

## John Skelton (1460?–1529)

Although there is little reliable information about Skelton's early life, he appears to have studied at both Cambridge and Oxford, where he was installed as poet laureate, apparently by Henry VII himself in 1488. The wonderful, dramatic hymn "Woefully Arrayed," addressed as though by Christ to humanity, was most likely written during this period. In 1498 Skelton took holy orders and soon after became the tutor of Prince Henry, who would become king Henry VIII. When Erasmus visited England in 1499, he paid Skelton the lavish compliment of claiming that what Homer was to Greece and Virgil to Rome, Skelton was to Britain. Although this estimate may be extravagant, Skelton was doubtless the most important English poet of the generation before Wyatt. In recognition of his royal service, he was made rector of Diss, near the border of Suffolk and Norfolk. His tenure there was, to say the least, controversial, in that his parishioners thought him more fit for the stage than the pulpit. According to a legend preserved in the jest book entitled *Merie Tales* (c.1567), in response to their complaint to the Bishop of Norwich that he kept a wench who was the mother of his child, Skelton delivered a sermon proclaiming his own humanity, during which he proudly displayed his naked infant son from the pulpit. During his rectorship he also wrote two comic Latin epitaphs on members of his congregation: "Epitaph for Adam Udersall" and "A Devout Trental for Old John Clarke," which anticipate the satirical vein of his later poetry.

The remarkable poem "Philip Sparrow" is a fine example of Skelton's determination to experiment with new verse forms (now called Skeltonics) at a time when the English language was changing rapidly. Like the best of his writing, this poem is a superb accommodation between the traditional and the new. The poem celebrates a mock mass – much as children sometimes elaborately bury their dead pets – for Jane Scrope's sparrow, killed by a Carrow Abbey cat. The poem is in two parts: the first is the girl's lament, in her own voice, for Philip; and the second is the poet's commendation of Jane's beauty. Fifteen years after composing the poem, Skelton wrote an additional section, replying to those, possibly including Jane's gentrified family, who raised moral objections about part two. Taken together, parts one and two have been rightly called a comparative study of innocence and experience (Fish, p. 99). While part two is an intricately sensual application of the art of rhetoric, which makes explicit use of rhetorical ter-

minology from such handbooks as the anonymous *Ad herennium*, its learning is undercut in part one by the girl's polymathic knowledge, which weaves together bird lore, musicology, the language of the Bible and the Office for the Dead, English literary history, and classical learning. The meshing of pagan mythology and Christianity is a hallmark of Renaissance culture (see Seznec). Because of its complex treatment of female sexuality, from the fictionalized points of view of Jane and the poet himself, the poem and the history of its reception have recently received sustained attention from feminist critics (see Schibanoff and Daileader).

With Henry VIII's accession to the throne in 1509, Skelton celebrated the occasion in "A Laud and Praise Made for Our Sovereign Lord and King." Most of Skelton's political poems, which include "Speak, Parrot" and "Colin Clout," are biting satirical, his attack on corruption in Church and State culminating (dangerously) in a magnificent assault on Cardinal Wolsey in "Why come ye not to Court?" There is, however, another voice in his political poems, which can be heard early in his lament for the death of the Earl of Northumberland and later in his celebration of Henry VIII. In such poems as these, Skelton gathers together some important pieces of the ideological mythology of the Tudors, where the political and religious orders are inextricably linked, where the Tudor rose – "both White and Red / In one Rose now doth grow" – puts symbolically to rest the long dispute between Lancastrians and Yorkists, and where there is a Renaissance hope that the great figures of the classical age – Alexander, Adrastus, Astraea, Priam, Mars, and even Christ himself – will be re-embodied in Henry's reign. In his last major poem – "A Replication Against Certain Young Scholars Abjured of Late" (1528) – Skelton put aside his old conflicts with Wolsey to join him in combatting what both men thought to be the heresy of Lutheranism, which was beginning to take root at Cambridge in the mid-1520s (see Waller).

### READING

Stanley Fish, *John Skelton's Poetry*.

Maurice Pollet, *John Skelton: Poet of Tudor England*, trans. John Warington.

Greg Waller, *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s*.

M. P.

## WOEFULLY ARRAYED

Woefully arrayed,  
 My blood, man,  
 For thee ran,  
 It may not be nay'd:  
 My body blo and wan,  
 Woefully arrayed.

Behold me, I pray thee, with all thy whole reason,  
 And be not so hard-hearted, and for this encheason, *occasion*  
 Sith I for thy soul sake was slain in good season,  
 Beguiled and betrayed by Judas' false treason:  
 10           Unkindly entreated,  
               With sharp cord sore freted,  
               The Jewes me threted:  
 They mowed, they grinned, they scorned me,  
 Condemned to death, as thou mayest see,  
               Woefully arrayed.

Thus naked am I nailed, O man, for thy sake!  
 I love thee, then love me; why sleepest thou? awake!  
 Remember my tender heart-root for thee brake,  
 20           With paines my veines constrained to crake:  
               Thus tugged to and fro,  
               Thus wrapped all in woe,  
               Whereas never man was so,  
 Entreated thus in most cruel wise,  
 Was like a lamb offered in sacrifice,  
               Woefully arrayed.

