THE SHORT POEMS

The poems printed here, Robinson explained, "are miscellaneous in character and have little in common except that they are short. They obviously belong to different periods of Chaucer's life." However, these poems are informed by a common tradition, that of French courtly verse, which was the literary tradition best known to the courts in which Chaucer grew up. When Alceste in the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women (F 422-23) pleads on Chaucer's behalf that he has made, "many an ympne for [Love's] halydayes / that highten balades, roundels, virelays," she specifies the fixed forms of French courtly verse and says that Chaucer has written many of them, though only two roundels (that in The Parliament of Fowls and Merciles Beaute, if it is Chaucer's) and no virelays have survived. Probably some of Chaucer's early lyrics were written in French and have since been lost or remain unidentified in manuscripts. It is even more likely that a number of his English lyrics have also been lost, especially those of his youth; the writing of love songs and poems was an ordinary part of the amusements of the court and was one of the expected attainments of young courtiers, such as the Squire in the General Prologue, who "koude songes make and wel endite."

Most of these "ditees and songes glade" that John Gower said Chaucer wrote in the flower of his youth (Confessio amantis, 8.*2942-*47) must have been brief and simple songs, such as those embodied in The Book of the Duchess, rather than the more elaborate forms exemplified in the surviving short poems. Probably, too, some of these early lyrics were composed for actual singing. The specification that the Man in Black's lay, "a maner song," is "without noote, without song" (The Book of the Duchess, 471-72) seems to imply that singing was ordinarily expected, and, though the word song is used very loosely in Middle English, at least some of the references in the works to singing clearly imply lyrics that were actually sung. Moreover, Chaucer's favorite lyric form, the ballade, was for his master in this, Guillaume de Machaut, a specific musical form. Nevertheless, aside from the roundel in The Parliament of Fowls and, possibly, Merciles Beaute, it is unlikely that many of Chaucer's surviving lyrics were meant to be sung. He seems to have followed the example not of the older Machaut but of his contemporary, Eustache Deschamps, who in his poetic treatise L'art de dictier et de faire chançon, balades, virelais et rondeaux (Oeuvres 7:266-92) distinguishes between the "artificial" music produced by the singing voice or musical instruments and the more difficult and sophisticated "natural" music, which consists in skillful versification in the fixed forms and which is recited rather than sung. Apparently almost all of Chaucer's surviving lyrics belong to the category of "natural" music.

Until quite recent years, Chaucer's short poems received little critical attention; though many of them are personal, they lack the lyric cri de coeur that early critics prized in this genre, and the best of the short poems are often satirical or didactic, qualities not thought suitable to lyrics. Those concerning the pangs of love, as Robinson noted, "sound rather like exercises in a conventional style of composition," as indeed they are, and this too was regarded as a flaw by critics who believed that a lyric should be a direct and sincere expression of personal feeling. In recent years critical attitudes have greatly changed, and these shorter works are now receiving some of the sympathetic attention they deserve.

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Chaucer was the first to use the form of the French ballade in English, taking the form and often much of his material from his older contemporary Guillaume de Machaut (d. 1377). The classic ballade consists of three eight-line stanzas \((a\ b\ a\ b\ b\ c\ b\ C)\), each using the same set of rhymes throughout and ending with a refrain \((C)\), usually with a brief envoy addressing either a lady, Madame, or, more often, a Prince (the “prince” of a puyys, a gathering of amateur poets, or an actual prince). To Rosemounde is a strict ballade, though lacking an envoy (it is probable that some of the envois in Chaucer’s ballades were added later). Womanly Noblesse is cast in the classic form, with a slight change in rhyme scheme, as is the rime royal Against Women Unconstant. Fortune is a triple ballade — three connected ballades with an envoy — as is The Complaint of Venus. Lenvoy de Chaucer a Sco-gan is a variation on the form, a double ballade in rime royal without the repeated rhymes or the refrain, and Lenvoy de Chaucer a Bukton shows the same variation in the form of a simple ballade. In Truth, Gentilesse, Lak of Stedfastnesse, and The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse, the form is strictly observed, though in rime royal rather than the eight-line stanza of the standard French form. All of Chaucer’s ballades are in his favorite five-accent decasyllabic line rather than the octosyllabic line standard in French ballades.

Such changes in the form of the ballade show Chaucer’s concern with poetic technique and his willingness to experiment. What may be the earliest of the shorter poems, An ABC, is in the decasyllabic line, which was rarely used in English before his time. He may have derived it from French (Machaut had used decasyllabic couplets), but his use of it in stanzas was probably inspired by the endecasillabi of the Italian poets whom he admired. The Complaint to His Lady contains not only an apparent brief experiment in terza rima, the first in English, but what are probably the earliest surviving English examples of rime royal, the seven-line stanza that Chaucer was to use in so many of his poems and was to leave as his principal legacy to the courtly poets of the fifteenth century. There are precedents for Chaucer’s rime royal in French lyric poetry that may account for its use in some of the lyrics here, but its close relationship to Boccaccio’s narrative stanza, the Italian ottava rima \((a\ b\ a\ b\ b\ c\ b\ c\)\), doubtless influenced Chaucer’s use of this stanza in his narrative poems.

Chaucer’s favorite lyric genre is the complaint, and he was the first to use the French word complaint in this sense. He applies it loosely to a variety of forms, from Ovid’s Her-oides to relatively brief lyrics, and he sometimes uses it even with the sense of a legal bill of petition (as in The Complaint unto Pity). Though Chaucer’s usage sometimes implies that it is a distinct poetic form (as in The Franklin’s Tale, in which Aurelius makes “layes, songes, compleintes, roundels, virelayes”\), the complaint has no fixed form. It may be a ballade, like The Complaint of Venus, a straightforward lyric (A Complaint to His Lady), or a lyric introduced by a narrative (The Complaint unto Pity, The Complaint of Mars) or interpolated into a longer narrative, like the complaints of Troilus, and, as seems to have been the intention, the complaint in Anelida. All, however, share a common theme — the pangs of unrequited or disappointed love — and a common use of a first-person speaker and of the conventions of courtly love.

Except for An ABC and The Complaint of Venus, the lyrics have no direct sources. However, almost all show the influence of French courtly verse, especially the poems of Machaut and the Roman de la rose, and many are indebted to Boethius’s Consolation of Philosophy (sometimes as conveyed by Machaut’s poems or the Roman, which are themselves permeated with Boethian ideas and materials), and the ideas, images, vocabulary, and attitudes are drawn from the commonplaces of the courtly poetry of the time. Though Chaucer’s principal subject is love, his poems, like those of his French predecessors and contemporaries, show a considerable range of topics, from the devotional An ABC and the philosophical Boethian lyrics (The Former Age, Fortune, Truth, Gentilesse, and Lak of Stedfastnesse) to the light-hearted Chaucers Wordes unto Adam, His Owne Scribeyn and The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse. Most striking is the wide range of tone and attitude; Chaucer shifts easily from the deeply serious to the bantering or even cynical, sometimes within the same poem. This, too, was part of the courtly tradition that Chaucer inherited, but, as with his handling of the sources for Troilus and many of the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer makes that tradition distinctly his own; even in the less successful of these short poems it is notable how
often he makes the thoroughly traditional and commonplace seem fresh and original.

It seems likely that many of these poems were written for specific occasions, but in the great majority of cases scholarship has failed to identify those occasions. Consequently, the dates of composition are usually impossible to determine with precision. Such matters are discussed in the Explanatory Notes, and the order in which these poems are here printed represents only an approximation of their relative dates.

An ABC
This poem, called in the manuscripts “La priere de Nostre Dame,” is a translation, close but skillful, of a prayer in Guillaume de Deguilleville’s long allegorical poem, Pelerinaige de la vie humaine. It consists of a series of stanzas, each addressed to the Virgin and each beginning with a different letter of the alphabet, progressing from A to Z. Each stanza evokes a different symbol or image, though the common image of the crucified Christ and the sorrowful Mary is intentionally omitted (81–82). The poem is notable for its use of legal terminology (though this is a terminology conventionally associated with the Redemption), as the speaker, almost as if in a court of law, begs the Virgin to intercede on his behalf.

The Complaint unto Pity
Even for a complaint, this poem is markedly gloomy. It is permeated by death, with burials, biers, hearses, and the speaker’s announcement that Pity is dead and so is he. Yet it is also an intricate work, and its elaborate use of allegory — this is Chaucer’s most heavily allegorical poem — lends it a sharply visual quality. It shares with An ABC a frequent use of legal language; indeed, the speaker presents his “Bill of Complaint” in accord with the established legal practices of the time, again as if he were in an actual court of law. This is apparently the earliest of the poems consisting of a third-person narrative introduction to a first-person complaint. The device provides a sense of specificity, even a sort of verisimilitude, to the lyric complaint.

A Complaint to His Lady
This work (called “A Balade of Pity” in some editions) is fragmentary, and it is not certain that its parts were meant to form a single poem. They are unified only in their common theme of unrequited love. The work, whether one poem or several, is unfinished, and it is best read as an experiment in versification: Part I is in rime-royal stanzas, possibly the earliest to have survived; Parts II and III are apparently in terza rima, the first appearance of Dante’s rhyme scheme in English; and Part IV is in a ten-line stanza (also apparently here used for the first time in the language) that bears some resemblance to the nine-line stanza of Anelida (with which this poem shares a number of verbal resemblances). The possible relation to Anelida suggests a later date than is usually assigned to the Complaint to His Lady, which is generally taken to be an early work on the basis of its thoroughly conventional imagery and language.

The Complaint of Mars
This work is composed of three unequal parts: the Proem, sung by a bird on St. Valentine’s Day; the Story, told by the narrator “in briddes wise, which concerns the love of the planets Venus and Mars; and the Complaint, spoken by Mars. The parts are not tightly unified, and Chaucer may have composed the Story and Complaint separately and then added the Proem to tie the two together, though critics have not found fault with this aspect of the poem.

The Story is simple in plot, though the astronomical terminology is difficult for the modern reader. It tells the well-known story of the love of Mars and Venus, translated into astronomical terms: the two planets move closer to one another in the skies as they come into conjunction in the zodiacal sign of Taurus. The sun is also moving toward Taurus, thus threatening to discover their assignation; Venus, who moves more rapidly through her orbit than Mars does through his, flees to the next zodiacal sign, leaving behind the slower-moving Mars to be overtaken and rendered “combust” by the sun, now fast approaching. The details of the planetary motions are for the most part quite accurate, and they closely (but not exactly) fit the actual conditions of the skies in the year 1385. Yet Chaucer blends astronomy, mythology, and human emotions without visible effort, as he evokes the familiar visual images of the planet-gods in their chariots, making their stately way through the zodiac, and of the gods of the myth — here
Venus and Mars pursued by the sun (usually Vulcan’s role) — in a very human predicament.

The Complaint is the longest of the three parts and has little connection to what precedes it. Only in the last few lines is it clear that the speaker is Mars and his lady Venus, and the preceding sections contain no astrological or mythological allusions. Instead, the frame of reference is pessimistically Christian.

As a whole, the poem is very impressive. Its blend of astronomy, mythology, and human love is unique in medieval literature and results in a work that raises questions, however briefly and lightly, about such matters as freedom of will and the nature of love. These are among the important concerns of Chaucer’s longer and better-known works, and one can understand why in recent years critics have seen the poem as a “miniature Troilus.”

The Complaint of Venus

This poem follows Mars in a number of manuscripts, and they are linked by the colophons in John Shirley’s copy, which records the tradition that Mars is to be identified with John Holland and Venus with Isabel of York. The Complaint of Venus is an adaptation of three ballades by the French poet Oton de Grandson, whom Chaucer probably knew personally. Chaucer changes the speaker to a woman, which is unusual (though not unknown) and unnecessary unless the poem is to be taken as Venus’s reply to Mars or as somehow connected with some court lady, though there is no way of knowing the identity of that lady nor whether there is any substance to the tradition that Shirley reports.

Despite the title, there are no astrological or mythical allusions in the three ballades to connect the poem with Venus, and the poem has little in common with the ordinary complaint in which a lover begs for mercy. The theme of love binds the three parts together, but each develops a different idea. Skeat entitled them: The Lover’s Worthiness, Disquietude Caused by Jealousy, Satisfaction in Constancy.

In the envoy (which may have been written later), Chaucer laments the “skarsete” of rhyme in English and his consequent inability to follow the “curiosite” of Grandson. This is a variation of the “affected modesty” topos, which calls attention to the virtuosity of the performance: Chaucer strictly maintains the same rhymes throughout each ballade and carries one rhyme (on -aunce) through all three ballades and into the envoy itself.

To Rosemounde

This is one of Chaucer’s most graceful poems, easily moving from adoration of the lady to lightly humorous mock-seriousness, which was very much a part of the courtly game of love but which is here distinctively Chaucerian. The work is notable for the ease with which Chaucer fulfills the requirements of the ballade form. The inscription “tregentil — chaucer” written at the end of the poem in the unique manuscript has been the cause of much speculation but has yet to be explained to everyone’s satisfaction.

Womanly Noblesse

Robinson, following Skeat, accepted the authenticity of this poem, as has Fisher. Other editors have rejected it; Heath labeled it “doubtful,” Koch omitted it from his edition, and its most recent editors, Pace and David, raise some serious objections. Although it is called a ballade in the manuscript and has an envoy, the poem is very unusual in form, since it lacks a refrain and uses nine lines in each stanza, with all three stanzas having but two rhymes and all using the same two rhymes throughout, one of which also appears in the envoy. Though the rhymes are fairly easy ones, this is a considerable accomplishment; Skeat, who discovered the poem, was especially impressed by what he considered its technical mastery.

Chaucer’s Wordes unto Adam,
His Owne Scriveyn

“The lines to Adam Scriveyn, which read like one of the personal epigrams of the ancients, reveal some of the anxieties which beset an author before the invention of printing. The poem could hardly be more vivid if the record searchers should succeed in discovering Adam’s family name” (Robinson). The record searchers have now generally abandoned that task, and the poem remains as vivid as it was for Robinson.

The Former Age

This and the four poems that follow all show the specific and general influence of Boethius.
They are, therefore, commonly grouped together as Boethian lyrics, though the degree of Boethian influence differs from one to another and they were probably composed over a period of several years rather than together as part of a projected group of poems. They are moral poems of the sort popular in both French and English poetry of the time, and though attempts have been made to attach some of them to specific occasions, they are too general in application to fit exactly any one of the various occasions scholars have proposed for their composition.

In The Former Age Chaucer takes the well-worn commonplaces of the Golden Age — primarily from Boethius (Bo 2.15), Ovid, the Roman de la rose, and possibly Virgil — and invests them with freshness and vigor. The “blissed folk” of this primeval time live in Spartan simplicity, which Chaucer characterizes mainly by negatives (in the third stanza each line begins with no or ne), in contrast with modern civilization, which is seen primarily as a source of pain. The direct comment on “oure dayes” in the final lines echoes the Roman de la rose but has the ring of conviction.

**Fortune**

The concept of Fortune in this ballade, technically one of Chaucer’s most skillful, is drawn primarily from Boethius’s Consolation of Philosophy, in which there is also a complaint against Fortune, a defense, and a discussion of her significance. However, Chaucer also draws upon Jean de Meun and Dante (as in Dante, Fortune is here drawn into the Christian system as executrix of God’s will) and on the common visual image of Fortune blindly turning her wheel. The envoy, with its unusual address to a group of princes, has been explained as an appeal to the Dukes of Lancaster, York, and Gloucester, who in 1390 controlled gifts given in the name of the king. If so, the poem dates from the early 1390s, though the envoy could easily be a later addition.

**Truth**

Judging from the number of manuscripts in which it is preserved (twenty-two, plus the early editions of Caxton and Thynne), Truth was Chaucer’s most popular lyric; of all his other works, only The Canterbury Tales and A Treatise on the Astrolabe are preserved in more manuscripts than Truth. In these manuscripts, Truth is usually called “Balade de Bon Conseyl, and it is exactly that. The good advice is given in a series of strong imperatives, ending with an exhortation to the reader to set forth on a spiritual pilgrimage, with the refrain echoing the familiar words of St. John, “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. The ideas are commonplace, but they are expressed here with a power that carries conviction. In one manuscript (MS Add 10340 fol. 41r) Truth appears next to an excerpt from the General Prologue, the portrait of the Parson; clearly the poem has some of the same appeal as that idealized but affecting portrait.

The envoy, addressed to Vache, has been the subject of much speculation, but it exists in only one of the many manuscripts and thus seems clearly a later addition.

**Gentilesse**

The doctrine of gentilesse set forth in this rime-royal ballade is that which the Wife of Bath expounds in her tale, where she cites as her source Dante, who, with Boethius and Jean de Meun, is echoed in this poem. Such sentiments, as Robinson wrote, sound very modern, but here, as in the other moral ballades, Chaucer expresses the received opinions of his time, commonplace of contemporary morality. The poem succeeds not because of the originality of its thought but because of the vigor and polish of its expression.

**Lak of Stedfastnesse**

The “complaint upon the times” is a familiar theme in medieval poetry, though unusual in Chaucer, who seldom writes direct political comment of the sort in “Lenvoy to King Richard. The assumption that this must have been evoked by some specific occasion and Shirley’s report that the poem was written in Chaucer’s “laste yeeres” have led some scholars to assign it to the late 1390s, when Richard’s “swerd of castigacioun” was sorely needed. Robinson and others argue that the poem would have been equally appropriate in the late 1380s. In genre it belongs with the other moral ballades in the Boethian group, though its relation to Boethius is very general. Its date, like those of most of these poems, cannot be surely fixed.
Envoy de Chaucer a Scogan

Envoy here is used in the sense of "message" or "letter," and this free double ballade is a dazzling example (perhaps the first in English) of light epistolary verse. The tone is lively, urbane, mock-serious, as Chaucer plays with the conventions of literature and love. He first makes Scog an (whom he addresses no fewer than seven times) responsible for a natural catastrophe, warns him of the fearful consequences, and protests that he will write no more verse (though that is exactly what he is doing at the moment). In the fourth through sixth stanzas Chaucer slyly allies himself with his friend at court, so that in the Envoy it is Scog an who kneels before the prince at "the stremes hed" (Windsor castle) to beg a favor for both.

The Scog an add ressed is probably Henry Sco gan, who himself wrote a moral ballade, addressed to the sons of Henry IV (whose tutor he was), in which the whole of Chaucer's Gentle esse is quoted.

Envoy de Chaucer a Bukton

The identity of this Bukton is unknown; he could be either Sir Robert Bukton of Suffolk or, slightly more likely, Sir Peter Bukton of Holder nesse (the setting of The Summoner's Tale). The date is likewise uncertain (though the reference to capture "in Frise" has been taken as evidence for composition in 1396). But there is no doubt about the occasion: Bukton is about to marry, and Chaucer wittily pretends to dissuade him, beginning with the authority of Christ and holy writ and ending with an assurance that "experience shal the teche" and an appeal to that experienced authority on such matters, the Wife of Bath. Her personality apparently had as strong a hold on her creator's imagination as it has had on modern readers. "It ought not to be necessary to add," Robinson wrote in a warning still germane, "but some remarks of the commentators invite the observation, that the Envoy is not to be taken as evidence that Chaucer either disapproved of his friend's marriage or regretted his own!"

The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse

Here Chaucer observes the classic ballade form, in rime royal, with the same rhymes throughout and with a refrain that plays upon the broad range of meanings of the words bete (heavy, sad, pregnant, etc.) and light (light, cheerful, wanton, etc.). The conventions of the love complaint are playfully employed to turn the mundane need for cash into an appeal for pity from his new lady, his purse. The envoy, clearly addressed to Henry IV, differs in tone, language, and versification from the body of the ballade, and it may be a later addition. However, the poem as we have it, addressed to Henry, must date after his coronation in October of 1399; it is therefore the last work known to have come from Chaucer's hand.

Proverbs

These lines are given their manuscript title, "A Proverbe of Chaucer," by some editors, and are called "Proverbs of Chaucer" in Skeat's edition. They were not ascribed to Chaucer in the copy by John Shirley. For this reason, and because of the suspicious rhyme compas: embrace, which Koch and Skeat believed proved they could not be Chaucer's, Robinson placed them in the "doubtful category." The poem's most recent editors, Pace and David, and R. T. Lenaghan, the editor for this edition, regard it as authentic. Certainty is, of course, impossible in so brief a work. The lines may be fragments of some longer poem, though possibly they were intended to stand as they are; critics have noted a similar set of verses in the works of Deschamps, and Middle English offers other examples of brief sententious verse.

POEMS NOT ASCRIBED TO CHAUCER

The following poems appear in manuscripts that contain undoubtedly genuine works by Chaucer but are not themselves attributed to Chaucer by the scribes.

Against Women Unconstant

This poem is titled "New Fangelnesse" in some editions. It was first printed among Chaucer's works by Stowe (1561), and Skeat was convinced that it was genuine, mainly because of its Chaucerian manner and the quality of its verse. Robinson believed it was "almost certainly" by Chaucer. Its most recent editors, Pace and
David, are doubtful. Yet if Chaucer did not write it, he need not have been ashamed to have it ascribed to him; it is livelier and has a more natural and personal tone than some of the ballades unquestioningly accepted as genuine, and technically it is as impressive as any ballade that Chaucer wrote, which is saying a good deal, given his high standards.

*Complaynt D’Amours*

This poem is called by its manuscript title, “An Amorous Complaint,” by some editors. It was first proposed for inclusion in the canon by Skeat, who was impressed by its Chaucerian touches and the obvious allusion to *The Parliament of Fouls*. Few critics have shared his opinion. It was perhaps written as a poetic exercise for St. Valentine’s Day by one of Chaucer’s skilled but uninspired admirers.

*Merciles Beaute*

Bishop Percy discovered this poem in the Pepys manuscript, which contains a number of genuine works by Chaucer, and it was first published as Chaucer’s in Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1767). Its authenticity has been questioned, but almost all critics now accept it, and it has been frequently anthologized. It is a technically impressive triple roundel, with a touch of typically Chaucerian humor in the third stanza, and it is heavily influenced by French courtly verse, even in its movement from adoration to witty dismissal. Skeat justly wrote: “If it is not Chaucer’s, it is by someone who contrived to surpass his own style.

*A Balade of Complaint*

Skeat came upon this poem in a manuscript by Shirley, and, though Shirley did not ascribe it to Chaucer, Skeat was so impressed with its “melo­dious flow” that he printed it in his edition, though in a section (along with Against Women Unconstant and the Complaynt D’Amours) reserved for works for which there was a “lack of external evidence” for their authenticity. There is no persuasive reason for the attribution; it is a good example of pedestrian verse, heavily indebted to Chaucer but far from attaining his standard.

LAILA Z. GROSS

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**The Short Poems**

Incipit carmen secundum ordinem litterarum alphabeti.

Almighty and al merciable queene,
To whom that al this world fleeth for socour,
To have relees of sinne, of sorwe, and teene,
Glorious virgine, of alle floures flour,
To thee I flee, confounded in errour.

Help and releve, thou mighti debonayre,
Have mercy on my perilous langour.
Venquisshed me hath my cruel adversaire.

Help, lady bright, er that my ship tobreste.

Bountee so fix hath in thin herte his tente
That wel I wot thou wolt my socour bee;
Thou canst not warne him that with good entente
Axeth thin helpe, thin herte is ay so free.
Thou art largesse of pleyn felicitee,
Haven of refut, of quiete, and of reste.
Loo, how that theeves sevene chasen mee.
Help, lady bright, er that my ship tobreste.

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6 relees: forgiveness 7 teene: trouble 5 debonayre: gracious (person) 7 langour: weakness 10 warne: refuse 14 refut: refuge 15 theeves sevene: the Seven Deadly Sins 16 tobreste: burst apart
Comfort is noon but in yow, ladi deere;
For loo, my sinne and my confusioun,
Which oughten not in thi presence appeere,
Han take on me a greevous accioun
Of verrey right and desperacioun;
And as bi right thei mighten wel susteene
That I were wurthi my dampnacioun,
Nere merci of you, blissful hevene queene.

Dowte is ther noon, thou queen of misericorde,
That thou n'art cause of grace and merci heere;
God vouched sauf thurgh thee with us to ac-
corde.

Fleeinge, I flee for socour to thi tente
Me for to hide from tempeste ful of dreede,
Biseeching yow that ye you not absente
Thouh I be wikke. 0, help yit at this neede!
Al have I ben a beste in wil and deede,
Yit, ladi, thou me clothe with thi grace.

Glorious mayde and mooder, which that nevere
Were bitter, neither in erthe nor in see,
But ful of sweetnesse and of merci evere,
Help that my Fader be not wroth with me.
Spek thou, for I ne dar not him ysee,
So have I doon in erthe, alIas the while,
That certes, but if thou my socour bee,
To stink eterne he wole my gost exile.

He vouched sauf, tel him, as was his wille,
Bocrine a man, to have oure alliaunce,
And with his precious blood he wrot the bille
Upon the crois as general acquitaunce
To every penitent in ful creauce;
And therfore, ladi bright, thou for us praye.
Thanne shalt thou bothe stinte al his grevaunce,
And make oure foo to failen of his praye.

