

# THE COLLEGE CHAUCER

EDITED BY

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**NEW HAVEN: YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS**

**LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD**

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS**

**MCMXIII**

## THE BOOKE OF THE DUCHESS

I have grete wonder, be this lyghte,  
How that I lyve, for day ne nyghte  
I may nat slepe wel nygh noght,  
I have so many an ydel thoght  
Purely for defaulte of slepe, 5  
That by my trouthe I take no kepe  
Of noo thinge, how hyt cometh or gooth,  
Ne me nys nothyng leve nor looth.  
Al is glyche goode to me,  
Joy or sorowe, wherso hyt be, 10  
For I have felynge in no thyng,  
But as yt were a mased thyng  
Alway in poynt to falle a-doun,  
For sorwful ymagynacioun  
Ys alway hooly in my mynde. 15  
And wel ye woote, agaynes kynde  
Hyt were to lyven in thys wyse,  
For Nature wolde nat suffice  
To noon erthely creature  
Nat longe tyme to endure 20  
Withoute slepe, and be in sorwe.  
And I ne may, no nyght ne morwe,  
Slepe, and thys melancolye  
And drede I have for to dye,  
Defaulte of slepe, and hevynesse, 25  
Hath sleyne my spirite of quyknesse,  
That I have loste al lustyhede.  
Suche fantasies ben in myn hede,  
So I not what is best too doo.  
But men myght axe me, why soo 30  
I may not sleepe, and what me is?

26 *sleyne om.* Lines 31-36 are written in this MS. in a hand of perhaps 1500.

But natheles, whoe aske this  
 Leseth his asking trewely.  
 Myselven can not telle why  
 The southe, but trewly, as I gesse, 35  
 I holde it be a sicknes  
 That I have suffred this eight yeere;  
 And yet my boote is never the nere,  
 For there nis phisicien but one  
 That may me heale, but that is done. 40  
 Passe we over untill efte;  
 That will not be, mote nedes be lefte.  
 Our first mater is good to kepe.  
 Soe when I sawe I might not slepe  
 Til now late, this other night, 45  
 Upon my bedde I sate upright,  
 And bade one reche me a booke,  
 A romaunce, and it me tok  
 To rede, and drive the night away;  
 For me thought it beter play 50  
 Then playen either at chesse or tables.  
 And in this boke were written fables  
 That clerkes had in olde tyme,  
 And other poets, put in rime  
 To rede, and for to be in minde, 55  
 While men loved the lawe of kinde.  
 This boke ne speake, but of such thinges,  
 Of quenes lives, and of kinges,  
 And many other thinges smalle.  
 Amonge all this, I fonde a tale 60  
 That me thought a wonder thing.  
 This was the tale: There was a king  
 That hight Seyes, and had a wife  
 The beste that might beare lyfe,  
 And this quene hight Alcyone. 65

32 natheles. 33 trewly. 34 tell. 38 hold. 39 is. 51 play. 56 of in.  
 58 kings 59 things. 64 best.

Soe it befill, thereafter soone,  
 This king wol wenden over see.  
 To tellen shortly, whan that he  
 Was in the see, thus in this wise,  
 Soche a tempest gan to rise 70  
 That brake her maste and made it fal,  
 And cleft ther ship, and dreint hem all,  
 That never was founden, as it telles,  
 Borde, ne man, ne nothing elles.  
 Right thus this king Seyes loste his life. 75  
 Now for to speaken of his wife,  
 This lady, that was left at home,  
 Hath wonder, that the king ne come  
 Home, for it was a longe terme.  
 Anone her herte began to erme, 80  
 And for that her thought evermo  
 It was not wele he dwelled soe,  
 She longed soe after the king  
 That certes, it were a pitous thing  
 To tell her hartely sorowfull life 85  
 That had, allas, this noble wife,  
 For him she loved alderbeste.  
 Anone she sent bothe eeste and weste  
 To seke him, but they founde nought.  
 "Alas!" (quoth shee) "that I was wrought! 90  
 And where my lord, my love, be deed?  
 Certes I will never eate breede,  
 I make a vowe to my god here,  
 But I mowe of my lord here."  
 Soche sorowe this lady to her toke 95  
 That trewly I, which made this booke,  
 Had suche pittee and suche rowthe  
 To rede hir sorwe, that by my trowthe  
 I ferde the worse al the morwe

67 woll. 73 founde. 76 speake of Alcyone. 79 long. 80 erme terme.  
 82 he dwelled her thought. 86 she had; *allas om.* 87 alas she.

Aftir, to thenken on hir sorwe. 100  
 So whan this lady koude here noo worde  
 That no man myghte fynde hir lorde,  
 Ful ofte she swouned, and sayed alas!  
 For sorwe ful nygh woode she was,  
 Ne she koude no rede but oon, 105  
 But doune on knees she sate anoon,  
 And weep that pittee was to here.  
 "A! mercy! swete lady dere!"  
 Quod she to Juno, hir goddessse;  
 "Helpe me out of thys distresse, 110  
 And yeve me grace my lord to se  
 Soone, or wete wher so he be,  
 Or how he fareth, or in what wise,  
 And I shal make yowe sacrificse,  
 And hooly youres become I shal 115  
 With good wille, body, hert, and al.  
 And but thow wilte this, lady swete,  
 Sende me grace to slepe, and mete  
 In my slepe somme certeyn sweven,  
 Wher-thorgh that I may knowe even 120  
 Whethir my lorde be quyke or ded."  
 With that worde she henge down the hed,  
 And felle a-swowne as colde as ston.  
 Hyr women kaught hir up anoon,  
 And broghten hir in bed al naked; 125  
 And she, forweped and forwaked,  
 Was wery, and thus the dede slepe  
 Fil on hir, or she tooke kepe,  
 Through Juno that had herde hir bone,  
 That made hir to slepe sone, 130  
 For as she prayede ryght so was done  
 In dede, for Juno ryght anone  
 Called thus hir messagere  
 To doo hir erande, and he come nere.

100 and aftir. 102 myght. 107 wepe. 100 to om. 127 ded.

Whan he was come she bad hym thus, 135  
 "Go bet," quod Juno, "to Morpheus—  
 Thou knowest hym wel, the god of slepe—  
 Now understonde wel, and take kepe,  
 Sey thus on my halfe, that he  
 Go faste into the grete se, 140  
 And byd hym, that on alle thynges,  
 He take up Seys body the kyngē,  
 That lyeth ful pale and no thynges rody.  
 Byd hym crepe into the body  
 And doo hit goon to Alcione, 145  
 The quene, ther she lyeth allone,  
 And shewe hir shortly, hit ys no nay,  
 How hit was dreynt thys other day;  
 And do the body speke soo  
 Ryght as hyt was woned to doo, 150  
 The whiles that hit was a-lyve.  
 Goo now faste, and hye the blyve."  
 This messenger toke leve, and went  
 Upon hys wey, and never ne stent  
 Til he come to the derke valey 155  
 That stant betwexe roches twey,  
 Ther never yet grew corne ne gras,  
 Ne tre, ne nothyng that oughte was,  
 Beste, ne man, ne nothyng elles,  
 Save ther were a fewe welles 160  
 Came rennynges fro the clyffes adoun  
 That made a dedely slepynges soun,  
 And ronnen doun ryght by a cave,  
 That was under a rokke ygrave,  
 Amydde the valey, wonder depe, 165  
 There these goddys lay and slepe,  
 Morpheus and Eclympasteyre,  
 That was the god of slepes eyre,

141 al. 142 That he. 144 Bud. 145 Alcione. 146 ryght soo. 156 betwex.  
 158, 159, *nothyng* noight.

