

FRANKLIN'S TALE

The Portrait, Prologue and Tale of the Franklin

The portrait of the Franklin from the General Prologue

where he is shown as a generous man who enjoys the good things of life. He travels in the company of a rich attorney, the Man of Law

	A FRANKÉLIN was in his company.	<i>rich landowner</i>
	White was his beard as is the daisy.	
	Of his complexiõn he was sanguine. ¹	<i>ruddy & cheerful</i>
	Well loved he by the morrow a sop in wine.	<i>in the a.m.</i>
335	To livèn in delight was ever his won,	<i>custom</i>
	For he was Epicurus's own son	
	That held opiniõn that plain delight	<i>total pleasure</i>
	Was very felicity perfite. ²	<i>truly perfect happiness</i>
	A householder and that a great was he;	
340	Saint Julian he was in his country. ³	
	His bread, his ale, was always after one.	<i>of one kind i.e. good</i>
	A better envinèd man was never none.	<i>with better wine cellar</i>
	Withouten bakèd meat was never his house	<i>food</i>
	Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous	
345	It snowèd in his house of meat and drink	<i>food</i>
	Of allè dainties that men could bethink.	
	After the sundry seasons of the year	<i>according to</i>
	So changèd he his meat and his supper.	
	Full many a fat partridge had he in mew	<i>pen</i>
350	And many a bream and many a luce in stew.	<i>fish / in pond</i>
	Woe was his cook but if his saucè were	
	Poignant and sharp, and ready all his gear. ⁴	<i>tangy</i>
	His table dormant in his hall alway	<i>set / always</i>
	Stood ready covered all the longè day.	

¹ 333: *Complexion ... sanguine* : probably means (1) he had a ruddy face and (2) he was of "sanguine humor", i.e. outgoing and optimistic because of the predominance of blood in his system.

² 336-8: Epicurus was supposed to have taught that utmost pleasure was the greatest good (hence "epicure").

³ 340: St Julian was the patron saint of hospitality

⁴ 351-2: His cook would regret it if his sauce was not sharp

355	At sessions there was he lord and sire.	<i>law sessions</i>
	Full often time he was knight of the shire.	<i>member of Parliament</i>
	An anlace and a gipser all of silk	<i>dagger / purse</i>
	Hung at his girdle white as morning milk.	
	A sherriff had he been, and a counter.	<i>tax overseer</i>
360	Was nowhere such a worthy vavasor. ¹	<i>gentleman</i>

Introduction to the Franklin's Tale

The Franklin's Tale has been taken by many critics to be the final and admirable contribution to the Marriage Group of tales — this tale and the preceding tales of the Wife, the Clerk and the Merchant. The Wife's tale insists on female dominance, the Clerk's shows what can happen if male dominance becomes tyrannical, and the Merchant's is a tale of a marriage born in the stupidity and self-indulgence of one partner, and continued in the adultery and deceit of the other. The Franklin advocates tolerance and forbearance on both sides of marriage, a willingness to do each other's will, and to give up the hopeless notion that you can always make your will prevail. Even if you could, it would spell death to any hope of love:

*When mastery comes, the God of love anon
Beateth his wings, and farewell, he is gone*

But that is not the only trouble a marriage may have to face. The marriage partners in *The Franklin's Tale* have settled for mutual love and forbearance, but then the wife's truth to her marriage promise is tested by the persistence of a young squire who falls in love with her and gets a bad case of "hereos," an affliction that befalls young men who fall hopelessly in love. It includes an inability to talk to the beloved, as well as a strong tendency to write poetry and to take to bed for long periods at a time, sick with love longing. When the young man finally does approach the lady, she rejects his advances, but to soften the blow she lightly makes a rash promise to grant him his wish if he removes all the rocks around the coast which threaten the

¹ 359-60: *sherriff*: "shire reeve," King's representative in a shire, i.e. county. *counter*: overseer of taxes for the treasury. *vavasour*: wealthy gentleman, possibly also a family name.

safe return of her husband. When he seems to accomplish this by magic, she now has to face the "truth", the answer to the question: Which shall she keep, the "troth" she has pledged to her husband in marriage or the troth she has so lightly pledged to Aurelius to breach that marriage? "Truth is the highest thing that man may keep," says her husband when she tells him her dilemma, and he sends her on her way to keep her rash promise to the love-sick squire. Just like that. The disturbing question as to which "troth / truth" takes precedence over which, is not discussed, but brushed aside by the narrator (1493-98).

When she meets the squire on her way to keep the tryst, her words unite three major topics of the tale: marriage, truth, submission. "Where are you going?" he asks:

*Unto the garden, as my husband bade,
My truthè for to hold, alas! alas!*

The squire, impressed by the fidelity of husband and wife to their word, releases her from her promise; now he has to keep truth with the magician to whom he has promised a sum that he cannot immediately pay. But in return for his generosity to the wife, he is forgiven his debt also.

For the Franklin, the generosity of all parties, and their fidelity to their word is a display of *gentillesse* or "gentleness," the kind of magnanimous behavior that was supposed to go with being born into the gentry, a topic on which Chaucer held forth through the mouth of the hag in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and in his own ballade called *Gentillesse*. Indeed, *gentillesse* rivals *truth* for frequency of occurrence in this tale of the Franklin. While all the "gentle" people display *gentillesse*, the magician, who is not a born patrician, shows *gentillesse* also in a prominent way. He illustrates in his action what the old hag in the Wife's tale had insisted on: that *gentillesse* is not a matter of birth only, but of moral quality.

The Franklin, a country gentleman, is very concerned about being a gentleman, but he professes not to be well educated in Rhetoric, that is, in the art of speaking eloquently. He says he does not really know how to use the "colors" of rhetoric, the arts and tricks of presenting oneself in words: he only knows how to tell a plain, unadorned tale. This is Chaucer's little joke. *The Franklin's Tale* is told with as much skill as any other in the collection, and in fact displays a good many of the "colors" of rhetoric, which Chaucer knew very well how to use, even if his imaginary Franklin says *he* does not. For the Franklin's very protestation of literary incompetence was itself a rhetorical trope or "color" known as the "modesty topos." His little pun on color rhetorical and color literal is another "color." And so on throughout the tale:

Dorigen's list of virtuous maidens and wives (1364 ff) is a very obvious rhetorical flourish, and is continued to such lengths as to make one feel that one is supposed to be amused. Chaucer is here probably mocking one aspect of rhetoric (the catalogue) as he does with another in *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, while showing that he knows very well indeed how to use it skilfully.

The story ends with another rhetorical trope, a *demande*, a question to the reader about love, somewhat like those in *The Knight's Tale* and *The Wife of Bath's Tale*. Here the *demande* is: Which of all the characters who kept a promise or forgave a debt was the most generous? Chaucer wisely leaves the answer to the reader.

Some linguistic notes for Franklin's Tale

Word Stress: It is fairly clear that some words were stressed in the original as we would no longer stress them: *sicknéss* to rhyme fully with *distress* (915-6). *philosópher* to rhyme with *coffer* (1560/1).

Sometimes indeed the same word occurs with different stress in different lines: *colours*, *colóurs* (723-4-6); *pénance* (1238), *penánce* (1082); *certain* and *certáin* (1568 / 719).

Rhyme: This is sometimes closely related to word stress as the preceding section indicates. *Stable* rhymes with *unreasonable* (871-2), and *tables* with *delitables* (899-900) because they probably had a more French pronunciation than we give them. (See notes to the text). In this version of the tale some other rhymes do not work fully as they would have in the original Middle English as in lines 1145-50. And a rhyme between *yowthè* and *allowe thee* (675/6) may have been a stretch even in Chaucer's day. As *youth* and *allow thee* it does not even come close to rhyme in modern English.

