of the earliest printed editions, Text C (British Library G.11587, c. 1500). And the poem is often found in early anthologies with Chaucerian poems, such as *The Legend of Good Women*, or with poems themselves often described as "Chaucerian," such as Lydgate's *The Temple of Glass*. Clear from even a cursory perusal of the poem are the reasons for its link with Chaucer: *The Assembly of Gods* features a distraught narrator; the appearance of a god, in this case, Morpheus, to a vexed dreamer caught between sleeping and waking, as in *The Book of the Duchess*; and the stanzaic form of the poem, rime royal (a seven-line stanza rhyming *ababbcc*), which Chaucer favored in many of his *balades*, *The Parlement of Foules*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and several of his religious tales.

Despite this association with Chaucer, *The Assembly of Gods* was initially attributed to John Lydgate (1370–1449). *The Assembly of Gods* is described by the poet Stephen Hawes in *The Pastime of Pleasure* (1505–06) as one of seven Lydgatian works.⁴ Called *Le*

² The poem was last edited in 1895 by Oscar Lovell Triggs, as a dissertation for the University of Chicago, and then reprinted by the Early English Text Society in 1896, as *The Assembly of Gods: Or The Accord of Reason and Sensuality in the Fear of Death, by John Lydgate, edited from the MSS. with Introduction, Notes, Index of Persons and Places, and Glossary*, EETS o.s. 69 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896). It was then reprinted verbatim by Oxford University Press in 1957. The reprinting supposedly involved corrections made by J. B. Trapp, but I would concur with previous scholars who have located no changes whatsoever in the text from the 1896 edition. According to Bradford Y. Fletcher, in "The Textual Tradition of *The Assembly of Gods*," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 71 (1977), 191–94, Triggs made over one hundred errors in transcription and provided inadequate variants, for which reason Fletcher recommended that a new edition be prepared. Fletcher also completed an unpublished edition of the Trinity College manuscript in which *The Assembly of Gods* appears, but without editing the poem itself: "An Edition of Trinity College Cambridge Manuscript R.3.19," 2 vols. (Ph.D. Diss. University of Chicago, 1973).

³ F. W. Bonner, "The Genesis of the Chaucer Apocrypha," *Studies in Philology* 48 (1951), 461, cites instances in which *The Assembly of Gods* was considered to be a work within the Chaucer apocrypha.

⁴ "And bytwene vertue and the lyfe vycyous / Of goddes and goddes[es] a boke solacyous / He dyde compyle" (*The Pastime of Pleasure*, lines 1362–64). Other works "by Lydgate" cited here include *The Ballade in Commendation of Our Lady*, *The Life of St. Edmund*, *The Fall of Princes* (attributed to Boccaccio), *The Chorl and Bird*, *The Courte of Savyence*, *Troy Book*, and *The Temple of Glass*. See Stephen Hawes, *The Pastime of Pleasure*, ed. William Edward Mead, EETS o.s. 173 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), lines 1338–1407, pp. 55–57. Hawes refers to Lydgate as his "mayster," "the chefe oryginall of my lernyng" (line 1375). Triggs took this passage as best

The Assembly of Gods

Assemble de Dyeus in the two earliest (late fifteenth-century) printed editions (Texts C and D),⁵ the poem was originally attributed to “Lydgate” in the authoritative manuscript (Text A)⁶ and at the end of one printed edition (Text C);⁷ it was also included with other works by Lydgate in early editions, chiefly the Wynkyn de Worde printed edition (Text D).⁸ Text D names *Le Assemble de Dyeus* as the second of three tracts, the first and third of which were written by Lydgate, *The Storie of the Destruction of Thebes* and *The Temple of Glass*. In the later British Library manuscript copy of Text D, known as Text B, the poem is clearly included because of its Lydgatian characteristics: the portion dating from the fifteenth century contains Lydgate’s *Troy Book* and his *Siege of Thebes*; the portion dating from the sixteenth century, in which *The Assembly of Gods* appears, contains work by William Cornish, John Skelton, and Lydgate.⁹

Modern scholars have argued against Lydgate’s authorship of *The Assembly of Gods*, however, despite its retention of the attribution to Lydgate into the twentieth century and its Lydgatian didactic moralism, allegory, and classical mythological figures.¹⁰ The

proof of Lydgate’s authorship of *The Assembly of Gods*, which he dated c. 1420, an attribution and date followed by the OED. But Hawes could not literally have been Lydgate’s pupil, as Triggs implies, for Lydgate died c. 1449 and Hawes was born c. 1475. See A. S. G. Edwards, *Stephen Hawes* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1983), p. 1. “Mayster” must simply mean that in his youth he read Lydgate with pleasure and literary sensitivity.

⁵ In D this description follows the end of the text: “Here endeth a lytyll Tratyse named Le assemble de dyeus.”

⁶ In Text A, Cambridge Trinity College Library R.3.19, fols. 67b–97b, Lydgate is cited as the author on fol. 68a.

⁷ The colophon for Text C, British Library G.11587, reads “Thus endeth this lytyll moralized treatyse compiled by dan John Lydgat,”

⁸ This edition is Text D, British Library C.13.a.21, from around 1500.

⁹ The works include: Will Cornish’s *Treatise betwene Truth and Enformation*, John Skelton’s *Elegies upon the Death of the Earl of Northumberland*, Lydgate’s *Stanzas and Testament*, and *The Assembly of Gods*. *The Assembly of Gods* is listed in the table of contents (fol. 1a) added in the seventeenth century as *The Discord betwixt Reason and Sensualytie* written by John Lydgate, along with “Names and Places of the Burial of All English Kings from the Conquest to Henry VII,” “Their Arms,” “The Descent of the Percies,” “Proverbs and Lodgings of Two Percy Castles,” and “Council of Aristotle to Alexander.”

¹⁰ If the work had been written by Lydgate, then, according to modern editor Oscar L. Triggs (1896), it must have been written either about 1412, at the time that Lydgate was writing his *Troy Book*, or about 1420, when *Siege of Thebes* was being written (p. xii). The OED prefers c. 1420 as well. But even Triggs acknowledges that, because of the unLydgatian poetic phraseology in *The Assembly of Gods*, “it is not impossible that Burgh or some other of Lydgate’s pupils rewrote the

Introduction

rhymes, meter, and other internal features are not like those of Lydgate; more importantly, the date of this London poem, c. 1478–83, as established by facsimile editor Bradford Y. Fletcher, is considerably later than any allowable in fact for authorship by Lydgate.¹¹ It seems likely that the work was written several decades after Lydgate had died, or, perhaps, at the earliest, between the time of his death (1449) and 1483.

Most likely written, then, in the early fourth quarter of the fifteenth century, at about the same time as several other similar dream-vision allegories, *The Assembly of Gods* can best be described, with them, not so much as “Chaucerian” as “Lydgatian,” and Lydgatian in nature rather than in fact. Such Lydgatian allegories, as exemplified by the anonymous *The Courte of Savyence* (c. 1449–83),¹² shared a scholastic or didactic nature, that is, they presented characters as personifications amidst long allegorical sequences and catalogues drawn from medieval psychology, classical mythology, Old Testament typology, the seven liberal arts, the seven deadly sins, and so forth. This type of Lydgatian poem was imitated in the late-fifteenth to early-sixteenth century in *The Bowge of Courte* (c. 1499) by John Skelton (c. 1460?–1529) and *The Example of Vertu* (1509) by Stephen Hawes (1475–1523?). Indeed, it has been suggested that *The Example of Vertu* was itself influenced by *The Assembly of Gods*, in its autumnal opening; its representations of Vices mounted upon the backs of beasts; its elaborate catalogues; and its calling of Morpheus

poem as we have it in the text” (p. xiv). Triggs identified as Lydgatian the poet’s preoccupation with death, along with an encyclopedic love of classical lore and Christian allegory, but the themes are common in the later fifteenth century. Lydgate scholars no longer accept this attribution. See Josef Schick in *Lydgate's Temple of Glas*, EETS e.s. 60 (London: Oxford University Press, 1891); Albert Rudolph in *Lydgate und die Assembly of Gods: Eine Untersuchung über die Autorschaft dieses Werkes auf Grund einer Stilvergleichung* (Berlin: R. Trenkel, 1909); Henry Noble MacCracken, ed., *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, Edited from All Available Manuscripts, with an Attempt to Establish the Lydgate Canon*, 2 vols., EETS e.s. 107 and o.s. 192 (London: K[egan] Paul, Trench, Trübner; New York: H. Frowde/Oxford University Press, 1911 [for 1910]; London: Humphrey Milford/Oxford University Press, 1934 [for 1933]); and Alan Renoir and C. David Benson, “XVI. John Lydgate,” in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050–1500* (New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1980), p. 2079.

¹¹ See Fletcher, “An Edition,” p. xv. J. H. Kern also argues that Lydgate was probably dead by the time the poem was written and remarks on the unLydgatian rhymes, in “Iets over London Likkepeny,” *Neophilologus* 3 (1918), 287. C. S. Lewis, *Allegory of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 260; Walter F. Schirmer, *Lydgate: A Study of the Culture of the XVth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), pp. 275–77; and Curt Bühler, “The Assembly of Gods and Christine de Pisan,” *English Language Notes* 4 (1967), 251, reject Lydgate’s authorship on various internal grounds. Like Fletcher, Bühler would also place its authorship in the third quarter of the fifteenth century.

¹² E. Ruth Harvey suggests that *The Courte* was written in the middle third of the fifteenth century, no earlier than 1449 or later than 1483 (p. xxii).

The Assembly of Gods

by the name “Morpheus” and Eolus by the name “Colus,” as does *The Assembly of Gods*, along with the use of a somewhat unusual phrase “nat worth a peere” (compare *The Assembly of Gods*, line 597, and *The Example of Vertu*, line 1015).¹³ But *The Example of Vertu* may also have been influenced by *The Courte of Sapyence*, particularly in its elaborate debate structures; its use of personification allegory, in which characters like Sapyence, Vertu, Fortune, and Nature are given prominent roles; its delight in theological issues involving the four Daughters of God; and, in an admixture of pagan and Christian lore, its representation of classical deities (especially Minerva) and its treatment of the Nine Worthies. But whatever the case, it is evident that *The Assembly of Gods* was read and admired as a Lydgatean work well into the sixteenth century.

Other influential and characteristic didactic, allegorical, and scholastic works of about the same time include translations into English from the French, such as Christine de Pizan’s *The Epistle of Othea* (1440–41, revised before 1488), and *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers* (1450, revised by 1472), both by Stephen Scrope and reviser William Worcester (Caxton published Earl Rivers’ separate translation of *The Dicts* in 1478).¹⁴ Still other Chaucerian and Lydgatean dream-vision allegories, such as *The Floure and the Leafe* (1460–88) and *The Assemby of Ladies* (1470–80), centered on courtly love behavior and the relationships between men and women.

A third literary context for *The Assembly of Gods*, like the first two derived from manuscripts or anthologies in which the work appears, has remained relatively unexplored. *The Assembly of Gods* is associated in the copytext manuscript, Text A, the earliest and most authentic manuscript, with courtly love and dream-vision poems that share a concern with women by both Chaucer and Lydgate and bears a more explicitly gendered title, as *Banquet of Gods and Goddesses*. Within this context, *The Assembly of Gods* may indeed be said to belong to a group of late-fifteenth-century courtly love parliament or assembly debate poems written about women or with female characters, some of which may have

¹³ In Hawes, Sensuality (i.e., lechery) rides upon a goat, as Lechery does in *The Assembly of Gods*. In *The Assembly of Gods*, Covetyse rides upon an elephant; in Hawes that mount is awarded Pride, a unique juxtaposition of mount and rider which, as Gluck and Morgan point out in their edition of the poem, may be due to Hawes’ reading of *The Assemby of Gods*. That is, in Hawes, “pryde [is] endued with covetyse” (line 1198), which could explain the borrowing of Covetyse’s mount for Pride’s conveyance.

¹⁴ For the dates and authorship of the translations of Stephen Scrope and the revisions of William Worcester, both of whom had connections with Sir John Fastolff, who brought manuscripts of French works back from Europe on his various trips, see Curt F. Bühler, ed. *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers: The Translations Made by Stephen Scrope, William Worcester, and an Anonymous Translator*, EETS o.s. 211 (London: Humphrey Milford/Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. xxxvii–lxii.

Introduction

been composed by women, or by poets whose patrons and audiences were female.¹⁵ Significantly, *The Assembly of Gods* is preceded in Text A (Cambridge Trinity College Library MS R.3.19, fols. 67b–97b) by *Assemble de Damys* (better known today as *The Assembly of Ladies*), fols. 55a–65b.¹⁶ Written in the same hand, the Text A *Assemble de Damys* is one of only three versions in existence,¹⁷ a fact that the earliest editor of *The Assembly of Gods*, Oscar L. Triggs, neglected to mention. This poem in particular was singled out by early Chaucer editor W. W. Skeat as having been possibly authored by a woman, probably the same author as that of *The Floure and the Leafe*.¹⁸ Such poems include some similarly identified by early anthologizers as Chaucerian apocrypha, given their focus on courtly love, their indebtedness to Chaucerian forms and style, and their inclusion in manuscripts with other works by Chaucer.¹⁹ Among these poems are the lyrics

¹⁵ On late-fifteenth-century poems showing concern for or about women, see Jane Chance, “Christine de Pizan as Literary Mother: Women’s Authority and Subjectivity in ‘The Floure and the Leafe’ and ‘The Assembly of Ladies,’” in *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentiis (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 245–59.

¹⁶ The other works in Cambridge Trinity College Library MS R.3.19 include (in order of appearance and entitled as the seventeenth-century hand lists on the flyleaf, unless title is omitted) Lydgate’s poems, Chaucer’s *Parliament of Birds*, a poem by George Ashby, prisoner in the Fleet, 1463, “Amoret, that was prynce of Salerno, flowre of knyghthood” (the latter omitted from the flyleaf), “Assemble de Dayms by Chaucer,” “La Belle dame sauns Mercie by Chaucer,” “The 10 Commandments of Love by Chaucer,” “The IX Ladyes Worthy by Chaycer,” “The Legend of Ladyes by Chaucer,” “The Explanation of the Death of Pyte by Chaucer,” “The Craft of Lovers by Chaucer,” “The Court of Love by Chaucer,” “Several other little pieces of Chaucers,” Piers of Fulham’s “Love Poems,” “The Genealogy of the Kings of England from the Normans,” and “Autumnus.” See Bradford Y. Fletcher’s “*The Assemble of Ladies*: Text and Context,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 82 (1988), especially pp. 230–34, for a study of variants and the manuscript genealogy.

¹⁷ The other two manuscripts containing *The Assembly of Ladies* are British Library MS Additional 34360, fols. 37a–49a, the earliest, and Longleat House MS 258, fols. 58a–75b.

¹⁸ See the discussion of Skeat’s opinion outlined in Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson, “*The Assembly of Ladies*: A Maze of Feminist Sign-Reading?” in *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice*, ed. Susan Sellers (New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 171–96; here, p. 193n9.

¹⁹ See G. L. Marsh, “Sources and Analogues of *The Flower and the Leaf*,” *Modern Philology* 4 (1906–07), 121–68 and 281–328; Eleanor Prescott Hammond, ed., *English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1927); Derek Pearsall, “The English Chaucerians,” in *Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature*, ed. D. S. Brewer (London: Thomas Nelson, 1966), pp. 201–39; and Derek Pearsall’s introduction to his 1962 edition of *The Floure and the Leafe* and *The Assembly of Ladies*. The Chaucerian attribution for the latter poem and its association with *The Floure and the Leafe* resulted from William

The Assembly of Gods

of what is known as *The Findern Anthology* (c. 1456), *The Floure and the Leafe* (1460–80?), *The Isle of Ladies*, and, as indicated above, *The Assembly of Ladies* (1470–80), as well as a number of manuscripts or translations of the works of Christine de Pizan.²⁰

Female authorship and/or reception would explain the label of “courtly” previously affixed by early Chaucer editors. In addition, some of these poems include female speakers, subjects related to the limitations on behavior proscribed for women aristocrats by the society they inhabited, and common appearances in the same manuscript. Signs of female audience are also reflected in the poems’ preference for chastity and morality in loving (as in the group who adhere to the Leaf in *The Floure and the Leafe*) or in an interest in female courtly behavior and problems of individuality and identity that ensue from such behavior (as in *The Assembly of Ladies*). *The Findern Anthology* (c. 1456) was believed to be the product of the Findern family country house and is signed by several women — Frances Crucken, Elizabeth Coton, Elizabeth Francis, and Anne Shirley — whose families lived in Derbyshire in the Findern area.²¹ In addition, Longleat MS 258,

Thynne’s inclusion of it in his edition of Chaucer’s works in 1532, which Walter Skeat followed in his 1897 edition of *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*. See Pearsall’s introduction to each poem in his 1990 edition, *The Floure and the Leafe*, *The Assembly of Ladies*, *The Isle of Ladies* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications), pp. 1, 29. All references in the text are to Pearsall’s 1990 edition.

²⁰ See Elizabeth Hanson-Smith, “A Woman’s View of Courtly Love: The Findern Anthology,” *Journal of Women’s Studies in Literature* 1 (1979), 179–94; Sarah McNamer, “Female Authors, Provincial Setting: The Re-versing of Courtly Love in the Findern Manuscript,” *Viator* 22 (1991), 279–310; Ann McMillan, “‘Fayre Sisters Al’: *The Flower and the Leaf* and *The Assembly of Ladies*,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 1 (1982), 27–42; Alexandra A. T. Barratt, “‘The Flower and the Leaf’ and ‘The Assembly of Ladies’: Is There a (Sexual) Difference?” *Philological Quarterly* 66 (1987), 1–24; and Jane Chance, “Gender Subversion and Linguistic Castration in Fifteenth-Century English Translations of Christine de Pizan,” in *Violence against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. Anna Roberts (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), pp. 161–94.

²¹ See Hanson-Smith, “A Woman’s View of Courtly Love,” pp. 179, 182. For an edition of the Findern manuscript, see Rossell Hope Robbins, “The Findern Anthology,” *PMLA* 69 (1954), 610–42; Robbins argues that two kinds of scribes (of the thirty hands present) aided in writing the manuscript, amateur women from the area and professional copyists who moved from place to place. A facsimile of the manuscript has been published: see *The Findern Manuscript: Cambridge University Library MS Ff.1.6*, introduced by Richard Beadle and A. E. B. Owen (London: Scolar Press, 1977). The introducers of the facsimile note that the manuscript arrived at the Cambridge University Library when George I purchased Bishop John Moore’s collection and presented it in 1715. Bishop Moore acquired this and others from the Knyvett family library (from Ashwellthorpe, near Wymondham, Norfolk), initially owned by Sir Thomas Knyvett (c. 1539–1618). Knyvett may have had this particular manuscript from the Findern family, who began compiling it in the mid-fifteenth century (p. vii). The manuscript contains Chaucerian poems and others, including his

Introduction

which includes *The Assembly of Ladies*, once also included *The Flooure and the Leafe* (what would have been fols. 33–48); Longleat MS 256 contains *The Isle of Ladies*; and Longleat MS 253 contains Stephen Scrope's Middle English translation of Christine de Pizan's *Epistle of Ladies*, dedicated to Sir John Fastolf, his stepfather, who brought a Middle French copy of Christine's text back from France around 1440.²²

Aside from its gendered character, the title of *Banquet of Gods and Goddesses* in the colophon for the work in Text E (STC 17006; Wynkyn de Worde, post 1499) is in some ways preferable to *The Assembly of Gods* because it conjoins to this text the ancient Graeco-Roman genre of the “banquet” or “feast” used by Plato in the appropriately titled *Symposium* and by first-century Petronius in the Menippean satire of the *Cena Trimalchionis* (Trimalchio's feast), one complete episode in the fragmentary novel *Satyricon*. In late antique parlance, the “banquet” is also known as “satura” (satire, but literally “a mixed stew”) and often called a *prosimetrum*, or mixture of prose and poetry.²³ Petronius' *prosimetrum*, the earliest Latin work of a continuous narrative like that of the modern novel, also contains two examples of Milesian fable, a form used in second-century Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* as a model for his beast fables, theorized in fourth-century Macrobius' commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis* and the fifth-century Martianus' allegorical *prosimetrum*, and thereafter funneled to the Middle Ages in a variety of mythological and mythographic collections involving truth hidden by a false cover or cloak, most influentially in Fulgentius' *Mitologiae*.

In this mythological and fabulous context, *The Assembly of Gods* serves up an extended narrative of mythological dream-allegory in which the gods, in a macrocosmic attempt to resolve a problem of internal division within the individual microcosm, spar verbally, *Aeneid*-like, in dispute over an issue of territorial and regional governance and definition.

Parlement of Foules and excerpts from *The Legend of Good Women*, Thomas Hoccleve's *Letter of Cupid* (entitled *Lepistre de Cupide*), excerpts from John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Sir John Clanvowe's *Boke of Cupide*, and others.

²² There exists a scribe's table of contents for Longleat MS 258, a manuscript once owned by Thynne and from which Thynne set up his copy, that lists *The Flooure and the Leafe* along with *The Assembly of Ladies*; see Fletcher's discussion in “*The Assembly of Ladies*,” pp. 229–34. For a fuller description of the variants in Thynne and the Longleat MS, see James Blodgett, “William Thynne and His 1532 Edition of Chaucer” (Ph.D. Diss. University of Indiana, 1975), who finds 108 variants (including orthographical differences). For details about the provenance of the translation of Christine by Scrope, see Curt Bühler's introduction to Stephen Scrope, trans., *The Epistle of Othea, Translated from the French Text of Christine de Pisan*, EETS o.s. 264 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. xiv–xxx.

²³ That is, the form mixes prose with lines of verse, as in Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae*, Martianus' *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, and other later medieval allegorical works such as Alan of Lille's twelfth-century *De planctu Naturae*.

The Assembly of Gods

To reflect the poem's emphasis on classical mythology, ever more popular in the Renaissance, sixteenth-century printers Richard Pynson and Robert Redman entitle the poem *The Interpretacyon of the Natures of Goddys and Goddesses* (Texts F and G, c. 1501–40). They borrowed their title from the Text A table of gods' names preceding the poem (fol. 66b), "Here folowyth the Interpretacion of the names of goddys and goddesses as ys rehersyd in this tretyse folowyng as poets wryte," to refer to both the table and the poem.

Ultimately, as a type of late-fifteenth-century Lydgatian poem, as defined at the beginning of this Introduction, the poem displaces and marginalizes the classical gods in favor of a Christianized and moralized center in which personifications of psychological faculties eventually resolve and harmonize their differences because of the fact of death. The poem includes, first, a dream frame in which a perplexed dreamer, caught between sleep and waking, introduces the possibility of bringing Reson and Sensualité into accord (lines 1–35; 1469–2107); second, the *Assembly* proper, in which Eolus (god of winds, the air) disputes with Diana (goddess of the woods and the hunt) and Neptunus (god of the sea) over a matter of jurisdiction, the resolution of which Apollo, the sun (god of truth), promises, in a banquet at which the assembled gods will convene to hear arguments (lines 36–616); and third, the longest part, the *psychomachia*, the battle between Vertu and Vyce, or Reson and Sensualité (lines 617–1468). Because Dyscorde, who has not been invited to Apollo's banquet, shows up anyway as a disgruntled guest, as she does at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (which led initially, of course, to her disruptive rolling of the golden ball into the festivities, followed by the Judgment of Paris and, eventually, the fall of Troy), there is no room for her at the table. After she leaves in anger, she meets male Attropos, the third Fate and here equivalent to Dethe, who returns to represent her case. Attropos complains that only one individual has broken his vow to him (line 483)—Vertu (line 591). All the gods agree to aid Attropos in destroying this one (unnatural) offender, which leads to the question of jurisdiction: if Vertu inhabits the aerial region, as Athena suggests, then Diana (ruler of the woods) and Neptunus (ruler of oceans) must be asked to forgive Eolus, but Pluto may well control the god of air, because Eolus was shut into the earth within a crevice and taken prisoner by Cerberus, porter of hell. Because Othea, goddess of prudence, also entreats Neptunus to forgive Eolus, Pluto grants the aid of his son, the bastard Vyce, in battling Vertu.

At this point the poem moves into its third and longest part, a morality play and psychological epic combined with social satire (lines 617–1468). Despite Vyce's protests, Vertu is warned of danger by Apollo (line 717) with the assistance of Morpheus and a catalogue of lesser virtues; then Vertu sends out the messenger of Ymaginacion to warn others in his company (line 748). Vertu is appropriately aided by his host, Baptym and Cryme Oryginall, the four knights of the cardinal virtues (Ryghtwysnes, Prudence, Streyngh, and Temperaunce), and the seven *remedia* for sins (Humylyté, Charyté,

Introduction

Pacyence, Lyberalyté, Abstynence, Chastyté, and Good Besynesse). Minor captains accompany them, including the three theological virtues, Feythe, Hooke (line 828), and Charyté (line 804), Konnyng, and the seven liberal arts (lines 854 ff.). The field of battle is the microcosm (line 932, mistakenly listed as “Macrocosme”), in which judge Conscience will decide who wins (line 934) and the lord at hand is Frewyll (line 996). At this point Reson counsels Frewyll not to succumb to the spy Sensualité and Vyce (lines 1050–55).

Why do the gods support Eolus’ complaint, going so far as to mercifully forgive him (lines 575–81), and, therefore, also support Attropos’ complaint and his bid to overthrow Vertu (lines 961–63)? The chief reason is that Attropos threatens to withdraw his service to them if Vyce fails (lines 964–66). The captains on this side include Falshood, Dyssymulacion, Symony, Usuré, and others. Fortunately, with Conscience as judge, the lady Prescience follows Vyce through the gates of hell, and Predestinacion grants a heavenly home to Vertu, at which point the Vices repent. Frewyll blames Vyce as the cause of his diversion (lines 1225–28) and agrees to deliver the microcosm, while Vyce is placed in the care of Reson and Frewyll, now to be guided by Sadnes (line 1265). Although Nature protests that Vyce should be freed (lines 1269–74), nevertheless, Vertu delegates to Morpheus, god of dreams, the job of guarding the five gates of the senses (lines 1296–97).

The second complaint of Attropos to the gods (lines 1315–21) is answered by Apollo, who declares that his patent is legal only within Nature (lines 1324–26), forcing Attropos to turn to the one God (lines 1331–37), saying, “Youre names shal be put to oblyvyone” (line 1337). That is, the gods are part of Nature, not high enough in the celestial hierarchy to represent the power of supernature. Thus Attropos, his name changed to “Dethe” (line 1403), is allocated a place in the microcosm by Ryghtwysnes (lines 1419–20), after which Vertu sends Presthood to the field with the sacraments and Penaunce (lines 1426–32). The field is cleansed by Reson and Sadnes, and they see the Eukaryst (line 1439). Holy Unccion follows with a chrismatory (line 1444) and then Dethe (the former Attropos) arrives (line 1447). Vertu is apotheosized (line 1465) and the Christianization of the pagan allegories of Martianus is complete.

The concluding dream-frame envelope (lines 1469–2107) is fitted to this allegory: the Dreamer comes to an arbor with four walls (line 1479) and is admitted by Wytte, chief porter, to the school of Dame Doctryne, next to whom is seated Holy Texte, Glose, and Moralyzacion, attended by scribe Scrypture (lines 1499–1504), in a scholastic allegory like Christine de Pizan’s tripartite division of each fable as text, gloss, and allegory in the *Epistre Othea a Hector* (1399). The iconography of the walls provides a biblical context: on one wall appear Adam and Eve, Abraham and Isaac, Moses, and other characters from the Old Testament (lines 1520–54). On the second wall appears material from the New Testament and the Church Fathers (lines 1562–87), ending, in another feminized and

The Assembly of Gods

Christine-like touch, with the “nobyll prophecyssa” Sybyll (line 1589), who dominated the last fable of the *Epistre Othea*, involving the conversion of Caesar Augustus to Christianity. Dame Doctryne’s subsequent glosses on the gods are moral: Eolus indicates that unbridled wealth increases misrule and causes folly (lines 1632–38). Mynos, judge of hell, represents God’s righteousness, for which reason he is called “juge of crewelnes” (lines 1643). Diana and Neptunus battling Eolus reflect “fooles reson” (line 1645), or the folly of attempting the impossible, by trying to control Eolus, the wind. Apollo diverts them; that is, the gods are false idols (line 1676), a passage of euhemerism (lines 1702–08) in which the gods, particularly Ceres and Isys, are understood as historical persons who distinguished themselves in times past. At the end of *The Assembly of Gods*, the narrator awakens from the dream (lines 2052–2107), having dismissed it as chaff in a Chaucerian echo: “Try out the corne clene from the chaff” (line 2071). Like Christine’s Sibyl, the narrator appeals to Christians to apply free will to virtue and to look forward to heavenly reward, in particular the beneficence of Christ, son of Mary (line 2105).

In form the poem is a dream-vision allegory like Chaucer’s *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Parlement of Foules*, *The Hous of Fame*, and the Prologue to the *The Legend of Good Women*, and like John Lydgate’s *The Temple of Glass*, the latter with which it appears in one early Wynkyn de Worde printed edition (Text D, c. 1500?); it also resembles Christine’s visionary allegories of *Dit de la Rose* and *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. The dream-vision of *The Assembly of Gods* includes a distraught male narrator, made anxious by the tension between reason and sensuality, very much like Chaucer’s in his division of self, but also like the narrator in *The Assembly of Ladies*, “Al amased” as she is (line 739), who dreams “La semble de Dames” (The likeness of Ladies) in pursuit of her own identity.

After the dream-vision frame or envelope is introduced, along with the dream “problem” (lines 1–35), the poem shifts its generic gears: because of the convention of gods to address the request of Eolus, it can also be described as a parliament, assembly, or banquet poem, like Chaucer’s *The Parlement of Foules* and the mid-fifteenth-century *The Parlement of Thre Ages*. The poem also includes a debate among the gods, very like debate poems such as *The Owl and the Nightingale* and *The Debate between the Soul and Body*, and like lyrics such as “The Holly and the Ivy,” and others.

In addition, the *psychomachia* between opposing forces, the virtues and vices, resembles those described by fourth-century Prudentius (from which the name of the form derives); Alan of Lille’s twelfth-century Latin epic allegory, the *Anticlaudianus*; Lydgate’s *Reason and Sensuality*; and also fifteenth-century English morality plays such as *Mankynd*, *The Castle of Perseverance*, and *Everyman*. The clash of personifications *for* and *within* the soul of an individual locates the poem within the same tradition of interiorized salvation that marks the literary progression of the protestantization of the Church, even though the allegory firmly supports the need for sacerdotal intervention in this process and the need

Introduction

for sacramental endorsement.

The Assembly of Gods ends with a cataloguing of specific types within a rogues' gallery indebted in nature both to the lists of the gods' vicious "children," in the descriptions of the altars of Venus, Mars, and Diana in Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, and to the social satire of William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (except that it ridicules the third estate). In *The Assembly of Gods*, a long catalogue of the petty captains who aid the Seven Deadly Sins (lines 617–714) under Pluto's bastard son Vyce begins with Sacrylege, Symony, and Dyssimulacion (lines 635–65) and ends with Idylnesse, who "set the comons in aray" (line 666); the Commons range from "bosters, braggars, and brybores, / Praters, fasers, strechers, and wrythers" (lines 673–74) to "Pylary knyghtes, double-tollyng myllers, / Gay joly tapsters with hostelers of the stewes, / Hoores and baudys that many bale brewes" (lines 698–700). The estates satire reflected here in miniature mirrors that of Chaucer's General Prologue and the first *passus* of *Piers Plowman*.

The poem manifests unmistakable signs of the influence of Christine de Pizan's *Epistre Othea*, probably through the mid- to late-fifteenth-century translation into English by Stephen Scrope, the *Epistle of Othea* (c. 1440–59).²⁴ These signs of literary reception are important for suggesting a new role for Christine outside the French court and her impact there on letters; although recently the history of her reception has been traced through the centuries following, there has been little attempt to identify a specific fifteenth-century influence on Middle English letters, and yet the many English translations of her works in the fifteenth century by scholars and poets (including Thomas Hoccleve) argue for a literary presence in England as well as in France.²⁵ Chief among these signs is the appearance of the name and character of the mythical figure Othea, goddess of prudence, created by Christine de Pizan by combining *O* (I would suggest taken from the church antiphons for Advent, many of which celebrate the Virgin Mary) and *thea*, "goddess," and

²⁴ See Curt Bühler, "The *Assembly of Gods* and Christine de Pisan," 251–54; and also his introduction to Scrope's translation of the *Epistle of Othea*. Most telling is the use of the name "Colus" in all the manuscripts and early editions of *The Assembly of Gods* as a mistake for "Aeolus," a mistake also found in Scrope's translation of Christine's *Epistre Othea* (Bühler, "The *Assembly of Gods*," p. 254). Another parallel with *The Assembly of Gods* found only in the English translation of Christine is that of the euhemeristic creation of deities by the pagan world (stanza 244 of *The Assembly of Gods*; see Christine's *Epistle of Othea*, fable 1, p. 6; Bühler, "The *Assembly of Gods*," p. 253).

²⁵ See Gianni Mombello, "Per un'edizione critica dell'‘Epistre Othea’ di Christine de Pizan," *Studi Francesi* 24 (1964), 401–17, here, pp. 408–09, for the influence of the *Epistre Othea* on contemporary French works; and on later periods, see Glenda K. McLeod, ed., *The Reception of Christine de Pizan from the Fifteenth through the Nineteenth Centuries: Visitors to the City* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991).

The Assembly of Gods

of the lone Fate Atropos, named as “Dethe” and made male instead of female.²⁶ As in Christine’s *Epistre Othea*, Othea in her role as “Rewler of knyghthode” (line 305) appears here seated next to Cupido; she it is who resolves the dispute among Diana, Neptunus, and Eolus. Isys, Mynerve, and Ceres reinforce the feminized governance of earthly process and fruition found in Christine’s epistolary allegory and also in the *Cité des Dames*, symbolic of the spiritual growth of virtues: Ceres is goddess of corn, who the “craft of tylthe founde” (line 1710), and Isys is goddess of fruit, who “fyrst made hit multyly / By the meane of gryffyng” (lines 1717–18). The strong presence of female deity is accentuated by the figure of Diana, goddess of chastity and the hunt, who here occupies the same role as in Christine de Pizan’s early fifteenth-century courtly dream-vision and complaint poems, *Epistre au Dieu d’Amours* and *Dit de la Rose*; Diana also appears in *The Floure and the Leafe*,²⁷ in the same dominant role as female Loyalty in *The Assembly of Ladies*. That is, Diana here protects the woods and the deer, the places and properties of the hunt, but she can also be said to ally with Vertu because she opposes Eolus, and thus she also opposes (at the next level of narrative discourse) Atropos and his captain, Vyce.

What other features are feminized about this mythological allegory? The actual assembly of the gods is reminiscent of the assembly of ladies in the poem of the same name with which it appears in the Trinity manuscript; there is as well the same emphasis on order in the hierarchy in which the gods are introduced that is equivalent to the hierarchy of the female personifications who govern the Castle of Pleasant Regard in *The Assembly of Ladies*. Both poems invest in a legal setting and terminology (also similar to Christine’s *Epistre au Dieu d’Amours* and Chaucer’s *The Legend of Good Women*) to redress wrongs to women, either aristocratic ladies or royal Diana in *The Assembly of Gods*. The poem emphasizes description of the clothing of the gods, details of fabric, color, adornment, and symbolism, very like that of the female petitioners in *The Assembly of Ladies*, in which the sleeves and their embroidered mottoes somehow typify both the ladies’ complaints (their bills, “Without ever giving cause,” “I can never rise,” “Rest assured,” and so forth) and also their identities, fragmented and socially proscribed as they might be. Aurora, goddess of morning, the dawn, for example, is dressed in “moyst clothes

²⁶ Atropos is also masculinized in Scrope’s translation of the *Epistle of Othea*; see Bühler, “*The Assembly of Gods* and Christine de Pisan,” p. 253. Bühler also notes the appearance of Ceres, Isis, and Pan in the same order in both the *Epistre Othea* and *The Assembly of Gods*, p. 252.

²⁷ In *The Floure and the Leafe*, however, Diana’s appearance as goddess of chastity, to whom the company of the Leaf owes allegiance, signals an ironic and misplaced pride in purity that matches more obvious spiritual errors of the company of the Flower, according to Cynthia Lockard Snyder, in “*The Floure and the Leafe*: An Alternative Approach,” in *New Readings of Late Medieval Love Poems*, ed. David Chamberlain (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), pp. 145–71; here, pp. 156–57.

Introduction

with teares all bespreynt; / The medewes in May shew therof her compleynt” (lines 258–59). Diana, goddess of the hunt, wears a mantle of black silk bordered with powdered ermine, as if she were royalty (lines 265–67). In *The Assembly of Gods*, the colors and fabrics of the gods’ clothing, the jewels and metals of their crowns, and the symbolic significance of both mirror Christine’s metallic allegories in *Epistre Othea*: Jupyter in both is crowned with tin, Saturne, with lead, and Venus, with red copper;²⁸ Othea in both poems wears pearls, as does Alceste in *The Legend of Good Women*.

Other literary and mythological influences can be discerned, most obviously, from the Latin and scholastic tradition, in particular from Martianus Capella’s fifth-century *prosimetrum, De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, upon which scholastic commentators lavished their attention between the ninth and the twelfth centuries, with differences clearly traced in this Middle English work. In that Latin work, Mercury’s search for the appropriate bride results in his journey through the celestial and planetary spheres accompanied by Apollo to petition the gods; their assembly anticipates that of this fifteenth-century Middle English allegory, with the result that, by the conclusion of the visionary frame in the first two books of Martianus’ work, Mercury marries the mortal Philology, who is then apotheosized. The remaining seven books detail the liberal arts of the trivium and quadrivium, that is, grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, followed by arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. A similar disquisition, much abbreviated, appears in the seventh book of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, on the education of a prince, and also in the fifteenth-century *The Courte of Savyence*, with its similar humanist linkage of classical and Christian. In *The Assembly of Gods*, the “marriage” takes place between Reson and Sensualyté, and the adjudication concerns the debate among Eolus, god of winds, Diana, goddess of the woods, and Neptunus, god of the sea. The issue centers on jurisdiction: Who controls the air, between earth and sea and heavens? Within the microcosm, who controls free will, caught between reason and sensuality?

The order of the gods invited through Apollo’s intercession also resembles the Stoic celestial hierarchies of Martianus Capella in *De nuptiis*, of which there are several in the epic: a description of the planetary spheres and regions through which Mercury (accompanied by Apollo) must fly in his journey to seek Jupiter’s aid, the gods who assemble at Jupiter’s invitation to adjudicate Mercury’s petition, and the descent of Mercury through the spheres afterward, which allows Martianus to describe yet other regions and their rulers, especially of the sublunar and earthly realms. But in *The Assembly of Gods*, in the first four hundred lines or so, the classification resembles the Stoic hierarchy of the four regions, of fire, air, water, and earth: following Eolus’ remorse,

²⁸ Compare the metallic allegories in Chaucer’s *The Hous of Fame* (lines 1429–1512), which likewise correspond to the equations in *The Assembly of Gods*.

The Assembly of Gods

there is Aurora (“Daybreak,” morning, line 254); Mars (line 260); Diana (the moon, line 265; also the poet adds Phebe later on, as sister to Apollo); Jupyter (line 269) and Juno (line 275), rulers of the ether and air, respectively; and Saturne (“Chronos,” time, line 279), Cretan father of Jupyter and ruler of the outermost translunary sphere. The denizens of earth and earthly process begin with Saturne’s wife, Ceres (“Ops,” matter, line 289), goddess of grain, plus Cupido, named like the god of love in Christine’s *Epistre au Dieu d’Amours*, who embraces Ceres (line 301), as if identical to the god of love and the daisy queen Alceste in Chaucer’s Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*; the Athenian goddess of prudence, Othea (line 304); dark Pluto, ruler of the underworld (line 309); Fortune (line 316); Pan (line 324); Ysys, goddess of fruit (line 330); fishy Neptunus, god of the sea (line 337); Mynerve, goddess of armor and warfare (line 344); and Bachus, god of wine (line 351). The catalogue returns to the planets below the sun, with Phebe (the moon, line 358); Mercurius, god of speech (line 365); and Dame Venus (line 372), with her “wanton ey” (line 378). At this point, Dyscord enters (line 409).

It is at the court of Mynos the judge where this issue of Eolus’ complaint is first debated. Although Mynos figures importantly in Dante’s *Commedia* because his decision relegates the sinner to the appropriate circle of hell, the “juge desperate” (line 28) in this poem occupies a role similar to that of the presider in the courts of love debates in which Christine de Pizan participated (in particular, the god of love, in her early visionary allegory, *Epistre au Dieu d’Amours* [1399], loosely translated by Thomas Hoccleve as *Letter of Cupid*). Seated next to Mynos in his court is the god of the underworld, Pluto. That the debate in *The Assembly of Gods* actually takes place in hell, the underworld governed by Pluto, should be no surprise if readers are familiar with the scholastic Boethian and Martianian commentaries that outline the old Stoic cosmic divisions as equivalent to fire or ether, Jupiter; air, Juno; water, Neptune; and earth, Pluto. These elemental regions correspond roughly to the equivalents of the translunary spheres (fire or ether would be Mercury, Venus, Mars, the sun, Jupiter, Saturn), the sublunary sphere (the aerial region is beneath the moon), and earth, the underworld, with its seas and bodies, but which in the Neoplatonic scheme of the universe also represents hell, that corporeal center of the universe. In *The Assembly of Gods*, the action moves from the court of Mynos, judge of Pluto’s underworld, to the translunary fortress of Apollo, where the banquet takes place, then to the field of battle on which Vyce and Vertu clash, that is, to the microcosm, and eventually, through Attropos’ second complaint, to God Himself, and heaven.

