The Knight: his Portrait and his Tale
Here is the portrait of the Knight from the General Prologue

The Knight is the person of highest social standing on the pilgrimage though you would never know it from his modest manner or his clothes. He keeps his ferocity for crusaders' battlefields where he has distinguished himself over many years and over a wide geographical area. As the text says, he is not "gay", that is, he is not showily dressed, but is still wearing the military padded coat stained by the armor he has only recently taken off.

A KNIGHT there was and that a worthy man
That from the timè that he first began
45 To riden out, he loved chivalry,  
Truth and honóur, freedom and courtesy.¹
Full worthy was he in his lorde's war,  
And thereto had he ridden--no man farre
As well in Christendom as Heatheness
50 And ever honoured for his worthiness.

*His campaigns*

At Alexandria he was when it was won.  
captured
Full often times he had the board begun  
table
Aboven alle nations in Prussia.²
In Lithow had he reised and in Russia  
Lithuania / fought
55 No Christian man so oft of his degree.  
rank
In Gránad' at the siege eke had he be  
Granada / also
Of Algesir and ridden in Belmarie.
At Leyês was he and at Satalie  
Mediterranean
When they were won, and in the Greatè Sea
60 At many a noble army had he be.  
At mortal battles had he been fifteen
And foughten for our faith at Tramissene
In listès thrice, and ay slain his foe.³
This ilkè worthy knight had been also

¹ 45-6: "He loved everything that pertained to knighthood: truth (to one's word), honor, magnanimity (freedom), courtesy."

² 52-3: He had often occupied the seat of honor at the table of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia, where badges awarded to distinguished crusaders read "Honneur vainc tout: Honor conquers all." Though the campaigns listed below were real, and though it was perhaps just possible for one man to have been in them all, the list is probably idealized. The exact geographical locations are of little interest today. This portrait is generally thought to show a man of unsullied ideals; Terry Jones insists that the knight was a mere mercenary.

³ 63: "In single combat (listes) three times, and always (ay) killed his opponent."
65 Sometime with the lord of Palatie
Against another heathen in Turkey,
And ever more he had a sovereign prize," always

His modest demeanor

And though that he was worthy he was wise, valiant / sensible
And of his port as meek as is a maid.
deporment
70 Ne never yet no villainy he said
In all his life unto no manner wight. no kind of person
He was a very perfect gentle knight.

But for to tellen you of his array:
rudeness
His horse was good; but he was not gay. well dressed

75 Of fustian he wearèd a gipoun
course cloth / tunic
All besmotered with his habergeon,
stained / mail
For he was late y-come from his voyáge,
just come / journey
And wentè for to do his pilgrimáge.4

To recapitulate what was said at the end of the General Prologue:
After serving dinner, Harry Bailly, the fictional Host, owner of the Tabard Inn, originates the idea for the Tales: to pass the time pleasantly, every one will tell a couple of tales on the way out and a couple on the way back. The teller of the best tale will get a dinner paid for by all the others at Harry’s inn, The Tabard, on the way back from Canterbury. He offers to go with them as a guide. They all accept, agreeing that the Host be MC. The next morning they set out and draw lots to see who shall tell the first tale.

1 64-67: The knight had fought for one Saracen or pagan leader against another, a common, if dubious, practice. And ever more … may mean he always kept the highest reputation or that he always came away with a splendid reward or booty (prize). .

2 70-71: Notice quadruple negative: “ne, never, no … no” used for emphasis, perhaps deliberately excessive emphasis. It is not bad grammar. The four negatives remain in Ellesmer’s slightly different version: “He never yet no villainy ne said … unto no manner wight”

3 74: “He (the Knight) was not fashionably dressed.” horse was: most MSS read hors weere(n) = “horses were.” I have preferred the reading of M S Lansdowne.

4 75-78: The poor state of the knight’s clothes is generally interpreted to indicate his pious anxiety to fulfill a religious duty even before he has had a chance to change his clothes. Jones thinks it simply confirms that the knight was a mercenary who had pawned his armor. voyage: MSS have viage. Blessed viage was the term often used for the holy war of the crusades.
The Host:

Let see now who shall tell the firsté tale.
As ever may I drinkên wine or ale,
Whoso be rebel to my judgément
Shall pay for all that by the way is spent.

835 Now draweth cut, ere that we further twinn;
He which that has the shortest shall begin.
   Sir Knight," quod he, "my master and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is mine accord.
Come near," quod he, "my lady Prioress.

840 And you, Sir Clerk, let be your shamefastness,
Nor study not. Lay hand to, every man."

They all draw lots.

Anon to drawen every wight began
And shortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by aventure or sort or cas,

845 The sooth is this, the cut fell to the knight,
Of which full blithe and glad was every wight.
And tell he must his tale as was reason
By forward and by composition
As you have heard. What needeth wordës mo'? 

850 And when this good man saw that it was so,
As he that wise was and obedient
To keep his forward by his free assent,
He said: "Since I shall begin the game,
What! welcome be the cut, in God's name."

855 Now let us ride, and hearken what I say."
   And with that word we riden forth our way
And he began with right a merry cheer
His tale anon, and said as you may hear.
Having drawn the lot to decide who is going to tell the first tale on the road to Canterbury, the Knight proceeds to tell the longest of all the tales in verse. It is, at least on the surface, a Romance; that is, in medieval terms, a tale of love and war, or as we might put it, sex and violence. But the sex here is a matter of convention rather than act, and in no way erotic or earthy as it is in other tales. The violence that we see is ordered and ritualistic, conducted according to rule; the violence that we do not see but hear about, is perhaps less ordered and rule-bound. There is not much "romance" in any modern sense of the word, and the tale appeals to something other than to the softer emotions.

At the beginning we see quite clearly the connected topics of sex and force: Theseus has won himself a bride by violence, and without a trace of erotic passion--just a war prize, as far as we can see. He has conquered the Amazons, a race of single women warriors, and has taken their leader as his wife; the violence is passed over as a sort of given, and we begin with the "lived happily ever after" part; which is the wrong way to begin a romance, and one good reason for wanting to label the tale in some other way.

This may seem overstated, because it is hard to detect any overt note of questioning within the text itself. At first perhaps the critical question only lurks at the back of the mind, but the accumulation of the rest of the tale brings it to the forefront: Is this tale really a romance designed to entertain by celebrating love and valor? Or is it something more?

To begin at the beginning: on the way home from his victorious war against the Amazons, to live happily ever after, Theseus, Duke of Athens, is shocked to hear of another conqueror's behavior: the widows from another war (presumably there were no widows of Theseus's war) complain piteously that Creon of Thebes will not allow them to bury their dead men, a nasty habit of Creon's. So the conquering hero turns around, starts and finishes another widow-making war, so
that even more widows can now live happily ever after, manless like Amazons. The act is at once his homecoming gift to his bride, the manned and tamed Amazon, Hippolyta, who proceeds obediently and placidly to Athens; and at the same time his sacrifice to the minotaur, War. For inside that much-admired construction, *The Knight's Tale*, lurks a Minotaur, not Picasso's version—lustful and savage but vital; this one is legal but lethal. It demands human sacrifice, a fearful and equivocal attraction to men who make offerings by war and related cruelties. Theseus feasts the monster once more, "sparing" only the lives of two young wifeless nobles whom he throws into prison for life.

Where, unlikely enough, "romance" begins, in spite of stone walls and iron bars which do not a prison make in that they do not subdue in the young knights the same drives that impel Theseus: lust and war. Or perhaps more accurately the Lust for War, since the sexual lust in the tale is largely conventional. This is no tale of Lancelot or Tristan who consummate their love as frequently as adverse circumstance permits. The two young prisoners fall for Emily at the same time, quite literally love at first sight, and promptly fall to battling over who shall possess this female that one of them thinks is a goddess. And the tale has shown that a virgin or a goddess is as good an excuse for a fight as a widow. Emily is not there to make love to, but to make war over.

When they both get free, they know only one way to settle their dilemma: a bloody fight. And when Theseus finds them fighting illegally in his territory, he knows one way to deal with the problem: a sentence of death. But under pressure from the women, who think that being fought over is touching, he decrees a LEGAL fight, a tournament, even more violent and bloody than the one he has just stopped. The first move of this great expositor of The First Mover is always violent. There is a lot of Fortitudo (physical Courage) but little Sapientia (Wisdom) in this ruler who is taken as the ideal by so many critics. Surely we are to take ironically the concession to Sapientia, his "moderation" at the opening of the tournament (1679-1706), when he forbids pole-axe and shortsword, and allows only longsword and mace! And (real restraint) only one ride with a sharp-ground spear, which, however, the fighter may continue to use if he is unhorsed. No wonder the people cry out:

*God save such a lord that is so good*
He willeth no destruction of blood. (1705-06)

Indeed!

One critic interprets rather differently: "Acknowledging with true wisdom the limitations of human control, Theseus eschews making the choice himself, [of Emily's husband]; not denying or combatting the role of chance, he merely provides a civilized context within which it can operate." [Jill Mann, "Chance and Destiny" in Cambridge Chaucer Companion, (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1986), p. 88]. He is hardly a wise ruler who cannot even choose a husband for his ward, unlike any Squire Paston; instead he leaves it to the "chance" outcome of a bloody tournament, which is his very deliberate choice; this arrangement can hardly be called without irony a "civilized context." It makes "civilization" consist in ordered violence which everyone can watch on the holiday declared for the occasion. Is not part of Chaucer's comment on this "civilization" the use of alliteration to describe the battle, a stylistic device he elsewhere dismisses as uncivilized "rum, ram, ruf," fit only for describing a barnyard row or a murderous melee?

Professor J.A. Burrow makes the same curious claim about civilized conduct in the same book (p. 121-2): "the tournament, the obsequies for Arcite, the parliament . . . represent man's attempts to accommodate and civilize the anarchic and inescapable facts of aggression, death and love, as social life requires." If there is, as Burrow claims, a political dimension to this "romance," conducting a war to seize a bride or to avenge a small group of widows for a sin that must have struck a 14th-century English audience as venial—this sort of behavior hardly "manifests a concern for matters of foreign relations" in any sense that most of us would accept, or which, perhaps, one 14th-century soldier-poet-diplomat could accept.

Were the wars in which Geoffrey Chaucer himself had taken part--or his Knight narrator--any better motivated than those of Theseus? Is this poem partly Chaucer's thoughtful response to organized royal violence in his medieval world, particularly the wars of his own ruler, Edward III?

If so, it might account in part for why he, a master of characterization, makes so little attempt in this tale to make the characters anything other than representative. They do not, for example,
have conversations; they make speeches, generally quite lengthy. The closest the young knights get to normal conversation is when they quarrel over Emily: they hurl abuse, accusations and challenges at each other, not so much a conversation as a flyting, the verbal equivalent of the single combat or tournament. For Palamon and Arcite are semi-allegorical rather than realistic characters. They are two Young Men smitten with Love for a Young Woman, as Young Men should be in Romances. Although they are natural cousins and Sworn Brothers in a warrior class, they quarrel over who shall have the Young Woman, and come to blows over the matter. An attempt to arbitrate the dispute in a Trial by Combat is arranged by an Older and Wiser Knight, Theseus. Arcite prays to his patron Mars to grant him Victory in the fight; Palamon prays to Venus to win the Young Woman, and the Young Woman prays to be left alone. The prayers are ritualistic and studied, the product or container of ideas rather than the passionate pleas of fully realized characters.

The incompatibility of their prayers inevitably raises the question for Christian readers about the outcome of competing requests by people who ask God for opposing things. Presumably even God cannot grant every petition. And does He want to? Does He care? Does a just and wise God rule this world at all?

What is mankind more unto you hold
Than is the sheep that rowketh in the fold (huddles)
For slain is man right as another beast . . .
What governance is in this prescience
That guiltèless tormenteth innocence? (1307-14)

The plot is mildly absurd, a fact that occurs even to one of the characters for a moment; he sees that he and his opponent are fighting like dogs over a bone which neither can win. And Theseus has a moment of mockery of two men fighting over a woman who knows no more about their dispute than "does a cuckoo or a hare." But for the most part this realization does not interfere with the mechanical progress of the narrative. This is not lack of ingenuity on the part of a poet who is capable of devilishly ingenious plots. Here the plot seems to function mostly to carry something else — ideas or questions about Destiny, Fortune, free will, war, prayer, the existence of God, the power of lust, the frailty of vows, and so on.
At one point Arcite glimpses something for a moment when he gets his desire to be let out of prison and then laments it:

*We knowen not what that we prayen here.*

This realization does not dissuade him later from praying for Victory the night before the tournament, although his previous wish has been granted without divine intervention, and he was unhappy with it anyway. Earlier Palamon also had knelt to Venus and prayed in vain for release from prison (1103 ff). Now, some years later, he too has escaped without any supernatural help, but once more he prays to the same Venus to win the lady. And they all pray in temples whose paintings show the influence of the gods to be almost universally malevolent. So, it would appear that prayer is at best pointless, at worst harmful.

The gods Mars and Venus quarrel over what is to be the result of these prayers, and the case is determined by an Older Wiser God, Saturn, who assures everybody that all will get what they have asked for. The mirroring of the human situation in the "divine" is evident and not reassuring. The gods seem to be nothing more than reflections of the minds of the humans involved—made in the human image in fact, bickering and quarreling, and eventually solving the dilemma not with Godlike wisdom but by a rather shabby trick or "an elegant sophism" depending on your point of view.

Some readers take comfort from the speeches near the end of the tale by Theseus and his father about the general benevolence of The First Mover, who sees to it that everything works out for the best, even though we do not always see it. Others consider the speeches to be of the post-prandial variety, full of sound and platitude, signifying nothing: "Every living thing must die," and "Make virtue of necessity." This is not deep philosophy. But it allows the tale to end, however shakily, as all romances should end — with the marriage of the knight and his princess, who live happily ever after.
Some notes on versification of this first tale (and others)

Some lines simply will not read smoothly in either modspell or old spelling, some only if the modspell is so modified as to be grotesque: putting stress on the second syllable of looking or upward, for example, as in line 2679 (see below). In some cases one cannot be sure how the rhythm was meant to go, and so I have left words unmarked; readers will have to exercise to their own judgement. In some place I have taken a chance and marked syllables even if the stress seems a little awkward. Rigid consistency has not seemed appropriate. And the reader is the final judge.