I wot it wel, thou wolt benoure socour,
Thou art so ful of bowntee, in certeyn,
For whan a soule falleth in errour
Thi pitee goth and haleth him ayein.
Thanne makest thou his pees with his sovereignty
And bringest him out of the crooked strete.
Whoso thee loveth, he shal not love in veyn,
That shal he fynde as he the lyf shal lete.

Kalenderes enlumyned ben thei
That in this world ben lighted with thi name,
And whoso goth to yow the righte wey,
Him thar not drede to be lame.
Now, queen of comfort, sith thou art that same
To whom I seeche for my medicyne,
Lat not my foo no more my wounde entame;
Myn he Ie into thin hand al I resygne.

Ladi, thi sorwe kan I not portreye
Under the cros, ne his greevous penaunce;
But for youre bothes peynes
I yow preye,
Lat not oure alder foo make his bobaunce
That he hath in his lystes of mischaunce
Convict that ye bothe have bought so deere.
As I seide erst, thou ground of oure substaunce,
Continue on us thi pitous eyen cleere!

Moises, that saugh the bush with flawmes rede
Brenninge, of which ther never a stikke brende,
Was signe of thin unwemmed maidenhede.
Thou art the bush on which ther gan descende
The Holi Gost, the which that Moyses wende
Had ben a-fyr, and this was in figure.
Now, ladi, from the fyr thou us defende
Which that in helle eternalli shal dure.

Noble princesse, that newere haddest peere,
Certes if any comfort in us bee,
That cometh of thee, thou Cristes mooder deere.
We han noon oother melodye or glee
Us to rejoyse in oure adversitee,
Ne advocat noon that wole and dar so preye
For us, and that for litel hire as yee
That helpen for an Ave-Marie or tweye.

O verrey light of eyen that ben blynde,
O verrey lust of labour and distresse,
O tresoreere of bountee to mankynde,
Thee whom God ches to mooder for humblesse!
From his ancille he made the maistresse
Of hevene and erthe, oure bille up for to beede.
This world awaiteth evere on thi goodnesse
For thou ne failest nevere wight at neede.

Purpos I have sum time for to enquere
Wherfore and whi the Holi Gost thee soughte
Whan Gabrielles vois cam to thin ere.
He not to werre us swich a wonder wroughte,
But for to save us that he sithen boughte.
Thanne needeth us no wepen us for to save,
But oonly ther we dide not, as us oughte,
Doo penitence, and merci axe and have.

Queen of comfort, yit when I me bithinke
That I agilt have bothe him and thee,
And that my soule is worthi for to sinke,
AlIas, I caityf, whider may I flee?
Who shal unto thi Sone my mene bee?
Who, but thiself, that art of pitee welle?
Thou hast more reuthe on oure adversitee
Than in this world might any tongue telle.

Redresse me, mooder, and me chastise,
For certeinyly my Faderes chastisinge,
That dar I nought abiden in no wise,
So hidous is his rightful rekenynge.
Mooder, of whom oure merci gan to springe,
Beth ye my juge and eek my soules leche;
For evere in you is pitee haboundinge
To ech that wole of pitee you biseeeche.

Soth is that God ne granteth no pitee
Withoute thee; for God of his goodnesse
Foryiveth noon, but it like unto thee.
He hath thee maked vicaire and maistresse
Of al this world, and eek gouvernouresse
Of hevene, and he represseth his justise
After thi wil; and therfore in witnesse
He hath thee crowned in so rial wise.

Temple devout, ther God hath his woninge,
Fro which these misbileeved deprived been,
To you my soule penitent I bringe.
Receyve me — I can no ferther fleen.
With thornes venymous, O hevene queen,
For which the eerthe acursed was ful yore,
I am so wounded, as ye may wel seen,
That I am lost almost, it smert so sore.

Virgine, that art so noble of apparaile,
And ledest us into the hye tour
Of Paradys, thou me wisse and counsaile
How I may have thi grace and thi socour,
All have I ben in filthe and in errour.
Ladi, unto that court thou me ajourne
That cleped is thi bench, O freshe flour,
Ther as that merci evere shal sojourne.

Xristus, thi sone, that in this world alighte
Upon the cros to suffre his passioun,
And eek that Longius his herte pighte
And made his herte blood to renne adoun,
And al was this for my salvacioun;
And I to him am fals and eek unkynde,
This thanke yow, socour of al mankynde!

Ysaac was figure of his deth, certeyn,
That so fer forth his fader wolde obeye
That he ne roughte nothing to be slayn;
94 in figure: symbolic
100 glee: music
106 lust of: joy to (those in)
109 ancille: maidservant
110 bille: petition  beede: offer (pray)
115 Gabriellevois: the voice of Gabriel, the angel of the Annunciation
116 to werre: for war, hostility
117 sitten: afterwards
125 mene: intermediary
132 rightful rekenynge: just account keeping
140 vicaire: vicar
144 rial: royal
146 misbileeved: infidels
153 apparaile: behavior, bearing (Fisher)
158 ajourne: summon on another day
159 bench: court of law
163 Longius: Longinus, the blind centurion supposed to have pierced (pighte) Christ's side with his spear
169 Ysaac: the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22) was thought to prefigure the Crucifixion.
171 roughte: cared (impersonal)
Right soo thi Sone list as a lamb to deye.
Now, ladi ful of merci, I yow preye,
Sith he his merci mesured so large,
Be ye not skant, for alle we singe and seye
That ye ben from vengeaunce ay oure targe.

Zacharie yow clepeth the open welle

To washe sinful soule out of his gilt.
Therfore this lessoun oughte I wel to telle,
That, nere thi tender herte, we were spilt.
Now, ladi bryghte, sith thou canst and wilt
Ben to the seed of Adam merciable,
Bring us to that palais that is bilt
To penitentes that ben to merci able. Amen.

Explicit carmen.

THE COMPLAINT UNTO PITY

Pite, that I have sought so yore agoo
With herte soore and ful of besy peyne,
That in this world was never wight so woo
Without deth — and yf I shal not feyne,
My purpos was to Pite to compleyne
Upon the crueltee and tirannye
Of Love, that for my trouthe doth me dye.

And when that I, be lengthe of certeyne yeres,
Had evere in oon a tyme sought to speke,
To Pitee ran I al bespreynt with teres
To prayen hir on Cruelte me awreke.
But er I myghte with any word outbreke
Or tellen any of my peynes smerte,
I fond hir ded, and buried in an herte.

Adoun I fel when that I saugh the herse,
Ded as a ston while that the swogh me laste;
But up I roos with colour ful dyverse
And pitously on hir mn eyen I caste,
And ner the corps I gan to presen faste,
And for the soule I shop me for to preye.

Thus am I slayn sith that Pite is ded.
Allas, that day, that ever hyt shulde falle.
What maner man dar now hold up his hed?
To whom shal any sorwful herte calle?

In ydel hope, folk redeless of peyne,
Syth she is ded, to whom shul we compleyne?

But yet encreseth me this wonder newe,
That no wight woot that she is ded, but I —
So many men as in her tyme hir knewe —
And yet she dyed not so sodeynly,
For I have sought hir ever ful besely
Sith first I hadde wit or mannes mynde,
But she was ded er that I koude hynfande.

Aboute hir herse there stoden lustely,
Withouten any woo as thoughte me,
Bounte parfyt, weI armed and richely,
And fresshe Beaute, Lust, and Jolyte,
Assured Maner, Youthe, and Honeste,
Wisdom, Estaat, Drede, and Governaunce,
Confedred both by bonde and alliaunce.

A compleynt had I, writen in myn hond,
For to have put to Pite as a bille;
But when I al this companye ther fond,
That rather wolden al my cause spille
Then do me help, I held my pleynte stille,
For to that folk, withouten any fayle,
Withoute Pitee ther may no bille availe.

Then leve I al these vertues, sauf Pite,
Kepyng the corps as ye have herd me seyn,
Confedered alle by bond of Cruelte
And ben assented when I shal be sleyn.  
And I have put my complaynt up ageyn,  
For to my foes my bille I dar not shewe,  
Th’effect of which seith thus, in wordes fewe:

The Bill of Complaint

Humblest of herte, highest of reverence,  
Benygne flour, coroune of vertues alle,  
Sheweth unto youre rial excellence  
Youre servaunt, yf I durste me so calle,  
Hys mortal harm in which he is yfalle,  
And noght al oonly for his evel fare,  
But for your renoun, as he shal declare.

Hit stondeth thus: your contraire, Crueltee,  
Allyed is ayenst your regalye —  
For men shulde not, lo, knowe hir tirannye —  
With Bounte, Gentilesse, and Curtesye,  
And hath depryved yow now of your place  
That hyghte “Beaute apertenant to Grace.”

For kyndely by youre herytage ryght  
Ye ben annexed ever unto Bounte;  
And verrayly ye oughte do youre myght  
To helpe Trouthe in his adversyte.  
Ye be also the corowne of Beaute,  
And certes yf ye wanten in these tweyne,  
The world is lore; ther is no more to seyne.

Eke what availeth Maner and Gentilesse  
Withoute yow, benygne creature?  
Shal Cruelte be your governeresse?  
Allas, what herte may hyt longe endure?  
Wherfore, but ye the rather take cure  
To breke that perilouse alliaunce,  
Ye sleen hem that ben in your obeisaunce.

And further over yf ye suffre this,  
Youre renoun ys fordoo than in a throwe;

Ther shal no man wite well what Pite is.  
Allas, that your renoun is falle so lowe!  
Ye be than fro youre heritage ythrowe  
By Cruelte that occupieth youre place,  
And we despeyred that seken to your grace.

Have mercy on me, thow Herenus quene,  
That yow have sought so tendirly and yore;  
Let som strem of youre lyght on me be sene  
That love and drede yow ever lenger the more;  
For sothly for to seyne I bere the soore,  
And though I be not konnynge for to pleyne,  
For Goddis love have mercy on my peyne.

My peyne is this, that what so I desire  
That have I not, ne nothing lyk therto;  
And ever setteth Desir myn hert on fire.  
Eke on that other syde where so I goo,  
What maner thing that may encrese my woo,  
That have I redy, unsoght, everywhere;  
Me lakketh but my deth and than my bere.

What nedeth to shewe parcel of my peyne?  
Syth every woo that herte may bethynke  
I suffre and yet I dar not to yow pleyne;  
For wel I wot although I wake or wynke,  
Ye rekke not whether I flete or synke.  
But natheles yet my trouthe I shall sustene  
Unto my deth, and that shal wel be sene.

This is to seyne I wol be youres evere,  
Though ye me slee by Crueltee your foo,  
Algate my spirit shal never dissevere  
Fro youre servise for any peyne or woo.  
Sith ye be ded — allas that hyt is soo —  
Thus for your deth I may wel wepe and pleyne  
With herte sore and ful of besy peyne.

Explicit.

59 rial: royal  
65 regalye: royal rule, authority  
67 For: so that  
70 apertenant: suitable, properly belonging to  
72 annexed: joined  
76 wanten in these tweyne: be lacking to these two (i.e., if Truth and Beauty lack Pity)  
82 cure: care, pains  
86 in a throwe: instantly  
92 Herenus quene: queen of the Furies; see n.  
104 unsoght: ready at hand  
105 bere: funeral bier  
106 parcel: part, small portion
A COMPLAINT TO HIS LADY

I
The longe nightes, whan every creature
Shulde have hir rest in somwhat as by kynde,
Or elles ne may hir lif nat longe endure,
Hit falleth most into my woful mynde
How I so fer have broght myself behynde 5
That, sauf the deeth, ther may nothyng me lisse,
So desespared I am from alle blisse.

This same thought me lasteth til the morwe
And from the morwe forth til hit be eve;
Ther nedeth me no care for to borwe,
For bothe I have good leyser and good leve;
Ther is no wyght that wol me wo bereve
To wepe ynogh and wailen al my fiIIe;
The sore spark of peyne now doth me spiIle.

II
This Love, that hath me set in such a place
That my desir [he] nevere wol fulfille,
For neither pitee, mercy, neither grace
Can I nat fynde, and yit my sorwful herte
For to be deed I can hit nought arace.
The more I love, the more she doth me smerte,
Thourgh which I see withoute remedye
That from the deeth I may no wyse asterte.

III
Now sothly what she hight I wol reherse:
Hir name is Bountee set in womanhede, 24
Sadnesse in youthe and Beautee prydelees
And Plesaunce under governaunce and drede;
Hir surname is eek Faire Rewthelees
The Wyse, yknit unto Good Aventure,
That, for I love hir, she sleeth me giltelees.

Hir love I best, and shal, whyl I may dure, 30
Bet than myself an hundred thousand deel,
Than al this worldes richesse or creature.
Now hath not Love me bestowed weel

To love ther I never shal have part?
Allas, right thus is turned me the wheel, 35
Thus am I slayn with Loves fyry dart!
I can but love hir best, my swete fo;
Love hath me taught no more of his art
But serve alwey and stinte for no wo.

IV
In my trewe [and] careful herte ther is 40
So moche wo and [eek] so litel blis
That wo is me that ever I was bore;
For al that thyngh which I desyre I mis
And al that ever I wolde not ywis,
That finde I redy to me evermore;
And of al this I not to whom me pleyne.
For she that mighte me out of this brynge
Ne reccheth nought whether I wepe or synge,
So litel rewthe hath she upon my peyne.

Allas! Whan slepyng-tyme is than I wake, 50
Whan I shulde daunce, for fere, lo, than I quake.
This hevy lif I lede, lo, for your sake
Thogh ye therof in no wyse hede take,
Myn hertes lady and hool my lyves quene.
For trewly durste I seye as that I fele,
Me semeth that your swete herte of stele
Is whetted now ageynes me to kene.

My dere herte and best beloved fo,
Why lyketh yow to do me al this wo?
What have I doon that greveth yow or sayd,
But for I serve and love yow and no mo? 61
And while I lyve I wol ever do so,
And therfor, swete, ne beth nat yvel apayd.
For so good and so fair as ye be
Hit were right gret wonder but ye hadde
Of alle servantes, bothe of goode and badde;
And leest worthy of alle hem, I am he.

But nevertheless, my righte lady swete,
Thogh that I be unconnyng and unmete

6 lisse: relieve
7 desespaired . . . from: deprived of
10 to borwe: as a pledge
12 bereve: take away
19 arace: uproot, tear away
25 Sadnesse: constancy prydelees: humble, without pride
26 Governaunce: self-control Drede: fear (of scandal)
31 deel: times
35 wheel: Fortune's wheel
40 careful: sorrowful
46 not = ne wol; know not
54 hool: entirely
57 to kene: too sharply
61 But for: except that
69 unmete: unsuited
To serve, as I coude best, ay your hynesse, 
Yit is ther noon fayner, that wolde I hete, 
Than I, to do yow ese, or elles bete 
What so I wiste that were to youre hevynesse; 
And hadde I myght as good as I have wille, 
Than shulde ye fele wher it were so or noon; 
For in this world livyng than is ther noon 
That fayner wolde your hertes wil fulfille.

For bothe I love and eek drede yow so sore, 
And algates moot, and have doon yow, ful yore, 
That bettre loved is noon ne never shal; 
And yit I wolde beseche yow of no more, 
But leveth weI and be not wrooth therfore, 
For I am not so hardy ne so wood, 
For ye be oon the worthiest on-lyve 
And I the most unlykly for to thryve, 
Yit for al this, witeth ye right wele 
That ye ne shulde love me, I am so litel worthy and ye so good. 

For ye be oon the worthiest on-lyve 
And I the most unlykly for to thryve, 
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THE COMPLAINT OF MARS

[The Proem]

Gladeth, ye foules, of the morowe gray. 
Lo, Venus, rysen among yon rowes rede, 
And floures fressh, honoureth ye this day; 
For when the sunne uprist then wol ye sprede. 
But ye lovers, that lye in any drede, 
For the more that I love yow, goodly free, 
The lasse fynde I that ye loven me; 
Allas, whan shal that harde wit amende? 
Wher is now al your wommanly pitee, 
Your gentilesse and your debonairtee? 
Wilk ye nothyng therof upon me spende? 
And so hool, sweete, as I am youre al, 
And so gret wil as I have yow to serve, 
Now certes, and ye let me thus serve, 
Yit have ye wonne theron but a smal.

For at my knowyng I do nought why, 
And this I wol beseche yow hertely, 
That ther ever ye fynde, whyles ye lyve, 
A trewre servynt to yow than am I, 
Leveth thanne and sleeth me hardly, 
And I my deeth to yow wol al foryive. 
And if ye fynde no trewre verrayly, 
Wil ye sufre than that I thus spille 
And for no maner gilt but my good wille? 
As good were thanne untrewe as trewe to be.

But I, my lyf and deeth, to yow obeye 
And with right buxom herte hooly 
WeI lever is me liken yow and deye 
Than for to anythyng or thynke or seve 
That yow myghte offende in any tyme. 
And therfor, sweete, rewe on my peynes: 
And of your grace graunteth me som drope, 
For elIes may me laste no blis ne hope, 
Ne dwelIe within my trouble careful herte. 

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Fleeth, lest wikked tonges yow espyle. 
Lo, yond the sunne, the candel of jelosye!

Wyth teres blewe and with a wounded herte 
Taketh your leve, and with Seint John to borowe 
Apeseth sumwhat of your sorowes smerte.

71 fayner: more eager, hete: promise
72 bete: make better, alleviate
76 ful yore: long since
89 unlykly: unsuitable
1 Gladeth: rejoice
2 morowe gray: dim, early morning
5 uprist = upriseth, rises up
100 harde wit: cruel spirit
102 debonairtee: graciousness
104 since to my knowledge I do nothing to cause this (your attitude)
122 or . or: either or
8 blewe: livid
9 with Seint John to borowe: with St. John as your guarantor
Tyme cometh eft that cese shal your sorowe; The glade nyght ys worth an hevy morowe — Seynt Valentyne, a foul thus herde I synge Upon thy day er sonne gan up-sprynge.

Yet sang this foul — Irede yow al awake, 15 And ye that han not chosen in humble wyse, Without repentynge cheseth yow your make, And ye that han ful chosen as I devise, Yet at the leste renoveleth your servyse. Confermeth hyt perpetuely to dure, 20 And paciently taketh your aventure.

And for the worship of this highe feste, Yet wol I, in my briddes wise, syng The sentence of the compleynt, at the leste, That woful Mars made atte departyng 25 Fro fresche Venus in a morwenynge, Whan Phebus with his firy torches rede Ransaked every lover in hys drede.

[The Story]

Whilom the thridde hevenes lord above, As wel by hevenysh revolucioun 30 As by desert, hath wonne Venus his love, And she hath take him in subjeccioun, And as a maistresse taught him his lessoun, Commandynge him that nevere, in her servise, He nere so bold no lover to dispise. 35

For she forbad him jelosye at al, And cruelte, and bost, and tyrannye. She made him at her lust so humble and tal, That when her deyned to cast on hym her ye, He tok in pacience to lyve or dye. 40 And thus she brydeleth him in her manere, With nothing but with scourging of her chere.

Who regneth now in blysse but Venus, That hath thys worthy knyght in governaunce? 45 Who syngeth now but Mars, that serveth thus The faire Venus, causer of plesaunce?

He bynt him to perpetuall obeisaunce, And she bynt her to loven him for evere, But so be that his trespas hyt desevere.

Thus be they knyt and regnen as in hevene Be lokyng moost; til hyt fil on a tyde 51 That by her bothe assent was set a stevene That Mars shal entre, as fast as he may glyde, Into hir neste paleys, and ther abyde, Walkynge hys cours, til she had him atake, 55 And he preide her to haste her for his sake. Then seyde he thus, "Myn hertes lady swete, Ye knowe wel my myschef in that place, For sikerly, til that I with yow mete, My lyf stant ther in aventure and grace; But when I se the beaute of your face, Ther ys no drede of deth may do me smerte, For al your lust is ese to myn herte."

She hath so gret compassioun of her knyght, That dwelleth in solitude til she come — 65 For hyt stod so that thilke tyme no wight Counseyled hym ther, ne seyde to hym wel-come —

That nygh her wit for wo was overcome; Wherfore she sped her as faste in her weye Almost in oo day as he dyde in tweye. 70

The grete joye that was betwix hem two When they be mette ther may no tunge telle. Ther is no more but unto bed thei go, And thus in joy and blysse I lete hem duelle. This worthi Mars, that is of knyghthod welle, 75 The flour of feyrnesse lappeth in his armes, And Venus kysseth Mars, the god of armes.

Sojourned hath this Mars of which I rede In chambre amyd the paleys prively A certeyn tyme, til him fel a drede 80 Throgh Phebus, that was comen hastely Within the paleys yates sturdely,
With torche in honde, of which the stremes bryghte
On Venus chambre knokkeden ful lyghte.

The chambre ther as ley this fresshe quene
Depeynted was with white boles grete, And by the lyght she knew, that shon so shene,
That Phebus cam to brenne hem with his hete.
This sely Venus nygh dreynt in teres wete
Enbraceth Mars and seyde, "Alas, I dye!
The torche is come that al this world wol wrie."

Up sterte Mars; hym liste not to slepe
When he his lady herde so compleyne,
But, for his nature was not for to wepe,
In stede of teres, from his eyen tweyne
The firi sparkes brosten out for peyne,
And hente his hauberk that ley hym besyde.
Fle wolde he not, ne mygte himselven hide.
He throweth on his helm of huge wyghte,
And girt him with his swerd, and in his hond
His myghty spere, as he was wont to fyghte,
He shaketh so that almost hit towond.
Ful hevy was he to walken over lond;
He may not holde with Venus companye
But bad her fleen lest Phebus her espye.

O woful Mars — alas — what maist thou seyn,
That in the paleys of thy disturbaunce
Art left byhynde in peril to be sleyn?
And yet thereto ys double thy penaunce,
For she that hath thyn herte in governaunce
Is passed half the stremes of thin yen;
That thou nere swift, wel maist thou wepe and crien.

Now fleeth Venus unto Cilenios tour
With voide cours for fere of Phebus lyght —
Alas — and ther ne hath she no socour,
For she ne found ne saugh no maner wyght,
And eke as ther she hath but litil myght,
Wherfor, herselven for to hyde and save,
Within the gate she fledde into a cave.

Derk was this cave and smokyng as the helle;
Not but two pas within the yate hit stod.
A naturel day in derk I lete her duelle.
Now wol I spoke of Mars, furious and wod.
For sorow he wolde have sen his herte blod;
Sith that he myghte don her no companye,
He ne roghte not a myte for to dye.
So feble he wex for hete and for his wo
That nygh he swelte, he myghte unnethe endure;
He passeth but o steyre in dayes two.
But nathelesse, for al his hevy armure,
He foloweth her that is his lyves cure,
For whos departynge he tok gretter ire
Then for al his brennyng in the fire.

After he walketh softly a paas,
Compleynyng, that hyt pite was to here,
He seyde, "O lady bryght, Venus, alas,
That evere so wyd a compas ys my spere!
Alas, when shal I mete yow, herte dere?
This twelffe daye of April I endure
Throgh jelous Phebus this mysaventure.

Now God helpe sely Venus allone.
But as God wolde, hyt happed for to be
That, while that Venus weping made her mone,
Cilenius, rydinge in his chevache,
Fro Venus valausne myghte his paleys se,
And Venus he salueth and doth chere,
And her receyveth as his frend ful dere.

Mars dwelleth forth in his adversyte,
Compleynyng ever on her departynge,
And what his compleynt was, remembreth me;
And therfore, in this lusty morwenynge
As I best can, I wol hit seyn and synge;
And after that I wol my leve take,
And God yeve every wyght joy of his make!

The Compleynt of Mars
The ordre of compleynt requireth skylfully
That yf a wight shal pleyne pitously,
Ther mot be cause wherfore that men pleyne;

86 boles: bulls
91 wrie: reveal, betray
99 wyghte: weight
100 girt him with his swerd: buckled on his sword
102 towond: broke in pieces
111 half the stremes of thin yen: half the extent of Mars’s influence (the conjunction is ending)
114 voide: solitary

121 two pas: two degrees
122 naturel day: twenty-four hours (cf. Astr 2.7)
129 o steyre: one degree
144 Cilenius: Mercury chevache: course
145 valausne: detrimentum, the zodiacal sign opposite a planet’s domicile (but see n.)
155 ordre of: rule for skylfully: with reason
Or men may deme he pleyneth folily
And causeles; alas, that am not I.
Wherfore the ground and cause of al my peyne,
So as my troubled wit may hit atteyne,
I wol rehearse; not for to have redresse,
But to declare my ground of hevynesse.

I
The firste tyme, alas, that I was wroght
And for certeyn effectes hider broght
Be him that lordeth ech intelligence,
I yaf my trewe servise and my thoght
For evermore — how dere I have hit boght —
To her that is of so gret excellence
That what wight that first sheweth his presence,
When she is wroth and taketh of hym no cure,
He may not longe in joye of love endure.

