

# **The Book of the Duchess and other Poems**

Geoffrey Chaucer

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## *THE PROEM*

I have gret wonder, be this lighte,  
How that I live, for day ne nighte  
I may nat slepe wel nigh noght,  
I have so many an ydel thocht  
Purely for defaute of slepe  
That, by my trouthe, I take no kepe  
Of no-thing, how hit cometh or goth,  
Ne me nis no-thing leef nor loth.  
Al is y-liche good to me —  
Ioye or sorowe, wherso hyt be —  
For I have feling in no-thinge,  
But, as it were, a mased thing,  
Alway in point to falle a-doun;  
For sorwful imaginacioun  
Is alway hoolly in my minde.

And wel ye wite, agaynes kynde  
Hit were to liven in this wyse;  
For nature wolde nat suffyse  
To noon erthely creature  
Not longe tyme to endure  
Without slepe, and been in sorwe;  
And I ne may, ne night ne morwe,  
Slepe; and thus melancolye  
And dreed I have for to dye,  
Defaute of slepe and hevynesse  
Hath sleyn my spirit of quiknesse,  
That I have lost al lustihede.  
Suche fantasies ben in myn hede  
So I not what is best to do.

But men myght axe me, why soo  
I may not slepe, and what me is?  
But natheles, who aske this  
Leseth his asking trewely.  
My-selven can not telle why  
The sooth; but trewely, as I gesse,  
I holde hit be a siknesse  
That I have suffred this eight yere,  
And yet my bote is never the nere;  
For ther is phisicien but oon,  
That may me hele; but that is doon.  
Passe we over until eft;  
That wil not be, moot nede be left;  
Our first matere is good to kepe.

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

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

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

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

And for that hir thoughte evermo  
Hit was not wel he dwelte so,  
She longed so after the king  
That certes, hit were a pitous thing  
To telle hir hertely sorwful lyf  
That hadde, alas! this noble wyfe;  
For him she loved alderbest.  
Anon she sente bothe eest and west  
To seke him, but they founde nought.  
    `Alas!' quoth she, `that I was wrought!  
And wher my lord, my love, be deed?  
Certes, I nil never ete breed,  
I make a-vowe to my god here,  
But I mowe of my lord here!'  
Such sorwe this lady to her took  
That trewely I, which made this book,  
Had swich pite and swich rowthe  
To rede hir sorwe, that, by my trowthe,  
I ferde the worse al the morwe  
After, to thenken on her sorwe.  
    So whan she coude here no word  
That no man mighte fynde hir lord,  
Ful ofte she swouned, and saide `Alas!'  
For sorwe ful nigh wood she was,  
Ne she coude no reed but oon;  
But down on knees she sat anoon,  
And weep, that pite was to here.  
    `A! mercy! swete lady dere!'  
Quod she to Iuno, hir goddesse;  
`Help me out of this distresse,  
And yeve me grace my lord to see  
Sone, or wite wher-so he be,  
Or how he fareth, or in what wyse,  
And I shal make you sacrificyse,  
And hoolly youres become I shal  
With good wil, body, herte, and al;  
And but thou wilt this, lady swete,  
Send me grace to slepe, and mete  
In my slepe som certeyn sweven,  
Wher-through that I may knowen even  
Whether my lord be quik or deed.'  
With that word she heng down the heed,  
And fil a-swown as cold as ston;  
Hir women caught her up anon,  
And broghten hir in bed al naked,  
And she, forweped and forwaked,  
Was wery, and thus the dede sleep  
Fil on hir, or she toke keep,  
Through Iuno, that had herd hir bone,  
That made hir to slepe sone;  
For as she prayde, so was don,

In dede; for Iuno, right anon,  
Called thus her messagere  
To do her erande, and he com nere.  
Whan he was come, she bad him thus:  
'Go bet,' quod Iuno, 'to Morpheus,  
Thou knowest hym wel, the god of sleep;  
Now understond wel, and tak keep.  
Sey thus on my halfe, that he  
Go faste into the grete see,  
And bid him that, on alle thing,  
He take up Seys body the king,  
That lyth ful pale and no-thing rody.  
Bid him crepe into the body,  
Aud do it goon to Alcyone  
The quene, ther she lyth alone,  
And shewe hir shortly, hit is no nay,  
How hit was dreynt this other day;  
And do the body speke so  
Right as hit was wont to do,  
The whyles that hit was on lyve.  
Go now faste, and hy thee blyve!'

This messenger took leve and wente  
Upon his wey, and never ne stente  
Til he com to the derke valeye  
That stant bytwene roches tweye,  
Ther never yet grew corn ne gras,  
Ne tree, ne nothing that ought was,  
Beste, ne man, ne nothing elles,  
Save ther were a fewe welles  
Came renning fro the cliffes adoun,  
That made a deedly sleping soun,  
And ronnen doun right by a cave  
That was under a rokke y-grave  
Amid the valey, wonder depe.  
Ther thise goddes laye and slepe,  
Morpheus, and Eclympasteyre,  
That was the god of slepes heyre,  
That slepe and did non other werk.

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

This messenger come flying faste,  
And cryed, 'O ho! awake anon!'  
Hit was for noght; ther herde him non.  
'Awak!' quod he, 'who is, lyth there?'  
And blew his horn right in hir ere,

And cryed `awaketh!' wonder hye.  
This god of slepe, with his oon ye  
Cast up, axed, `who clepeth there?'  
`Hit am I,' quod this messagere;  
`Iuno bad thou shuldest goon' ---  
And tolde him what he shulde doon  
As I have told yow here--tofore;  
Hit is no need rehearse hit more;  
And wente his wey, whan he had sayd.

Anon this god of slepe a-brayd  
Out of his slepe, and gan to goon,  
And did as he had bede him doon;  
Took up the dreynte body sone,  
And bar hit forth to Alcyone,  
His wif the quene, ther--as she lay,  
Right even a quarter before day,  
And stood right at hir beddes fete,  
And called hir, right as she hete,  
By name, and sayde, `my swete wyf,  
Awak! let be your sorwful lyf!  
For in your sorwe there lyth no reed;  
For certes, swete, I nam but deed;  
Ye shul me never on lyve y--see.  
But good swete herte, look that ye  
Bury my body, at whiche a tyde  
Ye mowe hit finde the see besyde;  
And far--wel, swete, my worldes blisse!  
I praye god your sorwe lisse;  
To litel whyl our blisse lasteth!"

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

For thus moche dar I saye wel,  
I had be dolven everydel,  
And deed, right through defaute of sleep,  
If I nad red and taken keep  
Of this tale next before:  
And I wol telle yow wherfore:  
For I ne might, for bote ne bale,  
Slepe, or I had red this tale  
Of this dreynte Seys the king,  
And of the goddes of sleping.  
Whan I had red this tale wel  
And over--loked hit everydel,  
Me thoughte wonder if hit were so;

For I had never herd speke, or tho,  
 Of no goddes that coude make  
 Men for to slepe, ne for to wake;  
 For I ne knew never god but oon.  
 And in my game I sayde anoon ---  
 And yet me list right evel to pleye ---  
 `Rather then that I shulde deye  
 Through defaute of sleping thus,  
 I wolde yive thilke Morpheus,  
 Or his goddesse, dame Iuno,  
 Or som wight elles, I ne roghte who ---  
 To make me slepe and have som reste ---  
 I wil yive him the alder-beste  
 Yift that ever he aboode his lyve,  
 And here on warde, right now, as blyve;  
 If he wol make me slepe a lyte,  
 Of downe of pure dowves whyte  
 I wil yive him a fether-bed,  
 Rayed with golde, and right wel cled  
 In fyn blak satin doutremere,  
 And many a pilow, and every bere  
 Of clothe of Reynes, to slepe softe;  
 Him thar not nede to turnen ofte.  
 And I wol yive him al that falles  
 To a chambre; and al his halles  
 I wol do peynte with pure golde,  
 And tapite hem ful many folde  
 Of oo sute; this shal he have,  
 Yf I wiste wher were his cave,  
 If he can make me slepe sone,  
 As did the goddesse Alcione.  
 And thus this ilke god, Morpheus,  
 May winne of me mo fees thus  
 Than ever he wan; and to Iuno,  
 That is his goddesse, I shal so do,  
 I trow that she shal holde her payd.'

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



(He that wroot al thavisioun  
That he mette, Kyng Scipioun,  
The noble man, the Affrican —  
Swiche marvayles fortunèd than)  
I trowe, a—rede my dremes even.  
Lo, thus hit was, this was my sweven.

*THE DREAM*

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

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

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

I herde goinge, up and doune,  
Men, hors, houndes, and other thing;  
And al men speken of hunting,  
How they wolde slee the hert with strengthe,  
And how the hert had, upon lengthe,  
So moche embosed, I not now what.  
Anon—right, whan I herde that,  
How that they wolde on hunting goon,  
I was right glad, and up anoon;  
I took my hors, and forth I wente  
Out of my chambre; I never stente  
Til I com to the feld withoute.  
Ther overtook I a gret route  
Of huntres and eek of foresteres,  
With many relays and lymeres,  
And hyed hem to the forest faste,  
And I with hem; — so at the laste  
I asked oon, ladde a lymere: —  
'Say, felow, who shal huntun here'  
Quod I, and he answerde ageyn,  
'Sir, themperour Octovien,'  
Quod he, 'and is heer faste by.'  
'A goddes halfe, in good tyme,' quod I,  
'Go we faste!' and gan to ryde.  
Whan we came to the forest—syde,  
Every man dide, right anoon,  
As to hunting fil to doon.  
The mayster—hunte anoon, fot—hoot,  
With a gret horne blew three moot  
At the uncoupling of his houndes.  
Within a whyl the hert y—founde is,  
Y—halowed, and rechased faste

Longe tyme; and so at the laste,  
This hert rused and stal away  
Fro alle the houndes a prevy way.  
The houndes had overshote hem alle,  
And were on a defaute y-falle;  
Therwith the hunte wonder faste  
Blew a forloyn at the laste.

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

Hit is no need eek for to axe  
Wher ther were many grene greves,  
Or thikke of trees, so ful of leves;  
And every tree stood by him-selve  
Fro other wel ten foot or twelve.  
So grete trees, so huge of strengthe,  
Of fourty or fifty fadme lengthe,  
Clene withoute bough or stikke,  
With croppes brode, and eek as thikke —  
They were nat an inche a-sonder —  
That hit was shadwe over-al under;  
And many an hert and many an hinde  
Was both before me and bihinde.  
Of founes, soures, bukkes, does  
Was ful the wode, and many roes,

And many squirelles that sete  
Ful hye upon the trees, and ete,  
And in hir maner made festes.  
Shortly, hit was so ful of bestes,  
That thogh Argus, the noble countour,  
Sete to rekene in his countour,  
And rekened with his figures ten —  
For by tho figures mowe al ken,  
If they be crafty, rekene and noumbre,  
And telle of every thing the noumbre —  
Yet shulde he fayle to rekene even  
The wondres, me mette in my sweven.

But forth they romed wonder faste  
Doun the wode; so at the laste  
I was war of a man in blak,  
That sat and had y-turned his bak  
To an oke, an huge tree.  
‘Lord,’ thoghte I, ‘who may that be?  
What ayleth him to sitten here?’  
Anoon—right I wente nere;  
Than fond I sitte even upright  
A wonder wel-faringe knight —  
By the maner me thoughte so —  
Of good mochel, and yong therto,  
Of the age of four and twenty yeer.  
Upon his berde but litel heer,  
And he was clothed al in blakke.  
I stalked even unto his bakke,  
And ther I stood as stille as ought,  
That, sooth to saye, he saw me nought,  
For—why he heng his heed adoune.  
And with a deedly sorwful soun  
He made of ryme ten vers or twelve  
Of a compleynt to him—selve,  
The moste pite, the moste rowthe,  
That ever I herde; for, by my trowthe,  
Hit was gret wonder that nature  
Might suffren any creature  
To have swich sorwe, and be not deed.  
Ful pitous, pale, and nothing reed,  
He sayde a lay, a maner song,  
Withoute note, withoute song,  
And hit was this; for wel I can  
Reherse hit; right thus hit began. —  
‘I have of sorwe so grete woon,  
That Ioye gete I never noon,  
Now that I see my lady bright,  
Which I have loved with al my might,  
Is fro me dedd, and is a—goon.  
And thus in sorwe lefte me alone.  
‘Allas, o deeth! what ayleth thee,

That thou noldest have taken me,  
`Whan that thou toke my lady swete?  
That was so fayr, so fresh, so free,  
So good, that men may wel y-see  
`Of al goodnesse she had no mete!' ---  
Whan he had mad thus his complaynte,  
His sorowful herte gan faste faynte,  
And his spirites wexen dede;  
The blood was fled, for pure drede,  
Doun to his herte, to make him warm ---  
For wel hit feled the herte had harm ---  
To wite eek why hit was a-drad,  
By kinde, and for to make hit glad;  
For hit is membre principal  
Of the body; and that made al  
His hewe chaunge and wexe grene  
And pale, for no blood was sene  
In no maner lime of his.

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

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

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

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

Lo! how goodly spak this knight,  
As it had been another wight;  
He made it nouthen tough ne queynte  
And I saw that, and gan me aqueynte

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

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

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

    `My boldnesse is turned to shame,  
For fals Fortune hath pleyd a game  
Atte ches with me, allas! the whye!  
The trayteresse fals and ful of gyle,  
That al behoteth and no-thing halt,  
She goth upryght and yet she halt,  
That baggeth foule and loketh faire,  
The dispitouse debonaire,  
That scorneth many a creature!  
An ydole of fals portraiture  
Is she, for she wil sone wryen;  
She is the monstres heed y-wryen,  
As filth over y-strawed with floures;  
Hir moste worship and hir flour is  
To lyen, for that is hir nature;  
Withoute feyth, lawe, or mesure.  
She is fals; and ever laughinge  
With oon eye, and that other wepinge.

That is broght up, she set al down.  
 I lykne hir to the scorioun,  
 That is a fals, flateringe beste;  
 For with his hede he maketh feste,  
 But al amid his flateringe  
 With his tayle he wol stinge,  
 And envenyme; and so wol she.  
 She is thenvyouse charite  
 That is ay fals, and seemeth wele,  
 So turneth she hir false whele  
 About, for it is no-thing stable,  
 Now by the fyre, now at table;  
 Ful many oon hath she thus y-blent;  
 She is pley of enchauntement,  
 That semeth oon and is not so,  
 The false thief! what hath she do,  
 Trowest thou? By our lord, I wol thee seye.  
 Atte ches with me she gan to pleye;  
 With hir false draughtes divers  
 She stal on me, and took my fers.  
 And whan I saw my fers aweye,  
 Alas! I couthe no lenger playe,  
 But seyde, "Farewel, swete, y-wis,  
 And farwel al that ever ther is!"  
 Therwith Fortune seyde, "Chek here!"  
 And "Mate!" in mid pointe of the chekkere  
 With a poune erraunt, allas!  
 Ful craftier to pley she was  
 Than Athalus, that made the game  
 First of the ches: so was his name.  
 But God wolde I had ones or twyes  
 Y-koud and knowe the Ieupardyes  
 That coude the Grek Pithagores!  
 I shulde have pleyd the bet at ches,  
 And kept my fers the bet therby;  
 And thogh wherto? for trewely,  
 I hold that wish nat worth a stree!  
 Hit had be never the bet for me.  
 For Fortune can so many a wyle,  
 Ther be but fewe can hir begyle,  
 And eek she is the las to blame;  
 My-self I wolde have do the same,  
 Before god, hadde I been as she;  
 She oghte the more excused be.  
 For this I say yet more therto,  
 Hadde I be god and mighte have do  
 My wille, whan she my fers caughte,  
 I wolde have drawe the same draughte.  
 For, also wis god yive me reste,  
 I dar wel swere she took the beste!  
 `But through that draughte I have lorn



My blisse; alas! that I was born!  
For evermore, I trowe trewly,  
For al my wil, my lust hoolly  
Is turned; but yet what to done?  
Be oure lord, hit is to deye sone;  
For no-thing I ne leve it noght,  
But live and deye right in this thoght.  
There nis planete in firmament,  
Ne in air, ne in erthe, noon element,  
That they ne yive me a yift echoon  
Of weping, whan I am aloon.  
For whan that I avyse me wel,  
And bethenke me every-del,  
How that ther lyth in rekening,  
In my sorwe for no-thing;  
And how ther leveth no gladnesse  
May gladde me of my distresse,  
And how I have lost suffisance,  
And therto I have no plesance,  
Than may I say, I have right noght.  
And whan al this falleth in my thoght,  
Allas! than am I overcome!  
For that is doon is not to come!  
I have more sorowe than Tantale.'

And whan I herde him telle this tale  
Thus pitously, as I yow telle,  
Unnethe mighte I lenger dwelle,  
Hit dide myn hert so moche wo.