Grammar: *so loath him was, how loath her was*: we would now say "so loath he was, or she was." In Chaucer's day the phrases meant literally: "so hateful (to) him or her it was"

The Link to the Tale of the Squire

The Franklin interrupts the tale of the Squire

	"In faith, Squire, thou hast thee well y-quit And gentilly. ¹ I praisè well thy wit,"	<i>done well your intelligence</i>
675	Quod the Franklin. "Considering thy youth, So feelingly thou speakest, sir, I allow thee, ² As to my doom, there is none that is here Of eloquencè that shall be thy peer, If that thou live. God givè thee good chance.	<i>I declare In my judgement</i>
680	And in virtúe send thee continuance, For of thy speechè I have great dainty. I have a son, and by the Trinity, I had lever than twenty pound worth land, Though it right now were fallen in my hand	<i>satisfaction I had rather</i>
685	He were a man of such discretion As that you be. Fie on possession, But if a man be virtuous withall. I have my sonnè snibbèd, and yet shall, For he to virtue listeth not intend,	<i>What use is wealth? Unless / as well rebuked does not care</i>
690	But for to play at dice and to dispend And lose all that he hath, is his uságe. And he had lever talken with a page Than to commune with any gentle wight Where he might learnè gentillesse aright." ³	<i>spend custom had rather converse / person to be a gentleman</i>

The Franklin in turn is interrupted by the Host

695	"Straw for thy gentilessè," quod our Host. "What! Frankelin, pardee sir, well thou wost That each of you must tellen at the least A tale or two, or broken his behest." "That know I well, sir," quod the Franklin.	<i>you know well his promise</i>
700	"I pray you haveth me not in disdain,	

¹ 673-4: "You have acquitted yourself well, like a gentleman." The y- on y-quit is a grammatical sign of the past participle. The meaning the same with or without the y-.

² 675-6: The original rhyme was *yowthe / allowe thee*.

³ 694: For the concept of *gentle / gentil* and *gentleness / gentillesse*", see Introduction above.

Though to this man I speak a word or two."

"Tell on thy tale withouten wordès mo'." ¹

"Gladly, sir Host," quod he, "I will obey
Unto your will. Now hearken what I say.

- 705 I will you not contráry in no wise, *not oppose*
As far as that my wittès will suffice. *as best I know how*
I pray to God that it may pleasen you.
Then wot I well that it is good enow." *I know / enough*

Prologue to the Franklin's Tale

- These oldè gentle Bretons in their days
710 Of diverse áventurès maden lays ² *stories / made poems*
Riméd in their oldè Breton tongue;
Which layès with their instruments they sung
Or elsè readen them for their pleasánce.
And one of them have I in rémembránce
715 Which I will say with good will as I can.

A modest disclaimer by the Franklin: I am not a polished speaker

- But, sirs, because I am a burel man, *simple*
At my beginning first I you beseech
Have me excuséd of my rudè speech. *unpolished*
I learnéd never rhetoric certáin.³ *art of speaking*
720 Thing that I speak, it must be bare and plain.
I slept never on the Mount of Parnasso, *[home of Muses]*
Nor learnéd Marcus Tullius Cicero. *[Roman orator]*
Colours ne know I none, withouten dread, *truthfully*
But such coloués as grownen in the mead *meadow*
725 Or elsè such as men dye or paint.
Colours of rhetoric be to me quaint. *strange*
My spirits feeleth not of such mattér. *I have no taste*

¹ 701: "Go on with your story without any more delay."

² 710: "They composed poems (*lays*) about various events (*aventures*)." Bretons were and are people of Brittany in France, sometimes called Armorica or Little Britain in contrast to Great Britain.

³ 719: Rhetoric, one of the Seven Liberal Arts, taught skill in writing and speaking. The "colors" of rhetoric were the stylistic "tricks" e.g. a modest disclaimer at the beginning (like the Franklin's), puns like that on "colors," rhetorical questions, exclamations, exempla, elaborate similes, etc. Many of the "colors" are displayed in this tale.

But if you list, my talè you shall hear.

wish

The Franklin's Tale

A Knight falls in love with a very highborn lady well above his rank who nevertheless accepts him

730	In Armorik, that callèd is Britáin, There was a knight that loved and did his pain To serve a lady in his bestè wise. And many a labour, many a great emprise He for his lady wrought, ere she were won; For she was one the fairest under sun,	<i>Armorica, Brittany</i> <i>took pains</i>
735	And eke thereto come of so high kindred ¹ That well unnethès durst this knight for dread Tell her his woe, his pain, and his distress. But at the last she for his worthiness, And namely for his meek obeisance	<i>enterprise, task</i> <i>performed, before</i> <i>also / noble family</i> <i>scarcely dared</i>
740	Has such a pity caught of his penáncè, That privily she fell of his accord To take him for her husband and her lord, Of such lordship as men have o'er their wives.	<i>especially / humility</i> <i>pain</i> <i>secretly</i>

They make a special agreement

745	And for to lead the more in bliss their lives Of his free will he swore her as a knight That ne'er in all his life he day nor night Ne should upon him take no mastery ² Against her will, nor kith her jealousy, But her obey and follow her will in all,	<i>show</i>
750	As any lover to his lady shall — Save that the name of sovereignty, That would he have, for shame of his degree. She thankèd him, and with great humbleness	<i>sake of his position</i>

¹ 734-7: "She was the most beautiful women on earth, and of such an exalted family, that this knight hardly dared to tell her how he ached with love for her."

² 744-8: And to lead even happier lives, of his free will he swore to her, as a knight, that he would never throughout his life, day or night, try to be master against her will, or show jealousy.

She saidè: "Sir, since of your gentillesse
 755 You proffer me to have so large a rein, *such wide freedom*
 Ne wouldè never God bitwixt us twain,¹ *between us two*
 As in my guilt, were either war or strife. *Through my fault*
 Sir, I will be your humble, truè wife —
 Have here my truth — till that mine heartè burst."
 760 Thus been they both in quiet and in rest.

A comment on the qualities of genuine love & the need for patience

For one thing, sirs, safely dare I say:
 That friendès ever each other must obey
 If they will longè holden company.
 Love will not be constrained by mastery.
 765 When mastery comes, the God of Love anon
 Beateth his wings and farewell — he is gone!
 Love is a thing as any spirit free:
 Women of kind desiren liberty, *by nature*
 And not to be constrained as a thrall — *like a slave*
 770 And so do men, if I sooth sayen shall. *if I tell truth*
 Look who that is most patient in love:
 He is at his advantage all above. *above others*
 Patience is a high virtúe, certáin,
 For it vanquisheth (as these clerkès sayn) *as clerics say*
 775 Thingès that rigor never should attain. *severity*
 For every word men may not chide or 'plain. *(com)plain*
 Learneth to suffer, or else, so may I go, *endure / I assure you*
 You shall it learn whether you will or no,
 For in this world, certain, there no wight is *no person*
 780 That he ne does or says sometime amiss.
 Ire, sickness, or constellation, *Anger / the stars*
 Wine, woe, or changing of complexiön *change of mood*
 Causeth full oft to do amiss or speaken.
 On every wrong a man may not be wreaken. *avenged*
 785 After the timè must be temperance
 To every wight that can on governance.² *knows self control*
 And therefore has this wisè worthy knight
 To live in easè sufferance her beight, *tolerance promised*

¹ 756-7: "God forbid that there should ever be, through *my* fault, quarreling or fighting between us."

² 785-6: "Everyone who knows anything about self control must show tolerance according to the occasion."

And she to him full wisly 'gan to swear *firmly*
 790 That never should there be default in her.