This is no feyned mater that I telle;
My lady is the verrey sours and welle
Of beaute, lust, fred om , and gentilnesse,
Of riche aray - how dere men hit selle! —
Of al disport in which men frendly duelle,
Of love and pley, and of benigne humblesse,
Of soun of instrumentes of al swetnesse;
And therto so weI fortuned and thewed
That thorogh the world her goodnesse is yshewed.

What wonder ys it then, thogh I besette
My servise on such on that may me knette
To wele or wo sith hit lyth in her myght?
Therfore my herte forever I to her hette,
Ne truly, for my deth, I shal not lette
To ben her truest servaunt and her knyght.
I hater noght, that may wete every wyght;
For this day in her servise shal I dye.
But grace be, I se her never wyth ye.

II
To whom shal I than pleyne of my distresse?
Who may me helpe? Who may my harm redresse?
Shal I compleyne unto my lady fre?
Nay, certes, for she hath such hevynesse,
For fere and eke for wo that, as I gesse,

In lytil tyme hit wol her bane be.
But were she sauf, hit were no fors of me.
Alas, that ever lovers mote endure
For love so many a perilous aventure!

For thogh so be that lovers be as trewe
As any metal that is forged newe,
In many a cas hem tydeth ofte soreowe.
Somtyme her lady wil not on hem rewe;
Somtyme yf that jelosie hyt knewe,
They myghten lyghtly leye her hed to borowe;
Somtyme envous folk with tunges horowe
Depraven hem; alas, whom may they plesse?
But he be fals, no lover hath non ese.

But what availeth such a long sermoun
Of aventures of love up and doun?
I wol returne and spoken of my peyne.
The poyn is this of my distruccioun:
My righte lady, my savacyoun,
Is in affray, and not to whom to pleyne.
O herte sweete, O lady sovereyne!
For your disese wel ougte I swowne and swelte,
Though I non other harm ne drede felte.

III
To what fyn made the God, that sit so hye,
Benethen him love other companye
And streyneth folk to love, malgre her hed?
And then her joy, for oght I can espye,
Ne lasteth not the twynkelyng of an ye,
And somme han never joy til they be ded.
What meneth this? What is this mystihed?
Wherto constreyne he his folk so faste
Thing to desyre, but hit shulde laste?

And thogh he made a lover love a thing
And maketh hit seme stedfast and during,
Yet putteth he in hyt such mysaventure
That reste nys ther non in his yeving.
And that is wonder, that so juste a kyng
Doth such hardnesse to his creature.
Thus, whether love breke or elles dure,
Algates he that hath with love to done
Hath ofter wo then changed ys the mone.

164 bane: slayer
168 to borowe: as a pledge
170 horowe: ugly, filthy
171 Depraven: slander
176 in affray: frightened not = ne wol, does not know
178 redresse: to make good
181 bane: slayer
190 to borowe: as a pledge
192 horowe: ugly, filthy
193 Depraven: slander
204 in affray: frightened not = ne wol, does not know
206 to borowe: as a pledge
214 other company: or companionship
220 malgre her hed: despite all they could do
224 mystihed: mysteriousness
Hit semeth he hath to lovers enmyte,
And lyk a fissher, as men alday may se,
Baiteth hys angle-hok with som plesaunce
Til many a fissh ys wod til that he be
Seses therwith; and then at erst hath he 240
Al his desir, and therwith al myschaunce;
And thogh the lyne breke, he hath penance;
For with the hok he wounded is so sore
That he his wages hath for evermore.

IV
The broche of Thebes was of such a kynde,
So ful of rubies and of stones of Ynde 246
That every wight, that sette on hit an ye,
He wende anon to worthe out of his mynde;
So sore the beaute wolde his herte bynde.
Til he hit had, him thoghte he moste dye; 250
And whan that hit was his, then shulde he
drye
Such woo for drede, ay while that he hit hadde,
That wel nygh for the fere he shulde madde.

And whan hit was fro his possessioun,
Then had he double wo and passioun 255
For he so feir a tresor had forgo;
But yet this broche as in conclusioun
Was not the cause of his confusion,
But he that wroghte hit enfortuned hit so
That every wight that had hit shulde have wo;
And therfore in the worcher was the vice, 261
And in the covetour that was so nyce.

So fareth hyt by lovers and by me;
For thogh my lady have so gret beaute
That I was mad til I had gete her grace,
She was not cause of myn adversite,
But he that wroghte her, also mot I the,
That putte such a beaute in her face,
That made me coveyten and purchace
Myn oune deth — him wite I that I dye, 270
And myn unwit that ever I clamb so hye.

V
But to yow, hardy knyghtes of renoun,
Syn that ye be of my devisioun,
Al be I not worthy to so gret a name,
Yet, seyn these clerkes, I am your patroun; 275
Therfore ye oghte have som compassion
Of my dise, and take hit not a-game.
The proudest of yow may be mad ful tame;
Wherfore I prey yow of your gentilesse
That ye compleyne for myn hevynesse.

And ye, my ladyes, that ben true and stable,
Be wey of kynde, ye oughten to be able
To have pite of folk that be in payne.
Now have ye cause to clothe yow in sable,
Sith that youre emperise, the honourable, 285
Is desolat; wel oghte ye to pleyne.
Now shulde your holy teres falle and reyne.
Alas, your honour and your emperise,
Negh ded for drede ne can her not chevise!
Compleyneth eke, ye lovers, al in-fere,
For her that with unfeyned humble chere
Was evere redy to do yow socour;
Compleyneth her that evere hath had yow 295
dere;
Compleyneth Beaute, Fredom, and Manere;
Compleyneth her that endeth your labour;
Compleyneth thilke ensample of al honour,
That never dide but al gentilesse;
Kytheth therfore on her sum kyndenesse.
I
Ther nys so high comfort to my pleasunce,
When that I am in any hevynesse,
As for to have leyster of remembrance
Upon the manhood and the worthynesse,
Upon the trouthe and on the stidfastnesse
Of him whos I am aI, while I may dure.
Ther oughte blame me no creature,
For every wight preiseth his gentilesse.

In him is bounte, wysdom, governaunce,
Wel more then any mannes wit can gesse,
For grace hath wold so ferforth hym avaunce
That of knyghthod he is parfit richesse.
Honour honoureth him for his noblesse;
Therto so wel hath formed him Nature
That I am his for ever, I him assure,
For every wight preiseth his gentilesse.

And notwithstanding al his suffisaunce,
His gentil herte is of so gret humblesse
To me in word, in werk, in contenaunce,
And me to serve is al his besynesse,
That I am set in verrey sikernesse.
Thus oughte I blesse weI myn aventure
Sith that him list me serven and honoure,
For every wight preiseth his gentilesse.

II
Now certis, Love, hit is right covenable
That men ful dere bye thy nobil thing,
As wake abedde and fasten at the table,
Wepinge to laughe and singe in compleynyg,
And doun to caste visage and lokyng,
Often to chaunge hewe and contenaunce,
Pleyne in slepyng and dremen at the daunce,
Al the revers of any glad felyng.

Jelosie be hanged by a cable!
She wolde al knowe thurgh her espying;
Ther doth no wyght nothing so resonable
That al nys harm in her ymagenyng.
Thus dere abought is Love in yevyng,
Which ofte he yiveth withouten ordynaunce,
As sorwe ynogh and litil of plesaunce,
Al the revers of any glad felyng.

A lytel tyme his yift ys agreable,
But ful encumberous is the usyng,
For substil Jelosie, the deceyvable,
Ful often tyme causeth desturyng.
Thus be we ever in drede and sufferyg;
In nouncerteyn we languishe in penaunce,
And han wele ofte many an hard mischaunce,
Al the revers of any glad felyng.

III
But certes, Love, I sey not in such wise
That for t’escape out of youre las I mente,
For I so longe have ben in your servise
That for to lete of wil I never assente;
No fors thogh Jelosye me turmente.
Sufficeth me to sen hym when I may,
And thertofore certes, to myn endyng day
To love hym best ne shal I never repente.

And certis, Love, when I me weI avise
On any estat that man may represente,
Then have ye made me thurgh your fraunchise
Chese the best that ever on erthe wente.
Now love weI, herte, and lok thou never stente,
And let the jelous putte it in assay
That for no peyne wol I not sey nay;
To love him best ne shal I never repente.

Herte, to the hit oughte ynogh suffise
That Love so high a grace to the sente
To chese the worthieste in alle wise
And most agreable unto myn entente.
Seche no ferther, neythir wey ne wente,
Sith I have suffisaunce unto my pay.
Thus wol I ende this compleynt or this lay;
To love hym best ne shal I never repente.

10 gesse: estimate
11 hath wold: has willed, desired
12 parfit richesse: finest example
25 covenable: suitable, fitting
26 ful dere bye: pay dearly for
38 withouten ordynaunce: without regulation, freely
42 encumberous: troublesome
46 nouncerteyn: uncertainty
50 las: snare
52 lete of: cease
59 fraunchise: nobility of character
69 wente: path
70 pay: pleasure, satisfaction
Lenvoy

Princes, receyveth this compleynt in gre,
Unto your excelent benignite
Direct after my litel suffisaunce.
For elde, that in my spirit dulleth me,
Hath of endyting al the subtite

Wel nygh bereft out of my remembraunce,
And eke to me it ys a gret penaunce,
Syth rym in Englissh hath such skarsete,
To folowe word by word the curiosite
Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in
Fraunce.

Here endith the Compleynt of Venus.

TO ROSEMOUNDE

A Balade

Madame, ye ben of al beaute shryne
As fer as cercled is the mapamounde,
For as the cristal glorious ye shyne,
And lyke ruby ben your chekes rounde.
Therwith ye ben so mery and so jocounde
That at a revel whan that I see you daunce,
It is an oynement unto my wounde,
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

For thogh I wepe of teres ful a tyne,
Yet may that wo myn herte nat confounde;
Your semy voyes that ye so smal out twyne
Maketh my thoght in joy and blis habounde.
So curtaysly I go with love bounde

That to myself I sey in my penaunce,
"Suffyseth me to love you, Rosemounde,
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

Nas never pyk walwed in galauntyne
As I in love am walwed and ywounde,
For which ful ofte I of myself devyne
That I am trewe Tristam the secounde.
My love may not refreyde nor affounde,
I brenne ay in an amorous plesaunce.
Do what you lyst, I wyl your thral be founde,
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

tregentil------//------chaucer

WOMANLY NOBLESSE

Balade That Chaucier Made

So hath myn herte caught in remembraunce
Your beaute hoole and stidefast governaunce,
Your vertues al and yowre hie noblesse,
That you to serve is set al my plesaunce.
So wel me liketh your womanly contenaunce,
Your fresshe fetures and your comlynesse,
That whiles I live myn hert to his maystresse
You hath ful chose in trewe perséveraunce
Never to chaunge, for no maner distresse.

73 in gre: favorably
75 Direct: dedicated
2 mapamounde: map of the world
7 oynement: ointment, salve
8 to me ne do no daliaunce: are not friendly, encouraging, to me
9 tyne: barrel
11 semy: small, high out twyne: twist out

78 bereft out: taken away
81 curiosite: intricate and skillful workmanship
82 Graunson: Oton de Grandson (d. 1397), author of the ballades that are the source of the foregoing
17 pyk walwed in galauntyne: pike steeped in galantine, a sauce; see n.
20 Tristam: Tristan, the idealized lover of Isolde in medieval romance
21 refreyde: grow cold affounde: grow numb, turn cold
1 tregentil: This, which may be a proper name or an epithet ("very gentle"), has not been explained; it may be merely an imitation of a similar colophon to Troilus, which immediately precedes this poem in the manuscript. It is printed here as it is in the manuscript, with a line, or flourish, connecting it with (or separating it from) the word chaucer.
And sith I shal do [you] this observaunce, 10
Al my lif withouten displesaunce
You for to serve with al my beseynesse,
And have me somewhat in your souvenaunce. 11
My woful herte suffreth greet duressse,
And [loke] how humbly with al symptesse
My wil I conforme to your ordynaunce, 16
As you best list, my peynes for to redresse.

Considryng eke how I hange in balaunce
In your service, such, lo, is my chaunce,
Abidyng grace, whan that your gentilnesse 20
Of my grete wo liste do alleggeaunce,
And with your pite me som wise avance

In ful rebatyng of myn hevynesse;
And thynketh by resoun that wommanly noblesse 25
Shuld nat desire for to do the outrance
Ther as she fyndeth non unbuxumnesse.

Lenvoye
Auctour of norture, lady of plesaunce,
Soveraigne of beautee, floure of wommanhede,
Take ye non hede unto myn ignoraunce, 30
But this receyveth of your goodlihede,
Thynkyng that I have caught in remembraunce,
Your beaute hole, your stidestaf governaunce.

CHAUCLERS WORDES UNTO ADAM, HIS OWNE SCRIVEYN

Adam scriveyn, if ever it thee bifalle
Boece or Troylus for to wryten newe,
Under thy long lokkes thou most have the scalle,

But after my makyng thow wryte more trewe;
So ofte adaye I mot thy werk renewe, 5
It to correcte and eke to rubbe and scrape,
And al is thorugh thy negligence and rape.

THE FORMER AGE

A blisful lyf, a paisible and a swete,
Ledden the peples in the former age.
They helde hem payed of the fruietes that they ete,
Which that the feldes yave hem by usage;
They ne were nat forpampred with outrage. 5
Unknowen was the quern and ek the melle;
They eten mast, hawes, and swich pounage,
And dronken water of the colde welle.

Yit nas the ground nat wounded with the plough,
But corn up-sprong, unsowe of mannnes hond,
The which they gnodded and eete nat halynough.
No man yit knew the forwes of his lond,
No man the fyr out of the flint yit fond,
Unkorven and ungrobbed lay the vyne;
No man yit in the morter spyces grond 15
To clarre ne to sause of galantyne.

12-13 Apparently a line, rhyming on -aunce, has been lost here.
13 souvenaunce: remembrance
14 duress: hardship, distress
15 symptesse: simplicity
17 redresse: amend, alleviate
20 alleggeaunce: alleviation
21 scalle: a scaly eruption of the scalp

1 paisible: peaceful
2 former: first
4 by usage: by custom, naturally (without cultivation)
5 forpampred: overindulged; outraged
6 quern: handmill; melle: mill
7 mast: nuts (acorns and beechnuts); hawes: hawthorn berries
pounage: food for pigs

23 rebatyng: abatement
25 outrance: excessive harm
26 unbuxumnesse: disobedience
27 norture: good manners (literally, nourishment)
28 scalle: erase (by scraping the parchment)
7 rape: haste

11 gnodded: shelled, husked (literally, rubbed)
12 knew the forwes: knew the furrows (i.e., fields were unplowed)
14 Unkorwen: unpruned; ungrobbed: untilled
16 clarre: spiced and sweetened wine; galantyne: a sauce
No mader, welde, or wood no litestere
Ne knew; the flees was of his former hewe;
No flesh ne wiste offence of egge or spere. 19
No coyn ne knew man which was fals or trewe,
No ship yit karf the wawes grene and blewe,
No marchaunt yit ne fette outlandish ware.
No trompes for the werres folk ne knewe,
Ne toures heye and walles rounde or square.

What sholde it han avayled to werreye? 25
Ther lay no profit, ther was no richesse;
But cursed was the tyme, I dare weI seye,
That men first dide hir swety bysinesse
To grobbe up metal, lurkinge in derknesse,
And in the riveres first gemmes soghte. 30
Allas, than sprong up al the cursednesse
Of coveytyse, that first our sorwe broghte.

Thise tyraunts putte hem gladly nat in pres
No wildnesse ne no busses for to winne,
Ther po verte is, as seith Diogenes, 35
Ther as vitaile is ek so skars and thinne
That noght but mast or apples is therinne;
But, ther as bagges ben and fat vitaile,
Ther wol they gon, and spare for no sinne
With al hir ost the cite for to asayle. 40

Yit was no paleis-chaumbres ne non halles;
In caves and wodes softe and swete
Slepten this blissed folk withoute walles
On gras or leves in parfit quiete.
Ne doun of fetheres ne no bleched shete 45
Was kid to hem, but in seurtee they slepte.
Hir hertes were al oon withoute galIes;
Everich of hem his feith to other kepte.

Unforged was the hauberk and the plate;
The lambish peple, voyd of alle vyce, 50
Hadden no fantasye to debate,
But ech of hem wolde other wel cheryce.
No pryde, non envye, non avaryce,
No lord, no taylage by no tyrannye; 54
Humblesse and pees, good feith the emperice.

Yit was not Jupiter the likerous,
That first was fader of delicacey,
Come in this world; ne Nembrot, desirous
To regne, had nat maad his toures hye.
Allas, allas, now may men wepe and crye! 60
For inoure dayes nis but covetyse,
Doublenesse, and tresoun, and envye,
Poyson, manslawhtre, and mordre in sondry
wyse.

Finit Etas Prima. Chaucers.
I. Le Pleintif contre Fortune

This wrecched worldes transmutacioun,
As wele or wo, now povre and now honour,
Withouten ordre or wys discrecioun
Governed is by Fortunes errour.
But natheles, the lak of hir favour
Ne may nat don me singen though I dye,
Jay tout perdu mon temps et mon labour;
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye.

Yit is me left the light of my resoun
To knownen frend fro fo in thy mirour.
So muchel hath yit thy whirling up and doun
Ytaught me for to knownen in an hour.
But trewely, no force of thy reddour
To him that over himself hath the maystrye.
My suffisaunce shal be my socour,
For fynally Fortune, I thee defye.

O Socrates, thou stidfast champioun,
She never mighte be thy tormentour;
Thou never dreddest hir oppressioun,
Ne in hir chere founde thou no savour.
Thou knewe weI the deceit of hir colour,
And that hir moste worshipe is to lye.
I knowe hir eek a fals dissimulour,
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye!

II. La respounse de Fortune au Pleintif

No man is wrecched but himself it wene,
And he that hath himself hath suffisaunce.
Why seystow thanne I am to thee so kene,
That hast thyself out of my governaunce?
Sey thus: “Graunt mercy of thyn habound-
ance
That thou hast lent or this. Why wolt thou striye?

What wostow yit how I thee wol avaunce?
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alvy.

I have thee taught divisioon bitwene
Frend of effect and frend of countenaunce;
Thee nedeth nat the galle of noon hyene, 35
That cureth eyen derked for penaunce;
Now seestow clee that were in ignoraunce.
Yit halt thy ancre and yit thou mayst arryve
Ther bountee berth the keye of my substaunce,
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alvy.

How many have I refused to sustene
Sin I thee fostred have in thy plesaunce.
Woltow than make a statut on thy quene
That I shal been ay at thyn ordinaunce?
Thou born art in my regne of variaunce,
Aboute the wheel with other most thou dryve.
My lore is bet than wikke is thy grevaunce,
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alvy.

III. La respounse du Pleintif contre Fortune

Thy lore I dampne; it is adversitee.
My frend maystow nat reven, blind goddesse;
That I thy frendes knowe, I thanke it thee.
Tak hem agayn, lat hem go lye on presse.
The negardye in keping hir richesse
Prenostik is thou wolt hir tour assayle;
Wikke appetyt comth ay before syknesse. 55
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

Thou pinchest at my mutabilitee
For I thee lente a drope of my richesse,
And now me lyketh to withdrawe me.

Balades de Visage sanz Peinture: ballades on a face without painting; see n.
Le Pleintif contre Fortune: the plaintiff (as in a court of law pleads) against Fortune
4 errour: fickleness
7 Jay tout, etc.: “I have lost all my time and labor,” the opening line of a “new French song,” quoted in ParsT X.248
13 no force of: has no force, does not matter reddour: severity, harshness
22 moste worshipe: greatest dignity
La respounse, etc.: Fortune’s response to the plaintiff
30 or: ere

34 of effect: in actuality, in deeds of countenaunce: in appearance
35 hyene: hyena
38 halt = holdeth, holds fast ancre: anchor
43 statut on: law applying to
47 “My teaching benefits you more than your affliction injures you” (R.)
La respounse, etc.: The plaintiff’s response to Fortune.
50 reven: take away
52 lye on presse: keep to themselves, stay away (as in a closet)
53 negardye: miserliness
54 Prenostik is: is a sign that
56 In general: universally
La respounse, etc.: Fortune’s response to the plaintiff
57 pinchest at: find fault with
Why sholdestow my realtee oppresse? 60
The see may ebbe and flowen more or lesse;
The welkne hath might to shyne, reyne, or hayle;
Right so mot I kythen my brotelnesse.
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

Lo, th‘execucion of the majestee 65
That al purveyeth of his rightwysnesse,
That same thing “Fortune” clepen ye,
Ye blinde bestes ful of lewednesse.
The hevene hath propretee of sikernesse,
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

Lo, th‘execucion of the majestee
That al purveyeth of his rightwysnesse,
That same thing “Fortune” clepen ye,
Ye blinde bestes ful of lewednesse.
The hevene hath propretee of sikernesse,
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

Lenvoy de Fortune
Princes, I prey you of your gentillesse
Lat nat this man on me thus crye and pleyne,
And I shal quyte you your bisinesse 75
At my requeste, as three of you or tweyne,
And but you list releve him of his peyne,
Preyeth his beste frend of his noblesse
That to som beter estat he may atteyne.

Explicit.

TRUTH

Balade de Bon Conseyl
Flee fro the prees and dwelle with sothfastness;
Suffyce unto thy thing, though it be smal,
For hord hath hate, and climbing tikelnesse,
Prees hath envye, and wele blent overal.
5 Savour no more than thee bihove shal,
Reule wel thyself that other folk canst rede,
And trouthe thee shal delivere, it is no drede.

Tempest thee noght al croked to redresse
In trust of hir that turneth as a bal;
Gret reste stant in litel besinesse. 10
Be war therfore to sporne ayeysn an al,
Stryve not, as doth the crokke with the wal.
Daunte thyself, that dauntest otheres dede,
And trouthe thee shal delivere, it is no drede.

That thee is sent, receyve in buxumnesse; 15

The wrastling for this world axeth a fal.
Her is non hoom, her nis but wildernesse:
Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste, out of thy stal!
Know thy contree, look up, thank God of al;
Hold the heye wey and lat thy gost thee lede, 20
And trouthe thee shal delivere, it is no drede.

Envoy
Therfore, thou Vache, leve thyn old wrecchednesse;
Unto the world leve now to be thral.
Crye him mercy, that of his hy goodnesse
Made thee of noght, and in especial 25
Draw unto him, and pray in general
For thee, and eek for other, hevenlich mede;
And trouthe thee shal delivere, it is no drede.

Explicit Le bon counseill de G. Chaucer.
GENTILESSE

Moral Balade of Chaucier

The firste stok, fader of gentilesse —
What man that desireth gentil for to be
Must folowe his trace, and alle his wittes dresse
Vertu to love and vyces for to flee.
For unto vertu longeth dignitee
And noght the revers, saufly dar I deme,
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.

This firste stok was ful of rightwisnesse,
Trew of his word, sobre, pitous, and free,
Clene of his gost, and loved besinesse,
Ayeinst the vyce of slouthe, in honestee;
And, but his heir love vertu as dide he,
He is noght gentil, thogh he riche seme,
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.

LAK OF STEDFASTNESSE

Balade

Somtyme the world was so stedfast and stable
That mannes word was obligacioun,
And now it is so fals and deceivable
That word and deed, as in conclusioun,
Ben nothing lyk, for turned up-so-doun
Is al this world for mede and wilfulness,
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse.

What maketh this world to be so variable
But lust that folk have in dissensioun?
For among us now a man is holde unable,
But if he can by som collusioun
Don his neighbour wrong or oppressioun.
What causeth this but wilful wrecchednesse,
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse?

Trouthe is put doun, resoun is holden fable,
Vertu hath now no dominacioun;
Pitee exyled, no man is merciable.
Through covetyse is blent discriacioun.
The world hath mad a permutacioun
Fro right to wrong, fro trouthe to fikelnesse,
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse.

Lenvoy to King Richard

O prince, desyre to be honourable,
Cherish thy folk and hate extorcioun.
Suffre nothing that may be reprevable
To thy estat don in thy regioun.

Shew forth thy swerd of castigacioun,
Dred God, do law, love trouthe and worthinesse,
And wed thy folk agein to stedfastnesse.

Explicit.

1 stok: stock, ancestor
2 obligacioun: surety, bond
3 trace: tracks, footsteps
4 vertu: virtue
5 dignitee: dignity
6 mede: bribery
7 Al: although were he: he may wear mytre, croune, or diademe; the visual symbols of bishop, king, and emperor
8 vertu: virtue
9 holde unable: considered ineffectual
10 fable: falsehood, deceit
15 old richesse: wealth long in a family
16 dominacioun: dominion
17 discriacioun: discretion
18 approproped unto: appropriated to, the exclusive possession of
19 queme: please
20 blent: blinded, deceived
21 reprevable: damaging, a reproach
LENVOY DE CHAUCER A SCOGAN

Tobroken been the statutz hye in hevene
That creat were eternally to dure,
Syth that I see the bryghte goddis sevene
Mowe wepe and wayle, and passioun endure,
As may in erthe a mortal creature. 5
Allas, fro whenne may thys thing procede,
Of which errour I deye almost for drede?

