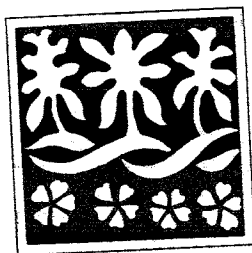


# THE RIVERSIDE CHAUCER



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BASED ON

*The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*

Edited by

*F. N. Robinson*

The cover shows representatives of the three estates of medieval society—the priest, the knight, and the laborer—from an illuminated letter in Sloane MS 2435, f. 85, The British Library.

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And if he foond owher a good felawe,  
 He wolde techen him to have noon awe  
 In swich caas of the ercedekenes curs, 655  
 But if a mannes soule were in his purs;  
 For in his purs he sholde ypunysshed be.  
 "Purs is the ercedekenes helle," seyde he.  
 But wel I woot he lyed right in dede; 659  
 Of cursyng oghte ech gilti man him drede,  
 For curs wol slee right as assoillyng savith,  
 And also war hym of a *Significavit*.  
 In daunger hadde he at his owene gise  
 The yonge girles of the diocise,  
 And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed. 665  
 A gerland hadde he set upon his heed,  
 As greet as it were for an ale-stake.  
A bokeleer hadde he maad hym of a cake.

With hym ther rood a gentil PARDONER  
 Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer, 670  
 That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.  
 Ful loude he soong "Com hider, love, to me!"  
 This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;  
 Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.  
 This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wax, 675  
 But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;  
 By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,  
 And therwith he his shuldres overspradde;  
 But thynne it lay, by colpons oon and oon.  
 But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon, 680  
 For it was trussed up in his walet.  
 Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;  
 Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.

653 owher: anywhere

655 caas: case, circumstances ercedekenes curs:

excommunication

656 But if: unless

659 woot: know

660 cursyng: archdeacon's curse, excommunication him drede:

be afraid

661 wol slee: will slay assoillyng: absolution

662 war hym: let him beware Significavit: order for

imprisonment

663 In daunger: in (his) control at his owene gise: as he

pleased

664 girles: young women or young people

665 conseil: secrets al hir reed: adviser of them all

666 gerland: wreath

667 ale-stake: sign of an alehouse

668 cake: loaf of bread

669 Pardoner: a seller of indulgences

670 Rouncivale: a hospital at Charing Cross compeer:

companion

671 court of Rome: papal court

672 "Com hider . . .": Probably the refrain of a popular song

673 stif burdoun: strong bass

674 trompe: trumpet soun: sound

675 heer: hair wax: wax

676 strike: clump, hank flex: flax

677 ounces: small strands

679 colpons: strands oon and oon: one by one

680 for jolitee: to make an attractive appearance

681 trussed: packed walet: pouch, knapsack

682 Hym thoughte: it seemed to him, he thought al of the

newe jet: in the very latest fashion

683 Dischevelee: with hair unbound, hanging loose save: save

for, except

Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.  
 A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe;  
 His walet, biforn hym in his lappe,  
 Bretful of pardoun comen from Rome al hoc  
 A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.  
 No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;  
 As smothe it was as it were late shave.  
 I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.  
 But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware  
 Ne was ther swich another pardoner.  
 For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,  
 Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl;  
 He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl  
 That Seint Peter hadde, whan that he wente  
 Upon the see, til Jhesu Crist hym hente.  
 He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,  
 And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.  
 But with thise relikes, whan that he fond  
 A povre person dwellynge upon lond,  
 Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye  
 Than that the person gat in monthes tweye.  
 And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes,  
 He made the person and the peple his apes.  
 But trewely to tellen atte laste,  
 He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.  
 Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,  
 But alderbest he song an offertorie;  
 For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe  
 He moste preche and wel affile his tonge  
 To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;  
 Therefore he song the murierly and loude.

Now have I toold you soothly, in a claus  
 Th'estaat, th'array, the nombre, and eek the  
 cause

684 glarynge eyen: staring eyes

685 vernycle: Veronica, a reproduction of St. Veronica's cloth

bearing the imprint of Christ's face; a badge of the pilgrims

Rome sowed: sewn

686 walet: pouch, knapsack lappe: large pocket (in a fold

his clothing)

687 Bretful: brimful pardoun: papal indulgences

688 voys: voice smal: high goot: goat

691 trowe: believe geldyng or a mare: a eunuch or a

homosexual

692 fro Berwyk into Ware: from one end of England to

other

694 male: pouch, bag pilwe-beer: pillow-case

695 Oure Lady veyl: Our Lady's veil

696 gobet of the seyl: piece of the sail

698 see: sea til: until hente: took

699 croys: cross latoun: a brass-like alloy

702 person: parson upon lond: in the countryside

703 gat hym: got himself

704 tweye: two

705 japes: tricks

706 He made fools (apes) of the parson and the people.

707 atte laste: at the last, finally

709 lessoun, storie: liturgical texts, often from the Bible.

during Mass

710 alderbest: best of all offertorie: Offertory (said or

when offerings are made at Mass)

712 affile his tonge: smooth his speech

714 song: sang murierly: more merrily

715 in a clause: briefly

Why that assembled was this compaignye  
 In Southwerk at this gentil hostelrye  
 That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.  
 But now is tyme to yow for to telle 720  
 How that we baren us that ilke nyght,  
 Whan we were in that hostelrye alyght;  
 And after wol I telle of our viage  
 And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.  
 But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye, 725  
 That ye n'arete it nat my vileynye,  
 Thogh that I pleyntly speke in this mateere,  
 To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,  
 Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.  
 For this ye knowen al so wel as I: 730  
 Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,  
 He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan  
 Everich a word, if it be in his charge,  
 Al speke he never so rudeliche and large,  
 Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe, 735  
 Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.  
 He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;  
 He moot as wel seye o word as another.  
 Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,  
 And wel ye woot no vileynye is it. 740  
 Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede,  
 The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede.  
 Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,  
 Al have I nat set folk in hir degree 744  
 Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde.  
 My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.  
 Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,  
 And to the soper sette he us anon.  
 He served us with vitaille at the beste; 749  
 Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us leste.  
 A semely man OURE HOOSTE was withalle  
 For to been a marchal in an halle.

719 faste by: close to Belle: a tavern  
 721 baren us: behaved ilke: same  
 722 alyght: arrived  
 723 wol: will viage: journey  
 726 n'arete it nat: do not attribute it to vileynye: rudeness  
 728 cheere: behavior  
 730 al so: as  
 731 Whoso: whoever shal: must  
 732 moot reherce: must repeat ny: close kan: knows how  
 733 Everich a: every in his charge: his responsibility  
 734 Al speke he: although he may speak rudeliche:  
 ignorantly, crudely large: freely  
 735 moot: must untrewe: inaccurately  
 736 feyne thyng: make up things  
 738 o: one  
 739 brode: plainly  
 740 woot: know vileynye: rudeness  
 741 kan hym rede: knows how to interpret him  
 742 cosyn: cousin, closely related  
 744 Al: although degree: social rank  
 746 may: can  
 747 Greet chiere: good cheer us everichon: every one of us  
 749 vitaille: victuals, provisions at the beste: of the best sort  
 750 wel to drynke us leste: we were well pleased to drink  
 751 semely: seemly, impressive withalle: indeed  
 752 marchal: master of ceremonies

A large man he was with eyen stepe—  
 A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe— 754  
 Boold of his speche, and wys, and wel ytaught,  
 And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.  
 Eek therto he was right a myrie man;  
 And after soper pleyen he bigan,  
 And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,  
 Whan that we hadde maad oure rekenynges, 760  
 And seyde thus: "Now, lordynges, trewely,  
 Ye been to me right welcome, hertely;  
 For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,  
 I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye  
 Atones in this herberwe as is now. 765  
 Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how.  
 And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,  
 To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.  
 "Ye goon to Caunterbury—God yow speede,  
 The blisful martir quite yow youre meede! 770  
 And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,  
 Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;  
 For trewely, confort ne myrthe is noon  
 To ride by the weye doun as a stoon;  
 And therfore wol I maken yow disport, 775  
 As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.  
 And if yow liketh alle by oon assent  
 For to stonden at my juggement,  
 And for to werken as I shal yow seye,  
 Tomorwe, whan ye riden by the weye, 780  
 Now, by my fader soule that is deed,  
 But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!  
 Hoold up youre hondes, withouten moore  
 speche."

Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche. 784  
 Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,  
 And graunted hym withouten moore avys,

753 eyen stepe: bright or large eyes; see n.  
 754 burgeys: citizen of a city (tradesman) Chepe: Cheapside  
 756 manhod: manliness, qualities proper to a good man right  
 naught: nothing at all  
 758 pleyen: to play, provide amusement  
 760 maad oure rekenynges: paid our bills  
 763 trouthe: faith  
 764 saugh: saw  
 765 Atones: at one time herberwe: lodging  
 766 Fayn: gladly doon yow myrthe: make you happy wiste  
 I: if I knew  
 767 am . . . bythoght: have thought  
 768 doon yow ese: give you pleasure  
 769 yow speede: give you success  
 770 quite yow youre meede: give you your reward  
 772 shapen yow: you intend talen: tell tales pleye: amuse  
 yourselves  
 776 erst: before  
 777 yow liketh alle: it pleases all of you by oon assent:  
 unanimously  
 779 werken: do  
 781 Now by the soul of my father, who is dead  
 782 But ye be: unless you are, if you are not  
 784 conseil: decision nat longe for to seche: i.e., ready at  
 hand  
 785 worth: worthwhile make it wys: deliberate on it, raise  
 difficulties  
 786 avys: discussion

This is a pitous tale for to heere.  
 But nathelees, passe over; is no fors.  
 I pray to God so save thy gentil cors,  
 And eek thyne uryngals and thy jurdones, 305  
 Thyn ypocras, and eek thy galiones,  
 And every boyste ful of thy letuarie;  
 God blesse hem, and oure lady Seinte Marie!  
 So moot I theen, thou art a propre man,  
 And lyk a prelat, by Seint Ronyan! 310  
 Seyde I-nat wel? I kan nat speke in terme;  
 But wel I woot thou doost myn herte to erme,  
 That I almoost have caught a cardynacle.  
 By corpus bones! but I have triacle,  
 Or elles a draughte of moyste and corny ale,  
 Or but I heere anon a myrie tale, 316

Myn herte is lost for pitee of this mayde.  
 Thou beel amy, thou Pardoner," he sayde,  
 "Telle us som myrthe or japes right anon."  
 "It shal be doon," quod he, "by Seint Ron-  
 yon! 320  
 But first," quod he, "heere at this alestake  
 I wol bothe drynke and eten of a cake."  
 But right anon thise gentils gonne to crye,  
 "Nay, lat hym telle us of no ribaudye! 324  
 Telle us som moral thyng, that we may leere  
 Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly heere."  
 "I graunte, ywis," quod he, "but I moot  
 thynke  
 Upon som honest thyng while that I drynke."