A paradox

Here may men see a humble wise accord: *agreement*
 Thus hath she take her servant and her lord —
 Servant in love and lord in marriage.
 Then was he both in lordship and servage. *servitude*
 795 Servagé? Nay, but in lordship above,
 Since he has both his lady and his love —
 His lady, certès, and his wife also, *i.e. his lady is his wife*
 The which that law of love accordeth to.¹ *agrees with*

*After they have been happily married for some time, the husband
 goes off to seek knightly honor*

And when he was in this prosperity,
 800 Home with his wife he goes to his country
 Not far from Pedmark, there his dwelling was,
 Where as he lives in bliss and in soláce. *& comfort*
 Who couldè tell, but he had wedded be, *unless he had*
 The joy, the ease and the prosperity
 805 That is bitwixt a husband and his wife?
 A year and more lasted his blissful life
 Till that the knight of which I speak of thus —
 That of Kairrúid was cleped Arveragus — *was called A. of K.*
 Shope him to go and dwell a year or twain *Prepared / or two*
 810 In Engeland that cleped was eke Britain *was also called*
 To seek in armès worship and honouír *renown*
 (For all his lust he set in such labouír) *all his desire*
 And dwellèd there two years — the book says thus.

Lamenting the absence of her husband, Dorigen is comforted by her friends

¹ 791-798: Chaucer is here playing with another rhetorical color, the paradox. According to one medieval code of love (literary), a man's beloved was his "mistress", i.e. he did what she said, he was her servant--*in servage*. After marriage, he was her lord and she his lady. Legally he was "master," "lord." Since people often married partners chosen for them, a spouse might not be one's chosen "love." Dorigen and Arveragus are fortunate: they are spouses and lovers at once, an ideal arrangement according to another code of love--*the which that law of love accordeth to*.

Now will I stint of this Arveragus *stop (speaking)*
 815 And speak I will of Dorigen his wife,
 That loves her husband as her heartè's life.
 For his abséncè weepeth she and sigheth
 As do these noble wivès when them liketh.
 She mourneth, waketh, waileth, fasteth, 'plaineth;
 820 Desire of his préséncè her so distraïneth *(com)plains*
 That all this widè world she set at nought.
 Her friendès, which that knew her heavy thought,
 Comfort her in all that ever they may.
 They preachen her, they tell her night and day
 825 That causèless she slays herself, alas —
 And every comfort possible in this case
 They do to her with all their busyness —
 All for to make her leave her heavyness.
 By process, as you knowen everyone, *By persistence*
 830 Men may so longè graven in a stone *carve*
 Till some figùre therein emprinted be.
 So long have they comfórted her, till she
 Receivèd hath, by hope and by reason,
 Th'emprinting of their consolation,
 835 Through which her greatè sorrow 'gan assuage —
 She may not always duren in such rage. *endure such grief*
 And eke Arveragus in all this care *And, besides*
 Has sent her letters home of his welfáre
 And that he will come hastily again,
 840 Or elsè had this sorrow her heartè slain.
 Her friendès saw her sorrow 'gan to slake, *slacken*
 And prayèd her on knees, for Godè's sake,
 To come and roamen in their company *stroll*
 Away to drive her darkè fantasy; *gloomy thoughts*
 845 And finally she granted that request,
 For well she saw that it was for the best.
 Now stood her castle fastè by the sea,
 And often with her friendès walketh she
 Her to disport upon the bank on high *to relax*
 850 Where as she many a ship and bargè saw
 Sailing their course where as them listè go, *where they wished*
 But then was that a parcel of her woe, *part*
 For to herself full oft, "Alas!" said she,
 "Is there no ship of so many as I see
 855 Will bringen home my lord? Then were mine heart

All warished of its bitter painès smart."

cured

*Concerned about the safe return of her husband along the rocky coast,
Dorigen wonders why God creates such dangers*

Another time there would she sit and think
 And cast her eyen downward from the brink —
 But when she saw the grisly rockès black,
 860 For very fear so would her heartè quake
 That on her feet she might her not sustain.
 Then would she sit adown upon the green
 And piteously into the sea behold,
 And say right thus, with sorrowful sighès cold:
 865 "Eternal God, that through thy purveyance *providence*
 Leadest the world by certain governance,
 In idle, as men say, you nothing make. *In vain*
 But Lord, these grisly fiendly rockès black, *devilish*
 That seemen rather a foul confusión
 870 Of work, than any fair creation
 Of such a perfect wisè God and a stable,
 Why have you wrought this work unreasonáble?¹
 For by this work — south, north, nor west nor east —
 There n'is y-fostred man nor bird nor beast. *is not nourished*
 875 It doth no good, to my wit, but annoyeth. *in my opinion*
 See you not, Lord, how mankind it destroyeth?
 A hundred thousand bodies of mankind
 Have rockès slain, all be they not in mind, *though not*
 Which mankind is so fair part of thy work *This mankind*
 880 That thou it madest like to thine own mark. *image*
 Then seeméd it you had great charity *love*
 Toward mankind. But how then may it be
 That you such meanès make it to destroy,
 Which meanès do no good, but ever annoy?
 885 I wot well clerks will sayen as them lest *I know / as they like to*
 By arguments that all is for the best,²
 Though I ne can the causes not y-know, *I don't know*
 But thilké God that made the wind to blow, *But (may) that God*

¹ 871-2: *stable / unreasonable*: the rhyme presupposes a somewhat French pronunciation for these words in Middle English with a stress on the last syllable of *unreasonáble*.

² 885-6: "I know well that scholars will say, as they like to do, and produce arguments (to prove), that everything that happens is for the best."

As keep my lord! This my conclusion. *Protect my husband*
 890 To clerks let I all disputation — *To scholars*
 But wouldè God that all these rockès black *I wish to God*
 Were sunken into hellè for his sake!
 These rockès slay mine heartè for the fear!"
 Thus would she say with many a piteous tear.

Her friends take her to a dance in a lovely garden

895 Her friendès saw that it was no disport *no recreation*
 To roamen by the sea, but díscómfort,
 And shopen for to playen somewhere else. *And planned to relax*
 They leaden her by rivers and by wells,
 And eke in other places délitàbles;¹ *delightful*
 900 They dauncen and they play at chess and tables. *checkers*
 So on a day, right in the morrowtide, *morning*
 Unto a garden that was there beside
 In which that they had made their ordinance *given orders*
 Of vítaille, and of other purveyance, *for food / necessities*
 905 They go and play them all the longè day. *amuse themselves*
 And this was on the sixthè morrow of May,
 Which May had painted with its softè showers *This May*
 This garden full of leavès and of flowers;
 And craft of mannè's hand so curiously *skill / ingeniously*
 910 Arrayèd had this garden truly
 That never was there garden of such price
 But if it were the very Paradise. *Unless / real Paradise*
 The odour of flowers and the freshè sight
 Would have makèd any heartè light
 915 That ever was born, but if too great sickness *unless*
 Or too great sorrow held it in distress,
 So full it was of beauty with pleasánce.
 At after-dinner they began to dance
 And sing also, save Dorigen alone,
 920 Which made always her cómplaint and her moan, *Which = Who*
 For she ne saw him on the dancè go
 That was her husband and her love also.
 But natheless she must a time abide, *wait a while*
 And with good hopè let her sorrow slide.

¹ 899-900: *places delitables / tables*: Not only does the adjective *delitables* come after the noun *places*, but it is pluralized, French fashion. It is also stressed in French fashion: *délitàbles*.