By word eterne whilom was it shape
That fro the fyfte sercle, in no manere,
Ne myght a drope of teeres doun escape. 10
But now so wepith Venus in hir spere
That with hir teeres she wol drenche us here.
Allas! Scogan, this is for thyn offence;
Thow causest this diluge of pestilence. 14

Hastow not seyd, in blaspheme of the goddis,
Thurgh pride, or thrugh thy grete rekelnesse,
Swich thing as in the lawe of love forbode is,
That, for thy lady sawgh nat thy distresse,
Therfore thow yave hir up at Michelmesse? 20
Allas! Scogan, of olde folk ne yonge
Was never erst Scogan blamed for his tonge.

Thow drowe in skorn Cupide eke to record
Of thilke rebel word that thow hast spoken,
For which he wol no lenger be thy lord.
And, Scogan, though his bowe be nat broken,
He wol nat with his arwes been ywroken
On the, ne me, ne noon of oure figure;
We shul of him have neyther hurt ne cure.

Now certes, frend, I dred of thy unhap, 29
Lest for thy gilt the wreche of Love procede
On alle hem that ben hoor and rounde of shap,
That ben so lykly folk in love to spede.
Than shal we for oure labour have no mede;
But wel I wot, thow wol awnter and saye,
"Lo, olde Grisel lyst to ryme and playe!" 35

Nay, Scogan, say not so, for I m'excuse—
God helpe me so! — in no rym, dowteles,
Ne thyne I never of slep to wake my muse,
That rusteth in my shethe stille in pees.
While I was yong, I put hir forth in prees; 40
But al shal passe that men prose or ryme;
Take every man hys turn, as for his tyme.

[Envoy]

Scogan, that knelest at the stremes hed
Of grace, of alle honour and worthynesse,
In th'ende of which strem I am dul as ded,
Forgeteth in solytarie wildernesse—
Yet, Scogan, thenke on Tullius kyndenesse;
Mynne thy frend, there it may fructyfye!
Far-wel, and loke thow never eft Love dyffye.

LENVOY DE CHAUCER A BUKTON

My maister Bukton, whan of Crist our kyng
Was axed what is trouthe or sothfastnesse,
He nat a word anserde to that axing,
As who saith, "No man is al trewe," I gesse.

And therfore, though I highte to expresse 5
The sorwe and wo that is in mariage,
I dar not writen of it no wikkenesse,
Lest I myself falle eft in swich dotage.

27 of oure figure: shaped like us
28 wrecche: vengeance
31 hoor and rounde of shap: gray and chubby
32 so lykly: such likely (i.e., so unlikely)
33 olde Grisel: the old grey horse (?); see n.
40 in prees: in public
43 stremes hed: the head of the Thames (Windsor castle)
45 th'ende of which strem: the mouth of the Thames
(Greenwich)
48 Mynne: remember there it may fructyfye: where it
(remembrance of your friend) can bear fruit, be of help
49 dyffye: defy, repudiate

5 highte: promised
8 eft: again dotage: foolishness
I wol nat seyn how that yt is the cheyne
Of Sathanas, on which he gnaweth evere,
But I dar seyn, were he out of his peyne,
As by his wille he wolde be bounde nevere.
But thilke doted fool that eft hath lever
Ycheyned be than out of prison crepe,
God lette him never fro his wo dissevere,
Ne no man him bewayle, though he wepe.

But yet, lest thow do worse, take a wyf;
Bet ys to wedde than brenne in worse wise.
But thow shal have sorwe on thy flessh, thy lyf,
And ben thy wives thral, as seyn these wise;
And yf that hooly writ may nat suffyse,
Experience shal the tech, so may happe,
That the were lever to be take in Frise
Than eft to falle of weddynge in the trappe.

Envoy
This lytel writ, proverbs, or figure
I sende yow; take kepe of yt, I rede;
Unwys is he that kan no wele endure.
If thow be siker, put the nat in drede.
The Wyf of Bathe I pray yow that ye rede
Of this matere that we have on honde.
God graunte yow your lyf frely to lede
In fredam, for ful hard is to be bonde.

Explicit.

THE COMPLAINT OF CHAUCER TO HIS PURSE

To yow, my purse, and to noon other wight
Complayne I, for ye be my lady dere.
I am so sory, now that ye been lyght;
For certes but yf ye make me hevy chere,
Me were as leef be layd upon my bere;
For which unto your mercy thus I crye,
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye.

Now voucheth sauf this day or hyt be nyght
That I of yow the blisful soun may here
Or see your colour lyk the sonne bryght
That of yelownesse hadde never pere.
Ye be my lyf, ye be myn hertes stere.
Quene of comfort and of good companye,
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles moot I dye.

Envoy de Chaucer
O conquerour of Brutes Albyon,
Which that by lyne and free eleccion
Been verray kyng, this song to yow I sende,
And ye, that mowen alle oure harmes amende,
Have mynde upon my supplicacion.

10 Sathanas: Satan
12 As by: so as it concerns
15 dissevere: part, get away from
3 lyght: light in weight, merry, wanton
4 but yf ye make me hevy chere: unless you look gravely at me, take me seriously
7 hevy: heavy in weight, serious, pregnant
12 stere: rudder, guide

23 take: taken prisoner Frise: Frisia
25 writ: composition proverbs: series of proverbs figure: metaphorical statement
29 Wyf of Bathe: The Wife of Bath's Prologue
19 shave as nye as any frere: as bare of money as a friar's tonsure is of hair
22 conquerour: Henry IV Brutes Albyon: the Albion (Britain) of Brutus
23 lyne: lineage, descent
26 Have mynde upon: be mindful of
PROVERBS

Proverbe of Chaucer

What shul these clothes thus manyfold, 
Lo this hote somers day? 
After grete hete cometh cold; 
No man caste his pilche away.

Of al this world the large compas 
Yt wil not in myn armes tweyne; 
Who so mochel wol embrace, 
Litel therof he shal distreyne.

Poems Not Ascribed to Chaucer in the Manuscripts

AGAINST WOMEN UNCONSTANT

Balade

Madame, for your newefangelnesse 
Many a servaunt have ye put out of grace. 
I take my leve of your unstedfastnesse, 
For wel I wot, whyl ye have lyves space, 
Ye can not love ful half yeer in a place, 
To newe thing your lust is ay so kene. 
In stede of blew, thus may ye were al grene.

Right as a mirour nothing may impresse, 
But, lightly as it cometh, so mot it pace, 
So fareth your love, your werkes beren wit- 
nesses.

Ther is no feith that may your herte enbrace, 
But as a wedercok, that turneth his face 
With every wind, ye fare, and that is sene; 
In stede of blew, thus may ye were al grene.

Ye might be shryned for your brotelnesse 15 
Bet than Dalyda, Creseyde or Candace, 
For ever in chaunging stant your sikernesse; 
That tache may no wight fro your herte arace.

If ye lese oon, ye can WeI tweyn purchace; 19 
Al light for somer (ye woot WeI what I mene), 
In stede of blew, thus may ye were al grene.

Explicit.

8 distreyne: retain
12 wedercok: weathercock, wind vane
13 shryned: enshrined, like a saint; cf. Ros 1. brotelnesse: 
brittleness, instability
16 Dalyda: Delilah, who betrayed Samson (see Mt VII.2063-70) Creseyde: the unfaithful lover of Troilus 
Candace: a queen of India, who tricked Alexander to get him in 
hers power
18 tache: blemish, defect
20 Al light for somer: Apparently with the implication of 
fickleness or wantonness. The phrase occurs, in a wholly different 
context, in Cypro VIII.568 (R.).
COMPLAYNT D'AMOURS

An Amorous Complaint, Made at Windsor

I, which that am the sorwefullest man
That in this world was ever yit livinge,
And leest recoverer of hirself can,
Beginne right thus my deedly compleininge
On hir that may to lyf and deeth me bringe,
Which hath on me no mercy ne no rewthe,
That love hir best, but sleeth me for my trewthe.

Can I noght doon ne seye that may yow lyke?
Ne, certes now; alas, alas the whyle!
Your plesaunce is to laughen whan I syke,
And thus ye me from al my blisse exyle.
Ye han me cast in thilke spitous yle
Ther never man on lyve mighte asterte;
This have I, for I love you, swete herte!

Sooth is, that weI I woot, by lyklinesse,
If that it were a thing possible to do
For to acompte youre beautee and goodnesse,
I have no wonder thogh ye do me wo;
Sith I, th'unworthiest that may ryde or go,
Durste ever thinken in so hy a place.
What wonder is, thogh ye do me no grace?

Allas, thus is my lyf brought to an ende;
My deeth, I see, is my conclusion.
I may wel singe, "In sory tyme I spende
My lyf." That song may have confusioun.
For mercy, pitee, and deep affeccioun,
I sey for me, so far as I am concerned
Alle thise diden, in that, me love yow dere.

And in this wyse and in dispayr I live
In love — nay, but in dispayr I dye!
But shal I thus yow my deeth forgive,
That causeles doth me this sorwe drye?
Ye, certes, I! For she of my folye
Hath nought to done although she do me serve,
Hit is nat with hir wil that I hir serve.

Than sithen I am of my sorwe the cause
And sithen I have this withoute hir reed,
Than may I seyn right shortly in a clause,
It is no blame unto hir womanheed
Though swich a wrecche as I be for hir deed.
Yet awel two thinges doon me dye,
That is to seyn, hir beautee and myn ye;

So that, algates, she is verray rote
Of my disese and of my deth also,
For with oon word she mighte be my bote,
If that she vouched sauf for to do so.
But than is hir gladnesse at my wo?
It is hir wone plesaunce for to take
To seen hir servaunts dyen for hir sake.

But certes, than is al my wonderinge,
Sithen she is the fayrest creature,
As to my doom, that ever was livinge,
The benignest and beste eek that Nature
Hath wrought or shal, why 1 that the world may dure,
Why that she lefte Pite so behinde?
It was, ywis, a greet defaute in Kinde.

Yit is al this no lak to hir, pardee,
But God or Nature sore wolde I blame.
For though she shewe no pite unto me,
Sithen that she doth othere men the same,
I ne oughte to despise my lad yes game;
It is hir pley to laughen whan men syketh,
And I assente al that hir list and lyketh!

Yet wolde I, as I dar, with sorwful herte
Biseche unto your meke womanhede
That I now dorste my sharpe sorwes smerte
Shewe by word, that ye wolde ones rede
The compleynte of me, which ful sore I drede
That I have seid here, through myn unkonninge,
In any word to your displesinge.

Lothest of anything that ever was loth
Were me, as wisly God my soule save,

3 recovere: remedy can: knows
9 me: a variant of nay (i.e., no)
12 spitous yle: hateful, inhospitable island; see n.
15 by lyklinesse: probably
17 acompte: recount
27 for me: so far as I am concerned
28 All these made me, in this case, love you dearly.
32 drye: suffer, feel
37 reed: permission (literally, advice)
43 rote: cause (root)
48 wone: custom
68 of me: concerning myself (or possibly this is possessive)
70 displesinge: displeasure
To seyn a thing through which ye might be wroth;
And, to that day that I be leyd in grave,
A trewer servaunt shulle ye never have;
And, though that I have pleyned unto you here,
Foryiveth it me, myn owne lady dere.

Ever have I been, and shal, how-so I wende,
Outher to live or dye, your humble trewe.
Ye been to me my ginning and myn ende,
Sonne of the sterre bright and clere of hewe;

Alwey in oon to love yow freshly newe,
By God and by my trouthe, is wyn entente;
To live or dye, I wol it never repente!

This compleynte on Seint Valentynes day,
Whan every foughel chesen shal his make,
To hir, whos I am hool and shal alwey,
This woful song and this compleynte I make,
That never yit wolde me to mercy take;
And yit wol I evermore her serve
And love hir best, although she do me sterve.

Explicit.

MERCILES BEAUTE
A Triple Roundel

I
Your yen two wol slee me sodenly;
I may the beautee of hem not sustene,
So woundeth hit thourghout my herte kene.

And but your word wol helen hastily
My hertes wounde while that hit is grene,
Your yen two wol slee me sodenly;
I may the beautee of hem not sustene.

Upon my trouthe I sey you feithfully
That ye ben of my lyf and deeth the quene,
For with my deeth the trouthe shal be sene.

II
So hath your beautee fro your herte chaced
Pitee, that me ne availeth not to pleyne.

Allas, that Nature hath in you compassed
So greet beautee, that no man may atteyne
To mercy though he sterve for the peyne.

So hath your beautee [fro your herte chaced
Pitee, that me ne availeth not to pleyne,]
For Daunger halt your mercy in his cheyne.

III
Sin I fro Love escaped am so fat,
I never thenk to ben in his prison lene;
Sin I am free, I counte him not a bene.

He may answere and seye this and that;
I do no fors, I speke right as I mene.

Love hath my name ystrike out of his sclat,
And he is strike out of my bokes clene
For evermo; [ther] is non other mene.

Explicit.

79 trewe: true (servant)
81 Sonne of the sterre bright: That is, source of light to Venus, the lovers' star
6-7 two .. sustene: See Textual Notes.
16 Daunger: disdain, standoffishness halt = boldeth, holds
86 foughel: bird
31 do no fors: pay no attention
34 sclat: slate
36 mene: means, course, of action
A BALADE OF COMPLAINT

Compleyne ne koude, ne might myn herte never,
My peynes halve, ne what torment I have,
Though that I sholde in your presence ben ever,
Myn hertes lady, as wisly he me save
That Bountee made, and Beautee list to grave
In your persone, and bad hem bothe in-fere
Ever t'awayte, and ay be wher ye were.

As wisly he gye alle my joyes here
As I am youres, and to yow sad and trewe,
And ye, my lyf and cause of my gode chere,
And deeth also, whan ye my peynes newe,
My worldes joye, whom I wol serve and sewe,
Myn heven hool, and al my suffisaunce,
Whom for to serve is set al my plesaunce.

Beseching yow in my most humble wyse
T'accepte in worth this litel pore dyte,
And for my trouthe my servyce not despyse,
Myn observaunce eke have not in despyte,
Ne yit to longe to suffren in this plyte;
I yow beseche, myn hertes lady, here,
Sith I yow serve, and so wil yeer by yere.

6 in-fere: together
8 gye: guide
11 newe: renew
16 dyte: poem
20 here: hear (my complaint)
The Short Poems

The following short poems are printed in only a very approximate chronological order, since few can be dated with any precision. The notes to each comment on the dating, the sources and influences, and the principal scholarly and critical concerns. The most important recent work on these poems is the Variorium edition of Chaucer's Minor Poems, ed. Pace and David, part 1, which contains full commentaries and bibliography. Also very useful is Russell A. Peck's annotated bibliography, Chaucer's Lyrics and Anelida and Arcite, 1982.

The poems that appear here and the few lyrics incorporated in the longer works are all that have survived from what is usually assumed to have been a larger body of lyric poetry (though, for a contrary view, see Moore, JEGP 48, 1949, 196–208, and CL 3, 1951, 32–46). Chaucer probably also wrote lyrics in French (Robbins, ChR 13, 1978, 93–115; Wimsatt, in Ch: Writers and Background, 109–36), though none is known to have survived. The Univ. of Pennsylvania MS French 15, an anthology of French poetry written in England, contains fifteen poems attributed to "Ch." They have been edited and translated by James I. Wimsatt (Poems of "Ch"), who concludes that they cannot be proven to be by Chaucer. The manuscript, which also contains poems by Machaut and Grandson — those by Grandson closer to the text Chaucer knew than are the modern editions (see introductory note to Venus) — provide a good idea of the literary milieu in which Chaucer's lyrics were written.

The milieu was French and courtly (see Derek Pearsall, OE and ME Poetry, 1977; Salter, SAC 2, 1980, 71–79; Richard F. Green, Poets and Princepleasers, 1980); Green, ChR 18, 1982, 146–54; and Lenaghan, ChR 18, 1982, 155–60. Chaucer's favorite forms were the French ballade (see Helen L. Cohen, The Ballade, 1915, 222–99; and Friedman, MAE 27, 1958, 95–110) and the French "complaint" (see Green, UMSE 3, 1962, 19–34; Norton-Smith, Geoffrey Ch., 16–17; and Derek Pearsall, John Lydgate, 1970, 92–93). For contemporary attitudes toward these forms see Eustache Deschamps, L'art de dictier (Oeuvres 7:266–92), Ernest Langlois, ed. Recueil d'art de seconde rhetorique: Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France, 1902, vol. 13; see also Glending Olson, Lit. as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages, 1982, 147–55. For a full discussion of the forms and social function of French courtly verse, see Daniel Poirion, Le poète.

Probably none of Chaucer's surviving lyrics (with the exception of the roundel in The Parliament of Fowls) was meant to be sung. Chaucer admired and imitated Machaut, whose lyrics were composed with music, but he followed the practice of his contemporary, Deschamps, who held in Art de dictier (Oeuvres 7:270) that the music of poetry should be "naturelle," that is, spoken rather than sung. Nevertheless, Chaucer's lyrics can be sung; settings from contemporary French music, including Machaut, are provided for fourteen of the lyrics by Nigel Wilson (Ch Songs, 1980). See also Wilson's Music in the Age of Ch, 1979.

Most of the short poems have received relatively little critical attention. For useful surveys, see Reiss, ChR 1, 1966, 55–65; and Robbins, in Comp to Ch, 380–402.

AN ABC

Chaucer's source is a prayer in Guillaume de Deguileville's La pelerinaige de la vie humaine (first redaction 1331, second 1355), a very popular work (see Rosamund Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, 1966, 149). It was translated by Lydgate, who left space for Chaucer's prayer in his text. Besides this testimony, the poem is also attributed to Chaucer in four of the MSS. Its date of composition is unknown, but it is usually considered to be very early on the basis of the heading in Speght's edition of 1602, fol. 347r: "Chaucer's A.B.C. called La Priere de Nostre Dame: made, as some say, at the request of Blanche Duchess of Lancaster, as prayer for her privat use, being a woman in her religion very devout." None of the MSS mentions Blanche and this report comes two centuries after Chaucer's death, but Pace (SB 21, 1968, 225–35) notes that Speght might have used a MS once owned by Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, Blanche's grandson, and could therefore have recorded a family tradition. If this is true, An ABC was written before Blanche's death in 1368. Of course, the report may be untrue, and the poem may have been written much later; certainly its stanzaic form (see below) associates it with later works.

An ABC is the only completely devotional work among Chaucer's short poems, although the Virgin is addressed in The Second Nun's Tale, The Prioresse's Tale, and elsewhere. Most critics have dismissed this poem as one of the least interesting and most derivative of Chaucer's works, though in recent years it has received more sympathetic attention from Reiss (ChR 1, 1966, 55–65), Clemen (Ch's Early Poetry, 175–79), Crampton (Ch Newsletter 1, 1979, 8–10), and Haskell (Eng. Symposium Papers 3, 1972, 1–45).

In form the poem is an alphabetical hymn to the Virgin; for other examples in English, see Carleton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins, Index of ME Verse, 1943, nos. 471, 604, 607, 664, 2201. It consists of a sequence of prayers, whose unity is provided by the alphabet. Chaucer did not include Deguileville's last two stanzas for et and c (= cetera), and there are no stanzas for modern j, u, or w. On this matter, see Pace (Manuscripta 23, 1979, 88–98), who also notes the special visual effect of the poem in the MSS, where the first letter of each stanza is usually very large, often adorned in red.

Chaucer changed Deguileville's twelve-line stanza to an eight-line stanza, a b a b b c c, which also appears in The Monk's Tale, Former Age, Venus, and Bukton. The line is decasyllabic as in French (rather than the octosyllabic line of the early narratives), and it is used skillfully (Skeat 1:61). Chaucer also departs from his source by using more epithets for the Virgin and by placing much greater emphasis on legal language. The law court is a familiar source of imagery for penitential literature, but here it is so emphasized that the speaker often seems to be pleading in a court of law (cf. Pity). The imagery is
more intensely visual than in the original, though, and as Patricia Kean observes (Ch and Poetry 2:197), each image stands alone.

Deguville's lines are conveniently printed in Skeat (1:261–71). Since there are so many differences between the two prayers, they will usually not be noted. For a detailed comparison of the two works, see Rogers, Anglistica 18, 1972, 82–106.


14 Cf. MLT 11.852, SNPro VII.75n.

20 accio-un: Fr. “Contre moy font une accion. The idea is that sin is accusing the sinner before the bar of heaven.

25–32 Klinefelter (Expl 24, 1965, no. 5) points to the Allegory of the Four Daughters of God here.

26 n'art: For the construction, see Tr 2.716–18n.

29–30 For the figure, cf. Ps. 7.12.

38 Chaucer adds the biblical image of fruit (cf. Romans 7.4).

50 bifer: Fr. “âmère. Word play on Maria and the Hebrew marah (bitterness; Exod. 15.23); cf. SNT VIII.58.

56 stink eterne: Stench as a part of the conception of hell is commonplace in medieval thought (Spenser, Spec 2, 1927, 191–92); cf. HF 1654.


81 sorwe: Chaucer may have misread Deguville’s “douceur” (sweetness) as douleur (sorrow).

85 lystes: In the terminology of the judicial duel, “in the arena” (MED s.v. liste [a]); that is, “a judicial combat” (see GP 1.239n.). It is usually glossed as “wiles,” but there is no such meaning in MED (s.v. list n. [3]), only “a crafty person.” Given the legalisms throughout the poem and the commonplace image of the devil, Christ, etc., “fighting in the lists” (e.g., PP B Passus 19), seems preferable as an interpretation.

88–90 Exod. 3.2. A familiar symbol for the Virgin; cf. PrT VII.467–72n.

100 melodye: This is usually taken as Chaucer’s mis­translation of “tirelire” (money box), though Chamberlain (in Signs and Symbols, 88) argues that the change was deliberate, intended to characterize the Virgin as “true melody.”


114–15 Not in the Fr. text.

140 vicaire: Not in the French text.

149–50 Cf. Gen. 3.18.

159 bench: Chaucer uses the common English legal term for the Fr. “court.”

161 Xristus: Christ; in the MSS the word is abbreviated as “Xp” or “Xpu” (the sigma in Greek Χριστου is represented by the c; the u is for the Latin ending -us).

163 Longius: See Legenda aurea, ch. 47.


177 Zech. 13.1.

THE COMPLAINT UNTO PITY

This was ascribed to Chaucer by Shirley in MS Harley 78 and called “A Complaint of Pitee,” as it was in MS Add. 34360, and some critics have argued for that title. As is true for all the short poems, there is no evidence for when Pity was written. It is usually considered to be an early poem on the familiar grounds: it is artificial and therefore must have been written when Chaucer was still learning his craft; it is derivative, although no exact source has been found (which is true for all the short poems except ABC and Venus). Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 270), among others, sees a strong influence of il dolce stil nuovo and assigns it to Chaucer’s Italian period. Clemen (Ch’s Early Poetry, 181) has led the argument against a notable Italian influence: “There is nothing in the least ‘dolce’ about it.” Yet Clemen also notes that a date in the Italian period is not impossible, since Chaucer here uses rime royal—the seven-line iambic pentameter stanza rhyming a b a b b c c, which became the narrative stanza of most of Chaucer’s major works, but which had been used previously in French only for lyric poetry (see Stevens, PMLA 94, 1979, 67–76; and Baumb, Ch’s Verse). Chaucer may have chosen the rime royal stanza under the influence of Boccaccio’s narrative stanza, ottava rima (eight iambic lines rhyming a b a b a c c), which closely resembles rime royal (the scheme is identical if the fifth line is omitted). The change from the octosyllabic couplets of The Book of the Duchess and The House of Fame to rime royal is usually attributed to Boccaccio’s influence, and The Complaint unto Pity may be Chaucer’s earliest use of the stanza, which he here already handles with great ease.

In form—a narrative introduction followed by a “com­plaint” (here Bill)—Pity resembles Anelida and The Complaint of Mars. Like ABC, Pity is notable for its heavy use of legal terminology and metaphors drawn from the law (Nolan, ChR 13, 1979, 363–72).

No exact source is known. Skeat argued that the personal­ification of Pity was taken from Statius’s Thebaid, bk. 12, but the parallel is very remote. There are some resemblances to the Roman de la rose, but they too are very vague, as are the poem’s few parallels to the poems of Machaut (Wimsatt, MAE 47, 1978, 79–81). Poem IX in the Poems of “Ch” (ed. Wimsatt) contains a personification of Pity and bears some resemblance to this poem. However, the figure of Pity is commonplace in medieval poetry (Fligel, Anglia 23, 1901, 196) and the theme of pity was one of Chaucer’s favorites (Gray, in J. R. R. Tolkien, Scholar and Storyteller, ed. Salu and Farrell, 1979, 173–203); the search for exact sources is probably unnecessary.

Norton-Smith (Geoffrey Ch, 21–23) gives the poem a very sympathetic reading, but no one else has made such great claims for its excellence as Pittcock (Crit 1, 1959, 160–68), and most critics have simply ignored it. No “occasion” for the poem has been found, and there is no evidence for the older speculations that Chaucer here and in The Book of the Duchess refers to his own experiences in love.

