

The Jogelour's Portrait



The Lost Chapter of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

By Lord Dmitri Skomorochoy, AOA, OBL
House Blackfeather

Close your eyes for a moment, and imagine...

It is nearing the end of the 14th century, and herds of people are making their way in pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas Becket, in Canterbury. The character of Geoffrey Chaucer is resting at the Tabard Inn, when he meets a group of pilgrims, twenty-nine in total, who stop to reside for the night, and he manages to join their progression.

That evening, the Host of the Inn proposes a challenge to the pilgrims, for each of them to take a turn at telling a story to entertain and enlighten the others. The Host joins the group, and as they travel to Canterbury, each plans to tell two stories to pass the time.

Now suppose that Chaucer had miscounted when he first encountered the pilgrims; that there might have been thirty instead of twenty-nine traveling in that group. Chaucer, as narrator of the story, didn't notice the additional stranger at first, but after he had written the chronicles, added the newcomer to the story.

This is the story of the pilgrim that Chaucer neglected, but who could have been there, along with the others.

This is the tale of the Jogelour.

Table of Contents

Cover Page	I
Introduction	II
Table of Contents	III
Mission Statement	IV
‘The Jogelour’s Portrait’ Poem	V
‘The Jogelour’s Portrait’ Translations	VI
The Canterbury Tales	VII
Line Frequency	IX
Middle-English Language	X
Middle-English Grammar	XII
Word Sources	XIV
Bibliographie	XV

Translation Appendix

All translations have been taken from the original Middle English, and then redacted to Modern English vocabulary, and then finally translated into Modern English colloquial grammar.

Chaucer’s Introduction	i
Monk’s Portrait	ii
Wife of Bath’s Portrait	iii
Craftsmen’s Portraits	iv
Plowman’s Portrait	iv
Friar’s Prologue	v
Clerk’s Prologue	vi
Franklin’s Prologue	vii
Manciple’s Tale	viii
Reference Photocopies	

Mission Statement

- To personally redact and translate from Middle English certain excerpts from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, including the introduction, descriptions, prologues, and tales of specific pilgrims within the story.
- To create my own pilgrim, the Jogelour, and write a 'portrait' (character description) of the Jogelour character in Middle English, so that my portrait will be indistinguishable from any other character portrait in Chaucer's prologue.
- To explain the use of grammar and spelling in Middle English, and how it translates into Modern English, with notes on the similarities and differences.

The Jogelour's Portrait

A jogelour ther was ful sely in lyf
He was sclendre and trenchant ylyk a knif
He was a gay yowthe but balled on his heed
Some trowe him a fonne but he kan to reede
One of a tregetoures route was he
On a bawdryk wore he were boydekyns thre
And on his girdel was pouche but no swerd
Unkonnyng in arms but was maister of word
He wolde devyse japes and fables ful oft
Yet whan he was dronk his gyse somedel softe
In vinolent hevynesse hadde he kithed soor wo
And wolde he rowne of hise lemman he sewe
To his mayden was trewe though she was biraft
Hir corages deffended for sith of his craft
Her kynrede nat fayn wit jogelour and sleighte
They trowed too much in her solempne estaat
A lowely fanne hadde nat a propre good
They trowed him povre and somedel wood
So to Caunterbury he rood with feyned corage
So that he might amende his vassellage
He rood a gentil colt a steede of hoor
Of great myght it was a privee tresoor

The Jogelour's Portrait

Modern English

A juggler there was, full silly in life,
He was slender and trenchant, like a knife,
He was a gay youth, but bald on his head,
Some trowe him a fool, but he can read,
One of a tregetours route was he,
On a baldric wore he were bodkins three,
And on his girdle was pouch but no sword,
Unknowing in arms, but was master of word,
He would devise japes and fables full oft,
Yet when he was drunk, his guise somewhat soft,
In vinolent heavyness had he kithed sore woe,
And would he rown of his leman he sought,
To his maiden was true, though she was bereft,
Their courages defended for sith of his craft,
Her kindred not fain with juggler and sleight,
They trowed too much in their solemn estate,
A lowly fann had nat a proper good,
They trowed him poor, and somewhat mad,
So to Canterbury he rode, with feigned courage,
So that he might ammend his vassellage,
He rode a gentle colt, a steed of hoar,
Or great might it was, a private treasure,

Modern English Redaction

There was a juggler, a very silly man,
He was thin and sharp, like a knife,
He was a cheerful youth, but totally bald,
Some thought he was an idiot, but he could read,
He was part of an illusionist company,
He wore three daggers upon his baldric,
And a pouch on his belt, but no sword,
He was untrained in weapons, but skilled in words,
He would tell jokes and fables very often,
But when he was drunk, he was somewhat mellow,
In drunken sadness he had shown painful sorrow,
And he would whisper of the lover he sought,
He was true to his maiden, though she was gone,
Their feelings forbidden because of his job,
Her family wasn't happy with a juggler and tricks,
They were too concerned with their own status,
A low-class fool didn't have a decent income,
They believed he was poor, and a little crazy,
So he rode to Canterbury, with false cheer,
So that he could improve his social standing,
He rode a gentle, young, grey horse,
It was very strong, his secret prize,

The Canterbury Tales

At the end of the fourteenth century, a popular poet set aside his other works and set about creating what would become a masterpiece work that would span the centuries and tell people from future generations what kind of people he saw all around him.

The Canterbury Tales were written by Geoffrey Chaucer of London, England, starting at around 1388 and remaining in progress until his death in 1400. The storyline had the overall theme of telling the tale of "...a group of pilgrim characters come together at the Tabard Inn on their way to the shrine of Saint Thomas a Becket in Canterbury..." (Woodring, pg 76).

Within this overall storyline there are several smaller stories, each one in theory being told by one of the pilgrims. Each of the thirty pilgrims, which consisted of people from all different levels of society (and a character of Chaucer himself as a pilgrim), were supposed to be reciting two stories on each leg of the trip, with the teller of the best story receiving a meal paid for by the others. All in all, a total of one hundred and twenty stories were set up, though only about twenty-four were actually completed.

Unlike most narrative tales, most historians agree that Chaucer was not writing the Tales as one consecutive story. According to popular historian opinion, when Chaucer wrote each separate piece of his tale, "...he circulated it privately among his friends..." (Powell, pg 108). Furthermore, these historians believe that the individual stories were written in "...'stripped' form, i.e. without any link to the poem as a whole..." (Powell, pg 108).

Finally, Chaucer didn't seem to have the entire order and patterns determined when he wrote each piece, and so he wrote a 'link', in the forms

of prologues and epilogues, connecting the stories to each other by way of the storytellers. According to Powell's research, different manuscripts, written at different times both before and after Chaucer's death, would have different versions of the tales, and even different orders to the tales. It's even quite possible that there were different versions of Chaucer's stories as he edited them both before and after they went to an editor for publication. As copies were passed among his friends and patrons, "...gradually these texts were copied and, during the process, became corrupted..." (Powell, pg 108). Also, after passing out copies of his stories, he would continue to revise them and choose which stories would be in his final draft, and add or eliminate others.

It is because of this history that I feel that I can add another character and portrait to his story of the Canterbury Tales, without attempting to rewrite the history of Chaucer's writings. Chaucer himself wrote different stories that he ended up not using, which is why some manuscripts might contain stories that later manuscripts were missing. Also, the order of characters and tales also changed.

Historians believe that the Canon Yeoman's prologue and tale are examples of this re-writing. "...because prologue and tale were inserted into the poem at a late stage in Chaucer's own lifetime..." with the intent to changing the atmosphere of the story. "...He (Chaucer) might easily have decided that the pilgrimage framework needed livening up..." (Powell, pg 118).

So my character, the Jogelour, is also being introduced as if he were originally written and subsequently written out, between the Doctor of Physic and the Wife of Bath.

Line Frequency for the Stories In Order of Introduction

	Portrait	Intro	Prologue	Tale	Epilogue
Chaucer (Sir Thopas)		<i>186</i>	21	255	
Chaucer (Melibee)				87	
Knight	36			<i>2250</i>	
Squire	22	8		700	
Canon's Yeoman	17		166	762	
Prioress	45		35	203	
Second Nun	<i>1</i>		119	434	
Nun's Priest	<i>1</i>		54	626	16
Monk	43		102	776	
Friar	64		36	364	
Merchant	15		32	<i>1174</i>	22
Clerk	24		56	<i>1163</i>	
Sergeant of the Law	22	98	35	<i>1162</i>	28
Franklin	30		20	896	
Craftsmen	18				
Cook	9		40	58	
Shipman	23			452	
Physician	34			286	
Wife of Bath	32		<i>862</i>	408	
Parson	52		74	102	
Plowman	13				
Miller	25		78	668	
Manciple	20		104	258	
Reeve	36		66	404	
Summoner	46		44	586	
Pardoner	46	42	134	506	
AVERAGE	30.55	49.33	67.56	441.55	22.00

Excluding the Second Nun and the Nun's Priest, the average portrait is approx. 31 lines, ranging from 9 to 64.