Of sharp thorn I have worn a crown on my head,  
 So pained, so strained, so rueful, so red,  
 Thus bobbed, thus robbed, thus for thy love dead,  
 30           Unfeigned I deigned my blood for to shed:  
               My feet and handes sore  
               The sturdy nailes bore:  
               What might I suffer more  
 Than I have done, O man, for thee?  
 Come when thou list, welcome to me,  
               Woefully arrayed.

Of record thy good Lord I have been and shall be:  
 I am thine, thou art mine, my brother I call thee.  
 Thee love I entirely—see what is befall'n me!  
 40           Sore beating, sore threating, to make thee, man, all free: *threatering*  
               Why art thou unkind?  
               Why hast not me in mind?  
               Come yet and thou shalt find  
 Mine endless mercy and grace—  
 See how a spear my heart did race,  
               Woefully arrayed.

Dear brother, no other thing I of thee desire  
 But give me thine heart free to reward mine hire:  
 I wrought thee, I bought thee from eternal fire:  
 50           I pray thee array thee toward my high empire  
               Above the orient,  
               Whereof I am regent,  
               Lord God omnipotent,

With me to reign in endless wealth:  
Remember, man, thy soules health.

60                   Woefully arrayed,  
                      My blood, man,  
                      For thee ran,  
                      It may not be nay'd:  
                      My body blo and wan,  
                      Woefully arrayed.

### PHILIP SPARROW [PART I]

*Pla ce bo!*  
                      Who is there, who?  
                      *Di le xi!*<sup>1</sup>  
                      Dame Margery.  
                      *Fa, re, my, my.*  
                      Wherefore and why, why?  
                      For the soul of Philip Sparrow  
                      That was late slain at Carrow,<sup>2</sup>  
                      Among the Nunes Black.  
10                   For that sweet soules sake,  
                      And for all sparrows' souls  
                      Set in our bead-rolls,<sup>3</sup>  
                      *Pater noster qui,*<sup>4</sup>  
                      With an *Ave Mari,*<sup>5</sup>  
                      And with the corner of a Creed,  
                      The more shall be your meed.

                      When I remember again  
                      How my Philip was slain,  
                      Never half the pain  
20                   Was between you twain,  
                      Pyramus and Thisbe,<sup>6</sup>  
                      As then befell to me.  
                      I wept and I wailed,  
                      The teares down hailed,  
                      But nothing it availed  
                      To call Philip again,  
                      Whom Gib, our cat, hath slain.

                      Gib, I say, our cat  
                      Worowed her on that                   *bit*  
                      Which I loved best.  
30                   It cannot be exprest  
                      My sorrowful heaviness,  
                      But all without redress!  
                      For within that stound,                   *moment*  
                      Half slumbering, in a sound  
                      I fell downe to the ground.

                      Unneth I cast mine eyes                   *barely*  
                      Toward the cloudy skies.  
                      But when I did behold

#### PHILIP SPARROW [PART I]

1 From the opening of the antiphon and the Psalm of the Vespers for the Office of the Dead. The syllabic divisions suggest plainsong.

2 A nunnery outside Norwich.

3 Lists of those for whom prayers were to be offered.

4 "Our Father which . . ."

5 "Hail Mary."

6 Tragic lovers in a tale by Ovid.

40

My sparrow dead and cold,  
 No creature but that wold  
 Have rued upon me,  
 To behold and see  
 What heaviness did me pang:  
 Wherewith my hands I wrang,  
 That my sinews cracked,  
 As though I had been racked,  
 So pained and so strained  
 That no life wellnigh remained.

*pitied*

50

I sighed and I sobbed,  
 For that I was robbed  
 Of my sparrow's life.  
 O maiden, widow, and wife,  
 Of what estate ye be,  
 Of high or low degree,  
 Great sorrow then ye might see,  
 And learn to weep at me!  
 Such paines did me frete  
 That mine heart did bear,  
 My visage pale and dead,  
 Wan, and blue as lead:  
 The pangs of hateful death  
 Wellnigh had stopped my breath.

60

*Heu, heu, me,*

That I am woe for thee!  
*Ad Dominum, cum tribularer, clamavi.*<sup>7</sup>

70

Of God nothing else crave I  
 But Philip's soul to keep  
 From the marees deep  
 Of Acheronte's<sup>8</sup> well,  
 That is a flood of hell;  
 And from the great Pluto,<sup>9</sup>  
 The prince of endless woe;  
 And from foul Alecto,<sup>10</sup>  
 With visage black and blo;  
 And from Medusa,<sup>11</sup> that mare,  
 That like a fiend doth stare;  
 And from Megaera's<sup>12</sup> adders  
 For ruffling of Philip's feathers,  
 And from her fiery sparklings  
 For burning of his wings;  
 And from the smokes sour  
 Of Proserpina's<sup>13</sup> bower;  
 And from the denes dark  
 Where Cerberus<sup>14</sup> doth bark,  
 Whom Theseus<sup>15</sup> did affray,  
 Whom Hercules<sup>16</sup> did outray,

*marsh**bag*

80

As famous poetes say;  
 From that hell-hound

*vanquish*

7 "Woe, woe is me . . . In my distress, I cried unto the Lord" (second antiphon and Psalm of the Vespers).