A young man falls secretly and painfully in love with Dorigen

- 925 Upon this dance, amongst other men,
 Dancèd a squire before Dorigen
 That fresher was and jollier of array,
 As to my doom, than is the month of May. *my judgement*
 He singeth, danceth, passing any man *surpassing*
- 930 That is or was since that the world began.
 Therewith he was, if men him should describe,
 One of the bestè faring man alive. *best looking*
 Young, strong, right virtuous, and rich, and wise, *very virile*
 And well-beloved, and holden in great prize. *highly regarded*
- 935 And shortly, if the sooth I tellen shall,
 Unwitting of this Dorigen at all, *truth*
 This lusty squire, servant to Venus — ¹ *lover*
 Which that y-cleped was Aurelius — *Who was called*
 Had loved her best of any creäture
- 940 Two years and more, as was his áventure; *destiny*
 But never durst he tellen her his grievance. *never dared*
 Withouten cup he drank all his penance.²
 He was despairèd — nothing durst he say, *in despair / dared*
 Save in his songès somewhat would he wray *display*
- 945 His woe, as in a general cómplaining.
 He said he loved, and was beloved no thing,
 Of whichè matter made he many lays, *poems*
 Songs, complaints, roundels, virelays, *(kinds of poem)*
 How that he durstè not his sorrow tell,
- 950 But languished as a fury does in hell.
 And die he must, he said, as did Echó
 For Nárçissus that durst not tell her woe. *Ovid, "Met", III, 370*
 In other manner than you hear me say
 Ne durst he not to her his woe bewray, *show, reveal*
- 955 Save that peráventure sometimes at dances
 Where youngè folkè keep their observánces
 It may well be he lookèd on her face
 In such a wise as man that asketh grace — *favor*
 But nothing wisté she of his intent. *she knew nothing*

¹ Venus is the goddess of love, hence a "servant of Venus" is a lover.

² 942: *Penance*, normally a word used in religious contexts, is a word frequently used in the Middle Ages for the pain of unsatisfied love. Hence the line seems to mean "He drank the pains of love to the dregs" (without a measuring cup). *Penánce / grievánce*, like some other words in Chaucer, probably had a French stress an the last syllable.

When the lover finally speaks, his advance is not welcomed

- 960 Natheless, it happened ere they thencè went,
 Because that he was her neighèboúr
 And was a man of worship and honoúr,
 And had y-knowèn him of timè yore, *(she) had known*
 They fell in speech, and forthè more and more *& ever closer*
- 965 Unto his purpose drew Aurelius,
 And when he saw his time he saidè thus:
 "Madame," quod he, "by God that this world made,
 So that I wist it might your heartè glad,¹ *gladden*
 I would that day that your Arveragus
- 970 Went o'er the sea that I, Aurelius,
 Had went where never I should have come again!
 For well I wot my service is in vain — *I know*
 My guerdon is but bursting of mine heart. *reward*
 Madame, rueth upon my painès smart, *have pity*
- 975 For with a word you may me slay or save!
 Here at your feet God would that I were grave! *buried*
 I have as now no leisure more to say — ²
 Have mercy, sweet, or you will do me die!" *cause me to*
 She gan to look upon Aurelius:
- 980 "Is this your will?" quod she, "and say you thus?
 Never erst," quod she, "ne wist I what you meant. *Never before did I know*
 But now, Aurelius, I knowè your intent,
 By thilkè God that gave me soul and life, *that God*
 Ne shall I never be an untrue wife
- 985 In word nor work. As far as I have wit, *as I know how*
 I will be his to whom that I am knit —
 Take this for final answer as of me."

*Attempting to soften the blow, Dorigen makes a tactical error, but
 this is small comfort to the disappointed lover*

- But after that in playè thus said she: *in jest*
 "Aurelius," quod she, "by highè God above,
 990 Yet would I grantè you to be your love,
 Since I you see so piteously complain.

¹ 968-72: This passage makes much more sense without line 968, whether "So that" means "If" or "Since": "If (Since) I knew it might gladden your heart."

² 977: A very odd line with which to finish such a passionate outburst.

Look what day that endalong Britáin *whole length of*
 You remove all the rockès, stone by stone,
 That they ne lettè ship nor boat to gon — *they do not hinder*
 995 I say, when you have made the coast so clean
 Of rockès that there is no stone y-seen,
 Then will I love you best of any man —
 Have here my truth, in all that ever I can.
 For well I wot that it shall ne'er betide. *I know / never occur*
 1000 Let such follies out of your heartè slide!
 What dainty should a man have in his life *satisfaction*
 For to go love another mannè's wife
 That hath her body when so that him liketh!"
 Aurelius full often sorè sigheth.
 1005 "Is there no other grace in you?" quod he. *favor*
 "No, by that Lord," quod she, "that maked me."¹
 Woe was Aurelius when that he this heard,
 And with a sorrowful heart he thus answered.
 "Madame," quod he, "this were an impossíble!
 1010 Then must I die of sudden death horrible!"
 And with that word he turned him anon.
 Then came her other friendès many a one,
 And in the alleys roamèd up and down,
 And nothing wist of this conclusion. *knew / arrangement*
 1015 But suddenly began the revel new
 Till that the brightè sun had lost his hue, *his color*
 For the horizon had reft the sun his light — *robbed*
 This is as much to say as it was night —
 And home they go in joy and in soláce,
 1020 Save only wretch Aurelius, alas. *wretched*
 He to his house is gone with sorrowful heart.
 He sees he may not from his death astart: *escape*
 Him seemèd that he felt his heartè cold.
 Up to the heavens he his hands 'gan hold,
 1025 And on his barè knees he set him down
 And in his raving said his orisoun. *prayer*
 For very woe out of his wit he braid. *he was going mad*

*Aurelius prays to the gods for a miracle -- a special tide to cover the coastal
rocks*

¹ 1005-06: I follow Manly-Rickert's suggestion in putting these 2 lines here rather than after 998.

	He n'istè what he spoke, but thus he said —	<i>didn't know</i>
	With piteous heart his 'plaint hath he begun	<i>(com)plaint</i>
1030	Unto the gods, and first unto the sun.	
	He said, "Apollo, god and governor	<i>Apollo = the Sun</i>
	Of every plant and herb and tree and flower,	
	That givest after thy declination	<i>according to point in sky</i>
	To each of them its time and its season	
1035	As thine harbérow changeth, low or high: ¹	<i>place in zodiac</i>
	Lord Phoebus, cast thy merciabile eye	<i>Phoebus = Apollo</i>
	On wretch Aurelius which that am but lorn!	<i>who am lost</i>
	Lo, Lord, my lady hath my death y-sworn	<i>sworn</i>
	Withouten guilt, but thy benignity	<i>unless thy goodness</i>
1040	Upon my deadly heart have some pity.	<i>my broken heart</i>
	For well I wot, Lord Phoebus, if you lest,	<i>I know / if it please you</i>
	You may me helpen — save my lady — best.	
	Now voucheth safe that I may you devise	<i>allow me to suggest</i>
	How that I may be helped, and in what wise.	
1045	Your blissful sister, Lucina the sheen,	<i>(the moon) bright</i>
	That of the sea is chief goddess and queen	
	(Though Neptunus have deity in the sea,	<i>Neptune is god</i>
	Yet empèress aboven him is she)	
	You know well, Lord, that — right as her desire	
1050	Is to be quicked and lighted of your fire,	<i>given life by</i>
	For which she followeth you full busily —	
	Right so the sea desireth naturally	
	To follow her, as she that is goddess	
	Both in the sea and rivers more and less.	<i>large and small</i>
1055	Wherefore, Lord Phoebus, this is my request:	<i>Apollo=god of sun</i>
	Do this miracle — or do mine heartè burst —	<i>or cause my heart</i>
	That now next at this opposition,	
	Which in the sign shall be of the Lion,	<i>sign of Leo</i>
	As prayeth her so great a flood to bring	
1060	That fivè fathoms at least it overspring	<i>in Brittany</i>
	The highest rock in Armoric Britáin	<i>two</i>
	And let this flood endure yearès twain.	
	Then certès to my lady may I say,	
	`Holdeth your hest, the rockès be away!	<i>Keep your promise</i>

¹ 1031-54: Chaucer liked to show off his considerable astronomical knowledge. Here he shows that he knows all about the relationship among the sun, the moon and the tides. In the following section (1055 ff) Aurelius is asking that the laws of nature be suspended so that the sea can cover the rocks for two years. For a full discussion of the astrophysics involved see J.D. North, *Chaucer's Universe* pp. 423 ff.

