

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

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Geoffrey Chaucer  
THE CANTERBURY TALES  
FIFTEEN TALES AND THE  
GENERAL PROLOGUE

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AUTHORITATIVE TEXT  
SOURCES AND BACKGROUNDS  
CRITICISM

SECOND EDITION

*Selected and Edited by*

V. A. KOLVE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT  
LOS ANGELES

GLENDING OLSON

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY



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W • W • NORTON & COMPANY • *New York • London*

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Printed in the United States of America.

The text of this book is composed in Fairfield Medium with the display set in Bernhard Modern.

Composition by PennSet, Inc.

Manufacturing by the Courier Companies—Westford Division.

Production Manager: Ben Reynolds.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Chaucer, Geoffrey, d. 1400.

[Canterbury tales. Selections]

The Canterbury tales : fifteen tales and the general prologue : authoritative texts, sources and backgrounds, criticism / selected and edited by V. A. Kolve, Glending Olson.

p. cm. — (A Norton critical edition)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-393-92587-0 (pbk.)

1. Christian pilgrims and pilgrimages—Poetry. 2. Storytelling—Poetry.  
3. Tales, Medieval. I. Kolve, V. A. II. Olson, Glending. III. Title. IV. Series.

PR1867.K65 2005

821'.1—dc22

2004063642

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110-0017

[www.wwnorton.com](http://www.wwnorton.com)

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., Castle House,

75/76 Wells Street, London W1T 3QT

3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

	Why! I dwelle in the signe of the leoun. <sup>3</sup>	
	Myn is the ruine of the hye halles,	
	The falling of the toures and of the walles	
2465	Upon the mynour <sup>o</sup> or the carpenter.	<i>miner</i>
	I slow <sup>o</sup> Sampson, shakinge the piler;	<i>slew</i>
	And myne be the maladyes colde,	
	The derke tresons, and the castes <sup>o</sup> olde;	<i>plots, deceits</i>
	My lokyng <sup>o</sup> is the fader of pestilence.	<i>aspect</i>
2470	Now weep namore, I shal doon diligence	
	That Palamon, that is thyn owne knight,	
	Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight. <sup>o</sup>	<i>promised</i>
	Though Mars shal helpe his knight, yet nathelees	
	Bitwixe yow ther moot be som tyme pees, <sup>o</sup>	<i>peace</i>
2475	Al be ye noght of o complexioun, <sup>o</sup>	<i>the same temperament</i>
	That causeth al day swich divisioun.	
	I am thin ayel, <sup>o</sup> redy at thy wille;	<i>grandfather</i>
	Weep now namore, I wol thy lust <sup>o</sup> fulfillle."	<i>desire</i>
	Now wol I stinten <sup>o</sup> of the goddes above,	<i>cease (to tell)</i>
2480	Of Mars and of Venus, goddesses of love,	
	And telle yow as pleyntly as I can	
	The grete effect <sup>o</sup> for which that I bigan.	<i>outcome</i>

## PART FOUR

	Greet was the feste in Athenes that day,	
	And eek the lusty seson of that May	
2485	Made every wight to been in swich plesaunce, <sup>o</sup>	<i>pleasure</i>
	That al that Monday justen <sup>o</sup> they and daunce,	<i>joust</i>
	And spenden it in Venus heigh servyse.	
	But by the cause that <sup>o</sup> they sholde ryse	<i>i.e., because</i>
	Erly, for to seen the grete fight,	
2490	Unto hir reste wenten they at night.	
	And on the morwe, whan that day gan springe,	
	Of hors and harneys <sup>o</sup> noyse and clateringe	<i>equipment</i>
	Ther was in hostelryes al aboute;	
	And to the paleys rood ther many a route <sup>o</sup>	<i>company</i>
2495	Of lordes upon stedes and palfreys.	
	Ther maystow seen devysyng <sup>o</sup> of harneys	<i>fashioning, preparation</i>
	So uncouth <sup>o</sup> and so riche, and wrought so weel <sup>o</sup>	<i>curious, unusual / well</i>
	Of goldsmithrie, of browdyng <sup>o</sup> , and of steel;	<i>embroidery</i>
	The sheeldes brighte, testes <sup>o</sup> , and trappures; <sup>o</sup>	<i>headpieces / trappings</i>
2500	Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;	
	Lordes in paraments <sup>o</sup> on hir coursers, <sup>o</sup>	<i>decorated robes / coursers, chargers</i>
	Knyghtes of retenue, <sup>o</sup> and eek squyeres	<i>in service</i>
	Nailyng the speres, <sup>+</sup> and helmes bokelinge;	
	Gigginge of <sup>o</sup> sheeldes with layneres <sup>o</sup> lacinge—	<i>Putting straps on / thongs</i>

