

John Lydgate

The Siege of Thebes

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Introduction

John Lydgate's *The Siege of Thebes* (c. 1421–22) commands our interest for both its story and its place in late-medieval English literary culture. It is the only Middle English poetic text to recount the disastrous fratricidal struggle between Oedipus' sons Eteocles and Polynices as they strive to retain lordship over ancient Thebes. Lydgate consciously presents this story as an added Canterbury tale. Writing himself into the frametale of the Canterbury pilgrimage, he purports to tell the first tale on the return journey from Canterbury to Southwark. His tale is thus the structural counterpart to *The Knight's Tale*, while he is the equivalent to Chaucer's narrative persona. In addition, Lydgate situates his poem in the literary and cultural project of the vernacular *romans antiques*. Like the earlier French redactors of the classical stories of Thebes, Troy, and Rome, he recreates antiquity in the framework of medieval historiography, social conventions, and moral example. In particular, he fashions the Theban story as a mirror for princes, expounding the virtues a ruler should possess and illustrating the catastrophe that follows from neglecting those virtues. Finally, *The Siege of Thebes* reflects the problem of poetic authority and the political and ethical themes of Lydgate's poetic career in the 1420s, when he is writing as a Lancastrian propagandist and unofficial royal poet.

The story of Thebes came to late-medieval writers like Lydgate in two literary versions. Statius' classical epic, the *Thebaid*, begins with Oedipus' curse on his sons for mocking his blindness, and it traces the bitter rivalry that follows from their agreement to alternate kingship year by year, with one brother on the throne while the other is in exile. By lot, Eteocles becomes king for the first year, and Polynices withdraws, arriving eventually before the palace of King Adrastus in Argos. Tydeus, exiled for the accidental killing of his brother, arrives there on the same stormy night. The two heroes battle, reconcile when Adrastus intervenes, and soon marry Adrastus' daughters. At the end of the year, Tydeus goes to Thebes on Polynices' behalf to claim the throne. Eteocles refuses the demand and sends fifty men to ambush Tydeus on his return. Tydeus slays all but one of the attackers. Adrastus subsequently mobilizes other Greek kings and heroes to depose Eteocles. Their advance on Thebes is delayed, however, by a drought; Hypsipyle comes to their rescue, but at the cost of the infant Opheltes, who is killed by a serpent while Hypsipyle shows the army to water. Hypsipyle's story and the funeral games for Opheltes are two of Statius' narrative set pieces. When he resumes the main story, Statius focuses on the savage combat between the Thebans and the Greeks, particularly the deaths of the Argive heroes. In the culmination of the battles, Eteocles and Polynices kill each other, and

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Creon assumes the throne. Creon's edict against burying the bodies of the combatants precipitates the final crisis of the poem. The Argive women seek redress at the altar of Clemency in Athens and persuade Theseus, as he returns from conquering the Amazons, to take up their cause. Theseus leaves immediately for Thebes and slays Creon; the poem ends with the Argive women reclaiming the bodies of their husbands and sons.

The first words of the *Thebaid*—"Fraternas acies" ("brotherly battle")—establish its theme and its dark vision of heroism and human motives. Statius portrays the struggle as an absolute will to power, and he stresses its extremity by remarking on how little is actually at stake: "nuda potestas / armavit fratres; pugna est de paupere regno" ("naked power / armed the brothers; their fight is over a beggarly kingdom" [1.150–51]). In his story, desire itself is distorted to power—"regendi / saevus amor" ("the fierce love / of ruling" [1.127–28]). Complementing this focus is a conscious rewriting of Virgil and of the hard-won optimism that the *Aeneid* brings to the twin ideals of moral heroism and empire. Where Aeneas struggles against the limits of fate, Statius' characters repeatedly break boundaries and limits, and even Jupiter must avert his eyes from the uncontrolled fury they set loose. Some readers of the *Thebaid* see a redemptive, triumphal ending in Theseus' reestablishment of order at the end, but others emphasize the repetition of violence and the final image of a battlefield strewn with corpses. For medieval readers, Thebes is prominent on the list of fallen ancient cities, and it is the shadowy partner of heroic Troy.

A second, amplified version of the Theban story appears with the anonymous Old French poem *Le Roman de Thèbes* (c. 1150), written for the Plantagenet court of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. This version adds the story of Oedipus to the Theban narrative. It thus answers the opening question of Statius' epic — where to begin in the cycles of Theban violence? (1.2–14) — by imposing a sense of natural order. Oedipus' birth, rescue, and childhood with King Polybus lead to his killing Laius, solving the Sphinx's riddle, and marrying Jocasta. Oedipus' discovery of his patricide and incest leads, in turn, to the struggle between Eteocles and Polynices, and their deaths introduce the final sequence of events, as Theseus intervenes to depose Creon and reestablish order. Besides amplifying the story, *Le Roman de Thèbes* relocates the narrative to a medieval chivalric framework by adding romance adventures, expanding the number of councils, and introducing the episode of Daire le Roux, which sets the claims of feudal law against those of courtly mercy. Prose redactions were made from *Le Roman de Thèbes* in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As Léopold Constans observes, these redactions appear in universal histories that begin with the creation of the world and connect pagan, Jewish, and Christian history in a single time scheme.¹ The *Histoire ancienne*

¹ *La légende d'Œdipe: Étudiée dans l'antiquité au moyen âge et dans les temps modernes, en particulier dans le Roman de Thèbes, texte français du xiie siècle* (1881; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1974), p. 315.

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jusqu'à César (c. 1208–13), modeled on Orosius' *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII*, contains the material of the vernacular *romans antiques* and carries the chronicle forward to Roman history. In the early fourteenth century, Ranulph Higden produces an Orosian universal history in his *Polychronicon*, which John Trevisa translates into English in the period 1385–87 and a second translator renders in approximately 1425. Lydgate acknowledges this tradition of universal history by connecting Amphion's building of Thebes to "the tyme of worthy Josué" (line 188) and dating Adrastus' burial at the end of the poem to four hundred years before the founding of Rome (lines 4623–25).

Lydgate's English predecessors encountered the Theban story in both its classical and vernacular forms, and used it for thematic effect in their own works. Chaucer sets *Anelida and Arcite* in the interim after Creon has taken power and before Theseus arrives to depose him. The "broche of Thebes" (line 245) is the symbol for desire, confusion, and catastrophe in Chaucer's "Complaint of Mars." In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Pandarus first approaches Criseyde as she and two other women listen to a reading of "the geste / Of the siege of Thebes" (2.83–84); and he asks, with more irony than he intends, whether the story is about love. Later in the poem, Cassandra rehearses the key events of the Theban story (5.1485–1512) in explicating Troilus' dream, and the *Troilus* manuscripts add a twelve-line Latin summary of Statius' *Thebaid*. In John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1.1977–2020), Capaneus' challenge to divine power and his spectacular death before the city, one of Statius' most compelling episodes, serves to illustrate the sin of pride. In the fragmentary *Alisaunder* (c. 1340–70), Philip of Macedon, Alexander's father, destroys Thebes.

Lydgate knew Statius' version of the Theban story well before he began writing *The Siege of Thebes*. In his Prologue to the *Troy Book*, a poem begun in 1412 and completed in 1420, he names Statius and mentions notable episodes from the *Thebaid* such as the rivalry of Eteocles and Polynices, the death of Tydeus, Oedipus' weeping, and the struggling twin flames in the fire that burns the brothers' bodies (Prol. 225–44). In *The Siege of Thebes*, Lydgate even seems to translate the Statian phrase "de paupere regno" as "this litol pore regioun" (line 1992). Lydgate's source lies, however, not in Statius but in the vernacular tradition of redacting classical texts. For Lydgate's poem, the two most important prose redactions of *Le Roman de Thèbes* are the *Roman de Edipus* and the *Hystoire de Thebes*. Modern scholars regard the *Roman de Edipus*, perhaps in a version somewhat different from the extant text, as Lydgate's prime source. Narrative details and parallels in phrasing suggest that Lydgate worked directly from this version of the story and that, when he refers to "myn auctour," he has in mind the anonymous author of the *Roman de Edipus*.²

As in the *Troy Book*, Lydgate augments the story he inherited by adding moralizations, advice, and mythological information. The moralizations and advice are his independent

² See the explanatory note to line 199 for an exception.

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additions, and they employ commonplaces on behavior, values, and governance that the story at times profoundly complicates. The mythological information in Lydgate's poem comes chiefly from Boccaccio's *Genealogiae deorum gentilium*. Boccaccio explains the origin of Thebes, the wedding of Oedipus and Jocasta, and the backgrounds behind Tydeus, Hypsipyle, and Lycurgus. For Oedipus, Lydgate also invokes Seneca's tragedy *Oedipus* and Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. In line with the conventions of universal history, Lydgate alludes to the Old and New Testaments, both to add examples to the Theban story and to expound its meaning. Alan Renoir argues that Lydgate changed the *Roman de Edipus* in five principal ways: "he rectifies the often defective logic of the French; he presents classical antiquity in a much more appealing light; he formulates a lesson for the conduct of rulers; he turns the ancient legend into an English nationalistic narrative; and he creates in the person of Tydeus a hero for the story."³ Later critics, particularly Derek Pearsall, dispute Renoir's claim that Lydgate approaches antiquity in a humanistic rather than medieval spirit.⁴ Still, it remains clear that Lydgate engaged rather than reproduced his narrative source and that he sought to bring the Theban story into his own interpretive framework.

Chaucer's presence figures as large in *The Siege of Thebes* as the sources Lydgate transformed and added. Although the Prologue recreates the pilgrimage as a frametale, Lydgate confuses and conflates details about Chaucer's pilgrims.⁵ After the Prologue, as Pearsall notes, he makes a greater effort to maintain the fiction of a pilgrimage than Chaucer does in any comparable tale.⁶ At the end of the poem's action, as Theseus enters to challenge Creon's edict against burial, Lydgate explicitly links his poem to the beginning of The Knight's Tale (line 4524) and incorporates numerous textual allusions. The inspiration and approach of Lydgate's poem may also lie in Chaucer. In the scene between Pandarus and Criseyde at the beginning of Book 2 of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer distinguishes the vernacular and Latin versions of the Theban story. Criseyde knows the French romance version because she mentions the inclusion of the Oedipus story: "This romaunce is of Thebes that we rede; / And we han herd how that kyng Layus deyde / Thorugh Edippus his sone, and al that dede" (2.100–02). Pandarus, by contrast, knows Statius' classical epic because he mentions its disposition in twelve books, which does not occur in *Le Roman de Thèbes* or its prose redactions: "For herof ben ther maked booke twelve" (2.108). Lydgate presents Criseyde's rather than Pandarus' version of the story.

³ *The Poetry of John Lydgate* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 119. See also Friedrich Brie, "Mittelalter und Antike bei Lydgate," *Englische Studien* 64 (1929), 261–301.

⁴ Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970), p. 154; and "Lydgate as Innovator," *Modern Language Quarterly* 53 (1992), 12.

⁵ See the explanatory notes for lines 28–35.

⁶ *John Lydgate*, p. 152.

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Apart from its fictional premise as a Canterbury tale, *The Siege of Thebes* directly engages The Knight's Tale as a literary precursor, and it continues Lydgate's ambivalent relation to Chaucer as a master and a rival. A. C. Spearing proposes that Lydgate may have thought that The Knight's Tale endorsed war and violence as means of resolving political and personal problems. Consequently, says Spearing, "Lydgate may well have persuaded himself that he was 'completing' his predecessor's 'truncated' work, not just by supplying the absent beginnings of the narrative of Thebes, but by making explicit a moral significance that was left implicit by Chaucer, and that demanded clarification."⁷ Rosamund Allen, following a contemporary trend that interprets the theme of order in Chaucer's poem skeptically, proposes a more direct confrontation and a radical rewriting of The Knight's Tale: "What Lydgate does in the *Siege* is to untie the knots of Chaucer's narrative, where Theseus razes Thebes and contains its evil in the diplomatic union of Palamon and Emelye, by letting loose the corruption and depravity of Thebes so carefully contained and apparently eliminated at the opening of *The Canterbury Tales* in the Knight's tale of joy after woe."⁸

To engage The Knight's Tale as a poetic text is necessarily to engage Chaucerian authority. In his translation and adaptation of Boccaccio's *Teseida*, Chaucer introduced a new poetic form that synthesized classical and medieval, romance and epic genres. Chaucer's fourteenth- and fifteenth-century readers recognized the form as distinctly his own (Boccaccio was not identified as Chaucer's source until Thomas Tyrwhitt's late-eighteenth-century edition of *The Canterbury Tales*). Just as Lydgate's *Troy Book* has to position itself with respect to the formal and thematic innovations of *Troilus and Criseyde*, so *The Siege of Thebes* must deal with Chaucer's authorial imprint in The Knight's Tale. In both cases, Lydgate follows the same strategy of overt deference and silent correction. Lydgate's praise of Chaucer in the Prologue to *The Siege of Thebes* (lines 39–57), marked by the marginal gloss "Chaucer," follows the commonplaces he had established earlier in *Troy Book*: Chaucer is the flower of British poets, who has embellished and refined the rude native tongue, joining rhetoric and eloquence in a way that expresses the substance and not merely the deceptive surface of his historical topics. As in *Troy Book*, this homage is doubly inscribed, for the language that offers praise of Chaucer is strikingly rich in allusions to lines and phrases throughout the Chaucer canon — Lydgate praises Chaucer in the language of Chaucer's poetry.

⁷ "Lydgate's Canterbury Tale: The *Siege of Thebes* and Fifteenth-Century Chaucerianism," in *Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays*, ed. Robert F. Yeager (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1984), p. 352; Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 84.

⁸ "The *Siege of Thebes*: Lydgate's Canterbury Tale," in *Chaucer and Fifteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. Julia Boffey and Janet Cowen (London: King's College, Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1991), pp. 129–30.

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Behind the rhetoric and gestures of deference there remains, however, a dimension of poetic rivalry and assertion, which defines not only Lydgate's own poetic standing but much of Chaucer's reputation through the Renaissance. Lydgate's competition is expressed obliquely by the errors he makes in describing the pilgrims and directly by his supplying the master narrative of Thebes on which The Knight's Tale depends for its full meaning. *The Siege of Thebes* brings back the history that The Knight's Tale seeks to escape first by foreshortening the events that lead up to Theseus' attack on Thebes and then by asserting an overarching providence in the First Mover speech at the end of the story. In this context, it is perhaps not by chance that Lydgate praises Chaucer at the opening of the poem but does not actually name him until the end (line 4501). As Pearsall, Spearing, and other modern critics have pointed out, Lydgate's apparent subordination to Chaucer makes possible a kind of imitation notable for its self-confidence and assurance.

Most scholars place the date of composition for *The Siege of Thebes* immediately after *Troy Book*, the ambitious verse translation of Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* commissioned by Henry V to preserve the memory of chivalric virtues and to create an English counterpart to the authoritative Latin and French versions of the Troy story. Astronomical references in the Prologue to *The Siege of Thebes* suggest a date of 27 April 1421 for the fictional return pilgrimage, while a verbal echo of the Treaty of Troyes, Henry's great political achievement, gives an apparent *terminus ante quem* before Henry's death on 31 August 1422.⁹ It has long been held that *The Siege of Thebes* was written without patronage, though the suggestion has been made that the poem may have been written for Henry's brother, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.¹⁰ As a mirror for princes, the poem carries out Lydgate's duties as a Lancastrian propagandist and unofficial court poet. At the same time, his strategy of narrative and moralization begins to reach beyond court and monastic circles.¹¹ The later manuscript and printing history of the poem shows its circulation among gentry and merchants.

Whatever its formal ties of patronage, *The Siege of Thebes* is a poem strongly rooted in contemporary politics. Pearsall notes that Lydgate is the first English poet to align his work directly with royal policy, and he argues that *The Siege of Thebes* is Lydgate's most political

⁹ See Explanatory Notes to lines 1–64 and 4703 for scholarship on dating the poem.

¹⁰ *Selections from Hoccleve*, ed. M. C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. xxx n20, argues that no fifteenth-century poet wrote a work of the scope of *The Siege of Thebes* without a patron in mind; he also points out that Lydgate's *Epithalamium for the Duke of Gloucester*, written at the same time as the presumed date of composition for *The Siege*, compares Gloucester to Tydeus (lines 138–40). Paul M. Clogan, "Lydgate and the *Roman Antique*," *Florilegium* 11 (1992), 12, accepts Seymour's argument.

¹¹ John Ganim, *Style and Consciousness in Middle English Narrative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 108.

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poem.¹² Walter F. Schirmer holds that Lydgate expounds his position on two urgent issues — the relation of rulers to the people and the question of war and peace.¹³ Not only Lydgate's moralizations but also the narrative action address the need for good governance and a cohesive body politic. The scenes in which Adrastus seeks council are a pointed contrast, for instance, to the false deliberation over which Eteocles presides. Though the Greek kings can pledge their fortunes in common cause for abstract principles of truth and justice, Thebes is a city in which political tensions and divided loyalties are barely contained by a devious autocrat. Many readers find in the idealized portrayal of Tydeus an approximation, if not full identification, with Henry V, and some see the debate in Adrastus' camp between young and old over pursuing war as an allegory of English peace and war factions in the Hundred Years' War. At the end of *The Siege of Thebes*, as at the end of *Troy Book*, Lydgate extolls the virtues of peace, but he goes beyond his earlier elegiac lament for the destruction of Greek and Trojan chivalry. War, he warns now, is a leveller of social estates and cultural institutions altogether: "in the werre is non excepcioun / Of hegh estat nor lowh condicioun" (lines 4645–46). The violent strife between brothers over succession is in some respects a figure for the political conflict between England and France. The rivalry between Henry's brothers, Humphrey and John, Duke of Bedford, after his death may explain the poem's continued popularity in the fifteenth century.¹⁴

Modern interpretations of *The Siege of Thebes* divide between those that stress the coherence of Lydgate's moral history and those that find contradictions within it. Robert Ayers establishes the dominant critical position, arguing that the "moral postulates" of love and truth are central to the poem, while the plot serves to illustrate these ethical principles. This focus in turn confers thematic and formal unity: "The unity of *The Siege of Thebes*, then, centers in the moral idea, and no episode, no characterization, and no tonal feature of the poem is extraneous to this essential moral purpose of the plot pattern; and despite the social tone which pervades the poem, this moral unity is facilitated by a teleological tendency, always present, but especially obvious and overt in the conclusion (4658–716)" (p. 474). Lydgate's philosophical grounding is, for Ayers, essentially Boethian. Love, in his view, "is indispensable to the social order and the art of government," truth is the moral ground of chivalric virtue

¹² "Lydgate as Innovator," p. 15.

¹³ *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century*, trans. Ann E. Keep (London: Methuen; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), p. 64.

¹⁴ Robert W. Ayers, "Medieval History, Moral Purpose, and the Structure of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*," *PMLA* 73 (1958), 468; and Paul M. Clogan, "Imaging the City of Thebes in Fifteenth-Century England," in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Hafniensis: Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies*, ed. Rhoda Schnur (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1994), p. 162.

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and political deliberation, and the moral application of the poem is “social and civil rather than personal and religious.”¹⁵ Ayers describes the chief characters of the poem as moral types. Amphion represents the ideal king, Adrastus “the practically good king,” and Eteocles the bad king (p. 472). Polynices is “the inglorious knight of ungentle and mean character,” while Tydeus is “a veritable catalogue of knightly virtues” and “the great exemplar of the power of truth.”¹⁶

Subsequent critics have expanded a number of these points. Pearsall says, “Lydgate’s prime interest in stories is thus in destroying them as imagined realities so as to reveal more clearly the hidden truth that is the justification for their existence.”¹⁷ Renoir offers an idealistic view of the relations of kings, nobles, and commons bound by love.¹⁸ Lois Ebin finds the moral significance of the story in “the opposition of the word and the sword,” and she takes the myth of Amphion’s building the walls of Thebes by music as a model of kingship through art rather than force.¹⁹ Schirmer observes a correlation between the moral life of Lydgate’s characters and proverbial expressions, and proposes that Tydeus is the real hero of the poem (p. 63). Hanspeter Schelp emphasizes the proximity of love and truth in chivalric values.²⁰ Though it may differ in emphases, this critical tradition consistently regards the poem’s ideology as the source of its meaning.

Revisionist readings of *The Siege of Thebes* accept the claim that its ideology is paramount, but they find inconsistencies and profound contradictions in the principles expressed. Allen, for example, reads the poem as a negative exemplum of weak or evil kings, and she challenges the contention that the social and political spheres are the main areas of moral significance: “The moral theme of *The Siege of Thebes* is the responsibility of one individual to another, and the fragility of human security when it is based on such unreliable agents” (pp. 123, 137). Boethius’ harmonizing of the physical, social, and individual levels, expressed consummately in Book 2, meter 8 of *The Consolation of Philosophy* (the rationale for Theseus’ ending speech in *The Knight’s Tale*), underwrites the theme of love as a cohesive political force. But Spearing challenges Ayers’ description of the essentially Boethian character of the poem: “Boethius, so effective a mediator in *The Knight’s Tale* between pagan story and Christian narrator, is absent from *The Siege of Thebes*, and there pagan and Christian grind jarringly

¹⁵ Ayers, pp. 466, 473.

¹⁶ Ayers, p. 473.

¹⁷ “Chaucer and Lydgate,” in *Chaucer Traditions: Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer*, ed. Ruth Morse and Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 48.

¹⁸ *The Poetry of John Lydgate*, p. 127.

¹⁹ *John Lydgate* (Boston: Twayne, 1985), p. 53.

²⁰ *Exemplarische Romanzen im Mittelenglischen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), p. 225.

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against each other.”²¹ James Simpson reads the poem back through The Knight’s Tale as “a powerful, prudential admonition concerning the treacherousness of history” and points out the recurrent disparity between the “bureaucratic” wisdom expressed in public deliberations over war and the intrinsic values of chivalry, which cannot abandon violence.²² In these terms, Lydgate’s urging peace through the example of Thebes inevitably contradicts the values of the princes and aristocrats whom he addresses.

The tensions of *The Siege of Thebes* may lie beyond its moral and political vision. Though a significant portion of the poem is devoted to moralization and sententious proverbs, these pronouncements often stand at a significant distance from the narrative itself. One example is the moralization of the Oedipus story, which ends the First Part of the poem. Lydgate eschews the tragic theme of fate and human choice that interested classical writers, and he casts the story instead as an illustration of what follows from failing to honor one’s father and mother. In this separation of story from moral sentence, he has important predecessors. In *The Canterbury Tales*, The Nun’s Priest’s Tale famously demonstrates the problems of interpretation. Closer to Lydgate perhaps in its didactic method, Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* frequently offers moralizations that oddly suit the tales they presumably explain, and recent readers have begun to reevaluate Gower’s practice as an ethical poet. In *Troy Book*, it is clear that Lydgate came to understand the complexities of his narrative as he wrote the story. Informing values such as prudence collapse under the weight of all they are supposed to signify, and in many respects the Trojan foundational myth discredits the chivalric values it ostensibly defines and celebrates.

In *The Siege of Thebes*, the key values of love and truth are challenged more often than exemplified by the narrative. Lydgate may extoll the “inward love” (line 280) of a people for their prince in ways thoroughly consistent with the political themes of Gower’s Prologue to *Confessio Amantis*, and he may prophesy in the end that “love and pees in hertys shal awake” (line 4698), but love does not operate as either erotic desire or charity in his story. The scene in which Tydeus is nursed to health by Lycurgus’ daughter in a garden offers the prospect of a sexual encounter, as in courtly romance, only to affirm Tydeus’ allegiance to brotherhood and domesticity. Earlier, his sudden reversal from rivalry to solidarity with Polynices had followed Statius’ example of depicting their friendship as a perverse brotherhood. Hypsipyle saves the parched Greek army out of pity, the great aristocratic virtue in Chaucer, but her gesture costs the life of Lycurgus’ infant son. At the end of the poem, when Polynices is moved by “compassioun” (line 4281) and “love” (line 4287) to remove his spear from Eteocles’ body,

²¹ “Lydgate’s Canterbury Tale,” p. 356.

²² “‘Dysemol daies and fatal houres’: Lydgate’s *Destruction of Thebes* and Chaucer’s *Knight’s Tale*,” in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, ed. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 16.

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his brother uses the opportunity to slay him treacherously: “His brother smoot unwarly to the herte” (line 4292). There is no equivalent to the scene in Statius where Argia and Antigone tell Creon how and why they have defied his injunction against burial: “‘ego corpus,’ ‘ego ignes,’ / ‘me pietas,’ ‘me duxit amor’” (“I brought the body,” “but I the fire,” / ‘I was led by affection,’ ‘I by love’” [12.458–59]).

Like love, truth proves an impossible value to maintain in Lydgate’s narrative. Truth means not just an accurate report of facts and circumstances (such as Oedipus’ real identity) but, more important, a pledge, agreement, or promise of fidelity. Lydgate holds that truth in the latter sense is the “chief pyler” (line 1726) sustaining a king: “Trouthe shulde longe to a kyng, / Of his word not be variable / But pleyn and hool as a centre stable” (lines 1722–24). Yet truth here and elsewhere in *The Siege of Thebes* refers to the agreement between Eteocles and Polynices to alternate kingship year by year. It is the betrayal of this pledge that persuades the Greek kings to join Adrastus and his sons-in-law to attack Thebes. But seen critically, the “trouthe” that the Greek heroes defend is in fact an impossible political arrangement. At the beginning of the *Thebaid* (1.123–43) Statius remarks that the plan is doomed, and he notes that it is the only bond (*pietas* 1.142) between the brothers. Alternating kingship does not guarantee stability or peace; it does not resolve the dispute between the claimants but only defers it. The deepest hope, in either Statian exile or the romance *aventure* that Lydgate and medieval writers accentuate, is that one of the royal claimants will die in his year of exile and thereby settle the question of succession.

Truth, as an ethical and political value, ignores and obscures the real crises of the poem, which are repetition and genealogical disruption from one generation to another. Oedipus’ obdurate pride at Polybus’ court (“so ynly surquydows,” line 471), for example, is the same quality that leads him to slay Laius and that he bequeathes to his sons — their “pompous surquedye” (line 1076), with its ultimate source in Lucifer (line 4661). The battle between Tydeus and Polynices over the wretched shelter of Adrastus’ porch repeats in miniature the struggle for kingship in impoverished Thebes. Tydeus battles the fifty knights sent by Eteocles to ambush him in the same place where Oedipus defeats the Sphinx, thereby connecting intellectual and physical struggle, verbal and political treachery. Throughout Lydgate’s poem, kingdoms are subject to the vicissitudes of succession. Laius is without issue at the beginning, and he chooses to have no heir rather than risk being slain by his son. Polybus adopts Oedipus because he has no heir. Adrastus resolves the quarrel between Tydeus and Polynices, and then divides his kingdom between them in order to assure orderly succession. Lycurgus loses his heir when his son dies in Hypsipyle’s care. The deaths of Eteocles and Polynices leave Thebes without a ruler, so Creon, who “hadde no title by dissent” (line 4389), assumes power in the destitute city only to die at Theseus’ hands. The final event of Lydgate’s poem is not the burial of the dead, as in Statius, but the death of Adrastus, sunken into age and despair at the loss of his companions.

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The narrative of *The Siege of Thebes* thus calls into question the principles that it is supposedly designed to illustrate. As in *Troy Book*, Lydgate finds that the informing values cannot contain the subversive power of his story. The poem whose action opens with Amphion constructing the walls of Thebes ends with two versions of how the walls are destroyed. If prudence fails to outwit fortune, chance, and fate in the Troy story, Thebes offers a tale in which the perverse fidelity of human motives produces disaster. Eteocles never wavers in his resolve to retain power. Polynices, for whom Tydeus and Adrastus come to speak, continues to press his claim. Though Amphiorax foresees his death and the destruction of the Greeks, he can neither avert his fate nor persuade his companions to change theirs. Tydeus remains unswerving in his devotion to Polynices' claims, from his embassy to Eteocles to his rejection of peace before the battle. Jocasta strives to find some ground of accommodation, but, as Simpson points out, "The space for rational, politically prudent action is, then, radically limited in Lydgate's poem" (p. 27). Chance intervenes in Jocasta's peace mission, as the tigers escape and are killed, to force the violent resolution. This last event, like Lamedon's courtesy to Jason in *Troy Book*, is the remote cause of enormous catastrophe. But it differs in that the main characters have already chosen their course of action. The "trouthe" at the center of Lydgate's narrative is, in the end, a perverse loyalty to a bad decision.

The Siege of Thebes is preserved in thirty-one manuscripts and several early printed editions (see Bibliography). In the colophons of some textual witnesses, the title *Siege* is replaced by *Destruction*, and Simpson argues for the latter as the poem's proper title (p. 14 n1). In the poem's literary tradition, however, *Destruction* is both a description of the action and an apparent title.²³ Lydgate seems to use *Siege* as the title in his *Fall of Princes*: "For in the siege of Thebes ye may it reede" (1.3724). For consistency and convenience, *Siege* is retained in the present edition. Lydgate's autograph manuscript of the poem has not survived, but two early manuscripts (BL Arundel 119 and Bodley 776) date from a decade or so after the poem's supposed composition. *The Siege of Thebes* circulated in a number of literary contexts. The poem is found with *Troy Book* in three manuscripts (Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.5.2; Bodleian Digby 230; and BL Royal 18. D.ii, which has the only extant cycle of illuminations, added in the sixteenth century). It appears with *The Canterbury Tales* in five manuscripts (BL Additional 5140; Oxford, Christ Church MS 152; BL Egerton MS 2864; Longleat MS 257; University of Texas MS 143) and with Chaucer's shorter poems and the *Siege of Jerusalem* in another (Coventry, Corporate Record Office, MS Acc. 325/1). It also appears with Thomas Hoccleve's *De regimine principum* (BL Additional 18632) and with Vegetius' *De re militari* (Bodleian MS Laud misc. 416, dated 1459). It is the sole text in eleven manuscripts (BL Arundel 119; Bodleian MS 776; Bodleian Laud misc. 557; Boston Public Library MS

²³ Constans (1974), p. 339.

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f.med.94; Cambridge University Library, Additional MSS 2707, 3137, 6864; Lambeth Palace 742; Oxford, Saint John's College 266; Prince Duleep Singh's MS; and Yale University, Beinecke MS 661). The number of extant witnesses and the testimony of wills and letters indicate that the poem existed in many more copies than those that have survived.

The earliest manuscripts of *The Siege of Thebes* reflect its aristocratic audience. Arundel 119 has the coat of arms of William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, who married Alice Chaucer, Geoffrey Chaucer's granddaughter, in the early 1430s. Carol M. Meale proposes that this manuscript may have been copied at Bury St. Edmunds in a center organized by Lydgate's monastery to prepare and circulate his work, and she suggests that Alice Chaucer may have been responsible for commissioning it.²⁴ BL Royal 18.D.ii was written for Sir William Herbert and his second wife, Anne Devereux, as a gift either to Henry VI or Edward IV.²⁵ Bodley 776, dated 1430–40 and containing only *The Siege of Thebes*, once carried illumination on its opening folio.²⁶ Digby 230 is similarly illuminated. In the 1430s, Stephen Doddesham copied *The Siege of Thebes* three times (Beinecke MS 661, Boston Public Library MS f.med.94, and Cambridge Additional MS 3137), probably on private commission while he was in commercial book production before entering religious life as a Carthusian monk; each of these manuscripts had a different exemplar.²⁷ Coventry, Corporation Record Office, MS 325/1 is probably from the London booktrade as well.²⁸

By mid-century, *The Siege of Thebes* circulated widely among country gentry. In 1463 John Baret of Bury bequeathed a copy of his "boke with the Sege of Thebes in englysh."²⁹ John Paston III mentions his sister's copy of the poem in a letter from 1472. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.5.2, produced in Norfolk, bears the coats of arms of the Knevet and Thwaites families.³⁰ Bodleian MS. Lat. misc. c.66, the commonplace book of Humfrey Newton of

²⁴ "Reading Women's Culture in Fifteenth-Century England: The Case of Alice Chaucer," in *Mediaevalitas: Reading the Middle Ages*, ed. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 92–93.

²⁵ Kathleen L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390–1490*, 2 vols., vol. 6 of *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles* (London: Harvey Miller, 1996), 2:282, 284.

²⁶ Axel Erdmann and Eilert Ekwall, eds. *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes*, 2 vols., EETS e.s. 108, 125 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.; Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1911–30), 2:43.

²⁷ A. S. G. Edwards, "Beinecke MS 661 and Early Fifteenth-Century English Manuscript Production," *Yale University Library Gazette* 66 (1991), 187.

²⁸ A. I. Doyle and George Pace, "A New Chaucer Manuscript," *PMLA* 83 (1968), 25.

²⁹ Eleanor P. Hammond, "Lydgate's Prologue to the Story of Thebes," *Anglia* 36 (1912), 362.

³⁰ Gisela Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances* (Munich: W. Fink, 1976), p. 88.

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Pownall, Cheshire, records the opening lines of *The Siege of Thebes*.³¹ Longleat MS 257 may have been written at Hempton Priory in Norfolk.³² Notations in the manuscripts show its continued ownership and circulation in the sixteenth century. The owners include a priory of Benedictine nuns at Amesbury, Wiltshire (BL Additional 18632) and the Bridgettine House at Syon, Middlesex (Bodleian Laud Misc. 416).³³ Lydgate's poem inspired a prose redaction around 1450 — the *Sege of Thebes* (Bodleian MS Rawl. misc. D.82) — which highlights the epic portions of the battle at the expense of chronicle and romance features. The Middle English author does to *The Siege of Thebes* what the author of the *Roman de Edipus* did to *Le Roman de Thèbes*, but he brings the story closer to Statius than to the *romans antiques*. In his Epilogue to *The Historie of Jason* (1477), William Caxton mentions “the siege of thebes” as well as “Stacius” and Boccaccio as sources of information for Jason’s exploits.³⁴

Wynkyn de Worde first printed *The Siege of Thebes* before 1500 (STC 17031), using Oxford, St. John’s College 266, as his copy-text. The manuscript is dated 1476 and was owned by the London mercer Roger Thorney, who is also mentioned in verses appended to the end of *The Siege of Thebes* in Bodleian MS Laud. Misc. 557.³⁵ John Stow, who copied the poem in 1558 (BL Additional MS 29729), printed *The Siege* in his 1561 edition of Chaucer’s *Works* (STC 5075–76). Stow’s edition relies on de Worde’s for the first four hundred lines, then turns to a different branch of the manuscript tradition for the rest of the text. *The Siege* appears at the end of Stow’s volume after a collection of Chaucer’s shorter poems, Chaucer apocrypha, “Chaucers woordes vnto his owne Scriuener,” and the colophon: “Thus endeth the workes of Geffray Chaucer.” Stow’s text was reprinted by Thomas Speght in his 1598 (STC 5077) edition of Chaucer’s poetry and in the 1602 (STC 5080) and 1687 (STC C3736) reissues, with the same sequence of shorter poems, apocrypha, “Adam Scrivener,” the colophon, and *The Siege of Thebes*. John Urry’s 1721 edition of Chaucer follows the same general pattern at the end but omits Lydgate’s poem.

Renaissance editions of *The Siege of Thebes* are notable in several respects. They show that printers had access to manuscripts held by prominent owners and that the two major formats for presenting Lydgate’s poem in manuscript could be adapted to print. A. S. G. Edwards

³¹ Julia Boffey, *Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1985), p. 24.

³² John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, eds., *The Text of the Canterbury Tales*, 8 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), 1:342.

³³ A. S. G. Edwards (1985), p. 195 n32.

³⁴ William Caxton, *Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton*, ed. W. J. B. Crotch, EETS o.s. 176 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 35.

³⁵ Gavin Bone, “Extant Manuscripts Printed by Wynkyn de Worde, with Notes on the Owner Roger Thorney,” *The Library*, 4th ser. 12 (1932), 295; Erdmann and Ekwall 2:49.

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(1985) points out that only six manuscripts of *The Siege of Thebes* have marginal rubrics; the others locate rubrics and glosses within the frame of the text, as an accommodation to mass book production (p. 182). Wynkyn de Worde's edition places the rubrics within the frame of the text but retains English and Latin glosses in the margins. Stow's 1561 edition easily absorbs what became the more common *ordinatio* of Lydgate's poem in manuscript. The rubrics for the Prologue and First Part of the poem extend over the double columns of text, but the incipits, explicits, and glosses are printed within the borders of the text in different type faces to distinguish them from the text.

The text of the poem printed in the Renaissance served, as Eleanor Hammond points out, as the basis for excerpts from *The Siege of Thebes* printed in the nineteenth century. Hammond herself edited the Prologue, but the major critical edition of the poem is Axel Erdmann's edition for the Early English Text Society. Erdmann's text with apparatus and a temporary preface appeared in 1911; the second volume, with a full introduction, manuscript descriptions, notes, and glossary was produced posthumously by Eilert Ekwall in 1930 from Erdmann's draft and notes. Erdmann's edition is based on Arundel 119 and records the variants of the twenty-one manuscripts known to him (Ekwall adds another); a list of errata in the second volume includes some corrections for readings. The edition reproduces the textual features of the manuscript, including scribal flourishes for final -e and plural forms, suspension marks for doubled consonants, and virgules indicating the caesura in the middle of the line. Erdmann also prints diæresis marks above sounded final syllables and especially final -e.

Arundel 119 is the base manuscript for the present edition. The manuscript was copied about 1430 by a scribe whose traits indicate an Essex dialect.³⁶ The same scribe copied Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 307), the *South English Legendary* (Tokyo, Takamiya Collection, MS 54), and John Walton's translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (Oslo & London, The Schøyen Collection, MS 615).³⁷ *The Siege of Thebes* is the only work in Arundel 119, and the text is complete. Written in a single column on vellum leaves measuring 10 7/8 x 7 3/8 inches, the poem is decorated by historiated initials with leaf borders around the text at the beginning of the Prologue (fol. 1r) and First Part (fol. 4r); by ornamental initials at the beginning of Second Part (fol. 18r), Tydeus' speech to Eteocles (fol. 32r), and Third Part (fol. 43r); and by large initials, paraph signs, marginal rubrics, and glosses throughout. Arundel 119 formally divides the poem with rubrics for *Prologus*, *Prima pars*, *Secunda pars*, and *Tertia pars*, and marks all the parts by incipits and explicits. The script is an *anglicana formata* with double-lobed a and g, looped d, eight-shaped

³⁶ Angus McIntosh et al., *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English*, 4 vols. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), 1:105, 3:132.

³⁷ Jeremy Griffiths, "Thomas Hyngham, Monk of Bury and the Macro Plays Manuscript," *English Manuscript Studies* 5 (1995), 214.

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s and long *s*, and *v*-form *r*, forked *r* and two-shaped *r*. Descriptions of the manuscript appear in Ward and Herbert’s catalogue of British Museum romances and Erdmann’s edition.

My text preserves manuscript spellings from Arundel 119 such as *dieu* and *diew* for *due*, *oyther* for *either*, and *knyttes* for *knygthes*. The only exceptions are instances where the initial *h-* in the manuscript forms *heyr*, *hermyn*, *harowes*, and *hamyng* is dropped and where MS *sonnes* (line 1000) and *sones* (line 1445) are corrected; preserving the spellings here could cause undue confusion. The text also preserves grammatical features of Arundel 119, such as the use of *ha* for various forms of the verb *have* and *hymself* for the standard plural *hemself* (line 3329); confusions of *hym* and *hem* at lines 2864 and 3197 are treated as errors. The MS form *to* for *til* is allowed to stand, and a marginal gloss is added (see line 3211 for one exception to the MS form). All these features are attested elsewhere in Lydgate and other Middle English writers. Substantive emendations have been made where the reading of the text is clearly wrong. The text presented here corrects Erdmann’s errors in transcribing the base manuscript and in his apparatus; Erdmann lists some errata in vol. 2 of his edition, but other errors are not recorded. He is inconsistent in reading scribal flourishes for final *-e* and in expanding suspension marks over words like *wymen* and *comyng*. Though I tend to retain MS readings more often than does Erdmann, his suggestions for correcting substantive errors are frequently adopted. I have not printed the virgule that typically indicates a caesura in the line. In the variants listed in the Textual Notes, word breaks with the virgule and underdotting for scribal cancellations are not reported, nor are insignificant differences in spacing (e.g., MS: *a narowe* for *an arowe* at line 3493).

Erdmann’s edition intervenes much more than mine to establish regular meter. In his Temporary Preface, Erdmann presents his text as a corrective to the view, conveyed by older printed texts, that Lydgate’s meter is often faulty: “The five-beat iambic lines of *Thebes* present the metrical traits peculiar to Lydgate’s heroic verse” (1:vii–viii). Earlier generations of scholars applied metrical standards to medieval texts that were neither characteristic of the poets nor reflective of the manuscript tradition. In recent years, scholars have come to recognize greater metrical variability than before and to accept the authority of manuscript readings over modern improvements and silent emendations. The text as read by medieval audiences now makes as much a claim on our critical and historical imagination as the ideal work reconstructed according to a presumed authorial intention. In the case of Lydgate, “broken back” lines, which lack an unstressed syllable after the caesura, have long been regarded as evidence of his failed craftsmanship or scribal inattention or both. Erdmann regularly corrects them in *The Siege of Thebes*, but I have chosen to allow them to stand. Lydgate’s basic metrical model is a five-stress line with a caesura. The first half of the line takes a number of forms, frequently dropping the initial syllable or reversing the iambic pattern of the second foot. The second half of the line frequently drops the first unstressed syllable but tends to end with an iambic pattern. Consequently, I have emended for final *-e* as needed and for medial vowels, such as *slayen* for *slayn* and *ageyns* for *ageyns*.

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In accordance with the conventions of the Middle English Texts Series, the letters *i/j* and *u/v* have been normalized. Thorn has been transcribed as *th*, yogh as *y*, *g*, or *gh*, and the scribal ampersand as *and*. Accented final *-e* is printed as *é* (e.g., *contré*, *antiquité*), if the ending does not otherwise end in *ee*. Where *the* is used as a second person pronoun instead of the definite article, I have spelled *thee* to clarify sense and pronunciation. Double consonants at the beginning of a line have been treated as capital letters, and those in the middle of lines have been regularized to lower-case letters. Suspension marks and common abbreviations have been silently expanded. The scribe of Arundel 119 is by no means consistent in using a flourish at the end of words as a final *-e* or an otiose mark. Capitalization and word division are editorial. The noun *nothing* is regularly distinguished from the adverbial form *no thing* (not at all). Punctuation is editorial, and it is designed to guide the reader through the additive clauses and phrases of Lydgate's sentences. A brief comparison with *Troy Book* will show that in *The Siege of Thebes*, Lydgate is less concerned to write periodic sentences with elaborate patterns of parallel clauses and phrases and more interested in the evolving sequence of his sentences. Some passages, such as the opening imitation of the General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales*, fail grammatically, but most of the syntax builds cumulatively in elaborate, complex sentences. For the marginal glosses and rubrics from Arundel 119, which are reported in the Explanatory Notes, I have made several small corrections and supplied modern punctuation; Erdmann in several cases misreads the glosses. There are differences in the layout and content of the rubrics and glosses in other manuscripts of *The Siege of Thebes*, but these variations are not reported. The hand in the left margin of the text indicates that there is a Latin or English marginal gloss at this point in the manuscript. See Explanatory Notes for the gloss itself.

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The Siege of Thebes

Incipit Prologus.