## THE PARDONER'S PROLOGUE



*Heere folweth the Prologe of the Pardoners Tale.*

*Radix malorum est Cupiditas. Ad  
 Thimotheum, 6.*

"Lordynges," quod he, "in chirches whan I  
 preche,  
 I payne me to han an hauteyn speche, 330  
 And ryng it out as round as gooth a belle,  
 For I kan al by rote that I telle.  
 My theme is alwey oon, and evere was —  
*Radix malorum est Cupiditas.*  
 "First I pronounce whennes that I come, 335  
 And thanne my bulles shewe I, alle and some.  
 Oure lige lordes seel on my patente,

That shewe I first, my body to warente,  
 That no man be so boold, ne preest ne clerk,  
 Me to destourbe of Cristes hooly werk. 340  
 And after that thanne telle I forth my tales;  
 Bulles of popes and of cardynales,  
 Of patriarkes and bishopes I shewe,  
 And in Latyn I speke a wordes fewe,  
 To saffron with my predicacioun, 345  
 And for to stire hem to devocioun.  
 Thanne shewe I forth my longe cristal stones.  
 Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones —  
 Relikes been they, as wenen they echoon.  
 Thanne have I in latoun a sholder-boon 350  
 Which that was of an hooly Jewes sheep.  
 'Goode men,' I seye, 'taak of my wordes keep  
 If that this boon be wasshe in any welle,  
 If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxe swelle  
 That any worm hath ete, or worm ystonge, 355

303 *passe over*: let it be is no fors: it does not matter  
 305 *uryngals*: vessels for analyzing urine *jurdones*: glass vessels  
 used by physicians  
 306 *ypocras*, *galiones*: medicinal drinks named after Hippocrates  
 and Galen, ancient medical authorities  
 307 *boyste*: container *letuarie*: medicine  
 309 *theen*: prosper  
 310 *Seint Ronyan*: probably St. Ronan, a Scottish saint  
 311 *in terme*: in technical language  
 312 *erme*: grieve  
 313 *cardynacle*: probably the Host's error for *cardiacle*, heart  
 attack  
 314 *By corpus bones!*: by God's bones! *triacle*: medicine  
 315 *moyste*: fresh, new *corny*: malty, strong

*Radix malorum, etc.*: Greed is the root of [all] evils, 1 Timothy  
 6.10

330 *hauteyn*: impressive, loud  
 332 *by rote*: by heart  
 333 *theme*: biblical text for a sermon  
 336 *bulles*: papal bulls (here indulgences)  
 337 *lige lordes seel*: seal of our liege lord (the bishop)  
*patente*: letter patent (authorizing his sale of pardons)

318 *beel amy*: fair friend (perhaps used derisively)  
 321 *alestake*: pole hung with a garland, the sign of an alehouse  
 322 *cake*: loaf of bread  
 324 *ribaudye*: ribaldry, coarse jesting

338 *warente*: protect  
 345 *saffron*: flavor with saffron, season *predicacioun*: sermon  
 347 *cristal stones*: glass cases; cf. GP L700.  
 348 *cloutes*: rags  
 350 *in latoun*: mounted in latten, a brass-like alloy  
 355 *worm*: snake

Taak water of that welle and wassh his tonge,  
 And it is hool anon; and forthermoore,  
 Of pokkes and of scabbe, and every soore  
 Shal every sheep be hool that of this welle 359  
 Drynketh a draughte. Taak kep eek what I telle:  
 If that the good-man that the beestes oweth  
 Wol every wyke, er that the cok hym croweth,  
 Fastynge, drynken of this welle a draughte,  
 As thilke hooly Jew oure eldres taughte,  
 His beestes and his stoor shal multiplie. 365

'And, sires, also it heeleth jalousie;  
 For though a man be falle in jalous rage,  
 Lat maken with this water his potage,  
 And nevere shal he moore his wyf mystriste,  
 Though he the soothe of hir defaute wiste, 370  
 Al had she taken prestes two or thre.

'Heere is a miteyn eek, that ye may se.  
 He that his hand wol putte in this mitayn,  
 He shal have multipliyn of his grayn,  
 Whan he hath sowen, be it whete or otes, 375  
 So that he offre pens, or elles grotes.

'Goode men and wommen, o thyng warne I  
 yow:

If any wight be in this chirche now  
 That hath doon synne horrible, that he  
 Dar nat, for shame, of it yshryven be, 380  
 Or any womman, be she yong or old,  
 That hath ymaked hir housbonde cokewold,  
 Swich folk shal have no power ne no grace  
 To offren to my relikes in this place. 384  
 And whoso fyndeth hym out of swich blame,  
 He wol come up and offre a Goddes name,  
 And I assoille him by the auctoritee  
 Which that by bulle ygraunted was to me.'

"By this gaude have I wonne, yeer by yeer,  
 An hundred mark sith I was pardonere. 390  
 I stonde lyk a clerk in my pulpet,  
 And whan the lewed peple is down yset,  
 I preche so as ye han herd bifoore  
 And telle an hundred false japes moore. 394  
 Thanne payne I me to strecche forth the nekke,  
 And est and west upon the peple I bekke,  
 As dooth a dowve sittynge on a berne.

358 pokkes: pocks, pustules

361 good-man: goodman, head of the household oweth: owns

365 stoor: stock, possessions

368 potage: soup

370 defaute: misdeed

372 miteyn: mitten

375 otes: oats

376 pens: pence, pennies grotes: groats, silver coins worth four pence

380 yshryven: confessed and forgiven

387 assoille: absolve

389 gaude: trick

390 hundred mark: about sixty-six pounds

396 bekke: nod

397 berne: barn

Myne handes and my tonge goon so yerne  
 That it is joye to se my bisynesse.

Of avarice and of swich cursednesse 400

Is al my prechyng, for to make hem free  
 To yeven hir pens, and namely unto me.

For myn entente is nat but for to wynne,  
 And nothyng for correccioun of synne. 404

I rekke nevere, whan that they been beryed,  
 Though that hir soules goon a-blakeberied!

For certes, many a predicacioun

Comth ofte tyme of yvel entencioun;

Som for plesance of folk and flaterye,

To been avaunced by ypocrisie, 410

And som for veyne glorie, and som for hate.

For whan I dar noon oother weyes debate,

Thanne wol I styng hym with my tonge smerte

In prechyng, so that he shal nat asterte

To been defamed falsly, if that he 415

Hath trespassed to my bretheren or to me.

For though I telle noght his propre name,

Men shal wel knowe that it is the same,

By signes, and by othere circumstances. 419

Thus quyte I folk that doon us displesances;

Thus spitte I out my venym under hewe

Of hoolynesse, to semen hooly and trewe.

"But shortly myn entente I wol devyse:

I preche of no thyng but for coveityse.

Therefore my theme is yet, and evere was, 425

*Radix malorum est Cupiditas.*

Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice

Which that I use, and that is avarice.

But though myself be gilte in that synne,

Yet kan I maken oother folk to twynne 430

From avarice and soore to repente.

But that is nat my principal entente;

I preche nothyng but for coveitise.

Of this mateere it oghte ynogh suffice.

"Thanne telle I hem ensamples many oon 435

Of olde stories longe tyme agoon.

For lewed peple loven tales olde;

Swiche thynges kan they wel reporte and holde.

What, trowe ye, that whiles I may preche,

And wynne gold and silver for I teche, 440

That I wol lyve in poverte wilfully?

398 yerne: quickly

405 beryed: buried

406 goon a-blakeberied: go blackberry picking

414 asterte: escape

420 quyte: pay back (revenge) doon us displesances: make trouble for us (pardoners)

421 hewe: pretense

424 coveityse: greed

427 agayn: against

430 twynne: depart, turn away from

435 ensamples: exempla, illustrative anecdotes

437 lewed: ignorant, unlearned

441 in poverte wilfully: in voluntary poverty (like a monk)

Nay, nay, I thoghte it nevere, trewely!  
 For I wol preche and begge in sondry landes;  
 I wol nat do no labour with myne handes,  
 Ne make baskettes and lyve therby, 445  
 By cause I wol nat beggen ydelly.  
 I wol noon of the apostles countrefete;  
 I wol have moneie, wolle, chese, and whete,  
 Al were it yeven of the povereste page,  
 Or of the povereste wydwe in a village, 450  
 Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne.  
 Nay, I wol drynke licour of the vyne

And have a joly wenche in every toun.  
 But herkneth, lordynges, in conclusioun:  
 Youre likyng is that I shal telle a tale. 455  
 Now have I dronke a draughte of corny ale,  
 By God, I hope I shal yow telle a thyng  
 That shal by reson been at youre likyng.  
 For though myself be a ful vicious man,  
 A moral tale yet I yow telle kan, 460  
 Which I am wont to preche for to wynne.  
 Now hoold youre pees! My tale I wol bigynne."

Adam ou  
 Fro Paradys  
 Were dryve  
 For whil th  
 He was in l  
 Eet of the f  
 Anon he w  
 O glotonye  
 O, wiste a  
 Folwen of  
 He wolde l  
 Of his diet  
 Allas, the s  
 Maketh tha  
 In erthe, in  
 To gete a  
 Of this mat  
 Mete unto  
 Shal God c  
 Allas, a fo  
 To seye th  
 Whan man  
 That of his  
 Thurgh thi  
 The apo  
 Ther wall  
 have  
 I seve it n  
 They been  
 Of whiche  
 god  
 O wombe!  
 Fulfilled o  
 At either  
 How gree  
 Taise cool  
 and  
 had turne  
 To fulfille  
 Out of the  
 The mary  
 That may  
 as defender  
 mesurabl  
 as ynke:  
 Paul: St.  
 combe:  
 as white an  
 The apo:  
 god: bag;  
 corrupci  
 due to f  
 as scamper:  
 as abstain  
 named appe  
 as likeous:  
 as mary: m  
 as let: gu

## THE PARDONER'S TALE



### *Heere bigynneth the Pardoners Tale.*

In Flaundres whilom was a compaignye  
 Of yonge folk that haunteden folye,  
 As riot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes, 465  
 Where as with harpes, lutes, and gyternes,  
 They daunce and pleyen at dees bothe day and  
 nyght,  
 And eten also and drynken over hir myght,  
 Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrificse  
 Withinne that develes temple in cursed wise  
 By superfluytee abhomynable. 471  
 Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable  
 That it is grisly for to heere hem swere.  
 Oure blissed Lordes body they totere —  
 Hem thoughte that Jewes rente hym noght  
 ynough — 475  
 And ech of hem at otheres synne lough.  
 And right anon thanne comen tombesteres  
 Fetys and smale, and yonge frutesteres,  
 Syngeres with harpes, baudes, wafereres,  
 Whiche been the verray develes officeres 480  
 To kyndle and blowe the fyr of lecherye,  
 That is annexed unto glotonye.