3. Saturn is most malign while in the astrological house of Leo.

4. I.e., nailing the head to the shaft.

- 2505 Ther as° need is, they weren no thing ydel; *Wherever*  
 The fomy steedes on the golden brydel  
 Gnawinge, and faste the armurers also  
 With fyle and hamer prikinge° to and fro; *riding*  
 Yemen° on foote and communes° many oon *Yeomen / common people*
- 2510 With shorte staves, thikke as they may goon;  
 Pypes, trompes,° nakers,° clariounes *trumpets / kettledrums*  
 That in the bataille blowen bloody sounes,° *warlike sounds*  
 The paleys ful of peple up and down,  
 Heer three, ther ten, holding hir questioun,  
 2515 Divyninge of° thise Thebane knightes two. *Speculating about*  
 Somme seyden thus, somme seyde it shal be so;  
 Somme helden with° him with the blake berd, *sided with*  
 Somme with the balled,° somme with the thikke herd;° *bald / haired*  
 Somme sayde he° loked grim, and he wolde fighte— *that one*
- 2520 "He hath a sparth° of twenty pound of wighte."° *batile-ax / weight*  
 Thus was the halle ful of divyninge,  
 Longe after that the sonne gan to springe.  
 The grete Theseus, that of° his sleep awaked *out of*  
 With minstralcye and noyse that was maked,  
 2525 Held yet the chambre of his paleys riche,  
 Til that the Thebane knightes, bothe yliche° *equally*  
 Honoured, were into the paleys fet.° *summoned*  
 Duk Theseus was at a window set,  
 Arrayed right as he were a god in trone.° *throne*
- 2530 The peple preesseth thiderward ful sone  
 Him for to seen, and doon heigh reverence,  
 And eek to herkne° his heste° and his sentence.° *hear / command / decision*  
 An heraud on a scaffold made an "Oo!"  
 Til al the noyse of peple was ydo;° *done, finished*
- 2535 And whan he saugh the peple of noyse al stille,  
 Thus showed he the mighty dukes wille:  
 "The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun° *acumen*  
 Considered that it were destruccioun  
 To gentil blood to fighten in the gyse° *manner*  
 2540 Of mortal bataille now in this empryse.° *undertaking*  
 Wherefore, to shapen° that they shal not dye,  
 He wol his firste purpos modifye. *upon*  
 No man therfore, up° peyne of los of lyf,  
 No maner shot,° ne polax,° ne short knyf *arrow, missile / battle-ax*
- 2545 Into the listes sende,° or thider bringe;  
 Ne short swerd, for to stoke° with poynt bytinge,° *may send*  
 No man ne drawe ne bere it by his syde. *stab / piercing*  
 Ne no man shal unto his felawe° ryde *against his opponent*  
 But o cours° with a sharp y-grounde spere; *one charge*
- 2550 Foyme,° if him list, on fote, himself to were.° *He may parry / defend*  
 And he that is at meschief° shal be take,° *in trouble / taken, captured*  
 And noght slayn, but be broght unto the stake

	That shal ben ordeyned° on either syde;	<i>set up</i>
	But thider he shal by force, and ther abyde. <sup>5</sup>	
2555	And if so falle° the chieftayn be take	<i>befall, happen</i>
	On either syde, or elles° sleen° his make, <sup>6</sup>	<i>else / slay</i>
	No lenger shal the turneyinge laste.	
	God spede yow! goth forth, and ley on faste.	
	With long swerd and with mace fighteth youre fille.	
2560	Goth now youre wey—this is the lordes wille.”	
	The voys of peple touchede the hevене,	
	So loude cryde they with mery stevene:°	<i>voice</i>
	“God save swich a lord, that is so good,	
	He wilneth° no destruccioun of blood!”	<i>desires</i>
2565	Up goon the trompes° and the melodye,	<i>trumpets</i>
	And to the listes rit° the companye,	<i>rides</i>
	By ordinaunce,° thurghout the citee large,	<i>In order</i>
	Hanged with cloth of gold and nat with sarge.°	<i>serge</i>
	Ful lyk a lord this noble duk gan ryde,	
2570	Thise two Thebans upon either syde;	
	And after rood the quene and Emelye,	
	And after that another companye	
	Of oon and other, after hir degree.°	<i>according to their rank</i>
	And thus they passen thurghout the citee,	
2575	And to the listes come they bytyme.°	<i>promptly</i>
	It nas° not of the day yet fully pryme°	<i>was / 9 A.M.</i>
	Whan set was Theseus ful riche and hye,	
	Ipolita the quene and Emelye,	
	And othere ladies in degrees° aboute.	<i>tiers</i>
2580	Unto the seetes preesseth al the route.°	<i>crowd</i>
	And westward, thurgh the gates under Marte,°	<i>Mars</i>
	Arcite, and eek the hundred of his parte,°	<i>on his side</i>
	With baner° reed is entred right anon;	<i>banner</i>
	And in that selve° moment Palamon	<i>same</i>
2585	Is under Venus, estward in the place,	
	With baner whyt, and hardy chere° and face.	<i>countenance</i>
	In al the world, to seken up and down,	
	So evene° withouten variacioun,	<i>equal</i>
	Ther nere° swiche companyes tweye.	<i>were not</i>
2590	For ther was noon so wys that coude seye	
	That any hadde of other avauntage	
	Of° worthinesse, ne of estaat ne age,	<i>In</i>
	So evene were they chosen, for to gesse.°	<i>one would guess</i>
	And in two renges° faire they hem dresse.°	<i>rows / place themselves</i>
2595	Whan that hir names rad° were everichoon,°	<i>read / every one</i>
	That° in hir nombre gyle° were ther noon,	<i>So that / deception</i>
	Tho° were the gates shet,° and cryed was loude:	<i>Then / shut</i>
	“Do now your devoir,° yonge knightes proude!”	<i>duty</i>
	The heraudes lefte hir priking° up and down;	<i>their riding</i>