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

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

Hath many another foly don.  
And for Dalida died Sampson,  
That slow him—self with a pilere.  
But ther is noon a—lyve here  
Wolde for a fers make this wo!  
    `Why so?' quod he; `hit is nat so,  
Thou woste ful litel what thou menest;  
I have lost more than thow wenest.'  
    `Lo, sir, how may that be?' quod I;  
    `Good sir, tel me al hoolly  
In what wyse, how, why, and wherfore  
That ye have thus your blisse lore,'  
    `Blythly,' quod he, `com sit adoun,  
I telle thee up condicioun  
That thou hoolly, with al thy wit,  
Do thyn entent to herkene hit.'  
    `Yis, sir.' `Swere thy trouthe ther—to.'  
    `Gladly.' `Do than holde her—to!'  
    `I shal right blythly, so god me save,  
Hoolly, with al the witte I have,  
Here yow, as wel as I can,'  
    `A goddes half!' quod he, and began: —  
    `Sir,' quod he, `sith first I couthe  
Have any maner wit fro youthe,  
Or kyndely understanding  
To comprehende, in any thing,  
What love was, in myn owne wit,  
Dredeles, I have ever yit  
Be tributary, and yiven rente  
To love hoolly with goode entente,  
And through plesaunce become his thral,  
With good wil, body, herte, and al.  
Al this I putte in his servage,  
As to my lorde, and dide homage;  
And ful devoutly prayde him to,  
He shulde besette myn herte so,  
That it plesaunce to him were,  
And worship to my lady dere.  
    `And this was longe, and many a yeer  
Or that myn herte was set o—wher,  
That I did thus, and niste why;  
I trowe hit cam me kindely.  
Paraunter I was therto most able  
As a whyt wal or a table;  
For hit is redy to cacche and take  
Al that men wil therin make,  
Wher—so so men wol portreye or peynte,  
Be the werkes never so queynte.  
    `And thilke tyme I ferde so  
I was able to have lerned tho,  
And to have coud as wel or better,

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

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

    `Among thise ladies thus echoon,  
Soth to seyn, I saw ther oon  
That was lyk noon of al the route;  
For I dar swere, withoute doute,  
That as the someres sonne bright  
Is fairer, clere, and hath more light  
Than any planete, is in heven,  
The mone, or the sterres seven,  
For al the worlde so had she  
Surmounted hem alle of beaute,  
Of maner and of comlinessse,  
Of stature and wel set gladnesse,  
Of goodlihede so wel beseye —  
Shortly, what shal I more seye?  
By god, and by his halwes twelve,  
It was my swete, right al hir-selve!  
She had so stedfast countenaunce,  
So noble port and meyntenaunce.  
And Love, that had herd my bone,  
Had espyed me thus sone,  
That she ful sone, in my thoght,  
As helpe me god, so was y-caught

So sodenly, that I ne took  
No maner reed but at hir look  
And at myn herte; for—why hir eyen  
So gladly, I trow, myn herte seyen,  
That purely tho myn owne thocht  
Seyde hit were bet serve hir for noght  
Than with another to be wel.

And hit was sooth, for, everydel,  
I wil anoon—right telle thee why.

I saw hir daunce so comlily,  
Carole and singe so swetely,  
Laughe and pleye so womanly,  
And loke so debonairly,  
So goodly speke and so frendly,  
That certes, I trow, that evermore  
Nas seyn so blisful a tresore.  
For every heer upon hir hede,  
Soth to seyn, hit was not rede,  
Ne nouthur yelw, ne broun hit nas;  
Me thoghte, most lyk gold hit was.  
And whiche eyen my lady hadde!  
Debonair, goode, glade, and sadde,  
Simple, of good mochel, noght to wyde;  
Therto hir look nas not a—syde,  
Ne overthwert, but beset so wel,  
Hit drew and took up, everydel,  
Alle that on hir gan beholde.

Hir eyen semed anoon she wolde  
Have mercy; fooles wenden so;  
But hit was never the rather do.  
Hit nas no countrefeted thing,  
It was hir owne pure loking,  
That the goddesse, dame Nature,  
Had made hem opene by mesure,  
And close; for, were she never so glad,  
Hir loking was not foly sprad,  
Ne wildely, thogh that she pleyde;  
But ever, me thocht, hir eyen seyde,  
"By god, my wrathe is al for—yive!"

Therwith hir liste so wel to live,  
That dulnesse was of hir a—drad.  
She nas to sobre ne to glad;  
In alle thinges more mesure  
Had never, I trowe, creature.  
But many oon with hir loke she herte,  
And that sat hir ful lyte at herte,  
For she knew no—thing of her thocht;  
But whether she knew, or knew hit noght,  
Algate she ne roghte of hem a stree!  
To gete hir love no ner was he  
That woned at home, than he in Inde;

The formest was alway behinde.  
But goode folk, over al other,  
She loved as man may do his brother;  
Of whiche love she was wonder large,  
In skilful places that bere charge.  
    `Which a visage had she ther-to!  
Allas! myn herte is wonder wo  
That I ne can discryven hit!  
Me lakketh bothe English and wit  
For to undo hit at the fulle;  
And eek my spirits be so dulle  
So greet a thing for to devyse.  
I have no wit that can suffyse  
To comprehenden hir beaute;  
But thus moche dar I seyn, that she  
Was rody, fresh, and lyvely hewed;  
And every day hir beaute newed.  
And negh hir face was alder-best;  
For certes, Nature had swich lest  
To make that fair, that trewly she  
Was hir cheef patron of beautee,  
And cheef ensample of al hir werke,  
And moustre; for, be hit never so derke,  
Me thinketh I see hir ever-mo.  
And yet more-over, thogh alle tho  
That ever lived were not a-lyve,  
They ne sholde have founde to discryve  
In al hir face a wikked signe;  
For hit was sad, simple, and benigne.  
    `And which a goodly, softe speche  
Had that swete, my lyves leche!  
So frendly, and so wel y-grounded,  
Up al resoun so wel y-founded,  
And so trefable to alle gode,  
That I dar swere by the rode,  
Of eloquence was never founde  
So swete a sowninge facounde,  
Ne trewer tonged, ne scorned lasse,  
Ne bet coude hele; that, by the masse,  
I durste swere, thogh the pope hit songe,  
That ther was never yet through hir tonge  
Man ne woman gretly harmed;  
As for hir, ther was al harm hid;  
Ne lasse flatering in hir worde,  
That purely, hir simple recorde  
Was founde as trewe as any bonde,  
Or trouthe of any mannes honde.  
Ne chyde she coude never a del,  
That knoweth al the world ful wel.  
    `But swich a fairnesse of a nekke  
Had that swete that boon nor brekke

Nas ther non sene, that mis-sat.  
Hit was whyt, smothe, streght, and flat,  
Withouten hole; and canel-boon,  
As by seming, had she noon.  
Hir throte, as I have now memoire,  
Semed a round tour of yvoire,  
Of good gretnesse, and noght to grete.  
`And gode faire Whyte she hete,  
That was my lady name right.  
She was bothe fair and bright,  
She hadde not hir name wrong.  
Right faire shuldres, and body long  
She hadde, and armes; every lith  
Fattish, flesshy, not greet therwith;  
Right whyte handes, and nayles rede,  
Rounde brestes; and of good brede  
Hyr hippes were, a streight flat bake.  
I knew on hir non other lak  
That al hir limmes nere sewing,  
In as fer as I had knowing.  
`Therto she coude so wel pleye,  
Whan that hir liste, that I dar seye,  
That she was lyk to torche bright,  
That every man may take of light  
Ynogh, and hit hath never the lesse.  
`Of maner and of comlinesse  
Right so ferde my lady dere;  
For every wight of hir manere  
Might cacche ynogh, if that he wolde,  
If he had eyen hir to beholde.  
For I dar sweren, if that she  
Had among ten thousand be,  
She wolde have be, at the leste,  
A cheef mirour of al the feste,  
Thogh they had stonden in a rowe,  
To mennes eyen coude have knowe.  
For wher-so men had pleyd or waked,  
Me thoghte the felawship as naked  
Withouten hir, that saw I ones,  
As a coroune withoute stones.  
Trewly she was, to myn ye,  
The soleyn fenix of Arabye,  
For ther liveth never but oon;  
Ne swich as she ne know I noon.  
`To speke of goodnesse; trewly she  
Had as moche debonairte  
As ever had Hester in the bible  
And more, if more were possible.  
And, soth to seyne, therwith-al  
She had a wit so general,  
So hool enclyned to alle gode,

That al hir wit was set, by the rode,  
Withoute malice, upon gladnesse;  
Therto I saw never yet a lesse  
Harmul, than she was in doing.  
I sey nat that she ne had knowing  
What harm was; or elles she  
Had coud no good, so thinketh me.

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

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

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

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

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

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

    `She was as good, so have I reeste,  
As ever was Penelope of Grece,  
Or as the noble wyf Lucrece,  
That was the beste — he telleth thus,  
The Romain Tytus Livius —  
She was as good, and no—thing lyke,  
Thogh hir stories be autentyke;  
Algate she was as trewe as she.

    `But wherfor that I telle thee  
Whan I first my lady say?  
I was right yong, the sooth to sey,  
And ful gret need I hadde to lerne;  
Whan my herte wolde yerne  
To love, it was a greet emprise.



But as my wit coude best suffyse,  
 After my yonge childly wit,  
 Withoute drede, I besette hit  
 To love hir in my beste wise,  
 To do hir worship and servyse  
 That I tho coude, be my trouthe,  
 Withoute feyning outhur slouthe;  
 For wonder fayn I wolde hir see.  
 So mochel hit amended me,  
 That, whan I saw hir first a-morwe,  
 I was warished of al my sorwe  
 Of al day after, til hit were eve;  
 Me thoghte no-thing mighte me greve,  
 Were my sorwes never so smerte.  
 And yit she sit so in myn herte,  
 That, by my trouthe, I nolde noghte,  
 For al this worlde, out of my thocht  
 Leve my lady; no, trewly!'

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

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

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

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

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

`Before god,' quod he, `and I shal.

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

    `But, for to kepe me fro ydelnesse,  
Trewly I did my besinesse  
To make songes, as I best coude,  
And ofte tyme I song hem loude;  
And made songes a gret del,  
Al-thogh I coude not make so wel  
Songes, ne knowe the art al,  
As coude Lamekes sone Tubal,  
That fond out first the art of songe;  
For, as his brothers hamers ronge  
Upon his anvelt up and down,  
Therof he took the firste soun;  
But Grekes seyn, Pictagoras,  
That he the firste finder was  
Of the art; Aurora telleth so,  
But therof no fors, of hem two.  
Algates songes thus I made  
Of my feling, myn herte to glade;  
And lo! this was the alther-firste,  
I not wher that hit were the werst. ---  
    "Lord, hit maketh myn herte light,  
Whan I thenke on that swete wight  
    That is so semely on to see;  
    And wisshe to god hit might so be,  
That she wolde holde me for hir knight,  
My lady, that is so fair and bright!" ---  
    `Now have I told thee, sooth to saye,  
My firste song. Upon a daye  
I bethoghte me what wo  
And sorwe that I suffred tho  
For hir, and yet she wiste hit noght,  
Ne telle hir durste I nat my thoght.  
`Allas!' thoghte I, `I can no reed;  
And, but I telle hir, I nam but deed;  
And if I telle hir, to seye sooth,  
I am a-dred she wol be wrooth;  
Allas! what shal I thanne do?"

    `In this debat I was so wo,  
Me thoghte myn herte braste a-tweyn!  
So atte laste, soth to sayn,  
I me bethoghte that nature

Ne formed never in creature  
So moche beaute, trewely,  
And bounte, withouten mercy.  
    `In hope of that, my tale I tolde,  
With sorwe, as that I never sholde;  
For nedes, and, maugree my heed,  
I moste have told hir or be deed.  
I not wel how that I began,  
Ful evel rehersen hit I can;  
And eek, as helpe me god with-al,  
I trowe hit was in the dismal,  
That was the ten woundes of Egipte;  
For many a word I over-skipte  
In my tale, for pure fere  
Lest my wordes mis-set were.  
With sorweful herte, and woundes dede,  
Softe and quaking for pure drede  
And shame, and stinting in my tale  
For ferde, and myn hewe al pale,  
Ful ofte I wex bothe pale and reed;  
Bowing to hir, I heng the heed;  
I durste nat ones loke hir on,  
For wit, manere, and al was gon.  
I seyde "mercy!" and no more;  
Hit nas no game, hit sat me sore.  
    `So atte laste, sooth to seyn,  
Whan that myn herte was come ageyn,  
To telle shortly al my speche,  
With hool herte I gan hir beseche  
That she wolde be my lady swete;  
And swor, and gan hir hertely hete  
Ever to be stedfast and trewe,  
And love hir alwey freshly newe,  
And never other lady have,  
And al hir worship for to save  
As I best coude; I swor hir this —  
"For youres is al that ever ther is  
For evermore, myn herte swete!  
And never false yow, but I mete,  
I nil, as wis god helpe me so!"  
    `And whan I had my tale y-do,  
God wot, she accounted nat a stree  
Of al my tale, so thoghte me.  
To telle shortly as hit is,  
Trewly hir answer, hit was this;  
I can not now wel counterfete  
Hir wordes, but this was the grete  
Of hir answer: she sayde, "nay"  
Al-outerly. Allas! that day  
The sorwe I suffred, and the wo!  
That trewly Cassandra, that so

Bewayled the destruccioun.  
Of Troye and of Ilioun,  
Had never swich sorwe as I tho.  
I durste no more say therto  
For pure fere, but stal away;  
And thus I lived ful many a day;  
That trewely, I hadde no need  
Ferther than my beddes heed  
Never a day to seche sorwe;  
I fond hit redy every morwe,  
For—why I loved hir in no gere.

    `So hit befel, another yere,  
I thoughte ones I wolde fonde  
To do hir knowe and understonde  
My wo; and she wel understood  
That I ne wilned thing but good,  
And worship, and to kepe hir name  
Over al thing, and drede hir shame,  
And was so besy hir to serve; —  
And pite were I shulde sterve,  
Sith that I wilned noon harm, y—wis.  
So whan my lady knew al this,  
My lady yaf me al hoolly  
The noble yift of hir mercy,  
Saving hir worship, by al weyes;  
Dredles, I mene noon other weyes.  
And therwith she yaf me a ring;  
I trowe hit was the firste thing;  
But if myn herte was y—waxe  
Glad, that is no need to axe!  
As helpe me god, I was as blyve,  
Reysed, as fro dethe to lyve,  
Of alle happes the alder—beste,  
The gladdest and the moste at reste.  
For trewely, that swete wight,  
Whan I had wrong and she the right,  
She wolde alway so goodely  
For—yeve me so debonairly.  
In alle my youthe, in alle chaunce,  
She took me in hir governaunce.

    `Therwith she was alway so trewe,  
Our loye was ever y—liche newe;  
Our hertes wern so even a payre,  
That never nas that oon contrayre  
To that other, for no wo.  
For sothe, y—liche they suffred tho  
Oo blisse and eek oo sorwe bothe;  
Y—liche they were bothe gladde and wrothe;  
Al was us oon, withoute were.  
And thus we lived ful many a yere  
So wel, I can nat telle how.'

`Sir,' quod I, `where is she now?'  
`Now!' quod he, and stinte anoon.  
Therwith he wex as deed as stoon,  
And seyde, `allas! that I was bore,  
That was the los, that her-before  
I tolde thee, that I had lorn.  
Bethenk how I seyde her-beforn,  
"Thou wost ful litel what thou menest;  
I have lost more than thou wenest" --  
God wot, allas! right that was she!  
`Allas! sir, how? what may that be?'  
`She is deed!' `Nay!' `Yis, by my trouthe!'  
`Is that your los? By god, hit is routhe!'  
And with that worde, right anoon,  
They gan to strake forth; al was doon,  
For that tyme, the hert-hunting.  
With that, me thoghte, that this king  
Gan quickly hoomward for to ryde  
Unto a place ther besyde,  
Which was from us but a lyte,  
A long castel with walles whyte,  
Be seynt Iohan! on a riche hil,  
As me mette; but thus it fil.  
Right thus me mette, as I yow telle,  
That in the castel was a belle,  
As hit had smiten houres twelve. --

Therwith I awook my-selve,  
And fond me lying in my bed;  
And the book that I had red,  
Of Alcyone and Seys the king,  
And of the goddes of sleping,  
I fond it in myn honde ful even.  
Thoghte I, `this is so queynt a sweven,  
That I wol, be processe of tyme,  
Fonde to putte this sweven in ryme  
As I can best'; and that anoon. --  
This was my sweven; now hit is doon.

Explicit the Boke of the Duchesse.

*The House of FAME*

*BOOK I Incipit liber primus.*

God turne us every dreem to gode!  
For hit is wonder, be the rode,  
To my wit, what causeth swevens  
Either on morwes, or on evens;  
And why the effect folweth of somme,  
And of somme hit shal never come;  
Why that is an avisioun,  
And this a revelacioun,  
Why this a dreem, why that a sweven,  
And nat to every man liche even;  
Why this a fantom, these oracles,  
I noot; but who—so of these miracles  
The causes knoweth bet than I,  
Devyne he; for I certainly  
Ne can hem noght, ne never thinke  
To besily my wit to swinke,  
To knowe of hir signifiounce  
The gendres, neither the distaunce  
Of tymes of hem, ne the causes,  
For—why this more than that cause is;  
As if folkes complexiouns  
Make hem dreem of reflexiouns;  
Or ellis thus, as other sayn,  
For to greet feblenesse of brayn,  
By abstinence, or by seeknesse,  
Prison, stewe, or greet distresse;  
Or elles by disordinaunce  
Of naturel acostomaunce,  
That som man is to curious  
In studie, or melancolious,  
Or thus, so inly ful of drede,  
That no man may him bote bede;  
Or elles, that devocioun  
Of somme, and contemplacioun  
Causeth swiche dremes ofte;  
Or that the cruel lyf unsofte  
Which these ilke lovers leden  
That hopen over mucche or dreden,  
That purely hir impressiouns  
Causeth hem avisiouns;  
Or if that spiritus have the might  
To make folk to dreem a—night  
Or if the soule, of propre kinde  
Be so parfit, as men finde,  
That hit forwot that is to come,  
And that hit warneth alle and somme  
Of everiche of hir adventures  
Be avisiouns, or by figures,  
But that our flesh ne hath no might  
To understonden hit aright,

For hit is warned to derkly; —  
But why the cause is, noght wot I.  
Wel worthe, of this thing, grete clerkes,  
That trete of this and other werkes;  
For I of noon opinioun  
Nil as now make mensiou, n  
But only that the holy rode  
Turne us every dreem to gode!  
For never, sith that I was born,  
Ne no man elles, me biforn,  
Mette, I trowe stedfastly,  
So wonderful a dreem as I  
The tenthe day dide of Decembre,  
The which, as I can now remembre,  
I wol yow tellen every del,

The Invocation

But at my ginninge, trusteth wel,  
I wol make invocacioun,  
With special devocioun,  
Unto the god of slepe anoon,  
That dwelleth in a cave of stoon  
Upon a streem that cometh fro Lete,  
That is a flood of helle unswete;  
Besyde a folk men clepe Cimerie,  
Ther slepeth ay this god unmerie  
With his slepy thousand sones  
That alway for to slepe hir wone is —  
And to this god, that I of rede,  
Prey I, that he wol me spede  
My sweven for to telle aright,  
If every dreem stonde in his might.  
And he, that mover is of al  
That is and was, and ever shal,  
So yive hem Ioye that hit here  
Of alle that they dreme to—yere,  
And for to stonden alle in grace  
Of hir loves, or in what place  
That hem wer levest for to stonde,  
And shelde hem fro poverte and shonde,  
And fro unhappe and eche disese,  
And sende hem al that may hem plese,  
That take hit wel, and scorne hit noght,  
Ne hit misdemen in her thoght  
Through malicious entencioun.  
And who—so, through presumpcioun,  
Or hate or scorne, or through envye,  
Dispyt, or Iape, or vilanye,  
Misdeme hit, preye I Iesus god  
That (dreme he barfoot, dreme he shod),

That every harm that any man  
Hath had, sith that the world began,  
Befalle him therof, or he sterve,  
And graunte he mote hit ful deserve,  
Lo! with swich a conclusioun  
As had of his avisioun  
Cresus, that was king of Lyde,  
That high upon a gebet dyde!  
This prayer shal he have of me;  
I am no bet in charite!