446 ydelly: in vain  
 448 wolle: wool  
 449 povereste: poorest

464 haunteden: made a habit of  
 465 riot: debauchery hasard: dicing stywes: brothels  
 466 gyternes: citterns (guitar-like instruments)  
 467 dees: dice  
 474 totere: tear in pieces  
 476 lough: laughed  
 477 tombesteres: dancing girls  
 478 Fetys: elegantly shaped smale: slim frutesteres: girls who  
 sell fruit  
 479 wafereres: sellers of wafers

The hooly writ take I to my witnesse  
 That luxurie is in wyn and dronkenesse.  
 Lo, how that dronken Looth, unkyndely, 485  
 Lay by his doghtres two, unwityngly;  
 So dronke he was, he nyste what he wroghte.  
 Herodes, whoso wel the stories soghte,  
 Whan he of wyn was repleet at his feeste,  
 Right at his owene table he yaf his heeste 490  
 To sleen the Baptist John, ful giltelees.  
 Senec seith a good word doutelees;  
 He seith he kan no difference fynde  
 Bitwix a man that is out of his mynde  
 And a man which that is dronkelewe, 495  
 But that woodnesse, yfallen in a shrewe,  
 Persevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse.  
 O glotonye, ful of cursednesse!  
 O cause first of oure confusioun!  
 O original of oure dampnacioun, 500  
 Til Crist hadde boght us with his blood agayn!  
 Lo, how deere, shortly for to sayn,  
 Aboght was thilke cursed vileynye!  
 Corrupt was al this world for glotonye.

456 corny: malty, strong

483 hooly writ: the Bible  
 484 luxurie: lechery  
 485 Looth: Lot unkyndely: unnaturally  
 486 unwityngly: unknowingly  
 487 nyste = *ne wiste*, did not know  
 488 Herodes: Herod stories: histories (or possibly the gospel  
 narratives in Matthew 14 and Mark 6)  
 489 repleet: filled  
 492 Senec: Seneca  
 495 dronkelewe: addicted to drink  
 497 Persevereth: lasts  
 499 confusioun: ruin



Adam oure fader, and his wyf also, 505  
 Fro Paradys to labour and to wo  
 Were dryven for that vice, it is no drede.  
 For whil that Adam fasted, as I rede,  
 He was in Paradys; and whan that he  
 Eet of the fruyt deffended on the tree, 510  
 Anon he was out cast to wo and peyne.  
 O glotonye, on thee wel oghte us pleyne!  
 O, wiste a man how manye maladyes  
 Folwen of excesse and of glotonyes,  
 He wolde been the moore mesurable 515  
 Of his diete, sittyng at his table.  
 Allas, the shorte throte, the tendre mouth,  
 Maketh that est and west and north and south,  
 In erthe, in eir, in water, men to swynke 519  
 To gete a glotoun deyntee mete and drynke!  
 Of this matiere, O Paul, wel kanstow trete:  
 "Mete unto wombe, and wombe eek unto mete,  
 Shal God destroyen bothe," as Paulus seith.  
 Allas, a foul thyng is it, by my feith,  
 To seye this word, and fouler is the dede, 525  
 Whan man so drynketh of the white and rede  
 That of his throte he maketh his pryvee  
 Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.  
 The apostel wepyng seith ful pitously,  
 "Ther walken manye of whiche yow toold 530  
 have I —  
 I seye it now wepyng, with pitous voys —  
 They been enemys of Cristes croys,  
 Of whiche the ende is deeth; wombe is hir  
 god!"  
 O wombe! O bely! O stynkyng cod,  
 Fulfilled of dong and of corrupcioun! 535  
 At either ende of thee foul is the soun.  
 How greet labour and cost is thee to fynde!  
 Thise cookes, how they stampe, and streyne,  
 and grynde,  
 And turnen substaunce into accident  
 To fulfille al thy likerous talent! 540  
 Out of the harde bones knokke they  
 The mary, for they caste noght away  
 That may go thurgh the golet softe and swoote.

510 deffended: forbidden  
 515 mesurable: temperate  
 519 swynke: labor  
 521 Paul: St. Paul the apostle trete: treat, discuss  
 522 wombe: belly  
 526 white and rede: wines  
 529 The apostel: St. Paul  
 534 cod: bag, belly  
 535 corrupcioun: decayed matter  
 537 thee to fynde: to provide food for you  
 538 stampe: pound  
 539 substaunce into accident: the inner reality into the  
 outward appearance  
 540 likerous: greedy talent: desire, inclination  
 542 mary: marrow  
 543 golet: gullet swoote: sweet

Of spicerie of leef, and bark, and roote 545  
 Shal been his sauce ymaked by delit,  
 To make hym yet a newer appetit.  
 But, certes, he that haunteth swiche delices  
 Is deed, whil that he lyveth in tho vices.  
 A lecherous thyng is wyn, and dronkenesse  
 Is ful of stryvyng and of wrecchednesse. 550  
 O dronke man, disfigured is thy face,  
 Sour is thy breeth, foul artow to embrace,  
 And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun  
 As though thou seydest ay "Sampsoun, Samp-  
 soun!"  
 And yet, God woot, Sampsoun drank nevere no 555  
 wyn.  
 Thou fallest as it were a styked swyn;  
 Thy tonge is lost, and al thyn honeste cure,  
 For dronkenesse is verray sepulture  
 Of mannes wit and his discrecioun.  
 In whom that drynke hath dominacioun 560  
 He kan no conseil kepe; it is no drede.  
 Now kepe yow fro the white and fro the rede,  
 And namely fro the white wyn of Lepe  
 That is to selle in Fysshstrete or in Chepe.  
 This wyn of Spaigne crepeth subtilly 565  
 In othere wyne, growyng faste by,  
 Of which ther ryseth swich fumositee  
 That whan a man hath dronken draughtes thre,  
 And weneth that he be at hoom in Chepe,  
 He is in Spaigne, right at the toun of Lepe —  
 Nat at the Rochele, ne at Burdeux toun — 571  
 And thanne wol he seye "Sampsoun, Samp-  
 soun!"

But herkne, lordynges, o word, I yow  
 preye,  
 That alle the sovereyn actes, dar I seye,  
 Of victories in the Olde Testament, 575  
 Thurgh verray God, that is omnipotent,  
 Were doon in abstinence and in preyere.  
 Looketh the Bible, and ther ye may it leere.  
 Looke, Attilla, the grete conquerour, 579  
 Deyde in his sleep, with shame and dishonour,  
 Bledyng ay at his nose in dronkenesse.  
 A capitayn sholde lyve in sobrenesse.  
 And over al this, avyseth yow right wel

545 by: for  
 547 delices: delicacies  
 550 stryvyng: strife, quarrelling  
 554 Sampsoun: Samson (cf. VII.2055)  
 556 styked swyn: stuck pig  
 557 honeste cure: care for decency, self-respect  
 563 Lepe: wine-growing district in Spain  
 564 Fysshstrete, Chepe: streets in London  
 567 fumositee: vapors (rising from the stomach to the head)  
 571 Rochele, Burdeux toun: La Rochelle, Bordeaux,  
 wine-growing districts in France  
 579 Attilla: king of the Huns  
 582 sobrenesse: sobriety



What was comaunded unto Lamuel —  
 Nat Samuel, but Lamuel, seye I; 585  
 Redeth the Bible, and fynde it expresly  
 Of wyn-yevyng to hem that han justise.  
 Namooore of this, for it may wel suffice.  
 — And now that I have spoken of glotonye,  
 Now wol I yow deffenden hasardrye. 590  
 Hasard is verray mooder of lesynges,  
 And of deceite, and cursed forswerynges,  
 Blaspheme of Crist, manslaughter, and wast  
 also  
 Of catel and of tyme; and forthermo,  
 It is repreeve and contrarie of honour. 595  
 For to ben holde a commune hasardour.  
 And ever the hyer he is of estaat,  
 The moore is he yholden desolaat.  
 If that a prynce useth hasardrye,  
 In alle governaunce and policye 600  
 He is, as by commune opinioun,  
 Yholde the lasse in reputacioun.  
 Stilboun, that was a wys embassadour,  
 Was sent to Corynthe in ful greet honour  
 Fro Lacidomye to make hire alliaunce. 605  
 And whan he cam, hym happede, par chaunce,  
 That alle the gretteste that were of that lond,  
 Pleyynge atte hasard he hem fond.  
 For which, as soone as it myghte be,  
 He stal hym hoom agayn to his contree, 610  
 And seyde, "Ther wol I nat lese my name,  
 Ne I wol nat take on me so greet defame,  
 Yow for to allie unto none hasardours.  
 Sendeth othere wise embassadours;  
 For, by my trouthe, me were levere dye 615  
 Than I yow sholde to hasardours allye.  
 For ye, that been so glorious in honours,  
 Shul nat allyen yow with hasardours  
 As by my wyl, ne as by my tretee."  
 This wise philosophre, thus seyde hee. 620  
 Looke eek that to the kyng Demetrius  
 The kyng of Parthes, as the book seith us,  
 Sente him a paire of dees of gold in scorn,  
 For he hadde used hasard ther-biforn;  
 For which he heeld his glorie or his renoun 625  
 At no value or reputacioun.