And yet, despite this celestial backdrop for the mythological adjudication, the psychological and moral issue of which faculty, reason or sensuality, should rule the individual, and whether it is possible to bring them into harmony, is common to both Christine and Hoccleve in the more courtly context of the misogynistic treatment of the ladies whom courtiers love and spurn. One answer provided by Christine is for women to

Introduction

govern themselves rationally and refuse importuning lovers intent on sexual congress. It is no accident that Diana, Christine's goddess of chastity in *Dit de la Rose* and the goddess to whom the company of the Leaf owes allegiance in *The Floure and the Leafe*, as well as the governing ruler of the Castle of Pleasant Regard in *The Assembly of Ladies*, supports Vertu here against Vyce and against his captain, Eolus, god of winds and ruler of the air — that region in which both the House of Fame and the whirling House of Rumor, in Chaucer's *The Hous of Fame*, are situated. The point is that malicious rumors can blacken a lady's reputation, complains Christine in *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*, rumors that a chaste life quashes entirely.

The psychological allegory of *The Assembly of Gods*, heightened by the mythological adjudication, returns to the same point as Christine's God of Love in her early courtly allegories, but the secularization is deleted and a Christianized ending substituted. The lady's best friends may be her priest and the sacraments of the Church, but the poem ends with a focus on the individual, that is, on free will, virtue, and "benygne Jhesu, that born was of Mary" (line 2105). The hero is Jesus, who, as in John Donne's holy sonnet, "Death Be Not Proud," alone of all the gods, has power over death — Attropos. "'A, haa,' seyd Attropos, 'then I se well / That all ye goddes be but counterfete. / For oo God ther ys that can everydell / Turne as hym lyst'" (lines 1331–34). Understanding finally, to the pagan gods he cries in victory, "And yef I may ones to hys servyce come, / Youre names shal be put to oblyvyone" (lines 1336–37). If the gods do not recognize the power and importance of death in facilitating religious faith and virtuous life, well, then, God does.

Text

My text is based on Text A, a single substantive manuscript, Cambridge Trinity College Library MS R.3.19, fols. 67b–97b (c. 1480), identified as a "fascicular miscellany" compiled by the successors to John Shirley and once owned by John Stowe.²⁹ This manuscript apparently provided the printer's copy for what Gavin Bone believes to have been the earliest printed edition, C (1498), by Wynkyn de Worde, although another early edition, D (1500?), also by Wynkyn de Worde, has been dated recently by Bradford Y. Fletcher as equally early (even though Caxton's device follows the text in this edition, British Library printed edition C.13.a.21, or STC 17007, and precedes it in the edition that

²⁹ Fletcher, "The Textual Tradition," p. 191. Fletcher agrees with Triggs that A is the authoritative text, arguing that all subsequent copies derive from it (p. 192). For the ownership of Text A by John Stowe, see Montague Rhodes James, *The Western MSS in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge: A Descriptive Catalogue*, vol. 2 of 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), p. 69.

The Assembly of Gods

Triggs, Bone, and I believe to be the first printed edition, C, British Library printed edition G. 11587 [2], of 1498).³⁰ The positioning may be significant in determining the date, for the device was used by Caxton initially at the beginning of books and thereafter at the more customary final position; after Caxton's death, de Worde used it during his entire career, that is, until his death in 1535.³¹ The edition known as C is closer textually to A than to D, the latter of which, because of its many textual changes and errors in meaning,

³⁰ Gavin Bone, in "Extant Manuscripts printed from by W. de Worde with Notes on the Owner, Roger Thorne," *The Library*, fourth series, 12 (1931–32), 303, points in the manuscript containing A to printer's ink and marginal pencilings of pages within signatures, suggesting that it was used by de Worde for the earliest quarto edition, known as C, published in 1498. The D edition, however, formerly identified as published in 1500, according to Fletcher, in "The Textual Tradition of *The Assembly of Gods*," must also be revised in date, probably to 1498, the same as the edition previously identified as earliest (that is, C) (p. 193). The 1976 edition of *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Abroad, 1475–1640*, comp. A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, second ed., rev. by W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, and Katherine F. Pantzer (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976), identifies C (17005) as 1498, E (17006) as 1500, and D (17007) as 1500? (2:124). Editions C, D, and E were printed by de Worde, and C (1498) precedes D (1500?), with E being listed as undated, according to H. S. Bennett, in *English Books and Readers, 1475 to 1557: Being a Study of the History of the Book Trade from Caxton to the Incorporation of the Stationers' Company*, second ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 259. If C followed A, however, then was the source edition for all other copies (BDEFG) C or D, the latter of which has been argued as the source edition by one scholar (see note 35 below)?

³¹ For information about the dating of these printer's marks, see Edward Gordon Duff, *Early English Printing: A Series of Facsimiles of All the Types Used in England during the Fifteenth Century, with Some of Those Used in the Printing of English Books Abroad* (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1974), p. 35. For the printing history and interrelationships of William Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde, Richard Pynson (appointed as King's Printer around 1508–09), and Robert Redman, see Bennett, pp. 76–77, 182–97, 222–25. Caxton died in 1491, at which time Wynkyn de Worde took over the management of the print shop. Wynkyn de Worde used Caxton's facilities until 1500, at which time he moved the operation to Fleet Street. C and D use the old Caxton type and must have been compiled in the original workshop. C has more errors than D. Perhaps D was compiled anew from A, as Bone (p. 303) and Fletcher (p. 192) suggest; or, perhaps, the compiler of D simply made corrections as he reset the text from C. 1498 was a busy year for the print shop, with the second edition of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, the fourth edition of the *Golden Legend*, and the third edition of *The Canterbury Tales* being completed. Perhaps *The Assembly of Gods* was compiled in haste, which might account for the errors. That the little book went through four printed editions in less than a decade is tribute to its popularity. The two sixteenth-century manuscripts based on the printed editions perhaps suggest that the printings sold out quickly, or that the poem was, at least, in demand.

Introduction

constitutes an entirely different edition.³² There exists one other manuscript, British Library Royal MS 18.D.ii, fols. 167a–180b (known as B), which now appears to be a later copy made for the Percys from D, somewhere between 1450 and 1520.³³ A manuscript fragment of two leaves, Oxford Bodleian Library Douce MS f. 51 (1), described as “Vertu” in *Short Title Catalogue* 24844a, is apparently a copy of lines 1213–1323 made from Richard Pynson’s printed edition of 1501–30, the latter of which can be found in the Huntington Library (88195).³⁴ Other printed editions (E, F, G) were even later in date and all derived from the original manuscript through a single printed copy, most likely D.³⁵

³² William Ringler argues that A allies with C, especially in lines 104, 974, and 981, in “The Fragment ‘Vertu’ and ‘The Assemble of Goddes’: STC 24844a and 17005–17007a,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 47 (1953), 378–80, here, p. 379.

³³ Ringler also notes that B derives from D, because B agrees with the error made in D in fourteen passages, lines 104, 210, 235, 607, 648, 673, 721, 966, 970, 974, 981, 1074, 1591, and 2103, countering Triggs’ proposition that C is copied from A, and B from C. Fletcher, in “The Textual Tradition of *The Assembly of Gods*,” describes B as an “elegant collection” intended for the Percys and written between 1450 and 1520, because in the same hand, following the poem, is a “Kings of England” that continues as far as Henry VIII, and because Lydgate’s “Testament” also appears in the manuscript, copied from Pynson’s 1515? print (STC 17035) (p. 191).

³⁴ Ringler, pp. 378–80.

³⁵ According to Triggs, later printings generally show “no important textual differences.” The most recent edition of the *Short-Title Catalogue* lists these editions: C is STC 17005 (W. de Worde, at Westminster, c. 1498), owned by the British Library, the Huntington Library (imperfect), and Pierpont Morgan Library; E is STC 17006 (de Worde, at Westminster? c. 1500), owned by Cambridge University Library; D is STC 17007 (de Worde, at Westminster? c. 1500?), owned by the British Library and the Huntington (imperfect); F is STC 17007.5, by R. Pynson (c. 1505), with a fragment of this edition at Oxford (formerly 24844a) and an imperfect copy at the Huntington Library; and G is STC 17007a [J. Skot for] R. Redman (after 1529), also at the Huntington. Ringler concludes that “C is the earliest edition, carelessly printed with many errors; that D is a reprint of C, corrected by an intelligent compositor but without recourse to any manuscript; that E and F are independent reprints of D which introduce new errors of their own; and that G is a paginary reprint of E” (p. 379). Fletcher, in “The Textual Tradition of *The Assembly of Gods*,” however, responds that because C corrects an error in the original manuscript, A, that is not corrected in D (and later editions), that correction isolates D as the copy edition for later editions and not C, as Ringler argued. Fletcher also states that “B, C, E, each varies independently so much that they can not be more closely related than through a common ancestor.” His hypothesis is that “BCDEFG all derive from A through a single one of their number, if one allows for just a few corrections of manifest error in later copies” (p. 192). Finally, he finds that BCE agree with D against A in lines 47, 84, 157, 217, 235, 256, 336, 337, 351, 402, 513, 536, 587, 634, 635, 648, 661, 687, 702, 721, 767, 857, 962, 966, 970, 1074, 1113, 1184, 1194, 1309, 1404, 1462, 1590, 1718, 1767, 1780, 1909, 1963, 1995, 2048, and 2055. BCE, individually or together, do not agree with A against D, and if they disagree with D, it is to correct D’s errors, in 267, 607, 673, 974, 981, 1591, 1608, and 2034; for CE correcting D, without B, 266, 570, 661, 974, 981, 1475, and 1710. In several instances CE

The Assembly of Gods

The text of this edition is based on a photocopy from microfilm of A, Cambridge Trinity College Library MS R.3.19 (2), the earliest manuscript of the work, which I have also examined at Cambridge. What errors there are in A have been primarily corrected by microfilm copies of C, Wynkyn de Worde's 1498 printed edition, and D, surmised to be a 1500? edition. I have also consulted B, British Library Royal MS 18.D.ii (a copy of D), and E, de Worde's 1500 edition, for variant readings and checked the text once more against F and G. Significant variations in meaning are listed in the Textual Notes. All letters have been normalized or spelled out according to modern English, including thorns, yoghs, and ampersands; all Roman numerals have been spelled out. The scribal practice of using *v* for *u* and *i* for *j* has also been silently emended. A regularly uses *the* for the second person singular familiar pronoun. Rather than place an accent on the vowel to indicate its length I have transcribed the word as *thee*, to differentiate it from the article. Elsewhere, if -*e* is a long vowel with syllabic value, I have transcribed -é. Punctuation has for the most part been added and capitalization, while based on A, is emended according to modern usage. "Morpheus" is substituted for the incorrect name of "Morleus" and "Eolus" for "Colus," both obvious errors in ACDEF. The table of the gods that appears in ACDEF, "Here foloweth the Interpretacion of the names of goddys and goddesses," does not appear in B and, although included under the general title of *The Assembly of Gods*, is set off in this edition from the poetic text of *Banquet of Gods and Goddesses*. Because there are many variants, especially in spelling, in all the printed editions, and because the original manuscript (and copytext) has long been accepted as A, unless there is a significant point to be made about the variations, in relation to emendations in A and differences from T, I have not included them in the notes. Most of the differences between A and T can be explained by T's penchant for capitalization and singular features found only in manuscript Text B, which T appears to have followed in some instances instead of A (see, for example, line 1051, where *stood and* is omitted only in BT, and line 1091 for *entent*, which is expanded to *entente* only in BT).

Select Bibliography

Manuscripts

A = Cambridge, Trinity College Library MS R.3.19 (2), fols. 67b–97b (written down after 1463; c. 1480). [The copytext for *The Assembly of Gods*. See *Manuscript Trinity R.3.19. Trinity College, Cambridge: A Facsimile*. Introduction by Bradford Y. Fletcher. In A

correct D differently, in 169, 937, 953, and 1485.

Introduction

Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1987.
This edition erroneously interchanges 87v and 88v.]

B = British Library Royal MS 18.D.ii, fols. 167a–180b [alleged copy of D].

H = Oxford, Bodleian Library Douce MS fragment, f. 51 (1), “Vertu,” lines 1213–1323
[fragmentary copy of F].

Early Printed Editions

C = (STC 17005) Wynkyn de Worde, 1498? British Library G.11587; Pierpont Morgan Library 737; Huntington Library 32073.

D = (STC 17007) Wynkyn de Worde, c. 1500? British Library C.13.a.21; Huntington Library 31533; University of Minnesota Law Library (no number).

E = (STC 17006) Wynkyn de Worde, c. 1500. Cambridge University Library AB.4.58 (19); facsimile edited by Francis Jenkinson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906.

F = (STC 17007.5) Richard Pynson, c. 1501–30, probably 1505. Huntington Library 88195; Oxford, Bodleian Library Douce MS fragment f. 51(1).

G = (STC 17007a) [J. Skot for] Robert Redman, c. 1530–40, but after 1529. Huntington Library 31641.

Modern Editions

Triggs, Oscar Lovell. *The Assembly of Gods: or The Accord of Reason and Sensuality in the Fear of Death, by John Lydgate, edited from the MSS. with Introduction, Notes, Index of Persons and Places, and Glossary.* Ph.D. Diss. University of Chicago, 1895. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1895.

———. *The Assembly of Gods: or The Accord of Reason and Sensuality in the Fear of Death, by John Lydgate, edited from the MSS. with Introduction, Notes, Index of Persons and Places, and Glossary.* EETS e.s. 69. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896. (Reprinted London: Oxford University Press, 1957, with corrections allegedly added by J. B. Trapp.)

The Assembly of Gods

Secondary Materials

Barratt, Alexandra A. T. “‘The Flower and the Leaf’ and ‘The Assembly of Ladies’: Is There a (Sexual) Difference?” *Philological Quarterly* 66 (1987), 1–24.

Bennett, H. S. *English Books and Readers, 1475 to 1557: Being a Study of the History of the Book Trade from Caxton to the Incorporation of the Stationers' Company*. Second ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

The Bible of the Poor (Biblia Pauperum): A Facsimile Edition of the British Library Block book C.9.d2. Trans. with commentary by Albert C. Labriola and John W. Smeltz. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1990.

Blodgett, James. “William Thynne and His 1532 Edition of Chaucer.” Ph.D. Diss. University of Indiana, 1975.

Bode, Georgius Henricus, ed. *Scriptores rerum Mythicarum latini tres Romae nuper reperti*. Celle, 1834; rpt. Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1968.

Bone, Gavin. “Extant Manuscripts printed from by W. de Worde with Notes on the Owner, Roger Thorney.” *The Library*, fourth series, 12 (1931–32), 284–306.

Bühler, Curt F. “The *Assembly of Gods* and Christine de Pisan.” *English Language Notes* 4 (1967), 251–54. [The only literary analysis of *The Assembly of Gods*, this note traces Christine de Pizan’s influence on it.]

Chance, Jane, ed. *The Mythographic Art: Classical Fable and the Rise of the Vernacular in Early France and England*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1990. [Contains essays on Ovid commentaries and myth in Chaucer and Christine de Pizan.]

———. *Christine de Pizan's Letter of Othea to Hector, Translated, with Introduction, Notes, and Interpretative Essay*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Information Group, 1990.

———. “Christine de Pizan as Literary Mother: Women’s Authority and Subjectivity in ‘The Floure and the Leafe’ and ‘The Assembly of Ladies.’” In *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*. Ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentiis. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994. Pp. 245–59. [An analysis of the possible influence of Christine de Pizan on two anonymous poems with female narrators.]

Introduction

_____. *Medieval Mythography: From Roman North Africa to the School of Chartres, A.D. 433–1175*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994. [A survey of major mythographers and traditions from late antiquity to the High Middle Ages.]

_____. *The Mythographic Chaucer: The Fabulation of Sexual Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. [A study of Chaucer's mythography in the *Canterbury Tales* and other poems that traces his narrative and imagistic appropriation of the mythographic tradition.]

_____. “Gender Subversion and Linguistic Castration in Fifteenth-Century English Translations of Christine de Pizan.” In *Violence against Women in Medieval Texts*. Ed. Anna Roberts. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998. Pp. 161–94. [An analysis of the ways in which Christine’s feminine authority and authorship are circumscribed by English translations.]

Charles of Orleans. *The English Poems of Charles of Orleans*. Ed. Robert Steele and Mabel Day. EETS o.s. 215, 220. London: Oxford University Press, 1941, 1946.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987. [All references to Chaucer are taken from this edition.]

Christine de Pizan. *The Epistle of Othea, Translated from the French Text of Christine de Pisan by Stephen Scrope*. Ed. Curt Bühler. EETS o.s. 264. London: Oxford University Press, 1970. [Scrope’s Middle English translation of Christine’s *Epistre Othea* may have provided the source for some of the mythologies in *The Assembly of Gods*.]

Dante Aligheri. *Divina Commedia: English and Italian*. Trans. Charles Singleton. 3 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. [Second printing, with corrections.]

Duff, Edward Gordon. *Early English Printing: A Series of Facsimiles of All the Types Used in England during the Fifteenth Century, with Some of Those Used in the Printing of English Books Abroad*. Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1974.

Edwards, A. S. G. *Stephen Hawes*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983.

Evans, Ruth, and Lesley Johnson. “The *Assembly of Ladies*: A Maze of Feminist Sign-Reading?” In *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice*. Ed. Susan Sellers, Linda Hutcheon, and Paul Perron. New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1991. Pp. 171–96. [The best theoretical analysis of *The Assembly of Ladies*.]

The Assembly of Gods

Fenster, Thelma S., and Mary Erler, eds. *Poems of Cupid, God of Love*. Leiden, Belgium: E. J. Brill, 1990. [The early dream-visions of Christine de Pizan, among other poets, are both edited and translated in this volume.]

The Findern Manuscript: Cambridge University Library MS. Ff.1.6. Intro. by Richard Beadle and A. E. B. Owen. London: Scolar Press, 1977.

Fletcher, Bradford Y. "An Edition of Trinity College Cambridge Manuscript R.3.19." 2 vols. Ph.D. Diss. University of Chicago, 1973. [This edition unfortunately omits *The Assembly of Gods* and other works.]

_____. "The Textual Tradition of *The Assembly of Gods*." *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 71 (1977), 191–94. [The most recent textual criticism of *The Assembly of Gods* and Triggs' edition.]

_____. "The *Assembly of Ladies*: Text and Context." *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 82 (1988), 229–34.

Gower, John. *The Complete Works of John Gower*. Ed. G. C. Macaulay. 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901.

Hammond, Eleanor Prescott, ed. *English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1927.

Hanson-Smith, Elizabeth. "A Woman's View of Courtly Love: The Findern Anthology." *Journal of Women's Studies in Literature* 1 (1979), 179–94.

Harvey, E. Ruth, ed. *The Court of Sapience*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.

Hawes, Stephen. *The Pastime of Pleasure*. Ed. William Edward Mead. EETS o.s. 173. London: Oxford University Press, 1928.

_____. *The Minor Poems*. Ed. Florence W. Gluck and Alice B. Morgan. EETS o.s. 271. London: Oxford University Press, 1974. [*The Example of Vertu*, pp. 1–71.]

James, Montague Rhodes. *The Western MSS in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge: A Descriptive Catalogue*. Vol. 2 of 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901.

Introduction

Jeffrey, David L. *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992.

Langland, William. *Piers the Plowman: A Parallel Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions*. Ed. A. V. C. Schmidt. Volume I: text. London: Longman, 1995.

Loukopoulos, Halina Didycky. "Classical Mythology in the Works of Christine de Pisan, with an Edition of *L'Epistre Othea* from the Harley Manuscript 4431." Ph.D. Diss. Wayne State University, 1977.

Lydgate, John. *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, Edited from all Available Manuscripts, with an Attempt to Establish the Lydgate Canon*. Ed. Henry Noble MacCracken. 2 vols. EETS e.s. 107 and o.s. 192. London: K[egan] Paul, Trench, Trübner; New York: H. Frowde/Oxford University Press, 1911 (for 1910); London: Humphrey Milford/Oxford University Press, 1934 (for 1933).

Macrobius. *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*. Trans. with introduction and notes William Harris Stahl. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.

Marsh, G. L. "Sources and Analogues of *The Flower and the Leaf*." *Modern Philology* 4 (1906–07), 121–68, 281–328.

McLeod, Glenda K., ed. *The Reception of Christine de Pizan from the Fifteenth through the Nineteenth Centuries: Visitors to the City*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991.

McMillan, Ann. "'Fayre Sisters Al': *The Flower and the Leaf* and *The Assembly of Ladies*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 1 (1982), 27–42.

McNamer, Sarah. "Female Authors, Provincial Setting: The Re-versing of Courtly Love in the Findern Manuscript." *Viator* 22 (1991), 279–310.

Mombello, Gianni. "Per un'edizione critica dell'‘Epistre Othea’ di Christine de Pizan." *Studi Francesi* 24 (1964), 401–17.

Orr, Patricia R. "Pallas Athena and the Threefold Choice in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*." In *The Mythographic Art: Classical Fable and the Rise of the Vernacular in Early France and England*. Ed. Jane Chance. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1990. Pp. 159–76.

The Assembly of Gods

The Oxford Classical Dictionary. Ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth. Third ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

The Oxford Dictionary of Saints. Ed. David High Farmer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Pearsall, Derek, ed. “*The Flooure and the Leafe*” and “*Assembly of Ladies*.” London: Thomas Nelson, 1962.

———. “The English Chaucerians.” In *Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature*. Ed. D. S. Brewer. London: Thomas Nelson, 1966. Pp. 201–39.

———. *John Lydgate*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.

———, ed. *The Flooure and the Leafe*, *The Assembly of Ladies*, *The Isle of Ladies*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1990. [The standard edition of these works.]

———. *John Lydgate (1371–1449): A Bio-bibliography*. English Literary Studies Monograph Series No. 71. Victoria: University of Victoria, 1997.

Pollard, A. W., and G. R. Redgrave, comps. *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Abroad, 1475–1640*. Second ed., rev. W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, and Katherine F. Pantzer. London: Bibliographical Society, 1976.

Ringler, William. “The Fragment ‘Vertu’ and ‘The Assemble of Goddes’: STC 24844a and 17005–17007a.” *Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* 47 (1953), 378–80.

Robbins, Rossell Hope. “The Findern Anthology.” *PMLA* 69 (1954), 610–42.

Skelton, John. *The Complete English Poems*. Ed. John Scattergood. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983. [*The Bowge of Courte*, pp. 46–61.]

Snyder, Cynthia Lockard. “*The Flooure and the Leafe*: An Alternate Approach.” In *New Readings of Late Medieval Love Poems*. Ed. David Chamberlain. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993. Pp. 145–71.

The Interpretation of the Names of Gods and Goddesses
(Table of Gods and Goddesses)

Here foloweth the Interpretacion of the names of goddys and goddesses, as ys
reheresyd in this tretyse folowyng, as poetes wryte.

	Phebus ys as moche to sey as the Sonne	
	Apollo ys the same, or ellys God of lyght	
5	Morpheus	Shewer of dremes
	Pluto	God of hell
	Mynos	Juge of hell
	Cerberus	Porter of hell
	Eolus, the wynde, or God of the eyre	
10	Diana, Goddess of woode and chace	
	Phebe, the mone, or Goddes of watyres	
	Aurora, Goddes of the morow, or the Spryng of the day	
	Mars	God of batayll
	Jubyter	God of wysdom
15	Juno	Goddesse of rychesse
	Saturne	God of colde
	Ceres	Goddesse of corne

The Assembly of Gods

	Cupido	God of love
	Othea	Goddesse of wysdom
20	Fortune	the variaunt Goddess
	Pan	God of shepardes
	Isys	Goddesse of frute
	Neptunus	God of the see
	Mynerve	Goddesse of batayll or of harneyse
25	Bachus	God of wyne
	Mercurius	God of langage
	Venus	Goddesse of love
	Discorde	Goddesse of debate and stryfe
	Attropos	Dethe

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- Whan Phebus in the Crabbe had nere hys cours ronne¹
And toward the leon his journé gan take,
To loke on Pictagoras speere I had begonne,
Syttyng all solytary alone besyde a lake,
5 Musyng on a manere how that I myght make
Reason and Sensualyté in oon to acorde.
But I cowde nat bryng about that monacorde.
- For long er I myght, slepe me gan oppresse
So ponderously I cowde make noon obstacle,
10 In myne heede was fall suche an hevynesse.
I was fayne to drawe to myn habytacle:
To rowne with a pylow me semyd best tryacle.
So leyde I me downe, my dysse to releve.
Anone came in Morpheus, and toke me by the sleve.
- 15 And as I so lay half in a traunse
Twene slepyng and wakyng, he bad me aryse,
For he seyde I must geve attendaunce
To the gret court of Mynos the justyse.
Me nought avaylyd agene hym to sylogyse,
20 For hit ys oft seyde by hem that yet lyves,
“He must nedys go that the devell dryves.”
- When I sy no bettyr but I must go,
I seyde I was redy at hys commaundment,
Whedyr that he wold me leede, to or fro.
25 So up I aroose and forthe with hym went,
Tyll he had me brought to the parlyament
Where Pluto sate and kept hys estate,

*began his circuit in Leo
(see note)*

*the means by which
harmonize
agreement*

*began to overcome me
resistance*

*eager; dwelling-place
whisper; medicine
anxiety*

Immediately

present myself

*Nothing helped me against; argue
by the one who yet lives*

perceived no other alternative except

Wherever

¹ When Phebus had nearly finished his circuit in Cancer (that is, the poem begins at the end of July)

The Assembly of Gods

- And with hym Mynos, the juge desperate. *judge of those past hope*
- 30 But as we thedyward went by the way, *in that direction*
I hym besought hys name me to tell.
“Morpheus,” he seyde, “thow me call may.”
“A, syr,” seyd I than, “where do ye dwell,
In heven, or in erthe, outhier elles in hell?” *or else*
“Nay,” he seyde, “myn abydying most comonly
35 Ys in a lytta corner callyd ‘Fantasy.’”
- And as sone as he these wordys had sayd, *as soon*
Cerberus, the porter of hell wyth hys cheyne,
Brought thedyr Eolus, in raggys evyll arayd, *poorly dressed*
Agayn whom Neptunus and Diana dyd compleyne,
40 Seying thus, “O Mynos, thow juge sovereyne,
Geve thy cruell jugement ageyn thys traytour, soo *Give*
That we may have cause to preyse thy lord Pluto.”
- Then was there made a proclamacion;
In Plutoys name commaundyd silence,
45 Upon the peyne of strayte correcccion, *pain of strict correction*
That Diana and Neptunus myght have audience
To declare her greefe of the gret offence
To theym done by Eolus, wheron they compleynyd.
50 And to begyn, Diana was constreynyd,
- Whyche thus began, as ye shall here, *hear*
Seying in thys wyse, “O thow, lord Pluto,
With thy juge Mynos, sytting wyth thee in fere,
Execute your fury uppon Eolus so,
Accordyng to the offence that he to me hath do,
55 That I have no cause forther to apele,
Whyche yef I do shall nat be for your wele. *manner*
to such an extent
has done to me
further
if; well-being
- “Remembre furst howe I, a goddesse pure, *first*
Over all desertys, forestes, and chases *wild places; hunting courses*
Have take the guydyng. And undyr my cure *undertaken the responsibility; care*
60 Thys traytour Eolus hath many of my places
Dystroyed with hys blastes, and dayly me manaces. *threatens*

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- Where any wood ys, he shall make hyt pleyne *desolate*
 Yef he to hys lyberté may resorte ageyne. *again*
- 65 “The grettest trees that any man may fynde *their*
 In forest to shade the deere for her comfort, *them (trees); bark*
 He breketh hem asondre, or rendeth hem, roote and rynde, *amusement*
 Out of the erthe. Thys ys hys dysport, *shelter*
 So that the deere shall have no resort,
 Within short tyme, to no manere shade.
- 70 Where thorough, the game ys lykly to fade.¹ *particular*
- “Whyche to my name a reproche syngler
 Shuld be for ever, whyle the world last,
 And to all the goddes an hygh dyspleser,
 To see the game so dystroyed by hys blast.
- 75 Wherfore, a remedy purvey in hast,
 And let hym be punysshyd aftyr hys offence.
 Consyder the cryme and geve your sentence.” *deer*
 prepare
 according to
 deliver
- And when thus Diana had made her compleynt
 To Mynos the juge in Plutoys presence,
 Came forthe Neptunus, wyth vysage pale and feynt, *pallid*
 Desyryng of favour to have audyence,
 Saying thus, “Pluto, to thy magnyfycence
 I shall reherse what thys creature
 Eolus hath doon to me, out of mesure.
- 85 “Thow knowest well that I have the charge
 Over all the see, and therof god I am.
 No shyp may sayle, kervell, boot ner barge, *caravel (a light, fast ship)*
 Gret karyk, nor hulke, wyth any lyvynge man,
 But yef he have my safe condyte than. *carack; transport ship*
 Unless; passage of safe-conduct then
- 90 Who me offendeth withyn my jurysdicion
 Oweth to submyt hym to my correcccion. *Ought*
- “But in asmekyll as hit ys now soo, *as much*

¹ Through which, the game (deer) is likely to diminish

The Assembly of Gods

- That ye hym here have as your pryonere,
I shall yow shew my compleynt, loo!
take notice!
- 95 Wherfore I pray yow that ye woll hit here,
And let hym nat escape out of your daungere
Tyll he have made full seethe and recompence,
For hurt of my name, thorough thys gret offence.
will hear it
power
reparation (penance); reckoning
- “Furst to begynne: thys Eolus hath oft
100 Made me to retourne my course agayn nature
With hys gret blastys, when he hath be a loft,
And chargyd me to labour, ferre out of mesure,
That hit was gret merveyle how I myght endure.
against
been
far
- 105 The fome of my swet wyll hit testyfy,
That on the see bankes lythe betyn full hy.
foam; sweat
banks of the sea; beaten; loudly
- “Secundly, whereas my nature ys
Bothe to ebbe and flowe, and so my course to kepe,
Oft of myn entent hath he made me mys —
Whereas I shuld have fyllyd dykes depe,
110 At a full watyr I myght nat thedyr crepe
Before my seson came to retorne ageyne,
And then went I fastyr than I wold, certeyne!
against
- “Thus he hath me dryven agen myn entent,
And contrary to my course naturall.
115 Where I shuld have be, he made me be absent,
To my gret dyshonour. And in especiall,
Oo thyng he usyd that worst was of all:
For where as I my savegard grauntyd,
Ay in that cost he comonly hauntyd.
One; used [to do]
wherever; safe passage
Always on that coast; frequented
- 120 “Of verrey pure malyce and of sylfewyll
Theym to dystroy, in dyspyte of me,
To whom I promysyd bothe in good and yll
To be her protectour in all adversyté,
That to theym shuld fall opon the see,
their
upon
- 125 And evyn sodenly, er they coude beware,
Wyth a sodeyn pyry he lappyd hem in care.
blast of wind he wrapped them

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- “And full oft sythe wyth hys boystous blast,
 Er they myght be ware, he drofe hym on the sande,
 And otherwhyle he brak top seyle and mast,
 Whyche causyd theym to perysse er they came to lande.
 Then cursyd they the tyme that ever they me fande.
 Thus among the pepyll lost ys my name,
 And so by hys labour put I am to shame.”
- oftentimes; fierce
 beached them
 at other times
- 130
- “Consydre thys mater and ponder my cause;
 Tendre my compleynt as rygour requyreth;
 Shew forthe your sentence with a breef clause.
 I may nat long tary; the tyme fast expyreth.
 The offence ys gret. Wherfore hyt desyreth
 The more grevous peyne and hasty jugement,
 For offence doon wylfully woll noon avysement.”
- found
 people
- 135
- For which reason it demands
- 140
- requires no deliberation
- And, when the god Pluto awhyle had hym bethought,
 He rownyd with Mynos to know what was to do.
 Then he seyd opynly, “Loke thow, fayle nougħt
 Thy sentence to geve wythout favour, so
 Lyke as thou hast herde the causys mevyd thee to,
 And so evenly dele twene these partyes tweyn
 That noon of hem have cause on the other compleyn.”
- consulted
- give
 moved
 between; two sides
 them
- 145
- Then seyd Mynos, full indifferently,
 To Dyane and Neptunus, “Ys there any more
 That ye wyll declare agayn hym opynly?”
 “Nay. In dede,” they seyde, “we kepe noon in store.
 We have seyde ynough to punysshe hym sore,
 Yef ye in thys matyr be nat parciall.
 Remembre your name was wont to be egall.”
- against
- severely
- reputation; stand for impartiality
- 150
- 155
- “Well, then,” seyd Mynos, “now let us here
 What thys boystous Eolus for hymself can sey,
 For here, prima facie, to us he doth apere
 That he hath offendyd; no man can sey nay.
 Wherfore thow, Eolus, wythout more delay,
 Shape us an answer to thyne accusement,
 And ellys I most procede opon thy jugement.”
- hear
 rude, fierce
 at first sight; appear
- 160
- otherwise

The Assembly of Gods

- And evyn as Eolus was onwarde to have seyde
 For hys excuse, came yn a messynger
 Fro god Appollo to Pluto, and hym prayde
 165 On hys behalfe that he wythout daungere *objection*
 Wold to hym come, and bryng with hym in feere
 Diane and Neptunus on to hys banquet.
 And yef they dysdeynyd, hymself he wold hem fet. *with him in company*
banquet
if; he would fetch them
- Moreover, he seyde the god, Apollo,
 170 Desyrd to have respyte of the jugement
 Of Eolus, bothe of Mynos and Pluto.
 So Dyane and Neptunus were therwith content,
 And yef they were dysposyd to assent,
 That he myght come unto hys presence —
 175 He hit desyrd to know hys offence.
- “What sey ye herto?” seyd Pluto to hem tweyn.
 “Wyll ye bothe assent that hit shall be thus?”
 “Ye,” seyd the goddesse, “for my part, certeyn.”
 “And I also,” seyd thys Neptunus.
 180 “I am well plesyd,” quod thys Eolus.
 And when they had a whyle thus togedyr spoke,
 Pluto commaundyd the court to be broke. *adjourned*
- And then togedyr went they in fere, *together; company*
 Pluto and Neptunus ledyng the goddesse,
 185 Whom folowyd Cerberus with hys pryonere. *last of all*
 And alther last, with gret hevynesse,
 Came I and Morpheus to the forteresse
 Of the god Apollo, unto hys banquet, *banquet*
 Where many goddyns and goddesses met.
- 190 When Apollo sye that they were come, *saw*
 He was ryght glad, and prayed hem to syt.
 “Nay,” seyd Diane, “thys ys all and some.
 Ye shall me pardone, I shall nat syt yet.
 I shall fyrst know why Eolus abyte, *remains*
 195 And what execucion shall on hym be do
 For hys offence.” “Well,” seyd Apollo, *action; against; taken*

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- “Madame, ye shall have all your plesere,
Syth that hit woll none otherwyse be. pleasure
But, furst, I yow pray let me the mater here
Why he ys brought in thys perplexyté.” reason hear
trouble (distress)
“Well,” seyde Pluto, “that shall ye sone se,”
And gan to declare even by and by soon
address
Bothe her compleyntes ordynatly. their (*Diane and Neptune's*); in an orderly manner
- 200
- And when Appollo had herd the report
Of Pluto, in a maner smylyng he seyde,
“I see well, Eolus, thow hast small comfort
Thy sylf to excuse; thow mayst be dysmayde
To here so gret compleyntes agene thee layde,
That, natwithstandyng, yef thow can sey ought hear
anything
210 For thyne owne wele, sey, and tary nought.” happiness; speak
- “Forsothe,” seyd Eolus, “yef I had respyte,
Her to an answerew cowde I counterfete. To her; devise (i.e., contrive)
But to have her grace, more ys my delyte.
Wherfore, I pray yow all for me entrete entreat
215 That I may, by your request, her good grace gete,
And what pyne or greef ye for me provyde. her
misery
Without any grogyng I shall hit abyde.” complaint; endure it
- “Loo, good Madame,” seyd god Apollo,
“What may he do more but sew to your grace? petition
220 Beholde how the teares from hys eyen go!
Hit ys satysfaccion half for hys trespass.
Now, gloryous goddesse, shewe your pyteous face
To thys poore prysoner, at my request.
All we for your honour thynke thus ys best,
- 225 “And yef hit lyke yow to do in thys wyse,
And to forgeve hym clerely hys offense,
Oon thyng surerly I wyll yow promyse: pleases
surely
Yef he eft rebelle and make resystence,
Or dysobey unto your sentence,
230 For every tree that he maketh fall,
Out of the erthe, an hundred aryse shall,

The Assembly of Gods

- “So that your game shall nat dyscrese
For lak of shade, I dar undyrtake.” *decrease*
- 235 “Well, syr Apollo,” seyde she than, “woll I cese
Of all my rancour and mery with yow make.” *From*
- And then god Neptunus of hys mater spake,
Seyng thus, “Apollo, though Diana hym relese,
Yet shall he sue to me to have hys pese.” *petition*
- “A,” seyde Apollo, “ye wend I had forgete
Yow for my lady Diane, the goddesse. *thought; forgotten*
- 240 Nay, thynke nat so, for I woll yow entrete
As well as hyr without long processe. *treat*
- Wyll ye agre that Phebe, your mastresse,
May have the guydyng of your varyaunce?” *disagreement (discord)*
- 245 “I shall abyde,” quod he, “her ordynaunce.” *decree*
- “Well, then,” quod Apollo, “I pray yow, goddes all,
And goddesses eke, that be heere present,
That ye compaygnably wyll aboorde fall.” *to table (that is, begin to eat)*
- “Nay, then,” seyd Othea, “hit ys nat convenyent.
250 A dew ordre in every place ys expedient
To be had, wherfore ye may nat let
To be your owne marchall at your owne banket.” *socially proper*
legal; proper
obtained; cease
marshal (officiating person)
- And when Apollo sy hit wold noon other be,
He callyd to hym Aurora the goddesse, *saw; no other way*
- 255 And seyde, “Thowgh ye wepe, yet shall ye before me
Ay kepe your course and put yoursylf in prees.” *Always; exert yourself*
- So he her set furst at hys owne messe,
With her moyst clothes with teares all bespreynt;
The medewes in May shew therof her compleynt. *seated; table*
sprinkled
- 260 Next hyr sate Mars, myghty god and strong.
With a flame of fyre envyround all about, *encircled*
- A crowne of iron on hys hede, a spere in hys hand.
Hyt semyd by hys chere as he wold have fought. *expression*
- 265 And next unto hym, as I perceve mought,
Sate the goddesse Diana, in a mantell fyne
Of blak sylke, purfylid with poudryd hermyne, *must be*
mantle
bordered; powdered ermine

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- Lyke as she had take the mantell and the ryng. *As if; [i.e., signs of widowhood]*
 And next unto hyr, arayed royally,
 Sate the good Jupyter; in hys demenyng *countenance*
 270 Full sad and wyse he semyd, sykerly. *serious; certainly*
 A crown of tynne stood on hys hede,
 And that I recorde of all philosophres *for*
 That lytyll store of coyne kepe in her cofres.
- 275 Joynyd to hym in sytting next ther was
 The goddesse Juno, full rychely beseene
 In a sercote that shone as bryght as glas, *surcoat (see note)*
 Of goldsmythes werke with spanglys wrought bedene. *spangles; assuredly*
 Of royall rychesse wantyd she noone, I wene. *lacked; think*
 And next by her sate the god Saturne,
 280 That oft sythe causeth many oon to morne. *times; a person to grieve*
- 285 But he was clad, me thought, straungely,
 For of frost and snow was all his aray.
 In hys hand he helde a fawchon all blody. *falchion (sickle)*
 Hyt semyd by hys chere as he wold make afray. *expression; assault*
 A bawdryk of isykles about hys nek gay *baldric; icicles*
 He had, and above, an hygh on hys hede,
 Cowchyd with hayle stonys, he weryd a crowne of leede. *Set; lead*
- 290 And next in ordre was set by hys syde
 Ceres the goddesse, in a garment
 Of sak clothe made with sleves large and wyde, *sackcloth*
 Embrowderyd with sheves and sykelys bent. *sheaves of corn; sickles*
 Of all maner greynes she sealyd the patent, *grains; controlled the seal*
 In token that she was the goddesse of corne.
 Olde poetys sey she bereth the hervest horne. *cornucopia*
- 295 Then was there set the god Cupido,
 All fresshe and galaunt and costlew in aray. *with expensive dress*
 With ouches and rynges he was beset so, *brooches (jewelled clasps); bracelets*
 The paleys therof shone as though hit had be day.
 300 A kerchyef of plesaunce stood over hys helme ay; *head-cover; helmet always*
 The goddesse Ceres he lookyd in the face
 And with oon arme he hyr dyd embrace. *embrace*

