

The Knight's Tale

Heere bigynneth the Knyghtes Tale Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,

Ther was a duc that highte Theseus;
Of Atthenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
5 That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne,
What with his wysdom and his chivalrie;
He conquered al the regne of Femenye,
That whilom was ycleped Scithia,
10 And weddede the queene Ypolita,
And broghte hir hoom with hym in his contree,
With muchel glorie and greet solempnytee,
And eek hir yonge suster Emelye.
And thus with victorie and with melodye
15 Lete I this noble duc to Atthenes ryde,
And al his hoost, in armes hym bisyde.

And certes, if it nere to long to heere,
I wolde have toold yow fully the manere
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
20 By Theseus, and by his chivalrye,
And of the grete bataille for the nones
Bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones,
And how asseged was Ypolita
The faire hardy queene of Scithia,
25 And of the feste that was at hir weddyng,
And of the tempest at hir hoom-comyng;
But al the thyng I moot as now forbere,
I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,
And wayke been the oxen in my plough,
30 The remenant of the tale is long ynough.
I wol nat letten eek noon of this route,
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,
And lat se now who shal the soper wynne;-
And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne.

35 This duc of whom I make mencion,
Whan he was come almoost unto the toun,
In al his wele and in his mooste pride,
He was war, as he caste his eye aside,
Where that ther kneled in the hye weye
40 A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,
Ech after oother, clad in clothes blake;
But swich a cry and swich a wo they make,
That in this world nys creature lyvyng
That herde swich another waymentyng;
45 And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten,
Til they the reynes of his brydel henten.

"What folk been ye, that at myn hom-comyng
Perturben so my feste with cryyng?"

Quod Theseus. "Have ye so greet envye
 50 Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?
 Or who hath yow mysboden or offended?
 And telleth me if it may been amended,
 And why that ye been clothed thus in blak?"
 The eldeste lady of hem alle spak-
 55 Whan she hadde swowned with a deedly cheere,
 That it was routhe for to seen and heere-
 And seyde, "Lord, to whom Fortune hath yiven
 Victorie, and as a conqueror to lyven,
 Nat greveth us youre glorie and youre honour,
 60 But we biseken mercy and socour.
 Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse,
 Som drope of pitee thurgh thy gentillesse
 Upon us wrecched wommen lat thou falle;
 For certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle,
 65 That she ne hath been a duchesse or a queene.
 Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene,
 Thanked be Fortune, and hir false wheel,
 That noon estaat assureth to be weel.
 And certes, lord, to abyden youre presence,
 70 Heere in the temple of the goddessse Clemence
 We han ben waitynge al this fourtenyght;
 Now help us, lord, sith it is in thy myght!
 I wrecche, which that wepe and waille thus,
 Was whilom wyf to kyng Cappaneus,
 75 That starf at Thebes -cursed be that day!-
 And alle we that been in this array
 And maken al this lamentacioun,
 We losten alle oure housbondes at that toun,
 Whil that the seege therabout lay.
 80 And yet now the olde Creon, weylaway!
 That lord is now of Thebes the Citee,
 Fulfild of ire and of iniquitee,
 He, for despit and for his tirannye,
 To do the dede bodyes vileynye,
 85 Of alle oure lordes, whiche that been slawe,
 Hath alle the bodyes on an heep ydrawe,
 And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent,
 Neither to been yburyed nor ybrent,
 But maketh houndes ete hem in despit."
 90 And with that word, withouten moore respit,
 They fillen gruf, and criden pitously,
 "Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy
 And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte."
 This gentil duc doun from his courser sterte
 95 With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke;
 Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
 Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,
 That whilom weren of so greet estaat.

And in his armes he hem alle up hente,
 100 And hem conforteth in ful good entente,
 And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,
 He wolde doon so ferforthly his myght
 Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke,
 That all the peple of Grece sholde speke
 105 How Creon was of Theseus yservyd,
 As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.
 And right anoon, withouten moore abood,
 His baner he displayeth, and forth rood
 To Thebes-ward, and al his hoost biside,
 110 No neer Atthenes wolde he go ne ride,
 Ne take his ese fully half a day,
 But onward on his wey that nyght he lay,
 And sente anon Ypolita the queene,
 And Emelye, hir yonge suster sheene,
 115 Unto the toun of Atthenes to dwelle,
 And forth he rit; ther is namoore to telle.
 The rede statue of Mars, with spere and targe,
 So shyneth, in his white baner large,
 That alle the feeldes gliteren up and down,
 120 And by his baner gorn is his penoun
 Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete
 The Mynotaur which that he slough in Crete.
 Thus rit this duc, thus rit this conquerour,
 And in his hoost of chivalrie the flour,
 125 Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte
 Faire in a feeld, ther as he thoughte to fighte.
 But shortly for to speken of this thyng,
 With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,
 He faught, and slough hym manly as a knyght
 130 In pleyn bataille, and putte the folk to flyght;
 And by assaut he wan the citee after,
 And rente adoun bothe wall, and sparre, and rafter.
 And to the ladyes he sestored agayn
 The bones of hir freendes that weren slayn,
 135 To doon obsequies as was tho the gyse.
 But it were al to longe for to devyse
 The grete clamour and the waymentynge
 That the ladyes made at the brennyng
 Of the bodies, and the grete honour
 140 That Theseus, the noble conquerour,
 Dooth to the ladyes, whan they from hym wente;
 But shortly for to telle is myn entente.
 Whan that his worthy duc, this Theseus,
 Hath Creon slayn, and wonne Thebes thus,
 145 Stille in that feeld he took al nyght his reste,
 And dide with al the contree as hym leste.
 To ransake in the taas of bodyes dede,
 Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,

The pilours diden bisynesse and cure,
 150 After the bataille and disconfiture;
 And so bifel, that in the taas they founde
 Thurgh-girt with many a grevous bloody wounde,
 Two yonge knyghtes liggyng by and by,
 Bothe in oon armes, wrought ful richely,
 155 Of whiche two Arcita highte that oon,
 And that oother knyght highte Palamon.
 Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were,
 But by here cote-armures and by hir gere,
 The heraudes knewe hem best in special
 160 As they that weren of the blood roial
 Of Thebes, and of sustren two yborn.
 Out of the taas the pilours han hem torn,
 And had hem caried softe unto the tente
 Of Theseus, and he ful soone hem sente
 165 To Atthenes to dwellen in prisoun
 Perpetuelly, he nolde no raunsoun.
 And whan this worthy duc hath thus ydon,
 He took his hoost, and hoom he rit anon,
 With laurer crowned, as a conquerour;
 170 And ther he lyveth in joye and in honour
 Terme of his lyve; what nedeth wordes mo?
 And in a tour, in angwissh and in wo,
 Dwellen this Palamon and eek Arcite
 For evermoore, ther may no gold hem quite.
 175 This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,
 Till it fil ones, in a morwe of May,
 That Emelye, that fairer was to sene
 Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,
 And fressher than the May with floures newe-
 180 For with the rose colour stroof hir hewe,
 I noot which was the fairer of hem two-
 Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,
 She was arisen, and al redy dight-
 For May wole have no slogardie a-nyght;
 185 The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
 And maketh hym out of his slepe to sterte,
 And seith, "Arys and do thyn observaunce."
 This maketh Emelye have remembraunce
 To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.
 190 Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse,
 Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse,
 Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse,
 And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,
 She walketh up and down, and as hir liste
 195 She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
 To make a subtil gerland for hir hede,
 And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong.
 The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong,

Which of the castel was the chief dongeon,
 200 (Ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun,
 Of whiche I tolde yow, and tellen shal)
 Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal
 Ther as this Emelye hadde hir pleyynge.
 Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morwenynge,
 205 And Palamoun, this woful prisoner,
 As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,
 Was risen, and romed in a chambre on heigh,
 In which he al the noble citee seigh,
 And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene,
 210 Ther as this fresshe Emelye the shene
 Was in hire walk, and romed up and doun.
 This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun,
 Goth in the chambre romynge to and fro,
 And to hym-self compleynynge of his wo.
 215 That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, "allas!"
 And so bifel, by aventure or cas,
 That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre
 Of iren greet, and square as any sparre,
 He cast his eye upon Emelya,
 220 And therwithal he bleynte, and cryede "A!"
 As though he stongen were unto the herte.
 And with that cry Arcite anon up sterte
 And seyde, "Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,
 That art so pale and deedly on to see?
 225 Why cridestow? who hath thee doon offence?
 For Goddess love, taak al in pacience
 Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be;
 Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.
 Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
 230 Of Saturne, by sum constellacioun
 Hath yeven us this, al though we hadde it sworn;
 So stood the hevene, whan that we were born.
 We moste endure it, this the short and playn."
 This Palamon answerde and seyde agayn:
 235 "Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun
 Thow hast a veyn ymaginacioun.
 This prison caused me nat for to crye,
 But I was hurt right now thurgh-out myn ye
 Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.
 240 The fairnesse of that lady, that I see
 Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro,
 Is cause of al my cryng and my wo.
 I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,
 But Venus is it, soothly as I gesse."
 245 And therwithal, on knees doun he fil,
 And seyde, "Venus, if it be thy wil,
 Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure
 Bifore me, sorweful wrecched creature,

Out of this prisoun helpe that we may scapen!
 250 And if so be my destynnee be shapen
 By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,
 Of oure lynage have som compassioun,
 That is so lowe ybrought by tyrannye."
 And with that word Arcite gan espye
 255 Wher-as this lady romed to and fro,
 And with that sighte hir beautee hurte hym so,
 That, if that Palamon was wounded sore,
 Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or moore.
 And with a sigh he seyde pitously:
 260 "The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly
 Of hire, that rometh in the yonder place,
 And but I have hir mercy and hir grace
 That I may seen hir atte leeste weye,
 I nam but deed, ther is namoore to seye."
 265 This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,
 Dispitously he looked and answerde,
 "Wheither seistow this in earnest or in pley?"
 "Nay," quod Arcite, "in earnest by my fey,
 God helpe me so, me list ful yvele pleye."
 270 This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye;
 "It nere," quod he, "to thee no greet honour
 For to be fals, ne for to be traitour
 To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother,
 Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til oother,
 275 That nevere for to dyen in the peyne,
 Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,
 Neither of us in love to hyndre other,
 Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother,
 But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me
 280 In every cas, as I shal forthren thee, -
 This was thyn ooth, and myn also certeyn,
 I woot right wel thou darst it nat withseyn.
 Thus artow of my conseil, out of doute;
 And now thou woldest falsly been aboute
 285 To love my lady, whom I love and serve
 And evere shal, til that myn herte sterve.
 Nay, certes, false Arcite, thow shalt nat so!
 I loved hire first, and tolde thee my wo
 As to my conseil, and to my brother sworn,
 290 To forthre me as I have toold biforn,
 For which thou art ybounden as a knyght
 To helpen me, if it lay in thy myght,
 Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn."
 This Arcite ful proudly spak ageyn,
 295 "Thow shalt," quod he, "be rather fals than I.
 But thou art fals, I telle thee outrely,
 For paramour I loved hir first er thow.
 What, wiltow seyn thou wistest nat yet now

Wheither she be a womman or goddesse?
 300 Thyn is affeccoun of hoolynesse,
 And myn is love, as to a creature;
 For which I tolde thee myn aventure
 As to my cosyn and my brother sworn.
 I pose, that thow lovedest hir biforn;
 305 Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe
 That `who shal yeve a lovere any lawe?'
 Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,
 Than may be yeve of any erthely man.
 And therfore positif lawe and swich decree
 310 Is broken al day for love in ech degree.
 A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed,
 He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,
 Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf.
 And eek it is nat likly, al thy lyf,
 315 To stonden in hir grace, namoore shal I,
 For wel thou woost thyselfen, verrailly,
 That thou and I be dampned to prisoun
 Perpetuely, us gayneth no raunsoun.
 We stryven as dide the houndes for the boon,
 320 They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon.
 Ther cam a kyte, whil they weren so wrothe,
 And baar away the boon bitwixe hem bothe.
 And therfore at the kynges court, my brother,
 Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother.
 325 Love if thee list, for I love, and ay shal;
 And soothly, leeve brother, this is al.
 Heere in this prisoun moote we endure,
 And everich of us take his aventure."
 Greet was the strif and long bitwix hem tweye,
 330 If that I hadde leyser for to seye.
 But to th'effect; it happed on a day,
 To telle it yow as shortly as I may,
 A worthy duc, that highte Perotheus,
 That felawe was unto duc Theseus
 335 Syn thilke day that they were children lite,
 Was come to Atthenes his felawe to visite,
 And for to pleye as he was wont to do-
 For in this world he loved no man so,
 And he loved hym als tendrely agayn.
 340 So wel they lovede, as olde bookes sayn,
 That whan that oon was deed, soothly to telle,
 His felawe wente and soughte hym doun in helle.
 But of that storie list me nat to write;
 Duc Perotheus loved wel Arcite,
 345 And hadde hym knowe at Thebes yeer by yere,
 And finally, at requeste and preyere
 Of Perotheus, withouten any raunsoun,
 Duc Theseus hym leet out of prisoun

Frely to goon, wher that hym liste overal,
 350 In swich a gyse as I you tellen shal.
 This was the forward, pleynty for t'endite,
 Bitwixen Theseus and hym Arcite,
 That if so were that Arcite were yfounde
 Evere in his lif, by day or nyght or stounde,
 355 In any contree of this Theseus,
 And he were caught, it was acorded thus,
 That with a swerd he sholde lese his heed;
 Ther nas noon oother remedie ne reed,
 But taketh his leve and homward he him spedde;
 360 Lat hym be war! His nekke lith to wedde!
 How greet a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!
 The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte,
 He wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously,
 To sleen hymself he waiteth prively.
 365 He seyde, "Allas, that day that he was born!
 Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;
 Now is me shape eternally to dwelle
 Nat in purgatorie, but in helle.
 Allas, that evere knew I Perotheus!
 370 For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus,
 Yfetered in his prisoun evermo;
 Thanne hadde I been in blisse, and nat in wo.
 Oonly the sighte of hire whom that I serve,
 Though that I nevere hir grace may deserve,
 375 Wolde han suffised right ynough for me.
 O deere cosyn Palamon," quod he,
 "Thyn is the victorie of this aventure.
 Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure.-
 In prisoun? certes, nay, but in paradys!
 380 Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,
 That hast the sighte of hir, and I th'absence;
 For possible is, syn thou hast hir presence,
 And art a knyght, a worthy and an able,
 That by som cas, syn Fortune is chaungeable,
 385 Thow maist to thy desir som tyme atteyne.
 But I, that am exiled and bareyne
 Of alle grace, and in so greet dispeir
 That ther nys erthe, water, fir, ne eir,
 Ne creature, that of hem maked is,
 390 That may me helpe or doon confort in this,
 Wel oughte I sterve in wanhope and distresse,
 Farwel, my lif, my lust, and my gladnesse!
 Allas, why pleynten folk so in commune
 On purveiaunce of God or of Fortune,
 395 That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse
 Wel bettre than they kan hemself devyse?
 Som man desireth for to han richesse,
 That cause is of his mordre of greet siknesse.

And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,
 400 That in his hous is of his meynee slayn.
 Infinite harmes been in this mateere,
 We witen nat what thing we preyen heere.
 We faren as he that dronke is as a mous;
 A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,
 405 But he noot which the righte wey is thider,
 And to a dronke man the wey is slider.
 And certes, in this world so faren we;
 We seken faste after felicitee,
 But we goon wrong ful often trewely.
 410 Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,
 That wende and hadde a greet opinioun
 That if I myghte escapen from prisoun,
 Thanne hadde I been in joye and perfit heele,
 Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
 415 Syn that I may nat seen you, Emelye,
 I nam but deed, ther nys no remedye."
 Upon that oother syde, Palamon,
 Whan that he wiste Arcite was agon,
 Swich sorwe he maketh that the grete tour
 420 Resouneth of his youlyng and clamour.
 The pure fettres on his shynes grete
 Weren of his bittre salte teeres wete.
 "Allas," quod he, "Arcite, cosyn myn!
 Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thyn.
 425 Thow walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
 And of my wo thow yevest litel charge.
 Thou mayst, syn thou hast wysdom and manhede,
 Assemblen alle the folk of oure kynrede,
 And make a werre so sharp on this citee,
 430 That by som aventure, or som tretee,
 Thow mayst have hir to lady and to wyf,
 For whom that I moste nedes lese my lyf.
 For as by wey of possibilitee,
 Sith thou art at thy large, of prisoun free,
 435 And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage
 Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage.
 For I moot wepe and wayle, whil I lyve,
 With al the wo that prison may me yeve,
 And eek with payne that love me yeveth also,
 440 That doubleth al my torment and my wo."
 Therwith the fyr of jalousie up-sterie
 Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte
 So woodly, that he lyk was to biholde
 The boxtree, or the asshen dede and colde.
 445 Thanne seyde he, "O cruel Goddes, that governe
 This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,
 And writen in the table of athhamaunt
 Your parlement and youre eterne graunt,

What is mankynde moore unto you holde
 450 Than is the sheep that rouketh in the folde?
 For slayn is man right as another beest,
 And dwelleth eek in prison and arreest,
 And hath siknesse, and greet adversitee,
 And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee.
 455 What governance is in this prescience
 That giltelees tormenteth innocence?
 And yet encresseth this al my penaunce,
 That man is bounden to his observaunce,
 For Goddes sake, to letten of his wille,
 460 Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfille.
 And whan a beest is deed, he hath no peyne,
 But man after his deeth moot wepe and pleyne,
 Though in this world he have care and wo.
 Withouten doute it may stonden so.
 465 The answeere of this lete I to dyvynys,
 But well I woot, that in this world greet pyne ys.
 Allas, I se a serpent or a thief,
 That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,
 Goon at his large, and where hym list may turne!
 470 But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,
 And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,
 That hath destroyed wel ny al the blood
 Of Thebes with hise waste walles wyde.
 And Venus sleeth me on that oother syde
 475 For jalousie and fere of hym Arcite."
 Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,
 And lete hym in his prisoun stille dwelle,
 And of Arcita forth I wol yow telle.
 The somer passeth, and the nyghtes longe
 480 Encressen double wise the peynes stronge
 Bothe of the love and the prisoner;
 I noot which hath the wofuller mester.
 For shortly for to seyn, this Palamoun
 Perpetuelly is dampned to prisoun
 485 In cheynes and in fettres to been deed,
 And Arcite is exiled upon his heed
 For evere mo as out of that contree,
 Ne nevere mo he shal his lady see.
 Yow loveres axe I now this questioun,
 490 Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?
 That oon may seen his lady day by day,
 But in prison he moot dwelle alway;
 That oother wher hym list may ride or go,
 But seen his lady shal he nevere mo.
 495 Now demeth as yow liste ye that kan,
 For I wol telle forth, as I bigan.

Sequitur Pars Secunda

(Here begins the second part)

- Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde `Allas,'
For seen his lady shal he nevere mo;
500 And shortly to concluden al his wo,
So muche sorwe hadde nevere creature,
That is, or shal whil that the world may dure.
His slep, his mete, his drynke is hym biraft,
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft.
505 Hise eyen holwe and grisly to biholde,
His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde;
And solitarie he was and evere allone
And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
510 Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.
So feble eek were hise spiritz, and so lowe,
And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe
His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.
And in his geere for al the world he ferde
515 Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye
Engendred of humour malencolik
Biforen in his celle fantastik,
And shortly turned was al up so down
520 Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of hym, this woful love daunce Arcite.
What sholde I al day of his wo endite?
Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two
This crueel torment, and this peyne and wo,
525 At Thebes in his contree, as I seyde,
Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,
Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie
Biforn hym stood, and bad hym to be murie.
His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte,
530 An hat he werede upon hise heris brighte.
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,
As he was whan that Argus took his sleep;
And seyde hym thus, "To Atthenes shaltou wende,
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende."
535 And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.
"Now trewely, how soore that me smerte,"
Quod he, "to Atthenes right now wol I fare,
Ne for the drede of deeth shal I nat spare
To se my lady that I love and serve,
540 In hire presence I recche nat to sterve."
And with that word he caughte a greet mirour,
And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,
And saugh his visage al in another kynde.

And right anon it ran hym in his mynde,
 545 That sith his face was so disfigured
 Of maladye, the which he hadde endured,
 He myghte wel, if that he bar hym lowe,
 Lyve in Atthenes, everemoore unknowe,
 And seen his lady wel ny day by day.
 550 And right anon he chaunged his array,
 And cladde hym as a povre laborer,
 And al allone, save oonly a squier
 That knew his privetee and al his cas,
 Which was disguised povrely, as he was,
 555 To Atthenes is he goon, the nexte way.
 And to the court he wente, upon a day,
 And at the gate he profreth his servyse,
 To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse.
 And shortly of this matere for to seyn,
 560 He fil in office with a chamberleyn,
 The which that dwellynge was with Emelye,
 For he was wys and koude soone espye
 Of every servant which that serveth here.
 Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere,
 565 For he was yong and myghty for the nones,
 And therto he was strong and big of bones
 To doon that any wight kan hym devyse.
 A yeer or two he was in this servyse
 Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte;
 570 And Philostrate he seyde that he highte.
 But half so wel biloved a man as he
 Ne was ther nevere in court, of his degree;
 He was so gentil of condicioun
 That thurghout al the court was his renoun.
 575 They seyden, that it were a charitee,
 That Theseus wolde enhauncen his degree,
 And putten hym in worshipful servyse
 Ther as he myghte his vertu exercise.
 And thus withinne a while his name is spronge
 580 Bothe of hise dedes and his goode tonge,
 That Theseus hath taken hym so neer,
 That of his chambre he made hym a squier,
 And gaf hym gold to mayntene his degree.
 And eek men broghte hym out of his contree
 585 From yeer to yeer, ful pryvely, his rente.
 But honestly and slyly he it spente,
 That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
 And thre yeer in this wise his lif he ladde,
 And bar hym so in pees, and eek in werre,
 590 Ther was no man that Theseus hath derre.
 And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,
 And speke I wole of Palamon a lite.
 In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun

These seven year hath seten Palamoun,
 595 Forpyned, what for wo and for distresse.
 Who feeleth double soor and hevynesse
 But Palamon, that love destreyneth so,
 That wood out of his wit he goth for wo?
 And eek therto he is a prisoner,
 600 Perpetuelly, noght oonly for a yer.
 Who koude ryme in Englyssh proprely
 His martirdom? For sothe it am nat I,
 Therefore I passe as lightly as I may.
 It fel that in the seventh yere, in May,
 605 The thridde nyght, (as olde bookes seyn,
 That al this storie tellen moore pleyn)
 Were it by aventure or destynnee -
 As, whan a thyng is shapen, it shal be -
 That soone after the mydnyght Palamoun
 610 By helpyng of a freend, brak his prisoun
 And fleeth the citee faste as he may go;
 For he hade yeve his gayler drynke so
 Of a clarree maad of a certeyn wyn,
 With nercotikes and opie of Thebes fyn,
 615 That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him shake,
 The gayler sleep, he myghte nat awake.
 And thus he fleeth as faste as evere he may;
 The nyght was short and faste by the day,
 That nedes-cost he moot hymselfen hyde;
 620 And til a grove, faste ther bisyde,
 With dredeful foot thanne stalketh Palamoun.
 For shortly, this was his opinioun,
 That in that grove he wolde hym hyde al day,
 And in the nyght thanne wolde he take his way
 625 To Thebes-ward, his freendes for to preye
 On Theseus to helpe hym to werreye;
 And shortly, outhere he wolde lese his lif,
 Or wynnen Emelye unto his wyf;
 This is th'effect and his entente pleyn.
 630 Now wol I turne to Arcite ageyn,
 That litel wiste how ny that was his care,
 Til that Fortune had broght him in the snare.
 The bisy larke, messenger of day,
 Salueth in hir song the morwe gray,
 635 And firy Phebus riseth up so brighte
 That al the orient laugheth of the light,
 And with hise stremes dryeth in the greves
 The silver dropes hangynge on the leves.
 And Arcita, that is in the court roial
 640 With Theseus, his squier principal,
 Is risen, and looketh on the myrie day.
 And for to doon his observaunce of May,
 Remembrynge on the poynt of his desir

He on a courser startlynge as the fir
 645 Is riden into the feeldes, hym to pleye,
 Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.
 And to the grove of which that I yow tolde
 By aventure his wey he gan to holde,
 To maken hym a gerland of the greves,
 650 Were it of wodebynde or hawethorn leves.
 And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene,
 "May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,
 Welcome be thou, faire fresshe May,
 In hope that I som grene gete may."
 655 And from his courser, with a lusty herte,
 Into a grove ful hastily he sterte,
 And in a path he rometh up and down
 Ther as by aventure this Palamoun
 Was in a bussh, that no man myghte hym se;
 660 For soore afered of his deeth was he.
 No thyng ne knew he that it was Arcite,
 God woot, he wolde have trowed it ful lite.
 But sooth is seyde, go sithen many yeres,
 That "feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres."
 665 It is ful fair a man to bere hym evene,
 For al day meeteth men at unset stevene.
 Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe,
 That was so ny to herknen al his sawe,
 For in the bussh he sitteth now ful stille.
 670 Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille
 And songen al the roundel lustily,
 Into a studie he fil al sodeynly,
 As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,
 Now in the croppe, now down in the breres,
 675 Now up, now down as boket in a welle.
 Right as the Friday, soothly for to telle,
 Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste,
 Right so kan geery Venus overcaste
 The hertes of hir folk; right as hir day
 680 Is gereful, right so chaungeth she array.
 Selde is the Friday al the wowke ylike.
 Whan that Arcite had songe, he gan to sike,
 And sette hym down withouten any moore;
 "Allas," quod he, "that day that I was bore!
 685 How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee
 Woltow werreyen Thebes the Citee?
 Allas, ybrought is to confusioun
 The blood roial of Cadme and Amphioun, -
 Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man
 690 That Thebes bulte, or first the toun bigan,
 And of the citee first was crouned kyng,
 Of his lynage am I, and his ofspryng,
 By verray ligne, as of the stok roial,

And now I am so caytyf and so thral
 695 That he that is my mortal enemy
 I serve hym as his squier povrely.
 And yet dooth Juno me wel moore shame,
 For I dar noght biknowe myn owene name,
 But theras I was wont to highte Arcite,
 700 Now highte I Philostrate, noght worth a myte.
 Allas, thou felle Mars! allas, Juno!
 Thus hath youre ire oure lynage al fordo,
 Save oonly me, and wrecched Palamoun
 That Theseus martireth in prisoun.
 705 And over al this, to sleen me outrely,
 Love hath his firy dart so brennyngly
 Ystiked thurgh my trewe careful herte,
 That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.
 Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye!
 710 Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye.
 Of al the remenant of myn oother care
 Ne sette I nat the montance of a tare,
 So that I koude doon aught to youre plesaunce."
 And with that word he fil down in a traunce
 715 A longe tyme, and after he upsterte.
 This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte
 He felte a coold swerd sodeynliche glyde,
 For ire he quook, no lenger wolde he byde.
 And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,
 720 As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
 He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke,
 And seide, "Arcite, false traytour wikke!
 Now artow hent that lovest my lady so,
 For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,
 725 And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,
 As I ful ofte ofte have seyde thee heerbiforn,
 And hast byjaped heere duc Theseus,
 And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus.
 I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye;
 730 Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,
 But I wol love hire oonly, and namo,
 For I am Palamon, thy mortal foo!
 And though that I no wepene have in this place,
 But out of prison am astert by grace,
 735 I drede noght that outhur thou shalt dye,
 Or thou ne shalt nat loven Emelye.
 Chees which thou wolt, for thou shalt nat asterte!"
 This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,
 Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,
 740 As fiers as leoun pulled out his swerd,
 And seyde thus: "By God that sit above,
 Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love,
 And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,

Thou sholdest nevere out of this grove pace,
 745 That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond.
 For I defye the seurete and the bond
 Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.
 What, verray fool, thynk wel that love is free,
 And I wol love hir, maugree al thy myght!
 750 But for as muche thou art a worthy knyght,
 And wilnest to darreyne hire by bataille,
 Have heer my trouthe; tomorwe I wol nat faille
 Withoute wityng of any oother wight
 That heere I wol be founden as a knyght,
 755 And bryngen harneys right ynough for thee,
 And ches the beste, and leef the worste for me.
 And mete and drynke this nyght wol I brynge
 Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddyng;
 And if so be that thou my lady wynne,
 760 And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,
 Thow mayst wel have thy lady as for me."
 This Palamon answerde, "I graunte it thee."
 And thus they been departed til amorwe,
 Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.
 765 O Cupide, out of alle charitee!
 O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!
 Ful sooth is seyde that love ne lordshipe
 Wol noght, hir thanks, have no felaweshipe.
 Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun.
 770 Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,
 And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,
 Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,
 Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreyne
 The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne.
 775 And on his hors, allone as he was born,
 He carieth al this harneys hym biforn,
 And in the grove, at tyme and place yset,
 This Arcite and this Palamon ben met.
 To chaungen gan the colour in hir face
 780 Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,
 That stondeth at the gappe with a spere,
 Whan hunted is the leoun and the bere,
 And hereth hym come russhyng in the greves,
 And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,
 785 And thynketh, "Heere cometh my mortal enemy,
 Withoute faille he moot be deed or I,
 For outhur I moot sleen hym at the gappe,
 Or he moot sleen me, if that me myshappe"-
 So ferden they in chaungyng of hir hewe,
 790 As fer as everich of hem oother knewe.
 Ther nas no good day ne no saluyng,
 But streight, withouten word or rehersyng,
 Everich of hem heelp for to armen oother,

As freendly as he were his owene brother.
 795 And after that with sharpe speres stronge
 They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.
 Thou myghtest wene that this Palamoun
 In his fightyng were a wood leon,
 And as a crueel tigre was Arcite.
 800 As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,
 That frothen white as foom for ire wood.
 Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood.
 And in this wise I lete hem fightyng dwelle,
 And forth I wole of Theseus yow telle.
 805 The destinee, ministre general,
 That executeth in the world overal
 The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,
 So strong it is, that though the world had sworn
 The contrarie of a thyng, by ye or nay,
 810 Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
 That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeere.
 For certainly, oure appetites heere,
 Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
 Al is this reuled by the sighte above.
 815 This mene I now by myghty Theseus,
 That for to hunten is so desirus
 And namely at the grete hert in May,
 That in his bed ther daweth hym no day
 That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde
 820 With hunte and horn, and houndes hym bisyde
 For in his huntynge hath he swich delit
 That it is al his joye and appetit
 To been hymself the grete hertes bane-
 For after Mars he serveth now Dyane.
 825 Cleer was the day, as I have toold er this,
 And Theseus, with alle joye and blis,
 With his Ypolita, the faire quene,
 And Emelye, clothed al in grene,
 On huntynge be they riden roially,
 830 And to the grove, that stood ful faste by,
 In which ther was an hert, as men hym tolde,
 Duc Theseus the streighte wey hath holde,
 And to the launde he rideth hym ful right,
 For thider was the hert wont have his flight,
 835 And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.
 This duc wol han a cours at hym, or tweye,
 With houndes swiche as that hym list comaunde.
 And whan this duc was come unto the launde,
 Under the sonne he looketh, and anon
 840 He was war of Arcite and Palamon,
 That foughten breme, as it were bores two;
 The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro
 So hidously, that with the leeste strook

It semed as it wolde felle an ook;
 845 But what they were, nothyng he ne woot.
 This duc his courser with his spores smoot,
 And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,
 And pulled out a swerd, and cride, "Hoo!
 Namooore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed!
 850 By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed
 That smyteth any strook, that I may seen.
 But telleth me what myster men ye been,
 That been so hardy for to fighten heere
 Withouten juge or oother officere,
 855 As it were in a lystes roially?"
 This Palamon answerde hastily,
 And seyde, "Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
 We have the deeth disserved, bothe two.
 Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,
 860 That been encombred of oure owene lyves,
 And as thou art a fightful lord and juge,
 Ne yeve us neither mercy ne refuge,
 But sle me first for seinte charitee!
 But sle my felawe eek as wel as me-
 865 Or sle hym first, for, though thou knowest it lite,
 This is thy mortal foo, this is Arcite,
 That fro thy lond is banysshed on his heed,
 For which he hath deserved to be deed.
 For this is he, that cam unto thy gate,
 870 And seyde that he highte Philostrate.
 Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yer,
 And thou hast maked hym thy chief Squier,
 And this is he that loveth Emelye.
 For sith the day is come that I shal dye,
 875 I make pleyedly my confessioun
 That I am thilke woful Palamoun,
 That hath thy prisoun broken wikkedly.
 I am thy mortal foo, and it am I
 That loveth so hoote Emelye the brighte,
 880 That I wol dye present in hir sighte;
 Wherefore I axe deeth and my juwise-
 But sle my felawe in the same wise
 For bothe han we deserved to be slayn."
 This worthy duc answered anon agayn,
 885 And seyde, "This is a short conclusioun,
 Youre owene mouth, by your confessioun,
 Hath dampned yow, and I wol it recorde.
 It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde,
 Ye shal be deed, by myghty Mars the rede!"
 890 The queene anon, for verray wommanhede,
 Gan for to wepe, and so dide Emelye,
 And alle the ladyes in the compaignye.
 Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,

That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle.
 895 For gentil men they were of greet estaat,
 And no thyng but for love was this debaat,
 And saugh hir bloody woundes wyde and soore,
 And alle crieden, both lasse and moore,
 "Have mercy, lord, upon us wommen alle!"
 900 And on hir bare knees adoun they falle,
 And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood;
 Til at the laste aslaked was his mood,
 For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.
 And though he first for ire quook and sterte,
 905 He hath considered shortly in a clause
 The trespass of hem bothe, and eek the cause,
 And although that his ire hir gilt accused,
 Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused.
 As thus: he thoghte wel, that every man
 910 Wol helpe hymself in love, if that he kan,
 And eek deliver hym-self out of prisoun;
 And eek his herte hadde compassioun
 Of wommen, for they wepen evere in oon.
 And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,
 915 And softe unto hymself he seyde, "Fy
 Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
 But been a leon, bothe in word and dede,
 To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,
 As wel as to a proud despitous man,
 920 That wol maynteyne that he first bigan.
 That lord hath litel of discrecioun
 That in swich cas kan no divisioun,
 But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon."
 And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon,
 925 He gan to looken up with eyen lighte,
 And spak thise same wordes al on highte:
 "The God of love, a benedicite!
 How myghty and how greet a lord is he!
 Ayeyns his myght ther gayneth none obstacles,
 930 He may be cleped a god for his myracles,
 For he kan maken at his owene gyse
 Of everich herte as that hym list divyse.
 Lo heere, this Arcite and this Palamoun
 That quitly weren out of my prisoun,
 935 And myghte han lyved in Thebes roially,
 And witen I am hir mortal enemy,
 And that hir deth lith in my myght also;
 And yet hath love, maugree hir eyen two,
 Ybrought hem hyder bothe for to dye.
 940 Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?
 Who may been a fole, but if he love?
 Bihoold, for Goddes sake that sit above,
 Se how they blede! Be they noght wel arrayed?