Excluding the Wife of Bath, the average prologue is approx. 68 lines, ranging from 20 to 166.

Excluding the Knight, Man of Law, Clerk, and Merchant, the average tale is approx. 440 lines, ranging from 58 to 896.

Middle English Language

Middle English, as a general term, refers to the English spoken between 1066 and 1450, when the language started to become more standardized and printing became more common. But to say that Middle English was the same for those four centuries would be like saying that everyone in the United States speaks with the same accent and dialect. It would be unrealistic.

In order to describe what I wrote, I have to describe what Chaucer wrote, what variation of the language, what dialect, and also what language and dialect the scribe for each manuscript used. Every time a manuscript was copied, there were three different possibilities about how accurate the copy would be, according to Angus McIntosh. "...A - He (the scribe) may leave the language of his copytext unchanged...", "B - He may 'translate' the language of the copytext into his own dialect...", or "C - He may do something in between Types A and B..." (Horobin, pg 11). Sadly, the two most well-known thorough manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales, the Ellesmere and the Hengwrt, are considered to have been copied by a scribe using Type 'B', or his own, dialect. (Horobin, pgs. 149 & 151).

In my study, I used a single source, the Ellesmere, to practice, translate, and compare my own works, so it could be assumed that my own language and dialect would be the same as the scribe, probably London trained, who copied the Ellesmere manuscript for his patron (presumed by many to have been Thomas Chaucer, Geoffrey's son).

As for the version of Middle English being used, Michael Samuels, a scholar of Middle English language and history, has divided the category of Late Middle English into four distinct types: "...Type I, also known as the

Central Midlands Standard...”, “...Type II is found in a group of manuscripts copied in London in the mid to late fourteenth century, (including) the Auchinleck manuscript which was produced in London around 1340...”, “...Type III is the language of London in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, recorded in, for example, the earliest Chaucer manuscripts: the Hengwrt and Ellesmere manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales...”, and finally, “...Type IV, also termed by Samuels ‘Chancery Standard’, which ‘consists of that flood of government documents that starts in the years following 1430...’”. (Horobin, pgs 13-14).

Chaucer’s version of Middle English, and the scribe of the Ellesmere manuscript (and therefore mine as well) was “...a variety of Middle English current in London at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries, coined Type III...” (Horobin, pg 16).

As mentioned, I based my writing off of the Ellesmere version of the Canterbury Tales, and I did so not by studying previous translations and scholarly works, but by choosing a selection of different portraits, prologues, and tales and translating them into modern spellings (the redaction), and finally into modern English that anyone should be able to understand. I had to utilize a dictionary for many of the words, but after some time, I gradually absorbed the feel and flow of the writing, and could breeze through it as easily as if I were reading modern text.

It was while I was on this ‘feel and flow’ that I wrote the Jogelour’s Portrait, while my mind was comprehending Middle English like my first language. My goal was to have written Middle English text that a reader of Chaucer would read, enjoy, and feel as if they were simply reading another page of Chaucer’s writing, without suspecting that it didn’t belong.

Middle English Grammar

Oddly enough, writing the Jogelour's Portrait was remarkably easy. Once I had allowed myself to be absorbed into the Ellesmere copy of the Canterbury Tales, it was quite easy to fall into that writing style and patterns and write my poem. There were a few difficulties, however.

First, I tried to make certain that most of the major words that I used could be located in different parts of the existing Tales. This would help to prove my use of these words, as well as show that I was writing with a similar vocabulary as Chaucer himself used. On page XIV, I have noted the locations of several words, and their context. Most importantly, I have made sure to pinpoint the fact that the word 'jogelour' was used, meaning more of a sleight-of-hand expert than a 'juggler' by today's definition.

Another important part of trying to copy Geoffrey Chaucer's style of poetry was making sure I understood how he would have pronounced his words. Someone who tries to go through the Canterbury Tales using Modern English pronunciations would have a completely different meter than Chaucer did, and the poetry would come out uneven. For example, "... (1) -ed, -es are distinct syllables; (2) final -e is a distinct syllable, except before a word beginning with a vowel of h- when it is usually elided..." (Chaucer, pg 618). Also, "...some consonants that are silent today were pronounced, such as the k in knight, the g in gnat, and the gh in light..." (Singman, pg 45).

Spelling was not very important in the use of Middle English, which is why the development of standardized English in the fifteenth century was so important. "...The spelling of Chaucerian manuscripts is more phonetic than ours..." (Chaucer, pg 617). While I tried to copy his words exactly as he

spelled them through the Tales, I didn't bother to reference many of the smaller words, but instead went with whatever spelling of the word seemed appropriate in the context of each line.

Finally, the Plot!

While writing the Jogelour's Tale, after making sure to take care of the technical issues of spelling, pronunciation, grammar, and dialect, I had to actually create a storyline, or at least a description of the character.

Chaucer wasn't ever trying to write a story about the pinnacle of human society. Instead, he wrote about average people, the kind that you would see every day, people with skills, lives, and more importantly, flaws. In doing so, he created an image of 14th century society that showed us what they were all really like. In my piece, I chose to write about a jogelour because one of my areas of study is performance and entertainment.

As far as medieval society was concerned, he would have been considered a vagrant, a street person who survived by stealing, lying, and tricking people. A street rat, who has fallen in love with a girl of higher rank than him, perhaps the daughter of a merchant, but her family has refused him because of his status on society, which was of vital importance to everyone in medieval culture.

And so my jogelour is on a journey, not just to the cathedral on pilgrimage, but on a personal mission to improve himself, to be good enough to win the approval of the family of the woman he loves. To improve his status in the world and advance his prospects for the future.

Word Sources

Sources for Noted Words

bawdryk - General Prologue - line 116 (yeoman)
biraft - Knight's Tale - line 503
boydekyns - Monk's Tale - line 814
corage - General Prologue - line 22 (intro)
deffended - Pardoner's Tale - line 224
fonne - Reeve's Tale - line 235
hevynesse - Nun's Priest's Prologue - line 3
jogelour - Friar's Tale - line 203
kithed - Canon Yeoman's Tale - line 501
kynrede - Franklin's Tale - line 27
lemman - Manciple's Tale - line 204
propre good - General Prologue - line 583 (manciple)
route - General Prologue - line 624 (reeve)
rowne - Friar's Tale - line 308
sclendir - General Prologue - line 589 (reeve)
sith - Shipman's Tale - line 30
sleighte - General Prologue - line 606 (reeve)
tregetoures - Franklin's Tale - line 433
trenchant - Reeve's Tale - line 76
unkonnyng - Chaucer's Retraction
vassellage - Knight's Tale - line 2196
vinolent - Summoner's Tale - line 267
wood - General Prologue - line 584 (manciple)

Bibliography

- 1) Chaucer, Geoffrey
“The Canterbury Tales”
Random House Inc., New York, New York
© 1994 Modern Library Edition
- 2) Woodring, Carl
“The Columbia House of British Poetry”
Columbia University Press, New York, New York
© 1994
- 3) Singman, Jeffrey L. & McLean, Will
“Daily Life in Chaucer’s England”
Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut
© 1995
- 4) Horobin, Simon
“The Language of the Chaucer Tradition”
Antony Rowe Ltd., Chippenham, Wiltshire, England
© 2003
- 5) Powell, Susan and Smith, Jeremy J.
“New Perspectives on Middle English Texts”
St. Edmundsbury Press Ltd., Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, England
© 2000
- 6) Koberl, Johann
“Introduction to Middle English Language”
College Student Handout
© 2003/04

Chaucer's Introduction - Lines 01 - 42

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

Whan that Aprille, with hise shoures soote,
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open eye-
So priketh hem Nature in hir corages-
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunturbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for the seke
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seeke.
Bifil that in that seson, on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
To Caunterbury, with ful devout corage,
At nyght were come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle
In felawshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed atte beste;
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everychon
That I was of hir felawshipe anon,
And made forward erly for to ryse
To take our wey, ther as I yow devyse.
But natheles, whil I have tyme and space,
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degree,
And eek in what array that they were inne;
And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne

When that April, with his showers sweet,
The drought of March has pierced to the root
And bathed every vein in such liquor,
Of which virtue engendered is the flower;
When Zephyr also with his sweet breath
Inspired has in every holt and heeth
The tender shoots, and the young sun
Has in the Ram his half-course run,
And small fowls making melody,
That sleep all the night with open eye-
So pricks them, Nature in their spirits,
Then longing folk to go on pilgrimages
And palmers for to seek strange strands
To far halls, known in sundry lands,
And specially, from every shire's end,
Of England, to Canterbury they wind,
The holy, blissful martyr for they seek,
That them have helped, when that they were sick,
Befell that in that season, on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,
Ready to wind on my pilgrimage,
To Canterbury, with full devout spirits,
At night were come into that hostel
Were nine and twenty in a company
Of sundry folk, by adventure fell,
In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all,
That toward Canterbury would ride,
The chambers and the stables were wide,
And well we were eased at best,
And shortly, when the sun was to rest,
So had I spoken with them everyone
That I was of their fellowship anon,
And made forward early for to rise,
To take our way, there as I you devise,
But nonetheless, while I have time and space,
Ere that I further in this tale pace,
Me think it accordant to resound
To tell you all the condition,
Of each of them, so as it seemed me,
And which they were, and of what degree,
And also in what array that they were in,
And at a knight then will I first begin,

When April, with his sweet showers
Has pierced the dryness of March to the root
And saturated every vein with that liquid
Which has the virtue to bring forth flowers
And when the West Wind also blows sweetly,
Inspired by every forest and plain,
The tender new leaves, and the young sun,
Has just passed halfway through Aries,
And small birds start singing their songs,
That sleep all night with one eye open,
So Nature provokes them in their feelings,
Then desiring people go on pilgrimages,
And palmers to seek foreign shores
To distant shrines, known in far-away lands,
And especially, from the ends of every town,
Of England, they make their way to Canterbury,
The seek the holy, blessed martyr,
That has helped them when they were sick,
It happened that in the season, on a day,
As I lay at the Tabard in Southwark
Ready to make my way on my pilgrimage,
To Canterbury, with strongly devout feelings,
That night, there came into the inn,
Were twenty-nine people in a group
Of various people, by chance had fallen,
In fellowship, and they were all pilgrims,
That would ride towards Canterbury,
The bedroom and stables were spacious,
And we were well eased at best,
And soon, when the sun went down,
I had spoken with everyone,
I was part of their group immediately,
And agreed to wake up early,
To start heading out, as I was commanded
But nonetheless, while I have a moment,
Before I get ahead of the story,
I think it's a good idea to let it be known,
To tell you about all of the details,
Of each person, as they seemed to me,
Of who they were, and what their status was,
And also the outfits that they were in,
And I will start with the knight,

The Monk's Portrait - Lines 165 - 207

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
An outridere, that lovede venerie,
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable,
And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere
Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere
And eek as loude, as dooth the chapel belle.
Ther as this lord was keper of the celle,
The reule of Seint Maure, or of Seint Beneit,
By cause that it was old and somdel streit
This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,
And heeld after the newe world the space.
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith that hunters beth nat hooly men,
Ne that a monk, whan he is reccheles,
Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees,-
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
And I seyde his opinioun was good.
What sholde he studie, and make hymselfen wood,
Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,
Or swynken with his handes and labour,
As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved!
Therefore he was a prikasour aright:
Grehoundes he hadde, as swift as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I seigh his sleeves purfild at the hond
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;
And, for to festne his hood under his chyn,
He hadde of gold ywroght a curious pyn;
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as it hadde been enoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt,
Hise eyen stepe, and rolynge in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.
Now certainly he was a fair prelaat;
He was nat pale as a forpynd goost.
A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye,

A monk there was, a fair for the master,
And outrider, that loved venerie,
A manly man, to be an abbot able,
Full many a dainty horse had he in stable,
And when he rode, men might his bridle hear,
Jingling in a whistling wind all clear,
And eek as loud, as doth the chapel bell.
There as this lord was keeper of the cell,
The rule of Saint Maurus or Saint Benedict,
By cause that it was old and somewhat strict,
This ilke monk let old things pace,
And held after the new world the space,
He gave not of the text a pulled hen,
That sayeth that hunters be not holy men,
Nor that a monk, when he is reechless,
Is likened to a fish that is waterless,-
This is to say, a monk out of his cloister
But the ilke text held he not worth an oyster;
And I said his opinion was good.
What should be study, and make himself wood,
Upon a book in cloister always to pour,
Or swink with his hands and labor,
As Austin bid? How shall the world be served?
Let Austin have his swink to him reserved!
Therefore he was a pricker alright:
Greyhounds he had, as swift as fowl in flight;
Of pricking and of hunting for the hare
Was all his lust, for no cost would be spare.
I say his sleeves purples at the hand
With grys, and that the finest of a land;
And, for to fasten his hood under his chin,
He had of gold-wrought a curious pin;
A love-knot in the greater end there was.
His head was bald, that shown as any glass,
And eek his face, as it had been annointed.
He was a lord full fat and in good point,
His eyes steep, and rolling in his head,
That steamed as a furnace of a leed;
His boots supple, his horse in great estate.
Now certainly he was a fair prelate;
He was not pale as a forpynd ghost.
A fat swan loved he best of any roast.
His palfrey was as brown as is a berry,

There was a monk, a veritable master,
An outrider who loved hunting,
A manly man, able to be an abbot,
He had many dainty horses in his stable,
And when he rode, people might hear his bridle,
Jingling clearly in the wind,
And also as loud as the chapel bell.
Where this lord was the governer of the small cell,
The rules of Saints Maurus or Benedict,
Because they were old-fashioned and strict,
This same monk let the old things take their time,
And held to the manners of the new world,
He didn't give a care about the text,
That says hunters are not holy men,
Nor that a monk, when he is careless,
Is like a fish out of water,-
That is, like a monk out of his cloister
But that the text was without worth,
And I said that his opinion was good.
Why should he study, and drive himself mad,
To spend all his time reading books,
Or toil with his hands and work,
As Austin bids? How shall the world be served?
Let Austin keep his hard work to himself!
He was therefore a tracker, of course:
He had greyhounds, as fast as small birds in flight;
Tracking and hunting for the rabbit
Was all his desire, he would spare no expense.
His sleeves were lined at the hand
With grey fur, the finest of the land;
And to fasten his hood under his chin,
He had an unusual pin fashioned of gold;
There was a love-knot in the large end of it.
He was bald, his head shining like glass,
And also his face, which had been oiled up.
He was a large, fat man in good form,
He eyes bulged, and rolled about in his head,
That steamed as a furnace of a cauldron;
His boots were supple, his horse in great shape.
He was certainly a good churchman;
He was not as pale as a haunting ghost.
He loved a fattened swan best of any meal.
His horse was as brown as a berry,

The Wife of Bath's Portrait - Lines 447 - 478

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

A good WIF was ther, OF beside BATHE,
But she was somdel deef, and that was scathe.
Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt,
She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.
In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon
That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon;
And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she,
That she was out of alle charitee.
Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;
I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
That on a Sunday weren upon hir heed.
Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.
Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
She was a worthy womman al hir lyve:
Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,
Withouthen oother compaignye in youthe, -
But therof nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.
And thries hadde she been at Jerusalem;
She hadde passed many a straunge strem;
At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,
In Galice at Seint-Jame, and at Coloigne.
She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.
Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.
Upon an amblere esily she sat,
Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat
As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
A foot-mantel aboute hir hippe large,
And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.
In felawshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe.
Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,
For she koude of that art the olde daunce.