Now herkneth, as I have you seyde,  
What that I mette or I abreyde.

### The Dream

Of Decembre the tenth day,  
Whan hit was night, to slepe I lay  
Right ther as I was wont to done,  
And fil on slepe wonder sone,  
As he that wery was for-go  
On pilgrimage myles two  
To the corseynt Leonard,  
To make lythe of that was hard.

But as I sleep, me mette I was  
Within a temple y-mad of glas;  
In whiche ther were mo images  
Of gold, stondinge in sondry stages,  
And mo riche tabernacles,  
And with perre mo pinacles,  
And mo curious portreytures,  
And queynte maner of figures  
Of olde werke, then I saw ever.  
For certeynly, I niste never  
Wher that I was, but wel wiste I,  
Hit was of Venus redely,  
The temple; for, in portreyture,  
I sawgh anoon-right hir figure  
Naked fletinge in a see.  
And also on hir heed, parde,  
Hir rose-garlond whyt and reed,  
And hir comb to kembe hir heed,  
Hir dowves, and daun Cupido  
Hir blinde sone, and Vulcano,  
That in his face was ful broun.

But as I romed up and doun,  
I fond that on a wal ther was  
Thus writen, on a table of bras:  
'I wol now singe, if that I can,  
The armes, and al-so the man,  
That first cam, through his destinee,  
Fugitif of Troye contree,



In Itaile, with ful moche pyne,  
Unto the strondes of Lavyne.'  
And tho began the story anoon,  
As I shal telle yow echoon.

First saw I the destruccioun  
Of Troye, through the Greek Sinoun,  
That with his false forsweringe,  
And his chere and his lesinge  
Made the hors broght into Troye,  
Thorgh which Troyens loste al hir Ioye.  
And after this was grave, allas!  
How Ilioun assailed was  
And wonne, and King Priam y-slayn,  
And Polites his sone, certayn,  
Dispitously, of dan Pirrus.

And next that saw I how Venus,  
Whan that she saw the castel brende,  
Doun fro the hevene gan descende,  
And bad hir sone Eneas flee;  
And how he fledde, and how that he  
Escaped was from al the pres,  
And took his fader, Anchises,  
And bar him on his bakke away,  
Cryinge, 'Allas, and welaway!'  
The whiche Anchises in his honde  
Bar the goddes of the londe,  
Thilke that unbrende were.

And I saw next, in alle this fere,  
How Creusa, daun Eneas wyf,  
Which that he lovede as his lyf,  
And hir yonge sone Iulo,  
And eek Ascanius also,  
Fledden eek with drery chere,  
That hit was pitee for to here;  
And in a forest, as they wente,  
At a turninge of a wente,  
How Creusa was y-lost, allas!  
That deed, but noot I how, she was;  
How he hir soughte, and how hir gost  
Bad him to flee the Grekes ost,  
And seyde he most unto Itaile,  
As was his destinee, sauns faille;  
That hit was pitee for to here,  
Whan hir spirit gan appere,  
The wordes that she to him seyde,  
And for to kepe hir sone him preyde.  
Ther saw I graven eek how he,  
His fader eek, and his meynee,  
With his shippes gan to sayle  
Toward the contree of Itaile,  
As streight as that they mighte go.

Ther saw I thee, cruel Iuno,  
That art daun Iupiteres wyf,  
That hast y-hated, al thy lyf,  
Al the Troyanisshe blood,  
Renne and crye, as thou were wood,  
On Eolus, the god of windes,  
To blowen out, of alle kindes,  
So loude, that he shulde drenche  
Lord and lady, grome and wenche,  
Of al the Troyan nacioun,  
Withoute any savacioun.

Ther saw I swich tempeste aryse,  
That every herte mighte agryse,  
To see hit peynted on the walle.

Ther saw I graven eek withalle,  
Venus, how ye, my lady dere,  
Wepinge with ful woful chere,  
Prayen Iupiter an hye  
To save and kepe that navye  
Of the Troyan Eneas,  
Sith that he hir sone was.

Ther saw I Ioves Venus kisse,  
And graunted of the tempest lisse.  
Ther saw I how the tempest stente,  
And how with alle pyne he wente,  
And prevely took arrivage  
In the contree of Cartage;  
And on the morwe, how that he  
And a knight, hight Achatee,  
Metten with Venus that day,  
Goinge in a queynt array,  
As she had ben an hunteresse,  
With wind blowinge upon hir tresse;  
How Eneas gan him to pleyne,  
Whan that he knew hir, of his peyne;  
And how his shippes dreynte were,  
Or elles lost, he niste where;  
How she gan him comforte tho,  
And bad him to Cartage go,  
And ther he shulde his folk finde  
That in the see were left behinde.

And, shortly of this thing to pace,  
She made Eneas so in grace  
Of Dido, quene of that contree,  
That, shortly for to tellen, she  
Becam his love, and leet him do  
That that wedding longeth to.  
What shulde I speke more queynte,  
Or peyne me my wordes peynte,  
To speke of love? hit wol not be;  
I can not of that facultee.

And eek to telle the manere  
How they aqueynteden in-fere,  
Hit were a long proces to telle,  
And over long for yow to dwelle.

Ther sawgh I grave how Eneas  
Tolde Dido every cas,  
That him was tid upon the see.

And after grave was, how shee  
Made of him, shortly, at oo word,  
Hir lyf, hir love, hir luste, hir lord;  
And dide him al the reverence,  
And leyde on him al the dispence,  
That any woman mighte do,  
Weninge hit had al be so,  
As he hir swoor; and her-by demed  
That he was good, for he swich semed.  
Allas! what harm doth apparence,  
Whan hit is fals in existence!  
For he to hir a traitour was;  
Wherfor she slow hir-self, alas!

Lo, how a woman doth amis,  
To love him that unknowen is!  
For, by Crist, lo! thus hit fareth;  
'Hit is not al gold, that glareth.'  
For, al-so brouke I wel myn heed,  
Ther may be under goodliheed  
Kevered many a shrewed vyce;  
Therfor be no wight so nyce,  
To take a love only for chere,  
For speche, or for frendly manere;  
For this shal every woman finde  
That som man, of his pure kinde,  
Wol shewen outward the faireste,  
Til he have caught that what him leste;  
And thanne wol he causes finde,  
And swere how that she is unkinde,  
Or fals, or prevy, or double was.  
Al this seye I by Eneas  
And Dido, and hir nyce lest,  
That lovede al to sone a gest;  
Therfor I wol seye a proverbe,  
That 'he that fully knoweth therbe  
May saufly leye hit to his ye';  
Withoute dreed, this is no lye.

But let us speke of Eneas,  
How he betrayed hir, alas!  
And lefte hir ful unkindely.  
So whan she saw al-utterly,  
That he wolde hir of trouthe faile,  
And wende fro hir to Itaile,  
She gan to wringe hir hondes two.

`Allas!' quod she, `what me is wo!  
Allas! is every man thus trewe,  
That every yere wolde have a newe,  
If hit so longe tyme dure,  
Or elles three, peraventure?  
As thus: of oon he wolde have fame  
In magnifying of his name;  
Another for frendship, seith he;  
And yet ther shal the thridde be,  
That shal be taken for delyt,  
Lo, or for singular profyt.'

In swiche wordes gan to pleyne  
Dido of hir grete peyne,  
As me mette redely;  
Non other auctour alegge I.  
`Allas!' quod she, `my swete herte,  
Have pitee on my sorwes smerte,  
And slee me not! go noght away!  
O woful Dido, wel away!  
Quod she to hir—selve tho.  
`O Eneas! what wil ye do?  
O that your love, ne your bonde,  
That ye han sworn with your right honde,  
Ne my cruel deeth,' quod she,  
"May holde yow still heer with me!  
O, haveth of my deeth pitee!  
Y—wis, my dere herte, ye  
Knowen ful wel that never yit,  
As fer—forth as I hadde wit,  
Agilte I yow in thoght ne deed.  
, have ye men swich goodliheed  
In speche, and never a deel of trouthe?  
Allas, that ever hadde routhe  
Any woman on any man!  
Now see I wel, and telle can,  
We wrecched wimmen conne non art;  
For certeyn, for the more part,  
Thus we be served everichone.  
How sore that ye men conne grone,  
Anoon as we have yow receyved!  
Certainly we ben deceyved;  
For, though your love laste a sesoun,  
Wayte upon the conclusioun,  
And eek how that ye determynen,  
And for the more part diffynen.  
`O, welawey that I was born!  
For through yow is my name lorn,  
And alle myn actes red and songe  
Over al this lond, on every tonge.  
O wikke Fame! for ther nis  
Nothing so swift, lo, as she is!

O, sooth is, every thing is wist,  
 Though hit be kevered with the mist.  
 Eek, thogh I mighte duren ever,  
 That I have doon, rekever I never,  
 That I ne shal be seyde, alas,  
 Y-shamed be through Eneas,  
 And that I shal thus Iuged be —  
 'Lo, right as she hath doon, now she  
 Wol do eftsones, hardily;  
 Thus seyth the peple prevely.' —  
 But that is doon, nis not to done;  
 Al hir compleynt ne al hir mone,  
 Certeyn, availeth hir not a stre.

And when she wiste sothly he  
 Was forth unto his shippes goon,  
 She in hir chambre wente anoon,  
 And called on hir suster Anne,  
 And gan hir to compleyne thanne;  
 And seyde, that she cause was  
 That she first lovede Eneas,  
 And thus counseilled hir therto.  
 But what! when this was seyde and do,  
 She roof hir—selve to the herte,  
 And deyde through the wounde smerte.  
 But al the maner how she deyde,  
 And al the wordes that she seyde,  
 Who—so to knowe hit hath purpos,  
 Reed Virgile in Eneidos  
 Or the Epistle of Ovyde,  
 What that she wroot or that she dyde;  
 And nere hit to long to endyte,  
 By god, I wolde hit here wryte.

But, welaway! the harm, the routhe,  
 That hath betid for swich untrouthe,  
 As men may ofte in bokes rede,  
 And al day seen hit yet in dede,  
 That for to thenken hit, a tene is.

Lo, Demophon, duk of Athenis,  
 How he forswor him ful falsly,  
 And trayed Phillis wikkedly,  
 That kinges doghter was of Trace,  
 And falsly gan his terme pace;  
 And when she wiste that he was fals,  
 She heng hir—self right by the hals,  
 For he had do hir swich untrouthe;  
 Lo! was not this a wo and routhe?

Eek lo! how fals and reccheles  
 Was to Breseida Achilles,  
 And Paris to Enone;  
 And Iason to Isiphile;  
 And eft Iason to Medea;

And Ercules to Dyanira;  
For he left hir for Iole,  
That made him cacche his deeth, parde.

How fals eek was he, Theseus;  
That, as the story telleth us,  
How he betrayed Adriane;  
The devel be his soules bane!  
For had he laughed, had he loured,  
He moste have be al devoured,  
If Adriane ne had y-be!  
And, for she had of him pitee,  
She made him fro the dethe escape,  
And he made hir a ful fals Iape;  
For aftir this, within a whyle  
He lefte hir slepinge in an yle,  
Deserte alone, right in the see,  
And stal away, and leet hir be;  
And took hir suster Phedra tho  
With him, and gan to shippe go.  
And yet he had y-sworn to here,  
On al that ever he mighte swere,  
That, so she saved him his lyf,  
He wolde have take hir to his wyf;  
For she desired nothing elles,  
In certein, as the book us telles.

But to excusen Eneas  
Fulliche of al his greet trespas,  
The book seyth, Mercurie, sauns faile,  
Bad him go into Itaile,  
And leve Auffrykes regioun,  
And Dido and hir faire toun.

Tho saw I grave, how to Itaile  
Daun Eneas is go to saile;  
And how the tempest al began,  
And how he loste his steresman,  
Which that the stere, or he took keep,  
Smot over-bord, lo! as he sleep.

And also saw I how Sibyle  
And Eneas, besyde an yle,  
To helle wente, for to see  
His fader, Anchises the free.  
How he ther fond Palinurus,  
And Dido, and eek Deiphebus;  
And every tourment eek in helle  
Saw he, which is long to telle.  
Which who-so willeth for to knowe,  
He most rede many a rowe  
On Virgile or on Claudian,  
Or Daunte, that hit telle can.

Tho saw I grave al tharivaile  
That Eneas had in Itaile;

And with King Latine his tretee,  
And alle the batailles that he  
Was at him—self, and eek his knightes,  
Or he had al y—wonne his rightes;  
And how he Turnus refte his lyf,  
And wan Lavyna to his wyf;  
And al the mervelous signals  
Of the goddes celestials;  
How, maugre Iuno, Eneas,  
For al hir sleighte and hir compas,  
Acheved al his aventure;  
For Iupiter took of him cure  
At the prayere of Venus;  
The whiche I preye alwey save us,  
And us ay of our sorwes lighte!

Whan I had seyen al this sighte  
In this noble temple thus,  
'A, Lord!' thoughte I, 'that madest us,  
Yet saw I never swich noblesse  
Of images, ne swich richesse,  
As I saw graven in this chirche;  
But not woot I who dide hem wirche,  
Ne wher I am, ne in what contree.  
But now wol I go out and see,  
Right at the wicket, if I can  
See o—wher stering any man,  
That may me telle wher I am.'

When I out at the dores cam,  
I faste aboute me beheld.  
Then saw I but a large feld,  
As fer as that I mighte see,  
Withouten toun, or hous, or tree,  
Or bush, or gras, or ered lond;  
For al the feld nas but of sond  
As smal as man may see yet lye  
In the desert of Libye;  
Ne I to maner creature,  
That is y—formed by nature,  
Ne saw, me for to rede or wisse.  
'O Crist,' thoughte I, 'that art in blisse,  
Fro fantom and illusioun  
Me save!' and with devocioun  
Myn yen to the heven I caste.

Tho was I war, lo! at the laste,  
That faste be the sonne, as hye  
As kenne mighte I with myn ye,  
Me thoughte I saw an egle sore,  
But that hit semed moche more  
Then I had any egle seyn.  
But this as sooth as deeth, certeyn,  
Hit was of golde, and shoon so bright,

That never saw men such a sighte,  
But—if the heven hadde y—wonne  
Al newe of golde another sonne;  
So shoon the egles fethres brighte,  
And somewhat downward gan hit lighte.

Explicit liber primus.

*Book II Incipit liber secundus.*

Proem.

Now herkneth, every maner man  
That English understonde can,  
And listeth of my dreem to lere;  
For now at erste shul ye here  
So selly an avisioun,  
That Isaye, ne Scipioun,  
Ne King Nabugodonosor,  
Pharo, Turnus, ne Elcanor,  
Ne mette swich a dreem as this!  
Now faire blisfull, O Cipris,  
So be my favour at this tyme!  
And ye, me to endyte and ryme  
Helpeth, that on Parnaso dwelle  
By Elicon the clere welle.

O Thought, that wroot al that I mette,  
And in the tresorie hit shette  
Of my brayn! now shal men see  
If any vertu in thee be,  
To tellen al my dreem aright;  
Now kythe thyn engyne and might!

The Dream.

This egle, of which I have yow told,  
That shoon with fethres as of gold,  
Which that so hye gan to sore,  
I gan beholde more and more,  
To see hir the beautee and the wonder;  
But never was ther dint of thonder,  
Ne that thing that men calle foudre,  
That smoot somtyme a tour to poudre,  
And in his swifte coming brende,  
That so swythe gan descende,  
As this foul, whan hit behelde  
That I a—roume was in the felde;  
And with his grimme pawes stronge,



Within his sharpe nayles longe,  
 Me, fleinge, at a swappe he hente,  
 And with his sours agayn up wente,  
 Me caryinge in his clawes starke  
 As lightly as I were a larke,  
 How high I can not telle yow,  
 For I cam up, I niste how.  
 For so astonied and a-sweved  
 Was every vertu in my heved,  
 What with his sours and with my drede,  
 That al my feling gan to dede;  
 For—why hit was to greet affray.

Thus I longe in his clawes lay,  
 Til at the laste he to me spak  
 In mannes vois, and seyde, `Awak!  
 And be not so a-gast, for shame!'   
 And called me tho by my name,  
 And, for I sholde the bet abreyde —  
 Me mette — `Awak,' to me he seyde,  
 Right in the same vois and stevene  
 That useth oon I coude nevene;  
 And with that vois, soth for to sayn,  
 My minde cam to me agayn;  
 For hit was goodly seyde to me,  
 So nas hit never wont to be.