That slepe and did noon other werke.  
 This cave was also as derke 170  
 As helle pitte, over al aboute,  
 They had good leyser for to route,  
 To envye who myght slepe beste;  
 Somme henge her chyn upon hir breste,  
 And slept upryght, hir hed yhedde, 175  
 And somme lay naked in her bedde,  
 And slepe, whiles the dayes laste.  
 This messenger come fleynge faste,  
 And cried, "O how! a-wake anoon!"  
 Hit was for noght, there herde hym non. 180  
 "Awake," quod he, "whoo ys, lythe there?"  
 And blew his horne ryght in here eere,  
 And cried, "awaketh!" wonder hye.  
 This god of slepe with hys on ye  
 Caste up, and axed, "who clepeth there?" 185  
 "Hyt am I!" quod this messagere,  
 "Juno bad thow shuldest goon"—  
 And tolde hym what he shulde doon,  
 As I have tolde yow here to-fore,  
 Hyt ys no nede rehearse hyt more; 190  
 And went hys wey whan he had sayede.  
 Anoon this god of slepe abrayede  
 Out of hys slepe, and gan to goon,  
 And dyd as he had bede hym doon,  
 Tooke up the dreynte body sone, 195  
 And bare hyt forth to Alcione,  
 Hys wife the quene, ther as she lay,  
 Ryght even a quarter before day;  
 And stood ryght at hys beddys fete,  
 And called hir ryght as she hete, 200  
 By name, and sayede, "My swete wyfe,  
 Awake, let be your sorwful lyfe,  
 For in your sorwe there lyth no rede,

For certes, swete, I nam but dede,  
 Ye shul me never on lyve yse. 205  
 But good swete herte, look that ye  
 Bury my body, for suche a tyde  
 Ye mowe hyt fynde, the see besyde;  
 And farewel, swete, my worldes blysse!  
 I praye God youre sorwe lysse;— 210  
 To lytel while oure blysse lasteth!"  
 With that hir eyen up she casteth,  
 And sawe noght. "Allas!" quod she for sorwe,  
 And deyede within the thridde morwe.  
 But what she sayede more in that swowe 215  
 I may not telle yow as nowe,  
 Hyt were to longe for to dwelle,  
 My first matere I wil yow telle,  
 Wherfore I have tolde this thyng  
 Of Alcione and Seys the kyng. 220  
 For thus moche dar I saye welle,  
 I had be dolven everydelle,  
 And ded ryght thorgh defaulte of slepe,  
 Yif I ne had redde and take kepe  
 Of this tale next before. 225  
 And I wol telle yow wherfore;  
 For I ne myght, for bote ne bale,  
 Slepe or I had redde thys tale  
 Of this dreynte Seys the kyng,  
 And of the goddis of slepyng. 230  
 Whan I had redde thys tale wel,  
 And over loked hyt everydel,  
 Me thoght wonder yf hit were so;  
 For I had never herde speke or tho  
 Of noo goddis that koude make 235  
 Men to slepe, ne for to wake,  
 For I ne knewe never God but oon.

204 am. 206 hert look om. 210 pray. 215 swowe sorowe. 220 Alcione.  
 221 say. 226 I om.



And in my game I sayede anoon—  
 And yet me lyst ryght evel to pley—  
 “Rather then that y shulde dey 240  
 Thorgh defaulte of slepyng thus,  
 I wolde yive thilke Morpheus  
 Or hys goddesse, dame Juno,  
 Or somme wight ellis, I ne roght who,  
 To make me slepe and have some reste, 245  
 I wil yive hym the alderbeste  
 Yifte, that ever he abode hys lyve,  
 And here, on warde, ryght now, as blyve;  
 Yif he wol make me slepe a lyte,  
 Of downe of pure dowves white 250  
 I wil yif hym a feder bedde,  
 Rayed with golde and ryght wel cledde  
 In fyne blak satyn de owter mere,  
 And many a pelowe, and every bere  
 Of clothe of Reynes to slepe softe, 255  
 Hym thar not nede to turnen ofte;  
 And I wol yive hym al that fallys  
 To a chambre, and al hys hallys  
 I wol do peynte with pure golde,  
 And tapite hem ful many folde 260  
 Of oo sute, this shal he have,  
 Yf I wiste where were hys cave,  
 Yf he kan make me slepe sone,  
 As did the goddesse quene Alcione;  
 And thus this ylke god Morpheus 265  
 May wyne of me moo fees thus,  
 Than ever he wanne, and to Juno  
 That ys hys goddesse I shal soo do,  
 I trow, that she shal holde hir payede.”  
 I hadde unneth that worde y-sayede, 270  
 Ryght thus I have tolde hyt yow,  
 That sodeynly, I nyste how,

Suche a luste anoon me tooke  
 To slepe, that ryght upon my booke  
 Y fil aslepe, and therwith evene 275  
 Me mette so ynly swete a swevene,  
 So wonderful, that never yitte  
 Y trowe no man had the wytte  
 To konne wel my sweven rede;  
 No, not Joseph, withoute drede, 280  
 Of Egipte, ho that red so  
 The kynges metynge, Pharao;  
 No more than koude the lest of us,  
 Ne nat skarsly Macrobeus—  
 He that wrote al thavysoun, 285  
 That he mette, kyng Scipioun,  
 The noble man, the Affrikan,  
 Swiche mervayles fortunéd than—  
 I trowe, a-rede my dremes even.  
 Loo, thus hyt was, thys was my sweven. 290  
 Me thoghte thus: that hyt was May,  
 And in the dawenyng I lay,  
 Me mette thus, in my bed al naked,  
 And loked forth, for I was waked  
 With smale foules a grete hepe, 295  
 That had affrayed me out of slepe  
 Thorgh noyse and swettenesse of her songe.  
 And as me mette, they sate a-monge  
 Upon my chambre roofe wythoute,  
 Upon the tyles over al aboute, 300  
 And songen everych in hys wyse,  
 The moste solempne servise,  
 By noote, that ever man, y trowe,  
 Had herde, for somme of hem songe lowe,  
 Somme high, and al of oon acorde. 305  
 To telle shortly, att oo worde,  
 Was never harde so swete a steven,

278 trow. 291 thoght. 292 dawnyng. 296 of my. 298 as al. 301 songe

But hyt had be a thyng of heven,  
 So mery a soun, so swete entewnes;  
 That certes, for the toune of Tewnes, 310  
 I nolde but I had herde hem synge,  
 For al my chambre gan to ryng  
 Thorgh syngynge of her armonye.  
 For instrument nor melodye  
 Was nowhere herde yet halfe so swete, 315  
 Nor of acorde halfe so mete;  
 For ther was noon of hem that feyned  
 To synge, for eche of hem hym peyned  
 To fynde out mery crafty notys,  
 They ne spared not her throtys. 320  
 And soothe to seyn, my chambre was  
 Ful wel depeynted, and with glas  
 Were al the wyndowes wel yglasyd  
 Ful clere, and nat an hoole ycrasyd,  
 That to beholde hyt was grete joye. 325  
 For holy al the story of Troye  
 Was in the glasyng ywroght thus,  
 Of Ector and of kynge Priamus,  
 Of Achilles and Lamedoun  
 And eke of Medea and of Jasoun, 330  
 Of Paris, Eleyne, and of Lavyne.  
 And alle the wallys with colouris fyne  
 Were peynted, bothe text, and glose,  
 And al the Romaunce of the Rose.  
 My wyndowes were shette echon, 335  
 And through the glas the sonne shon  
 Upon my bed with bryghte bemys,  
 With many glade gilde stremys,  
 And eke the welken was so faire,  
 Blew, bryght, clere was the ayre, 340  
 And ful attempre, for sothe, hyt was,  
 For nother to colde nor hote yt nas,

319 of mery. 329 and of kynge. 342 was.