A goodwife was there, of beside Bath,
But she was somedeal deaf, and that was scathe,
Of cloth-making she had such a haunt,
She passed them of Ypres and Gaunt,
In all the parish, another wife was there none,
That to the offering before her should be going,
And if there did, certain so wroth was she,
That she was out of all charity,
Her coverchiefs full fine were of ground,
I dost swear they weighed ten pound,
That on a Sunday were upon her head,
Her hose were of fine scarlet red,
Full straight tied, and shoes moist and new,
Bold was her face, and fair, and red of hue,
She was a worthy woman all her life,
Husbands at church door she had five,
Without then other company in youth,
But thereof need not to to speak as knoweth,
And thrice had she been at Jerusalem,
She had passed many a strange stream,
At Rome she had been, and at Boloigne,
In Galice at St. James, and at Coloigne,
She could muchel of wandering by the way,
Gap-toothed was she, soothly for to say,
Upon an ambler easily she sat,
Wimpled well, and on her head a heat,
As broad as is a buckler or a targe;
A foot-mantle about her hips large,
And on her feet a pair of spurs sharp,
In fellowship well could she laugh and carp,
Of remedies of love she knew perchance,
For she could of that art the old dance,

A wife was there, from the area around Bath,
But she was somewhat deaf, and that was a pity,
She had such a talent for making cloth,
She surpassed the people of Ypres and Gaunt,
In all the parish, there was not another wife,
That should precede her in the offering,
And if they did, she would certainly be so angry,
That she would be uncharitable,
Her head-dresses were of the finest quality,
I swear they weighed ten pounds,
That were on her head on a Sunday,
Her stockings were a good scarlet shade of red,
Tied completely straight, and brand new shoes,
Her face was bold and fair, with red shade,
She was a woman of worth for her entire life,
She had wed five men at the church doors,
Not counting other company in her youth,
But there's no need to speak of it, as truth,
And she had gone to Jerusalem three times,
She had passed many foreign rivers,
She had been to Rome and Boloigne,
To St. James in Galicia, and to Coloigne,
She could learn much from wandering around,
She was gap-toothed, I speak the truth,
She sat casually upon a walking-horse,
Wearing a wimple, and a hat on her head,
As broad as a buckler or small shield;
An overskirt was around her large hips,
And a pair of sharp spurs on her feet,
In a group, she could laugh and carp quite well,
She probably knew of the answers of love,
For she knew all about that old dance,

The Craftsmen's Portraits - Lines 363 - 380

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

An HABERDASSHERE and a CARPENTER,
A WEBBE, a DYERE, and a TAPYCER,-
And they were clothed alle in o lyveree
Of a solempne and a greet fraternitee.
Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;
Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras,
But al with silver; wrought ful clene and weel,
Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.
Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys
To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys.
Everich, for the wisdom that he kan,
Was shaply for to been an alderman.
For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,
And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente;
And elles certeyn, were they to blame.
It is ful fair to been ycleped "madame,"
And goon to vigilies al bifore,
And have a mantel roialliche ybore.

An haberdasher and a carpenter,
A weaver, a dyer, and a tapster,
And they were clothed all in a livery,
Of a solemn and a great fraternity,
Full fresh and new their gear adorned was,
They knives were shaped not with brass,
But all with silver; wrought full clean and well,
Their girdles and their pouches everydeel.
Well seemed each of them a fair burgess
To sit in a guildhall on a dais,
Every each, for the wisdom that he ken,
Was shapely for to be an alderman,
For cattle had they enough and rent,
And eek their wives would it well assent;
And else certain, were they to blame,
It is full fair to be cleped "madame",
And going to vigils all before,
And have a mantel royally bore.

A haberdasher and a carpenter,
A weaver, a dyer, and a tapestry-maker,
And they all wore the same livery,
Of a serious and important brotherhood,
Their equipment was brand new,
They knives were not made of brass,
But made with silver, well-made and neat,
Their belts and pockets in every detail.
They each seemed to be a fine businessman
To sit in a guildhall, and stand on a platform,
Each of them, for the wisdom that he knows,
Was well-shaped to be a (sub) mayor,
For they had enough property and income,
And also their wives would go along,
And certainly, if they were responsible,
If it very good to be called "madame",
And going to feasts before everyone else,
And to bear a royal mantel.

The Plowman's Portrait - Lines 531 - 543

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

With hym ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,
That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother;
A trewe swynkere and a good was he,
Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee.
God loved he best with al his hoole herte
At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,
And thanne his neighebor right as hym-selve.
He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight
Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.
Hise tithes payed he ful faire and wel,
Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.
In a tabard he rood, upon a mere.

With them there was a plowman, was his brother,
That had a load of dung full man of other;
A true swinker and a good was he,
Living in peace and perfect charity,
God loved he best with all his whole heart,
At all times, though he gamed or smart,
And then his neighbor right as himself.
He would thresh, and thereto dig and delve,
For Christ's sake, for every poor wight,
Without hire, if it lay in his might,
His tithes payed he full faire and well,
Both of his proper swink and his cattle.
In a tabard he rode, upon a mare,

There was a plowman with them, his brother,
That carted dung, and many other things;
He was a true and good worker,
Who lived in peace and perfect charity,
He loved God best, with his entire heart,
All of the time, whether it was simple or hard,
And then his neighbor, as much as his own self,
He would work hard and dig deep,
For the sake of Christ, for every poor person,
Without pay, if it was within his capabilities,
He paid his tithes completely and thoroughly,
With both his labor and his property.
He wore a tabard as he rode, on a mare,

The Friar's Prologue - Lines 01 - 36

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

This worthy lymytour, this noble Frere,
He made alwey a maner louryng chiere
Upon the Somonour, but for honestee
No vileyns word as yet to hym spak he.
But atte laste he seyde unto the wyf,
"Dame," quod he, "God yeve yow right good lyf!
Ye han heer touched, also moot I thee,
In scole-matere greet difficultee.
Ye han seyde muche thyng right wel, I seye;
But, dame, heere as we ryde by the weye,
Us nedeth nat to speken but of game,
And lete auctoritees, on Goddes name,
To prechyng and to scole eek of clergie.
But if it lyke to this compaignye,
I wol yow of a somonour telle a game.
Pardee, ye may wel knowe by the name
That of a somonour may no good be sayd;
I praye that noon of you be yvele apayd.
A somonour is a rennere up and down
With mandementz for fornicacioun,
And is ybet at every townes ende."
Oure Hoost tho spak, "A, sire, ye sholde be hende
And curteys, as a man of youre estaat;
In compaignye we wol have no debaat.
Telleth youre tale, and lat the somonour be."
"Nay," quod the Somonour, "lat hym seye to me
What so hym list; whan it comth to me lot,
By God, I shal hym quiten every grot.
I shal hym tellen which a greet honour
It is to be a flaterynge lymytour;
And eek of many another manere cryme
Which nedeth nat rehercen at this tyme;
And his office I shal hym telle, ywis."
Oure Hoost answerde, "Pees, namoore of this!"
And after this he seyde unto the Frere,
"Tel forth youre tale, my levee maister deere."

This worthy limiter, the noble Friar,
He made always a manner-lowering cheer
Upon the Summoner, but for honesty
No vile word as yet to him spoke he.
But at last he said unto the wife,
"Dame," quote he, "God give you right good life!
Ye have here touched, also must I thee,
In school matters great difficulty.
You have said much thing right well, I say;
But, dame, here as we ride by the way,
Us need not to speak but of game,
And let authorities, on God's name,
To preaching and to school also of clergy.
But if it like to this company,
I would you of a summoner tell a game.
Pardee, ye may well know by the name
That of a summoner may no good be said;
I pray that no one of you be evil paid.
A summoner is a runner up and down
With mandments for fornication,
And is beat at every town's end."
Our Host then spoke, "Hey, sir, ye should be kind
And courteous, as a man of your estate;
In company we would have no debate.
Tell your tale, and let the summoner be."
"Nay," quote the Summoner, "let him say to me
What so him likes; when it comes to my lot,
By God, I shall him quite every piece.
I shall him tell which a great honor
It is to be a flattering limiter,
And also of many another manner of crime
Which need not repeat at this time;
And his office I shall him tell, wise."
Our Host answered, "Peace, no more of this!"
And after this he said unto the Friar,
"Tell forth your tale, my lief maister deere."

This eminent limiter, the noble Friar,
He always made a depressing face
At the Summoner, but to be courteous
He hadn't said a bad word towards him.
But he finally said to the wife,
"Ma'am," he said, "God give you a good life!
You have touched, as I must tell you,
On scholarly matters of great difficulty.
You have said many thing correctly, I say;
But ma'am, as we ride here along the way,
We don't need to speak only of our game,
And leave the authorities, in God's name,
To preaching and to schools of churchmen.
But if it pleases this group,
I would tell you all of a summoner, as a game.
Goodness, you might tell by the name
That nothing nice will be said about a summoner;
I hope that no one will be ill-pleased.
A summoner is a runner going up and down
With directions for having intercourse,
And is defeated at the end of every town."
Then our Host said, "Hey, sir, you should be polite
And courteous, as a man of your station;
In our group we should have arguments.
Tell your tale, and leave the summoner alone."
"No," said the summoner, "let him tell me
Whatever he likes; when it's my turn,
By God, I'll repay him every bit.
I'll tell him what a great honor
It is to be a flattering limiter,
And of many more criminal things
Which doesn't need to be repeated now;
And I'll tell him his place, truly."
Our Host answered, "Peace, enough of this!"
And then, he said to the Friar,
"Tell us your tale, my good, dear lord."

