

**“SAVE OURE TONGES DIFFERENCE”:
REFLECTIONS ON TRANSLATING
CHAUCER’S *CANTERBURY TALES*
INTO AFRIKAANS**

by

Johannes Gerhardus Boje

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Supervisor: Dr Idette Noomé

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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
RESEARCH PROPOSAL & ETHICS COMMITTEE

DECLARATION

Full name: Johannes Gerhardus Boje
Student Number: 27469957
Degree/Qualification: PhD
Title of thesis: “Save Oure Tonges Difference”:
Reflections on Translating
Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* into Afrikaans

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J.G. Boje

SIGNATURE

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ABSTRACT

“Save Oure Tonges Difference”: Reflections on Translating Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* into Afrikaans

by
J. G. (John) Boje

Degree: Doctor Philosophiae

Department: English

Supervisor: Dr I. Noomé

The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer (c1340-1400) is acknowledged as a major work of world literature. It has been translated, as a whole or in part, into more than fifty languages. This study reflects on the process and outcome of an Afrikaans translation, *Die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer* (appended), of this Middle English text.

The aim of this study was to explore what happens when a text is decontextualised as a result of its removal from the historical linguistic, literary and cultural context in which it originated and it is recontextualised in terms of a very different twentieth and twenty-first century receptor culture. This necessitates interpretation of the source text in its fourteenth century thought world, elucidated by scholarship accumulated over the centuries, and its reinterpretation in order to be intelligible and acceptable to contemporary readers, specifically Afrikaans-speaking readers, shaped in large measure by Calvinist theology and nationalist ideology.

The focus of the study was on the correlation between theory underpinning Translation Studies and the practical conclusions arrived at in the course of an extended translating process and as a result of this study. Theorists whose insights figure prominently include Toury, Gadamer, Jauss, Iser and Even-Zohar. A central dilemma facing any translator was formulated by Friedrich Schleiermacher in 1813: a translation should either move the writer towards the reader (domestication) or move the reader towards the writer (foreignisation). Most more recent functionalist translation studies favour the former option, exemplified by Gideon Toury’s insistence on the normative nature of cultural accommodation in translation in order

to achieve acceptability in the target text's literary polysystem. Schleiermacher favoured moving the reader towards the writer, a course of action vigorously espoused by Lawrence Venuti, who rejects domestication in favour of foreignisation.

The translation investigated is the researcher's own work, a translation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, completed over a period of sixty years. These circumstances favoured a longitudinal approach and an autoethnographic methodology to investigate how practical translational strategies were employed to achieve the adequacy of the translation which can be reconciled with the theoretically based norms of acceptability, and how the theoretical acceptability of the translation relates to the realities of an Afrikaans polysystem.

Based on the practical experience set out in the reconstruction of the translation process, the study opposes the binarism implied in adopting either domestication or foreignisation fully. The research established the adequacy of the translation in terms of Toury's theoretically based norms of acceptability. These norms are usually advanced as purely descriptive, but in practical terms they may achieve prescriptive force for a translator in pursuit of acceptance. This difficulty, which arose in the context of a translation that was unacceptable to the Afrikaans polysystem at the height of Afrikaner nationalism, led to an appraisal of the current situation and a reflection on hypothetical future audiences for the translated work.

The study concluded that in contrast to modernisations, translations draw on the vast linguistic resources of the target language and are therefore able to throw new light on the source text. Translations of the *Canterbury Tales* are therefore of benefit to Chaucer scholarship. Consequently, the Afrikaans translation and the author's reflection on it may have a measure of significance in the global reception of Chaucer's work.

Key terms:

Translation, Translation Studies, Literary translation, Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, Middle English, Afrikaans literature, *Pelgrimsverhale*

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM OF THE STUDY

Literary translation involves the removal of a text from its historical linguistic, literary and cultural context in order to recreate it in a different linguistic, literary and cultural context. The translation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* into Afrikaans is a radical instance of this process. *The Canterbury Tales* is a major work of world literature that assumes an entirely new guise in a minority language. A vast gulf separates a medieval society which was cosmopolitan and Catholic in outlook from a twenty-first century community strongly influenced by its insular nationalist history and a largely Protestant orientation. The situation is complicated by the fact that, despite considerable commonality of culture, the Afrikaans speech community has for centuries been divided by race into a hegemonic elite and its subaltern counterpart. Although the South African political dispensation has changed dramatically since I embarked on my translation, most of the translation was completed in the context of an unfavourable political climate.

For a translation to succeed, it must do justice to the source text, a criterion referred to as "adequacy", and it must successfully navigate the complexities of the receiving culture(s) in order to achieve "acceptability". However, acceptability does not mean acceptance, because every new literary work, or translation of a literary work, meets with a measure of resistance from networks of established interests – the literary polysystem – of that culture. According to Pavel Maldarev, the literary polysystem is thus part of the prevailing "ideological milieu".¹

In this study, I reflect on the creation of an Afrikaans translation, *Die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer*, over a period of six decades, in the dynamic environment of the Afrikaans political, ecclesiastical, cultural and literary polysystem.

¹ A. Lefevere, *Beyond the Process*, in *Translation Spectrum*; edited by M.G. Rose, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1981, p. 56.

In the light of this situation, the aim of the study is to answer two main questions:

- How may the practical translational strategies employed to achieve the adequacy of the translation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* be reconciled with the theoretically based norms of acceptability?
- How does the theoretical acceptability of the translation relate to the realities of an Afrikaans polysystem?

This overarching aim was addressed by exploring a series of further questions to aid the above discussion:

- How is a medieval text mediated to a present-day reader?
- What is the interface between Translation Studies and Chaucer criticism?
- What are the inevitable losses in the translation process and is there a counterpoint?
- What is the role of the audiences of the source and target texts?
- Does a vernacular translation of the *Canterbury Tales* into Afrikaans have any global significance?

1.2 METHOD

Because the study focuses on a specific translation, the approach adopted in this study is unique in its combination of a longitudinal perspective on a particular translation process and an autoethnographic methodology.

1.2.1 Longitudinal perspective

I have been occupied and/or preoccupied with the translation of the *Canterbury Tales* for more than sixty years (see Section 1.5). This fact has three important implications. First, the time span which the process covered allowed for personal growth, increased knowledge and understanding and heightened competence as a translator, evident in greater ease in translating, with greater freedom in relation to the source text. Secondly, the target culture of my Afrikaans translation has undergone a profound transformation, and my perception of it and attitude to it have undergone concomitant change.

But there is an even more significant reason why the passage of time is important and why the translating process became freer: even as I was translating, an

epistemological revolution was taking place. I grew up in a world of apparent certainties, and when I first embarked on translating Chaucer, similar certainty prevailed also in relation to that task. I perceived my source text as an immutable datum, like an object in a laboratory, which I approached “objectively” with a view to rendering the units that comprised it, the words and phrases with their fixed meanings, by means of “equivalents” or, at any rate, approximations, sourced with the help of a bilingual dictionary.

But all the time, the old world was slipping away, with certainties giving place to relativity. Although this happened almost imperceptibly, the cumulative impact has been enormous. After centuries of confidence in the disjunction between subject and object, a paradigm shift has occurred. The dawning realisation that in the field of the humanities the subject is not only implicated in the object of study, but actually constructs it, revealed the naivety and inadequacy of our previous perceptions. Without my realising it, my understanding of the world, of Chaucer and of translation changed radically between the translation of my first tale and my last. At the same time, every academic discipline, including Translation Studies, has had to adapt to this tectonic change.

The positivist scientific epistemological model to which the human sciences had eagerly sought to conform since the eighteenth century disqualified all apprehensions not based on the Cartesian dichotomy underlying its methodology.² Martin Heidegger, however, insisted that it is our being-in-the-world that makes understanding possible. Following him, Hans-Georg Gadamer called for a re-evaluation of the term “prejudice” (*Vorurteil*), generally interpreted in a negative sense.³ Our prejudices and presuppositions reflect our historicity, which is not an impediment to understanding; rather, our hermeneutical thinking is inextricably tied up with our “*eigene Geschichtlichkeit*”:⁴

² R. C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction*, London: Methuen, 1984, p. 36-38.

³ Gadamer uses the terms pre-judice and fore-understanding interchangeably. He argues that we come to every text (and experience) with *Vormeinungen* (literally pre-opinions) and *Vorurteile* (prejudices, in the literal sense of pre-judgments), constructed by our historical *Geschichtlichkeit* (historicity). *Vormeinung* is clearly more neutral than *Vorurteil*, and implies being consciously aware of inculcated judgments. H-G. Gadamer. *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised edition, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1989 [1960], p. 270-271.

⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 299: “Real historical thinking must take account of its own historicity”. (*Wahrheit und Methode*, p. 283: “Ein wirklich historisches Denken muß die eigene Geschichtlichkeit mitdenken”).

Gadamer argues that all interpretations of past literature arise from a dialogue between past and present. Our attempts to understand a work will depend on the questions which our own cultural environment allows us to raise ... Our present perspective always involves a relationship to the past, but at the same time the past can only be grasped through the limited perspective of the present ... a hermeneutical notion of 'understanding' does not separate knower and object in the familiar fashion of empirical science; rather it views understanding as a 'fusion' of past and present: we cannot make our journey into the past without taking our present with us.⁵

1.2.2 Autoethnographic methodology

In keeping with these insights, I have adopted an autoethnographic method as described by H. Chang.⁶ This is a qualitative research method developed to supersede such totalizing metanarratives (the *grands récits* of Jean-François Lyotard)⁷ as the unification of knowledge and human liberation. Autoethnography is therefore premised on a self-reflective interrogation of experience, which uncovers multiple layers of identity to connect the personal and the cultural.⁸ It is a method that

seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*). [It] treats research as a political, socially-just and socially conscious act.... A researcher uses tenets of *autobiography* and *ethnography* to *do* and *write* autoethnography.⁹

The researcher's personal identity is shaped by "forces" of nationality, religion, gender, education, ethnicity, socioeconomic class and geography. Understanding these forces, Chang contends, helps us to examine our perceptions and feelings about others, "whether they are 'others of similarity', 'others of difference' or even 'others of opposition'".¹⁰ Ellis, Adams and Bochner warn in particular against the easy assumption of a white, masculine, heterosexual, middle/upper-classed, Christian, able-bodied perspective.¹¹

⁵ R. Selden, P. Widdowson and P. Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 4th edition, Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall, 1997, p. 54.

⁶ H. Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008; Chang's emphases.

⁷ J-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

⁸ D. Raab, Transpersonal Approaches to Autoethnographic Research and Writing, *The Qualitative Report*, vol. 18, no. 21, 2013, p. 4.

⁹ C. Ellis, T. E. Adams, and A. P. Bochner, Autoethnography: An Overview, *Historical Social Research*, vol. 36, no. 138, p. 273.

¹⁰ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, p. 52.

¹¹ Ellis, Adams and Bochner, in *Historical Social Research*, vol. 36, no. 138, p. 275.

An emphasis on self-identification in social research dates back to the early days of American Sociology in the wake of the First World War when Robert Park encouraged his students at Chicago University to research areas in which they had some personal involvement. Phenomenological research making use of self-reflectivity gained further impetus in the work of Chicago academics of the 1960s and 1970s,¹² culminating in David Hayano's important essay on the status of autoethnography.¹³ Subsequently, two distinct trends have developed: evocative and analytic autoethnography. Evocative ethnography has focused on highly emotional issues such as illness, death and divorce, and some valuable work has been done in these fields.¹⁴ In some cases, however, the "story" took over completely, supplanting analysis and generalization, and Sara Dalamont led a scathing attack against such excesses of self-obsession.¹⁵ However, analytic autoethnographers Leon Anderson and Paul Atkinson have redressed the balance, insisting on the role of personal experience as a means to understanding structures and processes.¹⁶ This kind of autoethnographic sensibility is not antithetical to the analytical goals of ethnographic research. Indeed, in the words of Atkinson, "the kind of reflexivity implied by autoethnography has been recognised as central to the ethnographic enterprise for many years and has actually been a key aspect of the ethnographic repertoire for even longer".¹⁷

In accordance with this approach, I would introduce myself as an English-speaking son of working-class, white Afrikaans-speaking parents. From the time of my birth and the birth of my younger sister, my parents spoke only English to us, although they spoke Afrikaans to each other and to our elder siblings. My education was also in English and this exposed me to different perspectives on life from that which was held by my parents and elder siblings. In time, I rejected the narrow nationalism and strict Calvinism my father espoused. Somewhere I read a dissident's painful

¹² L. Anderson, Analytic Autoethnography, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2006, p. 375-376.

¹³ D. Hayano, Auto-ethnography: Paradigms, Problems and Prospects, *Human Organization*, vol. 38, no. 1, 1979.

¹⁴ Anderson, in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2006, p. 377.

¹⁵ S. Delamont, Arguments against Autoethnography. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Institute of Education, University of London, 5-8 Sept. 2007.

¹⁶ Anderson, in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2006, p. 387.

¹⁷ P. Atkinson, Rescuing Autoethnography, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2006, p. 400.

account of his estrangement from his father, which he experienced as a kind of patricide. I can identify with his pain. In spite of my rejection of racism and departure from the Dutch Reformed Church, I chose Nederlands-Afrikaans as a major for my first degree, played a leading role in setting up an Afrikaans cultural organisation at the University of Cape Town, and took up a post teaching English at an Afrikaans school in the heart of the Free State. At this stage of youthful optimism, I imagined that I could introduce liberal insights into the Afrikaans community. I sought acceptance, but on my own terms, and my terms were met with hostility, culminating in the principal of the school warning the pupils against me because I was a “volksvreemde element”, a wolf in sheep’s clothing. It was this kind of rejection rather than my heterodoxy that alienated me from the Afrikaans establishment. Yet, even after this, I persevered with my Chaucer translation, which I fancied might contribute to the enlightenment of those who might read it.

I am profoundly grateful for my bilingual upbringing, not only because it exposed me to a wider world of ideas, which challenged me to reflect on differences in world view and how they came about, but also because it made me aware of language. As far back as I can remember, I was what Brian Harris and Bianca Sherwood characterise as a young natural translator, for whom “translating is coextensive with bilingualism”.¹⁸ Thinking back to my earliest childhood, I can add two incidents to the large number that Harris and Sherwood provide, the first illustrating very early functional interpersonal autotranslation on my sister’s part, the second my own spontaneous, non-functional autotranslation.

In the first incident, my younger sister and I were playing House under the dining room table. I asked her, “What’s *gordyne*?” and immediately she responded, “curtains”. The scene is fixed in my memory by my surprise that she could answer my question. How old would we have been? If five is a reasonable *terminus ad quem* for a little boy playing House, my sister would have been just three and a half years old.

In the second, at a very early age, I was dramatising an imagined incident of an adult who had lost his train ticket and tries to speak to an official about it. Although

¹⁸ B. Harris and B. Sherwood, *Translating as an Innate Skill*, in *Language, Interpretation and Communication*; edited by D. Gerver and H.W. Sinaiko, New York, NY: Plenum, 1978, p. 280.

the anxious passenger is English-speaking, he knows he must speak Afrikaans to the railway official,¹⁹ so he explains: “Meneer, daar’s ’n gat in my broek.” Overhearing me, my father reacted with visible agitation, for which he offered no explanation.²⁰ Because of its emotional content, this memory was able to survive childhood amnesia.²¹

Gregory Shreve elucidates the bilingualism substrate of translation as follows:

To understand translation, we have to understand bilingualism, but we also need to understand that the translation capacity is a special case of bilingualism, and that the development of translation skill or expertise may alter the way bilingual memory is structured and how lexical access and selection occur.²²

Because of its communicative and therefore inherently interactional nature, “natural translation” is normative and requires overt responses, providing feedback on the appropriateness of the transaction.²³ In time, the internalization of potential responses as motivational norms advanced my socialisation into translating.

An autoethnographic approach is highly relevant to the present investigation. A translator mediates between two cultures. My understanding of medieval culture derives from academic studies, including tertiary-level knowledge of Middle English, Middle Dutch and Latin, as well as medieval history, theology and art, and from a sense of personal affinity, though this is more difficult to define. In his *Essay on Translated Verse* (1864), the Earl of Roscommon recommended that a translator should

chuse an *Author* as you chuse a *Friend*:
United by this *Sympathetic Bond*,
You grow *Familiar, Intimate, and Fond*;
Your *Thoughts, your Words, your Stiles, your Soles* agree,
No longer his *Interpreter, but He*.

¹⁹ On the early awareness of the appropriate language to be used, see C. Hoffman, *An Introduction to Bilingualism*, London: Longman, 1991, p. 82.

²⁰ Cf. Van der Sijs, *Chronologisch Woordenboek*, p. 531: “Over het gebruik van *gat* merkt De Vooyo in 1920 op: ‘In ons land zijn of waren er kringen waar het woord *gat* in elke betekenis verboden werd. Multatuli vertelt in zijn *Brieven* ...: ‘Wij kinderen hadden een lange lijst van (heel onschuldige) woorden die verpönt waren, als *gat* of *gaatje*: opening moesten we zeggen!’” So we also spoke about a “kaartbordboks” rather than a “doos”!

²¹ M.J. Eacott, Memory for the Events of Early Childhood, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, vol. 8, no. 2, April 1999, p. 46.

²² G.M. Shreve, Bilingualism and Translation, in *Handbook of Translation Studies*; edited by Y. Gambier and L. van Doorslaer, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 21012, vol. 3, p. 5.

²³ Eacott in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1999, p. 284-285.

So too, John Stuart Blackie in his article “Homer and his Translators” (1861) urged the importance of a translator’s being “led by a sure instinct to recognize the author who is kindred to himself in taste and spirit, and whom he therefore has a special vocation to translate”,²⁴ advice that resonates with me.

With regard to the target culture of my translation, I have a native-speaker’s feel for the Afrikaans language. I acknowledge that for many years I was alienated from and indeed antagonistic towards the Afrikaner establishment, but, as I have said, this did not preclude my feeling keen anticipation of the enlightenment and enjoyment a prospective Afrikaans audience could derive from my translation. In this regard, self-reflexivity exposes an author’s and translator’s vulnerability,²⁵ but autoethnography “acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist”.²⁶

In line with the autoethnographic approach, I therefore write in the first person, reflecting on my experiences in the cultural contexts of both the source and target texts. Although I have no translation diary or early drafts at my disposal, I write from a privileged position, “for who knows a text better than a conscientious translator who labors to account for every word in the original?”²⁷ And, one may add, in the target text.

I would like to stress that this study is not intended to assess the ultimate merit, success or value of the translation itself, as is the concern of most studies of translations, which usually consider a translation done by someone else. Instead, it reflects on and attempts to account for my translation *process*,²⁸ some of the pitfalls and solutions tendered, the reception of parts of the translation published in 1989, and my revisiting of the process in the light of Translation Studies.

²⁴ Quoted in L. Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 274.

²⁵ Raab, in *The Qualitative Report*, vol. 18, no. 21, 2013, p.11.

²⁶ Ellis, Adams and Bochner, in *Historical Social Research*, vol. 36, no. 138, p. 274.

²⁷ C. Barrington, *Traveling Chaucer*, *Educational Theory*, vol. 64, no. 5, 2014, p. 470.

²⁸ There is a precedent for the application of this method in a 2015 South African doctoral thesis: I. Noomé, *Widening Readership – A Case Study of the Translation of Indigenous Law*, D.Litt thesis, University of Pretoria, 2015.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A translator is, in the first place, a reader, and therefore the reader-oriented theories of Jauss and Iser are of primary importance. Jauss contends that “the system of expectations that arises for each work in the historical moment of its appearance”²⁹ can be recuperated. Present-day readers bring their individualities, experiences and expectations to the task, so their readings are varied. In *Twentieth-century Chaucer Criticism*, Kathy Cawsey argues that

... ideas about audience, be they implicit or explicit, are fundamental to every literary theory: that the assumptions one makes about audiences are inherent to one’s theoretical approach, and are crucial in determining the critical conclusions to which one comes.³⁰

She examines the way in which six important scholars have envisaged Chaucer’s audience and the divergent interpretations of his work that ensued (I revert to her conclusions in Section 4.2).

Lee Patterson categorizes audience or reader-based interpretations of the *Canterbury Tales* as either exegetic or humanist. In the past, Chaucer’s exegetists have tended to hold an essentialist, conservative view of a culturally homogeneous and hierarchically ordered “Middle Ages”, whereas the humanist critics operated on the assumption of an unchanging human nature, “a transcendental subjectivity to which his[/her] own subjectivity responds and by means of which he [/she] understands”.³¹ In Chaucer Studies, the totalizing metanarrative of a monolithic, homogeneous Middle Ages is being subverted by postmodernism, but for now, it remains dominant in the academy, often fortified by an insularity bolstered by formidable scholarship.³²

Meanwhile, the humanist consensus has suffered dispersion. The decline in the teaching of Chaucer in British secondary schools is cause for concern,³³ and the “spectre of relativity” affects funding, contributing to academic marginalization.³⁴ In South Africa, Chaucer has all but disappeared even from most English courses at

²⁹ H. R. Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Brighton: Harvester, 1982, p. 22.

³⁰ K. Cawsey, *Twentieth-century Chaucer Criticism*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2011, p. 11.

³¹ L. Patterson, *Negotiating the Past*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987, p. 33.

³² L. Patterson, On the Margin, *Speculum*, vol. 65, no. 1, 1990, p. 103.

³³ M. Andrew, Translations, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*; edited by S. Ellis, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.557.

³⁴ K. Forni, *Chaucer’s Afterlife*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013, p. 1.

university (at all but two South African universities, any study of his work is either confined to options in postgraduate studies or is wholly absent from the curriculum).³⁵ Chaucer has become relatively obscure in Western culture; despite pretences to the contrary, the barrier of his language is not easily overcome;³⁶ there is no market for non-academic texts introducing him to non-specialist readers, and modernisations of his works are decried by scholars.³⁷

Historically, translators of literary works have been criticised for falling short of the ideal standard of total adequacy (however that is defined, see Chapter 2) to their source texts. However, they not only put the “cultural capital”³⁸ of an acclaimed work at the disposal of a receiving culture; in the process of approximating to the ideal of total acceptability in the receiving culture, they construct a “factual replacement” acceptable to that culture’s polysystem as a literary work in its own right.³⁹ As Holmes puts it: “Referring and producing simultaneously, verse translation is critical commentary on a source text, and yet yields critical interpretation, as if it were a primary text.”⁴⁰

What this means in practical terms is that as a translator I have performed a mediating role between the exegetic and humanist approaches. Having negotiated as much of the relevant scholarship as possible, and as I deemed necessary, I interpreted the source text and reconstituted it in terms of another culture. Any notes appended to the translation to elucidate my text (see Appendix) relate to the meaning of unfamiliar terms rather than erudite interpretation, so that the Afrikaans audience that I envisage will come to the translation fresh, unencumbered by either

³⁵ I. Noomé, Where ancestors meet, new memories are made, Paper presented at “Ancestry and Memory in the Medieval and Early Modern Worlds”, 24th Biennial Conference of the Southern African Society of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Mont Fleur, Stellenbosch, South Africa, 23–26 August 2018.

³⁶ S. Ellis, *Chaucer at Large*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p. 98.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153, 155, 165.

³⁸ Bassnett and Lefevere adopted the term from Pierre Bourdieu in order to indicate the role of translation in negotiating the interchange of cultural products and the power relations involved in their production and consumption. S. Bassnett, Culture and Translation, in *A Companion to Translation Studies*; edited by Piotr Kuhiwczak and Karim Littau, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2007, p. 19.; Lefevere, Translation Practice(s) and the Circulation of Cultural Capital in *Constructing Cultures*; edited by S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998, p.41-2. I use it in this sense rather than in Bourdieu’s sense, which is more narrowly derived from Marxian thought.

³⁹ Gideon Toury’s insights expounded by Edwin Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 128-129.

⁴⁰ Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, p. 91.

the strangeness of Chaucer's language or the mass of scholarship accumulated around his *Tales*.

1.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENCE

The phrase "Save oure tonges difference" in my title is from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (I.395),⁴¹ where it relates to the Latin of the narrator's alleged source. In Chaucer's England, Latin was the language of the Church and of learning. It had served as the primary language of record for centuries, and the officials at various levels of administration handled it with varying degrees of competence; for example, according to the General Prologue, Chaucer's character the Man of Law is familiar with judgements handed down in the past (*Canterbury Tales*, I.323-324)⁴² and the Summoner has picked up a few Latin tags in the course of his career (I.639-643). Because Latin had ceased to be a living language, in the sense of being an ordinary means of communication between native speakers, as far back as the second half of the fifth century, surviving only as "the language of the liturgy, of the chancelleries and of a few scholars",⁴³ lexemes to reflect the terminological needs of medieval society were not readily available, so English or French words were interspersed in a text with or without Latin endings. As these endings were often hidden as a result of the use of abbreviation signs, the text could be read on the basis of the semantic cores and the simplified syntax used. This form of Latin was also used in business documents. Rothwell advances the theory that it may well also have been a spoken language, the *lingua franca* of traders and travellers and the "maner Latyn corrupt" (II.519) that enables Custance in the Clerk's Tale to make herself understood in diverse places.⁴⁴

⁴¹ All quotations from Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by L. Benson, 3rd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

The use of this phrase was suggested by H.M. Leicester, Jr., "Our Tonges *Différance*": Textuality and Deconstruction in Chaucer, in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*; edited by L.A. Finke and M.B. Shichtman, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987, p 15-26.

⁴² With regard to the *Canterbury Tales*, I follow the regular practice of a Roman numeral for the fragment, followed by Arabic numerals for the lines quoted or referred to. The *Canterbury Tales* survives in ten fragments, the best order of which is uncertain. Robinson followed the order of the Ellesmere manuscript, even though he thought that the alternative order known as the "Bradshaw shift" was probably what Chaucer intended (*The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 5). *The Riverside Chaucer* is based on Robinson, so my line references are those provided in these widely used editions.

⁴³ The fifth-century Christian poet Apollinaris Sidonius, quoted in A. Manguel, *A History of Reading*, London: Flamingo, 1997, p. 251.

⁴⁴ W. Rothwell, The Trilingual England of Geoffrey Chaucer, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, vol. 16, 1944, p. 51-56.

French was the language of the court, and Norman French of bureaucracy. These two forms of French had developed independently for centuries. It has been estimated that fifty per cent of Chaucer's vocabulary comprised words of Romance origin but, as a result of the long and complex co-existence and intermingling of English and Norman French, any explanation in terms of "borrowing" is too simplistic.⁴⁵

French in both its Continental and Anglo-Norman forms was not a foreign language associated with nationalism; it was one of the languages of England. English itself took on different forms, including the Norfolk dialect spoken by the students in the Reeve's Tale.⁴⁶ Chaucer was comfortable with this multilingual situation. Rather than in any way seeking to promote an English national identity, he was thoroughly European in outlook.⁴⁷

"Our tonges difference" is an important starting point for me. I was able to translate Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* owing to the fact that I speak a kind of English which is different from Chaucer's – a language situation he foresaw⁴⁸ – and Afrikaans, which did not exist in his day, although he may have had a basic understanding of its ancestor, Middle Dutch. This supposition, advanced by Peter Beidler,⁴⁹ is based on Chaucer's diplomatic and business contacts with Flemings, the fact that his wife was the daughter of a Flemish knight, the Middle Dutch text *Heile van Beersele*, for which Beidler proposes as "a hard analogue with near-source status"⁵⁰ of the Miller's Tale, seventeen words of allegedly Middle Dutch provenance in that tale,⁵¹

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 55-60.

⁴⁶ D. Burnley, *A Guide to Chaucer's Language*, London: Macmillan, 1983, p. 118.

⁴⁷ S. Horobin, *Chaucer's Language*, Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 13-21; D. Wallace, Chaucer's Italian Inheritance, in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, edited by P. Boitani and J. Mann, 2nd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 37.

⁴⁸ Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so ... (*Troilus and Criseyde*, II.22-25.)

⁴⁹ P. Beidler, The Miller's Tale, in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*; edited by R.M. Correale, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005, vol. 2, p. 249-350; Beidler, *The Lives of the Miller's Tale*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015.

⁵⁰ Beidler, New Terminology for Sources and Analogues, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2006, p. 227. However, in The Miller's Tale and Heile van Beersele, *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 56, no. 226, 1 Sep. 2005, p. 497-523, and The Miller's Tale and Decameron, 3:4, *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 56, no. 226, 1 Sep. 2005, p. 497-523, F.M. Briggs demonstrates that the story is more likely to have originated with Chaucer.

⁵¹ This is refuted by Briggs in Seventeen Words of Middle Dutch Origin in The Miller's Tale? *Notes and Queries*, vol. 53, no. 4, 1 Dec. 2006, p. 407-409.

and two Flemish proverbs quoted by Chaucer,⁵² in one of which the retention of the Middle Dutch word “quaet” suggests knowledge of the proverb in its original form.⁵³

In Section 4.3.2, I conclude that it is precisely “oure tonges difference” that makes adequate translation possible. Many significant words in a source text cover a range of connotations from which a translator must choose, but the words of his/her target text also cover a range of meanings and therefore offer a challenge and provide the means to plumb new depths of significance. Not only individual words but the metaphors and other collocations typical of language draw on different experiences in the course of their different histories, and so a new setting derived from the target culture provides a new perspective with the potential of reinvigorating images dulled by familiarity.

The embeddedness of different languages in different cultures necessitates not only an appreciation of the alterity of the past but also of its plurality. The “pervasive and apparently ineradicable” metanarrative of the Renaissance as the source of modernity⁵⁴ has produced a stereotypical outlook on the “medieval mind”, a composite of myths of “homogenous faith, harmonious order, unquestioned hierarchy and unchallenged authority”.⁵⁵ A reading of the *Canterbury Tales* within a national paradigm asserts social homogeneity by privileging certain issues and favouring certain interpretations rather than others.⁵⁶ By contrast, a translation looks at the same text from the viewpoint of an outsider and is therefore more sensitive to difference and therefore to an awareness of the social dislocation that it mediates.

“Oure tonges difference” has a further dimension, that of past and present. Language is an essential aspect of culture, so translators are not only bilingual; they are also bicultural.⁵⁷ In English culture, the literary canon with Chaucer at its

⁵² “Sooth pley, quaad pley” and “Litel janglyng causeth muchel reste” (*Canterbury Tales*, I.5357 and IX.350), identified by J. Grauls and J.F. Vanderheyden, Two Flemish Proverbs in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, *Revue belge de Philologie et d’Histoire*, vol.13, no. 3, 1934, p. 745-749, as “Waer spot/ spel, quaet spot/ spel” and “Luttel onderwin brengt veel rusten in.”

⁵³ D. Gray (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 182; see also G. Latré, But What Does the Fleming Say? *Leeds Studies in English*, 32, 2001, p. 255-273.

⁵⁴ Patterson, in *Speculum*, vol. 65, no. 1, 1970, p. 92.

⁵⁵ D. Aers, *Chaucer*, Brighton: Harvester, 1986, p. 4.

⁵⁶ L. Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 129.

⁵⁷ M. Snell-Hornby, *The Turns of Translation Studies*, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2006, p. 52.

source was appropriated by the Protestant nationalist project of the sixteenth century and the imperialist project of the nineteenth century to assert British superiority and promote British hegemony.⁵⁸ The multilingual Chaucer with his European outlook came to be regarded as the progenitor of a monolingual chauvinism, which has accounted for much of the poet's popularity with admirers who sought to read English insularity and xenophobia back into the medieval past.⁵⁹ A popular survey of English literature by W.H. King asserts that Chaucer

reflects ... the English spirit, the spirit which rises above it all. It is the spirit of Shakespeare, which will have its jest on the moor in the thunderstorm with the mad old King, the spirit which finds humour at the heart of sorrow, and the fun of the tragedy – the spirit, if you will, of the soldier.⁶⁰

J.G. Green, the author of a widely used Victorian history, praised Chaucer for “the sturdy sense and shrewdness of our national disposition”, insisting that “the genius of Chaucer was ... English to the core”.⁶¹ More recently, G.K. Chesterton could claim that “Chaucer is the father of his country, rather in the style of George Washington”.⁶² And this attitude was confirmed in my own recent experience when an educated acquaintance asked with a disapproving inflection, “But how can you translate Chaucer into Afrikaans?” and then added emphatically, if not ecstatically: “He’s so English.”

Reinforced by post-colonialism, the “translation turn” in cultural studies has brought a heightened sensitivity to how power relations are reflected in unequal translation relationships.⁶³ Unequal relationships between languages have come about as a result of military conquest, religious expansion, cultural diffusion and economic imbalances. Such inequality may produce feelings of superiority in speakers of major languages and a sense of inferiority in the ideologically colonised. Source texts from dominant cultures are liable to be accorded superior status. While a sociology of translation focuses on the translator as “a social agent who is at the

⁵⁸ Barrington, in. *Educational Theory*, vol. 64, no. 5, 2014, p. 466.

⁵⁹ M. Davidson, *Medievalism, Multiculturalism and Chaucer*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 3.

⁶⁰ W.H. King, *Bookland*, 2nd edition, London: Philip, 1921, p. 8.

⁶¹ Quoted in D. Pearsall, Chaucer's Englishness, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1999, p. 95-96.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁶³ S. Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 3rd edition, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 4-5.

same time both constructed by society and constructing within society”,⁶⁴ the very recent field of comparative translation seeks to investigate how translations of *The Canterbury Tales* into more than fifty languages may contribute to new perspectives on their common source. “By returning *The Canterbury Tales* to a multicultural, polylingual milieu reminiscent of the one in which the *Tales* originated, comparative translation ... reinforces the *Tales*’ inherent instability and ensures that Chaucer’s text remains living, unfinished, and provoked out of resolution and complacency.”⁶⁵

1.5 TRANSLATING THE CANTERBURY TALES

Die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer is the first full-scale literary translation of any of Chaucer’s works into Afrikaans. Previously, over the years, three Afrikaans prose versions of the Nun’s Priest’s Tale adapted for children have been published. In 1936 (the year of my birth), a Mrs. A.E. Carinus published a prose re-telling of “Chaunticlere en Pertelote” as part of her book *Gulliver se reise en twee ander stories aan ons kinders vertel*.⁶⁶ A second version, “Die verhaal van Kantekleer”, published in 1983, covers four pages in *Die beste dierestories*, a collection of 47 stories. According to World Catalogue,⁶⁷ this is a translation of a German text, *Meine schönsten Tiergeschichten*,⁶⁸ but the inclusion of P.J. Schoeman, Eugène Marais, Boerneef and Gerald Durrell among the authors suggests augmentation of the original. This was followed in 1990 by *Kantekleer en die Jakkals*, Ria du Toit’s translation of Barbara Cooney’s illustrated children’s version, *Chanticleer and the Fox*, based on Lumiansky’s modernisation of the *Canterbury Tales*.⁶⁹ The beautiful original illustrations are retained by Du Toit’s translation, so although the jackal of the text represents an instance of domestication, young readers may find the pictures of a very European fox clearly foreignising.

⁶⁴ S. Berneking, A Sociology of Translation and the Central Role of the Translator, *The Bible Translator*, vol. 67, no. 3, 2016, p. 267.

⁶⁵ Barrington, *Educational Theory*, vol. 64, no. 5, 2014, p. 477.

⁶⁶ A.E. Carinus, *Gulliver se Reise en twee ander stories aan ons kinders vertel*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1936.

⁶⁷ https://www.worldcat.org/title/beste-dierestories/oclc/181822025&referer=brief_results

⁶⁸ E. Olivier (vertaler), Die Verhaal van Kantekleer, in *Die Beste Dierestories*, Kaapstad: Human & Rossouw, 1983, p. 38-41 Vertaling van J. Grabianski, *Meine schönsten Tiergeschichten*, Wien: Ueberreuter, 1983.

⁶⁹ R. du Toit (vertaler), *Kantekleer en die Jakkals*, Kaapstad: Anansi, 1990. ’n Vertaling van B. Cooney, *Chanticleer and the Fox*, New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1958, gebaseer op R. Lumiansky, *The Canterbury Tales of Geoffrey Chaucer: A New Modern English Prose Translation*, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1948.

The *Canterbury Tales* was not my first venture into translation. It was preceded, *inter alia*, by paragraphs from a school history book, Arnold's "Dover Beach", speeches from *The Merchant of Venice* and *Richard III*, and Gilbert and Sullivan's *Gondoliers*. And then I encountered Chaucer.

1.5.1 Phase 1 (1953-56)

This encounter occurred when I was a Grade 12 schoolboy. Our prescribed poetry anthology⁷⁰ included some excerpts from the *Canterbury Tales*, including the description of the Miller. Intrigued by the strangeness of the language, I set about translating this passage into Afrikaans. My first efforts were a translation on a word-for-word basis. "The Millere was a stout carl" was straightforward enough, but "for the nones"? My English teacher said it meant "for the occasion". This made no sense, so I left it out, thus taking my first small step away from a mechanical theory of lexical equivalence.

At university, where we read the General Prologue, I began to reach beyond the linguistic to the literary and translated the Prologue as a whole. The edition I used, *The Canterbury Tales: The Prologue*; edited by A.W. Pollard,⁷¹ was memorable for two reasons: firstly, the notes that helped me to make sense of the text, and secondly, the pictures of the pilgrims from the Ellesmere manuscript, which transported me into a strange and enchanting world. So, although I knew nothing about the theory of translation, the academic formulations, to which I will give attention in Chapter 2, were validated in practice. Pollard's notes were not just a crutch to help me translate obscure words; they mediated a culture to me. Pollard enabled me to read Chaucer, to interact with his cultural world and to move beyond a purely linguistic interest. Footnotes, according to Kwame Appiah, provide a literary education, influencing our perception of a text,⁷² and the illustrations were in Gérard Genette's words "liminal devices ... that form part of the complex mediation between book, authors, publisher and reader".⁷³ My only other resources were

⁷⁰ E.W. Parker (ed.), *The Poets' Company*, London: Longman's Green, 1939.

⁷¹ A.W. Pollard (ed.). *The Canterbury Tales: The Prologue*, London: Macmillan, 1955.

⁷² K. Appiah, Thick Translation, in *The Translation Studies Reader*; edited by L. Venuti, 2nd edition, New York, NY: Routledge, 2004, p. 399.

⁷³ G. Genette, *Paratexts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 1.

Nevill Coghill's modernisation⁷⁴ and my well-thumbed English-Afrikaans dictionary, but all the while it was becoming clear to me that a bilingual dictionary is, as Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere put it, "an object lesson in the inadequacy of any concept of equivalence as literary sameness".⁷⁵

Close translation is an arduous enterprise and therefore relatively joyless. As I began to translate more freely, I also translated with greater verve. My translation of the General Prologue is still very close to the source text, though there are flashes of creativity. In the description of the Physician, for example, "He was a verray, parfit praktisour" (I.422) is rendered "Ons Arts was waarlik 'n geneesheer duisend", and his relationship with the medieval pharmaceutical industry,

For ech of hem made oother for to wynne –
Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne
(I.427-428)

is translated as

Dit was 'n mees bevorderlike spul
wat 'n geruime tyd hul sakke vul.

I saw the translation of the General Prologue as a test and had no intention of translating any of the *Tales*, with which I was, in any case, largely unacquainted. Five years' residence in England marked a clear caesura in the history of my translation.

1.5.2 Phase 2 (1961-1988)

When I returned from England to take up residence in Swaziland, I had little contact with speakers of Afrikaans, so it is not surprising that I only gradually took up the task again, but when we moved to Pretoria in 1968, the pace accelerated. By now my linguistic motivation had given place to an appreciation of Chaucer's literary genius and this enabled me to translate more freely and with enhanced enjoyment and, because I enjoyed what I was doing, I was increasingly adventurous.

⁷⁴ N. Coghill (transl.), *The Canterbury Tales*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951; D.B. Bosman, I.W. van der Merwe and L.W. Hiemstra, *Tweetalige Woordeboek*, 4de uitgawe, Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1962.

⁷⁵ S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere, *Translation, History and Culture*, London: Pinter, 1990, p. 11.

The translator George Craig speaks about “the excitement of actually translating: setting up a body of words which, for better or worse, can stand for the original”.⁷⁶

Reflecting on her own experience, Barbara Reynolds aptly says:

Enjoyment is an essential ingredient in the translation of a work of art The translator should feel an urge to convey as nearly as possible the enjoyment received from the original. It is not an exclusively altruistic desire. The impulse to recreate, in one’s own language, something that has given delight in another, is a self-fulfilling one. It is an operation of love⁷⁷

John Hale aptly writes along similar lines:

Yet more fundamentally translators enjoy translating. They enjoy thinking afresh about the resources of their own language in order to make it yield its nearest equivalent to a text in an alien one. They are at heart anthropologists, who find it enlightening to compare languages and to rethink the axioms of the home language. Their satisfactions, accordingly, are not so much monetary, or even proselytizing, as personal.⁷⁸

My appreciation of Chaucer was aided by the editions, modernisations and notes that mediated the text in its linguistic and cultural alterity to me. In this phase, I used Sisam’s edition of the Nun’s Priest Tale⁷⁹ and the single-tale editions in the Cambridge Educational series; edited by J. Winny for the Miller, the Wife of Bath and the Prioress,⁸⁰ A.C. Spearing for the Pardoner and the Reeve, and M. Hussey for the revision of the Nun’s Priest’s Tale.⁸¹ I also acquired various modernisations, though I seldom consulted them. Muriel Bowden’s commentary,⁸² acquired in 1966, helped with the revision of the General Prologue.

In the mid-1960s I became aware of the existence of a Dutch translation of the *Canterbury Tales*. I wrote to the translator, Adriaan Barnouw, care of Columbia University, of which he was an emeritus professor. He graciously replied and in a letter now, sadly, lost, advised me that his Dutch translation was out of print. He

⁷⁶ G. Craig, *Writing Beckett’s Letters*, Paris: The American University of Paris, [2011], p. 5.

⁷⁷ B. Reynolds, *The Pleasure Craft*, in *The Translator’s Art*; edited by W. Radice and B. Reynolds, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987, p. 129-130.

⁷⁸ J.K. Hale, *The Personal Element in Some Renderings of Milton’s Paradise Lost*, in *Literature in Translation*, London: Sangam, 1988, p. 92.

⁷⁹ K. Sisam (ed.), *The Nun’s Priest’s Tale*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1927.

⁸⁰ *The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale from the Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. J. Winny, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.

⁸¹ *The Nun’s Priest’s Prologue and Tale*; edited by M. Hussey, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.

⁸² M. Bowden, *A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, New York, NY: Macmillan, 1966.

expressed an interest in my translation and advised me never to agree to an expurgated publication, something he profoundly regretted having done when his translation was last published.

Barnouw died in 1968 and according to a notice of his death in the *New York Times*, he had “recently completed his version of ‘The Canterbury Tales’ which will appear in the Netherlands in paperback in unexpurgated form”.⁸³ This version eventually saw the light in 1974,⁸⁴ fully sixty years after the publication of his first attempts as *De Kantelberg-vertellingen*.⁸⁵ I acquired a copy of this edition soon afterwards and I have consulted it on numerous occasions, and, having had brief contact with the translator, I always did so with pleasure.

During this phase, the concept of audience first entered my consciousness. I thought I was translating purely for my own pleasure, but as Toury points out, even such “socially insignificant translation” involves the translator in the witting or unwitting simulation of relevant social norms.⁸⁶ As I have already indicated in Section 1.2.2, I was antagonistic to the then hegemonic Afrikaner establishment; in view of my hostile attitude, I did not think that I could comply with societal norms “which serve as criteria according to which actual instances of behaviour are evaluated”,⁸⁷ so, if I imagined readers, it was in terms of either outraging or enlightening them. At the time when I translated the Miller’s Tale and the Reeve’s Tale, John Vorster was the prime minister and his brother Koot was the moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, and between them they were a formidable bulwark of illiberalism. I derived immense pleasure from the bawdy in these two Tales, relishing the thought of how the gatekeepers of high culture would choke on “poephol” and “naai”, the sort of words that did not appear in print in those days.⁸⁸

⁸³ Obituary: Adriaan Barnouw ... , *New York Times*, 28 Sept. 1968, p. 33.

⁸⁴ A. Barnouw (vertaler), *De vertellingen van de pelgrims naar Kantelberg*, Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1954.

⁸⁵ A. Barnouw (vertaler), *De Kantelberg-vertellingen*, Haarlem: E.F. Bohn, 1916.

⁸⁶ Toury, A Handful of Paragraphs on 'Translation' and 'Norms', *Current Issues in Language and Society*, vol. 5, no. 1 & 2, 1998, p. 19.

⁸⁷ Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, p. 65.

⁸⁸ By the time my *Keur uit die Pelgrimsverhale* appeared in print in 1989, change was very much in the air. The earliest citations for *naai* and *poephol* in the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*, dele XI (2000) and XII (2005) are from E. le Roux, *Onse Hymie*, 1982, p. 10, and P.J. Haasbroek, *Lem*, 1993, p. 58.

In this situation, my translation could not be described as coherent with Afrikaans culture; however, Vermeer posits that coherence norms derive from knowledge of what is required to be “like everybody”, but also to be different from everybody,⁸⁹ or, as Celia Martín de León puts it:

The relevant factor for translation is not affiliation to one culture or the other, but the possibility of making use of certain cultural scaffoldings that allow for the interpretation of a text in a given situation. ... Translation is not directed towards one culture, but towards a more or less defined group of individuals who may share some cultural models but not others.⁹⁰

During the 1980s, there were dramatic changes in church and state that profoundly affected Afrikaner identity (these receive attention in Chapter 4). As a result of these changes, emotional Identification with Afrikaner dissidence enabled me to begin to envisage a possible audience for my translation.

By 1988, I had translated the General Prologue, the Miller’s Tale, the Reeve’s Prologue and Tale, the Wife of Bath’s Prologue, the Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale, the Prioress’s Prologue and Tale, Chaucer’s Tale of Sir Thopas and the Nun’s Priest’s Tale. I felt emboldened to submit drafts to three mainstream publishers. These drafts were praised, but rejected on the grounds of economic viability. However, the following year, Hans Kirsten published the tales I had completed at that stage,⁹¹ bringing the second phase of the translation process to a happy conclusion.

1.5.3 Phase 3 (1989-2013)

The publication of my *Keur uit die Pelgrimsverhale* was an important milestone. I shall revert to its reception in Section 1.6.5. For the present, suffice it to say that its publication served as encouragement for me to persevere and achieve the goal of an annotated translation, including the prose tales so often omitted by translators and modernisers. In 2013, I finally completed the task I had embarked on fully sixty years earlier.

⁸⁹ X. Du, “A Brief Introduction to Skopos Theory”, *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 2, no. 10, Oct. 2012, p. 2192.

⁹⁰ C. Martín de León, Skopos and Beyond, *Target*, vol. 20, no.1, 2008, p. 19.

⁹¹ J. Boje (vertaler), *’n Keur uit die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer*, Pretoria: Hans Kirsten, 1989.

During this final phase of my translating career, *The Riverside Chaucer* was indispensable to me, and David Wright's prose version and A.C. Cawley's annotations proved useful adjuncts.⁹² I acquired a second Dutch translation by Ernst van Altena,⁹³ published in 1995, when my translation was nearing completion. Together with Frank Hill's modernisation,⁹⁴ Van Altena's version was useful to me because it included *Melibee* and the *Parson's Tale* in an unabridged form.

From time to time I also consulted German translations by Martin Lehnert, Detlef Droese and Erich Zauner,⁹⁵ although my imperfect command of German limited their usefulness. There is also a translation by Fritz Kemmler, which I have not seen, though I have availed myself of Jörg Fichte's "Erläuterungen", published as the third volume of this work.⁹⁶

Societal norms are inherently unstable and, as Gideon Toury points out, "substantial changes, in the translational norms too, quite often occur within one's lifetime".⁹⁷ This certainly applied in my case: I was spurred on not only by the success referred to above, but also by the societal changes, which I experienced as liberating. In the end, Afrikaner nationalist hegemony had to yield, to be replaced by unaccustomed political impotence, revelations of horrific offences during the apartheid years, and eventually cultural sidelining. In consequence, the animosity that I felt during Phase 2 of the translation process gave way to heartfelt empathy.

Although I did not then know the concept of "norms" as used by Vermeer and Toury, I intuitively began to apply cultural norms in the revision of my text in the expectation of publication; for example, knowing how offensive blasphemy is in Afrikaans culture,⁹⁸ I toned down the *Wife of Bath's* "Ag, Here Jesus, as ek aan die

⁹² L. Benson (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer*; D. Wright (transl.), *The Canterbury Tales: a modern rendering*, London: Panther Books, 1965 (the 1985 reprint); A.C. Cawley (ed.), *Canterbury Tales*, London: Dent, 1958.

⁹³ E. van Altena (vertaler), *De Canterbury-verhalen*, Baarn: Ambo, 1995.

⁹⁴ F. Hill (transl.), *The Canterbury Tales: A rendering for modern readers*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1936.

⁹⁵ M. Lehnert (transl.), *Canterbury-Erzählungen*, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1987; D. Droese, *Canterbury-Erzählungen*, Zürich: Manesse Verlag, 1971; E. Zauner, *Die Geschichten der Canterbury Tales von Geoffrey Chaucer*, Frankfurt am Main: Haag & Herchen, 1992.

⁹⁶ J. Fichte, "Erläuterungen", in F. Kemmler (transl.), *Die Canterbury-Erzählungen: in Deutsche Prosa übertragen*, Band 3, München: Goldmann Verlag, 1989.

⁹⁷ Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, p. 62.

⁹⁸ A.E. Feinauer, *Die taalkundige gedrag van vloekwoorde in Afrikaans*, M.A.-verhandeling, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 1981, p. 12-13, 40 en 217.

tyd/weer t’rugdink van my jeug en joligheid ...” (III.469-470) to “Ag, hemel toggie ...”. This is a topic with which I deal at length in Section 3.5.1.

Finally, in contrast to the success of the publication of the *Keur*, my failure to find a publisher for the complete *Pelgrimsverhale* has brought awareness of what I later learned to identify as the Afrikaans literary polysystem in its “connection with power and patronage, ideology and poetics, with emphasis on the various attempts to shore up or undermine an existing ideology or an existing poetics”⁹⁹ and an understanding that acceptability does not necessarily entail acceptance.

1.6 PARTIAL PUBLICATION

In January 1988, I approached some mainstream publishers with a view to the possible publication of a selection of what was then completed of my translation of the *Canterbury Tales*. Among the replies received, Petra Grütter of Tafelberg wrote:

Dis werklik ’n pragtige vertaling van ’n Engelse on vergeetlikheid. –’en dit was fraai versier met kruie soet/en ewe fraai het hy ’n mens begroet/met geur van soethout en valeriaan’ – lieflik. Ek het dit met groot waardering gelees. U het die karakteristieke oertige tekstuur van Chaucer baie mooi in Afrikaans opgevang. Dit wil gedoen word.

She regretted that publication would not be commercially viable, but concluded: “Maar ek wil graag vir u sê dat dit tog wel ’n groot vreugde is om te lees.”¹⁰⁰

Similarly, F.J. de Jager of Van Schaik reported that although “ons leser en onself besonder baie van u werk gehou het” and although a Chaucer expert had vouched for the high quality of the translation, the firm lacked the production capacity to publish it.¹⁰¹

In May 1989, a scheduled speaker at a meeting of the Unisa Medieval Association was unavailable and I was asked to stand in with a reading of my version of the Miller’s Tale. The venue was packed and afterwards a lady in the audience – and I regret I do not know who it was – asked if she could show a copy to a publisher she knew. As a result, I was contacted by Hans Kirsten, who was interested in publishing everything I had translated up to that point: the General Prologue, the

⁹⁹ A. Lefevere, Proust’s Grandmother and the Thousand and One Nights, in *Translation, History and Culture*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁰ Brief van (mev.) Petra Grütter, Redaksie: Fiksie, Tafelberg, 5 Jan. 1988.

¹⁰¹ Brief van F.J. de Jager, Assistent-Redakteur, J.L. van Schaik, 25 Mei 1988.

Miller's Tale, the Reeve's Tale, the Wife of Bath's Prologue, the Pardoner's Prologue and Tale, the Prioress's Prologue and Tale, Chaucer's Tale of Sir Thopas and the Nun's Priest's Tale.

I believe there were three reasons why Hans Kirsten took on the project. The mainstay of his business was the publication of school textbooks for the then Department of Education and Training, and he wished to break through to a wider market with what might be regarded as a prestige product; he hoped that Chaucer's popular reputation as a salacious story-teller would help to sell the book (I recall his mentioning schoolboys reading under the blankets by torchlight); and he believed that the translation had literary merit and might qualify for an Akademie award.

'n Keur uit die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer was duly launched on 20 September 1989, and the launch function provided the first potential purchasers with an opportunity to judge the book by its cover, so to speak – to appraise the paratext, the liminal devices, including the title, cover design, introduction and notes, which mediate the interpretation of a text to the reader. Gérard Genette describes this paratext as “a threshold ... which offers to anyone and everyone the possibility either of entering or of turning back”.¹⁰²

1.6.1 Title: *'n Keur uit die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer*

My title refers to “die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer”. The tales are “vertellings” rather than “verhale”, but the term “verhale” sounds more ordinary and arresting. “Pelgrims” might suggest a religious text, like *Pilgrim's Progress*, and on publication, an evangelical acquaintance who had authored a treatise on eschatology did indeed suggest an exchange of books, something which (fortunately) did not happen. Confusion might also arise because there is a whole genre of “pelgrimsverhalen” in Dutch, narrating pilgrims' experiences en route to various shrines.¹⁰³ Furthermore, this version of my translation is unique in not referring to Canterbury in its title, as a representative sample of other translation titles do: *Canterburyfortællingerne* (Danish), *Les Contes de Cantorbéry* (French), *Kentārbārijski razkazi* (Bulgarian), *Hikāyāt Kāntirbiri* (Arabic) and *Kantelbolei gushi*

¹⁰² G. Genette, Introduction to the Paratext, *New Literary History*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1991, p. 261.

¹⁰³ P. Post, *Pelgrimsverhalen: Mapping the Field*.

(Chinese).¹⁰⁴ Despite these indications to the contrary, I find my title succinct and appropriate, as it puts the emphasis on the multivocality of the narrative (the “tales”) rather than the devotional frame (“Canterbury”), which has less appeal and limited resonance for present-day readers in an increasingly secular society.

1.6.2 Cover

Commenting on the cover of the *Riverside Chaucer*, Stephanie Trigg remarks on the bright red and blue of the picture. These colours contribute to an overall impression of “the ‘medieval’ nature of the text it introduces”.¹⁰⁵ Apart from black, red (gules) and blue (azure) were colours commonly used in medieval heraldry,¹⁰⁶ in conjunction with either gold (or) or silver (argent). Red (vermillion) and blue (ultramarine) are prominent in medieval manuscript illumination.¹⁰⁷ For the cover of my *Keur*, the publisher commissioned the artist René Nel to produce a “medieval” picture of eating and drinking (see overleaf).

The illustration can be faulted as the essential of bread for trenchers is missing from the table setting,¹⁰⁸ but the intention is clearly to hold out the promise of a metaphorical feast for the reader. To further hint at the nature of the feast, one of the diners¹⁰⁹ is boorishly monopolising the wine and, at the publisher’s request, a male observer of the women at the table, one with a low décolletage, should have a lascivious expression. I cannot say how successfully this is communicated to the prospective reader, but the cheerfulness of the picture, also executed in bright red (or cerise in the final cover) and blue, clearly offers a liminal inducement to give the book a second glance.

¹⁰⁴ Translations and Adaptations. Global Chaucers.

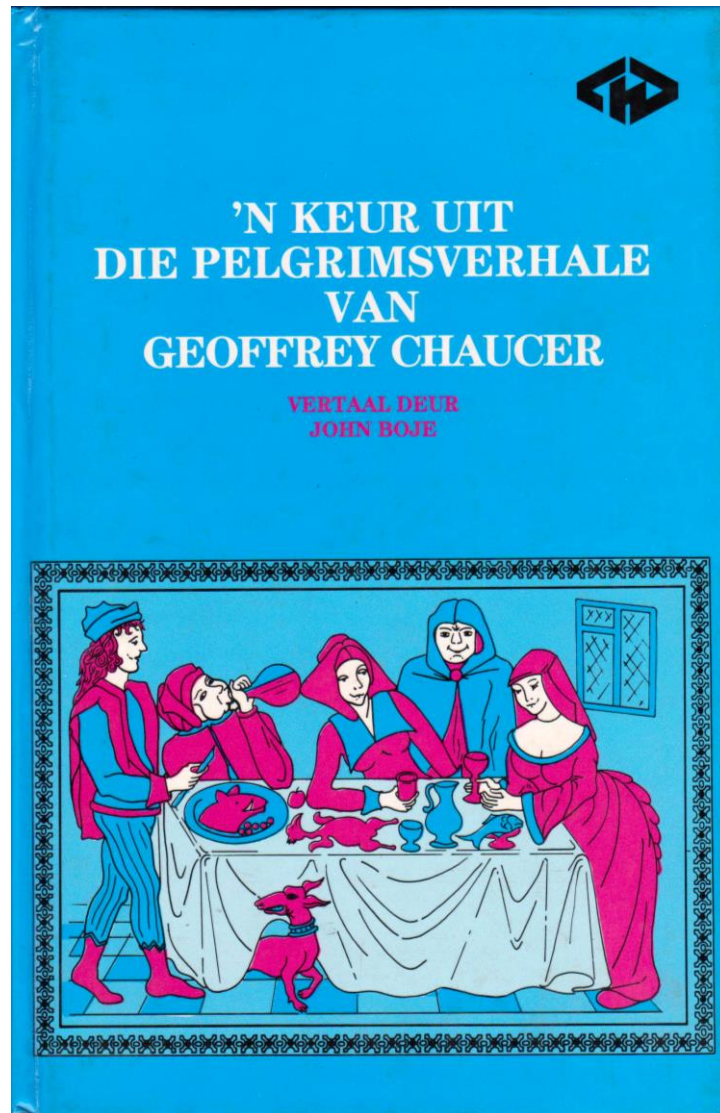
¹⁰⁵ S. Trigg, *Congenial Souls*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p. xiii and 12.

¹⁰⁶ Medieval Heraldry. Erenow website.

¹⁰⁷ Red, a rich colour that was easily produced, was widely used in illustrations to mark major festivals in Calendars (red-letter days) and to set off rubrics in service books. The English word “miniature” derives ultimately from the Latin *minium*, red lead, vermillion, and “rubric” from *rubeus*, red (cf. F. Spiegel, *Colouring the Past*). Blue, which was the most expensive pigment, signified purity and was generally used for the Virgin Mary’s robes (cf. *Pigments through the Ages: Medieval Age*).

¹⁰⁸ M.W. Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004, p. 158-159, 168-169.

¹⁰⁹ Recognisable from the tavern scene facing p. 16 in D. Brewer, *Chaucer and his World*, London: Eyre Methuen, 1978.



Cover of 'n Keur uit die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer

1.6.3 Introduction by a known author

Commendation by significant literary figures is important in promoting the reception of a new work. As André Lefevere notes: “In order for a foreign writer to be accepted in a native system, translations of his or her work need to be supplemented by critical appreciations from the pen of a major literary figure within the potentially receiving system.”¹¹⁰ For this reason, the publisher asked Henning Pieterse to edit the text and provide an introduction. At the time, Pieterse, now Professor in the Department of Afrikaans, German and French at the University of the Free State and an established poet, was a lecturer in Afrikaans at the University

¹¹⁰ A. Lefevere, quoted in A.J.T. Kleyn, 'n Sisteemteoretiese kartering van die Afrikaanse literatuur vir die tydperk 2000-2009 ..., PhD-proefskrif, Universiteit van Pretoria, 2013, p. 19.

of Pretoria and already a known figure in Afrikaans literary circles. At the ceremony at which I received the Akademie Prize for Translated Work, he was awarded the Eugène Marais Prize for a first or early belletristic publication in Afrikaans, with his poetry collection *Alruin*.¹¹¹ Pieterse's introduction outlined the life and work of Chaucer, accounted for his enduring literary importance and concluded with a commendation of my translation. His valued judgement as a poet was: "Die verse is steeds lig en soepel – geen geringe prestasie nie." And as a linguist, he was confident that "die leser [...] aangenaam verras [sal] wees oor die talle vondste wat die Afrikaanse vertaling oplewer".¹¹² Pieterse's approval of the liveliness of the translation is consistent with Chaucer's own attitude to translation as "creative reformulation".¹¹³

1.6.4 Endnotes

I provided endnotes to assist the reader's understanding by making foreignising aspects of the text accessible. My notes did not include definitions of words that could be looked up in a dictionary or elucidations of references to the Bible, such as the story of Jephthah's daughter, or to classical mythology. This was perhaps a mistake, as one reviewer suggested that unfamiliar Afrikaans words, such as "hakkenei", "geule" and "tremel" could have been glossed,¹¹⁴ and present-day readers may not be all that familiar with the Scriptures and almost certainly are unfamiliar with most classical allusions. The loss of the richness of allusion was not my intention, but it might be a deliberate strategy in some adaptations of Chaucer: in an article on the BBC's telefilm adaptation of the Miller's Tale, Katrin Rupp states quite categorically: "Dropping the biblical and chivalric subtexts accommodates a modern audience that can no longer be expected to understand allusions to such concepts."¹¹⁵

Kwame Appiah favours annotation as a means by which a translator is enabled to mediate one culture to another – what he calls a "thick translation". The term is derived from Clifford Geertz's use of "thick description" in characterising the work of

¹¹¹ Afrikaanse dosent wen Eugène Marais-prys; Alumnus wen Akademieprys vir vertaalde Pelgrimsverhale, *Unisa Nuus*, Junie/Aug. 1990, p. 3.

¹¹² H. Pieterse, Inleiding, in J. Boje (vertaler), *'n Keur uit die Pelgrimsverhale*, p. xii.

¹¹³ H. Phillips, Chaucer's French Translations, *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, no. 37, 1993, p. 82.

¹¹⁴ L.V. [Leonie Viljoen], Review in *Unisa English Studies*, 28:1 (April 1990), p. 64.

¹¹⁵ K. Rupp, Getting Modern on Alisoun's Ass, *Neophilologus*, vol. 98, no. 2, 2014, p. 346.

the ethnographer as an intense engagement with and an interpretive negotiation (translation) of cultural difference.¹¹⁶ In the same way, a translator can use explanatory material to locate a text in its rich cultural context. Thick translation therefore represents a form of Schleiermacher's dictum of taking the reader to the source,¹¹⁷ because as Appiah says, "what counts as a fine translation of a literary text – which is to say a taught text – is that it should preserve for us the features that make it worth teaching".¹¹⁸ The adequacy of a translation is therefore dependent on an understanding of the reading process¹¹⁹ and, as Venuti puts it, "the process of reading other people's readings of individual texts has no end".¹²⁰ Respecting alterity, a thick translation provides the target reader with a "literary education".¹²¹ This was confirmed for me when I heard that Prof. Heinrich Ohloff of Pretoria University was recommending my text to his Middle Dutch students. However, I was taken aback when someone told me that she found the notes more interesting than the text, such a divorce between literature and pedagogy being clearly contrary to Appiah's stated intention in this regard.

1.6.5 Reception

1.6.5.1 Akademie Prize for Translated Work

In October 1989, Hans Kirsten submitted the *Keur* to the Akademie for consideration by its Literary Commission, then made up of Professors Elize Botha, A.P. Grové, M.G. Scholtz, F.R. de K. Gilfillan, Réna Pretorius, D.H. Strauss and J.P. Smuts.¹²² I was notified of the award on 23 April 1990;¹²³ it was presented at a formal ceremony on 22 June. A tribute, read by Prof. Elsa Nolte on behalf of Prof. Smuts, sketched the background to the award and indicated why I qualified for it:

Die Akademieprys vir vertaalde werk is veertig jaar gelede ingestel om erkenning te gee aan persone wat deur hulle nougesette en liefdevolle arbeid die Afrikaanse literatuur uitgebrei het met vertalings uit die wêreldliteratuur.

¹¹⁶ T. Hermans, Cross-cultural Translation Studies as Thick Translation, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 66, no 3, 2003, Section 1.

¹¹⁷ K.M. Parker, Translation and Interpretation, Honours dissertation, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, 2012, p. 8.

¹¹⁸ K. Appiah, Thick Translation, *Callaloo*, vol. 16, no 4, Autumn 1993, p. 816.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ L. Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 70.

¹²¹ Appiah, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, p. 427.

¹²² Brief van (mev.) A. le Roux, Fakulteitsekretaresse, aan mnr. Hans Kirsten, 12 Okt. 1989.

¹²³ Brief van D.J.G. Geldenhuys, Hoofsekretaris, 23 April 1990.

Vertalings uit die klassieke, uit Spaans, Italiaans en Duits, en ook van enkele Shakespearedramas is al bekroon. Keer op keer het hierdie vertalers gedemonstreer dat 'n jong taal soos Afrikaans ryk en soepel genoeg is om oortuigend gestalte te gee aan die werk van uiteenlopende skrywers wat dikwels ver van ons taal en ons tyd verwyder is.

Tot hierdie belangrike groep vertaalde werke moet nou nog een bygevoeg word, naamlik John Boje se baie geslaagde omsetting van dele uit die *Canterbury Tales*, wat hy gebundel het onder die titel *'n Keur uit die pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer*.

Chaucer het sy meesterwerk meer as ses honderd jaar gelede geskryf, en die vertaling van so 'n teks skeep uiteraard groot probleme. Daar is talle leesversperrings in die Oud-Engelse teks, maar daar word van die vertaler baie meer gevra as om net woordeboekbetekenisse na te speur. Hy moet hom op hoogte stel van die kodes van die tyd sodat hy die atmosfeer van die oorspronklike werk so getrou as moontlik kan herskep. Die subtiele nuanses van woorde binne hulle konteks moet gepeil word en die regte toonwaarde van woorde moet behou word. Daarby moet die vertaler 'n fyn balans handhaaf tussen 'n te letterlike en daarom maklik stroewe vertaling, en 'n te vrye herskepping wat te ver weg is van die oorspronklike teks. Boonop het Chaucer van eindryme gebruik gemaak, en mnr. Boje het besluit om die uitdaging te aanvaar om hierdie patroon in die Afrikaanse vertaling deur te voer.

Met sy vertaling van Chaucer se *Canterbury Tales* toon John Boje dat hy teksetrou én leesbaar kan vertaal. Chaucer praat inderdaad twintigste-eeuse Afrikaans sonder dat sy reis deur die eeue hom stroop van die kwaliteite wat hom een van die groot skrywers van alle tye maak.¹²⁴

The first paragraph of this tribute echoes Schleiermacher's proposition of moving the reader to the author with the objective of enriching the target culture by means of a foreignising translation. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who was intensely involved in the movement for German unification, constructed a cultural concept of German nationality based on the German language and legitimated by Protestant theology. He saw foreignisation in translations as a means of resisting the dominant French culture, which made use of domestication in translating foreign literature.¹²⁵ Schleiermacher's focus was not merely ethnocentric, as it was specifically directed to a limited educated elite, invested with the authority to influence "the whole evolution of a culture".¹²⁶ For the Akademie as elite cultural representatives of the Afrikaner nation, similarly conceptualised and ideologically situated, the appeal of

¹²⁴ Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, Akademieprys vir Vertaalde Werk aan mnr. John Boje. Huldigingswoord deur prof. J.P. Smuts.

¹²⁵ L. Venuti, *Genealogies of Translation Theory*, Schleiermacher, *traduction, terminologie, réduction*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1991, p. 135-137.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

an ethnocentric translation paradigm comes as no surprise. The tribute does not, however, suggest that foreignisation is desired, as the third paragraph shows.

If the focus of the first paragraph is on the receiving community, the third paragraph postulates that for the translator's assumed goal to be reached – Chaucer's speaking twentieth-century Afrikaans (domestication) – fidelity to the original is essential. This involves sensitivity to nuances of connotation, insight into the cultural context and a closeness to the original that maintains the distinction (which Jakobson makes, but Toury dismisses) between a translation and an adaptation. If the translator meets the challenge of retaining the formal aspects of the original work, this is seen as a further strength.

1.6.5.2 Publicity

In spite of the Akademie award, my translation enjoyed only limited publicity. There were brief notices in various media¹²⁷ and a full-page article in *Rapport*, illustrated with a photograph of me captioned "Geoffrey Chaucer"!¹²⁸ I was interviewed by André Terblanche on the Afrikaans service of the SABC and an abridged version of my "Nonnepriester se verhaal" was read on this channel. A brief (chaste) excerpt from "Die Meulenaar se verhaal" was published in *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*.¹²⁹

The Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge (FAK) expressed its satisfaction with the publication:

Vir die FAK wat oor die afgelope 60 jaar besondere pogings aangewend en ondersteun het om Afrikaans eers te vestig en later uit te bou, is hierdie kragtoer van u van besondere betekenis. U word gelukgewens en ons hoop dat hierdie bydrae en dié wat moontlik nog gaan volg, vir u en vir duisende lesers groot vreugde sal besorg.¹³⁰

Because of the prestige of the original, the translation was approved for distribution to public libraries. I participated in a National Reading Circle seminar,¹³¹ but felt my presentation had little impact compared with that of the popular raconteur Pieter

¹²⁷ *Pretoria News*, 22 Sep. 1989, p.3; *The Citizen*, 27 Sep. 1989 and 5 Feb. 1990, p. 6; *Kalender, Bylae tot Beeld*, 27 Sep. 1989; *De Kat*, Dec. 1989, p. 85; *Unisa News*, 17:1 (Jan./Feb. 1990); *Insig*, June 1990; *Tidings: Newsletter of the Independent Schools Council*, Spring 1990.

¹²⁸ 'n Afrikaanse Chaucer, *Rapport-Tydskrif*, 22 Oct. 1989.

¹²⁹ Die Meulenaar se Verhaal, *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, Jg. 27, nr. 4, Nov. 1989, p. 106-108.

¹³⁰ Brief van A.J.J. Visser, Komiteesekretaris, FAK, 14 Mei 1990.

¹³¹ Nasionale Leeskringseminaar, Welkom, 26 en 27 September 1989.

Pieterse or Maretha Maartens's graphic description of sexual ineptitude on the back seat of a car.¹³² I was invited to address a seminar on literary translation at the University of South Africa¹³³ and interacted with students of Chaucer at the University of Pretoria on a number of occasions.

Hans Kirsten was greatly hampered by the lack of a distribution network and personally put in the footwork to try to persuade retailers to stock the book, meeting with commercially induced reluctance to do so. Yet *Beeld* reported in December 1989 that the *Keur* was in the top five Afrikaans fiction titles in Van Schaik's "Trefferlys".¹³⁴ The University of Pretoria library bought no fewer than four copies of the book, in one of which (in truly medieval fashion) some perplexed student has since written English glosses above the Afrikaans text.

1.6.5.3 Reviews

Henning Pieterse's praise for my handling of rhyme and rhythm was endorsed by another poet, Johann de Lange, who wrote:

... in die klompie verhale wat volg is dit telkens Boje se vernuf met die rymende koeplet (wat selfs Afrikaans se groot Rymer, D.J. Opperman 'n go gee) wat opval. Dit is 'n vorm wat byna bomenslike eise aan die digter stel en baie selde slaag.