Ne in al the welkene was a clowde.  
 And as I lay thus, wonder lowde  
 Me thought I herde an hunte blowe. 345  
 Tassay hys horne, and for to knowe  
 Whether hyt were clere or horse of sounce.  
 And I herde goynge bothe up and doune  
 Men, hors, houndes, and other thyngge,  
 And al men speken of huntyngge, 350  
 How they wolde slee the hert, with strengthe,  
 And how the hert had upon lengthe,  
 So moche embosed, y not now what.  
 Anoon, ryght whan I herde that,  
 How that they wolde on huntyngge goon, 355  
 I was ryght glad, and up anoon  
 Tooke my hors and forthe I went  
 Out of my chambre, I never stent  
 Til I come to the felde withoute.  
 Ther overtoke y a grete route 360  
 Of hunttes and eke of foresterys,  
 With many relayes and lymerys,  
 And hyed hem to the forest faste,  
 And I with hem; so at the laste  
 I asked oon, ladde a lymere, 365  
 "Say, felowe, whoo shal hunte here?"  
 Quod I, and he answered ageyn,  
 "Syr, themperour Octovyen,"  
 Quod he, "and ys here faste by."  
 "A Goddys halfe, in goode tyme," quod I, 370  
 "Go we faste!" and gan to ryde,  
 Whan we came to the forest syde,  
 Every man didde ryght anoon  
 As to huntyngge fille to doon.  
 The mayster hunte anoon, fote hote, 375  
 With a grete horne blewe thre mote  
 At the uncoupylyngge of hys houndys.

350 speke. 362 may. 364 I om. 369 fast.

Withynne a while the herte founde ys,  
 Ihalowed, and rechased faste  
 Longe tyme, and so at the laste 380  
 This hert rused, and staale away  
 Fro alle the houndes a prevy way.  
 The houndes had overshette hem alle,  
 And were on a defaulte yfalle.  
 Therwyth the hunte wonder faste 385  
 Blewe a forleygne at the laste.  
 I was go walked fro my tree,  
 And as I went, ther came by mee  
 A whelpe, that fauned me as I stode,  
 That hadde yfolowed, and koude no goode. 390  
 Hyt come and crepte to me as lowe,  
 Ryght as hyt had me yknowe,  
 Hyldedoun hys hede, and joyned hys erys,  
 And leyde al smothe doun hys herys.  
 I wolde have kaught hyt, and anoon 395  
 Hyt fled, and was fro me goon;  
 And I hym folwed, and hyt forthe went  
 Doune by a floury grene went  
 Ful thikke of gras ful softe and swete,  
 With flourys fele, faire under fete, 400  
 And litel used hyt semed thus,  
 For both Flora and Zephirus,  
 They two that make floures growe,  
 Had made her dwellynge ther, I trowe,  
 For hit was, on to beholde, 405  
 As thogh therthe envye wolde  
 To be gayer than the heven,  
 To have moo floures, swche<sup>1</sup> seven  
 As in the welkene sterris bee.  
 Hyt had forgete the povertie 410  
 That wynter, thorgh hys colde morwes,

383 hem hym. 384 upon. 400 walkene.

<sup>1</sup>See Glossary.

Had made hyt suffre, and his sorwes;  
 All was forgeten, and that was sene,  
 For al the woode was waxen grene,  
 Swetnesse of dewe had made hyt waxe. 415  
 Hyt ys no nede eke for to axe  
 Where there were many grene greves,  
 Or thikke of trees so ful of leves,  
 And every tree stooode by hym selve  
 Fro other wel tene fete or twelve. 420  
 So grete trees, so huge of strengthe,  
 Or fourty, fifty fedme lengthe,  
 Clene withoute bowgh or stikke,  
 With croppes brode, and eke as thikke,  
 They were nat an ynche asonder, 425  
 That hit was shadewe over al under,  
 And many an herte and many an hynde  
 Was both before me and be-hynde.  
 Of founes, sowres, bukkes, does,  
 Was ful the woode, and many roes 430  
 And many sqwireles that sete  
 Ful high upon the trees and ete,  
 And in hir maner made festys.  
 Shortly, hyt was so ful of bestys,  
 That thogh Argus, the noble counter, 435  
 Sete to rekene in hys counter,  
 And rekene with his figuris ten—  
 For by tho figuris mowe al ken  
 Yf they be crafty, rekene and noumbre,  
 And tel of every thinge the noumbre— 440  
 Yet shulde he fayle to rekene evene  
 The wondres, me mette in my swevene.  
 But forth they romed ryght wonder faste  
 Doune the woode, so at the laste  
 I was war of a man in blak, 445  
 That sete and had yturned his bak

420 or fro other. 424 brode bothe. 431 sqwirels. 446 turned.

To an ooke, an huge tree.

"Lorde," thocht I, "who may that be?

What ayleth hym to sitten here?"

Anoon ryght I wente nere; 450

Than founde I sitte even upryght,

A wonder wel-farynge knyght—

By the maner me thoghte soo

Of good mochel, and ryght yonge therto,

Of the age of foure and twenty yere. 455

Upon hys berde but lytel here,

And he was clothed al in blake.

I stalked even unto hys bake,

And ther I stode as stille as ought,

That, soth to saye, he sawe me nought, 460

For why, he henge hys hede adoune,

And with a dedely sorwful sounne

He made of ryme ten vers or twelwe,

Of a compleynt to hymselfe,

The moste pitee, the moste rowthe, 465

That ever I herde, for, by my trowthe,

Hit was gret wonder that nature

Myght suffre any creature

To have suche sorwe, and be not ded,

Ful petouse, pale, and nothyng red. 470

He sayed a lay, a maner songe,

Withoute noote, withoute songe,

And was thys, for ful wel I kan

Reherse hyt; ryght thus hyt began.—

*The Lay.*

"I have of sorwe so grete wone 475

That joye gete I never none,

Now that I see my lady bryght,

Which I have loved with al my myght,

Is fro me ded, and ys a-goon.

Allas, dethe, what ayleth the? 480  
 That thou noldest have taken me  
     Whan thou toke my lady swete,  
 That was so faire, so freshe, so fre,  
 So goode, that men may wel se  
     Of al goodenesse she had no mete!" 485

Whan he had made thus his complaynte,  
 Hys sorful hert gan faste faynte,  
 And his spiritis wexen dede.  
 The bloode was fled, for pure drede,  
 Doune to hys hert, to make hym warme, 490  
 For wel hyt feled the hert had harme,  
 To wete eke why hyt was adrad  
 By kynde, and for to make hyt glad;  
 For hit ys membre principal  
 Of the body; and that made al 495  
 Hys hewe chaunge and wexe grene  
 And pale, for ther noo bloode ys sene  
 In no maner lym of hys.  
 Anoon therwith whan y sawgh this,  
 He ferde thus evel there he sete, 500  
 I went and stode ryght at his fete,  
 And grette hym; but he spake noght,  
 But argued with his oune thocht,  
 And in hys wytte disputed faste  
 Why and how hys lyfe myght laste; 505  
 Hym thought hys sorwes were so smerte  
 And lay so colde upon hys herte;  
 So throug hys sorwes and hevvy thocht  
 Made hym that he herde me noght,  
 For he had wel nygh loste hys mynde, 510  
 Thogh Pan, that men clepe god of kynde,  
     for hys sorwes never so wrothe;  
     t the last, to sayn ryght sothe,

mplaynt. 487 faynt. 408 lym hym. 511 the god.