Stress & Pronunciation of Proper and common nouns:

Clearly the names of the protagonists could be spelled, stressed and pronounced in different ways depending on metrical and other needs:

Arcite: 2 syllables in 1145 & 1032 (rhymes with quite);
3 syllables: Arcīta 1013, 1112; 1152 Árcité. 2256 & 2258 have Arcīta in MSS. The first has stress on syllable #1 Arcīta; the second on syllable #2 Arcīta.

Emily (1068), Emelia (1078)

Palamon 1031, Palamoun 1070 both reflecting the MSS

Saturnus (2443); Satūrn 2450, and 2453 rhyming with to turn

Fortūne (915), Fōrtune (925)

1977: trees possibly has two syllables but I have not marked the word because that seems a trifle grotesque; however, I have marked stubbēs in the next line for two syllables because that seems more acceptable.
1235-6: aventúre / dure; 1239-40: abséncce / préséncce

1241-2: able / changeable. Clearly the last syllable of changeable is stressed but I have not marked it. In 2239 I marked the second syllable of victóry but did not do so six lines later when víctory is equally possible in reading.

1609: I keep battail for rhyme with fail

1787-8: With some trepidation I have marked obstácles / mirácles to show how the stress should go rather than as a guide for correct pronunciation.

1975 should have forést to have at least a half-rhyme with beast, but I have not marked it.

2039/40: old / would do not rhyme; in Shakespeare's Venus & Adonis should rhymes with cool’d

2321 & 2333-6: the word Queint recurs meaning both quenched and quaint (strange). I have kept queint / quaint at 2333-4, partly for the rhyme, and partly because of clear word play. Even in mid line queint rather than quenched is kept because of the possibility of further wordplay causes me to keep.

2259: I have prayer rhyming with dear; the accent should come on the second syllable of prayer, French fashion, as one might naturally do with the original spelling preyere. But I have not marked it. Similarly with 2267. But in 2332 I have marked it.

2290: The necessary change from coroune to crown leaves an irremediable gap of one syllable.

2487/8: service / rise I have made no attempt to mark the second syllable of service which needs to be stressed. Similarly 2685 has unmarked request where the meter demands a stress on the first syllable

2679: Lokyne upward upon this Emelye might be scanned rigidly with stresses on -ynge and
-ward in strict iambic meter, and indeed if one does not do so, the line limps a bit. But who would dare to do so even with Middle English spelling and pronunciation? Most will take the limp or pronounce upon as 'pon or on (as I have done), rather than stress two succeeding words in a way that does such violence to our ideas of word stress. looking and upwárd are quite impossible, in modern dress at any rate. obstácles / mirácles, above, are not much better.

2811-12: the ME divinistre / registre was probably pronounced French fashion with the stress -ístre

2789-90: knighthood / kindred do not rhyme. There is no reasonable way to change this.
THE KNIGHT'S TALE

Part One

Theseus, duke of Athens, returns victorious from a war against the Amazons, with one of them as his wife

Whilom, as old stories tellen us,  
There was a duke that hight Theseus:  
Of Athens he was lord and governor,  
And in his time such a conqueror  
That greater was there none under the sun.  
Full many a riché country had he won:

What with his wisdom and his chivalry,  
He conquered all the reign of feminy,  
That whilom was y-clepéd Scythia,  
And wedded the queen Hyppolita,  
And brought her home with him in his country,

With muché glory and great solemnity,  
And eke her youngé sister Emily.  
And thus with victory and melody  
Let I this noble duke to Athens ride,  
And all his host in armés him beside.

And certés, if it n'ere too long to hear,  
I would have told you fully the manéér  
How wonnen was the reign of feminy  
By Theseus and by his chivalry,  
And of the greaté battle, for the nones,

Betwixen Athens and the Amazons,  
And how besiegd was Hippolyta,  
The fairé, hardy Queen of Scythia,  
And of the feast that was at their wedding,  
And of the tempest at their home-coming.

But all that thing I must as now forbear.  
I have, God wot, a largé field to ere,  
And weaké be the oxen in my plough;
The remnant of the tale is long enough.
I will not letten eke none of this rout;
Let every fellow tell his tale about,
And let's see now who shall the supper win,
And where I left I will again begin.

_The weeping widows of Thebes ask his intervention against Creon_

This duke of whom I makë mention,
When he was comen almost to the town
In all his weal and in his mostë pride,
He was 'ware as he cast his eye aside
Where that there kneelëd in the high way
A company of ladies, tway and tway,
Each after other, clad in clothës black.
But such a cry and such a woe they make
That in this world n'is creature living
That hearde such another waymenting;
And of this cry they would not ever stent
Till they the reinës of his bridle hent.
"What folk be ye that at mine home-coming
Perturben so my feastë with crying?"
Quod Theseus. "Have you so great envy
Of mine honouë, that thus complain and cry?
Or who has you misboden or offended?
And telleth me if it may be amended
And why that you be clothed thus in black."
The eldest lady of them all
When she had swoonëd with a deadly cheer,
That it was ruthë for to see and hear.
She saidë: "Lord to whom Fortùne has given
Victory, and as a conqueror to liven,
Nought grieveth us your glory and your honour,
But we beseechen mercy and succour.
Have mercy on our woe and our distress!
Some drop of pity, through thy gentleness,
Upon us wretched women let thou fall!
For certës, lord, there is none of us all
That she n'ath been a duchess or a queen.
Now be we caitives, as it is well seen,
Thankèd be Fortune and her falsè wheel,
That no estate assureth to be well.¹

Now certès, lord, to abiden your présence,
Here in this temple of the goddess Cleménce
We have been waiting all this fortesnight.

Now help us, lord, since it is in thy might.
I, wretchè, which that weep and wailè thus,
Was whilom wife to King Cappaneus
That starved at Thebès--cursed be that day!²
And allè we that be in this array

And maken all this lamentatioñ,
We losten all our husbands at that town,
While that the siegé thereabout lay.
And yet now oldè Creon, welaway!
That lord is now of Thebès the city,

Fulfilled of ire and of iniquity--
He, for despite and for his tyranny,
To do the deade bodies villainy
Of all our lordès which that been y-slaw,
Has all the bodies on a heap y-draw,

And will not suffer them by no assent
Neither to be y-buried nor y-brent,
But maketh houndès eat them in despite!"
And with that word, withouten more respite,
They fallen gruf and crièd piteously:

"Have on us wretched women some mercy,
And let our sorrow sink into thy heart!"

This gentle duke down from his courser start
With heartè piteous when he heard them speak.
Him thoughtè that his heart would all to-break

Theseus complies with their wish

¹ 926: Fortune was often portrayed as spinning a wheel on which people clung, some on the way up, some on the way down, some totally "downcast," but only one at the top, however briefly. The wheel spins at Fortune's whim, so no one is assured of continual success.

² 933: "To starve" meant to die, not necessarily of hunger.
When he saw them so piteous and so mate, defeated (as in chess)
That whilom weren of so great estate. once were
And in his armes he them all up hent, lifted up
And them comforteth in full good intent,
And swore his oath, as he was true knight,

He woulde do so ferforthly his might
do his best
Upon the tyrant Creon them to wreak,
avenge
That all the people of Greece should speak
How Creon was of Theseus y-served
by Theseus treated
As he that had his death full well deserved.

And right anon withouten more abode
right away / delay
His banner he displayeth and forth rode
To Thebes-ward, and all his host beside.
No nearer Athens would he go nor ride
his army
Nor take his ease fully half a day,
walk nor ride

But onward on his way that night he lay,
camped
And sent anon Hippolyta the queen,
shining, lovely
And Emily her young sister sheen,
Unto the town of Athens there to dwell,
And forth he rides. There is no more to tell.

The red statue of Mars with spear and targe
shield
So shineth in his white banner large
That all the fields glittered up and down.
And by his banner borne is his penoun
standard
Of gold full rich, in which there was y-beat
hammered

The Minotaur, which that he won in Crete.
he overcame
Thus rides this duke, thus rides this conqueror,
And in his host of chivalry the flower,
Till that he came to Thebes and alight
dismounted
Fair in a field there as he thought to fight.
intended to

After his victory over Creon, Theseus imprisons two wounded young Theban nobles

But shortly for to speaken of this thing,
With Creon which that was of Thebes king
who was
He fought, and slew him manly as a knight
In plain battle, and put the folk to flight.
open battle
And by assault he won the city after,
And rent adown both wall and spar and rafter,
And to the ladies he restored again
The bones of their husbands that were slain,
To do obsequies as was then the guise,
But it were all too long for to devise

The great ë clamour and the waymenting
That the ladies made at the burning
Of the bodies, and the great honour
That Theseus, the noble conqueror,
Doth to the ladies when they from him went.

But shortly for to tell is my intent.
When that this worthy duke, this Theseus,
Has Creon slain and wonn Thebes thus,
Still in that field he took all night his rest,
And did with all the country as he pleased

To ransack in the tass of bodies dead,
Them for to strip of harness and of weed,
The pillers diden business and cure
After the battle and discomfiture. ¹
And so befell that in the tass they found,

Through-girt with many a grievous bloody wound,
Two youngë knightës, lying by and by,
Both in one armës wrought full richely;
Of whichë two, Arcíta hight that one, ²
And that other knight hight Palamon.

Not fully quick nor fully dead they were;
But by their coat-armour and by their gear
The heralds knew them best in special
As they that weren of the blood royál
Of Thebës, and of sisters two y-born.

Out of the tass the pillers have them torn
And have them carried soft unto the tent
Of Theseus, and he full soon them sent

¹ 1005-08: "Ransacking the heap of dead bodies, stripping them of their armor and clothes, the pillagers were busy after the battle and defeat."

² 1013: Arcita: The names of some of the characters occur in more than one form, generally to accommodate rime or rhythm: Arcite / Arcita, Emily / Emelia, Palamon / Palamoun
To Athenés to dwell in prison
Perpetually--them would he not ransom.

And when this worthy duke has thus y-done,
He took his host and home he rides anon,
With laurel crown as a conqueror.
And there he lives in joy and in honoúr
Term of his life. What needeth wordes more?

Emily, Hippolyta's sister, walks in the spring garden

And in a tower, in anguish and in woe,
Dwellen this Palamon and eke Arcite
For evermore; there may no gold them quite.
This passeth year by year and day by day,
Till it fell once in a morrow of May

That Emily, that fairer was to seen
Than is the lily upon its stalkè green,
And fresher than the May with flowers new
(For with the rosè colour strove her hue;
I n’ot which was the fairer of them two)

Ere it were day, as was her wont to do,
She was arisen and already dight,
For May will have no sluggardy a-night.
The season pricketh every gentle heart,
And maketh it out of its sleep to start,
And saith, "Arise and do thine observánce."
This maketh Emily have rémembránce
To do honoúr to May and for to rise.
Y-clothed was she fresh for to devise:
Her yellow hair was braided in a tress

Behind her back a yardè long, I guess,
And in the garden at the sun uprist
She walketh up and down, and as her list
She gathers flowers parti-white and red
To make a subtle garland for her head,

And as an angel heavenishly she sung.

Palamon falls in love with Emily on seeing her from his prison
The greatê tower that was so thick and strong
Which of the castle was the chief dungeon,
There as the knightês weren in prison
(Of which I toldë you and tellen shall)

1060  Was even joinant to the garden wall
There as this Emily had her playing.
Bright was the sun and clear in that morning,
And Palamon, this woeful prisoner,
As was his wont by leave of his jailor,

1065  Was risen and roaméd in a chamber on high,
In which he all the noble city saw,
And eke the garden full of branches green,
There as the freshê Emily the sheen
Was in her walk and roaméd up and down.

1070  This sorrowful prisoner, this Palamoun,
Goes in the chamber roaming to and fro,
And to himself complaining of his woe.
That he was born, full oft he said: "Alas!"
And so befell, by áventure or cas,

1075  That through a window thick of many a bar
Of iron great and square as any spar,
He cast his eye upon Emelia
And therewithal he blanched and crièd "Ah!"
As though he stungen were unto the heart.

1080  And with that cry Arcite anon up start
And saidê: "Cousin mine, what aileth thee
That art so pale and deadly on to see?
Why criedst thou? Who has thee done offence?
For Godê's love, take all in patience

1085  Our prison, for it may none other be.
Fortune has given us this adversity.
Some wicked aspect or disposition
Of Saturn, by some constellation,
Has given us this, although we had it sworn.

1090  So stood the heavens when that we were born.
We must endure it; this is the short and plain." ¹

This Palamon answered and said again:
"Cousin, forsooth, of this opinion
Thou hast a vain imagination." ²

This prison causèd me not for to cry,
But I was hurt right now throughout mine eye
Into mine heart, ³ that will my banè be.
The fairness of that lady that I see
Yond in the garden roaming to and fro
Is cause of all my crying and my woe.
I n'ot whether she be woman or goddess,
But Venus is it soothly, as I guess."
And therewithal down on his knees he fell
And said: "Venus, if it be thy will

You in this garden thus to transfigúre
Before me, sorrowful, wretched créatuère,
Out of this prison help that we may 'scape
And if so be my destiny be shape
By étørn word to dien in prison,
Of our lineage have some compassìon,
That is so low y-brought by tyranny."

*His kinsman Arcite is also stricken by sight of Emily*

And with that word Arcitè gan espy
Whereas this lady roamèd to and fro,
And with that sight her beauty hurt him so
That if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as much as he or more.
And with a sigh he saidè piteously:
"The freshè beauty slays me suddenly

¹ 1086-91: "The conjunction of planets and stars at our birth, particularly the malignant influence of Saturn, has destined our misfortune, whether we like it or not. So we must put up with it."

² 1094: "You have a totally wrong idea about this."

³ 1097: A common metaphor for love at first sight was the image of the god of Love shooting the lover through the eye with his arrow.
Of her that roameth in the yonder place,

And but I have her mercy and her grace,
That I may see her at the leasté way,
I n'am but dead: there is no more to say."