In Afrikaans het Opperman se versdrama *Vergelegen* en Eitemal se vertaling van die Middelnederlandse epos *Reinaard die Jakkals* swaar gebuk gegaan onder die onbeholpe hantering van die rymende koeplet. Eers met Van Wyk Louw se meesterlike *Raka* het ons 'n geslaagde en subtiele hantering daarvan gekry.

De Lange goes on to commend my command of Afrikaans:

Wat verder opval in verband met John Boje se vertaling is die aardsheid van sy Afrikaans. Die landelike, boertige, ruig agtergrond, Chaucer se mensekennis en die geilheid van sy storievertellers en hulle verhale maak *Die Pelgrimsverhale* ideal vir vertaling in Afrikaans. Dit is dan ook tot die krediet van Boje dat sy Afrikaans sommer baie lekker op die tong kom lê.¹³⁵

¹³² M. Maartens, *'n Pot vol winter*, HAUM-Literêr, Pretoria, 1989.

¹³³ Departement Linguistiek, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, Seminaar oor Literêre Vertaling, 24 Sept. 1990; *Studiebrief TAALKU-F 108/1990*, p. 10-22.

¹³⁴ Trefferlys, *Beeld*, Desember 1989.

¹³⁵ J. de Lange, in Exclusive Communiqué, 6, *Weekly Mail*, Aug. 1989.

Ironically, it is precisely these two attributes that were roundly contradicted by the highly influential poet and literary scholar T.T. Cloete in a devastating review of the book. The metre and rhyme, he contends,

het Boje gedwing tot talle en talle stoplappes, sintaktiese ongewoonhede, ... gesogte woorde en baie ander onnatuurlikhede. ... Boje het probeer om Chaucer se sappige taal na te doen, en hy slaag ook wel partykeer daarin, ... maar meestal word dit 'n vreemde mengsel van onnatuurlike, gedwonge taal en spontane vertellings. ... Aan die een kant beïndruk Boje 'n mens deur sy hantering van Afrikaans en sy vermoë om Chaucer se Middeleeuse wêreld op te roep, maar aan die ander kant weer, is die Afrikaanse weergawe vol lomphede.¹³⁶

From the introductory paragraphs of Cloete's review it becomes evident that he regards Chaucer as a very great poet who should be read in the original. Not only does he believe that all poetry is untranslatable – the archaism of Chaucer's language is essential to his poetic achievement: "Neem daardie taal weg ... en baie gaan verlore." Cloete's attitude reflects the then conventional approach to literary translation, which proceeds on the assumption that translations are, by definition, inferior to an exalted original. Ignoring the fact that most readers know authors such as Dante and Dostoyevsky only in translation, the literary pundit insists that literature should be read in the original: "Taking the supremacy of the original for granted from the start, the study of translation then serves merely to demonstrate that original's outstanding qualities by highlighting the errors and inadequacies of ... translations of it."¹³⁷

This disparagement of translation was taken up by a letter writer, who disagreed vehemently:

As [Cloete] sê dat 'n groot deel van die bekoring om Chaucer vandag te lees in sy taalgebruik lê, dan impliseer dit dat die oorspronklike teks nog met plesier gelees word. Ek betwyfel nie dat Boje, Cloete en nog 'n handjievol ander kenners dit doen nie, maar vir die gewone leser (Afrikaans- én Engelssprekend) is die Middelenegels eerder 'n struikelblok as 'n bron van vreugde.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ T.T. Cloete, Vertaling van Chaucer vol lomphede, *Beeld*, 30 Okt. 1989. It must be pointed out that the title of any article in a newspaper which influences the way in which the article is read is provided by a sub-editor, not by the author of the piece.

¹³⁷ T. Hermans, Translation Studies and a New Paradigm, in *The Manipulation of Literature*; edited by T. Hermans, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, p. 8.

¹³⁸ J. du Toit, Kritiek op vertaling van Chaucer onbillik, *Beeld*, 23 Nov. 1989.

I was wounded by Cloete's review, for I believe that Van Coller is correct in his assessment:

Daar is voldoende bewyse dat resensies 'n manier het om gekanoniseerde uitspraak te raak. ... Daarom is die impak van 'n resensie op die beeld van 'n skrywer of digter baie belangrik en skud 'n skrywer of digter moeilik 'n bepaalde etiket af.¹³⁹

However, it must be acknowledged that Cloete's approach was typical of the Afrikaans literary polysystem, in which translations have seldom achieved more than peripheral status, as I indicate in Section 4.4 below.

1.6.5.4 Sales

Unfortunately, I have no knowledge of how many copies of the book were printed and how many were sold, but I remember my surprise, when after a relatively short period, the publisher advised me that remaining copies were going to be pulped. Over the years, I lost touch with Hans Kirsten, and the business went into voluntary liquidation in September 2002.¹⁴⁰

1.6.5.5 Conclusion regarding the reception of the Keur

It is difficult to draw any coherent conclusion from what has been said above because of the conundrum of theoretical acceptability versus practical acceptance. That the translation was acceptable to a segment of the audience culture is evident from the Akademie award and scattered favourable responses. However, the book had minimal impact, as is evident from limited media attention and poor sales. I am very grateful to Hans Kirsten for investing in the publication, and acknowledge that perhaps the smallness of his operation militated against wider publicity and better sales. But then, if more people had bought the translation, more might have disapproved of it. I hope that with the passage of time, the complete translation will be acceptable to a wider audience, but I do not expect this acceptability to transmute into the acceptance of greater public awareness or physical publication.

¹³⁹ H. van Coller, quoted in A.J.T. Kleyn, 'n Sisteemteoretiese kartering van die Afrikaanse literatuur vir die tydperk 2000-2009, p. 79.

¹⁴⁰ South African Companies. Website.

1.7 INTRODUCING *DIE PELGRIMSVERHALE*

The *Keur uit die Pelgrimsverhale* was merely a stage along the way to a complete translation. The essential progress made along the way was in liberating the translation from its dependence on the source text. I would like to illustrate this process by comparing my translation of the first eighteen lines of the General Prologue from circa 1960 with the current text. I am able to reconstruct the original opening lines, because it was the beginning and I was young and foolishly proud of my achievement. I record these lines here (not without embarrassment) alongside the final version, and add a few comments that illustrate the thinking that underlay some of the changes made.

c.1960:

Wanneer April sy soete reënbuie bring
wat Maart se droogte heeltemal deurdring
en elke aar met daardie vog bedek
wat kragtig blomme tot die lewe wek;
wanneer die westewind met soete geur
sy asem uitblaas op swak lote deur
die bos en hei, en die jong son gegaan
het tot die helfte van die Ram se baan,
en die klein voëltjies opgeruimd uitsing
wat hele nagte met oë oop verbring
(Natuur en lus dwing tot hul handelswyse),
dan gaan mense graag op pelgrimsreise
as palmers op te spoor die vreemde strande
van verre heiliges in vele lande;
veral uit elke graafskap se uithoek
van Engeland gaan hul Kantelberg besoek
en die geseënde, heil'ge martelaar
in siekte altyd aan hul sy geskaar.

(l.1-18)

2019:

Wanneer Aprilmaand milde reënbuie bring
wat Maart se dorheid worteldiep deurdring
en sap laat opstoot in die plantegroei,
waardeur dit kragtig kom tot volle bloei;
wanneer Zephuros ook soet asemstote
laat walm oor die nuwe knoppe en lote
in bos en hei, en die fris jong son nou juis
die tweede helfte van die Ram deurkruis,
en voëltjies sing met opgewekte klank,
want hulle slaap oop-oë heelnag lank –
so prikkel die natuur hul handelswyse –
dan gaan mense graag op pelgrimsreise,
en swerwers hunker na die vreemde strande
van verre heiligdomme in vele lande.
Veral, uit elke graafskap, elke hoek
van Engeland, gaan hul Kantelberg besoek
en Thomas, die geseënde martelaar
in siekte altyd aan hul sy geskaar.

The first line of General Prologue, “Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote ...” has been described as “perhaps the most controversial line in the *Canterbury Tales*”.¹⁴¹ Scansions such as “Whan that Ápril wíth his shóores sóte” or even “Whan that Ápril with his shóores sóte”¹⁴² determinedly undermine the dramatic impact of the stress on the first syllable of the poem, the appropriateness of which is confirmed by Chaucer’s carefully constructed 18-line sentence in which, after a succession of

¹⁴¹ R. Evans, Whan that Aprill(e)?, *Notes and Queries*, vol. 202, 1 June 1957, p. 234.

¹⁴² E.G. Stanley, Chaucer’s Metre after Chaucer, *Notes and Queries*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1 March 1989, p. 13.

subordinate clauses, the main verb is introduced by the parallel stress pattern of “Thánne lónge fólk ...”. My opening line is “Wanneer Aprilmaand milde reënbuie bring ...” Although “wanneer” in ordinary conversation has initial stress [ˈvənər], as the first word of a literary work it would normally be read as [vəˈne:r].¹⁴³ The Afrikaans text is therefore an ordinary iambic pentameter, which not only forfeits the forceful impact of the headless Chaucerian line, but acquires a gentle meditative air on account of the interplay of nasal [n], [m] and [ŋ] consonants, and the liquid [r] and [l] sounds in combination with the long vowels (reminiscent of Tennyson’s “immemorial elms”¹⁴⁴). After this start, however, the initial stress in “dán gaan mense graag op pelgrimsreise” gains in dramatic impact.

In line 2 the poet speaks of “the droogte of March”. The change from “droogte” to “dorheid” in this line is indicative of my transition from translating words to translating within a cultural context. This is a vital advance, for as Edward Sapir, the anthropologist-linguist, so clearly perceived, “no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels”.¹⁴⁵

The word “droogte” carries a range of connotations that renders it inappropriate in this context; a dry spell in England is not the equivalent of a “droogte” in South Africa. In Greenwich, the average rainfall in March, calculated over the period 1841-1940, was 40 mm,¹⁴⁶ and one could expect 16 rainfall days.¹⁴⁷ From a medieval weather diary kept by William Merle,¹⁴⁸ it is evident that the number of rain days in 1337-1344, compared to modern records, fell within the normal range.¹⁴⁹ By contrast, June is the driest month in the interior of South Africa, with an average rainfall of only 9 mm.¹⁵⁰ In South Africa, the occurrence of less than 75% of the average rainfall is defined as a severe drought and a shortfall of 80% results in crop

¹⁴³ *Uitspraakwoordeboek van Afrikaans*, saamgestel deur T.H. le Roux en P. de Villiers Pienaar, 5de uitgawe, Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1976.

¹⁴⁴ Tennyson, “Shepherd’s Song”.

¹⁴⁵ Sapir quoted in D.Katan, *Translating Cultures*, Manchester: St Jerome, 1999, p. 74.

¹⁴⁶ J.A. Hart, “The droogte of March”: A Common Misunderstanding, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 4, no. 4, Winter 1963, p. 528.

¹⁴⁷ March Weather Averages for London, UK. HolidayWeather.com.

¹⁴⁸ *Merle’s Ms. Consideraciones Temperiei pro 7 Annis*, London: E. Stanford, 1891.

¹⁴⁹ K. Pribyl, The Study of the Climate of Medieval England, *Weather*, vol. 69, no 5, May 2014, p. 117.

¹⁵⁰ South Africa Travel Guide. Safari Bookings.

losses and will have disastrous socio-economic consequences.¹⁵¹ As a result, the local connotations of “droogte” are very different. At the end of the South African War in 1902, farmers returned to a devastated countryside in the grip of the worst drought since 1862 – from January to September 1903, the Free State received only 226 mm of rain, compared to an annual average of 606 mm for the period 1879-1901.¹⁵² Undercapitalised and lacking marketable skills, many were impelled to escape rural immiseration by joining the urban proletariat in the burgeoning mining towns. A classic Afrikaans novel, titled *Droogte*,¹⁵³ describes this descent into misery and played its part in embedding the horror of the word and its cultural associations in the national mythology. In revising my translation, I therefore opted for “dorheid”.

Because so much of our rain comes in the form of violent thunderstorms, the run-off of which erodes the land, “soete reënbuie” became “milde reënbuie”, because “milde” is redolent of gentle, persistent and beneficent rain. So one word had to be toned down and another augmented to accommodate the text to the deep-rooted emotional reactions of the target culture.¹⁵⁴

The nonce word “worteldiep” for “to the roote” in line 2 capitalizes on the Afrikaans language’s facility in compounding (see Section 3.4.2) to express the penetrative power of the right kind of rain.

Over the years I tinkered with my translation of lines 3 and 4, “And bathed every veyne in swich licour / Of which vertu engendered is the flour”, but eventually realised that I had to abandon the bedek / wek rhyme in order to rethink the couplet completely. The same “root and branch” approach applied to the next four lines.

I originally translated lines 7 and 8, “and the yonge sonne / Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne” as “... en die jong son gegaan/ het tot die helfte van die Ram se baan”. However, as the “halve cours” is assumed to mean the second half of the

¹⁵¹ What is a drought? South African Weather Service.

¹⁵² A.P.J. van Rensburg, Die Ekonomiese Herstel van die Afrikaner in die Oranjerivier-Kolonie 1902-1907, *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*, Jg. 30, deel 2, 1967, p. 306.

¹⁵³ C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1930.

¹⁵⁴ By the same token, a present-day reader who has seen television footage of drought conditions in Ethiopia, say, would be uncomfortable with the well-nigh universal retention of “drought” in modernisations of the *Canterbury Tales*. See also P. Beidler, Chaucer and the Trots, *The Chaucer Review*, vol.19, no.4, 1985, p. 291.

sun's journey through the sign of Aries,¹⁵⁵ I re-imagined the second line as “die tweede helfte van die Ram deurkruis”. There are not many words that rhyme with “kruis”, but “nou juis” offered the opportunity of indicating that the sun was only just past the mid-point and “nou” gave the narrative dramatic immediacy. Furthermore by replacing the spondee of the “jong son”¹⁵⁶ with two iambs, “die fris jong son”, I suggested the vitality which the “jong son” lacked, as in a South African context it may have suggested weakness, as in “sonnetjie”.

Line 9, “And smale foweles maken melodye”, is often quoted on account of its melodious cadence. In my first translation, it was particularly unmelodious because of the unwarranted stress on “die” and the distorted stress imposed by its final position on “sing”. The rhyme with “uitsing” is, in any case, unsatisfactory, because the normal Afrikaans sense of “uitsing” is sing to the end, e.g. *'n Psalm uitsing*,¹⁵⁷ and the non-existent “verbring” instead of “deurbring” in the next line was obviously chosen for the sake of the final-syllable stress. The refashioned version addresses these defects and replaces “opgeruimde” with “opgewekte”, the etymology of which links the concepts of high spirits and wakefulness.

In translating line 13, “And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes ...”, I was, like many an inexperienced translator, afraid to take risks. Here this is demonstrated by the retention of “palmeres” and the lame use of “op te spoor”. Given that Chaucer uses “palmer” and “pilgrim” synonymously, the beauty of the interpretational liberty that I subsequently took is that the two lines

dan gaan mense graag op pelgrimsreise,
en swerwers hunker na die vreemde strande ...

encompass the diverse motives for going on pilgrimage – from the Parson's to the Wife of Bath's –, while “hunker” covers their common disposition. My 1960 interpretation of “halwes” as saints, ‘heiliges’, rather than shrines was probably due

¹⁵⁵ V.J. DiMarco, Explanatory Notes, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p.799.

¹⁵⁶ When I translated the General Prologue, I used Pollard's text based on his Globe edition of Chaucer's *Works* (1898) and was therefore unaware of the emendation of “half” to “halve”. Emerson Brown Jr. has “half” and “cours” in separate feet and elucidates the “Lydgate effect” of their juxtaposition in *The Joy of Chaucer's Lydgate Lines*, in *Essays on the Art of Chaucer's Verse*, p. 278.

¹⁵⁷ *HAT. Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*, onder redaksie van F.F. Odendaal, e.a., 3de uitgawe, Midrand: Perskor, 1994, p. 1128.

to Coghill; it was probably from Skeat that I learnt that shrines, “heiligdomme” was more appropriate in this context.¹⁵⁸

In my early version of lines 15 and 16, “And specially from every shires ende / Of Engeland to Caunterbury they wende ...”, the translation “graafskap se uithoek” is metrically unsound because “uithoek” does not have a final-syllable stress. The change to “elke graafskap, elke hoek” solved the stress problem, and retained the useful rhyme pair hoek/besoek, and repeating “elke” lent emphasis to the popularity of the saint and his shrine.

My original version of lines 17 to 18, “The hooly blisful martir for to seke, / That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke”, also stuck too slavishly to the source text. The introduction of the saint’s name was a simple but effective strategy, all the more so since Chaucer’s hearers and readers would have known at once who the saint was, whereas Afrikaans readers need to be introduced to him. What these lines also show is that while the line content may change, a suitable rhyme is less readily abandoned.

1.8 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study is divided into five chapters.

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter reflecting on the aims of the study, the longitudinal approach and autoethnographic methodology adopted, some theoretical considerations and, in particular, the importance of difference throughout the thesis. The stages in the translation process are outlined, and the publication of a selection of the tales is discussed with reference to elements of the paratext and the reception that the book was accorded. The progress over the years is illustrated with comments on the first eighteen lines of the General Prologue. Finally, an outline of the thesis is provided.

Chapter 2 reflects on theoretical perspectives on translation, tracing the epistemological shift from positivism to relativity. I examine theories that have a bearing on my translation: readership, the equivalence paradigm, *Skopos*, descriptive translation studies, polysystem theory and the convergence of a variety of approaches in the field of cultural studies. A translator is, in the first place, a

¹⁵⁸ W. Skeat, *Glossarial Index to the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1899, p. 51.

reader, so the reader-oriented theories of Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss are considered. For Jauss, the response of the original audience is determinative, while Iser focuses on the subsequent reader. This distinction correlates with two streams in Chaucer criticism (the exegetical and humanist approaches). A reader's interpretation of the source text is reflected in the ensuing translation, which, in accordance with functionalist thinking, is directed to a target readership embedded in a particular culture. The reception of the translation is a function of the literary polysystem of that culture. Because Afrikaans culture was heavily ideologised for much of the twentieth century, the Afrikaans literary polysystem is examined in the light of the political, ecclesiastical, cultural systems before and after democratization in 1994.

The cultural turn in Translation Studies finally disposes of the equivalence paradigm by establishing the autonomy of a translated work. A translation is autonomous in the sense of its independence from the source text, which frees it from notions of equivalence and inevitable loss.¹⁵⁹ To illustrate this, I select some examples of what I regard as gains in my translation. A translation is not autonomous in relation to other texts; it forms part of a network of textual relations which deepen and multiply the readings individual readers will bring to it. Intertextuality is therefore discussed with reference to the influence of texts and mental predispositions.

Chapter 3 looks at the translation itself. I illustrate the foreignisation-domestication polarities with reference to two Dutch and one German translation. The impact of adherence to the formal elements of rhyme, metre and genre is examined. Using an adaptation of the methodological framework formulated by Christiane Nord, I then consider elements of my translation relating to the intercultural, interlinguistic and text-specific categories she puts forward. The intercultural section is concerned with terminology relating to the medieval church, feudal society and proper nouns. In the interlinguistic category, subsections deal with structure and syntax, metaphor and, idioms, speech patterns and forms of address. In the third broad category, I discuss the text-specific issues of oaths (swearing) and wordplay (puns).

¹⁵⁹ Cf. T.Hermans, Translation Studies and a New Paradigm. In: *The Manipulation of Literature*; edited by Theo Hermans. Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, p. 13.

Chapter 4 considers the importance that Chaucer accorded to his audience, both hearers and readers. The nature of his audiences through the ages is examined and the significance of translations of the *Canterbury Tales* for global audiences is adumbrated. A distinction is drawn between English-speaking and non-Anglophone readers served by modernisations and translations and the importance of linguistic difference is emphasised. Finally, a possible future audience for the completed Afrikaans translation is hypothesised.

Chapter 5 reflects on the central concerns of the adequacy and acceptability of the translation and its acceptability in relation to the Afrikaans literary polysystem and on the subsidiary issues investigated. I reflect on the suitability of autoethnography as a method for the research. While the value of the research lies in its uniqueness, a possible limitation is the methodology, which is only gradually achieving acceptance in the human sciences. The chapter concludes with some suggestions for future research, including the possibility of a comparative study of the *Canterbury Tales* in translation to assess the potential long-term contribution of such a translation.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, I examined the implications of the long time span over which I fashioned my translation, noting that it allowed for personal growth, heightened expertise, societal change, and the development of Translation Studies into a viable academic discipline (see Section 1.5). During the course of this development, the focus of attention shifted from the word as the unit of translation to the text, and beyond the text to the culture in which it is embedded. In this chapter, I trace the development of Translation Studies from the seemingly self-evident notion of lexical equivalence to an increasing awareness of the determinative role of culture. This development correlates with the move from high textual autonomy accorded a source text revered as a classic to increasing emphasis on the culturally determined needs of its target audience in translation.

Recognition of the autonomy of a translated text has far-reaching implications for the acknowledgement of possible gains in translation and the play of intertextuality.

2.2 EQUIVALENCE

The protean concept of equivalence has long held the field in translation theory and practice, and is still espoused by some linguistically oriented translation specialists, especially those interested in machine translation.¹

The proliferation of international organisations after the Second World War created a need for rapid translation, and stimulated translation research by specialists in the field of linguistics.² John Catford moved away from simple lexical equivalence to postulate more complex units of meaning: on the basis of the fact that “translation

¹ Cf. V. Hjørnager, *Description and Criticism*, in *Text, Typology and Translation*; edited by A. Trosborg, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997, p. 100; P. France, *Translation Studies and Translation Criticism*, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*; edited by P. France, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 6.

² R. Raley, *Machine Translation and Global English*, in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*; edited by M. Baker, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 420.

equivalence does not entirely match formal correspondence”,³ he and other specialists in the field of contrastive linguistics, including J.P. Vinay, J. Darbelnet and Werner Koller, sought to establish taxonomies of the divergences or “shifts” involved.⁴ The exponential growth in the capacity of computers has made possible the development of corpora,⁵ which have enhanced the sophistication of these linguists’ seminal studies, making machine translation a viable proposition for documents prioritising communication in institutional language.⁶ However, as both the input to and the output of computerised procedures are devoid of singularity, variety, complexity and subtlety, they are not relevant to literary translation, particularly into a minor language unaffected by the flattening effect of a fluent, transparent, non-metaphorical and unnuanced internationalisation that Steiner foresaw for English as long ago as 1975.⁷

Equivalence is based on a conception of translation as the replacement of semantic elements in a source text by corresponding elements in a target text. As such, it is always directional and therefore binary, postulating two points of reference for the translation process. The dichotomy goes all the way back to Cicero, who distinguished between word-for-word translation, *conversio ut interpres*, in the manner of an interpreter, and free translation, *conversio ut orator*, as practised by an orator who seeks to convey not only the substance but also the style of the original.⁸ His preference for the latter is expressed in his *De Optimo Genere Oratorum* (On the Best Kind of Orator) (45 B.C.), “for I saw my duty not as counting out words for the reader, but as weighing them out”.⁹ The distinction was developed and the preference for a creative translation was applied by Quintilian, who – anticipating Schleiermacher and twentieth-century functionalist theory – regarded Latin translations of Greek works as autonomous and possibly superior to their

³ J. Catford, quoted in J. Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*, 2nd edition, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 61. See also M.S. Malmkjær, *Linguistics and the Language of Translation*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005, p. 25-26.

⁴ Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*, p. 68.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.180-182.

⁶ L. Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 23.

⁷ G. Steiner, *After Babel*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992 (1975), p. 470. cf. L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, London: Routledge, 2002, p.1-6.

⁸ A. Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories*, 2nd edition, London: Routledge, 2014, p. 30.

⁹ Quoted in S. Bassnett, *Translation*, London: Routledge, 2014, p. 4.

source texts, and by St Jerome, who was responsible for the fourth-century Vulgate translation of the Bible.¹⁰

The equivalence paradigm found classic expression in the writings of Eugene Nida, another Bible-translator, whose “science of translating” was very popular in the 1960s.¹¹ Nida differentiated between formal and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence refers to literal, lexical equivalence, while dynamic equivalence seeks to convey the sense of the original in a form that would evoke a response in the target culture similar to that experienced by the original receptors. A formally equivalent translation is source-oriented, focusing on the message conveyed, and may have to use annotation to make the text comprehensible.¹² A dynamic translation aims at fluency of expression, achieved by employing “the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message”.¹³ The reiterated use of the term “message” reflects Nida’s concern for Bible translation, linking the translator to the missionary¹⁴ in the context of an essentialist view of humanity,¹⁵ in terms of which a sacred text from centuries ago can be fully comprehensible to people everywhere.

The dichotomies inherent in the equivalence paradigm have been articulated by various translation theorists in approaching the problem of the correspondence between source and target texts from different perspectives. Thus Peter Newmark distinguishes between semantic and communicative translation; Christiane Nord differentiates between documentary and instrumental equivalence. Gideon Toury draws a distinction between an *adequate* translation, defined by Itamar Even-Zohar as “a translation which realizes in the target language the textual relationships of a source text with no breach of its own [basic] linguistic system”¹⁶ and an *acceptable* translation, which adheres to norms deriving from the target culture.¹⁷

¹⁰ Bassnett, *Translation*, p. 5.

¹¹ France, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, p. 5, with reference to E.A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating*, Leiden: Brill, 1964.

¹² E. Nida, Principles of Correspondence, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by L. Venuti, 2nd edition, New York, NY: Routledge, 2004, p. 156, 161-2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹⁴ Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, p. 22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁶ Toury’s translation. Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1995, p. 56, fn. 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Equivalence theory is susceptible to a range of criticisms – linguistic, hermeneutic, logical, ideological and practical. It assumes the natural capacity of all languages to communicate equally effectively across discourses. This, Mary Snell-Hornby argues, is “an illusion of symmetry between languages which hardly exists beyond the level of vague approximations and which distorts the basic problems of translation”.¹⁸ The pursuit of equivalence results in an artificial naturalness, a valorization of an instrumental approach to language that reduces complexity to bland plainness,¹⁹ and nuance to explicit statement, misleading the reader and failing in the respect due to the original.²⁰

The perception of a text as a stable object “in which Truth is enshrined”, endowed with one invariable meaning,²¹ flies in the face of the central hermeneutic problem, identified by the theologian Rudolf Bultmann, that there are “no presuppositionless readings”.²² Similarly, the notion of a neutral translation innocent of ideological implications²³ is simplistic and unsustainable.

The binaries adduced by equivalence theorists are not the absolutes they appear to be, but arbitrary, essentializing, reductive categories in relation to a hypothetical continuum with an infinite number of possible gradations.²⁴ Schleiermacher presents the choice between foreignising and domestication in stark either/or terms,²⁵ but these binaries are not necessarily antithetical. Thus Toury claimed that adequacy and acceptability are poles between which a translation might hover. After the initial choice in favour of one or the other has been made,

it is not necessary that every single lower-level decision be made in full accord with it. We are still talking regularities, then, but not necessarily of any absolute

¹⁸ Cited in Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories*, p. 7.

¹⁹ Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 5.

²⁰ B. Hatim, *Teaching and Researching Translation*, 2nd edition, Harlow: Pearson, 2013, p. 115.

²¹ S. Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 3rd edition, p. 81.

²² Rudolf Bultmann, cited in G. Steiner, *After Babel*, p. 143; cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised edition, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1989, p. 331.

²³ A. Lefevere, Proust's Grandmother and the Thousand and One Nights, in *Translation, History and Culture*; edited by S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere, London: Pinter, 1990, p. 10-11.

²⁴ D. Robinson, The Limits of Translation, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, p. 20.

²⁵ J. Hadley, Theorizing in Unfamiliar Contexts, PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, Norwich, 2014; p. 39.

type. It is unrealistic to expect absolute regularities anyway, in any human domain.²⁶

And with reference to the source- and target-oriented categorization, Lambert and Van Gorp contend that while “the stylistic features of a given translation may be target-oriented, its socio-cultural references may still be drawn from the source text”, thus emphasising the translator’s selective strategies and the priorities that determine them.²⁷

My translation of the *Canterbury Tales* is both foreignising in its use of unfamiliar terminology relating to the Middle Ages and domesticating in its joyful appropriation of popular Afrikaans idiom. A foreignising effect may also be evident in the register used. This varies from tale to tale, depending on genre, with knightly romance at one end of the spectrum and the fabliaux at the other, and also within a tale. Thus Part 3 of “Die Ridder se Verhaal” with its stately description of the amphitheatre and the oratories and of the prayers offered there, has significantly more words that can be labelled “verouderd” or archaic (*skabrak*), “plegtig” or formal (*deer*), “deftig” or “posh” (*power*), “boektaal” or literary (*asmede*), “digterlik” or poetic (*aangedrewe*), or “weinig gebruiklik” or seldom used (*intensie*) than the other parts of the tale.²⁸

From the perspective of the outcome of a translation process, Jiří Levý has identified the binaries as “illusionary” and “anti-illusionary” with reference to translations that have appropriated the target-language culture to such an extent that they provide the illusion of not being translations at all.²⁹ This approach has a long history in English. It is exemplified by the thorough-going domestication of Sir John Denham’s partial translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (1656). “If Virgil must speak English,” Denham wrote, “it were fit he should speak not only as a man of this Nation, but as a man of this age.”³⁰ The emerging tradition of fluent domestication was consolidated by Dryden, who promoted “translation with latitude”, and Pope, who translated Homer “for his own age and his own nation”.³¹ As Venuti puts it:

²⁶ Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, p. 57.

²⁷ J. Lambert and H. van Gorp, On Describing Translations, in *The Manipulation of Literature*; edited by T. Hermans, London: Croom Helm, 1985, p. 46.

²⁸ HAT. *Handboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*.

²⁹ Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories*, p. 32; Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*.

³⁰ Quoted in L. Venuti, Neoclassicism and Enlightenment, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, p. 55.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

“English translation in this period was theorized and practised, essentially, as an appropriation of foreign literatures to serve domestic, cultural and political agendas.”³²

This was a tendency that became more pronounced as a result of Britain’s increasing assurance as an industrial and colonial power and the subsequent internationalization of the English language.³³ This has resulted in a publisher-driven market, which, imbued with these sentiments, now insists on fluent translations that do not read as translations. Anthea Bell, translator of more than two hundred books and co-translator of the English *Asterix*, claims that “translations should read as if they were not only written but also thought in English”.³⁴ In vigorously opposing this kind of translation, Venuti asserts:

By producing the illusion of transparency, a fluent translation masquerades as true semantic equivalence when in fact it inscribes the foreign text with a partial interpretation, partial to English-language values, reducing if not simply excluding the very difference that translation is called on to convey.³⁵

Apart from depriving translation of its power to enrich, this strategy also tends to exacerbate an Anglo-American sense of superiority and concomitant insensitivity to other cultures.³⁶

This concern, so eloquently articulated by Venuti, is particularly germane in a post-colonial context, in which the colonised struggle to free themselves from power relations of dominance and dependency. This is evident in Antônio Cândido’s dismissive characterization of Brazilian literature:

Our literature is a secondary branch of the Portuguese, in its turn a shrub of secondary order in the garden of the Muses. ... Compared to the greats, our literature is poor and weak.³⁷

Translations from the metropolitan language perpetuate the sense of the primacy of the colonizers’ language and the superiority of their literature. In reaction to this

³² Venuti, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, p. 63.

³³ T. Hale, Romanticism and the Victorian Age, and A. Pym, Late Victorian to the Present, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, p. 71 and 79.

³⁴ A. Bell, cited in Pym, *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, p. 69. See also A. Bell, Translation, in *The Translator as Writer*; edited by S. Bassnett and P. Bush, London: Continuum, 2006, p. 58-67.

³⁵ Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, p. 21.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁷ Antônio Cândido, *Formação da Literatura Brasileira*, quoted in J. Read, Manners of Mistranslation, *The New Centennial Review*, Volume 3, Number 1, Spring 2003, p. 301.

sense of inferiority, the brothers Haroldo and Augusto de Campos elaborated a translation theory of “cannibalism”, based on a metaphor first articulated in the 1920s in Oswald de Andrade’s *Manifesto Antropófago*. The metaphor derives from the ritual cannibalization of a Portuguese bishop by native Brazilians³⁸ in order that they might be energized and revitalized by his life force. By appropriating and digesting an original text in the language of the coloniser, the colonized are freed from it and invigorated by it.³⁹ Translation, according to Heroldo de Campos, is not linear mimetic reproduction but the production of “difference in sameness”, the difference deriving from the infusion of autochthonous input.⁴⁰ Translation can therefore be an empowering act which erases boundaries of chronology and hierarchy⁴¹ and therefore the colonized’s induced sense of inferiority.

This theory of interpenetration, which is akin to Bakhtin’s construct of dialogism and Kristeva’s concept of intertextuality,⁴² is exemplified in J. Botelho’s Brazilian Portuguese translation of the *Canterbury Tales*.⁴³ Because this is not a translation from metropolitan Portuguese, the language of the coloniser, post-colonial sensitivity is less of an issue. In defining his purpose, Botelho says: “From the start, I kept in mind that I had to create a believable fictional universe ... in which the spheres (Chaucer’s world and my own) would contaminate and transform each other, creating something new.”⁴⁴ This he achieves by the use of Brazilian Portuguese, associated with the rural south, “a site of archaic ways of life and worldviews”,⁴⁵ a less prestigious rhyme form widely used in popular music and oral poetry, and the folksy feel of well-known proverbs.⁴⁶

³⁸ O. de Andrade and L. Bary, Oswald de Andrade’s “Cannibalistic Manifesto”, *Latin American Literary Review*, vol 19, no. 38, July- Dec. 1991, p. 44 and 47, fn. 36.

³⁹ E. Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, London: Routledge, 1993, p.192.

⁴⁰ E.R.P. Vieira, A Postmodern Translational Aesthetics in Brazil, in *Translation Studies*; edited by M. Snell-Hornby, F. Pöchhacker and K. Kaindl, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1994, p. 69-70.

⁴¹ Read, *The New Centennial Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2003, p. 303.

⁴² Vieira, in *Translation Studies*, p. 69.

⁴³ J. Botelho (Trans.), *Cantos da cantuária*, São Paulo: Campanhia das Letras, 2013.

⁴⁴ Botelho, Old Janus Drinking from his *Guampa*, *Literature Compass*, vol. 15, no. 6, June 2018, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Botelho, *Literature Compass*, vol. 15, no. 6, June 2018, p. 5.

⁴⁶ See also, C. Barrington, Chaucer’s Voices, New Chaucer Society Blog, 3 Jan 2014.

2.3 READER-ORIENTED THEORY

Reader-oriented theory refers to the paradigm shift that took place in literary criticism in the 1960s when the authoritative, autonomous text envisaged by structuralism and New Criticism succumbed to a variety of views emphasising the interaction between texts and readers, the effect of texts on readers and the creative role of readers in “realizing” literary texts.⁴⁷ This paradigm shift was part of the demise of positivism in the “human sciences” referred to in the introductory chapter. It has not been not an easy transition, not only because New Criticism provided a solid and widely accepted basis for the academic study of English Literature,⁴⁸ but also because, as Derrida points out, the West has long bolstered its dominance by means of logocentrism – its fixation on the authoritative word.⁴⁹

In the case of Chaucer’s work, any claim to an authoritative and stable “original” text is illusory. Chaucer left the *Canterbury Tales* unfinished and the arrangement uncertain; copyists spoke different dialects and imposed different regional forms; printers availed themselves of different manuscripts; editors “corrected” the text to fit in with their notions of scansion and pronunciation; scholars used “stemmata” (genealogical trees) in an effort to arrive at a reliable text; and the domination of the Ellesmere manuscript has been challenged by the monumental collation of all known manuscripts by John Manly and Edith Rickert with individual “best texts” and the digitalisation of the Hengwrt manuscript in 2002.⁵⁰ As a result, contemporary readers “never experience medieval texts directly, unambiguously or unhistorically”.⁵¹

For Chaucerians, the instability of the text – despite the best endeavours of the copyists and the philologists to stabilize it – is already made evident in the author’s self-reflexivity. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer (in the destabilizing guise of a narrator) capsizes the notion of a text to be perceived as “a monument that

⁴⁷ A. Carusi, M. de Jong and Z. Jackson, *Theory of Literature: Only Study Guide for ALW201-J*, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1991, p. 7.

⁴⁸ D. Green, “Literature Itself”: The New Criticism and Aesthetic Experience, *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2003.

⁴⁹ R. Crosman, Do Readers Make Meaning? in *The Reader in the Text*, p. 162; N. Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, New York, NY: Norton, 2000, p. 25.

⁵⁰ E. Scala, Editing Chaucer, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, p. 479-496.

⁵¹ L. Finke and M.B. Shichtman, Critical Theory and the Study of the Middle Ages, in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987, p. 1.

monologically reveals its timeless essence⁵² by inviting his readers to create their own meaning:

For myne wordes, here and every part,
I speke hem alle under correccioun
Of yow that felyng han in loves art,
And putte it al in your discrecioun
To encesse or maken dymynucioun
Of my langage, and that I yow biseche.
(*Troilus and Criseyde*, III.1331-1336)

And in another passage the author speaks of the personal experience that will underlie his readers' different interpretations.⁵³

Ek scarsly bent her in this place thre
That have in love seid lik, and don, in al;
For to thi purpos this may liken the,
And the right nought, yet al is seid or schal.
(*Troilus and Criseyde*, II.43-46)

In the *Canterbury Tales*, an explicit invitation to audience participation also occurs in the Miller's Prologue:

And therefore, whoso list it nat yheere,
Turne over the leef and chese another tale;
For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,
Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,
And eek moralitee and hoolynesse.
Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys.
The Millere is a cherl; ye knowe wel this.
So was the Reve eek and othere mo,
And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.
Avyseth yow, and put me out of blame;
And eek men shal nat maken ernest of game.
(I.3176-3186)

So too in the Franklin's Tale:

Lordynges, this question, thane, wol I aske now,

⁵² Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 21. See also J. Zhang, Translator's Horizon of Expectations and the Inevitability of Retranslation of Literary Works, *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 3, no. 8, Aug. 2013, p. 1413. In 1635, Sir Francis Kinaston translated *Troilus and Criseyde* into Latin in the hope of making it "stable and unmoving ... throughout all time" (M. Reynolds, *The Poetry of Translation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 5). See Section 4.3.3.

⁵³ P.W. Travis, Affective Criticism, the Pilgrimage of Reading, and Medieval English Literature, in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*; edited by L.A. Finke and M.B. Shichtman, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, p. 203-204.

Which was the moste fre, as thynketh yow?
Now telleth me, er that ye ferther wende.
(V.1621-1623):

Roman Ingarden applied the insights of Heidegger and Gadamer (see Section 1.2.1) to cognition of the situatedness of both a literary work and its recipient(s). On the one hand, he differentiated between the text as an invariable and immutable artefact and its multiple aesthetic concretizations; on the other, he drew attention to the variability of readers who bring different experiences, dispositions and other contingent factors to the reading experience.⁵⁴ To this characterization, the Prague structuralist Jan Mukařovský added the further important emphasis that a reader is not an autonomous individual, but a “social creature”, a “member of a collective”.⁵⁵

The variability of a reader’s predispositions is usefully encapsulated in the term *Erwartungshorizont* or “horizon of expectation”, which Gadamer defines as “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point”.⁵⁶ An important implication of this is that there are multiple prospective meanings in a literary work, as there is no vantage point outside history.⁵⁷

Hans Robert Jauss concurs:

A literary work is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period. It is not a monument that monologically reveals its timeless essence. It is much more like an orchestration that strikes ever new resonances among its readers and that frees the text from the material of the words and brings it to a contemporary existence.⁵⁸

The reader is not a passive recipient, but an active participant whose horizon of expectations arises from each work and is applied to its reception “in the historical moment of its appearance”.⁵⁹ The expectations that a contemporary reader brings to such a text are informed by generic, stylistic and thematic knowledge, as well as the shared sociocultural norms of the community. For present-day readers of a text or a translation of it to achieve a merging of horizons of expectation with those of the original readers, the norms that originally prevailed must be imaginatively

⁵⁴ Holub, *Reception Theory*, p. 26.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 302.

⁵⁷ Zhang, *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 3, no. 8, Aug. 2013, p. 1414.

⁵⁸ Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 21.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

reconstructed.⁶⁰ Because these norms are intersubjective, the possibility of arbitrary readings is circumvented. However, a literary work is characterized by its richness in potential readings and the “multiplication” of horizons past and present will realize this potential in varied individual responses.⁶¹ The interaction between past and present is the mark of literary quality; without it, a text is mere *Unterhaltungskunst*, which Jauss’s translator renders as “culinary art”.⁶²

While Jauss drew on Gadamer’s thinking, Wolfgang Iser, his associate of the Constance School, based his approach on the phenomenologists, especially Ingarden, focusing on individual texts and how readers interact with them. Jauss concerned himself with the “macrocosm of reception”, Iser with the “microcosm of response”.⁶³

In Iser’s view, a literary work is only realised, or brought into existence, in the course of the interaction between structure (the text) and recipient (the reader).⁶⁴ The horizon a reader brings to a text is derived from a variable background, and the safeguard against subjective or arbitrary interpretations is the guidance an author inscribes in the work, corresponding to Iser’s concept of the “implied reader”,⁶⁵ a term that “incorporates both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader’s actualization of this potential through the reading process”.⁶⁶ During the reading process, the reader’s perspective constantly shifts between the artistic pole of the author’s text and the aesthetic pole of its realization by the reader.⁶⁷ Stimulated by indeterminacies in the text, the reader fills in the gaps by means of projections, but these projections are subject to modification by other anticipations, reflections or recollections and so new expectations arise. As Iser puts it, “[w]hat is said appears to take on significance as a reference to what is not said, and so it is the implications and not the statements that give shape and weight

⁶⁰ S. Suleiman, Introduction, in *The Reader in the Text*, edited by S. Suleiman and I. Crosman. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 36.

⁶¹ Suleiman, *The Reader in the Text*, p. 37.

⁶² Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 25. Other translations might be “entertainment art” (a literal translation) or “consumer art” (a freer version).

⁶³ Holub, *Reception Theory*, p. 83.

⁶⁴ W. Iser, Interaction between Text and Reader, in *The Reader in the Text*, p.106.

⁶⁵ Carusi, De Jong and Jackson, *Theory of Literature*, p. 27.

⁶⁶ W. Iser, *The Implied Reader*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974, p. xii.

⁶⁷ Iser, in *The Reader in the Text*, p. 106.

to the meaning”.⁶⁸ From Iser’s phenomenology of reading, it is evident that the reader is not a passive recipient of an author’s intention, but is actively involved in a sense-making activity.⁶⁹ This process exemplifies the “hermeneutic circle” which moves from expectation to reconstruction and revision and from there to a new expectation, the consistency-building involved in all interpretation.⁷⁰

Jauss emphasised the alterity of the literature of the past, but held that the *Erwartungshorizont* of a medieval audience can be reconstructed.⁷¹ The bibliography of the 1997 volume of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, which lists 323 items for that year alone,⁷² provides some measure of the alterity of that past. Commenting on a 23-page list of monographs published since the Second World War that elucidate the considerations necessary for the reconstruction of that past, Jörg Fichte assures us:

Wie unterschiedlich die Ansätze auch sein mögen, sie basieren fast alle auf der Prämisse, daß nur die Erschließung der mittelalterlichen Lebenswelt uns Auskunft über Chaucers Dichtung geben kann.⁷³

This implies a massive professionalization of an appreciation of Chaucer. However, once we are conversant with the “familiar sentiments” of his time, which would include the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism, we need no longer read the Prioress’s Tale “with the grain”,⁷⁴ which, according to Jauss, would reduce it to mere *Unterhaltungskunst*.⁷⁵ At the time when Chaucer’s Tale was created, Travis contends, “it subverted its original audience, undermined their expectations, and worked to effect in them a transformation to a more critical perspective”.⁷⁶ By reading “against the grain” the sophisticated modern reader can therefore interpret the Tale as a satirical exposé of the Prioress’s “arrested moral development”.⁷⁷ A

⁶⁸ W. Iser, *How to do Theory*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006, p. 64.

⁶⁹ Suleiman, in *The Reader in the Text*, p. 22-23.

⁷⁰ Carusi, De Jong and Jackson, *Theory of Literature*, p. 13.

⁷¹ Travis, in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, p. 202.

⁷² Ellis, *Chaucer at Large*, p. 157.

⁷³ J.O. Fichte, Erläuterungen, in Geoffrey Chaucer, *Die Canterbury-Erzählungen ... übertragen von Fritz Kemmler*, Band 3, München: Goldmann Verlag, 1989, p. 1444. However different these points of departure may be, they are almost all based on the premise that only understanding the medieval lifeworld can inform us about Chaucer’s poetry.

⁷⁴ Cf. D. Bartholomae and A. Petrosky, *Ways of Reading*, Boston, MA: St Martin’s, 1993.

⁷⁵ Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 25.

⁷⁶ Travis, in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, p. 207.

⁷⁷ E.S. Zitter, Anti-Semitism in Chaucer’s ‘Prioress’s Tale’, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1991, p. 280; cf. also A.B. Friedman, The ‘Prioress’s Tale’ and Chaucer’s Anti-Semitism, *The*

less informed modern reader might not experience this “horizontal change”,⁷⁸ but only what Wordsworth called the Prioress’s “fierce bigotry”.⁷⁹ In Iser’s interpretation, too, the conflicting perspectives of bigotry in the Tale and tenderheartedness in the Prologue call forth consistency-building.⁸⁰

Among the less informed readers referred to above would be readers of my translation, as any explanatory notes provided can point only to the *Sinn*, the sense or bare meaning of what is said, and not to the *Bedeutung*, the significance or what is said or believed about it. Consequently, non-specialist post-Holocaust readers of “Die Prioress se verhaal” are abandoned to their discomfort.

2.4 FUNCTIONALISM

The equivalence paradigm posits polarities such as formal versus dynamic translation, and semantic versus communicative translation, thus acknowledging a plurality of possible translations without, however, providing guidance as to what determines an appropriate choice.⁸¹

Katharina Reiss holds that the text itself serves as the basis for equivalence and, by categorizing a text as informative, expressive or operative, offers a basis for the selection of an appropriate strategy to achieve its communicative purpose.⁸² This teleological interpretation of translation is the hallmark of functionalist theory. The idea of intentionality is conveyed in Justa Holz-Männtäri’s description of *translatorisches Handeln* (translational action). Hans Vermeer also used action theory as the basis of his *Skopos* approach. “*Skopos*” is a Greek word for aim or purpose, which Vermeer uses interchangeably with target, intention and function,⁸³ with reference to a translation strategy determined on the basis of the perceived requirements of the intended audience.⁸⁴ In the case of a commissioned translation,

Chaucer Review, vol. 9, no. 2, 1974, p. 121; and R.J. Schoek, Chaucer’s Prioress: Mercy and Tender Heart, *The Bridge Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian Studies*, vol. 2, 1956, p. 243.

⁷⁸ Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 25.

⁷⁹ Zitter, in *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1991, p. 277.

⁸⁰ Iser, in *The Reader in the Text*, p. 106, 111.

⁸¹ Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories*, p. 24, 39.

⁸² Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*, p. 73-74.

⁸³ C. Nord, Functionalist Approaches, in *Handbook of Translation Studies*; edited by Y. Gambier and L. van Doorslaer Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2013, vol. 1, p. 122.

⁸⁴ X. Du, A Brief Introduction to Skopos Theory, *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 2, no. 10, 2012, p. 2192.

specific requirements should be stipulated in a detailed *Auftrag* (brief). This is important because at least since 1945, commercially commissioned translations have constituted the major and escalating part of all practical translating work worldwide. Even literary translations may have to meet the requirements of a publisher or other employing agent. According to Cay Dollerup, by 2007, translations such as mine, where the *Auftrag* is specific but self-imposed, no longer made up more than 0.1% of the total.⁸⁵

Holz-Männträri regards an uncommissioned literary translation as one that conforms to the translator's self-imposed requirement of successfully overcoming the barriers that separate cultural communities.⁸⁶ In this context, Vermeer defines culture as the norms and conventions an individual must know in order to be "like everybody" – or to be different from everybody.⁸⁷ In terms of this definition, a translator is retrospectively linked to a source text, which he/she receives as interpreter, and is progressively directed to a group within the target culture to whom the translation is offered (*Informationsangebot*) on the basis of the translator's assumptions regarding their knowledge, needs and expectations.⁸⁸ It is from this cultural directedness that intertextual coherence between source and target texts derives.⁸⁹

Functionalist theory "dethrones" the source text, which, in the case of Chaucer, no longer exists, since we only have redacted texts produced by various editors over centuries. This is merely a "start text", a "means to a new text".⁹⁰ Consequently, great independence and importance is accorded to the translator. Reiss and Vermeer contend that "der Translator eine eigenständige Position einnimmt: Er muß die Initiative sozusagen neu aufgreifen, neu in Gang setzen: Er entscheidet letzten Endes". And in achieving the final goal, the aphorism "Der Zweck heiligt die Mittel" is held to apply.⁹¹ Perhaps disquieted by such forceful formulations,

⁸⁵ C. Dollerup, Brave New Worlds of Translation, *Translation Quarterly*, vol. 44, 2007, p. 31.

⁸⁶ C. Martín de León, Skopos and Beyond, *Target*, vol. 20, no.1, 2008, p. 10.

⁸⁷ Hatim, *Teaching and Researching Translation*, p. 80-81.

⁸⁸ Martín de León, *Target*, vol. 20, no.1, 2008, p. 19.

⁸⁹ H.J. Vermeer, Skopos and Commission in Translational Action, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by L. Venuti, 3rd edition, London: Routledge, 2012, p. 229.

⁹⁰ Snell-Hornby, *The Turns of Translation Studies*, 2006, p. 54.

⁹¹ "...the translator takes up an independent position: he[/she] must take the initiative anew, set it in motion, so to speak: he[/she] makes the final decision"... "the purpose sanctifies the means". K. Reiss and H.J. Vermeer, *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translations-theorie*, 1984, p. 86-87 and 101, quoted in Martín de León, *Target*, vol. 20, no.1, 2008, p.10 and 14.

Christiane Nord resorts to a contradictory *loyalty* principle to the source text, which she qualifies as

... *not* the old faithfulness or fidelity in new clothes. Faithfulness and fidelity referred to an *intertextual* relationship holding between the source and the target *texts*. Loyalty, however, is an *interpersonal* category referring to a social relationship between *people*. It can be defined as the responsibility translators have toward their partners in the translational interaction. Loyalty commits the translator bilaterally to the source and the target side.⁹²

While the concepts referred to above were being elaborated in the Low Countries, parallel and complementary theories were evolving in Israel. The particular strength of the Israeli contribution is the clear articulation of the ideological character of any intertextual transfer, as the acceptance of a translation is dependent on relations existing within the target literary system.⁹³ Even-Zohar terms this a “polysystem” because it embraces a variety of literary systems ranging from those held in high esteem (canonized forms) to the less well-regarded or non-canonised.⁹⁴

The literary polysystem is in a state of constant flux as literary works struggle to move from the periphery to the centre, while established works resist the threat of innovation. In the twentieth century, translations have had little impact on literary systems; a peripheral position is now the norm for them.⁹⁵ This secondary status is precipitated by notions of the originality, creativity and inviolability of source texts.⁹⁶ Even-Zohar holds that the disparagement of translations produces vacuums in literary culture, in contrast to the important role that they have played in the history of literature. Social circumstances that favour their achieving a primary role are those that pertain when a literature is being established, when a literature is weak or peripheral in relation to world literature and when a literature is in crisis or is experiencing a turning point.⁹⁷

⁹² C. Nord, *Function and Loyalty in Bible Translation*, in *Apropos of Ideology*; edited by Maria Calzada Pérez, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 94; Nord's emphases. See also C. Nord, *Functionalism in Translation Studies*, in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, p. 205.

⁹³ S. Bassnett, *Translation at the Cross-Roads*, in *The Known Unknowns of Translation Studies*; edited by E. Brens, R. Meylaerts and L. van Doorslaer, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2014, p. 21.

⁹⁴ Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, p. 105.

⁹⁵ A. Lefevere & R. Vanderauwera, *Vertaalwetenschap*, Leuven: Acco, 1979, p. 9; Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*, p. 109.

⁹⁶ Hatim, *Teaching and Researching Translation*, p. 78.

⁹⁷ Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, p. 116-119. Afrikaans literature is arguably in precisely this position at the start of the twenty-first century.

Even-Zohar limits the concept of polysystem to the literary system; André Lefevere places it in its wider cultural context, insisting that “[t]ranslation needs to be studied in connection with power and patronage, ideology and poetics, with emphasis on the various attempts to shore up or undermine an existing ideology or an existing poetics”.⁹⁸

Translation is never innocent: because of the power nexus, it always involves a manipulation of its original.⁹⁹ A striking example of this is the German translation of *Anne Frank’s Diary*. While the original 1947 Dutch edition, already edited by Anne’s father, omitted references to her sexuality and unfavourable comments on family and friends, the 1950 German translation softened the image of Germans and Germany.¹⁰⁰ The translator, Anneliese Schutz, dismissed this manipulation by saying that “a book you want to sell well in Germany ... should not contain any insults directed at Germans”.¹⁰¹ A translation that disregards the need for prevenient interaction with the receiving culture will run the gauntlet of patronage, defined by Lefevere as “any kind of force that can be influential in encouraging and propagating, but also in discouraging, censoring and destroying works of literature”.¹⁰² This power is wielded (as the fate of my *Keur* shows) by publishers, cultural organizations, political leaders, censors, academics, critics, reviewers and the book-buying public.¹⁰³

Gideon Toury clarifies the relationship between the source text and a translation by emphasising its teleological migration from adequacy in relation to the original/start text to acceptability to the target culture.¹⁰⁴ Adequacy to the original/start text is far more than lexical equivalence; it means “doing justice to the values and formal

⁹⁸ Lefevere, in *Translation, History and Culture*, p. 10.

⁹⁹ T. Hermans, Norms of Translation, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, p. 14; cf. T. Hermans, *The Manipulation of Literature*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ A. Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 59-72, with reference to *Anne Frank’s Diary*. For the manipulation of *Robinson Crusoe*, see M.G. Monteiro, Choosing Not to Translate, and A.I. Cuza, From Robinson Crusoe to Robin in Wallachia, in *Sociological Aspects of Translating and Interpreting*; edited by A. Pym, M. Schlesinger and Z. Jettmarová, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2006, p. 65-72 and 73-82.

¹⁰¹ Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, p. 66. See also M. Leung, The Ideological Turn in Translation Studies, in *Translation Studies at the Interface of Disciplines*; edited by J.F. Duarte, A.A. Rosa and T. Seruya, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2006, p. 129-144.

¹⁰² Quoted in Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, p. 141.

¹⁰³ Hermans, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, p. 10-11. See also Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, p. 190.

¹⁰⁴ Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*, p. 112.

qualities of the original”,¹⁰⁵ but, even as it meets this criterion, the translation has already shifted away from the original/start text to meet the different set of linguistic, literary and cultural codes of its potential target audience. In relation to the target culture, a translation must already be in existence before there can be any question of reception.¹⁰⁶ This completedness is signified by Toury’s use of the past participle “*translatum*”. The issue in theory then is not actual acceptance, but acceptability. The acceptability of a translation and where it fits into the conceptual map of the receiving culture is far more important for the future of a translation than the linguistic or aesthetic compatibility between the original/start text and the translation.¹⁰⁷ A translation is an “observational fact” in the target system only; from the point of view of source cultures, translations are of very little significance.¹⁰⁸ By the same token, a work of great cultural significance in the source culture may fail to have an impact on the receiving culture.¹⁰⁹

Translation is essentially a form of intercultural communication, interaction and socialization, necessitating rules or “norms” of regulatory force, “anticipating, accommodating, calculating and negotiating the expectations of others”.¹¹⁰ Toury defines norms of translation behaviour as “the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community – as to what is right or wrong, adequate or inadequate – into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations”.¹¹¹ They are constraints on individual freedom specific to a particular society and time.¹¹² Despite their prescriptive force, norms can, however, be subverted in situations of weak normative control, for example, when alternative norms are gaining ground, or when the offender is prepared to bear the negative

¹⁰⁵ France, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies – and Beyond*, revised edition, 2012, p. 203-204.

¹⁰⁷ Hatim, *Teaching and Researching Translation*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁸ Toury, A Rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies, in *The Manipulation of Literature; edited by Theo Hermans*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, p. 18-19. This does not apply to a source culture that has an ideological agenda of ensuring the survival of cultural material. The immense role of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* in the British Empire is a case in point. (See I. Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan*, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁹ S. Bassnett, Culture and Translation, in *A Companion to Translation Studies*; edited by P. Kuhiwczak and K. Littau, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2007, p. 17.

¹¹⁰ Hermans, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, p. 12

¹¹¹ Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies – and Beyond*, p. 111.

¹¹² A. Chesterman and E. Wagner, *Can Theory Help Translators?* 2nd edition, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 91.

sanctions for doing so.¹¹³ This applies to my *Keur*. In a review of it, Johann de Lange refers to the normative flux that prevailed at the time: “Beslis nie leesstof vir fyngvoeliges nie. En daarom méér as welkom in ’n tyd waarin daar júís ’n nuwe konserwatisme voelbaar geword het, en geveinsdhede in alle kampe botvier.”¹¹⁴

The reference here is to Chaucer’s bawdy, but blasphemy is a far more serious impediment to acceptability in the context of Afrikaans cultural norms. A.E. (Ilse) Feinauer puts it bluntly: “Afrikaanssprekendes heg ’n besonder hoë taboewaarde aan die ydellike gebruik van Godsbenaminge.”¹¹⁵ For this reason I planned to replace these expressions with less offensive euphemisms such as “lieuwe hemel”, “hemel toggie”, “gedoriewaar”, “allemintig”, “in hemelsnaam”. I noted the relative inoffensiveness of “in godsnaam”, and “goddank” (but not “God weet”), as indicated by the use of the lower case in the *Afrikaanse Woordelys en Spelreëls*.¹¹⁶

This euphemistic strategy seemed to work well in the following examples from the Reeve’s Tale, the Wife of Bath’s Prologue and the Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale:

Aleyn up rist, and thoughte, “Er that it dawe,
I wol go crepen in by my felawe,”
And fond the cradel with his hand anon.
“By God,” thoughte he, “al wrang I have
mysgon.”

(I.4249-4252)

Alein staan op en dag: ‘Voor die daeraad
moet ek weer ’n slag gaan inkruip by my maat;’
maar hy loop hom teen die wieg vas onderweg.
‘Genugtig,’ dag hy, ‘nou verdwaal ek sleg ...

But – Lord Crist! – whan that it remembreth me
Upon my yowthe, and on my jolitee,
It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote.

(III.469-471)

Ag, hemel toggie, as ek aan die tyd
weer terugdink van my jeug en joligheid,
dan kittel dit my hart van lekkerkry.

And to hym spak, and thus seyde in his game:
“Stoupeth adoun. By God, ye be to blame!
Helpeth me now, as I dide you whileer ...’

(VIII.1326-1328)

Toe’t die kanunnik hom gul toegevoeg:
‘Nee maggies, man, ek het jou nou genoeg
gehelp; nou’s dit jou beurt: kom help vir my....’

“Genugtig” with its triple velar fricatives aptly captures the shock of a near-disaster, and “Ag, hemel toggie” seemed a snug expression appropriate to the character and

¹¹³ Toury, A Handful of Paragraphs on ‘Translation’ and ‘Norms’, *Current Issues in Language and Society*, vol. 5, no. 1-2, 1998, p. 28-29.

¹¹⁴ J. de Lange, Review in the *Weekly Mail Review of Books*, August 1989.

¹¹⁵ A.E. Feinauer, Die taalkundige gedrag van vloekwoorde in Afrikaans, MA-verhandeling, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 1981, p. 40.

¹¹⁶ Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, Taalkommissie, *Afrikaanse Woordelys en Spelreëls*, 8ste verbeterde uitgawe, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1991.

the occasion, which I could hear articulated with a chuckle in my own mother's voice. "Maggies" linked by alliteration with the informal "man" captures the canon's pretended bonhomie and the "nee" prefixed to "maggies" contributes a show of exasperation.

However, I did not proceed with my design for three reasons. Chaucer uses swearing as an indicator of class and character. Most of the pilgrims swear, but "[i]t is the vulgar characters who swear most and most profanely, with Harry Bailly well out in front, the Wife of Bath some way behind, followed by the Pardoner and the Miller".¹¹⁷ The Miller's very first words are "By armes, and by blood and bones" (I.3125), with reference to Christ's body, so that, as Horobin puts it, we are alerted to immorality before he even gets going on his Tale.¹¹⁸ Such anatomical oaths referring to the body of God the Son are used by the Host, the Miller, the Summoner, the Reeve, and the Pardoner, but not by the Wife of Bath, the Friar or the Shipman, so that as Ralph Elliott notes: "It is clear ... that Chaucer distributed his oaths with a good deal of discernment among the characters of his later poems, and that the oaths themselves varied considerably in type and intensity."¹¹⁹ Secondly, without egregious blasphemy, the strictures against dismembering Christ in the Pardoner's Tale and in the Parson's Tale (VI.708-709; X.590) would make little sense, and the Parson's exasperated '*Benedicite!*What eyleth the man, so sinfully to swere?" (II.1170-1171) would be ludicrously inappropriate if the Host's "gretteste ooth" is "Allawêreld!" Thirdly, and most importantly, I came to the conclusion, elaborated in Section 3.5.1, that oaths are fundamental to fourteenth-century culture and to the *Canterbury Tales* and that they should therefore be retained.

My dilemma as to whether or not to comply with the blasphemy norm of the receiving culture reveals Toury's distinction between adequacy and acceptability to be a binary, with the bias towards acceptability. It is as oppositional as the Schleiermacher-Venuti alternative of foreignisation or domestication, favouring foreignisation. If the blasphemy is retained, the translation is foreignised but may be unacceptable; if it were to be eliminated, the translation might be acceptable but

¹¹⁷ R.W.V. Elliott, *Chaucer's English*, London: Deutsch, 1974, p. 253.

¹¹⁸ S. Horobin, *Chaucer's Language*, 2nd edition, Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 162.

¹¹⁹ Elliott, *Chaucer's English*, p. 253.

would be totally inadequate. Because a re-writing without blasphemy is impossible for the reasons adduced above, my translation must remain unacceptable to many in the target culture until the “voortdurende afstomping van taboewoorde” of which Feinauer speaks,¹²⁰ accelerated by the massive cultural influence of English,¹²¹ makes it acceptable to a new generation of Afrikaans speakers.

My decision in this regard was not theoretically determined, but derived from an experiential pragmatism “conceived as the ongoing process of reflective adjustment between various cultural needs and interests”.¹²² This emphasises the importance of understanding Translation Studies as a descriptive and not a prescriptive discipline and of accepting the decisive role that translators have to play in resolving translational dilemmas.¹²³

2.4.1 THE AFRIKAANS POLYSYSTEM

According to Even-Zohar’s polysystems hypothesis, semiotic patterns of communication such as culture, language, literature and society function as systems, not as agglomerations of diverse elements.¹²⁴ Any literary text is therefore dynamically implicated in a network of relationships, its reception dependent on the operation of the multiple intersections of the various systems. According to Pavel Medvedev, the prevalent “ideological milieu” may profoundly affect the literary polysystem.¹²⁵ This was indeed the case in South Africa, where, for most of the time during which I was working on my translation, the political system was dominant in the hierarchy of systems, exerting disproportionate influence on the religious, cultural and literary spheres.

The determinative role of ideology for a cultural and literary polysystem obliges me to outline what might otherwise be regarded as disproportionate attention to Afrikaner nationalism, which prevailed during the time when I translated my *Keur*, and which I felt would be antagonistic to my translation. I discuss the polysystem in

¹²⁰ Feinauer, *Die taalkundige gedrag van vloekwoorde in Afrikaans*, p. 43.

¹²¹ J. Grobler, *Uitdaging en antwoord*, Pretoria: Grouie, 2007, p. 219.

¹²² C. Norris, *The Contest of Faculties*, London: Methuen, 1985, p. 148.

¹²³ R. Arrojo, *The Relevance of Theory*, in *Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*; edited by C. Millán and F. Bartrina, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 127.

¹²⁴ I. Even-Zohar, *Polysystem Theory*, *Poetics Today*, vol. 1, no. 1-2, 1979, p. 288.

¹²⁵ A. Lefevere, *Beyond the Process*, in *Translation Spectrum*; edited by M.G. Rose, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1981, p. 56.

terms of the political system, the ecclesiastical system, the cultural system, and the literary system, and then consider the present situation and non-Afrikaners as other speakers of Afrikaans.

2.4.1.1 The political system

In the period between 1902 and 1948, Afrikaner identity was a highly contentious issue. Because of their commitment to conciliation, members of the South African Party were very vulnerable to attack, but *Het Volksblad* was forced to concede that there were thousands amongst them “wat hulle volk, hulle taal, hulle vaderland so lief het als die opregste Nasionalis”.¹²⁶ After the gradual collapse of Fusion in the form of the United South African National Party, from its inception in 1934, there were various divisions to contend with, but D.F. Malan’s Herenigde Nasionale Party, supported by cultural entrepreneurs such as Gustav Preller, J.H.H. de Waal and C.J. Langenhoven, fostered an integrative cultural mythology which progressively narrowed the definition of “Afrikaner”. This constructed identity was then projected back into the past.

A churchman, Malan propagated a mystical immanentism of the *volkswil* achieving its teleological goal:

Our history is the greatest masterpiece of the centuries. We hold this nationhood as our due for it was given to us by the Architect of the universe. [His] aim was the formation of a new nation among the nations of the world. ... The last hundred years have witnessed a miracle behind which must lie a divine plan. Indeed the history of the Afrikaner reveals a will and a determination which makes one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the will of men but the creation of God.¹²⁷

Malan saw his party as a vehicle for bringing together those who belonged together, an exclusive aim to which Piet Meyer, a *beroepsafrikaner*¹²⁸ and gatekeeper to Afrikanerdom, gave the following content: “To Afrikanerdom belong only those who by virtue of blood, soil, culture, tradition, belief, calling form an organic unitary

¹²⁶ *Het Volksblad*, 29 Junie 1917, aangehaal in J.C. Steyn, *Trouwe Afrikaners*, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1987, p. 100.

¹²⁷ S.W. Pienaar (red.), *Glo in u Volk: D.F. Malan as Redenaar, 1908-1954*, p. 235-236, quoted in T. D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975, p. 1.

¹²⁸ Van Jaarsveld’s trenchant characterization of A.N. Pelzer in F.A. Mouton, *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, Vanderbijlpark: Kleio, 2007, p. 119.

society.”¹²⁹ In practical terms, an Afrikaner came to be self-identified by the dominant in-group as a white person who spoke Afrikaans, was a member of one of the three “sister churches”, subscribed to rural, patriarchal values, was constrained by his/her history to nurse grievances against the British and against black people, was committed to the restoration of national independence and the maintenance of white supremacy, and *ipso facto* voted for the National Party.¹³⁰ Knowledge of Afrikaners’ proneness to schism produced a prescriptive rather than descriptive approach to the question of national identity, and an overwhelming sense of imminent danger encouraged acceptance of conformity as necessary to survival. Malan’s successor, J.G. Strijdom, insisted on “eendersdenkenheid” and dissidents were ruthlessly discredited.¹³¹

Economic prosperity and the persuasiveness of Verwoerd’s ideological conviction kept many doubters in the security of the Afrikaner-nationalist laager,¹³² but the killings at Sharpeville on 21 March 1960 and the draconian repressive measures implemented by the State¹³³ proved an irresistible catalyst of change. Under Verwoerd’s successor, apartheid ideology yielded to pragmatism. The cardinal principle of the National Party, according to John Vorster, was “the retention, maintenance and immortalisation of Afrikaner identity. Apartheid and separate development is merely a means to achieve and perpetuate this”.¹³⁴ Vorster urged Ian Smith, the then Rhodesian Prime Minister, to reach a settlement with black nationalist leaders in what is now Zimbabwe, but he lacked the ability, power or political will to do so in South Africa.¹³⁵ In the context of this political indeterminacy, W.A. de Klerk noted in 1975: “The *Volk* has long ceased to be the homogeneous whole it seemed to be in the early 50s. The dissident Afrikaner, the angry Afrikaner,

¹²⁹ Quoted in A. Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, London: Mandarin, 1991, p. 168.

¹³⁰ Cf. J. Louw-Potgieter, *Afrikaner Dissidents*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1988, p. 50 and 112.

¹³¹ C. van der Westhuizen, *White Power and the Rise and Fall of the National Party*, Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2007, p. 83-4; F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Die Evolusie van Apartheid*, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1979, p. 12.

¹³² Cf. H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003, p. 520.

¹³³ P. Randall, *Not Without Honour*, Johannesburg: Ravan, 1982, p. 17.

¹³⁴ Quoted in J.J.H. Deysel, *The Subversive Afrikaner: An Exploration into the Subversive Stance of the Little Magazine Stet (1982-1991)*, doctoral thesis, University of Pretoria, 2007, p. 27.

¹³⁵ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 568

the philosophically analytical Afrikaner, are all in the centre of a kind of national anguish.”¹³⁶

In 1982 a breach between pragmatists and ideologues (dubbed “verligtes” and “verkramptes” by Wimpie de Klerk) in the National Party resulted in the formation of A.P. Treurnicht’s Conservative Party. This had a profound impact on Afrikaner identity. Group membership now had to be redefined to accommodate right-wing dissidents, while the cultural ferment on the left played havoc with the idea of a single, coherent identity. The End Conscription Campaign, launched in 1984, the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA), which met with the ANC leadership in Dakar in 1987, the *Voëlvry* movement and *Vrye Weekblad*, published from 1988 to 1993,¹³⁷ all challenged a monolithic Afrikaner identity. The ultimate abandonment of apartheid brought the speedy demise of the National Party in its train, leaving thousands who had adhered to its identity construction bewildered and bereft.

2.4.1.2 The ecclesiastical system

The contextualization of the Dutch Reformed Church¹³⁸ in the nineteenth century in terms of an emergent frontier community made it highly susceptible to the influence of custom and culture in respect of race. Racial discrimination, rejected in 1834, became normative in 1857 as “desirable and in accordance with Scripture” and resulted in separate churches in 1881.¹³⁹ The struggle against liberalism in the church strengthened its popular basis,¹⁴⁰ as did the church’s solidarity with Afrikanerdom during the South African War (1899-1902) and in its aftermath. In the 1930s, ethnic mobilisation in the setting of hegemonic imperialist discourse¹⁴¹ was underpinned by the concept of a national calling and mission, a basic and most versatile ingredient of civil religion. The influential theologian Kuyper’s teaching of separate spheres of sovereignty embedded in creation, with Church and State as

¹³⁶ W.A. de Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa*, London: Rex Collings, 1975, p. 341.

¹³⁷ Deysel, *The Subversive Afrikaner*, p. 31-36.

¹³⁸ This section draws on material used previously in J.G. Boje, *Ecumenical South African Church Historiography – Towards a Transcontextual Approach*. M.Th dissertation, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1991. I use a capital letter when naming the Dutch Reformed Church, a lower-case letter in referring to it, but upper case for the universal Church.

