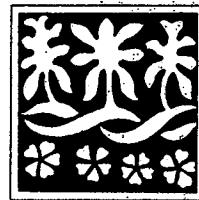


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THE BOOK OF THE DUCHESS

THE BOOK OF THE DUCHESS is the earliest of Chaucer's major poems. His translation of the *Roman de la rose* may have preceded it, and his ABC (which tradition holds was written at the request of the Duchess Blanche) was probably also an earlier work; doubtless some of the hymns of love mentioned in the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* and some of the many songs and lecherous lays mentioned in the Retraction also preceded the composition of this poem. At any rate, and despite occasional roughness of meter, *The Book of the Duchess* shows Chaucer already in full command of the idiom and conventions of the poetry of love, which was to be one of his major concerns for the next two decades.

There is a good deal of evidence, both external and internal, that Chaucer wrote *The Book of the Duchess* to commemorate the death of Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster and wife of John of Gaunt. In the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* Chaucer says that he wrote a poem called "the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse" and this is almost certainly what he later calls "the book of the Duchesse" (Retr. X.1086). A note in the Fairfax Manuscript, evidently in the hand of the Elizabethan antiquary John Stowe, says that this poem was written at John of Gaunt's request. In the poem it seems likely that the word *white* is a translation pun in several instances, notably in line 948, "And goode faire White she het." There is also an apparent series of word plays in 1318-19, where *white* appears and John of Gaunt is hinted at in "seynt Johan" and where there are probable references to Richmond and Lancaster (Gaunt was Earl of Richmond and Duke of Lancaster).

While this would seem to settle the date of the composition of the poem, which is usually placed between 1369 and 1372, at the latest,



there are, in fact, two questions that must raise doubts. In the first place, though the generally accepted date of Blanche's death is 12 September 1369, a more recent study suggests that 12 September 1368 is the probable date. In the second place, it has been argued that the poem was not, as hitherto supposed, written within a few months of Blanche's death but for one of the later and highly elaborate annual commemoration services.

At the time of writing the poem Chaucer was strongly influenced by some of the sophisticated French poets, notably Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun (authors of the *Roman de la rose*), Froissart, and Machaut. To the last of these in particular he owes a special debt, not only in the many lines he borrows for *The Book of the Duchess*, but also in the form of his elegy. One of Guillaume de Machaut's *diis*, the *Jugement dou Roy de Behaingne*, recounts how the poet walks in the meadows one morning in late April and overhears a lady and a knight lamenting: she because her true love has died, he because his beloved has proved faithless. They argue about which has the greater cause for sorrow, and eventually Guillaume takes them to the court of love of the King of Bohemia (Behaingne). The King's verdict is that infidelity, rather than bereavement, merits the greater grief. It has been plausibly suggested that in *The Book of the Duchess* the Dreamer's superficially obtuse questionings of the Black Knight are instrumental in making him declare that he knew perfect and reciprocated love cut off eventually by death, and that it is thus demonstrated to Gaunt out of his "own" mouth that his situation is identical to that of the Lady in the *Behaingne*. The companion poem, the *Jugement dou Roy de Navarre*, gives judgment in favor of a woman, and a number of

lines are borrowed by Chaucer from that work. Perhaps a more specific and historical relationship, setting the ideals of *fin'amor* against a backdrop of tragedy, lies in the opening 458 lines of the *Navarre*, in which the horrors of the outbreak of the Black Death (1349) are described. Chaucer's quotations from the *Navarre* may well have reminded his audience of the "horribles merveilles, / Sur toutes autres despareilles, / Dont homme puet avoir memoire," the horrifying wonders, greater than any others that one can recall. (Blanche's only sister had died of that disease and it was the cause of death of her father and of Blanche herself.) It is possible that the recollection of the countless thousands who mourned their dead was intended to provide Gaunt with the consolation of companionship in grief.

Critics have argued about the possibility that Chaucer's depiction of the Narrator in *The Book of the Duchess* may contain autobiographical elements. No doubt there are instances in his works when this is so, as in some details of the self-

portrait in *The House of Fame*; but the highly formalized narrator-persona of French courtly poetry, often melancholy and lovesick, is such a common figure that we should be very wary of assuming that the I of *The Book of the Duchess* represents Chaucer himself. The comic touches of exaggeration or incompetence that seem so individual can be found in Machaut, whose influence on Chaucer has already been noted.

The distancing effect of the dream motif makes it easier for Chaucer to offer consolation to Gaunt by presenting his patron as a mourning knight recalling the beauty, outward and inward, of his wife. The poem is a marvellous blend of comedy and poignancy, of scenes of birdsong and a winsome puppy, yet with the leitmotif "To lytel while oure blysse lasteth."

The intricate tripartite structure of dying Narrator, grief-stricken Alcione, and mourning Knight gives it, further, a sense of form that is both intellectually and aesthetically satisfying.

COLIN WILCOCKSON



The Book of the Duchess

I have gret wonder, be this lyght,
How that I lyve, for day ne nyght
I may nat slepe wel nygh noight;
I have so many an ydel thoght.
Purely for defaute of slep
That, by my trouthe, I take no kep
Of nothing, how hyt cometh or gooth,
Ne me nys nothyng leef nor looth.
Al is ylyche good to me—
Joye or sorowe, wherso hyt be—
For I have feylunge in nothyng,

This text was edited by LARRY D. BENSON.

3 may: can
5 defaute: lack
6 take no kep: do not notice, care about
8 I don't care about anything.
9 ylycher: equally
10 wherso: wherever

But as yt were a mased thyng,
Alway in poynt to falle a-doun;
For sorful ymagynacioun
Ys alway hooly in my mynde.
And wel ye woot, agaynes kynde
Hytt were to lyven in thys wyse,
For nature wolde nat suffyse
To noon erthly creature
Nat longe tyme to endure
Withoute slep and be in sorwe.
And I ne may, ne nyght ne morwe,
Stepe; and thus melancelye
And drede I have for to dye.
Defaute of slep and hevynesse

12 mased: dazed, bewildered
14 ymagynacioun: imagination; see n.
16 kynder: nature
23 hevynesse: sadness

15

20

25

Hath sleyn my spirit of quyknesse
That I have lost al lustyhede.
Suche fantasies ben in myn hede
So I not what is best to doo.
But men myght axe me why soo
I may not slepe and what me is.
But natheles, who aske this
Leseth his asking trewely.
Myselven can not telle why
The sothe; but trewely, as I gesse,
I holde hit be a sicknesse
That I have suffred this eight yeer;
And yet my boote is never the ner,
For there is phisicien but oon
That may me hele; but that is don.
Passe we over untill eft;
That wil not be mot nede be lef;
Our first mater is good to kepe.
So whan I saw I might not slepe
Til now late this other night,
Upon my bed I sat upright
And bad oon reche me a book,
A romaunce, and he it me tok
To rede and drive the night away;
For me thoughte it better play
Then playe either at ches or tables:
And in this bok were written fables
That clerkes had in olde tyme,
And other poetes, put in rime
To rede and for to be in minde,
While men loved the lawe of kinde.
This bok ne spak but of such thinges,
Of quenes lives, and of kinges,
And many other thinges smale,
Amonge al this I fond a tale
That me thoughte a wonder thing.
This was the tale: There was a king
That highte Seys, and had a wif,
The beste that mighte bere lyf,
And this quene highte Alcyone.
So it befel thereafter soone

This king wol wenden over see.
To tellen shortly, whan that he
Was in the see thus in this wise,
Such a tempest gan to rise 70
That brak her mast and made it falle,
And clefte her ship, and dreinte hem alle,
That never was founde, as it telles,
Bord ne man, ne nothing elles.
Right thus this king Seys loste his lif. 75
Now for to speke of Alcyone, his wif:
This lady, that was left at hom,
Hath wonder that the king ne com
Hom, for it was a longe terme.
Anon her herte began to [erme]; 80
And for that her thoughte evermo
It was not wele [he dwelte] so,
She longed so after the king
That certes it were a pitous thing
To telle her hertely sorowful lif 85
That she had, this noble wif,
For him, alas, she loved alderbest.
Anon she sent bothe eest and west
To seke him, but they founde nought.
"Alas!" quod she, "that I was wrought!
And wher my lord, my love, be deed?
Certes, I nil never ete breed,
I make avow to my god here,
But I mowe of my lord here!"
Such sorowe this lady to her tok
That trewely I, that made this book,
Had such pitree and such rowthe
To rede hir sorwe that, by my trowthe,
I ferde the worse al the morwe
Affir to thenken on hir sorwe. 100
So whan this lady koude here noo word
That no man myghte fynde hir lord,
Ful ofte she swouned, and sayed "Alas!"
For sorwe ful nygh wood she was,
Ne she koude no reed but oon;
But doun on knees she sat anoon
And wepte that pittee was to here.
"A, mercy, swete lady dere!"
Quod she to Juno, hir goddesse,
"Helpe me out of thys distresse, 110

70 gan to rise: did rise, arose; see n.
71 her: their
72 dreinte: drowned
80 erme: grieve
87 alderbest: best of all
90 quod: said
91 whert whether (introducing a question)
92 nil = ne wyl, will not
94 But: unless
99 ferde: fared
104 wood: mad
105 reed: plan of action

26 quyknesse: liveliness
27 lustyhede: vigor
30 mens: one
31 what me is: what is wrong with me
33 Leseth: loses, wastes
38 boote: remedy never the ner: no nearer
41 eft: again, another time
42 What won't come about must be done without.
45 Til now late: until recently
48 romaunce: Ovid's *Metamorphoses*
50 me thoughte: it seemed to me
51 tables: backgammon
52 fables: stories
56 lawe of kinde: natural law
64 ther: who
65 highte: was called

And yeve me grace my lord to se.
Soone or wite wher-so he be,
Or how he fareth, or in what wise,
And I shal make yow sacrificse,
And hooly youres become I shal 115
With good wille, body, herte, and al;
And but thow wolt this, lady swete,
Send me grace to slepe and mete
In my slep soon certeyn sweven
Wherthourgh that I may knowen even 120
Whether my lord be quyk or ded."
With that word she heng down the hed
And fel a-swowne as cold as ston.
Hyr women kaught hir up anoon
And broghten hir in bed al naked;
125 And she, forweped and forwaked,
Was wery; and thus the dede slep
Fil on hir or she tooke kep,
Throgh Juno, that had herd hir bone,
That made hir to slepe sone. 130
For as she prayede, ryght so was don
In dede; for Juno ryght anon
Called thus hir messenger
To doo hir erande, and he com ner.
Whan he was come, she bad hym thus:
135 "Go bet," quod Juno, "to Morpheus —
Thou knowest hym wel, the god of slep.
Now understond wel and tak kep!
Sey thus on my half: that he
Go faste into the Grete Se,
140 And byd hym that, on alle thyng,
He take up Seys body the kyng,
That lyeth ful pale and nothyng rody.
Bid hym crepe into the body
And doo hit goon to Alcione 145
The quene; ther she lyeth allone,
And shewe hir shortly, hit ys no nay,
How hit was dreynt thys other day;
And do the body speke ryght soo,
Ryght as hyt was woned to doo. 150

111 yeve: give
118 meter: dream
119 sweven: dream
120 even: exactly
121 quyk: alive
124 forweped: exhausted from weeping forwaked: exhausted from lack of sleep
128 or she tooke kep: before she noticed
129 bone: request
130 sone: immediately
136 Go bet: go quickly
139 half: behalf
140 Grete Se: Mediterranean
141 on alle thyng: above all
142 Seys body the kyng: the body of King Ceyx
143 nothyng rody: not at all ruddy
145 doo hit goon: make it go
147 hit ys no says: there is no denying it
149 do the body speke: make the body speak
150 woned: accustomed

The whiles that hit was alyve.
Goo now faste, and hye the blyve!"
This messenger tok leve and wente
Upon hys wey, and never ne stente
Til he com to the derke valeye 155
That stant betwixe roches tweye
Ther never yet grew corn ne gras,
Ne tre, ne noight that ought was,
Beste, ne man, ne noight elles,
Save ther were a fewe welles 160
Came rennyng for the clyves adoun,
That made a dedly slepyng soun,
And ronnen doun ryght by a cave
That was under a rokke ygrave
Amydde the valey, wonder depe. 165
There these goddes lay and slepe,
Morpheus and Eclympasteyr,
That was the god of slepes heyr;
That slep and dide noon other werk.
This cave was also as derk 170
As helle-pit overal aboute.
They had good leyser for to route,
To envye who myghte slepe best.
Somme henge her chyn upon hir brest:
And slept upryght, hir hed yhed, 175
And somme lay naked in her bed
And slepe whiles the dayes laste.
This messenger com fleyng faste
And cried, "O, how! Awake anoon!"
Hit was for noight; there herde hym non. 180
"Awake!" quod he, "whoo ys lyth there?"
And blew his horn ryght in here eere,
And cried "Awaketh!" wonder hye.
This god of slep with hys oon ye
Cast up, and axed, "Who clepeth ther?" 185
"Hyt am I," quod this messenger.
"Juno bad thow shuldest goon" —
And tolde hym what he shulde doon
(As I have told yow here-to-fore;
Hyt ys no nede reherse hyt more) 190
And went hys wey whan he had sayd.
Anoon this god of slep abrayd
Out of hys slep, and gan to goon,
And dyde as he had bede hym doon:

152 bye the blyve: hurry yourself quickly
154 stente: stopped
161 clyves: cliffs
162 dedly: lifeless
164 ygrave: cut
168 heyr: heir
171 helle-pit: the pit of Hell
172 route: snore
173 envye: contend
175 yhed: hidden, covered
182 here: their
183 hye: loudly
185 clepeth: calls
182 Anoon: at once abrayd: started
194 bede: bade, asked

Took up the dreynthe body sone
 And bar hyt forth to Alcione,
 Hys wif the quene, ther as she lay.
 Ryght even a quarter before day,
 And stood ryght at hyr beddes fet,
 And called hir ryght as she het
 By name, and sayde, "My swete wyf,
 Awake! Let be your sorwful lyf,
 For in your sorwe there lyth no red;
 For, certes, swete, I am but ded.
 Ye shul me never on lyve yse.
 But, godde swete herthe, that ye
 Bury my body, for such a tyde
 Ye mowe hyt fynde the see besyde;
 And farewel, swete, my worldes bysse!
 I praye God youre sorwe lysse.
 To lytel while oure bysse lasteth!"
 With that hir eyen-up she casteth
 And saw nocht. "Allas!" quod she for sorwe,
 And deyede within the thridde morwe.
 But what she sayede more in that swow
 I may not telle yow as now;
 Hyt were to longe for to dwelle.
 My first matere I wil yow telle,
 Wherefore I have told this thyng,
 Of Alcione and Seys the kyng,
 For thus moche dar I saye wel:
 I had be dolven everydel.
 And ded, ryght thurgh defaute of slep,
 Yif I ne had red and take kep
 Of this tale next before.
 And I wol telle yow wherefore:
 For I ne myghte, for bote ne bale,
 Slepe or I had red thys tale
 Of this dreynthe Seys the kyng
 And of the goddes of slepyng.
 Whan I had red thys tale wel
 And overloked hyt everydel,
 Me thoughte wonder yf hit were so,
 For I had never herd speke or tho
 Of noo goddes that koude make
 Men to slepe, ne for to wake,
 For I ne knew never god but oon.
 And in my game I sayde anoon

198 a quarter before day: three hours before dawn
 203 red: good advice, remedy
 205 yse: see
 206-7 that ye bury: see that you bury
 207 such a tyde: at a certain time
 215 swow: anguish
 217 dwell: delay
 222 dolven: buried; everydel: every bit, completely
 224 take kep: taken heed
 225 next before: immediately preceding, just now related
 227 bote ne bale: ease or suffering, good or ill
 228 or: before
 234 or tho: before then

(And yet me lyst ryght evel to pleye)
 Rather then that y shulde deye
 Thorgh defaute of slepyng thus,
 I wolde yive thilke Morpheus,
 Or hys goddesse, dame Juno,
 Or som wight elles, I ne roghte who —
 "To make me slepe and have som reste
 I wil yive hym the alderbeste
 Yifte that ever he abod hys lyve.
 And here on warde, ryght now as blyve,
 Yif he wol make me slepe a lyte,
 Of down of pure dowwes white
 I wil yive hym a fether-bed,
 Rayed with gold and ryght wel cled
 In fyn blak satyn doutremer,
 And many a pillowe, and every ber
 Of cloth of Reynes, to slepe softe —
 Hym thar not nede to turnen ofte —
 And I wol yive hym al that falles
 To a chambre, and al hys halles
 I wol do peynthe with pure gold
 And tapite hem ful many fold
 Of oo sute; this shal he have
 (Yf I wiste where were hys cave),
 Yf he kan make me slepe sone,
 As did the goddesse quene Alcione.
 And thus thys ylke god, Morpheus,
 May wynne of me moo fetes: thus
 Than ever he wan; and to Juno,
 That ys hys goddesse, I shal soo do,
 I trow, that she shal holde hir payd."
 I hadde unneeth that word ysaid
 Ryght thus as I have told hyt yow,
 That sodeynly, I nyste how,
 Such a lust anoon me took
 To slepe that ryght upon my book
 Y fil aslepe, and therwith even
 Me mette so ynly swete a sweven,
 So wonderful that never yit
 Y trowe no man had the wyt
 To konne wel my sweven rede;
 No, not Joseph, withoute drede,