584 Lamuel: Lemuel, biblical king of Massa  
 587 wyn-yevyng: giving wine justise: the duty of rendering  
 justice  
 590 deffenden: forbid hasardrye: gambling  
 591 Hasard: dicing lesynges: lies  
 592 forswerynges: perjuries  
 594 catel: property  
 603 Stilboun: possibly the Greek philosopher Stilbo  
 604 Corynthe: Corinth, a Peloponnesian city noted for luxury  
 605 Lacidomye: Lacedaemon, Sparta  
 622 Parthes: Parthia, northern Persia

Lordes may fynden oother maner pley  
 Honest ynough to dryve the day away.  
 Now wol I speke of othes false and grete  
 A word or two, as olde bookes trete. 630  
 Gret sweryng is a thyng abhominable,  
 And fals sweryng is yet moore repreevable.  
 The heighe God forbad sweryng at al,  
 Witnesse on Mathew; but in special  
 Of sweryng seith the hooly Jeremye, 635  
 "Thou shalt swere sooth thyne othes, and nat  
 lye,  
 And swere in doom and eek in rightwisnesse";  
 But ydel sweryng is a cursednesse.  
 Bihoold and se that in the firste table  
 Of heighe Goddes heestes honourable, 640  
 Hou that the seconde heeste of hym is this:  
 "Take nat my name in ydel or amys."  
 Lo, rather he forbedeth swich sweryng  
 Than homycide or many a cursed thyng;  
 I seye that, as by ordre, thus it stondeth; 645  
 This knoweth, that his heestes understondeth,  
 How that the seconde heeste of God is that.  
 And forther over, I wol thee telle al plat  
 That vengeance shal nat parten from his hous  
 That of his othes is to outrageous. 650  
 "By Goddes precious herte," and "By his  
 nayles,"  
 And "By the blood of Crist that is in Hayles,  
 Sevene is my chaunce, and thyn is cynk and  
 treye!"  
 "By Goddes armes, if thou falsly pleye, 654  
 This daggere shal thurghout thyn herte go!" —  
 This fruyt cometh of the bicched bones two,  
 Forsweryng, ire, falsnesse, homycide.  
 Now, for the love of Crist, that for us dyde,  
 Lete youre othes, bothe grete and smale.  
 But, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale. 660  
 These riotoures thre of whiche I telle,  
 Longe erst er prime rong of any belle,

631 Gret sweryng: frequent swearing  
 632 repreevable: blameworthy  
 634 Mathew: St. Matthew  
 635 Jeremye: Jeremiah the prophet  
 637 rightwisnesse: justice  
 638 ydel sweryng: profanity  
 639 firste table: the first three commandments  
 641 seconde heeste: second commandment  
 643 rather: earlier (in the ten commandments)  
 646 that: he who  
 648 forther over: furthermore al plat: flatly  
 650 outrageous: excessive  
 651 nayles: nails  
 652 Hayles: Hales Abbey in Gloucestershire  
 653 chaunce: a call in dicing (the number the shooter is trying to  
 roll) cynk: five treye: three  
 656 bicched bones: cursed dice  
 661 riotoures: debauchers, profligates  
 662 erst er: before prime: first hour of the day, beginning  
 about 6 A.M.

Were set hem in a taverne to drynke,  
 And as they sat, they herde a belle clynke  
 Biforn a cors, was caried to his grave. 665  
 That oon of hem gan callen to his knave:  
 "Go bet," quod he, "and axe redily  
 What cors is this that passeth heer forby;  
 And looke that thou reporte his name weel."  
 "Sire," quod this boy, "it nedeth never-a-  
 deel; 670  
 It was me toold er ye cam heer two houres.  
 He was, pardee, an old felawe of youre,  
 And sodeynly he was yslayn to-nyght,  
 Fordronke, as he sat on his bench upright.  
 Ther cam a privee thief men clepeth Deeth,  
 That in this contree al the peple sleeth, 676  
 And with his spere he smoot his herte atwo,  
 And wente his wey withouten wordes mo.  
 He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence.  
 And, maister, er ye come in his presence, 680  
 Me thynketh that it were necessarie  
 For to be war of swich an adversarie.  
 Beth redy for to meete hym everemoore;  
 Thus taughte me my dame; I sey namoore."  
 "By Seinte Marie!" seyde this taverner, 685  
 "The child seith sooth, for he hath slayn this  
 yeer,  
 Henne over a mile, withinne a greet village,  
 Bothe man and womman, child, and hyne, and  
 page;  
 I trowe his habitacioun be there.  
 To been avysed greet wysdom it were, 690  
 Er that he dide a man a dishonour."  
 "Ye, Goddes armes!" quod this riotour,  
 "Is it swich peril with hym for to meete?  
 I shal hym seke by wey and eek by strete,  
 I make avow to Goddes digne bones! 695  
 Herkneth, felawes, we thre been al ones;  
 Lat ech of us holde up his hand til oother,  
 And ech of us bicomen othere brother,  
 And we wol sleen this false traytour Deeth.  
 He shal be slayn, he that so manye sleeth, 700  
 By Goddes dignitee, er it be nyght!"  
 Togidres han thise thre hir trouthes plight  
 To lyve and dyen ech of hem for oother,

As though he were his owene ybore brother.  
 And up they stirte, al dronken in this rage, 705  
 And forth they goon towards that village  
 Of which the taverner hadde spoke biforn.  
 And many a grisly ooth thanne han they sworn,  
 And Cristes blessed body they torente — 709  
 Deeth shal be deed, if that they may hym hente!  
 Whan they han goon nat fully half a mile,  
 Right as they wolde han troden over a stile,  
 An oold man and a povre with hem mette.  
 This olde man ful mekely hem grette,  
 And seyde thus, "Now, lordes, God yow see!"  
 The proudeste of thise riotoures three 716  
 Answerde agayn, "What, carl, with sory grace!  
 Why artow al forwrapped save thy face?  
 Why lyvestow so longe in so greet age?"  
 This olde man gan looke in his visage, 720  
 And seyde thus: "For I ne kan nat fynde  
 A man, though that I walked into Ynde,  
 Neither in citee ne in no village,  
 That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age;  
 And therfore moot I han myn age stille, 725  
 As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille.  
 Ne Deeth, allas, ne wol nat han my lyf.  
 Thus walke I, lyk a resteleees kaityf,  
 And on the ground, which is my moodres gate,  
 I knokke with my staf, bothe erly and late, 730  
 And seye, 'Leeve mooder, leet me in!  
 Lo how I vanysshe, flesh, and blood, and skyn!  
 Allas, whan shul my bones been at reste?  
 Mooder, with yow wolde I chaunge my cheste  
 That in my chambre longe tyme hath be, 735  
 Ye, for an heyre clowt to wrappe me!  
 But yet to me she wol nat do that grace,  
 For which ful pale and welked is my face.  
 "But, sires, to yow it is no curteisye  
 To speken to an old man vileynye, 740  
 But he trespasse in word or elles in dede.  
 In Hooly Writ ye may yourself wel rede:  
 'Agayns an oold man, hoor upon his heed,  
 Ye sholde arise;' wherefore I yeve yow reed,  
 Ne dooth unto an oold man noon harm  
 now, 745  
 Namooore than that ye wolde men did to yow

665 cors: corpse

667 Go bet: go quickly

670 boy: servant it nedeth never-a-deel: it is not at all necessary

674 Fordronke: very drunk

675 men clepeth: one calls, is called

679 this pestilence: during this plague

684 dame: mother

687 Henne: hence, from here

688 hyne: hind, farm worker page: serving boy

690 avysed: forewarned

698 brother: sworn brother

702 plight: pledged

709 torente: tore to pieces

715 God yow see: may God look after you

717 carl: fellow with sory grace: bad luck to you

718 forwrapped: completely wrapped up

722 Ynde: India; i.e., the most remote place on earth

728 kaityf: wretch

731 Leeve: dear

732 vanysshe: waste away

734 cheste: strongbox for valuables

736 heyre clowt: haircloth

738 welked: withered

In age, if that ye so longe abyde.  
And God be with yow, where ye go or ryde!  
I moot go thider as I have to go."

"Nay, olde cherl, by God, thou shalt nat so,"  
Seyde this oother hasardour anon; 751

"Thou partest nat so lightly, by Seint John!  
Thou spak right now of thilke traytour Deeth,  
That in this contree alle oure freendes sleeth.  
Have heer my trouthe, as thou art his espye,  
Telle where he is or thou shalt it abyde, 756  
By God and by the hooly sacrament!  
For soothly thou art oon of his assent

To sleen us yonge folk, thou false theef!" 759

"Now, sires," quod he, "if that yow be so leef  
To fynde Deeth, turne up this croked wey,  
For in that grove I lafte hym, by my fey,  
Under a tree, and there he wole abyde;  
Noght for youre boost he wole him no thyng  
hyde.

Se ye that ook? Right there ye shal hym  
fynde. 765

God save yow, that boghte agayn mankynde,  
And yow amende!" Thus seyde this olde man;  
And everich of these riotoures ran  
Til he cam to that tree, and ther they founde  
Of floryns fyne of gold ycoyned rounde 770  
Wel ny an eighte busshels, as hem thoughte.  
No lenger thanne after Deeth they soughte,  
But ech of hem so glad was of that sighte,  
For that the floryns been so faire and brighte,  
That doun they sette hem by this precious  
hoord. 775

The worste of hem, he spak the firste word.  
"Bretheren," quod he, "taak kep what that I  
seye;

My wit is greet, though that I bourde and  
pleye.

This tresor hath Fortune unto us yiven  
In myrthe and joliftee oure lyf to lyven, 780  
And lightly as it comth, so wol we spende.  
Ey, Goddes precious dignitee! Who wende  
To-day that we sholde han so fair a grace?  
But myghte this gold be caried fro this place  
Hoom to myn hous, or elles unto youre — 785  
For wel ye woot that al this gold is oures —  
Thanne were we in heigh felicitye.  
But trewely, by daye it may nat bee.

747 abyde: remain (alive)

758 oon of his assent: in league with him

765 ook: oak

766 boghte agayn: redeemed

770 floryns: gold coins

778 bourde: jest

779 tresor: treasure

Men wolde seyn that we were theves stronge,  
And for oure owene tresor doon us honge. 790  
This tresor moste ycaried be by nyghte  
As wisely and as slyly as it myghte.

Wherefore I rede that cut among us alle  
Be drawe, and lat se wher the cut wol falle;  
And he that hath the cut with herte blithe 795  
Shal renne to the town, and that ful swithe,  
And brynge us breed and wyn ful prively.  
And two of us shul kepen subtilly  
This tresor wel; and if he wol nat tarie,  
Whan it is nyght, we wol this tresor carie, 800  
By oon assent, where as us thynketh best."  
That oon of hem the cut broghte in his fest,  
And bad hem drawe and looke where it wol  
falle;

And it fil on the yongeste of hem alle,  
And forth toward the toun he wente anon. 805  
And also soone as that he was gon,  
That oon of hem spak thus unto that oother:  
"Thow knowest wel thou art my sworn  
brother;

Thy profit wol I telle thee anon.  
Thou woost wel that oure felawe is agon. 810  
And heere is gold, and that ful greet plentee,  
That shal departed been among us thre.  
But nathelees, if I kan shape it so  
That it departed were among us two,  
Hadde I nat doon a freendes torn to thee?" 815  
That oother answerde, "I noot hou that may  
be.

He woot that the gold is with us tweye;  
What shal we doon? What shal we to hym  
seye?"

"Shal it be conseil?" seyde the firste shrewe,  
"And I shal tellen in a wordes fewe 820  
What we shal doon, and brynge it wel aboute."

"I graunte," quod that oother, "out of doute,  
That, by my trouthe, I wol thee nat biweye."