¹³⁹ W.A. Saayman, *Separate Dutch Reformed Churches*, in *Ekumene onder die Suiderkruis*, geredigeer deur A.C. Viljoen, Pretoria: Unisa Pers, 1979, p. 108-110.

¹⁴⁰ J.A. Loubser, *The Apartheid Bible*, Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1987, p. 14-15.

¹⁴¹ A. du Toit, “Neo-Fichtean Nationalists” and/or Organic Intellectuals, p. 14-15.

separate entities, but both performing their God-given function, was reinterpreted to provide theological support for the apartheid paradigm.¹⁴²

From 1962 until 1982, Article 67b of the church order of the NG Kerk read: “Die Kerk sal hom beywer om die Protestants-Christelike karakter van ons volk te beskerm en uit te bou.”¹⁴³ This integral connection was experienced as so self-evident that no definition of “ons volk” was needed, and when the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk broke away in 1988, they insisted that a true church was necessarily a “volkskerk”.¹⁴⁴ The defence and promotion of the volkskarakter was achieved by affiliation with and service in various cultural organisations. Thus Carel Boshoff, son-in-law of H.F. Verwoerd, who taught missionary science, was chairman of the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs and of the Afrikaner Broederbond and leader-in-chief of the Voortrekker movement.¹⁴⁵

Contextualization of the church as *volkskerk* led to self-interested theological captivity. Beguiled by Afrikaner nationalism, a whole generation of church leaders failed to heed Karl Barth’s critique of unevangelical conservatism¹⁴⁶ and the prophetic witness of their own theologians Ben Marais and B.B. Keet. In the wake of the Cottesloe conference in December 1960, which rejected unjust discrimination, the Dutch Reformed Church’s delegates were repudiated and harassed by the church, the Broederbond, elements of the press and the State.¹⁴⁷ Churchmen were cowed by the devastating consequences visited on the Afrikaner dissident when Beyers Naudé was forced out of the ministry, harassed by the police and restricted by ministerial decree.¹⁴⁸

Although the church seemed “solidly united and impregnable”,¹⁴⁹ cracks that showed in the monolith during the 1980s included the Reformation Day Witness of

¹⁴² W.A. Saayman, *Rebels and Prophets*, in *Resistance and Hope*; edited by C.Villa-Vicencio and J. de Gruchy, Cape Town: Philip, 1985, p. 59.

¹⁴³ P. Strauss, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk en die Afrikanervolk kerkordelik verwoerd*, *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2016, p. 448.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Strauss, *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2016, p. 453.

¹⁴⁶ J. de Gruchy, *Towards a Confessing Church*, in *Apartheid is a Heresy*; edited by J. de Gruchy and C. Villa-Vicencio, Cape Town: Philip, 1983, p. 89.

¹⁴⁷ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 527-528.

¹⁴⁸ E. Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa 1936-1960 with special reference to the Mission of the Church*, Johannesburg: South African Council of Churches, 1974, p. 237.

¹⁴⁹ D.J. Bosch, *The Afrikaner Today*, *Theology Today*, vol. 43, no. 2, 1986, p.72-3.

1980,¹⁵⁰ the early retirement or resignation of church ministers and opponents of apartheid such as O'Brien Geldenhuys and Nico Smith, the publication of *Storm-kompas*,¹⁵¹ the critical papers of H.J.C. Pieterse and David Bosch at the theological congress “Die Kerk in die Tagtigerjare” and the “Ope Brief”, published in June 1982.¹⁵² Ways were found to cushion the shock. Thus *Die Kerkbode* lost no time in pointing out that of the 123 signatories of the Ope Brief, only 44 were active ministers of the church and that some of them were, in any case, peripheral figures.¹⁵³ But nothing could minimise the impact of the revolt of the Sendingkerk. When it erupted at Ottawa in 1982, the white Dutch Reformed Church was caught unawares, for the “mother church” had “with a recklessness that bordered on the unbelievable totally underestimated the intensity and emotion that gave birth to the critical voices over the years”.¹⁵⁴ Decades of separation had resulted in an “engineered experience gap” which prevented members of the different groups from sharing or even knowing each other’s needs.¹⁵⁵

The Dutch Reformed Church’s ideological captivity had dire consequences because, having served its ideological purpose, in time the church became socially marginalized for, as Dean Inge put it, if you marry the spirit of your generation, you will be a widow in the next.¹⁵⁶ The church espoused Afrikaner interests and provided what it saw as an ethical defence of apartheid, which played a vital legitimatory role for much of the period of National Party rule (1948-1994). However, when the church opposed the introduction of defence bonus bonds to help finance the Border war with Angola in the early 1970s, the government simply ignored its objections.¹⁵⁷ More significantly, in the late 1970s, the emergence of a new dominant alliance of interests produced a new language of state discourse, emphasising technological rationality, a form of apologetic that is a typical

¹⁵⁰ *Die Kerkbode*, 5 November 1980.

¹⁵¹ N.J. Smith et al., *Storm-kompas*, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1981.

¹⁵² A.C.J. van Niekerk, Kontekstualiteit in die Suid-Afrikaanse sosiale-etiek: ’n vergelykende ondersoek na ‘The Kairos Document’, die ‘Evangelical Witness’, ‘Die Belydenis 1986’ en ‘Kerk en Samelewing’”, doktorsale proefskrif, Universiteit van Pretoria, 1989, p. 162-163.

¹⁵³ J.J.F. Durand, Belhar – Crisis for the D.R. Churches, in *A Moment of Truth; edited by G.D. Cloete and D.J. Smit*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984, p. 122.

¹⁵⁴ Durand, in *A Moment of Truth*, p. 118.

¹⁵⁵ W. Kistner, Structuring Church Unity for the Future, in *Church Unity and Diversity in the Southern African Context; edited by W.S. Vorster*, Pretoria: Unisa Press, 1980, p. 101.

¹⁵⁶ H.A. Cairns, *The Clash of Cultures*, New York, NY: Praeger, 1965, p. xiii.

¹⁵⁷ Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa*, p. 237.

legitimation of late capitalism.¹⁵⁸ Ideological norms that had previously sanctified apartheid gradually became a source of embarrassment.¹⁵⁹ The church, which had previously been an ally, now impeded the government's willingness to adapt. The church, which had supported the introduction of the Mixed Marriages Act in 1946,¹⁶⁰ was unwilling to support its abolition in the early 1980s.¹⁶¹ These developments marginalized the church by impugning its credibility. Ironically confirming Marx's contention that "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness",¹⁶² the church lagged behind the government in confronting change and has with difficulty escaped the iron cage of history. This is the heritage with which it has had to struggle since 1994.

2.4.1.3 The cultural system

The Afrikaner Broederbond was founded in 1918 to help Afrikaners to adapt to urbanisation, but by 1934 its ambitions had grown prodigiously. According to its then chairman, J.C. van Rooy, "[t]he primary consideration is whether Afrikanerdom will reach its ultimate destiny of domination in South Africa".¹⁶³ And by 1968, when the Bond celebrated its 50th anniversary, the first chairman, H.J. Klopper, could proudly proclaim to the assembled guests:

Do you realise what a powerful force is gathered here tonight between these four walls? Show me a greater power on the whole continent of Africa! Show me a greater power anywhere, even in your so-called civilized countries!

We are part of the State, we are part of the Church, we are part of every big movement that has been born of the nation. And we make our contributions unseen; we carried them through to the point our nation has reached today.¹⁶⁴

The Bond's goal of domination was achieved through a network of organisations including the Reddingsdaadbond and Helpmekaarfonds, Rapportryers, Voor-

¹⁵⁸ J. Habermas, *Towards a Rational Society*, London: Heinemann, 1972, p.100-101.

¹⁵⁹ D. Posel, Language, Legitimation and Control, *Social Dynamics*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1984.

¹⁶⁰ Louw-Potgieter, *Afrikaner Dissidents*, p. 91.

¹⁶¹ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 620.

¹⁶² Marx, quoted in J. Donovan, *Feminist Theory*, 3rd edition, New York, NY: Continuum, 2001, p. 80; cf. R. Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, New York, NY: Holt, 1929, p. 21: "Doctrines and practices change with the mutations of social structure, not vice versa".

¹⁶³ Quoted in I. Wilkins and H. Strydom, *The Super Afrikaners*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1978 (reprinted 2012), p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ Wilkins and Strydom, *The Super Afrikaners*, p. 3.

trekkers, Afrikaanse Studentebond, the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (SABRA), Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (ATKV) and the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (FAK). The FAK, in turn, was an effective front organisation for linking small cultural bodies throughout South Africa with the Broederbond.¹⁶⁵ Political leaders, newspaper editors, the board and management of the SABC, prominent churchmen and academics were Broeders, and the Bond was the think tank that plotted the evolution of the National Party from an anti-capitalist body to one that embraced “volkskapitalisme”,¹⁶⁶ and from a movement to safeguard Afrikaner interests to one centred on white survival, and ultimately from anti-black intransigence to attempted accommodation.

Academics played their part in legitimising government policies. A study guide for a course in Criminology at the University of South Africa (Unisa) in 1967 provided a stereotypical account of the criminal propensities of the four races in South Africa, and Comparative Education at the same institution in 1976 proffered a rationale for differentiated provision for these four categories of learners. As late as 1974, theologians were still justifying apartheid on the basis of the Tower of Babel story.¹⁶⁷ The now much criticised cultural anthropology (“volkekunde”) taught at Stellenbosch University, and later at the Universities of Pretoria and the Free State, undergirded arguments based on ethnicity.¹⁶⁸ Aspects of Ranke’s “scientific historiography”, favoured by Afrikaner academics, meshed conveniently with popular Afrikaner nationalist consciousness. This approach was not only ethnocentric, but was imbued with the unscientific concept of a nation immanently realizing its destiny; it focused on great leaders and tended to favour the preservation of the *status quo*. As a result of this overlap, the ideal of “volksgeskiedenis” gained a foothold. The universities came to play an important role in ethnic mobilization,¹⁶⁹ and in 1946, G.D. Scholtz could assert: “Die Afrikaanse historici van vandag is oor die algemeen daarvan bewus dat hulle ook ’n

¹⁶⁵ Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, p. 176.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. D. O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, Johannesburg, Ravan, 2017.

¹⁶⁷ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 620.

¹⁶⁸ S. Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, Oxford: Double Storey, 2006, p. 266; cf. S.L. Robins, *Letters of Stone*, Cape Town: Penguin, 2016, p. 270-274.

¹⁶⁹ A. Grundlingh, War, Wordsmiths and the ‘Volk’, in *Mfecane to Boer War*; edited by E. Lehmann and E. Reckwitz, Essen: Blaue Eule, 1992, p. 49. See also Mouton, *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*.

taak ten opsigte van die kultuur van hul volk vervul.”¹⁷⁰ Professional librarians justified the racial segregation of public libraries on the basis of P.C. Coetzee’s pseudo-scientific “culturology of readership”, which posited different cultural needs for different cultural groups; they were supine in the face of censorship; and participated in the burning of thousands of books between 1955 and 1971.¹⁷¹

Academics in the literary field were obviously well placed to keep writers in line, whether by means of the canon they taught, the literary histories, articles and book reviews they wrote, and the largesse they helped to distribute via various awards. These included not only the prestigious Hertzog Prize, but also the Eugène Marais Prize, the Scheepers Prize for youth literature, the W.A. Hofmeyr Prize, the CNA Prize, the ATKV Prize, the Rapport Prize, and the Akademie Prize for translated work. Examples of their input are provided in the next section.

2.4.1.4 The literary system

The first phase of Afrikaans literature was dominated by the poets C. Louis Leipoldt, Totius (J.D. du Toit), Jan Celliers and Eugène Marais. Intent on establishing Afrikaans as the “badge of social identity”¹⁷² and the vehicle of nascent Afrikaner nationalism, the cultural entrepreneur Gustav Preller assiduously promoted the poet of “Winternag” as a “volksdigter”,¹⁷³ although Marais, a cosmopolitan freethinker, a pseudo-scientist,¹⁷⁴ a morphine addict, who opposed Kruger before the war and had dubious patriotic credentials,¹⁷⁵ was a somewhat unlikely candidate for this role.

In Afrikaans fictional works such as Van Bruggen’s *Bittereinders* (1935) and T.C. Pienaar’s *'n Merk van die Eeue* (1939), burgeoning Afrikaner nationalism expressed itself in virulently anti-British rehearsals of historical grievances.¹⁷⁶ The Anglo-Boer War novels among the works of Mikro (C.H. Kühn) exemplify a romantic nationalist

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in A. Grundlingh, *Sosiale Geskiedenis en die Dilemma in Afrikaanse Geskiedskrywing, Suid-Afrikaanse Historiese Joernaal*, nr. 19, 1987, p. 41.

¹⁷¹ A.L. Dick, *The Hidden History of South Africa’s Book and Reading Cultures*, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013, p. 89-94.

¹⁷² Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 364.

¹⁷³ S. Swart, The Construction of Eugène Marais as an Afrikaner Hero, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2004, p. 847-867.

¹⁷⁴ S. Gray, Soul-Brother Eugène Marais, *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2013, p. 63-80.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. C. van der Merwe, *Donker Stroom*, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 2015, p. 75.

¹⁷⁶ M. Rice, *From Dolly Gray to Sarie Marais*, Cape Town: Fischer, 2004, p. 20.

mindset. In these novels, Mikro's intrepid heroes endlessly outwit the British.¹⁷⁷ A reviewer commented that *Die Ruiters in die Nag* and *Kaptein Gereke* "deur die jare heen vir geslagte van jong Afrikaners erfstukke geword het van voorvaderlike dapperheid, avontuur en krygsvernuif".¹⁷⁸ They served as an inspiration to their young readers to continue to wage a cultural and political war, the outcome of which seemed assured. Novels typified by local realism and the simple life of the rural past, for example, the farm novels of C.M. van den Heever and the *Ampie* trilogy of Jochem van Bruggen, accorded comfortably with this nostalgic phase of Afrikaner nationalism.

In the 1930s, N.P. van Wyk Louw called for a wider perspective in Afrikaans literature, urging that "all that moves modern man ... must find expression in our literature".¹⁷⁹ In 1938, he appealed to Afrikaners to retain their cultural nationalism, even if they found political nationalism repugnant.¹⁸⁰

In 1947, a Dutch Reformed Church delegation called on the government to introduce measures to curb "indecent" in local publications. This was strenuously opposed by Van Wyk Louw, who held that avant garde writers must be free to be both builders and critics of the volk;¹⁸¹ they were the true custodians of the "volksgees", not politicians, clergymen or patriotic writers. In 1963, the government introduced censorship, and Van Wyk Louw was again in the forefront of opposition, although the conservative Skrywerskring under Abel Coetzee could see no cause for disquiet.¹⁸²

The modes of expression of the generation of writers that came to the fore in the 1960s differed from and were even antagonistic towards the prevalent ideological thinking. These writers were more outspoken with regard to politics, religion and sex¹⁸³ and their dissent incurred the wrath of church and state. A clergyman was

¹⁷⁷ T.B. van der Walt, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog in Afrikaanse Kinderboeke*, doktorsale proefskrif, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit, Johannesburg, 2001, p. 145. See also J. Grobler, *Memories of a Lost Cause*, *Historia*, vol. 55, no. 2, November 2006, p. 204-205.

¹⁷⁸ H.J. Truter in *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1964, p. 53-54, quoted by T.B. van der Walt, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog in Afrikaanse Kinderboeke*, 145.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 430.

¹⁸⁰ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 431.

¹⁸¹ P.D. McDonald, *Guardians of the Emergent Volk Avant Garde, 1963-1968*, *Stilet*, vol. 20, no. 2, Sept. 2008, p. 163.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 165.

¹⁸³ Kannemeyer, *Die Afrikaanse literatuur*, p. 277.

offended by Etienne le Roux's *Sewe dae by die Silbersteins* "not only because of what is described on the pages, but most especially because of what one can imagine happening *between* the chapters".¹⁸⁴ In 1964, the Dutch Reformed Church's Synodal Commission for Public Morals called for works such as André Brink's *Lobola vir die Lewe* to be banned because of their "morally deleterious and polluting character".¹⁸⁵

Brink's *Kennis van die Aand*, "the first direct, oppositional political novel in Afrikaans",¹⁸⁶ was turned down by Human and Rousseau for fear of censorship. It was published by Buren in 1973 and banned the following year.¹⁸⁷ As Brink says, "[c]ensorship does not happen in a vacuum".¹⁸⁸ He was harassed by the security police, his phone was tapped, his letters opened, his home ransacked by intimidating policemen.¹⁸⁹ In a secret report to the Broederbond, T.T. Cloete warned that Breytenbach and Brink were "skrywers wat beoog om die blanke minderheidsregering in Suid-Afrika te beëindig en selfs met geweld te vernietig; wat Christelike godsdiens en moraal verwerp en selfs laster teen God, en wat volslae seksuele vryheid bepleit".¹⁹⁰ Cloete's report was passed on to several Afrikaans-language universities, and at Port Elizabeth University, it resulted in a changed curriculum.¹⁹¹

In this document, Cloete also warned against "committed literature", a perspective widely shared by academics who were highly influential as university teachers, reviewers, critics and literary historians. With reference to Jan Rabie, A.P. Grové contended:

Hierdie aktualiteitsteorie is ... nie slegs misleidend nie, hy is ook boos, want hy word dikwels na vore gebring deur halfbak politici wat van die literatuur 'n propagandamiddel wil maak en van die kunstenaar 'n verkapte politikus of sosiale hervormer.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁴ Thus André Brink, *A Fork in the Road*, London: Vintage, 2010, p. 212.

¹⁸⁵ Quoted in McDonald, *Stilet*, vol. 20, no. 2, Sept. 2008, p. 171.

¹⁸⁶ A. Coetzee, One hundred Years of Afrikaans Literature and Afrikaner Nationalism, in *Rendering Things Visible*; edited by M. Trump, Johannesburg: Ravan, 1990, p. 352.

¹⁸⁷ Brink, *A Fork in the Road*, p. 220.

¹⁸⁸ Brink, *A Fork in the Road*, p. 226.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 226-231.

¹⁹⁰ F. Galloway, *Breyten Breytenbach as openbare figuur*, Pretoria: HAUM-Literêr, 1990, p. 86-87.

¹⁹¹ Brink, *A Fork in the Road*, p. 229-230.

¹⁹² A.P. Grové, *Oordeel en vooroordeel*, Kaapstad: Nasou, 1958, p. 170.

So too, Gerrit Dekker rejected Adam Small's "strydpoësie, hees van geëmosioneertheid, ooremfaties ... soveel verbittering en opstandigheid", asserting that "suiwer kuns kan uit so 'n bron nouliks verwag word".¹⁹³ And Kannemeyer concurred that giving precedence to the "buiteliterêre doelstelling bo intrinsieke letterkundige waardes" reduced a work of art to "'n wapen in die stryd".¹⁹⁴

The aesthetic ideal championed by Van Wyk Louw and eagerly seized upon by the gatekeepers of Afrikaner culture insulated writers against social consciousness. In this regard, Brink warned:

In too many Afikaans novels, the political and social status quo is taken for granted to such an extent that there is not even the slightest evidence of a desire to think further or to entertain the possibility that the status quo might not be just.¹⁹⁵

Few writers were able to distance themselves from social injustice, and even when they sought to do so, the hegemony still appropriated them as producers of the culture it gloried in and enfolded them in the embrace of publication, literary awards, bursaries, scholarships, employment and the cachet of the writer as revolutionary.¹⁹⁶ This has led to the bizarre situation that now prevails in which writers such as Breytenbach, Brink, John Miles, Antjie Krog, Welma Odendaal and Koos Prinsloo are canonised, but not necessarily read, as a result of the radical disjuncture between the canon of "Afrikaans literature" and the construct of the "Afrikaner".¹⁹⁷ They may be "beyond Afrikanerdom in their writing",¹⁹⁸ but only Breytenbach is a revolutionary beyond his writing.¹⁹⁹ Breytenbach's unique situation derives not only from his radical sustained opposition to the political elite, facilitated by his residence abroad, but also from his rejection of patronage and his independence from government-supporting publishers.

The Herzog Prize for literature, awarded annually since 1916, is the symbolic epitome of Afrikaans cultural gatekeeping. Not only does being awarded the prize have a powerful canonising effect, but the withholding of it also serves a canonising

¹⁹³ G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, bygewerk tot 1966, Kaapstad: Nasou, 1980, p. 306.

¹⁹⁴ Kannemeyer, *Die Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Literatuur*, deel 2, p. 297.

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in P.D. McDonald, *The Literature Police*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 259.

¹⁹⁶ A. Coetzee, in *Rendering Things Visible*, p. 345.

¹⁹⁷ A. Coetzee, Afrikaans Literature in the Service of Ethnic Politics? in *Afrikaans Literature*; edited by R. Kriger and E. Kriger, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996, p. 103-104.

¹⁹⁸ Ampie Coetzee quoted in R. Kriger, Introduction, in *Afrikaans Literature*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁹ Coetzee, in *Rendering Things Visible*, p. 354.

function, as it projects a negative judgement with regard to a work's literary merit.²⁰⁰ J.P. Smuts describes the difficulties confronting the adjudicators and concedes that mistakes have been made, in some of which politics played a part.²⁰¹ The tardy recognition of Uys Krige, Adam Small, Brink and Breytenbach and the non-recognition of Jan Rabie are cases in point. J.C. Kannemeyer branded the treatment of Krige and Rabie as “’n besondere soort verraad teenoor Afrikaans en die Afrikaner”.²⁰² Because insidious ideology (soft-pedalled as “behoudendheid”²⁰³) influenced decision-making, the award has been dubbed “the most prestigious *volk* accolade of the apartheid era”. In 1984, Breytenbach, who had been repeatedly passed over, declined to accept a Herzog prize to be shared with Henrietta Grové.²⁰⁴ By contrast, Breytenbach won, and accepted, the “liberal” CNA prize on four occasions between 1961 and 1990, despite B.J. Vorster's efforts to block the 1967 award for *Huis van die Dowe*. The following year, D.J. Opperman distanced the publishers, Human and Rousseau, from Breytenbach's “drastic politics”.²⁰⁵

2.4.1.5 The present situation

From what has been said above, it is evident that the Afrikaans polysystem is in a state of ferment at the moment. The trauma of Afrikaners' disempowerment derives from their previous cocooning in “a network of schools, social clubs, churches, [and] cultural and business organizations which created a self-referential ideological world”, which “dominated the historical consciousness of most Afrikaners”.²⁰⁶

One response to the new situation in South Africa has been emigration. Between 1995 and 2005 alone, it is estimated that 841 000 South Africans, the majority Afrikaans-speaking, have left the country. Their emigration has been facilitated by their command of English (albeit as a second language), advanced technologies such as email and skype, and the presence of other expatriates in the destinations

²⁰⁰ J.P. Smuts, Die Akademie se letterkundepryse, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, Jg. 45, nr. 1, 2005, p. 3.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 3-5.

²⁰² Quoted in Ibid., p. 5.

²⁰³ Smuts, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, Jg. 45, nr. 1, p. 5.

²⁰⁴ McDonald, *The Literature Police*, p. 263.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 264.

²⁰⁶ J. Hyslop, Why did Apartheid's Supporters Capitulate? p. 5, quoted in C. Verwey and M. Quayle, Whiteness, Racism, and Afrikaner Identity in Post-Apartheid South Africa, *African Affairs*, vol. 111, no. 445, 2012, p. 553.

they opt for. There are, for example, 80 000 to 90 000 ex-South Africans living in Western Australia. Afrikaans enclaves encourage a nostalgic maintenance of an Afrikaner cultural identity, but this is not sustainable beyond the first or second generation.²⁰⁷ Migration to Orania or an “inward, metaphysical migration ... a self-induced emotional detachment from the realities of South Africa” is equally unproductive of a solution, as it does not address a communal need, even if these expedients, in Mads Vestergaard’s words, “make race appear to disappear”.²⁰⁸

A second type of response has been the advocacy of a cultural nationalism by intellectuals espousing multilingualism and minority rights. For Danie Goosen, this means opposition to neo-liberalism and the “imperialism of Afro-nationalism” in a “radical-democratic attempt of the multiplicity of cultural communities to achieve a say in their respective histories”.²⁰⁹ That this is a reformulation of Afrikaner nationalism, through a lower-order bid for power, is evident from Charles Malan’s contention that “[what is left of] the Afrikaner power base should be maintained and expanded” and Johan Rossouw’s call for the re-mobilisation of Afrikaner history.²¹⁰ Any attempt to maintain aspects of Afrikaner nationalism is doomed to failure, because whiteness remains essential to Afrikaner ethnic discourse, as Melissa Steyn demonstrates in her analysis of the 437 letters to the editor in *Rapport* for the entire year 2001,²¹¹ while the future of democratic government in South Africa “is premised on the demise of everything Afrikaner nationalism has always stood for”.²¹² And with regard to mobilisation, this implies – or imposes – homogeneity, but as I have pointed out elsewhere,²¹³ it is precisely the recuperation of their historical heterogeneity that offers Afrikaners the best prospect of constructive co-existence in a multi-cultural society. As Max du Preez puts it:

Afrikaans-wees is meer as kerkbasaars, geloftedagvieringe, sustersverenigings, Broederbond en Rapportryers, die dominee en die skoolhoof. Jy kan Boheems en Afrikaans wees, jy kan ’n wêreldburger of ’n kommunist of ’n

²⁰⁷ W. Visser, Afrikaner Responses to Post-Apartheid South Africa, *New Contree*, vol. 54, Nov. 2007, p. 9-12.

²⁰⁸ M. Vestergaard, Who’s Got the Map? *Daedalus*, Winter 2001, p. 28.

²⁰⁹ Danie Goosen quoted in M. Kriel, A New Generation of Gustav Prellers?, *African Studies*, vol 71, no.3, Dec. 2012, p. 436.

²¹⁰ Kriel, *African Studies*, vol 71, no.3, Dec. 2012, p. 427-429.

²¹¹ M. Steyn, Rehabilitating a Whiteness Disgraced, *Communication Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 2, Spring 2004, p. 143-169.

²¹² A.E. Coombes quoted in Steyn, *Communication Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2004, p. 150.

²¹³ J. Boje and F. Pretorius, Kent gij dat Volk? *Historia*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2011, p. 59-72.

sosialis of 'n Katoliek of 'n Hare Krishna wees. Jy kan wees net wat jy wil en nog Afrikaans wees. En jy kan baie beslis 'n demokrat wees.²¹⁴

Kriel says of the intellectuals associated with a variety of organizations referred to above: “But a movement, if it hopes to attract mass support, has to do more than repeat its ideology: it has to repeat it in a digestible form.”²¹⁵ This did not happen, unless one regards Steve Hofmeyr’s advocacy and Bok van Blerk’s immensely popular De La Rey song as a call to arms for their revived nationalism.²¹⁶

As an “identity entrepreneur”, the South African trade union Solidarity has been far more successful. By exploiting Afrikaners’ shame for the past and anger about their present situation, Solidarity mobilises community support, but rather than the discursive logic of Afrikaner nationalism, it uses the tropes of rights and belonging, thus aligning its discourse with constitutional values. Historical realities are obfuscated to make Afrikaners victims and thus counter culpability.²¹⁷

The sheer pragmatism of this approach is taken one step further by the participants in interviews conducted by Verwey and Quayle. In public these respondents were prepared to jettison aspects of their identity that were no longer useful to them – stereotypes, history, culture, “taalstryd” – but other aspects, specifically whiteness and its benefits, could only be experienced and articulated in private.²¹⁸ They were at pains to preserve a sanitized public identity, but privately they “recycled key discourses underlying racist apartheid ideology, particularly discourses of black incompetence and whites under threat”.²¹⁹

Extreme difficulty in re-imagining identity is characteristic of the older generation, but “the younger generation of post-apartheid Afrikaners does not necessarily share the same burden as they never enjoyed state power at all”.²²⁰ Rock music, branded communist by their elders, provided them with an early means of dissociation from

²¹⁴ Quoted in H. Marx and C. Milton, *Bastardised Whiteness*, *Social Identities*, vol. 17, no. 6, Nov. 2011, p. 728.

²¹⁵ Kriel, *African Studies*, vol 71, no.3, 2012, p. 439.

²¹⁶ A. Krog, *Conditional Tense*, London: Seagull Books, 2013, p. 192 regards it as an attempt at redefinition. She believes that the song “so powerfully tries to reach back to an honourable moment and an honourable man as if to insert the same kind of righteousness as the ‘new’ contribution of Afrikaners into the moral discourse of South Africa.”

²¹⁷ J. Boersema, *Between Recognition and Resentment*, *African Studies*, vol. 71, no. 3, Dec. 2012, p. 410-419.

²¹⁸ Verwey and Quayle, in *African Affairs*, vol. 111, no. 445, 2012, p. 566.

²¹⁹ Verwey and Quayle, in *African Affairs*, vol. 111, no. 445, 2012, p. 560.

²²⁰ Visser, in *New Contree*, vol. 54, Nov. 2007, p. 24.

the cultural establishment. After the Soweto uprising, musicians such as Johannes Kerkorrel, Koos Kombuis and Bernardus Niemand used rock music to mock the political establishment, their protest reaching a high point with the Voëlvry tour of 1989.²²¹ Afrikaans cultural festivals, such as Aardklop and the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees, started in 1995 and have continued to draw vast audiences of up to 100 000. The young people who attend these festivals identify with the bands, playwrights and performers whose destabilization of fixed identities opens the way to reconfiguration.²²² Left-aligned rappers and bands such as Jack Parow, Fokopolisiekar and Die Antwoord display “subversive, anti-establishment attitudes and ... openly hostile attitudes towards stereotypical Afrikaans identities and a perceived lack of impetus to act amongst Afrikaners”.²²³

2.4.1.6 Other Afrikaans speakers

My discussion thus far of Afrikaner hegemony in Section 2.4.1 and of the current state of Afrikaner perplexity in Section 2.4.1.5 has left out of consideration the majority of Afrikaans speakers who were oppressed by hegemonic Afrikanerdom and have their own reasons for being perplexed in the present situation. People of colour have for many generations been excluded and alienated from the dominant Afrikaans-language community. Among the outrages committed against them was a derogation or denial of their role in the origin and stabilisation the Afrikaans language. In the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, a professor of Afrikaans at the University of the Witwatersrand concurred in 1969 with a pronouncement of G.S. Nienaber to the effect that “... die Hotnots het hul eie, laat ons dit noem, plat Afrikaans; ... Die Afrikaanse taal is dan daar gebore waar die Afrikaanse volk gebore is – op die platteland in die deftige ou Hollandse boerewoning”.²²⁴ But, as Adam Small reminds us,

Ons was ... Afrikaans voordat die Afrikaner wat vandag die meeste daarop roem dat hy Afrikaans is, dit was. U sal onthou dat Afrikaans eers 'n 'kombuistaal' was, 'n taal wat uit die diepste setel van die kultuur hier by ons

²²¹ A. Klopper, “In wrede woede het ek die hand wat beheer gebyt”: Die opkoms van Afrikaanse (punk)rockmusiek, in *Van volksmoeder tot Fokopolisiekar*, geredigeer deur A.M. Grundlingh en S. Huygen. Stellenbosch: Sunpress, 2008, p. 209-211,

²²² Marx and Milton, in *Social Identities*, vol. 17, no. 6, Nov. 2011, p. 724. See also: T. Sonnekus, Hip Afrikaners and Neo-Tribalism in Post-Apartheid South Africa, *Cultural Arts*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2017, p. 18-36.

²²³ Marx and Milton, in *Social Identities*, vol. 17, no. 6, Nov. 2011, p. 733.

²²⁴ E. van Heerden, *Die ander werklikheid*, Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1969, p. 41.

dus in 'n tyd van sy vroegste ontstaan, verban is deur die voorvaders van die einste mense wat vandag so 'n trots daarin het om Afrikaans genoem te word.²²⁵

Current efforts to recruit and co-opt coloured Afrikaans speakers as “Afrikaanses”,²²⁶ a separate ethnic community who also have or should have an interest in the preservation of Afrikaans,²²⁷ have met with mixed reactions. There are those who assert their right to the language as a means of communication, as is demonstrated by the fact that approximately half of the readers of *Die Burger* are people of colour,²²⁸ while others have become anglicized almost overnight; but the role of “taalstryders” is rejected.²²⁹ Having resisted political attempts to impose homogeneity on them, coloured people are likely to react in a variety of ways to the *Pelgrimsverhale*. For some, at any rate, the negative experience of Afrikaner nationalism and a “national” literature may mean that it is experienced as a refreshing breeze from a different time and place.

2.5 CULTURAL STUDIES

Cultural Studies, a discipline inaugurated in Britain in the 1960s, arose from the work of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson and their common concern to establish a concept of culture transcending the bounds of the English class system.²³⁰ Investigation of issues such as cultural pluralism, identity, hegemony, a Eurocentric worldview and the input of post-structuralism, feminism, gender studies, hybridity theory and post-colonialism²³¹ led to increasing convergence of fields of study in the humanities. By the late 1980s, the ethnography of audiences proved a fruitful area of interdisciplinary cooperation.²³² By shifting the focus from identity to difference, deconstruction subverts notions of equivalence – including Toury’s adequacy-acceptability compatibility. Thus it is able to escape “the

²²⁵ A. Small, quoted in J. Esterhuyse, *Taalapartheid en Skoolafrikaans*, p. 27-28.

²²⁶ A term introduced by *Die Burger* in 2005. See R. Davies, *Afrikaners in the New South Africa*, London: Tauris, 2009, p. 4.

²²⁷ M. Steyn, in *Communication Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 2, Spring 2004, p. 427; Vestergaard, in *Daedalus*, 2001, p. 29.

²²⁸ B.J. Louw, Die oorlewing van 'n Afrikaanse koerant in 'n veeltalige omgewing, met spesifieke verwysing na *Die Burger* (Wes-Kaap), Meestersverhandeling, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 2003, p. 49.

²²⁹ Cf. Davies, *Afrikaners in the New South Africa*, p. 84.

²³⁰ S. Bassnett, The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies, in *Constructing Cultures; edited by S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere*, Clevedon: Multimedia Matters, 1998, p. 130.

²³¹ Bassnett, in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, p. 15.

²³² Bassnett, in *Constructing Cultures*, p. 130-132.

epistemological straitjacket that the power of the original text retains over the translation”.²³³ The binary of original and translation, institutionalised by nation states in the nineteenth century, no longer needs to play the determinative role imposed by essentialist cultures averse to foreign influence,²³⁴ and a translation can be accorded full autonomy to be appraised on its own terms by its own audience.

2.5.1 Loss and gain

The abiding negative aftermath of the equivalence paradigm is a fixation on loss in translation encapsulated in the cliché *traduttore, traditore* (translator, traitor) and the concomitant failure to acknowledge the wealth of linguistic resources a translator can draw on. However, Venuti notes that exorbitant gains are achieved by effects unique to the translating language.²³⁵ If one substitutes “Afrikaans” for “English” in the following quotation from Barbara Reynolds, it reflects my experience:

Sometimes I had to spend several days on a stanza before I could get it right. But the solution was there all the time, in among the resources of English, which are so much vaster than any one individual’s command of it. It is awe-inspiring to experience a sudden disclosure of its possibilities.²³⁶

I have selected four typically Afrikaans expressions from my translation of the Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale to demonstrate the unique contribution such turns of phrase can make to the ambience of the tale in question:

... Ful ofte it happeth so
The pot tobreketh, and farewel, al is go!
(VIII.906-907).

... Wel, dikwels bars die pot,
en dan is dit koebaai die hele lot.

For in his termes he wol hym so wynde,
And speke his wordes in so sly a kynde,
Whanne he commune shal with any wight,
That he wol make hym doten anonright ...
(VIII.980-983).

So ingewikkeld was sy redenasies,
versier met soveel slinkse fieterjasies;
met sy gladde tong was hy daartoe in staat
om enigeen ’n gat in die kop te praat.

Loo, how this theef koude his service beedel!
(VIII.1065).

So smeer die skurk hom aan die priester af.

Al his werkyng nas but fraude and deceite.
(VIII.1367)

... sonder die minste benul
dat die skobbejak hom van ’n kant af kul.

²³³ Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, p. 144.

²³⁴ Cf. S. Selim, Pharaoh’s Revenge, in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, p. 322.

²³⁵ Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 142.

²³⁶ B. Reynolds, The Pleasure Craft, in *The Translator’s Art*; edited by W. Radice and B. Reynolds, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987, p. 136.

Another example of the gain derived from the use of a distinctively Afrikaans expression relates to two occurrences of “ja-nee” in my translation. This unique collocation is deeply rooted in the Afrikaner psyche. From childhood one learnt never to disagree openly with one’s parents; this applied equally to other older relatives and, in fact, to all one’s elders, to whom one was tied by bonds of quasi-kinship. Excessive deference was excused with sayings such as “Wiens brood ik eet, diens woord ik spreek”. Social interaction was beset with caution; it was necessary “om die kat eers uit die boom te kyk” in the knowledge that “met die hoed in die hand, kom mens deur die hele land”. This engrained behaviour has a long history. During the South African War, Oskar Hintrager, a German volunteer and astute observer of the Boers, commented on this indeterminacy in social intercourse: the unaffirmative handshake, followed by desultory conversation about non-controversial matters.²³⁷ Similarly, when the author Karel Schoeman came to South Africa from the Netherlands in the 1940s, he became aware of this “besondere tweeslagtigheid – ’n neiging om konfrontasies te vermy, om menings nie reguit uit te spreek nie, om halfslagtige antwoorde te gee”, something that he regarded as “typisch Afrikaans”.²³⁸ Schoeman attributed this diffidence to a sense of national inferiority that was replaced by increasing self-confidence after the National Party’s assumption of power in 1948. But if the equivocation of “Ja-nee” best exemplifies this attitude, one of the definitions in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* suggests a greater antiquity: “Ja, neen word gebezigd als een verzachte tegenwerping of wanneer men iets slechts ten deele, of onder voorbehoud kan toestemmen.”²³⁹

Chaucer was clearly uncomfortable with the inherited material of the Clerk’s Tale and seeks to mitigate the cruelty of Walter by introducing a note of ambivalence in his behaviour towards Griselda:

‘Certes, Griselde, I hadde ynogh plesance
To han yow to my wyf for youre goodnesse,
As for youre trouthe and for youre obeisance,
Noght for youre lynage, ne for youre richesse;
But now knowe I in verry soothfastnesse

‘Ja-nee, ek moet erken dat dit prettig was
om jou as vrou te hê, want jy was goed,
gehoorsaam en getrou, eerder as
vermoënd of van adellike bloed.
Maar een ding wat ek al hoe meer vermoed,

²³⁷ J.J. Oberholster (red.), *Dagboek van Oskar Hintrager, Christiaan de Wet-Annale*, 2, 10 Julie 1900, p. 62, en 17 en 26 Augustus 1900, p. 115 en 125.

²³⁸ Karel Schoeman, *Die Laaste Afrikaanse Boek*, Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 2002, p. 142.

²³⁹ *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, onder redaksie van A. Beets, deel 7. Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1926, p. 8-9; cf. T.H. le Roux, *Afrikaanse Taalstudies*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1968, p. 40-41.

That in greet lordshipe, if I wel avyse
Ther is greet servitude in sondry wyse.'
. (IV.792-798)

is dat my hoë stand vir my verplig
om my na die wens van ander in te rig....'

Here “ja-nee” may be glossed as: “It is undoubtedly true (“Certes...”), but I am reluctant to acknowledge it” or, simply put, “Yes, but ...”.

In the Tale of Melibee, a husband – *ipso facto* the soul of rationality – is clearly out-manoeuvred by a very persuasive wife, as he inadvertently reveals:

‘Certes,’ quod Melibee, I graunte yow,
dame Prudence, that pacience is a greet
vertu of perfeccioun; but ...’
(VII.1517)

‘Ja-nee,’ sê Melibeus, ‘geduld is seker ’n
groot deug vir iemand wat volkomenheid
nastreef, maar ...’

In its context, this “ja-nee” clearly means: “I don’t accept your argument, but for the sake of peace I’ll concede that there may be merit in what you say” – or in another South African English version, “Ja well no fine”.²⁴⁰ These responses are therefore examples of what Jean-Marie Potgieter typifies as signifying “unenthusiastic agreement” in her dissertation on negative exclamatives in Afrikaans.²⁴¹

A final example of lexical gain relates to the characteristic Afrikaans use of the word “outyds” in describing the Host’s ingratiating manner in addressing the Prioress:

... and with that word he sayde
As curteisly as it had been a mayde
(VII.445-446)

Toe ewe outyds soos ’n maagd het hy
sy aandag aan die Prioeres gewy:

We are told that the Monk loved courtesy (I.45-46), a word that signifies “refinement of manners and spirit as well as a command of courtly usages”.²⁴² For a knight, instruction in this form of deportment “was one of the first lessons in his long education”.²⁴³ The Prioress “peyned hire to countrefete cheere/Of court” (I.139-140), and to all appearances carries it off. The Host adopts an unnatural (“ewe”) pretentious style appropriate to a bygone era and is assiduous (“aandag ... gewy”) in his orotund address to her. Furthermore, the adverb is appropriate in its

²⁴⁰ J. Branford and M. Venter, *Say Again?* Cape Town: Pharos, 2016, p. 13.

²⁴¹ J.-M. Potgieter, ‘n Minimalistiese Analise van Eksplitiwe Negativering in Afrikaans. Meesters-verhandeling, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 2018, p. 49.

²⁴² F.H. Ridley, Explanatory Notes, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 800.

²⁴³ Bowden, *A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, New York, NY: Macmillan, 1966, p. 48

etymological sense as medieval people imagined courtesy as representing a return to the chivalry of ancient times, to the “fairy-land sphere of the Round Table”.²⁴⁴

It is not my purpose to denigrate the work of other translators, but a comparison with two Dutch versions will reveal the advantage derived in this case from the typically Afrikaans diction.

Barnouw’s version reads:

... en met een hovesheid
Als waar de man een meisken vergde hy’t
De Prioeres

(p. 409)

and Van Altena’s:

Zo hoffelijk als het hoort tegen een maagd,
Heeft hij daarop aan de abdis gevraagd ...
(p. 400).

Gains are not necessarily lexical. Here is an example of the way in which syntax may contribute. In the Miller’s Tale, Absolon’s accomplishments include dancing:

In twenty manere koude he trippe and daunce
After the scole of Oxenforde tho,
And with his legges casten to and fro ...

(l.3328-3330)

... en twintig soorte dans (sy fort
die jongste Oxford-gier van bene skop
in alle rigtings in die lug in op) ...

As a result of the omission of an article or a possessive before “bene” (*die* bene or *sy* bene), Absolon’s legs seem to be separate from the rest of his body, objects to be kicked about like balls or stones, as is suggested by “casten”. This apparent disjointedness is intensified by the accumulation of spatial indicators in the Afrikaans, the repeated preposition “in ... in”, directly followed by “op”, suggesting frenzied, random activity. The effect of this loose syntax is to ironise Absolon’s concern to be punctilious, emphasised in the repetition of “punt” in the couplet “Maar wat sy spraak betref, was hy kieskeurig,/en op die punt van poep, bra punteneurig” (l.3338), and reinforced by a play on the verb “uitgestippel” applied to the design of his shoes (l.3318), since the morphological stem “stip” covers the range of punctual, precise, accurate, strict and prompt.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, London: Penguin, 1955, p. 68. And, it would seem, we still do. “Many will remember that particular mixture of gentleness, courtesy, sweetness, lack of guile and unbending sense of honour which characterised old-fashioned gentlemen of a certain kind. One says old-fashioned, because the type scarcely survives; it was the product of a particular set of circumstances which no longer exist. M. Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981, p.14.

²⁴⁵ D.B. Bosman, I.W. van der Merwe en L.W. Hiemstra, *T weetalige Woordeboek: Afrikaans-Engels*, 4de uitgawe, Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1962.

2.5.2 Intertextuality

The transition from structuralism to post-structuralism in the 1960s meant that “assertions of objectivity, scientific rigour, methodological stability” were replaced by “an emphasis on uncertainty, indeterminacy, incommunicability, subjectivity, desire, pleasure and play”.²⁴⁶ This was the cultural context in which Julia Kristeva introduced the work of the Russian theorist M.M. Bakhtin and formulated the concept of intertextuality as a form of gain, which she defined as “a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double”.²⁴⁷ In the context of my translation, it may add, or result in unintended loss.

Willis Barnstone observes:

Once the translated text is given to the reader, it should be perfectly clear that the reception of that text (like the translator’s reception of the original writer’s text) will be shaky and subjective, dependent on and subject to all the elements of intertextuality and variables of reader theory that any ordinary text goes through on the way to the reader’s transforming mind.²⁴⁸

The complexity of any receiving culture makes it inevitable that any text is superimposed on a palimpsest of previous texts and that the assumptions underlying it are in accordance with or in opposition to pre-existing assumptions, thus producing a network of subtexts or a sounding board of resonances, as demonstrated in the examples below.

In the Miller’s Tale, Alisoun, fearful of discovery, initially shies away from Nicholas’s crude advances with an appeal to his “curteisye”:

Why, lat be! quod she. Lat be, Nicholas, Or I wol crie ‘out , harrow’ and ‘allas’! Do wey youre handes, for youre curteisye! (l.3285-3287)	Nee, hou jou hande tuis. Laat staan my, want anders skree ek netnou moord en brand. Hei, Nicholas, waar’s jou ordentlikheid?
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Later, though, when the danger of detection has been removed, she is less prim and proper as she lightly scampers down the ladder to her adulterous assignation:

²⁴⁶ G. Allen, *Intertextuality*, 2nd edition, London: Routledge, 2011, p. 3.

²⁴⁷ J. Kristeva, quoted in E. Martin, *Intertextuality: An Introduction*, *The Comparatist*, vol. 35, 2011, p. 148.

²⁴⁸ W. Barnstone, *The Poetics of Translation*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993, p. 231.

Doun of the ladder stalketh Nicholay,
And Alisoun ful softe adoun she spedde.
(l.3648-3649)

Met die leer af ondertoe kruip Nicholas,
gevolg deur Alisoen met ligter tred.

In Afrikaans, the word “lig” carries overtones of frivolity and dubious morals when applied to a woman,²⁴⁹ and in my translation of the Reeve’s Tale, the miller’s wife is described as “lig en losbol soos ’n ekster” (l.4154). In the Shipman’s Tale, when the wife joins the monk in the garden, I say of their meeting: “En na die tuin kom ook die goeie vrou;/ligvoets loop sy ...” (VII.92-93). So the lightness with which Alisoun descends the steps may be seen as a foreshadowing of her intentions. Furthermore, the phrase “met ligter tred” will be familiar to hundreds of Afrikaans-speaking women for two reasons. It is the title of a collection of essays by Audrey Blignaut (1916-2008), famous for her elegant, if anaemic, essays first published in the magazine *Sarie*, and part of the subtitle of Amore Bekker’s *Hartstories*, with its “warm, comforting and uplifting” stories from her programme “Tjailatyd” on Radio Sonder Grense.²⁵⁰ Verbal coincidence between the description of Alisoun’s lightfootedness and the titles of salubrious reading matter aimed at a largely female audience produces an intertextuality, by means of which, as Julia Kristeva notes, “in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another”.²⁵¹ In *Sitting Pretty*, Christi van der Westhuizen shows with reference to the popular Afrikaans magazine *Sarie* how emphasis on the concept of “ordentlikheid” was used to suppress female sexual pleasure and agency, and thus perpetuate the *volksmoeder* construct.²⁵² The “productive” effect of this particular intertextuality may suggest a relativising of female erotic propriety.

Another example might be the “greyn” placed on the tongue of the “litel clergeon” in the Prioress’s Tale, which has been variously interpreted: one of the apple seeds placed under Adam’s tongue, a rosary bead, a portion of a consecrated Host, a pearl, a seed to lure the mythological soul bird back, a grain seed as the symbol of

²⁴⁹ HAT: *Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*. *lig*, definisie 6: ‘Ligsinnig, losbandig: ’n Meisie van ligte sedes’; so ook *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*, dl IX, M: definisie 4b.

²⁵⁰ A. Blignaut, *Met ligter tred*, Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1967; A. Bekker, *Hartstories: huis toe met ’n ligter tred*, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 2015; the description of the music played in the programme “From the Bell Tower” on Springbok Radio at noon on Sundays during the 1970s.

²⁵¹ J. Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 36, quoted in R. Malan, Intertekstualiteit, in *Literêre terme en teorieë*, geredigeer deur T.T. Cloete, Pretoria: HAUM-Literêr, 1992, p. 187.

²⁵² C. Blignaut, The Deconstruction of Post-apartheid Afrikaner Identity through White Afrikaans Women’s *ordentlikheid*, *Historia*, vol 64, no. 1, 2019, p.180.

life and death (John 12:24) or cardamom, whether as a sweetener after the privy or as a treatment for a sore throat.²⁵³ Ynez O'Neill pursues the pharmacological angle, suggesting *castoreum*, a medieval pill which was placed under the tongue for lingual paralysis, a medication known to Bernard, Gaddesden and Gilbert, the three English authorities mentioned by Chaucer in his portrait of the Physician (l.434).²⁵⁴

How then should I translate the “greyn”? The Virgin’s assurance, “My kindjie, ek sal jou kom haal ...” (VII.667) reminded me of the first hymn I learnt in early childhood and determined my choice:

As Hy weer kom, as Hy weer kom,
 kom haal Hy sy pêrels,
 al sy pêrels, fraaie pêrels,
 vir Jesus se kroon.
 Ja, die kindergesiggies,
 soos die sterre se liggies,
 is die pêrels, kosb're pêrels
 vir Jesus se kroon.²⁵⁵

How I hated that hymn, which to my inchoate child’s awareness was both threatening and condescending, an adult intrusion on my childhood freedom, but it too speaks of a child’s death as a moment of being fetched, and the “kindergesiggies” and the “sterre se liggies” echo Chaucer’s use of diminutives to convey the pathos of the Prioress’s narrative:

‘My litel child, now wol I fecche thee,
 Whan that the greyn is fro thy tonge ytake.
 Be nat agast; I wol thee nat forsake.’
 (VII.550-662)

“My kindjie, ek sal jou kom haal wanneer
 dié pêrel van jou tong geneem is. Raak nie
 onrustig, want ek sal jou nie versaak nie”.

Hymns remain prominent in my consciousness, as they do in that of the generations who grew up in Protestant Afrikaans homes. This affected my revision of the Tale of Sir Thopas. My original, literal translation of lines from the Tale was the following:

Heere is the queene of Fayerye,
 With harpe and pipe and symphonie,
 Dwellynge in this place.
 (VII.814-816)

Die Feëkoningin dié woon
 met harp-, fluit- en draaiorreltoon
 in hierdie einste plek.

²⁵³ A.B. Friedman, The Mysterious Greyn in the Prioress’s Tale, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1977, p. 328-330; L. Benson, Explanatory Notes, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 916.

²⁵⁴ Y.V. O'Neill, A Speculation concerning the Grain in Chaucer’s Prioress’s Tale, *Medical History*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1969, p. 187-189.

²⁵⁵ Lied 366, *Die Nuwe Halleluja*, 7de druk, Kaapstad: Suid-Afrikaanse Bybelvereniging, [1938].

But then I changed the second line to “met harp- en fluit- en sitertoon”, deliberately referencing a familiar hymn to heighten the comic effect:

... By die smeltend skone
harp- en sitertone
liefde en lof verklank.²⁵⁶

So too my translation of two lines from the Knight's Tale was made in full awareness of my father's soulful lament “Ag, wêreld, wat's jou waarde? 'n Paar sykoue en ses voet onder die aarde”:

What is this world? What asketh men to have?	Wat lê vir ons voor? Ag, wêreld, wat's jou waarde?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave. (I.2777-2778)	Nou met jou liefling, nou in die koue aarde.

As the Wife of Bath's Prologue comes to its conclusion, the historical antagonism between mendicants and possessioners²⁵⁷ flares up in a confrontation between the Friar and the Summoner. The Summoner boasts the upper hand because he perceives that the Friar is out of “patience” in the sense of “forbearance under provocation of any kind”²⁵⁸ – in other words, that he has lost his nerve.

“Now elles, Frere, I bishrewe thy face,” Quod this Somonour, “and I bishrewe me, But if I telle tales two or thre Of freres er I come to Sidyngborne That I shal make thyn herte for to morne, For wel I woot thy pacience is gon.” (III.844-849)	"Ek wens jou in die hel, verdomde frater," antwoord die Bodel, "en 'n vloek op my as ek nie twee of drie verhale inkry oor fraters voor ons Sittingbourne bereik; en dit sal jou berou, my vriend, want kyk, ek kan goed sien jou senuwees is klaar."
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As I introduced the snide, perlocutionary address,²⁵⁹ “my vriend”, in the context of the triumphant taunt of the last line, I had Adam Small's “Oppie Parara” very clearly in mind:

Haai mêrim haai
sure mêrim wil nie try onse guavas
ons guarantee hulle mêrim
hulle's baie goed vi' die nerves.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ Psalm 33:1, in *Die Berymde Psalms ... Gesange*, NG Kerk Uitgewers, 1958.

²⁵⁷ L.D. Benson, Explanatory Notes, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 872.

²⁵⁸ *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, 3rd edition, Oxford: Clarendon, 1970, vol. 2, p. 1447.

²⁵⁹ “the perlocutionary act ... is the *achieving* of certain *effects* by saying something”, J.L. Austin, quoted in T.T. Cloete, *Taalhandeling en die Literatuur*, in *Literêre Terme en Teorieë*, p. 526

Finally, my translation of the Host's praise of the positive effect of alcohol achieves a decided lilt as a result of the clear echo of a popular song, which assures us that "Tant Hessie se witperd maak/die hele wêreld reg": The "witperd" almost certainly refers to White Horse whisky.²⁶¹ The context of the passage quoted below is a scene of "exuberant celebration of primal, earthy materialism",²⁶² the grotesque realism that characterizes the carnivalesque expounded by Mikhael Bakhtin, heightened here by the addition of the realistic touch of "met trane in sy oë" and the jocular use of "lafenis" for alcohol.

<p>Thanne ganoure Hoost to laughen wonder loude, And seyde, "I se wel it is a necessarie, Where that we goon, good drynke with us carie; For that wol turne rancour and disese T'acord and love, and many a wrong apese. (IX.94-98)</p>	<p>Toe lag ons Waard. Met trane in sy oë sê hy: "Ek sien dat dit gerade is as mens op reis gaan om 'n lafenis met jou saam te dra: geskille word besleg; dit maak opeens die hele wêreld reg.</p>
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Intertextuality is located not only in a text but also in the person interacting with the text.²⁶³ As a result, the experience that a reader brings to his/her interaction with the text may distort the translator's intention. This may be illustrated with reference to my perhaps audacious translation of the opening lines of the Epilogue to the Nun's Priest's Tale:

<p>"Sire Nonnes Preest," our Hooste seide anoon, "I-blessed be thy breche, and every stoon!" (VII.3447-3448)</p>	<p>Ons Waard roep: 'Watter kokkedoor's dié pater! 'n Seën op jou boude en jou knaters!</p>
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The Host's words to the Nun's Priest (VII.3447-3462) are similar in content to his encomium on the Monk's masculinity (VII.1941-1962). It is assumed that the address to the Nun's Priest, found in only nine manuscripts, was cancelled when Chaucer wrote in similar vein about the Monk. The comparison of a man in a

²⁶⁰ A. Small, "Oppie Parara", in *Groot Verseboek*, geredigeer deur D.J. Opperman, 3de druk, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1971, p. 361.

²⁶¹ H. van Deventer, More uit Melkbos. Blog, 21 Jan. 2008. The brand was made very familiar by the iconic white horse on the label that figured in successful advertising campaigns, including the widespread distribution of ceramic figurines inscribed "White Horse Scotch Whisky" on one side and "Wit Perd Whisky" on the other.

²⁶² M. Turner, The Carnivalesque, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*; edited by S. Ellis, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 385.

²⁶³ Literacy – Intertextuality. Education Encyclopedia. [p. 2].

religious house with a cock in a hen-run was a Medieval commonplace,²⁶⁴ and it is said of both of them that they would have made good treaders of fowls if they were not celibate. It is therefore entirely appropriate that in my translation the Nun's Priest is described as a "kokkedoor", defined as

Vername, belangrike, i/d reël manlike persoon, veral iem. van gesag of invloed op grond van sy amp of prestasies – dikwels enigsins spottend of neerhalend gebruik m/d bygedagte dat die persoon grootdoenerig of vertonerig is, of spesiale behandeling verwag vanweë 'n oordrewe voorstelling van sy eie belangrikheid.²⁶⁵

The derivation of the word from the French *coq d'or*, cock of gold,²⁶⁶ makes it doubly appropriate. The Afrikaans translation thus establishes a verbal link between the Nun's Priest and the hero of his tale. The definition's first part accords perfectly with Chauntecleer's magnificent appearance, described in heraldic terms (VII.2859-2864), and his regal bearing (VII.3179-3184). But "kokkedoor" is also used ironically; the word calls to mind the anxious squawking of a frightened cockerel:

And so bifel that, as he caste his ye
Among the wortes on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox, that lay ful low.
Nothyng ne liste hym thanne for to crowe,
But cride anon, "Cok! Cok! And up he sterte
As man that was affrayed in his herte.
(VII.3273-3278)

en dus het dit gebeur dat toe hy daar
tussen die kool 'n skoelapper gewaar,
hy van die vos wat skuil bewus geraak het
en al sy kraailus hom meteens versaak het,
maar hy't gou opsygespring met 'n bange
'kok-kok' geluid soos een van vrees bevange.

However, *coq d'or* is also the name of a prestigious award to restaurants by the *Guides des Gourmands* in France. This and the fortuitous homonym "kok" meaning cook prompted the television channel kykNET to use the programme title "Kokkedoor" for a cookery series launched in 2013, followed by a "Koekedoor" competition in 2016, and a junior version "Kokkedoortjie" in 2017. The series spawned a number of recipe books by Errieda du Toit, variously titled *Kokkedoor*, *Kokkedoor 2*, *Koekedoor 1*, *Koekedoor 2*, and *Kokkerdoortjie*.²⁶⁷ So, as a result of the "foody cult", which has not abated, prospective readers of the *Pelgrimsverhale* may strongly associate the word with food and not at all with the original Afrikaans sense of an imposing person, and may so misconstrue my meaning.

²⁶⁴ L.D. Benson, Explanatory Notes, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 941.

²⁶⁵ *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*, dl 6, KLA-KOL, Pretoria: Staatsdrukker, 1976.

²⁶⁶ Boshof en Nienaber, *Afrikaanse Etimologieë*, p. 361.

²⁶⁷ Published by Human & Rousseau in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

This risk is even greater if a reader brings normative assumptions and experiences to bear on the reading of a translation which may produce responses sharply at variance with those applicable to readers of the source text. Trenchant criticism of ecclesiastical office bearers was a commonplace of Chaucer's time, but did not detract from faith in the Catholic Church as the ark of salvation.²⁶⁸

The abuses and venality [the Friar and the Pardoner] embody were real and they make for lively reading, but they were no more representative of the Church than the Parson is. Anticlerical sentiment ran very high, and with good reason, but most clergy were of neither extreme, neither Parson nor Pardoner. What corruption of the Church and some of its clergy did do was to create an appetite for reform and move the laity to adopt private devotions independent of Church auspices.²⁶⁹

But how will Afrikaans readers, schooled in often vituperative anti-Catholicism, relate to the portrayal of corruption in the medieval Church? When I was a child, I attended a "magic lantern" presentation in the church hall of the Dutch Reformed Church in Wynberg, where an English-speaking clergyman²⁷⁰ regaled his audience with horror stories about the Catholic Church, including a reference to nuns and their buried babies. Later I felt a frisson of apprehension on the rare occasions when I saw a nun, and in this I was not unique, for a blogger, Eleen Blaeser, writes:

In die hoofstraat van my grootword-dorp, Middelburg, staan 'n klein Roomse kerkie. Om by ouma se huis te kom, moes ons noodgedwonge verby die kerkie loop. Ons was vrek bang, want naas die Engelse en die rooi gevaar uit Rusland was die katolieke die mense waarvoor ons die bangste was. Die nonne in hul swart gewade was vir ons die verpersoonliking van alles wat boos was. ... Die kinders by die skool het vertel dat *hulle* gehoor het die nonne steek die mense wat geoffer word met die einste lem wat ons gesien het in hulle harte. Die harte word dan uitgesny en almal moet daarvan eet. Hulle verkies, so het die kind vertel, jong meisies. Virgins. ...²⁷¹

When I was catechized in 1952, the authoritative textbook used was the *Katkisasieboek*, which went through multiple reprints between 1950 and 1962. This informed its young readers that "(d)ie Roomse Kerk is ook nog in Suid-Afrika die vyand van ons Protestante en wend alle middele aan om ons teë te werk". Its nefarious purposes were ostensibly achieved not only by means of its schools, which seduced Afrikaner parents with inexpensive education and piano lessons, but

²⁶⁸ L.M. Bisson, *Chaucer and the Late Medieval World*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998, p. 53.

²⁶⁹ J. Rhodes, Religion, in *Chaucer: an Oxford Guide*, p. 86

²⁷⁰ An internet search to identify this clergyman has proved fruitless, and the Church archivist was unable to assist (e-mail communication from Dr Andrew Kok, 13 Nov. 2018).

²⁷¹ E. Blaeser, Die dag van die nonne. Blog.

also by means of hospitals and charitable organizations, and its missionary activity, which aimed to “betower die primitiewe aanleg van die heidene met hul blink en snaakse goedjies”. And then, most significantly: “*Hul negrofiliese standpunt teenoor ons Bybelse standpunt van differensiasie en segregasie is baie gevaarlik.*”²⁷²

More recently still, in the late 1980s when my wife taught in the English department at the University of Pretoria, students were urged to watch the Kenneth Clark “Civilization” series, then telecast on SABCTV, in the hope of augmenting their limited knowledge of Western culture. Some students expressed an unwillingness to do so because, they said, it was Roman Catholic propaganda.²⁷³

For such a reader, the Pardoner is clearly recognizable as a prototype of the villainous Tetzl, who so outraged Martin Luther; the Monk’s haughty rejection of labour accords neatly with the idea that monasteries were a refuge “vir dié wat te lui was om te werk”,²⁷⁴ and the veneration of the Virgin Mary might serve as confirmation of the reader’s ingrained prejudice.

As I shall point out in Chapter 3, this situation arises “as a result of any rupture or discontinuity in experience, outlook, or belief between writer and reader, and chronological distance makes such a rupture inevitable”.²⁷⁵ This applies most strikingly to present-day sensitivities to anti-Semitism, but also to the disquiet occasioned by the non-consensual sex of the Reeve’s Tale, especially among feminists versed in Women’s Studies rather than Chaucer criticism.²⁷⁶ Discontinuity is also evident in changes in taste. Chaucer’s age was very receptive to pathos (for example, the Prioress’s Tale), as is evident from fourteenth and fifteenth century religion, art and literature. Nineteenth century readers responded with enthusiasm to pathos in literature, but modern readers are as antipathetic to what is perceived as sentimentality as they are to the validity accorded to general truths encapsulated

²⁷² Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. Sondagskoolkommissie, *Die Katkisasieboek*, 3de druk, Bloemfontein: Sondagskool-Boekhandel, 1952, p. 350-351.

²⁷³ Communication: Elizabeth Boje.

²⁷⁴ *Die Katkisasieboek*, p. 357.

²⁷⁵ J. Mann, Chaucer and Atheism, in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, edited by L.J. Kiser, vol. 17, 1996, p. 5.

²⁷⁶ A. Hopkins, Chaucer’s Fables. Lecture, p. 15.

in exemplary narratives (such as the Man of Law's Tale) or proverbial wisdom (Chaucer's Tale of Melibee).²⁷⁷

2.6 CONCLUSION

I became acquainted with progressive translation theory only after I had completed my translation of the *Canterbury Tales*. It is not just that I was ignorant of translation theory at the time I was working on the translation. At a conscious level, I was, in fact, operating on the basis of assumptions which I now disavow. In this disavowal I am aided by the literary theorists themselves, because they would insist that although I thought I was doing one thing, I was, in fact, doing another. I was under the impression that my source text was stable and univocal and that I was according it primacy; Anton Popovič points out that as a translator I was inevitably interpreting a multivocal text in order to create an autonomous literary work alongside the original.²⁷⁸ For many years I believed I was translating purely for my own pleasure; Theo Hermans would argue that even then my efforts were an accommodation to the target culture.²⁷⁹ I considered that, being alienated from Afrikaner thinking, I could not comply with societal norms "which serve as criteria according to which actual instances of behaviour are evaluated".²⁸⁰ In this situation, my translation could not be described as coherent with that culture; however, Toury argues that a translator's accommodation is not necessarily to the norms of the target culture, but can also be to a sub-section of it.²⁸¹ Finally, I would have thought that publishers' rejection of a translation signalled its unacceptability; but according to Rule 2 of Skopos theory, as formulated by Reiss and Vermeer, the target text is an *Informationsgebot*, an offer of information, and its success is a function not of its canonisation in the target literary system, but of its coherence for target text reasons (Rule 1) and its internal coherence (Rule 4).²⁸²

I have experienced my belated discovery of translation theory in the course of revisiting and reflecting on my translation process, especially the insights of

²⁷⁷ R.W. Frank, *The Canterbury Tales III: Pathos*, and A.C. Spearing, *The Canterbury Tales IV: Exemplum and Fable*, in *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion*, p. 144 and 161.

²⁷⁸ A. Popovič, *De afbakening van het begrip 'vertaling'*, in *Vertaalwetenschap*, p. 26.

²⁷⁹ T. Hermans, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, p.12.

²⁸⁰ Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, 1995, p. 65.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁸² Du, *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 2, no. 10, Oct. 2012, p. 2192.

Gadamer, Jauss and Iser, Toury and Even-Zohar, as a liberating vindication of my arduous but enthralling efforts over many years. Rationally regarded, however, my delight is merely a confirmation of the coherence of theory and practice, of the fact that theory is not imposed on practice but provides explanatory hypotheses about what happens in practice. Toury formulates this understanding as follows:

For me, theory formation within Translation Studies has never been an end in itself. Its object has always been to lay a sound basis and supply an elaborate frame of reference for controllable studies into actual behaviour and its results, and the ultimate test of theory is its capacity to do that service.²⁸³

In the course of my translating I gradually moved away from the logocentrism of the authoritative text. So too in my study of translation theory, I have moved away from the logocentrism of authoritative texts to apply the ultimate test of practice, in the form of translation strategies, to which Toury refers in the above quotation.

²⁸³ Toury, in *Current Issues in Language and Society*, vol. 5, no. 1-2, 1998, p. 11.

CHAPTER 3: TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As Chapter 2 has made clear, translation is inevitably directed to the receiving culture, but the translator's point of departure is necessarily the source culture's "framework of ideology" or "universe of discourse", comprised of the "objects, concepts, customs belonging to the world that was familiar to the writer of the original".¹ This chapter is concerned with this point of departure and refers to aspects of the source text to elucidate translational strategies. This is not to valorise "solving" the "translation problems" presented by the source text as an unattainable goal (and thus to invite experts' enumeration of "translation errors").² Translation is always transactional; ideology in translation is not the preserve of the source text; it is also inherent in the translator's stance and in the relevance of the translation to the target audience.³ In interpreting the source culture to the target culture, the translator is confronted with multiple "clusters of properties, meanings and possibilities".⁴ The translator's privileging of a particular option inevitably results in loss, but it also opens up exciting new possibilities specific to the language of the translation of the *Canterbury Tales*,⁵ examples of which I explore, developing the discussion initiated in this regard in Chapter 2.

Although I use a variation on Christiane Nord's typology of what she calls "translation problems",⁶ it should be evident throughout that problems and solutions are mutually established in the process of translational interpretation and reformulation.⁷ For this reason I refer to "considerations" rather than "problems".

¹ A. Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 41.

² G. Toury, A Rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies, in *The Manipulation of Literature*; edited by T. Hermans, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, p. 26.

³ M. Tymoczko, quoted in C. Spies and I. Feinauer, Ideologies oorwegings by die vertaling van Anne Frank se dagboek, *Het Achterhuis*, in Afrikaans, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 51:2 (2011), p. 113.

⁴ E. Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 129.

⁵ L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 18.

⁶ C. Nord, A Functional Typology of Translation, in *Text, Typology and Translation*; edited by A. Trosborg, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997.

⁷ Toury, in *The Manipulation of Literature*, p. 25.

In the first part of this chapter, I address wider pragmatic considerations such as choices regarding foreignisation versus domestication, as well as formal aspects relating to metre, rhyme and genre. The focus then shifts to intercultural, interlinguistic and text-specific issues that emerged in the translation process.

3.2 PRAGMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

Pragmatic considerations arise from what Toury calls the preliminary norms of translation policy,⁸ essentially the closeness of a proposed translation to its source text. The question of relative closeness has been identified by means of various binaries, including Schleiermacher's identification of foreignising versus domesticating translation. This opposition may be illustrated with reference to two Dutch and one German translation of the *Canterbury Tales*.

3.2.1 Foreignisation and/or domestication

Adriaan Barnouw (1877-1968) studied medieval languages and literature and history at the University of Leiden. He lectured in English at Leiden from 1907 to 1913 and in Dutch, English language and literature and history at Columbia University in New York from 1920 to 1948.⁹ Barnouw, who was the author of 450 works in 839 publications in six languages,¹⁰ spent much of his life translating Chaucer into Dutch.¹¹ He started on the *Canterbury Tales* in 1910 and his translation of the General Prologue appeared in print in 1912.¹² He had a manuscript version of *De Kantelberg-vertellingen* ready by 1914¹³ and this was published two years later.¹⁴ In 1930, a new edition was published under the title *Vertellingen van de pelgrims naar Kantelberg*.¹⁵

⁸ Adriaan Barnouw 1877-1968: Biography.

⁹ G. Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies – and Beyond*, revised edition, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2012, p. 82.

¹⁰ Barnouw, Adriaan Jacob 1877-1968, WorldCat.

¹¹ Barnouw (vertaler), *Troilus en Criseyde*, Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1955; *Het Boek van de Hertogin, Het Vogelparlement*, Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1966.

¹² Barnouw (vertaler). De Proloog tot de Kantelberg-vertellingen van Geoffrey Chaucer, *Onze Eeuw*, 12e Jaargang, 1912, p. 375-411.

¹³ Barnouw, *Monthly Letters on the Culture and History of the Netherlands*, Assan: Van Gorcum, 1969, (1924), p. xxiv.

¹⁴ Barnouw (vertaler). *De Kantelberg-vertellingen*, Haarlem: E.F. Bohn, 1916.

¹⁵ Barnouw (vertaler), *De vertellingen van de Pelgrims naar Kantelberg*, Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, 1930-33.

