Geoffrey Chaucer

From *The Canterbury Tales:*
*The Knight's Tale*
Heere bigynneth the Knyghtes Tale

Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duc that highte Theseus;
Of Atthenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne,
What with his wysdom and his chivalrie;
He conquered al the regne of Femenye,
That whilom was ycleped Scithia,
And weddede the queene Ypolita,
And broghte hir hoom with hym in his contree,
With muchel glorie and greet solempnytee,
And eek hir yonge suster Emelye.
And thus with victorie and with melodye
Lete I this noble duc to Atthenes ryde,
And al his hoost, in armes hym bisyde.
And certes, if it nere to long to heere,
I wolde have toold yow fully the manere
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
By Theseus, and by his chivalrye,
And of the grete bataille for the nones
Bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones,
And how asseged was Ypolita
The faire hardy queene of Scithia,
And of the feste that was at hir weddynge,
And of the tempest at hir hoom-comyng;
But al the thyng I moot as now forbere,
I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,
And wayke been the oxen in my plough,
The remenant of the tale is long ynoough.
I wol nat letten eek noon of this route,
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,
And lat se now who shal the soper wynne;-
And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne.

This duc of whom I make mencioun,
Whan he was come almoost unto the toun,
In al his wele and in his mooste pride,
He was war, as he caste his eye aside,
Where that ther kneled in the hye weye
A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,
Ech after oother, clad in clothes blake;
But swich a cry and swich a wo they make,
That in this world nys creature lyvynge
That herde swich another waymentynge;
And of this cry they nolde nevere steten,
Til they the reynes of his brydel henten.
"What folk been ye, that at myn hom-comynge
Perturben so my feste with criynge?"
Quod Theseus. "Have ye so greet envye
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?
Or who hath yow mysboden or offended?
And telleth me if it may been amended,
And why that ye been clothed thus in blak?"

The eldeste lady of hem alle spak-
Whan she hadde swowned with a deadly cheere,
That it was routhe for to seen and heere-
And seyde, "Lord, to whom Fortune hath yiven
Victorie, and as a conqueror to lyven,
Nat greveth us youre glorie and youre honour,
But we biseken mercy and socour.
Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse,
Som drope of pitee thurgh thy gentillesse
Upon us wrecched wommen lat thou falle;
For certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle,
That she ne hath been a duchesse or a queene.
Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene,
Thanked be Fortune, and hir false wheel,
That noon estaat assureth to be weel.
And certes, lord, to abyden youre presence,
Heere in the temple of the goddesse Clemence
We han ben waitynge al this fourtenyght;
Now help us, lord, sith it is in thy myght!
I wrecche, which that wepe and waille thus,
Was whilom wyf to kyng Cappaneus,
That starf at Thebes -cursed be that day!-
And alle we that been in this array
And maken al this lamentacioun,
We losten alle oure housbondes at that toun,
Whil that the seege theraboute lay.
And yet now the olde Creon, weylaway!
That lord is now of Thebes the Citee,
Fulfild of ire and of iniquitee,
He, for despit and for his tirannye,
To do the dede bodyes vileynye,
Of alle oure lorde, whiche that been slawe,
Hath alle the bodyes on an heep ydrawe,
And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent,
Neither to been yburyed nor ybrent,
But maketh houndes ete hem in despit."

And with that word, withouten moore respit,
They fillen gruf, and criden pitously,
"Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy
And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte."

This gentil duc doun from his courser sterte
With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke;
Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,
That whilom weren of so greet estaat.
And in his armes he hem alle up hente,
And hem conforteth in ful good entente,
And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,
He wolde doon so ferforthly his myght
Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke,
That all the peple of Grece sholde speke
How Creon was of Theseus yserved,
As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.
And right anoon, withouten moore abood,
His baner he desplayeth, and forth rood
To Thebes-ward, and al his hoost biside,
No neer Atthenes wolde he go ne ride,
Ne take his ese fully half a day,
But onward on his wey that nyght he lay,
And sente anon Ypolita the queene,
And Emelye, hir yonge suster sheene,
Unto the toun of Atthenes to dwelle,
And forth he rit; ther is namoore to telle.

The rede statue of Mars, with spere and targe,
So shyneth, in his white baner large,
That alle the feeldes gliteren up and doun,
And by his baner gorn is his penoun
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete
The Mynotaur which that he slough in Crete.
Thus rit this duc, thus rit this conquerour,
And in his hoost of chivalrie the flour,
Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte
Faire in a feeld, ther as he thoughte to fighte.
But shortly for to spoken of this thyng,
With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,
He faught, and slough hym manly as a knyght
In pleyne bataille, and putte the folk to flyght;
And by assaut he wan the citee after,
And rente adoun bothe wall, and sparre, and rafter.
And to the ladyes he sestored agayn
The bones of hir freendes that weren slayn,
To doon obsequies as was tho the gyse.
But it were al to longe for to devyse
The grete clamour and the waymentynge
That the ladyes made at the brenynge
Of the bodies, and the grete honour
That Theseus, the noble conquerour,
Dooth to the ladyes, whan they from hym wente;
But shortly for to telle is myn entente.

Whan that his worthy duc, this Theseus,
Hath Creon slayn, and wonne Thebes thus,
Stille in that feeld he took al nyght his reste,
And dide with al the contree as hym leste.
To ransake in the taas of bodyes dede,
Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,
The pilours diden bisynesse and cure,
After the bataille and disconfiture;
And so bifel, that in the taas they founde
Thurgh-girt with many a grevous blody wounde,
Two yonge knyghtes liggynge by and by,
Bothe in oon armes, wroght ful richely,
Of whiche two Arcita highte that oon,
And that oother knyght highte Palamon.
Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were,
But by here cote-armures and by hir gere,
The heraudes knewe hem best in special
As they that weren of the blood roial
Of Thebes, and of sustren two yborn.
Out of the taas the pilours han hem torn,
And had hem caried softe unto the tente
Of Theseus, and he ful soone hem sente
To Atthenes to dwellen in prisoun
Perpetuelly, he nolde no raunsoun.
And whan this worthy duc hath thus ydon,
He took his hoost, and hoom he rit anon,
With laurer crowned, as a conquerour;
And ther he lyveth in joye and in honour
Terme of his lyve; what nedeth wordes mo?
And in a tour, in angwissh and in wo,
Dwellen this Palamon and eek Arcite
For evermoore, ther may no gold hem quite.
This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,
Till it fil ones, in a morwe of May,
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene
Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,
And fressher than the May with floures newe-
For with the rose colour stroof hir hewe,
I noot which was the fairer of hem two-
Er it were day, as was hir won an to do,
She was arisen, and al redy dight-
For May wole have no slogardie a-nyght;
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh hym out of his slepe to sterte,
And seith, "Arys and do thyn observaunce."
This maked Emelye have remembraunce
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.
Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse,
Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse,
Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse,
And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,
She walketh up and doun, and as hir liste

She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
To make a subtil gerland for hir hede,
And as an angel hevenysshly she soong.
The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong,
Which of the castel was the chief doungeoun,

(Ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun,
Of whiche I tolde yow, and tellen shal)
Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal
Ther as this Emelye hadde hir pleyynge.

Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morwenynge,
And Palamoun, this woful prisoner,
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,
Was risen, and romed in a chambre on heigh,
In which he al the noble citee seigh,
And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene,

Ther as this fresshe Emelye the shene
Was in hire walk, and romed up and doun.
This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun,
Goth in the chambre romynge to and fro,
And to hym-self compleynynge of his wo.

That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, "allas!"
And so bifel, by aventure or cas,
That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre
Of iren greet, and square as any sparre,
He cast his eye upon Emelya,

And therwithal he bleynyte, and cryede "A!"
As though he stongen were unto the herte.
And with that cry Arcite anon sterte
And seyde, "Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,
That art so pale and deedly on to see?

Why cridestow? who hath thee doon offence?
For Goddess love, taak al in pacience
Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be;
Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.

Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
Of Saturne, by sum constellacioun
Hath yeven us this, al though we hadde it sworn;
So stood the heavene, whan that we were born.
We moste endure it, this the short and playn."

This Palamon answerde and seyde agayn:

"Cosyn, for sothe, of this opioun
Thow hast a veyn ymaginacioun.
This prison caused me nat for to crye,
But I was hurt right now thurgh-out myn ye
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.
The fairnesse of that lady, that I see
Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro,
Is cause of al my criyng and my wo.
I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,
But Venus is it, soothly as I gesse."

And therewithal, on knees doun he fil,
And seyde, "Venus, if it be thy wil,
You in this gardyn thus to transfigure
Bfore me, sorweful wrecched creature,
Out of this prisoun helpe that we may scapen!

And if so be my destynee be shapen
By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,
Of oure lynage have som compassioun,
That is so lowe ybroght by tirannye."

Wher-as this lady romed to and fro,
And with that sighte hir beautee hurte hym so,
That, if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or moore.

"The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly
Of hire, that rometh in the yonder place,
And but I have hir mercy and hir grace
That I may seen hir atte leeste weye,
I nam but deed, ther is namoore to seye."

This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,
Dispitously he looked and answerde,
"Wheither seistow this in ernest or in pley?"
"Nay," quod Arcite, "in ernest by my fey,
God helpe me so, me list ful yvele pleye."

This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye;
"It nere," quod he, "to thee no greet honour
For to be fals, ne for to be traitour
To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother,
Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til oother,
That nevere for to dyen in the peyne,
Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,
Neither of us in love to hyndre other,
Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother,
But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me

In every cas, as I shal forthren thee, -
This was thyn ooth, and myn also certeyn,
I woot right wel thou darst it nat withseyn.
Thus artow of my conseil, out of doute;
And now thou woldest falsly been aboute

To love my lady, whom I love and serve
And evere shal, til that myn herte sterve.
Nay, certes, false Arcite, thow shalt nat so!
I loved hire first, and tolde thee my wo
As to my conseil, and to my brother sworn,
To forthre me as I have toold biforn,
For which thou art ybounden as a knyght
To helpen me, if it lay in thy myght,
Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn."
This Arcite ful proudly spak ageyn,
"Thow shalt," quod he, "be rather fals than I.
But thou art fals, I telle thee outrely,
For paramour I loved hir first er thou.
What, wiltow seyn thou wistest nat yet now
Whether she be a womman or goddesse?
Thyn is affeccioun of hoolynesse,
And myn is love, as to a creature;
For which I tolde thee myn aventure
As to my cosyn and my brother sworn.
I pose, that thow lovedest hir biforn;
Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe
That `who shal yeve a lover any lawe?'
Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,
Than may be yeve of any ethely man.
And therfore positif lawe and swich decree
Is broken al day for love in ech degree.
A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed,
He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,
Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf.
And eek it is nat likly, al thy lyf,
To stonden in hir grace, namoore shal I,
For wel thou woost thyselfen, verraily,
That thou and I be damned to prisoun
Perpetuelly, us gayneth no raunsoun.
We stryven as dide the houndes for the boon,
They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon.
Ther cam a kyte, whil they weren so wrothe,
And baar awey the boon bitwixe hem bothe.
And therfore at the kynges court, my brother,
Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother.
Love if thee list, for I love, and ay shal;
And soothly, leeve brother, this is al.
Heere in this prisoun moote we endure,
And everich of us take his aventure."
Greet was the strif and long bitwix hem tweye,
If that I hadde leyser for to seye.
But to th'effect; it happed on a day,
To telle it yow as shortly as I may,
A worthy duc, that highte Perotheus,
That felawe was unto duc Theseus
Syn thilke day that they were children lite,
Was come to Atthenes his felawe to visite,
And for to pleye as he was wont to do-
For in this world he loved no man so,
And he loved hym als tendrely agayn.

