

THE CHAUCERIAN APOCRYPHA:
A SELECTION



GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The poems in this volume were prized and preserved because of their association with Chaucer's name and have been, paradoxically, almost entirely ignored by modern readers for the same reason. The so-called Chaucerian apocrypha — suggesting works that are uncanonical, inauthentic, forged, and false — has come to refer to a somewhat ill-defined, diffuse, and amorphous body of poetry and prose. Bibliographers and editors have most often referred to the apocrypha as those presumably spurious works (approximately fifty in number) that were printed with or as Chaucer's authoritative work in the large folio editions by William Thynne (1532, 1545, 1550), John Stow (1561), Thomas Speght (1598, 1602, 1687), and John Urry (1721). These works were ostensibly mistaken as Chaucer's own productions, influencing the poet's reception history until the nineteenth century. The Chaucerian apocrypha is not, however, necessarily limited to those texts that circulated under the rubric "The Workes of Geoffrey Chaucer." Eleanor Hammond, for instance, in addition to the spurious works in the printed folio editions, also includes those (now rejected) works that nineteenth-century editors and scholars introduced to the canon as well as verses that the fifteenth-century scribe John Shirley ascribed to Chaucer. Aage Brusendorff includes only those poems erroneously ascribed to Chaucer in fifteenth-century manuscripts. And perhaps most influentially, in his bibliographical essay "The Chaucerian Apocrypha," Rossell Hope Robbins defines the apocrypha as "[s]ome one hundred miscellaneous poems [that] have been either ascribed to Chaucer in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscripts, or printed with or as Chaucer's in the black-letter editions of the sixteenth century, or linked to Chaucer by later scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."¹ Robbins includes works that accompanied Chaucer's poetry in fifteenth-century manuscripts, Chaucerian imitations, works that were presumably inspired by Chaucer or that contain allusions to Chaucer or his poetry, as well as several works associated with or indebted to Chaucer's literary successor, John Lydgate.

The vague and inclusive term *apocrypha*, therefore, seems to encompass texts that were not only mistaken for Chaucer's or falsely attributed to Chaucer in both manuscript and print, but also works that were inspired by or associated with Chaucer's poetry. The term is worth considering because since the early fifteenth century the apocrypha has been a defining feature of the Chaucer canon. Rather than collecting Chaucer's minor poems into single authoritative editions, scribal editors habitually contextualized Chaucer's poetry in manuscript anthologies and miscellanies (distinguished by the perceived presence or absence of an editorial intelligence or thematic coherence) of courtly verse. Seth Lerer calls this "anthologistic impulse" a defining feature of English medieval literary culture.² The

¹ Robbins, "Chaucerian Apocrypha," p. 1061.

² Lerer, "Medieval English Literature," p. 1253.

Chaucerian contents of these manuscript collections were often anonymous as were the contributions of authors such as Lydgate, Hoccleve, and Clanvowe. Chaucer's sixteenth-century print editors drew their materials from these manuscript collections and continued the century-old practice of supplementing and complementing Chaucer's poetry with what they advertised on their title pages as "dyvers workes." Although Chaucer's print editors appear to have been intent upon preserving a canon of his genuine poetry, at the same time the appearance of new "diverse" works — especially those "never in print before" — seems to have been an equally compelling editorial and commercial incentive. Indeed, David Carlson suggests that the printed folio editions were marketed as authorial collections ("The Workes of Geoffrey Chaucer") because in so-called print culture, Chaucer appears to have had value as a "brand name": "Chaucer's name, even attached to things he did not write, made books saleable, for it was his name, not the work, that moved the stock."¹

While one would be naive, I think, to dismiss the commercial incentive of Chaucer's early editors, these manuscript and print collections obviously did not develop in a political vacuum. Several scholars have suggested that Chaucer's (and his imitators') poetic use of the vernacular was valued by both the Lancastrians and the Tudors as a form of linguistic capital, a crucial foundation for English nationalism. In John Fisher's view, for instance, Henry IV and V encouraged the dissemination of Chaucer's poetry in order to promote English as a national language and to acquire popular acceptance for their "usurpation and taxes": "If the Lancastrian administration was in any way consciously seeking popular support by strengthening the use of the vernacular, it needed socially accepted models of English . . . the royal establishment appears to have undertaken a program to elevate the prestige of English."² Similarly, John Watkins surmises that the sixteenth-century Chaucerian anthologies played an important role in the larger dynastic, political, and ideological context of Tudor centralization and reform, "casting Chaucer as a champion of the King against the conflicting claims of Church and nobility."³ Although the thematic idiom of the manuscript and print anthologies is fundamentally courtly, invoking a feudal past in which ritualized and hierarchical social relations provided a cultural and ideological cement, the early Chaucer canon is peppered with anti-ecclesiastical works, such as the *Plowman's Tale* and *Jack Upland*, which not only complemented the anti-clerical satires in *The Canterbury Tales*, but also perhaps contributed to the ideology of imperial kingship and the prerogative rights of monarchs (Chaucer's *Retraction*, which softens the blow of his invective, was not printed for over two hundred years). Similarly, a poem like Gower's *In Praise of Peace* affirms the legitimacy of sacral monarchy, and the various short poems of wisdom and advice reinforce a conservative, authoritarian social and cosmic hierarchy. The Chaucer that emerges from these early collections is sometimes a very different authorial and ideological product from the poet valued today, but it is important to remember that his early canonization was, in part, dependent upon these royalist, reformist, and sententious accretions.

It was not until the late eighteenth century, which saw the renewed valuation of the English literary past and the emergence of a national literary canon, that Thomas Tyrwhitt, in the interest of compiling a glossary of Chaucer's language for his 1775 edition of *The Canterbury Tales*, became the first critic to compile a list of what he considered Chaucer's

¹ Carlson, "Chaucer, Humanism, and Printing," p. 279.

² Fisher, *Importance of Chaucer*, p. 144.

³ Watkins, "Wrangling for this world," p. 23.

"genuine productions." It would take another one hundred years, however, before the apocrypha was first omitted from Chaucer editions. Walter Skeat's *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1894–97) can be considered the first manifestation of the modern Chaucer canon. Skeat included, as a seventh volume, *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*, the only modern edition of the apocrypha. Skeat includes thirty-one of these texts, relying heavily on the first printed folio of Chaucer's works (edited by William Thynne in 1532) and on works by known authors (Lydgate, Hoccleve, Gower, Clanwowe). He seems to have eschewed those poems that he did not consider "worthy" of association with Chaucer's name or consonant with Chaucer's status as a laureate poet, omitting for instance, most of the scabrous antifeminist works printed by John Stow in 1561, four of which are included here.

Although several spurious works, including Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, Usk's *Testament of Love*, the Prologue to the *Tale of Bevis*, and *The Floure and the Leaf*, are known to modern readers, most works of the Chaucerian apocrypha have received relatively little critical attention since their exclusion from the Chaucer canon. Yet many of these pieces are worthy of study, not only in the context of Chaucerian reception, but also as specimens of the kinds of vernacular poetry that circulated in late-medieval manuscripts and that remained in print, largely by the accidental virtue of their association with Chaucer, throughout the Renaissance and well into the nineteenth century. The various genres represented in this sampler — the dream vision, good counsel, female panegyric, mass parody, proverbial wisdom, lovers' dialogue, prophecy, advice to princes, elegiac complaint, courtly parody, and anti-feminist satire — attest to the diversity of late-medieval literary tastes and to the flexibility of the courtly idiom. These poems derive from a variety of manuscript sources, largely anthologies and miscellanies of secular, vernacular verse (what Robbins calls "aureate collections"), usually professionally prepared and presumably purchased by the affluent: members of the landed gentry, prosperous bourgeois businessmen, and prominent clergy. Although such collections are often labeled "courtly," that is, produced for those with some courtly connections or pretensions, and concerned with amorous courtship, social courtesy, and political courtiership, the contents sometimes can exercise our assumptions about this broad and inclusive category. For instance, several apocryphal poems appearing in this sampler (*The Craft of Lovers*, *Of Theyre Nature*, *In February*, *O Merciful, I Have a Lady*, *O Mooy Quince, Beware*, *The Court of Love*) are extant in Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.19, a secular miscellany consisting of forty-six poems and one prose work dating from the third quarter of the fifteenth century, after the advent of print in England. Although lacking the illuminations and decorated capitals often found in deluxe or so-called bespoke manuscripts (such as Bodleian Library, Fairfax 16), the manuscript appears to have been professionally prepared, probably from a number of unbound fascicles (short booklets) from which either the scriptorium (on speculation) or a customer could compile a collection of verse to suit their tastes.⁶ Bradford Fletcher quite accurately describes the contents as "eclectic" (p. xv): a few of Chaucer's works appear — *The Parliament of Fowls*, *The Legend of Good Women*, *The Complaint to Pity*, and extracts from The Monk's Tale copied from Caxton's first edition of *The Canterbury Tales* — in addition to several works by Lydgate, folk traditions, satires on women, an explanation of the four humors, courtly complaints, proverbs, a pedigree of English royalty, and a meditation on bad habits. For modern readers who may find little courtliness or rational coherence in such variety, Julia Bolley reminds us that such

⁶ See Mooney, "Scribes and Booklets," pp. 241–66.

collections were not solely literary but fulfilled a variety of functions: "social, musical . . . biographical and purely practical."⁷

Similarly, in the sixteenth century both Chaucer's poetry and the diverse works with which it circulated appear to have continued to have been valued for their perceived courtly qualities. Paul Strohm is not alone in lamenting what he sees as a "narrowing" of critical appreciation for Chaucer's "incomparably rich" poetic legacy and an inordinate "affection or nostalgia for the courtly style."⁸ However, it appears that the printed Chaucer folio editions of the sixteenth century were not valued simply as collections of Chaucer's poetry but also may have had a more utilitarian function, acting, in part, as courtesy books. Wendy Wall argues that similar printed courtly anthologies (such as *Tottel's Miscellany*) served as "conduct books" and were intended to market "exclusivity" by demonstrating "to more common audiences the poetic practices entertained by graceful courtly readers and writers."⁹ Most of the apocryphal poems either concern the theory and practice of *fin amours* (including sophisticated parodies of courtly genres and conventions) or offer both public and domestic codes of behavior in the form of princely advice, moral instruction, and proverbial wisdom. Arthur Marotti suggests that the audience for similar collections included "the universities, the Inns of Court, the court, and the household or the family . . . both aristocratic and middle-class individuals."¹⁰ These readers purchased printed poetry collections partly to gain access to what was perceived as the "socially restricted communications" of a privileged elite, but also for intellectual and moral self-improvement, or to participate in the "traditional fictional world of love experience."¹¹ In other words, such works presumably provide both rhetorical and practical models of courtship, courtiership, and courtesy and represent, in Pierre Bourdieu's formulation, forms of cultural knowledge or competence readers may have deemed necessary for social advancement and distinction.

For modern readers, perhaps the most striking characteristic of some of these poems, second only to their anonymity, is the frequency of unacknowledged quotation. Patchworks, poems which are composed of extracts borrowed from other poems, seem to be examples of unimaginative plagiarism and have been treated as such by many literary critics. But Walter Benjamin once said that the literature of the future would not be original works, but assemblies of multiple texts; and readers may be familiar with the eclectic approach of artists such as Robert Rauschenberg whose paintings are composed of found objects, or hip-hop lyrics which are based on sampling. Indeed, Seth Lerer observes: "What seems to many distinctive of the postmodern textual condition — the fascination with pastiche, with the quoted quality of any utterance . . . seems also to some distinctive of the medieval textual condition."¹² The practice of extrapolating memorable or pithy lines from longer works was quite common in the late Middle Ages and both Chaucer and Lydgate's poetry were especially susceptible to these peculiar acts of homage. Addressing the charge of plagiarism in Gower's work, R. F. Yeager warns: "Plagiarism is a hard charge; but it is also a rather

⁷ Boffey, "Manuscripts of Courtly Love Lyrics," p. 11.

⁸ Strohm, "Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience," p. 20.

⁹ Wall, *Imprint of Gender*, p. 97.

¹⁰ Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance*, p. 30.

¹¹ Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance*, p. 218.

¹² Lerer, "Medieval English Literature," p. 1255.

anachronistic — and hence inappropriate — one to level against most medieval poets. . . . The term presupposes distinct ideas of artistic originality and literary property unfamiliar to most medieval writers.¹³ A full appreciation of such poems comes with a broad knowledge of medieval literature, and, perhaps, the aesthetic pleasure is (and was) derived less from the quality of the poetry than from the recognition of the original context of the extracted lyric.

None of the poems in this collection will be reclaimed as Chaucer's any time soon and readers steeped in Chaucer's poetics may find it puzzling that any of these pieces once circulated under his name. Indeed, some critics once worried that the apocrypha harmed Chaucer's early literary reputation, tainting the correct evaluation of his aesthetic achievement. Although the title of this book suggests that Foucault's notion of the "author-function" is still operative, giving these texts some degree of coherence and cultural status,¹⁴ these poems were also, in turn, operative in establishing Chaucer's own historical literary reputation. While a different authorial product (courtly, monarchical, anticlerical, misogynist) from the one valued today may emerge from the early manuscript and print collections, the spurious works found in these books would not have been canonized if they did not have some perceived cultural, political, ideological, or commercial value. Today Chaucer is valued for what he presumably wrote (enshrined in *The Riverside Chaucer*) but Chaucer's early scribal and print editors also appear to have prized his sphere of influence (attested to by imitation, continuation, and emendation) and his adaptability to contemporary social and political needs. The ostensibly rigorous distinction we make today between the genuine and the spurious appears to have had less conceptual validity before the early eighteenth century and the formation of Chaucer's canon confirms Jerome McGann's consensus that literary production is fundamentally "a social and an institutional event."¹⁵ The renewed critical attention to the Chaucerian apocrypha is, I believe, in response to both an interest in the material, institutional and cultural forces that shape canonicity as well as the related recognition of this socialized concept of literary production.

COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Gower, <i>Confessio Amantis</i>
CT	Chaucer, <i>Canterbury Tales</i>
IMEV	Brown and Robbins, <i>Index of Middle English Verse</i>
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
RR	<i>Roman de la Rose</i>
SIMEV	Robbins and Cutler, <i>Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse</i>

¹³ Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic*, p. 46.

¹⁴ See Foucault, "What Is an Author?"

¹⁵ McGann, *Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, p. 100.



THE COURT OF LOVE

INTRODUCTION

The Court of Love — a deft and humorous treatment of courtly genres, images, and conventions — deserves more critical attention than it has received. Although it is usually categorized as a dream vision, the lover, Philogenet, does not fall asleep, and the poem perhaps can better be described as a rhetorical primer of courtly erotic desire. For readers conversant with the allegorical love-vision there is much here that is familiar — the lover-poet, the guide, the rules of love, allegorical personages, personified abstractions, the birds' Matins on May Day — and the poet's primary achievement seems to be his easy ability to incorporate all of these literary motifs, as well as the attendant genres — the *complaint d'amours*, the lovers' dialogue, and the courtly panegyric — into a single, engaging, and coherent narrative. Indeed, although the poem has sometimes been seen as simply a compendium or patchwork of careworn courtly literary motifs, these familiar conventions are nonetheless treated with an invention and wry humor that revivifies the genre of love allegory.

Frances McNeely Leonard accurately suggests that "[t]he poet constructs the court out of places, personages, and rules drawn almost at random from the literature of love and stitched together with a cheerful disregard for their earlier allegorical significance."¹ After the customary apology for his poetic ineptitude, the eighteen-year-old lover (later identified as Philogenet), says that when he has attained "ripe corage" (line 45, meaning either psychological or sexual maturity) he is compelled to visit Love's Court (lines 1–112). There he meets the king and queen of Love — Admetus and Alceste — borrowed from Chaucer's *Legend of Good Wives*. Chaucer's chaste and charitable Alceste is here disdainful and somewhat "straunge" (line 734) and presides over a venal and chaotic collection of miserable devotees. Not knowing how to conduct himself, Philogenet is provided with a female guide, Philobosse, who gives him a tour of the spectacular glass temple where Venus and Cupid preside over an eclectic mix of mostly unhappy lovers, including a large contingent of malcontent religious (lines 113–301). The lover is then enjoined to follow the twenty statutes reserved for lovers, which include, among other familiar restraints, secrecy, fidelity, misery, patience, humility, discretion, deception, and starvation, in addition to the rigorous sixteenth statute which demands extraordinary sexual fortitude (lines 302–630). With a billion (!) other supplicants the lover then offers his own prayer, a light parody of Marian panegyrics, to Venus' golden icon (lines 631–86). He is then introduced to Pity's tomb and Philobosse secretly confesses that Pity is indeed dead and that women accept their lovers' advances only to satisfy their own desires.

¹ Leonard, *Laughter*, p. 101.

Somewhat absurdly, Philogenet loves but knows not whom; he finally learns that his own lover is named Rosiall (after her tendency to blush). After the requisite Vinsaufian portrait cataloguing the details of her exceptional physical beauty (lines 778–819), he presents her with a lengthy "bille" or formal petition to receive his service as her lover. There then ensues the familiar lovers' dialogue, reminiscent of both *The Craft of Lovers* and *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, in which the commonsensical (or "daungerous," in courtly parlance) Rosiall presses for more particulars ("Whate is youre name?" — line 904) and insists that a few glib, formulaic compliments will not win her heart (lines 820–994). As a reliable sign of his sincerity, Philogenet swoons; he is then accepted, provided he uphold the rigorous twenty statutes (with some leeway granted in fulfilling the demanding sixteenth) (lines 995–1024). He must, however, be instructed in the more advanced "guye" ("customs," line 954) of the court, and Philobone introduces him to some of the usual personified suspects (borrowed ultimately from *The Romance of the Rose*) representing the less salient features of sensual pursuits: Despair, Hope, Lust, Liar, Envy, and Flattery (lines 1025–92). A gap in the text here opens on a large group of disgruntled clerics and nuns (borrowed from Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*) who lament their enforced service to Diana, the goddess of chastity (lines 1095–1190). More personified abstractions appear — Dissemble, Shamefastness, Avaunter ("Boaster"), and Private Thought — representing the familiar vicissitudes of human courtship (lines 1191–1316). Following another textual lacuna, Rosiall agrees to accept Philogenet, following the dictates of the resurrected Pity (lines 1317–51). The poem concludes with a macaronic choir of birds on May Day, appropriating the language of Matins and Lauds, singing in praise of love (lines 1352–1442).

Paradoxically, *The Court of Love* has been largely ignored by modern readers by virtue of its association with Chaucer. John Stow was the first to print the poem with Chaucer's works in 1561. The poem continued to appear both with Chaucer's works and, in a popular translated version by Arthur Maynwaring, with Ovid's *Art of Love*, until the nineteenth century. Indeed, it was Swinburne's passing admiration for the poem in a discussion of Blake's lyrical poems that, in part, sparked the infamous and acrimonious exchange with Frederick Furnivall who, on the basis of new language and rhyme tests, had insisted that the poem was spurious. Ejecting the poem from Chaucer's canon was not without controversy, and Skeat settled the debate by demonstrating, at considerable length, that its language was much later than the time of Chaucer, although the text is not as late (c. 1535) as he had hoped to establish.

Indeed, in his zeal to disassociate the poem from Chaucer's canon, Skeat, perhaps inadvertently, sealed its critical fate for most of the twentieth century. Although Skeat says he has "nothing to say against" the poem itself, his treatment is consistently pejorative, so that the author's ignorance of Middle English becomes not simply linguistic, but, rather, a sequence of literary "offenses."² I believe that for Skeat the poem was a canonical anomaly, a derivative, anachronistic, and deliberately archaized product of the sixteenth century, stupidly accepted as Chaucer's by generations of readers (and editors). Subsequent commentators, including William Neilson and Josef Schick, read the poem as a tapestry of literary allusions, inspired primarily by Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*, but also by Chaucer's love poetry, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and *The Romance of the Rose*. C. S. Lewis suggests that the poem is largely a "pastiche," perhaps intended as a forgery, although he does praise the poem as "light," "graceful," and "sophis-

² Skeat, *Chaucer Canon*, p. 133.

ticated," especially compared to other literary efforts of the "Drab Age."³ Lewis is also the first to read *The Court of Love* as a parody of courtly genres, an approach that has proven quite popular with the few modern critics who have considered the text. Although in her survey of Chaucerian imitations Alice Miskimin dismisses the poem as an "interminable," "turgid and mindless" allegory,⁴ for Frances Leonard "it is a thoroughgoing parody of the courtly convention at the same time that it is made up of bits and pieces taken from earlier poems in the convention."⁵ Assuming the poem is a product of the Renaissance, Leonard suggests that "the Court of Love stands finally for nothing but inactive rigidity";⁶ the lover's success represents an "elevation of the active life," a "new world," without moral dilemma, which rejoices in the "fallen life, exults in the sexual drive."⁷ Finally, Bonita Friedman felicitously describes the piece as "a swan song to the medieval English love allegory" and as a "celebration of a fading genre and a compendium of the stereotypes and sophistical clichés of that genre."⁸ Friedman reads the allegory as a form of "ironic cautionary verse," which is intended to "mock humorously" both the misguided devotion of the erotic lover and the various motifs borrowed from other allegorical love visions. I would suggest, however, that although the numerous exaggerations are obviously meant to be parodic, the poem is more accurately a parody by virtue of its imitation of well-known conventions rather than because of its mockery or derision of courtly literary traditions.

THE TEXT

The Court of Love is extant in one manuscript — Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.19 (fols. 217r–234r) (T) — and the copy is both incomplete and sometimes careless. The poet has clearly attempted to archaize his text, using, for instance, the problematical final -e in unlikely, and incorrect, forms (*whate*, *thowse*), and Bradford Y. Fletcher is correct in his assessment that "it will only scan if one assumes extensive deterioration of ME inflections."⁹ However, in plurals and genitives, the final -e and -ei are both retained and usually sounded: *loves* (lines 67 and 91), *estates* (line 84), *armes* (line 86), *tales* (line 412), *wounds* (line 390). Skeat's edition of the poem (which silently incorporates many of Bell's readings), although by virtue of vigorous conjectural emendation is a highly readable and coherent text, is nonetheless schizophrenic by modern conventions of textual editing; he somewhat inconsistently both modernizes spelling and grammar (for instance, he deletes the final -e when it is not sounded although it is grammatically correct) but also sometimes restores Middle English forms and spelling. My editorial approach has been to present the text, warts and all, as it appears in the manuscript, only correcting what seem to me to be obvious scribal errors that interfere with sense. All emendations follow those previously established by Stow, Bell, or Skeat, and are accounted for in the Textual Notes.

³ Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 240.

⁴ Miskimin, *Renaissance Chaucer*, p. 231.

⁵ Leonard, *Laughter*, p. 98.

⁶ Leonard, *Laughter*, p. 99.

⁷ Leonard, *Laughter*, p. 103.

⁸ Friedman, "In Love's Thrall," p. 173.

⁹ Fletcher, "Edition of MS R.3.19," p. 536.



THE COURT OF LOVE

- 1 With tymeros hert and tremlyng hand of drede,
Of cunnynge naked, bare of eloquence,
Unto the flour of poort in womanhede¹
I write, as he that none intelligence
5 Of metres hath, ne floures of sentencie,
Sauft that me list my writing to convey,
In that I can to please her lygh nobley.
- timorous heart; trembling
lacking wit, stripped
no knowledge
nor flourishes of learning
Except; I wish
nobility
- 10 The blomes fresshe of Tullius garden soote
Present thaim not, my matere forto borne;
Poemys of Virgile taken here no rote,
Ne crafte of Galfride may not here sojorne.
Why nam I cunnynge? O well may I morne,
15 For lak of science, that I can not write,
Unto the princes of my life aright.
- Cicero's; sweet
adorn
root
Nor the abilities of Geoffrey
Why am I not clever?
learning
- 15 No termys digne unto her excellency.
So is she sprong of noble stripe and high;
A world of honoure and of reverence
There is in her, this wille I testifie.
Calypsoe, thowse sister wise and sly,
20 And thowse, Mynerva, guyde me with thy grace,
That langage rude my mater not deface.
- worthy
image
- 25 Thy suger dropes sweete of Elicone
Distill in me, thosse gentle muse I pray;
And thee, Melpomene, I calle anone,
Of ignorauunce, the miste to chace away,
And give me grace so forto write and sey,
That she, my lady, of her worthiness,
Accepte in gree this litill short tretesse,
- favorably; treatise
- 30 That is entituled thus *The Courte of Love*.
And ye that bene metriciens me excuse,
- poet

¹ To the paragon (flower) of feminine deportment

- 35 I you beseche for Venus sake above;
 For whate I mene in this ye nedē not muse.
 And yf so be my lady it refuse
 For lak of ornat speche, I wolde be woo,
 That I presume to her to witten so.
- 40 But myne entent and all my besy cure
 Is forto write this tretesse, as I can,
 Unto my lady, stable, true, and sure.
 Feithfull and kynde, sith first that she began
 Me to accept in service as her man;
 To her be all the pleasure of this boke,
 That when her like, she may it rede and loke.
- 45 When I was yong, at eighteen yere of age,
 Lusty and light, desirous of plesaunce.
 Approchyng on full sadde and ripe corage,
 Love arted me to do myn observaunce
 To his astate, and doon hym obeysaunce,
 Commaundsyng me the Courte of Love to see,
 A lite beside the mounte of Citharee,
- 50 There Citherea goddesse was and quene,
 Honowred highly for her majestie;
 And eke her sonne, the myghty god, I wene,
 Cupyde the blynde, that for his dignyté
 A mille lovers worship on theire kne.
 55 There was I bidde, in payn of deth, to pere
 By Marcury, the wynged messengere.
- 60 So than I went be straunge and ferre contrees,
 Enquiryng ay whate costes that it drewe,
 The Courte of Love; and thiderward as beers,
 At last I se the peple gan pursue.
 Anon me thought som wight was there that knewe
 65 Where that the courte was holden, ferre or nye,
 And aftir thaim full faste I gan me hie.
- 70 Anone as I theim overtoke, I seide,
 "Haile frendes, whider purpose ye to wende?"
 "For sothe," quod one, that aunswered lich a mayde,
 "To Loves Courte nowe goo we, gentill frend."
 "Where is that place," quod I, "my felowe hend?"
 "At Citheron, sir," seid he, "withoute dawte,
 The Kyng of Love and all his noble rowte,
- literary; useful
- anxious care
- since
- around
- whenever she wants to
- pleasure
- mature disposition
- compelled
- office
- Close beside
- Venus
- believe
- thousand, knees
- appear
- for
- coast; inhabited
- person
- far or near
- hurry
- where; go
- Truly, like
- gentle
- company

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| | Dwelling withynne a castell ryally." | royally |
| 75 | So than apace I jormed forth among,
And as he seid, so fond I there truly:
For I behelde the towres high and strong,
And high pynacles, large of hight and long,
With plate of gold bespredde on every side.
And presious stone the stonewerke forto hide. | spires
masonry |
| 80 | No saphir Ind, no rubé riche of price,
There lakked thaimse, nor emerawd so grene,
Bales, turkes, ne thing to my devise,
That may the castell maken forto shene;
All was as bright as sterres in wynter bene.
And Phebus shone, to make his pease agayne,
For trespace doon to high estates tweyne — | Indian sapphire; ruby
emerald
Bales (ruby), turquoise
shine |
| 85 | Venus and Mars, the god and goddesse clere —
When he theim founde in armes cheynd faste.
Venus was than full sad of harte and chere.
But Phebus bemes, streight as is the maste,
Upon the castell gynith he to cast,
To please the lady, princesse of that place,
In signe he loketh aftir loves grace. | Phebus' (i.e., the sun's) beams
begin |
| 90 | For there mys god in Heven or Helle, isis,
But he hath ben right soget unto love:
Jove, Pluto, or whatesoever he is.
Ne creature in erth, or yet above;
Of thise the revers may no wight approve.
But furthermore, the castell to discribe,
Yet sawe I never none so large and high. | is not; certainly
subject
whencesoever |
| 95 | For unto Heven it streccbeth, I suppose.
Withynne and oute depeynted wonderly,
With many a thousand daisy, rede as rose,
And white also, this sawe I verely;
But whate tho deyses myght do signifie.
Can I not tell, sauf that the quenes floure,
Alcesie yit was, that kepte there her sojoure. | describe
painted
true
these; symbolic
residence |
| 100 | Which under Venus lady was and quene,
And Admete kyng and soverayn of that place,
To whom obeide the ladys gode nineteen,
With many a thousand other, bright of face.
And yong men fele came forth with lusty pace,
And aged eke, theire homage to dispose; | Wh- |
| 105 | But whate they were, I cosede not well disclose. | many
apply |

- 115 Yet nere and nere furth in I gan me dresse,
Into an halle of noble apparayle,
With arras spred and cloth of gold, I gesse,
And other silke of esier availe;
Under the cloth of theire estate, saunz faille,
The kyng and quene ther sat, as I beheld;
It passed joye of Helise the feld.
- 120 There saintes have theire commyng and resort
To seen the kyng, so ryally beseen,
In purple clad, and eke the quene, in sort;
And on theire hedes sawe I crosenes twayn,
With stones frett so that it was no Payne,
Withouten mete and drynske, to stand and see
The kynges honor and the ryaltie.
- 125 And forto trete of states with the kyng,
That bene of councell chief, and with the quene,
The kyng had Daunger nere to hym standyng,
The Quene of Love, Disdeyne, and that was seen;
For by the feith I shall to God, I wene,
Was never straunger in her degree
Than was the quene in castyng of her ye.
- 130 And as I stode perceyyng her apart,
And eke the bemes shynnyng of her yen,
Me thought thay were shapyn liche a darte,
Sherpe and persyng, smale, and streight as lyne,
And all her here, it shone as gold so fyne,
Dissilvill, crispe, downe hyngyng at her bak
A yarde in length; and southly, than I spake:
- 135 "O bright Regina who made thee so faire?
Who made thy colour vermelet and white?
Where woneth that god? Howe fer above the eyre?
Grete was his crafte, and grete was his delite.
140 Now marvel I nothing that ye do hight
The Quene of Love, and occupie the place
Of Cithare; nowe, swete lady, thi grace."
- 145 In mewet spake I, so that nought astert,
By no condicion, worde that myght be harde;
But in myne inward thought I gan adverte
And oft I seid, "My witte is dulle and harde!"
For with her besetie thus, God wot, I ferde
As doth the man i-ravished with sight,
Whensse I beheld her cristall yen so bright,
- forward
furnishing
tapestries
of less value
without fail
the Elysian field
- adorned
suitably
ornamented
food
business
Resistance
appropriate
believe
eye
- hair
Loose, curled
truly
- Queen
red
lives
are called
(give me) your grace
- silence; escaped
heard
contemplate
fared
eyes

- 155 No respect havyng whate was best to doon,
 Till right anon, beholding here and there,
 I spied a frend of myne, and that full sone;
 A gentil woman was the chamberer
 Unto the quene, that hote, as ye shall here,
 Philobone, that loved all her life.
 Whan she me sey she led me farr as blyfe.
- 160 *was called*
sue; at once
- 165 And me demaunded bowe, and in whate wise,
 I thider come and whate myne erand was.
 "To sene the courte," quod I, "and all the guyse,
 And eke to sue for pardon and for grace,
 And mercy aske for all my grete trespace,
 That I none erst come to the Courte of Love;
 Forgive me this ye goddes all above."
- 170 *custom*
also
no sooner
- "That is well seid," quod Philobone, "in dede:
 But were ye not assomamed to apere
 By Mercurius? For that is all my drede."
 "Yis, gentill feire," quod I, "nowe am I here.
 Ye, yit whate those, though that be true, my dere?"
 "Of youre fre wille ye shuld have come unsent;
 175 For ye dide not I deme ye wille be shent.
- 180 *summoned*
companions
yet what if it were true
Because; disgraced
- "For ye that reigne in youth and lustynesse,
 Pampired with ease, and joylof in youre age,
 Youre dewtie is, as ferre as I canne gesse,
 To Loves Courte to dressen youre visage,
 As sone as nature maketh you so sage,
 185 That ye may knowe a woman from a swan,
 Or whanne youre fote is groseen half a spanne.
- 190 *direct; journey*
hand's breadth
- "But sith that ye, be wilfull negligence,
 This eighteen yere have kepte youre self at large,
 The gretter is youre trespace and offence,
 And in youre nek ye motte bere all the charge;
 For better were ye ben withouten barge,
 195 A midde se in tempest and in rayne,
 Than byden here receyvynge woo and Payne.
- 190 *since*
at liberty
must
boat
- "That ordeyned is for such as thaim absente
 Fro Loves Courte by yeres long and fele.
 I ley my lyf ye shall full sone repent,
 For Love wille reyve youre coloure, lust, and hele;
 Eke ye most bayte on many an hevy mesl.
 195 No force, iwis, I stired you long agoone
 To drawe to courte," quod litell Philobon.
- many
sense; health
feast; meal
No matter

- "Ye shall well se howe rosche and angry face
 The Kyng of Love will shewe when ye hym se.
 By myne advyse, knele downe and aske hym grace,
 200 Eschewing perell and adversitee;
 For welle I wot it wolle none other be,
 Conforte is none, ne councell to youre ease.
 Why wille ye thanne the Kyng of Love dispese?"
- "O mercy god," quod iche, "I me repent;
 205 Caytif and wrecche, in hert, in wille, and thought.
 And aftir this shall be myne hole entent
 To serve and please, howe dere that love be bought;
 Yit sith I have myne owen penaunce i-sought,
 With humble sprite shall I it receyve,
 210 Though that the Kyng of Love my life bereyve.
- "And though the fervent loves qualitē
 In me did never worche truly, yit I,
 With all obeysaunce and humilitē,
 And benigne harte, shall serve hym till I dye.
 215 And he, that lord of myghtes, grete and high,
 Right as hym lyste, me chastice and correcte,
 And punyssh me with trespace thus enfekte."
- These wordes seid, she caught me by the lap,
 And led me furth intill a temple round.
 220 Large, and wyde; and as my blessed hap
 And gode aventure was, right sone I founde
 A tabernacle reised from the grounde,
 Where Venus sat, and Cupide by her side:
 Yit half for drede I gan my visage hide.
- 225 And eft agayn I loked and behild,
 Seyng full sandry peple in the place,
 And myster folke, and som that myght not wild
 Theire lymmes wele, me thought a wounder case;
 The temple shone with wyndowes all of glasse,
 230 Bright as the day, with many a feire ymage.
 And there I sey the fresh quene of Cartage,
- Dydo, that brent her bestie for the love
 Of fals Eneas; and the weymyntyng
 Of hir Anelida, true as turtill dove,
 235 To Arcite fals; and there was in peynting
 Of many a prince and many a doughty kyng
 Whose marterdom was shewed aboue the walles;
 And howe that feale for love had suffred falles.

- But sore I was abashed and stonyed
 240 Of all thoo folke that there were in that tide;
 And than I asked where thay hadde woned:
 "In dyvers courtes," quod she, "here beside."
 In sondry clothing, mantilwise full wide,
 They were arrayed, and did theire sacrifice
 245 Unto the god and goddesse in theire guyse.
- "Lo, yonder folke," quod she, "that knele in blewe,
 Thay were the coloure ay, and ever shall,
 In signe thay were, and ever will be true,
 Withouten chaunge; and southly, yonder all
 250 That ben in blak with mornyng, cry and calle
 Unto the goddes, for theire loves bene
 Some ferre, some dede, some all to sherpe and kene."
- "Ye than," quod I, "whate done thise prestes here,
 Nonnes, and hermytes, freres, and all thoo
 255 That sit in white, in russet, and in grene?"
 "For soth," quod she, "thay waylen of theire woo:
 'O mercy lord, may thay so come and goo
 Frely to court, and have suche libertie?
 Ye, men of eche condicion and degree,
- 260 "And women eke; for truly there is none
 Expcion made ne never was, ne may:
 This courte is ope and ire for everychone.
 The Kyng of Love, he wille nat say thaim nay;
 He takith all, in poore or riche arraye,
 265 That mekely sewe unto his excellency
 With all theire harte and all theire reverence."
- And walkyng thus aboue with Philobone,
 I se where come a messengere in high,
 Streight from the kyng, which let commaunde anso,
 270 Througheout the courte to make an ho and crye:
 "Al Newe come folke, abide! And wote ye why?
 The kynges laste is forto seen youe sone.
 Come nere, let se! His wille mote nede be done."
- Than gan I me present tofore the kyng,
 275 Tremelyng for fere, with visage pale of hewe;
 And many a lover with me was knelyng,
 Abashed sore, till unto the tyme thay knewe
 The sentence gove of his entent full trewe.
 And at the laste the kyng hath me behold,
 280 With sterne visage, and seid, "Whate doth this old,
- astonished
at that time
lived
with wide robes
customary manner
- truly
far; cruel
- those
Who; brown
wif about their woe
- abs
open
attend
- now; in hand
an outcry
king's desire is to see you soon
meat
- before
Trembling from fear
gives
Why doest this old [person]?