"Now," quod the firste, "thou woost wel we  
be tweye,

And two of us shul strenger be than oon. 825  
Looke whan that he is set, that right anon  
Arys as though thou woldest with hym pleye,  
And I shal ryve hym thurgh the sydes tweye  
Whil that thou strogelest with hym as in game,  
And with thy daggere looke thou do the same;

789 theves stronge: arrant thieves

790 doon us honge: have us hanged

793-94 cut . . . Be drawe: lots be drawn

796 ful swithe: very quickly

815 freendes torn: friend's turn, friendly act

823 biweye: betray

828 ryve: stab

And thanne shal al this gold departed be, 831  
 My deere freend, bitwixen me and thee.  
 Thanne may we bothe oure lustes all fulfille,  
 And pleye at dees right at oure owene wille."  
 And thus acorded been thise shrewes tweye  
 To sleen the thridde, as ye han herd me seye. 836

This yongeste, which that wente to the toun,  
 Ful ofte in herte he rolleth up and doun  
 The beautee of thise floryns newe and brighte.  
 "O Lord!" quod he, "if so were that I myghte  
 Have al this tresor to myself allone, 841  
 Ther is no man that lyveth under the trone  
 Of God that sholde lyve so murye as I!"  
 And atte laste the feend, oure enemy, 844  
 Putte in his thought that he sholde poyson beye,  
 With which he myghte sleen his felawes tweye;  
 For-why the feend foond hym in swich lyvyng  
 That he hadde leve him to sorwe brynge.  
 For this was outrelly his fulle entente,  
 To sleen hem bothe and nevere to repente. 850  
 And forth he gooth, no lenger wolde he tarie,  
 Into the toun, unto a pothecarie,  
 And preyde hym that he hym wolde selle  
 Som poyson, that he myghte his rattes quelle;  
 And eek ther was a polcat in his hawe, 855  
 That, as he seyde, his capouns hadde yslawe,  
 And fayn he wolde wreke hym, if he myghte,  
 On vermyn that destroyed hym by nyghte.

The pothecarie answerde, "And thou shalt  
 have  
 A thyng that, also God my soule save, 860  
 In al this world ther is no creature  
 That eten or dronken hath of this confiture  
 Noght but the montance of a corn of whete,  
 That he ne shal his lif anon forlete;  
 Ye, sterve he shal, and that in lasse while 865  
 Than thou wolt goon a paas nat but a mile,  
 This poyson is so strong and violent."

This cursed man hath in his hond yhent  
 This poyson in a box, and sith he ran  
 Into the nexte strete unto a man, 870  
 And borwed [of] hym large botelles thre,  
 And in the two his poyson poured he;

838 rolleth up and doun: meditates on  
 842 trone: throne  
 848 leve: permission  
 852 pothecarie: apothecary  
 854 quelle: kill  
 855 polcat: weasel hawe: yard  
 857 wreke hym: revenge himself  
 858 vermyn: animal pests destroyed: were ruining  
 862 confiture: concoction  
 863 montance: amount, size corn: grain  
 864 forlete: lose  
 865 sterve: die while: time  
 866 a paas: at a walk

The thridde he kepte clene for his drynke.  
 For al the nyght he shoop hym for to swynke  
 In carynge of the gold out of that place. 875  
 And whan this riotour, with sory grace,  
 Hadde filled with wyn his grete botels thre,  
 To his felawes agayn repaireth he.

What nedeth it to sermone of it moore? 879  
 For right as they hadde cast his deeth bifoore,  
 Right so they han hym slayn, and that anon.  
 And whan that this was doon, thus spak that  
 oon:

"Now lat us sitte and drynke, and make us  
 merie,

And afterward we wol his body berie." 884  
 And with that word it happed hym, par cas,  
 To take the botel ther the poyson was,  
 And drank, and yaf his felawe drynke also,  
 For which anon they storven bothe two.

But certes, I suppose that Avycen  
 Wroot nevere in no canon, ne in no fen, 890  
 Mo wonder signes of empoisonyng  
 Than hadde thise wrecches two, er hir endyng.  
 Thus ended been thise homycides two,  
 And eek the false empoisonere also.

O cursed synne of alle cursednesse! 895  
 O traytours homycide, O wikkednesse!  
 O glotonye, luxurie, and hasardrye!  
 Thou blasphemour of Crist with vileynye  
 And othes grete, of usage and of pride!  
 Allas, mankynde, how may it bitide 900  
 That to thy creatour, which that the wroghte  
 And with his precious herte-blood thee boghte,  
 Thou art so fals and so unkynde, allas?

Now, goode men, God foryeve yow youre  
 trespas,  
 And ware yow fro the synne of avarice! 905  
 Myn hooly pardoun may yow alle warice,  
 So that ye offre nobles or sterlynges,  
 Or elles silver broches, spoones, rynges.  
 Boweth youre heed under this hooly bulle! 909  
 Cometh up, ye wyves, offreth of youre wolle!  
 Your names I entre heer in my rolle anon;  
 Into the blisse of hevene shul ye gon.

874 shoop hym: intended  
 885 par cas: by chance  
 889 Avycen: Avicenna, Arabic author of a medical treatise  
 890 canon: set of rules fen: a division of Avicenna's book  
 891 empoisonyng: poisoning  
 894 empoisonere: poisoner  
 897 luxurie: lechery  
 899 usage: habit  
 903 unkynde: unnatural  
 906 warice: cure, save  
 907 nobles: gold coins sterlynges: silver pennies  
 910 wolle: wool

I yow assoille, by myn heigh power,  
Yow that wol offre, as clene and eek as cleer  
As ye were born. — And lo, sires, thus I preche.  
And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soules leche, 916  
So graunte yow his pardoun to receyve,  
For that is best; I wol yow nat deceyve.

But, sires, o word forgat I in my tale:  
I have relikes and pardoun in my male, 920  
As faire as any man in Engelond,  
Whiche were me yeven by the popes hond.  
If any of yow wole, of devocion,  
Offren and han myn absolucion,  
Com forth anon, and kneleth heere adoun, 925  
And mekely receyveth my pardoun;  
Or elles taketh pardoun as ye wende,  
Al newe and fressh at every miles ende,  
So that ye offren, alwey newe and newe,  
Nobles or pens, whiche that be goode and  
trewe. 930

It is an honour to everich that is heer  
That ye mowe have a suffisant pardoneer  
T'assoille yow in contree as ye ryde,  
For adventures whiche that may bityde.  
Paraventure ther may fallen oon or two 935  
Doun of his hors and breke his nekke atwo.  
Looke which a seuretee is it to yow alle  
That I am in youre felaweshipe yfalle,  
That may assoille yow, bothe moore and lasse,  
Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe.  
I rede that oure Hoost heere shal bigynne, 941

*Heere is ended the Pardoners Tale.*

For he is moost envoluped in synne.  
Com forth, sire Hoost, and offre first anon,  
And thou shalt kisse the relikes everychon,  
Ye, for a grote! Unbokele anon thy purs." 945  
"Nay, nay!" quod he, "thanne have I Cristes  
curs!

Lat be," quod he, "it shal nat be, so theech!  
Thou woldest make me kisse thyn olde breech,  
And swere it were a relyk of a seint, 949  
Though it were with thy fundement depeint!  
But, by the croys which that Seint Eleyne fond,  
I wolde I hadde thy coillons in myn hond  
In stide of relikes or of seintuarie.  
Lat kutte hem of, I wol thee helpe hem carie;  
They shul be shryned in an hogges toord!" 955

This Pardoner answerde nat a word;  
So wrooth he was, no word ne wolde he seye.  
"Now," quod oure Hoost, "I wol no lenger  
pleye

With thee, ne with noon oother angry man."  
But right anon the worthy Knyght bigan, 960  
Whan that he saugh that al the peple lough,  
"Namooore of this, for it is right ynough!  
Sire Pardoner, be glad and myrie of cheere;  
And ye, sire Hoost, that been to me so deere,  
I prey yow that ye kisse the Pardoner. 965  
And Pardoner, I prey thee, drawe thee neer,  
And, as we diden, lat us laughe and pleye."  
Anon they kiste, and ryden forth hir weye.

913 assoille: absolve  
916 leche: physician  
917 graunte: allow  
920 pardoun: pardons, papal indulgences male: pouch, bag  
937 which a: what a seuretee: safeguard

942 envoluped: enveloped  
945 grote: goat, a silver coin worth four pence  
946 Cristes curs: damnation  
947 so theech = so thee ich, as I may prosper (I swear)  
948 breech: underpants  
950 fundement: anus depeint: stained  
951 croys: cross Seint Eleyne: St. Helen, discoverer of the true  
cross  
952 coillons: testicles  
953 seintuarie: sanctuary, box for relics  
955 shryned: enshrined toord: turd  
968 ryden: rode



Ruggiers, *Art of CT*, 124; Spearing, ed., 22; Faulkner, in *Twentieth Century Interpretations*, 11), but it has been attacked by Elliott, *Rev. of Eng. Lit.* 6:63-64, and Halverson, *ChR* 4, 1970, 185-86, who point out that the text offers no support for the idea that the Pardoner is drunk. Some have seen the Pardoner's confession as too excessive to be believed and have argued that the Pardoner is indulging in self-parody (Calderwood, *ES* 45:302-9) or an elaborate "put on" (Halverson, *ChR* 4:196-97). Beichner argues instead that the Pardoner is simply trying to entertain his hearers (*MS* 25, 1963, 160-72). Yet others believe that he is motivated by a need for approval (Condren, *Viator* 4, 1973, 177-205), acceptance (McNamara, *PMASAL* 46:603-4), or compassion (David, *Strumpet Muse*, 201).

Such psychological explanations of the Pardoner have dominated criticism since the time of Kittredge, and he has been generally regarded as "the ultimate example of Chaucer's subtle handling of human psychology" (Ruggiers, *Art of CT*, 123); Howard's study (*Idea of CT*, 339-70) is the most important recent example of this approach. Objections to the excesses of the psychological approach have been raised, most recently by Pearsall (*ChR* 17, 1983, 358-65; see also Bronson, *In Search of Ch.*, 79-87), and the idea that medieval literature has characters in the modern sense has been vigorously attacked (Robertson, *Pref. to Chaucer*, 34-37; cf. Morgan, *MLR* 71, 1976, 241-55). In an important essay, Kellogg (*Spec* 26, 1951, 465-85; rpt. in *Ch. Langland*, 245-68) studies the Pardoner as an exemplification of the Augustinian theory of sin, and Miller's exegetical study of the implications of the presentation of the Pardoner as a eunuch (*Spec* 30:180-99; see also Curry, *Ch. and Science*, 54-70) has been widely influential (see also Leicester, in *Acts of Interpretation*, 25-50).