And herewithal I gan to stere,  
 And he me in his feet to bere,  
 Til that he felte that I had hete,  
 And felte eek tho myn herte bete.  
 And tho gan he me to disporte,  
 And with wordes to comforte,  
 And sayde twyes, `Seynte Marie!  
 Thou art noyous for to carie,  
 And nothing nedeth hit, parde!  
 For al—so wis god helpe me  
 As thou non harm shalt have of this;  
 And this cas, that betid thee is,  
 Is for thy lore and for thy prow; —  
 Let see! darst thou yet loke now?  
 Be ful assured, boldely,  
 I am thy frend.' And therwith I  
 Gan for to wondren in my minde.  
 `O god,' thoughte I, `that madest kinde,  
 Shal I non other weyes dye?  
 Wher loves wol me stellifye,  
 Or what thing may this signifye?  
 I neither am Enok, ne Elye,  
 Ne Romulus, ne Ganymede  
 That was y-bore up, as men rede,  
 To hevene with dan Iupiter,  
 And maad the goddes boteler.'

Lo! this was tho my fantasye!  
 But he that bar me gan espye  
 That I so thoghte, and seyde this: —  
 `Thou demest of thy-self amis;  
 For Ioves is not ther—about —  
 I dar wel putte thee out of doute —  
 To make of thee as yet a sterre.  
 But er I bere thee moche ferre,  
 I wol thee telle what I am,  
 And whider thou shalt, and why I cam  
 To done this, so that thou take  
 Good herte, and not for fere quake.'  
 `Gladly,' quod I. — `Now wel,' quod he: —  
 `First I, that in my feet have thee,  
 Of which thou hast a feer and wonder,  
 Am dwellinge with the god of thonder,  
 Which that men callen Iupiter,  
 That dooth me flee ful ofte fer  
 To do al his comaundement.  
 And for this cause he hath me sent  
 To thee: now herke, by thy trouthe!  
 Certeyn, he hath of thee routhe,  
 That thou so longe trewely  
 Hast served so ententifly  
 His blinde nevew Cupido,  
 And fair Venus goddesse also,  
 Withoute guerdoun ever yit,  
 And nevertheles has set thy wit —  
 Although that in thy hede ful lyte is —  
 To make bokes, songes, dytees,  
 In ryme, or elles in cadence,  
 As thou best canst, in reverence  
 Of Love, and of his servants eke,  
 That have his servise soght, and seke;  
 And peynest thee to preyse his art,  
 Although thou haddest never part;  
 Wherfor, al—so god me blesse,  
 Ioves halt hit greet humblesse  
 And vertu eek, that thou wolt make  
 A—night ful ofte thyn heed to ake,  
 In thy studie so thou wrytest,  
 And ever—mo of love endytest,  
 In honour of him and preysinges,  
 And in his folkes furtheringes,  
 And in hir matere al devycest,  
 And noght him nor his folk despyssest,  
 Although thou mayst go in the daunce  
 Of hem that him list not avaunce.  
 `Wherfor, as I seyde, y—wis,  
 Iupiter considereth this,  
 And also, beau sir, other thinges;

That is, that thou hast no tydinges  
Of Loves folk, if they be glade,  
Ne of noght elles that god made;  
And noght only fro fer contree  
That ther no tyding comth to thee,  
But of thy verray neyghebores,  
That dwellen almost at thy dores,  
Thou herest neither that ne this;  
For whan thy labour doon al is,  
And hast y-maad thy rekeninges,  
In stede of reste and newe thinges,  
Thou gost hoom to thy hous anoon;  
And, also domb as any stoon,  
Thou sittest at another boke,  
Til fully daswed is thy loke,  
And livest thus as an hermyte,  
Although thyn abstinence is lyte.  
    `And therfor Ioves, through his grace,  
Wol that I bere thee to a place,  
Which that hight THE HOUS OF FAME,  
To do thee som disport and game,  
In som recompensacioun  
Of labour and devocioun  
That thou has had, lo! causeles,  
To Cupido, the reccheles!  
And thus this god, thorgh his meryte,  
Wol with som maner thing thee quyte,  
So that thou wolt be of good chere.  
For truste wel, that thou shalt here,  
When we be comen ther I seye,  
Mo wonder thinges, dar I leye:  
Of Loves folke mo tydinges,  
Both soth-sawes and lesinges;  
And mo loves newe begonne,  
And longe y-served loves wonne,  
And mo loves casuelly  
That been betid, no man wot why,  
But as a blind man stert an hare;  
And more Iolytee and fare,  
Whyl that they finde love of stele,  
As thinketh hem, and over-al wele;  
Mo discords, mo Ielousyes,  
Mo murmurs, and mo novelryes,  
And mo dissimulaciouns;  
And feyned reparaciouns;  
And mo berdes in two houres  
Withoute rasour or sisoures  
Y-maad, then greynes be of sondes;  
And eke mo holdinge in hondes,  
And also mo renovelaunces  
Of olde forleten aqueyntaunces;

Mo love—dayes and acordes  
Then on instruments ben cordes;  
And eke of loves mo eschaunges  
Than ever cornes were in graunges;  
Unnethe maistow trowen this?' —  
Quod he. 'No, helpe me god so wis!' —  
Quod I. 'No? why?' quod he. 'For hit  
Were impossible, to my wit,  
Though that Fame hadde al the pyes  
In al a realme, and al the spyes,  
How that yet she shulde here al this,  
Or they espie hit.' 'O yis, yis!'  
Quod he to me, 'that can I preve  
By resoun, worthy for to leve,  
So that thou yeve thyn advertence  
To understonde my sentence.  
    'First shalt thou heren wher she dwelleth,  
And so thyn owne book hit telleth;  
Hir paleys stant, as I shal seye,  
Right even in middes of the weye  
Betwixen hevene, erthe, and see;  
That, what—so—ever in al these three  
Is spoken, in privee or aperte,  
The way therto is so overte,  
And stant eek in so Iuste a place,  
That every soun mot to hit pace,  
Or what so comth fro any tonge,  
Be hit rouned, red, or songe,  
Or spoke in seurtee or in drede,  
Certein, hit moste thider nede.  
    'Now herkne wel; for—why I wille  
Tellen thee a propre skile,  
And worthy demonstracioun  
In myn imagynacioun.  
    'Geffrey, thou wost right wel this,  
That every kindly thing that is,  
Hath a kindly stede ther he  
May best in hit conserved be;  
Unto which place every thing,  
Through his kindly enclyning,  
Moveth for to come to,  
Whan that hit is away therfro;  
As thus; lo, thou mayst al day see  
That any thing that hevye be,  
As stoon or leed, or thing of wighte,  
And ber hit never so hye on highte,  
Lat goo thyn hand, hit falleth down.  
    'Right so seye I by fyre or soun,  
Or smoke, or other thinges lighte,  
Alwey they seke upward on highte;  
Whyl ech of hem is at his large,

Light thing up, and downward charge.

    `And for this cause mayst thou see,  
That every river to the see  
Enclyned is to go, by kinde.  
And by these skilles, as I finde,  
Hath fish dwellinge in floode and see,  
And trees eek in erthe be.  
Thus every thing, by this resoun,  
Hath his propre mansioun,  
To which hit seketh to repaire,  
As ther hit shulde not apaire.  
Lo, this sentence is knowen couthe  
Of every philosophres mouthe,  
As Aristotle and dan Platon,  
And other clerkes many oon;  
And to confirme my resoun,  
Thou wost wel this, that speche is soun,  
Or elles no man mighte hit here;  
Now herkne what I wol thee lere.

    `Soun is noght but air y-broken,  
And every speche that is spoken,  
Loud or privee, foul or fair,  
In his substaunce is but air;  
For as flaumbe is but lighted smoke,  
Right so soun is air y-broke.  
But this may be in many wyse,  
Of which I wil thee two devise,  
As soun that comth of pype or harpe.  
For whan a pype is blowen sharpe,  
The air is twist with violence,  
And rent; lo, this is my sentence;  
Eke, whan men harpe-stringes smyte,  
Whether hit be moche or lyte,  
Lo, with the strook the air to-breketh;  
Right so hit breketh whan men speketh.  
Thus wost thou wel what thing is speche.

    `Now hennesforth I wol thee teche,  
How every speche, or noise, or soun,  
Through his multiplicacioun,  
Thogh hit were pyped of a mouse,  
Moot nede come to Fames House.  
I preve hit thus — tak hede now —  
Be experience; for if that thou  
Throwe on water now a stoon,  
Wel wost thou, hit wol make anoon  
A litel roundel as a cercle,  
Paraventer brood as a covercle;  
And right anoon thou shalt see weel,  
That wheel wol cause another wheel,  
And that the thridde, and so forth, brother,  
Every cercle causinge other,

Wyder than himselve was;  
And thus, fro roundel to compas,  
Ech aboute other goinge,  
Caused of othres steringe,  
And multiplying ever-mo,  
Til that hit be so fer ygoo  
That hit at bothe brinkes be.  
Al-though thou mowe hit not y-see,  
Above, hit goth yet alway under,  
Although thou thenke hit a gret wonder.  
And who-so seith of trouthe I varie,  
Bid him proven the contrarie.  
And right thus every word, y-wis,  
That loude or privee spoken is,  
Moveth first an air aboute,  
And of this moving, out of doute,  
Another air anoon is meved,  
As I have of the water preved,  
That every cercle causeth other.  
Right so of air, my leve brother;  
Everich air in other stereth  
More and more, and speche up bereth,  
Or vois, or noise, or word, or soun,  
Ay through multiplicacioun,  
Til hit be atte House of Fame; —  
Tak hit in ernest or in game.  
    `Now have I told, if thou have minde,  
How speche or soun, of pure kinde,  
Enclyned is upward to meve;  
This, mayst thou fele, wel I preve.  
And that the mansioun, y-wis,  
That every thing enclyned to is,  
Hath his kindeliche stede:  
That sheweth hit, withouten drede,  
That kindly the mansioun  
Of every speche, of every soun,  
Be hit either foul or fair,  
Hath his kinde place in air.  
And sin that every thing, that is  
Out of his kinde place, y-wis,  
Moveth thider for to go  
If hit a-weye be therfro,  
As I before have preved thee,  
Hit seweth, every soun, pardee,  
Moveth kindly to pace  
Al up into his kindly place.  
And this place of which I telle,  
Ther as Fame list to dwelle,  
Is set amiddes of these three,  
Heven, erthe, and eek the see,  
As most conservatif the soun.

Than is this the conclusioun,  
That every speche of every man,  
As I thee telle first began,  
Moveth up on high to pace  
Kindely to Fames place.

    'Telle me this feithfully,  
Have I not preved thus simply,  
Withouten any subtiltee  
Of speche, or gret prolixitee  
Of termes of philosophye,  
Of figures of poetrye,  
Or colours of rethoryke?  
Pardee, hit oghte thee to lyke;  
For hard langage and hard matere  
Is encombrous for to here  
At ones; Wost thou not wel this?'  
And I answerde, and seyde, 'Yis.'

    'A ha!' quod he, 'lo, so I can,  
Lewedly to a lewed man  
Speke, and shewe him swiche skiles,  
That he may shake hem by the biles,  
So palpable they shulden be.  
But tel me this, now pray I thee,  
How thinkth thee my conclusioun?'  
Quod he. 'A good persuasioun,'  
Quod I, 'hit is; and lyk to be  
Right so as thou hast preved me.'  
'By god,' quod he, 'and as I leve,  
Thou shalt have yit, or hit be eve,  
Of every word of this sentence  
A preve, by experience;  
And with thyn eres heren wel  
Top and tail, and everydel,  
That every word that spoken is  
Comth into Fames Hous, y-wis,  
As I have seyde; what wilt thou more?'  
And with this word upper to sore  
He gan, and seyde, 'Be Seynt Iame!  
Now wil we speken al of game.' --

    'How farest thou?' quod he to me,  
'Wel,' quod I. 'Now see,' quod he,  
'By thy trouthe, yond adoun,  
Wher that thou knowest any toun,  
Or hous, or any other thing.  
And whan thou hast of ought knowing,  
Loke that thou warne me,  
And I anoon shal telle thee  
How fer that thou art now therfro.'

    And I adoun gan loken tho,  
And beheld feldes and plaines,  
And now hilles, and now mountaines,

Now valeys, and now forestes,  
And now, unethes, grete bestes;  
Now riveres, now citees,  
Now tounes, and now grete trees,  
Now shippes saillinge in the see.

But thus sone in a whyle he  
Was flowen fro the grounde so hye,  
That al the world, as to myn ye,  
No more semed than a prikke;  
Or elles was the air so thikke  
That I ne mighte not discerne.  
With that he spak to me as yerne,  
And seyde: 'Seestow any toun  
Or ought thou knowest yonder doun?'

I seyde, 'Nay.' 'No wonder nis,'  
Quod he, 'for half so high as this  
Nas Alexander Macedo;  
Ne the king, dan Scipio.  
That saw in dreame, at point devys,  
Helle and erthe, and paradys;  
Ne eek the wrecche Dedalus,  
Ne his child, nyce Icarus,  
That fleigh so highe that the hete  
His winges malt, and he fel wete  
In-mid the see, and ther he dreynte,  
For whom was maked moch compleynte.

'Now turn upward,' quod he, 'thy face,  
And behold this large place,  
This air; but loke thou ne be  
Adrad of hem that thou shalt see;  
For in this regioun, certein,  
Dwelleth many a citezein,  
Of which that speketh dan Plato.  
These ben the eyrish bestes, lo!'  
And so saw I al that meynee  
Bothe goon and also flee.  
'Now,' quod he tho, 'cast up thyn ye;  
See yonder, lo, the Galaxye,  
Which men clepeth the Milky Wey,  
For hit is whyt: and somme, parfey,  
Callen hit Watlinge Strete:  
That ones was y-brent with hete,  
Whan the sonnes sone, the rede,  
That highte Pheton, wolde lede  
Algate his fader cart, and gye.  
The cart-hors gonne wel espye  
That he ne coude no governaunce,  
And gonne for to lepe and launce,  
And beren him now up, now down,  
Til that he saw the Scorpioun,  
Which that in heven a signe is yit,



And he, for ferde, loste his wit,  
Of that, and leet the reynes goon  
Of his hors; and they anoon  
Gonne up to mounte, and doun descende  
Til bothe the eyr and erthe brende;  
Til Iupiter, lo, atte laste,  
Him slow, and fro the carte caste.  
Lo, is it not a greet mischaunce,  
To lete a fole han governaunce  
Of thing that he can not demeine?'

And with this word, soth for to seyne,  
He gan alway upper to sore,  
And gladded me ay more and more,  
So feithfully to me spak he.

Tho gan I loken under me,  
And beheld the eyrish bestes,  
Cloudes, mistes, and tempestes,  
Snowes, hailes, reines, windes,  
And thengendring in hir kindes,  
And al the wey through whiche I cam;  
'O god,' quod I, 'that made Adam,  
Moche is thy might and thy noblesse!'

And tho thoughte I upon Boece,  
That writ, 'a thought may flee so hye,  
With fetheres of Philosophye,  
To passen everich element;  
And whan he hath so fer y-went,  
Than may be seen, behind his bak,  
Cloud, and al that I of spak.'

Tho gan I wexen in a were,  
And seyde, 'I woot wel I am here;  
But wher in body or in gost  
I noot, y-wis; but god, thou wost!'  
For more cleer entendement  
Nadde he me never yit y-sent.  
And than thoughte I on Marcian,  
And eek on Anleclaudian,  
That sooth was hir descripcioun  
Of al the hevenes regioun,  
As fer as that I saw the preve;  
Therfor I can hem now beleve.

With that this egle gan to crye:  
'Lat be,' quod he, 'thy fantasye;  
Wilt thou lere of sterres aught?'  
'Nay, certeinly,' quod I, 'right naught;  
'And why? for I am now to old.'  
'Elles I wolde thee have told,'  
Quod he, 'the sterres names, lo,  
And al the hevenes signes to,  
And which they been.' 'No fors,' quod I.  
'Yis, pardee,' quod he; 'wostow why?'

