The Wife of Bath's [Prologue](http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/wbt-par.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22PROLOGUE) and [Tale](http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/wbt-par.htm#TALE)

An Interlinear Translation

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**The Wife of Bath's Prologue**

*The Prologe of the Wyves Tale of Bathe*

1       **"Experience, though noon auctoritee**
                "Experience, though no written authority
2       **Were in this world, is right ynogh for me**
                Were in this world, is good enough for me
3       **To speke of wo that is in mariage;**
                To speak of the woe that is in marriage;
4       **For, lordynges, sith I twelve yeer was of age,**
                For, gentlemen, since I was twelve years of age,
5       **Thonked be God that is eterne on lyve,**
                Thanked be God who is eternally alive,
6       **Housbondes at chirche dore I have had fyve --**
                I have had five husbands at the church door --
7       **If I so ofte myghte have ywedded bee --**
                If I so often might have been wedded --
8       **And alle were worthy men in hir degree.**
                And all were worthy men in their way.
9       **But me was toold, certeyn, nat longe agoon is,**
                But to me it was told, certainly, it is not long ago,
10       **That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but onis**
                That since Christ went never but once
11       **To weddyng, in the Cane of Galilee,**
                To a wedding, in the Cana of Galilee,
12       **That by the same ensample taughte he me**
                That by that same example he taught me
13       **That I ne sholde wedded be but ones.**
                That I should be wedded but once.
14       **Herkne eek, lo, which a sharp word for the nones,**
                Listen also, lo, what a sharp word for this purpose,
15       **Biside a welle, Jhesus, God and man,**
                Beside a well, Jesus, God and man,
16       **Spak in repreeve of the Samaritan:**
                Spoke in reproof of the Samaritan:
17       **`Thou hast yhad fyve housbondes,' quod he,**
                `Thou hast had five husbands,' he said,
18       **`And that ilke man that now hath thee**
                `And that same man that now has thee
19       **Is noght thyn housbonde,' thus seyde he certeyn.**
                Is not thy husband,' thus he said certainly.
20       **What that he mente therby, I kan nat seyn;**
                What he meant by this, I can not say;
21       **But that I axe, why that the fifthe man**
                But I ask, why the fifth man
22       **Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan?**
                Was no husband to the Samaritan?
23       **How manye myghte she have in mariage?**
                How many might she have in marriage?
24       **Yet herde I nevere tellen in myn age**
                I never yet heard tell in my lifetime
25       **Upon this nombre diffinicioun.**
                A definition of this number.
26       **Men may devyne and glosen, up and doun,**
                Men may conjecture and interpret in every way,
27       **But wel I woot, expres, withoute lye,**
                But well I know, expressly, without lie,
28       **God bad us for to wexe and multiplye;**
                God commanded us to grow fruitful and multiply;
29       **That gentil text kan I wel understonde.**
                That gentle text I can well understand.
30       **Eek wel I woot, he seyde myn housbonde**
                Also I know well, he said my husband
31       **Sholde lete fader and mooder and take to me.**
                Should leave father and mother and take to me.
32       **But of no nombre mencion made he,**
                But he made no mention of number,
33       **Of bigamye, or of octogamye;**
                Of marrying two, or of marrying eight;
34       **Why sholde men thanne speke of it vileynye?**
                Why should men then speak evil of it?

35       **Lo, heere the wise kyng, daun Salomon;**
                Lo, (consider) here the wise king, dan Salomon;
36       **I trowe he hadde wyves mo than oon.**
                I believe he had wives more than one.
37       **As wolde God it leveful were unto me**
                As would God it were lawful unto me
38       **To be refresshed half so ofte as he!**
                To be refreshed half so often as he!
39       **Which yifte of God hadde he for alle his wyvys!**
                What a gift of God he had because of all his wives!
40       **No man hath swich that in this world alyve is.**
                No man that in this world is alive has such (a gift).
41       **God woot, this noble kyng, as to my wit,**
                God knows, this noble king, according to my judgment,
42       **The firste nyght had many a myrie fit**
                The first night had many a merry fit
43       **With ech of hem, so wel was hym on lyve.**
                With each of them, so well things went for him in his lifetime.
44       **Yblessed be God that I have wedded fyve!**
                Blessed be God that I have wedded five!
44a       **[Of whiche I have pyked out the beste,**
                [Of which I have picked out the best,
44b       **Bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste.**
                Both of their lower purse (scrotum) and of their strongbox.
44c       **Diverse scoles maken parfyt clerkes,**
                Differing schools make perfect clerks,
44d       **And diverse practyk in many sondry werkes**
                And differing practice in many various works
44e       **Maketh the werkman parfyt sekirly;**
                Makes the workman truly perfect;
44f       **Of fyve husbondes scoleiyng am I.]**
                Of five husbands' schooling am I.]
45       **Welcome the sixte, whan that evere he shal.**
                Welcome the sixth, whenever he shall appear.
46       **For sothe, I wol nat kepe me chaast in al.**
                For truly, I will not keep myself chaste in everything.
47       **Whan myn housbonde is fro the world ygon,**
                When my husband is gone from the world,
48       **Som Cristen man shal wedde me anon,**
                Some Christian man shall wed me straightway,
49       **For thanne th' apostle seith that I am free**
                For then the apostle says that I am free
50       **To wedde, a Goddes half, where it liketh me.**
                To wed, by God's side (I swear), wherever it pleases me.
51       **He seith that to be wedded is no synne;**
                He says that to be wedded is no sin;
52       **Bet is to be wedded than to brynne.**
                It is better to be wedded than to burn.
53       **What rekketh me, thogh folk seye vileynye**
                What do I care, though folk speak evil
54       **Of shrewed Lameth and his bigamye?**
                Of cursed Lamech and his bigamy?
55       **I woot wel Abraham was an hooly man,**
                I know well Abraham was a holy man,
56       **And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I kan;**
                And Jacob also, insofar as I know;
57       **And ech of hem hadde wyves mo than two,**
                And each of them had more than two wives,
58       **And many another holy man also.**
                And many another holy man also.
59       **Wher can ye seye, in any manere age,**
                Where can you find, in any historical period,
60       **That hye God defended mariage**
                That high God forbad marriage
61       **By expres word? I pray yow, telleth me.**
                By express word? I pray you, tell me.
62       **Or where comanded he virginitee?**
                Or where commanded he virginity?
63       **I woot as wel as ye, it is no drede,**
                I know as well as you, it is no doubt,
64       **Th' apostel, whan he speketh of maydenhede,**
                The apostle, when he speaks of maidenhood,
65       **He seyde that precept therof hadde he noon.**
                He said that he had no precept concerning it.
66       **Men may conseille a womman to been oon,**
                Men may advise a woman to be one,
67       **But conseillyng is no comandement.**
                But advice is no commandment.
68       **He putte it in oure owene juggement;**
                He left it to our own judgment;
69       **For hadde God comanded maydenhede,**
                For had God commanded maidenhood,
70       **Thanne hadde he dampned weddyng with the dede.**
                Then had he damned marriage along with the act (of procreation).
71       **And certes, if ther were no seed ysowe,**
                And certainly, if there were no seed sown,
72       **Virginitee, thanne wherof sholde it growe?**
                Then from what should virginity grow?
73       **Poul dorste nat comanden, atte leeste,**
                In any case, Paul dared not command
74       **A thyng of which his maister yaf noon heeste.**
                A thing of which his master gave no command.
75       **The dart is set up for virginitee;**
                The prize is set up for virginity;
76       **Cacche whoso may, who renneth best lat see.**
                Catch it whoever can, let's see who runs best.

77       **But this word is nat taken of every wight,**
                But this word does not apply to every person,
78       **But ther as God lust gyve it of his myght.**
                But where God desires to give it by his power.
79       **I woot wel that th' apostel was a mayde;**
                I know well that the apostle was a virgin;
80       **But nathelees, thogh that he wroot and sayde**
                But nonetheless, though he wrote and said
81       **He wolde that every wight were swich as he,**
                He would that every person were such as he,
82       **Al nys but conseil to virginitee.**
                All is nothing but advice to (adopt) virginity.
83       **And for to been a wyf he yaf me leve**
                And he gave me leave to be a wife
84       **Of indulgence; so nys it no repreve**
                By explicit permission; so it is not blameful
85       **To wedde me, if that my make dye,**
                To wed me, if my mate should die,
86       **Withouten excepcion of bigamye.**
                Without objection on the grounds of bigamy.
87       **Al were it good no womman for to touche --**
                Although it would be good to touch no woman --
88       **He mente as in his bed or in his couche,**
                He meant in his bed or in his couch,
89       **For peril is bothe fyr and tow t' assemble;**
                For it is perilous to assemble both fire and flax;
90       **Ye knowe what this ensample may resemble.**
                You know what this example may apply to.
91       **This is al and som: he heeld virginitee**
                This is the sum of it: he held virginity
92       **Moore parfit than weddyng in freletee.**
                More perfect than wedding in weakness.
93       **Freletee clepe I, but if that he and she**
                Weakness I call it, unless he and she
94       **Wolde leden al hir lyf in chastitee.**
                Would lead all their life in chastity.

95       **I graunte it wel; I have noon envie,**
                I grant it well; I have no envy,
96       **Thogh maydenhede preferre bigamye.**
                Though maidenhood may have precedence over a second marriage.
97       **It liketh hem to be clene, body and goost;**
                It pleases them to be clean, body and spirit;
98       **Of myn estaat I nyl nat make no boost,**
                Of my state I will make no boast,
99       **For wel ye knowe, a lord in his houshold,**
                For well you know, a lord in his household,
100       **He nath nat every vessel al of gold;**
                He has not every utensil all of gold;
101       **Somme been of tree, and doon hir lord servyse.**
                Some are of wood, and do their lord service.
102       **God clepeth folk to hym in sondry wyse,**
                God calls folk to him in various ways,
103       **And everich hath of God a propre yifte --**
                And each one has of God an individual gift --
104       **Som this, som that, as hym liketh shifte.**
                Some this, some that, as it pleases Him to provide.

105       **Virginitee is greet perfeccion,**
                Virginity is great perfection,
106       **And continence eek with devocion,**
                And continence also with devotion,
107       **But Crist, that of perfeccion is welle,**
                But Christ, who is the source of perfection,
108       **Bad nat every wight he sholde go selle**
                Did not command that every one should go sell
109       **Al that he hadde, and gyve it to the poore,**
                All that he had, and give it to the poor,
110       **And in swich wise folwe hym and his foore.**
                And in such wise follow him and his footsteps.
111       **He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfitly;**
                He spoke to those who would live perfectly;
112       **And lordynges, by youre leve, that am nat I.**
                And gentlemen, by your leave, I am not that.
113       **I wol bistowe the flour of al myn age**
                I will bestow the flower of all my age
114       **In the actes and in fruyt of mariage.**
                In the acts and in fruit of marriage.

115       **Telle me also, to what conclusion**
                Tell me also, to what purpose
116       **Were membres maad of generacion,**
                Were members of generation made,
117       **And of so parfit wys a [wright] ywroght?**
                And by so perfectly wise a Workman wrought?
118       **Trusteth right wel, they were nat maad for noght.**
                Trust right well, they were not made for nothing.
119       **Glose whoso wole, and seye bothe up and doun**
                Interpret whoever will, and say both up and down
120       **That they were maked for purgacioun**
                That they were made for purgation
121       **Of uryne, and oure bothe thynges smale**
                Of urine, and both our small things
122       **Were eek to knowe a femele from a male,**
                Were also to know a female from a male,
123       **And for noon oother cause -- say ye no?**
                And for no other cause -- do you say no?
124       **The experience woot wel it is noght so.**
                The experience knows well it is not so.
125       **So that the clerkes be nat with me wrothe,**
                Provided that the clerks be not angry with me,
126       **I sey this: that they maked ben for bothe;**
                I say this: that they are made for both;
127       **That is to seye, for office and for ese**
                That is to say, for urination and for ease
128       **Of engendrure, ther we nat God displese.**
                Of procreation, in which we do not displease God.
129       **Why sholde men elles in hir bookes sette**
                Why else should men set in their books
130       **That man shal yelde to his wyf hire dette?**
                That man shall pay to his wife her debt?
131       **Now wherwith sholde he make his paiement,**
                Now with what should he make his payment,
132       **If he ne used his sely instrument?**
                If he did not use his blessed instrument?
133       **Thanne were they maad upon a creature**
                Then were they made upon a creature
134       **To purge uryne, and eek for engendrure.**
                To purge urine, and also for procreation.

135       **But I seye noght that every wight is holde,**
                But I say not that every person is required,
136       **That hath swich harneys as I to yow tolde,**
                That has such equipment as I to you told,
137       **To goon and usen hem in engendrure.**
                To go and use them in procreation.
138       **Thanne sholde men take of chastitee no cure.**
                Then should men have no regard for chastity.
139       **Crist was a mayde and shapen as a man,**
                Christ was a virgin and shaped like a man,
140       **And many a seint, sith that the world bigan;**
                And many a saint, since the world began;
141       **Yet lyved they evere in parfit chastitee.**
                Yet lived they ever in perfect chastity.
142       **I nyl envye no virginitee.**
                I will envy no virginity.
143       **Lat hem be breed of pured whete-seed,**
                Let them be bread of pure wheat-seed,
144       **And lat us wyves hoten barly-breed;**
                And let us wives be called barley-bread;
145       **And yet with barly-breed, Mark telle kan,**
                And yet with barley-bread, Mark can tell it,
146       **Oure Lord Jhesu refresshed many a man.**
                Our Lord Jesus refreshed many a man.
147       **In swich estaat as God hath cleped us**
                In such estate as God has called us
148       **I wol persevere; I nam nat precius.**
                I will persevere; I am not fussy.
149       **In wyfhod I wol use myn instrument**
                In wifehood I will use my instrument
150       **As frely as my Makere hath it sent.**
                As freely as my Maker has it sent.
151       **If I be daungerous, God yeve me sorwe!**
                If I be niggardly, God give me sorrow!
152       **Myn housbonde shal it have bothe eve and morwe,**
                My husband shall have it both evenings and mornings,
153       **Whan that hym list come forth and paye his dette.**
                When it pleases him to come forth and pay his debt.
154       **An housbonde I wol have -- I wol nat lette --**
                A husband I will have -- I will not desist --
155       **Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,**
                Who shall be both my debtor and my slave,
156       **And have his tribulacion withal**
                And have his suffering also
157       **Upon his flessh, whil that I am his wyf.**
                Upon his flesh, while I am his wife.
158       **I have the power durynge al my lyf**
                I have the power during all my life
159       **Upon his propre body, and noght he.**
                Over his own body, and not he.
160       **Right thus the Apostel tolde it unto me,**
                Right thus the Apostle told it unto me,
161       **And bad oure housbondes for to love us weel.**
                And commanded our husbands to love us well.
162       **Al this sentence me liketh every deel" --**
                All this sentence pleases me every bit" --

163       **Up stirte the Pardoner, and that anon;**
                Up sprang the Pardoner, and that at once;
164       **"Now, dame," quod he, "by God and by Seint John!**
                "Now, madam," he said, "by God and by Saint John!
165       **Ye been a noble prechour in this cas.**
                You are a noble preacher in this case.
166       **I was aboute to wedde a wyf; allas!**
                I was about to wed a wife; alas!
167       **What sholde I bye it on my flessh so deere?**
                Why should I pay for it so dearly on my flesh?
168       **Yet hadde I levere wedde no wyf to-yeere!"**
                Yet would I rather wed no wife this year!"