They quarrel

This Palamon, when he those wordes heard,
Despitously he looked and answered:

"Whether sayst thou this in earnest or in play?"
"Nay," quod Arcite, "in earnest, by my fay.
God help me so, me list full evil play." ¹

This Palamon gan knit his browés tway:
"It were to thee," quod he, "no great honour
For to be false, nor for to be traitor
To me, that am thy cousin and thy brother
Y-sworn full deep, and each of us to other,
That never, for to dien in the pain,
Till that the death departen shall us twain,
Neither of us in love to hinder other,
Nor in no other case, my levé brother,
But that thou shouldst truly further me
In every case, as I shall further thee.
This was thine oath, and mine also, certáin.
I wot right well thou darest it not withsayn.
Thus art thou of my counsel out of doubt,
And now thou wouldest falsely be about
To love my lady whom I love and serve,
And ever shall till that mine hearté starve.
Now certès, false Arcite, thou shalt not so.
I loved her first, and told to thee my woe
As to my counsel and my brother sworn
To further me, as I have told beforne.
For which thou art y-bounden as a knight
To helpé me, if it lie in thy might.

¹ 1125-7: "Are you saying this seriously or in jest?" "Seriously, I assure you," said A. "I am in no mood for joking."
Or else thou art false, I dare well sayn."
This Árcîtë full proudly spoke again:
"Thou shalt," quod he, "be rather false than I;
And thou art false, I tell thee, utterly.

For par amour I loved her first ere thou.
What wilt thou say? Thou wiestest not yet
Whether she be a woman or goddess:
Thine is affection of holiness,
And mine is love as to créâtúre, ¹

For as a lover just now didn't know

For which I told to thee mine áventúre,
As to my cousin and my brother sworn.
I posè that thou lovedest her beforne:
Wost thou not well the oldë clerkés saw,
That 'Who shall give a lover any law?'

Let's suppose scholar's saying Boeth. III, m 12

Love is a greater lawë, by my pan,
Than may be give to any earthly man;
And therefore positive law and such decree
Is broke alday for love in each degree.
A man must needès love, maugre his head:²

my head man-made laws every day / all levels

He may not flee it though he should be dead,
Al be she maiden, widow, or else wife.

Whether she is

One of them sees the absurdity of their quarrel

And eke it is not likely all thy life
To standen in her grace. No more shall I,
For well thou wost thyselfen, verily

her favor you know well

That thou and I be damned to prison
Perpetually; us gaineth no ransom.
We strive as did the houndés for the bone;
They fought all day, and yet their part was none;
There came a kite, while that they were so wroth

bird of prey / angry

¹ 1155-59: Arcite is making a "theological" distinction: he says that he fell in love with a woman; Palamon, however, did not know just now whether Emily was a woman or goddess, so his is a kind of divine love!

² 1169: "A man has to love whether he wants to or not", literally "A man must love in spite of his head."
1180 That bore away the bone bitwixt them both.
And therefore, at the kingé's court, my brother,
Each man for himself. There is no other.
Love if thee list, for I love and aye shall.
And soothly, levé brother, this is all.
1185 Here in this prison musté we endure
And ever each of us take his áventúre."
In any country of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was accorded thus:
1215 That with a sword he should lose his head.
There was no other remedy nor redd,
But took his leave, and homeward he him sped.
Let him beware; his neck lieth to wed.

_Arcite laments his release_

How great a sorrow suffers now Arcite!
1220 The death he feeleth through his hearté smite.
He weepeth, waileth, crieth piteously;
To slay himself he waiteth privily.
He said, "Alas, the day that I was born!
Now is my prison wors than beforne;
1225 Now is me shape eternally to dwell
Not in purgatóry, but in hell!
Alas, that ever I knew Perotheus,
For else had I dwelled with Theseus,
Y-fettered in his prison evermo'.
1230 Then had I been in bliss and not in woe.
Only the sight of her whom that I serve,
Though that I never her gracé may deserve,
Would have sufficéd right enough for me.
O deare cousin Palamon," quod he,
1235 "Thine is the victory of this áventúre:
Full blissfully in prison may'st thou dure.
In prison? Certés, nay, but Paradise!
Well has Fortúne y-turnéd thee the dice,
That hast the sight of her, and I th'absénce.
1240 For possible is, since thou hast her presénce,
And art a knight, a worthy and an able,
That by some case, since Fortune is changeable,
Thou mayst to thy desire some time attain.
But I that am exiléd, and barrén
1245 Of allé grace, and in so great despair
That there n'is earth, nor water, fire, nor air,
Nor créature that of them makéd is,
That may me help or do comfort in this. ¹
Well ought I starve in wanhope and distress.  
1250 Farewell my life, my lust and my gladness!
   Alas, why 'plain folk so in common
On purveyance of God, or of Fortune,
   That giveth them full oft in many a guise
Well better than they can themselves devise?

1255 Some man desireth for to have riches,
   That cause is of his murder or great sickness;
And some man would out of his prison fain,
   That in his house is of his meenee slain.
Infinite harms be in this matter.

1260 We witen not what thing we prayen here.
   We fare as he that drunk is as a mouse.
A drunken man wot well he has a house,
   But he n'ot which the right way is thither,
And to a drunken man the way is slither.

1265 And certes in this world so faren we.
   We seeken fast after felicity,
But we go wrong full often, truly.
   Thus may we sayen all, and namely I,
That wend and had a great opinion
1270 That if I might escapen from prison,
   Then had I been in joy and perfect heal,
Where now I am exiled from my weal.
   Since that I may not see you, Emily,
I n'am but dead! There is no remedy!"

_Palamon laments his imprisonment_

1275 Upon that other side Palamon,
   When that he wist Arcite was a-gone,
Such sorrow maketh he that the great tower
   Resoundeth of his yowling and [his] clamor.

¹ 1246: All material things were thought to be made up of the four elements: fire, water, earth, and air.
The purè fetters of his shins great

1280 Were of his bitter salté tearès wet
"Alas!" quod he, "Arcita, cousin mine,
Of all our strife, God wot, the fruit is thine!
Thou walkest now in Thebès at thy large,
And of my woe thou givest little charge.

1285 Thou mayst, since thou hast wisdom and manhood,
Assemble all the folk of our kindred,
And make a war so sharp on this city
That by some áventure or some treaty
Thou mayst have her to lady and to wife
For whom that I must needès lose my life.
For as by way of possibility,
Since thou art at thy large, of prison free,
And art a lord, great is thine ádvantáge,
More than is mine, that starve here in a cage.

1290 For I must weep and wail while that I live
With all the woe that prison may me give,
And eke with pain that love me gives also
That doubles all my torment and my woe!"

Therewith the fire of jealousy up start

1300 Within his breast, and hent him by the heart
So woodly that he like was to behold
The boxtree or the ashes dead and cold.
Then said he: "O cruel godès that govern
This world with binding of your word etern,
And writen in the table of adamant
Your parliament and your eternal grant,
What is mankinde more unto your hold
Than is the sheep that rowketh in the fold?"
For slain is man right as another beast,
And dwelleth eke in prison and arrest

---

1 1279: "Even the great fetters on his shins." This rendering presumes that great goes with fetters. It is also possible that the reference is to swollen shins.

2 1301-2: "He looked (as pale as) boxwood or cold ashes."

3 1308: "Does mankind mean anything more to you than sheep huddling in the fold?"
And has sickness and great adversity,
And often times guiltlessly, pardee.
What governance is in this prescience
That guiltlesse tormenteth innocence? 1

And yet increaseth this all my penance,
That man is bounden to his observance,
For Gode's sake to letten of his will,
Whereas a beast may all his lust fulfill,
And when a beast is dead he has no pain,

But man after his death must weep and plain,
Though in this world he havede care and woe.
Withouten doubte, it may standen so.
The answer of this let I to divinës, 2
But well I wot that in this world great pine is.

Alas, I see a serpent or a thief
That many a true man has done mischief,
Go at his large and where him list may turn.
But I must be in prison through Saturn,
And eke through Juno, jealous and eke wood,

That has destroyëd well nigh all the blood
Of Thebes, with its waste wallës wide! 3
And Venus slays me on that other side
For jealousy and fear of him—Arcite!"

Now will I stint of Palamon a lite,

And let him in his prison stille dwell,
And of Arcite forth I will you tell.
The summer passeth, and the nightës long
Increasen double wise the painës strong
Both of the lover and the prisoner.

1 1314: "What kind of governing is this which knows even before they are created (prescience) that innocent people are going to be tormented?"

2 1323-4: Who is speaking: Palamon, the Knight, or Chaucer?

3 1331: The goddess Juno was hostile to Thebes because her husband, Jupiter, had affairs with women of Thebes.
1340 I n’ot which has the woefuller mistér:  
For shortly for to say, this Palamon  
Perpetually is damnéd to prison,  
In chains and in fetters to be dead,  
And Arcite is exíled upon his head  
1345 For evermore as out of that country,  
Nor nevermore he shall his lady see.

Demande d’amour

You lovers ask I now this questïon:¹  
Who has the worse, Arcite or Palamon?  
That one may seen his lady day by day,  
1350 But in [a] prison must he dwell alway;  
That other where him list may ride or go,  
But see his lady shall he nevermo’.  
Now deemeth as you listë, you that can,  
For I will tellé forth as I began.

End of Part One

Part Two

Arcite’s love pains

1355 Whan that Arcite to Thebês comen was,  
Full oft a day he swelt and said: "Alas!"  
For see his lady shall he nevermo’.  
And shortly to concluden all his woe,  
So muchel sorrow had never créâtúre

¹ 1347-53: The question is a "demande d’amour," a puzzling query about love, and a favorite medieval game. Supposedly conducted in a sort of ladies’ lawcourt by Marie, Countess of Champagne and others, it certainly became a literary game. Boccaccio's Filocolo has many. See also in Chaucer The Franklin's Tale, 1621-22, and The Wife of Bath's Tale, 904-905.
That is or shall while that the world may dure.  
His sleep, his meat, his drink is him bereft,  
That lean he waxed and dry as is a shaft.  
His eyen hollow and grisly to behold,  
His hue fallow, and pale as ashes cold.  

And solitary he was and ever alone,  
And wailing all the night, making his moan.  
And if he heard song or instrument,  
Then would he weep, he mighte not be stent.  
So feeble were his spirits and so low,  

And changed so that no man could know  
His speeche nor his voice, though men it heard.  
And in his gear for all the world he fared  
Not only like the lover's malady  
Of Hereos, but rather like manie,  

Engendred of humor melancholic  
Before, in his own cellé fantastick.¹  
And shortly, turned was all up-so-down  
Both habit and eke disposition  
Of him, this woeful lover Daun Arcite.  

Inspired by a vision, Arcite goes to Athens in disguise

What should I all day of his woe endite?  
When he endured had a year or two  
This cruel torment and this pain and woe  
At Thebès in his country, as I said,  
Upon a night in sleep as he him laid,  

Him thought how that the wingèd god Mercury  
Before him stood, and bade him to be merry.  
His sleepy yard in hand he bore upright.  
A hat he wore upon his hairès bright.

¹ 1376: "Hereos": a conflation and confusion between "eros," love and "heros," a hero, hence the kind of extravagant lover's passion suffered by heroes in medieval romances. Its symptoms include those just given above. (See also Damian in The Merchant's Tale, and Aureliius in The Franklin's Tale). If it became bad enough, as with really big heroes like Tristan and Lancelot, it could turn into a "manie," a madness which afflicted the "cell" of fantasy, i.e. the foremost of the three divisions of the brain.
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,

As he was when that Argus took his sleep,
And said him thus: "To Athens shalt thou wend.
There is thee shapen of thy woe an end."
And with that word Arcite woke and start.
"Now truly, how sorè that me smart," 1

Quod he, "to Athens right now will I fare.
Nor for the dread of death shall I not spare
To see my lady that I love and serve.
In her presence I reck not to starve." 2
And with that word he caught a great mirror,

And saw that changed was all his colour,
And saw his visage all in another kind.
And right anon it ran him in his mind
That since his face was so disfigured
Of malady the which he had endured,

He mightè well, if that he bore him low,
Live in Athens evermore unknow,
And see his lady well nigh day by day.

And right anon he changed his array,
And clad him as a poor laborer,

And all alone, save only a squire
That knew his privy and all his case,
Which was disguised poorly as he was,
To Athens is he gone the nextè way.

He takes a job

And to the court he went upon a day,

And at the gate he proffered his service,
To drudge and draw what so men will devise.
And shortly of this matter for to sayn,
He fell in office with a chamberlain
The which that dwelling was with Emily.

For he was wise, and couldè soon espy

1 1394: "However much it hurts me."

2 1398: "I do not care if I die in her presence." starve = die
Of every servant which that serveth her.
Well could he hewen wood and water bear,
For he was young and mighty for the nones,
And thereto he was strong and big of bones,
To do what any wight can him devise.
A year or two he was in this service,
Page of the chamber of Emily the bright,
And "Philostrate" said he that he hight.
But half so well-beloved a man as he
Ne was there never in court of his degree.
He was so gentle of condition
That throughout all the court was his renown.
They saiden that it were a charity
That Theseus would enhancen his degree,
And putten him in worshipful service,
There as he might his virtue exercise.

A promotion

And thus within a while his name is sprung,
Both of his deedes and his goodë tongue,
That Theseus has taken him so near,
That of his chamber he made him a squire,
And gave him gold to maintain his degree.
And eke men brought him out of his country,
From year to year, full privily his rent,
But honestly and slyly he it spent
That no man wondered how that he it had.
And three years in this wise his life he led,
And bore him so in peace and eke in war,
There was no man that Theseus hath more dear
And in this blissë let I now Arcite,
And speak I will of Palamon a lite.

In darkness and horrible and strong prison
This seven year has sitten Palamon,
Forpinèd, what for woe and for distress. 
Who feelèth double sôre and heaviness

But Palamon? that love distrainèth so
That wood out of his wit he goes for woe.
And eke thereto he is a prisoner
Perpetually, not only for a year.
Who couldë rime in English properly

His martyrdom? Forsooth, it am not I.
Therefore I pass as lightly as I may.

An escape

It fell that in the seventh year, of May
The thirdè night, (as olde bookës sayn
That all this story tellen morè plain)--

Were it by áventure or destiny,
As when a thing is shapen it shall be,
That soon after the midnight, Palamon,
By helping of a friend, broke his prison,
And flees the city fast as he may go,

For he had given his jailer drinkè so
Of a claret, made of a certain wine
With nárctics and opium of Thebes fine,
That all that night, though that men would him shake,
The jailer slept; he mightë not awake.