8 Acheron, one of the rivers of the Underworld in Greek myth.

9 God of the Underworld, whose other name is Dis. There is a pun running through this section on Diss, where Skelton was rector. In Roman literature Dis was a symbol of death.

10 One of the Furies, or avenging spirits.

11 A female monster whose hideous head turned to stone anyone who looked at it.

12 One of the Furies.

13 Goddess of the Underworld.

14 A monstrous dog who guarded the entrance to the Underworld.

15 A mythical king of Athens.

16 A mythical Greek hero.

90 That lieth in chaines bound,  
 With ghastly heades three;  
 To Jupiter pray we  
 That Philip preserved may be!  
 Amen, say ye with me!

*Do mi nus,*

Help now, sweet Jesus!  
*Levavi oculos meos in montes.*<sup>17</sup>  
 Would God I had Zenophontes,<sup>18</sup>  
 Or Socrates the wise,  
 100 To shew me their device  
 Moderately to take  
 This sorrow that I make  
 For Philip Sparrow's sake!  
 So fervently I shake,  
 I feel my body quake;  
 So urgently I am brought  
 Into careful thought.  
 Like Andromach, Hector's<sup>19</sup> wife,  
 Was weary of her life,  
 110 When she had lost her joy,  
 Noble Hector of Troy;  
 In like manner also  
 Increaseth my deadly woe,  
 For my sparrow is go.

*Andromache*

It was so pretty a fool,  
 It would sit on a stool,  
 And learned after my school  
 For to keep his cut,  
 120 With 'Philip, keep your cut!'

*place*

It had a velvet cap,  
 And would sit upon my lap,  
 And seek after small wormes,  
 And sometime white bread-crumbes;  
 And many times and oft  
 Between my breastes soft  
 It woulde lie and rest;  
 It was proper and prest.

Sometime he would gasp  
 When he saw a wasp;  
 130 A fly or a gnat,  
 He would fly at that;  
 And prettily he would pant  
 When he saw an ant.  
 Lord, how he would pry  
 After the butterfly!  
 Lord, how he would hop  
 After the gressop!  
 And when I said, 'Phip, Phip!'  
 Then he would leap and skip,

*grasshopper*

17 "Lord . . . I lifted up my eyes unto the hills" (third antiphon and Psalm of the Vespers).

18 Xenophon, disciple of Socrates.

19 Eldest son of King Priam and bravest of the Trojans; killed by Achilles.

140

And take me by the lip.  
Alas, it will me slo  
That Philip is gone me fro!

*Si in i qui ta tes . . .*  
Alas, I was evil at ease!  
*De pro fun dis cla ma vi*<sup>20</sup>  
When I saw my sparrow die!

150

Now, after my dome,  
Dame Sulpicia<sup>21</sup> at Rome,  
Whose name registered was  
For ever in tables of brass,  
Because that she did pass  
In poesy to indite  
And eloquently to write,  
Though she would pretend  
My sparrow to commend,  
I trow she could not amend  
Reporting the virtues all  
Of my sparrow royal.

*judgment*

160

For it would come and go,  
And fly so to and fro;  
And on me it would leap  
When I was asleep,  
And his feathers shake,  
Wherewith he would make  
Me often for to wake,  
And for to take him in  
Upon my naked skin.  
God wot, we thought no sin:  
What though he crept so low?

170

It was no hurt, I trow  
He did nothing, perde,  
But sit upon my knee.  
Philip, though he were nice,  
In him it was no vice.  
Philip had leave to go  
To pick my little toe,  
Philip might be bold  
And do what he wold:  
Philip would seek and take  
All the fleas black  
That he could there espy  
With his wanton eye.

*truly*

180

*O pe ra:*<sup>22</sup>  
La, sol, fa, fa,  
*Confitebor tibi, Domine, in toto corde meo.*<sup>23</sup>  
Alas, I would ride and go  
A thousand mile of ground!  
If any such might be found  
It were worth an hundred pound

20 "If iniquities . . . Out of the depths have I cried" (fourth antiphon and Psalm of the Vespers).

21 Niece of Messala and author of six elegies.

22 "The works [of the Lord are great]" (Psalm 90:2, Vulgate).

23 "I will confess to thee, Lord, with my whole heart" (Psalm 90:1, Vulgate).

190 Of King Croesus<sup>24</sup> gold,  
 Or of Attalus the old,  
 The rich prince of Pergame,<sup>25</sup>  
 Whoso list the story to see.  
 Cadmus,<sup>26</sup> that his sister sought,  
 An he should be bought  
 For gold and fee,  
 He should over the sea  
 To weet if he could bring  
 Any of the offspring,  
 Or any of the blood.  
 200 But whoso understood  
 Of Medea's<sup>27</sup> art,  
 I would I had a part  
 Of her crafty magic!  
 My sparrow then should be quick  
 With a charm or twain,  
 And play with me again.  
 But all this is in vain  
 Thus for to complain.