The Assembly of Gods

- Next to Cupido in ordyr, by and by,
Of worldly wysdom sate the forteresse,
Callyd Othea, chyef grounde of polyty,
Rewler of knyghthode, of prudence the goddesse.
305 Clad all in purpur was she, more and lesse;
Safe on her hede a crowne ther stood,
Cowchyd with perles oryent fyne and good.
- female keeper of the fortress
foundation of governance
rich purple [cloth]
Except
Set
- And next to her was god Pluto set,
With a derke myst envyrond all aboute;
Hys clothynge was made of a smoky net.
Hys colour was, bothe withyn and withoute,
Foule, derke, and dymme; hys eyen, gret and stoute.
310 Of fyre and sulphure all hys odour wase,
That wo was me whyle I beheld hys fase.
- encircled*
haughty
- Fortune the goddesse, with her party face,
Was unto Pluto next in ordre set.
Varyaunt she was, ay in short space;
Hyr whele was redy to turne without let.
315 Hyr gowne was of gawdy grene chamelet,
Chaungeable of sondry dyverse colowres,
To the condycyons accordyng of hyr shoures.
- multicolored*
Changeable
Her [Fortune's] wheel; without ceasing
gaudy green camlet
colors
conforming to what she bestows
- And by her sate, though he unworthy were,
The rewde god Pan, of sheperdys the gyde,
Clad in russet frese and breched lyke a bere,
With a gret tar-box hangyng by hys syde.
325 A shepecrook in hys hand, he sparyd for no pryd,
And at hys feete lay a pryk-eryd curre.
He ratelyd in the throte as he had the murre.
- rust-colored woolen; bear (see note)*
sheep-salve container
shepherd's crook; sparred; reason
prick-eared dog
growled; a cold
- Ysys the goddesse bare hym company,
For at the table next she sat by hys syde
In a close kyrtyll, enbrowderyd curyously
With braunches and leves, brood, large, and wyde,
Grene as any gresse in the somertyde.
330 Of all maner frute she had the governaunce.
Of saverys odoryferous was her sustynaunce.
- Isis*
close-fitting dress; intricately
broad
grass
scents

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- Next hyr was then god Neptunus set.
 He savoryd lyke a fyssher; of hym I speake before. *smelled; fisherman*
- Hyt semyd by hys clothes as they had be wet.
- 340 Aboute hym, in hys gyrdyll stede, hyng fysshes many a score. *on his belt*
 Of hys straunge aray mervelyd I sore. *exceedingly*
 A shyp with a toppa and seyle was hys crest. *platform at masthead; sail*
 Me thowȝht he was gayly dysgysyd at that fest. *richly dressed*
- Then toke Mynerve the goddesse her sete,
 Joyntly to Neptunus, all in curas clad, *seat*
 Gauntlettes on hyr handys and sabatouns on hyr fete. *Next; cuirass (see note)*
 She loked ever about as though she had be mad. *Gloves; foot coverings*
 An hamer and a sythe on her hede she had. *gone mad*
 An hamer and a sythe on her hede she had. *scythe*
 She weryd two bokelers, oone by her syde,
 That other, ye wote where; thys was all her pryde. *shields*
- Then came the good Bachus and by her set hym downe,
 Holdyng in hys hande a cup full of wyne. *himself*
 Of grene vyne leves he weryd a joly crowne;
 He was clad in clustres of grapes good and fyne;
- 355 A garland of yvy he chase for hys sygne. *chose as*
 On hys hede he had a thredebare kendall hood;
 A gymlot and a fauset theropon stood.¹ *woolen [from Kendal]*
- Next hym sate Phebe, with hyr colour pale.
 Fat she was of face, but of complexyon feynt. *Full (Round); pale*
 She seyde she rewlyd Neptunus, and made hym to avale,
 And ones in the moneth with Phebus was she meynt. *yield (prevail)*
 Also, ne were she, Ceres were ateynt.² *housed (see note)*
 Thus she sate and tolde the myght of her nature,
 And on hyr hede she weryd a crowne of sylvyr pure.
- 365 Joyntly to her Mercurius tooke hys see,
 As came to hys course: wytnesse the zodyak. *Next; seat (place)*
 In regard to his planetary circuit

¹ A boring tool (corkscrew) and a vent-peg for a cask thereupon stood

² Also, were it not for Phebe, Ceres would be sullied (see note)

The Assembly of Gods

- He had a gyldyn tong, as fyll for hys degree. befitted; rank
 In eloquence of langage he passyd all the pak,
 For in hys talkyng no man cowde fynde lak.
- 370 A box with quysylver he had in hys hand;
 Multyplers know hit well in every land. *Alchemists*
- By hym sate Dame Venus with colour crystallyne,
 Whoos long here shone as wyre of goold bryght. hair
 Cryspe was her skyne; her eyen, columbyne; Fresh; eyes, dove-colored (gray)
 She ravysshed myn hert, her chere was so lyght. countenance; dazzling
 “Patronesse of plesaunce” be namyd — well se myght!
 A smokke was her wede, garnysshed curiously. shift, ornamented skillfully
 But above all other, she had a wanton ey. eye
- On her hede she weryd a rede copyr crowne. wore
 380 A nosegay she had made full pleasauntly.
 Betwene her and Aurora, Apollo set hym downe. himself
 With hys beames bryght he shone so fervently
 That he therwith gladyd all the company.
 A crowne of pure gold was on hys hede set,
 385 In sygne that he was mastyr and lord of that banquet. *feast*
- Thus was the table set rownde aboute
 With goddys and goddesses, as I have yow tolde.
 Awaytyng on the boorde was a gret route dining table; group
 Of sage phylosophyrs and poetes many folde: manifold
- 390 There was sad Sychero and Arystotyll olde, *Cicero*
 Tholomé, Dorothé with Dyogenes, *Ptolemy (see note)*
 Plato, Messehala, and wyse Socrates. *(see note)*
- Sortes and Saphyrus with Hermes stood behynde;
 Avycen and Averoys with hem were in fere.
 395 Galyen and Ipocras, that physyk have in mynde,
 With helpe of Esculapion toward hem drow nere.
 Virgyle, Orace, Ovyde, and Omere,
 Euclyde and Albert gave her attendaunce,
 To do the goddys and goddesses plesaunce. *Soter; Sarapis; Trismegistus*
Avicenna; Averroës; together
Galen; Hippocrates; medicine
Aesculapius; them (see note)
Horace; Homer
Albertus Magnus; their

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 400 | Whore-berdyd Orpheus was there with hys harpe,
And as a poet musykall made he melody.
Othyr mynstrall had they none, safe Pan gan to carpe
Of hys lewde bagpipe, whyche causyd the company
To lawe. Yet many mo ther were, yef I shuld nat ly, | <i>White-bearded</i>
<i>except; make music</i>
<i>crude</i>
<i>laugh</i> |
| 405 | Som yong, som olde, bothe bettyr and werse,
But mo of her names can I not reherse. | <i>their</i> |
| Of all maner deyntees there was habundaunce,
Of metys and drynkes, foysom plenteuous.
In came Dyscord, to have made varyaunce,
But ther was no rome to set hyr in that hous.
The goddys remembryd the scisme odyous
Among the three goddesses that she had wrought
At the fest of Peleus, wherfor they thought | | |
| 410 | | <i>delicacies; abundance</i>
<i>abundance plentiful</i>
<i>room</i>
<i>schism</i> |
| 415 | They wold nat with her dele in aventure,
Lest she theym brought to som inconvenyent.
She, seyng thys, was wrothe out of mesure,
And in that gret wrethe out of the paleyce went,
Seying to hersylf that chere shuld they repent.
And anone with Attropos happyd she to mete, | <i>deal roughly</i>
<i>disagreement</i> |
| 420 | As he had bene a geste came in a wyndyng shete. | <i>come (appearing)</i> |
| She toke hym by the hande and rownyd in hys eare,
And told hym of the banquet that was so delycate,
Howe she was rescevyd, and what chere she had there,
And howe every god sate in hys estate.
“Ys hit thus?” quod Attropos, “what, in the devylls date?”
“Well,” he seyde, “I see well howe the game gooth.
Ones yet for your sake shall I make hem wrooth.” | | |
| 425 | | <i>whispered</i>
<i>kindness</i>
<i>(see note)</i> |
| 430 | And when she had hym all togedyr tolde,
From her he departyd and of hyr toke hys leve,
Seying that, for hyr sake, hys wey take he wolde
In to the paleyce, hys matyrs to meve.
And er he thens went, he trowyd hem to greve
With suche tdynges as he shuld hem tell.
So forthe yn he went and spake wordys fell. | <i>business to advance</i>
<i>before; expected (intended); grieve</i>
<i>Because of</i>
<i>dark</i> |

The Assembly of Gods

- 435 When he came in the presence of the goddes all,
 As he had be woode he lookyd hym about. *mad*
 Hys shete from hys body down he let fall,
 And on a rewde maner he salutyd all the rout,
 With a bold voyse, carpyng wordys stout. *rude*
 boasting with fierce words
 as [if] it had been that one
 experienced pain
- 440 But he spake all holow, as hit had be oon
 Had spoke in another world that had woo begoon.
- He stood forthe boldly, with grym countenaunce,
 Saying on thys wyse, as ye shall here:
 “All ye gret goddyns, geve attendaunce
 Unto my wordys, without all daungere. *without any risk*
 Remembre howe ye made me your offycere,
 All tho with my dart fynally to chastyse
 That yow dysobeyed, or wold your law dyspysye!
- “And for the more sewerté, ye seelyd my patent, *certainty (see note)*
 450 Gevyng me full power soo to occupy,
 Wherto I have employed myn entent,
 And that can Dame Nature well testyfy.
 Yef she be examynyd, she woll hit nat deny. *If*
 For when she forsaketh any creature,
 I am ay redy to take hym to my cure. *charge*
- “Thus have I dewly, with all my dilygence, *duly*
 Executyd the offyce of olde antiquyté,
 To me by yow grauntyd by your comon sentence.
 For I spared noon, hygh nor low degré,
 460 So that on my part no defaute hath be.
 For as sone as any to me commyttyd wase,
 I smete hym to the hert; he had noone other grase. *smote; grace*
- “Ector of Troy, for all hys chyvalry, *(see note)*
 Alexaunder the grete, and myghty conquerour
 465 Julius Cesar, with all hys company,
 David nor Josue nor worthy Artour,
 Charles the noble that was so gret of honour,
 Nor Judas Machabee, for all hys trew hert,
 Nor Godfrey of Boleyn cowde me nat astert. *King Arthur*
Emperor Charlemagne
escape

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 470 | <p>“Nabugodonozor, for all hys gret pryde,
 Nor the kyng of Egypt, cruell Pharao,
 Jason ne Hercules, went they never so wyde;
 Cosdras, Hanyball, nor gentyll Sypio,
 Cirus, Achilles, nor many another mo,
 475 For feyre or foule, gat of me no grace.
 But all be, at the last, I sesyd hem with my mace.</p> | <i>Nebuchadnezzar</i>
<i>Codrus; Hannibal; Scipio</i>
<i>King Cyrus</i>
<i>destroyed them</i> |
| 480 | <p>“Thus have I brought every creature
 To an ende, bothe man, fyssh, foule, and beste,
 And every other thyng in whom Dame Nature
 Hath any jurysdicion, owther most or leste.
 Except oonly oon, in whom your beheste
 Ys to me broke, for ye me promysyd
 That myght of noon shuld have be dyspysyd.</p> | <i>promise</i> |
| 485 | <p>“Wheroft the contrary, dar I well avowe,
 Ys trew, for oon there ys that wyll nat apply
 Unto my correccion, nor in no wyse bowe
 To the dynt of my dart, for doole nor destyny.
 What comfort he hath, nor the cause why
 That he so rebelleth, I can nat thynke of ryght,
 490 But yef ye have hym grauntyd your aldrys safecondyght.</p> | <i>nor in any way</i>
<i>arrow; lot (fate)</i>
<i>safe-conduct of all</i> |
| 495 | <p>“And yef ye so have, then do ye nat as goddys,
 For a goddes wrytyng may nat reversyd be.
 Yef hit shuld, I wold nat geve two pesecoddys
 For graunt of your patent of offyce, ner of fee.
 Wherfore in thys mater do me equyté
 Accordyng to my patent, for tyll thys be do,
 Ye have no more my servyce nor my good wyll, lo!”</p> | <i>if you</i>
<i>peapods</i>
<i>(see note)</i>
<i>justice</i>
<i>office; done</i> |
| 500 | <p>And when all the goddes had Attropos herde,
 As they had be woode, they brayde up at oonyss,
 And seyde they wold nat reste tyll he were conqueryd,
 Taken and dystroyed, boody, blood, and boonyss.
 And that they swere gret othes, for the noonys,
 Her lawe to dyspyce, that was so malapert.
 They seyde he shuld be taught for to be so pert.</p> | <i>were crazy; started up together</i>
<i>body; bones (i.e., entirely)</i>
<i>for the occasion</i>
<i>Their; despise; outspoken (bold)</i>
<i>forward (saucy)</i> |

The Assembly of Gods

505	"Well," seyde Apollo, "yef he on erthe bee, Wyth my brennyng chare I shall hym confound."	<i>chariot</i>
	"In Feythe," quod Neptunus, "and yef he kepe the see, He may be full sure, he shall sone be drownde."	<i>soon</i>
510	"A, syr," seyd Mars, "thys have we well fownde, That any dysobeyed owre godly precept; We may well thynke we have to long slept.	
	"But, neverthelese, where I may hym fynde, With thundre and leyte about I shall hym chase."	<i>lightning</i>
515	"And I," quod Saturnus, "before and behynde, With my bytter colde shall shew hym harde grase."	<i>favor</i>
	"Well," seyd Mercurius, "yef I may see hys fase, For ever of hys speche I shall hym depryve, So that hym were bettyr be dede than a lyve."	<i>face</i>
		<i>To such an extent that</i>
520	"Ye," quod Othea, "yet may he well be In the eyre where he woll, and ax yow no leve. Wherfore my counsell ys that all we May entrete Neptunus hys rancour to forgeve,	<i>forgive</i>
	And then I dowte not Eolus wyll hym myscheve, So may ye be sewre he shall yow nat escape.	<i>sure</i>
525	And elles of all your angre woll he make but a jape."	<i>otherwise; joke</i>
	But for to tell yow how Eolus was brought In daunger of Pluto, yet had I forgete.	<i>power; forgotten</i>
	Wherfore, on thys mater ferther wyll I nought Procede, tyll I therof have knowleche yow lete.	<i>to you provided</i>
530	Hyt fell on a day the wedyr was wete, And Eolus thought he wold, on hys dysport, Go to rejoyse hys spyrytes and comfort.	<i>weather</i>
		<i>for his amusement</i>
		<i>revive; spirits</i>
	He thought he wold see what was in the grownd, And in a kravers forthe he gan hym dresse.	<i>crevice; proceed</i>
535	A drowthe had the erthe late before fownd That causyd hit to chyne and krany, more and lesse. Sodeynly by weet constreynyd, by duresse Was the ground to close hys superfyciall face So strayne that, to scape, Eolus had no space.	<i>drought; experienced (suffered)</i>
		<i>crack; cranny</i>
		<i>wet [weather]</i>
		<i>countenance</i>
		<i>directly; escape</i>

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- 540 Thys seyng Eolus, he stylly withyn aboode,
Sekyng where he myght have goon out, fer or nere.
Anone he was aspyed, and oon to Pluto roode,
And told hym how Eolus was in hys daungere. power
Then seyde he to Cerberus, “Fet me that pryonere! Fetch
- 545 Tyll I have hym seene, let hym nat go at large.
As thow wylt answer, of hym I geve thee charge.”
- Thus was thys Eolus take pryoner.
Then happyd hit so, that the same day
Pluto had prefyxyd for a gret mater, designated
550 Mynos to syt in his roob of ray, robe of striped cloth
Wherfore Cerberus tooke the next way, For which reason
And led hym to the place where the court shal be,
Whedyr, as I tolde yow, Morpheus brought me.
- So thedyr came Diana, caryed in a carre, chariot
555 To make her compleynt, as I told yow all,
And so dyd Neptunus, that dothe bothe make and marre,
Walewyng with hys wawes and tomblyng as a ball. Wallowing (Surging); waves
Her matyrs they mevyd, fall what may befall. Their; advanced
There was the furst syght that ever I theym sawe,
560 And yef I never do efte, I rekke nat a strawe. care not at all
- Bot now to my matyr to returne ageyn.
And to begynne, newe, where I left:
When all the goddes had done her besy peyn,
The wey to contrive howe he shuld be reft deprived
565 Of hys lyfe, that Attropos had no cause eft
To compleyn, than Phebe styrt upon her fete feet
And seyd, “I pray yow, let me speke a worde yete.” yet
- “Othea meneth well, to sey on thys wyse.
But all to entrete Neptunus, I hope, shall nat nedie.
570 Me semeth I alone durst take that entyrpryse;
Er I am beglyyd, or elles I shall spedie. Either I am misled; succeed
How say ye, Neptunus? Shall I do thys dede?
Wyll ye your rancour sese at my request?” end
“Madame,” quod he, “reule me as ye lyketh best.” as you please

The Assembly of Gods

- 575 “Gramercy,” seyd she, “of your good wyll
That hit pleseth yow to shew me that favour.
Wherfore the goddes hygh pleasure to fulfull,
Performe my desyre, and levee all olde rancour,
For our aldyrs wele and savyng of our honour,
Ageyn thys Eolus that ye long have had.”
580 “Hyt ys doon,” quoth he, “forsoth; then am I glad.”
- Seyde he, “now, then, Eolus, be thow to us trew,
Kepe well the eyr, and owre gret rebell
May we then soone ever to us subdew.”
- 585 “Yes; and that,” quod Eolus, “shall ye here tell:
Nowhere in the eyre shall he reste nor dwell;
Yef he do therof, put me in defaute;
With my bytter blastys, so shall I hym asaute.”
- 590 “What!” seyde the god Pluto, “what ys hys name
That thus presumeth ageyn us to rebell?”
“Vertew,” quod Attropos, “that have he mykyll shame,
He ys never confoundyd; thus of hym here I tell.”
“A,” seyde thys Pluto, “in dede I know hym well.
He hathe be ever myn utter enemy.
- 595 Wherfore thys mater ageyn hym take wyll I.
- “For all the baytys that ye for hym have leyde
Without myn helpe, be nat worthe a peere.
For though ye all the contrary had seyde,
Yet wolde he breede ryght nygh your althrys eere.
- 600 No maner of thyng can hym hurt nor dere,
Save oonly oon, a son of myn bastarde,
Whos name ys Vyce: he kepeth my vawarde.
- “Wherfore yow, Cerberus, now I thee dyscharge
Of Eolus, and wyll that thou hydryr fette
My dere son Vyce, and sey that I hym charge
That he to me come without any lette,
Armyd at all poyntes. For a day ys sette
That he with Vertew, for all the goddes sake,
In our defense, must on hym batayll take.”

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- 610 Forthe then went Cerberus with hys fyry cheyne,
 And brought thedyr Vyce, as he commaundyd was,
 Ageyn noble Vertew, that batayll to dereygne,
 On a glydying serpent, rydyng a gret pas,
 Formyd lyke a dragon, scalyd harde as glas,
 Whos mouth flamyd feere without fayll.
 Wyngys had hit, serpentyne, and a long tayll.
- Against; prove
 [at] a great pace
 fire
- Armyd was Vyce, all in cure boyle,
 Hard as any horn, blakker fer then soot.
 An ungodly soort folowyd hym, pardé,
 Of unhappy capteyns, of myschyef, croppe and roote:
 Pryde was the furst, that next hym roode, God woote,
 On a roryng lyon; next whom came Envy,
 Sytting on a wolfe; he had a scornfull ey.
- hardened (boiled) leather
 far than
 bud and root (top to bottom)
 knows
 eye
- Wrethe bestrode a wylde bore, and next hem gan ryde;
 In hys hand he bare a bldy, nakyd swerde.
 Next whom came Covetyse, that goth so fer and wyde,
 Rydyng on a olyfaunt, as he had ben aferde.
 Aftyr whom rood Glotony, with hys fat berde,
 Sytting on a bere, with hys gret bely.
 And next hym on a goot folowyd Lechery.
- Wrath
 elephant
 bear
 goat
- Slowthe was so sleepy, he came all behynde,
 On a dull asse, a full wery pase.
 These were the capteyns that Vyce cowde fynde
 Best, to set hys felde and folow on the chase.
- [at] a very slow pace
 establish his body of warriors
- 635 As for pety capteyns, many mo ther wase —
 As Sacrylege, Symony, and Dyssimulacion,
 Manslaughter, Mordre, Theft, and Extorcion,
- subordinate; more there were
 [Such] as
- Arrogaunce, Presumpcion, with Contumacy,
 Contempcion, Contempt, and Inobedience,
 640 Malyce, Frowardnes, Gret Jelacy,
 Wodnesse, Hate, Stryfe, and Impacience,
 Unkyndnesse, Oppression, with Wofull Neglygence,
 Murmour, Myschyef, Falshood, and Detraccion,
 Usury, Perjury, Ly, and Adulacion,
- Jealousy
 Madness

The Assembly of Gods

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 645 | Wrong, Ravyne, Sturdy Vyolence,
False Jugement, with Obstynacy,
Dysseyte, Dronkenes, and Improvydence,
Boldnes in Yll, and with Foule Rybaudy,
Fornycacion, Incest, and Avoutry,
Unshamefastnes, with Prodygalyté,
Blasphemé, Veynglory, and Worldly Vanyté, | <i>Debauchery</i>
<i>Adultery</i> |
| 650 | Ignoraunce, Diffydence, with Ipocrisy,
Scysme, Rancour, Debate, and Offense,
Heresy, Errour, with Idolatry, | |
| 655 | Newfangylnes, and sotyll False Pretense,
Inordinat Desyre of Worldly Excellense,
Feynyd Povert, with Apostasy,
Disclaundyr, Skorne, and unkynde Jelousy, | <i>Novelty (Innovation)</i> |
| 660 | Hoordam, Bawdry, False Mayntenaunce,
Treson, Abusion, and Pety Brybry. | <i>Whoredom, Pimping; Demeanor</i>
<i>Abuse (Deceit)</i> |
| 665 | Usurpcion, with Horryble Vengeaunce,
Came alther-last of that company.
All these pety capteyns folowyd by and by,
Shewyng theymsylf in the palyse wyde,
And seyde they were redy that batayll to abyde. | <i>Usurpation (Unjust or illegal possession)</i>
<i>last of all</i> |
| 670 | Idylnesse set the comons in aray,
Without the paleyse on a fayre felde.
But there was an oost for to make a fray!
I trow suche another never man behelde! | <i>battle</i> |
| 675 | Many was the wepyn among hem that they welde.
What pepyll they were that came to that dysport,
I shall yow declare of many a sondry sort. | <i>them</i>
<i>amusement</i> |
| | Ther were bosters, braggars, and brybores,
Praters, fasers, strechers, and wrythers, ¹
Shamefull shakerles, soleyn shaveldores,
Oppressours of pepyll and myghty crakers, | <i>bribers</i>
<i>vagabonds; sullen wanderers (see note)</i>
<i>great boasters</i> |

¹ *Idle talkers, hypocrites, liars, and perverts (see note)*

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

	Meytenours of querelles, horrable lyers, Theves, traytours, with false herytykes, Charmers, sorcerers, and many scismatykes,	<i>Maintainers of quarrels heretics makers of discord</i>
680	Pryvy symonyakes with false usurers, Multypliers, coyn-wasshers, and clyppers, Wrong usurpers with gret extorcioners, Bakbyters, glosers, and fayre flaterers, Malycious murmurers with grete claterers,	(see note) <i>Alchemists (see note)</i>
685	Tregetours, tryphelers, feyners of tales, Lascivuous lurdeyns and pykers of males,	<i>grumblers (gossips); tattlers Illusionists; tellers of idle stories Lascivious louts; pick-pockets</i>
690	Rowners, vagaboundes, forgers of lesynges, Robbers, revers, ravenouse ryfelers, Choppers of churches, fynders of tydynge, Marrers of maters and money makers, Stalkers by nyght with evesdroppers,	<i>Tattlers; deceits plunderers; forceful despoilers Dealers in ecclesiastical benefits Spoilers of matters</i>
	Fyghters, brawlers, brekers of lofedayes, Getters, chydres, causers of frayes,	<i>love days (see note) Braggarts; complainers</i>
695	Tytyvyllys, tyrauntes with tormentoures, Cursyd apostates, relygyous dyssymulors, Closshers, carders with comon hasardoures, Tyburne coloppys and pursekytters, Pylary knyghtes, double-tollyng myllers,	<i>Scoundrels (see note)</i> <i>Bowlers, card or dice players; gamblers Tyburn criminals; cutpurses (robbers) Pillorying (that is, punishing, insulting)</i>
700	Gay joly tapsters with hostelers of the stewes, Hoores and baudys that many bale brewes,	<i>bartenders; servants of the brothels Whores; pimps who brew much destruction</i>
705	Bolde blasphemers with false ipocrytes, Brothelles brokers, abhomynable swerers, Dryvilles dastardes, dyspysers of ryghtes, Homycydes, poyseners and comon morderers, Skoldes, caytyffys, comborouse clappers,	<i>Pimps Dastardly imbeciles (dirty persons)</i>
	Idolatres, enchauntours with false renegates, Sotyll ambidextres and sekers of debates,	<i>troublesome chatterers renegades double-dealers</i>
710	Pseudo-prophetes, false sodomites, Quesmers of chyldren with formycatours, Wetewoldes that suffre syn in her syghtes,	<i>sodomites (the spiritually corrupt) Murderers (quelm: to destroy) Contented cuckolds; their</i>

The Assembly of Gods

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| | Avouterers and abominable avauntours,
Of syn gret clappers and makers of clamours,
Unthryftys and unlustes came also to that game,
With luskes and loselles that myght nat thryve for shame. | <i>Adulterers; boasters
talkative persons; up roarers
The wasteful and slothful
idlers; profligates</i> |
| 715 | These were the comons came thedyr that day,
Redy bowne in batayll Vertew to abyde.
Apollo, theym beholding, began for to say
To the goddes and goddesses beyng there that tyde,
“Me semeth convenient an herowde to ryde | <i>thither
bound (ready); undertake</i> |
| 720 | To Vertew, and byd hym to batayll, make hym bone
Hymsylf to defende, for sowght he shal be sone. | <i>time
herald
ready (prepared)</i> |
| 725 | “And let hym nat be sodenly take
All dyspurveyde, or then he be ware,
For then shuld our dyshonour awake,
Yef he were cowardly take in a snare.”
“Ee!” quod Vyce, “for that have I no care; | <i>caught off guard (unprepared), before</i> |
| | I wyll avaantage take where I may.”
That heryng, Morpheus prvyly stale away, | <i>secretly</i> |
| 730 | And went to warne Vertew of all thys afrai,
And bade hym awake and make hymself strong,
For he was lyke to endure that day
A gret mortall shoure, er hit were evesong, | <i>shower [of blows], before; eventide</i> |
| 735 | With Vyce, wherfore he bade him nat long
Tary to sende aftyr more socour —
Yef he dede, hit shuld turne hym to dolour. | <i>If; grief</i> |
| 740 | And brefely the matyr to hym he declaryd,
Lyke as ye have herde, begynnyng and ende.
“Well,” quoth Vertu, “he shall nat be sparyd.
To the felde I wyll wende how hit wende. | <i>go</i> |
| | But gramercy, Morpheus, myn owne dere frende,
Of your trew hert and feythefull entent
That ye in thys mater to meward have ment.” | <i>toward me</i> |
| | Thys doon, Morpheous departyd away
Fro Vertu, to the palyce retornyng ageyn. | |

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- 745 Noone hym aspyed, that I dare well say,
In whyche tyme Vertew dyd hys besy peyn
Pepyll to reyse, hys quarell to menteyn.
Ymaginacion was hys messyngere:
He went to warne pepyll bothe fer and nere,
- 750 And bade hem come in all the haste they myght
For to streyngthe Vertu, for, without fayll,
He seyde he shuld have, long or hit were nyght,
With Vyce to do a myghty strong batayll.
Of ungracious gastes he bryngeth a long tayll,
“Wherfore hit behoveth to helpe at thys nede,
And aftyr thys shall Vertu rewarde yowre mede.”
- 755 When Imaginacion had goon hys cyrcute
To Vertews frendys thus all aboute,
Withyn short tyme many men of myght
Gaderyd to Vertew in all that they mowte.
They hym comfortyd and bad hym put no dowte
Hys uttyr enemy Vyce to overthrow,
Though he with hym brought never so gret arow.
- 760 And when Vertew sy the substaunce of hys oost,
He prayed all the comons to the felde hem hy
With her pety capteynys, bothe lest and moost,
And he with hys capteynys shuld folow redyly,
For he seyde he knew well that Vyce was full ny,
And who myght furst of the felde recover the centre
Wold kepe out that other he shuld nat esyly entre.
- 765 Then sent he forthe Baptym to the felde before,
And prayed hym hertyly hit to overse,
That no maner trayne nor caltrop theryn wore¹
To noy nor hurt hym nor hys meyné.
770 And when he thedyr came, he began to see
- worked diligently*
before
ghosts; tale
reward
route (circuit)
might
fear
a troop
saw; host
hasten themselves
their
[so that] he
Baptism
oversee
annoy; household company

¹ That no kind of lure or impediment were therein (see note)

The Assembly of Gods

- How Vyce hys pursevaunt Cryme Oryginall *pursuivant (attendant)*
Was entryd before, and had sesyd up all. *seized*
- But as sone as herof Baptym had a syght,
He fled fast awey and left the felde alone. *He (Vice)*
780 And anone Babtym entred with hys myght,
Serchyng all about where thys Cryme had gone.
But the felde was clene defaute; fonde he none. *Baptism*
Then cam Vertew aftyr with hys gret oost,
And hys myghty capytayns, bothe leste and moost. *entirely emptied; no one host*
- 785 But to enforme yow howe he thedyr came,
And what maner capteyns he to the felde brought,
Hymsylfe, sekerly, was the furst man *surely*
Of all hys gret boost that thedyrward sought,
Sytyng in a chare that rychely was wrought *chariot*
790 With golde and peerles and gemmes precious,
Crownyd with laurer as lord vyctoryous. *laurel*
- Foure dowty knyghtys about the chare went *brave*
At every corner, on hit for to gyde
And convey acordyng to Vertew hys entent.
- 795 At the furst corner was Ryghtwysnes that tyde; *time*
Prudence at the second, was set to abyde;
At the thryd, Streynghth; the fourth kept Temperaunce.
These the chare gydyd to Vertew hys plesaunce.
- 800 Next to the chare, seven capteyns there roode,
Ychone aftyr other, in ordre, by and by. *Each one*
Humylyté was the furst; a lambe he bestroode.
With countenaunce demure he roode full soburly.
A fawcon gentyll stood on hys helme on hy. *falcon; high*
And next aftyr hym came there Charyté,
805 Rydyng on a tygre, as fyll to hys degré. *fell*
- Roody as a roose ay he kept hys chere. *Ruddy; rose always*
On hys helme on hygh a pellycan he bare. *helmet*
Next whom came Pacyence, that nowhere hath no pere,
On a camell rydyng, as voyde of all care. *peer (match)*

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- 810 A fenyx on hys helme stood. So forthe gan he fare. *phoenix*
 Who next hym folowyd, but Lyberalyté,
 Sytting on a dromedary that was bothe good and free.
- On hys helme for hys crest he bare an ospray. *osprey (bird of prey)*
 And next aftyr hym folowyd Abstynence,
 Rydyng on an hert; hys trapure was gay. *deer; horse covering (see note)*
 He semyd a lorde of ryght gret excellence.
 A popynjay was hys crest; he was of gret dyffence. *parrot; defense*
 Next hym folowyd Chastyté, on an unycorn,
 Armyd at all poyntes, behynde and beforne.
- 820 A turtyldove he bare an hygh for hys crest.
 Then came Good Besynesse, last of the sevyn,
 Rydyng on a panter, a sondry colouryd best, *panther; beast*
 Gloryously beseene, as he had come from hevyn;
 A crane on hys hede stood hys crest for to steyn. *appearing (beheld)*
 825 All these sevyn capteynes had standardes of prycé, *specify*
 Eche of hem acordyng aftyr hys devyse. *individual military flags*
[heraldic] device
- Many pety capteyns aftyr these went,
 As Trew Feythe and Hoope, Mercy, Peese, and Pyté,
 Ryght Trowthe, Mekenesse, with Good Entent,
 830 Goodnes, Concorde, and Parfyte Unyté, *Unity*
 Honest Trew Love, with Symplycyté,
 Prayer, Fastyng, Prevy Almysdede, *Almsgiving (Charitable donations to the poor)*
 Joynyd with the Artycles of the Crede;
- Confession, Contrpcion, and Satysfaccion,
 835 With Sorow for Synne and Gret Repentaunce,
 Forgevenes of Trespas, with Good Dysposicion,
 Resystence of Wrong, Performyng of Penaunce,
 Hooly Devocion, with Good Contynuaunce.
- Preesthood theym folowyd, with the Sacramentes,
 840 And Sadnesse also, with the Commaundementis; *Steadfastness*
- Sufferaunce in Trowble, with Innocency,
 Clennesse, Continence, and Virginité,
 Kyndnesse, Reverence, with Curtesy,

The Assembly of Gods

	Content and Plesyd with Pyteous Poverté, Entendyng Well, Mynstryng Equyté Twene Ryght and Wrong, Hoole Indyfferency, And Laboryng the Servyce of God to Multyply;	<i>Administering Equity</i> <i>Whole (Complete) Impartiality</i>
845	Refuse of Rychesse and Worldly Veynglory, Perfeccion with Parfyte Contemplacion, Relygyon, Profession Well Kept in Memory, Verrey Drede of God, with Holy Predycacion, Celestiall Sapience, with Goostly Inspiracion. Grace was the guyde of all thys gret meyny, Whom folowyd Konnyng with hys genalogy.	<i>Preaching</i> <i>household</i> <i>genealogy</i>
850	(That ys to sey, Gramer and Sophystry, Philosophy Naturall, Logyk, and Rethoryk, Arsmetry, Geometry, with Astronomy, Canon and Cyvyle, melodyous Musyk, Nobyll Theology, and corporall Physyk, Moralizacion of Holy Scripture, Profounde Poetry, and Drawyng of Picture.)	<i>Ecclesiastical and Civil [Law]</i>
855	These folowyd Konnyng, and thedyr with hym came, With many oone moo, offryng her servyce To Vertew at that nede. But natwithstandyng than,	<i>their</i>
860	Som he refusyd, and seyde in nowyse They shuld with hym go, and as I coude avyse, These were her names: fyrst, Nygromansy, Geomansy, Magyk, and Glotony,	<i>under no circumstances</i> <i>determine</i> <i>their; Necromancy</i>
865	Adryomancy, Ornomancy, with Pyromancy, ¹ Fysenamy also, and Pawmestry, And all her sequelys, yef I shult nat ly. Yet Konnyng prayed Vertu he wold nat deny Theym forto know, nor Dysdeyne with hys ey On hem to loke, wherto Vertew grauntyd;	<i>Physiognomy; Palmistry</i> <i>followers (adherents), if</i>
870	How be hit in hys werres, he wold nat they hauntyd.	<i>eye</i> <i>them</i> <i>engaged in</i>
875		

¹ *Hydromancy, Ornithomancy* (augury by birds' cries and flights), with *Divination by fire*

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- So had they Connyngh lyghtly to depart
 From Vertew hys felde, and they, seyng thys,
 By comon assent hyryd theym a cart,
 And made hem be caryed toward Vyce, y-wys.
 Fro thensforth, to serve hym they wold nat mys;
 Full lothe theym were to be mastyrles.
 In stede of the bettyr, the worse ther they ches.
- But foorth to relese all the remenaunt
 Of pety capteyns that with Vertu were —
 Moderat Dyete and Wysdom avenaunt,
 Evyn Wyght and Mesure, Ware of Contagious Geere,
 Lothe to Offende and Lovyng Ay to Lere,
 Worshyp and Profyt, with Myrthe in Manere —
 These pety capteyns with Vertew were in fere.
- Comones hem folowyd, a gret multitude;
 But in com pyson to that other syde,
 I trow ther was nat (brefely to conclude)
 The tenth man that batayll to abyde.
 Yet, neverthelese, I shall nat fro yow hyde
 What maner pepyll they were, and of what secte,
 As neere as my wyt therto wyll me dyrecte.
- There were notable and famous doctours,
 Example gevers of lyvyngr gracyous,
 Perpetuell prestes and dyscrete confessours,
 Of Holy Scripture declarers fructuous,
 Rebukers of synne and myschesfes odyous,
 Fysshers of sowles and lovers of clennes,
 Dyspysers of veyn and worldly ryches,
- Pesyble prelates, justyciall governours,
 Founders of churches, with mercyfull peeres,
 Reformers of wrong of her progenitours,
 On peynfull poore, pyteous compassioneres,
 Well menyng merchauntes, with trew artyfyceres,
 Vyrgyns pure, and also innocentes,
 Hooly matronys, with chaste contynentes,

*hired themselves
indeed*

reluctant

lesser (petty)

agreeable (handsome)

Weight; Watchful; Jeering

Ever to Learn

company

them

comparison

believe there was not

await

givers

judicious

beneficial

Peaceable; judicial

their

craftsmen

those temperate and chaste

The Assembly of Gods

- Pylgryms and palmers, with trew laborers,
 Hooly heremytes, Goddes solycitours,
 Monasteriall monkes and well dysposyd freres,
 Chanons and nonnes, feythfull professoures,
 915 Of worldly peple trew conjugatoures,
 Lovers of Cryst, confounders of yll,
 And all that to godward geve her good wyll,
solicitors
- Mayntenours of ryght, verrey penytentes,
 Destroyers of errorre, causers of unyté,
 920 Trew actyf-lyvers that set her ententes
 The dedes to performe of mercy and ptyté,
 Contemplatyf peple that desyre to be
 Solytary servauntes unto God alone,
 Rather then to habounde in rychesesses everychone.
abound
- 925 These, with many mo then I reherse can,
 Were come thedyr redy that batayll to abyde,
 And take suche part as fyll to Vertew than.
 Vyce to overcome they hopyd, for all hys pryd,
 All though that he had more pepyll on hys syde,
 930 For the men that Vertu had were full sewre
 To trust on at Nede and Konnyng in armure.
secure
- “Macrocosme” was the name of the felde
 Where thys gret batayle was set for to be.
 In the myddes therof stood Conscience, and behelde
 935 Whyche of hem shuld be brought to captivyté;
 Of that nobyll tryumphe, juge wold he be.
 Synderesys sate hym wynthyn, closyd as in a parke,
 With hys tables in hys hand, her dedys to marke.
Microcosm
Moral Guardian; enclosed; park tablets; their
- To come in to the felde were hygh weyes fyve,
 Free to bothe partyes, large, broode, and wyde.
 Vertu wold nat tary, but hyghyd hym thydryr blyve,¹
 Lest he were by Vyce decevyd at that tyde.
five pathways
time

¹ *Vertu would not tarry, but hastened himself thither at once*

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- Long out of the felde, lothe he was to abyde
 In aventure that he out of hyt were nat kept,
 945 For then wolde he have thought he had to long slept.
- In thys mene tyme whyle, Vertu thus prevydyd
 For hym and hys pepyll the feld for to wynne.
 He chargyd every man by Grace to be guydyd,
 And all that ever myght the felde to entre ynne.
 950 In all that seson went Orygynall Synne,
 To lete Vyce know, how Baptym, with hys oost,
 Had entryd Macocrosme, and serchyd every coost. *provided host Microcosm; coast*
- “A,” seyde Vyce, “than I se well hit ys tyme
 Baners to dysplay and standardys to avaunce.
 955 Allmost to long haddyst thou taryed, Cryme,
 To let us have knowlege of thys puruyaunce.
 Yet I trow I shall lerne hem a new daunce!
 Wherfore I commaunde yow all, without delay,
 Toward the felde drawe, in all the haste ye may.” *then advance delayed*
- 960 Then seyde the god Pluto, that all men myght here,
 “Vyce, I thee charge, as thou wylt eschew
 Our heynous indignacion, thou draw nat arere,
 But put thee forthe boldly, to overthrow Vertew.”
 “In feythe,” quoth Attropos, “and I shall aftyr sew,
 965 For yef he escape your handys thys day,
 I tell yow, my servyce have ye lost for ay.” *heinous; draw not back yourself follow*
- Forthe, then, rode Vyce, with all hys hoole streyngth,
 On hys steede serpentyn, as I tolde yow before.
 The oost that hym folowyd was of a gret leyngth,
 970 Among whom were penowns and guytornes many a score. *pennants; small flags*
- But as he went thederward (I shall tell yow more
 Of hys pety capteyns) he made many a knyght,
 For they shuld nat fle, but manly with hym fyght.
- He dubbyd Falshood, with Dyssymulacion,
 975 Symony, Usuré, Wrong, and Rebawdy,
 Malyce, Deceyte, Ly, with Extorcion, *Ribaldry*

The Assembly of Gods

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| 980 | Perjury, Diffidence, and Apostasy,
With Boldnesse in Yll to bere hem company —
These fourteen knyghtes made Vyce that day
To wynne theyr spores they seyde they wold asay. | <i>Want of Faith (Doubt)</i>

<i>spurs; try</i> |
| 985 | In lyke wyse, Vertew dubbyd on hys syde
Of hys pety capteynes other fourtene,
Whyche made her avowe with hym to abyde.
Her spores wold they wynne that day, hit shuld besene.
These were her names, yef hit be as I wene:
Feythe, Hope, and Mercy, Trouthe, and also Ryght,
With Resystence of Wrong, a full hardy wyght, | <i>similar manner</i>

<i>their vow</i>
<i>Their spurs</i>
<i>their; suppose</i>

<i>creature</i> |
| 990 | Confession, Contricion, with Satisfaccion,
Verrey Drede of God, Performyng of Penaunce,
Perfeccion, Konnyng, and Good Dysposicion,
And all knyt to Vertu they were, by allyaunce.
Wherfore to hym they made assewraunce
That felde to kepe as long as they myght,
And in hys quarell ageyn Vyce to fyght. | <i>Intelligence</i>

<i>assurance</i> |
| 995 | The lord of Macocrosme and rewler of that fee
Was callyd Frewyll, chaunger of the chaunse,
To whom Vertew sent embassatours three,
Reson, Discretion, and good Remembraunce,
And prayed hym be favorable hys honour to enhaunse, | <i>Microcosm; estate</i>
<i>changer; chance</i> |
| 1000 | For but he had hys favour at that poynt of nede,
He stooode in gret doute he coude nat lyghtly sped. | |
| 1005 | In lyke wyse Vyce embassatours thre
For hys party unto Frewyll sent,
Temptacion, Foly, and Sensualyté,
Praying hym of favour that he wold assent
To hym, as he wolde, at hys commaundment,
Have hym eftsones when he lyst to call
On hym, for any thyng that aftward myght fall. | <i>again (in return, immediately)</i> |
| 1010 | Answeare gave he noone to neyther party,
Save oonly he seyde the batayle wold he se, | |

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- To wete whyche of hem shuld have the victory. *them*
 Hit hyng in hys balaunce, the ambyguyté.
 He seyde he wold nat restrayne hys lyberté
 When he come where sorow shuld awake.
- 1015 Then hit shuld be know what part he woll take.
- Whan Vertew and Vyce be her embassatours *by means of their*
 Knew of thys answere, they stood in gret doute.
 Neverthelese, they seyde they wold endure tho shoures, *those*
 And make an ende shortly of that they went aboue.
- 1020 So forthe came Vyce with all hys gret route. *company*
 Er he came at the felde, he sent yet prvyly
 Sensualyté before, in maner of a spy,
- Whyche sewe the felde with hys unkynde seede. *sowed; unnatural*
 That causyd Vertu aftyr mykyl woo to feele. *much*
- 1025 For therof grew nought but all oonly weede, *slippery; eel*
 Whyche made the grounde as slepyr as an yele.
 He went agene to Vyce and told hym every dele *every bit*
 How he had done, and bade hym com away,
 For he had so purveyde that Vyce shuld have the day.
- 1030 Soo as hit happyd at the felde they mete
 Frewyll, Vertew, and Vyce, as trypartyte.
 Safe Vertew a lytell before the felde had gete,
 And elles hys avaantage, forsothe, had be full lyght. *advantage*
 Nat for then encombryd so was never wyght
- 1035 As Vertew and hys men were, with the ranke wede
 That in the felde grew of Sensualytees sede. *from; seed*
- But as sone as Vyce of Vertu had a syght,
 He gan swage gonnes as he had be woode. *to swing cannons as if he were crazy*
 That heryng, Vertew commaundyd every wyght
- 1040 To pauyse hym undyr the sygne of the roode, *pause (stop); cross*
 And bad hem nat drede, but kepe stylle wher they stooode.
 Hyt was but a shoure shuld soone confound, *an assault*
 Wherfore he commaundyd them stand and kepe her ground. *their*

The Assembly of Gods

- And when Vyce came nerer to the felde,
 1045 He callyd soore for bowes and bade hem shote faste.
 But Vertew and hys meyn bare of with the shelde crew warded off
 Of the blesyd Trynyté, ay tyll shot was paste. until every shot had passed (ended)
 And when shot was doon, Vyce came forthe at laste,
 Purposyng the felde with assawte to wyn.
 1050 But Vertew kept hit long; he myght nat entyr theryn. enter
- All that tyme, Frewyll stood and hym bethought
 To whyche he myght leve, and what part he wold take.
 At last Sensualyté had hym so fer brought
 That he seyde pleynly he Vertu wold forsake,
 1055 And in Vyce hys quarell all hys power make.
 "Ywys," quoth Reason, "that ys nat for the beste."
 "No forse," seyde Frewyll, "I wyll do as my lyste." No matter; follow my desire
- Vertu was full hevy when he sy Frewyll saw
 Take part with Vyce, but yet, neverthelesse,
 1060 He dyd that he myght the felde to kepe styll,
 Tyll Vyce with Frewyll so sore gan hym oppresse
 That he was constreynyd clerely by duresse
 A lytta tyne abak to make a bew retret. little [bit] taken aback; a good retreat
 All thyng consyderyd hit was the best feet, feat
- Furst, to remembre how Vyces part was
 1065 Ten agene oon, strengor by lyklynnes; against one, stronger in comparison
 And than how Frewyll was with hym, allas!
 Whoo cowde deme Vertew, but in hevynes,
 Moreover, to thynke how that slyper gres,
 1070 That of Sensualyté hys unkynde seede grew,
 Undyr foote in standyng encombryd Vertew.
- Yet, natwithstandyng, Vertew hys men all
 Nobully theym bare and faught myghtyly, Nobly
 Howe be hyt the slepyr grasse made many of hem fall,
 1075 And from thense in maner depart sodeynly.
 That seyng, Vyce hys oost began to showt and cry,
 And seyde, "On, in Pluto name! On, and all ys owre. ours
 For thys day shall Vyce be made a conquerour!"

