A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

Geoffrey Chaucer

THE CANTERBURY TALES:
NINE TALES AND THE GENERAL PROLOGUE

AUTHORITATIVE TEXT
SOURCES AND BACKGROUNDS
CRITICISM

Selected and Edited by

V. A. KOLVE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT
LOS ANGELES

GLENDDING OLSON
CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY • New York • London
The Knight's Tale

The Knight's Tale is an adaptation of Boccaccio's Teseida (written ca. 1339-41). At times Chaucer translated it closely; at other times he condensed major sections into a few lines. The result is a narrative less than one-fourth as long as Boccaccio's that turns his lengthy story of war and love into a more ritualized, patterned, philosophical romance. The three selections from the Teseida printed here correspond to lines 175-328 (the young knights' reactions when they first see Emily), 1109-92 and 1509-79 (the temple of Mars and Arcite's prayer), and 2109-216 (Theseus's speech on Arcite's death). Boccaccio wrote a set of notes to the Teseida, mainly to explain his classical references and poetic locations, but it is uncertain that Chaucer's manuscript included them. We have printed the notes to the section on the temple of Mars, however, since they furnish important evidence of medieval habits of allegorization with which Chaucer was familiar.

In certain speeches of the young knights, and in the final speech of Theseus, Chaucer used material from Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy. The passages we print here are from Chaucer's own translation of this immensely influential book; those phrases in italics represent places where he translated glosses to Boethius as well as the original text.

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

From Il Teseida

From Book 3

When Juno's wrath, against ravaged Thebes had somewhat abated, Mars returned with his Furies to the cold regions. Therefore, I shall now sing in gentler tones of Cupid and his battles. I entreat him to be present in what I set down about him.

May he imbue my verses with the potency which he instilled into the hearts of the imprisoned Thebans, so that my words may be a match for

their mad deeds. They were far removed from salutary suffering, until at last Love made them come to blows and He became displeasing to both of them and for one of them the bitter cause of death.

Therefore, the two Thebans, imprisoned in this fashion, in utter sorrow and engaged in little else than weeping, had already despair of ever having a happy future. They often cursed the evil of their misfortune, and cursed even more the hour when they came into the world.

Very often they called on death to slay them, if that might avail. Almost a year had passed in this unhappy state of affairs, when Venus in her bright heaven chose something else for them to sigh over. No sooner had she thought of it, than action followed on the intention.

First the season and then the manner in which Arcites and Palaemon fell in love with Emilia.

Phoebus sallying forth with his steeds was in that part of the heavens which belongs to the lowly beast that carried Europa without stopping to the place where her name still prevails. Venus stepped forth with him and climbed to those lovely mansions, and for this reason all the heaven of Ammon smiled, as he dallied for a time in Pisces.

Because of this fortunate position of the stars, the earth enjoyed charming vitality and clothed her lovely form anew with young grass and exquisite little flowers. The new shrubs adorned their limbs with boughs as the trees neared the time of their flowering and fruit-bearing to beautify the world.

And all the little birds began to sing about their loves, jubilant and merry among the leaves and the flowers. The animals could not conceal their love, but showed it, rather, in their outward behavior. And happy youths, ripe for love, felt passion glow hotter in their hearts than ever before.

Then beautiful young Emilia, as dawn broke each morning, entered alone into the garden which opened out from her room, drawn there by her own nature, not because she was bound by any love. Barefoot and clad in her shift, she entertained herself by singing amorous songs.

She led this life for many days, that artless and beautiful maiden, from time to time gathering a new rose from its thorns with her white hand and joining it to other flowers to weave a little garland for her blond head, until a novelty occurred one morning because of the loveliness of this child.

One fine morning, after she had arisen and had wound her blond tresses about her head, she descended into the garden as was her custom. There, seated on the grass, singing and taking her delight, blithe and deftly she wove her garland with many flowers, all the while lightheartedly singing charming love lyrics with her angelic voice.

At the sound of that pretty voice, Arcites arose, for he was in the prison adjacent to the amorous garden, without saying anything to Palaemon. Longingly he opened the window to hear that song better. Then to see more easily who was singing, he put his head out a little between the iron bars.