210 I took my sampler once  
 Of purpose, for the nonce,  
 To sew with stitches of silk  
 My sparrow white as milk,  
 That by representation  
 Of his image and fashion  
 To me it might import  
 Some pleasure and comfort,  
 For my solace and sport.  
 But when I was sewing his beak,  
 220 Methought my sparrow did speak,  
 And opened his pretty bill,  
 Saying, 'Maid, ye are in will  
 Again me for to kill,  
 Ye prick me in the head!  
 With that my needle waxed red,  
 Methought, of Philip's blood;  
 Mine hair right upstood,  
 I was in such a fray  
 My speech was taken away.  
 230 I cast down that there was,  
 And said, 'Alas, alas,  
 How cometh this to pass?'  
 My fingers, dead and cold,  
 Could not my sampler hold:  
 My needle and thread  
 I threw away for dread.  
 The best now that I may  
 Is for his soul to pray:  
 A *porta inferi* . . .<sup>28</sup>

24 King of Lydia, known for his great wealth.

25 Pergamum, city in Asia Minor, which reached the height of its splendor under the Attalids.

26 Legendary founder of Thebes, who searched for his sister Europa, who had been carried off by Zeus in the form of a bull.

27 Her magic helped Jason take the golden fleece.

28 "From the gate of hell" (antiphon).

240

Good Lord, have mercy  
 Upon my sparrow's soul,  
 Written in my bead-roll!

*Au di vi vo cem,*<sup>29</sup>

Japhet, Ham, and Shem,<sup>30</sup>  
*Ma gni fi cat,*<sup>31</sup>

250

Shew me the right path  
 To the hills of Armony,<sup>32</sup>  
 Whereon the boards yet lie  
 Of your father's boat,  
 That was sometime afloat,  
 And now they lie and rot;  
 Let some poetes write  
 Deucalion's<sup>33</sup> flood it hight.

260

But as verily as ye be  
 The natural sonnes three  
 Of Noe the patriarch,  
 That made that great ark,  
 Wherein he had apes and owls,  
 Beasts, birds, and fowls,  
 That if ye can find  
 Any of my sparrow's kind  
 (God send the soul good rest!)  
 I would have yet a nest  
 As pretty and as prest  
 As my sparrow was.  
 But my sparrow did pass  
 All sparrows of the wood  
 That were since Noe's flood,  
 Was never none so good.  
 King Philip of Macedony<sup>34</sup>  
 Had no such Philip as I,  
 No, no, sir, hardely!

*Noah*

270

That vengeance I ask and cry,  
 By way of exclamation,  
 On all the whole nation  
 Of cattles wild and tame:  
 God send them sorrow and shame!  
 That cat specially  
 That slew so cruelly  
 My little pretty sparrow  
 That I brought up at Carrow.

280

O cat of carlish kind,  
 The fiend was in thy mind  
 When thou my bird untwined!  
 I would thou hadst been blind!  
 The leopards savage,  
 The lions in their rage  
 Might catch thee in their paws,

29 "I heard a voice" (antiphon, Rev. 14:12).

30 Sons of Noah.

31 "Magnify," as in "My soul magnifies the Lord" (Luke 1:46).

32 Armenius, birthplace of Armenius, who was one of the Argonauts.  
 Noah's ark came to rest at Ararat in the Armenian mountains.

33 The equivalent of Noah in Greek mythology.

34 Philip II, King of Macedon.

290 And gnaw thee in their jaws!  
 The serpents of Libany<sup>35</sup>  
 Might sting thee venomously!  
 The dragons with their tongues  
 Might poison thy liver and lungs!  
 The manticors of the mountains  
 Might feed them on thy brains!

Melanchaetes, that hound  
 That plucked Actacon to the ground,<sup>36</sup>  
 Gave him his mortal wound,  
 Changed to a deer,  
 300 The story doth appear,  
 Was changed to an hart:  
 So thou, foul cat that thou art,  
 The selfsame hound  
 Might thee confound,  
 That his own lorde bote,  
 Might bite asunder thy throat!

Of Ind the greedy grypes  
 Might tear out all thy tripes!  
 Of Arcady the bears  
 310 Might pluck away thine ears!  
 The wild wolf Lycaon<sup>37</sup>  
 Bite asunder thy backbone!  
 Of Etna<sup>38</sup> the burning hill,  
 That day and night burneth still,  
 Set in thy tail a blaze  
 That all the world may gaze  
 And wonder upon thee,  
 From Ocean the great sea  
 Unto the Isles of Orcady,<sup>39</sup>  
 320 From Tilbury Ferry  
 To the plain of Salisbury!  
 So traitorously my bird to kill  
 That never ought thee evil will!

*India/griffins*

Was never bird in cage  
 More gentle of courage  
 In doing his homage  
 Unto his sovereign.  
 Alas, I say again,  
 Death hath departed us twain!  
 330 The false cat hath thee slain:  
 Farewell, Philip, adew!  
 Our Lord, thy soul rescue!  
 Farewell, without restore,  
 Farewell, for evermore!

An it were a Jew,  
 It would make one rue,  
 To see my sorrow new.  
 These villainous false cats  
 Were made for mice and rats,

35 Libya, or Africa as a whole.

36 While hunting, Actaeon was changed by Artemis into a stag and then was torn to pieces by his own hounds.

37 According to Ovid, Lycaon of Arcadia was transformed into a wolf.

38 Etna, Europe's highest active volcano, located in Sicily.

39 Orkney Islands.

340

And not for birdes smale.  
 Alas, my face waxeth pale,  
 Telling this piteous tale,  
 How my bird so fair,  
 That was wont to repair,  
 And go in at my spare,<sup>40</sup>  
 And creep in at my gore  
 Of my gown before,  
 Flickering with his wings!