239 me lyst ryght evel: I had little desire
 244 alderbeste: very best, best of all
 247 abod: hoped to receive, experienced; hys lyver: in his life
 248 on warde: in (his) possession as blyve: immediately
 249 lyte: little
 252 Rayed: striped; cled: covered
 253 doutremer: from abroad
 254 ber: pillowcase
 255 cloth of Reynes: linen from Rennes (in France)
 257 falles: belongs
 260 tapite: cover with tapestry
 261 Of oo sute: matching
 264 fetes: payments, offerings
 269 shal holde hir payd: will be pleased
 270 unneeth: hardly
 272 nyste = *ne wiste*, did not know
 278-79 the wyt: To konne wel my sweven rede: the
 intelligence to interpret my dream correctly
 280 drede: doubt

Of Egipte, he that redde so
 The kynges metynge Pharao,
 No more than koude the lest of us;
 Ne nat skarsly Macrobeus
 (He that wrot al th'avysyoun
 That he mette, kyng Scipiou,
 The noble man, the Affrikan —
 Suche marvayles fortuneth than),
 I trowe, arede my dremes even.
 Loo, thus hyt was; thys was my sweven.
 Me thoughte thus: that hyt was May,
 And in the dawenyng I lay
 (Me mette thus) in my bed al naked
 And loked forth, for I was waked
 With smale foules a gret hep
 That had affrayed me out of my slep
 Thorgh noyse and swetnesse of her song.
 And, as me mette, they sate among
 Upon my chambre roof wythoute,
 Upon the tyles, overal aboute,
 And songe, everych in hys wyse,
 The mooste solempne servise
 By noote that ever man, y trowe,
 Had herd, for som of hem songe lowe,
 Som high, and al of oon acord.
 To telle shortly, at oo word,
 Was never herd so swete a steven
 But hyt had be a thyng of heaven —
 So mery a soun, so swete entewnes,
 That certes, for the toun of Tewnes
 I nolde but I had herd hem syng;
 For al my chambre gan to ryng
 Thurgh syngynge of her armony;
 For instrument yet melodye
 Was nowhere herd yet half so swete,
 Nor of acord half so mete;
 For ther was noon of hem that feyned
 To syng, for ech of hem hym peyned
 To fynde out mery crafty notes.
 They ne spared not her throtes.
 And sooth to seyn, my chambre was
 Ful wel depeynted, and with glas

282 The dream (*metynge*) of King Pharaoh (interpreted by Joseph; Gen. 41)
 284 Macrobeus: Macrobius
 286 That King Scipio dreamed (Scipio Africanus; for his dream, see PF 36-64)
 288 fortuneth: happened
 289 arede: explain; even: correctly
 294 affrayed: startled
 298 among: together
 303 By noote: in harmony
 304 som: probably singular
 307 steven: voice
 309 entewnes: tunes; see n.
 310 Tewnes: Tunis
 316 mete: suitable, fitting
 319 crafty: skillful, ingenious

Were al the wyndowes wel yglased.
 Ful clere, and nat an hooole ycrased,
 That to beholde hyt was gret joye.
 For hooly al the story of Troye
 Was in the glasyng ywroght thus,
 Of Ector and of kyng Priamus,
 Of Achilles and of kyng Lamedon,
 And eke of Medea and of Jason,
 Of Paris, Eleyne, and of Lavyne.
 And alle the walles with colours fyne
 Were peynted, bothe text and glose,
 Of al the Romaunce of the Rose.
 My wyndowes were shette echon,
 And through the glas the sonne shon
 Upon my bed with bryghte bemes,
 With many glade gilde stremes;
 And eke the welken was so fair —
 Blew, bryght, clere was the ayr,
 And ful attempte for sothe hyt was;
 For nother to cold nor hoot yt nas,
 Ne in al the welken was a clowde.
 And as I lay thus, wonder lowde
 Me thought I herde an hunte blowe
 T'assay hys horn and for to knowe
 Whether hyt were clere or hors of soun.
 And I herde goynge bothe up and doun
 Men, hors, houndes, and other thyng;
 And al men speken of huntyng,
 How they wolde slee the heit with strengthe,
 And how the hert had upon lengthe
 So moche embosed — y not now what.
 Anoon ryght whan I herde that,
 How that they wolde on-huntyng goon,
 I was ryght glad, and up anoon
 Took my hors, and forth I wente
 Out of my chambre; I never stente
 Til I com to the feld wythoute.
 Ther overtok y a gret route
 Of huntens and eke of foresteres,
 With many relayes and lymeres,

324 ycrased: broken
 326 hooly: wholly; story of Troye: history of Troy; see Troilus and Criseyde for the characters named here, with the exception of Medes and Jason (see LGW 1580-1679) and Lavinia (*Lavyne*), Aeneas's wife (see HF 458)
 327 glasyng: glasswork
 328 shette: glass; see n.
 328 gilde: golden
 329 welken: sky
 341 attempte: moderate
 345 hunte: hunter
 353 slee the heit with strengthe: kill the hart (male red deer) in the chase
 353 embosed: become exhausted from the hunt
 358 stente: stopped
 361 foresteres: trackers of game
 362 relayes: sets of fresh hounds to take up the chase; lymeres: hounds trained to track by scent

And hyed hem to the forest faste
 And I with hem. So at the laste
 I asked oon, ladde a lymere: 365
 "Say, felowe, who shal hunte here?"
 Quod I, and he answered ageyn,
 "Syr, th'emprouer Octovyen,"
 Quod he, "and ys here faste by."
 "A Goddes half, in good tyme!" quod I, 370
 "Go we faste!" and gan to ryde.
 Whan we came to the forest syde,
 Every man dide ryght anoon
 As to huntynge fil to doon.
 The mayster-hunte anoon, for-hot, 375
 With a gret horn blew thre mot
 At the uncouplynge of hys houndes.
 Withynne a while the hert yfounde ys,
 Yhalowed, and rechased faste
 Longe tyme; and so at the laste 380
 This hert rused and stal away
 Fro alle the houndes a privy way.
 The houndes had overshote hym alle
 And were on a defaute yfalle.
 Therwyth the hunte wonder faste 385
 Blew a forloyn at the laste.
 I was go walked for my tree,
 And as I wente, ther cam by mee
 A whelp, that fauned me as I stood,
 That hadde yfolowed and koude no good. 390
 Hyt com and crepte to me as lowe:
 Ryght as hyt hadde me yknowe,
 Felde down hys hed and joynd hys eres,
 And leyde al smothe down hys heres. 395
 I wolde have' kaught hyt, and anoon
 Hyt fledde and was fro me goon;
 And I hym folwed, and hyt forth wente
 Doun by a floury grené wente
 Ful thikke of gras, ful softe and swete. 400
 With floures fele, faire under fete,
 And litel used; hyt semed thus,

For both Flora and Zephirus,
 They two that make floures growe,
 Had mad her dwellynge ther; I trowe;
 For hit was, on to beholde, 405
 As thogh the erthe envye wolde
 To be gayer than the heven,
 To have moo floures, swiche seven,
 As in the welken sterres bee.
 Hyt had forgete the poverttee 410
 That wynter, thorgh hys colde morwes,
 Had mad hyt suffre, and his sorwes;
 All was forgotten, and that was sene;
 For al the woode was waxen grene;
 Swetnesse of dew had mad hyt waxe. 415
 Hyt ys no nede eke for to axe
 Wher there were many grene greves,
 Or thikke of trees, so ful of leves;
 And every tree stood by hymseive
 Fro other wel ten foot or twelve — 420
 So grete trees, so huge of strengthe,
 Of fourty or fifty fadme lengthe,
 Clene withoute bowgh or stikke,
 With croppes brode, and eke as thikke — 425
 They were nat an ynche asonder —
 That hit was shadewe overal under.
 And many an hert and many an hynde
 Was both before me and behynde.
 Of founes, sowres, bukkes, does 430
 Was ful the woode, and many roes,
 And many sqwirelles that sete
 Ful high upon the trees and ete,
 And in hir maner made festes.
 Shortly, hyt was so ful of bestes. 435
 That thogh Argus, the noble countour,
 Sete to rekene in hys countour,
 And rekene with his figures ten —
 For by tho figures mowe al ken,
 Yf they be crafty, rekene and noumbre, 440
 And telle of every thing the noumbre —

365 oon, ladde a lymere: one who was leading a hound (on a leash)
 368 Octovyen: Octavian, Augustus Caesar
 370 A Goddes half, in good tyme: For God's sake, that is, timely!
 375 mayster-hunte: chief huntsman for-hot: immediately
 376 mot: notes
 379 Yhalowed: hallooed after rechased: pursued
 381 rused: backtracked, to confuse the hounds
 384 And were stopped by loss of the scent
 386 forloyn: a hunting call indicating the hounds are far from the game
 387 was go walked: had walked, had gone tree: the tree by which he had been posted, toward which the game was to be driven by the hounds
 389 fauned: fawned on
 390 hadde no good: did not know what to do
 396 wehter: path
 400 fele: many

402 Flora: the goddess of flowers Zephirus: the west wind
 406 envye: contend
 408 swiche seven: seven times as many
 417 Wher whether greves: branches
 418 Or thikke of: or whether (the branches were) thick on
 422 fadme: fathom
 422 stikke: twig (on the trunk)
 424 croppes: crowns, tree-tops
 426 overal under: everywhere beneath
 427 hynde: female deer
 429 founes: fawns, year-old bucks sowres: four-year-old bucks
 430 bukkes: six-year-old bucks
 435 Argus: Argus, inventor of Arabic numerals countour: mathematician
 436 Sete were to sit countour: counting house
 437 figures ten: Arabic numerals
 438 mowe al ken: all may learn
 439 telle: count

Yet shoulde he fayle to rekene even,
 The wondres me mette in my sweven.
 But forth they romed ryght wonder faste
 Doun the woode; so at the laste
 I was war of a man in blak, 445
 That sat and had turned his bak
 To an ook, an huge tree.
 "Lord," thought I, "who may that be?
 What ayleth hym to sitten her?"
 Anoon-ryght I wente ner; 450
 Than found I sitte even upryght
 A wonder wel-farynge knyght —
 By the maner me thoghte so —
 Of good mochel, and ryght yong therto,
 Of the age of foure and twenty yer, 455
 Upon hys berd but lytel her,
 And he was clothed al in blak.
 I stalked even unto hys bak,
 And there I stood as stille as ought,
 That, soth to saye, he saw me nought; 460
 For-why he heng hys hed adoun,
 And with a dedly sorful souñ
 He made of rym ten vers or twelve
 Of a compleynte to hymseive —
 The moste pitee, the moste rowthe, 465
 That ever I herde; for, by my trowthe,
 Hit was gret wonder that Nature
 Myght suffre any creature
 To have such sorwe and be not ded. 470
 Ful pitous pale and nothyng red,
 He sayd a lay, a maner song,
 Withoute noote, withoute song;
 And was thys, for ful wel I kan
 Reherse hyt; ryght thus hyt began:

"I have of sorwe so gret won
 That joye gete I never non,
 Now that I see my lady bryght,
 Which I have loved with al my myght,
 Is fro me ded and ys agoon. 475
 "Allas, deth, what ayleth the,
 That thou noldest have taken me,
 Whan thou toke my lady swete,
 That was so fair, so fresh, so fre,

441 even: correctly
 450 Anoon-ryght: instantly ner: nearer
 451 even upryght: erect
 452 wel-farynge: attractive
 454 Of good mochel: pleasing in size, well proportioned
 therto: moreover
 459 as stille as ought: as quietly as anything (as possible)
 464 compleynte: a poem lamenting one's experience in love; see Short Poems for examples.
 471 maner: kind of
 475 won: abundance
 479-81 On the numbering of these lines, see textual note.

So good that men may wel se
 Of al goodnesse she had no mete!" 485
 Whan he had mad thus his complaynte,
 Hys sorful hert gan faste faynte
 And his spirites wexen dede;
 The blood was fled for pure drede 490
 Doun to hys herte, to make hym warm —
 For wel hyt feled the herte had harm —
 To wite eke why hyt was adrad
 By kynde, and for to make hyt glad,
 For hit ys membre principal 495
 Of the body; and that made al
 Hys hewe change and wexe grene
 And pale, for ther noo blood ys sene
 In no maner lym of hys.
 Anoon therwith whan y sawgh this — 500
 He ferde thus evel there he set —
 I went and stood ryght at his fet,
 And grette hym; but he spak noght,
 But argued with his owne thoght,
 And in hys wyt disputed faste 505
 Why and how hys lyf myght laste;
 Hym thoughte hys sorwes were so smerte
 And lay so colde upon hys herte.
 So, thogh hys sorwe and hevny thoght,
 Made hym that he herde me noght; 510
 For he had wel nygh lost hys mynde,
 Thogh Pan, that men clepeth god of kynde,
 Were for hys sorwes never so wroth.
 But at the last, to sayn ryght soth,
 He was war of me, how y stood 515
 Before hym and did of myn hood,
 And had ygret hym as I best koude,
 Debonayrly, and nothyng lowde.
 He sayde, "I prey the, be not wroth.
 I herde the not, to seyn the soth, 520
 Ne I sawgh the not, syr, trewely."
 "A, goode sir, no fors," quod y,
 "I am ryght sory yif I have ought
 Destroubled yow out of your thought.
 Foryive me, yif I have mystake." 525

486 mete: equal
 490 pure: utter
 493-94 To wite eke why hyt was adrad By kynde: to find out
 also why it (the heart), by instinct, was terrified
 495 membre principal: principal, chief organ
 501 He was becoming so ill while he sat there
 504 argued: debated
 509 hevny: gloomy
 512 god of kynde: god of nature
 516 did of: took off
 518 Debonayrly: courteously, modestly
 522 no fors: it does not matter
 524 Destroubled: disturbed

"Yis, th'amendes is lyght to make,"
 Quod he, "for ther lyeth noon therto;
 There ys nothyng myssayd nor do."
 Loo, how goodly spak thys knyght,
 As hit had be another wyght; 530
 He made hyt nouthr towgh ne queynte.
 And I saw that, and gan me aqweynte
 With hym, and fond hym so trefable,
 Ryght wonder skylful and resonable,
 As me thoghte, for al hys bale. 535
 Anoon ryght I gan fynde a tale
 To hym, to loke wher I myght ough
 Have more knowynge of hys thought.
 "Sir," quod I, "this game is doon.
 I holde that this hert be goon; 540
 These huntres konne hym nowher see."
 "Y do no fors therof," quod he;
 "My thought ys theron never a del."
 "By oure Lord," quod I, "y trow yow wel;
 Ryght so me thinkth by youre chere. 545
 But, sir, oo thyng wol ye here?
 Me thynketh in gret sorowe I yow see;
 But certes, sire, yif that yee
 Wolde ought discure me youre woo,
 I wolde, as wys God helpe me soo, 550
 Amende hyt, yif I kan or may.
 Ye mowe preve hyt be assay;
 For, by my trouthe, to make yow hool
 I wol do al my power hool.
 And telleth me of your sorwes smerte;
 Paraunter hyt may ese youre herte,
 That semeth ful sek under your syde."
 With that he lokod on me asyde,
 As who sayth, "Nay, that wol not be."
 "Graunt mercy, goode frend," quod he, 560
 "I thanke the that thow wolddest soo,
 But hyt may never the rather be doo.
 No man may my sorwe glade,
 That maketh my hewe to falle and fade, 565
 And hath myn understandyng lorn
 That me ys wo that I was born!
 May noight make my sorwes slyde,
 Nought al the remedies of Ovyde,

527 ther lyeth noon therto: nothing of that sort is needed
 531 He was neither haughty nor standoffish.
 533 trefable: tractable, affable
 535 baile: suffering
 536 Anoon ryght straightaway
 542 do no fors: care not
 549 discure: reveal
 552 preve hyt be assay: test it by trying it out
 553 hool: healthy
 554 hool: whole
 557 sek: sick
 560 Graunt mercy: thank you
 565 lorn: lost
 566 remedies of Ovyde: Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*

Ne Orpheus, god of melodye,
 Ne Dedalus with his playes slye; 570
 Ne hele me may no phisicien,
 Noght Ypocras ne Galyen;
 Me ys wo that I lyve houres twelve,
 But whooso wol assay hymselfe
 Whether his hert kan have pitee 575
 Of any sorwe, lat hym see me.
 Y wrecche, that deth hath mad al naked
 Of al the bysse: that ever was made,
 Yworthe worste of alle wyghtes,
 That hate my dayes and my nyghtes! 580
 My lyf, my lustes, be me loothe,
 For al welfare and I be wroothe.
 The pure deth ys so ful my foo
 That I wolde deye, hyt wolde not soo;
 For whan I folwe hyt, hit wol fle; 585
 I wolde have hym, hyt nyl nat me.
 This ys my peyne wythoute red,
 Alway deynge and be not ded,
 That Cesiphus, that lyeth in helle,
 May not of more sorwe telle. 590
 And whoso wiste al, by my trouthe,
 My sorwe, but he hadde rowthe
 And pitee of my sorwes smerte,
 That man hath a fendly herte;
 For whoso seeth me first on morwe 595
 May seyn he hath met with sorwe,
 For y am sorwe, and sorwe ys y.
 "Allas! and I wol tel the why:
 My song ys turned to pleynynge,
 And al my laughtre to wepyng, 600
 My glade thoghtes to hevynesse;
 In travayle ys myn ydelnesse
 And eke my reste; my wele is woo,
 My good ys harm, and evermoo
 In wrathe ys turned my pleynge 605
 And my delyt into sorwyng.
 Myn hele ys turned into seknesse,
 In drede ys al my sykernesse;
 To derke ys turned al my lyght,
 My wyt ys foly, my day ys nyght, 610
 My love ys hate, my slep wakynge,
 My myrthe and meles ys fastyng,

569 Orpheus: the famous musician
 570 Dedalus: Daedalus, famed for his mechanical skill
 572 Ypocras, Galyen: Hippocrates, Galen, ancient authorities on medicine
 579 Yworthe: become
 583 pure deth: death itself
 586 hys nyl nat me: it does not want me
 587 red: good advice, remedy
 589 Cesiphus: Sisyphus; see n.
 594 fendly: fiendish, evil
 607 hele: good health; seknesse: sickness
 608 drede: dread, doubt; sykernesse: certainty

My countenance ys nycete
 And al abaved, where so I be; 615
 My pees in pledyng and in werre.
 Allas, how myghte I fare werre?
 My boldnesse ys turned to shame,
 For fals Fortune hath pleyd a game
 Atte ches with me, allas the while!
 The trayteresse fals and ful of gyle, 620
 That al behoteth and nothyng halt,
 She goth upryght and yet she halt,
 That baggeth foule and loketh faire,
 The dispitouse debonaire
 That skorneth many a creature! 625
 An ydole of fals portrayture
 Ys she, for she wol sone wrien;
 She is the monstres hed ywrien,
 As fylthe over-ystrawed with floures.
 Hir moste worshippe and hir flour ys 630
 To lyen, for that ys hyr nature;
 Withoute feyth, lawe, or mesure
 She ys fals, and ever laughynge
 With oon eye, and that other wepyng.
 That ys brought up she set al doun. 635
 I lykne hyr to the scorioun,
 That ys a fals, flaterynge beste,
 For with his hed he maketh feste,
 But al amydde hys flaterynge
 With hys tayle he wol styng 640
 And envynme; and so wol she.
 She ys th'envyouse charite
 That ys ay fals and semeth wel;
 So turneth she hyr false whel.
 Aboure, for hyt ys nothyng stable — 645
 Now by the fire, now at table;
 For many oon hath she thus yblent.
 She ys pley of enchantement,
 That semeth oon and ys not soo.
 The false thef! What hath she doo, 650
 Trowest thou? By oure Lord I wol the seye:
 "At the ches with me she gan to pleye;
 With hir false draughtes dyvers
 She staal on me and tok my fers.