The daylight was still somewhat faint, since the horizon still hid part of the sun, but not enough to prevent him with his limited view from discovering to his supreme delight what the young maiden was doing, although he did not know her yet. Looking at her face intently he said to himself: "She is from paradise."

As he turned back in he said softly: "O Palaemon, come and see. Venus has truly come down here. Do you not hear her singing? O, if I mean anything to you, come here quickly. I believe for certain that it will please you to see the angelic beauty down there which has descended to us from the sovereign heights."

Palaemon arose, for he already heard her with more sweetness than he believed, and he went to the window together with Arcites, and both in silence, to watch the goddess. When he saw her, he said in a bright voice:
"Surely, this is Cytherea. I have never seen anything so beautiful, so charming and so lovely."

Meanwhile, they enjoyed themselves, breathless and attentive, keeping their eyes and ears fixed on her, and marveling much over her and over the time they had lost in their grieving, time which had passed before they saw her. Arcites said: "O Palaemon, do you see what I behold in those beautiful immortal eyes?"

"What?" answered Palaemon. Arcites said: "I see in them the one who wounded the father of Phaeton because of Daphne, if I am not mistaken. In his hands he holds two golden arrows and now he is placing one on his bow string as he looks at no one else but me. I do not know if it displeases him that I should look at what gives me so much pleasure."

"Indeed," answered Palaemon then, "I do see him. But I do not know if he has shot one arrow, for he does not have more than one in his hand now." Arcites said: "Yes, he has wounded me in such a way that pain will pierce my heart if I am not helped by that goddess." Then Palaemon, utterly astonished, cried out, "Alas, the other has wounded me."

At that "Alas!" the beautiful young lady turned around on her right breast and her eyes moved immediately to the little window. Then her face flushed for shame for she did not know who they were. Becoming bold, then, she rose to her feet with the flowers she had gathered and prepared to leave.

And as she turned away, she was not oblivious of that "Alas!" and although she was too young for mature love, still she understood what it meant. As it seemed to her that she knew that she was indeed liked, she took pleasure in it, and considered herself more beautiful, and now adorned herself the more every time she returned to the garden.

As soon as they saw Emilia leave, the two squires turned back in. They stood there for a while with their new thoughts, when Arcites began to speak first thus: "I do not know what cruel archer has shot an arrow into my heart, for it has taken my life. I feel myself gradually failing, enkindled, alas! by I know not what fire."

"And the image of that child will not leave my mind and I have no thought of anything else. Her form is so embedded in my heart and gives so much pleasure to my soul, that I would deem it the greatest good fortune to please her as she pleases me. Without that I do not believe I shall ever have peace."

Palaemon said: "The same thing that you are saying has happened to me. I do not want to experience it again ever, for I feel new pangs in my heart such as I do not believe I have ever felt before. I truly believe that that lord holds us in his power, just as I have heard it said many times, and that he is Love, the subtle thief of every noble heart.

"I tell you His captivity already weighs on me more heavily than that of Theseus. I feel much more anguish in my mind than I believe this god could inflict. Our great folly made us look out that window when such a lovely creature was singing, for my heart already consumes itself over love for her.

"I feel myself seized and bound by her. I do not find any hope for myself. On the contrary, I see myself imprisoned here and stripped of all my strength. Therefore, what can I do to please her? Nothing. Yet I shall die of this without fail. Now would to God I were dead! This would be my dearest and best comfort.

"O how good and how soothing would be the Aesculapien treatments for such a wound! It is said that he can bring broken bodies back to life. But what am I saying, for Apollo, who knew all human remedies, could not find a medicine that could help him when he was pierced by just such an arrow."

So the two new lovers talked in this fashion and each spoke words of comfort to the other. They did not know if this girl was a goddess of the
holy kingdoms come to dwell on earth, or a lady of this world, for her singing and her beauty made them unable to decide. Because they were afflicted by pain and did not know who had taken hold of them, they grieved the more.

And the raging winds that pour out of the Siculan caves when Aeolus opens them and that are so furious as they explore now the lower, and now the higher regions, were nothing to the harmonious sighs that these two emitted from their inmost parts, but with small voices, because the wound that pierced them was still fresh.