The medievalist Johan Huizinga and the poet Martinus Nijhoff welcomed Barnouw's translation. They were in agreement that authors such as Chaucer are incomplete "zonder de krans van vertalingen", but, while Huizinga regarded the *Vertellingen* as "een fris en gaaf, echt Nedelands kunstwerk" and approved of Barnouw's use of "oude woorden van middeleeuwse klank", Nijhoff denied it the status of an independent work of art and dismissed the foreignising words as "fonkelend gepoetste antiquiteitjes".¹⁶

In 1995, Ernst van Altena (1933-1999) produced a new translation of the *Canterbury Tales*,¹⁷ adducing a number of reasons for doing so. Van Altena was a talented, versatile and prolific translator into Dutch, whose range covered Balzac, Proust, Hugo, Flaubert, Fitzgerald, Hardy, Kipling, Dickens, Shaw, Kafka and Heine. He first became known for his translation of *chansons*, including almost all of Jacques Brel's *oeuvre*. Georges Brassens set a ballad of Francois Villon to music and this led Van Altena to Villon, whose poetry he translated from 1956-63. From Villon, he moved on to the *Roman de la Rose*, and this prompted an interest in his fellow-translator Geoffrey Chaucer and the *Canterbury Tales*.¹⁸ He found Barnouw's translation inadequate because the prose tales were omitted and passages had been expurgated. Most significantly, he rejected Barnouw's translation as antiquated, written in "een soort imitatie-Middel Nederlands ... met een ongelooflijk raar woordgebruik", including "Kantelberg" for Canterbury.¹⁹

Non-current words are an inescapable necessity in referring to non-current objects, offices, localities and practices, but in his translation, Adriaan Barnouw went beyond necessity in order to conjure up a different world. He used not only archaic terms, but also unfamiliar words from various dialects and medieval constructions,

¹⁶ T. Naaijkens, Het schuine en het schoner, *De Groene Amsterdammer*, nr. 3, 17 jan. 1996. I owe my knowledge of Dutch articles on Van Altena's translation to Ida Boogaart, Translating the *Canterbury Tales*: The Possibilities and Problems of Poetry-to-Prose Translation. MA dissertation, University of Utrecht, 2013.

Susan Bassnett points out that Victorian translators in Britain also resorted to "a mock antique language" to suggest remoteness (Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 3rd edition, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 75), a strategy which, as Venuti points out, "conceals a whole raft of domestic values". (T. Hale, Romanticism and the Victorian Age, in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*; edited by P. France, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 72).

¹⁷ E. van Altena, *De Canterbury-verhalen*, Baarn: Ambo, 1995.

¹⁸ G. Luijters, Levensberichten: Ernst van Altena, in *Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde te Leiden*, 2001, p. 39-44.

¹⁹ T. Summerfield, Van Kantelberg naar Canterbury, *Madoc*, 1996, p. 50.

and he did so with the sure touch of a scholar steeped in the culture of the Middle Ages. To illustrate this *tour de force*:

Dees jente haan regeerde zeven hennen,
Die hem in al zijn lusten moeten kennen.
Zijn minnekijns en zusters noemde-ie heur.
Zij leken wonder op hem van koeleur,
En die het schoonst getint was aan de strot
Die heette schone joffer Pertelot.
Hoves en schrander was ze en liefgetal
Een zoet gezelske, dat bewees ze al
Toen ze niet ouder was dan 'n dag of acht.
(p. 458)

The underlined words are not current in present-day Dutch. “[J]ente” is a phonological and morphological adaptation of the Middle English “gent”, of noble birth or character, Medieval French, noble, gracious, beautiful.²⁰ Historically, “heur” is a singular pronoun; “joffer” is an archaism; and “liefghetal” is a Middle Dutch variant of “lieftālich”.²¹ And yet the translation is perfectly intelligible. In this context, it is worth noting Venuti’s qualification of the meaning of foreignisation in this very important formulation: “The ‘foreign’ in foreignising translation is not a transparent representation of an essence that resides in the foreign text and is valuable in itself, but a strategic construction whose value is contingent on the current target-language situation.”²² Barnouw succeeds in retaining the reader’s awareness of the difference of the source text by means of an ethnodeliant disruption of target-language codes and therefore of the reading experience; but because his foreignisation is “a transparent representation of an essence” residing in the original text, it fails to establish non-equivalence of the target text.

Susan Bassnett elucidates the issue as follows:

Some translators have argued that if a work is ancient or medieval, the translator should signal its antiquity in some way in the language of the translation. This was the Victorian view, but the main reason that the vogue for medievalising died out is that translators were having to invent a language, for

²⁰ K.A. Murchison, The Meaning of Middle English *Gent* and *Smal*, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2015, p. 371.

²¹ W. Skeat, *Glossarial Index to the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899; N. van Wijk, *Franck’s Etymologisch Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, 2de uitgave, Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1912. The assistance of Dr A.A. Balkema, Amsterdam, is gratefully acknowledged.

²² Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, 2002, p. 20.

nobody ever spoke the fake medieval English many of them used in their written versions, and the result was unconvincing to readers.

My own view is that if a translation is going to sound authentic and be readable, the translator must write in his or her own language, in a language rooted in reality, not fantasy.²³

This kind of argument was the basis of Ernst van Altena's objection to Barnouw, which he cites as a major motivation for his own translation.²⁴ His version is fluent and versatile, although it succumbs to two temptations that accompany domestications. First, as Iser rightly observed that in a literary work, "[w]hat is said appears to take on significance as a reference to what is not said, and so it is, the implications and not the statements that give shape and weight to the meaning",²⁵ but in Van Altena's translation, for the sake of accessibility, subtle innuendo in the source text becomes explicit statement²⁶ in the target text:

He hadde maad ful many a mariage	En voor zijn minnaressen had hij vaak
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.	Een man gekocht en van zijn eigen geld.
(l.212-213)	

Another Dutch translator, Ed Franck, carries this tendency to an extreme in his prose version of the *Canterbury Tales*, as is evident in his distorted description of the Prioress, where information best accommodated in a footnote is made part of the text, with the result that all subtlety is lost: "De Ridder sprak haar aan als Vrouwe Egelantier – wat me verraste, omdat deze wilde roos toch het symbool van de lichamelijke liefde is."²⁷

The second temptation of a domesticating translation is heightened vulgarity, which Steve Ellis, with reference to David Wright's verse modernisation of the Cook's Tale, stigmatizes as an act of vandalism.²⁸ Van Altena's translation of the Monk's sober description of Nero's terror, "For fere almost out of his wit he beyde"

²³ S. Bassnett, *Reflections on Translation*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011, p. 25.

²⁴ Van Altena, *De Canterbury-verhalen*,

²⁵ W. Iser, *How to Do Theory*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006, p. 64.

²⁶ I. Boogaard, *Translating the Canterbury Tales*, MA dissertation, University of Utrecht, 2013. E. Klitgård illustrates this phenomenon with reference to the Danish translations of the *Canterbury Tales* of Mogens Boisen (*Canterburyfortcellingerne*, Copenhagen, 1951) and B. Johansen (*Canterburyfortcellingerne*, Copenhagen, 1958). See E. Klitgård, Chaucer Translation and Reception in Denmark, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2005, p.213-4.

²⁷ Ed Franck, *Slagveld van gebroken harten*, p. 8, cited in V. Uyttersprot, *Slagveld van gebroken harten*, Recensie in *Pluizer*.

²⁸ S. Ellis, *Chaucer at Large*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p. 115.

(VII.3730) as “Van angst werd hij haast gek, zijn broek vol poep” (p. 486) is gratuitously uncouth.

At his best, Barnouw is superb, but one must concede that there was a need for a more accessible text. This Van Altena has provided, but, in contrast to Barnouw’s life work, only four years elapsed from when he started translating the *Canterbury Tales* at the end of 1990²⁹ to the publication of the final product in September 1995. This is testimony at once to his verve and virtuosity as a translator and to his lack of scholarly care, resulting in many stop-gaps (even compared with the Master) as well as mistranslations. For example, Van Altena falls victim to the false friends “kyndely” (by nature) and “daunger” (reluctance):³⁰

Deceit, wepyng, spynnyng God hath yive
To wommen, kyndely, whil that they may live
(III.401-402)

Bedrog, roddel en tranen heeft de Heer
De vrouw vriendelik geschonken tot verweer

With daunger oute we al oure chaffare
(III.521)

In groot gevaar bieden wij onze koopwaar.

The Barnouw-Van Altena translations exemplify the foreignisation-domestication dichotomy, but also demonstrate what is wrong with this characterization. Barnouw cannot be represented as one extreme of a spectrum, because further foreignisation amounting to unintelligibility is possible; so too Van Altena’s domestication is relative not only to a hypothetical text but to one actually produced by Erich Zauner,³¹ in which Chaucer is accommodated to contemporary culture to such an extent that his voice is drowned out by the translator’s:

Allas, the shorte throte, the tender mouth.
Maketh that est and west and north and south,
In erthe, in eir, in water, men to swynke
To gete a glotoun deyntee mete and drynke!
Of this matiere, O Paul, wel kanstow trete:
‘Mete unto wombe, and wombe eek unto mete,
Shal God destroyen bothe,” as Paulus seith.
To seye this word, and fouler is the dede,
Whan man so drynketh of the white and rede

Es werken zwar ganze Kohorten
Zur Produktion von Fleisch und Torten,
In Nord und Süd ond Ost und Westen
Kocht man mit List die allerbesten
Gerichte, die man dann bei Tisch
Zu sich nimmt (freitags gibt es Fisch).
Dann gibt es Cognac, Whisky, Sake:
Das Ende ist eine Attacke
Auf Deinen ganz korrupten Bauch

²⁹ Van Altena, in *De Canterbury-verhalen*, p. 31.

³⁰ J.de Berg, Recensie: Wij houden van geen man ..., in *Trouw*, 21 Sept. 1995, p. 2.

³¹ E. Zauner, *Die Geschichten der Canterbury Tales von Geoffrey Chaucer*, Frankfurt am Main: Haag & Herchen, 1992. [Whole teams work on/ the production of meat and tarts;/in north and south and east and west/one is cunningly cooking the best/ dishes that one can consume/at the table (on Fridays, there is fish)./Then there is cognac, whisky, sake:/it ends in an assault/on your completely corrupt paunch/ (a bad stomach will do the same),/in a t-shirt, or in a suit,/you become a living sewer/and nowhere is there any absolution,/because what awaits you is destruction.]

That of his throte he maketh his pryvee
Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.
(VI.517-528)

(Ein schlechter Magen tut es auch).
Im T-shirt, aber auch im Fracke,
Wirst Du zur lebenden Kloake
Und nirgends findest Du Pardon,
Denn Dich erwartet Destruktion.
(p. 351-2)

Another fascinating example of domestication is provided by the Danish translator T.C. Bruun, in whose version of the Wife of Bath's Prologue (after Pope) he not only transposes the Wife from Bath to the Danish town of Slagelse but makes one of his students, the later famous linguist Rasmus Rask, her fifth husband:³²

En ung Student, en vis hr. Rask ...
Fattig rigtig nok, som en Poet,
Men ret en vakker Fyhr, saa høijt beleven;
Og I at sige smukke Ting saa dreven,
At havde han saa dybt I Skrivten seet,
Han Amstprovost, ja Professor selv var bleven.

[a young student, a certain Mr. Rask, ... poor
enough, just like a poet, but a rather handsome
fellow, so very affable, and in saying beautiful
things so skilful[ly], that had he looked deep into
the books, he would have become a rural dean,
indeed also a professor.]

Following on from Schleiermacher, the highly influential theorist Lawrence Venuti urged the use of foreignisation, "minoritisation" or resistance as opposed to domestication, fluency or transparency in translation. For him it is an ethical imperative, because heterogeneity in an English version of a foreign work subverts Anglo-American literary and commercial hegemony and ethnocentrism.³³ As my translation is into a minority language, this justification for opting for a foreignising translation is irrelevant.

My translation is a hybrid, with both foreignising and domesticating elements. As heuristic indicators, these terms are valid and helpful, but both Schleiermacher³⁴ and Venuti use them to characterise a text as a whole³⁵ and this, as I have indicated above, results in "a kind of absolute or universal standard of evaluation, with a sort of on/off quality rather than a sliding scale".³⁶

³² E. Klitgård, Translation as Transformation, *Perspectives*, vol.16, no. 3&4, 2008, p. 135, quoting T.C. Bruun (translator), *Slagelse-Madamen; efter Popes Konen i Bath*, Copenhagen: P.E. Martin, 1823, p. 15.

³³ L. Venuti, Translation as Cultural Politics, in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*; edited by M. Baker, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 69.

³⁴ A. Pym, Schleiermacher and the Problem of *Blendlinge*, *Translation and Literature*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1995, p. 23; J.L. Hadley, Theorizing in Unfamiliar Contexts, Doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia, 2014, p. 39.

³⁵ K. Myskja, Foreignisation and Resistance, *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2013, p. 12; Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p.15-23.

³⁶ Maria Tymoczko, quoted by Myskja, *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2013, p. 7.

3.2.2 Formal aspects

The *Skopos* of translating a canonised literary work is to make an instance of the “cultural capital”³⁷ of a particular time and place available to people of a different time and place. This assumes that the target audience is interested in it as a rendering of a classical work and therefore expects faithfulness to the original, including implied adherence to its ideological, generic and formal content. “In all the arts,” Brian Stone posits, “tight formal requirements of organic beauty have proved the best moulds for such qualities as intensity of expression, economy, and purity and power of focus”.³⁸ The original text can speak only through an interpreter, who must balance possibilities to produce what Gideon Toury terms a functionally adequate result.

“But how can a translator be sure,” Venuti asks, “that the translation realizes the source-text author’s intention when the author did not intend to write in the translating language?” His answer to this pertinent question is the translator’s adoption of the metre, rhyme and use of a particular genre.³⁹ Chaucer was conscious of the need for metrical correctness (cf. *House of Fame*, line 1098: “Though som vers fayle in a sillabe ...”). Because a medieval author had no control over the production and distribution of his work,⁴⁰ Chaucer expressed concern that copyists might fail to render his prosody accurately. Taking leave of a text, he says:

And for ther is so gret diversite
In Englissh and in wrytyng of oure tonge,
So prey I God that non myswrite the,
Ne the mys metre for defaute of tonge.
(*Troilus and Criseyde*, V.1793-96)

³⁷ See S. Bassnett, Culture and Translation, in *A Companion*, p. 19.; Lefevere, Translation Practice(s) in *Constructing Cultures*, p. 41-2; Lefevere, Translation Practice(s) and the Circulation of Cultural Capital in *Constructing Cultures*; edited by S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998, p.41-2.

³⁸ B. Stone, False Friends and Strange Metres, in *The Translator’s Art*, p. 180.

³⁹ L. Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 245. The use of metre and rhyme poses fewer problems in a culture which shares these literary conventions, but in Chinese, for example, a translator is obliged to resort to other functional expedients. Religious concepts are also problematic in translations directed to non-Christian cultures.

⁴⁰ S. Lerer, Introduction, *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*; edited by Seth Lerer. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 15; T.W. Machan, Texts, in *A Companion to Chaucer*, edited by P. Brown, Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, p.430-431; .

Elsewhere, his conscious concern about using exact rhymes is equally evident. In *The Complaint of Venus*, for example, he regrets that he cannot match the skill of the French poet Oton de Granson:⁴¹

And eke to me it is a gret penaunce,
Syth rym in Englissh hath such skarsete,
To folwe word by word the curiosite
Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in Fraunce.
(*Complaint of Venus*, 79-82)

Finally, Chaucer's *entente* is self-evident in his generic referentiality. The author's generic signals situate his works in literary contexts which elucidate the meaning they had for Chaucer and for audiences in his day.⁴²

I discuss the way in which the initial decision in favour of a translation that retains the formal attributes of the original affects subsequent decisions below, showing how these constraints in fact provide opportunities for creative translation strategies. In my case, like Barbara Reynolds, "I did not find ... rhyme and metre restrictive. On the contrary, I quite often found them liberating".⁴³

3.2.2.1 Metre

Chaucer's metre is a subject of great contention, Derek Pearsall going so far as to say that "discussions of metre always end in tight-lipped fury and the painful recognition that one's colleagues are not as likable or intelligent as one had thought".⁴⁴ In discussing Chaucer's metre, proponents of an iambicized Continental French decasyllabic line are opposed by those favouring the accentual principle with a medial break of English alliterative metre or a combination of the two, whether random (according to C.S. Lewis) or deliberate (according to Ian Robinson).⁴⁵ Over the years, editors of the *Canterbury Tales* have introduced emendations – even ungrammatical and unetymological emendations – in support

⁴¹ D. Burnley, *A Guide to Chaucer's Language*, London: Macmillan, 1983, p. 239.

⁴² C. Eckhardt, Genre, in *A Companion to Chaucer*, edited by Peter Brown, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, p. 183-184.

⁴³ B. Reynolds, The Pleasure Craft, in *The Translator's Art*; edited by W. Radice and B. Reynolds, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987, p. 138.

⁴⁴ D. Pearsall, Chaucer's Metre, in *Essays on the Art of Chaucer's Verse*; edited by A.T. Gaylord, New York, NY: Routledge, p. 2001, p. 131.

⁴⁵ F. Pile, Chaucer's Prosody, *Medium Ævum*, vol. 42, no. 1, Jan. 1973, p. 47-8; R. Elliott, *Chaucer's English*, London: Deutsch, 1974, p. 26.

of their readings.⁴⁶ As Peter Groves puts it, “the *Rezeptions-geschichte* of Chaucer’s metre is a history of re-invention and re-possessing, governed as much by desire and anxiety as it is by sober philological enquiry”.⁴⁷

Today most scholars agree that Chaucer employed a form of iambic pentameter with some variations, including headless lines and frequent iambic reversal (trochee) in the first foot⁴⁸ or line-internally with the likelihood of inversion decreasing from left to right.⁴⁹ In the words of D.S. Brewer: “The verse has a basic ‘regular’ structure of alternating light and heavy stresses, varying between nine and eleven in total number, against which the speech rhythm, as determined by the sense, plays its varying counterpoint.”⁵⁰ This is an admirably balanced formulation, as it gives due weight to rhythm as opposed to metre, thus ruling out any sing-song rendering of the verse.

In my translation I have written in iambic pentameters, but my lines are not nine or eleven syllables in length, because, although my early efforts were dominated by an iambic imperative, increasing confidence bought greater freedom, manifest in a ready use of anapests, a common variation in modern prosody. Here is an example from the Merchant’s Tale (IV.1437-1440):

By so 'n vrou verwek ek liefs geen kind;	- a regular iambic pentameter
tog is dit beter dat honde my verslind	- first foot inverted; anapest in the third.
as dat my goed nadat ek sterf, sou val	- third foot trochaic
in die hande van vreemdes. Hoor dus een en al...	- first two feet anapests; 12 syllables in all.

The lively conversational diction compares favourably with the mechanical counting of beats in an early excerpt quoted below, which includes two forced stresses on the indefinite pronoun “dit” and the particle “te” in the first line on the principle that

⁴⁶ For example, Thynne (P. Groves, *Water from the Well*, *Parergon*, vol. 17, no. 2, Jan. 2000, p. 53); Skeat (Pearsall, in *Essays on the Art of Chaucer’s Verse*, p. 134); and Tyrwhitt (Groves, in *Parergon*, vol. 17, no. 2, Jan. 2000, p. 68). See also Chapter 7, *The Psychology of Editors of Middle English Texts*, in E.T. Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer*, London: Athlone Press, p. 102-118.

⁴⁷ Groves, in *Parergon*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2000, p. 65.

⁴⁸ Groves, *Idem.*, p. 59; E. Brown, Jr., *Essays on the Art of Chaucer’s Verse*.

⁴⁹ D. Minkova, *Chaucer’s Language*, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*; edited by S. Ellis, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 153.

⁵⁰ D.S. Brewer, *The Criticism of Chaucer in the Twentieth Century*, in *Chaucer’s Mind and Art*; edited by A.C. Cawley, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969, p. 22.

“within a written string of unstressed syllables the syllable matched to a strong metrical position can be prosodically slightly more prominent”.⁵¹

But now is tyme to yow for to telle
How that we baren us that ilke nyght,
Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;
And after wol I telle of our viage
And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.
(l.721-725)

Maar nou is dit ook tyd om te vertel
wat daardie eerste aand ons als behaag het
vandat ons by die herberg opgedaag het,
en daarna van ons reis gewag te maak
en wat ons pelgrimstog ook verder raak.

Rhythm played a role in a multitude of translational decisions, for example, in the rendering of “the hende Nicholas” in the Miller’s Tale. The Afrikaans cognate of “hende” is “handig”, handy, but the sense of the Middle English ranges from near, close by, to courteous, gracious, refined, gentle and skilled, clever, crafty – and Nicholas is all of these.⁵² I considered using the Afrikaans “knap” – its range of signification covers able, capable, clever, smart, intelligent, handsome, personable. But in the end I did not use it, because Chaucer prefixes it to the name Nicholas and therefore a disyllabic word with the stress on the first syllable is required. Instead I chose “fyne” to describe Nicholas – fine, delicate, exquisite, refined, subtle, admirable. The word is generally uninflected before a noun, but it can be inflected to heighten its (ironic) effect,⁵³ to underline it, so to speak. So “This clerk was cleped hende Nicholas” (l.3199) became “Hul’t hom genoem ‘die fyne Nicholas’”, the definite article affirming his uniqueness. As with Chaucer’s frequently used description “worthy”, the definite article implies “the incomparably fine Nicholas”.

3.2.2.2 Rhyme

Chaucer complained of a “skarsete” of rhyme in the English of his time, and I experienced the same problem in Afrikaans. In spite of this, I adhered to his rhyme scheme: from the rhymed couplet to rhyme royal with its *ababbcc* rhyme scheme, the more demanding eight-line *ababbcbc* of the Monk’s Tale, the added complexity of the bob in Sir Thopas and the extraordinary feat of the Envoy to the Clerk’s Tale, a double ballade with only three rhyme words in its six eight-line stanzas. Chaucer

⁵¹ Minkova, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, p. 155.

⁵² M.R. Kraishan, *Sex and the (Hetero)Erotic in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde*, Doctoral thesis, University of Bangor, 2013, p. 154.

⁵³ Termed “emotiewe –e” in J.G.H. Combrink, *Afrikaanse Morfologie*, Pretoria: Academia, 1990, p. 285.

is noted for the precision of his rhymes⁵⁴ and in this respect, too, I sought to do him justice. There are admittedly some inexact rhymes in my translation, for example, maagd/laags, lank/gehang, gesteld/ tel, and bepêrel/ wêreld, but significantly, most of these occur in my early translations.

Rhymed couplets present the challenge of not falling into the epigrammatic effect of closed couplets so typical of Pope.⁵⁵ Chaucer uses some epigrammatic couplets to good effect in the description of the pilgrims, for example:

Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
And yet he semed bisier than he was.
(l.221-222)

Hy het dit druk gehad die hele tyd;
dog meer in voorkoms as in werklikheid.

For gold in phisik is a cordial,
Therefore he lovede gold in special.
(l.443-444)

Hartsterkend is die raat wat goud bevat;
dus het hy goud besonder liefgehad.

In the forward movement, the syntactic continuity, of Chaucer's narrative, however, the rhymes do not obtrude. In my translation, too, enjambment often counteracts the obtrusiveness of rhyme.

Because Afrikaans is an uninflected language, the lightness produced by *schwa* [ə] – as in the oft quoted line “And smale foweles maken melodye” (l.9) – is not easily achieved. Furthermore, the scarcity of feminine rhymes poses an even greater challenge than that of their masculine counterparts. In the following passage, the non-standard plural of “dobbelaar” and the old-fashioned strong past participle of “skend” were a small price to pay for the rollicking effect achieved:

In Flaundes whilom was a compaignye
Of yonge folk that haunteden folye,
As riot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes'
Where as with harpes, lutes, and gyternes,
They daunce and pleyen at dees both day and
nyght,
And eten also and drynken over hir myght,
Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrifice
Withinne that develes temple in cursed wise
By superfluytee abhomynable,
Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable
That it is grisly for to heere hem swere.
Oure blissed Lordes body they totere –
Hem thoughte that Jewes rente hym noght

In Vlaandere was 'n groep jongmans weleer
wat elke soort losbandigheid prakseer
as oproermakers en as dobbelare,
en hul't met harpe, luite en kitare
in kroeë en bordele dag en nag
gedans, geëet, gedrink met alle mag;
en bring die duiwel so hul offerande
daar in sy eie tempel deur die skande
van hul vervloekte buitensporighede;
so kras en lasterlik was hulle ede,
dis grusaam om te hoor hoe skeur hul daar
ons Liewe Heer se liggaam uitmekaar –

⁵⁴ E. Stanley, *Versification*, in *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, p. 481.

⁵⁵ T. Morrison (ed.), *The Portable Chaucer*, Revised edition, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, p. 40-41; W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon*, Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1989, p. 157.

ynough –
 And ech of hem at otheres synne lough.
 And right anon thanne comen tombesteres
 Fetys and smale, and yonge frutesteres,
 Syngeres with harpes, baudes, waferes,
 Whiche been the verray develes officeres
 To kyndle and blowe the fyr of lecherye,
 That is annexed unto glotonye.
 (VI.463-482)

asof deur Jode nie genoeg geskonde –
 en hulle lag nog oor mekaar se sonde.
 Dan kom die danseressies, fyn en net,
 die koppelaarsters en die sangers met
 hul harpe, jong verkoopsters van eetware,
 soos vrugte en lekkergoed, amptenare
 van die duiwel self wat wellus hoog laat brand,
 want wellus is aan gulsigheid verwant ...

A translator's anxiety to find a rhyme word – any rhyme word – can on occasion produce a McGonagall effect,⁵⁶ as in this couplet from Van Altena's translation:

His knave was a strong carl for the nones,
 And by the haspe he haaf it of atones.
 (I.3469-3470)

Hij was toevallig sterk, bepaald niet klein,
 En drukte dus de deur rap uit 't kosijn.

However, the necessity of finding a suitable rhyme can also open up exciting new possibilities arising from the associations that cluster around words. I originally said of the Knight:

He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde
 In al his lyf unto no maner wight.
 He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.
 (I.70-72)

Nog nooit het hy teen enigeen iets laag
 ooit aangevoer; hy was 'n toonbeeld van
 die ware en volmaakte edelman.

Apart from the awkwardness of the syntax, a knight was not a member of the higher nobility, so this passage was re-translated as:

He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde
 In al his lyf unto no maner wight.
 He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.
 (I.70-72)

Nog nooit het hy oor enigeen iets laags
 te sê gehad nie, want hy was voorwaar
 as edele ridder ongeëwenaar.

The assonance of “edele” and “ewenaar” reinforces the sense of unrivalled virtue, and the words thus linked call to mind Gawain, famed as the nonpareil (ongeëwenaarde) of courtesy amongst the knights of the Round Table.⁵⁷

For another example of the way the constraint of rhyme may produce a happy result, I refer to some lines from the Summoner's Tale. Here three lines went smoothly, but I then got stuck for a rhyme:

⁵⁶ William McGonagall, celebrated as the worst poet in the English language.

⁵⁷ T. L. Wallis, A Comparative Study of the Gawain Character and the Gawain Legend in Medieval English Literature, MA dissertation, McGill University, 1963, p. 1, 221, 232 and *passim*.

Fro Paradys first, if I shal nat lye,
 Was man out chaced for his glotonye;
 And chaast was man in Paradys, certeyn.
 (III.1915-1917)

Die mens is uit die paradys gejaag
 oor hy hom oorgegee het aan sy maag,
 want voor dié tyd was hy nog maagd gewees.

The play on “chaced” and “chaast” is successfully replaced by that on “maag” and “maagd”, but translating the next line, “But herkne now, Thomas, what I shal seyn” was complicated by the need to find a rhyme for “wees”. My solution to the problem, “Maar Thomas, luister ’n slaggie mooi, ou bees”, was a bold one because there was no immediate occasion in the start text for this form of address. If the friar spoke to the sick man in this way, it would be presumptuous, but then his behaviour throughout is presumptuous: his shooing the cat off the bench (III.1775), his lecherous greeting of the wife (III.1803-1805), his extravagant demands to be sumptuously fed (III.1838-1841) and his outrageous religious claims (III.1870-1872), all speak of gross presumption. “Bees” suggests health and strength, so calling a sick man “ou bees” would be insensitive, but Thomas’s illness does not deter the friar from haranguing him at length or deflect him from his efforts to extort money from him. In the context, “ou bees” is ingratiating because as an exclamation it expresses admiration, “ou” signifies affection, and the diminutive “’n slaggie” softens the demand that is being made on Thomas. In the end, “ou bees” turns out to have the opposite effect and, for this reason too, it is a happy choice. The metaphorical sense of “bees” is “[w]rede, slegte of onfatsoenlike persoon”,⁵⁸ prefiguring the dramatic irony of Thomas’s subsequent beastly behaviour towards the friar.

My translation of a couplet in the Knight’s Tale, describing Theseus’s attack on Thebes, may serve as yet another example of a gain occasioned by the choice of a rhyme word:

And by assaut he wan the citee after,
 And rente adoun bothe wall and sparre and rafter
 (I.989-990)

en met ’n stormloop neem hy die stad
 en sloop toe muur en spar en balk en lat.

Here the addition of a fourth and even smaller kind of building material, the lath, a thin strip of wood, and therefore of a fifth “en” reflects the violence of the utter destruction of the city.

⁵⁸ *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*, deel I, A-C, Pretoria: Staatsdrukker, 1950.

3.2.2.3 Genre

When a writer adopts a particular genre, one may assume that the choice reflects an intention to operate within a particular set of conventions. However, this assumption does not always hold good for Chaucer, because his “extraordinary tendency to frame, modulate, combine, resist and otherwise reinterpret his models produces what may be called the creative derangement of genre”.⁵⁹ The Nun’s Priest’s Tale, for example, combines beast fable with mock-epic, dream and debate; in the Monk’s Tale the random operation of fortune encapsulated in the narrator’s definition of tragedy is ironised by his religious profession and by the pilgrimage framework of the Tale.⁶⁰

Despite the elusiveness of Chaucer’s *entente*, genre remains highly relevant to exclude an interpretation that falls outside the parameters of the conventions in question. A religious genre, for example, cannot be interpreted in an irreligious sense; it must be taken on its own terms.⁶¹ The historicism entailed is the inevitable task of Chaucer scholars, but general readers approach the text differently, confronting the predicament arising from the disappearance of a genre such as hagiography and a weakening of religious faith in general. Bassnett explains: “Not only is the poet and his contemporaries dead, but the significance of the poem in its context is dead too.”⁶² Once a genre is inoperative, intelligibility is impaired. This is demonstrated in *The Lent Jewels*: David Hughes describes his vain attempts to understand the apparent equanimity of Victorian churchman Archibald Tait, later Archbishop of Canterbury, and his wife Charlotte in the face of the loss of five children, aged three to ten, their “lent jewels”, to scarlet fever in just over a month.⁶³ The gap between us and the Middle Ages is far greater than that between us and the Victorian era. In view of this generic disjunction, inevitably “the translator’s interpretation remains partial, both incomplete in omitting aspects of the source text and slanted towards what is intelligible and interesting in the receiving situation”.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Eckhardt, in *A Companion to Chaucer*, p. 184

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁶¹ J. Mann, Chaucer and Atheism, in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, vol. 17; edited by L.J. Kiser, Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 1995, p. 5.

⁶² Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, Revised edition, p. 83.

⁶³ D. Hughes, *The Lent Jewels*, London: Arrow Books, 2003.

⁶⁴ Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything*, p. 114.

Although the Man of Law's Tale is arguably the least compelling of the religious tales, it presented the fewest difficulties in this regard. This is because the narrator reacts to improbabilities and unanswerable theological problems by resorting to assertions of divine omnipotence,⁶⁵ a discursive procedure all too familiar to many Afrikaans readers.

The Second Nun's Tale is a saint's life, replete with the customary generic clichés, "including her almost insufferable self-assurance and conviction of purpose; the tedious ... and, it would seem, ill-mannered debate between Cecilia and Almachius".⁶⁶ When Cecilia appears before the Roman prefect, she initially addresses him as "yow", though her tone is hostile. When he asks her, "Of whennes comth thyn answeyng so rude?" she replies, "Of conscience and of good feith unfeyned" (VIII.432 and 434) and she switches to "thee" and heightened hostility. The negative impression is reinforced in my translation because of the deep-seated deference to authority in the Afrikaans-speaking community and as a result of my use of "jy" throughout (see also Section 3.4.4). The predominant impression medieval readers would have gained is of a courageous affirmation of faith; the translation opens up the possibility of a modern reader seeing in the Tale a warning against ugly intolerance and dogmatism. To present-day sensibilities, the two aspects of profound religious conviction is a familiar phenomenon – of his parents, for whom he felt deep affection and respect, Edmund Gosse says: "Here was perfect purity, perfect intrepidity, perfect abnegation; yet there was also narrowness, isolation, an absence of perspective, let it be boldly admitted, an absence of humanity."⁶⁷

The Prioress's Tale is the most accomplished of the religious narratives, but potentially presents the greatest difficulty to modern readers. For medieval readers the horror of the Tale would lie in the death of the child, but modern readers have been sensitised by the Holocaust to the horror of anti-Semitism, and that tends to dominate their reading. The Tale's anti-Semitism may be contextualised by the implications of the antecedent Christian massacre of Jews in Mainz on 27 May

⁶⁵ G.S. Hill, *The Hagiographic Narrators of Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales ...*, Ph.D. thesis, Rice University, Houston, TX, 1977, p. 86-93.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶⁷ E. Gosse, *Father and Son*; edited by P. Abbs, London: Penguin Books, 1986 (1907), p. 43.

1096⁶⁸ or the irony that the new law of the merciless Christians in the Tale is regarded as superior to the old law “of a people whose written and oral laws ring with the reverence for human life”.⁶⁹ But such expedients are not part of the mental equipment of the general reader, for whom they may even qualify as what Eco terms “overinterpretation”.⁷⁰ (I return to the Prioress’s Tale in Section 4.5.2.)

3.3 INTERCULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.3.1 Ecclesiastical context

For contemporary Afrikaans speakers, the cultural divide between them (as predominantly Protestant readers) and Chaucer’s Catholic world is most marked in respect of the clergy, monastic institutions, religious practices and theology. Here the divide is not only chronological, but also ideological. In his doctoral thesis (1963), D.J. Gomes noted regarding Afrikaans that it lacked a vocabulary relating to Catholicism, because

tydens [Afrikaans se] ontwikkeling uit 17-eeuse Nederlands [dit] kragtig gesteun is ... deur die Calvinisme ..., terwyl elke vorm van ’n moontlike Katolieke bydrae tegelyk bewus uitgesluit is. Dit het ’n opvallende tekort aan Katolieke woorde veroorsaak, sodat dit vandag byna onmoontlik is om die positiewe bydrae van laasgenoemde godsdiens tot die kultuurbesit van die Westerse beskawing in goeie Afrikaans uit te druk.⁷¹

To start with, this led to challenges in the translation regarding non-partisan terms for ecclesiastical office bearers.

The Parson, for example, is a village priest and emphatically not a predikant, a word which suggests that such a person’s primary function is preaching and carries South African connotations of domineering (as in “dominee”) and taking up a political role in society.⁷² Nor will the appellation “priester” serve, because

⁶⁸ J.J. Cohen, Postcolonialism, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, p. 460.

⁶⁹ Zitter, Anti-Semitism in Chaucer’s Prioress’s Tale, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1991, p. 283.

⁷⁰ P. Bondanella, *Umberto Eco and the Open Text*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 151.

⁷¹ D.J. Gomes, ’n Ondersoek na die wenslikheid en noodsaaklikheid van ’n Katolieke woordeskat in Afrikaans, doctoral thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1963, aangehaal in A.D. Scholten, Voorwoord, in Beraadsliggaam van die Suid-Afrikaanse Katolieke Biskoppe, Die Taalkomitee, *Kerkwoordeboek*, Pretoria: KAS, [1970].

⁷² See, for example, I. Wilkins and H. Strydom, *The Super Afrikaners*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2012, p. 291-296.

Chaucer's Parson is a sympathetic figure and the word "priester" conjures up the "Roomse gevaar"⁷³ or Anglican "troublemakers" such as Scott, Huddleston and Tutu. The Parson is technically a priest, but Chaucer emphasises his pastoral concern as a shepherd of his flock, in contrast to the ritual role of the chantry priest, so "pastor" is appropriate, but then, for some Afrikaans speakers, "pastoor" in the past carried negative associations of the Apostolic Faith Mission. However, that situation changed as a result of the *entente* which the Mission achieved with the Dutch Reformed Church in the 1950s,⁷⁴ and the increasing popularity of community-based churches, also served by pastors. In 1985, one commentator objected to the use of "pastoor" in a translation of *Madame Bovary* on the grounds that it denotes only a Baptist clergyman.⁷⁵ However, the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (WAT) supports the definition of pastoor as "(Katoliek) ... geestelike hoof van 'n parogie".⁷⁶

Another problem arises regarding the deacons who remove St Cecilia's body and are among the ordained clergy referred to in the Parson's Tale. There was no viable alternative to calling them "diakens", even though they are not the frock-coated men (or nowadays soberly dressed men or women) wielding collection plates familiar to members of the Protestant sister churches. I resorted to explaining in a footnote that in the medieval church there were minor clerical orders, porter, lector, exorcist and acolyte, and the major orders of sub-deacon, deacon and priest.

The term archdeacon presented the next difficulty. Originally, an archdeacon was a member of the diaconate chosen by the bishop to be his personal assistant. The status and powers of archdeacons increased enormously during the Middle Ages, but were curtailed by the Council of Trent (1545 to 1563), until the office eventually ceased to exist in the Roman Catholic Church, although it was retained in the Anglican Church.⁷⁷ Historically, therefore, an archdeacon was a chief deacon,

⁷³ J. Brain, *Moving from the Margins to the Mainstream*, in *Christianity in South Africa*; edited by R. Elphick and R. Davenport, Cape Town: Philip, 1997, p. 204.

⁷⁴ A. Anderson and G. Pillay, *The Segregated Spirit*, in *Christianity in South Africa*, p. 234.

⁷⁵ P. Haffter, *Sosiokulturele voorveronderstellings en moontlike oplossings vir die weergawe daarvan in literêre vertalings*, in *Die vertaling van nie-standaardtaal*, SAVAL-referate, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, Pretoria, 1985, p. 228; with reference to Gustave Flaubert, *Mevrou Bovary*, vertaal deur F.P. van der Merwe, Johannesburg: L 7 S Boek- en Kunssentrum, 1948.

⁷⁶ *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*, deel XII, P-Q, 2005.

⁷⁷ Catholic Encyclopaedia, New Advent.

hence “aartsdiaken” in the Afrikaans Prayer Book.⁷⁸ This is the only version in my Dutch explanatory dictionary⁷⁹ and the only translation in Bosman and Van der Merwe’s English-Afrikaans dictionary. However, to counter the image of “diaken” uppermost in Afrikaans speakers’ minds, I used the term “aartdeken”, originally the distinct office of chief dean, but used for archdeacon in Scotland in the seventeenth century.⁸⁰ For this, I found corroboration in four Afrikaans explanatory dictionaries.⁸¹

In the Middle Ages, all ranks of the clergy were referred to as “clerks”, though a clerk was not necessarily an ordained priest (a “clerk in Holy Orders”). The term covered a wide range of meanings and I did not always translate the designation in the same way. The basic sense was someone who could read and write, so it is synonymous with a learned man, as in the description of the Parson: “He was also a lerned man, a clerk” (I.480), which I translated “Daarby was hy ’n geleerde man, ’n klerk”, with an explanatory footnote. Chaucer’s Clerk was a student, and students received the tonsure on admission to minor orders. In this particular case, though, we have a student who is hoping for a benefice, so he is probably an ordained priest. In my translation he is referred to as a “Student”. Nicholas, the “poure scoler” of the Miller’s Tale, also refers to himself as a clerk:

‘Nay, therof care thee noght,’ quod Nicholas.
 ‘A clerk hadde litherly biset his whyle,
 But if he koude a carpenter bigyle.’
 (I.3298-3300)

‘Wees jy gerus,’ sê hy, ‘ek waarborg jou
 alleen ’n swak student is sonder plan
 hoe om ’n meulenaar die kroon te span.’

On another occasion in the same tale, “geleerde” felt more appropriate:

Whil that hir housbonde was at Oseneye,
 As clerkes ben ful subtile and ful queynte;
 And prively he caughte hire by the queynte.
 (I.3275-3277)

... en heimlik tussen die bene gryp hy haar
 (want so vol streke is geleerdes maar).

⁷⁸ Kerk van die Provinsie Suider-Afrika, *’n Anglikaanse Gebedeboek*, Kaapstad: Collins, 2000, p. 575. There is no entry for “archdeacon” in the Church of the Province of South Africa’s *Glossary of Liturgical and Theological Terms*, 1957.

⁷⁹ *Van Dale’s Handwoordenboek der Nederlandse Taal*, 5de druk, Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1948.

⁸⁰ *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, vol. 1: archdean.

⁸¹ *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (WAT), deel 1, Pretoria: Staatsdrukker, 1950; *HAT: Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*, 3de uitgawe, Midrand: Perskor, 1994; H.J. Terblanche en J.J. Odendaal, *Afrikaanse Woordeboek*, Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Persboekhandel, 1966; F.J. LAbuschagne en L.C. Eksteen, *Verklarende Afrikaanse Woordeboek* (Pharos), 8ste uitgawe, Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1993.

In reporting on the Wife of Bath's speculation about the purpose of our sex organs, I opted for a third possibility:

So that the clerkes be nat with me wrothe,
I sey this: that they maked ben for bothe.

(III.125-126)

Om geest'likes se gramskap af te koel,
sal ek toegee hulle dien 'n dubbele doel.

Absolon in the Miller's Tale is a "parish clerk". The primary function of a parish clerk was to read the Epistle and make the responses at Mass, and sometimes to teach in a school run by the church. Absolon also receives the offertory and censes the congregation. Parish clerks were men in minor orders and therefore enjoyed the benefit of clergy. However, because they were not ordained but merely appointed at the discretion of a parish priest, there might be little difference between them and laymen.⁸² By contrast, modern-day parish clerks have a secretarial role. Barnouw uses a direct translation "prochieklerk" (i.e. parochieklerk), a word I have not been able to find in any Dutch source relating to the Middle Ages; the office, I suspect, did not exist outside England. Van Altena opted for "koster", derived from the Middle Dutch *coster*, *custer*. In the Middle Ages, the "koster" or "sacrista" also fulfilled liturgical functions and was a "clerk" in minor orders. In the Netherlands, the koster, now a layman – or laywoman – is still a church functionary in both Catholicism and Protestantism.⁸³ In South Africa, however, the office of "koster" is intimately associated with the Dutch Reformed churches, and the function of the official is limited to looking after the church building, opening and closing it when required, and ringing the bell before services; it has connotations of age and solemnity, so the term is therefore doubly inapplicable to the "joly" Absolon. In its place, "sakristein", with its unambiguously Catholic provenance⁸⁴ was used. It was reassuring to find, long after I made this decision, that the German versions of both Lehnert and Droese⁸⁵ also opted for *Sakristan*.

In other ecclesiastical contexts, the concept to be translated is so alien to the intended modern, predominantly Protestant Afrikaans-speaking, readers, that a strange term was appropriate to the strange phenomenon, on the principle of "The

⁸² C. Atchley, *The Parish Clerk, and his Right to read the Liturgical Epistle*. Project Canterbury, Tract 4.

⁸³ Koster, [https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koster_\(persoon\)](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koster_(persoon)).

⁸⁴ C.B. van Haeringen, *Nederlands Woordenboek*, 5de uitgawe, Den Haag: Van Goor, 1952.

⁸⁵ M. Lehnert, *Die Canterbury-Erzählungen*, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1987; D. Droese, *Canterbury-Erzählungen*, Zürich: Manesse Verlag, 1971.

wordes moote be cosyn to the dede” (I.742). So the “annueleer” of the Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale VIII.1012) is an “annualaar” (explained in a footnote as a priest who said a mass on the anniversary of a person’s death) as a simple statement of fact. Elsewhere, where the concept of a chantry priest is deprecated, a successful paraphrase was used:

He sette nat his benefice to hyre
 And leet his sheep encombred in the myre
 And ran to London unto Seint Poules
 To seken him a chaunterie for soules.

(I. 507-510)

Hy het sy sorg aan niemand uitbestee
 en in die modder ploeterende vee
 versaak om in St. Paulus-kerk sy fooie
 te wen deur requiems te sing vir ’n dooie.

The Friar is a “lymytour”. The first time the concept occurs, I define it both in the text (“Daar was ’n Frater, sedig, lustig, flink,/met ’n bedelwyk wat vir hom afgepen is”) and by means of a footnote. In the Wife of Bath’s Tale, a limiter “gooth in his lymytacioun” (III.877), which I translated as a friar “[wat] sy rondtes maak as bedelaar”. In the Summoner’s Tale, another friar urges the people to provide for trentals (III.1716-1717) – my generalising translation “dat hul die Kerk se dienste onderhou” misses the point that the friar stands to benefit from the observance. The translation of a subsequent reference to trentals is more explanatory, though perhaps insufficiently so:

‘Trentals,’ seyde he, ‘deliveren fro penaunce
 Hir freendes soules, as wel olde as yonge –
 Ye, whan that they been hastily ysonge ...

(III.1724-1726).

’n Vriend se siel word uit die vaevuur
 gered deur requiems; ’n dertigtal
 kort op mekaar se hakke help veral.

Pardoners are familiar to Afrikaans speakers who know their church history, on account of Johann Tetzl, who over the years has figured prominently as a villain in Reformation Day sermons. Chaucer’s Pardoner is distinguished by the vernicle sewn on his cap (I.685). This was one of the mass-produced badges bought by pilgrims at the various shrines. These badges, which ranged from the devotional to the extravagantly erotic,⁸⁶ served as religious mementos, souvenirs or charms or, as in this case, they advertised the bearer’s ostensible piety, credibility or respectability. Each shrine had its own characteristic designs; thus a scallop signified that the pilgrim had visited Compostela, while a vernicle, a representation

⁸⁶ Stichting Middeleeuwse Religieuse en Profane Insignes; N.N. Sidhu, *Indecent Exposure*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016, p. 9; R. Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012, p. 73-74, 158-159.

of the cloth used by Veronica to wipe Jesus' face and which thereafter bore the imprint of his face ("vera icon"), advertised the fact that the pilgrim had been to Rome. The Pardoner is therefore a "palmer", a pilgrim who bore a palm branch in token of having visited that city. Having failed to find historically authentic translations for "vernicle" and "palmer", I rendered "vernicle" by means of "pelgrimsteken" and avoided a direct translation of "palmer" by substituting "swerwer". Now that I have traced the occurrence of the Middle Dutch words "vronike" or "vernikel" and "palmenare",⁸⁷ I am pleased that they eluded my earlier efforts, or it would have been a further instance of *ignotum per ignocius* (VIII.1457).

Monastic clergy were obliged to observe the seven "hours" or "getye". I lacked both knowledge of the hours and resources to discover what they were called in Dutch when I translated my second Tale, that of the Miller. When I came across "laudes", I took the explanatory route and translated as follows:

And thus lith Alison and Nicholas,
 In bisynesse of myrthe and of solas,
 Til that the belle of laudes gan to ryng,
 And freres in the chauncel gonne singe.
 (I.3653-3656)

En dis hoe Alisoen en Nicholas
 die heelnag met hul dinge besig was
 tot die klok gelui het vir die kloosterling
 om in die koor die vroeë diens te sing.

Another early venture in translating Chaucer was the Pardoner's Tale, where I was first confronted by "prime".

Thise riotoures thre of whiche I telle,
 Longe erst er prime rong of any belle,
 Were set hem in a taverne to drynke ...
 (VI.661-663)

My English-Afrikaans dictionary⁸⁸ offered these alternatives for prime: "begin, eerste stadium; lente; jeug, fleur, bloeityd; priemgetal". Clearly none of these was right, so I consulted an English-Dutch dictionary,⁸⁹ which suggested "hoogste volmaaktheid; 't beste bloeitijd; begin; metten; priemgetal; bep. positie bij schermen". My Dutch explanatory dictionaries⁹⁰ both defined "metten" as "eerste

⁸⁷ Rome – de pelgrimstekens; Het H. Land – insignes van pelgrims.

⁸⁸ D.B. Bosman, I.W. van der Merwe en L.W. Hiemstra *Tweetalige Woordeboek*, 4de uitgawe, Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1962.

⁸⁹ F.J.J. van Baars en J.G.J.A. van der Schoot, *Prisma Woordenboek: Engels-Nederlands*, Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1962.

⁹⁰ *Van Dale's Handwoordenboek der Nederlandse Taal*; C.B. van Haeringen, *Nederlands Woordenboek*.

gedeelte van het dagelijks breviergebed”, so it seemed to fit the context of an early time to be drinking, but I was not convinced, so I tried “priem” in two Afrikaans explanatory dictionaries⁹¹ and the two Dutch dictionaries referred to above, but without any success. Despite this, I used “priem” and when I subsequently came across an English-Afrikaans dictionary of Catholic terms,⁹² this decision was confirmed and many other problems solved, as this dictionary became an invaluable resource in dealing with copes, canons and concupiscence.

“Mette” (matins) was not needed in the translation, though I did use the Afrikaans idiom “korte mette maak”, to do something in a hasty or perfunctory manner, as matins was at midnight or 3 a.m.,⁹³ in the Pardoner’s Tale:

This tresor hath Fortune unto us yiven
In myrthe and joliftee oure lyf to lyven,
And lyghtly as it comth, so wol we spende
(VI.779-781).

Daar die geluk ons so bevoordeel het,
kan ons vooruitsien na genot en pret
en korte mette maak met hierdie skat.

In the Merchant’s Tale, the vesper (evensong) bell at about 5 p.m. is the signal for Januarie and May to leave their bed:

But heere I leve hem werken in hir wyse
Til evensong rong and that they moste aryse.
(IV.1965-1966)

ek verswyg dit als en laat hul maar begaan
tot die vesperklok hul roep om op te staan.

And, finally, compline (“komplete”) is mentioned seriously in the Parson’s Tale (X.386) and humorously in the Reeve’s Tale:

This millere hath so wisely bibbed ale
That as an hors he fnorteth in his sleep,
Ne of his tayl behynde he took no keep.
His wyf bar hym a burdon, a ful strong;
Men myghte hir rowtyng heere two furlong;
The wenche rowteth eek, *par compaignye*.

Aleyn, the clerk, that herde this melodye,
He poked John, and seyde, “Slepestow?
Herdestow evere slyk a sang er now?
Lo, swilk a complyn is ymel hem alle ...
(I.4162-4171)

Die meulenaar se bras was so oorbodig,
hy’t soos ’n perd geproes, ook nie attent
op proesgeluide uit sy agterent;
sy vrou sing kontrabas in dieselfde koor;
mens kon hul op ’n halfmyl afstand hoor;
hul dogter ronk ook saam *par compaignie*.

Alein dié luister na die melodie;
hy por sy maat en sê: ‘Jan, slaap jy al?
Het so ’n gesang ooit op jou oor geval?
Dat hul komplete op dié wyse sing!

⁹¹ Terblanche en Odendaal, *Afrikaanse Woordeboek; HAT: Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*.

⁹² Beraadsliggaam ..., *Kerkwoordeboek*. “Priem” has not found its way into the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*, deel 12, P-Q, 2005.

⁹³ This may not be the correct explanation as there were apparently also “lange metten”, sung on feast days. See: “Korte metten maken”.

The Monk is an “outridere”, meaning that he is responsible for the supervision of the estates belonging to an abbey. This was a role that developed as a result of monasteries’ acquiring landed property. So the abrogation of the fundamental rule of poverty led inevitably to the abrogation of the equally stringent rule of claustration, which read:

The monastery ... itself ought, if possible, to be so constructed as to contain within it all necessities ... so that there be no occasion for monks to wander abroad, since this is in no wise expedient for their souls. We wish this Rule to be read frequently in the community so that no brother may plead ignorance as an excuse.⁹⁴

This monk seeks no excuse, so instead of using an unfamiliar word current in Middle Dutch – “proos”⁹⁵ – as Barnouw does, I cut to the chase and translated:

<p>A Monk, ther was, a fair for the maistrie, An outridere, that lovede venerie...</p>	<p>'n Modieuse Monnik was ook by; hy was lief vir jag en om oral rond te ry.</p>
<p>(l.165-66)</p>	

Van Altena’s “solitaire” (kluizenaar), hermit, solitary,⁹⁶ is thus completely inappropriate for the Monk of the Prologue, although it might suit the lugubrious narrator of the Monk’s Tale.⁹⁷

In contrast to monks, who secluded themselves from the world, canons were involved in the world, running schools, hospitals and refuges for the blind, lepers and pregnant women.⁹⁸ Regular canons were priests organised in a chapter, living in community, observing the liturgical hours and sharing the cure of souls and the material needs of a parish. Those attached to a cathedral assisted the bishop in the administration of the diocese. Secular canons lived dispersed in houses near the church they served, although they might also hold a benefice in another town or village, leaving their canonry in the care of a vicar. The canonical religious life

⁹⁴ *Rule of St. Benedict*, Chap. LXVI, quoted in M. Bowden, *A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, New York, NY: Macmillan, 1966, p. 108.

⁹⁵ De Vries, J., *Nederlands Etymologisch Woordenboek*. Leiden: Brill, 1987; Van Wijk, *Franck’s Etymologisch Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*.

⁹⁶ K. ten Bruggencate en A. Broers, *Engels Woordenboek*, 15de uitgawe, Groningen: Wolters, [1959].

⁹⁷ J.M. Manly, *Some New Light on Chaucer*, p. 261f., referred to in Bowden, *A Commentary on the General Prologue*, p. 115.

⁹⁸ R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, p. 244, 248.

followed the same pattern in the Netherlands,⁹⁹ so the terms, though largely unfamiliar, are ready to hand: “kanunnik”, “regulier”, “kapittel”, “liturgiese getye”, “sievesorg”, “parogie”, “bisdom”, “sekulier”, “benefisie”, and “vikaris”.

Other ecclesiastical terms that occur in my translation include offertorium, bodel, kortepy, vont, homilie, konvent, habyt, oliesel, stola, brevier, novisie, benefisie, vita, munster and penitensiaris.

Aside from terminology for role-players, rituals and other practices, it was also necessary to tread warily in theological matters. Given that the vast majority of speakers of Afrikaans are (at least nominally) Calvinist, even the most basic terms are ideologically fraught. Is grace imputed or bestowed? In the Calvinist understanding, grace is the sovereign activity of God by which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the sinner, effecting his/her justification. By contrast the Catholic view of grace is well summarised by a Protestant theologian:

... dit is die goddelike eienskappe wat in die vorm van 'n bonatuurlike krag in die mens uitgestort word en 'n blywende kwaliteit van sy siel word, waardeur sy natuur opgehef en verbeter word, sodat hy deel kry aan die Goddelike natuur, en so self “vergoddelik” of geheilig word.¹⁰⁰

The Catholic dictionary translates grace as “genade”, but the Afrikaans version of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* introduces the term “genadegawe” for sacramental grace¹⁰¹ and I make use of this unfamiliar word eight times in the Parson’s Tale in order to alert the reader to the key theological distinction involved. Elsewhere it occurs once, significantly when the theologian Wife of Bath – described as “a noble prechour” by the Pardoner (III.165) and rebuked for meddling in “scole-matere greet difficultee” best left to “preching and to scole eek of clergie” by the Friar (III.1272 and 1277) – discusses different spiritual endowments in relation to marriage:

God clepeth folk to hym in sondry wyse,
And everich hath of God a propre yifte –
Som this, som that, as hym liketh shifte.
(III.102-104)

God roep ons almal anders en Hy’t meer
as een genadegawe om uit te stort,
na dié of daardie een begunstig word.

⁹⁹ J. Beun, *Het Kapittel van de collegiale Kerk van Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Mesen, 1060-1797*, p. 18-20.

¹⁰⁰ W.D. Jonker, *Die verband tussen die Rooms Katolieke Genadebegrip en Kerkbegrip*, deel 1, *Die Kerkbode*, Jg. 77, nr. 24, 14 Des. 1955, p. 993.

¹⁰¹ *Kerk van die Provinsie van Suid-Afrika, Gedeeltes van 'n Boek van Algemene Gebed en Bediening van die Sakramente*, p. 32, 42, 63, ens.

The Catholic understanding of grace is intricately associated with its ecclesiology because the sacraments are the means by which grace is communicated. For the Calvinist, baptism a symbolic rite signifying the covenant, while Catholics regard it as a grace-bestowing sacrament. The Catholic dictionary refers to “Doopsel”, and I used this term in the Parson’s Tale alongside the more familiar “doop”, where its sacramental nature is foregrounded.

3.3.2 Feudal society

For a South African audience, the absence of a feudal society and any remnants of it, as one might find in Europe, also implies the virtual absence of a vocabulary relating to this aspect of medieval life.

A squire is a “skildknaap” or a “jonker”. Technically, “skildknaap” may well be the better translation, but I used “jonker”, because, although in Middle Dutch “cnape” had the secondary meaning of an armed person of lower rank,¹⁰² the Afrikaans “knaap” is unambiguously a boy. Chaucer’s Squire is a young man of about twenty (I.82), rather than a boy. The term “skildknaap” refers to a noble youth in the service of a knight; “jonker” to the “(Oudste) seun van ’n edelman”,¹⁰³ so Chaucer’s squire is, in fact, a “jonker”. Besides this, “jonker” still has currency in Afrikaans in the familiar compound “jonkershuis” and the idiom “Hoe kaler jonker, hoe groter pronker”. The Squire was a “bachelor” (I.80), a term for which I could find no lexical equivalent, so I called him a “ridder-aspirant”. Barnouw has “baatselaar”, a word that does not appear in any Dutch dictionary, and Van Altena misinterprets it to mean that the Squire was unmarried, so I am doubly happy with my transparent invention.

Within limits, Van Altena’s criticism of the use of strange terminology by Barnouw is justified, but a medieval text cannot be made to read as if it were a modern text. Of the nineteen examples of outlandish words listed by Van Altena, “akotoen” and “salterie” occur in my translation as well: “akotoen”, from Middle Dutch *acotoen*, for the “aketoun” or quilted jacket that Sir Thopas wears under his armour (VII.2050) –

¹⁰² F. van Oostrom, *Nobel Streven: Het onwaarschijnlijke maar waargebeurde verhaal van ridder Jan van Brederode*, Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2017, p. 265-266.

¹⁰³ *HAT. Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal.*

an exotic word in an exotic context. Here Van Altena has a rather prosaic definition “watten hemd, strak en niet wijd”, justifying Nord’s caution that such a translation strategy may impair the literary charm of a text.¹⁰⁴ The other “incredibly strange” word is “salterie”, from Middle Dutch *salterie* (also *psalter*), for “sautrie”, the musical instrument which Nicholas plays (I.3213). Van Altena opts for “psalter”, which he has to explain in a footnote in any case.

My translation includes many other foreignising words relating to medieval times in a different country. Some of the terms explained in footnotes relate to

- seigneurial pursuits: skabrak, klaroen, kastelein, vaan, staketsel, valkenier, gewei, kamenier, kuras and maliekolder;
- spices: valeriaan, piment, kardamom, eenbes and muskaat;
- drinks: mee, hippokras, vernasie and malvesy; and
- animals, trees and birds native to the northern hemisphere: ewer, elp, bosboom, gaai, roerdomp, wou.

To the observation that translation is always a shift between two cultures, Umberto Eco adds “or two encyclopaedias”.¹⁰⁵ The aptness of this reflection may be illustrated by the narrative of my translation of the line, “And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe” (I.349). From footnotes I learnt that the reference is to bream and pike and my bilingual dictionary told me that bream is “brasem” and pike is “snoek”, so my first version of the line read, “en ’n dam om snoek en brasem aan te hou”. But then it occurred to me that the snoek my father bought at Kalk Bay harbour was a seawater fish. In a paper delivered in 1900, John Gilchrist, the then government biologist, noted that “if a Dutch name could not be got for a fish having some resemblance, however remote, to those already known, they [the early Dutch settlers] promptly applied the European name”.¹⁰⁶ So the name of the European freshwater snoek (*Esox lucius*) was transferred to the South African sea fish (*Thyrsites atun*). I therefore had to find some other freshwater fish (preferably with a

¹⁰⁴ C. Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology, and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-oriented Text Analysis*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991, p. 96, 99, cited in M.B. Müller & I. Feinauer, “Die Literêre vertaler as kulturele bemiddelaar”, *Literator*, nr. 29, 2008, p. 135.

¹⁰⁵ U. Eco, *Mouse or Rat?* London: Phoenix, 2004, p. 82.

¹⁰⁶ J. du P. Scholtz, *Uit die geskiedenis van die naamgewing aan plante en diere in Afrikaans*, Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1941, p. 10; with reference to J.D.F. Gilchrist, *History of the Local Names of Cape Fish*, *Transactions of the South African Philosophical Society*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1900, p. 207-232.

monosyllabic name) appreciated in the Middle Ages, and the perch appeared to meet my requirements,¹⁰⁷ so the line became “en ’n dam om baars en brasem aan te hou”. But then I read somewhere that the perch attacks other fish, so I replaced perch (“baars”) with tench (“seelt”), a fish mentioned in the late fourteenth-century text *The Goodman of Paris*,¹⁰⁸ as part of a fish dinner along with bream, and in a mid-fifteenth century document, again with bream, as an ingratiating gift, for which the recipient “gave right great thanks and made right much thereof”.¹⁰⁹

3.3.3 Proper nouns: Place names and personal names

The adaptation of place names that were well known beyond a country’s borders (exonyms) was a common phenomenon in the past, hence Dutch *Parijs*, *Berlijn*, *Lissabon* and *Kantelberg*. The seventeenth-century Dutch poet Joost van den Vondel dedicated a poem to “Geeraerd Vossius, Kanonik te Kantelberg”.¹¹⁰ As a result of improved communications, “Kantelberg” later became archaic, but the ecclesiastical feast day (29 December) and church dedications in the Netherlands and Belgium still preserve the memory of “Sint Thomas van Kantelberg”. So too Afrikaans versions of the Anglican prayer book commemorate “Thomas van Kantelberg”.¹¹¹ When Archbishop Ramsey visited South Africa in 1970, Afrikaans newspapers quite correctly referred to him as “Aartsbiskop van Kantelberg”, which a *New York Times* correspondent interpreted as a disparaging designation meaning “toppling mountain”.¹¹² The correct etymology is from Old English “Cantwaraburg”, so it should have been Kantelburg, but in the Netherlands -burg and -berg names were frequently confused in the Middle Ages¹¹³ (as they still are in South Africa).

¹⁰⁷ T. Scully, *The Art of Cookery in the Middle Ages*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995, p. 126.

¹⁰⁸ The Good Wife, in *The Portable Medieval Reader*, edited by J.B. Ross and M.M. McLaughlin, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, p. 156.

¹⁰⁹ E. Powell, Law and Justice, in *Fifteenth-century Attitudes*; edited by R. Horrox, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 36; see also M.W. Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004, p. 106.

¹¹⁰ “Vertroostinghe aan Geeraerd Vossius”, in *Hollandsche Parnas*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997, p. 68.

¹¹¹ Kerk van die Provinsie van Suid-Afrika, *Gedeeltes van ’n Boek van Algemene Gebed ...*, p. 11; Kerk van die Provinsie van Suider-Afrika, *’n Anglikaanse Gebedeboek*, p.26.

¹¹⁹ Obituary: Lord Ramsey dies in Britain, 83 ..., in *New York Times*, 5 May 1988.

¹¹³ F. Debrabandere, Vorm en uitspraak van eiggennamen/Plaatsnamen, in *Nederlands van Nu*, Jg. 55, no.1, November 2007.

I use the Afrikaans versions of Biblical and classical names, although there is not complete unanimity between the different Bible versions¹¹⁴ and the sources I used for classical names.¹¹⁵

In the case of personal names and their qualifiers, I adopted a range of strategies. Where the personal name is known in Afrikaans, it is taken over, with the assumption that it is likely to be pronounced in the Afrikaans manner (Nicholas, Absalom or Mei), and only the preceding adjective is translated (“die fyne Nicholas”, “die skalkse Absalom”, “die skone Mei”) – the rendering of “hende Nicholas” as “die fyne Nicholas” has already been discussed in Section 3.2.2.1. In other such collocations, the name is adapted phonologically, so “deynous Symkyn” (l.3941) becomes “Ou Windgat Siemie”. Simkin, the dupe of the Reeve’s Tale, is a diminutive of Symond, hence Afrikaans “Siemie”, while “deynous” signifies disdainful, haughty. As he has nothing to be haughty about, the vulgar “windgat” captures the vulgarity of his pretensions.

From the description of “jolif Absolon” in the Miller’s Tale with his hairstyle, shoes, dancing, and fastidiousness (l.3312-3338), he is clearly a dandy. The range of “jolif” (merry, cheerful, pleasing, comely, playful, frisky)¹¹⁶ overlaps with that of “skalks” (jolly, merry, arch, mischievous), so I opted for “skalkse”, which, applied to Absolon, conveys the roguery of his superficial affectations.

May in the Merchant’s Tale is described as “fresshe May” no fewer than thirteen times. The adjective covers a range of meanings: new, vigorous, lusty, wanton, amorous.¹¹⁷ In ten cases I used “die skone Mei”, which in the inflected form means “fine”, “beautiful”, but carries an ironic reminiscence of its original sense of shiny (Middle Dutch *scône*, cognate with Middle English *sciene* > Modern English *sheen*), giving rise to the divergent meanings “beautiful” and “pure”.¹¹⁸ In beauty and supposed purity, May resembles Alisoun in the Miller’s Tale, of whom it is said, “Ful brighter was the shynyng of hir hewe/Than in the Tour the noble yforged newe”

¹¹⁴ Thus the 1933 Bible translation has Matthéüs; 1983 Matteus; and 2004 Mattheus.

¹¹⁵ Bosman, Van der Merwe en Hiemstra, *Tweetalige Woordeboek*; Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, *Lys klassieke eiename*, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1984; J.P.J. van Rensburg (vertaler), *Die Odusseia*, Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 1963, p. 305-308.

¹¹⁶ Morgan, *English Studies*, vol. 91, no. 5, 2010, p. 505.

¹¹⁷ Kraishan, *Sex and the (Hetero)Erotic ...*, p. 190.

¹¹⁸ J. de Vries, *Nederlands Etymologisch Woordenboek*, p. 624.

(I.3255-3256) and “Hir forheed shoon as bright as any day,/So was it wasshen whan she leet hir werk” (I.3310-3311).

The nominal attribute, “Perkyn Revelour” (I.4371) is translated as “Piet Plesier”. This kind of combination is a popular device in Afrikaans; for example, politician Pieter Koornhof was known as “Piet Promises” on account of his sanguine expectation of better things to come, and an injudicious boast about South Africa’s military preparedness led to P.W. Botha being dubbed “Piet Skiet” or “Piet Geheime Wapen”.

Ordinary names like John and Aleyn were naturalised as Jan and Alein, and by a happy chance Alisoun’s name rendered Alisoen holds out the promise of things to come. (And, come to think of it: Absolon “sal sy alie sien as hy vir Alie soen!”)

3.4 INTERLINGUISTIC CONSIDERATIONS

The interlinguistic matters considered in this section are grammatical issues such as structure and syntax, metaphor and idioms, speech patterns, and forms of address.

3.4.1 Structure and syntax

The length and structure of my translation correspond closely with its source text. I have two extra lines between II.80 and 90, and two lines were inadvertently omitted between VII.280 and 290, so the total number of lines of verse is identical. In Chaucer’s Tale of Melibee some of the repetition has been trimmed. Thus “Whan Melibee hadde herd the wordes of his wyf Prudence, he seyde thus ...” (VII.2301) becomes: “Hierop sê Melibeus toe ...”. I do not regard the same number of lines as a particular merit, but Morrison’s reduction of the Knight’s Tale (and *Troilus and Criseyde*) by half as a result of “squeezing down” the original¹¹⁹ shows such disregard for the original that it cannot be accounted an adequate translation of it.

My translation includes sentences in which the English subject...verb...object (SVO) word order is used where in Afrikaans that order would be different:

¹¹⁹ Morrison (translator), *The Portable Chaucer*, p. 45.

And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye
(I.301-302)

en yw'rig opgedra in die gebed
diegene wat sy gang bevorder het

Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,
By his clenness, how that his sheep sholde live
(I.505-506)

Hul hoort te stel in die reinheid van hul lewe
'n voorbeeld wat hul kudde na kan strewe

And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes,
He made the person and the peple his apes
(I.706-707)

en so met flikflooi en met skelmstreke
het hy vir die gek gehou pastoor en leke

The deviation from the normal word order – “diegene opgedra”, “'n voorbeeld te stel”, “pastoor en leke vir die gek gehou” – suggests deliberate foreignisation, meeting Venuti's specification that

the heterogeneity needn't be so alienating as to frustrate a popular approach completely; if the remainder [i.e. foreignisation by means of a marginal form in the target language] is released at significant points in a translation that is generally readable, the reader's participation will be disrupted only momentarily.¹²⁰

But these are lapses dating back to the first phase of my translation history, the results of the ineptitude of inexperience in the face of the difficulty of finding useable rhymes, and not of intended foreignisation, for I may well say with Friedrich Schleiermacher:

Who would suffer himself to be seen moving with far less lightness and grace than that of which he is capable, and to appear at least occasionally harsh and stiff and so displease the reader just enough to keep him conscious of what one is about?¹²¹

In general, I have adhered closely to Chaucer's syntactic structure, imitating his rhetorical devices, for example, syntactical parallelism, combined in the following example from the Reeve's Tale with repetition, with its devastating satirical effect:

For hooly chirches good moot been despended
On hooly chirches blood, that is descended
Therefore he wolde his hooly blood honoure,
Though that he hooly chirche sholde devoure.
(I.3983-3986)

Dis paslik dat die Heil'ge Kerk se goed
hul toekom van die Heil'ge Kerk se bloed,
en dus het hy sy heil'ge bloed geëer,
al het hy ook die Heil'ge Kerk verteer.

¹²⁰ L. Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*. London: Routledge, 1998, p. 12.

¹²¹ F. Schleiermacher, On the Different Methods of Translating, *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by L. Venuti, 2nd edition, New York, NY: Routledge, 2004, p. 53.

In some cases, Chaucer piled up lexical items in a breath-taking manner. With reference to the Canon's Yeoman's Tale, Helen Cooper says: "Parts are sheer poetic mischief, as if Chaucer had a bet with himself as to whether it were possible to put this jargon into rhyme."¹²² For the translator, the image of that bet with oneself is perhaps even more appropriate – I kept all the items, but rearranged them slightly to retain the rhyme:

<p>Unslekked lym, chalk, and gleyre of an ey, Poudres diverse, asshes, donge, pisse, and cley, Cered pokkets, sal peter, vitriole, And diverse fires maad of wode and cole, Sal tartre, alkaly, and sal preparat, And combuste materes and coagulat; Cley maad with hors or mannes heer, and oille Of tartre, alum glas, berme, wort, and argoille (VIII.806-813)</p>	<p>kryt, ongebluste kalk, eiwit en mis, verskeie poeiers, as en klei en pis, bewaste sakkies, salpeter, swawelsuur en hout- asook houtskoolgestookte vuur, tartarus, loogsout en soutpreparaat, stof in gebrande en gestolde staat, perde- of mensehare gemeng met klei, aluin, wort, suurdeeg, realgar daarby ...</p>
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The same delight in multiplicity – the medieval “mania for encyclopaedic lists”¹²³ – is evident in the variety of trees used in building a funeral pyre in the Knight's Tale:

<p>But how the fyr was maked upon highte, Ne eek the names hat the trees highte, As ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popler, Wylugh, elm, plane, assh, box, chasteyn, lynde, laurer, Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippeltree – How they weren feld shal nat be toold for me (I.2919-2924)</p>	<p>maar hoe die bouwerk verder uitgesien het en watter soorte boom daarvoor gedien het, soos eik, den, berk, esp, els, huls, iep, populier, kastanje, linde, loofboom, buks, lourier, wilg, taksus, hasel, kornoelie, beuk, plataan, of hoedat hul gevel is, daaroor gaan ek niks vertel nie ...</p>
--	--

A distinct loss in Afrikaans is the fact that it does not have the simple past tense; the surviving periphrastic construction can become very clumsy in an extended narrative. In a complex sentence starting with an adverbial clause, the problem is compounded by the juxtaposition of verbs resulting from the rules governing word order. In describing a dramatic scene, awkwardness is avoided by the use of the historic present, for example, in the Nun's Priest's Tale:

Toe die weduwee en haar twee dogters al
 die henne so hoor gier en weeklaag, val
 hul by die deure uit en sien die vos
 wat hardloop in die rigting van die bos,
 en op sy rug het hy die arme haan.
 Toe skree hul hard, 'Help, help! Keer voor! Komaan!