11 Clemen (Ch’s Early Poetry, 181) and Gray (in J. R. R. Tolkien, 174) identify Cruelte with Daungier in RR. Wimsatt (MAE 47:80–81) refutes this and cites analogues in Machaut’s poetry for Chaucer’s image of Cruelte in conflict with Pite. Nolan (ChR 13:371) sees Pity and Cruelty engaged in a legal contest.

14 Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 270) compares Petrarch’s Sonnet 120: “Go, warm sighs, to the cold heart; break the ice that imprisons [contende] Pity,” but the resemblance is slight.
15 hearse: A frame for supporting lights as part of a funeral display. For an illustration, see fol. 142 of the Boucicaut Hours (repr. The Golden Age: Manuscript Painting at the Time of Jean, Duke of Berry, ed. Marcel Thomas, 1979, pl. 28). The body is lying in state.

38 It is not clear why Bounte should be wel armed.

The Bill of Complaint

This complaint is divided into three "terns, or groups of stanzas, each group ending with a couplet rhyming on -yne. Nolan (ChR 13:364) shows how the tripartite division conforms with legal bills.

Complaint: This is, like bill (petition), a legal term, a formal complaint presented to a court or some other authority. Cf. ProLGW G 363; Bo 3.pr3.63-64; and MED s.v. complaint 4.

59 Sheweth: A term regularly employed in petitions.

64–72 The allegory here, as Robinson noted, is not quite clear. The meaning seems to be: "Cruelty, the opposite of Pity, has disguised herself as Womanly Beauty and allied herself with Bounty, Gentilesse, and Courtesy to usurp your rightful dwelling place, which is called the Beauty that pertains to Grace." Pittock (Crt 1:167) explains that "Chaucer is exploring the genre to see how far he can stretch it without breaking. That he succeeded can be gauged from its fifteenth-century imitations."

92 Herenus quene: A great deal has been written on this, but most readers agree with Robinson: "Herenus, which has the best MS support, is usually taken to be an error or corruption for 'Herines,' the Erinyes, the three Furies (cf. Tr 4.22). Chaucer's reason for calling Pity the Queen of the Furies is uncertain." Skeat argues for the influence of Statius's Piaetas: "Pity may be said to be the queen of the Furies, in the sense that pity (or mercy) can alone control the vindictiveness of vengeance." Lowes (MP 14, 1917, 723) compares Inf. 9.43–45, where the furies ("Erine") are the handmaidens of Proserpina, "the queen of everlasting lamentation." See also Pittock, Crit 1:167. Various emendations have been suggested: "my hertes quene" (Flügel, Anglia 23, 1901, 205), "serenous" (Heath), "vertuous" (Koch), "Hesperus" (Ethel Seaton, Sir Richard Roos, 1961, 166).


110 Proverbial; cf KnT I.2397n. and Anel 182.

119 This repeats line 2. Cf. Anel 211, 350. The Trinity MS has a colophon: "Here endeth the exclamacioun of the Deth of Pyte" (Skeat 1:457).

A COMPLAINT TO HIS LADY

This work is attributed to Chaucer by Shirley, and most critics, with the exception of John Norton-Smith (Geoffrey Ch, 20), accept it as genuine. In Shirley's MS Harley 78 and in MS Add. 34369, which is apparently derived from it, the poem is entitled "The Balade of Pyte" and treated as a continuation of the "Complaint unto Pite." Lowes (MP 14, 1917, 724) argues for a connection between the two works, but no one else has tried to do so.

The poem consists of four parts: I. two stanzas in rime royal; II. eight lines of what appear to be terza rima (Dante's meter—iambic tercets, aba bcb, etc.); III. another seventeen lines of terza rima; IV. nine stanzas, all but the second consisting of ten decasyllabic lines rhyming aabaabcddc. There is little relation between the parts, and Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 273) would have it printed as three separate poems. It is apparently a series of metrical experiments, which may, as Fisher (670) holds, have been written at different times. Clogan (M&H 5, 1974, 183–89), in the most sympathetic discussion of the poem, emphasizes its experimental and unfinished character and argues that editorial emendations to clarify and "improve" the text merely obscure its distinctive character. Clemen (Ch's Early Poetry, 185–88) praises the naturalness of parts of the work, but most critics have dismissed it as purely conventional.

Because of the apparent use of terza rima, this poem is usually dated after Chaucer's first Italian journey, though, of course, it is possible that Chaucer knew Dante's work before he went to Italy. The poem shows a number of close affinities with the Anelida, the stanza used in Part IV is similar to the nine-line stanza of Anelida, and the two poems show frequent resemblances in language and sentiment (see notes below and Wimsatt, MAE 47, 1978, 66–67).

1 On the narrator's sleeplessness, cf. the opening of BD, and with 1–3 cf. esp. BD 18–21.

8–9 Cf. Anel 333–34.

15 Skeat and Fisher repeat 14 in order to correct the rhyme.

18 The construction is doubtful. Apparently the sentence means, "And yet, though I were to die I cannot tear it (i.e., love) out of my sorrowful heart." (Robinson).

22 Skeat adds line 189 from The Complaint of Mars to complete the rhyme scheme.

27 Skeat (1:526) argues that Faire Rewtheeles is a translation of "la belle dame sans merci," but this is contested by Timmer, ES 11, 1929, 20–22. The phrase does not occur in Machaut, Deschamps, or Grandson.

31 Cf. Anel 222 (nearly identical).

37 my swete fo: Cf. line 58 and Anel 272; Tr 1.874, 5.228; KnT I.2780. On such oxymorons, see Tr 1.411n.

40 Cf. KnT I.1565.


46 Cf. Anel 237 (repeated exactly).

51 Skeat adds a line (Anel 182) after this and adds Anel 181 after 53 to make this eight-line stanza conform with the other, ten-line stanzas in this section.

118–27 Because this stanza is found in only one of the two MSS, its authenticity was questioned in the Globe edition. But there seems to be no reason to differentiate between the conventionalities in these lines and the rest.


THE COMPLAINT OF MARS

Chaucer's authorship is attested by Shirley and by Lydgate (Pro to Fall of Princes I.322–23), who refers to the poem as "the broche which that Vulcanus / At Thebes wroughte. It is also called "The Broche of Thebes" in MS Harley 7333 (see Brusendorff, Ch Trad. 261–64; see also Textual Notes).

None of Chaucer's other short poems has elicited so much and such varied critical commentary. The commentary generally falls into three categories: allegorical, astronomical, and interpretative-appreciative.

The allegorical approach, which takes the poem as
representing a court scandal, has its beginning with the copyist John Shirley, who states in the rubric to MS Trinity R.3.20 that this poem was "made by Geoffrey Chaucer at the commandment of the renowned and excellent prince my lord the duc John of Lancastre." In the colophon Shirley writes: "Thus eondeth this complaint which some men sayne was made by my lady York doghter to the kyng of Spaygne [John of Gaunt] and my lord of huntyngdon some tyme duc of Exester." Then follows The Complaint of Venus, at the end of which Shirley writes "Hyt is sayde that Graunson made this last balade for venus resembled to my lady of York aunsweering the complaynt of Mars." The poem has therefore been taken as representing a scandalous liaison between John Holland and Isabel of York (Sket 1:65–66, 86) or another of John of Gaunt's daughters, Elizabeth of Lancaster (George Cowling, Ch, 1927, 1–64, 110–11). The allegorical reading remained popular until quite recent years (Haldeen Braddy, Ch and the Fr. Poet Graunson, 1947, 77–83) but has been vigorously attacked by recent critics such as Norton-Smith (Geoffrey Ch, 24–25), who argues that Shirley's "made by" cannot mean "composed concerning" (cf. MED s.v. bi 9[a]) and that Shirley's statement "made by my lady of York and my lord huntyngdon" records a rumor that the poem was "actually composed or recited by Isabel of York and John Holland." If so, it may have been recited as a courtly "disguising" (see Stevens, Music and Poetry, 169) or "mumming" (see Derek Pearsall, John Lydgate, 1970, 183–88), which were popular aristocratic entertainments of the time.

A number of critics have examined the poem only, or primarily, as a description of an astronomical event. This approach, like the allegorical, deals only with the story, not with the poem or complaint. Manly, refuting older theories, argued that the astronomical situation was purely imaginary (see 81–82 below). North (RES 20, 1969, 439–42) argued that the astronomical configurations described in the poem fit the year 1385; Parr and Holz (ChR 15, 1981, 255–66) likewise argue for 1385, though noting discrepancies between the poem and the actual condition of the skies. Eade (SAC 4, 1982, 69–76) also provides a useful examination of the astronomy and argues that the references are simpler than they have seemed and would have been understood by many in Chaucer's audience (82). See also Wood, Ch and Stars, 100–117; Smyser, Spec 45, 1970, 359–73; Manzalaoui, in Ch: Writers and Backgrounds, 241–42.

Most interpretative and appreciative criticism has concentrated on the complaint itself. Stillwell (PQ 35, 1956, 69–89) was among the first to examine Mars for its poetic merits, reversing a long critical tradition of simply dismissing it out of hand (e.g., Root, Poetry of Ch, 63; and Lewis, Allegory of Love, 170). The poem has since received careful and sympathetic attention and has often been compared to Troilus. See, among others, Clemen, Ch's Early Poetry, 188–97; Lawlor, in Ch and Chaucerians, 39–64; Owen, SP 63, 1966, 535–36, and PQ 46, 1967, 434–35; Hultin, AnM 9, 1968, 58–75; Merrill, Lit. Monographs 5, 1973, 3–61; Laird, ChR 6, 1972, 229–31; Storm, PQ 57, 1978, 323–35.

Chaucer's ultimate source is the story of Mars and Venus, captured in Vulcan's net (Ovid, Metamorphoses 4.171–89 and Ars amatoria 2.561), one of the best-known classical stories. Peter Abelard used it to compare himself and Eloise to Mars and Venus (The Story of My Misfortunes, tr. Henry A. Bellows, 1972, 20–21, where he also notes that they named their son Astrolabe), and Chaucer refers to it in KnT 1:2383–92 and Tr 3.724–25. In this version, the lovers are discovered by the sun rather than by Vulcan with his net (Manzalaoui, in Ch: Writers and Background, 245, and Storm, PQ 57:326–27, argue that Vulcan is metaphorically present). Other Ovidian influences are found by Norton-Smith, Geoffrey Ch, 26–27, and Dean, CL 19, 1967, 1–27 Brewer (N&Q 199, 1954, 462–63) notes the possible influence of Boccaccio's De genealogia deorum 3.22 on the characterization of Venus. Wimsatt (MAE 47, 1978, 73–76) notes possible echoes of Machaut.

The story may be dated, hesitantly, around 1385, on the basis of the astronomical allusions, though there is the possibility that the story and the complaint were written at different times (see Owen, PQ 46:434, and Sket 1:65). The occasion may have been a Valentine's Day celebration at the court, perhaps involving a "disguising," but that is only conjecture.

"The proem and the story (1–154) are in Chaucer's customary seven-line stanza. The complaint consists of sixteen nine-line stanzas, one introductory stanza and five terns, or sets of three stanzas, on different subjects" (Robinson).

1 gray: MED s.v. grei 1(b), as used in referring to morning light; cf. KnT 1.1492.
8 blew: MED s.v. bleu 1(e), meaning, figuratively, "sad, sorrowful." Braddy (Geoffrey Ch, 78) argues that "blue" stands rather for "faithful," "loyal."
9 Cf. SqT V.396n.
12 Apparently proverbial, though this is the only recorded example in ME; cf. Whiting N103.
13–14 Seynt Valencia thy day: Cf. PF 309 and n.
29 thridde hevenes lord: Mars is in the third heavenly sphere, reckoned inward from Saturn, as here and in Scogan 9; in Tr 3.2 Chaucer counts from the earth outward and Venus is in the third heaven. Both methods of reckoning were common.
30–51 Venus and Mars are in "platic" conjunction, which occurs when the radius of their surrounding "rays" (a halo of 8 for Mars and 7 for Venus) touch one another; that is, when they are within 7½° of one another (see Richard of Wallingford, Exafrenon pronosticonum temporis, in Works 1:227 and 2:115). In Richard's Canon supra calendarium, the minimum distance is given as 15° (1:562).
30 hevenysh revolucioyn: The orbit of Mars in his sphere, which brings him close to Venus. The addition of by desert (31) shows that the narrative has a non-astrological dimension.
42 with scourging of her chere: By her look; i.e., astrological aspect (Lat. aspectus, look).
45 Who syngeth now but Mars: Mars is in the zodiacal sign Aries, his house or domicile: "When a planet is in his hows . . . it is cleipid his hows of joye" (Exafrenon 1:203). That Venus regneth now in blyss (43) could indicate she is in her exaltation at or near 27° Pisces: "When a planeete is in his exaltation, he is likened til a kynge in
his see and in his joye emonge his men” (Richard of Wallingford, Works 1:203), but in both cases the joy may be due to love rather than astrology.

50-56 Mars and Venus, knyt in platic conjunction, agree to meet, join in exact conjunction, in hir neste paleys. Venus’s next house or domicile is the immediately following sign Taurus, the bull. Mars will await her there, since he is ahead of Venus and moves slowly through the sky as she, at her faster speed, overtakes him (see 69–70 below).

51 lokyng: Both astrological aspect and amorous glances.

58 my myschef: Taurus is an unfortunate sign for Mars (cf. 106–8); it is of opposite qualities to his house (Aries is “Masculyne, frye, orientale,” Taurus “Feminyne, er-thye, meredionale,” Richard of Wallingford, Works 1:207) and in it he has no astrological “dignities” and thus no power; but in a conjunction “a planet of another takes greet strength and confort” (Richard of Wallingford, Works 1:227).

61 Cf. NPT VII.3160.

69-70 Mars was commonly said to complete his orbit in two years (actually 687 days): cf. Bartholomaeus Anglicus 8.3; tr. Trevisa 1:481. He thus moves about one-half degree a day; Venus moves almost a full degree.

71-72 Cf. MLT II.1075, 1114–15.

72 they be mette: Mars and Venus were in exact conjunction in 5° Taurus on 3 March 1385. Parr and Holtz (ChR 15:256) print a table of the planetary positions in 1385 (see 81–82 below).

79, 84, 85 chambre: North (RES 20:139) takes this as the first “term” (first 8 degrees) of Taurus, which was a dignity of Venus; Eade (SAC 4:73–74) takes it as the center (15°) of Taurus. The word may mean simply “bedroom,” with a possible pun; see WBPro III.618.

81-82 Phebus ... Within the paleys yates: The sun enters the sign of Taurus (on 12 April in Chaucer’s time, see 139 below). In 1385, by 12 April Venus had already left Taurus and was 3° into Gemini. For this reason Manly rejected the year 1385 and judged the astronomical situation described as “entirely imaginary” (Harvard Sts. and Notes in Philol. and Lit. 5, 1896, 113); North (RES 20:138) and Parr and Holtz (ChR 15:259–60) regard the discrepancy as insignificant.

86 boles: The bull stands for Taurus, the white Bole (cf. Tr 2.55 and n.).

88 brenne hem: The sun, Phoebus, will destroy the influence of a planet, render it combust (cf. Tr 3.717; and 127–28 below) if it approaches closer than 15° (Richard of Wallingford, Works 1:562, 2:115), though 17° and 20° are given by some authorities. (North, RES 20:139.)

Cf. Astr 2.4.33–36.

89 dreyn in teres: Venus is a “hot and moist” planet (cf. Scogon 11–12) and Mars, who reacts with firi sparkes (96), is “hot and dry.” Cf. KnT I.2664–66.

90-91 A brief aubade or dawn song; cf. 136–40, and Tr 3.1422–1533 and n.

104-5 The sun “can overtake Mars but not Venus because his sphere is between theirs and his motion is consequently slower than Venus; but faster than Mars” (Florence M. Grimm, Astro. Lore in Ch, 1919, 47): see North (RES 20:138) and the chart of transits in Parr and Holtz (ChR 15:256) for exact details.

111 half the stremes: Half the rays, or “halo” of Mars, extending 4° on each side of the planet. This would mean that the conjunction is ending, and Venus is beginning to move away. See Richard of Wallingford, Works 1:562, 2:115.

113 Cilenios tour: Gemini, the sign of Mercury, who was born on Mt. Cyllene (Aen. 8:139). On toue, used for zodiacal house or domicile, see North (RES 20:139) and Laird (ChR 6:229–31). See Wood, Ch and Stars, pl. 21, for a zodiacal house depicted as a touer.

114 With voide cours: Venus moves through the last ten degrees of Taurus, which are “vacui” (Richard of Wallingford, Works 1:207). Emerson (PQ 2:83) argues for the meaning “cunning, artful,” a recognized sense of Fr. voide, which is possible, though the astrological meaning is more plausible.

116 No other planet is in Gemini.

117 litil myght: Venus has but one “term” in Gemini and hence little power (Richard of Wallingford, Works 2:207).

119 cave: Skeat explains the cave within the gate as one of the caves or patei of Gemini, one of which was at 2°. The idea that she remains there a naturel day seems based on the idea that she moves 1° a day (see 69–70 above); see Smyser, Spec 45:368.

120 Derk smokyng: “Does not accord with the standard allocation of gradus tenebrosi, umbrosi, and fumosi. Either Chaucer made a mistake (the degrees at the beginning of Gemini are actually lucidi, although followed by fumosi)” (North, RES 20:140).

127-28 The feebleness of Mars is due to the approach of the sun: “When he [a planet] begynnes to com towarde the sunne, so that he may not be seen (for owrmekill lighte of the Sonne), the planete is sayde to have his fallynge downe; and he is calid unhappy till domis” (Richard of Wallingford, Works 1:217).

129 steyre: Skeat (1:500) notes this exactly translates Lat. gradus (degree or stair).

130 twelwte daye of April: The day the sun enters Taurus, in which Mars remains (at 21° on 12 April 1385).

144 chevache: The planets are commonly depicted in illustrations as riding in chariots drawn by horses or birds (see Parr and Holtz, ChR 15:261).

145 valaunse: Most critics accept Skeat’s explanation that this is a form of Fr. faillaunce, which he takes as a translation of the astronomical term detrimentum. The detrimenta of Venus (those signs opposite Venus’s domiciles or mansions) were Scorpio and Aries, and Skeat takes the latter as intended here (1:501–2). Parr and Holtz (ChR 15:262) argue that Mercury must be in Taurus to see his paleys (Gemini, the next sign) and that valaunse must therefore be derived from Fr. vaillaunce (Lat. valentia, power), referring to Venus’s power in her house, Taurus. Norton-Smith (Geoffrey Ch, 145) believes there is a wordplay with reference to Venus’s headress (cf. PF 272), but this is unlikely.

146-47 her receyveth: “A planet is ‘received’ by another planet if that planet being ‘received’ is in an essential dignity (i.e., house or exaltation of the other planet)” (Parr and Holtz, ChR 15:262). Since Gemini is the domicile of Mercury, receyveth is the astronomically precise term. The idea that Venus and Mercury become lovers, suggested by Stillwell (cf. Laird, PQ 51:486–89; Storm, PQ 57:329), is improbable.
This poem is a free translation, or adaptation, of three ballades by the French knight-poet Oton de Grandson (d. 1397), whom Chaucer names as his source. In Shirley's manuscript and others it is treated as a continuation of The Complaint of Mars, though most editors reject that association and Robinson thought even the title, The Complaint of Venus, which may account for its following Mars in some manuscripts. If that is the case, then the poem must have been written before Isabel's death in 1392, presumably about the same time as The Complaint of Mars, perhaps around 1385. Robinson dated it later, partly because of Chaucer's apparent reference to his advanced age (lines 76–78), which, "though not to be dated too precisely, would have been most natural in the nineties," but mainly because on 17 November 1393 Grandson received a grant from Richard II "and about this time he and Chaucer may have been in personal contact. However, Piaget, Grandson's editor, believes the ballades Chaucer used date from Grandson's early years, and the two poets must have met long before 1393. Grandson was an exemplar of international chivalry, who, over a period of twenty years, was a retainer of John of Gaunt, Richard II, and the future Henry IV According to John of Gaunt's Register (ed. Sydney Armitage-Smith, item 1662) on 30 January 1375 John of Gaunt ordered Chaucer to be given 10 livres and Grandson 50 marks for the term of Easter. Their names appear separately on many occasions and on 11 May they appear together again, Grandson receiving 10 livres and Chaucer 100 'soldz' (John of Gaunt's Register, 1379–83, ed. E. C. Lodge and R. Sommerville, item 296). The Register ends in 1383, when Grandson is mentioned again on 8 April (item 847). He presumably continued in the family's employ, since from 1390 to 1393 he served with John of Gaunt's son Henry, the future king, then earl of Derby (see The Expedition to Prussia and the Holy Land Made by Henry Earl of Derby, ed. Lucy Toumlin Smith, 1894; rpt. 1965). Chaucer could have known Grandson's work at any time after about 1375. Grandson (c. 1340–1397) died in a judicial duel on the issue of his complicity in the death of the Count of Savoy. The best account of his life and works is that by Arthur Piaget, Oton de Grandson: Sa vie et ses poésies, 1941.

Chaucer did not translate word by word (81), as he claims, since the shift from a male to a female speaker necessitated omissions, additions, and alterations. Yet the lines remain close to the French, especially in the second and third sets of stanzas, and a good many lines are translated literally. For the text, see Wimsatt, Poems of "Ch." 70–74; these versions are closer to the text Chaucer used than those previously published by Piaget, Oton de Grandson; Braddy, Ch and the Fr. Poet Graunson; 1947, 61–62; and Skeat (1:400–404). Wimsatt notes that the first of the ballades originally bore the rubric "complainte," later effaced.

Chaucer's oft-quoted remark on the scarcity of rhymes in English (80) is true; that English has fewer rhymes than French is incontestable. Yet these ballades exhibit an apparent ease in finding the rhymes necessary in a strict ballade. The envoy of ten lines is both unusually long and unusually difficult, since it is built on but two rhymes, one of which (-aunce) had been used in the second set of ballades. Perhaps the apology for the scarsete of rhyme in English is at once a conventional use of the topos of "affected modesty" (see GP 1.746n.) and a sly way of calling attention to the technical virtuosity of his poem.

Most discussions of this work have concerned its possible relation to a court scandal (see introductory note to Mars, and Braddy, Ch and the Fr. Poet Graunson, 77–83), and little attention has been paid to its aesthetic qualities. Robbins (in Comp. to Ch, 17–19) and Green (Univ. of Miss. Sts. in Eng. 3, 1962, 26–27) comment on Chaucer's improvement of his original; and Merrill (Lit. Monographs 5, 1973, 1–61) considers the relation of Venus to The Complaint of Mars and argues for the unity of the two poems.
The sole copy of this poem (Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poet 163) was discovered by Skeat, who assigned it to Chaucer and gave it the present title (Athenaeum 1, 1891, 410). Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 439–40) rejected the ascription, but it has been accepted by most editors. In the MS To Rosemounde follows Troilus, and at the end of both works are written in a different script the words chaucer and Tregentil, as they are printed here. Skeat (1:81) argues that Tregentil is the name of the scribe; Kökeritz (MLN 63, 1948, 310–18) held instead that it was an honorific compliment (tretantil). Pace-David (1:170) note that the words are far separated in the manuscript, which suggests that they were intended to be taken separately rather than as a noun plus modifying adjective.

Because the ballade is so lively, some critics have assumed a real Rosemounde was addressed, though the name (which means “Rose of the World” or possibly, on the basis of line 2, “Rosy mouth”) was fairly common in verse. Robbins (Sts. in Lit. Imagination 4, 1971, 73–81) reviews the candidates and endorses the conjecture by Rickert (MP 25, 1927, 255) that the poem was addressed to Richard II’s child-bride, the seven-year-old Isabelle of Valois, on the occasion of her entry into London in 1396. There is no evidence for this and the poem may be much earlier; Vasta (in Ch Probs, 97–113) would put it as early as 1369–70.

In structure the poem is a highly conventional ballade (see R. T. Davies, Med. Eng. Lyrics, 1963, 133–34). Even its mock seriousness is not completely outside the tradition, since the courtly mode admitted a wide range of attitudes (see Stevens, Music and Poetry, 220–21; and Burrow in his edition of the poem in English Verse 1300–1500, 1977).

Vasta (as above) finds the major literary influence here the Roman de la rose. Wimsatt (MAE 47, 1978, 76–77) argues for the influence of Machaut’s “Tout ensemence com le monde enlumine,” but the resemblances are only general.

1 Madame: Robbins (Sts. in Lit. Imagination 4:79) notes this title was given to the eldest daughter of the king of France and suggests that, if Chaucer is addressing Isabelle of Valois, the word is used in its technical sense. However, madame is a common form of address in the ballades; see Against Women Unconstant 1.

2 mapamonde: Map of the world (Lat. mappa mundi); medieval maps were usually rounded (cercled); see Vasta, Ch Probs, 11–12.

3 cristal: A conventional comparison (Whiting C594); both crystal and rubies (line 4) were commonly used in shrines and reliquaries.