 Whan brighte Phebus passed was the Ram Myd of Aprille and into Bole cam, And Satourn old with his frosty face In Virgyne taken had his place, Malencolik and slowgh of mocioun, And was also in th'oposicioun  Of Lucina the mone moyst and pale, That many shour fro hevene made avale; Whan Aurora was in the morowe red, 10 And Jubiter in the Crabbes hed Hath take his paleys and his mansioun; The lusty tyme and joly fressh sesoun Whan that Flora the noble myghty quene The soyl hath clad in newe tendre grene, 15 With her floures craftly ymeynt, Braunch and bough with red and whit depeynt, Fletinge the bawme on hillis and on valys; The tyme in soth whan Canterbury talys Complet and told at many sondry stage 20 Of estatis in the pilgrimage, Everich man lik to his degré, Some of despert, some of moralité, Some of knyghthode, love, and gentillesse, And some also of parfit holynesse, 25 And some also in soth of ribaudye To make laughter in the companye (Ech admitted, for non wold other greve) Lich as the Cook, the Millere, and the Reve Aquytte hemself, shortly to conclude, 30 Boystously in her teermes rude, Whan thei hadde wel dronken of the bolle,	<i>the sun; Aries</i> <i>In the middle; Taurus</i> <i>Virgo</i> <i>slow</i> <i>Diana; moon</i> <i>shower; fall</i> <i>Dawn; morning</i> <i>Jupiter; Cancer's head</i> <i>palace</i> <i>(the goddess of flowers)</i> <i>artfully; combined</i> <i>painted</i> <i>The balm flowing</i> <i>indeed; tales</i> <i>various distances traveled</i> <i>social classes</i> <i>Every; according to; social rank</i> <i>entertainment</i> <i>nobility</i> <i>perfect</i> <i>truly of ribaldry</i> <i>permitted; no one; insult</i> <i>Behave</i> <i>Rudely; their speech</i> <i>bowl</i>
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The Siege of Thebes

	And ek also with his pylled nolle	too; bald head
15	The Pardowner beerdlees al his chyn, Glasy-eyed and face of cherubyn,	beardless cherubic face
35	Tellyng a tale to angre with the frere, As opynly the storie kan yow lere	friar teach
	Word for word with every circumstaunce, Echon ywrite and put in remembraunce	
40	By hym that was, yif I shal not feyne, Floure of poetes thorghout al Breteyne, Which sothly hadde most of excellence	Every one written who; if; dissemble
	In rethorike and in eloquence (Rede his making who list the trouthe fynde)	rhetoric poetry; wishes
	Which never shal appallen in my mynde	fade
45	But alwey fresh ben in my memoyré, To whom be gove pris, honure, and gloyré	given renown
	Of wel seyinge first in oure language, Chief register of this pilgrimage,	recorder
	Al that was tolde forgeting noght at al,	
50	Feyned talis nor thing historial, With many proverbe divers and unkouth,	Fictional; historical curious
	Be rehersaile of his sugrid mouth,	
	Of eche thyng keping in substaunce	By narration; sugared (see note)
	The sentence hool withoute variance,	essentially
55	Voyding the chaf sothly for to seyn, Enlumynyng the trewe piked greyn	complete meaning
	Be crafty writinge of his sawes swete,	Removing; husk truly (see note)
	Fro the tyme that thei deden mete	Revealing; selected kernel
60	First the pylgrimes sothly everichon, At the Tabard assembled on be on,	By artful; stories
	And fro Suthwerk shortly forto seye	did
	To Canterbury ridyng on her weie,	truly every one
	Tellynge a tale as I reherce can,	Tabard Inn; one by one
	Lich as the hoste assigned every man,	Southwerk
65	None so hardy his biddyg disobeye.	their way
	And this whil that the pilgrymes leye	recount
	At Canterbury wel logged on and all,	Just as
	I not in soth what I may it call —	daring
	Hap or fortune in conclusioun —	
70	That me byfil to entren into toun	lodged one
		I do not know truly
		Chance; finally
		happened

Prologus

	The holy seynt pleynly to visite	
¶	After siknesse, my vowes to aquyte,	sickness; fulfill
¶	In a cope of blak and not of grene,	[monk's] cloak
	On a palfrey slender, long, and lene,	riding horse
75	With rusty brydel mad nat for the sale,	unfit for court (see note)
	My man toforn with a voide male,	servant; before me; empty purse
	Which of fortune took myn inne anon	Who; arranged my lodging forthwith
	Wher the pylgrymes were logged everichon,	every one
	The same tyme her governour, the Host,	their
80	Stonding in halle ful of wynde and bost,	boast
¶	Lich to a man wonder sterne and fers,	Like; very
	Which spak to me and seide anon, "Daun Pers,	Who; immediately
	Daun Domynyk, Dan Godfrey, or Clement,	
	Ye be welcom newly into Kent,	
85	Thogh youre bridel have neither boos ne belle,	boss (ornamental stud)
	Besechinge you that ye wil me telle	
	First youre name and of what contré	
	Withoute mor shortely that ye be,	
	That loke so pale al devoyde of blood,	Who; lacking
90	Upon youre hede a wonder thredbare hood,	very threadbare
	Wel araied for to ride late."	outfitted
¶	I answerde my name was Lydgate,	
¶	"Monk of Bery, nygh fyfty yere of age,	Bury St. Edmunds; nearly
	Come to this toune to do my pilgrimage,	
95	As I have hight. I ha therof no shame."	promised; have
¶	"Daun John," quod he, "wel broke ye youre name.	do credit to
	Thogh ye be soul, beth right glad and light,	alone
	Preiying you soupe with us tonyght,	dine
	And ye shal han mad at youre devis	have; wish
100	A gret puddyng or a rounde hagys,	haggis
	A franchemole, a tansey, or a froyse;	meat or vegetable pie (see note); omelet; pancake
	To ben a monk, sclender is youre koyse;	slender; carcass
	Ye han be seke, I dar myn hede assure,	ill; guarantee
	Or late fed in a feynt pasture.	recently; sparse
105	Lift up youre hed, be glad, tak no sorowe!	
	And ye shal hom ride with us to morowe,	
	I seye, whan ye rested han your fille.	
	Aftere soper slepe wil do non ille.	
	Wrappe wel youre hede with clothes rounde aboute.	

The Siege of Thebes

110	Strong notty ale wol mak you to route. Tak a pylow that ye lye not lowe; Yif nede be, spare not to blowe! To holde wynde, be myn opynyooun, Wil engendre collik passioun	<i>nutty; snore so that If; do not hesitate to fart (see note)</i>
115	And make men to greven on her roppys, Whan thei han filled her mawes and her croppys. But toward nyght ete some fenel rede, Annys, comyn, or coriandre sede. And lik as I power have and myght,	<i>innards stomachs; throats red fennel anise, cumin</i>
120	I charge yow rise not at mydnyght, Thogh it so be the moone shyne cler. I wol myself be youre orloger Tomorrow erly, whan I se my tyme, For we wol forth parcel afore pryme;	<i>clock set out a little before 6 a.m.</i>
125	A company, pardé, shal do you good. What? Look up, monk! For by kokkis blood, Thow shalt be mery who so that sey nay. For to morowe, anoon as it is day And that it gynne in the est to dawe,	<i>by God God's blood as soon as when; east; dawn</i>
130	Thow shalt be bound to a newe lawe Att goyng oute of Canterbury toune And leyn aside thy professioun. Thow shalt not chese nor thisilf withdrawe, Yif eny myrth be founden in thy mawe,	<i>lay have a free choice If; stomach</i>
135	Lyk the custom of this compenyne, For non so proude that dar me denye, Knyght nor knave, chanon, prest ne nonne, To telle a tale pleynly as thei konne, Whan I assigne and se tyme opportune.	<i>canon fully; know how appoint</i>
140	And for that we our purpoos wil contune, We wil homward the same custome use, And thow shalt not platly thee excuse.  Be now wel war — stody wel tonyght!	<i>continue plainly yourself attentive</i>
145	But for al this, be of herte light! Thy wit shal be the sharper and the bet.” And we anon were to soper set, And served wel unto oure plesaunce, And sone after be good governaunce	<i>better immediately</i>

Prima Pars

	Unto bed goth every maner wight.	<i>person</i>
150	And towarde morowe anon as it was light, Every pilgryme bothe bet and wors, As bad oure hoste toke anon his hors, Whan the sonne roos in the est ful clyere, Fully in purpoos to come to dynere	<i>as soon</i> <i>better</i> <i>directed; soon</i>
155	Unto Osspryng and breke ther our faste. And whan we weren from Canterbury paste Noght the space of a bowe draught, Our hoost in hast hath my bridel rauht And to me seide as it were in game,	<i>passed</i> <i>bowshot</i> <i>haste; seized</i>
160	"Come forth, daun John, be your Cristene name, And lat us make some manere myrrh or play. Shet youre portoos a twenty develway! It is no disport so to patere and seie.	<i>amusement</i> <i>Close; breviary</i> <i>recite the Paternoster</i>
165	It wol make youre lippes wonder dreye. Tel some tale, and make therof a jape. For be my rounchy, thow shalt not eskape. But preche not of non holynesse.	<i>dry</i> <i>joke</i> <i>horse</i>
170	Gynne some tale of myrrh or of gladnesse, And nodde not with thyn hevy bekke. Telle us some thyng that draweth to effecte Only of joye. Make no lenger lette."	<i>nose</i> <i>produces</i> <i>delay</i>
175	And whan I saugh it wolde be no bette, I obeyde unto his biddynge, So as the lawe me bonde in al thinge; And as I coude with a pale cheere,	<i>countenance</i> <i>began; directly; hear</i>
	My tale I gan anon as ye shal here.	

**Explicit Prologus.
Incipit Pars Prima.**

Prima Pars.

	"Sirs," quod I, "sith of your curtesye I entred am into your compayne And admitted a tale for to telle By hym that hath power to compelle (I mene our hoste, governour, and guyde	<i>since</i>
180		

The Siege of Thebes

- Of yow echon ridyng her beside),
 Thogh that my wit barayn be and dul,
 I wol reherce a story wonderful,
 185 Towchinge the siege and destruccioune
 Of worthy Thebees the myghty royal toun,
 Bylt and begonne of olde antiquité,
 Upon the tyme of worthy Josué,
 Be dyligence of kyng Amphioun,
 190 Chief cause first of his fundacioun,
 For which his fame which nevere shal away,
 In honure floureth yit unto this day,
 And in story remembred is and preised.
 But how the wallys weren on heghte reised,
 195 It is wonder and merveil forto here.
 But if ye list, I shal yow platly lere
 The maner hool shortly in sentence,
 Under support of youre pacience,
 As writ myn auctour and Bochas bothe two.
 Rede her bookes and ye shal fynde it so,
 How this kyng, thys prudent Amphyoun,
 With the swetnesse and melodious soun
 And armonye of his swete song
 The cyté bylt that whilom was so strong,
 205 Be vertue only of the werbles sharpe
 That he made in Mercuries harpe,
 Of which the strenges were not touched softe,
 Wherby the walles reised weren alofte,
 Withoute craft of eny mannys hond,
 210 Ful yoor agon myd of Grekes lond;
 Which is a thing of poetes told,
 Nevere yseyne neither of yong nor old.
 But as Bochas list to specifie,
 Cler expownyng this derke poysye,
 215 Seith Mercurye, god of eloquence,
 Gaf be the myght of heavenly influence
 Unto this kyng at his nativité
 Thorgh glade aspectes that he shulde be
 Most excellent be craft of rethorik,
 220 That in this world was non to hym lik;
- understanding; empty*
- Founded*
Joshua
- aloft*
- wish; openly teach*
whole
- author; Boccaccio*
- sound*
- once*
tunes
- Mercury's*
- Long ago, in the middle of*
- seen*
- Boccaccio wished; mention*
interpreting
- Gave by*
- in*

Prima Pars

- Which signyfieith to hem that ben prudent
 The musycal, the lusty instrument
 (I mene the harpe most melodious),
 Gove to this kynge be Mercurius;
 And his song, this auctour can yow teche,
 Was nothyng but the crafty speche
 Of this kyng ycalled Amphioun;
 Wherby he made the contrés envyroun
 To han such lust in his wordes swete
 That were so plesaunt, favourable, and mete
 In her eerys that shortly ther was noon
 Disobeysaunt with the kyng to goon,
 Whersoevere that hym list assigne.
 His cheer, his port was outward so benyngne
 That thorgh his styring and exortacioun
 With hym they went to byld first this toun
 And forsook ecch man his contré
 Be on assent to make this cyté
 Royal and riche that lich was nowher noon.
- And thus the wallis made of lym and stoon
 Were reyzed first be syngyng of this kyng,
 Lich as poetys feyne in her writyng,
 Passyng rich and royal of entaille.
- Her may ye see how myche may avaylle
 The goodlihed and lownesse of a kyng,
 And specealy in cher and in spekyng
 To his lyeges and to bern hym fayre
 In his apport and shewe hym debonayre
 And nat to bene to straunge ne soleyn
 In contenaunce outward be disdeyn;
- Which causeth ofte, who that can adverte,
 Grete hatred in the puples herte,
 And therupon prively wol rowne,
 Whan a prynce doth upon hem frowne,
 Shortly deme for al his excellencie,
 Among hemself out of his presence,
 Everych conclude lich his fantasye.
 And thus ful ofte gendred is envye
 In folkes hertes of soleynté and prydē,
- lively*
- Given; by
author*
- all around
have; pleasure
suitable
their ears*
- direct
countenance; demeanor*
- By one*
- mortar
by*
- Just; portray
Exceedingly; design*
- Here
humility
appearance
conduct himself
comportment; gracious
too reserved nor sullen
external appearance
foresee
people's
[they] will whisper*
- judge*
- imagination*
- hearts of haughtiness*

The Siege of Thebes

- 260 For swich as list nat onys loke asyde
 To reward hem whan they lowe loute.
 And ageyn kynde it is, out of doute,
 That eny hed be recorde of the wyse
 Shuld the foot of disdeyn despysye
such; wish not once to look
bow
against nature
evidence
- 265 Which bereth hym up, who so can take hede,
 And susteneth in his moste nede
 As his pyler and his sowpowayle.
 For fynaly ne wer the porayle
 Her berer up and supportacioun,
pillar; support
were not the poor people
Their
- 270 Farwel lordshyp and domynacioun
 Thorghoute the world of every hegh estat!
 Wherfor me semeth mor is fortunat
 Of Mercurye the soote sugred harpe
 Than Mars swerd whetted kene and sharpe,
sweet
sharpened
- 275 Mor accepted with asspectis goode
 Than is this god with his lokes woode.
mad
- 280 For humble speche with glad contenaunce
 May a prynce sothly mor avaunce
 Among his puple hertes forto wynne
 Of inward love which that wol not twynne,
 Than gold, rychesse, pride, or tyranye,
pass away
- 285 Oyther disdeyne, daunger, or surquedyne.
 For of lordes — clerkes can reporte —
 But that love her crowne do supporte,
 The fyn ys nougnt in conclusioun.
Or; resistance; pride
- 290 I take record of kyng Amphyoun
 That bylte Thebes be his eloquence
 Mor than of pride or of violence,
 Noble and riche that lik was nowher non,
 And thus the walles mad of lym and stoon
mortar
- 295 Were reised first be synging of this kyng,
 Lich as poetes feyn in her wryting.
 But sothly yit some expositours,
 Groundyng hem upon olde auctours,
 Seyn that Cadmus the famous olde man
Just; describe
truly
authors
- 300 Ful longe afor this cité first began,
 And the ground of the bieldyng sette,
 And the boundes be compas out he mette
Say
before
measured

Prima Pars

300	With thong outkorve of a boyls hyde, Whych envyroun strecche myghte wyde To get inne londe a ful large space Wherupon to byld a dwellyng place, And called was the soyle thus geten inne Whylom Boece of the bolys skynne.	<i>cut out; bull's around</i>
305	The name after into Thebes turned. But Cadmus ther hath longe not sojourned, Lik in story as it is compyled; For shortly he from thennys was exiled, Never after to dwelle in this toun,	<i>Long ago Boeotia because of; bull's afterwards</i>
310	Be the knyghthode of this Amphioun, Which up parformeth riche for the noonys The cité Thebes of myghty squar stonys, As I yow tolde a litil heretoiforn;	<i>gathered thence</i>
315	And Cadmus thus hath his kyngdam lorn, Sceptre and crowne and his powere royal. Now have I told unto you ground of al, That ye wel knowe be informacioun Cleerly the pith and exposicioun	<i>By completed purposely</i>
320	Of this mater, as clerkes can you telle. It were but veyn lenger for to dwelle, To tary yow as in this matiere, Sith my tale which that ye shal here Upon oure waie wil lasten a longe while,	<i>lost the basis</i>
325	The space as I suppose of seven myle. And now ye know first how Amphyoun Bylt and began this cité and this toun, Regnyng ther long aftere, as I rede. Of hym no more, for I wil procede	<i>Since</i>
330	To my purpos that I first began, Not tellyng here how the lyne ran From kyng to kyng be successioun, Conveying doun the stok of Amphyoun Cereously be lyneal discent;	<i>line of descent by</i>
335	But leve al this, pleynly of entent, To telle forth, in bookes as I rede, How Layus be processe gan succede To bere the croune in this myghty lond,	<i>Transmitting; family Successively by the course of time did</i>

The Siege of Thebes

- ¶ Holdyng the sceptre of Thebes in his hond,
 Manly and wys duryng al his liff.
- 340 And Jocasta called was his wyff,
 Ful wommanly the story seith certeyn,
 For a tyme thogh she were bareyn,
 Tyl Layus in ful humble wise
 To have a child did sacrificise
- 345 Fyrst t' Apollo in his char so bright
 And Jubiter that hath so gret a myght,
 Besechyg hem with devout reverence
 To graunt only thorgh her influence
 That his request may executed be;
- 350 And specially to goddesses thre
 He besoughte — Pallas and Juno
 And Dyane — forto helpe also
 That he be not defrauded of his bone.
 And his preyere accepted was ful sone,
- 355 That fynaly thorgh his ryttys olde,
 Evene lik as his herte wolde,
 The queene Jocasta hath anon conceyved.
 Which, whan the kyng fully hath perceyved,
 He made in hast, hym lyst not to abide,
- 360 Thorgh hys kyngdom massageres ryde
 Fro coost to coost the story can devyse,
 For dyvynoures and phylosophres wise,
 For such as weren famous physiciens
 And wel expert astronomyens
- 365 To come in hast unto his presence
 To fynde out shortly in sentence,
 By craft only of calculacioun,
 The chyldes fate and disposicioun
 And therupon to geve a jugement,
- 370 The root ytake at the ascendent, *base of calculation (see note); first astrological house*
 Trewly sought out be mynut and degré,
 The silfe houre of his natyvyté,
 Not forgete the heavenly mansions
 Clerly cerched be smale fracciouns,
- 375 First be secoundes, tiers, and eke quartes
 On augrym stoones and on white caartes
- Very
chariot
who
them
disappointed; prayer
rituals
Just as
haste; did not wish; delay
tell
soothsayers
haste
significance
astrology
child's; location of astral influences
forgotten; astrological houses
sought by; fractions
thirds; also
stones for calculation; treatises

Prima Pars

	<i>Computed by</i>
380	<p>Ypreved out be diligent labour, In tables correcte devoyde of al error, Justly soght and founde out bothe twoo, The yeeres collecte and expance also, Consydred ek be good inspeccioun Every hour and constellacioun And eche aspecte and lookes ek dyvers, Which were good and which also pervers, Wher they were toward or ellys at debat, Happy, welful, or infortunat. And fynaly, in conclusyoun, They founde Satourn in the Scorpioun, Hevy-chered, malencolik and loth, And woode Mars furious and wroth, Holdyng his sceptre in the Capricorn, The same hour whan this chyld was born, Venus dejecte and contrarious And depressed in Mercuryes hous;</p>
390	<p>That the dome and judgement fynal Of thies clerkes, to speke in special, Be fatal sort which may not be withdrawe, That with his swerd his fader shal be slawe: Ther may no man helpe it nor excuse.</p>
395	<p>On whiche thyng the kyng gan sore muse, And cast he wolde on that other side Agayn her doom for hymself provide, Shape a way and remedy toforn, Biddyng the queene whan the chyld were born, Withoute mercy or moderly pyté, That he be ded: that may non other be. And in al hast lik as he hath sent, She obeyed his comaundement.</p>
400	<p>With wooful herte and a pitous loke And face pale, her yonge sone she toke, Tendre and grene both of flesssh and bonyss, To certeyn men ordeyned for the noonys From poynt to poynt in al maner thing To execute the biddyng of the kyng.</p>
405	<p>They durste not delay it nor abide,</p>
	<i>also by</i>
	<i>astrological position (see note)</i>
	<i>favorable; in conflict</i>
	<i>Saturn; house of Scorpio</i>
	<i>Gloomy; hostile</i>
	<i>mad; angry</i>
	<i>without influence; adverse</i>
	<i>powerless</i>
	<i>So that; opinion</i>
	<i>[was] to; particular</i>
	<i>fated destiny; avoided</i>
	<i>did; ponder</i>
	<i>plan; in response</i>
	<i>Against their prophecy</i>
	<i>beforehand</i>
	<i>motherly</i>
	<i>slain: it cannot be otherwise</i>
	<i>haste</i>
	<i>entrusted</i>
	<i>young</i>
	<i>for the occasion</i>

The Siege of Thebes

- But to a forest that stood fer besyde,
 They took her wey and faste gan hem spedē
 The kyngges wille to parforme in dede,
 Havyng therof passyng hevynesse. far
hastened themselves
exceeding
- 420 But whan that they beheelden the fairnesse
 Of the chyld and excellent beauté,
 In her herte they hadde grete pyté
 And pleynly cast — among hem was no stryf — their
decided; disagreement
 That the child shulde han his lif. have
- 425 And anon ful hygh upon a tre,
 In a place that no man myght se,
 They henge hym up, the story kan reherce.
 But first his feet thorgh they gan to perce,
 And on bowes tendre, tough, and smale, immediately
 430 They knet hym up shortly (this is no tale),
 Hym to preserve from bestys wild and rage,
 And after that token her viage
 Toward Thebes in alle the hast they may. relate
through; pierce
boughs
tied; in short
savage
journey
haste
by chance that very
- 435 But of fortune thilke same day
 With her houndes serchyng up and doun,
 The huntis went of kyng Poliboun
 Thorgh the forest game forto fynde,
 Some aforn and some cam behynde, their
huntsmen; Polibon
- 440 And gan serch and seke wonder sore
 Among the hilles and the haltes hore.
 And as they reenge the trenchis by and by,
 They herde a noyse and a pitous cry
 445 Of thys chyld hangyng on the tre,
 And all at onys drowe forto se, sought very eagerly
 And lefte not to they han hym founde,
 And toke hym doune and his fete unbounde, grey woods
 And bare hym hom unto Polyboun,
 Kyng of Archadye, the famous regioun. go along; forest paths
- 450 And whan that he first the chyld gan see,
 Of his woundes he hadde grete pyté
 To beholde his tender fete so blede,
 And called hym Edippus, as I rede,
 Which is to seyn (platly this no phage) immediately approached
until
unbound
carried
Arcadia
saw
 Bored the feete, as in that langage. feet; to bleed
Oedipus
plainly; lie
Pierced

Prima Pars

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 455 | And first the kyng in his royal halle
Made his men an norys forto calle,
This yonge chylde to foster and to kepe
With her milk that he nat ne wepe;
And his leches he charged ek also, | nurse
nourish |
| 460 | Til he were hool her never forto do:
Fully in purpoos, for the child was fair,
After his day to maken hym his hayr
For cause only, who so taketh hede,
Sone hadde he noon be lyne to succede; | physicians
whole their duty
intending
on his death; heir
Because
by line of descent
whether |
| 465 | And wher that he had a wif or noon,
I fynde not and therfor lat it goon. | |
| 470 | But by processe of dayes and of yeeris,
This Edypus among his pleying feeris
Was in his port passyng ful of pride,
That non with hym myght in pees abide.
In hert he was so inly surquydows, | playmates
behavior exceedingly
tranquility
inwardly prideful
Morose; contentious |
| 475 | Malencolik, and contrarious,
Ful of despyt and of hegh disdeyn,
That no wight durst shortly hym withseyen;
Til on a day he gan with oon debate
To whom he hadde specyal grete hate, | intense scorn
no one dare; contradict
argue |
| 480 | Which of rancour and of hasty tene,
As he that myght his pride not sustene,
Gan upon hym cruelly abrayde,
And unto hym felly thus he saide.
“Wherto,” quod he, “artow so proude of port, | Who; anger
bear
Did; shout
fiercely |
| 485 | Contrarie also ever in oure dispot,
Froward and felle lastyng evere in oon,
As thow were lord of us everichon,
And presumest fully in wyrchyng,
Lik as thow were sone unto the kyng, | Why; are you; manner
Contentious; games
Perverse; cruel always |
| 490 | And descended of his royal blood?
But wher so be thow be wroth or wood,
Thow art no thing, and thow list take hede,
Appartenyng unto his kynrede
But in a forest founden and unknowe, | As if; each one
most presumptuous in your doings |
| | Whan thow were yonge. Therfor bere thee lowe!
And uttrely remembre, yif thee lyst, | whether; angry; mad
in no way, if; wish
Belonging; family
unknown
conduct yourself humbly
fully; if; wish |

The Siege of Thebes

	Thy byrth and blood ar bothe two unwist.	unknown
495	This the fyne shortly of my tale."	end
	Wherwith Edippus gan to wexe pale,	grow
	And chaunge also cheer and contenaunce,	face; appearance
	And gan apoint in his remembraunce	arrange
	Word be word and feyned right nought,	
500	And felly mused in his owne thought,	eagerly pondered
	And cast he wold withoute more taryng	planned
	The trouth enquire of Poliboun the kyng.	seek
	And whan he saugh opportune space	
	And the kyng in a sycré place,	private
505	He hym bysoghte lowly on his kne	
	To his request benignely to se,	humblly; entertain
	And that he wolde pleynly, and not spare,	If; forbear
	Of his byrth the trewe ground declare,	
	And make hym sure of this thyng anon	immediately
510	Yif he were his verrey sone or non.	If; true
	And Polyboun only of gentilles,	out of kindness
	Whan he beheeld the grete hevynesse	sorrow
	Of Edippus and the wooful peyne,	
	He gan dissimule and in manere feyne,	dissemble; falsify
515	Lik as he had be verrelly his heyre.	As if; were truly; heir
	But mor and mor he falleth in dispeir	
	And doune on knees oft ageyn gan falle,	did
	Hym conjuring be the goddes alle	beseeching by
	To telle trouth and nothyng to hide,	
520	Affermyng ek he wold nat abide	Declaring also; remain
	Lenger with hym but ryden and enquire,	search out
	Til tyme he may the verrey sothe lere	real truth discover
	In eny part of hap or of fortune.	by change
	And for that he was so importune	because; persistent
525	In his desire, the kyng without abood	delay
	Ceriously tolde how it stood,	In sequence
	In a forest first how he was founde	
	Upon a tre be the feet ybounde,	by
	And how he caste, in conclusioun,	planned
530	To make hym kyng of that regiouн	
	Aftere his day shortly forto telle.	death
	But Edippus wil no longer dwelle	

Prima Pars

	But took lieve and in hast gan ryde To a temple faste ther besyde Of Appollo, in storie as is tolde, Whos statue stood in a char of golde Of wheles four boornyd bright and shene; And within a spirit ful unclene, Be fraude only and fals collusiooun,	<i>haste did close</i>
535	Answeare gaf to every questioun, Bryngyng the puple in ful gret errorur, Such as to hym dyden fals honour Be rytyss used in the olde dawes Aftere custome of pagansmes lawes.	<i>chariot</i> <i>With wheels; burnished; gleaming inside; foul</i>
540	545 And Edyppus with ful humble chere To Appollo maked his preiere, Besechyngh hym on his knees lowe Be some signe that he myghte knowe, Thorg evidence shortly comprehendyd,	<i>By gave people</i>
550	555 Of what kynrede that he was discendyd. And whan Edyppus be gret devocioun Fynysshed hath fully his orysoun, The fend anon withinnen invisyle With a vois dredful and horrible	<i>By rituals observed; days Following very prayer</i>
	Bad hym in hast taken his viage Toward Thebes wher of his lynage He heren shal and be certefied. And on his way anon he hath hym hyed, By hasty journé so his hors constreyned	<i>family</i>
560	560 Day be day til he hath atteyned Unto a castel Pylotes ycalled, Rich and strong and wel aboute walled, Adjacent be syt of the contré And perteynent to Thebes the cyté:	<i>prayer</i> <i>fiend immediately inside</i>
565	Kyng Layus beyng ther present Fortho holde a maner tornement With his knyghtes yong and coraious And other folkes that were desyrous To preve hemself, shortly forto telle,	<i>haste; journey lineage informed hastened urged onward</i>
570	Who by force oyther myght excelle Or gete a name thorgh his hegh prouesse.	<i>reached</i>
		<i>by location belonging</i>
		<i>tournament courageous</i>
		<i>themselves either</i>

The Siege of Thebes

	Everich of hem dyd his bysynesse On horsbak and also ek en foote, Al be that some founde ful unsoote (Rather a pley of werre than of pees), Wher Edyppus put hymself in prees, As he that was ay redy to debat, Enforsyng hym to entren at the gate, ¶ Maugré all tho that hym wolde lette. And in the pres of aventur he mette Kyng Layus and cruelly hym slogh, Thow the story writ not the maner howh, Ne no wight can of alle the compayne Be no signe verrelly espye By whos hond that the kyng was slawe; For Edyppus in hast gan hym withdrawe And kept hym coy of entenciou.	<i>Each one; them; diligent endeavor</i> <i>Although; dreadful war</i> <i>the thick of the fight</i> <i>always; fight</i> <i>Striving</i> <i>Despite; those; hinder</i> <i>throng by chance</i> <i>slew</i> <i>Though; how</i> <i>person</i> <i>By; truly observe</i> <i>slain</i> <i>haste</i> <i>quiet on purpose</i> <i>pitiful sound</i>					
575	Gret was the noyse and the pitous soun In the castel for slaughter of the kyng, Dooel and compleynt, sorowe and wepyng. But for they segh hevynesse and thoght Ageynes deth vayleth lit or noght, They ordeyne with ryttys ful royal For the feste called funeral.	<i>Grief; lament</i> <i>Because; saw</i> <i>avails little or nothing</i> <i>prepare; rituals</i>					
580	590	595	600	605	610	And lik the custom of the dayes olde, The corps they brent into asshes colde, And in a vessel rounde, mad as a bal, They closed hem in gold and in metal. And after that did her bysy cure In Thebes to make a sepulture, And richely, hem list no longer lette, The asshen did they enclose and shette: Of this matere ther nys no mor to seyn. But to Edippus I wil retourne ageyn, Which hym enhasteth ay fro day to day Towardes Thebes in al that evere he may, Brennyng in herte hoot as eny fire The fyn to knowe of his fatal desire. But for that he failed of a guyde, Out of his way he wente fer beside	<i>burned</i> <i>shaped</i> <i>enclosed</i> <i>applied themselves</i> <i>they did not wish to delay</i> <i>shut</i> <i>Who; hastens always</i> <i>as quickly as he can</i> <i>heart hot</i> <i>outcome</i> <i>because he lacked</i>

Prima Pars

610	Thorgh a wylde and a waast contré, By a mounteyn that stood upon the see, Wher that monstres of many dyvers kynde Were conversaunt, in story as I fynde;	<i>desolate</i> <i>against; sea</i>
615	Amonges which sothly ther was on, So inly cruel that no man durst gon For drede of deth forby that passage. This monstre was so mortal in his rage,	<i>habitually dwelling</i> <i>truly; one</i> <i>dare go</i> <i>past</i> <i>terrible</i>
620	Which hadde also, be descripcioune, Body and feet of a fers lyoun; And lik a mayde in soth was hede and face, Fel of his look and cruel to manace,	<i>Who</i> <i>fierce lion</i> <i>woman</i> <i>savage</i>
625	And odyous of countenaunce and sight; And as I rede, Spynx this monstre hight, Wors than tygre, dragon, or serpent. And I suppose by enchauntement	<i>Sphinx; was called</i>
	He was ordeyned on the hyl t'abyde, To sleen all tho that passeden besyde And specially all that diden fayle	<i>commanded</i> <i>slay; those who</i>
630	To expowne his mysty dyvynaile, His problem ek in wordes pleyn and bare Withoute avys opynly declare, Or with the lif he myghte not eskape:	<i>explain; obscure riddle</i>
	This verray soth platly and no jape.	<i>consultation</i>
635	And yif that he, be declaracioun, Gaf therupon cleer exposicioun, He shuld in hast — there was non other mene — Sleen this monstre for al his cruel tene:	<i>complete truth plainly; trick</i> <i>if</i>
	Ther may of mercy be non other graunte.	<i>in haste</i> <i>Slay; despite; hate</i> <i>allowance</i>
640	But of al this Edyppus ignoraunte, This dredful hill stondyng on a roche, Er he was war, gan ful nygh approche, More perilous platly than he wende.	<i>did; closely</i> <i>imagined</i> <i>did</i>
645	And sodeynly the monster can descende To stoppen his way and letten his passage, Thus abraydyng with a fel corage: “I have in herte inly gret disport	<i>block</i> <i>Shouting; bitter</i> <i>amusement</i> <i>power</i>
	That fortune hath broght thee to my sort To make a preef yif thou mayst endure	<i>test whether</i>

The Siege of Thebes

650	The fatal ende of this aventure, Set at a fyn sothly be daies olde.” And by and by al the caas hym tolde, Charging hym to be wel war and wise, Gete the palme and bere away the pryse	deadly outcome Established; truly circumstances Advising triumph; prize
655	Touchyng this thyng sette awene us tweyn, With lyf or deth which we shal dareyn. And this monstre with a despitous chere His problem gan thus, as ye shal here. “Ther is a beest merveilous to se,	settle by combat pitiless look
	¶ The which in soth at his nativyté Is of his myght so tender and so grene That he may hymsilve nat sustene Upon his fete, thogh he hadde it sworn, But yif that he be of his moder born.	power
665	And afterwardes be processe of age, On foure fete he maketh his passage; After on thre, if I shal not feyne, And alderlast he goth upright on tweyne, Dyvers of port and wonderful of cherys,	Unless; carried feet Afterwards; lie last of all
670	Til, be length of many sondry yeeres, Naturely he goth ageyn on thre, And sith on foure (it may non other be) And fynaly (this the trouthe pleyn) He retourneth kyndely ageyn	Differing; behavior; strange; manner by goes
675	To the matere which that he kam fro. Loo her is al my problem is ido. Muse herupon withoute werre or stryff It to declare or ellis lese thy lyff.” And whan Edyppus gan this thing adverte,	afterwards; otherwise naturally from done
680	Wel assured in his manly herte, Gan in his wytt cerchen up and doun, And of prudence cast in his resoun Be grete avis what thyng this may be, Seyng also that he may not flee,	Ponder; war solve; else lose consider
685	And how ther was counsel noon ne rede, But telle trouth or ellys to be dede, And be ful good deliberacioun Thus he answerd in conclusioun.	mind to search considered With much thought advice else by

Prima Pars

	"Thowe Spynx," quod he, "fals and fraudulent,"	<i>said</i>
690	Thow vyle monstre, thow dragon, thow serpent, Which on this hyl lich as I conceyve, Lyst in awaite folkes to deceyve, But truste wel, for al thy sleghty wit, Thy fals fraude shal anon be qwyt.	<i>Who; understand</i> <i>Lies; ambush</i> <i>sly</i> <i>immediately be repaid</i>
695	Me list not nowe whisper neither rowne, But thy problem I shal anon expowne ☞ So opynly thow shalt not go therfro. Loo, this it is — tak good hede thereto. Thilke best thow spak of hertoform,	<i>I do not wish; nor speak quietly</i> <i>riddle; explain</i> <i>from that</i>
700	Is every man in this world yborn, Which may not gon (his lymes be so softe), Bot as his moder bereth hym alofte In her armes, whan he doth crye and wepe. And after that he gynneth forto crepe	<i>The same; earlier</i> <i>born</i> <i>Who; walk</i> <i>Except</i> <i>creep</i>
705	On foure feet in his tendre youth, B'experience as it is ofte kouth, Aforn yrekned his hondes bothe two.	<i>known</i>
	His two hands stretched out in front of him	
	And by processe, thow mayst consider also	<i>in time</i>
	With his two fete, for al thy felle tene,	<i>bitter hatred</i>
710	He hath a staf hymselfen to sustene, And than he goth shortly upon thre. And altherlast, as it most nedes be, Voyding his staf, he walketh upon tweyn, Til it so he thorgh age he atteyn,	<i>last of all</i> <i>Setting aside</i> <i>reaches</i> <i>vigor</i>
715	That lust of youthe wasted be and spent; Than in his hond he taketh a potent, And on thre feet thus he goth ageyn — I dar afferme thow maist it not withseyн —	<i>Then; staff</i>
	And sone aftere thorgh his unweldy myght,	<i>contradict</i>
720	By influence of Naturys right, B'experience as every man may knowe, Lich a child on foure he crepeth lowe. And for he may no whyl here sojourne,	<i>soon; impotent</i>
	To erth ageyn he most in hast retourne,	<i>Nature's</i>
725	Which he kam fro — he may it not remewe. For in this world no man may eschewe (This verray soth shortly and no doute)	<i>because</i> <i>haste</i> <i>escape</i> <i>avoid</i> <i>complete; in short</i>

The Siege of Thebes

	Whan the wheel of kynde cometh aboue And naturely hath his cours yronne	<i>Nature</i>
730	Be circuete, as doth the shene sonne, That man and chyld of hegh and lowe estat, It geyneth nat to make mor debat, His tyme sette that he moste fyne,	<i>bright sun</i> <i>struggle</i> <i>die</i>
735	Whan Antropos of malice doth untwyne His lyves thred by Cloto first compowned. Loo, her thy problem fully is expowned, At oure metyng as I took on honde,	<i>Atropos (one of the Three Fates); unwind</i> <i>life's; Clotho (another Fate); formed</i> <i>riddle; solved</i> <i>undertook</i>
740	To the lawe that thou most nedes stonde And in al hast of myn hondes deye, But of reson thou can it ought withseye." And so this Spynx, awapyd and amaat,	<i>[According] to; condition; answer</i> <i>haste at my hands</i> <i>Unless; deny</i> <i>amazed; overwhelmed</i>
745	Stood disamayed and dysconsolaat With chier dounecast muet, pale, and ded. And Edippus anon smote of the hed Of this fende stynkyng and unswete,	<i>face; mute, livid; colorless</i> <i>off; head</i> <i>dreadful</i> <i>fully in tranquility</i>
750	And the contré sette holy in quyete, Wherby he hath such a pris ywonne That his fame is every cost yronne Thorgh al the londe that he the monstre hath slawe.	<i>glory won</i> <i>everywhere spread widely</i> <i>slain</i> <i>straightaway</i>
755	And lyneright to Thebes he gan drawe, Wel receyved for his worthynesse, For his manhode and his grete prouesse. And for they segh he was a semly knyght,	<i>because; saw; handsome</i>
760	Wel favoured in every manrys sight, And sawh also Thebes the myghty toun, Not only they but al the regiouin, Weren destitut of a governour,	
765	Ageynst her foon havyng no socour Hem to defend but the quene allon, Among hemself makyn ful gret mon, For heire was non, as bookes specifie,	<i>their foes</i> <i>Them; queen</i> <i>themselves; complaint</i> <i>heir</i>
	The sceptre or crowne forto occupie, For which the lordes all be on assent Withinne the toun set a parlement, Shortly concludyng, if it myghte ben,	<i>in agreement</i> <i>called</i>
	Prudently to trete with the quene,	<i>negotiate</i>

Prima Pars

	Namely they that helde hemself most sage,	wisest
	To condescende be way of mariage	agree
	She to be joyned to this manly knyght,	
770	Passing prudent and famous ek of myght,	also
	Most likly man, as they can discerne,	suitable
	The worthy cyté to kepen and governe.	
	And thorgh counsayl of the lordes alle	
	To her desyre pleynly she is falle	<i>their; she accedes</i>
775	And accorded withoute mor taryng	<i>delay</i>
	That of Thebes Edippus shal be kyng	
	By ful assent — was non that seide nay.	<i>there was no one who</i>
	And tyme set ageyn a certeyn day	
	Among hemself and finaly devysed,	<i>appointed</i>
780	The weddyng was in Thebes solempnyzed	<i>celebrated</i>
	Ful ryally, which nedes most unthryve,	<i>necessarily must fail</i>
	Only for he his moder toke to wyve,	<i>because</i>
	Unwist of both he was of her blode,	<i>Unbeknownst to either of them; blood</i>
	And ignoraunt, shortly, how it stode	
785	That he toforn hadde his fadere slawe,	<i>before; slain</i>
	For which this weddyng was ageyn the lawe.	
	And tofor God is neither feire ne good	<i>before</i>
	Nor acceptable blood to touche blood,	
	Which cause hath ben of gret confusioun	<i>misfortune</i>
790	In many londe and many regyoun,	
	Grounde and roote of unhappy and meschaunce,	<i>source; ill luck</i>
	The fyn concludyng alway with vengeaunce,	<i>end</i>
	As men han seie by cleer experience.	<i>seen</i>
	And holy writ recordeth in sentence	<i>opinion</i>
795	How Herodes falsly in his lyff	<i>Herod</i>
	By violence toke his brother wyf,	<i>brother's</i>
	For she was faire and plesaunt to his sight,	
	And kepte her stille be fors thorgh his myght,	<i>force</i>
	Al be to her he hadde title non;	<i>Although; right</i>
800	And for her sake the holy man Seynt John	
	For his trouth in prison lost his hede.	<i>advise</i>
	Therfor I rede every man take hede,	
	Wherso he be prynce, lorde, or kyng,	
	That he be war t'eschewe such weddyng,	<i>avoid</i>
805	Er that the swerde of vengeaunce hym manace,	<i>Before</i>

The Siege of Thebes

	Lest he lese hap, fortune, and grace,	<i>lose chance</i>
	Takyn ensample in al manere thyngē	
	Of Edyppus in Thebes crowned kyng,	
	Al be that he wroght of ignoraunce,	<i>Although he acted out of</i>
810	Ful derk and blynde of his woful chaunce.	<i>if unknowing; innocently</i>
	And yif unwist he of innocence,	<i>have</i>
	As ye han herde, fil in such offence,	<i>overthrown</i>
	For which he was punished and brought lowe,	<i>deserving who their</i>
	What ar they worthy that her errour knowe	<i>wish</i>
815	And fro the knotte list not to abstene	<i>marriage</i>
	Of such spousale, to God and man unclene?	
	I can not seyn nor mor therof devise.	
	Demeth yourself that prudent ben and wise	<i>Judge; who</i>
	And Edippus hath among in mynde,	<i>keep in mind</i>
820	Of whom the weddyng, lik as ye may fynde,	
	Unhappy was and passing odious,	
	Infortuned and ungracious.	<i>without grace</i>
	I am wery mor therof to write;	
	The hatful processe also to endyte	
825	I passe over, fully of entent.	<i>purposely</i>
	For Ymeneus was not ther present,	<i>Hymenaeus (god of marriage)</i>
	Nor Lucyna list not ther to shyne,	<i>Diana (as goddess of childbirth) wished</i>
	Ne ther was none of the Musys nyne	
	By on accord to make melodye	<i>one</i>
830	(For ther song not be hevenly armonye),	
	Neither Clyo nor Calyopé,	<i>Clio (muse of history); Calliope (mother of Orpheus)</i>
	On of the sustren in nombre thries thre,	<i>One; sisters; three times three</i>
	As they dyde whan Philolegye	<i>Philology</i>
	Ascendid up hegh above the skye	
835	To be weddid, this lady vertuous,	
	Unto hir lord the god Mercurius,	<i>Mercury</i>
	As Marcian ynamed de Capelle	<i>Martianus Capella (see note)</i>
	In his book of weddyng can you telle,	
	Ther concludyng in this mariage	
840	The poete that whilom was so sage	<i>who once</i>
	That this lady, called Sapience,	<i>Wisdom</i>
	Iwedded was unto Eloquence,	
	As it sat wel, by hevenly purveaunce,	<i>Since it was proper</i>
	Hem to be joyned be knot of aliaunce.	<i>Them; bond</i>

Prima Pars

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 845 | But bothe two, sothly, of entent
At the weddyng in Thebes were absent,
That caused after grete adversité.
For fynal eende of that solempnyté
Was sorowe and woo and destruccioun, | <i>truly, with purposeful intention</i> |
| | Utter ruyne of this royal toun.
Ther may no man helpe it nor socoure,
For a tyme in joye thogh they floure. | <i>outcome</i> |
| 850 | ¶ But at this weddyng, platly forto telle,
Was Cerberus, chief porter of helle; | <i>plainly</i> |
| 855 | And Herebus, fader to hatrede,
Was ther present with his hool kynrede,
His wiff also with her browes blake,
And her doghtren sorow forto make,
Hydous-chered and uggly forto see, | <i>gatekeeper</i> |
| | Megeira and Thesiphonee,
Allelecto ek with Labour and Envie,
Drede and Fraude and Fals Trecherie,
Tresoun, Poverté, Indigence, and Nede,
And cruel Deth in his rente wede, | <i>Erebos, father</i> |
| 860 | Wrechednesse, Compleynt, and eke Rage,
Ferful pale Derknesse, croked Age,
Cruel Mars as eny tygre wood,
Brennyng ire of unkynde blood,
Fraternal Hate depe sett the rote, | <i>whole family</i> |
| | ¶ Save only deth that ther nas no bote,
Assuryd othes at the fyn untrewe:
All thise folk weren at this weddyng newe,
To make the towne desolat and bare,
As the story after shal declare. | <i>daughters</i> |
| 865 | But ay in Thebes with his walles stronge
Edyppus regneth many day and longe.
And as myn autour writ in wordys pleyn,
By Jocasta he had sones tweyn, | <i>Dreadful looking</i> |
| | Ethyocles and also Polymyte, | <i>Tisiphone</i> |
| 870 | And, in bokes as sondry clerkes write,
Doughtres two ful goodly on to se,
Of which the ton hight Antygone,
And that other called was Ymeyne, | <i>torn clothes</i> |
| | | <i>mad</i> |
| | | <i>Burning; unnatural</i> |
| | | <i>deeply rooted</i> |
| | | <i>Except for; remedy</i> |
| | | <i>Sworn; end</i> |
| | | <i>explain</i> |
| 875 | But ay in Thebes with his walles stronge
Edyppus regneth many day and longe.
And as myn autour writ in wordys pleyn,
By Jocasta he had sones tweyn, | <i>author</i> |
| | Ethyocles and also Polymyte, | <i>two</i> |
| | | <i>Eteocles; Polynices</i> |
| 880 | And, in bokes as sondry clerkes write,
Doughtres two ful goodly on to se,
Of which the ton hight Antygone,
And that other called was Ymeyne, | <i>various</i> |
| | | <i>the one was named Antigone</i> |
| | | <i>Ismene</i> |