- 1065 Lord Phoebus, do this miracle for me!
 Pray her she go no faster course then ye. *"her" = Moon*
 I say this: pray your sister that she go
 No faster course than you these yearès two.
 Then shall she be e'en at the full alway, *"e'en" = uniformly*
- 1070 And spring-flood lastè bothè night and day.
 And but she vouchésafe in such mannér *agree*
 To grantè me my sovereign lady dear,
 Pray her to sinken every rock adown
 Into her ownè darkè region
- 1075 Under the ground where Pluto dwelleth in, *god of underworld*
 Or never more shall I my lady win.
 Thy temple in Delphos will I barefoot seek.
 Lord Phoebus, see the tearès on my cheek,
 And of my pain have some compassion."
- 1080 And with that word in swoon he fell adown,
 And longè time he lay forth in a trance.
 His brother, which that knew of his penáncè, *distress*
 Up caught him, and to bed he hath him brought.
 Despairèd in this torment and this thought
- 1085 Let I this woeful creäturè lie —
 Choose he for me whether he will live or die. *for all I care*

The husband returns safely

- Arveragus with health and great honoúr,
 As he that was of chivalry the flower,
 Is comen home, and other worthy men.
- 1090 Oh, blissful art thou now, thou Dorigen,
 That hast thy lusty husband in thine arms,
 The freshè knight, the worthy man of arms.
 That loveth thee as his own heartè's life!
 No thing list him to been imaginative
- 1095 If any wight had spoke while he was out *any person / was away*
 To her of love; he had of it no doubt. *no suspicion*
 He not entendeth to no such mattér,¹ *didn't think of*
 But danceth, jousteth, maketh her good cheer.

The lover's pain

¹ 1094-97: "It did not even occur to him that anyone had been making advances to his wife while he was away." The passage says much the same thing twice.

And thus in joy and bliss I let them dwell,
 1100 And of the sick Aurelius will I tell.
 In labour and in torment furious
 Two years and more lay wretch Aurelius, *wretched*
 Ere any foot he might on earthè go.
 Nor comfort in this time ne had he none,
 1105 Save of his brother, which that was a clerk.
 He knew of all this woe and all this work,
 For to no other creäture, certain,
 Of this matter he durst no wordè sayn. *dared*
 Under his breast he bore it more secree *secretly*
 1110 Than ever did Pamphilus for Galathee.¹
 His breast was whole withoutè for to seen, *healthy on outside*
 But in his heart aye was the arrow keen: *always was / sharp*
 And well you know that of a sursanure *wound*
 In surgery is perilous the cure, *hard to cure*
 1115 But men might touch the arrow or come thereby.² *Unless one*

A possible remedy: magic

His brother wept and wailèd privily,
 Till at the last him fell in rémembrance *he remembered*
 That while he was at Orleäns in France — *university town*
 As youngè clerkès that been likerous *eager*
 1120 To readen artès that been curious, *arcane studies*
 Seek in every halk and every herne *hole and corner*
 Particular sciénces for to learn — *areas of knowledge*
 He him remembered that, upon a day,
 At Orleans in a study a book he saw
 1125 Of magic natural,³ which his fellow, *fellow student*
 That was that time a bachelor of law
 (Al were he there to learn another craft) *although*
 Had privily upon his desk y-left.

¹ 1110: Characters in a medieval love poem.

² 1113-15: "You know that a wound only superficially healed (*a sursanure*) is very difficult to treat, unless you can get at the arrow" (buried in the flesh).

³ 1125: *Magic natural* was felt to be distinct from "black magic" in which diabolical forces were invoked. "Natural magic," on the other hand, used observations of the planets and stars, and knowledge of their "influence" on human affairs to make predictions. The brother seems to feel that an astrologer practising "magic natural" who was also a *tregetour*, a magician who produced illusions, would be the perfect one for this job, "a piece of sheer ignorance on the brother's part" according to North, p. 427.

- Which book spoke much of th'operations
 1130 Touching the eight and twenty mansions *daily positions*
 That longen to the moon, and such folly *belong to*
 As in our dayès is not worth a fly
 (For Holy Church's faith in our belief
 Nor suffers no illusion us to grieve). *allows no*
- 1135 And when this book was in his rémembrance,
 Anon for joy his heartè 'gan to dance *At once*
 And to himself he saidè privily:
 "My brother shall be warished hastily! *cured soon*
 For I am siker that there be sciénces *sure / skills*
- 1140 By which men maken diverse "ápparénces," *illusions*
 Such as these subtle tregetourès play. *magicians*
 For oft at feastès have I well heard say
 That tregetoures within a hallè large
 Have made come in a water and a barge,
- 1145 And in the hallè rowen up and down;
 Some time hath seemed to come a grim lion;
 Some timè flowers spring as in a mead, *meadow*
 Some time a vine, and grapès white and red,
 Some time a castle all of lime and stone,
- 1150 And when them likèd, voided it anon —
 Thus seemèd it to every mannè's sight.
 Now then conclude I thus, that if I might
 At Orleans some old fellow y-find *fellow student*
 That had these moonè's mansions in mind,
- 1155 Or other magic natural above, *(See 1125, note)*
 He should well make my brother have his love.
 For with an "ápparence" a clerk may make *magic illusion*
 To mannè's sight that all the rockès black
 Of Britain were y-voided every one, *taken away*
- 1160 And shippès by the brinkè come and gon, *shore*
 And in such form endure a week or two.
 Then were my brother warished of his woe! *would be cured*
 Then must she needès holden her behest, *keep her promise*
 Or elsè he shall shame her at the least."

*The possibility of success rouses Aurelius enough to go with his brother
 to Orleans where a magician meets them "by chance"*

- 1165 What should I make a longer tale of this?
 Unto his brother's bed he comen is,

And such comfórt he gave him for to gon
 To Orleans, that up he starts anon
 And on his way forward then is he fare, *he has set out*
 1170 In hope for to be lissèd of his care. *relieved*
 When they were come almost to that city,
 But if it were a furlong two or three, *within a furlong = C mile*
 A young clerk roaming by himself they met,
 Which that in Latin thriftily them gret, *courteously greeted*
 1175 And after that he said a wonder thing:
 "I know," quod he, "the cause of your coming."
 And ere they further any footè went,
 He told them all that was in their intent.
 This Breton clerk him askèd of fellows *asked about*
 1180 The which that he had known in olden days,
 And he him answered that they deadè were —
 For which he wept full often many a tear.
 Down off his horse Aurelius lights anon, *dismounts*
 And with this magician forth is he gone
 1185 Home to his house, and made them well at ease.
 Them lackèd no vitaille that might them please. *victuals, food*
 So well arrayèd house as there was one *as this one was*
 Aurelius in his life saw never none.