8 daliance: The meanings of this important word in love poetry range from “sociability” (GP 1.211) to “sexual intimacy” (WBPro III.260).

17 pyk walwed in galaunyte: A pike steeped in galantine sauce. Hieatt (in Ch Probs, 153) says this is a sort of aspic, a cold, jellied sauce. In Two Fifteenth Cent. Cookery Books, EETS 91, it is defined as a pickling sauce made of brown bread, vinegar, salt, and pepper; for “Pik in galanteine” the cook should “cast the same under him and above him that he be al yhidde in the sauce” (108).

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20 Tristam: Tristan, the lover of Isolde, commonly cited as an ideal; Lowes (RomR 2, 1911, 128) compares Froissart, “Nom ai Amans, et en sornom Tristans” (Oeuvres, ed. Scheler 2:367). Cf. PF 290 and n.

1 refreyde: Kökeritz (MLN 63:317) takes the rarity of this word, which appears elsewhere only in Chaucer (Tr 3.1343, 5.507; ParsT X.341) and the works of Wycliffe, as internal evidence for Chaucer’s authorship.

affounde: “Decline, fail,” according to MED s.v. afounden 2(a); possibly “be numb with cold” (Kökeritz, MLN 63, 1948, 316).

WOMANLY NOBLESSE

The single MS copy is in British Library Add. 34360, where it is headed “Balade that Chauncier made.” The present title was taken by Skeat from line 24; Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 276–77) thinks it too abstract and suggests instead “Envoy to a Lady.” That the work is Chaucer’s is generally accepted, though Koch (Est 27, 1900, 68) doubted its authenticity, and Helen L. Cohen (The Ballade, 1915, 246–47) argued against Chaucer’s authorship on the basis of the looseness with which the form of the ballade is used here. Chaucer does depart from the usual form by omitting the refrain, but he increases the difficulty of the form by using only two rhymes (-aunce, -este) rather than three throughout all three stanzas.

As in the case of Chaucer’s other ballades, no one source is known. Wimsatt (MAE 47, 1978, 76–78) discusses Machaut’s influence, particularly “Foy porter.” He also points out the similarities between Womanly
Noblesse and To Rosemounde: the narrator praises the lady instead of complaining to her, and the diction is mainly derived from French, with the -aunce rhyme used in both.

12 To supply the missing line, Furnivall composed "Take me lady, in your obeiaunces," which Skeat printed.

13 souvenance: This is the only use of this word by Chaucer; Wimsatt (MAE 47:76) argues it was suggested by "souvenir" in the refrain of Machaut's "Dame, le dous souvenir."

25 outrance: According to the MED, this is the first use in English of this word.

**ADAM SCRIVEYN**

In Shirley's MS R.3.20 this poem bears the title "Chaucers words, a' Geoffrey unto Adame his own scriveyne." No one has doubted Chaucer's authorship, and critics have been mainly concerned with identifying the scribe Adam. For various suggestions, see Brusendorff, Ch Trad., 57; Hammond, Ch: Bibl. Man., 405, and MLN 19, 1904, 36, and MP 11, 1914, 223; Bressie, TLS 9 May 1929, 383; Manly, TLS 16 May 1929, 403; Wagner, TLS 13 June 1929, 474.

Kaske (in Ch Probs, 114-18) suggests that Chaucer may have been thinking of the popular Latin verses on Clericus Adam: "Beneath a certain tree, Adam the clerk wrote of how the first Adam sinned by means of a certain tree." Peck (PMLA 90, 1975, 467) had earlier suggested a relation between the first Adam and Chaucer's scribe. Root (Poetry of Ch, 69-70) compares Petrarch, who voices a similar exasperation with scribes in Tr 5.1793-98.

Since *Troilus* is mentioned, Robinson fixed the probable date around the middle 1380s, though the poem could have been composed any time after *Boece* and *Troilus* were finished. The poem is written in the same rime royal stanza as *Troilus*, and it reflects the same concern with accurate transmission of his text as Chaucer expressed in Tr 5.1793-98.

3 scalle: Modern English *scale*, which Fisher defines as "a parasitic skin infection (dermathophytosis)." "What that ever be, the commune use hath that the skalle is a scram of the heede with flawes and with crustes and with some moysture and with doynge awaye of heres and with an askishe colour and with stynkyng smelnyng and horrible lonyngye" (The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac, EEES 265, 416).

6 rubbe and scrape: Parchment was corrected by scraping off the old ink and then rubbing the surface smooth again. (MS illustrations of scribes and authors often show them with a pen in one hand and a scraper in the other.)

**THE FORMER AGE**

This and the four poems that follow are all ascribed to Chaucer in the MSS, and his authorship has never been questioned. They have been assigned to various dates between 1380 and the end of his life. They all show indebtedness to Boethius, but that influence cannot be reserved to any one period in Chaucer's life. The most thorough examination of this influence remains Bernard Jefferson, Ch and the Consolation, 1917. Norton-Smith (MAE 32, 1963, 117-24) has argued for the influence of Deschamps; many of Deschamps's ballades have themes similar to these "Boethian" poems (the whole first volume of his collected works consists solely of "ballades de Moralitez"), but the question of whether Deschamps influenced Chaucer or Chaucer influenced Deschamps has not received adequate study.

The theme of the Golden Age has been a commonplace since Hesiod (for a recent study, see Bodo Gatz, Weltalter: Goldene Zeit und sinnerverwandte Vorstel­lungen, 1967). Chaucer bases this poem on metrum 5 of *Boethius*, with additions from Ovid and the *Roman de la rose* (as noted below).

Schmidt (EIC 26, 1976, 99-115) points out that this is the only poem in which Chaucer handles a myth that is not a story but an image, and he analyzes the unusual language, images, and rhythm of the poem.

Norton-Smith (MAE 32:117-24) approaches the work as a completely topical treatment of society under Richard II in 1398-99, but for the need to re-examine the whole notion of historical references in works such as this, see Cross, Saga-Book 16, 1965, 283-314. Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 293-94) regarded The Former Age as an unfinished rough draft; Pace (MS 23, 1961, 361-67) reaches the same conclusion from a study of the MSS.

In one of the MSS the poem is called "Aetats Prima, in the other "Chaucer upon the fyfte metur of the second book"; the present title was taken from the second line.

1-8 Closely follows Bo 2.m5.1-6. In Cambridge Univ. Library MS li.3.21, this poem is written in Boece, immediately following Bo 2.m5.

2 former: Norton-Smith (MAE 32:119) finds this usage, with the meaning "first," unusual. It does not appear in this sense elsewhere in Chaucer's works.

9-10 Cf. Ovid, Met. 1.109-10; RR 8381-84.

11 Cf. RR 8373.

15-18 Cf. Bo 2.m5.6-15.

16 clare: See KnT 1.1471 n.; galantyne: see Ros 17n.

21-25 Cf. Bo 2.m5.18-24; for 23-24 cf. Ovid, Met. 1.77-100.

27-40 Cf. Bo 2.m5.31-40; for 27-29 cf. Ovid, Met. 1.137-40.


41-48 A very general expansion of Bo 2.m5.15-18, with suggestions from RR 8393-8402.


55 A line is obviously missing; "Skeat skillfully composed a concluding line to this stanza: 'Fulfilled ethe of olde curtesye' " (Robinson). Koch and Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 293 n. 4) made other suggestions.

58 Nembrot (Nimrod) is not specifically connected with the Tower of Babel in chapter 11 of Genesis, but medieval tradition held that he was the builder; cf. Gower, Conf. Aman., Pro 1018-20. Schmidt (MAE 47,
FORTUNE

In several MSS this poem—which received its present title in the Chaucer Society edition—is called “Balades de vilage (an error for “visage”) sanz peinture,” which could mean “ballads that paint portraits without using paint.” Wimsatt (in Ch Probs, 124) suggests that the title means that Fortune is here presented “without her usual application of face paint.” Fisher in his edition suggests it is rather an allusion to Bo 2.pr.1.57–61, which refers to the visage of Fortune shown openly to the narrator. Norton-Smith (Reading Med. Sts. 2, 1976, 70) argues that the MS title originally read “deux visages” and notes Machaut’s frequent use of “balades a deux visages,” dialogues between two characters.

The pervasive influence of Boethius and echoes of the Roman de la rose are noted below. Wimsatt (in Ch Probs, 119, 124–27) argues for the influence of Machaut’s “Il m’est avis” and, with Patch (MLR 22, 1927, 381), against Brusendorff’s thesis (Ch Trad., 242–44) that two ballads by Deschamps were the source.

The poem is a strict triple ballade, organized as a dialogue between the complainant (Pleintif) and Fortune, with a concluding envoy in rime royal.

The envoi has been used to date the poem after 1390 by taking princes in line 76 to refer to the dukes of Lancaster, York, and Gloucester, and line 76 to refer to the ordinance of 1390, which specified that no royal gift or grant should be authorized without the consent of at least two of the three dukes. The beste frend of line 78, as well as of lines 32, 40, and 48, would thus mean King Richard.

There are, however, problems with this reading, since line 76 appears in only one of the ten MSS, and beste frend may be an echo of the Roman de la rose (see 32 below). It may be, as Patch argued (Goddess Fortune, 74) that the poem belongs to the “friend in need” tradition: the consolation for bad fortune is that we discover who our friends are. If the poem does indeed refer to the three princes’ power over grants, then it dates from the early 1390s; if not, given the use of Boethius, with possible echoes of Chaucer’s own translation, some time around the later 1380s seems most likely.

TRUTH

No specific date, occasion, or source can be assigned to this moral ballade, which, if the number of surviving MSS (22 plus two early editions) is any indication, was Chaucer’s most popular lyric. Shirley (in MS Cambridge, Trinity R.3.20) says it is a “Balade that Chaucier made on his deeth bedde,” a title that is repeated in MS Hatton 73 and the burnt MS Otho A.xviii (see Brusendorff, Ch. Trad., 250 n. 4). The title seems to have been earlier than Shirley’s copy (Pace, Spec 26, 1951, 313), but the implied date of composition has not been widely accepted. An earlier date, 1386–89, has often been based on the envoy addressed to Vache, whom Rickert (MP 11, 1913, 209–25) identified as Sir Philip (de) la Vache, whose career in the king’s household extended over the reigns of Edward III, Richard II, and Henry IV. There was also a John le Vache mentioned in Joan of Kent’s will (9 December 1385) with Lewis Clifford and John Clavowowe (John Nichols, ed., Collection of Wills of Kings and Queens of England, 1780, 80). However, the envoy in which Vache is addressed appears in only one of the manuscripts, and it may have been added at a later time (Pace-David 1:55).

In some of the MSS the poem is labeled “Balade de Conseyl,” which classes it with similar ballades on this fashionable theme. Brusendorff prints both a Middle English and a French example (Ch. Trad., 251–52), the latter of which is found in the same MS as Truth and resembles it in some details. “A Ballad of Good Counsel” is attributed to James I (in King’s Quair, ed., Alexander Lawson, 1910, 102–3); its first five lines are generally reminiscent of Gentilese (Sket 1:55).

The influence of Boethius in Truth is to be found mainly in the general ideas (Jefferson, Ch and the Conso- lation, 104–9, 136), especially Bo 2.pr4 and m4; 3.pr11 and m11; and 4.pr6 and m6. The refrain is biblical (see
7 below), and Kean (Ch and Poetry 1:38-42) argues that the tone owes more to Seneca than to Boethius. Scattered goodwill defines a tradition of curial satire and places Truth in it (Hermathena, 133, 1982, 29-45). Brusendorff (Ch. Trad., 251) believes that the chief inspiration for the poem was a passage from Gower (see 2 below).

The technical proficiency and poetic impact of Truth are very impressive. Chaucer makes excellent use of the tripartite ballad form (Green, UMSE 4, 1963, 80), of alliteration (Baum, Ch.'s Verse, 60), and of rhyme (Owen, SP 63, 1966, 534-35). The poem has been widely praised for its style (Basil Cottle, The Triumph of English, 1969, 39-40) and for "a metrical control in the imperative mood hardly to be met with before the close of the sixteenth century" (Kean, Ch and Poetry 1:38).

1 pees: See Flügel, Anglia 23, 1901, 209-10.
2 Suffycce: The notion is commonplace (see Flügel, Anglia 23:195-224, and the French ballad printed by Brusendorff, Ch. Trad., 252), but the use of suffycce is unusual and Robinson notes that it may be due to the Latin quoted in the margin of Gower's Conf. Aman. 5.7735-42 and attributed to Seneca (actually from Caecilius Balbus, De nugis philosophorum 11.3): "Si res tuei non sufficiat, fac ut rebus tuis sufficias." Gower translates "Bot if thi good suffise / Unto the liking of thi will / Withdrawe thi lust and hold the still / And be to thy good sufficiant / For that thing is appurent / To trouthe and causeth to be fre." 3-4 Possibly proverbial (Whiting H399); cf. Bo 2.pr.15-16.
4 Prees hath envoy: Proverbial; Whiting P369. 
5 gentlesse: Cf. "Prosperitas gentes cecat plus insipientes" (Walther 22707).
6 Romans 12.3: "Non plus sapere quam oporet sapere." Helen Kao, an editor of the MED, notes (by letter) the similarity of Chaucer's line to the Wycliffite translation: "That ye saure no' more than it behoveth to saure," Holy Bible. Made from the Latin Vulgate by Frederic Madden, 1850,4:328; similarly, A Fourteenth-Century Engil. Bible Version, ed. Anna C. Paves, 1904, 54.
7 John 8;32; cf. Conf. Aman. 5.7742, quoted in 2 above. The idea is proverbial (see Flügel, Anglia 23:215).
8-9 Tempest thee noght: Bo 2.pr.4.66-69.
9 hir . bal: Cf. Bo 2.pr.2.51-57.
12 Proverbial; cf. Whiting W20, "Surnp not against the wall," and P319, "An earthen pot should not fight with a caldron."
15 Cf. Bo 2.pr.1.91-94.
17-18 The idea of life as a pilgrimage is commonplace; cf. KnT 1.2847-49n: the comparison of man's lower nature with a beste is likewise common, as in KnT I.1309, Tr 3.620, For 68, and several times in Boethius (e.g., Bo 4.pr.101-26 and m3).
19 Know thy contree: That is, heaven is your true home; cf. Bo 1.pr.9.5-20, RR 5035.
20 looke up: Beasts look downward, man upward; cf. Bo 5.m.5.15-16. Skeat quotes Pol. and Love Poems, ed. Furnivall, 185, "But man, as thou witsless were, / Thou lookest ever downward as a beast."
20 the heye wey: Cf. Bo 1.m7.13-15, 4.pr.1.64 (Robinson).
LENVOY DE CHAUCER A SCOGAN

The authenticity of this work (which is attributed to Chaucer in all three MSS) has never been questioned. Here, and in the Envoy to Bukton, "envoy" means "letter," and both are extraordinary examples of epistolary verse. For a discussion of its genre and Chaucer’s mastery of it, see Norton-Smith (in Essays on Style and Language, ed. Roger Fowler, 1966, 157–65, and Geoffrey Ch., 213–25). Norton-Smith argues for the pervasive influence of Horace’s Epistles, and Wimsatt (MAE 47, 1978, 82) suggests Machaut’s “Puis qu’amours faut” as a source, but neither offers any exact parallels to this, one of Chaucer’s most inventive lyrics.

Scogan, who is addressed by name throughout and in the envoy (in the more familiar sense) is most likely Henry Scogan (1361?–1407), a squire in the king’s household and lord of the manor of Havyles after the death in 1391 of his brother, John Scogan. He became a tutor to the sons of Henry IV, to whom he addressed “A moral Balade” (printed by Skeat 7:237–44); in his “Balade” Scogan quotes the entire text of Gentilese, paraphrases part of it, and refers to Chaucer as his “maister.” The copyist Shirley notes that Scogan’s poem was read at a “souper” in the Vintry in London organized by a group of merchants and attended by the princes whom he addresses; Chaucer’s poem may have been first read in similarly convivial circumstances.

The reference to a diluge of pestilence (14) caused by Scogan’s recent renunciation of Love (at Michaelmas, 19) led Skeat to date the poem in late 1393, because of the floods around Michaelmas in that year. There were, however, other seasons of heavy rain (Brusendorff, Ch Trad., 219, suggests July and August 1391, and Fisher notes rains and floods in March 1390), and determining a precise date is impossible. To assume that the poem must be very late, on the grounds that boor (31) is intended literally, is to ignore the bantering tone of the poem. The same might be said of the ingenious attempts to explain exactly what Chaucer wanted from Scogan, though French’s suggestion (PMLA 48, 1933, 289–92) that Chaucer is refusing Scogan’s request to compose a conciliatory letter to his lady is an attractive, though unprovable, possibility.

The poem is much admired, not least for the mastery with which the rime royal stanza is used. Among useful critical discussions are David (ChR 3, 1969, 265–74), Kean (Ch and Poetry 1:33–37), Lenaghan (ChR 10, 1975, 46–61), and Burrow (SAC 3, 1981, 61–75).

1–2 statutz hye . . . eternally: Skeat compares Purg. 1.76, “Non son gli editti eterni per noi gastii” (the eternal edicts are not broken by us).

3 bryghte goddis sevne: The seven planets, thought to be an important influence on the weather (cf. Tr 3.624–28 and Richard of Wallingford, in Works). Here, however, the rain is caused by the planets’ tears rather than their heavenly positions.

9 the fyfte sercle: The sphere of Venus, counting from the outside inward (see Mars 29n.).

11 Venus was especially associated with rain (see Mars 89n.). Venus also weeps in KnT I.2664–66 and Mars 143.

14 For the construction, see KnT I.1912 and n.

15 goddis: Probably the seven in line 3 are meant.
Skeat’s reading, “goddes” (i.e., Venus), is attractive but “the form goddes for goddesse in rime is hardly Chaucerian” (Robinson).

28 On the power of Cupid’s arrows to harm or cure, see PF 215–17 and notes 215–16, 217

31 hoor and rounde of shap: Chaucer seems to imply that he is stout in HF 574, ProThop VII.700, and MercB 27. Henry Scogan was probably only about 30 years old, and, taking hoor to imply a greater age, Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 291) identified the Scogan of this poem as Henry’s elder brother John and dated it before his death (in 1391). However, Kittredge (Harvard Sts. and Notes 1, 1892, 116–17) and David (ChR 3:270) argue that hoor need not apply to Scogan.

32 Pace and David take folk as the object of spede and interpret, with Donaldson, “That are so able to help folk in love.” But the humorous “That are such suitable folk to succeed in love” is equally possible.

35 Grisel: A gray-haired old man (MED) or, as in OF, a gray horse. For rhyme Caxton and Thynne have “renne,” which may imply that “horse” is the better interpretation.

38–39 There has been much speculation on these lines, which are often taken as straightforward autobiography. Chaucer is said to be in his old age (French, PMLA 43:292; Kean, Ch and Poetry 1:33), to have ceased writing (Brusendorff, Ch Trad., 292), and to be not only old but neglected (Norton-Smith, Essays on Style, 164) or, at the very least, to be middle-aged and, like many poets, fearful “that his poetic gift was deserting him” (Fisher). David notes (ChR 3:273) “It would be an error to take literally Chaucer’s statement that he has given up poetry. This is simply another word to be broken, is in fact being broken in the writing of the Envoy.”

39 rusteth: Robinson agrees with Kittredge (MP 7, 1910, 483) that the preface to Alman de Insulis’s Anti-claudianus, and Ovid’s Tristia 5:12, 21, provided the metaphor. Norton-Smith (Geoffrey Ch, 217–18) argues that the source is Horace’s Satires 2:39–44. Pace and David cite Merchie, Musée Belge 27, 1923, 83–89, who notes a parallel in Apuleius’s Florida (17.31–32), and they conclude that the figure is a commonplace.

40 Cf. PF 603.

41 al shal passe: Proverbal; cf. Tr 5.1085 and Whiting T99.

43 stremes hed: In all three MSS this line is glossed “Windesor” (i.e., Windsor Castle) and line 45 is glossed “Grenewich,” which is where Chaucer was probably living (Ch Life Records, 512–13). The strem is thus the Thames, though it may also have metaphorical meanings (see Preston, Ch, 123, and David, ChR 3:272).

47 Tuullius: Possibly Tullius Hostillius, legendary king of Rome noted for his friendliness toward the poor; he is mentioned in WBT III.1116–66, lines quoted in Sco­gan’s “Moral Balade,” 166–67; see Phipps, MLN 58, 1943, 108–9. More likely this refers to Cicero, De amicitia, as cited in RR 4747–62 (Rom 5285–5304); see Goffin, MLR 20, 1925, 318–21.

LENVOY DE CHAUCER A BUKTON

This poem survives in but one MS, Fairfax 16, where it is given the title it bears, and one early print, Julian Notary’s edition of Mars and Venus (1499–1501), but its authenticity has not been seriously questioned. In the early collected editions, the title and the name Bukton in the first line were omitted, and it followed The Book of the Duchess: Urry thought it was an envoy addressed to John of Gaunt, and until the nineteenth century it was usually printed as an appendage to BD (see Hammond, Ch: Bibl. Man., 366–67).

The identity of Bukton is still doubtful, as there are two possibilities: Sir Peter Bukton, of Holderness in Yorkshire, first suggested by Tyrwhitt (see Kuhl, PMLA 38, 1923, 115–32). “His long and close association with the Lancasters brings him into association with Chaucer” (Robinson), and it is worth noting that The Summoner’s Tale is set in Holderness (III.1709–10). Sir Robert Bukton, the other possibility (Tatlock, Dev. and Chron., 210–11; James R. Hulbert, Ch’s Official Life, 1912, 54–55), was connected with the royal court as a squire of Queen Anne and later of the king. Most scholars are inclined to Peter, who was steward to the Earl of Derby, the future Henry IV, and, after Henry’s coronation, guardian and later steward to his son, Thomas of Lancast­er.

The poem is usually dated in 1396 because of the reference in line 23 to being taken prisoner at Frisia (though Praie is a common rime word; see 23 below); an expedition against Frisia was undertaken between 24 August and the end of September in 1396, and Froissart (Chronicles 4:99–99) remarks on the brutality of the Frisians, who killed their prisoners rather than ransoming them in the usual way. Yet Lowes (MLN 27, 1912, 45–48) notes that the brutality of the Frisians was a commonplace, and he argues that the reference to Frisia would have been appropriate at any time in the decade preced­ing 1396; he also argues that it would not have been appropriate after the defeat of the Frisians in that year, but this is doubtful. The reference to The Wyf of Bathe is of little further help, since the date of that prologue is not certain, nor is it clear whether Bukton was to read the work in its present, probably revised, form or in some earlier version. Finally, the reference to Bukton’s proposed marriage is of no help; Robert Bukton was married sometime before 1397 (Tatlock, Dev. and Chron., 210–11) but when is not known; nothing is known of Peter Bukton’s marriage.

The allegations against marriage are familiar and traditional. Kittredge (MLN 24, 1909, 14–15) and Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 487) note parallels in the ballades of Deschamps but none is especially striking.

The Envoy to Bukton, like that to Scogan, is a verse letter ending with an envoy to the addressee. It is a “true” ballade, having three eight-line stanzas, though with a differing set of rhymes for each stanza and without a refrain.

1 maister: A respectful form of address (cf. GP I.837) rather than, as Rickert believed (Manly Anniv. Sts., 31), an indication that Bukton was a lawyer.

2 John 18.38. See SqT V.555n.

6 Cf. WBPro III.3.

8 eft: Chaucer’s wife Philippa is believed to have died in 1387

9 For the image of the bound Satan, common in litera­ture and art, see MLT II.361n., and for gnawing on the chain (of love), see Tr. 1.509. For marriage as a chain or set of fetters, proverbial in antifeminist satire, see
Walther 10750, and Matheolus, Lamentations, 2287. Cf. the distich “Cur proprio caput ense secas, cur sponte cathanas / Demonis incurris, cur sua iussa facis” (Walther 4707), and see also John of Salisbury, Polycraticus 8.11, cited by Tatlock, MLN 29, 1914, 98.

17 On love as a prison, see MercB 28 and n.

18 1 Cor. 7.9; also cited by the Wife of Bath (III.52). Proverbial (Whiting W162).

19-20 Cf. WBPro III.154–60. Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 487) compares Deschamps, Ballade 823 (Oeuvres 5:343): “Car exil met son corps et sa vie / Et devient serfs, laches et espandu / Et d’une erreur fait seconde folie / Quant deux fois est par femme confondue.”

23 Frise is a common rhyme word in French courtly poetry; see Ernst Langlois, ed., Recueil d’art de seconde rhétorique, 1902, 13:141. Cf. Rom 1093.

25-28 The proverbs in 27–28 do not occur elsewhere in Middle English (cf. Whiting W134), though the sentiments survive in the modern saying “Leave well enough alone.” Skeat notes that in Fairfax 16 the following proverb appears at the end of the poem: “Bette is to suffre, and Fortune abide / Than [MS And] hastily to clyme, and sodeynly slyde.