Thus hath hir lord, the God of Love, ypayed
 945 Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!
 And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse,
 That serven love, for aught that may bifalle!
 But this is yet the beste game of alle,
 That she, for whom they han this jolitee,
 950 Kan hem therfore as muche thank, as me!
 She woot namoore of al this hoote fare,
 By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare!
 But all moot ben assayed, hoot and coold;
 A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold;
 955 I woot it by myself ful yore agon,
 For in my tyme a servant was I oon.
 And therfore, syn I knowe of loves peyne,
 And woot how soore it kan a man distreyne,
 As he that hath ben caught ofte in his laas,
 960 I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespaas,
 At requeste of the queene that kneleth heere,
 And eek of Emelye, my suster deere.
 And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere,
 That nevere mo ye shal my contree dere,
 965 Ne make werre upon me, nyght ne day,
 But been my freendes in al that ye may,
 I yow foryeve this trespass, every deel."
 And they hym sworn his axying, faire and weel,
 And hym of lordship and of mercy preyde,
 970 And he hem graunteth grace, and thus he seyde:
 "To speke of roial lynage and richesse,
 Though that she were a queene or a princesse,
 Ech of you bothe is worthy doutelees
 To wedden whan tyme is, but nathelees
 975 I speke as for my suster Emelye,
 For whom ye have this strif and jalousye:
 Ye woot yourself, she may nat wedden two
 Atones, though ye fighten everemo.
 That oon of you, al be hym looth or lief,
 980 He moot go pipen in an yvy leef-
 This is to seyn, she may nat now han bothe,
 Al be ye never so jalouse, ne so wrothe.
 And forthy, I yow putte in this degree;
 That ech of yow shal have his destynnee
 985 As hym is shape, and herkneth in what wyse;
 Lo, heere your ende of that I shal devyse.
 My wyl is this, for plat conclusioun,
 Withouten any repplicacioun, -
 If that you liketh, take it for the beste,
 990 That everich of you shal goon where hym leste,
 Frely, withouten raunson, or daunger,
 And this day fifty wykes fer ne ner,
 Everich of you shal brynge an hundred knyghtes

Armed for lystes up at alle rightes,
 995 Al redy to darreyne hire by bataille.
 And this bihote I yow withouten faille,
 Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knyght,
 That wheither of yow bothe that hath myght,
 This is to seyn, that wheither he, or thow
 1000 May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
 Sleen his contrarie, or out of lystes dryve,
 Thanne shal I yeve Emelya to wyve
 To whom that Fortune yeveth so fair a grace.
 Tho lystes shal I maken in this place,
 1005 And God so wisly on my soule rewe,
 As I shal evene juge been, and trewe.
 Ye shul noon oother ende with me maken,
 That oon of yow ne shal be deed or taken.
 And if yow thynketh this is weel ysayd,
 1010 Seyeth youre avys and holdeth you apayd;
 This is youre ende and youre conclusioun."
 Who looketh lightly now but Palamoun?
 Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite?
 Who kouthe tellen, or who kouthe endite
 1015 The joye that is maked in the place,
 Whan Theseus hath doon so fair a grace?
 But doun on knees wente every maner wight,
 And thonken hym with al hir herte and myght,
 And namely the Thebans, often sithe.
 1020 And thus with good hope and with herte blithe
 They taken hir leve, and homward gonne they ride
 To Thebes with hise olde walles wyde.

From The Canterbury Tales:
 The Knight's Tale

Sequitur Pars Tercia
 (Here begins the third part)

I trowe men wolde deme it necligence,
 If I foryete to tellen the dispence
 1025 Of Theseus, that gooth so bisily
 To maken up the lystes roially;
 That swich a noble theatre as it was,
 I dar wel seyen, in this world ther nas.
 The circuit a myle was aboute,
 1030 Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.
 Round was the shap, in manere of compas,
 Ful of degrees the heighte of sixty pas,
 That whan a man was set on o degree,
 He lette nat his felawe for to see.
 1035 Estward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,
 Westward, right swich another in the opposit;
 And shortly to concluden, swich a place

Was noon in erthe, as in so litel space.
 For in the lond ther was no crafty man
 1040 That geometrie or ars-metrike kan,
 Ne portreytour, ne kervere of ymages,
 That Theseus ne yaf him mete and wages,
 The theatre for to maken and devyse.
 And for to doon his ryte and sacrificise,
 1045 He estward hath upon the gate above,
 In worshipe of Venus, goddessse of love,
 Doon make an auter and an oratorie.
 And on the gate westward, in memorie
 Of Mars, he maked hath right swich another,
 1050 That coste largely of gold a fother.
 And northward, in a touret on the wal
 Of alabastre whit, and reed coral,
 An oratorie, riche for to see,
 In worshipe of Dyane, of chastitee,
 1055 Hath Theseus doon wroght in noble wyse.
 But yet hadde I foryeten to devyse
 The noble kervyng and the portreitures,
 The shap, the contenaunce, and the figures,
 That weren in thise oratories thre.
 1060 First in the temple of Venus maystow se
 Wroght on the wal, ful pitous to biholde,
 The broken slepes and the sikes colde,
 The sacred teeris and the waymentynge,
 The firy strokes, and the desiryng
 1065 That loves servantz in this lyf enduren;
 The othes that her covenantz assuren;
 Plesaunce and Hope, Desir, Foolhardynesse,
 Beautee and Youthe, Bauderie, Richesse,
 Charmes and Force, Lesynges, Flaterye,
 1070 Despense, Bisynesse, and Jalousye,
 That wered of yelewe gooldes a gerland,
 And a cokkow sittynge on hir hand;
 Festes, instrumentz, caroles, daunces,
 Lust and array, and alle the circumstaunces
 1075 Of love, whiche that I rekned, and rekne shal,
 By ordre weren peynted on the wal,
 And mo than I kan make of mencion;
 For soothly, al the mount of Citheroun,
 Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellynge,
 1080 Was shewed on the wal in portreyng,
 With al the gardyn and the lustynesse.
 Nat was foryeten the Porter Ydelnesse,
 Ne Narcisus the faire, of yore agon,
 Ne yet the folye of kyng Salamon,
 1085 And eek the grete strengthe of Ercules -
 Th'enchautementz of Medea and Circes -
 Ne of Turnus, with the hardy fiers corage,

The riche Cresus, kaytyf in servage.
 Thus may ye seen, that wysdom ne richesse,
 1090 Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardynesse,
 Ne may with Venus holde champartie,
 For as hir list, the world than may she gye.
 Lo, alle thise folk so caught were in hir las,
 Til they for wo ful ofte seyde "allas!"
 1095 Suffiseth heere ensamples oon or two-
 And, though, I koude rekene a thousand mo.
 The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,
 Was naked, fletyng in the large see,
 And fro the navele doun al covered was
 1100 With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas.
 A citole in hir right hand hadde she,
 And on hir heed, ful semely for to se,
 A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge;
 Above hir heed hir dowves flikerynge.
 1105 Biforn hir stood hir sone Cupido,
 Upon his shuldres wynges hadde he two,
 And blynd he was, as it was often seene.
 A bowe he bar, and arwes brighte and kene.
 Why sholde I noght as wel eek telle yow al
 1110 The portreiture, that was upon the wal
 Withinne the temple of myghty Mars the rede?
 Al peynted was the wal in lengthe and brede
 Lyk to the estres of the grisly place
 That highte the grete temple of Mars in Trace,
 1115 In thilke colde frosty regioun
 Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mansioun.
 First on the wal was peynted a forest
 In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,
 With knotty, knarry, bareyne trees olde,
 1120 Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde,
 In which ther ran a rumbel and a swough
 As though a storm sholde bresten every bough.
 And dounward from an hille, under a bente,
 Ther stood the temple of Mars Armypotente,
 1125 Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree
 Was long and streit, and gastly for to see,
 And therout came a rage and suche a veze,
 That it made al the gate for to rese.
 The northren lyght in at the dores shoon,
 1130 For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon,
 Thurgh which men myghten any light discernen.
 The dore was al of adamant eterne,
 Yclenched overthwart and endelong
 With iren tough, and for to make it strong
 1135 Every pyler, the temple to sustene,
 Was tonne-greet of iren bright and shene.
 Ther saugh I first the dirke ymaginyng

Of Felonye, and al the compassyng,
 The crueel Ire, reed as any gleede,
 1140 The pykepurs, and eek the pale Drede,
 The smylere with the knyf under the cloke,
 The shepne brennyng with the blake smoke,
 The tresoun of the mordrynge in the bedde,
 The open werre, with woundes al bibledded;
 1145 Contek, with bloody knyf and sharp manace,
 Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.
 The sleere of hymself yet saugh I ther,
 His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer;
 The nayl ydryven in the shode anyght,
 1150 The colde deeth, with mouth gapyng upright.
 Amyddes of the temple sat Meschaunce,
 With Disconfort and Sory Contenaunce.
 Yet saugh I Woodnesse laughynge in his rage,
 Armed Complaint, Outhees, and fiers Outrage;
 1155 The careyne in the busk with throte ycorve,
 A thousand slayn, and nat of qualm ystorve,
 The tiraunt with the pray by force yraft,
 The toun destroyed, ther was nothyng laft.
 Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres,
 1160 The hunte strangled with the wilde beres,
 The sowe frenen the child right in the cradel,
 The cook yscalded, for al his longe ladel.
 Noght was foryeten by the infortune of Marte,
 The cartere overryden with his carte,
 1165 Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.
 Ther were also, of Martes divisioun,
 The barbour, and the bocher, and the smyth
 That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his styth.
 And al above, depeynted in a tour,
 1170 Saugh I Conquest sittynge in greet honour,
 With the sharpe swerd over his heed
 Hangynge by a soutil twyned threed.
 Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius,
 Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;
 1175 Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,
 Yet was hir deth depeynted ther-biforn
 By manasyng of Mars, right by figure;
 So was it shewed in that portreiture,
 As is depeynted in the sterres above
 1180 Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.
 Suffiseth oon ensample in stories olde,
 I may nat rekene hem alle though I wolde.
 The statue of Mars upon a carte stood
 Armed, and looked grym as he were wood,
 1185 And over his heed ther shynen two figures
 Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures
 That oon Puella, that oother Rubeus.

This god of armes was arrayed thus:
 A wolf ther stood biforn hym at his feet,
 1190 With eyen rede, and of a man he eet.
 With soutil pencil was depeynt this storie,
 In redoutynge of Mars and of his glorie.
 Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste
 As shortly as I kan I wol me haste,
 1195 To telle yow al the descripsioun.
 Depeynted been the walles up and doun
 Of huntynge and of shamefast chastitee.
 Ther saugh I, how woful Calistopee
 Whan that Diane agreved was with here,
 1200 Was turned from a womman til a bere,
 And after was she maad the loode-sterre.
 Thus was it peynted, I kan sey yow no ferre-
 Hir sone is eek a sterre, as men may see.
 Ther saugh I Dane, yturned til a tree,
 1205 I mene nat the goddesse Diane,
 But Penneus doughter, which that highte Dane.
 Ther saugh I Attheon an hert ymaked,
 For vengeance that he saugh Diane al naked.
 I saugh how that hise houndes have hym caught
 1210 And freeten hym, for that they knewe hym naught.
 Yet peynted was a litel forther moor
 How Atthalante hunted the wilde boor,
 And Meleagree, and many another mo,
 For which Dyane wroghte hym care and wo.
 1215 Ther saugh I many another wonder storie,
 The which me list nat drawen to memorie.
 This goddesse on an hert ful hye seet,
 With smale houndes al aboute hir feet;
 And undernethe hir feet she hadde a moone,
 1220 Wexynge it was, and sholde wanye soone.
 In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,
 With bowe in honde, and arwes in a cas.
 Hir eyen caste she ful lowe adoun,
 Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
 1225 A womman travaillynge was hir biforn;
 But for hir child so longe was unborn
 Ful pitously Lucyna gan she calle,
 And seyde, "Help, for thou mayst best of alle!"
 Wel koude he peynten lyfly, that it wroghte,
 1230 With many a floryn he the hewes boghte.
 Now been thise listes maad, and Theseus,
 That at his grete cost arrayed thus
 The temples, and the theatre every deel,
 Whan it was doon, hym lyked wonder weel.-
 1235 But stynte I wole of Theseus a lite,
 And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.
 The day approacheth of hir retournynge,

That everich sholde an hundred knyghtes brynge
 The bataille to darreyne, as I yow tolde.
 1240 And til Atthenes, hir covenantz for to holde,
 Hath everich of hem broght an hundred knyghtes,
 Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.
 And sikerly, ther trowed many a man,
 That nevere sithen, that the world bigan,
 1245 As for to speke of knyghthod of hir hond,
 As fer as God hath maked see or lond,
 Nas of so fewe so noble a compaignye.
 For every wight that lovede chivalrye,
 And wolde, his thanks, han a passant name,
 1250 Hath preyed that he myghte been of that game;
 And wel was hym that therto chosen was.
 For if ther fille tomorwe swich a cas
 Ye knowen wel, that every lusty knyght
 That loveth paramours, and hath his myght,
 1255 Were it in Engelond or elles where,
 They wolde, hir thanks, wilnen to be there,
 To fighte for a lady, benedicitee!
 It were a lusty sighte for to see.
 And right so ferden they with Palamon,
 1260 With hym ther wenten knyghtes many on.
 Som wol ben armed in an haubergeoun,
 In a bristplate, and in a light gypoun,
 And som wol have a paire plates large,
 And som wol have a Puce sheeld, or a targe,
 1265 Som wol ben armed on hir legges weel,
 And have an ax, and somme a mace of steel.
 Ther is no newe gyse, that it nas old;
 Armed were they, as I have yow told,
 Everych after his opinioun.
 1270 Ther maistow seen comyng with Palamoun,
 Lygurge hym-self, the grete kyng of Trace.
 Blak was his berd, and manly was his face,
 The cercles of hise eyen in his heed,
 They gloweden bitwyxen yelow and reed,
 1275 And lik a grifphon looked he aboute,
 With kempe heeris on hise browes stoute,
 Hise lymes grete, hise bawnes harde and stronge,
 Hise shuldres brode, hise armes rounde and longe;
 And as the gyse was in his contree,
 1280 Ful hye upon a chaar of gold stood he,
 With foure white boles in the trays.
 In stede of cote-armure, over his harnays
 With nayles yelewe and brighte as any gold
 He hadde a beres skyn, col-blak, for old;
 1285 His longe heer was kembd bihynde his bak,
 As any ravenes fethere it shoon for-blak.
 A wrethe of gold arm-greet, of huge wighte,

Upon his heed, set ful of stones brighte,
 Of fyne rubyes and of dyamauntz.
 1290 Aboute his chaar ther wenten white alauntz,
 Twenty and mo, as grete as any steer,
 To hunten at the leoun or the deer,
 And folwed hym, with mosel faste ybounde,
 Colored of gold, and tourettes fyled rounde.
 1295 An hundred lordes hadde he in his route,
 Armed ful wel, with hertes stierne and stoute.
 With Arcita, in stories as men fynde,
 The grete Emetreus, the kyng of Inde,
 Upon a steede bay, trapped in steel,
 1300 Covered in clooth of gold dyapred weel,
 Cam ridynge lyk the god of armes, Mars.
 His cote-armure was of clooth of Tars,
 Couched with perles white and rounde and grete.
 His sadel was of brend gold newe ybete;
 1305 A mantelet upon his shuldre hangynge
 Bret-ful of rubyes rede, as fyr sparklynge.
 His crispe heer lyk rynges was yronne,
 And that was yelow, and glytered as the sonne.
 His nose was heigh, hise eyen bright citryn,
 1310 Hise lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn;
 A fewe frakenes in his face yspreynd,
 Bitwixen yelow and somdel blak ymeynd,
 And as a leoun he his looking caste.
 Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste;
 1315 His berd was wel bigonne for to sprynge,
 His voys was as a trompe thonderynge.
 Upon his heed he wered of laurer grene
 A gerland, fressh and lusty for to sene.
 Upon his hand he bar for his deduyt
 1320 An egle tame, as any lilye whyt.
 An hundred lordes hadde he with hym there,
 Al armed, save hir heddes, in al hir gere,
 Ful richely in alle maner thynges.
 For trusteth wel, that dukes, erles, kynges,
 1325 Were gadered in this noble compaignye,
 For love, and for encrees of chivalrye.
 Aboute this kyng ther ran on every part
 Ful many a tame leoun and leopard,
 And in this wise thise lordes, alle and some
 1330 Been on the sonday to the citee come,
 Aboute pryme, and in the toun alight.
 This Theseus, this duc, this worthy knyght,
 Whan he had broght hem into his citee,
 And inned hem, everich in his degree,
 1335 He festeth hem, and dooth so greet labour
 To esen hem and doon hem al honour,
 That yet men wenen that no maner wit

Of noon estaat ne koude amenden it.
 The mynstralcy, the service at the feeste,
 1340 The grete yiftes to the mooste and leeste,
 The riche array of Theseus paleys,
 Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,
 What ladyes fairest been, or best daunsynge,
 Or which of hem kan dauncen best and synge,
 1345 Ne who moost felyngly speketh of love,
 What haukes sitten on the perche above,
 What houndes liggen in the floor adoun-
 Of al this make I now no mencioun;
 But, al th'effect, that thynketh me the beste,
 1350 Now cometh the point, and herkneth if yow leste.
 The Sonday nyght, er day bigan to sprynge,
 Whan Palamon the larke herde synge,
 (Al though it nere nat day by houres two,
 Yet song the larke) and Palamon right tho.
 1355 With hooly herte and with an heigh corage
 He roos, to wenden on his pilgrymage,
 Unto the blisful Citherea benigne,
 I mene Venus, honorable and digne.
 And in hir houre he walketh forth a pas
 1360 Unto the lystes, ther hire temple was,
 And doun he kneleth, with ful humble cheere,
 And herte soor, and seyde in this manere.
 "Faireste of faire, O lady myn, Venus,
 Doughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,
 1365 Thow glader of the Mount of Citheron,
 For thilke love thow haddest to Adoon,
 Have pitee of my bittre teeris smerte,
 And taak myn humble preyere at thyn herte.
 Allas, I ne have no langage to telle
 1370 Th'effectes, ne the tormentz of myn helle!
 Myn herte may myne harmes nat biwreye,
 I am so confus that I kan nocht seye.
 But 'Mercy, lady bright! that knowest weele
 My thought, and seest what harmes that I feele.'
 1375 Considere al this, and rewe upon my soore,
 As wisly, as I shal for everemoore,
 Emforth my myght, thy trewe servant be,
 And holden werre alwey with chastitee.
 That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe.
 1380 I kepe nocht of armes for to yelpe,
 Ne I ne axe nat tomorwe to have victorie,
 Ne renoun in this cas, ne veyne glorie
 Of pris of armes blowen up and doun,
 But I wolde have fully possessioun
 1385 Of Emelye, and dye in thy servyse.
 Fynd thow the manere how, and in what wyse-
 I recche nat, but it may bettre be

To have victorie of hem, or they of me-
 So that I have my lady in myne armes.
 1390 For though so be, that Mars is god of armes,
 Yourte vertu is so greet in hevene above
 That if yow list, I shal wel have my love.
 Thy temple wol I worshiþe everemo,
 And on thyn auter, where I ride or go,
 1395 I wol doon sacrifice and fires beete.
 And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,
 Thanne preye I thee, tomorwe with a spere
 That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.
 Thanne rekke I noght, whan I have lost my lyf,
 1400 Though that Arcita wyne hir to his wyf.
 This is th'effect and ende of my preyere,
 Yif me my love, thow blisful lady deere!"
 Whan the orison was doon of Palamon,
 His sacrifice he dide, and that anon,
 1405 Ful pitously with alle circumstaunces,
 Al telle I noght as now his observaunces.
 But atte laste, the statue of Venus shook,
 And made a signe wherby that he took
 That his preyere accepted was that day.
 1410 For thogh the signe shewed a delay,
 Yet wiste he wel that graunted was his boone,
 And with glad herte he wente hym hoom ful soone.
 The thridde houre inequal, that Palamon
 Bigan to Venus temple for to gon,
 1415 Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye,
 And to the temple of Dyane gan hie.
 Hir maydens that she thider with hir ladde,
 Ful redily with hem the fyr they ladde,
 Th'encens, the clothes, and the remenant al
 1420 That to the sacrifice longen shal.
 The hornes fulle of meeth, as was the gyse,
 Ther lakked noght to doon hir sacrificise,
 Smokyng the temple, ful of clothes faire.
 This Emelye, with herte debonaire,
 1425 Hir body wessh with water of a welle-
 But how she dide hir ryte I dar nat telle,
 But it be any thing in general;
 And yet it were a game to heeren al,
 To hym that meneth wel it were no charge,
 1430 But it is good a man been at his large.-
 Hir brighte heer was kembd, untressed al,
 A coroune of a grene ook cerial
 Upon hir heed was set, ful fair and meete.
 Two fyres on the auter gan she beete,
 1435 And dide hir thynges as men may biholde
 In Stace of Thebes, and thise bookes olde.
 Whan kyndled was the fyr, with pitous cheere

Unto Dyane she spak as ye may heere.
 "O chaste goddesses of the wodes grene,
 1440 To whom bothe hevene and erthe and see is sene,
 Queene of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,
 Goddesses of maydens, that myn herte hast knowe
 Ful many a yeer, and woost what I desire,
 As keep me fro thy vengeance and thyn ire,
 1445 That Attheon aboughte cruelly.
 Chaste goddesses, wel wostow that I
 Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,
 Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.
 I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,
 1450 A mayde, and love huntynge and venerye,
 And for to walken in the wodes wilde,
 And noght to ben a wyf, and be with childe.
 Noght wol I knowe the compaignye of man;
 Now helpe me, lady, sith ye may and kan,
 1455 For tho thre formes that thou hast in thee.
 And Palamon, that hath swich love to me,
 And eek Arcite, that loveth me so soore,
 This grace I preye thee, withoute moore,
 As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two,
 1460 And fro me turne away hir hertes so,
 That al hir hote love and hir desir,
 And al hir bisy torment and hir fir,
 Be queynt, or turned in another place.
 And if so be thou wolt do me no grace,
 1465 And if my destynnee be shapen so
 That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,
 As sende me hym that moost desireth me.
 Bihoold, goddesses, of clene chastitee,
 The bittre teeris that on my chekes falle.
 1470 Syn thou art mayde and keper of us alle,
 My maydenhede thou kepe and wel conserve,
 And whil I lyve a mayde, I wol thee serve."
 The fires brenne upon the auter cleere,
 Whil Emelye was thus in hir preyere;
 1475 But sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte,
 For right anon oon of the fyres queynte,
 And quyked agayn, and after that anon
 That oother fyr was queynt and al agon;
 And as it queynte, it made a whistelynge
 1480 As doon thise wete brondes in hir brennynge;
 And at the brondes ende out ran anon
 As it were bloody dropes many oon;
 For which so soore agast was Emelye
 That she was wel ny mad, and gan to crye;
 1485 For she ne wiste what it signified.
 But oonly for the feere thus hath she cried,
 And weep that it was pitee for to heere.

And therwithal Dyane gan appeere,
 With bowe in honde, right as an hunteresse,
 1490 And seyde, "Doghter, stynt thyn hevynesse.
 Among the goddes hye it is affermed,
 And by eterne word writen and confermed,
 Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho
 That han for thee so muchel care and wo.
 1495 But unto which of hem I may nat telle,
 Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.
 The fires whiche that on myn auter brenne
 Shule thee declaren, er that thou go henne,
 Thyn aventure of love, as in this cas."
 1500 And with that word, the arwes in the caas
 Of the goddesse clateren faste and rynge,
 And forth she wente, and made a vanysshynge,
 For which this Emelye astoned was,
 And seyde, "What amounteth this, allas!
 1505 I putte me in thy proteccioun,
 Dyane, and in thy disposicioun!"
 And hoom she goth anon the nexte weye.
 This is th'effect, ther is namoore to seye.
 The nexte houre of Mars folwyng this
 1510 Arcite unto the temple walked is
 Of fierse Mars, to doon his sacrificise
 With alle the rytes of his payen wyse.
 With pitous herte and heigh devocioun
 Right thus to Mars he seyde his orisoun.
 1515 "O stronge god, that in the regnes colde
 Of Trace honoured art and lord yholde,
 And hast in every regne and every lond
 Of armes al the brydel in thyn hond,
 And hem fortunest as thee lyst devyse,
 1520 Accepte of me my pitous sacrificise.
 If so be that my youthe may deserve,
 And that my myght be worthy for to serve
 Thy godhede, that I may been oon of thyne,
 Thanne preye I thee to rewe upon my pyne.
 1525 For thilke peyne, and thilke hooite fir,
 In which thou whilom brendest for desir
 Whan that thou usedest the greet beautee
 Of faire yonge fresshe Venus free,
 And haddest hir in armes at thy wille-
 1530 Although thee ones on a tyme mysfille
 Whan Vulcanus hadde caught thee in his las,
 And foond thee liggyng by his wyf, allas!-
 For thilke sorwe that was in thyn herte
 Have routhe as wel, upon my peynes smerte!
 1535 I am yong and unkonnyng as thou woost,
 And, as I trowe, with love offended moost
 That evere was any lyves creature,

For she that dooth me al this wo endure
 Ne reccheth nevere wher I synke or fleete.
 1540 And wel I woot, er she me mercy heete,
 I moot with strengthe wynne hir in the place.
 And,. wel I woot, withouten help or grace
 Of thee, ne may my strengthe noght availle.
 Thanne help me, lord, tomorwe in my bataille
 1545 For thilke fyr that whilom brente thee,
 As wel as thilke fyr now brenneth me!
 And do that I tomorwe have victorie,
 Myn be the travaille and thyn be the glorie!
 Thy sovereyn temple wol I moost honouren
 1550 Of any place, and alwey moost labouren
 In thy plesaunce, and in thy craftes stronge,
 And in thy temple I wol my baner honge,
 And alle the armes of my compaignye;
 And evere-mo, unto that day I dye,
 1555 Eterne fir I wol biforn thee fynde.
 And eek to this avow I wol me bynde;
 My beard, myn heer, that hongeth long adoun,
 That nevere yet ne felte offensioun
 Of rasour, nor of shere, I wol thee yeve,
 1560 And ben thy trewe servant whil I lyve.
 Now lord, have routhe upon my sorwes soore;
 Yif me victorie, I aske thee namoore!"
 The preyere stynt of Arcita the stronge;
 The rynges on the temple dore that honge,
 1565 And eek the dores clatereden ful faste,
 Of which Arcita somewhat hym agaste.
 The fyres brenden upon the auter brighte,
 That it gan al the temple for to lighte,
 And sweete smel the ground anon up yaf,
 1570 And Arcita anon his hand up haf,
 And moore encens into the fyr he caste,
 With othere rytes mo, and atte laste
 The statue of Mars bigan his hauberk rynges,
 And with that soun he herde a murmurynge,
 1575 Ful lowe and dym, and seyde thus, "Victorie!"
 For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie;
 And thus with joye and hope wel to fare,
 Arcite anon unto his in is fare,
 As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne.
 1580 And right anon swich strif ther is bigonne
 For thilke grauntyng, in the hevene above
 Bitwixe Venus, the Goddesse of Love,
 And Mars the stierne God armypotente,
 That Jupiter was bisy it to stente;
 1585 Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,
 That knew so manye of adventures olde,
 Foond in his olde experience an art

That he ful soone hath plesed every part.
 As sooth is seyde, elde hath greet advantage;
 1590 In elde is bothe wysdom and usage;
 Men may the olde atrenne, and noght atrede.
 Saturne anon, to stynten strif and drede,
 Al be it that it is agayn his kynde,
 Of al this strif he gan remedie fynde.
 1595 "My deere doghter Venus," quod Saturne,
 "My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,
 Hath moore power than woot any man.
 Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan,
 Myn is the prison in the derke cote,
 1600 Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte,
 The murmure, and the cherles rebellyng,
 The groynynge, and the pryvee empoysonyng.
 I do vengeance and pleyn correccioun,
 Whil I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.
 1605 Myn is the ruyne of the hye halles,
 The fallynge of the toures and of the walles
 Upon the mynour, or the carpenter.
 I slow Sampson, shakynge the piler,
 And myne be the maladyes colde,
 1610 The derke tresons, and the castes olde;
 My lookyng is the fader of pestilence.
 Now weep namoore, I shal doon diligence
 That Palamon, that is thyn owene knyght,
 Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.
 1615 Though Mars shal helpe his knyght, yet nathelees
 Bitwixe yow ther moot be somtyme pees,
 Al be ye noght of o compleccioun-
 That causeth al day swich divisioun.
 I am thyn aiel, redy at thy wille,
 1620 Weep now namoore, I wol thy lust fulfille."
 Now wol I stynten of the goddes above,
 Of Mars and of Venus, goddessse of Love,
 And telle yow, as pleynly as I kan,
 The grete effect for which that I bygan.

From The Canterbury Tales:

The Knight's Tale

Sequitur Pars Quarta

(Here begins the fourth part)

1625 Greet was the feeste in Atthenes that day,
 And eek the lusty seson of that May
 Made every wight to been in such plesaunce
 That al that Monday justen they and daunce,
 And spenten it in Venus heigh servyse.
 1630 But by the cause that they sholde ryse
 Eerly, for to seen the grete fight,
 Unto hir rest wenten they at nyght.