- 285 "Thus ferre i-stope in yeris, come so late
 Unto the courte?" "For soth, my liege," quod I,
 "An hundred tyme I have ben at the gate
 Afore this tyme, yit coude I never espye
 Of myne acqueyntaunce eny with myne ye,
 And shamefastnes away me gane to chace,
 But nowe I me submyste unto your grace." *So far advanced*
Before; see submit myself
- 290 "Well, all is perdoned, with condicion:
 That those be trewe from hensforth to thy myghts,
 And serven love in thyne entencion.
 Swere this and thanne, as fer as it is right,
 Thowe shalte have grace here in my quenes sight."
 "Yis, by the feith I owe youre crowne, I swere,
 Though Deth therfore me thirlith with his spere." *pierce*
- 295 And whan the kyng had sene us everychone,
 He let commaunde an officer in hic
 To take ouare feith, and shewe us, one by one,
 The statutis of the courte full besyly.
 Anon the boke was leide before her ye,
 To rede and se whate thyng we most observe
 In Loves Courte, till that we dye and sterue. *at once*
carefully their eyes must decay
- 305 And, for that I was lettered, there I redde
 The statutis hole of Loves Courte and halle.
 The firste statute that on the boke was spred,
 Was to be true, in thought and dedes all,
 Unno the Kyng of Love, the lord ryall,
 And to the quene, as feithfull and as kynde,
 As I coude thynke, with harte, and wille, and mynde. *because; literate; read royal*
- 310 The secunde statute: Secretely to kepe
 Councell of love, nat blowyng everywhere
 All that I knowe, and let in synk and flete,
 It may not sowne in every wightes ere;
 Exilyng slander ay for dred and fere,
 And to my lady, which I love and serve,
 Be true and kynde, her grace forto deserve. *proclaiming float sound; person's ear*
- 315 The thridde statute was clerely write also:
 Withouten chaunge, to lyve and dye same,
 None other love to take, for wele ne woo,
 For brynde delite, for ernest nor for game,
 Withoute repent, for laughyng or for grame;
 To biden still in full perseveraunce —
 All this was hole the kynges ordynaunce. *together burning desire grief persist*

- 325 The fourth statute: To purchace ever to here,
 And sturen folke to love, and beten fire
 On Venus awter, here aboue and there,
 And preche to thaym of love and hote desire,
 And tell howe love will quyten well theire hire;
 This must be kepte — and loth me to displease —
 Yf love be wroth, passe forby is an ease.²
- 330 The fifth statute: Not to be daungerous,
 Yf that a thought wold reyve me of my slepe,
 Nor of a sight to be oversquaymous:
 And so verely this statute was to kepe,
 To turne and walowe in my bed and wepe,
 When that my lady, of her crueltie,
 Wold from her harte exilyn all pyte.
- 340 The sixte statute (it was for me to use):
 Alone to wander, voyde of company,
 And on my ladys bewtie forto muse,
 And to thinke no force to lyve or dye;
 And eft agayn to thynke the remedy,
 Howe to her grace I myght anson attayn,
 And tell my woo unto my souverayn.
- 345 The seventh statute was to be pacient,
 Whether my lady joyfull were or wroth,
 For wordes glad or hevy; diligent,
 Wheder that she me helden lefe or loth;
 And hereupon I put was to myn othe,
 Hir forto serve, and lowly to obey,
 And shewing my chere, ye, twenty sith aday.
- 350 The eighth statute, to my remembraunce,
 Was to speke and pray my lady dere
 With hourely laboure, and grete attendaunce,
 Me forto love with all her harte entier,
 And me desire, and make me joyfull chere,
 Right as she is, surmountyng every faire,
 Of bewtie well, and gentill debonayre.
- 355 The ninth statute, with lettres writ of gold:
 This was the sentence how that I, and all,
 Shuld ever dred to be to over bolde
 Her to displease — and truly so I shall —

*cause (folk) perpetually to pay heed
to kindle*

alter

repay them

reluctant

deprive

everly squirmish

faithfully

sixth; to follow

no matter

wore

*persistent
friend or foe*

times

entire

fair thing

² If my love is angry, [she] get away is a relief

- But ben content for thyng that may falle,
 And mekely take her chastisement and yerde,
 And to offende her ever ben afred.
- rod (*punishment*)
afred
- 365 The tenth statute was egally discerne
 Bytwene thy lady and thy abilitie.
 And thynke thyself arte never like to yerne,
 By right, her mercy, nor of equité,
 But of her grace and womanly pitee:
 370 For though thyself be noble in thy strene,
 A thowsand-fold more nobill is thy quene,
- by *justly distinguish*
worthiness
ever
fairness
lineage
- Thy lives lady and thy souverayn,
 That hath thyne harte all hole in governaunce.
 Thow maist no wise hit taken to disdayne.
 375 To put thee humbly at her ordynaunce.
 And yf her free the reyne of her plesaunce;
 For libertie ys thing that woman loke,
 And truly ellis the mater is acroke.
- give
 seek
or else; surely
- 380 The eleventh statute: Thy signes forto knosse,
 With ie, and fynger, and with smyles soft,
 And lowe to kowigh, and always forto shon,
 For dred of spies, forto wynken ofte;
 But secretly to bring up a sigh aloft,
 385 And eke beware of over moche resorte,
 For that, peraventure, spilleth all thy sporte.
- covert signals*
eye
cough; shun
coming together too often
perhaps, ruin
- The twelfith statute remember to observe:
 For all the Payne thow haste for love and wo,
 All is to lite her mercy to deserve,
 390 Thow must thou thynke where ever thow ride or goo;
 And mortall woundes suffer thow also,
 All for her sake, and thynke it well beset
 Upon thy love, for it may be no bette.
- too little
no better
- The thirteenth statute, whilom is to thynke,
 Whate thyng may best thy lady lyke and please,
 395 And in thyne hartes botom let it synke;
 Som think devise, and take for thyne ease,
 And sent it her, that may her harte pease:
 Some hert, or ryng, or lettre, or devise,
 Or precious stone — but spare not for no price!
- frequently*
Some thing
send; appraise
heart-shaped jewelry; ornament
- 400 The fourteenth statute eke thou shalte assay
 Formely to kepe the most parte of thy life:
 Wisshe that thy lady in thyne armes lay.
- attempt
Correctly

- And myghtly dreme thow hast thy hertes wife
 Sweetly in armes, straynyng her as blife;
 405 And whanne thou seest it is but fantasy,
 Se that thow syng not over merely.
embracing; busily
too merrily
- For to moche joye hath oft a wofull end.
 It lengtheth eke, this statute forto hold:
 To deme thy lady evermore thy frende,
 410 And thynke thyself in nowise a cocold.
 In every thing she doth but as she shuld:
 Construe the beste, believe no tales newe,
 For many a lie is told that semyth full trewe.
- But thinke that she, so bounteous and fayre,
 415 Cosede not be fals; imagyne this algate.
 And thinke that tonges wykkes wold her appaier,
 Sklaunderyng her name and worshipfull estate,
 And lovers true to settent at debate;
 And though thow seest a fawte right at thyne ye,
 420 Excuse it blive and glose it pretily.
Instead; virtuous
always
damage
fault; eye
quickly; interpret
- The fifteenth statute: Use to swere and stare,
 And counterfete a lesyng hardely,
 To save thy ladys honoure everywhere,
 And put thyself to fight boldely.
 425 Sey she is gode, vertuous, and gostely.
 Clere of entent, and harte, and thought, and wille;
 And argue not, for reson ne for skille,
- Agayne thy ladys plesire ne entent,
 For love wille not be counterpleted, in dede.
 430 Sey as she seith, than shalte thowe not be shent:
 "The crowe is white"; "Ye, truly, so I rede!"
 And ay whate thyng that she therewille forbiddeth,
 Eschewe all that, and give her soverentie;
 Hir appetide felawe in all degree.
Against
disputed
scorned
Avoid
desire join
- The sixteenth statute, kepe it yf thow may!
 Seven sith at nyght thy lady forto please,
 And seven at mydnyght, seven at moroweday;
 And drynke a cawdell erly for thyne ease.
 435 Do this, and kepe thyne hefe from all dyssease,
 And wynne the garland here of lovers alle.
 That ever come in courte, or ever shalle.
- Full fewe, thynke I, this statute hold and kepe!
 But truly, this, my reason giveth me fele:
- times
fortified drink; benefit
awareness

- That som lovers shuld rather fall aslepe,
 445 Than take on hand to please so ofte and wele.
 There lay none othe to this statute adele,
 But kepe who myght, as gave hym his corage.
 Nose get this garlant lusty folke of age.
- Nowe wynne whoo may, ye lusty folke of youth,
 450 This garland freshh, of floures rede and white,
 Purpill and blewe, and colours fel uncouth,
 And I shall crowne hym kyng of all delite!
 In all the courte there was not, to my sight,
 A lover trewe, that he ne was adrede,
 455 Whan he expresse hath hard the statute redde.
- The seventeenth statute: When age approchith on,
 And lust is leide, and all the fire is queynt,
 As freshly than thosee shalte begyn to sonne,
 And dote in love, and all her ymage paynte
 460 In the remembraunce till thou begyn to fayne,
 As in the firste season thyne hart beganne.
 And her desire, thoughow ne may ne can
- Perfourme thy lyvynge actuell, and lust,
 Regester this in thy remembraunce.
 465 Eke whan thou maist not kepe thy thing from rust,
 It speke and talke of plesaunt dalyaunce,
 For that shall make thyne harte rejoysse and daunce;
 And when thou maist no more the gam assay,
 The statute bidde thee pray for hem that may.
- 470 The eighteenth statute, holy to commende
 To please thy lady, is that thou eschesee
 With sluttishnesse thyself forto offend;
 Be jolif, fresshe, and fete with things newe,
 Courty with maner — this is all thy due —
 475 Gentill of porte, and loving clenlynesse,
 This is the thing that liketh thi mastresse.
- And not to wander liche a dulled asse,
 Ragged and torn, disguised in array,
 Rybaude in specche, or oute of mesure passe,
 Thy bounde excedyng; thynk on this always,
 For women been of tender hartes aye,
 480 And lightly set theire plesire in a place;
 When they mistinke, they lightly let it passe.

many unfamiliar

afraid
heardcalmed; quenched
be foolish

Yet

game practice

forego
slowness
decked out
duty
behavior
pleaser your mistress

dull-witted

Risald; moderation

always

- 485 The nineteenth statute: Mete and drynke forgete!
 Eche other day, se that thow fast for love,
 For in the courte thei live withouten mete,
 Sauf suche as comyth from Venus all above;
 Thei take noose hede, in Payne of grete reprove,
 Of mete and drynke, for that is all in vayn:
 490 Only they live be sight of theire soverain,
- Food
Save
no heed
- 495 The tweentieth statute, last of everychone,
 Enrolle it in thyne harte privite:
 To wryng and waile, to turne, and sigh, and grone,
 When that thy lady absent is from thee:
 And eke renewe the wordes that she
 Bitwene you tways hath seid, and all the chere
 That thee hath made, thy lives lady dere.
- secretly
- 500 And se thyne harte, in quiete ne in rest,
 Sojorne so tyme thowe sene thy lady eft;³
 But where she wonne be south, or est, or west,
 With all thy force, noose se it be not left.
 Be diligent, till tyme thy life be refit,
 In that thowe maist, thy lady forto see;
 This statute was of old antiquite.
- wherever she lives
neglected
is taken away
- 505 An officer of high auctorite,
 Cleped Rigour, made us swere anon
 (He nas corrupt with parcialyte,
 Favor, prayer, ne gold that cherely shone):
 "Ye shall," quod he, "noose sweren here ecchone,
 510 Yong and old, to kepe in that they may,
 The statutes truly all aftir this day."
- Hardness-of-heart (obduracy)
Bias; incuriously
each one
- 515 O god, thought I, hard is to make this oth;
 But to my power shall I thaim observe.
 In all this world nas mater half so loth,
 To swere for all; for though my body sterue,
 I have no myght the hole forto reserve.
 But berkyn nowe the cace how it befell:
 Aftir my othe was made, the trouth to telle.
- oath
troublesome
die
listen
- 520 I turned leaves, lokyng on this boke,
 Where other statutes were of women shene;
 And right furthwith, Rigour on me gan loke
- excellent

³ Lines 498-99: *And see [Do it that]f your heart, [neither] in repose nor in rest, / [Does not] passively wait until the time that you see your lady again*

- Full angrily, and seid unto the quene
 I traitour was, and charged me let bene.
 "There may no man," quod he, "the statute know,
 That long to woman, hie degree ne low." to desist
belongs
- "In secrete wise thay kepten ben full close,
 They sowne ecchone to Libertie, my frend;
 Pleasant thay be, and to theire ownen purpose.
 There wot no wight of thaim but God and fendl."
 Ne naught shall wite, unto the worldes ende.
 The quene hath gave me charge, in Payne to dye,
 Never to rede ne sen thaim with myne ye." speak each one
know; friend
none; know
has given; on pain of death
nor see; eye
- "For men shall not so nere of councell ben
 With womanhode, ne knownen of her guyse.
 Ne whate they thinke, ne of there wit th'engene;
 I me reporte to Salamon the wise,
 And mighty Sampson, which begyled thries
 With Dalida was; he wot that, in a throwe,
 There may no man statute of women knowse." customs
the mechanism of their wit
- "For it paraventure may right so befallie,
 That they be bounde be nature to disceyve,
 And spynne, and wepe, and sugre strew on gall,
 The hart of man to ravissh and to reyve,
 And whet theire song as sharpe as swerd or gleyve;
 It may betide, this is theire ordynaunce.
 So must thei lowly done the observaunce." perchance
bitterness
pierce
spear
humbly
- "And kepe the statute goven thaim of kynde,
 Or suche as love hath gave hem in theire life.
 Men may not wete why turneth every wynde,
 Nor waxen wise, nor ben inquisytyf
 To knowe secret of mayde, widow, or wife.
 For thai theire statutes have so thaim reserved,
 And never man to knowe thaim hath deserved." given [to them] by nature
know; change
widow
- "Now dresse you furth, the god of love you gayde!"
 Quod Rigour than, "and sike the temple bright
 Of Cithera, goddes here beside.
 Beseche her, by enflueunce and myght
 Of all her vertue, you to teche aright
 How forto serve youre ladis, and to please,
 Ye that ben sped, and set your hart in ease." seek
Venus
- "And ye that ben unpurveied, pray her eke,
 Comforste you sone with grace and destine," unprovided for

- That ye may set youre hart there ye may like,
 In such a place, that it to love may be
 Honoure, and worship, and filicité
 To you for ay. Now goth, by one assent."
 "Graunt mercy, sir," quod we, and furth we went
- Devoutly, soft and esy pace, to se slow
 Venus the goddes ymage, all of gold;
- And there we founde a thousand on theire kne, cloaks
 Sum freshh and feire, som dedely to behold,
 In sondry mantils newe, and some were old,
 Som paynted were with flames rede as fire,
 Outeard to shewe theire inwarde hote desire:
- With dolefull chere, full feele in theire complaynt
 Cried, "Lady Venus, rewe upon oure sore!
 Receyve oure billes with teres all bedreynte;
 We may not wepe, there is no more in store,
 But woo and Payne us frettith more and more.
- Thow blessedfull planet, lovers sterre so shene,
 Have rowth on us, that sigh and carefull bene.
- "And ponysshe, lady, grevously, we pray,
 The false untrew with counterfete plesaunce,
 That made theire othe, be trewe to live or dye,
 With chere assured, and with countenaunce;
 And falsely now thay foton loves daunce,
- Vit eft again, a mille milion.
 Rejoying love, ledyng theire life in blisse,
 Thay seid: "Venus, redresse of all divyson,
 Goddes eternel, thy name i-hired is!
 By loves bond is knyt all thing, iwis:
 Best unto best, the erth so water wanne,
- Birde unto bird, and woman unto man.
- "This is the life of joye that we ben in,
 Resemblyng life of heavenly paradyse.
 Love is exiler ay of vice and synne;
 Love maketh hertes lusty to devise.
 Honoure and grace have thay in every wise,
 That ben to loves lase obedient.
 Love makith folke benignie and diligent,
- happines
forever; go
- fence
have pity
- consumes
lover's star (Venus); bright
compassion
- punish
pleasurans
- composure
excuse the steps of
Barren
alleviated
- thousand million
- redresser
praised
indeed
pale
- perform [good deeds]

- 605 "Ay steryng theim to drede vice and shame,
In theire degree it maketh thaim honorable,
And swete it is of love to bere the name,
So that his love be feithfull, true, and stable.
Love prumyth hym to semen amyable;
Love hath no faute there it is excercised,
But sole with theim that have all love dispised.
- moving them to fear
groom
flour
only
- 610 "Honoure to thee, celestiall and clere
Goddess of love, and to thi celcitude,
That gevest us light so ferre downe from thi spere,
Persing our hartes with thi pulcitude.
Compersion none of similitude
615 May to thi grace be made in no degré,
That hast us set with love in unité.
- loftiness
gives; sphere
Piercing; beauty
No similar comparison
- 620 "Grete casse have we to prayse thy name and thee,
For through thee we live in joye and blisse.
Blessed be those, most souverayn to se.
625 Thi holy courte of gladnesse may not mysse:
A thousand sith we may rejoise in this,
That we ben thynne with harte and all i-fere,
Enflamed with thi grace and hevynly fere."
- times
together
fire
- 630 Musyng of tho that spakyn in this wise,
I me bethought, in my remembraunce,
Myne oryson right godely to devise,
And pleasauntly, with hartes obeysaunce,
Beseche the goddess voiden my grevaunce:
635 For I loved eke, sauf that I wist nat where.
Yet downe I set and seid as ye shall here:
- Considering those
prayer
*[if] beseeched; to void
also, except; knew not*
- 640 "Feirest of all that ever were or be,
Lucerne and light to pensif creature,
Myne hole affiaunce and my lady fre.
My goddes bright, my fortune, and my ure,
I geve and yeld my harte to thee, full sure,
645 Humbly beseching lady, of thi grace,
Me to bestowe into som blissed place.
- Lamp; melancholy
fate
give and yield
- 650 "And here I vowe me feithfull, true, and kynde,
Without offence of mutabilite,
Humbly to serve, while I have witte and mynde,
Myne hole affiaunce, and my lady free,
In thilke place there ye me signe to be,
655 And sith this thing, of newe, is gove to me,
To love and serve, and nedely, most I obey.
- inconstancy
trust
where; assign
given
earnestly

- 645 "Be merciable with thi fire of grace,
And fix myne harte there bewtie is, and routh.
For hote I love, determyne in no place,
Sauf only this, be God and by my trouthe:
Trowbled I was with slomber, slepe, and slouth
650 This other nyght, and in a vision
I se a woman romen up and downe —
- pay
*Except; by
saw*
- "Of mene stature, and semly to behold,
Lusty and fressh, demure of countynaunce.
Vong and wel shap, with here that shone as gold,
655 With yen as cristall fercid with plesaunce —
And she gan stir myne harte alite to daunce;
But sodenly, she vanyssh gan right there.
Thus I may sey I love and wot not where!
- moderate; becoming
*well-shaped; hair
eyes; filled
caused; to dance a little*
- "For whate she is, ne her dwellyng, I note,
660 And yit I fele that love distractyneth me;
Might iche her knowe, that wold I fayne, God wot,
Serve and obey with all benignite.
And yf that other by my destine,
So that nowise I shall hir never see,
665 Than graunte me her that best may likene me.
- I know not
constrains
(If) I might; then would I desire
fTo] serve
another [girl is to] be*
- "With glad rejoysse to live in parfite hele,
Devoide of wrath, repent, or variaunce.
And able me to do that may be wele
Unto my lady, with hartes hie plesaunce.
670 And, myghty goddes, through thy purviaunce,
My witte, my thought, my lust, and love so guyde,
That to thyne honoure I may me provyde
- perfect happiness
sorrow, or infidelity
enable
providence
- "To set myne harte in place there I may like,
And gladly serve with all affeccion.
675 Grete is the payn which at myne hart doth styke,
Till I be sped by thyne eleccion.
Helpe, lady goddes, that possession
I might of her have, that in all my life
I clepen shall my quene and hartes wife.
- affusion; selection
call
- 680 "And in the Courte of Love to dwell, for aye,
My wille it is, and done thee sacryfice
Dayly, with Diane eke, forso fight and fraye,
And holden werre as myght well me suffice.
- forever
abe; attack

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 685 | That goddes chaste I kepen in no wise
To serve; a ffigge for all her chastit !
Hir lawe is for religiosit !" | <i>the religious-minded</i> |
| 690 | And thus gan fynyssh prerer, laude, and preice
Which that I gave to Venus on my kne;
And in myne harte to powder and to peice,
I gave anom hir ymage freshh bewtie:
"Heile to that figure swete, and heile to thee,
Cupide," quod I, and rose and yede my way.
And in the temple as I yede I sey | <i>praise</i>
<i>gave</i>
<i>wreigh</i>
<i>Hail</i>
<i>went</i>
<i>saw</i> |
| 695 | A shryne sormowenting all in stones riche,
Of which the force was plesaunce to myne ye;
With diamant or saphire nevir liche
I have none seyen, ne wrought so wondery.
So whan I met with Philobone, in hie
I gan demaund, "Who is this sepulture?"
"Forsoth," quod she, "a tender creature | <i>exceeding</i>
<i>effet</i>
<i>marvelously</i>
<i>immediately</i>
<i>Whose</i> |
| 700 | "Ys shryned there, and Pit  is her name.
She saw an egle wreke hym on a flye,
And pluk his wyng, and ete hym in his game;
And tender harte of that hath made her dye.
Eke she wold wepe and morne right piteously,
To sene a lover suffre grete destresse.
In all the courte nas none that, as I gesse, | <i>avenge himself</i> |
| 705 | "That coude a lover have so well availe,
Ne of his woo, the torment or the rage,
Aslake, for he was sure, withouten faile,
That of his gryfe she coude the hete awage,
Instead of Pit , spedeth hote corage,
The maters all of courte, now she is dede;
I me report in this to womanhode. | <i>half, help</i>
<i>Allieviate</i>
<i>relieve</i>
<i>desire</i>
<i>[In] all the matters</i> |
| 710 | "For weile and wepe, and crye, and speke, and pray —
Women wold not have pit  on thi playnt;
Ne by that meane to ease thyne hart convey,
But thee receyven for theire ownen talent,
And sey that Pit  causith thee, in consent
Of rewth, to take thy service and thy Payne
In that thou maist, to please thy souverayn. | <i>desire</i> |
| 715 | | |
| 720 | | |

⁴ [For] that chaste goddess (i.e., Dharma) I care in no way.

- "But this is councell, kepe it secretly." *confidential*
 Quod she, "I told for all the world abowte,
 The Quene of Love it wist. And witte ye why?
 725 For yf, by me, this mater spryngen oute,
 In courte no lenger shuld I, owe of dowsse,
 Dwellen, but shame in all my life endry.
 Nowe kepe it close," quod she, "this hardely.
*endure
firmly*
- "Well, all is well nowe, shall ye sene," she seid,
 730 "The feirest lady under sonne that is!
 Come on with me, demeane you liche a mayde,
 With shamefast drede, for ye shall spede, iwis,
 With her that is the mirth, and joye, and blisse —
 735 But sumwhathe straunge and sad of her demeane
 She is — beware youre countenaunce be sene,
*you shall see
govern
succord; indeed
bearing*
- "Nor over light, ne rechelesse, ne to bold,
 Ne malapert, ne rymyng with your tong.
 For she will you abiesen and behold,
 And you demaund why ye were hens so long
 740 Oute of this courte, withouten resorte among;
 An Rosiall her name is hote aright.
 Whose harte is yet goven to no wight.
*impudent
abash; inspect
arsey
called
grov*
- "And ye also ben, as I understand,
 With love but light avaunced, by your worde:
 745 Might ye, be happe, youre fredome maken bond,
 And fall in grace with her, and wele accorde,
 Well myght ye thank the god of love and lord.
 For she that ye sawe in youre dreme appere,
 To love suche one, whate ar thee than the nere?
constrain
- "Yit wote ye whate? As my remembraunce
 Me gevith nowe, ye fayne where that ye sey
 That ye with love had never aqueyntaunce,
 Sauf in your dreme right late this other day.
 Why, yis, pardé! my life — that durst I lay —
 755 That ye were caught opon an beth, when I
 Saw you complayn and sigh full piteously.
*dissensible
dare
boath*
- "Withynne an erber and a garden faier,
 With floures growe and herbes vertuse,
 Of which the savour swete was and the heire,
 There were youre self full hote and amerous:
 Iwis, ye ben to nyse and daungerouce.
 760 A! Wold ye nowe repent, and love some newe?"
 "Nay, by my trouth," I seid, "I never knewe
*herb garden
wholesome
smell; fumes
fauoy; reserved*

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 765 | "The godeley wight, whoes I shall be for aye.
Guyde me the lord that love hath made and me."
But furth we went intill a chambre gay:
There was Rosiall, womanly to se,
Whose stremes, sotell persyng, of her ye
Myne harte gan thrill for beswte in the stound.
"Alas," quod I, "whoo hath me gave this wounde?" | <i>into</i>
<i>say; valtily piercing</i>
<i>in an instant</i>
<i>given</i> |
| 770 | And than I dred to speke, till at the laste
I grete the lady reverently and wele.
Whan that my sigh was gon and over past;
And downe on knees full humbly gan I knele,
Beseching her my fervent woo to kele,
For there I toke full purpose, in my mynde,
Unto her grace my paynfull harte to bynde. | <i>cool</i> |
| 775 | For yf I shall all fully her discryve,
Her heide was rounde, by compace of nature;
Here here as gold — she passed all on live —
And lilly forbede had this creature,
With loveliessh browes, flawe, of coloure pure,
Bytwene the whiche was mene disseveraunce
From every browe, to shewe a distaunce. | <i>contrivance</i>
<i>surpassed</i>

<i>yellowish</i>
<i>moderate distance</i> |
| 780 | 785 Her nose, directed streight and even as lyne
With fourme and shap thereto convenient,
In which the goddes mylke white path doth shyse;
And eke her yen ben bright and orient
As is the smaragde, unto my juggement,
Or yet thise sterres heavenly, smale, and bright.
Hir visage is of lovely rede and white. | <i>appropriate</i>

<i>eye; brilliant</i>
<i>emerald</i> |
| 790 | 795 Her mouth is shorte and shitte in litill space,
Flamyng somdele, not over rede, I mene.
With prengnaunte lippes, and thik to kisse, percas!
For lippes thynne, not fatte, but ever lene,
They serve of naught, thay be not worth a bene.
For yf the basse ben full, there is delite,
Maximyan truly thus doth be write. | <i>small; enclosed</i>

<i>blazing</i>
<i>full; perchance</i>

<i>kin</i> |
| 800 | 805 But to my purpose: I sey, white as snowe
Ben all her seth, and in order thay stand
Of one stature; and eke her breth, I trowe,
Surmounteth all oders, that ever I found,
In switnesse; and her body, face, and hond
Ben sharply slender, so that from the heide
Unto the fote, all is but womanhede. | |

- I hold my pease of other thinges hidde:
 Here shall my soule, and not my tong, bewry.
 But how she was arrayed, yf ye me bidde,
 That shall I well discover you and say:
 A bende of gold and silke, full fressh and gay,
 With her in tresse, browdered full well,
 Right smothly kepte and shynyng every dele.
- Aboute her nec a floare of fressh devise
 With rubies set, that lusty were to sene;
 And she in gowne was, light and somerwise,
 Shapen full wele, the coloure was of grene,
 With awreat seint aboute her sides clene,
 With dyvers stones, precious and riche:
 Thus was she raied, yit saugh I never her liche.
- For yf that Jove had this lady seyn,
 Tho Calixto ne Alcenia,
 Thay never hadden in his armes leyne;²
 Ne he had loved the faire Europa,
 Ye, ne yit Dame, ne Antiopa!
- For all theire bewtie stode in Rosiall;
 She semed lich a thyng celestiall
- In bownté, favor, porte, and semlynnesse,³
 Plesaunt of figure, myrroure of delite,
 Gracious to sene, and rote of gentilnesse,
 With angell visage, lusty, rede and white.
 There was not lak, sauf Daunger had, a lite,
- And eft agayn I com to seken grace,
 And up I put my bille, with sentence clere,
 That folowith aftir; rede and ye shall here:
- "O ye fressh, of bewtie the rote,
 That nature hath fourmed so wele and made
 Pryncesse and quene! And ye that may do bose
- dredge
clothed, if you ask me fit to say!
reveal fit if you
ribbon
tresses, braided
- vivid design
delightful
- gold wash; shapely sides
arrayed; like
- Dame
- Delightful person
- come
formal petition; purport
provide a remedy

² Lines 821–22: *Then /norther/ Calixto nor Alcenia / /Would/ have ever lain in his arms*

³ *In virtue, disposition, deportment, and graciousness*

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 845 | Of all my langoure with youre wordes glad!
Ye wounded me, ye made me wo bestad;
Of grace, redresse my mortall grief, as ye,
Of all myne harm, the verrey causer be. | <i>beset with woe</i> |
| 850 | "Now am I caught, and unware sodenly,
With persant stremes of your yen clere,
Subjecte to ben, and serven you mekely,
And all youre man, iwis, my lady dere:
Abidyngr grace, of which I you require,
That merciles ye cause me not to sterre,
But guerdon me liche as I may deserve. | <i>piercing beams; eyes</i>
<i>Awaiting</i>
<i>die</i>
<i>reward</i> |
| 855 | "For, by my trouth, the dayes of my breth,
I am and wille be youre in wille and harte.
Pacient and meke, for you to suffree deth
If it require; nowe rewé upon my smert!
And this I swere: I never shall oute sterre
From Loves Courte for none adversit 
So ye wold rewé on my distresse and me. | <i>pity; pain</i>
<i>run out</i> |
| 860 | "My destin , and me fate, and ure, i-blisse,
That have me set to ben obedient
Only to you, the floure of all, iwis;
I trusste to Venus never to repent —
Forever redy glad and dyligent
Ye shall me fynde, in service to your grace,
Tyll deth my life oute of my body rase. | <i>fortune (luck); /God/ bless me</i>
<i>tear</i> |
| 865 | "Humble unto your excellencie so digne,
Enforcyng ay my wittes and delite
To serve and please with glad harte and benigne,
And ben as Troylus, Troyes knyghte,
Or Antony for Cleapatre bright,
And never you me thynkes to rensey:
This shall I kepe unto myne endyng day. | <i>noble</i>
<i>Exerting</i>
<i>resource</i> |
| 870 | "Enprint my speche in youre memoriall
Sadly, my princes, salve of all my sore!
And think that, for I wold becommen thrall,
And ben youre osyn, as I have seid before,
Ye most of pit  cherissh more and more
Youre man, and tender aftir his deserfe,
And yf hym corage forto ben expert. | <i>memory</i>
<i>Fally; princess, remedy</i>
<i>enslaved</i> |
| 875 | "For where that one hath settis his harte on fire,
And fyndeth nether refute, ne plesaunce, | <i>merit</i>
<i>And give; experienced (in love)</i>
<i>refuge</i> |

- 885 Ne worde of comfoete, deth will quite his hire.
 Allas, that there is none allegaunce
 Of all their woo! Allas, the grete grevaunce
 To love unloved! But ye, my lady dere,
 In other wise may governe this matere."
- 890 "Truly, gramercy, frende, of your gode wille,
 And of youre profer, in youre humble wise.
 But for youre service, take and kepe it stille;
 And where ye say, I ought you well cheryssh,
 And of youre gref the remedy devise.
- 895 I knowe not why: I nam acqueyncted well
 With you ne wote not, southly, where ye dwell."
- "In arte of love I write, and songes make,
 That may be song in honour of the Kyng
 And Quene of Love; and than I undertake,
 He that is saddle shall than full mery syng.
 And daungerus not ben in everything
- 900 Beseche I you, but sene my wille and rede,
 And let your aunswere put me ouze of drede."
- 905 "Whate is youre name? Reberse it here, I pray,
 Of whens, and where, of whate condicoun,
 That ye ben of. Let se, com of, and say!
 Fayne wold I knowe your dysposicioun;
- 910 Ye have putte upon youre old entencoun,
 But whate ye meane to serve me I nese,
 Sauf that ye say ye love me wunder hete."
- "My name, allas, my hart, why make it straunge?
 Philogenet I cald am, fer and nere,
 Of Cambrige clerke, that never think to chaunge
 For you, that with youre hevenly stremes clere,
- 915 Ravish myne harte and geste and all in fere.
 This is the firsse I write my bille for grace:
 Me thynke I se som mercy in youre face.
- 920 "And whate I mene, by goddes that all hath wrought,
 My bille, that maketh fynall mencion,
 That ye bene, lady, in myse inward thought,
 Of all myne harte withouten offencion,
- transgression
- That I beste love, and have, sith I beganne
 To drawe to courte. Lo thanne, whate myght I say?
 I yeld me here unto youre nobly.
- yield; nobility

- 925 "And yf that I offend, or wilfully,
Be pompe of harte, youre precepte disobey,
Or done agayn youre wille unskillyfully,
Or greven you, for ernest or for play.
Correcte ye me right sharply than, I pray.
Through pride
at against
aggrieve
- 930 As it is sene unto youre womanhede,
And rewe on me, or ellis I nam but dede."
As seems appropriate
- "Nay, god forbede to fesse you so with grace,
And for a worde of sugred eloquence,
To have compassion in so litell space!
invest
- 935 Than were it tyme that som of us were hens!
Ye shall not fynde in me suche insolence.
Ay, whate is this? May ye not suffer sight?
How may ye loke upon the candill lyght
misbehavior
- "That clere is and hatter than myn ye?
940 And yet ye seid the bemes perse and frete;
Howe shall ye thanse the candelight endry?
For well wotte ye, that hath the sharper hete.
And there ye bidde me you correcte and bete
If ye offend; nay, that may not be done!
hatter; eye
burn
endure
- 945 There come but fewe that speden here so sone.
succeed
- "Withdrawe youre ye, withdrawe from presens eke;
Hurtie not youreself, thrugh foly, with a loke!
I wold be sorry so to make you syke.
A woman shuld beware eke whom she toke.
950 Ye beth a clarke — go serch ynne my boke —
If any women ben so light to wynne.
Nay, abide a while; thowe ye were all my kynne,
attracts
though
- "So sone ye may not wynne myne harte, in trouth;
The guyse of courte will sene youre stedfastnesse,
955 And as ye done, so have upon you rewth.
Youre owen deserfe and lawly gentilnesse —
That will reward you, joy for hevynesse.
And those ye waxen pale, and grene, and dede,
Ye most it use a while, withouten drede.
pity
humble
endure
- 960 "And it accept, and grucchen in no wise,
But where as ye me hastily desire
To bene to love, me thynke ye be not wise.
Cease of youre language, cease, I you require!
For he, that hath this twenty yere bene here,
965 May not optayne; than marveile I that ye
Be nowe so bold, of love to trete with me."
grumble
be successful

- "A! Mercy, hart, my lady, and my love,
 My righteous prinessse and my lives guyde!
 Nowe may I playn to Venus all above,
 That, rewthles, ye may gife this wounde wide?
 Whate have I done? Why may it not betide,
 That for my trouth I may receyved be?
 Alas thanne, youre daunger and your crueltie!"
- rightful
complain
merciless; give
- "In wofull hōwre I gote was, welaway!
 In wofull oure fostered and i-fedde,
 In wofull oure i-borne, that I ne may
 My supplicacion swetely have i-spedde.
 The frosty grave and cold miste be my bedde,
 Withoutye list youre grace and mercy shewe,
 Deth with his axe so faste on me doth hewe."
- hour; concerned
named
Unless
- "So grese disease and in so litell while,
 So litell joy, that felte I never yet;
 And at my wo fortune gynnyth to smyle,
 That never arst I felte so harde a fute.
 Confounded ben my spiritis and my witte,
 Tylle that my lady take me to her cure,
 Which I love best of ertheyle creature."
- begins
enwhile
Troubled
- "But that I like, that may I not com by;
 Of that I playn, that have I habondaunce
 Sorowe and thought; thay sit me wounder nye.
 Me is withhold that myght be my plesaunce;
 Yet turne agayn my worldly suffisaunce,
 O lady bright, and sauf your frithfull true,
 And, ar I dye, yet ois upon me rewe."
- near
satisfaction
more
before; once
- With that I fell in sounde, and dede as stone,
 With colour slayn and swanne as ashi pale;
 And by the hande she caught me up anon:
 "Aryse anon," quod she, "whate, have ye drunken dwale?
 Why slepen ye? It is no nyrtale?"
- a noon
extinguished; gray
(a narcotic)
not night
- "Now mercy, swete," quod I, ivers affraied.
 "What thyng," quod she, "hath made you so dysmayed?
- "Now wote I well that ye a lover be —
 Youre hewe is witnessse in this thyng," she seid.
 "Yf ye were secrete, ye might knowe," quod she.
 "Carteise and kynde, all this shuld be aleyde.
 And nowe, myne harte, all that I have mysseide
 I shall amend, and set youre harte in ease."
 "That wordie, it is," quod I, "that doth me please."
- discreet
alleviated

- 1010 "But this I charge — that ye the statutes kepe —
 And breke thaym not for slouth nor ignorauunce."
 With that she gan to smyle and laughen depe.
 "Iwis," quod I, "I wille do youre plesaunce.
 The sixteenth statute doth me grete grevaunce:
 But ye most that releesse or modifie!"
 1015 "I graunte," quod she, "and so I wille, truly."

 And softly thanne her coloure gan appeire,
 As rose so rede, throughoute her visage all;
 Wherefore me thynke that it is accordyng here,
 That she of right be cleped Rosyall.
 1020 Thus have I wome, with wordes grete and small,
 Some godely worde of hir that I love best,
 And trust she shall yit sette myse harte in rest.

 "Goth on," she seid to Phelobone, "and take
 This man with you, and lede hym all abowte
 1025 Withynne the courte, and shewe hym, for my sake,
 Whate lovers dwell withynne, and all the rowte
 Of officers him shewe; for he is, oute of dawte,
 A straunger yit." "Come on," quod Philobone,
 "Philogenet, with me nowe must ye gon."

 1030 And stalkyng softe with easy pase, I sone
 Aboute the kyng stonden environ,
 Attendaunce, Diligence, and theire felosee
 Fortherer, Asperaunce, and many one.
 Dred-to-Offende there stode, and not alone;
 1035 For there was eke the cruell adversary,
 The lovers foo, that cleped is Dispaire.

 Which unto me spak angrely and felle,
 And seid my lady me dysseyvene shall:
 "Throwest thoue," quod he, "that all that she did tell
 1040 Ys true? Nay, nay, but under hony gall!
 Thy birth and hers be nothing egall;
 Caste of thyne harte for all her wordes white,
 For, gode faith, she lovith thee but alite.

 "And eke remember, thyne habilité
 1045 May not compare with hir, this well thosee wote."
 Ye, than came Hope and seid, "My frende, let be!
 Believe hym not; Dispaire, he gynneth dote."
 "Alas," quod I, "here is both cold and hote:
 The tene me biddeth love, the toder nay.
 1050 Thus wote I not whate me is best to say.