And she continued her walks in the beautiful garden for her recreation, sometimes alone and sometimes in company. She always secretly turned her eyes toward the window from which she had first heard Palaemon's "alas." And she did not do this because she was urged on by love, but to see if others were looking at her.

If she saw that she was being observed, she began to sing and to entertain herself in her delightful and clear voice, almost as if she were unaware. She trod the grass among the shrubs with tiny, lady-like steps and clad in modesty, all the while contriving to give more pleasure to whoever was watching her.

She was not prompted by any thought or feeling of love, but by vanity, which women have innate in their hearts in making others see their beauty. Almost stripped of any other worth, they are satisfied to be praised for beauty, and by contriving to please by their charm, they enslave others while they keep themselves free.

Every morning with the first appearance of dawn, the two lovers arose and looked into the garden to see if she had come whose divine countenance filled them with immeasurable love. As long as she remained in the garden, they could not rise from their places.

They thought that if they gazed at her hard enough they would sate the ardent thirst of their yearning and soften their grievous pangs, but they were held the more tightly in the chains of the strong god Cupid. Now they showed a happy countenance and now a pitiful one as they gazed at her, solely to give her as much pleasure as she gave them.

As they watched from day to day, the fire of love went on increasing, just as the serpent's tooth wounds someone with a small bite at first, and then the poison spreads rapidly, infecting one member, then another, and still another in succession, until it covers the whole body.

They were so completely absorbed that every other thought gave way, and now it began to show in their faces because of their long vigils and the scant food that they ate. They blamed their condition on the fact that they were accustomed to joyous activity and games, whereas now they were prisoners. Thus they concealed the real reasons.

Now from sighing they advanced to weeping, and if it were not for the fact that they did not want to reveal their love, they would have frequently cried out in their anguish. This is how Love treats those to whom He is most obliged for service. Whoever has been captured by Him at some time and afflicted with similar pangs knows this.

Ancient Thebes and their own high lineage had faded from their memory. Their unhappiness and the injury they had received were also gone; that their life was unpleasant, and that they possessed great heritage had faded. Where these things used to be, they held Emilia only.

And it was not at all their greatest desire that Theseus should release them from prison, since they thought that then they would have to go into exile in some other country and would not be able to see or hear the flower of all the Amazon women again. It is true that what they wanted most was to be released and yet remain in Athens.

Worn out by love, therefore, they bore their ardor more easily when they saw this lady. Then, when she left, they returned to their earlier madness and often composed measured verse to comfort themselves in singing of her high worth. In this way they took some delight in their misfortune.
Because they still did not know who she was, they summoned one of their pages to them one day and Arcites addressed these words to him: “O tell me, for love’s sake, dear friend, do you know who she is who showed herself to us the other day as she sang so clearly in the garden? Have you ever seen her elsewhere, or has she come down from heaven?”

The valet answered promptly: “She is Emilia, sister of the queen, and more charming than anyone in the world. Because she is very young, she comes safely to the garden without fail every morning. She sings better than Apollo. I have heard her already, and so I know it.”

They said to one another: “He is telling the truth. It is certainly she who has stolen our hearts and turned our every thought to her. She has made each of us the host of plaints and sighs and severe torment and every other woe, so compellingly does the beauty which shines in her make us desire her.”

So the two lovers passed the day in sighing and discontent, and when morning came, their martyrdom abated, as long as they beheld the sparkling eyes of Emilia, which made their desires grow more fervent every hour. So they lived while it was summertime, as much in sweetness as in grief.

But when Libra stripped the world of the beauty that Aries had bestowed, the two lovers lost the sweetness that used to assuage their fiery thirst; that is, they lost the sight of the sublime splendor which held them in the net of Love. And so they were left in bitter sorrow as they called for death constantly day and night.

The weather altered its look and the dew-laden air wept. The grass dried, and the trees were stripped bare, and the stormy tribe of Aeolus raced about, wandering here and there through the unhappy world. And so Emilia with her loving looks left the garden and stayed in her room all the while and took no notice of the weather.