And on the morwe, whan that day gan sprynge,
 Of hors and harneys noyse and claterynge
 1635 Ther was in hostelryes al aboute.
 And to the paleys rood ther many a route
 Of lordes upon steedes and palfreys.
 Ther maystow seen devisynge of harneys
 So unkouth and so riche, and wroght so weel
 1640 Of goldsmythrye, of browdyng, and of steel;
 The sheeldes brighte, testeres, and trappures,
 Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;
 Lordes in parementz on hir courseres,
 Knyghtes of retenue and eek squieres,
 1645 Nailynge the speres, and helmes bokelynge,
 Giggynge of sheeldes, with layneres lacyng.
 There as nede is, they weren nothyng ydel.
 The fomy steedes on the golden brydel
 Gnawynge, and faste the armurers also
 1650 With fyle and hamer prikyng to and fro;
 Yemen on foote and communes many oon,
 With shorte staves thikke as they may goon,
 Pypes, trompes, nakers, clariounes,
 That in the bataille blowen bloody sounes;
 1655 The paleys ful of peples up and doun,
 Heere thre, ther ten, holdynge hir questioun,
 Dyvynynge of thise Thebane knyghtes two.
 Somme seyden thus, somme seyde "it shal be so";
 Somme helden with hym with the blake berd,
 1660 Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke-herd,
 Somme seyde he looked grymme, and he wolde fighte,
 "He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte."
 Thus was the halle ful of divynynge,
 Longe after that the sonne gan to sprynge.
 1665 The grete Theseus, that of his sleep awaked
 With mynstralcie and noyse that was maked,
 Heeld yet the chambre of his paleys riche,
 Til that the Thebane knyghtes, bothe yliche
 Honured, were into the paleys fet.
 1670 Duc Theseus was at a wyndow set,
 Arrayed, right as he were a god in trone.
 The peple preesseth thiderward ful soone,
 Hym for to seen and doon heigh reverence.
 And eek to herkne his heste and his sentence.
 1675 An heraud on a scaffold made an "Oo!"
 Til al the noyse of peple was ydo,
 And whan he saugh the peple of noyse al stille,
 Tho shewed he the myghty dukes wille.
 "The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun
 1680 Considered that it were destruccioun
 To gentil blood, to fighten in the gyse
 Of mortal bataille, now in this emprise;

Wherefore, to shapen that they shal nat dye,
 He wolde his firste purpos modifye.
 1685 No man therfore, up peyne of los of lyf,
 No maner shot, ne polax, ne short knyf
 Into the lystes sende, ne thider brynge.
 Ne short swerd for to stoke, with poynt bitynge,
 No man ne drawe, ne bere by his syde;
 1690 Ne no man shal unto his felawe ryde
 But o cours, with a sharpe ygrounde spere.
 Foyne, if hym list on foote, hymself to were.
 And he that is at meschief shal be take,
 And noght slayn, but be broght unto the stake
 1695 That shal ben ordeyned on either syde,
 But thider he shal by force, and there abyde.
 And if so be the chevetayn be take
 On outhur syde, or elles sleen his make,
 No lenger shal the turneiynge laste.
 1700 God spede you! Gooth forth, and ley on faste!
 With long swerd and with maces fight youre fille.
 Gooth now youre wey, this is the lordes wille."
 The voys of peple touchede the hevene,
 So loude cride they with murie stevene,
 1705 "God save swich a lord, that is so good
 He wilneth no destruccion of blood."
 Up goon the trompes and the melodye,
 And to the lystes rit the compaignye,
 By ordinance, thurghout the citee large
 1710 Hanged with clooth of gold, and nat with sarge.
 Ful lik a lord this noble duc gan ryde,
 Thise two Thebanes upon either syde,
 And after rood the queene and Emelye,
 And after that another compaignye,
 1715 Of oon and oother, after hir degree.
 And thus they passen thurghout the citee
 And to the lystes come they by tyme.
 It nas nat of the day yet fully pryme
 Whan set was Theseus ful riche and hye,
 1720 Ypolita the queene, and Emelye,
 And othere ladys in degrees aboute.
 Unto the seettes preesseth al the route,
 And westward thurgh the gates under Marte,
 Arcite, and eek the hondred of his parte,
 1725 With baner reed is entred right anon.
 And in that selve moment Palamon
 Is under Venus estward in the place,
 With baner whyt, and hardy chiere and face.
 In al the world, to seken up and doun
 1730 So evene, withouten variacioun
 Ther nere swiche compaignyes tweye;
 For ther was noon so wys, that koude seye

That any hadde of oother avauntage,
 Of worthynesse ne of estat ne age,
 1735 So evne were they chosen, for to gesse.
 And in two ringes faire they hem dresse,
 Whan that hir names rad were everichon,
 That in hir nombre gyle were ther noon.
 Tho were the gates shet and cried was loude,
 1740 "Do now youre devoir, yonge knyghtes proude!"
 The heraudes lefte hir prikyng up and down;
 Now ryngen trompes loude and clarioun.
 Ther is namoore to seyn, but west and est
 In goon the speres ful sadly in arrest,
 1745 In gooth the sharpe spore into the syde.
 Ther seen men who kan juste, and who kan ryde,
 Ther shyveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke;
 He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.
 Up spryngen speres twenty foot on highte;
 1750 Out goon the swerdes as the silver brighte.
 The helmes they tohewen and toshrede,
 Out brest the blood, with stierne stremes rede,
 With myghty maces the bones they tobreste.
 He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste;
 1755 Ther stomblen steedes stronge, and doun gooth al;
 He rolleth under foot as dooth a bal,
 He foyneth on his feet with his tronchoun,
 And he hym hurtleth with his hors adoun.
 He thurgh the body is hurt and sithen ytake,
 1760 Maugree his heed, and broght unto the stake,
 As forward was, right there he moste abyde;
 Another lad is on that oother syde.
 And som tyme dooth hem Theseus to reste,
 Hem to refresshe, and drynken if hem leste.
 1765 Ful ofte a day han thise Thebanes two
 Togydre ymet, and wroght his felawe wo.
 Unhorsed hath ech oother of hem tweye,
 Ther nas no tygre in the vale of Galgopheye
 Whan that hir whelp is stole, whan it is lite,
 1770 So crueel on the hunte, as is Arcite
 For jelous herte upon this Palamon;
 Ne in Belmarye ther nys so fel leon
 That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,
 Ne of his praye desireth so the blood,
 1775 As Palamon to sleen his foo Arcite.
 The jelous strokes on hir helmes byte,
 Out renneth blood on bothe hir sydes rede.
 Som tyme an ende ther is of every dede.
 For er the sonne unto the reste wente,
 1780 The stronge kyng Emetreus gan hente
 This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,
 And made his swerd depe in his flessch to byte.

- And by the force of twenty is he take
 Unyolden, and ydrawen unto the stake.
- 1785 And in the rescus of this Palamoun
 The stronge kyng Lygurge is born adoun,
 And kyng Emetreus, for al his strengthe,
 Is born out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,
 So hitte him Palamoun er he were take;
- 1790 But al for noght, he was broght to the stake.
 His hardy herte myghte hym helpe naught,
 He moste abyde, whan that he was caught,
 By force, and eek by composicioun.
- Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,
- 1795 That moot namoore goon agayn to fighte?
 And whan that Theseus hadde seyn this sighte
 Unto the folk that foghten thus echon
 He cryde, "Hoo! namoore, for it is doon.
 I wol be trewe juge, and no partie;
- 1800 Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelie,
 That by his fortune hath hir faire ywonne!"
 Anon ther is a noyse of peple bigonne
 For joye of this so loude and heighe withalle
 It semed that the lystes sholde falle.
- 1805 What kan now faire Venus doon above?
 What seith she now? What dooth this queene of Love,
 But wepeth so, for wantynge of hir wille,
 Til that hir teeres in the lystes fille.
 She seyde, "I am ashamed, doutelees."
- 1810 Saturnus seyde, "Doghter, hoold thy pees,
 Mars hath his wille, his knyght hath al his boone,
 And, by myn heed, thou shalt been esed soone."
 The trompes with the loude mynstralcie,
 The heraudes that ful loude yolle and crie,
- 1815 Been in hir wele for joye of daun Arcite.
 But herkne me, and stynteth noyse a lite,
 Which a myracle ther bifel anon.
- This fierse Arcite hath of his helm ydon,
 And on a courser for to shewe his face
- 1820 He priketh endelong the large place,
 Lokynge upward upon this Emelye,
 And she agayn hym caste a freendlich eye,
 (For wommen, as to speken in comune,
 Thei folwen alle the favour of Fortune)
- 1825 And she was al his chiere, as in his herte.
 Out of the ground a furie infernal sterte,
 From Pluto sent, at requeste of Saturne,
 For which his hors for fere gan to turne,
 And leep aside and foundred as he leep.
- 1830 And er that Arcite may taken keep,
 He pighte hym on the pomel of his heed,
 That in the place he lay as he were deed,

His brest tobrosten with his sadel-bowe.
 As blak he lay as any cole or crowe,
 1835 So was the blood yronnen in his face.
 Anon he was yborn out of the place,
 With herte soor, to Theseus paleys.
 Tho was he korven out of his harneys,
 And in a bed ybrought ful faire and blyve,
 1840 For he was yet in memorie and alyve,
 And alwey crynge after Emelye.
 Duc Theseus, with al his compaignye,
 Is comen hoom to Atthenes his citee,
 With alle blisse and greet solempnitee;
 1845 Al be it that this aventure was falle,
 He nolde noght disconforten hem alle.
 Men seyde eek that Arcite shal nat dye,
 He shal been heeled of his maladye.
 And of another thyng they weren as fayn,
 1850 That of hem alle was ther noon yslayn,
 Al were they soore yhurt, and namely oon,
 That with a spere was thirled his brest boon.
 To othere woundes, and to broken armes,
 Somme hadden salves, and somme hadden charmes,
 1855 Fermacies of herbes and eek save
 They dronken, for they wolde hir lymes have.
 For which this noble duc as he wel kan,
 Conforteth and honoureth every man,
 And made revel al the longe nyght
 1860 Unto the straunge lordes, as was right.
 Ne ther was holden no disconfitynge
 But as a justes or a tourneyng,
 For soothly ther was no disconfiture.
 For fallyng nys nat but an aventure-
 1865 Ne to be lad by force unto the stake
 Unyolden, and with twenty knyghtes take,
 O persone allone, withouten mo,
 And haryed forth by arme, foot, and too,
 And eke his steede dryven forth with staves,
 1870 With footmen, bothe yemen and eek knaves,
 It nas aretted hym no vileynye,
 Ther may no man clepen it cowardye.
 For which anon duc Theseus leet crye,
 To stynten alle rancour and envye,
 1875 The gree, as wel of o syde as of oother,
 And eyther syde ylik as ootheres brother,
 And yaf hem yiftes after hir degree,
 And fully heeld a feeste dayes three,
 And conveyed the kynges worthily
 1880 Out of his toun a journee largely;
 And hoom wente every man, the righte way.
 Ther was namoore but "Fare-wel, have good day."

Of this bataille I wol namoore endite,
 But speke of Palamoun and of Arcite.
 1885 Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the soore
 Encreeseth at his herte moore and moore.
 The clothed blood for any lechecraft
 Corrupteth, and is in his bouk ylaft,
 That neither veyne-blood, ne ventusynge,
 1890 Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpynge.
 The vertu expulsif, or animal,
 Fro thilke vertu cleped natural
 Ne may the venym voyden, ne expelle.
 The pipes of his longes gonne to swelle,
 1895 And every lacerte in his brest adoun
 Is shent with venym and corrupcioun.
 Hym gayneth neither for to gete his lif
 Vomyt upward, ne downward laxatif;
 Al is tobrosten thilke regioun,
 1900 Nature hath now no dominacioun.
 And certainly, ther Nature wol nat wirche,
 Fare wel phisik! Go ber the man to chirche!
 This al and som, that Arcita moot dye;
 For which he sendeth after Emelye
 1905 And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.
 Thanne seyde he thus, as ye shal after heere:
 "Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
 Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte
 To yow, my lady, that I love moost.
 1910 But I biquethe the servyce of my goost
 To yow aboven every creature.
 Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure,
 Allas, the wo! Allas, the peynes stronge,
 That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!
 1915 Allas, the deeth! Allas, myn Emelye!
 Allas, departynge of our compaignye!
 Allas, myn hertes queene! allas, my wyf!
 Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!
 What is this world? What asketh men to have?
 1920 Now with his love, now in his colde grave,
 Allone, withouten any compaignye.
 Fare-wel, my swete foo, myn Emelye!
 And softe taak me in youre armes tweye,
 For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.
 1925 "I have heer with my cosyn Palamon
 Had strif and rancour many a day agon,
 For love of yow, and for my jalousye.
 And Juppiter so wys my soule gye,
 To speken of a servaunt proprely,
 1930 With alle circumstances trewely,
 That is to seyen, trouthe, honour, and knyghthede,
 Wysdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kynrede,

- Freedom, and al that longeth to that art -
 So Juppiter have of my soule part
- 1935 As in this world right now ne knowe I non
 So worthy to ben loved, as Palamon
 That serveth yow, and wol doon al his lyf;
 And if that evere ye shul ben a wyf,
 Foryet nat Palamon, the gentil man."
- 1940 And with that word his speche faille gan,
 And from his herte up to his brest was come
 The coold of deeth, that hadde hym overcome.
 And yet moreover in hise armes two
 The vital strengthe is lost and al ago.
- 1945 Oonly the intellect, withouten moore,
 That dwelled in his herte syk and soore
 Gan faillen, when the herte felte deeth.
 Dusked hise eyen two, and failed breeth,
 But on his lady yet caste he his eye.
- 1950 His laste word was "Mercy, Emelye!"
 His spirit chaunged hous, and wente ther
 As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher,
 Therfore I stynte; I nam no divinistre;
 Of soules fynde I nat in this registre,
- 1955 Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle
 Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.
 Arcite is coold, ther Mars his soule gye!
 Now wol I speken forthe of Emelye.
 Shrighte Emelye, and howleth Palamon,
- 1960 And Theseus his suster took anon
 Swownynge, and baar hir fro the corps away.
 What helpeth it to tarien forth the day
 To tellen how she weep bothe eve and morwe?
 For in swich cas wommen have swich sorwe
- 1965 Whan that hir housbond is from hem ago,
 That for the moore part they sorwen so,
 Or ellis fallen in swich maladye,
 That at the laste certainly they dye.
 Infinite been the sorwes and the teeres
- 1970 Of olde folk, and eek of tendre yeeres
 In al the toun, for deeth of this Theban.
 For hym ther wepeth bothe child and man;
 So greet a wepyng was ther noon, certayn,
 Whan Ector was ybrought al fressh yslayn
- 1975 To Troye. Allas, the pitee that was ther,
 Cracchyng of chekes, rentynge eek of heer;
 "Why woldestow be deed," thise wommen crye,
 "And haddest gold ynough, and Emelye?"
 No man myghte gladen Theseus,
- 1980 Savynge his olde fader, Egeus,
 That knew this worldes transmutacioun,
 As he hadde seyn it chaunge bothe up and down,

Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse,
 And shewed hem ensamples and liknesse.
 1985 "Right as ther dyed nevere man," quod he,
 "That he ne lyvede in erthe in som degree,
 Right so ther lyvede never man," he seyde,
 "In al this world that somtyme he ne deyde.
 This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,
 1990 And we been pilgrymes passynge to and fro.
 Deeth is an ende of every worldes soore."
 And over al this yet seyde he muchel moore,
 To this effect ful wisely to enhort
 The peple, that they sholde hem reconforte.
 1995 Duc Theseus, with al his bisy cure,
 Caste now, wher that the sepulture
 Of goode Arcite may best ymaked be,
 And eek moost honorable in his degree.
 And at the laste he took conclusioun
 2000 That ther as first Arcite and Palamoun
 Hadden for love the bataille hem bitwene,
 That in that selve grove swoote and grene
 Ther as he hadde hise amoureuse desires,
 His compleynte, and for love hise hote fires,
 2005 He wolde make a fyr, in which the office
 Funeral he myghte al accomplice.
 And leet comande anon to hakke and hewe
 The okes olde, and leye hem on a rewe
 In colpons, wel arrayed for to brenne.
 2010 His officers with swifte feet they renne
 And ryden anon at his comandement;
 And after this, Theseus hath ysent
 After a beere, and it al over-spradde
 With clooth of gold, the richeste that he hadde.
 2015 And of the same suyte he cladde Arcite,
 Upon his hondes hadde he gloves white,
 Eek on his heed a coroune of laurer grene,
 And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.
 He leyde hym bare the visage on the beere,
 2020 Therwith he weep that pitee was to heere.
 And for the peple sholde seen hym alle,
 Whan it was day, he broghte hym to the halle,
 That roreth of the cryng and the soun.
 Tho cam this woful Theban, Palamoun,
 2025 With flotery berd and ruggy asschy heeres,
 In clothes blake, ydropped al with teeres,
 And, passynge othere of wepyng, Emelye,
 The rewefulleste of al the compaignye.
 In as mucche as the servyce sholde be
 2030 The moore noble and riche in his degree,
 Duc Theseus leet forth thre steedes brynge
 That trapped were in steel al gliterynge,

And covered with the armes of daun Arcite.
 Upon thise steedes that weren grete and white
 2035 Ther sitten folk, of whiche oon baar his sheeld,
 Another his spere up in his hondes heeld,
 The thridde baar with hym his bowe Turkeys,
 (Of brend gold was the caas, and eek the harneys;)
 And riden forth a paas, with sorweful cheere,
 2040 Toward the grove, as ye shul after heere.
 The nobleste of the Grekes that ther were
 Upon hir shuldres caryeden the beere,
 With slakke paas, and eyen rede and wete,
 Thurghout the citee by the maister strete,
 2045 That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye
 Right of the same is the strete ywrye.
 Upon the right hond wente olde Egeus,
 And on that oother syde duc Theseus,
 With vessel in hir hand of gold ful fyn,
 2050 Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn.
 Eek Palamon, with ful greet compaignye,
 And after that cam woful Emelye,
 With fyr in honde, as was that tyme the gyse,
 To do the office of funeral servyse.
 2055 Heigh labour, and ful greet apparaillynge,
 Was at the service and the fyr-makynge,
 That with his grene top the heven raughte,
 And twenty fadme of brede the armes straughte;
 This is to seyn, the bowes weren so brode.
 2060 Of stree first ther was leyd ful many a lode,
 But how the fyr was maked upon highte,
 Ne eek the names that the trees highte,
 As, ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popeler,
 Wylugh, elm, plane, asshe, box, chasteyn, lynde, laurer,
 2065 Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippeltree -
 How they weren fild shal nat be toold for me,
 Ne how the goddes ronnen up and doun
 Disherited of hir habitacioun,
 In whiche they woneden in reste and pees,
 2070 Nymphes, Fawnes, and Amadrides;
 Ne how the beestes and the briddes alle
 Fledden for fere, whan the wode was falle;
 Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
 That was nat wont to seen the sonne bright;
 2075 Ne how the fyr was couched first with stree,
 And thanne with drye stokkes cloven a thre,
 And thanne with grene wode and spicerye,
 And thanne with clooth of gold and with perrye,
 And gerlandes hangynge with ful many a flour,
 2080 The mirre, th'encens, with al so greet odour;
 Ne how Arcite lay among al this,
 Ne what richesste aboute his body is,

Ne how that Emelye, as was the gyse,
 Putte in the fyr of funeral servyse;
 2085 Ne how she swowned whan men made the fyr,
 Ne what she spak, ne what was hir desir;
 Ne what jeweles men in the fyre caste,
 Whan that the fyr was greet and brente faste;
 Ne how somme caste hir sheeld, and somme hir spere,
 2090 And of hire vestimentz whiche that they were,
 And coppes fulle of wyn, and milk, and blood,
 Into the fyr, that brente as it were wood,
 Ne how the Grekes, with an huge route,
 Thries riden al the fyr aboute,
 2095 Upon the left hand with a loud shoutynge,
 And thries with hir speres claterynge,
 And thries how the ladyes gonne crye,
 And how that lad was homward Emelye;
 Ne how Arcite is brent to asshen colde,
 2100 Ne how that lyche-wake was yholde
 Al thilke nyght, ne how the Grekes pleye
 The wake-pleyes ne kepe I nat to seye,
 Who wrastleth best naked, with oille enoynt,
 Ne who that baar hym best in no disjoynt;
 2105 I wol nat tellen eek, how that they goon
 Hoom til Atthenes, whan the pley is doon;
 But shortly to the point thanne wol I wende,
 And maken of my longe tale an ende.
 By processe, and by lengthe of certeyn yeres,
 2110 Al stynted is the moornynge and the teres
 Of Grekes, by oon general assent.
 Thanne semed me ther was a parlement
 At Atthenes, upon certein pointz and caas,
 Among the whiche pointz yspoken was
 2115 To have with certein contrees alliaunce,
 And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce,
 For which this noble Theseus anon
 Leet senden after gentil Palamon,
 Unwist of hym what was the cause and why.
 2120 But in hise blake clothes sorwefully
 He cam at his comandement in hye;
 Tho sente Theseus for Emelye.
 Whan they were set, and hust was al the place,
 And Theseus abiden hadde a space
 2125 Er any word cam fram his wise brest,
 Hise eyen sette he ther as was his lest,
 And with a sad visage he siked stille,
 And after that right thus he seyde his wille:
 "The Firste Moevere of the cause above
 2130 Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
 Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his entente;
 Wel wiste he why, and what therof he mente,

For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
 The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond,
 2135 In certeyn boundes that they may nat flee.
 That same prince and that same moevere," quod he,
 "Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun
 Certeyne dayes and duracioun
 To al that is engendred in this place,
 2140 Over the whiche day they may nat pace;
 Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge,
 Ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee t'allegge,
 For it is preeved by experience,
 But that me list declaren my sentence.
 2145 Thanne may men by this ordre wel discerne
 That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne.
 Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
 That every part deryveth from his hool;
 For nature hath nat taken his bigynnyng
 2150 Of no partie nor cantel of a thyng,
 But of a thyng that parfit is and stable,
 Descendynge so til it be corrupable;
 And therfore, of his wise purveiaunce,
 He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce,
 2155 That speses of thynges and progressiouns
 Shullen enduren by successiouns,
 And nat eterne, withouten any lye.
 This maystow understonde and seen at ye.
 "Loo the ook, that hath so long a norisshynge
 2160 From tyme that it first bigynneth sprynge,
 And hath so long a lif, as we may see,
 Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.
 "Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon
 Under oure feet, on which we trede and goon,
 2165 Yet wasteth it, as it lyth by the weye.
 The brode ryver somtyme wexeth dreye,
 The grete toures se we wane and wende,
 Thanne may ye se that al this thyng hath ende.
 "Of man and womman seen we wel also,
 2170 That nedeth, in oon of thise termes two -
 This is to seyn, in youthe or elles age -
 He moot be deed, the kyng as shal a page.
 Som in his bed, som in the depe see,
 Som in the large feeld, as men may se;
 2175 Ther helpeth noght, al goth that ilke weye,
 Thanne may I seyn that al this thyng moot deye.
 "What maketh this, but Juppiter the kyng,
 That is prince and cause of alle thyng
 Convertinge al unto his propre welle
 2180 From which it is deryved, sooth to telle,
 And heer-agayns no creature on lyve
 Of no degree availleth for to stryve.

"Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me,
 To maken vertu of necessitee,
 2185 And take it weel, that we may nat eschue;
 And namely, that to us alle is due.
 And who so gruccheth ought, he dooth folye,
 And rebel is to hym that al may gye.
 And certainly, a man hath moost honour
 2190 To dyen in his excellence and flour,
 Whan he is siker of his goode name,
 Thanne hath he doon his freend ne hym no shame.
 And gladder oghte his freend been of his deeth,
 Whan with honour up yolden in his breeth,
 2195 Than whan his name apalled is for age;
 For al forgeten is his vassellage.
 Thanne is it best as for a worthy fame,
 To dyen whan that he is best of name.
 "The contrarie of al this is wilfulnesse:
 2200 Why grucchen we, why have we hevynesse,
 That goode Arcite, of chivalrie flour,
 Departed is with duetee and honour
 Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?
 Why grucchen heere his cosyn and his wyf
 2205 Of his welfare, that loved hem so weel?
 Kan he hem thank? Nay, God woot never a deel,
 That bothe his soule and eek himself offende,
 And yet they mowe hir lustes nat amende.
 "What may I concluden of this longe serye,
 2210 But after wo I rede us to be merye,
 And thanken Juppiter of al his grace?
 And er that we departen from this place
 I rede that we make, of sorwes two,
 O parfit joye lastyng everemo.
 2215 And looketh now, wher moost sorwe is her inne,
 Ther wol we first amenden and bigynne.
 "Suster," quod he, "this is my fulle assent,
 With all th'avys heere of my parlement,
 That gentil Palamon thyn owene knyght,
 2220 That serveth yow with wille, herte, and myght,
 And evere hath doon, syn that ye first hym knewe,
 That ye shul of your grace upon hym rewe,
 And taken hym for housbonde and for lord.
 Lene me youre hond, for this is oure accord.
 2225 Lat se now of youre wommanly pitee;
 He is a kynges brother sone, pardee,
 And though he were a povre bachelor,
 Syn he hath served yow so many a yeer,
 And had for yow so greet adversitee,
 2230 It moste been considered, leeveth me,
 For gentil mercy oghte to passen right."
 Thanne seyde he thus to Palamon the knyght:

"I trowe ther nedeth litel sermonyng
 To make yow assente to this thyng.
 2235 Com neer, and taak youre lady by the hond."
 Bitwixen hem was maad anon the bond
 That highte matrimoigne or mariage,
 By al the conseil and the baronage.
 And thus with alle blisse and melodye
 2240 Hath Palamon ywedded Emelye;
 And God, that al this wyde world hath wrought,
 Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght,
 For now is Palamon in alle wele,
 Lyvyng in blisse, in richesse, and in heele,
 2245 And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,
 And he hir serveth al so gentilly,
 That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene,
 Of jalousie, or any oother teene.
 Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye,
 2250 And God save al this faire compaignye! Amen.

II part

Once on a time, as old stories tell to us,
 There was a duke whose name was Theseus:
 Of Athens he was lord and governor,
 And in his time was such a conqueror
 5 That greater was there not beneath the sun.
 Very many rich countries had he won;
 What with his wisdom and his chivalry
 He gained the realm of Femininity,
 That was of old time known as Scythia.
 10 There he married the queen, Hippolyta,
 And brought her home with him to his country.
 In glory great and with great ceremony,
 And, too, her younger sister, Emily.
 And thus, in victory and with melody,
 15 Let I this noble duke to Athens ride
 With all his armed host marching at his side.

And certes, if it nere to long to heere,
 I wolde have toold yow fully the manere
 How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
 20 By Theseus, and by his chivalrye,
 And of the grete bataille for the nones
 Bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones,
 And how asseged was Ypolita
 The faire hardy queene of Scithia,
 25 And of the feste that was at hir weddyng,
 And of the tempest at hir hoom-comyng;
 But al the thyng I moot as now forbere,
 I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,

And wayke been the oxen in my plough,
 30 The remenant of the tale is long ynough.
 I wol nat letten eek noon of this route,
 Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,
 And lat se now who shal the soper wynne;-
 And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne.
 And truly, were it not too long to hear,
 I would have told you fully how, that year,
 Was gained the realm of Femininity
 20 By Theseus and by his chivalry;
 And all of the great battle that was wrought
 Where Amazons and the Athenians fought;
 And how was wooed and won Hippolyta,
 That fair and hardy queen of Scythia;
 25 And of the feast was made at their wedding,
 And of the tempest at their home-coming;
 But all of that I must for now forbear.
 I have, God knows, a large field for my share,
 And weak the oxen, and the soil is tough.
 30 The remnant of the tale is long enough.
 I will not hinder any, in my turn;
 Let each man tell his tale, until we learn
 Which of us all the most deserves to win;
 So where I stopped, again I'll now begin.

The Knight's Tale

lines 35-93: Women complain that they have lost their husbands in battle

35 This duc of whom I make mencioune,
 Whan he was come almoost unto the toun,
 In al his wele and in his mooste pride,
 He was war, as he caste his eye aside,
 Where that ther kneled in the hye weye
 40 A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,
 Ech after oother, clad in clothes blake;
 But swich a cry and swich a wo they make,
 That in this world nys creature lyvyng
 That herde swich another waymentynge;
 45 And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten,
 Til they the reynes of his brydel henten.

 35 This duke of whom I speak, of great renown,
 When he had drawn almost unto the town,
 In all well-being and in utmost pride,
 He grew aware, casting his eyes aside,
 That right upon the road, as suppliants do,
 40 A company of ladies, two by two,
 Knelt, all in black, before his cavalcade;
 But such a clamorous cry of woe they made
 That in the whole world living man had heard
 No such a lamentation, on my word:

45 Nor would they cease lamenting till at last
They'd clutched his bridle reins and held them fast.

"What folk been ye, that at myn hom-comynge
Perturben so my feste with crynge?"
Quod Theseus. "Have ye so greet envye
50 Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?
Or who hath yow mysboden or offended?
And telleth me if it may been amended,
And why that ye been clothed thus in blak?"
"What folk are you that at my home-coming
Disturb my triumph with this dolorous thing?"
Cried Theseus. "Do you so much envy
50 My honour that you thus complain and cry?
Or who has wronged you now, or who offended?
Come, tell me whether it may be amended;
And tell me, why are you clothed thus, in black?"

The eldeste lady of hem alle spak-
55 Whan she hadde swowned with a deedly cheere,
That it was routhe for to seen and heere-
And seyde, "Lord, to whom Fortune hath yiven
Victorie, and as a conqueror to lyven,
Nat greveth us youre glorie and youre honour,
60 But we biseken mercy and socour.
Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse,
Som drope of pitee thurgh thy gentillesse
Upon us wrecched wommen lat thou falle;
For certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle,
65 That she ne hath been a duchesse or a queene.
Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene,
Thanked be Fortune, and hir false wheel,
That noon estaat assureth to be weel.
And certes, lord, to abyden youre presence,
70 Heere in the temple of the goddessse Clemence
We han ben waitynge al this fourtenyght;
Now help us, lord, sith it is in thy myght!
The eldest lady of them answered back,
55 After she'd swooned, with cheek so deathly drear
That it was pitiful to see and hear,
And said, "Lord, to whom Fortune has but given
Victory, and to conquer where you've striven,
Your glory and your honour grieve not us;
60 But we beseech your aid and pity thus.
Have mercy on our woe and our distress.
Some drop of pity, of your gentleness,
Upon us wretched women, oh, let fall!
For see, lord, there is no one of us all
65 That has not been a duchess or a queen;
Now we are captives, as may well be seen:

Thanks be to Fortune and her treacherous wheel,
There's none can rest assured of constant weal.
And truly, lord, expecting your return,
70 In Pity's temple, where the fires yet burn,
We have been waiting through a long fortnight;
Now help us, lord, since it is in your might.

I wrecche, which that wepe and waille thus,
Was whilom wyf to kyng Capaneus,
75 That starf at Thebes -cursed be that day!-
And alle we that been in this array
And maken al this lamentacioun,
We losten alle oure housbondes at that toun,
Whil that the seege therabout lay.
80 And yet now the olde Creon, weylaway!
That lord is now of Thebes the Citee,
Fulfilde of ire and of iniquitee,
He, for despit and for his tirannye,
To do the dede bodyes vileynye,
85 Of alle oure lordes, whiche that been slawe,
Hath alle the bodyes on an heep ydrawe,
And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent,
Neither to been yburyed nor ybrent,
But maketh houndes ete hem in despit."

I, wretched woman, who am weeping thus,
Was once the wife of King Capaneus,
75 Who died at Thebes, oh, cursed be the day!
And all we that you see in this array,
And make this lamentation to be known,
All we have lost our husbands at that town
During the siege that round about it lay.
80 And now the old Creon, ah welaway!
The lord and governor of Thebes city,
Full of his wrath and all iniquity,
He, in despite and out of tyranny,
To do the dead a shame and villainy,
85 Of all our husbands, lying among the slain,
Has piled the bodies in a heap, amain,
And will not suffer them, nor give consent,
To buried be, or burned, nor will relent,
But sets his dogs to eat them, out of spite."

90 And with that word, withouten moore respit,
They fillen gruf, and criden pitously,
"Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy
And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte."

90 And on that word, at once, without respite,
They all fell prone and cried out piteously:
"Have on us wretched women some mercy,
And let our sorrows sink into your heart!"

From The Canterbury Tales:
The Knight's Tale
lines 94-116: Theseus promises revenge

- This gentil duc doun from his courser sterte
95 With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke;
Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,
That whilom weren of so greet estaat.
And in his armes he hem alle up hente,
100 And hem conforteth in ful good entente,
And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,
He wolde doon so ferforthly his myght
Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke,
That all the peple of Grece sholde speke
105 How Creon was of Theseus yservyd,
As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.
And right anon, withouten moore abood,
His baner he desplayeth, and forth rood
To Thebes-ward, and al his hoost biside,
110 No neer Atthenes wolde he go ne ride,
Ne take his ese fully half a day,
But onward on his wey that nyght he lay,
And sente anon Ypolita the queene,
And Emelye, hir yonge suster sheene,
115 Unto the toun of Atthenes to dwelle,
And forth he rit; ther is namoore to telle.
- This noble duke down from his horse did start
95 With heart of pity, when he'd heard them speak.
It seemed to him his heart must surely break,
Seeing them there so miserable of state,
Who had been proud and happy but so late.
And in his arms he took them tenderly,
100 Giving them comfort understandingly:
And swore his oath, that as he was true knight,
He would put forth so thoroughly his might
Against the tyrant Creon as to wreak
Vengeance so great that all of Greece should speak
105 And say how Creon was by Theseus served,
As one that had his death full well deserved.
This sworn and done, he no more there abode;
His banner he displayed and forth he rode
Toward Thebes, and all his host marched on beside;
110 Nor nearer Athens would he walk or ride,
Nor take his ease for even half a day,
But onward, and in camp that night he lay;
And thence he sent Hippolyta the queen
And her bright sister Emily, I ween,
115 Unto the town of Athens, there to dwell

While he went forth. There is no more to tell.