5. But there he must be brought by force, and there remain.

6. I.e., the opposing leader.

- 2600 Now ringen trompes loude and clarioun.  
 Ther is namore to seyn, but west and est  
 In goon the speres ful sadly° in th'arest;° *firmly / into the spear rests*  
 In goth the sharpe spore° into the syde. *spur*  
 Ther seen men who can juste° and who can ryde; *joust*
- 2605 Ther shiveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke;  
 He° feleth thurgh the herte-spoon° the prikke. *One / breastbone*  
 Up springen speres twenty foot on highte;° *on high*  
 Out goon the swerdes as the silver brighte.  
 The helmes they tohewen and toshrede;° *hew and shred to pieces*
- 2610 Out brest° the blood, with sterne° stremes rede. *bursts / powerful, violent*  
 With mighty maces the bones they tobreste.° *smash to bits*  
 He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste;° *thrust*  
 Ther stomblen stedes stronge, and doun goth al;  
 He rolleth under foot as dooth a bal.
- 2615 He foyneth° on his feet with his *parries*  
 tronchoun,° *truncheon, shattered spear*  
 And he him hurtleth° with his hors adoun. *strikes*  
 He thurgh the body is hurt and sithen° y-take, *then*  
 Maugree his heed,° and broght unto the stake. *In spite of all he could do*  
 As forward° was, right ther he moste abyde; *agreement*
- 2620 Another lad° is on that other syde. *led, carried off*  
 And som tyme dooth° hem Theseus to reste, *causes*  
 Hem to refresshe and drinken, if hem leste.° *if it please them*  
 Ful ofte a day° han thise Thebanes two *during this day*  
 Togidre y-met, and wroght his felawe wo;° *done harm to each other*
- 2625 Unhorsed hath ech other of hem tweye.° *twice*  
 Ther nas no tygre° in the vale of Galgopheye,<sup>7</sup> *tigress*  
 Whan that hir whelp is stole whan it is lyte,° *little*  
 So cruel on the hunte° as is Arcite *toward the hunter*  
 For jelous herte upon° this Palamoun. *toward*
- 2630 Ne in Belmarye ther nis so fel° leoun *fierce*  
 That hunted is, or for° his hunger wood,° *because of / enraged*  
 Ne of his praye desireth so the blood,  
 As Palamon to sleen° his foo Arcite. *slay*
- 2635 The jelous strokes on hir helmes byte;  
 Out renneth° blood on bothe hir sydes rede. *runs*  
 Som tyme an ende ther is of every dede.  
 For er the sonne unto the reste wente,  
 The stronge king Emetreus gan hente° *seize*  
 This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,
- 2640 And made his swerd depe in his flesh to byte;  
 And by the force of twenty is he take  
 Unyolden° and y-drawe° unto the stake. *Not having yielded / drawn, dragged*  
 And in the rescus° of this Palamoun *(attempted) rescue*  
 The stronge king Ligurge is born adoun;

7. Probably the valley of Gargaphie, where according to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Actaeon was killed by his hounds. Chaucer describes the event in ll. 2065–68. For Belmarye (l. 2630), see *General Prologue*, l. 57.

- 2645 And king Emetreus, for al his strengthe,  
 Is born<sup>o</sup> out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe, *carried, knocked*  
 So hitte him Palamon er he were take.  
 But al for noght: he was broght to the stake.  
 His hardy herte mighte him helpe naught;
- 2650 He moste abyde, whan that he was caught,  
 By force<sup>o</sup> and eek by composicioun.<sup>o</sup> *necessity / agreement*  
 Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,  
 That moot<sup>o</sup> namore goon agayn to fighte? *may*  
 And whan that Theseus had seyn this sighte,  
 2655 Unto the folk that foghten thus echoon  
 He cryde, "Ho! namore, for it is doon!  
 I wol be trewe juge, and nat partye.<sup>o</sup> *partisan*  
 Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelye,  
 That by his fortune hath hir faire<sup>o</sup> y-wonne." *fairly*
- 2660 Anon ther is a noyse of peple bigonne  
 For joye of this, so loude and heighe<sup>o</sup> withalle, *great*  
 It semed that the listes sholde falle.  
 What can now faire Venus doon above?  
 What seith she now? what dooth this quene of love
- 2665 But wepeth so, for wanting<sup>o</sup> of hir wille, *lacking*  
 Til that hir teres in the listes fille?<sup>o</sup> *fell*  
 She seyde, "I am ashamed,<sup>o</sup> doutelees." *shamed, disgraced*  
 Saturnus seyde, "Doghter, hold thy pees.<sup>o</sup> *peace*  
 Mars hath his wille: his knight hath al his bone;<sup>o</sup> *request*
- 2670 And, by myn heed,<sup>o</sup> thou shalt ben esed<sup>o</sup> sone."  
 The trompours<sup>o</sup> with the loude minstralcye,<sup>o</sup> *head / eased, satisfied*  
 The heraudes that ful loude yelle and crye, *trumpeters / music*  
 Been in hir wele<sup>o</sup> for joye of daun<sup>o</sup> Arcite. *happiness / sir, master*  
 But herkneþ me, and stinteth<sup>o</sup> noyse a lyte,<sup>o</sup> *cease / litle*
- 2675 Which<sup>o</sup> a miracle ther bifel anon. *What*  
 This fierse<sup>o</sup> Arcite hath of<sup>o</sup> his helm y-don,<sup>o</sup> *bold / off / taken*  
 And on a courser, for to shewe his face,  
 He priketh endelong<sup>o</sup> the large place, *the length of*  
 Loking upward upon this Emelye;
- 2680 And she agayn<sup>o</sup> him caste a freendlich yē  
 (For wommen, as to speken in comune,<sup>o</sup> *toward*  
 They folwen alle the favour of fortune) *generally*  
 And she was al his chere,<sup>o</sup> as in his herte. *happiness*  
 Out of the ground a furie infernal sterte,<sup>o</sup> *started, leaped*
- 2685 From Pluto sent at requeste of Saturne,  
 For which his hors for fere<sup>o</sup> gan to turne *fear*  
 And leep<sup>o</sup> asyde, and foundred<sup>o</sup> as he leep; *leaped / foundered, stumbled*  
 And er that Arcite may taken keep,<sup>o</sup> *heed*  
 He pighte<sup>o</sup> him on the pomel<sup>o</sup> of his heed, *pitched / crown, top*
- 2690 That in the place he lay as he were deed,  
 His brest tobrosten<sup>o</sup> with<sup>o</sup> his sadel-bowe.<sup>8</sup> *broken, shattered / by*