169       **"Abyde!" quod she, "my tale is nat bigonne.**
                "Wait!" she said, "my tale is not begun.
170       **Nay, thou shalt drynken of another tonne,**
                Nay, thou shalt drink from another barrel,
171       **Er that I go, shal savoure wors than ale.**
                Before I go, which shall taste worse than ale.
172       **And whan that I have toold thee forth my tale**
                And when I have told thee forth my tale
173       **Of tribulacion in mariage,**
                Of suffering in marriage,
174       **Of which I am expert in al myn age --**
                Of which I am expert in all my life --
175       **This is to seyn, myself have been the whippe --**
                This is to say, myself have been the whip --
176       **Than maystow chese wheither thou wolt sippe**
                Than may thou choose whether thou will sip
177       **Of thilke tonne that I shal abroche.**
                Of that same barrel that I shall open.
178       **Be war of it, er thou to ny approche;**
                Beware of it, before thou too near approach;
179       **For I shal telle ensamples mo than ten.**
                For I shall tell examples more than ten.
180       **`Whoso that nyl be war by othere men,**
                `Whoever will not be warned by (the examples of) other men,
181       **By hym shul othere men corrected be.'**
                Shall be an example by which other men shall be corrected.'
182       **The same wordes writeth Ptholomee;**
                The same words writes Ptholomy;
183       **Rede in his Almageste, and take it there."**
                Read in his Almagest, and take it there."

184       **"Dame, I wolde praye yow, if youre wyl it were,"**
                "Madam, I would pray you, if it were your will,"
185       **Seyde this Pardoner, "as ye bigan,**
                Said this Pardoner, "as you began,
186       **Telle forth youre tale, spareth for no man,**
                Tell forth your tale, refrain for no man,
187       **And teche us yonge men of youre praktike."**
                And teach us young men of your practice."

188       **"Gladly," quod she, "sith it may yow like;**
                "Gladly," she said, "since it may please you;
189       **But yet I praye to al this compaignye,**
                But yet I pray to all this company,
190       **If that I speke after my fantasye,**
                If I speak according to my fancy,
191       **As taketh not agrief of that I seye,**
                Do not be annoyed by what I say,
192       **For myn entente nys but for to pleye.**
                For my intention is only to amuse.

193       **Now, sire, now wol I telle forth my tale.**
                Now, sir, now will I tell forth my tale.
194       **As evere moote I drynken wyn or ale,**
                As ever may I drink wine or ale,
195       **I shal seye sooth; tho housbondes that I hadde,**
                I shall speak the truth; those husbands that I had,
196       **As thre of hem were goode, and two were badde.**
                Three of them were good, and two were bad.
197       **The thre were goode men, and riche, and olde;**
                The three were good men, and rich, and old;
198       **Unnethe myghte they the statut holde**
                Hardly might they the statute hold (pay the debt)
199       **In which that they were bounden unto me.**
                In which they were bound unto me.
200       **Ye woot wel what I meene of this, pardee!**
                You know well what I mean of this, by God!
201       **As help me God, I laughe whan I thynke**
                So help me God, I laugh when I think
202       **How pitously a-nyght I made hem swynke!**
                How pitifully at night I made them work!
203       **And, by my fey, I tolde of it no stoor.**
                And, by my faith, I set no store by it.
204       **They had me yeven hir lond and hir tresoor;**
                They had given me their land and their treasure;
205       **Me neded nat do lenger diligence**
                I needed not work hard any longer
206       **To wynne hir love, or doon hem reverence.**
                To win their love, or do them reverence.
207       **They loved me so wel, by God above,**
                They loved me so well, by God above,
208       **That I ne tolde no deyntee of hir love!**
                That I reckoned little of their love!
209       **A wys womman wol bisye hire evere in oon**
                A wise woman will be constantly busy
210       **To gete hire love, ye, ther as she hath noon.**
                To get their love, yes, when she has none.
211       **But sith I hadde hem hoolly in myn hond,**
                But since I had them wholly in my hand,
212       **And sith they hadde me yeven al hir lond,**
                And since they had me given all their land,
213       **What sholde I taken keep hem for to plese,**
                Why should I take care to please them,
214       **But it were for my profit and myn ese?**
                Unless it were for my profit and my pleasure?
215       **I sette hem so a-werke, by my fey,**
                I set them so to work, by my faith,
216       **That many a nyght they songen `Weilawey!'**
                That many a night they sang `Woe is me!'
217       **The bacon was nat fet for hem, I trowe,**
                The bacon was not fetched for them, I believe,
218       **That som men han in Essex at Dunmowe.**
                That some men have in Essex at Dunmowe.
219       **I governed hem so wel, after my lawe,**
                I governed them so well, according to my law,
220       **That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe**
                That each of them was very blissful and eager
221       **To brynge me gaye thynges fro the fayre.**
                To bring me gay things from the fair.
222       **They were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire,**
                They were very glad when I spoke to them pleasantly,
223       **For, God it woot, I chidde hem spitously.**
                For, God knows it, I cruelly scolded them.

224       **Now herkneth hou I baar me proprely,**
                Now listen how well I conducted myself,
225       **Ye wise wyves, that kan understonde.**
                You wise wives, that can understand.
226       **Thus shulde ye speke and bere hem wrong on honde,**
                Thus should you speak and accuse them wrongfully,
227       **For half so boldely kan ther no man**
                For half so boldly can there no man
228       **Swere and lyen, as a womman kan.**
                Swear and lie, as a woman can.
229       **I sey nat this by wyves that been wyse,**
                I do not say this concerning wives that are wise,
230       **But if it be whan they hem mysavyse.**
                Unless it be when they are ill advised.
231       **A wys wyf, if that she kan hir good,**
                A wise wife, if she knows what is good for her,
232       **Shal beren hym on honde the cow is wood,**
                Shall deceive him by swearing the bird is crazy,
233       **And take witnesse of hir owene mayde,**
                And prove it by taking witness of her own maid
234       **Of hir assent. But herkneth how I sayde:**
                Who is in league with her. But listen how I spoke:

235       **`Sire olde kaynard, is this thyn array?**
                `Sir old doddering fool, is this thy doing?
236       **Why is my neighebores wyf so gay?**
                Why is my neighbor's wife so gay?
237       **She is honoured overal ther she gooth;**
                She is honored everywhere she goes;
238       **I sitte at hoom; I have no thrifty clooth.**
                I sit at home; I have no decent clothing.
239       **What dostow at my neighebores hous?**
                What dost thou at my neighbor's house?
240       **Is she so fair? Artow so amorous?**
                Is she so fair? Art thou so amorous?
241       **What rowne ye with oure mayde? Benedicite!**
                What do you whisper with our maid? Bless me!
242       **Sire olde lecchour, lat thy japes be!**
                Sir old lecher, let thy tricks be!
243       **And if I have a gossib or a freend,**
                And if I have a close friend or an acquaintance,
244       **Withouten gilt, thou chidest as a feend,**
                Innocently, thou scold like a fiend,
245       **If that I walke or pleye unto his hous!**
                If I walk or go unto his house to amuse myself!
246       **Thou comest hoom as dronken as a mous,**
                Thou comest home as drunk as a mouse,
247       **And prechest on thy bench, with yvel preef!**
                And preach on thy bench, bad luck to you!
248       **Thou seist to me it is a greet meschief**
                Thou sayest to me it is a great misfortune
249       **To wedde a povre womman, for costage;**
                To wed a poor woman, because of expense;
250       **And if that she be riche, of heigh parage,**
                And if she be rich, of high birth,
251       **Thanne seistow that it is a tormentrie**
                Then thou sayest that it is a torment
252       **To soffre hire pride and hire malencolie.**
                To put up with her pride and her angry moods.
253       **And if that she be fair, thou verray knave,**
                And if she be fair, thou utter knave,
254       **Thou seyst that every holour wol hire have;**
                Thou sayest that every lecher wants to have her;
255       **She may no while in chastitee abyde,**
                She can not remain chaste for any length of time,
256       **That is assailled upon ech a syde.**
                Who is assailed on every side.

257       **Thou seyst som folk desiren us for richesse,**
                Thou sayest some folk desire us for riches,
258       **Somme for oure shap, and somme for oure fairnesse,**
                Some for our shape, and some for our fairness,
259       **And som for she kan outher synge or daunce,**
                And one because she can either sing or dance,
260       **And som for gentillesse and daliaunce;**
                And some because of noble descent and flirtatious talk;
261       **Som for hir handes and hir armes smale;**
                Some because of their hands and their slender arms;
262       **Thus goth al to the devel, by thy tale.**
                Thus goes all to the devil, according to you.
263       **Thou seyst men may nat kepe a castel wal,**
                Thou sayest men may not defend a castle wall,
264       **It may so longe assailled been overal.**
                It may so long be assailed on all sides.

265       **And if that she be foul, thou seist that she**
                And if she be ugly, thou sayest that she
266       **Coveiteth every man that she may se,**
                Covets every man that she may see,
267       **For as a spanyel she wol on hym lepe,**
                For like a spaniel she will on him leap,
268       **Til that she fynde som man hire to chepe.**
                Until she find some man to buy (take) her.
269       **Ne noon so grey goos gooth ther in the lake**
                Nor does any goose go there in the lake, no matter how drab,
270       **As, seistow, wol been withoute make.**
                That, thou sayest, will be without a mate.
271       **And seyst it is an hard thyng for to welde**
                And thou sayest it is a hard thing to control
272       **A thyng that no man wole, his thankes, helde.**
                A thing that no man will, willingly, hold.
273       **Thus seistow, lorel, whan thow goost to bedde,**
                Thus sayest thou, scoundrel, when thou goest to bed,
274       **And that no wys man nedeth for to wedde,**
                And that no wise man needs to wed,
275       **Ne no man that entendeth unto hevene.**
                Nor any man that hopes (to go) to heaven.
276       **With wilde thonder-dynt and firy levene**
                With wild thunder-bolt and fiery lightning
277       **Moote thy welked nekke be tobroke!**
                May thy wrinkled neck be broken in pieces!

278       **Thow seyst that droppyng houses, and eek smoke,**
                Thou sayest that leaky houses, and also smoke,
279       **And chidyng wyves maken men to flee**
                And scolding wives make men to flee
280       **Out of hir owene houses; a, benedicitee!**
                Out of their own houses; ah, bless me!
281       **What eyleth swich an old man for to chide?**
                What ails such an old man to chide like that?

282       **Thow seyst we wyves wol oure vices hide**
                Thou sayest we wives will hide our vices
283       **Til we be fast, and thanne we wol hem shewe --**
                Until we be securely tied (in marriage), and then we will them show --
284       **Wel may that be a proverbe of a shrewe!**
                Well may that be a proverb of a scoundrel!

285       **Thou seist that oxen, asses, hors, and houndes,**
                Thou sayest that oxen, asses, horses, and hounds,
286       **They been assayed at diverse stoundes;**
                They are tried out a number of times;
287       **Bacyns, lavours, er that men hem bye,**
                Basins, wash bowls, before men them buy,
288       **Spoones and stooles, and al swich housbondrye,**
                Spoons and stools, and all such household items,
289       **And so been pottes, clothes, and array;**
                And so are pots, clothes, and adornments;
290       **But folk of wyves maken noon assay,**
                But folk of wives make no trial,
291       **Til they be wedded -- olde dotard shrewe! --**
                Until they are wedded -- old doddering scoundrel! --
292       **And thanne, seistow, we wol oure vices shewe.**
                And then, sayest thou, we will show our vices.

293       **Thou seist also that it displeseth me**
                Thou sayest also that it displeases me
294       **But if that thou wolt preyse my beautee,**
                Unless thou will praise my beauty,
295       **And but thou poure alwey upon my face,**
                And unless thou peer always upon my face,
296       **And clepe me "faire dame" in every place.**
                And call me "dear lady" in every place.
297       **And but thou make a feeste on thilke day**
                And unless thou make a feast on that same day
298       **That I was born, and make me fressh and gay;**
                That I was born, and make me happy and gay;
299       **And but thou do to my norice honour,**
                And unless thou do honor to my nurse,
300       **And to my chamberere withinne my bour,**
                And to my chambermaid within my bedchamber,
301       **And to my fadres folk and his allyes --**
                And to my father's folk and his allies --
302       **Thus seistow, olde barel-ful of lyes!**
                Thus sayest thou, old barrelful of lies!

303       **And yet of oure apprentice Janekyn,**
                And yet of our apprentice Janekin,
304       **For his crispe heer, shynynge as gold so fyn,**
                Because of his curly hair, shining like gold so fine,
305       **And for he squiereth me bothe up and doun,**
                And because he familiarly attends me everywhere,
306       **Yet hastow caught a fals suspecioun.**
                Yet hast thou caught a false suspicion.
307       **I wol hym noght, thogh thou were deed tomorwe!**
                I do not want him, though thou were dead tomorrow!

308       **But tel me this: why hydestow, with sorwe,**
                But tell me this: why hidest thou, bad luck to you,
309       **The keyes of thy cheste awey fro me?**
                The keys of thy strongbox away from me?
310       **It is my good as wel as thyn, pardee!**
                It is my property as well as thine, by God!
311       **What, wenestow make an ydiot of oure dame?**
                What, think thou to make a fool of the lady of the house?
312       **Now by that lord that called is Seint Jame,**
                Now by that lord that is called Saint James,
313       **Thou shalt nat bothe, thogh that thou were wood,**
                Thou shalt not both, though thou were crazy with anger,
314       **Be maister of my body and of my good;**
                Be master of my body and of my property;
315       **That oon thou shalt forgo, maugree thyne yen.**
                One of them thou must give up, despite anything you can do.
316       **What helpith it of me to enquere or spyen?**
                What helps it to inquire about me or spy?
317       **I trowe thou woldest loke me in thy chiste!**
                I believe thou would lock me in thy strongbox!
318       **Thou sholdest seye, "Wyf, go wher thee liste;**
                Thou should say, "Wife, go where you please;
319       **Taak youre disport; I wol nat leve no talys.**
                Enjoy yourself; I will not believe any gossip.
320       **I knowe yow for a trewe wyf, dame Alys."**
                I know you for a true wife, dame Alys."
321       **We love no man that taketh kep or charge**
                We love no man who takes notice or concern about
322       **Wher that we goon; we wol ben at oure large.**
                Where we go; we will be free (to do as we wish).