From The Canterbury Tales:

The Knight's Tale

lines 117-146: The achievement of revenge

The rede statue of Mars, with spere and targe,
So shyneth, in his white baner large,
That alle the feeldes gliteren up and down,
120 And by his baner gorn is his penoun
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete
The Mynotaur which that he slough in Crete.
Thus rit this duc, thus rit this conquerour,
And in his hoost of chivalrie the flour,
125 Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte
Faire in a feeld, ther as he thoughte to fighte.
But shortly for to speken of this thyng,
With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,
He faught, and slough hym manly as a knyght
130 In pleyn bataille, and putte the folk to flyght;
And by assaut he wan the citee after,
And rente adoun bothe wall, and sparre, and rafter.
And to the ladyes he sestored agayn
The bones of hir freendes that weren slayn,
135 To doon obsequies as was tho the gyse.
But it were al to longe for to devyse
The grete clamour and the waymentynge
That the ladyes made at the brennyng
Of the bodies, and the grete honour
140 That Theseus, the noble conquerour,
Dooth to the ladyes, whan they from hym wente;
But shortly for to telle is myn entente.

The image of red Mars, with spear and shield,
So shone upon his banner's snow-white field
It made a billowing glitter up and down;
120 And by the banner borne was his pennon,
On which in beaten gold was worked, complete,
The Minotaur, which he had slain in Crete.
Thus rode this duke, thus rode this conqueror,
And in his host of chivalry the flower,
125 Until he came to Thebes and did alight
Full in the field where he'd intent to fight.
But to be brief in telling of this thing,
With Creon, who was Thebes' dread lord and king,
He fought and slew him, manfully, like knight,
130 In open war, and put his host to flight;
And by assault he took the city then,
Levelling wall and rafter with his men;
And to the ladies he restored again
The bones of their poor husbands who were slain,

135 To do for them the last rites of that day.
But it were far too long a tale to say
The clamour of great grief and sorrowing
Those ladies raised above the bones burning
Upon the pyres, and of the great honour
140 That Theseus, the noble conqueror,
Paid to the ladies when from him they went;
To make the story short is my intent.

Whan that his worthy duc, this Theseus,
Hath Creon slayn, and wonne Thebes thus,
145 Stille in that feeld he took al nyght his reste,
And dide with al the contree as hym leste.

When, then, this worthy duke, this Theseus
Had slain Creon and won Thebes city thus,
145 Still on the field he took that night his rest,
And dealt with all the land as he thought best.

From The Canterbury Tales:

The Knight's Tale

lines 147-174: Two knights, Arcita and Palamon, are captured and imprisoned

To ransake in the taas of bodyes dede,
Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,
The pilours diden bisynesse and cure,
150 After the bataille and disconfiture;
And so bifel, that in the taas they founde
Thurgh-girt with many a grevous bloody wounde,
Two yonge knyghtes liggyng by and by,
Bothe in oon armes, wrought ful richely,
155 Of whiche two Arcita highte that oon,
And that oother knyght highte Palamon.
Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were,
But by here cote-armures and by hir gere,
The heraudes knewe hem best in special
160 As they that weren of the blood roial
Of Thebes, and of sustren two yborn.
Out of the taas the pilours han hem torn,
And had hem caried softe unto the tente
Of Theseus, and he ful soone hem sente
165 To Atthenes to dwellen in prisoun
Perpetuelly, he nolde no raunsoun.
And whan this worthy duc hath thus ydon,
He took his hoost, and hoom he rit anon,
With laurer crowned, as a conquerour;
170 And ther he lyveth in joye and in honour
Terme of his lyve; what nedeth wordes mo?
And in a tour, in angwissh and in wo,
Dwellen this Palamon and eek Arcite
For evermoore, ther may no gold hem quite.

In searching through the heap of enemy dead,
 Stripping them of their gear from heel to head,
 The busy pillagers could pick and choose,
 150 After the battle, what they best could use;
 And it happened that in a heap they found,
 Pierced through with many a grievous, bloody wound,
 Two young knights lying together, side by side,
 Bearing one crest, wrought richly, of their pride,
 155 And of those two Arcita was the one,
 The other knight was known as Palamon.
 Not fully quick, nor fully dead they were,
 But by their coats of arms and by their gear
 The heralds readily could tell, withal,
 160 That they were of the Theban blood royal,
 And that they had been of two sisters born.
 Out of the heap the spoilers had them torn
 And carried gently over to the tent
 Of Theseus; who shortly had them sent
 165 To Athens, there in prison cell to lie
 For ever, without ransom, till they die.
 And when this worthy duke had all this done,
 He gathered host and home he rode anon,
 With laurel crowned again as conqueror;
 170 There lived he in all joy and all honour
 His term of life; what more need words express?
 And in a tower, in anguish and distress,
 Palamon and Arcita, day and night,
 Dwelt whence no gold might help them to take flight.

From The Canterbury Tales:

The Knight's Tale

lines 175-233: Emely walks in the garden and is seen by the two prisoners

175 This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,
 Till it fil ones, in a morwe of May,
 That Emelye, that fairer was to sene
 Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,
 And fressher than the May with floures newe-
 180 For with the rose colour stroof hir hewe,
 I noot which was the fairer of hem two-
 Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,
 She was arisen, and al redy dight-
 For May wole have no slogardie a-nyght;
 185 The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
 And maketh hym out of his slepe to sterte,
 And seith, "Arys and do thyn observaunce."
 This maked Emelye have remembraunce
 To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.
 190 Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse,
 Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse,

Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse,
 And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,
 She walketh up and down, and as hir liste
 195 She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
 To make a subtil gerland for hir hede,
 And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong.
 The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong,
 Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun,
 200 (Ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun,
 Of whiche I tolde yow, and tellen shal)
 Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal
 Ther as this Emelye hadde hir pleyynge.
 Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morwenynge,
 205 And Palamoun, this woful prisoner,
 As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,
 Was risen, and romed in a chambre on heigh,
 In which he al the noble citee seigh,
 And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene,
 210 Ther as this fresshe Emelye the shene
 Was in hire walk, and romed up and down.
 This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun,
 Goth in the chambre romynge to and fro,
 And to hym-self compleynynge of his wo.
 215 That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, "allas!"
 And so bifel, by aventure or cas,
 That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre
 Of iren greet, and square as any sparre,
 He cast his eye upon Emelya,
 220 And therwithal he bleynte, and cryede "A!"
 As though he stongen were unto the herte.
 And with that cry Arcite anon up sterte
 And seyde, "Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,
 That art so pale and deedly on to see?
 225 Why cridestow? who hath thee doon offence?
 For Goddess love, taak al in pacience
 Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be;
 Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.
 Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
 230 Of Saturne, by sum constellacioun
 Hath yeven us this, al though we hadde it sworn;
 So stood the hevene, whan that we were born.
 We moste endure it, this the short and playn."
 175 Thus passed by year by year and day by day,
 Till it fell out, upon a morn in May,
 That Emily, far fairer to be seen
 Than is the lily on its stalk of green,
 And fresher than is May with flowers new
 180 For with the rose's colour strove her hue,
 I know not which was fairer of the two,
 Before the dawn, as was her custom to do,

She rose and dressed her body for delight;
 For May will have no sluggards of the night.
 185 That season rouses every gentle heart
 And forces it from winter's sleep to start,
 Saying: "Arise and show thy reverence."
 So Emily remembered to go thence
 In honour of the May, and so she rose.
 190 Clothed, she was sweeter than any flower that blows;
 Her yellow hair was braided in one tress
 Behind her back, a full yard long, I guess.
 And in the garden, as the sun up-rose,
 She sauntered back and forth and through each close,
 195 Gathering many a flower, white and red,
 To weave a delicate garland for her head;
 And like a heavenly angel's was her song.
 The tower tall, which was so thick and strong,
 And of the castle was the great donjon,
 200 (Wherein the two knights languished in prison,
 Of whom I told and shall yet tell, withal),
 Was joined, at base, unto the garden wall
 Whereunder Emily went dallying.
 Bright was the sun and clear that morn in spring,
 205 And Palamon, the woeful prisoner,
 As was his wont, by leave of his jailor,
 Was up and pacing round that chamber high,
 From which the noble city filled his eye,
 And, too, the garden full of branches green,
 210 Wherein bright Emily, fair and serene,
 Went walking and went roving up and down.
 This sorrowing prisoner, this Palamon,
 Being in the chamber, pacing to and fro,
 And to himself complaining of his woe,
 215 Cursing his birth, he often cried "Alas!"
 And so it was, by chance or other pass,
 That through a window, closed by many a bar
 Of iron, strong and square as any spar,
 He cast his eyes upon Emilia,
 220 And thereupon he blenched and cried out "Ah!"
 As if he had been beaten to the heart.
 And at that cry Arcita did up-start,
 Asking: "My cousin, why what ails you now
 That you've so deathly pallor on your brow?
 225 Why did you cry out? Who's offended you?
 For God's love, show some patience, as I do,
 With prison, for it may not different be;
 Fortune has given this adversity.
 Some evil disposition or aspect
 230 Of Saturn did our horoscopes affect
 To bring us here, though differently 'twere sworn;
 But so the stars stood when we two were born;

We must endure it; that, in brief, is plain."

The Knight's Tale

lines 234-264: Arcita compares Emily with Venus

This Palamon answerde and seyde agayn:

- 235 "Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun
Thow hast a veyn ymaginacioun.
This prison caused me nat for to crye,
But I was hurt right now thurgh-out myn ye
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.
240 The fairnesse of that lady, that I see
Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro,
Is cause of al my cryng and my wo.
I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,
But Venus is it, soothly as I gesse."
245 And therewithal, on knees doun he fil,
And seyde, "Venus, if it be thy wil,
Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure
Bifore me, sorweful wrecched creature,
Out of this prisoun helpe that we may scapen!
250 And if so be my destynnee be shapen
By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,
Of oure lynage have som compassioun,
That is so lowe ybrought by tyrannye."
And with that word Arcite gan espye
255 Wher-as this lady romed to and fro,
And with that sighte hir beautee hurte hym so,
That, if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or moore.
And with a sigh he seyde pitously:
260 "The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly
Of hire, that rometh in the yonder place,
And but I have hir mercy and hir grace
That I may seen hir atte leeste weye,
I nam but deed, ther is namoore to seye."

This Palamon replied and said again:

- 235 "Cousin, indeed in this opinion now
Your fancy is but vanity, I trow.
It's not our prison that caused me to cry.
But I was wounded lately through the eye
Down to my heart, and that my bane will be.
240 The beauty of the lady that I see
There in that garden, pacing to and fro,
Is cause of all my crying and my woe.
I know not if she's woman or goddess;
But Venus she is truly, I guess."
245 And thereupon down on his knees he fell,
And said: "O Venus, if it be thy will
To be transfigured in this garden, thus

Before me, sorrowing wretch, oh now help us
 Out of this prison to be soon escaped.
 250 And if it be my destiny is shaped,
 By fate, to die in durance, in bondage,
 Have pity, then, upon our lineage
 That has been brought so low by tyranny."
 And on that word Arcita looked to see
 255 This lady who went roving to and fro.
 And in that look her beauty struck him so
 That, if poor Palamon is wounded sore,
 Arcita is as deeply hurt, and more.
 And with a sigh he said then, piteously:
 260 "The virgin beauty slays me suddenly
 Of her that wanders yonder in that place;
 And save I have her pity and her grace,
 That I at least may see her day by day,
 I am as good as dead; there's no more to say."

The Knight's Tale

lines 265-293: Palamon claims Emily to be his lady and love

265 This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,
 Dispitously he looked and answerde,
 "Wheither seistow this in earnest or in pley?"
 "Nay," quod Arcite, "in earnest by my fey,
 God helpe me so, me list ful yvele pleye."
 270 This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye;
 "It nere," quod he, "to thee no greet honour
 For to be fals, ne for to be traitour
 To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother,
 Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til oother,
 275 That nevere for to dyen in the peyne,
 Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,
 Neither of us in love to hyndre other,
 Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother,
 But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me
 280 In every cas, as I shal forthren thee, -
 This was thyn ooth, and myn also certeyn,
 I woot right wel thou darst it nat withseyn.
 Thus artow of my conseil, out of doute;
 And now thou woldest falsly been aboute
 285 To love my lady, whom I love and serve
 And evere shal, til that myn herte sterve.
 Nay, certes, false Arcite, thow shalt nat so!
 I loved hire first, and tolde thee my wo
 As to my conseil, and to my brother sworn,
 290 To forthre me as I have toold biforn,
 For which thou art ybounden as a knyght
 To helpen me, if it lay in thy myght,

Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn."

- 265 This Palamon, when these words he had heard,
Pitilessly he watched him, and answered:
"Do you say this in earnest or in play?"
"Nay," said Arcita, "earnest, now, I say!
God help me, I am in no mood for play!"
270 Palamon knit his brows and stood at bay.
"It will not prove," he said, "to your honour
After so long a time to turn traitor
To me, who am your cousin and your brother,
Sworn as we are, and each unto the other,
275 That never, though for death in any pain,
Never, indeed, till death shall part us twain,
Either of us in love shall hinder other,
No, nor in any thing, O my dear brother;
But that, instead, you shall so further me
280 As I shall you, all this we did agree.
Such was your oath and such was mine also.
You dare not now deny it, well I know.
Thus you are of my party, beyond doubt.
And now you would all falsely go about
285 To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And shall while life my heart's blood may preserve.
Nay, false Arcita, it shall not be so.
I loved her first, and told you all my woe,
As to a brother and to one that swore
290 To further me, as I have said before.
For which you are in duty bound, as knight,
To help me, if the thing lie in your might,
Or else you're false, I say, and downfallen."

The Knight's Tale

lines 294-328: Arcita rejects Palamon's claim

- This Arcite ful proudly spak ageyn,
295 "Thow shalt," quod he, "be rather fals than I.
But thou art fals, I telle thee outrely,
For paramour I loved hir first er thow.
What, wiltow seyn thou wistest nat yet now
Wheither she be a womman or goddesse?
300 Thyn is affeccoun of hoolynesse,
And myn is love, as to a creature;
For which I tolde thee myn aventure
As to my cosyn and my brother sworn.
I pose, that thow lovedest hir biforn;
305 Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe
That `who shal yeve a love any lawe?'
Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,
Than may be yeve of any erthely man.
And therfore positif lawe and swich decree
310 Is broken al day for love in ech degree.

A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed,
 He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,
 Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf.
 And eek it is nat likly, al thy lyf,
 315 To stonden in hir grace, namoore shal I,
 For wel thou woost thyselfen, verrailly,
 That thou and I be dampned to prisoun
 Perpetuelly, us gayneth no raunsoun.
 We stryven as dide the houndes for the boon,
 320 They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon.
 Ther cam a kyte, whil they weren so wrothe,
 And baar away the boon bitwixe hem bothe.
 And therfore at the kynges court, my brother,
 Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother.
 325 Love if thee list, for I love, and ay shal;
 And soothly, leeve brother, this is al.
 Heere in this prisoun moote we endure,
 And everich of us take his aventure."
 Then this Arcita proudly spoke again:
 295 "You shall," he said, "be rather false than I;
 And that you're so, I tell you utterly;
 For par amour I loved her first, you know.
 What can you say? You know not, even now,
 Whether she is a woman or goddess!
 300 Yours is a worship as of holiness,
 While mine is love, as of a mortal maid;
 Wherefore I told you of it, unafraid,
 As to my cousin and my brother sworn.
 Let us assume you loved her first, this morn;
 305 Know you not well the ancient writer's saw
 Of 'Who shall give a lover any law?'
 Love is a greater law, aye by my pan,
 Than man has ever given to earthly man.
 And therefore statute law and such decrees
 310 Are broken daily and in all degrees.
 A man needs love, despit thoughts in his head.
 He cannot flee it though he should be dead,
 And be she maid, or widow, or a wife.
 And yet it is not likely that, in life,
 315 You'll stand within her graces; nor shall I;
 For you are well aware, always truly,
 That you and I are doomed to prison drear
 Perpetually; we gain no ransom here.
 We strive but as those dogs did for the bone;
 320 They fought all day, and yet their gain was none.
 Till came a kite while they were still so wroth
 And bore the bone away between them both.
 And therefore, at the king's court, O my brother,
 It's each man for himself and not for other.
 325 Love if you like; for I love and aye shall;

And certainly, dear brother, that is all.
Here in this prison cell must we remain
And each endure whatever fate ordain."

The Knight's Tale

lines 329-350: Arcita is ransomed

- Greet was the strif and long bitwix hem tweye,
330 If that I hadde leyser for to seye.
But to th'effect; it happed on a day,
To telle it yow as shortly as I may,
A worthy duc, that highte Perotheus,
That felawe was unto duc Theseus
335 Syn thilke day that they were children lite,
Was come to Atthenes his felawe to visite,
And for to pleye as he was wont to do-
For in this world he loved no man so,
And he loved hym als tendrely agayn.
340 So wel they lovede, as olde bookes sayn,
That whan that oon was deed, soothly to telle,
His felawe wente and soughte hym down in helle.
But of that storie list me nat to write;
Duc Perotheus loved wel Arcite,
345 And hadde hym knowe at Thebes yeer by yere,
And finally, at requeste and preyere
Of Perotheus, withouten any raunsoun,
Duc Theseus hym leet out of prisoun
Frely to goon, wher that hym liste overal,
350 In swich a gyse as I you tellen shal.
Great was the strife, and long, between the two,
330 If I had but the time to tell it you,
Except in effect; it happened on a day
To tell the tale as briefly as I may
A worthy duke men called Pirithous,
Who had been friend unto Duke Theseus
335 Since that day that they were children,
Was come to visit Athens and visit
His play-fellow, as he was used to do,
For in this whole world he loved no man so;
And Theseus loved him as truly- nay,
340 So well each loved the other, old books say,
That when one died, it is but truth I tell,
The other went and sought him down in Hell;
But of that tale I have no wish to write.
Pirithous loved Arcita, too, that knight,
345 Having known him in Thebes full many a year;
And finally, at his request and prayer,
And that without a coin of ransom paid,
Duke Theseus released him out of shade,

Freely to go where'er he wished, and go
350 In such a way, I will let you know.

The agreement was, to set it plainly down,
As made between those two of great renown:
That if Arcita, any time, were found,
Ever in life, by day or night, on ground
355 Of any country of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was concerted thus,
That by the sword he straight should lose his head.
He had no choice, so taking leave he sped
Homeward to Thebes, lest by the sword's sharp edge
360 He forfeit life. His neck was under pledge.

The Knight's Tale

lines 361-416: Arcita is released from prison and regrets losing the sight on Emily

How greet a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!
The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte,
He wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously,
To sleen hymself he waiteth prively.
365 He seyde, "Allas, that day that he was born!
Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;
Now is me shape eternally to dwelle
Nat in purgatorie, but in helle.
Allas, that evere knew I Perotheus!
370 For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus,
Yfetered in his prisoun evermo;
Thanne hadde I been in blisse, and nat in wo.
Oonly the sighte of hire whom that I serve,
Though that I nevere hir grace may deserve,
375 Wolde han suffised right ynough for me.
O deere cosyn Palamon," quod he,
"Thyn is the victorie of this aventure.
Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure.-
In prisoun? certes, nay, but in paradys!
380 Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,
That hast the sighte of hir, and I th'absence;
For possible is, syn thou hast hir presence,
And art a knyght, a worthy and an able,
That by som cas, syn Fortune is chaungeable,
385 Thow maist to thy desir som tyme atteyne.
But I, that am exiled and bareyne
Of alle grace, and in so greet dispeir
That ther nys erthe, water, fir, ne eir,
Ne creature, that of hem maked is,
390 That may me helpe or doon confort in this,
Wel oughte I sterve in wanhope and distresse,
Farwel, my lif, my lust, and my gladnesse!
How great a sorrow is Arcita's now!

How through his heart he feels death's heavy blow,
 He weeps, he wails, he cries out piteously;
 He thinks to slay himself all privily.
 365 He said: "Alas, the day that I was born!
 I'm in worse prison, now, and more forlorn;
 Now am I doomed eternally to dwell
 No more in Purgatory, but in Hell.
 Alas, that I have known Pirithous!
 370 For else had I remained with Theseus,
 Fettered within that cell; but even so
 Then had I been in bliss and not in woe.
 Only the sight of her that I would serve,
 Though I might never her dear grace deserve,
 375 Would have sufficed, oh well enough for me!
 O my dear cousin Palamon," said he,
 "Yours is the victory, and that is sure,
 For there, full happily, you may endure.
 In prison? Never, but in Paradise!
 380 Oh, well has Fortune turned for you the dice,
 Who have the sight of her, I the absence.
 For possible it is, in her presence,
 You being a knight, a worthy and able,
 That by some chance, since Fortune's changeable.
 385 You may to your desire sometime attain.
 But I, that am in exile and in pain,
 Stripped of all hope and in so deep despair
 That there's no earth nor water, fire nor air,
 Nor any creature made of them there is
 390 To help or give me comfort, now, in this -
 Surely I'll die of sorrow and distress;
 Farewell, my life, my love, my joyousness!

Allas, why pleynten folk so in commune
 On purveiaunce of God or of Fortune,
 395 That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse
 Wel bettre than they kan hemself devyse?
 Som man desireth for to han richesse,
 That cause is of his mordre of greet siknesse.
 And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,
 400 That in his hous is of his meynee slayn.
 Infinite harmes been in this mateere,
 We witen nat what thing we preyen heere.
 We faren as he that dronke is as a mous;
 A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,
 405 But he noot which the righte wey is thider,
 And to a dronke man the wey is slider.
 And certes, in this world so faren we;
 We seken faste after felicitee,
 But we goon wrong ful often trewely.
 410 Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,

That wende and hadde a greet opinioun
That if I myghte escapen from prisoun,
Thanne hadde I been in joye and perfit heele,
Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
415 Syn that I may nat seen you, Emelye,
I nam but deed, ther nys no remedye."
Alas! Why is it men so much complain
Of what great God, or Fortune, may ordain,
395 When better is the gift, in any guise,
Than men may often for themselves devise?
One man desires only that great wealth
Which may but cause his death or long ill-health.
One who from prison gladly would be free,
400 At home by his own servants slain might be.
Infinite evils lie therein, 'tis clear;
We know not what it is we pray for here.
We fare as he that's drunken as a mouse;
A drunk man knows right well he has a house,
405 But he knows not the right way leading thither;
And a drunk man is sure to slip and slither.
And certainly, in this world so fare we;
We furiously pursue felicity,
Yet we go often wrong before we die.
410 This may we all admit, and specially I,
Who deemed and held, as I were under spell,
That if I might escape from prison cell,
Then would I find again what might heal,
Who now am only exiled from my weal.
415 For since I may not see you, Emelye,
I am as good as dead; there is no remedye."
lines 417-478: Palamon pities himself still being in prison

435 And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage
 Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage.
 For I moot wepe and wayle, whil I lyve,
 With al the wo that prison may me yeve,
 And eek with peyne that love me yeveth also,
 440 That doubleth al my torment and my wo."
 Therwith the fyr of jalousie up-sterter
 Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte
 So woodly, that he lyk was to biholde
 The boxtree, or the asshen dede and colde.
 And on the other hand, this Palamon,
 When that he found Arcita truly gone,
 Such lamentation made he, that the tower
 420 Resounded of his crying, hour by hour.
 The very fetters on his legs were yet
 Again with all his bitter salt tears wet.
 "Alas!" said he, "Arcita, cousin mine,
 With all our strife, God knows, you've won the wine.
 425 You're walking, now, in Theban streets, at large,
 And all my woe you may from mind discharge.
 You may, too, since you've wisdom and manhood,
 Assemble all the people of our blood
 And wage a war so sharp on this city
 430 That by some fortune, or by some treaty,
 You shall yet have that lady to your wife
 For whom I now must needs lay down my life.
 For surely 'tis in possibility,
 Since you are now at large, from prison free,
 435 And are a lord, great is your advantage
 Above my own, who die here in a cage.
 For I must weep and wail, the while I live,
 In all the grief that prison cell may give,
 And now with pain that love gives me, also,
 440 Which doubles all my torment and my woe."
 Therewith the fires of jealousy up-start
 Within his breast and burn him to the heart
 So wildly that he seems one, to behold,
 Like seared box tree, or ashes, dead and cold.

445 Thanne seyde he, "O cruel Goddes, that governe
 This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,
 And writen in the table of atthamaunt
 Youre parlement and youre eterne graunt,
 What is mankynde moore unto you holde
 450 Than is the sheep that rouketh in the folde?
 For slayn is man right as another beest,
 And dwelleth eek in prison and arreest,
 And hath siknesse, and greet adversitee,
 And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee.
 445 Then said he: "O you cruel Gods, that sway

This world in bondage of your laws, for aye,
And write upon the tablets adamant
Your counsels and the changeless words you grant,
What better view of mankind do you hold
450 Than of the sheep that huddle in the fold?
For man must die like any other beast,
Or rot in prison, under foul arrest,
And suffer sickness and misfortune sad,
And still be oftentimes guiltless, too, by gad!

455 What governance is in this prescience
That giltelees tormenteth innocence?
And yet encresseth this al my penaunce,
That man is bounden to his observaunce,
For Goddes sake, to letten of his wille,
460 Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfille.
And whan a beest is deed, he hath no peyne,
But man after his deeth moot wepe and pleyne,
Though in this world he have care and wo.
Withouten doute it may stonden so.
465 The answeere of this lete I to dyvynys,
But well I woot, that in this world greet pyne ys.
Allas, I se a serpent or a thief,
That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,
Goon at his large, and where hym list may turne!
470 But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,
And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,
That hath destroyed wel ny al the blood
Of Thebes with hise waste walles wyde.
And Venus sleeth me on that oother syde
475 For jalousie and fere of hym Arcite."

Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,
And lete hym in his prisoun stille dwelle,
And of Arcita forth I wol yow telle.

455 What management is in this prescience
That, guiltless, yet torments our innocence?
And this increases all my pain, as well,
That man is bound by law, nor may rebel,
For fear of God, but must repress his will,
460 Whereas a beast may all his lust fulfill.
And when a beast is dead, he feels no pain;
But, after death, man yet must weep amain,
Though in this world he had but care and woe:
There is no doubt that it is even so.
465 The answer leave I to divines to tell,
But well I know this present world is hell.
Alas! I see a snake or a thief,
That has brought many a true man unto grief,
Going at large, and where he wills may turn,
470 But I must lie in gaol, because Saturn,

And Juno too, both envious and mad,
 Have spilled out well-nigh all the blood we had
 At Thebes, and desolated her wide walls.
 And Venus slays me with the bitter galls
 475 Of fear of Arcita, and jealousy."
 Now will I leave this Palamon, for he
 Is in his prison, where he still must dwell,
 And of Arcita will I forthwith tell.
 lines 479-496: The Knight asks which of the two knights is the luckiest

The somer passeth, and the nyghtes longe
 480 Encressen double wise the peynes stronge
 Bothe of the lovere and the prisoner;
 I noot which hath the wofuller mester.
 For shortly for to seyn, this Palamoun
 Perpetuelly is dampned to prisoun
 485 In cheynes and in fettres to been deed,
 And Arcite is exiled upon his heed
 For evere mo as out of that contree,
 Ne nevere mo he shal his lady see.
 Summer being passed away and nights grown long,
 480 Increased now doubly all the anguish strong
 Both of the lover and the prisoner.
 I know not which one was the woefuller.
 For, to be brief about it, Palamon
 Is doomed to lie for ever in prison,
 485 In chains and fetters till he shall be dead;
 And exiled, on thread of losing his head
 Arcita must remain abroad, nor see,
 For evermore, the face of his lady.

Yow loveres axe I now this questioun,
 490 Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?
 That oon may seen his lady day by day,
 But in prison he moot dwelle alway;
 That oother wher hym list may ride or go,
 But seen his lady shal he nevere mo.
 495 Now demeth as yow liste ye that kan,
 For I wol telle forth, as I bigan.
 You lovers, now I ask you this question:
 490 Who has the worse, Arcita or Palamon?
 The one may see his lady day by day,
 But yet in prison must he dwell for aye.
 The other, where he wishes, he may go,
 But never see his lady more, ah no.
 495 Now answer as you wish, all you that can.
 For I will speak right on as I began.
 lines 497-521: Arcita returns to Thebes

Sequitur Pars Secunda

(Here begins the second part)

- Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde `Allas,'
For seen his lady shal he nevere mo;
500 And shortly to concluden al his wo,
So muche sorwe hadde nevere creature,
That is, or shal whil that the world may dure.
His slep, his mete, his drynke is hym biraft,
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft.
505 Hise eyen holwe and grisly to biholde,
His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde;
And solitarie he was and evere allone
And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
510 Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.
So feble eek were hise spiritz, and so lowe,
And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe
His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.
And in his geere for al the world he ferde
515 Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye
Engendred of humour malencolik
Biforen in his celle fantastik,
And shortly turned was al up so down
520 Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of hym, this woful love daunce Arcite.
- Now when Arcite unto Thebes was come,
He lay and languished all day in his home,
Since he his lady nevermore should see,
500 But telling of his sorrow brief I'll be.
Had never any man so much torture,
No, nor shall have while this world may endure.
Bereft he was of sleep and meat and drink,
That lean he grew and dry as shaft, I think.
505 His eyes were hollow and ghastly to behold,
His face was sallow, all pale and ashen-cold,
And solitary kept he and alone,
Wailing the whole night long, making his moan.
And if he heard a song or instrument,
510 Then he would weep ungoverned and lament;
So feeble were his spirits, and so low,
And so changed was he, that no man could know
Him by his words or voice, whoever heard.
And in this change, for all the world he fared
515 As if not troubled by malady of love,
But by that humor dark and grim, whereof
Springs melancholy madness in the brain,
And fantasy unbridled holds its reign.
And shortly, all was turned quite upside-down,

520 Both habits and the temper all had known
Of him, this woeful lover, Dan Arcite.

The Knight's Tale

lines 522-540: Arcite dreams that he has to go to Athens

What sholde I al day of his wo endite?
Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two
This crueel torment, and this peyne and wo,
525 At Thebes in his contree, as I seyde,
Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,
Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie
Biforn hym stood, and bad hym to be murie.
His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte,
530 An hat he werede upon hise heris brighte.
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,
As he was whan that Argus took his sleep;
And seyde hym thus, "To Atthenes shaltou wende,
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende."
535 And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.
"Now trewely, how soore that me smerte,"
Quod he, "to Atthenes right now wol I fare,
Ne for the drede of deeth shal I nat spare
To se my lady that I love and serve,
540 In hire presence I recche nat to sterve."
Why should I all day of his woe indite?
When he'd endured all this a year or two,
This cruel torment and this pain and woe,
525 At Thebes, in his own country, as I said,
Upon a night, while sleeping in his bed,
He dreamed of how the winged God Mercury
Before him stood and bade him happier be.
His sleep-bestowing wand he bore upright;
530 A hat he wore upon his ringlets bright.
Arrayed this god was (noted at a leap)
As he'd been when to Argus he gave sleep.
And thus he spoke: "To Athens shall you wend;
For all your woe is destined there to end."
535 And on that word Arcite woke and started.
"Now truly, howsoever sore I'm smarted,"
Said he, "to Athens right now will I fare;
Nor for the dread of death will I now spare
To see my lady, whom I love and serve;
540 I will not reck of death, with her, nor swerve."

From The Canterbury Tales:

The Knight's Tale

lines 541-592: Arcite disguises himself as a poor labourer and finds employment at Theseus' court

And with that word he caughte a greet mirour,
 And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,
 And saugh his visage al in another kynde.
 And right anon it ran hym in his mynde,
 545 That sith his face was so disfigured
 Of maladye, the which he hadde endured,
 He myghte wel, if that he bar hym lowe,
 Lyve in Atthenes, everemoore unknowe,
 And seen his lady wel ny day by day.
 550 And right anon he chaunged his array,
 And cladde hym as a povre laborer,
 And al allone, save oonly a squier
 That knew his privetee and al his cas,
 Which was disgised povrely, as he was,
 555 To Atthenes is he goon, the nexte way.
 And to the court he wente, upon a day,
 And at the gate he profreth his servyse,
 To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse.
 And shortly of this matere for to seyn,
 560 He fil in office with a chamberleyn,
 The which that dwellynge was with Emelye,
 For he was wys and koude soone espie
 Of every servant which that serveth here.
 Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere,
 565 For he was yong and myghty for the nones,
 And therto he was strong and big of bones
 To doon that any wight kan hym devyse.
 A yeer or two he was in this servyse
 Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte;
 570 And Philostrate he seyde that he highte.
 But half so wel biloved a man as he
 Ne was ther nevere in court, of his degree;
 He was so gentil of condicioun
 That thurghout al the court was his renoun.
 575 They seyden, that it were a charitee,
 That Theseus wolde enhauncen his degree,
 And putten hym in worshipful servyse
 Ther as he myghte his vertu exercise.
 And thus withinne a while his name is spronge
 580 Bothe of hise dedes and his goode tonge,
 That Theseus hath taken hym so neer,
 That of his chambre he made hym a squier,
 And gaf hym gold to mayntene his degree.
 And eek men broghte hym out of his contree
 585 From yeer to yeer, ful pryvely, his rente.
 But honestly and slyly he it spente,
 That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
 And thre yeer in this wise his lif he ladde,
 And bar hym so in pees, and eek in werre,
 590 Ther was no man that Theseus hath derre.