8. The high arched front of a saddle. Arcite's horse, after rearing and pitching him off, falls backward on top of him.

- As blak he lay as any cole° or crowe,  
 So was the blood y-ronnen in° his face.  
 Anon he was y-born out of the place,  
 2695 With herte soor, to Theseus paleys.  
 Tho° was he corven° out of his harneys,°  
 And in a bed y-brought ful faire and blyve,°  
 For he was yet in memorie° and alyve,  
 And alway crying after Emelye.
- 2700 Duk Theseus, with al his companye,  
 Is comen hoom to Athenes his citee,  
 With alle blisse and greet solempnitee.  
 Al be it that this aventure° was falle,°  
 He nolde noght disconforten° hem alle.  
 2705 Men seyde eek that Arcite shal nat dye;  
 He shal ben heled of his maladye.  
 And of another thing they were as fayn:°  
 That of hem alle was ther noon y-slayn,  
 Al° were they sore y-hurt, and namely° oon,  
 2710 That with a spere was thirled° his brest-boon.  
 To° othere woundes and to broken armes  
 Some hadden salves, and some hadden charmes;  
 Fermacies° of herbes, and eek save°  
 They dronken, for they wolde hir limes° have.°  
 2715 For which this noble duk, as he wel can,°  
 Conforteth and honoureth every man,  
 And made revel al the longe night  
 Unto the straunge° lordes, as was right.  
 Ne ther was holden no disconfitinge  
 2720 But as a justes or a tourneyinge;  
 For soothly ther was no disconfiture,  
 For falling nis nat but an aventure.°  
 Ne to be lad° with fors unto the stake  
 Unyolden,° and with twenty knightes take,  
 2725 O° persone allone, withouten mo,  
 And haried° forth by arme, foot, and to,°  
 And eek his steede driven forth with staves  
 With° footmen, bothe yemen and eek knaves°—  
 It nas aretted° him no vileinye,°  
 2730 Ther may no man clepen° it cowardye.°  
 For which anon duk Theseus leet crye,°  
 To stinten° alle rancour and envye,°  
 The gree° as wel of o syde as of other,  
 And either syde ylyk° as otheres brother;  
 2735 And yaf hem yiftes after hir degree,  
 And fully heeld a feste dayes three;  
 And conveyed the kinges worthily  
 Out of his toun a journee° largely.°

coal  
intoThen / cut / armor  
quickly  
consciousaccident / had occurred  
dishearten

glad

Although / especially  
pierced  
ForMedicines / a drink made of herbs  
limbs / keep, preserve  
knows how

foreign

led, carried  
Not having yielded  
One  
dragged / toeBy / servants  
attributed to / disgrace  
call / cowardice  
caused to be proclaimed  
stop / bad will  
worthiness  
alike

a day's journey / fully

9. Nor was anything accounted a defeat except as is proper to a jousting or a tournament; for truly there was no dishonor, since falling (in a joust) is nothing but an accident.