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- Thus Vertew was by myght of Vyce and Frewyll
 1080 Dreven out of the felde. Hit was the more pyté!
 Howe be hit, yet Baptym kept hys ground stylle,
 And with hym aboode Feythe, Hoope, and Unyté,
 And Kunnyng also, with comons a gret meyné,
 Confessyon, Contricion, were redy at her hande,
 1085 And Satysfaccion, Vyce to wythstande.
- But all the tyme, whyle Vertew was away,
 A myghty conflycte kept they with Vyce his rowte.
 And yet, neverthelesse, for all that gret affray,
 Hoope stood upryght and Feythe wold never lowte,
 1090 And evermore seyd Baptym, “syres, put no dowte:
 Vertu shall retorne and have hys entent.
 Thys felde shal be ours, and elles let me be shent!”
- And whyle these pety capteynes susteynyd thus the feelde,
 With Vertew hys rerewarde came Good Perseveraunce,
 1095 An hogy myghty hoost, and when he behelde
 How Vertew hym withdrew, he toke dysplesaunce.
 And when he to hym came, he seyde, “ye shall your chaunce
 Take, as hit falleth, wherfore returne ye must.
 Yet oonys for your sake with Vyce shall I just.
- “Allas, that ever ye shuld leese thus your honour,
 And therwith also the hygh perpetuell crowne
 Whyche ys for yow kept in the celestiall tour,
 Wherfore be ye callyd ‘Crystis Champyon.’
 How ys hit that ye have no compassyon
- 1100 On Baptym, Feythe, and Hoope, Konnyng and Unyté,
 That stant so harde be stadde, and fyght, as ye may see?
- “All the tresour erthely undyr the fyrmament
 That ever was made of Goddes creacion
 To rewarde theym evynly were nat equyvalent
- 1110 For her noble labour in hys afflyccion.
 Wherfore take upon yow your jurysdycion —
 Rescu yondyr knyghtes and recontynu fyght,
 And elles, a dew your crowne, for all your gret meryt.”
- great troop
Vice's company
bow
destroyed
Virtue's rear guard
huge
joust
lose
stand so hard assailed
their
recontinue
adieu (farewell)

The Assembly of Gods

- With these and suche wordys, as I have yow tolde,
1115 By good Perseveraunce uttryd in thys wyse,
Vertu hym remembryd and gan to wex bolde,
And seyd, “Geve trew knyghtes to rescu, I avyse; advise
Let us no lengor tary from thys entrepryse.”
Agayn to the felde so Vertew retornyd,
1120 That causyd hem be mery that long afore had mornyd. mourned
- “Avaunt baner,” quoth he, “in the name of Jhesu!” Forward the banner
And with that, hys pepyll set up a gret showte
And cryed with a lowde voyce, “A, Vertew! A, Vertew!”
Then began Vyce hys hooste for to loke abowte.
1125 But I trowe Perseveraunce was nat long withowte.
He bathyd hys swerde in hys foes blood;
The boldyst of hem all nat oonys hym withstood.
- Constaunce hym folowyd and brought hym hys spere.
But when Perseveraunce saw Vyce on hys stede,
1130 No man cowde hym let tyll he came there. hinder
For to byd hym ryde, I trow, hit was no nede;
All Vertew hys ost prayde for hys good spedé. host
Agayn Vyce he roode with hys gret shaft
And hym overthrew for all hys sotyll craft. subtle
- That seyng, Frewyll came to Conscience,
And gan hym to repent that he with hym had bee,
Praying hym of counsell for hys gret offence,
That he agayn Vertew had made hys armee;
What was best to do? “To Humylyté,”
1140 Quoth Conscience, “must thou go,” so he hym thedyr sent thither
Disguysyd, that he were nat knownen as he went.
- And when he thedyr came, Humylyté hym took gave
A token and bad hym go to Confessyon,
And shew hym hys mater with a peteous look.
- 1145 Whyche doon, he hym sent to Contrycion.
And fro thensforth to Satysfaccion.
Thus fro poost to pylour was he made to daunce,
And at the last he went forthe to Penaunce. pillar

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- But now for to tell yow: when Vyce was overthrow,
 1150 A gret parte of his oost about hym gan resorte.
 But he was so febyll that he cowde no man know, feeble
 And when they sy that they knew no comforde,
 But caryed hym awey be a pryye porte. by a secret door
 And as they hym caryed, Dyspeyre with hym met. Despair
 1155 With Vyce hys rewarde, he came theym for to fet. fetch
- Then came ther downe goodly ladyes tweyne
 From the hygh hevyn above the firmament,
 And seyde the gret Alpha and Oo most sovereyne Alpha and Omega (God)
 For that nobyll tryumphe had hem thedyr sent,
 1160 Oone of hem to dryve Vyce to gret torment
 With a fyry scourge that she bare in her hande;
 And so he dede dyspeyre, and all hys hoole bande.
- The name of thys lady was callyd Prescience. Foresight
 She never left Vyce, ne noone that wold hym folow,
 1165 Tyll they were commytyd by the divine sentence
 All to peyne perpetuell and infynyte sorow.
 Ryghtwysnes went to see, that no man shuld hem borow.
 Thus all entretyd sharplye were they tyll Cerberus handled
 Had hem beshut withyn hys gates tenebrus. imprisoned; dark (gloomy)
- 1170 And all the whyle that Prescience with her scorge smert stinging
 To rewarde Vyce gan hyr thus occupy,
 With all hys hoole bende aftyr her desert, band (gang); inclination
 That other gloryous lady that came fro hevyn on hy,
 Havynge in her hande the palme of vyctory,
 1175 Came downe to Vertu and toke hym to that present,
 Seying thus, that Alpha and Oo hathe hym sent.
- And as ferre as I aryght cowde undyrstande,
 That ladyes name was Predestinacion.
 Vertu and hys hoost she blesyyd with her hande,
 1180 And in heven grauntyd hem habitacion,
 Where to eche of hem reservyd was a crown.
 She seyde in token that they enherytours inheritors (heirs)
 Of the glory were, and gracious conquerours.

The Assembly of Gods

- Whyche doon, thoo ladyes agene togedyr met *those; again*
 1185 And toward hevyn up they gan to fly,
 Embrasyd in armes as they had be knet
 Togedyr with a gyrdyll, but so sodenly *belt*
 As they were vanysshyd saw I never thyng with ey. *eye (i.e., literally)*
 And anon Vertew with all hys company
 1190 Knelyd downe, and thankyd God of that vyctory.
- Yet had I forgete, when Vyce was overthrow, *forgotten*
 To have tolde yow how many of Vyce hys oost
 Gan to seke Peese, and darkyd downe full low, *lay hidden*
 And besought Mercy, whatsoever hys cost,
 1195 To be her mene to Vertew; elles they were but lost. *their intermediary; otherwise*
 And som in lyke wyse to Feythe and Hoope sought.
 What to do for Peese they seyde they ne rought. *cared not*
- Som also to Baptym sewyd to be her mene; *petitioned; their*
 Som to oon, som to other, as they hem gete myght. *earn*
 1200 But all to Confession went to make hem clene, *themselves*
 And, as they came by Conscience, he theym bad goo lyght,
 Er than olde Attropos of hem had a syght,
 For yef he so theym tooke, lost they were forever.
 He seyde Vyce to forsake, ys bettyr late then never.
- 1205 Som eke for socour drew to Circumcision,
 But by hym cowde they gete but small favour,
 For he in that company was had but in derysion.
 Neverthelesse, to Feythe he bade hem go labour,
 Praying theym for olde acqueyntance theym socour.
- 1210 “Well,” quoth Feythe, “for hys sake I shall do that I may do,
 But furst, for the best wey, Baptym go ye to.
- “For by hym sonnest shull ye recover grace,
 Whyche shall to Vertu bryng yow by processe,
 Wherfore in any wyse looke ye make good face,
 1215 And let no man know of your hevynes.”
 So they were by Baptym brought out of dystres — *distress*
 Turnyd all to Vertew, and when thys was doon,
 Vertu commaundyd Frewyll before hym com.

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- 1220 To whom thus he seyde, “I have gret mervayll
 Ye durst be so bolde Vyces part to take.
 Who bade yow do so and gave yow that counsayll?
 Justly unto that ye shall me pryvy make.” secretly
 Then seyde Frewyll, and swemfully spake,
 Knelyng on hys kne with a chere benygne,
 “I pray yow, syr, let pyté your eares to me enclyne,
- “And I shall yow tell the verrey sothe of all,
 Howe hit was and who made me that wey drawe.
 Forsothe, ‘Sensualité’ hys propre name they call.” truth
 “A,” seyde Reason, “then I know well that felawe.
 1230 Wylde he ys, and wanton; of me stant hym noon awe.”
 “Ys he soo?” quod Vertu, “Well he shal be taught,
 As a pleyer shuld, to drawe another draught.” chess player; make another move
- 1235 And with that came Sadnesse with hys sobre chere, Steadfastness; expression
 Bryngyng Sensualyté, beyng full of thought,
 And seyde that he had take hym pryonere.
 “A, welcome,” seyde Vertew. “Now have I that I sought;
 Blessyd be that good lord; as thou wolde, ys hit nought.
 Why art thou so wantoun and wylde?” he seyde, “for shame;
 Er thou go at large, thou shalt be made more tame.
- 1240 “But stande apart awhyle tyll I have spoke a woerde
 With Frewyll, a lytell, and then shalt thou know a little
 What shal be thy finaunce.” And then he seyde in boorde recompense; in jest
 Unto Frewyll, “The bende of your bowe
 Begynneth to slake, but suche as ye have sowe slacken
 1245 Must ye nedes reepe; ther ys noon other way. reap
 Nat withstandyng that, let see what ye can say.
- “What ys your habylté me to recompense ability
 For the gret harme that ye to me have do?”
 “Forsothe,” seyd Frewyll in opyn audyense,
 1250 “But oonly Macrocosme; more have I nat, lo; Microcosm
 Take that, yef hit plese yow; I wyll that hit be so.
 Yef I may undyrstand, ye be my good lorde.” you are
 “In dede,” seyde Vertu, “to that wyll I acorde.”

The Assembly of Gods

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| 1255 | Then made Vertu Reson hys lyeftenaunt,
And gave hym a gret charge Macocrosme to kepe.
That doone, Sensualyté yelde hym recreaunt,
And began for to angre, byttryly to wepe,
For he demyd sewerly hys sorow shuld nat slepe.
Then made Vertu Frewyll bayll undyr Reson,
1260 The felde for to occupy to hys behove that seson. | <i>Virtue made Reason
Microcosm
cowardly</i>

<i>perceived surely
Virtue made Freewill bailiff
command</i> |
| 1265 | And then seyde Vertu to Sensualyté,
“Thow shalt be rewardyd for thy besynesse.
Undyr thys fourme, all fragylyté
Shalt thow forsake, bothe more and lesse,
And undyr the guydyng shalt thow be of Sadnesse,
All though hit somwhat be ageyn thy hert.
Thy jugement ys gevyn; thow shalt hit nat astert.” | <i>given; escape</i> |
| 1270 | And even with that, came in Dame Nature,
Saying thus to Vertew, “Syr, ye do me wrong
By duresse and constreynt to put thys creature,
Gentyll Sensualyté, that hath me servyd long,
Cleerly from hys liberté and set hym among
Theym that love hym nat, to be her underlowte,
As hit were a castaway, or a shoo clowte.” | <i>their subordinate
clouted or patched shoe</i> |
| 1275 | “And, pardé, ye know well a rewle have I must
Withyn Macrocosme; forsoth, I sey nat nay,”
Quoth Vertu, “but Sensualyté shall nat performe your lust
Lyke as he hath do before thys, yef I may.
Therfro, hym restrayn Sadnesse shall assay. | <i>Microcosm
desire</i>

<i>attempt</i> |
| 1280 | Howe be hit, ye shall have your hoole lyberté
Withyn Macrocosme, as ye have had fré.” | <i>Microcosm</i> |
| 1285 | And when Vertu had to Nature seyd thus,
A lytill tyne, hys ey castyng hym besyde,
He sy in a corner standyng Morpheus,
That hym before warnyd of the verryly tyde.
“A, syres,” seyd Vertu, “yet we must abyde.
Here ys a frende of owre may nat be forgete.
Aftyr hys desert we shall hym entrete. | <i>little tiny [bit]</i>

<i>ours</i> |

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- 1290 “Morpheus,” seyd Vertu, “I thanke yow hertyly
For your trew hert and your gret laboure,
That ye lyst to come to me soo redyly.
When ye undyrstood the commyng of that shoure, *assault*
I thanke God and yow of savyng of myn honour.
Wherfore thys prylvylege now to you I graunt,
That withyn Macrocosme ye shall have your haunt. *Microcosm*
- 1300 “And of fyve posternes, the keyes shall ye kepe, *gates*
Lettyng in and out at hem whom ye lyst, *them (the gates); please*
As long as in Macrocosme your fadry woll crepe. *Microcosm*
Blere whos ey ye woll, hardyly, with your myst,
And kepe your werkes close there as in a chyst.
Safe I wold desyre yow spare Pollucion, *Except; Corruption*
For nothyng may me plese that sowneth to corrupcion.” *leads*
- 1305 And when he had thus seyde, the keyes he hym tooke *explained; to him entrusted*
And toward hys castell with hys pepyll went,
Byddyng Reason take good heede and about looke
That Sensualyté by nature were nat shent. *harmed*
“Kepe hym short,” he seyde, “tyll hys lust be spent,
For bettyr were a chylde to be unbore,
Then let hyt have the wyll and forever be lore.” *desire* *his way; lost*
- 1310 And when olde Attropos had seen and herde all thys,
How Vertew had opteynyd, astonyed as he stood *prevailed, astonished*
He seyd to hymself, “Somwhat ther ys amys.
I trow well my patent be nat all good.” *agreement of privilege*
And ran to the palyse as he had be wood,
1315 Seying to the goddes, “I see ye do but jape. *crazy*
Aftyr a worthy whew have ye made me gape. *joke* *whirly phantom; desire*
- 1320 “Howe a devyllway shuld I Vertu overthrow,
When he dredyth nat all your hoole rowte!
How can ye make good your patent, wold I know
Hyt ys to impossybyll to bryng that abowte,
For stryke hym may I nat; that ys out of dowte.”
“A, good Attropos,” seyd god Apollo,
“An answere convenient shalt thou have herto. *How in the devil*

The Assembly of Gods

- “The wordys of thy patent, dare I well say,
 1325 Streche to no ferther but where Dame Nature
 Hath jurysdiction there to have thy way,
 And largesse to stryke as longeth to thy cure. *permission; belongs; jurisdiction*
 And as for Vertu, he ys no creature
 Under the predicament conteynyd of quantyté;
 1330 Wherfore hys destruccion longeth nat to thee.”
- “A, haa,” seyd Attropos, “then I se well
 That all ye goddes be but counterfete.
 For oo God ther ys that can everydell
 Turne as hym lyst, bothe dry and whete,
 1335 Into whos servyce I shall assay to gete.
 And yef I may ones to hys servyce come,
 Youre names shal be put to oblyvyone.”
- Thus went Attropos fro the paleyce wrooth. *angry*
 But in the mene tyme, whyle that he there was,
 1340 Glydyng by the palyce, Resydyvacion gooth
 Toward Macrocosme with a peyntyd fase,
 Clad lyke a pylgryme, walkyng a gret pase
 In the forme as he had bene a man of Ynde. *Backsliding*
 He wende have made Reson and Sadnesse bothe blynde. *Microcosm*
- 1345 With Sensualyté was he soone aqueyntyd,
 To whome he declaryd hys matyr pryyvly.
 Yet he was espyed, for all hys face peyntyd. *despite*
 Then Reson hym commaundyd pyke hym thens lyghtly.
 “For hys ease,” quoth Sadnes, “so counsell hym wyll I.”
- 1350 So was Sensualyté ay kept undyr foote,
 That to Resydyvacion myght he doo no boote. *remedy*
- Then went he to Nature and askyd hyr avyse,
 Hys entent to opteygne what was best to do. *advice*
 She seyde, “Ever syth Vertew of Vyce wan the prysse,
 1355 Reson with Sadnes hath rewlyd the fylde so,
 That I and Sensualyté may lyt yell for thee do.
 For I may no more, but oonly kepe my cours,
 And yet ys Sensualyté strengor kept, and wours.” *determine (obtain)*
- do little for you
- worse

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- 1360 Thus heryng, Residivacion fro thens he went ageyn,
Full of thought and sorow that he myght nat spede.
Then Reson and Sadnesse toke wedehokes tweyn,
And all wylde wantones out of the fylde gan wede
With all the slyper grasse that grew of the sede
That Sensualyté before theryn sew,
And fro thensforthe, kept hit clene fro Vertew.
- weed hooks
sowed from thenceforth
- 1365 Then began new gresse in the fylde to spryng,
All unlyke that other, of colour fayre and bryght.
But then I aspyed a mervelous thyng —
For the grounde of the felde gan wex hoore and whyte.
1370 I cowde nat conceyve how that be myght,
Tyll I was enformyd and taught hit to know.
But where Vertew occupyeth, must nedys well grow.
- 1375 Yet in the menetyme, whyle the fylde thus grew,
And Reson with Sadnesse therof had governaunce,
Many a pryy messenger thedyr sent Vertew,
To know yef hit were guyddyd to hys plesaunce.
Now Prayer eft Fastyng, and oftyn tyme Penaunce,
And when he myght goo pryyvly, Almesdede,
And bade hym to hys power helpe wher he sy nede.
- meantime
secret if after saw
- 1380 Whyle that fylde thus rewlyd Reson with Sadnes,
Mawgre Dame Nature, for all her carnall myght,
Came thedyr Attropos, voyde of all gladnes,
Wrappyd in hys shete, and axyd yef any wyght
Cowde wysshe hym the wey to the Lorde of Lyght,
1385 Or ellys where men myght fynd Ryghtwysnesse.
“Forsothe,” seyde Reason, “I trow, as I gesse,
- Despite
asked if anyone advise one might
- 1390 “At Vertu hys castell ye may soone hym fynde,
Yef ye lyst the labour thedyr to take,
And there shall ye know, yef ye be nat blynde,
The next wey to the Lorde of Lyght, I undyrtake.”
So thedyr went Attropos, peticion to make
To Ryghtwysnes, praying that he myght
Be take in to the servyce of the Lord of Lyght.

The Assembly of Gods

- “What!” seyde Ryghtwysnes, “Thow olde dotyng foole!
1395 Whom hast thou servyd syth the world began,
But oonly hym? where hast thou go to scoole,
Whether art thou double, or elles the same man
That thou were furst?” “A, syr,” seyde he than,
“I pray yow hertyly holde me excusyd.
1400 I am olde and febyll; my wyttes ar dysusyd.” *are abused (diseased)*
- “Well,” seyde Ryghtwysnes, “for as moche as thou
Knowest nat thy mastyr, thy name shall I chaunge.
‘Dethe’ shalt thou be callyd from hens forward now.
Among all the pepyll thou shalt be had straunge,
1405 But when thou begynnest to make thy chalaunge, *held*
Dredde shalt thou be where so thou become,
And to no creature shalt thou be welcome. *come (i.e., travel)*
- “And as for theym whom thou dedyst serve,
For as moche as they presume on hem to take
1410 That hygh name of God, they shall as they deserve
Therfore be rewardyd, I dare undyrtake,
With peyn perpetuell among fendes blake,
And her names shall be put to oblyvyon — *their*
Among men, but hyt be in derysyon.”
- 1415 “Aha!” seyde Attropos, “Now begyn I wex gladde
That I shall thus avengyd of hem be,
Syth they so long tyme have made me so madde.”
“Yee,” quoth Ryghtwysnes, “here what I sey to thee:
The Lord of Lyght sent thee worde by me
1420 That in Macocrosme sesyne shalt thou take, *Microcosm possession*
Wherfore thy darte redy loke thou make.”
- And as sone as Vertu that undyrstood,
He seyde he was plesyd that hit shuld so be,
And evyn forthewith he commaundyd Presthood
1425 To make hym redy the felde for to se.
Soo thedyr went Presthood with benygnyté,
Conveying thedyr the bessyd sacrament
Of Eukaryst. But furst were theder sent

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- Confession, Contricion, and Satisfaccion,
 1430 Sorow for Synne and Gret Repentaunce,
 Holy Devocion with Good Dysposicion;
 All these thedyr came and also Penaunce,
 As her dewté was to make puruyaunce
 Ageyn the commyng of that blessyd lorde.
 1435 Feythe, Hoope, and Charyté therto were acorde.
- Reason with Sadnes dyd hys dylygence
 To clese the fylde withyn and without,
 And when they sy the bodyly presence
 Of that hooly Eukaryst, lowly gan they lowte.
 1440 So was that lord receyvd, out of dowte,
 With all humble chere debonayre and benygne,
 Lykly to hys pleasure; hit was a gret sygne.
- Then came to the fylde the mynystre fynall,
 Callyd Holy Unccion, with a crysmatory.
 1445 The fyve hygh weyes in especiall
 Theroft he anoyntyd, and made hit sanctuary
 Whom folowyd Dethe, whyche wold nat tary
 Hys fervent power there to put in ure,
 As he was commaundyd, grauntyng Dame Nature,
- He toke hys darte (callyd hys mortall launce)
 And bent hys stroke toward the feldys herte.
 That seyng, Presthoode bade Good Remembraunce
 Toward the felde turne hym, and adverte,
 For except hym, all vertues thense must sterte.
 1450 And evyn with that, Dethe there sesyne took,
 And then all the company clerely hit forsook.
- And as sone as Dethe thus had sesyne take,
 The colour of the felde was chaungyd sodenly:
 The grasse theryn, seere as though hit had be bake,
 1460 And the fyve hygh weyes were muryd opon hy,
 That fro thensforward no one entre shuld therby.
 The posternes also were without lette,
 Bothe inward and outward fyn fast shette.

their duty

bow

(see note)

use

take note

possession

scorched (baked)

walled

admittance

shut

The Assembly of Gods

- Whyche doon, sodenly Dethe vanysshed away,
 1465 And Vertu exaltd was above the firmament,
 Where he toke the crowne of glory that ys ay,
 Preparat by Alpha and Oo omnipotens. *eternal*
- The swete frute of Macocrosme thedyr with hym went.
Microcosm
- And on all thys matyer, as I stood musyng thus,
 1470 Agayn fro the felde to me came Morpheus,
- Seyng thus, “What chere, howe lyketh thee thys syght?
 Hast thou sene ynowgh, or wyll thou se more?” *do you wish to see*
- “Nay, syr,” I seyde, “my trouthe I yow plyght,
 Thys ys suffysyent yef I knew wherfore *promise*
 1475 Thys was to me shewyd, for therof the lore *if*
 Coveyte I to have, yef I gete myght.” *learning*
- “Folow me,” quod he, “and have thy delyght.” *Covet*
- So I hym folowyd tyll he had me brought
 To a fouresquare herber wallyd round about. *arbor with four walls*
- 1480 “Loo,” quoth Morpheus, “here mayst thou that thou sought
 Fynde, yef thou wyll, I put thee out of dout.”
 A lytyll whyle we stood stylly ther without,
 Tyll Wyttie, chyef porter of that herber gate,
 Requyryd by Stody, let us in therate. *Study; enter*
- 1485 But when I came in, I mervelyd gretly *marveled*
 Of that I behelde, and herde there reporte,
 For furst in a chayar, apparaylyd royally, *chair on a dais*
 There sate Dame Doctryne, her chyldren to exorte.
- 1490 And about her was many a sondry sorte,
 Som wyllyng to lerne dyverse scyence,
 And som for to have perfytte intellygence.
- Crownyd she was lyke an emperesse,
 With thre crownes standyng on her hede on hy;
 All thyng about hyr, an infynyte processe *undertaking*
- 1495 Were to declare, I tell yow certeynly.
 Neverthelese, som in mynde therof have I,
 Whyche I shall to yow, as God wyll geve me grace,
 As I sawe and herde tell in short space.

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- Fast by Doctryne on that oone syde,
 1500 As I remembre, sate Holy Texte,
 That openyd hys mouthe to the pepyll wyde,
 But nat in comparyson to Glose, that sate next.
 Moralyzacion with a cloke context *cloak woven (or sewn) together*
 Sate, and Scrypture was scrybe to theym all.
 1505 He sate ay wrytyng of that that shuld fall. *always; which; come to pass*
- These were tho that I there knew,
 By no maner wey of olde aqueyntaunce.
 But as I before saw theym with Vertew,
 Company in felde and havyng dalyaunce,
 1510 And as I thus stood half in a traunce
 Whyle they were occupied in her besynesse, *their*
 Abowte the walles myn ey gan I dresse *eye; cast (address)*
- Where I behelde the marvelous story *most marvelous*
 That ever I yet saw in any pycture.
- 1515 For on the walles was made memory
 Singlerly of every creature
 That there had byn, bothe forme and stature,
 Whos names reherse I wyll, as I can
 Bryng theym to mynde, in ordre, every man.
- 1520 Furst to begynne, there was in portrature
 Adam and Eve, holdyng an appyll round;
 Noe in a shyp, and Abraham havyng sure *Noah; firmly*
 A flyntstone in hys hand, and Isaac lay bound;
 On an hygh mount Jacob slepyng sound
- 1525 And a long laddyr stood hym besyde.
 Joseph in a cysterne was also there that tyde, *well (cistern); time*
- Next whom stood Moyses with hys tables two, *Moses*
 Aaron and Urré, hys armes supportyng; *supporting his (Moses') arms*
 Ely in a brennyng chare was there also. *Elijah; chariot*
- 1530 And Elyze stood clad in an hermytes clothynge;
 David with an harpe and a stoone slyng; *Elisha*
 Isaye, Jeremy, and Ezechiell,
 And, closyd with lyons, holy Danyell, *slingshot* *enclosed*

The Assembly of Gods

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| 1535 | Abacuc, Mychee with Malachy,
And Jonas out of a whales body commyng,
Samuell in a temple, and holy Zakary,
Besyde an awter, all blody standyng;
Osee with Judyth stode there conspyryng
The dethe of Oloferne; and Salomon also,
1540 A chylde with hys swerde dyvydying in two. | <i>Habbakuk, Micheas; Malachias</i>
<i>Zacharias (Zechariah)</i>
<i>altar</i>
<i>Ozias</i>
<i>Holofernes</i> |
| 1545 | Many moo prophetys certeynly there were,
Whos names now come nat to my mynde.
Melchisedech also aspyed I there,
Bred and wyne offryng as fyll to hys kynde;
Joachym and Anne stood all behynde,
Embrasyd in armes to the gyldyn gate,
And holy John Baptyst in a desert sate. | <i>Melchizedek (Melchizedec)</i> |
| 1550 | And now commyth to my remembraunce,
I am avysyd, I saw Sodechy,
And Amos also, with sobre countenaunce,
Standyng with her faces toward Sophony;
Neemy and Esdras bare hem company;
The holy man Joob as an impotent
Then folowyd in pycture with Thoby pacyent. | <i>reminded; Sedecias (Zedekiah)</i>
<i>their; Sophonias (Zephaniah)</i>
<i>Nehemiah; them</i>
<i>Job</i>
<i>Tobias</i> |
| 1555 | These, with many mo, on that oon syde
Of that grene herber portrayed were.
“A,” seyde Morpheous, “a lytyll tyme abyde.
Turne thy face where thy bak was ere,
And beholde well what thou seest there.” | <i>arbor</i>
<i>before</i> |
| 1560 | Than I me turnyd as he me bade
With hert stedefast and countenaunce sade, | |
| 1565 | Where I saw Petyr with hys keyes stande,
Poule with a swerde, James also,
With a scalop, and Thomas holdyng in hys hande
A spere, and Phylyp aprochyd hym, too.
James the Lesse next hem in pycture, loo,
Stood with Bartylmew, whyche was all flayn;
Symon and Thadée shewyd how they were slayn. | <i>Paul</i>
<i>cockle-shell</i>
<i>A spear</i>
<i>James the Lesser</i>
<i>Bartholomew; who; flayed</i> |

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| 1570 | Mathy and Barnabe, drawyng lottys, stood,
Next whom was Marke, a lyon hym by,
Hys booke holdyng, and Matheuw in hys mood
Resemblyd an aungell with wynges, gloryosly.
Luke had a calfe to holde hys booke on hy,
And John, with a cupp and palme in hys hande. | <i>Matthias; Barsabas</i> |
| 1575 | 1575 An egle bare hys book; thus sawe I hem stande: | |
| 1580 | Gregory and Jerome, Austyn and Ambrose,
With pylons on her hedys, stood lyke doctours;
Bernard with Anselme, and as I suppose,
Thomas of Alquyne and Domynyk, confessours;
Benet and Hew, relygyous governours; | <i>Augustine
pillions; their
Bernard of Chartres; Anselm
Thomas Aquinas; Dominic
Benedict; Hugh of St. Victor</i> |
| | Martyne and John, with bysshops tweyne,
Were there also, and Crysostom, certeyne. | <i>Martin
John Chrysostom</i> |
| 1585 | Behynde all these was worshipfull Beede.
All behynde and next hym stood Orygene,
Hydyng hys face as he of hys deede
Had hem ashamyd (ye woot what I mene),
For of errorre was he nat all clene;
And on that syde stood there last of all
The nobyll prophecyssa; "Sybyll," men hyr call. | <i>Bede
as [if] he
himself</i> |
| 1590 | Let me remembre now, I yow pray
(My brayne ys so thynne, I deme in myn hert),
Som of the felyshyp that I there say.
In all thy whyle have I overstert,
A benedycyte, no one ere cowde I advert. | <i>brain; judge</i> |
| 1595 | To thynke on Andrew the Apostyll with hys crosse,
Whom to forgete were a gret losse. | <i>none before could I turn away</i> |
| 1600 | Many oone moo were peyntyd on that wall,
Whos names now come nat to my remembraunce.
But these I markyd in especiall,
And moo cowde I tell in contynuaunce
Of tyme, but forthe to shewe yow the substaunce
Of thys matyr, in the myddes of that herbere
Sate Doctryne, coloryd as any crystall clere, | |

The Assembly of Gods

- 1605 Crownyd, as I tolde yow, late here before,
 Whos apparayll was worthe tresour infynyte;
 All erthely rychesse count I no more
 To that in comparyson valewyng then a myte.
 Over her heede hovyd a culver, fayre and whyte,
 Out of whos byll procedyd a gret leme
 1610 Downward to Doctryne lyke a son beme.
- valuing [no more] than a mite
 their heads hovered a dove
 light (flame)
 sunbeam
- The wordys of Doctryne gave gret redolence
 In swetnes of savour to her dysaples all.
 Hyt ferre excedyd myrre and frankensence,
 Or any other tre spyce, or ellys gall.
 1615 And when she me aspyed, anon she gan me call,
 And commaundyd Morpheus that he shuld bryng me neere,
 For she wolde me shew the effecte of my desyre.
- She seyde, “I know the cause of thy commyng
 Ys to undyrstand, be myn enformacion,
 1620 Sensybly the mater of Morpheus hys shewyng,
 As he hath thee ledde aboute in vysyon.
 Wherfore now I apply thy naturall reson
 Unto my wordys, and er thou hens wende,
 Thow shalt hit know begynnyng and ende.
- matter
 hence depart
- 1625 “Furst, where Eolus to Pluto was brought,
 By hys owne neglygence takyn pryonere
 Withyn the erthe, for he to ferre sought,
 Sygnyfyed ys no more, be that matere,
 But oonly to shew thee howe hit dothe apere
 1630 That welthe unbrydelyd, dayly, at thyne ey
 Encreseth mysrewle and oft causyth foly.
- because; too far
 show you how it; appear
 eye
- “For, lyke as Eolus, beyng at hys large,
 Stretyd hymself thorow his owne lewdenesse,
 For he wold deeple where he had no charge,
 1635 Ryght so wantons by her wyldenesse
 Oft sythe bryng hemself in dystresse
 Because they somtyme to largely deele.
 What may worse be suffryd then overmykyll weele?
- Pressed hardily upon
 their
 themselves
 excessive happiness

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- “By Mynos, the juge of hell desperate,
 1640 May be undyrstand Goddis ryghtwysnes,
 That to every wyght hys peyne deputate
 Assygneth acordyng to hys wykydnes,
 Wherfore he ys callyd juge of crewelnes;
 And as for Diana and Neptunus compleynt,
 1645 Fyguryd may be fooles reson feynt.
- understood God's justice
 pain allotted
 Disguised may be fools' faint reason*
- “For lyke as they made her suggestion,
 To have me Eolus from course of hys kynde,
 Whyche was impossible to bryng to correccion,
 For evermore hys liberté have wyll the wynde,
 1650 In lyke wyse, fooles otherwhyle be blynde,
 Wenyng to subdew with her oone hande
 That ys overmekyll for all an hoole lande.
- similar manner; otherwise
 Thinking; their own hands
 That which is excessive*
- “But what foloweth therof that shall thow heere,
 When they were come to the banquet,
 1655 The gret Apollo with hys sad chere
 So fayre and curteysly gan theym entrete
 That he made her beardys on the new gete.
 Loo, what wysdome dothe to a foole!
 Wherfore ar chyldren put to scoole?
- greet
 their beards; latest fashion
 Why; sent*
- “Oft ys hit seene with sobre contenaunce
 That wyse men fooles overcome, ay
 Turnyng as hem lyst, and all her varyaunce
 Chaunge from ernest into mery play.
 What were they bothe amendyd that day,
 1660 When they were drevyn to her wyttes ende?
 Were they nat fayne to graunt to be hys frende?
- always
 driven
 glad*
- “Ryght so, fooles, when they have doone
 All that they can, than be they fayne
 Geve up her mater to oblyvyone.
 1670 Without rewarde they have no more brayne,
 And yet full oft hath hit be seyne
 When they hit have forgete, and set at nought,
 That they full deere have aftyrward hit bought.
- To give up their matter
 brain*

The Assembly of Gods

- “And as for all tho that represent
 1675 To be callyd ‘goddys’ at that banquet,
 Resemble false ydollys, but to thys entent:
 Was Morpheous commaundyd thedyr thee to fet,
 That thou shuldest know the maner and the get
 Of the paynym lawe and of her beleve;
 1680 How false Idolatry ledeth hem by the sleve.
- “For soone upon the worldys creacion,
 When Adam and Eve had broke the precept,
 Whyche clerkes call the Tyme of Devyacion,
 The worldly pepyll in paynym law slept,
 1685 Tyll Moyses undyr God the tables of stone kept.
 In whyche Tyme poetys feynyd many a fable
 To dyscrete Reson ryght acceptable.
- “And to the entent that they shuld sownde
 To the eares of hem the more plesauntly,
 1690 That theym shuld reede or here, they gave theym a grounde,
 And addyd names unto theym naturally
 Of whom they spake, and callyd hem goddes hy,
 Som for the streyngthe and myght of her nature,
 1695 And som for her sotyll wytty conjecture.
- “By nature thus, as the sevyn planetts
 Have her propre names by astronomers,
 But goddys were they callyd by oold poetys
 For her gret fervency of wyrkyng in her speres;
 Experyence preveth thys at all yeres.
- 1700 And for as other that goddes callyd be,
 For sotyll wytte that shall I teche thee
- “How they by that hygh name of god came.
 In thys seyd Tyme, the pepyll was so rude
 That what maner creature man or woman
 1705 Cowde any novelté contrive, and conclude,
 For the comon wele, all the multitude
 Of the comon peple a god shuld hym call,
 Or a goddesse, aftyr hit was fall.