So wel they lovede, as olde bookes sayn,
That whan that oon was deed, soothly to telle,
His felawe wente and soughte hym doun in helle.
But of that storie list me nat to write;
Duc Perotheus loved wel Arcite,

And hadde hym knowe at Thebes yeer by yere,
And finally, at requeste and preyere
Of Perotheus, withouten any raunsoun,
Duc Theseus hym leet out of prisoun
Frely to goon, wher that hym liste overal,

In swich a gyse as I you tellen shal.
   This was the forward, pleynly for t’endite,
Bitwixen Theseus and hym Arcite,
That if so were that Arcite were yfounde
Evere in his lif, by day or nyght or stounde,

In any contree of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was acorded thus,
That with a swerd he sholde lese his heed;
Ther nas noon oother remedie ne reed,
But taketh his leve and homward he him spedde;

Lat hym be war! His nekke lith to wedde!
   How greet a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!
The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte,
He wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously,
To sleen hymself he waiteth prively.

He seyde, "Allas, that day that he was born!
Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;
Now is me shape eternally to dwelle
Nat in purgatorie, but in helle.
Allas, that evere knew I Perotheus!

For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus,
Yfetered in his prisoun evermo;
Thanne hadde I been in blisse, and nat in wo.
Oonly the sighte of hire whom that I serve,
Though that I nevere hir grace may deserve,

Wolde han suffised right ynough for me.
O deere cosyn Palamon," quod he,
"Thyn is the victorie of this aventure.
Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure.
In prisoun? certes, nay, but in paradys!

Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,
That hast the sighte of hir, and I th’absence;
For possible is, syn thou hast hir presence,
And art a knyght, a worthy and an able,
That by som cas, syn Fortune is chaungeable,

Thow maist to thy desir som tyme atteyne.
But I, that am exiled and bareyne
Of alle grace, and in so greet dispeir
That ther nys erthe, water, fir, ne eir,
Ne creature, that of hem maked is,
That may me helpe or doon confort in this,
Wel oughte I sterve in wanhope and distresse,
Farwel, my lif, my lust, and my gladnesse!
    Allas, why pleynen folk so in commune
On purveiaunce of God or of Fortune,
That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse
Wel bettre than they kan hemself devyse?
Som man desireth for to han richesse,
That cause is of his mordre of greet siknesse.
And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,
That in his hous is of his meynee slayn.
Infinite harmes been in this mateere,
We witen nat what thing we preyen heere.
We faren as he that dronke is as a mous;
A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,
But he noot which the righte wey is thider,
And to a dronke man the wey is slider.
And certes, in this world so faren we;
We seken faste after felicitee,
But we goon wrong ful often trewely.
Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,
That wende and hadde a greet opioun
That if I myghte escapen from prisoun,
Thanne hadde I been in joye and perfit heele,
Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.

    Upon that oother syde, Palamon,
Whan that he wiste Arcite was agon,
Swich sorwe he maketh that the grete tour
Resouneth of his youlyng and clamour.
The pure fettres on his shynes grete
Weren of his bittre salte teeres wete.
"Allas," quod he, "Arcite, cosyn myn!
Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thyn.
Thow walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
And of my wo thow yevest litel charge.
Thou mayst, syn thou hast wysdom and manhede,
Assemblen alle the folk of oure kynrede,
And make a werre so sharp on this citee,
That by som aventure, or som tretee,
Thow mayst have hir to lady and to wyf,
For whom that I moste nedes lese my lyf.
For as by wey of possibilitee,
Sith thou art at thy large, of prisoun free,
And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage
Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage. 
For I moot wepe and wayle, whil I lyve,
With al the wo that prison may me yeve, 
And eek with payne that love me yeve also,
That doubleth al my torment and my wo."

Therwith the fyre of jalousie up-sterete
Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte
So woodly, that he lyk was to biholde
The boxtree, or the asshen dedde and colde.

Thanne seyde he, "O cruel Goddes, that governe
This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,
And writen in the table of athamaunt
Youre parlement and youre eterne graunt,
What is mankynde moore unto you holde
Than the sheep that rouketh in the folde?
For slayn is man right as another beest,
And dwelleth eek in prison and arreest,
And hath siknesse, and greet adversitee,
And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee.

What governance is in this prescience
That giltelees tormenteth innocence?
And yet encresseth this al my penaunce,
That man is bounden to his observaunce,
For Goddes sake, to letten of his wille,
Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfille.
And whan a beest is deed, he hath no payne,
But man after his deeth moot wepe and pleyne,
Though in this world he have care and wo.
Withouten doute it may stonden so.

The answere of this lete I to dyvynys,
But well I woot, that in this world greet pyne ys.
Allas, I se a serpent or a theef,
That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,
Goon at his large, and where hym list may turne!

But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,
And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,
That hath destroyed wel ny al the blood
Of Thebes with hise waste walles wyde.
And Venus sleeth me on that oother syde
For jalousie and fere of hym Arcite."

Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,
And lete hym in his prisoun stille dwelle,
And of Arcita forth I wol yow telle.

The somer passeth, and the nyghtes longe
Encressen double wise the peynes stronge
Bothe of the lover and the prisoner;
I noot which hath the wofuller mester.
For shortly for to seyn, this Palamoun
Perpetuilly is damped to prisoun
In cheynes and in fettres to been deed,
And Arcite is exiled upon his heed
For evere mo as out of that contree,
Ne nevere mo he shal his lady see.
   You loveres axe I now this questioun,
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?
That oon may seen his lady day by day,
But in prison he moot dwelle alway;
That oother wher hym list may ride or go,
But seen his lady shal he nevere mo.
Now demeth as yow liste ye that kan,
For I wol telle forth, as I bigan.

Explicit Prima Pars
(Here ends the first part)
The knight’s Tale

Sequitur Pars Secunda
(Here begins the second part)

Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde ‘Allas,’
For seen his lady shal he nevere mo;
500
And shortly to concluden al his wo,
So muche sorwe hadde nevere creature,
That is, or shal whil that the world may dure.
His slep, his mete, his drynke is hym biraf,
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft.
505
Hise eyen holwe and grisly to biholde,
His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde;
And solitarie he was and evere allone
And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
510
Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.
So feble eek were hise spiritz, a nd so lowe,
And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe
His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.
And in his geere for al the world he ferde
515
Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye
Engendred of humour malencolik
Biforen in his celle fantastik,
And shortly turned was al up so doun
520
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of hym, this woful lovere daun Arcite.
What sholde I al day of his wo endite?
Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two
This cruwel torment, and this peyne and wo,
525
At Thebes in his contree, as I seyde,
Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,
Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie
Biforn hym stood, and bad hym to be murie.
His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte,
530
An hat he werede upon hise heris brighte.
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,
As he was whan that Argus took his sleep;
And seyde hym thus, “To Atthenes shaltou wende,
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende.”
535
And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.
"Now trewely, how soore that me smerte,"
Quod he, “to Atthenes right now wol I fare,
Ne for the drede of deeth shal I nat spare
To se my lady that I love and serve,
540
In hire presence I recche nat to sterve."
And with that word he caughte a greet mirour,
And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,
And saugh his visage al in another kynde.
And right anon it ran hym in his mynde,

That sith his face was so disfigured
Of maladye, the which he hadde endured,
He myghte wel, if that he bar hym lowe,
Lyve in Athenes, everemoore unknowe,
And seen his lady wel ny day by day.

And right anon he chaunged his array,
And cladde hym as a povre laborer,
And al allone, save oonly a squier
That knew his privetee and al his cas,
Which was disgised pourely, as he was,
To Athenes is he goon, the nexte way.
And to the court he wente, upon a day,
And at the gate he profreth his servyse,
To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse.
And shortly of this matere for to seyn,

He fil in office with a chamberleyn,
The which that dwellynge was with Emelye,
For he was wys and koude soone espye
Of every servant which that serveth here.
Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere,
For he was yong and myghty for the nones,
And therto he was strong and big of bones
To doon that any wight kan hym devyse.
A yeer or two he was in this servyse
Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte;

But half so wel biloved a man as he
Ne was ther nevere in court, of his degree;
He was so gentil of condicioun
That thurghout al the court was his renoun.

They seyden, that it were a charitee,
That Theseus wolde enhauncen his degree,
And putten hym in worshipful servyse
Ther as he myghte his vertu exercise.

But thus withinne a while his name is spronge
Bothe of hise dedes and his goode tonge,
That Theseus hath taken hym so neer,
That of his chambre he made hym a squier,
And gaf hym gold to mayntene his degree.
And eek men broghte hym out of his contree
From yeer to yeer, ful pryvely, his rente.
But honestly and slyly he it spente,
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
And thre yeer in this wise his lif he ladde,
And bar hym so in peas, and eek in werre,
Ther was no man that Theseus hath derre.
And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,
And speke I wole of Palamon a lite.

In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun
Thise seven yeer hath seten Palamoun,

Forpyned, what for wo and for distresse.
Who feeleth double sor and hevynesse
But Palamon, that love destreyneyth so,
That wood out of his wit he goth for wo?
And eek therto he is a prisoner,

Perpetually, noght onlty for a yer.

Who koude ryme in Englyssh proprely
His martirdom? For sothe it am nat I,
Therfore I passe as lightlty as I may.