The Siege of Thebes

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 885 | Of her beauté inly sovereyn.
Edypus, ay devoyde of werre and strif,
With Jocasta ladde a mery lyf
Tyl fortune of her iniquyté
Hadde envie of his prosperité. | |
| 890 | For whan he shon most riche in his renoun,
From her wheel she plonged hym adoun
Out of his joye into sodeyn wo,
As she is wonte frowardly to do,
And namely hem that setten her affiaunce
Of erthly trust in her variaunce. | <i>plunged</i>
<i>adversely</i>
<i>them; their faith</i>
<i>her mutability</i> |
| 895 | For whan this kyng passing of gret myght,
Sat with the quene upon a certeyn nyght,
Casuelly whan his folk echon
Out of chambre sodeynly wer gon,
Or he was war Jocasta gan byholde
The carectys of his woundes olde, | <i>By chance; each one</i>
<i>Before</i>
<i>scar</i> |
| 900 | Upon his fete enprented wonder depe,
Turnyng her face brast out forto wepe
So secrely he myght it not espie.
And she anon fille into a fantasie,
Ay on thys thyng musyng mor and more,
And in her bed gan to sighe sore. | <i>burst</i>
<i>notice</i>
<i>immediately; imagining</i>
<i>Always; concentrating</i> |
| 905 | And whan the kyng conceyveth her distresse,
He gan enquere of her hevynesse
Fully the cause and occasioun,
For he wil wite, in conclusioun,
What her eileth and why she ferde so.
“My lorde,” quod she, “withoute wordes mo, | <i>realized</i>
<i>inquire</i>
<i>know</i>
<i>pains; feared</i>
<i>said; in brief</i> |
| 910 | Parcel cause of this sodeyn rage
Is for that I in my tender age
Had a lorde inamed Layus,
Kynge of this toune, a man right vertuous,
Be whom I hadde a sone wonder fair, | <i>A portion; illness</i> |
| 915 | Likly tabene his successour and hair;
But by cause his dyvvynours tolde
At his birthe soothly that he sholde,
Yif he have lyf, be fatal destanyé
Sleen his fader (it may non other be); | <i>named</i>
<i>powerful</i>
<i>By; exceedingly</i>
<i>to be; heir</i>
<i>soothsayers</i>
<i>truly</i> |
| 920 | | |

Prima Pars

	For which the king his fate to eschewe	avoid
	Bad me in hast, as hym thoghte dewe,	<i>Commanded; appropriate</i>
925	To sle the childe and have therof no routh.	<i>pity</i>
	And I anon bad withoute slouth	<i>delay</i>
	To certeyn men, up peyne of jugemente,	<i>on</i>
	To execute the comaundemente	
	Of the king, as I gaf hem in charge.	<i>gave them</i>
930	And forth they gon to a forest large	<i>went</i>
	Adjacent unto this contré,	<i>Belonging</i>
	Percen his fete, and honge hym on a tre,	
	Nat parfourmyng th'execucioun:	<i>carrying out</i>
	(On hym they hadde such compassioun),	<i>such</i>
935	Lefte hym ther, and hom resort ageyn,	<i>returned</i>
	Beyng in doute and in non certeyn	
	At theyre repeire, as they tolden alle,	<i>return</i>
	Of this childe what afterward is falle,	<i>happened</i>
	Save they saide huntys han hym founde,	<i>huntsmen have</i>
940	Which lad hym forth and his feet unbounde	<i>Who conveyed</i>
	But to what coost they coude not declare.	<i>region; say</i>
	Which parcel is of myn evel fare,	<i>state of mind</i>
	Grounde and cause of myn hevy chere,	<i>sad appearance</i>
	Considred ek the woundes that appere	<i>appear</i>
945	Upon youre fete, and woot not what they mene.	<i>do not know</i>
	And on thyng ay is at myn herte grene,	<i>one; fresh</i>
	My lord, allas, but of newe date:	<i>recent</i>
	Kyng Layus slayen was but late	<i>recently</i>
	At a castel nygh by this contré,	<i>close</i>
950	Upon youre comyng into this cité.	<i>At</i>
	Al this yweied and reckned into on	<i>weighed; taken together</i>
	Maketh myn herte hevy as a ston,	
	So that I can counsel non nor rede."	<i>I know; advice</i>
	And with that word the kyng lift up his hede,	
955	And abrayd with sharpe sighes smerte,	<i>cried out; bitter</i>
	And al this thing be ordre gan adverte,	<i>consider</i>
	Ceriously be good avisement,	<i>From beginning to end; deliberation</i>
	And by signes cleer and evident	
	Conceyveth wel, and sore gan repente	<i>Understood</i>
960	It was hymself that Jocasta mente.	
	And whan the quene in manere segh hym pleyn,	<i>saw; lament</i>

The Siege of Thebes

	By her goddes she gan hym to constreyne	urge
	To shewen out the cause of his affray,	disclose; consternation
	And it expowne, and make no delay,	
965	Crop and root shortly, why that he	Branch and root (<i>i.e.</i> , the whole thing)
	Entred first into that contré,	
	Fro when he kam and fro what regiouн.	whence
	But he hir put in dilusioun,	false impression
	As he had done it for the nonys,	for the occasion
970	Til at laste he brak out atonys	at once
	Unto the queene and gan a processe make	narration
	First how he was in the forest take,	taken
	Wounded the feet and so forth everythyng,	
	Of his chershing with Polyboun the kyng,	
975	And hool the cause why he hym forsoke,	all
	And in what wise he the weye toke	
	Toward Thebes as Appollo bad,	
	And of fortune how that he was lad	
	Wher that Spynx kepte the mounteyn;	
980	And how that he slough also in certeyn	slew
	Kyng Layus at the castel gate,	
	Towardes nyght whan it was ful late;	
	And how to Thebes that he gan hym spedē	
	To fynden oute the stok of his kynrede:	family
985	Which unto hym gan to wexe couth;	began to be known
	For by processe of his grene youth	the tale of
	He fonde out wel, be reknyng of his lif,	
	That she was both his moder and his wif.	
	So that al nyght and suing on the morow	following on until morning
990	Atwene hem two gan a newe sorowe,	them
	Which unto me were tedious to telle;	
	For therupon, yif I shulde dwelle,	if
	A long space it wolde occupie.	
995	But ye may reden in a tragedye	
	Of moral Senyk fully his endyngē,	Seneca (see note to line 994)
	His dool, his meschief, and his compleynyng,	grief; sorrow; lamentation
	How with sorow and unweldy age	decrepit
	This Edippus fille into dotage,	fell
	Lost his wit and his worldly delit,	pleasure
1000	And how his sones had hym in despit,	sons; contempt

Prima Pars

	And of disdeyn tok of hym no kepe, And bookes seyn his eyen out he wepe. And as myn auctour liketh to devise, As his sones rebuke hym and dispise,	<i>out of scorn; care tell how; eyes author; tell mistreat</i>
1005	Upon a day in a certeyn place Out of his hede his eyen he gan race And cast at hem, he can non other bote; And of malice they trad hem under fote, Fully devoide both of love and drede.	<i>eyes; tear out them; knows; relief trod them; foot awe</i>
1010	And whan Edippus for meschier was thus dede, Withinne a pytte made in the erthe lowe Of cruelté his sones han hym throwe, Wers than serpent or eny tigre wood. Of cursid stok cometh unkynde blood,	<i>Into, pit have mad unnatural</i>
1015	As in story ye may rede her toforn, Al be the roos grow out of a thorn. Thus of Edippus, whan he was blynd and old, The wrecched ende I ha you pleynly told.	<i>Although; rose have advise</i>
	For which shortly to man and child I rede To be wel war and to taken hede	
	Of kyndely right and of conscience To do honour and dieu reverence	<i>natural due</i>
	To fader and moder of what estat thei be, Or certeyn ellis they shul nevere the.	<i>father; mother; whatever social rank otherwise; thrive</i>
1025	For who that is not to hem debonayr In spech, in port for to trete hem fair, Hem to obeye in honesté and drede, And to cherissh of what they han nede, I dar afferme — exceptyng non astat —	<i>courteous behavior</i>
1030	That he shall first be infortunat In alle his werk both on see and lond, And of what thyng that he take on hond Fortune froward to hym and contrayre, Wayst of his good, pleynly and appaire,	<i>undertake adverse</i>
1035	Fynde plenté of contek, werre, and striff, Unhappy ende and shortnesse of liff, And gracelees of what he hath at do, Hatrede of God and of man also. Therfor no man be herof rekles,	<i>Destruction; property; weakened dissension ill-fortuned</i>

The Siege of Thebes

- 1040 But make youre myrour of Ethiocles
 And his brother called Polomyte,
 Which in such thyng gretlich were to wite,
 As ye shal here of hem how it fil. blame
happened
 And whan we ben descendid doune this hil
 1045 And ypassed her the lowe vale, passed
 I shal begynne the remnant of my tale.

**Explicit Prima Pars istius codicilli.
 Incipit Secunda Pars Eiusdem.**

Secunda Pars.

- Passed the throp of Bowtoun on the Ble,
 By my chilyndre I gan anon to se
 Thorgh the sonne that ful cler gan shyne
 1050 Of the clok that it drogh to nyne
 And saugh also the silver dropes shene
 Of the dewe, lich peerlys on the grene,
 Vapoured up into the eire alofte,
 Whan Zephyrus with his blowing softe
 1055 The wedere made lusty, smoth, and feir,
 And right attempre was the hoolsom eir —
 The same hour all the hoole route
 Of the pylgrymes rydying round aboute,
 In my tale whan I gan precede,
 1060 Rehercying forth as it was in dede,
 Whan Edippus buried was and grave,
 How his sones the kyngdam for to have
 Among hemself be ful mortal hate
 For the crowne gonue to debate
 1065 Which of hem justly shal succede
 And the sceptre of the toune possede,
 Advertyng nought neither to right ne wronge
 But eche of hem to make her partie stronge
 And his querele proudly to sustene:
 1070 From whoos hertes was devoyded clene
 Of brotherhode the faithful alliaunce.
 Fals covetise so made hem at distaunce,
- village; Boughton under Blean*
portable sundial; immediately
approached
bright
pearls
air
pleasant
very mild; healthful air
whole group
Recounting
interred
themselves by murderous hatred
contend
possess
Neither taking heed of
them; their side
claim
fully lacking

Secunda Pars

- Fully worchyng into destruccioun
And ruyne of this noble toun.
- 1075 So hoote brente the hatred and envie
Of bothe two thorgh pompous surquedye
That nowther wold pleynly in a poynt
Other forbern; they stod in such disjoynete
How as they hadde of berthe be foreyns,
1080 Tyl of the toune the noble citezeyns,
Knyghtes, barounes with many worthi lord,
Shope a way to mak hem of accord,
And to set hem in quyete and in pees.
But for his part this Ethiocles
1085 Allegge gan that he was first yborn,
For which he ought of resoun go toforn
In the cité to be crowned kyng,
Sith be lawe ther was no lettyng.
For unto hym longeth the herytage
1090 Be dissent and be title of age.
But Polymyte of ful hegh disdeyn
Al opynly gan replie ageyn
And for his part seide, in special,
Reson was non that he shuld have alle
1095 Regaly and domynacioun
And the lordship hooly of the toun,
And he right nought, out of the cyté
But lyve in exile and in poverté,
Ful concludyng, withoute feer and dred,
1100 Rather than suffre that he wil be ded.
And thus, allas, thorgh her envious strif,
At the ende everich loste his lif,
At gret mischief as ye shal after here.
But thylke tyme the lordes al yfere
1105 Ful bysily did her dyligence,
By gret avis and ful high prudence,
To setten hem in quyete and in reste,
Conseylyng hem pleynly for the beste,
To leve her strif of wisdam and resoun
1110 And condescende to some conclusioun
Which to both myghte most availe;
- arrogant pride*
neither
tolerate; conflict
As though; from birth been strangers
- Devised; them*
- Claimed*
first
- Since; obstacle*
belonged; inheritance
By; right
- answered*
- Royal power; dominion*
completely
nothing at all
- contentious*
each one
sorrow; hear
same; together
- With much thought*
them
- set aside; out of*
resolution
benefit

The Siege of Thebes

- That fynaly thorgh her governaile,
 The lordes alle beyng tho present,
 They han hem broght to be of on assent,
 Of on hert as brother unto brother,
 Everich of hem to regnen after other,
 Yeer be yeer as it cam abouthe,
 So that the ton shal absent hym oute
 Fully that yeer and hymsilven guye
 Be his manhode and his chyvalrye,
 Haunte hymself in dedys marcial,
 Whil his brother in his see royal
 Holdeth his sceptre the cité to governe;
 And whan the yeer his cours hath ronne yerne
 And is come out, he shal ha repair
 To regne in Thebes lik as lord and hair,
 There to receyve fully his dignyté,
 Whil the tother voideth the cité,
 Paciently taking his aventure
 To he ageyn his honure may recure.
 Thus entrechaunge every yere they shal:
 The ton ascendeth; that other hath a fal.
 They most obeye of hert and take it wel,
 Lich as the tourn resorteth of the whel.
 For this was hool the composiciooun
 Atwene the bretheren and convenciooun,
 Ful knet up be gret avisement,
 Tofor the goddys be oth of sacrament,
 Never after to groche ne to varye
 But acomplisshen shortly and not tarye,
 Lich as th'acord enrolled in the toune,
 From poynt to poynt made menciouun.
 But alderfirst be reson of his age,
 Ethyocles hadde th'avaantage
 To regne aforn and to were a croune,
 Polymyte hym hastyng out of toune
 Duryng that yeer (it may non other be),
 Whil his brother sat in his royal see
 Ful richely upon fortunes wheel;
 And rode hym forth armed bright in stèle,
- then
in agreement
- Each one
- the one; withdraw
guide
- occupy; martial exploits
seat
- its; quickly
return
- heir
honor
- the other leaves
- Until; recover
exchange (change places)
- turning returns
whole; agreement
- Between
concluded; deliberation
- Before
afterwards to complain
- written in a roll
- first of all
- before; wear
hastening
- Fortune's

Secunda Pars

- This Polymyte, sothly as I rede,
Hymsilf allone on a ryal stede,
Withoute guyde al the longe day,
Beyng aferd to kepe the heghe way,
1155 In his herte havyng suspeciou
To his brother of malice and tresoun,
Lest he pursued thorgh fals unkynd blood
To have hym ded for covetise of good,
That he allon myght ha possessioun
1160 Duryng his lif fully of the toun.
For which in hast, havyng no felawe,
Polymyte aside gan hym drawe
By a forest joynyng to the see,
Knowyng right nougħt the syyt of the contré,
1165 Ful of hilles and of hegh mounteyns,
Craggy roches and but fewe playns,
Wonder dredful and lothsom of passage,
And therwithal ful of beestis rage,
Holdyng his way of herte no thyng light,
1170 Maat and wery to it drowe to nyght.
And al the day beholdyng enviroun,
He neyther saugh castel, toure, ne toun,
The whiche thing greved hym ful sore.
And sodeynly the se began to rore,
1175 Wynde and tempest hidously t'arise.
The reyn doune bete in ful grisly wise,
That man and beest therof were adrad
And negh for fer gan to wexe mad,
As it semp̄e by the woeful sownes
1180 Of tygres, beres, boores and lyounes,
Which for refut hemself forto save
Everich in hast drogh unto his cave.
But Polymyte in this tempest huge,
Allas the whil, fyndeth no refuge,
1185 Nor hym to schrowde saugh nowher no socour
Til it was passed almost mydnyght hour
A large space that the sterres clere,
The clowdes voyde, in hevene did appere,
So that this knyght out of the forest large
- truly
royal stallion*
- take; main road*
- acted; unnatural*
- companion
approach*
- region*
- unpleasant
savage*
- Continuing on; not at all cheerful*
- Tired; until*
- sea; roar*
- beat; ghastly manner*
- terrified*
- grow insane*
- seemed; sounds*
- refuge*
- Every one; drew*
- shelter*
- having left*

The Siege of Thebes

	Gan approchen to the londe of Arge, Seyng a palays myghty of beeldyng, Of which Adrastus called was the kyng, A manly man riche and wonder sage And ronne was somdel into age,	Argos <i>construction</i>
1195	Born of the ile which called is Chysoun, And whylom sone of the kyng Chaloun. And for his witt, in story as is kouth, He chosen was in his tendre youth Of alle Arge to be crowned kyng,	<i>powerful; wise</i> <i>advanced</i>
1200	Chief of alle Grece by record of wryting, Not be dissent nor successiouun But al only of fre elecciouun To holde of Arge the sceptre in his hond, As most worthy of alle Grekes lond,	<i>long ago; Talaus</i> <i>skill; history; known</i>
1205	Loved and drad for wisdam and justice. And as the story pleynly can devise, This worthy kyng hadde doghtres two, Passyng fair and right good also. It were to longe her beauté to discryve.	<i>by descent</i>
1210	And the eldest called was Argive, Deyfyle ynamed the seconde.	Argia
	And Adrastus, lich as it is founde, This worthy kyng hadde sone non, To succede after he be gon,	Deiphile
1215	For which he was duryng al his lyff Trist in hert and passingly pensif. But hool his trust and his hope stod Be aliaunce of some worthy blood Brought inne by mene of his doghtres tweyn,	<i>Sad; melancholic</i> <i>whole</i>
1220	That he shal be releasd of his peyne Thorgh recomfort of some hie mariage.	<i>Join; means</i>
	And soothly yet ful high in his corage He troubled was be occasion Of a sweven and a vision	<i>remedy; noble</i> <i>truly; heart</i>
1225	Shewed to hym upon a certeyn nyght. For as hym thoght in his inward sight Whyl he slept, by cleer inspecciouun, A wylde boor and a fers lyoun	<i>dream</i> <i>imagination</i>

Secunda Pars

	Possede shal, thise bestes in her rage,	<i>Possess</i>
1230	His doghtres two be bond of mariage In shorte tyme within a certeyn day, Which broght his herte in ful grete affray.	<i>alarm</i>
	But thing in soth that destiné hath shape Her in this world ful hard is to eskape,	<i>in truth</i>
1235	Eke merveylous a man t'eschewe his faate. And Polymyte, of whom I spak late, With the tempest bete and al bereyned,	<i>Also; avoid recently</i>
	Be grace only the cité hath atteyned, Wher Adrastus ful statly of degré	<i>beaten; drenched with rain</i>
1240	Thilke tyme helde his royal see. The troublly nyght, myrk and ful obscure,	<i>At that time; seat dim; dark</i>
	Hath brought this knyght only be aventure Thorgh the cité, enclosed with a wal,	<i>by chance</i>
	Unto the paleys chief and principal,	
1245	Wher as the kynge in his chambre alofte Lay in his bed and slepte wonder softe.	
	Eke alle his folk hadde her chambres take,	<i>Also; their</i>
	Lik as Fortune peraunter hadde shape,	<i>by chance</i>
	The silfe tyme because it was so late;	<i>same</i>
1250	And casuelly no porter at the gate, As it had be right for the nonys.	<i>by chance</i>
	And in a porche bilt of square stonyis,	<i>for the occasion</i>
	Ful myghtely enarched envyroun,	
	Wher the domys and plees of the toun	<i>arched over all around judgments; pleas</i>
1255	Weren execut and lawes of the kyng, And ther this knyght, without mor taryng,	
	Wery and maat from his stede alight,	<i>delay</i>
	Hangynge the rene in al the hast he myght	<i>exhausted</i>
	Upon his arme surer hym to kepe,	<i>Tying; rein; haste</i>
1260	And leyde hym doune and gan anon to slepe, As hym sempte that tyme for the beste.	
	And whil that he lay thus forto reste,	<i>immediately</i>
	Of aventure ther cam a knyght ryding,	<i>it seemed to him</i>
	The worthiest in this world lyvyn,	
1265	Curteys, lowly, and right vertuous, As seith myn autour, called Tidyus,	<i>humble; powerful</i>
	Eurous in armes and manly in werkyn,	<i>author; Tydeus Prosperous; deeds</i>

The Siege of Thebes

	Of his byrthe sone unto the kyng Of Calydonye, a londe of gret renoun.	By <i>Calydon</i>
1270	And he, allas, out of that regiou Exiled was for he his brother sclowe, As Stace of Thebes writ the manere howe, Al be that he to hym no malys mente. For on a day, as they on huntyng wente	<i>because; slew</i> <i>Statius</i> <i>Although; hatred</i>
1275	In a forest for herte and for hynde, So as he stod under a grene lynde And casuelly lete his arow slippe, He slough his broder called Menalippe; Thorgh mortal sort his honde was begyled,	<i>bucks; hinds</i> <i>lime tree</i> <i>accidentally</i> <i>slew; Menalippe</i> <i>deadly chance; deceived</i>
1280	For which he was banished and exiled, As the lawe narowe sette his charge. And for this caas he cam first to Arge, Into the porche wher Polymyte slepe, Of aventure ere he toke eny kepe,	<i>strictly; punishment</i> <i>event</i>
1285	The same nyght hidously beseyn With the tempest of thonder wynde and reyn; And filt also anoy and gret damage Thorgh the forest holding his passage, As Polymyte hadde do toforn,	<i>By chance before; notice</i> <i>in a dreadful state</i> <i>[he] felt; discomfort</i>
1290	In peryl ofte likly to be lorn, With beestes rage set on every side, Til of grace withouten eny guyde He rode thorgh Arge the grete myghty toun, Stregh to the paleys and the chief dongoun,	<i>did before</i> <i>lost</i> <i>savage</i> <i>Until by chance</i>
1295	Lich as I tolde wher Polymyte lay; And at his comyng made a gret affray, For he was blynde thorgh derknesse of the nyght And hym to gwy he ne fonde no light	<i>disturbance</i> <i>guide</i>
	Whan he cam inne of priket nor of torche,	<i>candle</i>
1300	Til he unwarly entered the porche And wold han take ther his herbygage. But Polymyte stert up in a rage, Sodeynly awaked as I rede,	<i>unawares</i> <i>lodging</i> <i>started</i>
	With the nyngie of his proude stede.	<i>awakened; imagine</i>
1305	And first of al, whan that he byhelde A knyght yarmed upon his brest a shelde	<i>neighing</i> <i>armed with</i>

Secunda Pars

	And gan the maner of his aray adverte,	<i>dress notice</i>
	Of verrey ire upon his hors he sterte,	<i>true; mounted</i>
	And cruelly gan tydinges enquere	<i>fiercely; news ask</i>
1310	Whennys he cam or what he dede there, And bad in hast his answer to devise.	<i>Whence deliver</i>
	And Tydeus, in ful humble wise, Answerd ageyn of verrey gentillesse	
	And seid in soth that of hegh distresse,	<i>great trouble</i>
1315	Of the tempest and the derke nyght, He dryven was lich an erraunt knyght,	
	Of nede only and necessité	<i>wandering</i>
	And high constreyn of his adversité, To take loggyng wher so that he myght,	<i>By</i>
1320	And in that courte therfor he alight Without mor, thenkyng non outrage	
	Nor to no wight moving ne damage.	<i>trespass</i>
	Than Polomyte of malys and hegh pride	<i>provoking</i>
	Tolde hym shortly he shuld not abide	<i>Then; hatred</i>
1325	Nor logge ther, thogh he had it sworn. “For I,” quod he, “toke it up toforn	<i>remain</i>
	And wil it kepe during al this nyght, I seie thee platly maugré al thy myght.”	<i>even if</i>
	Quod Tydeus, “That is no curtesie	<i>before</i>
1330	Me to devoyde but rather vileyne, Yif ye take hede that seme a gentil knyght.	<i>plainly despite</i>
	And I suppose ye han no title of right	
	To this loggyng be way of heritage	<i>cast out</i>
	More than have I, for alle youre felle rage.	<i>If; notice who</i>
1335	And, pardé, yit it shal be no desese, Til tomorrowwethogh ye do me ese,	<i>have; claim</i>
	Of gentillesse only with youre leve;	<i>inheritance</i>
	To suffre me, it shal litil greve.”	<i>bitter</i>
	But ay the more Tydeus spak faire,	<i>By God; inconvenience</i>
1340	Polomyte was foward and contrayre And shortly seide it geyneth not to stryve,	<i>if you assist me</i>
	That of force he shal devoide blyve,	<i>[Out] of; permission</i>
	Or uttrely atwen hem bothe two	<i>accommodate</i>
	This thyng to trie he most have ado.	
1345	And Tydeus, seyng no bettre mene,	<i>hostile</i>
		<i>debate</i>
		<i>withdraw quickly</i>
		<i>them</i>
		<i>settle (by arms); undertake</i>
		<i>seeing</i>

The Siege of Thebes

	Ful lik a knyght in steel yarmed clene,	<i>armed</i>
	Without abood faste gan hym spedē	<i>delay</i>
	Wonder lyvely forto take his stede;	
	And thus thies knyghtes, pompous and ellat,	<i>proud</i>
1350	For litil cause fillen at debat.	<i>fell in strife</i>
	And as they ranne togider on horsbak,	
☞	Everich on other first his spere brak.	<i>Each one</i>
	And after that, ful surquedous of pride,	<i>arrogant</i>
	With sharpe swerdes they togyder ryde	
1355	Ful yrously thise myghty champiouns,	<i>angrily</i>
	In her fury lik tygres or lyouns.	
	And as they hurtle that all the paleis shoke,	<i>collide; shook</i>
	Kyng Adrastus out of his slep awoke,	
	And made in hast his chamberleynes calle	
1360	And thorgh the courte his worthy knyghtes alle,	
	Comaundyng hem to descende and se	
	And reporte what it myghe be,	
	This wonder noyse in his courte be nyght.	
	And whan they saugh two straunge knyghtes fight	
1365	In platys bright and in thikke male,	<i>armor plate; chain mail</i>
	Withoute juge, they hadde grete mervale	<i>wonder</i>
	And disamayed of this unkouth thing,	<i>were astonished; strange</i>
	As they fond tolde to the kyng.	<i>tried to tell</i>
	And Adrastus for derknesse of the nyght,	
1370	From his chambre with many torche light	
	Into the courte is discended doun,	
	All his meyné stondyng envyroun,	<i>retinue; around</i>
	Of thytes knyghtes having ful gret wonder.	
	And of manhode he put hem first asonder,	<i>courage; them apart</i>
1375	Hem comaundyng lich a gentil kyng,	
	To leven her strif and sesen of fighting;	<i>end their; cease</i>
	And entred inne with a knyghtly loke;	<i>bearing</i>
	And first fro hem her swerdes both he took,	
	Affermyng ek, as to his fantasie,	<i>opinion</i>
1380	It was a rage and a gret folye	
	So wilfully her lyves to juparte,	<i>risk</i>
	Withoute juge her querel to departe	<i>settle</i>
	And specialy in the derke nyght	
	Whan neither myght of other han no sight,	

Secunda Pars

1385	Charching hem upon peyne of her lif To dissever and styntyn of her strif. And Tydeus in al the hast he myght, Ful humbly from his stede alight, And right mekely with cheer and contenance	<i>Charging them separate; cease</i>
1390	Put hym hooly in the governance Of Adrastus in al maner thing. And Polymyte mad ek no taryng To light also and wolde not withsey The kyngges biddyg lowly to obey,	<i>dismount; oppose humbly</i>
1395	So as hym ought with diew reverence. And as thei stood both in his presence, He gan enquere first of her estaat, The cause also why they weren at debat, Of her cuntries sothly and her age;	<i>ask about; social rank in conflict homelands</i>
1400	He axed ek touching her lynage, Be discent of what stok thei were born. And Tydeus his answer gaf toforn; Tolde pleynly and made no lesyng, How that he was sone to the kyng	<i>lineage gave first lie</i>
1405	Of Caledoyn and rightful heir therto; And of his exile the soth he told also, As ye han herde in the storye rad. And Polymyte, with cheer and face sad, Unto the kyng touching his contré	<i>truth read serious</i>
1410	Seyde he was born in Thebes the cité, And Jocasta, the grete famous quene, His moder was withouten eny wene. But of his fader whilom kyng and lord, For verray shame he spak not a word,	<i>doubt once true</i>
1415	Only for he (yif I shal not feyne) His fader was and brother bothe tweyne: The which, in soth, he was ful loth to telle. And eke the kyng wold hym not compelle Of gentillesse but bad, withoute blame,	<i>if; dissemble truth; reluctant</i>
1420	Of his birth forto have no shame; For hool the caas and maner every dell Touchyng his kynne he knewe the ground ful wel, Lich as it was, by ful clier report.	<i>Out of nobility; ordered; reproof part Concerning; family</i>

The Siege of Thebes

	Enforsyng hym forto do confort	<i>Striving</i>
1425	With all his myght and his bysy peyne, This manly kyng to the knyghtes tweyne; And to hem seide, aforn hym as they stood, He wiste wel that of ful worthy blood They were dyscended, touchyng ther kynrede;	<i>before noble</i>
1430	And made in hast his officeres lede The straunge knyghtes beyng at debat Thorgh his paleys to chambres of estat, Eche by hymself forto take his ese.	<i>high rank</i>
1435	And everything, in soth, that myght hem plesse, Was offred hem lich to her estates. And whan they weren disarmed of her platis,	<i>armor</i>
	Cusshewes, greves, and her sabatons, <i>leg armor (see note)</i> , <i>shin armor</i> ; <i>armored shoes</i>	
	Her harneys voyded and her habergons, <i>set of armor taken off</i> ; <i>coat of mail</i>	
	Tweyne mantels unto hem wer broght,	
1440	Frett with peerle and riche stony, wrought Of cloth of golde and velvyt cremysyn, Ful richely furred with ermyn, To wrap hem inne ageyn the colde morowe,	<i>Adorned; pearls</i>
	After the rage of her nyghtes sorowe,	<i>velvet crimson</i>
1445	To take her reste to the sonne arise.	<i>until</i>
	And than the kyng in ful prudent wise	<i>then</i>
	First of alle was not rekkeles	<i>negligent</i>
	The knyghtes hertes for to sett in pees,	
	That ever after, I dar afferme it wel,	
1450	Eche was to other trew as eny stele During her lif both in word and dede Under a knotte bounde of brotherede.	<i>sworn bond; brotherhood</i>
	And Adrastus the worthy kyng famous	
	A feeste made riche and plentevous	<i>plentiful</i>
1455	To thise knyghtes, hymself therat present.	
	And after mete ful goodly he hath sent,	
	This noble kyng, for his doghters dere	
	Of gentyllesse forto make chere	
	To the knyghtes come fro so ferre.	
1460	And lik in soth as Lucyfer the sterre Gladeth the morow at his uprysing, So thoo ladies at her incomyng,	<i>Lucifer (the sun; see note)</i>
		<i>those; arrival</i>

Secunda Pars

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| | With the stremes of her eyen clere, | <i>eyes bright</i> |
| | Goodly apport, and wommanly manere, | <i>bearing</i> |
| 1465 | Contenaunce and excellent faynesse, | |
| | To alle the court broghten in gladnesse. | |
| | For the frechnesse of her hevenly cheres | <i>brightness; appearance</i> |
| | So agreeable was to the straungers | |
| | At her entré that in special | |
| 1470 | Hem thought it lik a thynge celestial, | |
| | Enhastynge hem in ful knyghtly wise | <i>Hastening</i> |
| | Ageynes hem goodly to arise. | |
| | And as they mette with humble contenaunce, | |
| | Ful konyngly did her observaunce, | <i>politely</i> |
| 1475 | Hem conveying to her sitting place. | |
| | But sothly I ha leyser non nor space | <i>have</i> |
| | To reherce and put in remembraunce | <i>tell</i> |
| | Hooly the maner of her daliaunce. | |
| | It were to longe for you to abide. | <i>too</i> |
| 1480 | But wel I woot that the god Cupide, | <i>know</i> |
| | By influence of his myghty hond | |
| | And the fervence of his firy brond, | <i>torch</i> |
| | Her metyng first fortuned hath so wel | <i>favored</i> |
| | That his arowes of gold and not of stiel | |
| 1485 | Iperced han the knyghtes hertes tweyn | <i>Pierced</i> |
| | Thorgh the brest with such a lusty peyn | |
| | That ther abood sharpe as spere or launce, | <i>remained</i> |
| | Depe yficed the poynt of remembraunce, | <i>fixed</i> |
| | Which may not lightly raced ben away. | <i>pulled out</i> |
| 1490 | And thus in joye they dryve forth the day | |
| | In play and revel for the knyghtes sake. | |
| | And towardes nyght they her chambres take | <i>retire</i> |
| | At dieu tyme, as her fader bad; | <i>proper</i> |
| | And on her way the knyghtes han hem lad | |
| 1495 | Reverently up be many staire; | |
| | Takynge lieve gan anon repaire | |
| | To her logging in a ful statly toure, | <i>lodging; splendid</i> |
| | Assigned hem be the harberioure. | <i>knight who arranges lodging for guests</i> |
| | And after spices pleynly and the wyn | <i>spices (or spice cakes; see note)</i> |
| 1500 | In coppes grete wroght of gold ful fyn, | |
| | Withoutute taryng to bed streght they gon. | |

The Siege of Thebes

	Touchyng herreste, wher thei slepte or non,	<i>whether</i>
	Demeth ye lovers that in such maner thing	<i>who</i>
	B'experience han fully knowlechygng,	
1505	For it is nat declared in my boke.	<i>recorded</i>
	But as I fynde, the kyng al nyght woke,	
	Thoghtful in herte, the story specifies,	
	Musing sore and ful of fantasies,	<i>speculation</i>
	First adverteng the grete worthynesse	<i>considering</i>
1510	Of this knyghtes and the semlynesse,	
	Her lusty youth, her force and her manhode,	
	And how thei weren ycome of royal blode.	
	Al this he ganne to revolve aboute,	
	Ay in his herte havyng a maner doute,	
1515	Atwene two hangyng in balaunce	
	Where he shulde maken an aliaunce	
	Atwene his doghtren and the knyghtes tweyn.	
	For on thyng ay his herte gan constreyn,	<i>one; distress</i>
	The remembrance of his avisoun,	
1520	Of which toforn I made mencioune,	<i>before</i>
	Touchyng the lyon and the wilde boor	
	(It nedeth nat to reherce it mor),	<i>repeat</i>
	Casting alway in his fantasie,	
	What it myghte clearly signyfie,	
1525	This dirke dreme; this was hid and cloos.	<i>obscure dream; hidden; enclosed</i>
	But on the morowe Adrastus up aroos,	
	And to the temple the righte way he took,	
	And gan preie devoutly on his book	
	To the goddes his dreme to specefie.	<i>clarify</i>
1530	And they hym bad homward forto hye	<i>hasten</i>
	And to beholde in the knyghtes sheldys	<i>shields</i>
	The felle beestys peynted in the feedlys,	<i>fierce; heraldic fields (see note)</i>
	Which shal to hym, be cleer inspeccioun,	
	Ful pleynly make declaracioun	<i>explanation</i>
1535	Of his dreme which he hadde in the nyght.	
	And Adrastus enhasted hym ful right	
	In her sheldes wisly to beholde,	
	Wher that he saugh, as the goddes tolde,	<i>saw</i>
	In the sheldes hangyng upon hokys	<i>hooks</i>
1540	The beestes rage with her mortal lokys.	<i>ferocious looks</i>

Secunda Pars

	And to purpos, lik as writ Bochas, Polomyte ful streght embraced was In the hyde of a feerce lyoun; And Tydeus aboven his haberiou	<i>regarding this matter; Boccaccio covered</i>
1545	A gypon hadde hidous sharpe and hoor, Wroght of the bristels of a wylde boor. The whiche beestis, as the story lerys, Wer wroght and bete upon her banerys, Displaied brood whan they shulde fight.	<i>mail jacket short doublet; grey bristles teaches embossed; banners Unfurled</i>
1550	Wheroft the kyng whan he hadde a sight Att hys reperir in herte was ful glad, And with a face ful demur and sad With his lordes, that he about hym hadde, To the temple he thys knyghtes ladde.	<i>return serious these</i>
1555	And whan they hadde with all circumstaunces Of rytys olde don her observaunces, Hom to the court they resort ageyn. And in an halle riche and wel beseyn,	<i>splendid; furnished generous</i>
1560	This worthy kyng of herte lyberal Made a feeste solempne and royal, Which in deyntys surly dyd excelle. But it were veyn every cours to telle, Her straunge sewes and her sotyltees,	<i>delicacies surely useless exotic sauces; ornamental desserts according to their rank</i>
1565	Ne how they sat lik to her degrees; For lak of tyme I lat it overslyde. And after mete Adrastus toke asyde The knyghtes two and lik a prudent man In sykré wise thus his tale he gan.	<i>pass by meal private</i>
1570	“Sirs,” quod he, “I ne doute it nought That it is fressh and grene ay in your thought How that first by goddyns ordynaunce, And after next thorgh fatys purveaunce, How that ye weren brought into this lond	<i>new always foresight</i>
1575	Bothe tweyn but now this laste nyght; Of whoos comyng I am ful glad and light First in myself, shortly to expresse, Whan I considre and se the liklynesse Of your personys with the circumstancys	<i>only handsomeness</i>

The Siege of Thebes

- 1580 And hool the maner of your governancys,
 Seyng ful wel — wherto shuld I feyne — *why; dissemble*
 Ye likly be herafter to atteyn
 To grete estat and habundaunce of good
 Thorgh youre birth and your royal blood:
- 1585 Ye may not fayle but ye have wrong, *unless*
 For ye are both manly and right strong.
 And forto sette youre hertes mor at reste
 My purpoos is I hope for the beste,
 So that in you be no variance *disagreement*
- 1590 To make a knotte as be allyaunce,
 Atwixe yow and my doghtres two,
 Yif youre hertes accorde wel therto. *If*
 And for I am fully in dyspeyr
 To succede for to han an heir,
despair
- 1595 Therfor ye shal han possessioun
 Duryng my lyf of half this regiou
 Forwith in hond and hool after my day. *In advance; entirely; death*
 Ther is no man that therto shal sey nay.
 And sothly after whan that I am grave,
- 1600 Eche of yow shal his party have *buried portion*
 Of this kyngdam, as I have provided;
 This to seyn, it shal be devyded
 Atwen yow two, everich to be crowned,
 Youre pourparties be equyté compowned
- 1605 So egally in every mannys sight *shares; settled*
 That ech of yow rejoysse shal his ryght.
 And by your wit ye shul the lond amend,
 And of manhode knyghtly it diffend
 Ageyn oure enmyes and oure mortal fon. *foes*
- 1610 And for the daies passed ben and gon
 Of my desyres and my lusty youth,
 I am ful set forto make kouth *prepared; known*
 That ye shal han lik myn opynyoun
 The governaunce of this regiou. *by my decree*
- 1615 To this entente me semeth for the beste,
 Ye to governe and I to lyve in reste,
 Fully to folowe the lust of my desyris,
 Hunte and hauke in wodes and ryverys *hawk*

Secunda Pars

	Whansoever I ha therto plesaunce,	have
1620	And for to han non other attendance	obligation
	Unto nothing but unto myn ese.	leisure
	For which shortly yif it agre and plese	if; be agreeable
	That I have seid to you that be so wis	What; who
	And be according unto youre avis,	judgment
1625	Delaith not but in wordes pleyn	
	What yow semeth gif answerē ageyn."	
	And whan Adrastus hadde his tale fyned,	give; back
	Tydeus with hed ful lowe enclyned,	speech ended
	As he that was a verray gentyl knyght,	bowed
1630	With al his power and his fulle myght	
	Ful humblye thanked he the kyng	
	Touchyng his profre of so high a thyng	offer
	And for his parte seide he wolde assente	agree
	Fully of herte, nevere to repente,	
1635	To all that ever the kyng hath sayd.	
	And Polymyte was also wel apayd,	content
	In the story as it is comprehendid.	
	And so they ben bothe condescendyd	agreed
	The kyngges wille to fulfille in dede	
1640	From poynt to poynt and therupon procede,	
	Whersoever that they wynne or lese.	Whether; gain; lose
	And Tydeus made his brother chese,	choose
	Of gentillesse and of curtesye,	
	Which that was most to his fantasye	fancy
1645	Of the sustren for to han to wive.	
	And he in soth chosen hath Argive,	
	Which eldest was ful wommanly to se.	
	And Tydeus tok Deyphylee,	
	Of her beauté most sovereyn excellent.	
1650	And Adrastus thorghoute his lond hath sent	
	For his lordes and his baronage	
	To be present at the mariage	
	Of the knyttes and make no lettyng.	knights; delay
	And they echon cam at his bidding	
1655	In goodly wyse meke and ful benygne	
	Ageyn the day that he dide assigne.	
	And thyder cam ful many lusty knyght	

The Siege of Thebes

	Ful wel beseyn and many lady bright From every coost and many frecessh sqwyer,	<i>well appointed region; squire</i>
1660	The story seith, and many comunere, To byholde the grete ryalté And the maner of thys solempnyté. But to telle all the circumstances Of justes, revel, and the dyvers daunces,	<i>[a] commoner</i>
		<i>jousts</i>
1665	The feestes riche, and the gyftes grete, The prývē sighes and the fervent hete Of lovys folk brennyng as the glede, And devyses of many sondry wede, The touches stole and th'amerous lookes	<i>secret; heat burning; coal</i>
		<i>heraldic symbols; clothes</i>
1670	By sotyl craft leyd doun lyne and hokes The jalous folk to traysshēn and begyle In their awayt with many sondry wile — Al this in soth descriyven I ne can.	<i>stolen hooks amorous; betray snare truth describe</i>
	But wel wote I the newe fame ran	<i>know; rumor spread widely</i>
1675	This menewhil with ful swift passage Unto Thebes of this mariage. And by report trewe and not yfeyned, The sounē therof the eeres hath atteyned,	<i>made up sound; ears</i>
	Myn auctour writ, of Ethyocles,	
1680	Touchyng th'onour and the gret encres Of Polymyte heghly magnyfied, And how that he newly was allied With Adrastus in the londe of Arge.	
	The whiche thyng he gretly gan to charge,	<i>contemplate</i>
1685	Dredyng inly that this mariage Shal after turne unto his damage, Sore musyng and castyng up and doun The grete power and the hegh renoun	
	Of Adrastus, the which of Grekes land	<i>pondering</i>
1690	Hadde al the power soget to his hand, Lest that he for Polymytes sak Wold upon hym a newe werre make,	<i>subject sake</i>
	But yif that he, lik the convencioun, At tyme sette delyvered the toun	<i>Unless; following the agreement</i>
1695	To his broder by bond of oth besworn, Be covauntes assured her toforn,	<i>here before</i>

Secunda Pars

- Yif ye remembre late as I you told:
 Which he was nat in purpos forto hold,
 But from his heste caste forto varye,
 1700 And therupon list no lenger tarye
 Lich his desire to shape remedies.
 And first he sente for his next allies
 In whom he hadde most his affiaunce,
 For his lordes that hadde governaunce
 1705 Of his kyngdom to come to hym anon.
 And whan they weren present everichon,
 He seide pleynly, wenyng for his best,
 That his hert shal never lyve in rest
 But in sorowe and in a maner drede,
 1710 Tyl his brother outrely be dede,
 That he in Thebes in his royal sete
 Myght allone regnen in quiete:
 He mente hymself shortly, and non other,
 Unperturbed of Polymytle his brother.
 1715 And at this counsayl divers of entent,
 I fynde writ thre folkes were present —
 Some in soth that feithful were and trewe,
 And some also that can chaunge of newe,
 And other ek that betwixe tweyn
 1720 Covertly kowde under colour feyn.
 The firste seide, aboven alle thyng,
 Trouthe shulde longe to a kyng,
 Of his word not be variable
 But pleyn and hool as a centre stable.
 1725 For trouthe first, withouten eny wene,
 Is chief pyler that may a kyng sustene
 In joye and honour for to lede his lyff.
 For trouth whilom hadde a prerogatiff,
 As of Esdre the book can specyfie;
 1730 Record I take of prudent Neemye
 That worthy kyngges for al her grete pride,
 Wyn, and wymmen ben ek set asyde,
 With all her power and domynacioun
 Havyng reward in comparisoun
 1735 To trouthes myght and trouthes worthynesse.
- If; lately
did not intend
promise planned; deviate
wish; linger
close allies
every one
thinking
Until
devious in meaning
kinds of people
between the two
doubt
pillar
once; precedence
Esdras
Witness; Nehemiah
held at low value
by*