idols

fetch

mode

pagan; their belief

Deviation

pagan

prudent

purpose; sound

them

them

their subtle

their

after the fact

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- “Of the same thyng that was so new founde
 1710 As Ceres, for she the craft of tylthe founde,
 Wherby more plenteuosly corne dyd habounde;
 The pepyll her callyd thorout every londe
 ‘Goddesse of corne,’ wenyng in her honde
 Had leyn all power of cornys habundaunce.
 1715 Thus were the paynemes deceyvyd by ignoraunce.
- cultivation invented*
- “In lyke maner Isys was callyd the goddesse
 Of frute, for she fyrst made hit multyly
 By the meane of gryffyng, and so by processe
 The name of Pan gan to deyfy,
 1720 For he furst founde the mene shepe to guy.
 Som tooke hit also by her condicion,
 As Pluto, Fortune, and suche other don.
- thinking*
- grain’s abundance*
- pagans*
- “Thus, all that poetys put undyr coverture
 Of fable, the rurall pepyll hit took
 1725 Propyrly as acte, refusyng the fygure.
 Whyche errorr som of hem never forsook.
 Oft a false myrrour deceyveth a manrys look,
 As thow mayst dayly prove at thyne ey.
 Thus were the paynymys deseuyd generally.
- cover*
- “That seyng, the dedely enemy of mankynde,
 By hys power permissyve, entryd the ymages
 Withyn the temples, to make the pepyll blynde
 In her idolatry, standyng on hygh stages.
 1730 In so moche, whoo usyd daungerous passages
 Any maner wey, by watyr or be londe,
 When hyd hys sacryfye, hys answere redy founde.
- Deviation*
- “Thus, duryng the Tyme of Devyacion,
 From Adam to Moyses, was idolatry,
 Thorow the world usyd in comon opynyon.
 1740 These were the goddyns that thow there sy,
 And as for the awayters that stood hem by,
 They polytyk philosophrys and poetes were
 Whyche feynyd the fables that I speke of here.
- saw*
- watchers*
- devised (constructed)*

The Assembly of Gods

- “Then sesyd the Tyme of Devyacion. *ended (ceased)*
1745 When Moyses receyvd that tables of stone,
Entryng the Tyme of Revocation,
On the mount of Synay stondyng alone,
God gave hym myght agene all hys fone, *foes*
And then began the Olde Testament,
1750 Whyche to the pepyll, by Moyses, was sent.
- “And that Tyme duryd to the Incarnacion
Of Cryst, and then began hit to sese,
For then came the Tyme of Reconsylacion
Of man to God. I tell thee doutlese,
1755 When the Son of Man put Hym in prese *put Himself in jeopardy*
Wylfully to suffre dethe for mankynde,
In Holy Scripture thys mayst thow fynde.
- “Thys Reconsylacion was the Tyme of Grace,
When foundyd was the Churche uppon the feyr stoon, *fair*
1760 And to holy Petyr the key delyveryd was
Of hevyn; then hell dyspolyd was anoon. *immediately*
Thus was mankynde delyveryd from hys foon, *foes*
And then began the New Testament
That the Crystyn pepyll beleve in present.
- 1765 “Whyche thre tymes asondry devydyd,
Mayst thow here see, yef thow lyt beholde:
The furst behynde thee yn pycture ys provydyd;
The second of the lyft hande shewe prophetes olde;
The thirde on the ryght hande here hit ys to thee tolde.
1770 Thus hast thow in vysyon the verrey fygure
Of these thre tymes here shewyd in purtrayture.
- “That ys to sey, furst, of Devyacion,
From Adam to Moyses, recordyng Scripture;
Secund, fro Moyses to the Incarnacion
1775 Of Cryst, kepeth Revocacions cure;
And as for the thryd, thow mayst be verrey sure,
Wyll dure from thens to the worldes ende.
But now the fourth must thow have in mynde,

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- 1780 “Whyche ys callyd propurly the Tyme of Pylgremage
 Aftyr som, and som name hit otherwyse,
 And call hyt the Tyme of Daungerous Passage,
 And som, Tyme of Werre, that fully hyt dyspyse.
 But what so hit benamyd, I woll thee avyse:
 Remembre hit well and prynnte hit in thy mynde,
 Wheroft the fygure mayst thow se behynde.
- War
called; advise you
- 1785 “And elles, remembre thysylf in thyne hert,
 Howe Vyce and Vertu dayly theym occupy,
 In maner oone of hem, hym to pervert,
 Another to bryng hym to endeles glory.
 Thus they contynu, fyght for the victory.
 Hyt ys no nede herof to tell the moore,
 For in thys short vysyon, thow hast seen hit before.
- In addition*
- 1790 “And as for Attropos grevous compleynt
 Unto the goddes, betokeneth no more,
 But oonly to shewe thee how frendely constreynt
 On a stedfast hert weyeth full soore.
 Good wyll requyreth, good wyll agene therfore.
 Dyscorde to Dethe hathe ay byn a frende,
 For Dyscorde bryngeth many to her ende.
- their ends*
- 1795 1800 “Wherfore, Dethe thought he wolde avengyd be
 On hys frendes quarell, yef that he myght,
 For her gret unkyndnes, in so moche as she
 Was, among hem all, had so in despyte,
 And at that banquet made of so lyte,
 Whyche causyd hym among hem to cast in a boone
- their
held so
- 1805 That found theym gnawyng ynough, everychoone.
- bone*
everyone of them
- 1810 “Thus oft ys seen oo frende for a nother
 Wyll say and do and somtyme matyrs feyne,
 And also kynnsmen, a cosyn or a brother
 Woll for hys aly, er he have cause, compleyne.
 And where that he loveth, do hys besy peyne,
 Hys frendes matyr as hys owne to take,
 Whyche oft sythe causeth mochyll sorow awake.
- ally, before*
much

The Assembly of Gods

- “Be hyt ryght or wrong, he chargeth nat a myte,
1815 As toward that poynt he taketh lytell heede;
So that he may have hys froward appetyte
Performyd, he careth nat howe hys soule speede,
Of God or Devyll have suche lytyll dreede.
Howe be hyt, oon ther ys that lorde ys of all,
1820 Whyche to every wyght at last rewarde shall. *creature*
- “And as for the batayll betwene Vyce and Vertew, holde
So pleynly, appereth to thee inwardly
To make exposicion therof, new or olde
Were but superfluyté; therfore refuse hit I.
1825 In man shall thow fynde that werre kept dayly,
Lyke as thow hast seen hit fowtyn before thy face. *fought*
The pycture me behynde shewyth hit in lytyll space.
- “And as for Macrocosme, hit ys no more to say
But the lesse worlde to the comon entent,
1830 Whyche applyed ys to man both nyght and day,
So ys man the felde to whyche all were sent
On bothe parties, and they that thedyr went,
Sygnifyf no more but aftyr the condicion
Of every mans opynyon. *Microcosm*
- 1835 “And as for the nobyll knyght Perseveraunce,
Whyche gate the felde when hit was almost goon,
Betokeneth no more but the contynuaunce *than*
Of vertuous lyvyng tyll dethe hath overgoon.
Who so wyll doo, rewardyd ys anon, *do [this]; soon*
- 1840 As Vertu was with the crowne on hy,
Whyche ys no more but everlasting glory.
- “And as for Prescience and Predestinacion,
That eche of hem rewardyd aftyr hys desert
Ys to undyrstond no more but dampnacion
1845 To vycyous pepyll ys the verrey scourge smert.
Rewarde for they fro Vertu wolde pervert,
And endelesse joy ys to hem that be electe,
Rewardyd and to all that folow the same secte. *according to his due*

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- 1850 “And as for the keyes of the posterns fyve,
 Whyche were to Morpheus rewardyd for hys labour,
 Sygnyfy nat ellys but whyle man ys on lyve,
 Hys fyve inwarde wyttes shal be every houre
 In hys slepe occupyed, in hele and in langoure,
 With fantasyes, tryfyls, illusions, and dremes,
 Whyche poetys call ‘Morpheus stremes.’
- gates
nothing else except; alive
health; sickness
trifles (false or idle tales)
- 1855
- 1860 “And as for Resydivacion, ys no more to sey,
 But aftyr confession, turnyng agene to syn,
 Whyche to every man retorneth, saunz deley,
 To vycyous lyvynge ageyn hym to wyn.
 Whyle any man lyveth, wyll hit never blyn
 That cursyd conclusion for to bryng abowte,
 But Reson with Sadnes kepe hit stylly owte.
- [there] is no more*
without
to win him again
cease from
Unless; out
- 1865 “Here hast thou propurly the verrey sentence
 Herde now declaryd of thys vysyon;
 The pycture also geveth clere intellygence.
 Theroft beholdyn with good discresyon;
 Loke well aboute and take consyderasyon,
 As I have declaryd, whether hit so be.”
 “A, syr,” quoth Morpheus, “what tolde I thee?
- 1870 “Hast thou nat now thyne hertes desyre?
 Loke on yon wall yonder before.”
 And all that tyme stood I in a wyre,
 Whyche way furst myn hert wold geve more
 To looke; in a stody stood I therfore.
- as if caught in a quandary*
meditative state
- 1875 Neverthelese, at last, as Morpheus me badde,
 I lokyd forward with countenaunce sadde,
- Where I behelde in portrayture
 The maner of the felde evyn as hit was
 Shewyd me before, and every creature
- 1880 On boothe sydes beyng drawyn in small space,
 So curiously, in so lytell a compace.
 In all thys world was never thyng wrought,
 Hit were impossyble in erthe to be thought.

The Assembly of Gods

- And when I had long beholde that pycture:
1885 “What!” quoth Morpheous, “How long shalt thou looke,
Daryng as a dastard on yon portrayture?
Come of, for shame! Thy wytte stant a crooke!”
I, heryng that, myn hert to me tooke
Towarde the fourth wall, turnyng my vysage
1890 Where I sawe poetys and phylosophyrs sage.
- off; stands aslant*
- Many oon mo then at the banquet
Servyd the goddes, as I seyde before.
Som were made standyng and som in chayeres set;
Som lookyng on bookes, as they had stodyed sore;
1895 Som drawyng almenakes, and in her handes bore
Astyrlabes, takyng the altytude of the sonne,
Among whom Dyogenes sate in a tonne.
- intensely*
their
barrel (cask)
- And as I was lokyng on that fourthe wall,
Of Dyogenes beholdyng the ymage,
1900 Sodeynly Doctryne began me to call,
And bad me turne toward hyr my vysage.
And so then I dyd with humble corage.
“What thynkest thou?” she sayde, “hast thou nat th’entent
Yet of these foure wallys? what they represent?
- face*
heart
- 1905 “The pycture on the fyrist, that standeth at my bake,
Sheweth thee the present Tyme of Pylgremage,
Of whyche before I unto thee spake,
Whyche ys the Tyme of Daungerus Passage.
The secund, dyrectly ageyne my vysage,
- Shows you*
- 1910 The Tyme expresseth of Devyacion,
Whyle paynymē lawe had the domynacion.
- “The thryd wall, standyng on my lyft hande,
The Tyme representeth of Revocacion,
And the fourth, standyng on my ryght hande,
1915 Determyneth the Tyme of Reconsylacion.
Thys ys the effect of thy vysion.
Wherfore thee nedyth no more theron to muse;
Hit were but veyn thy wittes to dysuse.

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- “But duryng the Tyme of Reconsiliacion,
 1920 Thy Tyme of Pylgremage looke well thow spende,
 And then woll gracious Predestinacion
 Bryng thee to glory at thy last ende.”
 And evyn with that, cam to my mynde
 My furst conclusion that I was abowte,
 1925 To have drevyn er slepe made me to loute. *before; bend (bow)*
- That ys to sey, howe Sensualyté
 With Reason to acorde myght be brought abouthe,
 Whyche causyd me to knele downe on my kne
 And beseke Doctryne determyne that doute. *beseech; doubt*
 1930 “Oo, Lord God,” seyde Doctryne, “canst thow nat withoute
 Me that conclusion bryng to an ende?
 Ferre ys fro thee wytte, and ferther, good mende.” *mind*
- And even with that, Dethe gan appere,
 Shewyng hymself as though that he wolde
 1935 Hys darte have occupiedd withyn that herbere. *arbor*
 But there was noone for hym, yong nor olde,
 Save oonly I, Doctryne hym tolde.
 And when I herde hyr with hym comon thus, *commune*
 I me withdrew behynde Morpheus,
- 1940 Dredyng full soore lest he with hys dart,
 Thorow Doctrynes wordes, any entresse *interest*
 In me wolde have had, or claymed any part,
 Whyche shuld have causyd me gret hevynesse.
 Within whyche tyme and short processe,
 1945 Came theder Reason and Sensualyté.
 “A,” quoth Doctryne, “ryght welcome be ye.
- “Hyt ys nat long syth we of yow spake.
 Ye must, er ye go, determyne a dowte.” *resolve a doubt*
 And evyn with that, she the mater brake
- 1950 To theym and tolde hit every where abowte
 I wold have be thens, yef I had mowte. *been; strength*
 For feere I lookyd as blak as a coole; *coal*
 I wold have cropynd in a mouse hoole. *crept into*

The Assembly of Gods

- 1955 “What!” quoth Doctryne, “where ys he now,
 That mevyd thys mater straunge and diffuse?
 He ys a coward! I make myn avow,
 He hydeth hys hede, hys mocion to refuse.”
 “Blame hym nat,” quoth Reson, “alwey that to use,
 When he seeth Dethe so neere at hys hande.
 1960 Yet ys hys part hym to wythstande.”
- “Or at the leste way, ellys fro hym flee
 As long as he may; who dothe otherwyse,
 Ys an ydiote,” quoth Sensualyté.
 “Who dredyth nat Dethe, wyse men hym dyspysye.”
- 1965 “What!” seyde Doctryne, “how long hathe thys gyse
 Be holdyn and usyd thus, atwyx yow tweyne?
 Yee were nat wont to acorde, certeyne.”
- “Yes,” quoth Reson, “in thys poynt alway
 To every man have wee geven our counsayll,
 1970 Dethe for to flee as long as they may.
 All though we otherwyse have done our travayll,
 Yche other to represse yet withoute fayll,
 In that poynt oonly discordyd we never,
 Thus condescendyd theryn be we for ever.”
- 1975 “A, a!” seyde Doctryne, “then ys the conclusion
 Clerely determinyd of the gret dowte
 That here was mevyd,” and halfe in derysion
 Sme me then callyd and bade me loke owte.
 “Come forthe,” she seyde, “and feere nat thys rowte.”
- 1980 And even with that, Reson and Sensualyté
 And Dethe fro thens were vanysshedyd, all thre.
- Then lokyd I forthe, as Doctryne me badde.
 When Dethe was goone, me thought I was bolde
 To shew mysylf, but yet was I sadde.
 1985 Me thought my dowte was nat as I wolde,
 Clerely and opynly declaryd and tolde.
 Hit sownyd to me as a parable,
 Derke as a myste, or a feynyd fable.

manner of behavior
Been held; between
accustomed to get along, certainly

work

fear; company

fear

*sounded; like
 imagined*

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

	And Doctryne my conceyete gan espy.	
1990	“Wherfore,” seyde she, “standyst thou so styl?	<i>metaphor</i>
	Whereyn ys thy thought? Art thou in stody	
	Of thy quescion? Hast thou nat thy fyll	
	To thee declaryd? Tell me thy wyll:	
	Herdest thou nat Reson and Sensualyté	
1995	Declare thy dowte here before thee?”	
	“Forsothe,” quoth I, “I herde what they seyde,	
	But, neverthelese, my wyt ys so thynne,	
	And also of Dethe I was so afayed,	<i>afraid</i>
	That hit ys oute where hyt went ynne,	
2000	And so that matyr can I nat wynne	
	Without your helpe and benyvolence	
	Therofto expresse the verray sentence.”	
	“Well,” quoth Doctryne, “then geve attendaunce	
	Unto my wordes, and thou shalt here	
2005	Opynly declaryd the concordaunce	<i>together</i>
	Atwene Sensualyté and Reson in fere.	
	Yef thou take hede, hit clerely dothe apere	
	How they were knette in oon opynyon:	
	Bothe agayn Dethe helde contradycyon.	<i>against; opposition</i>
2010	“Whyche concordaunce no more sygnyfyeth	
	To pleyne undyrstandingyng, but in every mane	<i>man</i>
	Bothe Sensualyté and Reson applyeth,	
	Rather Dethe to fle then with hit to be tane.	<i>taken</i>
	Loo, in that poynt accorde they holly thane,	<i>wholly then</i>
2015	And in all other they clerely dyscorde.	<i>disagree</i>
	Thus ys trewly set thy doutfull monacorde.”	<i>agreement</i>
	I, heryng that, knelyd on my kne,	
	And thankyd her lowly for hyr dyscyplyne,	<i>humbly</i>
	That she vouchesafe of hyr benygnyté	
2020	Of tho gret dowtys me to enlumyne.	<i>those</i>
	Well was she worthy to be callyd Doctryne,	
	Yef hit had be no more, but for the solucion	
	Of my demaunde, and of thys straunge vysyon.	

The Assembly of Gods

- And as I with myne heede began for to bow,
2025 As me well ought to do hyr reverence,
She thens departyd, I cannot tell how,
But withyn a moment goone was she thens.
Then seyde Morpheus, "Let us go hens.
What shuld we heere tary lengere?
2030 Hast thou nat herde a generall answere

"To all thy matyrs that thou lyst to meve?
My tyme draweth nere that I must rest."
And evyn therwith he tooke me by the sleve
And seyde, "goo we hens, for that hold I best,
2035 As good ys ynowgh as a gret feste.
Thow hast seen ynowgh; hold thee content."
And evyn with that, forthe with hym I went,

Tyll he hade me brought agene to my bedde
Where he me founde, and then pryyly
2040 He stale awey. I cowde nat undyrstande
Where he became, but sodenly
As he came, he went; I tell yow veryly,
Whyche doone, fro slepe I gan to awake;
My body all in swet began for to shake

2045 For drede of the syght that I had seene, fear
Wenyng to me all had be trew, Imagining; myself; been
Actuellly doon, where I had beene, happened
The batayll holde twene Vyce and Vertew. held
But when I sy hit, hit was but a whew,
2050 A dreme, a fantasy, and a thyng of nought. saw; hue (will-of-the-wisp)
To study theron I had no more thought,

Tyll at the last I gan me bethynke
For what cause shewyd was thys vysyon.
I knew nat; wherfore, I toke pen and ynke
2055 And paper to make therof mencion
In wrytyng, takyng consideracion
That no defaute were founde in me,
Wheron accusyd I ought for to be deficiency

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| | For slowthe that I had left hit untolde, | <i>sloth</i> |
| 2060 | Nowthyr by mowthe nor in remembraunce,
Put hit in wrytyng, where thorow manyfolde
Weyes of accusacion myght turne me to grevaunce.
All thys I saw as I lay in a traunce. | <i>Neither orally nor by memory</i> |
| 2065 | But whedyr hit was with myne ey bodyly,
Or nat, in certayn, God knoweth and nat I. | <i>physical eye</i> |
| | That to dyscerne, I purpose nat to deegle.
So large by my wyll, hit longeth nat to me,
Were hit dreme or vysion, for your owne wele. | <i>benefit</i> |
| 2070 | All that shall hit rede, here rad or se;
Take therof the best and let the worst be;
Try out the corne clene from the chaff,
And then may ye say ye have a sure staff | <i>mean; read or see</i> |
| | To stand by at nede, yef ye woll hit holde,
And walke by the way of Vertu hys loore. | <i>Virtue's teaching</i> |
| 2075 | But alwey beware, be ye yong or olde,
That your Frewyll ay to Vertu moore
Apply than to Vyce, the eysyer may be boore
The burdyn of the fylde, that ye dayly fygght
Agayn your thre enemyes, for all her gret myght: | <i>always
easier; borne
field
Despite; their</i> |
| 2080 | That ys to sey, the Devyll and the Flesshe,
And also the Worlde, with hys glosyng chere,
Whyche on yow looketh ever newe and fresshe;
But he ys nat as he doth apere. | <i>false demeanor</i> |
| 2085 | Loke ye, kepe yow ay out of hys daungere,
And so the vyctory shall ye obteyne,
Vyce fro yow exylyd and Vertew in yow reyne. | <i>gain
rule</i> |
| | And then shall ye have the triumphall guerdoun
That God reserveth to every creature,
Above in Hys celestiall mansioun, | <i>reward</i> |
| 2090 | Joy and blys infinite eternally to endure.
Wherof we say we wold fayne be sure,
But the wey thedyrward to holde be we lothe,
That oft sythe causeth the good Lorde to be wrothe. | <i>thitherward</i> |

The Assembly of Gods

- 2095 And by oure desert, oure habitacion chaungeth
Fro joy to peyne and woo perpetuelly;
From Hys gloryous syght thus He us estraungeth
For our vycyous lyvyng thorough owre owne foly.
Wherfore let us pray to that Lord of Glory
Whyle we in erthe bee, that He wyll geve us grace,
So us here to guyde that we may have a place,
- separates
Because of
- 2100 Accordyng to oure regeneracion
With hevynly spyrytes, Hys name to magnyfy,
Whyche downe descendyd for our redempcion,
Offryng Hymsylf on the crosse to Hys fadry on hy.
- 2105 Now benygne Jhesu, that born was of Mary,
All that to thys vysion have govyn her audyence,
Graunt eternall joy aftyr thy last sentence.

Amen.

Explanatory Notes

The Interpretation of the Names of the Gods and Goddesses (Table of Gods and Goddesses)

- 24 *harneyse*. I.e., personal fighting equipment, armor. Wynkyn de Worde mistranscribes as *harveyste*, an error that is reduplicated in all subsequent editions and reprintings, including Triggs'. See Hawes' *The Pastime of Pleasure*, lines 225–31, on Minerva as goddess of “harneys.”

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses

- 1 *Whan*. The reference to Phebus running his *cours* echoes the beginning of the *Canterbury Tales*, although in this instance the circuit is nearly finished, with Phebus in the astrological sign of Cancer, which ends in July. The unconventional time of the dream vision — summer or Indian summer — echoes those of *The Assembly of Ladies* (September) and *Pearl* (August); see also Hawes' *The Example of Vertu* in *The Minor Poems*, which is set in September.
- 3 *Pictagoras speere*. The ninth sphere, as described by Pythagoras who, according to Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*, “the first fynder was / Of the art” (lines 1168–69) of music with its harmonic intervals, was thought to reflect the music of the spheres. Pythagoras is viewed here as a great arithmetician who established the principles of ratio and spherical geometry. The sphere signifies the harmony in which all discord is resolved. See Triggs' note. It is a “Pictagoras” who notes that “liche as oure begynnnyng cometh of God, oure ende muste nedis be there,” in the fable about “Acropos” (Atropos, or Death), in Christine de Pizan's *The Epistle of Othea* (fable 34, p. 45). In *The Courte of Sapience* (line 1970) he is the observer of “a multytude of unytees” (see note to line 7) and the one who “by the soun of hamers in a forge . . . fyrst musik ganne to forge” (lines 2036–37).
- 7 *monacorde*. In Pythagorean/Boethian lore, everything yearns for and moves toward the One. But amidst temporalities such conjoining is never complete, thus the narrator's frustration. See notes to lines 3, 1872, and 2030. See also Boethius,

The Assembly of Gods

Consolatio Philosophiae 3.m.9, on the world soul that unifies all. Boethius was the medieval authority on such matters in his *De musica*. See Elizabeth Teviotdale, “Music and Pictures in the Middle Ages,” in *Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Music*, ed. Tess Knighton and David Fellows (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992; rpt. 1997), p. 187, for a depiction of a monachord as a one-stringed instrument used to explain musical theory in a twelfth-century illumination of Boethius, who holds one in his lap as he explains ratios, number, intervals, and harmony.

- 12 *To rowne with a pylow.* To share secrets or commune with a pillow implies meditation or dialogic consultation of an intimate, mysterious sort. To sleep might also lead to visionary dreams, an *oraculum* (oracle), *visio* (vision), or *somnium* (enigmatic dream), according to Macrobius’ well-known fourth-century commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis* (Dream of Scipio), 1.3.2
- 14 *Morpheus.* Morpheus comes as a guide, as is evident by his leading the narrator by the sleeve. Compare Chaucer’s *The Book of the Duchess*, where he is sought as a counselor. Morpheus is “the messangere / Of the god of slepe and dremys sere” in Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea* (fable 78, p. 95), who both makes dreams and causes men to dream. See also *The Assembly of Gods*, lines 1849–54; for “Morpheus stremes” see line 1855: as reward for his “labour,” the god is granted the keys to five posterns, or gates, that is, control of the fantasies, idle tales, illusions, and dreams that occupy the five “inwarde wyttes” (or senses) while humans sleep. See note to line 35 on Morpheus’ capacities for insight.
- 18 *Mynos the justyse.* In Dante’s *Inferno*, the judge Minos awaits the confessions of sinners at the entrance to the second circle, after which he decides where the sinner will be sent and “encircles himself with his tail as many times as the grades he will have it sent down” (5.11–12; trans. Charles S. Singleton). Minos is similarly termed the “maister and iusticere of Helle” in Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea* (fable 4, p. 13) and also a “provost or a chef bailie, and a-fore him is broughte alle [the soules] descending into that valeye; and aftir that thei have deserved of penaunce, as many degrees as he will that thei be sette deepe, as ofte he turnyth his taile aboute him” (fables 4–5, p. 13). In Chaucer’s *Troilus* 4.1188, Troilus, seeing Crisyede swoon and imagining she is dead, longs to die so that he can follow Criseyde’s soul where “the doom of Mynos wolde it dighte.”
- 19 *sylogyse.* To engage in ratiocination, the making up of syllogisms. The OED cites this line as the earliest use of the term, noting Stephen Hawes, *The Pastime of*

Explanatory Notes

Pleasure (1509), as the next, with “But rude people, opprest with blyndnes / Agaynst your fables, wyll often solisgyse [sic]” (lines 792–93). The term implies some degree of precious futility.

- 21 “*He must nedys go that the devell dryves.*” A common proverb. See Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), D278, p. 154, which cites John Skelton’s *Garland of Laurel*, “Nedes must he sin that the deuyll dryvith” (1523) and eighteen other instances in the following centuries.
- 27 *Pluto*. The ruler of hell (see Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae* 3.m.12), Pluto is also identified in commentaries on Boethius as god of the underworld, or of earth, and therefore of wealth or riches. Pluto’s relationship with the “juge desperate” (i.e., Minos in line 28) exists in analogue with that of God’s relationship with Judge Minos in Dante’s *Inferno*: hell was created by God for the unrepentant sinner, as the gate of hell reminds those who pass through (“Justice moved my maker on high, / Divine power made me and supreme wisdom and primal love” [3.4–6, trans. Singleton]). For his mythographic significance in the Middle Ages, see especially the long sixth book on Pluto as fourth child of Saturn and ruler of the underworld in the influential Third Vatican Mythographer (Bode, pp. 174–97).
- 35 *a lytyll corner callyd ‘Fantasy.’* To place Morpheus’ dwelling place in fantasy is to link him with dreams. Compare Chaucer’s *The Hous of Fame*, lines 66–80. The term derives from an ancient Greek concept of showing or making visible. Phantasos, who according to Pierre Bersuire’s fourteenth-century commentary on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (11.633), is one of the three sons of Somnus, or Sleep; he governs the lowest appetites — gluttony and sloth — just as brother Morpheus governs desire for fame and brother Icelos, lust. Dreams in Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea* (fable 78) are sometimes troublesome and dark, sometimes meaningful or meaningless, but no one is wise enough to interpret them except the expositors themselves. See also Chaucer’s *The Book of the Duchess* (lines 136–95) and John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* (4.2985 ff.), both of which discuss Morpheus’ dwelling in the cave of sleep near the strange land of Chymerie.
- 37 *Cerberus*. The “porter of hell,” with his “cheyne,” is called “Serebrus” in Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea* (fable 3, p. 10) and associated with his master Pluto or with his conqueror Hercules, who tames him in his fifth Labor. Cerberus is often depicted as a three-headed “hell-hound” whose three heads allegorically represent the three continents of earth, the three ages of human life, or three kinds of envy, and as earth,

The Assembly of Gods

a flesh-eater, he is ever greedy for new meat (that is, sinners), according to commentaries on Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae* (3.m.12). See also Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, on King Alfred's Cerberus in the Anglo-Saxon translation of Boethius (pp. 211–12); the influential Boethius glosses on Cerberus by Remigius of Auxerre (p. 237); William of Conches (p. 412); and Bernardus Silvestris on the *Aeneid* (p. 460).

- 38 *Eolus, in raggys evyll arayd.* Eolus changed from A: *Colus*. “Colus” is also the name for Eolus, “god of wyndes,” in Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea* (fables 12 and 79), and in Hawes’ *The Example of Vertu*, which also begins with the roaring of Eolus’ “blastes” (line 132). Eolus, or Aeolus, is responsible for the fatal shipwreck of Ceys (Seys), husband of Alchion (Halcyon). In commentaries on the *Aeneid*, Aeolus is linked with Juno, who governs the aerial region and is responsible for honors and fame. See also Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 121, 336–37, 447, and 462. In *The Assembly of Gods*, lines 585–88, he is released and called upon to attack Vertu. Her constancy is unaffected by his blasts, however, just as she is immune to all assaults of Fortune. See lines 1646 ff. for Dame Doctryne’s explication of Eolus.
- 39 *Neptunus and Diana.* Neptune is god of the sea; Diana is goddess of the wood and hunting and identified with the moon. Saturn’s four children govern the four cosmological regions: Jupiter, the ether, or fire; Juno, the air; Neptune, the water; and Pluto, the earth. For Neptune, Christine reminds the knight that he should pay his devotions to this god to protect him from tempests (fable 33, pp. 44–45). For the genealogy of Neptune and his role in medieval mythographies, see the note to line 337.
Diana is glossed in Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea* as the moon who “yeveth chaste condicion; and thei named it after a ladi that so was callid, the which was ful chaste and was ever a virgin” (fable 23, p. 35). In the “Allegorie” for this fable she represents the “God of hevyn.” For the mythographic significance of Diana as the moon, see Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, especially in Cicero (p. 79); the First Vatican Mythographer (pp. 191–92); and Martianus (p. 291). See also the chapter on Diana in the Third Vatican Mythographer, 8.3 (Bode, pp. 200–01).
- 66 *roote and rynde.* The sense is root and bark, or the whole plant, i.e., entirely.
- 164 *Appollo.* Apollo played an especially important role in Macrobius’ *Saturnalia*, Fulgentius’ *Mitologiae*, and Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, in part because in the last work he aided his friend, the bridegroom Mercury, in his search for a bride. School commentaries on Martianus and Boethius (3.m.9) up to

Explanatory Notes

the twelfth century helped to disseminate the basically Neoplatonic reading of the god Apollo as a planet signifying light and truth. See Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, on Apollo in the *Saturnalia* (pp. 77–80); in Fulgentius (pp. 106–07, 121); in the First Vatican Mythographer (pp. 191–92); and in Remigius of Auxerre (pp. 272–75, 292). Known as “Phoebus,” the sun, Apollo is prominent in Chaucer, especially in The Franklin’s Tale, where Aurelius appeals to him for help, and in The Manciple’s Tale, where he appears as a central character. See also the eighth book on the god Apollo in the Third Vatican Mythographer (Bode, pp. 210–13). In Christine’s *The Episile of Othea*, he represents the clarity of truth and is linked with Sunday and gold (fables 9, 40, and 81). About Apollo Christine writes, “The sonne be his clernes schewith thinges that be hidde; and therfore / Trouthe, the which is clere and schewith secrete thinges, may be yeven to him” (fable 9, p. 19). In her “Allegorie” he signifies the truth of Christ opposed to all falsity. In Lydgate he is commonly used to signify governance in the daytime world of nature, much as he is here.

- 167 *banket*. Triggs (p. 62) notes, “In the fourteenth century the cloth or cushion covering a bank or bench on which dessert was served was called a ‘banker’; a feast came to be called a ‘banket’ (*Mem. of Lond.*, ed. Riley, I, p. 179 and p. 44).”
- 203 *Bothe her compleyntes*. See lines 194 and 195 where Diane asks why Eolus is permitted to remain with the gods and what action should be taken against his crimes.
- 220 *teares from hys eyen go*. Proof of repentence or sincerity by pointing to tears is a common literary device. Compare Aurelius’ proof to Apollo in his prayer for grace from Dorigen: “Lord Phebus se the tearis on my cheke” (*CT* V[F]1078); or Dorigen’s touching appeal to “Eterne God,” with “many a pitous tear” (*CT* V[F]894).
- 243 *Phebe*. The sister of the sun, Apollo (or Phoebus), *Phebe* is similarly identified as the moon and linked with folly and unsteadfastness, in Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea* (fable 10). There she is associated with Monday and silver and called by the masculine name of her brother, *Phebus*, as she is in *The Assembly of Gods* (see textual note to lines 243 and 358). Identified by a variety of names in the Middle Ages, as Diana her name is said to derive (according to the First Vatican Mythographer in myth 37) from *duana*, because the moon is two and appears both at night and during the day; she was also known as Vesta, from *vestita*, in that she dresses in grasses. As Lucina, goddess of childbirth, and Proserpina, goddess of the

The Assembly of Gods

underworld, she has a tripartite role, which supports her name as “Trivia,” meaning (according to some sources) a place where three roads meet and referring to the fact that Diana was worshipped at the crossroads (*tri* and *via*) (see Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 191 and 584n14). In The Franklin’s Tale Chaucer refers to her as “Lucina the sheene” who is “emperisse aboven [Neptune]” (*CTV* [F] 1045–48). See below, note to line 362.

- 248 *aboorde*. The term derives from the practice of placing boards on trestles to create tables, which then could be removed as the clearing took place.
- 249 *Othea*. Referred to in line 304 as the “chyeſ grounde of polyty.” Although Triggs equates Othea with Athena (p. 68), a passage cited by Bühler in his edition of Scrope’s translation of Christine, that equation is doubtful. Christine, in her *The Epistle of Othea*, invented the name “Othea,” probably to denote the goddess, “O Thea,” although *Othea* also appears as “goddesse of prudence” in Lydgate’s *Troy Book* (Prol. 38) and in *The Assembly of Ladies*, where she is a different goddess, quite separate from Athena. In *The Assembly of Gods*, Minerva more likely equates with Athena. See note to lines 344–49.
- 250 *A dew ordre in every place ys expedyent*. The seating of the gods at the Assembly places Apollo, the sun, governor of the middle of the translunar realm, rather than Jupiter, penultimate planet, at the head of the assembly. That adjustment of hierarchy identifies the natural concerns of the poem, as the assemblage attempts to deal with changes provoked by Eolus’ blasts that occur below the moon and the sun and therefore are not the concern of the region designated by the upper planets. (Note that Juno, consort of Jupiter, is also silent, perhaps because she governs the aerial region dominated by Aeolus as god of winds.) The paradigm applies to the Christian perspective of the microcosm back on earth, as well as the translunar and cosmological realm, where Dame Nature becomes a factor in the decision to release Sensualité, despite his errant behavior (see lines 1268 ff.).
- 254–55 *Aurora the goddesse*, / . . . “*Thowgh ye wepe*. Aurora is “Spryng of the day” in the “Interpretation of the Names of Gods and Goddesses” (line 12) and also in Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea*. Christine’s Aurora “in hir-silf hath sorowe and wepyng” because she lost her son Tynus in the battle of Troy (fable 44, pp. 55–56). See the First Vatican Mythographer, fable 139 (Bode, pp. 44–45). As Daybreak she also represents the new day. See Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, p. 458, where in Bernardus Silvestris’ commentary on the *Aeneid*, book 6, she represents the first glow of understanding that illuminates the eyes of the mind.

Explanatory Notes

- 260 *Mars, myghty god and strong.* In Christine's *The Epistle of Othea*, the followers of Mars love and pursue arms and the deeds of knighthood; the god is linked there with Tuesday and iron (fable 11 — see also *The Hous of Fame*, line 1459). For the etymology of his name and its association with Mors, death, see Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, p. 318; for his mythographic definitions in the First and Second Vatican Mythographers, see pp. 201 and 318; for his role as a planet, see p. 382; and for his significance in Martianus Capella, see p. 296. Mars figures prominently in Chaucer's writings. See especially *The Knight's Tale*, *The Complaint of Mars*, and *The Complaint of Venus*; in *Troilus* 5.1853 he is cited as one of the "rascaille" pagan gods. In Lydgate's *Troy Book* Mars is a war god and a cuckolder of Vulcan (see, for example, Prol. 1–37). In *The Courte of Sapyence* he is "cruel," like a "tempestuous fury" (line 474).
- 267 *mantell and the ryng.* Triggs (p. 68) cites similar lines relating to mantle and ring (along with the color black) as signs of widowhood in Lydgate's *Dance of Macabre* (Bodl. 686) and elsewhere in his *Minor Poems*.
- 269 *good Jupyter.* Christine notes, "Jovis or Jubiter is a planete of softe condicion, amyable and ful gladde and figure to sangwen complexion," in *The Epistle of Othea* (fable 6, pp. 16–17), as in he is a "mankydely planete." In Gower Jupiter is said to be "softe and swete" by nature (*Confessio Amantis* 7.912) and an opponent to "stormy weder" (7.928). Allegorically, Christine's Jupiter signifies the mercy and compassion of Jesus Christ. Jupiter is normally associated with tin (line 270), as in Chaucer (*The Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, CT VIII [G] 828), but Christine oddly links him with copper and brass, which differs from the tradition followed by *The Assembly of Gods*, Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate (see Bühler, pp. 252–53). One might think, given his supremacy among the gods and his place at the head of a similar assembly in Martianus Capella, that Diana and Neptune would have taken their plight to him and that he would have called the feast. See the notes to lines 164 and 250.
- 275 *Juno, full rychely beseene.* Juno represents riches and fame, just as Venus represents love and beauty, and Minerva, wisdom, in the medieval glosses on the Judgment of Paris. In the *Aeneid* commentaries, because Juno was spurned by Paris in his Judgment of the three goddesses, she retaliates against the Trojans by delaying Aeneas in Carthage, with Dido, in his flight from Troy and his journey toward his ultimate goal, the founding of Italy. For her antipathy to Paris and the Argives, see Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 313, 315, and 425; for her role in the Judgment of Paris in Chaucer, see Patricia R. Orr, pp. 159–76. For her various names as Diana,

The Assembly of Gods

Proserpina, and Lucina, see also Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 249, 286–87, and 384–85; for her role in Stoic myth, pp. 10–11, 429, and 432; for her role as ruler of air, pp. 248, 284, 287–90, 313, and 318; and as goddess of childbirth and marriage, pp. 287, 375, and 385.

- 276 *sercote*. “An outer coat or garment, commonly of rich material, worn by people of rank of both sexes” (OED).
- 280 *oon*. For proof that Saturn causes *many oon to morne*, see Chaucer’s The Knight’s Tale (*CTI* [A] 2454–69).
- 282 *frost and snow*. Because Saturn is the slowest and most distant planet in the Ptolemaic scheme, he is presented as being most wintry (n.b., his “bawdryk of isykles” in line 285) and leaden (line 287). Compare Chaucer’s The Knight’s Tale, cited in notes to lines 280 and 287. See also Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid*, ed. Robert L. Kindrick (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), lines 151–68.
- 283 *fawchon*. A falchion is “a broad sword, more or less curved, with the edge on the convex side; in later use and in poetry, sword of any kind” (OED). Saturn’s son Jupiter cut off his privy members, which may explain the blood on the blade. For this reason Saturn often represents prudence in medieval commentaries; from his testicles, thrown into the sea, his daughter Venus, also known as Aphrodite, born from foam, sprang. The poet may have forgotten Saturn’s association with a scythe that mows down, as does time; or, perhaps, *fawchon* is simply a synonym for “scythe.”
- 287 *leede*. Saturn is similarly associated with lead and Saturday in Chaucer’s The Knight’s Tale (*CTI* [A] 2454–69) and Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea* (fable 8, pp. 18–19). For Christine he is cold because he is a “planete of slowe condicion” that controls the outermost of the planetary spheres. The outermost planet of the seven in the Ptolemaic system of cosmology, Saturn has the longest path and is therefore often represented as cold, distant, and old. On his important planetary signification and role in Chaucer’s The Knight’s Tale, see Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer*, especially pp. 185–213. See also Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1964).
- 289–94 *Ceres . . . / . . . hervest horne*. Ceres is the goddess of corn who invented the craft of

Explanatory Notes

tilling in Christine's *The Epistle of Othea*: "because that the lande bare the more plenteuouslye after that it was eried, they seide that sche was a goddes of cornys; and thei callid the lande after here name" (fable 25, p. 36). Because Ceres as a goddess of grain appears, along with Bacchus as god of the vine, in Virgil's *Georgics*, a work much less well known in the Middle Ages than his much-glossed *Aeneid*, she plays a less significant role in the early medieval mythographies; on her role in commentaries on the *Georgics*, see Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 177–79; on her Terentian association with bread and grain, which reappears in Remigius of Auxerre and Martianus, p. 282; for her coupling with Bacchus, god of wine, in Macrobius glosses, pp. 423–25 and 442–43. Ceres is identified as the wife of Saturn in the Third Vatican Mythographer, book 2. For her important role in Christine, see Judith Kellogg, "Christine de Pizan as Chivalric Mythographer: *L'Epistre Othea*," in *The Mythographic Art*, ed. Chance, pp. 100–24; and "Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*: Feminist Myth and Community," *Essays in Arts and Sciences* 18 (1989), 1–15; for Chaucer's Ceres, see Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer*, pp. 15, 41, 85, and 135.