For when thou redest poetrye,  
 How goddes gonne stellifye  
 Brid, fish, beste, or him or here,  
 As the Raven, or either Bere,  
 Or Ariones harpe fyn,  
 Castor, Pollux, or Delphyn,  
 Or Atlantes doughtres sevene,  
 How alle these arn set in hevene;  
 For though thou have hem ofte on honde,  
 Yet nostow not wher that they stonde.'  
 'No fors,' quod I, 'hit is no nede;  
 I leve as wel, so god me spede,  
 Hem that wryte of this matere,  
 As though I knew hir places here;  
 And eek they shynen here so brighte,  
 Hit shulde shenden al my sighte  
 To loke on hem.' 'That may wel be,'  
 Quod he. And so forth bar he me  
 A whyl, and than he gan to crye,  
 That never herde I thing so hye,  
 'Now up the heed; for al is wel;  
 Seynt Iulyan, lo, bon hostel!  
 See here the Hous of Fame, lo!  
 Maistow not heren that I do?'  
 'What?' quod I. 'The grete soun,'  
 Quod he, 'that rumbleth up and doun  
 In Fames Hous, full of tydinges,  
 Bothe of fair speche and chydinges,  
 And of fals and soth compouned.  
 Herke wel; hit is not rouned.  
 Herestow not the grete swogh?'  
 'Yis, pardee,' quod I, 'wel y-nogh.'  
 'And what soun is it lyk?' quod he.  
 'Peter! lyk beting of the see,'  
 Quod I, 'again the roches holowe,  
 Whan tempest doth the shippes swalowe;  
 And lat a man stonde, out of doute,  
 A myle thens, and here hit route;  
 Or elles lyk the last humblinge  
 After the clappe of oo thundringe,  
 Whan Ioves hath the aire y-bete;  
 But hit doth me for fere swete.'  
 'Nay, dred thee not thereof,' quod he,  
 'Hit is nothing wil byten thee;  
 Thou shalt non harme have, trewely.'  
 And with this word bothe he and I  
 As nigh the place arryved were  
 As men may casten with a spere.  
 I niste how, but in a strete  
 He sette me faire on my fete,  
 And seyde, 'Walke forth a pas,

And tak thyn aventure or cas,  
That thou shalt finde in Fames place.'  
    'Now,' quod I, 'whyl we han space  
To speke, or that I go fro thee,  
For the love of god, tel me,  
In sooth, that wil I of thee lere,  
If this noise that I here  
Be as I have herd thee tellen,  
Of folk that doun in erthe dwellen,  
And cometh here in the same wyse  
As I thee herde or this devyse;  
And that ther lyves body nis  
In al that hous that yonder is,  
That maketh al this loude fare?'  
    'No,' quod he, 'by Seynte Clare,  
And also wis god rede me!  
But o thinge I wil warne thee  
Of the which thou wolt have wonder.  
Lo, to the House of Fame yonder  
Thou wost how cometh every speche,  
Hit nedeth noght thee eft to teche.  
But understond now right wel this;  
Whan any speche y-comen is  
Up to the paleys, anon-right  
Hit wexeth lyk the same wight,  
Which that the word in erthe spak,  
Be hit clothed red or blak;  
And hath so verray his lyknesse  
That spak the word, that thou wilt gesse  
That hit the same body be,  
Man or woman, he or she,  
And is not this a wonder thing?'  
    'Yis,' quod I tho, 'by hevene king!'  
And with this worde, 'Farwel,' quod he,  
    'And here I wol abyden thee;  
And god of hevene sende thee grace,  
Som good to lerne in this place,'  
And I of him took leve anoon,  
And gan forth to the paleys goon.

Explicit liber secundus.

*Book III Incipit liber tercius.*

Invocation.

O god of science and of light,  
Apollo, through thy grete might,

This litel laste book thou gye!  
Nat that I wilne, for maistrye,  
Here art poetical be shewed;  
But, for the rym is light and lewed,  
Yit make hit sumwhat agreable,  
Though som vers faile in a syllable;  
And that I do no diligence  
To shewe craft, but o sentence.  
And if, divyne vertu, thou  
Wilt helpe me to shewe now  
That in myn hede y-marked is —  
Lo, that is for to menen this,  
The Hous of Fame for to descryve —  
Thou shalt see me go, as blyve,  
Unto the nexte laure I see,  
And kisse hit, for hit is thy tree;  
Now entreth in my brest anoon!

The Dream.

Whan I was fro this egle goon,  
I gan beholde upon this place.  
And certein, or I ferther pace,  
I wol yow al the shap devyse  
Of hous and site; and al the wyse  
How I gan to this place aproche  
That stood upon so high a roche,  
Hyer stant ther noon in Spaine.  
But up I clomb with alle paine,  
And though to climbe hit greved me,  
Yit I ententif was to see,  
And for to pouren wonder lowe,  
If I coude any weyes knowe  
What maner stoon this roche was;  
For hit was lyk a thing of glas,  
But that hit shoon ful more clere;  
But of what congeled matere  
Hit was, I niste redely.

But at the laste espyed I,  
And found that hit was, every deel,  
A roche of yse, and not of steel.  
Thoughte I, 'By Seynt Thomas of Kent!  
This were a feble foundement  
To biden on a place hye;  
He ought him litel glorifye  
That her-on bilt, god so me save!'

Tho saw I al the half y-grave  
With famous folkes names fele,  
That had y-been in mochel wele,  
And hir fames wyde y-blowe.  
But wel unethes coude I knowe

Any lettres for to rede  
Hir names by; for, out of drede,  
They were almost of-thowed so,  
That of the lettres oon or two  
Was molte away of every name,  
So unfamous was wexe hir fame;  
But men seyn, 'What may ever laste?'

Tho gan I in myn herte caste,  
That they were molte away with hete,  
And not away with stormes bete.  
For on that other syde I sey  
Of this hille, that northward lay,  
How hit was writen ful of names  
Of folk that hadden grete fames  
Of olde tyme, and yit they were  
As fresshe as men had writen hem there  
The selve day right, or that houre  
That I upon hem gan to poure.  
But wel I wiste what hit made;  
Hit was conserved with the shade ---  
Al this wrytinge that I sy ---  
Of a castel, that stood on hy,  
And stood eek on so cold a place,  
That hete mighte hit not deface.

Tho gan I up the hille to goon,  
And fond upon the coppe a woon,  
That alle the men that ben on lyve  
Ne han the cunning to descryve  
The beautee of that ilke place,  
Ne coude casten no compace  
Swich another for to make,  
That mighte of beautee be his make  
Ne be so wonderliche y-wrought;  
That hit astonieth yit my thought,  
And maketh al my wit to swinke  
On this castel to bethinke.  
So that the grete craft, beautee,  
The cast, and curiositee  
Ne can I not to yow devyse,  
My wit ne may me not suffyse.

But natheles al the substance  
I have yit in my remembrance;  
For-why me thoughte, by Seynt Gyle!  
Al was of stone of beryle,  
Bothe castel and the tour,  
And eek the halle, and every bour,  
Withouten peces or Ioininges,  
But many subtil compassinges,  
Babewinnes and pinacles,  
Imageries and tabernacles,  
I saw; and ful eek of windowes,

As flakes falle in grete snowes.  
And eek in ech of the pinacles  
Weren sondry habitacles,  
In whiche stoden, al withoute —  
Ful the castel, al aboute —  
Of alle maner of minstrales,  
And gestiours, that tellen tales  
Bothe of weping and of game,  
Of al that longeth unto Fame.

Ther herde I pleyen on an harpe  
That souned bothe wel and sharpe,  
Orpheus ful craftely,  
And on his syde, faste by,  
Sat the harper Orion,  
And Eacides Chiron,  
And other harpers many oon,  
And the Bret Glascurion;  
And smale harpers with her glees  
Saten under hem in sees,  
And gunne on hem upward to gape,  
And countrefete hem as an ape,  
Or as craft countrefeteth kinde.

Tho saugh I stonden hem behinde,  
A—fer fro hem, al by hemselfe,  
Many thousand tymes twelve,  
That maden loude menstralcyes  
In cornemuse and shalmyes,  
And many other maner pype,  
That craftely begunne pype  
Bothe in doucet and in rede,  
That ben at festes with the brede;  
And many floute and liling—horne,  
And pypes made of grene corne,  
As han thise litel herde—gromes  
That kepen bestes in the bromes.

Ther saugh I than Atiteris,  
And of Athenes dan Pseustis,  
And Marcia that lost her skin,  
Bothe in face, body, and chin,  
For that she wolde envyen, lo!  
To pypen bet than Apollo.  
Ther saugh I famous, olde and yonge,  
Pypers of the Duche tonge,  
To lerne love—daunces, springes,  
Reyes, and these straunge thinges.

Tho saugh I in another place  
Stonden in a large space,  
Of hem that maken bloody soun  
In trumpe, beme, and clarioun;  
For in fight and blood—shedinge  
Is used gladly clarioninge.

Ther herde I trumpen Messenus,  
Of whom that speketh Virgilius.  
Ther herde I Ioab trumpe also,  
Theodomas, and other mo;  
And alle that used clarion  
In Cataloigne and Aragon,  
That in hir tyme famous were  
To lerne, saugh I trumpe there.

Ther saugh I sitte in other sees,  
Pleyinge upon sondry glees,  
Whiche that I cannot nevene,  
Mo then sterres been in hevene,  
Of whiche I nil as now not ryme,  
For ese of yow, and losse of tyme:  
For tyme y-lost, this knowen ye,  
By no way may recovered be.

Ther saugh I pleyen Iogelours,  
Magiciens and tregetours,  
And phitonesses, charmeresses,  
Olde wicches, sorceresses,  
That use exorsisaciouns,  
And eek thise fumigaciouns;  
And clerkes eek, which conne wel  
Al this magyke naturel,  
That craftely don hir ententes,  
To make, in certeyn ascendentes,  
Images, lo, through which magyk  
To make a man ben hool or syk.  
Ther saugh I thee queen Medea,  
And Circes eke, and Calipsa;  
Ther saugh I Hermes Ballenus,  
Lymote, and eek Simon Magus.  
Ther saugh I, and knew hem by name,  
That by such art don men han fame.  
Ther saugh I Colle tregetour  
Upon a table of sicamour  
Pleye an uncouth thing to telle;  
I saugh him carien a wind-melle  
Under a walsh-note shale.

What shuld I make lenger tale  
Of al the peple that I say,  
Fro hennes in-to domesday?

Whan I had al this folk beholde,  
And fond me lous, and noght y-holde,  
And eft y-mused longe whyle  
Upon these walles of beryle,  
That shoon ful lighter than a glas,  
And made wel more than hit was  
To semen, every thing, y-wis,  
As kinde thing of fames is;  
I gan forth romen til I fond

The castel–yate on my right hond,  
Which that so wel corven was  
That never swich another nas;  
And yit hit was by aventure  
Y–wrought, as often as by cure.

Hit nedeth noght yow for to tellen,  
To make yow to longe dwellen,  
Of this yates florissinges,  
Ne of compasses, ne of kervinges,  
Ne how they hatte in masoneries,  
As, corbetz fulle of imageries.  
But, lord! so fair hit was to shewe,  
For hit was al with gold behewe.  
But in I wente, and that anoon;  
Ther mette I crying many oon, --  
`A larges, larges, hold up wel!  
God save the lady of this pel,  
Our owne gentil lady Fame,  
And hem that wilnen to have name  
Of us! Thus herde I cryen alle,  
And faste comen out of halle,  
And shoken nobles and sterlinges.  
And somme crouned were as kinges,  
With crounes wroght ful of losenges;  
And many riban, and many frenges  
Were on hir clothes trewely.

Tho atte laste aspyed I  
That pursevauntes and heraudes,  
That cryen riche folkes laudes,  
Hit weren alle; and every man  
Of hem, as I yow tellen can,  
Had on him throwen a vesture,  
Which that men clepe a cote–armure,  
Enbrowded wonderliche riche,  
Al–though they nere nought y–liche.  
But noght nil I, so mote I thryve,  
Been aboute to discryve  
Al these armes that ther weren,  
That they thus on her cotes beren,  
For hit to me were impossible;  
Men mighte make of hem a bible  
Twenty foot thikke, as I trowe.  
For certeyn, who–so coude y–knowe  
Mighte ther alle the armes seen  
Of famous folk that han y–been  
In Auffrike, Europe, and Asye,  
Sith first began the chevalrye,

Lo! how shulde I now telle al this?  
Ne of the halle eek what nede is  
To tellen yow, that every wal  
Of hit, and floor, and roof and al



Was plated half a fote thikke  
Of gold, and that nas no-thing wikke,  
But, for to prove in alle wyse,  
As fyn as ducat in Venyse,  
Of whiche to lyte al in my pouche is?  
And they wer set as thikke of nouchis  
Fulle of the fynest stones faire,  
That men rede in the Lapidaire,  
As greses growen in a mede;  
But hit were al to longe to rede  
The names; and therfore I pace.

But in this riche lusty place,  
That Fames halle called was,  
Ful moche prees of folk ther nas,  
Ne crouding, for to mochil prees.  
But al on hye, above a dees,  
Sitte in a see imperial,  
That maad was of a rubee al,  
Which that a carbuncle is y-called,  
I saugh, perpetually y-stalled,  
A feminyne creature;  
That never formed by nature  
Nas swich another thing y-seye.  
For altherfirst, soth for to seye,  
Me thoughte that she was so lyte,  
That the lengthe of a cubyte  
Was lenger than she semed be;  
But thus sone, in a whyle, she  
Hir tho so wonderliche streighte,  
That with hir feet she therthe reighte,  
And with hir heed she touched hevene,  
Ther as shynen sterres sevene.  
And ther-to eek, as to my wit,  
I saugh a gretter wonder yit  
Upon hir eyen to beholde;  
But certeyn I hem never tolde;  
For as fele eyen hadde she  
As fetheres upon foules be,  
Or weren on the bestes foure  
That goddes trone gunne honoure,  
As Iohn writ in th'Apocalips.  
Hir heer, that oundy was and crips,  
As burned gold hit shoon to see.  
And sooth to tellen, also she  
Had also fele up-standing eres  
And tonges, as on bestes heres;  
And on hir feet wexen saugh I  
Partriches winges redely.

But, lord! the perrie and the richesse  
I saugh sitting on this goddessse!  
And, lord! the hevenish melodye

Of songes, ful of armonye,  
I herde aboute her trone y-songe,  
That al the paleys-walles ronge!  
So song the mighty Muse, she  
That cleped is Caliopee,  
And hir eighte sustren eke,  
That in hir face semen meke;  
And evermo, eternally,  
They songe of Fame, as tho herde I: --  
'Heried be thou and thy name,  
Goddesse of renoun and of fame!'

Tho was I war, lo, atte laste,  
As I myn eyen gan up caste,  
That this ilke noble quene  
On hir shuldres gan sustene  
Bothe tharmes and the name  
Of tho that hadde large fame;  
Alexander, and Hercules  
That with a sherte his lyf lees!  
Thus fond I sitting this goddesse,  
In nobley, honour, and richesse;  
Of which I stinte a whyle now,  
Other thing to tellen yow.

Tho saugh I stonde on either syde,  
Streight down to the dores wyde,  
Fro the dees, many a pileer  
Of metal, that shoon not ful cleer;  
But though they nere of no richesse,  
Yet they were maad for greet noblesse,  
And in hem greet and hy sentence,  
And folk of digne reverence,  
Of whiche I wol yow telle fonde,  
Upon the piler saugh I stonde.

Alderfirst, lo, ther I sigh,  
Upon a piler stonde on high,  
That was of lede and yren fyn,  
Him of secte Saturnyn,  
The Ebrayk Iosephus, the olde,  
That of Iewes gestes tolde;  
And bar upon his shuldres hye  
The fame up of the Iewerye.  
And by him stoden other sevene,  
Wyse and worthy for to nevene,  
To helpen him bere up the charge,  
Hit was so hevy and so large.  
And for they writen of batailes,  
As wel as other olde mervailles,  
Therfor was, lo, this pileer,  
Of which that I yow telle heer,  
Of lede and yren bothe, y-wis,  
For yren Martes metal is,

Which that god is of bataille;  
And the leed, withouten faille,  
Is, lo, the metal of Saturne,  
That hath ful large wheel to turne.  
Tho stoden forth, on every rowe,  
Of hem which that I coude knowe,  
Thogh I hem noght be ordre telle,  
To make yow to long to dwelle.

These, of whiche I ginne rede,  
Ther saugh I stonden, out of drede:  
Upon an yren piler strong,  
That peynted was, al endelonge,  
With tygres blode in every place,  
The Tholosan that highte Stace,  
That bar of Thebes up the fame  
Upon his shuldres, and the name  
Also of cruel Achilles.  
And by him stood, withouten lees,  
Ful wonder hye on a pileer  
Of yren, he, the gret Omeer;  
And with him Dares and Tytus  
Before, and eek he Lollius,  
And Guido eek de Columpnis,  
And English Gaufride eek, y-wis;  
And ech of these, as have I loye,  
Was besy for to bere up Troye.  
So hevy ther-of was the fame,  
That for to bere hit was no game.  
But yit I gan ful wel espye,  
Betwix hem was a litil envye.  
Oon seyde, Omere made lyes,  
Feyninge in his poetryes,  
And was to Grekes favorable;  
Therfor held he hit but fable.

Tho saugh I stonde on a pileer,  
That was of tinned yren cleer,  
That Latin poete, dan Virgyle,  
That bore hath up a longe whyle  
The fame of Pius Eneas.

And next him on a piler was,  
Of coper, Venus clerk, Ovyde,  
That hath y-sowen wonder wyde  
The grete god of Loves name.  
And ther he bar up wel his fame,  
Upon his piler, also hye  
As I might see hit with myn ye:  
For-why this halle, of whiche I rede  
Was woxe on highte, lengthe and brede,  
Wel more, by a thousand del,  
Than hit was erst, that saugh I wel.

Tho saugh I, on a piler by,

Of yren wroght ful sternely,  
The grete poete, daun Lucan,  
And on his shuldres bar up than,  
As highe as that I mighte see,  
The fame of Iulius and Pompee.  
And by him stoden alle these clerkes,  
That writen of Romes mighty werkes,  
That, if I wolde hir names telle,  
Al to longe most I dwelle.

And next him on a piler stood  
Of soulfre, lyk as he were wood,  
Dan Claudian, the soth to telle,  
That bar up al the fame of helle,  
Of Pluto, and of Proserpyne,  
That quene is of the derke pyne.

What shulde I more telle of this?  
The halle was al ful, y-wis,  
Of hem that writen olde gestes,  
As ben on trees rokes nestes;  
But hit a ful confus matere  
Were al the gestes for to here,  
That they of write, and how they highte.  
But whyl that I beheld this sighte,  
I herde a noise aprochen blyve,  
That ferde as been don in an hyve,  
Agen her tyme of out-fleyinge;  
Right swiche a maner murmuringe,  
For al the world, hit semed me.

Tho gan I loke aboute and see,  
That ther come entring in the halle  
A right gret company with-alle,  
And that of sondry regiouns,  
Of alleskinnes condiciouns,  
That dwelle in erthe under the mone,  
Pore and ryche. And also sone  
As they were come into the halle,  
They gonne down on knees falle  
Before this ilke noble quene,  
And seyde, `Graunte us, lady shene,  
Ech of us, of thy grace, a bone!'  
And somme of hem she graunted sone,  
And somme she werned wel and faire;  
And somme she graunted the contraire  
Of hir axing utterly,  
But thus I seye yow trewely,  
What hir cause was, I niste.  
For of this folk, ful wel I wiste,  
They hadde good fame ech deserved,  
Although they were diversly served;  
Right as hir suster, dame Fortune,  
Is wont to serven in comune.