The Clerk's Prologue - Lines 01 - 20

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

"Sire Clerk of Oxenford," oure Hooste sayde,
"Ye ryde as coy and stille as dooth a mayde,
Were newe spoused, sittyng at the bord.
This day ne herde I of youre tonge a word.
I trowe ye studie about som sophyme;
But Salomon seith, `every thyng hath tyme.'
For Goddes sake, as beth of bettre cheere;
It is no tyme for to studien heere,
Telle us som myrie tale, by youre fey!
For what man that is entred in a pley,
He nedes moot unto the pley assente;
But precheth nat as freres doon in Lente,
To make us for oure olde synnes wepe,
Ne that thy tale make us nat to slepe.
Telle us som murie thyng of adventures;
Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures,
Keepe hem in stoor, til so be that ye endite
Heigh style, as whan that men to kynges write.
Speketh so pleyn at this tyme, we yow preye,
That we may understonde what ye seye."

"Sir Clerk of Oxford," our Host said,
"You ride as coy and still as doeth a maid,
Were new spoused, sitting at the board.
This day nay heard I have your tongue a word.
I trowe you study about some sophism;
But Solomon says 'every thing has time.'
For God's sake, as be of better cheer;
It is no time for to study here,
Tell us some merry tale, by your faith!
For what man that is entered in a play,
He needs must unto the play assent;
Be preach not as friars do in Lent,
To make us for our old sins weep,
Nay that your tale make us not to sleep.
Tell us some merry thing of adventures;
Your terms, your colors, and your figures,
Keep them in store, til so be that you endite
High style, as when that men to kings write.
Speak so plain at this time, we you pray,
That we may understand what ye say."

"Mister Scholar from Oxford," said our Host,
"You ride as shy and still as a girl does,
Who is newly wed, sitting at the supper table,
I haven't heard a word from your mouth all day.
I believe you study about some false argument;
But Solomon said 'Every thing has a time.'
For God's sake, be more cheerful;
Now isn't the time for studying,
Tell us a happy tale, by your faith!
For whatever man may join a play,
He needs to agree with the play;
But don't preach, as friars do during Lent,
To make us cry for our old sins,
Don't make your tale put us to sleep.
Tell us a happy story about adventures;
Your terms, your imagery, and your own speech,
Keep them handy, until you have to describe
High style, like what man write to kings.
Speak plainly, we beg of you,
That we can understand what you say."

The Franklin's Prologue - Lines 01 - 20

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

Thise olde gentil Britouns in hir dayes
Of diverse aventures maden layes,
Rymeyed in hir firste Briton tonge;
Whiche layes with hir instrumentz they songe,
Or elles redded hem, for hir plesaunce.
And oon of hem have I in remembraunce,
Whiche I shal seyn, with good-wyl, as I kan.
But sires, by cause I am a burel man,
At my bigynnyng first I yow biseche,
Have me excused of my rude speche.
I lerned nevere rethorik, certeyn;
Thyng that I speke, it moot be bare and pleyn.
I sleep nevere on the Mount of Parnaso,
Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Scithero.
Colours ne knowe I none, withouten drede,
But swiche colours as growen in the mede,
Or elles swiche, as men dye or peynte.
Colours of rethoryk been me to queynte,
My spirit feeleth noght of swich mateere;
But if yow list, my tale shul ye heere.

These old gentle Bretons in their days
Of diverse adventures making lays,
Rhymed in their first Breton tongue;
Which lays with their instruments they sung,
Or else read them, for their pleasing.
And one of them have I in remembrance,
Which I shall say with good will as I can.
But sirs, because I am a borrel man,
At my beginning first I you besech,
Have me excused of my rude speech.
I learned never rhetoric, cartain;
Thing that I speak, it must be bare and plain.
I sleep never on the Mount of Parnaso,
Nor learned Marcus Tullius Scithero.
Colors nor know I none, without dread,
But which colors as grow in the meadow,
Or else which, as men dye or paint.
Colors of rhetoric been me too quaint,
My spirit feels not of such material;
But if you list, my tale shall you here.

These ancient noble Bretons, in their days
Of various adventures making legends,
Rhymed in their original British language;
They sang these lays with instruments,
Or else recited them for their pleasure.
And I have one of them I remember,
Which I will tell with what goodwill I have.
But sirs, because I'm a common man,
To begin with, first I beg of you,
Excuse me for my vile language.
I have never learned rhetoric, for certain;
That which I talk about must be plain and simple.
I've never slept on the Mount of Parnaso,
Nor studied Marcus Tullius Scithero.
I do not know any colors, I'm afraid,
Except for the colors that you find in meadow,
Or else, that men make with dye or paint.
I find rhetorical colors too quaint,
My soul doesn't feel much for that;
But if you want, you'll hear my tale

The Manciple's Tale - Lines 105 - 147

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

Whan Phebus dwelled heere in this world adoun,
As olde bookes maken menciouun,
He was the mooste lusty bachiler
In al this world, and eek the beste archer.
He slow Phitoun the serpent, as he lay
Slepyng agayn the sonne upon a day;
And many another noble worthy dede
He with his bowe wroghte, as men may rede.
Pleyen he koude on every mynstralcie,
And syngen, that it was a melodie
To heeren of his cleere voys the soun.
Certes, the kyng of Thebes, Amphion,
That with his syngyng walled that citee,
Koude nevere syngen half so wel as hee.
Therto he was the semelieste man,
That is or was sith that the world bigan.
What nedeth it hise fetures to discryve?
For in this world was noon so fair on lyve.
He was therwith fulfild of gentillesse,
Of honour, and of parfit worthynesse.
This Phebus that was flour of bachilrie,
As wel in fredom as in chivalrie,
For his desport, in signe eek of victorie
Of Phitoun, so as telleth us the storie,
Was wont to beren in his hand a bowe.
Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a crowe,
Which in a cage he fostred many a day,
And taughte it speken as men teche a jay.
Whit was this crowe, as is a snow-whit swan,
And countrefete the speche of every man
He koude, whan he sholde telle a tale.
Therwith in al this world no nyghtngale
Ne koude, by an hondred thousand deel,
Syngen so wonder myrily and weel.
Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a wyf
Which that he lovede moore than his lyf;
And nyght and day dide evere his diligence
Hir for to plesse and doon hire reverence.
Save oonly, if the sothe that I shal sayn,
Jalous he was, and wolde have kept hire fayn,
For hym were looth byjaped for to be-
And so is every wight in swich degree;
But al in ydel, for it availleth noght.

When Phoebus dwelled here in this world down,
As old books make mention,
He was the most lusty bachelor
In all this world, and also the best archer.
He slew Python the serpent, as he lay
Sleeping against the sun upon a day;
And many another noble worthy deed
He with his bow wrought, as men may read.
Play he could on every minstrelsy,
And sing, that it was a melody
To hear of his clear voice the sun.
Certainly, the king of Thebes, Amphion,
That with his singing walled that city,
Could never sing half so well as he.
Thereto he was the seemliest man,
That is or was since that the world began.
What need it his features to describe?
For in this world was no one so fair on life.
He was therewith fulfilled of gentlesse,
Of honor, and of perfect worthiness.
This Phoebus that was the flower of bachelorie,
As well in freedom as in chivalry,
For his sport, in sign also of victory
Of Python, so as tells us the story,
Was wont to bear in his hand a bow.
Now hade this Phoebus in his house a crow,
Which in a cage he fostered many a day,
And taught it speak as men teach a jay.
White was this crow, as is a snow-white swan,
And counterfit the speech of every man
He could, when he should tell a tale.
There was, in all this world no nightingale
Who could, by a hundred thousand deel,
Sing so wonder merrily and well.
Now had this Phoebus in his house a wife
Which that he loved more than his life;
And night and day did every his diligence
Her for to please and doing her reverence.
Save only, in the sooth that I shall say,
Jealous he was, and would have kept her fain,
For him were loathe bejaped for to be-
And so is every wight in such degree;
But all in idle, for it avails not.

When Phoebus lived down here in this world,
As the old books tell us,
He was the most lustful young man
In the entire world, and the best archer too.
He slew the serpent Python, as he lay
Asleep in the sunlight, on a day;
And many more noble and worthy deeds
He accomplished with his bow, as men can read.
He could play on every musical instrument,
And sing, and create a melody
To hear the sun in his clear voice.
Certainly, Amphion, the king of Thebes,
That walled the city with his singing,
Couldn't ever sing half as well as he could.
There also he was the most handsome man,
That is or has been since the world began.
Why do I need to describe his features?
For there was no one in this world so fair in life.
He was also full of noble courtesy,
Of honor, and of absolute worthiness.
This Phoebus, who was the flower of knighthood,
As much when he was normal as in chivalry,
For his amusement, same as in victory
Of the Python, so the old stories tell us,
Would often carry in his hand a bow.
Now Phoebus had a crow in his house,
Which he took care of in a cage for many days,
And he taught it to speak like men teach jays.
This crow was as white as a snow-white swan,
And imitate the speech of everyone
He could, when he was telling a tale.
There wasn't a nightingale in the world
Who could, by a millionth part
Sing so wonderful and merrily.
Now Phoebus had at home a wife
Who he loved more than his own life;
And all the time, he did everything he could
To please her and do her reverence.
Except for, if I tell the truth,
He was jealous, and would have pleased her,
For he loathed to be made a fool of-
And so is everyone in such circumstances;
But all for nothing, because it does no good.