350

Alas, my heart it stings,  
 Remembering pretty things!  
 Alas, mine heart it sleth,  
 My Philip's doleful death!  
 When I remember it,  
 How prettily it would sit,  
 Many times and oft,  
 Upon my finger aloft!  
 I played with him tittle-tattle,  
 And fed him with my spittle,  
 With his bill between my lips,

360

It was my pretty Phips!  
 Many a pretty kiss  
 Had I of his sweet muss!  
 And now the cause is thus,  
 That he is slain me fro,  
 To my great pain and woe.

370

Of fortune this the chance  
 Standeth on variance:  
 Oft time after pleasance,  
 Trouble and grievance.  
 No man can be sure  
 Alway to have pleasure:  
 As well perceive ye may  
 How my disport and play  
 From me was taken away  
 By Gib, our cat savage,  
 That in a furious rage  
 Caught Philip by the head  
 And slew him there stark dead!

380

*Kyrie, eleison,*  
*Christe, eleison,*  
*Kyrie, eleison!*<sup>41</sup>  
 For Philip Sparrow's soul,  
 Set in our bead-roll,  
 Let us now whisper  
 A *Paternoster*.<sup>42</sup>

*Lauda, anima mea, Dominum!*<sup>43</sup>  
 To weep with me look that ye come  
 All manner of birdes in your kind;  
 See none be left behind.

40 An opening or slit in a gown.

41 Lord, have mercy,  
 Christ, have mercy,  
 Lord, have mercy.

42 Our Father.

43 "Praise the Lord, O my soul!" (Psalm 145:1, Vulgate). Skelton puns on the word "anima" (soul) here.

390 To mourning looke that ye fall  
 With dolorous songes funerall,  
 Some to sing, and some to say,  
 Some to weep, and some to pray,  
 Every birde in his lay.  
 The goldfinch, the wagtail;  
 The jangling jay to rail,  
 The flecked pie to chatter *magpie*  
 Of this dolorous matter;  
 And robin redbreast,  
 400 He shall be the priest  
 The requiem mass to sing,  
 Softly warbeling,  
 With help of the reed sparrow,  
 And the chattering swallow,  
 This hearse for to hallow;  
 The lark with his long toe;  
 The spink, and the martinet also; *chaffinch/martin*  
 The shoveller with his broad beak; *spoonbill*  
 The dotterel, that foolish peke, *plover/dolt*  
 410 And also the mad coot,  
 With balde face to toot; *pry*  
 The fieldfare and the snite; *snipe*  
 The crow and the kite;  
 The raven, called Rolfe,  
 His plain-song to sol-fa;  
 The partridge, the quail;  
 The plover with us to wail;  
 The woodhack, that singeth 'chur'  
 Hoarsely, as he had the mur; *woodpecker*  
 420 The lusty chanting nightingale; *catarrh*  
 The popinjay to tell her tale,  
 That toteth oft in a glass, *looks*  
 Shall read the Gospel at mass;  
 The mavis with her whistle *song-thrush*  
 Shall read there the Epistle.  
 But with a large and a long  
 To keep just plain-song,  
 Our chanters shall be the cuckoo,  
 430 The culver, the stockdowe, *dove/wild pigeon*  
 With 'peewit' the lapwing,  
 The Versicles shall sing.  
  
 The bittern with his bumpe, *loud call*  
 The crane with his trumpe,  
 The swan of Maeander,  
 The goose and the gander,  
 The duck and the drake,  
 Shall watch at this wake;  
 The peacock so proud,  
 Because his voice is loud,  
 440 And hath a glorious tail,  
 He shall sing the Grail; *Gradual*  
 The owl, that is so foul,  
 Must help us to howl;  
 The heron so gaunt,  
 And the cormorant,  
 With the pheasant,

And the gagging gant, *gannet*  
 And the churlish chough;  
 The knot and the ruff;  
 450 The barnacle, the buzzard, *wild goose*  
 With the wild mallard;  
 The dividop to sleep; *dabchick*  
 The water-hen to weep;  
 The puffin and the teal  
 Money they shall deal  
 To poore folk at large,  
 That shall be their charge;  
 The seamew and the titmouse; *gull*  
 The woodcock with the longe nose;  
 460 The throstle with her warbling; *song-thrush*  
 The starling with her brabbling;  
 The rook, with the osprey  
 That putteth fishes to a fray;  
 And the dainty curlew,  
 With the turtle most true.

At this *Placebo*  
 We may not well forgo  
 The countering of the coe; *counterpoint/jackdaw*  
 The stork also,  
 470 That maketh his nest  
 In chimneys to rest;  
 Within those walls  
 No broken galls  
 May there abide  
 Of cuckoldry side,  
 Or else philosophy  
 Maketh a great lie.  
 The ostrich, that will eat  
 An horseshoe so great,  
 480 In the stead of meat,  
 Such fervent heat  
 His stomach doth frete; *digest*  
 He cannot well fly,  
 Nor sing tunably,  
 Yet at a brayd *suddenly*  
 He hath well assayed  
 To sol-fa above E-la.  
 Fa, lorell, fa, fa!  
*Ne quando*  
 490 *Male cantando*,<sup>44</sup>  
 The best that we can,  
 To make him our bell-man,  
 And let him ring the bells.  
 He can do nothing else.