- 290 *sak clothe*. Usually sackcloth implies poverty, penance, or humility. Here it suggests harvest and the purveyance of Ceres' bounty. The OED cites this line as its example for the agricultural use of sackcloth (a coarse linen fabric used for bales or bagging of grain).
- 295–99 *Cupido, / . . . helme ay*. The Latinate spelling of Cupid's name recurs in the Middle Ages in three poems, one Middle French and two Middle English, one of which is a translation. In Christine's *The Epistle of Othea*, the god of love is "yong and ioly" (fable 47, p. 59); Cupido is also the speaker in her *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* (Letter to the God of Love) (1399). In *The Assembly of Gods*, Cupido's pairing with Ceres, goddess of corn, resembles those of the God of Love and Alceste the daisy and of Mars and Cybele, in Chaucer's Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*. See Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer*, pp. 39 and 40–41; for Cupid's role in the *Troilus*, see pp. 116, 129–36, and 156–57.
- 299 *kerchyef of pleasaunce*. This phrase is also found in the English ballads of Charles of Orleans. See lines 1168, 4764, and 5170.
- 316 *Fortune the goddesse, with her party face*. The goddess Fortune is often depicted with a face of different colors to show her variable and inconstant behavior. Associated with an ever-turning wheel in medieval mythographies and commentaries, the goddess Fortune is called "the greet goddesse" in Christine's *The Epistle of*

The Assembly of Gods

Othea because worldly things are governed by her (fable 74, p. 91). Her multicolored face in *The Assembly of Gods* suggests her association with mutability and change, the conditions governing the sublunary region; thus, for Christine, “in a litel space sche chaungith” (p. 91). Fortune as a goddess predominates in the second book of Boethius’ *Consolatio Philosophiae*; she also appears to have both philosophic and mythographic significance throughout Chaucer: for example, he refers to her as “pley of enchauntement, / That semeth oon and ys not soo” (*The Book of the Duchess*, lines 648–49); in addition Fortune appears in “Fortune: Balades de Visage sanz Peinture,” The Monk’s Tale, and The Knight’s Tale. See her role in Bernard L. Jefferson, *Chaucer and the ‘Consolation of Philosophy’ of Boethius* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1917; rpt. New York: Gordian Press, 1968), pp. 130–32 and 142–44; see also Howard Rollins Patch, *The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1967).

- 320 *gowne was of gawdy grene chamelet.* The term *gawdy grene* may suggest vitality as it does in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where it describes the Green Knight’s garb, “embrauded abof, wyth bryddes and flyȝes / With gay gaudi of grene ay in myddes” (lines 167–68). But as Fortune’s dress the yellowish green gown (see OED on *gaudy-green*), which is “Chaungeable of sondry dyverse colowres” (line 321), may characterize Dame Fortune’s instability and newfangledness. See Tamotsu Kurose, *Miniatures of Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Manuscripts* (Tokyo: Sanseido Co., Ltd., 1977), where color miniatures of Dame Fortune commonly depict the goddess clothed in particolors, often (about 30 instances) with a green gown, or green sleeves, or green stripes, or green hat, or green girdle, sometimes even with green wings. Figures of inconstancy, Fortune, and green become somewhat interchangeable. See, for example, the Chaucerian “Against Women Unconstant,” where newfangledness, ever yearning for variety, is told “in stede of blew, thus may ye were al grene” (*balade* refrain, lines 7, 14, and 21).
- 323–24 *though he unworthy were, / The rewde god Pan, of shoperdys the gyde.* A god whom Isidore identifies with Nature because of his name, “All,” Pan shares with Ceres and Bacchus a small role in the evolution of medieval mythography because of his appearance in the little-read Virgilian *Georgics*. See Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, for his mythographies in Macrobius (p. 81); Isidore (pp. 144–45); the First Vatican Mythographer (p. 179); Martianus Capella and his commentators, including Notker Labeo (pp. 290 and 383); the Second Vatican Mythographer (p. 321); and William of Conches (p. 440).

Explanatory Notes

- 325 *russet fresa*. This is a coarse rust-colored woolen cloth (frieze) napped on one side.
 breched lyke a bere. The phrase means wearing sloppy breeches.
- 326 *tar-box*. The tar box was once commonly used by shepherds (OED).
- 328 *pryk-eryd*. Prick-eared dogs were used for hunting (OED).
- 330–36 *Ysys . . . / . . . sustynaunce*. Ysys (Isis) bears Pan the shepherd company because, in Christine's *The Epistle of Othea*, she is "goddess of plantis and graffis and she yeveth them strengthe and growinge to multiplie" (fable 25, p. 37). There her fable appears next to those of Ceres (24) and Diana (23), allegorically the three representing the Trinity. An Egyptian goddess whom Christine links with Io, she also appears in Giovanni Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*; for her significance in Christine, see Chance, trans., *Christine de Pizan's Letter of Othea to Hector*, pp. 122 and 128. Although Isis was not very mainstream in medieval mythography, glosses about her were disseminated through the works of North African Roman Martianus Capella and school commentaries on his *prosimetrum*; see Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 289 and 474.
- 337 *Neptunus*. Neptune, the god of the sea, so important in the Greek epics of Homer, played a relatively inconspicuous role in the medieval mythographies; see above, note to line 39 and below note to line 360. The third child of Saturn, Neptune also governs imaginary creatures and the fluidity of imagining and image-making. His Greek name, Poseidon, means "making an image or likeness" in Latin (*faciens imaginem*), according to the Third Vatican Mythographer, "quod aqua imagines formet in se spectantium, quod nulli alii de quatuor elementis accidit" [because water alone of all the four elements may form images, because no others of the four elements reaches by falling] (5.1; Bode, p. 171). He also appears in Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate. See especially The Franklin's Tale (CTV [F] 1047); Gower, *Confessio Amantis* 1.1152, 2.180, 5.983 ff., 1146, 6162 ff., and 8.623; and Lydgate's *Troy Book* 2.568 ff. (on Troy being Neptune's city).
- 342 *A shyp with a toppe*. "A platform near the head of each of the lower masts of a ship. In early fighting ships, a platform at the head of the mast, fenced with a rail, stored with missiles and occupied by archers" (OED).
- 344–49 *Mynerve . . . / . . . by her syde*. As goddess of "harneyse" ("Interpretation of the Names," line 24) Minerva bears her armorial iconography. *Gauntlettes* are leather

The Assembly of Gods

gloves reinforced with steel (part of medieval armor) and *sabatouns* are broad-toed foot coverings worn by warriors in full armor (see OED). Christine describes her as figurative mother of the exemplar of chivalry, the Trojan prince Hector, in *The Epistle of Othea* (fable 1, p. 5); see also Chance, “Christine’s Minerva, the Mother Valorized,” in Christine’s *The Letter of Othea to Hector*, pp. 121–33. Although Christine differentiates Minerva, the inventor of armor, from Pallas Athena, the goddess of wisdom, nevertheless, Minerva is “ladi of grete connynge and fonde the crafte to make armure” (fable 13, pp. 23–24). Usually equivalent in the Middle Ages to Pallas Athena, the daughter of Jupiter who burst forth fully grown from his head, Minerva represents the goddess of peace and wisdom and is often depicted holding an olive branch because, in a contest with Neptune (Poseidon) over who should name Athens, her gift to civilization, the olive tree, was deemed greater than his, the horse. For her perpetual virginity, see Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 266–67; for her gift to Athens, p. 391; for her very important allegorical role in Martianus Capella, see pp. 258–59 and 295–96; for the mythographers’ glosses on her, see, for Fulgentius, p. 114; for the First Vatican Mythographer, pp. 189, 193–94; for the Second Vatican Mythographer, pp. 319, 321, 332–33, and 342–43. For her role in the Judgment of Paris and Chaucer’s *Troilus*, see especially Orr. Note that *The Courte of Sapience* presents Minerva as “the goddess of wysedom ful of all lyght” (line 1745) and also describes her luminous armor at length (lines 1744–78); of the ancient deities, Minerva is the one most akin to Sapience herself: “Y-gete she was of Jupyteres brayne” (line 1761).

- 345 *curas*. Literally, “boiled leather,” from *cuirass* (ME *curas*; MF *curasse*, “leather,” “skin”), identified as what warriors wore before Minerva invented armor, in Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea* (fable 13, p. 23) and also in the *Epistre Othea*.
- 358 *Phebe*. “Phebe” is the name given to the moon in Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea* (fable 10), but gendered male (pp. 20–21), a mistake perhaps picked up and corrected inaccurately by A.
- 360 *to avale*. Neptunus’ “availing” to Phebe alludes to tidal responsiveness to the moon’s attraction. The power of the sea is therefore linked to the pull of gravity by the moon, so that Phebe can also be said to make him “prevail.” See note to line 362.
- 361 *meynt*. The word *meynt* (from the verb *meng*) usually means “to be mingled together in intercourse; or with, among, others; to be joined in battle; to have sexual intercourse; to be united in marriage” (OED). Because the moon and the sun (Diana/Phebe, and Apollo/Phebus) are sister and brother and the context is astrological,

Explanatory Notes

most likely what is meant is “conjoined,” as when planets are in conjunction, or in the same house, therefore, housed. See also Chaucer’s *The Franklin’s Tale* (*CTV* [F] 1041–54) for Aurelius’ petition to Phoebus and Phoebe.

- 362 *ne were she, Ceres were ateynt.* Phoebe controls tides and, in conjunction with Phoebus, affects the germination of seed. That is why farmers would plant according to the phases of the moon. This passage implies that, without Phebe, Ceres (goddess of corn), who invents cultivation (line 1710), would be “ateynt,” i.e., sullied, hindered, less procreative or less heat intensive. See various MED and OED glosses on the term. There is a possibility that *ateynt* means “accused” or “convicted,” with the suggestion of wrongdoing by Ceres without Phebe, either because of her abrogation of function or because, given the identification of Ceres in the commentaries with the Magna Mater cult and its orgiastic rites and sexual activity, without the validation of philosophical and cosmological purpose.
- 365–71 *Mercurius . . . / . . . every land.* This god takes a seat next to Phebe because the planet Mercury is situated next to the moon, Phoebe or Diana (Luna), and is closest to the earth, around which all the planets (including the sun) circle in the Ptolemaic system. Because his course is the quickest, Mercury is known as the messenger of the gods and for his eloquence (quick speech): Christine describes him in *The Epistle of Othea* as “a planete that yeveth influence of pontificalle behavyng and of faire langage arayed with retorik,” allegorically, “god of langage” bearing “good prechinges and wordes” (fable 12, pp. 22–23). A flute player who lulls the many-eyed Argus to sleep, Mercury also allows Jupiter’s beloved, Io, to escape from Juno’s shepherd (fable 30, pp. 41–42). Mercury is similarly associated in Christine with Wednesday and quicksilver (line 370). See also Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, for discussions of his importance to Fulgentius and the First and Second Vatican Mythographers (pp. 106–08, 121, 192–93, 318, 322, and 330); and Martianus Capella and his commentators (pp. 34, 106, and 272–75). Chaucer uses this planet as a character in *The Complaint of Mars* (see Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer*, pp. 88–89); and as a guide to Troilus in the *Troilus* (pp. 107–08, 110–11, 113–14, 151, 159, 161, and 166–67). See also his Virgilian and Ovidian associations, especially in *The Hous of Fame* (pp. 51–52 and 54), *The Knight’s Tale* (pp. 189, 198, and 200), and *The Wife of Bath’s Prologue* (pp. 219–20).
- 371 *Multyplyers know hit well.* Alchemists use mercury to dissolve gold or silver in the first stage of the alchemical process. See the digest of Arnald of Villanova’s *Rosarium* in the Aldine edition of *Pretiosa Margarita Novella*, cited by John Reidy

The Assembly of Gods

in his introduction to the edition of Thomas Norton's *Ordinal of Alchemy*, EETS o.s. 272 (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. lxiv.

- 372–78 *Venus . . . / . . . wanton ey.* This goddess of love, much glossed in medieval mythographies and commentaries, is daughter of Saturn (or time, mutability) and mother of Cupid, desire (from the Latin *cupiditas*, “concupiscence,” “greed”). Unlike the other planets in *The Assembly of Gods* associated with a metal and a day of the week and also found in Christine's *The Epistle of Othea*, she is not numbered among Christine's significant deities, perhaps because of her lascivious nature. But she is certainly prominent in English courtly romance traditions, especially in Chaucer and Gower. For her genealogy, see Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, p. 467; for her adulterous role in Chaucer's *The Complaint of Mars*, see Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer*, pp. 84–85 and 87–91; for her undressed and generative significance in *The Parlement of Foules*, see pp. 83–87 and 95–104; for her association with Palamon in The Knight's Tale and her Berchorian Ovidian signification, see pp. 185–86, 190–97, 200, 204–05, and 209; for her profound but bifurcated role in the *Troilus*, see pp. 84, 109–10, 129–38, 156–57, 163–64, and 182; and for Alisoun's astrological and psychological affinities with Venus, expressed both in her Prologue and by means of the Ovidian allusions in The Wife of Bath's Tale, see pp. 84, 217–21, and 231.
- 374 *her eyen, columbyne.* Compare Januarie's yearning after May — “com forth now, with thyne eyen columbine” — in The Merchant's Tale (CTIV [E] 2141). Januarie's love song echoes Song of Songs 4:1, as does the line here.
- 389–99 *sage phylosophyrs and poetes . . . / goddesses plesaunce.* In the catalog that follows, the poet lists Greek, Turkish, Egyptian, Roman, Arabian, and medieval European poets and philosophers, their roles stretched to include physicians, scientists, historians, astrologers, and magicians. Their duty here is to serve the pagan gods and goddesses summoned for the banquet. Many of them are cited in Christine in her glosses on fables from the Middle English *The Epistle of Othea*; she would not have known their works individually but instead sampled excerpts found in the collection, *Dits moraulx des philosophes* (*The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*), like *The Epistle*, translated into Middle English by Stephen Scrope in the early- to mid-fifteenth century. See the edition by C. F. Bühlér, EETS o.s. 211 (London: Oxford University Press, 1941). Bühlér's notes in *The Epistle* identify the source of each gloss in *The Dicts*. For convenience I will refer to the appropriate fable and page citation in Christine in the notes that follow. For a comparable list of philosophers,

Explanatory Notes

see *The Courte of Sapyence*, lines 1881–89; for rhetoricians and poets, see lines 1915–32.

- 391 *Tholomé, Dorothé with Dyogenes*. Christine cites “Tholome” in her gloss on fable 97, *The Epistle of Othea*, p. 117, and “Diogenes” in her glosses on fables 12, p. 23, and 26, p. 38. “Ptolomy” names the Macedonian kings in Egypt; Ptolemy I (fourth to third century BC) was a friend of Alexander the Great whose histories record his reign. *Dorothé* may refer to Dorotheus of Sidon (AD first century), an astrological poet in vogue with later Islamic astrologers (*Oxford Classical Dictionary*). It is possible his name appeared in a list with Avicenna and Averroës; he is also included in *The Dicts*. Diogenes of Sinope, known as the “mad Socrates,” was an Athenian street philosopher born in Turkey (404 BC).
- 392 *Messehala*. An unknown poet or philosopher, apparently Greek because of his position here between Plato and Socrates, but possibly either Marcus Valerius Messal(la) (Rufus) (d. 26 BC), author of once esteemed and well-known but now lost books on history and religion, or else Marcus Valerius Messal(l)a Corinus (64 BC–AD 8), supporter of Brutus and Cassius, who penned a pastoral poem and was part of a literary circle.
- 393 *Sortes and Saphyrus with Hermes*. The name *Sortes*, a word for ancient oracles, also appears in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* 3.366 and 8.2718. The editor Macaulay explains that the latter name refers to a magician who personifies the *Sortes sanctorum* (*Works* 3:547), meaning the *Sortes Virgilianae*, that is, the works of Virgil opened randomly for the selection of an arbitrary but oracular line, although on what basis Macaulay concludes so remains unclear (see the *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, s.v. Oracles). Even though the name appears in the list above, *Sortes* is probably a corruption for Socrates, as it is in *Piers Plowman* (B Text, 12.268), according to a note by editor Walter W. Skeat in his edition of *Piers Plowman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1886; rpt. with addition of bibliography, 1954, 2.187). *Sortes* may also represent the title *Soter*, used initially for a protective deity and later for Hellenistic kings, most prominently Ptolemy I (see line 391). *Saphyrus* may refer to Sarapis or Serapis, the deity brought from Sinope to Egypt by Ptolemy I. *Hermes* refers to Hermes Trismegistus, the Egyptian Thoth the Great reputed to be the author of the *Hermetica*. Christine cites Hermes more than any other philosopher included in *The Dicts*, to gloss the following fables in *The Epistle*: 7 (p. 18), 8 (p. 19), 9 (p. 20), 10 (p. 20), 14 (p. 25), 19 (p. 31), 23 (p. 35), 25 (p. 37), 29 (p. 41), 30 (p. 42), 35 (p. 46), 48 (p. 60), 49 (p. 61), 54 (p. 67), 61 (p. 75),

The Assembly of Gods

62 (p. 77), 66 (p. 80), 71 (p. 87), 76 (p. 93), 77 (p. 94), 82 (p. 100), 84 (p. 102), 91 (p. 110), and 100 (p. 112).

- 395 *Galyen and Ipocras.* Christine cites *Galyen* (Galen) to gloss fable 45 in *The Epistle*, p. 57, and *Ipocras* (Ypocras) to gloss fable 21, p. 33. Galen and Hippocrates were regarded as fathers of natural philosophy in the Middle Ages and accordingly appear in *The Dicts*. “Hippocrates,” a physician of Cos, is the name given to the authors of a collection of Greek texts from the fifth to fourth century BC, the most famous of which was an anthology of medical sayings known as the *Aphorisms*, on which Galen, a Greek physician from Asia Minor (b. 130 BC), also commented. See Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; rpt. 1995), especially pp. 1–37.
- 396 *Esculapion.* Christine cites Aesculapius in her gloss on fable 39, *The Epistle of Othea*, p. 51.
- 400 *Orpheus.* Orpheus commonly represents the poet/musician. See *The Courte of Sapience*, line 2034. For a comprehensive discussion of Orpheus in the Middle Ages see John Block Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).
- 425 *what, in the devyllys date?* The phrase is proverbial, parodying words used to date normal events, that is, “in the year of our Lord,” to suggest an inversion of usual practice, and ironically implying a connection with Satan. See Bartlett Jere Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases From English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), D 200, p. 130; Whiting cites *Piers Plowman* A.2.81 (Schmidt, A.2.77) as the earliest instance. See also Skelton’s *The Bowge of Courte*, lines 375 and 455, where the phrase is used as part of the scurrilous squabble between such vices as Ryotte, Drede, and Dyssymulation. Compare later proverbs on “the devil in the horologue” (clock) in Morris P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), D302, p. 155.
- 449 *ye seelyd my patent.* “You sealed my patent letter,” i.e., accorded me my right.
- 463–69 *Ector of Troy . . . Boleyn.* Attropos enumerates the Nine Worthies, though without the usual ranking according to pagans, Jews, and Christians. Perhaps the demand for

Explanatory Notes

a rhyme displaces the order of Arthur and Judas Maccabee. The Nine Worthies, famous ancient and medieval nobles found in history and legend, are included among the crowned knights who support the company of the Leaf in *The Floure and the Leafe*, line 504, because they exemplify the honor of chivalry (said to have been instituted by Julius Caesar; line 530). The three Jews are Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabee; the three pagans are Trojan Hector, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar; the three Christians are King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon (also cited as of Boulogne). See also *The Alliterative Morte Arthure*, lines 3250–3327, for Arthur’s dream of Lady Fortune’s wheel and the Nine Worthies, and lines 3408–45, for the philosopher’s expansion of the Worthies; and *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, lines 295–583, for the dreamer’s chilling vision of the Worthies as explained by Elde. The Nine Worthies are also mentioned in Hawes’ *The Example of Vertu*, line 260.

- 473 *Cosdras.* Codrus was a wise king of Athens who, in the Doric Wars, pitied his people and chose death for himself rather than affliction for them. See Gower, *Confessio Amantis* 7.3163–3214.
- 494 *For graunt of your patent of offyce, ner offee.* “For privilege of your right of office, despite the fee,” meaning “letter patent office,” the right to sell a product.
- 527 *yet had I forgete.* It is hard to say whether this “forgetting” is a calculated flashback or mere ineptitude on the part of the poet. The placement underscores well Othea’s counseling of prudence rather than her following the premature judgments of the other gods against Eolus, which in turn sets up the arrival of Attropos with his complaint against Vertu. That counsel leads to the release of Eolus so that he might direct his blasts against Vertu, who persists in evading Attropos. That is, the flashback sets up the next section of the poem, with its calling upon the assistance of Vyce and his minions, the seven deadly sins, to undo Vertu.
- 599 *breede ryght nygh your althrys eere.* The idiom is difficult. The sense is that Vertu will spring up (regardless of efforts to repress it) right in front of one’s nose (to use a modern idiom). *Breede* means “grow,” “inseminate”; *nygh your althrys eere* means “near the ear of all of you.” At the Annunciation the Virgin Mary was “bred with Virtue through the ear.” The recurrent line in dozens of Latin hymns is *quae per aurem concepisti* (who conceived through the ear). See, e.g., hymn entries in the Index to Guido Maria Dreves, *Analecta hymnica medii aevi* (Bern: Francke, 1978), under “Gaudie virgo mater Christi.” For a fine ME rendition of such hymns, see lyric 87 in *Marian Lyrics*, ed. Karen Saupe (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publica-

The Assembly of Gods

- tions, 1998), pp. 162–63; 275–76; and Lydgate’s “Gaude virgo mater christi,” with its rendition “Whiche conceyvedest oonly by hering” (line 3), in *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, pt. 1, p. 288. For discussion of the aural phenomenon, see David L. Jeffrey, pp. 489–95. Perhaps Pluto, without Christian insight, reflects upon such frustrating mysteries (frustrating from his point of view).
- 620 *croppe and roote*. “Bud and root” implies “top to bottom,” or “the whole thing, or totality” (of mischief). See OED. Compare Lydgate, *Troy Book* 1.229 and 4.5220.
- 620–34 *unhappy capteyns . . . On a roryng lyon . . . on the chase*. The mounting of Vices and Virtues on animals with attendant iconography was an exercise in the delights of moral edification in early literature. See, for example, Langland’s *Piers Plowman* B.2.171 ff., Gower’s *Mirour de l’omme* (book 1), and Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* 1.iv.16–36 (lines 136–324). The illustrator of Cambridge University Library MS GG.4.27 depicts three of the seven deadly sins in Chaucer’s Parson’s Tale as riding animals, though the virtuous remedies for each are not depicted on beasts. See *Poetical Works: Geoffrey Chaucer: A Facsimile of Cambridge University Library MS GG.4.27, with Introductions by M. B. Parkes and Richard Beadle*, vol. 2 (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1980), fols. 389r (Invidia and Charity), 401r (Gluttony and Abstinence), and 402r (Lechery and Chastity). Also see Stephen Hawes, *The Example of Vertu*, with woodblocks on Sensuality and Pride riding beasts (*The Minor Poems*, opposite pp. 39 and 40). Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Mediaeval Art* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1939), pp. 57–74 and Index, p. 96, suggests patristic sources for such matter. But especially see Morton Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1952), appendix 1, on animals and the seven deadly sins (pp. 245–49); and, for processions of sins on animals, his discussion of the Austrian *Lumen animae* (pp. 138–39), Gower’s works (pp. 193–96), Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (pp. 196–98), *The Assembly of Gods* (pp. 227–28), and Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (pp. 241–43). For animal iconography, see George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954) and T. H. White, *A Bestiary: A Book of Beasts* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1954). For a beautifully illustrated bestiary, see Richard Barber, *Bestiary, Being an English Version of the Bodleian Library, Oxford MS. Bodley 764* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1993).
- 626 *Covetyse*. See William Langland’s vividly physical portrait of the ugly personification in *Piers Plowman* B.5.188–94). Dante places the covetous in the fourth circle of hell in the *Inferno* (canto 7), defined as the tonsured orders (including popes and

Explanatory Notes

cardinals) “in cui usa avarizia il suo soperchio” (in whom avarice wrecks its excess [line 48], trans. Singleton, *The Divine Comedy*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 70–71).

635–714 *As for pety capteyns . . . / . . . thryve for shame.* Allegorical literature of the later fifteenth century thrives on lists of names and personification, a sort of educational agenda that instructs through classification and affiliation. See, for example, the catalogue of moral and ethical personifications in *The Courte of Sapyence* (lines 1499–1652); or the companions to the “Quene of Sapience” in Gavin Douglas’ *Palis of Honour* (lines 240–62), and the companions of Venus (lines 562–94); or the wedding of Dame Clennes attended by Dame Grace with her fifteen attendant ladies in Hawes’ *The Example of Vertu* (lines 1773–93); or Dunbar’s list of the attendants of the Queen of Love, Mars, tender youth, etc., in *The Golden Targe* (lines 136–80). None of these examples are as replete as the congregation of *pety capteyns* assembled in *The Assembly of Gods*, however, which provides an encyclopedic anatomy of what constitutes for the poet unseemly behavior.

673 *bosters, braggars, and brybores.* According to Triggs’ note on lines 673 ff., this list compares with Langland’s “bakbiteris, brewecheste, brawleris and chideris” in *Piers Plowman* B.16.42.

674 *Praters, fasers, strechers, and wrythers.* *Praters* are idle talkers; *fasers* are hypocrites (people who falsify); *strechers* are literally fabric stretchers, thus, figuratively, liars; and *wrythers* are those who twist or pervert the facts.

675 *shaveldores.* *Shaveldores* are wanderers, particularly gentlemen robbers near the Scottish border; or minstrels or entertainers (OED).

676 *crakers.* “Crackers,” from *Kraghers*, an obsolete form of “crag,” refers to boasters (OED).

678 *traytours.* The traitors are housed in Dante’s ninth circle, the deepest in hell, in the *Inferno* (cantos 32–34).

herytykes. Dante places the heretics in the sixth circle of hell (*Inferno*, cantos 9–10), after the incontinent (representing weakness of flesh) and before the violent (representing premeditated sin). The Epicurean is heretical because he denies immortality to the soul.

The Assembly of Gods

- 679 *sorcerers . . . scismatykes.* Dante places sorcerers in the eighth circle, of the fraudulent, tenth *bolgia* (*Inferno*, cantos 29–30), for example, the alchemist Griffolino of Arezzo; and schismatics in the ninth *bolgia* (canto 28), for example, prophet Mahomet. Langland couples “Sarženes and scismatikes” with the Jews in *Piers Plowman* B.11.120.
- 680 *symonyakes.* Dante places the simonists in the third *bolgia* of the eighth circle of hell, of the fraudulent (*Inferno*, canto 19). For him, Pope Nicholas III (1277–80) typifies the simonist, that is, someone who purchases his ecclesiastical office.
- usurers.* Dante places the usurers in the seventh circle of hell (*Inferno*, canto 17), as a type of the third round, the violent against God, nature, and art; they represent in particular the violent against art.
- 681 *coyn-wasshers, and clyppers.* A coin washer “sweats” metal from around the edges of a coin, while a clipper is one who clips or shaves metal from coins (MED).
- 685 *Tregetours.* This word is used by Chaucer in The Franklin’s Tale to describe illusionists (CT V [F] 413–28).
- 686 *lurdeyns and pykers of males.* A *lurdeyn* is an “evildoer, wicked person, criminal, good-for-nothing.” A *male* is a purse or wallet (MED).
- 687 *Rowners.* According to the OED, a *rowner* is a “whisperer, a tattler, a tale-bearer.”
- 692 *lofedayes.* On love days, when courts were not in session, suits could be settled out of court; or, in an impasse, a love day was a day when both sides were forgiven.
- 694 *Tytyvyllys.* “Titivilus” is the name of a devil who collected mumbled bits of divine service and took them to hell as evidence against the mumbler. The name is also found in France and Germany in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. “Titinillus” is the earliest form of the name (OED). He appears as one of Satan’s minions in the Towneley Judgment play and as a boasting buffoon in the popular morality play *Mankind*, both from the mid-fifteenth century.
- 697 *Tyburne.* Tyburn was a place in Middlesex used for public executions until 1738.
- coloppys.* Coloppys, usually a piece of meat, bacon, or fat rendering, could also refer to offspring (OED). Here the sense is of the offspring of dangerous criminals.

Explanatory Notes

- 700 *baudys*. Pimps and “Brothelles brokers” (line 702) join panders and seducers in Dante’s eighth circle, of the fraudulent, first round (*Inferno*, canto 18).
- 708 *Pseudo-prophetes, false sodomites*. The sodomites appear in Dante’s seventh circle, third round, the violent against nature, of whom the famous scholar Brunetto Latini is an example (*Inferno*, canto 15).
- 710 *Wetewoldes*. Men who are aware of and complacent about the infidelity of their wives, thus “contented cuckolds.”
- 732 *shoure*. Implied is an assault by Satan, a vice, or death.
evesong. The term is short for “evensong-bell.”
- 773 *trayne*. The *trayne* refers to baggage; procession; something dragged on the ground, often to make a trail to lure wild beasts into a trap, though the noun more generally refers to treachery, guile, deceit, betrayal, trickery, fraud. See MED, n.1: as a verb it means to entice, reduce, ensnare, entrap. See MED, v.1.: A “train can also be a line of gunpowder, etc., laid as a fuse to detonate a charge.” Black powder was first used in Europe in the early 1300s. See, for example, Chaucer’s *The Hous of Fame*, lines 1643–44.
- caltrop*. A “caltrop” involves strewing the field with iron spikes to impede cavalry.
- 782 *defaute*. In hunting, when the scent of the prey cannot be followed or picked up.
- 792 ff. *Foure dowty knyghtys*. Vertu’s four companions — Ryghtwysnes, Prudence, Streynghth, and Temperaunce — are the four cardinal virtues, commonly cited in moral treatises and identified as “classical,” as opposed to the three Christian virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. See, for example, the four seeds for sowing given by Grace to Piers in *Piers Plowman* B.19.275–311; or Dante’s Chariot of the Church in the *Purgatorio* (canto 24, lines 121 ff.), with its three dancing ladies on the right in red, white, and green (faith, charity, and hope) and four on the left in purple, led by prudence (along with righteousness, strength, and temperance).
- 815 *hys trapure*. A trapper was a metal or leather covering for a horse or other beast of burden used in defense or as shelter or adornment; trapping; housing (OED).

The Assembly of Gods

- 817 *popynjay*. The popynjay was the name for a parrot or its representation in ornamental design and tapestries in the fourteenth century; in heraldic charges in the fifteenth century; and as the figure atop a pole used for target practice in the sixteenth century (OED). The *papiayez* in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are painted or embroidered among flowers on the borders of the silk band on the helmet of Sir Gawain (line 611). In Hawes' *The Example of Vertu* "popinjays," described as "wanton fowlrys," along with "pyes, Iays and owlrys," adorn designs in the roof of Fortune's palace (line 249–50).
- 827 *pety capteyns*. See note to lines 635–714.
- 855–61 Compare Konnyng's entourage with the elaborate catalogue of Sapyence's companions in the arts in *The Courte of Sapyence* (lines 1807–2205). Encyclopedic detail of this kind held a special place in the hearts of proto-humanists as their topics are purveyed to a broader audience of readers in vernacular literature. The effect is similar to the alchemist's lists in Chaucer's The Canon's Yeoman's Tale, where the categories of science are celebrated as "knowledge."
- 931 *Nede and Konnyng in armure*. According to St. Paul (Ephesians 6:10–17), the virtuous person is armed in the armor of faith; *Konnyng* (intelligence), like faith, provides Vertu true security ("full sewre / To trust on," lines 930–31). See note to lines 855–61 above on the protective, courtly role of Konnynge in *The Courte of Sapyence*.
- 932 "Macrocosme." The OED and Triggs gloss this term as "microcosm," because of the ensuing allegorical battle sequence that involves faculties of the soul in line with the Prudentian *psychomachia* tradition. (See also lines 1250, 1276, 1281, 1295, 1298, 1341, and 1828.) According to the OED, *The Assembly of Gods* poet is the first to use the term "macrocosm" in English; the term "microcosm" had been in use for a hundred years. The poet seems to be referring to the "felde" (line 931) of battle as earth, that is, humankind's domain. Given the other scribal errors — "Colus" for "Eolus" and "Morpleus" for "Morpheus" — there seems to be scribal misprision at work here, too. In the twelfth century, Bernardus Silvestris in his Neoplatonic *Cosmographia*, or *De mundi universitate*, constructed an epic poem about the creation of the *Megacosmos*, or "great world," and the *Microcosmus*, or mankind himself, the "little world" whose body and soul parallel the material (earthly) and celestial regions of the great world. The poet in *The Assembly of Gods* is attempting a similar correspondence, between cosmological disturbance and human sin, or the ordering of the heavens and human society and the psychological hierarchy of the

Explanatory Notes

human soul. Hence the synoptic crossing of borders and blurring of boundaries between “Macrocosm” and “Microcosm” *passim*.

- 937 *Synderesys . . . as in a parke.* “Synderesis” denotes moral guardianship, the watchful keeping of conscience, a “sense of guilt, remorse” (OED). *De anima et de potenciarum eius*, an Avicennian treatise of c. 1220–30, presents *sinderesis*, along with *ratio*, as two parts of the practical intellect. It is an inborn quality naturally moving toward the good (*naturaliter movens ad bonum*) that abhors evil (*abhorrens malum*). See R. A. Gauthier, “Le Traité *De anima et de potenciarum eius* d’un Maitre ès arts (vers 1225),” *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 66 (1982), 54–55. Here in *The Assembly of Gods* he is a tabulator, a court clerk “with his tables in hye hand, her dedys to marke” (line 938). Synderesys’ enclosed park resembles those in *The Floore and the Leafe* and *The Assembly of Ladies*. The fifteenth-century park implied “an enclosed tract of land held by royal grant or prescription for keeping beasts of the chase” (OED).
- 957 *new daunce.* Vyce is being wittily perverse. The “new dance” that he would teach is really the “old dance” of lechery (novelty). St. Augustine and subsequent theologians usually speak of the “old daunce” as sin and the “new dance” as correspondent to the new song of faith. See David L. Jeffrey, p. 566. N.b., St. Augustine’s sermon *De cantico novo* on the new song of chastity and the old song of cupidity, cited by D. W. Robertson, Jr., in *Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 127, as well as references in *Romance of the Rose* and Chaucer to “the olde daunce,” see, for example, the Wife of Bath in the General Prologue, who knows the “remedies of love . . . and of that art the olde daunce” (CTI [A] 495–96).
- 970 *penowns.* A *penown* is identified in the MED as “a long narrow flag, attached to a lance, with distinguishing marking for identification; borne especially by knights and bachelors but also by men of higher rank.”
- 974–80 *He dubbyd Falshood / . . . These fourteen knyghtes . . . / they wold asay.* When Vyce dubs fourteen knights, Vertu responds by dubbing fourteen of his own (lines 981 ff.). The reciprocal symmetry defines one of Vertu’s characteristics, which is responsive as well as initiative. In the postlapsarian world, Vertu is to some degree defensive.
- 1094 *Vertew hys rerewarde.* The poet commonly creates a genitive by following a noun with *hys*, imagining that the *-s* genitive is a contraction with the *h* dropped. See also lines 1155, 1192, and 2074.

The Assembly of Gods

- 1094 *Good Perseveraunce.* Good Perseverance, who chides even as he reinforces Vertu, reminding him that he is “Crystis Champyon” (line 1103), is a prominent concept in later fifteenth-century moral treatises. The battle of virtues and vices in *The Assembly of Gods* shares much in common with morality plays such as *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Everyman* as a kind of personification allegory. “Perseverance” is an ethical category that blossomed in the Reformation.
- 1135 *Frewyll came to Conscience.* In their victory, the warriors of Vertu specifically affirm Christian doctrine, in this instance the staging of penance, with its tripartite pilgrimage from Confession to Contrition to Satisfaction. See Chaucer’s The Parson’s Tale (*CT X* [I] 106, 111–26), where the paradigm moves from contrition to confession to satisfaction. Chaucer’s pattern is more psychological, moving from desire to reaction to result; *The Assembly of Gods*’ paradigm is more doctrinal, moving from institution to effect and result.
- 1154 *Dyspeyre with hym met.* In defeat, Vyce is confronted with Dyspeyre, again a common theological topic that is explored, especially in reform doctrine, with its strong emphasis on faith. See, for example, Langland’s *Piers Plowman* C.22.165–68, on the struggle with Wanhope; and compare Redcrosse Knight’s dilemma in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1.ix), where, even in victory, he is, in the presence of Conscience and his own guilt, threatened by Despair.
- 1178 *Predestinacion.* Once again the theological proposition implicit here accords with late fifteenth-century concerns on such issues as the triumph of the one true contender, who can never be defeated by Dethe. In Vertu, the contradictions of Frewyll and Predestinacion are resolved. Both abide in his household, along with his other lady, Prescience (foreknowledge). One might be reminded of the one good man who characterizes God’s plan of continuance of virtue in the alliterative poem *Death and Life*, or, later, in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (books 11 and 12).
- 1205–06 *Som eke for socour drew to Circumcision / But by hym cowde they gete but small favour.* The reason for Circumcision’s small favor is explained in Acts 15, where Christian faith is deemed more important than old Hebrew rites.
- 1228 ‘*Sensualité*’ hys propre name. The summons recalls the central theme of the poem, the reconciliation of Reson and Sensualité. Here, just as Eolus was tried by the pagan council at the outset of the poem, that part of humankind that dwells primarily in the classical world, i.e., the senses, will be addressed in another trial.

Explanatory Notes

- 1233 *Sadnesse with hys sobre chere.* Given the volatility of the senses and their need for good governance, Sadnes (steadfastness, prudence, right reason) is the suitable warden for Sensualité (see lines 1261–65). Sadnes works well with Reson, Vertu’s “lyeftenaunt” (line 1254), and when properly guided by Frewyll the senses lead to sane, healthy human behavior. Thus Dame Nature (line 1268) rightly asks for “Gentyll” Sensualité’s freedom (lines 1269–74) within the Microcosme, and Vertu grants the petition (lines 1280–81). Sensualité is not some “underlowte,” to be a “castaway, or a shoo clowte” (lines 1273–74, see note below), but rather, if well-governed by Sadnes, a key component of human nature, even when marred by Cryme Oryginall (line 776).
- 1242 *finaunce.* The word conveys a range of meanings, from “ransom,” “settlement,” and “recompense,” to “punishment” or “outcome.” See the OED.
- 1274 *shoo clowte.* The clouted shoe was a sole protected by iron plates or nails that might denote a patched shoe or, more figuratively, a clown or boor (that is, someone who wears clouted shoes) (OED).
- 1296 ff. *fyve posternes.* That Morpheus is given the keeping of the *fyve posternes* (i.e., the five senses) is tribute to his steady vision as he sits in his little corner of fantasy and illuminates situations. See line 35. Morpheus has also guided the narrator through the poem’s various sections. For example, when Vertu, at Dame Nature’s behest, grants Sensualité freedom (lines 1286 ff.), Morpheus suddenly appears in his “corner” (line 1284) and is praised for his vision.
- 1310–11 *Attropos . . . astonyed as he stood.* Dethe is once again thwarted by Vertu. See line 591. With Vertu, Dame Nature allows even the senses to triumph. In his anger, Attropos’ only hope is Residivacion (Backsliding, line 1359), which cannot thrive as long as Sensualité abides in the care of Sadnes.
- 1361 *wedehokes.* Weed-hooks are hooks for cutting away weeds. The term could be used figuratively.
- 1382 ff. *Attropos, voyde of all gladnes.* Perceiving the futility of his role in the classical world, where Christian virtue remains untouchable, Attropos asks Reson the way to *the Lorde of Lyght* (line 1384), where he is given a new name, Dethe (line 1403). With the new name comes a new franchise. Now, rather than agent of hell, he becomes agent of heaven (n.b., lines 1420–21). Compare the position of Death in the contemporary morality play *Everyman*: God calls upon Death to go to mankind

The Assembly of Gods

as a friend, to help him keep macrocosmic/microcosmic matters in the right perspective.