The Manciple's Tale - Lines 148 - 190

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

A good wyf that is clene of werk and thoght
Sholde nat been kept in noon awayt, certayn.
And trewely the labour is in vayn
To kepe a shrewe, for it wol nat bee.
This holde I for a verray nycetee,
To spille labour for to kepe wyves,
Thus writen olde clerkes in hir lyves.
But now to purpos, as I first bigan:
This worthy Phebus dooth al that he kan
To plesen hir, wenyng that swich plesaunce,
And for his manhede and his governaunce,
That no man sholde han put hym from hire grace.
But God it woot, ther may no man embrace
As to destreyne a thyng, which that nature
Hath natureelly set in a creature.
Taak any bryd, and put it in a cage,
And do al thyn entente and thy corage
To fostre it tendrely with mete and drynke,
Of alle deynteas that thou kanst bithynke;
And keepe it al so clenly as thou may,
Although his cage of gold be nevere so gay,
Yet hath this bryd, by twenty thousand foold,
Levere in a forest that is rude and coold
Goon ete wormes, and swich wrecchednesse;
For evere this bryd wol doon his bisynesse
To escape out of his cage, whan he may.
His libertee this brid desireth ay.
Lat take a cat, and fostre hym wel with milk,
And tendre flessh, and make his couche of silk,
And lat hym seen a mous go by the wal,
Anon he weyveth milk and flessh and al,
And every deyntee that is in that hous,
Swich appetit he hath to ete a mous.
Lo, heere hath lust his dominioun,
And appetit fleemeth discreioun.
A she wolf hath also a vileyns kynde,
The lewedeste wolf that she may fynde,
Or leest of reputacioun wol she take,
In tyme whan hir lust to han a make.
Alle these ensamples speke I by these men,
That been untrewe, and no thyng by wommen,
For men han evere a likerous appetit
On lower thyng to parfourne hire delit,

A good wife that is clene of work and thought
Should not be kept in none await, certain.
And truly the labor is in vain
To keep a shrew, for it will not be.
This hold I for a verile nicety,
To spill labor for to keep wives,
Thus write old clerks in their lives.
But now to purpose, as I first began:
This worthy Phoebus does all that he kan
To please her, weening that such plesaunce,
And for his manhood and his governaunce,
That no man should then put him from her grace.
But God it knows, there may no man embrace
As to restrain a thng, which that nature
Has naturally set in a creature.
Take any bird, and put it in a cage,
And do all thy intent and thy courage
To foster it tenderly with meat and drink,
Of all dainties that you can think;
And keep it also clean as you may,
Although his cage of gold be never so gay,
Yet has this bird, by twenty thousand fold,
Live in a forest that is rude and cold
Going eat worms, and such wretchedness;
For ever this bird would do his business
To escape out of his cage, when he may.
His liberty this bird desires, aye.
Let take a cat, and foster him well with milk,
And tender flesh, and make his couch of silk,
And let him see a mouse go by the wall,
Anon he waives the milk and flesh and all,
And every dainty that is in that house,
Such appetite he has to eat a mouse,
Lo, here has lust his domination,
And appetite <<fleemeth>> discretion.
A she-wolf has also a villainous kind,
The lewdest wolf that she may find,
Or least of reputation would she take,
In time when her lust to have a mate.
All these examples speak I be these men
That be untrue, and no thing by women,
For men have ever a lecherous appetite
On lower things to perform their delight,

A good wife who is pure of mind and deed
Shouldn't be kept alone waiting, certainly.
And honestly the effort is wasted
To keep a shrew, for it won't happen.
I take this for a true nonsense,
To waste effort to keep wives,
So write the old sages in their lives.
But now on course, as I started:
This worthy Phoebus does everything that he can
To please her, thinking that such pleasure,
And by his manhood and his management,
That no man would replace him in her favor.
But God knows, no man can embrace
To restrain something, something that nature
Has made a part of a creature's nature.
Take any bird, and put it in a cage,
And do everything you mean and feel
To take decent care of it with food and drink,
Of every delicacy that you can imagine;
And also keep in as clean as you can,
Although his cage of gold could never be happier,
Yet this bird would, by twenty-thousand fold,
Live in a forest that is cold and unbearable
Eating worms, and other wretchedness;
This bird would always be trying forever
To escape from his cage, when he can.
This bird wants his freedom, yes.
Take a cat, and care for him decently with milk,
And tender meat, and make him a silken bed,
And then, if he sees a mouse go by near the wall,
Right away, he passes up milk, flesh, and all,
And every delicacy that is also in the house,
He has quite an appetite to eat a mouse,
Behold, here lust is in control,
And appetite overpowers discretion.
A she-wolf also has an evil side,
The lewdest wolf that she can find,
Or with the worst reputation, she would take,
In time, when she desires a mate.
All of these examples I speak of these men
Who are untrue, and nothing about women,
For men always have a lecherous hunger
For lower things to perform for their delight,

The Manciple's Tale - Lines 191 - 233

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

Than on hire wyves, be they never so faire,
Ne never so trewe, ne so debonaire.
Flessh is so newefangel, with meschaunce,
That we ne konne in no thyng han plesaunce
That sowneth into vertu any while.
This Phebus, which that thoghte upon no gile,
Deceyved was, for al his jolitee.
For under hym another hadde shee,
A man of litel reputacioun,
Nat worth to Phebus in comparisoun.
The moore harm is, it happeth ofte so,
Of which ther cometh muchel harm and wo.
And so bifel, whan Phebus was absent,
His wyf anon hath for hir leman sent;
Hir leman? Certes, this is a knavyssh speche,
Foryeveth it me, and that I yow biseche.
The wise Plato seith, as ye may rede,
The word moot nede accorde with the dede.
If men shal telle proprely a thyng,
The word moot cosyn be to the werkyng.
I am a boystous man, right thus seye I.
Ther nys no difference trewely
Bitwixe a wyf that is of heigh degree-
If of hire body dishoneste she bee-
And a povre wenche, oother than this,
If it so be they werke bothe amys,
But that the gentile in hire estaat above,
She shal be cleped his lady as in love,
And for that oother is a povre womman,
She shal be cleped his wenche, or his leman;
And God it woot, myn owene deere brother,
Men leyn that oon as lowe as lith that oother.
Right so bitwixe a titlelees tiraunt
And an outlawe, or a thief erraunt,
The same I seye, ther is no difference.
To Alisaundre was toold this sentence:
That for the tiraunt is of gretter myght,
By force of meynee for to sleen downright,
And brennen hous and hoom, and make al playn,
Lo, therfore is he cleped a capitayn;
And for the outlawe hath but smal meynee,
And may nat doon so greet an harm as he,
Ne brynge a contree to so greet mescheef,

Than on their wives, be they never so fair,
Nor never so true, nor so debonaire.
Flesh is so newefangle, with mischance,
That we never know in nothing pleasance
That sounds into truth any while.
This Phoebus, which that thought upon no guile,
Deceived was, for all his jollity.
For under him another had she,
A man of little reputation,
Not worth to Phoebus in comparison.
The more harm is, it happens oft so,
Of which there comes much harm and woe.
And so befell, when Phoebus was absent,
His wife anon had for her leman sent;
Her leman? Certainly, this is a knavish speech,
Forgive it me, and that I you beseech.
The wise Plato said, as you may read,
The word must need accord with the deed.
If men shall tell properly of a thing,
The word must cousin be to the working.
I am a boisterous man, right thus say I.
There is no difference truly
Betwixt a wife that is of high degree-
If of her body dishonest she be-
And a poor wench, other than this,
If it so be they work both amiss,
But that the gentle in her state above,
She shall be called his lady as in love,
And for that other is a poor woman,
She shall be called his wench, or his leman;
And God it wise, my own dear brother,
Men lean that one as low as with that other.
Right so betwixt a titleless tyrant
And an outlaw, or a thief errant,
The same I saw, there is no difference.
To Alexander was told this sentence:
That for the tyrant is of greater might,
By force of many for to say downright,
And burning house and home, and make all plain,
Lo, therefore is he called a captain;
And for the outlaw has but small many,
And may not do so great a harm as he,
Nor bring a country to so great mischief,