The Siege of Thebes

- For as Esdre pleynly doth expresse,
 Who taketh hede, in the same place,
 Be the influence sothly and the grace
 Of trouthe allon this olde Neemye power
- 1740 Gat hym licence to reedifie
 The wallys newe of Jerusalem. permission to rebuild
- ¶ Which trouth is tresour chief of every rewme,
 For Salomon writ how that thynges tweyne — treasure principal; realm
- ¶ Trouth and mercy lynked in a cheyne —
- 1745 Preserve a kyng lik to his degré
 From al meschief and adversité.
 Allas, therfor that eny doublenesse, duplicity
 ¶ Variaunce, or unsicrenesse, instability
 Chaunge of word or mutabilité,
- 1750 Fraude or deceyte or unstabileté
 Shuld in a kyng han domynacioun power
 To causen after his destruccioun.
- Of kyngges redeth the story dounre be rowe, to the end
 And seth how many han ben overthowre see
- 1755 Thorgh her falshede fro Fortunes Whel.
 For unto God pleseth never a del their
 A kyng to ben double of entent, not at all
 For it may happe that the world is blent duplicitious in
 Ful ofte sith be sleght of her werkyng. occur; blind
many times by deceit
- 1760 But this the trouthe — God seeth everythyng
 Right as it is, for ther may be no cloude
 To forn his sight trouthe forto shrowde. Before; veil
 It may be clipped and derked be disceyte, obscured; dimmed by deceit
 By fals engyne liggyng in aweyte, cunning; ambush
- 1765 As a serpent forto undermyne;
 ¶ But at the last it wol clerly shyne, beams
 Who that seith nay, shew his brighte bemes. realms
 For it in soth of kyngdames and of reawmes
 Is berer up and conservatrice
- 1770 From al meschief, sothfast mediatrice misfortune, truthful mediator
 To God above, whoso list to se, wishes
 To kepe a kyng in prosperité
 On every side, as I afferme dar.
- For which, ye kyngges and lordes, beth wel war be

Secunda Pars

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| 1775 | Your bihestes justly forto holde,
And thenk how Thebes with his walles olde
Distroied was — platly this no les —
For doublenesse of Ethiocles,
Which his puple after sore abouth, | <i>promises</i>
<i>plainly; lies</i>
<i>duplicity</i> |
| 1780 | Only for he nat by counsell wroght
Of hem that wern bothe trewe and wis
(Hym lyst nat worchen after her devys)
But lefte trouthe and sette his fantasye
To be governed by fals flaterye, | <i>afterwards; paid the penalty for</i>
<i>because; acted</i> |
| 1785 | That bad hym thenke how he was a knyght,
And to holde of force, more than right,
Duryng his lyf lordship of the toun,
And not to lese his possessioun
For no bond nor heestes mad toforn, | <i>advise</i> |
| 1790 | But lete his brother blownen in an horn,
Wher that hym lyst or pypen in a red.
This was the counsail platly and the reed
Of swich as liste nat to seyn the soth
But falsly flater with her wordes smoth. | <i>plainly; advice</i>
<i>those who did not wish; truth</i>
<i>deceitful</i> |
| 1795 | And whan they hadde hool her tale fyned,
Ethyocles fully is enclynnyd,
Whosoever therat laugh or wepe,
Lik her counsayl possessioun to kepe,
Who that sey nay or gruche therageyn; | <i>entirely their tale finished</i> |
| 1800 | Hym to contrarye he thoght was but veyn.
But in this whyl hath the shene sonne
The twelve signes round abouthe ronne
Sith Ethiocle be just rekenyng | <i>grumble</i>
<i>oppose</i>
<i>bright</i> |
| 1805 | In Thebes was crowned lord and kyng,
Holdyng the sceptre and the dyademe,
That be resoun, as it wolde seme,
The tyme was ful complet and the space
Of covaunte he shulde voide his place | <i>Since</i> |
| 1810 | And Polymyte ek his journé make
Toward Thebes, pocessioun to take
Of dieu title but he hadde wronge,
Which thoght in soth the yeer was wonder longe
Of his exil er it kam aboute. | <i>By agreement</i>
<i>due; was mistaken</i>
<i>Who</i> |

The Siege of Thebes

- And for he hadde in hert a manere doute,
 1815 Lest in his broder ther wer falshed found,
 T'aquyte hymself lik as he was bound,
 To Adrastus he gan declar his herte,
 Beseching hym this mater to adverte
 And therupon to give a counsayl sone
 treachery
*To discharge his duties
 reveal his intentions
 ponder*
- 1820 Touchyng his right what was best to done,
 Wher it was bet to gon or to abyde
 Or liche a knyght manfully to ryde
 Hymsilf allone and make no massage,
 For to chalaunge his rightful heritage
 Whether; better
- 1825 Withinne Thebes oyther be pees or stryf,
 And therupon to juparte his lif.
 Thus was he set for al his fierce brother.
 But Adrastus sothly thought another
 Bet was to sende than hymself to gon,
 either
 risk
*resolved; arrogant
 truly; someone else*
 better
 enemies
- 1830 Lest he were trapped among his mortal fon,
 Havynge his brother suspecte in this cas
 That be fraude or be some fallas
 He wolde werk to his destruccioun,
 Yif he wer hardye to entren into toun.
 by; deceit
If; bold enough
- 1835 For which he bad hym prudently tak hede,
 Ful concludyng how it was mor spedē
 That some other be to Thebes sent
 To apparceyve fully the entent
 Of Ethio cle outward be some signe
 judge
advantage
- 1840 And wher that he his croune wil resigne
 For thilke yeer, lik as he made his ooth,
 And whan he knewe how his purpos goth
 Therupon to werken and procede:
 Thus Adrastus wisely gan hym rede.
 whether
*what he intends
 act*
- 1845 And whil they trete upon this matere,
 Tydeus with a manly chere
 Sade uttrey for his broder sake
 This massage he wold undertake
 With hool th'empres of th'embassyat,
 discussed
*Said decidedly; brother's
 enterprise; embassy*
- 1850 Wer it wilful or infortunat:
 He wil not spare what so that betide.
 But Adrastus on the tother syde
 prosperous
 forbear

Secunda Pars

- | | | |
|------|--|------------------------------------|
| | And Polymyte in conclusioun
Weren contrarye to that opynyoun | <i>opposed</i> |
| 1855 | And seide sothly, as hem thoghte right,
Sith that he was so wel a preved knyght
And discended of so worthy blood,
That they nolde for non ertly good,
For all Thebes with the regalye, | <i>acknowledged</i> |
| | Put his body in such jupartie. | <i>would not kingdom</i> |
| 1860 | But all this thyng avayled hem right noght,
For he wol forth how dere that it be boght,
Takynge lieve first of all th'estatys,
And armed hym in mayle and sure platys, | <i>no matter what the cost</i> |
| 1865 | And shope hym forth upon his journé.
Who made sorowe but Deyphylé, | <i>chain mail and armor plates</i> |
| 1870 | With bitter teeres dewed al her face,
Ful ofte sith swownyng in the place,
Trist and mournyng in her blake wede
Whan she saugh that he took his stede? | <i>got ready to start</i> |
| | So inwardly encres gan her mone,
Seyng her lord so ride forth allone
Upon his way, this worthy Tydeus.
And in al hast, the story telleth us, | <i>Oftentimes; fainting</i> |
| 1875 | He spedde hym so, makynge no delayes,
That in space of a fewe daies
The heghe toures of Thebes he gan se, | <i>Sad; clothes</i> |
| | And entred is into the cité,
Wisly enquiryng wher the paleys stood; | <i>grief</i> |
| 1880 | And lik a knyght thidere he streght rood,
Markyd ful wel in many mannys sight,
Lich Mars hymself, in stiel armed bright,
Til he atteyned hath the chief dongoun, | <i>Seeing</i> |
| | Wher as the kyng helde his mancyoun. | <i>high towers</i> |
| 1885 | And thorgh the paleys with a knyghtly look
Into the hall the righte way he took,
From his stede whan he lighte doun,
Not afered but hardy as lyoun, | <i>Noticed</i> |
| | Wher as the kyng with lordes a gret route | <i>Like</i> |
| 1890 | In the halle sittynge rounde aboute,
He entred inne most manful of corage, | <i>reached; tower dwelling</i> |
| | | <i>afraid</i> |
| | | <i>crowd</i> |
| | | <i>[was] sitting</i> |

The Siege of Thebes

	T'execute the fyn of his massage.	<i>purpose</i>
	And as hym thought convenient and due,	<i>appropriate</i>
	Ful konnyngly he gan the kyng salue,	<i>courteously; address</i>
1895	Requiring hym, of kyngly excellence,	<i>Requesting</i>
	In goodly wise to geve hym audience	
	And not disdeyne neither in port ne cheer,	<i>be angry; bearing nor countenance</i>
	Sith he was come as a massagere	<i>messenger</i>
	From Polymyte his owne brodere dere,	
1900	Gynnyng his tale thus, as ye shal here.	<i>Beginning</i>
1898	"Sir," quod he, "unto your worthynesse	
	My purpoos is breefly to expresse	
	Th'effepte only, as in sentement,	<i>gist; meaning</i>
	Of the massage why that I am sent.	
1905	It were in veyn longe processe forto make.	
	But of my mater the verrey ground to take,	<i>substance</i>
	In eschewyng of prolixité	
	And voyde away al superfluyté,	<i>excess</i>
	Sith youresilf best ought to understand	
1910	The cause fully that we han on hond	
	And ek conceyve th'entent of my menyng,	<i>understand</i>
	Of rightwisnesse longgyng to a kynge,	
	First considred, yif that ye tak hede,	<i>if</i>
	Whan Edippus the olde kyng was dede,	
1915	How that yoursilf and youre brother blyve	<i>at once</i>
	For the croune contagiously gan stryve	<i>perniciously; contend</i>
	As mortal foon by ful gret hatrede	<i>enemies</i>
	Which of yow two shulde first succede,	
	Til that ye were be meenys reconcyled —	<i>intermediaries</i>
1920	Ye to regne and he to be exiled	
	Out of this towne for a yeeres space	
	And than ageyn resorte to his place	<i>return</i>
	To regne as kyng and ye to voyden oute,	<i>leave</i>
	So as your tourne be processe kam abouthe	
1925	Everich of yow paciently t'endure	
	Th'enterchaungyng of his aventurē,	<i>fortune</i>
	Who were put out or stood in his estat,	
	Therupon to make no debat,	<i>conflict</i>
	Lich the covenauant and convencioune,	<i>According to</i>
1930	Enrolled up by lordys of this toun,	<i>Written on a roll</i>

Secunda Pars

	Which of reson may not be denied.	
☞	And sith ye han a yeer yoccupied, Polimytes requereth yow of right T'aqwite you lik a trewe knyght	<i>since; held the throne</i> <i>asks</i>
1935	In eschewyng of mortal werre and strif, Sith ye han had a prerogatif As eldest brother forto regne aforne.	<i>To perform your duties</i> <i>avoiding; war</i> <i>first</i>
	And thenketh eke how that ye ar sworn Your oth to kepe and make no taryng,	
1940	Holy adverting lich a prudent kyng That trouth is mor in comparisoun Than all the tresour of your regyoun, Mor acceptable unto god and man Than all richesse that ye rekne kan.	<i>Wholly considering</i> <i>enumerate</i>
1945	Wherefor in hast (and lat ther be no slouthe), Quytteth yoursilf justly of your trouthe Unto youre brother, avoyding this cyté, And lat hym regnen in his ryalté, The croune of Thebes a yeer to occupie.	<i>Acquit; promise</i> <i>departing from</i>
1950	Than wol al Grece preise and magnyfie Youre hegh renoun and may sey non other But ye han quytt you justly to your brother. This hool th'effepte of al that I wil seyn, Answer expectaunt what ye list sende ageyn."	<i>exalt</i> <i>reputation; say</i> <i>have acquitted yourself</i> <i>meaning</i> <i>I await your answer</i>
1955	Whan Tydeus hadde told his tale, Ethiocles, trist and wonder pale, His conceyt first in maner hath refreynd, Dyssimulyng under colour feyned, Shewyng a cheer in maner debonayre,	<i>sad</i> <i>thought; restrained</i>
1960	To his entent wonderly contrayre, Inward in herte wood and furious; Turnyng his face towarde Tydeus, He gan abraid, and at the last outbrak, And even thus unto hym he spak.	<i>angry</i>
☞		<i>upbraid; shout out</i>
1965	"I ha gret mervaile," quod he, "in my thought Of the massage which that thou hast broght, That my brother, as thou hast expownyd, Desyreth so in Thebes to be crownyd, Havynge reward to the habundance,	<i>have</i> <i>explained</i>

The Siege of Thebes

1970	The grete plenté, and the suffisaunce That he hath nowe with the kyng of Arge; That me semeth he shuld lityl charge To han lordship or domynacioun In the boundis of this lytyl toun,	<i>It seems to me; care</i>
1975	Sith he regneth so fresshly in his flours, Surmountyng all his predecessours Be newe encres thorgh fortunis myght; Wheroft in hert I am right glad and light, Fully trustyng, yif I hadde nede	<i>Since Surpassing By if doubt then Toward me</i>
1980	To his helpe, that withoute drede Lik a brother than I shuld hym fynde To meward feithful, trewe, and kynde, Supposing pleynly evermor Of this regne he set but lityl stor	
1985	Nor cast hym not for so short a while As for a yeer, his brother to exile, To lyve in poverté and gret distresse. He wol not suffre it of his high noblesse. It were no token as of brotherede	<i>intended brotherhood</i>
1990	But a signe rather of hatrede To interrupte my possessioun Of this litil pore regiouon.” Al that he spak, who that couth adverte,	
1995	Of verrey scorn, rooted in his herte; As it sempte, the story can you teche, By the surplus sothly of his speche, He myghte nat no lenger hym refreyne But platly seide, “as atwene us tweyne, I mene thus Polymytes and me,	<i>observe seemed remainder contain between us two</i>
2000	Ther nys no bonde nor no sureté Nor feith ymade that may hym avaylle, As he cleymeth to ha the governaylle Of this cité, nowther yere nor day.	<i>is not any promise governance</i>
2005	For I shal lette hym, sothly, yif I may, That he shal not be title of no bond Rejoysse in Thebes half a foot of londe. Late hym kepe all that he hath wonne! For I purpoos, as I ha begonne,	<i>hinder have</i>

Secunda Pars

	To regne in Thebes enforth al my lyve,	<i>uninterruptedly; life</i>
2010	Maugré al hem that therageynes stryve And in despit of his frendes all Or the counsaylle that hym list to calle. Lat hym be sur, and know this right wel, His manacyng I dred never a del.	<i>Despite; them; contend</i>
		<i>council; might wish</i>
2015	And sikerly, as to my devis, It scheweth wel that thou were not wis But supprised with a manere rage To take on thee this surquedous massage, And presume to do so hegh offence	<i>not at all</i> <i>surely; opinion</i>
		<i>overtaken; madness</i>
2020	So boldely to speke in my presence. But al yfere avayle shal right noght. For the tyding that thou hast ybrought Shal unto hym be but disencrees.	<i>together</i> <i>news</i> <i>loss</i>
2025	He better were to ha ben in pees Than of foly and presumpcioun Ageynes me to seke occasiou.	
	For whil I lyve — and therto her myn hond — As I seide erst, he wynneth her no lond, Whyl the walles of this toune may stond.	<i>hand [in promise]</i> <i>before; gains here</i>
2030	For fynaly I do thee understand That they shal first be bete doune ful lowe And alle the toures to the erth ythrowe, Er he in Thebes have eny thyng ado. Lo, her is al. Retourne and sey him so."	<i>would have you</i> <i>beaten</i> <i>thrown</i> <i>Before</i>
2035	Whan Tydeus saugh the fervent ire Of the kyng with angre set afire, Ful of despit and malencolye, Conceyvyng eke the grete felonye	<i>wrath</i>
	In his apport, lik as he wer wood,	<i>Realizing; fury</i>
2040	This worthy knyght a lityl while stood Sad and demur, or oght he wolde seyn. But at the laste thus he spak ageyn. "Certes," quod he, "I conceyve of newe Aboute thee, thy counsel is untrewe —	<i>bearing; insane</i>
		<i>Serious; before anything</i>
		<i>realize; once more</i>
2045	I dar it seyn and vowen at the best — Nor thou art not feithful of thy behest, Stable of thy word that thou hast seid toforn	<i>declare; completely</i> <i>promise</i> <i>before</i>

The Siege of Thebes

	But deceyveable and falsly ek forsworn And ek periuor of thyn assured ooth.	<i>pledged</i>
2050	But whersobe that thou be lief or loth, I seye thee shortly — hold it for no fage — Al shal turn unto thy damage; Trust it wel, and in ful cruel wyse Alle Grekes londe shal upon thee ryse	<i>whether you like it or not</i>
	To ben avenged and manly to redresse The gret untrouth and the hegh falsnesse Which that thou hast ageyn thy brother wroght. It shal ful dere after this be bought.	<i>lie</i>
	And verrely in dede, as thou shalt lere,	<i>against</i>
2060	Kyng Adrastus wil medle of this matere And alle the lordes about hym envyroun That bounde ben to his subjeccioun; Prynces, dukes, and many a noble knyght, In sustenyng of thy brotheres right,	<i>paid for</i>
	Shal on a day with sper and with sheld Ageynes thee be gadered in a feld, Knyghtly to preve al be on assent	<i>truly; learn</i>
	That thou art fals and double of entent, Of thy promys atteynt and ek outrayed.	<i>intervene in</i>
2065	And leve me wel it shal not be delayed But in al hast execute in dede.	<i>surrounding</i>
	Lik thi desert thou shalt ha thy mede. For God above of his rightwisnesse	
	Swich open wrong shal in hast redresse,	<i>with one intent</i>
2070	And of his myght al such collusioun Reforme ageyn and al extorsioun.	<i>duplicitous</i>
	For this the fyn, falshede shal not vaile Ageynes trouth in feeld to hold batayle.	<i>convicted; broken away from</i>
	Wrong is crooked, bothen halt and lame.	<i>believe</i>
2075	And here anon in my brotheres name, As I that am next of his alye	
	In his querel, I shortly thee deffye, Fully avySED with al myn hool entent.	<i>usurpation</i>
	And ye lordes that ben her present,	<i>avail</i>
2080	I yow requere of your worthynesse To saye trouth and to ber wittnesse,	<i>both</i>
		<i>kinship</i>
		<i>challenge you</i>
		<i>aware</i>
2085		<i>ask</i>

Secunda Pars

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| | Whan tyme comth, justly to recorde
How your kyng falsly can discorde
From his heest of fals variaunce. | <i>testify
did deviate
promise through
allegiance
avoid it</i> |
| 2090 | And thenk how ye on feith and lygaunce
Ar bounde echon — ye may not go therfro —
Fortho obeye and serve, bothe two,
This nexte yeer now anon folowynge
As to your lord and your trewe kyng | |
| 2095 | Polemytes, thogh he be now absent,
By just accord maad in parlement,
At youre devis which sitten her a rowe,
Engrosed up, as it is wel knowe,
And enrolled only for witnesse | <i>agreement
arrangement; in a row
Written out in legal form</i> |
| 2100 | In youre regestres to voyden al falsnesse,
That non of you vary may of newe
Fro that I say, but he be untrewe.
For which I rede yoursilf to acquyte.
Lat no tyme lenger you respit | <i>what; unless
advise; discharge your duty
delay</i> |
| 2105 | But at onys withoute mor taryng,
Of manly force fetteth hom your kyng,
Maugré his foon, lik as ye ar bounde,
And lat in yow slouthe non be founde,
To put hym justly in pocessioune — | <i>bring
Despite; enemies</i> |
| 2110 | This my consayl in conclusioun.”
Whan Tydeus hadde his massage saide,
Lik to the charge that was on hym laide,
As he that list no lenger ther sojourne,
Fro the kyng he gan his face tourne, | <i>wished</i> |
| 2115 | Nat astouned nor in his hert afferde
But ful proudly leyde hond on his swerde,
And in despit who that was lief or loth,
A sterne pas thorgh the halle he goth
Thorghout the courte, and manly took his stede, | <i>dismayed</i> |
| 2120 | And out of Thebes faste gan hym spede,
Enhastyng hym til he was at large,
And sped hym forth toward the londe of Arge.
Thus leve I hym ride forth a while,
Whilys that I retourne ageyn my style | <i>in the open country</i> |
| 2125 | Unto the kyng which in the halle stood | <i>writing instrument</i> |

The Siege of Thebes

	Among his lordes furious and wood,	<i>mad</i>
	In his herte wroth and evel apayd	<i>angry; discontented</i>
	Of the wordes that Tydeus hath said,	
	Specialy havyng remembraunce	
2130	On the proude, dispitous diffiaunce	<i>throne</i>
	Whilys that he sat in his royal see,	<i>For</i>
	Upon which he wil avenged be	
	Ful cruelly, what evere that befall.	
	And in his ire he gan to hym calle	<i>anger</i>
2135	Chief constable of his chyvalrye,	<i>knighthood</i>
	Charchyng hym faste for to hye	<i>Charging; hasten</i>
	With al the worthy chooce of his houshold,	<i>best men</i>
	Which as he knewe most manful and most bolde,	
	In al hast Tydeus to swe	<i>follow</i>
2140	Toforn or he out of his lond remwe,	<i>Before; go away</i>
	Up peyn of lyf and lesyng of her hede,	<i>their heads</i>
	Withoute mercy anon that he be dede.	<i>immediately; slain</i>
	And of knyghtes fyfty weren in nombre,	
	Myn autour seith, unwarly hym t'encombe,	<i>without warning; overpower</i>
2145	Armed echon in mayle and thikke stiel	<i>chain mail</i>
	And therwithal yhorsed wonder wiel.	
¶	At a posterne forth they gan to ryde	<i>backgate</i>
	By a geynpath that ley oute aside,	<i>short cut</i>
	Secrely that no man hem espie,	
2150	Only of tresoun and of felonye.	<i>treachery</i>
	They haste hem forth al the longe day	
	Of cruel malys forto stoppe his way,	<i>hatred</i>
	Thorgh a forest all of on assent,	<i>one</i>
	Ful covartly to leyn a busshement	<i>lay an ambush</i>
2155	Under an hill at a streite passage,	<i>narrow</i>
	To falle on hym at mor avauntage,	
	The same way that Tydeus gan drawe,	
	At thylke mount wher that Spynx was slawe.	<i>slain</i>
	He nothing war in his opynyoun	<i>aware</i>
2160	Of this compassed conspiracioun	<i>planned</i>
	But innocent and lich a gentyl knyght	<i>until</i>
	Rood ay forth to that it drowe to nyght,	<i>Alone</i>
	Sool by hymself, withoute companye,	
	Havyng no man to wisse hym or gye.	<i>direct; guide</i>

Secunda Pars

- 2165 But at the laste lifting up his hede,
 Toward eve he gan taken hede,
 Mid of his way right as eny lyne,
 Thoght he saugh ageyn the mone shyne *straight*
 Sheldes fresh and plates borned bright, *against*
 2170 The which environ casten a gret lyght,
 Ymagynng in his fantasye *burnished*
 Ther was treason and conspiracye
 ↗ Wrought by the kyng his journe forto lette. *around*
 And of al that he nothyng ne sette, *opinion*
 2175 But wel assured in his manly herte *obstruct*
 List nat onys asyde to dyverte, *did not care*
 But kepte his way, his shield upon his brest,
 And cast his spere manly in the rest. *Wished; once*
 And the firste platly that he mette *set*
 2180 Thorgh the body proudly he hym smette, *smote*
 That he fille ded, chief mayster of hem all; *commander of them*
 And than at onys they upon hym falle *then at once*
 On every part be compas envyroun. *on every side; encircling*
 But Tydeus thorgh his hegh renoun
 2185 His blody swerde lete about hym glyde, *Slays*
 Sleth, and kylleth upon every side *murderous rage*
 In his ire and his mortal tene,
 That mervaile was he myghte so sustene
 Ageyn hem all in every half besette. *on every side*
 2190 But his swerde was so sharpe whette *ground*
 That his foomen fonde ful unsoote.
 But he, allas, was mad light afoote *enemies; disagreeable*
 Be force grounded in ful gret distresse;
 But of knyghthod and of gret prouesse *to dismount*
 2195 Up he roos, maugré all his foon;
 And as they cam, he slogh hem oon be on, *By*
 Lik a lyoun rampaunt in his rage.
 And on this hille he fond a narow passage,
 Which that he took of ful high prudence;
 2200 And liche a boor stondyng at diffence,
 As his foomen proudly hym assaylle, *despite; enemies*
 Upon the pleyn he made her blode to raylle *slew*
 Al enviroun, that the soyl wex rede *threatening (see note)*
 flow
 around; grew

The Siege of Thebes

- Now her, now ther as they fille dede,
 2205 That her lay on and ther lay two or thre.
 So mercyles in his cruelté
 ferocity
 Th'ilke day he was upon hem founde.
 That same; discovered [to be]
 And attonyss his enemyes to confounde,
 at once; destroy
 Wher as he stood this myghty champioun
- 2210 Be side he saugh with water turned doun
 An huge ston large, rounde, and squar;
 thick
 And sodeynly, er that thei wer war,
 aware
 As it hadde leyn ther for the nonys,
 As if; for the occasion
 Upon his foon he rolled it at onys,
 enemies; at once
 2215 That ten of hem wenten unto wrak
 were killed
 And the remnaunt, amased, drogh abak;
 astounded, drew
 For on by on they wente to meschaunce.
 one by one; destruction
 And fynaly he broghte to outraunce
 put to death
 Hem everychon Tydeus, as blyve,
 Them; quickly
- 2220 That non but on was left of hem alyve
 sharply
 Hymsilf yhurt and ywounded kene,
 armor
 Thurgh his harneys bledyng on the grene.
 all around
 The Theban knyghtes in compas rounde aboute
 company
 In the vale lay slayen all the route,
- 2225 Which pitously ageyn the mone gape;
 Who; moon
 For non of hem, shortly, myght eskape
 But dede echon as thei han deserved,
 Save on excepte the which was reserved
 one; kept
 By Tydeus of intencioune
- 2230 To the kyng to make relacioun
 fared
 How his knyghtes han on her journé sped,
 pledge
 Everich of hem his lyf left for a wed,
 And at the metyng how they han hem born —
 pledged
- 2235 To tellen al he sured was and sworn
 To Tydeus ful lowly on his kne.
 By which ensample ye opynly may se
 falsehood
 Ageynes trouth falshed hath no myght.
 Fy on querilis nat grounded upon right,
 Withoute which may be no victoyré.
- 2240 Therfor ech man ha this in memoyré:
 have
 That gret power, shortly to conclude,
 Plenté of good, nor moch multitude,

Secunda Pars

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| | Scleight or engyne, fors or felonye | <i>deceit; treachery</i> |
| | Arn to feble to holden chanpartye | <i>Are; hold the field</i> |
| 2245 | Ageynes trouth, who that list take hede.
For at the ende falshede may not sped
T'endure longe — ye shul fynde it thus.
Record I take of worthy Tydeus,
Which with his hand thorgh trouthes excellence | <i>whoever
succeed</i> |
| | Fyfty knyghtes slogh in his dyffence | <i>Witness</i> |
| 2250 | But on except, as I late tolde,
Sworn and assured with his honde upholde
The kyng t'enforme how they wern atteynt.
And Tydeus, of bledyng wonder feynt, | <i>slew</i> |
| | Maat and wery and in gret distresse,
And overlayd of verray feblenesse,
But as he myght hym silve tho sustene,
He took his hors stondyng on the grene,
Worthered up, and forth he gan to ryde | <i>Except for one, [just] as
to inform; overpowered</i> |
| 2255 | An esy pas with his woundes wyde.
And sothly yit in his opynyon
He was alway affered of tresoun.
But anguysshous and ful of bysy peyne | <i>Exhausted
overcome
then</i> |
| | He rode hym forth til he did atteyne | <i>Mounted
pace</i> |
| 2260 | Into the boundes of Lygurgus lond,
A worthy kyng and manly of his hond.
And he ful paal only for lak of blood
Tydeus saugh wher a castel stood, | <i>constant pain
arrive</i> |
| | Strong and myghty belt upon a roche, | <i>saw</i> |
| 2265 | Toward which he faste gan approche,
Conveyed thider be clernessee of the ston
That be nyght ageyn the moone shon,
On heghe toures with crestes marcial. | <i>built; rock</i> |
| | And joyneaut almost to the wal | <i>by</i> |
| 2270 | Was a gardyn lityl out be syde,
Into which Tydeus gan ride
Of aventure be a gate smal. | <i>martial</i> |
| | And ther he fond, forto rekne al, | <i>By chance</i> |
| 2275 | A lusty herbere unto his devis,
Soote and fresh lich a paradys, | <i>pleasant arbor; fancy</i> |
| | Verray heavenly of inspeccioun. | <i>Truly; in appearance</i> |

The Siege of Thebes

- | | | |
|------|---|---------------------------------|
| | And first of al he alyghte doun,
The goodly place whan that he byheld,
And fro his nek he voyded hath his sheld, | <i>removed</i> |
| 2285 | Drogh the brydyl from his horses hede,
Let hym goon, and took no maner hede
Thorgh the gardyn that enclosed was,
Hym to pasture on the grene gras.
And Tydeus, mor hevie than is led, | <i>Drew</i> |
| 2290 | Upon the herbes grene, whit, and red,
As hym thoughte that tyme for the best,
He leid hym doune forto tak his rest,
Of werynesse desirous to slepe; | <i>lead</i> |
| 2295 | And non awayt his body forto kepe;
And with dremes grocched ever among.
Ther he lay to the larke song
With notes newe hegh up in the ayr, | <i>guard</i> |
| | The glade morowe rody and right fayr,
Phebus also, casting up his bemes, | <i>moaned</i> |
| 2300 | The heghe hylles gilte with his stremes,
The sylver dewe upon the herbes rounde;
Ther Tydeus lay upon the ground
At the uprist of the shene sunne, | <i>until; sang</i> |
| | And stoundemele his grene woundes runne | <i>rosy</i> |
| 2305 | Round about, that the soyl depeynt
Of the grene with the rede meynt. | |
| | And every morowe for hoolsomnesse of eyre | <i>bright</i> |
| ¶¶ | Lygurgus doghter maked her repeyr,
Of custom ay among the floures newe | <i>from time to time; fresh</i> |
| | | <i>colored</i> |
| 2310 | In this gardyn of many dyverse hwe
Swich joye hadde, forto taken hede,
On her stalkes forto sen hem spredē,
In the allures walking to and fro. | <i>mixed</i> |
| | And whan she hadde a litil while goo | <i>morning</i> |
| | | <i>return</i> |
| 2315 | Herself allon casting up her sight,
She byheld wher an armed knyght
Lay to rest hym on the herbes colde; | <i>colors</i> |
| | And hym besyde she gan ek byholde | |
| | His myghty stede walkyng her and ther. | <i>garden walks</i> |
| 2320 | And she anon fille in a maner fer, | <i>alone</i> |
| | | <i>was frightened</i> |

Secunda Pars

- Speceally whan she saugh the blood
 Sprad al the grene aboute ther she stood.
 But at the laste she kaught hardynesse
 And wommanly gan her forto dresse
 2325 Toward this knyght, havyng a manere drede
 And gret doute lest that he were dede.
 And of her wille sothly this was chief —
 That she thoughte forto mak a prief
 How that it stood of this man, ful ofte.
- 2330 And forth she gooth and touched hym ful softe,
 Ther as he lay with her hondes smale.
 And with a face dedly bleyk and pale,
 Lich as a man adawed in a swogh,
 Up he stert, and his swerd he drogh
 2335 Nat fully out, but put it up ageyn,
 Anon as he hath the lady seyn,
 Beseching hir only of her grace
 To han pité upon his trespace
 And rewe on hym of her wommanhede.
 2340 For of affray he was falle in drede,
 Lest he hadde assayled ben of newe
 Of the Thebans preved ful untrewe;
 For dred of which he was so rekkeles,
 Ful humblyly hym yelding to the pes,
 2345 Tryst in hymself he passed hadde his boundes.
 And whan that she saugh his mortal woundes,
 She hadde routh of verrey gentyllesse
 Of his desese and of his distresse,
 And bad he shulde no thing be dismayd,
 2350 Nor in herte sorowful nor affrayd,
 Discomfort hym in no maner thing.
 “For I,” quod she, “am doghter to the kyng
 Callyd Lygurge, which gretly me delyte
 Every morowe this gardyn to visyte;
 ¶ It is to me so passingly disport.
 Wherfor,” quod she, “beth of good comfort,
 For no wight her touchyng your viage
 Shal hynder you nor do yow no damage.
 And yif ye list of al your aventure
- around where
regained her courage
move
- truly
examination
- wan
awakened from his swoon
drew
- As soon as
- have pity
fright
again
- heedless
- Certain
- pity
discomfort
not at all
- said
who
- excellent pleasure
be
person; concerning
- if; wish

The Siege of Thebes

2360	The pleyne trouth unto me discure, I wil in soth do my bysynesse To reforme youre grevous hevynesse With al my myght and hool my dylygence, That I hope of youre gret offence	disclose try (make an effort) remedy <i>injury</i>
2365	Ye shal han helpe in your adversité. And, as ferforth as it lith in me, Trusteth right wel, ye shul no faute fynde.” And whan he saugh that she was so kynde, So wommanly, so goodly and benyngne	insofar as fault
2370	In al her poort be many dyvers signe, He unto hir be ordre wold not spare His aventuris fully to declare, In Thebes first touching his massage, And at the hil of the woode rage;	bearing by in sequence relate <i>wild</i>
2375	Of his woundes and his hurtes sore (It were but veyn to reherce it mor)	
☞	By and by he told her every del, The which in soth she liked nevere a del But hadde routh and compassioun	part not at all pity
2380	Of his meschief wroght be fals tresoun, Byddyng in hast that he shuld hir swe; And wommanly, as her thoghte dwe, To a chambre she ladde hym up alofte, Ful wel beseyn, therin a bed right softe	<i>injury</i> follow appropriate <i>appointed</i>
2385	Richely abouten apparyled With cloth of gold, al the floor yrayled Of the same, both in length and brede. And first this lady of her wommanhede	<i>adorned</i> <i>breadth</i>
	Hir wymmen badde, as goodly as they kan,	
2390	To be attendaunt on this wounded man. And whan he was unarmed to his sherte, She made first wassh his woundes smerte, And serche hem wel with dyvers instrumentes, And made fette sondry oynementes	disarmed painful probe <i>had brought (fetched) various</i>
2395	And leches ek, the beste she koude fynde, Ful craftely to staunche hem and to bynde. And everything that may do hym ease T'aswage his peyn or his woo t'apese	<i>physicians</i> <i>stop the flow of blood</i> <i>relieve</i>

Secunda Pars

- Was in the courte and the castel sought
 2400 And by her bydding to his chambre brought.
 And for his sake she hath after sent
 For swich deyntees as wern convenient,
 Moost nutrityf be phisikes lore,
 Hem that wern syk or wounded to restore,
 2405 Makyngh her wymmen ek to taken kep,
 And wayt on hym anyghtes whan he slep,
 And be wel war that nothing asterte
 That was or myght be lusty to his herte.
 And with al this she preied hym abyde
 2410 Til he were strong and myghty forto ride,
 In the castel to pley hym and dispore,
 And at leysere hom ageyn resorte,
 Whan he myght bywelde hym at his large.
 But al for nougth; he wil hom to Arge,
 2415 Toke his lyeve on the nexte day,
 Without abood to hast hym on his way,
 Lowly thonkyng unto her goodnesse
 Of her fredam and bountevous largesse,
 So wommanly that hir list tak hede
 2420 Hym to refressh in his grete nede,
 Beheestyng hir with al his ful myght
 He wolde be hir servaunt and hir knyght
 Whyl he leveth, of what she wold hym charge.
 And forth he rood til he cam to Arge
 2425 In ful gret hast and wolde nowher dwelle.
 But what shuld I rehercen owther telle
 Of his repeir the coostes or the pleyns,
 The craggy roches or the hegh mounteyns,
 Or al the maner of his hoomcomynge,
 2430 Of the metyng nor the welcomynge,
 Nor the joye that Adrastus made,
 Nor how his sustre and his wif were glade,
 Nor how that they (wherfor shuld I write?)
 Embraced hym in her armes white,
 2435 Nor the gadryng about hym and the pres,
 Nor of the sorowe that Polymytes
 Mad in hymself to sen hym so soor wounded,
- delicacies; appropriate according to medical learning*
- by night*
- be lacking*
- pleasing*
- amuse*
- return*
- move about freely*
- delay*
- Humbly*
- generosity*
- revive*
- Promising*
- lives, whatever*
- relate or*
- return; regions*
- crowd*

The Siege of Thebes

- | | | |
|------|---|--------------------|
| | His grevous hurtes, his soorys ek unsounded, | wounds; unhealed |
| | His dedly look and his face pale | |
| 2440 | (Of alle this to gynne a newe tale
It were in soth a maner ydylnesse), | begin
a form of |
| | Nor how hymself in ordre did expresse | |
| | First how that he in Thebes hath hym born, | behaved |
| | Nor how the kyng falsly was forsworn, | |
| 2445 | Nor of the awayt nor tresoun that he sette,
Whan fyfty knyghtes on the way hym mette,
As ye han herd al the manere howe,
Withoute which my tale is long ynowe. | ambush |
| | But Adrastus made men to seche | search |
| 2450 | In every coost for many diverse leche
To come in hast and make no taryng,
Upon a peyne be biddyg of the kyng,
To don her craft that he wer recured | region; physicians |
| | And of his force in every part assured. | healed |
| 2455 | And they echon so her konnyng shewe
That, in space of a daies fewe,
He was al hool maad of his siknesse.
Tho was ther joye and tho was ther gladnesse | knowledge |
| | Thorghout the courte and thorghout al the toun. | Then |
| 2460 | For every man hath swich opynyoun
In Tydeus for his gentyllesse,
For his manhood and his lowlynesse | prowess; humility |
| | That he was holde the moste famous knyght | |
| | And best byloved in every manrys sight | |
| 2465 | Thorghoute Grece in every regioun.
But now most I make a digressioun, | |
| | To telle shortly as in sentement, | |
| | Of thilke knyght that Tydeus hath sent | the same |
| | Into Thebes only to declare | tell |
| 2470 | The grete meschief and the evel fare
Unto the kyng how it is befalle, | misfortune |
| | The opyn trouth of his knyghtes alle, | |
| | How Tideus hath slain hem everychon, | |
| | That, sauf hymself, ther eskaped non, | every one |
| 2475 | Which was reserved from sheding of his blood
The kyng to telle pleynly how it stood. | preserved |

Secunda Pars

	And whan he hadde rehersed every poynt, Ethiocles stood in such disjoynyt Of hatful ire that he wex nye wood.	<i>mental conflict</i> <i>nearly went mad</i>
2480	And in his tene and his felle mood, Of cruel malys to the knyght he spak And felly seid that it was for lak Only of manhood thorgh her cowardys That thei wern slain in so mortal wyse.	<i>anger; savage</i> <i>hatred</i> <i>cruelly</i> <i>their cowardice</i>
2485	"And hanged be he highe by the nekke That of your deth or of your slaughter rekke, Or you compleyn oyther on or all Of the meschief that is yowe befall. I do no force that non of you asterte.	<i>let him be hanged</i> <i>care</i> <i>lament either</i> <i>misfortune</i> <i>do not care; escaped</i>
2490	But fyne upon your fals couard herte, That on knyght hath, thorgh his hegh renoun, Brought yow all in confusioun, Ful graceles and ful unhappy to."	<i>defeat</i>
	"Nay," quod this knyght, "it is no thing so.	<i>not at all</i>
2495	It is thyng unhappe pleynly and not oures That so many worthy werreoures, Which al her lif never hadde shame, Except this quarel taken in thy name That grounded was and rooted on falsenesse:	<i>misfortune</i>
2500	This was cause in verray sikernesse Of our unhappe I woot wel and non other, And the untrouth don unto thy brother, And that thow were so opynly forsworn;	<i>in truth</i> <i>know</i>
2505	A parcel cause why that we wer lorn Was fals brekyng of thyng assured oth." And tho the kyng almost mad for wroth In purpoos was forto slee this knyght, Oonly for he seide to hym right.	<i>A portion of; lost</i> <i>promised</i> <i>then; insane for anger</i>
	The which, allas, both at eve and morowe,	<i>Just because</i>
2510	Supprised was with a dedly sorowe, Renewed ay in his remembraunce With the pitous and unhappy chaunce Of the meschief and mysaventure, Touching the deth and disconfiture	<i>Who</i> <i>Overtaken</i>
2515	Of his feeres and of hymself also;	<i>companions</i>

The Siege of Thebes

	That the shamfast importable wo So frat on hym with such a mortal stryf That he was wery of his owne lif, Hent a swerd, and aside sterte,	<i>unbearable gnawed</i>
2520	And rove hymself even to the herte, The kyng hymself beyng tho present; That the rumour and the noys is went Thorghoute Thebes and the woode rage	<i>Seized; moved suddenly stabbed then</i>
	Be swich as wern joyned by lynage	<i>savage anger</i>
2525	To the knyghtes slayen at the hille; That all atonys of oon herte and wille They wold han ryse thorghout the cité Upon the kyng avenged forto be,	<i>at once risen</i>
	Which of her deth was chief occasiou.	<i>their; cause</i>
2530	But the barouns and lordes of the toun Ful bysy wern this rumour to dysesse, Of high prudence to stynten and appese, In quyete everythyng to sette.	<i>dispel stop; relieve</i>
	And after that the bodyes hom they fette	<i>home; carried</i>
2535	Of the knyghtes, lik as ye han herde, Aforn yslawe with the blody swerde Of Tydeus ful sharpe whet and grounde.	<i>honed</i>
	And in the felde, so as they hem founde, Only of love and affeccioun	
2540	Solemnealy they broght hem into toun. And lik the maner of her rytis olde, They weren first brent into asshes colde, Everich buried lich to his degré.	<i>them their ancient rituals burned</i>
	Lo, her kalendys of adversité,	<i>Everyone; according to hear beginnings</i>
2545	Sorowe upon sorowe, and destruccioun, First of the kyng and all the regyoun, For lak oonly, lik as I yow tolde, That biheestes trewly wern not holde —	<i>promises</i>
	The firste grounde and roote of this ruyne,	<i>beginning; source</i>
2550	As the story shal clerly determyne And my tale herafter shal yow lere, Yif that yow list the remenaunt for to here.	<i>declare teach If; wish</i>

Explicit Secunda pars

Tercia Pars

John Lydgate
Incipit pars Tercia

Tercia Pars.