And thus he flees as fast as ever he may.
The night was short and fastè by the day,
That needès cost he most himselfen hide.
And to a grove fastè there beside
With dreadful foot then stalkèth Palamon.

For shortly, this was his opinion,
That in that grove he would him hide all day,
And in the night then would he take his way
To Thebès-ward, his friendès for to pray
On Theseus to help him to warrey.

And shortly, either he would lose his life
Or winnen Emily unto his wife.
This is th'effect and his intentè plain.
Now will I turne to Arcite again,
That little wist how nigh that was his care,
Till that Fortune had brought him in the snare.
The busy lark, messenger of day,
Salueth in her song the morrow grey,
And fiery Phoebus riseth up so bright
That all the orient laugheth of the light,
AndArcite, that in the court royall
With Theseus is squire principal,
Is risen and looketh on the merry day;
And for to do his observance to May,
Remembering on the point of his desire,
He on a courser startling as the fire
Is ridden into the fieldes him to play,
Out of the court were it a mile or tway.
And to the grove of which that I you told
By aventure his way he gan to hold
To maken him a garland of the greves
Were it of woodbine or of hawthorn leaves;
And loud he sang against the sunne sheen:
"May, with all thy flowers and thy green,
Welcome be thou, faire freshe May,
In hope that I some green getten may."

And from his courser with a lusty heart
Into the grove full hastily he start,
And in a path he roameth up and down
Thereas by aventure this Palamoun
Was in a bush, that no man might him see,
For sore afeared of his death was he.
No thing ne knew he that it was Arcite.
1520 God wot he would have trowed it full lite.1 But sooth is said, gone sithen many years, That "field hath eyen and the wood hath ears."
It is full fair a man to beat him even, For alday meeten men at unset steven.2

1525 Full little wot Arcite of his fellow
That was so nigh to hearken all his saw,
For in the bush he sitteth now full still.
When that Arcite had roamèd all his fill,
And sungen all the roundel lustily,

1530 Into a study he fell suddenly,
As do these lovers in their quainté gears,
Now in the crop, now down in the briars,
Now up, now down, as bucket in a well.
Right as the Friday, soothly for to tell,

1535 Now it shineth, now it raineth fast,3
Right so can gery Venus overcast
The heartés of her folk right as her day
Is gereful; right so changeth she array.
Seld is the Friday all the week y-like.

1540 When that Arcite had sung, he gan to sigh,
And set him down withouten any more:
"Alas," quod he, "that day that I was bore.
How longè, Juno, through thy cruelty
Wilt thou warreyen Thebès the city?

1545 Alas, y-brought is to confusion
The blood royál of Cadme and Amphion-
Of Cadmus, which that was the firstè man
That Thebès built or first the town began,
And of the city first was crowned king.

1550 Of his lineage am I and his offspring,

---

1 “God knows he would not have believed it”, literally: "he would have believed it very little."

2 1523-4: "A man should always be ready, for it happens every day that people meet unexpectedly."

3 1534-5: Friday is Venus's day (Lat. veneris dies; Ital. venerdi), and its weather apparently was reputed to be especially unreliable.
By very line, as of the stock royál.
And now I am so caitiff and so thrall,
That he that is my mortal enemy,
I serve him as his squire poorly.

And yet does Juno me well more shame,
For I dare not beknow mine own name,
But there as I was wont to hight Arcite,
Now hight I Philostrate, not worth a mite.
Alas, thou fellé Mars! Alas, Juno!

Thus has your ire our lineage all fordo,
Save only me and wretched Palamon
That Theseus martyreth in prison.
And over all this, to slay me utterly,
Love has his fiery dart so burningly

And over all this, to slay me utterly,
Love has his fiery dart so burningly

This Palamon, that thought that through his heart
He felt a cold sword suddenly glide,
For ire he quoke. No longer would he bide.
And when that he had heard Arcita's tale,
As he were wood, with face dead and pale,
He start him up out of the bushes thick

And said: "Arcité, falsé traitor wick,
Now art thou hent, that lov'st my lady so,
For whom that I have all this pain and woe,
And art my blood, and to my counsel sworn,
As I full oft have told thee herebeforn,

And hast bejapèd here duke Theseus,
And falsely changèd hast thy namè thus.
I will be dead or else thou shalt die.
Thou shalt not love my lady Emily,
But I will love her only and no mo’;

For I am Palamon, thy mortal foe,
And though that I no weapon have in this place,
But out of prison am astart by grace,
I dreadè not that either thou shalt die,
Or thou ne shalt not loven Emily.

Choose which thou wilt, or thou shalt not astart.”
This Arcitè with full despitous heart,
When he him knew and had his talè heard,
As fierce as lion pulled out his sword,
And saidè thus: "By God that sits above,

N'ere it that thou art sick and wood for love,
And eke that thou no weapon hast in this place,
Thou shouldest never out of this grovè pace,
That thou ne shouldest dien of my hand.
For I defy the surety and the bond

Which that thou sayst that I have made to thee.
What, very fool, think well that love is free,
And I will love her, maugre all thy might.

They agree to a duel

But for as much as thou art a worthy knight,
And wilnest to darrein her by battail,¹

Have here my truth, tomorrow I will not fail,
Withouten witting of any other wight,
That here I will be founden as a knight,
And bringen harness right enough for thee,
And choose the best, and leave the worst to me.

¹ 1609: "Art willing to fight a battle to vindicate your right to her."
1615 And meat and drinkè this night will I bring
   Enough for thee, and clothes for thy bedding.
   And if so be that thou my lady win
   And slay me in this wood where I am in,
   Thou mayst well have thy lady as for me.

1620 This Palamon answered: "I grant it thee."
   And thus they be departed till amorrow,
   When each of them had laid his faith to borrow.
   O Cupid, out of all charity!
   O regne, that would no fellow have with thee!

1625 Full sooth is said that lovè nor lordship
   Will not, his thankès, have no fellowship;
   Well finde that Arcite and Palamon.¹
   Arcite is riden anon unto the town,
   And on the morrow ere it were dayè's light,

1630 Full privily two harness has he dight,
   Both suffisant and meet to darreine
   The battle in the field bitwixt them twain;
   And on his horse, alone as he was born,
   He carrieth all this harness him beforne;

1635 And in the grove at time and place y-set
   This Arcite and this Palamon be met.
   To changen gan the color in their face,
   Right as the hunter's in the regne of Thrace,
   That standeth at the gappè with a spear,

1640 When hunted is the lion or the bear,
   And heareth him come rushing in the greves,
   And breaketh both the boughs and the leaves,
   And thinks: "Here comes my mortal enemy.
   Withouten fail he must be dead or I,

1645 For either I must slay him at the gap,
   Or he must slay me if that me mishap."
   So farèd they in changing of their hue

¹ 1623-27: "O Cupid, [god of love], totally without love! O ruler [regne] who will tolerate no partner. True is the saying that neither lover nor lord will share willingly [his thanks], as Arcite and Palamon certainly find out."
As far as ever each other of them knew. \(^1\) There was no "Good day" nor no saluing, 

1650 But straight, withouten word or rehearsing, Ever each of them helped to arm the other, As friendly as he were his own\(\text{e}\) brother.

And after that with sharp\(\text{e}\) spear\(\text{s}\) strong They foinen each at other wonder long. 

1655 Thou mightest ween\(\text{e}\) that this Palamon In his fighting were a wood lion, And as a cruel tiger was Arcite. As wil\(\text{d}\)e boar\(\text{s}\) gonnen they to smite, That frothen white as foam, for ire wood. 

1660 Up to the ankle fought they in their blood. And in this wise I let them fighting dwell, And forth I will of Theseus you tell.

_Fate intervenes in the form of Theseus who comes upon them while hunting_

The destiny, minister general, That executeth in the world overall 

1665 The purveyance that God has seen befo\(\text{n}\),\(^2\) So strong it is that, though the world had sworn The contrary of a thing by yea or nay, Yet sometimes it shall fallen on a day That falls not eft within a thousand year. 

1670 For certainly, our appetit\(\text{s}\) here, Be it of war, or peace, or hate, or love, All is this ruled by the sight above. This mean I now by mighty Theseus, That for to hunten is so desirous, 

1675 And namely at the great\(\text{e}\) hart in May, 

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\(^1\) 1637 and 1647-8: These appear to mean that each knew the other to be a bear or lion in strength and so each pales, like the hunter awaiting the onrush. 

\(^2\) 1663 ff: "Destiny, God's deputy, that carries out everywhere God's Providence, is so strong that even if the whole world is determined against it, things will sometimes happen in one day that will not occur again within a thousand years."
That in his bed there dawneth him no day
That he n’is clad and ready for to ride
With hunt and horn and hounds him beside;
For in his hunting has he such delight

That it is all his joy and appetite
to be himself the great hart’s bane;
For after Mars he serveth now Diane.
Clear was the day, as I have told ere this,
And Theseus, with allé joy and bliss,

With his Hippolyta the fairé queen,
And Emélía clothed all in green,
On hunting be they ridden royally,
And to the grove that stood full fasté by,
In which there was a hart, as men him told,

Duke Theseus the straighté way has hold,
And to this land he rideth him full right,
For thither was the hart wont have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth on his way.
This Duke will have a course at him or tway,

With houndés such as that him list command.
And when this Duke was come unto the land,
Under the sun he looketh, and anon
He was ‘ware of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughten breme as it were bullés two.

The brighté swordés wenten to and fro
So hideously that with the leasté stroke
It seemed as it wouldé fell an oak.
But what they weré, nothing he ne wot.
This Duke his courser with the spurrés smote,

And at a start he was bitwixt them two,
And pulled out a sword, and cried: "Whoa!
No more, on pain of losing of your head.
By mighty Mars, he shall anon be dead
That smiteth any stroke that I may see.

But telleth me what mister men you be,
That be so hardy for to fighten here,
Withouten judge or other officer,
As it were in a listés royally?"
This Palamon answéred hastily

1715 And saide: "Sir, what needeth wordes mo'? We have the death deservèd bothe two. Two woefull wretches be we, two cautives, captives That be encumbered of our owne lives; of = by And as thou art a rightful lord and judge,

1720 Ne give us neither mercy nor refuge; But slay me first, for sainté charity,¹ But slay my fellow eke as well as me; also Or slay him first, for though thou know'st it lite, little do you know it This is thy mortal foe, this is Arcite,

1725 That from thy land is banished on his head, on pain of death For which he has deservèd to be dead; For this is he that came unto thy gate, And saide that he hight Philostrate. was named Thus has he japed thee full many a year,

1730 And thou hast maked him thy chief squire; Tricked And this is he that loveth Emily. And this is he that loveth Emily. For since the day is come that I shall die, I makè plainly my confessiôn That I am thilkè woeful Palamon, I'm the same That I am thilkè woeful Palamon,

1735 That has thy prison broken wickedly. That loveth so hot Emily the bright, so hotly That I will dien present in her sight. Wherefore I askè death and my juwise.

1740 But slay my fellow in the samè wise, For both have we deservèd to be slain."

The Duke instantly sentences them, but the ladies intervene

This worthy Duke answered anon again

¹ 1721: For sainté charity, literally "for holy charity (or love)." The exclamation is presumably an anachronism in the mouth of a pagan. But neither is it very Christian or chivalrous, since his betrayal of his kinsman and fellow knight is about as vindictive as it well could be.
And said: "This is a short conclusion.
Your owné mouth by your confession
Hath damned you, and I will it record;
It needeth not to pine you with the cord.
You shall be dead, by mighty Mars the red."
The queen anon for very womanhood
Gan for to weep, and so did Emily,
And all the ladies in the company.
Great pity was it, as it thought them all,
That ever such a chancé should befell;
For gentlemen they were of great estate,
And nothing but for love was this debate;
And saw their bloody woundês wide and sore,
And allé criéd, bothé less and more,
"Have mercy, lord upon us women all."
And on their bare knees adown they fall,
And would have kissed his feet there as he stood;
Till at the last aslakéd was his mood,
For pity runneth soon in gentle heart,¹
And though he first for iré quoke and start,
He has considered shortly, in a clause,
The trepass of them both, and eke the cause;
And although that his ire their guilt accused,
Yet in his reason he them both excused,
As thus: He thoughté well that every man
Will help himself in love if that he can,
And eke deliver himself out of prison.
And eke his hearté had compassion
Of women, for they wepten ever in one.
And in his gentle heart he thought anon,
And soft unto himself he saidé: "Fie
Upon a lord that will have no mercy
But be a lion both in word and deed
To them that be in repentánce and dread,

¹ 1761: "The heart of the truly noble (gentle) is easily moved to generosity (pity)." A famous and favorite phrase of Chaucer's, used also in MerT 4, 1986; SquireT, V, 479; Leg. of Good Women, Prol F, 503; Man Of Law's T. II, 660. For "gentle" see ENDPAPERS.
As well as to a proud despitous man
That will maintainè what he first began.
That lord has little of discretion

1780 That in such case can no division,
But weigheth pride and humbless after one." And shortly, when his ire is thus agone,
He gan to looken up with eyen light, And spoke these samè wordès all on height:

1785 "The God of Love, ah, benedicitee.
How mighty and how great a lord is he.
Against his might there gaineth no obstácles.
He may be cleped a god for his miracles,
For he can maken at his ownè guise,

1790 Of every heart as that him list devise.
Lo, here this Arcite and this Palamon,
That quitely weren out of my prison,
And might have lived in Thebês royally,
And wit I am their mortal enemy,

1795 And that their death lies in my might also,
And yet has Love, maugre their eyen two,¹ Brought them hither bothè for to die.
Now looketh, is not that a high folly?
Who may be a fool, but if he love?²

1800 Behold, for God’s sake that sits above,
See how they bleed! Be they not well arrayed?
Thus has their lord, the God of Love, y-paid Their wages and their fees for their service. And yet they weenen for to be full wise

1805 That serven Love, for aught that may befall.
But this is yet the besté game of all,
That she for whom they have this jollity Can them therefore as muchè thank as me.
She wot no more of all this hottè fare,

¹ 1796: maugre . . .: "In spite of both their eyes", i.e. in spite of common sense.