And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,
And speke I wole of Palamon a lite.

And with that word he caught a great mirror,
And saw how changed was all his old colour,
And saw his visage altered from its kind.
And straightway it ran into his mind
545 That since his face was now disfigured so,
By suffering endured (as well we know),
He might, if he should bear him low in town,
Live there in Athens evermore, unknown,
Seeing his lady well-nigh every day.
550 And at once he altered his array,
Like a poor labourer in mean attire,
And all alone, except only for a squire,
Who knew his secret heart and all his case,
And who was dressed as poorly as he was,
555 To Athens was he gone the nearest way.
And to the court he went upon a day,
And at the gate he proffered services
To drudge and drag, as any one devises.
And to be brief herein, and to be plain,
560 He found employment with a chamberlain
Was serving in the house of Emily;
For he was sharp and very soon could see
What every servant did who served her there.
Right well could he hew wood and water bear,
565 For he was young and mighty, let me own,
And big of muscle, aye and big of bone,
To do what any man asked, in a trice.
A year or two he was in this service,
Page of the chamber of Emily the bright;
570 He said "Philostrates" would name him right.
But half so well beloved a man as he
Was never in that court, of his degree;
His gentle nature was so clearly shown,
That throughout all the court spread his renown.
575 They said it were but kindly courtesy
If Theseus should heighten his degree
And put him in more honourable service
Wherein he might his virtue exercise.
And thus, at once, his name was so up-sprung,
580 Both for his deeds and sayings of his tongue,
That Theseus had brought him nigh and nigher
And of the chamber he had made him squire,
And given him gold to maintain dignity.
Besides, men brought him, from his own country,
585 From year to year, clandestinely, his rent;
But honestly and slyly it was spent,
And no man wondered how he came by it.
And three years thus he lived, with much profit,

And bore him so in peace and so in war
590 There was no man that Theseus loved more.
And in such bliss I leave Arcita now,
And upon Palamon some words bestow.
lines 593-629: After seven years, Palamon escapes from prison

In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun
Thise seven yeer hath seten Palamoun,
595 Forpyned, what for wo and for distresse.
Who feeleth double soor and hevynesse
But Palamon, that love destreyneth so,
That wood out of his wit he goth for wo?
And eek therto he is a prisoner,
600 Perpetuelly, noght oonly for a yer.
In darkness, in horrible and strong prison
These seven years has now sat Palamon,
595 Wasted by woe and by his long distress.
Who has a two-fold evil heaviness
But Palamon? whom love yet tortures so
That half out of his wits he is for woe;
And joined thereto he is a prisoner,
600 Perpetually, not only for a year.

Who koude ryme in Englyssh proprely
His martirdom? For sothe it am nat I,
Therefore I passe as lightly as I may.
It fel that in the seventhe yer, in May,
605 The thridde nyght, (as olde bookes seyn,
That al this storie tellen moore pleyn)
Were it by aventure or destyne -
As, whan a thyng is shapen, it shal be -
That soone after the mydnyght Palamoun
610 By helpyng of a freend, brak his prisoun
And fleeth the citee faste as he may go;
For he hade yeve his gayler drynke so
Of a clarree maad of a certeyn wyn,
With nercotikes and opie of Thebes fyn,
615 That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him shake,
The gayler sleep, he myghte nat awake.
And thus he fleeth as faste as evere he may;
The nyght was short and faste by the day,
That nedes-cost he moot hymselfen hyde;
620 And til a grove, faste ther bisyde,
With dredeful foot thanne stalketh Palamoun.
For shortly, this was his opinioun,
That in that grove he wolde hym hyde al day,
And in the nyght thanne wolde he take his way
625 To Thebes-ward, his freendes for to preye
On Theseus to helpe hym to werreye;
And shortly, outhur he wolde lese his lif,

And who could rhyme in English, properly,

It fell out in the seventh year, in May,

615 That all that night, although a man might shake
This jailor, he slept on, nor could awake.

620 And to a grove that grew hard by, with stride
Of furtive foot, went fearful Palamon.

625 Toward Thebes, and there find friends, and of them pray
 Their help on Theseus in war's array;

670 Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille

As doon thise lovers in hir queynte geres,
Now in the croppe, now down in the breres,

Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste,
Right so kan geery Venus overcaste

670 Arcita, having roamed and roved his fill,
And having sung his rondel, lustily,

Into a study fell he, suddenly,

As do these lovers in their strange desires,
Now in the trees, now down among the briers,
675 Now up, now down, like bucket in a well.
Even as on a Friday, truth to tell,
The sun shines now, and now the rain comes fast,
Even so can fickle Venus overcast
The spirits of her people; as her day,
680 Is changeful, so she changes her array.
Seldom is Friday quite like all the week.

Whan that Arcite had songe, he gan to sike,
And sette hym down withouten any moore;
"Allas," quod he, "that day that I was bore!
685 How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee
Woltow werreyen Thebes the Citee?
Allas, ybrought is to confusioun
The blood roial of Cadme and Amphioun, -
Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man
690 That Thebes bulte, or first the toun bigan,
And of the citee first was crouned kyng,
Of his lynage am I, and his ofspryng,
By verray ligne, as of the stok roial,
And now I am so caytyf and so thral
695 That he that is my mortal enemy
I serve hym as his squier povrely.
And yet dooth Juno me wel moore shame,
For I dar noght biknowe myn owene name,
But theras I was wont to highte Arcite,
700 Now highte I Philostrate, noght worth a myte.
Allas, thou felle Mars! allas, Juno!
Thus hath youre ire oure lynage al fordo,
Save oonly me, and wrecched Palamoun
That Theseus martireth in prisoun.
705 And over al this, to sleen me outrely,
Love hath his firy dart so brennyngly
Ystiked thurgh my trewe careful herte,
That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.
Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye!
710 Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye.
Of al the remenant of myn oother care
Ne sette I nat the montance of a tare,
So that I koude doon aught to youre plesaunce."
And with that word he fil down in a traunce
715 A longe tyme, and after he upsterte.
Arcita, having sung, began to speak,
And sat him down, sighing like one forlorn.
"Alas," said he, "the day that I was born!
685 How long, O Juno, of thy cruelty,
Wilt thou wage bitter war on Thebes city?
Alas! Confounded beyond all reason

The blood of Cadmus and of Amphion;
 Of royal Cadmus, who was the first man
 690 To build at Thebes, and first the town began,
 And first of all the city to be king;
 Of his lineage am I, and his offspring,
 By true descent, and of the stock royal:
 And now I'm such a wretched serving thrall,
 695 That he who is my mortal enemy,
 I serve him as his squire, and all humbly.
 And even more does Juno give me shame,
 For I dare not acknowledge my own name;
 But whereas I was Arcita by right,
 700 Now I'm Philostrates, not worth a mite.
 Alas, thou cruel Mars! Alas, Juno!
 Thus have your angers all our kin brought low,
 Except only me, and wretched Palamon,
 Whom Theseus martyrs yonder in prison.
 705 And above all, to slay me utterly,
 Love has his fiery dart so burningly
 Struck through my faithful and care-laden heart,
 My death was patterned before my swaddling-shirt.
 You slay me with your two eyes, Emily;
 710 You are the cause for which I now must die.
 For on the whole of all my other care
 I would not set the value of a tare,
 So I could do one thing to your pleasance!"
 And with that word he fell down in a trance
 715 That lasted long; and then he did up-start.

lines 716-764: Arcita and Palamon agree to fight the next day

This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte
 He felte a coold swerd sodeynliche glyde,
 For ire he quook, no lenger wolde he byde.
 And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,
 720 As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
 He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke,
 And seide, "Arcite, false traytour wikke!
 Now artow hent that lovest my lady so,
 For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,
 725 And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,
 As I ful ofte ofte have seyde thee heer biforn,
 And hast byjaped heere duc Theseus,
 And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus.
 I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye;
 730 Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,
 But I wol love hire oonly, and namo,
 For I am Palamon, thy mortal foo!
 And though that I no wepene have in this place,
 But out of prison am astart by grace,

735 I drede noght that outhur thow shalt dye,
 Or thow ne shalt nat loven Emelye.
 Chees which thou wolt, for thou shalt nat asterte!"
 This Palamon, who thought that through his heart
 He felt a cold and sudden sword blade glide,
 For rage he shook, no longer would he hide.
 But after he had heard Arcita's tale,
 720 As he were mad, with face gone deathly pale,
 He started up and sprang out of the thicket,
 Crying: "Arcita, oh you traitor wicked,
 Now are you caught, that crave my lady so,
 For whom I suffer all this pain and woe,
 725 And are my blood, and know my secrets' store,
 As I have often told you heretofore,
 And have befooled the great Duke Thesues,
 And falsely changed your name and station thus:
 Either I shall be dead or you shall die.
 730 You shall not love my lady Emily,
 But I will love her, and none other, no;
 For I am Palamon, your mortal foe.
 And though I have no weapon in this place,
 Being but out of prison by God's grace,
 735 I say again, that either you shall die
 Or else forgo your love for Emily.
 Choose which you will, for you shall not depart."

This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,
 Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,
 740 As fiers as leoun pulled out his swerd,
 And seyde thus: "By God that sit above,
 Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love,
 And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,
 Thou sholdest nevere out of this grove pace,
 745 That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond.
 For I defye the seurete and the bond
 Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.
 What, verray fool, thyng wel that love is free,
 And I wol love hir, maugree al thy myght!
 750 But for as muche thou art a worthy knyght,
 And wilnest to darreyne hire by bataille,
 Have heer my trouthe; tomorwe I wol nat faille
 Withoute wityng of any oother wight
 That heere I wol be founden as a knyght,
 755 And bryngen harneys right ynough for thee,
 And ches the beste, and leef the worste for me.
 And mete and drynke this nyght wol I brynge
 Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddyng;
 And if so be that thou my lady wynne,
 760 And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,
 Thow mayst wel have thy lady as for me."

This Arcita, with scornful, angry heart,

When he knew him and all the tale had heard,
740 Fierce as a lion, out he pulled a sword,
And answered thus: "By God that sits above!
Were it not you are sick and mad for love,
And that you have no weapon in this place,
Out of this grove you'd never move a pace,
745 But meet your death right now, and at my hand.
For I renounce the bond and its demand
Which you assert that I have made with you.
What, arrant fool, love's free to choose and do,
And I will have her, spite of all your might!
750 But in as much as you're a worthy knight
And willing to defend your love, in mail,
Hear now this word: tomorrow I'll not fail
Without the cognizance of any wight
To come here armed and harnessed as a knight,
755 And to bring arms for you, too, as you'll see;
And choose the better and leave the worse for me.
And meat and drink this very night I'll bring,
Enough for you, and clothes for your bedding.
And if it be that you my lady win
760 And slay me in this wood that now I'm in,
Then may you have your lady, for all of me."

This Palamon answerde, "I graunte it thee."
And thus they been departed til amorwe,
Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.

This Palamon replied: "I do agree."
And thus they parted till the morrow morn,
When each had pledged his honour to return.

lines 765-804: Arcita and Palamon start to fight their duel

765 O Cupide, out of alle charitee!
O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!
Ful sooth is seyde that love ne lordshipe
Wol noght, hir thankses, have no felaweshipe.
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun.
770 Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,
And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,
Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,
Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreyne
The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne.
775 And on his hors, allone as he was born,
He carieth al this harneys hym biforn,
And in the grove, at tyme and place yset,
This Arcite and this Palamon ben met.
To chaungen gan the colour in hir face

780 Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,
 That stondeth at the gappe with a spere,
 Whan hunted is the leoun and the bere,
 And hereth hym come russhyng in the greves,
 And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,
 785 And thynketh, "Heere cometh my mortal enemy,
 Withoute faille he moot be deed or I,
 For outhur I moot sleen hym at the gappe,
 Or he moot sleen me, if that me myshappe"-
 So ferden they in chaungyng of hir hewe,
 790 As fer as everich of hem oother knewe.
 Ther nas no good day ne no saluyng,
 But streight, withouten word or rehersyng,
 Everich of hem heelp for to armen oother,
 As freendly as he were his owene brother.
 795 And after that with sharpe speres stronge
 They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.
 Thou myghtest wene that this Palamoun
 In his fightyng were a wood leon,
 And as a crueel tigre was Arcite.
 800 As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,
 That frothen white as foom for ire wood.
 Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood.
 And in this wise I lete hem fightyng dwelle,
 And forth I wole of Theseus yow telle.
 765 O Cupido, that know'st not charity!
 O despot, that no peer will have with thee!
 Truly, 'tis said, that love, like all lordship,
 Declines, with little thanks, a partnership.
 Well learned they that, Arcite and Palamon.
 770 Arcita rode into the town anon,
 And on the morrow, before the dawn, he bore,
 Secretly, arms and armour out of store,
 Enough for each, and proper to maintain
 A battle in the field between the twain.
 775 So on his horse, alone as he was born,
 He carried out that harness as he'd sworn;
 And in the grove, at time and place they'd set,
 Arcita and this Palamon were met.
 Each of the two changed colour in the face.
 780 For as the hunter in the realm of Thrace
 Stands at the clearing with his ready spear,
 When hunted is the lion, or the bear,
 And through the forest hears him rushing fast,
 Breaking the boughs and leaves, and thinks aghast.
 785 "Here comes apace my mortal enemy!
 Now, without fail, he must be slain, or I;
 For either I must kill him before he pass,
 Or he will make of me a dead carcass"-
 So fared these men, in altering their hue,

790 So far as each the strength of other knew.
 There was no "good-day" given, no saluting,
 But without word, rehearsal, or such thing,
 Each of them helping, so they armed each other
 As dutifully as he were his own brother;
 795 And afterward, with their sharp spears and strong,
 They thrust each at the other wondrous long.
 You might have fancied that this Palamon,
 In battle, was a furious, mad lion,
 And that Arcita was a tiger quite:
 800 Like very boars the two began to smite,
 Like boars that froth for anger in the wood.
 Up to the ankles fought they in their blood.
 And leaving them thus fighting fast and fell,
 Forthwith of Theseus I now will tell.

lines 805-837: Duke Theseus goes hunting

805 The destinee, ministre general,
 That executeth in the world overal
 The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,
 So strong it is, that though the world had sworn
 The contrarie of a thyng, by ye or nay,
 810 Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
 That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeere.
 For certainly, oure appetites heere,
 Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
 Al is this reuled by the sighte above.
 815 This mene I now by myghty Theseus,
 That for to huntun is so desirus
 And namely at the grete hert in May,
 That in his bed ther daweth hym no day
 That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde
 820 With hunte and horn, and houndes hym bisyde
 For in his huntyng hath he swich delit
 That it is al his joye and appetit
 To been hymself the grete hertes bane-
 For after Mars he serveth now Dyane.
 805 Great destiny, minister-general,
 That executes in this world, and for all,
 The needs that God foresaw before we were born,
 So strong it is that, though the world had sworn
 The contrary of a thing, by yea or nay,
 810 Yet sometime it shall fall upon a day,
 Though not again within a thousand years.
 For certainly our wishes and our fears,
 Whether of war or peace, or hate or love,
 All are ruled by that foresight above.
 815 This show I now by mighty Theseus,
 Who to go hunting is so desirous,

And specially of the hart of ten, in May,
 That, in his bed, there dawns for him no day
 That he's not clothed and soon prepared to ride
 820 With hound and horn and huntsman at his side.
 For in his hunting has he such delight,
 That it is all his joy and appetite
 To be himself the great hart's deadly bane:
 For after Mars, he serves Diana's reign.

825 Cleer was the day, as I have toold er this,
 And Theseus, with alle joye and blis,
 With his Ypolita, the faire quene,
 And Emelye, clothed al in grene,
 On huntynge be they riden roially,
 830 And to the grove, that stood ful faste by,
 In which ther was an hert, as men hym tolde,
 Duc Theseus the streighte wey hath holde,
 And to the launde he rideth hym ful right,
 For thider was the hert wont have his flight,
 835 And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.
 This duc wol han a cours at hym, or tweye,
 With houndes swiche as that hym list comaunde.

825 Clear was the day, as I have told before this,
 When Theseus, compact of joy and bliss,
 With his Hippolyta, the lovely queen,
 And fair Emilia, clothed all in green,
 A-hunting they went riding royally.
 830 And to the grove of trees that grew hard by,
 In which there was a hart, as men had told,
 Duke Theseus the shortest way did hold.
 And to the glade he rode on, straight and right,
 For there the hart was wont to go in flight,
 835 And over a brook, and so forth on his way.
 This duke would have a course at him today,
 With such hounds as it pleased him to command.

lines 838-883: Duke Theseus interrupts the fight between Arcita and Palamon and learns their true identity

And whan this duc was come unto the launde,
 Under the sonne he looketh, and anon
 840 He was war of Arcite and Palamon,
 That foughten breme, as it were bores two;
 The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro
 So hidously, that with the leeste strook
 It semed as it wolde felle an ook;
 845 But what they were, nothyng he ne woot.
 This duc his courser with his spores smoot,
 And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,
 And pulled out a swerd, and cride, "Hoo!

Namooore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed!
 850 By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed
 That smyteth any strook, that I may seen.
 But telleth me what myster men ye been,
 That been so hardy for to fighten heere
 Withouten juge or oother officere,
 855 As it were in a lystes roially?"

And when this duke was come upon that land,

Under the slanting sun he looked, anon,
 840 And there saw Arcita and Palamon,
 Who furiously fought, as two bears do;
 The bright swords went in circles to and fro
 So terribly, that even their least stroke
 Seemed powerful enough to fell an oak;
 845 But who the two were, nothing did he note.
 This duke his courser with the sharp spurs smote,
 And in one bound he was between the two,
 And lugged his great sword out, and cried out: "Ho!
 No more, I say, on pain of losing head!
 850 By mighty Mars, that one shall soon be dead
 Who smites another stroke that I may see!
 But tell me now what manner of men ye be
 That are so hardy as to fight out here
 Without a judge or other officer,
 855 As if you-rode in lists right royally?"

This Palamon answerde hastily,
 And seyde, "Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
 We have the deeth disserved, bothe two.
 Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,
 860 That been encombred of oure owene lyves,
 And as thou art a fightful lord and juge,
 Ne yeve us neither mercy ne refuge,
 But sle me first for seinte charitee!
 But sle my felawe eek as wel as me-
 865 Or sle hym first, for, though thow knowest it lite,
 This is thy mortal foo, this is Arcite,
 That fro thy lond is banysshed on his heed,
 For which he hath deserved to be deed.
 For this is he, that cam unto thy gate,
 870 And seyde that he highte Philostrate.
 Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yer,
 And thou hast maked hym thy chief Squier,
 And this is he that loveth Emelye.
 For sith the day is come that I shal dye,
 875 I make pleylnly my confessioun
 That I am thilke woful Palamoun,
 That hath thy prisoun broken wikkedly.
 I am thy mortal foo, and it am I
 That loveth so hoote Emelye the brighte,

880 That I wol dye present in hir sighte;
 Wherefore I axe deeth and my juwise-
 But sle my felawe in the same wise
 For bothe han we deserved to be slayn."
 This Palamon replied, then, hastily,
 Saying: "O Sire, what need for more ado?
 We have deserved our death at hands of you.
 Two woeful wretches are we, two captives
 860 That are encumbered by our own sad lives;
 And as you are a righteous lord and judge,
 Give us not either mercy or refuge,
 But slay me first, for sacred charity;
 But slay my fellow here, as well, with me.
 865 Or slay him first; for though you learn it late,
 This is your mortal foe, Arcita- wait!-
 That from the land was banished, on his head.
 And for the which he merits to be dead.
 For this is he who came unto your gate,
 870 Calling himself Philostrates- nay, wait!-
 Thus has he fooled you well this many a year,
 And you have made him your chief squire, I hear:
 And this is he that loves fair Emily.
 For since the day is come when I must die,
 875 I make confession plainly and say on,
 That I am that same woeful Palamon
 Who has your prison broken, viciously.
 I am your mortal foe, and it is I
 Who love so hotly Emily the bright
 880 That I'll die gladly here within her sigh!
 Therefore do I ask death as penalty,
 But slay my fellow with the same mercy,
 For both of us deserve but to be slain."

lines 884-926: The queen and ladies ask for mercy

This worthy duc answered anon agayn,
 885 And seyde, "This is a short conclusioun,
 Youre owene mouth, by your confessioun,
 Hath dampned yow, and I wol it recorde.
 It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde,
 Ye shal be deed, by myghty Mars the rede!"
 This worthy duke presently spoke again,
 885 Saying: "This judgment needs but a short session:
 Your own mouth, aye, and by your own confession,
 Has doomed and damned you, as I shall record.
 There is no need for torture, on my word.
 But you shall die, by mighty Mars the red!"
 890 The queene anon, for verray wommanhede,
 Gan for to wepe, and so dide Emelye,

And alle the ladyes in the compaignye.
 Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,
 That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle.
 895 For gentil men they were of greet estaat,
 And no thyng but for love was this debaat,
 And saugh hir bloody woundes wyde and soore,
 And alle crieden, both lasse and moore,
 "Have mercy, lord, upon us wommen alle!"
 900 And on hir bare knees adoun they falle,
 And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood;
 Til at the laste aslaked was his mood,
 For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.
 And though he first for ire quook and sterte,
 905 He hath considered shortly in a clause
 The trespass of hem bothe, and eek the cause,
 And although that his ire hir gilt accused,
 Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused.
 As thus: he thoghte wel, that every man
 910 Wol helpe hymself in love, if that he kan,
 And eek delivere hym-self out of prisoun;
 And eek his herte hadde compassioun
 Of wommen, for they wepen evere in oon.
 And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,
 915 And softe unto hymself he seyde, "Fy
 Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
 But been a leon, bothe in word and dede,
 To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,
 As wel as to a proud despitous man,
 920 That wol maynteyne that he first bigan.
 That lord hath litel of discrecioun
 That in swich cas kan no divisoun,
 But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon."
 And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon,
 925 He gan to looken up with eyen lighte,
 And spak thise same wordes al on highte:
 890 But then the queen, whose heart for pity bled,
 Began to weep, and so did Emily
 And all the ladies in the company.
 Great pity must it be, so thought they all,
 That ever such misfortune should befall:
 895 For these were gentlemen, of great estate,
 And for no thing, except love, was their debate.
 They saw their bloody wounds, so sore and wide,
 And all cried out- greater and less, they cried:
 "Have mercy, lord, upon us women all!"
 900 And down upon their bare knees did they fall,
 And would have kissed his feet there where he stood,
 Till at the last assuaged was his high mood;
 For soon will pity flow through gentle heart.
 And though he first for ire did shake and start,

905 He soon considered, to state the case in brief,
 What cause they had for fighting, what for grief;
 And though his anger still their guilt accused,
 Yet in his reason he held them both excused;
 In such wise: he thought well that every man
 910 Will help himself in love, if he but can,
 And will himself deliver from prison;
 And, too, at heart he had compassion on
 Those women, for they cried and wept as one,
 And in his gentle heart he thought anon,
 915 And softly to himself he said then: "Fie
 Upon a lord that will have no mercy,
 But acts the lion, both in word and deed,
 To those repentant and in fear and need,
 As well as to the proud and pitiless man
 920 That still would do the thing that he began!
 That lord must surely in discretion lack
 Who, in such case, can no distinction make,
 But weighs both proud and humble in one scale."
 And shortly, when his ire was thus grown pale,
 925 He looked up to the sky, with eyes alight,
 And spoke these words, as he would promise plight:
 lines 927-970: Duke Theseus grants mercy but stipulates some conditions

"The God of love, a benedicite!
 How myghty and how greet a lord is he!
 Ayeyns his myght ther gayneth none obstacles,
 930 He may be cleped a god for his myracles,
 For he kan maken at his owene gyse
 Of everich herte as that hym list divyse.
 Lo heere, this Arcite and this Palamoun
 That quitly weren out of my prisoun,
 935 And myghte han lyved in Thebes roially,
 And witen I am hir mortal enemy,
 And that hir deth lith in my myght also;
 And yet hath love, maugree hir eyen two,
 Ybrought hem hyder bothe for to dye.
 940 Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?
 Who may been a fole, but if he love?
 Bihoold, for Goddes sake that sit above,
 Se how they blede! Be they noght wel arrayed?
 Thus hath hir lord, the God of Love, ypayed
 945 Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!
 And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse,
 That serven love, for aught that may bifalle!
 But this is yet the beste game of alle,
 That she, for whom they han this jolitee,
 950 Kan hem therfore as mucche thank, as me!
 She woot namoore of al this hoote fare,
 By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare!

But all moot ben assayed, hoot and coold;
 A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold;
 955 I woot it by myself ful yore agon,
 For in my tyme a servant was I oon.
 And therfore, syn I knowe of loves peyne,
 And woot how soore it kan a man distreyne,
 As he that hath ben caught ofte in his laas,
 960 I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespaas,
 At requeste of the queene that kneleth heere,
 And eek of Emelye, my suster deere.
 And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere,
 That nevere mo ye shal my contree dere,
 965 Ne make werre upon me, nyght ne day,
 But been my freendes in al that ye may,
 I yow foryeve this trespas, every deel."
 And they hym sworn his axying, faire and weel,
 And hym of lordship and of mercy preyde,
 970 And he hem graunteth grace, and thus he seyde:
 "The god of love, ah benedicite!
 How mighty and how great a lord is he!
 Against his might may stand no obstacles,
 930 A true god is he by his miracles;
 For he can manage, in his own sweet wise,
 The heart of anyone as he devise.
 Lo, here, Arcita and this Palamon,
 That were delivered out of my prison,
 935 And might have lived in Thebes right royally,
 Knowing me for their mortal enemy,
 And also that their lives lay in my hand;
 And yet their love has wiled them to this land,
 Against all sense, and brought them here to die!
 940 Look you now, is not that a folly high?
 Who can be called a fool, except he love?
 And see, for sake of God who sits above,
 See how they bleed! Are they not well arrayed?
 Thus has their lord, the god of love, repaid
 945 Their wages and their fees for their service!
 And yet they are supposed to be full wise
 Who serve love well, whatever may befall!
 But this is yet the best jest of them all,
 That she for whom they have this jollity
 950 Can thank them for it quite as much as me;
 She knows no more of all this fervent fare,
 By God! than knows a cuckoo or a hare.
 But all must be essayed, both hot and cold,
 A man must play the fool, when young or old;
 955 I know it of myself from years long gone:
 For of love's servants I've been numbered one.
 And therefore, since I know well all love's pain,
 And know how sorely it can man constrain,

As one that has been taken in the net,
 960 I will forgive your trespass, and forget,
 At instance of my sweet queen, kneeling here,
 Aye, and of Emily, my sister dear.
 And you shall presently consent to swear
 That nevermore will you my power dare,
 965 Nor wage war on me, either night or day,
 But will be friends to me in all you may;
 I do forgive this trespass, full and fair."
 And then they swore what he demanded there,
 And, of his might, they of his mercy prayed,
 970 And he extended grace, and thus he said:

lines 971-1011: Arcita and Palamon are allowed to return after a year with hundred warriors each and the winner of the battle shall have Emily

"To speke of roial lynage and richesse,
 Though that she were a queene or a princesse,
 Ech of you bothe is worthy doutelees
 To wedden whan tyme is, but nathelees
 975 I speke as for my suster Emelye,
 For whom ye have this strif and jalousye:
 Ye woot yourself, she may nat wedden two
 Atones, though ye fighten everemo.
 That oon of you, al be hym looth or lief,
 980 He moot go pipen in an yvy leef-
 This is to seyn, she may nat now han bothe,
 Al be ye never so jalouse, ne so wrothe.
 And forthy, I yow putte in this degree;
 That ech of yow shal have his destyne
 985 As hym is shape, and herkneth in what wyse;
 Lo, heere your ende of that I shal devyse.
 "To speak for royalty's inheritress,
 Although she be a queen or a princess,
 Each of you both is worthy, I confess,
 When comes the time to wed: but nonetheless,
 975 I speak now of my sister Emily,
 The cause of all this strife and jealousy -
 You know yourselves she may not marry two,
 At once, although you fight or what you do:
 One of you, then, and be he loath or lief,
 980 Must pipe his sorrows in an ivy leaf.
 That is to say, she cannot have you both,
 However jealous one may be, or wroth.
 Therefore I put you both in this decree,
 That each of you shall learn his destiny
 985 As it is cast; and hear, now, in what wise
 The word of fate shall speak through my device.

My wyl is this, for plat conclusioun,

Withouten any repplicacioun, -
 If that you liketh, take it for the beste,
 990 That everich of you shal goon where hym leste,
 Frely, withouten raunson, or daunger,
 And this day fifty wykes fer ne ner,
 Everich of you shal brynge an hundred knyghtes
 Armed for lystes up at alle rightes,
 995 Al redy to darreyne hire by bataille.
 And this bihote I yow withouten faille,
 Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knyght,
 That wheither of yow bothe that hath myght,
 This is to seyn, that wheither he, or thow
 1000 May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
 Sleen his contrarie, or out of lystes dryve,
 Thanne shal I yeve Emelya to wyve
 To whom that Fortune yeveth so fair a grace.
 Tho lystes shal I maken in this place,
 1005 And God so wisly on my soule rewe,
 As I shal evene juge been, and trewe.
 Ye shul noon oother ende with me maken,
 That oon of yow ne shal be deed or taken.
 And if yow thynketh this is weel ysayd,
 1010 Seyeth youre avys and holdeth you apayd;
 This is youre ende and youre conclusioun."
 My will is this, to draw conclusion flat,
 Without reply, or plea, or caveat
 In any case, accept it for the best,
 990 That each of you shall follow his own quest,
 Free of all ransom or of fear from me;
 And this day, fifty weeks hence, both shall be
 Here once again, each with a hundred knights,
 Armed for the lists, who stoutly for your rights
 995 Will ready be to battle, to maintain
 Your claim to love. I promise you, again,
 Upon my word, and as I am a knight,
 That whichsoever of you wins the fight,
 That is to say, whichever of you two
 1000 May with his hundred, whom I spoke of, do
 His foe to death, or out of boundary drive,
 Then he shall have Emilia to wive
 To whom Fortune gives so fair a grace.
 The lists shall be erected in this place.
 1005 And God so truly on my soul have ruth
 As I shall prove an honest judge, in truth.
 You shall no other judgment in me waken
 Than that the one shall die or else be taken.
 And if you think the sentence is well said,
 1010 Speak your opinion, that you're well repaid.
 This is the end, and I conclude hereon."

lines 1012-1022: The two knights thank Theseus and go homeward to prepare for the fight

Who looketh lightly now but Palamoun?
Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite?
Who kouthe tellen, or who kouthe endite
1015 The joye that is maked in the place,
Whan Theseus hath doon so fair a grace?
But down on knees wente every maner wight,
And thonken hym with al hir herte and myght,
And namely the Thebans, often sithe.
1020 And thus with good hope and with herte blithe
They taken hir leve, and homward gonne they ride
To Thebes with hise olde walles wyde.
Who looks up lightly now but Palamon?
Who leaps for you but Arcita the knight?
And who could tell, or who could ever write
1015 The jubilation made within that place
Where Theseus has shown so fair a grace?
But down on knee went each one for delight
And thanked him there with all his heart and might,
And specially those Thebans did their part.
1020 And thus, with high hopes, being blithe of heart,
They took their leave; and homeward did they ride
To Thebes that sits within her old walls wide.

The Knight's Tale

lines 1023-1055: Duke Theseus builds an amphitheatre for the fight between Arcita and Palamon

Sequitur Pars Tercia

(Here begins the third part)

I trowe men wolde deme it negligence,
If I foryete to tellen the dispenche
1025 Of Theseus, that gooth so bisily
To maken up the lystes roially;
That swich a noble theatre as it was,
I dar wel seyen, in this world ther nas.
The circuit a myle was aboute,
1030 Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.
Round was the shap, in manere of compas,
Ful of degrees the heighte of sixty pas,
That whan a man was set on o degree,
He lette nat his felawe for to see.
I think that men would deem it negligence
If I forgot to tell of the expense
1025 Of Theseus, who went so busily
To work upon the lists, right royally;
For such an amphitheatre he made,
Its equal never yet on earth was laid.

The circuit, rising, hemmed a mile about,
1030 Walled all of stone and moated deep without.
Round was the shape as compass ever traces,
And built in tiers, the height of sixty paces,
That those who sat in one tier, or degree,
Should hinder not the folk behind to see.