	O cruel Mars ful of malencoly And of thy kynde hoot, combust, and drye (As the sperkes shewen fro so ferre By the stremes of thi rede sterre, In thy spere as it aboute goth), What was cause that thow were so wroth With hem of Thebes, thorgh whoos fervent ire	anger <i>nature hot, combustible</i> <i>sparks; far</i>
2555	(As the sperkes shewen fro so ferre By the stremes of thi rede sterre, In thy spere as it aboute goth), What was cause that thow were so wroth With hem of Thebes, thorgh whoos fervent ire	<i>angry</i>
2560	The cité brent and was sette afyre, As bookees olde wel reherce konne, Of cruel hate rooted and begunne And engendred, the story maketh mynde, Oonly of blood corrupt and unkynde,	<i>burned</i> <i>can relate</i>
2565	B'ynfeccioun called orygynal, Causyng a strif dredful and mortal, Of which the meschief thorgh al Grece ran? And kyng Adrastus alderfirst began, Which hath hym cast a conquest for to make	<i>recalls</i> <i>trouble</i> <i>first of all</i> <i>planned</i>
2570	Upon Thebes for Polymytes sake, In knyghtly wise ther to preve his myght, Of ful entent to recure his right. And first of al he sette a parlement And hath his lettres and massageres sent	<i>demonstrate</i> <i>recover</i>
2575	Thorghouthe Grece to many sondry kyngges, Hem to enhast and make no lettyngges. And rounde about, as maad is mencioune, He sent also to many regyoun For prynces, dukes, lordys, and barouns	<i>hasten; delays</i>
2580	To taken up in citees and in touns, And chesen out the moste liklyest And swich as wern preved for the best As of manhode, and saude hem up echon, And in her honde receyve her pay anon,	<i>levy</i> <i>suitable</i> <i>such</i>
2585	With Adrastus to Thebes forto ryde. And tho lordes that with hym abyde	<i>enlisted them each [as a soldier]</i> <i>their; immediately</i> <i>those</i>

The Siege of Thebes

- In houshold stille han her leve take
 To ryden hom her retenue to make
 In ther contrees as they wern of degré,
 2590 To stuffen hem and taken up meyné,
 And make hem stronge with knyghtes and squyers,
 With speres, bowes, and with ablasters
 In al the hast possible that they may,
 And to retourne in their best aray
 2595 At terme sette, ful manly to be seyn,
 Toforn Arge mostren in a pleyn.
 And as I rede, ful worthy of degré
 Thider cam first Prothonolopé,
 The which was, by recorde of wryting,
 2600 Of Archada sone to the kyng.
 And ful prudent found in werre and pees
 Ther kam also the kyng Cylmythenes.
 And as I fynde, ful famous of renoun
 Thyder cam ek the kyng Ypemedoun.
 2605 And passing all of knyghthode and of name
 And excellyng by worthynesse of fame,
 The noble kyng callyd Campaneus
 Kam ek to Arge, the story telleth us,
 Proved ful wel and hadde ryden ferre.
 2610 And thider kam the kyng Melleager,
 Kyng Genor ek that helde his royal sete,
 Myn autour seith, in the lond of Crete,
  Kyng Laeris and the kyng Pyrrus,
 And ek the kyng called Tortolanus.
 2615 And renomed in many regyoun
 Ther cam the kyng ynamed Palemoun,
 Oft assayed and found a manly knyght,
 That with hym broght in steel yarmed bright
 Ful many worthy out of his cuntré.
 2620 And Tideus most knyghtly forto se,
 That manly man, that noble werreyour,
 As he that was of worthynesse flour,
 Maistere and myrour by prouesse of his hond
 Hath sent also into the myghty lond
 2625 Of Calcedoyne of which he was hayr,
- according to their rank*
garrison; retinue
longbows; crossbows
date set
Before; muster; plain
Parthenopaeus
Who
Arcadia
of Mycenaë (see note)
Hippomedon
Capaneus
Meleager
Agenor
armed
renowned heroes
Calcedonia; heir

Tercia Pars

- That is a kyngdam bothe riche and fayr,
 Chargyng his counsale and officers also,
 In al the hast that it may be do,
 To seken out the beste werreyours,
 Of famous knyghtes and preved sawdyours
 Thorgh al the lond and layde on hem this charge
 Withoute aboode forto come to Arge.
 And they obeye ful lowly his biddyng,
 Enhastynge hem, and mad no letting
 But spedde hem fast uppon her journé.
 And fro Thebes the myghty strong cité
 Kam doune knyghtes with many another man,
 Maugré the kyng, to help what they can,
 Considerd first his falshed and tresoun,
 Ymeved only of trouth and of resoun,
 Polymytes as they were sworn of yore
 To his croune justly to restore.
 And whan they weren at large out of the toun,
 Unto Arge they be descendid doun
 And, lik her oth and her assuraunce,
 As they wern bounde only of lygeaunce,
 To hym they cam in ful lowly wise,
 Redy to don what hym list devise.
 And whan he hadde her trouthe ful conceyved,
 He hath to grace goodly hem receyved,
 Assignyng hem her place mydde the hoste
 Assembled ther from many diverse coste,
 That fynaly in this compayne
 Ygadred was the floure of chyvalrye,
 Ychosen out of al Grekes lond
 The most knyghtly and manful of her hond,
 That I trowe, sith the world began,
 Ther was not seyn so many manly man,
 So wel horsed with sper and with sheld
 Togydre assembled soothly, in a feld.
 Ther men may see many straunge guyses
 Of armyng newe and uncouth devyses,
 Every man after his fantasye,
 That, yif I shuld in ordre specifie
- council*
soldiers
delay
humbly
Hastening; delay
Despite falsehood
Moved
free
loyalty
whatever he said understood
in the middle of regions
Gathered
Chosen
in valor
believe, since
Together
fashions
exotic heraldic symbols
wish
if; describe

The Siege of Thebes

2665	Every pes longyng to armure And therupon do my bysy cure, It wer in soth almost a dayes werk, And the termes also ben to derk To reherce hem clerly and to ryme: I passe over only for lak of tyme. And telle I wil forth of her loggyng, How Adrastus the noble worthy kyng Hath every lord lik to his degré Receyved wel withinnen his cyté (And ther they hadde lik to her plesaunce, Of what nedeth fulsom habundaunce, For man and hors plenté of vitaylle), Comaundyng that nothyng ne faylle, That alle thise noble worthy werreoures,	<i>piece</i> <i>apply myself diligently</i> <i>would be in truth</i> <i>too obscure</i> <i>lodging</i>
2670		
2675		
2680	Both high and lough and poor soudeoures, Iserved weren of that they hadde nede.	<i>low; soldiers</i> <i>Furnished</i>
2685	For Adrastus prudently took hede Ful lik a kyng, touching her terme day, That thei toforn wer served of her pay.	<i>payday</i> <i>beforehand; given</i> <i>generous; wished</i>
2690	He was so free hym list no thyng restreyn; And no man hadde cause to compleyn For hunger, thrust, nor for indygence. And in a prince it is ful gret offence, As clerkes seyn, and a gret repreef	<i>poverty</i>
2695	Suffre his purple lyven at mescheef. It is ful hevy and grevous in her thoght, Yif he habound and they han right noght. He may not both possede good and herte, He to be riche and seen his purple smerte.	<i>To allow; distress</i> <i>flourishes; nothing</i> <i>possess</i> <i>suffer</i> <i>command</i>
2700	He may the body of power wel constreyne, But her herte hath a ful long reyne. Maugré his myght, to loven at her large. Ther may no kyng on hertes sette a charge Nor hem cohercen from her lyberté.	<i>Despite; power; as they wish</i> <i>order</i> <i>force</i> <i>see</i>

Tercia Pars

	That bounté, fredom, plenté, and largesse	
2705	Be on accord, that they his brydel lede,	<i>in agreement; bridle</i>
	Lest of his puple whan he hath most nede	
	He be defrauded; whan he is but allone,	
	Than is to late forto make his mone.	<i>deprived of the support; by himself</i>
	But in his courte lat hym first devise	<i>complaint</i>
2710	To exile scarshed and covetise;	<i>arrange</i>
	Than is he likly, with fredam yif he gynne,	<i>stinginess</i>
	Love of his puple evermore to wynne,	<i>begin</i>
☞	To regne long in honure, and contune	<i>continue</i>
	Ay to encresse be favour of fortune,	
2715	And his ennemyes manly to oppresse.	<i>subdue</i>
	For love is mor than gold or gret richesse;	
	Gold faileth ofte; love wol abyde	
	For lyf or deth be a lordys syde;	
	And the tresour, shortly, of a kyng	<i>treasure, in brief</i>
2720	Stondeth in love aboven alle thyng.	
	Farwel lordshipe bothe morowe and eve,	
	Specially whan love taketh his leve!	
	And whoso list a merour forto make	<i>mirror</i>
	Of kyngly fredam, lat hym ensample take	<i>generosity</i>
2725	Of Adrastus the manly kyng famous,	
	So liberal and so bountevous	<i>generous</i>
	Unto his puple at al tymes found,	
	Which mad hym strong his foomen to confound;	<i>enemies to destroy</i>
	And love only his ennemyes to werreye	<i>to make war on</i>
2730	Alle Grece made his bidding to obeye	
	Of oon accord knyghtly be his side,	
	Al attones to Thebes forto ryde	<i>at once</i>
	For t'avenge, sith they were so strong,	<i>since</i>
	The gret injurye and the importable wrong	<i>unbearable</i>
2735	Don to his sone and his next allye,	<i>Done; son-in-law]; closest kinsmen</i>
	As ye toforn han herd me specifie.	<i>before; describe</i>
	But whil Grekes rest a whil in pes,	
	I will resort to Ethiocles,	<i>return</i>
	Which in Thebes warly hath espied	<i>carefully; discovered</i>
2740	Be his frendes, as he was certefied,	<i>informed</i>
	Of the Grekys hooly the ordinaunce,	<i>preparation</i>
	Her purpoos ek, and her purveaunce,	<i>provision</i>

The Siege of Thebes

- And therof had in herte a manere drede.
 And first he took his counsayle and his rede
 Of the lordis and barons of the toun
 And of the wisest of his regioun,
 How he myghte maken resistence,
 Manfully to stonden at diffence,
 To be so strong that ther wer no doute.
- ¶ And in the contrees adjacent aboute
 And ek also in foreyn regiouns,
 He hath withhold all the champions;
 And therupon he sent out his espies
 And his frendes and his next allies;
- 2745 And alle the worthy dwellyng enviroun —
 Yong, fressh, and lusty — he gadred into toun,
 Maskowede his wallys and his hege tours
 And stuffed hem with manly sowdeours.
 Round abouthe he sette many gonnys,
- 2755 Grete and smale and some large as tonnys.
 And in his hasty, passing fervent hete,
 He spent his tresour and gaf giftes grete
 Unto knyghtes and worthy men of name;
 And overmor to encres his fame,
- 2760 He gaf to lordes juellis manyfold,
 Clothes of velvet, of damask, and of gold,
 To gete hym hertes sothly, as I rede,
 To helpe hym now in his grete nede;
 And prudently purveied hym to forn
- 2765 Before
 meat; wheat
- 2770 Sette his capteyns erly and ek late
 With ful gret stuf strong at every gate,
 And mad also be werkmen that were trewe
 Barbykans and bulwerkes newe,
- 2775 Barreris, cheynys, and dices wonder depe,
 Makyng his vouh the cité forto kepe
 Whil he lyveth, despit of all his foon.
 And by his goddys of metal and of ston,
 Ful ofte he swoor both of herte and thouht
- 2780 That it shal first ful der ben abouht
 And many a man with pollex, swerd, and knyff
- advice
- retained
- renowned heroes; all around*
- Provided openings in the parapet*
garrisoned; soldiers
- cannon
- barrels
- gave
- reputation
- jewels
- by
- Double towers over gates; ramparts*
- pledge
- enemies
- dearly be bought*
- pole ax

Tercia Pars

	Tofor this toune shal first lese his liff And ther shal ek many sydes blede Or his brother possibly possede The toune in pees, lich as Grekes wene. But at the ende the trouthe shal be sene — Lat hym be war and wel toforn provyde.	<i>Before; lose</i> <i>Before; possess</i> <i>thought</i> <i>take steps beforehand</i>
2785	For Adrastus on that other side, For his party was not negligent, But on a day helde a parlement, All his lordes sittyng enviroun, To dryve shortly a pleyn conclusioun And up t'apoynt the fyn of ther entent.	<i>neglectful</i> <i>all around</i> <i>effect</i> <i>decide; goal</i> <i>fit</i>
2790	But some thoughte ful expedient, Or they procede, to wirke be th'avice Of on that was ful prudent and right wyce And circumspecte in his werkes alle, A worthy bisshop into age falle	<i>Before</i> <i>wise</i> <i>grown old</i>
2795	And called was, sothly by his name, Amphiorax, of whom the grete fame Thorgh al the londe bothen est and south Amonges Grekes passingly was kouth; A man, in soth, of olde antiquyté	<i>known</i> <i>old age</i>
2800	And most acceptid of auctorité, First be resoun of his high estat And ek for he was so fortunat In his werkes and was also secré With the goddys, knowyng her pryveté.	<i>familiar</i> <i>their hidden lore</i> <i>mention</i>
2805	By graunt of whom, as bookes specifye He hadde a spirit of trewe prophecye And cowde aforne ful opynly dyvyne Thyngges begonne how they shulde fyne And eke be craft of calculacioun	<i>before; clearly interpret</i> <i>begun</i>
2810	Gif a dome of every questioun; And hadde in magik grete experience And fynde cowde be heavenly influence And by mevyng of the heghe sterrys A fynal doome of contek and of werrys;	<i>Give; judgment</i> <i>judgment; strife</i>
2815	And wiste wel, as his goddys tolde, That, yif Grekes forth her journé holde,	<i>knew</i> <i>if</i>
2820		

The Siege of Thebes

	It turn shuld platly — this no fage — To gret meschief and to gret damage Of hem ychon and in especial The moste parte of the blood royal	plainly; lie havoc in battle
2825	Thorgh al Grece — it may not be withdrawe — In this viage shortly shal be slawe, And yif hymself with the Grekes wente, (Who that ever wepte hym or bymente, This was the fyn and may nat be socoured)	military expedition; slain if lament destiny; prevented
2830	Of the erth he shulde be devoured, Quyk as he was — he knewe it in certeyn. And for he saugh ther was non other geyn To save his lif nor no bet diffence, Than uttreyly withdrawnen his presence,	Alive because; expedient defense
2835	Preying his wiff for hym to provide, Yif he wer sought, that she wold hym hide And wommanly for to kepe hym cloos And of trouth concelen his purpoos, For al his trust touchyng his grevaunce,	prepare if hidden intent distress
2840	Was fully sette in hir purvyance. I hope to God that he thar not drede Of no deceyt in hir wommanhede. She was so trewe as wommen ben echon And also cloos and mwet as a ston	governance discreet; mute
2845	That she ne wold, as the matier stood, Discuren hym for no worldly good. But fynaly the Grekes, of entent, In al his drede han for this bisshop sent, Thogh it was long er they myght hym fynde,	Reveal
2850	For cause his wif was to hym so kynde That ful seurly hath lokked up his cors. But for she hadde a maner of remors In hirsilf, gervyng her conscience, Dreding to falle in ful grete offence,	shut (hidden away); body (person) remorse troubling
2855	Lest her soule were in peryl lorn Whan she be oth compelled was and sworn, They requeryng yif she coude telle Wher her lord the bisshop shulde dwelle, Which to discure hir herte was ful loth,	lost asking Whom to reveal; hesitant

Tercia Pars

- 2860 Til tyme she gan remembren on her oth,
And coude a trouth of custom not denye,
And hadde also gret conscience to lye,
Wonder hevy with a sorrowful face,
Maugré hir lust taught hem to the place
 refuse
2865 Wher as he was shet up in a toure,
Al alone havyng no socour.
They falle on hym or that he was war
And sette hym up in a ful riche char.
 Despite her wishes directed them
A fool he was to jupard his lif,
2870 Forto discure his counsel to his wif;
And yit she was ful sory for his sake,
Specially whan she saugh hym take.
 before he took heed
Bot I hope that her hevynesse
Gan asswage ful sone, by processe,
2875 In short tyme whan that he was gon.
Ther is no tempest may last evere in on.
But this bisshope be verrey force and myght
Unto Grekes conveyed was ful right,
This hoore gray in his char sytting.
 chariot
2880 And they ful glad wern of his comyng,
Havyng a trust and ful opynyoun
That, thorgh cause and occasioune
Of his wisdam and his sapience
And by vertue of his hegh presence,
2885 They shuld eschewe al adversité
Possible to falle, as in her journé.
 risk
And as the story fully hath devised,
Ful circumspect and riht wel avised
He hath pronounced in the parlement
2890 Toforn the lordes and the president
His cleer conceyte in verray sikernessee,
Nat entryked with no doublenesse,
Her dysemol daies and her fatal houres,
Her aventurys and her sharpe shoures,
2895 The froward soort and unhappy stoundys,
The compleyntes of her dedly woundys,
The woeful wrath and contrariousté
Of felle Mars in his cruelté,
 reveal
 seized
 forever
 grey-haired man; chariot
 were
 avoid
 explained
 judicious
 opinion; certainty
 enveloped in duplicity
 unpropitious
 conflicts
 future fate; times
 hostility
 fierce

The Siege of Thebes

	And howe by mene of his gery mood	<i>means; changeable</i>
2900	Ther shal be shadde al the worthy blood Of the Grekes — it may not ben eschewed, If her purpos be execute and swed. “Ther is no more; this shal be the fyn: The hegh noblesse shal drawe to declyne	<i>done; pursued</i> <i>outcome</i> <i>decay</i>
	Of Grekes blood in meschief, sorowe, and woo; And with al this I myself also, As my fate hath aforn disposyd, Depe in the grounde I shal be enclosed And lokked up in the dirke vale	<i>misfortune</i> <i>appointed</i> <i>Deep; buried</i> <i>valley</i>
2910	Of cruel deth.” Lo, this was the tale That the bisshope to Adrastus tolde, Hym counsaylyng his purpos to withholde In eschuynge of mor meschief and sorowe. For alle his goddis he took unto borowe,	<i>relinquish</i> <i>avoidance</i> <i>pledge</i>
2915	Yif the Thebans and the Grekes mete, The fyn therof shal be so unswete That alle Grece after shal it rewe, Warnyng hem yif thei the meschief knewe That shal folowe, which no man may lette,	<i>If</i> <i>unpleasant</i> <i>regret</i> <i>if</i> <i>avoid</i>
2920	Thei wold abstene a siege forto sette Unto Thebes and her purpos leve. With whos wordes the lordes gan hem greve And therinne had but ful smal delit; And everechon of hertly hegh despit	<i>intent abandon</i> <i>were distressed</i> <i>everyone</i>
2925	They abrayde and seide he was untrewe, A controover of prophecies newe, And ek also for al his longe berde An olde dotard, a coward, and aferde; And of rancour gonue to diffye	<i>cried out; false</i> <i>inventor; recently made (i.e., contrived)</i>
2930	Both his kalkyng and his astronomye; And shortly seide thei took therof non hede, Ne wil no thyng governe hem after his rede. This was the clamour and noyse in every cost Of hegh and lough thorghout all the hoost	<i>challenge</i> <i>calculations</i>
2935	And specialy of the sowdeours, And of lordes regnyng in her flours, And of th'estates effectuely, I mene,	<i>soldiers</i> <i>their prime</i> <i>in fact</i>

Tercia Pars

	Which of age were but tendre and grene, That ha not hadde by Martys influence Of the werre gret experience.	<i>young have</i>
2940	Her, yif ye list, ye may considre and se Of conceytes ful grete diversyté, How that youth no peril cast aforne Til he by meschief sodeynly be lorn,	<i>wish opinions foresees lost</i>
2945	Wheras age provydeth everything  Or he bygynne to casten the endyng. Youth is governyd be a large reyne	<i>foresees ponder</i>
	To renne forth and can hym not reffreyn But of hede set on al attony,	<i>restrain</i>
2950	As he that hurtleth ageynes harde stony Broseth hymself unwarly and parbraketh. But age experte nothyng undertaketh But he toforn be good discrecioun Make a due examynacioun	<i>determined all at once against Bruises; shatters experienced Unless; beforehand</i>
2955	How it wil tourne oyther to badde or good. But youth, as fast as stered is the blood, Taketh emprises of hasty wilfulness: Joye at the gynnyng; the ende is wretchednesse. The olde, prudent in al his governaunce,	<i>either stirred endeavors</i>
2960	Ful longe aforne maketh purveaunce; But youth, allas, be counsail wil not wyrke, For which ful ofte he stumbleth in the dyrke. Thus selde is seyne, the trouthe to termyne, That age and youth drawe be o lyne.	<i>old man provision</i>
2965	And wher that foly hath domynacioun, Wisdam is putte into subjeccioun, Lik as this bysshop, with al his hegh prudence, For cause he myghte ha no audience,	<i>tell share the same views</i>
	All his wisdam and his profecye	<i>have</i>
2970	Of the Grekes was halden but folye. For thogh Plato and wise Socrates, Moral Senek and Dyogenes, Albumasar and prudent Tholomee, And Tullius that hadde sovereynté	<i>By</i>
2975	Whylom in Rome as of eloquence — Thogh all thise, shortly in sentence,	<i>Once</i>

The Siege of Thebes

	Were alyve, most konnyng and experte,	<i>knowledgeable; experienced</i>
	And no man list her counsel to adverte	<i>wished; observe</i>
	Nor of her sawes forto taken hede,	<i>prophecies</i>
2980	What myght availle, and it cam to nede?	<i>if</i>
	For wher prudence can fynde no socour	<i>trust</i>
	And providence haveth no favour,	
	Farwel wisdam, farwel discreciooun,	
	For lakke only of supportacioun.	
2985	For unsupported with his lokkes hore,	
	Amphiorax sighen gan ful sore	<i>sighed full sorely</i>
	With hede enclynyd and many evyl thouht,	<i>hung down</i>
	Whan that he sauhe his counsayl stood for nouht.	<i>saw; noght</i>
	For uttrey the Grekes, as I tolde,	
2990	Han fully cast her journé for to holde,	<i>decided</i>
	Made hem redy, and gonne to hosteye	<i>make an expedition in force</i>
	Toward Thebes the cyté to werreye,	<i>war against</i>
	And in Grece wil no lenger tarye;	
	And forth with hem Amphiorax they carye,	
2995	Sette in his char with a doolful herte,	<i>painful</i>
	Whan he wist he myghte not asterte	<i>knew; escape</i>
	Of his fate the disposicioun.	
	And hosteying into the regiou	<i>invading</i>
	Of Lygurgus, Grekes gan approche	
3000	A sondy londe with many craggy roche.	<i>sandy</i>
	But al the way, sothly, that thei gon,	
	For hors nor man water was ther non —	
	So dry weren the vales and the pleynys.	<i>valleys; plains</i>
	For al that yeere they hadden had no reynys	
3005	But ful gret drouht, as mad is menciou;	<i>drought</i>
	And al the londe cerchygng enviroun	<i>searching all around</i>
¶	They nowther fonde welle nor ryver	
	Hem to refressh nor water that was cler,	<i>potable</i>
	That they, allas, no refut ne konne.	<i>refuge; know</i>
3010	So inportable was the shene sonne,	<i>unbearable; bright</i>
	So hoot on hem in feldes wher they leye	
	That for meschief man and hors gan deye,	
	Gapyng ful drye upward into south;	
	And some putten her swerdes in her mouth	<i>duress</i>
3015	And sperys hedes, in story as is told,	

Tercia Pars

- T'aswage her thirst with the yren cold;
 And of his lif ful many on dispeyred
 In this meschief and hom ageyn repeyred;
 Tyl on a day worthy Tydeus
- 3020 And with hym ek the kyng Campaneus
 Of purpoos rood thorghoute the contré
 Yif they myght eny water see
 Fro coost to cost bothe fer and ner;
 Til of fortune they entred an herber
- 3025 With trees shadowed for the sonne shene,
 Ful of floures and of herbes grene,
 Wonder hoolsom both of syyt and ayr.
 Therinne a lady which passingly was fayr,
 Sittyng as tho under a laurer tre,
- 3030 And in her armes a lilit child hadd she,
 Ful gracious of loke and of visage,
 And was also wondre tendre of age,
 Sone of the kyng born forto succede,
 Called Ligurgus in story as I rede,
- 3035 Whoos hertly joye and worldly ek dispot,
 Al his myrth, plesaunce, and confort
 Was in this child of excellent fayrnesse.
- And this lady, myrour of semlynesse,
 Al sodeynly as she cast up her sight
- ¶ And on his stede sauh an armed knyht,
 Gretely abasshed gan anon remwe.
 But Tideus after gan to swe
 And seyde, "Sustir, beth no thyng dismayed,
 In youresilf displeased, nor affrayed.
- 3045 For we ar come only to this place
 Yow to biseche of mercy and of grace
 Us to socour in oure grete nede,
 Declaring you how it stont in dede.
 Her faste by, almost at the hand,
- 3050 The worthiest of al Grekes land,
 Kyngges, prynces ly logged in the feld
 And many other with pollex, speer, and sheld,
 Which in meschief, peryl, and gret dred
 For want of water ar likly to be ded.
- despaired*
grievous situation; returned
- If*
- arbor*
bright
- then; laurel*
- face*
- beauty*
- saw*
- confused; at once withdraw*
- follow*
- not at all*
- frightened*
- encamped*
- pole ax*
- misadventure*

The Siege of Thebes

- | | | |
|------|--|------------------------------------|
| 3055 | For ther was non of hegh nor lowgh degré
In all our host, now passed daies thre,
That drank, allass, excepting non estat;
Our viage is so infortunat:
Preying yow of wommanly ptyé, | <i>rank</i> |
| | Benygnely, and graciously to se
How of Grece all the chyvalrye
Of her lyves stont in jupartie,
That ye wold of wommanhede telle
Yif ye knowe ryver, spryng, or welle, | <i>military expedition</i> |
| 3060 | 3065 Specially now in al oure care,
Of gentillesse unto us declare.
Lo, her is alle, yif ye list to here,
That I wol seyn, myn owne suster dere." | <i>If</i> |
| 3070 | And whan this lady inly vertuous
The compleynt herde of worthy Tydeus,
Of verrey ptyé chaungeth cher and hewe,
And in her herte upon her woo gan rewe,
And ful goodly seyng his distresse, | <i>inwardly</i> |
| | Seyde unto hym in al his hevynesse,
"Certes," quod she, "yif I were at large
Touching this child of which I have charge,
I shuld in hast of al that doth yow greve
To my power helpen to releve, | <i>their; regret</i> |
| 3075 | Only of routh and compassiou,
3080 And leve al other occupacioun,
Conveye yowe and be youre trewe guyde
To a ryver but lityl her besyde. | <i>if: free</i> |
| | But I dar not so moche me assure
This litil child to put in aventur.
3085 I am so ferdful from it to departe.
But for youre sake yet I shal juparte | <i>only a little way from here</i> |
| | My lif, my deth of trewe affeccioun,
To provyde for your savacioun."
Took the child and laide it in her lappe, | <i>venture</i> |
| 3090 | And richely in clothes gan it wrappe,
And couched it among the herbes soote,
And leyde aboute many hoolsom roote
And floures ek bothe blewe and rede. | <i>at risk</i> |
| | | <i>risk</i> |
| | | <i>out of</i> |
| | | <i>lay to sleep</i> |

Tercia Pars

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| 3095 | And supprised with a maner drede,
With Tideus forth anon she wente,
As she in trouth that no treson mente,
And on hir way wolde nevere dwelle
Til she hym broght to a right faire welle
And to a ryvere of water ful habounde. | <i>seized</i>
<i>immediately</i>
<i>treachery</i> |
| 3100 | But who was glad and who was tho jocounde
But Tydeus seyng the ryver,
Which in al hast sente his massager
To Adrastus and bad hym nat abide
But doune descende to the ryver syde | <i>plentiful</i>
<i>merry</i>
<i>Who</i> |
| 3105 | With al his host recur forto have
At this ryver her lyves forto save.
And thei enhast hem, makyng non abood,
All attynys to the ryver rood
Fortho drynk; thei hadde so gret lust | <i>remedy</i>
<i>delay</i>
<i>All at once; rode</i>
<i>wish</i> |
| 3110 | Of appetit forto staunche her thrust.
And some dronk and fonde it did hem good;
And some wern so fervent and so wood
Upon the water that in sikernessee,
Thorgh undiscret and hasty gredynesse, | <i>satisfy; thirst</i>
<i>found</i>
<i>wild</i>
<i>surely</i> |
| 3115 | Out of mesur the watere so thei drynke
That they fille ded evene upon the brynde;
And some naked into the ryvere ronne,
Only for hete of the somer sonne,
To bathe hem (the water was so cold); | <i>dead; bank</i> |
| 3120 | And some also, as I ha yow told,
(I mene tho that prudent wern and wise)
The water drank in mesurable wyse,
That of the thrust they ha toforn endured
They were refreshed fully and recured. | <i>have</i>
<i>those</i>
<i>moderate</i>
<i>thirst</i>
<i>restored</i> |
| 3125 | And Grekes than of hegh and lowe degré,
For high profit and gret commodité,
Compas the ryvere cristalyn of sighte,
Of oon accorde they her tentys pyhte
To rest hem ther in relees of her peyne | <i>then</i>
<i>comfort</i>
<i>Around; crystalline</i>
<i>pitched</i> |
| 3130 | Only the space of a day or tweyne.
And whylys Grekes upon the ryver lay,
This Tydeus upon the same day | |

The Siege of Thebes

- Ful knyghtly hath don his diligence
 This yonge lady with gret reverence
 3135 To Adrastus goodly to presente.
 At whoos comyng the kyng hymsilve wente
 Ageynes hir, she fallyng doun on knees,
 All th'estates present and degrees
 Of Grekes lond (absent was nat on);
 3140 And in his armes took hir up anon,
 Thanking hir of her bysynesse,
 Of hir labour and her kyndenesse,
 Behotyng hir, lik as he was holde,
 If eny thyng pleynly that she wolde
 3145 That he may don, she shuld it redy fynde.
 And Grekes all, the story maketh mynde,
 Of th'estatys beyng tho present,
 Thanked hir with al her hool entent
 For refreshyng don to many Grek;
 3150 And for her part they biheght her ek,
 With her body and goodes bothe two,
 What her list comaunde hem forto do
 To be redy platly and nat faille.
 And her myn autour maketh rehersaille
 3155 That this lady so faire upon to se,
 Of whom the name was Isyphilé,
 To Adrastus told, as ye may rede,
 Lynealy the stok of her kynrede,
 Whilom how she a kyngges doghter was,
 3160 Rehersyng hym hooly al the cas,
 First why that she out of her contré wente
 Shortly for she wolde not assente
 To execute a conspiracioun
 Mad by the wymmen of that regioun —
 3165 A thyng contrayr and ageyn al right —
 That eche of hem upon a certeyn nyght
 Be on accord shal warly taken kepe
 Fader, brother, and husband in her slepe
 With knyves sharpe and rasoures kene
 3170 Kytt her throtes in that mortal tene
 Unto this fyn, as Bochas telle can —
- To*
effort
Promising; bound
immediately
reminds us
then
their; promised her
their
she might wish
plainly
here; recital
Hypsipyle
By descent; family
Once
conspiracy
carefully; care
Cut; anger
For this purpose; Boccaccio

Tercia Pars

- In al that londe be not founde a man
 But slayn echon to this conclusioun,
 That wymmen myght han domynacioun
 3175 In that kyngdam to regne at liberté
 And on no partie interrupted be.
 But for this lady passing debonayre,
 To this mordre was foward and contrayre,
 Kept her fader that he was not slawe
 3180 But fro the deth preserved and withdrawe,
 For which, allas, she fledde the contré,
 And of a pyrat taken in the see,
 To kyng Lygurgus broght in al her drede.
 And for her trouth and her wommanhede
 3185 To hir he took his yonge child to kepe,
 Which in the herber allone she left slepe
 Whan Tydeus she broghte to the welle.
 ↗ And by Jason some bookis telle
 That this lady hadde sones two,
 3190 Whan that he and Hercules also
 Toward Colchos by hir contré cam
 ↗ For t'accomplyssh the conquest of the ram.
 ↗ But who that lyst by and by to se
 The story hool of Ysyphlee,
 3195 Hir fadres name of which also I wante,
 Thouh some seyn he named was Thoante
 And some bokes Vermes ek hym calle,
 But to knowe the aventures alle
 Of this lady Isyphilé the faire,
 3200 So feithful ay and inly debonayre,
 Lok on the book that John Bochas made
 Whilom of wommen with rethorikes glade
 And directe be ful sovereyn style
 To fayre Jane, the queen of Cecile.
 3205 Rede ther the rubrich of Ysiphylé,
 Of her trouth and her hegh bounté,
 Ful craftily compiled for her sake.
 And whan that she hath her lieve take
 Of Adrastus, homward in her weye
 3210 Tydeus gan hyr to conveye,
- in no way disturbed*
gentle
opposed
slain
- gave*
Who
- ram [with the golden fleece]*
wishes
- lack*
- Giovanni Boccaccio*
eloquent discourses
dedicated
Sicily
chapter heading
- her (the queen's)*
taken

The Siege of Thebes

- To the gardyne til she is repeyred. *returned*
 But now, allas, my mater disespeyred *[is] hopeless*
 Of alle joye and of welfulnesse
 And destitut of myrth and alle gladnesse,
 3215 For now of woo gynne the sharpe shoures.
 For this lady fond among the floures *found*
 Her litil child turned up the face,
 Slayn of a serpent in the selve place,
 Hyr taile burlyd with skalis silver shene.
 3220 The venym was so persyng and so kene,
 So perilous ek the mortal violence
 Caused, allas, thorgh her long absence:
 She was to slouh homward forto hie. *too slow; hasten*
 But now can she but wepe, wayle, and crye;
 3225 Now can she nouht but sighen and compleyn
 And wofully wryng her handys tweyn,
 Dedly of look, pal of face and chere; *Deathly; pale*
 And gan to rende her gilt tresses clere,
 And ofte sith she gan to seyn, "Allas,
 3230 O woeful wretch unhappy in this cas,
 What shal I don, or whider may I tourne?
 For this the fyn, yif I her sojourne, *know*
 I woot right wel I may it not eskafe *prepared*
 The pitous fate that is for me shape.
 3235 Socour is non, nor ther may be no red
 Lich my desert but that I mot be ded;
 For thorhe my slouth and my neclgence
 I have, allas, don so gret offence
 That my gilt — I may it nat excuse —
 3240 Shal to the kyng of treson me accuse.
 Thorgh my defaute and slouth bothe two,
 His sone is ded and his heir also,
 Which he loved mor than al his good
 (For tresour non so nygh his herte stood
 3245 Nor was so depe grave in his corage), *plan*
 That he is likly to fallen in a rage
 Whan it is so, myn odyous offence
 Reported be unto his audience —
 So inportable shal be his hevynesse. *merit except; must sloth*
negligence; sloth
Whom
penetrated; heart
unbearable; grief

Tercia Pars

3250	And wel woot I in verrey sothfastnesse That, whan the quene hath this thing espied (To myn excus it may nat be denyed), I doute it not ther geyneth no pyté; Without respit she wil avenged be	<i>know; truthfulness learned delay</i>
3255	On me, allas, as I ha deserved That fro the deth I may not be preserved Nowther by bille ne supplicacioun; For the rage of my transgressioun Requereth deth and non other mede."	<i>Neither; petition grief caused by remedy</i>
3260	And thus, allas, she, quaking in her drede, Non other helpe nor remedye kan But dreynt in sorow to the Grekes ran, Of hertly woo face and chere disteynyd And her chekес with wepyng al bereynyd,	<i>knows plunged heartfelt; stained streaming with tears</i>
3265	Inhir affray distracte and furious. Toforn alle she cam to Tydeus And fille on knees and gan her compleynt mak, Tolde pleynly that for Grekes sake She mot be ded and shortly in substaunce	<i>fear distraught First of all</i>
3270	Rehersing hym the grete of her grevaunce, First how be traynys of a fals serpent The child was slawe whil she was absent, In what disjoynte and peril that she stood. And whan that he her meschief understood,	<i>substance; trouble treachery slain difficulty trouble</i>
3275	Unto hire ful knyghtly he behiht To help and forther al that evere he myght, Hir pitous woo to stynten and appese. And forto fynde unto hir disse Hasty confort, he went a ful gret pas	<i>promised stop; alleviate distress with great speed</i>
3280	To Adrastus and told hym al the cas Of this unhappy woeful aventurē, Beseching hym to don his bysy cure, As he was bound of equyté and right, And adverten and to han a sight	<i>circumstances</i>
3285	How she qwit her to Grekes her toforn Whan they wer likly forto ha be lorn, The socour voide of her wommanhede; For which he most of knyghthod taken hede	<i>think; take into consideration behaved; earlier lost If the help were not given must</i>

The Siege of Thebes

- To remedien this unhappy thing.
 3290 And Adrastus lik a worthy kyng
 T'aquyt hymself, the story maketh mynd,
 To thys lady wille nat be found unkynd,
 Neither for cost nor for no travaylle,
 But bysy was in al that myght availle
 3295 To hir socour, considered alle thingges,
 And by th'avice of alle the worthy kyngges
 Of Grekes lond thei be accorded thus —
 Pynces, dukes and worthy Tydeus
 To hold her way and al at onys ryde
 3300 To Lygurgus dwelling ther besyde,
 Of on entent: yif they may purchace
 In eny wise forto gete grace
 For this lady called Ysiphilé
 They wold assay, yif it mighte be.
 3305 And to his paleys ful ryal bylt of ston
 The worthy Grekes cam ryding everichon,
 Every lord ful fresshly on his stede.
 And Lygurgus, example of manlihede,
 Anon as he knewe of her comyng,
 3310 T'aquyt hymself lich a gentil kyng,
 Ageyn hem went to mete hem on the way,
 Ful wel byseyn and in ful good array,
 Receyvyng hem with a ful kyngly chere;
 And to Adrastus seid, as ye shul here,
 3315 "Cosyn," quod he and gan hym to embrace,
 "Ye be welcome to youre owne place,
 Thankyng hertly to your hegh noblesse
 That so goodly of your gentillesse
 Towardes me ye list you to acquite,
 3320 Youresilf this day your cosyn to visite,
 In this castel to take youre loggyng,
 That never yit I was so glad of thyng
 In al my lif — and therto her my trouth.
 And overmor ther shal be no slouth
 3325 That the chambres and the large tours
 Shal be delyvered to your herberious,
 That every lord, as he is of degré,
- repay [her kindness]
ungrateful*
- agreed*
- immediately
nearby
if; succeed*
- try, if*
- everyone
horse*
- As soon as
behave
Toward
well appointed*
- act*
- lodging*
- delay*
- made ready; harbingers (see note)*

Tercia Pars

- Unto his loggyng shal assigned be.
Youre officers lat hymself devis *decide*
3330 Yif the howsyng may largely suffise *If*
To yow and youres strecchen and atteyn,
That non estaat ha cause to compleyn.
And alle your hoost logged her besyde,
Which in tentys upon you abide, *wait*
3335 Lat hem fette be myn auctorité,
Vitayle ynoh her in my cité.
And alle that may socour hem or save *obtain by*
And, at a word, al that evere I have
Is ful and hool at your comaundement.” *Food enough here help*
- 3340 Quod Adrastus, “That is nat our entent
Nor on no parte cause of oure comyng.
For we be come al for another thyng,
A certeyn gift of you to requere, *ask*
Benygnyly yif ye list to here, *hear*
3345 Which may Grekes passyngly availle,
Of our request yif that ye nat ne faille, *if*
Which we dar not opynly expresse,
Withoutte that ye wold of gentillesse *directly say*
Youre graunt aforn conferme and ratefy. *Unless*
3350 Than wer we bold it to specifie.” *agreement before confirm*
Quod Lygurgus, “Whatever thyng it be,
Nouht exceptid but only thingges thre: *Then*
The first is this — it touch nat my lif,
My yonge sone, pleynly, nor my wyf.
3355 Take al my good or what ye list provyde *Nothing*
Of my tresour and sette thies thre asyde —
Al the surplus I count nat at a myte.” *stipulate*
Than Adrastus astounyd was a lyte
Whan Lygurgus in conclusioun *rest; mite*
3360 Of his sone made excepcioun. *amazed*
And whilis they entreten thus yfere,
Ther cam forth on with a woeful chere, *negotiate; together*
Of face and look pal and no thing rede, *a person*
Alowde crieth, “The kynges sone is dede,
3365 Allas the whyl, that whilom was so fayr,
After Lygurgus born forto ben hayr, *not at all*
 Aloud
 once
 heir

The Siege of Thebes

	The which, allas, hath yolden up the breth,	<i>Who; yielded</i>
	Of a serpent stonge to the deth	
	And with his wound newe, fressh and grene,	
3370	In th'erber lith, that pité is to sene,	<i>lies</i>
	And hath so leyne almost al this day,"	
	That whan Lygurgus herde this affray	<i>cry</i>
	And wist his child was ded and hath no mo,	<i>knew; lived no longer</i>
	Lytel wonder thogh that he were wo.	
3375	For sodeynly the importable smerte	<i>unbearable suffering</i>
	Ran anon and rent hym by the herte,	<i>tore</i>
	That, for constreyn of his dedly peyne,	
	Thorghoute he felte korven every veyne.	<i>cut</i>
☞	The rage gan myne in hym so depe	<i>grief; burrow</i>
3380	That he can not but sighe, sobbe, and wepe.	
	And with the noyse and lamentacioun	
	The qwen distraught is descendid doun.	<i>distraught</i>
	And whan she knewe the ground of al this sorowe,	<i>cause</i>
	Hit nedeth her no teeres forto borowe	
3385	But twenty tyme ny upon a rowe	
	Aswounе she fille unto the grunde lowe;	
	And stoundemele for this hegh meschaunce	<i>at intervals</i>
	Stille as ston she lyggeth in a traunce.	
	And whan the child into the courte was brouht	
3390	Tofore Lygurgus, allas, I wite hym nouht.	<i>Before; knew</i>
	Upon the cors with a mortal face,	
	He fil atonys and gan it to embrace,	<i>at once</i>
	Soore grype and ageyn upsterte,	<i>Hold tight; spring up</i>
	That whan Adrastus gan this thyng adverte,	<i>observe</i>
3395	Of kyngly routh and compassioun	
	From his eyen the teeres fille doun;	
	Ek kyngges, dukes that aboute stood	
	Only of pité which is in gentyl blood,	
	No power hadde the water to restreyn	
3400	That on her chekes doune bygan to reyn.	
	But al a day wolde not suffise	
	Alle her sorowes in ordre to devise,	<i>recite</i>
	First of the kyng and of the quene also;	
	To tellen all, I shulde never ha do,	<i>finish</i>
3405	Not in the space almost of an hour.	