Then the martyromds and the lamentations, the harsh torments and the painful anguish returned twofold to each of the two lovers, and they did not see or hear anything that pleased them. Thus they were all consumed by grievous pangs. Each one wanted to despair, but then, at the last moment, checked himself.

The sighs and sufferings of each were very great. They reached such a point that their imprisonment made them even more unhappy. Every day seemed like a hundred days to them until they might either die or be free. And they called on Emilia for their sole and only comfort and delight.

* * *

From Book 7

How the Thebans went to temples to pray to the gods to help them in the forthcoming battle. And first, Arcites in the temple of Mars.

It was already the day before the one on which the battle was to be fought, when Palaemon and Arcites went humbly and with pious sentiments to pray to the gods. Placing bright fires on their altars, they offered incense, and with fervent desires they prayed that the gods would help each of them in their needs on the following day.

But after he had visited the others and placed fire and incense everywhere, Arcites also returned to the temple of Mars and illuminated it much more than any of the others, and having sprinkled the finest distillations with solemn skill, he offered this prayer to Mars with a devout heart and great devotion.

Arcites’ prayer to Mars.

"O strong God, you maintain your sacred dwelling in the snowy Bistonian realm, in dark places unfriendly to the sun, and brimful of the woes you devised to humble the proud brows of Earth’s haughty sons. For they

1. Since they do not see the sun.
2. The poets write that Earth gave birth to the giants. How they were conquered by Jove and by Mars through force of arms is described above.
were left on the ground, every one in mortal cold, under the attacks you and your father Jove made against them.

"If by the will of the Most High, my youth and my prowess merit my being called one of yours, by that compassion which Neptune had for you when you passionately enjoyed the beauty of Cytherea and were entrapped by Vulcan and made a spectacle to all the gods, I humbly pray you not to deny my requests.

"As you see, I am a young man, and mighty Love so binds me under His lordship for youthful beauty's sake, that I need all my strength and courage if I am to take delight in what my heart most desires. Without you I have little power. In fact, I can do nothing at all.

"Therefore, by that holy fire which once burned you as it burns me now, help me. Honor me with your might in this coming palestale game. Such a gift certainly would not seem slight to me, but the greatest good. Perform your task here, therefore. If I am the victor in this contest, I shall have the pleasure and you shall have the honor.

"Your everlasting temple will be decorated with the armor of my vanquished comrade and my own will hang there too and the reason for it will be inscribed there. Eternal fires will burn there always. I promise you my beard and those locks of my hair which remain unscathed by the sword, if you allow me to win as I have asked."

How Arcites' Prayer reached Mars, and how and where his temple is built.

7. By this the author wants to show that Mars was at his ease when the Prayer of Arcites reached him, since men of arms, when they do not have anything else to do, have their armor furnished, or saddles adjusted, and similar things.

8. When two gods are at a distance from one another, many times there are intermediary ambas- sadors to make the intention of one known to the other. Prayer between us and God is just like this. Here the author imagines that the Prayer has the shape of a person, so that by making it a person he takes the occasion, consequently, to describe the house of Mars, as something seen by this Prayer.

9. In this passage the author describes the house of Mars, concerning which many things must be con- sidered minutely by whoever wants to set them forth in order. However, since it is very superficially touched on hereafter, we shall go over it with a summary explanation. And so that the exposition might be more readily understood, the author says that he intends to show four things here: The first is the kind of place where the house of Mars is situated; the second is how the house of Mars is constructed; the third is who is in the house of Mars; the fourth is with what the house of Mars is adorned. I say, therefore, first of all, that the house of Mars is in Thrace, in cold and cloudy places, full of water and of wind and of ice, wild and mongered with fruitless trees; and in shady places, unfriendly to the sun and full of confusion.

For an understanding of this it should be remarked that in every man there are two principal appetites. One of these is called the concupiscible appetite, whereby man desires and rejoices to have the things which, according to his judgment—whether it be rational or corrupt—are delightful and pleasing. The other is called the irascible appetite, whereby a man is troubled if delightful things are taken away or impeded, or when they cannot be had. This irascible appetite is found very readily in men of much blood, because blood of its nature is hot, and hot things lightly burst into flame for any small provocation. So it happens that men of much blood become angry easily although some, by very strong effort of reason, restrain and conceal their anger.