It fel that in the seventhe yer, in May,
The thridde nyght, (as olde bookes seyn,
That al this storie tellen moore pleyn)
Were it by aventure or destynee -
As, whan a thyng is shapen, it shal be -
That soone after the mydnyght Palamoun

By helpyng of a freend, brak his prisoun
And fleeth the citee faste as he may go;
For he hade yeve his gayler drynke so
Of a clarree mad of a certeyn wyn,
With nercotikes and opie of Thebes fyn,

That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him shake,
The gayler sleep, he myghte nat awake.
And thus he fleeth as faste as evere he may;
The nyght was short and faste by the day,
That nedes-cost he moot hymselven hyde;

And til a grove, faste ther bisyde,
With dreedeful foot thanne stalketh Palamoun.
For shortly, this wss his opinioun,
That in that grove he wolde hym hyde al day,
And in the nyght thanne wolde he take his way

To Thebes-ward, his freendes for to preye
On Theseus to helpe hym to werreye;
And shortly, outher he wolde lese his lif,
Or wynnen Emelye unto his wyf;
This is th’effect and his entente pleyn.

Now wol I turne to Arcite ageyn,
That litel wiste how ny that was his care,
Til that Fortune had broght him in the snare.

The bisy larke, messager of day,
Salueth in hir song the morwe gray,

And firy Phebus riseth up so brighte
That al the orient laugheth of the light,
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
The silver dropses hangynge on the leves.
And Arcita, that is in the court roial
With Theseus, his squier principal,
Is risen, and looketh on the myrie day.
And for to doon his observaunce of May,
Remembrynge on the poyn of his desir
He on a courser startlynge as the fir
Is riden into the feeldes, hym to pleye,
Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.
And to the grove of which that I yow tolde
By aventure his wey he gan to holde,
To maken hym a gerland of the greves,
Were it of wodebynde or hawethorn leves.
And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene,
"May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,
Welcome be thou, faire fresshe May,
In hope that I som grene gete may."
And from his courser, with a lusty herte,
Into a grove ful hastily he sterte,
And in a path he rometh up and doun
Ther as by aventure this Palamoun
Was in a bussh, that no man myghte hym se;
For soore afered of his deeth was he.
No thyng ne knew he that it was Arcite,
God woot, he wolde have trowed it ful lite.
But sooth is seyd, go sithen many yeres,
That "feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres."
It is ful fair a man to bere hym evene,
For al day meeteth men at unset stevene.
Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe,
That was so ny to herknen al his sawe,
For in the bussh he sitteth now ful stille.
Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille
And songen al the roundel lustily,
Into a studie he fil al sodeynly,
As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,
Now in the croppe, now doun in the breres,
Now up, now doun as boket in a welle.
Right as the Friday, soothly for to telle,
Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste,
Right so kan geery Venus overcaste
The hertes of hir folk; right as hir day
Is gereful, right so chaungeth she array.
Selde is the Friday al the wowke ylike.
Whan that Arcite had songe, he gan to sike,
And sette hym doun withouten any moore;
"Allas," quod he, "that day that I was bore!
How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee
Woltow werreyen Thebes the Citee?
Allas, ybroght is to confusioun
The blood roial of Cadme and Amphioun, -
Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man
That Thebes bulte, or first the toun bigan,
And of the citee first was crowned kyng,
Of his lynage am I, and his ofspryng,
By verray ligne, as of the stok roial,
And now I am so caytyf and so thral

That he that is my mortal enemy
I serve hym as his squier povrely.
And yet dooth Juno me wel moore shame,
For I dar noght biknowe myn owene name,
But theras I was wont to highte Arcite,
Now highte I Philostrate, noght worth a myte.
Allas, thou felle Mars! allas, Juno!
Thus hath youre ireoure lynage al fordo,
Save oonly me, and wrecched Palamoun
That Theseus martireth in prisoun.

And over al this, to slee me outrely,
Love hath his fiery dart so brennyngly
Ystiked thurgh my trewe careful herte,
That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.
Ye slee me with youre eyen, Emelye!
Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye.
Of al the remenant of myn oother care
Ne sette I nat the montance of a tare,
So that I koude doon aught to youre plesaunce.”
And with that word he fil doun in a traunce

A longe tyme, and after he upsterte.
This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte
He felte a coold sward sodeynlichglyde,
For ire he quook, no lenger wolde he byde.
And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke,
And seide, "Arcite, false traytour wikke!
Now artow hent that lovest my lady so,
For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,
And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,
As I ful ofte ofte have seyd thee heer biforn,
And hast byjaped heere duc Theseus,
And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus.
I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye;
Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,
But I wol love hire oonly, and namo,
For I am Palamon, thy mortal foo!
And though that I no wepene have in this place,
But out of prison am astert by grace,
I drede noght that outhere thou shalt dye,
Or thou ne shalt nat loven Emelye.
Chees which thou wolt, for thou shalt nat asterte!"
This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,
Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,
As fiers as leoun pulled out his swerd,
And sayde thus: "By God that sit above,
Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love,
And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,
Thou shooldest nevere out of this grove pace,
That thou ne shooldest dyen of myn hond.
For I defye the seurete and the bond
Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee."
What, verray fool, thynk wel that love is free,
And I wol love hir, maugree al thy myght!
But for as muche thou art a worthy knyght,
And wilnest to darreyne hire by bataille,
Have heer my trouthe; tomorwe I wol nat faille
Without wityng of any oother wight
That heere I wol be founden as a knyght,
And bryngen harneys right ynough for thee,
And ches the beste, and leef the worste for me.
And mete and drynke this nyght wol I brynge
Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddynge;
And if so be that thou my lady wynne,
And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,
Thow mayst wel have thy lady as for me."
This Palamon answerde, "I graunte it thee."
And thus they been departed til amorwe,
Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.
O Cupide, out of alle charitee!
O regne, that wol no felawe have with thee!
Ful sooth is seyd that love ne lordshipe
Wol noght, hir thankes, have no felaweshipe.
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun.
Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,
And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,
Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,
Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreyne
The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne.
And on his hors, allone as he was born,
He carieth al this harneys hym biforn,
And in the grove, at tymene and place yset,
This Arcite and this Palamon ben met.
To chaungen gan the colour in hir face
Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,
That stondeth at the gappe with a spere,
Whan hunted is the leoun and the bere,
And hereth hym come russelshyng in the greves,
And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,
And thynketh, "Heere cometh my mortal enemy,
Withoute faille he moot be deed or I,
For outher I moot sleen hym at the gappe,
Or he moot sleen me, if that me myshappe”.
So ferden they in chaungynge of hir hewe,

As fer as everich of hem oother kneue.
Ther nas no good day ne no saluyng,
But streight, withouten word or rehersyng,
Everich of hem heelp for to armen oother,
As frendly as he were his owene brother.

And after that with sharpe speres stronge
They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.
Thou myghtest wene that this Palamoun
In his fightyng were a wood leon,
And as a cruel tigre was Arcite.

As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,
That frothen white as foom for ire wood.
Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood.
And in this wise I lete hem fightyng dwelle,
And forth I wole of Theseus yow telle.

The destinee, ministre general,
That executeth in the world overal
The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,
So strong it is, that though the world had sworn
The contrarie of a thyng, by ye or nay,

Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeere.
For certeinly, our appetites heere,
Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
Al is this reuled by the sighte above.

This mene I now by myghty Theseus,
That for to hunten is so desirus
And namely at the grete hert in May,
That in his bed ther dauneth hym no day
That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde

With hunte and horn, and houndes hym bisyde
For in his huntyng hath he swich delit
That it is al his joye and appetit
To been hymself the grete hertes bane-
For after Mars he serveth now Dyane.

Cleer was the day, as I have toold er this,
And Theseus, with alle joye and blis,
With his Ypolita, the faire quene,
And Emelye, clothed al in grene,
On huntyng be they riden roially,

And to the grove, that stood ful faste by,
In which ther was an hert, as men hym tolde,
Duc Theseus the streighte wey hath holde,
And to the launde he rideth hym ful right,
For thider was the hert wont have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.
This duc wol han a cours at hym, or tweye,
With houndes swiche as that hym list comaunde.
   And whan this duc was come unto the launde,
Under the sonne he looketh, and anon

He was war of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughten breme, as it were bores two;
The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro
So hidously, that with the leeste strook
It semed as it wolde felle an ook;

But what they were, nothyng he ne woot.
This duc his courser with his spores smoot,
And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,
And pulled out a swerd, and cride, "Hoo!
Namoore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed!

By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed
That smyteth any strook, that I may seen.
But telleth me what myster men ye been,
That been so hardy for to fighten heere
Withouten juge or oother officere,
As it were in a lystes roially?"

This Palamon answarde hastily,
And seyde, "Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
We have the deeth disserved, bothe two.
Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,
That been encombred of oure owene lyves,
And as thou art a fightful lord and juge,
Ne yeve us neither mercy ne refuge,
But sle me first for seinte charitee!
But sle my felawe eek as wel as me-
Or sle hym first, for, though thow knowest it lite,
This is thy mortal foo, this is Arcite,
That fro thy lond is banysshed on his heed,
For which he hath deserved to be deed.
For this is he, that cam unto thy gate,
And seyde that he highte Philostrate.
Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yer,
And thou hast maked hym thy chief Squier,
And this is he that loveth Emelye.
For sith the day is come that I shal dye,

I make pleynly my confessioun
That I am thilke woful Palamoun,
That hath thy prisoun broken wikkedly.
I am thy mortal foo, and it am I
That loveth so hoote Emelye the brighte,

That I wol dye present in hir sighte;
Wherfore I axe deeth and my juwise-
But sle my felawe in the same wise
For bothe han we deserved to be slayn."
This worthy duc answered anon agayn,

And seyde, "This is a short conclusiou, 
Youre owene mouth, by your confessiou, 
Hath damprowad yow, and I wol it recorde. 
It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde, 
Ye shal be deed, by myghty Mars the rede!"

890 

The queene anon, for verray wommanhede, 
Gan for to wepe, and so dide Emelye, 
And alle the ladyes in the compaignye. 
Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle, 
That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle.

895 

For gentil men they were of greet estaat, 
And no thyng but for love was this debaat, 
And saugh hir blody woundes wyde and soore, 
And alle crieden, both lasse and moore, 
"Have mercy, lord, upon us wommen alle!"

900 

And on hir bare knees adoun they falle, 
And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood; 
Til at the laste aslaked was his mood, 
For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte. 
And though he first for ire quook and sterte,

905 

He hath considered shortly in a clause 
The trespas of hem bothe, and eek the cause, 
And although that his ire hir gilt accused, 
Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused. 
As thus: he thoghte wel, that every man

910 

Wol helpe hymself in love, if that he kan, 
And eek delivere hym-self out of prisoun; 
And eek his herte hadde compassioun 
Of wommen, for they wepen evere in oon. 
And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,

915 

And softe unto hymself he seyde, "Fy 
Upon a lord that wol have no mercy, 
But been a leon, bothe in word and dede, 
To hem that been in repentauce and drede, 
As wel as to a proud despitous man,

920 

That wol maynteyne that he first bigan. 
That lord hath litel of discreccioun 
That in swich cas kan no divisoun, 
But weyth pride and humblesse after oon." 
And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon,

925 

He gan to looken up with eyen lighte, 
And spak thise same wordes al on highte: 
"The God of love, a benedicite! 
How myghty and how greet a lord is he! 
Ayeyns his myght ther gayneth none obstacles, 

930 

He may be cleped a god for his myracles, 
For he kan maken at his owene gyse 
Of everich herte as that hym list divyse.
Lo heere, this Arcite and this Palamoun
That quitly weren out of my prisoun,
And myghte han lyved in Thebes roially,
And witen I am hir mortal enemy,
And that hir deth lith in my myght also;
And yet hath love, maugree hir eyen two,
Ybrogth hem hyder bothe for to dye.

Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?
Who may been a fole, but if he love?
Bihoold, for Goddes sake that sit above,
Se how they blede! Be they noght wel arrayed?
Thus hath hir lord, the God of Love, ypayed
Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!
And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse,
That serven love, for aught that may bifalle!
But this is yet the beste game of alle,
That she, for whom they han this jolitee,
Kan hem therfore as muche thank, as me!
She woot namoore of al this hoote fare,
By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare!
But all moot ben assayed, hoot and coold;
A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold;
I woot it by myself ful yore agon,
For in my tyme a servant was I oon.
And therfore, syn I knowe of loves peyne,
And woot how soore it kan a man distreyne,
As he that hath ben caught ofte in his laas,
I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespaas,
At requeste of the queene that kneleth heere,
And eek of Emelye, my suster deere.
And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere,
That nevere mo ye shal my contree dere,
Ne make werre upon me, nyght ne day,
But been my freend es in al that ye may,
I yow foryeve this trespas, every deel."
And they hym sworn his axyng, faire and weel,
And hym of lordship and of mercy preyde,
And he hem graunteh grace, and thus he seyde:

"To speke of roial lynage and richesse,
Though that she were a queene or a princesse,
Ech of you bothe is worthy doutelees
To wedden whan tyme is, but nathelees
I speke as for my suster Emelye,
For whom ye have this strif and jalousye:
Ye woot yourself, she may nat wedden two
Atones, though ye fighten everemo.
That oon of you, al be hym looth or lief,
He moot go pipen in an yvy leef-
This is to seyn, she may nat now han bothe,
Al be ye never so jalous, ne so wrothe.
And forthy, I yow putte in this degree;
That ech of yow shal have his destyne.

985
As hym is shape, and herketh in what wyse;
Lo, heere your ende of that I shal devyse.

My wyl is this, for plat conclusioun,
Withouten any replicacioun,
If that you liketh, take it for the beste,

990
That everich of yow shal goon where hym leste,
Frely, withouten raunson, or daunger,
And this day fifty wykes fer ne ner,
Everich of yow shal brynge an hundred knyghtes
Armed for lystes up at alle rightes,

995
Al redy to darreyne hire by bataille.
And this bihote I yow withouten faille,
Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knyght,
That wheither of yow bothe that hath myght,
This is to seyn, that wheither he, or thou

1000
May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
Sleen his contrarie, or out of lystes dryve,
Thanne shal I yeve Emelya to wyve
To whom that Fortune yeveth so fair a grace.
Tho lystes shal I make in this place,

1005
And God so wisly on my soule rewe,
As I shal evene juge been, and trewe.
Ye shul noon oother ende with me maken,
That oon of yow ne shal be deed or taken.
And if you thynketh this is weel ysayd,

1010
Seyeth youre avys and holdeth you apayd;
This is youre ende and youre conclusioun."

Who looketh lightly now but Palamoun?
Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite?
Who kouthe tellen, or who kouthe endite

1015
The joye that is maked in the place,
Whan Theseus hath doon so fair a grace?
But doun on knees wente every maner wight,
And thonken hym with al hir herte and myght,
And namely the Thebans, often sithe.

1020
And thus with good hope and with herte blithe
They taken hir leve, and homward gonne they ride
To Thebes with his olde walles wyde.

Explicit Secunda Pars
(Here ends the second part)
The Knight’s Tale

Sequitur Pars Tercia
(Here begins the third part)

I trowe men wolde deme it necligence,
If I foryete to tellen the dispence
Of Theseus, that gooth so bisily
To maken up the lystes roially;
That swich a noble theatre as it was,
I dar wel seyen, in this world ther nas.

The circuit a myle was aboute,
Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.
Round was the shap, in manere of compas,
Ful of degrees the heighte of sixty pas,
That whan a man was set on o degree,
He lette nat his felawe for to see.

Estward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,
Westward, right swich another in the opposit;
And shortly to concluden, swich a place
Was noon in erthe, as in so litel space.
For in the lond ther was no crafty man
That geometrie or ars-metrike kan,
Ne portreytour, ne kervere of ymages,
That Theseus ne yaf him mete and wages,
The theatre for to maken and devyse.
And for to doon his ryte and sacrifise,

He estward hath upon the gate above,
In worshipe of Venus, goddesse of love,
Doon make an auter and an oratorie.
And on the gate westward, in memorie
Of Mars, he maked hath right swich another,
That coste largely of gold a fother.
And northward, in a touret on the wal
Of alabastre whit, and reed coral,
An oratorie, riche for to see,
In worshipe of Dyane, of chastitee,

Hath Theseus doon wroght in noble wyse.
But yet hadde I foryeten to devyse
The noble kervyng and the portreitures,
The shap, the contenaunce, and the figures,
That weren in thise oratories thre.

First in the temple of Venus maystow se
Wroght on the wal, ful pitous to biholde,
The broken slepes and the sikes colde,
The sacred teeris and the waymentynge,
The firy strokes, and the desirynge
That loves servantz in this lyf enduren;
The othes that her covenantz assuren;
Plesaunce and Hope, Desir, Foolhardynesse,  
Beautee and Youthe, Bauderie, Richesse,  
Charmes and Force, Lesynges, Flaterye,  
Despense, Bisynesse, and Jalousye,  
That wered of yelewe gooldes a gerland,  
And a cokkow sittyng on hir hand;  
Festes, instrumentz, caroles, daunces,  
Lust and array, and alle the circumstaunces  
Of love, whiche that I rekned, and rekne shal,  
By ordre waren peynted on the wal,  
And mo than I kan make of mencioun;  
For soothly, al the mount of Citheroun,  
Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellynge,  
Was shewed on the wal in portreyynge,  
With al the gardyn and the lustynesse.  
Nat was foryeten the Porter Ydelnesse,  
Ne Narcisus the faire, of yore agon,  
Ne yet the folye of kyng Salamon,  
And eek the grete strengthe of Ercules -  
Th’enchauntementz of Medea and Circes -  
Ne of Turnus, with the hardy fiers corage,  
The riche Cresus, kaytyf in servage.  
Thus may ye seen, that wysdom ne richesse,  
Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardynesse,  
Ne may with Venus holde champartie,  
For as hir list, the world than may she gye.  
Lo, alle thise folk so caught were in hir las,  
Til they for wo ful ofte seyde "allas!"  
Suffiseth heere ensamples oon or two-  
And, though, I koude rekene a thousand mo.  
   The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,  
   Was naked, fletynge in the large see,  
   And fro the navele doun al covered was  
   With wavues grene, and brighte as any glas.  
   A citole in hir right hand hadde she,  
   And on hir heed, ful semely for to se,  
   A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge;  
   Above hir heed hir dowves flikerynge.  
   Biforn hir stood hir sone Cupido,  
   Upon his shulders wynges hadde he two,  
   And blynd he was, as it was often seen.  
   A bowe he bar, and arwes brighte and kene.  
   Why sholde I noght as wel eek telle yow al  
The portreiture, that was upon the wal  
Withinne the temple of myghty Mars the rede?  
Al peynted was the wal in lengthe and brede  
Lyk to the estres of the grisly place  
That highte the grete temple of Mars in Trace,  
In thilke colde frosty regioun
Ther as Mars hath his sovereign mansioun.
   First on the wal was peynted a forest
In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,
   With knotty, knarry, bareyne trees olde,

Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde,
   In which ther ran a rumbel and a swough
As though a storm sholde bresten every bough.
And dounward from an hille, under a bente,
   Ther stood the temple of Mars Armypotente,

Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree
   Was long and streit, and gastly for to see,
And therout came a rage and suche a veze,
   That it made al the gate for to rese.
The northren lyght in at the dores shoon,
   For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon,
The dore was al of adamant eterne,
   Yclenched overthwart and endelong
With iren tough, and for to make it strong

Every pyler, the temple to sustene,
   Was tonne-greet of iron bright and shene.
   Ther saugh I first the dirke ymaginyng
Of Felonye, and al the compassyng,
The cruel Ire, reed as any gleede,

The pykepurs, and eek the pale Drede,
The smylere with the knyf under the cloke,
The shepne brennynge with the blake smoke,
The tresoun of the mordrynge in the bedde,
The open werre, with woundes al biblesd;

Contek, with blody knyf and sharp manace,
   Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.
The sleere of hymself yet saugh I ther,
   His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer;
The nayl ydryven in the shode anyght,

The colde deeth, with mouth gapyng upright.
Amyddes of the temple sat Meschaunce,
   With Disconfort and Sory Contenaunce.
   Yet saugh I Woodnesse laughyng in his rage,
Armed Compleint, Outhees, and fiers Outrage;

The careyne in the busk with throte ycorve,
   A thousand slayn, and nat of qualm ystorve,
The tiraunt with the pray by force yraft,
The toun destroyed, ther was nothyng laft.
   Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres,

The hunte strangled with the wilde beres,
The soue freten the child right in the cradel,
The cook yscalded, for al his longe ladel.
Noght was foryeten by the infortune of Marte,
The cartere overryden with his carte,
1165 Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.
Ther were also, of Martes divisoun,
The barbour, and the bocher, and the smyth
That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his styth.
And al above, depeynted in a tour,

1170 Saugh I Conquest sittynge in greet honour,
With the sharpe swerd over his heed
Hangynge by a soutil twyned threed.
Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius,
Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;

1175 Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,
Yet was hir deth depeynted ther-biforn
By manasynge of Mars, right by figure;
So was it shewed in that portreiture,
As is depeynted in the sterres above

1180 Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.
Suffiseth oon ensample in stories olde,
I may nat rekene hem alle though I wolde.
   The statue of Mars upon a carte stood
   Armed, and looked grym as he were wood,

1185 And over his heed ther shynen two figures
Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures
That oon Puella, that oother Rubeus.
This god of armes was arrayed thus:
A wolf ther stood biforn hym at his feet,

1190 With eyen rede, and of a man he eet.
With soutil pencel was depeynt this storie,
In redoutynge of Mars and of his glorie.
   Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste
   As shortly as I kan I wol me haste,

1195 To telle yow al the descripsioun.
Depeynted been the walles up and doun
Of huntyng and of shamefast chastitee.
Ther saugh I, how woful Calistopee
Whan that Diane agreved was with here,

1200 Was turned from a womman til a bere,
And after was she maad the loode-sterre.
Thus was it peynted, I kan sey yow no ferre-
Hir sone is eek a sterre, as men may see.
Ther saugh I Dane, yturned til a tree,

1205 I mene nat the goddesse Diane,
But Penneus doughter, which that highte Dane.
Ther saugh I Atthem an hert ymakyned,
For vengeaunce that he saugh Diane al naked.
I saugh how that hise houndes have hym caught

1210 And freeten hym, for that they knewe hym naught.
Yet peynted was a litel forther moor
How Atthalante hunted the wilde boor,
And Meleagree, and many another mo,
For which Dyane wroghte hym care and wo.