² 1799: This line seems to mean: "There is no fool like a lover fool."
By God, than wot a cuckoo or a hare.
But all must be assayéd, hot and cold.
A man must be a fool, or young or old.
I wot it by myself full yore agone,
For in my time a servant was I one,

And therefore, since I know of love's pain,
And wot how sore it can a man distrain,
As he that has been caught oft in his lass,
I you forgive all wholly this trespass,
At réquest of the queen that kneeleth here,

And eke of Emily my sister dear,
And you shall both anon unto me swear
That never more you shall my country dere,
Nor maké war upon me, night nor day,
But be my friendés in all that you may.

I you forgive this trespass everydeal."
And they him swore his asking fair and well,
And him of lordship and of mercy prayed.

Theseus orders a tournament to decide who shall have Emily

And he them granted grace, and thus he said:
"To speak of royal lineage and richessse,

Though that she were a queen or a princess,
Each of you both is worthy, doubtless,
To wedden when time is. But, natheless--
I speak as for my sister Emily
For whom you have this strife and jealousy--

You wot yourself she may not wedden two
At oncé, though you lighten evermore.
That one of you, al be him loath or lief,
He must go pipen in an ivy leef.
This is to say, she may not now have both,

Al be you never so jealous nor so wroth.
And forthy I you put in this degree,
That each of you shall have his destiny
As him is shape, and hearken in what wise;
Lo, here your end of that I shall devise:
1845  My will is this, for plat conclusion,  
Withouten any replication;  
If that you liketh, take if for the best:  
That each of you shall go where that him lest,  
Freely, withouten ransom or danger,  
plain
contradiction

1850  And this day fifty weekès, far or near,  
Ever each of you shall bring a hundred knights  
Armèd for listès up at allé rights,¹  
All ready to darrein her by battail.  
And this behote I you withouten fail,  
for tournament
claim by fight
promise

1855  Upon my truth and as I am a knight,  
That whether of you bothè that has might,  
This is to say, that whether he or thou  
May with his hundred as I spoke of now  
Slay his contráry, or out of listès drive,  
whichever

1860  Then shall I givé Emilia to wive  
To whom that Fortune gives so fair a grace.  
The listès shall I maken in this place,  
And God so wisly on my soulé rue,  
As I shall even judgè be and true.  
surely have mercy
just judge

1865  You shall no other endè with me maken,²  
That one of you ne shall be dead or taken.  
And if you thinketh this is well y-said,  
Say your avis, and holdeth you apaid.  
This is your end and your conclusïon."  
agreement / satisfied

1870  Who looketh lightly now but Palamon?  
Who springeth up for joyé but Arcite?  
Who couldé tell or who could it endite  
The joyé that is maked in the place,  
When Theseus has done so fair a grace?  

1875  But down on knee went every manner wight,  
And thanken him with all their heart and might,  
And namèly the Thebans often sithe.  
oftentimes

¹ 1853: "Completely armed and ready for the lists," i.e. for the place where the tournament would take place.

² 1863-66: "And as sure as I hope for God's mercy, I will be a fair and just judge. I will make no other arrangement with you (than this): one of you has to be killed or captured."
And thus with good hope and with heartè blithe
They take their leave and homeward gan they ride
1880 To Thebes, with its oldè walles wide.

End of Part II

Part Three

The new stadium for the tournament

I trow men wouldè deem it negligence
If I forget to tellen the dispence
Of Theseus, that goes so busily
To maken up the listès royally,
1885 That such a noble theatre as it was
I dare well sayen in this world there n'as.
The circúït a milè was about,
Walled of stone and ditchèd all without.
Round was the shape in manner of compass,
1890 Full of degrees, the height of sixty pas,
That when a man was set on one degree
He letted not his fellow for to see.
Eastward there stood a gate of marble white,
Westward right such another in th'opposite;
1895 And shortly to conclúde, such a place
Was none in earth as in so little space.
For in the land there was no crafty man
That geometry or ars-metric can,
Nor portrayer, nor carver of imáges,
1900 That Theseus ne gave him meat and wages,
The theatre for to maken and devise.
And for to do his rite and sacrifice,
He eastward has, upon the gate above,
In worship of Venus, goddess of love,

Done make an altar and an oratory.¹

And on the gate westward, in memory
Of Mars, he made has right such another,
That cost largely of gold a fother.
And northward in a turret on the wall,

Of alabaster white and red coral,
An oratory rich for to see,
In worship of Diane of chastity,
Hath Theseus wrought in noble wise.

But yet had I forgotten to devise
The noble carving and the portraiture,
The shape, the countenance, and the figures,
That were in these oratories three.

The temple of Venus

First, in the temple of Venus mayst thou see,
Wrought on the wall, full piteous to behold,
The broken sleep and the sighs cold,
The sacred tears and the waymenting,
The fiery strokes of the desiring
That Love's servants in this life endure,
The oaths that their covenants assure,

Pleasance and Hope, Desire, Foolhardiness,
Beauty and Youth, Bawdry, Richesse,
Charmes and Force, Leasings, Flattery,
Dispense, Business, and Jealousy,
That wore of yellow goldes a garland,

And a cuckoo sitting on her hand;
Feastés, instrumentés, carols, dances,
Lust and array, and all the circumstances
Of love, which that I reckoned and reckon shall,
By order were painted on the wall,

And more than I can make of mention.
For soothly all the Mount of Citheron,

¹ 1905: He had an altar and a chapel built
Where Venus has her principal dwelling,
Was showèd on the wall in portraying,
With all the garden and the lustiness.

Nor was forgotten the porter Idleness,
Nor Narcissus the fair of yore agon
Nor yet the folly of king Salomon,
Nor yet the greatè strength of Hercules,
Th'enchantments of Medea and Circes,
Nor of Turnus with the hardy fierce couráge,
The riché Croesus, caitiff in serváge.
Thus may you see that wisdom nor richesse,
Beauty nor sleighté, strengthé, hardiness,
Ne may with Venus holde champarty,
For as her list, the world then may she gie.
Lo, all these folk so caught were in her lass
Till they for woe full often said "Alas!"
Sufficeth here examples one or two,
Although I couldé reckon a thousand more.

The statue of Venus, glorious for to see,
Was naked, floating in the largé sea,
And from the navel down all covered was
With wavès green and bright as any glass.
A citole in her right hand haddè she,
And on her head, full seemly for to see,
A rose garland, fresh and well smelling,
Above her head her dovès flickering.
Before her stood her sonné, Cupido.
Upon his shoulders wingès had he two,
And blind he was, as it is often seen;
A bow he bore, and arrows bright and keen.

---

1 1940 ff: All the instances cited in the following lines are meant to exemplify the claim that nothing can compete with the power of Love. Idleness was the porter of the love garden in The Romance of the Rose, a poem that Chaucer knew and probably translated. Echo died of unrequited love for Narcissus. Solomon, famed for wisdom, was nevertheless, led into idolatry through his lust for women; Hercules the strong was poisoned by a shirt sent to him by his jealous wife. Medea, beautiful and good at "sleight," tricked her family for her lover Jason who afterwards abandoned her; Circe enchanted the followers of Odysseus; "hardy" Turnus fought Aeneas for Lavinia. Croesus was certainly rich and proud, but his love follies are not recorded.
The temple of Mars

Why should I not as well eke tell you all
The portraiture that was upon the wall
Within the temple of mighty Mars the red? [God of War]

All painted was the wall in length and breadth
Like to the estres of the grisly place
That hight the greatè temple of Mars in Thrace,
In thilkè colde frosty region
There as Mars has his sovereign mansïon.

First on the wall was painted a forest,
In which there dwelleth neither man nor beast,
With knotty, knarry, barren trees old,
Of stubbes sharp and hideous to behold,
In which there ran a rumble in a swough,

As though a storm should bursten every bough.
And downward on a hill under a bent
There stood the temple of Mars armipotent,
Wrought all of burnished steel, of which th'entry
Was long and strait and ghastly for to see,

And thereout came a rage and such a veze
That it made all the gat for to rese.
The northern light in at the doorès shone,
For window on the wall ne was there none
Through which men mighten any light discern.

The door was all of adamant etern,
Y-clenchèd overthwart and endalong
With iron tough; and for to make it strong
Every pillar the temple to sustain
Was tonne-great, of iron bright and sheen.

There saw I first the dark imagining
Of Felony, and all the compassing,
The cruel Ire, red as any gleed,
The pick-purse, and eke the palè Dread,
The smiler with the knife under the cloak,

The shippen burning with the blackè smoke,
The treason of the murdering in the bed,
The open War with woundès all be-bled,
Contest with bloody knife and sharp menáce.
All full of chirking was that sorry place.

2005 The slayer of himself yet saw I there;
His hearte's blood has bathed all his hair;
The nail y-driven in the shode at night,
The colde Death with mouth gaping upright.
   Amiddest of the temple sat Mischance,
   In the midst / Disaster

2010 With discomfórt and sorry countenance.
   Yet saw I Woodness, laughing in his rage;
   Arméd Complaint, Outhees, and fierce Outrage;
   The carrion in the bush with throat y-carve,
   A thousand slain and not of qualm y-starve,

yet saw I there;
His hearte's blood has bathed all his hair;
The nail y-driven in the shode at night,
The colde Death with mouth gaping upright.
   Amiddest of the temple sat Mischance,
   In the midst / Disaster

2015 The tyrant with the prey by force y-reft,
The town destroyed--there was nothing left.
   Yet saw I burnt the shippes hoppesteres,¹
   The hunter strangled with the wilde bears,
   The sow freten the child right in the cradle,

2020 The cook y-scalded for all his longe ladle.
   Nought was forgotten by the infortúne of Marte:
   The carter overridden with his cart;
   Under the wheel full low he lay adown.
   There were also of Mars's division
   The barber and the butcher, and the smith
   That forges sharp swordes on his stith.
   And all above depainted in a tower
   Saw I Conquest, sitting in great honoúr,
   With the sharpé sword over his head

2025 The barber and the butcher, and the smith
   That forges sharpé swordés on his stith.
   And all above depainted in a tower
   Saw I Conquest, sitting in great honoúr,
   With the sharpé sword over his head

2030 Hanging by a subtle twine's thread.
   Depainted was the slaughter of Julius,
   Of great Nero, and of Antonius.
   Al be that thilké time they were unborn,
   Yet was their death depainted therebeforn,

2035 By menacing of Mars, right by figure.
   So was it showd in that portraiture,

¹ 2017: Literally hoppesters are female dancers. "Dancing ships" or "ship's dancers" does not make much sense here. The phrase is probably a result of Chaucer's mistranslation of an Italian phrase that meant "ships of war."
As is depainted in the stars above
Who shall be slain, or else dead for love.
Sufficeth one example in stories old;
I may not reckon them all, though I would.
The statue of Mars upon a cart stood
Armed, and looked grim as he were wood.
And over his head there shinen two figures
Of starrês that be clepêd in scriptûres
That one Puella, that other Rubeus.
This god of armès was arrayêd thus:
A wolf there stood before him at his feet,
With eyen red, and of a man he eat.
With subtle pencil painted was this story
In rédouting of Mars and of his glory.

The temple of Diana

Now to the temple of Diane the chaste
goddess of chastity
As shortly as I can I will me haste,
To tell you all the descriptïon.
Depainted be the wallês up and down
Of hunting and of shamefast chastity.
There saw I how woeful Calistopee,
When that Diane agriev’d was with her,
Was turnêd from a woman to a bear,
And after was she made the Lodé-Star.
Thus was it painted, I can say you no farre.
tell you no farther
Her son is eke a star, as men may see.
There saw I Dane y-turnêd to a tree.
(If meanê not the goddessé Diane,
But Penneus’ daughter which that highte Dane.)

1. 2051-55: Diana (Roman name for Greek goddess Artemis) has a number of different (and conflicting) attributes all portrayed in this picture. She is the virgin huntress and goddess of chastity, but also as Lucina, she is goddess of childbirth. As Luna she is goddess of the moon but as Hecate or Prosperine (Persephone) she is a goddess of the underworld ruled by Pluto.

2. 2062-64: Daphne (here called Dane) was transformed into a laurel tree by her father to (continued...)
There saw I Actaeon a hart y-makèd,
  For vengeance that he saw Diane all naked:
  I saw how that his houndès have him caught
  And freten him, for that they knew him not.¹
  Yet painted was little further more

How Atalanta hunted the wild boar,
  And Meleager, and many another more,
  For which Diana wrought him care and woe.
  There saw I many another wonder story,
  The which me list not draw into memóry.²

This goddess on a hart full highè sat,
  With smallè houndès all about her feet,
  And underneath her feet she had a moon;
  Waxing it was, and shouldè wanè soon.
  In gaudy green her statue clothèd was,

With bow in hand and arrows in a case;
  Her eyen castè she full low adown
  Where Pluto has his darkè regïon.
  A woman tràvailing was her beforñ,
  But for her child so longè was unborn,

Full piteously Lucina gan she call,
  And saidè: "Help, for thou mayst best of all."
  Well could he paintè lifelike that it wrought;
  With many a florin he the huès bought.
  Now be these lists made, and Theseus,

That all his great costè arrayèd thus
  The temples and the theatre everydeal,
  When it was done him likèd wonder well.
  But stint I will of Theseus a lite,
  And speak of Palamon and of Arcite.

(continued)

escape the embraces of the god Apollo who was pursuing her.

1 2065-8: Actaeon was a hunter who looked at Diana while she was bathing in a pool and was punished by her for this "crime" by being turned into a deer (hart), which was torn apart by his own hounds.

2 2074: "Which I do not want to recall now."
The combatants arrive

2095  The day approacheth of their réturning,
      That ever each should a hundred knightês bring
The battle to darrein, as I you told.
And to Athens, their covenant for to hold,
Has ever each of them brought a hundred knights,

2100  Well armêd for the war at allè rights;
      And sikerly there trowêd many a man
That never sithen that the world began,
As for to speak of knighthood of their hand,
As far as God has maked sea and land,

2105  N'as of so few so noble a company.\(^1\)
For every wight that lovêd chilvalry,
And would, his thankês, have a passant name,\(^2\)
Has prayed that he might be of that game,
And well was him that thereto chosen was.

2110  For if there fell tomorrow such a case,
      You knowen well that every lusty knight
That loveth paramours and has his might,
Were it in Engeland or elsèwhere,
They would, their thankês, wilnen to be there.