Now herkne how she gan to paye  
 That gonne hir of hir grace praye;  
 And yit, lo, al this companye  
 Seyden sooth, and noght a lye.  
 `Madame,' seyden they, `we be  
 Folk that heer besechen thee,  
 That thou graunte us now good fame,  
 And let our werkes han that name;  
 In ful recompensacioun  
 Of good werk, give us good renoun.'

`I werne yow hit,' quod she anoon,  
 `Ye gete of me good fame noon,  
 By god! and therfor go your wey.'

`Alas,' quod they, `and welaway!  
 Telle us, what may your cause be?'

`For me list hit noght,' quod she;  
 `No wight shal speke of yow, y-wis,  
 Good ne harm, ne that ne this.'

And with that word she gan to calle  
 Hir messenger, that was in halle,  
 And bad that he shulde faste goon,  
 Up peyne to be blind anoon,  
 For Eolus, the god of winde; —  
 `In Trace ther ye shul him finde,  
 And bid him bringe his clarioun,  
 That is ful dyvers of his soun,  
 And hit is cleped Clere Laude,  
 With which he wont is to heraude  
 Hem that me list y-preised be:  
 And also bid him how that he  
 Bringe his other clarioun,  
 That highte Sclaundre in every toun,  
 With which he wont is to diffame  
 Hem that me list, and do hem shame.'

This messenger gan faste goon,  
 And found wher, in a cave of stoon,  
 In a contree that highte Trace,  
 This Eolus, with harde grace,  
 Held the windes in distresse,  
 And gan hem under him to presse,  
 That they gonne as beres rore,  
 He bond and pressed hem so sore.

This messenger gan faste crye,  
 `Rys up,' quod he, `and faste hye,  
 Til that thou at my lady be;  
 And tak thy clarions eek with thee,  
 And speed the forth.' And he anon  
 Took to a man, that hight Triton,  
 His clariouns to bere tho,  
 And leet a certeyn wind to go,  
 That blew so hidously and hye,

That hit ne lefte not a skye  
In al the welken longe an brood.

    This Eolus no-wher abood  
Til he was come at Fames feet,  
And eek the man that Triton heet;  
And ther he stood, as still as stoon.  
And her-withal ther com anoon  
Another huge companye  
Of gode folk, and gunne crye,  
`Lady, graunte us now good fame,  
And lat our werkes han that name  
Now, in honour of gentilesse,  
And also god your soule blesse!  
For we han wel deserved hit,  
Therefore is right that we ben quit.'

    `As thryve I,' quod she, `ye shal faile,  
Good werkes shal yow noght availe  
To have of me good fame as now.  
But wite ye what? Y graunte yow,  
That ye shal have a shrewed fame  
And wikked loos, and worse name,  
Though ye good loos have wel deserved.  
Now go your wey, for ye be served;  
And thou, dan Eolus, let see!  
Tak forth thy trumpe anon,' quod she,  
`That is y-cleped Sclaunder light,  
And blow her loos, that every wight  
Speke of hem harm and shrewednesse,  
In stede of good and worthinesse.  
For thou shalt trumpe al the contraire  
Of that they han don wel or faire.'

    `Alas,' thoughte I, `what adventures  
Han these sory creatures!  
For they, amonges al the pres,  
Shul thus be shamed, gilteles!  
But what! hit moste nedes be.'

    What did this Eolus, but he  
Tok out his blakke trumpe of bras,  
That fouler than the devil was,  
And gan this trumpe for to blowe,  
As al the world shulde overthrowe;  
That through-out every regioun  
Wente this foule trumpes soun,  
As swift as pelet out of gonne,  
Whan fyr is in the poudre ronne.  
And swiche a smoke gan out-wende  
Out of his foule trumpes ende,  
Blak, blo, grenissh, swartish reed,  
As doth wher that men melte leed,  
Lo, al on high fro the tuel!  
And therto oo thing saugh I wel,

That, the ferther that hit ran,  
The gretter wexen hit began,  
As doth the river from a welle,  
And hit stank as the pit of helle.  
Alas, thus was hir shame y-ronge,  
And giltelees, on every tonge.

Tho com the thridde companye,  
And gunne up to the dees to hye,  
And down on knees they fille anon,  
And seyde, 'We ben everichon  
Folk that han ful trewely  
Deserved fame rightfully,  
And pray yow, hit mot be knowe,  
Right as hit is, and forth y-blowe.'  
'I graunte,' quod she, 'for me list  
That now your gode werk be wist;  
And yet ye shul han better loos,  
Right in dispyt of alle your foos,  
Than worthy is; and that anoon:  
Lat now,' quod she, 'thy trumpe goon,  
Thou Eolus, that is so blak;  
And out thyn other trumpe tak  
That highte Laude, and blow it so  
That through the world hir fame go  
Al esely, and not to faste,  
That hit be knowen atte laste.'

'Ful gladly, lady myn,' he seyde;  
And out his trumpe of golde he brayde  
Anon, and sette hit to his mouthe,  
And blew hit est, and west, and southe,  
And north, as loude as any thunder,  
That every wight hadde of hit wonder,  
So brode hit ran, or than hit stente,  
And, certes, al the breeth that wente  
Out of his trumpes mouthe smelde  
As men a pot-ful bawme helde  
Among a basket ful of roses;  
This favour dide he til hir loses.

And right with this I gan aspye,  
Ther com the ferthe companye --  
But certeyn they were wonder fewe --  
And gonne stonden in a rewe,  
And seyden, 'Certes, lady brighte,  
We han don wel with al our mighte;  
But we ne kepen have no fame.  
Hyd our werkes and our name,  
For goddes love! for certes we  
Han certeyn doon hit for bountee,  
And for no maner other thing.'  
'I graunte yow al your asking,'  
Quod she; 'let your werk be deed.'

With that aboute I clew myn heed,  
And saugh anoon the fifte route  
That to this lady gonne loute,  
And down on knes anoon to falle;  
And to hir tho besoughten alle  
To hyde hit gode werkes eek,  
And seyde, they yeven noght a leek  
For fame, ne for swich renoun;  
For they, for contemplacioun  
And goddes love, hadde y-wrought;  
Ne of fame wolde they nought.

‘What?’ quod she, ‘and be ye wood?  
And wene ye for to do good,  
And for to have of that no fame?  
Have ye dispyt to have my name?  
Nay, ye shul liven everichoon!  
Blow thy trumpe and that anoon,’  
Quod she, ‘thou Eolus, I hote,  
And ring this folkes werk by note,  
That al the world may of hit here.’  
And he gan blowe hir loos so clere  
In his golden clarioun  
That through the world wente the soun,  
Also kenely, and eek so softe;  
But atte laste hit was on-lofte.

Thoo com the sexte companye,  
And gonne faste on Fame crye.  
Right verrailly, in this manere  
They seyden: ‘Mercy, lady dere!  
To telle certain, as hit is,  
We han don neither that ne this,  
But ydel al our lif y-be.  
But, natheles, yit preye we,  
That we mowe han so good a fame,  
And greet renoun and knowen name,  
As they that han don noble gestes,  
And acheved alle hir lestes,  
As wel of love as other thing;  
Al was us never broche ne ring,  
Ne elles nought, from wimmen sent,  
Ne ones in hir herte y-ment  
To make us only frendly chere,  
But mighte temen us on bere;  
Yit lat us to the peple seme  
Swiche as the world may of us deme,  
That wimmen loven us for wood.  
Hit shal don us as moche good,  
And to our herte as moche availe  
To countrepeise ese and travaile,  
As we had wonne hit with labour;  
For that is dere boght honour



At regard of our grete ese.  
And yit thou most us more plese  
Let us be holden eek, therto,  
Worthy, wyse, and gode also,  
And riche, and happy unto love.  
For goddes love, that sit above,  
Thogh we may not the body have  
Of wimmen, yet, so god yow save!  
Let men glewe on us the name;  
Suffyceth that we han the fame.'

'I graunte,' quod she, 'by my trouthe!  
Now, Eolus, with-outen slouthe.  
Tak out thy trumpe of gold, let see,  
And blow as they han axed me,  
That every man wene hem at ese,  
Though they gon in ful badde lese.'  
This Eolus gan hit so blowe  
That through the world hit was y-knowe.

Tho come the seventh route anon,  
And fel on knees everichoon,  
And seyde, 'Lady, graunte us sone  
The same thing, the same bone,  
That ye this nexte folk han doon.'  
'Fy on yow,' quod she, 'everichoon!  
Ye masty swyn, ye ydel wrecches,  
Ful of roten slowe tecches!  
What? false theves! wher ye wolde  
Be famous good, and no-thing nolde  
Deserve why, ne never roughete?  
Men rather yow to-hangen oughte!  
For ye be lyk the sweynte cat,  
That wolde have fish; but wostow what?  
He wolde no-thing wete his clowes.  
Yvel thrift come to your Iowes,  
And eek on myn, if I hit graunte,  
Or do yow favour, yow to avaunte!  
Thou Eolus, thou king of Trace!  
Go, blow this folk a soo grace,'  
Quod she, 'anon; and wostow how?  
As I shal telle thee right now;  
Sey: "These ben they that wolde honour  
Have, and do noskinnes labour,  
Ne do no good, and yit han laude;  
And that men wende that bele Isaude  
Ne coude hem noght of love-werne;  
And yit she that grint at a querne  
Is al to good to ese hir herte.'"

This Eolus anon up sterte,  
And with his blakke clarioun  
He gan to blasen out a soun,  
As loude as belweth wind in helle.

And eek therwith, the sooth to telle,  
This soun was al so ful of Iapes,  
As ever mowes were in apes.  
And that wente al the world aboute,  
That every wight gan on hem shoute,  
And for to laughe as they were wode;  
Such game fonde they in hir hode.

Tho com another companye,  
That had y–doon the traiterye,  
The harm, the gretest wikkednesse  
That any herte couthe gesse;  
And prayed hir to han good fame,  
And that she nolde hem doon no shame,  
But yeve hem loos and good renoun,  
And do hit blowe in clarioun.  
`Nay, wis!' quod she, `hit were a vyce;  
Al be ther in me no Iustyce  
Me listeth not to do hit now,  
Ne this nil I not graunte you.'

Tho come ther lepinge in a route,  
And gonne choppen al aboute  
Every man upon the croune,  
That al the halle gan to sounen,  
And seyden: `Lady, lefe and dere  
We ben swich folk as ye mowe here.  
To tellen al the tale aright,  
We ben shrewes, every wight,  
And han delyt in wikkednes,  
As gode folk han in goodnes;  
And Ioye to be knowen shrewes,  
And fulle of vyce and wikked thewes;  
Wherfor we prayen yow, a–rowe,  
That our fame swich be knowe  
In alle thing right as hit is.'

`I graunte hit yow,' quod she, `y–wis.  
But what art thou that seyst this tale,  
That werest on thy hose a pale,  
And on thy tipet swiche a belle!  
`Madame,' quod he, `sooth to telle,  
I am that ilke shrewe, y–wis,  
That brende the temple of Isidis  
In Athenes, lo, that citee.'  
`And wherfor didest thou so?' quod she.  
`By my thrift,' quod he, `madame,  
I wolde fayn han had a fame,  
As other folk hadde in the toun,  
Al–thogh they were of greet renoun  
For hir vertu and for hir thewes;  
Thoughte I, as greet a fame han shrewes,  
Thogh hit be but for shrewednesse,  
As gode folk han for goodnesse;

And sith I may not have that oon,  
 That other nil I noght for—goon.  
 And for to gette of Fames hyre,  
 The temple sette I al a—fyre.  
 Now do our loos be blowen swythe,  
 As wisly be thou ever blythe.'  
 `Gladly,' quod she; `thou Eolus,  
 Herestow not what they prayen us?'  
 `Madame, yis, ful wel,' quod he,  
 And I wil trumpen hit, parde!'  
 And tok his blakke trumpe faste,  
 And gan to puffen and to blaste,  
 Til hit was at the worldes ende.

With that I gan aboute wende;  
 For oon that stood right at my bak,  
 Me thoughte goodly to me spak,  
 And seyde, `Frend, what is thy name?  
 Artow come hider to han fame?'  
 `Nay, for—sothe, frend!' quod I;  
 I cam noght hider, graunt mercy!  
 For no swich cause, by my heed!  
 Suffyceth me, as I were deed,  
 That no wight have my name in honde.  
 I woot my—self best how I stonde;  
 For what I drye or what I thinke,  
 I wol my—selven al hit drinke,  
 Certeyn, for the more part,  
 As ferforth as I can myn art.'  
 `But what dost thou here than?' quod he.  
 Quod I, `that wol I tellen thee,  
 The cause why I stonde here: —  
 Som newe tydings for to lere: —  
 Som newe thinges, I not what,  
 Tydinges, other this or that,  
 Of love, or swiche thinges glade.  
 For certeynly, he that me made  
 To comen hider seyde me,  
 I shulde bothe here and see,  
 In this place, wonder thinges;  
 But these be no swiche tydinges  
 As I mene of.' `No?' quod he,  
 And I answerde, `No, pardee!  
 For wel I wiste, ever yit,  
 Sith that first I hadde wit,  
 That som folk han desyred fame  
 Dyversly, and loos, and name;  
 But certeynly, I niste how  
 Ne wher that Fame dwelte, er now;  
 Ne eek of hir descripcioun,  
 Ne also hir condicioun,  
 Ne the ordre of hir dome,

Unto the tyme I hider come.'  
`Whiche be, lo, these tydinges,  
That thou now thus hider bringes,  
That thou hast herd?' quod he to me;  
`But now, no fors; for wel I see  
What thou desyrest for to here.  
Com forth, and stonde no longer here,  
And I wol thee, with-ouen drede,  
In swich another place lede,  
Ther thou shalt here many oon,'

    Tho gan I forth with him to goon  
Out of the castel, soth to seye.  
Tho saugh I stonde in a valeye,  
Under the castel, faste by,  
An hous, that Domus Dedali,  
That Laborintus cleped is,  
Nas maad so wonderliche, y-wis,  
Ne half so queynteliche y-wrought.  
And evermo, so swift as thought,  
This queynt hous aboute wente,  
That never-mo hit stike stente.  
And ther-out com so greet a noise,  
That, had hit stonden upon Oise,  
Men mighte hit han herd esely  
To Rome, I trowe sikerly.  
And the noyse which that I herde,  
For al the world right so hit ferde,  
As doth the routing of the stoon  
That from thengyn is leten goon.

    And al this hous, of whiche I rede,  
Was made of twigges, falwe, rede,  
And grene eek, and som weren whyte,  
Swiche as men to these cages thwyte,  
Or maken of these paniers,  
Or elles hottes or dossers;  
That, for the swough and for the twigges,  
This hous was also ful of gigges,  
And also ful eek a chirkinges,  
And of many other werkinges;  
And eek this hous hath of entrees  
As fele as of leves been on trees  
In somer, whan they grene been;  
And on the roof men may yit seen  
A thousand holes, and wel mo,  
To leten wel the soun out go.

    And by day, in every tyde,  
Ben al the dores open wyde,  
And by night, echoon unshette;  
Ne porter ther is non to lette  
No maner tydings in to pace;  
Ne never reste is in that place,

That hit nis fild ful of tydinges,  
 Other loude, or of whispringes;  
 And, over alle the houses angles,  
 Is ful of rouninges and of Iangles  
 Of werre, of pees, of mariages,  
 Of reste, of labour, of viages,  
 Of abood, of deeth, of lyfe,  
 Of love, of hate, acorde, of stryfe,  
 Of loos, of lore, and of winninges,  
 Of hele, of sekenesse, of bildinges,  
 Of faire windes, of tempestes,  
 Of qualme of folk, and eek of bestes;  
 Of dyvers transmutaciouns  
 Of estats, and eek of regiouns;  
 Of trust, of drede, of Ielousye,  
 Of wit, of winninge, of folye;  
 Of plentee, and of greet famyne,  
 Of chepe, of derth, and of ruyne;  
 Of good or mis gouvernement,  
 Of fyr, of dyvers accident.

And lo, this hous, of whiche I wryte,  
 Siker be ye, hit nas not lyte;  
 For hit was sixty myle of lengthe;  
 Al was the timber of no strengthe,  
 Yet hit is founded to endure  
 Whyl that hit list to Aventure,  
 That is the moder of tydinges,  
 As the see of welles and springes, --  
 And hit was shapen lyk a cage.

`Certes,' quod I, `in al myn age,  
 Ne saugh I swich a hous as this.'  
 And as I wondred me, y-wis,  
 Upon this hous, tho war was I  
 How that myn egle, faste by,  
 Was perched hye upon a stoon;  
 And I gan streighte to him goon,  
 And seyde thus: `I preye thee  
 That thou a whyl abyde me  
 For goddes love, and let me seen  
 What wondres in this place been;  
 For yit, paraventure, I may lere  
 Som good ther-on, or sumwhat here  
 That leef me were, or that I wente.'

`Peter! that is myn entente,'  
 Quod he to me; `therfor I dwelle;  
 But certein, oon thing I thee telle,  
 That, but I bringe thee ther-inne,  
 Ne shalt thou never cunne ginne  
 To come in-to hit, out of doute,  
 So faste hit whirleth, lo, aboute.  
 But sith that Ioves, of his grace,

As I have seyde, wol thee solace  
 Fynally with swiche thinges,  
 Uncouthe sightes and tydinges,  
 To passe with thyn hevinesse;  
 Suche routhe hath he of thy distresse,  
 That thou suffrest debonairly —  
 And wost thy—selven utterly  
 Disesperat of alle blis,  
 Sith that Fortune hath maad a—mis  
 The fruit of al thyn hertes reste  
 Languisshe and eek in point to breste —  
 That he, through his mighty meryte,  
 Wol do thee ese, al be hit lyte,  
 And yaf expres commaundement,  
 To whiche I am obedient,  
 To furthre thee with al my might,  
 And wisse and teche thee aright  
 Wher thou maist most tydinges here;  
 Shaltow anon heer many oon lere.'