323       **Of alle men yblessed moot he be,**
                Of all men blessed may he be,
324       **The wise astrologien, Daun Ptholome,**
                The wise astrologer, Dan Ptolemy,
325       **That seith this proverbe in his Almageste:**
                Who says this proverb in his Almagest:
326       **"Of alle men his wysdom is the hyeste**
                "Of all men his wisdom is the highest
327       **That rekketh nevere who hath the world in honde."**
                Who never cares who has the world in his control."
328       **By this proverbe thou shalt understonde,**
                By this proverb thou shalt understand,
329       **Have thou ynogh, what thar thee recche or care**
                If thou have enough, why should thou take note or care
330       **How myrily that othere folkes fare?**
                How merrily other folks fare?
331       **For, certeyn, olde dotard, by youre leve,**
                For, certainly, old senile fool, by your leave,
332       **Ye shul have queynte right ynogh at eve.**
                You shall have pudendum right enough at eve.
333       **He is to greet a nygard that wolde werne**
                He is too great a miser that would refuse
334       **A man to lighte a candle at his lanterne;**
                A man to light a candle at his lantern;
335       **He shal have never the lasse light, pardee.**
                He shall have never the less light, by God.
336       **Have thou ynogh, thee thar nat pleyne thee.**
                If thou have enough, thou need not complain.

337       **Thou seyst also, that if we make us gay**
                Thou sayest also, that if we make ourselves gay
338       **With clothyng, and with precious array,**
                With clothing, and with precious adornments,
339       **That it is peril of oure chastitee;**
                That it is dangerous to our chastity;
340       **And yet -- with sorwe! -- thou most enforce thee,**
                And yet -- bad luck to thee! -- thou must reinforce thy argument,
341       **And seye thise wordes in the Apostles name:**
                And say these words in the Apostle's name:
342       **"In habit maad with chastitee and shame**
                "In clothing made with chastity and shame
343       **Ye wommen shul apparaille yow," quod he,**
                You women shall apparel yourselves," he said,
344       **"And noght in tressed heer and gay perree,**
                "And not in carefully arranged hair and gay precious stones,
345       **As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche."**
                Such as pearls, nor with gold, nor rich cloth."
346       **After thy text, ne after thy rubriche,**
                In accordance with thy text, nor in accord with thy interpretation,
347       **I wol nat wirche as muchel as a gnat.**
                I will not do as much as a gnat.

348       **Thou seydest this, that I was lyk a cat;**
                Thou said this, that I was like a cat;
349       **For whoso wolde senge a cattes skyn,**
                For if anyone would singe a cat's skin,
350       **Thanne wolde the cat wel dwellen in his in;**
                Then would the cat well stay in his dwelling;
351       **And if the cattes skyn be slyk and gay,**
                And if the cat's skin be sleek and gay,
352       **She wol nat dwelle in house half a day,**
                She will not stay in house half a day,
353       **But forth she wole, er any day be dawed,**
                But forth she will (go), before any day be dawned,
354       **To shewe hir skyn and goon a-caterwawed.**
                To show her skin and go yowling like a cat in heat.
355       **This is to seye, if I be gay, sire shrewe,**
                This is to say, if I be well dressed, sir scoundrel,
356       **I wol renne out my borel for to shewe.**
                I will run out to show my poor clothes.

357       **Sire olde fool, what helpeth thee to spyen?**
                Sir old fool, what help is it for thee to spy?
358       **Thogh thou preye Argus with his hundred yen**
                Though thou pray Argus with his hundred eyes
359       **To be my warde-cors, as he kan best,**
                To be my bodyguard, as he best knows how,
360       **In feith, he shal nat kepe me but me lest;**
                In faith, he shall not keep me but as I please;
361       **Yet koude I make his berd, so moot I thee!**
                Yet could I deceive him, as I may prosper!

362       **Thou seydest eek that ther been thynges thre,**
                Thou said also that there are three things,
363       **The whiche thynges troublen al this erthe,**
                The which things trouble all this earth,
364       **And that no wight may endure the ferthe.**
                And that no one can endure the fourth.
365       **O leeve sire shrewe, Jhesu shorte thy lyf!**
                O dear sir scoundrel, Jesus shorten thy life!
366       **Yet prechestow and seyst an hateful wyf**
                Yet thou preachest and sayest a hateful wife
367       **Yrekened is for oon of thise meschances.**
                Is reckoned as one of these misfortunes.
368       **Been ther none othere maner resemblances**
                Are there no other sorts of comparisons
369       **That ye may likne youre parables to,**
                That you can use in your sayings,
370       **But if a sely wyf be oon of tho?**
                Without a poor wife's being one of them?

371       **Thou liknest eek wommenes love to helle,**
                Thou also compare women's love to hell,
372       **To bareyne lond, ther water may nat dwelle.**
                To barren land, where water may not remain.
373       **Thou liknest it also to wilde fyr;**
                Thou compare it also to Greek (inextinguishable) fire;
374       **The moore it brenneth, the moore it hath desir**
                The more it burns, the more it has desire
375       **To consume every thyng that brent wole be.**
                To consume every thing that will be burned.
376       **Thou seyest, right as wormes shende a tree,**
                Thou sayest, just as worms destroy a tree,
377       **Right so a wyf destroyeth hire housbonde;**
                Right so a wife destroys her husband;
378       **This knowe they that been to wyves bonde.'**
                This know they who are bound to wives.'

379       **Lordynges, right thus, as ye have understonde,**
                Gentlemen, right thus, as you have heard,
380       **Baar I stifly myne olde housbondes on honde**
                I firmly swore to my old husbands
381       **That thus they seyden in hir dronkenesse;**
                That thus they said in their drunkenness;
382       **And al was fals, but that I took witnesse**
                And all was false, but I took witness
383       **On Janekyn, and on my nece also.**
                On Janekin, and on my niece also.
384       **O Lord! The peyne I dide hem and the wo,**
                O Lord! The pain I did them and the woe,
385       **Ful giltelees, by Goddes sweete pyne!**
                Entirely guiltless (they were), by God's sweet pain!
386       **For as an hors I koude byte and whyne.**
                For like a horse I could bite and whinny.
387       **I koude pleyne, and yit was in the gilt,**
                I could complain, and yet was in the wrong,
388       **Or elles often tyme hadde I been spilt.**
                Or else many times had I been ruined.
389       **Whoso that first to mille comth, first grynt;**
                Whoever first comes to the mill, first grinds;
390       **I pleyned first, so was oure werre ystynt.**
                I complained first, so was our war ended.
391       **They were ful glade to excuse hem blyve**
                They were very glad to excuse themselves quickly
392       **Of thyng of which they nevere agilte hir lyve.**
                Of things of which they were never guilty in their lives.
393       **Of wenches wolde I beren hem on honde,**
                Of wenches would I falsely accuse them,
394       **Whan that for syk unnethes myghte they stonde.**
                When for sickness they could hardly stand.

395       **Yet tikled I his herte, for that he**
                Yet I tickled his heart, for he
396       **Wende that I hadde of hym so greet chiertee!**
                Believed that I had of him so great affection!
397       **I swoor that al my walkynge out by nyghte**
                I swore that all my walking out by night
398       **Was for t' espye wenches that he dighte;**
                Was to spy out wenches with whom he had intercourse;
399       **Under that colour hadde I many a myrthe.**
                Under that pretense I had many a mirth.
400       **For al swich wit is yeven us in oure byrthe;**
                For all such wit is given us in our birth;
401       **Deceite, wepyng, spynnyng God hath yive**
                Deceit, weeping, spinning God has given
402       **To wommen kyndely, whil that they may lyve.**
                To women naturally, while they may live.
403       **And thus of o thyng I avaunte me:**
                And thus of one thing I boast:
404       **Atte ende I hadde the bettre in ech degree,**
                At the end I had the better in every way,
405       **By sleighte, or force, or by som maner thyng,**
                By trickery, or force, or by some such thing,
406       **As by continueel murmur or grucchyng.**
                As by continual grumbling or grouching.
407       **Namely abedde hadden they meschaunce:**
                Especially in bed they had misfortune:
408       **Ther wolde I chide and do hem no plesaunce;**
                There would I scold and do them no pleasure;
409       **I wolde no lenger in the bed abyde,**
                I would no longer in the bed abide,
410       **If that I felte his arm over my syde,**
                If I felt his arm over my side,
411       **Til he had maad his raunson unto me;**
                Until he had paid his penalty to me;
412       **Thanne wolde I suffre hym do his nycetee.**
                Then would I allow him to do his foolishness.
413       **And therfore every man this tale I telle,**
                And therefore this tale I tell to every man,
414       **Wynne whoso may, for al is for to selle;**
                Anyone can profit, for everything is for sale;
415       **With empty hand men may none haukes lure.**
                One can lure no hawks with an empty hand.
416       **For wynnyng wolde I al his lust endure,**
                For profit I would endure all his lust,
417       **And make me a feyned appetit;**
                And make me a feigned appetite;
418       **And yet in bacon hadde I nevere delit.**
                And yet in bacon (old meat) I never had delight.
419       **That made me that evere I wolde hem chide,**
                That made me so that I would always scold them,
420       **For thogh the pope hadde seten hem biside,**
                For though the pope had sat beside them,
421       **I wolde nat spare hem at hir owene bord,**
                I would not spare them at their own table,
422       **For, by my trouthe, I quitte hem word for word.**
                For, by my troth, I paid them back word for word.
423       **As helpe me verray God omnipotent,**
                As help me true God omnipotent,
424       **Though I right now sholde make my testament,**
                Though I right now should make my will,
425       **I ne owe hem nat a word that it nys quit.**
                I owe them not one word that has not been avenged.
426       **I broghte it so aboute by my wit**
                I brought it so about by my wit
427       **That they moste yeve it up, as for the beste,**
                That they had to give it up, as the best they could do,
428       **Or elles hadde we nevere been in reste;**
                Or else had we never been at peace;
429       **For thogh he looked as a wood leon,**
                For though he looked like a furious lion,
430       **Yet sholde he faille of his conclusion.**
                Yet should he fail to attain his goal.

431       **Thanne wolde I seye, `Goode lief, taak keep**
                Then I would say, `Sweetheart, see
432       **How mekely looketh Wilkyn, oure sheep!**
                How meekly looks Willy, our sheep!
433       **Com neer, my spouse, lat me ba thy cheke!**
                Come near, my spouse, let me kiss thy cheek!
434       **Ye sholde been al pacient and meke,**
                You should be all patient and meek,
435       **And han a sweete spiced conscience,**
                And have a sweet tender disposition,
436       **Sith ye so preche of Jobes pacience.**
                Since you so preach of Job's patience.
437       **Suffreth alwey, syn ye so wel kan preche;**
                Suffer always, since you so well can preach;
438       **And but ye do, certein we shal yow teche**
                And unless you do, certainly we shall teach you
439       **That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.**
                That it is fair to have a wife in peace.
440       **Oon of us two moste bowen, doutelees,**
                One of us two must bow, doubtless,
441       **And sith a man is moore resonable**
                And since a man is more reasonable
442       **Than womman is, ye moste been suffrable.**
                Than a woman is, you must be able to bear suffering.
443       **What eyleth yow to grucche thus and grone?**
                What ails you to grouch thus and groan?
444       **Is it for ye wolde have my queynte allone?**
                Is it because you want to have my pudendum all to yourself?
445       **Wy, taak it al! Lo, have it every deel!**
                Why, take it all! Lo, have it every bit!
446       **Peter! I shrewe yow, but ye love it weel;**
                By Saint Peter! I would curse you, if you did not love it well;
447       **For if I wolde selle my bele chose,**
                For if I would sell my `pretty thing,'
448       **I koude walke as fressh as is a rose;**
                I could walk as fresh (newly clothed) as is a rose;
449       **But I wol kepe it for youre owene tooth.**
                But I will keep it for your own pleasure.
450       **Ye be to blame, by God! I sey yow sooth.'**
                You are to blame, by God! I tell you the truth.'

451       **Swiche manere wordes hadde we on honde.**
                Such sorts of words we had in hand.
452       **Now wol I speken of my fourthe housbonde.**
                Now will I speak of my fourth husband.

453       **My fourthe housbonde was a revelour --**
                My fourth husband was a reveller --
454       **This is to seyn, he hadde a paramour --**
                This is to say, he had a mistress --
455       **And I was yong and ful of ragerye,**
                And I was young and full of playfulness,
456       **Stibourn and strong, and joly as a pye.**
                Stubborn and strong, and jolly as a magpie.
457       **How koude I daunce to an harpe smale,**
                How well I could dance to a small harp,
458       **And synge, ywis, as any nyghtyngale,**
                And sing, indeed, like any nightingale,
459       **Whan I had dronke a draughte of sweete wyn!**
                When I had drunk a draft of sweet wine!
460       **Metellius, the foule cherl, the swyn,**
                Metellius, the foul churl, the swine,
461       **That with a staf birafte his wyf hir lyf,**
                Who with a staff deprived his wife of her life,
462       **For she drank wyn, thogh I hadde been his wyf,**
                Because she drank wine, if I had been his wife,
463       **He sholde nat han daunted me fro drynke!**
                He should not have frightened me away from drink!
464       **And after wyn on Venus moste I thynke,**
                And after wine on Venus must I think,
465       **For al so siker as cold engendreth hayl,**
                For as surely as cold engenders hail,
466       **A likerous mouth moste han a likerous tayl.**
                A gluttonous mouth must have a lecherous tail.
467       **In wommen vinolent is no defence --**
                In drunken women there is no defense --
468       **This knowen lecchours by experience.**
                This lechers know by experience.