Since, as we have stated in another place, men in cold regions have more blood than elsewhere, the author says that the temple of Mars, that is, this irascible appetite, is in Thrace, which is a province situated among very cold, and in which there are very cruel and warlike men. And they are irascible because they have much blood. He says that it is cloudy, to show that anger obfuscates the course of reason, which he signifies further on by the sun's rays, which by his way of speaking the house of Mars thrusts away from it. By the ice, he means the coldness of the soul of the angry man, who, overcome by embittering of his wrath, becomes cruel and intransient and without any charity. By the water he means the tears which the enraged shed many times out of wrath. He says, likewise, that the house of Mars is in a forest. By this he means the secret sennings to do harm that angry men sometimes harbor. By the barrenness of the forest he means the effects of the anger, the only thieves of the fruits of men's labors, but their wastes as well. And that is why it is that in such a forest there is neither shepherd nor beast, since the angry man does not govern himself or other. And therefore the habita- tion of Mars in such a place has been shown, however briefly.

A look at the second matter, that is, how this habitation or house of Mars is constructed, follows. He says that it is all sparkling with steel, and has gates of diamond and columns of iron. By the steel, he means the hardness of the stubbornness of the angry man, and this shows that it is the covering of the house, because he says that the columns are of iron. And he says that when this steel reflects, it shines away from itself the light of the sun, and deservedly, because if this steel should soften so as to let the light of the sun pass through, that is, the sound advice of reason in the mind of the angry man, it would no longer be the house of Mars, that is of war and tribulation, but of peace.

Not only does this ordinary make the divine grace which descends upon it by away, that is, the salutary counsel of reason, but it has doors of diamond, so that no human persuasion may pass within to either bend or soften it. And it is sustained by columns of iron, that is, by unbreakable resolves. And there are many people in this house, which is the third matter that will be expounded.

He says, then, that in this house of Mars there are Impulses, which he says emerge through the gate, to show that the first act of the angry man is Impulse, since, as we see, angry men quickly run to take up arms and go against others. He calls these Impulses demented, that is crazy, as we see they are. Next he says there is Blind Sin, which is the effect of Impulse, because he who rushes to do something without reasonable deliberation is blindly. He says
now here, now there, by various winds in various places into spring rainstorms, or are hurled down as globules of water merged together by the cold, as the snow keepshardening little by little to form ice.

It is located in a barren forest of sturdy beech trees, thick-clustering and very tall, gnarled and harsh, unbending and ancient, which cover the face of the sod earth with an eternal shadow. And she heard there among the ancient trunks, a great noise muffled by a thousand Furies; and there was no beast or shepherd there.

In this forest she saw the house of the battle-strong god, built entirely of steel, splendid and clean, from which the light of the sun, which shunned that cruel place, was deflected. The narrow entrance was all iron and the gates were re-enforced everywhere with eternal diamond.

that there is also every "Alas!" that is, every manner of wo. And that is very reasonable, since we win no follow of necessity on things done senselessly, either for whoever unjustly receives them or for whoever realizes that he has done them unjustly.

Next he states that there were Wrath, red as fire, whereby he expresses the appearance of the angry man, whom we generally becomes flushed at first. And he says "Wrath," plural in number, to show that there are two kinds of wrath, and each one causes the angry man to become flushed: one is getting angry for no reason, and this is vicious, and is that which is spoken of here. The other can be reason, such as becoming troubled when something is done unjustly, and this accepts the advice of reason in repenting or in bringing about amend to what has been ill done. And the author wants this Wrath to be in the house of Mars, because from this are born and can be born every hour many just wars.

Similarly, he puts Fear there, which is accursed to being under the limits of the wrathful since sometimes they grow cold; or let us say the wages of war grown cold when they do not see things happening as they planned in their undertakings.