613 countenance: self-possession; nycete: foolishness, shyness
 614 abaved: disconcerted
 615 pledyng: lawsuits; werre: war
 616 weires: worse
 621 behoteth: promises; halt = *boldeth*, holds (keeps a promise)
 622 halt = *hallet*, limps
 623 baggeth: squints
 624 dispitouse: disdainful; debonaire: gracious; oone
 627 wrien: turn away
 628 ywrien: covered up, hidden
 629 over-ystrawed: strewn
 638 maketh feste: shows favor, pays court
 647 yblent: blinded
 649 semeth oon: seems to be one thing
 653 draughtes dyvers: hostile moves at chess
 654 fers: queen

And whan I sawgh my fers awaye, 655
 Allas, I kouthe no lenger playe,
 But seyde, 'Farewel, swete, ywys,
 And farewell al that ever ther ys!
 "Therwith Fortune seyde 'Chek her!
 And mat in the myd poynt of the chekker, 660
 With a poun errant!' Allas,
 Ful craftier to pley she was
 Than Athalus, that made the game
 First of the ches, so was hys name.
 But God wolde I had oones or twyes 665
 Ykoud and knowe the jeupardyes
 That kowde the Grek Pictagores!
 I shulde have pleyd the bet at ches
 And kept my fers the bet therby.
 And though wher? For trewey! 670
 I holde that wyssh nat worth a stree!
 Hyt had be never the bet for me,
 For Fortune kan so many a wyle
 Ther be but fewe kan hir begile;
 And eke she ys the lasse to blame; 675
 Myself I wolde have do the same,
 Before God, hadde I ben as she;
 She oghte the more excused be.
 For this I say yet more therto:
 Had I be God and myghte have do 680
 My wille whan she my fers-kaughte,
 I wolde have drawe the same draughte.
 For, also wys God yive me reste,
 I dar wel swere she took the beste.
 But through that draughte I have lorn 685
 My bysse; allas, that I was born!
 For evermore, y trowe trewly,
 For al my wille, my lust holly
 Ys turned; but yet, what to doone?
 Be oure Lord, hyt ys to deye soone. 690
 For nothing I leve hyt noight,
 But lyve and deye ryght in this thoght;
 For there nys planete in firmament,
 Ne in ayr ne in erthe noon element,
 That they ne yive me a yifte echone 695

659 Chek hert: checkmate
 660 myd poynt of the chekker: center of the board
 661 poun errant: traveling pawn (one that has moved from its first position); see n.
 662 craftier: more skillful
 663 Athalus: Antalus Philometor, king of Cappadocia
 664 jeupardyes: chess problems
 667 Pictagores: Pythagoras, the Greek mathematician
 669 bet: better
 671 street: straw
 673 kant: knows
 682 drawe the same draughte: made the same move
 683 also wys: as surely as
 685-89 For al my wille, my lust holly Ys turned: in spite of all my desire, my joy is entirely reversed

Of wepyng when I am alone.
 For whan that I avise me wel
 And bethenke me every del.
 How that ther lyeth in rekenyng,
 In my sorwe, for nothyng;
 And how ther leveth no gladnesse
 May glade me of my distresse,
 And how I have lost suffisance,
 And therto I have no plesance,
 Than may I say I have ryght nocht.
 And whan al this falleth in my thought,
 Allas, than am I overcome!
 For that ys doon ys not to come.
 I have more sorowe than Tantale.
 And whan I herde hym tel thys tale
 Thus pitously, as I yow telle,
 Unneth myght y lenger dwelle,
 Hyt dyde myn herte so moche woo.
 "A, goode sir," quod I, "say not soo!
 Have som pitee on your nature
 That formed yow to creature.
 Remembre yow of Socrates,
 For he ne counted nat thre strees
 Of nocht that Fortune koude doo."
 "No," quod he, "I kan not soo."
 "Why so, good syr? Yis parde!" quod y;
 "Ne say nocht soo, for trewely,
 Thogh ye had lost the feres twelve,
 And ye for sorwe mordred yourselfe,
 Ye sholde be dampned in this cas.
 By as good ryght as Medea was,
 That slough hir children for Jasoun;
 And Phyllis also for Demophoun
 Heng himself — so weylaway! —
 For he had broke his terme-day
 To come to hir. Another rage
 Had Dydo, the queene eke of Cartage,
 That slough herself for Eneas
 Was fals — which a fool she was!

And Ecquo died for Narcisus
 Nolde nat love hir, and ryght thus
 Hath many another foly doon;
 And for Dalida died Sampson,
 That slough hymself with a piler.
 But thier is no man alyve her
 Wolde for a fers make this woo!"
 "Why so?" quod he, "hyt ys nat soo.
 Thou wost ful lytel what thou menest;
 I have lost more than thou wenest."
 "Loo, [sey] how that may be?" quod y;
 "Good sir, telle me al hooly
 In what wyse, how, why, and wherfore
 That ye have thus youre blisse lore."
 "Blythely," quod he; "com syte adoun!
 I telle the upon a condicioun
 That thou shalt hooly, with al thy wyt,
 Doo thyn entent to herkene hit."
 "Yis, syr." "Swere thy trouthe therto."
 "Gladly." "Do thanne holde hereto!"
 "I shal ryght blythely, so God me save,
 Hooly, with al the wit I have,
 Here yow as wel as I kan."
 "A Goddes half!" quod he, and began:
 "Syr," quod he, "sith first I kouthe
 Have any maner wyt fro youthe,
 Or kyndely understanding
 To comprehende in any thyng.
 What love was, in myn owne wyt,
 Dredeles, I have ever yit
 Be tributarye and yive rente
 To Love, hooly with good entente,
 And throug plesance become his thral
 With good wille, body, hert, and al.
 Al this I putte in his servage,
 As to my lord, and dide homage;
 And ful devoutly I prayed hym to
 He shulde besette myn herte so
 That hyt plesance to hym were.
 And worship to my lady dere.
 "And this was longe, and many a yer
 Or that myn herte was set owher,
 That I dide thus, and nyste why;
 I trowe hit cam me kyndely.

725 Ecquo, Narcisus: For the story of Echo and Narcisus, see Rom 1469-1538.
 728 Dalida, Sampson: For the story of Delilah and Sampson, see MKT VII.2063-70.
 748 lost: lost.
 761 kyndely: natural.
 764 Dredeles: doubtless.
 768 tributarye: a vassal, who pays tribute (*rent*).
 766 hooly: completely.
 772 besette: employ, use.
 776 owher: anywhere.
 777 nyste = *ne wiste*, did not know.
 778 kyndely: naturally.

497 avise me wel: consider.
 499-700 ther lyeth in rekenyng, In my sorwe, for nothyng: there is nothing owing to me in the way of sorrow.
 701 leveth: remains.
 703 suffisance, contentment.
 709 Tantale: Tantalus, tormented in Hades by having sustenance just out of reach (cf. Bo 3 m12.38-40).
 712 Unneth: hardly.
 717 Socrates: celebrated for his indifference to fortune; see For. 17-22.
 720 kan not soo: cannot (do) so.
 723 feres twelve: twelve queens; see n.
 726-27 Medea, Jasoun: for their story, see LGW 1580-1679.
 728 Phyllis, Demophoun: for the story, see LGW 2394-2361.
 729 weylaway: alas.
 730 terme-day: appointed day.
 731 rage: violent grief.
 732-33 Dydo, Eneas: For the story see LGW 924-1367 and HF 221-382.

Paraunter I was therto most able,
 As a whit wal or a table,
 For hit ys redy to cacche and take
 Al that men wil theryn make,
 Whethir so men wil portreye or peynte,
 Be the werkes never so queynte.
 "And thilke tyme I ferde ryght so,
 I was able to have lerned tho,
 And to have kend as wel or better,
 Paraunter, other art or letre;
 But for love cam first in my thought,
 Therefore I forgat hyt nocht.
 I ches love to my firste craft;
 Therefore hit ys with me laft,
 For-why I tok hyt of so yong age
 That malyce hadde my corage
 Nat that tyme turned to nothyng
 Thorgh to mochel knowlechyng.
 For that tyme Yowthe, my maistrisse,
 Governed me in ydelnesse;
 For hyt was in my firste youthe,
 And thoo ful lytel good y couthe,
 For al my werkes were fyttyng
 That tyme, and al my thought varyng.
 Al were to me ylyche good
 That I knew thoo; but thus hit stood:
 "Hit happed that I cam on a day
 Into a place ther that I say
 Trewely the fayrest companye
 Of ladyes that evere man with yē
 Had seen togedres in oo place.
 Shal I clepe hyt hap other grace
 That broght me there? Nay, but Fortune,
 That ys to lyen ful comune,
 The false trayteresse pervers!
 God wolde I koude clepe hir wers,
 For now she worcheth me ful woo,
 And I wol telle some why soo.
 "Among these ladyes thus echon,
 Soth to seyen, y sawgh oon
 That was lyk noon of the route;
 For I dar swere, withoute doute,
 That as the someres sonne bryght
 Ys fairer, clerer, and hath more lyght
 Than any other planete in heven,

779 Paraunter: perhaps able: capable.
 784 queynte: elaborately decorated, contrived.
 787 kend: learned.
 788 other . . . or: either . . . or.
 789 for: because.
 794 malyce: misdeed, trouble.
 801 fyttyng: permanent.
 806 say: saw.
 812 comune: accustomed.
 819 route: company.

The moone or the sterres seven,
 For al the world so hadde she
 Surmounted hem alle of beaute,
 Of maner, and of comlynesse,
 Of stature, and of wel set gladnesse,
 Of goodlyhede so wel beseye —
 Shortly, what shal y more seye?
 By God and by his halwes twelve,
 Hyt was my swete, ryght as herselfe.
 She had so stedfast countenance,
 So noble port and meyntenance,
 And Love, that had wel herd my boone,
 Had espied me thus soone,
 That she ful sone in my thought,
 As helpe me God, so was ykought
 So sodenly that I ne tok
 No maner counseyl but at hir lok
 And at myn herte; for-why hir eyen
 So gladly, I trow, myn herte seyen
 That purely tho myn owne thought
 Seyde hit were beter serve hir for nocht
 Than with another to be wel.
 And hyt was soth, for everydel
 I wil anon ryght telle thee why.
 "I sawgh hyr daunce so comilly,
 Carole and synge so swetely,
 Laughe and pleye so womanly,
 And loke so debonairly,
 So goodly speke and so frendly,
 That certes y trowe that evermor
 Nas seyn so blysfyl a tresor.
 For every heer on hir hed,
 Soth to seyne, hyt was not red,
 Ne nouthre yelowne ne broun hyt nas;
 Me thoghte most lyk gold hyt was.
 "And whiche eyen my lady hadde!
 Debonaire, goode, glade, and sadde,
 Symple, of good mochel, nocht to wyde.
 Therto hir look nas not asyde
 Ne overthwert, but beset so wel
 Hyt drew and took up everydel
 Al that on hir gan beholde.
 Hir eyen semed anon she wolde

824 sterres seven: the Pleiades (?).
 827 comlynesse: graciousness.
 829 goodlyhede: excellence beseye: provided.
 831 halwes: saints, apostles.
 834 meyntenance: bearing, demeanor.
 835 boone: request.
 842 seyn: behold.
 843 thir: then.
 846 comilly: in a becoming way.
 849 Carole: dance.
 860 sadder: serious.
 861 Symple: unaffected of good mochel: well proportioned, of pleasing size.
 863 overthwert: askance, sidewise.

Have mercy — fooles wenden soo —
 But hyt was never the rather doo;
 Hyt nas no countrefeted thyng;
 Hyt was hir owne pure lokyng
 870 That the goddesse, dame Nature,
 Had mad hem opene by mesure
 And close; for were she never so glad,
 Hyr lokyng was not foly sprad,
 Ne wildely, thogh that she pleyde;
 875 But ever, me thought, hir eyen seyde,
 'Be God, my wrathe ys' al foryive!
 "Therwith hir lyste so wel to lyve,
 That dulnesse was of hir adrad.
 She nas to sobre ne to glad;
 880 In alle thyngs more mesure
 Had never, I trowe, creature.
 But many oon with hire lok she herte,
 And that sat hyr ful lyte at herte,
 For she knew nothing of her thought;
 885 But whether she knew or knew it nowght
 Algate she ne roughte of hem a stree! —
 To gete her love no ner nas he
 That woned at hom than he in Ynde;
 The formest was alway behynde.
 890 But goode folk, over al other,
 She loved as man may do hys brothery;
 Of which love she was wonder large,
 In skilful places that bere charge.
 "But which a visage had she thertoo!
 895 Allas, myn herte ys wonder woo
 That I ne kan discryven hyt!
 Me lakketh both Englyssh and wit
 For to undo hyt at the fulle;
 And eke my spirites be so dulle
 900 So gret a thyng for to devyse.
 I have no wit that kan suffise
 To comprehende hir beaute.
 But thus moche dar I sayn, that she
 Was whit, rody, fressh, and lyvely hewed,
 905 And every day hir beaute newed.
 And negh hir face was alderbest,
 For certes Nature had swich lest
 To make that fair that trewly she

Was hir chef patron of beaute, 910
 And chef ensample of al hir werk;
 And moustre; for be hyt never so derk,
 870 Me thynketh I se hir ever moo.
 And yet moreover, thogh alle thoo
 That ever livede were now alyve,
 Ne sholde have founde to discryve
 Yn al hir face a wikked synge,
 915 For hit was sad, symple, and benygne.
 "And which a goodyly, softe speche
 Had that swete, my lyves-leche!
 920 So frendly, and so wel ygrounded,
 Up al resoun so wel yfounded,
 And so trefable to alle goode
 That I dar swere wel, by the roode,
 Of eloquence was never founde 925
 So swete a sownynge facounde,
 Ne trewer tonged, ne skomed lasse,
 Ne bet koude hele — that, by the masse
 I durste swere, thogh the pope hit songe,
 930 That ther was never yet through hir tonge
 Man ne woman gretly harmed;
 As for her, was al harm hyd —
 Ne lasse flaterynge in hir word,
 That purely hir symple record 935
 Was founde as trewe as any bond
 Or trouthe of any mannes hond;
 Ne chyde she koude never a del;
 That knoweth al the world ful-wel.
 "But swich a fairnesse of a nekke
 940 Had that swete that boon nor brekke
 Nas ther non sene that myssat,
 Hyt was whit, smothe, streght, and pure flat,
 Wytouten hole or canel-boon,
 As be semyng had she noon.
 945 Hyr throte, as I have now memoyre,
 Semed a round-tour of yvoyre,
 Of good gretnesse, and noght to gret.
 "And goode faire White she het;
 950 That was my lady name ryght.
 She was bothe fair and bryght;

910 patron: pattern
 912 moustre: model, pattern
 914 discryve: discover
 920 leche: physician
 921 ygrounded: instructed
 922 Up: upon
 923 trefable: amenable
 924 roode: cross
 926 sownynge facounde: eloquent speech
 934 record: promise
 940 brekke: blemish
 941 myssat: was unbecoming
 943 canel-boon: collarbone
 944 As be semyng: to all appearances
 947 gretnesse: size
 948 het: was called

867 wenden: believed
 878 hir lyste: she desired
 881 mesure: moderation
 883 herte: hurt
 884 sat hyr ful lyte: did not weigh heavily, did not afflict
 887 Algate: nevertheless; roughte: reckoned; stree: straw
 890 woned: dwelt, remained; Ynde: India
 890 formest: very first
 893 large: generous
 894 In reasonable situations that are of some consequence
 899 undo: explain, unfold