- And hoom wente every man the righte way.  
 2740 Ther was namore but "Farewel, have good day!"  
 Of this bataille I wol namore endyte,<sup>o</sup> *tell, make verses*  
 But speke of Palamon and of Arcite.  
 Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the sore  
 Encreeseth at his herte more and more.  
 2745 The clothered<sup>o</sup> blood, for<sup>o</sup> any lechecraft,<sup>o</sup> *clotted / despite / medical care*  
 Corrupteth and is in his bouk<sup>o</sup> y-laft,<sup>o</sup> *body / left*  
 That neither veyne-blood,<sup>o</sup> ne ventusinge,<sup>o</sup> *bloodletting / cupping*  
 Ne drinke of herbes may ben his helpinge.  
 The vertu expulsif, or animal,  
 2750 Fro thilke vertu cleped natural<sup>1</sup>  
 Ne may the venim voyden<sup>o</sup> ne expelle. *void, remove*  
 The pypes<sup>o</sup> of his longes<sup>o</sup> gonne to swelle, *tubes / lungs*  
 And every lacerte<sup>o</sup> in his brest adoun *muscle*  
 Is shent<sup>o</sup> with venim and corrupcioun.<sup>o</sup> *damaged / decay*  
 2755 Him gayneth<sup>o</sup> neither, for to gete<sup>o</sup> his lyf, *It helps him / save*  
 Vomyt upward ne dounward laxatif;  
 Al is tobrosten<sup>o</sup> thilke regioun. *shattered*  
 Nature hath now no dominacioun;<sup>o</sup> *dominion, power*  
 And certainly, ther nature wol nat wirche,<sup>o</sup> *work*  
 2760 Farewel, phisyk;<sup>o</sup> go ber the man to chirche. *medicine*  
 This al and som,<sup>o</sup> that Arcita mot<sup>o</sup> dye; *This is the entire matter / must*  
 For which he sendeth after Emelye  
 And Palamon, that was his cosin dere.  
 Than seyde he thus, as ye shul after here:  
 2765 "Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte  
 Declare o poynt<sup>o</sup> of alle my sorwes smerte<sup>o</sup> *one part / painful*  
 To yow, my lady, that I love most;  
 But I biquethe<sup>o</sup> the service of my gost<sup>o</sup> *bequeath / spirit, soul*  
 To yow aboven every creature,  
 2770 Sin<sup>o</sup> that my lyf may no lenger dure.<sup>o</sup> *Since / last*  
 Allas, the wo! allas, the peynes stronge,  
 That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!  
 Allas, the deeth! allas, myn Emelye!  
 Allas, departinge<sup>o</sup> of oure companye! *separation*  
 2775 Allas, myn hertes quene! allas, my wyf!  
 Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!  
 What is this world? what asketh men<sup>o</sup> to have? *does one ask*  
 Now with his love, now in his colde grave  
 Allone, withouten any companye.  
 2780 Farewel, my swete fo, myn Emelye!  
 And softe tak me in your armes tweye,  
 For love of God, and herkneth what I seye:  
 I have heer with my cosin Palamon

1. Medieval medicine thought three powers ("virtues") controlled the functions of the body. Here the animal virtue, located in the brain, is unable to force the muscles to expel the corrupted blood from the natural virtue, located in the liver. Hence the natural virtue is powerless to perform one of its normal tasks, cleansing the lungs of corrupt substances.

- Had stryf and rancour many a day agon,<sup>o</sup> past  
 2785 For love of yow and for my jalousye.  
 And Jupiter so wis<sup>o</sup> my soule gye,<sup>o</sup> wise / guide  
 To speken of<sup>o</sup> a servant<sup>o</sup> proprely, about / servant (of love)  
 With alle circumstaunces<sup>o</sup> trewely— necessary qualities  
 That is to seyn, trouthe,<sup>o</sup> honour, knighthede, fidelity  
 2790 Wisdom, humblesse,<sup>o</sup> estaat,<sup>o</sup> and heigh kinrede,<sup>o</sup> humility / position / kindred  
 Freedom,<sup>o</sup> and al that longeth<sup>o</sup> to that art— Generosity / belongs  
 So Jupiter have of my soule part,<sup>o</sup> i.e., receive after death  
 As in this world right now ne knowe I non  
 So worthy to ben loved as Palamon,  
 2795 That serveth yow and wol don al his lyf.  
 And if that evere ye shul been a wyf,  
 Foryet nat Palamon, the gentil<sup>o</sup> man.” noble, virtuous  
 And with that word his speche faille gan,<sup>o</sup> began to  
 For from his feet up to his brest was come  
 2800 The cold of deeth, that hadde him overcome,  
 And yet moreover, in his armes two  
 The vital strengthe is lost and al ago.  
 Only<sup>o</sup> the intellect, withouten more,<sup>o</sup> Only then / without delay  
 That dwelled in his herte syk and sore,  
 2805 Gan failen when the herte felte deeth.  
 Dusked<sup>o</sup> his eyen two, and failed breeth, Became dim  
 But on his lady yet caste he his yë;  
 His laste word was, “Mercy, Emelye!”  
 His spirit chaunged hous and wente ther  
 2810 As<sup>o</sup> I cam never, I can nat tellen wher. Where  
 Therfor I stinte,<sup>o</sup> I nam no divinistre;<sup>o</sup> stop / diviner, theologian  
 Of soules finde I nat in this registre,<sup>o</sup> register, list  
 Ne me ne list<sup>o</sup> thilke<sup>o</sup> opiniouns to telle It does not please me / those  
 Of hem, though that they wryten wher they dwelle.  
 2815 Arcite is cold, ther<sup>o</sup>. Mars his soule gye.<sup>o</sup> wherefore may / guide  
 Now wol I speken forth of Emelye.  
 Shrighte<sup>o</sup> Emelye and howleth Palamon, Shrieked  
 And Theseus his suster took anon  
 Swowninge, and bar<sup>o</sup> hire fro the corps away. bore, carried  
 2820 What helpeth it to tarien forth the day<sup>2</sup>  
 To tellen how she weep<sup>o</sup> bothe eve and morwe? wept  
 For in swich cas wommen have swich sorwe,  
 Whan that hir housbondes been from hem ago,<sup>o</sup> gone  
 That for the more part they sorwen so,<sup>o</sup> thus, in that manner  
 2825 Or elles fallen in swich a maladye  
 That at the laste certainly they dye.  
 Infinite been the sorwes and the teres  
 Of olde folk and folk of tendre yeres  
 In al the toun, for deeth of this Theban;  
 2830 For him ther wepeth bothe child and man.