*laicens
passionately**appropriate**company**around
Attention
Assistance, Hope**cruelly
deceive
Trust**equivalent
fair**worthmen
know**begins to act foolishly**one; other*

- "But well wote I, my lady graunted me,
 Truly to be my woundes remedy.
 Her gentilnesse may not infected be
 With doblenesse; this trust I till I dye.
- 1055 So cast I voide Dispaires company,
 And taken Hope to councell and to frande."
 "Ye, kepe that wele," quod Phelibone, "in mynde."
- And there beside, withyn a bay wyndowe,
 Stode one in grene, full large of brede and length,
 His berd as blak as fethers of the crose:
 His name was Lust, of wounder might and strength.
 And with Delite to argue there he thynketh,
 For this was all his opynyon.
 That love was synne; and so he hath begonne
- 1065 To reason faste and legge auctorité.
 "Nay," quod Delite, "love is a vertue clere,
 And from the soule his progresse holdeth he;
 Blynd appityde of lust doth often stirre,
 And that is synne, for reason lakketh there.
 1070 For thowe thinke thi neighbours wife do wyn,
 Yit thynk it well that love may not be synne.
- "For God and seint, thay love right verely.
 Voide of all synne and vise, this knowe I wele;
 Affection of flessh is synne, truly,
 But verray love is vertue, as I fele.
 For love may not thy freyle desire akkele:
 1075 For verray love is love withouten synne."
 "Nowe stymte," quod Lust, "thow spekest not worth a pyne."
- And there I left thaim in theire arguyng,
 Romyngh ferther in the castell wide,
 And in a corner Lier stode talkyng
 Of lesinges fast, with Flatery there beside:
 He seid that women were attire of pride,
 1080 And men were founde of nature variaunte
 And coude be false, and shewen beawe semblaunt.
- Than Flatery bespake and seid, iwis:
 "Se, so she goth on patens faire and fete,
 Hit doth right wele; whate prety man is this
 That rommeth her? Nowe truly, drynke ne mete
 1085 Nede I not have; myne harte for joye doth bese,
 Hym to behold, so is he godely fressh.
 It semeth for love his harte is tender nessh."
- width
extraordinary
(to) appeal to
Desire
true
cool
stop
fishhook
equipped with
fair appearance
wooden clog
Who reaches [for] her
softened

[text missing]

- "This is the courte of lusty folke and glad,
And welbecometh theire abite and arraye." *clothing*
- 1095 "O why be som so sory and so sadde,
Complaynyng thus in blak and white and gray?"
"Freres thay ben, and monkes, in gode fay.
Alas, for rewth, grete dole it is to sene,
To se thaim thus bewaile and sory bene.
- 1100 "Se howe thei crye and wryng theire handes white,
For thei so sone went to religion!
And eke the nonnes, with vaile and wympyle pligt,
There thought that thei ben in confusion:
'Alas,' thay sayn, 'we fayn perfeccyon,
- 1105 In clothes wide, and lake oure libertie;
But all the synne mote on oure frendes be. *too soon
fastened
must*
- "For Venus wote, we wold, as fayne as ye
That bene attired here and welbesene,
Desiren man and love in oure degree,
Ferme and feithfull, right as wold the quene.
Oure frendes wikkē, in tender youth and grene,
- 1110 Agenst oure wille made us religious;
That is the cause we morne and waylen thus." *wicked*
- 1115 Than seid the monke and freres in the tide,
"Well may we course ouare abbes and our place,
Oure statutes sharpe: to syng in copes wide,
Chastly to kepe us oute of loves grace,
And never to fele conforte ne solace.
- 1120 Yit suffre we the hete of loves fire,
And aftir than other happily we desire. *at the same time
carse; abbey
couch*
- "O Fortune cursed, why nowe and wherefore
Hast thowē," thay seid, "berafte us libartie,
Sith nature gave us instrument in store,
And appetide to love and lovers be?
Why mot we suffer suché adversité,
- 1125 Dyane to serve and Venus to refuse?
Full often sith this matier doth us muse. *denied
Since
must
times; ponder*
- 1130 "We serve and honour sore agenst oure wille,
Of chastitē the goddes and the quene;
Us leffier were with Venus biden stille,
And have reward for love, and soget bene
Unto thisē women courtly, fressh, and shene. *against
We would rather
subject
beautiful*

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| | Fortune, we curse thi whel of variaunce!
There we were wele thou revist our plesaunce." | wheel
turn back |
| 1135 | Thus leve I thaym, with voice of pleint and care,
In ragyng woo crying full petiously;
And as I yede, full naked and full bare
Some I beholde, lokyng dispiteously
On Poverté, that dedely cast theire ye; | complaint
wert |
| 1140 | And "Welaway!" thei cried, and were not fayne,
For they ne myght theire glad desire attayne. | moanfully
happy |
| | For lak of richesse worldely and of gold,
Thay banne and curse, and wepe, and seyn, "Allas,
That Poverté hath us hem that whilom stode
At harts eas, and fre, and in gode case!
But now we dare not shew ourself in place, | condemn
captured; once |
| 1145 | Ne us embolde to duelle in company,
There as oure harte wolde love right faithfully." | desirous |
| 1150 | And yit agaynewarde shryked every nonne,
The prange of love so strayneth thaym to crye:
"Nowe woo the tyme," quod thay, "that we be boune!
This hatefull ordre myse will done us dye!
We sigh and sobbe and bleden inwardly, | agonys
<i>were bound (to religion)</i>
<i>strict; cause us [to] die</i> |
| 1155 | Frettyng oureself with thought and hard complaunt,
Than nay, for love, we waxen wode and faynt." | Devouring
nearly; distracted |
| | And as I stode beholdyng here and there,
I was ware of a sorte full languysshing.
Savage and wilde of lokyng and of chere,
Theire mantaylles and theire clothes ay teryng; | fully |
| 1160 | And ofte thay were of nature complauntyng,
For they there membres lakked, fote and hand,
With visage wry and blynde, I understand. | robey; tearing
twisted |
| 1165 | They lakked shap and beautie to preferre
Theymself in love, and seid that God and Kynde
Hath forged thaym to worshippen the sterre.
Venus the bright, and leften all behynde | advancē
Nature |
| | His other werkes clene and oute of mynde:
"For other have theire full shappe and bewtie,
And we," quod thay, "ben in deformyté." | |
| 1170 | And mye to thaym there was a company,
That have the sisters waried and mysseid;
I mene, the thre of fatall desynē,
That be our wordes. And sone, in a brayde | near
cursed; slandered
wroth (fates); outburst |

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| | Oute gan thay crye as thay had ben affrayed:
"We curse," quod thay, "that ever hath nature
I-formed us this wofull life to endure!" | disturbed |
| 1175 | And there he was contrite and gan repent,
Confessyng hole the wounde that Citheré
Hath with the darre of hote desire hym sent, | (see note)
Venus |
| 1180 | And howe that he to love muste subjet be;
Thanne held he all his skornes vanyté,
And seid, that lovers lede a blissedfull life.
Yong men and old, and widue, maide, and wife. | |
| 1185 | "Bereve, my goddesse," quod he, "thi myght,
My skornes all and skoffles, that I have
No power forth to mokken any wight
That in thi service dwell; for I ded rave,
This knowe I welle right nose, so God me save.
And I shal be the chife post of thy feith,
And love uphold, the revers who so seith." ⁷ | Take away |
| 1190 | Dissemble stode not ferre from hym, in trouth,
With party mantill, party hode and hose;
And seid, he had upon his lady rowth,
And thus he wounde hym in, and gan to glose
Of his entent full doble, I suppose.
And all the world, he seid, he lovid it wele;
But ay, me thoughtie, he loved hir nere adele. | Concealment; fair
multi-colored mantle
pity
gloss
double
not at all |
| 1195 | Eke Shamefastnesse was there, as I tolke hede,
That blashed rede and darst nat ben a knowe
She lover was, for therof had she drede.
She stode and lyng her visage downe alone.
But suche a sight it was to sene, I trowe,
As of thise roses rody on theire stalke;
There cowde no wight her spy to speke or talke | blashed; dared not be revealed
hung
trust
reddy |
| 1200 | In loves arte, so gan she to abasshe,
Ne durst not utter all her previné.
Many a stripe and many a grevouse lasshe
She gaven to thaym that wolden lovers be,
And hindered sore the sympill comonaltie,
That in nowise dурсе grace and mercy crave. | be embarrassed
dared; intimacies
people |
| 1205 | For were not she, thei nede but aske and have, | |

⁷ And [do] uphold love, regardless of what others say.

- Where yf thay nowe approchyn forto speke,
 Thanse Shamefastnesse returnyth thaym agayn:
 Thay thynke if thay oure secrutes councell breke,
 1215 Oure ladys wille have scorne on us certen,
 And, aventure, thynken grete disdayne.
 Thus Shamefastnesse may bryngyn in Dispeire:
 When she is dede, the toder will be heire. *other*
- Com forth, Avaunter, nowe I ryng thy bell! *Buster*
 1220 I spied hym sone; to God I make a vow,
 He loked blak as fendes doth in Hell.
 "The firste," quod he, "that ever I ded wowe,
 Withynne a worde she com, I wotte not howe.
 So that in armes was my lady fre;
 1225 And so hath ben a thousand mo than she.
- "In Engliond, Bretayn, Spayn, and Pycardie,
 Artyes, and Fraunce, and up in hie Holand,
 In Burgoyne, Naples, and Italy,
 Naverne, and Grece, and up in hethen lond,
 1230 Was never woman yit that wold withstand
 To ben at myne commaundement, whan I wold!
 I lakked neither silver coyne ne gold,
- "And there I met with this estate and that.
 And here I broched her, and here, I trowe:
 1235 Lo, there goith one of myne; and wotte ye whate?
 Yonue freshh attired have I leyde full lowe,
 And suche one yonder eke right well I knowe —
 I kepte the statute whan we lay i-fere,
 And yet yon same hath made me right goode chere." *piected*
- 1240 Thus hath Avaunter blowen everywhere *boasted*
 All that he knowith, and more, a thousand fold.
 His auncetrye of kynne was to Lier,
 For first he makith promyse forto hold *forefather*
 His ladys councell, and it not unfold;
 1245 Wherfore, the secrete when he doth unshitte,
 Than lieth he, that all the world may witte. *reval*
disclose
knew
- For falsing so his promyse and beheste,
 I wounder sore he hath suche fantasie;
 He lakketh witte, I trowe, or is a beste,
 1250 That canne no bette hymself with reason guy. *betraying; oath*
best
guide
 Be myne advice, love shal be contrarie
 To his avayle, and hym eke dishonsoure,
 So that in courte he shall no more sojorne. *adverstige*
reside

- 1255 "Take hede," quod she, this litell Philobone,
 "Where Envye rokketh in the corner yonde,
 And sitteth dirke; and ye shall se anone
 His lene bodie, fading face and hond;
 Hymself he fretteth, as I understand.
 Witnesse of Ovide *Methamorphoses*;
 1260 The lovers foo he is, I will not gloose.
- "For where a lover thinketh hym promote,
 Envye will grucche, repynng at his wele;
 Hit swelleth sore aboue his hertes rote,
 That in no wise he canne not live in hele.
 1265 And yf the feithfull to his lady stèle,
 Envye will noise and ryng it rounde aboue,
 And sey moche worse than done is, oute of dowsē."
- And Preyne Thought, rejoysing of hymself,
 Stode not ferre thens in abite meruelous;
 1270 Yonne is, thought I, som sprite or some elf.
 His scotill image is so corious.
 "Howe is," quod I, "that he is shaded thus
 With yonder cloth, I note of whate coloure?"
 1275 And nere I went, and gan to lere and pore,⁹
- And frayned hym question full hard:
 "Whate is," quod I, "the thyng thou lovest beste?
 Or whate is hote unto thi paynes hard?
 Me think thowe liveste here in grete unreste;
 1280 Thowe wandrest ay from south to est and weste,
 And eft to north: as ferre as I canne see,
 There is no place in courte may holden thee.
- "Whom folowest thowe? Where is thi harte i-set?
 But my demaunde asoile, I thee require."
 "Me thought," quod he, "no creature may leste,
 1285 Nowe to ben here, and where, as I desire;
 For where as absence hath done oute the fire,
 My mery thought it kyndelith yet agayne,
 That bodey, me thinke, with my souverayne
- 1290 "I stand, and speke, and laugh, and kisse, and halse,
 So that my thought comforteth me full oft.
 I think, God wote, though all the world be false,
 I wille be trewe; I think also howe softe

⁹ *And naser I went, and began to stare [at him] and examine [him]*

- My lady is in speche, and this on lofte
 Bryngeth myne harte to joye and gladnesse;
 1295 This prevey thought alayeth myne hevynesse. *up high*
- "And whate I thinke, or where to be, no man
 In all this erth can tell, isis, but I.
 And eke there nys no swalowe swifte, ne *sean*
 So wight of wyng ne half so yerne can flye;
 1300 For I canne ben, and that right sodenly,
 In Heven, in Helle, in Paradise, and here,
 And with my laday, whan I wylle desire. *wisdom; swiftly*
- "I am of councell ferre and wide, I wote,
 With lord and lady and there previtē,
 1305 I wotete it all, and be it cold or boote,
 Thay shall not speke withouten licence of me —
 I mene in suche as sesonable bee —
 For firste the thing is thought withynne the harte,
 Er any worde oute from the mouth astarte." *believe*
secrets
know
- 1310 And with that worde Thought bad farewell and yeede. *went*
 Eke furth went I to sene the cortis guyse;
 And at the dore came in, so God me spedē.
 Twey courteours, of age and of assise,
 Liche high and brode; and as I me advise, *Two; feature*
- 1315 The Golden Love and Leden Love, thay hight:
 The rone was sad the toder glad and light. *Leden; are called*
one; other
- [text missing]
- "Yis, drase youre harte, with all your force and myght,
 To lustynesse, and bene as ye have seid.
 And thinke that I no drope of favour hight,
 1320 Ne never hadde unto youre desire obeide.
 Till sodenly, me thought me was affrayed
 To sene you wax so dede of countenaunce,
 And Pitē bade me done you som plesaunce. *promised*
- "Oute of her shryne she rose from deth to live,
 1325 And in myne ere full privily she spake:
 'Deth not youre servante hens a way to drive,
 Rosiall,' quod she; and than myn harte break
 For tender reuth. And where I founde moche lak
 In youre persoone, than I me bethought,
 1330 And seid, 'thus is the man myne harte hath sought.'" *ear; privately*
pity

- "Gramercy, Pité! Myght I but suffice
 To yeve the lawde unto thy shryne of gold,
 God wotte, I wold, for sith that thou dide rise
 From deth to live for me, I am behold
 1335 To thanken you a mille tymes told,
 And eke my lady Rosyall the shene,
 Which hath in conforte set myne harte, I wene.
 be capable
 give; praise
 duty-bound
 thousand
 beautiful
 believe
- "And here I make myne protestacion,
 And depely swere, as myne power, to bene
 1340 Feithfull, devoide of variacion,
 And here forbere in anger or in tene,
 And serviceable to my worldes quene,
 With all my reason and intelligence,
 To done her honoure high and reverence."
 fickleness
 adversity
- 1345 I had not spoke so sone the worde, but she,
 My souverayn, dyde thanke me hartily,
 And seid, "Abide, ye shall dwelle stille with me
 Tylle season come of May; for than, truly,
 The Kyng of Love and all his company
 1350 Shalle hold his feste full ryally and welle."
 And there I bode till that the season felle.
 celebration
 remained
- On May day whan the larke began to ryse,
 To matens went the lusty nithingale,
 Within a temple shapen hasthorne wise.
 1355 He myght not slepe in all the nyghtertale,
 But "*Domine, labia*" gan he crye and gale.
 "My lippes open, lord of love, I crye,
 And let my mouth thi prysing nose bewrey."
 morning service
 like a hawthorn tree
 night
 shout
 praising; reveal
- The egle sang "*Venit, bodies all,*
 1360 And let us joye to love that is oure helth."
 And so the deske anon thay gan to falie.
 And who come late, he preced in by stelth.
 Than seide the fawcon, "*Oure owen hartis welth,*
Domine, dominus noster, I wote,
 1365 Ye be the god that done us brenne thus hote."
 lectern
 falcon
 believe
 makes us burn
- "*Celi eravant,*" seid the popyngay.
 "Youre myght is told in heven and firmament!"
 And than came inne the gold fynche fresh and gay.
 And seid this psalme with hartily glad intent:
 1370 "*Domini est terra,* this Laten intent,
 The god of love hath erth in governaunce."
 And than the wren gan skippen and to daunce,
 parrot
 Latin meant

- 1375 "Jule, domine, lorde of love, I pray,
 Commaunde me well this lesson forto rede;
 This legend is of all that wolden dye
 Marters for love; god yf the sowles sped!
 And to thee, Venus, singe we oute of drede,
 By influence of all thy vertue greate,
 Beseeching thee to kepe us in oure hete."
- 1380 The seconde lesson Robyn Redebreste sang:
 "Hayle to thee, god and goddes of oure lay!"
 And to the lectorn amoryly he sprong:
 "Haile," quod he eke, "O fresshe season of May,
 Oure moneth glad that syngen on the spray.
 1385 Haile to the floures rede, and white, and blewe,
 Which by theiri vertue maketh oure lustes newe!"
- 1390 The thridde lesson the turtill dove toke up,
 And therat lough the mavis in scorne.
 He seid, "O god, as mut I dyene or suppe,
 1395 This folissh dove wille gife us all an horne!
 There ben right here a mille better borne
 To rede this lesson, which, as welle as he
 And eke as hote, can love in all degree."
- 1400 The turtylle dove seid, "Welcom, welcom May,
 Gladsum and light to lovers that ben trewe!
 I thanke thee, lord of love, that doth purvey
 For me to rede this lesson all of dewe;
 For in gode southe, of corage I purpose
 To serve my make till deth us most departe."
 1405 And than *theas ewe* sang he all aparte.
- 1410 "Te deum amoris," sang the thrustell cok;
 Tuball hymself, the firste musician,
 With key of armomy coude not onlok
 So swete tewne as that the thrusill can:
 1415 "The lord of love we praysen," quod he than,
 "And so done all the fowles, grete and light,
 Honoure we May, in fals lovers despite."
- 1420 "Dominus regnauit," seid the pecok there,
 "The lord of love, that myghty prynce, iwis,
 1425 He hath receyved her and everywhere;
 Nowe *Jubilate* sing!" "Whate meneth this?"
 Seid than the lynette, "welcom, lord of blisse!"
 Ouse sterte the owle with "*Benedicite*,
 What meneth all this mery fare?" quod he.

*Martyn; giv; iurors
without doubt*

*song
ardently*

bough

*laughed; song thrush
mast; dine
(i.e., mock us)
thousand*

*provide
in due form
truth, with all my heart
male
"but you"*

"You, lord of love"; blackbird

little

- 1415 "Laudate," sang the larke with voice full shirill;
 And eke the kight, "O admirable,
 This quere will throwe myne eris pers and thrille.
 But whate? Welcom this May season," quod he,
 "And honoure to the lord of love mot be,
 That hath this feeste so solemayne and so high."
 "Amen," seid all, and so seid eke the pye.
- "Praise you"; shrill
 kite
 choir; pierce
 must
 magpie
- 1420
 And furth the cokkowe gan procede anon.
 With "Benedictus," thankyn god in hast.
 That in this May wold visite thaim echon,
 And gladden thaym all while the feeste shall last.
 And therewithall a laughtur oute he beaste,
 "I thanke it god that I shuld end the song,
 And all the service which hath ben so long."
- last
 in laughter he burst out
- 1425
 Thus sang they all the service of the feeste,
 And that was done right erly, to my dome;
 And furth goith all the courte, both most and lest,
 To feche the floures fressh, and braunche, and bloome;
 And namly hawthorn brought both page and grome,
 With fressh garlantis partie blewe and white.
 And thaim rejoysen in theire grete delite.
- in my judgment
 blossom
 parti-colored
- 1430
 Eke eche at other threwe the floures bright,
 The prymrose, the violet, the gold;
 So than as I beheld the riall sight,
 My lady gan me sodenly behold,
 And with a trewe love, plited many fold,
 She smote me through the harte as blive;
 And Venus yet I thanke I am alive!
- marigold
 pleated
 at once



EXPLANATORY NOTES TO *THE COURT OF LOVE*

- 2-12 *of curwyng naked . . . Why nam I curwyng?* The opening represents the common modesty *topos* — the writer's claim of poetic ineptitude — which is usually belied, as in this case, by his knowledge of the chief authorities on the "flowers" of rhetoric. Both the *De Inventione* of Tullius (line 8, Marcus Tullius Cicero) and the *Poetria Nova* of Galfridus (line 11, Geoffrey de Vinsauf) were influential sources on medieval rhetoric. See Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*.
- 19-24 *Calliope . . . Mynerva . . . Melpomene.* In Greek mythology, Calliope is the muse of eloquence and epic poetry, and Melpomene is the muse of tragedy; in Roman mythology, Minerva is the goddess of wisdom and invention.
- 22 *Elicone.* Mount Helicon on the Gulf of Corinth, sacred to Apollo and home to the Muses. According to Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 5.250-63) a blow from the hoof of Pegasus created a miraculous and sacred stream on the mount, a stream later interpreted as a font of poetic inspiration (Hippocrene).
- 45 *full saddle and ripe corage.* Suggesting both psychological and sexual maturity.
- 46 *Love arstid me.* Friedman detects a pun here: "The poet is constrained by Love to create his art, to write this poem, his 'observauance,' for his lady's pleasure" ("In Love's Thrall," p. 176). Chaucer uses the verb in a similar way in *Trislu and Criseyde*: "And over al this, yet muchel more he thoughte / What for to speke, and what to holden inne; / And what to arten hire to love he soughte" (1.386-88).
- 48 *Courte of Love.* John Stevens suggests that courts of love in medieval literature (such as those found here and in *The Kingis Quair*) have four principal meanings: 1) they are social courts, "in which the lover is at school and receives instruction in polite behavior"; 2) they resemble courts of law, "with its statutes, presided over by a judge"; 3) they invoke the image of the feudal court, "in which the subject pays homage to a sovereign"; and 4) because love is a religion, the court is a "congregation of the faithful" (*Music and Poetry*, p. 164).
- 49-50 *Citharee.* Skeat (*Chaucerian*, p. 541) points out that this is a common confusion (found also in Chaucer) of the mountain Cithaeron and the island Cythera (Cerigo), where Venus was thought to have risen from the foam of the sea. *Cithera* (line 50) is another name for Venus based on her association with the island.
- 66 *litch a mayde.* The description calls into question the gender of the speaker. Is it a woman who speaks like a youthful girl? Or is it a man whom love has made effeminate? The one interpretation might speak well of love, but which is meant is unclear until line 69, where the speaker is finally identified as male.

- 80 *turkes*. Skeat (*Chaucerian*, p. 542) suggests the adjective "Turkish"; similarly, Friedman states that the Turkish ruby represents infidelity, "as in other works" ("In Love's Thrall," p. 177), but I have been unable to find any supporting references. I have therefore suggested the noun "turkes," or turquoise, considered a semiprecious stone in the Middle Ages: "Turlogis, þat hatte turkeys also, is a white yellow stoon and halþat name of þe contre of Turkeys þer it is ybred. His stoon kepeþ and saveþ þe sight and bredeþ gladnesse and confort" (Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, 2.878 [xvi.lxxxxvi]).
- 83–91 *Phœbus shone, to make his pease . . . aftir loves grace*. Following Ovid and Chaucer (*Complaint of Mars*), it is Phœbus (the sun) that is faulted for discovering the adultery of Venus and Mars, those "high estates tweyne" (line 84) caught in Vulcan's net ("in armes cheyned faste"—line 86). Friedman suggests that since Phœbus is in the service of Venus, "light and wisdom are subservient to sensuality in this place" ("In Love's Thrall," p. 177).
- 94 *Jove, Pluto*. Jove is another name for the Roman god Jupiter, renowned for his extramarital sexual exploits; Pluto (also known as Hades or Dis) is the god of the underworld. Both usually resort to kidnap and rape rather than laborious courtship.
- 99 *unto Heaven it stretcheth*. The idea of a building so high that it reaches for Heaven itself might remind readers of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1–9. Associating the court of love with that which gave rise to the confusion of tongues (and perhaps also with the vanity and egotism behind it) is another means of subtly undercutting the subject matter.
- 104–05 *the quenes floure / Alceste*. The flower of Queen Alceste (i.e., the daisy). Although the story of Alceste and Admetus is also found in Gower (*Confessio Amantis* 7.1917–43), the allusion is probably more directly to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* in which Alceste is the paragon of wifely fidelity who "for hire housbonde chees to dye, / And eke to goon to helle, rather than he" (F 513–14). She is later transformed into a daisy. The speaker's ignorance of what "tho deyses myght do signifie" is perhaps meant to be facetious given not only Chaucer's own ruminations on the flower but also the corpus of *dits amoureux* by Machaut (*Dit de la marguerite*), Froissart (*Ditie de la flour de la marguerite*), and Deschamps (*Loy de Franchise*) known as the "marguerite" poems. See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the French Love Poets*.
- 108 *the ladyes gode nineteen*. A reference to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* (F 285). Chaucer describes ten good women in nine tales, although manuscripts of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* variously refer to the number as twenty-five, nineteen, and fifteen. See Hammond, "Chaucer's 'Book,'" pp. 514–16.
- 119 *Helise*. Elysium, in Greek mythology, the eternal dwelling place of the virtuous, noted chiefly for its clement climate.
- 129–30 *Daunger . . . Disdryue*. These two are also paired in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* (line 136), and Lydgate's *Temple of Glas* (line 156). Daunger (Resistance) is the usual foil of Fair Welcoming; see RR (lines 2825–3325).

- 136 *liche a darte*. The queen's eyes being like darts might be an oblique reference to the medieval commonplace that love casts a dart into the heart of the lover. The poet's immediate source here is perhaps Chaucer's Knight's Tale, where Arcite proclaims that Emily has slain him with her eyes (*CT II[A]1567*): "Love hath his firy dart so brennyngly / Ystiked thurgh my trewe, careful herte" (1564–65), though in *RR* Cupid shoots several of his arrows into the lover's eye.
- 140 *A yarde in length*. In this feature this poet's Alceste resembles Chaucer's Emily in The Knight's Tale, whose "yellow heer was broydied in a tresse / Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse" (*CT II[A]1049–50*). See also our poet's description of Rosall's hair (lines 810–12).
- 160 *Philobone*. The name suggests either "good to lovers" (Neilson, *Origins and Sources*, p. 240), "love of the good," or the "good of love" (Friedman, "In Love's Thrall," p. 178).
- 171 *Mercurius*. Mercury, the messenger of the gods. Although he sometimes serves as Jupiter's henchman, his appearance is perhaps a bad omen since in the *Aeneid* Mercury delivers Jove's command that Aeneas fulfill his duty and leave Carthage for Italy (see Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, F 1297, and *House of Fame*, lines 427–52).
- 181 *a woman from a mous*. An allusion to a popular story, adopted by Boccaccio (*Decameron*, Introduction to Fourth Day) and La Fontaine (*Les Oies de Frere Philippe*), in which a boy who has been raised in a cave and shielded from worldly temptations visits Florence and, immediately attracted to some young ladies, is told by his father that they are geese (*poules*). The point is that young men have an innate affection for females, even though they may not be able to name it properly.
- 182 *spanne*. The distance from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the middle or the little finger when the hand is fully extended.
- 194 *dayte on many as hevy meel*. Although not listed in Whiting, this sounds proverbial. See also Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale: "On many a sory meel now may she bayse" (*CT II[B']466*).
- 229 *glassee*. Similarly, in both in Chaucer's *House of Fame* and Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*, Venus' temple is made of glass, suggesting, perhaps, not only the privileged nature of courtly erotic desire but also its insubstantiality and impermanence. Painted glass windows depicting faithful (and therefore usually unhappy) lovers are also common in these abodes. But *glassee* also means mirror, thus, narcissism, as one looks about in a house of mirrors to see only oneself. This scene is most closely imitated from Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* (lines 44–142).
- 232 *Dido*. Dido is the archetypal betrayed lover; her story is found in Virgil's *Aeneid* 4, Ovid's *Heroides* 7, and Chaucer's *House of Fame* (lines 259–432) and *The Legend of Good Women* (lines 924–1367).
- 234–35 *Anelida, true . . . Arcite fals*. In Chaucer's *Anelida and Arcite*, Anelida, who was faithful to "fals Arcite" (line 11), describes her ordeal in a long complaint.

- 255 *in white, in russet, and in green.* Skeat suggests that white refers to the Carmelites and russet to hermits (*Chaucerian*, p. 543). Bell reads the green garments as alluding to "the unfaithfulness of these ecclesiastics to their religious vows" (*Poetical Works*, p. 140).
- 266 Another longer lament by cloistered lovers (at lines 1095–1176) somewhat incoherently interrupts Philogenet's introduction to the allegorical denizens of Love's court; although the transition is still rickety, it would make some sense if those twelve stanzas (consisting of two manuscript pages) were inserted here. See my note to line 1092.
- 270 *an ho and crye.* To make an outcry or clamor; distinct from the legalistic *hue and cry* which is more specifically the alarm raised against criminals (*MED*).
- 304–504 *The firste statute . . . of old antiquite.* Such statutes are quite common (compare Ovid's *Art of Love*, Capellanus' *De Amore*, and *The Ten Commandments of Love* [IMEV 590]); those statutes listed here most closely resemble the rules found in *RR* (lines 2023–2577) and Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* (lines 1152–1213). The more ribald rules (particularly sixteen and seventeen) are apparently the author's invention.
- 325 *To purchase ever to here.* Bell interprets this difficult phrase as "to acquire, or gain over proselytes" (*Poetical Works*, p. 142).
- 329 *passe forby is an ease.* Skeat suggests that this line means that "to pass by, i.e. to get out of his [Love's] way" is "a relief, a way of escape" (*Chaucerian*, p. 544). Stow reads, "If love be wroth, passe for there by is an ease" (*Workers*, p. 349v). Even emended, this line makes no sense since the second half of the line should have some bearing on the consequences of love's wrath.
- 451 *The crowe is white.* In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book 2), in an effort to prevent the raven from revealing to Phoebus his wife's infidelity, the crow relates how his own plumage was changed from white to black for telling tales (i.e., the truth). See also Chaucer's Manciple's Tale: "Whit was this crowe as is a snow-whit swan, / And countrefete the speche of every man / He koude, whan he sholde telle a tale" (*CT* IX[H]133–35). The point of the fifteenth statute is, of course, to tell lies.
- 506 *Rigour.* Bell suggests that this personified official denotes "the strictness of the obedience required of his subjects" (*Poetical Works*, p. 148). But see note to line 521.
- 521 *Rigour.* *MED* n.1a: "Hardness of heart (obdurancy)." Compare *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, lines 717–20: "O marble hert, and yet more harde . . . What vayleth you to shewe so gret rigoure?" See Symons, ed., *Chaucerian Dream Visions*.
- 536–37 *Solomon and Sampson.* The standard examples of wisdom and fortitude, neither of which is adequate defense against women's perfidy. For Sampson, see Chaucer's Monk's Tale (*CT* VII[B']2015–94). Solomon is, of course, proverbially wise; sometimes his sagacity is attributed to his vast experience with women.
- 629 *sraf that I wrist not where.* The comic futility of the poet's presentation of love is neatly summed up by the speaker's impassioned, honest admission that he

- knows that he loves a lady, knows that he must give a fervent prayer for her graces, yet has no idea who she is or where she might be. He is left to request assignment to "som blissid place" (line 637).
- 647–48 *For hote I love . . . by my trouþ*. Left to his own imagination, the would-be lover at last thinks of someone he saw in a dream. He wonders if she might be the object of his desires. There is, perhaps, a pun on the word *hote*, as well. Read one way, the speaker swears (*be God and by my trouþ* — line 648) that he calls (*hote* — line 647) love, no matter where it is, nothing but the effects that it has on him (line 649). This reading would neatly parallel the beginning of Chaucer's *Parlement of Fouls*, where the narrator likewise knows love by its reported effects and not "in dede" (line 8). Yet one might also read *hote* as meaning "hotly"; thus the speaker claims that he loves most passionately, even if he does not know anything specific about the object of his love (not even where she is) aside from the mere fact that he swears he was troubled one night.
- 685 *a figge for all her chastite*. The *OED* lists this as an instance of a construction that conveys the meaning "not at all"; that is, the speaker cares not at all for Diana's chastity. The association with chastity (and thereby with sex), however, could mean that a sexual connotation is also implied. This indecent meaning (usually associated with the phrase "giving the fig" — i.e., making a gesture meant to replicate the female genitalia) is first cited by the *OED* in Fulwell's *Art of Flattery* (1579), over 100 years later than the present poem.
- 701 *Pitie*. Although the personified figure of Pitie is commonplace, there is a possible allusion here to Chaucer's *Complaint Unto Pitie*, in which, in a "Bill of Complaint," the speaker unsuccessfully attempts to rally the moribund Pitie to ward off Cruelty. Our poem's Pitie is, of course, a personification *in extremis*, for she dies from pity at an eagle eating a fly (lines 702–03).
- 778–819 The poet's description of Rosiall, including her round head, golden hair, lily forehead, separated eyebrows, starry eyes, pregnant lips, straight and snowy teeth, sweet breath, and braided hair, closely follows Geoffrey of Vinsauf's rhetorical model for how to describe a beautiful woman found in his *Nova Poetria*. See Murphy, *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, pp. 54–55.
- 787 *mylike white path*. The Milky Way, also referred to in the Middle Ages as the *galaxy*. Skeat suggests (*Chaucerian*, p. 547) that the poet refers to the "prominent ridge of Rosial's nose"; Seaton suggests the white skin between the eyebrows (*Sir Richard Roos*, p. 452); and Friedman suggests the poet is describing Rosiall's "milk-white nose" ("In Love's Thrall," p. 182). Our poet appears to be following Vinsauf: "let the appearance of her eyebrow be like dark blueberries; let a milk-white path divide those twin arches" (Murphy, *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, p. 54).
- 798 Maximianus. Cornelius Maximianus Gallus. The reference is to his *First Elegy*, lines 97–98: "flammea dilexi modicamque tumentia labra, / quae gustata mihi basia plena darent" ("I loved flaming and somewhat swollen lips, which gave me full kisses when tasted"). See Maximianus, *Elegies of Maximianus*, ed. Webster.

- 816 *grene*. Green can be an ambiguous color, associated with not only inconstancy, fickleness, and frivolity, but also youth and fecundity. See Chaucer's "Against Women Unconstant," with its refrain "In stede of blew, thus may ye were al grene." The color can also be emblematic of constancy: in Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*, his Lady wears green and white (line 299), and in the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer's Alceste is also dressed in green (F 214).
- 821–24 These lines are lifted from Vinsauf's *Nova Poetria* (Murphy, *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, p. 55). Incidentally, it would, no doubt, be better if one's beauty did not catch Jove's attention. Jove's seduction/rape of each of these ladies, as well as the usually unhappy aftermath (occasioned by the jealous Juno) is described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. *Callisto* (Callisto) bore Jove's son and was turned into a bear (Book 2). *Alcmene* (Alcmene), the mother of Hercules, was forced to undergo her own Herculean labor as Juno delayed the birth of her son for a week (Book 9). *Europe* was seduced by Jove in the form of a bull (Book 2). *Danae* (Danae) was impregnated through the form of a golden shower and bore Perseus (Book 4). And Jove seduced *Antiope* as a satyr; she later delivered twins (Book 6).
- 862 *urz, i-blisse*. The word *urz* derives from Latin *augurium* through the Old French *eure*, and carries with it the connotations of fortune, destiny, and, as I have glossed it here, luck (see MED *eure* [n]). The term *i-blisse* is idiomatic, meaning something like "may God bless me," or "if I may be so blessed by God."
- 890–96 The entrance of the lady's voice is abrupt and somewhat jarring. Perhaps we are meant to think of this "dialogue" as an internal debate of sorts, possibly akin to discussions between Amans and Genius in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.
- 904–10 The "lady" is understandably confused and concerned. She does not know who this "lover" is, much less what he intends.
- 912 *Philogenet*. Our lover's name has been variously interpreted: Friedman suggests "he who generates love" or "love of generation" ("In Love's Thrall," p. 183), and Neilson guesses "a lover born" (*Origins and Sources*, p. 240).
- 995 *in sounde*. Here, the swoon, as in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, is an outward sign of the lover's sincerity, and is usually quite efficacious in eliciting the lady's pity.
- 1016 *her coloures gay appere*. For Leonard, it is here that the poem has real "allegorical vitality," insofar as Rosiall's blush suggests "not only her namesake, the Rose of the *Roses* [de la Rose], but also Christ, the Rose of Sharon, and, more abstractly, Charity, whose symbolic color is red" (*Laughter*, p. 105).
- 1040 *under hony goll*. Proverbial; see Whiting G7; H505.
- 1092 *tender ness*. *Nesol(e)* (adj.) is often used in conjunction with "tender" to describe a softened, compassionate, or receptive heart, but never as a compound adjective. This reflects the author's practice of sometimes joining two adjectives: e.g., "gentill debonayre" (line 357), "godeley fressh" (line 832), "feithfull true" (line 993).
- There appears to be a lacunae in the text here with the transition between Flattery's blandishments and the introduction of the malcontent religious having

been lost. It seems to me that at line 1093 Philobone is speaking to Philogenet and I have placed the quotation marks accordingly. In addition, the twelve stanzas (lines 1093–1176) which describe the unhappy clerics and nuns seem out of place, since they interrupt Philogenet's discourse with the various allegorical personifications. Having reached this conclusion independently, I nonetheless agree with Neilson (*Origins and Sources*, pp. 6–7) that it would make some sense if this section followed line 266, where those constrained by religion are first introduced. The three stanzas (lines 1177–90) that follow this section could conceivably be attributed to Flattery, who stands "not ferre" (line 1191) from Dissemble. Neilson suggests that the speaker at line 1177 could be an allegorical figure, Contrite. See note below, line 1177.

- 1095–1155 The clerical lamente are borrowed from Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* (lines 196–208); see Schick, *Lydgate's Temple*, pp. cxxix–cxxxi.
- 1096 *blak and white and gray*. The colors, respectively, of the Dominican, Carmelite, and Franciscan friars (Skeat, *Chaucerian*, p. 550).
- 1157 *a sorte full langseysshynge*. In a scene reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno*, these grossly deformed lovers may be lepers, who were proverbially thought to be lecherous.
- 1172 *thre of fatall destyne*. The three fates of Greek myth: Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos.
- 1177 *he was contrite*. I.e., one of the company (line 1170) who has slandered the three sisters "of fatall destyne" (line 1172). In order to make sense of this confusing section, Bell (*Poetical Works*, p. 173) and Neilson (*Origins and Sources*, pp. 5–6) suggest that a personified abstraction, Contrite, is the subject of the line. Bell emends to "And there [eek] was Contrite, and gan repent," an emendation that Neilson does not follow.
- 1192 *party mastill*. Bell suggests that Dissemble's multicolored clothing represents his duplicity (*Poetical Works*, p. 173).
- 1234 *broched*. Perhaps a double entendre suggesting both pierced and decorated with ornaments.
- 1259 For the figure of Envy, see Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book 2) where, in an attempt to prevent Mercury from seducing Herse, Minerva visits Envy's house in order to arouse the jealousy of Herse's sister, Aglauros. For meddling in the affair, Aglauros is turned into a statue.
- 1268 *Presye Thought*. Skeat suggests (*Chaucerian*, p. 551) that this figure is inspired by Douz Penser (Sweet-Thought) in *RR* (lines 2640–68).
- 1315 Skeat suggests (*Chaucerian*, pp. 551–52) for comparison *RR* (lines 907–85), and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.470–71), where Cupid has two sets of arrows, one gold and the other iron or lead, corresponding, respectively, to attraction and repulsion. See also Gower's *Confessio Amantis* 3.1700–05 and *The Kingis Quair*, stanzas 94–95.
- 1317 Rosiall is speaking.

- 1353 *To matens went.* The notion of the birds' songs or matins in spring as a service or office in praise of love is a popular courtly conceit. In this case, opening phrases from Matins and Lauds of the Divine Office are appropriated to praise the power of erotic love. For a similar macaronic use of scripture see the *Birds' Devotions* (JMEV 357), Jean de Condé's *La Messe des Oiseaux*, *As I went on a Yol Day* (JMEV 377), and *The Lovers' Mass* (JMEV 4186). On the tradition of bird poems, see Neilson, *Origins and Sources*, pp. 216–27, and Davenport, "Bird Poems."
- 1356 *Domine, labia.* From the Oratio or opening prayer of Matins: "Domine, labia mea aperies" ("O Lord, open my lips").
- 1359 *Venite.* From Vulgate Psalm 94, the Invitatory: "Venite, exsultemus Domino" ("Come, let us give praise to the Lord").
- 1364 *Domine, dominus noster.* From Vulgate Psalm 8: "Domine, Dominus noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra!" ("Lord our Lord, how admirable is your name in the whole earth!").
- 1366 *Celi enarrant gloriam Dei.* From Vulgate Psalm 18: "Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei" ("The heavens show forth the glory of God").
- 1370 *Domini est terra.* Vulgate Psalm 23: "The earth is the Lord's."
- 1373 *Jube, domine.* From "Jube, Domine, benedicere" ("Lord, command us to bless"). The versicle of the Absolutio immediately preceding the first lesson.
- 1390 *gife us all an horne.* To scorn or mock (Skeat, *Chaucerian*, p. 553). Later, of course, to make a cuckold.
- 1400 *Tu autem.* From "Tu autem, Domine, miserere nobis" ("But you, O Lord, have mercy on us"). The versicle repeated at the conclusion of each lesson.
- 1401 *Te deum amerū.* A parody of "Te Deum laudamus" ("God, we praise you") recited at the end of Matins.
- 1402 *Tuball.* Tubal was a metalworker (see Gower, *Confessio Amantis* 4.2425); his brother, Jubal, "was the father of them that play upon the harp and the organs" (Genesis 4:21). Chaucer and others make the same mistake. See *Book of the Duchess*, line 1162.
- 1408 *Dominus regnabit.* From Vulgate Psalm 92, recited at the beginning of Lauds: "Dominus regnavit, decorem indunus est" ("The Lord hath reigned, he is clothed with beauty").
- 1411 *Jubilate.* From Vulgate Psalm 99, the second psalm of Lauds: "Jubilate Deo, omnis terra" ("Sing joyfully to God, all the earth").
- 1413 *Benedicite.* From the "Canticle of the Three Children" (Daniel 3:57–8:56): "Benedicite, omnia opera Domini, Domino" ("All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord").
- 1415 *Laudate.* Vulgate Psalm 148: "Laudate Dominum de caelis" ("Praise ye the Lord from the heavens").

- 1416 *O admirabile*. The antiphon or refrain following the chapter and hymn.
- 1423 *Benedictus*. From the Canticle of Zachary (Luke 1:68–79); “Benedictus Dominus, Deus Israel” (“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel”).
- 1433 *hawthorn*. In Lydgate’s *Temple of Glass* (lines 503–23), the hawthorn represents fidelity and constancy in love, even under adverse circumstances; appropriately, the hawthorn is an evergreen shrub.
- 1440 *truelove*. The herb paris (*Paris quadrifolia*), whose leaves and flowers are arranged in whorls of four, and which is usually symbolic of fidelity (*MED*); Skeat suggests the term may also refer to a truelove knot of herb paris used for ornamentation (*Chaucerian*, p. 553). See “The Four Leaves of the Truelove” in Fein, *Moral Love Songs and Laments*, pp. 161–254, where the leaf is linked to the Trinity and Mary.