29 There is a similar reference in MerT IV.1685.

THE COMPLAINT OF CHAUCER TO HIS PURSE

This mock love complaint is attributed to Chaucer in the MSS (though labeled “a balade to kynge Richard” in Shirley’s copy), and its authenticity has never been questioned.

The envoy can be dated, though not so precisely as was believed when it was assumed that the poem must have been written between 30 September 1399, when Henry was accepted as king, and 3 October (a mistake for 13 October), when the new king apparently granted Chaucer a pension of forty marks. Chaucer’s annuity from Richard was terminated with his deposition and the regular installment of ten pounds, due on 29 September, was not paid. After Henry’s acceptance as king on 30 September, in a document dated 13 October, his coronation day, he reconfirmed Richard’s grant and granted Chaucer an additional forty marks a year (Ch Life Records, 525). Ferris (MP 65, 1967, 45–52) has shown that this document was antated; it was actually issued around 16 February 1400. Chaucer may have been pressed for cash (Finnell, ChR 8, 1973, 147–58), though this is not certain (Scott, ELN 2, 1964, 81–87). On 18 October he appeared in the Exchequer to swear to the existence of the lost originals of Richard’s grants, and these were confirmed (Ch Life Records, 525–27). Yet no payment was forthcoming. On 9 November, King Henry granted Chaucer ten pounds as a payment of the arrears of the annuity granted by Richard, specifying this was a gift (“de nostre doun,” Ch Life Records, 530). This money, however, was not paid until 21 February 1400. Payment on the grant of 13 October, due 31 March, was not mandated until 11 May 1400, and no mandate for the further arrears of his grant from Richard was issued until 14 May. Chaucer finally received partial payment, five pounds, on 5 June 1400, the last he was to receive before his death later that year (Ch Life Records, 529–30). The plea for money could thus have been made at almost any time from 30 September 1399 until Chaucer’s death. However, that the poem has a direct connection with these payments is only inference. There is no record showing that Chaucer sent the poem to Henry nor that the king responded with any payments.

The envoy in which the plea is made appears in only five of the eleven manuscripts, and it may be a later addition (see 17 below). Recent critics have defended the integrity of the whole work (e.g., Finnell, ChR 8:154–55), though the tone and diction of the envoy, if not meant as mock serious, differ markedly from the preceding lines, and it is cast in an unusual stanzaic form (one also used by Clanvowe in his Boke of Cupide). If the envoy is an original part of the poem, Chaucer’s Complaint to His Purse belongs to the category of “begging poems,” such as that addressed by Deschamps to King Charles IV in 1381 (No. 247, Oeuvres 2:81) and that written by Machaut to John II (Oeuvres, ed. Tarbé, 78). Other such poems by Deschamps have been noted (Cook, Trans. Conn. Acad. 23, 1919, 33–38; Smith, MLN 66, 1951, 31–32). There are no striking similarities between any of these proposed models and Chaucer’s poem, though Deschamps’s Balade No. 247 offers an analogy to what may have been the circumstances—in Stanza 3 he complains that the king makes promises but all he gets is “you will be paid.” Chaucer’s poem is unique in its humorous application of the language of a lover’s appeal to his mistress to this well-worn theme.


1-2 Cook (Trans. Conn. Acad. 23, 1919, 35) notes a parallel to a well-known poem attributed to the Chateleine de Coucy: “A vos, amant, plus k’a nule autre / Est bien raisons ke ma dolor complaigne” (To you, my love, more than to any other, my sadness rightly complains); in Chansons attr. au Chastelein de Couci, ed. Alain Le- rond, 1964; tr. in Lyrics of the Troubadours and Trouvères, ed. Goldin, 1973, 350–53). The poem has no other similarities to Chaucer’s Purse.

3-4 lyght . . . hevy: Both words had a wide range of meaning: lyght could mean “cheerful, fickle, wanton, giddy, or graceful” as well as “light” (in weight), and bery could mean “sad, serious, clumsy, or pregnant” as well as “heavy.”

13 Queene of comfort: An epithet of the Virgin in
Poems Not Ascribed to Chaucer
in the Manuscripts

Some poems, not identified as Chaucer's by the scribes have been attributed to him by modern editors. The four printed here are those accepted as genuine in Skeat's Oxford Chaucer and printed by most subsequent editors. Of these, Merciles Beaute and Against Women Unconstant are generally accepted as genuine. The Complaynt D'Amours is more doubtful, and A Balade of Complaint which Skeat later rejected in Ch Canon, 90-142, is most likely not Chaucer's.

A considerable number of short poems are ascribed to Chaucer in the MSS or were included by the early printers among his works. The principal discussions of these spurious attributions remain those of Skeat (1:27-48; and Ch Canon, 90-142), Hammond (Ch: Bibl. Man., 406-603), and Brusendorff (Ch Trad., esp. 433-44). In Shirley's MS B.L. Add. 16165 are two poems, "The Balade of the Plough" and "A Balade by Chaucer." Furnivall was doubtful which ballade was meant, and printed both with the title "A Balade or two by Chaucer" (in his ed. of Jyl of Brentford's Testament, 1871, 34-36). Hammond (MLN 19, 1904, 35-38) reprinted both and argued that the "Plough" was probably Chaucer's. Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 278-84) reprinted the "Reeve" parallel with another copy in Harl. 7578, arguing that it should be accepted as authentic. Neither has been so accepted by editors. "An Holy Meditation" (printed in Lydgate's Minor Poems, ed. McCracken 1:43-48), which Carleton Brown (PMLA 50, 1935, 997-1011) argued was Chaucer's lost "Of the Wretched Engendyringe of Mankynd," has likewise been rejected by the great majority of scholars.

AGAINST WOMEN UNCONSTANT

This was first ascribed to Chaucer in Stowe's edition of 1561; there is no ascription in the MSS, where it is called
simply “Balade. The present title is Skeat’s adaptation of Stowe’s heading. Skeat (1:26-27, 86-88, and Ch Canon, 62-63) argues persuasively for Chaucer’s authorship on the grounds of its quality and association with Chaucer’s genuine works in the MSS. Koch was initially doubtful (Chronology, 41) but later accepted it (Est 27, 1900, 60). Hammond rejected it (Ch: Bibl. Man., 440-41) as did Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 441), but Robinson noted that the language, meter, and subject matter are consistent with the theory of Chaucer’s authorship, as are some details of the vocabulary (see 1 below). Skeat notes especially its resemblance in mood to Lak of Stedefastnesse.

The general idea of the poem is similar to a ballade of Machaut (in Voir Dit, 309), the refrain of which (“Qu’en lieu de bleu, Dame, vous vestez vert’”; in place of blue, lady, you dress in green) is almost identical with line 7; Wimsatt (MAE 47, 1978, 83-84) argues that Chaucer is dependent directly on that poem. However, Machaut often used old refrains (see Gilbert Reaney, Machaut, 1971, 8) and the recurrence of the line of the old refrain in a close variant elsewhere in Machaut (Voir Dit, 4929) suggests it may have been proverbial.

The title, which Skeat adapted from Stowe, is unfortunate, since the speaker is specifically addressing one lady. The Fairfax MS calls it simply “Balade”; the other MSS have no heading. Furnivall’s title “Newfangelnesse” in his Chaucer Society edition of the Minor Poems, which was adapted by Koch, seems more appropriate.

1 Madame: Cf. To Rosemounde.

newfangelnesse: Chaucer is the first to use this word (cf. MED s.v. newfangellesse) and he seems fond of it; it appears in SqT V.610, ProLGW F 154, and Anel 141, where it rhymes with stidlastnesse, while here with unstedfastnesse: in all its uses, except here, it applies to a male.

7 Proverbial (Whiting B384). See introductory note to this poem. Blue is explicitly symbolic of constancy, (trough) and green of falsity in SqT V.644-47; cf. also Tr 3.885n., Anel 330-32. See especially Anel 145-47, the lines immediately following those noted above, as similar in rhyme to this stanza.

8 Tatlock suggested (in a letter to the editor) that the similar use of the figure in MerT IV.1582 is perhaps evidence of the genuineness of the ballade” (Robinson). However, the image is commonplace; see MerT IV.1577-87n.

7 Proverbial, Whiting W160.

15-17 brotelnesse sikernesse: The same rhyme is used in the discussion of faithless women in MerT IV.1279-80.

19 If ye lese oon, ye can wel tweyn purchase: Skeat compares the modern proverb “She has two strings to her bow”; cf. Whiting O39, “One lost and two recovered.”

COMPLAYNT D’AMOURS

This poem, first printed by Skeat (Acad 33, 1901, 307) is not attributed to Chaucer in any of the MSS, including the one by Shirley. Since the MSS in which it appears contain genuine pieces, and because of its many echoes of Chaucer’s works, Skeat concluded it was genuine. From Shirley’s puzzling heading—“an amerowse com-

plynte made at wyndesore in the laste may to fore nouembrace”—he inferred it was an early work, associated with Chaucer’s service in the royal court beginning in 1367. Koch first expressed doubts (Est 15, 1891, 418) but then accepted it as genuine (Est 27, 1901, 60; Chronology, 21) and conjectured 1374 as the date of composition. Robbins has questioned its authenticity (Ch 13, 1978, 386-87), but in Comp. to Ch, 386-87, he treats it without comment as one of Chaucer’s lyrics. Lounsbery rejected it because “it has almost too many of his particular phrases” and “gives the impression of a cento collected from various writings by an ardent admirer” (Sts. in Ch 1:452-53); Oruch (Spec 56, 1981, 559) is probably right in taking it as a fifteenth-century Valentine’s Day poem inspired by Chaucer.

Braddy (Ch and the Fr. Poet Graunson, 1947, 56-57) sees a relation of this poem to Grandson’s Complainte amoureuse de saint Valentin, which is disputed by Bennett in his review of Braddy’s book (MAE 18, 1949, 35-37). Wimsatt (MAE 47, 1978, 71-73) finds a “family relationship” with some of Machaut’s poems. Skeat notes its general resemblance to Aurelius’s lament (FranT V.1311-25) and to various complaints in Troilus.

MERCELES BEAUTE

This poem appears along with a number of undoubtedly genuine works in a single manuscript (Pepys 2006; see for a description Hammond, MLN 19, 1904, 196-98). It was first printed by Percy in his Reliques (1st ed. 1765, 2:11) as “An Original Ballad by Chaucer” (though called “Merciles Beaute” in his list of contents of the MS). Skeat accepted it as genuine; Hammond (Ch: Bibl. Man., 437) and Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 440) rejected it. Though Robinson consigned it to the “doubtful” category because of the lack of MS attribution, he believed it “thoroughly Chaucerian.”

The poem is divided by editors into three roundels (on the form, see PF 675n., and Daniel Poirion, Le poète,
318–60), with the form $AB^1B^2$ $abAB^1$ $abAB^1B^2$. The refrains (indicated by the capitals) are editorial additions. In the MS the refrains are indicated only by "Your yen two &c. "So hath your beaute &c "Syn I fro love &c" and there is no way to determine how many lines were to be repeated.

Merceles Beaute is so thoroughly imbued with the attitudes and language of contemporary love poetry that it seems fruitless to search for analogues. Lowes (MLR 5, 1910, 33–39) suggested that the first roundel was based on Deschamps's Chanson baladee 541 (Oeuvres 3:382), beginning: "However my body suffers or endures the sweet looks of your beautiful eyes." The third he regards as a humorous paraphrase of Deschamps's Rondeau 570 (Oeuvres 4:29), "Puis qu'Amour ay servi trestout mon temps" (since I have always devoted my time to Love). However, the striking opening line of this section is exactly matched in a humorous ballade, the response of the Duc de Berry to the Clédel de Jœuf (ed. Raynaud, SATF, 1905, 213), beginning "Puis qu'a Amours suis si gras eschape." Raynaud dates this ballade between 31 October and 6 November 1389. Which poem borrows from the other is not clear, and it could be that some common source accounts for the lines, though if borrowing is involved, the Duc de Berry is probably the debtor. Wimsatt (MAE 47, 1979, 67–88) argues for the strong influence of Machaut, but the parallels he adduces are commonplace. There is, however, a resemblance in the first roundel to Machaut's "Vo doulz regart, douce dame, m'a mort," which Deschamps quotes (without attribution) as an example of the roundel in his Art de dictier (Oeuvres 7:266–92).

Since for Machaut the roundel, like the ballade, was also a musical form and since in The Parliament of Fouls the birds are said to sing the roundel, it is possible that Merciles Beaute was also meant to be sung. Although "singing" and "song" were used loosely (see Moore, JEGP 48, 1949, 196–208), it is at least suggestive that the lover in To My Soverain Lady (Skeat 7:281, line 20) describes himself as "singing evermore" the first line of Merciles Beaute.

Skeat entitled the three roundels "captivity," "rejection," and "escape." For the change from adoration to rejection as part of the game of love, see Stevens, Music and Poetry, 220–221, and Poirion, Le poète, 333–40.

1 The image is familiar in love poetry of the time (cf. KnT I.1096 and 1077–97n.).
16 Daunger: Cf. Rom 3018 and n.
27 fat: On this line, see introductory note above. Cf. Scogan 31. Skeat notes that lovers should of course be lean; cf. Rom 2684–86.
28 prison: A commonplace in love poetry; see Bukton 14, and Wimsatt, Ch and Fr. Poets, 32–36; Poirion, Le poète, 548–78; Stevens, Music and Poetry, 194.
29 I counte him not a bene: Proverbial; see Whiting B92, and GP 1.177 and n. Poirion, Le poète, points out that Froissart, among others, frequently used proverbs in his roundels.

A BALADE OF COMPLAINT

Skeat greatly admired this poem and accepted it as Chaucer's because of its merits, though it is not attributed to him in the sole MS (by Shirley); he later denied its authenticity and attributed it to Lydgate (Ch Chron., 63–64). No one since then has argued for its authenticity, though with the exception of Koch, editors have usually included it among the "doubtful" poems. Norton-Smith (Geoffrey Ch, 20) regards it as a polished example of the complaint form, worthy of comparison to Chaucer's genuine works, but few others have shared Skeat's admiration. Though it is called a balade, it lacks the refrain and strict rhyme scheme. Robbins (Comp. to Ch, 386) notes that the -ere rhymes in all three stanzas may indicate that it was begun as a strict ballade.
The twenty-one poems of this section are found in fifty-three manuscripts and in a number of early printed books, of which five have been used for this edition. These authorities are designated by the sigils (with slightly different conventions of capitalization) of the extremely useful edition of George Pace and Alfred David, The Minor Poems: Part One, Vol. 5 in the Variorum Chaucer, which also provides some description of the manuscripts and printed books. The notes that follow are intended to show variants of both textual and literary interest. Although the authorities for the poems resist genetic classification, their variants do form manuscript groups, and these groups have been indicated in the notes to focus and simplify comparison of variants. The authorities for a particular variant are listed by groups and alphabetically within each group. Whole-word emendations without textual authority are bracketed and noted. In some instances emendations by the earlier modern editors, Skeat, Koch, Heath, and Robinson, have developed a sort of authority, and so their editions are occasionally noted: Skt, Kch, Hth, Rob. The following notes are selective; for more complete sets of variants, see Pace and David and Koch's edition.

### AN ABC

Authorities: sixteen manuscript copies and Speght's edition of 1602:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bod</td>
<td>Bodleian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cov</td>
<td>Coventry MS (Accession 325), City Record Office, Coventry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fairfax 16, Bodleian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gg</td>
<td>Gg.4.27, Cambridge University Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H*</td>
<td>Harley 2251, British Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H*</td>
<td>Harley 7578, British Library (lines 1–50 only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Pemps 2006, Magadalene College, Cambridge (two copies, P1 and P2, lines 1–60 only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sp</td>
<td>Speght's second edition, 1602, STC 5080–81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A*</td>
<td>Additional 36983, British Library (formerly Bedford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F*</td>
<td>Ff.5.30, Cambridge University Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Hunter 239, Glasgow University Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>G.21, St John's College, Cambridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Laud Misc 740, Bodleian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mel</td>
<td>Melbourne MS, State Library of Victoria (Felton Bequest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Arc. L.40.2/E.44, Sion College, London</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cos (Cosin MS.V.I. 9, Durham University Library), lines 1–16 only, is not classified. Ff2, G J L Mel and S occur in a prose translation of Dégulleville's *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*. All texts have been published: fourteen by the Chaucer Society; Cov by Doyle and Pace (PMLA 83, 1968, 22–34), Mel by Doyle and Pace (SB 28, 1975, 41–61), Cos by Doyle (Durham Philobilibon 1, 1949–55, 54–55), and Sp in the Brewer facsimile. Ff2 is the basis of the present text.

### Title

An ABC is editorial (Skt Rob); the subtitle is from A*6 Ff2 S; om. Bod Gg H*3 H*3 G J L Mel; Chaucers A.b.c. F (in margin); Here beginsmeth a preuour of our ladie that Geffrie Chaucer made affir the orde of the a b c Cov; La pryere de nostre Dame—per Chaucer P1 P2; Chaucers ABC called La Priere de Nostre Dame Sp; S has a marginal attribution to Chaucer.

6 thou might| thou om. P1 P2; al m. Cov Gg H*3 Sp; O goodly Cos.
33 been in thee| in the be α.
35 Hast thou to misericorde| Unto mercy bastow α.
38 fruit] good Bod F H*3; om. G L Mel; goodness J.
39 correcte vice| correcte me α (except correctid be Cov) G L; me chastyse A*6 FF2; correcte my folise J; help me that in syn lyse Mel; me wel chastyse S Skt Hth Kch Rob. Severs (MLN 64, 1949, 306–9) argues for correcte me, the reading of most MS authority, in spite of its departure from the rhyme scheme. The present reading is the proposal of Avril Henry, ChR 18, 1983, 95–99.
40 wol me| me woole FF2 G; will my w. A*6.
54 the] ther A*6 FF2 G; that J.
55 if thou| that thou Bod F P1 P2; if om. Cov G J L Mel.
58 to have oure| as for our α (except beree for us in H*3).
59 precious blood he wrote the bille| gleode b. w. t. bill Bod; p. bloode b. w. that bill Cov; bloode b. w. t. blysful bille F P1 P2; bloode b. w. that blisful bille GG Sp; bloode b. w. a p. bille H*3.
83 bothes| GG Sp A*6 FF2 G S; both Bod Cov F L Mel; om. H*3; kather J. Youre bothere, though supported by good MSS, is a strange construction. Perhaps the reading should be youre bothere (supported by J), as in Tr 4.168 (R).
99 That cometh of thee thou Cristes| Thou erte cristiis awvn J; Thou art crystysy L; That ert cristiis our lordeis awvn Mel.
115 to] unto A*6 FF2 S.
132 is his rightful rekenynge| his fulle rekenynge is GG Sp; it is rightful rekenynge A*6 FF2 G; it is the rightful rekenynge S; it is that rewenke rekenynge J L Mel.
133 merci| joye GG Sp.
137 Soth is that God| S. is t. be α except troublt it is G. H*3; S. it is t. G. J L Mel.
his] Om. J.
151 so| Om. A*6 FF2; soore S.
158 courty| country α except H*3.
159 O freshe| of fresh a; of a freshe J Mel.
163 And eek that| All MSS have hypermetric suffred: And suffred that Bod F J; And s. eek t. Cov Gg Sp; And s. eek H*3; And eek s. t. A*6 FF2 G S; And also s. t. L Mel.
181 bryghte| Cov Gg Sp; om. rest.
183 palais| place H*3 J L Mel.

The textual notes to The Short Poems were prepared by R. T. Lenaghan.
THE COMPLAINT UNTO PITY

Authorities: nine manuscripts and Thynne's edition of 1532:

\[\begin{array}{l|l} 
\alpha & A^3 \\
\mid & \text{Additional 34360, British Library (formerly Phillipps 9053)} \\
H^1 & \text{Harley 78, British Library} \\
H^3 & \text{Harley 7578, British Library} \\
\mid & \text{Bodleian} \\
\mid & \text{Bodleian} \\
F & \text{Fairfax 16, Bodleian} \\
FF & \text{FF.1.6. Cambridge University Library} \\
\mid & \text{Lt} \\
\mid & \text{Longleat 258, in the possession of the Marquess of Bath} \\
R^1 & \text{R.3.19. Trinity College, Cambridge} \\
T & \text{Tanner 346, Bodleian} \\
\mid & \text{Th} \\
\mid & \text{Thynne's edition, 1532, STC 5068} \\
\end{array}\]

All have been published: nine by the Chaucer Society and Th in Brewer's facsimile edition (see p. 1117). F is the basis of the present text.

Title: From Bod (colophon); And now here folowith a complaint of pite made by Geoffrey Chaucier the aurore poet A^3 H^1; om. H^3; Balade F; How pite is dead T Th; Pite FF (colophon) The exclamation of the dethe of pyte Lt R^1.

4 Withoute deth] W the d. a.
6 crueltie and tirannye] cruel t. a.
15 that] H^2; om. rest.
16 a] Lt R^1 Th; om. rest.
19 gan to] H^2; came to A^3 H^1; to om. B.
21 I was but] H^3 B; Me thoughte me A^3 H^1; nas Skt Hth Kch Rob.
24 hold] heve a.
34 first I hadde] I b. f. B.
45 when] Om. B except Bod F.
50 sauf] save only B.
52 of] a; and by B except R^1 Th; and R^1; unto Th.

The Bill of Complaint The complaynt in the bill A^3; om. rest.
59 rial] souverayne a.
61 in] Om. a.
64 ifalle] Th; in falle a; falle B except Th.
70 hyghte] is highe B.

to Grace of G. H^3; to your G. B.

76 wanten] Skt Hth Kch Rob; want(e) all MSS.
79 Withoute yow, benygne creature] With youe benigne and fere creature A^3 H^1; W youre b. a. f. c H^3.
80 your] now oure a.
83 that perilouse alliaunce] of tho persone a. A^3; of those persone the a. H^3; these personne a. H^3.
86 than] H^1; that A^3 H^3; om. B.
87 well] F; om. rest.
Pite] peyne a.
88 is falle] sholde be a Rob.
89 than] also H^3 B.
91 seken] spoken F.
113 youre] youre H^3; om. FF L R^1 T.
117 Sith ye be ded] Now pite that I have soughte so yore agoo a (repeating line 1); S. ye be yet d. B (yet om. Skt Hth Kch Rob).

A COMPLAINT TO HIS LADY

 Authorities: two manuscripts and Stowe's edition of 1561.

\[\begin{array}{l|l} 
\alpha & A^3 \\
\mid & \text{Additional 34360, British Library (formerly Phillipps 9053)} \\
H^1 & \text{Harley 78, British Library} \\
\mid & \text{St} \\
\mid & \text{Stowe's Edition 1561, STC 5075-76} \\
\end{array}\]

The copy in H^1 was written by Shirley; A^3 and St seem to derive from it. A^3 adds a unique stanza at the end. H^1 and A^3 have been printed by the Chaucer Society, St in Brewer's facsimile edition. H^1 is the basis of the present text, but a number of readings present difficulties that have led to relatively frequent, and more or less traditional, emendation.

Title: Supplied by Skeat; the balade of Pytee by Chauciers A^3 H^1. The MSS and Stowe present this poem as a continuation of The Complaint unto Pity.

2 hir] theyre MSS.
3 hir] theyre MSS.
15 Skeat repeats 14 here, before 15, to begin the terza rima.
16 he] Om. MSS.
22 After this line Skeat adds a line, Mars 189, to fill out the rhyme scheme. See Expl. Notes.
23 Before this line Skeat begins the new sequence of terza rima with two additional lines, a compound of Pity 22 and 17 and Anel 307.
40 and] Om. MSS.
41 eek] Om. MSS.
50 than] lo than MSS.
51 After this line Skeat adds a rhyming line based on Anel 182.
52 lo] Om. Skt Hth Rob.
53 After this line Skeat adds a rhyming line based on Anel 181.
62 while] while(ss) H^1 St Skt Kch Hth Rob.
71 noon fayner] f. n. Hh Kch Rob.
73 youre heynenesse] y. heynesse MSS; you b. Kch; you distresse Skt Hth Rob.
76 livyng than] than l. A^3 Kch Rob; than om. Skt Hth.
79 doon yow] y. don A^3.
86 will] may St.
92 ne will] nil Skt Hth Kch Rob.
94 on yow in such manere] so by upon your whole St.
97 here] Om. MSS.
110 whyles] whyl Skt Hth Rob.
114 trewer verrayly] trewer so verrayly A^3 H^1.
118-27 The last stanza occurs only in A^3.
120 is] Om. A^3.
121 Wel] For wel A^3.

THE COMPLAINT OF MARS

Authorities: eight manuscripts and the editions of Julian Notary (1499-1501) and of Thynne (1532):
Though the readings of $\beta$ are preferable, no individual manuscript of that group claims preference. Therefore, because the spelling of $F$ conforms with that of good manuscripts for other texts, $F$ is the basis of the present text, but $\beta$ readings are usually preferred where there is disagreement. All texts have been published: nine by the Chaucer Society and Th in Brewer's facsimile.

