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 Marie 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 terminology from such handbooks as the anonymous Ad herenium, 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 bitingly 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 reembodied 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*.


Greg Waller, *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s*.
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,
Sith I for thy soul sake was slain in good season,
Beguiled and betrayed by Judas’ false treason:
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,
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,
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!
Sore beating, sore threating, to make thee, man, all free:
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:
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.

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!'
Dame Margery.
Fa, re, my, my.

Wherefore and why, why?
For the soul of Philip Sparrow
That was late slain at Carrow,'
Among the Nunes Black.
For that sweet soules sake,
And for all sparrows’ souls
Set in our bead-rolls,’
Pater noster qui,®
With an Ave Mari,®
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
Was between you twain,
Pyramus and Thisbe,®
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
Worrowed her on that
Which I loved best.
It cannot be exprest
My sorrowful heaviness,
But all without redress!
For within that stound,
Half slumbering, in a sound
I fell downe to the ground.

Unneth I cast mine eyes
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.
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.

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 beat,
My visage pale and dead,
Wan, and blue as lead:
The pangs of hateful death
Wellnigh had stopped my breath.

Heu, heu, me,
That I am woe for thee!
Ad Dominum, cum tribularer, clamavi.\(^7\)
Of God nothing else crave I
But Philip’s soul to keep
From the marees deep
Of Acherontes’\(^8\) well,
That is a flood of hell;
And from the great Pluto,\(^9\)
The prince of endless woe;
And from foul Alecto,\(^10\)
With visage black and blo;
And from Medusa,\(^11\) that mare,
That like a fiend doth stare;
And from Megaera’s\(^12\) 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\(^13\) bower;
And from the denes dark
Where Cerberus\(^14\) doth bark,
Whom Theseus\(^15\) did affray,
Whom Hercules\(^16\) did outray,
As famous poetes say;
From that hell-hound

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.
That lieth in chains bound,
With ghastly heads three;
To Jupiter pray we
That Philip preserved may be!
Amen, say ye with me!

*Do mi nui,*
Help now, sweet Jesus!
*Levavi oculos meos in montes.*[^17]
Would God I had Zenophontes,[^18]
Or Socrates the wise,
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[^19] wife,
Was weary of her life,
When she had lost her joy,
Noble Hector of Troy;
In like manner also
Increaseth my deadly woe,
For my sparrow is go.

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

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;
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,

[^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.
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
When I saw my sparrow die!

Now, after my dome,
Dame Sulpicia 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.

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?
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.

O pe rer:
La, sol, fa, fa,
Confitebor tibi, Domine, in toto corde meo!

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).
Of King Croesus’ \textsuperscript{24} gold,
Or of Attalus the old,
The rich prince of Pergame,\textsuperscript{25}
Whoso list the story to see.
Cadmus,\textsuperscript{26} 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.
But whoso understood
Of Medea’s\textsuperscript{27} 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.

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,
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.
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:
\textit{A porta inferi . . .} \textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} King of Lydia, known for his great wealth.
\textsuperscript{25} Pergamum, city in Asia Minor, which reached the height of its splendor under the Attalids.
\textsuperscript{26} Legendary founder of Thebes, who searched for his sister Europa, who had been carried off by Zeus in the form of a bull.
\textsuperscript{27} Her magic helped Jason take the golden fleece.
\textsuperscript{28} “From the gate of hell” (antiphon).
Good Lord, have mercy
Upon my sparrow’s soul,
Written in my bead-roll!

An di vi vo com,\textsuperscript{29}
Japhet, Ham, and Shem,\textsuperscript{30}
Ma gui fi cat,\textsuperscript{31}
Shew me the right path
To the hills of Armony,\textsuperscript{32}
Whereon the boards yet lie
Of your father’s boat,

That was sometime afloat,
And now they lie and rot;
Let some poëtes write
Deucalion’s\textsuperscript{33} flood it hight.
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 Macedon\textsuperscript{34}
Had no such Philip as I,
No, no, sir, hardly!

That vengeance I ask and cry,
By way of exclamation,
On all the whole nation
Of cattes 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.

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,

\textsuperscript{29} “I heard a voice” (antiphon, Rev. 14:12).
\textsuperscript{30} Sons of Noah.
\textsuperscript{31} “Magnify,” as in “My soul magnifies the Lord” (Luke 1:46).
\textsuperscript{32} Arremenius, birthplace of Armenius, who was one of the Argonauts.
\textsuperscript{33} The equivalent of Noah in Greek mythology.
\textsuperscript{34} Philip II, King of Macedon.