Ther saugh I many another wonder storie,
The which me list nat drawn to memorie.
This goddesse on an hert ful hye seet,
With smale houndes al aboute hir feet;
And underne the hir feet she hadde a moone,
Wexynge it was, and sholde wanye soone.
In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,
With bowe in honde, and arwes in a cas.
Hir eyen caste she ful lowe adoun,
Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
A womman travaillynge was hir biforn;
But for hir child so longe was unborn
Ful pitously Lucyna gan she calle,
And seyde, "Help, for thou mayst best of alle!"
Wel koude he peynten lyfly, that it wroghte,
With many a floryn he the hewes boghte.
Now been thise listes maad, and Theseus,
That at his grete cost arrayed thus
The temples, and the theatre every deel,
Whan it was doon, hym lyked wonder weel.-
But stynte I wole of Theseus a lite,
And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.
The day approcheth of hir retournynge,
That everich sholde an hundred knyghtes brynge
The bataille to darreyne, as I yow tolde.
And til Atthenes, hir covenantz for to holde,
Hath everich of hem broght an hundred knyghtes,
Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.
And sikerly, ther trowed many a man,
That nevere sithen, that the world bigan,
As for to speke of knyght hod of hir hond,
As fer as God hath maked see or lond,
Nas of so fewe so noble a compaignye.
For every wight that lovede chivalrye,
And wolde, his thankes, han a passant name,
Hath preyed that he myghte been of that game;
And wel was hym that therto chosen was.
For if ther fille tomorwe swich a cas
Ye knowen wel, that every lusty knyght
That loveth paramours, and hath his myght,
Were it in Engelond or elles where,
They wolde, hir thankes, wilnen to be there,
To fighte for a lady, benedicitee!
It were a lusty sighte for to see.
And right so ferden they with Palamon,
With hym ther wenten knyghtes many on.
Som wol ben armed in an haubergeoun,
In a bristplate, and in a light gypoun,
And som wol have a paire plates large,
And som wol have a Pruce sheeld, or a targe,

1265
Som wol ben armed on hir legges weel,
And have an ax, and somme a mace of steel.
Ther is no newe gyse, that it nas old;
Armed were they, as I have yow told,
Everych after his opioun.

1270
Ther maistow seen comyng with Palamoun,
Lygurge hym-self, the grete kyng of Trace.
Blak was his berd, and manly was his face,
The cercles of hise eyen in his heed,
They gloweden bitwyxen yelow and reed,

1275
And lik a grifphon looked he aboute,
With kempe heeris on hise browes stoute,
Hise lymes grete, hise brawnes harde and stronge,
Hise shuldres brode, hise armes rounde and longe;
And as the gyse was in his contree,

1280
Ful hye upon a chaar of gold stood he,
With foure white boles in the trays.
In stede of cote-armure, over his harnays
With nayles yelewe and brighte as any gold
He hadde a beres skyn, col-blak, for old;

1285
His longe heer was kembd bihynde his bak,
As any ravenes fethere it shoon for-blak.
A wrethe of gold arm-greet, of huge wighte,
Upon his heed, set ful of stones brighte,
Of fyne rubyes and of dyamauntz.

1290
Aboute his chaar ther wenten white alauntz,
Twenty and mo, as grete as any steer,
To hunten at the leoun or the deer,
And folwed hym, with mosel faste ybounde,
Colored of gold, and tourettes fyled rounde.

1295
An hundred lordes hadde he in his route,
Armed ful wel, with hertes stierne and stoute.

With Arcita, in stories as men fynde,
The grete Emetreus, the kyng of Inde,
Upon a steede bay, trapped in steel,

1300
Covered in clooth of gold dyapred weel,
Cam ridynge lyk the god of armes, Mars.
His cote-armure was of clooth of Tars,
Couched with perles white and rounde and grete.
His sadel was of brend gold newe ybete;

1305
A mantelet upon his shuldre hangynge
Bret-ful of rubyes rede, as fyir sparklynge.
His crispe heer lyk rynges was yronne,
And that was yelow, and glytered as the sonne.
His nose was heigh, hise eyen bright citryn,

1310
Hise lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn;
A fewe frakenes in his face yspreynd,
Bitwixen yelow and somdel blak ymeynd,
And as a leoun he his looking caste.
Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste;
1315
His berd was wel bigonne for to sprynge,
His voys was as a trompe thonderynge.
Upon his heed he wered of laurer grene
A gerland, fressh and lusty for to sene.
Upon his hand he bar for his deduyt
1320
An egle tame, as any lilye whyt.
An hundred lordes hadde he with hym there,
Al armed, save hir heddes, in al hir gere,
Ful richely in alle maner thynges.
For trusteth wel, that dukes, erles, kynges,
1325
Were gadered in this noble compaignye,
For love, and for encrees of chivalrye.
Aboute this kyng ther ran on every part
Ful many a tame leoun and leopard,
And in this wise thise lordes, alle and some
1330
Been on the sonday to the citee come,
Aboute pryme, and in the toun alight.
This Theseus, this duc, this worthy knyght,
Whan he had brught hem into his citee,
And inned hem, everich in his degree,
1335
He festeth hem, and dooth so greet labour
To esen hem and doon hem al honour,
That yet men wenen that no maner wit
Of noon estaat ne koude amenden it.
The mynstralcye, the service at the feeste,
1340
The grete yiftes to the mooste and leeste,
The riche array of Theseus paleys,
Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,
What ladyes fairest been, or best daunsynge,
Or which of hem kan dauncen best and synge,
1345
Ne who moost felyngly speketh of love,
What haukes sitten on the perche above,
What houndes liggen in the floor adoun-
Of al this make I now no mencion;
But, al th'effect, that thynketh me the beste,
1350
Now cometh the point, and herkneth if yow leste.
The Sunday nyght, er day bigan to sprynge,
Whan Palamon the larke herde synge,
(Al though it nere nat day by houres two,
Yet song the larke) and Palamon right tho.
1355
With hooly herte and with an heigh corage
He roos, to wenden on his pilgrmage,
Unto the blissful Citherea benigne,
I mene Venus, honourable and digne.
And in hir houre he walketh forth a pas
1360
Unto the lystes, ther hire temple was,
And doun he kneleth, with ful humble cheere,
And herte soor, and seyde in this manere.
    "Faireste of faire, O lady myn, Venus,
    Doughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,

1365
Thow glader of the Mount of Citheron,
For thilke love thow haddest to Adoon,
Have pitee of my bitteer teeris smerte,
And taak myn humble preyere at thyn herte.
Allas, I ne have no langage to telle

1370
Th'effectes, ne the tormentz of myn helle!
Myn herte may myne harms nat biwreye,
I am so confus that I kan noght seye.
But 'Mercy, lady bright! that knowest weele
My thought, and seest what harms that I feele.'

1375
Considere al this, and rewe upon my soore,
As wisly, as I shal for everemoore,
Emforth my myght, thy trewe servant be,
And holden werre alwey with chastitee.
That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe.

1380
I kepe noght of armes for to yelpe,
Ne I ne axe nat tomorwe to have victorie,
Ne renoun in this cas, ne veyne glorie
Of pris of armes blowen up and doun,
But I wolde have fully possessioun

1385
Of Emelye, and dye in thy servyse.
Fynd thow the manere how, and in what wyse-
I recche nat, but it may bettre be
To have victorie of hem, or they of me-
So that I have my lady in myne armes.

1390
For though so be, that Mars is god of armes,
Youre vertu is so greet in hevene above
That if yow list, I shal wel have my love.
Thy temple wol I worshipe everemo,
And on thyn auter, where I ride or go,

1395
I wol doon sacrifice and fires beete.
And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,
Thanne preye I thee, tomorre with a spere
That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.
Thanne rekke I noght, whan I have lost my lyf,

1400
Though that Arcita wynne hir to his wyf.
This is th'effect and ende of my preyere,
Yif me my love, thow blisful lady deere!"
    Whan the orison was doon of Palamon,
    His sacrifice he dide, and that anon,

1405
Ful pitously with alle circumstaunces,
Al telle I noght as now his observaunces.
But atte laste, the statue of Venus shook,
And made a signe wherby that he took
That his preyere accepted was that day.
For thogh the signe shewed a delay,
Yet wiste he wel that graunted was his Boone,
And with glad herte he wente hym hom ful soone.
The thridde houre inequal, that Palamon
Bigan to Venus temple for to gon,

Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye,
And to the temple of Dyane gan hye.
Hir maydens that she thider with hir ladde,
Ful redily with hem the fyr they ladde,
Th'encens, the clothes, and the remenant al

That to the sacrifice longen shal.
The horns fulle of meeth, as was the gyse,
Ther lakked noght to doon hir sacrificise,
Smokynge the temple, ful of clothes faire.
This Emelye, with herte debonaire,

Hir body wessh with water of a welle-
But how she dice hir ryte I dar nat telle,
But it be any thing in general;
And yet it were a game to heeren al,
To hym that meneth wel it were no charge,

But it is good a man been at his large.-
Hir brighte heer was kembd, untressed al,
A coroune of a grene ook cerial
Upon hir heed was set, ful fair and meete.
Two fyres on the auter gan she beete,

And dice hir thynges as men may biholde
In Stace of Thebes, and thise bookes olde.
When kyndled was the fyr, with pitous cheere
Unto Dyane she spak as ye may heere.