TEXTUAL NOTES TO *THE COURT OF LOVE*

- 1 Marginalia. A later hand (probably Beaupré Bell's) has written "by G. Chaucer" in the right-hand margin. John Stow has provided the title "The courte of love" at the top of the page.
With. MS: *ik*. Space has been left for a 3-line initial that was never filled in.
The same thing occurs at lines 45, 302, 1025, and 1352.
- 8 *Tullian*, MS: *Tullian*.
- 105 A different hand as written in the margin: "Alceste þe dayse."
- 143 *weneth*, MS: *weneth*.
- 150 *But*, MS: *B*.
- 189 *Than*, MS: *That*.
- 235 *Artice*, MS: *Artice*.
in peynting, MS: *inþeyntyn*.
- 246 *To*, MS: *To*.
- 270 *Throungheate*, MS: *Though oate*, with *r* inserted above the line.
- 333 *verely*, MS: *verþely*.
- 356 *faire*, MS: *fire*.
- 377 *yo*, MS: *yo*.
- 386 *remember*, MS: *reve* canceled before.
- 403 *harter*, MS: *nyghtes harter*. See also line 679.
- 461 *As*, MS: *And*.
- 481 *bere*, MS: *but*.
- 483 *they*, MS: *the*.
- 490 *sorriain*, MS: *savouure*.
- 494-95 These lines are transposed in MS, corrected by Stow.
- 495 *renewe*, MS: *renewe*.
- 506 *cleped*, MS: *clipes*.
- 508 *prayer*, MS: *payser*.
- 519 *leaves*, MS: *loves*.
- 530 In MS this line appears at the end of the stanza and marginal markings indicate the correct order.
- 552 *For*, MS: *Or*.
- 561 *pray her*, MS: *prayer*.
- 595 *onto man*, MS: *onto weman*.
- 605 *to*, MS omits.
- 632 *Lucerne*, MS: *Lucorne*.
- 634 *use*, MS: *use*.
- 639-40 These lines are transposed in MS.

- 640 This line repeats line 633.
 654 *that*, MS: omits.
 679 *harter*. See note to line 403.
 684 *I kepen*, MS: *in kepen*.
 694 *sormounting*, MS: *sormouting*.
 695 *force*, MS: *fore*.
 703 *eke*, MS: *eke*.
 710 *Aslak*, MS: *Aslak*.
 733 *mirth*, MS: *mir*.
 747 *thank*, MS: *think*.
 760 *hote*, MS: *ole*.
 770 *gove*, MS: *you*.
 798 *he*, MS: *he*.
 823 *Europa*, MS: *Eurosa*.
 843 *ye*, MS: *I*.
 846 *grief*, MS: *give*.
 847 *karm*, MS: *harte*.
 853 *not*. Inserted into MS in a later hand.
 860 *Loves*, MS: *Love*.
 884 *refute*, MS: *refuse*.
 897 *I*, MS: *and*.
 901 In MS this line occurs out of place, at the end of the stanza.
 911 *make it straungry?*. Supplied by Skeat.
 928 *grewen*, MS: *grouwen*.
 970 *gife*, MS: *gue*.
 984 *wounde*, MS: *wounder*.
 1004 *harde*. Corrected from *harte* in MS.
 1009 *ye might*, MS: *might*.
 1012 *statutes*, MS: *steutes*.
 1012 *I I*, MS: *I*.
 1036 *Dyspaire*, MS: *Diplesire*.
 1039 *he*, MS: *she*.
 1041 *hers*, MS: *his*.
 1076 *love*, MS: *verray love*.
 1077 *verray*, MS omits.
 1083 *that women*, MS: *thou woman*.
 1108 *here*, MS: *hire*.
 1116 *copes*, MS: *copien*.
 1127 *matier*, MS: *matiers*.
 1146 This line is missing from MS; supplied by Stow.
 1146 *onself*, Stow: *nor selfe*.
 1203 *As*, MS: *And*.
 1205 *arte*, MS: *harte*.
 1222 *I ded wove*, MS: *ded wove*.
 1233 *this*, MS: *the*.
 1246 *Than leith*, MS: *That leith*.
 1270 *I*, MS omits.

- 1294 *to*, MS: *from*.
1299 *to*, MS omits.
1305 *cold or hooote*, MS: *hoote or cold*.
1315 *Twenty*, MS: *Twenty*.
1324 *shryne*, MS: *shyne*.
1325 *ere*, MS: *eke*.
1326 *servaunte*, MS: *servente*, with a written above the line.
1327 *brak*, MS: *blak*.
1328 *reuth*, MS: *reich*.
1329 *than*, MS: *and*.
1331 *but*, MS: *not*.
1333 *thow*, MS: *she*.
1335 *thanken*, MS: *taken*.
1341 *here*, MS: *herre*.
1369 *this*, MS: *thus*.
1370 *Domini*, MS: *Domine*.
1377 *singe*, MS: *signe*.
1383 *he*, MS omits.
1411 *sing*, MS: *sang*.
1432 *bleme*, MS: *bleme*.



LITERATURE OF COURTLY LOVE

INTRODUCTION

Although many different kinds of works circulated with and became attached to Chaucer's name — allegorical, proverbial, monarchical, advisory, anticlerical, and didactic — most of the poems that accompanied Chaucer's works in fifteenth-century manuscripts and sixteenth-century print editions deal in some fashion with what is broadly categorized as *fin amours* or courtly love. The aristocratic amatory idiom is today considered one of the most influential and enduring literary legacies of the Middle Ages and most of the secular manuscript anthologies and miscellanies available in facsimile (particularly those produced by the Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer), which are heavily dominated by amorous subjects, suggest that the theory and practice of *fin amours* was a fetishized obsession among fourteenth- and fifteenth-century social elites. Indeed, emphasizing that courtly love was a trivial pursuit — "a pretense, a fiction, a game"¹ — John Stevens suggests that from the late fourteenth until the sixteenth century what he calls the "the game of love," including reading and talking about love, and acting, playing, and emulating the lover, provided a primary form of polite recreation for "social play" and "social display."² Although Richard Firth Green, in *Poets and Princepleasers*, his study of court literature in late medieval England, stresses the "relative unimportance of the literature of idealized love amongst the intellectual preoccupations of the late medieval nobility,"³ he nonetheless acknowledges that for aristocrats, gentry, and the merchant class, the fiction of courtly love offered a system of etiquette, polite behavior, and good breeding: "Since the capacity to experience exalted human love was, by definition in the middle ages, restricted entirely to the well-born, it followed that one way in which a man might display his gentility was to suggest that he was in love; thus the conventions by which this emotion was defined, originally pure literary hyperbole, became part of a code of polite behavior."⁴ Catherine Bates demonstrates that this code remained viable throughout the sixteenth century as "playing the lover" and "being a courtier" came to mean the same thing, especially under Elizabeth's reign.⁵ Beyond providing simple models of courtship and courteous behavior, the rhetoric of amorous seduction and compliment, with its emphasis on "flattering, dissembling, deceitful, and tactical discursive strategies," prevailed as an essential feature in the discourse of political courtiership.

¹ Stevens, *Music and Poetry*, p. 191.

² Stevens, *Music and Poetry*, p. 209.

³ Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp. 127–28.

⁴ Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, p. 114.

⁵ See Bates, *Rhetoric of Courtship*, pp. 6–44.

The various genres represented here, ranging from the serious to the satirical, and the sentimental to the sophisticated, and including the panegyric, valentine, amorous complaint, lovers' dialogue, and sacred parody, attest to the diversity and flexibility of the literature of *fin amours*. Stevens complains that the writers of many love lyrics "have what amounts to a genius for the stilted and colourless," and *In February*, a lover's lament for his disfavor, appears to manifest the "drab lifelessness" he finds common to the genre.⁶ Inspired by French "marguerite" poetry and beginning with a panegyric to the daisy, the point of the complaint is not to dazzle the recipient or reader with its insight or originality but to display the writer's familiarity with rhetorical and poetic conventions, or to display what Stevens calls his "sentimental education."

A similar case is found with *O Merciful and O Mercyable*, a lover's plea for mercy from his disgruntled mistress. The first four stanzas are lifted from an unlikely source: an episode allegorizing Christ's atonement and the redemption of mankind found in the didactic dream vision *The Court of Sapience*. In the original poem, a personified Sapience relates to the dreamer the well-known story of the four daughters of God, in which two sisters (Mercy and Peace) plead with Truth and Justice for the release of Adam, God's disobedient and incarcerated servant. Our poet adapts the lines so that it is the lover pleading to Cupid for release from the prison of his love sickness. In keeping with his juristic theme, in which the lover plays the vassal begging for mercy from his sovereign, two other stanzas (lines 57–63 and 78–84) which also appropriate the language of feudal law and hierarchy are taken from *The Craft of Lovers*. Although for some modern readers these poems may seem to be marred by cliché and plagiarism, Stephen Manning reminds us that as with modern pop music, for readers of medieval love lyrics it was the expectation and gratification of the familiar that "creates a peculiar aesthetic pleasure."⁷

The Craft of Lovers, offering a "symilitude" (line 1) or representation of a conversation between a hopeful suitor and his chosen lady, was repeatedly ransacked by later writers. Again, the lover uses conventional rhetoric and tropes — showering his lady with hyperbolic praise, swearing his allegiance and fealty, bemoaning his pain — to express his desire. The lady, although clearly admiring his deft facility with the language of courtly seduction, is nonetheless wary and repeatedly pushes for clarity ("What is your wille?" [line 50]; "What is your name?" [line 80]). Somewhat surprisingly, the lover frankly admits to his carnal intentions, assuring her that she will not be disappointed since he is "Of manrys copulacion the verray exemplary" (line 89). Even more surprising, given his somewhat crude veracity, the lady accepts his suit: "Unto your plesure I wold be at youre call" (line 137). The poem ends conventionally with the author hoping that his own "love elect" (line 170) will be inspired by the lady's example and will offer a similar remedy for his own amorous distress.

Although the lover's advances may seem somewhat artificial and hyperbolic to the modern reader, Green argues that the poem is a product of what he calls the Continental "second rhetoric" tradition. These "do-it-yourself manuals for the aspiring writer of courtly verse" provided models of "fashionable flirtation" and were characterized by "heavy polysyllabic and Latinate rhymes" and "pretentious classical and biblical name dropping."⁸ For the English aristocracy, the poem would have had an "aura of Continental sophistication,"

⁶ Stevens, *Music and Poetry*, p. 212.

⁷ Manning, "Game and Ernest," pp. 225–41.

⁸ Green, "Craft of Lovers," pp. 106–07.

providing a "pattern-book for fashionable discourse." On the other hand, Arthur K. Moore instead reads the poem as a parody of ornate eloquence which exposes and satirizes the artificial conventions (the "craft") of amorous courtly discourse. For Moore, the poem claims our attention only as "a reaction against insipid courtly verse filled with denatured amour courtois and allegorical conceits,"¹⁰ and he contextualizes the dialogue as part of the tradition of antifeminist protest verse that "employs the devices of courtly panegyric ironically." From this approach, the lover's advances should be read as an "indictment of both chivalric pretense and rhetorical excess." In short, the dialogue represents "not only a keen analysis of courtly supplication but also a rejection of that artificial system of love which in the fifteenth century was, like chivalry, largely anachronistic."¹¹ As such, the poem has a political valence as well, striking at the "pretensions of the nobility, who sought to sustain the faded flower of chivalry at a time when the larger frame that contained it, feudalism, was in rapid decline."¹²

Although one of the purposes of the dialogue is perhaps to contrast the impotent artificiality of the courtly idiom with the rhetorical efficacy of frank sensuality, the poem was nonetheless viewed as a fecund source of amorous diction by other fifteenth-century poets. Green has found no less than seven instances in which lines — and even entire stanzas — all spoken by the lover, were purloined and incorporated into conventional courtly lyrics. Even the lady's skeptical common sense is itself a rhetorical trope, found also, for instance, in *The Court of Love* (lines 841–1015). Nonetheless, the poem does offer an interesting example of the seductive dialogue and is perhaps best contrasted with Alan Chartier's *La Belle Dame sans Merci* in which the unsuccessful lover uses similar tactical rhetoric on his skeptical mistress but who never confesses the frank physical nature of his passion. Believing his own hyperbolic tropes, the lover in *La Belle Dame*, like Chaucer's Troilus, literally dies from his frustrated desire.

John Lydgate's speaker in *The Floure of Curyse* also appears moribund, experiencing the common symptoms — ranging from listlessness to mortal anguish — elicited by his chosen lady's requisite "daunger." His suffering is exacerbated on the dawn of Valentine's Day as he witnesses the annual, ritualistic avian coupling in which the birds freely choose their mates. The spectacle invokes a lament familiar from Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* that only man, of all species, and apparently against all laws of nature, is constrained to love in one, usually unreceptive, place. Nonetheless, although his case appears hopeless and he lacks literary skill, he composes a lengthy panegyric to his lady in which her beauty and virtues are favorably compared to those of famous women of history and legend. He closes with an encomium, well known to Chaucerians, lamenting his inability to imitate Chaucer's "gay style":

Chaucer is deed, that had suche a name
Of fayre makynge, that was, without wene,
Fayrest in our tonge, as the laurer grene.
We may assay for to countrefete
His gay style, but it wyl not be!

doubt

¹⁰ Moore, "Some Implications," p. 231.

¹¹ Moore, "Some Implications," p. 234.

¹² Moore, "Some Implications," p. 237.

The welle is drie with the lycore swete,
Bothe of Clye and of Calopé. (lines 236–42)

In this case, the fount of inspiration refers to the Valentine motif, specifically the association of the eponymous saint with spring, the mating of birds, and human courtship. Both Jack Oruch and H. A. Kelly trace the origins of this tradition — which became popularized in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and which is found scattered among courtly writers such as Christine de Pisan, Oton de Grandson, John Clamwowe, Charles d'Orleans, and John Gower — to Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls*. Lydgate uses the motif in two other poems, *A Kalender* and *A Valentine to Her That Excelleth All*, and despite his characteristic deprecations of his own literary craft, at least in this case the modesty *topos* is truly undeserved. Oruch describes Lydgate as the "chief innovator in the treatment of Valentine"; he is both the first to make the "name of the saint a label for a type of poem"¹² and, according to Kelly, the first to use the term "Valentine" as a name for a sweetheart.¹³ Indeed, *The Floure of Curteysye*, a "tour de force" in Kelly's estimation,¹⁴ represents one of the best examples of early Valentine poetry.

Finally, *The Lovers' Mass* (also known as *Venus' Mass*), a lyrical parody of the first part of the Roman Mass, was once thought to have been by Lydgate, whose amorphous canon in the early twentieth century served as a convenient dumping ground for anonymous verse circulating in courtly anthologies and miscellanies. Although never printed as Chaucer's or attributed to Chaucer, the poem nonetheless has been categorized as a piece of apocrypha by Hartung's *Manual of Writings in Middle English* perhaps on the basis of its allusion to *The Legend of Good Women* or by virtue of its appearance in Bodleian Library, Fairfax 16, a mid-fifteenth-century secular verse anthology concerned "with sophisticated morality and the trials and tribulations of *fin amors* — those concepts and imaginative experiences which reflect the social and literary refinements of the 'lettered chivalry' of the time,"¹⁵ and which includes, in addition to works by Clamwowe, Hoccleve, and Lydgate, an impressive collection of Chaucer's minor poems.

In courtly love lyrics the conflation of profane and spiritual passion is a popular and widespread conceit, and sacred parody comprised of macaronic verse, incorporating Latin tags and phrases from the liturgy, is also quite common (see *The Court of Love*, and Lydgate's *The Floure of Curteysye*). Nonetheless, in the English vernacular tradition there is, to my knowledge, nothing quite like the ambitious and sophisticated parody of Roman liturgy found in *The Lovers' Mass*. Hammond points to some Continental analogues, such as Jean de Condé's *Messe des Oiseaux* ("Birds' Mass") and Suero de Ribera's *Missa de Amores* ("Lovers' Mass"). Sacred parody is found in ecclesiastical vocal music¹⁶ and individual prayers and hymns, such as the *Kyrie Alison* (IMEV 377) or the "Ave formosissima" ("Hail, most beautiful one"), a parody of the *Ave Maria*,¹⁷ are often adapted to secular, amorous themes. And in

¹² Oruch, "St. Valentine," p. 559.

¹³ Kelly, *Chaucer and the Cult of St. Valentine*, pp. 145–46.

¹⁴ Kelly, *Chaucer and the Cult of St. Valentine*, p. 144.

¹⁵ Norton-Smith, *Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 16*, p. vii.

¹⁶ See Huot, *Allegorical Play*.

¹⁷ See Walsh, *Love Lyrics*.

Parody in the Middle Ages, Martha Bayless describes a long and flourishing tradition of liturgical parody in Latin, especially Drinkers' and Gamblers' Masses. Many of these texts involve social parody, ridiculing vice or folly. *The Lovers' Mass*, however, which adapts its lyrics to the tone and mood of the Ordinary of the Mass, is closer to what Bayless calls textual parody, which achieves its effects by "imitating and distorting the distinguishing characteristics . . . of specific texts."¹⁸ In this case, Hammond notes that "[i]ts author is not merely dexterous and graceful in the complexities of the Kyrie, and aware of the clear singing quality of the Gloria-stanza, but he is sufficiently sensitive to make the change to the deeper slower seriousness of the Orison."¹⁹ Bayless finds that medieval parody is often not "the tool of the reformer, literary or social," and is "more often entertainment than polemic."²⁰ And, indeed, the intent of *The Lovers' Mass* is less to ridicule the solemnity of the Mass than to humorously mock those who have made eroticism their religion.

THE TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS

In February (IMEV 1562) and *O Merciful and O Mercitable* (IMEV 2510), both first printed in John Stow's *Workes of Geffrey Chaucer* (1561), are based on the manuscript which he used as copy text: Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.19 (fols. 160r, 161r-v).

The Craft of Lovers (IMEV 3761), also first printed in John Stow's *Workes of Geffrey Chaucer* (1561), is found in three manuscripts: H (British Library, MS Harley 2251, fols. 52r-54v); A (British Library, MS Additional 34360, fols. 75v-77r); and T (Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.19, fols. 154v-156r). Stow's edition is based on T (see Edwards and Hedley, "John Stowe"). H and A, both dated 1460-70, are believed to have been written by the same scribe and copied from the same exemplar (see Hammond, "Two British Museum Manuscripts"). Although Bradford Fletcher suggests that "the readings of T[rinity] should be given the greater weight over those of HA" ("Edition of MS R.3.19," p. 346), it seems to me that the Trinity scribe often emends for clarity and simplicity (e.g., lines 18, 39, 57, 73, 101, 139, 161) although he does also manifest what appear to be superior readings (e.g., 46, 103). Since T is available in Fletcher's facsimile, I have used H (which seems to have fewer errors than A) as my base text for spelling and substantives, while substituting a few readings from T. A complete list of variants is found in the Textual Notes.

Lydgate's *The Flosse of Curtey* is based on the earliest extant text found in William Thynne's *Workes of Geffray Chaucer* (1532). The two previous editors of the poem, Henry Noble MacCracken and Walter Skeat, emend both substantives and accidentals for the sake of sense and meter. MacCracken's text is far more conservative; Skeat, for instance, restores earlier forms although he also drops the final -e when it is not sounded. I have adopted their emendations only to correct what appear to be clear substantive errors in Thynne's text.

The Lovers' Mass (SIMEV 4186) is edited from the only extant manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 16 (fols. 314r-317v). See Norton-Smith, *Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 16*, introduction.

¹⁸ Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*, p. 3.

¹⁹ Hammond, *English Verse*, p. 208.

²⁰ Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*, p. 7.



IN FEBRUARY

- 1 In the season of Feverer, when hit was full colde,
Frost and snowe, hayle, rayne hath dominacion,
Wynth chaungeable elementes and wyndys manyfolde,
Whyche hath ground flour and herbe, undyr jurysdicion
5 For a tyme, to dyspose aftyr theyr correcccion;
And yet Apreyll, wynth hys plesaunt showres,
Dyssolveth the snow and bryngeth forthe hys flowres.
- 10 Of whos invencion ye lovers may be glad,
For they bryng yn the kalendes of May:
And ye, wynth countenaunce demure, meke and sad,
Owe forto worshyp the lusty flowres all way,
And in especiall oone whyche ys callyd see of the day,
The daysé, a flowre whyte and rede,
And in frenshe callyd *la bele margarete*.
- 15 O commendable flour and most on mynde!
O flour and gracious of excellencie!
O amysable Margaret, exaltyd of natyf kynd,
Unto whom I must resorte, wynth all my diligence,
Wynth hert, wylle, and thought, wynth most lowly obedience,
20 I to be your servaunt, and ye my regent,
For lyfe ne dethe, never to repente.
- 25 Of thys processe now forth wyll I procede,
Whyche happeth me wynth gret dysdayne,
As for the tyme therof I take leste hede,
For unto me was brought the soore Payne.
Therfore, my cause was the more to complayne:
Yet unto me my grevaunce was the lesse,
That I was so nygh my lady and maystresse,
- 30 There where she was present in thys place.
I, havyng in hert gret adversyté,
Except only the fortune and good grace
Of hyr whos I am, the whyche relevyed me;
And my gret dures unlasyed hath she,

February

intense

action

beginning

serious

delightful

eye of the day

native species

adhere

course of events

little heed

injury

near

released

- 35 And brought me out of that ferefull grevaunce.
 Yef hit were her ease, hit were to me gret plesaunce. *if; pleasure*
- 40 As for the whyche woo I dyd endure,
 Hyt was to me a verrey plesaunt Payne,
 Seyng hit was for that fayre creature,
 Whyche ys my lady and soverayn,
 In whos presence I wold be passyng fayne. *very happy*
 So that I wyst hit were hir pleasure, *knew*
 For she ys from all distaunce my protectour. *protector*
- 45 Though unto me dredefull were the chaunce,
 No maner of gentylnes oweth me to blame;
 For I had levyr suffre of deth the penaunce
 Then she shuld for me have dyshonour or shame,
 Or in any wyse lese oo drope of hyr good name; *one*
 So wysely God for Hys endelesse mercy
 Graunt every trew lover to have joy of his lady!



NOTES TO *IN FEBRUARY*

ABBREVIATIONS: see p. 63.

12 *wlyche*. Stow omits.

see of the day. The daisy is popularly known as the "eye of the day" or the "day's eye" (OE *dæges øege*) because it closes at evening. See Chaucer, *LGF* F184–86: "men it calle may / The 'dayysye,' or elles the 'ye of day,' / The emperice and flour of floures alle."

13 *a floure whyte and rede*. The European daisy (*Bellis perennis*) has pink-tipped petals.

14 *la bele margarete*. On the tradition of French marguerite poetry, see Wimsatt, *Marguerite Poetry*, pp. 30–39; Nouvet, "'Marguerite,'" pp. 251–76; and Huot, "Daisy and the Laurel," pp. 240–51.

15 *on*. Stow: *in*.

18 *diligence*. T: *dilig*. Due to cropping here and at lines 18, 19, 32, 34, 35, 43, 44, 46, 47, and 49, the final words are truncated or missing; the readings are supplied from Stow. Fletcher judiciously cautions that "there is only a reasonable presumption that the page was whole in Stow's time" ("Edition of MS R.3.19," p. 357).

47 *drope*. T: *drape*.

O MERCIFUL AND O MERCYABLE

- | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | O Merciful and O Mercyable,
Kyng of Kynges, and Fadyr of Pisé.
Whos myght mercy ys incomperable; | mighty |
| 5 | O Prynce Eterne, O Myghty Lord sey we,
To whom mercy ys gevyn of propurte,
On Thy seruaunt that lythe in pryon bounde. | by nature |
| 10 | Have Thou mercy or that hys hert wounde, | before |
| 15 | And that Thou wylt graunte to hym, Thy prisonere,
Fre liberte and loose hym out of Payne,
All hys desyres and all hys hevy chere, | release |
| 20 | To all gladnes they were restoryd agayne;
Thy hygh vengeance, why shuld Thou nat refrayne
And shew mercy, syth he ys penitent?
Now helpe hym Lord, and let hym nat be shent. | reined spirits |
| 25 | But syth hit ys so, ther ys a trespass doon,
Unto Mercy late yelde the trespassour.
Hyt ys her offyce to redresse hit soon,
For trespass to Mercy ys a myttour, | yield |
| 30 | And lyke as the sweete hath the price by sowre,
So by trespass Mercy hath all her myght:
Wythout trespass, Mercy hath lak of lyght. | sowr |
| 35 | What shuld physyk do, but yef sekenes were?
What nedeth salve, but yef ther were sore?
What nedeth drynke wher thurst hath no powere? | medicine; unction |
| 40 | What shuld Mercy do, but trespass go afore?
But trespass be, Mercy woll be lytyll store;
Wythout trespass, noon execusion | of little value |
| 45 | May Mercy have, ne chyef perfeccion. | execution (realization) |
| 50 | The cause at thys tyme of my wrytyng
And towchynge Mercy, to whom I make mone,
Ys for fere lest my soverayn and sweetynge, | trewhart |
| 55 | I meane her that lovelyer ys none.
Wyth me vs dyspleasd for causys more then one: | |

- What causes they be, that knoweth God and she,
 35 But so do nat I; alias, hit forthynketh me. *displease*
- What sy she in me, what defaute or offence?
 What have I do that she on me dysdayne?
 Howe myght I do come to her presence
 To tell my complaynt, wherof I were fayne?
 40 I drede to loke, to speke, or to complayne
 To her that hath my hert every dele;
 So helpe me God, I wold all thyng were wele!
- For in thys case came I never, or now,
 In loves daunce so fer in the trace; *before*
 45 For wylth myn ese skape I ne mow
 Out of thys daunger, except her good grace.
 For though my constaunce be mery in her face,
 As semeth to hyr, by worde or by chere,
 Yet her good grace syteth myn hert nere. *treasure (confining braid), harness*
I may not
expression
- 50 And yef that my soverayne have any mervayle
 Why I to her now and afore wrote,
 She may well thynke hit ys no gret travayle
 To hym that ys in love brought so hote;
 Hit ys a simple tre that falleth wylth oon stroke —
 55 That meane I — though that my soverayne toforne
 Me hath denied, yet grace may come to morne! *wonder*
before
labor
one
before
tomorrow
- Let never the love of trew loveres be losyd,
 My soverayn masteras, in no maner wyse;
 In your confydence my wordes I have closyd.
 60 My hertes love, to yow I do promyse,
 So that ye kyn the knot of exercise,
 Bothe lok and key ye have in governaunce,
 Wherfore empreyt me in your remembrance. *conclude the activity*
- But, masteras, for the good wyll that I have yow ought
 65 And evermore shall, as long as my lyfe dureth,
 Have pyte on your servaunt and kepe hym in your thought,
 And yeve hym som comfort or medycyn that cureth
 Hys fervent agu that encreseth and reneweth.
 70 So grevous byn hys peynes and hys syghes soore,
 That wythout your mercy hys dayes byn all forlore. *ended*
fever
lost
- Go lytyll byll, go forthe and hye thee fast,
 And recommaund me, and excuse me as thou can;
 For verray febylnes thus am I at the last,
 My penne ys worn, my hew ys pale and wan. *hurry*
end [of life]
worn

- 75 My eyen byn sonkyn, dysfiguryd lyke no man,
Tyll deth hys dart that causeith forto smert,
My corps have consumyd, then farewell swetebert.
*eye are sunken
hurt*
- 80 O daughter of Phebus in vertuous apparence,
My love elect in my remembraunce.
80 My carefull hert, dysstreynd cause of absence,
Tyll ye meynprise me and relese my grevaunce;
Upon yow ys set my lyfe and myn attendaunce,
Wythout recure, ywys, untill
Ye graunt trew hert to have hys wyll.
*tormented because
you release
attention
remedy*
- 85 Thus, my dere swetyng, in a traunce I do ly,
And shall tyll som dropys of pyte from yow spryng,
I mene yowre mercy, that lyeth my hert ny,
That use may rejoysse and cause me forto syng
These termys of love; loo, I have won the ryng!
near
- 90 My goodly masteras, thus of her good grace,
God graunt hys blysse in Heven to have a place.
Amen.



NOTES TO *O MERCIFUL* AND *O MERCYABLE*

ABBREVIATIONS: see p. 63.

- 1-28 The first four stanzas are borrowed from *The Court of Sapience* (lines 197-205, 218-24, 365-78). Lines 1-14 adapt Mercy's plea to God for the release of Adam; Mercy is unsuccessful in moving her sisters, Truth and Justice, and Peace takes up her case (lines 15-28), arguing that just as Peace, Truth, and Justice have "no properté" without war, falsehood, and injury, Mercy can only be realized through trespass. See *Court of Sapience*, ed. Harvey.
- 3 *weyght*. Stow: *weight* and.
- 19 *sweete hath the price by swere*. Proverbial; see Whiting S943.
- 27 *noon*. Stow: *never*.
- 57-63 This stanza as well as lines 78-84 are from *The Craft of Lovers* (lines 127-33 and 169-75). The poet appears to have been attracted to juridical metaphors describing the rigors of love.
- 64 *ought* T: *on*. The manuscript is cropped here; reading supplied from Stow.
- 66 *Have pyte on your*. Stow: *Pite your*.
- 67 *that*. Stow: *and*.
- 68 *and*. Stow: *that*.
- 78 *daughter of Phelus*. Phoebus has no daughter; the allusion may either suggest that his lady has the attributes of the sun god (brilliance, beauty), or it may be a blunder. See note to line 15 of *The Craft of Lovers*.
- 81 *and*. Stow omits.
- 89 *los, I have won the ryng!* To "win the ring" presumably means to become betrothed, as the ring was then, as now, a symbol of matrimony, though a certain sexual connotation might also be understood. The context here seems to imply that these are the initial words to a song, but no such item is listed in the IMEV or SIMEV.

THE CRAFT OF LOVERS

1	To moralise a symilitude — who list — these balettes seve The craft of loyvers curios argument;	desire; follow subtle reasoning
5	For some ben false, and som ben triewe, And som ben double of entendement.	meaning correct training demonstrate mean
10	These loyvers, with theyre moral document And eloquent langage, can exemplifie The craft of love, what it doth signifie.	wishes power
15	Who list these balettes have inspeccioun, Think that loves lordshippe excellent	weak
20	Is remedy for disease and correcccion To woeful hert and body impotent, Suppose that the maker be nat negligent In his compilng — hold hym excusale — Because his spirites be sory and lamentable.	careless composing sad and mournful
[Lover] "Moste soveraigne lady, surmountyng in noblesse,		exceeding; nobility
25	O intemerate juniper and daysic delicious, My trust, myn helth, my cordial founderesse, O medycyne sanatyf to myn infirmynat langoures, O comfortable creature of loyvers amours,	unblemished juniper reviving source reliefing afflictions comforting; affections
30	O excelent herber of lovely countenaunce, Ye registre my love in your remembrance."	herb record
[Lady] "Certes, syr, you're peynted eloquence, So gay, so fresh, and eke so talkatyve,		Certainly; colorful splendid; verbose
35	It doth transcend the wit of Dame Prudence; For to declare your thought or to discryve, So curiously your eloquence ye contrive. Of youre conceyt, youre thought and your entent, I wil be ware or than I be shent."	describe unningly plan be careful; disgraced
[Lover] "O rubicunde rose and white as the lilye, O korven figure of worldly portrature,		red
40	O clarifed cristal, resplendent of glorye, O gemme of beaulte or charbuncle shyneng pure, Youre fairenesse excedith the craft of Dame Nature,	carved; animate appearance illuminating; radiant with carbuncle

	Most wommanly behavynge in countenaunce; Wherfor ye do registre my love in your remembraunce."	<i>conduct</i> <i>record</i>
[Lady]	"What availeth, syr, suche demonstracions Of curios talkyng nat touchyng to sadnesse? It is but wynd, flatteryng, and adulacioun, Unmesurable cogitacions of worldly wieldnesse, 40 Whiche is chief cause of gostly distresse. Youre wille, youre thought, youre double entendement, I wil be ware for drede that I be shent."	<i>What is the use of</i> <i>seriousness</i> <i>insincere praise</i> <i>Immoderate; wantonness</i> <i>spiritual</i> <i>ambiguous intention</i> <i>disgraced</i>
[Lover]	"My wit, my thought, and myn entencioune Is for to please yow, lady soveraygne; 45 And, for youre love, thurgh many a regyoun I wold be exiled, so that ye wold nat dislayne To have pitie on me whan I compleyne; In wele and woo to suffre perturbaunce, So that ye wold have me in your remembraunce."	<i>intention</i> <i>lament</i> <i>happiness; trouble</i>
[Lady]	"What is your wille? Plainly that ye expresse. 51 That maketh this curios glosed supplicacion. Sey on syr, briefly, on hertly tenderesse! Be right wele advised of vayne delectacion; At youre begynnnyng, thynk on the termynacon. 55 Passe nat youre boundis, be nat to negligent, And ever be ware in lesse that ye be shent."	<i>spurious plea</i> <i>genuine compassion</i> <i>idle delight</i> <i>end</i> <i>limits</i> <i>lest</i>
[Lover]	"Youre goodeley behavynge, your beaute in substance, Makith me to enclyne to do yow reverence: Youre lovely lokyng, youre wommanly governaunce, 60 Overcomyth my spirit, my wyt, and my prudence. Som drope of grace of youre magnificence Unto your suppliaunt, ye shewe attendaunce; And ones, registre my love in your remembraunce,"	<i>innate</i> <i>to be disposed</i> <i>appearance</i> <i>Overwhelms</i> <i>attention</i> <i>At once</i>
[Lady]	"O combrous thought of mannes fragilité! 65 O fervent wille of lustis furious! O cruel corage causyng adversité! O Vulcanus corrupcion and erbe contrarious To helth of man! A chaunce most perilous, To breke the virginité of the virgynal innocent! 70 Wherfor be ware, mankynd, lesse that ye be shent."	<i>troubling</i> <i>ardent; unrestrained</i> <i>desire</i> <i>herb-harmful</i> <i>event</i> <i>lest</i>
[Lover]	"My peyne is prevy, impossible to discerne; My lamentable thoughtis be cast in mournyng. O general juge, whiche sittith superne, Graciously conveyeth the love of this lady yeng!	<i>secret</i> <i>sorrowful</i> <i>above</i> <i>direct; young</i>

- | | | |
|---------|--|---|
| 75 | O amiable lady, gracious and besyngne,
I put me holly in youre governaunce;
Exile me nat out of youre remembraunce." | kind
wholly; control |
| [Lady] | "Me semes by your langage ye be some potestate,
Or ellis som curious glorer deceyvable;
What is your name, mekely, I make regrate,
Or of what science or crafties commendable?
I am a lady, excellent and honourable;
He must be gay that please shuld myn entent.
Wherfor beware, in lesse that ye be shent." | /It/ seems [to] me [that]; lord
deceptive flatterer
respect
knowledge or skill
charming |
| 80 | | |
| [Lover] | "O lord God, this is a sharp examynacioun,
Of hir that most is in my memory!
Unto yow, lady, I make certificacioun,
My name is Triewe Love of Carnal Desidery,
Of manmys copulacioun the verray exemplary,
Whiche am one of your seruaunts of plesaunce;
Wherfor I must be registered in your remembraunce." | guarantee
desire
joining; model of conduct
pleasure |
| 85 | | |
| [Lady] | "I have sought Triewe Love yeeres grete excesse,
Yit found I hym never, but for a season.
Som men be dyverse and know no gentilnesse,
And som lakkith both wisdam and reason;
In som men is trust, in som is treason.
Wherfor I wil conclude, by avisement,
And also beware, in lesse that I be shent." | unkind
lack
decide |
| 90 | | |
| [Lover] | "The rectour Tullius, so gay of eloquence,
100 And Ovide that shewith the craft of love expresse,
With habundaunce of Salamons sapience,
And pulcritude of Absolom fairenesse,
And I were possesid with Jobis grete riches,
Manly as Sampson my persone to avaunce —
105 Yit wold I submyt me in your remembraunce." | rhetorician Cicero
describer; explicitly
wisdom
beauty
Job's
promote |
| 95 | | |
| [Lady] | "Now, syr, if it please youre noblenesse
To gyve advertence to my questioun:
What thyng is plesure of worldly swetnesse
And is most bitter in fynal successioun?
110 Or what thyng gevith man occasioun
In tendre age for to be concupiscent?
Resolve this questioun and ye shul nat be shent." | attention
in process of time
given; cause
lustful
reproached |
| 100 | | |
| [Lover] | "My soverayne lady, Ovide, in his writyng,
Seyth that desire of worldly concupiscence,
115 As for a tyme is swete in his wirchynge. | lust
effect |

- And in his end he causith grete offence.
 Nat withstandingy my lady Dame Prudence,
 Grene flowryng age and manly countenaunce
 Causith ladyes to have hem in remembraunce." harm
in spite of
(see note)
- [Lady] "Yowre goodly answers, so benyngne in substance,
 121 Wold cause the hert of wommanheed comvert
 Unto delite of natural plesaunce.
 But of oo thyng I wold be expert:
 Why mannes langage wil procure and transvert
 125 The wille of wymmen and virgyns innocent?
 Wherfor I stonde in feire lesse that I be shent." salacious
physical pleasure
one; informed
seducer; overturn
ruined
- [Lover] "Late never the love of triewe lovers be losed,
 My soverayne lady, in no maner wise.
 In youre confidence my wordis have I closed;
 130 My cordial love to yow I do promyse,
 So that ye knyt the knot of excercise.
 Both lok and key, ye have in governaunce;
 Wherfor, emprise me in your remembraunce." loosened
enclosed
sincere
end this trial
control
imprint
- [Lady] "Of verray trust and I were certifyed,
 135 The pleyne intencion of your hert cordiall,
 Me semes in blisse; than were I gloriified;
 Unto your pleasure I wold be at youre call.
 But ever I feere me of chauncis casuall,
 Of foward discneyt and langage insolent;
 140 Than were I sure my virgynit  were shent." Truthfully, if I were assured of
clear; sincere
transformed
uncertain events
perverse; improper
destroyed
- [Lover] "Ther was never tresour of terestral richesse,
 Nor precious stones reckened innumerable,
 To be of comparison unto youre high goodenesse,
 Of al creatures, to me most amyable.
 145 Trust nat the contrary; I was never discryable.
 Kepe wele Triewe Love, forge no ressemblaunce;
 And, fynally, registre and take me in your remembraunce." incapable of being counted
pleasing
deceptive
invent
- [Lady] "Me semes by feture of manly propert ,
 Ye shud be trusty and triewe of compromyse.
 150 I fynde in yow no false duplicit ,
 Wherfor, Triew Love, ye have myn herte, iwis,
 And evermor shal, so have I blisse.
 This confederacy made by goode avisement,
 God grant grace that nother of us be shent." appearance; nature
should; promise
certainly
alliance; consideration
neither; harmed
- 155 Whan Phebus first was in his chare splendent,
 In the moneth of May, erly in a mornynge, bright chariot

- I herd two lovers dispute this argument,
 In the yeere of God a mille by rekenyng.
 Four hundred fifty and nine yere folowynge.
 160 O prepotent princesse, conserve triewe lovers all,
 And graunt of this terestry vale the blisse celestial!
- a thousand
 (i.e., 1459)
 prepotent; preserve
 terrestrial*
- [Envoy] Go litel baletis, submytting everywhere,
 To diew correccoun of bemyvolence.
 But where that emye is, loke ye come nat there;
 165 For any thynge, kepe youre balettes thens.
 For envy is ful of foward reprehens.
 And how to hurte, lyth ever in awayte;
 Kepe ye thens, that ye be nat theyr bayte.
- proper; from
 away
 perverse censure
 enticement*
- O daughter of Phebus in vertuous apparence,
 170 My love elect in my remembraunce,
 My careful hert distreyned cause of absence,
 Til ye maynprise me and relese my grevaunce;
 Upon yow is set my lyf and myn attendaunce.
 Without recure, iwis, untill
 175 Ye graunt Triew Hert to have his will.
- chosen
 constrained because of
 release; complaint
 service
 remedy; certainly*
- Salamon, distressed for love, in loves daunce
 Sang in his trace with woful compleynt,
 "Come deere hert," without cessaunce.
 Releve my paynes, that in teres am spreynet;
 180 Quia amore longuo, late me nat spil for feynt!
 Com on, my deere spowse, joy ye me till
 Triew Hert, of me, shal have his wyll.
- dance steps
 sprinkled
 perish; fairness
 delight*



EXPLANATORY NOTES TO *THE CRAFT OF LOVERS*

ABBREVIATIONS: see p. 63.