Noah’s ark came to rest at Ararat in the Armenian mountains.
And gnaw thee in their jaws!
The serpents of Libya\textsuperscript{35}
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,\textsuperscript{36}
Gave him his mortal wound,
Changed to a deer,
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
Might pluck away thine ears!
The wild wolf Lycaon\textsuperscript{37}
Bite asunder thy backbone!
Of Etna\textsuperscript{38} 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,\textsuperscript{39}
From Tilbury Ferry
To the plain of Salisbury!
So traitorously my bird to kill
That never ought thee evil will!

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!
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,

\textsuperscript{35} Libya, or Africa as a whole.
\textsuperscript{36} While hunting, Actaeon was changed by Artemis into a stag and then was torn to pieces by his own hounds.
\textsuperscript{37} According to Ovid, Lycaon of Arcadia was transformed into a wolf.
\textsuperscript{38} Etna, Europe's highest active volcano, located in Sicily.
\textsuperscript{39} Orkney Islands.
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,\(^4\)
And creep in at my gore
Of my gown before,
Flickering with his wings?
Alas, my heart it stings,
Remembering pretty things!
Alas, mine heart it slieth,
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,
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.

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!

\textit{Kyrie, eleison,}
\textit{Christe, eleison,}
\textit{Kyrie, eleison.}\(^4\)

For Philip Sparrow’s soul,
Set in our bead-roll,
Let us now whisper
\textit{A Paternoster}.\(^4\)

\textit{Lauda, anima mea, Dominum}.\(^4\)

To weep with me look that ye come
All manner of birds in your kind;
See none be left behind.

\(^4\) An opening or slit in a gown.

\(^4\) Our Father.

\(^4\) Lord, have mercy.

\(^4\) “Praise the Lord, O my soul!” (Psalm 145:1, Vulgate). Skelton puns on the word “anima” (soul) here.
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
Of this dolorous matter;
And robin redbreast,
He shall be the priest
The requiem mass to sing,
Softly warbeling,
With help of the reed sparrow,
And the chatteringe swallow,
This hearse for to hallow;
The lark with his long toe;
The spink, and the martinet also;
The shoveller with his broad beak;
The dotterel, that foolish peke,
And also the mad coot,
With balde face to toot;
The fieldfare and the snite;
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;
The lusty chanting nightingale;
The popinjay to tell her tale,
That toteth oft in a glass,
Shall read the Gospel at mass;
The mavis with her whistle
Shall read there the Epistle.
But with a large and a long
To keep just plain-song,
Our chanters shall be the cuckoo,
The culver, the stockdowe,
With ‘peewit’ the lapwing,
The Versicles shall sing.

The bittern with his bumpe,
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,
And hath a glorious tail,
He shall sing the Grail;
The owl, that is so foul,
Must help us to howl;
The heron so gaunt,
And the cormorant,
With the pheasant,
And the gaggling gant,  
And the churlish chough;  
The knot and the ruff;  

The barnacle, the buzzard,  
With the wild mallard;  
The divendop to sleep;  
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;  
The woodcock with the longe nose;  

The throstle with her warbling;  
The starling with her brabling;  
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;  
The stork also,  
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,  
In the stead of meat,  
Such fervent heat  
His stomach doth frete;  
He cannot well fly,  
Nor sing tunably,  
Yet at a brayd  
He hath well assayed  
To sol-fa above E-la.  
Fa, lorell, fa, fa!  
Ne quando

Male cantando;  
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,
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
He plucketh by the head
When he doth her tread.

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
With aromatic gums
That cost great sums,
The way of thurification\textsuperscript{45} To make a fumigation,
Sweet of reflare,
And redolent of aire,
This corse for to cense
With great reverence,
As patriarch or pope
In a blacke cope.

Whiles he censeth the hearse,
He shall sing the verse,
\textit{Libera me,}\textsuperscript{46} In de la, sol, re,
Softly B molle
For my sparrow’s soul.
Pliny\textsuperscript{47} sheweth all
In his \textit{Story Natural}
What he doth find
Of the phoenix kind;
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.

But for the eagle doth fly
Highest in the sky,
He shall be the sub-dean,
The choir to demean,
As provost principal,
To teach them their Ordinal;
Also the noble falcon,
With the ger-falcon,
The tarsel gentil,\(^\text{48}\)
They shall mourn soft and still
In their amice of gray;
The saker with them shall say
Dirige\(^\text{49}\) for Philip’s soul;
The goshawk shall have a roll
The choristers to control;
The lanners and the merlions
Shall stand in their mourning-gowns;
The hobby\(^\text{50}\) and the musket
The censers and the cross shall fet;
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!\(^\text{51}\)
Fa, fa, fa, mi, re, re,
A por ta in fe ri;\(^\text{52}\)
Fa, fa, fa, mi, mi.