2115  To fighten for a lady, ben'citee,
      It were a lusty sightê for to see.

Palamon with his 100

And right so farêd they with Palamon.
With him there wenten knightês many a one
Some will be armed in a habergeon,\(^3\)

---

\(^1\) 2100 ff: "Many believed that since the Creation there had never been in the world so select a group of knights in the annals of chivalry."

\(^2\) 2107 "And who would gladly have a surpassing name" (for chivalry). his thankes or their thankes = gladly, with thanks.

\(^3\) (continued...)
2120 And in a breastplate and a light gipon; And some will have a pair of plates large And some will have a Prussian shield or targe; Some will be armed on his legges well, And have an ax, and some a mace of steel-

2125 There is no new guise that it n‘as old.¹ Armèd were they as I have you told, Ever each after his opinion. There mayst thou see coming with Palamon Lygurje himself, the greatè king of Thrace.

2130 Black was his beard and manly was his face. The circles of his eye in his head, They glowed betwixen yellow and red, And like a griffon looked he about, With kempe hairès on his browès stout.²

2135 His limbs great, his brawnès hard and strong, His shoulders broad, his armès round and long, And as the guise was in his country, Full high upon a char of gold stood he, With fourè whitè bullès in the traces.

2140 Instead of coat-armoùr over his harness,³ With nailès yellow and bright as any gold, He had a bear‘s skin, coal-black for old. His longè hair was comèd behind his back; As any raven‘s feather it shone for-black.

2145 A wreath of gold, arm-great, of hugè weight,

³(...continued)

2119 ff: "Some" retains its old meaning of "one," "a certain one." The switch from past tense to what looks like future is odd, but has no significance; the "future" should be read as past. Presumably "will be armed" has the sense of "wishes (or chooses) to be armed," which still needs to be read as a past tense: "One was armed in ..."

¹ 2125: "There is no new fashion (in arms) that has not been old." Since Chaucer has put his characters in what seems to be medieval armor, perhaps this sentence is saying that he is aware of the anachronism, as in 2033 above.

² 2134: "With bushy hairs in his prominent eyebrows."

³ 2140: coat-armour: a garment worn over armor (harness), and embroidered with a coat-of-arms."
Upon his head, set full of stone's bright,
Of fine rubies and of diamonds.
About his char there wente white alaunts,
Twenty and more, as great as any steer,

To hunten at the lion or the deer,
And followed him with muzzle fast y-bound,
Collared of gold, and tourettes filèd round.
A hundred lordes had he in his rout,
Armed full well, with heartës stern and stout.

Arcite's troop led by Emetrius

With Árcita, in stories as men find,
The great Emetrius, the king of Ind,
Upon a steedè bay trapped in steel,
Covered in cloth of gold diapered well,
Came riding like the god of armès, Mars.

His coat-armour was of cloth of Tarès,
Couched with pearles white and round and great;
His saddle was of burned gold new y-beat.
A mantlet upon his shoulder hanging,
Bretful of rubies red as fire sparkling;

His crîspè hair like ringës was y-run,
And that was yellow and glittered as the sun;
His nose was high, his eyen bright citрон,
His lips round, his colour was sanguine
A fewè frakens in his face y-sprend,
Betwixen yellow and somdeal black y-mend;
And as a lion he his looking cast.
Of five and twenty year his age I cast.
His beard was well begunnè for to spring.
His voice was as a trumpet thundering.

Upon his head he weared of laurel green
A garland fresh and lusty for to seen.
Upon his hand he bore for his delight
An eagle tame, as any lily white.
A hundred lordès had he with him there,
All armèd, save their heads, in all their gear,
Full richly in allë manner things;
For trusteth well that dukês, earlês, kings,
Were gathered in this noble company
For love and for increase of chivalry.

About this king there ran on every part
Full many a tamê lion and leopard.

_Theseus throws a feast for the occasion_

And in this wise these lordês all and some
Be on the Sunday to the city come
Aboute prime, and in the town alight.

This Theseus, this Duke, this worthy knight,
When he had brought them into his city,
And inned them, ever each at his degree,
He feasteth them and does so great laboûr
To easen them and do them all honoûr,

That yet men weenen that no mannê's wit
Of no estate ne could amenden it.¹
The minstrelcy, the service at the feast,
The greatê giftês to the most and least,
The rich array of Theseus' paláce,

Nor who sat first or last upon the dais,
What ladies fairest be and best dancing,
Or which of them can dancen best and sing,
Nor who most feelingly speaks of love,
What hawkês sitten on the perch above,

What houndês lien on the floor adown--
Of all this make I now no mention.
But all th'effect; that thinketh me the best.
Now comes the point, and hearken if you lest.

_Palamon goes to the temple of Venus_

The Sunday night, ere day began to spring,

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¹ 2195-6: "Men are still of the opinion that no one's intelligence, of whatever rank, could improve upon it." Occupatio is the figure of speech used in the following lines, in which the author says he will not tell about what he then proceeds to tell about.
When Palamon the lark hearde sing,
Although it n'ere not day by hours two
Yet sang the lark; and Palamon right tho,
With holy heart and with a high couráge,
He rose to wenden on his pilgrimáge

Unto the blissful Cytherea benign,
I meanè Venus honorabile and digne,
And in her hour he walketh forth a pace
Unto the listes where her temple was,
And down he kneeleth, and with humble cheer

And hearté sore, he said as you shall hear:
"Fairest of fair, O lady mine Venus,
Daughter of Jove and spouse to Vulcanus,
Thou gladder of the Mount of Citheron,
For thilké love thou haddest to Adon,

Have pity of my bitter tearés smart,
And take mine humble prayer at thine heart.
Alas! I ne have no language to tell
Th'effect nor the torments of my hell.
My hearté may my harmés not bewray.

I am so cónfused that I cannot say
But "Mercy!" lady bright, that knowest well
My thoughts, and seest what harmés that I feel.
Consider all this, and rue upon my sore,
As wisly as I shall for evermore

Emforth my might, thy truè servant be,
And holden war always with chastity.
That make I mine avow, so you me help.
I keepé nought of armés for to yelp,
Nor I ask not tomorrow to have victóry,

Nor renown in this casè, nor vainé glory
Of prize of armés blowen up and down,
But I would have fully possession
Of Emily, and die in thy service.
Find thou the manner how and in what wise.

I recké not but it may better be
To have victory of them, or they of me,
So that I have my lady in mine arms.
For though so be that Mars is god of arms,
Your virtue is so great in heaven above

That, if you list, I shall well have my love.
Thy temple will I worship evermo',
And on thine altar, where I ride or go,
I will do sacrifice and fires beet.
And if you will not so, my lady sweet,

Then pray I thee tomorrow with a spear
That Árcita me through the heartè bere;
Then reck I not, when I have lost my life,
Though that Arcíta win her to his wife.
This is th'effect and end of my prayer:

Give me my love, thou blissful lady dear.'
When th'orison was done of Palamon,
His sacrifice he did, and that anon,
Full piteously, with allè circumstánces,
Al' tell I not as now his observánces.

But at the last the statue of Venus shook,
And made a signè whereby that he took
That his prayer accepted was that day;
For though the signè showèd a delay,
Yet wist he well that granted was his boon,

And with glad heart he went him home full soon.

Emily prays in the temple of Diana

The third hour unequal that Palamon¹
Began to Venus' temple for to gon,
Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily,
And to the temple of Diane gan she hie.

Her maidens that she thither with her led
Full readily with them the fire they had,
Th'incense, the clothès, and the remnant all
That to the sacrificè longen shall,

¹ 2271: "unequal": Darkness and daylight were divided into twelve parts each. 1/12th of the hours of darkness would be unequal to 1/12 of the hours of daylight except around the solstice. This is a difficult line to scan metrically even with ME spelling.
The hornès full of mead, as was the guise.
2280  There lackèd naught to do her sacrifice.
Smoking the temple, full of clothès fair,
This Emily with heartè debonair
Her body washed with water of a well.
(But how she did her rite I dare not tell,
2285  But it be any thing in general,
And yet it were a game to hearen all.
To him that meaneth well it were no charge;
But it is good a man be at his large).¹
Her brightè hair was combed untressèd all;
2290  A coroun of a greenè oak cerial
Upon her head was set, full fair and meet.
Two firès on the altar gan she beet,
And did her thingès as men may behold
In Stace of Thebes and other bookès old.
2295  When kindled was the fire, with piteous cheer
Unto Diane she spoke as you may hear:
"O chastè goddess of the woodès green,
To whom both heaven and earth and sea is seen;
Queen of the regne of Pluto, dark and low,
2300  Goddess of maidens, that mine heart hast know
Full many a year, and wost what I desire,
As keep me from thy vengeance and thine ire
That Actaeon aboughtè cruelly.
Chaste goddessè, well wost thou that I
2305  Desire to be a maiden all my life,
Nor never will I be nor love nor wife.
I am, thou wost, yet of thy company
A maid, and love hunting and venery,
And for to walken in the woodès wild,
2310  And not to be a wife and be with child.
Not will I knowè company of man.
Now help me, lady, since you may and can,
¹ 2284-88: The meaning of this passage is obscure. Perhaps the narrator is saying that he will not be like Actaeon (2303 below) watching a girl take her bath? What a man should be free to do is not clear.
For those three formès that thou hast in thee.¹
And Palamon, that has such love to me,
2315 And eke Arcite, that loveth me so sore,
This grace I prayè thee withouten more,
As sendè love and peace bitwixt them two,
And from me turn away their heartès so
That all their hottè love and their desire,
2320 And all their busy torment and their fire
Be queint or turnd in another place.
And if so be thou wilt not do me grace,
Or if my destiny be shapen so
That I shall needès have one of them two,
2325 As send me him that most desireth me.
Behold, goddess of cleanè chastity,
The bitter tears that on my cheekès fall.
Since thou art maid and keeper of us all,
My maidenhood thou keep and well conserve.
2330 And while I live, a maid I will thee serve."  
The fires burn upon the altar clear,
While Emily was thus in her prayér,
But suddenly she saw a sightè quaint,
For right anon one of the fires queint,
2335 And quicked again, and after that anon
The other fire was queint and all agone,
And as it queint it made a whistling,
As do these wetè brands in their burning,
And at the brandès’ end out ran anon
2340 As it were bloody droppès many a one.
For which so sore aghast was Emily
That she was well nigh mad, and gan to cry,
For she ne wistè what it signified;
But only for the fear thus has she cried,
2345 And wept that it was pity for to hear.
And therewithal Diana gan appear,
With bow in hand, right as an hunteress,

¹ 2313: She asks help from Diana who is also known as Luna, the moon goddess; as Hecate, goddess of the underworld; and as Lucina, goddess of childbirth. See above 2051, note.
And said: "Daughter, stint thy heaviness. Among the goddess high it is affirmed,
and by eternal word written and confirmed,
Thou shalt be wedded unto one of tho
That have for thee so much care and woe,
But unto which of them I may not tell.
Farewell, for I ne may no longer dwell.
The fires which that on mine altar burn
Shall thee declaren ere that thou go hence
Thine aventure of love as in this case."
And with that word the arrows in the case
Of the goddess clatter fast and ring,
And forth she went, and made a vanishing.
For which this Emily astonished was,
And said: "What amounteth this, alas?
I put me in thy protection,
Diana, and in thy disposition."
And home she goes anon the nexte way.
This is th'effect, there is no more to say.

Arcite prays in the temple of Mars

The nexte hour of Mars following this,
Arcite unto the temple walked is
Of fierce Mars, to do his sacrifice,
With all the rites of his pagan wise.
With piteous heart and high devotion,
Right thus to Mars he said his orison:
"O stronge god, that in the regnes cold
Of Thrace honoure red art and lord y-hold,
And hast in every regne and every land
Of armes all the bridle in thine hand,
And them fortunest as thee list devise:
Accept of me my piteous sacrifice.
If so be that my youth may deserve,
And that my might be worthy for to serve
Thy godhead, that I may be one of thine,
Then pray I thee to rue upon my pine,
For thilke pain and thilke hotté fire
In which thou whilom burnedst for desire

2385 When that thou usedest the beauty
Of fairé, youngé, freshé Venus free,
And haddest her in armés at thy will,
Although thee once upon a time misfell,
When Vulcanus had caught thee in his lass,
And found thee lying by his wife, alas.

2390 For thilké sorrow that was in thine heart,
Have ruth as well upon my painés smart.
I am young and uncunning, as thou wost,
And as I trow, with love offended most
That ever was any livé créâtúre.

2395 For she that does me all this woe endure
Ne recketh never whether I sink or fleet;
And well I wot ere she me mercy heet,
That ever was any livé créâtúre.

2398: "And I know well that before she will show me any favor ..."

The Chaucer
Glossary implies tht the form hote rather than Heete was used in Skeat. I could use it and float
for the preceding line.

2400 And well I wot with outen help and grace
Of thee ne may my strengthé not avail.
Then help me, lord, tomorrow in my bataille,
For thilké fire that whilom burnéd thee,
As well as thilké fire now burneth me,

2405 And do that I tomorrow have victóry.
Mine be the travail, and thine be the glory.
Thy sovereign temple will I most honóur
Of any place, and always most labóur
In thy pleasánce and in thy craftés strong.²

2410 And in thy temple I will my banner hang,
And all the armés of my company,
And evermore until that day I die
Eternal fire I will before thee find.
And eke to this avow I will me bind:

2415 My beard, my hair, that hangeth long adown,

¹ 2398: "And I know well that before she will show me any favor ..."

The Chaucer
Glossary implies tht the form hote rather than Heete was used in Skeat. I could use it and float
for the preceding line.

² "I will always work very hard to please you and (be) strong in your service"
That never yet ne felt offension
Of razor nor of shears, I will thee give;
And be thy true servant while I live.
Now lord, have ruth upon my sorrows sore.

Give me the victory. I ask no more."

The prayer stint of Árcita the strong.
The ring on the temple door that hung
And eke the doors clatter'd full fast,
Of which Arcita somewhat him aghast.

The fires burned upon the altar bright
That it gan all the temple for to light.
A sweet smell anon the ground up gave
And Arcita anon his hand up have,
And more incense into the fire he cast,

With other rîtes more, and at the last
The statue of Mars began his hauberk ring,
And with that sound he heard a murmuring,
Full low and dim, that said thus: "Victóry!"
For which he gave to Mars honóur and glory.