- 1429–67 *Confession, Contricion, and Satisfaccion / . . . Oo omnipotens*. As in *Everyman*, the virtuous person is protected by the sacraments of “hooly Eukaryst” (line 1439) and “Holy Uncction” (line 1444), under the governance of “Presthoode” and “Good Remembraunce” (line 1452), despite the wages of Dethe, who ultimately vanishes as a threat (line 1464). Vertu wears the “crowne of glory” (line 1466) and bears the “swete frute of Macocrosme” (Microcosm) (line 1468) to heaven “above the firmament” (line 1465). See notes to lines 932 and 1135.
- 1444 *crysmary*. “The vessel containing the chrism or consecrated oil, in R. C. Ch., a case containing three flasks of oil for baptism, confirmation, and anointing of sick” (OED).
- 1455 *sesyne*. There are two meanings: the first, “to wall up the doors of; to stop the means of access to”; and second, “to shut up or enclose within walls; to imprison” (OED).
- 1470 ff. *Agayn fro the felde to me came Morpheus*. Having completed the exemplary drama reconciling Reson and Sensualité, the poet now shifts the scene to review the matter through introspection. The new setting, in “a fouresquare herber wallyd round about” (line 1479), tended by Wytte and Stody and under the supervision of Dame Doctryne, is similar to the shift in Langland’s *Piers Plowman* from the Visio section (B passus 1–7) to the Vita de Dowel, Dobet, Dobest section (B passus 8 ff.), where a different kind of journey — an introspective one — begins. In *The Assembly of Gods* it is here that Holy Texte (line 1500) will come to his assistance, along with prefigurations and types of Christ in the Old and New Testaments.
- 1515–20 *on tho walles was made memory / . . . of every creature / . . . in portrature*. The poet’s representing of biblical history on walls *in portrature* is well suited to establishing the new direction of the poem as the pagan gods are about to be displaced by the Christian God. The battle between pagan and Christian doctrine is presented as a contest in iconography. The *figurae* in the murals that follow are keyed to prominent biblical scenes that are pervasively represented in English fifteenth-century popular culture, from wall paintings, ceiling bosses, and church sculpture to tales, romances, plays, books of hours, and instruction manuals, all of which use popular biblical stories for exemplary effect. Compare Gavin Douglas’ *The Palis of Honoure*, which also explores the debate between sacred and pagan (worldly) domain by means of murals adorning temple walls. Literary use of murals

Explanatory Notes

became a fifteenth-century rhetorical fashion. As Triggs wittily observes, “[a] secondary poet like Stephen Hawes [*The Pastime of Pleasure*] cannot mention a wall without covering it with pictures” (p. lvii). The formulation of literary murals is established by Guillaume de Lorris in the *Roman de la Rose*, and it flourishes in Chaucer’s *The Book of the Duchess* and, in a brass variant, in *The Hous of Fame*, from whence it is imitated profusely in works like Lydgate’s *The Temple of Glass*, Barclay’s *Toure of Vertue and Honour*, and Dunbar’s *Dream*, as well as in Douglas’ *The Palis of Honoure*, Hawes’ *The Pastime of Pleasure*, *The Assembly of Ladies*, and *The Assembly of Gods*.

- 1521 *Adam and Eve . . . appyll round.* Adam and Eve caused the fall of humankind when they disobeyed God and ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. See Genesis 3.1–7. This scene was a key component in all the Corpus Christi cycles and was a favorite subject for windows, murals, and tile work in chapel floors.
- 1522 *Noe in a shyp.* Noah built the ark in obedience to God’s commands and thereby saved his family from the Flood (see Genesis 6–7). This is another key scene in the mystery plays, church windows, and ceiling bosses. See Chaucer’s amusing send-up in *The Miller’s Tale*, where John the carpenter knows the story of Noah from the plays.
- 1522–23 *Abraham . . . and Isaac lay bound.* In obedience to God’s command, Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac to God (see Genesis 22:2–13). This constitutes another key play in the cycle plays. In Augustine’s parsing of time, the figures of Adam, Noah, and Abraham mark the first three ages. See note to line 1737. All three are featured in the forty-plate block book known as the *Biblia pauperum*. Several modern facsimile editions of this important text are available. See, in particular, *The Bible of the Poor (Biblia pauperum): A Facsimile Edition of the British Library Block Book C.9.d2*, trans. with commentary by Albert C. Labriola and John W. Smeltz; and also Avril Henry’s edition (see note to lines 1536–37).
- 1524–25 *Jacob . . . a long laddyr stood hym besyde.* Jacob, son of Isaac, was also father of the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel (see Genesis 25–50). Although Jacob is not featured in the plays, Jacob’s ladder and Jacob’s well figure prominently in moral treatises, Books of Hours, and the *Biblia pauperum*.
- 1526 *Joseph in a cysterne.* His envious brothers took his many-colored coat and threw him into a well. He was thereafter sold into slavery in Egypt (see Genesis 37:3–24). This scene is featured in the *Biblia pauperum* to prefigure the entombment of Christ.

The Assembly of Gods

- 1527 *Moyses*. Moses, by accepting from God the two tablets (i.e., the Ten Commandments), is regarded as the founder of the Law. He is said to be the author of the first five books of the Bible. See Exodus 20.
- 1528 *Aaron and Urré, hys armes supportyng*. According to the book of Exodus, Aaron was Moses' brother and the first Jewish high priest (regarded as the founder of the Hebrew priesthood). When called to his mission by God, Moses doubted his own capabilities. He found assurance through the promise of support from Aaron (*hys armes supportyng*). Urré may be Hur, in that he and Aaron supported Moses (Exodus 17:10–121), or perhaps Beseleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur (Exodus 31:2), who, filled with the spirit of God, made the tabernacle that the Israelites carried before them in the desert. Thus he, too, supports Moses' *armes*.
- 1529 *Ely*. Elijah (Elias in the Douay/Vulgate) rode the fiery chariot to the third heaven; see 1 Kings 19:8 and 2 Kings 2:11 (Douay/Vulgate 3 Kings 19:8, 4 Kings 2:11). Both he and Elisha (line 1530) are linked to the Resurrection in the *Biblia pauperum*, since both brought the dead back to life. See plate 1 on the raising of Lazarus.
- 1530 *Elyze . . . in an hermytes clothyng*. Elisha (Eliseus in the Douay/Vulgate), a prophet of Israel whom Elijah designated as his successor. He dwelt in the desert and is thus *clad in an hermytes clothyng*. See 1 Kings 19:16 and 19 and 2 Kings 2 (Vulgate 3 Kings 19:16 and 4 Kings 2).
- 1531 *David with an harpe and a stoone slyng*. King David was a composer of psalms who also slew the giant Goliath with his slingshot. David's harp becomes a sign of good kingship, the capacity to bring peace and harmony to the state. The sling is a sign of prowess under God. See Douay/Vulgate 1 Kings 16:16–23 and 1 Kings 17:40–51.
- 1532 *Isaye, Jeremy, and Ezechiell*. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are all biblical prophets in the Old Testament. Isaiah (Isaias in the Douay/Vulgate) foretold the coming of Christ; Jeremiah (Jeremias in the Douay/Vulgate) was a priest whose suffering prefigured that of Christ. Ezekiel envisioned the Lord as a burning wheel ascending into heaven (Ezekiel 1).
- 1533 *closyd with lyons . . . Danyell*. A biblical prophet, Daniel interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar. After his enemies engineered a law forbidding prayer, Daniel was cast into the lions' den, from which he was rescued by God. See Daniel 6:16–24. *Biblia pauperum*, plate 1, juxtaposes the scene with Jesus' appearing to Mary Magdalene in John 22:11–17.

Explanatory Notes

- 1534 *Abacuc, Mychee with Malachy.* Habakkuk (Habacuc or Habaccus in the Douay/Vulgate) was a Hebrew prophet of Juda in the seventh century BC who foretold the invasion of the Chaldeans; Micah (Micheas in the Douay/Vulgate), a Hebrew prophet from Juda, was contemporary with Isaiah; Malachi was contemporary with Nemehiah and the last of the prophets (around 400 BC). All three appear repeatedly in the *Biblia pauperum* as prophets of Christ.
- 1535 *Jonas out of a whales body commyng.* Jonah, the Old Testament prophet of Galilee, was the only prophet to preach to the gentiles. In the *Biblia pauperum* he is associated with the entombment of Christ and the Resurrection as he enters the great fish and then is disgorged, *out of a whales body commyng*. The scene commonly appears in church windows.
- 1536–37 *Samuell in a temple . . . Zakary / Besyde an awter.* Samuel was a Hebrew judge and prophet; see 1 and 2 Samuel (1 and 2 Kings in the Douay/Vulgate). Zacharias, Zechariah, or Zachary, was a sixth-century BC Hebrew prophet who wanted the temple rebuilt and whose visions anticipate the future of the Church. In the *Biblia pauperum* he appears with Sophonias (see line 1551) in plate *d*, which celebrates the presentation of Mary in the Temple. His verse (Zacharias 2:10) reads, “See, I am coming and shall live among you.” Zacharias and Sophonias also appear together in plate *f*, on the destruction of the Egyptian idols after Christ’s flight into Egypt, where Zacharias says (Zacharias 13:2), “At that time I shall eradicate the names of the idols from the earth.” The fall of the Egyptian idols is nonbiblical, deriving from eighth- and ninth-century legends of the type. See Avril Henry, *Biblia pauperum* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1987), p. 59. Altogether Zacharias appears nine times in the *Biblia pauperum*, in plates *i* (on the Baptism of Christ), *n* (on Mary Magdalene’s repentance), *o* (on Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem — twice), *p* (on Christ’s purifying of the temple), *r* (Judas’ selling of Jesus), and *h* (on the Harrowing of Hell).
- 1538–39 *Osee with Judyth . . . / . . . Oloferne.* Ozias was the high priest of Bethulia who encouraged Judith in her foray to destroy Holofernes. See the book of Judith 8–16, in the Douay/Vulgate.
- 1539–40 *Salomon . . . / A chylde with hys swerde dyvydyng in two.* That is, dividing a child into two with his sword. Solomon was a king of Israel (974–c. 937 BC) and the alleged author of the Song of Solomon, written, according to Christian commentators, in celebration of the wedding of the bridegroom (Christ) to the bride (the Church). Renowned for his wisdom, Solomon was famous for his judgment that decided the identity of a baby’s mother: when he informed two quarreling mothers

The Assembly of Gods

that he would cut the baby in half so each would be satisfied, the true mother refused her half, thus preserving her baby's life.

- 1543–44 *Melchisedech . . . / Bred and wyne offryng.* Melchizedek, or Melchizedec, was a priest and king of Salem who blessed Abraham. See Genesis 14:18. His offering of *Bred and wyne* was viewed as a prefiguration of the Eucharist. See *Biblia pauperum*, plate s, which juxtaposes Melchizedec offering bread and wine with the Last Supper (John 13:1–30) and with Moses receiving the manna in the desert.
- 1545–46 *Joachym and Anne . . . / Embrasyd in armes to the gyldyn gate.* Joachim and Anne were parents of the Virgin Mary (hence the reference to the golden gate, presumably of Paradise, that is, the intermediary or liaison through whose mercy true Christians obtain grace and thereby pass into Paradise).
- 1547 *John Baptyst in a desert sate.* The son of Zacharias and Elizabeth through a miraculous conception, John lived in the desert of Judea from early manhood. Because he baptizes Jesus in Jerusalem, John is presented in the Gospel as the forerunner of Christ. In Luke 1, when the pregnant Virgin Mary visits Elizabeth, John leaps in his mother's womb and she is filled with the Holy Ghost. He is associated with the voice crying in the wilderness (n.b., the opening of the baptism scene in each of the Synoptic Gospels) and thus is usually represented as wearing a camel's hair coat, signifying how he *in a desert sate*. He was beheaded while a prisoner at Herod's fortress and his head was offered to Salome on a plate. He was, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, immensely popular in England, with no fewer than 496 ancient churches dedicated to his honor, "a total exceeded only by SS. Mary, Peter, Michael, Andrew, and All Saints" (p. 215). In *The Assembly of Gods* he is of especial importance, given the prominence of Baptym in the poet's scheme of redemption.
- 1549 *Sodechy.* Sedecias, or Zedekiah, originally called Matthanias, uncle of Jechonias or Joachin; Sedecias reigned as king of Juda for eleven years, after which he revolted against the king of Babylon, fled, and was captured, blinded, and enslaved. At this important juncture Jerusalem was also captured, the temple burned, and its people sent to Babylon. See 4 Kings 24:17–25:21.
- 1550 *Amos . . . with sobre countenaunce.* This Old Testament prophet denounces the crimes of the people of Israel. He appears in the *Biblia pauperum* as one who anticipates Christ's purification of the temple (plate p), who prophesies the Jews'

Explanatory Notes

condemnation of Christ (plate *b*), and who foretells the piercing of Christ's side (plate *f*).

- 1551 *Sophony.* Zephaniah (Sophonias in the Douay/Vulgate) prophesies the Jews' punishment for idolatry and other crimes. In the *Biblia pauperum*, plate *d*, his verse (Sophonias 3:15) reads, "The King of Israel, the Lord, is among you." On plate *f* he says, "The Lord will bring low all the gods of the earth" (Sophonias 2:11). See also plates *i* (on the Resurrection) and *n* (on doubting Thomas).
- 1552 *Neemy and Esdras.* Nehemiah and Ezra (Nehemias and Esdras in the Douay/Vulgate) were authors of books of the Old Testament; each describes the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple. Ezra, a priest and doctor of the law, wrote two books, 1 and 2 Esdras, although the Douay calls 2 Esdras "Nehemias" (cupbearer to king of Persia) while retaining "Second book of Esdras" under the "Book of Nehemii."
- 1553 *Joob as an impotent.* Job, in the Old Testament book of the same name, was known for his patience in the face of increasing tribulation and persecution. The allusion is to Job's powerlessness while under the constraint of Satan.
- 1554 *Thoby pacyent.* Tobias, prophet of the Old Testament, was known for his patience and resignation to the will of God. Eighth husband of Sara, Tobias waited until Sara's first seven husbands were each slain by the fiend when they tried to possess her too soon; and then, as Gower puts it, "Thobie his wille hadde" (*Confessio Amantis* 7.5361).
- 1560 *Than I me turnyd.* The poet juxtaposes Old Testament images with New, the one on the left, the other on the right.
- 1562 *Petyr with hys keyes.* St. Peter was the fisherman whom Christ found at the Sea of Galilee and the apostle whose name means "rock," upon whom Christ built his church. Founder of the Roman Church and its first pope, he holds two keys, for the gates of heaven and hell.
- 1563 *Poule with a swerde.* St. Paul is the author of the Pauline epistles in the New Testament and apostle of Christianity to the gentiles. A Jew of Tarsus known originally as Saul, he carries the sword with which he was murdered. Namesake of the principal cathedral in England, his influence on theology and literature is enormous. Chaucer refers to him as "the Apostle" and cites his writings more than he does those of any other patriarch.

The Assembly of Gods

- 1563–64 *James also, / With a scalop.* One of the original twelve apostles, linked with the New Testament's epistle of St. James and the shrine of Compostela, in Galicia, Spain (a favored pilgrimage site in the Middle Ages), James is depicted wearing a scallop shell on his cloak. A pilgrim who had visited the shrine of St. James at Compostela often wore a cockleshell as a sign (OED).
- 1564 *Thomas holdyng in hys hande / A spere.* According to John, the doubting apostle, born in Galilee as a twin and present at the sea of Galilee when Christ manifested himself, is holding a spear because, doubting the physical presence of the resurrected Christ, he touched the spear wound in Christ's side with his fingers. His life is marked by contradictions. At the Last Supper he is the one of greatest faith, willing to die with Christ; then, after the Resurrection, he doubts the resurrected Christ's word. According to the Weaver's play in the York Cycle (play 46, on the Assumption of the Virgin Mary), word of Mary's translation comes first to Thomas who, filled with the joy of faith, tells the good news to the other apostles, who doubt the truth of his vision. Legends say that he preached in India, where he died. See Mandeville's wondrous account of his encounter with "the arm and the hond that he putte in oure lordes syde," which are preserved in a vessel without a tomb in India, where it passes judgment in trials: petitions for and against a case are placed in the hand and it casts away the false (*Mandeville's Travels*, ed. M. C. Seymour [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967], p. 127). Mandeville also describes the tomb.
- 1565 *Phylyp aprochyd hym, too.* Among the first of the twelve apostles, Philip brought Greeks to Jesus and during Christ's discourse after the Last Supper requested, in a tone of doubt, that Jesus show the apostles the Father. Like Thomas, with whom he is linked here, he provokes a response from Jesus, in this instance, "He that seeth me, seeth the Father also" (Douay/Vulgate, John 14:8–9).
- 1566 *James the Lesse.* James the less is usually identified as Christ's brother or the author of the Epistle of St. James or the son of the woman who stood by Christ at the Cross. His standing "loo" (i.e., in the lesser position, line 1566) appears to be a pun on his name. The *Golden Legend* says he was beaten to death with a fuller's club while he knelt, praying for his enemies. He had just been thrown from the top of the temple, in mockery of Christ's temptation scene. His feast day is May 1.
- 1567 *Bartylmew... all flayn.* A martyred apostle, Bartholomew is linked with Philip (line 1565). He was flayed alive at his martyrdom; his skin became his iconographic sign.

Explanatory Notes

- 1568 *Symon and Thadee shewyd how they were slain.* Simon Zelotes and Thaddeus (also called Jude, the brother of James) were both said to have been martyred in Persia. Traditions vary on the martyrdom of Thaddeus. Some accounts indicate that he was beaten to death with a club; others have him impaled with a lance (see George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols of Christian Art*, p. 127); while others still depict him as beheaded with a halbard (*Golden Legend*). Regardless, he becomes the “patron of hopeless cases” (*Oxford Book of Saints*, p. 225). Simon’s iconography usually depicts him with a boat or holding a fish, perhaps because he was thought to be cousin to the Zebedees, the group of fishermen to which Simon Peter belonged. According to the *Golden Legend* he was crucified; in other legends he was hewn to death with a falchion, which sometimes becomes his sign. In Western Europe, Simon and Thaddeus share a common feast day, October 28, the day on which their relics were marvelously translated to Rome. Since the line indicates that they *shewyd how they were slain*, we are apparently to imagine Simon holding a fish or falchion and Thaddeus holding a club, a lance, or a halbard.
- 1569 *Mathy and Barnabe, drawyng lottys.* According to Acts 1:21–26, Matthias and Barsabas, two who witnessed the Resurrection, were the chosen candidates to replace Judas Iscariot as one of the twelve. They were given lots, and the lot fell to Matthias. The poet apparently confuses Barsabas with St. Barnabas, Paul’s companion and disciple, known for his charity.
- 1570 *Marke, a lyon.* Mark was one of the four evangelists and his symbol is the lion. As author of the second Gospel he is often depicted at a writing desk or holding his book (see line 1571). His gospel begins with the voice crying in the wilderness, of which the lion was held to be the sign.
- 1571–72 *Mathew in hys mood / . . . an aungell with wynges.* Matthew was the evangelist whose symbol is the angel. He is said to have written the first book of the New Testament, about Christ’s life.
- 1573 *Luke had a calfe.* This evangelist’s symbol is an ox, perhaps because of his unique account of the sacrifice in the temple at the Presentation. This companion of Paul wrote the third book of the New Testament and the Acts of the Apostles.
- 1574–75 *John . . . / An egle bare hys book.* The fourth evangelist, John, is known by the symbol of the eagle because of the keen vision with which John perceived celestial truths regarding the Word. In addition to the fourth book of the New Testament, he was thought to have written three epistles and the Book of Revelation.

The Assembly of Gods

- 1576 *Gregory . . . Ambrose.* The four Fathers of the Western Church were Ambrose (340?–97), bishop of Milan, who was Augustine’s teacher; Jerome (340?–420), who translated the Bible into the Latin Vulgate; Augustine (354–430), author of *The City of God* and *On Christian Doctrine*, who was later claimed to be the founder of the Austin friars; and Pope Gregory (560–604), who was the author of the *Moralia*. In *Piers Plowman*, this same combination of patriarchs is identified as the “foure stottes” (bullocks, stallions) who plow the fields of Grace for Piers’ sowing in man’s soul the seeds of the four cardinal virtues, namely prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice (19.269ff.). Compare *The Courte of Savyence*, lines 1793–99.
- 1578 *Bernard with Anselme.* St. Bernard (1092–1153), abbot of Clairvaux, was one of the founders of the Cistercian order; St. Anselm (1033–1109) was archbishop of Canterbury and author of numerous popular theological tracts.
- 1579 *Thomas of Alquyne and Domynyk.* St. Thomas Aquinas (1225?–74), scholastic author of the *Summa theologica*, was one of the greatest of the Dominicans, an order of friars known for its preaching and scholarship founded by St. Dominic (1170–1221).
- 1580 *Benet and Hew, relygyous governours.* St. Benedict (480?–543?) was founder of a monastic rule that dominated Western spirituality to the twelfth century; Hugh of St. Victor in the twelfth century wrote a famous manual on education entitled *Didascalion*, as well as treatises on the soul and the sacraments.
- 1581 *Martyne and John, with bysshops twayne.* St. Martin was bishop of Tours (c. 316–400) and patron saint of France and of innkeepers; “John” is the name of twenty-three popes, including St. John I (470?–526), sent by Theodoric the Ostrogoth in 525 to Constantinople to help convince the Byzantine emperor to be more tolerant of the Arians. See *Webster’s Biographical Dictionary*.
- 1582 *Crysostom.* John Chrysostom of Antioch lived between 347 and 407. He was a famous preacher and commentator on Scripture, who became archbishop of Constantinople in 398. In the West he was celebrated as one of the four Greek Doctors, along with Athanasius, Basil (the Great), and Gregory Nazianzus (*Oxford Dictionary of Saints*).
- 1584–86 *Orygene / Hydyng hys face . . . / . . . what I mene.* In an act of assumed piety Origen emasculated himself, for which he was subsequently condemned; thus, his shame.

Explanatory Notes

- 1589 “*Sybyll.*” The sibyl was the priestess/prophet to whom Aeneas went for guidance into the future and the underworld (*Aeneid* 6). In commentaries, she becomes a pagan visionary who foresees the coming of Christ. Thus, in the mystery plays, she joins the patriarchal prophets in the processions foretelling Advent. She also appears as a wise woman at the end of Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea*, where she converts Caesar Augustus to Christianity (fable 100). All the sibyls appear in Book 2 of *The City of Ladies*.
- 1595 *Andrew the Apostyll with hys crosse.* The brother of Simon Peter, Andrew was crucified in Achaea. While on the cross he witnessed for Christ and preached the Gospel for two days to 20,000 people. When his persecutor Aegeus attempted to take him down out of fear of the people, Andrew prayed for release by God and his soul flew to heaven in a ball of light. A demon seized Aegeus, however, and he died in the street (Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*).
- 1608 *Over her heede hovyd a culver, fayre and whyte.* The implication is that Dame Doctryne provides official access to the Holy Spirit.
- 1657 *made her beardys on the new gete.* Apollo, as sun god and source of light, can make beards grow, here, in the *new gete*, or “newe jet,” that is, “according to the latest fashion,” a term also applied to the way the fashionable Pardoner rides bareheaded, having folded up his hood in his “walet,” in his portrait in Chaucer’s General Prologue (line 682). The sense is that Apollo convinced them to change their minds, that is, literally to trim their beards according to the lastest fashion or style. “To make a beard” in late medieval England is also “to trick” or “to deceive”; a “beard” is a joke or trick, as in Chaucer’s The Miller’s Tale, where the barber Absolon is himself bearded by “hende” Nicholas and willing Alisoun.
- 1683 *Tyme of Devyacion.* See note to lines 1737 ff.
- 1695–97 *sevyn planetts / . . . goddys were they callyd.* The seven planets in the Ptolemaic cosmological system are also regarded as gods, as witnessed in the first part of the poem. Counting from the outside in, the planets begin with Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars; then the sun (Apollo) is in the fourth position, while Venus, Mercury, and the moon (Diana) follow. See Macrobius’ classification in the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, pp. 155–68 (1.17–19); and Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 82–91, 191, 374–75, 382, and 467.

The Assembly of Gods

- 1707–08 *a god shuld hym call, / Or a goddesse.* This practice is known as “euhemerism,” from Euhemerus of Messina (fl. 316), who opposed the allegorists and rationalized the gods as historical persons. His *Sacred History* acknowledges the holy sites of the gods as burial places of real men and women. Ennius translated this Greek work into Latin. See Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 25–26.
- 1723–24 *undyr coverture / Of fable.* The use of *coverture* is reminiscent of Christine’s *The Epistle of Othea*, from which the mention of grafting and Ceres, the goddess of corn (around lines 1710–14), may have also come.
- 1737 ff. *the Tyme of Devyacion.* Triggs (p. 91) sees this discussion of the Times as an allusion to the seven ages, which he misreads from the calendar in *Cursor mundi*, where he confuses the sixth and seventh ages, calling the sixth age the life of Christ and placing humankind now in the seventh age. In fact *Cursor mundi* follows the Augustinian scheme, where the ages are: (1) Adam to Noah, (2) Noah to Abraham, (3) Abraham to David, (4) David to Solomon (Augustine says the Exile), (5) Solomon (or, in Augustine, the Exile) to the birth of Christ, (6) the Resurrection to the Last Judgment, (7) The Last Judgment. The eighth age is that of the New Jerusalem, when time and the seas shall be no more. See St. Augustine, Tractate 9 of his sermons *On the Gospel of St. John*, where, discussing the six vessels of water at the marriage of Cana that were turned by Christ into wine, he identifies them as the six ages, “this being the sixth, as you have often heard and know” (trans. John Gibb and James Innes, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991], vol. 7, p. 65). See also Mary Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man’s Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). But in *The Assembly of Gods* Dame Doctryne does not follow Augustine. Here the time scheme, rather, fits the three- and fourfold scheme of a proscenium theater, where history is beheld on three walls and enacted on the fourth. This first period, “the Tyme of Devyacion,” is a time of separation and division. See the Prologue to Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* on division as the cause of evil (lines 848–1052); “divisioun” is “moder of confusion” (*Confessio Prol.* 851–52), and sin is “moder of divisioun” (line 1030). *The Assembly of Gods’* scheme behind the time of “Devyacion” corresponds fairly directly with Gower’s theory of division. Gower, in lines 633–821 of his Prologue, also acknowledges the Times (or Ages) but personified in the figure of Time in Nebuchednezzer’s dream, as expanded in Daniel 2:19–45. The Ages of Gold, Silver, and Brass continue with those of Steel and Earth. This personification of time is akin to Dante’s figure of Father Time, a symbol of human history, in the “Old Man of Crete,” or Saturn, found in *Inferno* (canto 14.94–120). “Saturn” has three epochs of

Explanatory Notes

time, Oriental, Greco-Roman, and Christian. In Dante the four rivers of hell derive from the sins and tears of human history.

- 1746 *the Tyme of Revocacion*. This period, marked by Moses and the receiving of the Law, is a time of recalling. OED lists this line as the first instance of the word in English.
- 1758 *Thys Reconsylyacion was the Tyme of Grace*. In an Augustinian time scheme *Reconsylyacion* would allude to the seventh age of the Last Judgment (see note to lines 1737 ff.) when, as *Cursor mundi* puts it, the saints rest after the final defeat of Satan, at the day of the “dome,” an age “calde the tyme of grace” (line 21848) in the Trinity and Fairfax manuscripts of the poem. But here the poet follows a different time scheme based on three ages (see notes to lines 1737 ff. and 1765–92), where the present time is considered to be the time of *Reconsylyacion*, when, because of Christ’s sacrifice, humankind has a new access to Grace, a new law displacing the time of *Revocacion*. Compare Langland’s *Piers Plowman* B.19.264 ff., when, after the Resurrection, Grace gives Piers four oxen (the Gospels) and “foure stottes” (bullocks, stallions) of the patriarchs (Augustine, Ambrose, Gregory, and Jerome) to plow his fields. He can then sow the four virtues in the human souls to help establish and maintain the house of Unité called “Holy Chirche on Engliss” (*Piers Plowman* B.19.331). The time of *Reconsylyacion* is now. See note to line 1576.
- 1765–92 *thre tymes asondry devydyd*. Here Dame Doctryne looks at time as a triptych, a not uncommon practice: compare the layout of the pages of the *Biblia pauperum*, where Christ holds the center panel, with wing panels on either side presenting symbolic analogies within time, and the wings announcing the sentence through the voices of the prophets. Here the poet introduces his ideas as murals, the “pycture ys provydyd” (line 1767) by his poem as the center panel, then on the left the explication of the prophets, and on the right, his explanation in which he presents the Devyacion (see line 1737) now in terms of the three ages of man: first, from Adam to Moses (line 1773, i.e., the time establishing the Law); second, the time from Moses to the Incarnation (line 1774, i.e., the time of the Prophets, concluding in John the Baptist); and third, the time from Christ to the present, which “[w]yll dure from thens to the worldes ende” (line 1777). He then adds a fourth wall, which shifts rather subtly the concept of time from a historical plane to a psychological one. He calls this plane “Tyme of Pylgremage” (line 1779) and a “Tyme of Daungerous Passage” (line 1781), which one must print on one’s mind (line 1784) to remember personally within the heart (line 1786). This new focus, where time becomes personal and where the battle of Vyce and Vertu occurs daily “in thyne hert” (line 1786), leads to

The Assembly of Gods

a positive construction of the role of Atropos (Dethe) in history and the renovation of the psyche. From this perspective the battle within the microcosm is indeed one of the “lesse worlde” (line 1829).

- 1778 *fourth.* In this time scheme, the fourth “Tyme” marks eternity and the New Jerusalem, when Alpha and Omega join and time shall be no more (Revelation 21). See note to lines 1765–92.
- 1849 *keyes of the posterns fyve.* That is, the five senses. Pierre Bersuire’s commentary on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (11.633; *The Ovidius moralizatus of Petrus Berchorius : An Introduction and Translation*, William Donald Reynolds, [Ph.D. Diss. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1971], pp. 374–75) identifies the desires governed by the sons of Sleep, or Somnus: for fame and honor (Morpheus), lust (Icelos), and gluttony (Phantasos).
- 1872 *stood I in a wyre.* Compare Chaucer’s *The Hous of Fame*, line 979, where the dreamer falls into a state of confusion about who and where he is. In this passage in *The Assembly of Gods*, Morpheus confronts the dreamer with the images of his dream and thereby leaves him in a state of confusion, similar to the conclusion of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, where Venus confronts Amans with the wisdom of philosophers and poets and then with a confounding mirror image of himself. Here, as in the *Confessio*, the dreamer is caught up in his confusion (*in a wyre*), while Morpheus scolds him — “How long shalt thou looke” (line 1885). As in Chaucer and Gower, poets and philosophers appear before him, but it takes Dame Doctryne to make sense of the four walls (lines 1905 ff.). And even then the dreamer remains in a doubt (see lines 1929, 1948, 1985, 1995), lacking his conclusion. See notes to lines 1930–31, 1987–88, 1995.
- 1897 *Dyogenes sate in a tonne.* Diogenes equates with the “philosopher” who rejects King Alexander’s invitation to join the court in favor of sitting in his tub and contemplating the sun (compare the functions of Apollo in *The Assembly of Gods*). For a lively account of that story, see Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, 3.1201–1316.
- 1930–31 *canst thou nat withoute / Me that conclusion bryng to an ende?* Dame Doctryne asks if the dreamer cannot reasonably come to terms with the problem of human desire without recourse to doctrine, i.e., theology. In logic, to be lost in contradictory particularities of the minor premise without ability to arrive at a conclusion is the essence of frustration. Without certainty within the minor premise no cause can be ascertained; e.g., see the dreamer’s preoccupation with finding the “cause” at the

Explanatory Notes

outset of Chaucer's *The Hous of Fame*, which leaves him in a doubt. Here the conclusion to "that doute" (line 1929) is sought, but the conclusion remains, as it does with other poets of the time, paradoxical (see note to lines 1987–88). Faith in religious authority does not seem to help the dreamer reconcile reason and sensuality, nor is he able to rely solely on his flawed ability to ratiocinate.

1987–88 *as a parable, / Derke as a myste, or a feyned fable.* The dreamer's *doute* is not resolved "[c]lerely and opynly" (line 1986) as he had hoped, but rather as a dark mystery. The ambiguity is characteristic of medieval humanist epistemologies, where the limitations of human understanding are defined by riddles and confined by the limitations of temporalities. The poet seems to suggest that the ontological problem of human nature — rational yet sensual — is a conundrum best expressed by means of the emblem of the Macrobian *fabula* and, therefore, best understood through poetry, not doctrine.

1995 *Declare thy dowte.* Even though the dreamer can enjoy debates amongst the gods of the classical world regarding changeabilities figured through Eolus and dwell enclosed within Christian walls covered with explanatory murals and the explications of Dame Doctryne, the *dowte* remains, a doubt bound up in the dreamer's wit "so thynne" (line 1997) and his sensual fear of Dethe (line 1998). What began as a boisterous squabble against the traitor Eolus, who "[d]estroyed with hys blastes" many places and, according to Diana, "dayly me manaces" (line 61), concludes with a chilling confrontation with the menace of Dethe, whose blasts decimate humankind with even more ruthlessness than the weather. But note it is here Sensualité, a suspect influence, who insists on the fear of Dethe (lines 1961–64). Fear of Death is a favorite topic with Lydgate, so prominent, in fact, that it becomes one of Triggs' focal reasons for concluding that *The Assembly of Gods* must be by Lydgate (pp. xiii, xlvi–l, and liii). The illustrator of Lydgate's poem, entitled in MacCracken (*Minor Poems*, pt. 2, pp. 655–57) "Death's Warning," depicts Death with a spear in his right hand and a bell in his left, announcing, "lo, here thys manace, / Armour ys noon that may withstande hys wounde / Ne whom I merke ther ys non other grace" (lines 9–11); the drawing is filled with words proclaiming the bell's sharp message: "Dethe, dethe, deye, deye"; for so the bell tolls (Douce MS 322, fol. 19v). That drawing would make a fitting epilogue for *The Assembly of Gods*. See also Lydgate's "Timor mortis conturbat me" ("Fear of death confounds me"), written according to the formulas of mortality in dozens of other fifteenth-century poems, or his *Dance of Macabre*, translated from an Old French text and belonging to a long tradition of macabre literature (see also the ending of Hawes' *The Pastime of Pleasure*).

The Assembly of Gods

2012–16 *Bothe Sensualyté and Reson . . . / . . . thy doutfull monacorde.* Doctrine means the fear of death and the rational explanation of its significance bring both body and soul together, united in one common purpose, of avoidance.

2030 *a generall answere.* The dreamer's doubts lie “in especiall” (lines 116, 1445, and 1599), that is, in the particularities of temporalities that he is not able to comprehend. He has a *generall* sense of what is what — Dame Doctryne has taught that to him (it is the major premise) — but he still lacks confidence amidst the particularities (the minor premise — see note to lines 1930–31). Morpheus can show (see note to line 35), but he cannot make him understand. Compare Chaucer's *Boece* (5.m.3), which puts the problem well:

But whanne the soul byholdeth and seeth the heye thought (that is to seyn, God), thanne knoweth it togidre the somme and the singularities (*that is to seyn, the principles and everyche by hymself*). But now, while the soule is hidd in the cloude and in the derknesse of the membres of the body, it ne hath nat al foryeten itself, but it withholdeth the somme of the thinges and lesith the singularities. Thanne who so that sekith sothnesse, he nis in neyther nother habite, for he not nat al, ne he ne hath nat al foryeten, but yit hym remembreth the somme of thinges that he withholdeth, and axeth conseile, and retretith deepliche thinges iseyn byforn (*that is to seyn, the grete somme in his mynde*) so that he mowe adden the parties that he hath foryeten to thilke that he hath withholden. (lines 38–56)

2035 *As good ys ynowgh as a gret feste.* Proverbial. See Tilley, *A Dictionary of Proverbs*, E158: “Enough is as good as a feast,” p. 188.

2038–40 *he hade me brought agene to my bedde . . . / then pryyly / He stale awey.* The dreamer's awakening bears some similarity to Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*, where the poet/dreamer/Black Knight, whose love/hart/solace “sta(a)l away” (lines 381, 1251), awakens to find himself in his bed, still caught up in his study. His only alternative is to tell his dream, to “[p]ut hit in wrytyng” (line 2061). In *The Book of the Duchess* Chaucer ends with the telling of his dream — “now hit ys doon” (line 1334). *The Assembly of Gods* poet goes further, to admonish the reader to walk with Vertu (line 2074) and to fight the good fight against the three enemies (the World, Flesh, and Devil — lines 2079–82) in hope of “triumphall guerdon” (line 2087) in God's “celestiall mansioun” (line 2089). (Compare the dreamer in *The Book of the Duchess* at the outset of the poem, with his desire for reward: though at the outset he knows “my boote is never the ner” [line 38], ultimately he is blessed with an ambiguous glimpse of the New Jerusalem as he accepts the fact that the good fair

Explanatory Notes

White had gone to her reward [lines 1314–23], her “triumphall guerdoun” in God’s “celestial mansioun,” indeed.)

2053–54 *For what cause shewyd was thys vysyon. / I knew nat; wherfore, I toke pen and ynke.*

Like Chaucer at the end of so many of his dream visions, for example, *The Parlement of Foules*, or the female narrator at the end of the visionary *The Assembly of Ladies*, the dreamer here particularizes his general lesson by means of writing down his vision exactly as he experienced it. The “fantasy” to which he has been led by Morpheus, god of dreams, thus becomes both an expression and sign of his anxiety about the human condition and also the means of his recuperation and regeneration. It is also the means by which others may learn how to fight Dethe (see lines 2068–69, where the deciphering of the poem is “for your owne wele”).

2064 *myne ey bodyly.* Medieval mystics frequently distinguish between physical sight and the inner eye that allows them to “see” spiritual truths more clearly and to commune with God.

2070–71 *Take therof the best and let the worst be; / Try out the corne clene from the chaff.* Compare Chaucer’s The Nun’s Priest’s Tale (CTVII [B²] 3443–44): “Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille”; that is, learn from the morality and ignore the merely entertaining and trivial. This particular admonition has long been used by poets to suggest the bifurcated nature of poetry, which has a pleasing exterior but a truthful core hidden inside.

2080–81 *the Devyll and the Flesshe, / And also the Worlde.* These enemies of humankind who attack the body through the five senses also appear as the three beasts who try to waylay the exiled Dante at the beginning of the *Inferno* (canto 1), according to Giovanni Boccaccio’s commentary on the first book of Dante’s *Inferno*. See also Chaucer’s The Tale of Melibeus (CT VII [B²] 1420 ff., 2610 ff.). The Devil works through Pride, Wrath, and Sloth; the World, through Covetousness and Envy; and the Flesh, through Gluttony and Lechery. See Donald R. Howard, *The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

2106–07 The prayer for *eternall joy* for those who give their *audyence* to his vision reflects a common formula for concluding visionary poems. Chaucer, in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Canterbury Tales*, asks for prayers on behalf of his own soul. Here *The Assembly of Gods* poet shifts the concern from the poet’s soul to the welfare of his audience, the implication being that we, as audience, read for our own good,

The Assembly of Gods

despite our doubts. Prayers for the audience, rather than the poet, characterize several of Lydgate's poems as well. See, for example, the conclusion to *The Life of Our Lady* and the several shorter Marian poems, with their prayers of intercession for "us"; or the mutual prayers "To sende us pes" at the end of *The Siege of Thebes* (line 4713); or the Envoy to *Troy Book*, with its prayer to the king that he have the grace to rule well according to God's pleasure and our benefit; or the prayers on behalf of Duke Humphrey at the end of *The Fall of Princes*.

Textual Notes

Abbreviations:

A: Cambridge, Trinity College Library MS R.3.19, fols. 67b–97b.

B: British Library, Royal MS 18.d, fols. 167a–180b (alleged copy of D).

C: British Library, printed edition of *Le Assemble de Dyeus* by Wynkyn de Worde, G.11587 (tract 2) (1498).

D: British Library, printed edition of *Le Assemble de Dyeus* by Wynkyn de Worde, C.13.a.21 (tract 2) (1500?).

E: Cambridge University Library, printed edition by Wynkyn de Worde (c. 1500), reprinted in facsimile by Francis Jenkinson, Cambridge University Press, 1906 (latest of the three printed editions published around 1500).

F: Huntington Library printed edition by Richard Pynson (c. 1505). Missing lines 764–1099.

G: Huntington Library printed edition by [J. Skot for] Robert Redman (after 1529).

H: Oxford, Bodleian Library Douce MS, fragment f. 51 (1), “Vertu,” lines 1213–1323 (fragmentary copy of F).

T: Triggs’ edition (1895; 1896).

R: Ringler’s corrections (1953).

Fl: Fletcher’s corrections (1977).

The Interpretation of the Names of the Gods and Goddesses (Table of Gods and Goddesses) (in ACDEFG).

Because the poem is based on the A text, only significant exceptions in other texts or

Textual Notes

emendations of A have been cited in the textual notes. Where A has been emended on the basis of practice in other texts, I have indicated A's practice.

- 1–2 *Here foloweth . . . as poetes wryte.* In EF these lines follow the table: *Here endeth the interpretacyon of the names of Goddes and Goddesses as is rehearsed hereafter in this treatyse folowyng as poetes wryte*, with E, at what would be line 31; and FG, at the opening of *Banquet*, instead of at lines 1–2. E substitutes *reherced, the for this in this treatyse, and folowyngē.*
- 5 *Morpheus.* ACDEFG: *Morpleus*; emended by T.
- 9 *Eolus.* ACDEFG: *Colus*; emended by T. "Colus" also appears for Eolus in Christine's *The Epistle of Othea*, trans. Stephen Scrope.
- 12 *the Spryng.* E omits *the*.
- 16–26 Lines missing in F.
- 19 *Goddesse.* CT: *Goddes*.
- 21 *of shepardes.* E omits *of*; D: *Shepardis*.
- 26 *Mercurius.* A: *Marcurius*; DG: *Marcuryus*; E: *Mercuryus*; emended by T.
- 28 *and stryfe.* G: *or of varyans*.