1035 Estward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,
Westward, right swich another in the opposit;
And shortly to concluden, swich a place
Was noon in erthe, as in so litel space.
For in the lond ther was no crafty man
1040 That geometrie or ars-metrike kan,
Ne portreytour, ne kervere of ymages,
That Theseus ne yaf him mete and wages,
The theatre for to maken and devyse.
And for to doon his ryte and sacrificise,
1045 He estward hath upon the gate above,
In worshipe of Venus, goddesse of love,
Doon make an auter and an oratorie.
And on the gate westward, in memorie
Of Mars, he maked hath right swich another,
1050 That coste largely of gold a fother.
And northward, in a touret on the wal
Of alabastre whit, and reed coral,
An oratorie, riche for to see,
In worshipe of Dyane, of chastitee,
1055 Hath Theseus doon wrought in noble wyse.

1035 Eastward there stood a gate of marble white.
And westward such another, opposite.
In brief, no place on earth, and so sublime,
Was ever made in so small space of time;
For in the land there was no craftsman quick
1040 At plane geometry or arithmetic,
No painter and no sculptor of hard stone,
But Theseus pressed meat and wage upon
To build that amphitheatre and devise.
And to observe all rites and sacrifice,
1045 Over the eastern gate, and high above,
For worship of Queen Venus, god of love,
He built an altar and an oratory;
And westward, being mindful of the glory
Of Mars, he straightway builded such another
1050 As cost a deal of gold and many a bother.
And northward, in a turret on the wall,
Of alabaster white and red coral,
An oratory splendid as could be,
In honour of Diana's chastity,
1055 Duke Theseus wrought out in noble wise.

lines 1056-1108: The form and shape of Venus

But yet hadde I foryeten to devyse
The noble kervyng and the portreitures,
The shap, the contenaunce, and the figures,
That weren in thise oratories thre.

But yet have forgot to advertise
The noble carvings and the portraitures,
The shapes, the countenances, the figures
That all were in these oratories three.

1060 First in the temple of Venus maystow se
Wroght on the wal, ful pitous to biholde,
The broken slepes and the sikes colde,
The sacred teeris and the waymentynge,
The firy strokes, and the desiryng

1065 That loves servantz in this lyf endure;
The othes that her covenantz assuren;
Plesaunce and Hope, Desir, Foolhardynesse,
Beautee and Youthe, Bauderie, Richesse,
Charmes and Force, Lesynges, Flaterye,

1070 Despense, Bisynesse, and Jalousye,
That wered of yelewe gooldes a gerland,
And a cokkow sittynge on hir hand;
Festes, instrumentz, caroles, daunces,
Lust and array, and alle the circumstaunces

1075 Of love, whiche that I rekned, and rekne shal,
By ordre weren peynted on the wal,
And mo than I kan make of mencion;
For soothly, al the mount of Citheroun,
Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellynge,

1080 Was shewed on the wal in portreyng,
With al the gardyn and the lustynesse.
Nat was foryeten the Porter Ydelnesse,
Ne Narcisus the faire, of yore agon,
Ne yet the folye of kyng Salamon,

1085 And eek the grete strengthe of Ercules -
Th'enchautementz of Medea and Circes -
Ne of Turnus, with the hardy fiers corage,
The riche Cresus, kaytyf in servage.
Thus may ye seen, that wysdom ne richesse,

1090 Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardynesse,
Ne may with Venus holde champartie,
For as hir list, the world than may she gye.
Lo, alle thise folk so caught were in hir las,
Til they for wo ful ofte seyde "allas!"

1095 Suffiseth heere ensamples oon or two-
And, though, I koude rekene a thousand mo.

1060 First, in the fane of Venus, one might see,
Wrought on the wall, and piteous to behold,

The broken slumbers and the sighing cold,
 The sacred tears and the lamenting dire,
 The fiery throbbing of the strong desire,
 1065 That all love's servants in this life endure;
 The vows that all their promises assure;
 Pleasure and hope, desire, foolhardiness,
 Beauty, youth, bawdiness, and riches, yes,
 Charms, and all force, and lies, and flattery,
 1070 Expense, and Labour and Jealousy
 That wore of marigolds a great garland
 And had a cuckoo sitting on her hand;
 Carols and instruments and feasts and dances,
 Lust and array, and all the circumstances
 1075 Of love that I may reckon or ever shall,
 In order they were painted on the wall,
 Aye, and more, too, than I have ever known.
 For truly, all the Mount of Citheron,
 Where Venus has her chief and favoured dwelling,
 1080 Was painted on that wall, beyond my telling,
 With all the gardens in their loveliness.
 Nor was forgot the gate-guard Idleness,
 Nor fair Narcissus of the years long gone,
 Nor yet the folly of King Solomon,
 1085 No, nor the giant strength of Hercules,
 Nor Circe's and Medea's sorceries,
 Nor Turnus with his hardy, fierce courage,
 Nor the rich Croesus, captive in his age.
 Thus may be seen that wisdom, nor largess,
 1090 Beauty, nor skill, nor strength, nor hardiness,
 May with Queen Venus share authority;
 For as she wills, so must the whole world be.
 Lo, all these folk were so caught in her snare
 They cried aloud in sorrow and in care.
 1095 Here let suffice examples one or two,
 Though I might give a thousand more to you.

The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,
 Was naked, fletyng in the large see,
 And fro the navele doun al covered was
 1100 With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas.
 A citole in hir right hand hadde she,
 And on hir heed, ful semely for to se,
 A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge;
 Above hir heed hir dowves flikerynge.
 1105 Biforn hir stood hir sone Cupido,
 Upon his shuldres wynges hadde he two,
 And blynd he was, as it was often seene.
 A bowe he bar, and arwes brighte and kene.
 The form of Venus, glorious as could be,
 Was naked, floating on the open sea,

And from the navel down all covered was
 1100 With green waves, bright as ever any glass.
 A citole in her small right hand had she,
 And on her head, and beautiful to see,
 A garland of red roses, sweet smelling,
 Above her swirled her white doves, fluttering.
 1105 Before her stood her one son, Cupido,
 Whose two white wings upon his shoulders grow;
 And blind he was, as it is often seen;
 A bow he bore, and arrows bright and keen.
 lines 1109-1192: The form and shape of Mars

Why sholde I noght as wel eek telle yow al
 1110 The portreiture, that was upon the wal
 Withinne the temple of myghty Mars the rede?
 Al peynted was the wal in lengthe and brede
 Lyk to the estres of the grisly place
 That highte the grete temple of Mars in Trace,
 1115 In thilke colde frosty regioun
 Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mansioun.
 Why should I not as well, now, tell you all
 1110 The portraiture that was upon the wall
 Within the fane of mighty Mars the red?
 In length and breadth the whole wall was painted
 Like the interior of that grisly place,
 The mighty temple of great Mars in Thrace,
 1115 In that same cold and frosty region where
 Mars to his supreme mansion may repair.

First on the wal was peynted a forest
 In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,
 With knotty, knarry, bareyne trees olde,
 1120 Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde,
 In which ther ran a rumbel and a swough
 As though a storm sholde bresten every bough.
 And downward from an hille, under a bente,
 Ther stood the temple of Mars Armypotente,
 1125 Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree
 Was long and streit, and gastly for to see,
 And therout came a rage and suche a veze,
 That it made al the gate for to rese.
 The northren lyght in at the dores shoon,
 1130 For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon,
 Thurgh which men myghten any light discernen.
 The dore was al of adamant eterne,
 Yclenched overthwart and endelong
 With iren tough, and for to make it strong
 1135 Every pyler, the temple to sustene,
 Was tonne-greet of iren bright and shene.
 First, on the wall was limned a vast forest

Wherein there dwelt no man nor any beast,
 With knotted, gnarled, and leafless trees, so old
 1120 The sharpened stumps were dreadful to behold;
 Through which there ran a rumbling, even now,
 As if a storm were breaking every bough;
 And down a hill, beneath a sharp descent,
 The temple stood of Mars armipotent,
 1125 Wrought all of burnished steel, whereof the gate
 Was grim like death to see, and long, and strait.
 And therefrom raged a wind that seemed to shake
 The very ground, and made the great doors quake.
 The northern light in at those same doors shone,
 1130 For window in that massive wall was none
 Through which a man might any light discern.
 The doors were all of adamant eterne,
 Rivetted on both sides, and all along,
 With toughest iron; and to make it strong,
 1135 Each pillar that sustained this temple grim
 Was thick as tun, of iron bright and trim.

Ther saugh I first the dirke ymaginyng
 Of Felonye, and al the compassyng,
 The crueel Ire, reed as any gleede,
 1140 The pykepurs, and eek the pale Drede,
 The smylere with the knyf under the cloke,
 The shepne brennyng with the blake smoke,
 The tresoun of the mordrynge in the bedde,
 The open werre, with woundes al biblesde;
 1145 Contek, with bloody knyf and sharp manace,
 Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.
 The sleere of hymself yet saugh I ther,
 His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer;
 The nayl ydryven in the shode anyght,
 1150 The colde deeth, with mouth gapyng upright.
 Amyddes of the temple sat Meschaunce,
 With Disconfort and Sory Contenaunce.
 Yet saugh I Woodnesse laughynge in his rage,
 Armed Complaint, Outhees, and fiers Outrage;
 1155 The careyne in the busk with throte ycorve,
 A thousand slayn, and nat of qualm ystorve,
 The tiraunt with the pray by force yraft,
 The toun destroyed, ther was nothyng laft.
 Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres,
 1160 The hunte strangled with the wilde beres,
 The sowe frenen the child right in the cradel,
 The cook yscalded, for al his longe ladel.
 Noght was foryeten by the infortune of Marte,
 The cartere overryden with his carte,
 1165 Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.
 Ther were also, of Martes divisioun,

The barbour, and the bocher, and the smyth
That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his styth.
And al above, depeynted in a tour,
1170 Saugh I Conquest sittynge in greet honour,
With the sharpe sword over his heed
Hangynge by a soutil twyned threed.
Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius,
Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;
1175 Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,
Yet was hir deth depeynted ther-biforn
By manasyng of Mars, right by figure;
So was it shewed in that portreiture,
As is depeynted in the sterres above
1180 Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.
Suffiseth oon ensample in stories olde,
I may nat rekene hem alle though I wolde.

There saw I first the dark imagining
Of felony, and all the compassing;
And cruel anger, red as burning coal;

1140 Pickpurses, and the dread that eats the soul;
The smiling villain, hiding knife in cloak;
The farm barns burning, and the thick black smoke;
The treachery of murder done in bed;
The open battle, with the wounds that bled;

1145 Contest, with bloody knife and sharp menace;
And loud with creaking was that dismal place.
The slayer of himself, too, saw I there,
His very heart's blood matted in his hair;
The nail that's driven in the skull by night;

1150 The cold plague-corpsse, with gaping mouth upright
In middle of the temple sat Mischance,
With gloomy, grimly woeful countenance.
And saw I Madness laughing in his rage;
Armed risings, and outcries, and fierce outrage;

1155 The carrion in the bush, with throat wide carved;
A thousand slain, nor one by plague, nor starved.
The tyrant, with the spoils of violent theft;
The town destroyed, in ruins, nothing left.
And saw I burnt the ships that dance by phares,

1160 The hunter strangled by the fierce wild bears;
The sow chewing the child right in the cradle;
The cook well scalded, spite of his long ladle.
Nothing was lacking of Mars' evil part:
The carter over-driven by his cart,

1165 Under a wheel he lay low in the dust.
There were likewise in Mars' house, as needs must,
The surgeon, and the butcher, and the smith
Who forges sharp swords and great illz therewith.
And over all, depicted in a tower,

1170 Sat Conquest, high in honour and in power,

Yet with a sharp sword hanging o'er his head
 But by the tenuous twisting of a thread.
 Depicted was the death of Julius,
 Of Nero great, and of Antonius;
 1175 And though at that same time they were unborn,
 There were their deaths depicted to adorn
 The menacing of Mars, in likeness sure;
 Things were so shown, in all that portraiture,
 As are fore-shown among the stars above,
 1180 Who shall be slain in war or dead for love.
 Suffice one instance from old plenitude,
 I could not tell them all, even if I would.

 The statue of Mars upon a carte stood
 Armed, and looked grym as he were wood,
 1185 And over his heed ther shynen two figures
 Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures
 That oon Puella, that oother Rubeus.
 This god of armes was arrayed thus:
 A wolf ther stood biforn hym at his feet,
 1190 With eyen rede, and of a man he eet.
 With soutil pencil was depeynt this storie,
 In redoutynge of Mars and of his glorie.
 Mars' image stood upon a chariot,
 Armed, and so grim that he seemed mad;
 1185 And o'er his head two constellations shone
 Of stars that have been named in writings known.
 One being Puella, and one Rubeus.
 This god of armies was companioned thus:
 A wolf there was before him, at his feet,
 1190 Red-eyed, and of a dead man he did eat.
 A cunning pencil there had limned this story
 In reverence of Mars and of his glory.

lines 1193-1230: The form and shape of Diana

 Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste
 As shortly as I kan I wol me haste,
 1195 To telle yow al the descripsioun.
 Depeynted been the walles up and doun
 Of huntyng and of shamefast chastitee.
 Ther saugh I, how woful Calistopee
 Whan that Diane agreved was with here,
 1200 Was turned from a womman til a bere,
 And after was she maad the loode-sterre.
 Thus was it peynted, I kan sey yow no ferre -
 Hir sone is eek a sterre, as men may see.
 Ther saugh I Dane, yturned til a tree,
 1205 I mene nat the goddesse Diane,
 But Penneus doughter, which that highte Dane.

Ther saugh I Attheon an hert ymaked,
 For vengeaunce that he saugh Diane al naked.
 I saugh how that hise houndes have hym caught
 1210 And freeten hym, for that they knewe hym naught.
 Yet peynted was a litel forther moor
 How Atthalante hunted the wilde boor,
 And Meleagree, and many another mo,
 For which Dyane wroghte hym care and wo.
 1215 Ther saugh I many another wonder storie,
 The which me list nat drawn to memorie.
 Now to the temple of Diana chaste,
 As briefly as I can, I'll pass in haste,
 1195 To lay before you its description well.
 In pictures, up and down, the wall could tell
 Of hunting and of modest chastity.
 There saw I how Callisto fared when she
 Diana being much aggrieved with her
 1200 Was changed from woman into a female bear,
 And after, made into the lone Pole Star;
 There was it; I can't tell how such things are.
 Her son, too, is a star, as men may see.
 There saw I Daphne turned into a tree
 1205 I do not mean Diana, no, but she,
 Peneus' daughter, who was called Daphne
 I saw Actaeon made a hart all rude
 For punishment of seeing Diana nude;
 I saw, too, how his fifty hounds had caught
 1210 And him were eating, since they knew him not.
 And painted farther on, I saw before
 How Atalanta hunted the wild boar;
 And Meleager, and many another there,
 For which Diana wrought him woe and care.
 1215 There saw I many another wondrous tale
 From which I will not now draw memory's veil.

 This goddess on an hert ful hye seet,
 With smale houndes al aboute hir feet;
 And undernethe hir feet she hadde a moone,
 1220 Wexynge it was, and sholde wanye soone.
 In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,
 With bowe in honde, and arwes in a cas.
 Hir eyen caste she ful lowe adoun,
 Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
 1225 A womman travaillynge was hir biforn;
 But for hir child so longe was unborn
 Ful pitously Lucyna gan she calle,
 And seyde, "Help, for thou mayst best of alle!"
 Wel koude he peynten lyfly, that it wroghte,
 1230 With many a floryn he the hewes boghte.
 This goddess on an antlered hart was set,

With little hounds about her feet, and yet
 Beneath her perfect feet there was a moon,
 1220 Waxing it was, but it should wane full soon.
 In robes of yellowish green her statue was,
 She'd bow in hand and arrows in a case.
 Her eyes were downcast, looking at the ground.
 Where Pluto in his dark realm may be found.
 1225 Before her was a woman travailing,
 Who was so long in giving birth, poor thing,
 That pitifully Lucina did she call,
 Praying, "Oh help, for thou may'st best of all!"
 Well could he paint, who had this picture wrought,
 1230 With many a florin he'd his colours bought,

lines 1231-1258: Arcita and Palamon and their company come to Athens

Now been thise listes maad, and Theseus,
 That at his grete cost arrayed thus
 The temples, and the theatre every deel,
 Whan it was doon, hym lyked wonder weel.-
 1235 But stynte I wole of Theseus a lite,
 And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.
 But now the lists were done, and Theseus,
 Who at so great cost had appointed thus
 The temples and the circus, as I tell,
 When all was done, he liked it wondrous well.
 1235 But hold I will from Theseus, and on
 To speak of Arcita and Palamon.
 The day approacheth of hir retournynge,
 That everich sholde an hundred knyghtes brynge
 The bataille to darreyne, as I yow tolde.
 1240 And til Atthenes, hir covenantz for to holde,
 Hath everich of hem broght an hundred knyghtes,
 Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.
 And sikerly, ther trowed many a man,
 That nevere sithen, that the world bigan,
 1245 As for to speke of knyghthod of hir hond,
 As fer as God hath maked see or lond,
 Nas of so fewe so noble a compaignye.
 For every wight that lovede chivalrye,
 And wolde, his thanks, han a passant name,
 1250 Hath preyed that he myghte been of that game;
 And wel was hym that therto chosen was.
 For if ther fille tomorwe swich a cas
 Ye knowen wel, that every lusty knyght
 That loveth paramours, and hath his myght,
 1255 Were it in Engelond or elles where,
 They wolde, hir thanks, wilnen to be there,
 To fighte for a lady, benedicitee!

It were a lusty sighte for to see.
 The day of their return is forthcoming,
 When each of them a hundred knights must bring
 The combat to support, as I have told;
 1240 And into Athens, covenant to uphold,
 Has each one ridden with his hundred knights,
 Well armed for war, at all points, in their might.
 And certainly, 'twas thought by many a man
 That never, since the day this world began,
 1245 Speaking of good knights hardy of their hands,
 Wherever God created seas and lands,
 Was, of so few, so noble company.
 For every man that loved all chivalry,
 And eager was to win surpassing fame,
 1250 Had prayed to play a part in that great game;
 And all was well with him who chosen was.
 For if there came tomorrow such a case,
 You know right well that every lusty knight
 Who loves the ladies fair and keeps his might,
 1255 Be it in England, aye or elsewhere,
 Would wish of all things to be present there
 To fight for some fair lady. Ben'cite!
 'Twould be a pleasant goodly sight to see!

And right so ferden they with Palamon,
 1260 With hym ther wenten knyghtes many on.
 Som wol ben armed in an haubergeoun,
 In a bristplate, and in a light gypoun,
 And som wol have a paire plates large,
 And som wol have a Puce sheeld, or a targe,
 1265 Som wol ben armed on hir legges weel,
 And have an ax, and somme a mace of steel.
 Ther is no newe gyse, that it nas old;
 Armed were they, as I have yow told,
 Everych after his opinioun.
 And so it was with those with Palamon.
 1260 With him there rode of good knights many one;
 Some would be armoured in a habergeon
 And in a breastplate, under light jupon;
 And some wore breast-and back-plates thick and large;
 And some would have a Prussian shield, or targe;
 1265 Some on their very legs were armoured well,
 And carried axe, and some a mace of steel.
 There is no new thing, now, that is not old.
 And so they all were armed, as I have told,
 To his own liking and design, each one.
 1270 Ther maistow seen comyng with Palamoun,

- Lygurge hym-self, the grete kyng of Trace.
 Blak was his berd, and manly was his face,
 The cercles of hise eyen in his heed,
 They gloweden bitwyxen yelow and reed,
 1275 And lik a grifphon looked he aboute,
 With kempe heeris on hise browes stoute,
 Hise lymes grete, hise brawnes harde and stronge,
 Hise shuldres brode, hise armes rounde and longe;
 And as the gyse was in his contree,
 1280 Ful hye upon a chaar of gold stood he,
 With foure white boles in the trays.
 In stede of cote-armure, over his harnays
 With nayles yelewe and brighte as any gold
 He hadde a beres skyn, col-blak, for old;
 1285 His longe heer was kembd bihynde his bak,
 As any ravenes fethere it shoon for-blak.
 A wrethe of gold arm-greet, of huge wighte,
 Upon his heed, set ful of stones brighte,
 Of fyne rubyes and of dyamauntz.
 1290 Aboute his chaar ther wenten white alauntz,
 Twenty and mo, as grete as any steer,
 To huntun at the leoun or the deer,
 And folwed hym, with mosel faste ybounde,
 Colored of gold, and tourettes fyled rounde.
 1295 An hundred lordes hadde he in his route,
 Armed ful wel, with hertes stierne and stoute.
 1270 There might you see, riding with Palamon,
 Lycurgus' self, the mighty king of Thrace;
 Black was his beard and manly was his face.
 The eyeballs in the sockets of his head,
 They glowed between a yellow and a red.
 1275 And like a griffon glared he round about
 From under bushy eyebrows thick and stout.
 His limbs were large, his muscles hard and strong.
 His shoulders broad, his arms both big and long,
 And, as the fashion was in his country,
 1280 High in a chariot of gold stood he,
 With four white bulls in traces, to progress.
 Instead of coat-of-arms above harness,
 With yellow claws preserved and bright as gold,
 He wore a bear-skin, black and very old.
 1285 His long combed hair was hanging down his back,
 As any raven's feather it was black:
 A wreath of gold, arm-thick, of heavy weight,
 Was on his head, and set with jewels great,
 Of rubies fine and perfect diamonds.
 1290 About his car there circled huge white hounds,
 Twenty or more, as large as any steer,
 To hunt the lion or the antlered deer;
 And so they followed him, with muzzles bound,

Wearing gold collars with smooth rings and round.
1295 A hundred lords came riding in his rout,
All armed at point, with hearts both stern and stout.

lines 1297-1331: Arcita's company

With Arcita, in stories as men fynde,
The grete Emetreus, the kyng of Inde,
Upon a steede bay, trapped in steel,
1300 Covered in clooth of gold dyapred weel,
Cam ridynge lyk the god of armes, Mars.
His cote-armure was of clooth of Tars,
Couched with perles white and rounde and grete.
His sadel was of brend gold neue ybete;
1305 A mantelet upon his shuldre hangynge
Bret-ful of rubyes rede, as fyr sparklynge.
His crispe heer lyk rynges was yronne,
And that was yelow, and glytered as the sonne.
His nose was heigh, hise eyen bright citryn,
1310 Hise lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn;
A fewe frakenes in his face yspreynd,
Bitwixen yelow and somdel blak ymeynd,
And as a leoun he his looking caste.
Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste;
1315 His berd was wel bigonne for to sprynge,
His voys was as a trompe thonderynge.
Upon his heed he wered of laurer grene
A gerland, fressh and lusty for to sene.
Upon his hand he bar for his deduyt
1320 An egle tame, as any lilye whyt.
An hundred lordes hadde he with hym there,
Al armed, save hir heddes, in al hir gere,
Ful richely in alle maner thynges.
For trusteth wel, that dukes, erles, kynges,
1325 Were gadered in this noble compaignye,
For love, and for encrees of chivalrye.
Aboute this kyng ther ran on every part
Ful many a tame leoun and leopard,
And in this wise thise lordes, alle and some
1330 Been on the sonday to the citee come,
Aboute pryme, and in the toun alight.
With Arcita, in tales men call to mind,
The great Emetreus, a king of Ind,
Upon a bay steed harnessed all in steel,
1300 Covered with cloth of gold, all diapered well,
Came riding like the god of arms, great Mars.
His coat-of-arms was cloth of the Tartars,
Begemmed with pearls, all white and round and great.
Of beaten gold his saddle, burnished late;
1305 A mantle from his shoulders hung, the thing

- Close-set with rubies red, like fire blazing.
 His crisp hair all in bright ringlets was run,
 Yellow as gold and gleaming as the sun.
 His nose was high, his eyes a bright citrine,
 1310 His lips were full, his colouring sanguine.
 And a few freckles on his face were seen,
 None either black or yellow, but the mean;
 And like a lion he his glances cast.
 Not more than five-and-twenty years he'd past.
 1315 His beard was well beginning, now, to spring;
 His voice was as a trumpet thundering.
 Upon his brows he wore, of laurel green,
 A garland, fresh and pleasing to be seen.
 Upon his wrist he bore, for his delight,
 1320 An eagle tame, as any lily white.
 A hundred lords came riding with him there,
 All armed, except their heads, in all their gear,
 And wealthily appointed in all things.
 For, trust me well, that dukes and earls and kings
 1325 Were gathered in this noble company
 For love and for increase of chivalry.
 About this king there ran, on every side,
 Many tame lions and leopards in their pride.
 And in such wise these mighty lords, in sum,
 1330 Were, of a Sunday, to the city come
 About the prime, and in the town did light.

lines 1332-1350: The feast at Theseus' court

- This Theseus, this duc, this worthy knyght,
 Whan he had broght hem into his citee,
 And inned hem, everich in his degree,
 1335 He festeth hem, and dooth so greet labour
 To esen hem and doon hem al honour,
 That yet men wenen that no maner wit
 Of noon estaat ne koude amenden it.
 This Theseus, this duke, this noble knight,
 When he'd conducted them to his city,
 And quartered them, according to degree,
 1335 He feasted them, and was at so much pains
 To give them ease and honour, of his gains,
 That men yet hold that never human wit,
 Of high or low estate, could better it.
- The mynstralcy, the service at the feeste,
 1340 The grete yiftes to the mooste and leeste,
 The riche array of Theseus paleys,
 Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,
 What ladyes fairest been, or best daunsynge,
 Or which of hem kan dauncen best and synge,

- 1345 Ne who moost felyngly speketh of love,
What haukes sitten on the perche above,
What houndes liggyn in the floor adoun-
Of al this make I now no menciouyn;
But, al th'effect, that thynketh me the beste,
1350 Now cometh the point, and herkneth if yow leste.
The minstrelsy, the service at the feast,
1340 The great gifts to the highest and the least,
The furnishings of Theseus, rich palace,
Who highest sat or lowest on the dais,
What ladies fairest were or best dandling,
Or which of them could dance the best, or sing,
1345 Or who could speak most feelingly of love,
Or what hawks sat upon the perch above,
Or what great hounds were lying on the floor -
Of all these I will make no mention more;
But tell my tale, for that, I think, is best;
1350 Now comes the point, and listen if you've zest.

The Sondag nyght, er day bigan to sprynge,
Whan Palamon the larke herde synge,
(Al though it nere nat day by houres two,
Yet song the larke) and Palamon right tho.
1355 With hooly herte and with an heigh corage
He roos, to wenden on his pilgrymage,
Unto the blisful Citherea benigne,
I mene Venus, honourable and digne.
And in hir houre he walketh forth a pas
1360 Unto the lystes, ther hire temple was,
And doun he kneleth, with ful humble cheere,
And herte soor, and seyde in this manere.

That Sunday night, before day began to spring,
When Palamon the earliest lark heard sing,
Although it lacked two hours of being day,
Yet the lark sang, and Palamon sang a lay.
1355 With pious heart and with a high courage
He rose, to go upon a pilgrimage
Unto the blessed Cytherea's shrine
I mean Queen Venus, worthy and benign.
And at her hour he then walked forth apace
1360 Out to the lists wherein her temple was,
And down he knelt in manner to revere,
And from a full heart spoke as you shall hear.

Have pitee of my bittre teeris smerte,
 And taak myn humble preyere at thyn herte.
 Allas, I ne have no langage to telle
 1370 Th'effectes, ne the tormentz of myn helle!
 Myn herte may myne harmes nat biwreye,
 I am so confus that I kan noght seye.
 But 'Mercy, lady bright! that knowest weele
 My thought, and seest what harmes that I feele.'
 1375 Considere al this, and rewe upon my soore,
 As wisly, as I shal for everemoore,
 Emforth my myght, thy trewe servant be,
 And holden werre alwey with chastitee.
 That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe.
 1380 I kepe noght of armes for to yelpe,
 Ne I ne axe nat tomorwe to have victorie,
 Ne renoun in this cas, ne veyne glorie
 Of pris of armes blowen up and doun,
 But I wolde have fully possessioun
 1385 Of Emelye, and dye in thy servyse.
 Fynd thow the manere how, and in what wyse-
 I recche nat, but it may bettre be
 To have victorie of hem, or they of me-
 So that I have my lady in myne armes.
 1390 For though so be, that Mars is god of armes,
 Youre vertu is so greet in hevene above
 That if yow list, I shal wel have my love.
 Thy temple wol I worshipe everemo,
 And on thyn auter, where I ride or go,
 1395 I wol doon sacrifice and fires beete.
 And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,
 Thanne preye I thee, tomorwe with a spere
 That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.
 Thanne rekke I noght, whan I have lost my lyf,
 1400 Though that Arcita wynne hir to his wyf.
 This is th'effect and ende of my preyere,
 Yif me my love, thow blisful lady deere!"
 "Fairest of fair, O lady mine, Venus,
 Daughter of Jove and spouse to Vulcanus,
 1365 Thou gladdener of the Mount of Citheron,
 By that great love thou borest to Adon,
 Have pity on my bitter tears that smart
 And hear my humble prayer within thy heart.
 Alas! I have no words in which to tell
 1370 The effect of all the torments of my hell;
 My heavy heart its evils can't bewray;
 I'm so confused I can find nothing to say.
 But mercy, lady bright, that knowest well
 My heart, and seest all the ills I feel,
 1375 Consider and have ruth upon my sore
 As truly as I shall, for evermore,

Well as I may, thy one true servant be,
 And wage a war henceforth on chastity.
 If thou wilt help, thus do I make my vow,
 1380 To boast of knightly skill I care not now,
 Nor do I ask tomorrow's victory,
 Nor any such renown, nor vain glory
 Of prize of arms, blown before lord and churl,
 But I would have possession of one girl,
 1385 Of Emily, and die in thy service;
 Find thou the manner how, and in what wise.
 For I care not, unless it better be,
 Whether I vanquish them or they do me,
 So I may have my lady in my arms.
 1390 For though Mars is the god of war's alarms,
 Thy power is so great in Heaven above,
 That, if it be thy will, I'll have my love.
 In thy fane will I worship always, so
 That on thine altar, where'er I ride or go,
 1395 I will lay sacrifice and thy fires feed.
 And if thou wilt not so, O lady, cede,
 I pray thee, that tomorrow, with a spear,
 Arcita bear me through the heart, just here.
 For I do not care, when I have lost my life
 1400 That Arcita may win her for his wife.
 This the effect and end of all my prayer,
 Give me my love, thou blissful lady fair."

lines 1413-1508: Emily prays at Diana's temple

Whan the orison was doon of Palamon,
 His sacrifice he dide, and that anon,
 1405 Ful pitously with alle circumstaunces,
 Al telle I noght as now his observaunces.
 But atte laste, the statue of Venus shook,
 And made a signe wherby that he took
 That his preyere accepted was that day.
 1410 For thogh the signe shewed a delay,
 Yet wiste he wel that graunted was his boone,
 And with glad herte he wente hym hoom ful soone.
 Now when he'd finished all the orison,
 His sacrifice he made, this Palamon,
 1405 Right piously, with all the circumstance,
 Albeit I tell not now his observance.
 But at the last the form of Venus shook
 And gave a sign, and thereupon he took
 This as acceptance of his prayer that day.
 1410 For though the augury showed some delay,
 Yet he knew well that granted was his boon;
 And with glad heart he got him home right soon.

The thridde houre inequal, that Palamon
 Bigan to Venus temple for to gon,
 1415 Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye,
 And to the temple of Dyane gan hye.
 Hir maydens that she thider with hir ladde,
 Ful redily with hem the fyr they ladde,
 Th'encens, the clothes, and the remenant al
 1420 That to the sacrifice longen shal.
 The hornes fulle of meeth, as was the gyse,
 Ther lakked noght to doon hir sacrificise,
 Smokyng the temple, ful of clothes faire.
 This Emelye, with herte debonaire,
 1425 Hir body wessh with water of a welle-
 But how she dide hir ryte I dar nat telle,
 But it be any thing in general;
 And yet it were a game to heeren al,
 To hym that meneth wel it were no charge,
 1430 But it is good a man been at his large.-
 Hir brighte heer was kembd, untressed al,
 A coroune of a grene ook cerial
 Upon hir heed was set, ful fair and meete.
 Two fyres on the auter gan she beete,
 1435 And dide hir thynges as men may biholde
 In Stace of Thebes, and thise bookes olde.
 Whan kyndled was the fyr, with pitous cheere
 Unto Dyane she spak as ye may heere.