The idea that the Pardoner is evil—the "one lost soul" on the Pilgrimage (Kittredge, *Ch and His Poetry*, 180)—is widely accepted (e.g., Huppé, *Reading of CT*, 209-20); to some he has seemed a personification of vice (Peterson, *ChR* 10, 1976, 326-36; Scheps, *Acta* IV, 1977, 107-23). Recent critics, such as Howard, have been more sympathetic toward him (see also McAlpine, *PMLA* 95, 1980, 8-22). Reiss (*CE* 25, 1964, 260-66) argues that he is misunderstood by the pilgrims, and Mitchell that, because of his lack of hypocrisy, he is their moral superior (*CE* 27, 1966, 437-44; see also Rhodes, *ChR* 17, 1982, 40-61).

The question of the Pardoner's motivation comes to focus on his attempt to sell his admittedly fake relics to the Host. Kittredge's explanation that the Pardoner suffers from a "paroxysm of agonized sincerity" is still widely quoted, but a great many other explanations have been offered (for summaries of opinions see Halverson, *ChR* 4:189-90; Reiss, *CE* 25:260-66). Lumiansky (*Of Sundry Folk*, 220) argues rather that the Pardoner has foolishly reverted to his usual sales pitch, and this has been taken as a gross insult to the pilgrims (Bronson, *In Search of Ch.*, 86), an elaborate joke (Beichner, *MS* 25:170-72), mere forgetfulness (Stockton, *TSL* 6, 1961, 56), and as a cynical attempt to reduce the pilgrimage to nonsense (Curtis, *Crit. Rev.* 11, 1968, 15-31). Howard (*Idea of CT*, 353) regards the Pardoner's offer of his relics as an extravagant gamble motivated perhaps by an unconscious will to lose. The Host's reaction has likewise been explained in a variety of ways—disgust at the Par-

doner's effrontery (Gerould, *Essays*, 71), an expression of the reader's feelings toward the Pardoner (Brewer, *Chaucer*, 159), and as an angry reaction to a personal attack (Kean, *Ch and Poetry* 2:104).

As the above shows, the critical bibliography is formidable and the range of disagreement broad indeed. The reviews by Sedgewick (*MLQ* 1:431-58) and Halverson (*ChR* 4:184-202), both of whom make valuable contributions of their own, are good starting points for the reader intent on studying this criticism. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Pardoner's Tale*, ed. Dewey Faulkner, 1973, contains excerpts from older criticism as well as some significant original essays.

### *The Pardoner's Prologue*

**331** For the phrasing, cf. *Tr* 2.1615 and Whiting B234.

**333** theme: The biblical text for a sermon, often subdivided into three (as here: gluttony, gambling, swearing). See headnote.

**334** *Radix malorum est Cupiditas*: 1 Tim. 6.10; cf. Mel VII.130. Morton W. Bloomfield (*The Seven Deadly Sins*, 1952, 74 and 95) notes that greed was increasingly seen as the root of evil in the later Middle Ages. Friend (*MLQ* 18, 1957, 305-8) argues that this is a dangerous text to choose: a secular clerk, Robert Lynclade, was arrested in 1395 by Richard II for using this text as a sermon against churchmen who preached for money. On the relation of this theme to gluttony, gambling, and swearing, see Robertson, *Pref. to Ch.*, 332-34.

**336** bulles: Bulls, papal letters (here indulgences) bearing the round leaden seal, or *bull*, stamped with the figures of Sts. Peter and Paul on the obverse and the name of the pope who gave it on the reverse. Cf. *Rom* 6847.

**337** Cf. *PP B Pro* 68-69: "Ther preched a Pardoner, as he a preest were/Broughte forthe a bull with bis-hopes seles." *Oure lige lordes* may also be the bishop, though Hamilton (*JEGP* 40, 1941, 70), agreeing with Brown (ed., 27), regards this as a royal seal.

patente: letter patent ("open," to be shown publicly; cf. *GP I.315n.*), containing the Pardoner's authorization.

**342-43** Popes, cardinals, patriarchs, and bishops could all grant indulgences (Kellogg and Haselmayer, *PMLA* 66, 1951, 251-77). Patriarchs here are metropolitans such as those of Venice and Lisbon.

**347-49** Owst (*Preaching in Med. Engl.*, 109-10) quotes a contemporary sermon attacking "theves" who "with fals letters and seeles, with crosses and reliques that thei bere abowten them, . . . sei that thei be of seyntes bones or of holy mens clothinge, and bihoteth myche mede that will offre to hem." On the display of relics in sermons, see Owst, 349-51.

**347** cristal stones: Cf. *GP I.700*. See, on the relation of *cristal stones* to lapidary lore, Henkin, *Bull. of the Hist. of Medicine* 10, 1941, 504-12.

**350** latoun: See *GP I.699n*. On the use of a sheep's bone in divination (spatelmancy), see *ParsT X.602*, Higden's *Polychronicon*, tr. John of Trevisa 1.cap.60, and Andersen, *NM* 75, 1974, 630-39.

**351** hooly Jewes: The epithet *hooly* has led to attempts to identify this Jew with one who lived before the incarnation; Skeat (5:271) suggests Jacob (*Gen.* 30.31-43), noting this would add force to VI.365; others (Rutter,



MLN 43, 1928, 536) suggest Gideon (Judges 6.13-40). Henkin (MLN 55, 1940, 254-59) argues that no specific individual is intended and that the reference is rather to the common association of Jews with magic. Andersen (NM 75:630-39) discusses the use of relics as part of agrarian witchcraft, appropriate to the Pardoner's rural audience.

**372** miteyn: Said by Brown (ed. PardT, 28) to be a mitten worn by farmers when sowing grain.

**377** For analogues to the trick of telling parishioners that sinners may not offer to his relics, see Whiting, MLN 51, 1936, 322-27, and S&A, 411-13; see also 652 below on the blood of Hayles, which was visible only to the truly penitent.

**390** A mark was worth two-thirds of a pound (13s. 4d.). In his last years Chaucer himself had official annuities amounting to only £46 13s. 4d. (Ch Life Records, 533), considerably less than the Pardoner's claimed income. Baugh (Ch's Maj. Poetry, xv) estimates that in his most affluent years Chaucer's annual income was about £99.

**391** lyk a clerk: Beichner (MS 25:160-72) argues that this implies the Pardoner is not a cleric. His clerical status is uncertain (see introduction to notes to his portrait in the General Prologue).

**392** doun yset: Manly (CT, 614) notes that this and Gower, *Mirour de l'omme*, 5245-56, show that there were seats in English churches for the congregation, though none have survived.

**397** Cf. MilT I.3258. Huppé (Reading of CT, 213) finds an allusion to the Holy Ghost; see also Rowland, N&Q 209, 1964, 48-49.

**403** See Rom 6837 (RR 11565; S&A 410). Morgan (MLR 71:241-55) agrees with Brusendorff (Ch Trad, 402-4) that Chaucer followed the English Romaunt rather than RR here and at VI.407-08 and 443-44.

**406** a-blakeberyed: Play truant (Cross, RES, n.s., 2, 1951, 372-74). Kökeritz (cited in Baum, PMLA 71, 1956, 231) finds this a pun on *beryed* (buried) (VI.405) and *blakeberyed*. Skeat (5:272-74) explains the form as based on an analogy with forms such as ME *an bunteih*, *abunteid*, from OE *on buntop*, with the ME forms in -ed taken as past participles rather than as abstract nouns (OE suffix -op, as in modern *strength*, etc.). Cf. III.354, V.1580, and (without a-) III.1778.

**407-8** Parallel to Rom 5763-64 (RR 5113-14); cf. 403 above. See also Rom 5745-57, discussed by Morgan, MLR 71:241-55. Jungmann (Ch Newsletter 1, 1979, 16-17) compares Augustine (De doctrina 4.27.59), who says that the wicked may preach what is right and good. Yet contemporary opinion held that a preacher must be of good character. Cf. Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests, EETS 31, 19-68; GP I.505-6.

**415-20** Cf. SumT III.2212 for another example of a preacher's using the pulpit for revenge.

**416** my bretheren: This suggests to some readers that the Pardoner is a mendicant friar (see Hamilton, JEGP 40:48-72); cf. 391 above; VI.443; and GP I.683n.

**435** ensamples: Exempla, illustrative anecdotes used by preachers, found in collections such as Petrus Alphonsus, *Disciplina clericalis* (c. 1110); Robert Holkot, *Libri sapientiae* (c. 1340); and the *Gesta Romanorum* (c. 1300).

**441** in povert wilfully: see WBT III.1178-79 and n.

**443-44** Cf. Rom 6845-46 (RR 11571-72; S&A, 410).

**445** Cf. PP B 15.290. Both Chaucer's text and Lang-

land's seem to confuse St. Paul the Apostle, a tentmaker, with St. Paul the Hermit, who appears in medieval art clad in a mat of palm-leaves (see Jerome, Vita S. Pauli, PL 23:27). However, these passages very likely derive from Jerome, *Ad rusticum*, advising him to "weave a little basket from rushes, or weave a basket from supple osiers" by way of providing for himself (CSEL 56:130). See Hemingway, MLN 32, 1917, 57-58; Pratt, Expl 21, 1962, Item 14; and Fleming, Christianity and Lit. 28, 1979, 21-22, who argues there is no confusion here.

**447-48** See Mark 6.7-10.

### The Pardoner's Tale

**463-84** For the Flemish setting cf. S&A, 437. Manly (CT, 619) suggests that Chaucer set the tale in Flanders because of the Flemings' reputation for drunkenness; for English attitudes toward Flanders, see Norris, PMLA 48, 1933, 636-41. Morgan (MLR 71:241-55) finds the company of young folk given to excess reminiscent of Rom 4925-28, but the resemblance is slight.

**468-71** For the conception of gluttony in the Middle Ages and its links with blasphemy and heresy, esp. in Chaucer and Gower, see Yeager, SP 81, 1984, 42-55. Lewis, ed. 1978, 8, notes possible parallels in lines 467-69 and 481-82 to Innocent III, *De miseria condicionis humane* 2.18.11-12<sup>46</sup> and 12<sup>47</sup>.

**470** develes temple: Cf. *The Ayenbit of Inwit* (S&A, 438): "The tavernne ys the scole of the dyeuele . . . and his oghene chapele . . . ther huer he maketh his miracles . . . vor huanne the glotoun geth in the tavernne he geth opyright, huanne he comth a-yen, he ne heth uot ther him moghe sostyeni ne bere." Cf. *Jacob's Well* (S&A, 438); the *Ménagier de Paris*, 1.48; Tupper JEGP 13: 553-65.

**474-75** Cf. ParsT X.591; EpiMLT II.1171 and n.

**479** wafereres: Cf. MilT I.3379 and n. According to OED (s.v. *waferer*), *wafereres* were apparently employed as go-betweens and bawds.