She hadde not hir name wrong.
 Ryght faire shuldres and body long
 She had, and armes, every lyth
 Fattyssh, fleshy, not gret therwith;
 955 Ryght white handes, and nayles rede;
 Rounde brestes; and of good brede
 Hyr hippes were; a streight flat bak.
 I knew on hir noon other lak
 That al hir lymmes nere pure sewynge
 In as fer as I had knowynge.
 960 "Therto she koude so wel pleye,
 Whan that hir lyste, that I dar seye
 That she was lyk to torche bryght
 That every man may take of lyght
 Ynogh, and hyt hath never the lesse,
 965 Of maner and of comlynesse
 Ryght so ferde my lady dere,
 For every wight of hir manere
 Myght cacche ynogh, yif that he wolde,
 Yif he had eyen hir to beholde;
 970 For I dar swere wel, yif that she,
 Had among ten thousand be,
 She wolde have be, at the leste,
 A chef myrour of al the feste,
 Thogh they had stonden in a rowe,
 975 To mennes eyen that koude have knowe;
 For wher-so men had pleyd or waked,
 Me thoughte the felawshyppe as naked
 Wytouten hir that sawgh I oones
 As a corowne withoute stones.
 980 Trewly she was, to myn yē,
 The soleyf fenix of Arabye,
 For ther livyth never but oon,
 Ne swich as she ne knowe I noon.
 "To speke of godnesse, trewly she
 985 Had as moche debonaire
 As ever had Hester in the Bible,
 And more, yif more were possyble.
 And soth to seyne, therwythal
 She had a wyt so general,
 990 So hool enclynyed to alle goode,
 That al hir wyt was set, by the rode,
 Wytouten malyce, upon gladnesse;
 And therto I saugh never yet a lesse

953 lyth: limb
 954 Fattyssh: well rounded; fleshy: shapely
 956 brede: breadth
 958 lak: flaw
 959 nere pure sewynge: were not perfectly conformable
 (proportioned)
 969 yif that: if
 982 soleyf fenix: solitary phoenix (the mythical bird)
 986 debonaire: graciousness
 987 Hester: Esther, a biblical model of wifely virtue.
 990 general: liberal, affable to all
 992 rode: cross

Harmful than she was in doynge. 995
 I sey nat that she ne had knowynge.
 What harm was, or elles she
 Had koud no good, so thinketh me.
 "And trewly for to speke of trouthe,
 1000 But she had had, hyt hadde be routhe.
 Therof she had so moche hyr del —
 And I dar seyn and swere hyt wel —
 That Trouthe hymself over al and al
 Had chose hys maner principal
 In hir that was his restyng place.
 1005 Therto she hadde the moste grace
 To have stedefast perseveraunce
 And esy, atempre gouvernaunce
 That ever I knew or wyste yit,
 So pure suffraunt was hir wyt;
 1010 And reson gladly she understood;
 Hyt folowed wel she koude good.
 She used gladly to do wel;
 These were hir maners everydel.
 "Therwith she loved so wel ryght
 1015 She wrong do wolde to no wyght.
 No wyght myghte do hir noo shame,
 She loved so wel hir owne name.
 Hyr lust to holde no wyght in honde,
 Ne, be thou siker, she wolde not fonde 1020
 To holde no wyght in balance
 By half word ne by countenaunce —
 But if men wolde upon hir lye —
 Ne sende men into Walakye,
 To Pruyse, and into Tartarye,
 1025 To Alysaundre, ne into Turkeye,
 And byd hym faste anon that he
 Goo hoodles into the Drye Se
 And come hom by the Carrenar,
 And seye, 'Sir, be now ryght war
 1030 That I may of yow here seyn
 Worshyp or that ye come ageyn!'
 She ne used no suche knakkes smale.

997-98 or elles she Had koud no good: otherwise she would not have known what goodness was
 1000 But she had had: if she had not had it (trouthe)
 1003 al and al: everything
 1004 maner: manner, residence
 1010 suffraunt: tolerant
 1019 to holde no wyght in honde: to encourage no one with false hope
 1020 fonde: strive
 1021 balance: suspense
 1022 half word: insinuation
 1023 Unless someone wanted to give a false report about her
 1024 Walskyer: Wallachia, in Rumania
 1025 Pruyse: Prussia. Tartarye: Outer Mongolia
 1026 Alysaundre: Alexandria
 1028 hoodles: bareheaded. Drye Se: the Gobi Desert
 1029 Carrenar: Kara-Nor, on the east side of the Gobi
 1033 knakkes smale: petty tricks

"But wherefore that y telle my tale?
Ryght on thys same, as I have seyde,
Was hooly al my love leyde;
For certes she was, that swete wif,
My suffisaunce, my lust, my lyf,
Myn hap, myn hele, and al my blesse,
My worldes welfare, and my goddesse,
And I hooly hires and everydel."
"By oure Lord," quod I, "y trowe yow wel!
Hardely, your love was wel beset;
I not how ye myghte have do bet."
"Bet? Ne no wyght so wel," quod he.
"Y trowe hyt wel, sir," quod I, "parde!"
"Nay, leve hyt wel!" "Sire, so do I;
I leve yow wel, that trewely
Yow thoghte that she was the beste
And to beholde the alderfayreste,
Whoso had loked hir with your eyen."
"With myn? Nay, alle that hir seyen
Seyde and sworn hyt was soo.
And thogh they ne hadde, I wolde thoo
Have loved best my lady free,
Thogh I had had al the beaute
That ever had Alcipyades,
And al the strengthe of Eracles,
And therto had the worthynesse
Of Alysander, and al the rychesse
That ever was in Babyloyne,
In Cartage, or in Macedoynne,
Or in Rome, or in Nynnyve;
And therto also hardy be
As was Ector, so have I joye,
That Achilles slough at Troye —
And therfore was he slaya alsoo
In a temple, for bothe twoo
Were slayne, he and Antylegyus
(And so seyth Dares Frygius),
For love of Polixena —
Or ben as wis as Mynerva,
I wolde ever, withoute drede,
Have loved hir, for I moste nede.
'Nede?' Nay, trewely, I gabbe now;

Noght 'nede,' and I wol tellen how:
For of good wille myn herte hyt wolde,
And eke to love hir I was holde
As for the fairest and the beste.
She was as good, so have I reste,
As ever was Penelopee of Grece,
Or as the noble wif Lucrece,
That was the beste — he telleth thus,
The Romayn, Tytus Lyvyus —
She was as good, and nothyng lyk
(Thogh hir stories be autentyk),
Algate she was as trewe as she.
"But wherefore that I telle thee
Whan I first my lady say?
I was ryght yong, soth to say,
And ful gret nede I hadde to lerne;
Whan my herte wolde yeine
To love, hyt was a gret empryse,
But as my wyt koude best suffise,
After my yonge childly wyt,
Withoute drede, I besette hyr
To love hir in my beste wyse,
To do hir worship and the servise
That I koude thoo, be my trouthe,
Withoute feynynge outhere slouth,
For wonder feyn I wolde hir se.
So mochel hyt amended me.
That whan I saugh hir first a-morwe
I was warished of al my sorwe
Of al day after; til hyt were eve
Me thoghte nothyng myghte me greve,
Were my sorwes never so smerte.
And yet she yt so in myn herte
That, by my trouthe, y nolde noght
For al thys world out of my thoght
Leve my lady; noo, trewely!"
"Now, by my trouthe, sir," quod I,
"Me thynketh ye have such a chaunce
As shryfte wythoute repentaunce."
"Repentaunce? Nay, fy!" quod he,
"Shulde y now repente me

1077 hyt wolde: wished it
1078 holde: obligated
1081 Penelopee: faithful wife of Ulysses
1082 Lucrece: Lucretia; for her story see LGW 1680-1885.
1084 Tytus Lyvyus: Livy, the Roman historian
1085 nothyng lyk: not like Lucretia (save in goodness)
1086 autentyk: true
1089 say: saw
1093 empryse: difficult task
1095 Afer: in accordance with
1099 koude thoo: knew how at that time
1100 Withoute feynynge: wholeheartedly
1103 a-morwe: in the morning
1104 warished: cured
1114 shryfte wythoute repentaunce: forgiveness without contrition; see n.

1039 hap: good fortune
1057 Alcipyades: Alcibiades
1058 Eracles: Hercules
1060 Alysander: Alexander the Great
1061 Babyloyne: Babylon
1062 Cartage: Carthage
1063 Macedoynne: Macedonia
1064 Nynnyve: the biblical Nineveh
1065 Ector: Hector
1069 Antylegyus: Antiochus (i.e., Archilogus; he and Achilles were slain as the latter was about to marry Polixena)
1070 Dares Frygius: supposed author of a history of the Trojan War
1072 Mynerva: the goddess of wisdom
1073 gabber: talk nonsense

To love? Nay, certes, than were I wel
Wers than was Achitofel,
Or Anthenor, so have I joye,
The traytor that betrayed Troye,
Or the false Genelloun,
He that purchased the tresoun
Of Rowland and of Olyver.
Nay, while I am alyve her,
I nyl foryete hir never moo."
"Now, goode syre," quod I thoo,
"Ye han wel told me herebefore;
Hyt ys no nede to reherse it more,
How ye sawe hir first, and where.
But wolde ye tel me the manere
To hire which was your firste speche —
Therof I wolde yow besече —
And how she knewe first your thoght,
Whether ye loved hir or noght?
And telleth me eke what ye have lore,
I herde yow telle herebefore."
"Yee!" seyde he, "thow nost what thow
menest;
I have lost more than thou wenest."
"What los ys that?" quod I thoo;
"Nyl she not love yow? Ys hyt soo?
Or have ye oght doon amys,
That she hath left yow? Ys hyt this?
For Goddes love, telle me al."
"Before God," quod he, "and I shal.
I saye ryght as I have seyde,
On hir was al my love leyde,
And yet she nyste hyt nat, never a del
Noght longe tyme, leve hyt wel!
For be ryght siker, I durste noght
For al this world telle hir my thoght,
Ne I wolde have wraththed hir, trewely.
For wostow why? She was lady
Of the body; she had the herte,
And who hath that may not asterre.
But for to kepe me fro ydelnesse,
Trewely I dide my besynesse
To make songes, as I best koude,
And ofte tyme I song hem loude;
And made songes thus a gret del,
Although I koude not make so wel
Songes, ne knewe the art al,
As koude Lamekes sone Tubal,

1118 Achitofel: the evil counselor who urged Absalom to rebel against David
1119 Anthenor: Antenor
1121 Genelloun: Ganelon, who betrayed Rowland and Olyver, heroes of the *Chanson de Roland*
1137 nost = *st wost*, know not
1162 Lamekes sone Tubal: Lamech's son Tubal; see n.

That found out first the art of songe;
For as hys brothes hamers ronge
Upon hys anvelt up and down,
Therof he took the firste soun —
Bur Grekes seyn Pictagoras,
That he the firste fynder was
Of the art (Aurora telleth so);
But therof no fors of hem two.
Algates songes thus I made
Of my felynge, myn herte to glade;
And, lo, this was [the] altherferste —
I not wher hyt were the werste.

"Lord, hyt maketh myn herte lyght
Whan I thenke on that swete wyght
That is so semely on to see;
And wishe to God hit myghte so bee
That she wolde holde me for hir knyght,
My lady, that is so fair and bryght!"

"Now have I told thee, soth to say,
My firste song. Upon a day
I bethoghte me what woo
And sorwe that I suffred thoo
For hir, and yet she wyste hyt noght,
Ne telle hir durste I nat my thoght.
'Allas,' thoghte I, 'y kan no red;
And but I telle hir, I nam but ded;
And yif I telle hyr, to seye ryght soth,
I am adred she wol be wroth.
Allas, what shal I thanne do?"

"In this debat I was so wo
Me thoghte myn herte braste atweyne!
So at the laste, soth to sayne,
I bethoghte me that Nature
Ne formed never in creature
So moche beaute, trewely,
And bounte, wythoute mercy.
In hope of that, my tale I tolde
With sorwe, as that I never sholde,
For nedes, and mawgree my hed,
I most have told hir or be ded.
I not wel how that I began;
Ful evel rehersen hyt I kan;

1165 anvelt: anvil
1167 Pictagoras: Pythagoras
1169 Aurora: a twelfth-century commentary on parts of the Bible by Peter of Ripa
1171 Algates: nevertheless
1173 altherferste: first of all
1188 nam but ded: am as good as dead
1193 saweynes: in two
1200 With sorwe: badly (literally, with bad luck) as that: in a way that (i.e., he presented his case poorly)
1201 For of necessity and in spite of all I could do

And eke, as helpe me God withal,
I trowe hyt was in the dismal,
That was the ten woundes of Egipte —
For many a word I over-skippe
In my tale, for pure fere
Lest my wordes mysset were.
With sorweful herte and woundes dede,
Softe and quakyng for pure drede
And shame, and styntyng in my tale
For ferde, and myn hewe al pale —
Ful ofte I wex bothe pale and red —
Bowyng to hir, I heng the hed;
I durste nat ones loke hir on,
For wit, maner, and al was goon.
I seyde 'Mercy!' and no more.
Hyt nas no game; hyt sat me sore.
"So at the laste, soth to seyn,
Whan that myn hert was come ageyn,
To telle shortly al my speche;
With hool herte I gan hir besече
That she wolde be my lady swete;
And swor, and gan hir hertely herte
Ever to be stedfast and trewe,
And love hir alwey freschly newe,
And never other lady have,
And al hir worship for to save
As I best koude. I swor hir this:
'For youres is alle that ever ther ys
For evermore, myn herte swete!
And never to false yow, but I mete,
I nyl, as wys God helpe me soo!
'And whan I had my tale y-doo,
God wot, she accounted nat a stree
Of al my tale, so thoghte me.
To telle shortly ryght as hyt ys,
Trewly hir answer was hyt was this —
I kan not now wel counterfete
Hir wordes, but this was the grete
Of hir answer: she sayde 'Nay'
Al outerly. Allas, that day
The sorowe I suffred and the woo
That trewly Cassandra, that soo
Bewayled the destruccioun
Of Troye and of Ilyoun,
Had never swich sorwe as I thoo.

1206 dismal: unlucky days; see n.

1208 over-skipper: skipped, passed over

1210 mysset: misplaced

1214 For ferde: out of fear

1220 sad: afflicted

1224 herte: promise

1234 mete: dream

1242 the grete: the main point

1244 outerly: utterly

1246 Cassandra: daughter of King Priam of Troy

1248 Ilyoun: Ilium, the citadel of Troy

I durste no more say thertoo
For pure fere, but stal away;
And thus I lyved ful many a day,
That trewely I hadde no ned
Ferther than my beddes hed
Never a day to seche sorwe;
I fond hyt redy every morwe,
For-why I loved hyr in no gere.
"So hit befel, another yere
I thoughte ones I wolde fonde
To do hir knowe and understonde
My woo; and she wel understod
That I ne wilned thyng but god,
And worship, and to kepe hir name
Over alle thynges, and drede hir shame,
And was so besy hyr to serve,
And pitee were I shulde sterve,
Syth that I wilned noon harm, ywis.
So whan my lady knew al this,
My lady yaf me al hooly
The noble yifte of hir mercy,
Savyng hir worship by al weyes —
Dredles, I mene noon other weyes.
And therwith she yaf me a ryng;
I trowe hyt was the firste thyng;
But if myn herte was ywaxe
Glad, that is no nede to axe!
As helpe me God, I was as blyve
Reysed as fro deth to lyve —
Of al happes the alderbeste,
The gladdest, and the moste at reste.
For trewely that swete wyght,
Whan I had wrong and she the ryght,
She wolde alwey so goodly
Foryeve me so debonairly.
In al my yowthe, in al chaunce,
She took me in hir governaunce.
Therwyth she was alwey so trewe
Our joye was ever ylyche newe;
Oure hertes wern so evene a payre
That never nas that oon contrayre
To that other for no woo.
For sothe, ylyche they suffred thoo
Oo blysse and eke oo sorwe bothe;
Ylyche they were bothe glad and wrothe;
Al was us oon, withoute were.
And thus we lyved ful many a yere
So wel I kan nat telle how."

1257 in no gere: in no changeable fashion

1259 fonde: try

1266 sterve: die

1269 yaf: gave

1272 Dredles: doubtless

1277 as blyve: very quickly

1295 were: doubt

"Sir," quod I, "where is she now?"
"Now?" quod he, and stynte anon.
Therwith he wax as ded as stoon
And seyde, "Allas, that I was bore!
That was the los that here-before
I tolde the that I hadde lorn.
Bethenke how I seyde here-beforn,
'Thow wost ful lytel what thow menest;
I have lost more than thow weneest.'
God wot, allas! Ryght that was she!"
"Allas, sir, how? What may that be?"
"She ys ded!" "Nay!" "Yis, be my trouthe!"
"Is that youre los? Be God, hyt ys routhe!"
And with that word ryght anon
They gan to strake forth; al was doon,
For that tyme, the hert-huntyng.
With that me thoghte that this kyng
Gan homwarde for to ryde
Unto a place, was there besyde,
Which was from us but a lyte —
A long castel with walles white,
Be Seynt Johan, on a ryche hil,
As me mette; but thus hyt fil.
Ryght thus me mette, as I yow telle,
That in the castel ther was a belle,
As hyt hadde smyten houres twelve.
Therwyth I awook myselfe
And fond me lyng in my bed;
And the book that I hadde red,
Of Alcione and Seys the kyng,
And of the goddes of slepyng,
I fond hyt in myn hond ful even.
Thoghte I, "Thys ys so queynat a sweven
That I wol, be processe of tyme,
Fonde to put this sweven in ryme
As I kan best, and that anon."
This was my sweven; now hit ys doon.