"O chaste goddesse of the wodes grene,
To whom bothe hevene and erthe and see is sene,
Queene of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,
Goddesse of maydens, that myn herte hast knowe
Ful many a yeer, and woost what I desire,
As keep me fro thy vengeaunce and thyn ire,

That Attheon aboughte cruelly.
Chaste goddesse, wel wostow that I
Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,
Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.
I am, thow woost, yet of thy campaignye,

A mayde, and love huntynge and venerye,
And for to walken in the wodes wilde,
And noght to ben a wyf, and be with childe.
Noght wol I knowe the campaignye of man;
Now helpe me, lady, sith ye may and kan,

For tho thre formes that thou hast in thee.
And Palamon, that hath swich love to me,
And eek Arcite, that loveth me so soore,
This grace I preye thee, withoute moore,
As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two,
And fro me turne awey hir hertes so,
That al hir hoote love and hir desir,
And al hir bisy torment and hir fir,
Be queynt, or turned in another place.
And if so be thou wolt do me no grace,
And if my destynee be shapen so
That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,
As sende me hym that moost desireth me.
Bihoold, godesse, of clene chastitee,
The bittre teeris that on my chekes falle.
Syn thou art mayde and kepere of us alle,
My maydenhede thou kepe and wel conserve,
And whil I lyve a mayde, I wol thee serve."
The fires brenne upon the auter cleere,
Whil Emelye was thus in hir preyere;
But sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte,
For right anon oon of the fyres queynte,
And quyked agayn, and after that anon
That oother fyr was queynt and al agon;
And as it queynte, it made a whistelynge
As doon thise wete brondes in hir brennynge;
And at the brondes ende out ran anon
As it were blody dropes many oon;
For which so soore agast was Emelye
That she was wel ny mad, and gan to crye;
For she ne wiste what it signyfied.
But oonly for the feere thus hath she cried,
And weep that it was pitee for to heere.
And therwithal Dyane gan appeere,
With bowe in honde, right as an hunteresse,
And seyde, "Doghter, stynt thyn hevynesse.
Among the goddes hye it is affermed,
And by eterne word writen and confermed,
Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho
That han for thee so muchel care and wo.
But unto which of hem I may nat telle,
Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.
The fires whiche that on myn auter brenne
Shule thee declaren, er that thou go henne,
Thyn aventure of love, as in this cas."
And with that word, the arwes in the caas
Of the goddesse clateren faste and rynge,
And forth she wente, and made a vanysshynge,
For which this Emelye astoned was,
And seyde, "What amounteth this, allas!
I putte me in thy proteccioun,
Dyane, and in thy disposicioun!"
And hoom she goth anon the neste weye.
This is th'effect, ther is namoore to seye.

The nexte houre of Mars folwynge this

1510 Arcite unto the temple walked is

Of fierse Mars, to doon his sacrifise
With alle the rytes of his payen wyse.
With pitous herte and heigh devocioun

Right thus to Mars he seyde his orisoun.

1515 "O stronge god, that in the regnes colde
Of Trace honoured art and lord yholde,
And hast in every regne and every lond
Of armes al the brydel in thyn hond,
And hem fortunest as thee lyst devyse,

1520 Accepthe of me my pitous sacrifise.
If so be that my youthe may deserve,
And that my myght be worthy for to serve
Thy godhede, that I may been oon of thyne,
Thanne preye I thee to rewe upon my pyne.

1525 For thilke peyne, and thilke hoote fir,
In which thou whilom brenderest for desir
Whan that thow usedest the greet beautee
Of faire yonge fresche Venus free,
And haddest hir in armes at thy wille-

1530 Although thee ones on a tyme mysfille
When Vulcanus hadde caught thee in his las,
And foond thee liggynghe by his wyf, allas!-
For thilke sorwe that was in thyn herte
Have routhe as wel, upon my peynes smerte!

1535 I am yong and unkonnynge as thow woost,
And, as I trowe, with love offended moost
That evere was any lyves creature,
For she that dooth me al this wo endure
Ne reccheth nevere wher I synke or fleete.

1540 And wel I woot, er she me mercy heete,
I moot with strengthe wynne hir in the place.
And,.. wel I woot, withouten help or grace
Of thee, ne may my strengthe noght availle.
Thanne help me, lord, tomorwe in my bataille

1545 For thilke fyr that whilom brente thee,
As wel as thilke fyr now brenneth me!
And do that I tomorwe have victorie,
Myn be the travaille and thyn be the glorie!
Thy sovereyn temple wol I moost honouren

1550 Of any place, and alwey moost labouren
In thy plesaunce, and in thy craftes stronge,
And in thy temple I wol my baner honge,
And alle the armes of my compaignye;
And evere-mo, unto that day I dye,

1555 Eterne fir I wol biforn thee fynde.
And eek to this avow I wol me bynde;
My beerd, myn heer, that hongeth long adoun,  
That nevyr yet ne felte offensioun  
Of rasour, nor of shere, I wol thee yeve,  
And ben thy trewe servant whil I lyve.

1560  
Now lord, have routhe upon my sorwes soore;  
Yif me victorie, I aske thee namoore!"

The preyere stynt of Arcita the stronge;  
The rynges on the temple dore that honge,  
And eek the dores clatereden ful faste,  
Of which Arcita somwhat hym agaste.

1565  
The fyres brenden upon the auter brighte,  
That it gan al the temple for to lighte,  
And sweete smel the ground anon up yaf,  
And Arcita anon his hand up haf,

1570  
And moore encens into the fyjr he caste,  
With othere rytes mo, and atte laste  
The statue of Mars bigan his hauberk rynge,  
And with that soun he herde a murmurynge,

1575  
Ful lowe and dym, and seyde thus, "Victorie!"  
For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie;  
And thus with joye and hope wel to fare,  
Arcite anon unto his in is fare,

1580  
As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne.  
And right anon swich strif ther is bigonne  
For thilke grauntynge, in the hevene above  
Bitwixe Venus, the Goddesse of Love,

1585  
And Mars the stierne God armypotente,  
That Jupiter was bisy it to stente;  
Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,  
That knew so manye of aventures olde,

1590  
Foond in his olde experience an art  
That he ful soone hath plesed every part.  
As sooth is seyd, elde hath greet avantage;  
In elde is bothe wysdom and usage;

1595  
Men may the olde atrenne, and noght atrede.  
Saturne anon, to stynten strif and drede,  
Al be it that it is agayn his kynde,  
Of al this strif he gan remedie fynde.

1600  
"My deere doghter Venus," quod Saturne,  
"My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,  
Hath moore power than woot any man.  
Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan,

1605  
Myn is the prison in the derke cote,  
Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte,  
The murmure, and the cherles rebellyng,

1610  
The groynynge, and the pryvee empoysonyng.  
I do vengeance and pleyn correcchioun,  
Whil I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.
The fallynge of the toures and of the walles
Upon the mynour, or the carpenter.
I slow Sampsoun, shakynge the piler,
And myne be the maladyes colde,

1610  The derke tresons, and the castes olde;
My lookyng is the fader of pestilence.
Now weep namoore, I shal doon diligence
That Palamon, that is thyn owene knyght,
Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.

1615  Though Mars shal helpe his knyght, yet nathelees
Bitwixe yow ther moot be somtyme pees,
Al be ye noght of o compleccioun-
That causeth al day swich divisioun.
I am thyn aiel, redy at thy wille,

1620  Weep now namoore, I wol thy lust fulfille."
Now wol I stynten of the goddes above,
Of Mars and of Venus, goddesse of Love,
And telle yow, as pleyntly as I kan,
The grete effect for which that I bygan.

Explicit Tercia Pars
(Here ends the third part)
Greet was the feeste in Atthenes that day,
And eek the lusty seson of that May
Made every wight to been in such plesaunce
That al that Monday justen they and daunce,
And spenten it in Venus heigh servyse.

But by the cause that they sholde ryse
Eerly, for to seen the grete fight,
Unto hir rest wenten they at nyght.
And on the morwe, whan that day gan sprynge,
Of hors and harneys noyse and claterynge

Ther was in hostelryes al aboute.
And to the paleys rood ther many a route
Of lordes upon steedes and palfreys.
Ther maystow seen devisynge of harneys
So unkouth and so riche, and wroght so weel

Of goldsmithrye, of browdynge, and of steel;
The sheeldes brighte, testeres, and trappures,
Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;
Lordes in parementz on hir courseres,
Knyghtes of retenue and eek squieres,
Nailynge the speres, and helmes bokelynge,
Giggynge of sheeldes, with layneres lacynge.
There as nede is, they weren nothyng ydel.
The fomy steedes on the golden brydel
Gnawynge, and faste the armurers also

With fyle and hamer prikyng to and fro;
Yemen on foote and communes many oon,
With shorte staves thikke as they may goon,
Pypes, trompes, nakers, clariounes,
That in the bataille blowen blody sounes;

The paleys ful of peples up and doun,
Heere thre, ther ten, holdyng hir questioun,
Diyynynge of thise Thebane knyghtes two.
Somme seyden thus, somme seyde "it shal be so";
Somme helden with hym with the blake berd,

Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke-herd,
Somme seyde he looked gryme, and he wolde fighte,
"He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte."
Thus was the halle ful of divynynge,
Longe after that the sonne gan to sprynge.

The grete Theseus, that of his sleep awaked
With mynstralcie and noyse that was maked,
Heeld yet the chambre of his paleys riche,
Til that the Thebane knyghtes, bothe yliche
Honured, were into the paleys fet.

1670 Duc Theseus was at a wyndow set,
Arrayed, right as he were a god in trone.
The peple presseth thiderward ful soone,
Hym for to seen and doon heigh reverence.
And eek to herkne his heste and his sentence.

1675 An heraud on a scaffold made an "Oo!"
Til al the noyse of peple was ydo,
And whan he saugh the peple of noyse al stille,
Tho shewed he the myghty dukes wille.
"The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun

1680 Considered that it were destruccioun
To gentil blood, to lighten in the gyse
Of mortal bataille, now in this emprise;
Wherfore, to shapen that they shal nat dye,
He wolde his firste purpos modifye.

1685 No man therfore, up peyne of los of lyf,
No maner shot, ne polax, ne short knyf
Into the lystes sende, ne thider brynge.
Ne short swerd for to stoke, with poynt bitynge,
No man ne drawe, ne bere by his syde;

1690 Ne no man shal unto his felawe ryde
But o cours, with a sharpe ygrounde spere.
Foyne, if hym list on foote, hymself to were.
And he that is at meschief shal be take,
And noght slayn, but be broght unto the stake
That shal ben ordeyned on either syde,
But thider he shal by force, and there abyde.
And if so be the chevetayn be take
On outher syde, or elles sleen his make,
No lenger shal the turneiynge laste.