469       **But -- Lord Crist! -- whan that it remembreth me**
                But -- Lord Christ! -- when I remember
470       **Upon my yowthe, and on my jolitee,**
                My youth, and my gaiety,
471       **It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote.**
                It tickles me to the bottom of my heart.
472       **Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote**
                Unto this day it does my heart good
473       **That I have had my world as in my tyme.**
                That I have had my world in my time.
474       **But age, allas, that al wole envenyme,**
                But age, alas, that all will poison,
475       **Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith.**
                Has deprived me of my beauty and my vigor.
476       **Lat go. Farewel! The devel go therwith!**
                Let it go. Farewell! The devil go with it!
477       **The flour is goon; ther is namoore to telle;**
                The flour is gone; there is no more to tell;
478       **The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle;**
                The bran, as I best can, now I must sell;
479       **But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde.**
                But yet I will try to be right merry.
480       **Now wol I tellen of my fourthe housbonde.**
                Now will I tell of my fourth husband.

481       **I seye, I hadde in herte greet despit**
                I say, I had in heart great anger
482       **That he of any oother had delit.**
                That he had delight in any other.
483       **But he was quit, by God and by Seint Joce!**
                But he was paid back, by God and by Saint Joce!
484       **I made hym of the same wode a croce;**
                I made him a cross of the same wood;
485       **Nat of my body, in no foul manere,**
                Not of my body, in no foul manner,
486       **But certeinly, I made folk swich cheere**
                But certainly, I treated folk in such a way
487       **That in his owene grece I made hym frye**
                That I made him fry in his own grease
488       **For angre, and for verray jalousye.**
                For anger, and for pure jealousy.
489       **By God, in erthe I was his purgatorie,**
                By God, in earth I was his purgatory,
490       **For which I hope his soule be in glorie.**
                For which I hope his soul may be in glory.
491       **For, God it woot, he sat ful ofte and song,**
                For, God knows it, he sat very often and cried out in pain,
492       **Whan that his shoo ful bitterly hym wrong.**
                When his shoe very bitterly pinched him.
493       **Ther was no wight, save God and he, that wiste,**
                There was no person who knew it, save God and he,
494       **In many wise, how soore I hym twiste.**
                In many a way, how painfully I tortured him.
495       **He deyde whan I cam fro Jerusalem,**
                He died when I came from Jerusalem,
496       **And lith ygrave under the roode beem,**
                And lies buried under the rood beam,
497       **Al is his tombe noght so curyus**
                Although his tomb is not so elaborate
498       **As was the sepulcre of hym Daryus,**
                As was the sepulcher of that Darius,
499       **Which that Appelles wroghte subtilly;**
                Which Appelles wrought skillfully;
500       **It nys but wast to burye hym preciously.**
                It is nothing but waste to bury him expensively.
501       **Lat hym fare wel; God yeve his soule reste!**
                Let him fare well; God give his soul rest!
502       **He is now in his grave and in his cheste.**
                He is now in his grave and in his casket.

503       **Now of my fifthe housbonde wol I telle.**
                Now of my fifth husband I will tell.
504       **God lete his soule nevere come in helle!**
                God let his soul never come in hell!
505       **And yet was he to me the mooste shrewe;**
                And yet he was to me the greatest scoundrel;
506       **That feele I on my ribbes al by rewe,**
                That feel I on my ribs one after another,
507       **And evere shal unto myn endyng day.**
                And ever shall unto my final day.
508       **But in oure bed he was so fressh and gay,**
                But in our bed he was so lively and gay,
509       **And therwithal so wel koude he me glose,**
                And moreover he so well could deceive me,
510       **Whan that he wolde han my bele chose;**
                When he would have my `pretty thing';
511       **That thogh he hadde me bete on every bon,**
                That though he had beat me on every bone,
512       **He koude wynne agayn my love anon.**
                He could win back my love straightway.
513       **I trowe I loved hym best, for that he**
                I believe I loved him best, because he
514       **Was of his love daungerous to me.**
                Was of his love standoffish to me.
515       **We wommen han, if that I shal nat lye,**
                We women have, if I shall not lie,
516       **In this matere a queynte fantasye:**
                In this matter a curious fantasy:
517       **Wayte what thyng we may nat lightly have,**
                Note that whatever thing we may not easily have,
518       **Therafter wol we crie al day and crave.**
                We will cry all day and crave for it.
519       **Forbede us thyng, and that desiren we;**
                Forbid us a thing, and we desire it;
520       **Preesse on us faste, and thanne wol we fle.**
                Press on us fast, and then will we flee.
521       **With daunger oute we al oure chaffare;**
                With niggardliness we spread out all our merchandise;
522       **Greet prees at market maketh deere ware,**
                A great crowd at the market makes wares expensive,
523       **And to greet cheep is holde at litel prys:**
                And too great a supply makes them of little value:
524       **This knoweth every womman that is wys.**
                Every woman that is wise knows this.

525       **My fifthe housbonde -- God his soule blesse! --**
                My fifth husband -- God bless his soul! --
526       **Which that I took for love, and no richesse,**
                Whom I took for love, and no riches,
527       **He som tyme was a clerk of Oxenford,**
                He was formerly a clerk of Oxford,
528       **And hadde left scole, and wente at hom to bord**
                And had left school, and came home to board
529       **With my gossib, dwellynge in oure toun;**
                With my close friend, dwelling in our town;
530       **God have hir soule! Hir name was Alisoun.**
                God have her soul! Her name was Alisoun.
531       **She knew myn herte, and eek my privetee,**
                She knew my heart, and also my secrets,
532       **Bet than oure parisshe preest, so moot I thee!**
                Better than our parish priest, as I may prosper!
533       **To hire biwreyed I my conseil al.**
                To her I revealed all my secrets.
534       **For hadde myn housbonde pissed on a wal,**
                For had my husband pissed on a wall,
535       **Or doon a thyng that sholde han cost his lyf,**
                Or done a thing that should have cost his life,
536       **To hire, and to another worthy wyf,**
                To her, and to another worthy wife,
537       **And to my nece, which that I loved weel,**
                And to my niece, whom I loved well,
538       **I wolde han toold his conseil every deel.**
                I would have told every one of his secrets.
539       **And so I dide ful often, God it woot,**
                And so I did very often, God knows it,
540       **That made his face often reed and hoot**
                That made his face often red and hot
541       **For verray shame, and blamed hymself for he**
                For true shame, and blamed himself because he
542       **Had toold to me so greet a pryvetee.**
                Had told to me so great a secret.

543       **And so bifel that ones in a Lente --**
                And so it happened that once in a Springtime --
544       **So often tymes I to my gossyb wente,**
                Since frequently I went to visit my close friend,
545       **For evere yet I loved to be gay,**
                For I always loved to be gay,
546       **And for to walke in March, Averill, and May,**
                And to walk in March, April, and May,
547       **Fro hous to hous, to heere sondry talys --**
                From house to house, to hear various bits of gossip --
548       **That Jankyn clerk, and my gossyb dame Alys,**
                That Jankin the clerk, and my close friend dame Alys,
549       **And I myself, into the feeldes wente.**
                And I myself, into the fields went.
550       **Myn housbonde was at Londoun al that Lente;**
                My husband was at London all that Spring;
551       **I hadde the bettre leyser for to pleye,**
                I had the better opportunity to amuse myself,
552       **And for to se, and eek for to be seye**
                And to see, and also to be seen
553       **Of lusty folk. What wiste I wher my grace**
                By amorous folk. What did I know about where my good fortune
554       **Was shapen for to be, or in what place?**
                Was destined to be, or in what place?
555       **Therfore I made my visitaciouns**
                Therefore I made my visitations
556       **To vigilies and to processiouns,**
                To religious feasts and to processions,
557       **To prechyng eek, and to thise pilgrimages,**
                To preaching also, and to these pilgrimages,
558       **To pleyes of myracles, and to mariages,**
                To plays about miracles, and to marriages,
559       **And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes.**
                And wore my gay scarlet robes.
560       **Thise wormes, ne thise motthes, ne thise mytes,**
                These worms, nor these moths, nor these mites,
561       **Upon my peril, frete hem never a deel;**
                Upon my peril (I swear), chewed on them never a bit;
562       **And wostow why? For they were used weel.**
                And know thou why? Because they were well used.

563       **Now wol I tellen forth what happed me.**
                Now will I tell forth what happened to me.
564       **I seye that in the feeldes walked we,**
                I say that in the fields we walked,
565       **Til trewely we hadde swich daliance,**
                Until truly we had such flirtation,
566       **This clerk and I, that of my purveiance**
                This clerk and I, that for my provision for the future
567       **I spak to hym and seyde hym how that he,**
                I spoke to him and said to him how he,
568       **If I were wydwe, sholde wedde me.**
                If I were a widow, should wed me.
569       **For certeinly -- I sey for no bobance --**
                For certainly -- I say this for no boast --
570       **Yet was I nevere withouten purveiance**
                I was never yet without providing beforehand
571       **Of mariage, n' of othere thynges eek.**
                For marriage, nor for other things also.
572       **I holde a mouses herte nat worth a leek**
                I hold a mouse's heart not worth a leek
573       **That hath but oon hole for to sterte to,**
                That has but one hole to flee to,
574       **And if that faille, thanne is al ydo.**
                If that should fail, then all is lost.

575       **I bar hym on honde he hadde enchanted me --**
                I falsely swore that he had enchanted me --
576       **My dame taughte me that soutiltee --**
                My mother taught me that trick --
577       **And eek I seyde I mette of hym al nyght,**
                And also I said I dreamed of him all night,
578       **He wolde han slayn me as I lay upright,**
                He would have slain me as I lay on my back,
579       **And al my bed was ful of verray blood;**
                And all my bed was full of real blood;
580       **`But yet I hope that ye shal do me good,**
                `But yet I hope that you shall do me good,
581       **For blood bitokeneth gold, as me was taught.'**
                For blood symbolizes gold, as I was taught.'
582       **And al was fals; I dremed of it right naught,**
                And all was false; I dreamed of it not at all,
583       **But as I folwed ay my dames loore,**
                But I followed always my mother's teaching,
584       **As wel of this as of othere thynges moore.**
                As well in this as in other things more.

585       **But now, sire, lat me se what I shal seyn.**
                But now, sir, let me see what I shall say.
586       **A ha! By God, I have my tale ageyn.**
                A ha! By God, I have my tale again.

587       **Whan that my fourthe housbonde was on beere,**
                When my fourth husband was on the funeral bier,
588       **I weep algate, and made sory cheere,**
                I wept continuously, and acted sorry,
589       **As wyves mooten, for it is usage,**
                As wives must do, for it is the custom,
590       **And with my coverchief covered my visage,**
                And with my kerchief covered my face,
591       **But for that I was purveyed of a make,**
                But because I was provided with a mate,
592       **I wepte but smal, and that I undertake.**
                I wept but little, and that I affirm.

593       **To chirche was myn housbonde born a-morwe**
                To church was my husband carried in the morning
594       **With neighebores, that for hym maden sorwe;**
                By neighbors, who for him made sorrow;
595       **And Jankyn, oure clerk, was oon of tho.**
                And Jankin, our clerk, was one of those.
596       **As help me God, whan that I saugh hym go**
                As help me God, when I saw him go
597       **After the beere, me thoughte he hadde a paire**
                After the bier, I thought he had a pair
598       **Of legges and of feet so clene and faire**
                Of legs and of feet so neat and fair
599       **That al myn herte I yaf unto his hoold.**
                That all my heart I gave unto his keeping.
600       **He was, I trowe, twenty wynter oold,**
                He was, I believe, twenty years old,
601       **And I was fourty, if I shal seye sooth;**
                And I was forty, if I shall tell the truth;
602       **But yet I hadde alwey a coltes tooth.**
                But yet I had always a colt's tooth.
603       **Gat-tothed I was, and that bicam me weel;**
                With teeth set wide apart I was, and that became me well;
604       **I hadde the prente of seinte Venus seel.**
                I had the print of Saint Venus's seal.
605       **As help me God, I was a lusty oon,**
                As help me God, I was a lusty one,
606       **And faire, and riche, and yong, and wel bigon,**
                And fair, and rich, and young, and well fixed,
607       **And trewely, as myne housbondes tolde me,**
                And truly, as my husbands told me,
608       **I hadde the beste quoniam myghte be.**
                I had the best pudendum that might be.
609       **For certes, I am al Venerien**
                For certainly, I am all influenced by Venus
610       **In feelynge, and myn herte is Marcien.**
                In feeling, and my heart is influenced by Mars.
611       **Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,**
                Venus me gave my lust, my amorousness,
612       **And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardynesse;**
                And Mars gave me my sturdy boldness;
613       **Myn ascendent was Taur, and Mars therinne.**
                My ascendant was Taurus, and Mars was therein.
614       **Allas, allas! That evere love was synne!**
                Alas, alas! That ever love was sin!
615       **I folwed ay myn inclinacioun**
                I followed always my inclination
616       **By vertu of my constellacioun;**
                By virtue of the state of the heavens at my birth;
617       **That made me I koude noght withdrawe**
                That made me that I could not withdraw
618       **My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.**
                My chamber of Venus from a good fellow.
619       **Yet have I Martes mark upon my face,**
                Yet have I Mars' mark upon my face,
620       **And also in another privee place.**
                And also in another private place.
621       **For God so wys be my savacioun,**
                For as God may be my salvation,
622       **I ne loved nevere by no discrecioun,**
                I never loved in moderation,
623       **But evere folwede myn appetit,**
                But always followed my appetite,
624       **Al were he short, or long, or blak, or whit;**
                Whether he were short, or tall, or black-haired, or blond;
625       **I took no kep, so that he liked me,**
                I took no notice, provided that he pleased me,
626       **How poore he was, ne eek of what degree.**
                How poor he was, nor also of what rank.

627       **What sholde I seye but, at the monthes ende,**
                What should I say but, at the month's end,
628       **This joly clerk, Jankyn, that was so hende,**
                This jolly clerk, Jankin, that was so courteous,
629       **Hath wedded me with greet solempnytee,**
                Has wedded me with great solemnity,
630       **And to hym yaf I al the lond and fee**
                And to him I gave all the land and property
631       **That evere was me yeven therbifoore.**
                That ever was given to me before then.
632       **But afterward repented me ful soore;**
                But afterward I repented very bitterly;
633       **He nolde suffre nothyng of my list.**
                He would not allow me anything of my desires.
634       **By God, he smoot me ones on the lyst,**
                By God, he hit me once on the ear,
635       **For that I rente out of his book a leef,**
                Because I tore a leaf out of his book,
636       **That of the strook myn ere wax al deef.**
                So that of the stroke my ear became all deaf.
637       **Stibourn I was as is a leonesse,**
                I was as stubborn as is a lioness,
638       **And of my tonge a verray jangleresse,**
                And of my tongue a true chatterbox,
639       **And walke I wolde, as I had doon biforn,**
                And I would walk, as I had done before,
640       **From hous to hous, although he had it sworn;**
                From house to house, although he had sworn the contrary;
641       **For which he often tymes wolde preche,**
                For which he often times would preach,
642       **And me of olde Romayn geestes teche;**
                And teach me of old Roman stories;
643       **How he Symplicius Gallus lefte his wyf,**
                How he, Simplicius Gallus, left his wife,
644       **And hire forsook for terme of al his lyf,**
                And forsook her for rest of all his life,
645       **Noght but for open-heveded he hir say**
                Because of nothing but because he saw her bare-headed
646       **Lookynge out at his dore upon a day.**
                Looking out at his door one day.