Explicit the Bok of the Duchesse.

1304 Bethenke: consider

1312 strake forth: sound the signal on a hunting horn for going homeward

1318 long castel: a reference to Lancaster; see Expl. Notes to

1314-29.

1330 queynat: curious

The Book of the Duchess

Though in none of the manuscripts do the copyists assign *The Book of the Duchess* to Chaucer, his authorship has never been questioned. He lists it among his works as "the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse" in the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* (418, G 406) and as "the book of the Duchesse" in his Retraction (Tales X.1086). Chaucer's authorship is also attested in *Lydgate's Fall of Princes* (bk. 1, Pro 304-5). In the Introduction to the *Man of Law's Tale* (II.57) we are told that in his youth Chaucer wrote of Ceys and Alcionie; while this could refer to another (unknown) work of Chaucer's, the likelihood is that the reference is to BD 62-220.

The Fairfax MS has a note, evidently in the hand of John Stow, stating that Chaucer wrote the poem at the request of the Duke of Lancaster "pitiously complaynyng the deathe of the sayd dutchesse blaunche" (see 905 below, and John Norton-Smith's intro. to the facsimile of the Fairfax MS, 1979). For internal evidence supporting a dedication to Gaunt and Blanche, see BD 1318-19 and the note below on 1314-29, though there is an apparent discrepancy with regard to Gaunt's age at the time of Blanche's death (445 below). For further information on the historical context, see Sydney Arnitage-Smith, John of Gaunt, 1904, especially 74-78 (death of Blanche and her memorial services) and 420 (Gaunt's will, where, in the first clause, he directs that he be interred in St. Paul's Cathedral "juxta ma treschere jadis compaigne Blanch illeco's entierre," next to my beloved former wife Blanche where she is buried).

For the older theory that the narrator-persona contains autobiographical details of a hopeless love affair, see Furnivall, *Trial Forewords*, 35-36; Bernhard ten Brink, *Geschichte der engl. Litt.* vol. 2, bk. 4, 1893, 49-50; and note 30-43 below; on such theories, see George Kane, *Autobiographical Fallacy in Ch and Langland*, 1965.

The Book of the Duchess was strongly influenced by French poetry, notably *Le roman de la rose* and the works of Froissart and Machaut. A number of passages are closely translated, and the form of *The Book of the Duchess* owes much to Machaut's *Jugement dou Roy de Behaingnes*, where the narrator overhears the stories of bereaved or forsaken lovers. The notes indicate these source-passages, as well as debts to Ovid, Statius, and others. See further, Kitchel, *Vassar Med. Studies*, 1923, 217-31; Rosenthal, *MLN* 48, 1933, 511-14; Braddy, *MLN* 52, 1937, 487-91; Max Lange, *Untersuchungen über Ch's BD*, 1883; Sypherd, *MLN* 24, 1909, 46-47; Windeatt, *Ch's Dream Poetry*. For additional discussions of the dream-vision tradition, see W. O. Sypherd, *Studies in Ch's HF*, 1907, and n. 291-343 below.

An outline account of the critical history of the poem by D. W. Robertson, Jr., is in *Comp.* to Ch, 403-13. Recent criticism has included interpretations of the poem along exegetical, allegorical lines (see references to Huppé and Robertson in 30-43, 309-10, 388-97, 1314-29 below); James Winny, *Ch's Dream-Poems*, 1973; also puts forward some theories of interpretation. Some notable studies not mentioned in the notes are: *On rhetoric*:

Harrison, *PMLA* 49, 1934, 428-42; Manly, *Brit. Acad.*, 1926, 95-113. *On meter*: Malone, in *Ch und seine Zeit*, 71-95. *On structure*: Baker, *SN* 30, 1958, 17-26; Crampton, *JEGP* 62, 1963, 486-500; Ebel, *CE* 29, 1967, 197-206. *On literary background*: Wimsatt, *Ch and Fr Poets*; Boitani, *Eng. Med. Narrative*, 140-49. *Edition*: Helen Phillips, ed., *Ch: The BD*, 1982.

1-15 Closely modeled on Froissart, *Paradis d'amours*, 1-12. Kittredge (*ES* 26, 1899, 321-36) demonstrated that BD was written after *Paradis*. D. S. Brewer (in *Ch and Chaucerians*, 2-8) analyzes both passages, concluding that though Chaucer's subject-matter is from Froissart, the style is that of the native rhyming romances. Barbara Nolan (in *New Perspectives*, 203-22) argues that, through the Narrator, Chaucer transformed the style of his French exemplars, freeing himself from the demands of familiar mythologies "by his refusal to embrace authoritative stances in relation to his audience, matter, and meaning." *Severs* (*MS* 25, 1963, 355-62) draws attention to similarities in Machaut, *Dir dou verger*, and in the anonymous *Songe vert* (ed. Constans, *Romania* 33, 490-539).

Some of Chaucer's knowledge of dreams came from glosses on the common school text, *Cato's Distichs*; see Hazelton, *Spec* 35, 1960, 369. For further references see HF 1-52n. For discussion of the Narrator's state of mind and its similarity to that described by Petrus de Abano as a likely prelude to a "somniaum animale," see Clemen, *Ch's Early Poetry*, 26; Curry, *Ch and Science*, 233-37; Kittredge, *Ch and his Poetry*, 58-60. The "somniaum animale" grows out of "much worry of the waking mind" (Petrus de Abano). Gardner (Lang. and Style 2, 1969, 143-71) argues that the dream is open to both a sexual and a religious interpretation: on one level a "somniaum animale," on the other a "somniaum coeleste." A. C. Spearing (*Med. Dream Poetry*, 55-62) considers that the dream could be classified as a "somniaum naturale," "animale," or "coeleste." (The "somniaum naturale" "originates in the dominion of bodily complexions and humors"; the "somniaum coeleste" derives "from the impressions made by celestial minds or intelligences which are said to direct the heavenly bodies in their courses" tr. from Petrus de Abano, *Liber conciliator differentiarum philosophorum precipue medicorum appetatus*, 1472, *diff.* 157 fol. 206r).

14 *ymagynacion*: Douglas Kelly (*Med. Imagination*, 1978, 57) suggests that the confused state of mind here described as *serpifol ymagynacion* derives ultimately from Macrobius's classification of dreams: the narrator's *fantasies* (28) correspond to Macrobius's "visum," in which fantastic images appear between waking and sleeping and have no prophetic significance (Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* 1.3.3.).

16-21 There are many similarities here to the beginning of Machaut's first *Complainte* (*Poésies lyriques*, ed. Chichemaref, 1.241). See Kittredge, *PMLA* 30, 1915, 1-24.

23 *melancolye*: *Paradis d'amours*, 7, refers to this condition; so, too, Machaut, *Jugement dou Roy de Navarre* (*Oeuvres* 1:109-12), where there are further parallels to BD 23-29. See Kittredge, *PMLA* 30:2-4. Cf.

445 below. On the melancholic humor, see GP I.333n. and 420n.

30-43 The eight-year sickness and the physician of these lines have been the subject of considerable debate. There has been much critical concern about whether Chaucer is writing autobiography, spiritual allegory, or simply repeating the common convention of the love-sick poet and unresponsive mistress. The eight-year sickness has been attributed to Chaucer's supposedly unhappy married life (Frederick G. Fleay, *Guide to Ch and Spenser*, 1877, 36-37) or to some bereavement (Lumiansky, *TSE* 9, 1959, 5-17; also see Condren, as cited in 1314-29 below). The "physician" has been identified as Joan of Kent, mother of Richard II, who, the critic supposes, was Chaucer's patron (Galway, *MLN* 60, 1945, 431-39); as sleep, which could assuage melancholy (Hill, *ChR* 9, 1974, 35-50); as God (Severs, *PQ* 43, 1964, 27-39); and as Christ (Huppé and Robertson, *Fruyt and Chaf*, 32-34; cf. Chermis in 544 below); Gardner (Lang. and Style 2:148-49) argues that all these various interpretations are simultaneously present. However, the situation and the sentiments are conventional in French poetry of the period, and Sypherd (*MLN* 20, 1905, 240-43) argues for the love/unresponsive mistress motif and suggests that the eight-year period is simply to give the appearance of verisimilitude; see also Loomis (*MLN* 59, 1944, 178-80) and the "seven or eight years" of love-devotion in BD 759-804 (see n.). With *physician*, cf. BD 571 and 920; Tr 2.1065-66; and Gower, *Confessio amantis* 8.902.

44-45 Cf. *Paradis d'amours*, 13-14, "n'a pas lonc terme/Que die dormir oi voloir ferme" (it was not long ago that I deeply desired to sleep); for an argument that reading a book was not a regular convention of love visions until after Chaucer, see Stearns, *MLN* 57, 1942, 28-31. Spearing, *Med. Dream Poetry*, 58, taking the dream as a "somniaum animale" (which reflects the experience of waking life), notes that Chaucer is innovative in making that experience the reading of a book. For discussion of medieval theory of the therapeutic powers of literature (and hence, by extension, of the consolatory potential of BD for Gaunt), see Glending Olson, *Lit. as Recreation*, 1982, 85-89.

48 A romance: Ovid, *Met.* 11.410-749. Wimsatt (*MAE* 36, 1967, 231-41) notes the similarity of treatment of the Ceys story in Machaut's *Dir de la fonteinne amoureuse* (hereafter *Font. amor.*), 543-698. Ovid's description of the storm is reduced drastically in BD (omitted in *Font. amor.*) and only brief mention is made (*Font. amor.*) or there is total omission (BD) of the metamorphosis into sea-birds (cf. 215 below). Wimsatt also notes that Chaucer probably used the Ovid moralisé, as did Machaut, as well as Ovid's original work; Minnis (*MAE* 48, 1979, 254-57) supports this in remarking that *romance* usually referred to a work in French, not Latin.

56 *lawe of kinde*: Probably implies the gentle dealings between people in the unbrutalized Golden Age. (See Fryer, *Ch and Ovid*, 65-81.)

62-220 Many critics regard the Ceys and Alcionie story as a tactful encouragement to Gaunt to come to terms with Blanche's death. The mirror-image (death of a husband) politely distances the hint. See, for example, Spearing, *Med. Dream Poetry*, 53-58.

To tellen shortly: A common formula in Chaucer: e.g., GP I.843; *KnT* I.1000; cf. *KnT* I.875-88n. But the

reference could be to Chaucer's abbreviations of Ovid's tale; see 48 above. In the *Metamorphoses*, the storm and shipwreck occupy 77 lines.

70 *gan to rise*: Although *gan* is from OE *ginnan* (= to begin), the use of the verb in the preterite in ME is often for dramatic, intensive purpose and does not necessarily imply the commencement of an action. See Mustanoja, *ME Syntax*, 610-15, especially 613, where he notes, "In his earlier poems written under strong French influence, like BD, Chaucer makes sparing use of periphrastic *gan* . . . [in Chaucer] the *gan*-periphrasis is particularly used when the action takes place unexpectedly or in haste." Cf. BD 193, 536, etc.

73 *telles*: The third person singular present indicative in -e (properly of Northern or West Midland dialect) occurs very rarely in Chaucer. Here and in line 257 it is clearly established by the rhyme. On such forms, see Burnley, *Guide to Ch's Language*, 127. Cf. *RvT* I.4022n.

108-17 Alcionie uses both the singular and the plural pronouns to Juno. It was common to use *thou* in prayers to a deity (see *KnT* I.2221-2260, where the singular is used), though the plural is also used (cf. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 756). In *Font. amor.*, Alcionie addresses Juno using the singular pronoun. See *Language and Versification*, p. xxxix.

187-87 The peremptory tone of the speeches of Juno to the messenger and of the messenger to Morpheus does not appear in Ovid or Machaut. For discussion, see Clemen, *Ch's Early Poetry*, 104; Lowes, *Geoffrey Ch. 96*; Muscatine, *Ch and Fr Trad.*, 104. The singular pronoun *thou* emphasizes this tone; see 519 below.

142 For the word order, see *Language and Versification*, p. xxxviii.

153-65 Though Chaucer borrows from the Ceys and Alcionie stories in Ovid and Machaut (see 48 above), including the account of the messenger's journey to the god of sleep, he also takes some details from Statius, *Theb.* 10.84-99, and 10.121-31, where Iris is sent to the cave of sleep to deliver a command from Juno. See Cloggan, *Eng. Miscellany* 18, 1967, 16, n. 17, and cf. BD 242-69 and n.

154-56 Imitated from *Font. amor.*, 590-92; "Tant se travaille/Que venue est en une grant valee/De deus grans mons entour environnee" (He put such effort into his journey that he arrived in a large valley completely enclosed by two high mountains).

154 *hys*: The messenger in Ovid and in Machaut, however, is Iris.

164 under a rokke: Shannon (Ch and Roman-Poets, 6-7) argues that this corresponds to a variant reading in some MSS of *Met.* 11.591, "sub rupe" instead of "sub nube." However, Wimsatt (*MAE*, 36:231-41) agrees with Wise (*Infl.* of Statius, 41) that the phrase derives from Statius, *Theb.* 10.86-87, "Subterque cavis grave rupis antrum/it vacuum in montem" (And under the hollow rocks the deep cave runs into the empty mountain; even though Chaucer would have understood the Latin, "cavis grave" may have suggested the rhyme of BD 163-64, and Wimsatt doubts whether Ovidian MSS available to Chaucer contained "rupe" (for "nube").

167 *Eclypmastyer*: The name occurs only here and in Froissart's *Paradis d'amours*, 28, where he is a son of the "noble dieu dormant." "The source of the name is uncertain. Derivation has been suggested from *Icelon* *plastera* (*παστήρις*), or from *Icelon* and *Phobetora* (cor-

The explanatory notes to *The Book of the Duchess* were written by Colin Wilcockson.

rupted into Pastora) which occur in Met. 11.640" (Robinson). Carrier (Revue de la littérature comparée 38, 1964, 18-34) discusses the many attempts to account for the name. Froissart, he shows, invented names by twisting them or forming anagrams. The probable derivation, he suggests, is "Enclin + postere" = "supine," thence "Lazy-bones."

171 helle-pit: Spencer (Spec 2, 1927, 177-200, esp. 180-81) notes that the "pit" of hell is a medieval rather than a classical concept. In Met. 11.594-96 Ovid says that the sun never enters and that there is "doubtful light"; Thebaid, 10.84, speaks of "nebulosa cubilia noctis," (cloudy couches of the night). (See references to Ovid and Statius in 48 and 153-65 above.)

174 Machaut, Font. amor., 607, (describing the god of sleep): "ses mentons a sa poitrine touche," (his chin touches his chest). Met. 11.619-20 has "Knocking his breast with his nodding chin."

184 oon yet: The comedy derives from Font. amor., 632, where the god of sleep "Un petiot ouvri l'un de ses yeus" (opened one of his eyes a little). Ovid, 619, has "oculos" (eyes).

189-90 As I have told you: A commonplace formula. (Cf. for example, FranT V.1465-66, 1593-94; PhYT VI.229-30; GP 1.849; and in RR 7243-45 we find, "And I told him, just as you have heard—there is no purpose in repeating it to you.")

201 Wimsatt (MAE 36:237-38) suggests that the speech of Ceyx to Alcione is imitated from Aeneid 2.776-84, where Creusa appears to Aeneas as a ghost and "very much as if in a dream" ("simillima somno," 794). Chaucer tells the story in HF 174-92.

202-10 your sorrowful life: For the use of the plural pronoun, see 108-17 above and 519 below.

215 But what she sayde more: Chaucer omits the rest of the story, including the metamorphosis into seabirds. Delasanta (PMLA 84, 1969, 245-51, esp. 249) suggests that though a hint of afterlife reunion is inherent, the Narrator has at this point insufficient spiritual maturity to see anything but death at the end of man's existence. Shannon (Ch and Roman Poets, 10) comments Chaucer's sound taste in omitting an "irrelevant device of pagan mythology." Gower, Conf. aman. 4.3088-123, includes the metamorphosis. Chaucer ordinarily omits the metamorphosis in stories adapted from Ovid (e.g., the legend of Philomela in LGW).

222-23 Cf. Parady's d'amours, 19-22, where the narrator says that he would still be sleepless had he not sacrificed a gold ring to Juno; cf. BD 243.

242-69 Chaucer is confating Font. amor., 807-10, where the poet promises the god a hat and a feather bed, with Parady's d'amour, 15-18, where the poet prays to Morpheus, Juno and Oleus. Kittredge (PMLA 30:2) suggests that Chaucer "shied at Oleus"; hence *som wighti elles, I ne roghte who*. "Oleus" appears nowhere else. Perhaps the confusion is with Aeolus. In Met. 11.444, 573, Alcione is referred to as the "daughter of Aeolus" (god of the winds), and in 747-48, after the metamorphosis of Ceyx and Alcione into seabirds, Aeolus imprisons the winds so that their chicks may be safe. In Statius, Theb. 10.53-60, a beautiful cloth is offered to Juno shortly before the visit of Iris to the cave of sleep. Cf. BD 153-65 and n.

255 cloth of Reynes: A kind of linen made at Rennes, in Brittany. Skeat (1:469-70) cites medieval

examples of sheets and pillow cases made of Rennes linen. It was evidently fine cloth. Skelton, Complete English Poems, ed. Scattergood, 1983, 254 (Collyn Clout, 314) uses the phrase "fyne raynes" in a passage about worldly luxury.

265-66 Morpheus . . . moo feis thus: For the rhyme, see 309-10 below.