The magician displays some of his skills

He showed him ere he wentè to suppér
 1190 Forests, parkès full of wildè deer.
 There saw he hartès with their hornès high, *stags*
 The greatest that ever were seen with eye;
 He saw of them an hundred slain with hounds,
 And some with arrows bled of bitter wounds.
 1195 He saw, when voided were these wildè deer, *removed*
 These falconers upon a fair rivér,
 That with their hawkès have the heron slain.
 Then saw he knightès jousting in a plain.
 And after this he did him such pleasáncè,
 1200 That he him showed his lady on a dance,
 On which himself he dancèd — as him thought,
 And when this master that this magic wrought
 Saw it was time, he clapped his handès two,
 And farewell! All our revel was ago. *gone*
 1205 And yet removed they never out of the house

- While they saw all this sightè marvelous,
 But in his study, there as his bookès be,
 They sitten still, and no wight but they three. *nobody*
 To him this master callèd his squire
 1210 And said him thus: "Is ready our suppér?
 Almost an hour it is, I undertake,
 Since I you bade our supper for to make,
 When that these worthy men wenten with me
 Into my study there as my bookès be."
 1215 "Sir," quod this squire, "when that it liketh you, *when you please*
 It is all ready, though you will right now."
 "Go we then sup," quod he, "as for the best;
 These amorous folk some time must have their rest."

They agree quickly on the magician's fee

- At after-supper fell they in treaty *they negotiated*
 1220 What summè should this master's guerdon be *fee, reward*
 To remove all the rockès of Britáin, *Brittany*
 And eke from Gironde to the mouth of Seine. *& also / [rivers]*
 He made it strange, and swore, so God him save, ¹ *tough*
 Less than a thousand pounds he would not have,
 1225 Nor gladly for that sum he would not gon. ²
 Aurelius with blissful heart anon
 Answered thus: "Fie on a thousand pound!
 This widè world, which that men say is round,
 I would it give, if I were lord of it.
 1230 This bargain is full drive, for we been knit. *we are agreed*
 You shall be payèd truly, by my truth.
 But look now, for no negligence nor sloth,
 You tarry us here no longer than tomorrow." *do not delay*
 "Nay," quod this clerk, "have here my faith to borrow." *as pledge*
 1235 To bed is gone Aurelius when him lest, *when he pleased*
 And well nigh all that night he had his rest,
 What for his labour and his hope of bliss,
 His woeful heart of penance had a liss. *a rest*

They return to Brittany. December weather

¹ 1223: "He drove a hard bargain, and swore that as sure as he hoped to be saved ..."

² 1224-5: Scholars who think that the clerk's fee is steep "could do worse than themselves attempt the computational part" of his work. (North, 153)

- Upon the morrow, when that it was day
 1240 To Brittany they took the rightè way, *direct route*
 Aurelius and this magician beside,
 And been descended where they would abide.¹
 And this was, as these bookès me remember, *remind me*
 The coldè frosty season of December.
 1245 Phoebus waxed old and huèd like latten, *brass colored*
 That in his hotè declination *high point*
 Shone as the burnèd gold with streamès bright.
 But now in Capricorn adown he light, *sign of zodiac*
 Where as he shone full pale, I dare well sayn.²
 1250 The bitter frostès with the sleet and rain
 Destroyèd hath the green in every yard.
 Janus sits by the fire with double beard
 And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine,
 Before him stands brawn of the tuskèd swine, *meat*
 1255 And "Nowel!" crieth every lusty man. *Noel, Christmas*
 Aurelius in all that ever he can *in every way*
 Doth to this master cheer and reverence, *shows proper respect*
 And prayeth him to do his diligence *do his best*
 To bringen him out of his painès smart, *sharp*
 1260 Or with a sword that he would slit his heart.

The magician's preparations and the result

- This subtle clerk such ruth had of this man *pity*
 That night and day he sped him that he can *tried his best*
 To wait a time of his conclusion — *To find*
 This is to sayn, to make illusion
 1265 By such an "ápparence" or jugglery
 (I can no termès of astrology)³
 That she and every wight should ween and say *everyone should think*
 That of Britáin the rockès were away,

¹ 1242: "And they dismounted where they intended to stay", i.e. when they reached their destination.

² 1245-9: The sun which had sent out streams of burning gold during the summer (*in his hot declination*) has grown feeble and brass-colored and now shines weakly in Capricorn (close to winter solstice).

³ 1266: That the narrator knows more "terms of astrology" than most of his audience is very clear from the passages that soon follow. According to North not one of the astronomical terms here used is misplaced or inappropriate. It is not necessary to understand these terms to get most of the point.

- Or elsè they were sunken under ground.
 1270 So at the last he hath his time y-found
 To make his japès and his wretchedness *tricks*
 Of such a superstitious cursedness.
 His tables Tolletanès forth he brought *astronomical tables*
 Full well corrected. Nor there lackéd nought,
 1275 Neither his cóllect nor his éxpanse years,
 Neither his rootès, nor his other gears,
 As been his centres and his arguments,
 And his proportionals convenient,
 For his equations in every thing.
 1280 And by his eighthè sphere in his working
 He knew full well how far Alnath was shove *a star or "mansion"*
 From the head of thilkè fixed Aries above
 That in the ninthè sphere considered is —
 Full subtly he calculéd all this. *calculated*
 1285 When he had found his firstè mansion,
 He knew the remnant by proportiön,
 And knew the rising of his moonè well,
 And in whose face and term, and every deal,
 And knew full well the moonè's mansion
 1290 Accordant to his operation,
 And knew also his other óbservánces
 For such illusions and such mischances
 As heathen folkè used in thilkè days.¹
 For which no longer makéd he delays,
 1295 But, through his magic, for a week or tway
 It seemed that all the rockès were away.²

Aurelius's gratitude to the magician

Aurelius, which that yet despairèd is
 Whe'r he shall have his love or fare amiss,³

¹ 1292-3: This and lines 1125-34 above imply that some astrology was not considered legitimate, and the narrator--who knows so much about it-- is now trying to distance himself.

² 1294-6: A report in the New York Times for March 7, 2000 claims that this phenomenon may actually have occurred on Dec 19, 1340, around the time of Chaucer's birth.

³ 1297-8: "Aurelius, desperate (to know) whether (*Whe'r*) he will get his lover or miss out ..."

Awaiteth night and day on this miracle.
 1300 And when he knew that there was no obstacle,
 That voided were these rockès every one,
 Down to his master's feet he fell anon
 And said, "I, woeful wretch Aurelius,
 Thank you, lord, and lady mine Venus,
 1305 That me have holpen from my carès cold!" *helped*

His demand to Dorigen

And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,
 Where as he knew he should his lady see.
 And when he saw his time, anon-right he *right away*
 With dreadful heart and with full humble cheer *filled with dread*
 1310 Saluted has his sovereign lady dear: *greeted*
 "My rightè lady," quod this woeful man,
 "Whom I most dread and love as best I can, *most respect*
 And lothest were of all this world displease, *most unwilling*
 Ne're it that I for you have such dis-ease *were it not / pain*
 1315 That I must die here at your feet anon,
 Nought would I tell how me is woe-begone.
 But certès either must I die or 'plain. *speak my grief*
 You slay me guiltèless for very pain.
 But of my death though that you have no ruth, *no pity*
 1320 Aviseth you ere that you break your truth.
 Repenteth you, 'fore thilkè God above, *before that God*
 Ere you me slay because that I you love.
 For, Madame, well you wot what you have hight *you know / promised*
 (Not that I challenge any thing of right *demand / by rights*
 1325 Of you, my sovereign lady, but your grace). *your favor*
 But in a garden yond at such a place, *yonder*
 You wot right well what you behighten me, *you know / promised*
 And in mine hand your truthè plighted ye *you pledged*
 To love me best. God wot you saidè so, *God knows*
 1330 All be that I unworthy am thereto. *although*
 Madame, I speak it for the honour of you
 More than to save mine heartè's life right now:
 I have done so as you commanded me,

	And if you vouchésafe, you may go see.	<i>if you please</i>
1335	Do as you list, have your behest in mind,	<i>as you wish / promise</i>
	For quick or dead right there you shall me find.	<i>alive or dead</i>
	In you lies all to do me live or die,	<i>cause me to</i>
	But well I wot the rockès been away."	<i>I know</i>