- 1-4 Kooper ("Slack Water Poetry," p. 484) accurately describes these lines as "confused and confusing." "To moralise" is to interpret morally or symbolically and a "similitude" is a reproduction or resemblance (a similarity). These lines can be roughly paraphrased as "Whoever chooses to interpret the moral or spiritual significance of this representation, these stanzas show the craft of lovers' subtle arguments, since some are false, some true, and some have double meanings." Skeat reasonably suggests that the phrase "a similitude" was in the margin in the exemplar but was incorporated into the text by subsequent scribes (*Chaucerian*, p. xii). The poem offers a similitude, that is, a representation or image of the craft of love. Moore points out that Stephen Hawes uses the phrase to "moralise the semelytude" (*Pastime of Pleasure* 1.808) in the sense of finding the moral or spiritual significance in a "far-fetched resemblance": "Since . . . no similitude is actually moralized, the phrase may mean only to 'explain' — in this instance, the hidden meaning of the 'curious arguments' of love" ("Some Implications," pp. 233–34).
- balettes. Rhyme royal stanzas (ababcc).
- 12 *not.* H and T omit "not." It makes more sense to me, however, that the *writer* claims that he is *not* careless in his composition; any defects in his work can be attributed to his depressed spirits.
- 15 A designates the speakers as "Cupido" and "Diana," corresponding to sensuality and chastity. Kooper suggests that the A scribe has confused the dedicatee, described as "doughter of Phebus" (line 169), with Diana, the sister of Phoebus ("Slack Water Poetry," p. 489).
- Moore notes that this stanza is "freighted with aureate forms" including *exalatio*, *prosopisatio*, *dissolutio*, *repetitio* and *translatio* ("Some Implications," p. 234). Note also the medicinal theme that runs throughout.
- This stanza, and lines 43–49, 71–77, and 99–105, derived from a separate exemplar, are incorporated in *Lady of Pys* (IMEV 1858), which also appears in T. For texts and commentary, see Robbins, "Love Epistle," pp. 289–92; Wilson, "Five Unpublished Secular Love Poems," pp. 399–418; and Person, *Cambridge Middle English Lyrics*, pp. 14–16.

- 16 *intemperate juniper*. The juniper is known for its ability to withstand fire and its berries were used for medicinal purposes; see Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, 17.84. Kooper points out that the juniper is often associated with the Virgin Mary in religious lyrics. The burning bush of the Old Testament (Exodus 3:2) was a Marian symbol anticipating the Virgin Birth. See Chaucer's Prioress' Tale: "O bussh unbrent, brennyng in Moyses sighte" (*CT VII[B³]*468); see also Lydgate, *Life of Our Lady* (lines 281–87) in *John Lydgate: Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith.
- 18 *infirmynat langours*. T (*sares langorous*) is clearly the easier reading, reflecting this scribe's practice of sometimes emending for clarity. This word appears to be an aureate coinage, making it difficult to choose between H and A (*infirmitat*). Although a show of hands is not the best guide, I have sided with H since in *Lady of Pite*, which incorporates this stanza, the reading is also "infirmynat." The adjective is related to "infirm," "infirmate," that is, weakening or debilitating.
- 22 *peynted eloquence*. Skillful and/or deceptive rhetoric. Green notes that "The lady here is not ridiculing the artificiality of her lover's language in itself . . . merely seeking to discover what truth lies behind it" ("Craft of Lovers," p. 116).
- 24 *Dame Prudence*. A possible allusion to Chaucer's Tale of Melibee. Dame Prudence is known for her prolix sententiousness.
- 30–31 As a last resort, in order to make sense of these lines, I have transposed the first halves of the two lines. H reads, *O clarified cristal of worldly portreature, / O horses figure resplendent of glorie*.
- clarified cristal. "Clarified" suggests both illuminating or brightening and clarifying or cleansing.
- 32 *charbucle*. A precious stone that shines in the dark. See Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, 16.25.
- 53 *rayne delectacion*. The context suggests that *delectacion* is used here in the intellectual sense, that is, a worthless or pretentious intellectual exercise in seductive rhetoric. However, another connotation, suggesting sensual pleasure, and more specifically, the second stage of sin — the pleasure in contemplating a sin — may also be inferred. See Chaucer's Parson's Tale (*CT X[1]*350–56).
- 57 Kooper notes, "The lover claims that he is attracted by the lady's inward, or essential, beauty. Such beauty springs from virtue and spiritual uprightness, as in the case of Mary, the virgin *plena gracia*" ("Slack Water Poetry," p. 486).
- 67 *O Falcons*. Vulcan, in Roman mythology, is the god of fire and metallurgy and married to Venus. Known for his lameness and as a public cuckold. Vulcan's corruption perhaps refers to Venus (amorous love) herself or to his jealousy and vindictiveness following his discovery of her affair with Mars. Note that here the lady herself indulges in a bit of rhetorical excess.
- 88 *Desidery*. Kooper suggests a neologism: "it is a good example of what a skilled rhetorician can do: by using this self-coined word he can 'hide' his intentions behind a facade of completely diaphanous material" ("Slack Water Poetry," p.

- 487). However, the *OED* cites the OF *desiderie* from the L *desiderium*, "longing" or "desire."
- Triewe Lovv.* I have added capitals here and at lines 92 and 175. Both the lover and the lady appear to refer to a personified abstraction.
- 89 *Of manys copulacion the verry exemplary.* The lover's frank, if not crude, avowal of his sexual intentions is somewhat surprising given his earlier circumlocutions. This may be one of the first uses of the term *copulacion* in its modern sense. Kooper notes that although according to the *OED* this word is not used in the sexual sense until 1483, "ever since Alanus de Insulis's *De planctu Nostre* grammatical terms had been known to have sexual overtones" ("Slack Water Poetry," p. 487).
- 99–105 The so-called catalogue of worthies is common; Green cites the allusions in this stanza as an example of the "pretentious classical and biblical name-dropping" common to the second rhetoric tradition ("Craft of Lovers," p. 107). *Tullius* (line 99) is the common medieval name for Marcus Tullius Cicero; the Old Testament *Absalon* (line 102) was a conventional example of male beauty.
- 103 *Jobu.* Job is usually invoked as an emblem of patience rather than wealth. Kooper notes that Job's riches "are emphasized especially in texts that stem from folk-tale versions of his life. . . . The confusion in HA [which reads "robis"] is more easily understood if we bear in mind that the version of Job's life best known to medieval man was the one contained in the Office for the Dead" ("Slack Water Poetry," pp. 487–88).
- 118 *Grene flouryng age and manly countenancor.* This can be taken in two senses. On the one hand it appears to be the conventional *carte d'armes* argument: green age — that is, pale or sickly — and the concomitant manly (not feminine) features cause women to reconsider appropriate sexual behavior. However, the line may also suggest that in the vital prime of their age, which brings a mature attitude, women more wisely weigh (i.e., favorably consider) a suitor's case. Kooper suggests a somewhat different reading: "In spite of [the warnings of] Dame Prudence, desire for worldly concupiscence [or 'their lusty age' and men's attractive appearance] will occupy ladies' thoughts" ("Slack Water Poetry," p. 488).
- 127–33 This stanza and lines 169–75 are incorporated into *O Merciful and O Mercable*.
- 131 *knyt the knot of exersise.* Playing on the term "losed" (loosened) in line 127, the lover suggests that she end this "exercise," in the sense of either a trial or a ritual. There might well be sexual implications to the suggestion as well.
- 132–33 *Bath lok and key . . . emprise.* This image has possible sexual overtones and brings to mind the "clyket" and "wyket" of Chaucer's Merchant's Tale (*CT* IV[E] 2045–46).
- 139 Green notes that here the lady "presumably means the dangers of male beache and the loss of her good reputation" ("Craft of Lovers," p. 120).

- 155 *Phelus*. Phoebus, or Apollo, the sun god; also, appropriately, the genius of poetry.
- 159 *fifty and nine*. The discrepancy in dates found in HA (1459) and T (1458) has not been satisfactorily explained and may simply be an early mechanical error (confusing viii and viii), although both H and A do use the form ix. In T, Stow adds in the margin, "Chaucer died 1400" and, believing the poem to be Chaucerian, indulges in some conscious variation of his own and changes the date to 1348 in his 1561 print of the poem.
- 160 *prepotent princess*. Moore suggests that this refers to Venus. Kooper notes that the term is also applied to the Virgin Mary "and thus the poet keeps up the fiction of decency to the very end" ("Slack Water Poetry," p. 489).
- 162 ff. The final three stanzas do not appear in T. Since lines 169–75 also appear in *O Merciful and O Mercyable*, it is quite likely that the envoy is part of the original text.
- 169–75 Note the juridical language in this stanza. *Distrayned*: "To constrain or force (a person) by the seizure and desecration of a chattel or thing, to perform some obligation" (*OED*); *maynprise*: A legalistic term; the action of securing the release of a prisoner by becoming surety for his appearance in court (*MED*).
- 176 *Solomon*. Solomon, known for his wisdom but, in the popular imagination, also for his predilection for amorous dalliance. See 3 Kings 11 where Solomon is said to have had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.
- 177 *sing in his trace*. *Trace*, a series of steps in dancing; a measure; a dance (*OED*). The metaphor suggests active and intimate involvement in the "dance" of love; compare *O Merciful and O Mercyable*: "For in thy case came I never, or now, / In loves daunce so fer in the trace" (lines 43–44).
- 180 *Quia amore langueo*. "I am faint with love" (Canticle of Canticles 2:5, 5:8). This popular refrain is also found in *Quia Amore Langueo (In a Valley of the Restless Mind)* and *In a Tabernacle of a Tower*; see Fein, ed., *Moral Love Songs and Laments*.
- 181 *joy ye*. Kooper ("Slack Water Poetry," p. 489) suggests *joy* is a variant of *jones* (to fasten or unite) and translates the final sentence as, "Come on, my dear spouse, join me / Unite yourself with me [and say] . . ." However, *joien* (to enjoy, delight, take pleasure in) is another possibility.

TEXTUAL NOTES TO *THE CRAFT OF LOVERS*

ABBREVIATIONS: see p. 63.

- 1 *To moralise*. T: *Moralise*.
these. T: *theyr*.
- 2 *argument*. T: *argumentes* (plural also in lines 4 and 5).
- 3 *ben*, T: *be fowadyn*.
- 5 *These*. T: *Thus*.
- 6 *can*. T: *they can*.
- 8 *list*. T: *lyst unto*; A: *list to*.
- 9 *loves lordshippe*. H: *lovers lordshippe*; T: *loves lordshippes*.
- 12 *that the maker be nat*. H: *that the maker be*; T: *the maker that he be*.
- 14 *spiritis*. H: *spirit*.
- 15 *m*. T: *your*.
- 18 *to*. H: *and*.
- 19 *syn infirmynat langoures*. T: *sore langoures*; A: *syn infirmatyf langoures*.
- 23 *asours*. T: *asorous*.
- 26 *eke*. A omits.
- 26 *curiously your eloquence*. T: *gloryously glad language*.
- 28 *or than*. T: *for drede or*.
- 29 *the*. H omits.
- 30-31 I have transposed the second half of each line in order to keep the rhyme scheme consistent.
- 31 *of*. T: *with*.
- 32 *beauti*. A: *bounti*.
- 34 *in*. T: *your lonely*.
- 35 *Wherfor ye do*. T: *Ye*.
- 36 *sache demonstracion*. T: *proclamacion*.
- 38 *and*. H omits.
- 39 *cogitacion*. T: *thought*.
- 40 *distresse*. T: *felynes*.
- 42 *for drede that*. T: *of drede or*.
- 43 *syn*. H: *my*.
- 44 *lady*. T: *my lady*.
- 46 *nat disdayne*. T: *dedyne*.
- 49 *that*. A omits.
- 49 *your*. T omits.

- 50 that ye. T: ye do.
 51 maketh. A: maketh thus.; T: maketh hym.
 52 glosed. T omits.
 53 briefly. T omits.
 54 right. T omits.
 55 in lessie that. T: for drede syr or.
 56 in substance. T: and countenance.
 57 to enclyne. T: enclyne.
 58 you. A: youre.
 59 womanly. T: glorious.
 60 spirit. T: spirites.
 62 suppliant. T: servant.
 63 ones. T omits.
 67 O Vulcanus. T: Of wemens; H: Of vlasses; A: Of
 erbe. A: anerbe
 68 helik. H: help; T: Remember man what chaunge ys perylouse.
 69 the virgynal. T: virgines.
 70 lesse that ye. T: or ther.
 72 out in mourayng. T: eastyng mornynge.
 73 whiche sittith. T: flessh sittynge.
 74 conveyeth. T, A: convert.
 75 this lady yeng. T: my swete thyng.
 76 youre. A: thy.
 78 Me semet by your. T: Mesemeth by.
 80 makely. A: make.
 81 make. H: may.
 82 crafles. T: craft.
 83 please shuld. H: please; T: shuld be to.
 84 T: Wherfore I wyll be ware or I be shent.
 85 O. T omits.
 86 most is. T: ys most.
 87 your. H, A: my.
 88 certificacion. H, A: true certificacion.
 89 Desidery. H: desiderary.
 90 servaunts. H: servants.
 91 Wherfor I must be registered in your. T: I must be chyef callyd to.
 92 yeres grete excesse. T: of yeres gret processe.
 93 hym never. T: never loue.
 94 be. H: by.
 96 in son. T: and son men.
 97 by avisement. H: bavisement; A: be avisement.
 98 also. T: ever.
 99 in lessie. T: for drede.
 101 of. T omits.
 102 Salamons saponce. H: Salamon his saponce; T: Salamonis prudence.
 103 Jobis. A, H: robis.
 105 wold. T: shuld.

- I.* H omits.
 106 *it.* T: *yef that.*
 107 *to.* A, T: *unto.*
 108 *worldly.* T omits.
 110 *man.* H: *maxxes.*
 112 *and ye shal nat.* T: *or drede syn ye.*
 114 *desire.* A: *the desire.*
 119 *hem.* T: *hit.*
 120 *answers so benyngne.* T: *anwere so notable.*
 123 *wold be.* T: *wold fayse be.*
 125 *virgyn.* H: *vyrgynide.*
 126 *stonde in feire lessie that.* T: *am aferde or.*
lessie. H: *lassie.*
 127 *lovers.* T: *love.*
 130 *cordial.* T: *amiable.*
 133 *Wherfor.* T omits.
me. T: *my love.*
 134 *Of.* T: *O.*
 135 *hert.* T: *herdes.*
 138 *me.* T omits.
 139 *froward.* T: *fraude.*
 140 *my virgynide were.* T: *maydenhode shuld be.*
 142 *stones.* H: *stone.*
 143 *of comparison.* A: *comparison.*
 144 *Of al creatures.* T: *Above all creature.*
 146 *resemblaunce.* T: *dissimblouance.*
 147 *fynally registre and take me in.* T: *graciously take me to.*
 148 *manly.* T: *womanly.*
 152 *shal.* T: *shall endure.*
 153 *This confederacy.* T: *The fedevry.*
by. T: *with.*
 155 *first.* T: *freshke*
his. T omits.
 157 *dispute.* T: *prefer.*
 158 *of God.* T: *our lord.*
 159 *fifty and nine.* T: *xl and viii.*
 161 *of this terestry vnde the.* T: *hem thy Region and.*
 162 ff. T omits.
 164 *lode ye.* A omits.
 165 *thens.* H: *thesse.*
 176 *in lovers.* A: *my lovers.*
 179 *am.* A: *all be.*
 181 *my.* A omits.

JOHN LYDGATE, THE FLOURE OF CURTESYE

- 1 In Feverier, whan the frosty moone
 Was horned, ful of Phebus fyre lyght.
 And that she gan to reyse her stremes sone,
 Saynt Valentyn, upon thy blissful nyght
 Of dutie whan glad is every wight,
 And foules chese, to voyde her olde sorowe,
 Everyche his make, upon the next morowee,
- February
crescent-shaped
sayn soon
- 5 *person*
 birds choose, to relieve their
 Each; mate
- 10 The same tyme, I herde a larke syng
 Ful lustely, agayne the morowe gray:
 "Awake, ye lovers, out of your slomberinge,
 This glad morowee, in al the haste ye may!
 Some observaunce dothe unto this day,
 Your choysse agen of herte to renewe,
 In confirmyng forever to be trewe.
- anticipating; morning
- 15 "And ye that be, of chosyng, at your large
 This lusty day, by custome of nature,
 Take upon you the blissful holy charge
 To serve love, whyle your lyfe may dure,
 With herte, body, and al your besy cure,
 Forevermore, as Venus and Cipride
 For you disposeth, and the god Cupyde,
- last
diligent attention
- 20 *strange*
- 25 "For joye oswē we playnly to obey
 Unsto this lordes mighty ordynaunce,
 And, mercylesse, rather forto dye,
 Than ever in you be founden varyaunce;
 And though your lyfe be meddled with grevaunce,
 And, at your herte, closed be your wounde,
 Beth away one, there as ye are bounde."
- right
without mercy
- 30 *infused*
 healed
- That whan I had herde and lysted longe,
 With devoute herte, the lusty melodye
 Of this heavenly comfortable songe,
 So agreeable as by crmonyne,
 I rose anon, and faste gan me bye
- listened
- comforting
harmony
- hasten

- 35 Towarde a grove, and the way take,
Foules to sene everyche chose his make. eack; male
- And yet I was ful thursty in languisshyng:
Myn ague was so fervent in his hete.
Whan Aurora, for drery complaynyng,
Can distyl her chrystral teeres wete. froer [of lovesickness]
Dawn
Began to
- 40 Upon the soyle with sylver dewe so swete;
For she dursie, for shame, not apere
Under the lyght of Phebus beames clere. dared
- And so, for anguyshe of my paynes kene,
And for constrainte of my sighes sore,
45 I set me dosene under a laurer grene
Ful pitously; and alway more and more,
As I behelde into the holtes hore,
I gan complayne myn inwarde deedly smerte,
That aye so sore crampissed myn herte. sharp pain
laural
dark grove
begins; pain
cramped
- 50 And whyle that I, in my drery Payne
Sate and behelde, aboute on every tre
The foules synne, alway twayne and twayne,
Than thought I thus: "Alas, what may this be,
That every foule hath his lyberté
55 Frely to chose, after his desyre,
Everyche his make thus, fro yere to yere?" always two by two
Each; male
- "The sely wrenne, the tytemose also,
The lytel redbreast, have free election
To flyen yfere and togither go
60 Where as hem lyst, aboute enyron,
As they of kynde have inclynacion,
And as Nature, empresse and gyde
Of every thyng, lyst to provyde. insignificant; timorous
robin; free choice
together (in company); together
it pleases them, all around
nature; instinct
guide
chooses
- 65 But man alone, alas, the harde stounde!
Ful cruelly, by kyndes ordynance.
Constrained is, and by statute bounde
And debarred, from al suche plesaunce.
What meneth this? What is this purveyaunce
70 Of God above, agaynt al right of kynde,
Without cause, so narowe man to bynde? condition
nature's
providence
law of nature
- "Thus may I sene, and playne, alas!
My woful houre and my disaventure,
That doulfully stonde in the same caas
So ferre behynde from al helth and cure. sor, and lament
misfortune
miserably stand
far

- 75 My wounde abydeth lyke a sursanure;
For me fortune so felly lyste dispose,
My harme is hyd, that I dare not disclose.

 "For I my herte have set in such a place
Where I am never lykely forto spedre,
So ferre I am hyndred from her grace
That, save Daunger, I have none other mede;
And thus, alas, I not who shal me rede,
Ne for myne helpe shape remedye,
For Male Bouche, and for false Envye.

 85 "The whiche twayne aye stondeth in my wey
Maliciously, and false Suspection
Is very cause also that I dey,
Gynnyng and rote of my distruction,
So that I fele, in conclusyon,
90 With her traynes that they wol me shende
Of my labour, that deth the mote make an ende.

 "Yet or I dye, with herte, wyl, and thought,
To God of Love this avowe I make:
As I best can, howe dere that it be bought,
95 Where so it be that I slepe or wake,
Whyle Boreas dothe the leaves shake,
As I have heught plainly, tyl I sterve,
For wel or wo, that I shal her serve.

 100 "And for her sake, nowe this holy tyme,
Saynt Valentyne, somwhat shal I write:
Although so be that I cannot ryme,
Nor curiously by no crafte endyte,
Yet lever I have that she put the wyte
105 In uncomyng than in negligence,
Whatever I saye of her excellency.

 "Whatever I say, it is of duté,
In sothfastnesse, and no presumption;
This I ensure to you that shal it se,
That it is al under correction,
110 What I reberce in commendacion
Of her, that I shal to you, as blyve,
So as I can, her vertues here discryve.

 "Ryght by example as the somer sonne
Passesthe sterre with his beames shene,
115 And Lucyfer, amone the skyes donne,

wound; superficially healed wound
cruelly chooses

succed

except for Aloofness; reward
do not know; advise

Wicked Tongue

Suspicion

die

The beginning and root

their tricks; *bof nob* (deny)
night

before

now

however dearly

the North Wind
promised; die

compose for poem/
I would rather; Name
ignorance

courtesy

at once

bright
the morning star; dark

- A-morose sheweth to voyde myghes tene,
So verily, withouten any wene,
My lady passeth, whoso taketh hede,
Al tho alye, to speke of womanhede.
- In the morning; affliction
truly; doubt
those*
- 120 "And as the ruby hath the soveraynté
Of ryche stones and the regalye,
And the rose of sweetenesse and beauté
Of fresshe floures, without any lye,
Ryght so, in sothe, with her goodly eye,
125 She passeth al in bountie and fayrenesse,
Of maner eke, and of gentylnesse.
- pre-eminence
benevolence
manners*
- "For she is bothe the fayrest and the beste,
To reken al, in very sothfastnesse.
For every vertue is in her at reste;
130 And furthermore, to speke of stedfastnesse,
She is the rote, and of semelynesse
The very myrrour, and of governaunce,
To al example, withouten varyaunce.
- All in all; truthfulness
fixed
graciousness*
- 135 "Of porte benygne, and wonder glad of chere,
Having evermore her trewe advertence
Abay to reason, so that her desyre
Is brideled aye by wyte and provydence;
Thereto of wyte and of hye prudence
140 She is the welle, aye devoyde of pride,
That unto vertue her selven is the gyde.
- deportment
attention
reason; discretion*
- "And over this, in her dalyaunce
Lowly she is, discrete and secrec,
And goodly gladde by attemperaunce,
145 That every wight, of hygh and lowe degré,
Are glad in herte with her forto be;
So that, shortly, if I shal not lye,
She named is The Floure of Courtesye.
- social interactions
Gracious
temperament*
- 150 "And there to speke of femymyté,
The leste mannysshe in comparyson,
Goodly ahasshed, having aye pyté
Of hem that ben in trybulacion;
For she alone is consolacion
155 To al that arne in mischefe and in nede,
To conforte hem of her womanhede.
- manly (masculine)
Courteously humble*
- 155 "And aye in vertue is her besy charge,
Sadde and demure, and but of wordes fewe;
- attentive care*

- Dredful also of tonges that ben large,
Eschewyng aye hem that lysten to hewe
Above her heed, her wordes for to shewe;
160 Dishonestly to speke of any wight —
She deedly hateth of hem to have a syght.

 unrestrained (*untrukful*)
desire; strike
revel
- "The herte of whom so honest is and clene,
And her entent so faythal and entere
That she ne may, for al the wrold, sustene
165 To suffre her eeres any worde to here
Of frende nor foe, neyther ferre ne nere,
Amysse resowning that hynder shulde his name;¹
And if she do, she wexeth reed for shame.

uncare
waxes red
- "So trewely in mesyng she is in-sette,
Without chaungyng or any doublenesse,
For bountie and beautie are together ksette
170 In her persone, under faythalnesse;
For voyde she is of newfanglenesse,
In herte aye one, forever to persever
175 There she is sette, and never to dissever.

purpose; set
virtue; joined
fickleness
fall away
- "I am to rude her vertues everychone
Connyngly to discryve and write;
For wel ye wote, colour have I none,
180 Lyke her discretion craftely to endyne,
For what I say, all it is to lyte;
Wherfore to you thus I me excuse,
That I aqueynted am not with no muse.

know; literary skill
describe
too little
- "By rethorike my style to governe
In her preise and commendacion,
I am to blynde so hylie to discerne
185 Of her goodnesse to make discrypcion,
Save thus I say, in conclusyon,
If that I shal shortly her commende,
In her is naught that Nature can amende.

carefully
improve upon
- 190 "For good she is, lyke to Polycene,
And in fayrenesse to the quene Helayne,
Stedfast of herte, as was Dorigene,
And wyfely trouthe, if I shal not fayne,
In constaunce eke and faythe, she may attayne

her

¹ Wrongly conveying [*an impression*] that should damage his name

- 195 To Cleopatre, and therto as secre
As was of Troye the whyte Antygoⁿ. *discret*
- "As Hester meke, lyke Judith of prudenc,
Kynde as Alcest or Marcia Catoun,
And to Grisylde lyke in pacience,
200 And Ariadn^e of discrecion,
And to Lucrece, that was of Rome toun.
She may be lykened as for honest^e,
And for her faythe, unto Penelope. *faithfulness*
- "To fayre Phyllis and to Hipsyphilee,
205 For innocence and for womanhede,
For semelynesse unto Canac^e:
And over this, to speke of goodlyhede.
She passeth al that I can of rede,
For worde and dede, that she naught ne fal,
210 Acorde in vertue, and her werkes al. *confidence*
excellence
- "For though that Dydo with wytte sage
Was in her tymse stedfast to Enee,
Of hastynesse yet she dyd outrage,
And so for Jason dyd also Medee;
215 But my lady is so avysee
That, bountie and beautie bothe in her demeyne,
She maketh bountie alway soverayne. *mature judgment*
From
prudent
possession
virtue
- "This is to meane, bountie gothe afore,
Lad by prudenc, and hath the soveraynt^e,
220 And beautie foloweth, ruled by her lore,
That she ne fende her in no degré;
So that, in one, this goodly freshe fre,
Surmountyng al, withouten any were,
Is good and fayre in one persone yfere. *instruction*
does not offend
without doubt
together
- 225 "And though that I, for very ignorauunce,
Ne may discryve her vertues by and by,
Yet on this day, for a remembraunce,
Onely supported under her mercy,
With quakynge bonde, I shal ful humbly
230 To her hynesee, my rudenesse forto quyte,
A lytel balade here byneth endyte, *one after another*
moments
- "Ever as I can suprise in myn herte,
Alway with feare, betwixt drede and shame,
Leste out of lose any worde asterte
235 In this metre, to make it seme lame; *endeavor*
loosely; slip out

Chaucer is deed, that had such a name
Of fayre makynge, that was, without wene,
Fayrest in our touge, as the laurer grene.

dead
doubt

- 240 "We may assay forto countrefete
His gay style, but it wyl not bel
The welle is drie with the lycoure swete,
Bothe of Clye and of Caliopé;
And, first of al, I wol excuse me
To her that is grounde of goodlyhede,
And thus I say untyl her womanhede:

and so

BALADE SYMPLE

- 250 "With al my might and my best entent,
With al the faythe that mighty God of kynde
Me gave syth he me soule and knowyng sent,
I chese, and to this bonde ever I me bynde,
To love you best whyle I have lyfe and mynde.
Thus herde I foules in the daunynge
Upon the day of Saynte Valentyne synge.

gave since

- 255 "Yet chese I, at the begynnyng, in this entent,
To love you, though I no mercy fynde,
And if you lyste I dyed, I wolde assent,
As ever taynne I quicke out of this lynde;
Suffyseth me to sene your fethers ynde.
Thus herde I foules in the mornynge
Upon the daye of Saynte Valentyne synge.

depart; tree
indigo (blue)

- 260 "And over this, myne hertes luste to bente,
In honour onely of the wodde-bynde,
Holy I geve, never to repente
In joye or wo, where so that I wynde
Tofore Cupyde, with his eyen blynde.
The foules al, whan Tytan dyd springe,
With devoute hert, me thought I herde synge."

direct
woodbine
give
go
Before
the Sun

LENVOYE

- 270 Princesse of beautise, to you I represent
This symple dyté, rude as in makynge.
Of herte and seyl faythal in myn entent,
Lyke as this day foules herde I synge.

poem

Here endeth the Floure of Curtesy.



NOTES TO THE FLOURE OF CURTESYE

- 2 *Phelus*. Phoebus (Apollo); the sun.
- 4-7 *Seynt Valentynse . . . Everyche his make*. Lydgate is almost certainly situating himself in relation to Chaucer's *Parliament of Fouls*, lines 509-10: "Seynt Valentynes day,
/ Whan every foul cometh there to chese his make."
- 20 *Cypride*. "Cypriot," another name for Venus derived from Cyprus, a center for Venusian worship. The "doubling" of Venus here perhaps derives from a misunderstanding of Chaucer's *Parliament of Fouls*, lines 260-79, where the goddess is first called "Venus" (line 261) when seen, then called "Cypride" in a later reference (line 277).
- 27 *closid*. Thynne: *closid*.
- 33-35 *faste gan me hys . . . to sene everyche chose his make*. The narrator's eagerness to see nature in operation echoes the dreamer's eagerness in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fouls* and *Legend of Good Women* to see and hear the birds choose their mates and see the flowers open.
- 45 *laurel grene*. A tree for poets and lovers, where Daphne, Apollo's first love, was preserved against the eager god's assault by being turned into a laurel tree. Feeling her heart beating still beneath the bark, Apollo even so still loved her and made the laurel his sacred tree as the leaves of the laurel crown perpetually proclaim her beauty (see Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1.452-567).
- 49 *crampisched*. Thynne: *crampisched at*. Both MacCracken and Skeat emend Thynne's reading.
- 84 *Male Bouche*. An allegorical figure, in English known as Wicked Tongue or Foul Mouth (i.e., slander or gossip); this figure, as well as "Daunger" (line 81) and *Evyre* (line 84), all representing impediments to successful courtship, are originally found in *The Romance of the Rose*.
- 96 *shake*. Thynne: *slake*.
- 142 *secre*. So Skeat. Thynne reads "seyse"; MacCracken supplies "fire."
- 157 *tonges that ben large*. Cp. Troilus and Criseyde 5.804, where Diomedede is said by some to be "of tongue large" (i.e., deceitful, dishonest). See *Floore of Curtesye*, line 160.
- 158 *hem that lysten to heuse*. Skeat (Chaucerian, p. 509) notes an allusion to the proverb, "He that hews above his head, the chip falls in his eye," a warning to men who attack their betters. See Whiting C235 and Tilley C357.

- 188 *her commende*. Thynne: *commende*.
- 190ff. A very similar list of exemplary female worthies is found in Lydgate's *A Valentine to Her that Excelleth All* (IMEV 3065), though both seem mainly to be echoing the dreamer's spontaneous song when he first meets Alceste, who exceeds in beauty Esther, Penelope, Marcia Cato, Adriane, Phyllis, Canace, Dido, Hypsipyle, and others (LGW F249–69). See various notes below.
- 190–96 *Polyxene . . . Antigone*. Polyxena (*Polyxene* [line 190]), the daughter of Priam of Troy and, by some accounts, betrothed to Achilles, was sacrificed on Achilles' tomb in order to appease his ghost. See Lydgate, *Troy Book* 4.6640–6893, and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13.448–80. Helen of Troy (*Helyne* [line 191]) was, of course, proverbially beautiful. Dorigen (*Dorigene* [line 192]), the heroine of Chaucer's Franklin's Tale, considers suicide when her wifely fidelity is threatened. In Chaucer's version of the legend, in the wake of Anthony's suicide, the despondent Cleopatra (*Cleopatre* [line 195]) throws herself into a snake-pit (LGW 580–705). As Skeat notes (*Chaucerian*, p. 509), in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, "fresshe Antigone the white" (2.876) is Criseyde's circumspect niece.
- 195 *secre*. Thynne: *sefrouse*.
- 197 *Hester . . . Judith*. In the Old Testament Book of Esther, Esther's meek and humble supplications to her husband, King Assuerus, saved the Israelites from massacre (15:1–19). Her meekness was proverbial; see Lydgate, *A Valentine to Her That Excelleth All* (lines 36–42), and Chaucer, The Merchant's Tale (CT IV[E] 1744–45). As described in the Book of Judith, the eponymous heroine beheads Holofernes and helps to deliver the Israelites from the Assyrians. Chaucer regularly lists her, along with Esther, Sarah, Rebecca, and Abigail, as an exemplary figure for wives.
- 198–99 *Alcest . . . Marcia Cato* . . . *Griyld*. Alceste is the heroine of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, who, "for hire housbonde chees to dye, / And eke to goon to helle, rather than he" (LGW F513–14). For the story of Alceste and Admetus see also *Confessio Amantis* 7.1917–45. Marcia Cato is perhaps either the wife of Marcus Cato Uticensis who remained devoted to her husband even after his divorce, or their daughter, who remained faithful to her first love. She is also mentioned by Chaucer (LGW F252). Griselda is the patient and obedient heroine of Chaucer's Clerk's Tale.
- 200–05 *Ariadne . . . Lucrece . . . Penelope*. Ariadne is deserted on an island after Theseus absconds with her sister (LGW 1886–2227, Ovid's *Heroides* 10, *Confessio Amantis* 5.5231–5495). Lucretia committed suicide after being raped by Tarquin (LGW 1680–1885, *Confessio Amantis* 7.4754–5150). Penelope is Ulysses' patient and faithful spouse (*Confessio Amantis* 4.146–233, *Heroides* 1).
- 204–06 *Phyllis . . . Hippophilee . . . Canace*. Phyllis hanged herself after being abandoned by Demophon (LGW 2394–2561, *Heroides* 2, *Confessio Amantis* 4.731–878). Jason deserted Hippophilee and their two children (LGW 1368–1579; *Heroides* 6). Canacee most likely refers to the comely heroine of Chaucer's Squire's Tale.

- 211–14 *Dido . . . Medea*. Dido committed suicide after Aeneas departed for Italy (*LGW* 924–1366, *Heroïdes* 7). Medea, having been spurned by Jason, killed their two children (*Confessio Amantis* 5.5227–4222, *Heroïdes* 12, *LGW* 1580–1670).
- 220–21 *And beaulte foloweth . . . That she ne fende*. That is, beauty is ruled so completely by virtue that she does not offend or fight virtue in any way.
- 232 *supprise*. Skeat (*Chaucerian*, p. 510) suggests “undertake, endeavor to do,” which the *MED* tentatively accepts.
- 234 *out of lose*. Skeat (*Chaucerian*, p. 510) suggests the phrase means “out of praise, discreditable,” but the phrase appears to mean something closer to “out of turn; loosely.” The claim of poetic ineptitude, itself a rhetorical trope, is common both with Lydgate and among many fifteenth-century writers. See Lawton, “Dullness.”
- 236–38 *Chaucer is deed . . . / Of fayre makynge . . . / Fayrest in our tonge, as the laurer grene*. Compare the naming of the death of “Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete” in the Clerk’s prologue — “He is now deed” (*CT IV[E]29–38*).
- 237 *that was*. Thynne: that. I have followed Skeat’s emendation.
- 242 *Clye and Calliope*. Chaucer invokes both Clio (the muse of history) and Calliope (muse of epic poetry) in *Troilus and Criseyde* (2.8 and 3.45).
- 256 *lynde*. Thynne: *lyne*.
- 257 *ynde*. Blue is the color of constancy.
- 261 *wodde-bynde*. Skeat (*Chaucerian*, p. 510) notes that the woodbine “is an emblem of constancy, as it clings to its support.”



THE LOVERS' MASS

INTROIBO

- 1 Wyth all myn hool herte enter, *entire*
Tofore the famous riche auter *Before; altar*
Of the myghty God of Love,
Whiche that stondeth high above,
- 5 In the chapel of Cytheron, *Venus (Cithera)*
I will, wyth gret devocion,
Go knele and make sacrificye,
Lyke as the custom doth devyse,
- 10 Afor that God preye and wake, *keep vigil*
Of entent I may be take *taken*
To hys servyse, and there assure,
As longe as my lyf may dure,
- 15 To contune as I best kan, *last*
Whil I lyve, to ben hys man. *continuer*
servant

CONFITEOR

- 15 I am aknowe and wot ryght well, *I confess and know*
I speke pleynly as I fel. *feel*
Touchyng the grete tendymesse *Concerning*
Of my youthe, and my symplexesse, *simplicity*
Of myn unkonyng and grene age, *nayseth*
Wil lete me han noon avantage; *have no*
To serve Love I kan so lyte, *know so little*
And yet myn hert doth delyte *them; learn*
Of hys servauntys forto here.
- 20 By exaumple of hem I myghte here *skill*
To folowee the wey of ther servyse,
Yif I hadde konnyng to devyse,
That I myght a servant be,
Amongys other in my degré;
Havynge ful gret repentaunce
- 25 That I non erste me gan avaunce *before*
In Love court, myselfe to offre,
And my servyse forto profre,

- For fer of my tender youthe;
 Nouther be Est, nouther by Southe,
 35 Lyst Daunger putte me abake,
 And Dysdeyn to make wrake,
 Wolde hyndre me in myn entente;
 Of al this thyng I me repente
 As my conscience kan recorde,
 40 I sey lowly, Myserycorde.

fear

Nouther by

discord

humbly, Mercy

MISEREATUR

- By God of Lovys ordynaunce,
 Folks that have repentaunce,
 Sorowful in herte, and nothyng lyght.
 45 Whiche ha nat spent ther tyme aryght,
 But wastyd yt in ydelnesse,
 Only for lake of lusynesse,
 In slep, slogardye, and slouthie,
 Of whom ys pyté and gret routhe:
 50 But when they repente hem ageyn
 Of al ther tyme spent in veyn,
 The God of Love thorgh hys myght —
 Syth that mercy passeth ryght —
 Ther mot acceptyd be to grace,
 55 And pute daunger out of place;
 This, the wyl of Dame Venus
 And of hyr bisshop, Genius.

vitility

indolence; sloth

most

disdain

OFFICIUM

- In honour of the god Cupide,
 First that he may be my guyde;
 In worshepe eke of the pryncesse,
 60 Whyche is lady and maystresse:
 By grace they may for me provyde,
 Humble of herte, devoyde of pryde,
 Envye and rancour set asyde,
 Withoute change or doubilnesse.
 65 In honour of the [god Capide,]
 first that he [may be my guyde.]
- Joye and welfare in every tyde
 Be gove to hem, wherso they byde,
 And give to hem grace on my dystresse,
 70 To have pyté of ther hyghnesse,
 For in what place I go or ryde.

also

at all times

*given; reside**because of; high rank*

In honour [of the god Cupide.]
first that [he may be my guyde.]