272-75 Cf. Parady's d'amour, 14 (see note 44-45 above), and 30-31, where the narrator says he falls asleep he knows not how.

280 Joseph: For his interpretation of the Pharaoh's dream, see Gen. 41.

282 The kynges metyng Pharao: "The dream of king Pharaoh" (see Gen. 41). For the structure, see BD 142 and n.

284 Macrobeus: The reference to Macrobius is perhaps secondhand and due to similar citation in RR 7-10 (Rom 7-10). On the Somnium Scipionis, which was written by Cicero and expanded with a commentary by Macrobius, see PF 31n., and notes 1-15 and 14 above.

286 kyng Scipion: Scipio was not a king; the error is due to RR (see 284 above and HF 916-18n.).

291-348 The description of May is largely indebted to the Roman de la rose, and there is a kind of acknowledgement of this fact in BD 352-34. For particular resemblances, cf. BD 291-92 with RR 45-47, 88 (Rom 49-51, 94); 304-5 with RR 705, 484-85 (Rom 717, 496-97); 306-8 with RR 627-68 (Rom 675-76); 309-11 with RR 487-92 (Rom 499-501); 318 with RR 74-102 (Rom 78-108); 331-32 with RR 20831-32; 339-43 with RR 124-25 (Rom 130-31), though in this case the Dit dou Roy de Behaigne, 13-14, is closer where the conventional May morning is described: "Et li jours fu attempz par mesure/Biaus, clers, luisans, nés et purs, sans froidure" (And the day was perfectly temperate, beautiful, clear, bright, fine and cloudless, without chill). For discussions of the convention see, for example, Bennett, PF, ch. 2; Lewis, Allegory of Love, ch. 3; Muscatine, Ch and Fr Trad., 15-17.

293 al naked: At 125 is another reference to the common custom in the Middle Ages of sleeping naked. For references to night attire see Tr 3.738, 1099, 1372, 4.92-96.

304 soim: Probably singular, as often elsewhere in this construction, and referring back to 301 *ewerch*, cf. KnT I.3031-32. See Mustanoja, ME Syntax, 259-63.

309-10 entewnes: Usually taken as a noun, "tunes," Emerson suggests (PQ 2, 1923, 81-86, esp. 81-82) that it is the Northern form of the present tense of the verb, third person singular, substituted for the preterite in rhyme. For other Northern forms, see BD 73, 257. Kökeritz (PMLA 69, 1954, 937-52) discusses the influence on Chaucer of French word-play: a "punning or jingling effect" common in the French poets is seen here, and in 265-66 where, Kökeritz suggests, Robinson's diaeresis in *feis* is probably unwarranted. (The diaeresis is, however, metrically desirable, and the "jingling" remains.) See also BD 813-14, *perverre . . . clepe hir wers*. For exegetical interpretations of BD as a religious allegory and holding that the *town of Towns* suggests "tune of tunes" (i.e., Song of Songs) and also "Town of Towns" (i.e., the New Jerusalem), see Hüppé and Robertson, Fruyt and Chaf, ch. 2, esp. 46-47; so also Gardner, Lang, and Style, 2:153. Robinson translates, with comment: "Certainly, even to gain the town of Tunis, I would not have given

up hearing them sing. The choice of Tunis was probably due to the rhyme."

326-31 the story of Troy: Chaucer refers to the whole history of Troy as told by either Benoit de Sainte Maure or Guido della Colonne, probably the former, rather than the story of the siege and fall of the city as told by Homer and Virgil or as summarized in RR, which does not associate Medea with the Troy story. See 1117-23 below and introductory note to *Troilus*. See *Troilus* for the characters named (Lamedon, Laomedon, is there called Lameadoun, Tr 4.124), with the exception of Medea and Jason, for which see LGW 1580-1679.

333-34 bothe text and glose: Perhaps simply a formula meaning "the whole story." Possibly Chaucer had in mind some manuscript in which both text and commentary were illustrated by pictures, though no such MS of RR is known. The search for rhyme might account for "glose/Rose" (cf. LGW, F 328-29). But the scribal *ex-plitis* to one MS may provide a clue: "Cy gist le Romant de la Rose, Ou tout l'Art d'Amours se repose, La fleur des beaux bien dire /ose, Qui bien y entend teste et glose." (Ernest Langlois, Les MSS du RR, 1910, 211.) This MS contains miniatures (but no commentary on the text). It would suit the idea of a mural decoration if *glose* here meant "illustrations" (the *significatio* sometimes of the allegory) and *text* referred to brief descriptions of these illuminations which commonly appear in the MSS, either above or below the pictures. But the suggestion is tentative, as *glose* normally means "textual commentary" (MED s.v. *glose*, n.).

344-86 The accuracy of Chaucer's hunting terminology is attested by Emerson, RomR 13, 1922, 115-50. Lowes, (PMLA 19, 1904, 648 n. 1) compares the huntsmen of the God of love in Parady's d'amours, 916-64. For possible word-play on "hart/hear" from BD 351-1313, see Kökeritz, PMLA, 69:951; and Marcelle Thiébaux, Stag of Love, 1974, especially 116-17 and n. 35. Baum (PMLA 71, 1956, 225-46, esp. 239) suggests that the hart represents Blanche; Hüppé and Robertson, Fruyt and Chaf, 49-52, believe the Black Knight of *The Book of the Duchess* represents the Narrator's alter ego, whose heart must be hunted until it recognizes that the loss of the virtuous Blanche must be seen "not as the loss of a gift of Fortune, but as an inspiration"; Grennen (MLQ 25, 1964, 131-39) discusses medieval treatises on heart diseases, and suggests that the Dreamer's offers in lines 553 and 556 are in accordance with the comforting recommended in the treatment; Shoaf (JEGP 78, 1979, 313-24) draws attention to some confessional literature where huntsman = "confessor," and hart = "penitential self." He suggests that specific parallels on the theme in Le livre de seynz medicines by Blanche's father might honor his memory and also that of his daughter.

346 horn: The detail, and several others, may have been suggested by a passage in Machaut, Roy de Navarre, where the passing of the outbreak of the plague was celebrated by the playing outside the poet's window of "Cornemuses, trompes, nauques, /Et d'instrumens plus de set paires" (Bagpipes, horns, drums, /And more than seven pairs of instruments) (463-64). Guillaume, delighted, mounted his horse (488, cf. BD 356-57) and went swiftly to the fields to hunt with a hound (491, 520; cf. BD 359, 362). Spearing (Med. Dream Poetry, 58-59) sees the horn blown by Juno's messenger (BD 182) and the horns blown by the huntsmen as examples of the

reflection in his subsequent dream of the book the Narrator had read earlier. See 44-45 above.

351 with strengthe: Kill in regular chase with horses and hounds (Fr. "à force," see Emerson, RomR, 13: 117).

353 embosed: MED (s.v. *embosen* v.) interprets "exhausted from being hunted" (MED has one other reference only, where this meaning seems confirmed). So also Emerson, RomR, 13:117. Baugh (Language 37, 1961, 539-41) argues for "to go to or to hide in the woods" (see OED s.v. *embos* v.3).

357-58 Took my hors: The inconsequentialities of riding a horse from a bedroom here, the lack of surprise on hearing about Octavian (368), the unremarked disappearance of the puppy encountered at 389, and so on, may be evidence that Chaucer is accurately describing dream-psychology (see, for example, Kittredge, Ch and His Poetry, 68-71; Cllemen, Ch's Early Poetry, 41; Lowes, Art of Ch, 122-23; Spearing, Med. Dream Poetry, 63). Muscatine (Ch and Fr Trad., 102) disagrees, considering that incoherence of plot sequence is characteristic of narrative of this kind.

365 oon, ladde a lymere: "One who was leading a hound on a leash." This construction of a relative clause without a subject pronoun first appears in the later fourteenth century. See Mustanoja (ME Syntax, 204-5), who notes that it is rarer in Chaucer's prose than in his verse, which implies that he uses it for metrical purposes.

368 Octovien: The original name of Augustus Caesar, adopted son of Julius Caesar (63 B.C.-14 A.D.). Skeat suggests that there may be an oblique compliment to Edward III (see reference to *ibid* king at 1314). Condren (Chr 5, 1971, 195-212, esp. 210) also favors the Octovien/Edward III equation. Carson (AnM 8, 1967, 46-58) suggests that Chaucer had in mind the story, in the Welsh Mabingion, of Eudav, who is king of the Other World, and is found carving chess pieces. (In the Welsh Dingestow Brut, a translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, "Octavian" is rendered "Eudav.") For the medieval romance of Octavian, who is befriended by a lion and has many adventures, see Laura A. Hibbard, *Med. Romance in Engl.*, 1924, 267-73; Lillian H. Hornstein, in *Manual of ME* 1:127-29. Two (probably fourteenth-century) English versions exist. In Behaigne, 421, a lover says, "If I had all of Octavian's wealth"; this may have caught Chaucer's eye. 370 in good tyme: Possibly a formula to avert evil; cf. CYT VIII.1048n.

386 forloyn: See Emerson, RomR 13:130-32.

387 I was go walked: The construction of *walked* appears to contrast to that of the past participle in German (*kam gelaufen*, etc.). But there may be involved a confusion with nouns in *-ed*, earlier *eth*, *ath*. See the note in *a-blakeberyed*, Pard. Prol, VI, 406" (Robinson). But Mustanoja (ME Syntax, 558 and 582) considers it more likely that the construction exemplifies a semantic weakening of *go*, and is roughly equivalent to "was walked" (*walked* and auxiliary *it* occurs in KnT I.2368). See also SumT III.1778.

389-96 The lines were suggested by Machaut's Behaigne, 1204-15 (a lady's little dog runs barking to Guillaume, thus revealing that he has accidentally overheard sad accounts of love; with which situation cf. BD 443-86), but more particularly by a passage about a lion, who is equipped with a little dog and "joined his ears"

when patted, in Machaut's *Dit dou Lyon*, 325-31 (see Kittredge, PMLA 30:7). Steadman (N&Q 201, 1956, 374-75) draws attention to dogs representing fidelity in medieval literature and, specifically, marital fidelity on tombs; thus the whelp may suggest Chaucer's fidelity to Blanche and Gaunt and the fidelity between the married couple; Rowland (NM 66, 1965, 148-60) points out that Chaucer never bestows commendatory adjectives on dogs, that *whelp* does not necessarily denote smallness (cp. NPT VII.2932), and she finds a possible association with ghostly huntsmen or snarling emissaries of hell; Huppé and Robertson (Fruyt and Chaf, 53-55, 97) refer to hunt symbolism where hounds = "preachers," and the whelp is here taken as symbolic of the elucidation of the cares of the soul; Friedman (CHR 3, 1969, 145-62) concludes that the existence of such various literary treatment of dogs in the Middle Ages means that the particular context must be taken into account, and that, here, traditional roles of leading, healing, and wisdom are relevant. Many agree, however, with Kittredge's view (PMLA 30:7) that we have here simply a "charming picture of the lost puppy."

402-33 For both *Flora* and *Zephrus* . . . : Probably modeled on RR 8411-30, where *Flora* and *Zephrus* are associated and where earth with its flowers is seen to be striving to outdo the sky in "stars." See ProLGW F 171; cf. BD 410-15 with RR 53-66; "La terre . . . oblie la povreté/Ou ele a tot l'iver este" (The earth . . . forgets the poverty/which it has endured throughout the winter) and see also Rom 59-62 and ProLGW F 125-26; cf. 416-33 with RR 1361-82 (Rom 1391-1403) where the trees in the idyllic "horus inclusus" are evenly spaced, providing shade where deer roam and there are many squirrels; cf. also RR 12790-96.

408 swiche seven: On the idiom, see Klaeber, MLN 17, 1902, 323, and Mustanoja, ME Syntax, 309.

410-15 Cf. Rom 57-62, LGW 125-29 and n. 435-42 That though Argus, the noble countour . . . : More commonly called *Algis*, which is in turn an Old French adaptation of the Arabic surname *Al-Khwarizmi* (native of Khwarizm) of the ninth-century mathematician *Abū 'Abdallāh Muhammad ibn Mūsā*. See Millt 1.3210n.

figures ten: Arabic numerals and the decimal system were introduced into Europe through translations of this mathematician's works. Chaucer may well have had in mind RR 12790-96, where the *La Vieille* tells *Bel Aceuil* (Fair Welcome) that even *Algis* with his ten figures could not reckon up the number of squabbles that arose among her suitors. The matter is different, the phraseology similar.

438 ken: "Kin, mankind. The form *ken* (riming with *ten*) is properly Kentish" (Robinson). On such forms, see Burnley, Ch's Language, 128-29, and cf. Tr 1.229n.

443-617 There are many close paraphrases of Machaut in this passage (Kittredge, MP 7, 1910, 465-83, especially 465-71; and Kittredge, PMLA 30:7-9). Chaucer draws chiefly on Behaingne. BD 475-86 has similarities to Machaut's third Motet, 475-86, and to Behaingne, 195-200. In Behaingne 208-28, the lady faints after her lament (with which cf. BD 487-99).

445 a man in black: It is usually agreed that the Knight represents Gaunt, but the age discrepancy poses a difficulty: Gaunt was twenty-nine at Blanche's death (if she died in 1369); the Knight is twenty-four (see 455). (For

a suggestion that Gaunt was twenty-eight when Blanche died, see reference to Palmer in 1314-29 below.) Viktor Langhans (Untersuchungen zu Ch, 1918, 280-302) argues against the Knight/Gaunt identification on grounds of the discrepancy in age. Skeat (1:476) considers it a mere slip on Chaucer's part, though he also quotes a Mr. Brock's suggestion that xxiiiij could be a scribal error for xxviiiij and notes a similar scribal confusion in IntrMLT II.5 (see textual note). Schoenbaum (MLN 68, 1953, 121-22) suggests that the apparent discrepancy results from Chaucer's universalizing the theme of loss; though Blanche's death probably provided the impulse to write the elegy, the details are not limited to a specific historical context, and twenty-nine was not considered young (cf. BD 454). Nault (MLN 71, 1956, 319-21) quotes the nearly contemporary poem, *Parlement of the Three Ages*, where thirty is described as young; Nault agrees with the scribal error theory, though extant MSS of *The Book of the Duchesse* have *four* and *twenty*, not *xxiiiij*. Fisher (550) suggests that the underestimation of age might have been intended as a compliment. That the melancholy Narrator should dream of a mourning figure in black is in accord with medieval medical theory: Petrus de Abano (in Liber conciliator, dif. 157, fol. 208r) remarks that the melancholy man is likely to dream "of black things that strike terror into us, weeping and wailing, accidents, places of the dead." Cf. notes 1-12 and 23 above, and see NPT VII.2933-36 and n.

464 The compleynte, which begins at 475, has eleven lines. There is no fixed form for the "complaint" (see p. 632). However, the rhyme-scheme appears to be faulty, *a b b a c c d e e d*. All MSS agree, though Thynne (ed. 1532) adds a line after 479 and rearranges the lines. Most modern editors omit Thynne's line, but number as if the line were present: Dickerson (Papers of Bibliograph. Soc. America 66, 1972, 51-54) argues for reinstatement of Thynne's line 480. Blake (ES 62, 1981, 237-48) sees no conclusive authority for Thynne's line: none of the scribes leaves a space for later completion and Thynne's 480 adds little to the sense of the *compleynte*. Perhaps on the "lectio difficilior" principle, the eleven-line *compleynte* should stand. See further, textual note to BD 480; cf. also 1155-57 below. In Fontaine amoureuse, Machaut overtakes his patron reciting a complaint. The lord subsequently takes the poet into his confidence and asks him to write a love poem. Machaut delivers the poem that the lord had composed aloud and confesses its origin. His patron is amazed and delighted.

479 That the Dreamer hears that the lady is dead, yet is apparently ignorant of the fact when he later questions the Black Knight has been the cause of much debate. Kittredge (Ch and His Poetry, esp. 52-53) suggests that the Dreamer understands that the lady is dead, but feigns ignorance so that the Knight may disturb himself by opening his heart. Lawlor (Spec. 31, 1956, 626-48) takes this further: the Dreamer understands, but needs to know the precise nature of the love between the Knight and the lady as in the *dit* poems on which *The Book of the Duchesse* is modeled (Machaut's Behaingne and Navarre); the consolation lies in the Knight's recognition that his grief is over the removal by death of a faithful love fulfilled, not unfulfilled through infidelity. For discussion of the similarity of consolatory functions of the (often comic) dreamer-narrator in BD and Behaingne, see Calin, A Poet at the Fountain, 1974, 48-50. How-

ever, French (JEGP, 61, 1957, 231-41) maintains that love-laments were conventional exercises not intended to be taken literally, and thus the Dreamer is not certain that the Knight is describing an actual occurrence. Diekstra (ES 62, 1981, 215-36) argues that Chaucer juxtaposes comedy and courtly conventions, particularly in the exchanges between the Dreamer and Black Knight, as a testing of the conventions, in the tradition of Jean de Meun in RR; but Chaucer leaves untouched the praise of Blanche and the technique does not invalidate elegiac elements. Kreuzer (PMLA 66, 1951, 843-47) would distinguish the Narrator of the opening lines from the Dreamer-persona. Zimbaro (in CHR 18, 1984, 329-46) suggests that the Black Knight/Dreamer relationship is akin to the traditional relationship of King and Fool: the Dreamer-Fool educates the Knight so that he may question the boundaries of philosophy and of art. 502-62. Behaingne, 56-109, has many similarities: the young man salutes the lady who is so absorbed in her grief that she does not observe him; there are mutual apologies and he begs her to tell the cause of her sorrow. Some phrases that read awkwardly in the Chaucer passage may have been influenced by the French constructions in the Behaingne: BD 504 argued with his own thought corresponds to Beh. 61, "la dame que pensée argua" (the lady, exercised by her contemplation). Similarly, BD 509-10 is evidently modeled on Beh. 70-71, "Certes, sire, pas ne vous entendî/Pour mon penser qui le me deffendi" (Indeed, sir, I did not hear you/Because of my preoccupation which prevented me from so doing). BD 509-10 apparently means, "Thus, because of his sorrow and unhappy contemplation, he was in such a mental state that he did not hear me at all." Perhaps, if the MS he used had the abbreviation *pr* at this point, Chaucer incorrectly assumed it to represent *par* (hence his translation *through*) instead of *pour* (Mod. Fr. *à cause de*).