Dorigen's dismay

	He takes his leave and she astonished stood.	
1340	In all her face there n'as a drop of blood.	<i>wasn't a drop</i>
	She wendè never have come in such a trap.	<i>never thought</i>
	"Alas," quod she, "that ever this should hap.	<i>happen</i>
	For wend I never by possibility	
	That such a monster or marvel mightè be!	
1345	It is against the process of natúre."	
	And home she goes a sorrowful crëature;	
	For very fear unnethè may she go.	<i>scarcely walk</i>
	She weepeth, waileth all a day or two,	
	And swooneth that it ruthè was to see.	<i>pitiful to see</i>
1350	But why it was, to no wight told it she,	<i>to nobody</i>
	For out of town was gone Arveragus.	
	But to herself she spoke and saidè thus,	
	With facè pale and with full sorrowful cheer	
	In her complaint, as you shall after hear:	

She will die rather than be unfaithful

1355	"Alas," quod she, "on thee, Fortúne, I 'plain,	<i>complain</i>
	That unaware hast wrapped me in thy chain,	
	From which t'escapè wot I no succoúr	<i>I know no help</i>
	Save only death or elsè dishonoúr —	
	One of these two behooveth me to choose.	<i>I must</i>
1360	But natheless yet have I lever lose	<i>had rather</i>
	My life than of my body to have a shame,	
	Or know myselfen false, or lose my name;	<i>(good) name</i>
	And with my death I may be quit, ywis.	<i>indeed</i>
	Has there not many a noble wife ere this,	
1365	And many a maid y-slain herself, alas,	

Rather than with her body do trespass? *do wrong*
 Yes, certès, lo, these stories bear witness.¹

She cites many models of wifely chastity from classical history and legend

When thirty tyrants full of cursedness
 Had slain Phidón in Athens at the feast,
 1370 They commanded his daughters for t'arrest, *be arrested*
 And bringen them before them in despite *contempt*
 All naked, to fulfill their foul delight;
 And in their father's blood they made them dance
 Upon the pavement — God give them mischance!
 1375 For which these woeful maidens, full of dread,
 Rather than they would lose their maidenhead, *virginity*
 They privily been start into a well *jumped*
 And drowned themselvès, as the bookès tell.
 They of Messina let enquire and seek *let = caused*
 1380 Of Lacedaemon fifty maidens eke, *also*
 On which they woulden do their lechery.
 But there was none of all that company²
 That she n'as slain, and with a good intent *and gladly*
 Chose rather for to die than to assent
 1385 To be oppressèd of her maidenhead. *deprived by rape*
 Why should I then to dien be in dread?
 Lo, eke, the tyrant Aristoclides *also*
 That loved a maiden hight Stymphalides, *called*
 When that her father slain was on a night,
 1390 Unto Diana's temple goes she right *straight*
 And hent the image in her handès two, *grasped*
 From which imáge would she never go.
 No wight ne might her hands of it arace, *tear*
 Till she was slain right in the selfè place. *same place*

¹1366 ff: The following list of over 20 wives, maidens or widows who destroyed themselves rather than be sexually dishonored is an unusually extended list of *exempla*, one of the "colors" of rhetoric that the Franklin said he knew nothing about. The details of the cases adduced need not concern us. They are all taken from the same anti-matrimonial book by St Jerome that the Wife of Bath was at pains to refute in parts of her Prologue.

² 1382-5: "But there was not one of that group of maidens who did not die gladly rather than agree to be robbed of her virginity."

- 1395 Now since that maidens hadden such despite
 To been defouléd with man's foul delight,
 Well ought a wife rather herselfen slay
 Than be defouléd, as it thinketh me.
 What shall I say of Hasdrubalè's wife
- 1400 That at Cartháge bereft herself her life?
 For when she saw that Romans won the town,
 She took her children all and skipped adown
 Into the fire, and chose rather to die
 Than any Roman did her villainy. *should violate her*
- 1405 Hath not Lucrece y-slain herself, alas,
 At Rome when that she oppresséd was *killed*
 Of Tarquin, for her thought it was a shame *raped*
 To liven when that she had lost her name? *By Tarquin*
 The seven maidens of Milesia also
- 1410 Have slain themselves for very dread and woe
 Rather than folk of Gaul them should oppress.
 More then a thousand stories, as I guess,
 Could I now tell as touching this mattér.
 When Habradate was slain, his wife so dear
- 1415 Herselfen slew, and let her blood to glide
 In Habradate's woundès deep and wide,
 And said, `My body at the leasté way
 There shall no wight defoulen, if I may!' *nobody*
 What should I more examples hereof sayn?
- 1420 Since that so many have themselven slain
 Well rather than they would defouléd be,
 I will conclude that it is bet for me *better*
 To slay myself than be defouléd thus.
 I will be true unto Arveragus,
- 1425 Or rather slay myself in some mannér —
 As did Democionès's daughter dear,
 Because that she would not defouléd be.
 O Cedasus, it is full great pity
 To readen how thy daughters died, alas,
- 1430 That slew themselves for such a manner case!
 As great a pity was it, or well more, *or worse*
 The Theban maiden that for Nichanor

- Herselfen slew right for such manner woe.
 Another Theban maiden did right so
 1435 For one of Macedon had her oppressed, *Because a Macedonian*
 She with her death her maidenhead redressed.
 What shall I say of Niceratès' wife
 That for such case bereft herself her life?
 How true eke was to Alcibiades *also*
 1440 His love, that rather for to dien chose
 Than for to suffer his body unburied be? *allow*
 Lo, which a wife was Alcestis," quod she. *what a wife*
 "What says Homer of good Penelope?
 All Greecè knoweth of her chastity.
 1445 Pardee, of Laodomia is written thus, *By God*
 That when at Troy was slain Protheselaus,
 No longer would she live after his day.
 The same of noble Portia tell I may:
 Withouten Brutus couldè she not liven,
 1450 To whom she had all whole her heartè given.
 The perfect wifehood of Arthemisie
 Honourèd is through all the Barbary. *pagan lands*
 O Teuta queen, thy wifely chastity
 To allè wivès may a mirror be!
 1455 The samè thing I say of Bilyea,
 Of Rodogone, and eke Valeria."

Dorigen informs her husband of her plight

- Thus 'plainèd Dorigen a day or two,
 Purposing ever that she wouldè die.
 But natheless upon the thirdè night
 1460 Home came Arveragus, this worthy knight,
 And askèd her why that she wept so sore.
 And she gan weepen ever longer the more —
 "Alas!" quod she, "that ever I was born!
 Thus have I said," quod she, "thus have I sworn."
 1465 And told him all as you have heard before;
 It needeth not rehearse it you no more. *repeat*
 This husband with glad cheer in friendly wise

Answered and said as I shall you devise:

tell

His unusual response

- "Is there ought elsè, Dorigen, but this?"
- 1470 "Nay, nay," quod she, "God help me so as wis, *indeed*
 This is too much, and it were Godè's will." *if it were*
 "Yea, wife," quod he, "let sleepen that is still.
 It may be well paraunter yet today. *perhaps*
 You shall your truthè holden, by my fay, *keep your word / faith*
 1475 For God so wisly have mercy upon me,¹ *as sure as*
 I had well lever y-stickèd for to be, *rather be stabbed*
 For very love which that I to you have,
 But if you should your truthè keep and save. *Unless*
 Truth is the highest thing that man may keep."
- 1480 But with that word he burst anon to weep,
 And said: "I you forbid, up pain of death, *on pain*
 That never while thee lasteth life nor breath,
 To no wight tell thou of this áventure. *nobody / experience*
 As I may best I will my woe endure.
- 1485 Nor make no countenance of heaviness, *no show of*
 That folk of you may deemen harm or guess." *suspect*
 And forth he cleped a squire and a maid: *he called*
 "Go forth anon with Dorigen," he said,
 "And bringeth her to such a place anon."
- 1490 They took their leave, and on their way they gon.
 But they ne wisté why she thither went: *did not know*
 He would to no wight tellen his intent. *nobody*
 Peráventure a heap of you, ywis, *Perhaps / indeed*
 Will holden him a lewèd man in this, *stupid*
 1495 That he will put his wife in jeopardy.
 Hearken the tale ere you upon her cry. *condemn*
 She may have better fortune than you seemeth,
 And when that you have heard the talè, deemeth. *judge*

The lover meets Dorigen on her way to keep her rash promise.