He was war of me, how y stooode  
 Before hym, and did of myn hoode, 515  
 And had ygret hym as I best koude,  
 Debonayrly, and no thyng lowde.  
 He sayde, "I prey the, be not wrothe,  
 I herde the not, to seyn the sothe,  
 Ne I sawgh the not, syr, trewely." 520  
 "A, good sir, no fors," quod y,  
 "I am ryght sory yif I have oughte  
 Destroubled yow out of youre thoughte;  
 Foryive me, yif I have mystake."  
 "Yis, thamendys is lyght to make," 525  
 Quod he, "for ther lyeth noon therto;  
 There ys no thyng myssayde nor do."  
 Loo, how goodely spake thys knyghte,  
 As hit had be another wyghte;  
 He made hyt nouthetowgh ne queynte. 530  
 And I sawe that, and gan me aqueynt  
 With hym, and fonde hym so trefable,  
 Ryght wonder skylful and resonable,  
 As me thoght, for al hys bale.  
 Anoon-ryght I gan fynde a tale 535  
 To hym, to loke wher I myght oughte  
 Have more knowynge of hys thoughte.  
 "Sir," quod I, "this game is doon;  
 I holde that this hert be goon;  
 These huntys konne hym nowher see." 540  
 "Y do no fors therof," quod he,  
 "My thought ys thereon never a dele."  
 "Be oure Lorde," quod I, "y trow yow wele;  
 Ryght so me thenketh by youre chere.  
 But sir, oo thyng wol ye here? 545  
 Me thynketh, in grete sorowe I yow see;  
 But certys, good sir, yif that yee  
 Wolde ought discure me youre woo,

I wolde, as wys God helpe me soo,  
 Amende hyt, yif I kan or may. 550  
 Ye mowe preve hyt be assay.  
 For by my trouthe, to make yow hool  
 I wol do alle my power hool.  
 And telleth me of your sorwes smerte,  
 Paraventure hyt may ease youre herte, 555  
 That semeth ful seke under your syde."  
 With that he loked on me asyde  
 As who sayth, "nay, that wol not be."  
 "Graunt mercy, goode frende," quod he,  
 "I thanke the that thow woldest soo, 560  
 But hyt may never the rather be doo.  
 No man may my sorwe glade,  
 That maketh my hewe to fal and fade,  
 And hath myn understondynge lorne,  
 That me ys woo that I was borne! 565  
 May nocht make my sorwes slyde  
 Nought al the remedyes of Ovyde;  
 Ne Orpheus, god of melodye,  
 Ne Dedalus, with his playes slye,  
 Ne hele me may noo phisicien, 570  
 Noght Ypocras, ne Galyen.  
 Me ys woo that I lyve oures twelve,  
 But whoo so wol assay hymselfe,  
 Whether his hert kan have pitee  
 Of any sorwe, lat hym see me. 575  
 Y wrechch, that deth hath made al naked  
 Of al blysse that ever was maked,  
 Y worthe worste of alle wyghtys,  
 That hate my dayes and my nyghtys;  
 My lyfe, my lustes, be me loothe, 580  
 For al welfare and I be wroothe.  
 The pure deth ys so ful my foo,

That I wolde deye, hyt wolde not soo.  
 For whan I folwe hyt, hit wol flee,  
 I wolde have hym, hyt nyl nat me. 585  
 This ys my peyne, wythoute rede,  
 Alway deynge and be not dede,  
 That Thesiphus, that lyeth in helle,  
 May not of more sorwe telle.  
 And who so wiste alle, be my trouthe, 590  
 My sorwe, but he hadde rowthe  
 And pitee of my sorwes smerte,  
 That man hath a fendely herte.  
 For who so see the me firste on morwe  
 May seyn, he hath mette with sorwe, 595  
 For y am Sorwe, and Sorwe ys y.  
 Allas! and I wol tel the why,  
 My sorowe ys turned to pleynynge,  
 And al my lawghtre to wepynge,  
 My glade thoghtys to hevynesse, 600  
 In travayle ys myn ydelnesse,  
 And eke my reste, my wele is woo,  
 My goode ys harme, and ever-moo  
 In wrathe ys turned my pleynge,  
 And my delyte into sorwyng. 605  
 Myn hele ys turned into sekennesse,  
 In drede ys al my sykernesse,  
 To derke ys turned al my lyghte,  
 My wytte ys foly, my day ys nyghte,  
 My love ys hate, my slepe wakyng, 610  
 My merthe and meles ys fastyng,  
 My countenaunce ys nycete,  
 And al abawed, where so I be.  
 My pees in pledyng and in werre—  
 Allas, how myght I fare werre! 615  
 My boldenesse ys turned to shame,

501 had.

For fals Fortune hath pleyde a game  
 Atte the chesse with me, allas, the while!  
 The trayteresse fals, and ful of gyle,  
 That al behoteth, and no thyng halte, 620  
 She gethe upryght and yet she is halte,  
 That baggeth foule and loketh faire,  
 The dispitouse debonaire,  
 That skorneth many a creature;  
 An ydole of fals portrayture 625  
 Ys she, for she wol sone wrien,  
 She is the monstres hed ywrien,  
 As fylthe over ystrawed with flouris.  
 Hir moste worshippe and hir flour ys  
 To lyen, for that ys hyr nature, 630  
 Withoute feythe, lawe, or mesure;  
 She ys fals; and ever lawghynge  
 With one yghe, and that other wepynge;  
 That ys broght up she sette al doun,  
 I lykne hyr to the scorpioun, 635  
 That ys a fals flaterynge beste,  
 For with his hede he maketh feste,  
 But al amydde hys flaterynge,  
 With hys tayle hyt wol styngge,  
 And envenyme, and so wol she. 640  
 She ys thenvyouse charite  
 That ys ay fals, and semeth wele,  
 So turneth she hyr false whele  
 Aboute, for hyt ys nothyng stable,  
 Now by the fire, now at table, 645  
 For many oon hath she thus yblent.  
 She ys pley of enchaumentement,  
 That semeth oon and ys not soo;  
 The false thefe, what hath she doo,  
 How west thou? by oure Lorde, I wol the sey. 650

wrien varien. 627 mowstres. 648 fals. 646 thus she. 640 fals.