And he says that this Fear was pale, because we see that the fearful are pale and the reason is that the blood has withdrawn into the heart which is afraid. He also says that there are Betrayals with hidden weapons and Intrigues, that is, ambushes, under a righteous appearance, which belong to the effects that are born of Wrath, that is, wars. And Discord was there, with bloody weapons. She is similar to the effect of Wrath, since many say that Wrath is born of Discord.

He says that there is every Difference, that is, every manner of quarrel and of riot. He also says that there is clamorizing, that is, the echoing of harsh Threats and of Cruel Design, that is, rivalry, which as we all well realize are the acts of the enraged. Besides this, he says that there is unhappy Valor. By this he means bodily strength, which, when it is unjustly employed in the deaths and wounds of the innocents, is a sorry and poor Valor, that is, without any worthy praise. Next he says that there is every Madness, which we unfealingly detect in every act of the man who is unjustly angered, since all such acts are mad. He calls him merry, because he rather furiously to his undertakings with an impious soul and with noise and with pomp.

He says next that there are armed Death and Bewilderment, almost always two of the effects of the wars born of Wrath, since in arms, one either dies, having been killed by those who are armed, or if one remains alive, there is bewilderment over the stupendous consequences from little beginnings, as we have seen happen many times.

Next the author proceeds to show the fourth matter, that is, with what the house of Mars is adorned, that is, the temple. And he says that every altar is covered with blood, not that of beasts and other things, but that which was killed when sacrifice was offered to the other gods, but with human blood shed in battle.

And he mentions this, and also the other things which follow, to show the cruel endings to that Wrath, unmixed by reason, leads.

He says, likewise: "Every altar was luminous, etc." What the other ornaments might be appears clear. Nevertheless, I know that many other things could be said on this matter and said better. I leave them to those who still want to examine and write about them with more delight and in detail, since for me it is enough to have said what it seems to me I should, as I write this at the instance of ladies.

And subtle Mulciber had built that retreat with his skill before the sun had shown him by his rays that Cytherea was with Mars. From afar Mars

2. That is, wounds.
3. That is, Vulcan. The fable of Mars, of Venus, and of Vulcan, has been written down at length a little before this. He is called Vulcan, because he melts iron, as we see. Vulcan, that is the fire, makes iron, which is hard, so soft by heating it that man can do what he wants with it.
knew what the Prayer wanted and whence she came to entreat him. So he received her and listened to her business.

39

When Mars heard that this Prayer had been sent humbly by Arcites from afar, without waiting for more, he went little by little to where he had been secretly summoned. As soon as the temple heard its sovereign god, it began to tremble and all at once the gates began to roar, so that Arcites was very much afraid.

40

The fires\textsuperscript{4} emitted a much brighter glow and the earth a marvelous aroma and the smoke of the incense drew near the image placed in honor of Mars, and the armor\textsuperscript{5} moved of its own accord and resounded with a sweet music, and signs were given to wondering Arcites that his prayer had been heard.

41

And so the young man rested content with the thought of achieving victory. He did not leave the temple that night, but instead spent the entire night in prayer. He received other signs that night that assured him of the truth of his experience. As soon as the new day appeared, the elegant youth had himself armed.

* * *

From Book 12

1

Let those who have ever felt sorrow reflect on what the life of Emilia was like while these things were being done in honor of Arcites. She was dressed in black and her cheeks were stained with tears, and refusing to take any comfort, she only wept for her dead Arcites.

2

And the rosy color was fled from her face, which became pale and thin, and the bright splendor of her eyes was clouded over. The cruel sorrow was so strong in her that she could scarcely be recognized, for night and day her only consolation was to call on Arcites in lamentation and tears.

How Theseus, after giving a long speech, commanded Palaemon to marry Emilia and all mourning garb to be laid aside.

\textsuperscript{4} Kindled by Arcites, \textsuperscript{5} That is, the statue of Mars.
fame will preserve the honor he deserves. As for the body that is left behind, one place or another serves, and the soul has neither more nor less its fill of delight.

10

"I say the same for the manner of death. For while some drown in the sea, some die as they lie in their beds, some die with their blood shed in battle, and some, for whatever you want to say of how many ways a man can die, yet it is still necessary for each one to come to Acheron, let him die as he will, well or badly.