With this worde he, right anon,  
 Hente me up bitwene his toon,  
 And at a windowe in me broghte,  
 That in this hous was, as me thoghte —  
 And ther—withal, me thoughte hit stente,  
 And no—thing hit aboute wente —  
 And me sette in the flore adoun.  
 But which a congregacioun  
 Of folk, as I saugh rome aboute  
 Some within and some withoute,  
 Nas never seen, ne shal ben eft;  
 That, certes, in the world nis left  
 So many formed by Nature,  
 Ne deed so many a creature;  
 That wel unnethe, in that place,  
 Hadde I oon foot—brede of space;  
 And every wight that I saugh there  
 Rouned ech in others ere  
 A newe tyding prevely,  
 Or elles tolde al openly  
 Right thus, and seyde: 'Nost not thou  
 That is betid, lo, late or now?'

'No,' quod the other, 'tel me what;' —  
 And than he tolde him this and that,  
 And swoor ther—to that hit was sooth —  
 'Thus hath he seyde,'— and 'Thus he dooth' —  
 'Thus shal hit be,' — 'Thus herde I seye' —  
 'That shal he found' — 'That dar I leye:' —  
 That al the folk that is a—lyve  
 Ne han the cunning to discryve  
 The thinges that I herde there,  
 What aloude, and what in ere.

But al the wonder—most was this: —  
 Whan oon had herd a thing, y-wis,  
 He com forth to another wight,  
 And gan him tellen, anoon—right,  
 The same that to him was told,  
 Or hit a furlong—way was old,  
 But gan somewhat for to eche  
 To this tyding in this speche  
 More than hit ever was.  
 And nat so sone departed nas  
 That he fro him, that he ne mette  
 With the thridde; and, or he lette  
 Any stounde, he tolde him als;  
 Were the tyding sooth or fals,  
 Yit wolde he telle hit nathelees,  
 And evermo with more encrees  
 Than hit was erst. Thus north and southe  
 Went every word fro mouth to mouthe,  
 And that encresing ever—mo,  
 As fyr is wont to quikke and go  
 From a sparke spronge amis,  
 Til al a citee brent up is.

And whan that was ful y-spronge,  
 And woxen more on every tonge  
 Than ever hit was, hit wente anoon  
 Up to a windowe, out to goon;  
 Or, but hit mighte out ther pace,  
 Hit gan out crepe at som crevace,  
 And fleigh forth faste for the nones.

And somtyme saugh I tho, at ones,  
 A lesing and a sad soth—sawe,  
 That gonne of aventure drawe  
 Out at a windowe for to pace;  
 And, when they metten in that place,  
 They were a—chekked bothe two,  
 And neither of hem moste out go;  
 For other so they gonne croude,  
 Til eche of hem gan cryen loude,  
 `Lat me go first!' — `Nay, but let me!  
 And here I wol ensuren thee  
 With the nones that thou wolt do so,  
 That I shal never fro thee go,  
 But be thyn owne sworn brother!  
 We wil medle us ech with other,  
 That no man, be he never so wrothe,  
 Shal han that oon of two, but bothe  
 At ones, al beside his leve,  
 Come we a—morwe or on eve,  
 Be we cryed or stille y—rouned.'  
 Thus saugh I fals and sooth compouned  
 Togeder flee for oo tydinge.

Thus out at holes gonne wringe  
Every tyding streight to Fame;  
And she gan yeven eche his name,  
After hir disposicioun,  
And yaf hem eek duracioun,  
Some to wexe and wane sone,  
As dooth the faire, whyte mone,  
And leet hem gon. Ther might I seen  
Wenged wondres faste fleen,  
Twenty thousand in a route,  
As Eolus hem blew aboute.

And, lord! this hous, in alle tymes,  
Was ful of shipmen and pilgrymes,  
With scrippes bret-ful of lesinges,  
Entremedled with tydinges,  
And eek alone by hem-selve.  
O, many a thousand tymes twelve  
Saugh I eek of these pardoneres,  
Currours, and eek messangeres,  
With boistes crammed ful of lyes  
As ever vessel was with lyes.  
And as I alther-fastest wente  
Aboute, and dide al myn entente  
Me for to pleye and for to lere,  
And eek a tyding for to here,  
That I had herd of som contree  
That shal not now be told for me; ---  
For hit no nede is, redely;  
Folk can singe hit bet than I;  
For al mot out, other late or rathe,  
Alle the sheves in the lathe; ---  
I herde a gret noise withalle  
In a corner of the halle,  
Ther men of love tydings tolde,  
And I gan thiderward beholde;  
For I saugh renninge every wight,  
As faste as that they hadden might;  
And everich cryed, 'What thing is that?'  
And som seyde, 'I not never what,'  
And whan they were alle on an hepe,  
Tho behinde gonne up lepe,  
And clamben up on othere faste,  
And up the nose and hye caste,  
And troden faste on othere heles,  
And stampe, as men don after eles.

Atte laste I saugh a man,  
Which that I nevene naught ne can;  
But he semed for to be  
A man of greet auctoritee...

(the work is unfinished)



*The Parliament of Fowles*

Here begynyth the Parlement of Foullys

**THE PROEM**

The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,  
Thassay so hard, so sharp the conquering,  
The dredful Ioy, that alwey slit so yerne,  
Al this mene I by love, that my feling  
Astonyeth with his wonderful worching  
So sore y-wis, that whan I on him thinke,  
Nat wot I wel wher that I wake or winke.

For al be that I knowe nat love in dede,  
Ne wot how that he quytesth folk hir hyre,  
Yet happeth me ful ofte in bokes rede  
Of his miracles, and his cruel yre;  
Ther rede I wel he wol be lord and syre,  
I dar not seyn, his strokes been so sore,  
But God save swich a lord! I can no more.

Of usage, what for luste what for lore,  
On bokes rede I ofte, as I yow tolde.  
But wherfor that I speke al this? not yore  
Agon, hit happed me for to beholde  
Upon a boke, was write with lettres olde;  
And ther-upon, a certeyn thing to lerne,  
The longe day ful faste I radde and yerne.

For out of olde felde, as men seith,  
Cometh al this newe corn fro yeer to yere;  
And out of olde bokes, in good feith,  
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.  
But now to purpos as of this matere —  
To rede forth hit gan me so delyte,  
That al the day me thoughte but a lyte.

This book of which I make of mencion,  
Entitled was al thus, as I shal telle,  
'Tullius of the dreame of Scipioun.';  
Chapitres seven hit hadde, of hevene and helle,  
And erthe, and soules that therinnr dwelle,  
Of whiche, as shortly as I can hit trete,  
Of his sentence I wol you seyn the grete.

First telleth hit, whan Scipion was come  
In Afrik, how he mette Massinisse,  
That him for Ioye in armes hath y nome.  
Than telleth hit hir speche and al the blisse  
That was betwix hem, til the day gan misse;  
And how his auncestre, African so dere,  
Gan in his slepe that night to him appere.

Than telleth hit that, fro a sterry place,  
How African hath him Cartage shewed,  
And warned him before of al his grace,  
And seyde him, what man, lered other lewed,  
That loveth comun profit, wel y-thewed,  
He shal unto a blisful place wende,  
Ther as Ioye is that last withouten ende.

Than asked he, if folk that heer be dede  
Have lyf and dwelling in another place;  
And African seyde, `ye, withoute drede,'  
And that our present worldes lyves space  
Nis but a maner deth, what wey we trace,  
And rightful folk shal go, after they dye,  
To heven; and shewed him the galaxye.

Than shewed he him the litel erthe, that heer is,  
At regard of the hevenes quantite;  
And after shewed he him the nyne speres,  
And after that the melodye herde he  
That cometh of thilke speres thryes three,  
That welle is of musyk and melodye  
In this world heer, and cause of armonye.

Than bad he him, sin erthe was so lyte,  
And ful of torment and of harde grace,  
That he ne shulde him in the world delyte.  
Than tolde he him, in certeyn yeres space,  
That every sterre shulde come into his place  
Ther hit was first; and al shulde out of minde  
That in this worlde is don of al mankinde.

Than prayde him Scipioun to telle him al  
The wey to come un—to that hevene blisse;  
And he seyde, `know thy-self first immortal,  
And loke ay besily thou werke and wisse  
To comun profit, and thou shalt nat misse  
To comen swiftly to that place dere,  
That ful of blisse is and of soules clere.

But brekers of the lawe, soth to seyne,  
And lecherous folk, after that they be dede,

Shul alwey whirle aboute therthe in peyne,  
Til many a world be passed, out of drede,  
And than, for—yeven alle hir wikked dede,  
Than shul they come unto that blisful place,  
To which to comen god thee sende his grace!' —

The day gan failen, and the derke night,  
That reveth bestes from her besinesse,  
Berafte me my book for lakke of light,  
And to my bedde I gan me for to dresse,  
Fulfilde of thought and besy hevinesse;  
For bothe I hadde thing which that I nolde,  
And eek I ne hadde that thing that I wolde.

But fynally my spirit, at the laste,  
For—wery of my labour al the day,  
Took rest, that made me to slepe faste,  
And in my slepe I mette, as I lay,  
How African, right in the selfe aray  
That Scipioun him saw before that tyde,  
Was comen and stood right at my bedes syde.

The wery hunter, slepinge in his bed,  
To wode ayein his minde goth anoon;  
The Iuge dremeth how his plees ben sped;  
The carter dremeth how his cartes goon;  
The riche, of gold; the knight fight with his foon;  
The seke met he drinketh of the tonne;  
The lover met he hath his lady wonne.

Can I nat seyn if that the cause were  
For I had red of African beforne,  
That made me to mete that he stood there;  
But thus seyde he, `thou hast thee so wel born  
In loking of myn olde book to—torn,  
Of which Macrobie roghte nat a lyte,  
That somdel of thy labour wolde I quyte!' —

Citherea! thou blisful lady swete,  
That with thy fyr—brand dauntest whom thee lest,  
And madest me this sweven for to mete,  
Be thou my help in this, for thou mayst best;  
As wisly as I saw thee north—north—west,  
When I began my sweven for to wryte,  
So yif me might to ryme and endyte!

### *THE STORY*

This forseid African me hente anoon,  
And forth with him unto a gate broghte  
Right of a parke, walled of grene stoon;  
And over the gate, with lettres large y-wroghte,  
Ther weren vers y-writen, as me thoghte,  
On eyther halfe, of ful gret difference,  
Of which I shal yow sey the pleyne sentence.

`Thorgh me men goon in—to that blisful place  
Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure;  
Thorgh me men goon unto the welle of Grace,  
Ther grene and lusty May shal ever endure;  
This is the wey to al good aventure;  
Be glad, thou reder, and thy sorwe of—caste,  
Al open am I; passe in, and hy the faste!'

`Thorgh me men goon,' than spak that other syde,  
`Unto the mortal strokes of the spere,  
Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,  
Ther tre shal never fruyt ne leves bere.  
This streem yow ledeth to the sorwful were,  
Ther as the fish in prison is al drye;  
Theschewing is only the remedye.'

Thise vers of gold and blak y-writen were,  
Of whiche I gan a stounde to beholde,  
For with that oon encresed ay my fere,  
And with that other gan myn herte bolde;  
That oon me hette, that other did me colde,  
No wit had I, for errour, for to chese  
To entre or flee, or me to save or lese.

Right as, betwixen adamauntes two  
Of even might, a pece of iren y-set,  
That hath no might to meve to ne fro —  
For what that on may hale, that other let —  
Ferde I; that niste whether me was bet,  
To entre or leve, til African my gyde  
Me hente, and shoof in at the gates wyde,

And seyde, `hit stondeth writen in thy face,  
Thyn errour, though thou telle it not to me;  
But dred the nat to come in—to this place,  
For this wryting is no—thing ment by thee,  
Ne by noon, but he Loves servant be;  
For thou of love hast lost thy tast, I gesse,  
As seek man hath of swete and bitternesse.

But natheles, al—though that thou be dulle,  
Yit that thou canst not do, yit mayst thou see;

For many a man that may not stonde a pulle,  
Yit lyketh him at the wrastling for to be,  
And demeth yit wher he do bet or he;  
And if thou haddest cunning for tendyte,  
I shal thee shewen mater of to wryte.'

With that my hond in his he took anoon,  
Of which I comfort caughte, and went in faste;  
But, lord! so I was glad and wel begoon!  
For over-al, wher that I myn eyen caste,  
Were trees clad with leves that ay shal laste,  
Eche in his kinde, of colour fresh and grene  
As emeraude, that Ioye was to sene.

The bilder ook, and eek the hardy asshe;  
The piler elm, the cofre unto careyne;  
The boxtree piper; holm to whippes lasshe;  
The sayling firr; the cipres, deth to pleyne;  
The sheter ew, the asp for shaftes pleyne;  
The olyve of pees, and eek the drunken vyne,  
The victor palm, the laurer to devyne.

A gardyn saw I, ful of blosmy bowes,  
Upon a river, in a grene mede,  
Ther as swetnesse evermore y-now is,  
With floures whyte, blewe, yelow, and rede;  
And colde welle-stremes, no-thing dede,  
That swommen ful of smale fisshes lighte,  
With finnes rede and scales silver-brighte.

On every bough the briddes herde I singe,  
With voys of aungel in hir armonye,  
Som besyed hem hir briddes forth to bringe;  
The litel conyes to hir pley gunne hye.  
And further al aboute I gan espye  
The dredful roo, the buk, the hert and hinde,  
Squerels, and bestes smale of gentil kinde.

Of instruments of strenges in acord  
Herde I so pleye a ravissing swetnesse,  
That god, that maker is of al and lord,  
Ne herde never better, as I gesse;  
Therwith a wind, unnethe hit might be lesse,  
Made in the leves grene a noise softe  
Acordaunt to the foules songe on-lofte.

The air of that place so attempre was  
That never was grevaunce of hoot ne cold;  
Ther wex eek every holsum spyce and gras,  
Ne no man may ther wexe seek ne old;  
Yet was ther Ioye more a thousand fold

Then man can telle; ne never wolde it nighte,  
But ay cleer day to any mannes sighte.

Under a tree, besyde a welle, I say  
Cupyde our lord his arwes forge and fyle;  
And at his fete his bowe al redy lay,  
And wel his doghter tempred al this whyle  
The hedes in the welle, and with hir wyle  
She couched hem after as they shulde serve,  
Some for to slee, and some to wounde and kerve.

Tho was I war of Plesaunce anon—right,  
And of Aray, and Lust, and Curtesye,  
And of the Craft that can and hath the might  
To doon by force a wight to do folye —  
Disfigurat was she, I nil not lye;  
And by him—self, under an oke, I gesse,  
Saw I Delyt, that stood with Gentilnesse.

I saw Beautee, withouten any atyr,  
And Youthe, ful of game and Iolyte,  
Fool—hardinesse, Flattery, and Desyr,  
Messagerye, and Mede, and other three —  
Hir names shul noght here be told for me —  
And upon pilers grete of Iasper longe  
I saw a temple of bras y—founded stronge.

Aboute the temple daunceden alway  
Wommen y—nowe, of whiche some ther were  
Faire of hem—self, and somme of hem were gay;  
In kirtels, al disshevele, wente they there —  
That was hir office alway, yeer by yere —  
And on the temple, of doves whyte and faire  
Saw I sittinge many a hunderede paire.

Before the temple—dore ful soberly  
Dame Pees sat, with a curteyn in hir hond:  
And hir besyde, wonder discretly,  
Dame Pacience sitting ther I fond  
With face pale, upon an hille of sond;  
And alder—next, within and eek with—oute,  
Behest and Art, and of hir folke a route.

Within the temple, of syghes hote as fyr  
I herde a swogh that gan aboute renne;  
Which syghes were engendred with desyr,  
That maden every auter for to brenne  
Of newe flaume; and wel aspyed I thenne  
That al the cause of sorwes that they drye  
Com of the bitter goddesse Ialousye.

The god Priapus saw I, as I wente,  
Within the temple, in soverayn place stonde,  
In swich aray as whan the asse him shente  
With crye by night, and with ceptre in honde;  
Ful besily men gunne assaye and fonde  
Upon his hede to sette, of sondry hewe,  
Garlondes ful of fresshe floures newe.

And in a privee corner, in disporte,  
Fond I Venus and hir porter Richesse,  
That was ful noble and hauteyn of hir porte;  
Derk was that place, but afterward lightnesse  
I saw a lyte, unnethe hit might be lesse,  
And on a bed of golde she lay to reste,  
Til that the hote sonne gan to weste.

Hir gilte heres with a golden threde  
Y-bounden were, untressed as she lay,  
And naked fro the breste unto the hede  
Men might hir see; and, sothly for to say,  
The remenant wel kevered to my pay  
Right with a subtil kerchief of Valence,  
Ther was no thikker cloth of no defence.

The place yaf a thousand savours swote,  
And Bachus, god of wyn, sat hir besyde,  
And Ceres next, that doth of hunger bote;  
And, as I seide, amiddes lay Cipryde,  
To whom on knees two yonge folkes cryde  
To ben hir help; but thus I leet hir lye,  
And ferther in the temple I gan espye

That, in dispyte of Diane the chaste,  
Ful many a bowe y-broke heng on the wal  
Of maydens, suche as gunne hir tymes waste  
In hir servyse; and peynted over al  
Of many a story, of which I touche shal  
A fewe, as of Calixte and Athalaunte,  
And many a mayde, of which the name I wante;

Semyramus, Candace, and Ercules,  
Biblis, Dido, Thisbe, and Piramus,  
Tristram, Isoude, Paris, and Achilles,  
Eleyne, Cleopatre, and Troilus,  
Silla, and eek the moder of Romulus —  
Alle these were peynted on that other syde,  
And al hir love, and in what plyte they dyde.