¹²² H. Cooper, *The Canterbury Tales*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 379.

¹²³ P. Bondanella, *Umberto Eco and the Open Text*, p. 32.

'n Vos, 'n vos!' en sit hom agterna ...
(VII.3375-3381)

Afrikaans poet Langenhoven bewailed “die skreiende onmag om pad te vind, in die verhaaltrant, tussen die onvolmaak verlede tyd en die verlede gebruik van die teenwoordige tyd”.¹²⁴ My own use of the historic present in conjunction with the full past tense form was criticised by T.T. Cloete as “an arbitrary and confusing switching of tenses”.¹²⁵ Chaucer was, of course, guilty of the same offence:

She walketh up and doun, and as hire liste
She gadereth floures, party white and rede ...
And as an aungel hevenysshly she song.
(I.1052-1053 and 1055)

I have made greater use of the now archaic “had” (16 times) and the less obtrusive “wis” (24 times) than I would have wished. The decline into obsolescence of these forms can be charted in Afrikaans Bible translations, which offer a useful yardstick, because in addition to reflecting language usage, the Bible translations also influence usage. As S.J. du Toit put it:

Mar so ver as 'n taal volmaak kan wees, bestaan di volmaakheid juis daarin dat di bevolking o'ereenkom om soveul as mo'entlik is eenders te skrywe. Maar die volmaakheid moet jy ni eers in 'n taal hê voor dat jy di Bybel daarin vertaal ni. Mar omgekeerd, juis di Bybelvertaling breng di taal tot di eenvormigheid.¹²⁶

In his translation of 1889, Du Toit used both “had” and “wis”; in the 1933 translation the less common “wis” was eliminated, and “had” was replaced almost everywhere by “gehad het”; by 1953 “had” too had disappeared.¹²⁷

3.4.2 Metaphor and idioms

Chaucer’s descriptive epithets, similes and metaphors offer a translator particular challenges and scope for inventive solutions.

¹²⁴ *Die Burger*, 27 Jan. 1923, quoted in E.C.Pienaar, *Die Triomf van Afrikaans*, Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1946, p. 390.

¹²⁵ T.T. Cloete, Vertaling van Chaucer vol lomphele, *Beeld*, 30 Okt. 1989.

¹²⁶ S.J. du Toit, quoted in C.J. Conradie, Afrikaanse Bybelvertalings, in *G.S. Nienaber: 'n Huldeblyk*, Kaapstad: Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland, 1883, p. 108.

¹²⁷ J.C. Steyn, Die Afrikaans van die Bybelvertaling van 1933, *Acta Theologica*, nr. 29, 2009, p. 148; D. du Plessis, Die verskillende Afrikaans van die Afrikaanse Bybelvertalings, *Standpunte*, 5 Des. 2014.

He describes Simkin as “a market-bettere atte fulle” (I.3936). Here the juxtaposition of place and personality concentrates the senses of loitering and bullying and I translated the relevant line as “Hy was ’n regte markplek-moer-jou-op” – Afrikaans lends itself to compounding. My translation includes a number of “deviant collocations” or new combinations of existing lexemes.¹²⁸

Such compounds were helpful in several instances. In the Knight’s Tale, on the morning of the tournament, we have “The fomy steedes on the golden brydel/ Gnawynge” (I.2506-7), rendered as “... in die gedrang/ kou elke skuimbekdier sy goue stang”. The eagerness of the crowd, “Unto the seetes presseth al the route” (I.2580), is intensified by the compound noun in “volg daar ’n sitplekstormloop deur die gedrang”. In the Cook’s Tale, the “prentys revelour” (I.4391) becomes “’n losbolleerkneg”; in the Merchant’s Tale, Pluto is dismissive of women’s “wikkednesse” (IV.2249), rendered as “julle vroumensstreke”, and the Reeve derides the Cook’s horsemanship (IX.49-50) as “lepellekkerruiterskap”.

In the Summoner’s Tale, there is a delightful description of a lecherous friar producing “mossietjirpgeluide”. This compound noun is all the more memorable in view of the simile used in relation to the Summoner himself in the General Prologue: “As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe” (I.626), which I rendered “en jagser as ’n mossie was die ou”. The absurdity of the word “mossietjirpgeluide” and the use of the verb “voortgebring” rather than “gemaak” suggests calculation on the friar’s part and reinforces the intrusiveness of his courtship already captured in “opgedring”:

<p>The frere ariseth up ful curteisly, And hire embraceth in his armes narwe, And kiste hire sweete, and chirketh as a sparwe With his lyppes.</p>	<p>Die frater het hofflik op die been gekom, met soen en stywe druk hom opgedring en mossietjirpgeluide voortgebring.</p>
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(I.1802-1805)

Many adjectives in Afrikaans have stock intensive forms, so variations on these arrest attention. This effect is achieved when a phrase is compressed into a single unusual intensive adjective, for example, in the description of the Miller’s drunkenness in the Prologue to his Tale, and of the Cook’s enjoyment of the Reeve’s Tale:

¹²⁸ Touroy, *Descriptive Translation Studies – and Beyond*, Revised edition, p. 243.

The Millere, that for dronken was al pale ...
(I.3120)

Skoon bleekbesope was die Meulenaar ...

The Cook of Londoun, whil the Reve spak,
For joye him thoughte he clawed him on the bak.
(I.4325-4326)

In dié verhaal het die Kok hom so vermei
dat hy skoon rugkraplekke daarvan kry.

A simile which has a distinctly defamiliarising effect, as envisaged by Russian Formalism,¹²⁹ is my retention of “dronke as a mous” (“dronk soos ’n muis”) in the Knight’s Tale and the Wife of Bath’s Prologue (I.1261 and III.245), where the Afrikaans stock expression “so dronk soos ’n matroos” would be as inappropriate as the modern English “as drunk as a lord”.¹³⁰ In the case of the Knight’s Tale, however, I provided an explanatory footnote, as I did not feel that there was any need to add to the effect of estrangement already provided for in good measure by the stately pace of the narrative, the mores of the characters depicted and the strangeness of the lexicon. In the Wife of Bath’s Prologue, no explanation needed to be provided, as the simile splendidly enhanced the comic effect (is he a man or a mouse?) of the Wife’s diatribe.

The retention of Chaucer’s references to specific colour nuances creates a similarly defamiliarising effect, for example, “sleeswart” and “bessiebruin”, for which footnotes were provided. Both the Prioress and Simkin’s daughter in the Reeve’s Tale have “eyen greye as glas” (I.152 and I.3974), “so gryns soos glas”, signifying their conformity with a particular medieval notion of romantic feminine beauty.¹³¹ By contrast, Absolon in the Miller’s Tale has “eyen greye as goos” (I.3317), “gansgryns oë”), geese being regarded as foolish creatures, and introducing another bird image, in satirical contrast to the bridegroom in Song of Songs 5:12 whose “eyes are as beautiful as doves”.¹³² Other bird images in the translation include “ydel soos ’n pou”, “bly soos ’n papegaaie”, “jagser as ’n mossie”, “vrolik soos ’n goudvink”, “genadeloos soos ’n janfiskaal”, and “trots...”, “vrolik...”, and “lig en losbol soos ’n ekster”.

¹²⁹ E. Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, 1993, p. 79.

¹³⁰ The same expedient is followed by Barnouw, Van Altena, Coghill, Lumiansky, Hill, Nicholson and Raffel. Droese has “besoffen wie ein Stint”, Wright has “drunk as a wheelbarrow” and “pissed as a newt”, and Morrison “drunk as a souse”,

¹³¹ F.H. Ridley, Explanatory Notes, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 805, n.152.

¹³² R.E. Kaske, Patristic Exegesis, in *Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Anthology*; edited by J.A. Burrow, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, p. 237.

Alisoun in the Miller's Tale is "upright as a bolt" (I.3264), for which Afrikaans idiom requires "regop soos 'n kers". When Absolon goes courting, the night was as dark as pitch or coal. "Pikdonker" and "koolswart" are ordinary intensives, but instead my comparison strikes a solemn note, heightening the hilarity of what follows:

Derk was the nyght as pitch, or as the cole, And at the wyndow out she putte hir hole. (I.3731-3732)	Die nag was pikswart, donker soos die dood, toe sy haar poephool deur die opening stoot.
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The Man of Law remarks on how well things go for the wealthy – here the reference is to the bad luck of double ones, while six and five are a winning throw in a game of chance. Instead of explaining this in a footnote, I used a more familiar image:

O noble, o prudent folk as in this cas! Youre bagges been nat fild with ambes as, But with sys cynk, that renneth for youre chauce (II.123-125)	... vir jul gaan alles reg; die dobbelsteentjies val vir jul nooit sleg – daar's pure dubbel sesse in jul beker.
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In the Pardoner's Tale, on the other hand, the game of hazard, in which seven is a winning throw, is not used metaphorically, so there is no need for such a change:

Sevene is my chauce, and thine is cynk and treye! (VI.653)	jy't vyf en drie, en sewe's my hasard!
--	--

Idioms are notoriously problematic in translation, especially across culturally and geographically disparate milieus. Yet they are often surprisingly successful in translation because they reflect the common sense of centuries of folk wisdom and have a pithy formulation in common.

Sometimes an equivalent saying is readily available. In the Cook's Tale we read:

Of a proverbe that seith this same word: Wel bet is roten appul out of hoord Than that it rotie al the remenaunt. (I.4405-4407)	dat hy nou op die spreekwoord ag moet slaan, want 'Een vrot appel steek die ander aan'. Dis beter gooi mens so 'n appel weg:
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It may be that there is no parallel in the target language, but the saying is self-explanatory or draws on such a fund of folk wisdom that it can be translated and still sound perfectly natural:

Therefore bihoveth hire a ful long spoon That shal ete with a feend,' thus herde I seye. (V.600-601)	Een wat wil aansit met die duiwel hoort 'n baie lang lepel vir dié doel te hê.
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Sometimes a different image may be used to convey the same meaning. The Reeve says of a lingering lasciviousness that he has a colt's tooth. In Afrikaans it is said of an older man who pursues a young woman: "n Ou bok lus ook 'n groen blaartjie".¹³³ Goats (along with sparrows) are medieval symbols of lust,¹³⁴ this idiom can be conveniently applied to the Reeve, heightening the sense of his appetite by the strong sexual connotations of the word "lus" and its colloquial use as a verb:

Oure olde lemes mowe wel been unweelde, But wyl ne shal nat failen, that is sooth. And yet ik have alwey a coltes tooth.	Al word ons ledemate styf en krom, is die begeerte iets wat ons nooit blus. Ek's self 'n bok wat nog jong blare lus.
(I.3886-3888)	

The Wife of Bath also admits to having a colt's tooth and again the goat image is a suitable substitution, with heightened irony on account of the different sex, and calling to mind Skeat's explanation of "gat-toothed" as goat-toothed, rather than gate-toothed.¹³⁵ Speaking of the disparity in age between herself and her fifth husband, the Wife of Bath says:

He was, I trowe, twenty wynter oold, And I was fourty, if I shal seye sooth; But yet I hadde alwey a coltes tooth. Gat-toothed I was, and that bicam me weel; I hadde the prente of seinte Venus seel. As help me God, I was a lusty oon, And faire, and riche, and yong, and wel bigon.	Hy was, so meen ek, twintig somers oud en ek 'n vrou van in die veertig, maar ek bly nou eenmaal bok vir so 'n blaar. Die merk van Venus – tande wyd uiteen – het meer aantreklikheid aan my verleen. Die Here weet, ek was maar warm van bloed, en mooi en jonk en ryk en welgemoed.
(III.600-606)	

The Host rubs his hands with glee and says:

This gooth aright: unboked is the male;
Lat se now who shal telle another tale...
(I.3115)

I have replaced this image, meaning "the pack is opened" with one relating to sport, possibly bowls, which was very popular in the Middle Ages:¹³⁶

Die bal is aan die rol, so wat de hel,
wie gaan die volgende verhaal vertel?

¹³³ *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*, deel I, A-C, Pretoria: Staatsdrukker, 1950, p. 473.

¹³⁴ R.S. Loomis, *A Mirror of Chaucer's World*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 179.

¹³⁵ S. Wenzel, Explanatory Notes, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 818, n. 468

¹³⁶ J.A.R. Pimlott, *Recreations*, London: Studio Vista, 1968, p. 20 and illustration no. 18.

On another occasion when the Host looks around for another narrator, the idiom he uses refers to a parlour game:

Ther gan oure Hooste for to jape and pleye,
And seyde, "sires, what! Dun is in the myre!"
(IX.4-5)

Parlour games associated with long English evenings are unknown to Afrikaans speakers and our limited rainfall makes the picture of a horse struggling in the mud almost unimaginable. On the other hand, wagons, which were commonly used in the interior, could get stuck in "drifts" or river crossings.

... "Ons wa het vasgeval.
Wie kry hom uit die modder?" het hy geskal.

Even if the field of reference of such a translated saying is alien, for example, "With empty hand men may na haukes tulle" (I.4134), a direct translation "Met leë hand kan mens g'n hawik lok" may feel familiar because in its structure it resembles an Afrikaans proverb, in this case "Met onwillige honde kan 'n mens nie hase vang nie".¹³⁷ The proverbial quality can be heightened by antithetical structure for example, "... 'feeld hath eyen and the wode hath yeres' (I.1522): "Die veld het oë; ore het die woud", and by internal rhyme, which, together with brevity, makes one of the abundance of proverbs in the Tale of Melibee more forceful:

For the commune proverbe seith thus: 'He that soone deemeth, soone shal repente.'
Die spreekwoord sê mos: "Oordeel gou, kry gou berou."
(VII.1029)

The folksy feel of Chaucer's language use is enhanced by the use of idiomatic expressions typical of the target language, so an ordinary line may become an aphorism in translation. For example, in the Clerk's Tale, Griselda seeks comfort in an acquiescent generalisation, which could be compressed into a pithy proverbial expression which suggests the universality and inevitability of her experience:

But sooth is seyde – algate I fynde it trewe,
For in effect it preeved is on me –
Love is noght oold as whan that it is newe.
Die spreekwoord sê: "Ou liefde bruis nie meer",
en dit is waar bewys in my geval.
(IV.855-857)

¹³⁷ R.P. Botha, G. Kroes en C.H. Winckler, *Afrikaanse idiomie en ander vaste uitdrukkings*, Halfweghuis: Southern, 1994, p. 143.

In the Cook's Tale, with its multiplicity of idiomatic expressions, the translation contributes one more:

For thefte and riot, they been convertible. ...want speel en steel is vinkel en koljander.
(l.4395)

Translating "riot", wanton behaviour, as "speel" produces an internal rhyme that reinforces the similarity between the one and the other. This linguistic play, so typical of Chaucer, invites (or tempts) the translator to take liberties in rendering the spirit rather than the letter of the original. In the words of Umberto Eco, "... I was frequently tempted not to translate, but rather (once I understood what kind of word game the author was playing), to try playing the same game, following the same rules, in another language".¹³⁸

The following lines from the Miller's Tale are richly textured as a result of rhyme, alliteration and proverbial wisdom:

Ful sooth is this proverb, it is no lye, Men seyn right thus: 'Alwey the nye slye Maketh the ferre leeve to be looth.' For though that Absolon be wood or wroth, By cause that he fer was from hire sight, This nye Nicholas stood in his light. (l.3391-3396)	Dis 'n ware woord wat niemand kan ontken: 'n Skelm vryer byderhand moet wen oor een wat ver is van sy goed; ou Absalom het erg bedroë daarvan afgekome, want hy het lank gesukkel, niks gekry; Klaas Tuisbly het die vroukje afgevry.
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Here Chaucer's "nye slye" idiom explicates two meanings of "hende" not covered by "fyn", namely "skelm", crafty and "byderhand", close by, and the advantage of his being "nye" is reinforced by the Afrikaans expression "Ver van jou goed en naby aan jou skade" and the playful allusion to "Met Jan Tuisbly se karretjie ry".

3.4.3 Speech patterns

In this section, I discuss evidence of the sensitivity of Chaucer's ear provided by the distinctive voices that we can apprehend in different characters and types of narrative, variations in pace and the use of dialect, and how these speech patterns are handled in my translation. Chaucer wrote to be read aloud and it is essential for a translator who wishes to retain the auditory quality of his writing to subvocalise

¹³⁸ Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, p. 77.

and not merely write. In a presentation on translating for the stage, Maryse Pelletier says:

Like music, language is made up of sounds, and sounds create effects. Very often, beyond words, beyond the meaning of the words, beyond the study of the characters, the theatrical text creates a network of feelings whose source is actually the language's particular sonorous quality, the alternating sounds and silences – in other words, the music of the language. Translators must hear this “music” of language in the original and rewrite it in their translations.¹³⁹

Based on her insights, I would agree with Ellis's view that one reason why Nevill Coghill's modernisation of the *Canterbury Tales* is generally regarded as superior to other modern English versions is that it originated in a series of radio broadcasts that necessitated sensitivity to auditory detail.¹⁴⁰ To illustrate with an example from my translation, let me compare a line that I first wrote with its subsequent revision. Of Simkin's wife in the Reeve's Tale we are told, “Hir thoughte that a lady sholde hire spare” (l.3966), which I translated as “Sy meen 'n dame moet afsydig wees”. But with the word order changed to “'n Dame, meen sy, moet afsydig wees”, the slight pause engineered after “dame” directs attention to the word, or “points” it, as an actor on stage would do,¹⁴¹ to heighten its satirical effect. This is in line with Newmark's contention that emphasis and word order “are the most neglected factors in translation and translation theory”.¹⁴²

Different characters in the *Canterbury Tales* may speak in markedly different ways. Thus the characters in the Friar's Tale are clearly differentiated by their speech patterns: the summoner is loud and coarse, while the fiend is soft-spoken and urbane; the carter's exclamations, cajoling and praise are appropriate to the task in hand, and the old woman's responses shift from fawning to vituperative.¹⁴³ So too, in the Knight's Tale, the short phrases and end-stopped lines used to describe the excited populace at the tournament are very different from the stately tone of the herald's proclamation with its use of enjambment and abstract nouns just a few lines later:

¹³⁹ M. Pelletier, *Theatre and the Music of Language*, in *Mapping Literature*; edited by D. Homel and S. Simon, Montréal: Véhicule Press 1988, p. 31.

¹⁴⁰ Ellis, *Chaucer at Large*, p. 115; M. Andrew, *Translations*, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*; edited by Steve Ellis, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 556; D. Gray (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 336.

¹⁴¹ J. Bourne, *Teach Yourself Amateur Acting*, London: English Universities Press, 1949, p. 86.

¹⁴² P. Newmark, *More Paragraphs on Translation*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998, p.70.

¹⁴³ Cooper, *The Canterbury Tales*, p. 174.

Somme seyden thus, somme seyde "it shal be so",	Een sê dis sus, die ander sê dis so;
Somme helden with hym with the blake berd,	een hou van 'Swartbaard', maar ander plaas
Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke herd;	groter vertrouwe in 'Kaalkop' of 'Boskaas'.
Somme seyde he looked grymme, and he wolde fighte:	'Hei, daardie ou's 'n wenner, hy lyk so kwaai;
"He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte." (I.2516-2520)	sy strydbyl weeg goed twintig pond, sou ek raai.'
'The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun Considered that it were destruccioun To gentil blood to fighten in the gyse Of mortal bataille now in this emprise. Wherefore, to shapen that they shal nat dye, He wol his firste purpos modifye. (I.2537-2542)	'Dit is die hertog se deurdagte wil om te verhoed dat edele bloed verspil word as gevolg van stryd op lewe en dood in hierdie aangeleentheid; derhalwe stoot hy nou sy vorige besluit opsy om verlies van menselewens te vermy.

In the Afrikaans text of the first passage, I used an idiomatic expression in the first line, broke up the text into smaller speech units, and replaced descriptions with pithy nicknames. I added the exclamatory "Hei", and opted for the informal diction of "daardie ou". In the second passage, which is more serious, the marked iambic metre lends solemnity; the run-on lines result in a single sentence that marches on inexorably to "derhalwe", the first break after twenty-six words. And "derhalwe", in conjunction with words and phrases such as "deurdagte wil", "aangeleentheid" and "menselewens" are instances of the elevated diction used.

The different way in which people deal with the same situation, for example, the Wife of Bath and the Reeve on the subject of their advancing years, is reflected in her relaxed diction compared with his contorted syntax. She says:

But – Lord Crist! – whan that it remembreth me Upon my yowthe, and of my jolitee, It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote. Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote That I have had my worlde as in my tyme. But age, allas, that al wole envenyme, Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith. Lat go. Farewel! The devel go therwith! The flour is goon; ther is namoore to telle; The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle; But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde. Now wol I tellen of my fourthe housbonde. (III.469-480)	'Ag, hemel toggie, as ek aan die tyd weer terugdink van my jeug en joligheid, dan kittel dit my hart van lekkerkry, want tot vandag toe is ek dankieibly die lewe het soveel vreugde ingehou. Hoe jammer dat die ouderdom ons knou, met skoonheid wegdoen en met energie; maar dis verby nou en dit traak my nie! Met die meelblom klaar, bly daar niks oor vir my as die beste prys vir die semels te verkry; maar nogtans gaan ek my nie daarvoor kwel. Nou gaan ek van my vierde man vertel.
---	--

By contrast, he laments:

But ik am oold; me list not pley for age;
Gras tyme is doon; my fodder is now forage;
This white top writeth myne olde yeris;
Myn herte is also mowled as myne heris,
But if I fare as dooth an open-ers –
That ilke fruit is ever lenger the wers,
Til it be roten in mullok or in stree.
We olde men, I drede, so fare we:
Til we be roten, kan we nat be rype;
We hoppen alwey whil that the world wol pype.
For in oure wyl ther stiketh evere a nayl,
To have an hoor heed and a grene tayl,
As hath a leek; for thogh oure myght be goon,
Oure wyl desireth folie evere in oon.
For whan we may nat doon, than wol we speke;
Yet in oure asshen old is fyr yreke.

(l.3867-3882)

...maar ek's te oud vir speel; my grastyd oor,
lê daar 'n droë hooityd vir my voor.
Dié witkop is getuienis van my jare;
my hart is ewe skimmel as my hare,
tensy ek soos 'n mispel is: hoe later –
wanneer dit reg is om te eet – hoe kwater,
vrot op die vullis of in strooi gedraai.
Ons ou mans is maar almal so, sou ek raai:
voordat ons rot is, is ons nog nie ryp;
so ons sal maar hop solank die wêreld pyp.
Een haakplek met die mens se wil is dit:
dat die stengel groen moet wees, hoe wit
die kop ook is – presies net soos 'n prei –
al is ons suf, streef ons na sotterny.
Al kan ons net op ons vermoëns borduur,
in ons geharkte as smeul daar nog vuur.

In the first passage, short, jaunty statements express satisfaction with a remembered past and a determination to make the best of the situation: “Met die meelblom klaar, bly daar niks oor vir my/as die beste prys vir die semels te verkry”. In the second, the complex imagery and syntax depict a bitter struggle to come to terms with a present reality and a resentful acceptance of an imposed fate: “so ons sal maar hop ...”

A dramatic example of narrative voice is the description of the tournament in the Knight's Tale. Here the repetition of grammatical structures, as well as metrical, semantic and phonetic elements, together with Chaucer's use of the historic present tense, unite the text into a tightly coherent structure, giving it a quality of great vigour.¹⁴⁴ The immediacy of “Up spryngeth speres ... Out goon the swerdes ... Out brest the blood ...” three lines starting with adverb-verb-subject word order and initial inverted iamb (trochee) could not be matched in my translation, but the anaphoric reference of *he/his*¹⁴⁵ is captured in the visual prompt of *hier/hier's/ hier't/daar*, directing attention to the vicissitudes of the various contestants even as these events befall them. The translation also captures the auditory elements of alliteration and onomatopoeia in this scene. In this respect, it is reminiscent of the alliterative verse of heroic Anglo-Saxon times, characterised by long lines divided

¹⁴⁴ Burnley, *A Guide to Chaucer's Language*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82-83.

by a caesura into half lines, each with not fewer than two or more than three stresses,¹⁴⁶ the third alliterating with either of or both the first and second.¹⁴⁷ Chaucer's text approximates to this alliterative pattern and the translation approximate to his achievement, with the caesura indicated in each line:

Up spryngen speres / twenty foot on highte;	Speersplinters spat / tot twintig voet bo die
Out goon the swerdes / as the silver brighte;	aarde
The helmes they tohewen / and toshrede;	en silwer skitter / die getrokke swaarde;
Out brest the blood / with stierne stremes rede;	hul kap die helms stukkend, / kloof hul oop,
With myghty maces / the bones they tobreste.	sodat die bloed / in sterk rooi strome loop;
He thurgh the thikkeste / of the throng gan	swaar knotse word geswaai / en bene knak;
threste;	hier't een 'n weg / deur die menigte gehak;
Ther stomblen steedes stronge, / and doun	die sterkste perde struikel, / 'n ruiters val;
gooth al,	
He rolleth under foot / as dooth a bal;	hier's een nou onder die voet / net soos 'n bal;
He foyneth on his feet / with his tronchoun,	hier veg 'n man te voet / met sy lans se skag,
And he hym hurtleth / with his hors adoun;	daar bly 'n perd / en ruiters in die slag.
He thurgh the body is hurt/ and sithen take,	Een deur die lyf gewond, / word teen sy sin
Maugree his heed, / and broght unto the stake.	van die veld gesleep / agter die staketsel in.

(I.2605-2618)

The surprising claim by Wendy Scase that the only reminiscence of the alliterative verse of pre-Conquest poetry in Chaucer's work is the description of the landscape of the temple of Mars in lines I.1975-1980¹⁴⁸ is gainsaid by the vigorous lines quoted above.

The tales differ with regard to pace. Read aloud, the Miller's Tale moves at almost twice the speed of the Knight's Tale, "an astonishingly large differential, and an indication of the extraordinary narrative pace of the tale".¹⁴⁹ This effect is achieved (in the source and in the translation) by the use of shorter, simpler sentences with coordination rather than subordination, ample use of exclamations and colloquialisms and the repetition of sentences constructed on a similar pattern.¹⁵⁰ The first 200 lines of the Miller's Tale comprises 70 sentences of (on average) 21.9 words, whereas the first 200 lines of the Knight's Tale are made up of 31 sentences with an average of 35.3 words per sentence.

¹⁴⁶ Pearsall, in *Essays on the Art of Chaucer's Verse*, p. 136.

¹⁴⁷ J. Parsons, *English Versification for the Use of Students*, Boston, MA: Leach, Shewell & Sanborn, 1891, p. 79.

¹⁴⁸ W. Scase, The English Background, in *Chaucer An Oxford Guide*, p. 276.

¹⁴⁹ Cooper, *The Canterbury Tales*, p. 104

¹⁵⁰ Elliott, *Chaucer's English*, p. 205.

Within tales too, Chaucer shows himself to be a master of changes, varying the pace of the narrative to build suspense. A dramatic example of this is the Nun's Priest's Tale, where the *digressio* containing the speculation on predestination contrasts markedly with the narrative of the chase, in which one is particularly struck by the use of coordination to heighten the dramatic intensity. In the first passage, from the free will/predestination debate, the word "and" occurs only twice in seventeen lines; in the second it is repeated no fewer than twenty times (nineteen in the translation) in twenty-two lines, with parallel statements providing further coordination. But in addition to the techniques mentioned above, the nature of the vocabulary used is also significant. In the first passage, learned nouns predominate; in the second, we are swept along by verbs of vigorous activity:

But what that God forwoot moot needes bee,
 After the opinioun of certeyn clerkis.
 Witnesse on hym that any parfit clerk is,
 That in scole is greet altercacioun
 In this mateere, and greet disputisoun,
 And hath been of an hundred thousand men.
 But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren
 As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,
 Or Boece, or the Bisshop Bradwardyn,
 Wheither that Goddes worthy forwityng
 Streyneth me nedely for to doon a thyng –
 "Nedely" clep I symple necessitee –
 Or elles, if free choys be graunted me
 To do that same thyng, or do it noght,
 Though God forwoot it er that it was wroght;
 Or if his wityng streyneth never a deel
 But by necessitee condicioneel.

(VII.4424-4440)

This sely wydwe and eek hir doghtres two
 Herden this hennes crie and maken wo,
 And out at dores stirten they anon,
 And syen the fox toward the grove gon,
 And bar upon his bak the cok away,
 And cryden, "Out! Harrow! and weylaway!
 Ha, ha! The fox!" and after hym they ran,
 And eek with staves many another man.
 Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot and Gerland,
 And Malkyn, with a dystaf in her hand;
 Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,
 So fered for the berkyng of the dogges
 And shoutyng of the men and wommen eeke
 They ronne so hem thoughte hir herte breeke.
 They holleden as feendes doon in helle;

Maar weet God iets vooruit, móét dit geskied
 volgens die mening van party studente,
 wat inderdaad ook al die argumente
 wat woed oor hierdie saak, kon uitgelê het,
 als wat skolastici daaroor te sê het,
 want honderdduisend het daaroor gestry,
 maar ek kan nie die kaf van die koring skei
 soos Augustinus, daardie vrome man,
 Boethius, of Bradwardine dit kan:
 of God se raadsbesluite ons beperk
 tot die verwesenliking van Sy werk,
 en of ons vrye wil ons na gelang
 van die gebeurlikhede onder dwang
 van Sy voorwete tog 'n keuse laat,
 al is dit voorbekend in God se Raad,
 en of Sy alwetendheid ons noodsaak in
 alleenlik 'n kondisionele sin.

Toe die weduwee en haar twee dogters al
 die henne so hoor gier en weeklaag, val
 hul by die deure uit en sien die vos
 wat hardloop in die rigitng van die bos,
 en op sy rug het hy die arme haan.
 Toe skree hul hard, 'Help, help! Keer voor!
 Komaan!
 'n Vos, 'n vos!' en sit hom agterna
 en 'n magdom mans wat almal stokke dra,
 en Kol, ons hond, en Talbot en Gerland,
 en Martjie met 'n spinrok in haar hand,
 en koei en kalf, en die varke sit ook af,
 doodbang vir die honde se geblaf
 en die mans en vrouens se geskree daarby;
 hul hardloop dat hul daarvan seer moes kry.

The dokes cryden as men wolde hem quelle;
The gees for feere flowen over the trees;
Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees.
Of bras they broghten bemes, and of box,
Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe and
powped,
And therwithal they skriked and they howped.
It semed as that hevene sholde falle.

(VII.4565-4591)

Hul het geskree soos duiwels in die hel.
Of hul vermoor word, kry's die eende skel;
bevrees vlieg al die ganse in die lug;
die swerm bye't uit die korf gevlug, ...
Hul bring trompette saam van been en koper,
van hout en horing waarin hulle blaas
en boonop dit, skree hulle en hul raas,
dat mens sou dink die hemele gaan val.

I first read the Nun's Priest's Tale in my undergraduate days and I remember my impatience with the digressions, prolixity, and mock-heroic lamentations. A minor source of this impatience was my ignorance with regard to most of the classical allusions. Far more important, though, was the effect of lifestyle. I grew up in a busy world where even entertainment was busy: short, sharp and action-packed. So when I first read Chaucer, it was with a first-year student's ignorance of irony.

However, when one translates, one is forced to slow down, to take one's time, to consider every word. At first I made heavy weather of the digressions. I had become bogged down by what seemed dull and uninspiring, but one of my most vivid memories of the translation process was the thrill of the chase at the end of the Tale. I translated breathlessly, experiencing the exhilaration of the narrative. And so I came to appreciate that telling a story well is all about pace. And once I understood that, I could join Chaucer in teasing the reader by spinning out the story. Later still I came to relish the elaboration for its own sake. When Chaucer stopped to consider the amazing variety of trees that could be used for a really splendid funeral pyre (see Sections 3.4.1 and 4.5.4), or the perplexity of God's foreknowing and man's free will, or the self-deluding musings of a lecherous old man, I no longer wanted to rush on to reach the end, but increasingly shared in the sense of wonder he so vividly communicated.

A striking example of Chaucer's ear for speech patterns is his use of distinctive dialectal features by the two students, John and Aleyn, in the Reeve's Tale. Although regional varieties of Afrikaans can be distinguished, they are not easily localised by non-specialists. One exception is the variety of Afrikaans widely used by Coloured people of the south-western Cape. During Afrikaner nationalist rule, language subserved an ideological agenda. In schools and in the media "Standard

Afrikaans” was promoted and “KaapsAfrikaans” was stigmatised.¹⁵¹ At that time, it would have been impossible to have John and Aleyn use this dialect without the unwarranted intrusion of South African race dynamics, including the then current provisions of the Immorality Act, which criminalized what was called “miscegenation”. In any case, Lefevere rightly warns that the use of dialect is likely to show up a translator’s ideological stance by potentially making a certain group appear inferior or ridiculous.¹⁵²

Fortunately, another expedient was available to me. Newmark suggests that the translator must decide on the function of the dialect usage – which I would regard as student slang – and then to produce “naturally slangy, possibly classless speech in moderation”.¹⁵³ In reaction against their conservative elders, Afrikaans-speaking students have long interspersed English words in their slang. Since the 1980s this practice also became fashionable among young writers.¹⁵⁴ This gave me the idea of using words of English origin which were absorbed into Afrikaans at an early stage of its development, words like “proppers”, “sports”, “plein en simpel”, and “die hele lot”. These words are fully adapted phonologically and morphologically, but over years they have moved down the social scale and are now perceived as part of a low register,¹⁵⁵ along with inelegant forms such as “daai”, “vrotsak”, “verdomp”, “kooi” and “klapperdop”, and vulgarities such as “pomp” and “naai”. What I have done is to use a sprinkling of these words in the second half of the tale; so although the description of Simkin’s pretensions is in a dignified register, the subsequent narrative descends into (and by means of) linguistic rough and tumble:

“For, John,” seyde he, “als evere moot I thryve, If that I may, yon wenche wil I swyve.” (I.4177-4178)	“want, Jan, sê hy, “ek gaan verdomp nog daai meulenaar se dogter proppers naai.”
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The strategy appears to have succeeded, as a reader of the translation noted this shift in the dialect: in a contribution on the translation of poetry in *Die Afrikaanse*

¹⁵¹ See, for example, J. Esterhuyse, *Taalapartheid en Skoolafrikaans*, Johannesburg: Taurus, 1986, *passim*.

¹⁵² Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, p. 50.

¹⁵³ P. Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation*, Hemel Hempstead: Phoenix ELT, 1995, p. 195.

¹⁵⁴ P. van der Merwe, What the Canon Saw, in *Afrikaans Literature*; edited by R. Kriger and E. Kriger, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996, p. 121; cf., for example, J. Nagtegaal, *Daar’s Vis in die Punch*, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 2002.

¹⁵⁵ B.C. Donaldson, *The Influence of English on Afrikaans*, Pretoria: Serva, p. 146.

Skryfgids, Henning Pieterse refers to another passage in the Reeve's Tale (after the deed), commenting:

In hierdie gedeelte praat twee studente, John en Aleyn (Jan en Alein) 'n Noord-Engelse dialek ... en die vertaling lewer bewys daarvan hoe Boje hierdie komiese dialek in 'n Afrikaanse sosiolek weergee.¹⁵⁶

He then quotes the following passage in the original and in translation:

Aleyn uprist, and thoughte, "Er that it dawe,
I wol go crepen in by my felawe",
And fond the crasel with his hand anon.
"By God," thoghte he, "al wrang I have misgo
Heere lyth the miller and his wyf also."
And forth he goth, a twenty deevel way,
Unto the bed ther as the miller lay –
He wende have copen by his felawe John –
And by the millere in he creep anon,
And caughte hym by the nekke, and softe he
spak.
He seyde, "Thou, John, thou swynes-heed,
awak
For Christes saule, and heer a noble game.
For by that lord that called is Seint Jame,
As I have thryes in this shorte night
Swyved the milleres doghter bolt upright,
Whyl thow hast as a coward been agast.
"Ye, false harlot," quod the millere, "hast?
A! false traitour! false clerk!" quod he,
"Thou shalt be deed, By Goddes dignitee!
Who dorste be so bold to disparage
My doghter, that is come of swich linage?"
(l.4249-4272)

Alein staan op en dag: 'Voor die daeraad
moet ek weer 'n slag gaan inkruip by my maat;
maar loop hom teen die wieg vas onderweg.
'Genugtig,' dag hy, 'nou verdwaal ek sleg;
my kop is dronk van al die werk en waak,
dis dié dat ek my spoor so byster raak.
Aan die wiegie weet ek ek moet soontoe hou;
hier slaap die meulenaar mos en sy vrou.
Hy loop asof hy twintig duiwels het,
totdat hy kom by die meulenaar se bed:
terwyl hy dink dit is sy maat wat daar
in die bed lê, is dit mooi die meulenaar.
Hy sit sy arm om sy nek en 'Jan,
jou varkkop,' fluister hy, 'word wakker, man,
en hoor net watter sports het ek gehad.
Die meulenaar se dogter, wat ewe plat
op haar rug gelê het, is vannag verdomp
nie minder nie as drie maal goed gepomp,
terwyl jy soos 'n lafaard hier bly lê.'
'Jou bliksem!' roep die meulenaar, 'Hoesê?
Verraderlike skobbejak, ek sweer
ek sal jou hiervoor doodmaak, by ons Heer.
Hoe durf jy smaad en so 'n vernedering
oor my dogter met haar hoë afkoms bring?'

3.4.4 Forms of address

The final form of interlinguistic comparison to be considered is forms of address in Chaucer's Middle English and present-day Afrikaans. This comprises pronominal and nominal forms of address.

3.4.4.1 Pronominal forms

Middle English has two forms of address, the singular "thee/thou/thy" for condescension and intimacy, and the plural "ye/you/your" for reverence and

¹⁵⁶ H. Pieterse, Poësievertaling: Verarming en vernietiging of verryking en verruiming? in *Die Afrikaanse Skryfgids*, saamgestel deur R. Scheepers en L. Kleyn, Johannesburg: Penguin, 2012, p. 206.

formality. The distinction applies in many languages and is generally indicated by T and V (for the French *tu* and *vous*). In medieval poetry, the pronoun of address serves as a means of establishing register,¹⁵⁷ but in English modernisations, the impact of the Host's switching from 'ye' to 'thou' in addressing the Franklin is lost: "Straw for youre gentillesse!" quod oure Hoost./"What Frankeleyn! Pardee, sire, wel thou woot..." (V.695-696).

The fact that Afrikaans has the T and V forms of address in both the singular and the plural ("jy/jou" and "julle, jul" versus "u") is a great advantage and my Afrikaans text uses the distinction to bring out nuances of relationship. However, in using the distinction, I do not necessarily follow Chaucer's practice, because the determinants of usage in Afrikaans are different from those in Middle English.¹⁵⁸

As a first difference, we may note that languages differ in the extent to which switching – "retractibility of address"– takes place. German, for example, is rigid in its adherence to an established pattern; any change from the formal "Sie" and the now obsolete plural "Ihr" (in their various declensions) to "du/dir/dich/dein" has to be explicitly permitted by the superior party and it is accompanied by an explicit or tacit acknowledgment of changed circumstances.¹⁵⁹ Afrikaans is also resistant to switching, so I tend to consistency in the use of either the T or the V form of address, in contrast to Chaucer, whose frequent switches make it difficult to generalise, especially as one must also reckon with copyists who regarded one or the other form as more appropriate.

There are moments of high drama when I retain a switch in Chaucer's text (the text that has come down to us) or introduce one of my own. In the Friar's Tale, the widow uses the V form when she begs mercy of a summoner, but when these fail, she changes to T in exasperation and anger, and I adopted the same shift:

"Thou lixt!" quod she, "by my savacioun,
Ne was I nevere er now, wydwe ne wyf,
Somoned unto youre court in al my lyf."
(III.1618-1620)

"Dit lieg jy," sê sy. "By my saligheid,
nog nooit as vrou of weduwee is ek
deur jou in so 'n hofgeding betrek."

¹⁵⁷ Stone, in *The Translator's Art*, p. 171.

¹⁵⁸ D. Burnley, The T/V pronouns in Later Middle English Literature, in *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems*; edited by I.Taavitsanea and A.H. Jucker, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2002; D.M. Wybenga, Aanspreekvorme en wisselende status, MA-verhandeling, Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys, Vanderbijlpark, 1981.

¹⁵⁹ Honegger, 'And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete', in *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems ...*, p. 62.

I also introduced a switch in the Canon Yeoman's Tale. Once I have the canon addressing the priest with the informality of "Nee, maggies, man", I felt the continued use "u" was inconsistent, so this became a turning point at which the canon is so assured of his power over the priest that he no longer needs to pretend respect for him:

... And to hym spak, and thus sede in his game:	Toe't die kanunnik hom gul toegevoeg:
"Stoupeth adoun. By God, ye be to blame!	'Nee maggies, man, ek het jou nou genoeg
Helpeth me now, as I dide yow whileer;	gehelp; nou's dit jou beurt: kom help vir my.
Putte in youre hand, and loketh what is theer."	Steek in jou hand en sien wat jy kan kry.'
(VIII.1326-1329)	

In the Second Nun's Tale, as indicated in Section 3.2.2.3, Cecilia initially addresses Almachius as "ye" but later insultingly switches to "thou". Stability of address¹⁶⁰ obliged me to choose either the V or T form of address, but because "u" is entirely inconsistent with the content of her utterances, I opted for "jy" throughout, producing a rather different perspective on dogmatic conviction.

A second difference is that "jy" is the unmarked form in Afrikaans, while "u" is strained and very much less natural in everyday spoken Afrikaans.¹⁶¹ The pronoun "u" derives from a formal written *Uw Edelheid* or *Uw edele* and in its abbreviated form did not become common in the Dutch spoken language until the nineteenth century, long after Afrikaans had evolved. Its alien feel is evidenced by the popular use of indirect forms of address such as "Het oom al van soiets gehoor?" or "Kan meneer my miskien help?"¹⁶² According to the linguist J. du P. Scholtz, "Tot vandag toe word *u* ... dikwels aangevoel as iets oneie aan Afrikaans, as 'n kultuurontlening uit Nederlands".¹⁶³ F.F. Odendaal concurs: "U was nooit natuurlik in die gesproke omgangstaal nie." He argues that *jy* is not necessarily discourteous.¹⁶⁴ Apparently some Bible translators and proofreaders regarded "u" as an un-Afrikaans "Neerlandisme";¹⁶⁵ however,

¹⁶⁰ Honegger, in *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems*, p. 226.

¹⁶¹ Wybenga, *Aanspreekvorme en wisselende status*, p 180.

¹⁶² D. N. van der Sijs (2006), *Klein uitleenwoordenboek.*, www.etymologiebank.nl/trefwoord/u.

¹⁶³ J. du P. Scholtz, *Wording en Ontwikkeling van Afrikaans*, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1980, p. 109; cf. Scholtz, *Taalhistoriese opstelle*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1963, p. 65.

¹⁶⁴ F.F. Odendaal Oor die aanspreekvorme in Afrikaans, in *Gedenkbundel H.J.J.M. van der Merwe*, geredigeer deur W.J. de Klerk en F.A. Ponelis, Pretoria: van Schaik, 1976, p. 111.

¹⁶⁵ D. du Plessis, in *Standpunte*, 5 Des. 2014, par. 4.1.

[d]ie gevoel onder Afrikaanssprekendes vir die verheuenheid van die Bybel blyk uit 'n besluit van die Raad van die Ned. Geref. Kerke in 1927. Die Raad versoek die vertalers om die voornaamwoorde 'jy' en 'jou' met die 'grootste omzichtigheid' te gebruik. Hulle moet rekening hou met die 'deftigheid' van die Bybel.¹⁶⁶

As a result of this difference between Afrikaans and Middle English, the T form is more common in my translation than in the source text. Commenting on the contemporary European situation, Brown and Gilman remark: "Well into the nineteenth century the power semantic prevailed However, all our evidence consistently indicates that in the past century the solidarity semantic has gained supremacy."¹⁶⁷ Since the student revolt in 1968, there has been a significant decline in the use of the V form in the Netherlands; a survey carried out in Germany in 1974 showed a vast increase of the T form (referred to as the "Schüler-Du") among students and young adults;¹⁶⁸ and according to Odendaal, this appears to be the case in Afrikaans as well: "Ek het soms die indruk dat *jy* besig is om dit op *u* te wen in status- en meer formele situasies, veral ook in die sosiaal mindere lae."¹⁶⁹

From an Afrikaans cultural perspective, people travelling together are likely to experience a sense of solidarity, levelling social distinctions,¹⁷⁰ and this provides further justification for my decision to extend the T form of address. Harry Bailly, for example, uses the T form in addressing the Miller, Reeve, Cook, Physician, Pardoner and Shipman, but the V form for the Clerk, the Monk, the Friar and the Man of Law. Interpreting the Host as a hail-fellow-well-met personality, I made a solidarity T semantic¹⁷¹ his habitual form of address. In the lines preceding the quotation that follows below (and in the first line of the passage quoted) the Host addresses the high-status Monk as V, but then he switches in jocular mode to T. In Afrikaans "u" would be entirely inconsistent with his merciless ragging of the Monk:

Of what hous be ye, by youre fader kyn?
I vowe to God, thou hast a ful fair skyn;

Uit watter klooster kom jy? Laat ons hoor.
Jou vel is glad en goed versorg; dis oor

¹⁶⁶ P. Strauss, Die Geskiedenis, aanvaarding en impak van die Afrikaanse Bybel van 1933, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, Jg. 56, nr. 3, Sept. 2016, p. 739.

¹⁶⁷ R. Brown and A. Gilman, The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity, in *Style in Language*; edited by T.A. Sebeok, Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1966, p. 259.

¹⁶⁸ A. Wielenga, "U mag wel jij zeggen", BA-Skripsie, Universiteit van Leiden, 2014, p. 10-11.

¹⁶⁹ Odendaal, Oor die aanspreekvorme in Afrikaans, p. 111-112 ; cf. Wybenga, Aanspreekvorme en wisselende status, p. 200.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Wybenga, Aanspreekvorme en wisselende status, p. 15.

¹⁷¹ Brown and Gilman, in *Style in Language*, p. 258.

It is a gentil pasture ther thou goost.
 Thou art nat lyk a penant or a goost:
 Upon my feith, thou art som officer,
 Som worthy sextein, or som celerer,
 For by my fader soule, as to my doom,
 Thou art a maister whan thou art at hoom;
 Ne povre cloysterer, ne no novys,
 But a governour, wily and wys,
 And therwithal of brawnes and of bones
 A wel farynge persone for the nones.
 I pray to God, yeve hym confusioun
 That first thee broghte to religioun!
 Thou woldest han been a tredefowel aright.
 Haddestow as greet a leeve as thou hast myght
 To parfourne al thy lust in engendrure,
 Thou haddest bigeten ful many a creature.
 Allas, why werestow so wyd a cope?
 God yeve me sorwe, but, and were I a pope,
 Nat only thou, but every myghty man,
 Though he were shorn ful hye upon his pan,
 Sholde have a wyf. ...

(VII.1931-1953)

jy goed gevoed is, waar dit ook mag wees.
 Jy lyk nie soos 'n boeteling of gees.
 Jy is 'n hooggeplaaste, na die skyn,
 'n keldermeester of 'n sakristein,
 want waarlik waar, dis duidelik soos die dag,
 in die klooster is jy 'n man van groot gesag,
 nie 'n novise of 'n gewone broer,
 maar een bekwaam om daar gesag te voer.
 Maar daarby ook 'n man van vlees en bloed;
 van voorkoms, welgeskape, fris en goed.
 My bede is dat God die man vergewe
 wat jou oorreed het tot die kloosterlewe!
 Jy kon 'n knap tredhaan gewees het as
 die geleentheid daartoe jou beskore was
 om, luidens aangename Skrifvertolking,
 ook by te dra tot die aarde se bevolking.
 Helaas dat jy 'n koorkap dra, want as
 ek Pous was, dan sou ek vir jou gelas –
 en nie net jou nie, elke stoere man
 wat rondloop met 'n geskeerde harsingpan –
 om 'n vrou te vat. ...

In the *Pelgrimsverhale* the Host habitually uses the T form of address, but he resorts to V to express wheedling subservience to the Prioress:

... and with that word he sayde,
 As curteisly as it had been a mayde,
 "My lady Prioressse, by youre leve,
 So that I wiste I sholde yow nat greve,
 I wolde demen that te tellen sholde
 A tale next, if so were that ye wolde ...

(VII.445-450)

Toe ewe outyds soos 'n maagd het hy
 sy aandag aan die Prioeres gewy:
 "Met u verlof, mevrou, wil ek dit waag
 om u te vra of dit u sal behaag
 om nou aan die beurt te kom, iets te vertel,
 mits dit, natuurlik, u nie sal ontstel."

A third difference of usage occurs in respect of "courtly" formal relationships. In Afrikaans culture this is either unknown or fossilised, as in university teachers addressing their students as "u" or clergymen pronouncing, "NN., ek doop u ...". With regard to the university practice, in a survey of university teachers carried out by Nerina Bosman and Annél Otto, 21% of respondents indicated that they always use "u", 47% sometimes do and 32% never do.¹⁷² The use of the V form by clergymen, which I remember from the 1940s, was the norm in days gone by, as

¹⁷² N. Bosman en A. Otto, "Moenie my 'jy' en 'jou' nie, *LitNet Akademies*, Jg. 12, no. 3, Des. 2015, p. 385.

can be seen from a Dutch order of service, but in the order currently in use, it no longer applies.¹⁷³

Derek Pearsall notes: “A particularly consistent point of usage in Chaucer is that courtly relationships between men and women, including husbands and wives, are almost always marked by the avoidance of T forms.”¹⁷⁴ Thus Walter and Griselda, Chauntecleer and Pertelote, and Januarie and May address each other courteously, avoiding any suggestion of condescension. Significantly, only the Wife of Bath and Godelief, the Host’s wife, address their husbands as “thow”.¹⁷⁵ In Afrikaans, the T form is normal in marriage relationships, so that is what I use throughout. The consistent use of T in Afrikaans thus results in the loss of subtle shifts in relationships resulting from what Burnley calls “affective switching”.¹⁷⁶ An example can be found in the Franklin’s Tale, where Arveragus and Dorigen use the V form, except momentarily while he is instructing her never to divulge her terrible secret (V.1483-4). In the Shipman’s Tale, while Daun John and the wife use the V form, even at moments of intimacy, the merchant expresses his annoyance with his wife for interrupting him in his counting-house by addressing her as “thou” and “wyf” without any qualification (VII.1414).¹⁷⁷

A final difference in usage relates to Deity and the Virgin Mary. In Middle English, in common with French and German, for example, the T form is used, while in Afrikaans the V form is mandatory. In the *Canterbury Tales*, pagan deities are generally addressed as “thow”, but again one would expect “u” denoting superior beings in Afrikaans. However, I have boldly used the T of solidarity. This is in keeping with the petitioners’ solidarity strategy in the Knight’s Tale: in Emily’s prayer to Diana, she pleads their shared virginity and chastity, their shared love of hunting and antipathy to childbearing. So too, Arcite approaches Mars as a fellow warrior and as one who has experienced the pains of love. Palamon approaches Venus as

¹⁷³ Formulier om den heiligen doop aan de kleine kinderen der geloven te bedienen; Formulier vir die Bediening van die doop aan kinders van gelowiges.

⁷⁸ D. Pearsall, The Franklin’s Tale, Line 1469, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, vol. 17, 1995, p. 76.

¹⁷⁵ J. Kerkhof, *Studies in the Language of Geoffrey Chaucer*, Leiden: University Press, 1966, p. 138.

¹⁷⁶ Burnley, *A Guide to Chaucer’s Language*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁷ Pearsall, in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, vol. 17, 1995, p. 76-77.

his liege lady but admits “I am so confus” (I.2230), because their shared experience of love longing can be used to cajole her into compliance with his wishes.¹⁷⁸

The only form of address in the plural is “ye (yow)”. In Afrikaans either “julle” or “u” may be used, but as “julle” is familiar but polite,¹⁷⁹ this is the only plural form that I used in the Afrikaans translation, except when the narrator addresses his extra-textual hearers or readers, including high-status people for whom this would be the only appropriate form of address.

3.4.4.2 *Nominal forms*

The most common form of nominal address for men in the *Canterbury Tales* is “sir(e)”, translated as “meneer”, followed by a professional title, for example, “Sire Man of Law” (II.33). I have followed suit with “heer Advokaat”, though on one occasion I have “meneer die Dorpspastoor”. When the Monk is addressed as Lord Monk, I translated “heer Monnik”. “Maister” is used with reference to the Physician, the Shipman and the Friar, but again I opted for “heer”. I do, however, use “meester” when the carpenter speaks to Nicholas in the Miller’s Tale, when Thomas, his wife and the lord of the village speak to the friar in the Summoner’s Tale, when the summoner addresses the devil in the Friar’s Tale, and when Aurelius talks to the astrologer in the Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale. My choice was largely a matter of convenience, but in all these instances “meester” reflects the traditional sense of respect for a teacher. In the Summoner’s Tale, it is essential that the friar be called “meester”, because after he has been thus addressed by Thomas and his wife (III.1781 and 1823), he obsequiously and hypocritically declines the honour when he is addressed in the same way by the lord of the village:

“No maister, sire,” quod he, “but servitour,
Thogh I have had in scole that honour.
God liketh nat that ‘Raby’ men us calle
Neither in market ne in youre large halle.”
(III.2185-2188)

‘Nie meester nie, maar dienaar, goeie heer,
al het die fakulteit my daardie eer
bewys, tog maan die Heer Hy wil nie hê
dat mense vir ons “Meester” of “Rabbi” sê.’

The Host habitually addresses the assembled company as “Lordynges”. I translated “menere”, but quite frequently I changed this – metre permitting – to “mense”. This domesticating concession to present-day sensibilities is not only more logical; in its

¹⁷⁸ Honegger, in *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems*, p. 72-77.

¹⁷⁹ F.A. Poneis, *Afrikaanse Sintaksis*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1979, p. 67.

informality it is also more in keeping with the translation's relaxed portrayal of the Host, who uses the T form of address even in speaking to the high-status Monk.

A wife would not normally call her husband "my heer", but Griselda's marriage is no ordinary one and I felt that "my man" as a form of address common among an older generation of Afrikaans speakers could serve as a bridge to "my heer". In the *Canterbury Tales*, husbands normally address their wives as "my wyf" or "deere wyf", which I translated as "my vrou" or "my liewe vrou". An unadorned "wyf" may signify annoyance, as when the merchant of the Shipman's Tale is disturbed in his counting house. In this case, I substituted very formal language for the merchant's curt address, as a result of which the sarcastic "my liewe vrou" becomes an expression of exasperation rather than of courtesy or affection.

"Wyf," quod this man, "litel kanstow devyne
The curious bisynesse that we have ..."
VII.224-225

"My liewe vrou," se hy, "jy dien te weet
hoe ingewikkeld handelsake is ..."

In the *Canterbury Tales*, women are often addressed as "Lady", "Dame" and "Madame". These forms clearly all indicate great worth: the Prioress and the Virgin Mary are addressed as "lady" (VII.447 and 474); the guildsmen's wives wish to be addressed as "madame" (I.376); and Simkin's wife had best be addressed as "dame" (I.3956).¹⁸⁰ In my translation, all three forms are rendered by "mevrouw", although I used "dame" as a form of address in what may be described as two courtly situations: Emelye's petition to Diana in the Knight's Tale (I.2312), and Absolon's petition for his lady's favour in the Miller's Tale (I.3361). I also use the plural "dames" when the friar in the Summoner's Tale and the Pardoner solicit gifts from women (III.1738-1753 and VII.910-915), and when the narrator apologises to his female audience in the Merchant's Tale (IV.2350).

I have also introduced three forms of address for which there is no textual warrant in my source text: "man", "my vriend", and "ou bees". The unadorned, conversational "man", alliterating with "maggies" is used in an illustration of softened swearing (see Section 2.4). I used "my vriend" as an ostensibly friendly address that assumes a menacing tone in the context of overt hostility between the Friar and the Summoner, reinforced by the wider context of an intertextual echo (see Section 2.5.2). Finally, "ou bees" is an example of a decision prompted in the first place by

¹⁸⁰ S. Horobin, *Chaucer's Language*, p. 155.

the search for a rhyme word that, in my view, contributes significantly to the atmosphere of the interaction (see Section 3.2.2.2).

These bold decisions are in line with Ezra Pound's view that translators should "make it new", that they should not be over-literal or faceless, but should "bring themselves *into* the act."¹⁸¹ In each case, the form of address used accords well with Bassnett's observation that translators tend to translate not only the words before them but also "the absent context in which those words appear, the text behind the text, as it were".¹⁸² There is an element of risk involved, and the test must be whether the innovation contributes to the context or detracts from it. By contrast, Van Altena's explication of what the source only implies, referred to in Section 3.2.1, sacrifices Chaucer's irony, resulting in a weakening.

Abusive forms of address are considered in Section 3.5.1.2 below as a pervasive text-specific challenge in this translation.

3.5 TEXT-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

I have chosen to discuss swearing and puns in a separate section, although the cultural and linguistic issues discussed above are, of course, also to some extent text-specific, and swearing is a cultural and wordplay a linguistic phenomenon. However, I discussed the lexicon and syntax, metaphor and speech patterns as cultural and linguistic considerations on account of their more general applicability, whatever the text. My discussion of swearing, on the other hand, relates primarily to the *Canterbury Tales*, because the nature of the oaths used create a very specific practical and theoretical translational dilemma. Wordplay (puns) is also treated as text-specific, as my concern was not with punning in general, but how best to cope with the puns in this particular work.

3.5.1 Swearing

In Section 2.4, I raised the strategic issue of whether the heavy oaths used in the *Canterbury Tales* should be euphemised. I concluded that while this was possible, and even desirable in some cases, oaths and their legitimate and illegitimate use

¹⁸¹ Cf. J.K. Hale, *The Personal Element in Some Renderings of Milton's Paradise Lost*, in *Literature in Translation*; edited by P. Talgeri and S.B. Verma, New Delhi: Sangam Books, 1988, p. 101.

¹⁸² Bassnett, *Reflections on Translation*, p. xii.

were of such fundamental importance in the Middle Ages and in the *Canterbury Tales* that their wholesale replacement was not an option, even if their retention violated a fundamental norm of acceptability. In this section, I elaborate on the background to my decision. After oaths, I turn to calumnies and to sexual and scatological terms that were not regarded as taboo in the Middle Ages.

3.5.1.1 Oaths

“Trouthe” was a keyword of fourteenth-century morality. Its original sense was a covenant binding two people together (“and thereto I plight thee my troth”). Its semantic range came to include the moral quality of reliability, trustworthiness, integrity. “Trouthe,” Arveragus insists, “is the hyeste thing that man may kepe” (V.1479). By the time Chaucer was working on the *Canterbury Tales*, it also signified a quality associated with God, and, because God was “the ultimate guarantor of all morality”,¹⁸³ he was invoked as a witness to any undertaking. Oaths were therefore fundamental to medieval culture. They were the means of securing relationships in feudal society: “Men swore a series of interlocking oaths of fealty to set up networks of land ownership, military support, and agricultural labour.”¹⁸⁴ Friendship, cooperation, commercial transactions, promises – all these were sealed by oaths. Even the legal system made use of compurgation, the practice of strengthening an oath of innocence by the oaths of witnesses to the accused’s integrity. The London Glosses on the Laws of the Anglo-Saxon kings, dating from the early thirteenth century, project the sworn brotherhood of the London guilds as a model for the state. The subjects’ oath of loyalty to the king unites them as sworn brothers (*fraters conjurati*) committed to the protection of the kingdom.¹⁸⁵

Oaths called on God to confirm a verbal assurance, so anyone who practised deceit was guilty of blasphemy and would have to answer for it on the Day of Judgement. The consequences might also be more immediate. Thus the Norman Conquest was justified on the grounds that Harold was a perjured king because he had sworn fealty to William when a shipwreck placed him in the Duke’s power.¹⁸⁶ During

¹⁸³ R.F. Green, *Morality and Immorality*, in *A Concise Companion to Chaucer*, edited by C. Saunders, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006, p. 210.

¹⁸⁴ M. Mohr, *Holy Shit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 113.

¹⁸⁵ F. Heer, *The Medieval World*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962, p. 61.

¹⁸⁶ G.O. Sayles, *The Medieval Foundations of England*, London: Methuen, 1966, p. 162-163.

Chaucer's own lifetime, the capture of Richard II at Flint Castle was achieved by the breaking of an oath of safe conduct solemnly sworn on a consecrated Host.¹⁸⁷

Legitimate swearing, the Parson says, quoting Jeremiah 4:2, must be "in trouthe, in doom, and in rightwisnesse" (X.591). Because medieval religion was christocentric, oaths "by God" were commonly replaced by oaths "by Christ". In terms of the doctrine of incarnation, God was physically present in Christ on earth; in terms of the account of the ascension, Christ was taken up to heaven in bodily form; and in terms of the belief in transubstantiation, promulgated in 1215, he is physically present in the Mass. The introduction of tabernacles and pyxes in churches and the monstrance in processions led to an exaggerated emphasis on this presence.¹⁸⁸ Reinforced by preaching, iconography, dramatic presentations and Franciscan devotion to the wounds and Passion of Christ,¹⁸⁹ a cult of his body and blood arose, reaching a high point in the fourteenth century. The institution of the feast of Corpus Christi in 1264 exemplified and advanced the adoration of his body and blood,¹⁹⁰ an affective orientation characteristic of the popular religion of the time.¹⁹¹

Because the dismemberment of Christ's body in the crucifixion and the Mass was experienced viscerally, this gave rise to the most powerful oaths, by his passion and by different parts of his body. Because of the Athanasian insistence on the equality in the hypostatic union,¹⁹² such oaths commonly took the form of "God's wounds" or "God's blood". The Church's abhorrence of this kind of anatomical oath¹⁹³ is reflected in graphic representations such as a mural dating to about 1430 in Broughton Church in Buckinghamshire. This painting depicts the Virgin Mary holding the mutilated body of her son. She is surrounded by men holding the parts

¹⁸⁷ D. Brewer, *Chaucer in his Time*, London: Nelson, 1963, p. 205.

¹⁸⁸ N. Tanner, *The Church in the Later Middle Ages*, London: IB Tauris, 2008, p. 90.

¹⁸⁹ R.W. Frank, *The Canterbury Tales III: Pathos*, in *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion*; edited by P. Boitano and Jill Mann, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 145; S. Metcalf, *Inner and Outer*, in *The Later Middle Ages*; edited by S. Metcalf, London: Methuen, 1981, p.118.

¹⁹⁰ J. Rhodes, *Religion*, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*; edited by Steve Ellis, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 88.

¹⁹¹ N. Watson, *Christian Ideologies*, in *A Companion to Chaucer*; edited by P. Brown, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, p. 79. See also: De Heilige Juliana van Cornillon en het ontstaan van Sacramentsdag, Het Katholieke Forum.

¹⁹² J. Daniélou, *Patristic Literature*, in *The Pelican Guide to Modern Theology*; edited by J. Daniélou, A.H. Couratin and John Kent, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, vol. 2, p. 85.

¹⁹³ A. Hudson, *Oaths, Swearing* in *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, p. 354.

of his body they have sworn by.¹⁹⁴ This abhorrence is echoed in the Parson's urging:

For Cristes sake, ne swereth nat so sinfully in
dismembrynge of Crist by soule, herte, bones,
and body. For certes, it semeth that ye thynke
that the cursede Jewes ne dismembred nat
ynough the precieuse persone of Crist, but ye
dismember hym moore. (X.590)

Moet, om Christus wil, nie so sondig deur
Christus na siel, hart, beendere en liggaam
uitemkaar te skeur nie. Dit lyk asof julle dink
die vervloekte Jode het die kosbare liggaam
van Christus nie genoeg verskeur nie; nou wil
julle hom nog meer verskeur.

Of the three rioters in the Pardoner's Tale we are also told:

Hir oothes been so grete and so dampnable
That it is grisly for here hem swere.
Oure blessed Lordes body they totere –
Hem thoughte that Jewes rente hym noght
ynough –
And ech of hem at otheres synne lough.
(VI.472-476)

... so kras en lasterlik was hulle ede,
dis grusaam om te hoor hoe skeur hul daar
ons Liewe Heer se liggaam uitemkaar –
asof deur Jode nie genoeg geskonde –
en hulle lag nog oor mekaar se sonde.

The use of anatomical oaths was not unique to England. In 1491, a man called Hanneken van Uphoven suffered cruel punishment in Bruges

omme dat hij ghecostumert [accustomed] es groote, zware, orrible en blammelicke eeden te zweerene, als bij den bloede, bij den hoofde, bij den vijf wonden, bij den longhere, bij den pensen ende darmen van den almogende God.¹⁹⁵

So too

de Franken en hunne opvolgers (daer wy Belgen *gedeeltelyk* toe behooren) gewoon waren te zweeren *per caput dei* (later *cap de di*, nu *cadedi*), *per dentes dei*, *per guttur dei*, *per capillum dei*, *per splendorem dei*, *par la char dieu* (la chaire de dieu), *par le corps dieu*, *par la couronne dieu*, *par la coiffe dieu*, *par la figure dieu*, *par le poitron* (poitrine) *dieu sanglant*, *par la forcelle dieu*, *plagues de dieu*, *par le faire dieu*, enz. Men zou de lyst ten minste op een honderdtal brengen kunnen.¹⁹⁶

And the remonstrances against such oaths were no different. Those who employed them, it was said, cut Christ's body in pieces with their tongues. They were worse than the Jews who at least left his body intact.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ R.S.A. Loomis, *A Mirror of Chaucer's World*, p. 168; cf. M.D. Anderson, *Drama and Imagery in English Medieval Churches*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 58f.

¹⁹⁵ P.G.J. van Sterkenburg, Veranderingen in de lexicale onderwereld van het Nederlands: Vloeken, in J. van Bakel, *Woorden en Beelden*, 22 juli 2014.

¹⁹⁶ J.F. Willems, *Over eenige oude Nederlandsche vloeken, eeden en uitroepingen*, Gent: Snoeck-Ducaju, 1834, p. 8.

¹⁹⁷ M. Veldhuizen, *De ongetemde tong*, Hilversum: Verloren, 2014, p. 52.

Paradoxically, the promiscuous swearing of the Middle Ages was a manifestation of a profoundly religious age. As Geoffrey Hughes puts it: “Just as Black Magic is a monstrous parody of orthodox religion, so blasphemous utterance is the obverse of an age of faith.”¹⁹⁸ To quote Huizinga:

The excesses and abuses resulting from an extreme familiarity with things holy, as well as the insolent mingling of pleasure with religion, are generally characteristic of periods of unshaken faith and of a deeply religious culture. The same people who, in their daily life mechanically follow the routine of a rather degraded sort of worship will be capable of rising suddenly, at the ardent word of a preaching monk, to unparalleled heights of religious emotion. Even the stupid sin of blasphemy has its roots in a profound faith. It is a sort of perverted act of faith, affirming the omnipresence of God and his intervention in the minutest concerns. Only the idea of really daring Heaven gives blasphemy its sinful charm. As soon as an oath loses its character of an invocation of God, the habit of swearing becomes mere coarseness.¹⁹⁹

Blasphemy was used as a weapon in violent conflicts. It was “an integral part of a competitive masculine culture”,²⁰⁰ as the Parson recognizes when he asks:

What seye we eek of hem that deliten hem in sweryng, and holden it a gentrie or a manly dede to swere grete othes? And what of hem that of verray usage ne cesse nat to swere grete othes, al be the cause nat worth a straw?

(X.601)

Wat kan ons sê van iemand wat behae daarin skep om te sweer en dit as edel of manlik beskou om groot ede te sweer? En wat van hom wat uit pure gewoonte voortdurend groot ede sweer, al is die aanleiding daartoe g'n strooi werd nie?

It was a means of asserting power and independence associated with threats, insults and physical violence, often provoked in the course of gambling.²⁰¹ Significantly, there are two men in the foreground of the Broughton Church mural, referred to above, playing “tables”, a form of backgammon, one of the chief means of satisfying “the national passion for gambling”.²⁰²

Machismo was also the context of the horrendous anatomical oaths of the three rioters in the Pardoner’s Tale:

“By Goddes precious herte,” and “By his nayles,”
And “By the blood of Crist that is in Hayles,
Sevene is my chance, and thyn is cynk and treye!”

‘By Sy spykers en Sy dierb're hart, en by die Bloed van Christus in die Hales-abdy, jy't vyf en drie, en sewe is my hasard;

¹⁹⁸ G. Hughes, *Swearing*, London: Penguin, 2nd edition, 1998, p. 55.

¹⁹⁹ J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, London: Penguin, 1955, p.156-157.

²⁰⁰ G. Schwerhoff, Horror Crime or Bad Habit? *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 32, no. 4, Dec. 2008, p. 405-406.

²⁰¹ Schwerhoff, in *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 32, no. 4, Dec. 2008, p. 406.

²⁰² J.A.R. Pimlott, *Recreations*, p. 20 and illustration no. 5.

“By Goddes armes, if thou falsly pleye,
This daggere shal thurghout thyn herte go!”–
This fruyt cometh of the bicched bones two:
Forsweryng, ire, falsnesse, homicide.

(VI.651-657)

by God se arms, ek deurboor jou hart
met hierdie dolk as jy probeer bedrieg’ –
dit is die dobbelsteen se oes: gelieg,
gekul en woede, moord. ...’

But blasphemy was also a bonding device, as we see from the line “And ech of hem at otheres synne lough” (VI.472-6). Swearing (then and now) serves to integrate people from diverse backgrounds.²⁰³ This is surely relevant to the *Canterbury Tales*, for if oaths underlay the coherence of medieval society, they also provided the basis of the “felaweshipe” of the pilgrimage and of the relationships of the characters depicted in the tales. The pilgrims do not merely agree to the Host’s proposals, they “othes swore/With ful glad herte” (I.810-811). Palamon and Arcite swear brotherhood, as do the revellers of the Pardoner’s Tale: “To lyve and dyen ech of hem for oother,/As though he were his owene ybore brother” (VI.703-704), and, ironically, so do the devil and the summoner in the Friar’s Tale (III.1404-1405). Husbands and wives are sworn to fidelity, and members of religious houses to poverty, chastity and obedience. We would thus be justified in concluding that much of the *Canterbury Tales* is about the breaking of oaths (although the Franklin’s Tale hinges on the dilemma arising from keeping of an oath), a blasphemy far more serious than the empty exclamations that proliferate in its pages.