**481-82** Association of lechery and gluttony, and of wine and lust, is commonplace; cf. PF 275-76n. and 468-71 above.

**483** hooly writ: Lat. gloss: "And do not become drunk with wine, in which is lechery" (Eph. 5.18), quoted from Innocent III, *De miseria* 2.19.12-13, which work Chaucer probably translated as the lost *Of the Wretched Engendrynge of Mankynde* (cf. LGW G 414-15 and Lewis, ed., 1978, 20-30). Skeat (3:444-45) notes parallels between Innocent's work and VI.485-87 (2.20.148); 505-7 (2.18.5-7<sup>49</sup>); 513-16 and 521-23 (2.17.21-26<sup>50</sup>); 517-20 (2.17.2-5, 14<sup>51</sup>); 534-36 (2.18.2-5); 537-46 (2.17.5-14<sup>52</sup>); 547-48 (2.17.19-21<sup>53</sup>); 549-50 (2.19.14<sup>54</sup>); 551-52 and 560-61 (2.19.1-4<sup>55</sup>). See also Skeat 3:444-45.

**485** Looth: See Gen. 19.30-36. Langland uses Lot as an example of drunkenness and lechery in *Piers Plowman* B I.27-33. See 483 above.

**488** Herodes: Herod and Lot are listed together as examples of drunkenness in *Piers Plowman*, ed. Skeat, C 11.176-79. Stories may refer to the *Historia evangelica*, part of the *Historia scholastica* of Peter Comestor (Skeat 5.278; Taitt, N&Q 216, 1971, 284-85). Robinson doubted this, since Peter's account of Herod does not mention his drunkenness (PL 198:1574-75). Brown

(ed., 32) believes the reference is to the expanded version in Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale* 7.22, where it is specified that Herod "diem natalis sui super bibiendo celebravit." *Stories* could also refer to the biblical account (Matt. 14.3-12, Mark 6.17-29), though the drunkenness of Herod is not mentioned. Cf. GP 1.709.

**492 Senec:** Identified in the gloss as Seneca, from whose epistle 83.18 lines 493-97 are roughly translated. Ayers (RomR 10, 1919, 5-7) finds further reminiscences of Seneca (esp. from Epist. 95.19-25) in VI.513-548. Skeat finds parallels instead in Innocent's *De contemptu mundi* (esp. 2.17, 18), which he believes reflect Chaucer's prose translation (see PL 218:723 and Skeat 3:445, where the relevant passages are printed).

**498** For gluttony associated with taverns, see PP B 5.296-305 and 470 above.

**504-11** Cf. SumT III.1915-16, ParsT X.819.

**505** From Jerome, Adv. Jov. 2.15 (PL 23:305).

**508-11** Lat. gloss: "Jeronimus contra Jovinianum: 'Quamdiu jejunavit Adam in Paradiso/fuit: comedit et ejectus est statim duxit uxorem'" (Adv. Jov. 2.15), translated in the text. Cf. ParsT X.819.

**512-16** Cf. Ecclus. 37.29-31: "Do not be greedy for every delicacy or eat without restraint. For illness is a sure result of overeating, and gluttony is next door to colic. Gluttony has been the death of many; be on your guard and prolong your life." Brown (ed., 32) compares VI.513-14 to Seneca, Epist. 95.19: "Many courses make for many diseases."

**517-20** Cf. Jerome, Adv. Jov. 2.8: "Because of the brief pleasure of the throat lands and seas are ransacked" (PL 23:297). See 483 above.

**522-23** Lat. gloss: "Meat for the belly, and the belly for meat, but God shall destroy both the one and the other" (1 Cor. 6.13). See 483 above.

**527-28** Jerome, Adv. Jov. 2.17.

**529-35** Lat. gloss: "Ad Philipenses capitulo 3<sup>o</sup>" (Phil. 3.18-19; cf. ParsT X.820). See also 483 above.

**538-39** Cf. Innocent III, De miseria 2.17.5-14<sup>2</sup>: "Alius contundit et colat, alius confundit et conficit, substantiam vertit in accidens, naturam mutat in artem." The "substance into accident" figure (the essential nature and the outward quality by which a thing is identified and apprehended) as applied to cookery appears also in Latin Poems Commonly Attributed to Walter Map, page liii: "fiant per accidents quod esse non potuerit per substantiam." Robinson notes that Chaucer could hardly have failed to relate this to the controversy over transubstantiation, a lively topic in Chaucer's time (Manly, CT, 619), and to have been reminded of Wyclif's facetious remark that the faithful should forbid friars to enter their cellars lest the wine be transubstantiated into nothing (Wyclif, Sermones, ed. Iohann Loserth, Wyclif Soc., 1887-90, 194). On allusions to the Eucharist in the work, see Nichols, PMLA 82: 501-2. Cf. Tr 4.1505 n.

**547-48** Lat. gloss: "[She] who lives in pleasure is dead while living" (1 Tim. 5.6). Quoted in Jerome (Brown, ed., 34).

**549-50** Lat. gloss: "Luxuriosa res vinum et contumeliosa ebrietas" (Prov. 20.1, with "contumeliosa" for Vulgate "tumultosa," as in Jerome, Adv. Jov. 2.10 [PL 23: 299]). Lewis notes it is also quoted by Innocent. See 483 above.

**554-55** Sampson: Sampson, as a Nazarite, abstained

from wine (Judges 13.7 and Num. 6.3). Skeat suggests the name was chosen for its sound and that it should be pronounced with a nasal intonation.

**558-59** Cf. MLT II.773-74, ParsT X.822.

**560-61** Proverbial; cf. Mel VII.1194n. See 483 above.

**564-66** Fysshstrete: Fish Hill Street, off Thames Street, just below London Bridge. Chepe: probably Cheapside, one of the principal shopping streets in the London of Chaucer's day (cf. I.754 and n.), though here perhaps Eastcheap; see Magoun, Ch Gazetteer, 105-6.

**565-71** That the wine of Spain could creep subtly into other wines produced nearby is a reference to the illegal diluting of better wines with cheaper varieties, a practice common enough that in the Liber albus, 615-18, there are regulations specifying that different kinds of wine are to be kept in different cellars. Manly (CT, 619) quotes Letter Book H. 145 on the price of wines from Bordeaux (Burdeaux) and La Rochelle (Rochele) set at ten pence, and wines from Spain, such as those produced at Lepe (northwest of Cadiz), set at eight pence. See further Hench, MLN 52, 1937, 27-28. Bronson (In Search of Ch, 82) takes the reference to adulterating wines as a dig at the Host.

**579** Attila, king of the Huns, died (453) of a nose-bleed brought on by excessive drinking on a night when he had just wed a new wife; see Jordanes, *De getarum gestis*, 49, and Paul the Deacon, *De Gestis Romanorum*, 15.

**584** Lamuel: Lat. gloss: "Noli vinum dare," from Prov. 31.4: "Do not to kings, O Lamuel, do not to kings give wine, for there is no secret where drunkenness reigns." For the rhetorical device used here, see Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, 668-86.

**591** Lat. gloss: "Policraticus, Book I: 'Dicing is the mother of lies and perjuries'" (John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* 1.5).

**603** Stilboun: Chaucer draws the story in VI.603-20 from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* 1.5.1 (S&A, 438) but substitutes *Stilboun* for Chilon. Some MSS (not in the Ellesmere or Hengwrt traditions of glossing) gloss the name with "i.e., Mercurius," since this is the Greek name (*στῆλβων*) for that planet. But Chaucer may have been thinking of the philosopher Stilbo, mentioned in Seneca Epist. 9, 18-19, 10.1 (Ayers, RomR 10:5) or in Seneca's *Dialogues* 2.5.6 (Hinckley, Notes on Ch, 175-76).

**621** Demetrius: His story appears in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* 1.1.5 (S&A, 438), immediately following that of Chilon (Chaucer's *Stilboun*).

**622** Parthes: See Magoun, Ch Gazetteer, 123.

**631-32** Cf. ParsT X.600n. Swearing is associated with gluttony in PP B 2.92-93, 6.92, 5.314, and 13.400. Drunkenness, a branch of gluttony, was associated with gambling. See Tupper, JEGP 13:553-65; Owst, Lit and Pulpit, 414-25.

**631-50** Cf. ParsT X.587-93 and 474-75 above.

**633-34** Mathew: Lat. gloss: "Do not swear at all" (Matt. 5.34).

**635** Lat. gloss: "Jeremiah 4: 'You shall swear in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness'" (Jer. 4.2, omitting "that the Lord lives" after "swear"). The same text is quoted in ParsT X.592 (Brown, ed., 36).

**639** the firste table: The first three commandments, setting forth the duties owed to God, the other seven being those owed to mankind; see Dives and Pauper, EETS 275, 1:304.

**641** seconde heeste: "Thou shalt not take the Lord's

name in vain" (reckoned as the third commandment in most Protestant usages).

**649-50** Ecclus. 23.11 has "A man given to swearing is lawless to the core; the scourge will never be far from his house . . . his house will be filled with trouble."

**651** *nayles*: Either Christ's fingernails or the nails of the cross. The former seems most likely in the light of Wyclif (Select Engl. Works 3.483): "It is not leeful to swere . . . by Godds bonys, sydus, naylus, ne arms, or by ony membre of Cristis body, as tho moste dele of men usen." As Skeat notes (5:284), however, the rioters were probably not concerned with the distinction.

**652** *Hayles*: Hayles Abbey in Gloucestershire, founded in 1246, where there was a vial containing what was said to be the blood of Christ; the blood was visible only to those with pure consciences; see Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*, 275-81.

**653** *chaunce*: In the game of hazard (*hasard*, VI.465), which is played with two dice, the thrower calls a number (his "main") and throws the dice; if his main appears, he wins; if two aces (*ambes as*), ace-deuce, or (if seven is the main) twelve appear, he loses; if seven is the main an eleven will also win, as will a twelve if six is the main. If any other number appears on the first roll, this is the thrower's *chaunce*, and the thrower casts the dice until either his *chaunce* appears and he wins, or his main reappears and he loses (see Charles Cotton, *The Compleat Gamester*, 1674, ed. in *Games and Gamesters of the Restoration* by Cyril H. Hartman, 1930, 82-84). Obviously modern "craps" is "hazard" with seven always the main. In this case the speaker's main was eight (*cink and trey*); on his first throw he cast a seven, which is now his winning number, his *chaunce*, while an eight will win for his opponent. For accounts of medieval dicing see Deschamps (*Oeuvres* 7:253-65 and 4:286-87) and Franz Semrau (*Würfel und Würfelspiel im alten Frankreich*, *Beih. zur ZRP*, 23, 1910).