11

"And it is wisdom, therefore, to make a virtue of necessity when one must. And the opposite is plain vanity, worse in the man who has had experience of this than in one who has never tried it. Certainly, this true maxim of mine can apply to us who live sorrowfully always in the midst of contingencies,

12

"and all the more so in the midst of necessities: such as in this case of the death of someone whose valor was so great and of such a nature, that its flower is followed by the graceful fruit of fame. If we thought deeply about this, we would set aside this wretched grief and turn our efforts toward a valiant life that would win us glorious fame.

13

"It is true that on such occasions sadness and lamentation cannot be kept sealed within us very well, so it ought to be allowed in some measure. But after that it ought to cease, because the desire to exceed the limits so much can hurt the one who indulges, and it is folly, and such a one does not get back what he desires.

14

"And certainly, if ever a brave man was mourned in Greece by many kings and a populous nation, Arcites was deservedly that man. He was also honored with magnificent glory on his splendid pyre, and every respectful office that a dead body could receive was rendered him.

15

"And besides, as we have seen, here in Athens the mourning has continued and everyone has gone on wearing mourning garb, as is especially proper for us who are here, from whom others should take example in every deed and whom they should follow, especially in doing good.

16

"Therefore, whatever is born to us, dies on us as well, no matter what our desire is. And we have paid proper honor to him whom we are mourning now, and with reason I think that it would be better to divest ourselves of this gloomy dress and set sorrow aside, for it is womanish behavior rather than virile.

17

"If I thought that we might have Arcites back by weeping for him, I would say that we should all weep and I would earnestly request it. But it would not avail. Therefore, from now on, let everyone be joyful and set aside the tears and sighs, if you want to please me, for in this great matter you ought to want to do so.

18

"And besides this, let thought be given to carry out his final request. Phoroneus, who first gave us laws, said that the last wish of a dying man with good reason ought to be faithfully carried out; and Arcites prayed that Emilia, whom he loved so much, should be given to Palaemon.

19

"Put aside these black garments, therefore, and when the sorrow and lamentation have ceased, the joyful and bright festivities will begin. Before any lord departs, we shall celebrate with proper splendor and openly the wedding of the couple we have named. So prepare yourselves to do what I want without refusal."

* * *

BOETHIUS

From The Consolation of Philosophy†

Book 2, Meter 8

"That the world with stable feith varieth acordable chaunginges; that the contrarious qualites of ele-
ments holden among hemself aiaunce perdurable; that Phedus the sonne with his goldene chariet bringeth forth the roseene day; that the moone hath commandement over the nightes, which nightes Hesperus the eve-stere hath brought; that the see, greedy to flower, constreyeth with a certein ende his floods, so that it is nat leveful to streche his brode termes or bounded upon the erthe, that is to seyn, to covere al the erthe—al this acountance of things is bounden with love, that governeth erthe and see, and hath also commandement to the heavene. And yf this love slaked the byndeles, alle things that now loven hem togideres wolden maken bataile continually and styven to fordoon the fassoun of this worlde; the whiche they now leden in acountable feith by faire moevinges. This love halte togideres pooleys joined with an holy bond, and knitheth sacrament of marriages of chast loves; and love endeth lawes to trewe felawes. O weeful were mankinde, yf thilke love that governeth heavene governed youre corages!

From Book 3, Prose 10

"For as moche thanne as thou hast seyne which is the forme of good that nis nat parfit, and which is the forme of good that is parfit, now trowe I that it were good to shewe in what this perfeccion of blisfulnesse is set. And in this thing, I trowe that we sholden first enquire for to witen yf that any swiche maner good as thilke good that thou hast diffiyned a litel herbforn, that is to seyn, sovren good, may ben founde in the nature of things, for that eyyn imaginacioun of thought ne deccye us nat and putte us out of the sothfastnesse of thilke thing that is summitted unto us. But it may nat ben denied that thilke good ne is and that it nis right as a welle of alle goodes. For al thing that is cleepe parfit is proved parfit by the amensinge of perfeccion or of thing that is parfit. And therof comith it, that in every thing general, yf that men sen any thing that is parfit, certes in thilke general ther mot ben som thing that is parfit; for yf so be that perfeccion is don away, men may nat thinke ne seye fro wheres thilke thing