The profanity of avoiding the naming of the Deity but swearing by the saints, by heaven, hell, salvation and damnation, or using expressions such as “goeie genade”, “in hemelsnaam” or “om Godswil”, or euphemistic distortions such as “Jete” dates back to the Middle Ages and increased greatly after the Reformation.²⁰⁴

Given the integral role of oaths, I decided to retain them in most cases. I return to this crucial decision in Section 5.2.

3.5.1.2 Calumnies

The blasphemous or profane swearing discussed above is “swearing by” (Afrikaans: sweer) as opposed to “swearing at” (Afrikaans: vloek). The medieval

²⁰³ Cf. Schwerhoff, in *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 32, no. 4, Dec. 2008, p. 406.

²⁰⁴ Sterkenburg, in Jan van Bakel, *Woorden en Beelden*.

transition from one to the other resulted in a multitude of secular referents,²⁰⁵ but as the Parson points out, such swearing did not escape the taint of blasphemy:

And taak kep now, that he that repreveth his
neighebor, outhere he repreveth hym by som
harm of peyne that he hath on his body, as
“mesel,” “croked harlot,” or by som synne that
he dooth. Now if he repreve hym by som harm
or peyne, thane turneth the repreve to Jhesu
Crist, for peyne is sent by the rightwys sonde
of God, and by his sufferance, be it meselrie,
or mayhem, or maladie. And if he repreveth
hym uncharitably of synne, as “thou holour,”
“thou dronkelewe harlot,” and so forth, thane
aperteneth that to the rejoysynge of the devel,
that ever hath joye that men doon synne.

(X.623-4)

Kyk hoe mense mekaar verwyt met verwysing
na 'n liggaamsgebrek of -kwaal, soos
'melaatse' of 'boggelrug' of anders na een of
ander sonde. As jy iemand 'n kwaal verwyt,
verwyt jy Jesus Christus, want 'n kwaal kom
deur die regverdige bestier en beskikking van
God, of dit melaatsheid of verminking of siekte
is. En as jy hom liefdeloos sy sonde verwyt,
'Jou hoereerder' of 'Jou dronkaard' enso-
voorts, dan pas dit in die duiwel se kraam,
want hy verlustig hom gedurig in die mens se
sondes.

In the Summoner's Tale, the angry friar responds to Thomas's insult with: “A, false cherl”, which I have translated as “Jou lae lak!” (III.2153). While “lae” echoes the sense of *churl*, “lak”, which as a swearword does not appear in most Afrikaans dictionaries, would appear to exemplify the denigration of a physical defect decried by the Parson. In a Dutch source on word origins,²⁰⁶ I found “lak”, meaning defect, imperfection, in a section headed “vergeten woorden”. According to Franck's etymological dictionary, the Middle Dutch *lac* signifies defect, fault, blemish.²⁰⁷ The English cognate is “lack”, and Skeat informs us that the “old sense is often ‘failing’, ‘failure’ or ‘fault’”.²⁰⁸ So, although we would join the Parson in regarding negative references to bodily defects as reprehensible, “lak” dates back to Chaucer's time and maliciously represents the person to whom it is directed as physically defective.

Among other secular referents, we may note the following. The Wife of Bath addresses her husbands as “Sire olde kaynard” – which I have translated “Jou simpel sufferd” (III.235), as “lorel” – “Jou lummel” (III.273), and “O leewe sire shrewe” – “ou grompot” (III.365). In the Friar's Tale, the summoner calls the old widow “thou olde virytrate” – “jou helleveeg” (III.1582). A few lines later he expresses his impatience: “Com of, and lat me ryden hastily”, which I have

²⁰⁵ Hughes, *Swearing*, p. 56

²⁰⁶ Nederlands Woordenboek online.

²⁰⁷ Van Wijk, *Franck's Etymologisch Woordenboek der Nederlansche Taal*.

²⁰⁸ W.S. Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*. 4th edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961 (1910)

translated: “Kom, kom nou, vroumens, want ek wil vertrek” (III.1602), “vroumens” being “an expression of male annoyance and dismissiveness”.²⁰⁹

In the Pardoner’s Tale, the rioter’s “What, carl, with sory grace!” becomes “Jou verdomde ou gek!” (III.717). The adjective “verdomde” suggests a curse, but the profligate use of the adverb “verdomp” in the translation empties it of meaning, making it just another example of the rioters’ proclivity for swearing. However, when the Summoner attacks the Friar with, “Now elles, Frere, I bishrewe [curse] thy face”, his imprecatory intent (“verwensing”) justifies my fierce translation: “Ek wens jou in die hel, verdomde frater!” (III.844).

The miller’s angry expletive in the Reeve’s Tale, “Ye, false harlot” (I.4268), calls for comment. “Harlot” here signifies “rogue, rascal”.²¹⁰ I have translated it as “[j]ou bliksem!”, keeping “verraderlike skobbejak” for “false traitour” in the next line. According to Feinauer, “bliksem” as a swearword is a survival from Germanic times,²¹¹ but although the word itself is ancient, cursing by the elements is comparatively recent.²¹² However, the potency of the word is evident from an older generation’s avoidance of it; “weerlig” was substituted for “bliksem”, and “onweer” for “donder”. From my grandfather I heard of a Free State farmer who wanted to take a whip to a schoolmaster who taught the children a ditty beginning with the words “Wees nie bang vir die bliksem”.²¹³ In the General Prologue, the Summoner is ironically described as a “gentil harlot” (I.647). Like the original, my translation, “n gawe bliksem”, is an example of the bonding effect of a paradoxical play on words in which a positive connotation is attributed to a negative word, as in the reclamation of a slur (“Protestant”, “queer”) or the British slang subversion of “wicked”, for example.²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ K. Parker, *Gendering a language, Liberating a People*. in *Culture in the New South Africa*, vol. 2; edited by R. Kriger and A. Zegeye, Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001, p.201.

²¹⁰ Skeat, *Glossarial Index to the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, p. 52.

²¹¹ I. Feinauer, *Die taalkundige gedrag van vloekwoorde in Afrikaans*, MA-verhandeling, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 1981, p. 9.

²¹² P.G.J. van Sterkenburg, in *Van Bakel, Woorden en beelden*.

²¹³ An internet search to identify the rhyme proved unavailing.

²¹⁴ A. Dunai, *Semantic Shift and the Link between Words and Culture*, MA dissertation, University of North Texas, 2008, p. 59-60.

3.5.1.3 Sexual and scatological terms

Sexual and scatological terms, the mainstay of present-day swearing, played no part in the medieval lexicon of profanity, and had to be retained. When Chaucer uses such terms, he does so naturally, without any sense of violating a taboo. One explanation is that there was little privacy regarding bodily functions in his time, so the body was less charged with taboo.²¹⁵ In excusing the language of the fabliaux, Chaucer does not speak of it as obscene, but as appropriate to a low character:²¹⁶

But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,
That ye n'arette it nat my vileynye,
Thogh that I pleylnly speke in this mateere,
To telle yow his wordes and his cheere,
Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.
For this ye knowen al so wel as I:
Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche and large ...
(l.725-734)

Maar eers moet ek nog sê dat ek vertrou
u sal dit nie as ongepoets beskou
as ek met openhartigheid verslag
sou doen van hulle praatjies en gedrag,
al haal ek hulle einste woorde aan.
Ek meen dat almal tog akkoord sal gaan
dat enigeen wat iets van 'n ander man
wil oorvertel, so goed as wat hy kan,
die juiste woorde moet gebruik, al was
dié onfatsoenlik of hoe onvanpas...

And before the Miller's Tale (l.3167- 3184), Chaucer again advances the argument from the perspective of decorum:²¹⁷

What sholde I moore seyn, but this Millere
He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,
But tolde his cherles tale in his manere.
M'athynketh that I shal reherce it heere.
And therfore every gentil wight I preye,
For Goddes love, demeth nat that I seye
Of yvel entente, but for I moot reherce
Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse,
Or elles falsen som of my mateere.
And therfore, whoso list it nat yheere,
Turne over the leef and chese another tale;
For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,
Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,
And eek moralitee and hoolynesse.
Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys.
The Millere is a cherl; ye knowe wel this,
So was the Reve eek and othere mo,
And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.
Avyseth yow, and put me out of blame;
And eek men shal nat maken ernest of game.
(l.3167-3186)

Ons praat het niks gehelp nie, aangesien
die kêrel g'n verfyndheid wou ontsien,
maar weggeval het met sy plat verhaal.
Dit spyt my net dat ek dit moet herhaal,
maar opgevoede mense moet 'seblief
nie dink ek doen dit uit 'n swak motief;
aan elke storie moet daar immers reg
geskied – of ek reken dit is goed of sleg –
want anderste vervals ek mos my stof.
As iemand egter voel dit is te grof,
moet hy dit oorslaan; daar is baie meer
om uit te kies, geskik vir dame en heer;
daar's lang en kort vertellings wat mens leer
van heiligheid en goeie gedrag en eer.
Verkwalik my nie as u u misgis;
u weet dat die Meulenaar 'n lummel is:
net soos die Meier, en nog 'n paar daarby,
was hy berug vir sy vuilpraterij.
Blameer my nie vir wat ek gaan vertel;
en wees nie stroef nie; dis maar net 'n spel!

²¹⁵ Morrison, *The Portable Chaucer*, p. 26; Mohr, *Holy Shit*, p. 103-106.

²¹⁶ G.R. Simes, Chaucer and Bawdy, *Sydney Studies in Society and Culture*, vol. 6, 2013, p. 108.

²¹⁷ Simes, in *Sydney Studies in Society and Culture*, vol. 6, 2013, p. 109.

Farting figures prominently in the Miller's and Summoner's Tales. We react to emissions of wind with embarrassment; Chaucer describes them with relish. Part of the reason for this different attitude is that deliberate farting was apparently used in public entertainment at court, and Langland treats it as an accomplishment.²¹⁸

The Wife of Bath's Prologue is a dramatic monologue of assertive sexuality. Nicholas catches Alisoun by the "queynte" (l.3276), glossed by *The Riverside Chaucer* as "elegant, pleasing thing", an untranslatable euphemism that is also a pun – Larry Benson says, "the best indecent pun in Chaucer".²¹⁹ This pun is lost in what I must consider to be lamely rendered as "Tussen die bene gryp hy haar". This is followed by a succession of other euphemistic terms: "membres" (116) is rendered as *geslagsorgane*, "thynges smale" (121) as *goeters*, "instrument" (149) as *instrument*, "bele chose" (447) as *blommetjie*, with a verbal link to her youthful sexuality described as *blommeel* (477), "bele chose" once more (510) as *stukkie koek*, and "quoniam" (608) as *dinges*.

Aleyn's non-consensual sex with Malyne in the Reeve's Tale is mitigated by her agency expressed in her tender farewell speech and in the free gift of cake (l.4240-4246). If the cake is intended as a metaphor for female sexuality,²²⁰ this becomes more explicit in the punning use of the Afrikaans word "koek".

"Swyven" is used freely and naturally on six occasions in the *Canterbury Tales*. In the absence of an ordinary, unobjectionable verb in Afrikaans, I had to fall back on the crude terms "steek", "naai", "pomp", "skrop" and "stoot":

From the Miller's Tale:

Thus swyved was this carpenteris wyf.
(l.3850)

Dus is die timmerman se vrou gesteek.

And from the Reeve's Tale

"For, John,"seyde he, "als evere moot I thryve,
If that I may, yon wenche wil I swyve ..."
(l.4178)

... ek gaan verdomp nog daai
meulenaar se dogter proppers naal.

... for by that lord that called is Sent Jame,
As I have thries in this shorte nyght
Swyved the milleres doghter bolt upright.
(l.4264-4266)

Die meulenaar se dogter, wat ewe plat
op haar rug gelê het, is vannag verdomp
nie minder nie as drie maal goed gepomp.

²¹⁸ *Piers Plowman*, B XIII. 231-2, referred to in Morgan, *English Studies*, vol. 91, no. 5, 2010, p. 496.

²¹⁹ L. Benson, quoted in Morgan, *English Studies*, vol. 91, no. 5, 2010, p. 498.

²²⁰ W.W. Allman and D.T. Hanks, Rough Loves, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 38 no. 1, 2003, p. 46.

In the Merchant's Tale, the choice of 'geskrop' (the first extract below) is a particularly indelicate expression considering the Merchant's previous evasiveness (e.g. IV.1958-63 and 2350-3), especially right after his demurral to specify what exactly was happening in the pear tree (the second extract):

He swyved thee; I saugh it with myne yen (IV.2378)	Hy't jou geskrop; ek het dit self gesien
And saugh that Damyan his wyf had dressed In swich manere it may nat been expressed, But if I wolde speke uncurteisly ... (IV.2361-2363)	waar Damian betrokke was met haar op 'n wyse wat ek moeilik kan verklaar sonder om onverfynd te wees. ...

And finally, in the Manciple's Tale:

For on thy bed thy wyf I saugh hym swyve. (IX.255-256)	... hy't haar oop en bloot waar ek toegekyk het op jou bed gestoot.
---	--

Chaucer is himself nuanced in his choice of "swyven" – there is indeed a suggestion of indelicacy, as "swyven" is used only by male narrators. Women resort to "more polite, polyvalent and periphrastic sexual constructions".²²¹

Emelye in the Knight's Tale expresses reluctance:

Noght wol I knowe compaignye of man... (I.2311)	Ek soek nie die geselskap van 'n man...
--	---

The Prioress also refers to abstinence:

That nevere, fleshly, wommen they ne knewe (VII.585)	... as rein van liggaam hulle voor dié Lam verskyn
---	---

Even the outspoken Wife of Bath prefers some circumlocution:

... t'espye wenches that he dighte... (III.398)	... die meisies soek by wie hul lê
... thanne wolde I suffre hym do his nycetee (III.412)	...kon hy sy dinge doen na hartelus

Zenobia in the Monk's Tale puts it differently:

... if that men with hem pleyde (VII.2294)	... om seksueel ... te verkeer
---	--------------------------------

²²¹ C.M. Harris, Inserting "A grete tente, a thrifty, and a long", *Essays in Medieval Studies*, vol. 27, March 2011, p. 45.

In the Merchant's Tale, Chaucer softens the impact of "swyven" with an apology to the ladies: "Ladyes, I prey yow that ye be nat wrooth;/I kan nat glose, I am a rude man" (IV.2350-2351). The variety of less explicit substitutions by fifteenth-century copyists may also point to some discomfort with the obscene charge of the term.²²² The undoubted potency of the (non-)“equivalents” used in the translation will reinforce Chaucer's reputation for obscenity,²²³ but, given the immunisation of our susceptibilities to sexual terms as a result of the “voortdurende afstomping van taboewoorde”,²²⁴ they may be regarded by some readers, at any rate, as “vileynye”, rather than “not only indecorous but revolting”.²²⁵

But there can be no ambiguity about the ordinariness of words like “shit” and “piss” in Chaucer's vocabulary. In the description of the Parson, we find:

And shame it is, if a prest take keep, A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep. (I.503-504)	Laat priesters let dat dit 'n goor vertoon is as 'n herder smerig en sy skape skoon is.
--	--

Nicholas in the Miller's Tale and the wife in the Reeve's Tale get up to piss (I.3878 and 4215); the Wife of Bath refers casually to the verb and the noun (III.534 and 729); piss is used in the alchemist's efforts to transmute base metals into gold (VII.807); and, best of all, the Parson describes a lecher by means of a delightful, if foreignising image no Afrikaans speaker will have heard from a Dutch Reformed Church pulpit:

... this olde dotardes holours, yet wol they kisse, though they may nat do so, and smatre hem. Ceres, they been lyk to houndes; for an hound, whan he comth by the roser or by othere [bushes], though he may nat pisse, yet wole he heve up his leg and make a contenance to pisse. (X.826-827)	'n Jagse ou sufferd wat met alle mag wil soen, al is hy skaars daartoe in staat om net 'n pikkie in te kry, laat 'n mens dink aan 'n hond, want as 'n hond by 'n roos of 'n ander struik kom, al wil hy nie pis nie, lig hy nogtans sy poot en maak asof hy pis.
---	---

²²² Harris, *Essays in Medieval Studies*, vol. 27, March 2011, p. 56.

²²³ For a definition of the adjective “Chaucerian” as “bawdy in an acceptably Olde Englishe way”, see G.G. Shuffelton, Chaucerian Obscenity in the Court of Public Opinion, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2012, p. 1.

²²⁴ G. Steiner, *After Babel*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 183; Feinauer, *Die taalkundige gedrag van vloekwoorde in Afrikaans*, p. 43.

²²⁵ Leigh Hunt, quoted in Simes, *Sydney Studies in Society and Culture*, vol. 6, 2013, p. 93.

3.5.2 Puns

Puns present a special challenge to the translator and I think one must accept that it is a challenge that cannot always be met. I hold out little hope of anyone being able to replicate the play on ‘queynte’ in the Miller’s Tale (I.3275-3276) or of other puns, for example, on “cosyn” in the Shipman’s Tale (VII.148-154).

However, if the tale turns on a pun – if the tale turns on “tale”, as the Shipman’s Tale does – some solution must be found. What I did in addressing this particular pun was to use the tally (Afrikaans “kerfstok”) as a phallic image. Here are some lines from the end of the Tale:

Ye han mo slakkere dettours than am I! For I wol paye yow wel and redily Fro day to day, and if so be I faille, I am youre wyf; score it upon my taille ... Thus endeth my tale, and God us sende Tailynghe ynough unto oure lyves ende. (VII.413-416 and 433-434)	as ek jou skuld, dan is dit tot jou baat; vir die betaalslag is ek steeds paraat, so bietjies-bietjies elke dag, en as ek faal, dan kom jou kerfstok snags te pas. ... My storie’s uit. Solank die lewe hou, mag ons op dié ou kerfstok bly vertrou.
---	--

In the first passage I originally had “dan kom jou kerfstok goed te pas” but changed it to “snags te pas” (with “snags” opposed to “elke dag”) to make the word play more explicit. This accords with Newmark’s strategy of compensation, in terms of which loss of a nuance in one place can be compensated for in another.²²⁶

For readers familiar with the difference in meaning of “neuk” in Afrikaans and Dutch,²²⁷ there is further compensation in the wife’s protestation concerning her partner in adultery: “Marie, deffie the false monk, daun John!” (VII.402), which I translated as: “Wat neuk die kêrel, die ellendeling?” This also calls to mind the equally inelegant use of “verneuk” meaning to cheat.

The use of “neuk” works particularly well in the Reeve’s Tale, where it produces the dramatic irony of the wife’s saying to herself:

I hadde almoost goon to the clerkes bed. Ey, benedicite! Thanne hadde I foule ysped! (I.4219-4220)	So hittete was ek in die verkeerde bed; dit sou ’n neukery beteken het.
--	--

²²⁶ P. Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation*, 2nd edition, Harlow: Pearson Education, 2003, p. 90.

²²⁷ In Dutch “neuken” is a crude term for having sex; in Afrikaans “neuk” in this context signifies bother, annoy, and “neukery” a mess-up, a pretty kettle of fish. D. Ehlers and P. van Beek, *Oranje Boven*, Pretoria: Protea, 2004, p. 24 and 242.

The Wife of Bath's straightforward use of "tayl" offers an opportunity for further compensatory wordplay:

And after wyn on Venus moste I thynke, For al so siker as cold engendreth hayl, A likerous mouth moste han a likerous tayl. (III.454-466)	en as ek wyn genuttig het dan dink ek net aan seks – soos koue hael verwek: eers aangeklam, word ek klam op 'n ander plek.
--	--

Punning is typical of the slippery language of the Summoner's Tale.²²⁸ "Ars metrica" (III.2193) works equally well in English and in Afrikaans, but "eructavit" (line 1934) becomes more explicit as "breek ek wind met Dawid" to parallel Thomas's fart, but the puns on "ferthyng" (line 1967) and "squyre" (line 2090) are unfortunately lost in translation.

Friar John is proud of his ability to "grope" to find out sin:

Thise curatz been ful necligent and slowe To grope tendrely a conscience In shrift ... (III.1816-1818)	want priesters is so traag en hulle laat dit na om goed te tas in die gewete van een wat boetvaardig is ...
--	---

Thomas echoes the concept of "tas", when he urges the friar, "As jy jou hand hier langs my rug af steek/en 'n slaggie deeglik rondtas ..." Furthermore, when Thomas's wife complains about his irritability, Friar John warns him, "... therof wol I speke a word or two" (1835). My translation, "ek sal jou aan die tand moet voel hieroor" introduces an enhancement of the groping pun as the friar ends up probing a different part of Thomas's body.

In the Merchant's Tale, May develops a sudden pain in her side, known in English since the earliest times as a stitch (ME *Stych*, 'peyn on the syde' < OE *stician*, to prick, pierce).²²⁹ The same metaphor has come down to us in Afrikaans, so a stitch is a "steek" and therefore coterminous with the copulatory application of the word (just as "naai" is used for another kind of stitching). This results in the delightful situation that in the translation May's stitch is followed by her being stitched only a few lines later (IV.2329 and 2378). There are five other occurrences of "steek" in the Tale: Januarie's musing about being stabbed (line 2163); May's concealment of letters, "Sy steek dit in haar boesem" and "Sy steek die brief weg onder sy kussing" (lines 1944 and 2003); May's claim that she would never disgrace her family ("in die

²²⁸ Cooper, *The Canterbury Tales*, p. 179.

²²⁹ Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*.

skande steek”) by being unfaithful to her husband (lines 2195-2198) and Saturn’s determination to expose the disgrace of her infidelity:

Now wol I graunten, of my magestee,
Unto this olde, blynde, worthy knyght
That he shal have ayen his eyen syght,
Whan that his wyf wold doon hym vileynye.
Thanne shal he knowen al hire harlotrye ...
(IV.2258-2262)

Vanweë my majesteit sal ek nie skroom
om hierdie selfde goeie, blinde ou heer
in staat te stel om weer te sien wanneer
sy vrou vir hom in die skande steek, en hy
sal als ontdek van haar hoereerdery.

So, if polysemy is ubiquitous in the start text, it lurks in the corners of the translation as well.

3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has illustrated what happens in the process of translation. The translator reads the source text and allows it to resonate and reverberate in his/her mind, then thinks about it in the target language and determines which of the associations that present themselves is most effective within the constraints of rhyme and metre. It is a creative and therefore very satisfying process.

CHAPTER 4: AUDIENCE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of audience is of fundamental importance to all literary criticism.¹ From the discussion on reader-oriented theory in Section 2.3, it emerges that an individual reader's response to a literary work is idiosyncratic, depending on that particular person's conceptions and experiences, but, since these attributes are shaped and acquired in a communal context, the horizons of expectation that individuals bring to the reading experience are also communal to a large extent. In this chapter, I consider Chaucer's initial hearers and readers – people who had much in common with him. Readers of subsequent generations interpreted his writings in accordance with their presuppositions, in Gadamer's sense of the word.² So too, modernisations and translations of his work solicit responses shaped by the diverse cultural backgrounds of their readers, and an Afrikaans translation of the *Canterbury Tales* will be meaningful to a segment of the Afrikaans-speaking community whose values and meaning-making are not inimical to those of the translator.

4.2 CHAUCER AND HIS AUDIENCE(S)

Chaucer was concerned about his audience, contemporary and prospective. The contemporary audience was important for a medieval author because, in a manuscript culture, a patron or an assured audience was essential for the compensation of the author and for the reception and survival of his/her work. Indeed, according to H.S. Bennett, much of the more pedestrian verse of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries might never have been written but for the need "to flatter the vanity or to please the wretched taste of some rich patron".³ However, financial need was not always a central consideration – many authors were clerics

¹ K. Cawsey, *Twentieth-century Chaucer Criticism*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2011, p. 11.

² H-G. Gadamer. *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised edition, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1989 [1960], p. 270-271.

³ H.S. Bennett, *Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947, p. 108. See also: S. Lerer, *Chaucer and his Readers*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 4, 16-17, 23, etc.

who were not in financial need and whose writings were accommodated in ecclesiastical libraries.⁴ Chaucer too was not a court poet, in the sense of receiving patronage for entertaining the court; rather, royal patronage as the source of his secular employment made it possible for him to work as a civil servant by day and write poetry by night.⁵ As the eagle says of him in *The House of Fame*:

For when thy labour doon al ys,
And hast mad alle thy rekenynges,
In stede of reste and newe thynges
Thou goost hom to thy hous anoon,
And, also domb as any stoon,
Thou sittest at another book
Tyl fully dawsed ys thy look ...
(*House of Fame*, ll.652-658).

Once a manuscript left an author's hands, he or she generally had no further control over it. Hence Chaucer's concern that his work should not be mangled by careless copyists, as he urged in "Chaucers Wordes unto Adam, his Owne Scriveyn":

So oft adaye I mot thy werk renewe,
It to correcte and eke to rubbe and scrape,
And al is thorough thy negligence and rape.
(lines 3-5)

Later, booksellers produced copies of literary works on demand and met the requirements of the purchaser. Thus Speght produced an edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* for gentlemen who wanted "some reparations on his works, which they iudged to be much decaied by iniury of time, ignorance of writers, and negligence of Printers".⁶ And later still, as we have seen, editors introduced emendations to bring the text into line with their preconceptions. As a result, the *Canterbury Tales* has come down to us in a highly mediated form,⁷ and it is impossible to speak about an original text.

⁴ H.S. Bennett, Review of M. Giffin, *Studies on Chaucer and his Audience*, *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 9, no. 34, 1958, p. 183.

⁵ P. Strohm, Chaucer's Audience, *Literature and History*, vol. 5, Spring 1977, p. 30; R.T. Lenaghan, Chaucer's Circle of Gentlemen and Clerks, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1983, p. 156.

⁶ Quoted in P. Brown, *A Companion to Chaucer*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, p. 19.

⁷ S. Lerer, Introduction, in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*; edited by Seth Lerer, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 15.

What was at stake for Chaucer was thus not only the physical transmission and integrity of his text, but the understanding of it, a concern which clearly looked beyond a contemporary audience to future readers:

And for ther is so gret diversite
In Englissh and in wryting of oure tonge,
So prey I God that non myswrite the,
Ne the mys metre for defaute of tonge;
And red wherso thow be, or elles songe,
That thow be understonde, God I biseche! ...
(*Troilus and Criseyde*, V.1793-1798)

In the *Canterbury Tales*, the reference to turning the page in the Miller's Prologue points in the same direction:

And therefore, whoso list it nat yheere,
Turne over the leef and chese another tale
(l. 3176-3177)

The understanding solicited by Chaucer indicates that he did not regard his audience as passive recipients, but acknowledged their role as participants in making meaning. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, the narrator constantly interacts with his audience;⁸ in the *Canterbury Tales*, the readers are addressed as “yow” in the General Prologue, the Nun's Priest's Tale, the Parson's Tale and the Retraction. For the rest, the characters are an audience who interact among themselves: they laugh, approve or condemn, and misinterpret tales (the Host), respond negatively to them (the Reeve),⁹ or tell tales to “quite” (meaning to repay, requite or take revenge on) opponents (the Reeve, the Friar and the Summoner). The fictionalization of the narrator as just another pilgrim obfuscates an authorial presence behind the characters. In consequence, “the ‘meaning’ of any authority, indeed of any speaker – including the present pilgrims – retreats into ever-further uncertainties of conscious and unconscious subjectivity or *entente*”.¹⁰

In David Wallace's words, Chaucer was “as finely attuned to audience reactions inside and outside his text-worlds as any dramatist”.¹¹ The interaction between the pilgrims inside Chaucer's text-world has been noted above; the responsibility for

⁸ P. Strohm, *Social Chaucer*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989, p.65.

⁹ Cawsey, *Twentieth-century Chaucer Criticism*, p. 2.

¹⁰ P. Brown, *A Companion to Chaucer*, p. 29.

¹¹ D. Wallace, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 4.

reaction outside the text-world rests firmly on the readers. At the end of the Nun's Priest's Tale, the audience/readers are enjoined to make sense of the text:

But ye that holden this tale a folye,
As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
Taketh the moralite, goode men.
For Seint Paul seith that al that writen is,
To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis;
Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille.
(VII.3438-3444)

This again implies Chaucer's awareness of the interactive nature of the text; as Seth Lerer puts it: "The responsibility for a story may rest with the author; but the social function of literature – the meaning of specific stories, the communal uses of the written word, the political implications of utterances – rests with us."¹²

The pilgrim characters who constitute a fictional audience are portrayed with such skill that some critics have described the *Canterbury Tales* as a drama of character, which offers a helpful but only partial perspective.¹³ The interpretations provided by members of the fictionalized pilgrim audience such as the Host and the Man of Law are entertaining because they imply an intended audience outside the text who are aware of the wrongheadedness of these pilgrims as interpreters of the tales. The Man of Law's opinion that Chaucer "kan but lewedly/On metres and on rymyng craftily" (II.47-48), for example, depends for its humour on an audience that knows the opposite to be true.¹⁴ This implied audience, then, is one with the sophistication not only to understand but also to stimulate the ironies and ambiguities in which the poet delights.¹⁵ It is called upon to respond to devices such as the *demande d'ámour*, a love question for courtly debate, for example, which of the suitors in the Knight's Tale suffers more (I.1347-1354) or whether the knight, squire or clerk in the Franklin's Tale is "mooste fre" (V.1621-1623). Furthermore, Chaucer's "poetics of juxtaposition"¹⁶ confronts his audience with complex dilemmas, for example, whether a vicious man like the Pardoner can lead people to repentance, in which a

¹² S. Lerer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, p. 283.

¹³ P. Strohm, *Chaucer's Audience(s)*, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1983, p. 139.

¹⁴ E. Reiss, *Chaucer and his Audience*, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1980, p. 396.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 393

¹⁶ Strohm, in *Literature and History*, vol. 5, 1977, p. 35.

choice between opposed points of view can lead to absurd or uncomfortable conclusions.¹⁷

The interaction among the pilgrims implies an audience aware of the rivalry between mendicants and the secular clergy,¹⁸ reflected in the fierce antagonism between the Friar and the Summoner (III.833-849). Another characteristic of the implied audience to which Patricia Eberle has directed attention is familiarity with the world of commerce. Venality operates as a moral frame of reference throughout the General Prologue,¹⁹ implying an outside audience's ability to locate its innuendos within the medieval opposition between *cupiditas* and *caritas*. This audience is also assumed to be conversant with technical terminology from the world of commerce: "fee simple", "purchas" as opposed to "rente", "bargaynes" and "chevyssaunce".²⁰ Indeed, the prominence given to the Host, Harry Bailly, with his commercial point of reference, and the commercial values that operate throughout the tales mark a departure from the conventions of Chaucer's earlier works, centred on love and chivalry, and may suggest a reality in which his implied audience shared.²¹

Such an implied audience, however, remains a hypothetical construct until it is checked against the reception of the *Canterbury Tales* by actual audiences, both its contemporary hearers and its subsequent readers, in an actualization of the text which, according to Iser, will "vary historically from one age to another".²²

Having demonstrated that the famous frontispiece (fol. lb) in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 61 of *Troilus and Criseyde* cannot be advanced as evidence of Chaucer's reading to the inner circle of the court, Derek Pearsall concludes:

We might do well to look beyond the entourage of king and nobility for Chaucer's audience, to the multitude of household knights and officials, career

¹⁷ Strohm, in *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1983, p. 38; Reiss, in *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1980, p. 399-400.

¹⁸ L. Benson, Explanatory Notes, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 874; F.H. Ridley, The Friars and the Critics, in *Chaucer's Mind and Art*; edited by A.C. Cawley, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969, p. 162.

¹⁹ P. J. Eberle, Commercial Language and the Commercial Outlook in the *General Prologue*, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1983, p. 162.

²⁰ Of interest too is Chaucer's use of legal terminology in his *An ABC*. See: *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 1076.

²¹ Eberle, in *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1983, p. 165-170.

²² Strohm, in *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1983, p. 140.

diplomats and civil servants, who constitute the 'court' in its wider sense, that is, the national administration and its metropolitan milieu.²³

Beside some women,²⁴ this would have included Henry Scogan, Sir Peter Bukton, Sir Philip de la Vache, Lewis Clifford, Thomas Usk, John Gower and Ralph Strode. There is general agreement that Chaucer's primary audience was in fact made up of near-equals,²⁵ "new men" like himself, "people born in the middle class or petty gentry, now upwardly mobile, moving between the London of business or small country landholdings and the world of the nobility which they served".²⁶

The relatively wide dissemination of the *Canterbury Tales* during the fifteenth century demonstrates that Chaucer was an accepted author with a growing readership. The earliest extant copies of the *Tales* are found in 55 relatively complete manuscripts, 18 segments in miscellanies and nine further fragments. Caxton's two printed editions also date from this period.²⁷ In his epilogue to Chaucer's *Boece*, however, Caxton distances the poet from his readers by emphasising the fact that he is dead:

And furthermore I desire & require you that of your charite ye wol praye for the soule of the sayd worshipful mann Geffrey Chaucer first translatur of this sayd boke into englissh & embelisshe in making the sayd langage ornate & fayr. whiche shal endure perpetually. [A]nd therefore he ought eternally to be remembrid. of whom the body and the corps lieth buried in thabbay of Westmestre beside london to fore the chapele of seynte benet.²⁸

So too, Thynne's and Speght's sixteenth-century editions of the *Canterbury Tales* are concerned to place the poet in his medieval context²⁹ as an already remote "father" of English literature. John Dryden (1631-1700) provided an informed evaluative criticism of Chaucer, but, because of the changes in the English language, he contended that Chaucer was "a rough diamond, and must first be polished ere he shines". He therefore felt the need to "translate" (modernise)

²³ D. Pearsall, The 'Troilus' Frontispiece and Chaucer's Audience, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 7, 1977, p. 73.

²⁴ R. F. Green, Women in Chaucer's Audience, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1983, p. 147.

²⁵ Strohm, in *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1983, p. 143; Strohm, *The Poet's Tale*, London: Profile Books, 2014, p. 191-194.

²⁶ Strohm in *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1983, p. 32.

²⁷ P. Strohm, The Social and Literary Scene in England, in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*; edited by Piero Boitani and Jill Mann, 2nd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 13.

²⁸ Quoted in S. Lerer, *Chaucer and his Readers*, p. 147.

²⁹ S. Trigg, *Congenial Souls*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p. 130.

Chaucer, making up for what he considered deficiencies due to a “want of words in the beginning of our language”.³⁰ In this he was followed by many other eighteenth-century “translators”.

The nineteenth century brought a revival of Chaucer scholarship, but while Walter Skeat (1835-1912) was committed to the philological study of medieval texts, F.J. Furnivall (1825-1910) had an egalitarian approach, holding Chaucer to be accessible on a purely human basis. As I have already indicated in Sections 1.3 and 1.8, this division deepened in the twentieth century, when interpretations focused on Chaucer’s intentions (purportedly manifest in the way he was heard or read by his contemporaries) diverged into two streams. The one was committed to the academic imperative of recuperating the historical context, the other to making use of a universalist approach based on the belief that the *Canterbury Tales*’ essential meaning is immediately accessible because human nature is the same now as it was then.

Kathy Cawsey has mapped six divergent reading audiences from the turn of the twentieth century.³¹ D.W. Robertson (1914-1992) situates the text within the Augustinian exegetical and moral tradition and proposes an allegorical reading; while Lee Patterson (1940-) espouses New Historicism, applying a subjective reading to the medieval audience disclosed in documents from the past. C.S. Lewis (1894-1963) favours a psychological reading based on the courtly ethos of a supposedly monolithic medieval culture. On the other hand, in George Lyman Kittredge’s (1860-1941) cross-historical understanding, Chaucer’s audience was “like a theatrical audience, watching characters in a play” and E. Talbot Donaldson (1910-1987) uses the close-reading technique of New Criticism, excluding from consideration anything outside the text. Finally, Carolyn Dinshaw (1957-) draws attention to the fact that Chaucer’s diverse audience included male and female readers who would have responded differently. She says:

a denaturalization of the masculine response constitutes the first step in any feminist analysis: it sees that the dominant perspective isn’t given, natural or universal and that there can therefore be other perspectives. The first step toward the formulation of alternatives to a monistic reading strategy is to

³⁰ John Dryden, *Preface to Fables Ancient and Modern*, 1700, in *Geoffrey Chaucer*, edited by J.A. Burrow, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, p. 68, 69.

³¹ Cawsey, *Twentieth-century Criticism*.

recognize the existence of such a strategy: the first step toward a knowledge of what it might be to read like a woman ... is to understand that there is 'reading like a man'.³²

Retaining the traditional attributes of male and female readers, but inverting the value hierarchy, she concludes that if "reading like a man" implies a totalizing, controlling, restrictive approach, "reading like a woman" means a reception of the text that is sensitive, inclusive, and disruptive of totalitarianism.³³

What this demonstrates is that the concept of an original audience is problematic. Chaucer's text is multivocal, as can be seen from Betsy Bowden's report on the divergent responses elicited by the line "And al was conscience and tender herte" (l.150) in the description of the Prioress – Charles Muscatine hears delight, D.W. Robertson Jr "unmistakable sarcasm", R.M. Lumiansky "gentle raillery" and E. Talbot Davidson "one last defiant assertion" followed by "obvious relief".³⁴ The way in which such critics responded to the *Canterbury Tales* was (and remains) determined by their own interests and assumptions. In short, "each critical school of thought constructs a Chaucer in its own image ...".³⁵

Meaning, according to Voloshinov, is like an electric spark arising from contact between two terminals.³⁶ This occurs in an utterance, which is a "two-sided act ... the product of a reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee",³⁷ both of whom operate within their own particular wider social context. This insight is crucial, because if it applies to the reception of the *Canterbury Tales*, it can be applied in equal measure to the readership of the *Pelgrimsverhale*.

4.3 GLOBAL AUDIENCES

Chaucer's global audiences may be divided into those in the English-speaking world, who may access a Middle English version, but who mainly rely on intralingual

³² C. Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989, p. 29.

³³ Cawsey, *Twentieth-century Criticism*, p.114-115.

³⁴ Cited in B. Bowden, *Chaucer Aloud*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, p. 21.

³⁵ S.H. Rigby, *Chaucer in Context*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 167.

³⁶ P. Prior, From Speech Genres to Mediated Multimodal Genre Systems, in *Genre in a Changing World*, edited by C. Bazerman, A. Bonini and D. Figueiredo, West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, LLC, 2009, p. 25.

³⁷ Strohm, *Social Chaucer*, p. 49.

translations, i.e. modernisations of his works, and those in the wider non-Anglophone world, who are served by interlingual translations.

4.3.1 The English-speaking world

Chaucer's status in the contemporary English-speaking world is in large measure dependent on British imperial history and the hierarchy of values it imposed.³⁸

As I pointed out in Chapter 1, Chaucer spoke a number of languages, and his lived world and thought world extended beyond the bounds of England. His *Canterbury Tales* too encompasses North Africa, Turkey, Asia, Lombardy, Syria and Tartary.³⁹ Yet, as early as the fifteenth century, the construction of Chaucer as anglophone laureate began to take shape with Thomas Hoccleve, who in his *Regement of Princes* (1412) acclaimed him as

O maister deere and fadir reverent!
Mi maister Chaucer, flour of eloquence,
Mirour of fructuous entendement,
O universel fadir in science! ...
The firste fyndere of our fair langage.⁴⁰

So too, Caxton described him in the prologue to the 1478 edition of Chaucer's *Boethius* as the "worshipful fader & first foundeur & embelisser of ornate eloquence in our englissh".⁴¹

Despite his Catholic orthodoxy, Chaucer was accorded a foundational role in the Protestant nationalism of the sixteenth century,⁴² and the impetus of Dryden's nation-based canonisation prevailed throughout the subsequent centuries of colonisation and empire. Dryden's *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700), with English translations of Homer, Ovid and Boccaccio, as well as versions of the Knight's Tale, Nun's Priest's Tale and Wife of Bath's Tale, was reprinted throughout the eighteenth century and was therefore readily available as a form of colonial pedagogy at a time of imperial expansion.⁴³ In national literatures, Jerry Varsava,

³⁸ M.R. Warren, Chaucer and the Future of World Literature, *Literature Compass*, vol. 15, no. 6, 2018, p. 1.

³⁹ C. Barrington and J. Hsy, Editors' Introduction, *Literature Compass*, vol. 15, no. 6, 2018, p.2.

⁴⁰ Hoccleve, quoted in *Geoffrey Chaucer*, edited by J.A. Burrow, p. 41.

⁴¹ A. Bale, From Translator to Laureate, *Literature Compass*, vol. 5, no. 5, 2008, 931-932.

⁴² C. Barrington, Traveling Chaucer, *Educational Theory*, vol. 64, no. 5, 2014, p. 466.

⁴³ Warren, *Literature Compass*, vol. 15, no. 6, 2018, p. 3.

points out, “great canonical figures ... serve as markers of, and proxies for, national genius/greatness”.⁴⁴

Dryden’s *Fables Ancient and Modern* was a forerunner of the anthologies of world literature used in the United States in the teaching of courses in Comparative Literature. This contentious field of study arose during the Cold War period when the United States saw itself as heir to and custodian of Western European civilization.⁴⁵ The canon of world literature was defined as “all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language”.⁴⁶ Globalisation, in its positive meaning of “an empirical condition of the modern world: what I shall call *complex connectivity*”,⁴⁷ has meant a vastly augmented canon, necessitating the use of translations. This restriction has fed into the other sense of globalisation, which “bears the strong imprint of American political and economic power”.⁴⁸ Although globalisation increases the volume of translation, it impedes diversity, owing to the restrictions imposed by the asymmetry of the international exchange.⁴⁹ The vast imbalance in the power relations between languages in favour of English has promoted not only the invisibility of the translator, as Venuti laments,⁵⁰ but also the loss of linguistic and cultural specificity.⁵¹ The commodification of literature is exacerbated by its piecemeal presentation in one of the three anthologies in general use in the United States. In the Longman anthology, Chaucer’s “micro-canon” is comprised of the Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale in A.U. Nicolson’s modernisation. The Bedford anthology has the Wife of Bath’s Tale and the Miller’s Tale in Theodore Morrison’s version; and the *Norton Anthology of World Literature* (3rd edition) pairs the Wife of Bath’s Tale and the Pardoner’s Tale, using a modernisation by Sheila Fisher.⁵²

⁴⁴ J. A. Varsava, *Comparative Literature Without Borders*, *symplokē*, vol. 15, nos 1-2, 2007, p.334.

⁴⁵ A. Behdad and D. Thomas, *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014, p. 2-3.

⁴⁶ D. Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Varsava, *symplokē*, vol. 15, nos 1-2, 2007, p. 338, with reference to John Tomlinson.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, with reference to Anthony Giddens.

⁴⁹ A. Brisset, Cultural Perspectives on Translation, *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 61, no. 199, 2010, p. 74.

⁵⁰ See L. Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, London: Routledge, 2002.

⁵¹ K. Shields, Challenges and Possibilities for World Literature, *Global Literature, and Translation*, *Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 15, no. 7, 2013, p. 5.

⁵² Warren, *Literature Compass*, vol. 15, no. 6, 2018, p. 3-4. *The Longman Anthology of World Literature*, 2nd edition, vol. B; edited by D. Damrosch and D. Pike, New York, NY: Pearson Longman, 2009; *The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, vol. 2; edited by P. Davis et al.,

4.3.2 Modernisations

Modernisations are much derided by scholars, who suffer the frustration of students using them as a crutch, instead of confronting the hurdle of Middle English and the complexities of the text. Their frustration is understandable, but, as Beidler points out, the solution to their problem is a pedagogical one, rather than trying to wish modernisations away.⁵³ Although students boost the sales of modernisations, this does not invalidate their existence: *abusus non tollit usum*. Modernisations also serve the need of ordinary readers who do not have the time, inclination or ability to master the basics of Middle English and would not therefore achieve any kind of acquaintanceship with the *Canterbury Tales* without the modernisations.

Despite their usefulness, I believe Steve Ellis is right in his assessment of why modernisations often disappoint. A modernisation, he says, “arguably presents greater challenges than those facing translators working from foreign languages”⁵⁴ – and, *mutatis mutandi*, into foreign languages. Too much can be retained in a modernisation, whereas the translator is challenged by linguistic difference at every step. From the first words of the *Canterbury Tales*, modernisers avail themselves of shortcuts. In spite of the radical semantic shifts words have undergone, “liquor” (line 3) is retained by Coghill, Nicolson and Morrison, “crops” (line 7) by Hitchins and Raffel,⁵⁵ and “fowl” (line 9) – the archaic plural form to boot – by Coghill, and “smalle fowles” by Hitchins. The dictates of (even imperfect) rhyme result in absurd insertions, distorted syntax and dubious rhythm, as in Morrison’s version

(So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgimages
(l.11-12))

(So Nature pricks them on to ramp and rage) –
Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage.
(Morrison, p. 1)

Burton Raffel’s:

(So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgimages
(l.11-12))

Exactly as Nature frames their lives’ short ages.
Then people think of holy pilgrimages.
(Raffel, p. 3)

Boston, MA: Bedford/ St Martin’s, 2004; *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, 3rd edition, vol. B; edited by M. Puchner et al., New York, NY: Norton, 2012.

⁵³ P. Beidler, Chaucer and the Trots, *The Chaucer Review*, vol.19, no.4, 1985, p. 298.

⁵⁴ S. Ellis, *Chaucer at Large*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p. 100.

⁵⁵ H.L.Hitchins (translator), *Canterbury Tales*, London: John Murray, 1946; B. Raffel (translator), *The Canterbury Tales*, New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2008.

or Glaser's.⁵⁶

(So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
(l.11-12)

... Mad for love in trees and hedges,
Why, then folks go on pilgrimages.

Versions that incorporate words like “wight”, “pelf”, “swive”, “twain” and “eke” (for example, those of Nicolson and Tatlock and Mackaye⁵⁷), leave Chaucer “uneasily stranded between past and present”.⁵⁸

In order to escape the demands of verse modernisations, some modernisers resort to prose versions. In my view, the only purpose served by a rendition of the *Canterbury Tales* in prose is as a crutch for a reader unfamiliar with Middle English. To be helpful to such a reader, the text should be as literal as possible, at the cost of what makes the original a poetic masterpiece. A prose version will also serve the need of someone who equates knowing the stories with reading Chaucer. But literature is not only the “what” that is communicated but also the “how”;⁵⁹ therefore literary translation (or modernisation, as a form of intralingual translation) should be inestimably more than a paraphrase. As Dudley Fitts puts it, “what is missing [from a prose modernisation] is ... the complex detail that establishes a poem and distinguishes it from any other kind of utterance”.⁶⁰ This does not apply to translations into foreign languages, because in the case of prosody, “equivalence” cannot be the translator’s objective. Trying to use iambic pentameters in an Arabic translation, for example, violates the firmly established rule of traditional prosody and will cast the attempt “into various circles of prosaic hell”.⁶¹

In his review and critique of modernisations, Ellis points out that his purpose is not to find fault by picking on occasional infelicities but to draw attention to *characteristic* trends.⁶² These are defects that derive from the misleading similarity between Middle English and Modern English, which results in an evasion of the

⁵⁶ J. Glaser, *The Canterbury Tales in Modern Verse*, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2005.

⁵⁷ J.S.P. Tatlock and P. Mackaye (translators), *The Complete Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, New York, NY: Macmillan, 2015 [1912].

⁵⁸ Ellis, *Chaucer at Large*, p.101.

⁵⁹ H.G. Widdowson, *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*, London: Longmans, 1975, p. 70.

⁶⁰ D. Fitts, The Poetic Nuance, in *On Translation*; edited by R.A. Brower, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 39, quoted by L.A.de V. Leal, *Literêre Terme en Theorieë*.

⁶¹ A-D Lúlúa, Problems in Translating World Classics, in *Literature in Translation*; edited by P. Talgeri and S.B. Verma, London: Sangam, 1988, p. 71.

⁶² Lúlúa, in *Literature in Translation*, p. 103 and 120.

challenge to move away from the source text. To this I would add that the cultural inheritance of an iconic forebear makes it difficult for those aware of their lesser talents (therefore excluding Dryden!) to let go of the Master's coat tails. This is a relative failure, which still leaves room for a comparative appraisal of the various modernisations on offer.

But there is a far more important consequence: the resources of a *different* language are not available to stimulate creativity. This is the powerhouse of foreign-language translation.

David Wright says his modernisation is not intended as a substitute for, but as “an introductory prologue to the real thing”, a transition that can be made with “only a little, if any, study”.⁶³ Wright is wrong on both counts: modernisations do not function as a bridge to the fourteenth century, and the difficulties of reading Middle English with understanding cannot be dismissed in such a cavalier fashion.⁶⁴ Frank Hill acknowledges the reality of the distance, not only in the form of the language but also between scholars and ordinary readers when he says:

... that Chaucer's readers in a full sense are relatively few, and no one who makes the most superficial of tests among those who supposedly know Chaucer can doubt that his reputation is more an accepted legend than the result of a wide popular experience.

And he goes on to say: “The existence of this condition is the warrant for the appearance of [his] complete translation of *The Canterbury Tales* ...”.⁶⁵ If distance in its various manifestations validates attempts at modernisation, it provides an even more compelling warrant for translations into foreign languages.

4.3.3 The non-English world

By the end of the sixteenth century, changes in the English language were regarded as having silenced Chaucer, which accounts for Sir Francis Kinaston's translation of *Troilus and Criseyde* into Latin in 1635. This project was well received amongst scholars, as we can see from Edward Foulis's encomium:

⁶³ D. Wright (translator), *Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. xxi.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ellis, *Chaucer at Large*, p. 99.

⁶⁵ F.E. Hill (translator), *The Canterbury Tales*, New York, NY: Heritage Press, 1946, p. xiii.

Thus time can silence *Chaucer's* tongue,
 But not his witte, which now among
 The Latines hath a lowder sound;
 And what we lost, the World hath found.
 Thus the Translation will become
 Th'Originall, while that grows dumbe:
 And this will crowne these labours: None
 Sees *Chaucer* but in *Kinaston*.⁶⁶

In the preface to his *Tales Ancient and Modern* (1700), Dryden reports that “*Mademoiselle de Scudery* ... is at this time translating *Chaucer* into modern *French*”.⁶⁷ There is no other trace of this translation, and another century and a half elapsed before the publication of a French version of the *Canterbury Tales* by the “Chevalier de Chatelain”,⁶⁸ of which Spurgeon said that its “careless, facile, jog-trot verses would not give any one who did not know the original the least idea of *Chaucer's* work or of the delicacy of his art”.⁶⁹

In Germany, in 1827, Goethe commented to his young disciple Johann Eckermann: “Nowadays national literature doesn't mean much; the age of world literature is beginning, and everybody should contribute to hasten its advent.”⁷⁰ This statement of his ambitious intent should be read in conjunction with Schleiermacher's contemporaneous stance on foreignisation as being in the interest of appropriation from other literatures in order to nourish intellectual and literary growth in terms of a cultural nationalism. In this climate, Wilhelm Hertzberg published a German translation of the Clerk's Tale in 1856 and a reliable *Canterbury-Erzählungen* ten years later. This was followed by Adolf von Düring's three-volume *Geoffrey Chaucers Werke* in 1883-1886,⁷¹ during a second period of nascent nationalism, this time more political, after the formalisation of a unified Prussian German nation state under Bismarck's leadership.

⁶⁶ E. Foulis, quoted in J.O. Fichte, Erläuterungen, in F. Kemmler, *Die Canterbury Erzählungen*, Band 3, München: Goldmann Verlag, 1989, p. 1400. See also: M. Cook and D. Hadbawnik, “His Latin stile hath Englisht thee”, *Global Chaucers*, 2014.

⁶⁷ Dryden, quoted in M. Andrew, Translations, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*; edited by Steve Ellis, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 554.

⁶⁸ “Chevalier de Chatelain,” *Contes de Cantorbery, traduits en vers francais, de Geoffrey Chaucer, par le Chevalier de Chatelain*, 2 vols, London, 1857.

⁶⁹ Spurgeon, quoted in S. Downes, Chaucer in Nineteenth-century France, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2015, p. 364.

⁷⁰ Goethe, quoted by A. Behdad and D. Thomas, *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, p. 1.

⁷¹ Andrew, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, p. 555;

In nineteenth-century France, the literary historian E.G. Sandras praised Chaucer for his essential “Frenchness”. This raised the hackles of patriotic Englishmen who held him in high regard on account of his “Englishness”, so Furnivall sought the arbitration of “an impartial German critic”, Professor Adolf Ebert.⁷² The critics Abel Villemain and E.J. Delécluze recognised Chaucer as a great European poet and Delécluze held that a French translation of the *Canterbury Tales* would be a great service to those who love literature.⁷³

Chaucer translation has flourished in the twentieth century; to date more than fifty translations or part-translations of the *Canterbury Tales* have been identified. *Die Pelgrimsverhale* takes its place among this polyglot company to reclaim Chaucer from his possessive, monolingual adherents as an eminent representative of *Weltliteratur*.

4.3.4 Translations

In advancing his concept of *Weltliteratur*, Goethe also advanced the cause of literary translation. He expresses appreciation for the Greek classics, a Serbian poem, a Chinese novel and the Persian poet Hafis, all encountered in German translations.⁷⁴ And after reading a French translation of his own *Faust*, he asserted that he experienced it as “again fresh, new and spirited”.⁷⁵

This at first astonishing claim has been ratified by other observers, for example, David Damrosch, who points to the complex ways in which

works of world literature take on a new life as they move into the world at large, and to understand this new life we need to look closely at the ways the work becomes reframed in its translations and in its new cultural contexts.⁷⁶

However, the phrase “new cultural contexts” calls for a cautionary note. The institutionalisation of “World Literature” at American universities from the mid-1990s, with the concurrent closing down of modern language departments, leads all

⁷² S. Downes, in *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2015, p. 355.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 361, 363.

⁷⁴ Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* p. 13; J. Waltje, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s Theory of Translation in the *West-Eastern Divan*, *Other Voices*, vol. 2, no. 2, March 2002.

⁷⁵ Goethe, quoted in Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* p. 7.

⁷⁶ Damrosch quoted in Behdad and Thomas, *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, p. 10.

too readily to a “literary post-colonialism”⁷⁷ with an unreflecting endorsement of cultural equivalence. In Emily Apter’s formulation:

Severed from place, thrown into the maw of the global culture industry or survey course, and subject to pedagogical transmission by instructors with low levels of cultural literacy and nonexistent knowledge of a translated work’s original language, local or native literature relinquishes its defining self-properties once it is exported and trafficked like an artifact.⁷⁸

This caution applies to the discipline of World Literature, rather than to the phenomenon of world literature and is particularly apposite in relation to Anglo-American cultural dominance, which motivates Venuti’s ethical opposition to domestication. Over and above this qualification, I endorse what Damrosch has to say about the revivifying effect of translation.

Literary translations, I contend, are everything that modernisations are not. They come into being apart from the constraint of the reverence due to the originating author as representative of the national genius. As a result of this greater freedom, a translator does not have to feel the same obligation of narrow fidelity to a start text. Furthermore, because the language is different, the temptation to take shortcuts is removed by the imposition of a “roots and branch” approach. Having to give careful consideration to every perplexity along the way, the translator is receptive to the vast resources of the translating language. And at the end of the process of translation, the finished product is received in a different culture, where readers’ perceptions are nourished by a different history and milieu. Modernisations may pursue similarity; literary translations are premised on difference.

4.4 TRANSLATIONS WITHIN THE AFRIKAANS LITERARY SYSTEM

On the subject of translations into Afrikaans, Kannemeyer has this to say:

In vergelyking met vroeër is uitgewers, behalwe waar daar steun is van instansies soos die Nederlandse Taalunie wat werke uit hul taalgebied graag in ander lande beskikbaar stel, nie meer besonder geesdriftig om vertalings te publiseer nie. Die vertaling van *Die Ooste teen die Weste: Herodotus se Geskiedenis*⁷⁹ deur J.P.J. van Rensburg was byvoorbeeld reeds in 1971 klaar, maar moes tot 1994 wag voordat ’n uitgewer bereid was om dit te publiseer. Ná 1985 – die jaar waarin Bartho Smit se reeks oorsettings van meesterdramas uit

⁷⁷ E. Apter, *Against World Literature*, London: Verso, 2013, p. 1.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 326.

⁷⁹ Also published by Hans Kirsten.

Frans en Duits in verskillende dele verskyn – neem die publikasie van vertalings sterk af. Tog verskyn enkele klassieke tekste in Afrikaans, soos *'n Keur uit die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer* (1989), wat deur John Boje vertaal word, Arnold Blumer se saamgestelde “Bertolt Brecht song-book” (*Brecht sing Afrikaans*, 1989), Aristoteles se *Poëtika* (1991), wat met L. Cilliers en E.L. de Kock se kommentaar verskyn, G.J. de Klerk en H.J. Schutte se vertaling van die Middelnederlandse *Brandaan* (1996), Desiderius Erasmus se *Tot lof van dwaasheid* (2002) deur J.J. de Villiers en *Op Griekse lier* (2004) deur W.J. Henderson. Die belangrikste werk wat op dié gebied deur private inisiatief uitgevoer word, is N.A. Blanckenberg se versvertaling van Vergilius se *Aeneïs* (onder die titel *Van wapens en 'n man*, 1980) en Delamaine du Toit se prosavertaling van Dante se volledige *Die Goddelike komedie* met kommentaar: *Die hel* (1990), *Die purgatorium* (1998) en *Die Paradys* (2002).⁸⁰

Kannemeyer offers no explanation for this situation, but polysystem theory is helpful in this regard. Even-Zohar postulates three situations in which a national literary system becomes more receptive to outside influence.

The first is when a new cultural community readily supplements its emerging literature by means of translations.⁸¹ This is illustrated by F.W. Reitz’s adaptations of William Cowper, Walter Scott and Robert Burns,⁸² which enriched the meagre store of the First Afrikaans Language Movement (1875-1900), which Lydia van Niekerk is constrained to call “letterkundige voortbrengselen”.⁸³ Most successful was Reitz’s “Klaas Gezwind zijn paert” (1870), based on Burns’s “Tam O’Shanter”, which continues to be anthologised as canonised literature.

Stories retold from the oral literature of the Khoisan were also a major contribution during this phase of Afrikaans literary production. Eugene Marais published his *Dwaalstories*, attributed to “outa Hendrik”, in 1927. Four volumes of Von Wielligh’s *Dierestories* and four volumes of *Boesmanstories* appeared between 1917 and 1922. This followed on an earlier edition of *Dire storiis, soos deur die Hottentots ferteld* (1907). Marais’s *Dwaalstories* are far superior to his other stories, as are the poems in free verse included in the text (including “Dans van die Reën”) compared

⁸⁰ J.C. Kannemeyer, *Die Afrikaanse Literatuur*, Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 2005, p. 565.

⁸¹ B. Hatim, *Teaching and Researching Translation*, 2nd edition, Harlow: Pearson, 2013, p. 74.

⁸² J.C. Kannemeyer, *Die Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Literatuur*, Tweede hersiene en verbeterde uitgawe, Pretoria: Academica, 1984, p. 61; D. Hugo, Vertaling en die Afrikaanse digkuns, *Versindaba*, 1 Okt. 2012.

⁸³ L. van Niekerk, *De Eerste Afrikaanse Taalbeweging en zijn letterkundige voortbrengselen*, Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, 1920.

to his other poems, which are formally structured.⁸⁴ In the case of Von Wielligh's stories, the descriptive sections are weak, but the narrative comes alive.⁸⁵ For half a century the Khoisan provenance of these works was not in doubt, but then critics with an ideological agenda began to insist on their European origin. Esselen denied that Afrikaans literature was enriched by indigenous culture; F.I.J van Rensburg suggested that indigenes heard the stories from white colonists and then retold them to the colonists' children; Abel Coetzee established a link between one of the tales and a medieval Latin work;⁸⁶ and T.T. Cloete asserted that Marais's "kamtige Boesmanstyl is stilistiese bluf, as ek dit maar so mag noem". From 1959 onwards, Hendrik's name no longer appeared on the title page of the *Dwaalstories*.⁸⁷

The period up to the National Party's accession to power in 1948 saw many translations. The 1930s, Stephen Gray says, were boom years for translation with "everything from Tarzan to the Communist Manifesto"⁸⁸ assuming an Afrikaans guise.

Even-Zohar's second postulated situation in which a national literary system becomes more receptive to outside influence is when a small nation which feels dominated by a large nation may regard translations from the dominant culture or from world literature as a means of enhancing its sense of self-worth.⁸⁹ Dirk Delabastita notes:

Newly emancipated or recognized languages ... quite systematically engage in the translation of canonical texts in order to enrich their textual repertoires, flex their stylistic muscles and showcase their ability to accommodate even the most demanding texts. The Bible and Shakespeare are typically found at the top of their "to translate" list.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ H. van Vuuren, Plagiaat? Appropriasie? Kulturele oorplanting? Huldiging? Brandende kwessies rondom mondelinge tradisies, *Tydskrif vir Literatuurwetenskap*, Jg 24, no. 4 2008 p. 105. See also J. van Wyk, Afrikaans Poetry and the South African Intertext, in *Afrikaans Literature; edited by R. Kriger and E. Kriger*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996, p. 115.

⁸⁵ Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Literatuur*, deel 1, p. 69.

⁸⁶ J. van Rensburg, Afrikaans Stories of Jackal and Hyena, *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2018, p. 86-87.

⁸⁷ H. Willemsse, Tokkelossie, "'n Boesman, outa Hendrik" en ontkennde close readings, *Literator*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2008 p. 68, 69.

⁸⁸ Gray, in *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2013, p. 71.

⁸⁹ I. Even-Zohar, The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem, *Poetics Today*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1990, p. 48.

⁹⁰ D. Delabastita, Literary Translation, in *Handbook of Translation Studies*; edited by Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer, vol. 2, p. 70.

In the thirty years from 1945 to 1975, no fewer than 33 Afrikaans translations of Shakespeare plays were published.⁹¹ The publication of plays was boosted by the needs of the National Theatre Organization (1948-1962), which received lavish state funding, and was perceived as a means of redressing the cultural imbalance between Afrikaans and English speakers.⁹² It is noteworthy, therefore, that the most prolific period of Shakespeare translation coincided with the zenith of Afrikaner nationalism.⁹³

The publication of other theatre classics in translation was also a means of enhancing the prestige of Afrikaans in the face of the literary domination of English. Thus Theo Wassenaar's translation of *Oedipus Rex*⁹⁴ was widely reported on; its performance in 1938, which was attended by the prime minister and members of the Cabinet, clearly evoked national pride. This is evident from Prof. H.G. Viljoen's comment "dat elke Afrikaner dié stuk behoort te sien om sy gevoel van trots op die werk van die teatervereniging aan te wakker. ... As elke Afrikaner maar die stuk kon sien!"⁹⁵ And according to an editorial in *Die Transvaler*, it was a production "... waardeur so skitterend gestalte gegee is aan die vermoë en die krag van die Afrikaanse taal om die draer te wees van die ontroerendste gedagte wat in die oudste en klassieke tale sy uiting gevind het".⁹⁶

The third scenario envisaged by Even-Zohar was that of a turning point in literary history. The Sestigers proved such a turning point in Afrikaans literature. An adaptation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* by André Brink was a public expression of change in the air, providing an opportunity to use an imported

⁹¹ For the complete list, see William Shakespeare in Wikipedia, die vrye ensiklopedie.

⁹² R. Quince, Shakespeare on the Apartheid Stage, in *The Shakespeare International Yearbook*, vol. 9: Special section, *South African Shakespeare in the Twentieth Century*; edited by G. Bradshaw, T.G. Bishop and L. Wright, Farnham: Ashgate, 2009, p. 88-89. See also Internet Shakespeare Editions, *Shakespeare in South Africa: The Earlier Twentieth Century*, University of Victoria, p. 3, note 7.

⁹³ A. Kruger, Shakespeare Translation in South Africa, in *Translators' Strategies and Creativity*; edited by A. Beylard-Ozeroff, J. Králová and B. Moser-Mercer, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1998, p. 113.

⁹⁴ T. Wassenaar, *Koning Oidipus: 'n drama van Sophokles*, hersiene uitgawe, Johannesburg: Perskor, 1974.

⁹⁵ *Die Transvaler*, 11 Junie 1938, aangehaal in P.J. Conradie, Die Resepsie van enkele opvoerings van Griekse tragedie, *Akroterion*, nr. 44, 1999, p. 15.

⁹⁶ *Die Transvaler*, 17 Junie 1938, aangehaal in Conradie, Die Resepsie van enkele opvoerings van Griekse tragedie; B. van Zyl Smit, Oedipus and Afrikaans Theater, *Comparative Drama*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2010, p. 484.

authority to critique the establishment:⁹⁷ *Kinkels innie Kabel*, written in “Kaaps”, jubilantly satirized the dominant ideology. First staged in 1970, the play was revived several times, with its topical references updated, but “as political realities changed, the concept of a state-sponsored controlled carnival lost its subversive novelty and seemed increasingly appropriated and contained by the dominant ideology”.⁹⁸

These plays served their hegemonic (or counter-hegemonic) purpose, but the text versions had a limited shelf life. By contrast, print editions of other classical works, such as Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Aristotle’s *Poetics* and Erasmus’s *In Praise of Folly*,⁹⁹ were not motivated by the needs of the Afrikaans theatre and did not enjoy the benefit of publicity that stage productions stimulated. The patriotic plea for notice to be taken is still occasionally heard, as when *Aristoteles Poëtika* is lauded as “’n groot gebeurtenis vir Afrikaans”,¹⁰⁰ but most reviews are directed to a narrow circle of fellow specialists. Translators of literary works struggle to find publishers. In the words of Jan Rabie: “Uitgewers is gou om te sê: ’n Vertaling? Nee dankie. Kan nie voorgeskryf word nie. Goeie boek? Nee dankie, nee dankie. Sal nie verkoop nie.”¹⁰¹ As a result, translators, on occasion, resort to publication at their own expense, an expedient of which Joan Hambidge says (with reference to two volumes of Du Toit’s *Goddelike Komedie*): “’n Mens kan dit as ’n aanklag teen ons uitgewershuse beskou dat die outeur sêlf hierdie boeke moes publiseer.”¹⁰²

But are the publishers to blame? They are business firms subject to the reality of commercial viability. The earliest Afrikaans publishing houses, Van Schaik, established in Pretoria in 1914, and Nasionale Pers, started in Cape Town the following year, flourished as a result of the phenomenal rise of Afrikaans literature, of which J.D. Pretorius said: “Nog nooit in die geskiedenis het seker ’n letterkunde so bewustelik en georganiseerd ontstaan nie.”¹⁰³ This conscious and organised

⁹⁷ M.G. Rose, Translation Types and Conventions, in *Translation Spectrum*, p. 40, fn. 16.

⁹⁸ R. Quince, Crinkles in the Carnival, *Shakespeare in Southern Africa*, vol. 4, 1990/91, p. 78.

⁹⁹ Dante Alighieri, *Die Goddelike Komedie: Purgatorium en Paradiso*, vertaal deur D.A. du Toit, Kaapstad: Die Skrywer, 1998 en 2002; Aristoteles, *Poëtika*, vertaling en uitleg van betekenis deur E.L. de Kock en L. Cilliers, Johannesburg: Perskor, 1991; Erasmus, *Tot lof van dwaasheid: Encomium Moriae*, vertaal deur J.L. de Villiers, Pretoria: Protea, 2002.

¹⁰⁰ P.C. Conradie, Resensie: *Aristoteles Poëtika*, *Acta Classica*, nr. 36, 1993, p. 151.

¹⁰¹ J. Rabie, *Buidel*, Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 1989, p. 83.

¹⁰² J. Hambidge, Resensie van Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorium*, Afrikaanse vertaling deur Delamaine du Toit, *Woorde wat weeg*, 25 Maart 2013.

¹⁰³ J.D. Pretorius, Die Afrikaanse Boek, *Cape Librarian*, Jg. 36, nr. 5, June 1967, p. 13; cf. E. van Heerden, *Die ander werklikheid*, Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, p. 3.

growth was fostered in the warm embrace of Afrikaner nationalism. Between 1900 and 1943, 5 000 new titles were published. Of the 894 Afrikaans books published in 1965, 254 were translations, though only 30 were of a literary nature. At this stage there were 215 publishers serving an apparently insatiable need.¹⁰⁴ But those halcyon days came to an abrupt end with the advent of democracy when Afrikaans lost its privileged position. While Afrikaans was constitutionally entrenched as one of only two co-equal official languages, fifty per cent of library subsidies went to the purchase of Afrikaans books. In the 1990s, these subsidies were drastically reduced and the equal allocation for Afrikaans books ceased to apply, while affirmative provision had to be made for nine new official languages and the conversion of libraries into public information centres (by 2000, public libraries recorded a funding deficit of R184.9 million). In 1998, a further shock ensued when schoolbook purchases were cut by 85 per cent.¹⁰⁵ The lucrative market in library books and school readers had enabled publishers to cross-subsidize literary works;¹⁰⁶ now they resorted increasingly to light popular works, best sellers and money-spinners to keep afloat.¹⁰⁷

Publishers had to adjust to economic independence from the comfort zone of a 'prescription' mode – in the long term, it may be a step in the direction of true sustainability: but in the short term it led to downsizing of the publishing operations and reduced production.¹⁰⁸

Many were forced to close down; some amalgamated, and major companies were bought out by Naspers, in part to enable them to survive as imprints of NB publishers.¹⁰⁹ Naspers has since grown into one of the largest and most successful investment firms in the world and as it pursues new opportunities in Eastern Europe and the BRICS countries, it is increasingly responsible to shareholders with no interest in Afrikaans literature.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 12-15.

¹⁰⁵ F. Galloway and R. Venter, Book History, Publishing Research and Production Figures, *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 55, 2006, p. 57.

¹⁰⁶ R. Venter, Waarnatoo met die Afrikaanse fiksieboek? *LitNet Young Voices*, 25 Nov. 2004, deel 1.

¹⁰⁷ H. van Zyl, Die boek in Afrikaans, rondom 2000, in E. van Heerden, *Briewe deur die Lug: LitNet/ Taal-sekretariaat-skrywersberaad, 2001*, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 2001, p. 266.

¹⁰⁸ A. van der Merwe, Ons is van uiteenloopenheid aanmeekargesit, in *Briewe deur die Lug*, p. 240.

¹⁰⁹ Van Zyl, in *Briewe deur die Lug*, p. 266.

¹¹⁰ A. Morgenrood, Price makes Naspers a shoo-in JSE investment. *Business Report*, 2 July 2018; A. Speckman, Naspers sets its sights on growth within Brics countries, *Business Times*, 29 July 2018; Van Zyl, in *Briewe deur die Lug*, p. 266.