647       **Another Romayn tolde he me by name,**
                Another Roman he told me by name,
648       **That, for his wyf was at a someres game**
                Who, because his wife was at a midsummer revel
649       **Withouten his wityng, he forsook hire eke.**
                Without his knowledge, he forsook her also.
650       **And thanne wolde he upon his Bible seke**
                And then he would seek in his Bible
651       **That ilke proverbe of Ecclesiaste**
                That same proverb of Ecclesiasticus
652       **Where he comandeth and forbedeth faste**
                Where he commands and strictly forbids that
653       **Man shal nat suffre his wyf go roule aboute.**
                Man should suffer his wife go wander about.
654       **Thanne wolde he seye right thus, withouten doute:**
                Then would he say right thus, without doubt:

655       **`Whoso that buyldeth his hous al of salwes,**
                `Whoever builds his house all of willow twigs,
656       **And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,**
                And spurs his blind horse over the open fields,
657       **And suffreth his wyf to go seken halwes,**
                And suffers his wife to go on pilgrimages,
658       **Is worthy to been hanged on the galwes!'**
                Is worthy to be hanged on the gallows!'
659       **But al for noght, I sette noght an hawe**
                But all for nothing, I gave not a hawthorn berry
660       **Of his proverbes n' of his olde sawe,**
                For his proverbs nor for his old sayings,
661       **Ne I wolde nat of hym corrected be.**
                Nor would I be corrected by him.
662       **I hate hym that my vices telleth me,**
                I hate him who tells me my vices,
663       **And so doo mo, God woot, of us than I.**
                And so do more of us, God knows, than I.
664       **This made hym with me wood al outrely;**
                This made him all utterly furious with me;
665       **I nolde noght forbere hym in no cas.**
                I would not put up with him in any way.

666       **Now wol I seye yow sooth, by Seint Thomas,**
                Now will I tell you the truth, by Saint Thomas,
667       **Why that I rente out of his book a leef,**
                Why I tore a leaf out of his book,
668       **For which he smoot me so that I was deef.**
                For which he hit me so hard that I was deaf.

669       **He hadde a book that gladly, nyght and day,**
                He had a book that regularly, night and day,
670       **For his desport he wolde rede alway;**
                For his amusement he would always read;
671       **He cleped it Valerie and Theofraste,**
                He called it Valerie and Theofrastus,
672       **At which book he lough alwey ful faste.**
                At which book he always heartily laughed.
673       **And eek ther was somtyme a clerk at Rome,**
                And also there was once a clerk at Rome,
674       **A cardinal, that highte Seint Jerome,**
                A cardinal, who is called Saint Jerome,
675       **That made a book agayn Jovinian;**
                That made a book against Jovinian;
676       **In which book eek ther was Tertulan,**
                In which book also there was Tertullian,
677       **Crisippus, Trotula, and Helowys,**
                Crisippus, Trotula, and Heloise,
678       **That was abbesse nat fer fro Parys,**
                Who was abbess not far from Paris,
679       **And eek the Parables of Salomon,**
                And also the Parables of Salomon,
680       **Ovides Art, and bookes many on,**
                Ovid's Art, and many other books,
681       **And alle thise were bounden in o volume.**
                And all these were bound in one volume.
682       **And every nyght and day was his custume,**
                And every night and day was his custom,
683       **Whan he hadde leyser and vacacioun**
                When he had leisure and spare time
684       **From oother worldly occupacioun,**
                From other worldly occupations,
685       **To reden on this book of wikked wyves.**
                To read in this book of wicked wives.
686       **He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves**
                He knew of them more legends and lives
687       **Than been of goode wyves in the Bible.**
                Than are of good women in the Bible.
688       **For trusteth wel, it is an impossible**
                For trust well, it is an impossibility
689       **That any clerk wol speke good of wyves,**
                That any clerk will speak good of women,
690       **But if it be of hooly seintes lyves,**
                Unless it be of holy saints' lives,
691       **Ne of noon oother womman never the mo.**
                Nor of any other woman in any way.
692       **Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?**
                Who painted the lion, tell me who?
693       **By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,**
                By God, if women had written stories,
694       **As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,**
                As clerks have within their studies,
695       **They wolde han writen of men moore wikkednesse**
                They would have written of men more wickedness
696       **Than al the mark of Adam may redresse.**
                Than all the male sex could set right.
697       **The children of Mercurie and of Venus**
                The children of Mercury (clerks) and of Venus (lovers)
698       **Been in hir wirkyng ful contrarius;**
                Are directly contrary in their actions;
699       **Mercurie loveth wysdam and science,**
                Mercury loves wisdom and knowledge,
700       **And Venus loveth ryot and dispence.**
                And Venus loves riot and extravagant expenditures.
701       **And, for hire diverse disposicioun,**
                And, because of their diverse dispositions,
702       **Ech falleth in otheres exaltacioun.**
                Each falls in the other's most powerful astronomical sign.
703       **And thus, God woot, Mercurie is desolat**
                And thus, God knows, Mercury is powerless
704       **In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltat,**
                In Pisces (the Fish), where Venus is exalted,
705       **And Venus falleth ther Mercurie is reysed.**
                And Venus falls where Mercury is raised.
706       **Therfore no womman of no clerk is preysed.**
                Therefore no woman is praised by any clerk.
707       **The clerk, whan he is oold, and may noght do**
                The clerk, when he is old, and can not do
708       **Of Venus werkes worth his olde sho,**
                Any of Venus's works worth his old shoe,
709       **Thanne sit he doun, and writ in his dotage**
                Then he sits down, and writes in his dotage
710       **That wommen kan nat kepe hir mariage!**
                That women can not keep their marriage!

711       **But now to purpos, why I tolde thee**
                But now to the point, why I told thee
712       **That I was beten for a book, pardee!**
                That I was beaten for a book, by God!
713       **Upon a nyght Jankyn, that was oure sire,**
                Upon a night Jankin, that was master of our house,
714       **Redde on his book, as he sat by the fire,**
                Read on his book, as he sat by the fire,
715       **Of Eva first, that for hir wikkednesse**
                Of Eve first, how for her wickedness
716       **Was al mankynde broght to wrecchednesse,**
                All mankind was brought to wretchedness,
717       **For which that Jhesu Crist hymself was slayn,**
                For which Jesus Christ himself was slain,
718       **That boghte us with his herte blood agayn.**
                Who bought us back with his heart's blood.
719       **Lo, heere expres of womman may ye fynde**
                Lo, here clearly of woman you may find
720       **That womman was the los of al mankynde.**
                That woman was the cause of the loss of all mankind.

721       **Tho redde he me how Sampson loste his heres:**
                Then he read me how Sampson lost his hair:
722       **Slepynge, his lemman kitte it with hir sheres;**
                Sleeping, his lover cut it with her shears;
723       **Thurgh which treson loste he bothe his yen.**
                Through which treason he lost both his eyes.
724       **Tho redde he me, if that I shal nat lyen,**
                Then he read to me, if I shall not lie,
725       **Of Hercules and of his Dianyre,**
                Of Hercules and of his Dianyre,
726       **That caused hym to sette hymself afyre.**
                Who caused him to set himself on fire.

727       **No thyng forgat he the care and the wo**
                He forgot not a bit of the care and the woe
728       **That Socrates hadde with his wyves two,**
                That Socrates had with his two wives,
729       **How Xantippa caste pisse upon his heed.**
                How Xantippa caste piss upon his head.
730       **This sely man sat stille as he were deed;**
                This poor man sat still as if he were dead;
731       **He wiped his heed, namoore dorste he seyn,**
                He wiped his head, no more dared he say,
732       **But `Er that thonder stynte, comth a reyn!'**
                But `Before thunder stops, there comes a rain!'

733       **Of Phasipha, that was the queene of Crete,**
                Of Phasipha, that was the queen of Crete,
734       **For shrewednesse, hym thoughte the tale swete;**
                For sheer malignancy, he thought the tale sweet;
735       **Fy! Spek namoore -- it is a grisly thyng --**
                Fie! Speak no more -- it is a grisly thing --
736       **Of hire horrible lust and hir likyng.**
                Of her horrible lust and her pleasure.

737       **Of Clitermystra, for hire lecherye,**
                Of Clitermystra, for her lechery,
738       **That falsly made hire housbonde for to dye,**
                That falsely made her husband to die,
739       **He redde it with ful good devocioun.**
                He read it with very good devotion.

740       **He tolde me eek for what occasioun**
                He told me also for what occasion
741       **Amphiorax at Thebes loste his lyf.**
                Amphiorax at Thebes lost his life.
742       **Myn housbonde hadde a legende of his wyf,**
                My husband had a legend of his wife,
743       **Eriphilem, that for an ouche of gold**
                Eriphilem, that for a brooch of gold
744       **Hath prively unto the Grekes told**
                Has secretly unto the Greeks told
745       **Wher that hir housbonde hidde hym in a place,**
                Where her husband hid him in a place,
746       **For which he hadde at Thebes sory grace.**
                For which he had at Thebes a sad fate.

747       **Of Lyvia tolde he me, and of Lucye:**
                Of Livia told he me, and of Lucie:
748       **They bothe made hir housbondes for to dye,**
                They both made their husbands to die,
749       **That oon for love, that oother was for hate.**
                That one for love, that other was for hate.
750       **Lyvia hir housbonde, on an even late,**
                Livia her husband, on a late evening,
751       **Empoysoned hath, for that she was his fo;**
                Has poisoned, because she was his foe;
752       **Lucia, likerous, loved hire housbonde so**
                Lucia, lecherous, loved her husband so much
753       **That, for he sholde alwey upon hire thynke,**
                That, so that he should always think upon her,
754       **She yaf hym swich a manere love-drynke**
                She gave him such a sort of love-drink
755       **That he was deed er it were by the morwe;**
                That he was dead before it was morning;
756       **And thus algates housbondes han sorwe.**
                And thus always husbands have sorrow.

757       **Thanne tolde he me how oon Latumyus**
                Then he told me how one Latumius
758       **Compleyned unto his felawe Arrius**
                Complained unto his fellow Arrius
759       **That in his gardyn growed swich a tree**
                That in his garden grew such a tree
760       **On which he seyde how that his wyves thre**
                On which he said how his three wives
761       **Hanged hemself for herte despitus.**
                Hanged themselves for the malice of their hearts
762       **`O leeve brother,' quod this Arrius,**
                `O dear brother,' this Arrius said,
763       **`Yif me a plante of thilke blissed tree,**
                `Give me a shoot of that same blessed tree,
764       **And in my gardyn planted shal it bee.'**
                And in my garden shall it be planted.'

765       **Of latter date, of wyves hath he red**
                Of latter date, of wives has he read
766       **That somme han slayn hir housbondes in hir bed,**
                That some have slain their husbands in their bed,
767       **And lete hir lecchour dighte hire al the nyght,**
                And let her lecher copulate with her all the night,
768       **Whan that the corps lay in the floor upright.**
                When the corpse lay in the floor flat on its back.
769       **And somme han dryve nayles in hir brayn,**
                And some have driven nails in their brains,
770       **Whil that they slepte, and thus they had hem slayn.**
                While they slept, and thus they had them slain.
771       **Somme han hem yeve poysoun in hire drynke.**
                Some have given them poison in their drink.
772       **He spak moore harm than herte may bithynke,**
                He spoke more harm than heart may imagine,
773       **And therwithal he knew of mo proverbes**
                And concerning this he knew of more proverbs
774       **Than in this world ther growen gras or herbes.**
                Than in this world there grow grass or herbs.
775       **`Bet is,' quod he, `thyn habitacioun**
                `Better is,' he said, `thy habitation
776       **Be with a leon or a foul dragoun,**
                Be with a lion or a foul dragon,
777       **Than with a womman usynge for to chyde.**
                Than with a woman accustomed to scold.
778       **Bet is,' quod he, `hye in the roof abyde,**
                Better is,' he said, `to stay high in the roof,
779       **Than with an angry wyf doun in the hous;**
                Than with an angry wife down in the house;
780       **They been so wikked and contrarious,**
                They are so wicked and contrary,
781       **They haten that hir housbondes loven ay.'**
                They always hate what their husbands love.'
782       **He seyde, `A womman cast hir shame away,**
                He said, `A woman casts their shame away,
783       **Whan she cast of hir smok'; and forthermo,**
                When she casts off her undergarment'; and furthermore,
784       **`A fair womman, but she be chaast also,**
                `A fair woman, unless she is also chaste,
785       **Is lyk a gold ryng in a sowes nose.'**
                Is like a gold ring in a sow's nose.'
786       **Who wolde wene, or who wolde suppose,**
                Who would believe, or who would suppose,
787       **The wo that in myn herte was, and pyne?**
                The woe that in my heart was, and pain?

788       **And whan I saugh he wolde nevere fyne**
                And when I saw he would never cease
789       **To reden on this cursed book al nyght,**
                Reading on this cursed book all night,
790       **Al sodeynly thre leves have I plyght**
                All suddenly have I plucked three leaves
791       **Out of his book, right as he radde, and eke**
                Out of his book, right as he read, and also
792       **I with my fest so took hym on the cheke**
                I with my fist so hit him on the cheek
793       **That in oure fyr he fil bakward adoun.**
                That in our fire he fell down backwards.
794       **And he up stirte as dooth a wood leoun,**
                And he leaped up as does a furious lion,
795       **And with his fest he smoot me on the heed**
                And with his fist he hit me on the head
796       **That in the floor I lay as I were deed.**
                That on the floor I lay as if I were dead.
797       **And whan he saugh how stille that I lay,**
                And when he saw how still I lay,
798       **He was agast and wolde han fled his way,**
                He was frightened and would have fled on his way,
799       **Til atte laste out of my swogh I breyde.**
                Until at the last out of my swoon I awoke.
800       **`O! hastow slayn me, false theef?' I seyde,**
                `O! hast thou slain me, false thief?' I said,
801       **`And for my land thus hastow mordred me?**
                `And for my land thus hast thou murdered me?
802       **Er I be deed, yet wol I kisse thee.'**
                Before I am dead, yet will I kiss thee.'