And thus with joy and hopè well to fare
Arcite anon unto his inn is faire,
As fain as fowl is of the brightè sun.

An argument among the gods

And right anon such strife there is begun
For thilkè granting, in the heaven above
Betwixtè Venus, the goddess of love,
And Mars, the sternè god armipotent,
That Jupiter was busy it to stent,
Till that the pale Sáturnus the cold,
That knew so many of adventures old,
Found in his old experience an art
That he full soon has pleased every part.
As sooth is said, eld has great avantáge;
In eld is bothè wisdom and uságe;
Men may the old outrun but not outred.
Saturn anon, to stinten strife and dread,
Albeit that it is against his kind,  
Of all this strife he can remedy find.

_Saturn settles the argument_

"My dear daughter Venus," quod Satúrn,  
"My coursé, that has so widè for to turn,

2455 Has morè power than wot any man.  
Mine is the drenching in the sea so wan;

Mine is the prison in the darkè cote;

Mine is the strangling and hanging by the throat,

Has morè power than wot any man.  
Mine is the drenching in the sea so wan;

Mine is the prison in the darkè cote;

Mine is the strangling and hanging by the throat,

The murmur and the churl's rebelling,

2460 The groining and the privy empoisoning.  
I do vengeânce and plain correction

While I dwell in the sign of the lion.

Mine is the ruin of the highè halls,

The falling of the towers and of the walls

2465 Upon the miner or the carpenter.

I slewè Sampson, shaking the pillar;

And minè be the maladiès cold,

The darkè treasons, and the castès old.

My looking is the father of pestilence.

2470 Now weep no more, I shall do diligence

That Palamon, that is thine ownè knight,

Shall have his lady as thou hast him hight.

Though Mars shall help his knight, yet natheless,

Betwixtè you there must be some time peace,

2475 Al be you not of one complexiôn,

That causeth alday such division.

I am thine aìel, ready at thy will.

Weep now no more; I will thy lust fulfill."

Now will I stinten of the gods above,

2480 Of Mars and Venus, the goddèss of love,

And tellè you as plainly as I can

The great effect for which that I began.

_End of Part III_
CANTERBURY TALES

Part Four

Preparations for the tournament

Great was the feast in Athenès that day,
And eke the lusty season of that May

2485 Made every wight to be in such pleasânce
That all that Monday jousten they and dance,
And spenden it in Venus' high service.
But by the causé that they shouldé rise
Early for to see the greaté fight,

2490 Unto their resté wenten they at night.
And on the morrow when the day gan spring,
Of horse and harness noise and clattering
There was in hostelriés all about;
And to the palace rode there many a rout

2495 Of lordés upon steedés and palfreys.
There mayst thou see devising of harness,
So uncouth and so rich, and wrought so well
Of goldsmithry, of broiding, and of steel,
The shieldés brighté, testers, and trappúres,

2500 Gold-hewn helms, hauberks, coat-armourés,
Lords in paréments on their coursers,
Knightés of retinue and eke squires
Nailing the spears and helmets buckling;
Gigging of shieldés, with laineres lacing:

2505 There as need was they weré no thing idle.
The foamy steedés on the golden bridle
Gnawing; and fast the armourers also
With file and hammer, pricking to and fro;
Yeomen on foot and commons many a one

2510 With shorté staves, thick as they may gon;
Pipés, trumpets, nakers, clarions,
That in the battle blowen bloody sounds;
The palace full of people up and down,
Here three, there ten, holding their questión,

2515 Divining of these Theban knightés two.
Some said thus, some said it shall be so;
Some held with him with the blackè beard,
Some with the bald, some with the thickly-haired;
Some said he lookèd grim, and he would fight:

"He" has a sparth of twenty pound of weight."
Thus was the halle full of divining
Long after that the sun began to spring.

Theseus announces the rules

The greatè Theseus, that of his sleep awkawed
With minstrelsy and noisè that was makèd,

2525 Held yet the chambers of his palace rich,
Till that the Theban knightès, both alike
Honoúred, were into the palace fet.
Duke Theseus is at a window set,
Arrayèd right as he were a god in throne;

2530 The people presseth thitherward full soon,
Him for to see and do high reverence,
And eke to hearken his hest and his sentènce.
A herald on a scaffold made a "Ho!"
Till all the noise of people was y-do.

2535 And when he saw the people of noise all still,
Thus showed he the mighty duke's will:
"The lord has of his high discretion
Considerèd that it were destruction
To gentle blood to fighten in the guise
Of mortal battle now in this emprise;
Wherefore, to shapen that they shall not die,
He will his firstè purpose modify:
No man, therefòre, on pain of loss of life,
No manner shot, nor pole-ax, nor short knife
Nor short-sword for to stoke with point biting,
No man ne draw nor bear it by his side.
Nor no man shall unto his fellow ride
But one course with a sharp y-grounden spear.

2545 Into the listès send or thither bring,
Nor short-sword for to stoke with point biting,
No man ne draw nor bear it by his side.
Nor no man shall unto his fellow ride
But one course with a sharp y-grounden spear.

2550 Foin, if him list, on foot, himself to were.
And he that is at mischief shall be take,
And not slain, but be brought unto the stake
That shall ordained be on either side;¹
But thither he shall by force, and there abide.

2555 And if so fell the chieftain be take
On either side, or else slay his make,
No longer shall the tourneying last.
God speedè you: go forth and lay on fast.
With long sword and with maces fight your fill.

2560 Go now your way. This is the lordè's will."
The voice of people touched the heaven,
So loudè cried they with merry steven:
"God savè such a lord that is so good;
He willeth no destruction of blood."

2565 Up go the trumpets and the melody,
And to the lists rideth the company,
By ordinance, throughout the city large,
Hangèd with cloth of gold and not with serge.
Full like a lord this noble Duke gan ride,

2570 These two Thebans upon either side,
And after rode the Queen and Emily,
And after that another company
Of one and other after their degree.
And thus they passen throughout the city,

2575 And to the listès camè they betime,
It was not of the day yet fully prime.

All spectators take their places and the tournament begins

When set was Theseus full rich and high,
Hippolyta the queen and Emily,
And other ladies in degrees about,

2580 Unto the seats presseth all the rout,
And westward through the gatès under Mart
Arcite and eke the hundred of his part,

¹ At the edge of the lists, the tournament place, stakes have been set up to serve as a kind of sideline; any warrior captured and forced to the sideline is out of the fight.
With banner red is entered right anon.
And in that selfè moment Palamon

Is under Venus eastward in the place,
With banner white and hardy cheer and face.
In all the world, to seeken up and down,
So even without variation
There n'erè suchè companiès tway;

For there was none so wisè that could say
That any had of other avantâge
Of worthiness nor of estate nor age,
So even were they chosen for to guess;
And in two ringès fairè they them dress.

When that their namès read were every one,
That in their number guilè was there none,
Then were the gates shut and cried was loud:
"Do now your devoir, youngè knightès proud."
The heralds left their pricking up and down.

Now ringen trumpets loud and clarion.
There is no more to say, but east and west
In go the spears full sadly in the rest,
In goes the sharpè spur into the side,
There see men who can joust and who can ride.

There shiveren shaftès upon shieldès thick,
He feeleth through the heartè-spoon the prick.
Up springen spearès twenty foot on height,
Out go the swordès as the silver bright,
The helmets they to-hewen and to-shred,
"to" is intensive

Out burst the blood with sternè streamès red,
With mighty maces the bones they to-burst;
"He" = one
There stumble steedès strong and down goes all.

He rolleth under foot as does a ball,
"He" = another

He foineth on his feet with his truncheon,
And he him hurtleth with his horse adown,
He through the body is hurt and sithen take,
Maugre his head, and brought unto the stake,
As forward was; right there he must abide.

Another led is on that other side.
And some time does them Theseus to rest, makes them
Them to refresh and drinken if them lest.
Full oft a-day have these Thebans two
Together met and wrought his fellow woe. if they wish

2625 Unhorsèd has each other of them tway.
two
There was no tiger in Vale of Galgophay,
When that her whelp is stole when it is lite,
So cruel in the hunt as is Arcite,
For jealous heart, upon this Palamon.
little

2630 Ne in Belmary there n'is so fell lion,
fierce
That hunted is or for his hunger wood,
mad with hunger
Ne of his prey desireth so the blood,
As Palamon to slay his foe Arcite.

2635 Out runneth blood on both their sidès red.
angry blows

Palamon is captured

Some time an end there is of every deed,
For ere the sun unto the restè went,
before sunset
The strongè king Emetrius gan hent
seized
This Palamon as he fought with Arcite,

2640 And made his sword deep in his flesh to bite,
Unyolden, and y-drawen to the stake.
Unyielding
And in the rescue of this Palamon,
The strongè king Lygurge is born adown,

2645 And King Emetrius, for all his strength,
Is borne out of his saddle a swordè's length,
So hit him Palamon ere he were take.
But all for naught: he brought was to the stake.
His hardy heartè might him helpè naught;

2650 He must abidè when that he was caught,
By force and eke by composition.
and as agreed
Who sorroweth now but woeful Palamon,
That must no morè go again to fight?

Theseus announces the victor; Venus sulks; Saturn strikes
And when that Theseus hadd seen this sight,
Unto the folk that foughten thus each one
He cried, "Whoa! No more, for it is done.
I will be true judge and not party.
Arcite of Thebès shall have Emily,
That by his fortune has her fair y-won."

Anon there is a noise of people begun
For joy of this, so loud and high withall,
It seemèd that the listès shoulde fall.
What can now faire Venus do above?
What says she now? What does this queen of love,

But weepeth so for wanting of her will,
Till that her tearès in the listès fell.
She said: "I am ashamed, doubtèless."
Saturnus said: "Daughter, hold thy peace.
Mars has his will, his knight has all his boon.

And, by my head, thou shalt be easèd soon."
The trumpers with the loudè minstrelcy,
The heralds that full loudè yell and cry,
Be in their weal for joy of daun Arcite.
But hearken me, and stinteth noise a lite

Which a miracle there befell anon!
This fierce Arcite has off his helm y-done,
And on a courser for to show his face,
He pricketh endalong the largè place,
Looking upward on this Emily,

And she again him cast a friendly eye.
For women, as to speaken in commune,
They follow all the favour of Fortûne,
And she was all his cheer as in his heart.
Out of the ground a Fury infernal start,
From Pluto sent at request of Satúrn,
For which his horse for fearè 'gan to turn
And leap aside, and founbered as he leaped.
And ere that Árcitè may taken keep,
He pight him on the pommel of his head,
That in the place he lay as he were dead,
His breast to-bursten with his saddle-bow.¹
As black he lay as any coal or crow,
So was the blood y-runnen in his face.
Anon he was y-borne out of the place,

With hearté sore to Theseus' palace.
Then was he carven out of his harness,
And in a bed y-brought full fair and blive,
For he was yet in memory and alive,
And always crying after Emily.

Activities after the tournament

Duke Theseus with all his company
Is comen home to Athens his city
With allé bliss and great solemnity.
Albeit that this áventure was fall,²
He wouldé not discomforten them all.

Men said eke that Arcíte shall not die:
"He shall be healéd of his malady."
And of another thing they were as fain:
That of them allé was there none y-slain,
Al were they sore y-hurt, and namely one,

That with a spear was thirléd his breast bone.
To other woundés and to broken arms
Some haddé salvés and some haddé charms;
Fermacies of herbés and eke save
They drank, for they would their limbés have.

For which this noble Duke, as he well can,
Comfórteth and honoúreth every man,
And madè revel all the longé night
Unto the strangé lordés, as was right.
Ne there was holden no discomfiting,

But as a joust or as a tourneying,
For soothly there was no discomfiture,

¹ 2691: "His breast torn open by the bow at the front of the saddle" which he has somehow struck in his fall.
² 2703: "Although this accident had occurred"
For falling n’is not but an áventure,
Nor to be led by force unto the stake,
Unyolden, and with twenty knights y-take,
2725 One persón alone, withouten mo’
And harried forth by armê, foot, and toe
And eke his steedé driven forth with staves,
With footmen, bothê yeomen and eke knaves--
It n’as aretted him no villainy;
2730 There may no man clepen it cowardy.
For which anon Duke Theseus let cry--
To stinten allé rancour and envy--
The gree as well of one side as of other,
And either side alike as other’s brother,
2735 And gave them giftês after their degree,
And fully held a feasté dayês three,
And cónveyed the kingês worthily
Out of his town a journey largêly.
And home went every man the rightè way,
2740 There was no more but "Farewell, have good day."
Of this battle I will no more endite,
But speak of Palamon and of Arcite.

Arcite’s injury does not heal

Swelleth the breast of Árcite, and the sore
Encreaseth at his hearté more and more;
2745 The clothèred blood, for any leechêcraft,
Corrupteth, and is in his bouk y-left,
That neither vein-blood nor ventusing,
Nor drink of herbes may be his helping.
The virtue expulsíve or animal
Ne may the venom voiden nor expell;¹
The pipês of his lungs began to swell,
And every lacert in his breast adown
Is shent with venom and corruption.

2755 Him gaineth neither, for to get his life,
Vomit upward, nor downward laxative.
All is to-bursten thilké region;
Nature has now no domination;
And certainly, where Nature will not work,

2760 Farewell, physic, go bear the man to church.
This all and sum: that Árcita must die,
For which he sendeth after Emily,
And Palamon that was his cousin dear.

*His last will and testament*

Then said he thus, as you shall after hear:

2765 "Not may the woeful spirit in mine heart
Declare a point of all my sorrows smart
To you, my lady, that I lovè most;
But I bequeath the service of my ghost
To you aboven every créâtúre

2770 Since that my lifè may no longer dure.
Alas the woe! Alas the painès strong
That I for you have suffered, and so long!
Alas the death! Alas, mine Emily!
Alas, departing of our company!

2775 Alas, mine heart's queen! Alas, my wife!¹
Mine heartè's lady, ender of my life.
What is this world? What asketh man to have?
Now with his love, now in his coldé grave
Alone, withouten any company.