**656** *bicched bones*: "Cursed dice" (MED s.v. *bicched* ppl). Brown (MLN 23, 1908, 126) compares "ossibus caninis" (dog's bones), used for "dice" by Vincent of Beauvais in *Speculum morale* 3.8.4, though it is not clear whether this refers to the material of which the dice were made or is also an opprobrious epithet.

**661** Sometimes taken as a clumsy transition back to the tale of the rioters; for a refutation see Osselton, ES 49, 1968, 37-38.

**662** *prime*: The first of the canonical hours (cf. GP I.122n.); the bell is rung at 6 A.M. for the singing of the office of prime.

**664-65** Skeat (5:286) notes the custom of ringing a handbell before a corpse on its way to burial and cites Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests, EETS 31, line 1964.

**679** *pestilence*: Possible reference to the plagues of 1348-50, 1361-62, 1376, and 1379, though there were minor outbreaks throughout the century. For contemporary accounts of riotous behavior in plague times, see Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death*, 1969, 160, 164, and 270-71; for the decline of morals after the plague, see Élisabeth Carpentier, *Une ville devant la peste: Orvieto et la Peste Noir de 1348, 1962, 195-96*; both are cited in Beidler's discussion of the plague background to *The Pardoner's Tale*, ChR 16, 1982, 257-69. For a contemporary description of the plague, see Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 1, intro., and PP B 20.52-182. The hospital at

Charing Cross (see GP I.670 and n.) was particularly hard hit.

**710** Cf. Hosea 13.4 and PP B 18.35.

**713** *oold man*: On the literary definition of old age in Chaucer's day, see Lowes, PMLA 20, 1905, 782-85; Coffman, MLN 52, 1937, 25-26; and Philip, MLN 53, 1938, 181-82. See also 727-36 below.

**717-20** Morgan (MLR 71:241-55) finds a source for the hostility of the rioters toward the old man in Rom 2925-28, 4955-58, 4961; Harris (SFQ 33, 1969, 24-38) cites Old Norse analogues; but this may have been part of the story as Chaucer received it (cf. the contempt for the old man shown by Tagliagambe in the *Rappresentazione di Sant' Antonio*, S&A, 423-24).

**719** The contemporary Geoffrey le Baker writes "The pestilence seized especially the young and strong, commonly sparing the elderly and feeble." Other chroniclers say the same (Beidler, ChR 16:260).

**721-24** Cf. Rom 4964-66.

**722** *Ynde*: Cf. WPro III.824n.

**727-36** The Old Man's desire for death is not found in any of the analogues; it is based on the first elegy of Maximian, in which the aged man knocks on the ground and pleads, "Receive me, mother, take pity on the hardships of age; I seek to warm my tired bones in your bosom" (vv. 227-28; S&A, 437). Chaucer may have read Maximian in school (Coffin, Spec 9, 1934, 269-71). Nitecki (ChR 16, 1981, 76-84) shows that the lament of an old man, based on Maximian's elegy, was the subject of a number of Middle English poems; she notes the closest analogue is "Le regret de Maximian," in Carleton Brown, *Rel. Lyrics of XIII Cent.*, 1932, 92-100.

**730** Steadman (N&Q 5, 1958, 323) derives the knocking on the gate, not in Maximian, from a Spanish proverb.

**743-44** Lat. gloss: "Stand up in the presence of a gray head" [and honor the face of an old man] (Lev. 19.32).

**745** Cf. Ecclus. 8.7: "Despise no man for being old."

**765** *ook*: The oak does not appear in the analogues. Candelaria (MLN 71, 1956, 321-22) connects this with the ancient folk custom of burying an image of death under an oak tree. Chaucer was robbed in 1390 at a place called "fowle ok" in Kent, an execution site (Kuhl, MLN 36, 1921, 157-59, and Ch Life Records, 477-89). Collette (ChR 19, 1984, 39-45) argues that the oak is a complex exegetical symbol of death and idolatry.

**770** *florins*: Either coins in general or German or Flemish florins, worth three shillings and struck in imitation of the Florentine florin, the standard gold coin of the later Middle Ages. An English florin was minted briefly in 1344 but then recalled and replaced by the "noble" (Baker, Spec 36, 1961, 282-86).

**779** "Treasure is believed to be a gift of Fortune . . . of ancient time it was by natural law the property of the finder, [but] it is now by the law of nations the property of the lord king himself" (Henri de Bracton, *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliae*, ed. George E. Woodbine, 1915-42, 2:338-39). This is quoted by Roache (JEGP 64, 1965, 1-6), who shows that the rioters commit theft by keeping the treasure.

**781** Proverbial; Whiting C384.

**793** See GP I.835.

**845** On poison lore see Hallissy, MSE 9, 1983, 54-63.

**848** he hadde leve: On God's permitting the devil to tempt an individual, see Job 1.2, 2.6 and cf. FrT III.1482-96.

**889-90** Avycen: Avicenna, the authority on medicine (see GP I.432 and note 429-34), whose work included canons or rules of procedure; in his book a chapter is called a *fen* (Arabic *fann*, a division of a science). His work treats of poisons in Bk. 4, Fen 6.

**907** nobles: First struck in the reign of Edward III, they were worth six shillings eight pence (Baker, Spec 36: 284-86, with illustrations).

**sterlynges**: The name is said to derive from the Eastlings, Norwegians and Danes, once brought to England to undertake the purification of the minting of English money (Drennen and Wyatt, ed. PardT, 79).

**916** Cf. Psalms 146.3 (A.V. 147.3).

**946** On complicit audiences' sharing the guilt of fraudulent pardoners, see Mitchell, CE 27:437-44.

**949** Knapp (ELH 39, 1972, 1-26) suggests there is an allusion here to the hair breeches worn by St. Thomas, an object of veneration at Canterbury.

**951** On St. Helen's discovery of the cross, see Acta Sanctorum, 18 Aug.

**952-53** Possibly an echo of RR 7108-9 where there is a word play on "coillons" and "reliques" (relikes). This is usually taken as a crude reference to the Pardoner's eunuchry (e.g., Curry, Ch and Science, 67), but cf. GP I.691 and n. Baum (Ch, 54) and Faulkner (Twentieth-Century Interpretations, 11) argue that this indicates that the Pardoner is not a eunuch.

**953** seintuarie: Taken by the OED as "shrine," but perhaps here rather "sacred relic" as in Roman de Troie, 25515; Cligés, 1194-96; Yvain, 6630-33.

**968** they kiste: They exchange the kiss of peace as a formal sign of reconciliation; on the custom see Nicholas J. Perella, The Kiss: Sacred and Profane, 1969, 130. Some critics have doubted that the Host and Pardoner are actually reconciled; see Burlin, Ch Fiction, 169-75.

## FRAGMENT VII

Fragment VII usually follows Fragment VI in the MSS with the Ellesmere order, but in the Chaucer Society order, which Skeat adopted for his edition, VII was joined with II, forming Fragment B, to correct a geographical inconsistency (see VII.1926 and n. and the introduction to the textual notes to *The Canterbury Tales*). Seventeen MSS contain lines linking The Pardoner's Tale with the Shipman's, and three other MSS contain lines that link The Nun's Priest's Tale with the Second Nun's Prologue and Tale (see textual notes to VI.944 and EpiNPT), but both links are clearly spurious.

Fragment VII is the longest and most varied of the fragments and lacks any very clear unifying theme. Paull F. Baum (Ch: A Crit. Appreciation, 1958, 74-84) argues that the tales of this fragment form a "Surprise Group," since, though the tellers tell stories that on reflection are seen to fit their characters, they often surprise the Host's expectations. Bernard F. Huppé (A Reading of CT, 1964, 231) emphasizes the dramatic refusal of the clergy to provide the Host with the sort of "mirth" he demands. Gaylord (PMLA 82, 1967, 226-35) suggests instead that the tales form a "literary group," with Harry Bailly acting as a kind of editor. Howard (Idea of CT,

271-88) finds rather a sort of "retrospective" unity supplied by The Nun's Priest's Tale read as a skeptically ironic comment on the tales that have gone before. Though the tales that make up the fragment are of varying dates of composition, the fragment itself was assembled rather late in the composition of *The Canterbury Tales* (see Dempster, PMLA 68, 1953, 1142-59) and perhaps never received a final revision.

LARRY D. BENSON

## The Shipman's Tale

The Host's words to the *gentil maryneer*, which follow this tale (VII.435-42), show Chaucer intended it for the Shipman. The textual history of EpiMLT II.1179, however, suggests that the tale may originally have been intended for another narrator (see note to that line). Furthermore, the pronouns *we* and *us* suggest a married female speaker. The tale may therefore have been originally intended for the Wife of Bath (Lawrence, Spec 33, 1958, 56-68, and Pratt, Sts. in Hon. of Baugh, 45-79). However, the Shipman may be mimicking a female speaker; see Copland (MAE 35, 1966, 25-26), comparing Skelton's *Magnificence*, 461.

The tale is a fabliau, like others of the *Tales*, but "nearer to the pure fabliau-type" (Brewer, in Companion to Ch, 259). The setting in St. Denis, the snatch of French at VII.214 and several oaths might suggest a French source; but the nearest known French analogue is not very close: *Le bouchier d'Abeville* (Benson and Andersson, Lit. Context, 282-311). The story belongs to a well-known folktale type, "the lover's gift regained": see J. W. Spargo, Ch's ShipT, The Lover's Gift Regained, FFC 91, 1930, and S&A, 439-46. The closest extant analogue is Boccaccio's *Decameron* 8.1 (8.2 is a similar story). A version preserved in Sercambi's Novella 19 (text and trans. in Benson and Andersson, Lit. Context, 312-19) perhaps gave Chaucer some ideas (see Pratt, MLN 55, 1940, 142-45). Guerin (ES 52, 1971, 412-19) suggests that he used all three Italian versions. If these were Chaucer's sources, however, he altered a great deal—particularly the ending where, in his version, the merchant's wife excuses herself with a ready answer (VII.400-426).

Uncertainty about the tale's narrator and the lack of any definite source have contributed to difficulties of interpretation. Lawrence (Spec 33:56-68) compares the tale with its analogues, and finds in Chaucer's untypical ending a profeminist tendency; but Tupper sees only the standard antifeminism (JEGP 33, 1934, 352-72). The tale may be read as simply cynical, "an immoral tale told by an immoral man" (Howard, Idea of CT, 273); but Richardson (Blameth Nat Me, 100-122) finds traditional Christian standards "embedded in the imagery," by which the behavior of the characters is measured and found wanting. According to Silverman (PQ 32, 1953, 329-36) the equation in the tale between sex and money shows that in the Shipman's world human relations are reduced to the level of financial transactions. Many critics see a basic irony directed at the merchant in the tale (e.g.,

The explanatory notes to The Shipman's Tale were written by J. A. Burrow and V. J. Scattergood.