1700 God spede you! Gooth forth, and ley on faste!
With long swerd and with maces fight youre fille.
Gooth now youre wey, this is thelordes wille."
The voys of peple touchede the hevene,
So loude cride they with murie stevene,

1705 "God save swich a lord, that is so good
He wilneth no destruccioun of blood."
Up goon the trompes and the melodye,
And to the lystes rit the compagnye,
By ordinance, thurghout the citee large

1710 Hanged with clooth of gold, and nat with sarge.
Ful lik a lord this noble duc gan ryde,
This two Thebanes upon either syde,
And after rood the queene and Emelye,
And after that another compagnye,

1715 Of oon and oother, after hir degree.
And thus they passen thurghout the citee
And to the lystes come they by tyme.
It nas nat of the day yet fully pryme
Whan set was Theseus ful riche and hye,

Ypolita the queene, and Emelye,
And othere ladys in degrees aboute.
Unto the seettes preesseth al the route,
And westward thurgh the gates under Marte,
Arcite, and eek the hondred of his parte,

With baner reed is entred right anon.
And in that selve moment Palamon
Is under Venus estward in the place,
With baner whyt, and hardy chiere and face.
In al the world, to seken up and doun

So evene, withouten variacioun
Ther nere swiche compaignyes tweye;
For ther was noon so wys, that koude seye
That any hadde of oother avaughtage,
Of worthynesse ne of estaat ne age,

So evene were they chosen, for to gesse.
And in two renges faire they hem dresse,
Whan that hir names rad were everichon,
That in hir nombre gyle were ther noon.
Tho were the gates shet and cried was loude,
"Do now youre devoir, yonge knyghtes proude!"

The heraudes lefte hir prikyng up and doun;
Now ryngen trompes loude and clarioun.
Ther is namoore to seyn, but west and est
In goon the speres ful sadly in arrest,

In gooth the sharpe spore into the syde.
Ther seen men who kan juste, and who kan ryde,
Ther shyveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke;
He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.
Up spryngen speres twenty foot on highte;

Out goon the swerdes as the silver brighte.
The helmes they tohewen and toshrede,
Out brest the blood, with stierne stremes rede,
With myghty maces the bones they tobreste.
He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste;

Ther stomblen steedes stronge, and doun gooth al;
He rolleth under foot as dooth a bal,
He foyneheth on his feet with his tronchoun,
And he hym hurtleth with his hors adoun.
He thurgh the body is hurt and sithen ytake,
Maugree his heed, and broght unto the stake,
As forward was, right there he moste abyde;
Another lad is on that oother syde.
And som tyme dooth hem Theseus to reste,
Hem to refresshe, and drynken if hem leste.
Ful ofte a day han thise Thebanes two
Togydre ymet, and wroght his felawe wo.
Unhorsed hath ech oother of hem tweye,
Ther nas no tygre in the vale of Galgopheye
Whan that hir whelp is stole, whan it is lite,
So cruel on the hunte, as is Arcite
For jelous herte upon this Palamon;
Ne in Belmarye ther nys so fel leon
That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,
Ne of his praye desireth so the blood,
As Palamon to sleen his foo Arcite.
The jelous strokes on hir helmes byte,
Out renneth blood on bothe hir sydes rede.
Som tyme an ende ther is of every dede.
For er the sonne unto the reste wente,
The stronge kyng Emetreus gan hente
This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,
And made his swerd depe in his flesssh to byte.
And by the force of twenty is he take
Unyolden, and ydrawen unto the stake.
And in the rescus of this Palamoun
The stronge kyng Lygurge is born adoun,
And kyng Emetreus, for al his strengthe,
Is born out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,
So hitte him Palamoun er he were take;
But al for noght, he was broght to the stake.
His hardy herte myghte hym helpe naught,
He moste abyde, whan that he was caught,
By force, and eek by composicioun.
Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,
That moot namoore goon agayn to fighte?
And whan that Theseus hadde seyn this sighte
Unto the folk that foughten thus echon
He cryde, "Hoo! namoore, for it is doon.
I wol be trewe juge, and no par tie;
Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelie,
That by his fortune hath hir faire ywonne!"
Anon ther is a noyse of peple bigonne
For joye of this so loude and heighe withalle
It semed that the lystes sholde falle.
What kan now faire Venus doon above?
What seith she now? What dooth this queene of Love,
But wepeth so, for wantynge of hir wille,
Til that hir teeres in the lystes fille.
She seyde, "I am ashamed, doutelees."
Saturnus seyde, "Doghter, hoold thy pees,
Mars hath his wille, his knyght hath al his Boone,
And, by myn heed, thou shalt been esed soone."
The trompes with the loude mynstralci,
The heraudes that ful loude yolle and crie,
Been in hir wele for joye of daun Arcite.  
But herkneth me, and stynteth noyse a lite,
Which a myracle ther bifel anon.

This fierse Arcite hath of his helm ydon,
And on a courser for to shewe his face
He priketh endelong the large place,
Lokynge upward upon this Emelye,
And she agayn hym caste a freundlich eye,
(For wommen, as to spoken in comune,
Thei folwen alle the favour of Fortune)
And she was al his chiere, as in his herte.

Out of the ground a furie infernal sterte,
From Pluto sent, at requeste of Saturne,
For which his hors for fere gan to turne,
And leep aside and foundred as he leep.

And er that Arcite may taken keep,
He pighte hym on the pomel of his heed,
That in the place he lay as he were deed,
His brest tobrosten with his sadel-bowe.
As blak he lay as any cole or crowe,
So was the blood yronnen in his face.
Anon he was yborn out of the place,
With herte soor, to Theseus paleys.
Tho was he korven out of his harneys,
And in a bed ybrought ful faire and blyve,
For he was yet in memorie and alyve.

Duc Theseus, with al his compaignye,
Is comen hoom to Athenes his citee,
With alle blisse and greet solempnitee;
Al be it that this aventure was falle,
He nolde noght disconforten hem alle.
Men seyde eek that Arcite shal nat dye,
He shal been heeled of his maladye.
And of another thyng they weren as fayn,
That of hem alle was ther noon yslayn,
Al were they soore yhurt, and namely oon,
That with a spere was thirled his brest boon.
To othere woundes, and to broken armes,
Somme hadden salves, and somme hadden charmes,
Fermacies of herbes and eek save
They dronken, for they wolde hir lymes have.
For which this noble duc as he wel kan,
Conforteth and honoureth every man,
And made revel al the longe nyght

Unto the straunge lordes, as was right.
Ne ther was holden no disconfitynge
But as a justes or a tourneiynge,
For soothly ther was no disconfiture.
For fallyng nys nat but an aventure-
Ne to be lad by force unto the stake
Unyolden, and with twenty knyghtes take,
O persone allone, withouten mo,
And haryed forth by arme, foot, and too,
And eke his steede dryven forth with staves,
With footmen, bothe yemen and eek knaves,
It nas aretted hym no vileynye,
Ther may no man clepen it cowardye.
For which anon duc Theseus leet crye,
To stynten alle rancour and envye,
The gree, as wel of o syde as of oother,
And eyther syde ylik as ootheres brother,
And yaf hem yiftes after hir degree,
And conveyed the kynges worthily
Out of his toun a journee largely;
And hoom wente every man, the righte way.
Ther was namoore but "Fare-wel, have good day."
Of this bataille I wol namoore endite,
But spoke of Palamoun and of Arcite.
Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the soore
Encreesseth at his herte moore and moore.
The clothered blood for any lechecraft
Corrupteth, and is in his bouk ylaft,
That neither veyne-blood, ne ventusynge,
Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpynge.
The vertu expulsif, or animal,
Fro thilke vertu cleped natural
Ne may the venym voyden, ne expelle.
The pipes of his longes gonne to swelle,
And every lacerte in his brest adoun
Is shent with venym and corrupcioun.
Hym gayneth neither for to gete his lif
Vomyt upward, ne dounward laxatif;
Al is tobrosten thilke regioun,
Nature hath now no dominacioun.
And certeiny, ther Nature wol nat wirche,
Fare wel phisik! Go ber the man to chirche!
This al and som, that Arcita moot dye;
For which he sendeth after Emelye
And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.
Thanne seyde he thus, as ye shal after heere:
"Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte
To yow, my lady, that I love moost.
But I biquethe the servyce of my goost
To yow aboven every creature.


Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure,
Allas, the wo! Allas, the peynes stronge,
That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!

1915
Allas, the deeth! Allas, myn Emelye!
Allas, departynge of our compaignye!
Allas, myn hertes queene! allas, my wyf!
Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!
What is this world? What asketh men to have?

1920
Now with his love, now in his colde grave,
Allone, withouten any compaignye.
Fare-wel, my sweete foo, myn Emelye!
And softe taak me in youre armes tweye,
For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.

1925
"I have heer with my cosyn Palamon
Had strif and rancour many a day agon,
For love of yow, and for my jalousye.
And Juppiter so wys my soule gy,
To spoken of a servaunt proprely,

1930
With alle circumstances trewely,
That is to seyen, trouthe, honour, and knygthede,
Wysdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kynrede,
Fredom, and al that longeth to that art -
So Juppiter have of my soule part

1935
As in this world right now ne knowe I non
So worthy to ben loved, as Palamon
That serveth yow, and wol doon al his lyf;
And if that evere ye shul ben a wyf,
For yet nat Palamon, the gentil man."

1940
And with that word his speche faille gan,
And from his herte up to his brest was come
The coold of deeth, that hadde hym overcome.
And yet moreover in hise armes two
The vital strengthe is lost and al ago.

1945
Oonly the intellect, withouten moore,
That dwelled in his herte syk and soore
Gan faillen, when the herte felte deeth.
Dusked hise eyen two, and failled breeth,
But on his lady yet caste he his eye.

1950
His laste word was "Mercy, Emelye!"
His spirit chaunged hous, and wente ther
As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher,
Therfore I stynte; I nam no divinistre;
Of soules fynde I nat in this registre,

1955
Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle
Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.
Arcite is coold, ther Mars his soule gy!
Now wol I spoken forthe of Emelye.

1960
Shrighte Emelye, and howleth Palamon,
And Theseus his suster took anon
Swownynge, and baar hir fro the corps away.
What helpeth it to tarien forth the day
To telled how she weep bothe eve and morwe?
For in swich cas wommen have swich sorwe

Whan that hir housbond is from hem ago,
That for the moore part they sorwen so,
Or ellis fallen in swich maladye,
That at the laste certeinly they dye.

Infinite been the sorwes and the teeres
Of olde folk, and eek of tendre yeeres
In al the toun, for deeth of this Theban.
For hym ther wepeth bothe child and man;
So greet a wepyng was ther noon, certayn,
Whan Ector was ybrught al fressh yslayn

To Troye. Allas, the pitee that was ther,
Cracchynge of chekes, rentynge eek of heer;
"Why woldestow be deed," thise wommen crye,
"And haddest gold ynoogh, and Emelye?"

No man myghte gladen Theseus,
Savynge his olde fader, Egeus,
That knew this worldes transmutacioun,
As he hadde seyn it chaunge bothe up and doun,
Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse,
And shewed hem ensamples and liknesse.