At the chesse with me she gan to pleye;  
 With hir false draughtes dyvers  
 She staale on me, and toke my fers.  
 And whan I sawgh my fers away,  
 Allas, I kouthe no lenger play, 655  
 But seyde, 'farewel, swete, ywys,  
 And fare-wel al that ever ther ys!  
 Therwith Fortune seyde, 'chek here,  
 And mate in the myd poynt of the chekkere'  
 With a pounne errante, allas! 660  
 Ful craftier to pley she was  
 Than Athalus, that made the game  
 First of the chesse, so was hys name;  
 But God wolde I had, oones or twyes,  
 Ykoude and knowe the jeopardyes 665  
 That koude the Greke Pictagoras;  
 I shulde have pleyde the bet at ches,  
 And kept my fers the bet therby,  
 And thogh, wherto? for trewely  
 I holde that wysse nat worthe a stree; 670  
 Hyt had be never the bet for me.  
 For Fortune kan so many a wyle,  
 Ther be but fewe kan hir begile,  
 And eke she ys the lasse to blame;  
 My selfe I wolde have do the same, 675  
 Before God, hadde I be as she;  
 She oght the more excused be.  
 For this I say yet more therto,  
 Had I be God and myghte have do  
 My wille, whan my fers she kaught, 680  
 I wolde have drawe the same draught.  
 For also wys God yive me reste,  
 I dar wel swere she tooke the beste!  
 But through that draught I have lorne

652 fals. 660 thocht; trewely. 676 hadde as. 680 she my fers. 688 he.

My blysse, allas, that I was borne! 685  
 For evermore, y trowe trewly,  
 For al my wille, my luste holly  
 Ys turned, but yet, what to doone?  
 Be oure lorde, hyt ys to deye soone,  
 For no thyng I leve hyt noght, 690  
 But lyve and deye ryght in this thoght.  
 For there nys planete in firmament,  
 Ne in ayre, ne in erthe noon element,  
 That they ne yive me a yifte echon  
 Of wepyng, whan I am allon. 695  
 For whan that I avise me wel,  
 And bethenke me every del,  
 How that ther lyeth in rekenyng  
 Inne my sorwe for no thyng;  
 And how ther levyth noe gladnesse 700  
 May gladde me of my distresse,  
 And how I have loste suffisance,  
 And therto I have no plesance,  
 Than may I say, I have ryght noght.  
 And whan al this falleth in my thoght, 705  
 Allas, than am I overcome!  
 For that ys doon ys not to come.  
 I have more sorowe than Tantale."  
 And whan I herde hym tel thys tale  
 This pitously, as I yow telle, 710  
 Unnethe myght y lenger duelle,  
 Hyt dyd myn hert so moche woo.  
 "A, goode sir!" quod I, "say not soo!  
 Have somme pitee on your nature  
 That formed yow to creature, 715  
 Remembre yow of Socrates,  
 For he ne counted nat thre strees  
 Of noght that Fortune koude doo."

"No," quod he, "I kan not soo."  
 "Why so, good syr? parde," quod y, 720  
 "Ne, say noght soo for trewely,  
 Thogh ye had loste the ferses twelve,  
 And ye for sorwe mordred yourselve,  
 Ye sholde be dampned in this cas  
 By as goode ryght as Medea was, 725  
 That slowgh hir children for Jasoun,  
 And Phyllis also for Demophoun  
 Henge hirselve, so weylaway!  
 For he had broke his terme day  
 To come to hir; another rage 730  
 Had Dydo, the quene eke of Cartage,  
 That slough hirselve, for Eneas  
 Was fals, which a foole she was!  
 And Ecquo died for Narcisus  
 Nolde nat love hir, and ryght thus 735  
 Hath many another foly doon.  
 And for Dalida died Sampson  
 That slough hymselfe with a pilere.  
 But ther is no man alyve here  
 Wolde for a fers make this woo!" 740  
 "Why so?" quod he, "hyt ys nat soo,  
 Thou woste ful lytel what thou menynt,  
 I have loste more than thow wenyst."  
 "Loo, sir, how may that be," quod y,  
 "Good sir, telle me al hooly 745  
 In what wyse, how, why, and wherefore  
 That ye have thus youre blysse lore."  
 "Blythely," quod he, "come sytte adoun,  
 I telle the up condicioun  
 That thou shalt hooly with al thy wytte 750  
 Doo thyn entent to herkene hitte."  
 "Yis, syr." "Swere thy trouthe therto."

720 yis parde. 721 say om.; trewely. 744 sir how she that may.

740 hyt the up a.

"Gladly." "Do thanne holde hereto."  
 "I shal ryght blythely, so God me save,  
 Hooly, with al the witte I have, 755  
 Here yow, as wel as I kan."  
 "A Goddys halfe," quod he, and began;  
 "Syr," quod he, "sith firste I kouthe  
 Have any maner wytte fro youthe,  
 Or kyndely understondynge 760  
 To comprehende, in any thyng,  
 What love was in myn oun wytte,  
 Dredeles I have ever yitte  
 Be tributarye, and yive rente  
 To Love hooly with goode entente, 765  
 And through plesaunce become his thralle,  
 With good wille, body, hert, and alle.  
 Al this I putte in his servage  
 As to my lorde, and did homage,  
 And ful devoutely I prayed hym to, 770  
 He shulde besette myn herte so,  
 That hyt plesance to hym were,  
 And worshippe to my lady dere.  
 And this was longe and many a yere  
 Or that myn herte was set owhere, 775  
 That I did thus, and nyste why,  
 I trowe hit came me kyndely,  
 Peraventure I was therto moste able  
 As a white walle or a table;  
 For hit ys redy to cacheche and take 780  
 Al that men wil theryn make,  
 Whethir so men wil portrey or peynte,  
 Be the werkes never so queynte.  
 And thilke tyme I ferde ryght so  
 I was able to have lerned tho, 785  
 And to have kende as wel or better,

755 here to. 771 hert. 782 peynt. 783 queynt.



Paraunter, other arte or letre;  
 But for love came firste in my thought,  
 Therfore I forgate hyt noght.  
 I ches love to my firste crafte, 790  
 Therfore hit ys with me lafte;  
 For why, I toke hyt of so yonge age,  
 That malyce had my corage  
 Nat that tyme turned to nothyng  
 Thorgh to mochel knowlachyng. 795  
 For that tyme Yowthe, my maistresse,  
 Governed me in ydelnesse,  
 For hyt was in my firste youthe,  
 And thoo ful lytel goode y couthe;  
 For al my werkes were flyttyng 800  
 That tyme, and al my thought varyng,  
 Al were to me ylyche goode  
 That I knewe thoo, but thus hit stoode.  
 Hit happed, that I came on a day  
 Into a place, ther that I say 805  
 Trewly the fayrest companye  
 Off ladyes, that evere man with ye  
 Had seen togedres in oo place.  
 Shal I clepe hyt happe other grace  
 That broght me there? nay, but Fortune, 810  
 That ys to lyen ful comune,  
 The fals trayteresse pervers!  
 God wolde I koude clepe hir wers,  
 For now she worcheth me ful woo,  
 And I wol tel sone why soo; 815  
 Amonge these ladyes thus echon,  
 Soth to seyne, sawgh y oon  
 That was lyke noon of the route;  
 For I dar swere, withoute doute,  
 That as the somerys sonne bryghte 820

Ys fairer, clerer, and hath more lyghte  
 Than any other planete in hevене,  
 The moone, or the sterres sevene,  
 For al the worlde, so had she  
 Surmountede hem al of beaute, 825  
 Of maner, and of comelynesse,  
 Of stature, and of wel sette gladnesse,  
 Of godelyhede so wel besey;  
 Shortly what shal y more sey?  
 By God, and by his halwes twelve 830  
 Hyt was my swete, ryght al hir selve!  
 She had so stedfaste countenaunce,  
 So noble porte, and meyntenaunce;  
 And Love, that had wel herd my boone,  
 Had espyed me thus soone, 835  
 That she ful sone, in my thoght,  
 As helpe me God, so was y-kaught  
 So sodenly, that I ne toke  
 No maner counseyl, but at hir loke,  
 And at myn hert; for why, hir eyen 840  
 So gladly, I trow, myn herte seyen,  
 That purely tho myn oun thoght  
 Seyde hit were beter serve hir for noght  
 Than with another to be wel.  
 And hyt was sothe, for everedel 845  
 I wil anoon-ryght telle the why:  
 I sawgh hyr daunce so comelely,  
 Carole and synge so swetly,  
 Lawghe and pley so womanly,  
 And loke so debonairly, 850  
 So goodely speke, and so frendly,  
 That certes y trowe, that evermore  
 Nas seyne so blysfyl a tresore.