803       **And neer he cam, and kneled faire adoun,**
                And near he came, and kneeled gently down,
804       **And seyde, `Deere suster Alisoun,**
                And said, `Dear sister Alisoun,
805       **As help me God, I shal thee nevere smyte!**
                So help me God, I shall never (again) smite thee!
806       **That I have doon, it is thyself to wyte.**
                What I have done, it is thyself to blame (you drove me to it).
807       **Foryeve it me, and that I thee biseke!'**
                Forgive it me, and that I beseech thee!'
808       **And yet eftsoones I hitte hym on the cheke,**
                And yet immediately I hit him on the cheek,
809       **And seyde, `Theef, thus muchel am I wreke;**
                And said, `Thief, thus much am I avenged;
810       **Now wol I dye, I may no lenger speke.'**
                Now will I die, I may no longer speak.'
811       **But atte laste, with muchel care and wo,**
                But at the last, with much care and woe,
812       **We fille acorded by us selven two.**
                We made an agreement between our two selves.
813       **He yaf me al the bridel in myn hond,**
                He gave me all the control in my hand,
814       **To han the governance of hous and lond,**
                To have the governance of house and land,
815       **And of his tonge, and of his hond also;**
                And of his tongue, and of his hand also;
816       **And made hym brenne his book anon right tho.**
                And made him burn his book immediately right then.
817       **And whan that I hadde geten unto me,**
                And when I had gotten unto me,
818       **By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,**
                By mastery, all the sovereignty,
819       **And that he seyde, `Myn owene trewe wyf,**
                And that he said, `My own true wife,
820       **Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf;**
                Do as you please the rest of all thy life;
821       **Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat' --**
                Guard thy honor, and guard also my reputation' --
822       **After that day we hadden never debaat.**
                After that day we never had an argument.
823       **God helpe me so, I was to hym as kynde**
                As God may help me, I was to him as kind
824       **As any wyf from Denmark unto Ynde,**
                As any wife from Denmark unto India,
825       **And also trewe, and so was he to me.**
                And also true, and so was he to me.
826       **I prey to God, that sit in magestee,**
                I pray to God, who sits in majesty,
827       **So blesse his soule for his mercy deere.**
                So bless his soul for his mercy dear.
828       **Now wol I seye my tale, if ye wol heere."**
                Now will I say my tale, if you will hear."

*Beholde the wordes bitwene the
Somonour and the Frere*

829       **The Frere lough, whan he hadde herd al this;**
                The Friar laughed, when he had heard all this;
830       **"Now dame," quod he, "so have I joye or blis,**
                "Now dame," he said, "as I may have joy or bliss,
831       **This is a long preamble of a tale!"**
                This is a long preamble of a tale!"
832       **And whan the Somonour herde the Frere gale,**
                And when the Summoner heard the Friar cry out,
833       **"Lo," quod the Somonour, "Goddes armes two!**
                "Lo," said the Summoner, "By God's two arms!
834       **A frere wol entremette hym everemo.**
                A friar will always intrude himself (in others' affairs).
835       **Lo, goode men, a flye and eek a frere**
                Lo, good men, a fly and also a friar
836       **Wol falle in every dyssh and eek mateere.**
                Will fall in every dish and also every discussion.
837       **What spekestow of preambulacioun?**
                What speakest thou of perambulation?
838       **What! amble, or trotte, or pees, or go sit doun!**
                  What! amble, or trot, or keep still, or go sit down!
839         **Thou lettest oure disport in this manere."**
                  Thou spoil our fun in this manner."

840         **"Ye, woltow so, sire Somonour?" quod the Frere;**
                  "Yes, wilt thou have it thus, sir Summoner?" said the Friar;
841         **"Now, by my feith I shal, er that I go,**
                  "Now, by my faith I shall, before I go,
842         **Telle of a somonour swich a tale or two**
                  Tell of a summoner such a tale or two
843         **That alle the folk shal laughen in this place."**
                  That all the folk shall laugh in this place."

844         **"Now elles, Frere, I bishrewe thy face,"**
                  "Now otherwise, Friar, I curse thy face,"
845         **Quod this Somonour, "and I bishrewe me,**
                  Said this Summoner, "and I curse myself,
846         **But if I telle tales two or thre**
                  Unless I tell tales two or three
847         **Of freres er I come to Sidyngborne**
                  Of friars before I come to Siitingbourne
848         **That I shal make thyn herte for to morne,**
                  That I shall make thy heart to mourn,
849         **For wel I woot thy pacience is gon."**
                  For well I know thy patience is gone."

850         **Oure Hooste cride "Pees! And that anon!"**
                  Our Host cried "Peace! And that right now!"
851         **And seyde, "Lat the womman telle hire tale.**
                  And said, "Let the woman tell her tale.
852         **Ye fare as folk that dronken ben of ale.**
                  You act like folk that are drunk on ale.
853         **Do, dame, telle forth youre tale, and that is best."**
                  Do, dame, tell forth your tale, and that is best."

854         **"Al redy, sire," quod she, "right as yow lest,**
                  "All ready, sir," she said, "right as you please,
855         **If I have licence of this worthy Frere."**
                  If I have permission of this worthy Friar."

856         **"Yis, dame," quod he, "tel forth, and I wol heere."**
                  "Yes, dame," he said, "tell forth, and I will hear."

*Heere endeth the Wyf of Bathe hir Prologe*

**The Wife of Bath's Tale**

*Heere bigynneth the Tale of the Wyf of Bathe*

857         **In th' olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour,**
                  In the old days of King Arthur,
858         **Of which that Britons speken greet honour,**
                  Of whom Britons speak great honor,
859         **Al was this land fulfild of fayerye.**
                  This land was all filled full of supernatural creatures.
860         **The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye,**
                  The elf-queen, with her jolly company,
861         **Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede.**
                  Danced very often in many a green mead.
862         **This was the olde opinion, as I rede;**
                  This was the old belief, as I read;
863         **I speke of manye hundred yeres ago.**
                  I speak of many hundred years ago.
864         **But now kan no man se none elves mo,**
                  But now no man can see any more elves,
865         **For now the grete charitee and prayeres**
                  For now the great charity and prayers
866         **Of lymytours and othere hooly freres,**
                  Of licensed beggars and other holy friars,
867         **That serchen every lond and every streem,**
                  That overrun every land and every stream,
868         **As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem,**
                  As thick as specks of dust in the sun-beam,
869         **Blessynge halles, chambres, kichenes, boures,**
                  Blessing halls, chambers, kitchens, bedrooms,
870         **Citees, burghes, castels, hye toures,**
                  Cities, towns, castles, high towers,
871         **Thropes, bernes, shipnes, dayeryes --**
                  Villages, barns, stables, dairies --
872         **This maketh that ther ben no fayeryes.**
                  This makes it that there are no fairies.
873         **For ther as wont to walken was an elf**
                  For where an elf was accustomed to walk
874         **Ther walketh now the lymytour hymself**
                  There walks now the licensed begging friar himself
875         **In undermeles and in morwenynges,**
                  In late mornings and in early mornings,
876         **And seyth his matyns and his hooly thynges**
                  And says his morning prayers and his holy things
877         **As he gooth in his lymytacioun.**
                  As he goes in his assigned district.
878         **Wommen may go saufly up and doun.**
                  Women may go safely up and down.
879         **In every bussh or under every tree**
                  In every bush or under every tree
880         **Ther is noon oother incubus but he,**
                  There is no other evil spirit but he,
881         **And he ne wol doon hem but dishonour.**
                  And he will not do them any harm except dishonor.

882         **And so bifel that this kyng Arthour**
                  And so it happened that this king Arthur
883         **Hadde in his hous a lusty bacheler,**
                  Had in his house a lusty bachelor,
884         **That on a day cam ridynge fro ryver,**
                  That on one day came riding from hawking,
885         **And happed that, allone as he was born,**
                  And it happened that, alone as he was born,
886         **He saugh a mayde walkynge hym biforn,**
                  He saw a maiden walking before him,
887         **Of which mayde anon, maugree hir heed,**
                  Of which maiden straightway, despite all she could do,
888         **By verray force, he rafte hire maydenhed;**
                  By utter force, he took away her maidenhead;
889         **For which oppressioun was swich clamour**
                  For which wrong was such clamor
890         **And swich pursute unto the kyng Arthour**
                  And such demand for justice unto king Arthur
891         **That dampned was this knyght for to be deed,**
                  That this knight was condemned to be dead,
892         **By cours of lawe, and sholde han lost his heed --**
                  By course of law, and should have lost his head --
893         **Paraventure swich was the statut tho --**
                  Perhaps such was the statute then --
894         **But that the queene and other ladyes mo**
                  Except that the queen and other ladies as well
895         **So longe preyeden the kyng of grace**
                  So long prayed the king for grace
896         **Til he his lyf hym graunted in the place,**
                  Until he granted him his life right there,
897         **And yaf hym to the queene, al at hir wille,**
                  And gave him to the queen, all at her will,
898         **To chese wheither she wolde hym save or spille.**
                  To choose whether she would him save or put to death.

899         **The queene thanketh the kyng with al hir myght,**
                  The queen thanks the king with all her might,
900         **And after this thus spak she to the knyght,**
                  And after this she spoke thus to the knight,
901         **Whan that she saugh hir tyme, upon a day:**
                  When she saw her time, upon a day:
902         **"Thou standest yet," quod she, "in swich array**
                  "Thou standest yet," she said, "in such condition,
903         **That of thy lyf yet hastow no suretee.**
                  That of thy life yet thou hast no assurance
904         **I grante thee lyf, if thou kanst tellen me**
                  I grant thee life, if thou canst tell me
905         **What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren.**
                  What thing it is that women most desire.
906         **Be war, and keep thy nekke-boon from iren!**
                  Beware, and keep thy neck-bone from iron (axe)!
907         **And if thou kanst nat tellen it anon,**
                  And if thou canst not tell it right now,
908         **Yet wol I yeve thee leve for to gon**
                  Yet I will give thee leave to go
909         **A twelf-month and a day, to seche and leere**
                  A twelvemonth and a day, to seek to learn
910         **An answere suffisant in this mateere;**
                  A satisfactory answer in this matter;
911         **And suretee wol I han, er that thou pace,**
                  And I will have, before thou go, a pledge
912         **Thy body for to yelden in this place."**
                  To surrender thy body in this place."

913         **Wo was this knyght, and sorwefully he siketh;**
                  Woe was this knight, and sorrowfully he sighs;
914         **But what! He may nat do al as hym liketh.**
                  But what! He can not do all as he pleases.
915         **And at the laste he chees hym for to wende**
                  And at the last he chose to leave
916         **And come agayn, right at the yeres ende,**
                  And come again, exactly at the year's end,
917         **With swich answere as God wolde hym purveye;**
                  With such answer as God would provide him;
918         **And taketh his leve, and wendeth forth his weye.**
                  And takes his leave, and goes forth on his way.

919         **He seketh every hous and every place**
                  He seeks every house and every place
920         **Where as he hopeth for to fynde grace**
                  Where he hopes to have the luck
921         **To lerne what thyng wommen loven moost,**
                  To learn what thing women love most,
922         **But he ne koude arryven in no coost**
                  But he could not arrive in any region
923         **Wher as he myghte fynde in this mateere**
                  Where he might find in this matter
924         **Two creatures accordynge in-feere.**
                  Two creatures agreeing together.
925         **Somme seyde wommen loven best richesse,**
                  Some said women love riches best,
926         **Somme seyde honour, somme seyde jolynesse,**
                  Some said honor, some said gaiety,
927         **Somme riche array, somme seyden lust abedde,**
                  Some rich clothing, some said lust in bed,
928         **And oftetyme to be wydwe and wedde.**
                  And frequently to be widow and wedded.
929         **Somme seyde that oure hertes been moost esed**
                  Some said that our hearts are most eased
930         **Whan that we been yflatered and yplesed.**
                  When we are flattered and pleased.
931         **He gooth ful ny the sothe, I wol nat lye.**
                  He goes very near the truth, I will not lie.
932         **A man shal wynne us best with flaterye,**
                  A man shall win us best with flattery,
933         **And with attendance and with bisynesse**
                  And with attentions and with solicitude
934         **Been we ylymed, bothe moore and lesse.**
                  We are caught, every one of us.

935         **And somme seyen that we loven best**
                  And some say that we love best
936         **For to be free and do right as us lest,**
                  To be free and do just as we please,
937         **And that no man repreve us of oure vice,**
                  And that no man reprove us for our vices,
938         **But seye that we be wise and no thyng nyce.**
                  But say that we are wise and not at all silly.
939         **For trewely ther is noon of us alle,**
                  For truly there is not one of us all,
940         **If any wight wol clawe us on the galle,**
                  If any one will scratch us on the sore spot,
941         **That we nel kike, for he seith us sooth.**
                  That we will not kick back, because he tells us the truth.
942         **Assay, and he shal fynde it that so dooth;**
                  Try it, and whoever so does shall find it true;
943         **For, be we never so vicious withinne,**
                  For, be we never so vicious within,
944         **We wol been holden wise and clene of synne.**
                  We want to be considered wise and clean of sin.

945         **And somme seyn that greet delit han we**
                  And some say that we have great delight
946         **For to been holden stable, and eek secree,**
                  To be considered steadfast, and also (able to keep a) secret,
947         **And in o purpos stedefastly to dwelle,**
                  And in one purpose steadfastly to remain,
948         **And nat biwreye thyng that men us telle.**
                  And not reveal things that men tell us.
949         **But that tale is nat worth a rake-stele.**
                  But that tale is not worth a rake handle.
950         **Pardee, we wommen konne no thyng hele;**
                  By God, we women can hide nothing;
951         **Witnesse on Myda -- wol ye heere the tale?**
                  Witness on Midas -- will you hear the tale?

952         **Ovyde, amonges othere thynges smale,**
                  Ovid, among other small matters,
953         **Seyde Myda hadde, under his longe heres,**
                  Said Midas had, under his long hair,
954         **Growynge upon his heed two asses eres,**
                  Two ass's ears, growing upon his head,
955         **The whiche vice he hydde as he best myghte**
                  The which vice he hid as he best could
956         **Ful subtilly from every mannes sighte,**
                  Very skillfully from every man's sight,
957         **That, save his wyf, ther wiste of it namo.**
                  That, except for his wife, there knew of it no others.
958         **He loved hire moost, and trusted hire also;**
                  He loved her most, and trusted her also;
959         **He preyede hire that to no creature**
                  He prayed her that to no creature
960         **She sholde tellen of his disfigure.**
                  She should tell of his disfigurement.