Whan I was come ayen unto the place  
That I of spak, that was so swote and grene,  
Forth welk I tho, my-selven to solace.

Tho was I war wher that ther sat a quene  
That, as of light the somer—sonne shene  
Passeth the sterre, right so over mesure  
She fairer was than any creature.

And in a launde, upon an hille of floures,  
Was set this noble goddess Nature;  
Of braunches were hir halles and hir boures,  
Y—wrought after hir craft and hir mesure;  
Ne ther nas foul that cometh of engendrure,  
That they ne were prest in hir presence,  
To take hir doom and yeve hir audience.

For this was on seynt Valentynes day,  
Whan every foul cometh ther to chese his make,  
Of every kinde, that men thenke may;  
And that so huge a noyse gan they make,  
That erthe and see, and tree, and every lake  
So ful was, that unnethe was ther space  
For me to stonde, so ful was al the place.

And right as Aleyn, in the Pleynt of Kinde,  
Devyseth Nature of aray and face,  
In swich aray men mighten hir ther finde.  
This noble emperesse, ful of grace,  
Bad every foul to take his owne place,  
As they were wont alwey fro yeer to yere,  
Seynt Valentynes day, to stonden there.

That is to sey, the foules of ravyne  
Were hyst set; and than the foules smale,  
That eten as hem nature wolde enclyne,  
As worm or thing of whiche I telle no tale;  
And water—foul sat loweste in the dale;  
But foul that liveth by seed sat on the grene,  
And that so fele, that wonder was to sene.

There mighte men the royal egle finde,  
That with his sharpe look perceth the sonne;  
And other egles of a lower kinde,  
Of which that clerkes wel devysen conne.  
Ther was the tyraunt with his fethres donne  
And greye, I mene the goshawk, that doth pyne  
To briddes for his outrageous ravyne.

The gentil faucoun, that with his feet distreyneth  
The kinges hond; the hardy sperhawk eke,  
The quayles foo; the merlion that payneth  
Him—self ful ofte, the larke for to seke;  
Ther was the douve, with hir eyen meke;  
The lalous swan, ayens his deth that singeth;



The oule eek, that of dethe the bode bringeth;

The crane the geaunt, with his trompes soune;  
The theef, the chogh; and eek the Iangling pye;  
The scorning Iay; the eles foo, heroune;  
The false lapwing, ful of trecherye;  
The stare, that the counseyl can bewrye;  
The tame ruddok; and the coward kyte;  
The cok, that orloge is of thorpes lyte;

The sparrow, Venus sone; the nightingale,  
That clepeth forth the fresshe leves newe;  
The swallow, mordrer of the flyes smale  
That maken hony of floures fresshe of hewe;  
The wedded turtel, with hir herte trewe;  
The pecok, with his aungels fethres brighte;  
The fesaunt, scorner of the cok by nighte;

The waker goos; the cuckow ever unkinde;  
The popiniay, ful of delicasye;  
The drake, stroyer of his owne kinde;  
The stork, the wreker of avouterye;  
The hote corneraunt of glotonye;  
The raven wys, the crow with vois of care;  
The throstel olde; the frosty feldefare.

What shulde I seyn? of foules every kinde  
That in this world han fethres and stature,  
Men mighten in that place assembled finde  
Before the noble goddessse Nature,  
And everich of hem did his besy cure  
Benignely to chese or for to take,  
By hir acord, his formel or his make.

But to the poynt — Nature held on hir honde  
A formel egle, of shap the gentileste  
That ever she among hir werkes fonde,  
The moste benigne and the goodlieste;  
In hir was every vertu at his reste,  
So ferforth, that Nature hir-self had blisse  
To loke on hir, and ofte hir bek to kisse.

Nature, the vicaire of thalmighty lorde,  
That hoot, cold, hevy, light, and moist and dreye  
Hath knit by even noumbre of acorde,  
In esy vois began to speke and seye,  
`Foules, tak hede of my sentence, I preye,  
And, for your ese, in furthering of your nede,  
As faste as I may speke, I wol me spede.

Ye knowe wel how, seynt Valentynes day,

By my statut and through my governaunce,  
Ye come for to chese — and flee your way —  
Your makes, as I prik yow with plesaunce.  
But natheles, my rightful ordenaunce  
May I not lete, for al this world to winne,  
That he that most is worthy shal beginne.

The tercel egle, as that ye knowen wel,  
The foul royal above yow in degree,  
The wyse and worthy, secree, trewe as stel,  
The which I formed have, as ye may see,  
In every part as hit best lyketh me,  
Hit nedeth noght his shap yow to devyse,  
He shal first chese and speken in his gyse.

And after him, by order shul ye chese,  
After your kinde, everich as yow lyketh,  
And, as your hap is, shul ye winne or lese;  
But which of yow that love most entryketh,  
God sende him hir that sorest for him syketh.'  
And therwith—al the tercel gan she calle,  
And seyde, `my sone, the choys is to thee falle.

But natheles, in this condicioun  
Mot be the choys of everich that is here,  
That she agree to his eleccioun,  
What—so he be that shulde be hir fere;  
This is our usage alwey, fro yeer to yere;  
And who so may at this time have his grace,  
In blisful tyme he com in—to this place.'

With hed enclyned and with ful humble chere  
This royal tercel spak and taried nought:  
`Unto my sovereyn lady, and noght my fere,  
I chese, and chese with wille and herte and thought,  
The formel on your hond so wel y-wrought,  
Whos I am al and ever wol hir serve,  
Do what hir list, to do me live or sterve.

Beseching hir of mercy and of grace,  
As she that is my lady sovereyne;  
Or let me dye present in this place.  
For certes, long may I not live in peyne;  
For in myn herte is corven every veyne;  
Having reward only to my trouthe,  
My dere herte, have on my wo som routhe.

And if that I to hir be founde untrewed,  
Disobeysaunt, or wilful negligent,  
Avauntour, or in proces love a newe,  
I pray to you this be my Iugement,

That with these foules I be al to-rent,  
That ilke day that ever she me finde  
To hir untrewē, or in my gilte unkinde.

And sin that noon loveth hir so wel as I,  
Al be she never of love me behette,  
Than oghte she be myn thourgh hir mercy,  
For other bond can I noon on hir knette.  
For never, for no wo, ne shal I lette  
To serven hir, how fer so that she wende;  
Sey what yow list, my tale is at an ende.'

Right as the fresshe, rede rose newe  
Ayen the somer-sonne coloured is,  
Right so for shame al wexen gan the hewe  
Of this formel, whan she herde al this;  
She neyther answerde `Wel', ne seyde amis,  
So sore abasshed was she, til that Nature  
Seyde, `doghter, drede yow noght, I yow assure.'

Another tercel egle spak anoon  
Of lower kinde, and seyde, `that shal nat be;  
I love hir bet than ye do, by seynt Iohn,  
Or atte leste I love hir as wel as ye;  
And lenger have served hir, in my degree,  
And if she shulde have loved for long loving,  
To me allone had been the guerdoninge.

I dar eek seye, if she me finde fals,  
Unkinde, langler, or rebel in any wyse,  
Or Ialous, do me hongen by the hals!  
And but I bere me in hir servyse  
As wel as that my wit can me suffyse,  
From poynt to poynt, hir honour for to save,  
Tak she my lyf, and al the good I have.'

The thridde tercel egle answerde tho,  
`Now, sirs, ye seen the litel leyser here;  
For every foul cryeth out to been a-go  
Forth with his make, or with his lady dere;  
And eek Nature hir-self ne wol nought here,  
For taryng here, noght half that I wolde seye;  
And but I speke, I mot for sorwe deye.

Of long servyse avaunte I me no-thing,  
But as possible is me to dye to-day  
For wo, as he that hath ben languissching  
Thise twenty winter, and wel happen may  
A man may serven bet and more to pay  
In half a yere, al-though hit were no more,  
Than som man doth that hath served ful yore.

I ne sey not this by me, for I ne can  
Do no servyse that may my lady plese;  
But I dar seyn, I am hir trewest man  
As to my dome, and feynest wolde hir ese;  
At shorte wordes, til that deth me sese,  
I wol ben hires, whether I wake or winke,  
And trewe in al that herte may bethinke.'

Of al my lyf, sin that day I was born,  
So gentil plee in love or other thing  
Ne herde never no man me beforne,  
Who—so that hadde leyser and cunning  
For to reherse hir chere and hir speking;  
And from the morwe gan this speche laste  
Til downward drow the sonne wonder faste.

The noyse of foules for to ben delivered  
So loude rong, `have doon and let us wende!'  
That wel wende I the wode had al to—shivered.  
`Come of!' they cryde, `allas! ye wil us shende!  
Whan shal your cursed pleding have an ende?  
How shulde a Iuge eyther party leve,  
For yee or nay, with—outen any preve?'

The goos, the cokkow, and the doke also  
So cryden, `kek, kek!' `kukkow!' `quek, quek!' hye,  
That thorgh myn eres the noyse wente tho.  
The goos seyde, `al this nis not worth a flye!  
But I can shape hereof a remedye,  
And I wol sey my verdict faire and swythe  
For water—foul, who—so be wrooth or blythe.'

`And I for worm—foul,' seyde the fool cukkow,  
`For I wol, of myn owne auctorite,  
For comune spede, take the charge now,  
For to deliver us is gret charite.'  
`Ye may abyde a whyle yet, parde!'  
Seide the turtel, `if hit be your wille  
A wight may speke, him were as good be stille.

I am a seed—foul, oon the unworthieste,  
That wot I wel, and litel of kunninge;  
But bet is that a wightes tonge reste  
Than entermeten him of such doinge  
Of which he neyther rede can nor singe.  
And who—so doth, ful foule himself acloyeth,  
For office uncommitted ofte anoyeth.'

Nature, which that alway had an ere  
To murmur of the lewednes behinde,

With facound voys seide, `hold your tonges there!  
And I shal sone, I hope, a counseyl finde  
You to delivere, and fro this noyse unbinde;  
I Iuge, of every folk men shal oon calle  
To seyn the verdit for you foules alle.'

Assented were to this conclusioun  
The briddes alle; and foules of ravyne  
Han chosen first, by pleyn eleccioun,  
The tercelet of the faucon, to diffyne  
Al hir sentence, and as him list, termyne;  
And to Nature him gonnen to presente,  
And she accepteth him with glad entente.

The tercelet seide than in this manere:  
`Ful hard were it to preve hit by resoun  
Who loveth best this gentil formel here;  
For everich hath swich replicacioun,  
That noon by skilles may be broght a-down;  
I can not seen that argumentes awayle;  
Than semeth hit ther moste be batayle.'

`Al redy!' quod these egles tercels tho.  
`Nay, sirs!' quod he, `if that I dorste it seye,  
Ye doon me wrong, my tale is not y-do!  
For sirs, ne taketh noght a-gref, I preye,  
It may noght gon, as ye wolde, in this weye;  
Oure is the voys that han the charge in honde,  
And to the Iuges dome ye moten stonde;

`And therfor, pees! I seye, as to my wit,  
Me wolde thinke how that the worthieste  
Of knighthode, and lengest hath used hit,  
Moste of estat, of blode the gentileste,  
Were sittingest for hir, if that hir leste;  
And of these three she wot hir-self, I trowe,  
Which that he be, for hit is light to knowe.'

The water-foules han her hedes leyd  
Togeder, and of short avysement,  
Whan everich had his large golee seyd,  
They seyden sothly, al by oon assent,  
How that `the goos, with hir facounde gent,  
That so desyreth to pronounce our nede,  
Shal telle our tale,' and preyde `god hir spede.'

And for these water-foules tho began  
The goos to speke, and in hir cakeling  
She seyde, `pees! now tak kepe every man,  
And herkeneth which a reson I shal bringe;  
My wit is sharp, I love no taryinge;

I seye, I rede him, though he were my brother,  
But she wol love him, lat him love another!'

`Lo here! a parfit reson of a goos!'  
Quod the sperhawk; `never mot she thee!  
Lo, swich hit is to have a tonge loos!  
Now parde, fool, yet were hit bet for thee  
Have holde thy pees, than shewed thy nycete!  
Hit lyth not in his wit nor in his wille,  
But sooth is seyde, "a fool can noght be stille."

The laughter aroos of gentil foules alle,  
And right anoon the seed-foul chosen hadde  
The turtel trewe, and gunne hir to hem calle,  
And preyden hir to seye the sothe sadde  
Of this matere, and asked what she radde;  
And she answerde, that pleyntly hir entente  
She wolde shewe, and sothly what she mente.

`Nay, god forbede a lover shulde chaunge!'  
The turtle seyde, and wex for shame al reed;  
`Thogh that his lady ever-more be straunge,  
Yet let him serve hir ever, til he be deed;  
For sothe, I preyse noght the gooses reed;  
For thogh she deyed, I wolde non other make,  
I wol ben hires, til that the deth me take.'

`Wel bourded!' quod the doke, `by my hat!  
That men shulde alwey loven, causeles,  
Who can a reson finde or wit in that?  
Daunceth he mury that is mirtheles?  
Who shulde recche of that is reccheles?  
Ye, quek!' yit quod the doke, ful wel and faire,  
`There been mo sterres, god wot, than a paire!'

`Now fy, cherl!' quod the gentil tercelet,  
`Out of the dunghil com that word ful right,  
Thou canst noght see which thing is wel be-set:  
Thou farest by love as oules doon by light,  
The day hem blent, ful wel they see by night;  
Thy kind is of so lowe a wrechednesse,  
That what love is, thou canst nat see ne gesse.'

Tho gan the cuckow putte him forth in prees  
For foul that eteth worm, and seide blyve,  
`So I,' quod he, `may have my make in pees,  
I recche not how longe that ye stryve;  
Lat ech of hem be soleyne al hir lyve,  
This is my reed, sin they may not acorde;  
This shorte lesson nedeth noght recorde.'

`Ye! have the glotoun fild ynogh his paunche,  
Than are we wel!' seyde the merlioun;  
`Thou mordrer of the heysugge on the braunche  
That broghte thee forth, thou rewthelees glotoun!  
Live thou soleyn, wormes corrupcioun!  
For no fors is of lakke of thy nature;  
Go, lewed be thou, whyl the world may dure!'

`Now pees,' quod Nature, `I comaunde here;  
For I have herd al your opinioun,  
And in effect yet be we never the nere;  
But fynally, this is my conclusioun,  
That she hir-self shal han the eleccioun  
Of whom hir list, who-so be wrooth or blythe,  
Him that she cheest, he shal hir have as swythe.

For sith hit may not here discussed be  
Who loveth hir best, as seide the tercelet,  
Than wol I doon hir this favour, that she  
Shal have right him on whom hir herte is set,  
And he hir that his herte hath on hir knet.  
Thus Iuge I, Nature, for I may not lye;  
To noon estat I have non other ye.

But as for counseyl for to chese a make,  
If hit were reson, certes, than wolde I  
Counseyle yow the royal tercel take,  
As seide the tercelet ful skilfully,  
As for the gentilest and most worthy,  
Which I have wroght so wel to my plesaunce;  
That to yow oghte been a suffisaunce.'

With dredful vois the formel hir answerde,  
`My rightful lady, goddesse of Nature,  
Soth is that I am ever under your yerde,  
Lyk as is everiche other creature,  
And moot be youres whyl that my lyf may dure;  
And therfor graunteth me my firste bone,  
And myn entente I wol yow sey right sone.'

`I graunte it you,' quod she; and right anoon  
This formel egle spak in this degree,  
`Almighty quene, unto this yeer be doon  
I aske respit for to avysen me.  
And after that to have my choys al free;  
This al and sum, that I wolde speke and seye;  
Ye gete no more, al-though ye do me deye.

I wol noght serven Venus ne Cupyde  
For sothe as yet, by no manere wey.'  
`Now sin it may non other wyse betyde,'

Quod tho Nature, `here is no more to sey;  
Than wolde I that these foules were a-vey  
Ech with his make, for taryng lenger here' —  
And seyde hem thus, as ye shul after here.

`To you speke I, ye tercelets,' quod Nature,  
`Beth of good herte and serveth, alle three;  
A yeer is not so longe to endure,  
And ech of yow peyne him, in his degree,  
For to do wel; for, god wot, quit is she  
Fro yow this yeer; what after so befallle,  
This entremes is dressed for you alle.'

And whan this werk al broght was to an ende,  
To every foule Nature yaf his make  
By even acorde, and on hir wey they wende.  
A! lord! the blisse and Ioye that they make!  
For ech of hem gan other in winges take,  
And with hir nekkes ech gan other winde,  
Thanking alwey the noble goddessse of kinde.

But first were chosen foules for to singe,  
As yeer by yere was alwey hir usaunce  
To singe a roundel at hir departinge,  
To do to Nature honour and plesaunce.  
The note, I trowe, maked was in Fraunce;  
The wordes wer swich as ye may heer finde,  
The nexte vers, as I now have in minde.

Qui bien aime a tard oublie.

`Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast this wintres weders over-shake,  
And driven away the longe nightes blake!

`Saynt Valentyn, that art ful hy on-lofte; —  
Thus singen smale foules for thy sake —  
Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast this wintres weders over-shake.

`Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,  
Sith ech of hem recovered hath his make;  
Ful blisful may they singen whan they wake;  
Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast this wintres weders over-shake,  
And driven away the longe nightes blake.'

And with the showting, whan hir song was do,  
That foules maden at hir flight a-way,  
I wook, and other bokes took me to  
To rede upon, and yet I rede alway;



In hope, y-wis, to rede so som day  
That I shal mete som thing for to fare  
The bet; and thus to rede I nil not spare.

Parliamentum avium in die Sancti Valentini tentum secundum  
Galfridum Chaucer. Deo gracias.