Three hours unequal after Palamon

To Venus' temple at the lists had gone,
 1415 Up rose the sun and up rose Emily,
 And to Diana's temple did she hie.
 Her virgins led she thither, and with them
 They carefully took fire and each emblem,
 And incense, robes, and the remainder all
 1420 Of things for sacrifice ceremonial.
 There was not one thing lacking; I'll but add
 The horns of mead, as was a way they had.
 In smoking temple, full of draperies fair,
 This Emily with young heart debonnaire,
 1425 Her body washed in water from a well;
 But how she did the rite I dare not tell,
 Except it be at large, in general;
 And yet it was a thing worth hearing all;
 When one's well meaning, there is no transgression;
 1430 But it is best to speak at one's discretion.
 Her bright hair was unbound, but combed withal;
 She wore of green oak leaves a coronal
 Upon her lovely head. Then she began
 Two fires upon the altar stone to fan,
 1435 And did her ceremonies as we're told
 In Statius' Thebaid and books as old.

When kindled was the fire, with sober face
Unto Diana spoke she in that place.

- "O chaste goddess of the wodes grene,
1440 To whom bothe hevene and erthe and see is sene,
Queene of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,
Goddesse of maydens, that myn herte hast knowe
Ful many a yeer, and woost what I desire,
As keep me fro thy vengeance and thyn ire,
1445 That Attheon aboughte cruelly.
Chaste goddess, wel wostow that I
Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,
Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.
I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,
1450 A mayde, and love huntynge and venerye,
And for to walken in the wodes wilde,
And noght to ben a wyf, and be with childe.
Noght wol I knowe the compaignye of man;
Now helpe me, lady, sith ye may and kan,
1455 For tho thre formes that thou hast in thee.
And Palamon, that hath swich love to me,
And eek Arcite, that loveth me so soore,
This grace I preye thee, withoute moore,
As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two,
1460 And fro me turne away hir hertes so,
That al hir hoote love and hir desir,
And al hir bisy torment and hir fir,
Be queynt, or turned in another place.
And if so be thou wolt do me no grace,
1465 And if my destynnee be shapen so
That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,
As sende me hym that moost desireth me.
Bihoold, goddess, of clene chastitee,
The bittre teeris that on my chekes falle.
1470 Syn thou art mayde and kepere of us alle,
My maydenhede thou kepe and wel conserve,
And whil I lyve a mayde, I wol thee serve."
"O thou chaste goddess of the wildwood green,
1440 By whom all heaven and earth and sea are seen,
Queen of the realm of Pluto, dark and low,
Goddess of maidens, that my heart dost know
For all my years, and knowest what I desire,
Oh, save me from thy vengeance and thine ire
1445 That on Actaeon fell so cruelly.
Chaste goddess, well indeed thou knowest that I
Desire to be a virgin all my life,
Nor ever wish to be man's love or wife.
I am, thou know'st, yet of thy company,
1450 A virgin, who loves the hunt and venery,
And to go rambling in the greenwood wild,

And not to be a wife and be with child.
 I do not crave the company of man.
 Now help me, lady, since thou may'st and can,
 1455 By the three beings who are one in thee.
 For Palamon, who bears such love to me,
 And for Arcita, loving me so sore,
 This grace I pray thee, without one thing more,
 To send down love and peace between those two,
 1460 And turn their hearts away from me: so do
 That all their furious love and their desire,
 And all their ceaseless torment and their fire
 Be quenched or turned into another place;
 And if it be thou wilt not show this grace,
 1465 Or if my destiny be moulded so
 That I must needs have one of these same two,
 Then send me him that most desires me.
 Behold, O goddess of utter chastity,
 The bitter tears that down my two cheeks fall.
 1470 Since thou art virgin and keeper of us all,
 My virginity keep you, and still preserve,
 And while I live as a virgin, you will I serve."

The fires brenne upon the auter cleere,
 Whil Emelye was thus in hir preyere;
 1475 But sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte,
 For right anon oon of the fyres queynte,
 And quyked agayn, and after that anon
 That oother fyr was queynt and al agon;
 And as it queynte, it made a whistelynge
 1480 As doon thise wete brondes in hir brennynge;
 And at the brondes ende out ran anon
 As it were bloody dropes many oon;
 For which so soore agast was Emelye
 That she was wel ny mad, and gan to crye;
 1485 For she ne wiste what it signyfyed.
 But oonly for the feere thus hath she cried,
 And weep that it was pitee for to heere.
 And therwithal Dyane gan appeere,
 With bowe in honde, right as an hunteresse,
 1490 And seyde, "Doghter, stynt thyn hevynesse.
 Among the goddes hye it is affermed,
 And by eterne word writen and confermed,
 Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho
 That han for thee so muchel care and wo.
 1495 But unto which of hem I may nat telle,
 Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.
 The fires whiche that on myn auter brenne
 Shule thee declaren, er that thou go henne,
 Thyn aventure of love, as in this cas."
 1500 And with that word, the arwes in the caas

The nexte houre of Mars folwyng this
1510 Arcite unto the temple walked is
Of fierse Mars, to doon his sacrifice

With alle the rytes of his payen wyse.
With pitous herte and heigh devocioun
Right thus to Mars he seyde his orisoun.

At the next hour of Mars, and following this,

- 1510 Arcita to the temple walked, that is
Devoted to fierce Mars, to sacrifice
With all the ceremonies, pagan-wise.
With sobered heart and high devotion,
This way, right thus he said his orison.
- 1515 "O stronge god, that in the regnes colde
Of Trace honoured art and lord yholde,
And hast in every regne and every lond
Of armes al the brydel in thyn hond,
And hem fortunest as thee lyst devyse,
1520 Accepte of me my pitous sacrificise.
If so be that my youthe may deserve,
And that my myght be worthy for to serve
Thy godhede, that I may been oon of thyne,
Thanne preye I thee to rewe upon my pyne.
1525 For thilke peyne, and thilke hooite fir,
In which thou whilom brendest for desir
Whan that thow usedest the greet beautee
Of faire yonge fresshe Venus free,
And haddest hir in armes at thy wille-
1530 Although thee ones on a tyme mysfille
Whan Vulcanus hadde caught thee in his las,
And foond thee liggyng by his wyf, allas!-
For thilke sorwe that was in thyn herte
Have routhe as wel, upon my peynes smerte!
1535 I am yong and unkonnyng as thow woost,
And, as I trowe, with love offended moost
That evere was any lyves creature,
For she that dooth me al this wo endure
Ne reccheth nevere wher I synke or fleete.
1540 And wel I woot, er she me mercy heete,
I moot with strengthe wynne hir in the place.
And, wel I woot, withouten help or grace
Of thee, ne may my strengthe noght availle.
Thanne help me, lord, tomorwe in my bataille
1545 For thilke fyr that whilom brente thee,
As wel as thilke fyr now brenneth me!
And do that I tomorwe have victorie,
Myn be the travaille and thyn be the glorie!
Thy sovereyn temple wol I moost honouren
1550 Of any place, and alwey moost labouren
In thy plesaunce, and in thy craftes stronge,
And in thy temple I wol my baner honge,
And alle the armes of my compaignye;
And evere-mo, unto that day I dye,

1555 Eterne fir I wol biforn thee fynde.
 And eek to this avow I wol me bynde;
 My beerd, myn heer, that hongeth long adoun,
 That nevere yet ne felte offensioun
 Of rasour, nor of shere, I wol thee yeve,
 1560 And ben thy trewe servant whil I lyve.
 Now lord, have routhe upon my sorwes soore;
 Yif me victorie, I aske thee namoore!"
 1515 "O mighty god that in the regions cold
 Of Thrace art honoured, where thy lordships hold,
 And hast in every realm and every land
 The reins of battle in thy guiding hand,
 And givest fortune as thou dost devise,
 1520 Accept of me my pious sacrifice.
 If so it be that my youth may deserve,
 And that my strength be worthy found to serve
 Thy godhead, and be numbered one of thine,
 Then pray I thee for ruth on pain that's mine.
 1525 For that same pain and even that hot fire
 Wherein thou once did'st burn with deep desire,
 When thou did'st use the marvelous beauty
 Of fair young wanton Venus, fresh and free,
 And had'st her in thine arms and at thy will
 1530 Howbeit with thee, once, all the chance fell ill,
 And Vulcan caught thee in his net, whenas
 He found thee lying with his wife, alas!
 For that same sorrow that was in thy heart,
 Have pity, now, upon my pains that smart.
 1535 I'm young, and little skilled, as knowest thou,
 With love more hurt and much more broken now
 Than ever living creature was, I'm sure;
 For she who makes me all this woe endure,
 Whether I float or sink cares not at all,
 1540 And before she'll hear with mercy when I call,
 I must by prowess win her in this place;
 And well I know, too, without help and grace
 Of thee, my human strength shall not avail
 Then help me, lord, tomorrow not to fail,
 1545 For sake of that same fire that once burned thee,
 The which consuming fire so now burns me;
 And grant, tomorrow, I have victory.
 Mine be the toil, and thine the whole glory!
 Thy sovereign temple will I honour most
 1550 Of any spot, and toil and count no cost
 To pleasure thee and in thy craft have grace,
 And in thy fane my banner will I place,
 And all the weapons of my company;
 And evermore, until the day I die,
 1555 Eternal fire shalt thou before thee find.
 Moreover, to this vow myself I bind:

My beard, my hair that ripples down so long,
That never yet has felt the slightest wrong
Of razor or of shears, to thee I'll give,
1560 And be thy loyal servant while I live.
Now, lord, have pity on my sorrows sore;
Give me the victory. I ask no more."

The preyere stynt of Arcita the stronge;
The rynges on the temple dore that honge,
1565 And eek the dores clatereden ful faste,
Of which Arcita somewhat hym agaste.
The fyres brenden upon the auter brighte,
That it gan al the temple for to lighte,
And sweete smel the ground anon up yaf,
1570 And Arcita anon his hand up haf,
And moore encens into the fyr he caste,
With othere rytes mo, and atte laste
The statue of Mars bigan his hauberk rynges,
And with that soun he herde a murmurynges,
1575 Ful lowe and dym, and seyde thus, "Victorie!"
For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie;
And thus with joye and hope wel to fare,
Arcite anon unto his in is fare,
As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne.

With ended prayer of Arcita the young,
The rings that on the temple door were hung,
1565 And even the doors themselves, rattled so fast
That this Arcita found himself aghast.
The fires blazed high upon the altar bright,
Until the entire temple shone with light;
And a sweet odour rose up from the ground;
1570 And Arcita whirled then his arm around,
And yet more incense on the fire he cast,
And did still further rites; and at the last
The armour of God Mars began to ring,
And with that sound there came a murmuring,
1575 Low and uncertain, saying: "Victory!"
For which he gave Mars honour and glory.
And thus in joy and hope, which all might dare,
Arcite to his lodging then did fare,
Fain of the fight as fowl is of the sun.

lines 1580-1624: The gods quarrel but Saturn decides that Palamon shall have his lady
Emily

1580 And right anon swich strif ther is bigonne
For thilke grauntyng, in the hevene above
Bitwixe Venus, the Goddesse of Love,
And Mars the stierne God armypotente,
That Jupiter was bisy it to stente;

1585 Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,
 That knew so manye of adventures olde,
 Foond in his olde experience an art
 That he ful soone hath plesed every part.
 As sooth is seyde, elde hath greet advantage;
 1590 In elde is bothe wysdom and usage;
 Men may the olde atrenne, and noght atrede.
 Saturne anon, to stynten strif and drede,
 Al be it that it is agayn his kynde,
 Of al this strif he gan remedie fynde.
 1580 But thereupon such quarrelling was begun,
 From this same granting, in the heaven above,
 'Twixt lovely Venus, goddess of all love,
 And Mars, the iron god armipotent,
 That Jove toiled hard to make a settlement;
 1585 Until the sallow Saturn, calm and cold,
 Who had so many happenings known of old,
 Found from his full experience the art
 To satisfy each party and each part.
 For true it is, age has great advantage;
 1590 Experience and wisdom come with age;
 Men may the old out-run, but not out-wit.
 Thus Saturn, though it scarcely did befit
 His nature so to do, devised a plan
 To quiet all the strife, and thus began:

1595 "My deere doghter Venus," quod Saturne,
 "My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,
 Hath moore power than woot any man.
 Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan,
 Myn is the prison in the derke cote,
 1600 Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte,
 The murmure, and the cherles rebellyng,
 The groynyng, and the pryvee empoysonyng.
 I do vengeance and pleyn correccioun,
 Whil I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.
 1605 Myn is the ruyne of the hie halles,
 The fallynge of the toures and of the walles
 Upon the mynour, or the carpenter.
 I slow Sampson, shakynge the piler,
 And myne be the maladyes colde,
 1610 The derke tresons, and the castes olde;
 My lookyng is the fader of pestilence.
 Now weep namoore, I shal doon diligence
 That Palamon, that is thyn owene knyght,
 Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.
 1615 Though Mars shal helpe his knyght, yet nathelees
 Bitwixe yow ther moot be somtyme pees,
 Al be ye noght of o compleccioun-
 That causeth al day swich divisioun.

I am thyn aiel, redy at thy wille,
1620 Weep now namoore, I wol thy lust fulfille."
Now wol I stynten of the goddes above,
Of Mars and of Venus, goddesse of Love,
And telle yow, as pleyedly as I kan,
The grete effect for which that I bygan.

1595 "Now my dear daughter Venus," said Saturn,
"My course, which has so wide a way to turn,
Has power more than any man may know.
Mine is the drowning in sea below;
Mine is the dungeon underneath the moat;
1600 Mine is the hanging and strangling by the throat;
Rebellion, and the base crowd's murmuring,
The groaning and the private poisoning,
And vengeance and amercement- all are mine,
While yet I dwell within the Lion's sign.
1605 Mine is the ruining of all high halls,
And tumbling down of towers and of walls
Upon the miner and the carpenter.
I struck down Samson, that pillar shaker;
And mine are all the maladies so cold,
1610 The treasons dark, the machinations old;
My glance is father of all pestilence.
Now weep no more. I'll see, with diligence,
That Palamon, who is your own true knight,
Shall have his lady, as you hold is right.
1615 Though Mars may help his man, yet none the less
Between you two there must come sometime peace,
And though you be not of one temperament,
Causing each day such violent dissent,
I am your grandsire and obey your will;
1620 Weep then no more, your pleasure I'll fulfill."
Now will I cease to speak of gods above,
Of Mars and Venus, goddess of all love,
And tell you now, as plainly as I can,
The great result, for which I first began.

Part IV

lines 1625-1664: The feast and the night at Theseus' court

Sequitur Pars Quarta

(Here begins the fourth part)

1625 Greet was the feeste in Atthenes that day,
And eek the lusty seson of that May
Made every wight to been in such plesaunce
That al that Monday justen they and daunce,
And spenten it in Venus heigh servyse.

1630 But by the cause that they sholde ryse
 Eerly, for to seen the grete fight,
 Unto hir rest wenten they at nyght.
 And on the morwe, whan that day gan sprynge,
 Of hors and harneys noyse and claterynge
 1635 Ther was in hostelryes al aboute.
 And to the paleys rood ther many a route
 Of lordes upon steedes and palfreys.
 Ther maystow seen devisynge of harneys
 So unkouth and so riche, and wrought so weel
 1640 Of goldsmythrye, of browdyng, and of steel;
 The sheeldes brighte, testeres, and trappures,
 Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;
 Lordes in parementz on hir courseres,
 Knyghtes of retenue and eek squieres,
 1645 Nailynge the speres, and helmes bokelynge,
 Giggynge of sheeldes, with layneres lacyng.
 There as nede is, they weren nothyng ydel.
 The fomy steedes on the golden brydel
 Gnawynge, and faste the armurers also
 1650 With fyle and hamer prikyng to and fro;
 Yemen on foote and communes many oon,
 With shorte staves thikke as they may goon,
 Pypes, trompes, nakers, clariounes,
 That in the bataille blowen bloody sounes;
 1655 The paleys ful of peples up and down,
 Heere thre, ther ten, holdynge hir questioun,
 Dyvynyng of thise Thebane knyghtes two.
 Somme seyden thus, somme seyde "it shal be so";
 Somme helden with hym with the blake berd,
 1660 Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke-herd,
 Somme seyde he looked grymme, and he wolde fighte,
 "He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte."
 Thus was the halle ful of divynyng,
 Longe after that the sonne gan to sprynge.
 1625 Great was the feast in Athens on that day,
 And also the merry season of the May
 Gave everyone such joy and such pleasance
 That all that Monday they'd but joust and dance,
 Or spend the time in Venus' high service.
 1630 But for the reason that they must arise
 Betimes, to see the heralded great fight,
 All they retired to early rest that night.
 And on the morrow, when that day did spring,
 Of horse and harness, noise and clattering,
 1635 There was enough in hostelryes about.
 And to the palace rode full many a rout
 Of lords, bestriding steeds and on palfreys.
 There could you see adjusting of harness,
 So curious and so rich, and wrought so well

1640 Of goldsmiths' work, embroidery, and of steel;
 The shields, the helmets bright, the gay trappings,
 The gold-hewn casques, the coats-of-arms, the rings,
 The lords in vestments rich, on their coursers,
 Knights with their retinues and also squires;
 1645 The rivetting of spears, the helm-buckling,
 The strapping of the shields, and thong-lacing-
 In their great need, not one of them was idle;
 The frothing steeds, champing the golden bridle,
 And the quick smiths, and armourers also,
 1650 With file and hammer spurring to and fro;
 Yeoman, and peasants with short staves were out,
 Crowding as thick as they could move about;
 Pipes, trumpets, kettledrums, and clarions,
 That in the battle sound such grim summons;
 1655 The palace full of people, up and down,
 Here three, there ten, debating the renown
 And questioning about these Theban knights,
 Some put it thus, some said, "It's so by rights."
 Some held with him who had the great black beard,
 1660 Some with the bald-heads, some with the thick haired;
 Some said, "He looks grim, and he'll fight like hate;
 He has an axe of twenty pound in weight."
 And thus the hall was full of gossiping
 Long after the bright sun began to spring.

lines 1665-1702: Duke Theseus stipulates some conditions to avoid a bloodbath

1665 The grete Theseus, that of his sleep awaked
 With mynstralcie and noyse that was maked,
 Heeld yet the chambre of his paleys riche,
 Til that the Thebane knyghtes, bothe yliche
 Honured, were into the paleys fet.
 1670 Duc Theseus was at a wyndow set,
 Arrayed, right as he were a god in trone.
 The peple preesseth thiderward ful soone,
 Hym for to seen and doon heigh reverence.
 And eek to herkne his heste and his sentence.
 1675 An heraud on a scaffold made an "Oo!"
 Til al the noyse of peple was ydo,
 And whan he saugh the peple of noyse al stille,
 Tho shewed he the myghty dukes wille.
 1665 The mighty Theseus, from sleep awakened
 By songs and all the noise that never slackened,
 Kept yet the chamber of this rich palace,
 Till the two Theban knights, with equal grace
 And honour, were ushered in with flourish fitting.
 1670 Duke Theseus was at a window sitting,
 Dressed as he were god upon a throne.
 Then pressed the people thitherward full soon,

- To see him and to do him reverence,
 Aye, and to hear commands of sapience.
- 1675 A herald on a scaffold cried out "Ho!"
 Till all the people's noise was stilled; and so,
 When he observed that all were fallen still,
 He then proclaimed the mighty ruler's will.
- "The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun
 1680 Considered that it were destruccioun
 To gentil blood, to fighten in the gyse
 Of mortal bataille, now in this emprise;
 Wherefore, to shapen that they shal nat dye,
 He wolde his firste purpos modifye.
- 1685 No man therfore, up peyne of los of lyf,
 No maner shot, ne polax, ne short knyf
 Into the lystes sende, ne thider brynge.
 Ne short swerd for to stoke, with poynt bitynge,
 No man ne drawe, ne bere by his syde;
- 1690 Ne no man shal unto his felawe ryde
 But o cours, with a sharpe ygrounde spere.
 Foyne, if hym list on foote, hymself to were.
 And he that is at meschief shal be take,
 And noght slayn, but be broght unto the stake
- 1695 That shal ben ordeyned on either syde,
 But thider he shal by force, and there abyde.
 And if so be the chevetayn be take
 On outhur syde, or elles sleen his make,
 No lenger shal the turneiynge laste.
- 1700 God spede you! Gooth forth, and ley on faste!
 With long swerd and with maces fight youre fille.
 Gooth now youre wey, this is the lordes wille."
- "The duke our lord, full wise and full discreet,
- 1680 Holds that it were but wanton waste to meet
 And fight, these gentle folk, all in the guise
 Of mortal battle in this enterprise.
 Wherefore, in order that no man may die,
 He does his earlier purpose modify.
- 1685 No man, therefore, on pain of loss of life,
 Shall any arrow, pole-axe, or short knife
 Send into lists in any wise, or bring;
 Nor any shortened sword, for point-thrusting,
 Shall a man draw, or bear it by his side.
- 1690 Nor shall knight against opponent ride,
 Except one full course, with any sharp-ground spear;
 Unhorsed, a man may thrust with any gear.
 And he that's overcome, should this occur,
 Shall not be slain, but brought to barrier,
- 1695 Whereof there shall be one on either side;
 Let him be forced to go there and abide.
 And if by chance the leader there must go,

Of either side, or slay his equal foe,
No longer, then, shall tourneying endure.
1700 God speed you; go forth now, and lay on sure.
With long sword and with maces fight your fill.
Go now your ways; this is the lord duke's wil

lines 1703-1740: Everybody goes to the amphitheatre

The voys of peple touchede the hevene,
So loude cride they with murie stevene,
1705 "God save swich a lord, that is so good
He wilneth no destruccion of blood."
Up goon the trompes and the melodye,
And to the lystes rit the compaignye,
By ordinance, thurghout the citee large
1710 Hanged with clooth of gold, and nat with sarge.
The voices of the people rent the skies,
Such was the uproar of their merry cries:
1705 "Now God save such a lord, who is so good
He will not have destruction of men's blood!"
Up start the trumpets and make melody.
And to the lists rode forth the company,
In marshalled ranks, throughout the city large,
1710 All hung with cloth of gold, and not with serge.

Ful lik a lord this noble duc gan ryde,
Thise two Thebanes upon either syde,
And after rood the queene and Emelye,
And after that another compaignye,
1715 Of oon and oother, after hir degree.
And thus they passen thurghout the citee
And to the lystes come they by tyme.
It nas nat of the day yet fully pryme
Whan set was Theseus ful riche and hye,
1720 Ypolita the queene, and Emelye,
And othere ladys in degrees aboute.
Unto the seettes preesseth al the route,
And westward thurgh the gates under Marte,
Arcite, and eek the hondred of his parte,
1725 With baner reed is entred right anon.
And in that selve moment Palamon
Is under Venus estward in the place,
With baner whyt, and hardy chiere and face.
In al the world, to seken up and doun
1730 So evene, withouten variacioun
Ther nere swiche compaignyes tweye;
For ther was noon so wys, that koude seye
That any hadde of oother avauntage,
Of worthynesse ne of estaat ne age,
1735 So evene were they chosen, for to gesse.

And in two renges faire they hem dresse,
 Whan that hir names rad were everichon,
 That in hir nombre gyle were ther noon.
 Tho were the gates shet and cried was loude,
 1740 "Do now youre devoir, yonge knyghtes proude!"
 Fully like a lord this noble duke did ride,
 With the two Theban knights on either side;
 And, following, rode the queen and Emily,
 And, after, came another company
 1715 Of one and other, each in his degree.
 And thus they went throughout the whole city,
 And to the lists they came, all in good time.
 The day was not yet fully come to prime
 When throned was Theseus full rich and high,
 1720 And Queen Hippolyta and Emily,
 While other ladies sat in tiers about.
 Into the seats then pressed the lesser rout.
 And westward, through the gate of Mars, right hearty,
 Arcita and the hundred of his party
 1725 With banner red is entering anon;
 And in that self-same moment, Palamon
 Is under Venus, eastward in that place,
 With banner white, and resolute of face.
 In all the world, searching it up and down,
 1730 So equal were they all, from heel to crown,
 There were no two such bands in any way.
 For there was no man wise enough to say
 How either had of other advantage
 In high repute, or in estate, or age,
 1735 So even were they chosen, as I guess.
 And in two goodly ranks, they did then dress.
 And when the name was called of every one,
 That cheating in their number might be none,
 Then were the gates closed, and the cry rang loud:
 1740 "Now do your devoir, all you young knights proud!"

lines 1741-1777: The battle in the amphitheatre

 The heraudes lefte hir prikyng up and doun;
 Now ryngen trompes loude and clarioun.
 Ther is namoore to seyn, but west and est
 In goon the speres ful sadly in arrest,
 1745 In gooth the sharpe spore into the syde.
 Ther seen men who kan juste, and who kan ryde,
 Ther shyveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke;
 He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.
 Up spryngen speres twenty foot on highte;
 1750 Out goon the swerdes as the silver brighte.
 The helmes they tohewen and toshrede,
 Out brest the blood, with stierne stremes rede,

With myghty maces the bones they tobreste.
 He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste;
 1755 Ther stomblen steedes stronge, and doun gooth al;
 He rolleth under foot as dooth a bal,
 He foyneth on his feet with his tronchoun,
 And he hym hurtleth with his hors adoun.
 He thurgh the body is hurt and sithen ytake,
 1760 Maugree his heed, and broght unto the stake,
 As forward was, right there he moste abyde;
 Another lad is on that oother syde.
 And som tyme dooth hem Theseus to reste,
 Hem to refresshe, and drynken if hem leste.
 1765 Ful ofte a day han thise Thebanes two
 Togydre ymet, and wroght his felawe wo.
 Unhorsed hath ech oother of hem tweye,
 Ther nas no tygre in the vale of Galgopheye
 Whan that hir whelp is stole, whan it is lite,
 1770 So crueel on the hunte, as is Arcite
 For jelous herte upon this Palamon;
 Ne in Belmarye ther nys so fel leon
 That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,
 Ne of his praye desireth so the blood,
 1775 As Palamon to sleen his foo Arcite.
 The jelous strokes on hir helmes byte,
 Out renneth blood on bothe hir sydes rede.
 The heralds cease their spurring up and down;
 Now ring the trumpets as the charge is blown;
 And there's no more to say, for east and west
 Two hundred spears are firmly laid in rest;
 1745 And the sharp spurs are thrust, now, into side.
 Now see men who can joust and who can ride!
 Now shivered are the shafts on bucklers thick;
 One feels through very breast-bone the spear's prick;
 Lances are flung full twenty feet in height;
 1750 Out flash the swords like silver burnished bright.
 Helmets are hewed, the lacings ripped and shred;
 Out bursts the blood, gushing in stern streams red.
 With mighty maces bones are crushed in joust.
 One through the thickest throng begins to thrust.
 1755 There strong steeds stumble now, and down goes all.
 One rolls beneath their feet as rolls a ball.
 One flails about with club, being overthrown,
 Another, on a mailed horse, rides him down.
 One through the body's hurt, and haled, for aid.
 1760 Spite of his struggles, to the barricade,
 As compact was, and there he must abide;
 Another's captured by the other side.
 At times Duke Theseus orders them to rest,
 To eat a bite and drink what each likes best.
 1765 And many times that day those Thebans two

Met in the fight and wrought each other woe;
 Unhorsed each has the other on that day.
 No tigress in the vale of Galgophey,
 Whose little whelp is stolen in the light,
 1770 Is cruel to the hunter as Arcite
 For jealousy is cruel to Palamon;
 Nor in Belmarie, when the hunt is on
 Is there a lion, wild for want of food,
 That of his prey desires so much the blood
 1775 As Palamon the death of Arcite there.
 Their jealous blows fall on their helmets fair;
 Out leaps the blood and makes their two sides red

lines 1778-1793: Palamon is captured

Som tyme an ende ther is of every dede.
 For er the sonne unto the reste wente,
 1780 The stronge kyng Emetreus gan hente
 This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,
 And made his swerd depe in his flessch to byte.
 And by the force of twenty is he take
 Unyolden, and ydrawen unto the stake.
 1785 And in the rescus of this Palamoun
 The stronge kyng Lygurge is born adoun,
 And kyng Emetreus, for al his strengthe,
 Is born out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,
 So hitte him Palamoun er he were take;
 1790 But al for noght, he was broght to the stake.
 His hardy herte myghte hym helpe naught,
 He moste abyde, whan that he was caught,
 By force, and eek by composicioun.
 But sometime comes the end of every deed;
 And before the sun had sunk to rest in gold,
 1780 The mighty King Emetreus did hold
 This Palamon, as he fought with Arcite,
 And made his sword deep in the flesh to bite;
 And by the force of twenty men he's made,
 Unyielded, to withdraw to barricade.
 1785 And, tryng hard to rescue Palamon,
 The mighty King Lyburgus is borne down;
 And King Emetreus, for all his strength,
 Is hurled out of the saddle a sword's length,
 So hits out Palamon once more, or ere
 1790 But all for nothing, he's brought to barrier.
 His hardy heart may now avail him naught;
 He must abide there now, being fairly caught
 By force of arms, as by provision known.

lines 1794-1804: Theseus declares Arcita to be the winner

- Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,
 1795 That moot namoore goon agayn to fighte?
 And whan that Theseus hadde seyn this sighte
 Unto the folk that foghten thus echon
 He cryde, "Hoo! namoore, for it is doon.
 I wol be trewe juge, and no partie;
 1800 Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelie,
 That by his fortune hath hir faire ywonne!"
 Anon ther is a noyse of peple bigonne
 For joye of this so loude and heighe withalle
 It semed that the lystes sholde falle.
 Who sorrows now but woeful Palamon,
 1795 Who may no more advance into the fight?
 And when Duke Theseus had seen this sight,
 Unto the warriors fighting, every one,
 He cried out: "Hold! No more! For it is done!
 Now will I prove true judge, of no party.
 1800 Theban Arcita shall have Emily,
 Who, by his fortune, has her fairly won."
 And now a noise of people is begun
 For joy of this, so loud and shrill withal,
 It seems as if the very lists will fall.

lines 1805-1817: Saturn disagrees with the result of the fight

- 1805 What kan now faire Venus doon above?
 What seith she now? What dooth this queene of Love,
 But wepeth so, for wantynge of hir wille,
 Til that hir teeres in the lystes fille.
 She seyde, "I am ashamed, doutelees."
 1805 But now, what can fair Venus do above?
 What says she now? What does this queen of love
 But weep so fast, for thwarting of her will,
 Her tears upon the lists begin to spill.
 She said: "Now am I shamed and over-flung."
 1810 Saturnus seyde, "Doghter, hoold thy pees,
 Mars hath his wille, his knyght hath al his boone,
 And, by myn heed, thow shalt been esed soone."
 The trompes with the loude mynstralcie,
 The heraudes that ful loude yolle and crie,
 1815 Been in hir wele for joye of daun Arcite.
 But herkneth me, and stynteth noyse a lite,
 Which a myracle ther bifel anon.
 1810 But Saturn said: "My daughter, hold your tongue.
 Mars has his will, his knight has all his boon,
 And, by my head, you shall be eased, and soon."
 The trumpeters and other minstrelsy,
 The heralds that did loudly yell and cry,
 1815 Were at their best for joy of Arcita.

But hear me further while I tell you- ah!-
The miracle that happened there anon.

lines 1818-1841: Arcita falls from his horse

 This fierse Arcite hath of his helm ydon,
And on a courser for to shewe his face
1820 He priketh endelong the large place,
Lokyng upward upon this Emelye,
And she agayn hym caste a freendlich eye,
(For wommen, as to speken in comune,
Thei folwen alle the favour of Fortune)
1825 And she was al his chiere, as in his herte.
 This fierce Arcita doffs his helmet soon,
And mounted on a horse, to show his face,
1820 He spurs from end to end of that great place,
Looking aloft to gaze on Emily;
And she cast down on him a friendly eye
For women, generally speaking, go
Wherever Fortune may her favor show
1825 And she was fair to see, and held his heart.

 Out of the ground a furie infernal sterte,
From Pluto sent, at requeste of Saturne,
For which his hors for fere gan to turne,
And leep aside and foundred as he leep.
1830 And er that Arcite may taken keep,
He pighte hym on the pomel of his heed,
That in the place he lay as he were deed,
His brest tobrosten with his sadel-bowe.
As blak he lay as any cole or crowe,
1835 So was the blood yronnen in his face.
Anon he was yborn out of the place,
With herte soor, to Theseus paleys.
Tho was he korven out of his harneys,
And in a bed ybrought ful faire and blyve,
1840 For he was yet in memorie and alyve,
And alwey cryng after Emelye.
 But from the ground infernal furies start,
From Pluto sent, at instance of Saturn,
Whereat his horse, for fear, began to turn
And leap aside, all suddenly falling there;
1830 And Arcita before he could beware
Was pitched upon the ground, upon his head,
And lay there, moving not, as he were dead,
His chest crushed in upon the saddle-bow.
And black he lay as ever coal, or crow,
1835 So ran the surging blood into his face.
Anon they carried him from out that place,
With heavy hearts, to Theseus' palace.