827 of so. 828 and so. 829 more om. 830 His om. 840 And But; hert hest.  
853 so a.

For every heer on hir hede,  
 Soth to seyne, hyt was not rede, 855  
 Ne nouthur yelow, ne broune hyt nas,  
 Me thoghte most lyke gold hyt was  
 And which eyen my lady hadde!  
 Debonair, goode, glade, and sadde,  
 Symple, of goode mochel, noght to wyde; 860  
 Therto hir looke nas not asyde  
 Ne overthwert, but besette so wele  
 Hyt drewh and tooke up, everydele,  
 Al that on hir gan beholde.  
 Hir eyen semed anoon, she wolde 865  
 Have mercy—foolys wenden soo,  
 But hyt was never the rather doo!  
 Hyt nas no countrefeted thyng,  
 Hyt was hir oune pure lokyng,  
 That the goddesse, Dame Nature, 870  
 Had made hem opene by mesure  
 And cloos; for were she never so glad,  
 Hyr lokyng was not foly sprad,  
 Ne wildely, thogh that she pleyde;  
 But ever me thocht hir eyen seyde 875  
 'Be God, my wrathe ys al foryive!  
 Therwith hir lyste so wel to lyve,  
 That dulnesse was of hir adrad;  
 She nas to sobre, ne to glad.  
 In alle thynges more mesure 880  
 Had never, I trow, creature.  
 But many oon with hire loke she herte,  
 And that sate hyr ful lytel at herte.  
 For she knewe nothyng of her thocht,  
 But whither she knew, or knew it nowght, 885  
 Algate she ne rought of hem a stree.  
 To gete hyr love noo nerre was he

857 thocht; *gold om.* 882-3 hert. 884 knowe.

That woned at home, than he in Ynde;  
 The formest was alway behynde.  
 But goode folke over al other 890  
 She loved, as man may do hys brother,  
 Of whiche love she was wounder large  
 In skilful placis that bere charge.

But which a visage had she thertoo!  
 Allas, myn hert ys wonder woo 895  
 That I ne kan discryven hyt!  
 Me lakketh both Englyssh and wit  
 For to undo hyt at the fulle;  
 And eke my spiritis be so dulle  
 So grete a thyng for to devyse. 900

I have no witte that kan suffice  
 To comprehende hir beaute,  
 But thus moche dar I sayn, that she  
 Was rody, fressh, and lyvely hewed;  
 And every day hir beaute newed, 905

And negh hir face was alderbest;  
 For certys Nature had swich lest  
 To make that faire, that trewly she  
 Was hir chefe patrone of beaute,  
 And chefe ensample of al hir werke, 910  
 And moustre; for, be hyt never so derke,  
 Me thynkyth I se hir evermoo.

And yet moreover, thogh al thoo  
 That ever levede were now alyve,  
 Ne sholde ha founde to diskryve 915  
 Yn al hir face a wikked sygne,  
 For hit was sad, symple, and benygne.

And which a goodely softe speche  
 Had that swete, my lyves leche,  
 So frendely, and so wel ygrounded, 920  
 Up al resoun so wel yfounded,

888 *than that.* 890 good. 904 white rody.

And so trefable to al goode,  
 That I dar swere wel by the roode  
 Of eloquence was never founde  
 So swete a sownynge facounde, 925  
 Ne trewer tonged, ne skorned lasse,  
 Ne bet koude hele, that by the masse  
 I durste swere, thogh the Pape hit songe,  
 That ther was never yet through hir tonge  
 Man ne woman gretely harmed. 930  
 As for hir, hit was al harme hyd;  
 Ne lasse flaterynge in hir word,  
 That purely hir symple recorde  
 Was founde as trewe as any bonde  
 Or trouthe of any manns honde. 935  
 Ne chyde she koude never a dele,  
 That knoweth al the worlde ful wele.  
 But swiche a fairenesse of a nekke  
 Had that swete, that boon nor brekke  
 Nas ther non seen that mys-satte. 940  
 Hyt was white, smothe, streght, and pure flatte,  
 Wythouten hole; or canel-boon,  
 As be semynge, had she noon,  
 Hyr throte, as I have now memoyre,  
 Semed a rounde toure of yvoyre, 945  
 Of goode gretenesse, and nought to grete.  
 And goode faire White she hete,  
 That was my lady name, ryghte.  
 She was bothe faire and bryghte,  
 She had not hir name wronge; 950  
 Ryght faire shuldres, and body longe  
 She had, and armes; every lyth  
 Fattyssh, flesshy, not grete therwith,  
 Ryght white handes, and nayles rede;  
 Rounde brestes, and of good brede 955

Hyr hippes were, a streight flat bakke.  
 I knewe on hir noon other lakke,  
 That al hir lymmes nere pure sywyng  
 In as ferre as I had knowyng.  
 Therto she koude so wel pley, 960  
 Whan that hir lyst, that I dar sey  
 That she was lyke to torche bryght  
 That every man may take of lyght  
 Ynogh, and hyt hathe never the lesse.  
 Of maner and of comlynesse 965  
 Ryght so ferde my lady dere;  
 For every wight of hir manere  
 Myght cachche ynogh, yif that he wolde,  
 Yif he had eyen hir to beholde;  
 For I dar swere wel, yif that she 970  
 Had amonge ten thousande be,  
 She wolde have be, at the lest,  
 A chefe meroure of al the fest,  
 Thogh they had stonde in a rowe,  
 To mennys eyen koude have knowe. 975  
 For wher so men had pleyed or wakyed,  
 Me thocht the felysshyppe as naked  
 Withouten hir, that sawgh I oones,  
 As a corowne withoute stones.  
 Trewly she was to myn eye 980  
 The soleyne Fenix of Arabye,  
 For ther levyth nevir but oon;  
 Ne swich as she ne knowe I noon.  
 To speke of godenesse, trewly, she  
 Had as moche debonairyete 985  
 As ever had Hester in the Bible,  
 And more, yif more were possyble.  
 And sothe to seyne, therwythalle  
 She had a wytte so generale,