512 Pan . . . god of kynde: The idea may have come to Chaucer from Servius, *Comentarii in Aeneidem*, ed. Georg Thilo and Hermann Hagen, 1884, 2:99: ". . . quod graece τὸ πᾶν dicitur, id est omne quod est" (which is called "to pan" in Greek, that is everything which is), and more particularly Servius, in Vergili *Bucolicum librum commentarius*, ed. Thilo and Hagen, 1887, 3:23; "Pan . . . totius naturae deus" (Pan . . . the god of all nature). Similarly, Isidore, *Etym.* 8.11.81-83; and Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. doctrinale*, 1624, liber 17, ch. 10, fol. 155v: "Pan . . . Quem volunt rerum et totius naturae Deum" (Pan . . . whom they [i.e., the Greeks and the Romans] made the god of everything and of all nature). See also Bode, *Scriptores rerum mythicarum* 1:40-41, 91, 200; and Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the 12th Century*, 1972, 136, n. 25.

519 I prey the: The relative social positions of the Dreamer and the Black Knight are indicated by the consistent use of *thou/theu* (Knight to Dreamer) implying the Dreamer's inferiority and the respectful *ye/you* (Dreamer to Knight) in their forms of address. (See Mustanoja ME Syntax, 126-28, for discussion of ME usage.) Cf. the use of the plural pronoun between persons of high rank in the address of Alciono to Ceix in BD 202-10, and see also CIT IV.890n.

531 For the idiom see ShipT VII.379n, Tr 2.1025n. 544-57 Elliott (Ch's English, 242-44) draws attention to the large number of tags, oaths, and coordinating

conjunctions in the Dreamer's speech, which convey a sense of his well-intentioned but incoherent outpouring of counsel.

544 The dialogue between the Dreamer and the Black Knight has been considered by some critics to be modeled on Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (in *Med. Sts. in Hon. of Urban T. Holmes, Jr.*, ed. J. Mahoney and J. E. Keller, 1966; Univ. of North Carolina Sts. in Romance Lang. and Lit., 56, 169-95) equates the Black Knight with Boethius, the Dreamer with the Confessor, arguing that the Black Knight, who does not suffer wisely and bravely, cannot represent Gaunt, but rather "a certain aspect of almost everyone in the audience." See also Cherniss (JEGP, 68, 1969, 655-65), who considers that the physician of BD 39 is the "medicine" of philosophy, so described in Cons. A detailed comparison of the structure of Cons. with that of BD is given by Russell A. Peck (in *Silent Poetry: Essays in Numerological Analysis*, ed. A. Fowler, 1970, 73-115), who sees throughout the passage a Boethian "combination of confession and recollection." Bronson (PMLA 67, 1952, 863-81) suggests that the Black Knight represents both Gaunt and the Dreamer's surrogate. Shoaf (Genre 14, 1981, 163-89) suggests that the dialogue between the Dreamer and the Black Knight echoes the terminology of confessional literature; in particular, he notes the similarity between BD 746-48 and 1126-36 and the references to *circumstantiae peccati* of penitential writings. Shoaf argues that the Black Knight's "sin" in the early part of the dialogue had been "to try to live in the past—not *with* it."

569-72 Ovid, *Met.* 10.40-44, describes the power of Orpheus's music to bring rest to those tortured in the Underworld; cf. Bo 3.m12n. Dedalus (Daedalus) represents mechanical skill; his story is told in *Met.* 8.183-262. For *Ypocras* (Hippocrates) and *Galyen* (Galen) see GP 1.429-34n.

571 Cf. 39-40 and note 30-43 above.

583 Identical sentiments are expressed in Behaingne, 196-97.

589 Cesiphus: "Sisiphus, mentioned along with Orpheus in *Met.* 10.44. But *that heid in belle* is applicable rather to Tityus, who is referred to (but not named) by Ovid in the same place. Perhaps Chaucer's memory was confused for the moment" (Robinson). But see Textual Notes (MSS read *Tisiphus/Tisiphus*).

597 Rhetorical *communitas*; see 817-1040 below.

599-616 Hammerle (in *Anglia* 66, 1942, 70-72) suggests that this may have been inspired by Chaucer's recollection of the first couplet of *Alanus de Insulis*, *De planctu Naturae*, "In lacrymas risus, in fletum gaudia verro; In plancum plausus, in lacrymosa iocosa" (I turn my laughter into tears, my joy into weeping; my applause into complaint, my jokes into grieving); Behaingne, 177-87, is also a likely source, which itself may be modeled on the long list of paradoxes describing the state of being in love ("Esperance desespere"; hopeless hope, etc.) of RR 4293-334. With BD 600 cf. Machaut's *Remede de fortune*, 1198, "en grief plour est mûe mon ris" (my laughter is turned to sad weeping). Cf. Tr 5.1375-79.

617-709 Kittredge, PMLA 30:10-14, discusses Chaucer's indebtedness to four Machaut poems in this passage: *Remede de fortune* (Oeuvres, ed. Hoepffner, lines 918, 1052-56, 1138, 1162, 1167-68); Behaingne (1072-74,

1078-80); the eighth Motet (Poésies lyriques, ed. Chichemaref 2.497-98); and Confort (Poésies lyriques, ed. Chichemaref, 2.415, lines 10-13—where Machaut remarks that there is no element or planet in the firmament that does not give him the gift of weeping, with which cf. BD 695-96). Many phrases are translated word for word by Chaucer. With the scorpion figure Kittredge (PMLA 30:11) compares Machaut's ninth Motet; cf. also RR 6744-46; MLT II.361, 406; and MerT IV.2058-64. Chaucer may have also recalled the discussion of the duplicity of Fortune in Remede de fortune, 2379-2452, where she is described as two-faced, both bitter and sweet, etc.

629-33 As fylthe over-ystrawed with flouris: Cf. RR 8908-13, where the sentiment is expressed that a dunghill covered with silk or flowers still smells; the idea is proverbial (Whiting F146). Machaut's eighth Motet, 6-8, is the immediate source, however, describing Fortune as "Sans foy, sans loy, sans droit et sans mesure" (Faithless, lawless, unjust and extreme; cf. BD 632-33) and as dung covered with rich cloth. See 811-13 below.

636-41 The scorpion was a common symbol of treachery; cf. MLT II.404; MerT IV.2058-65; MancT IX.271; and Whiting S96, who quotes a gloss from Ecclesiasticus 26.10 in the Wycliffite Bible: "A scorpion that maketh fair semblaunt with the face and pricketh with the tail; so a wickid woman draweth by flatteryngis, and prickith til deith"; cf. Ayenbite of Inwit, BETS 23, 62. The idea is traditional and occurs in Aesop's Fables 4.3. According to Vincent of Beauvais, the scorpion's face is "somewhat like a maiden's," and it never ceases seeking occasions to strike (Spec. nat. 20.95, col. 1549).

652-71 With the chess allegory, cf. RR 6620-726, from which Chaucer takes some phrases (see 660-61 and 663 below); in RR the "games of chess" are the actual battles between Charles of Anjou and his enemies, though their discomfiture is seen to be due to Fortune. See also Remede de fortune, 1190-91; the trope was a common one; however, *fers* originally meant "wise man, counsellor" (Arabic *frazan*) and the name was given to a chess piece with restricted movement (one square diagonally), which kept close to the King (see H. J. R. Murray, A Hist. of Chess, 1913, esp. 423). Alongside *fers* as the name of the piece, there developed in Europe other names which were feminine, *domina, regina*, etc. Cooley (MLN 63, 1948, 30-35) suggests that the medieval strategy was to keep the queen (*fers*) in close attendance on the king, so that it is likely to be the last piece taken before the king is mated. French (MLN 64, 1949, 261-64) is of the view that the losing of the queen was in itself not serious, but that the Black Knight takes no further interest in the game when his *fers* is lost and is thus easily checkmated.

660-61 the myd poynt of the chekker: Apparently refers to the four central squares of the board, where the checkmate often took place (Murray, Hist. of Chess, 428-29, 474, 605). Poun errant (traveling pawn) was frequently the title given to the mating pawn (Murray, 751). Cf. RR 6652-59, where all these phrases occur, "Eschech e mat . . . /D'un trait de paonet errant/Ou milleu de son eschequier." (Check and mate . . . With a move of the traveling pawn in the middle of the chess-board).

663 Than Athalus, that made the game: Attalus the Third, Philometor, king of Pergamos, described in RR

6691-92 as the inventor of chess. (See Murray, Hist. of Chess, 502.)

667 Pictagores: Pythagoras; Baugh (15) notes that John of Salisbury says that Pythagoras was interested in games that have a numerical basis.

669 And kept my fers the bet therby: See 772 below.

708 Proverbial, Whiting D287; cf. HF 361 and Tr 2.789n.

709 Tantale: Tantalus, who is mentioned along with Ixion and Sisyphus in Met. 10.41. Cf. 589 above. Ixion, Tantalus, and Sisyphus are also named near together in RR 19279-99.

710-59 In the following conversation Chaucer made considerable use of RR; cf. for example, BD 717-19 with RR 5847-56 (Socrates' indifference to Fortune); 726-34 with RR 13174-262, where La Vieille (the Duenna) gives examples (Dido, Phyllis, Oenone, Medea) of women who have committed suicide when forsaken by their lovers; 735-37 with RR 1439-56 (Rom 1469-89—the death of Echo); 738-39 with RR 9203-6 and 16677-88, though in these references to Samson the deceit of Dalilah (rather than Samson's death) is stressed.

717 Socrates: Cf. note WBPio III.772-32 and For 17 and note 17-20.

723 the ferses twelve: The number twelve presents a problem to which no completely convincing solution has been found. The RR passage (see 652-71 and 660-61 above) does not mention a number. Murray, Hist. of Chess, 452, shows that by medieval rules "a game was won by checkmating the opponent's king, or by robbing or denuding him of his forces—an ending called Bare King." Stevenson (ELH 7, 1940; 215-22) suggests that the Dreamer refers to draughts or checkers, though finds no evidence of a draughtsman ever being called a *fers*. Cooley (MLN 63:30-35) suggests that, as the *fers* was so important (cf. 652-71 above) *ferses twelve* could, by metonymy, mean "twelve games"; though all MSS have *the ferses*, Cooley advocates the omission of the definite article to resolve the difficulty; *twelve* might, he suggests, be used because of its associations with companions, e.g., apostles and douzpers. Bronson (PMLA 67:874-75) also favors the association with the Twelve Peers of Charlemagne and suggests that *Douzpers* might sometimes have been corrupted into *Douzfers*. Skeat (1:481-82) counts eight pawns (referring to Caxton's Game of Chess to prove the individual character of each pawn—laborer, smith, clerk; etc.) and one each of (the duplicated) bishop, knight, and rook; this, with the addition of the queen, totals twelve. He argues, "As the word *fers* originally meant counsellor or monitor of the king, it could be applied to any of the pieces." But, while a pawn could become a *fers* by reaching the eighth square, there is no reason to believe that *fers* could apply to "any" piece. Rowland (Anglia 80, 1962, 384-89) points out that boards of 12 by 8 squares existed (particularly in a German version of chess) with twelve pawns; she also suggests an improbable astrological link involving a pun on *fers*/Lat. *fers* (ME *fer*, OF *fer*, *fer*)—"wild beast" (cf. Astr 1.21.49-62), which might give the meaning "even if you were not under the influence of the twelve signs of the zodiac and could choose your own destiny and kill yourself as you wish, you would be condemned because it is foolish to die for love." For an interpretation of the pawn image as an oblique reference to Chaucer himself

in a struggle for promotion, see Rowland, AmN&Q 6, 1967, 3-5. See also 946 and n. below.

728-29 The idea that Phyllis hanged herself is probably from RR 13414-17; see LGW 2484-85n.

735 Ecquo: See 710-58 above. Echo's hopeless love for Narcissus is told in Ovid, Met. 3.370-401.

738 Dalida: For the form of the name, see MKT VII.2063-70.

749-52 Cf. Behaingne, 253-56.

759-804 Many details and a good deal of the vocabulary are taken from Behaingne, 125-33, 261-73; Remede de fortune, 23-60; and RR 1881-2022, 12889-92 (Kittredge, PMLA 30:16-17). The account is thoroughly conventional. Von Kreisler, MP 68, 1970, 62-64, compares the formula in BD 768 with 116, and also with FF 417 and KnT I.3078. Although he suggests that the formula originates in Max. 22.37, and that in the BD passages Chaucer stresses physical absence, it should be noted that in Behaingne, 125-52, the lady says that she has for seven or eight years (cf. BD 37) given her devotion to Bonne Amour; and that since her first childhood knowledge of love she has "Cuer corps, pooir, vie, avoif et puissance/Et quanqu'il fu de moy, mis par plaiance/En son service" (joyfully placed in her [Bonne Amour's] service heart, body, strength, life, possessions and might, and whatever else was mine). A similar formula occurs in Behaingne, 502-3: the lover adores the lady above everything else. "With heart, body, true desire, and soul."

793-98 Cf. 445 above. Gaunt married Blanche in 1359 when he was nineteen. Much of the phraseology is directly from Remede de fortune (see 759-804 above), e.g., "Et l'entrepregne en jeune aage . . . juenesse me gouvernoit" (Let him undertake it when young . . . youth governed me).

797-98 Cf. Rom 593.

805-9 Modeled on Behaingne, 281-90 (Kittredge, MP 7:467-68); cf. Dit douz vergier (Oeuvres 1:155-58).

810-11 For the rhetorical devices used here see 817-1040 below.

811-13 Nay, but Fortune . . . : This reversion to the tirade against Fortune (see 617-709 and n.; 629-33n.) is a blend of Behaingne, 284-85: "Fortune,/Qui de mentir a tous est trop commune" (Fortune who lies to everyone all too often) and the eighth Motet, 17, where Fortune is described as "Fausse, traître, perverse" (False, treacherous, perverse).

813-14 For the rhyme, see 309-10 above.

817-1040 For the long description of the lady, Chaucer drew very largely upon Behaingne, with frequent incidental use of the Remede de fortune, and occasional reminiscences from the Lay de confort and the Roman de la rose. Even some of the most individualizing traits in the picture are paralleled in the French sources. Yet it is hard to believe that the passage does not contain a real portrayal of the Duchess of Lancaster. Clemen (Ch's Early Poet, 54-57) remarks that Chaucer shortens the catalogue of physical features found in Machaut and stresses Blanche's sympathy, friendliness, and goodness of heart; by interspersing his conventional material with protestations, questions, and so on, freshness and a personal effect are created. For another contemporary portrait emphasizing Blanche's unspoiled nature, see Froissart, Le joli Buisson de Jonece, 241-50, ed. Anthime Fourrier, 1975. For further discussion, see Anderson,

MP 45, 1948, 152-59. Cf. BD 817-32 with Behaingne, 286-96; 833-45 with Remede de fortune, 71-72, 95-99, 102-3, 197-99 (and also with RR 1681-83); 844-45 with Confort, 164-66; 848-74 with Behaingne, 297-330; 871-72 with Rom 345 and Behaingne, 321-22; 904-6 with Behaingne, 356-58 and Remede de fortune, 1629-30; 907-11 with Behaingne, 397-403, 582; 912-13 with Behaingne, 411-14; 918 with Behaingne, 580-81; 919-37 with Remede de fortune, 217-38; 939-47 with Behaingne, 361-63; 948-51 with Remede de fortune, 54-56; 952-60 with Behaingne, 364-83; 966-74 with Remede de fortune, 167-74; 985-87 with Remede de fortune, 123-24; 1035-40 with Behaingne, 148-53, 156-58.

There is in many of these passages a very close modeling: cf. for example, BD 848-54 with Behaingne, 297-301: "car je la vi dancier si contement/ Et puis chanter si très jollement/ Rire et jouer si gracieusement/ Qu'onques encor/ Ne fu veü plus gracieus tresor" (For I saw her dance so prettily, / And then sing so very charmingly, / Laugh and play so graciously, / That since then, / There has never been seen so gracious a treasure). Chaucer is also influenced by Machaut's rhyme-scheme. This mode of describing a lady feature by feature from head to foot was conventional in medieval love-poetry. A rhetorician's specimen known to Chaucer (cf. NPT VII.3347 and n.) was furnished by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Poetria nova, 562-599. For a number of other examples, see Faral, Les arts poétiques, 75-81; Rom 817-1302; Hammond, Eng. Verse, 405, 452; see also Brewer, MLR 50, 1955, 257-69; Rudolfo Renier, Il tipo estetico della donna nel medio evo, 1885; Kohn, Das weibliche Schöne in der ritterlichen Dichtung, 1930; Muscatine, Ch and Fr Trad., 17-18. See also Tr 5.799-840n. Chaucer also follows the Poetria nova (ultimately derived from the pseudo-Ciceronian Rhetorica ad Herennium) in particulars. Geoffrey of Vinsauf describes thirty-five "plain colors" of rhetorical devices. Many can be seen in the Black Knight's speeches: e.g., 810, *substantio* and *interrogatio* (rhetorical question); 811, *reincognatio* (a question addressed to and answered by the speaker) and *expeditio* (elimination of all but one possibility); 829, *præfatio* or *epitaphis* (unfinished sentence); 830, *interrogatio* again; 832, *conclusio* (brief summing-up); 848-51, *similiter cadens* (successive clauses with the same inflectional endings); 855-56, 896-70, *contrarium* (denying the contrary of an idea before affirming it). For Chaucer's use of rhetoric, see the works cited in the Bibliography, pp. 773-74. Murphy (RES n.s. 15, 1964, 1-20) has challenged the idea that Chaucer knew Geoffrey of Vinsauf directly, but see Dronke in Ch: Writers and Background, 170.