Than on their wives, who are never as fair,
Not never as true, as as debonaire.
Flesh is so novel, with misfortune,
That we can never long have pleasure in anything
That sounds like the truth anytime.
This Phoebus, who had thought of no deceit,
Was deceived, for all his joviality.
For behind his back, she had another,
A man of little reputation,
Not worthy to be compared to Phoebus.
The more it hurts, it often happens so,
So that there come a lot of harm and woe.
And so it happened, when Phoebus was gone,
His wife had at once sent for her lover;
Her lover? Surely this is a common figure of speech,
Forgive me for it, I do beg of you.
Wise Plato has said, as you might read about,
The word must match the deed.
If a man should speak truly about something,
The words must be related to the actions.
I am a boisterous man, I tell you.
There isn't a real difference
Between a wife of high status-
If she is dishonest with her body-
And a lowly whore, except for this,
If they both do something wrong,
But that the gentlewoman in her high status,
She shall be called his lady, in their love,
And for the other, she is a poor woman,
She call be called his whore, or his lover;
And God knows, my own dear brother,
Mean lay that one was low as the other.
Same as if between a titleless tyrant
And a criminal, or a wandering thief,
They are the same, I say, there is no difference.
This sentence was told to Alexander:
That though the tyrant has greater strength,
By force of numbers, to kill men outright,
And to burn house and home, and flatten it all,
Behold, he is therefore called a captain;
And since the criminal has just a few,
And cannot do as much harm as him,
Nor bring a country to such grand trouble,

The Manciple's Tale - Lines 234 - 276

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

Men clepen hym an outlawe or a theef.
But, for I am a man noght textueel,
I wol noght telle of textes never a deel;
I wol go to my tale as I bigan.
Whan Phebus wyf had sente for hir lemman,
Anon they wroghten al hir lust volage.
The white crowe that heeng ay in the cage
Biheeld hire werk, and seyde nevere a word,
And whan that hoom was com Phebus the lord,
This crowe sang, "Cokkow! Cokkow! Cokkow!"
"What bryd!" quod Phebus, "what song syngestow?
Ne were thou wont so myrily to synge
That to myn herte it was a rejoysynge
To heere thy voys? Allas, what song is this?"
"By God," quod he, "I synge nat amys.
Phebus," quod he, "for al thy worthynesse,
For al thy beautee and thy gentillesse,
For al thy song and al thy mynstralcye,
For al thy waityng, blered is thyn eye
With oon of litel reputacioun
Noght worth to thee, as in comparisoun
The montance of a gnat, so moote I thryve,
For on thy bed thy wyf I saugh hym swyve."
What wol ye moore? The crowe anon hym tolde,
By sadde tokenes and by wordes bolde,
How that his wyf han doon hire lecherye,
Hym to greet shame and to greet vileynye,
And tolde hym ofte, he saugh it with hise eyen.
This Phebus gan awayward for to wryen,
And thoughte his sorweful herte brast atwo,
His bowe he bente and sette ther inne a flo,
And in his ire his wyf thanne hath he slayn.
This is th'effect, ther is namoore to sayn,
For sorwe of which he brak his mynstralcie,
Bothe harpe, and lute, and gyterne, and sautrie,
And eek he brak hise arwes and his bowe,
And after that thus spak he to the crowe.
"Traitor," quod he, "with tonge of scorpioun,
Thou hast me broght to my confusioun,
Allas, that I was wroght! Why nere I deed?
O deere wyf, O gemme of lustiheed,
That were to me so sad and eek so trewe,
Now listow deed with face pale of hewe,

Men call him an outlaw or a thief.
But, for I am a man not textual,
I will not tell of texts never a deal;
I will go to my tale as I began.
When Phoebus wife had sent for her leman,
Anon they wrought all her lust volatile.
The white crow that hang aye in the cage
Beheld their work, and said never a word,
And when that home was come Phoebus the lord,
This crow sang "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"
"What bird!" quote Phoebus, "what song sing you?
Not were thou wont so merrily to sing
That to my heart is was a rejoicing
To hear thy voice? Alas, what song is this?"
"By God," guote he, "I sing not amiss.
Phoebus," quote he, "for all thy worthyness,
For all thy beauty and thy gentlesse,
For all thy song and all thy minstrelsy,
For all thy waiting, blurred is thine eye
With one of little reputation
Not worth to thee, as in comparison
The mountance of a gnat, so must I thrive,
For on thy bed thy wife I saw him swive."
What would ye more? The crow anon him told,
By sad tokens and by words bold,
How that his wife had done her lechery,
Him to great shame and to great villainy,
And told him often, he saw it with his eye.
Thus Phoebus gone awayward for to turn,
And thought his sorrowful heart burst in two,
His bow he bent and set therein a flow,
And in his ire his wife then has he slain.
This is the effect, there is no more to say,
For sorrow of which he broke his minstrelsy,
Both harp, and lute, and gittern, and psaltry,
And also he broke his arrows and his bow,
And after that thus spoke he to the crow.
"Traitor," quote he, "with tongue on scorpion,
Thou has me brought to my confusion,
Alas, that I was wrought! Why never I dead?
Oh dear wife, Oh gem of lustihood,
That were to me so sad and also so true,
Now lies dead with face pale of hue,

Men call him a criminal of a thief.
But, because I'm not a book-smart man,
I won't speak of the texts not a bit;
I will continue with my tale as I started.
When Phoebus's wife had sent for her lover,
At once they wrought all of her savage lust.
The white crow that always hangs in the cage
Beheld their actions, and never said anything,
And when the lord Phoebus had come home,
The crow sang out "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"
"What, bird!" said Phoebus, "what song do you sing?"
That you were not singing so merrily
That was a joyous thing to my heart
To hear your voice? Alas, what is this song?"
"By God," he said, "I do not sing wrong.
Phoebus," he said, "for all of your greatness,
For all of your beauty and noble courtesy,
For all of your song and all your musical ability,
For all of your waiting, your eye is blurred
With one of little reputation
Not a match for you, in comparison
The amouth worth a gant, I must insist,
For on your bed, I saw him sleep with your wife."
What more do you want? The crow told him at once,
By sorrowful pieces, and bold words,
How his wife had committed her lechery,
To his great shame, and with great villainy,
And repeatedly told him, he saw it with his own eye.
Thus Phoebus went to turn away,
And thought his sad would broke into two pieces,
He bent back his bow and set an arrow in it,
And in his anger, he then slayed his wife.
This is the result, there's nothing more to say,
Because of his grief, he finished his music playing,
Both his harp, his lute, his guitr, and his psaltry,
And he also broke his arrows and bow,
And after that, he spoke to the crow like this.
"Traitor," he said, "with a scorpion's tongue,
You have brought me to my disturbed mind,
Alas, that I was created! Why aren't I dead?
Oh dear wife, Oh gem os lustfulness,
That was so sad and also so true to me,
Now lies dead with a pale-colored face,

The Manciple's Tale - Lines 277 - 319

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

Ful gilteles, that dorste I swere, ywys.
O rakel hand, to doon so foule amys!
O trouble wit, O ire recchelees!
That unavysed smyteth gilteles.
O wantrust, ful of fals suspecioun,
Where was thy wit and thy discrecioun?
O every man, be war of rakelnesse,
Ne trowe no thyng withouten strong witnessse.
Smyt nat to soone, er that ye witen why,
And beeth avysed wel and sobrelly,
Er ye doon any execucioun
Upon youre ire for suspecioun.
Allas, a thousand folk hath rakel ire
Fully fordoon, and broght hem in the mire!
Allas, for sorwe I wol myselfen slee!"
And to the crowe, "O false theef," seyde he,
"I wol thee quite anon thy false tale;
Thou songe whilom lyk a nyghtngale,
Now shaltow, false theef, thy song forgon,
And eek thy white fetheres everichon.
Ne nevere in al thy lyf ne shaltou speke,
Thus shal men on a traytour been awreke.
Thou and thyn ofspryng evere shul be blake,
Ne nevere sweete noyse shul ye make,
But evere crie agayn tempest and rayn,
In tokenyng that thurgh thee my wyf is slayn."
And to the crowe he stirte, and that anon,
And pulled hise white fetheres everychon,
And made hym blak, and refte hym al his song,
And eek his speche, and out at dore hym slong,
Unto the devel-which I hym bitake;
And for this caas been alle crows blake.
Lordynges, by this ensample I yow preye,
Beth war and taketh kepe what I seye:
Ne telleth nevere no man in youre lyf
How that another man hath dight his wyf;
He wol yow haten mortally, certeyn.
Daun Salomon, as wise clerkes seyn,
Techeth a man to kepen his tonge weel.
But as I seyde, I am nocht textueel;
But nathelees, thus taughte me my dame;
"My sone, thenk on the crowe, on Goddes name.
My sone, keepe wel thy tonge and keepe thy freend,