Chanticleer, our cock,  
 Must tell what is of the clock  
 By the astrology  
 That he hath naturally  
 Conceived and caught,

44 Lest ever by singing badly.

500 And was never taught  
 By Albumazer  
 The astronomer,  
 Nor by Ptolomy  
 Prince of astronomy,  
 Nor yet by Haly;  
 And yet he croweth daily  
 And nightly the tides  
 That no man abides,  
 With Partlot his hen,  
 Whom now and then  
 510 He plucketh by the head  
 When he doth her tread.

*Ptolomy*

The bird of Araby,  
 That potentially  
 May never die,  
 And yet there is none  
 But one alone;  
 A phoenix it is  
 This hearse that must bless  
 520 With aromatic gums  
 That cost great sums,  
 The way of thurification<sup>45</sup>  
 To make a fumigation,  
 Sweete of reflare,  
 And redolent of aire,  
 This corse for to cense  
 With greate reverence,  
 As patriarch or pope  
 In a blacke cope.  
 530 Whiles he censeth the hearse,  
 He shall sing the verse,  
*Libera me,*<sup>46</sup>  
 In de la, sol, re,  
 Softly B molle  
 For my sparrow's soul.  
 Pliny<sup>47</sup> sheweth all  
 In his *Story Natural*  
 What he doth find  
 Of the phoenix kind;  
 540 Of whose incineration  
 There riseth a new creation  
 Of the same fashion  
 Without alteration,  
 Saving that olde age  
 Is turned into corage  
 Of freshe youth again;  
 This matter true and plain,  
 Plain matter indeed,  
 Who so list to read.

550 But for the eagle doth fly  
 Highest in the sky,  
 He shall be the sub-dean,

<sup>45</sup> Burning of incense.

<sup>46</sup> "Deliver me" (opening of the Responsory).

<sup>47</sup> Pliny the Elder, Roman author of the *Natural History*.

The choir to demean, *conduct*  
 As provost principal,  
 To teach them their Ordinal;  
 Also the noble falcon,  
 With the ger-falcon,  
 The tarsel gentil,<sup>48</sup>  
 They shall mourn soft and still  
 560 In their amice of gray;  
 The saker with them shall say *lanmer falcon*  
*Dirige*<sup>49</sup> for Philip's soul;  
 The goshawk shall have a roll  
 The choristers to control;  
 The lanners and the merlions *merlins*  
 Shall stand in their mourning-gowns;  
 The hobby<sup>50</sup> and the musket  
 The censers and the cross shall fet;  
*fetch*  
 570 The kestrel in all this wark  
 Shall be holy water clerk.

And now the dark cloudy night  
 Chaseth away Phoebus bright,  
 Taking his course toward the west,  
 God send my sparrow's soul good rest!  
*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine!*<sup>51</sup>  
 Fa, fa, fa, mi, re, re,  
*A por ta in fe ri,*<sup>52</sup>  
 Fa, fa, fa, mi, mi.

580 *Credo videre bona Domini,*<sup>53</sup>  
 I pray God, Philip to heaven may fly!  
*Domine, exaudi orationem meam!*<sup>54</sup>  
 To heaven he shall, from heaven he came!  
*Do mi nus vo bis cum!*<sup>55</sup>  
 Of all good prayers God send him some!

*Oremus,*  
*Deus, cui proprium est misereri et parcere,*<sup>56</sup>  
 On Philip's soul have pity!  
 For he was a pretty cock,  
 And came of a gentle stock,  
 590 And wrapt in a maiden's smock,  
 And cherished full daintily,  
 Till cruel fate made him to die:  
 Alas, for doleful destiny!  
 But whereto should I  
 Longer mourn or cry?  
 To Jupiter I call,  
 Of heaven imperial,  
 That Philip may fly  
 Above the starry sky,  
 600 To tread the pretty wren,  
 That is our Lady's hen.  
 Amen, amen, amen!

48 Male peregrine falcon.

49 "Direct [my steps]."

50 A male sparrowhawk.

51 "Grant them eternal rest, O Lord!"

52 "From the gates of hell."

53 "I had thought to see the goodness of the Lord" (Psalm 26:13, Vulgate).

54 "Lord, hear my prayer" (Psalm 102:2, Vulgate).

55 "The Lord be with you."

56 "O God, whose property it is to be merciful and to spare."