2. What does it serve to while away the day.

- So greet weping was ther noon, certayn,  
 Whan Ector° was y-broght, al fresh y-slayn, Hector  
 To Troye. Allas, the pitee that was ther:  
 Cracching° of chekes, renting° eek of heer. Scratching / rending, tearing  
 2835 "Why woldestow° be deed," thise wommen crye, didst thou wish to  
 "And haddest gold ynough, and Emelye?"  
 No man mighte gladen Theseus  
 Savinge° his olde fader Egeus, Except  
 That knew this worldes transmutacioun,° mutability  
 2840 As he had seyn it chaunge bothe up and doun—  
 Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse—  
 And shewed hem ensamples and lyknesse.° i.e., analogies  
 "Right as ther deyed° nevere man," quod he, died  
 "That he ne livede in erthe in some degree,  
 2845 Right so ther livede never man," he seyde,  
 "In al this world, that som tyme he ne deyde.  
 This world nis but a thurghfare° ful of wo, thoroughfare, roadway  
 And we ben pilgrimes, passinge to and fro:  
 Deeth is an ende of every worldly sore."° pain, sorrow  
 2850 And over° al this yet seyde he muchel more beyond  
 To this effect, ful wysely to enhorte° exhort  
 The peple that they sholde hem reconforte.° be comforted  
 Duk Theseus, with al his bisy cure,° diligent concern  
 Caste° now wher that the sepulture° Considered / burial  
 2855 Of goode Arcite may best y-maked be,  
 And eek most honorable in° his degree.° according to / rank  
 And at the laste he took conclusioun,  
 That ther as° first Arcite and Palamoun where  
 Hadden for love the bataille hem bitwene,  
 2860 That in that selve° grove, swote° and grene, same / sweet  
 Ther as he hadde his amoureuse desires,  
 His compleynte,° and for love his hote fires, lament  
 He wolde make a fyr, in which the office° duties, rites  
 Funeral he mighte al accomplice;  
 2865 And leet comaunde° anon to hakke and hewe had commands given  
 The okes olde, and leye hem on a rewe° row  
 In colpons° wel arrayed° for to brenne.° pieces / arranged / burn  
 His officers with swifte feet they renne° run  
 And ryde anon at his comaundement.  
 2870 And after this, Theseus hath y-sent  
 After a bere,° and it al overspradde° bier / covered  
 With cloth of gold, the richeste that he hadde;  
 And of the same suyte° he cladde Arcite. material  
 Upon his hondes hadde he gloves whyte,  
 2875 Eek on his heed a croune of laurer° grene, laurel  
 And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.  
 He leyde him, bare the visage,° on the bere; with face uncovered  
 Therwith he weep° that pitee was to here. wept  
 And for° the peple sholde seen him alle, so that

- 2880 Whan it was day he broghte him to the halle,  
That roreth of the crying and the soun.  
Tho cam this woful Theban Palamoun,  
With flotery° berd and ruggy,° asshy° heres, *fluttering / unkempt / ash-covered*  
In clothes blake, y-dropped° al with teres; *wet*
- 2885 And, passinge othere of° weping, Emelye, *surpassing others in*  
The rewfulleste° of al the companye. *most rueful, sorrowful*  
In as muche as the service sholde be  
The more noble and riche in° his degree, *according to*  
Duk Theseus leet° forth three stedes bringe,° *caused / to be brought*
- 2890 That trapped° were in steel al gliteringe *outfitted*  
And covered with the armes° of daun Arcite. *coat of arms*  
Upon these stedes, that weren grete and whyte,  
Ther seten° folk, of which oon bar° his sheeld, *sat / bore*  
Another his spere up in his hondes heeld,
- 2895 The thridde bar with him his bowe Turkeys°— *Turkish*  
Of brend° gold was the cas° and eek the harneys;° *refined / quiver / fittings*  
And riden° forth a pas° with sorweful *(they) rode / at a walk*  
chere° *countenance*  
Toward the grove, as ye shul after here.  
The nobleste of the Grekes that ther were
- 2900 Upon hir shuldres carieden the bere, *slow pace*  
With slakke pas° and eyen rede and wete, *principal*  
Thurghout the citee by the maister° strete, *spread / wondrously high*  
That sprad° was al with blak; and wonder hye°  
Right of the same is the strete y-wrye.<sup>3</sup>
- 2905 Upon the right hond wente old Egeus,  
And on that other syde duk Theseus,  
With vessels in hir hand of gold ful fyn,  
Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn;  
Eek Palamon, with ful greet companye;
- 2910 And after that cam woful Emelye,  
With fyr in honde, as was that tyme the gyse,° *custom*  
To do the office of funeral servyse.  
Heigh° labour and ful greet apparailinge° *Great / preparation*  
Was at the service and the fyr-makinge,
- 2915 That with his° grene top the hevene raughte,° *its / reached*  
And twenty fadme of brede the armes straughte<sup>4</sup>—  
This is to seyn, the bowes° were so brode. *boughs*  
Of stree° first ther was leyd ful many a lode; *straw*  
But how the fyr was maked upon highte,° *in height*  
Ne eek the names how the treës highte°— *were called*
- 2920 As ook, firre, birch, aspe,° alder, holm,° popler, *aspen / holm oak (holly)*  
Wilow, elm, plane, ash, box, chasteyn,° lind,° laurer, *chestnut / linden*  
Mapul, thorn, beech, hasel, ew,° whippeltree°— *yew / dogwood*  
How they weren feld shal nat be told for me;
- 2925 Ne how the goddes° ronnen° up and down, *i.e., tree spirits / ran*