Kyrite

- | | | |
|----|---|----------------------|
| | Mercy, mercy, contynuely I crye. | |
| 75 | In gret disjoynst, upon the poynyt to deye. | distress; just about |
| | For that pyté ys unto me contrayre, | |
| | Daunger my fo, Dysdeyn also, whylk tweye | which two |
| | Causen myn herte, of mortal smert, dyspeyre, | anguish |
| 80 | For she that ys fayrest, ywys, of fayre, | |
| | Hath gladnesse of my syknesse to pleye. | |
| | Thus my trouble, double and double, doth repaire, | return |

CHRISTIE

- | | |
|--|---|
| Repreyeth ay, which, nyght nor day, ne cesseþ nought,
Now hope, now dired, now pensyfheðe, now thought,
As thyse yfere palen myn chere and hewe,
Yet to hyr grace, ech hour and space, I ha besought;
Hyr lyst nat here for hyr daunger doþt ay renewe ¹
Towardys me, for certys, she lyst nat rewe
Up on my peyne, and thus my cheyne ys wrought,
Which hath me bounde never to be founde untrouȝt. | <i>Return always
closely
together make pale
have
deserves not fit have pity</i> |
|--|---|

KNVUE

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 90 | Untrewe, may, to se that day, God forbede!
Voyde slouthe, kepe my trouthe in dede,
Eve and morowe, for joye or sorowe, I have behyght,
Til I sterue, evere to serve hir womanhede;
In erthe lyvynge ther is nothyng maketh me so lyght.
For I shal dye ne but wer hir mercye mor than ryght,
Of no decertyns, but mercy certyns, my journé spede.
<i>Afors al play, thus may I say, I, woful wyght.</i> | <i>Avoid
promised
die
cheerful
Of no merit
Goodbye</i> |
| 95 | | |

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

- Worsshyppe to that lord above
That callyd ys the God of Love;
Pes to hys servantes everychon,
Trewe of herte, stable as ston,
That feythal be.

³ It pleases her not to listen for her also fears your impudence.

	To hertes trewe of ther corage, That lyst chaunge for no rage,	intention passion
105	But kep hem in ther hestys stille In all maner wedris ylle, Pes, concord, and unyté.	promise continually weather ill (bad) unity
	God send hem sone ther desyrs, And reles of ther hoote frys	
110	That brenneth at her herte sore, And encreseth more and more, This my prayere.	release from their hot fires burn
	And aftyr wynter wyl hys shourys God send hem counfort of May flourys,	showers flowers
115	After gret wynd and stormys kene, The glade sonne with bemys shene May appere.	bright
	To give hem lyght after dyrknesse, Joye eke after hevynesse,	give them also
120	And after dool and ther wepyng, To here the somer foulys syng, God give grace.	torment hear; birds
	For ofte sythe man ha seyn A ful bryght day after gret reyn,	many times; has seen
125	And tyl the storme be leyd asyde, The herdys under bussh abyde, And taketh place.	herds
	After also the dirke nyght, Voyde of the mone and sterre lyght,	
130	And after nyghtys dool and sorowe, Foweth ofte a ful glade morowe, Of aventure.	Devoid dolesful
	Now lorde that knowest hertys alle Of lovers that for helpe calle,	
135	On her trouthe of mercy rewe, Namely on swyche as be trewe, Helpe to recure.	By chance restore
	Amen.	

THE ORYSON

	Most myghty and most dredful lord,	
140	That knowest hertys fals and trewe, As wel ther thynkyng as ther word, Bothe of lovers olde and newe, Of pyté and of mercy, rewe	Who
	On thy seruauntes that be stable,	
145	And make ther joye to renewe, Swich as wyl never be chaungable.	Frow; have pity



THE LOVERS' MASS

THE EPISTEL IN PROSE

From the party of the por plentyf in love, wyth many yers of probacon professyd to be trewe, to all the holy fraternite and confrary of the same bretherhede; and to alle hospytelrys and religyous, nat spottyd nor mad foul wyth no cryme of apostasye, nouthyf notyd nor atteynt with no double face of symulacon, nor constreynd countenaunce of hypocrysé: to alle swiche chose chylde of stabynesse — wthy ouse variaunce of corage or of herte — joye, elthe, and long prosperyte, wthy perfeccon of perseveraunce in ther trouthe perpetually t'abyde.

Experycence techeth that pilgrymes and folkes customizable to vyage, whan they underfangen any long weye wiche that ys laboryous, somwhile of consuetude and custom they use a maner to reste on ther wey, of entent to wype⁴ and washe away the soot of ther vysages. And sum also usen to ley adoun the hevy fardellys of ther bake fofto alleggen ther very lemys of her grete berthene. And some outhers usen to gadrym wyne; and some to drynken outhers water or wyn of ther botell or goordys to asswage the grete dryhnesse of ther gredy thruste. And somme of hem somwhile rekne and accounten how myche they ha passyd of ther journe; and sodeynly tourne ageyn ther bakkys towardys som notable seteys, which they of newe be partyd fro. And therwyth al recorden and remembren hem of cytes, castelles, and touns which they ha passyd by, and nat forgete hilles, ne valeys, dygne to be put in remembraunce of hyt for a memoria. Some entylen hem in smale booke of report or in tabyls to callen hem to mynde whan they sene her tym. And som ought callen to mynde grete ryvers and smale, and pereyldes of the see that they ha passyd by. And whan they han alle accountyd and ageyn relatyd the partieys passyd of her journé, of newe they take to hem force, vigour, and strengthe myghtyly, wythouse feystyse, to performe and manly to accomplishyshe the resydue and the remnaunt of her labour.

147 **plentyf**, plaintiff; **probacon**, proof. 148 **confrary**, confraternity. 149 **hospytelrys**, members of a religious order that cared for the sick. 150 **nouthyf**, neither; **notyd**, notorious, stigmatized; **atteynt**, convicted; **symulacon**, dissimulation. 151 **hypocrysé**, hypocrisy; **choose**, chosen. 152 **elthe**, health. 153 **t'abyde**, to abide. 154 **customable to**, accustomed to. 155 **underfangen**, undertake; **consuetude**, tradition. 157 **fardellys**, packs. 158 **alleggen**, relieve. 159 **gadrym**, acquire; **goordys**, gourds. 160 **thruste**, thirst. 161 **rekne**, reckon (count); **myche**, much. 162 **seteys**, cities. 164 **dygne**, worthy. 165 **entylen**, record. 168 **partieys**, regions. 170 **wythouse feystyse**, without delay.

And thus I, in semblable wyse, al the tyme of my lyf, from my grene tendre
 youthe and tyme that I hadde yerys of dyscrecon, beynge, and contymuyng as an
 175 erryzng pylgrym in the servyse of the myghty and dredful God of Love, how many
 perylous passages and wayes that I ha passyd by! How ofte, in compleynyng, I
 have setyn don to wypen away the soot of myn importable labour, and dronken ever
 among of my botell and goordes the bytter drynakes of drerynesse and, ofte sythes,
 assayed to casten adoun the importable fardel of myn hevy thoughtys. And amongys
 180 al this thryngys, lookyd bakward to consydren and sen the fyn and the ende of my
 worthy bretheren and predecesours in love that ha passyd the same pilgrymage
 tofore. And ther I ha founden and seyn the grete trouthe of Troylus, perseverant
 to hys lyves ende, the trewe, stable menyng of Penelope, the clennesse of Polycene,
 the kyndenesse of Dydo, quen of Cartage, and rad also ful often in my con-
 185 templatyf medytacons, *The Holy Legende of Martyrs of Cappado*, the secre trouthe of
 Trystram and Ysoude, and the smale gerdouns of woful Palamides. All thyse, and
 an hondryd thousand mo, callyd to mynde me semeth amonges all I am on of the
 most forsake, and ferthest set behynde of grace, and moste hyndred to the mercy
 190 of my lady dere, nat wylstondyng the grete party of my pilgrymage that I ha
 don. But that I shal evere, for lyfe or deth, contynue and persevere, trewe to my
 lyves ende, besechynge ful lowly to alle yow my bretheren unto whom thys lytel
 epystel ys dyrect, that ys lyke yow of pycé amone your devout observaunces to han
 me recomendyd with som especial memorie in your prayers that yet, or I dye, I
 may sum mercy fynde, or that the God of Love enspyre my ladys herte, of hys
 grace, what I endure for hyr sake.

172 **semblable**, similar. 176 **importable**, unbearable. 177 **ofte sythes**, often times. 178
 fardel, burden. 179 **fyn**, conclusion. 182 **menyng**, purpose; **clennesse**, purity. 185
gerdouns, rewards. 193 **enspyre**, inspire.

NOTES TO THE LOVERS' MASS

- 1–14 *Introibo*. Immediately following the initial sign of the Cross, the priest begins the Latin Mass by saying "Introibo ad altare Dei" ("I will go to the altar of God"), to which the congregation responds "Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam" ("To God who gives joy to my youth"). The *Introibo*, *Confitor*, and *Misereatur* are in tetrameter couplets.
- 15–40 *Confitor*. The Confession, beginning "Confiteor Deo omnipotenti" ("I confess to Almighty God"). Here, his sin is not only his youth and inexperience but also his tardiness in seeking out Love's court.
- 41–56 *Misereatur*. The Absolution: "Miserear vestri omnipotens Deus" ("Almighty God have mercy on you"). Rather than life everlasting, mercy in the form of his lady's grace is hoped for here.
- 44 *ther*. MS: *hys*. The context seems to require a plural pronoun.
- 53 *Ther*. MS: *The*. Hammond suggests the emendation I have adopted.
- 56 *Genius*. The god or force associated with reproduction, regeneration, and natural inclination. Descending ultimately from Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae* (*The Complaint of Nature*), Genius acts as Nature's priest (and bishop) in *The Roman de la Rose* (lines 16272–20704), and as Venus' priest and the Lover's confessor in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.
- 57–73 *Officium*. The Officium (the Introit or entrance hymn) is a roundel, a short poem based on two rhymes in which the opening lines serve as a refrain in the middle and at the end.
- 65–66 The antiphon (from lines 57–58) is abbreviated here. Hammond notes that "Scribes often write only the first word or two of the repeated lines" (*English Verse*, p. 466).
- 72–73 The antiphon is abbreviated here. See note to lines 65–66.
- 74–97 *Kyrie*. The *Kyrie*, composed of three lines which alternate "Kyrie eleison / Christe eleison / Kyrie eleison" ("Lord have mercy / Christ have mercy / Lord have mercy"), is the first invocation after the Introit in the Ordinary of the Mass. Each of the three 8-line stanzas is in pentameter and has double internal assonant rhymes which change with each line. For another parody of the *Kyrie* see *Kyrie, so Kyrie* (also known as the "Kyrie Alison") in *Middle English Lyrics*, ed. Luria and Hoffman, pp. 84–85.

- 98–138 *Gloria in excelsis*. "Gloria in excelsis Deo" ("Glory to God in the highest"). Tetrameter quatrains with diameter bob.
- 124 *A ful bryght day after gret reyn*. Proverbial; see Whiting D41 and Tilley R8.
- 139–46 *Oryson*. The prayer or "Collect" for the day preceding the Epistle.
- 144 *thy seruantes that be stable*. In keeping with the blurring of the secular and the religious throughout, the phrase suggests not only those who are steadfast in love but also, in an ecclesiastical sense, those who persevere in monastic life.
- 147 ff. *The Epistel in Praise*. The first reading, from either the Old or the New Testament. This Epistle, which compares courtship to a touristic pilgrimage, draws freely from Laurent de Premierfait's French prose translation (c. 1409) of Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*, Book 5 (see Hammond, *English Verse*, p. 467). On the "at once commonplace and curiously elusive" motif of the pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, see Dyas, *Pilgrimage*.
- The author omits the rest of the Mass, including, for instance, the Gospel, Homily, Nicene Creed, Offertory, Sanctus, and *Agnus Dei*.
- 181–89 *And ther I . . . that I ha don*. Our amorous pilgrim is indeed in a bad way if he is "on of the most forsake" of this group of exemplary lovers. *The Holy Legende of Martyrs of Cupido* (i.e., Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, which is referred to as "the Seintes Legende of Cupide" in the Introduction to the Man of Law's Tale — CT II[B']61) demonstrates that faithful love is usually both unrewarded and cruelly abused. Although Penelope's steadfast rejection of her predatory suitors is rewarded with Odysseus' return, in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Criseyde remains in the Greek camp with Diomede despite Troilus' "grete trouthe"; Aeneas abandons Dido despite her "kyndenesse" (Chaucer, *LGW* F924–1367); Polixena (Priam's daughter), sacrificed on Achilles' tomb to appease either his desire or his vengeance, modestly covers her exposed breast as she dies (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13.475–82); the "secre trouthe" of Tristram and Isolde causes both the illicit lovers only misery; and Palamides, Isolde's unrequited lover, has few rewards for his faithful service — see Lydgate, *The Complaint of the Black Knight*, lines 330–43 (Symons, ed., *Chaucerian Dream Visions*).

THE ANTIFEMINIST TRADITION

INTRODUCTION

The four antifeminist poems printed here, first introduced to the Chaucer canon in John Stow's 1561 edition of his works, may strike some readers as distinctly un-Chaucerian given the poet's reputation, dating back to the sixteenth century, as "wemenis frend."¹ Yet Chaucer's genuine works do have their fair share of antifeminist sentiments, usually with comic effect: the ironic encomiums to wedded bliss in *The Merchant's Tale*, the heavily ironic defense of archwives at the end of *The Clerk's Tale*, Chauntecleer's cynical observations on the efficacy of women's counsel in *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, and the ambiguous portrayal of the Wife of Bath who, for all her defiant vitality, is nonetheless the textual embodiment of Jerome's wicked wife. However, only one poem today printed as Chaucer's — *Against Women Unconstant* — dips as deeply into the trenchant antifeminist strain as that which is found in these poems that Stow introduced to the canon.

While Carolyn Ives and David Parkinson demonstrate that in the fifteenth century Chaucer does appear to have had some reputation in Scotland as a misogynist authority,² Stow's additions (including *Against Women Unconstant*) may have been dictated less by a desire to compile an authorial oeuvre than by his desire to complement Chaucer's image with poetry that was currently fashionable. Indeed, in *The Crooked Rib*, Francis Lee Utley demonstrates the popularity of the "querelle des femmes" in the mid-sixteenth century, calling the Renaissance the "most prolific age of English satire on women" and "a century when satires on women were pouring off the presses in a quantity unimagined in the times of Chaucer or Charlemagne."³ Although demonstrating that the subject of female perfidy is an "age-old controversy," Utley suggests that contemporary political events, including "the long succession of Henry's queens, the dissolution of the monastic life, the quarrels over the legitimacy of Mary and Elizabeth, and the Statute of the Six Articles (1539), which hampered the reforming tendency by reaffirming the celibacy of the priesthood," sharpened the "perennial taste for satire."⁴

Although to modern readers these antifeminist lyrics may seem to violate a more refined and restrained courtly sensibility, in *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* R. Howard Bloch suggests that misogyny, by logical necessity, accompanies the idealization of the feminine found in courtly discourse. Bloch demonstrates that the paradoxical

¹ Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years*, 1.72.

² See Ives and Parkinson, "Scottish Chaucer."

³ Utley, *Crooked Rib*, pp. 4–5.

⁴ Utley, *Crooked Rib*, p. 75.

Western view of women as "Devil's Gateway" and "Bride of Christ" dates back to the asceticism of the early Christian era.⁵ Due to a variety of social and cultural factors, including the increasing economic and matrimonial power of women, this dichotomy is revived in the early Middle Ages, and Bloch suggests that the treacherous, duplicitous female is a necessary corollary to the inaccessible, idealized courtly lady.⁶ The posturing of the impotent and exasperated lover or spouse could then, as now, be grounded in conviction or experience, but by the late Middle Ages such poems, circulating in secular miscellanies, appear to have become a rhetorical game or exercise. The wimpy, inept, mentally self-castrated male, so prominent in courtly poems, is matched by the virago who beats him, tricks him, and cuckolds him. These poems perhaps provided a corrective to the idealizing rhetoric of courtly discourse, and were intended to be humorous rather than simply vituperative and cantankerous. That is, these poems perhaps represent an aspect of the gamesmanship that John Stevens detects in courtly love lyrics: "One of the delights of the 'fiction' consisted . . . in reacting against it with every possible coarseness and vulgarity."⁷ Linda Woodbridge suggests that antifeminist verse in part served as an intellectual game for the practice of rhetoric, and for Elizabeth Clarke this game "is obviously played at an elite level": "Men and, it seems, sometimes women, wishing to establish a reputation for wit at various levels, find plenty of stock in the apothegms about women circulating in the period."⁸ Taking a somewhat different approach in her study of early Tudor poetry, Elizabeth Heale reads the "discourse of misogyny" as primarily a male domain, meant to foster "male solidarity": "By strenuously asserting his own masculine trustiness in the face of feminized treachery and betrayal, the courtier could display his own reliability and virtue. In such ways a poetic discourse of misogyny could displace into safer forms the frustrations and resentments of courtly life."⁹ But we should also remember the squeamish Absalom in Chaucer's Miller's Tale, who is much more the object of ridicule than Alisoun, as is old Januarie, rather than May, in The Merchant's Tale. The knife of satire has two edges, and so, too, the *querelle des femmes*.

I Have a Lady and *O May Quince*, both satirical descriptions of a mistress, represent parodies of the courtly panegyric which catalogue a lady's deficiencies rather than her charms. Although Utley describes some of the poems in this genre as "comic valentines," he nonetheless suggests that "the malice of most of these poems comes from the anger of a rebuffed lover."¹⁰ I would suggest, however, that part of the point is the art of the insult; these poems appropriate and invert conventional courtly rhetoric and appreciation depends upon a knowledge of both secular and religious panegyrics, and perhaps "flytings," insult poems affiliated with the legal profession. Indeed, Utley and Ziolkowski suggest that *I Have a Lady* may be considered a prototype for both Shakespeare's deft treatment of this genre in Sonnet 130, "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun," and John Donne's *Elegie II: The*

⁵ Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, pp. 65–91.

⁶ Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, pp. 143–64.

⁷ Stevens, *Music and Poetry*, p. 223.

⁸ Woodbridge, *Women in the English Renaissance*, p. 44; Clarke, "Anne Southwell," pp. 41–42.

⁹ Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey*, p. 48.

¹⁰ Utley, *Crooked Rib*, p. 213.

*Anagram.*¹¹ The author of *O Moy Quince*, inspired perhaps by the proverbial adage that wine, women, honor, and age make men fools — which he incorporates into his poem — depends upon mundane metaphors to describe his “lovely lewde masterasse” (line 22), comparing her not only to old fruit but also, in the last stanza, to an animal that has been slaughtered, smoked, tanned, and turned to leather. This is no flower of courtesy or feminine deportment but the flower of the tanning vat, the “fowlyst of all the nacion” (line 24). Both *O Moy Quince* and *I Have a Lady* parody conventional antiseptic descriptions of a woman’s beauty (bright eyes, radiant skin, snowy breasts, long fingers, slender waist) by describing their mistresses in quite colorful terms: the “Fayre Lady” of *I Have a Lady*, for instance, has skin as smooth as an “osys song” (line 21) and the “Moy Quince” has breasts that are both orange and “satournad” (“sagging” — line 18). Both poems, however, possess a surprising tenderness; despite each lady’s ostensible defects, the authors nonetheless betray their affection: the author of *O Moy Quince* intends to love his lady but “a lytill” (line 25), but of all women, he loves her best (line 29).

Beware (now attributed to Lydgate) and *Of Theyre Nature* (also called *Balade against Hypocritical Women*), both marked by proverbial lore and pastiche, warn readers of the atavistic deceptiveness, fickleness, and treachery of women. On another level, these poems may reflect what Daniel Javitch calls the courtly “cult of dissimulation”;¹² while women are denounced for their duplicitous artifice, such dissembling behavior was nonetheless recognized — and admired — as a necessary strategy for self-promotion and social advancement. *Beware*, which Utley accurately describes as “a skillful use of proverbial libels,”¹³ is an especially interesting poem because it appears to have been repeatedly ransacked: its refrain, “Beware therfore; the blynde eteth many a flye,” also appears in *Of Theyre Nature* and remained extant throughout the sixteenth century (see Whiting B548 and Tilley B451); and the final stanza (beginning “thogh al the erthe so wan / Were parchemyn smothe” — lines 36–37) is incorporated into *The Remedy of Love* (IMEV 3084) and is found as an independent poem (IMEV 1469.3) in both Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland MS Advocates’ 1.1.6 (the Bannatyne manuscript, where it is marked “Chaucer”) and London, British Library MS Additional 17492 (the Devonshire manuscript). *Of Theyre Nature*, inspired, no doubt, by the pessimistic musings in Lydgate’s *Pain and Sorrow of Evil Marriage* from which the poet lifts seven lines, *in toto*, for his initial stanza, is somewhat pedestrian; indeed, even the poet himself appears to weary of his misogynist posturing. The poem is saved, however, by the felicitous expansion on the “blind eat many a fly” refrain: “But whether that the blynde eate flessh or fyssh, / I pray God kepe the fly out of my dyssh!” (lines 20–21).

THE TEXTS

O Moy Quince (IMEV 2524) and *Of Theyre Nature* (IMEV 2661) are extant only in T (Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.19, fols. 205v–206r and 156v); *I Have a Lady* (IMEV 1300) appears in both T (fols. 205r–205v), and L (Leiden University, MS Vossius 9, fol. 110v). For a description of the Leiden manuscript (c. 1470–1500) and a transcript of the

¹¹ Utley, *Crooked Rib*, p. 213; Ziolkowski, “Avatars of Ugliness,” p. 19.

¹² Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness*, p. 79.

¹³ Utley, *Crooked Rib*, p. 180.

poem, see van Dorsten, "The Leyden 'Lydgate Manuscript,'" pp. 315–25. The L variants are found in the Notes.

Beware (JMEV 1944), also known as *Beware of Deceitful Women, Against Women, or The Blynde Ethel Many a Flye*, is now attributed to Lydgate. The poem, with various alterations, is extant in four manuscript miscellanies: T (fols. 207r–207v), H (British Library, MS Harley 2251, fols. 149v–150r), O (Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.9.38, fols. 28r–28v), and R (Rome College MS English 1405 alin 1306, fol. 75v). For a description of R, see Klinefelter, "Newly Discovered," pp. 3–6; and Robbins, "Middle English Diatribe," pp. 131–46. Since the version in R has not yet been published, I have provided a transcription here with the variants contained in the Textual Notes.

I HAVE A LADY (THE DESCRYVYNG OF A FAIR LADY)

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | I have a Lady, whereso she be,
That seldom ys the soverayn of my thought;
On whos beawte when I beholde and se,
Remembryng me how well she ys wrought.
I thanke fortune that so hyt grace me brought,
So fayre ys she but nothyng angelyke —
Hyr besyty ys to none other lyke. | whereto
beauty
fashioned
angelic |
| 5 | For hardely, and she were made of brasse,
Face and all, she hath ynowgh fayrenesse:
Hyr eyen byn holow and grene as any grasse,
And ravynnysshe yelow ys hyt sonny tresse.
Thereto she hath of every comlynesse
Such quanyté gevyn hyr by nature,
That with the leest she ys of hyr stanare. | assuredly, even if
sunken
dark blond |
| 10 | 15 And as a bolt hyr browes byn y-bent,
And byttyl-browyd she ys also withall,
And of hir wytte as sympyll and innocent
As ys a chylde that can no good at all.
She ys nat thyk; hyr stature ys but small.
Hyr fyngers byn lytill and nothyng long,
Hyr skyn ys smothe as any coxys tong. | arched
bully-bowed
knout
ox's tongue |
| 20 | 25 Therto she ys so wyse in dalyaunce,
And besette hyr wordes so womanly,
That hyr to here hit doth me dysplesaunce.
For that she seyth ys sayde so connyngly,
That when that there be mo then she and I,
I had lever she were of talkyng stylle,
Then that she shuld so goodly speche spyll. | Abs; conversation
employs
bear
more
quiet |
| 30 | 30 And slowth noone shall have in her entresse,
So dylygent ys she and vertulesse,
And so besy ay all good to undresse,
That as a she-ape she ys harmelese,
And as an hornet meke and pytelesse; | loth; entry
innocent |

- With that she ys so wyse and circumspecte,
 That prudent noon hyr foly can infecte. *prudence*
- Ys hit nat joy that suche oone of hyr age,
 Withyn the boundys of so gret tendyrnesse.
 Should in her werke be so sad and sage,
 That of the weddyyng sawe all the noblesse
 Of quene Jane, and was tho, as I gesse,
 But of the age of yeres ten and fyve?
 I trowe ther ar nat many suche alyne! *steadfast and wise*
splendor
then
believe
- For as Jhesu my synfull sowle save,
 There nys creature in all thys world lyvynge
 Lyke unto hyr that I wold gladly have,
 So pleseth myn hert that goodly swete thyng.
 Whos sowle in haste unto hys blysse bryng,
 That furst hyr formyd to be a creature.
 For were she wele, of me, I dyd no cure. *is not*
do not care

Explicit the dyscryvyng of a fayre lady.

NOTES TO *I HAVE A LADY*

ABBREVIATIONS: see p.103.

- 1 The subtitle is taken from the explicit in T. Stow calls the poem "A balade
pleasaunte" (p. 344r).
- 4 *wrought*, L; *i wrought*.
- 7 *yn*, L; *ar*.
- 11 *yelow*, L; *yslewe*.
- 15 *And as a bolt hyr browses byn y-best*. Her brows are arched like an arrow or a bolt for
fastening; i.e., her brows are straight, not arched. Arched brows were then, as
now, a conventional sign of beauty.
hyr, T: *hys*.
- 16 *bytyl-brouyd*. Shaggy, prominent brows.
yn, L omits.
- 26 *That*, T: *Then*.
- 30 *vertalese*. "Lacking the quality of moral excellence; also, lewd, lecherous" (*MED*).
- 31 *ay all good*, L: *al good ay*.
- 32 *as a she-ape she yn barnelese*. Although sometimes a byword for a dupe, an ape is
also often associated with trickery; therefore, she is not innocent at all.
- 35 *That*, T: *Than*.
- 38 *werke*, L: *workys*.
- 40 *quene Jane*. Utley (*Crooked Rib*, pp. 147-48) notes that *Jane* refers to Joan of
Navarre who was married to Henry IV in 1403 when the subject of the poem was
fifteen years old. To suggest that there are "nat many suche alyne" that witnessed
that event is a not very subtle way of saying that the fair lady is advanced in years.
The allusion also allows editors to date the poem to the middle of the fifteenth
century.
- 42 *ar*, L omits.

- 44 *There wye creature.* Satirical descriptions of a mistress sometimes close with similar, unusual benedictions. See, for instance, *The Lover's Mocking Reply* (IMEV 2437), printed in Robbins, *Sesdai Lyrics*, p. 220.
- 48 *be,* L; *ben.*
- 49 *I dyd.* L; *did I.*



O MOSY QUINCE

	O mosy quince, hangyng by your stalke, The whyche no man dar pluk away ner take, Of all the folk that passe forby or walke. Your floweres fresshe be fallyn away and shake.	mosy fruit nor scattered
5	I am ryght sory, masteras, for your sake, Ye seme a thyng that all men have forgotyn; Ye be so type ye wex almost rotyn.	mistress grow
	Wyne, women, worshyp, unswelde age, Make men to fonne for lak in theyr resonis: Elde causeth dalnesse and dotege,	honor, enfeebled act foolishly senility
10	And worshyp, chaunge of condicions; Excesse of wyne blydeth theyre dyscrecions, And all bookees that poetis made and radde Seyen women most make men madde!	read Say
15	Youre ugly chere deynous and foward, Youre grene eyen frosenyng and nat glad, Yowre chekes enboilded lyke a melow costard, Colour of orenge your brestys satournad,	scornful and bellicose eyes swollen; ripe apple sagging
20	Gylt, opon warantye, the colour wyll nat fade; Bawsyn-butnockyd, belyed lyke a tonne, Men cry, "Seynt Barbara!" at lossyng of your gonne.	Painted, without fail Badger-used, bellied; cask loosening; gown (gown or organ)
	My lovely lewde masterasse, take consideracion. I am so sorrowfull there as ye be absent;	
25	The floweres of the barkdate, the fowlyst of all the nacion — To love yow but a lytyll is myne entent. The swert hath y-swent yow, the smoke hath yow shent; I trowe ye have be layde opon som kylene to dry.	tanning vat flame; struck; spoiled kib
	Ye do me so moche worshyp there as ye be present; Of all wemen I love yow best. A thowsand tymes fy!	



NOTES TO *O MOSY QUINCE*

ABBREVIATIONS: see p. 103.

- 1 *quince*. A yellow, acidic, pear-shaped fruit, used for preserves.
- 8-14 This inserted proverbial digression (*IMEV* 4250), sometimes known as *Four Things That Make a Man a Fool and Saying of Dan John*, is usually traced back to Lydgate. The popular rhyme royal stanza is extant in various forms, some lacking the antifeminist sting and counseling instead that one practice humility (see *Four Things That Make a Man a Fool and Yet of the Same*). Stow omits this stanza from his 1561 print of the poem.
- 16 *grene eyen*. Pale, colorless, or livid; the color green is often associated with inconstancy and envy.
- 17 *enboyned*. T: *enbowyd*. I have emended with Stow's correction, the past participle of *enboinen*, to swell (with anger or pride); i.e., her cheeks are puffy or swollen like a ripe apple.
- 19 *gylt*. Covered with a thin coating of gold (and thus concealing defects).
- open warantysse. For certain, without fail.
- 20 *bawsyn-buttisckyd*. The "bawsyn" is a badger, but here the term implies fat or broad.
- 21 *Seynt Barbara*. Patron saint in times of danger from thunderstorms and fire and protector of artillery men, miners, firework makers, architects, builders. Therefore, an explosive declaration. Person (*Cambridge Middle English Lyrics*, p. 79) suggests a possible play on gosen/gun (or, possibly, fart).
- 22 *leude*. The adjective has several connotations, none complimentary: foolish, common, uneducated, unrefined, idle, dishonest, and lascivious.
- 24 *floures of the barkfate*. A barkfat is a vat for tanning; therefore, odiferous and dried up or crusty. Note the unusual tanning metaphors throughout this stanza through which he compares his lady to a hide turned into leather.
- 25 *is*. T: *air*. Stow's correction.

 JOHN LYDGATE, BEWARE
(THE BLYNDE ETETH MANY A FLYE)

- 1 Loke wel aboute, ye that lovers bee,
Let not youre lustes lede you to dotage.
Be not anamoured on al thing that ye see:
Sampson the fort and Salomon the sage,
5 Deceyved were for al thaire grete courage.
Men deeme it right that they see at eye,
But ever bescare: the blynde eteth many a flie!
- desire; folly
strong; wise
valor
eat; fly
- 10 I meen in women, for all thaire cheres queynt,
Trust not to moche; thaire trouthe is but geson.
The fairest outward wel can they peymt;
Thayre stedfastnesse endureth but a seson.
They fayne frendlynes and worchen treson,
15 And sith thay be chaungeable naturally,
Beware, therfore: the blynde eteth many a flie.
- attractive looks
scorn
work
- 20 Thogh all this world doo his besy cure
To make women stande in stableness,
It may not be, it is ageyne nature:
The world is doo whan thay lak doublenesse.
They lagh and love not, this know men expresse;
25 In theyme to trust, it is but fantasie.
Therfore, beware: the blynde eteth many a flie.
- careful effort
against
delusion
- 30 What wight on lyve that trusteth on thaire cheres,
Shal have at last his guerdon and his mede.
They shave nerer than doth rasour or sheres;
Al is not gold that shineth, men take bede!
Thaire galle is hid under a sugred wede;
25 It is ful queynte thaire fantasies to aspie.
Beware, therfore: the blynde eteth many a flie.
- person; face
reward; compensation
razor or scissors
bile; garment
clever; lies; detect
- 35 Women of kynde have condicions thre:
The first is thay be full of deceite;
To spynne also is thaire propreté;
And women have a wonderful conceite:
They wepen oft, and all is but a sleight;
- by nature
discreet
trick

- And whan hem lust, the teere is in the eye. *desire*
35 Therfore, beware: the blynde etheth many a flye.
- In sothe to sey, thogh al the erthe so wan
Were parchesmyn smothe, white, and scribable,
And the grete see, called occian,
Were turned ink, blacker than is sable.
30 Eche stikk a penne, ech man a scrivener able,
Nought coade thay write womens trecherie.
Beware, therfore: the blynde etheth many a flye!



EXPLANATORY NOTES TO *BEWARE*

ABBREVIATIONS: see p. 103.

- 1 R titles the poem "The blynde eteth many a flye"; similarly, O reads "Beware the blynd etyth meny flye." Skeat adopts Stow's title, "A balade, warnyng men to beware of deceipfull women."
- 4 Sampson the fort and Salomon the sage. The proverbial models of strength and wisdom, combining the ideals of *fortitudo et sapientia*.
- 7 *the blynde eteth many a flie.* Proverbial; see Whiting B348 and Tilley B451. This line is also incorporated into *Of Theyre Nature* (lines 14, 20–21).
- 24 *They shaw never than doth rason or sheres.* Perhaps related to the saying, "To make one's beard" (i.e., "to trick"). See Whiting B116, and Chaucer, *House of Fame* (lines 689–91).
- 25 *All is not gold that shineth.* Proverbial; see Whiting G282.
- 26 *Thaire gaile is hid under a sigred wede.* Proverbial; see Whiting G12.
- 29–34 *Womyn of kynde have condicous thre / . . . in the eye.* From the Latin "Fallere, ftere, nere, tria sunt hec in muliere." Proverbial; see Whiting D120. A variation appears in Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Prologue: "For al swich wit is yeven us in our byrthe; / Deceite, wepyng, spynnyng God hath yive / To wommen kyndely, whil that they may lyve" (CT III[D]400–02).
- 35 *but a sleight.* Variants include *asceyte* (T), which Robbins, *Secular Lyrics*, reads as *as leyte* ("cheerful"), and *but dysceyte* (O).
- 36–41 *thogh al the erthe so wan / . . . womens trecherise.* Linn ("If All the Sky Were Parchment," pp. 951–70) traces the literary history of this formula back at least two thousand years. It has been adapted to praise the glory and power of God, to describe the misfortunes of the Jews, to describe the joys of the saints, and, by Oliver Wendell Holmes, to satirize the human compulsion "to write, and write, and write."

TEXTUAL NOTES TO *BEWARE*

ABBREVIATIONS: see p. 103.

- 1 *Loke*. O: *Lokyth*.
6 *Men deeme*. H: *Myndemyth*.
it. O: *hit ys*.
that. O: *as*.
at. T, H: *with*.
O adds an extra line: *Be thynk yow wel on thy passage*.
7 *But ever beware*. T, H: *Beware therfore*; O: *Bysare*.
8 in. T: *of*.
9 *Trust*. T, H: *Trust hem*.
geson. H: *a geson*.
10 *wel*. O: *full well*.
12 *They feyne frendlynes and wrochen treason*. T: *For they feyne frendlynes and wroches treason*; H: *For they can feyne friendes and wroche by treason*; O: *For and hyt shuld it were agayn reson*.
13 *And sith*. T, H: *And for*; O: *Syth*.
be. T, H: *are*.
O adds an extra line: *Solomon seyth all thyng hath reson*.
14 *therfore*. O omits.
15–28 Stanzas 3 and 4 are transposed in T.
15 *this*. T, O: *the*.
16 *stande*. O: *to stande*.
17 *way*. T: *wel*.
18 *doo whan*. H: *doulteful*.
lak. H: *lak no*.
19 *They*. T, H: *For they can*.
not. H omits.
know men. T, H: *ys*.
20 *In theyme to trust*. T: *To trust on theyw*; H, O: *To trust in hem*.
but. O: *but a*.
O adds an extra line: *F warne you all both more and lese*.
21 *Therefore beware*. T, H: *Beware therfore*; O: *Beware*.
22 *on lyve*. O: *a lyve*.
that. T, O omit.
on. O: *yn*.
last. H: *last*.

- 24 *They* T, H: *For wemen can...*
 never, H: *more nere*; O: *nere*.
 deth, T, H omit.
 rassour, T: *rassours*,
 shere, H: *sheere*.
- 27 *fantasies*, T, H: *fantary*.
 quaynte thaire fantasies. O: *hardē theyr quayntesye*.
 to, H: *for to*.
 O adds an extra line: *Thow schalt not forthynk and thow do by rede.*
 therfore, O omits.
- 28 Stanzas 5 and 6 transposed in O.
- 29–42 *is*, O: *ys that*.
- 31 *spynne*, H: *spyn*.
 is, O: *hif ys*.
- 35 *They wepen*, T, H: *For they can wepe,*
 but a sleight, T: *asceyte*; O: *but dysceyte*.
- 34 *And*, T, H: *And ever*.
 teere is in the, O: *tyrys beth yn here*.
 O adds an extra line: *Full hard ys here cherys trady to awryte.*
 Therefore beware, T, H: *Beware therfore*; O: *Beware*.
- 36 *In sothe*, O: *In schorte*.
 thogh al the erthe so wan, H: *the erthe so broode and wane*.
- 38 *called*, T: *that callyd ys the*; H: *that clepid is*; O: *that clepyd ys the*.
- 39 *is*, T: *is to ymke*; H: *is ymke*; O: *yn yngkle*.
 is, T: omits.
- 40 *Ecke*, T: *Every*.
 eck man, H: *echman*.
- 41 *Nought coude thay write*, T: *Nat coude then wryte*; H: *Nat coude write*; O: *They coude nat wrytyn*.
 O adds an extra line: *They beth foyre fals and unstabyll.*
- 42 *etek*, H: *ete*.
 therfore, O omits.
 O adds a seventh stanza:
 What thyng than eyr is lyghter and meveabyll
 The lyght men say that paasyth yn a trowth
 All yf the lyght be not so waryabyll
 As ys the wynde that every weye blowth
 And yut of reson sun men deme and trose
 Wymmen be lyghtyst of thes company
 Let passe over yn ese and let the wynd blow
 Beware the blynde etyilh many a flyc



OF THEYRE NATURE

- 1 Of theyre nature they gretly theym delyte,
Wyth holy face feynyd for the noues,
In saynneware theyre frendys to vysyte,
More for reliques than for seynies bones.
- 5 Though they be closyd undyr precyous stones;
To gete hem pardon lyke theyr olde usages,
To kys no shrynes but hasty quyk ymages.
- Whan maydons ar weddyd and householdys have take,
All theyre humylyté ys exylid asey.
- 10 And the cruell hertes begynneth to awake;
They do all the besy cure that they can or may,
To wex theyr housholdes maisters, the soth forto sey;
Wherfore, ye yong men, I rede yow forthy,
Beware alwey, the blynde eteth many a fly.
- 15 Of thys matyer I dar make no lengor relacion,
For in defaute of slepe my spyrytes wesen feyst;
In my study I have had so long an habitacion,
That my body and my gost ar grevously atteynt;
And therfore of thys proces I make no lengor compleynt.
- 20 But whether that the blynde ete flesch or fyssh,
I pray God kepe the fly out of my dyssh!
- Now I make an ende and ley me downse to rest,
For I know by experiance verament,
- 25 Yef maydones and wylfes knew and wist
Who made the mater he shuld be shent;
Wherfore I pray God omnipotent,
Hym save and kepe both nyght and day;
Wretyn in the lusty season of May.
- themselves
occasion
church
customs
line

effort
sex
advise; therefore

report
absence; gone
spirit; exhausted

truly
raised

NOTES TO *OF THEYRE NATURE*

ABBREVIATIONS: see p. 103.