Yet one thing is behind,  
 That now cometh to mind;  
 An epitaph I would have  
 For Philippes grave:  
 But for I am a maid,  
 Timorous, half afraid,  
 That never yet assayed  
 610 Of Helicones<sup>57</sup> well,  
 Where the Muses dwell;  
 Though I can read and spell,  
 Recount, report, and tell  
 Of the *Tales of Canterbury*,  
 Some sad stories, some merry;  
 As Palamon and Arcet,  
 Duke Theseus, and Parletelet;  
 And of the Wife of Bath,<sup>58</sup>  
 That worketh much scath  
 620 When her tale is told  
 Among housewives bold,  
 How she controlled  
 Her husbands as she wold,  
 And them to despise  
 In the homeliest wise,  
 Bring other wives in thought  
 Their husbands to set at nought.  
 And though that read have I  
 Of Gawain and Sir Guy,  
 630 And tell can a great piece  
 Of the Golden Fleece,  
 How Jason it wan,  
 Like a valiant man;  
 Of Arthur's Round Table,  
 With his knights commendable,  
 And Dame Gaynour, his queen,  
 Was somewhat wanton, I ween;  
 How Sir Lancelot de Lake  
 Many a spear brake  
 640 For his lady's sake;  
 Of Tristram, and King Mark,  
 And all the whole wark  
 Of Belle Isold his wife,  
 For whom was much strife;  
 Some say she was light,  
 And made her husband knight  
 Of the common hall,  
 That cuckolds men call;  
 And of Sir Lybius,  
 650 Named Dysconius;<sup>59</sup>  
 Of Quater Fylz Amund,<sup>60</sup>  
 And how they were summoned  
 To Rome, to Charlemagne,  
 Upon a great pain,

57 Helicon, a favorite haunt of the Muses.

58 Characters in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

59 *Lybeau's Disconus* in Ritson's *Met. Rom.*, 2.

60 Caxton, *The Four Sons of Aymon*.

And how they rode each one  
 On Bayard Mountalbon;<sup>61</sup>  
 Men see him now and then  
 In the forest of Arden.  
 What though I can frame  
 660 The stories by name  
 Of Judas Maccabeus,<sup>62</sup>  
 And of Caesar Julius;  
 And of the love between  
 Paris and Vienne;  
 And of the duke Hannibal,  
 That made the Romans all  
 Fordread and to quake;  
 How Scipion<sup>63</sup> did wake  
 670 The city of Carthage,  
 Which by his unmerciful rage  
 He beat down to the ground.  
 And though I can expound  
 Of Hector of Troy,  
 That was all their joy,  
 Whom Achilles slew,  
 Wherefore all Troy did rue;  
 And of the love so hot  
 That made Troilus to dote  
 Upon fair Cresseid;<sup>64</sup>  
 680 And what they wrote and said,  
 And of their wanton willes  
 Pander bare the billes  
*love letters*  
 From one to the other;  
 His master's love to further,  
 Sometime a precious thing,  
 A brooch or else a ring;  
 From her to him again  
 Sometime a pretty chain,  
 Or a bracelet of her hair,  
 690 Prayed Troilus for to wear  
 That token for her sake;  
 How heartily he did it take,  
 And much thereof did make;  
 And all that was in vain,  
 For she did but feign;  
 The story telleth plain,  
 He could not obtain,  
 Though his father were a king,  
 Yet there was a thing  
 700 That made the male to wring;<sup>65</sup>  
 She made him to sing  
 The song of lover's lay;  
 Musing night and day,  
 Mourning all alone,  
 Comfort had he none,  
 For she was quite gone.

61 French chivalric hero.

62 Jewish hero in 2 Maccabees.

63 Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus (c.185–129 BC); destroyed the city of Carthage.

64 Troilus and Criseyde are lovers in a poem by Chaucer; their love letters are delivered by Pandarus.

65 Wrung his withers.

Thus in conclusion,  
 She brought him in abusion;  
 In earnest and in game  
 She was much to blame;  
 710 Disparaged is her fame,  
 And blemished is her name,  
 In manner half with shame;  
 Troilus also hath lost  
 On her much love and cost,  
 And now must kiss the post;  
 Pandarus, that went between,  
 Hath won nothing, I ween,  
 But light for summer green;  
 720 Yet for a special laud  
 He is named Troilus' bawd;  
 Of that name he is sure  
 Whiles the world shall 'dure.

Though I remember the fable  
 Of Penelope<sup>66</sup> most stable,  
 To her husband most true,  
 Yet long-time she ne knew  
 Whether he were live or dead;  
 Her wit stood her in stead,  
 730 That she was true and just  
 For any bodily lust  
 To Ulysses her make,  
 And never would him forsake.

Of Marcus Marcellus<sup>67</sup>  
 A process I could tell us;  
 And of Antiochus,<sup>68</sup>  
 And of Josephus<sup>69</sup>  
*De Antiquitatibus*;  
 And of Mardocheus,<sup>70</sup>  
 740 And of great Ahasuerus,  
 And of Vesca his queen,  
 Whom he forsook with teen,  
 And of Esther his other wife,  
 With whom he led a pleasant life;  
 Of King Alexander;<sup>71</sup>  
 And of King Evander;<sup>72</sup>  
 And of Porsena the great,<sup>73</sup>  
 That made the Romans to sweat.