2780 Farewell, my sweeté foe, mine Emily,
And sofè take me in your armès tway,
For love of God, and hearken what I say:
I have here with my cousin Palamon
Had strife and rancour many a day agone

¹ 2775: wife: In Boccaccio's "Teseida," Chaucer's source for this tale, Arcite and Emily marry after his victory.
For love of you, and for my jealousy.
And Jupiter so wise my soule gie
to speaken of a servant properly
With alle circumstances truly,
That is to sayen, truth, honoúr, knighthood,
Wisdom, humblest, estate, and high kindred,
Freedom, and all that 'longeth to that art,
So Jupiter have of my soule part,
As in this world right now ne know I none
So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
That serveth you and will do all his life.
And if that ever you shall be a wife,
Forget not Palamon, the gentle man."
And with that word his speech to faile gan;
For from his feet up to his breast was come
The cold of death that had him overcome.
And yet moreover, for in his armes two
The vital strength is lost and all ago;
Only the intellect withouten more,
That dwelleth in his hearté sick and sore,
Gan failen when the hearté felté death.
Dusked his eyeen two and failed breath,
But on his lady yet he cast his eye.
His laste word was: "Mercy, Emily."
His spirit changed house and wenté there
As I came never, I can not tellen where;
Therefore I stint, I am no divinister:
Of soules find I not in this register,
Ne me ne list thilke opinions to tell
Of them, though that they writen where they dwell.¹
Arcite is cold, there Mars his soule gie.

The mourning for Arcite. The funeral

Now will I speaken forth of Emily.

¹ 2813-14: "And I don't want to give the opinions of those who write about the afterworld" seems to be the general meaning.
It is difficult to decide what to make of the sentiment expressed in these two lines which seem singularly unapt at this point.

Shright Emily and howleth Palamon,
And Theseus his sister took anon
Swooning, and bore her from the corpse away.

What helpeth it to tarry forth the day
To tellen how she wept both eve and morrow?
For in such cases women have such sorrow,
When that their husbands be from them a-go,
That for the morë part they sorrow so,

2820  What helpeth it to tarry forth the day
       To tellen how she wept both eve and morrow?
       For in such cases women have such sorrow,
       When that their husbands be from them a-go,
       That for the morë part they sorrow so,

Shrieked
sister -in-law
take all day
gone

2825  Or elsë fall in such a malady,
      That at the lastë certainly they die.
      Infinite be the sorrows and the tears
      Of oldë folk and folk of tender years
      In all the town for death of this Theban;

2830  For him there weepeth bothë child and man.
       So greatë weeping was there none, certãin,
       When Hector was y-brought all fresh y-slain
       To Troy. Alas, the pity that was there,
       Cratching of cheekës, rending eke of hair:

2835  "Why wouldest thou be dead," these women cry,
      "And haddest gold enough and Emily?" 1
      No man mightë gladden Theseus
      Saving his oldë father Egeus,
      That knew this worldë's transmutation,

2840  As he had seen it change both up and down,
       Joy after woe, and woe after gladness;
       And showëd them example and likeness:
       "Right as there diëd never man," quod he,
       "That he ne lived in earth in some degree,

2845  Right so there livëd never man," he said,
       "In all this world that some time he ne died.
       This world n'is but a thoroughfare full of woe,
       And we be pilgrims passing to and fro.
       Death is an end of every worldly sore."

2850  And overall this yet said he muchel more
       To this effect, full wisely to exhort

1 2835-6: It is difficult to decide what to make of the sentiment expressed in these two lines which seem singularly unapt at this point.
The people that they should them recomfort.  
Duke Theseus with all his busy cure  
Casteth now wherè that the sepultúre

2855  Of good Arcite may best y-maked be,  
And eke most honourable in his degree.  
And at the last he took conclusion  
That there as first Arcite and Palamon  
Haddè for love the battle them between,

2860  That in the selfe grovè, sweet and green,  
There as he had his amorous desires,  
His cómplaint, and for love his hotté fires,  
He woulde make a fire in which the office  
Funeral he mightë all accomplish,

2865  And let anon command to hack and hew  
The oakës old, and lay them in a row,  
In colpons well arrayèd for to burn.  
His officers with swiftë feet they run  
And ride anon at his commandëment,

2870  And after this Theseus has y-sent  
After a bier, and it all overspread  
With cloth of gold, the richest that he had,  
And of the samë suit he clad Arcite,  
Upon his handës two his glovës white,

2875  Eke on his head a crown of laurel green,  
And in his hand a sword full bright and keen.  
He laid him, bare the visage, on the bier.  
Therewith he wept that pity was to hear,  
And for the people shouldë see him all,

2880  When it was day he brought him to the hall  
That roareth of the crying and the sound.  
Then came this woeful Theban Palamon,  
With fluttery beard and ruggy ashy hairs,  
In clothës black, y-droppèd all with tears,

2885  And passing other of weeping, Emily,  
The ruefullest of all the company.  
In as much as the servicë should be  
The morë noble and rich in his degree,  
Duke Theseus let forth three steedës bring
That trapped were in steel all glittering,
And covered with the arms of Daun Arcite.
Upon these steeds that weren great and white,
There satten folk of which one bore his shield;
Another his spear up in his handes held;
The thirdè bore with him his bow Turkish.
Of burnèd gold was the case and eke th' harness,
And ridden forth a pace with sorrowful cheer
    Toward the grove, as you shall after hear.
The noblest of the Greekês that there were

Upon their shoulders carried the bier,
    With slackè pace, and eyen red and wet,
Throughout the city by the master street,
That spread was all with black. And wonder high
Right of the samè is the street y-wry.

Upon the right hand went old Egeus,
And on that other side Duke Theseus,
With vessels in their hands of gold full fine,
Eke Palamon with full great company

And after that came woeful Emily,
    With fire in hand, as was that time the guise
To do the office of funeral service.
    High labour and full great apparreling
Was at the service and the fire-making,

That with his greenè top the heaven raught,
And twenty fathom of breadth the armès straught,
This is to say, the boughs were so broad.
Of straw first there was laid many a load.¹
But how the fire was makèd upon height,

Nor eke the namès how the trees hight--
As oak, fir, birch, asp, alder, holm, poplar,
Willow, elm, plane, ash, box, chestain, lind, laurer,

¹ 2919: Here begins what has been called the longest sentence in Chaucer's poetry and perhaps the longest *occupatio* in English, a rhetorical feature as dear to Chaucer and to the Middle Ages generally as the catalogue which it is also. *Occupatio* is the pretence that the author does not have the time, space or talent to describe what he then sets out to describe. The catalogue is self explaining, if not self justifying to modern taste.
Maple, thorn, beech, hazel, yew, whippletree--
How they were felled shall not be told for me,

2925 Nor how the goddès runnen up and down,
Disherited of their habitation
In which they wonèden in rest and peace:
Nymphs, fauns, and hamadryadès;
Nor how the beastès and the birdès all

2930 Fledden for fearè when the wood was fall;
Nor how the ground aghast was of the light
That was not wont to see the sunnè bright;
Nor how the fire was couchèd first with streè
dAnd then with dry stickès cloven a-three,

2935 And then with greene wood and spicerie,
And then with cloth of gold and with perry,
And garlands hanging full of many a flower,
The myrrh, th’incense with all so great savour,
Nor how Arcité lay among all this,

2940 Nor what richness about the body is,
Nor how that Emily, as was the guise,
Put in the fire of funeral service,
Nor how she swoonèd when men made the fire,
Nor what she spoke, nor what was her desire,

2945 Nor what jewells men in the firè cast
When that the fire was great and burnèd fast,
Nor how some cast their shield and some their spear,
And of the vestements which that therè were,
And cuppès full of milk and wine and blood

2950 Into the fire that burnt as it were wood;
Nor how the Greekès with a hugè rout
Thricè riden all the fire about,
Upon the left hand, with a loud shouting,
And thricè with their spearès clattering,

2955 And thricè how the ladies gan to cry,
And how that led was homeward Emily;
Nor how Arcite is burnt to ashes cold;
Nor how that lichè-wakè was y-hold
All thilkè night; nor how the Greekès play

2960 The wakè-plays; ne keep I nought to say
Who wrestleth best naked with oil anoint,
Nor who that bore him best in no disjoint.¹
I will not tellen all how that they gon
Homè to Athens when the play is done,
But shortly to the point then will I wend,
And maken of my longè tale an end.

*Theseus sends for Palamon and Emily*

By process and by length of certain years,
All stinted is the mourning and the tears
Of Greekès by one general assent.

2970 Then seeméd me there was a parliament
At Athens, upon a certain point and case;
Among the whiche points y-spoken was
To have with certain countries allliance,
And have fully of Thebans obeïsance;

2975 For which noble Theseus anon
Let senden after gentle Palamon,
Unwist of him what was the cause and why.
But in his blacke clothès sorrowfully
He came at his commandement in hie.

2980 Then sent Theseus for Emily.
When they were set, and hushed was all the place,
And Theseus abiden has a space
Ere any word came from his wisè breast,
His eyen set he there as was his lest,

2985 And with a sad viságe he sighèd still,
And after that right thus he said his will:

*His speech about Destiny*

"The Firstè Mover of the cause above,
When he first made the fairè Chain of Love,
Great was th'effect, and high was his intent;

2990 Well wist he why and what thereof he meant.

¹ 2962: "Nor who came off best, with least difficulty" (?)
For with that fairè Chain of Love he bound
The fire, the air, the water, and the land
In certain boundes that they may not flee.
That samè Prince and that Mover," quod he,

"Hath 'stablished in this wretched world adown
Certain dayès and duration
To all that is engendred in this place,
Over the whiche day they may not pace,
All may they yet those dayès well abridge,

There needeth no authority to allege,
For it is provèd by experience,
But that me list declaren my senténce.
Then may men by this order well discern
That thilkè Mover stable is and etern.

Then may men knowé, but it be a fool,
That every part deriveth from its whole,
For Nature has not taken its beginning
Of no part´y or cantle of a thing,
But of a thing that perfect is and stable,

Descending so till it be córrumpable.
And therefore for his wisè purveyance
He has so well beset his ordinance
That species of thingès and progressïons
Shall enduren by successïons,

And not etern, withouten any lie.
This mayst thou understand and see at eye.¹
Lo, the oak that has so long a nourishing
From timè that it first beginneth spring,
And has so long a life, as you may see,

Yet at the lastè wasted is the tree.
Consider eke how that the hardè stone
Under our foot on which we ride and gon,
Yet wasteth it as it lies by the way;

¹ 3005-16: Every part is part of a whole, and is therefore imperfect. Only the perfect, i.e. God, is whole and eternal. Nature itself derives directly from God, but each part of it is less perfect because further removed from the great One. Everything imperfect is destined to die. But, though each individual is perishable, the species itself has some kind of eternity.
The broade river some time waxeth dry;

3025 The greatè townès see we wane and wend;
Then may you see that all this thing has end.
Of man and woman see we well also
That needs, in one of these termès two,
This is to say, in youth or else in age,

3030 He must be dead, the king as shall a page:¹
Some in his bed, some in the deepè sea,
Some in the largè field, as you may see.
There helpeth naught, all goes that ilkè way.
Then may I say that all this thing must die.

Destiny is the will of Jove

3035 What maketh this but Jupiter the king,
That is the Prince and cause of allè thing,
Converting all unto his proper well
From which it is derivèd, sooth to tell!
And here-against no creâtûre alive

3040 Of no degree, availeth for to strive.
Then is it wisdom, as it thinketh me,
To maken virtue of necessity,
And take it well that we may not eschew,
And namèly what to us all is due.

3045 And whoso groucheth aught, he does folly,
And rebel is to Him that all may gie.
And certainly a man has most honoúr
To dien in his excellence and flower,
When he is siker of his goodè name.

3050 Then has he done his friend nor him no shame;
And gladder ought his friend be of his death
When with honoúr up yielded is his breath,
Than when his name appalled is for age,
For all forgotten is his vassalage.

¹ 3027-3030: The passage states the obvious: that every man and woman must die, young or old, king or servant. The awkward syntax is about as follows: "man and woman . . . needs . . . be dead"; must be repeats needs be, and he refers back to man and woman.
3055 Then is it best, as for a worthy fame,
To dien when that he is best of name. 

He reminds them that Arcite died at the height of his fame

The contrary of all this is wilfulness.
Why grouchen we, why have we heaviness,
That good Arcite, of chivalry the flower,
Departed is with duity and honour
Out of this foulè prison of this life?
Why grouchen here his cousin and his wife
Of his welfare that loveth them so well?
Can he them thank? Nay, God wot, never a deal
That both his soul and eke himself offend.
And yet they may their lustès not amend.
What may I conclude of this long serie,
But after woe I rede us to be merry,
And thanken Jupiter of all his grace;
And, er we departen from this place,
I redè that we make of sorrows two
One perfect joyé, lasting evermo'.
And look now where most sorrow is herein,
There I will first amenden and begin.

Theseus wishes Palamon and Emily to marry

3075 "Sister," quod he, "this is my full assent,
With all th'advice here of my parliament:
That gentle Palamon, your ownè knight,
That serveth you with will and heart and might,
And ever has done since you first him knew,

That you shall of your grace upon him rue
And taken him for husband and for lord.
Lene me your hand, for this is our accord:
Let see now of your womanly pity.
He is a kingè's brother's son, pardee,
And though he were a poorè bachelor,
Since he has servèd you so many year
And had for you so great adversity,
It must be considered, 'lieveth me
For gentle mercy aught to passen right.¹

Than said he thus to Palamon the knight:
"I trow there needeth little sermoning
To makè you assent unto this thing.
Come near and take your lady by the hand."

They marry and live happily ever after

Bitwixen them was made anon the bond
That hight matrimony or marriage,
By all the council and the baronage.
And thus with allè bliss and melody
Hath Palamon y-wedded Emily.
And God, that all this widè world has wrought,
Send him his love that has it dear abought;
For now is Palamon in allè weal,
Living in bliss, in riches, and in heal,
And Emily him loves so tenderly,
And he her serveth also gentilly,
That never was there no word them between
Of jealousy or any other teen.

Thus endeth Palamon and Emily,
And God save all this fairè company.
Amen

¹ 3089: "Mercy is preferable to insisting on one's rights." The implication is that, by rights, she should be married to a man of higher rank than Palamon.