So hoole enclined to alle goode, 990  
 That al hir wytte was set, by the rode,  
 Withoute malyce, upon gladnesse.  
 And therto I sawgh never yet a lesse  
 Harmeful than she was in doynge.  
 I sey nat that she ne had knowynge 995  
 What harme was, or elles she  
 Had koude no good, so thenketh me.  
 And trewly, for to speke of trouthe  
 But she had hadde, hyt hadde be routhe;  
 Therof she had so moche hyr dele, 1000  
 And I dar seyn, and swere hyt wele,  
 That Trouthe hymselfe over al and alle  
 Had chose hys maner principalle  
 In hir, that was his restynge place.  
 Therto she hadde the moste grace 1005  
 To have stedefaste perseveraunce  
 And esy atempry governaunce  
 That ever I knewe, or wyste yitte,  
 So pure suffraunt was hir wytte.  
 And reson gladly she understoode; 1010  
 Hyt folowed wel she koude goode.  
 She used gladly to do wel,  
 These were hir maners everydel;  
 Therwith she loved so wel ryght,  
 She wronge do wolde to no wyght, 1015  
 No wyght myght doo hir noo shame,  
 She loved so wel hir oun name  
 Hyr lust to holde no wyght in honde,  
 Ne, be thou siker, she wolde not fonde  
 To holde no wyght in balaunce 1020  
 By halfe worde, ne by countenaunce,  
 But yif men wolde upon hir lye;  
 Ne sende men into Walakye,  
 To Pruyse, and into Tartarye,

To Alysaundre, ne into Turkye, 1025  
 And byd hym faste anoon, that he  
 Goo hoodeles to the drye se,  
 And come home by the Carrenare,  
 And sey, 'Sir, be now ryght ware,  
 That I may of yow here seyn 1030  
 Worshyppe, or that ye come ageyn.'  
 She ne used no suche knakkes smale.  
 But wherfore that y tel my tale?  
 Ryght on thys same, as I have seyde,  
 Was hooly al my love leyde; 1035  
 For certes, she was, that swete wife,  
 My suffisaunce, my luste, my lyfe,  
 Myn happe, myn hele, and al my blysse,  
 My worldys welfare and my lisse,  
 And I hooly hires, and everydel!" 1040  
 "By oure lord," quod I, "y trowe yow wel,  
 Hardely, your love was wel besette.  
 I not how ye myght have doo bette."  
 "Bette? ne no wyght so wele," quod he,  
 "Y trowe hyt wel, sir," quod I, "parde!" 1045  
 "Nay, leve hyt wel!" "Sire, so do I;  
 I leve yow wel, that trewly  
 Yow thoghte, that she was the best,  
 And to be-holde the alderfayrest,  
 Who soo had loked hir with your eyen." 1050  
 "With myn? nay, al that hir seyen  
 Seyde and swore hyt was soo;  
 And thogh they ne hadde, I wolde thoo  
 Have loved best my lady free.  
 Thogh I had hadde al the beaute 1055  
 That ever had Alcipyades,  
 And al the strengthe of Ercules,  
 And therto had the worthynesse

1027 into. 1039 *lisse* goddesse.



- Of Alysaunder, and al the rychesse  
 That ever was in Babyloyne, 1060  
 In Cartage, or in Macedoyne,  
 Or in Rome, or in Nynve;  
 And to also as hardy be  
 As was Ector, so have I joye,  
 That Achilles slough at Troye— 1065  
 And therefore was he slayn also,  
 In a temple, for bothe twoo  
 Were slayne, he and Antylegyus—  
 And so seyth Dares Frygius,  
 For love of Polixena; 1070  
 Or ben as wis as Mynerva,  
 I wolde ever, withoute drede,  
 Have loved hir, for I most nede.  
 Nede? nay, trewly, I gabbe nowe;  
 Noght 'nede,' and I wol telle howe; 1075  
 For of goode wille myn hert hyt wolde,  
 And eke to love hir I was holde  
 As for the fairest and the beste.  
 She was as good, so have I reste,  
 As ever was Penolopee of Grece, 1080  
 Or as the noble wife Lucrece,  
 That was the best, he telleth thus,  
 The Romayne, Tytus Lyvyus.  
 She was as good, and nothyng lyke,  
 Thogh hir stories be autentyke; 1085  
 Algate she was as trewe as she—  
 But wherfore that I telle the?  
 Whan I firste my lady say,  
 I was ryght yonge, sothe to say,  
 And ful grete nede I hadde to lerne; 1090  
 Whan my herte wolde yerne  
 To love, hyt was a grete empryse.  
 But as my wytte koude beste suffice,

After my yonge childely wytte,  
 Withoute drede, I besette hytte, 1095  
 To love hir in my beste wyse  
 To do hir worshippe, and the servise  
 That I koude thoo, be my trouthe,  
 Withoute feynynge outhr slouthe;  
 For wonder feyne I wolde hir se, 1100  
 So mochel hyt amended me,  
 That whan I sawgh hir first a-morwe  
 I was warished of al my sorwe,  
 Of al day after til hyt were eve;  
 Me thoghte nothyng myghte me greve 1105  
 Were my sorwes never so smerte.  
 And yet she sytte so myn herte,  
 That by my trouthe y nolde noght,  
 For ay thys worlde, oute of my thought  
 Leve my lady, noo, trewly!" 1110  
 "Now by my trouthe, sir," quod I,  
 "Me thynketh ye have suche a chaunce  
 As shryfte wythoute repentaunce."  
 "Repentaunce? nay, fy!" quod he,  
 "Shulde y now repente me 1115  
 To love? nay, certis, than were I wel  
 Wers than was Achetofel,  
 Or Anthenor, so have I joye,  
 The traytore that betrayesd Troye;  
 Or the false Genelloun, 1120  
 He that purchased the tresoun  
 Of Rowlande and of Olyvere.  
 Nay, while I am alyve here,  
 I nyl foryete hir never moo."  
 "Now, good syr," quod I, as thoþ, 1125  
 "Ye han wel tolde me here before,  
 Hyt ys no nede to reherse more,

How ye sawgh hir firste, and where;  
 But wolde ye tel me the manere  
 To hire which was your first speche? 1180  
 Therof I wolde yow beseche;  
 And how she knewe first your thought,  
 Whether ye loved hir or noght;  
 And telleth me eke what ye have lore  
 I herde yow telle herebefore." 1185  
 "Yee," he seyde, "thow nost what thou menyst;  
 I have lost more than thou wenyst."  
 "What losse ys that?" quod I thoo.  
 "Nyl she not love yow? ys hyt soo?  
 Or have ye oght doon amys, 1140  
 That she hathe lefte yow, ys hyt this?  
 For Goddys love, telle me alle."  
 "Before God," quod he, "and I shalle.  
 I say ryght as I have seyde,  
 On hir was al my love leyde, 1145  
 And yet she nyste hyt never a del  
 Noght longe tyme, leve hyt wel.  
 For be ryght siker, I durste noght  
 For al this worlde tel hir my thought,  
 Ne I wolde have wraththed hir, trewly. 1150  
 For wostow why, she was lady  
 Of the body, she had the hert,  
 And who hath that may not astert.  
 But, for to kepe me fro ydelnesse,  
 Trewly I did my besynesse 1155  
 To make songes, as I best koude,  
 And ofte tyme I songe hem loude,  
 And made songes this a grete dele,  
 Al thogh I koude not make so wele  
 Songes, ne knowe the arte alle 1160  
 As koude Lamekys sone, Tuballe,

1146 nat never. 1154 so fro. 1160 ne the.