3. With the same material the street fronts were draped.

4. And twenty fathoms in breadth the sides stretched.

	Disherited° of hire habitacioun,	<i>Disinherited</i>
	In which they woneden° in reste and pees—	<i>dwelled</i>
	Nymphes, faunes, and amadrides,°	<i>hamadryads</i>
	Ne how the bestes and the briddes alle	
2930	Fledden for fere whan the wode was falle,°	<i>felled</i>
	Ne how the ground agast was of the light,	
	That was nat wont° to seen the sonne bright;	<i>accustomed</i>
	Ne how the fyr was couched° first with stree,°	<i>laid / straw</i>
	And thanne with drye stikkes cloven a° three,	<i>in</i>
2935	And thanne with grene wode and spycerye,°	<i>spices</i>
	And thanne with cloth of gold and with perrye,°	<i>jewels</i>
	And gerlandes hanginge with ful many a flour,	
	The mirre,° th'encens,° with al so greet odour;	<i>myrrh / incense</i>
	Ne how Arcite lay among al this,	
2940	Ne what richesse aboute his body is;	
	Ne how that Emelye, as was the gyse,°	<i>custom</i>
	Putte in° the fyr of funeral servyse;	<i>I.e., lit</i>
	Ne how she swowned whan men made the fyr,	
	Ne what she spak, ne what was hir desyr;	
2945	Ne what jeweles men in the fyr caste,	
	Whan that the fyr was greet and brente° faste;	<i>burned</i>
	Ne how som caste hir sheeld, and som hir spere,	
	And of hire° vestiments whiche that they were,°	<i>part of their / were wearing</i>
	And cuppes ful of milk and wyn and blood,	
2950	Into the fyr that brente as it were wood;°	<i>mad</i>
	Ne how the Grekes with an huge route°	<i>company</i>
	Thryës° riden al the fyr aboute	<i>Thrice</i>
	Upon the left hand, with a loud shoutinge,	
	And thryës with hir speres clateringe;	
2955	And thryës how the ladies gonne crye;°	<i>cried out</i>
	Ne how that lad° was homward Emelye;	<i>led</i>
	Ne how Arcite is brent to asshen colde;	
	Ne how that liche-wake° was y-holde°	<i>funeral wake / held</i>
	Al thilke night; ne how the Grekes pleye	
2960	The wake-pleyes,° ne kepe° I nat to seye—	<i>funeral games / care</i>
	Who wrestleth best naked with oille enoynt,°	<i>anointed</i>
	Ne who that bar him best in no disjoynt.°	<i>in any difficulty</i>
	I wol nat tellen eek how that they goon	
	Hoom til° Athenes whan the pley is doon;	<i>to</i>
2965	But shortly to the poynt than wol I wende,°	<i>proceed</i>
	And maken of my longe tale an ende.	
	By processe° and by lengthe of certeyn°	<i>In course / a certain number of</i>
	yeres	
	Al stinted° is the moorninge and the teres	<i>ceased</i>
	Of Grekes, by oon general assent.	
2970	Thanne semed me ther was a parlement	
	At Athenes, upon certeyn poynts and cas;°	<i>matters</i>
	Among the whiche poynts y-spoken was	
	To have with certeyn contrees alliaunce,	

	And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce.°	<i>submission</i>
2975	For which this noble Theseus anon Leet° senden after gentil Palamon, Unwist of° him what was the cause and why; But in his blake clothes sorwefully He cam at his comaundement in hye.°	<i>Caused</i> <i>Unknown to</i> <i>haste</i>
2980	Tho sente Theseus for Emelye. Whan they were set, and hust° was al the place, And Theseus abiden hadde a space° Er any word cam from his wyse brest, His eyen sette he ther as was his lest,°	<i>hushed</i> <i>space of time</i> <i>pleasure</i>
2985	And with a sad visage he syked stille,° And after that right thus he seyde his wille: "The Firste Moevere of the cause above, Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love, Greet was th'effect, and heigh° was his entente.	<i>sighed quietly</i> <i>noble</i>
2990	Wel wiste he why, and what thereof he mente,° For with that faire cheyne of love he bond° The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee. That same Prince and that Moevere," quod he,	<i>intended</i> <i>bound</i>
2995	"Hath stablissed° in this wrecched world adoun° Certeyne° dayes and duracioun To al that is engendred in this place, Over° the whiche day they may nat pace,° Al mowe they° yet tho dayes wel abregge.°	<i>established / below</i> <i>Beyond / pass</i> <i>Although they may / abridge, shorten</i>
3000	Ther needeth non auctoritee to allegge,° For it is preved° by experience, But that me list° declaren my sentence.° Than may men by this ordre wel discernen That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne.°	<i>cite</i> <i>proved</i> <i>it pleases me / thought</i> <i>eternal</i>
3005	Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool, That every part deryveth° from his hool.° For nature hath nat taken his beginning Of no partye° or cantel° of a thing, But of° a thing that parfit is and stable,	<i>derives, descends / its own whole</i> <i>part / portion</i> <i>from</i>
3010	Descendinge so° til it be corrupable.° And therefore, of his wyse purveyaunce,° He hath so wel biset° his ordinaunce° That spesces° of thinges and progressiouns° Shullen endure by successiouns°	<i>i.e., from heaven / corruptible</i> <i>providence, foresight</i> <i>arranged / plan</i> <i>species / natural changes</i> <i>succession of generations</i>
3015	And nat eterne,° withouten any lye. This maistow° understonde and seen at eye:° Lo, the ook that hath so long a norisshinge° From tyme that it first biginneth springe, And hath so long a lyf, as we may see,	<i>by being eternal</i> <i>mayest thou / by looking</i> <i>growth</i>
3020	Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.	