869-73 Cf. PhYT VI.9-13n.

889 Ynde: I.e., the end of the earth; cf. Rom 624; WBPio III.824n.

895-901 Perhaps a use of the topos of "affected modesty" (see GP I.746n.), though cf. KnT I.1459-60n.

905 Was whit, rody, fressh, and lyvely hewed: Against this line (and against 942 and 948) the word "blanche" has been written in the Fairfax MS, probably by John Stowe. Lines 905 and 942 are hypermetric. Some editors have omitted *whit* (see Textual Notes), but Peck (in Silent Poetry, 94) suggests that the extra foot is intended "to heighten the metaphysical import of 'White' when she is actually named in 948"; Peck be-

lieves that Stowe's marginal notes show that he understood the riddle.

946 a round tour of *vyvoire*: The detail does not appear in Machaut or RR. This may be a continuation of the chess-piece image, BD 652-741, and see also 975 (Rowland, N&Q 208, 1963, 9). Song of Songs 7.4 has "Collum tuum sicut turris eburnea" (Thy neck is as a tower of ivory, AV). The association of Mary with the "turris eburnea" was common (see Yrjö Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 1912, 444-45). Wimsatt (JEGP 66, 1967, 26-44) notes a number of details in the description of Blanche that are associated with the Virgin (e.g., the phoenix, 982-83; Esther, 985-88, who was sometimes seen as a prefiguring of Mary; and the spotless mirror in Wisdom 7.26, which was taken to represent Mary, and with which cf. BD 974). Wimsatt concludes that the poem's consolatory function is thus effected: "Chaucer by means of the Black Knight's description raises her to Heaven where she is no longer an imperfect figure of Mary."

963-65 *Iyk to torche bryght*: A common simile, cf. LGW 2419 and Whiting C24. The idea is proverbial and appears in *Ennius*, as quoted by Cicero, *De officiis* 1.16 (Skeat 5:300), though here probably drawn from RR 7410-14. Cf. WBPo III.333-34.

982 The *soleyn fenix*: The ancient tradition about the phoenix was familiar in both learned and popular writings of the Middle Ages. Passages that Chaucer may have had in mind are Met. 15.292-407, and RR 15975-98, both of which emphasize the solitariness of the bird. Cf. also Gower's *Balade no. 35*, 8-11 (Works, ed. Macaulay, 1366), where the lady is compared with "la fenix souleine . . . En Arabie" (The one and only phoenix . . . in Arabia). See also note 946 above.

987 Hester: Cf. MerT IV.1370-71, 1744-45n.

1019 "It gave her no pleasure to keep anyone's interest in her by raising false expectations." See Tr 3.773n.; cf. also Tr 5.1615, 1680. For an example of similar usage in Shakespeare, see Much Ado, 4.1.304.

1024-32 Cf., for the general tenor of this passage, the *Dit dou lyon*, 1368-504, where long journeys are compared by lovers who are anxious to prove their worthiness of ladies' affections; and Gower's *Confessio amantis* 4.1615-82, where the Confessor enjoins the task of military travel "over the grete Se," etc., to win the love of "worthi women," though the Lover adduces arguments to the contrary. For illustrations of the young knight's wanderings, see *Loves*, RomR 2, 1911, 113-28, esp. 121-23. *Loves* quotes from Jean de Condé's *Li dis dou levrier*, where a lady commands her lover to spend seven years acquiring honor in Scotland, England, France, and Germany. Cf. GP 1.85-88.

1024-25 *Walakye*: Wallacia, an independent Romanic-speaking country between the Danube and the Transylvanian Alps in South Romania.

Fruyzer: See GP 1.53n.

Tartarye: Probably used here loosely for Outer Mongolia (see S&T V.9n.; Magoun, MS 17, 1955, 117-42, esp. 140 and 142).

1026 *Alysaundre*: Cf. GP 1.51n.

1028-29 The *Drye Set*: Probably the great Desert of Gobi in Central Asia; the *Carrenar* (or *Carrenare*), the Kara-Nor, or Black Lake, is on its eastern side. This region lay on a main trade route between China and the West. That it was known to medieval Europeans is

proved by the mention of it by Marco Polo (ed. Sir Henry Yule, 3rd ed., 1903, 1:196-203). Chaucer and his contemporaries may have confused it with the great shoals at the mouths of the Dwina and the Petchora in Russia, which bore similar names and lay along the course of another Asiatic trade route. On the whole subject, see *Loves*, MP 3, 1905-6, 1-46; for other explanations see 2-5 there.

hoodles probably implies a "romantic disregard for comfort" (*Loves*, RomR 2:121).

1056-74 With this list of worthies cf. the *Remede de fortune*, 107-34. "Even if I were as wise as Solomon etc. . . I would never love anyone but my lady," and also Machaut's thirty-eighth *Balade notée* (*Poésies lyriques*, ed. Chichemaref 2:560-61) where the poet says that he has no interest in seeing the beauty of Absalon, or in testing Samson's strength, because, "Je voy assez, puisque je voy ma dame" (I see enough because I see my lady), and Behaingne, 421-25. The sentiment was commonplace.

1057-60 *Alciyades*: Alcibiades was commonly celebrated for his beauty; cf. RR 8943, Bo 3.pr8.44-45. The strength of *Ercules* (*Hercules*) was proverbial (*Whiting H358*), as was the worthiness of *Alysaundre* (*Alexander*, *Whiting A85*).

1061-65 *Babylon* (*Babylynye*), *Carthage* (*Cartage*), *Macedonia* (*Macedoyne*), *Rome*, and the biblical *Nineveh* (*Nynyve*) are examples of great cities and empires now fallen.

1069 *Antylegyus*: A corruption of *Antilogus* (*Antilochus*), which is in turn a mistake for *Archilochus*. He and Achilles (1066) were slain by ambush in the temple of Apollo, where they had gone so that Achilles might marry Polixena (1071). The plot was laid against them in revenge for the deaths of Hector and Troilus. This episode is briefly related by Dares, ch. 34; but Chaucer may have got it rather from Benoît (see *Le roman de Troie* 21838-22334; Dares is cited in some MS readings of 22306) or from Joseph of Exeter, *De bello Troiano* 6.402-50. It is also in Guido delle Colonne (ed. Griffin, 207-8).

1070 *Dares Frygius*: On Dares Phrygius and his place in the history of the Trojan legend, see the introduction to the notes to *Troilus*. See also 1117 below.

1081-85 *Penelopee* and *Lucrece* were famed for their virtues (cf. *IntrMLT* II.63, 75; *FranT* V.1443; *Anel* 82; LGW 1680-1885). Cf. RR 8605-12, where *Tytus Lyvvyus* is also mentioned. See also *PhyT* VI.1 and the introductory note to that tale.

1088-1111 Cf. *Remede de fortune*, 64-65, 89-94, 135-66, 295-302.

1089-90 The rhyme say (preterite indicative) and say (a clipped form of the infinitive) is very unusual in Chaucer; cf. introductory note to *Proverbs*. Possibly, as Skeat suggested, the former should be *sey* (preterite subjunctive), though the indicative seems more natural. Perhaps Chaucer was attracted by the "rime riche." See GP 1.17-18n.

1100 *slouther*: In the later Middle Ages, sloth (*accidia*) in descriptions of the Seven Deadly Sins related primarily to laziness in the performance of religious duties. (See Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, 1952, esp. 217.) This association is appropriate in the context of the Black Knight's *worship and tennis* (1098).

1108-11 Cf. *Dit dou lyon*, 207-12.

1113-25 Perhaps a development of Behaingne, 1140-47.

1114 *shryfte wythoute repentance*: Some critics have taken this to mean that the Dreamer considers the Black Knight has "got off without penance," or has "sorrow with nothing to repent." More likely, however, is "It seems to me that you have as much chance of being shriven as if you were to confess without being contrite." (For discussion, see Diekstra, ES 62:215-36, esp. 224.) Cf. RR 6924, "Confession senz repentance."

1117-23 *Achitofel*: Achitophel counseled Absalon to rebel against David (2 Sam. 17). *Antenor* (*Antenor*) betrayed Troy by sending the statue of Pallas Athena, on whose safety Troy depended, to Ulysses. Cf. Tr 4.202-6 and n.; Benoît, *Roman de Troie*, 24397-824 (where both Dares and Dictys are referred to); and Guido delle Colonne, *Historia destructionis Troiae*, 226-29.

Genelloun: The notorious traitor of the *Chanson de Roland* (cf. *ShipT* VII.136n.). Rowland and Olyver, whose friendship was celebrated, were the most famous of Charlemagne's knights (cf. *Mkt* VII.2387).

1146-50 Cf. *Remede de fortune*, 357-66.

1152-53 Cf. RR 1996-97: "Il est assez sires dou cors/ Qui a le cuer en sa comande" (He who possesses the heart can be sure enough of the body). This is turned about in BD 1154: "and if any one has that [his heart], a man may not escape."

1155-57 Cf. *Remede de fortune*, 401-6. The making of complaints in song was of course the regular procedure under such circumstances. See, for example, Machaut's *Confort d'ami*, 2057-2102, *Font. amor.*, 235-1034. For discussion of Machaut's "complaints," see Calin, *Poet at the Fountain*: references are given under "complainte" on 256 there. Cf. *FranT* V.943-49.

1162 As *koude Lamekes sone Tubal*: "In Gen. 4.21 it is Jubal, not Tubal, who is called the father of all such as handle the harp and the organ." The ascription to Tubal, however, is not peculiar to Chaucer. It occurs in Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* (Lib. Gen. cap. 28) and Vincent's *Speculum doctrinale* 17.25, as well as in the *Aurora* of Petrus de Riga, which Chaucer in 1169 acknowledges as his source. (All these passages were printed by Young, *Spec* 12, 1937, 299-303.) They all mention also the Greek attribution of the invention of music to Pythagoras (*Pictagoras*) (Robinson). Machaut, *Remede de fortune*, 2318, makes the Pythagoras/music attribution also. Lamech took two wives: from Ada was born Jubal (father of harpists and organists); from Sella was born Tubalcain (hammerer and artificer of brass and iron). Beichner (in *Texts and Studies in Hist. of Med. Educ.* 2, 1954, 5-27) gives a detailed history of medieval traditions about the original discoverer of music and demonstrates that there was a common misreading of "tubal" for "jubal," paleographically understandable, particularly with the proximity in the context of "tubalcain" (in Latin MSS of the Middle Ages, proper names were seldom capitalized). Of twenty copies of the *Aurora* studied by Beichner, only two read "tubal" instead of "jubal"; he concludes that Chaucer writes "Tubal," . . . either because he was using one of the rare copies of the *Aurora* with this spelling, or because he changed 'tubal' to 'tubal' thinking it was right. The latter, I believe, is more probable because by this time 'tubal' was rather common."

1180-1312 In the following passages Chaucer again

makes frequent use of Behaingne and the *Remede de fortune*. Cf. BD 1181-82 with *Remede de fortune*, 681-82; 1183-91 with Behaingne, 453-56; 1192 with Behaingne, 466; 1195-98 with Behaingne, 461-62 and *Remede de fortune*, 1671-83; 1203-18 with Behaingne, 467-76; 1216 with *Remede de fortune*, 696; 1219 with Behaingne, 504-5; 1226-28 with Behaingne, 656-58; 1236-38 with Behaingne, 509-12; 1239-44 with Behaingne, 541-48; 1250-51 with *Remede de fortune* 751-52; 1258-67 with Behaingne, 610; 1273 with *Remede de fortune*, 4074-75; 1275-78 with Behaingne, 642-43; 1285-86 with *Remede de fortune*, 139-40; 1289-297 with Behaingne, 166-76. Many of these Machaut passages are quoted in columns with BD in Kittredge, PMLA 30:20-24.

1200 With sorwe: Probably imprecatory rather than descriptive. For the construction, see FrT III.1334n.

1206-7 I *trouwe hyt* was in the *dismal*/That was the ten woundes of Egypte: MED derives *dismal* from OF *dis mal* (unlucky days). A thirteenth-century Anglo-French poem defines *dismal* as "maljoirs" (which, Skeat states, confirms the etymology from Lat. *dis mali*). But Spitzer (MLN 57, 1942, 602-13) argues that this etymology is philologically impossible, that the genuine origin is Lat. *decem mala* (ten evils), and that the idea links with Gregory's instruction that a tenth of the year should be given over to self-mortification. The connection between *dismal* and the *ten woundes of Egypte* is complex: two days each month were designated as "Egyptian days" and were thought to be unlucky. (Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum naturale* 15.83, explains that there were minor plagues in addition to the major ten.) These Egyptian days were sometimes called "dismal days" (MED s.v. *dismal*, a reference to Wyclif, "egipcian daies that we call dysmal"; MED, s.v. *Egyptien*, quotes the *Cyurgie* of Gui de Chauliac [c. 1425]: "Of egipcianez daiez, i. ditez malez daiez"). Spitzer demonstrates that medieval writers were not averse to using more than one "etymology" of a word, and that Chaucer here plays on both Lat. *dis mali* (OF *dis mal*), "evil days," and Lat. *decem mala* (OF *dis mala*), "ten evils." Skeat (1.493) believes that *woundes* is an over-literal translation of Lat. "plague" (see *Vulgate*, Exodus 7-12, headings), usually translated "plagues," but *Promptorium parvulorum*, EETS s. 102, gives Lat. "plaga" as a definition for *wound*. On the tradition of the "Egyptian" or "dismal" days, see Hirsch, ELN 13, 1975, 86-90.

1246 For the lamentation of Cassandra, see Benoît, *Roman de Troie*, 26113-122.

1248 Ilyoun: See MLT II.289n.

1270 This phrase occurs twice in Behaingne, 641, 670. 1312 to strake: See Emerson, RomR 13:135-37 and cf. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, 1363-64, and 1922-23. In *Master of Game* by Edward, second duke of York, written between 1406 and 1413 (ed. W. A. and F. Baillie-Grohman, London, 1904, 110 and 112) two types of straking are described, each with a distinct sequence of notes. One indicates that the king no longer wishes to hunt and it is used "for all huntynges save when the hert is slayn with strength" (see 351 above). The other note-sequence for straking indicates that a hart has been "slayn with strength" in the king's hunt. As Chaucer does not say which of the two horn-calls was used, he leaves ambiguous whether the hart was slain. See Tilander, *Cyngetica* 4, 1957, 228-33;

and Marcelle Thiébaux, *Stag of Love*, 1974, 115-27, esp. 126 and n. 40.

1314-29 this kyng: It seems likely that the *emperour Octovien* of line 368, the Black Knight, and this kyng all represent Gaunt. Skeat (1:422), following an earlier suggestion, considered that *this kyng* "plainly intended" Edward III. Condren (ChR 5, 1970, 195-212) suggests that the poem may have been composed for an anniversary service of Blanche's death (for details of which see Lewis, *Bulletin of John Rylands Library* 21, 1937, 176-92) and in ChR 10, 1975, 87-95, Condren proposes a date post-1371, because only after Gaunt's marriage to Constantine (September 1371) did he assume the title of King of Castile and León; Condren sees the eight-year sickness (cf. 30-43 above) as Ch's period of grief after Blanche's death, and favors accordingly a 1376 date for the composition of BD. See also discussion of the possible date of composition by Palmer (ChR 8, 1974, 253-61), who demonstrates that Blanche's death was not the hitherto accepted 12 September 1369, but 12 September 1368. For further evidence supporting the 1368 date, see Ferris (ChR 18, 1983, 92-95). There appear to be several examples of word play which connect the poem with Gaunt and Blanche: *long castel* = "Lancaster" (also

called "Loncastel," "Longcastell"), *waltes white* is probably an oblique reference to "Blanche" (cf. the translation pun in 948); *seyni Johan* is Gaunt's name-saint; *ryche bil* = "Richmond." Gaunt, at the age of two, was created earl of Richmond in Yorkshire and it belonged to him until 1372. (See Tupper, MLN 31, 1916, 250-52 and MLN 32, 1917, 54; Skeat's letter in Acad 45, 1894, 191, where he accepts the above interpretations and would emend his own note on Richmond accordingly; Kökeritz, PMLA 69:951). Exegetical, allegorical interpreters of the poem (see references to Huppé and Robertson and to Gardner in 309-10 above) take the lines to imply also the "white city of Jerusalem, on the rich hill of Sion, which St. John described." Similarly, Peck (in *Silent Poetry*, 76) considers that the general archetype of counselor-healer occurs in various manifestations in the poem, "and ultimately emanates from the vision 'be seyni Johan' of the homeward bound king, where Christ is indeed immanent."

1324-34 At the end of the poem Chaucer reverts to the *Paradys d'amours*, from which he took the suggestion of his opening lines. With BD 1324-25, cf. the *Paradys*, 1685-92; and with 1330-34, cf. *Paradys*, 1693-95 and 1722-23.