1. I.e., exist.
2. But it cannot be denied that this (sovereign) good exists and that it is exactly like a wellspring of all goodness.

is that is cleepe inparfit. For the nature of things ne took nat hir biringe of things amenuseth and inparfit, but it procedeth of things that ben al hoole and absolut, and descendet so doun into outterost things, and into things empty and withouten fruit. But, as I have y-shewed a litel herbiforn, that yif ther be a blisfulnesse that be freele and veyn and inparfit, ther may no man doute that ther nis som blisfulnesse that is sad, stedefast, and parfit."

Boece. "This is concluded," quod I, "terrly and solastly."

Philosphie. "But considere also," quod she, "in whom this blisfulnesse enhabith. The comune acountance and conceyte of the corages of men proveoth and graunteith that God, prince of alle things, is good. For, so as nothing may ben thought bettre than God, it may nat ben douted thanne that he, that no thing nis bettre, that he nis good. Certes, resoun sheweth that God is so good, that it prooveth by verry force that parfit good is in him. For yf God ne is swich, he ne may nat ben prince of alle things; for certes somthing possessing in itself parfit good sholde ben more worthy than God, and it sholde semen that thilke thing were first and elder than God. For we han shewed aperly that alle things that ben parfit ben first or" things that ben inparfit. And forth, for as moche as that my resoun or my proces ne go nat awaye withoute an ende, we owen to graunten that the sovren God is right ful of sovren parfit good. And we han established that the sovren good is verry blisfulnesse. Thanne mot it nedes be that verry blisfulnesse is set in sovren God."

* * *

Book 4, Meter 6

"If thou, wys, wilt demen in thy pure thought the righteth or the lawes of the hewe thondereth, that is to seyn, of God, loke thou and bithold the heights of the sovren heavene. There kepen the sterres, by rightful alliaunce of things, his olde pees. The sonne, y-mooved by his rody fyr, ne distorbeth nat that colde cercle of the mone. Ne the sterre y-cleept

3. I.e., is.
4. I.e., to infinity.
The Miller's Prologue and Tale

Although there are a number of analogues to individual motifs in the Miller's Tale, only one story from Chaucer's age survives that contains all the major plot elements. It is a Flemish fabliau, titled The Three Guests of Heile of Bersele in Constance B. Heatt's translation. Chaucer's source may well have been a French fabliau now lost, but the Miller's Tale is rich with detail and nuance usually lacking in the genre, of which Heile is a fairly typical representative. Chaucer's apology for the tale in the Miller's Prologue shares much of the tone and many of the gambits of Boccaccio's Introduction to the Fourth Day and his Conclusion to the Decameron. Whether or not Chaucer was remembering the Decameron precisely at this point, both passages offer insight into the defense of nondidactic literature in the later Middle Ages.

The Three Guests of Heile of Bersele

You have often heard tales of all manner of things, told or sung to the tune of a fiddle or harp; but I think few will have heard of such a strange case as one which happened here in Antwerp some time ago. I will tell you about it at the request of a boon companion of mine; he wouldn't let me off.

Here in the market street in Antwerp, there lived, I recall, a fair wench, and she was called Heile of Bersele. She often made love, for a price, with good fellows to whom she displayed her arts. It fell out once, as I heard the story, that three such fellows came to her on the same day, one after the other, all three asking her that for the sake of friendship she would let them come where she lived: each wanted to speak to her alone, in secret. This was good business for Heile, who determined to satisfy all three.

The first one she made an appointment with was a miller called William Hoef. She told him to come as soon as evening fell. The second was a priest; she told him to come when the curfew-bell rang. She told the third, a smith who was a neighbor of hers, to come when the clock struck midnight. This satisfied all three, and they all went their way happily, awaiting the proper time.

At twilight, William came promptly. Heile received him graciously and made him quite at home. They played the game of love—she knew that

5. And thus Love makes harmonious the everlasting
6. i.e., did not control, movements (of the stars).