961         **She swoor him, "Nay"; for al this world to wynne,**
                  She swore him, "Nay"; for all this world to win,
962         **She nolde do that vileynye or synne,**
                  She would not do that dishonor or sin,
963         **To make hir housbonde han so foul a name.**
                  To make her husband have so foul a reputation.
964         **She nolde nat telle it for hir owene shame.**
                  She would not tell it for her own shame.
965         **But nathelees, hir thoughte that she dyde**
                  But nonetheless, she thought that she would die
966         **That she so longe sholde a conseil hyde;**
                  If she should hide a secret so long;
967         **Hir thoughte it swal so soore aboute hir herte**
                  She thought it swelled so sore about her heart
968         **That nedely som word hire moste asterte;**
                  That necessarily some word must escape her;
969         **And sith she dorste telle it to no man,**
                  And since she dared tell it to no man,
970         **Doun to a mareys faste by she ran --**
                  She ran down to a marsh close by --
971         **Til she cam there hir herte was afyre --**
                  Until she came there her heart was afire --
972         **And as a bitore bombleth in the myre,**
                  And as a bittern bumbles in the mire,
973         **She leyde hir mouth unto the water doun:**
                  She laid her mouth down unto the water:
974         **"Biwreye me nat, thou water, with thy soun,"**
                  "Betray me not, thou water, with thy sound,"
975         **Quod she; "to thee I telle it and namo;**
                  She said; "to thee I tell it and no others;
976         **Myn housbonde hath longe asses erys two!**
                  My husband has two long asses ears!
977         **Now is myn herte al hool; now is it oute.**
                  Now is my heart all whole; now is it out.
978         **I myghte no lenger kepe it, out of doute."**
                  I could no longer keep it, without doubt."
979         **Heere may ye se, thogh we a tyme abyde,**
                  Here you may see, though we a time abide,
980         **Yet out it moot; we kan no conseil hyde.**
                  Yet out it must come; we can hide no secret.
981         **The remenant of the tale if ye wol heere,**
                  The remnant of the tale if you will hear,
982         **Redeth Ovyde, and ther ye may it leere.**
                  Read Ovid, and there you may learn it.

983         **This knyght, of which my tale is specially,**
                  This knight, of whom my tale is in particular,
984         **Whan that he saugh he myghte nat come therby --**
                  When he saw he might not come to that --
985         **This is to seye, what wommen love moost --**
                  This is to say, what women love most --
986         **Withinne his brest ful sorweful was the goost.**
                  Within his breast very sorrowful was the spirit.
987         **But hoom he gooth; he myghte nat sojourne;**
                  But home he goes; he could not linger;
988         **The day was come that homward moste he tourne.**
                  The day was come that homeward he must turn.
989         **And in his wey it happed hym to ryde,**
                  And in his way he happened to ride,
990         **In al this care, under a forest syde,**
                  In all this care, near a forest side,
991         **Wher as he saugh upon a daunce go**
                  Where he saw upon a dance go
992         **Of ladyes foure and twenty, and yet mo;**
                  Ladies four and twenty, and yet more;
993         **Toward the whiche daunce he drow ful yerne,**
                  Toward the which dance he drew very eagerly,
994         **In hope that som wysdom sholde he lerne.**
                  In hope that he should learn some wisdom.
995         **But certeinly, er he cam fully there,**
                  But certainly, before he came fully there,
996         **Vanysshed was this daunce, he nyste where.**
                  Vanished was this dance, he knew not where.
997         **No creature saugh he that bar lyf,**
                  He saw no creature that bore life,
998         **Save on the grene he saugh sittynge a wyf --**
                  Save on the green he saw sitting a woman --
999         **A fouler wight ther may no man devyse.**
                  There can no man imagine an uglier creature.
1000       **Agayn the knyght this olde wyf gan ryse,**
                  At the knight's coming this old wife did rise,
1001       **And seyde, "Sire knyght, heer forth ne lith no wey.**
                  And said, "Sir knight, there lies no road out of here.
1002       **Tel me what that ye seken, by youre fey!**
                  Tell me what you seek, by your faith!
1003       **Paraventure it may the bettre be;**
                  Perhaps it may be the better;
1004       **Thise olde folk kan muchel thyng," quod she.**
                  These old folk know many things," she said.

1005       **"My leeve mooder," quod this knyght, "certeyn**
                  "My dear mother," said this knight, "certainly
1006       **I nam but deed but if that I kan seyn**
                  I am as good as dead unless I can say
1007       **What thyng it is that wommen moost desire.**
                  What thing it is that women most desire.
1008       **Koude ye me wisse, I wolde wel quite youre hire."**
                  If you could teach me, I would well repay you."

1009       **"Plight me thy trouthe heere in myn hand," quod she,**
                  "Pledge me thy word here in my hand," she said,
1010       **"The nexte thyng that I requere thee,**
                  "The next thing that I require of thee,
1011       **Thou shalt it do, if it lye in thy myght,**
                  Thou shalt do it, if it lies in thy power,
1012       **And I wol telle it yow er it be nyght."**
                  And I will tell it to you before it is night."

1013       **"Have heer my trouthe," quod the knyght, "I grante."**
                  "Have here my pledged word," said the knight, "I agree."
1014       **"Thanne," quod she, "I dar me wel avante**
                  "Then," she said, "I dare me well boast
1015       **Thy lyf is sauf, for I wol stonde therby;**
                  Thy life is safe, for I will stand thereby;
1016       **Upon my lyf, the queene wol seye as I.**
                  Upon my life, the queen will say as I.
1017       **Lat se which is the proudeste of hem alle**
                  Let's see which is the proudest of them all
1018       **That wereth on a coverchief or a calle**
                  That wears a kerchief or a hairnet
1019       **That dar seye nay of that I shal thee teche.**
                  That dares say `nay' of what I shall teach thee.
1020       **Lat us go forth withouten lenger speche."**
                  Let us go forth without longer speech."
1021       **Tho rowned she a pistel in his ere,**
                  Then she whispered a message in his ear,
1022       **And bad hym to be glad and have no fere.**
                  And commanded him to be glad and have no fear.
1023       **Whan they be comen to the court, this knyght**
                  When they are come to the court, this knight
1024       **Seyde he had holde his day, as he hadde hight,**
                  Said he had held his day, as he had promised,
1025       **And redy was his answere, as he sayde.**
                  And his answer was ready, as he said.
1026       **Ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,**
                  Very many a noble wife, and many a maid,
1027       **And many a wydwe, for that they been wise,**
                  And many a widow, because they are wise,
1028       **The queene hirself sittynge as a justise,**
                  The queen herself sitting as a justice,
1029       **Assembled been, his answere for to heere;**
                  Are assembled, to hear his answer;
1030       **And afterward this knyght was bode appeere.**
                  And afterward this knight was commanded to appear.

1031       **To every wight comanded was silence,**
                  Silence was commanded to every person,
1032       **And that the knyght sholde telle in audience**
                  And that the knight should tell in open court
1033       **What thyng that worldly wommen loven best.**
                  What thing (it is) that worldly women love best.
1034       **This knyght ne stood nat stille as doth a best,**
                  This knight stood not silent as does a beast,
1035       **But to his questioun anon answerde**
                  But to his question straightway answered
1036       **With manly voys, that al the court it herde:**
                  With manly voice, so that all the court heard it:

1037       **"My lige lady, generally," quod he,**
                  "My liege lady, without exception," he said,
1038       **"Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee**
                  "Women desire to have sovereignty
1039       **As wel over hir housbond as hir love,**
                  As well over her husband as her love,
1040       **And for to been in maistrie hym above.**
                  And to be in mastery above him.
1041       **This is youre mooste desir, thogh ye me kille.**
                  This is your greatest desire, though you kill me.
1042       **Dooth as yow list; I am heer at youre wille."**
                  Do as you please; I am here subject to your will."
1043       **In al the court ne was ther wyf, ne mayde,**
                  In all the court there was not wife, nor maid,
1044       **Ne wydwe that contraried that he sayde,**
                  Nor widow that denied what he said,
1045       **But seyden he was worthy han his lyf.**
                  But said that he was worthy to have his life.
1046       **And with that word up stirte the olde wyf,**
                  And with that word up sprang the old woman,
1047       **Which that the knyght saugh sittynge on the grene:**
                  Whom the knight saw sitting on the green:
1048       **"Mercy," quod she, "my sovereyn lady queene!**
                  "Mercy," she said, "my sovereign lady queen!
1049       **Er that youre court departe, do me right.**
                  Before your court departs, do me justice.
1050       **I taughte this answere unto the knyght;**
                  I taught this answer to the knight;
1051       **For which he plighte me his trouthe there,**
                  For which he pledged me his word there,
1052       **The firste thyng that I wolde hym requere**
                  The first thing that I would ask of him
1053       **He wolde it do, if it lay in his myghte.**
                  He would do, if it lay in his power.
1054       **Bifore the court thanne preye I thee, sir knyght,"**
                  Before the court then I pray thee, sir knight,"
1055       **Quod she, "that thou me take unto thy wyf,**
                  Said she, "that thou take me as thy wife,
1056       **For wel thou woost that I have kept thy lyf.**
                  For well thou know that I have saved thy life.
1057       **If I seye fals, sey nay, upon thy fey!"**
                  If I say false, say `nay', upon thy faith!"

1058       **This knyght answerde, "Allas and weylawey!**
                  This knight answered, "Alas and woe is me!
1059       **I woot right wel that swich was my biheste.**
                  I know right well that such was my promise.
1060       **For Goddes love, as chees a newe requeste!**
                  For God's love, choose a new request!
1061       **Taak al my good and lat my body go."**
                  Take all my goods and let my body go."

1062       **"Nay, thanne," quod she, "I shrewe us bothe two!**
                  "Nay, then," she said, "I curse both of us two!
1063       **For thogh that I be foul, and oold, and poore**
                  For though I am ugly, and old, and poor
1064       **I nolde for al the metal, ne for oore**
                  I would not for all the metal, nor for ore
1065       **That under erthe is grave or lith above,**
                  That under earth is buried or lies above,
1066       **But if thy wyf I were, and eek thy love."**
                  Have anything except that I were thy wife, and also thy love."

1067       **"My love?" quod he, "nay, my dampnacioun!**
                  "My love?" he said, "nay, my damnation!
1068       **Allas, that any of my nacioun**
                  Alas, that any of my family
1069       **Sholde evere so foule disparaged be!"**
                  Should ever be so foully degraded!"
1070       **But al for noght; the ende is this, that he**
                  But all for naught; the end is this, that he
1071       **Constreyned was; he nedes moste hire wedde,**
                  Constrained was; he must by necessity wed her,
1072       **And taketh his olde wyf, and gooth to bedde.**
                  And takes his old wife, and goes to bed.

1073       **Now wolden som men seye, paraventure,**
                  Now would some men say, perhaps,
1074       **That for my necligence I do no cure**
                  That because of my negligence I make no effort
1075       **To tellen yow the joye and al th' array**
                  To tell you the joy and all the rich display
1076       **That at the feeste was that ilke day.**
                  That was at the (wedding) feast that same day.
1077       **To which thyng shortly answeren I shal:**
                  To which thing shortly I shall answer:
1078       **I seye ther nas no joye ne feeste at al;**
                  I say there was no joy nor feast at all;
1079       **Ther nas but hevynesse and muche sorwe.**
                  There was nothing but heaviness and much sorrow.
1080       **For prively he wedded hire on morwe,**
                  For he wedded her in private in the morning,
1081       **And al day after hidde hym as an owle,**
                  And all day after hid himself like an owl,
1082       **So wo was hym, his wyf looked so foule.**
                  So woeful was he, his wife looked so ugly.

1083       **Greet was the wo the knyght hadde in his thoght,**
                  Great was the woe the knight had in his thought,
1084       **Whan he was with his wyf abedde ybroght;**
                  When he was brought to bed with his wife;
1085       **He walweth and he turneth to and fro.**
                  He wallows and he turns to and fro.
1086       **His olde wyf lay smylynge everemo,**
                  His old wife lay smiling evermore,
1087       **And seyde, "O deere housbonde, benedicitee!**
                  And said, "O dear husband, bless me!
1088       **Fareth every knyght thus with his wyf as ye?**
                  Does every knight behave thus with his wife as you do?
1089       **Is this the lawe of kyng Arthures hous?**
                  Is this the law of king Arthur's house?
1090       **Is every knyght of his so dangerous?**
                  Is every knight of his so aloof?
1091       **I am youre owene love and youre wyf;**
                  I am your own love and your wife;
1092       **I am she which that saved hath youre lyf,**
                  I am she who has saved your life,
1093       **And, certes, yet ne dide I yow nevere unright;**
                  And, certainly, I did you never wrong yet;
1094       **Why fare ye thus with me this firste nyght?**
                  Why behave you thus with me this first night?
1095       **Ye faren lyk a man had lost his wit.**
                  You act like a man who had lost his wit.
1096       **What is my gilt? For Goddes love, tel it,**
                  What is my offense? For God's love, tell it,
1097       **And it shal been amended, if I may."**
                  And it shall be amended, if I can."

1098       **"Amended?" quod this knyght, "Allas, nay, nay!**
                  "Amended?" said this knight, "Alas, nay, nay!
1099       **It wol nat been amended nevere mo.**
                  It will not be amended ever more.
1100       **Thou art so loothly, and so oold also,**
                  Thou art so loathsome, and so old also,
1101       **And therto comen of so lough a kynde,**
                  And moreover descended from such low born lineage,
1102       **That litel wonder is thogh I walwe and wynde.**
                  That little wonder is though I toss and twist about.
1103       **So wolde God myn herte wolde breste!"**
                  So would God my heart would burst!"

1104       **"Is this," quod she, "the cause of youre unreste?"**
                  "Is this," she said, "the cause of your distress?"

1105       **"Ye, certeinly," quod he, "no wonder is."**
                  "Yes, certainly," he said, "it is no wonder."

1106       **"Now, sire," quod she, "I koude amende al this,**
                  "Now, sir," she said, "I could amend all this,
1107       **If that me liste, er it were dayes thre,**
                  If I pleased, before three days were past,
1108       **So wel ye myghte bere yow unto me.**
                  Providing that you might behave well towards me.