There was his harness cut away, each lace,
And swiftly was he laid upon a bed,
1840 For he was yet alive and some words said,
Crying and calling after Emily.

lines 1842-1884: Everybody recovers at Theseus' court

Duc Theseus, with al his compaignye,
Is comen hoom to Atthenes his citee,
With alle blisse and greet solempnitee;
1845 Al be it that this aventure was falle,
He nolde noght disconforten hem alle.
Men seyde eek that Arcite shal nat dye,
He shal been heeled of his maladye.
And of another thyng they weren as fayn,
1850 That of hem alle was ther noon yslayn,
Al were they soore yhurt, and namely oon,
That with a spere was thirled his brest boon.
To othere woundes, and to broken armes,
Somme hadden salves, and somme hadden charmes,
1855 Fermacies of herbes and eek save
They dronken, for they wolde hir lymes have.
For which this noble duc as he wel kan,
Conforteth and honoureth every man,
And made revel al the longe nyght
1860 Unto the straunge lordes, as was right.
Ne ther was holden no disconfitynge
But as a justes or a tourneyng,
For soothly ther was no disconfiture.
For fallyng nys nat but an aventure-
1865 Ne to be lad by force unto the stake
Unyolden, and with twenty knyghtes take,
O persone allone, withouten mo,
And haryed forth by arme, foot, and too,
And eke his steede dryven forth with staves,
1870 With footmen, bothe yemen and eek knaves,
It nas aretted hym no vileynye,
Ther may no man clepen it cowardye.
For which anon duc Theseus leet crye,
To stynten alle rancour and envye,
1875 The gree, as wel of o syde as of oother,
And eyther syde ylik as ootheres brother,
And yaf hem yiftes after hir degree,
And fully heeld a feeste dayes three,
And conveyed the kynges worthily
1880 Out of his toun a journee largely;
And hoom wente every man, the righte way.
Ther was namoore but "Fare-wel, have good day."
Of this bataille I wol namoore endite,
But speke of Palamoun and of Arcite.

Duke Theseus, with all his company,
 Is come again to Athens, his city,
 With joyous heart and great festivity.

1845 And though sore grieved for this unhappy fall,
 He would not cast a blight upon them all.
 Men said, too, that Arcita should not die,
 But should be healed of all his injury.
 And of another thing they were right fain,

1850 Which was, that of them all no one was slain,
 Though each was sore, and hurt, and specially one
 Who'd got a lance-head thrust through his breastbone.
 For other bruises, wounds and broken arms,
 Some of them carried salves and some had charms;

1855 And medicines of many herbs, and sage
 They drank, to keep their limbs from hemorrhage.
 In all of which this duke, as he well can,
 Now comforts and now honours every man,
 And makes a revelry the livelong night

1860 For all these foreign lords, as was but right.
 Nor was there held any discomfiting,
 Save from the jousts and from the tourneying.
 For truly, there had been no cause for shame,
 Since being thrown is fortune of the game;

1865 Nor is it, to be led to barrier,
 Unyielded, and by twenty knights' power,
 One man alone, surrounded by the foe,
 Driven by arms, and dragged out, heel and toe,
 And with his courser driven forth with staves

1870 Of men on foot, yeomen and serving knaves-
 All this imputes to one no kind of vice,
 And no man may bring charge of cowardice.
 For which, straightway, Duke Theseus bade cry,
 To still all rancour and all keen envy,

1875 The worth, as well of one side as the other,
 As equal both, and each the other's brother;
 And gave them gifts according to degree,
 And held a three days' feast, right royally;
 And then convoyed these kings upon their road

1880 For one full day, and to them honour showed.
 And home went every man on his right way.
 There was nothing more but "Farewell" and "Good-day."
 I'll say no more of war, but turn upon
 My tale of Arcita and Palamon.

lines 1885-1958: Arcita says goodbye to Palamon and Emily and dies

1885 Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the soore
 Encreesseth at his herte moore and moore.
 The clothered blood for any lechecraft
 Corrupteth, and is in his bouk ylaft,

That neither veyne-blood, ne ventusynge,
 1890 Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpynge.
 The vertu expulsif, or animal,
 Fro thilke vertu cleped natural
 Ne may the venym voyden, ne expelle.
 The pipes of his longes gonne to swelle,
 1895 And every lacerte in his brest adoun
 Is shent with venym and corrupcioun.
 Hym gayneth neither for to gete his lif
 Vomyt upward, ne dounward laxatif;
 Al is tobrosten thilke regioun,
 1900 Nature hath now no dominacioun.
 And certainly, ther Nature wol nat wirche,
 Fare wel phisik! Go ber the man to chirche!
 This al and som, that Arcita moot dye;
 For which he sendeth after Emelye
 1905 And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.
 Thanne seyde he thus, as ye shal after heere:
 "Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
 Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte
 To yow, my lady, that I love moost.
 1910 But I biquethe the servyce of my goost
 To yow aboven every creature.
 Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure,
 Allas, the wo! Allas, the peynes stronge,
 That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!
 1915 Allas, the deeth! Allas, myn Emelye!
 Allas, departynge of our compaignye!
 Allas, myn hertes queene! allas, my wyf!
 Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!
 What is this world? What asketh men to have?
 1920 Now with his love, now in his colde grave,
 Allone, withouten any compaignye.
 Fare-wel, my swete foo, myn Emelye!
 And softe taak me in youre armes tweye,
 For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.
 1885 Swells now Arcita's breast until the sore
 Increases near his heart yet more and more.
 The clotted blood, in spite of all leech-craft,
 Rots in his bulk, and there is must be left,
 Since no device of skillful blood-letting,
 1890 Nor drink of herbs, can help him in this thing.
 The power expulsive, or virtue animal
 Called from its use the virtue natural,
 Could not the poison void, nor yet expel.
 The tubes of both his lungs began to swell,
 1895 And every tissue in his breast, and down,
 Is foul with poison and all rotten grown.
 He gains in neither, in his strife to live,
 By vomiting or taking laxative;

All is so broken in that part of him,
 1900 Nature Tetains no vigour there, nor vim.
 And certainly, where Nature will not work,
 It's farewell physic, bear the man to church!
 The sum of all is, Arcita must die,
 And so he sends a word to Emily,
 1905 And Palamon, who was his cousin dear;
 And then he said to them as you shall hear.
 "Naught may the woeful spirit in my heart
 Declare one point of how my sorrows smart
 To you, my lady, whom I love the most;
 1910 But I bequeath the service of my ghost
 To you above all others, this being sure
 Now that my life may here no more endure.
 Alas, the woe! Alas, the pain so strong
 That I for you have suffered, and so long!
 1915 Alas for death! Alas, my Emily!
 Alas, the parting of our company!
 Alas, my heart's own queen! Alas, my wife!
 My soul's dear lady, ender of my life!
 What is this world? What asks a man to have?
 1920 Now with his love, now in the cold dark grave
 Alone, with never any company.
 Farewell, my sweet foe! O my Emily!
 Oh, take me in your gentle arms, I pray,
 For love of God, and hear what I will say.

1925 I have heer with my cosyn Palamon
 Had strif and rancour many a day agon,
 For love of yow, and for my jalousye.
 And Juppiter so wys my soule gye,
 To speken of a servaunt proprely,
 1930 With alle circumstances trewely,
 That is to seyen, trouthe, honour, and knyghthede,
 Wysdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kynrede,
 Fredom, and al that longeth to that art -
 So Juppiter have of my soule part
 1935 As in this world right now ne knowe I non
 So worthy to ben loved, as Palamon
 That serveth yow, and wol doon al his lyf;
 And if that evere ye shul ben a wyf,
 Foryet nat Palamon, the gentil man."
 1940 And with that word his speche faille gan,
 And from his herte up to his brest was come
 The coold of deeth, that hadde hym overcome.
 And yet moreover in hise armes two
 The vital strengthe is lost and al ago.
 1945 Oonly the intellect, withouten moore,
 That dwelled in his herte syk and soore
 Gan faillen, when the herte felte deeth.

- Dusked his eye two, and failed breath,
 But on his lady yet cast he his eye.
- 1950 His last word was "Mercy, Emelye!"
 His spirit changed house, and went there
 As I can never, I can not tell where,
 Therefore I stent; I am no diviner;
 Of souls find I not in this register,
- 1955 Ne me ne list thilke opinions to tell
 Of hem, though that they written where they dwell.
 Arcite is cold, then Mars his soul give!
 Now will I speak for the of Emelye.
- 1925 I have here, with my cousin Palamon,
 Had strife and rancour many a day that's gone,
 For love of you and for my jealousy.
 May Jove so surely guide my soul for me,
 To speak about a lover properly,
- 1930 With all the circumstances, faithfully,
 That is to say, truth, honour, and knighthood,
 Wisdom, humility and kinship good,
 And generous soul and all the lover's art-
 So now may Jove have in my soul his part
- 1935 As in this world, right now, I know of none
 So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
 Who serves you and will do so all his life.
 And if you ever should become a wife,
 Forget not Palamon, the noble man."
- 1940 And with that word his speech to fail began,
 For from his feet up to his breast had come
 The cold of death, making his body numb.
 And furthermore, from his two arms the strength
 Was gone out, now, and he was lost, at length.
- 1945 Only the intellect, and nothing more.
 Which dwelt within his heart so sick and sore,
 Began to fail now, when the heart felt death,
 And his eyes darkened, and he failed of breath.
 But on his lady turned he still his eye,
- 1950 And his last word was, "Mercy, Emelye!"
 His spirit changed its house and went away.
 As I was never there, I cannot say
 Where; so I stop, not being a truth say;
 Of souls here naught shall I enregister;
- 1955 Nor do I wish their notions, now, to tell
 Who write of them, though they say where they dwell.
 Arcite's cold; Mars guides his soul on high;
 Now will I speak forthwith of Emelye.

lines 1959-1978: Athens mourns for the death of Arcite

- Shrill Emelye, and howleth Palamon,
- 1960 And Theseus his sister took anon

1965 When that hir housbond is from hem ago,
 That for the moore part they sorwen so,
 Or ellis fallen in swich maladye,
 That at the laste certainly they dye.
 Shrieked Emily and howled now Palamon,

1960 Till Theseus his sister took, anon,
 And bore her, swooning, from the corpse away.
 How shall it help, to dwell the livelong day
 In telling how she wept both night and morrow?
 For in like cases women have such sorrow,

1965 When their good husband from their side must go,
 And, for the greater part, they take on so,
 Or else they fall into such malady
 That, at the last, and certainly, they die.

Infinite been the sorwes and the teeres
1970 Of olde folk, and eek of tendre yeeres
In al the toun, for deeth of this Theban.
For hym ther wepeth bothe child and man;
So greet a wepyng was ther noon, certayn,
Whan Ector was ybrought al fressh yslayn
1975 To Troye. Allas, the pitee that was ther,
Cracchyng of chekes, rentyng eek of heer;
"Why woldestow be deed," thise wommen crye,
"And haddest gold ynough, and Emelye?"

Infinite were the sorrows and the tears
1970 Of all old folk and folk of tender years
Throughout the town, at death of this Theban;
For him there wept the child and wept the man;
So great a weeping was not, 'tis certain,
When Hector was brought back, but newly slain,
1975 To Troy. Alas, the sorrow that was there!
Tearing of cheeks and rending out of hair.
"Oh why will you be dead," these women cry,
"Who had of gold enough, and Emily?"

1980 No man myghte gladen Theseus,
Savyng his olde fader, Egeus,
That knew this worldes transmutacioun,
As he hadde seyn it chaunge bothe up and down,
Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse,
And shewed hem ensamples and liknesse.

1985 "Right as ther dyed nevere man," quod he,
"That he ne lyvede in erthe in som degree,

- Right so ther lyvede never man," he seyde,
 "In al this world that somtyme he ne deyde.
 This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,
 1990 And we been pilgrymes passynge to and fro.
 Deeth is an ende of every worldes soore."
 And over al this yet seyde he muchel moore,
 To this effect ful wisely to enhort
 The peple, that they sholde hem reconforte.
 No man might comfort then Duke Theseus,
 1980 Excepting his old father, AEgeus,
 Who knew this world's mutations, and men's own.
 Since he had seen them changing up and down,
 Joy after woe, and woe from happiness:
 He showed them, by example, the process.
 1985 "Just as there never died a man," said he,
 "But he had lived on earth in some degree,
 Just so there never lived a man," he said,
 "In all this world, but must be sometime dead.
 This world is but a thoroughfare of woe,
 1990 And we are pilgrims passing to and fro;
 Death is the end of every worldly sore."
 And after this, he told them yet much more
 To that effect, all wisely to exhort
 The people that they should find some comfort.

lines 1995-2023: The preparation of Arcita's funeral

- 1995 Duc Theseus, with al his bisy cure,
 Caste now, wher that the sepulture
 Of goode Arcite may best ymaked be,
 And eek moost honorable in his degree.
 And at the laste he took conclusioun
 2000 That ther as first Arcite and Palamoun
 Hadden for love the bataille hem bitwene,
 That in that selve grove swoote and grene
 Ther as he hadde hise amoureuse desires,
 His compleynte, and for love hise hote fires,
 2005 He wolde make a fyr, in which the office
 Funeral he myghte al accomplice.
 And leet comande anon to hakke and hewe
 The okes olde, and leye hem on a rewe
 In colpons, wel arrayed for to brenne.
 2010 His officers with swifte feet they renne
 And ryden anon at his comandement;
 And after this, Theseus hath ysent
 After a beere, and it al over-spradde
 With clooth of gold, the richeste that he hadde.
 2015 And of the same suyte he cladde Arcite,
 Upon his hondes hadde he gloves white,
 Eek on his heed a coroune of laurer grene,

And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.
 He leyde hym bare the visage on the beere,
 2020 Therwith he weep that pitee was to heere.
 And for the peple sholde seen hym alle,
 Whan it was day, he broghte hym to the halle,
 That roreth of the cryng and the soun.
 1995 Duke Theseus now considered and with care
 What place of burial he should prepare
 For good Arcita, as it best might be,
 And one most worthy of his high degree.
 And at the last concluded, hereupon,
 2000 That where at first Arcita and Palamon
 Had fought for love, with no man else between,
 There, in that very grove, so sweet and green,
 Where he mused on his amorous desires
 Complaining of love's hot and flaming fires,
 2005 He'd make a pyre and have the funeral
 Accomplished there, and worthily in all.
 And so he gave command to hack and hew
 The ancient oaks, and lay them straight and true
 In split lengths that would kindle well and burn.
 2010 His officers, with sure swift feet, they turn
 And ride away to do his whole intent.
 And after this Duke Theseus straightway sent
 For a great bier, and had it all o'er-spread
 With cloth of gold, the richest that he had.
 2015 Arcita clad he, too, in cloth of gold;
 White gloves were on his hands where they did fold;
 Upon his head a crown of laurel green,
 And near his hand a sword both bright and keen.
 Then, having bared the dead face on the bier,
 2020 The duke so wept, 'twas pitiful to hear.
 And, so that folk might see him, one and all,
 When it was day he brought them to the hall,
 Which echoed of their wailing cries anon.

lines 2024-2108: The funeral

Tho cam this woful Theban, Palamoun,
 2025 With flotery berd and ruggy asschy heeres,
 In clothes blake, ydropped al with teeres,
 And, passynge othere of wepynge, Emelye,
 The rewefulleste of al the compaignye.
 In as mucche as the servyce sholde be
 2030 The moore noble and riche in his degree,
 Duc Theseus leet forth thre steedes brynge
 That trapped were in steel al gliterynge,
 And covered with the armes of daun Arcite.
 Upon thise steedes that weren grete and white
 2035 Ther sitten folk, of whiche oon baar his sheeld,

Another his spere up in his hondes heeld,
 The thridde baar with hym his bowe Turkeys,
 (Of brend gold was the caas, and eek the harneys;)
 And riden forth a paas, with sorweful cheere,
 2040 Toward the grove, as ye shul after heere.
 The nobleste of the Grekes that ther were
 Upon hir shuldres caryeden the beere,
 With slakke paas, and eyen rede and wete,
 Thurghout the citee by the maister strete,
 2045 That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye
 Right of the same is the strete ywrye.
 Upon the right hond wente olde Egeus,
 And on that oother syde duc Theseus,
 With vessel in hir hand of gold ful fyn,
 2050 Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn.
 Eek Palamon, with ful greet compaignye,
 And after that cam woful Emelye,
 With fyr in honde, as was that tyme the gyse,
 To do the office of funeral servyse.
 Then came this woeful Theban, Palamon,
 2025 With fluttery beard and matted, ash-strewn hair,
 All in black clothes wet with his tears; and there,
 Surpassing all in weeping, Emily,
 The most affected of the company.
 And so that every several rite should be
 2030 Noble and rich, and suiting his degree,
 Duke Theseus commanded that they bring
 Three horses, mailed in steel all glittering,
 And covered with Arcita's armour bright.
 Upon these stallions, which were large and white,
 2035 There rode three men, whereof one bore the shield.
 And one the spear he'd known so well to wield;
 The third man bore his Turkish bow, nor less
 Of burnished gold the quiver than harness;
 And forth they slowly rode, with mournful cheer,
 2040 Toward that grove, as you shall further hear.
 The noblest Greeks did gladly volunteer
 To bear upon their shoulders that great bier,
 With measured pace and eyes gone red and wet,
 Through all the city, by the wide main street,
 2045 Which was all spread with black, and, wondrous high,
 Covered with this same cloth were houses nigh.
 Upon the right hand went old AEgeus,
 And on the other side Duke Theseus,
 With vessels in their hands, of gold right fine,
 2050 All filled with honey, milk, and blood, and wine;
 And Palamon with a great company;
 And after that came woeful Emily,
 With fire in hands, as use was, to ignite
 The sacrifice and set the pyre alight.

2055 Heigh labour, and ful greet apparaillynge,
 Was at the service and the fyr-makynge,
 That with his grene top the heven raughte,
 And twenty fadme of brede the armes straughte;
 This is to seyn, the bowes weren so brode.
 2060 Of stree first ther was leyd ful many a lode,
 But how the fyr was maked upon highte,
 Ne eek the names that the trees highte,
 As, ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popeler,
 Wylugh, elm, plane, asshe, box, chasteyn, lynde, laurer,
 2065 Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippeltree -
 How they weren fild shal nat be toold for me,
 Ne how the goddes ronnen up and doun
 Disherited of hir habitacioun,
 In whiche they woneden in reste and pees,
 2070 Nymphes, Fawnes, and Amadrides;
 Ne how the beestes and the briddes alle
 Fledden for fere, whan the wode was falle;
 Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
 That was nat wont to seen the sonne bright;
 2075 Ne how the fyr was couched first with stree,
 And thanne with drye stokkes cloven a thre,
 And thanne with grene wode and spicerye,
 And thanne with clooth of gold and with perrye,
 And gerlandes hangynge with ful many a flour,
 2080 The mirre, th'encens, with al so greet odour;
 Ne how Arcite lay among al this,
 Ne what richesse aboute his body is,
 Ne how that Emelye, as was the gyse,
 Putte in the fyr of funeral servyse;
 2085 Ne how she swowned whan men made the fyr,
 Ne what she spak, ne what was hir desir;
 Ne what Jeweles men in the fyre caste,
 Whan that the fyr was greet and brente faste;
 Ne how somme caste hir sheeld, and somme hir spere,
 2090 And of hire vestimentz whiche that they were,
 And coppes fulle of wyn, and milk, and blood,
 Into the fyr, that brente as it were wood,
 Ne how the Grekes, with an huge route,
 Thries riden al the fyr aboute,
 2095 Upon the left hand with a loud shoutynge,
 And thries with hir speres claterynge,
 And thries how the ladyes gonne crye,
 And how that lad was homward Emelye;
 Ne how Arcite is brent to asshen colde,
 2100 Ne how that lyche-wake was yholde
 Al thilke nyght, ne how the Grekes pleye
 The wake-pleyes ne kepe I nat to seye,
 Who wrastleth best naked, with oille enoynt,

Ne who that baar hym best in no disjoynt;
 2105 I wol nat tellen eek, how that they goon
 Hoom til Atthenes, whan the pley is doon;
 But shortly to the point thanne wol I wende,
 And maken of my longe tale an ende.
 2055 Great labour and full great apparelling
 Went to the service and the fire-making,
 For to the skies that green pyre reached its top,
 And twenty fathoms did the arms out-crop,
 That is to say, the branches went so wide.
 2060 Full many a load of straw they did provide.
 But how the fire, was made to climb so high;
 Or what names all the different trees went by.
 As oak, fir, birch, asp, alder, poplar, holm,
 Willow, plane, ash, box, chestnut, linden, elm,
 2065 Laurel, thorn, maple, beech, yew, dogwood tree,
 Or how they were felled, sha'n't be told by me.
 Nor how the wood-gods scampered up and down,
 Driven from homes that they had called their own,
 Wherein they'd lived so long at ease, in peace,
 2070 The nymphs, the fauns, the hamadryades;
 Nor how the beasts, for fear, and the birds, all
 Fled, when that ancient wood began to fall;
 Nor how aghast the ground was in the light,
 Not being used to seeing the sun so bright;
 2075 Nor how the fire was started first with straw,
 And then with dry wood, riven thrice by saw,
 And then with green wood and with spicery,
 And then with cloth of gold and jewellery,
 And garlands hanging with full many a flower,
 2080 And myrrh, and incense, sweet as rose in bower;
 Nor how Arcita lies among all this,
 Nor what vast wealth about his body is;
 Nor how this Emily, as was their way,
 Lighted the sacred funeral fire, that day,
 2085 Nor how she swooned when men built up the fire,
 Nor what she said, nor what was her desire;
 No, nor what gems men on the fire then cast,
 When the white flame went high and burned so fast;
 Nor how one cast his shield, and one his spear,
 2090 And some their vestments, on that burning bier,
 With cups of wine, and cups of milk, and blood,
 Into that flame, which burned as wild-fire would;
 Nor how the Greeks, in one huge wailing rout,
 Rode slowly three times all the fire about,
 2095 Upon the left hand, with a loud shouting,
 And three times more, with weapons clattering,
 While thrice the women there raised up a cry;
 Nor how was homeward led sad Emily;
 Nor how Arcita burned to ashes cold;

- 2100 Nor aught of how the lichwake they did hold
 All that same night, nor how the Greeks did play
 The funeral games I care not to say
 Who, naked, wrestled best, with oil anointed,
 Nor who best bore himself in deeds appointed.
 2105 I will not even tell how they were gone
 Home, into Athens, when the play was done;
 But briefly to the point, now, will I wend
 And make of this, my lengthy tale, an end.

lines 2109-2128: Political tactics

- By processe, and by lengthe of certeyn yeres,
 2110 Al stynted is the moornyng and the teres
 Of Grekes, by oon general assent.
 Thanne semed me ther was a parlement
 At Atthenes, upon certein pointz and caas,
 Among the whiche pointz yspoken was
 2115 To have with certein contrees alliaunce,
 And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce,
 For which this noble Theseus anon
 Leet senden after gentil Palamon,
 Unwist of hym what was the cause and why.
 2120 But in hise blake clothes sorwefully
 He cam at his comandement in hye;
 Tho sente Theseus for Emelye.
 Whan they were set, and hust was al the place,
 And Theseus abiden hadde a space
 2125 Er any word cam fram his wise brest,
 Hise eyen sette he ther as was his lest,
 And with a sad visage he siked stille,
 And after that right thus he seyde his wille:
 With passing in their length of certain years,
 2110 All put by was the mourning and the tears
 Of Greeks, as by one general assent;
 And then it seems there was a parliament
 At Athens, upon certain points in case;
 Among the which points spoken of there was
 2115 To have certain bonds of alliances
 That should hold Thebes from all defiances.
 Whereat this noble Theseus, anon,
 Invited there the gentle Palamon,
 Not telling him what was the cause, and why;
 2120 But in his mourning clothes, and sorrowfully,
 He came upon that bidding, so say I.
 And then Duke Theseus sent for Emily.
 When they were seated and was hushed the place,
 And Theseus had mused a little space,
 2125 Before any word came from his full wise breast,
 His two eyes fixed on whoso pleased him best,

Then with a sad face sighed he deep and still,
And after that began to speak his will.

lines 2109-2128: Theseus speaks to Palamon and Emily about the Creation of the world

- "The Firste Moevere of the cause above
2130 Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his entente;
Wel wiste he why, and what therof he mente,
For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond,
2135 In certeyn boundes that they may nat flee.
That same prince and that same moevere," quod he,
"Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun
Certeyne dayes and duracioun
To al that is engendred in this place,
2140 Over the whiche day they may nat pace;
Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge,
Ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee t'allegge,
For it is preeved by experience,
But that me list declaren my sentence.
2145 Thanne may men by this ordre wel discernen
That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne.
Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
That every part deryveth from his hool;
For nature hath nat taken his bigynnyng
2150 Of no partie nor cantel of a thyng,
But of a thyng that parfit is and stable,
Descendynge so til it be corruptible;
And therefore, of his wise purveiaunce,
He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce,
2155 That spesces of thynges and progressiouns
Shullen endure by successiouns,
And nat eterne, withouten any lye.
This maystow understonde and seen at ye.
Loo the ook, that hath so long a norisshynge
2160 From tyme that it first bigynneth sprynge,
And hath so long a lif, as we may see,
Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.
"The Primal Mover and the Cause above,
2130 When first He forged the goodly chain of love,
Great the effect, and high was His intent;
Well knew He why, and what thereof He meant;
For with that goodly chain of love He bound
The fire, the air, the water, and dry ground
2135 In certain bounds, the which they might not flee;
That same First Cause and Mover," then said he,
"Has stablissed in this base world, up and down,
A certain length of days to call their own

For all that are engendered in this place,
 2140 Beyond the which not one day may they pace,
 Though yet all may that certain time abridge;
 Authority there needs none, I allege,
 For it is well proved by experience,
 Except that I please to clarify my sense.
 2145 Then may men by this order well discern
 This Mover to be stable and eterne.
 Well may man know, unless he be a fool,
 That every part derives but from the whole.
 For Nature has not taken his being
 2150 From any part and portion of a thing,
 But from a substance perfect, stable aye,
 And so continuing till changed away.
 And therefore, of His Wisdom's Providence,
 Has He so well established ordinance
 2155 That species of all things and all progressions,
 If they'd endure, it must be by successions,
 Not being themselves eternal, 'tis no lie:
 This may you understand and see by eye.
 Lo now, the oak, that has long nourishing
 2160 Even from the time that it begins to spring,
 And has so long a life, as we may see,
 Yet at the last all wasted is the tree.

Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon
 Under oure feet, on which we trede and goon,
 2165 Yet wasteth it, as it lyth by the weye.
 The brode ryver somtyme wexeth dreye,
 The grete toures se we wane and wende,
 Thanne may ye se that al this thyng hath ende.
 Consider, too, how even the hard stone
 Under our feet we tread each day upon
 2165 Yet wastes it, as it lies beside the way.
 And the broad river will be dry some day.
 And great towns wane; we see them vanishing.
 Thus may we see the end to everything.

lines 2169-2208: The power of God

Of man and womman seen we wel also,
 2170 That nedeth, in oon of thise termes two -
 This is to seyn, in youthe or elles age -
 He moot be deed, the kyng as shal a page.
 Som in his bed, som in the depe see,
 Som in the large feeld, as men may se;
 2175 Ther helpeth noght, al goth that ilke weye,
 Thanne may I seyn that al this thyng moot deye.
 Of man and woman just the same is true:
 2170 Needs must, in either season of the two,

That is to say, in youth or else in age,
All men perish, the king as well as page;
Some in their bed, and some in the deep sea,
And some in the wide field- as it may be;
2175 There's naught will help; all go the same way. Aye,
Then may I say that everything must die.

What maketh this, but Juppiter the kyng,
That is prince and cause of alle thyng
Convertynge al unto his propre welle
2180 From which it is deryved, sooth to telle,
And heer-agayns no creature on lyve
Of no degree availleth for to stryve.
Who causes this but Jupiter the King?
He is the Prince and Cause of everything,
Converting all back to that primal well
2180 From which it was derived, 'tis sooth to tell.
And against this, for every thing alive,
Of any state, avalls it not to strive.

Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me,
To maken vertu of necessitee,
2185 And take it weel, that we may nat eschue;
And namely, that to us alle is due.
And who so gruccheth ought, he dooth folye,
And rebel is to hym that al may gye.
And certainly, a man hath moost honour
2190 To dyen in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is siker of his goode name,
Thanne hath he doon his freend ne hym no shame.
And gladder oghte his freend been of his deeth,
Whan with honour up yolden in his breeth,
2195 Than whan his name apalled is for age;
For al forgeten is his vassellage.
Thanne is it best as for a worthy fame,
To dyen whan that he is best of name.

The contrarie of al this is wilfulnesse:
2200 Why grucchen we, why have we hevynesse,
That goode Arcite, of chivalrie flour,
Departed is with duetee and honour
Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?
Why grucchen heere his cosyn and his wyf
2205 Of his welfare, that loved hem so weel?
Kan he hem thank? Nay, God woot never a deel,
That bothe his soule and eek himself offende,
And yet they mowe hir lustes nat amende.

Then is it wisdom, as it seems to me,
To make a virtue of necessity,
2185 And calmly take what we may not eschew,
And specially that which to all is due.

Whoso would balk at aught, he does folly,
 And thus rebels against His potency.
 And certainly a man has most honour
 2190 In dying in his excellence and flower,
 When he is certain of his high good name;
 For then he gives to friend, and self, no shame.
 And gladder ought a friend be of his death
 When, in much honour, he yields up his breath,
 2195 Than when his name's grown feeble with old age;
 For all forgotten, then, is his courage.
 Hence it is best for all of noble name
 To die when at the summit of their fame.
 The contrary of this is wilfulness.
 2200 Why do we grumble? Why have heaviness
 That good Arcita, chivalry's fair flower,
 Is gone, with honour, in his best-lived hour.
 Out of the filthy prison of this life?
 Why grumble here his cousin and his wife
 2205 About his welfare, who loved them so well?
 Can he thank them? Nay, God knows, not! Nor tell
 How they his soul and their own selves offend,
 Though yet they may not their desires amend

lines 2209-2250: The marriage of Palamon and Emily

What may I concluden of this longe serye,
 2210 But after wo I rede us to be merye,
 And thanken Juppiter of al his grace?
 And er that we departen from this place
 I rede that we make, of sorwes two,
 O parfit joye lastyng everemo.
 2215 And looketh now, wher moost sorwe is her inne,
 Ther wol we first amenden and bigynne.
 What may I prove by this long argument
 2210 Except that we all turn to merriment,
 After our grief, and give Jove thanks for grace.
 And so, before we go from out this place,
 I counsel that we make, of sorrows two
 One perfect joy, lasting for aye, for you;
 2215 And look you now, where most woe is herein,
 There will we first amend it and begin.

Suster," quod he, "this is my fulle assent,
 With all th'avys heere of my parlement,
 That gentil Palamon thyn owene knyght,
 2220 That serveth yow with wille, herte, and myght,
 And evere hath doon, syn that ye first hym knewe,
 That ye shul of your grace upon hym rewe,
 And taken hym for housbonde and for lord.
 Lene me youre hond, for this is oure accord.

- 2225 Lat se now of youre womanly pitee;
He is a kynges brother sone, pardee,
And though he were a povre bachelor,
Syn he hath served yow so many a yeer,
And had for yow so greet adversitee,
2230 It moste been considered, leeveth me,
For gentil mercy oghte to passen right."
Sister," said he, "you have my full consent,
With the advice of this my Parliament,
That gentle Palamon, your own true knight,
2220 Who serves you well with will and heart and might,
And so has ever, since you knew him first-
That you shall, of your grace, allay his thirst
By taking him for husband and for lord:
Lend me your hand, for this is our accord.
2225 Let now your woman's pity make him glad.
For he is a king's brother's son, by gad;
And though he were a poor knight bachelor,
Since he has served you for so many a year,
And borne for you so great adversity,
2230 This ought to weigh with you, it seems to me,
For mercy ought to dominate mere right."

Thanne seyde he thus to Palamon the knyght:

- 2235 Com neer, and taak youre lady by the hond."
 Bitwixen hem was maad anon the bond
 That highte matrimoine or mariage,
 By al the conseil and the baronage.
 And thus with alle blisse and melodye
 2240 Hath Palamon ywedded Emelye;
 And God, that al this wyde world hath wrought,
 Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght,
 For now is Palamon in alle wele,
 Lyvyng in blisse, in richesse, and in heele,
 2245 And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,
 And he hir serveth al so gentilly,
 That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene,
 Of jalousie, or any oother teene.
 Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye,
 2250 And God save al this faire compaignye! Amen.

2240 Has Palamon now married Emily.
And God who all this universe has wrought,
Send him his love, who has it dearly bought.
For now has Palamon, in all things, wealth,
Living in bliss, in riches, and in health;
2245 And Emily loved him so tenderly,
And he served her so well and faithfully,
That never word once marred their happiness,
No jealousy, nor other such distress.
Thus ends now Palamon and Emily;
2250 And may God save all this fair company! Amen.

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