Though I have enrolled  
 A thousand new and old  
 Of these historious tales,  
 To fill budgets and males  
 750 With books that I have read,

66 Faithful wife of Ulysses in Homer's *Odyssey*.

67 Conqueror of Syracuse in the second Punic War.

68 Name of several of the Seleucid kings of Asia.

69 Flavius Josephus, author of *Antiquitates Iudaicae*.

70 Mordecai, the hero of the Book of Esther, enabled his orphaned cousin Esther to marry King Ahasuerus of Persia.

71 Alexander the Great.

72 Legendary founder of Rome.

73 Thought by the Romans to be an Etruscan chieftain who once was master of Rome.

760 Yet I am nothing sped,  
 And can but little skill  
 Of Ovid or Virgil,<sup>74</sup>  
 Or of Plutarch,  
 Or Francis Petrarch,  
 Alcaeus or Sappho,  
 Or such other poets mo,  
 As Linus and Homerus,  
 Euphorion and Theocritus,  
 Anacreon and Arion,  
 Sophocles and Philemon,  
 Pindarus and Simonides,  
 Philistion and Pherecydes;  
 These poets of anciente,  
 They are too diffuse for me:

770 For, as I tofore have said,  
 I am but a young maid,  
 And cannot in effect  
 My style as yet direct  
 With English words elect.  
 Our natural tongue is rude,  
 And hard to be ennewed  
 With polished termes lusty;  
 Our language is so rusty,  
 So cankered, and so full  
 Of frowards, and so dull,  
 780 That if I would apply  
 To write ornately,  
 I wot not where to find  
 Terms to serve my mind.

Gower's<sup>75</sup> English is old,  
 And of no value told;  
 His matter is worth gold,  
 And worthy to be enrolled.

790 In Chaucer I am sped,  
 His *Tales* I have read:  
 His matter is delectable,  
 Solacious, and commendable;  
 His English well allowed,  
 So as it is enprowed,  
 For as it is employed,  
 There is no English void,  
 At those days much commended;  
 And now men would have amended  
 His English, whereat they bark,  
 And mar all they wark.  
 800 Chaucer, that famous clerk,  
 His termes were not dark,  
 But pleasant, easy, and plain;  
 No word he wrote in vain.

74 There follows a catalogue of Greek, Roman, and Italian poets, some perhaps legendary.

75 John Gower, medieval English poet, author of *Confessio Amantis*.

Also John Lydgate<sup>76</sup>  
 Writeth after an higher rate;  
 It is diffuse to find  
 The sentence of his mind,  
 Yet writeth he in his kind,  
 No man that can amend  
 810 Those matters that he hath penned;  
 Yet some men find a faute,  
 And say he writeth too haut.

Wherefore hold me excused  
 If I have not well perused  
 Mine English half abused;  
 Though it be refused,  
 In worth I shall it take,  
 And fewer wordes make.

But, for my sparrow's sake,  
 Yet as a woman may,  
 My wit I shall assay  
 An epitaph to write  
 In Latin plain and light,  
 Whereof the elegy  
 Followeth by and by:  
*Flos volucrum formose, vale!*  
*Philippe, sub isto*  
*Marmore jam recubas,*  
*Qui mihi carus eras.*  
 830 *Semper erunt nitido*  
*Radiantia sidera caelo;*  
*Impresusque meo*  
*Pectore semper eris.*<sup>77</sup>

## A LAUD AND PRAISE MADE FOR OUR SOVEREIGN LORD THE KING

THE Rose both White and Red  
 In one Rose now doth grow:  
 Thus thorough every stead  
 Thereof the fame doth blow.  
 Grace the seed did sow:  
 England, now gather floures,  
 Exclude now all doloures.

Noble Henry the Eight,  
 Thy loving sovereign lord,  
 10 Of kinges line most straight  
 His title doth record:  
 In whom doth well accord  
 Alexis<sup>1</sup> young of age,  
 Adrastus<sup>2</sup> wise and sage,

76 Medieval English poet reputed to be the dullest writer in the language, author of the 36,000 line poem, *The Fall of Princes*.

77 Farewell, sweet bird. Philip, beneath that marble you lie; you who were dear to me. So long as the stars shine in the sky will your image be graven on my heart.

A LAUD AND PRAISE MADE FOR OUR SOVEREIGN LORD  
 THE KING

1 Alexander the Great.

2 Mythical king of Argos.

Astraea,<sup>3</sup> Justice hight,  
 That from the starry sky  
 Shall now come and do right.  
 This hundred year scantly  
 A man could not espy  
 That Right dwelt us among,  
 And that was the more wrong.

20

Right shall the foxes chare,  
 The wolves, the bearés also,  
 That wrought have muché care,  
 And brought Engeland in woe:  
 They shall worry no mo,  
 Nor root the Rosary  
 By extort treachery.

Of this our noble king  
 The law they shall not break;  
 They shall come to reckoning;  
 No man for them will speak:  
 The people durst not creke  
 Their griefes to complain,  
 They brought them in such pain.

30

Therefore no more they shall  
 The commons overbace,  
 That wont were over all  
 Both lord and knight to face:  
 For now the years of grace  
 And wealth are come again,  
 That maketh England fain.

40

Adonis<sup>4</sup> of fresh colour,  
 Of youth the goodly floure,  
 Our prince of high honour,  
 Our paves, our succour,  
 Our king, our emperour,  
 Our Priamus of Troy,<sup>5</sup>  
 Our wealth, our worldly joy:

50

Upon us he doth reign,  
 That maketh our heartes glad,  
 As king most sovereign  
 That ever England had;  
 Demure, sober, and sad,  
 And Mars's lusty knight;  
 God save him in his right!

Amen.

<sup>3</sup> Mythical figure of justice who fled to heaven during the wicked Bronze Age, awaiting her return to earth at a more auspicious time.

<sup>4</sup> Beautiful youth loved by Aphrodite.

<sup>5</sup> King of Troy during the Trojan War.