- That founde out firste the art of songe;  
 For as hys brothres hamers ronge  
 Upon hys anvelet, up and doun,  
 Therof he tooke the first soun. 1165  
 But Grekes seyn Pictagoras,  
 That he the firste fynder was  
 Of the arte; Aurora telleth soo,  
 But therof no fors of hem twoo.  
 Algatis, songes thus I made 1170  
 Of my felynge, myn hert to glade,  
 And loo, this was myn alther-first—  
 I not wher hyt were the werst—
- 'Lorde, hyt maketh myn herte lyght  
 Whan I thenke on that swete wyght 1175  
 That is so semely on to see;  
 And wisshe to God, hit myght so bee  
 That she wolde holde me for hir knyght,  
 My lady, that is so faire and bryght!'
- Now have I tolde, the sothe to say, 1180  
 My firste songe. Upon a day  
 I bethoghte me what woo  
 And sorwe that I suffred thoo  
 For hir, and yet she wyst hyt noght,  
 Ne tel hir durst I nat my thoght. 1185  
 'Allas,' thoght I, 'y kan no rede!  
 And, but I telle hir, I nam but dede.  
 And yif I telle hyr, to sey ryght sothe,  
 I am adred she wol be wrothe.  
 Allas, what shal I thanne doo?' 1190  
 In this debate I was so woo  
 Me thoght myn herte brast a-tweyne.  
 So at the laste, sothe to sayne,

1167 first. 1172 *myn om.*; *this* thus. 1174 hert. 1181 first. 1182 bethoght.  
 1187 am. 1192 hert. 1193 last.

I be-thought me, that nature  
 Ne formed never in creature 1195  
 So moche beaute, trewely  
 And bounte, wythoute mercy.  
 In hope of that, my tale I tolde  
 With sorwe, as that I never sholde;  
 For nedys, and mawgree my hede, 1200  
 I most have tolde hir, or be dede.  
 I not wel how that I beganne—  
 Ful evel reherse hyt I kan—  
 And eke, as helpe me God withalle,  
 I trowe hyt was in the dismalle 1205  
 That was the ten woundes of Egipte;  
 For many a worde I overskipte  
 In my tale, for pure fere  
 Lest my wordys mys-sette were.  
 With sorweful herte, and woundes dede, 1210  
 Softe and quakyng for pure drede  
 And shame, and styntyng in my tale  
 For ferde, and myn hewe al pale,  
 Ful ofte I wexe bothe pal and rede.  
 Bowyng to hir I heng the hede— 1215  
 I durste nat ones loke hir on—  
 For witte, maner, and al was goon.  
 I seyde 'mercy!' and no more.  
 Hyt nas no game, hyt sate me sore.  
 So at the laste, sothe to seyne, 1220  
 Whan that myn hert was come ageyne,  
 To telle shortely al my speche,  
 With hool herte I gan hir beseche  
 That she wolde be my lady swete;  
 And swore, and gan hir hertely hete 1225  
 Ever to be stedfast and trewe,  
 And love hir alwey fresshly newe,

And never other lady have,  
 And al hir worshippe for to save.  
 As I best koude, I swore hir this, 1230  
 'For youres is alle, that ever ther ys,  
 For evermore, myn herte swete,  
 And never to false yow, but I mete,  
 I nyl, as wysse God helpe me soo!  
 And whan I had my tale ydoo, 1235  
 God wote, she acounted nat a stree  
 Of al my tale, so thoghte me!  
 To telle shortly ryght as hyt ys,  
 Trewly hir answer, hyt was this—  
 I kan not now wel counterfete 1240  
 Hyr wordys, but this was the grete  
 Of hir answer, she sayde 'nay!  
 Alle outerly, allas, that day!  
 The sorowe I suffred, and the woo  
 That trewly Cassandra, that soo 1245  
 Bewayled the destruccioun  
 Of Troy and of Ilyoun  
 Had never swich sorwe as I thoo.  
 I durst no more say ther-too  
 For pure fere, but stale away; 1250  
 And thus I lyved ful many a day,  
 That trewely I hadde no nede  
 Ferther than my beddes hede  
 Never a day to seche sorwe.  
 I fonde hyt redy every morwe, 1255  
 For why, I loved hyr in no gere.  
 So hit befel another yere,  
 I thoughte ones I wolde fonde  
 To do hir knowe and understonde  
 My woo, and she wel understode 1260  
 That I ne wilned no thyng but gode

1237 thoght.

And worshippe, and to kepe hir name  
 Over alle thynges, and dred hir shame,  
 And was so besy hyr to serve,  
 And pitee were I shulde sterve, 1265  
 Syth that I wilned noon harme, ywys.  
 So whan my lady knewe al thys  
 My lady yaf me al hooly  
 The noble yifte of hir mercy,  
 Savynge hir worshippe by al weyes, 1270  
 Dredles, I mene noon other weyes.  
 And therwith she yaf me a rynge,  
 I trowe hyt was the first thyng.  
 But yif myn hert was iwaxe  
 Gladde, that is no nede to axe. 1275  
 As helpe me God, I was as blyve  
 Reysed as fro dethe to lyve,  
 Of al happes the alderbeste,  
 The gladdest, and the moste at reste;  
 For trewely that swete wyght, 1280  
 Whan I had wrong and she the ryght,  
 She wolde alway so goodely  
 Foryeve me so debonairely,  
 In al my yowthe, in alle chaunce,  
 She tooke me in hir governaunce. 1285  
 Therwyth she was alway so trewe  
 Our joye was ever-glyche newe.  
 Oure hertys werne so evene a payre  
 That never nas that oon contrarye  
 To that other, for noo woo. 1290  
 For sothe glyche they suffred thoo  
 Oo blysse and eke oo sorwe bothe;  
 Ylyche they were, bothe glad and wrothe;  
 Al was us oon, withoute were;  
 And thus we lyved ful many a yere 1295

1280 trewly. 1281 *the om.* 1284 al (2).

So wel, I kan nat telle how!"  
 "Sir," quod I, "where is she now?"  
 "Now!" quod he, and stynte anoon. . . .  
 Therwith he waxe as dede as stoon,  
 And seyde, "Allas, that I was bore! 1300  
 That was the losse that here before  
 I tolde the, that I hadde lorne.  
 Bethenke how I seyde herebeforne  
 'Thow wost ful lytel what thow menyst,  
 I have lost more than thow wenyst,' 1305  
 God wote, allas, ryght that was she!"  
 "Allas, sir, how? what may that be?"  
 "She ys ded!" "nay!" "Yis, be my trouthe!"  
 "Is that youre losse? be God, hyt ys routhe!"  
 And with that worde, ryght anoon 1310  
 They gan to strake forth, al was doon,  
 For that tyme the herte huntynge.  
 With that me thoghte that this kynge  
 Anoon gan homewarde for to ryde  
 Unto a place was there besyde, 1315  
 Which was from us but a lyte,  
 A longe castel, with wallys white,  
 Be seynt Johan, on a ryche hille,  
 As me mette; but thus hyt fille—  
 Ryght thus me mette, as I yow telle— 1320  
 That in the castell ther was a belle,  
 As hyt hadde smyten oures twelve.  
 Therewyth I awooke my selve,  
 And fonde me lyinge in my bedde,  
 And the booke that I hadde redde 1325  
 Of Alcione and Seys the kynge  
 And of the goddys of slepynge,  
 I fond hyt in myn honde ful evene.  
 Thought I, "Thys ys so queynt a swevene

1313 thought. 1314 Anoon om. 1322 smyte.



That I wol, be processe of tyme, 1330  
Fonde to put this swevene in ryme  
As I kan best, and that anoon."  
This was my swevene, now hit ys doon.

*Explicit the Boke of the Duchesse.*