5. I.e., a certain number of.

- Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon  
 Under oure feet, on which we trede and goon,  
 Yet wasteth it, as it lyth by the weye.  
 The brode river somtyme wexeth dreye;° *becomes dry*
- 3025 The grete tounes see we wane and wende.° *pass away*  
 Than may ye see that al this thing hath ende.  
 Of man and womman seen we wel also  
 That nedes,° in oon of this termes° two, *by necessity / times*  
 This is to seyn, in youthe or elles age,  
 3030 He moot be deed, the king as shal a page;  
 Som° in his bed, som in the depe see, *One*  
 Som in the large feeld, as men may see.  
 Ther helpeth noght: al goth that ilke° weye. *same*  
 Thanne may I seyn that al this thing moot deye.° *must die*
- 3035 What° maketh this but Jupiter the king, *Who*  
 That is prince and cause of alle thing,  
 Convertinge al unto his° propre welle° *its / source*  
 From which it is deryved, sooth to telle?  
 And here-agayns° no creature on lyve,° *against this / alive*
- 3040 Of no degree, availleth° for to stryve. *it avails*  
 Thanne is it wisdom, as it thinketh° me, *seems to*  
 To maken vertu of necessitee,  
 And take it wel that° we may nat eschue,° *what / eschew, avoid*  
 And namely° that to us alle is due. *especially*
- 3045 And whoso gruccheth° ought,° he dooth *grouches, complains / in any way*  
 folye,  
 And rebel is to him that al may gye.° *govern*  
 And certainly a man hath most honour  
 To dyen in his excellence and flour,  
 Whan he is siker° of his gode name; *sure*
- 3050 Than hath he doon his freend ne him° no shame. *himself*  
 And gladder oghte his freend ben of his deeth  
 Whan with honour up yolden° is his breeth,  
 Than whan his name apalled° is for age, *yielded*  
 For al forgeten is his vasselage.° *faded, dimmed*
- 3055 Than is it best, as for a worthy fame,  
 To dyen whan that he is best of name.  
 The contrarie of al this is wilfulnesse.  
 Why grucchen we, why have we hevinesse,° *sorrow*  
 That goode Arcite, of chivalrye flour,° *the flower*
- 3060 Departed is with duetee° and honour *due respect*  
 Out of this foule prison of this lyf?  
 Why grucchen heer his cosin and his wyf  
 Of his welfare, that loveth hem so weel?  
 Can he hem thank? Nay, God wot, never a deel,° *not a bit*
- 3065 That° bothe his soule and eek himself° offende,° *Who / themselves / hurt*  
 And yet they mowe° hir lustes° nat amende.° *can / happiness / advance*  
 What may I conclude of this longe serie,° *sequence of arguments*  
 But after wo I rede° us to be merie, *advise*

- And thanken Jupiter of al his grace;  
 3070 And er that we departen from this place,  
 I rede° that we make of sorwes two *advise*  
 O° parfyt joye, lastinge everemo; *One*  
 And loketh now, wher most sorwe is herinne,  
 Ther wol we first amenden and biginne.  
 3075 Suster," quod he, "this is my fulle assent,° *desire*  
 With al th'avys° heer of my parlement: *advice*  
 That gentil Palamon, your owne knight,  
 That serveth yow with wille, herte, and might,  
 And ever hath doon sin° ye first him knewe, *since*  
 3080 That ye shul of your grace upon him rewe,° *take pity*  
 And taken him for housbonde and for lord.  
 Leene° me your hond, for this is our acord.° *Give / agreement*  
 Lat see now of youre wommanly pitee.  
 He is a kinges brother° sone, pardee;° *brother's / indeed (Fr. par Dieu)*  
 3085 And though he were a povre bacheler,° *young knight*  
 Sin he hath served yow so many a yeer,  
 And had for yow so greet adversitee,  
 It moste been considered, leveth° me; *believe*  
 For gentil mercy oghte to passen° right."° *surpass, prevail over / justice*  
 3090 Than seyde he thus to Palamon the knyght:  
 "I trowe° ther nedeth litel sermoning° *believe / preaching, persuading*  
 To make yow assente to this thing.  
 Com neer, and tak your lady by the hond."  
 Bitwixen hem was maad anon° the bond *at once*  
 3095 That highte matrimoigne° or marriage, *matrimony*  
 By al the counseil° and the baronage. *council*  
 And thus with alle blisse and melodye  
 Hath Palamon y-wedded Emelye.  
 And God, that al this wyde world hath wroght,  
 3100 Sende him his love that hath it dere aboght.° *who has paid dearly for it*  
 For now is Palamon in alle wele,° *happiness*  
 Livinge in blisse, in richesse, and in hele,° *health, well-being*  
 And Emelye him loveth so tendrely,  
 And he hir serveth so gentilly  
 3105 That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene  
 Of jalousye or any other tene.° *trouble, vexation*  
 Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye;  
 And God save al this faire companye! Amen.

## The Miller's Prologue and Tale

*The Prologue*

- Whan that the Knight had thus his tale y-told,  
 3110 In al the route° nas° ther yong ne old *company / was not*  
 That he ne seyde it was a noble storie,  
 And worthy for to drawn to° memorie, *hold in*