Banquet of Gods and Goddesses.

The title here, along with an attribution to Lydgate, is found in A. See Introduction, p. 1.

- 1 *Whan.* A: a four-line space for an ornamental *W* has been left, but the capital has not been added.
in. EG omit.
- 8 *me gan.* F: *gan me*.
- 13 *leyde I me.* G: *I leyde me*.
- 14 *Morpheus.* *Morpleus* in ABCDEFG here and throughout, an obvious mistake.
- 24 *me leede.* F: *lede me*.
- 33 *in erthe.* F omits *in*.
outher. B: *either*; DEFG: *eyther*.
- 47 *her:* their. Although ME *hie* and *hem* have usually become *they* and *them* in A, the genitive plural is most resistant to change and remains as *her*. The female singular pronoun is usually spelled *hyr*, though sometimes *her* in AG.
- 57 *a goddesse.* F omits *a*.
- 59 *take.* EG omit.
- 70 *Where thorough.* F: *Wherethroughē*.
lykly to fade. F: *likely for to fade*.
- 71 *a reproche.* F: *aproche*.

Textual Notes

- 78 *thus*. EG omit.
84 *to*. BCDEFG omit.
89 *yef*. EFG omit.
90 *me*. F: *so*.
92 *as mekyll*. C: *as moche*; F: *so moche*.
104 *fome*. A: *from*, which makes little sense; BG: *come*; DE: *com*; C: *fome*, which
 correction I have followed; see also F: *scome* (scum) or *foome*; T: *foom* (for which
 there is no basis).
 swet. G: *tyme*.
 hit. EG omit.
106 *as*. EFG omit.
107 *Bothe*. A: *Abothe*; BC: *Bothe*; DEFG: *Both*.
115 *me be*. EG omit *be*.
117 *worst was*. CF: *was worst*.
118 *as*. EG omit.
119 *Ay*. F: *Ever*.
120 *of sylfewyll*. G omits *of*.
123 *To*. EG: *For to*.
 all. T omits, as noted by Fl.
124 *to*. C omits.
127 *sythe*. F: *tymes*.
130 *er*. EFG: *or*.
131 *they me*. C omits.
132 *pepyll*. F: *tyme*.
133 *shame*. EG: *blame*.
140 *avysement*. T: *avysment*
141 *had*. C omits.
142 *to know*. EG omit.
145 *mevyd*. EG omit.
147 *compleyn*. B: *spleyne*; G: *to compleyne*.
155 *here*. E: *see*; G: *se*.
157 *he*. EG omit.
164 *Appollo*. BDFT: *Apollo*; EG: *Appolo*; generally the names remain consistent
 throughout each text, and generally A writes *Apollo*, though not in this instance.
 T mistranscribes as *Apollo*.
166 *in feere*. T brackets *in* as his emendation of A; T's mistake is noted by Fl; B: *fere*;
 DEG: *in fere*; F: *i fere*.
169 *the god, Apollo*. ABF: *to the god*; E reads *to* for *to the*, while G substitutes *that* for
 to the. Fl acknowledges both variants and notes T's failure to correct the line for

Textual Notes

- sense after T deletes *to*.
175 *offence*. F: *defence*.
179 *Neptunus*. G: *god Neptunus*.
186 *alther last*. BE: *alderlast*; C: *alder last*, D: *alder laste*; F: *althe last*; G: *alderlaste*.
187 *the*. B: *be*.
198 *that*. C omits.
199 *yow pray*. E: *pray you*; G: *praye you*.
202 *to*. G omits.
205 *a*. F omits.
208 *To here*. G: *For to here*.
210 *owne wele, sey*. B: *one well say*; D: *one wele sey*; E: *own wele say*; G: *owne wele say*. R notes that B agrees in its error with D, and therefore B must be copied from D.
212 *Her to an*. F: *Hir to*.
 an. F omits.
213 *her*. B: *here*; F: *hir*; G: *theyr*.
214 *entrete*. G: *to entrete*.
215 *her*. G: *their*.
217 *grogynge*. B: *grutching*; CDE: *grutchyng*; F: *grutchinge*; G: *grutchyng*.
218 *Loo*. T reads *Lo*, as in BEG.
 Madame. E: *dame*.
222 *gloryous*. F: *gracious*.
 goddesse. BG: *goddes*.
224 *All we*. F: *Alwey*.
226 *to forgeve*. EG: *so to foryeve*.
228 *Yef he eft*. EG: *If he ought*.
235 *mery*. BCDF: emend to *mercy*. R notes that B agrees with D in this error and therefore that B must have been copied from D.
236 *of hys*. G: *in this*.
 mater. EG: *maner*.
240 *my*. G omits.
 goddesse. B: *goddes*; E: *godd'esse*.
243 *Phebe*. *Phebus* in ABCDEFG, but clearly incorrect. T lists *Pheb[e]*. So too in line 358 (see explanatory note).
247 *goddesses eke, that be heere*. G: *goddesse*; CE omit *eke*; EG substitute *ben* for *be*.
255 *yet*. EG: *ye*.
 ye. EG omit.
256 *prees*. B: *press*; G: *prease*; T: *presse*, as in E (abbreviated) and F.

Textual Notes

- 262 *hys hand.* B: *his hede*; D: *his honde*; C: *honde*, with *hys* omitted; E: *his hond*; G: *his hande*.
- 262–315 These lines are missing from F.
- 265 *Sate the goddesse.* B: *Sad the goddes*.
- 267 *she.* According to Fl, *she* in AC; but also in G; BDE: *he*.
- 268 *hyr.* CEG: *her*.
- 280 *oft sythe.* B: *oft sith*; C: *tyme*; E: *oftsyth*; G: *ofte syth*.
- 293 *the.* E omits.
 goddesse. E: *goddes*.
- 301 *hyr dyd.* C: *dyde her*.
- 304 *polyty.* B: *policy*; ET: *polycy*; G: *polyce*.
- 305 *goddesse.* BT: *goddese*; E: *goddes*.
- 316 *party.* E: *perty*.
- 320 *chamelet.* E: *clamelet*.
- 328 *pryk-eryd.* E: *prekered*; G: *prycke ered*.
- 331 *hys.* G omits.
- 332 *kyrtyll.* E: *kyr ell*.
- 337 *Next hyr.* E: *Next to her*; G: *Nexte to her*.
was then. BDEF: *than was*, which, according to R, attests that D does not derive from A. A, once again, is unique.
and seyle. G: *and a sayle*.
- 342 *hyr handys.* BCD: *her hondis*; E: *hondes*; F: *hir handes*; G: *her hondes*.
- 347 *ever.* EG omit.
- 355 *chase.* EG: *chose*.
- 358 *Phebe.* A: *Phebus*, but clearly Apollo's sister is meant.
- 360 *to avale.* EG: *vayl*.
- 366 *course: wytnesse.* F: *cours as witnesseth*.
- 369 *fynde lak.* FG: *fynde no lacke*.
- 374 *skyne; her.* C reads *and her*.
- 375 *She rayysshyd.* Emended from *Ravysshyd* on basis of F.
- 390 *There.* T mistranscribes as *ther*.
- 391 *with.* C substitutes *and*.
- 398 *her.* G: *theyr*.
- 402 *gan.* Fl: *han*.
- 403 *whyche.* C: *that*.
- 404 *mo.* C omits.
- 409 *made.* E omits.
- 412 *she.* ABDEG: *he.* T's emendation, based on F.
- 417 *that.* B: *the*; C omits.

Textual Notes

- 418 *shuld they.* G: *they sholde.*
419 *Attropos.* See also lines 565 and 1322. G: *Antropos*, throughout.
420 *a wyndyng.* BCD omit *a*.
423 *and.* Fl notes T's mistake (and also in EG) in omitting *and* and corrects on the basis
 of A.
 she had. C: *had she.*
425 *quod.* C: *sayd.*
 the. C omits.
427 *yet.* C omits.
432 *went.* B omits.
434 *yn.* EG omit.
436 *woode.* EG: *mad.*
439 *carpyng.* E: *spekyng; G: spekynge.*
440 *hit.* B: *he.*
442 *He stood for the boldly, with grym countenaunce.* F deletes *boldly* and changes *grym*
 to *bolde.*
443 *on.* T: *in.*
444 *gret.* EG omit.
445 *all.* G: *ony.*
449 *ye.* EG omit.
453 *hit nat.* E: *not it.*
460 *defaute.* EG: *faute.*
475 *no grace.* G: *they gate no grace.*
476 *all be.* F omits *be.* G deletes *all be.*
 hem. G: *them all.*
478 *foule.* G omits.
479 *every.* F: *in every.*
490 *have.* EG omit.
493 *two.* AT: roman numerals. EG: *you ii;* F spells out.
494 *offyce, ner.* E: *offycenere;* F: *nor for ner;* G: *offycynere.*
497 *good wyll.* E: *gode wy.*
 lo. EG omit.
499 *they brayde up.* G: *brayde up all.*
502 *they swere.* G: *they dyde swere.*
507 *yef.* EF omit.
508 *full.* EG: *well;* F omits.
 sone. EG omit.
510 *That.* G: *That and.*
513 *leyte.* E: *lyghtning;* F: *lightnyng;* G: *lyghtnyng.*

Textual Notes

- 518 *be.* EG omit.
522 *to.* E omits.
525 *all.* EG omit.
 woll he. EG: *he wyll.*
526 *But for to tell.* F: *For to tell.*
534 *a kravers.* CF omit *a*; C: *cravers.*
537 *weet.* G: *were.*
541 *have.* F omits.
 goon out. F: *go oute*; EG omit *out.*
 fer. G: *terre.*
542 *oon.* B: *on*; CDEG: *one.*
545 *Tyll.* B: *This*; E: *Tyl*; T: *Till.*
546 *of.* F: *for.*
553 *as.* EG omit.
554 *a.* E omits.
556 *bothe.* EG omit.
560 *efte.* G: *agayne.*
 rekke. EG: *care.*
 nat. F: *nat of.*
561 *to returne.* E omits *to.*
564 *he.* E: *it*; F: *they.*
565 *that.* EG omit.
 Attropos. G: *Antropos.*
566 *Phebe.* EFG: *Phebus.* See also line 358.
570 *alone.* BD: *alove.*
571 *Er.* G: *Other.*
 or elles. One word in A; CF: *ellys*; E: *ellie.*
573 *sese.* E: *seale*; G: *sease.*
574 *lyketh.* F: *thinke.*
577 *hygh plesure.* G: *hyght pleyser.*
585 *shall ye.* E omits *ye*; G: *ye shall.*
587 *defaute.* BDEFG: *the faute*; C: *the fawte.* R suggests that D does not derive from A
 here.
588 *so.* F omits.
591 *mykyll.* G: *mothe.*
595 *thys mater ageyn hym take.* F: *ageyne hym this mater take.*
599 *your althrys eere.* G changes to *althers tre.*
601 *oon.* EG omit.

Textual Notes

- 607 *Armyd.* BDEFG: *Armed*; for R, this indicates that D does not correspond with A and that B agrees with D and is therefore copied from D.
at all. BCD omit *all*, according to Fl (though BD retain *all* and omit *at*); F: *in all*.
609 *batayll.* G: *that batayle*.
611 *And.* EG omit.
612 *Ageyn.* G: *Ayenst*.
617 *cure.* F: *ever*.
617–714 The capitalization in A of the names of the *capteyns* of *Vyce* and all the *pepyll* (line 671) in the entourage is quite irregular. I have capitalized the officers' names and used lowercase for the types and classes of persons.
618 *any.* EG omit.
621 *next hym roode.* F: *rode next hym*.
623 *on a wolfe.* E omits *a*.
625 *nakyd.* EG omit.
634 *Best.* A: *Bost*; corrected to *Best* by T in agreement with CDEFG; B: *Bist*.
on. F omits; G: *in*.
635 *ther.* A: *the*. Emended to *ther(e)* by CT; BDEFG: *there*.
640 *Gret Jelacy.* F: *and greate*.
648 *Yll, and with Foule Rybaudy.* BCD: *and* precedes *Rybaudy*, which disrupts the meter. R notes that D does not derive from A in this line (because D adds *and*) and that B agrees with D in its error and therefore must be derived from D.
651 *Worldly Vanyté.* Emended on basis on FG from A: *wordly*.
661 *Horryble.* B: *horribly*; D: *horrybly*; F: *horrible*.
662 *alther-last.* F: *all the last*.
671 *pepyll.* EG omit.
673 *braggars.* Fl notes that AC: *Braggers*; DBE: *kraghers*; but in fact, EG: *crakers*; F: *braggers*.
674 *fasers.* E: *sasers*.
675 *shakerles*. F: *shakelers*.
soleyn. C: *sol eyn*; F: *soleyne*.
680 *usurers.* G: *users*.
682 *gret.* F omits.
686 *Lascyyvous.* A: *Lastyyvous*.
687 *of.* E: *and*.
691 *Stalkers.* E: *Sralkers*.
693 *Getters.* F: *Fetters*.
702 *Brothelles.* BCDEFG: *Brothellers*.
709 *Quesmers.* T mistranscribes *Quelmers*. Fl notes that *Quesmers* in *The Assembly of Gods* appears as the only OED citation. Also BDF.

Textual Notes

- 715 *comons*. EG: *comons that*.
717 *for*. EG omit.
721 *for sowght he*. BCEG: *forsoth it*; D: *forsothe hit*; F: *forsothe*.
723 *then*. EG: *that*.
732 *er*. G: *or*.
733 *him nat*. BCDEG: *hym not*. R concludes that B copies from D because B agrees
 with D in this “error.”
736 *hym*. EG omit.
 he. G: *be*.
737 *begynnyng*. G: *bothe begynnyng*.
739 *wende*. EG: *go how*.
742 *mater*. E: *mat*.
750 *the*. EG omit.
753 *do*. B omits.
754 *a long*. E: *a gret*; F: *a longe*; G: *a grete*.
756 *yowre*. G: *you your*.
758 *frendys*. E: *and frendis*.
760 *mowte*. EG: *myght*.
764–1099 Lines are missing in F.
767 *he*. DEG omit.
773 *no*. B omits.
 caltrop. E: *cotrop*.
788 *boost*. B: *oste*; E: *host*; T: *hoost*; Fl notes T’s mistake.
791 *laurer*. G: *Laurel*.
792 *dowty*. EG: *doubty*.
794 *hys*. C omits.
798 *hys*. G omits.
805 *to*. G: *for*.
812 *Syttyng . . . good and free*. Entire line is missing in B.
813 *hys crest*. B omits *hys*.
815 *hert*. E: *hete*.
 hys trapure was gay. AG read *was for hys*; T emends to *hys*, which I follow here;
 E omits *hys*. C: *trappured and agy*; E: *and gay*.
819 *Armyd*. BCDEG: *Armed*; T: *Arymd*; Fl notes mistake in T.
821 *the*. Emended from A: *tho* on basis of EFGT, although *tho* could mean “those.”
826 *aftyr*. G: *to*.
828–89 I have capitalized names of personifications.
853 *gret*. EG omit.
862 *came*. E: *nean*.

Textual Notes

- 873 *with.* EG omit.
875 *be.* T emends to *he*, and Fl agrees.
875 *he.* E: *ge*.
877 *hys.* CG omit.
880 *they wold.* E substitutes *this* for *they*; G: *wolde they*.
881 *theym . . . be.* T: *they . . . he*, incorrectly.
891 *com pyson.* The sense is obscure. CT solve the problem with *comparyson*; E: *came pyson*; G: *came poyson*.
897 *notable.* EG: *noble*.
900 *declarers.* A: *declares*. Expanded on the basis of BCDEGT. Fl follows T.
902 *sowles.* D: *foules*; T: *fowles*. It seems likely that the long *s* in A was read as *f* in later witnesses.
914 *feythfull.* E: *feyth*; G: *fayth*.
923 *Solytary.* E: *Salytary*.
924 *rychesses.* B: *richesses*; G: *ryches*; T: *rychesse*.
927 *fall.* G: *fell*.
932 *Macrocosme.* The word should read *Microcosme*, and *passim* including lines 952, 1255, 1420, and 1468 (where EG: *Macrocosme*). A writes, incorrectly, *Maco-crosme*, as in lines 952 and 1468.
937 *Synderesys . . . as in a parke.* C omits *as*; EG omit *in*. Omissions in CE noted by Fl.
938 *to marke.* G: *for to marke*.
943 *he was.* G: *was he*.
944 *nat.* EG omit.
945 *have.* C omits.
946 *In.* C omits.
953 *than.* EG omit.
954 *I se.* C: *see I*.
962 *heyinous.* G: *hydeous*.
966 *ye.* BCDE omit. Because B agrees in error with D, B must be copied from D.
970 *Among whom . . . a score.* For R, this line indicates that B agrees in error with D and is therefore copied from D.
971 *But as . . . tell yow more.* C: *you tell more*. EG omit line.
972 *pety.* C omits.
974 *dubbyd.* BD: *doubled*, also in line 981, according to Fl; EG: *doubed*. See also line 981, where R notes that this shows the linkage between A and C, and B and D.
976 *with.* ABD: *without*; CE: *wythout*; emended in GT.
981 *dubbyd.* In BD: *doubled*; EG: *doubed*. R notes that this shows the linkage between A and C, and B and D.
982 *hys.* EG omit.

Textual Notes

- 983 *her.* C: *ther*; G: *theyr*.
984 *hit shuld.* EG: *shold it*.
1017 *answere.* G: *mater*.
1024 *mykyll.* G: *moche*.
1031 *Frewyll, Vertew.* G: *Vertu Frewyll*.
1033 *be.* T: *he*; Fl notes T's mistake.
1034 *then.* G: *them*.
1044 *nerer.* C: *nere*.
1051 *stood.* BT omit, a mistake noted by Fl. B is the only manuscript in which this omission occurs, which suggests that T used B here rather than A or simply reduplicated the error.
1053 *last.* G: *the last*.
1054 *Vertu wold.* G: *wolde Vertu*.
1058 *sy.* E: *see*; G corrects to *sawe*.
1060 *that.* C omits.
1063 *tynē.* G: *tyme*.
1074 *Howe be hyt the slepyr grasse made many of hem fall.* DE: *How . . . sleper*; B: *slepper*; C: *slypper*. G: *How . . . the grasse . . . them*. R notes that B agrees in error with D and concludes therefore that B is copied from D.
1083 *comons.* EG omit.
1087 *his.* EG omit.
1092 *ours.* Emended from A: *our*, as in BCEG.
 elles. E omits.
1095 *hogy.* E: *hugy*; G: *huge*.
 behelde. In A only: *behold*. I follow the correction in BCDGT. E: *beheld*.
1100 *thus.* EG omit.
1103 *Crystis.* A: *Cryste*; emended on the basis of variants in BC: *Cristis*; E: *chrystys*; G: *Chrystes*; T: *Cristes*.
1113 *gret meryt.* B: *might*; CE: *myȝt*; DG: *myght*; F: *myghte*, which also omits *gret*. R suggests that this line shows that D does not derive from A.
1117 *Geve.* A: *yeve*; C: *yone*; F: *yonder*; G: *you*.
1118 *no lengor.* F: *nat longe*.
1123 *a lowde.* F omits *a*.
1124 *hys.* G omits.
 for. B omits.
1132 *Vertew hys ost.* G: *Vertues hoost*.
1138 *armee.* B: *harm*.
1144 *a.* F omits.
1145 *hym sent.* G: *sent hym*.

Textual Notes

- 1148 *forthe*. G omits.
- 1149 *for to tell yow*. C omits *for* and *yow*.
- 1154 *they hym*. EG omit *hym*.
- 1161 *scourge*. In AT; BCG: *stronge*; DE: *strong*.
- 1169 *beshut*. C: *beshyt*; G: *be shyt*.
- 1176 *hathe*. T mistranscribes as *have*; Fl corrects so.
- 1184 *agene togedyr*. C: *togyder agayn*.
- 1185 *fly*. ABCDEG: *sty*; F: *stye*; T's emendation.
- 1192 *hys*. EG omit.
- 1193 *seke*. T mistranscribes as *seek*.
- 1194 *whatsoever*. A: *what so ever*; G: *what ever*.
- 1195 *Vertew; elles*. G: *vertu or els*.
- 1198 *also to*. EG omit *to*.
- be her*. G: *theyr*.
- 1199 *they*. C omits.
- 1201 *as they came by Conscience, he theym bad goo lyght*. B inverts word order — *And as thei to conscience cam*. CDEFG: *to* instead of *by*. FG reverse word order in *theym bad*.
- 1202 *Er than*. G: *Left that*.
- 1203 *he*. B omits.
- 1204 *ys*. E omits.
- late then*. B: *let hem*.
- 1209 *socour*. G: *to socour*.
- 1211 *for*. C: *to*.
- 1219 *mervayll*. B: *mivel*.
- 1223 *swemfully*. G corrects to *shamefully*.
- 1230 *stant hym noon awe*. G emends to *standes he in none awe*.
- 1237 *ys hit*. EG: *it is*.
- 1238 *and wylde*. EG omit.
- 1239 *made*. EG omit.
- 1240 *But*. C omits.
- 1243 *The*. C: *they*.
- 1245 *Must ye*. E: *muit* and omits *ye*.
- other*. E omits.
- 1246 *that*. F omits.
- see*. E omits.
- 1257 *to angre*. CFG omit *to*.
- 1259 *bayll*. B: *baille*; T: *bayll[e]*; E: *bayl*; F: *bailly*; G: *bayle*.
- 1260 *for*. CF omit.

Textual Notes

- 1265 *shalt thou.* E: *thu shalt;* G: *thu shalte.*
1267 *jugement.* E: *Jugementis;* G: *iugementes.*
1267 *ys.* G omits.
1274 *castaway.* BD: *cast awaye;* CE: *cast a way;* G: *cast way*
1279 *restrayn.* G: *to restrayne.*
1283 *tyne.* F omits.
1284 *sy.* BD: *see;* C: *sawe;* EG: *se.*
1287 *may.* G: *that may.*
1293 *I thanke God . . . myn honour.* Stand-alone line in A.
1296 *fyve.* Expanded from *.v.*
shall ye. F: *ye shall.*
1309 *let.* G: *to let.*
hyt. BDFG: *hym.*
be lorne. F: *be lorne.*
1314 *And ran to the palyse as he had be wood.* Line missing EG.
1316 *worthy.* G: *whyrly.*
1317 *a devyllway.* G substitutes *the* for *a;* F: *a devylwey.*
1322 *Attropos.* G: *Antropos.*
god. G: *the god.*
1331 *I se.* C: *see I.*
1336 *yef.* F omits.
1348 *hym commaundyd.* C: *commaunded hym.*
pyke hym. G: *to pyke hym;* C omits *hym.*
1350 *undyr.* F: *hym under.*
1353 *best.* G: *the best.*
1362 *of.* E omits.
1365 *fro . . . fro.* EFGT: *for . . . for.*
1370 *be.* G: *it.*
1373 *menetyme.* B: *meane.*
1374 *therof had.* C: *had therof.*
1379 *bade hym.* G: *hym bad.*
1385 *men.* E omits; G: *he.*
1387 *Vertu hys.* CF: *vertues;* G: *Vertues,* with *hys* omitted.
soone. G emends to *sonest.*
1389 *shall ye.* F: *ye shall.*
1400 *ar dysusyd.* F substitutes *ben* for *ar;* G substitutes *abused* for *dysusyd.*
1404 *thow shalt be.* BD: *that shall be;* CF: *that shalbe;* E: *that shal be;* G: *thou shall be.*
1406 *thow become.* G: *ever thou come.*
1408 *as.* C omits.

Textual Notes

- 1416 *of.* G: *on.*
1421 *redy loke thou.* F: *loke redy thou;* G: *loke thou redy.*
1425 *the.* F: *that.*
1438 *bodyly.* F: *holy.*
1442 *hys.* E omits.
 sygne. G: *thynge.*
1445 *fyve.* AT: *v.*
1451 *herte.* G: *thwarte.*
1459 *seere.* G: *dyed.*
1462 *also were.* BCDEFG: *were also.*
1463 *fyn.* G: *all.*
1466 *ys ay.* G: *shall last aye.*
1467 *omnipotens.* T emends A to *omnipotent*, as in B; CDEG: *omnypotent*; F: *omnypo-*
 tente.
1475 *to.* F omits.
 therof. BD: *theroft.*
1477 *have.* G: *thou shalte have.*
1478 *hym folowyd.* F: *folowed hym.*
 had. G omits.
1485 *in, I.* Fl notes *in* omitted in C; E omits *I.*
1486 *there.* EG omit.
1493 *thre.* Expanded from *iii* in ABCDEGT.
1494 *about.* B: *above.*
1498 *tell.* G: *shewe.*
1502 *next.* G: *hym nexte.*
1507 *aqueyntaunce.* F: *antyquyte.*
1511 *were.* G: *we.*
1514 *I yet.* C: *yet I.*
1519 *mynde.* G: *my mynde.*
1525 *hym.* E omits.
1526 *there.* G omits.
1530 *an.* EG omit.
1539 *also.* EG omit.
1543 *aspyed I.* E: *I espyed;* G: *I aspyed.*
1547 *a.* EG omit.
1563 *James.* EG: *and James.*
1566 *next hem.* F: *next to hym.*
1572 *wynges.* G: *his wynges.*
1582 *Crysostom.* F: *grysostome;* G: *Crysostony.*

Textual Notes

- 1586 *hem.* C: *them*; FG: *ben*.
1587 *was he.* EG: *he was*.
1590 *me remembre.* Only in AT does a second *me* follow after *me remembre*, clearly a mistake, and I have deleted on the basis of the correction in BCDEFG.
 yow. C: *yon*.
1591 *brayne.* BD: *barayne*; E: *barayn*. R notes that B agrees in error with D, so that B perhaps copied from D.
1593 *whyle have I.* EG: *whyle to have*.
1597 *moo.* EG omit.
1598 *now.* EG omit.
1608 *hovyd.* A: *honyd*; CEFG: *hoved*; Fl is incorrect in noting the appearance of *honyd* only in D since D agrees with A. Changed to *hovyd* for sense.
1609 *whos.* EG: *her*.
1620 *hys.* CF omits; G: *is*.
1622 *now I.* F reads *nowe*, with *I* deleted.
1630 *dayly.* EG omit.
1636 *sythe.* C: *tyme*; F: *tymes*.
1638 *then.* BCEFGT: *than*.
 overmykyll. C: *overmoch*; F: *overmoche*; T: *over mykyll*.
1640 *be.* T: *he*; Fl notes T's mistake.
1645 *be fooles.* F: *be by fooles*.
1647 *me.* F: *brought*; G: *meved*.
1652 *overmekyll.* C: *overmoche*.
1659 *to scoole.* F: *to the scole*; G: *to scole*.
1664 *amendyd.* BDE: *amendeth*.
1669 *her.* E: *hed*.
1672 *set at.* F: *set it at*.
1676 *thys.* E: *his*.
1678 *shuldest.* E: *holdest*.
1684 *paynym.* G: *the paynym*.
1693 *Som.* G: *So*.
1700 *for as.* G: *as for*.
1705 *and.* BG: *or*.
1714 *cornys.* F: *goddys*; G: *corne*.
1716 *In lyke maner . . . goddesse.* In G, this line appears as the last line of the previous stanza.
1718 *meane.* BCDE: *name*; F: *mene*.
 gryffyng. E: *graffyng*; G: *graffynge*.
1719 *deyfy.* G: *edyfy*.

Textual Notes

- 1720 *furst founde.* F: *fonde first.*
1723 *that.* G: *the.*
1734 *whoo.* F: *who so.*
1736 *hyd.* C: *dyd;* F: *he did;* G: *he dyd.*
1741 *awayters.* G: *wayters.*
1744 *sesyd.* F: *saide.*
1751 *duryd to the.* to added to A for sense, as in BCT. F omits *to.*
1752 *to.* F omits.
1755 *Man.* F: *god.*
1761 *then.* EG omit.
1764 *That the . . . present.* This entire line is missing in EG; pencilled in in G.
1765 Emended from roman numeral; F: *thre.* See also line 1771.
asondry. F: *asonder;* G: *a sondre.*
1767 *thee yn pycture ys.* F: *in picture.*
1769 *thirde.* A: *iii,* emended as in F.
hit ys to. B omits *hit.* G omits *to.*
1775 *cure.* G: *oure.*
1777 *to.* C: *tyll.*
1778 *fourth.* ABCD: *iiiith*; EG: *.iiii;* emended as in F.
1782 *Tyme.* EG omit.
1783 *benamyd.* G: *be name.*
1785 *fygure.* F: *figure se.*
thow se. A: *thow me.* G: *thou se.* Both F and G's emendations disrupt the meter. B, C, and D follow A.
1791 *no.* F omits.
1798 *hathe ay.* G: *aye hath.*
1799 *For.* D omits.
1802 *so moche.* F: *for as.*
1804 *that.* C omits.
1809 *or.* G: *and.*
1810 *he.* G omits.
1813 *awake.* G: *to awake.*
1814 *chargeth.* F: *careth;* T: *changeth.* Fl notes T's mistake.
1815 *As.* E: *Ap;* G: *Up.*
1817 *nat.* E: *nor.*
1819 *oon.* G: *that one.*
lorde ys. G: *is lorde.*
1821 *Vyce and.* E omits.
1826 *fowtyn.* E: *fowtyve;* G: *fawtyve.*

Textual Notes

- 1828 *as.* C omits.
- 1829 *the comon.* B omits *the*.
- 1842 *Prescience and Predestinacion.* E omits *Prescience and*; substitutes *Prestynacyon*.
- 1844 *Ys.* F: *It*.
- 1846 *they fro Vertu wolde pervert.* F: *they wolde fro vertu perverte*.
- 1858 *Whyche.* G: *Unto whiche*.
- 1870 *Hast thow nat now thyne hertes desyre?* C omits *now*; EG: *Hast thou properly the verey sentence?* G generally follows E.
- 1871 *yon.* B: *thou*; D: *you*; F: *the*. See also line 1886.
- 1886 *yon.* D: *you*; F: *that*.
- 1889 *fourth.* A: *iiijth*; BEG: *fourthe*; C: *fourth*.
- 1903 *sayde.* G: *sayd she*.
- 1906 *thee the present.* C omits *thee*, probably because in A both *thee* and *the* are spelled *the*.
- 1909 *dyrectly.* BC: *discretly*; D: *dyscretly*; E: *dyserettly*; F: *discretely*; G: *dyscretely*.
- 1922 *last.* E: *law*.
- 1925 *loute.* E: *lute*; T: *lowte*.
- 1932 *mende.* F: *mynde*.
- 1934 *though.* B: *thought*.
- 1938 *with hym comon.* G: *comon with hym*.
- 1942 *claymed.* F: *clawed*.
- 1960 *Yet ys.* G: *It is*.
- 1977 *mevyd.* G: *mened*.
- 1978 *me then.* G: *then me*.
- 1988 *myste.* E: *myhe*.
- 1990 *seyde she.* G: *she sayd*.
- 1995 *Declare.* BCDEFG: *Declared*.
- 1999 *went.* E: *vent*.
- 2008 *knette in oon.* F adds *in*: *knytte in in one*.
- 2018 *And.* BCT: *An.* Fl notes T's mistake in reading *and* as *an*.
- 2019 *vouchesafe.* G: *wolde vouchesafe*.
- 2023 *of thys.* G deletes *of*.
- 2024 *for.* G omits.
- 2029 *heere tary.* G: *tary here*.
- 2034 *that hold I best.* B deletes *that*; BDE: *sholde*; F: *that is for the best*; Fl incorrectly notes that *hold* appears in AC, *shold* in BDET.
- 2041 *Where.* E: *were*.
- 2044 *he.* F omits.
- 2044 *for to.* G: *to a*.

Textual Notes

- 2048 *The.* BCDEFG: *That.*
 and Vertew. F adds a second *and* before *vertue.*
- 2049 *hit, hit.* C omits one *hit* and reads *it.*
- 2055 *paper to make therof.* BCDG: *therof to make;* E: *thereof to make.* F: *papere therof to make.*
- 2061 *where thorow.* F: *wherethrough.*
- 2074 *hys.* CEFG omit.
 loore. EG omit.
- 2079 *thre.* AEG: *iii.*
- 2080 *the Flesshe.* F: *the[m] flesshe.*
- 2086 *exylyd.* G: *exyle.*
- 2091 *fayne.* C: *feyne.*
- 2093 *That oft sythe causeth the good Lorde to be wrothe.* G: *That ofte tymes causeth god w[ith] us to be wrothe.*
- 2101 *regeneracion.* F: *generacion;* G: *generacyon.*
- 2103 *descendyd.* CG: *descended;* BDEF: *descendeth.* R declares that B agrees with D in error, therefore B must have been copied from D.
- 2108 *Amen.* After this word, C adds, *Thus endeth this lytell moralized treatyse compiled by dan John Lydgat somtyme monke of Bury on whose soule god have mercy;* D: *There endeth a lytyll Tratyse named Le assemble de dyeus;* E: *Here endeth alytyll Treatyse named The assemble of goddes;* F: *Emprynted by Richarde Pynson;* G emends E, i.e., separates *a lytyll*, lower-cases *treatyse*, expands *namede*, and entitles it *the assemble of goddes and goddesses.* The printer in G acknowledges this was “*Imprynted at London in Fletestrete by me Robert Redman.*”

Glossary

a untranslated	avysement (n.) <i>advice, consideration, thinking, deliberation</i>
abowte <i>about</i>	ay <i>always</i>
abyde, abyte <i>waits, remains; abyte</i> (3rd preterit singular) <i>remained</i>	banket <i>banquet</i>
abydyng <i>dwelling, awaiting</i>	bawdryk <i>baldric, a shoulder belt over the chest used to support a sword or trumpet</i>
acorde <i>come to an agreement</i>	be <i>by</i>
advert <i>to turn towards; to turn one's attentions to; to take notice of, heed, observe</i>	begonne, begoone <i>begun</i>
afray (n.) <i>battle, assault, outcry, fear, dismay</i>	begylyd <i>tricked, deceived, betrayed, led into error</i>
afrayed (v.) <i>arouse, frighten; (p.p.) aroused, frightened</i>	benedycyte <i>thanks be to God</i>
ageyn, ayene <i>against, in opposition; again</i>	bere <i>bear</i>
alther-last <i>last of all</i>	betyn <i>beaten, flogged, struck; embroidered, painted</i>
anone <i>at once, straightway</i>	boorde <i>dining table</i>
apele <i>appeal</i>	boote <i>remedy, relief, advantage, help, good</i>
apparaylyd <i>dressed</i>	boystous <i>fierce</i>
array <i>order, preparation</i>	carre, chare <i>chariot, carriage</i>
assone <i>as soon</i>	certeyne <i>certainly</i>
avaunce <i>to advance; prosper, succeed; help cause to prosper</i>	cese <i>cease</i>
avaunt <i>forward</i>	chayar, chayere <i>chair, sedan chair, throne; position of authority; professorial chair</i>
avaantage <i>advantage, supremacy, superiority</i>	chere <i>facial expression, face, demeanor, manner, disposition, outward appearance, mood, kindness</i>
avaylyd <i>did help, helped</i>	clene <i>fully, completely, entirely</i>
avowe <i>to vow</i>	
avyse <i>to judge, remind, consider, advise, decide, look at, look around</i>	
avysed (p.p.) <i>reminded</i>	

Glossary

clerely freely, brightly, loudly
convenyent suitable, appropriate
corage heart, inclination, desire, courage
cowde could
curas breastplate armor coupled with back piece (OF cuirace)
cure charge, jurisdiction, power, spiritual keeping

dalyaunce flirtation, sociable conversation
dele bit, part
dewté duty
disport, dysport amusement, fun, pleasure, comfort
do done
dyscrete prudent, judicious, morally discerning, courteous

eftsones immediately; again, in return
elles else, otherwise, other
entente purpose, intention, plan; legal claim; meaning
entresse interest
entrete entreat
er, or before
eschew forgo, eschew, escape
evyll poorly
evyn even, exactly
eyen eyes
eyre air

fande found
fantasye imagination, delusion, fancy
fase face
fayne happy
fere authority; fear; company

ferre far, afar
fet, fette fetch, bring
fone, foon foes
for for on
forther further
foryete forgotten
foryeve forgive
fre freely
full fully, completely
furst first
fylde field

gan began
grase grace
grasse, gresse grass
guy guide
guydyng counseling, guiding
gyrdyll belt

habitacion dwelling
habounde to be full of, be plentiful
habundaunce abundance
habytacle dwelling
helme helmet
hem them, themselves
hens hence
her her; their; here
herber arbor, garden
here (v.) to hear; (adv.) here; (n.) hair
hit it
holly wholly, entirely
hoole whole, entire, complete
hy high, loudly
hym him
hyr her
hys his

in in, on

Glossary

jape joke, trick, deceit	hours, usually at the ninth hour of the day, or about 3 p.m., in the early Christian Church
journé journey	
just joust	
nowthyr neither	
konnyngh ability, skill, knowledge, understanding, cleverness	of of, off of, from, about, on
kyrtyll tunic or unadorned gown, frock, outer petticoat	on on, onto, into, for
leese lose	ones once
lere learn	oo, oon, oone one, a one
lesynghe lie, deceit; loss	oost army
let stop	opon on, upon, in, to, at
lette delay	opteygne obtain, win; determine
lewde unsophisticated, ignorant, uneducated, foolish	opteynyd (p.p.) obtained
lothe reluctant	ordynaunce decree, order; preparation; orderly arrangement
loute, lowte to bow down, bend	outher; outher . . . outher or; either, neither . . . nor
lyke to please	overmekyll too much, excessive, excessively
lytyll little	
maner means, way	patent letter patent; a document
mawgre despite, in spite of	granting a right; a commission to hold a public office
mede reward, payment, bribe, fulfillment; meadow	paynym(e), paynem pagan
mekyll, mykyll much, many, greatly	pepyll people
mene means, method	plesaunce pleasure
mevyd moved, advanced	porte gate, door
meyné, meyny household attendants, company, troop of followers	posternes gates
mochyll much	prevydyd tested, proved, experienced; succeeded
myn mine	pryvy secret, hidden, private, discreet, secretive
myscheve trouble, misfortune; deprivation, need	pryvyly secretly, discreetly, alone
ner nor	purfyllyd embroidered or furred (hem of a garment)
nere nearly	puruyaunce foresight, providence; arrangement, preparations; provision
noonys nones; one of the canonical	

Glossary

reft <i>robbed, deprived</i>	syr <i>sir</i> (polite form of address)
rought (preterit or p.p.) [from werken] <i>wrought, worked, done, made, employed, caused, used</i>	sythe <i>since</i>
route, rowte <i>company, crowd, retinue, train</i>	taryed <i>tarried, delayed, kept someone waiting</i>
rowne (v.) <i>to whisper; consult</i>	theder, thedyr <i>thither, there</i>
rownyd <i>whispered</i>	thedyrward <i>thither, toward there</i>
sadnes <i>steadfastness, constancy; seriousness; discretion, prudence; maturity; trust; sanity</i>	thens <i>thence</i>
se, see <i>see</i>	theryn <i>therein</i>
sekerly <i>certainly, surely, truly</i>	theym <i>them</i>
sesyd <i>seized, ceased</i>	thorough <i>through</i>
sesyne <i>possession</i>	thow <i>you</i>
sew <i>follow, pursue, go</i>	twene <i>between</i>
sewerly <i>surely, certainly, assuredly</i>	tweyn <i>two</i>
sey <i>to say</i>	tyde <i>tide of the sea; time, hour</i>
seyde <i>said</i>	underlowte <i>underlout, subject, subservient, subordinate, inferior</i>
shent <i>ruined, destroyed, injured; disgraced, shamed</i>	varyaunt <i>changeable</i>
shew <i>show</i>	verrey <i>very, true, truly, exactly</i>
shoure <i>shower; battle; hardship</i>	verryly <i>exactly, truly</i>
shuld <i>should</i>	vysage <i>face</i>
slyper <i>slippery</i>	vysyon <i>dream, dream vision</i>
so, soo <i>so much; to such an extent</i>	weele, wele <i>happiness, prosperity, well- being</i>
sondry <i>various, differing, sundry</i>	wend <i>supposed</i>
sone <i>soon</i>	wende <i>depart, go, travel, leave</i>
sore <i>intensely</i>	wenying <i>supposing, thinking, imagining</i>
sothe <i>truth, true</i>	werre <i>war</i>
sotyll <i>ingenious, skillful; delicate, thin</i>	wex <i>wax, grow, become, come to be</i>
sownde <i>sound, play (musical instr.); (preterit, p.p.) mean, signify</i>	whedyr <i>whether</i>
spores <i>spurs</i>	wherfore <i>why</i>
stody <i>study</i>	whete <i>wet</i>
sy, sye <i>understood, saw</i>	whew <i>hue</i>
sykerly <i>certainly</i>	whyle <i>times</i>
	woll <i>will</i>

Glossary

wood(e) *crazy, mad, angry*

woodeness *madness*

wrethe *wrath, anger*

wrothe *angry*

wyght *person, creature, being*

ychone *each one*

ye *you*

yef *if*

yete *yet*

yeve *give*

yeven *given*

ynowgh *enough*