¹ 1475-8: "For as sure as I hope God will have mercy on me -- because of the deep love I have for you I had rather be stabbed than that you should fail to keep your promise."

This squire which that hight Aurelius, *was called*
 1500 On Dorigen that was so amorous,
 Of áventuré happened her to meet *by chance*
 Amid the town, right in the quickest street, *busiest*
 As she was bound to go the way forth right *directly*
 Toward the garden there as she had hight. *where / promised*
 1505 And he was to the garden-ward also,
 For well he spiéd when she wouldé go
 Out of her house to any manner place.
 But thus they met of áventure or grace, *chance or destiny*
 And he saluteth her with glad intent, *greeted*
 1510 And askéd of her whitherward she went.
 And she answerèd half as she were mad:
 "Unto the garden as my husband bade,
 My truthè for to hold — alas! alas!" *My promise*

Impressed, Aurelius finally does the honorable thing

Aurelius gan wonder on this case,
 1515 And in his heart had great compassion
 Of her and of her lamentation,
 And of Arveragus, the worthy knight,
 That bade her holden all that she had hight, *she had promised*
 So loath him was his wife should break her truth. *So unwilling*
 1520 And in his heart he caught of this great ruth, *pity*
 Considering the best on every side
 That from his lust yet were him lever abide ¹ *rather desist*
 Than do so high a churlish wretchedness *high = low*
 Against franchise and allè gentillesse, *decent & noble conduct*
 1525 For which in fewè wordès said he thus:
 "Madáme, say to your lord Arveragus
 That since I see his greatè gentillesse
 To you, and eke I see well your distress
 That him were lever have shame — and that were ruth —²

¹ 1522-4: "That he would rather desist from satisfying his lust than commit such a low offence against decency and honor." The terms *churlish*, *franchise*, *gentillesse* are probably laden with class-conscious rather than moral connotation.

² 1529-30: "That he would rather (*lever*) be shamed—and that would be a pity (*ruth*)—than that you should break your word to me."

- 1530 Than you to me should breakè thus your truth,
 I have well lever ever to suffer woe *I'd much rather*
 Than I depart the love betwixt you two. *than separate*
 I you release, Madame, into your hand,
 Quit every serement and every bond *cancel every oath.*
- 1535 That you have made to me as herebeforn, *before this*
 Since thilkè time in which that you were born.
 My truth I plight,¹ I shall you ne'er reprove *I pledge / reproach*
 Of no behest. And here I take my leave, *promise*
 As of the truest and the bestè wife *About your*
- 1540 That ever yet I knew in all my life.
 But every wife beware of her behest.
 On Dorigen remember at the least.
 Thus can a squire do a gentle deed
 As well as can a knight, withouten dread." *without doubt*
- 1545 She thanketh him upon her knees all bare
 And home unto her husband is she fare,
 And told him all as you have heard me said.
 And be you siker, he was so well apaid *be assured / pleased*
 That it were impossible me to write.
- 1550 What should I longer of this case endite? *write*
 Arveragus and Dorigen his wife
 In sovereign blissè leaden forth their life —
 Never eft ne was there anger them between. *Never again*
 He cherished her as though she were a queen,
- 1555 And she to him was true for evermore.
 Of these two folk you get of me no more.

The magician's generous response to Aurelius

- Aurelius, that his cost has all forlorn, *I'm lost*
 Curses the time that ever he was born.
 "Alas!" quod he, "alas that I behight *promised*
 1560 Of purèd gold a thousand pound of weight
 Unto this philosopher. How shall I do? *scholar-magician*
 I see no more but that I am foredo. *lost, ruined*
 My heritagè must I needès sell *inheritance*

¹ 1537-8: "I pledge my word, I shall never reproach you for (not fulfilling) a promise (*behest*).

- And be a beggar. Here I may not dwell
 1565 And shamen all my kindred in this place *my family*
 But I of him may get a better grace. *Unless / better terms*
 But natheless I will of him assay *try*
 At certain dayès year by year to pay
 And thank him of his greatè courtesy.
 1570 My truthè will I keep, I will not lie. *My promise*
 With heartè sore he goes unto his coffer,
 And broughtè gold unto this philosópher
 The value of five hundred pounds, I guess,
 And him beseecheth of his gentilesse
 1575 To grant him dayès of the remenant,¹
 And said: "Master, I dare well make avaunt *I can boast*
 I failèd never of my truth as yet,
 For sikerly my debtè shall be quit *certainly / paid*
 Towardès you, however that I fare *even if I have to*
 1580 To go abeggèd in my kirtle bare; *begging in my shirt*
 But would you vouchèsafe upon surety *grant / pledge*
 Two years or three for to respiten me, *grant delay*
 Then were I well. For elsè must I sell *I'd be alright. Otherwise*
 My heritage. There is no more to tell."
 1585 This philosopher soberly answered
 And saidè thus when he these wordès heard:
 "Have I not holden covenant unto thee?" *kept my agreement*
 "Yea, certès well and truly," quod he.
 "Hast thou not had thy lady as thee liketh?"
 1590 "No! No!" quod he. And sorrowfully he sigheth.
 "What was the causè? Tell me if thou can."
 Aurelius his tale anon began,
 And told him all as you have heard before;
 It needeth not to you rehearse it more. *repeat*
 1595 He said: "Arveragus — of gentilesse — *out of "gentilesse"*
 Had lever die in sorrow and distress *Had rather*
 Than that his wife were of her truthè false."
 The sorrow of Dorigen he told him als' — *also*
 How loath her was to be a wicked wife, *How reluctant she was*
 1600 And that she lever had lost that day her life, *had rather*

¹ 1575: "To give him time to pay the rest."

And that her truth she swore through innocence;
 She ne'er erst had heard speak of `ápparence'. *never before*
 "That made me have of her so great pity.
 And right as freely as he sent her me,
 1605 As freely sent I her to him again.
 This all and some. There is no more to sayn."
 This philosópher answered, "Levé brother, *dear brother*
 Ever each of you did gently to the other.
 Thou art a squire, and he is a knight;
 1610 But God forbiddé, for His blissful might,
 But if a clerk could do a gentle deed
 As well as any of you, it is no dread. *no doubt*
 Sir, I release thee of thy thousand pound,
 As thou right now were cropped out of the ground *As if*
 1615 Ne ne'er ere now ne haddest knowen me. *never before now*
 For sir, I will not take a penny of thee
 For all my craft, nor naught for my travail. *skill / work*
 Thou hast y-payéd well for my vitaille; *food, victuals*
 It is enough. And farewell, have good day" —
 1620 And took his horse and forth he goes his way.

*Demande d'amour*¹

Lordings, this question will I aské now: *Ladies & gentlemen*
 Which was the mosté free, as thinketh you? *generous*
 Now telleth me, ere that you further wend. *go*
 I can no more, my tale is at an end.

¹ 1622-3: The *demande* is a question about love put to the readers of some poems or sections of poems.