Tercia Pars

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| | But whan the stormes and the sharpe shour
Of her wepyng was somwhat overgon,
The lytil cors was graven under ston.
And Adrastus in the same tide | <i>abated</i>
<i>buried</i>
<i>time</i> |
| 3410 | Lygurgus took a litil out aside
And ful wisely with his prudent spech
(The qwen present) gan hym forto tech
That so to sorowe avaylle may right noght,
To mordre hymself with his owne thouht, | <i>benefit may not at all</i> |
| 3415 | Sith loos of deth no man may recure,
Thogh he in woo perpetuall endure:
Al helpeth nat whan the soule is go. | <i>Since loss by; restore</i>
<i>gone</i> |
| 3420 | “And our lif her, who tak hed therto,
Is but an exile and a pilgrymage,
Ful of torment and of bitter rage,
Lich a see rennyng to and fro,
Swyng an ebbe whan the flood is do, | <i>sorrow</i>
<i>sea</i>
<i>Ebb tide following; full tide</i>
<i>Briefly</i> |
| | Lytil space abidynge at the fulle,
Of whos sojour the pope geveth no bulle. | <i>duration; proclamation (certainty)</i> |
| 3425 | Nor kyng is non, duk, nor emperour
That may hym shroude ageyn the fatal shour
Of cruel deth, whan hym list manace
To marke a man with his mortal mace.
Than geyneth nat to his savacioun | <i>shelter himself</i>
<i>club</i>
<i>Then it avails</i> |
| 3430 | Neyther fraunchyse nor proteccioun,
And lit or noght may helpen in this caas
Sauffecondit or supersedyas.
For in this world, whoso look aright,
Is non so gret of power nor of myght, | <i>freedom from arrest</i>
<i>Safe conduct; legal injunctions</i> |
| 3435 | Noon so riche shortly nor so bold
But he mot dey oyther yong or old.
And who in youth passeth this passage,
He is eskaped al the woode rage, | <i>But that; die either</i>
<i>sorrow</i> |
| 3440 | Al sorowe and trouble of this present lyff,
Replevished with contek, werre and stryff,
Which seedl or nevere stont in suerté.
Wherfor best is, as semeth unto me,
No man gruch but of hegh prudence | <i>Filled; strife</i>
<i>seldom; remains</i>
<i>complain</i> |
| | The sonde of goddis tak in pacience. | <i>ordinance; the gods</i> |

The Siege of Thebes

- 3445 And ye that ben so wis and manly to,
 Youresilf to drowne in torment and in woo
 For loos of thyng, yif that ye list to se,
 Which in no wise may recured be,
 Is gret foly and undiscreccioun." *if
restored*
- 3450 And thus Adrastus hath conveyed doun
 The substaunce hool of that he wolde seye,
 Til that he fond a tyme forto preye
 Convenient for Ysyphilee,
 Bysechyg hym forto han pité
- 3455 Of that she hath offended his highnesse,
 Not wilfully but of reklesnesse:
 First, that he wold his doomes to dyvide,
 Mercy preferre and set right aside,
 At request and preier of hem alle
- 3460 Of this unhappe and meschief that is falle
 By hasty rigour nat to do vengeaunce
 But thynk aforn in his puruyaunce,
 Who to wreches doth mercy in her drede
 Shal mercy fynde whan he hath most nede;
- 3465 And sith he hath power, myght, and space,
 Lat hym tak this lady to his grace,
 For lak of routh that she nat ne dye.
- 3470 But tho the quene gan agayn replye
 And platly seide as in this matere,
 Avayleth not requeste nor preyere,
 Pyté, mercy, nor remyssyoun,
- 3475 But yif it be by this condicioun —
 That the serpent, cause of al this sorowe,
 Thorgh her labour lay his hed to borowe. *Unless
pay with its head*
- 3480 This is fynal and utter recompense
 To fynde grace for her gret offence,
 Or ellis shortly sheede blood for blood.
 And whan Grekys her answer understood,
 Al of accord in her beste wise
- Took on hem this aventurous emprise
 For love only of Ysyphilee
 And gan to ryde envyron the contré,
 By hilles, vales, roches, and ek caves,

Tercia Pars

- 3485 In dychis dirk and in olde gravis,
By every cooste cerchyng up and doun, *region searching*
Til at the last ful famous of renoun,
- ¶ The worthy knyght Parthonolopé
Was the first that happed for to se *happened*
This hydous serpent by a ryverside,
- 3490 Gret and horrible, stern and ful of pride,
Undere a rocch by a banke lowe.
And in al hast he bent a sturdy bowe
And therin sette an arowe fyled kene, *sharpened*
And thorugh the body spotted blew and grene,
- 3495 Ful myghtily he made it forto glyde,
Hent out a swerde hongyng be his syde, *Pulled; hanging*
Smoot of his hede and anon it hent
And therwithal gan the quene present, *off its; immediately took it*
Wherthorgh her sorowe parcel gan aswage.
- 3500 And thus of prowesse and of hegh corage
This manly man Parthonolopé
Hath reconciled faire Isyphilee
Unto grace fully of the quene,
Hir ire avoided and her olde tene. *bitterness*
- 3505 And by Adrastus mediacioun,
Kyng Lygurgus graunted a pardoun
To this lady, that from al daunger fre
She was restored to her liberté,
In his paleys al her lif to dwelle,
- 3510 Thogh John Bochas the contrarie telle;
For this autour affermeth out of dred
That, whan this child was by the serpent ded,
She durste not for her gret offence
Never after comen in presence *again*
- 3515 Of Lygurgus but of intencioun
Fledde anon out of that regioun:
Att herte she took the childe deth so sore.
What fille of hir I fynd can no more *happened*
Than ye han herd aforn me specifye.
- 3520 And the kyngdam, but yif bookys lye, *before; relate*
¶ Of Lygurgus was ycalled Trace. *unless; lie*
And, as I rede in another place,

The Siege of Thebes

- He was the same myghty champiou
To Athenes that kam with Palamoun
- 3525 Ageyne his brother that called was Arcyte,
Lad in his chaar with foure boyls whyte,
Upon his hed a wreth of gold ful fyn.
☞ And I fynd ek how Bachus, god of wyn,
With this kyng was whilom at debat
- 3530 Only for he pompous and elat,
Destruccioun dide to his vynys,
And for he first sett allay on wynys,
Meynte water whan they were to strong.
And this Bachus for the grete wrong
- 3535 Brak his lymys and dreynt hym in the see.
Of Lygurgus ye gete no more of me.
☞ But the trouth, yif ye lyst verryfie,
Rede *Of Goddes the Genologye*,
- 3540 Lynealy her kynrede be degrees,
Ibraunched out upon twelve trees,
Mad by Bochas de Certaldo called,
Among poetys in Ytaille stalled
Next Fraunceys Petrak swyng in certeyn.
- Now unto Grekys I wil retourne ageyn,
To telle forth shortly, yif I konne,
Of her journé that they ha begonne,
How Adrastus hath his lieve take
Of Ligurgus with his browes blake
- 3545 And departyng with Seynt John to borowe
Mad his wardes on the nexte morowe
So wel beseyn, so myghty, and so strong,
Wonder erly whan the larke song
With a trumpet warned every man
- 3550 To be redy in al the hast they kan
Fortho remwe and no letting make.
And so they han the righte way itake
Toward Thebes the Grekes everychon,
That such a nombre gadred into on
- 3555 Of worthy knyghtes nevere aforne was seyn,
Whan they in fere monstred in a pleyn.
And they ne stynt by non occasiou
- as security
Set in order; divisions
- advised
move; delay
taken
- together mustered*
- [Boccaccio's] *Genealogia deorum gentilium*
By descent; family
- Branched
Boccaccio
placed
Behind; Petrarch following
- if; confirm
- conflict
arrogant; proud
vines
dilution with water
Mixed
- Broke; drowned

Tercia Pars

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| | Til they be come even afor the toun
And pight her tentys proudly, as I rede,
Under the wallys in a grene mede. | <i>pitched</i> |
| 3565 | And whan the Thebans were besette aboute,
The manly knyghtes wold han yssyd oute
And ha scarmosshed in her lusty pride
With her foomen on the tother side.
But be byddyng of Ethiocles | <i>encircled</i>
<i>sallied forth</i>
<i>skirmished</i>
<i>enemies</i> |
| 3570 | Alle thilk nyght thei kepte hemself in pes,
Be cause only that it was so late,
With gret awayt set at every gate,
Men of armys al the nyght wakynge
On the wallys be byddyng of the kyng, | <i>watches</i> |
| 3575 | Lest ther were treynys or tresoun.
And on the tours and in the chief dongoun
He sette up men to make mortal sowns
With brasyn hornys and loude clarions,
Of ful entent the wacches forto kepe | <i>trickery or treachery</i>
<i>great tower (keep)</i> |
| | | <i>brass</i> |
| 3580 | In his warde that no man ne slepe.
And Grekys proudly al the longe nyght
Kyndled fyrys and maad ful gret lyght,
Sette up loggyng upon every syde,
Lik as they shuld ever ther abyde; | <i>part of the city</i> |
| 3585 | Compas the toune ther was no voide space
But al besette her foomen to manace.
And whilys they afor the cité laye,
On every cost they sent out to forraye,
Brente townes, thorpes, and vilages, | <i>As if; remain</i>
<i>All around; empty</i>
<i>encircled their enemy</i> |
| 3590 | With grete ravyn makyngh theyr pillages,
Spoyle and robbe and broughte hom vitaille
And al maner soortes of bestaylle —
Shep and neet — and in her cruel rage
With houndes slowe al that was savage — | <i>region; forage</i>
<i>hamlets</i>
<i>greediness</i>
<i>foodstuffs</i>
<i>kinds; beasts</i> |
| | | <i>cattle</i> |
| 3595 | Hert and hynde, bothe buk and doo,
The blake beer and the wilde roo,
The fatte swyn and the tussy boor —
Karyng al hom for the Grekes stoor,
Whete and wyn for her avauntage, | <i>wild</i>
<i>hart; hind</i>
<i>roe</i>
<i>tusked</i> |
| 3600 | Hay and otys, fodder and forage. | <i>Carrying; provision</i> |

The Siege of Thebes

	With this kalendis, as hem thynke dwe,	beginning
	Grekys gan the Thebans to salwe,	greet
	Mynistring hem occisiones felle,	<i>Giving; slaughter bitter</i>
	The sege sette, shortly forto telle,	
3605	Of ful entent in their hatful prydē,	
	For lif or deth therupon t'abide,	
	Whosoever therwith be agreved,	
	Til they fully her purpos have acheved;	
	Ther may therof be maked no relees.	cessation
3610	And of this ful war Ethiocles	
	Gan in party gretly to mervaille,	part
	Whan that he saugh the grete apparaylle	<i>preparation</i>
	Of the Grekes the cité rounde aboute,	
	And in hymself hadde a maner doute	
3615	Now at the poynt what was best to do.	
	For thilke tyme it stood with hym so	<i>that same</i>
	That to some abidyng in the toun	
	He hadde in herte gret suspecioun	
	List toward hym that they were unstable	<i>Lest; unreliable</i>
☞	And to his brother in party favorable;	
	For in the cité ther was variance,	
	Which unto hym was a gret meschaunce,	disaster
	For in his nede shortly he ne wiste	know
	Upon whom that he myghte triste,	trust
3625	For they wer not alle of on entent.	
	For which he hath for his counsale sent,	
	Al his lordes and the olde quene,	
	Which as he dempte were pur and clene,	thought
	Hool of on herte and not variable,	<i>Wholly of one</i>
3630	Of old expert and alway founde stable,	<i>experienced</i>
	Requeryng hem because they were wys	Asking
	Al openly to tellen ther avis	
	Wher it was bet pleynly in her sight	
	With his brother to treten or to fight.	<i>Whether; better</i>
3635	And some gaf a ful blunt sentence,	<i>negotiate</i>
	Which hadde of werre non experience,	
	Seyde it was best, and nat ben afferd	<i>gave</i>
	To trye his right manly with the swerd.	
	And some also that wer moor prudent	

Tercia Pars

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| 3640 | Spak unto hym by good avisement
And list nat spar but their conceyte tolde
How hit was best his covenauant forto hold
And to parforn his heeste mad toforn
To his brother lich as he was sworn, | <i>deliberation</i>
<i>did not hold back; opinion</i>
<i>agreement</i>
<i>promises; before</i> |
| 3645 | So that his word, the wors to mak hym spedē,
Be nat founde variant fro the dede,
For non hatred, rancour, neyther prydē.
And tho the queen took hym out aside, | <i>to his disadvantage</i>

<i>inappropriate</i> |
| 3650 | Tolde hym pleynly it was ful unsittynge
Swich doublenesse to fynden in a kyng,
And seide hym ek, althoh he were strong,
To his brother how he dide wrong, | <i>notice</i>
<i>if need be</i> |
| 3655 | “As al the toune wil record, in dede,
And ber witnesse, yif it kam to nede. | <i>fresh</i>
<i>Before; begun willingly</i>
<i>end</i>
<i>if; settled</i> |
| 3660 | Wherfor lat us shape another mene
In this matere whil that it is grene,
Or this quarel, gonne of volunté,
Turne in the fyn to mor adversité.
For yif it be darreyned be bataylle, | <i>in brief</i>
<i>Mars'</i>
<i>mad</i>
<i>argue</i> |
| 3665 | Who tresteth most may ful likly faille.
And it is foly be short avisement
To putte a strif in Martys jugement.
For hard it is whan a juge is wood
To tret aforn hym without loos of blood. | <i>if</i>
<i>enforce</i>
<i>Then; whether; sad</i> |
| 3670 | And yif we put our mater hool in Marte,
Which with the swerd his lawes doth coarte,
Than may hit happe, wher ye be glad or loth,
Thow and thy brother shal repente both
And many another that is her present, | <i>crime</i> |
| 3675 | Of youre trespass that ben innocent,
And many thousand in cas shal compleyn
For the debat only of yow tweyn,
And for your strif shal fynde ful unsoote.
And for thow art gynnyng, ground, and roote
Of this injurie and this gret unright,
To the goddys that herof han a sight
Thow shalt accountys and a reknyng make
For alle tho that persshyn for thi sake. | <i>bitter</i>
<i>beginning, cause</i>
<i>injustice</i>
<i>those; perish</i> |

The Siege of Thebes

	And now the cause dryven is so ferre,	<i>advanced; far</i>
3680	Sodeyn pees oyther hasty werre Moot folowe anon; for the fatal chaunce Of lif and deth dependeth in balaunce.	<i>or untimely</i> <i>Must</i> <i>hangs in the balance</i>
	And no man may be no craft restreyne That upon on platly of this tweyne	<i>by</i>
3685	The soort mot falle, lik as it doth tourne, Whosoever lawgh or ellys mourne. And thow art dryve so narowe to the stake That thow mayst nat moo delayes make	<i>one plainly; two</i> <i>chance</i>
	But fight or tret, this quarel forto fyne;	<i>constrained by circumstances</i>
3690	By non engyn thow canst it not declyne. And hasty cas, as folk seyn that be wys, Redresse requereth by ful short avys; For trete longe now avaylleth noght.	<i>negotiate; resolve</i> <i>cunning; avert</i> <i>pressing</i> <i>quick judgment</i> <i>For to debate</i>
	For to the poynt sothly thou art brought: Ouyther to kepe thy pocessiou	
3695	Or in al haste devoyde out of this toun, Wher thow therwith be wroth or wel apayd. Now note wel al that I ha sayd,	<i>withdraw</i> <i>Whether; pleased</i>
	And by my counsayl wisly condescende	<i>agree</i>
3700	Wrong, wrought of olde, newly to amende. The tyme is come — it may be non other. Wherfor in haste trete with thi brother	<i>deal</i>
	And ageyn hym make no resistance	
	But to thy lordys fully gif credence,	
3705	By whoos counsayl, sith they be so sage, Late Polymyte rejoysse his heritage. And that shal turne most to thyn avail.	<i>since</i> <i>Let</i>
	Loo, her is hool the fyn of our counsail."	
	And shortly tho for verrey ire wroth,	<i>then; true anger</i>
3710	Thouh he therto froward was and loth, Accorded is, heryng al the prees; Yif he algate shal trete for a pes, It moste be by this condicioun —	<i>opposed; unwilling</i> <i>crowd</i>
	That he wol han the domynacioun	<i>If; after all; negotiate</i>
3715	First in chief to hymself reserved, As hym thouht he hadde wel disserved, And save to hym hool the sovereynté;	<i>retain</i>

Tercia Pars

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| | And under hym in Thebes the cité
He to graunte with a right good cher
Polomytes to regne for a yer,
Than avoyde and not resoort ageyn;
For mor to cleyme was nat but in veyn.
This wold he don only for her sake,
And otherwise he wil non ende make | willingly |
| 3720 | With the Grekys, what fortune evere falle.
And fynally among his lordys alle
Ther was not on of hih nor lowgh estat
That wold gon on this ambassyat | <i>Then leave; return</i> |
| | Out of the toune, nouther for bet nor wors, | embassy |
| 3725 | Til Jocasta made sadyl her hors
And cast hersilf to gon for this treté,
To make an ende, yif it wolde be. | <i>ordered to be saddled</i>
<i>planned</i>
<i>if</i> |
| | And this was don the morowe right be tyme,
Upon the houre whan it droh to pryme. | |
| 3730 | And with hyr went hyr yonge dohtres tweyne,
Antygoné and the feyr Ymeyne,
Of hyr meyné ful many on aboute;
At the gate she was conveyed oute, | <i>her</i> |
| | And of purpos she made first hir went | <i>Ismene</i> |
| 3735 | On horsbak to kyng Adrastus tent,
He and his lordys beyng al yffere. | <i>retinue</i> |
| | And they receyve hyr with a right glad chere,
Shewyng hyr lik to hir degré | <i>way</i> |
| 3740 | On every half ful gret humanyté; | <i>together</i> |
| | Polomytes rysyng fro his place,
And humblyle his moder gan embrace, | <i>Displaying</i> |
| 3745 | Kyssede hyr and than Antigoné
And ek Ymeyne excellyng of bewté. | <i>courtesy</i> |
| | And for that they passyngly were faire, | |
| 3750 | Gret was the pres, concours, and repaire
Of the ladyes forto han a sight. | <i>crowd, gathering; assembly</i> |
| | And Jocasta procedeth anon ryght | <i>directly</i> |
| 3755 | To Adrastus hir mater to purpose,
And gan to hym opynly disclose | |
| | Th'entent and will of Ethiocles | <i>explain</i> |
| | And by what mene he desireth pes — | |

The Siege of Thebes

- To hym reserved, as she gan specifie,
 The honour hool and the regalye,
 With sceptre and croune fro hym not devyded
kingship
- 3760 But hool to hym as he hath provided
 And Polymyte, be this condicioun,
 Under hym to regnen in the toun
 As a soget, be suffraunce of his brother.
subject
otherwise
- 3765 But the Grekes thouthen al another,
 And specyaly worthy Tydeus,
~~¶~~ Pleynly affermynge it shuld nat be thus:
 For he wil have no condiciouns
 But sette asyde all excepcions,
 Nothyng reservid as in special,
possess
- 3770 But hool the lordship, regalye, and al,
 Polymytes it fully to possede,
 In Thebes crowned verrayly in dede
 As rightful kyng putte in pocessioun,
 Lich the covauntyss and convencioun
Made; sworn; sealed
repealed
force
- 3775 Imad of olde, assuryd, and asselyd,
 "Which shall not now of nwe be repelyd
 But stable and hool in his strengthe stonde.
 And lat hym so platly undyrstonde:
 And first that he devoyde hym out of toun
leave
- 3780 And delyvere the sceptre and the croun
 To his brother and mak therof no more.
 And, shortly, ellys it shal be bouht ful sore
 Or this mater brought be to an ende.
 For Grek is non that shal hennys wende
in brief, otherwise
Before
hence go
- 3785 Or that our right, which is us denied,
 With lif or deth darreyned be and tryed:
 We wil not arst fro this towne remewe.
 And yif hym lyst al this thyng eschwe
 And al meschief styntyn and appese,
settled by combat
first
if; wishes; avoid
- 3790 To either part he may do gret ese;
 Thus I mene for his avauntage:
 Delyver up hool the trewe herytage
 To his brother for a yeer t'endure
 And Grekys shal fully hym assure,
side
last
- 3795 By what bonde that hym list devise,

Tercia Pars

- The yeer complet in our beste wise
 To hym delyver ageyn pocessiou
 Withoute strif or contradiccioun,
 And to this fyn justly hald us to.
 3800 And yif it falle that he wil nat so,
 Lat hym not wayte but only after werre.
 The hour is come — we wil it not differre.
 Lo, her is al, and thus ye may reporte
 To hym ageyn, whan that ye resorte,
 3805 Fro which apoynt we cast us not to varye.”
 And yit to hym Amphiorax contrarye
 Ful pleynly saide, in conclusioun,
 This fyn shal cause a destruccioun
 Of hem echon, yif it forth procede
 3810 To be parfoumed and execute in dede.
 But thilke tyme for al his eloquence
 He had in soth but lytyl audience.
 For whersoever he ment good or ille,
 Kyng Adrastus bad hym to be stille.
 3815 And tho Jocasta, as wisdom did hyr tech,
 Humble of her port with ful softe spech,
 Gan seke menys in hyr fantasye,
 Yif she myght the ire modefyne
 Of the Grekes to make hem to enclyne
 3820 In eny wise hyr rancour forto fyne.
 She dyd hyr never and hir bysy cure.
 But tho byfel a wonder aventure,
 Cause and ground of gret confusioun,
 Grekys perturbyng and also ek the toun,
 3825 And it to telle may me not asterte.
 For which a whil my styell I mot dyverte
 And shortly telle, by descripcionioun,
 Of a tigre dwellyng in the toun,
 Which fro a kyngdam besyden adjacent
 3830 Out of Egipte was to Thebes sent.
 The whiche beest by record of scripture
 Is most swift as of his nature,
 And of kynd also most savage,
 And most cruel whan he is in his rage;
- end; hold*
happen
expect
delay
- decision; intend*
- everyone of them*
- truth*
whether
- then*
- search; mind*
If
- end*
duty; concern
then occurred
- avoid*
- writing instrument; must*
- nearby to*
- written record*
- by nature*

The Siege of Thebes

- 3835 And, as clerkys make menciou恩,
He of body resembleth the lyoun,
And lik a greyhound the mosel and the hed, *muzzle*
And of eyen as eny fyret red, *eyes; ferret*
Ek of his skyn, wryten as I fynde,
- 3840 Lich a panter conversant in Ynde *dwelling in India*
With al maner hwys and colours *hues*
And is ful oft disceyved with merours *mirrors*
By fraude of huntrys and fals apparence *trick*
Shewyd in glas withouten existence,
- 3845 Whan his kyndles arn be sleight ytake *young; taken*
And he deceyved may no rescus make. *rescue*
And lik a lombe was this tygre tame,
Ageynys kynde, myn autour writ the same. *Unnaturally*
And this beest, mervaillous to se,
- 3850 Was sent to Ymeyne and Antigoné, *person*
Which unto hem dide gret confort
And cowde playe and make good dispot,
Lik a whelp that is but yong of age,
And to no wight dide no damage,
- 3855 No mor in soth than doth a litil hound; *sorrow*
And it was worth many hundred pound
Unto the kyng, for ay in his grevaunce
Ther was nothing did hym mor plesaunce,
That for no tresour it myght not be bought.
- 3860 For whan that he was pensif or in thought,
It putt hym out of his hevynesse.
And thilke tyme, the story doth expresse,
That Jocasta treded for a pes *at the same time*
This tame tygre in party rekkeles *negotiated*
3865 Out at the gates, in sight of many a man,
Into the felde wildely out ran,
And casuelly rennyng to and fro,
In and oute, as doth a tame roo; *heedless*
Grekys wenyng, that wer yong of age,
- 3870 That this tygre hadde be savage
And cruelly besettynge al the place
Round aboute gan hym to enhace
Til he was ded and slayen in the feld. *roe*
 thinking
 must be
 surrounding
 chase

Tercia Pars

- 3875 The slauhter of whom whan that they byheld,
 The proude Thebans, which on the wallys stood,
 They ronne doun ful furious and wood,
 Wenying he had be slayen of despit,
 Takynge her hors withoute mor respit,
 Believing; spite delay
 Fully in purpos with Grekys forto fighte,
 The tigres dethe t'avengen yif they myghte.
 And out they rood withoute governaylle
 And ful proudly Grekes gan assaylle,
 And of hatred and ful heghe desdayne
 Fyl upon hem that han the tygre slayne,
 And cruelly qwitten hem her mede,
 That many Greke in the grene mede
 By the force and the grete myght
 Of her foomen lay slayen in this fight.
 The tigres deth so dere they aboughte,
 So mortally Thebanys on hem wroughte
 That al the host in the feld liggyng
 Was astounyd of this sodeyn thyng.
 And in this whil, of rancour rekkeles,
 Out of Thebes rood Ethiocles
 And with hym ek the worthy kyng Tremour,
 Of his hond a noble werreour,
 That made Grekes to forsak her place
 And to her tentys gan hem to enchace.
 And myd the feld as thei togyder mette
 On horsbak with speres sharpe whette
 Of verray hate and envious pryde,
 Ful many on was ded on outhers syde.
 The whiche thyng whan Tideus espieth,
☞ Wood as lyoun to horsbak he hieth,
 As he that was never a del afferd,
 But ran on hem and met hem in the berd;
 And maugré hem, in his cruelté
 He made hem flee hom to her cité,
 Hem pursuyng of ful dedly hate,
 That many on lay slayen at the gate,
 Gapyng uprightys with her woundys wyde,
 That uttrelly they durste not abyde
 governance assault gave them their reward meadow enemies paid for lodging animosity pursue in the middle of honed saw hastened not at all afraid face to face despite

The Siege of Thebes

	Tofor the swerd of this Tydeus.	<i>Before</i>
	He was on hem so passing furius,	
3915	So many Theban he roof unto the herte That, whan Jocasta the slauhtre gan adverte, Polymytes she gan prey ful fayre To make Grekis hom ageyn repaire And that they wolden styntyn to assaylle	<i>cut</i> <i>observe</i> <i>return</i> <i>cease</i> <i>that same</i>
3920	For thilke day and cessen her bataylle. At whoos requeste pleynly and preyeire And at reverence of his moder dere, Polymytes, her herte to conforte, Grekes made hom ageyn resorte	
3925	And Tydeus to stynten of his chas. And they of Thebes, hasting a gret pas, Ful trist and hevy ben entred into toun. And for the tygre, in conclusioun, As ye han herd, first began this stryff,	<i>return</i> <i>hastening</i> <i>sorrowful</i>
3930	That many Theban that day lost his lyff And recurlees hath yolden up the breth In th'avengyng of the tygres deth. And al this while duely as she ought,	<i>beyond remedy; yielded</i>
3935	The quene Jocasta humbly besought Kyng Adrastus only of his grace, Some mene way wisly to purchace To make a pees atwene the bretheren tweyn And the treté so prudently ordeyne	<i>means; procure</i>
3940	On either party that no blood be shad. And this Adrastus, avise and right sad, For Grekis party answer gaf anon That other ende shortly gete she non, Lich as the lordis fully ben avisyd,	<i>agreement; construct</i> <i>thoughtful; serious</i> <i>gave immediately</i> <i>outcome</i>
3945	Than Tydeus hath aforne devisyd. And whan she saugh it may non other be, She lieve tok and hom to the cyté She is repeired, havyng to hyr guyde Polymytes rydyng be her syde.	<i>said</i> <i>returned</i>
3950	And Tideus ladde Antigoné, And of Archadye Prothonolopé The worthy kyng did his bysy peyne	

Tercia Pars

- To ben attendaunt upon fair Ymeyne,
 Whos hert she hath to her servise luryd;
 And he ageyn hath purtraied and fyguryd
 3955 Myd of his brest, which lightly may not passe,
 Hooly the feturis of her fresshly face.
 Hym thouht she was so faire a creature,
 And though that he durst hym not discure,
 Yit in his hert as ferforth as he kan,
 3960 He hath avowed to ben her trwe man,
 Unwist to hir pleynly and unknowe
 How he was marked with Cupides bowe,
 With his arwe sodeynly werreyed.
 And to the gate the ladyes conveyed
 3965 Ben entred in, for it drow to eve,
 Grekys of hem taking tho her leve;
 Thogh some of hem wer sory to departe,
 Yit of wisdam they durste not juparte
 Under a conduit to entren into toun,
 3970 Lest it turned to her confusion.
 Thouh some bookes the contrarye seyn,
 But myn autoour is platly therageyn
 And affermeth in his opynyoun
 That Tydeus of hegh discreciooun,
 3975 Of wilfulness nor of no folye,
 Ne wold as tho put in jupartie
 Nowther hymself nor non of his ferys.
 And the ladyes with her hevenly cherys,
 Angelik of look and contenance,
 3980 Lich as it is put in remembrance,
 At her entryng from Grekys into toun,
 Polomytes of gret affeccioun
 The quen bysouhte thilke nyght not fyne
 For t'asseye yif she myght enclyne
 3985 Ethiocles, of conscience and ryght,
 To kepe covenauant, as he hath behight
 Ful yore agon with the surplusage,
 List the contrayre tourne to damage,
 First of hymself and many an other mo.
 3990 And thus fro Thebes Grekys ben ago
- enticed
drawn; imagined
*In his heart; vanish
features*
- dared not reveal himself*
- Unbeknownst*
- struck
- then
- safe conduct
destruction
- opposed
- then
companions
faces
- cease
try
- promised
Long ago; remaining part
- more

The Siege of Thebes

	To her tentys and rest hem al that nyght. And Lucyna the mone shon ful bright Withinne Thebes on the chief dongoun, Whan Jocasta made relacioun	<i>castle keep</i>
3995	Unto the kyng and told hym al the guyse, How that Grekys uttrely despysse His profre made be fals collusioun, Only excepte the convencioun,	<i>manner</i>
	Of old engrocyd by gret purvyance,	<i>disdain</i>
4000	Which is enrollyd and put in remembrance, Upon which they fynaly wil reste: Hym counsaillinge, hir thouhte for the beste, To conforme hym to that he was bounde,	<i>offer</i>
	Lyst in the fyn falsnesse hym confounde.	<i>agreement</i>
4005	But al hir counsayl he set it at no prys; He dempt hymself so prudent and so wys, For he was wilful and he was indurat, And in his hert of malice obstynat,	<i>written out in legal form; foresight</i>
	And outtrelly avised in his thouht	<i>written in a roll</i>
4010	Withinne Thebes his brother get right nouht. And in his errour thus I lete him dwelle. And of Grekis forth I wil you telle, Which al that nyght kepte hem silve cloos.	<i>obey</i>
	And on the morow whan Tytan up aroos,	<i>Lest; end; destroy</i>
4015	They armyd hem and gan hem redy make, And of assent han the felde itake, With the Thebans that day out of doute Fortho fighten, yif they yssen oute.	<i>value</i>
	And Adrastus in ful thrifty wise	<i>stubborn</i>
4020	In the feld his wardys gan devise, As he that was of all deceytes war. And richely armyd in his char Amphiorax cam with his meyné,	<i>hatred</i>
	Ful renomyd of antiquité,	<i>determined</i>
4025	And wel expert because he was old. And whil that Grekys, as I have you told, Wer bysiest her wardys to ordeyne, Myd of the feld bifyl a cas sodeyne,	<i>nothing at all</i>
¶	Ful unhappy, lothsom, and odyble,	<i>confined</i>
		<i>the sun</i>
		<i>taken</i>
		<i>sally forth</i>
		<i>divisions</i>
		<i>chariot</i>
		<i>retinue</i>
		<i>renowned</i>
		<i>experienced</i>
		<i>set out in formation</i>
		<i>In the middle; unexpected event</i>
		<i>shocking; hateful</i>

Tercia Pars

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| 4030 | For liche a thing that wer invisible
This olde bisshop with char and hors certeyn
Disaperyd and no mor was seyne.
Only of fate which no man can repelle,
The erth opnede and he fille to helle, | <i>resist</i> |
| 4035 | With all his folk that upon hym abood.
And sodeynly the grunde on which he stood
Closyd ageyn and togydre shette,
That never after Grekis with hym mette.
And thus the devel for his old outrages, | <i>attended</i> |
| 4040 | Lich his decert, paied hym his wages.
For he ful lowe is discendid doun
Into the dirk and blake regyoun
Wher that Pluto is crownyd and ystallyd
With his quene Proserpina icallyd. | <i>offenses</i>
<i>According to his merit</i> |
| 4045 | With whom this bisshop hath made his mansioun
Perpetually as for his guerdoun.
Lo, here the mede of ydolatrie,
Of rytyds old and fals mawmetry. | <i>enthroned</i>
<i>dwelling</i>
<i>reward</i>
<i>reward</i> |
| 4050 | Lo, what avayllen incantaciouns
Of exorsismes and conjurisouns;
What stood hym stede his nigromancye,
Calculacioun, or astronomye; | <i>idolatry</i>
<i>availed him his necromancy</i> |
| 4055 | What vaylled hym the heavenly manciouns,
Diverse aspectis, or constellaciouns?
The ende is nat bot sorowe and meschaunce
Of hem that setten her outre affiaunce | <i>astrological houses</i>
<i>positions of the stars</i> |
| 4060 | In swich werkes superstitious,
Or trist on hem: he is ungracious.
Record I take, shortly forto telle,
Of this bysshop sonken doun to helle, | <i>total belief</i>
<i>trust; lacking in God's grace</i>
<i>Evidence</i> |
| 4065 | Whos woeful ende about in every cost
Swich a rumour hath maked in the host
That the noys of this uncouth thyng
Is yronne and come to the kyng,
How this vengeance is unwarly falle. | <i>part</i>
<i>rumor; strange</i>
<i>run</i>
<i>unexpectedly happened</i>
<i>at once</i>
<i>people</i> |
| | And he anon made a trumpet calle
Alle his puple out of the feld ageyn;
And everychon assembled on a pleyn | |

The Siege of Thebes

	Tofore the kyng and also rounde aboute.	<i>Before</i>
4070	Every man of his lyf in doute Ful pitously gan to frowne and loure, List that the grounde hem alle wil devoure And swalowen hem in his dirke kave; And they ne can no recur hem to save.	<i>look gloomy; be mournful</i> <i>Lest</i> <i>know no remedy</i>
4075	For nouther force nor manhode may availle In swiche meschier the valewe of a maylle. For he that was wisest and koude most To serche and seke thorghout al the host, Amphiorax, whan that he lest wende,	<i>misfortune; value; halfpenny</i> <i>knew</i>
4080	To helle is sonken and coude hym not diffende (To hym the tyme unknownen and unwist), In whom whilom was al the Grekis trist, Her hool confort, and her affiaunce. But all attynys for this sodeyn chaunce	<i>least expected</i> <i>protect</i> <i>unseen</i> <i>once; confidence</i> <i>faith</i> <i>at once; turn of events</i>
4085	And this meschier they gan hem to dispere, Hom to Grece that they wil repeyre. This was the purpoos of hem everichon. And on the wallys of Thebes lay her fon, Rejoysing hem of this unhappy eure,	<i>return</i> <i>intention</i> <i>enemies</i> <i>fate</i>
4090	Wenyng therby gretly to recure. And on her tours as they loken oute, They on Grekys enviously gan shoute, And of despit and gret enmyté Bad hem foolys gon hom to her contré,	<i>Thinking; win back lost ground</i>
4095	Sith they han lost her confort and socour, Her fals prophete and her dyvynour Wherthorugh her partie gretly is apeyryd. And in this wise Grekys disespeyryd, Dempte pleynly be tokens evidente	<i>malice</i> <i>fools</i> <i>Since</i>
4100	This cas was falle by som enchauntement, By wichecraft or fals sorcerye, Ageynes which may be no remedye, Tristy diffence, helpe, nor socour. And whan Adrastus herde this clamour,	<i>Through which; weakened</i> <i>despaired</i> <i>Judged</i>
4105	He bysy was ageyn this perturbance To provyde some maner chevysaunce And to hym calleth such counsayl as he wiste,	<i>remedy</i>

Tercia Pars

- For lyf or deth that he myghte tryste,
Requeryng hem but in wordys fewe
4110 In this meschief her mocioun to shewe
And declare by good avisement
What to Grekys was most expedient
To remedyen — and mak no delay —
The uncouth noyse and the gret affray
4115 That Grekys made with clamour importune
And newe and newe evere in on contune.
And they that wern most manly and most wise
Shortly saide it wer a cowardysse
The hegh emprise that they han undirtake
4120 For dred of deth so sodeynly forsake.
It wer to hem a perpetuel shame
And outre hyndryng unto Grekys name;
And better it wer to every werreyour
Manly to deye with worship and honour
4125 Than lik a coward with the lyf endure.
For onys shamyd, hard is to recure
His name ageyn, of what estat he be.
And sith Grekes of old antiquyté,
As of knyghthode, who so list tak hed,
4130 Ben so famous and so renomed,
Yif now of newe the shyning of her fame
Eclipsid were with eny spotte of blame,
It were a thyng uncouth forto here,
Of whoes renoun the bemes yit ben clere
4135 Thorgh al the world, wher as they han passyd,
And ben not yit dyrkyd nor diffacyd
By no report nouther on se ne londe
Thyng to forsake that they tok on honde.
“And by example of our progenitours,
4140 That whilom wern so manly conquerours,
Toforn that we into Grece wende,
Of thyng bygon lat us make an ende
And parte nat nor severe from this toun
Til it be brought to destruccioun,
4145 Wallys, tourres crestyd and batailled
And for werre strongly apparayld
- Asking
misfortune their suggestion
deliberation*
- strange rumor; fear
persistent
again and again; continue*
- enterprise*
- great discredit*
- shamed; recover
reputation; whatever status*
- If; suddenly; reputation
Obscured
curious to hear*
- darkened; marred*
- undertook*
- go
begun*
- towers crenelated*

The Siege of Thebes

	Be first doune bete that nothyng be seyn,	beaten
	But al togyder with the erthe pleyn	
	Be low leyde or that we resorte,	<i>levelled to the earth before; return</i>
4150	That afterward men may of us reporte	<i>say</i>
	That we bygan we knyghtly han achievyd	<i>That what</i>
	Upon our foon with worship unrepravyd."	<i>enemies; blameless</i>
	This was the counsaylle shortly and th'avis	
	Of the Grekys that manly wern and wys,	
4155	That nevere aforn wer markyd with no blame,	<i>such</i>
	And specialy swich as drede shame	<i>intend; happen</i>
	And fully caste what fortune ever tyde	
	On her purpoos to the ende abyde,	
	That on no part her honure not apalle.	<i>fade</i>
4160	And to this counsaille Grekys on and alle	<i>Agreed; success</i>
	Ben condescendyd and, for mor happy sped,	<i>recently</i>
	Insted of hym that was so late ded,	
	Amphiorax buryed depe in helle	
	That koude whilom to the Grekys telle	<i>could once</i>
4165	Of thyngges hid how it shal falle aforn,	<i>hidden; beforehand</i>
	Instede of whom now they han hym lorn,	<i>[him] whom; lost</i>
¶	They casten hem wisly to purchace	<i>thought; obtain</i>
	Some prudent man to occupye his place,	
	That in swich thyng myght hem most availle	<i>profit</i>
4170	Thorgh mystery of his dyvynaylle	<i>divination</i>
	By craft of sorte or of profecye,	<i>drawing lots</i>
	Yif eny swich they couden out espye.	<i>could discover</i>
	And among al, her purpoos to atteyne,	
	As I fynde, they han chosyn tweyne,	<i>two</i>
4175	Most renomed of hem everychon.	
	And Menolippus callyd was the ton,	<i>the one</i>
	And Terdymus ek the tother highte.	<i>the other was called</i>
	And for he hadde most favour in her sighte,	<i>their</i>
	This Terdymus was chosen and preferryd.	
4180	And in her choys Grekys han not erryd,	
	For whilom he lernyd his emprise	<i>long ago; task</i>
	Of his maister Amphiorax the wyse	
	And was disciple undyr his doctrine.	
	And of entent that he shal termyne	<i>state</i>
4185	Unto Grekys thynges that shal falle	<i>occur</i>

Tercia Pars

	And as a bisshop mytred in his stalle,	wearing a mitre; bishop's seat in a choir
	They don for him in many uncouth wyse	exotic manners
	In the temple to goddys sacrificise,	
	And thus conformed and stallyd in his se,	confirmed; installed; seat
4190	A fewe dayes stood in his degré, After his mayster with ful gret honour, Of Grekys chose to be successour.	chosen
	And al this tyme, in story as is told, Ful gret meschife of hungre, thrust, and cold	trouble
4195	And of Thebans as they issen oute Lay many on slayen in the route On outhier part, of fortune as they mette — Her mortal swerdys wer so sharpe whette. And Tydeus among hem of the toun	company either side deadly; keenly honed
4200	Fro day to day pleyeth the lyoun So cruelly, wher so that he rood, That Theban non aforn his face abood. He made of hem, thorgh his high renown, So gret slaughter and occisioun	wherever before; remained killing
4205	That as the deth fro his swerd they fledde, And who cam nexte leid his lyf to wedde. He qwitte hymself so lik a manly knyght That wher he went he putte hem to the flight, And maugré hem, in his craulté,	as a pledge behaved
4210	He droff hem hom into her cité, Hem purswyng proudly to the gate, That unto hym they bar so dedly hate That they hem caste by sleyht or some engyn, To bryngyn hym unwarly to hys fyn	ferocity drove
4215	And leyde awayt for hym day and nyght. But, o allas, this noble manly knyght, Upon a day as he gan hem enchace  And mortally made hem lese her place And sued hem almost to the toun —	planned; sleight; deceit without warning; end in ambush
4220	That cause was of his destruccioun. For on, allas, that on the wallys stood, Which al that day upon hym abood, With a quarel sharpe heded for his sake Markede hym with a bowe of brake	pursue lose followed waited bolt from a crossbow sharpened Wounded; arbalest

The Siege of Thebes

4225	So cruelly, makynge non arrest Tyl it was passyd bothe bak and brest. Wherthorugh, allas, ther was non other red Nor lechecraft but that he mot be ded — Ther may therof be maked non delayes.	<i>stop</i>
4230	And yit was he holdyn in his dayes The beste knyght and most manly man, As myn autour wel reherce kan. But for al that was ther no dyffence Ageyn the strok of dethys violence.	<i>Through which; remedy healing</i>
4235	And Bochas writ, er he was fully ded, He was by Grekys presentyd with the hed Of hym that gaf his laste fatal wounde; And he was callyd, lik as it is founde, Menolippus, I can non other telle.	<i>Boccaccio head gave</i>
4240	But thilke day Thebans wex so felle Upon Grekys that under her cyté The manly kyng Parthanolopé Islayen was evene afor the gatys; And ther also, armyd bright in platys,	<i>no more grew; deadly</i>
4245	The famous kyng callyd Ypomedoun The same day, as mad is menciouin, On horsbak manly as he faught At the brigge evene upon the draught, Besette with pres casuelly was drownyd.	<i>Slain; before armor plate</i>
4250	And thus fortune hath on Grekys frownyd On every syde thilk unhappy day. But al the maner tellen I ne may Of her fightyng nor her slaughter in soth, Mor to declare than myn autour doth.	<i>drawbridge Surrounded; combatants accidentally frowned</i>
4255	But thilke day I fynde as ye may sen, Whan Phebus passyd was merydyen And fro the south westward gan hym drawe, His gylte tressys to bathe in the wawe, The Theban kyng felle Ethyocles,	<i>zenith</i>
4260	Rote of unreste and causer of unpes, The slauhter of Grekys whan that he beheld, Armyd in steel he kam out into feld, Ful desirous in that sodeyn hete	<i>waves cruel Source (Root); discord</i>

Tercia Pars

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| 4265 | Polomytes at good leyser to mete,
Syngulerly with hym to han ado.
For in this world he hatede no man so
(He sat so nygh emprented in his herte).
Whoos comyng out his brother gan adverte
Upon his stede in the opposit | <i>without haste</i>
<i>Singly; battle</i> |
| 4270 | And hadde ageynward also gret delyt
To meten hym, yif fortune assente —
Th'envious fyr so her hertys brente
With haate cankered of unkynde blood.
And lik two tygres in her rage wood, | <i>near impressed</i>
<i>His; noticed</i> |
| 4275 | With speerys sharpe grounde for the nonys,
So as they ranne and mette both attonyss,
Polomytes thorgh platys, mayle, and sheeld
Roof hym thorghout and smette hym into feld.
But whan he sauh the stremys of his blood | <i>in return</i> |
| 4280 | Raylle about in maner of a flood,
Al sodeynly of compassioun
From his coursere he alighte doun,
And brotherly, with a pitous face,
To save his lyf gan hym to embrace, | <i>burned</i>
<i>envenomed by unnatural</i>
<i>furious</i> |
| 4285 | And from his wounde of newe affeccioun,
Ful bysy was to pulle out the trunchoun,
Of love only handlyng hym ryght softe.
But, o allas, whil he lay alofte,
Ful yrounly Ethiocles the felle, | <i>keenly sharpened for the occasion</i>
<i>at once</i> |
| 4290 | Of al this sorowe verraye sours and welle,
With a dagger in al his peynys smerte
His brother smoot unwarily to the herte,
Which al her lyf hadde be so wrothe.
And thus the Thebans were yslawe bothe | <i>armor plates, chain mail</i>
<i>Pierced; smote; to the ground</i> |
| 4295 | At the entré evene aforn the toun.
But Grekys tho ben availed doun
Out of the feld, the worthy knyghtys alle.
And in Thebes loud as eny shalle
The cry aroos whan her kyng was ded. | <i>Flow</i> |
| 4300 | And to the gatys armyd foot and hed,
Out of the toun cam many proud Theban.
And some of hem upon the wallys ran | <i>warhorse</i> |
| | | <i>to remove his armor</i> |
| | | <i>out of</i> |
| | | <i>fragment of a spear</i> |
| | | <i>stood above</i> |
| | | <i>savage</i> |
| | | <i>origin</i> |
| | | <i>sharp</i> |
| | | <i>without warning</i> |
| | | <i>Who; angry</i> |
| | | <i>slain</i> |
| | | <i>then; defeated</i> |
| | | <i>shawm (musical instrument)</i> |

The Siege of Thebes

	And gan to shoute, that pité was to here.	
	And they without, of her lyf in were,	<i>on the outside; doubt</i>
4305	Without confort or consolacioun	<i>In despair</i>
	Disespeyred ronne hom to the toun,	
	And Grekys folowen after at the bak,	
	That many on that day goth to wrak.	<i>perished</i>
	And as her foomen proudly hem assaylle,	<i>enemies</i>
4310	Ful many Grekys thorgh platys and thorgh maylle	<i>armor plate; chain mail</i>
	Was shette thorghout, pressyng at the wallys,	<i>shot</i>
	And betyn of with grete rounde ballys,	<i>off</i>
	That her lay on and another yonder.	
	And the noyse, hydousher than thonder,	<i>more hideous</i>
4315	Of gonneshot and arblastys ek	<i>cross bows</i>
	So loude outronge that many worthy Grek	
	Ther lost his lyf — they wern on hem so felle.	<i>cruel</i>
	And at the gatys, shortly forto telle,	
	As Grekys prees to entren the cyté,	
4320	They of Thebes in her craulté	
	With hem mette ful furious and wood;	<i>angry</i>
	And mortally as they ageyn hem stood,	<i>against</i>
	Men myghte sen sperys shyvere asonder,	<i>see</i>
	That to byhold it was a verray wonder	
4325	How they foyne with daggers and with swerdys	<i>thrust</i>
	Thorgh the vyser amyng at the berdys,	<i>visers aiming; face</i>
	Percyng also thorgh the rownde maylles,	<i>metal rings</i>
	Rent out peces of ther aventaylles,	<i>Cut; throat pieces</i>
	That nouht availleth the myghty geseran,	<i>light coat of armor</i>
4330	Thorgh brest and nekke that the sperys ran.	
	Her wepnys wern so sharpe grounde and whet	<i>keenly sharpened</i>
	In ther armure that ther was no let.	<i>mail; obstacle</i>
	For ther laye on troden under foote	
	And yonde on percyd to the herte roote;	<i>stabbed to the heart</i>
4335	Her lith on ded and ther another lame.	
	This was the play and the mortal game	
	Atwene Thebans and the Grekys proude,	
	That the swowys and the cryes loude	<i>sighs</i>
	Of hem that lay and yolden up the goost	<i>yielded</i>
4340	Was herd ful fer aboute in many cost.	<i>region</i>
	And at the gatys and sayllyng of the wal	<i>assault</i>

Tercia Pars

	Islayen was al the blood royal, Both of the toun and of Grekys lond And all the worthy knyghtys of her hond.	<i>Slain</i>
4345	And of lordys, yif I shal not feyne, On Grekys syde alyve wer but tweyne, Kyng Adrastus and Campaneus. That day to hem was so ungracius. And for Titan westryd was so lowe	<i>side</i> <i>if; deceive</i> <i>unfortunate</i> <i>Titan (the sun) passed to the west</i>
4350	That no man myght unnethys other knowe, Tho of the toun shet her gatys faste With barrys rounde maked forto laste, In which no wight kerfe may nor hewe. And Adrastus with a Grekys fewe	<i>scarcely</i> <i>Those</i> <i>bars; made</i> <i>cut</i>
4355	Repeyred is hom unto his tent, And al that nyght he wastyd hath and spent For his unhappe in sorowe compleynng. And they in Thebes the nexte day swyng Her devoyre did and her bysy cure,	<i>Returned</i> <i>misfortune</i> <i>following</i> <i>duties</i>
4360	To ordeyne and make a sepulture For her kyng yslayen in the feeld, And offred up his baner and his sheld, His helme, his swerd, and also his penoun, Therinne of gold ibetyn a dragoun,	<i>slain</i> <i>embossed</i>
4365	High in the temple that men myghe sen. And Jocasta, that infortunyd quene, Her sones deth soore gan compleyne; And also ek her yonge doghtres tweyne, Both Ymeyne and Antigonee,	<i>ill-fortuned</i> <i>lament</i>
4370	Cryden and wepte that ptyé was to se. But to her sorowes that was no refut. And thus the cité bar and destitut, Havyng no wight to govern hem nor guye, For ded and slain was al the chyvalrye	<i>remedy</i> <i>barren</i> <i>knighthood</i>
4375	And no wight left almost in the toun To regne on hem by successiouin. But for they saugh and tokyn also hed, Withoutte this that they hadde an hed In the cyté thei may not dure longe,	<i>because</i> <i>Unless; leader</i>
4380	For though so be comownerys be stronge	<i>commoners</i>

The Siege of Thebes

	With multitude and have no governaylle Of an hed, ful lytyl may avaylle. Therfor they han unto her socour Ychosyn hem a newe governour,	<i>governance</i>
4385	An olde tyraunt that callyd was Creon, Ful acceptable to hem everichon, And crownyd hym withoute mor lettyng To regne in Thebes and to ben her kyng,	<i>Chosen</i>
	Althogh he hadde no title by dissent But by fre choys made in parlement.	<i>right</i>
4390	And ther to hym, lik as it is founde, By her lygeaunce of newe they wer bounde For to be trewe, whyl the cité stood, To hym only with body and with good.	<i>choice</i>
4395	Thus they wer sworn and suryd everichon; And he ageynward to save hem from her foon, And hem dyffende with al his ful myght, And meynten hem in al manere ryght.	<i>pledged every one in return; enemies</i>
	This was th'acord as in sentement.	<i>Maintain substance</i>
4400	And in this whil hath Adrastus sent From the siege of Thebes the cyté A woundyd knyght hom to his contré Thorgh al Grece pleynly to declare	<i>tell</i>
	Al the slaughter and the evyl fare	<i>fortune</i>
4405	Of worthy Grekys, ryght as it is falle, And how that he hath lost his lordys alle Att mor meschief than eny man can mouth. And whan this thyng was in Grece couth,	<i>happened</i>
	Fyrst to Argyve and Deyphlee	<i>trouble</i>
4410	And to the ladies ek in the contré And of provynces aboute hem adjacent, They come doun, al be on assent, Worthy queenys and with hem ek duchessys	<i>known</i>
	And other ek that callyd were contessys;	
4415	And alle the ladyes and wymmen of degré Ben assembled in Arge the cyté, Lik as I rede, and alle in clothes blake, That to byhold the sorowe that they make,	<i>nearby</i>
	It were a deth to eny man alyve.	