Credo videre bona Domini;\(^\text{53}\)
I pray God, Philip to heaven may fly!
Domine, exaudi orationem meam!\(^\text{54}\)
To heaven he shall, from heaven he came!
Do mi nus vo bis cum!\(^\text{55}\)
Of all good prayers God send him some!
Oremus,
Deus, cui proprium est misereri et parcere,\(^\text{56}\)
On Philip’s soul have pity!
For he was a pretty cock,
And came of a gentle stock,
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,
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

Of Helicones\textsuperscript{57} well,
Where the Muses dwell;
Though I can read and spell,
Recount, report, and tell
Of the \textit{Tales of Canterbury},
Some sad stories, some merry;
As Palamon and Arcer,
Duke Theseus, and Partelet;
And of the Wife of Bath,\textsuperscript{58}
That worketh much scath

When her tale is told
Among housewifes 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,
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
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,

Named Dysconius;\textsuperscript{59}
Of Quater Fylz Amund,\textsuperscript{60}
And how they were summoned
To Rome, to Charlemagne,
Upon a great pain,

\textsuperscript{57} Helicon, a favorite haunt of the Muses.
\textsuperscript{58} Characters in Chaucer's \textit{Canterbury Tales}.
\textsuperscript{59} Lyboun's \textit{Discons} in Ritson's \textit{Met. Rom.}, 2.
\textsuperscript{60} Caxton, \textit{The Four Sons of Aymon}. 
And how they rode each one
On Bayard Mountalbon;\footnote{French chivalric hero.}
Men see him now and then
In the forest of Arden.
What though I can frame

The stories by name
Of Judas Maccabeus,\footnote{Jewish hero in 2 Maccabees.}
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\footnote{Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus (c.185–129 BC); destroyed the city of Carthage.} did wake
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;\footnote{Troilus and Criseyde are lovers in a poem by Chaucer; their love letters are delivered by Pandarus.}

And what they wrote and said,
And of their wanton wills
Pander bare the billes
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,

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

That made the male to wring;\footnote{Wrung his withers.}
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.
Thus in conclusion,  
She brought him in abusión;  
In earnest and in game  
She was much to blame;  
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;  
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 Penelope66 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,  
That she was true and just  
For any bodily lust  
To Ulysses her make,  
And never would him forsake.

Of Marcus Marcellus67  
A process I could tell us;  
And of Antiochus,68  
And of Josephus69  
De Antiquitatibus;  
And of Mardocheus,70  
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;71  
And of King Evander;72  
And of Porsena the great,73  
That made the Romans to sweat.

Though I have enrolled  
A thousand new and old  
Of these historious tales,  
To fill budgets and males  
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.
Yet I am nothing sped,
And can but little skill
Of Ovid or Virgil,\(^4\)
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,
Philstion and Pherecydes;
These poets of anciente,
They are too diffuse for me:

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,
That if I would apply
To write ornately,
I wot not where to find
Terms to serve my mind.

Gower’s\(^5\) English is old,
And of no value told;
His matter is worth gold,
And worthy to be enrolled.

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.

Chaucer, that famous clerk,
His termes were not dark,
But pleasant, easy, and plain;
No word he wrote in vain.

\(^4\) There follows a catalogue of Greek, Roman, and Italian poets, some perhaps legendary.
\(^5\) John Gower, medieval English poet, author of Confessio Amantis.
Also John Lydgate
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
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.

Semper erunt nitido
Radiantia sidera cœlo;
Impressusque meo
Pectore semper eris.

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,
Of kinges line most straight
His title doth record:
In whom doth well accord
Alexis’ young of age,
Adrastus’ wise and sage,
Astraea, Justice hight,
That from the stary sky
Shall now come and do right.
This hundred year scanty
A man could not espy
That Right dwelt us among,
And that was the more wrong.

Right shall the foxes chare,
The wolves, the bears 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.

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.

Adonis' 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,
Our wealth, our worldly joy:

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.

3. Mythical figure of justice who fled to heaven during the wicked Bronze Age, awaiting her return to earth at a more auspicious time.
4. Beautiful youth loved by Aphrodite.
5. King of Troy during the Trojan War.