- 1-7 These lines are from Lydgate's *The Pain and Sorrow of Evil Marriage* (JMEV 919). In this satire warning against marriage, the speaker, about to take a wife, is warned in a vision of three angels about the evil nature of women. This stanza, extant in only one manuscript of the poem (Bodleian Library MS Digby 181), occurs at the end of a long exposé of women's atavistic sensuality and duplicity. See Salisbury, ed., *Trials and Joys*, and Lydgate, *Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken.
- 4 *reliques*. A double entendre suggesting either sacred objects (i.e., "seyntis bones") or beloved persons. Fletcher suggests that the term refers to lovers' tokens ("Edition of MS R.3.19," p. 348). The sense of the line seems to be that women visit church more for their lovers (or lovers' tokens) rather than to worship saints' bones. The reading in Digby 181 is a bit different: "In seymaries ther frendes to visite, / More than for relikkes or any seymis bones."
- 14 This popular proverb counseling male vigilance (Whiting B348) is also found in *Besure*.
- 20 *flesh or fyssh*. T: *fyssh or flesh*. I have followed Stow's change which preserves the rhyme.



GOOD COUNSEL, WISDOM, AND ADVICE

INTRODUCTION

Many of the poems that circulated with Chaucer's poetry in manuscript and print consist of proverbial wisdom, public counsel, and princely advice. Given the preponderance of sententiae, adages, and aphorisms in Chaucer's own poetry,¹ it is not surprising that Chaucer would have some perceived reputation as a fount of worldly wisdom and courtly counsel. Indeed, Richard Firth Green suggests that in the late fourteenth century, for the ambitious courtier or poet, literature of instruction and advice was likely to "attract a more favorable reception from their masters than they were by contributing to the literary tradition of the courtly 'game of love.'² The ability to fashion oneself "as a practical and moral mentor" was necessary for any writer who desired recognition beyond the limited role as courtly minstrel: "if [Chaucer's] literary attainments had any effect at all upon his career as a courtier, it was probably to such works as *Boethius* and *Melibee* rather than love-allegories like the *Parliament of Fools* that Chaucer would have owed his advancement."³ Seth Lerer demonstrates that in the fifteenth century, Chaucer's "socially attuned" readers, including the scribe John Shirley, continued to imagine Chaucer as a poet of "courtly politics and royal diplomacy."⁴ Given the number of proverbs and "sententiae of different sorts" that became attached to Chaucer's name in fifteenth-century manuscripts, Julia Boffey suggests that "[i]n addition to the association of Chaucer with Boethius, there are hints of a more general tendency to regard Chaucer as a source of wisdom."⁵ In the sixteenth century, Chaucer's folio print editors, particularly Thynne and Stow, continued to add poems dispensing good counsel and advice, both domestic and political. In her study of humanist commonplace books, Mary Hart Crane suggests that during the reigns of both Henry VIII and Elizabeth, the command of good counsel became of a form of cultural capital and "the central credential" for those outside aristocratic circles seeking political advancement: "[t]he skillful citation of maxims and commonplaces became a way of displaying the fruits of humanist education when seeking preferment."⁶ Humanist courtiers did not necessarily dis-

¹ Whiting counts 186 proverbs and 630 sententious phrases (*Chaucer's Use of Proverbs*, p. 10).

² Green, *Poets and Princeplaymen*, p. 161.

³ Green, *Poets and Princeplaymen*, p. 166.

⁴ Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, pp. 124–25.

⁵ Boffey, "Proverbial Chaucer," pp. 46–47.

⁶ Crane, *Framing Authority*, p. 93.

play their wisdom to actually advise their sovereign; rather, "[t]he giving of such advice was . . . itself a sophisticated maneuver in the game of courtly power" maintaining the illusion of social mobility and allowing the monarch to avoid the appearance of tyranny.⁷

Eight Goodly Questions with Their Answers, Duodecim Abusiones, Prophecy, and Four Things That Make a Man a Fool each dispense conservative, proverbial advice that seems concerned with dissuading dissimulation and duplicity and reinforcing the social and cultural hierarchy. For instance, although some versions of *Four Things That Make a Man a Fool* and *Yis of the Same*, which weigh the relative dangers of women, honor, age, and wine, conclude with a misogynist sting, in this case the remedy for folly is "With thyne estate have humlythee" (line 14). *Eight Goodly Questions with Their Answers*, distinguished as the first item to appear in all the folio editions until the eighteenth century, consists of a series of pithy questions and answers about ideal social types ostensibly handed down by sage Greek philosophers. Skeat describes the poem as an expansion upon the first lines of Aesop's *Septem Sapientiam Sententiae Septem Versibus Explicatae*: "Quis dives? Qui nil cupiet, quis pauper? Avarus" ("Who is a rich man? He who has no desires. Who is a pauper? The avaricious man"). This Latin poem (ostensibly a simplistic summary of Aesop's *Ludus Sapientum*), extant in numerous medieval manuscripts, is now considered spurious.⁸ Similarly, *Duodecim Abusiones*, which some scholars attribute to Lydgate and which is known by several different titles (*Go Forth King, Advice to the Several Estates, Instructions to the Estates*) is derived from a popular Latin treatise used by medieval preachers called "On the Twelve Abuses" (*De duodecim abusis*) which "teaches morality" by discussing twelve social types "whose essential moral characteristics are concentrated in a single virtue that is expressed by its opposite."⁹ Wenzel describes this genre (which he classifies as a "Type A" complaint) as a type of versified lament "at the decay or disappearance or perversion of virtues." In this case, the primary complaint is the apparent widespread transgression of traditional estate-specific social expectations. Similarly, *Prophecy*, a snapshot of social chaos, was first printed by Caxton at the end of his 1478 edition of *Aesopus and Arius* — probably as what Boffey calls a "makeweight" or "programme filler" to utilize extra page space.¹⁰ Lesley A. Coote categorizes this type of poem, which lists four moral and social evils followed by a prophetic final couplet, as an example of the "world-upside-down formula" of the Thomas Erceldoune variety, noting that such simple prognostics share characteristics with moralizing discourse and acted as a "means of expressing fundamental beliefs about the relationship of king, people, and nation."¹¹ Although England's imminent ruin is predicted, because the poem chronicles how vices have become virtues, Wenzel classifies *Prophecy* as a type of complaint lyric ("Type B") that witnesses the evils of the age: "the old virtues have passed away, vices are now triumphant, what used to be prized highly is nowadays scorned, and the like."¹²

John Gower's *In Praise of Peace* and Stagan's *Moral Balade*, both in the tradition of advice to princes and both formally addressed to royalty, provide good examples of "the

⁷ Crane, *Frowning Authority*, p. 95.

⁸ See Shenkl, Appendix; and Green, *Works of Aesop*, pp. 674–76.

⁹ Wenzel, *Preachers*, p. 177.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Boffey, "Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics," p. 12.

¹¹ Coote, *Prophecy*, p. 237.

¹² Wenzel, *Preachers*, p. 182.

generous qualities of flattery, programmatic conciliation, wary evasion, and self-protective equivocation" that Paul Strohm finds "common to most advice-giving to medieval kings."¹³ Gower's *In Praise of Peace*, variously dated between the years 1399 and 1404, is addressed to Henry IV following his usurpation of Richard II in the fall of 1399. Gower begins by reiterating some of the official Lancastrian claims to the crown (divine election, hereditary right, popular sanction), heavily emphasizing the role of divine providence — rather than Lancastrian malfeasance — in Richard's deposition. The body of the poem — which contrasts the political benefits of peace with the social instability occasioned by wars of conquest — is a distillation or pastiche of themes explored more fully elsewhere in Gower's poetry, especially Book VII of the *Confessio Ansamtis*.¹⁴ Against the background of the Hundred Years' War with France and continuing hostilities with Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, Gower asserts that in the Christian era, rulers should be constrained to follow the law of charity, even in the absence of ecclesiastical example. Belligerent action is permissible in only two cases: to defend one's "rightful heritage" (lines 50–70) and against the Saracens, in the defense of the Church (lines 244–52); in the first case alluding obviously to Henry's usurpation of Richard II, and the second perhaps to his participation in the Lithuanian crusade. Given the lack of Church leadership and internecine warfare as a result of the Great Schism, it falls to secular rulers to follow natural law and reason in establishing and maintaining peaceful community. Gower closes with an encomium to Henry's pity, patience, and "pris" ("excellence" — line 3721) which he enjoins all men to commend.

R. F. Yeager suggests that *In Praise of Peace* represents the logical conclusion of a "pacifistic" trend that Gower adopted toward the end of his life, "in the doctrinal mode of Augustine, with its strong position against all but the most limited wars of defense."¹⁵ On the other hand, John Fisher reads the poem as a propagandistic justification for Henry's administration, reflecting Gower's role as "an apologist for the Lancastrian usurpation of Richard."¹⁶ In either case, Gower faced, as Frank Grady contends in a sophisticated reading of the numerous conventional exempla used to put forth his case, some "manifest contradictions" in addressing Henry IV on the theme of peace. Describing *In Praise of Peace* as "a poem of exasperation and a valediction to the mirror-for-princes genre" Grady argues that both the exempla (Solomon, Constantine, Alexander) and current events, including the numerous uprisings and rebellions at the beginning of Henry's reign, serve to undermine Gower's sanguine panegyric; Gower provides no "topical allusions" because "there simply wasn't much peace or pity to describe."¹⁷ As such, Gower's mirror for princes provides a good example of what Judith Fetterley calls the "dance of deference and delicate challenge" that marks the literature of counsel in the late Middle Ages.¹⁸

According to the scribe John Shirley, Scogan's *Moral Balade* is an occasional piece, reportedly written for the entertainment and edification of Henry IV's four sons, to be read at a supper at the house of a prominent citizen, Lewis John, and critics have imagined

¹³ Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p. 175.

¹⁴ See Peck, *Kingship*, pp. 142–59.

¹⁵ Yeager, *John Gower's Poetry*, p. 241.

¹⁶ Fisher, *John Gower*, p. 133.

¹⁷ Grady, "Lancastrian Gower," p. 572.

¹⁸ Fetterley, *Fictions of Advice*, p. 88.

similar privileged and convivial circumstances for Chaucer's own minor poems. Henry Scogan (1361?–1407) served in Richard II's household and later as tutor to the sons of Henry IV. He is perhaps best known to Chaucerians as the well-placed friend addressed in the *Envoy to Scogan*, and as part of the group of successful civil servants and courtiers who comprised the "inner circle" of Chaucer's original audience. Scogan's poem, chiefly valued by modern editors for its testimony to Chaucer's authorship of *Gentilesse*, which is quoted in full (lines 105–25), is marked by its modest and self-deprecating tone and by the thoroughly conventional and conservative nature of its advice. Expanding upon Chaucer's theme in *Gentilesse* — that the exercise of virtue is ennobling and that true nobility is derived from character, not birth — Scogan begins with a short prayer regretting his own misspent youth, then proceeds to urge the princes to cultivate virtue at an early age for both earthly honor and heavenly reward. Although Scogan does assert that even "folkes of poure degree" (line 89) have been set "in gret honnour" (line 90) through the exercise of virtue, the idea of "generositas virtus, non sanguis" ("nobility is virtue, not blood") is not necessarily democratic. The point is that those of high estate should, through the practice of a somewhat ill-defined "virtue," honor that station that God has conferred upon them. The consequence of sloth, which in this case seems to be set in opposition to virtuous "besynesse," is not simply a bad reputation but either divine retribution or, closer to home, loss of earthly prosperity: "Thenkthe also howe many a governour / Calde to estate hath offt be sette ful lowe / Thorugh misusing of right, and for error" (lines 93–95). Scogan provides only legendary and exemplary figures culled from Chaucer's Monk's Tale to support his case, but given the turbulence of their father's early reign, many contemporary examples would, no doubt, be close at hand. Indeed, A. J. Minnis wryly comments: "the sons of Henry IV would not have needed much reminding of what had happened to Richard II a few years earlier."¹⁸

THE TEXTS

In two cases there are no extant manuscripts so I have used the earliest print editions: *Eight Goodly Questions with Their Answers* (IMEV 3183) is from Thynne's 1532 edition, and *Duodecim Absucoes* (IMEV 920) is from Wynken de Worde's edition of Lydgate's *Temple of Glas* (London, 1498). Various versions of *Prophecy* (IMEV 3943) are extant in manuscript (see Robbins, "Chaucerian Apocrypha," 4.1292); I have used the text from Caxton's *Anelida and Arcite* (London, 1478), the text which was reprinted by later editors. *Four Things That Make a Man a Fool and Yit of the Same* (IMEV 3523 and 3521), which first appeared in Stow's 1561 edition, are based on Trinity College Cambridge R.3.20 (pp. 8–9) from which Stow derived his texts.

The text of Gower's *In Praise of Peace* (IMEV 2587) is a diplomatic transcription of British Library, MS Additional 59495, commonly called the Trentham Manuscript, fols. 5r–10v; I have supplied the variants found in Thynne's (Th)1532 text of the poem which is based on a different manuscript that is no longer extant. For a description of the contents of the Trentham Manuscript, see Macaulay (Mac), *Complete Works of John Gower*, l.bxxix–lxxxiii.

Scogan's *Moral Balade* (IMEV 2264) is extant in two manuscripts, A (Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 59, fols. 25r–28r) and H (British Library, MS Harley 2251, fols. 153v–156r).

¹⁸ Minnis, Scattergood, and Smith, eds., *Oxford Guide to Chaucer*, p. 485.

and two prints, by Caxton (*Temple of Brut*, c. 1477) and Thynne (*Worke*, 1532). A disordered fragment (10 discontinuous stanzas) is also found in FF (Cambridge University Library F.1.4.9, fols. 85r–86r); and Stow's copy of several lines from A is found in British Library, Harley 367, fol. 86b. I have based my text on A, correcting some of its obvious errors with readings from H. A transcription of A is available in Furnivall, ed., *Parallel-Text Edition of Chaucer's Minor Poems*, Part 3 (pp. 427–30). For a collation of Caxton's text and A, see Boyd, ed., *Chaucer according to William Caxton*.



FOUR THINGS THAT MAKE A MAN A FOOL, AND YET OF THE SAME.

A SEYING OF DAUN JOHAN

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Ther beothe four things that maketh man a fool:
Honour first putethe him in oultrace.
And alder next solytarye and sool;
The secound is unwelthy crooked aage;
Wymmen also bring men in dotage,
And mighty wyne in many dyvers wyse
Distempren folk wheche beon holden wyse. | <i>are</i>
<i>in <i>je</i> state off <i>intemperance</i></i>
<i>next; alone</i>
<i>infirm</i>
<i>different wayis</i>
<i>Impairs</i> |
| 5 | | |

YIT OF THE SAME

- Ther beon four things causing gret folye:
Honour first, and unwelde aage,
Wymmen am wyne, I dare eeke specefye,
Make wyse men fallen in dotage;
Wherfore, by counseyle of phylosofres saage,
In gret honour lerne this of me:
With thyne estate have humlytee.



EIGHT GOODLY QUESTIONS WITH THEIR AUNSWERS

- 1 Somtyme in Grece, that noble region,
There were eight clerkes of grete science,
Philosophers of notable discretion,
Of whom was asked, to prove their prudence,
5 Eight questions of derke intelligence;
To whiche they answered, after their entent,
As here dothe appere playne and evydent.
- The fyrt questyon: What erthly thyng
Is best, and to God moost commendable?
- 10 The first clerke answered without taryng:
"A mannes soule ever ferme and stable
In right, from trouthe nat varyable;
But nowe, alas, ful sore may we wepe,
For covetyse hath brought trouth a slepe."
- 15 The seconde: What thyng is moost odious?
"A double man," sayd the philosophre,
"With a virgyn face and a tayle venomous,
With a fayre vieu and a false profre;
A corrupte caryen in a golden coffour,
- 20 It is a monster in natures lynage.
One man to have a double vysage."
- The thirde: What is the best dower
That maye be to a wylfe appropriate?
- 25 "A clene lyfe," was the clerkes aunswere,
"Without synne, chast, and invyolate
From al disceytes and speches inornate,
Or countenaunce, whiche shal be to dispise:
No fyre make and no smoke wol aryse!"
- 30 The fourth questyon: What mayden may
Be called clene in chastyte?
- The fourth clerke answered: "Whiche abay
Every creature is ashamed on to lye,
Of whom every man reporteth great honeste;
- Once
learning
moral discernment*
- difficult subject matter
opinion*
- caused; to be neglected*
- innocent
offer
decayed corpse; coffin
family*
- dowry*
- pure*
- indecorous
conduct*
- to slander*

- Good maydens kepe your chastysé forthe,
And remembre that good name is golde worthe." *continuously*
- Who is a poore man, ever ful of wo?
"A covetouse man whiche is a nygon,
He that in his herte can never say 'ho';
The more good, the lesse distributyon,
The richer, the worse of condityon;
Men in this cost clepen him a nygarde;
Sir Guy the bribour is his stewarde." *misery*
stop
spending
condition
swindler; scoundrel
- Whiche is a riche man withouten fraude?
"He that can to his good suffyse,
Whatsoever he hath, he geveth God the laude,
And kepeth him clene from al covetyse;
He desyreth nothyng in ungodly wyse;
His body is here, his mynde is above;
He is a riche man, for God doth him love." *is able to be content with his prosperity*
given; praise
- Who is a foole, is the seventh demaunde.
"He that wolde hurte and hath no powere,
Myght he, mykel moche wolde he commaunde,
His malyce great, his myght noughe were;
He thretteth ful faste, ful lytel may he dere;
Thynketh nat howe men have sayd beforne:
God sendeth a shreude cowe a shorte horne!" *question*
very
threatens; injure
malicious
- Who is a wyse man, is the eight question:
"He that myght noye and dothe no noyance,
Myght punyshe and leaveth punyssion;
A man merciful without vengeance,
A wyse man putteth in remembraunce,
Sayeng, 'Had I venged al myne harme,
My cloke had nat be furred halfe so warme!'" *harm; injury*
avenged



EXPLANATORY NOTES TO *EIGHT GOODLY QUESTIONS*

- 19 *coffour*. This scribal emendation is found in the Bannatyne manuscript. Thynne reads *tree*. See Fox and Ringler, eds., *Bannatyne Manuscript*.
- 32 *to lyre*. Perhaps a double entendre suggesting both "to slander" and "to have intercourse with."
- 42 *Sir Gay*. This is either an idiomatic name for a swindler or is perhaps a reference to the villain Guy of Gisborne. In *Robin Hood and Gay of Gisborne*, Robin states, "Thou hast beene traytor all thy liffe, / Which thing must have an ende" (lines 165–66). The earliest extant version of this ballad dates from the seventeenth century, but the episode is thought to be based on a much older version. See Knight and Ohlgren, eds., *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*.
- 51 There is no indent in the print.
- 56 Proverbial; see Whiting G217 and C751.
- 58 There is no indent in the print.
- 62–63 *had I venged . . . furred halfe so warwe*. In other words, "had I spent all my energy avenging my injuries, I would not be half as prosperous."



DUODECIM ABUSIONES (THE TWELVE ABUSES)

*Rex sine sapientia.
Episcopus sine doctrina.
Dominus sine consilio.
Mulier sine castitate.
Miles sine probitate.
Judex sine justicia.
Dives sine elemosina.
Populus sine lege.
Senex sine religione.
Servus sine timore.
Pauper subterfugia.
Adolescens sine obedientia.*

*A king without wisdom
A bishop without doctrine
A lord without counsel
A woman without chastity
A soldier without honesty (i.e., honor)
A judge without justice
A rich man without pity (i.e., giving no alms)
A people without laws
An old man without religion
A servant without fear
An arrogant poor man
A youth without obedience*

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | Go forth kynge, rule thee by savyence.
Bysshop, be able to mymyster doctrine.
Lorde, to trewe counsell gyve audyence.
Womanhede, to chastyte ever enclyne. | wisdom |
| 5 | Knyght, lette thy dedes woeshyp determinye.
Be ryghtwyse juge, in savyng thy name.
Ryche, do almes lest thou lese blysse with shame. | <i>honor</i>
<i>impartial</i>
<i>works of charity</i> |
| 10 | People, obeye your kynge and the lawe.
Age, be thou ruled by good relygon.
Trewe servaunt, be dredful and kepe thee under awe.
And thou, poore, fye on presumpcyon.
Inobedyence, to youth, is utter destruccyon.
Remembre you howe God hath sette you, lo:
And do your parte as ye are ordeyned to, | <i>respectful</i>
<i>you fall!</i> |



NOTES TO *DUODECIM ABUSIONES*

- 1 Each of the twelve Latin abuses is remedied in the ME verses by the assertion of its opposite.
- 15 *God hath settē you.* In essence, the poem recommends the status quo of medieval estates theory. Every person has been assigned a place in society, and that position requires certain behaviors in order for the whole of the society to function properly.

 PROPHECY

- 1 Whan feyth faileth in prestes sawes,
And lordes hestes ar holden for lawes,
And robbery is holden purchas,
And lechery is holden solas,
5 Than shal the lond of Albyon
Be brought to grete confusyon.
- treachery
commands
legitimate acquisition
pleasure



NOTES TO PROPHECY

- 4 solas. Perhaps a double entendre, suggesting not only physical pleasure but also spiritual comfort.
- 5 Albion. Another name for Britain, derived from the Latin *albus* ("white"), alluding to the white appearance of the coastal cliffs. Appropriately, in Shakespeare's *King Lear* the Fool parodies the medieval prophecy:

When priests are more in word than matter;
When brewers mar their malt with water;
When nobles are their tailors' tutors;
No heretics burn'd, but wenches' sinners;
Then shall the realms of Albion
Come to great confusion . . .
This prophesy Merlin shall make, for I live before his time. (3.2.81-95)

For similar versions attributed to Merlin, see Dean, ed., *Medieval English Political Writings*.



JOHN GOWER, IN PRAISE OF PEACE

*Electus Christi, pie Rex Henrici, fisiisti,
Qui bene venisti cum propria regna petisti.
Tu mala vicisti que bonis bona restitueristi,
Et populo tristis nova gaudia contribueristi.
Est michi spes late quod adhuc per te renovata
Sacredent fato veteri probitate beata;
Est tibi nam grata gracia sponte data.¹*

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | O worthi noble kyng, Henry the ferthe,
In whom the glade fortune is befallen | <i>fourth</i>
<i>On; has befallen</i> |
| 5 | The poeple to governe uppon this erthe,
God hath thee chose, in comfort of ous alle; | <i>chosen</i> |
| The worchipe of this lond, which was doun falle,
Now stant uprighth thurgh grace of thi goodnesse,
Which every man is holde forto blesse. | <i>honor; had fallen down</i>
<i>stands</i>
<i>obliged</i> | |
| 10 | The highe God of His justice alone,
The right which longeth to thi regalie, | <i>royal status</i> |
| Declared hath to stonde in thi persone,
And more than God may no man justifie. | <i>uphold</i> | |
| Thi title is knowe uppon thi ancestrie,
The londes folk hath ek thy riht affirmed: | <i>adjudicate</i> | |
| So stant thi regne of God and man confermed. | <i>recognized</i>
<i>people of the land have also</i>
<i>your reign</i> | |
| 15 | Ther is no man mai seie in other wise
That God himself ne hath thi riht declared; | <i>say to the contrary</i> |
| Whereof the lond is boan to thi servise,
Which for defalte of help hath longe cared. | <i>has not</i> | |
| Bot now ther is no mannes herte spared | <i>By which; prepared for</i> | |
| 20 | To love and serve and wirche thi plesance,
And al is this thurgh Godes pourveiance. | <i>lack; grieved</i>
<i>man's heart</i>
<i>work</i>
<i>providence</i> |
| | In alle thing which is of God begonne | |

¹ *Pious King Henry, you were chosen by Christ, / Who rightfully came when you caught your own realms,
/ You conquered evils and restored property to good people, / And you bestowed new joys to a sorrowful people.
/ I have hope for what you have brought because what you have restored so far / Will raise up through honest
blessing what was said of old; / And for you, grateful thanks are given freely.*

- Ther folwith grace, if it be wel governed;
 Thus tellen thei whiche olde booke conne,
 Whereof, my lord, Y wot wel thow art lerned.
 Axe of thi God, so schalt thou nougnt be werned
 Of no requeste whiche is resonable;
 For God unto the goode is favorable.
- Kyng Salomon, which hadde at his axinge
 Of God what thing him was levest to crave,
 He ches wisdom unto the governyng
 Of Goddis folk, the whiche he wolde save:
 And as he ches, it fel him forto have;
 For thurgh his wit, whil that his regne laste,
 He gat him pees and reste unto the laste.
- Bot Alisaundre, as telleth his histoire,
 Unto the God besoughte in other weie:
 Of all the world to winne the victoire,
 So that undir his swerd it myght obeie.
 In werre he hadde al that he wolde preie;
 The myghti God behight him that beheste:
 The world he wan and had it of conqweste.
- Bot thogh it fel at thilke time so,
 That Alisandre his axinge hath achieved,
 This sinful world was al paiene tho,
 Was non which hath the hilfe God believed.
 No wondir was thogh thilke world was grieved:
 Thogh a tiraunt his pourpos myhse winne,
 Al was vengance and infortune of sinne.
- Bot now the feith of Crist is come a place
 Among the princes in this erthe hiere.
 It sit hem wel to do pitie and grace.
 Bot yit it mot be tempred in manere:
 For as thei finden cause in the matiere
 Upon the point, what afterward betide,
 The lawe of riht schal nougnt be leid aside.
- So mai a kyng of werre the viage
 Ordeigne and take, as he thereto is holde,
 To cleime and axe his rightful heritage
 In alle places wher it is withholde.
 Bot other wise if God himsilve wolde
 Afferme love and pes betwen the kynges,
 Pes is the beste, above alle erthely thinges.
- follow
know
Of which; I know
Ask; refused
- request
wished to ask for
choose
people, whom he would
choose, it came down [to] him to
reign lasted
won peace; until the end
- Alexander*
entreated
- might obey [him]
war
granted; promise
- happened at that
request
pagan then
high
then that
- misfortune
- into place
here
causes them (i.e., the princes)
moderation
- whatever [may] afterward occur
laid
- war; enterprise
- claim and ask [for]
withheld
- Peace

- Good is t'eschue werre, and natholes
A kyng may make werre uppon his right,
For of bataile the final ende is pees.
Thus stant the lawe, that a worthi knyght
Upon his trouthe may go to the fight;
Bot if so were that he myghte chese,
Betre is the pees, of which may no man lese.
- Sustene pes oughte every man alye:
First for to sette his liege lord in reste,
And ek these othre men that thei ne stryve,
For so this world mai stonden ate beste.
What kyng that wolde be the worthieste,
The more he myghte oure dedly werre cesse,
The more he schulde his worthinessse encresse.
- Pes is the chief of al the worldes welthe,
And to the Heven it ledeth ek the weie;
Pes is of soule and lif, the mannes helthe
Of pestilence, and doth the werre aweie.
My liege lord, tak hiede of that Y seie:
If werre may be left, tak pes on honde,
Which may noght be withoute Goddis sonde.
- With pes stant every creature in reste;
Withoute pes ther may no lif be glad;
Above alle othre good, pes is the besse;
Pes hath himself whan werre is al bestad;
The pes is sauft, the werre is ever adrad:
Pes is of al charite the keie,
Which hath the lif and soul forto weie.
- My liege lord, if that thee list to seche
The sothe essamples that the werre hath wroght,
Thow schalt wiel hiere of wisemennes specche,
That dedly werre turneth into noght;
For if these olde bokes be wel soght,
Ther myght thou se what thing the werre hath do,
Bothe of conqueste and conquerer also.
- For vein honour or for the worldes good,
Thei that whilom the stronge werres made,
Wher be thei now? Bethenk wel in thi mod,
The day is goon, the nyght is dierk and fade;
Her craulte, which mad hem thanne glade,
Thei sorwen now and yit have noght the more;
The blod is schad which no man mai restore.
- to avoid war*
- combat; peace*
- stands*
- honor*
- choose*
- lose*
- Keep [the] peace ought*
- also; they might not fight*
- cause*
- increase*
- From plague*
- take heed of what I say*
- ceased; in hand*
- God's dispensation*
- stand*
- bout (distress)*
- safe; afraid*
- key*
- weigh*
- wish to seek*
- true examples*
- shall will hear*
- turne [all things] into nothing*
- has done*
- vain; good (wealth)*
- once the great wars*
- Consider; mind*
- gone*
- Their cruelty*
- They regret*

- The werre is modir of the wronges alle:
 It sleth the prest in Holi Chirche at Masse,
 Forlith the maide and doth here flour to falle;
 The werre makth the grete citee lasse,
 110 And doth the Lawe his reules overpassee.
 There is no thing wherof meschef mai growe,
 Which is noght caused of the werre, Y trowe.
- The werre bringth in poverté at hise hieles,
 Wherof the comon poeple is sore grieved.
 115 The werre hath set his cart on thilke whieles
 Wher that Fortune mai noght be believed;
 For whan men wene best to have achieved,
 Ful ofte it is al newe to beginne:
 The werre hath no thing siker, thogh he winne.
- Forthi, my worthi princi, in Cristes halve,
 As for a part whos feith thou hast to guide,
 Leie to this olde sor a newe salve,
 And do the werre awei, what so betide.
 120 Pourchace pes and sette it be thi side,
 And suffre noght thi poeple be devoured;
 So schal thi name ever after stonde honoured.
- If eny man be now, or ever was,
 Agein the pes thi prevé counseillour,
 Lete God ben of thi counsel in this cas.
 130 And putte awei the cruel werreionur;
 For God, which is of man the creatour,
 He wolde noght men slowe His creature
 Without cause of dedly forfeiture.
- Wher nedeth most, behoveth most to loke:
 Mi lord, how so thi werres ben withoute,
 Of time passed who that hiede toke.
 Good were at hom to se riht wel aboute;
 135 For everemor the werste is forto doute.
 Bot if thou myghtest parfit pes atteigne,
 Ther schulde be no cause forto pleigne.
- Aboute a kyng good counsel is to preise
 Above alle othre things most vailable;
 Bot yit a kyng withinne himself schal peise,
 And se the thinges that ben resonable,
 140 And ther uppon he schal his wittes stable,
 Among the men to sette pes in evene,
 For love of Him which is the Kyng of Hevene.
- mother
days
Rapes; flower (virginity)
beu
transgres
I believe
- its heel
those wheel
assume; succeeded
certain
- Therefore; behalf
sore; remedy
whatever happens (i.e., regardless of cost)
Acquire
- Against; personal
*would not slay men kill
reason of; crime*
- it is necessary
although; external
herd
home
worst is to be uncertain
*perfect peace attain
complain*
- beneficial
consider
- establish
*to settle peace
(i.e., Christ)*

- Ha, wel is him that schedde never blod,
Bot if it were in cause of rihtwinesse;
150 For if a kyng the peril undirstod
What is to sle the poeple, thanne Y gesse,
The dedly werres and the hevynesse,
Wherof the pes distourbid is ful ofte,
Schulde at som time cesse and wexe softe.
- Ah, well
righteousness
say the people, then I suppose
grew soft
- 155 O kyng, fulfild of grace and of knyghthode,
Remembre upon this point for Cristes sake:
If pes be profred unto thi manhode,
Thin honour sauf, let it noght be forsake,
Though thou the werres darst wel undirtake;
160 Altir reson yit tempre thi corage,
For lich to pes ther is non avantage.
- full; nobility
offered
were did
temper; valor
no benefit
- My worthi lord, thenke wel, how so befallie,
Of thilke lore, as holi bokes sein:
Crist is the heved and we ben membres alle,
165 Als wel the subgit as the sovereign.
So sit it wel that charité be plein,
Which unto God himselfe most acordeth,
So as the lore of Cristes word recordeth.
- lesson
head; limbs
As well
complete
- In th'Olde Lawe, er Crist Himself was bore,
170 Among the Ten Comandementz Y rede
How that manslaghtre schulde be forbore;
Such was the will that time of the Godhede.
And afterward, whanne Crist tok His manhede,
Pes was the ferste thing He let do crie
175 Agein the worldes rancour and envie.
- Old Testament, before; born*
obtained from
achieved; humanity
against
- And er Crist wente out of this erthe hiere,
And stigh to hevene, He made His testament,
Wher He bequath to His disciples there
180 And gaf His pes, which is the foundement
Of charité, withouten whos assent
The worldes pes mai never wel be tried,
Ne love kept, ne lawe justefied.
- ascended
bestowed
gave; foundation
tested
- The Jewes with the païens hadden werre,
Bot thei among hemself stode evere in pes;
185 Whi schulde thanne oure pes stonde oute of herre,
Which Crist hath chose unto His oghne encres?
For Crist is more than was Moises,
And Crist hath set the parfit of the lawe,
The which scholde in no wise be withdrawe.
- pagans
themselves
out of kilter
benefit
perfection

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 190 | To give ous pes was cause whi Crist dide;
Withoute pes may no thing stonde availed;
Bot now a man mai sen on everi side
How Cristes feith is every dai assailed,
With the paiens destruid, and so batailed
That for defalte of help and of defence.
Unethe hath Crist His dewe reverence. | died
strong
see |
| 195 | pagans devastated; best
lack
Hardly | |
| 200 | The righte feith to kepe of Holy Chirche,
The firste point is named of knyghthode,
And everi man is holde forto wirche
Upon the point which stant to his manhode.
Bot now, helas, the fame is sprad so broode,
That everi worthi man this thing compleigneth,
And yit ther is no man which help ordeigneth. | principle
work
principle; attests to
also
appeal to
provides |
| 205 | attended to everywhere
fully | |
| 210 | The worldes cause is waited overal;
Ther ben the werres redi to the fulle.
Bot Cristes oghne cause in special,
Ther ben the swerdes and the speres dulle;
And with the sentence of the popes bulle
As forto do the folk paien obeie.
The chirche is turned al an other weie. | spear
pronouncement; edict
pagan folk |
| 215 | | |
| 220 | It is no wondre above a mannys wit,
Withoute werre, how Cristes feith was wonne;
And we that ben upon this erthe yit,
Ne kepe it noght as it was first begonne.
To every creature undir the sonne
Crist bad Himself how that we schulden preche,
And to the folk His evangile teche. | message |
| 225 | | |
| 230 | More light it is to kepe than to make;
Bot that we founden mad tofore the bond,
We kepe noght, bot lete it lightly slake.
The pes of Crist hath altobroke his bond;
We reste ourselve and soeffrim every lond
To selen ech other as thing undefendid:
To stant the werre, and pes is noght amendid. | easy; acquire
made beforehand
lesson
completely broken
allow
slay; not forbidden
established |
| 235 | | |
| 240 | Bot thogh the Heved of Holy Chirche above
Ne do noght al His hole businesse
Among the men to sette pes and love,
These kynges oughten of here righlinessse,
Here oghne cause among hemself redresce;
Thogh Petres schip as now hath lost his stiere,
It lith in hem that barge forto stiere. | Head (<i>i.e.</i> , Christ)

their righteousness
repair
Peter's ship (<i>i.e.</i> , the Church); rudder
falls to them; steer |

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| | If Holy Cherche, after the dueté
Of Cristes word, ne be noght al avyssed
To make pes, acord, and unité | duty |
| 235 | Among the kinges that ben now devised,
Vit natholes the lawe stant assised
Of mannys wit to be so resonable,
Withoutte that, to stonde hemselfe stable. | dividē
ordained |
| 240 | Of Holy Chirche we ben children alle,
And every child is holden forto bowe
Unto the modir, how that ever it falle,
Or elles he mot reson desalowe; | must; repudiate
first mother |
| 245 | And for that cause a knyght schal ferst avowe
The right of Holi Chirche to defende,
That no man schal the previlege offendre. | violate |
| | Thus were it good to setten al in evene,
The worldes princes and the prelatz bothe,
For love of Hims which is the King of Hevene;
And if men scholde algate wexe wrothe, | to settle calmly
prelates |
| 250 | The Sarazins, whiche unto Crist be lothe,
Let men ben armed agein hem to fighte,
So mai the knyht his dede of armes righte. | neverthelē; grew angry
are hateful
against
direct |
| | Upon thre pointz stant Cristes pes oppressed:
Ferst Holy Cherche is in hersilf divided,
Which oughſe of reson first to be redresced: | |
| 255 | Bot yit so highe a cause is noght decided.
And thus whan humble pacience is prided,
The remenant, which that thei schulden reule,
No wondir is though it stonde out of reule. | repaired
remnant
in disorder |
| 260 | Of that the heved is siek, the limes aken:
These regnes that to Cristes pes belongen,
For worldes good, these dedly werres maken,
Whiche helpples as in balance hongen: | Because; head, ake
reigns
worldly possessions |
| 265 | The heved above hem hath noght undifongen
To sette pes, bot every man sleth other,
And in this wise hath charité no brother. | undertaken
kills |
| | The two defaltes bringen in the thridde,
Of mescreantz, that sen how we debate;
Betwene the two thei fallen in amidde,
Wher now aldai thei finde an open gate. | failure; third
infidels
the middle |
| 270 | Lo, thus the dedly werre stant algate.
Bot evere Y hope of Kyng Henries grace,
That he it is which schal the pes embrase. | all day (i.e., always)
always |

- 275 My worthi noble prince and kyng enoight,
Whom God hath of His grace so preserved,
Beholde and se the world upon this point,
As for thi part, that Cristes pes be served;
So schal than highe mede be deserved
To Him which al schal qviten ate laste,
280 For this lif hiere mai no while laste.
- See Alisandre, Ector, and Julius,
See Machabeu, David, and Josue,
See Charlemeine, Godefroi, Arthus,
Fulfild of werre and of mortalit 
285 Here fame abit, bot al is vanit ;
For deth, which hath the werres under fote,
Hath mad an ende of which ther is no bote.
- So mai a man the sothe wite and knowe,
That pes is good for every king to have;
290 The fortune of the werre is evere unknowe,
Bot wher pes is, ther ben the marches save.
That now is up, to morwe is under grave;
The mighti God hath alle grace in honde,
Withouten Him pes mai nought longe stonde.
- 295 Of the tenetz to winne or lese a chace,
Mai no lif wite er that the bal be ronne;
Al stant in God what thing men schal pourchace:
Thende is in him er that it be begonne.
Men sein the wolle, whanne it is wel sponne,
300 Doth that the cloth is strong and profitable,
And elles it mai never be durable.
- The worldes chaunces upon aventure
Ben evere sett, bot thilke chaunce of pes
Is so behoveli to the creature,
305 That it above alle othre is piercels.
Bot it mai nought be gete, natheles,
Among the men to lasten eny while,
Bot wher the herse is plein withoute guyle.
- The pes is as it were a sacrament
310 Tofore the God, and schal with wordes pleine,
Withouten eny double entendement,
Be treted, for the trouthe can nought feine.
Bot if the men withinne hemself be veine,
The substance of the pes may nought be trewe,
315 Bot every dai it chaungeth uppon newe.
- anointed
attend to
your high reward
From; requite
- Judas Maccabaeus; Joshua
Godfrey [of Bouillon]*
- Too full
Their; abides
remedy
- truly recognize
- territories safe
- triumph
person; played out
receive
The end; before
say the wool; spun
serviceable
otherwise
- events; chance
opportunity
beneficial
pernicious
gotten
- sincere; guile
- before
meaning
dissent
deficient of virtue

	Bot who that is of charité parfit, He voideth alle sleigtes ferr awese, And sett his word uppon the same plit Wher that his herte hath founde a siker weie;	<i>perfect removes; schemes pledge secure</i>
320	And thus whan conscience is trewly weie, And that the pes be handlid with the wise. It schal abide and stonde in alle wise.	<i>weighted in all respects</i>
	Th' apostle seith ther mai no lif be good Which is noght grounded uppon charité, For charité ne schedde nevere blod; So hath the werre, as ther, no propriété.	<i>The apostle</i>
325	For thilke vertus, which is seid pité, With charité so ferforth is aweinted That in here may no fals semblant be peinted.	<i>called for her (pit) resemblance</i>
330	Cassodre, whos writinge is auctorized, Seith wher that pité regneth ther is grace, Thurgh which the pes hath al his welthe assised, So that of werre he dredeth no manace.	<i>Cassiodorus; trustworthy reigns secured</i>
335	Wher pité dwelleth, in the same place Ther mai no dedly cruelté sojorne, Wheroft that merci schulde his wei tornē.	<i>reside</i>
	To se what pité forth with mercy doth, The croniqe is at Rome, in thilke empire Of Constantin, which is a tale soth.	<i>further story true</i>
340	Whan him was levere his oghne deth desire Than do the yonge children to martire: Of crualté he lafte the querele; Pité he wroghte, and pité was his hele.	<i>would rather martyr cause remedy</i>
345	For thilke mannes pité which he dede, God was pitous and mad him hol at al; Silvestre cam, and in the same stede, Gaf him bapeisme first in special,	<i>did healthily altogether immediately</i>
350	Which disde awai the sinne original, And al his lepre it hath so purified, That his pité forever is magnified.	<i>leprosy exalted</i>
	Pité was cause whi this emperour Was hol in bodi and in soule bothe, And Rome also was set in thilke honour Of Cristes feith, so that the lieve of lothe,	<i>healthy</i>
355	Whiche hadden be with Crist tofore wrothe, Resceived were unto Cristes lore; Thus schal pité be preised evermore.	<i>enemies (disbelievers) before angry faith</i>

- My worthi liege lord, Henri be name,
Which Engelond hast to governe and righte,
Men ogheten wel thi pité to proclaime.
Which openliche, in al the worldes sighte,
Is schewed with the help of God almighty,
To give ous pes, which longe hath be debated,
Wherof thi pris schal nevere ben abated.
- 360
- My lord, in whom hath ever yit be founde
Pité, withoutte spot of violence.
Kep thilke pes alwei withinne bounde
Which God hath planted in thi conscience;
So schal the cronique of thi pacience.
370 Among the seintz be take into memoire,
To the loenge of perdurable gloire.
- 375
- And to thin erthli pris, so as Y can,
Which everi man is holde to commende,
I, Gower, which am al thi liege man,
This lettre unto thin excellency Y sende.
As Y, which evere unto my lives ende,
Wol pracie for the stat of thi persone
In worschipe of thi sceptre and of thi throne.
- 380
- Noght only to my king of pes Y write,
Bot to these othre princes Cristene alle,
That ech of hem his oghne herse endite
And see the werre er mor meschief falle;
Sette ek the rightful pope uppon his stalle,
Kep charité and draugh pité to honde,
385 Maintene lawe, and so the pes schal stonde.