1109       **"But, for ye speken of swich gentillesse**
                  "But, since you speak of such nobility
1110       **As is descended out of old richesse,**
                  As is descended out of old riches,
1111       **That therfore sholden ye be gentil men,**
                  That therefore you should be noble men,
1112       **Swich arrogance is nat worth an hen.**
                  Such arrogance is not worth a hen.
1113       **Looke who that is moost vertuous alway,**
                  Look who is most virtuous always,
1114       **Pryvee and apert, and moost entendeth ay**
                  In private and public, and most intends ever
1115       **To do the gentil dedes that he kan;**
                  To do the noble deeds that he can;
1116       **Taak hym for the grettest gentil man.**
                  Take him for the greatest noble man.
1117       **Crist wole we clayme of hym oure gentillesse,**
                  Christ wants us to claim our nobility from him,
1118       **Nat of oure eldres for hire old richesse.**
                  Not from our ancestors for their old riches.
1119       **For thogh they yeve us al hir heritage,**
                  For though they give us all their heritage,
1120       **For which we clayme to been of heigh parage,**
                  For which we claim to be of noble lineage,
1121       **Yet may they nat biquethe for no thyng**
                  Yet they can not bequeath by any means
1122       **To noon of us hir vertuous lyvyng,**
                  To any of us their virtuous living,
1123       **That made hem gentil men ycalled be,**
                  That made them be called noble men,
1124       **And bad us folwen hem in swich degree.**
                  And commanded us to follow them in such matters.

1125       **"Wel kan the wise poete of Florence,**
                  "Well can the wise poet of Florence,
1126       **That highte Dant, speken in this sentence.**
                  Who is called Dante, speak on this matter.
1127       **Lo, in swich maner rym is Dantes tale:**
                  Lo, in such sort of rime is Dante's speech:
1128       **`Ful selde up riseth by his branches smale**
                  `Very seldom grows up from its small branches
1129       **Prowesse of man, for God, of his goodnesse,**
                  Nobility of man, for God, of his goodness,
1130       **Wole that of hym we clayme oure gentillesse';**
                  Wants us to claim our nobility from him';
1131       **For of oure eldres may we no thyng clayme**
                  For from our ancestors we can claim no thing
1132       **But temporel thyng, that man may hurte and mayme.**
                  Except temporal things, that may hurt and injure a man.

1133       **"Eek every wight woot this as wel as I,**
                  "Also every person knows this as well as I,
1134       **If gentillesse were planted natureelly**
                  If nobility were planted naturally
1135       **Unto a certeyn lynage doun the lyne,**
                  Unto a certain lineage down the line,
1136       **Pryvee and apert thanne wolde they nevere fyne**
                  Then in private and in public they would never cease
1137       **To doon of gentillesse the faire office;**
                  To do the just duties of nobility;
1138       **They myghte do no vileynye or vice.**
                  They could do no dishonor or vice.

1139       **"Taak fyr and ber it in the derkeste hous**
                  "Take fire and bear it in the darkest house
1140       **Bitwix this and the mount of Kaukasous,**
                  Between this and the mount of Caucasus,
1141       **And lat men shette the dores and go thenne;**
                  And let men shut the doors and go away;
1142       **Yet wole the fyr as faire lye and brenne**
                  Yet will the fire as brightly blaze and burn
1143       **As twenty thousand men myghte it biholde;**
                  As if twenty thousand men might it behold;
1144       **His office natureel ay wol it holde,**
                  Its natural function it will always hold,
1145       **Up peril of my lyf, til that it dye.**
                  On peril of my life (I say), until it dies.

1146       **"Heere may ye se wel how that genterye**
                  "Here may you see well that nobility
1147       **Is nat annexed to possessioun,**
                  Is not joined with possession,
1148       **Sith folk ne doon hir operacioun**
                  Since folk not do behave as they should
1149       **Alwey, as dooth the fyr, lo, in his kynde.**
                  Always, as does the fire, lo, in its nature.
1150       **For, God it woot, men may wel often fynde**
                  For, God knows it, men may well often find
1151       **A lordes sone do shame and vileynye;**
                  A lord's son doing shame and dishonor;
1152       **And he that wole han pris of his gentrye,**
                  And he who will have praise for his noble birth,
1153       **For he was boren of a gentil hous**
                  Because he was born of a noble house
1154       **And hadde his eldres noble and vertuous,**
                  And had his noble and virtuous ancestors,
1155       **And nel hymselven do no gentil dedis**
                  And will not himself do any noble deeds
1156       **Ne folwen his gentil auncestre that deed is,**
                  Nor follow his noble ancestry that is dead,
1157       **He nys nat gentil, be he duc or erl,**
                  He is not noble, be he duke or earl,
1158       **For vileyns synful dedes make a cherl.**
                  For churlish sinful deeds make a churl.
1159       **For gentillesse nys but renomee**
                  For nobility is nothing but renown
1160       **Of thyne auncestres, for hire heigh bountee,**
                  Of thy ancestors, for their great goodness,
1161       **Which is a strange thyng to thy persone.**
                  Which is a thing not naturally part of thy person.
1162       **Thy gentillesse cometh fro God allone.**
                  Thy nobility comes from God alone.
1163       **Thanne comth oure verray gentillesse of grace;**
                  Then our true nobility comes from grace ;
1164       **It was no thyng biquethe us with oure place.**
                  It was not at all bequeathed to us with our social rank.

1165       **"Thenketh hou noble, as seith Valerius,**
                  "Think how noble, as says Valerius,
1166       **Was thilke Tullius Hostillius,**
                  Was that same Tullius Hostillius,
1167       **That out of poverte roos to heigh noblesse.**
                  That out of poverty rose to high nobility.
1168       **Reedeth Senek, and redeth eek Boece;**
                  Read Seneca, and read also Boethius;
1169       **Ther shul ye seen expres that it no drede is**
                  There shall you see clearly that it is no doubt
1170       **That he is gentil that dooth gentil dedis.**
                  That he is noble who does noble deeds.
1171       **And therfore, leeve housbonde, I thus conclude:**
                  And therefore, dear husband, I thus conclude:
1172       **Al were it that myne auncestres were rude,**
                  Although it is so that my ancestors were rude,
1173       **Yet may the hye God, and so hope I,**
                  Yet may the high God, and so hope I,
1174       **Grante me grace to lyven vertuously.**
                  Grant me grace to live virtuously.
1175       **Thanne am I gentil, whan that I bigynne**
                  Then am I noble, when I begin
1176       **To lyven vertuously and weyve synne.**
                  To live virtuously and abandon sin.

1177       **"And ther as ye of poverte me repreeve,**
                  "And whereas you reprove me for poverty,
1178       **The hye God, on whom that we bileeve,**
                  The high God, on whom we believe,
1179       **In wilful poverte chees to lyve his lyf.**
                  In voluntary poverty chose to live his life.
1180       **And certes every man, mayden, or wyf**
                  And certainly every man, maiden, or woman
1181       **May understonde that Jhesus, hevene kyng,**
                  Can understand that Jesus, heaven's king,
1182       **Ne wolde nat chese a vicious lyvyng.**
                  Would not choose a vicious form of living.
1183       **Glad poverte is an honest thyng, certeyn;**
                  Glad poverty is an honest thing, certain;
1184       **This wole Senec and othere clerkes seyn.**
                  This will Seneca and other clerks say.
1185       **Whoso that halt hym payd of his poverte,**
                  Whoever considers himself satisfied with his poverty,
1186       **I holde hym riche, al hadde he nat a sherte.**
                  I consider him rich, although he had not a shirt.
1187       **He that coveiteth is a povre wight,**
                  He who covets is a poor person,
1188       **For he wolde han that is nat in his myght;**
                  For he would have that which is not in his power;
1189       **But he that noght hath, ne coveiteth have,**
                  But he who has nothing, nor covets to have anything,
1190       **Is riche, although ye holde hym but a knave.**
                  Is rich, although you consider him but a knave.
1191       **Verray poverte, it syngeth proprely;**
                  True poverty, it rightly sings;
1192       **Juvenal seith of poverte myrily:**
                  Juvenal says of poverty merrily:
1193       **`The povre man, whan he goth by the weye,**
                  `The poor man, when he goes along the roadway,
1194       **Bifore the theves he may synge and pleye.'**
                  Before the thieves he may sing and play.'
1195       **Poverte is hateful good and, as I gesse,**
                  Poverty is a hateful good and, as I guess,
1196       **A ful greet bryngere out of bisynesse;**
                  A very great remover of cares;
1197       **A greet amendere eek of sapience**
                  A great amender also of wisdom
1198       **To hym that taketh it in pacience.**
                  To him that takes it in patience.
1199       **Poverte is this, although it seme alenge:**
                  Poverty is this, although it may seem miserable:
1200       **Possessioun that no wight wol chalenge.**
                  A possession that no one will challenge.
1201       **Poverte ful ofte, whan a man is lowe,**
                  Poverty very often, when a man is low,
1202       **Maketh his God and eek hymself to knowe.**
                  Makes him know his God and also himself.
1203       **Poverte a spectacle is, as thynketh me,**
                  Poverty is an eye glass, as it seems to me,
1204       **Thurgh which he may his verray freendes see.**
                  Through which one may see his true friends.
1205       **And therfore, sire, syn that I noght yow greve,**
                  And therefore, sir, since I do not injure you,
1206       **Of my poverte namoore ye me repreve.**
                  You (should) no longer reprove me for my poverty.

1207       **"Now, sire, of elde ye repreve me;**
                  "Now, sir, of old age you reprove me;
1208       **And certes, sire, thogh noon auctoritee**
                  And certainly, sir, though no authority
1209       **Were in no book, ye gentils of honour**
                  Were in any book, you gentlefolk of honor
1210       **Seyn that men sholde an oold wight doon favour**
                  Say that men should be courteous to an old person
1211       **And clepe hym fader, for youre gentillesse;**
                  And call him father, because of your nobility;
1212       **And auctours shal I fynden, as I gesse.**
                  And authors shall I find, as I guess.

1213       **"Now ther ye seye that I am foul and old,**
                  "Now where you say that I am ugly and old,
1214       **Than drede you noght to been a cokewold;**
                  Than do not fear to be a cuckold;
1215       **For filthe and eelde, also moot I thee,**
                  For filth and old age, as I may prosper,
1216       **Been grete wardeyns upon chastitee.**
                  Are great guardians of chastity.
1217       **But nathelees, syn I knowe youre delit,**
                  But nonetheless, since I know your delight,
1218       **I shal fulfille youre worldly appetit.**
                  I shall fulfill your worldly appetite.

1219       **"Chese now," quod she, "oon of thise thynges tweye:**
                  "Choose now," she said, "one of these two things:
1220       **To han me foul and old til that I deye,**
                  To have me ugly and old until I die,
1221       **And be to yow a trewe, humble wyf,**
                  And be to you a true, humble wife,
1222       **And nevere yow displese in al my lyf,**
                  And never displease you in all my life,
1223       **Or elles ye wol han me yong and fair,**
                  Or else you will have me young and fair,
1224       **And take youre aventure of the repair**
                  And take your chances of the crowd
1225       **That shal be to youre hous by cause of me,**
                  That shall be at your house because of me,
1226       **Or in som oother place, may wel be.**
                  Or in some other place, as it may well be.
1227       **Now chese yourselven, wheither that yow liketh."**
                  Now choose yourself, whichever you please."

1228       **This knyght avyseth hym and sore siketh,**
                  This knight deliberates and painfully sighs,
1229       **But atte laste he seyde in this manere:**
                  But at the last he said in this manner:
1230       **"My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,**
                  "My lady and my love, and wife so dear,
1231       **I put me in youre wise governance;**
                  I put me in your wise governance;
1232       **Cheseth youreself which may be moost plesance**
                  Choose yourself which may be most pleasure
1233       **And moost honour to yow and me also.**
                  And most honor to you and me also.
1234       **I do no fors the wheither of the two,**
                  I do not care which of the two,
1235       **For as yow liketh, it suffiseth me."**
                  For as it pleases you, is enough for me."

1236       **"Thanne have I gete of yow maistrie," quod she,**
                  "Then have I gotten mastery of you," she said,
1237       **"Syn I may chese and governe as me lest?"**
                  "Since I may choose and govern as I please?"

1238       **"Ye, certes, wyf," quod he, "I holde it best."**
                  "Yes, certainly, wife," he said, "I consider it best."

1239       **"Kys me," quod she, "we be no lenger wrothe,**
                  "Kiss me," she said, "we are no longer angry,
1240       **For, by my trouthe, I wol be to yow bothe --**
                  For, by my troth, I will be to you both --
1241       **This is to seyn, ye, bothe fair and good.**
                  This is to say, yes, both fair and good.
1242       **I prey to God that I moote sterven wood,**
                  I pray to God that I may die insane
1243       **But I to yow be also good and trewe**
                  Unless I to you be as good and true
1244       **As evere was wyf, syn that the world was newe.**
                  As ever was wife, since the world was new.
1245       **And but I be to-morn as fair to seene**
                  And unless I am tomorrow morning as fair to be seen
1246       **As any lady, emperice, or queene,**
                  As any lady, empress, or queen,
1247       **That is bitwixe the est and eke the west,**
                  That is between the east and also the west,
1248       **Dooth with my lyf and deth right as yow lest.**
                  Do with my life and death right as you please.
1249       **Cast up the curtyn, looke how that it is."**
                  Cast up the curtain, look how it is."

1250       **And whan the knyght saugh verraily al this,**
                  And when the knight saw truly all this,
1251       **That she so fair was, and so yong therto,**
                  That she so was beautiful, and so young moreover,
1252       **For joye he hente hire in his armes two.**
                  For joy he clasped her in his two arms.
1253       **His herte bathed in a bath of blisse.**
                  His heart bathed in a bath of bliss.
1254       **A thousand tyme a-rewe he gan hire kisse,**
                  A thousand time in a row he did her kiss,
1255       **And she obeyed hym in every thyng**
                  And she obeyed him in every thing
1256       **That myghte doon hym plesance or likyng.**
                  That might do him pleasure or enjoyment.

1257       **And thus they lyve unto hir lyves ende**
                  And thus they live unto their lives' end
1258       **In parfit joye; and Jhesu Crist us sende**
                  In perfect joy; and Jesus Christ us send
1259       **Housbondes meeke, yonge, and fressh abedde,**
                  Husbands meek, young, and vigorous in bed,
1260       **And grace t' overbyde hem that we wedde;**
                  And grace to outlive them whom we wed;
1261       **And eek I praye Jhesu shorte hir lyves**
                  And also I pray Jesus shorten their lives
1262       **That noght wol be governed by hir wyves;**
                  That will not be governed by their wives;
1263       **And olde and angry nygardes of dispence,**
                  And old and angry misers in spending,
1264       **God sende hem soone verray pestilence!**
                  God send them soon the very pestilence!

*Heere endeth the Wyves Tale of Bathe*