Full guiltless, that dost I swear, wise.
Oh reckless hand, to do so foul amiss!
Oh trouble wit, Oh ire reckless!
That unadvised smites guiltless.
Oh mistrust, full of false suspicion,
Where was thy wit and thy discretion?
Oh every man, beware of recklessness,
Never trowe nothing without strong witness.
Smite not too soon, before that ye wit why,
And be advised well and soberly,
Before ye do any execution
Upon your ire for suspicion.
Alas, a thousand folk have reckless ire
Fully fordo, and brought them in the mire!
Alas, for sorrow I would myself slay!"
And to the crow, "Oh false thief," said he,
"I would thee quit at once thy false tale;
Thou song whilom like a nightingale,
Now shall you, false thief, thy song forgone,
And also thy white feathers every one.
Nay never in all thy life ne shalt speak,
Thus shall men on a traitor been wreak.
Thou and thine offspring even shall be black,
Nay never sweet noise shall ye make,
But ever cry again tempest and rain,
In token that through thee my wife is slain."
And to the crow he started, and that at once,
And pulled his white feathers every one,
And made him black, and reft him all his song,
And also his speech, and out at door he slung,
Unto the devil - which I him betake;
And for this case be all crows black.
Lordings, by this example I you pray,
Be ware and take keep what I say:
Nay telleth never no man in your life
How that another man has dighted his wife;
He will you hate mortally, certain.
Dan Solomon, as wise clerks say,
Teach a man to keep his tongue well.
But as I said, I am not textual;
But nonetheless, thus taught me my dame;
"My son, think on the crow, on God's name.
My son, keep well thy tongue and keep thy friend,

Totally guiltless, I truly swear.
Oh reckless hand, so do something so horrible!
Oh troubles mind, oh reckless anger!
That strikes down the innocent without cause.
Oh jealousy, full of false suspicion,
What was you mind and your discretion?
Oh everyone, beware of recklessness,
Never believe anything without strong witness.
Don't strike too soon, before you reason why,
And be advised good and reasonably,
Before you execute anything
Because of your anger and jealousy.
Also, a thousand people have reckless anger
Fully in ruin, and has brought them into the mire!
Alas, out of sadness I would kill myself!"
And he said to the crow, "Oh false thief,"
"I insist that you stop your lies right now;
Your song, formerly like a nightingale,
Now for you, false thief, your songs are done,
And also every one of your white feathers.
Nor never in your life will you speak anymore,
Thus shall men know a traitor has been avenged.
Your and your offspring shall be black forever,
You you will never make sweet music again,
But you shall always cry in storm and rain,
In symbol that, because of you, my wife is dead."
And he at once start for the crow,
And pulled out every one of his white feathers,
And turned him black, and took his songs from him,
And also his speech, and slung him out the door,
To the Devil - which I commit him;
And for this reason, all crows are black.
Good lords, by this example, I beg of you,
Beware and take heed of what I say:
Never tell any man who is in your life
How another man has adorned his wife:
He will hate you forever, to be sure.
Dan Solomon, as wise clerks tell us,
Teach a man to hold his tongue carefully.
But as I told you, I am not book-smart;
But nonetheless, this my mother taught me;
"My son, remember the crow, in God's name.
My son, hold your tongue and retain your friend,

The Manciple's Tale - Lines 320 - 362

Original Text, Redaction, and Modern Translation

A wikked tonge is worse than a feend.
My sone, from a feend men may hem blesse.
My sone, God of his endeles goodnesse.
Walled a tonge with teeth and lippes eke,
For man sholde hym avyse what he speeke.
My sone, ful ofte for to mucche speche
Hath many a man been spilt, as clerkes teche.
But for litel speche, avysely,
Is no man shent, to speke generally.
My sone, thy tonge sholdestow restreyne
At alle tymes, but whan thou doost thy peyne
To speke of God in honour and in preyere;
The firste vertu sone, if thou wolt leere,
Is to restreyne and kepe wel thy tonge.
Thus lerne children, whan that they been yonge,
My sone, of muchel spekyng yvele avysed,
Ther lasse spekyng hadde ynough suffised,
Comth muchel harm-thus was me toold and taught. -
In muchel speche synne wanteth naught.
Wostow wherof a rakel tonge serveth?
Right as a swerd forkutteth and forkerveth
An arme a-two, my deere sone, right so
A tonge kutteth freendshipe al atwo.
A jangler is to God abhomynable;
Reed Salomon, so wys and honorable,
Reed David in hise psalmes, reed Senekke.
My sone, spek nat, but with thyn heed thou bekke;
Dissimule as thou were deaf, it that thou heere
A jangler speke of perilous mateere.
The Flemyng seith, and lerne it if thee leste,
That litel jangling causeth muchel reste.
My sone, if thou no wikked word hast seyde,
Thee thar nat drede for to be biwreyd;
But he that hath mysseyde, I dar wel sayn,
He may by no wey clepe his word agayn.
Thyng that is seyde is seyde, and forth it gooth;
Though hym repente, or be hym leef or looth,
He is his thral to whom that he hath sayd
A tale, of which he is now yvele apayd.
My sone, be war, and be noon auctour newe
Of tidynyges, wheither they been false or trewe,
Wherso thou com, amonges hye or lowe,
Kepe wel thy tonge, and thenk upon the crowe."

The Jogelour's Tale

A wicked tongue is worse than a fiend.
My son, from a fiend men them bless.
My son, God of his endless goodness.
Walled a tongue with teeth and lips also,
For men should him advise what he speak.
My son, full oft for too much speech
Has many a man been spilt, as clerks teach.
But for little speech, advisedly,
Is no man shunned, to speak generally.
My son, thy tongue should you restrain
At all times, but when thou do thy pain
To speak of God in honor and in prayer;
The first virtue son, if thou would learn,
Is to restrain and keep well thy tongue.
Thus learn children, when that they be young,
My son, of much speaking evil advised,
There less speaking had enough sufficed,
Come much harm - thus was to told and taught -
In much speech sin wants not.
Wouldst thou whereof a reckless tongue serve?
Right as a sword forcut and forcurve
An army a-two, my dear son, right so
A tongue cuts friendship all a-two.
A jangler is to God abominable;
Read Solomon, so wise and honorable,
Read David in his psalms, read Seneca.
My son, speak not, but with thy head thou beck;
Dissemble as thou were deaf, it that thou hear
A jangler speak of perilous matter.
The Fleming says, and learn it if thee lest,
That little jangling causes much rest.
My son, if thou no wicked word has said,
Thee there not dread for to be betrayed;
But he that has mis-said, I dare well say,
He may by no way keep his word again.
Thing that is said is said, and forth it goes;
Though him repent, or be him lief or loath,
He is his thrall to whom that he has said
A tale, of which he is now evil apaid.
My son, be ware, and be no author new
Of tidings, whether they be false or true,
Wherso thou come, amongst high or low,
Keep well thy tongue, and think upon the crow."

A wicked tongue is worse than a fiend.
My son, men can bless themselves apart from fiends.
My son, God with his eternal goodness.
Walled in th tongue with teeth, and lips, too,
For men should be advised when he speaks.
My son, very often for speaking too much
Has split up many men, as clerks teach us.
But if man speaks little, and carefully,
No man is shunned, to speak in general.
My son, you should restrain your tongue
All of the time, but when you do your pain
To speak about God, in honor and prayer;
The first truth, son, if you would learn,
Is to retrain and hold your tongue.
Thus children learn, when they are young,
My son, too much speaking is ill-advised,
Where speaking less would have sufficed,
Brings great harm - so I was told and taught -
Sin wants for nothing in too much speech.
Do you know how a reckless tongue works?
Same as a sword has cut back and forth
An army in two, my dear son, exactly
A tongue severs a friendship in two.
A gossip is unacceptable to God;
Read about Solomon, so wise and honorable,
Read about David in his psalms, and Seneca.
My son, don't speak, but beckon with your head;
Dissemble as if you were deaf, if you should hear
A gossip speak of dangerous subjects.
The Fleming said, and learn it if you fear,
That little gossiping provides much rest.
My son, if you haven't said a wicked word,
You don't have to fear that you'll be betrayed;
But the man who had lied, I dare to say,
He can never keep his word again.
Something that is said is said, and away it goes;
Though he repents, or if he is willing or not,
He is in debt to the person that he spoke of
A tale, that he is now ill-pleased.
My son, beware, and don't be the new creator
Of tidings, whether they're false or true,
Wherever you go, with those high or low,
Hold your tongue, and remember the crow."

xiii