Explicit carmen de pacis commendacione, quod ad laudem et memoriam serenissimi principis domini Regis Henrici quarti suus humilis orator Johannes Gower composuit.

[Here ends the poem on the praising of peace, which his humble orator, John Gower, composed for the praise and memory of that most august prince of the Lord, King Henry the Fourth.]

EXPLANATORY NOTES TO *IN PRAISE OF PEACE*

- 4 *God bath thee chose.* In the opening stanzas, Gower repeats some standard justifications for Henry's usurpation of Richard II: the good fortune of divine sanction, hereditary right, and popular consent. Compare Chaucer, *The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse*: "O conquerour of Brutes Albyon, / Which that by lyne and free eleccyon / Been verray kyng" (23–24). It is only later in the poem (see below, lines 50–70) that Gower alludes to the martial component of Henry's accession to the throne. On both Chaucer's and Gower's poems as examples of Lancastrian propaganda, see Strohm, "Saving the Appearances: Chaucer's *Purse* and the Fabrication of the Lancastrian Claim" (chapter 4 in *Hocken's Arrow*).
- 25 *thow art lerned.* On Henry IV's books, see Doyle, "English Books"; Meale, "Patrons, Buyers and Owners"; and Summerson, "English Bible."
- 29 *Kyng Salomon.* This is an abbreviated version of Solomon's career. Although in *CA* Solomon is initially lauded for his wisdom (7.3891–3942), he is nonetheless later denounced for violating chastity, the fifth principle of kingship, since his polygamy and promiscuity lead to idolatry and the division of his kingdom (*CA* 7.4469–4545).
- 36 *Alisaundre.* See the tale of Alexander and the Pirate (*CA* 3.2361–2480), in which a pirate convinces Alexander that the nature of their exploits differs only in degree. The tale concludes with the consequences of Alexander's tyranny: "Thus was he slain that whilom slowh" (*CA* 3.2461). Although in some versions of Book 7 Gower includes an exemplum showing Alexander's pity (*CA* 7.3168–3181), Porter ("Gower's Ethical Microcosm") argues that Gower's Alexander represents the failure to achieve "ethical self-governance."
- 50–70 In these three stanzas, Gower reiterates four times that war is permissible only when one must defend "the lawe of riht" (line 56) and one's "rightful heritage" (line 59), echoing the official Lancastrian rhetoric used to defend the "naked illegality" (Pollard, *Late Medieval England*, p. 25) of Henry's usurpation of Richard II; see Barron, "Deposition of Richard II."
- 66 *For of bataile the final ende is pees.* The notion is Augustinian in origin; see Yeager, "Pax Poetica."
- 107–08 *It sléth the prest . . . Forlith the maide.* See *CA* 5.2275–6. Macaulay points out several other echoes: line 78 (*CA* 5.2265), line 113 (*CA* 5.2294), line 115 (*CA* Prol.444), and line 155 (*CA* Prol.89).

- 174 *Pes was the ferste thing.* See Matthew 5:9: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God."
- 178 *bepoath to His disciples there.* See John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid."
- 250 Sarazins. Following an aborted attempt to aid Christians against Saracens in Africa, Henry did complete a campaign against the pagan Lithuanians in Prussia. See Du Boulay, "Henry of Derby's Expeditions." Although the crusade is here condoned as a legitimate outlet for chivalric belligerency, in C4 Genius condemns the activity as violating Christ's law of charity. See, for instance, 3.2481–2546 and 4.1679–81: "A Sarazin if I sle schal, / I sle the Soule forth withal, / And that was nevere Cristes lore."
- 254 *Holy Cherche is in hersilf divided.* A reference to the two papal courts — at Rome and Avignon — of the Great Schism, responsible, in Gower's view, for Lollardy and other heresies. See C4 Prol.528–498.
- 267 *The two defautes bringen in the thridde.* The first two faults or failures are the Great Schism (1378–1417) and the internecine wars between Christian powers; these lead to the third, the threat of non-Christians. In other words (line 260), the head is sick and the limbs ache, allowing the body of the Church to be attacked by either infidels or heretics.
- 281–83 The Nine Worthies, three pagan (Alexander, Hector, Julius Caesar), three Jewish (Judas Maccabeas, David, Joshua), and three Christian (Charlemagne, Godfrey of Boulogne, Arthur), are often cited as paragons of a transcultural nobility and chivalry, but also, as here, as exemplary victims of the power of transience and mortality. Godfrey of Boulogne, duke of Lorraine (1061–1100), was the leader of the First Crusade and king of Jerusalem (1099–1100). Judas Maccabeus (c. 2nd century BC), whose exploits are described in 1 and 2 Maccabees, led the Jewish revolt against the Hellenist Seleucids, restored the Temple, and established a period of self-rule.
- 295 *to winne or lese a chase.* In the medieval game of tennis, *chase* refers to the "second impact on the floor (or in a gallery) of a ball which the opponent has failed or declined to return; the value of which is determined by the nearness of the spot of impact to the end wall. If the opponent, on sides being changed, can 'better' this stroke (i.e., cause his ball to rebound nearer the wall) he wins and scores it; if not, it is scored by the first player; until it is so decided, the 'chase' is a stroke in abeyance" (*OED*). In other words, in tennis, as in life, the significance or meaning of a given action can be understood only in retrospect.
- 323 *Th'apostle.* St. Paul. See 1 Corinthians 13:1–13.
- 330 Cassiodorus. Cassiodorus was a sixth-century Roman statesman and monk. The reference is to his *Variarum Libri XII* (11.40). Also quoted in C4: "Cassodre in his apprise tellett, / The regne is sauf, wher pité duelleth" (7.3161–62). See further Jones, "Influence of Cassiodorus."

auctorized. On the textual, literary, and cultural connotations of this term, see Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, pp. 75–159, and Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, pp. 57–54.

- 337–57 This version of Constantine's conversion is given more fully in *CA* 2.3187–3496. As a cure for his leprosy, Constantine's physicians suggest that he bathe in the blood of young children, but the emperor is moved to pity by their mothers' grief. In a dream, he is directed by Peter and Paul to visit Silvester and after having been instructed in the basic tenets of Christianity, he is baptized. The "fishe skales" of his malady fall away and he orders the baptism — upon pain of death — of all of Rome. Genius tells his story in order to represent the efficacy of charity in combating envy. Grady notes that the sanitized version of Constantine's career found in *In Praise of Peace* is perhaps cleaned up "for the king's consumption" ("Lancastrian Gower," p. 569). On the different versions of Constantine current in the Middle Ages, see Webb, "Truth about Constantine."



TEXTUAL NOTES TO *IN PRAISE OF PEACE*

Macaulay emends British Library MS Additional 59495 in four cases. 1) He elides the final -e in the following imperative forms: *Leie*, line 122; *sette*, line 124; *Lete*, line 129; *putte*, line 130; *thene*, line 162; *Bekolde*, line 276. 2) He changes the possessive pronoun of the feminine singular (*here*, *her*) to the more regular form (*hire*, *hir*) at lines 108, 254, and 329. 3) He adds -e to adverbial *ever* and *never* (lines 89, 126, 127, 148, 181, 241, 301, 350, and 365). 4) For the sake of meter, he sometimes elides (*fatsen*, line 269; line 384) or adds (*highe*, line 8; *alle*, line 90; *wire*, line 336; *more*, line 382) a final -e. I have let stand the scribal peculiarities that Macaulay finds contrary to Gower's practice, although in the fourth case his emendations surely help the meter.

In Thynne's version (titled "John Gower unto the Noble and Worthy Kynge Henry the Fourth"), the Latin epigraph is placed at the end of the poem, followed without a break by the Trentham version of Gower's Latin poem *Quicquid homo scribat*.

ABBREVIATIONS: see pp. 122-23.

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1 | worthi noble. Th: noble worthy. |
| 3 | upon this. Th: <i>here upon</i> . |
| 4 | chase. Th: <i>chassen</i> . |
| 16 | thi. Th: <i>the</i> . |
| 17 | boun. Th: <i>bounde</i> . |
| 21 | is this. Th: <i>this is</i> . |
| 27 | whiche. Mac: <i>which</i> , from Th. |
| 30 | to. Th omits. |
| 31 | the. Th omits. |
| 35 | unto the. Th: <i>in to his</i> . |
| 36 | histoire. Th: <i>storie</i> . |
| 38 | victoire. Th: <i>victorie</i> . |
| 39 | it. MS: <i>itt</i> , with the second t canceled. |
| 42 | he. Th omits. |
| 45 | paine. Th: <i>paynem</i> . |
| 54 | as. Th omits. |
| 71 | Sustene. So Mac. MS: <i>S</i> , followed by an erasure. Th reads <i>To stene</i> .
every man alyne. Th: <i>everiche on lyre</i> . |
| 74 | world mai stondew. Th: <i>lande may stande</i> . |
| 93 | that. Th: <i>what</i> . |
| 96 | sought. Th: <i>ysought</i> . |
| 121 | to. Th: <i>be</i> . |

- 144 *ben.* Th: *be.*
 153 *the.* Th omits.
 155 *and of.* Th: *of.*
 164 *ben.* Th: *be.*
 165 *the.* Th: *be.*
 173 *And.* Th: *But.*
 175 *Alein.* Th: *Ayein.*
 177 *stigh.* Th: *stighed.*
 183 *paines.* Th: *paysyns.* See also line 194.
 185 *herre.* Th: *ere.*
 200 *which.* Th: *that.*
 202 *worthi.* Th omits.
 203 *ther is.* Th: *is there.*
 which. Th: *that.*
 205 *ben.* Th: *be.*
 209 *paines.* Th: *payne.*
 211 *to.* Th omits.
 a. Th: *any.*
 215 *ben.* Th: *be.*
 216 *how.* Th omits.
 219 *the.* Th omits.
 223 *slen.* Th: *slee.*
 227 *men.* Th: *people.*
 238 *hemselfe.* Th: *him selfe.*
 246 *selfen.* Th: *sette.*
 250 *he.* Th: *hen.*
 251 *ben.* Th: *be.*
 agrin. Th: *ayen.*
 254 *it.* Th omits.
 263 *helpples.* Th: *helpplesse.* Mac: *helpeles.*
 265 *deft.* Mac: *deeth,* from Th.
 272 *Kyng.* Mac: *King,* from Th.
 278 *this.* Th: *thy.*
 283 *Arthur.* Th: *asaf A.*
 288 *mai.* Th: *may.*
 291 *ben.* Th: *is.*
 294 *pes.* Th: *men.*
 305 *it.* Th: *is.*
 is. Th omits.
 306 *be gete.* Th: *begete.*
 313 *be.* Th: *ben.*
 321 *the pes.* Th: *these.*
 331 *regneth.* Mac: *reigneth,* from Th.
 ther. Th omits.
 342 *crualté.* MS: *y* inserted between *t* and *e* by later hand.
 356 *were.* So MS, Th. Mac emends to *were:* "However the case may be with
 Chaucer, there is no instance elsewhere in Gower of elision prevented by

caesura. The cases that have been quoted are all founded on mis-readings" (3,554).

- 360 *ahten*. Th: *aught*.
364 *schal*. So MS. Mac: *shal*, from Th.
371 *loenge*. Th: *legende*.
378 *ef*. Th omits.
382 *ser*. Stow: *seare*.



SCOGAN'S MORAL BALADE

Here folowethe nexst a moral balade to my lord the Prince, to my lord of Clarence, to my lord of Bedford, and to my lorde of Gloucestre, by Henry Scogan, at a souper of feorthe merchande in the Vyntre in London, at the hous of Lowys Johan.

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | My noble sonnes and eke my lordes dere. | <i>also</i> |
| | I, youre fadre called, unwoorthely, | <i>father</i> |
| | Sende unto yowee this balade following here, | |
| | Writen of myne owen hande ful rudely; | <i>unskillfully</i> |
| 5 | Yitte howe it be that I not reverently | |
| | Have wriuen to yowre estates, yet I yowe prey, | <i>group [of high rank]
error (ignorance)</i> |
| | That myne unkonyng yee take benignely | |
| | For Goddes sake, and herkyne what I seye. | <i>listen to</i> |
| 10 | I compleye sore whane I remembre me | <i>grieve</i> |
| | The sodeyne age that is upon me falle; | |
| | More I compleyne my mispent juventé, | <i>mourn; youth</i> |
| | The whiche is impossible ageine to calle; | |
| | But comunely, the mosite compleynte of alle | <i>commonly</i> |
| | Is foreto thenke that I have beon so nyce, | <i>It is to think; been so ignorant</i> |
| 15 | And that I wolde no vertue to me calle | |
| | In al my youthe, but vyces ay cheryce. | <i>always cherished</i> |
| 20 | Of whiche I aske mercy of Thee, Lord, | |
| | That art Almighty Lorde in Mageste, | |
| | Byseching Thee to make so even acorde | <i>agreement</i> |
| | Bytwene Thee and my soule, that vanytee | |
| | Of worldely louste ne blynde prosperitee | <i>but (pleasure) nor
foul</i> |
| | Have no lordship over my fleshe so frell: | <i>perfect
health</i> |
| | Thou Lord of reste and parfite unitee, | |
| | Puite fro me vyce and kepe my soules heel. | |
| 25 | And gif me might, while I have lyf and space, | <i>give; time</i> |
| 28 | Me to confourme fully to thy plesaunce; | <i>satisfaction (see note)</i> |
| | Shewe upon me th'abundance of thi grace; | |
| | In gode werkis graunte me perseveraunce; | <i>good</i> |
| | Of al my youthe forgete the ignorance; | |
| 30 | Gyf me gode wille to serve Thee ay to qweme; | <i>always properly</i> |

- Sette ay my lyff aftir Thy governaunce,
And able me to mercy or Thou deeme.
enable; judge
- My lordes dere, why I this compleinte wryte
To yowe, alle whome I love entierely,
Is for to warne yowee, as I cane endyse,
That tyme eloste in yowthe solely,
Greventhe a wight goostely and bodely.
I mene hem that to vyses list t'entende;
Therfore I prey you lordes tendrely,
Youre youthe in vertue shapethe to dispende.
*prescribe
lost; foolishly
person spiritually
choose to be inclined to
spend*
- Plantethe the roote of youthe in suche a wyse
That in vertue youre growing beo aboeye;
Looke ay, goodenesse beo in youre exercysse,
That shal you mighty make, at eche assaye,
For to withstande the feonde at eche affraye;
Passe the wisely this paraillous pilgrymage;
Thenke on this worde and use it every daye:
That shal yowee gif a parfyte floured age.
*be
fiend; attack
prosperous*
- ~~xx~~ Take the heede alsoo, howe that theos noble clerkis
Wrote in their bookis of noble sapience,
~~xx~~ Seying that feythe is ded withouten werkis;
So is estate withoute intelligence
Of vertue; therfore, with diligence,
Shapethe of vertue so to plantethe the roote,
That yee thereof have ful exparience,
To worship of youre lyf and soules boote.
*(see note)
wisdom
(see note)
noble rank
honor; benefit*
- Thenkethe also that lordshipe ne estate,
Withoute vertue, may not longe endure;
Thenkethe also how vices and vertue at debate
Have beon, and shal, whiles the worlde may dure;
And ay the vicyous, by aventure,
Is overthowen; and thenkithe evermore
That God is lorde of vertue and figure
Of alle godenes: loke that yee folowee His lore.
*high rank
in opposition
embodiment
teaching*
- My maistre Chaucier, God his soule have,
That in his langage was so curyous,
He saide that the fader, nowe dede and grave,
Beqwathe nothing his vertue with his hous
Unto his sone; therfore, laborious
Aught you to beo, beseeching God of grace,
To geve you might for to be virtuous,
Thorugh which yee might gete part of His feyre place.
*skillful
buried
bestow
give*

- Here may yee see that vertuous noblesse
 Comthe not to yowe of youre auncestrye,
 But it comthe thorough leofful besynesse,
 Of honeste lyff, and nought of slougarderye;
 Wherfore, in youthe, I rede you edefye
 The hous of vertue in soo wyse manere,
 That in youre age it may you kepe and guye
 Frome the tempete of worldly wawes here.
- Thenkethe how bytwene vertue and estate
 There is a perfite blessed mariage:
 Vertue is cause of pees, vycy of debate
 In mannes soule; for whiche, with full corage
 Cherissmeth the vertue, vycy to outrage,
 Dryveth awe, let hem have no womynng
 In youre soules; leese not the heritage
 Whiche God hath give to vertuous living.
- Takethe heede also howe folkes of poure degree
 Thorughe vertue have be sette in gret honnour,
 And ever have lyved in gret prosperitee
 By cherisshinge of vertuous labour;
 Thenkthe also howe many a governour
 Calde to estate hath oft be sette ful lowe
 Thorughe misusing of right, and for errorur;
 Therfore, I counsayle yowe vertue to knowe.
- By auncestrye thus may yee no thing clayme,
 As that my maistre Chaucier dothe expresse,
 But temporell thinge that man may hurte and maymene:
 Thane is Gode stocke of vertuous noblesse.
 And sithe that He is Lord of blessednesse,
 That made us alle and for mankynde that dyed,
 Folowe His vertue with full besynesse,
 And of this thinge herke howe my maistre seyd:
- "The first fader and foundour of gentylesse,
 What man that claymethe gentlefe for to be,
 Moste felowe heos traas and alle heos wittes dresse,
 Vertue to swwe and vyses for to flee;
 For unto vertue longethe dignytee,
 And nought the reverse, savelly dar I deeme,
 Al were he moytre, croune, or dyademe.
- "This first stocke was grounde of righwysnesse,
 Truwe of his worde, sobur, pitous, and fre,
 Clene of his gooste, and loved besynesse.
- proper
illness
Therefore; advise
- guide
wises
- noble rank
- conflict
- expel
away; dwelling
inheritance
- high office
judgment
- Therefore God is the source*
- diligence
listen to
- (see note)
- line
pursue
- Whether he wear miter
- righteousness
generous
spirit

- 115 Ageinst the vice of slouthe, in honestee;
 And but his heyre love vertue as did he,
 He nys not gentyle, thaugh he him ryche seeme,
 Al were he mytre, crowne, or dyademe.
- 120 "Vyce may wele be an heyre til olde richchesse,
 But there may noman, as thou maist wele se,
 Beqweythe his heyre his vertuous noblesse;
 That is appropred unto no degree,
 But to first fadre in magestee
 That mathe his heyre him that wol him qweme,
 Al were he mytre, crowne, or dyademe."
- 125 Loo here, this noble poete of Brettayne
 Howe hyely he, in virtuous sentence.
 The losse in youthe of vertue can compleyne;
 Wherfore, I prey yow, doothe youre diligence,
 For youre estates and Goddes reverence,
 T'enprynte vertue fully in youre mynde,
 That whane yee come into youre juges presence.
 Yee be not sette as vertuelesse byhinde.
- 130 For yee lordes, of coustume nowe adayes,
 Thaugh one of you here of a gode matere,
 Youre unsure youthe is of so fals alayes,
 That of suche artes you list not to here,
 But as a shipp that is withouten stere,
 Dryveth up and douse, withouten variaunce,
 Weomng the calme wol laste yeere by yeere,
 Right so fare yee, thorghue veray ignoraunce.
- 135 For verray shame, knowe yee not, by raisoun,
 That after an ebbe there comethe a flode rage?
 Right even so, whane youthe passethe his saysoun,
 Comethe crooked and unweldy palled age:
 Soone after that komthe kalendes of dotage;
 And of youre youthe no vertue have provyd,
 Alle folke wol seye: "Eye on youre vasellage!"
 Thus hathe youre youthe and slouthe you al misgyded.
- 140 Boece, that clerk, as men may rede and see,
 Seythe in his Booke of Consolacyoun
 What man desyreteth to have of vyne or tree
 Plenty of fruyt in the riping saysoun,
 Most ay eschewe to doone oppressioune
 Unto the roote whylest it is yonge and grene;
- heir
(see note)
appropriated to no rank
makes; please
- expression*
lament
- To imprint*
- custom
alloying
desire; bear
rudder
- Assuming*
- raging*
- infirm; impaired*
comes the beginning
- knightly behavior*
loth
- Borbois*

- Yee may wele see by this conclusioune,
That youthe vertulesse dothe ay michil teene. much harm
- Sithe, there ageinst, that vertuous noblesse
Rooted in youthe, with goode perseveraunce,
Dryveth awaye al vyce and wretchednesse,
Al slogardrye, al ryots, and dispence; *Since, on the contrary*
160 Seothe eke howe vertue causethe suffisaunce,
And suffisaunce exylethe coveityse:
Thus who hathe vertue hathe gret habondaunce
165 Of wele, als far as raison can devyse. well-being
- Takethe heede of Julius Hastilius,
That came frome povertee to hye degré
Thorugh virtue; eke redethe of Julius
The conquerour, howe poure a man was he;
170 Vitte thorughis vertue and humanyté,
Of many a lande hadde he the governance:
Thus vertue bringethe unto gret degree
Eche wight that list do to him attendaunce.
- Rede there ageine of Nero vertulesse,
Takethe heede also of proude Baltasare; Baltasar
They hated vertue, equytee, and pees. justice
Looke howe Anthyocus fel frome his chare,
That he his skyn and also heos boones notare; chariot
175 Looke what meschaunces they hadde for theire vices!
Who so that wil not by theos signes beware,
I dare wele seye infortunat or nyce is. foe
- I cane more, but hereby may yee se,
Howe vertue causethe perfyte sikurnesse, ignorant
And vyces done exyle prosparitee;
180 The beste is eche to cheesen, as I gesse.
Dothe as yow list, I me excuse expresse; openly
I wil be sorwe if that yee mischeese.
God you conferme in vertuous goodnesse,
So that thorugh negligence yee nothing leese. lame



EXPLANATORY NOTES TO SCOGAN'S MORAL BALADE

- Before 1 The heading from Ashmole 59 contextualizes this piece as an occasional poem, sent to and read at a supper of the Merchants' Guild in the Vintry, in the presence of the four sons of Henry IV when they were teenagers. John was not created duke of Bedford until 1415; the other sons are Henry ("my lord the Prince"), Thomas (duke of Clarence), and Humphrey (duke of Gloucester). Skeat, who dates the poem c. 1406–07, probably correctly suspects that the biographical information was supplied by the scribe John Shirley, who is well-known for his personalized, chatty marginal notes. See Connolly, *John Shirley*, pp. 145–69.
- On Henry Scogan, see Farnham, "John (Henry) Scogan"; Kittredge, "Henry Scogan"; and Hallmundsson, "Chaucer's Circle."
- fœrthe merchandise*. The fourth meeting of merchants or the fourth of four quarterly meetings of the guild (Skeat, *Chaucerian*, p. xlvi).
- Lewis John*. Connolly describes the Welshman Lewis John, Esquire, who, among other things, served as steward to Henry IV's dowager queen, Joan of Navarre, and as chief butler under Henry V, as a "protégé of Thomas Chaucer" (John Shirley, p. 137). See Carr, "Sir Lewis John."
- 26 **¶ Latin marginalia:** *Delicta juventutis meæ et ignoranciam meam ne memineris me domine* ["Lord, do not remember the sins of my youth and my idiocies"].
- 49 **¶ Latin marginalia:** *nota per Shirley* ["written by Shirley"].
- 51 **¶ Latin marginalia:** *fides sine operibus nihil est* ["Faith without works is nothing"], from James 2:17: "So faith also, if it have not works, is dead in itself."
- 67–68 *He saide that the fader . . . Bequathe nothing.* The sentiment is found in both Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale (CT III[D]1121–22), and Gentilese (lines 16–18).
- 97 *By auncstrye thus may yee no thing clayme.* The quotation is from Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale (CT III[D]1131–32): "For of oure eldres may we no thyng clayme / But temporel thyng, that man may herte and mayme."
- 105 **¶ Latin marginalia:** "Geffrey Chaucer made theos thre balades next that followen." The poem is Chaucer's *Gentilese*, which touches upon one of Chaucer's favorite Boethian themes: that nobility depends upon character, not birth. See also the "pillow sermon" in The Wife of Bath's Tale (CT III[D]1111–76).

- 112 *first stocke*. Variously interpreted by Chaucerians as referring to a first human ancestor, to the first generation of nobles, to Adam, or to God. Scogan explicitly chooses a genealogical source of virtue: "Thane is Gode stocke of vertuous noblesse" (line 100). See Allen, "Firste Stok."
- 119 *richkesse*. The doubling of the double consonant is a habit of the scribe, John Shirley.
- 121 **¶ Latin marginalia** (in later hand): *Nam genas et pressas et quae non fecimus ipsi fix ea nostra voco* ["For race and ancestors and whatever we ourselves have not made, those things I scarcely call ours"].
- 150 *Bocer*. Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (c. 480–524). The allusion appears to be to *Lme.6.11–15*, which, in Chaucer's translation of *Bocer* reads:
- Yif thou desirest or wolt usen grapes, ne seek thou nat with a glotonos hand the streyne and presse the stalkes of the vyne in the first somer sesoun; for Bachus, the god of wyn, hath rather yven his yiftes to autumpane (*the latterende of somer*).
- 162 *virtue canuethe suffisaunce*. This is ultimately a Boethian notion. See *Consolation of Philosophy* 3.pr.9–11.
- 166 *Tullius Hostilius*. Tullius Hostilius (675–42 BC), the legendary third king of Rome popularly known for his humble origins and his charity to the poor. Also cited in Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale (*CT III[D]1165–67*): "Thenketh hou noble, as seith Valerius, / Was thilke Tullius Hostilius, / That out of povertie roos to heigh noblesse."
- 168–79 *eke redethe . . . what meuchances they hade*. Scogan no doubt culled his exemplary figures — Julius Caesar (line 168), Nero (line 174), Balthasar (line 175), and Antiochus (line 177) — from Chaucer's Monk's Tale. Compare, for instance, Scogan's description of Antiochus (lines 177–78) to Chaucer's: "For he so score fil out of his char / That it his limes and his skyn totar" (*CT VII[B²]2610–11*).



TEXTUAL NOTES TO SCOGAN'S MORAL BALADE

Skeat's text of the poem is based on Thynne, with some variants supplied from Caxton, A, and H. H lacks the text of Gentilese; I have based my text on A, correcting some of its obvious errors with readings from H. Since the texts of H and Ff are not readily available, I have provided their significant variants here.

ABBREVIATIONS: see p. 120-21.

- 1-8 Ff omits.
 called. H omits.
 balade folowing. H: *listel tretice*.
 ful. H omits.
 Fiftē hour. H: *Although*.
 estates. H: *estate*.
 get. H omits.
 That. H omits.
 yeo take. H: *takith*.
8 *herbyne*. H: *herk*.
9 *sore*. Ff: *me sore*.
10 *is upon me*. Ff: *uppon me is*.
11 *juuentē*. H: *pong age*.
13 *commonly*. H, Ff: *certainly*.
14 *beon*. H: *be*.
15 *And*. H, Ff omit.
 wolde. Ff: *ne wolde*.
 no. H: *never no*.
 to. H: *un to*.
17 *I aske*. H: *youth* (error).
 of. Ff: *to*.
18 *lorde*. H, Ff: *god*.
20 *Byfornne*. H: *beforid*.
 Thee. Ff: *me*.
21 *ne*. H: *nor*; Ff: *and*.
 blynde prosperite. Ff: *parfide myle* (error).
22-23 Ff omits.
24 *tyte*. H: *tyees*.
25 *lyf*. H: *tyme*.
27 *me*. A: *thee* (error).

- 29 Of. FF: *In.*
 forgette. FF: *to f.*
 or Thou. FF: or that you.
 lordes. FF: masters.
 alle whome. H: whiche that; FF: which.
 eloste. H: lost.
 vyses last t'. FF: lutes and vyses.
 Therefore. H: Wherfor; FF: Wherefore syrs.
 lordes tendrely. H: lordis especially; FF: specially.
 Plantethe. FF: And p.
 vertue . . . beo. H: vertu you're growyng be.
 ay. H: alway.
 make. FF: makyn.
 For to withstande . . . affraye. H: *The fiende for to withstand and his affray;* FF
 omits for.
 use it. H: werke it; FF: worsheth.
 That. H: And that.
 you. H omits.
 keede also. H: also keede; FF: kede.
 wrote. H, FF: writes.
 noble. H, FF: grete.
 estate. H: eche estate.
 withoute intelligence. H: with negligence.
 FF transposes with 129.
 54–56 FF transposes with 131–33.
 56 yours. H omits.
 57–88 FF transposes with 134–65.
 57 ne. H: nor.
 59 Thenkethe also. H: *Thynk eke.*
 vertue. H: vertues.
 whiles. H: while.
 been. H: be.
 alle. H omits.
 loke that yee folowor. H: therfor folowith.
 Chaucier. H: Chaucier; FF: Chancer.
 language. FF: longe age.
 He. H omits.
 that. H, FF omit.
 now. H, FF: that is.
 nothing. FF: not.
 Unto his sonne; therefore. FF: *Therefore every wy ??? to be.*
 69 beseching. H: seekyng.
 FF transposes with 102.
 71 for. H omits.
 72 feyre. H omits.
 FF transposes with 104.
 73 Here. H: *Here by.*

- 74 *of you're*. H: *by wey of*.
 76 *of*. H: *be*.
 78 *too wyse*. H: *sache a*.
 80 *wisnes*. H: *welthins*.
 85 *virtue*. H: *the vertus*.
 86 *tyce*. H: *the tyces*.
 86 *sav*. H: *kyn away*.
 87 *leese*. H: *leseth*.
 88 *give*. H omits (error).
 89–93 FF transposes with 65–9.
 89 *Takethe*. H: *Take*.
 90 *folkes*. H: *men*.
 91 *posse*. H: *you're*.
 92 *By*. H: *Thergh*.
 94 *Oiff*. H omits.
 95 FF transposes with 102.
 95 *for*. H: *af*.
 96 FF transposes with 71.
 96 FF transposes with 104.
 97 *By auncestrye thus may yee*. H: *Thus by you're auncestriss ye may*.
 98 *my*. H omits.
 99 *Chaucier*. H: *Chaucer*.
 100 *dothe*. H: *sayde*.
 102 *That*. H: *And*.
 102 *monkynde that*. H: *as al*.
 103 FF: *Berychynge kyn oft that for us all dyed*.
 103 *his*. H: *kyn in*.
 105–25 H omits.
 120 *se*. A: *seeme* (error).
 127 *ke*. H omits.
 128 *loue*. A: *leese*.
 129 *Wherfore*. H: *Therfor*; FF: *Wherfore syn*.
 130 *estates*. H: *estate*.
 131 *Temprysde*. FF: *To plant*.
 132 *into*. FF: *in*.
 134 *For*. H omits; FF: *But*.
 135 *lordes*. FF: *yonge men*.
 135 *of costome*. H, FF: *have a maner*.
 136 *of you here of a gode*. H, FF: *shewe you a vertuous*.
 136 *souure youthe*. H: *fervent loue*; FF: *fervent youthe*.
 137 *Sache artes*. H, FF: *that art*.
 138 *hat not*. H, FF: *have no joy*.
 139 *seruiance*. H, FF: *governance*.
 140 *calme*. A: *worlde*.
 141 *laste peere*. H: *laste*.
 142 *not, by*. FF: *not*.
 143 *there*. H, FF omit.

- rage. H, Ff: *full rage*.
 144 *Right even so*, H, Ff: *In the same wise*.
 his, H omits.
 145 *crooked*, H: *febilous*.
 146 *Soone after that*, H, Ff: *And sone after*.
 halendes, H, Ff: the *k*.
 147 *And of youre*, H: *And if*; Ff: *If ye in*.
 148 *Alle folke*, H: *Thanne men*; Ff: *All men*.
 149 *youthe and slouthe you al misyded*. H: *youth from worslyp you devided*; Ff: *slouthe
 from worslyp you devided*.
 150 *that*, H, Ff: the.
 Boece, H: *Boys*.
 153 *Plenty of*, H, Ff: *Plentynous*.
 155 *whylest*, H, Ff: *while*.
 156 *Yee may usele*, Ff: *Thus may ye*.
 157 *ay michil*, H, Ff: *moche*.
 158 *Sithke, therre agenist, that*, H, Ff: *Seeth here agayn how*.
 161 *Al*, H, Ff: *As*.
 al ryot, H, Ff: *riot*.
 163 H omits (error).
 164 *Thus who*, H: *And who so*.
 gret, H, Ff: *al*.
 167 *came frome povertie*, H: *from povertie cam*.
 168 *eke redethe*, H: *redich eke*.
 169 *posure*, A: *a posure* (error).
 171 *lende*, H: *contre*.
 the, H omits.
 172 *unis*, H: *us to* (error).
 173 *do to*, H: *to do*.
 174 *of*, A: *to*.
 175 *heede also*, H: *also heede*.
 177 *Looke*, H: *Lo*.
 178 *That*, H: *There*.
 also her, H omits.
 totare, H: *altotare*.
 179 *mechamcer*, H: *mychamcer*.
 180 *that*, H omits.
 181 *is*, H: *he is*.
 182 *more*, H: *no more*.
 hereby, H: *here*.
 184 *done exyle*, H: *exiles al*.
 185 *eche to cheesen*, A: *dethe to cheesen*; H: *to chese*. I follow Skeat's emendation.
 186 *Dothe as youre*, H: *Do ye as ye*.
 me, H: *syn* (error).
 187 *wil*, H: *wolde*.
 188 *you conferme*, H: *conferme you*.

 EPIGRAPH

A BALADE IN THE PRAISE AND COMMENDACION OF
MASTER GEFFRAY CHAUSER FOR HIS GOLDEN ELOQUENCE

- 1 Maister Geffray Chaucer, that now lieth in grave,
The noble rhetoricon and poet of Great Bretaine,
That worthy was the laurer of poetry to have,
For this, his labor, and the palme to attein,
5 Whiche first made to dystil and reine
The gold dewe dropes of speche and eloquence,
Into English tong through his excelence.
- who now lies in this grave
laurer

From John Stow's *Workes of Geffrey Chaucer*, 1561 (fol. 337v). These seven lines served as an envoy to Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* in both Trinity College, Cambridge MS R.3.19 and British Library, MS Harley 7333. The extract from John Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady* (2. 1628-34). Described by Walter Skeat as "a poor imitation of the style of Lydgate" (Chaucerian, p. 554).

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 GLOSSARY

actual real; vigorous	degre social rank; stage
affiaunce confidence, trust	demaunde question
afore before	demen to judge
agayn, ayein against	dispute discuss
and if, even if	dotage folly; sensibility; infatuation
anon immediately	dryry sorrowful, sad
aspac promptly	duren to last, to remain
avisement careful consideration	
ay(e) constantly, all the time; always	
baiten to feed	eft again, once more; after
balad(e) a poem or stanza in rhyme royal	ek(e) also; moreover
be by, through	er before
besy diligent, attentive; anxious	ese comfort; pleasure; benefit
bidden to ask; pray; demand	estat(e) rank; condition
bidem to stay, remain	expresse certainly; clearly
biteden to happen, come to pass	
bill a petition, letter, prayer	fayne (adv.) gladly
careful sorrowful; miserable, troubled	feinem to invent; disguise; dissemble
chere attitude; expression; behavior;	feint exhausted
mood; countenance	flour(e) flower; model, paragon
chesse to choose	for because, because of; since
clene pure; bright; splendid	forby past
comlynnesse fairness	forthly therefore
commendable worthy of admiration	forsto to
conceite idea; mental ability	fre gracious; generous
connyngly skillfully	fro from
contriven to fashion; to devise	ful very
council secret, confidence	furious unrestrained
countenaunce conduct, bearing;	furth forth, forward
appearance	
curious skillful; subtle; intricate	gan began
daunger resistance; disdain, arrogance	glose explain; falsify; flatter
debonayre kind, courteous	grucchen complain; annoy
defaute lack; absence	
	ha have
	hele health; happiness
	hem them
	her their; her

holden hold, maintain; obligated	reserven to keep
hole wholly	resort return
hoten to be called	reuth pity
ich(e) I	rewen have pity on; regret
iswis certainly	
joylof joyful; vigorous; beautiful	sad steadfast; serious; prudent
lawrer laurel	sanatyf healing
lesen to lie; to lose; to set free	scribable suitable for being written on
list wish	shenden ruin; harm; confound
longen belong; desire	sith since
lust pleasure; sexual desire	slaken erase; diminish; alleviate
manner(e) custom; manners	sondry various
manly masculine; reliable; noble	sothfastnesse truth
me my	sothly truly
mercyeable compassionate; compliant	sownen sound; incline to
mot must	speden prosper; succeed; assist; hasten
musen to ponder	spillen to waste; to perish; to pine away (for love)
nas was not	stature height, size
naught nothing	straunge aloof, reserved
ne nor, not	submytting submitted for judgement
nere nearer	swert sword
none not any, no	
nys is not	
of from	tendre young; delicate
on for	thider there, to that place
ones at once	tho those; then
other or	thought concern; plan, idea
outrage violence; excess	tofore before
owe ought	touching mentioning; alluding to
palme palm branch	trouthe promise; loyalty
pensifhede anxiety; sorrow	
pleaunce pleasure; politeness; desire;	ure fate
conuent	
proces discourse; activity; event	variaunce inconstancy; change
quemen to serve in an acceptable	verray true; certain
manner	vieu gaze
quod said	vowen promise
relacion narration, report	wele (adj.) happy; healthy; (n.) prosperity
	welfare well being, delight
	wight person
	wise manner, way
	withoute(n) unless
	wonder (adv.) extraordinarily
	wonderly marvelously

worship honor
wot(e) know

Y /
yfere together
yode went