"Right as ther dyed nevere man," quod he,
"That he ne lyvede in erthe in som degree,
Right so ther lyvede never man," he seyde,
"In al this world that somtyme he ne deyde.
This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,

And we been pilgrimage passynge to and fro.
Deeth is an ende of every worldes soore."
And over al this yet seyde he muchel moore,
To this effect ful wisely to enhorte
The peple, that they sholde hem reconforte.

Duc Theseus, with al his bisy cure,
Caste now, wher that the sepulture
Of goode Arcite may best ymaked be,
And eek most honourable in his degree.
And at the laste he took conclusioun

That ther as first Arcite and Palamoun
Hadden for love the bataille hem bitwene,
That in that selve grove swoote and grene
Ther as he hadde hise amorouse desires,
His compleynte, and for love hise hoote fires,

He wolde make a fyr, in which the office
Funeral he myghte al accomplice.
And leet comande anon to hakke and hewe
The okes olde, and leye hem on a rewe
In colpons, wel arrayed for to brenne.
2010 His officers with swifte feet they renne
And ryden anon at his comandement;
And after this, Theseus hath ysent
After a beere, and it al over-spradde
With clooth of gold, the richeste that he hadde.

2015 And of the same suyte he cladde Arcite,
Upon his hondes hadde he gloves white,
Eek on his heed a coroune of laurer grene,
And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.
He leyde hym bare the visage on the beere,

2020 Therwith he weep that pitee was to heere.
And for the peple sholde seen hym alle,
Whan it was day, he broghte hym to the halle,
That roreth of the cryng and the soun.

2025 Tho cam this woful Theban, Palamoun,
With flotery berd and ruggy asshy heeres,
In clothes blake, ydropped al with teeres,
And, passynge othere of wepynge, Emelye,
The rewefulleste of al the compaignye.

2030 The moore noble and riche in his degree,
Duc Theseus leet forth thre steedes brynge
That trapped were in steel al gliterynge,
And covered with the armes of daun Arcite.
Upon thise steedes that werent grete and white

2035 Ther sitten folk, of whiche oon baar his sheeld,
Another his spere up in his hondes heeld,
The thridde baar with hym his bowe Turkeys,
(Of brend gold was the caas, and eek the harneys;)
And riden forth a paas, with sorweful cheere,

2040 Toward the grove, as ye shul after heere.
The nobleste of the Grekes that ther were
Upon hir shuldres caryeden the beere,
With slakke paas, and eyen rede and wete,
Thurghout the citee by the maister strete,

2045 That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye
Right of the same is the strete ywrye.
Upon the right hond wente olde Egeus,
And on that oother syde duc Theseus,
With vessel in hir hand of gold ful fyn,

2050 Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn.
Eek Palamon, with ful greet compaignye,
And after that cam woful Emelye,
With fyr in honde, as was that tyme the gyse,
To do the office of funeral servyse.

2055 Heigh labour, and ful greet apparaillynge,
Was at the service and the fyr-makynge,
That with his grene top the heven raughte,
And twenty fadme of brede the armes straughte;
This is to seyn, the bowes weren so brode.

Of stree first ther was leyd ful many a lode,
But how the fyr was maked upon highte,
Ne eek the names that the trees highte,
As, ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popeler,
Wylugh, elm, plane, assh, box, chasteyn, lynde, laurer,
Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippeltree -
How they weren fild shal nat be toold for me,
Ne how the goddes runnen up and doun
Disherited of hir habitacioun,
In whiche they woneden in reste and pees,

Nymphes, Fawnes, and Amadrides;
Ne how the beestes and the briddes alle
Fledden for fere, whan the wode was falle;
Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
That was nat wont to seen the sonne bright;

Ne how the fyr was couched first with stree,
And thanne with drye stokkes cloven a thre,
And thanne with grene wode and spicerye,
And thanne with clooth of gold and with perrye,
And gerlandes hangyng with ful many a flour,
The mirre, th'encens, with al so greet odour;
Ne how Arcite lay among al this,
Ne what richesse aboute his body is,
Ne how that Emelye, as was the gyse,
Putte in the fyr of funeral servyse;

Ne how she swowned whan men made the fyr,
Ne what she spak, ne what was hir desir;
Ne what jeweles men in the fyre caste,
Whan that the fyr was greet and brente faste;
Ne how somme caste hir sheeld, and somme hir spere,

And of hire vestimentz whiche that they were,
And coppes fulle of wyn, and milk, and blood,
Into the fyr, that brente as it were wood,
Ne how the Grekes, with an huge route,
Thries riden al the fyr aboute,

Upon the left hand with a loud shoutynges,
And thries with hir speres claterynges,
And thries how the ladyes gonne crye,
And how that lad was homward Emelye;
Ne how Arcite is brent to asshen colde,
Ne how that lyche-wake was yholde
Al thilke nyght, ne how the Grekes pleye
The wake-pleyes ne kepe I nat to seye,
Who wrastleth best naked, with oille enoynyt,
Ne who that baar hym best in no disjoynt;

I wol nat tellen eek, how that they goon
Hoom til Atthenes, whan the pley is doon;
But shortly to the point thanne wol I wende,
And maken of my longe tale an ende.
   By processe, and by lengthe of certeyn yeres,

2110 Al stynted is the moornynge and the teres
   Of Grekes, by oon general assent.
   Thanne semed me ther was a parlement
   At Atthenes, upon certein pointz and caas,
   Among the whiche pointz yspoken was

2115 To have with certein contrees alliaunce,
   And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce,
   For which this noble Theseus anon
   Leet senden after gentil Palamon,
   Unwist of hym what was the cause and why.

2120 But in hise blake clothes soruefullly
   He cam at his comandement in hye;
   Tho sente Theseus for Emelye.
   Whan they were set, and hust was al the place,
   And Theseus abiden hadde a space

2125 Er any word cam fram his wise brest,
   Hise eyen sette he ther as was his lest,
   And with a sad visage he siked stille,
   And after that right thus he seyde his wille:
   "The Firste Moevere of the cause above

2130 Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
   Greet was th’effect, and heigh was his entente;
   Wel wiste he why, and what therof he mente,
   For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
   The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond,

2135 In certeyn boundes that they may nat flee.
   That same prince and that same moevere," quod he,
   "Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun
   Certeyne dayes and duracioun
   To al that is engendred in this place,

2140 Over the whiche day they may nat pace;
   Al move they yet tho dayes wel abregge,
   Ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee t’allegge,
   For it is preeved by experience,
   But that me list declaren my sentence.

2145 Thanne may men by this ordre wel discerne
   That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne.
   Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
   That every part deryveth from his hool;
   For nature hath nat taken his bigynnnyng

2150 Of no partie nor cantel of a thyng,
   But of a thyng that parfit is and stable,
   Descendynge so til it be corrumpable;
   And therfore, of his wise purveiaunce,
   He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce,

2155 That species of thynges and progressiouns
   Shullen enduren by successiouns,
And nat eterne, withouten any lye.
This maystow understonde and seen at ye.
  "Loo the ook, that hath so long a norisshynge
2160 From tyme that it first bigynneth sprynge,
And hath so long a lif, as we may see,
Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.
  "Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon
Underoure feet, on which we trede and goon,
2165 Yet wasteth it, as it lyth by the weye.
The brode ryver somtyme wexeth dreye,
The grete toures se we wane and wende,
Thanne may ye se that al this thyng hath ende.
  "Of man and womman seen we wel also,
2170 That nedeth, in oon of thise termes two -
This is to seyn, in youthe or elles age -
He moot be deed, the kyng as shal a page.
Som in his bed, som in the depe see,
Som in the large feeld, as men may se;
2175 Ther helpeth noght, al goth that ilke weye,
Thanne may I seyn that al this thyng moot deye.
  "What maketh this, but Juppiter the kyng,
That is prince and cause of alle thyng
Convertynge al unto his propre welle
2180 From which it is deryved, sooth to telle,
And heer-agaysn no creature on lyve
Of no degree availleth for to stryve.
  "Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me,
To maken vertu of necessitee,
2185 And take it weel, that we may nat eschue;
And namely, that to us alle is due.
And who so gruccheth ought, he dooth folye,
And rebel is to hym that al may gye.
And certeinly, a man hath moost honour
2190 To dyen in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is siker of his goode name,
Thanne hath he doon his freend ne hym no shame.
And gladder oghte his freend been of his deeth,
Whan with honour up yolden in his breeth,
2195 Than whan his name apalled is for age;
For al forgeten is his vassellage.
Thanne is it best as for a worthy fame,
To dyen whan that he is best of name.
  "The contrarie of al this is wilfulnesse:
2200 Why grucchen we, why have we hevynesse,
That goode Arcite, of chivalrie flour,
Departed is with duetee and honour
Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?
Why grucchen heere his cosyn and his wyf
2205 Of his welfare, that loved hem so weel?
Kan he hem thank? Nay, God woot never a deel,
That bothe his soule and eek hemself offende,
And yet they moue hir lustes nat amende.

"What may I concluden of this longe serye,
But after wo I rede us to be merye,
And thanken Juppiter of al his grace?
And er that we departen from this place
I rede that we make, of sorwes two,
O parfit joye lastyng everemo.

And looketh now, wher moost sorwe is her inne,
Ther wol we first amenden and bigynne.
"Suster," quod he, "this is my fulle assent,
With all th'avys heere of my parlement,
That gentil Palamon thyne owene knyght,
That serveth yow with wille, herte, and myght,
And evere hath doon, syn that ye first hym kneue,
That ye shul of your grace upon hym rewe,
And taken hym for housbonde and for lord.
Lene me youre hond, for this is oure accord.

Lat se now of youre wommanly pitee;
He is a kynges brother sone, pardee,
And though he were a poure bachelcer,
Syn he hath served yow so many a yeer,
And had for yow so greet adversitee,
It moste been considered, leeveth me,
For gentil mercy oghte to passen right."

Thanne seyde he thus to Palamon the knyght:
"I trowe ther nedeth litel sermonyng
To make yow assente to this thyng.
Com neer, and taak youre lady by the hond."
Bitwixen hem was maad anon the bond
That highte matrimoigne or mariage,
By al the conseil and the baronage.
And thus with alle blisse and melodye
Hath Palamon ywedded Emelye;
And God, that al this wyde world hath wroght,
Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght,
For now is Palamon in alle wele,
Lyvyng in blisse, in richesse, and in heele,
And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,
And he hir serveth al so gentilly,
That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene,
Of jalousie, or any oother teene.
Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye,
And God save al this faire compaignye! Amen.

Heere is ended the Knyghtes Tale.