Tercia Pars

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| 4420 | And yif I shuld by and by descriye
Ther tendre wepyng and ther woeful sownys,
Her complayntys and lamentacionys,
Her ofte swounyng with facys ded and pale,
Theroft I myghte make a newe tale, | |
| 4425 | Almost a day yow to occupye.
And as myn autour doth clerly certifie,
Thorghoute Grece from all the rigoions
Out of cities and of royal touns
Cam alle the ladies and wymmen of estat, | declare |
| 4430 | Ful hevy cheryd and disconsolat,
To this assemblé, aforne as I you tolde,
In purpoos fully her journé forto holde
Toward Thebes, thys sorwful creaturys,
Ther to bywaylle her woeful aventurys, | gloomy
before
undertake
these |
| 4435 | T'aquyte hemself of trouthe in wommanhede
To her lordys, which in the feld lay dede.
And as the story liketh to declare,
Al this journé they went on foote bare,
Lik as they hadde gon on pylgrymage, | barefoot |
| 4440 | In tokyn of mournyng barbyd the visage,
Wympled echon and in burnet weedys, ¹
Nat in charys drawen forth with steedys,
Nor on palfreys blake nowther white:
The sely wymmen koude hem not delite | covered their faces |
| 4445 | To hold her way but barfote forth they wente;
So feithfully everichon they ment,
Thorgh hevynesse diffacyd of her hwe;
And as I fynde, they weryn alle trwe.
Now was not that a wonder forto se | intended
sadness marred; complexion |
| 4450 | So many trewe out of a contré,
Attonys gadryd in a companye,
And feithful alle, bookys can not lye,
Both in her port and inward in menyng?
Unto my doom it was an uncouth thyng, | faithful women
At once gathered |
| 4455 | Among a thowsand wymen outhir tweyne | behavior
<i>In my judgment; marvelous</i>
<i>or two</i> |

¹ Wearing a wimple each one and in dark-brown clothes

The Siege of Thebes

	To fynden noon that kowde in herte feyne.	deceive
	It was a mervaylle nat ofte seyn aforne.	
	For seelde in feldys groweth eny corn,	seldom
	But yif some wede spryng up ther among.	if
4460	Men laye wynys whan they be to strong,	dilute wines
	But her trouth was meynte with non allayes;	mixed; alloys (impurities)
	They were so trewe founde at alle assayes.	proofs
	And they ne stynt upon her journé	cease
	Tyl that they cam ther they wolde be,	where
4465	Wher Adrastus, wrytyn as I fynde,	
	Lay in his tent al of colour ynde,	indigo blue
	Gretly mervaylyd whan that he biheld	
	The nombre of hem sprad thorgh al the feld	
	Clad all in blak and barfoot everychon.	
4470	Out of his tent he dressyd hym anon,	proceeded; immediately
	Upon his hand the kyng Campaneus;	At his side
	Ful trist in herte and face right pitous,	
	Ageyn the wommen forth they went yfere.	Toward; together
	And to byhold the woeful hevy chere,	
4475	The woeful cryes also, whan they mette,	
	The sorful sighys in her brestys shette,	enclosed
	The teerys newe distillyng on her facys,	trickling down
	And the swownyng in many sondry placys	
	Whan they her lordys alyve not ne founde,	
4480	But in the feeld thorgh girt with many wounde,	pierced
	Lay stark upright, pleynly to endite,	
	With dedly eyen tournyd up the white,	
	Who made sorowe or felt her herte ryve	break
	For hir lorde but the faire Argyve?	
4485	Who can now wepe but Deyphylee,	
	Tydeus for she ne myghte se?	
	Whoos constretyss were so fel and kene	Their agonies; bitter
	That Adrastus myghte not sustene	bear
¶	To byholde the ladyes so compleyne,	
4490	Wisshing his herte parted wer on tweyne.	
	And yit, alas, bothen eve and morowe	
	O thyng ther was that doubled al her sorowe —	
	That old Creon, fader of fellonye,	treachery
	Ne wold suffre thorgh his tyrannyne	

Tercia Pars

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| 4495 | The dede bodies be buried nowther brente
But with beestis and houndys to be rente.
He made hem all upon an hepe be leyde.
Wherof the wymmen, trist and evyl apeyde
For verray dool, as it was no wonder, | <i>nor burned</i>

<i>sorrowful and ill-content</i> |
| 4500 | Her hertys felt almost ryve asonder.
And as my mayster Chaucer list endite,
Al clad in blak with her wyples whyte,
With gret honour and dieu reverence,
In the temple of the goddesse Clemence | <i>sorrow</i>

<i>torn</i>

<i>Clemency</i> |
| 4505 | They abood the space of fourtenyght,
Tyl Theseus the noble worthy knyght,
Duk of Athenys, with his chyvalry
Repeyred hom out of Femynye
And with hym ladde ful feir upon to sene, | <i>knights</i>
<i>Returned</i>
<i>led</i> |
| 4510 | Thorgh his manhod, Ypolita the quene
And her suster callyd Emelye.
And whan thies wommen gon first espye
This worthy duk as he cam rydynge,
Kyng Adrastus, hem alle conveyinge, | <i>Hippolyta</i>

<i>these; did; see</i> |
| 4515 | The wommen brought unto his presence,
Which hym bysought to give hem audience,
And all attonyss swownyng in the place,
Ful humbly preiden hym of grace
To rewe on hem her harmys to redresse. | <i>Who</i>
<i>fainting</i> |
| 4520 | But yif ye list to se the gentyllesse
Of Theseus and how he hath hym born,
Yif ye remembre ye han herde it to forn
Wel rehersyd at Depforth in the vale,
In the bygynnyng of the <i>Knyghtys Tale</i> : | <i>if; wish</i>
<i>acted</i>
<i>If</i>
<i>Deptford</i> |
| ¶ | First how that he, whan he herd hem speke,
For verray routh felt his herte breke;
And her sorowys whan he gan adverte,
From his courser doun anon he sterte,
Hem confortyng in ful good entente, | <i>pity</i>
<i>understood</i>
<i>dismounted</i> |
| 4530 | And in his armys he hem all up hente.
The <i>Knyghtys Tale</i> reherseth every del
Fro poynt to poynt, yif ye looke wel,
And how this duk withoute more abood | <i>seized</i>
<i>describes wholly</i>

<i>delay</i> |

The Siege of Thebes

- 4535 The same day toward Thebes rood,
 Ful lik in soth a worthy conquerour
 And in his hoost of chyvalrye the flour;
 And fynally, to spekyn of thys thing,
 With old Creon that was of Thebes kyng *who*
 How that he faught and slough hym lik a knyght *slew*
- 4540 And all his host putte unto the flyght.
 Yit, as some auctours make menciouin,
 Or Theseus entred into toun, *Before*
 The women first with pikkeys and with mallys,
 With gret labour bete doun the wallys. *picks; hammers*
- 4545 And in her writyng also as they sayn,
 Campaneus was on the wallys slain; *their*
 With cast of ston he was so overlade, *overwhelmed*
 For whom Adrastus such a sorowe made
 That no man myght reles hym of his peyne. *relieve*
- 4550 And Jocasta with her doghtres tweyne,
 Ful woofully oppressyd of her cherys, *mournful; appearance*
 To Athenes wer sent as prysonerys.
 What fil of hem more can I not seyn.
 But Theseus, myn autour writ certeyn, *happened to them*
- 4555 Out of the feld or he fro Thebes wente,
 He bete it downe and the howsys brente, *before*
 The puple slough for al her crying loude,
 Maad her wallys and her towrys proude *razed; burned*
 Rounde aboute, evene upon a rowe, *one after another*
- 4560 With the soyle to be lade ful lowe, *laid*
 That nought was left but the soyle al bare.
 And to the wommen in reles of her care, *relief; sorrow*
☞ The bonys of her lordys that were slain *bones; who*
 This worthy duk restoryd hath agayn.
- 4565 But what shuld I any lenger dwelle
 The olde ryytys by and by to telle; *rituals*
 Nor th'obsequies in ordre to devise;
 Nor to declare the manere and the guyse
 How the bodyes wer to asshes brent;
- 4570 Nor of the gommes in the flaumbe spent *gums burned as incense*
 To make the ayre swetter of relees,
 As frauncencence, mirre and aloes; *for relief*
 frankincense, myrrh; aloes

Tercia Pars

- Nor how the wommen round aboute stood,
Some with mylk and some also with blood
4575 And some of hem with urnes made of gold,
Whan the asshes fully weren made cold,
T'enclosyn hem of gret affeccioun
And bern hem hom into her regiou; *bear*
And how that other ful dedly of her loke *pale in appearance*
- 4580 For love only of the bonys tooke,
Hem to kepe for a remenbraunce:
That to reherce every observaunce *describe*
That was don in the fyres bright,
The wakeplayes duryng al the nyght; *funeral games*
- 4585 Nor of the wrastlyng to telle poyst be poyst
Of hem that wern nakyd and ennoyt; *oiled*
How everiche other lugge gan and shake; *pull*
Nor how the wommen han her leve take
Of Theseus with ful gret humblesse,
- 4590 Thankyng hym of his worthynesse *wished; to take pity*
That hym lyst upon her woo to rewe;
And how that he, his fredam to renewe, *generosity to show again*
With the wommen, of his hegh largesse,
Ypartyd hath ek of his richesse; *Divided*
- 4595 And how this duk Thebes ek forsoke *left*
And to Athenys the righte waye tooke
With laurer crownyd in signe of victory *laurel*
And the palme of conquest and of glorie,
Did his honour duely to Marte;
- 4600 And how the wymmen wepte whan they departe
With kyng Adrastus hom ageyn to Arge —
To tellyn al wer to gret a charge,
 And ek also, as ye shal understande, *beginning I agreed to*
At the gynnyng I took no mor on honde
- 4605 Be my promys, in conclusioun, *tell*
But to reherce the destruccioun
Of myghty Thebes shortly and no more.
And thus Adrastus, with his lokkys hore, *grey hair*
Stille abood in Arge his cyté
- 4610 Unto his ende: ye gete no more of me, *Except; write*
Sauf, as myn auctour liketh to compyle,

The Siege of Thebes

- After that he lyved but a while;
 For he was old er the siege gan,
 And thought and sorowe so upon hym ran,
 The which in soth shortyd hath his dayes.
 And, tyme sette, deth maketh no delayes,
 And al his joye passid was and gon;
 For of his lordys alyve was not on
 But slain at Thebes, ye knownen al the cas.
- And whan this kyng in Arge buryed was
 Ful ryaly with gret solempnyté,
 It was acountyd, in bookys ye may se,
 Four hundred yeer, as mad is mencioune,
 Tofoor the beelding and fundacioun
 Of gret Rome so ryal and so large,
 Whan the ladies departyden from Arge
 To her contrés ful trest and desolat.
 Lo, her the fyn of contek and debat.
 Lo, her the myght of Mars the foward sterre.
- Lo, what it is for to gynne a werre.
 How it concludeth ensample ye may se
 First of Grekys and next of the cyté,
 For owther parte hath matere to compleyne.
 And in her strif ye may se thyngges tweyne:
 The worthy blood of al Grece spilt;
 And Thebes ek, of Amphion first bylt,
 Withoute recur brought unto ruyne
 And with the soyle made pleyn as a lyne,
 To wyldernesse turnyd and desert,
- And Grekys ek falle into povert,
 Both of her men and also of her good;
 For fynally al the gentyl blood
 Was shad out ther, her woundys wer so wyde,
 To los fynal unto outhir syde.
- For in the werre is non excepcioun
 Of hegh estat nor lowh condicioun
 But as fortune and fate, both yffere,
 List to dispose with her double chere
 And Bellona the goddes in hir char
 Aforn provydeth: wherfor ech man be war
- old*
shortened
once the time is determined
reckoned
Before; building
sad
strife; conflict
unfavorable star
either; cause
remedy
level
detriment; either
together
Wish to arrange; double face
Bellona (goddess of war); chariot
Beforehand

Tercia Pars

	Unavysed a werre to bygynne, For no man woot who shal lese or wynne. And hard it is whan eyther party leseth. And douteles nowther of hem cheseth That they most in al swich mortal rage, Maugré her lust, felyn gret damage. It may nat be by mannys myght restreyned. And werre in soth was never first ordeyned But for synne folkis to chastyse.	<i>Without deliberation knows loses neither; perceives must Despite their wishes, experience punish tell began companions cockle sown scarcely Is envious source; contend beginning trouble one; say Everyone bears The beginning; as witness beginning learned by</i>
4655	¶ And as the Byble trewly kan devyse, Hegh in hevene of pryd and surquedye, Lucyfer, fader of envie, The olde serpent, he levyathan, Was the first that ever werre gan,	
4660	Whan Michael, the heavenly champioun, With his feerys venqwisshyd the dragoun And to helle cast hym downe ful lowe.	
4665	¶ The whence serpent hath the cokkyl sowe Thorgh al erth of envye and debat,	
4670	That unnethys is ther non estat Withoutte stryf can lyve in charité. For every man of hegh and lough degré Envyeth now that other shulde thryve.	
4675	And ground and cause why that men so stryve Is coveytise and fals ambicioun, That everich wold han domynacioun Over other and trede hym undyr foote, Which of al sorowe gynnyng is and roote.	
4680	And Crist recordyth — red Luk and ye may se — For lak of love what meschief ther shal be. For o puple, as he doth devyse, Agayn another of hate shal aryse, And after tellith what dyvisions	
4685	Ther shal be atwixe regyouns, Everiche bysy other to oppresse. And al swich strif, as he berth wytnesse, Kalendys ben, I take his word to borowe, And a gynnyng of meschief and of sorowe:	
	Men have it founde be experience.	

The Siege of Thebes

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| 4690 | But the venom and the violence
Of strif, of werre, of contek, and debat
That maketh londys bare and desolat
Shal be proscript and voyded out of place,
And Martys swerd shal no more manace, | <i>conflict</i> |
| 4695 | Nor his sper grevous to sustene
Shal now no mor whettyd be so kene,
 Nor he no mor shal his hauberk shake.
But love and pees in hertys shal awake,
And charité both in length and brede | <i>prohibited</i>

<i>sharpened</i>
<i>coat of mail</i> |
| 4700 | Of newe shal her bryghte beemys sprede
Thorgh grace only in dyvers naciouns,
Fortho reforme atwixe regyouns
Pees and quyet, concord and unyté.
And He that is both on and two and thre, | <i>Again</i> |
| 4705 | Ek thre in on and sovereyn lord of pes,
Which in this exil for our sake ches,
For love only our troubles to termyne,
For to be born of a pur virgyne:
And lat us prey to Hym that is most good, | <i>chose</i> |
| 4710 | Which for mankynde shadde His herte blood,
Thorgh byseching of that heavenly quene,
Wyff and moder and a mayde clene,
To sende us pes her in this lyf present,
And of oure synnys parfit amendement, | <i>end</i> |
| 4715 | And joye eternal whan we hennes wende.
Of my tale thus I make an ende. | <i>here</i>
<i>correction</i>
<i>hence</i> |

Explicit.

Here endeth the destruccioun of Thebes.

Explanatory Notes

Prologus

- 1–64 **Latin marginalia:** *Phebus in Ariete.* Lydgate's opening to *The Siege of Thebes* echoes the opening of the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* (I[A]1–18). The difference is that Chaucer's periodic sentence connects the renewal of nature and spirituality in a complex but controlled syntactic structure, while Lydgate's syntax collapses under the weight of successive clauses. Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p. 153, suggests that Lydgate's effort at imitation reveals his confidence rather than diffidence, based on the achievement of *Troy Book*. Erdmann (2.95) argues that lines 18–19 ("The tyme in soth whan Canterbury talys / Complet and told at many sondry stage") characteristically omit the verb "to be"; they also mark a point at which Lydgate enters the literary time scheme of the spring convention and Chaucer's evidently popular text. In *Troy Book*, Lydgate tries and similarly fails to imitate Chaucer's opening; see 1.3907–43 for direct imitation and 3.1–36 for a reprise of the structural technique. Among the important early textual witnesses to *The Siege of Thebes*, Bodley MS 776 provides an indirect commentary on Lydgate's imitation; it lacks the opening eight lines and a portion from the middle of the passage yet still conveys the essential tone and fictional premise. Johnstone Parr, "Astronomical Dating for Some of Lydgate's Poems," *PMLA* 67 (1952), 253–56, interprets the astrological references to yield the date of 27 April 1421 for Lydgate's return pilgrimage. Hammond, p. 369, observes that Chaucer places the sun in Aries, while Lydgate indicates the pilgrims' later departure from Canterbury by saying that the sun had passed into Taurus, the next zodiacal sign.
- 3 **Latin marginalia:** *Saturnus in Virgine.* As in Chaucer, Saturn is both a god and a planet. In The Knight's Tale, Palamon claims that he is in prison because of Saturn (I[A]1328), and later it is Saturn who resolves the strife between Venus and Mars by imposing a violent outcome (I[A]2438–78) to the tale. In Statius (*Thebaid* 2.356–62), Polynices invokes Saturn as a figure of justice, as he contemplates his return to Thebes from his year of exile. It is Jupiter (*Thebaid* 1.196–247) who loses his patience with Theban and Greek transgressions and promises strife.

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- 7–8 **Latin marginalia:** *Jubiter in capite Cancri.* The gloss occurs three lines early because of marginal decoration.
- 19 *Complet and told.* Koeppel proposed to emend to *Complet are tolde* in order to furnish a verb.
- 22–25 Lydgate's taxonomy of tales recalls the Host's intention of introducing "myrthe" and "disport" to the Canterbury Pilgrimage (General Prologue I[A]761–76).
- 28–30 **Marginalia:** *The Cook, the Millere, and the Reve.* Lydgate mistakenly has the Reeve drunk, along with the Cook and Miller; see Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, p. 75.
- 32 Lydgate mistakenly ascribes the baldness of the Miller in The Reeve's Tale (I[A]3935) to the Pardoner.
- 33 **Marginalia:** *Pardonere.*
- 34 Lydgate mistakenly ascribes the Summoner's "cherubinnes face" (I[A]624) to the Pardoner. Recent scholarship associates such inaccuracies with Lydgate's oblique challenge to Chaucer's authority rather than mere accidents. See Pearsall, "Lydgate as Innovator" and "Chaucer and Lydgate"; Ebin, "Chaucer, Lydgate, and the 'Myrie Tale,'" and *John Lydgate*; Bowers, "*The Tale of Beryn and The Siege of Thebes: Alternative Ideas of the Canterbury Tales*"; Allen; and Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*. Erdmann (2: 96) points out that Lydgate turns to The Knight's Tale with more precision at the end of the poem (lines 4463–540). Spearing, "Lydgate's Canterbury Tale," p. 337, counts some thirty allusions there to the opening, background story of The Knight's Tale.
- 35 In *The Canterbury Tales*, the conflict is between the Summoner and the Friar.
- 39–57 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Chaucer.* Lydgate's praise of Chaucer recalls similar passages in *Troy Book* 2.4677–719, 3.550–57, 3.4234–63, 5.3519–43. Lydgate does not actually name Chaucer until line 4501. Spearing, "Lydgate's Canterbury Tale," says of Chaucer's absence from the frametale of Lydgate's poem: "the implicit claim of the *Siege* is that in it Lydgate *becomes* the father whose place he usurps" (p. 338).

Explanatory Notes to Prologus

- 43 *making.* “Making” is formally correct poetic composition, as distinct from the creative activity associated with “poetry.” Chaucer typically describes his craft as “making.”
- 52 *his sugrid mouth.* In *Troy Book*, Lydgate invokes Orpheus “wyth thy n hony swete / Sugrest tongis of rhetoricyens” (Prol.56–57), but quickly contrasts the “dillygence of cronycleris” (Prol.246) with Homer’s “veyn fables” (Prol.263): “With sugred wordes under hony soote / His galle is hidde lowe by the rote” (Prol.277–78). Thereafter, in the narrative of *Troy Book*, “sugre” and “sugred wordis” denote treacherous, deceitful speech in the private and public spheres. Blake, “Caxton and Chaucer,” pp. 32–33, notes that this passage is adapted by William Caxton in his praise of Chaucer in the prologue to his second edition (c. 1484) of *The Canterbury Tales*.
- 53–54 *keping in substaunce / The sentence hool withoute variance.* Lydgate’s remark on Chaucer as a poet seeking to write true history echoes his praise of Guido delle Colonne (Prol.359–60) and his hope for his own poem at the end of *Troy Book* (5.3540–43).
- 55–56 *the chaf . . . the trewe piked greyn.* Compare the end of The Nun’s Priest’s Tale: “Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille” (VII[B²]3443).
- 59–60 **Marginalia:** ¶ *At the Tabarde in Suthwerk.* The original departure point for the pilgrims in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* (I[A]20).
- 65 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The Hoste*
- 73–74 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Discryving of the Monk. a palfrey slender, long, and lene.* In *The Canterbury Tales*, the Clerk’s horse is described as lean (I[A]287).
- 75 *With rusty brydel mad nat for the sale.* Bowers glosses the latter part of the line to mean “not worth selling,” which is certainly possible given the reference to his man’s “voide male” (“empty purse”) in line 76. But the sense of *sale* is more likely “hall,” particularly of a palace, castle, or mansion (see MED *sale*, noun 1.a). Unlike Chaucer’s Monk, who would dress well and prefers the King’s feast (roasted swan), Lydgate’s modest Monk, with his lean horse and rusty bridle, does not yearn for or affect the pretensions of court. The MED does not cite this specific line, but neither does it cite “for the sale” as an idiom for selling.

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- 79 *her governour*. Lydgate uses the same term for the Host as Chaucer does in the General Prologue (I[A]813).
- 81–82 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The wordes of the Host to the Monk.*
- 82–83 *Daun Pers, / Daun Domynyk, Dan Godfrey, or Clement.* The Host addresses Lydgate in the same manner as he does the clerics among the Canterbury pilgrims; compare the address to the Monk: “Wher shal I calle yow my lord daun John, / or daun Thomas, or elles daun Albon” (VII[B²]1929–30) and later “Wherfore, sire Monk, daun Piers by youre name, / I pray yow hertely telle us somwhat elles” (VII[B²]2792–93). The Monk’s Tale is a *de casibus* tragedy that begins with the fall of Lucifer and Adam, moves through ancient figures like Alexander and Julius Caesar, and ends with some of Chaucer’s contemporaries; its theme and tone complement the story of Thebes.
- 85 *ne belle*. The bridle of Chaucer’s Monk is adorned with bells that “Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere / And eke as loude as dooth the chapel belle” (I[A]170–71).
- 90 *a wonder thredbar hood*. Compare the description of the Clerk in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*: “Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy” (I[A]290).
- 92 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Lydgate.*
- 93 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Monk of Bery.*
- 96 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The wordes of the Host.*
- 101 *franchemole*. A dish consisting of a mixture of ingredients boiled or roasted in a sheep’s stomach (MED). Other fifteenth-century sources gloss it as a pudding or *lucanica* (a smoked sausage).
- tansey*: a pudding or omelet with tansy (MED), a plant of the genus Tanacetum.
- froyse*: a kind of pancake containing chopped meat or fish (MED).
- 104 *in a feynt pasture*. Bowers (p. 21) cites the Host’s chiding the monk for grazing in a “gentil pasture” (VII[B²]1933).

Explanatory Notes to Prologus

- 114 *collik passioun.* Bowers (p. 21) cites the passage on *colica passio* in John Trevisa's fourteenth-century translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum*.
- 116 ff. The Host's dietary advice sounds a bit like Pertelote's to the indulgent Chauntecleer in The Nun's Priest's Tale as she would govern what he puts in his "crop" (VII[B²]2961–67).
- 122 *orloger.* Compare *Parliament of Fowls*, line 350: "The kok, that orloge is of thordes lyte," and The Nun's Priest's Tale, where Chauntecleer's crowing is said to be a more certain time piece than "an abbey orlogge" (VII[B²]2854). In *Troy Book*, the phrase "the cok, comoun astrologer" (1.2813) is a direct echo of *Troilus and Criseyde* 3.1415, the scene after the lovers' consummation.
- 126 *by kokkis blood.* An echo of the Host's oath "for cokkes bones" in *The Canterbury Tales* (IX[H]9 and X[I]29) and the Parson's reproof of swearing (X[I]591).
- 128–45 In bringing Lydgate under the "newe lawe" of the pilgrim "compenye" and having him set aside his monastic rule, the Host repeats the substance of the agreement that founds the temporary community and creates the dramatic frame of *The Canterbury Tales* (I[A]769–818).
- 143–44 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How oure Host spak to Daun John.*
- 164–66 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How oure Host bad Daun John telle a tale.*
- 165 *jape.* The term means both a trick and a joke. In the link introducing the Pardoner's Prologue, the Host asks the Pardoner, "Telle us som myrthe or japes right anon" (VI[C]319). Erdmann (2:100) also cites the Cook's Prologue (I[A]4343); compare the Pardoner: "a jape or a tale" (X[I]1024a). Both senses of the term converge in Nicholas' intent to "amenden al the jape" (I[A]3799) at the end of The Miller's Tale.
- 167 *But preche not of non holynesse.* Chaucer's Host, instructing the Clerk to recount "som myrie tale" (IV[E]9) and "som murie thyng of aventures" (IV[E]15), admonishes him: "But precheth nat, as freres doon in Lente" (IV[E]12).
- 168 *some tale of myrthe or of gladnesse.* Erdmann (2:100) notes the Host's words to Chaucer at the beginning of Sir Thopas: "Telle us a tale of myrthe, and that anon" (VII[B²]706); compare VII(B²)964, VII(B²)3449, VIII(G)597, and X(I)46. Ebin,

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“Chaucer, Lydgate, and the ‘Myrie Tale,’” p. 331, argues that Lydgate extended Chaucer’s concept of a tale of “solaas” and “sentence” by adding the element of a mirror or moral speculum with practical as well as spiritual benefits; compare Ebin, *John Lydgate*, pp. 57–58.

Prima Pars

- 188 Upon the tyme of worthy Josué. Orosius’ *Historiarum adversum paganos libri vii* is the model for a universal history aligning Biblical and classical events. Erdmann (2:100) cites Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium* 2.63 on calculations about the founding of Thebes.
- 199–227 Erdmann (2:100) points out that the source Lydgate actually is referring to as *myn auctour and Bochas bothe two* is Boccaccio’s *Genealogie deorum gentilium* 5.30. Boccaccio is the source for much of the mythology that Lydgate adds or amplifies. Koeppel (pp. 23–24) points out that Thomas Warton identified Boccaccio as Lydgate’s source in his *History of English Poetry* (1774–81). Clogan, “Imagining the City of Thebes in Fifteenth-Century England” (p. 161), suggests the alternative that Lydgate’s mention of Amphion’s song could have come from Lactantius Placidus’ commentary on the *Thebaid* (Boccaccio’s source) or from a gloss to Statius.
- 200–03 **Marginalia:** *How Kyng Amphyoun was the first that bilt the cyté of Thebes be the swetnesse of his soune.* On Amphion’s raising of the walls of Thebes by the sweet harmonies of the harp (lines 201–10), see also Chaucer’s The Manciple’s Tale, where Phebus’ music is said to surpass that of Amphioun “That with his syngyng walled that citee” (IX[H]117). Chaucer also alludes to Amphioun in The Knight’s Tale, when Arcite laments, “Allas, ybrought is to confusioun / The blood roial of Cadme and Amphioun” (I[A]1545–46).
- 212–15 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The exposicioun of John Bochas upon this derk poysie.* In the poetic treatise that comprises Books 14–15 of the *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, Boccaccio insists that one of the defining traits of poetry is its allegorical covering, which is designed to hide meaning from common readers.
- 215–16 Sense requires “He” as the subject of *Seith* or for *Seith* to be ignored and *Gaf* to be construed as the main verb.

Explanatory Notes to Prima Pars

- 222–24 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The significacioun of the harpe of Mercure.*
- 231–36 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Kyng Amphion be mediacioun of his soft spech wan the love and the hertes of the puple.*
- 234–39 The power of Amphion’s song, which is the *crafty speche* of prudence (line 226), recalls Priam’s rebuilding of Troy and the corresponding political allegiance that he instills in the craftsmen who become its citizens (*Troy Book* 2.479–1066). Ebin, *John Lydgate*, p. 53, remarks that Lydgate goes past his source in Boccaccio’s *Genealogie deorum gentilium* to sing with “crafty speech” to demonstrate the triumph of words over arms.
- 244–85 Lydgate’s excursus on the duties of kingship is consistent with the advice John Gower gives in the Prologue and Book 7 of his *Confessio Amantis* and with precepts Lydgate sets out early, in *Troy Book*, and late in his career, in his translation of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secreta Secretorum*. Allen sees two of Lydgate’s explicit themes as “the maintenance of cordial relations among those in positions of power and the mutual cooperation between monarch and populace, with the initiative borne by the monarch” (p. 124). Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate* (p. 112), counts some 22 instances (555 lines) in *The Siege of Thebes* where Lydgate offers advice to royalty. On the danger and practical nature of such rhetoric, see Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Council in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), and Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).
- 246 **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Nota.*
- 248–51 **Marginalia:** ¶ *What availeth to a kyng or to a prince to ben goodly and benygne of his port to his puple.*
- 265–68 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the poor puple supporten and beren up the estat of a kyng.*
- 276 **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Nota.*
- 277–80 **Marginalia:** ¶ *What the goodlihede of a prince avayleth to wynne the hertes of hys puple.*
- 286–87 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Ensample of Kyng Amphioun.*

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- 293–305 Erdmann (2:102) points out that Lydgate confuses the details of the white ox in Ovid's account of Cadmus (*Metamorphoses* 3.1–137) with the story of Dido's founding Carthage.
- 294–97 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How aftere the opynyoun of some auctours Cadmus bilt first the cité of Thebes.*
- 303–08 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the contré of Boece toke first his name of a bolys skyn after called Thebes.*
- 309–13 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Kyng Cadmus was exiled out of Thebes be prowesse of Kynge Amphyoun.*
- 319 *clerkes.* Erdmann (2:102) points out that the reference is to Boccaccio. In *Troy Book* (Prol.147–225), clerks preserve both the “pleyne trouthe” and the reputation of heroes against the corrosive power of time.
- 330–33 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the lyne of Amphioun be discent was conveied to Kyng Layus.*
- 339–40 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Kyng Layus and Jocasta hys wiff.*
- 343–44 These lines are iambic tetrameter.
- 368 *The chyldes fate and disposicioun.* Astral determinism is a position that Christian writers from Augustine onwards rejected, though it remained a topic of speculation for poets like Bernardus Silvestris in his *Cosmographia*, *Experimentarius*, and *Mathematicus* (the last a story of fated patricide based on pseudo-Quintilian's *Declamatio Maior* 4). Laius' consultation with his diviners reflects the late-medieval interest in both the philosophical problems of the ancient world and its cultural practices; see Alastair Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982), chapters 1–2.
- 369–73 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the astronomyens and phylisophres of Thebes calked out the fate of Edyppus.*
- 370 *The root ytake at the ascendent.* The *root* (Latin *radix*) is the time from which the astrological tables were calculated for a particular location. The *ascendent* is the first and most powerful astrological house that the sun enters in its twenty-four hour circuit.

Explanatory Notes to Prima Pars

- 380 *yeeres collecte. Anni collecti* are astrological tables showing a planet's position in twenty-year cycles, as distinct from those for single years (*anni expansi*). See Chaucer's *The Franklin's Tale* V(F)1275, and his *Treatise on the Astrolabe* 2.44–45 (supplementary propositions) for the means of calculating positions according to degrees, minutes, seconds, and small fractions.
- 383 *eche aspecte and lookes ek dyvers.* Aspect is “the relative position, described in angular distance, of one planet or sign to another at a certain time” (MED), regarded as a good or evil influence; *lookes* is merely a repetition of *aspecte*.
- 385 **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Nota.*
- 386–90 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The cursed constellacioun and indisposicioun of the hevene in the nativyté of Edyppus.* J. Parr, “The Horoscope of Oedipus in Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes*” (p. 122), concludes that Lydgate does not present a technically exact horoscope for Oedipus but constructs instead an arrangement of planets — Saturn and Mars with Venus waning — that would convey the inevitability of patricide rhetorically.
- 388 *Satourn.* The Knight’s Tale (I[A]2443–69) emphasizes Saturn’s melancholic character; see also Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), pp. 159–95.
- 392 *The same hour.* Compare phrasing at line 1057.
- 393 **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Nota.*
- 394–98 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the fate of Edippus disposed that he shulde sleen his owne fadere.*
- 396 The syntax requires “was” to be understood: “the clerks’ judgment was that his father shall be slain.”
- 442–47 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the hunteys of Kyng Poliboun fonde the chyld in the forest and presented hym to the kynge.*
- 465–66 Spearing, “Lydgate’s Canterbury Tale,” p. 351, notes that Lydgate’s mention that Polyboun lacks an heir surprisingly echoes the narrator’s remark about Criseyde:

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“But wheither that she children hadde or noon, / I rede it naught, therfore I late it goon” (*Troilus and Criseyde* 1.132–33).

- 482–83 The pairing of *Contrarie* and *Froward* recurs in lines 1033, 1340, 3178; compare 2895–97.
- 538–40 *And within a spirit ful unclene, / Be fraude only and fals collusioun, / Answere gaf to every questioun.* Compare Lydgate’s excursus on idolatry in *Troy Book* 2.5472–74, as Agamemnon sends Achilles and Pirithous to consult the Delphic oracle: “And therin was, thorough the devels sleighe, / A spirit unclene, be false illusioun, / That gaf answere to every question.” Spearing, “Lydgate’s Canterbury Tale,” pp. 357–58, finds the attitude close to that in the Franklin’s Tale: “swiche illusiouns and swiche meschaunces / As hethen folke useden in thilke dayes” (V[F]1292–93). On idolatry, see below, lines 4047–54.
- 566 *a maner tornement.* The tournament that Laius holds recalls Theseus’ tournament in The Knight’s Tale in its dual aim of proving chivalric worth and promoting reputation (I[A]2106–16).
- 579–81 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Edippus slogh his fader of ignoraunce at the castel.*
- 581 *cruelly hym slogh.* Compare Troilus’ death at the hands of Achilles: “Despitously hym slough the fierse Achille” (*Troilus and Criseyde* 5.1806).
- 611–15 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Edippus passed by the hyll wher the monstre lay that was called Spynx.*
- 619–21 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The descripcioune of the foule monstre.*
- 660–62 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Of the problem that Spynx putte to Edippus.*
- 680 *in his manly herte.* The phrase is repeated later in the description of Tydeus at the ambush (line 2175).
- 697–700 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Egippus expounded the problem that Sphynx put to hym.*
- 726–35 Erdmann (2:105) regards the sentence as a series of run-on clauses, but the syntax is elliptical rather than broken: no man may escape the truth that, when Fortune’s wheel turns, it does no good for anyone to resist further when he sees his time end

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and Atropos cuts the life-thread that Clotho first wove. The sentence comes to a full stop here.

- 809–16 In conceding that Oedipus was ignorant when he married Jocasta yet suffered punishment and overthrow, Lydgate interprets the myth according to Boethian Fortune. In the *Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius explains Fortune as the confluence of remote sources that the individual cannot foresee or adequately understand.
- 823 *I am wery mor therof to write.* Compare Chaucer's expression of exasperation in *The Legend of Good Women*: "I am agroted herebyforn / To wryte of hem that ben in love forsworn" (line 2454–55).
- 831 *Clyo nor Calyopé.* Chaucer calls upon these two muses in the proems to books 2 and 3 of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Clio, muse of history, to help him "storie" the courtship of Criseyde; and Calliope, muse of epic poetry, to help him recount the consummation of their love. Lydgate's point here is that Oedipus' marriage will not be blessed by "hevenly armonye" (line 830), regardless of the telling.
- 837 *Marcian ynamed de Capelle.* Martianus Capella was the fifth-century North African writer who composed the *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, an encyclopedia of the Seven Liberal Arts prefaced by the allegorical story of the wedding of Philology and Mercury. Chaucer makes the wedding a point of satiric contrast for the marriage of January and May in The Merchant's Tale (IV[E]1732–41).
- 853–56 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The infortunat folk that weren at the weddyng: Cerebus, Herebus, Nygh[t] and her thre doghtren, Drede, Fraude, Trecherie, Tresoun, Poverté, Indygence, Nede, Deth, Cruel Mars.*
- 869 *Fraternal Hate.* Compare Statius, *Thebaid* 1.1: "Fraternas acies."
- 870–72 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Alle thise folk weren at the wedding of Edyppus and Jocasta.*
- 873 *To make the towne desolat and bare.* Repeated at line 4372. The image of the desolate city is taken from the opening of the Book of Lamentations traditionally ascribed to Jeremiah. Dante uses it to represent the death of Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova* (ch. xxviii). In the *Filostrato*, Boccaccio revises Dante's use of the figure in order to signify the absence of his fictitious lover and Criseida's empty house after she has left Troy and abandoned Troiolo. Chaucer employs Boccaccio's image to

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describe Criseyde's "paleys desolat" (5.540–53). Compare *Anelida and Arcite* lines 57–63 for the image in Chaucer's summary of the carnage of the Theban expedition (Simpson, p. 28).

- 994 **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Tragedia Senece de Edippo rege Thebarum.* The *Oedipus* written by Lucius Annaeus Seneca follows the main lines of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* but adds spectacular scenes such as occult rituals and Jocasta's death on stage.
- 1009 *devoide both of love and drede.* Lydgate recalls the phrasing that describes the relation of the Lombard prince Walter to his nobles and people at the beginning of Chaucer's The Clerk's Tale: "Biloved and drad" (IV[E]69). Compare line 1205, where the phrasing is applied to Adrastus as a monarch who holds power by virtue and popular consent.
- 1010 *whan Edippus for meschief was thus dede.* Lydgate follows the narrative of the prose romances. In Statius, Oedipus is alive when Creon comes to power following the deaths of Etiocles and Polynices.
- 1020 **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Nota.*
- 1021–26 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How every man oght of dieuté to do reverence to fader and modere, or ellis ther wil folowe vengeaunce.*
- 1025–38 This sentence has no control over syntax; from line 1033 onwards, it is a sequence of elliptical clauses.
- 1046b **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Secunda pars.*

Secunda Pars

- 1047 *Bowntoun on the Ble.* In the frametale of *The Canterbury Tales*, the Second Nun's life of St. Cecilia has just ended when the Canon's Yeoman overtakes the pilgrims at Boghtoun under Blee (VIII[G]556), which is located about five miles from Canterbury. Lydgate imagines the pilgrims now returning to London as he tells his tale of Thebes. They have already passed the locations where the Manciple and Parson told their tales on their way to Becket's shrine.

Explanatory Notes to Secunda Pars

- 1050 *Of the clok that it drogh to nyne.* The time-telling trope resonates with Chaucer's time-telling passages, one in the Introduction to The Man of Law's Tale, where Harry Bailly urges the pilgrims on because it is already 10 o'clock and time is slipping away, and another just outside Canterbury as the Parson is called on to tell his tale. Lydgate's pilgrims are off to a good start as it is only 9 o'clock and Lydgate has already finished the first part of his triptych tale.
- 1054–56 *Zephyrus . . . hoolsom eir.* Another allusion to *The Canterbury Tales*. Compare the opening lines of the General Prologue, particularly I(A)5–18.
- 1088–89 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The controvercy of the bretheren.*
- 1104–30 Simpson remarks that a “bureaucratic” and clerical wisdom is undone by the knightly interests of Eteocles and Polynices.
- 1121–22 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The convencioun of the brotheren.*
- 1161–70 Polynices' journey recapitulates Oedipus' earlier journey.
- 1190–92 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Polymytes cam into the lond of Arge.*
- 1195 *Chysoun.* Adrastus was King of Sicyon.
- 1196 *Chaloun.* Adrastus is the son of Talaus: “senior Talaionides” (*Thebaid* 2.141); see also Hyginus, *Fabulae* 68A.1, 69, 69A.1, 70.
- 1211 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Deyphylé.*
- 1212 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Adrastus.*
- 1222–24 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The drem of Kyng Adrastus of a bor and a lyoun.*
- 1266 *Tidyus.* As Erdmann points out (2:108–09), Lydgate and his sources are uncertain about the details of Tydeus' exile. Tydeus' fratricide, mentioned in line 1271 but unemphasized in Lydgate's poem, ironically reinforces the theme of internecine conflict. His first meeting with Polynices leads to violence, but they reconcile as allies and brothers-in-law.

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- 1270–81 Statius refers briefly to Tydeus' killing of his brother (*Thebaid* 2.402–03, 2.452–54).
- 1349 *pompous and ellat.* The phrase is applied later to another heroic knight, in a mythological excursus on Lycurgus (line 3530); compare *Troy Book* 1.3110, 4.250, 5.37.
- 1352–54 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Tydeus and Polomyte striffor her loggyng.*
- 1374–86 Lydgate's equation of Adrastus with Theseus in Chaucer's The Knight's Tale is indicated by the repetition of the phrase *Withoute juge* (lines 1366, 1382; compare I[A]1712: "Withouten juge or oother officere").
- 1408–29 In the *Thebaid* 1.679–92, Polynices identifies himself by mentioning Cadmus, Thebes, and Jocasta. Adrastus tells him that the rest of the story is well known, adding that his house has its own sins and that posterity does not bear the blame of its ancestor.
- 1437 *Cusshewes.* A cuisse is a piece of armor that covers the thighs with plate armor front and back. Greaves are armor for the lower leg. Lydgate describes the inverse scene in *Troy Book* (3.50), where the knights arm themselves with the same pieces as mentioned here.
- 1460 *Lucyfer.* Lydgate seems to mean Lucifer as the sun, as Erdmann indicates in his gloss, but normal Middle English usage construes him as the morning star. Compare Chaucer's *Boece* 3.m1.9 and *Troilus and Criseyde* 3.1417.
- 1484 *his arowes of gold and not of stiel.* Cupid's arrows representing courtly virtues and vices are mentioned in the *Roman de la rose*. Compare Chaucer's *Romaunt* 946–47: "But iren was ther noon ne steell, / For al was gold."
- 1488 *Depe yficed the poynt of remembraunce.* Compare Anelida's complaint in *Anelida and Arcite*, which laments Arcite's betrayal (lines 211, 350).
- 1499 *spices pleynly and the wyn.* Spices were taken with wine. Compare The Squire's Tale V(F)291–94 and *The Legend of Good Women*, line 1110.
- 1502–05 *Touchyng her reste . . . Demeth ye lovers . . . in my boke.* Lydgate's deferential trope originates in Chaucer. See, e.g., *Troilus and Criseyde* 3.1310–16. Lydgate picks up

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the phrase “the grete worthynesse” from *Troilus and Criseyde* 3.1316 in his line 1509.