**Title:** Supplied by Skeat; *Complaint of Mars and Venus* F T Th; ... *The Broche of thebes as of the love of Mars and Venus* H$^4$ Pb (Hammond, 1908, Ch: Bibl. Man., 384); *The love and complayntes bytwene Mars and Venus* (caption) JN; om. Pe S$^2$; the alliance bytwene Mars and Venus made by Geoffrey Chaucer. $R^2$.

The Proem: This, *The Story* (after 28), and *The Proem* (after 154) were supplied by Skeat.

1. *foules* [lovers α; *flowers* H$^4$; *fooles* R$^2$].
2. *yon* [Th Skt Kch Rob; *yow* R$^2$ S$^2$; om.].
3. *day* [may H$^4$] Pb S$^2$.
4. *ye* [they F Th Pb; *the* B; *be* H$^4$].
5. *F* mistakenly has line 19 next.
6. *yow* [R$^2$ S$^2$; om. α H$^4$ Pb Pe; *yonder* Pb; *your* R$^2$; *the* S$^2$].
7. *3* day [may H$^4$] Pb S$^2$.
8. *4* ye [they F Th Pb; *the* B; *be* H$^4$].
9. *6* F mistakenly has line 19 next.
10. *17* yow [R$^2$ S$^2$; om. α H$^4$ Pb Pe; ye JN].
11. Displaced in F (16, 19, 17).
12. *25* att[e] [at the T Th H$^4$ Pb S$^2$; at Pe R$^2$].
13. *22* scouring [stirring F; *scouryng* T; *scornyng* Th; *strenght* H$^4$].
14. *54* and ther abyde [to a. F Lth; forto a. T Th*$^4$; and Pe].
15. *67* ther [Om. α].
16. *68* wo [sorwe α].
17. *69* sped her [her om. L Th Th].
18. *76* lappeth [happeth L Th Th].
19. *84* knokkedon [knokken F; *knokked* L Th H$^4$; *knooking* Pe; *kan kythe the full grete light* S$^2$; line missing R$^2$].
20. *96* brosten [sprangen L Th Th; *breken* JN].
21. *105* Phebus [Vlctus S$^2$].
22. *115* ne [Omn. α JN; so S$^2$].
23. *139* twelfte daye [xii dayes α].
24. *141* allone [al alone JN Pb].
25. *143* Venus weping [F H$^4$ S$^2$; w. V α except F; *weeping* om. β except H$^4$ S$^2$].
26. *146* doth [maketh α; *did* S$^2$].
27. *181* yshewed [sbowd Th B].
28. *182* it [Omn. α JN].
29. *186* I shal [shal I L Th Th JN R$^2$].
30. *191* than [R$^2$; om. rest].
31. *192* harm [hert L Th Th S$^2$].
32. *207* Depraven [Departen α except Th; *Depeynen* S$^2$].
33. *208* non [bis α].
34. *216* wel oughte [Ogbe wel α].
35. *218* the God [α S$^2$; *be* β except S$^2$].
36. *219* him [Omn. F; *thame* S$^2$; other* or β except only S$^2$].
37. *228* seme [Omn. β except sum S$^2$].
38. *256* tresor [jewel L T Th].
39. *293* had you dere [be to you d. Lt; be you d. T Th; *made* you chere S$^2$; *yow* om. R$^2$].

**THE COMPLAINT OF VENUS**

 Authorities: eight manuscripts and the editions of Julian Notary (1499–1501) and of Thynne (1532):

**Title:** F S$^2$; Here begynmeth a balade made by that worthy Knight of Savoye in frenshe calde sir Otes Graunson. translated by Chauciers A R$^2$; omn. T Pe.

5. on] [F FF$^1$ S$^2$ only; but it prevents hiatus (Rob.).

7. blame] [to blame A T Th; *to blamen* R$^2$; *Therefore there sulde blame* S$^2$. Lines 7 and 8 are transposed in A. 8. Stib be it cropphe and roote of gentylesse A; For be it c. and r. o. of g. R$^2$ (from margin); gentilnesse T γ.

22.ighth I blesse wel] ought me wel to blesse α; o. I w. blesse FF$^1$ JN; *wel om. Pb; o. I w. to b. S$^2$.

27. and fasten] [and fastinge α γ except and om. JN].

30. bewe] [α Pb S$^2$; visage rest, caught from previous line.

31. Pleyne] [All eds.; *Pley* MSS.

33. by] [be F Rob; with γ].

47. wele ofte] [α Pe Kch; full often F T Skt Hth Rob; *wele often* Th FF$^1$ S$^2$; *full ofte* JN; *ofte* Pb.

59. made] [maked R$^2$ F$^1$ Pb Pe Rob; caught S$^2$].

63. wolv in not] [ne shal I never α; *wille I not B*; *wolde I not γ].

64. him] [you F FF$^1$ JN Pb. *Cf. bym* in lines 56 and 72. 67. in] [of α γ except on S$^2$].

73. Princes] [Princece α Skt Hth Rob. See Expl. Notes. Here endith, etc. From F (which adds *And Mars*).}

**TO ROSEMOND**

Authority: Rawlinson Poet. 163, Bodleian. The manuscript has been printed by Skeat (Twelve Facsimiles of Old English Manuscripts, 1892, 36–37) and by KÖKERITZ (MLN 63, 1948, 310), who argues for a more conserva-
WOMANLY NOBLESSE

Authority: Additional 34360 British Library. The poem is printed by Skeat (Athenaeum, 9 June 1894, 742) and transcribed by Brusendorff (Ch Trad., 277–78).

Title: Supplied by Skeat, who took it from line 24; the subtitle is that in the MS (with Chauncier for Chaucier).

1 herte MS.
8 trewe] triewe MS.
10 you] Om. MS.
12 After this the syntax and rhyme scheme imply a missing line. Skeat supplied I pray you; do to me som dali­aunce in his edition in Athenaeum; Furnivall conjectured Takest me, lady, in your obeisance, which Skeat adopted in the Oxford Ch.
14 herte] bert MS.
15 loke how humbly] bow b. MS; l. b. bumblely Skt Rob; bowerth bumbly Hth; the emendation adopted is that of Fisher.
25 to] til MS.

CHAUCERS WORDES UNTO ADAM, HIS OWEÑ SCRIVEYN

 Authorities:

R2 Trinity College, Cambridge, R.3.20
St Stowe’s edition, 1561, STC 5075–76

Both have been printed by the Chaucer Society. R2 is transcribed without changes in Pace and David; St is available in Brewer’s facsimile of Thynne. R2 is the basis of the present text.

Title: From R2; St has Chaucers woordes vnto his owne Scriuener.

THE FORMER AGE

 Authorities:

Li Li.3.21 Cambridge University Library
Hh Hh.4.12 Cambridge University Library

Both have been printed by the Chaucer Society. Li is the basis of the present text.

Title: Supplied by Skeat; Chaucuer upon this fysie meter of the second book Li.

18 his] is li.
20 was] is li.
23 No trompes] Eds.; No batails trompes MSS.
34 No wildnesse] No places w. li; No place of w. Hh.
40 for to asayle] forto a sayle MSS; fort t’assaille Skt Kch Rob; forto assayle Hth.

FORTUNE

Authorities: ten manuscripts and the editions of Caxton (1477–78) and of Thynne (1532):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A} & \quad \text{Ashmole 59, Bodleian} \\
\text{B} & \quad \text{Harley 2251, British Library} \\
\text{R} & \quad \text{Trinity College, Cambridge} \\
\text{F} & \quad \text{Fairfax 16, Bodleian} \\
\text{P} & \quad \text{Pepys 2006, Magdalene College, Cambridge} \\
\text{S} & \quad \text{Arch. Selden B.10, Bodleian} \\
\text{Th} & \quad \text{Thynne’s edition, 1532, STC 5068}
\end{align*}
\]

All texts have been published: ten by the Chaucer Society, Leyd by Nichols (Spec 44, 1969, 46–49), and Th in Brewer’s facsimile. Li is the basis of the present text.

Title: Supplied by eds. The subtitle occurs, with visage for visage, in li Bod Cx F (the village Th); compleynye of the pleintyf agensie fortune translated out of frenshe into Englishe by Geoffrey Chaucier A; om. Hh; a balade made by Chaucier of the lover and of Dame Fortune R2; disputatio inter conquerulatorem et fortunam Ld Leyd; Pauertias conqueritur super ortunam S1. Le Pleintif Om. Li R2 Bod F Ld Leyd S1. 2 or] and B y except as Cx. 4 Fortunes error] Fortunes fals error A H3; F. frye e. R2. 6 though I] t. that I A H3 Ld Leyd S1 Th; al though I R2. 8 thee] Om. B y. 9 light] sight B y. 11 swirling] twournyng B y. 12 for] Om. B y. 14 the] Om. A Cx Ld Leyd Th. 16 thee] Om. B y. 18 never mighte] myght never A H3 y; might fortune not R2. 21 wel the] ay wele B; wel om. Cx Th. 24 thee] Om. B y. 30 Why wolt thou] thou shalt not B y. 35 noon] Om. MSS; all eds. emend to conform to Chaucer’s usage.

hyene] hywe B; ben S1; hywe Th. 47 wikke is thy grevaunce] wike is thy governaunce H3; tho wikkid governaunce Ld Leyd S1. 51 it thee] to I; not t. A; it not t. H3.
or] li A; and & (except A) γ.

or] and β γ.

may nat] ne may nat β. After this line all MSS introduce an erroneous subtitle, which attributes the next lines to the plaintiff.

Om. Ld Leyd S1.

your] this Bod Cx F P Th.

li only; om. β γ.

And but] That but li R2; And yf Cx Th.

TRUTH

Authorities: twenty-three manuscript copies, a transcript of a Cotton manuscript copies, and the editions of Caxton (1477–78) and of Thynne (1532):

A

A1

Additional 10340, British Library

Ph

Phillips 8299, now HM 140, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.

A4

Additional 22139, British Library

C

Cotton Cleopatra D.VII, British Library

Cov

Coventry MS (Accession 325), City Record Office, Coventry

El

Ellesmere MS, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.

Gg

Gg.4.27, Cambridge University Library

A6

Additional 36983, British Library (formerly Bedford)

Co

Cotton Otho A XVIII, British Library, from a transcript by William Thomas

Cp

MS 203 Corpus Christi College, Oxford

Cx

Caxton's edition, c. 1477–78, STC 5091

F

Fairfax 16, Bodleian (two copies, F1 and F2)

H4

Harley 7333, British Library

Hat

Hatton 73, Bodleian

Kk

Kk.1.5, Cambridge University Library

Lam

MS 344 Lambeth Palace Library

Ld

Landsdowne 699, British Library

Leyd

Vossius GG.qv.9, Leyden University Library

Nott

MS ME LM 1 (Mellish), Nottingham University Library

P

Pepys 2006, Magdalene College, Cambridge

R2

R.3.20, Trinity College, Cambridge (two copies, R2-1 and R2-2).

S1

Arch. Selden B.10, Bodleian

S2

Arch. Selden B.24, Bodleian

Th

Thynne's edition, 1532, STC 5068

A6 F1, Kk S2; MSS vary greatly, e.g.: Balade F2; B. that Chaucier made on his death bedde Co R2-1; Moral B. of C. H4. See the Variorum edition or the published transcripts listed above for the full record.

unto thy thing] ibn owen t. A1; the thyne owene Ph; u. t. lyinge A4; u. t. good El γ (except Cx F Leyd Th) Rob; (un)to the g. Cx Leyd Th; thee thy g. F.

blent] blenteth β, is blent else γ except F3 Kk Nott R2-1; ys blynd F2 Kk Nott; blenteth β R2-1

6 Reule] Werke B; Do A6 Co F H4 Hat Lam R2 S2; Rede Cp Cx Nott Th; r. thy self Ld Leyd P S1. Kk interchanges 13 for 6, γ (except Kk) 20 for 13, and α 6 for 20.

7 thoure thee shal delivere] thee om. A1 C El Gg; t. the d. A4 Lam Nott; t. s. d. the Cov.

10 Tempest] Restreyne A4; Peyne γ except Ne study Cp.

11 Be war therfore] And eke bewar β (except A4, which has line 12 here and Clymbe not to byr for fere thou fall as line 12) Skt Hth; b. w. also γ (except Cp Kk) Rob; Ne stombor not thy fette Cp; also b. w. Kk.


19 Know thy contree] Loke up on bye and γ (except Cp Kk); Lyfte up thy heart Cp; Lyft up thyn e Ene Kk.

20 Hold the heye wy] Wyve thy lust γ except (A6 Co Kk Lam S1); Waye thy lust A6; Distreyne thy luste Co; Wyve thy lust Lam S1; Ruell thi self thet other folk may rede Kk. See note 6 above.

21 thoure thee shal delivere] thee om. A1 C El Gg; t. s. the d. Ph A4 F1, F3 Nott S1.

22-28 A1 only.

GENTLESSE

Authorities: ten manuscripts and the editions of Caxton (1477–78) and of Thynne (1532):

A4

Additional 22139, British Library

C

Cotton Cleopatra D.VII, British Library

Cov

Coventry MS (Accession 325), City Record Office, Coventry

Cx

Caxton's edition, ca. 1477–78, STC 5091

H3

Harley 2251, British Library

H5

Harley 7578, British Library

Nott

Nottingham University Library MS ME LM 1 (Mellish)

Th

Thynne's edition, 1532, STC 5068

A

Ashmole 59, Bodleian

H4

Harley 7333, British Library

R2

R.3.20, Trinity College, Cambridge

All have been printed: nine by the Chaucer Society; Cov by Doyle and Pace (PMLA 83, 1968, 22–34), Nott by Davis (RES 20, 1969, 46). Th in Brewer's facsimile. C is the basis of the present edition.

Title: Supplied by Skeat. The subtitle is from H4; om. α except Cov. R4; Balade Cov R4; Geoffrey Chaucier made thes ibre balades next that folower A; B. by Chaucier R2; Cx Th occur in the text of Henry Scogan's poem on gentilesse.
1 stok fader] s. was f. H3; strooke f. H3; f. and foundour A; f. and fynder H3; f. fynder R2.
2 desireth] claymeth Cx H3 Nott R4(?); Th; that cov-eyethe A4 Cov.
3 love] bsewe R4 H4; suse A R2; folowse Cx; loke Th; suse Skth Hth Rob.
13 hei] bim β.
15 Vyce] vices A4 C Cov H3.
16 as men may welle see] alle men may wele see Cx Nott; as every man se H3; al men may se Th; as thou maist wele see A; as yee may welle see H4 R2.
20 hem his heyr that] Rob; bis eires hem that can A4 Cov Nott Th; bis heires hem that C H3; hem eires that can Cx; bis Eyre suche as can H3; bis heyre him that wol A Hh; bis heires hem that doone H4; beos heyers hem that wol R2; bim bis his heyr that can Skt; bim bis heyr that wol Kch. The emendation adopted was proposed by Robt. E. Brittain, MLN 51, 1936, 433.

LAK OF STEDFASTNESSE

Authorities: fourteen manuscripts, a transcript of a Cotton manuscript, and Thynne’s edition of 1532:

[B] Advocates Library i.1.6, Edinburgh
[Co] Cotton Otho A XVIII, British Library, from a transcript by William Thomas
[Du] No. 432, Trinity College, Dublin
[H4] Harley 7333, British Library
[Hat] Hatton 73, Bodleian
[Lam] No. 344, Lambeth Palace Library
[M] Pepys 2553, Magdalene College, Cambridge
[R3] R.3.21, Trinity College, Cambridge (two copies of lines 22-28, the envoy, only)
[Th] Thynne’s edition, 1532, STC 5068
[C] Cotton Cleopatra D.VII, British Library
[Cov] Coventry MS (Accession 325), City Record Office, Coventry
[F] Fairfax 16, Bodleian
[H5] Harley 7578, British Library

All have been printed: ten by the Chaucer Society; Co by Pace (Spec 26, 1951, 306–7); Du by Pace (MLN 63, 1948, 460–61); Lam and R3 by MacCracken (MLN 23, 1908, 214); M by John Pinkerton (Ancient Scottish Poems, 1786); Th in Brewer’s facsimile, and Cov by Doyle and Pace (PMLA 83, 1968, 28). C is the basis of the present edition.

Title: Adopted by Skeat from the CH Soc. transcript; om. B Du M R3 Th A4 C; Balade Ryalle made by Poetcalle Chaucer a Gaufrede Co; This b. made Geffrey Chauciers the Laurelle Poete of Albion and sente it to Kyng Richard H4; B. Royal made by oure laureal poete of Albion in bees laste yeeres R3; Balade R4 Cov F H3. For Hat titles, see MacCracken, MLN 23:214.
1 the] this α except M; om. H3.
5 Ben] H4 Hat Lam R2; Is Co β C F H3; Ar B M A4 Cov.

LENVOY DE CHAUCER A BUKTON

Authorities: two MSS and the editions of Julian Notary (1499–1501) and of Thynne (1532):

Cx Caxton’s edition, 1477–78, STC 5091 (lines 1–28 only)
F Fairfax 16, Bodleian
Gg Gg.4.27, Cambridge University Library
P Pepys 2006, Magdalene College, Cambridge
Th Thynne’s edition, 1532, STC 5068

Cx F Gg and P have been printed by the Chaucer Society, Th in Brewer’s facsimile edition. Because the variants determine no grouping among F Gg and P, they are treated as equally valuable. The variants do suggest that Cx and Th descend from P (cf. 10, 32, and 38 below), but because there are other variants with alternative implications (cf. 3, 16, 28 below), Cx and Th are represented in the notation. F is the basis of the present text.

Title: Litera directa de Scogon per G. C. Gg; om. Th, but Lenvoye is catchword on preceding page.
2 were] weren F.
3 Syn) Syn Cx Gg P.
5 erthe] yerthe P.
6 whennes] bens P.
8 it shape] y-shape F Kch Rob; it y-shape Hh.
10 a drope] Om. Cx P Th.
15 Hastow] Havestbow F.
the] this F.
16 rekelnesse] rebelesnesse Gg Kch; rekelesnesse P Cx.
25 his] thy F.
27 oure] youre F.
28 him] hem P.
32 in love] Om. P Th.
33 have] ban Gg P Skt Hth Rob.
35 olde] bolde F.
38 to] Om. P Th.
Envoy] Supplied by eds.; om. MSS.
43 streymes] wellis Gg.

LENVOY DE CHAUCER A SCOGAN

Authorities: three manuscripts and the editions of Caxton (1477–78) and of Thynne (1532):

Cx Caxton’s edition, 1477–78, STC 5091 (lines 1–28 only)
F Fairfax 16, Bodleian
Gg Gg.4.27, Cambridge University Library
P Pepys 2006, Magdalene College, Cambridge
Th Thynne’s edition, 1532, STC 5068

Cx F Gg and P have been printed by the Chaucer Society, Th in Brewer’s facsimile edition. Because the variants determine no grouping among F Gg and P, they are treated as equally valuable. The variants do suggest that Cx and Th descend from P (cf. 10, 32, and 38 below), but because there are other variants with alternative implications (cf. 3, 16, 28 below), Cx and Th are represented in the notation. F is the basis of the present text.

Title: Lenvoye to King Richard] R2; to Kyng Richard om. H4 Hat Lam Th F; entire rubric om. Co Du M R3 R4 A4 C Cov H3.
26 swerd] yerde Du β.
28 wed] bring B; dryve Co H4 Hat Lam R2 R3; knyt to gydre Du; leid M.
THE SHORT POEMS 1191

THE COMPLAINT OF CHAUCER
TO HIS PURSE

 Authorities: eleven manuscripts, a transcript of a Cotton manuscript, and the editions of Caxton (1477–78) and Thynne (1532):

\[ \alpha \]
- F Fairfax 16, Bodleian
- FF1 Ff.1.6 Cambridge University Library
- A4 Additional 22139, British Library
- CA2 MS.176, Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge (lines 15–26 only)
- Cov Coventry MS (Accession 325), City Record Office, Coventry

\[ \beta \]
- Cx Caxton’s Anelida and Arcite, 1477–78, STC 5900
- P Pepys 2006, Magdalene College, Cambridge
- Th Thynne’s edition, 1532, STC 5068
- A3 Additional 34360, British Library
- CA1 MS.176, Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge (lines 1–14 only)
- CO Cotton Otho A.XVIII, British Library, from a transcript by William Thomas
- H3 Harley 2251, British Library
- H4 Harley 7333, British Library
- Mg MS.4, Morgan Library

With the addition of Cov and Th this is the classification proposed by Pace (SB 1, 1948, 103–12). For an alternative classification see Vinton A. Dearing, A Manual of Textual Analysis, 1959, 72–78. All texts have been published: eight by the Chaucer Society; Cov by Doyle and Pace (PMLA 83, 1968, 22–34), Ca2 by Pace (MLN 63, 1948, 461–62), Ca1 by MacCracken (MLN 27, 1912, 228–29), Th in Brewer’s facsimile edition, Mg by Buhler (MLN 52, 1937, 5–9), and Co by Pace (Spec 26, 1951, 306–7). F is the basis of the present text.

**Title:** Om. FF1 A4 A3 H3; Balade Cov; La c. de C. a sa Bourse voide Cx P Th; A Nother Balade Ca1; Balade by C.

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PROVERBS

 Authorities: four manuscripts and the edition of Stowe 1561:

\[ \alpha \]
- A2 Additional 10392, British Library (lines 5–8 only)
- A3 Additional 16165, British Library
- F Fairfax 16, Bodleian
- H3 Harley 7578, British Library
- St Stowe’s edition, 1561, STC 5075–76

All have been published: three by the Chaucer Society and the entire set by Pace (SB 18, 1965, 43). F is the basis of the present edition.

**Title:** Proverbs is editorial; the subtitle Proverbe of Chaucer is from F H3; A3 has Proverbe, St A proverbe agaynst covitise and negligence; A2 is untitled.

- shul] shal A3 St; ibule H3.
- al] Om A3.
- large] wyde A3.
- so] that A2; om. H3.

AGAINST WOMEN UNCONSTANT

 Authorities: three manuscripts and Stowe’s edition 1561:

\[ \alpha \]
- F Fairfax 16, Bodleian
- C Cotton Cleopatra D.VII, British Library
- H3 Harley 7578, British Library
- St Stowe’s edition, 1561, STC 5075–76

C is printed by the Chaucer Society, F by Pace (SB 28, 1975, 57–58), St in Brewer’s facsimile edition of Thynne. F is the basis of the present edition.

**Title:** Supplied by Skt, adapting A balade whiche Chaucer made agaynset women inconstaunt St; Balade F H3 (F has The Newfangelines of A Lady in MS table of contents); om. C.

- for] that through F.
- ye] Om. F.
- out of grace] out of your grace α St.
- ye have lyves] to lyve have C St.
- thus may ye] ye may wel F. This F reading is repeated as the refrain in line 14, but in line 21 F agrees with β.
- as] as in a F.
- nothing] that nothinge C β.

impresse] enpresse C St Skt Hth Kch Rob.
10 beren] hereth C β Skt Hth Kch Rob.
12 his] ay βis F.
14 thus may ye] ye may wel F. See 7 above.
16 Bet] Better MSS; all eds. emend for meter.
17 stant] stondeth MSS; all eds. emend for meter.
19 oon] one H5.

COMPLAYNT D'AMOURS

Authorities: three manuscripts:

α F Fairfax 16, Bodleian
    Bod Bodley 638, Bodleian
    H⁴ Harley 7333, British Library

F and Bod are available in facsimile editions (see p. 1117). H⁴ is the basis of the present edition.

Title: From F Bod; the subtitle is from H⁴: an amourous compleynite made at wynesore in the leste Maye tofore November.

9 Ne] MSS Hth; Nay Kch Rob; For Skt.
14 love you] α Skt; t. y. best H⁴ Hth Kch Rob.
16 that] Om. H⁴.
17 For to acompte] Tacompte α.
24 singe] say H⁴. F lacks line endings 24 through 28 and Bod is corrupt.
58 sore wolde] bene wolde α; bene soore wolde H⁴.
66 sorwes] shoures H⁴.
76 have pleyned unto you] on you have pleyned α.

77 lady dere] Skt Hth Kch Rob; berte dere α; lady so dere H⁴.
81 of the] over the α.
    and clere] Om. α.
82 Alwey in oon] And I ay oon H⁴.

MERCILES BEAUTE

Authority: One manuscript, Pepys 2006, Magdalene College, Cambridge (P). It has been printed by the Chaucer Society. There is a seventeenth-century transcription (Additional 38179, British Library), which lacks authority (see Pace and David, Minor Poems, 173). The poem was first printed in Bishop Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1767).

Title: From the index in P. The subtitle added by Skt Hth Rob; Kch has (Ronde/); on the subtitle, see further Pace and David, 175.
1 yen two] two yen P. When repeated in 6 and 11, the reading is yen two.
6 Your yen two wol] Your yen etc. P. All the repeated lines in the poem are abbreviated.
36 ther] All eds., beginning with Percy; this P.

A BALADE OF COMPLAINT

Authority: one manuscript, Additional 16165, British Library (A), printed by Skeat (Acad. 33, 1888, 1:292).