The largest distributors of Afrikaans books (CNA, Exclusive Books, the Leserskring and Leisure Books book clubs) control about 70 per cent of the market.¹¹¹ They import books from overseas, and their Afrikaans book stock is made up largely of Mills and Boon translations, devotional texts, self-help popular psychology manuals and syndicated children's and youth literature. During the period from 1990 to 2003, romance novels constituted fully 62.3 per cent of the overall Afrikaans book production, while literary fiction accounted for only 24.2 per cent.¹¹²

Book sales must be seen in the wider context of Afrikaans book culture, which Afrikaner nationalism has distorted in two ways. First, although people of colour make up the majority of Afrikaans speakers, they were alienated by the appropriation of the language by Afrikaner nationalism. This and the pro-government stance of most publishers inhibited book production on their part.¹¹³ Once this burden lifted, works such as A.H.M. Scholtz's *Vatmaar* were not only written, but also read.¹¹⁴

Secondly, translations have been denied access to the canon, because while nationalism asserts cultural homogeneity, translation is concerned with cultural difference. Because influences from outside "implicitly reveal the incompleteness of the nation, translation is a scandal to nationalist thinking",¹¹⁵ resulting in the paradox that translations threaten nationalism even as they enrich a national literature.¹¹⁶ This is borne out by the neglect that Uys Krige suffered over so many years: Kannemeyer says of his output and excellence as a translator: "Met hierdie vertalings maak Krige 'n bydrae tot ons poësie [en] verruim hy die Afrikaanse geesteslewe met literatuur wat oor die algemeen minder bekend is."¹¹⁷ Leti Kleyn quotes Venuti to the effect that translation is no guarantee of penetrating a literary system and reminds us that translations that fail to do so end up being pulped, as

¹¹¹ Van Zyl, in *Briewe deur die Lug*, p. 262.

¹¹² Galloway and Venter, in *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 55, 2006, p. 58; Kleyn, 'n Sisteemteoretiese kartering van die Afrikaanse literatuur ..., p. 120.

¹¹³ H.Willemse, *The Black Afrikaans Writer*, in *From South Africa*; edited by D. Bunn and J. Taylor, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 240, 245.

¹¹⁴ A. van der Merwe, in *Briewe deur die Lug*, p. 242, 245.

¹¹⁵ Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything*, p. 117.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129, 117; cf. S. Selim, *Pharaoh's Revenge*, in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*; edited by M. Baker, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 322. By contrast, Schleiermacher focused on the gains to the national culture through translation.

¹¹⁷ Kannemeyer, *Die Afrikaanse literatuur*, p. 169.

Krige's Lorca poems were¹¹⁸ (and as my *Keur* was). In these circumstances, it is gratifying that in Andre Brink's 2000 version of *Groot Verseboek* – Opperman's "barometer van gehalte" – the disparagement of poetry in translation has been remedied.¹¹⁹

4.5 A POSSIBLE AUDIENCE FOR THE *PELGRIMSVERHALE*

Who are the people who constitute the envisaged audience of *Die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer*? According to Vermeer, even a communication directed "to the world" has specific audience in mind. Then, in a neat turn of phrase, he says: "One surely often uses one's own (self-evaluated) level as an implicit criterion (the addressees are (almost) as intelligent as one is oneself ...)."¹²⁰ With this in mind, I have identified passages in the Tales that struck me forcibly either during the process of translation or in editing my text, and which bear some relation to the current Afrikaans speakers' world of experience; on this basis I extrapolate my projected audience – an inversion therefore of Strohm's observation that literary reception is a group phenomenon, based on "the assumption that the shared experiences of a particular social group will lead to certain common denominators in the responses of members of the group".¹²¹ Given a multitude of such shared experiences, I anticipate concurrence between my mediation, "the extent to which one feeds one's current beliefs and goals"¹²² into processing the text of the *Canterbury Tales* and potential readers' processing of the *Pelgrimsverhale*.

4.5.1 Possible political resonances

I think of a younger liberated audience whose world of experience includes, in the first place, the dramatic political change that brought a new South Africa into being in 1994. Steve Biko looked forward to the overthrow of apartheid, which would liberate not only black but white people as well.¹²³ In the early days of democracy

¹¹⁸ Kleyn, 'n Sisteemteoretiese kartering van die Afrikaanse literatuur ..., p. 128.

¹¹⁹ J. Hambidge, Resensie: André Brink (samesteller), *Groot Verseboek*, 2000. Blogspot, 26 Maart 2018.

¹²⁰ H.J. Vermeer, Skopos and Commission in Translational Action, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by L. Venuti, 3rd edition, London: Routledge, 2012, p. 197.

¹²¹ Strohm in *Literature and History*, vol. 5, Spring, 1977, p. 26.

¹²² Beaugrande and Dressler, quoted in I. Mason, Discourse, Ideology and Translation, in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, p. 91.

¹²³ S. Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 2nd edition, Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2004, p. 27.

vast numbers of whites experienced a sense of exhilaration as the burden of injustice was lifted. Since those heady days, many have relapsed into nostalgia for the fleshpots of Egypt, the material advantages of their days of bondage. But some have remained true to the vision; they are the liberated ones I have in mind.

They are not people who imagine that the past can simply be expunged from memory. Rather they have engaged and continue to engage with the past in the process known in German as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. They are deeply troubled by the challenge of continuing violence and the aggression.

State violence in South Africa reached a peak with the militarization of government and society by P.W. Botha. As part of his “total strategy”, neighbouring states were destabilized by means of ruthless commando raids and indiscriminate bombing,¹²⁴ which left scenes of carnage that still haunt the memories of many unwilling participants.¹²⁵ The Knight’s Tale stirs deep resonances. Like P.W. Botha, Duke Theseus exemplifies military domination and hotheaded violence that leaves havoc in its wake¹²⁶ – and sadly the horror has not abated in democratic South Africa where protesters turn to arson, intimidation, violence and looting to make their grievances known and the assassination of opponents is a regular feature of political life. The misery caused by violence is vividly portrayed on the walls of the temple of Mars:

Her saugh I first the derke ymaginyng
Of Felonye, and al the compassyng;
The crueel Ire, reed as any gleede
The pykepurs, and eek the pale Dreede;
The smylere with the knyf under the cloke;
The shepne brennyng with the blake smoke;
The tresoun of the mordryng in the bedde;
The open werre, with woundes al bibledde;
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;

Daar’t ek gesien versinnebeeld Verraad:
sy donker planne voer tot donker daad;
en wrede Toorn met bloedbelope blik;
die sakkeroller en die bleke Skrik;
die skurk wat glimlag met versteekte dolk;
die stal wat brand, die rook ’n groot swart wolk;
moord op ’n man onskuldig in sy bed
en felle Oorlogvoering, wondbesmet,
en Twis wat met bebloede mes bedreig;
uit die nare plek het ’n gekrysgestyg.
Op die naat van sy rug lê die selfmoordenaar
met mond wat oophang; die vermoorde daar
het ’n pen deur die slaap; sy bloed het

¹²⁴ A. Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, London: Mandarin, 1991, p.308-312.

¹²⁵ For reminiscences of South African counter-insurgency and its effects on government operatives, see: K. Batley, *A Secret Burden*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2007; J.H. Thompson, *An Unpopular War*, Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006; A. Feinstein, *Battle Scarred*, Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2011.

¹²⁶ This modern interpretation would not have commended itself to Medieval readers. Cf. S.H. Rigby, *Chaucer in Context*, p. 56.

The colde deeth, with mouth gapyng upright
...

opgedam;
sy hare is saamgekoek daarvan en klam.

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 not of qualm ystorve;
The tiraunt, with the pray by force yraft;
The toun destroyed, ther was no thyng laft.

(l.1095-2006 and 2011-2016)

...
Verskriklik klink die Waansin se gelag;
daar's gruwels en rumoerige gedrag.
In die bosse lê 'n lyk met keel gesny;
'n duisend dood wat aan geen siekte ly;
die buit geplunder deur tiran se hand
uit stede wat verwoes lê, afgebrand.

Such a town was Thebes, totally destroyed by the conqueror:

And by assaut he wan the citee after,
And rente adoun bothe wall and sparre and rafter
(l.989-990)

En met 'n stormloop neem hy die stad
en sloop toe muur en spar en balk en lat.

After the destruction of the town followed the laying waste of the surrounding countryside and the pillaging of the bodies of the dead:

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 boodys dede,
Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,
The pilours diden bisynesse and cure
After the bataille and disconfiture.

(l.1003-1008)

Hy bring die nag daar op die slagveld deur
en hy't die land verwoes na willekeur.
Die plunderaars het ná die nederlaag
en vlug van die Thebane opgedaag
om haastig dog metodies deur die hoop
lyke te soek ten einde hul te stroop.

This “memorable image of cultures which transform humans into objects, things, profitable dead things”¹²⁷ calls to mind bodies repeatedly dynamited by the security police in order to destroy any trace of them,¹²⁸ the body of a political opponent burnt on a fire while his killers braaied (barbecued) meat and drank beer,¹²⁹ the bodies of enemy dead in Angola dishonoured by 18-year-old national servicemen urinating on them or throwing stones at their skulls to try to crack them.¹³⁰

Counter-insurgency is dirty work, and, as we are reminded by the Clerk's Tale, there are always minions ready to do their masters' bidding. In the process,

not only the ruler's moral state is perverted. The moral life of the obedient subject is also corrupted ... and as ever, the servants of the state justify

¹²⁷ D. Aers, *Chaucer*, Brighton: Harvester, 1986, p. 27.

¹²⁸ J. Dlamini, *Askari*, Johannesburg: Jacana, 2016, p. 55.

¹²⁹ A. Krog, *Country of my Skull*, 2nd edition, Cape Town: Random House Struik, 2009, p. 60.

¹³⁰ Thompson, *An Unpopular War*, p. 201-202.

themselves by saying they were only carrying out orders, even petitioning their victims for understanding.¹³¹

At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, perpetrators insisted that they were merely doing their job and expected their victims not to hold it against them,¹³² the same exculpation as that voiced by Walter's henchman in the Clerk's Tale:

"Madame," he seyde, "ye moote foryeve it me,
Though I do thyng to which I am constreyned.
Ye been so wys that ful wel knowe ye
That lordes heestes mowe nat been yfeyned;
They mowe wel been biwailed or compleyned,
But men moote nede unto hire lust obeye,
And so wol I; ther is namoore to seye."

(IV.526-532)

Hy sê: "Mevrou, u moet my nie blameer
dat ek hier staan op 'n ander se bevel;
u is verstandig en sal weet, 'n heer
se strenge opdrag kan nie uitgestel
of nagelaat word nie, en alhoewel
dit te bejammer is, het ek 'n taak
om uit te voer. Dis die einde van die saak."

Even the dreary Tale of Melibee has a sobering message for our times in an old man's warning:

Lordynges," quod he, "ther is ful many a man that
crieth, 'Were, were!' that woot ful litel what were
amounteth. Were at his bigynnyng hath so greet
an entryng and so large that every wight may
entre whan hym liketh and lightly fynde were; but
certes what ende that shal therof bifalle, it is nat
light to knowe. For soothly, whan that were is
ones bigonne, ther is ful many a child unborn of
his mooder that shal sterve yong by cause of
thilke were, or elles lyve in sorwe and dye in
wrecchednesse,

(VII.1037-1040)

'Menere,' sê hy, 'daar's baie wat "Te wapen, te
wapen!" roep, wat min benul het van wat
oorlog beteken. Aan die begin van 'n oorlog is
daar 'n ingang so groot dat almal kan ingaan
net wanneer hul wil en gemaklik die oorlog kan
vind, maar waarop dit uitloop, is heeltemal 'n
ander saak, want as 'n oorlog eers begin, is
daar baie nog ongeboore kinders wat as gevolg
daarvan jonk sal sterf of in nood sal lewe en in
ellende sal sterwe.'

At some stage in the dying days of apartheid, whites in South Africa started repeating to each other, "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Although this cliché dates far back, it surprised them with all the force of a novel revelation. In the light of this widespread experience, I believe contemporary Afrikaans readers are likely to respond more empathetically to the Manciple's excursus into semantics than readers of the source text or of translations into other languages:

...That, for the tirant is of gretter myght
By force of meynee for to sleen downright,
And brennen hous and hoom, and make al
playn,

... 'n tiran met leërmagte aan sy kant
het die vermoë om deur moord en brand
almal wat in sy pad kom af te maai

¹³¹ Aers, *Chaucer*, p. 33.

¹³² See, for example, Krog, *Country of my Skull*, p. 92, and Dlamini, *Askari*, p. 233.

Lo, therefor is he cleped a capitayn;
 And for the outlawe hath but a smal meynee,
 And may nat doon so greet an harm as he,
 Ne brynge a contree to so greet mescheef,
 Men clepen hym an outlawe or a theef.

(IX.223-234)

en groot verwoesting om hom heen te saai,
 en daarom noem ons hom 'veroweraar';
 maar 'n voëlvryverklaarde wat net 'n paar
 aanhangers het en minder kwaad bedryf
 of skade doen, word weer as 'dief' beskryf.

4.5.2 Ecclesiastical experience

The Dutch Reformed Church objected to the evangelical initiative known as the Oxford Group *inter alia* because “Die atmosfeer van vrolikheid en gelag by die huispartye ... pas nie by die aanbidding van die Heilige God nie.”¹³³ Among the “sondes wat nie in die Bybel opgeteken staan nie” were dancing, playing cards, taking bets and flirting.¹³⁴ For readers who espouse such weariness of spirit, Chaucer must be avoided, as his mirth and tolerance clearly “sownen into synne” (X.1085). Joylessness is one reason why people left the church. Lina Spies writes:

Die kerk was verantwoordelik vir die radikalisering van my lewensingesteldheid deur die oorheersende inhoud van die erediens waarteen ek al hoe meer in opstand gekom het. In die prediking en samesang is die lewe nie gevier nie en die aarde gedenigreer tot die 'aardse jammerdal', tot 'die wêreld is ons woning nie'.¹³⁵

She goes on to say: “Ek het geleer om die wêreld uitgesproke lief te hê en my ekplisiet te verheug in my liggaamlikheid en aardse bestaan.” Those who share this attitude with her will embrace Chaucer’s joyful affirmation of life, nature and the stirring of human spirit so powerfully expressed in the opening lines of the General Prologue, quoted in Section 1.8. It is a remarkable passage in which the four elements – water, earth, fire and air – that were then thought to constitute all creation are referenced, followed by an ascent through vegetation, animals and human beings, and then from creation in nature to recreation in grace:¹³⁶

Whan that Aprill with his *shoures* soote [water]
 The *droghte* of March hath perced to the roote,
 [earth]
 And bathed every veyne in swich licour
 Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
 Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth [air]

Wanneer Aprilmaand milde reënbuie bring
 wat Maart se dorheid worteldiep deurdring
 en sap laat opstoot in die plantegroei,
 waardeur dit kragtig kom tot volle bloei;
 wanneer Zephuros ook soet asemstote
 laat walm oor die nuwe knoppe en lote
 in bos en hei, en die fris jong son nou juis

¹³³ Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, *Die Katkisasieboek*, 13de druk, Bloemfontein: Sondagskool-Boekhandel, 1962, p. 344.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

¹³⁵ L. Spies, Ek los nou die kerk, Sentrum vir Eietydse Spiritualiteit, 1 April 2013.

¹³⁶ P.B. Taylor, *Chaucer Translator*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998, p. 25.

Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
 The tendre croppes, [vegetation] and the yong
 sonne [fire]
 Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,
 And smale foweles maken melodye, [animals]
 That slepen al the nyght with open ye
 (So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
 Thanne longen folk to goon on
 pilgrimages,[humans]
 And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
 To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes, [grace]
 And specially from every shires ende
 Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
 The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
 That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.
 (I.1-18)

die tweede helfte van die Ram deurkruis,
 en voëltjies sing met opgewekte klank –
 want hulle slaap oop-oë heel nag lank –
 so prikkel die natuur hul handelswyse –
 dan gaan mense graag op pelgrimsreise,
 en swerwers hunker na die vreemde strande
 van verre heiligdomme in vele lande.
 Veral, uit elke graafskap, elke hoek
 van Engeland, gaan hul Kantelberg besoek
 en Thomas, die geseënde martelaar
 in siekte altyd aan hul sy geskaar.

They will also identify with the Wife of Bath's physicality, celebrated in this wonderful passage:

But – Lord Crist! – Whan that it remembreth me
 Upon my yowthe, and on my jolitee,
 It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote.
 Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote
 That I have had my world as in my tyme.
 But age, allas, that al wole envenyme,
 Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith.
 Lat go. Farewel! The devel go therwith!
 (III.469-476)

Ag, hemel toggie, as ek aan die tyd
 weer terugdink van my jeug en joligheid,
 dan kittel dit my hart van lekkerkry,
 want tot vandag toe is ek dankieby
 die lewe't soveel vreugde ingehou –
 hoe jammer dat die ouderdom ons knou,
 met skoonheid wegdoen en met energie;
 maar dis verby nou en dit traak my nie!

And they will surely find many occasions for merriment in the ingenious arguments of the Wife, the cleverly contrived climaxes of the fabliaux, the absurdities of Sir Thopas – or the forthrightness of the Host's rejection of the Tale. Chaucer was preoccupied with women, their agency, moral consciousness and their relationships with men, to a remarkable extent, considering his time and his sex and the ecclesiastical disparagement of women and their supposedly sinful appetites. This was noted by his contemporaries who, in the words of Gavin Douglas, recognised him as “ever (God wait) all womanis frend”.¹³⁷ His sympathetic ability to pick holes in patriarchy is evident in the following passage in which the Wife neatly subverts male logic and rhetoric:

Thanne wolde I seye, 'Goode lief, taak keep
 How mekely looketh Wilkyn, our sheep!
 Com neer, my spouse, lat me ba thy cheke!

Dan sê ek: 'Ou man, jy moet 'n slaggie kyk
 na Willie, ons skaap, hoe nederig hy lyk.
 Kom hier, dat ek jou wang kan soen, want jy

¹³⁷ D. Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, p. 138.

Ye sholde been al pacient and meke,
 And han a sweete spiced conscience,
 Sith ye so preche of Jobes pacience.
 Suffreth alwey, syn ye so wel kan preche;
 And but ye do, certain we shal yow teche
 That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.
 Oon of us two moste bowen, doutelees,
 And sith a man is moore resonable
 Than womman is, ye moste been suffrable.’
 (III.431-442)

moet nederig en geduldig wees soos hy,
 en van 'n onberispelike gees –
 jy hou mos daarvan om uit Job te lees.
 Wees nou maar lydsaam soos jy ander maan,
 want anders sal ons jou moet laat verstaan
 om die vrede te bewaar is die beste plan.
 Een van ons twee moet buig; omdat 'n man
 met meer verstand bedeel is as 'n vrou,
 verwag ek dié toegeeflikheid van jou.’

Absolon’s preparation for his anticipated pleasures of his tryst with Alisoun in the Miller’s Tale is a wonderful example of the humour of parody. Although the parodic use of elements of the Song of Songs is not as clear-cut as in the Merchant’s Tale (IV.2138-2145), its prefiguration in the Biblical references to Absolon’s hair and Noah’s flood and numerous echoes of the Song offers convincing evidence of the poet’s intention.

In Chaucer’s time, the Song of Songs was held to symbolise the relationship between Christ and the Church or the Christian soul or the Virgin Mary. Protestant hesitation about an allegorical interpretation is illustrated by the comment that a “danger of the allegorical interpretation is that readers may be led into an erotic view of his [/her] personal relationship with Christ”.¹³⁸ For a Protestant reader of my translation, it is Holy Scripture’s depiction of chaste human love that is shockingly and therefore powerfully parodied.

In the passage from the Miller’s Tale quoted below, Absolon uses cardamom, liquorice and herb of Paris (also known as True-love, and an aphrodisiac) to sweeten his breath, and we recall that Alisoun also smells sweet:

Hir mouth was sweete as bragot or the meeth,
 Or hoord of apples leyd in hey or heeth...
 (I.3261-3262, cf. Song 7: 8-9).

The emphasis on using all kinds of fresheners calls to mind the lover and his beloved in the Song of Songs and prepares the way for a malodorous denouement:

Whan that the firste cok hath crowe, anon
 Up rist this joly love Absolon,
 And hym arraieth gay, at poynt-devys.

Maar toe die haan kraai, was hy uit die kooi,
 en het die flinke vryer hom getooi
 so netjies as hy kan kom, en toe eers gou

¹³⁸ J.A. Balchin, The Song of Solomon, in *The New Bible Commentary Revised*; edited by D. Guthrie and J.A. Motyer, 3rd edition, London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970, p. 579.

But first he cheweth greyn and lycorys,
 To smellen sweete, er he hadde kemd his heer.
 Under his tonge a trewe-love he beer,
 For therby wende he to ben gracious.
 He rometh to the carpenteres hous,
 And stille he stant under the shot-wyndowe –
 Unto his brestit raughte, it was so lowe –
 And softe he cougheth with a semy soun:
 “What do ye, hony-comb, sweete Alisoun,
 My faire bryd, my sweete cynamome?”
 Awaketh, lemman myn, and speket to me!
 Wel litel thynken ye upon my wo,
 That for youre love I swete ther I go.
 No wonder is thogh that I swelte and swete;
 I moorne as dooth a lamb after the tete.
 Ywis, lemman, I have swich love-longyng
 That lik a turtel trewe is my moornynge.
 I may nat ete na moore than a mayde.”
 (I.3687-3709)

'n stuk soethout en kardamom gekou
 vir die lekker ruik; daarna kam hy sy hare.
 Met eenbes onder die tong om as 't ware
 die vrouens aan te moedig, stryk hy aan
 na die timmerman se huis waar hy gaan staan
 vlak onder die kamervenster, 'n luikgat wat
 die kêrel skaars tot by sy borskas vat.
 Hy't sag gekug en toe gesê: 'Wat doen
 jy heuningkoekie, soetlief Alisoen?
 Jy is soos soet kaneel, my voëltjie jy.
 Word wakker, liefling, en kom praat met my.
 My lyding's iets waarvan jy nie eers weet nie,
 of hoedat ek van die liefde loop en sweet nie.
 G'n wonder ek's in so 'n benouenis,
 ek's soos 'n lam wat agter die tiet aan is.
 Waarlik, my skat, my liefdesmart is groot,
 soos die tortelduif s'n trou tot in die dood;
 'n meisie kan nie minder eet as ek.'

Absolon's knocking and calling on Alisoun to get up and speak to him echoes the dramatic situation of Song 5: 2ff.; his address, “What do ye, hony-comb, sweete Alisoun,/My faire bryd, my sweete cynamone?” (I.3698-9) parodies the lover's “Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the hony-comb” (Song 4:11a, A.V.). “Bryd” is ambiguous. To avoid the circular argument that “my bride” is regularly used as a form of address in the Song of Songs and therefore that is what Chaucer intended, I have adhered to the modern interpretation¹³⁹ and translated it as “bird”.

My translation, in fact, has “voëltjie”. This is not only because “bryd” is used metaphorically in the sense of ‘sweetheart’. Alisoun will respond to Absolon's overtures with “As help me God, it wol nat be ‘com pa me” (I.3709). My translation “Ek deel verdomp g'n soene uit nie, man” captures her irritation, but not the contemptuous mockery of the baby talk.¹⁴⁰ Unable to do justice to her tone, I compensate by adding two diminutives (‘heuningkoekie’ and ‘voëltjie’) to Absolon's childish plea that elicits her mockery.

Absurdities abound. The lover in the Song of Songs is elegantly damp from the morning dew; Absolon is unromantically sweating with love-longing. He describes his yearning for her “as dooth a lamb after the tete” (I.3704). This comparison,

¹³⁹ *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 75, fn.

¹⁴⁰ L.D. Benson, Explanatory Notes, p. 847, n. 3709.

described by Kaske as a “triumph of lyric absurdity”,¹⁴¹ comes across well in my graphic “soos ’n lam wat agter die tiet aan is”, and in its animal greediness it is totally at odds with the allegorisation of the Song as representing sublime spiritual love and Absolon’s romantic affectation as a lovesick worshipper.¹⁴²

Chaucer also parodies a verse form in his Tale of Sir Thopas. Edwin Howard maintains that general readers are unmoved by the merriment of this tale because they are unfamiliar with the literary types that are parodied.¹⁴³ Yet I think that any reader who is familiar with lame versification, whether the “inspirational” verse of Helen Steiner Rice or rhymes for kitchen teas and bachelorettes, is equipped to appreciate Sir Thopas. Constructing a bad poem calls for great skill in a good poet, and translating it poses its own challenges. With regard to the content, I could follow the narrator as he meandered aimlessly and endlessly from one absurdity to another, but the form was more demanding. In other tales, enjambment made it easier to find rhymes and to avoid the rhymes being too obtrusive; here end-stopped lines are called for and therefore the search for rhyme words is complicated. So too, metrical variation must be eschewed in favour of sing-song regularity:

Listeth, lordes, in good entent,
 And I wol telle verrayment
 ... Of myrthe and of solas,
 Al of a knyght was fair and gent
 In bataille and in tourneyment;
 His name was sire Thopas.

Kom luister toe met al jul mag,
 op troos of op plesier bedag,
 na ’n vrolike relaas
 aangaande ’n ridder goed en sag
 in toernament sowel as slag –
 sy naam was heer Topaas.

Yborn he was in fer contree,
 In Flaundres, al biyonde the see,
 At Poper yng, in the place.
 His fader was a man ful free,
 And lord he was of that contree,
 As it was Goddes grace.

Hy is gebore in die land
 van Vlaandere ver anderkant
 die see, te Popering.
 Sy vader was van hoë stand,
 hy was die vors van daardie land
 deur God se ordening.

¹⁴¹ R.E. Kaske, *The Canticum Canticorum in the Miller’s Tale*, *Studies in Philology*, vol. 59, no. 3, 1962, p. 484.

¹⁴² Love-sickness was regarded as a physical illness, the symptoms of which are referred to in the *Knight’s Tale*, l. 1356-1379.

¹⁴³ E.J. Howard, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, New York, NY: Twayne, 1964, p. 170.

Sire Thopas was a doghty swayn;
Whit was his face as payndemayn,
His lippes rede as rose;
His rode is lyk scarlet in grayn,
And I yow telle in good certain
He hadde a semely nose.

His heer, his berd was lyk saffroun,
That to his girdel raughte adoun;
His shoon of cordewane.
Of Brugges were his hosen broun,
His robe was of syklatoun,
That coste many a jane.

(VII.712-735)

Sy aangesig was sonder plooi,
en sy gelaatskleur bleek soos strooi,
sy lippe soos granaat,
sy wange was skarlakenrooi
en verder was sy neus ook mooi –
dis die waarheid wat ek praat.

Sy baard en hare van saffraan
golf byna tot sy gordel aan;
in Brugge is sy broek gekoop;
sy stewels was van kordewaan,
sy kleed was fyn en ek verstaan
dit kos 'n hele hoop.

After the lofty diction of Sir Thopas, the Host's exasperation is expressed in down-to-earth speech, peppered with oaths. The translation draws on typically Afrikaans idiom, for instance: "net mooi moeg", "kwytraak", "oor 'n boeg", and "kry end". I have not found "rond en pront" in any dictionary, but such rhyming pairs occur spontaneously in popular parlance. Thus I recall my father saying of a grandchild who used too much sugar on his porridge: "Hy gooi die suiker oor en toor". The rhymed pair gives extra prominence to the unexpected "stront". Bill Bryson has a special talent for using such turns of phrase when one least expects them, and I laugh out loud when I encounter them.

"Namooore of this, for Goddes dignitee,"
Quod oure Hooste, "for thou makest me
So wer of thy verray lewednesse
That, also wisly God my soule blesse,
Myne eres aken of thy drasty speche.
Now swich a rym the devel I betechel!
This may wel be rym dogerel," quod he.
"Why so?" quod I, "why wiltow lette me
Moore of my tale than another man,
Syn that it is the beste rym that I kan?"
"By God," quod he, "for pleynty, at a word,
Thy drasty ryning is nat worth a toord!"

(VII.919-929)

"Dis nou genoeg hiervan om hemelswil,"
val die Waard my in die rede, "Bly tog stil!
Die Here weet ek is nou net mooi moeg
vir die louter onsin wat jy oor 'n boeg
hier kwytraak, so kry end met resiteer.
Jou storie maak 'n mens se ore seer;
dis seker wat hul meen met rym'lary."
Ek antwoord hom toe: "Waarom pik op my?
Dis die beste storie wat ek ken, maar nou
word ek beveel om daarmee op te hou."
"Nou goed," sê hy, "ek stel dit rond en pront:
jou versiesmaak is sommer pure stront!"

Having discussed the upliftment of the human spirit in the opening lines of the *Tales*, the life and laughter associated with the Wife of Bath, the animal vitality of the Miller's Tale, and the sheer fun of Sir Thopas, I now consider to the doctrinal origins of the joylessness to which Lina Spies refers.

The hymnody of the church prior to the acceptance of the *Liedboek van die Kerk*¹⁴⁴ in 2001 was essentially catechetical. Ostensibly addressed to God, it spoke “objectively” to the congregation about theological truths centred on God’s power and human wretchedness:

God enkel lig, voor u gesig
is niks op aarde rein nie.
Ons is bevek, met skuld bedek –
kan nie voor u verskyn nie.¹⁴⁵

Feminist theologian Christina Landman describes the stultifying effect that a male-oriented religion of power had on Afrikaner women as they struggled to adapt to the restrictive female sub-culture of a dominant culture “infamous for its racism, sexism and authoritarianism”. As men laid claim to truth, universality, eternity and objectivity, devout women like Susanna Smit internalized a piety of fear of God and a paralyzing self-image.¹⁴⁶ Landman contends that the language of orthodox Calvinism consists of variations on the doctrine of original sin and that is all it has words for.¹⁴⁷

The Wife of Bath proposes a different approach for female theology, offering actual experience as a counterweight to male insistence on authority: “Al was daar g’n geskrif war dit beaam,/sou ek uit ondervinding saam/kon praat ...” she asserts. The sensitivity of the clergy to dissident lay people – in this case a woman! – appropriating clerical discourse¹⁴⁸ also comes across very clearly in the Friar’s rebuke:

<p>“Dame,” quod he, “God yeve yow right good lyf! Ye han heer touched, also moot I thee, In scole-matere greet difficultee. Ye han seyde muche thyng right wel, I seye, Us nedeth nat to speken but of game, And lete auctoritees, on Goddes name, To prechyng and to scoles of clergye...” (III.1270-1277)</p>	<p>“Mevrou, ek wens u seëning van die Heer. Die sake wat u hier te berde bring, kom in skolastiese bespiegeling meermale voor. U het dit straks nie mis, maar tog, terwyl ons op die reispad is, is dit beter dat ons lag en skertsend praat, in godsnaam ou outoriteite laat aan predikante en aan teoloë. ...”</p>
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¹⁴⁴ Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, *Liedboek van die Kerk*. Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitewers, 2001.

¹⁴⁵ Gesang 265, Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. *Die Berymde Psalms ... met die Evangeliese Gesange*. Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitewers; 1976.

¹⁴⁶ C. Landman, *The Piety of Afrikaans Women*, Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1994, p. 75.

¹⁴⁷ C. Landman, Verlos ons van godsdienstige taal, in *Briewe deur die Lug*, p. 80.

¹⁴⁸ A. Blamires, Crisis and Dissent, in *A Companion to Chaucer*, p. 142; cf. A. Fletcher, The Summoner and the Abominable Anatomy of Antichrist, in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, edited by L.J. Kiser, vol. 18, 1968, p. 113, with reference to even greater clerical discomfiture in the Summoner’s Tale.

The change in hymnody referred to above derive from and have been accompanied by liturgical reform. Terms never heard before – kantillerend, ordinarium, akklamasie, antifoon, respons¹⁴⁹ – are indicative of the Church’s reconnection with its roots and the concomitant break with isolation. Unsurprisingly its break with the recent past has been strenuously resisted. When some local church leaders welcomed the election of Pope Francis and participated in a retreat with Roman Catholic clergy, it was regarded as going too far and elicited responses such as the following contribution to a website dedicated to the church’s errors:

Die NG-Kerk se fassinering met die Katolieke en hul Pous – in plaas daarvan om hul te ontmasker vir wat hul werklik is, nl. ’n kultus met soveel onChristelike teologie dat hul nie ’n kerk is nie, maar eerder ’n misleier van mense – is ’n aanduiding dat die NGK ook besig is om ’n vals kerk te word. Dr Gustav Claassen verleen met hierdie skrywe geloofwaardigheid aan die Pous en sy instituut van Rome. Die NGK is eukumenies onherroepelik op pad na die arms van die ‘moederkerk’ van Rome.¹⁵⁰

As I pointed out in Chapter 2, readers who subscribe to anti-Catholic invective may find that the *Canterbury Tales* reinforces their prejudices. But there is also a possibility that exposure to a different mindset may challenge preconceptions and that the sheer beauty of the Prioress’s prologue, for example, may seduce a receptive reader into a “dynamic engagement with an *actual* other world...[one] dramatically distant from us in time, space and culture”¹⁵¹ and acceptance of the reality of a never-before considered spirituality:

O Lord, oure Lord, thy name how merveillous
Is in this large world ysprad –quod she –
For noght oonly thy laude precious
Parfourned is by men of dignitee,
But by the mouth of children thy bountee
Parfourned is, for on the brest soukyng
Somtyme shewen they thyn heriyng.

Wherefore is laude, as I best kan or may,
Of thee and of the white lylie flour
Which that the bar, and is a mayde alway,
To telle a storie I wol do my labour;
Nat that I may encreasen hir honour,
For she herself is honour and the roote
Of bountee, next hir Sone, and soules boote.

O, Heer, ons Heer, hoe lieflik is u roem
in hierdie ganse aarde rond versprei,
want, nie net word u grote lof genoem
deur die man van hoë aansien nie, sê sy,
maar U’t dit ook uit kindermund berei,
dat selfs die baba wat die bors nog suig,
partymaal van u heerlikheid getuig.

Derhalwe sal ek my beywer om,
na my vermoë, iets te sê geskik
tot eer van U en die wit lelieblom
wat U gebaar het, ewig maagdelik;
nie dat ek na haar meerdere eer wil mik,
want sy is eer en (naas haar Seun) altyd
die bron van guns en van ons saligheid.

¹⁴⁹ E.C. Kloppers, Vernuwings in die kerklied, *Acta Theologica*, Jg. 23, no. 1, Junie 2003, p. 71-82.

¹⁵⁰ Dr Kobus Gerber en die Roomse Gevaar, Hierstaaneke-webwerf, 19 Maart 2013.

¹⁵¹ D. Damrosch, Translation and World Literature, in *Translation Studies Reader*, 3rd edition, p. 424.

O mooder Mayde, O mayde Mooder free!
 O bussh unbrent, brennynge in Moyses sighte,
 That ravishedest down fro the Deitee,
 Thurgh thyn humblesse, the Goost that in
 th'alighte,
 Of whos vertu, whan he thyn herte lighte,
 Conceyved was the Fadres sapience,
 Help me to telle it in thy reverence!

O Moedermaagd, wat altyd maagd sal wees!
 O bos wat brand voor Moses, onverteer!
 wat deur u nederigheid die Heil'ge Gees
 na ons gebring het, dalend van die Heer,
 deur wie se krag u hart geillumineer,
 ontvang is die Wysheid van die Vader,
 mag my verhaal u waardigheid benader.

Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,
 Thy vertu and thy grete humylitee
 Ther may no tonge expresse in no science;
 For somtyme, Lady, er men praye to thee,
 Thou goost biforn of thy benygnytee,
 And getest us the lyght, of thy preyere,
 To gyden us unto thy Sone so deere.

O Liewe Vrou, geen tong kan dit vermag
 om aan u mildheid reg te laat geskied,
 u luister, diepe nederigheid en krag.
 Want somtyds, voordat ons nog tot u bid,
 is u reeds daar en bewerkstellig dit
 dat ons deur u gebede lig verkry
 om ons tot by u liewe Seun te lei.

My konnyng is so wayk, O blisful Queene,
 For to declare thy grete worthynesse
 That I ne may the weighte nat susteene;
 But as a child of twelf month oold, or lesse,
 That kan unnethes any word expresse,
 Right so fare I, and therefore I yow preye,
 Gydeth my song that I shal of yow seye.

Te swak is my vermoë, Koningin,
 om u groot waardigheid te kan verklaar –
 my kragte is vir so 'n taak te min;
 dit gaan met my soos met 'n kind wat maar
 twaalf maande oud is, nog 'n stotteraar,
 en daarom bid ek dat u aan die lied
 wat ek van u gaan sing, self leiding bied.

(VII.453-487)

Such a challenge would be consistent with Iser's conception of the fragmented subject, the reader holding previous experience in abeyance during exposure to a novel literary event.¹⁵² This is precisely, Antoine Berman contends (after Schleiermacher), that every culture needs translation to enrich it:

The very aim of translation – to open up in writing a certain relation with the Other, to fertilise what is one's own through the mediation of what is Foreign – is diametrically opposed to the ethnocentric structure of every culture, that species of narcissism by which every society wants to be a pure and unadulterated Whole.¹⁵³

Acceptance of the Prologue may be the necessary prelude and key to present-day acceptance of the Tale. Stephen Spector argues convincingly that (leaving her much-dispraised anti-Semitism aside for the moment) the Prioress's identification with the child who makes known the glory of God reconciles the conflicting elements of the portrait in the General Prologue, her prayerful prologue and the

¹⁵² A. Carusi, M. De Jong and Z. Jackson, *Theory of Literature, Study Guide*, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1991, p. 28.

¹⁵³ K.M. Faull, Introduction, in *Translation and Culture*, Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2004, p. 17.

contentious Tale.¹⁵⁴ Like the child, she is inarticulate, frail and vulnerable, devoted to the Virgin Mary, the bearer of a simple, childlike faith. Like her, he is “sowded to virginitee” (VII.1769). For G.H. Russell too the gentleness of the Prologue prepares the reader to appreciate Chaucer’s economy and skill in the construction of the Tale.¹⁵⁵ The Prologue opens with a powerful invocation of Psalm 8, familiar to Chaucer’s Catholic contemporaries from its use in the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin and as the introit of the Mass of the Holy Innocents,¹⁵⁶ but also very well known to Protestant Afrikaans speakers as a popular hymn. The two versifications of the second stanza by Totius and T.T. Cloete¹⁵⁷ read as follows:

U het, o HEER, wat troon oor alle dinge,
 uit kindertaal en stem van suigeling
 u mag gegrond, sodat die mens moet swyg
 wat, hoog van hart, uit wraakbegeerte dreig.

Selfs kinders sing van wat U als gemaak het,
 van wat u hande skeppend aangeraak het.
 ’n Suigeling kan as getuie sing
 en so u vyande tot swye bring.

In Cloete’s version the opposition between the child who witnesses to God’s greatness and the enemies of God is starkly evident, as opposed to Totius’s periphrastic vengeance seekers. It also has the advantage of emphasising the singing which, as Marie Boroff points out, is crucial to the tale’s plot:¹⁵⁸ the child hears the singing of Alma Redemptoris Mater, sings on his way through the ghetto, sings even though his throat has been cut. The monks sing the Mass, and the triumph of good over evil is exemplified by the virgin martyr singing in the heavenly choir (VII.579-585). The Prioress refers to her tale as a song and its diction is incantatory.¹⁵⁹ This emphasis on singing correlates well with Cloete’s version of the psalm with its explicit references to singing reinforced by repetition, rhyme (sing/tot stilte bring), and the internal rhyme suigeling/sing, in comparison with the distance introduced by the use of the nouns “taal” and “stem” in the Totius version.

Doctrinal fundamentalism would be an impediment to a joyful reception of the *Pelgrimsverhale*. Although Chaucer “must certainly be considered a devout and

¹⁵⁴ S. Spector, Empathy and Enmity in the Prioress’s Tale, in *The Olde Daunce*; edited by R.R. Edwards and S. Spector, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991, p. 220-223.

¹⁵⁵ G.H. Russell, The Prioress’s Tale, in *Medieval Literature and Civilization*; edited by D.A. Pearsall and R.A. Waldron, London: Athlone Press, 1969, p. 224.

¹⁵⁶ Benson, Explanatory Notes, p. 914.

¹⁵⁷ Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, *Berymde Psalms en Evangeliese Gesange*; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, *Liedboek van die Kerk*.

¹⁵⁸ M. Boroff, “Loves Hete” in the Prioress’s Prologue and Tale, in *The Olde Daunce*, p. 233.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 234.

orthodox Catholic, though ... evidently of a mildly reformist persuasion",¹⁶⁰ it is impossible to know what he thought about particular Church doctrines, because of

the double allegiance in Chaucer's habit of simultaneously positing and undoing a foundational moment. He typically establishes for his poems a legitimizing genesis, an originary absoluteness, whose contingency and insufficiency are then relentlessly exposed.¹⁶¹

Or as Barry Windeatt observes: "[W]ho could be more evasive than Chaucer towards the *grand récits* of his culture? Taken as a whole, his work is not exactly in the service of reaffirming Christian orthodoxy."¹⁶²

The present-day Afrikaans reader who is less categorical in matters of dogma will relate to Chaucer's famous "detachment" in such matters as well. Of the death of Arcite, the narrator concludes:

His spirit chaunged hous and wente ther,
As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher.
Therefore I stynte; I nan no divinistre;
Of soules fynde I nat in this registre,
Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle
Of hem, though that they writen wher they
dwelle.

(l.2809-2814)

Sy siel het toe verhuis, maar ek weet nie waar
dit heen is nie – ek was nog self nie daar,
dus swyg ek liewer; ek's g'n teoloog;
van siele is daar niks in my betoog.
Ek wil geen mening lug oor hul verblyf,
al word dié ook deur teoloë beskryf.

And if uncertainty about Arcite's post-mortem destiny is attributed to the pagan setting of the Knight's Tale, two rejoinders may be offered. The first is that the opening of the *Legend of Good Women* confirms Chaucer's preoccupation with the issue:

A thousand tymes have I herd men telle
That ther ys joy in hevene and peyne in helle,
And I acorde wel that it ys so;
But, natheles, yet wot I wel also
That ther nis noon dwelling in this contree
That eyther hath in hevene or helle ybe,
Ne may hit noon other weyes witen
But as he hath herd seyde or founde it writen ...

(*Legend of Good Women*, 1-8)

¹⁶⁰ P. Strohm, *The Poet's Tale*, p. 81.

¹⁶¹ L. Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 19.

¹⁶² B. Windeatt, Postmodernism in Chaucer, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, p. 401.

The second is that Chaucer's relaxed orthodoxy includes a respect for pagan thought characteristic of the Boethian synthesis of Christian and classical ideas. Numerous translations of and references to Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*

exemplify the eclecticism and ecumenism of the many medieval Christians like Chaucer, who rejoiced in what they knew of classical philosophy not only because it coincided with their own opinions or because they thought it prefigured Christianity but because it reflected the presence of God.¹⁶³

St Bernard of Clairvaux affirmed that ignorance of Christ did not preclude knowledge of God by natural law and St Augustine differentiated between the Church and the City of God, asserting that it is the power of divine love that moves human beings to build the City of God.¹⁶⁴ In this context, Theseus's account of the operation of the Boethian First Mover in the Knight's Tale (l.2987-3089) is, at once, a hymn of praise to God's providential love.

This ecumenical spirit admittedly did not extend to Jews and Muslims. Jews had been banished from England since 1290, but they were "central to post-expulsion English religious and national identity, an absent presence around which identity solidified".¹⁶⁵ Although Chaucer probably had no direct knowledge of Jews or Judaism, his travels in Europe would have acquainted him with the phenomenon of Jews isolated in ghettos and therefore always the Other. The anti-Semitism of the Prioress's Tale is particularly offensive to post-Holocaust readers, but it must be recognized that anti-Semitism was a pervasive feature of medieval Christianity and continued to exist even in the shadow of the Holocaust.¹⁶⁶ And in South Africa, long before the conflation of opposition to the State of Israel and anti-Semitism, legislation was enacted to prevent Jews fleeing from Nazi persecution from entering the country and Jews found themselves debarred from exclusive English clubs and schools.

Pearsall has commented on a tendency to use dramatic irony or ironic reconstruction to make tales that offend modern sensitivities more acceptable to

¹⁶³ R. Ames, *God's Plenty*, Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press, 1984, p. 207.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 207, 210.

¹⁶⁵ J. Cohen, Postcolonialism, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, p. 459.

¹⁶⁶ Thus on 11 August 1945, the Jews of Cracow who had survived the concentration camps were attacked and beaten up in the streets, in their homes and in the hospital where they awaited treatment by a mob led by police and militia. People were plundered and the synagogue was burnt down because, according to a rumour, a Christian child had been murdered there. See: I. Buruma, *1945*, Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2013, p. 98-99.

readers.¹⁶⁷ The desire to come to Chaucer's defence is understandable, but even if the Prioress's Tale is ironised out of all contention, we are still left with the Parson's references to the Jews as "cursed" (X.599).¹⁶⁸ The Prioress's Tale is crafted by a master to allow innocence to alternate with violence. If the pathos of the child's innocence has lost its appeal for us, the violence of the villainous Jews and the vengeance visited on them may yet serve as a warning against religious intolerance:

Fro thennes forth the Jues han conspired
 This innocent out of the world to chace.
 An homycide therto han they hyred,
 That in an aleye hadde a privee place;
 And as the child gan forby for to pace,
 This cursed Jew hym hente, and heeld hym
 faste;
 And kitte his throte, and in a pit hym caste.

Van toe af het die Jode saamgespan,
 want hul't die stomme kind se dood verlang;
 hul het 'n moordenaar gehuur, 'n man
 wat hom verskuil het in 'n donker gang.
 En toe die kind daarlangs verbykom, vang
 die lae Jood hom stewig, sny verblyd
 sy keel; en het hom toe 'n put gesmyt.

I seye that in a wardrobe they hem threwe
 Where as thise Jewes purgen hire entraille.
 O cursed folk of Herodes al newe,
 What may youre yvel entente yow availle?
 Mordre wol out, certeyn, it wol nat faille,
 And namely that th'onour of God shal sprede;
 The bloodout crieth on youre cursed dede.
 (VII.565-578)

'n Kleinhuisie se sinkput was dit waar
 die Jode hulle derms gaan ontlas.
 Vervloekte volk Herodese, spruit daar
 dan voordeel daaruit dat jul nydig was?
 want 'Moord bly nie verborge', dit staan vas,
 veral waar God Sy meerdere eer beoog.
 Bloed roep oor jul vervloekte daad omhoog.

With torment and with shameful deeth echon,
 This provost dooth thise Jewes for to sterve
 That of this mordre wiste, and that anon.
 He nolde no swich cursednesse observe.
 "Yvele shal have that yvele wol deserve";
 Therefore with wilde hors he dide hem drawe,
 And after that he heng hem by the lawe.
 (VII.628-634)

Toe't die provoos onmiddellik elke Jood
 wat medepligtig was aan daardie daad
 gestraf met foltering en skandedood,
 want hy't nie sulke boosheid toegelaat;
 'Aan boosheid word gemeet gelyke maat.'
 Dat hul gehang moes word, het hy beveel,
 ná wilde perde hul eers vierendeel.

In the second stanza quoted above, the horror is heightened by the explicitness of the words "kleinhuisie", "derms" and "ontlas", the repetition of the word "vervloekte" and the alliteration of "vervloekte volk".

Identification of Islam with idolatry and sacrificial rites in the Man of Law's Tale demonstrates ignorance of the Muslim religion; the monstrous figure of the sultan's mother represents the horror of the infidel enemy against whom the Christian Knight fought in Turkey, Morocco and Spain. In contrast to this virago, Custance

¹⁶⁷ Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1985, p. 250.

¹⁶⁸ L.D. Benson, Explanatory Notes, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 913.

embodies the superiority of Christian religion and civilization, justifying the invasive imposition of the one upon the other.¹⁶⁹

Closer to home, *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest* drew attention to the ambiguity of missionary activity in South Africa; a slender volume, *The Conversion*, focuses on the violence done to assumed inferiors in the specificity of a particular instance.¹⁷⁰ The *entente* of the Man of Law's Tale is that the reader should recoil from the villainy of the infidel; however, from a post-colonial perspective we are not unaware of the (admittedly ill-advised) villainy of the Christian protagonists:

What nedeth gretter dilatacioun?
I seye, by tretys and embassadie,
And by the popes mediacioun,
And al the chirche, and al the chivalrie,
That in destruccioun of mawmettrie,
And in encrees of Cristes lawe deere,
They been acorded, so as ye shal heere:

Dit is onnodig om nog uit te wei.
Deur middel van verdrag en afgesant
en deur bemiddeling van die Pous daarby,
gesteun deur Kerk en adellike stand,
is daar ooreengekom dat hul die land
sou suiwer van Moesliem-afgodery
om dit aan Christus en Sy wet te wy.

How that the Sowdan and his baronage
And alle his liges sholde ycristed be,
And he shal han Custance in mariage,
And certein gold, I noot what quantitee;
And heer to founden sufficient suretee.
This same accord was sworn on eyther syde;
Now, faire Custance, almyghte God thee gyde!
(II.232-245)

Die sultan en die hoës van die land,
sy onderdane ook, moes hul laat doop:
dit was die prys vir die prinses se hand
en daarby ook nog goud – 'n hele hoop;
ek kan nie sê presies wat dit beloop
het nie, maar dis gewaarborg. Liewe vrou,
mag die Here jou in Sy bewaring hou.

4.5.3 Cultural expectations around gender

Patriarchy, the institutionalization of the manliness construct as the dominant mode of being, the generic norm of humanity,¹⁷¹ is deeply entrenched in Afrikaans culture where it has held sway for many generations as an expression of the will of both politicians and church leaders. Gendered roles are variable, subject to transformation, but because we are socialized into them, established patterns of behaviour readily reassert themselves. In the wake of the South African War, for example, women briefly claimed the moral high ground as the true *bittereinders*,¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Cohen, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, p. 456.

¹⁷⁰ N. Majeke, *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*, Johannesburg: Society of Young Africa, [1952?]; P. Delius, *The Conversion*, Johannesburg: Ravan, 1984.

¹⁷¹ M.M. Nieman, 'n Analise van die representasie van geslagtelikheid in Roelf van Rensburg se *Gooi hom in die sloot* (1971) en Barrie Hough se *Skilpoppe* (1998), M.A. mini-verhandeling, Universiteit van Natal, Durban, 2001.

¹⁷² The "bittereinders" were Boers who were regarded as heroic for maintaining resistance to the British to the bitter end of the South African War.

but their subservience was reaffirmed from the 1920s onwards by the assertion of their “proper” role in the domestic sphere¹⁷³ and the male discourse of their historical victimhood, exemplified by the interpretation of the Vrouemonument fostered by subsequent rampant Afrikaner nationalism.¹⁷⁴ When destitute Afrikaans women entered the garment industry in the 1920s, their efforts to feed their families subverted the patriarchy of unemployed male relatives and their self-assertion in unionized action placed them “beyond the pale in the eyes of the more ‘respectable’ conception of Afrikaner womanhood”.¹⁷⁵ Female suffrage did not accord with the submissiveness and unassertiveness appropriate to them. Therefore a synodal commission of the Gereformeerde Kerk chaired by J.D. du Toit (Totius) advised their 1920 synod “om altyd te protesteer teen Vroue stemreg op grond van Gods Woord”.¹⁷⁶ When women did get the vote ten years later, it was because Herzog saw it as a means to counter the constitutionally entrenched Cape African vote, which he had tried in vain to abolish.¹⁷⁷ Two world wars offered opportunities for women to assume previously male responsibilities, but after the World War II, a discourse of female domesticity once more held sway.

The multiple disabilities of women affected every facet of daily life, as I found when as late as 1978 my wife needed a letter from me giving her permission to teach at a government-funded high school in Pretoria, where she would be paid on a lower salary scale than her male colleagues. And because patriarchy was normative, at the time, I am now embarrassed to say, I was not nearly as upset as she was.

The theological underpinning of patriarchy is at least as old as the book of *Genesis* and the Church’s role in its maintenance is illustrated by this quotation from a university professor, bolstering his exegetical expertise with amateur psychology:

¹⁷³ J. Rossouw, *’n Rooi Z4 en ’n Renaissance-kasteel*, Kaapstad: Zebra, 2007, p. 13; S.E. Pretorius, Poor Whiteness: The Fictional *Volksmoeder* in South African Novels, *Historia*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2019, p. 70.

¹⁷⁴ L. Stanley and H. Dampier, Cultural Entrepreneurs, Proto-Nationalism and Women’s Testimony Writings, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3, September 2007, p. 508; N. Meyer, *Sitting pretty*: ’n Onderhoud met Christi van der Westhuizen, *Voertaal Nieuwsbrief*, 1 Feb., 2018; A. Grundlingh, The Meaning of the Women’s Monument, in *The War at Home*; edited by B. Nasson and A. Grundlingh, Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2013, p. 241.

¹⁷⁵ E. Brink, “Maar ’n klomp ‘factory’ meide”, in *Class, Community and Conflict*, edited by B. Bozzoli, Johannesburg: Ravan, 1987, p. 178.

¹⁷⁶ Landman, *The Piety of Afrikaans Women*, p. 110.

¹⁷⁷ C. Walker, Women’s Suffrage Movement, South African History Online.

Die vrou ... is fisies swakker, emosioneel fynbesnaard, en kom die beste tot haar reg as sy binne 'n geborge omgewing leef wat deur die man geskep is. Hy moet die verantwoordelikheid vir die sekuriteit en voortbestaan van die gesin dra, terwyl sy vir die daaglikse versorging, bemoediging en opvoeding van die gesin moet instaan, en ook deur haar sin vir die estetiese 'n mooi en aangename leefruimte skep. Haar vroulikheid moenie ondermyn word deur haar met take te belas wat deur die man uitgevoer moet word nie. ...

Wat sal van 'n vrou word as sy haar in die harde wêreld van 'n man begewe en haarself sodoende buite God se gesagstruktuur probeer handhaaf? Sy sal haar vroulikheid heeltemal inboet en emosioneel knak onder die lading van verantwoordelikhede waarvoor sy nie geroepe en toegerus is nie. Sy sal óf in depressie óf in arrogansie verval.¹⁷⁸

This interpretation is consistent with the medieval conception of a hierarchically structured reality in which the cosmos, the state, the family and the individual are governed by God, the ruler, the husband/father and reason respectively,¹⁷⁹ but it reads unconvincingly in an age when post-modernism has taught us to look beyond a narrative to its source and beyond the source to the agenda it serves. Thus instructed, we respond with delight to the Wife of Bath's adept deconstructionism in her "vigorous two-fingered reply to teachings that enjoin meekness, obedience, and restraint in speech, dress, physical and sexual behaviour"¹⁸⁰:

For trusteth wel, it is an impossible
That any clerk wol speke good of wyves,
But if it be of hooly seintes lyves,
Ne of noon oother womman never the mo.
Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?
By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,
As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,
They wolde han writen of men moore
wikkednesse ...

...

Therefore no womman of no clerk is preysed.
The clerk, whan he is oold, and may nocht do
Of Venus werkes worth his oolde sho,
Thanne sit he doun, and writ in his dotage
That wommen kan nat kepe hir mariage!
(III.688-695, 706-710)

... want een ding's seker, dit sal moeilik gaan
vir 'n geestelike om 'n vrou te prys,
tensy hy na 'n Heilige verwys,
maar al die ander moet beswadding ly.
Maar wie't die leeu geskilder? Sê vir my.
As dit 'n vrou was wat die ding vertel,
en nie 'n man, gekluister in 'n sel,
stel sy die mans se sondes aan die kaak
...

en daarom word g'n vrou deur 'n klerk geprys.
Wanneer hy oud is en nie mee kan doen,
dink seks is minder werd as sy ou skoen,
gaan skryf hy in sy kindsheid dat g'n vrou
haar ooit by huweliksbeloftes hou!

¹⁷⁸ J. Malan, *Die Vrou in die Gemeente*.

¹⁷⁹ J. Stephens and R. Waterhouse, *Literature, Language and Change*, London: Routledge, 1990, p. 24.

¹⁸⁰ G. Ashton, *Feminisms*, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, p. 373.

The Nun's Priest's Tale satirises this assumption of male superiority. According to a feminist manifesto quoted by Josephine Donovan, "man establishes his 'manhood' in direct proportion to his ability to have his ego override woman's, and derives his strength and self-esteem through this process".¹⁸¹ This is precisely how Chauntecleer behaves in relation to Pertelote. Unable to win his argument about the significance of dreams and having scorned her home remedies, he has a snide joke at her expense (and I am reminded of Mr Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*), mistranslating "*Mulier est hominis confusio*" as "Womman is mannes joye and al his blis" (VII.3164-3166). Finally, he resorts to physical domination: although he is unable to "ryde" her on their perch, he certainly over-rides her once they are on the ground. The incident reminds me of something I saw in the early 1970s: tanks and artillery pieces were displayed at Fort Klapperkop, where I saw a cannon inscribed "Ultima ratio regis" – the king's final argument.¹⁸²

Chaucer's description of Chauntecleer's restored self-esteem is simply masterly:

Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,
 Of o thyng God hath sent me large grace;
 For whan I se the beautee of youre face,
 Ye been so scarlet reed aboute youre yen,
 It maketh al my drede for to dyen;
 For al so siker as *In Principio*,
Mulier est hominis confusio –
 Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,
 'Womman is mannes joye and al his blis.'
 For whan I feele a-nyght your softe syde –
 Al be it that I may nat on yow ryde,
 For thatoure perche is maad so narwe, allas –
 I am so ful of joye and of solas,
 That I diffye bothe sweven and dreem."
 And with that word he fley doune fro the beem,
 For it was day, and eke his hennes alle,
 And with a chuck he gan hem for to calle,
 For he hadde founde a corn, lay in the yerd.
 Real he was, he was namoore aferd.
 He fethered Pertelote twenty tyme,
 And trad hire eke as ofte, er it was pryde.
 He looketh as it were a grym leoun,
 And on his toos he rometh up and doune;
 He chukketh whan he hath a corn yfounde,

... want, mevrou Pertelot, die Here het
 my hierin so begunstig inderdaad,
 as ek die skoonheid sien van jou gelaat,
 die kringe van skarlaken om jou oë,
 dan is my angstigheid meteens vervloë.
 Want net so seker as *In Principio*,
mulier est hominis confusio –
 mevrou, die spreuk het dié betekenis
 dat 'n vrou 'n man se troos en vreugde is –
 wanneer ek snags jou donserige sy
 hier langs my voel, al kan ek jou nie ry –
 ons wankelrige slaapstok is al rede –
 dan voel ek so voldaan en stil tevrede
 en kan ek droom en visioen trotseer.'
 En daarop vlieg hy van die slaapstok neer
 (want dit was dag), asook sy henneskaar,
 en met 'n kloek roep hy hul bymekaar
 want hy't 'n saadjie op die werf gekry.
 Nie meer benoud, maar vorstelik was hy,
 hy't vlerkgesleep en nog voor die priemgety
 vir Pertelot goed twintig keer gery.
 Hy lyk nou soos 'n leeu, hy is so straf:
 en op sy tone stap hy op en af,
 goed grond te vat hom skaars verwerdigend.

¹⁸¹ *The Politics of the Ego*, quoted in J. Donovan, *Feminist Theory*, 3rd edition, New York, NY: Continuum, 2001, p. 158.

¹⁸² Commonly found on Spanish royal cannons; cf. Timothy Darvill, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

And to him rennen thanne his wyves alle.
Thus roial, as a prince is in his halle,
Leve I this Chauntecleer in his pasture ...
(VII.3157-3185)

Hy het gekloek as hy 'n saadjie vind,
en dan kom al sy henne aangenael.
Hier, soos 'n prins wat heerlik hom onthaal
in sy paleis, sal ek Kantekleer laat
staan...

Sexual activity is regarded as a marker of masculinity, as is aggression.¹⁸³ According to Freud, “[t]he sexuality of most men shows an admixture of aggression, of a propensity to subdue, the biological significance of which lies in the necessity for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object”.¹⁸⁴ Feminists have vehemently rejected this assertion of anatomy as destiny as a legitimation of sexual intercourse as rape, which has the effect of informing “the dispossessed that the circumstances of their deprivation are organic, therefore unalterable”.¹⁸⁵ Aggression is learnt behaviour and centuries of state and familial patriarchy, sanctified by fundamentalist religion and enhanced by militarism in recent years, has resulted in South Africa’s having perhaps the highest rate of rape and murder in the world. Even more disturbing is that much of the violence perpetrated against women occurs within intimate relationships (as was the case with the Wife of Bath, whose husband hits her hard enough to cause deafness). According to data from the Medical Research Council, 25 per cent of men in South Africa have raped someone and 40 per cent admit to having hit their partners.¹⁸⁶

According to the traditional Pauline teaching, marriage is a means of avoiding lust. Sex is described as a mutual debt, but as the subordination of the woman is commanded, a sense of male entitlement is fostered, and, in the words of Diane Elam, “feminists know how the notion of ‘conjugal rights’ has served to enshrine marital rape for centuries in the West”.¹⁸⁷ The Parson concludes:

... she hath merite of chastitee that yeldeth to
hire housbonde the dette of hir body, ye, even
though it be agayn hir likynge and the lust of
hire herte. (X.944)

... 'n vrou wat haar huwelikspelig teenoor haar
man nakom, hoewel sy niks daarvan hou nie,
besit luidens die wet die verdienstelikheid van
kuisheid.

¹⁸³ Cf. J Cock, *Colonels and Cadres*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 61-65.

¹⁸⁴ Freud, quoted in Donovan, *Feminist Theory*, p. 106.

¹⁸⁵ K. Millett, quoted in Donovan, *Feminist Theory*, p. 115.

¹⁸⁶ P. Ghosh, Oscar Pistorius, *International Business Times*, 19 Feb. 2013.

¹⁸⁷ D. Elam, *Feminism and Deconstruction*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 79.

and in the Man of Law's Tale, Custance acts in accordance with this victim virtue:

They goon to bedde, as it was skile and right;
For thogh that wyves be ful hooly thynges,
They moste take in pacience at nyght
Swiche manere necessaries as been plesynges
To folk that han ywedded hem with rynges,
And leye a lite hir hoolynesse aside,
And for the tyme – it may no bet bitide.

(II.708-714)

Toe't hul gaan lê; dis immers goed en waar
dat 'n vrou, al is sy ook 'n heil'ge ding,
maar alles snags gelate moet aanvaar
wat daar gedoen word ter bevrediging
van hom wat haar getrou het met 'n ring.
Daar is g'n ander uitweg, dus sit sy
haar heiligheid voorlopig maar opsy.

A man's entitlement to the use of a female body "in a self-gratifying exercise of 'manly' power and domination"¹⁸⁸ is shocking to modern sensibility and as shocking is a woman's resignation to the inevitability of such normative abuse, as Dorigen acknowledges in discouraging Aurelius's advances in the Franklin's Tale.¹⁸⁹

Lat swiche folies out of youre herte slyde.
What deyntee sholde a man han in his lyf
For to go love another mannes wyf,
That hath hir body whan so that hym liketh?

(V.1002-1005)

Laat sulke dwaasheid uit jou kop uit gaan.
Watter vreugde hou die lewe in
vir een wat 'n ander man se vrou bemin,
terwyl dié volmag oor haar liggaam het?'

But it is in the Merchant's Tale that the themes of the Church's teaching, male entitlement and the passive (though hardly virtuous) bride all come together in a scathing critique. The role of the Church in sanctifying a loveless union is described to devastating effect in a hurried sequence of customary actions "that make everything that a man wants so conveniently, swiftly and licitly available":¹⁹⁰

Forth comth the preest, with stole about his
nekke,
And bad hire be lyk Sara and Rebekke
In wysdom and in trouthe of mariage;
And seyde his orisons, as is usage,
And croucheth hem, and bad God sholde hem
blesse,
And made al siker ynogh with hoolynesse.

(IV.1703-1708)

Die priester kom met stola om die nek;
hy maan dat sy net wysheid en respek
soos Sara en Rebekka moet betoon;
hy sê gebede op, als doodgewoon;
hy kruis hul; smeeke Gods seën af op hul eg;
só maak 'n vrome rite alles reg.

¹⁸⁸ D. Aers, Representations of Marriage and Sexual Relations, in *Critical Essays on Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*; edited by Malcolm Andrew, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991, p. 211.

¹⁸⁹ A. Blamires, Sexuality, in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, p. 217.

¹⁹⁰ Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, p. 258.

After the wedding feast, which Januarie endures with mounting impatience, he fortifies himself with aphrodisiacs, and then the blessing of the marriage bed “leads straight into the sharply detailed and hideous representation of aggressive sexuality, the death of tenderness and the absence of mutuality”:¹⁹¹

And Januarie hath faste in armes take
 His fresshe May, his paradys, his make.
 He lulleth hire; he kisseth hire ful ofte;
 With thikke Brustles of his berd unsofte,
 Lyk to the skyn of houndfiss, sharp as brere –
 For he was shave al newe in his manere –
 He rubbeth hire aboute hir tendre face,
 And seyde thus, “Allas I moot trespace
 To yow, my spouse, and yow greetly offende
 Er tyme come that I wol doun descende.
 But nathelees, considereth this,” quod he,
 “Ther nys no werkman, whatsoevere he be,
 That may bothe werke wel and hastily;
 This wol be doon at leyser parfityly.
 It is no fors how longe that we pleye;
 In trewe wedlok coupled be we tweye,
 And blessed be the yok that we been inne,
 For in our actes we mowe do no synne.
 A man may do no synne with his wyf,
 Ne hurte hymselfen with his owene knyf,
 For we han leve to pleye us by the lawe.”
 Thus labourereth he til that the day gan dawe;
 And thanne he taketh a sop in fyn clarree,
 And upright in his bed thanne sitteth he,
 And after that he sang ful loude and cleere,
 And kiste his wyf, and made wantown cheere.
 He was al coltiss, ful of ragerye,
 And ful of jargon as a flekked pye.
 The slakke skyn aboute his nekke shaketh
 Whil that he sang, so chaunteth he and craketh.
 But God woot what that May thought in hir herte,
 Whan she hym saugh up sittynge in his sherte,
 In his nyght-cappe, and with his nekke lene;
 She preyseth nat his pleyng worth a bene.

(IV.1821-1854)

En Januarie het sy skone jong Mei,
 sy paradys, sy maat, daar beetgekry;
 hy liefkoos haar en soen haar keer op keer
 en skuur sy harde baard pal oor haar teer
 gesig, die stoppels daarvan soos 'n haai
 se vel, dit was so doringskerp en taai,
 al was hy glad geskeer op sy manier;
 en sê: ‘Helaas, dat ek jou moet ontsier,
 my liewe vrou, deur jou te lyf te gaan
 voor dit tyd is om in die oggend op te staan.
 Maar dink daaraan: geen vakman kan gewis
 deeglike werk wil doen as hy haastig is,
 maar, wat ook al die taak, bly tydszaamheid
 die beste welslae bringende beleid.
 Dit maak nie saak hoe lank rek ons ons pret,
 want ons is tog verenig volgens wet.
 Geseënd is die juk wat ons verbind,
 want daarin is g'n sondesmet te vind:
 mens kan nie sonde doen met jou huweliksmaat;
 met jou eie mes kan jy jou mos nie skaad;
 vir ons genietings is ons regsbevoeg.’
 So het hy deur die nag tot dagbreek toe geswoeg;
 Toe neem hy brood wat geweek is in klaret,
 en, penorent gesete op sy bed,
 het hy luid en skril gesing, sy vrou gesoen
 en allerhande gekke goed gedoen;
 so lewenslustig soos 'n vul was hy
 en soos 'n ekster s'n sy babbelary;
 die slap vel het geflabber in sy nek,
 so erg het hy die note uitgerek.
 God weet wat Mei gedink het toe sy daar
 na hom in sy naghemp en sy slaapmus staar;
 met sy seningrige nek het sy liefdespel
 minder as 'n boontjiesstoel by haar getel.

4.5.4 Ecological awareness

During the Middle Ages, (personified) Nature was generally accorded a female identity and represented as God’s deputy with his authority to order the physical

¹⁹¹ Aers, in *Critical Essays on Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales*, p. 211.

world.¹⁹² In the *Parliament of Fowls*, Nature is an aristocratic lady overseeing sexual behaviour; in the *Physician's Tale* she has divine discretion "To forme and peynten erthely creaturis" (VI.21) as she chooses. In medieval configurations, Nature has a human face and is not separate from humanity.¹⁹³ According to Ariel Salleh, "The separation of humanity and nature is the lynch pin of patriarchal ideology,"¹⁹⁴ because as Rosemary Ruether, notes, the fundamental defect in "the male ideology of transcendent dualism" is that it operates by means of conquest,¹⁹⁵ the mastery of difference – whether the Other is woman or Nature.

The *Physician's Tale* exemplifies male conquest of a woman endowed by Nature, and in responding to the Tale, the Host with his customary obtuseness blames that endowment for her death:

Algate this sely mayde is slayn, allas!
 Allas! To deere boughte she beautee!
 Wherefore I seye al day that men may see
 That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature
 Been cause od deeth to many a creature.
 Hire beautee was hire deeth, I dar wel sayn.
 (VI.292-297).

Maar sy's onskuldig dood. Kyk nou net hoe
 'n prys sy vir haar skoonheid moes betaal.
 Dis wat ek sê, mens sien mos baiemaal,
 die gawes van geluk en die natuur
 bring mee die dood van menige kreatuur.
 Haar skoonheid was haar dood, sou ek kon sê.

In the context of the conquest of Nature, I was struck by a passage in the *Knight's Tale* describing the impact of the chopping down of trees for Arcite's funeral pyre:

How they weren feld shal nat be toold for me;
 Ne hou the goddes ronnen up and doun,
 Disherited of hir habitacioun,
 In which they woneden in reste and pees,
 Nymphes, fawnes and amadrides;
 Ne hou 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
 (I.2924-2933)

... of hoedat hul gevel is, daaroor gaan
 ek niks vertel nie, of hoe die gode –
 nimfe, faune en driades – node
 geskarrel het om weg te kom van 'n plek
 wat hul ontnem is, waar hul opgewek
 tot nou toe kon bestaan in peis en vree;
 of hoe die voëls en diere allerweë
 toe die bome om hul val in vrees moes vlug;
 of hoe die grond verras is deur die warm lug
 van sonskyn ...

¹⁹² L.J. Kiser, Alain de Lille, Jean de Meun, and Chaucer, in *Mediaevalitas; edited by P. Boitani and Anna Torti*, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996, p. 1.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁹⁴ A. Salleh, Class, Race, and Gender Discourse in the Ecofeminism/Deep Ecology Debate, *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1993, p. 225.

¹⁹⁵ Rosemary Ruether, quoted in Davidson, *Feminist Theory*, p. 148.

David Wallace comments:

This remarkable switching of viewing perspective finds us looking *with* the earth, rather than at it, as the tree canopy is removed and sunlight strikes for the first time. Chaucer here anticipates a foundational act of modern eco-criticism: to imagine that the planet we inhabit, and are laying to waste, might itself have a point of view.¹⁹⁶

4.5.5 Technological challenges

But matter is often intractable and man's efforts to conquer it meet with frustrating failure. In an amusing scene from the Canon's Yeoman's Tale, the alchemist's pot has exploded, scattering the volatile mixture far and wide, so he jollies his team along not to be discouraged by what is after all only a temporary setback:

"What," quod my lord, "ther is namoore to doone;
Of these perils I wol be war eftsoone.
I am right siker that the pot was crased.
Be as be may, be ye no thyng amased;
As usage is, lat swepe the floor as swithe,
Plukke up youre hertes and beeth glad and
blithe."