- 1532 *feeldys*. The field is the surface of the shield on which a charge of heraldic device is displayed.
- 1541 *lik as writ Bochas. Genealogie deorum gentilium* 2.41.
- 1562–65 Lydgate uses the device of *occupatio* in a manner reminiscent of The Knight’s Tale and alluding closely to The Squire’s Tale (V[F]65–68), where the Squire in fact demonstrates his inability to control the figure rhetorically. Unlike Chaucer’s narrators, Lydgate adheres to the ideal of brevity. A *sotyltee* is an ornamental device used at fine banquets, sometimes made of sugar and consumed, but sometimes also a table decoration that might establish the motif of the feast.
- 1615–21 Adrastus’ plan to divide his kingdom between Polynices and Tydeus so that he can pursue *the lust of my desyris* (line 1617) and *myn ese* (line 1621) recalls Walter’s governance before his marriage to Griselda in The Clerk’s Tale as much as King Lear’s disastrous division of his realm in Shakespeare’s play. Allen, p. 125, suggests that Lydgate may be drawing on the ironic lesson of *Troilus and Criseyde* that human plans can be thwarted by the malice of others.
- 1629 *verray gentyl knyght*. Compare Chaucer’s phrasing in his idealizing portrait of the Knight in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*: “He was a veray, parfit gentil knyght” (I[A]72). Lydgate idealizes Tydeus, suppressing the details of his cannibalism as he dies on the battlefield; see below lines 4235–37.
- 1663–73 Another Chaucerian example of *occupatio*. See note to lines 1562–65.
- 1669–70 *th’amerous lookes . . . leyd doune lyne and hokes*. The notion that lines with hooks stream from the eyes of lovers to ensnare others lies at the heart of courtly love traditions. See Andreas Capellanus, *De amore*, 1.3. Relying on Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* 10.1.5, Andreas traces the origin of the word “love” (*amor*) to the word for “hook” (*hamus*): *Nam qui amat captus est cupidinis vinculis aliumque desiderat suo capere hamo* [for the lover is caught in bonds of desire and longs to catch another on his hook (*hamo*)]. See also Chaucer’s “Merciles Beaute” where “Your yēn two wol slee me sodenly” (line 1); or “The Complaint of Mars,” where the lover is troubled by “the stremes of thin yēn” (line 111).

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1721–22 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Comendacioun of Trouthe.* See note to lines 1728–32 below.

1724 *as a centre stable.* Compare the description of Cambyuskan in Chaucer's The Squire's Tale (V[F]22): "Of his corage as any centre stable."

1727 **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Nota.*

1728–32 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How trouth is preferred in the book of Esdre aforn kyngges, wymmen, and wyn.* The reference is to 3 Esdras 3–4.43, where wisemen demonstrate through debate that Truth is stronger than the king, wine, or women. The story is a great favorite among late fourteenth-century English poets. See Gower, *Confessio Amantis* 7.1783–1984, where Truth, which is stronger than all contenders, is identified as a primary point of virtue. Chaucer's Prudence gives an amusing variation on the story, where jasper is declared stronger than gold, wisdom stronger than jasper, and women strongest of all (The Tale of Melibee VII[B²]1106–08). 3 Esdras may be found in the appendix to Weber's Stuttgart edition of the Vulgate (1986), 2.1910–30. An interesting translation may be found in *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal Books*, trans. from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers, ed. Josiah Forsball and Sir Frederic Madden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850; 1982), vol. 2.542–75.

1732 *ben ek set asyde.* The syntax of this clause is confusing. The general sense is that kings, wine, and women have little value and power in comparison to truth. Erdmann (2: 66) observes that the syntax of the line confused a number of scribes.

1736–41 The story of the rebuilding of the wall is alluded to in 2 Esdras 2:1–8, but the account is greatly expanded in 3 Esdras 2 and 4, as the king is convinced that the keeping of his word to rebuild the wall is most important of all. See note to lines 1728–32.

1743–45 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Trouth and mercye preserven a kyng from al adversyté.* Proverbs 20:28. "Misericordia et veritas custodiunt regem et roboratur clementia thronus eius" ("Mercy and truth preserve a king, and his throne is upheld by mercy"); compare Proverbs 16:12.

1748–50 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Chaunge nor doublenesse shuld not be in a kyng.*

1766 **Interlinear gloss:** *trouth.* Added to explain grammatical referent of *it*: truth *wol clerly shyne.*

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1785–86 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The counsayl offatareres.*

1790 *blowen in an horn.* Compare Theseus' remark about the loser of the contest to win Emily: "He moot go pipen in an yvy leef" (I[A]1838); and the luckless priest in The Miller's Tale (I[A]3387): "Absolon may blowe the bukkes horn."

1801–03 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the yeer was come out that Ethiocles regnyd.*

1814–60 Lydgate and his sources omit the portion of the story in which Argeia pleads that Polynices not return to Thebes to claim the throne. It is subsequent to this scene that Polynices seeks counsel with Adrastus and Tydeus volunteers to undertake the mission. In Lydgate, Tydeus' refusal to hear any objection recalls Hector's refusal in *Troy Book* to heed Andromache's and Priam's protests against his taking the field against the Greeks.

1846–49 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Tydeus took upon hym to doun the massage of Polymyne.*

1867–70 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The sorowe of Deyphilé whan Tideus went toward Thebes.*

1889–90 The sense requires "was sittynge."

1901–04 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How wisly and how knyghtly Tideus did his massage.*

1932–35 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The request that Tideus mad in the name of Polymyt under the title of the convencioun.*

1963–64 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The answer of Ethiocles.*

1983 A four-beat line.

2047–49 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The knyghtly answere ageyne of Tydeus.*

2116–18 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How manly Tydeus departed from the kyng.*

2147–51 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How falsly Ethyocles leyde a busshment in the way to have slain Tydeus.*

2157–58 The ambush of Tydeus repeats Oedipus' encounter with the Sphinx.

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2173–75 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Tydeus outrayed fifty knyghtes that lay in a wayt for hym.*

2197 *rampaunt.* Lydgate uses the adjective both in the sense of “threatening, fierce” and in the heraldic sense of a lion or griffon “standing in profile on the left hind leg” (MED).

2197–200 Erdmann (2:117) notes that the images here recall the battle of Palamon and Arcite in *The Knight’s Tale* (I[A]1655–58).

2204 *Now her, now ther.* Tydeus’ slaughter of his enemies echoes Pandarus’ account to Criseyde of Troilus’ prowess on the battlefield: “Now here, now ther, he hunted hem so faste, / Ther nas but Grekes blood — and Troilus” (*Troilus and Criseyde* 2.197–98).

2239–42 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Hou trouth with lityl multitude hath evere in the fyn victory of falshede.*

2244 *chanpartye.* Chaucer (*The Knight’s Tale* I[A]1949) and Lydgate (*Troy Book* 2.5357, 2.5681, 3.2923) use the term in a number of contexts to mean “dispute” or “contend.”

2269–71 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Tydeus al forwounded cam unto Ligurgus lond.*

2274–75 As Erdmann (2:118) points out, the garden Tydeus enters recalls the one in which Palamon and Arcite first see Emily in *The Knight’s Tale* (I[A]1056–61). The reference is interesting for what does not occur in Lydgate’s poem: when he is healed of his wounds, Tydeus thanks Lygurgus’ daughter for her assistance and returns to Argos.

2306–09 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Barurgus [Ligurgus] doghter fond Tydeus sleping in the herber al forwounded.*

2355–58 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How wommanly the lady acquyt hir to Tydeus in his desese.*

2377–79 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Hou Tydeus was refresshed in the castel of the lady.*

2424–25 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Hou Tydeus repeyred hym to Arge al forwoundyd.*

2484–88 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Ethiocles was assstyoned whan he herd the deth of his knyghtes.*

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- 2553–67 Erdmann (2:120) cites Chaucer's *Anelida and Arcite*, lines 50–53, as a source, and Spearing, "Lydgate's Canterbury Tale," p. 362n33, suggests a formal resemblance to "O crueel goddes" (The Knight's Tale I[A]1303). But compare the apostrophes to Mars in *Troy Book* Prologue 1–37 and 4.4440–537.
- 2586–88 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The gret purveaunce of Kyng Adrastus touard Thebes.*
- 2602 *Cylmythenes.* The passage from the *Roman de Edipus* printed by Erdmann (2:120) makes it clear that the proper name is an error for the title King of Mycenae: "La vint Parthonopeus qui estoit filz du roy Archade et cil de Michenes et le Roy ypomedon . . ." In the *Thebaid*, Parthonopeus is the last of the heroes named in Statius' list.
- 2613–15 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The kyngges and princes that cam with Adrastus.*
- 2661–63 As Erdmann (2:121) notes, these lines recall the passages in The Knight's Tale where the knights gather (I[A]2095–127) and later begin the tournament (I[A]2491–512). Lydgate's phrasing is close but not exact: *uncouth devyses* (line 2662) reformulates Chaucer's "devisyng of harneys / So unkouth and so riche" (I[A]2496–97) and *Every man after his fantasye* (line 2663) makes a significant change in "Everych after his opinioun" (I[A]2127). These verbal approximations belie the profound difference between Adrastus' preparations for war and Theseus' efforts to contain violence through ceremony and game.
- 2682–85 **Marginalia:** ¶ *What vayleth a kyng to payen his puple trewly her sowde.*
- 2713–14 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Hou love vayleth mor a kyng than gold or gret richesse.*
- 2750–53 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Ethiocles made hym strong ageyn the commyng of the Grekes.*
- 2759 *gonnys.* Compare line 4315 and Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*, line 637, which has guns at Antony and Cleopatra's defeat at Actium (Erdmann 2:121). Cannons are mentioned in English and Italian documents from the early fourteenth century onwards.

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- 2801–04 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the Bysshope Amphiorax was sent for to come to the Grekes.* Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate*, p. 123, argues that Lydgate presents a more positive view of Amphiarus than the closest French source, the *Roman de Edipus*, and makes him a source of wisdom.
- 2823–24 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The proph[e]cie of Amphiorax.*
- 2832 *ther was non other geyn.* Lydgate's characteristic expression of necessity; compare *Troy Book* 1.3490, 2.7370, 3.5244, 3.5299, 4.618, 4.1400, 4.3111, 5.1947.
- 2841–72 Lydgate's casual misogyny here and at lines 4449–62 plays against his more complex treatment of women in *Troy Book* 3.4343–448, where he seems to reprove Guido delle Colonne's antifeminism but ends by affirming part of it.
- 2853–57 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the wif of Amphiorax of conscience to save her hath discured her husbond.*
- 2946–48 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How age and youth ben of diverse opynyons.*
- 2958 *Joye at the gynnyng; the ende is wretchednesse.* Compare the definitions of tragedy in Dante's Letter to Can Grande della Scala and the Prologue to Chaucer's The Monk's Tale (VII[B²]1971–81).
- 2969–72 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How that wysdam withoute supportacioun avayleth lit or noght.*
- 3007–09 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The gret meschief that Grekes hadde for watere.*
- 3034 "This Ligurgus seems to be another person than the king of the same name mentioned 2308, 2353, and the country as well as the garden are apparently quite unfamiliar to Tydeus" (Erdmann 2:123). Chaucer confuses Lycurgus of Nemea (mentioned in *Teseida* 6.14) with Lycurgus of Thrace (mentioned in *Thebaid* 4.386 and 7.180); see *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 837, the note for The Knight's Tale I(A)2129.
- 3040–43 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Tydeus compleyned to the lady in the herber for water.*
- 3069–71 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the ladye taught Tydeus to the welle.*

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- 3154–92 The story of Hypsipyle told here, Erdmann (2:123) points out, combines Lydgate's prose sources with Boccaccio's *Genealogie deorum gentilium* 5.29, his *De claris mulieribus* 15, and Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*, 3155–87. In Statius, the story is told at length (*Thebaid* 5.28–498).
- 3188 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Jason.*
some bookis telle. Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women* recounts the collusion of Jason and Hercules to seduce and betray Hypsipyle in the paired stories of Medea and Hypsipyle (1368–679). See also Gower's telling of the story of Jason, Medea, and the golden fleece in *Confessio Amantis* 5.3247–4361.
- 3192 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Hercules.*
- 3193 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Ysyphylé.*
- 3195 *Hir fadres name of which also I wante.* Hypsipyle's father is named Thoas; see Statius, *Thebaid* 5.239 and Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women*, line 1468.
- 3204 *fayre Jane.* Giovanna (Joanna), daughter of Robert of Anjou, king of Naples, where Boccaccio lived between 1327–41. Giovanna is the last figure mentioned in Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*. Though originally intended for Giovanna, the work, begun in 1361 and revised until 1375, is dedicated to Countess Andrea Acciaiuoli.
- 3207 *copiled.* A *compilatio* is a collection of narratives with some organizing principle, as opposed to a *collectio*, which merely gathers the materials without an organizing scheme. Chaucer and Gower describe their authorial role as that of a *compilator*, someone who writes the materials of others and augments them but adds nothing of his own.
- 3217–18 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the child was slain with the serpent.*
- 3313–16 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Hou Adrastus and all th' estatus of Grekis praiden Lygurgus for the lif of Ysyphilé.*
- 3326 *herberiours.* A harbinger is a servant who rides ahead to arrange his master's lodging.

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- 3379 *The rage gan myne.* Erdmann (2:126) proposes a source in Criseyde's inclination toward Troilus: "And after that, his manhood and his pyne / Made love withinne hire for to myne" (*Troilus and Criseyde* 2.676–77).
- 3379–83 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The sorrow that the Kyng Ligurgus made for the deth of his child and the lamentacioun of the quene.*
- 3384 Erdmann (2:126) cites Criseyde's isolation in the Greek camp: "Hire nedede no teris for to borwe" (*Troilus and Criseyde* 5.726).
- 3398 <pit  which is in gentyl blood.
- The phrase "pitee renneth soone in gentil herte" recurs throughout Chaucer's poetry (The Knight's Tale I[A]1761, The Man of Law's Tale II[B¹]660, The Merchant's Tale IV[E]1986, The Squire's Tale V[F]479, *The Legend of Good Women* F 503). Guido Guinizelli's doctrinal canzone "Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore" ("Love returns always to the gentle heart") gives one of the most important medieval expressions to the idea; see also Dante, *Convivio* 4.16.3–5. In Statius, the corresponding virtue is *clementia*, which has political significance (mercy that can supersede the mechanisms of justice) rather than aristocratic and moral meaning.

3417–18 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Ageynes deth may be no recur.*

3418–19 *And our lif her, who tak hed therto, / Is but an exile and a pilgrymage.* Compare Egeus' speech of consolation to Palamon immediately after Arcite's death in The Knight's Tale: "This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo, / And we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro" (I[A]2847–48). Adrastus' speech of consolation to Lycurgus (lines 3409–49) also recalls Theseus' speech on providence at the end of The Knight's Tale and the practical wisdom of Agamemnon's speech to Menelaus after the loss of Helen (*Troy Book* 2.4337–427).

3430 *fraunchyse.* The term refers broadly to freedom and nobility of character and specifically to special rights and privileges, including right of sanctuary and freedom from arrest in certain places (MED); see also Erdmann 2:177.

3432 *supersedyas.* Writ to stay legal proceedings or to suspend the powers of an officer (MED and Erdmann 2:199). Erdmann 2:126–27 and Schirmer, p. 64, relate the reference to the murder of Duke John of Burgundy (10 September 1419) and cite *Troy Book* 5.3553–56 as a parallel.

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3468–70 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the quen wil algate han the serpente dede.*

3487–89 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Parthonolope saugh the serpent.*

3510 Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium* 3.29

3521–22 **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Nota de Ligurgo rege Traccee.*

3522–35 In The Knight’s Tale, Lycurgus is the champion who accompanies Palamon against Arcite (I[A]2128–29); compare *Teseida* 6.14. Like Chaucer, Lydgate confuses Lycurgus, the father of the slain infant Opheltes, with Lycurgus, the king of Thrace who repudiated Bacchus (*Thebaid* 4.386); see above, line 3034.

3528 **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Bachus de vini.*

3537–40 **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Nota de xii arboribus in libro Bochacii de Genealogia Deorum.* Boccaccio sets out the genealogical scheme in the first proem to the *Genealogie deorum gentilium*.

3541 *Certaldo.* Boccaccio was born in the village of Certaldo, not far from Florence. He returned there after retirement from public life and called himself “John of Certaldo.”

3589–92 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The forey that the Grekis made in the contré about Thebes.*

3620–22 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The variaunce in Thebes among hemself.*

3647–50 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Nota The word of the Qwene Jocasta to Ethiocles.*

3655 *lat us shape another mene.* Chaucer uses the phrase to describe Fate’s plan for killing Hector (*Troilus and Criseyde* 5.1551), and Lydgate uses the phrase throughout *Troy Book* to express practical deliberation in political matters.

3661–70 Ebin, *John Lydgate*, pp. 54–55, remarks that Lydgate amplifies the climax of Jocasta’s speech by reiterating the example of Amphion’s elevation of words over arms.

3663–65 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How perilous it is to be governyd any querel.*

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3687 *dryve so narowe to the stake.* Erdmann (2:129) notes similar phrasing in The Knight's Tale: "be broght unto the stake" (I[A]2552), "ydrawen to the stake" (I[A]2642), and "broght to the stake" (I[A]2648).

3766–67 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The answer of Tydeus.*

3822–932 The episode of the tiger is amplified in details from Statius by Lydgate's sources, and Lydgate uses it to make the same point as in *Troy Book* — disastrous consequences follow from remote and oblique causes.

3904–05 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The manhood of Tydeus.*

4011 *thus I lete him dwelle.* A favorite transitional device in Chaucer; see The Knight's Tale I(A)1661, The Man of Law's Tale II(B¹)410 and 1119, The Franklin's Tale V(F)1099, The Shipman's Tale VII(B²)306, *Troilus and Criseyde* 5.195, *The Legend of Good Women*, lines 2348 and 2383, and "Complaint of Mars" lines 74, 122.

4029–30 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Amphiorax fil doune into hell.*

4041–44 Spearing, "Lydgate's Canterbury Tale," p. 340, finds the model for Amphiarus' descent to hell in Aurelius' address to Apollo in The Franklin's Tale (V[F]1073–75).

4047–54 Lydgate's style echoes Chaucer's ambiguous anaphora on pagan rites and poetry at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* 5.1849–55. On idolatry, see above, lines 538–40. See also the note to lines 4620–30 below.

4167–69 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Grekes chose hem a new dyvynour in stede of Amphiorax.*

4205 *That as the deth fro his swerd they fledde.* The description of Tydeus parallels that of Troilus in his effort to secure Criseyde's admiration through deeds of arms: "Fro day to day in armes so he spedde / That the Grekes as the deth him dredde" (*Troilus and Criseyde* 1.482–83).

4212–15 The plot to ambush Tydeus resembles the plots that Achilles organizes in *Troy Book* to kill first Hector and then Troilus.

4218–19 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How pitously Tydeus was slain with a quarell.*

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- 4235–37 Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium* 9.21 in fact records the full details of the scene in Statius, where Tydeus gnaws on the head of Menalippus; compare Dante’s version of the scene with Ugolino (*Inferno* 33.1–90), to which Chaucer directs the curious reader in The Monk’s Tale (VII[B²]2458–62).
- 4239–41 **Marginalia:** ¶ *He that slogh Tydeus was callyd Menolippus.*
- 4240–54 Lydgate’s treatment of the rest of the Argive heroes is in marked contrast to that of Statius, who sets the rhythm of his poem around the successive deaths of the kings who join Adrastus to move against Thebes.
- 4277–80 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How everich of the Theban bretheren slogh other toforn the cyté.*
- 4281 *compassioun.* Schlauch, p. 19, emphasizes that the combat between the brothers is presented “in the spirit of the *Roman de Thèbes*,” where the equivalent term is *pitié* (9630). Lydgate’s use of *compassioun* in this scene is the culmination of an ambiguous pattern: the term applies earlier to the decision not to kill the infant Oedipus, to Lycurgus’ daughter’s healing of Tydeus after the ambush, to Hypsipyle’s response to the desperate situation of the Greek army, and to Adrastus’ sympathy for Lycurgus as the king holds the body of his infant son.
- 4315 See above, line 2759.
- 4341–44 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How al the gentyl blood of Grece and Thebes was distroyed on o day.*
- 4345–48 In Statius, Adrastus is the only hero to survive the assault on Thebes. Lydgate follows his prose source in having both Adrastus and Campaneus survive (Erdmann 2:134). In the *Roman de Thèbes*, Campaneus is struck down by Jupiter’s thunderbolt.
- 4372 *the cité bar and destitut.* See above, line 872.
- 4384 Creon is chosen governor of the city in the French tradition of the story, while he seizes power in Statius. Compare *Anelida and Arcite*, lines 64–68.
- 4386–88 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Creaunt the old tyraunt was chosen kyng of Thebes.*

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- 4412–15 Erdmann (2:133) cites the references to queens and duchesses in The Knight’s Tale (I[A]922–23), but Lydgate amplifies the number of titles and makes explicit the social standing of the women.
- 4416–18 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How alle the ladyes of Gr[e]ce arayde hem toward Thebes.*
- 4448–62 See above, lines 2841–72. Erdmann (2:134) finds a tinge of satire in the passage.
- 4489–92 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Creon wil not suffre the bodies nowther to be buryed nor brent.*
- 4501 *And as my mayster Chaucer list endite.* The ending portions of Lydgate’s poem are linked with the opening of Chaucer’s The Knight’s Tale both at a narrative level and at the level of specific textual detail. Later (line 4531), Lydgate directs attention to the text itself in a summary of the tale.
- 4523 *Wel rehersyd at Depforth in the vale.* The reference is to The Reeve’s Tale, not The Knight’s Tale.
- 4525–28 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How the fynal destruccioun of Thebes is compendeously rehersyd in the Knygghtes Tale.*
- 4541–53 The alternative narrative that Lydgate notes — “as some auctours make menciou” (line 4541) — is the narrative that Statius recounts at the end of the *Thebaid*.
- 4563–66 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How Duk Theseus delyvered to the ladies the bodyes of her lordys.*
- 4565–607 Lydgate’s *occupatio* echoes The Knight’s Tale (I[A]2919–66), the description of Arcite’s funeral, and the longest sentence in Chaucer. Lydgate had used it earlier in *Troy Book* 4.3251–61.
- 4603–06 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Kyng Adrastus with the ladyes repeyred hom ageyn to Arge.*
- 4610 *ye gete no more of me.* A repeated formula in Chaucer: The Merchant’s Tale (IV[E]1945), The Squire’s Tale (V[F]343), The Franklin’s Tale (V[F]1556), The Manciple’s Prologue (IX[H]102), *House of Fame*, line 1560, *Parliament of Fowls*, line 651, *The Legend of Good Women*, line 1557; compare The Monk’s Tale (VII[B²]2292) and Parson’s Prologue (X[I]31).
- 4623–26 **Marginalia:** ¶ *CCCC yere tofore the fundacioun of Rome was Thebes destroyed.*

Explanatory Notes to Tercia Pars

- 4628–30 Lydgate's repetition in these lines recalls the ending of *Troilus and Criseyde* where the narrator repudiates antiquity, its cultural practices, and poetic topics.
- 4634–39 **Marginalia:** ¶ *The worthy blood of Grece was distroyed at the siege and the cyté fynaly brouht to noughe.* Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate*, p. 125, points out that Lydgate's repudiation of war echoes Amphiarus' earlier warning to the Greeks about the outcome of war (lines 2887–910).
- 4649–50 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Belliona is goddesse of bataill.*
- 4661–64 **Marginalia:** ¶ *How that werre byganne in hevene by the pride and surquedye of Lucyfer.* Erdmann (2:135–36) cites Isaiah 14:12 and 17:1 and Revelations 20:1–3 and 12:7, 9. Kurose, p. 22, notes parallels in *Troy Book* 2.5845–83 and examines the implications in Lydgate's treatise *The Serpent of Division*. He wrongly equates division with mutability, confusing cause and effect (pp. 24–25).
- 4668 **Marginalia:** ¶ *Lollum.*
- 4697 **Latin marginalia:** ¶ *Surget gens contra gentem lucc xxi* °. Luke 21:10: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.”
- 4703 *Pees and quyet, concord and unyté.* Lydgate echoes the terms of the Treaty of Troyes, reached in 1420. At the end of *Troy Book*, he refers to the same *convenciooun* (5.3398) and sees in Henry V's marriage to Katherine of Valois the promise of “Pes and quiete” (5.3435). Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, suggests that the peace Henry negotiated was “the fulfilment of the whole historical teaching of the Thebes-story” (p. 156) and that Lydgate turned consciously to the ending in *Troy Book*. Lawton, pp. 778–79, argues that Lydgate developed the theme of the waste of war out of *Troy Book* and expressed his deeply-held convictions in this passage. Ayers, p. 468 n26, is skeptical about using 31 August 1422 as a *terminus ante quem* for dating *The Siege of Thebes*, since he finds the poem's optimistic ending and the echo of the Treaty of Troyes “conventionally Christian in character.” Simpson (p. 15) also places the poem after Henry's death, in the struggle between Bedford and Gloucester.
- 4704 Here Lydgate echoes the last stanza of *Troilus and Criseyde*, where Chaucer, borrowing from Dante's prayer for virtuous warriors in *Paradiso* 14.28–30, lays his hero and his poem to rest.

Textual Notes

- 43 *trouthe*. MS: *trouth*. In a number of instances I have added a final -e to restore the meter. See the following: *spare* (line 112), *bothe* (lines 151, 199, 707, 844, 1416, 1575, 1638, 2092, 2626, 2721, 3023, 3093, 3151, 3241, 4226), *shulde* (lines 218, 424, 1516, 1722, 1918, 2812, 2830, 2858, 3404), *moste* (lines 266, 733), *myghte* (line 300), *silfe* (line 372), *woode* (lines 390, 2374, 2523, 3438), *wexe* (lines 496, 985), *wolde* (lines 579, 1393, 1833, 3097, 3162, 3401), *hymsilve* (line 662), *trouthe* (lines 673, 1722, 1725, 1762, 2649, 2786, 2963), *Thilke/thilke* (lines 699, 1240, 1841, 3616, 3862, 3920, 3983, 4240, 4255), *foure* (lines 705, 3526), *seide* (line 777), *dyde/dide* (lines 833, 3531, 3652, 3851, 3854), *erthe* (lines 1011, 4148), *hoole* (line 1057), *berthe* (1079), *groche* (line 1139), *heghe* (lines 1154, 2273, 2300, 2757, 2817), *herte* (line 1169), *silfe* (line 1249), *grene* (lines 1276, 2288, 2290, 2304, 3564), *hadde* (line 1289), *thikke* (lines 1365, 2145), *tolde* (line 1368), *torche* (line 1370), *derke* (line 1383), *Tweyne* (line 1439), *whiche* (lines 1547, 3903), *laste* (line 1575), *fulle* (line 1630), *Sore/Soore/soore* (lines 1687, 3393, 4367), *betwixe* (line 1719), *alle* (lines 1721, 2720), *croune* (line 1840), *blake* (lines 1869, 3596, 4042), *olde* (lines 1914, 4031, 4566), *avayle* (line 2021), *while* (lines 2040, 2314), *slouthe* (line 2108), *moone* (line 2272), *pleyne* (line 2360), *made* (lines 2394, 2449), *highe* (line 2485), *wirke* (line 2795), *wiste* (line 2819), *hoore* (line 2879), *dirke* (lines 2909, 4073), *gonne* (line 2929), *Conveye* (line 3081), *allone* (line 3186), *fayre* (line 3204), *taile* (line 3219), *remedye* (line 3261), *mighte* (line 3304), *newe* (line 3369), *herde* (lines 3372, 4104), *sighe* (line 3380), *aboute* (line 3397), *sharpe* (lines 3406, 3900), *sheede* (line 3477), *lieve* (line 3547), *larke* (line 3552), *broughte* (line 3591), *thynke* (line 3601), *strengthe* (line 3777), *helpe* (line 4103), *drede* (line 4156), *Atwene* (line 4337), *dede* (line 4495), *looke* (line 4532), *waye* (line 4596), *atwixe* (lines 4684, 4702).
- 45 *memoyré*. For the rhyme with *gloyré* (line 46), compare lines 2239–40.
- 46 *whom*. MS: *who*.
- 58 *deden*. MS: *ded*. In a number of instances I have supplied a medial vowel or ending inflection where the meter and syntax require it. See the following: *franchemole* (line 101), *benignely/Benygnely*, (lines 506, 3060), *Amonges* (lines 615, 2802), *diden* (line 629), *slayen/Islayen/yslayen* (lines 948, 2224, 2525, 3873, 3877, 3910, 4196, 4241, 4342, 4361), *hymsilven* (line 1119), *humbley* (line 1388), *withouten* (lines 1412, 1725), *officeres* (line 1430), *aboven* (lines 1721, 2720), *therageynes*

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- (line 2010), *Ageynes* (lines 2078, 2237, 2245, 3137, 4102), *stoundemele* (lines 2304, 3387), *rasoures* (line 3169), *wildely* (line 3866), *wichecraft* (line 4101), *lechecraft* (line 4228), *hennes* (line 4715).
- 67 *logged*. MS: *louged*.
- 109 *with*. MS omits.
- 110 *to*. MS omits.
- 114 *collik*. MS: *collis*. Erdmann (2:99) notes Latin “*collica passio*” but emends to “*Collikes passioun*.”
- 163 *It*. MS omits.
- 165 *a*. MS omits.
- 176b *Incipit Pars Prima*. MS: *Incipit Pars Prima. Per &c.*
- 177 *curtesye*. MS: *curteseye*.
- 185 *and*. MS: *of*.
- 203–04 Lines transposed in MS.
- 215 *Seith*. MS: *Seth*.
- 234 *outward*. MS: *after*.
- 239–42 Lines repeated with minor variation in 289–92, but evidently not cancelled in this passage.
- 280 *which that*. MS: *which*.
- 283 *clerkes can reporte*. I have retained the MS reading against other early witnesses, which Erdmann uses to emend to *as clerkes can reporte*. Parenthetical clauses are characteristic of both Chaucer’s and Lydgate’s style. The error in the next line shows the scribe construing the parenthetical clause as the main clause.
- 284 *But that*. MS: *That but*.
- 285 *nought*. MS: *nat*.
- 324 *space*. MS: *space in soth*. MS reading hypermetric. Erdmann proposes (2:93) that this error originates with the first copyist of the poem.
- 358 *perceyved*. MS: *conceyved*.
- 365 *come*. MS: *corve*.
- 368 *fate*. MS: *face*.
- 379 *soght*. MS: *foght*.
- 380 *founde out bothe*. MS: *founde out of both*.
- 382 *collecte*. MS: *correcte*. See also Explanatory Notes.
- 382 *hour*. MS: *tour*.
- 455 *halle*. MS: *alle*.
- 461 *purpoos*. MS: *propoos*.
- 493 *uttrely*. MS: *uutrely*.
- 498 *his*. MS: *her*.

Textual Notes

- 500 *mused.* MS: *musen.*
504 *a.* MS omits.
508 *ground.* MS: *trouthe.*
527 *he.* MS: *it.*
532 *Edippus.* MS: *Egippus.*
544 *paganysmes.* MS: *paganysme.*
553 *fend.* MS: *fond.*
561 *Unto a.* MS: *Unta.*
564 *perteynent.* MS: *perceynent.*
644 *monster.* MS: *moyster.*
649 *preef.* MS: *preest.*
690 *vyle.* Other MSS: *foule*; see Erdmann 2:105 for arguments for either reading.
725 *remewe.* MS: *renewe.*
752 *grete.* MS: *right.*
799 *her.* MS: *hur.*
804 *be.* MS omits.
813 *punished.* MS: *punshed.*
814 *ar.* MS: *er.*
863 *Indigence.* MS: *Indigence.*
865 *Compleynt.* MS: *compleyn.*
882 *Of which.* MS: *Of the which.*
928 *To execute.* MS: *Execute.* Erdmann (2:93) regards the confusion of lines 927–28 as
 an error deriving from the common exemplar of all the extant witnesses. I have
 preserved the MS reading “To certeyn men” (line 927), which Erdmann takes as
 a scribal mistake for *To execute* (line 928) because of its attestation in all MSS
 and its metrical regularity.
982 *ful.* MS: *fal.*
990 *hem.* MS: *ham.*
1000 *sones.* MS: *sonnes.* Compare line 1445.
1013 *Wers.* MS: *Werre.*
1022 *honur.* MS: *nur.*
1023 *and.* MS omits.
1028 *cherissh.* MS: *cherssh.*
1033 *contrayre.* MS: *contrarye.* See below line 3988.
1046b *Incipit Secunda Pars Eiusdem.* MS: *Incipit Secunda Pars Eiusdem. Secunda pars.*
1051 *And.* MS: *An.*
1052 *peerlys.* MS: *perelys.*
1053 *eire.* MS: *heire.*
1056 *eir.* MS: *heir.*

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- 1070 *devoyded*. MS: *devoyden*.
1078 *forbern*. MS: *forborn*.
1098 *But*. MS omits.
1112 *thorgh*. MS: *thorg*.
1116 *regnen*. MS: *regne*.
1132 *ascendeth*. MS: *descendeth*.
1203 *To*. MS: *Be*.
1216 *and*. MS omits.
1221 *mariage*. MS: *marige* (corr. *mariage*)
1222 *yet*. MS: *right*.
1256 *without*. MS: *with*.
1271 *his*. MS: *is*.
1280 *banished*. MS: *banshed*.
1300 *entered*. MS: *entred*.
1309 *tydinges*. The alternative reading in some MSS — *Tydeus* — makes sense as well.
1346 *yarmed*. MS: *armed*.
1351 *on*. MS: *or*.
1357 *And*. MS omits. Erdmann (2:109) regards this error as deriving from the exemplar
common to all extant witnesses.
1358 *Kyng*. MS: *And kyng*.
1375 *gentil*. MS: *getil*.
1384 *myght*. MS: *mygh*.
1392 *taryng*. MS: *taryng*.
1393 *light*. MS: *ligh*.
1400 *He axed*. MS: *I-axed*.
1442 *ermyn*. MS: *hermyn*.
1445 *sonne*. MS: *sone*. Compare line 1000.
1448 *for to*. MS: *to*.
1465 *Contenaunce*. MS: *Contenaunces*.
1467 *frecchnesse*. MS: *frocchnesse*.
1484 *arowes*. MS: *harowes*.
1540 *lokys*. MS: *hokys*. Other MSS: *crokes*.
1565 *it*. MS omits.
1583 *To*. MS: *The*.
and. MS: *of*. Erdmann's emendation, retained here, offers an aristocratic perspective
rather than the more worldly view of the MS: *The grete estat of habundance of
good*.
1591 *Atwixe*. MS: *Atwixt*.
1631 *thanked he*. MS: *thanked*. Following Eilert Ekwall's suggestion 2:111.

Textual Notes

- 1646 *And.* MS: *An.*
1695 *oth.* MS: *both.*
1721 *aboven alle.* This line and the following one are metrically deficient in MS: *above al;* compare line 2720 for similar MS forms.
1738 *Be the.* MS: *The.* Erdmann (2:113) regards this error as characteristic of the exemplar common to all extant witnesses.
1749 *mutabilité.* MS: *mutablite.*
1750 *unstableté.* MS: *unstablete.*
1755 *fro.* MS: *for.*
 Whel. MS: *wel.*
1766 *at.* MS: *a.*
1776 *And.* MS: *I.*
 walles. MS: *wal.*
1784 *flaterye.* MS: *flatrye.*
1790 *blowen.* MS: *blowe.*
1802 *The.* MS: *Th.*
1803 *rekenyng.* MS: *reknyng.*
1815 *falsched.* MS: *falsed.*
1861 *hem.* MS: *hym.*
1892 *his.* MS: *this.*
1896 *to.* MS omits.
1901 *Sir.* MS omits.
1909 *to.* MS omits.
1941 *That.* MS: *Tha.*
1957 *in maner.* MS: *in a maner.*
1966 *which.* MS: *woch.*
1981 *than.* MS: *that.*
1988 *high.* MS: *gret.*
2006 *of.* MS omits.
2010 *al.* MS: *of.*
2022 *tyding.* MS: *dyding.*
2029 *walles.* MS: *wall.*
2045 *best.* MS: *lest.*
2073 *rightwisnesse.* MS: *righwisnesse.*
2078 *in feeld to hold batayle.* MS: *to hold no batayle.*
2081 *next of his alye.* MS: *his next alye.* Erdmann (2:116) cites *Troy Book* 1.2882 (“And alle the lordis eke of hir allye”) in support of the emendation for meter.
2084 *ye.* MS: *the.*
 her. MS: *ther.*

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- 2097 *a rowe*. MS: *arawe*.
2109 *justly*. MS: *justlyl*.
2130 *dispitous*. MS: *dispititous*.
2140 *or*. MS: *ar*.
2220 *was*. MS omits. Erdmann (2:117–18) argues the omission occurs in the exemplar
 common to all extant witnesses.
 hem. MS: *ham*.
2224 *lay*. MS omits.
2239 *which*. MS: *woch*.
2251 *late*. MS: *layt*.
2297 *ayr*. MS: *hayr*.
2307 *eyre*. MS: *heyre* (corr. *eyre*).
2368 *so*. MS: omits *so*.
2374 *at*. MS: *al*.
2433 *wherfor*. Other MSS and Erdmann: *wherto*.
2475 *sheding*. MS: *the sheding*.
2487 *oyther*. MS: *oythe*.
2491 *That*. MS: *Tha*.
2494 *no thing*. MS: *not*.
2574 *massageres*. MS: *massagers*.
2583 *saude*. MS corr. from *saide*; Erdmann emends to *sende*. Compare *Troy Book*
 5.1354: “And sowden up every manly man.”
2613 *Pyrrus*. MS: *of Pyrrus*.
2618 *yarmed*. MS: *armed*.
2633 *ful*. MS: *shal*.
2645 *oth*. MS: *hoth*.
2717 *love*. MS: *gold*.
2720 *aboven alle*. MS: *above al*; compare line 1721.
2739 *Which in*. MS: *With inne*.
2833 *no*. MS: *to*.
2848 *han*. MS: *hath*.
2856 *oth*. MS: *hoth*. See also line 2860.
2864 *hem*. MS: *hym*.
2900 *Ther*. MS: *The*.
2920 *Thei*. MS: *The*.
2944 *by*. MS omits.
 lorn. MS: *born*.
3007 *nor*. MS: *no*.
3026 *floures and of herbes*. MS: *herbes and offlours*.

Textual Notes

- 3027 *ayr.* MS: *hayr.*
3051 *ly logged.* Other MSS: *be (be loggyng).*
3064 *knowe.* MS: *knewe.*
3086 *yet.* MS: *that.* MS reading is plausible: “But for your sake, I shall risk that — my life, my death — for true affection, in order to provide for your rescue.” Other witnesses read: *now.*
3099 *to a.* MS: *ta.*
3108 *rood.* MS: *abood* (corr. *bood*)
3168 *husbond.* MS: *husbondys.*
3195 *wante.* MS: *wente.*
3197 *hym.* MS: *hem.*
3211 *To.* MS: *Til.*
3219 *til.* MS: *to.*
3219 *Hyr.* MS: *hy.*
3230 *O.* MS: *I.*
3232 *her.* MS: *ther.*
3251 *quene.* MS: *king.*
3292 *thys.* MS: *thy.*
3299 *al at onys.* MS: *altonys.*
3315 *Cosyn.* MS: *Cosy.*
3323 *In.* MS: *An.*
3346 *our.* MS: *your.*
3364 *yif that.* MS: *that.* See Erdmann 2:125–26.
3364 *kynges.* MS: *kyng.*
3376 *rent.* I have retained the MS reading against Erdmann and other MSS: *hente.*
3383 *the.* MS omits.
3384 *nedeth.* MS: *nede.*
3385 *ny.* MS: *by.*
3436 *But.* MS: *That.*
3447 *yif that.* MS: *that.* MS reading is plausible: *loos of thyng that ye list to see.* Alternative readings are *if* and *that if.*
3477 *blood for.* MS: *bloood for.*
3488 *for to.* MS: *to.*
3496 *Hent.* MS: *Rent.*
3504 *avoided.* MS: *avoiden.*
3518 *hir.* MS: *hur.*
3565 *the Thebans.* MS: *Thebans.*
3566 *han.* MS: *an.*
3577 *to.* MS: *ta.*

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- 3595 *hynde*. MS: *ynde*.
3597 *tusshy*. MS: *trusshy*. Other MSS: *tussky*, *tuskyd*.
3603 *occisiones*. MS: *occasions*. Major substantive error for Erdmann (2:128); compare
 line 4204.
3611 *to*. MS omits.
3628 *were*. MS: *that were*.
3665 *put our mater*. MS: *puter*.
3684 *on*. MS omits.
3712 *a pes*. MS: *pes*.
3787 *remewe*. MS: *remowe*.
3831 *The whiche*. MS: *which*.
3845 *ytake*. MS: *take*.
3850 *to*. MS omits.
3852 *good*. MS: *gret*.
3903 *espieth*. MS: *espeth*.
3942 *gete*. MS: *getys*.
3950 *Prothonolopé*. MS: *Protholonope*.
3965 *drow*. MS: *droweth*.
3988 *contrayre*. Erdmann emends to *contrarie*; see above note to line 1033.
4008 *And*. MS: *Ant*.
4011 *lete him*. MS: *lote hem*.
4043 *Pluto*. MS: *Plyto*.
4045 *his*. MS: *is*.
4095 *socour*. MS: *her socour*.
4180 *in*. MS omits.
4187 *They*. MS omits.
 him. MS: *hem*.
4204 *occisioun*. MS: *occasioun*. Compare line 3603.
4228 *but that*. MS: *that*.
4249–50 Lines transposed in MS.
4256 *passyd was*. MS: *was passyd*.
4286 *out*. MS omits.
4294 *yslawe*. MS: *yslowe*.
4298 *loud*. MS: *land*.
4306 *ronne*. MS: *room*.
4322 *hem*. MS: *ham*.
4326 *Thorgh*. MS: *Torgh*.
 amynge. MS: *hamyng*.
4362 *and*. MS: *an*.

Textual Notes

- 4373 *nor.* Erdmann emends to *ne*.
4374 *and.* MS: *an*.
4378 *that.* MS omits. Understood sense “unless” (“but that”).
4389 *Althogh.* MS: *Al they*.
4390 *by.* MS omits.
 choys. MS: *iоys*.
4447 *hevynesse.* MS: *hevnesse*.
4467 *mervaylyd.* MS: *amervaylyd*.
4471 *Campaneus.* MS: *Companeus*.
4490 *Wisshing.* MS: *Whisshing*.
4491 *bothen.* MS: *both*. Compare line 2801 for *bothen*.
4518 *preiden.* MS: *preide*.
4549 *That.* MS: *Tha*.
4571 *ayre.* MS: *hayre*.
4600 *departe.* MS: *parte*.
4626 *departyden.* MS: *partyd*.
4639 *wyldernessee.* MS: *wydernessee*.
4679 *Luk.* MS: *bok*. Compare rubric citing Luke 21:10: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (from the signs of the end of the world). Other MSS read *bok* or *the boke*, referring to the Bible in general.
4696 *mor.* Erdmann emends to *more*.
 whettyd. MS: *whtyd*.
4714 *amendment.* MS: *amedement*.

Glossary

abo(o)de <i>delay</i>	everychone <i>everyone</i>
abraide <i>speak</i>	felle <i>cruel</i>
advert <i>notice</i>	ferre <i>far</i>
asterte <i>escape</i>	foon <i>enemies</i>
attonys <i>at once</i>	fredam <i>generosity, liberality</i>
availle <i>be of use</i>	fyn <i>end, goal</i>
avisement <i>deliberation</i>	
awayt <i>ambush</i>	gaf <i>gave</i>
ay <i>always</i>	geve <i>give</i>
 	gif <i>give</i>
be <i>by; be</i>	gove <i>given</i>
brent <i>burned</i>	gynne <i>begin</i>
cast <i>plan, foresee</i>	ha <i>have</i>
ceriously <i>in due order, point by point</i>	hap <i>chance</i>
char <i>chariot</i>	hem <i>them; themselves</i>
cher(e) <i>countenance, mood</i>	hent(e) <i>seized, took</i>
condescende <i>agree</i>	her <i>her; their; hair; hear</i>
confusioun <i>destruction, misfortune</i>	hight(e) <i>was called</i>
contune <i>continue</i>	hole, hool(e) <i>whole</i>
cors <i>corpse</i>	hye <i>hasten</i>
co(o)st <i>region</i>	
 	kerve, korve <i>cut, carve</i>
dede <i>deed; dead; did</i>	konne <i>know</i>
deme <i>judge</i>	kynde <i>nature</i>
devise <i>tell; arrange</i>	
discure <i>reveal</i>	lette <i>hinder</i>
dool <i>sorrow</i>	list <i>lest; it pleases</i>
durste <i>dared</i>	lorn <i>lost</i>
 	lich(e) <i>like</i>
echon <i>every one</i>	
eke <i>also</i>	Martis Mars'
eschew <i>avoid</i>	

Glossary

maugré despite
meynt(e) mixed
morow(e) morning, morrow

of of; off
or before
oyther or; either

pes peace
platys plate armor
platly plainly, openly
pre(e)s mob, crowd, warriors
purveaunce foresight, provision

recur(e) recover
rede, reed advice; read
renomed renowned
requere ask
rood rode
ro(o)te root, source
routh pity

sad serious
sentence significance, opinion
sikernes certainty
sith since; time
slawe slain
soth(e) truth
stede steed, horse
ste(e)le steel, armor
stoundemel from time to time
sue, swe follow, pursue
surquedye pride
swich(e) such

thilke that, that same
tho those; then
ton the one
tother the other

trete negotiate
tweyn(e) two

unnethys scarcely, hardly
unwist unknown

verray true
voyde remove

wende go
wene doubt
wenyng thinking, expecting
wer(e) were
werre war
wex grow, become
wher where; whether
whilom once, long ago
wood mad, angry
wist knew
wight person

yfere together
yif if