The mullok on an heep ysweped was,
And on the floor ycast a canevas,
And al this mullok in a syve ythrowe,
And sifted, and ypiked many a throwe,
"Pardee," quod oon, "somwhat of our metal
Yet is ther heere, though we han nat al.
And though this thyng myshapped have as now,
Another tyme it may be wel ynow.
Us moste putte oure good in aventure.
A marchant, pardee, may nat ay endure,
Trusteth me wel, in his prosperitee.
Somtyme his good is drowned in the see,
And somtyme comth it sauf unto the londe."
..... "Pees! quod my lord, "the nexte tyme I wol
fonde
To bryngen oure craft al in another plite,
And but I do, sires, lat me han the wite.
Ther was defaute in somewhat, we I woot."
(VIII.932-954).

'Wel, daar's niks aan te doen nie,' sê my heer;
'ek sal maar meer versigtig wees 'n volgende
keer.

Bes moontlik was daar 'n kraak in die pot
gewees.

Nou toe! Wat staan jul almal so bedees.
Vee alles soos gewoonlik bymekaar.
Kom, wees vol goeie moed, al gaan dit swaar.'

Nou vee ons al die rommel op 'n hoop
en op die vloer sprei ons 'n seildoek oop;
daarna sal alles in 'n sif beland
vir fyn beoordeling van die restant.

'Haai, kyk,' sê iemand, hier's 'n stukkie oor;
dis darem iets; ons het nie áls verloor.

Al het ons sake misgeloop dié keer;
op 'n ander dag miskien geluk dit weer.

Mens moet bereid wees om 'n kans te waag.
'n Koopman sal nie altyd daarin slaag
om goeie geluk te hê nie; op 'n dag
verswelg 'n stormsee sy hele vrag;
op 'n ander dag weer kom dit veilig aan.'

'Ja,' sal my heer dan sê, 'ek moet voortaan
'n meer geslaagde reis vir ons skip prakseer;
as dit weer so afloop, kan jul my blameer.
Dié keer't daar iets geskort; ek weet vir vas.'

This passage struck me for two reasons. The tone was so reminiscent of team-building retreats attended during the course of my professional life, the key-note addresses of motivational speakers, the sense of camaraderie purportedly induced,

¹⁹⁶ Wallace, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, p. 114

the SWOT analyses to determine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; in short the artificiality of management's workforce manipulation experienced by many other potential readers.

The passage also speaks of the failure of a central metanarrative of our time. As John Speirs says: "The explosion that shatters the experiment is more than an explosion of chemicals; it is an explosion of illusory hopes and pretensions and of the evil passions lurking beneath and around these",¹⁹⁷ and for Charles Muscatine the dishevelled group scratching in the rubble epitomises our misguided faith in science and prefigures the future of technology.¹⁹⁸

From the passages selected in Sections 4.5.1 to 4.5.5 it is clear that our present-day assumptions, experiences and concerns inform and enrich our reading of the *Canterbury Tales* and of a translation of it. The selection is based on some of my responses to the text(s), in the expectation that people who share some or all of these predispositions will find "myrthe and solas" in my *Pelgrimsverhale*.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Chaucer wrote with an audience in mind, and I have translated with an audience in mind. I have speculated about a hypothetical audience; meanwhile I have an actual audience in those who read this thesis.

There are many quotations from my translation in the text. I believe that the translation should be read as an autonomous work and not as a mere shadow of the original, but in the hope that the quotations will also stimulate interest in the wider context, I have added line references to my translation. The line references (showing the Roman numeral for the fragment, followed by Arabic numerals for the lines quoted or referred to) enable readers to correlate the quotations with the original text. As I acknowledge in Section 2.5.1, there are inevitable losses in addition to occasional gains. In between the losses and the gains, there are passages which I consider successful (such as the heroic description of Emetrius in the Knight's Tale – I.2155-2186) to be discovered by the interested reader. With regard to the losses, after examination, the Appendix, along with the thesis, if it is

¹⁹⁷ J. Speirs, *Chaucer the Maker*, London: Faber & Faber, 1964, p.197-198.

¹⁹⁸ C. Muscatine, The Canon's Yeoman's Tale, in *Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales: A Casebook*; edited by J.J. Anderson, London: Macmillan, 1974, p. 245.

accepted, enters the public domain and, like the Master, I invite readers to emend it where necessary:

For myn wordes, heere and every part,
I speke hem alle under correccioun ...
And putte it al in youre discrecioun
To encesse or maken dymynucioun
Of my langage, and that I yow biseche.
(*Troilus and Criseyde*, III.1331-1336).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, I revert to the main problems and subsidiary issues of this study and consider the conclusions reached in addressing them. I then confirm the appropriateness of the method used. After noting the value and limitations of the study, I briefly reflect on possibilities for future research.

5.2 MAIN FINDINGS

At the start of the study, I formulated the main concern of my research in terms of the following questions (see Section 1.1):

- How may the practical translational strategies employed to achieve the adequacy of the translation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* be reconciled with the theoretically based norms of acceptability?
- How does the theoretical acceptability of the translation relate to the realities of an Afrikaans polysystem?

The findings regarding these two main areas of concern are discussed below.

5.2.1 Adequacy and acceptability

This study presented an in-depth investigation of a specific translation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, namely the Afrikaans *Die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer*, drawing on Toury's concepts of the adequacy and acceptability of translations. These concepts mark a major advance on the equivalence paradigm, because they build on the idea of moving away from a source text, as advanced by *Skopos* theory, by emphasising that the destination of that movement is a different culture to which a recreated text is constrained to accommodate itself. Adequacy to the start text is the beginning of this movement, and acceptability to the target culture is its destination. In such an approach, because of the emphasis on movement, fidelity to an immutable iconic "source" text (which predestines a translator to failure) is no longer seen as the essence of translation. The word "adequacy" seems a weak substitute for fidelity, but if a competent translator

reconceptualises the original by creatively exploiting the resources of the translating language, the resultant translation may do justice to the original.

The role of the translator is crucial – therefore I indicated my competencies and sense of affinity with the poet in Section 1.2.2, in line with the requirements of transparency and accountability implied by the autoethnographic approach which I adopted for this study. In Section 3.2.2, I underlined my intention to adhere to the formal elements of the *Canterbury Tales* and Sections 3.4 and 3.5 are replete with examples of the re-imagining of the *Tales* in Afrikaans.

Once a process of translation is complete, a product has come into being which, according to Toury's precepts, needs to be acceptable to the intended target culture. This is achieved by adherence to the norms and socio-cultural constraints specific to that particular target culture and period. This formulation disturbed me, because, reflecting back on my translation process, at the time when I was translating many of the tales, my translation would have been unacceptable to Afrikaner culture as I conceived of it then; the translation of blasphemy, in particular, was a matter of grave concern to me. As an empirical statement of an observed reality, Toury's formulation is unexceptionable. The problem arises, as Andrew Chesterman perceived, from the fact that all norms "exert a prescriptive pressure".¹ As a result, the translator is still confronted with the domestication-foreignisation dilemma identified by Schleiermacher in 1813 and others since then in new guises.

Reflection on this issue persuaded me that Descriptive Translation Studies does not go far enough in eliminating the binary of compliance or non-compliance with the target culture. The wider context of the "cultural turn" advanced by Bassnett and Lefevere and the insights of cultural studies are essential to avoid such binaries by confronting the issues of power in society at large. This provides a setting for Umberto Eco's reversal of Toury's descriptivism and starting from the conditioning of translation in real time and place.²

¹ Quoted in T. Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*, London: Routledge, 2001, p 118.

² T. Hermans, What is (not) Translation, in *Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*; edited by Carmen Millán and Francesca Bartina, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 78.

In this context of process as opposed to product, John Catford raised the spectre of untranslatability as long ago as 1965,³ but did not advance beyond lexical lacunae, and Newmark offers advice on how this (very relative) untranslatability may be addressed.⁴ Dealing with this kind of problem forms the substance of Section 3.3 in my study. It was only after the cultural turn that theorists reflected on how incongruence between core ideas and values of different cultures impacted on translation. Kanyi Kitamura uses a scale based on the significance of individualism, as opposed to collectivism, to demonstrate the vast distance between American and Japanese culture, as a result of which a sentence such as “She is a real individual”, though linguistically flawless in translation, is an insult in Japanese.⁵ If one were to take blasphemy as a touchstone, Afrikaans culture would prove very remote from Middle English culture in this respect. Toury ranged norms from mandatory to tolerated,⁶ and mandatory would clearly apply, yet, as I have argued, oaths – legitimate and illegitimate – were a fundamental aspect of medieval culture (see Section 3.5.1.1).

I would like to describe the cultural incommensurability discussed above as horizontal, and turn now to a vertical dimension of which postcolonialism has made us aware. This relates to the operation of unequal power in the historical application of norms of translation behaviour. Venuti urges foreignisation in order to counter Anglo-American dominance in cultural exchange, and Gayatri Spivak’s influential essay “The Politics of Translation” highlights the impossibility of translating a Bengali poem without over-assimilation to make it accessible to an English audience.⁷ What this says is that in an unequal cultural exchange, adaptation in the interest of acceptability may nullify the criterion of adequacy.

The converse applies to translations from a major to a minor culture. While the source text exerts no further pressure on the product of translation, its prestige asserts itself during the process of translation. In certain situations, the resultant tension therefore obliges a translator to choose between adequacy and acceptability. Retaining blasphemous oaths despite a mandatory norm to the

³ J.C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965.

⁴ P. Newmark, *Approaches to Translation*, Oxford: Pergamon, 1981, p. 70-83; *A Textbook of Translation*, Hemel Hempstead: Phoenix, 1995, p. 94-103.

⁵ K. Kitamura, Cultural Untranslatability, *Translation Journal*, vol. 13, no. 3, July 2009.

⁶ Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*, p. 115.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

contrary therefore entails “deviating from native norms to stage an alien reading experience”.⁸ In contrast to the common practice of dealing with the untranslatability of a text that is unacceptable to the host culture by manipulating it into acceptability – as happened with the German translation of *Anne Frank’s Diary* (see Section 2.4) – the translator “(visibly) resists the ideological dominance of the target culture by protecting the source text from it”.⁹

What I have said above does not invalidate Toury’s emphasis on norms; on the contrary, it seeks to give due weight to the importance of norms not only in descriptive theory but also to their prescriptive force in translation practice.

5.2.2 Acceptability and the polysystem

The locus of acceptability lies in the realm of the literary polysystem. For much of the twentieth century, the ideological milieu, of which a literary polysystem forms a part, was heavily politicised. I therefore discussed the political, ecclesiastical and cultural systems that prevailed in South Africa in that period in detail (see Sections 2.4.1.1 to 2.4.1.3), before turning to the Afrikaans literary polysystem. Cultural Studies (where translation studies, literary theory and ethnography converge) provides a wider context for a polysystem theory of translation studies.

The theoretical framework of dynamic change in society elaborated by Raymond Williams¹⁰ is helpful in creating an understanding that not only the literary polysystem, but also society as a whole, is in constant flux. The dominant culture contains residual elements from the past, such as organised religion and rural values, which are still operative, although by means of “traditions” they may be “reinterpreted, diluted and projected” by the dominant culture.¹¹ But the dominant culture is also challenged by an emergent culture of alternative ideas and practices struggling for acceptance. In the words of Lee Patterson, hegemony “has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified. It is also continually

⁸ L.Venuti, Translation as Cultural Politics, in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*; edited by M.Baker, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 69.

⁹ M.Westling, A Comparative Translation Study of Strindberg’s *The Red Room* (1879), Master’s dissertation, Stockholm University, 2011, p. 7.

¹⁰ R. Williams, Dominant, Residual, Emergent, in *Twentieth Century Literary Theory*; edited by K.M. Newton, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997.

¹¹ R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 122.

resisted, limited, altered and challenged by pressures not its own”.¹² Williams’s analysis advanced my understanding of Toury’s statement that the operation of norms is not restricted to a target culture as a whole, but may also apply to “that section of it which would host the end product”.¹³ Hence, acceptability to a target audience does not imply conformity to a dominant ideology. As I reflected further on a possible audience for my translation, it was also helpful to adopt a diachronic perspective. Doing so enabled me to consider the acceptability of the translation not only in terms of the context of Afrikaans culture during the period of Afrikaner nationalist hegemony (see Section 2.4.1 and 4.4) when I started my translation, or even in the midst of present uncertainties, but also in a milieu of emergent meanings and values (see Section 2.4.1.5) and a wider understanding of who speakers of Afrikaans are.

Interrogation of translation theory as applied (retrospectively) to my translation and my personal circumstances thus led me to a reconciliation of Toury’s concepts of adequacy and acceptability, the central concern of my research. The problems encountered *en route* to this conclusion suggest an imprecise overlap between theory and practice which merited further investigation (see Section 5.5 below).

5.3 SUBSIDIARY CONCERNS

The overarching aim was met by exploring a series of further questions to aid the above discussion:

- How is a medieval text mediated to a present-day reader?
- What is the interface between Translation Studies and Chaucer criticism?
- What are the inevitable losses in the translation process and is there a counterpoint?
- What is the role of the audiences of the source and target texts?
- Does a vernacular translation of the *Canterbury Tales* have any global significance?

My conclusions regarding these questions are summarised in Sections 5.3.1 to 5.3.5 below.

¹² L. Patterson, *Negotiating the Past*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987, p. 56.

¹³ G. Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1995, p. 56.

5.3.1 Mediated text

A medieval text such as the *Canterbury Tales* comes to modern readers in a highly mediated form. Indeterminacy in the *Canterbury Tales* itself derives from its unfinished state, as well as the multivocality Chaucer achieved by adopting the fiction of an interacting audience and irony as favoured techniques. Moreover, in a manuscript culture, texts were at the mercy of their copyists, and in the intervening centuries, a succession of mediating editors have done their best – or worst – to stabilise the instability of the text. These issues are covered in detail in Sections 2.3, 3.2.2.1, and 4.2. Because of the resultant complexity of reading the *Canterbury Tales* with understanding, the scholarly contemporary reader is also dependent on the mediation provided by explanatory notes, glossaries, commentaries, scholarly writings and other aids (see Sections 1.5.1, 1.5.2 and 1.6).

Ordinary readers who are unable or unwilling to make this kind of investment then have to depend on the mediation of a translation (see Sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.4) or modernisation as a form of intralingual translation. Scholarship is not absent from a translation, but the burden has been shifted to the translator, who mediates the background knowledge acquired, the decisions made, options selected and alternatives sought and creative interpretations found to the reader. Again engagement with the text is not eliminated, but it is an engagement of a different kind, with a different text.

Jauss, who emphasises the alterity of the past, argues that it is essential to reconstruct the horizon of expectation of the original readers.¹⁴ His is a reception theory arising from previous readers' judgments.¹⁵ This is the way in which the vast majority of present-day scholars approach Chaucer's text. By contrast, Iser's reception theory was concerned with individual texts and the reader's response to the prestructured potential meanings within them.¹⁶ This is the approach most (present-day) readers will adopt to a translation of the *Canterbury Tales* (see Section 2.3). Such a reading will be informed by the reader's own experiences and

¹⁴ Peter Travis, *Affective Criticism, the Pilgrimage of Reading, and Medieval English Literature*, in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*; edited by Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987, p. 202.

¹⁵ W. Iser, *How to do Theory*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006, p. 57.

¹⁶ A. Carusi, M. de Jong, and Z. Jackson, *Theory of Literature: Only Study Guide for ALW201-J*, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1991, p. 27.

will therefore be responsive to the universality of human behaviour and, in the process, recuperate the humanist approach to reading Chaucer.

5.3.2 Chaucer criticism and translation studies

The text of the *Canterbury Tales* is fixed only to the extent that the editors of the *Riverside Chaucer* and their predecessors have fixed it. Chaucer, as we have seen in Sections 2.3 and 4.1, left it open, unfinished and unstable. This has immense implications for the way in which it is interpreted. This topic, first broached in Chapter 2, is developed in Chapter 4: the conclusion is that two ways of reading Chaucer – identified as the exegetical and the humanist – emerged. Both were practised by Chaucer scholars, but the establishment of new universities and the creation of English departments caught up in the dynamics of pressurised, ever more specialised research fostered the exaltation of the exegetical approach and the side-lining and denigration of humanist approaches. The publication of Manly and Rickert's eight-volume edition of the *Canterbury Tales* in 1940 typified the professionalization of Chaucer studies and marked the separation of academia from the dwindling remnant of non-professional Chaucer readers.¹⁷ This professionalization has a bearing on the translation of Chaucer for those general readers.

Roman Jakobson differentiates between interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic translation.¹⁸ Interlingual translation is translation from one language to another; intralingual translation refers to restatement in the same language and would therefore include paraphrases and modernisations of Chaucer's texts; and intersemiotic translation relates to recreation in a different medium, i.e. adaptation. Both intralingual and interlingual translation answer the need to make a classic text of world literature accessible to non-specialist readers, but, as I have shown, they differ in respect of the extent of the transformation required and in the level of literary autonomy that can be achieved, as well as the losses and gains of a translation.

¹⁷ R.M. Stein and S.P. Prior, Introduction, and S. Gilles and S. Tomasch, Professionalizing Chaucer, in *Reading Medieval Culture*; edited by R.M. Stein and S.P. Prior, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005, p. 14, 365.

¹⁸ Jakobson, Roman, On Linguistic Aspects of Translation, in *On Translation*; edited by Reuben Brower, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959, p. 233.

5.3.3 Inevitable loss vs potential gains

Translation theories based on notions of equivalence focus on inevitable loss; recognition of a translation as an autonomous creation allows for the possibility of gain. Indeed, loss is inevitable in translations, because texts contain “clusters of properties, meanings, possibilities”, and translators are forced to privilege some of these rather than others.¹⁹ The problem is complicated where there is a deliberate play on words by the author. However, words in the receiving language also communicate clusters of association and may therefore provide unexpected new insights. Idiomatic expressions unique to the target language are a particular source of enrichment. As I translated, my efforts gradually freed themselves from dependence on the original text to an increasing sense of independence.

Now that my translation is complete, it is no longer dependent on the start text. It now commends itself to the reader as an autonomous text to be read and evaluated in its own right. In short, I have now arrived at the point formulated by Bassnett with reference to Octavio Paz:

The poet plays with language and comes to create a poem by fixing language in such a way that it cannot be altered. But the translator has a completely different task, that involves a different kind of play. The translator starts with the language that the poet has fixed, and then has to set about dismantling it and reassembling the parts in another language altogether. Paz argues that this process of freeing the signs into circulation parallels the original creative process invertedly. The task of the translator is therefore not firstly [to be] a writer and then a reader, but firstly [to be] a reader who becomes a writer. What happens, says Paz, is that the original poem comes to exist inside another poem: ‘less a copy than a transmutation’.²⁰

Chapter 3 offered me the opportunity to acknowledge weaknesses in my translation and to showcase some flashes of creativity.

5.3.4 The role of audience

Audience is a further link between Chaucer criticism and translation theory and practice. Reader-oriented theory, as expounded by Jauss and Iser, was developed as an aspect of literary criticism. The interpretation of a text requires active input on

¹⁹ E. Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 129.

²⁰ S. Bassnett, *Transplanting the Seed*, in *Constructing Cultures*; edited by S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998, p. 66.

the part of a reader. Thus what the reader brings to the text triggers interaction with the text and determines the meaning derived from it (see Section 2.3).

Chapter 4 therefore considered the readership of the *Canterbury Tales* in some detail. This confirmed that there are as many meanings as there are readers. As noted above, a major divide, particularly since the nineteenth century, has arisen between readers who sought to reconstruct the reading experience of Chaucer's time through scholarly endeavour and those who held that the universality of human behaviour made comprehension readily accessible. The professionalization of Chaucer studies has entrenched the scholarly approach, excluding those who are not Chaucer scholars or medievalists, obliging such "non-professional" readers to read Chaucer in translation, just as they read the "inaccessible" texts of Cervantes, Dostoyevsky or Neruda in translation. This conclusion led to a hypothetical projection of a possible future audience for *Die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer* (see Section 4.5).

An important implication of distinguishing the face-value readership of a translation from the studious readership of the original text is that new interpretations may arise from a particular societal change or translational foregrounding. In Section 3.2.2.3, I refer to the weakening of the religious genre in modern perception and indicate that the Second Nun's consistent use of the T form of address is likely to deflect contemporary readers' interpretation from the devout assurance medieval readers would have perceived to the dogmatism the translation suggests.

I regard this as a very important illustration of divergent readings, confirming Gadamer's interpretation of translation as a hermeneutical conversation in which both the text and the translator have a share:

Hence ... understanding is certainly not concerned with "understanding historically" – i.e., reconstructing the way the text came into being. Rather one intends to *understand the text itself*. But this means that the interpreter's own thoughts too have gone into re-awakening the text's meaning. In this the interpreter's own horizon is decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces, but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and that helps one truly to make one's own what the text says.²¹

²¹ H-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edition, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1989 [1960], p. 388.

On this basis, Barrington observes, “translations disclose what is not fully apparent in the source language and provide more explicit access to embedded meanings otherwise unavailable in the originary text.”²²

5.3.5 Global significance

An Afrikaans translation of the *Canterbury Tales* must also be considered in a global context. Even with my limited knowledge of translations into other languages, it is evident that concerns that I have encountered have also demanded the attention of several other translators.

My decision to retain the poetic forms used by Chaucer was informed by the fact that they are part of our Western heritage and occur regularly in Afrikaans literature. However, they are alien to Oriental languages. In his Chinese translation of the Tales, Fang Chong used a less condensed though still formal style,²³ while the Japanese translator felt obliged to resort to prose.

In Section 3.2, I illustrated the range of possibilities between foreignisation and domestication with reference to Barnouw’s Dutch translation and Zauner’s German version. I discussed the difficulty arising from an ideological discontinuity (see Sections 2.5.2 and 3.2.2.3), a difficulty that is clearly exacerbated in translating a Christian text such as the Man of Law’s Tale in a Moslem context, such as Aliraza Mahdepour’s Farsi translation.

I also dealt with the possibility of conflict between adequacy (meeting the requirements of the source text) and acceptability (conforming to the norms of a receiving culture) with reference to blasphemy (see Sections 2.4 and 3.5.1). This conflict led to the mutilation of Kenji Kaneko’s first Japanese translation by censors, who blocked out sexual references, and even the Wife of Bath’s disrespecting of her husbands. These passages were regarded as alien to the Japanese culture that prevailed in 1917, but were fortunately restored in his 1946 edition.²⁴

²² C. Barrington, Chaucer: Comparative Translation and Cosmopolitan Humanism, *Educational Theory*, vol. 64, no. 5, 2014, p. 471.

²³ C. Li, The Complementarity of Chinese Translation Methods of English Metrical Poetry, *Translation and Interpreting*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2010, p. 70.

²⁴ Kano, Koichi, Preamble to the first Japanese translation of The Canterbury Tales, *Literature Compass*, vol. 15, no. 6, 2018.

According to D.S. Brewer, writing in 1969, “nobody has yet compared the various versions of different ages and in the many languages into which parts of Chaucer’s work have been translated.”²⁵ However, in September 2012, Candace Barrington and Jonathan Hsy initiated Global Chaucers, an immense project of locating, cataloguing and studying translations of the Tales. Translations into more than fifty languages have already been identified. The project relies heavily on the collaboration of the translators. Those who have already contributed insights via email correspondence include translators of Chaucer into Hungarian, Estonian, Farsi, Brazilian Portuguese, Afrikaans, Turkish and Polish – and translators into Arabic, Chinese, Turkish, Korean and Afrikaans have been selected for interview.²⁶

5.4 REFLECTING ON THE METHOD

The autoethnographic method stood me in good stead, as it has encouraged me to incorporate the lived experiences of a long lifetime into my research. The first of these experiences, relating to bilingualism, dates back to about 1941 (see Section 1.2.2), the next, about my first meeting up with Chaucer, to 1953 (see Section 1.5.1), and the most recent to today’s perceptions shaping this sentence. This is in sharp contrast to the common theme of students who “are encouraged to study a phenomenon from afar, failing to situate themselves in personal relationship to the study and failing to reveal how the study relates to them personally”.²⁷

Writing about her translation of Third World women’s writing, Gayatri Spivak says:

First, then, the translator must surrender to the text. She must solicit the text to show the limits of its language, because that rhetorical aspect will point at the silence of the absolute fraying of language that the text wards off, in its special manner. Some think this is just an ethereal way of talking about literature or philosophy. But no amount of tough talk can get around the fact that translation is the most intimate act of reading. Unless the translator has earned the right to become the intimate reader, she cannot surrender to the text, cannot respond to the special call of the text.²⁸

²⁵ D.S. Brewer, *The Criticism of Chaucer in the Twentieth Century*, in *Chaucer’s Mind and Art*, edited by A.C. Cawley, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969, p. 27.

²⁶ C. Barrington, *Traveling Chaucer*, *Educational Theory*, vol. 64, no. 5, 2014, p. 472.

²⁷ J.A. Sell-Smith and W. Lax, *A Journey of Pregnancy Loss*, *The Qualitative Report*, vol. 18, article 92, 2013, p. 1.

²⁸ G.C. Spivak, *The Politics of Translation*, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by L. Venuti, 3rd edition, London: Routledge, 2012, p.315.

And so, having immersed myself in “the most intimate act of reading”, I can relate to the Wife of Bath’s pronouncement:

Experience, though noon auctoritee
Were in this world, is right ynogh for me
To speke of wo that is in mariage ...
(III.1-3).

Her comment indicates that, of course, there were authorities on marriage, but that she is prepared to challenge them. Equally, there are authorities on translation studies, but an autoethnographic approach (see Section 1.2.2) encourages me not simply to accept their dicta, but to engage with them in qualitative enquiry.

In the course of this study, I have reflected on my reading and study of Chaucer, and on my complex relationship with Afrikaans culture. I have recalled the long process of translating, relived the pleasure and excitement involved, and I have been able to interrogate translation theory as I correlated it with my own translation practice and wider lived experience.

Because autoethnography is a transformative methodology,²⁹ I can elaborate on the issue of my own experience of and interaction with Afrikaans culture at various stages of the translation process. Analysis of my alienation during the apartheid era reveals that I regarded Afrikaners as a negative reference group, the target of “dependent hostility” amounting to “an abiding and rigid rejection of the norms of the repudiated group”.³⁰ Imaginative reconstruction of the personal circumstances that produced my anger, no less than the changes that have intervened, have led me to greater understanding and empathy. Here I must admit that the hurt occasioned by T.T. Cloete’s unfavourable review of the published part of my translation (see Section 1.7) was not unrelated to this cultural antipathy and that my anger was fuelled by my discovery of his dubious role in Afrikaans cultural politics (see Section 2.4.1.4). The chosen method served me well, in that my re-examination of the assumptions (now disqualified by more recent translation theory) underlying his review has proved therapeutic.

²⁹ D. Custer, Autoethnography as a Transformative Method, *The Qualitative Report*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2014.

³⁰ J. Louw-Potgieter, *Afrikaner Dissidents*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1988, p. 71, with reference to R.K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, New York, NY: The Free Press, 1965, p. 295, and T. Parsons, *The Social System*, Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1951, p. 255.

Finally, the meanings and values that constitute my identity are articulated in my projection of a hypothetical audience for my *Pelgrimsverhale* in Section 4.5.

5.5 VALUE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH AND POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The value of this project is that although many people know a lot about the *Canterbury Tales*, many know about translation and many know about the Afrikaans language, I am unique in my knowledge of translating the whole of the *Canterbury Tales* into Afrikaans. In conjunction with the theory that informs this thesis, the practice that culminated in the text of the translation is submitted for examination and ultimate accessibility in the public domain.

A possible limitation of the study is its use of a methodology that is still new and therefore relatively unfamiliar in Translation Studies. In this, I followed the example of my supervisor, whose thesis³¹ pioneered the use of an autoethnographic methodology for a translation study in South Africa.

In previous research I had adopted the traditional “objective” stance. I was indeed present in my research reports, as evidenced by the choice of material and the way it was marshalled in support of my presuppositions, but my presence was carefully concealed by the now outmoded model of the disjunction of the autonomous investigator from supposedly autonomous material awaiting interpretation. This necessitated the scrupulous avoidance of the first person pronoun, the use of the impersonal passive voice, and a semblance of objectivity in the suppression of overt opinions by means of endlessly qualified statements.

By 1989, Hans Küng already rejected the epistemologically naïve assumptions of positivism deriving from the Enlightenment in favour of a radically new, postmodern paradigm, the term he used for “an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community”.³² Acknowledging the hermeneutical dimension that characterises the pursuit of all

³¹ I. Noomé, *Widening Readership – A Case Study of the Translation of Indigenous Law*, D.Litt thesis, University of Pretoria, 2015.

³² H. Küng, *Paradigm Change in Theology*, in *Paradigm Change in Theology*; edited by H. Küng and D. Tracy, Edinburgh: Clarke, 1989, p.7.

knowledge, this new paradigm gives due weight to the community of inquiry and the human subject.³³

Autoethnography enhances the role of the human subject in research. This does not mean lapsing into the “subjectivity” dreaded by positivist researchers, because individual identity is constructed in relation to the community. The “I” of my self-perception and the “me” of the perception of others is the engine of self-reflectivity, which is integral to our humanity.³⁴ Human beings are at once participants “in the social context in which experience takes place” and observers “of their own story and its social location”.³⁵

The traditional “scientific” methodology applied to the human or social sciences suggests an author with no personal knowledge or experience to contribute, who can only repeat what others have said before him/her. In the field of translation, and Chaucer translation in particular, it is my conviction that I have much knowledge and experience garnered over many years, of which I can speak feelingly in the first person. But I am aware of the fact that for many this might be a bridge too far.

I have spoken above (see Section 5.2.2) of the importance of closing the gap between translation theory and practice.³⁶ Rosemary Arrojo describes “the construction of a more symmetrical relationship between theory and practice” as the biggest challenge with which Translation Studies must contend.³⁷ Susan Bassnett argues that the “theoretical paradigms of the last two decades have ... run their course” and that there is an increasing tendency to turn to the translator’s experience and sense of self for insight into the practice of translation.³⁸ South Africa is a multilingual country and there is therefore much scope for research on translators’ reflections on their own practice. To date, little has been done in this regard. An exception is Idette Noomé’s doctoral thesis,³⁹ an autoethnographic case study reflecting on the translation in a postcolonial setting of a legal anthropological

³³ Küng, in *Paradigm Change in Theology*, p. 6.

³⁴ T. Muncey, *Creating Autoethnographies*, London: Sage, 2010, p. 16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁶ S. Bassnett, *Reflections on Translation*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011, p. 16.

³⁷ R. Arrojo, The Relevance of Theory in Translation Studies, in *Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, p. 126.

³⁸ S. Bassnett, Translation Studies at a Crossroads, in *The Known Unknowns of Translation Studies*; edited by E. Brens, R. Meylaerts and L. van Doorslaer, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2014, p. 24.

³⁹ Noomé, *Widening Readership – A Case Study of the Translation of Indigenous Law*, D.Litt thesis, University of Pretoria, 2015.

text on indigenous law. A number of M. Phil studies from the University of Stellenbosch deal with literary translation. These include studies by Margaret Muller, Marike van der Watt and Marietjie Fouché.⁴⁰ In all of these studies, however, the translations illustrate the theory, rather than the theory commenting on the translations, the volume of the excerpts translated is limited, and the material is generally of a popular nature. In an interview with Alwyn Roux, Anné Engelbrecht somewhat disingenuously explained her procedure. Her purpose was to achieve an MA, so she chose a theoretical framework, in this case, Vermeer's Skopos theory, and then translated 80 pages of Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* with this theory in mind.⁴¹

A second source of information on the practice of translation that could usefully inform the further development of translation theory may be found in the introductory comments that translators have made on their work, especially on literary translations into Afrikaans, although T.H. Savory remarks that translators contradict one another "about almost every aspect of their art".⁴² Sherry Simon observes:

Prefaces ... have on occasion made explicit the link between the manner of translation and the literary and political context they serve.

Prefaces in fact give all translators the opportunity to define the cultural and ideological underpinnings of their work. It is unfortunate that more literary translators don't get – or take – the chance to use the preface, because translators often talk about the work in a way quite different from the way professional critics do. The translator's preface does not *explain away* a work.

A successful preface draws out the complex links between language, culture, and the particular destiny that is desired for the ... work.⁴³

That said, this thesis may serve as a somewhat extended preface to my *Pelgrimsverhale*.

²² M. Muller, Die vertaling van *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* van Alexander McCall Smith: strategieë en besluite tydens die vertaalproses, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 2006; M. van der Watt, Die Afrikaanse bestemming van C.S. Lewis se *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 2014; M. Fouché, 'n Afrikaanse vertaling uit Cornelia Funke se *Tintenherz*, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 2007.

⁴¹ A. Engelbrecht, Onderhoud met Alwyn Roux, Die problematiek van die vertaling van aanspreekvorme in Afrikaans aan die hand van Alan Paton se *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Engelbrecht, Onderhoud, *LitNet Akademies*, Jg. 15, no. 3, 2018.

⁴² T.H. Savory, *The Art of Translation*, London: Cape, 1968, p. 9.

⁴³ S. Simon, Out from Undercover, in *Mapping Literature*; edited by D. Homel and S. Simon, Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1988, p. 53.

A third source of information relating to translation practice suggests that a different perspective may yield different conclusions. I refer to literary self-translation, a practice which goes back to antiquity and has accomplished modern exponents, including Rabindranath Tagore, Stefan George, Vladimir Nabokov and Samuel Beckett. In South Africa, where English and Afrikaans speakers have lived together for generations, it is not surprising that some Afrikaans poets and novelists wrote initially in English and that self-translation is widely practised. Self-translation also came to the fore as a means of resistance to censorship and the establishment that imposed political control on South African literature⁴⁴ and has provided an outlet for writers hampered by a shrinking market for Afrikaans novels.

Bronwyn Raaths has explored “Two Approaches by South African Authors writing in Afrikaans”.⁴⁵ The two approaches refer to a text subsequently translated, illustrated with reference to Mark Behr’s *Die Reuk van Appels* (1993), translated as *The Smell of Apples* two years later, and the writing of two versions simultaneously, illustrated by Brink’s *Die Blou Deur/The Blue Door* (2006). The latter practice was also adopted in Elisabeth Eybers’s last volume of poetry, *Valreep/Stirrup Cup*:

De titel van de bundel zegt het eigenlijk al: Elizabeth Eybers geeft ons steeds twee versies, de ene in haar vaders taal, het Afrikaans, de andere in het Engels, haar moedertaal. En ook geeft de titel aan dat de ene versie geen letterlijke vertaling van de andere is ...⁴⁶

Schleiermacher declared bilingual writing to be an impossibility, “in defiance of nature and morality”.⁴⁷ Language theory that has evolved in monoglot nation states has followed him in its emphasis on linguistic and cultural difference, rather than interculturality. In contrast, Pym defends bilingual textual commensurability, contending that

real translators live and work not in a hypothetical gap between languages, but in the midst of them; they combine several languages and cultural competencies at once, and constitute a mid-zone of overlaps and intersections, being actively engaged in several cultures simultaneously.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ See A. Kruger, Translation, Self-Translation and Apartheid-imposed Conflict, *Journal of Language and Politics*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2012, p. 273-292.

⁴⁵ B. Raaths, Self-Translation: Two Approaches by South African Authors writing in Afrikaans, MA research report, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2008.

⁴⁶ E. Eybers, *Valreep/Stirrup-Cup*, Amsterdam; Querido, 2005, cover text.

⁴⁷ Quoted in J. Hokenson and M. Munson, *The Bilingual Text*, London: Routledge, 2014, p. 3.

⁴⁸ A. Pym, quoted in Hokenson and Murison, *The Bilingual Text*, p. 4.

It is precisely this simultaneity of engagement that may militate against self-translation yielding helpful insights. In the case of Beckett, for example, the English texts are so different from the French versions that they do not comply with the theoretical modes of translation, yet so similar that they cannot be regarded as autonomous creations.⁴⁹

5.6 FINAL REMARKS

My final remarks echo Chaucer's "Go, litel bok ..." (*Troilus and Criseyde*, V.1786) in seeking to speak in restrained terms about a lofty ideal.

In their defence of self-translation, Hokenson and Munson note the way in which "each text intersects with the other in multiply inter-echoing lexical and cultural registers".⁵⁰ This is precisely what the Global Chaucers project sets out to achieve by comparing translations of the same work that have drawn on the resources of different languages and cultures. Its goal is to discern the positive role of translations in enhancing our appreciation of the original. Such a comparative study of translations of the *Canterbury Tales* is of great potential significance in opening up a new dimension of literary criticism, a global interpretative situation of which D.W. Fokkema says:

De vertolking van bestaande teksten is niet meer in handen van enkele experts die zich de benadering van de éne, adequate interpretatie ten doel hebben gesteld, maar de verschillen in interpretatie worden gelegitimeerd door verschillen in interesse en receptie-context.⁵¹

Mapping out the road ahead, Candace Barrington writes:

Translations can reveal what has been latent in the Middle English text and unavailable until it was translated into other languages, no matter whether those tongues were known to Chaucer and his contemporaries. For that is the nature of language, to hide as well as to reveal. And each language has a different set of things that it reveals or hides. The original and these

⁴⁹ Hokenson and Munson, *The Bilingual Text*, p. 194, with reference to Brian T. Fitch, *Beckett and Babel: An Investigation into the Status of the Bilingual Work*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988, p. 78.

⁵⁰ Hokenson and Munson, *The Bilingual Text*, p. 9.

⁵¹ D.W. Fokkema, Vergelijkende literatuurwetenschap en het nieuwe paradigma, *Forum der Letteren*, juni 1981, quoted in H. van Vuuren, *Komparatisme*, in *Literêre terme en teorieë*, geredigeer deur T.T. Cloete, Pretoria: HAUM-Literêr, 1992, p. 229.

translations supplement one another, supplying words, associations, and imagery not available in the others."⁵²

This is a long-term research project, to which the present study in conjunction with my translation into a tongue not known to Chaucer and his contemporaries may hopefully make its own unique contribution.

⁵² Barrington, *Why Translations?* *Global Chaucers*, 26 Sep. 2013.

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“DIE PELGRIMSVERHALE VAN GEOFFREY CHAUCER”

**AN APPENDIX TO
“SAVE OURE TONGES DIFFERENCE”:
REFLECTIONS ON TRANSLATING
CHAUCER’S *CANTERBURY TALES*
INTO AFRIKAANS**

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Johannes Gerhardus Boje

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Fragment I

DIE ALGEMENE PROLOOG

Wanneer Aprilmaand milde reënbuie bring
wat Maart se dorheid worteldiep deurdring
en sap laat opstoot in die plantegroei,
waardeur dit kragtig kom tot volle bloei;
wanneer Zephuros¹ ook soet asemstote
laat walm oor die nuwe knoppe en lote
in bos en hei, en die fris jong son nou juis
die tweede helfte van die Ram² deurkruis,
en voëltjies sing met opgewekte klank,
want hulle slaap oop-oë heelnag lank – 10
so prikkel die natuur hul handelswyse –
dan gaan mense graag op pelgrimsreise,
en swerwers hunker na die vreemde strande
van verre heiligdomme in vele lande.
Veral, uit elke graafskap, elke hoek
van Engeland, gaan hul Kantelberg besoek
en Thomas,³ die geseënde martelaar
in siekte altyd aan hul sy geskaar.

Dit het gebeur eendag in dié gety
toe ek by die Wapenrok⁴ in Southwark bly, 20
gereed om op my bedevaart te gaan
na Kantelberg, met vroomheid aangedaan,
dié aand kom by die einste herberg aan
'n groep van nege-en-twintig wat bestaan
uit alle slag van mense, pelgrims wat
per toeval saamgekom het langs die pad
en saam na Kantelberg toe aan wou stoot.
Die kamers en die stalle daar was groot;
ons is so tuisgemaak soos mens verlang,
en kort voor lank, so teen sonsondergang, 30
deur net die saak met elkeen te bepraat,
is ek tot hul gemeenskap toegelaat
en het ons onderneem om vroeg te roer
na Kantelberg, soos ek hier aan sal voer.

Maar tog, terwyl ek tyd en ruimte het,
voor my verhaal se trant dit my belet,
kom dit my billik voor om nog gewag
te maak van die besondere gedrag,
soos ek dit sien, van elkeen in verband

1 Die westewind.

2 Die son beweeg tussen 12 Maart en 11 April deur hierdie teken van die diereriem.

3 Thomas à Becket, Aartsbiskop van Kantelberg, is in 1170 op aanstigting van Hendrik II in sy katedraal vermoor. Hy is kort daarna tot heilige verklaar en sy graftombe in die katedraal het groot getalle pelgrims getrek. Hendrik VIII het die ryk versierde heiligdom in 1538 vernietig en baie vrage goud en juwele verwyder.

4 Die naam van 'n herberg. Op 'n uithangbord sou daar 'n uitbeelding gewees het van 'n wapenrok, die kort kleed wat 'n ridder oor sy harnas gedra het.

met sy beroep en sosiale stand, 40
en verder ook nog iets oor hul kledy.
'n Ridder is die eerste in die ry.

Daar was 'n RIDDER,⁵ 'n man van naam was hy;
hy't van sy jeug af hom daaraan gewy
om ridderlike deug te kultiveer:
getrouheid, mildheid, hoflikheid en eer.
Dapper was hy in sy heer se stryd,
vir verder diens as enigeen bereid,
sowel in Christenland as heidendom;
geloof vir edelheid waar hy ook kom. 50

Die val van Alexandrië het hy
aanskou; by feeste in Pruise is hom berei
die ereplek uit al die nasies daar.
Litoue en Rusland het sy kryg ervaar;
geen Christenheer wat daar so dikwels was.
En in Granada by Algericas
was hy gewees, en dan nog Benmarin,
Adalia en Ayas ook toe hul oorwin
is, want al langs die Middellandse see
was hy op baie ekspedisies mee. 60

In doodsgevegte vyftien maal was hy;
in Tlemcen ook vir ons geloof gestry
en drie teenstanders in die perk verslaan.
Dié edele ridder het ook onder die vaan⁶
van 'n Anatoliaanse opperheer
die stryd gevoer teen 'n heiden-Turkse leër;
en hy is oral grootliks aangeprys.
Al was hy onverskrokke, was hy wys
en in gedrag beskeie soos 'n maagd.
Nog nooit het hy oor enigeen iets laags
te sê gehad nie, want hy was voorwaar
as troue ridder ongeëwenaar. 70

Sy perde het goed gelyk, maar wat sy eie
voorkoms betref, sy drag was heel beskeie.
In 'n bombasyntuniek is hy geklee
met kolle deur sy harnas afgegeë,
want hy het onlangs nog in diens gestaan
en het nou op sy bedevaart gegaan.

Sy seun, 'n JONKER,⁷ het met hom gery;
'n minnaar en ridder-aspirant was hy 80
met lokke deur 'n krultang dalk gedraai.
Hy was so by die twintig sou ek raai.
Redelik lank was hy van liggaamsbou,
verbasend sterk en van beweging gou.

5 Die ridder was 'n kampvegter vir die Christendom in die grenslande van Europa: in Spanje en Noord-Afrika teen die More, in Egipte en Klein-Asië teen die Sarasene en in Oos-Pruise teen die barbaarse Russe en Litouers. Hy verteenwoordig die Middeleeuse ideal van 'n aktiewe Christelike lewe.

6 Vaandel, vlag.

7 Die seun van 'n edelman wat sy proeftyd dien voordat hy self tot ridder geslaan word.

Hy't diens gedoen met die kavallerie
in Atrecht, Vlaandere en Pikardië.
In 'n kort tydsduur het hy hom goed gekwyt
vir sy beminde se goedgunstigheit.
Hy's geborduur net soos 'n weiland, mooi
met oervloed van vars blomme wit en rooi. 90
Hy sing of speel die fluit terwyl hy ry
en was so flink en vrolik soos die Mei.
Kort was sy rok, die moue lank en breed;
hoe om goed perd te ry, het hy geweet.
Hy kon ook liedere dig en komponeer,
dans, teken en in steekspel triomfeer;
so heet min hy dat tot die son voortstraal,
hy minder slaap kry as 'n nagtegaal.
Hoflik, dienswillig, nederig het hy
aan tafel vir sy vader voorgesny. 100

Buiten 'n LEENMAN⁸ was geen ander kneg
by dié geleentheid met die ridder op weg.
Sy wambuis⁹ en sy kap was groen van kleur;
en pouveerpyle was te kus en keur
in die koker aan sy lyfband. Kundig het hy
al sy benodigdhede voorberei;
gevolglik was sy pyle vluggetrou.
'n Reuse-boog het hy in sy hand gehou.
Bruin sy gesig en kortgeknip sy hare.
In die weë van die bos was hy ervare. 110
'n Blink mansjet het sy gewrig teen die snaar
van sy boog geskut. Hy't 'n swaard en beukelaar¹⁰
eenkant gedra, met 'n dolk aan die ander sy,
mooi afgewerk en skerp soos 'n spies daarby.
Hy't 'n Christophorus¹¹ wat sy bors versier
en 'n horing aan 'n grasgroen bandelier.
Hy moes boswagter wees van sy gewes.

Dan was daar ook 'n non, 'n PRIORES,
en haar glimlaggies was bedees en teer.
Slegs by Eligius¹² het sy gesweer, 120
en Egelantier¹³ was haar gewyde naam.
Die liturgie het sy, soos dit betaam,
aantreklik deur haar neus geïntoneer,¹⁴

8 'n Vasal wat sy feodale verpligtinge teenoor sy leenheer, die ridder, nakom.

9 'n Kort jas wat die liggaam van die nek tot die middellyf dek.

10 'n Ronde skild met 'n skerp punt in die middel.

11 'n Medalje van die beskermheilige van boswagters en reisigers.

12 'n Baie gewilde heilige in Middeleeuse Engeland en Frankryk. In 'n tyd toe growwe ede by dié of daardie deel van Christus se liggaam algemeen was, het die Prioeres slegs by die verfynde Eligius gesweer. Sy het dus slegs baie ligte ede gebruik, maar die reëls van haar orde het dit natuurlik verbied dat sy enige ede gebruik, net soos sy ook nie veronderstel was om soos 'n fatsoenlike dame troeteldiere aan te hou nie.

13 Tydens haar nonnewyding het sy nie die naam van 'n heilige aangeneem nie maar van die wilde roos, ook die naam van 'n romantiese heldin. Die egelantier simboliseer ewigdurende liefde, soos blyk uit die slot van die Middel-nederlandse gedig "Twee conincskinderen."

14 'n Nasale intonasie is gebruik sodat die stembande nie ooreis word nie.

en Frans in die nonneklooster aangeleer,¹⁵
 het sy gepraat, piekfyn en eksellent,
 want dié van Frankryk was haar onbekend.
 Haar eetgewoontes was gekultiveer;
 niks het sy van haar lippe terug laat keer,
 en nooit haar vingers diep in sous gebad;
 sy kon 'n brokkie lig en dra sodat 130
 geen druppeltjie eens op haar bors sou val.
 Sy was gesteld op hoflikheid veral.
 Haar bolip het sy afgegee so skoon
 dat 'n koppie nie die minste spoor sou toon
 as sy gedrink het nie, en by gebrek
 is haar hand stemmig na die kos gestrek.
 Onderhoudend was sy sekerlik,
 vriendelik en aangenaam, daarop gemik
 om deftig te vertoon met 'n hoofse grasia
 passend by haar stand en situasie, 140
 want sy het steeds 'n goeie naam beny.
 Wat haar gevoeligheid betref, was sy
 so liefderyk en medelydend dat
 sy ween as sy 'n muis gesien het wat
 gevang is en óf dood was óf beseer.
 Haar troetelhondjies het sy getraktrakteer
 op gebraaide vleis of melk en fyn wit brood.
 Smartlik het sy geween as daar een dood
 was of deur iemand met 'n stok beseer,
 want sy was liefd'ryk en haar hart was teer. 150
 Sy's gesluier soos betaamlikheid vereis;
 haar neus was elegant, haar oë grys;
 haar mond besonder klein, maar sag en rooi,
 en sonder twyfel was haar voorkop mooi,
 byna 'n spanbreed oor die broue dié;¹⁶
 onuitgegroeï was sy vir seker nie.
 Haar kleed was smaakvol, het ek opgelet.
 Sy't 'n stel bidkrale om haar arm met
 die paternosters¹⁷ groen, 'n rosekrans,
 waaraan 'n hanger met 'n goue glans, 160
 en daarop was 'n groot gekroonde A,
 en laer, *Amor vincit omnia*.¹⁸

'n TWEEDE NON, haar assistente wel,
 asook 'n PRIESTER,¹⁹ het haar vergesel.

15 Die Benediktynse klooster by Stratford-Bow, toe ten ooste van Londen, waar ongetroude dames van hoë stand ook 'n heenkome gevind het.

16 'n Groot voorkop is as baie mooi beskou. Dis dan ook dié dat Alisoen in die Meulenaar se verhaal haar wenkbroue uitgedun het.

17 Die groot krale van 'n rosekrans waarby 'n Onse Vader gebid word.

18 Die liefde oorwin alles.

19 By Chaucer "preestes thre", wat egter nie met die vroeër vermelde nege en twintig pelgrims klop nie.

'n Modieuse MONNIK was ook by;
hy was lief vir jag en om oral rond te ry²⁰ –
'n man na 'n man se hart, vir 'n ab gepas.
Keurig die perde wat in sy stalle was,
en as hy ry, kon 'n mens sy toom gewaar,
170 kling'lend as 'n windjie waai, so klaar
en hard ook as die klok van die kapel is
waar hierdie heer oor 'n kloosterhuis gestel is.
Die Reël van Maurus en Sint Benedik²¹
het hy verwerp as gans te oud en strik;
die dinge van weleer het hy laat staan
om met die jongste mode saam te gaan.
Minder as op 'n hen was hy gesteld
op die teks dat jagters nie as vroom kan tel
of dat 'n onbesonne monnik soos
180 'n vis is wat lê spartelend waterloos:
'n ongekluiserde sou dit beteken.
Hy het dié teks g'n oester werd gereken.
Ek het gesê dis goed geredeneer:
'n mens kan mal word van te veel studeer,
en wie sal na die wêreld omsien as
hy hande arbeid moet verrig op las
van Augustinus? Nee, dié heer kon sy
gedeelte van die arbeid ook maar kry.
Die Monnik was 'n man wat hard kon ry;
190 windhonde snel soos vlieënde voëls had hy.
Spoorsny en hase jag het hom gedien
tot groot vermaak; g'n duurte het hy ontsien.
Sy moue is versier rondom die hand
met mooi grys pels, die beste in die land;
onder sy ken is sy kap vasgehou
deur 'n speld wat uit gesmede goud gevou
en soos 'n liefdesknoop gevorm was.
Sy kop was kaal en het geblink soos glas,
ook sy gesig, asof met salf gesmeer.
200 Hy was 'n vet en uitgelese heer.
Sy helder oë het altyd rondgerol,
blinkend soos vlamme onder 'n loodkastrol;
soepel sy stewels, sy perd tot veel in staat;
hy was voorwaar 'n swierige prelaat.
Hy was nie bleek soos lank gekwelde geeste;
van 'n vet, gebraaide swaan hou hy die meeste.²²
Sy hakkenei het bessiebruin²³ geblink

20 Hy was 'n "outridere", 'n monnik belas met die bestuur van 'n abdy se buitebesittings – wat in sy kraam te pas gekom het.

21 Maurus was 'n dissipel van Benedictus, die opsteller van die Reël wat die ganse monnikdom ten grondslag gelê het. As die Monnik hierdie Reël verwerp, verwerp hy dus alles waarom die kloosterideaal gegaan het.

22 'n Swaan het meer as twintig maal soveel as 'n hoender gekos.

23 Telganger, damesperd. Ryp haagdoringbessies is bruin van kleur.

Daar was 'n FRATER,²⁴ sedig, lustig, flink,
 met 'n bedelwyk wat vir hom afgepen is. 210
 Niemand in al vier ordes had meer kennis
 van vrome ginnegaap en vleierey.
 Vir meer as een vrou het hy 'n man gekry,
 vir elkeen uitbetaal wat hy kon spaar.
 Vir sy orde was hy 'n edele pilaar.
 Alom bekend, alom bemind was hy
 onder grondeienaars in sy kontrei
 en vooraanstaande vroue van die stad,
 want mag om bieg te hoor het hy gehad,
 meer as 'n dorpspastoor, het hy beweer,
 want hy's mos deur die Pous gelisensieer. 220
 Vriend'lik het hy geluister na konfessie,
 en ewe vriendelik was sy boetelessie,
 want hy was uiters billik in kwytskelding
 as hy kon staatmaak op iets tot vergelding;
 wanneer 'n geskenk aan 'n arm orde gegee is,
 dan toon dit dat die boeteling gedweë is,
 en, is hy ryk en sy geskenk hom waardig,
 dan kan mens seker wees hy is boetvaardig.
 Want sommiges se harte is van steen
 hoe spyt hul ook al het, hul kan nie ween; 230
 dus, by gebrek aan trane van berou,
 dien 'n skenking om 'n frater te onderhou.
 Met messies en mooi spelde was sy kraag
 altyd gestop, om vroutjies te behaag.
 En seker was sy sang 'n groot plesier,
 asook sy begeleiding op 'n lier.
 Sy skat van liefdesliedere het ag gewek.
 Witter as 'n lelie was sy nek;
 daarby was hy vir 'n stoeier sterk genoeg. 240
 Hy was bekend met elke dorp se kroeg;
 eerder die waard en die buffetbediende
 as bedelaars en melaatses was sy vriende,
 want vir 'n man van hoë aansien was
 dit tog, gesien sy status, onvanpas
 om met melaatse lui te staan en praat.
 Dis onfatsoenlik, dit kan niemand baat,
 raak mens met sulke sukkelaars deurmekaar
 pleks van die ryke en die handelaar.
 Maar oral waar daar hoop was op profyt,
 was hy vol eerbied en dienswilligheid. 250
 Nêrens was daar ooit 'n man so kuis;
 die beste bedelaar in sy broederhuis.
 [Die huur wat hy betaal het, het belet
 dat ander op sy werf gewerskaf het.]²⁵

24 'n Bedelmonnik, 'n lid van een van die vier ordes, die Dominikane, Franciskane, Karmeliete en Augustyne,
 wat in navolging van die apostels daarna gestreef het om eenvoudig te lewe en wat vir hul behoud van die
 gawes van die gelowiges afhanklik was. Gevolglik gaan hul op termyn, d.i. hulle volg 'n vasgestelde
 bedelronde.

Selfs by die ongeskoeide weduvrou,
so hartlik was sy *In principio*,²⁶
voordat hy gaan, sou hy haar penning hê;
dus was sy loon bo wat hy moes belê.
En hoe het hy baljaar, net soos 'n welp.
Op skikkingsdae²⁷ kon hy heelwat help;
dán nie geklee in kluisenaarshabyt,
of soos 'n arm student, sy kraag verslyt, 260
maar soos 'n meester of die Pous self met
'n mantel handgeweef van duur sajet,
net soos 'n klok in die matrys gesprei.
Hy het gelispel uit aanstellery;
'n pedante uitspraak het sy tong gestreel.
As hy gesing het en sy lier bespeel,
dan het die oë in sy kop gelag
soos sterre in die ryperige nag.
Hubertus het dié waardige geheet.

'n KOOPMAN met gevurkte baard, gekleed 270
in kakelbont,²⁸ het hoog te perd gery;
'n Vlaamse hoed van bewerhaar had hy;
sy stewels was gegespe fyn en net.
Sy redenasies was steeds deftig met
'n strekking tot die toeneem van sy winste.
Hy wou die see beskerm hê – ten minste
teen die Orwell-Middelburgse roofgevaar.²⁹
Hy was 'n mees bedrewe wisselaar.³⁰
En hy't geweet, bring hy vernuf te pas,
sou niemand weet hoe diep in die skuld hy was; 280
so statig in transaksies owerigens
met kopies was hy en met woekerwins.
Hy was 'n man van aansien, maar ek weet nie
meer in werklikheid hoe't hy geheet nie.

'n Oxfordse STUDENT het saamgery,
reeds jare terug aan die logika gewy.³¹
Sy perd was vel en bene het ek gelet,
en seker was hy self nie alte vet,
maar hy het hol gelyk, somber daarby,
en erg verslete was sy kortepý.³² 290

25 Hierdie koeplet kom in slegs enkele handskrifte voor.

26 Die eerste woorde van die Evangelie volgens Johannes is as besonder heilig beskou en is deur die fraters as groet gebruik.

27 Liefdesdae wanneer geskille met behulp van geestelikes buite die hof bygelê kon word.

28 Sterk kontrasterende kleurkombinasie.

29 Orwell was 'n hawe tussen Ipswich en Harwich vanwaar Engelse weefstof na die Lae Lande uitgevoer is.

30 'n Onwettige bedrywigheid, want slegs koninklike makelaars kon geld teen 'n wins verwissel.

31 Die feit dat sy studies in logika reeds agter die rug was, dui daarop dat hy die *trivium* (grammatika, retorika en logika), die vier jaar studie vir sy B.A. op 18 of 19 jaar voltooi het en nou met die *quadrivium* (rekenkunde, meetkunde, astronomie en musiek) asook filosofie (natuurkunde, etiek en metafisika) besig was – wat oor nog vier jaar tot 'n M.A. sou lei. 'n Universiteitstudent het die tonsuur ontvang tydens sy ordening tot minstens die klein wydinge, nl. deurbewaarder, besweerder, voorleser en misdienaar (akoliet). Omdat hierdie student gehoop het op 'n benefisie, 'n besoldigde kerklike amp, weet ons dat hy reeds die hoër wyding tot subdiaken, diaken en priester ontvang het.

Geen benefisie het hy dusver ontvang
 en hy het nooit 'n baantjie kon verlang;
 hy het hom eerder daarop toegelê
 om twintig boeke byderhand te hê
 van Aristoteles se filosofie;
 hy't dit verkies bo pret en melodie.
 Maar tog, ten spyte van sy studies was
 daar bra min goud gebêre in sy kas;³³
 en wat hy van sy vriende kon verkry,
 het hy aan boeke en die leer gewy, 300
 en yw'rig opgedra in die gebed
 diegene wat sy gang bevorder het.
 In studie kon hy veel behae skeep;
 geen woord het hy ooit nodeloos gerep;
 eerbiedig en presies het hy gepraat,
 en kort en vlug en slegs ná ryp beraad.
 Die opset van sy spraak was om te stig;
 hy't ewe graag studeer as onderrig.

Daar was 'n wyse en wakker ADVOKAAT,³⁴
 wat in St. Paulus-voorportaal beraad 310
 gevoer het met kliënte. Hy was gewigtig;
 in elke opsig eerbaar en omsigtig –
 of het so geklink, sy woorde was so wys.
 Hy't dikwels as 'n regter rondgereis,
 kragtens 'n volle opdrag en brevet;
 sy breë kennis en vermaardheid het
 hom steeds met foie en kledy beloon.
 Hy was 'n grondopkoper en ofskoon
 dit somtyds fideikommis was, het hy
 direkte oordrag daarvan reggekry. 320
 Hy het dit druk gehad die hele tyd,
 dog meer in voorkoms as in werklikheid.
 Hy was bekend met die besonderhede
 van elke saak van Willem³⁵ tot op hede;
 sy dokumente's opgestel so knap,
 mens kon nie twyfel aan sy vakmanskap;
 en elke wet het hy geken van buite.
 Eenvoudig was sy voorkoms in die geruite
 en sy-omgorde jas waarin hy ry;
 maar dis genoeg gesê van sy kledy. 330

32 Skapulier of skouerkleed.

33 Net soos die betekenis van geleerde en geestelike inmekaarvloei, so ook met geleerde, wysgeer en alchemis. Alhoewel die student leergierig was, het hy nog nie geslaag in die alchemiste se strewe om onedele metale deur middel van die steen van die wyses in goud te verander nie.

34 Hy was 'n "Sergeant of the law", 'n vooraanstaande regsgeleerde wat na sestien jaar studie en ondervinding 'n brevet of koninklike aanstelling as regter kon ontvang.

35 Willem die Normandiër wat Engeland in 1066 verower het.

Daar het 'n HEREBOER³⁶ gery met hom.
 Sy baard was wit soos 'n madeliefieblom;
 sy rooi gesig het nie verniet geskyn,
 hy't soggens graag sy brood geweek in wyn;³⁷
 in 'n lekker lewe het hy hom berus –
 'n ware seun van Epikurus dus –
 oor genot was dié die mening toegedaan
 dat daar geen groter saligheid bestaan.
 Hy is geloof in sy buurt wyd en syd
 as 'n Julianus³⁸ van herbergsaamheid; 340
 sy brood, sy bier was altyd eersteklas;
 daar's niemand wat so goed gekelder was.
 Dit het hom nooit ontbreek aan een pastei
 van vlees of vis; daar was soveel daarby,
 dit het voorwaar gesneeu van drank en spyse.
 Met elke soort gereg het daar, by wyse
 van akkoord met die seisoensverwisseling,
 die skottels op sy dis mekaar verdring.
 Vir die vetmaak van patryse had hy 'n kou
 en 'n dam om seelt en brasem aan te hou. 350
 Die arme kok, was sy souse nie pikant nie
 of sy gerei die dag nie byderhand nie!
 Daar was 'n vaste tafel in sy saal,
 altyd gedek en wagtend vir 'n maal.
 Hy was sy setel op die regbank waardig,
 en is dikwels as 'n raadslid afgevaardig.
 'n Dolk asook 'n beurs van sy het witter
 as môremelk aan sy lyfband geskitter.
 'n Balju en 'n ouditeur was hy:
 geen waardiger vasal was daar te kry. 360

'n KRAMER, VERWER, WEWER, BEHANGER VAN
 TAPISSERIEË en 'n TIMMERMAN,
 geklee in die indrukwekkende livrei
 van een geagte gilde,³⁹ het saam gery.
 Hul uitrusting was keurig, nuut en sterk,
 hul messe nie met koper afgewerk,
 maar uitgevoer in dieselfde silwer as
 wat op hul gordels en hul beurse was –
 elk 'n bekwame burger wat hom tuis
 sou voel op die verhoog van 'n gildehuis. 370
 Te oordeel na die wysheid van hul praat,
 was elk geskik vir wethouer inderdaad;
 hul het genoeg besit, genoeg belê,
 hul vrouens wou dit buitendien so hê;
 tereg ook, anders sou iets immers skort,

32 'n Vrygebore maar nie-adellike grondeienaar.

37 "a sop in wyn", entlik 'n mengsel bestaande uit wyn, amandelmelk, saffraan, gemmer, suiker, kaneel, naeltjies en foelie.

38 'n Mitiese heilige befaamd om sy gasvryheid.

39 Hulle het verskillende ambagte beoefen. As hul in dieselfde livrei geklee was, moes dit dié van 'n geestelike gilde of sodaliteit (broederskap) gewees het.

want dis mos gaaf as mens ge-mevrou word,
en kerk toe gaan waar ander jou kan sien,
'n koningin deur haar sleepdraers bedien.

Daar was 'n KOK in hul geselskap ook
wat weet van hoenders met 'n murgbeen kook,
met kruiesouse en met speserye.

Op die smaak af kon hy biere onderskei, 380
en hy kon bak en stoof en braai en kook,
en puik pasteie maak en dik sop ook.
Dit was net jammer dat daar aan sy skeen
'n wond was wat gelyk het na gangreen.
Sy hoenderhutspot⁴⁰ was beslis die beste.

Daar was 'n SKIPPER uit die verre weste;
'n man van Dartmouth⁴¹ na my beste wete,
erg ongemaklik op 'n knol⁴² gesete, 390
in 'n growwe kiel⁴³ wat tot sy knieë reik.

Onder sy arm het 'n dolk gepryk
wat neergehang het aan sy skouerband.
Hy's deur die somerhitte bruin gebrand;
en hy was sekerlik 'n gawe soort.
Hy't heelwat pinte wyn getap aan boord
op oortog van Bordeaux, as die koopman droom;
gewetenswroeging het hom nooit laat skroom:
'n vyand in 'n slag ter see verslaan,
moes, teen sy sin, seelanges huis toe gaan.⁴⁴ 400

Maar in sy vak, berekening van gety,
van strome en ander risiko's daarby,
met mane, hawens, loodse, was daar van
Hull tot Carthago⁴⁵ geen bekwamer man.
'n Uitgeslape kêrel uit een stuk
met 'n baard deur baie storms rondgepluk;
hy was van elke lêplek langs die kus
van Gotland tot Kaap Finisterre bewus,
ook geule in Biskaje se kuslyn.
Sy boot het hy genoem die Madelyn. 410

Verder was daar ook nog 'n MEDIKUS;
niemand op aarde had ooit so 'n lus
vir praat oor artseny en chirurgie;
goed onderlê in die astronomie
sodat hy wetenskaplik kon beslis
wanneer 'n sterrebeeld aan 't opkom is,⁴⁶

40 "Blankmanger": kapoen (gesnyde haan) voorberei met room, rys, eiers, amandels, suiker en sout.

41 Berug om sy seerowers.

42 'n Ou, afgewerkte perd.

43 Loshangende kleed met moue.

44 Hy het hom in die see gegooi.

45 Eintlik Cartagena, 'n hawestad in Suid-Spanje.

46 Die posisie van 'n sterrebeeld bokant die oostelike horison is gebruik om te bepaal wanneer dit 'n gunstige tyd sou wees om die siektetoestand te behandel.

deur middel van 'n horoskoop die uur
 kon vasstel vir die toedien van 'n kuur.
 Hy het die wese en oorsaak van 'n kwaal
 as heet of koud of droog of klam bepaal, 420
 die setel en humeur daarvan uitpluisend⁴⁷ –
 ons Arts was waarlik 'n geneesheer duisend.
 Met die besonderhede eers bekend,
 word 'n middel voorgeskryf vir sy pasiënt.
 Aptekers het gereed gestaan by hope
 met die verlangde pille, pleisters, strope;
 dit was 'n mees bevorderlike spul
 wat 'n geruime tyd hul sakke vul.
 Hy't die deskundiges pal nagelees:
 ou Eskulaap en Dioscorides, 430
 Hippocrates, Rufus, Hali en
 Rhasis, Serapion, asook Galiën,
 Averroës, Avicenna, Damascenus,
 Bernard, Gilbert, Gaddesden, Constantinus.
 Met sy dieet was hy altyd behoedsaam,
 derhalwe moes sy kos verteerbaar, voedsaam
 en sonder buitensporighede wees.
 Hy het min tyd gevind vir Bybel lees.
 In rooi en hemelsblou het hy gery,
 gevoer met taf en met die beste sy. 440
 Maar tog was hy nie juis spandabel met
 wat hy in plaë ingevorder het.
 Hartsterkend is die raat wat goud bevat;
 dus het hy goud besonder liefgehad.

Uit die buurt van Bath was daar 'n goeie VROU;
 net haar hardhorendheid was te berou.
 Dié vrou was so bedrewe in lakens weef
 dat leperen en Gent haar na kon streef.
 Niemand sou dit waag om ooit voor haar
 'n gawe op te neem na die altaar;⁴⁸ 450
 in iesegrimgheid sou dit haar dompel
 dat haar liefdadigheid meteens verskrompel.
 Met doeke van stramien om haar gesig,
 so om en by die tien pond in gewig,
 het sy haar kop op Sondae getooi.
 Haar kouse was 'n fyn skarlakenrooi,
 en styf geryg haar skoene, nuut en sag;
 haar skone rooi gesig vol lewenskrag.
 'n Wakker vrou was sy haar hele lewe;
 sy't haar al vyf maal in die eg begewe, 460

47 Hierdie vier teenstellings kenmerk die vier elemente, lug (heet en vogtig), vuur (heet en droog), aarde (koud en droog) en water (koud en vogtig) waaruit die skepping saamgestel is. In die menslike liggaam kom hierdie onderskeid ooreen met die vier liggaamsvogte of humeure, nl. bloed (heet en vogtig), geel gal (heet en droog), swart gal (koud en droog) en slym (koud en vogtig). Hierdie sappe bepaal 'n mens se temperament as sanguinies, choleries, melancholies of flegmaties. 'n Siektetoestand ontstaan as gevolg van 'n wanbalans van die liggaamsappe.

48 Tydens die Mis het kerkgangers by die offertorium hul gawes opgeneem na die altaar.

benewens ander minnaars van haar jeug –
 maar daardie onderwerp sal nou nie deug.
 Sy't drie maal in Jerusalem gestaan,
 en heelwat vreemde strome oorgegaan;
 na Rome, Keulen, Boulogne het sy gereis;
 in Spanje aan Jakobus⁴⁹ eer bewys;
 met uitdraaipaadjies ook 'n ou kalant.
 Haar tande is wyd uitmekaar geplant.⁵⁰
 Gemaklik was sy op 'n trippelaar,
 gesluier, en met 'n hoed soos 'n beukelaar 470
 of soos 'n skild bo-op haar kop, so breed;
 oor haar groot heupe het 'n lang rykleed
 tot aan haar skerpgespoorde voet gestrek.
 In geselskap was sy jolig en opgewek;
 en het raad geweet kom dit by die liefdeslewe,
 in die knepe van dié vak was sy bedrewe.

'n Toegewyde man van hoë faam,
 'n arm DORPSPASTOOR, was met ons saam;
 maar hy was ryk aan vrome denke en werk;
 daarby was hy 'n geleerde man, 'n klerk⁵¹ 480
 wat sy parogiane⁵² trou gestig het
 en uit die Evangelie onderrig het.
 Hardwerkend was hy en van goeie moed,
 en vol geduld in tyd van teëspoed;
 en dit is dikwels op die proef gestel.
 Traag was hy om vir tiendes uit te skel,⁵³
 hy't eerder na die armes omgesien;
 ten einde dit te doen, het hy hom bedien
 van sy offergawes en sy eiendom, 490
 want hy't met weinig oor die weg gekom.
 Groot sy gemeente, met huise yl versprei;
 nóg reën nóg onweer het verhoed dat hy,
 in siekte of verdriet, besoek gebring
 het aan die verste lidmaat, groot of gering,
 en dit te voet, met wandelstok in die hand.
 Hy was sy kudde 'n goeie voorbeeld, want
 hy't self gedoen voor hy 'n woord gesê het,
 soos die Evangelie hom dit opgelê het.
 Dié spreekwoord het hy ook beskou as raak
 dat as goud roes, dan hoe moet yster maak? 500

49 Sy het al die beroemde Middeleeuse pelgrimsoorde besoek: die Heilige Grafkerk in Jerusalem; Rome, die setel van die pousdom, waar duisende relikwieë in die St Pieterskerk en elders gesien kon word; Keulen, met relikwieë van die drie konings uit die Ooste asook Sint Ursula en die elfduisend maagde wat glo daar vermoor is; Boulogne-sur-Mer in Frankryk met sy wonderbaarlike beeld van die Maagd Maria; en die grafombe van die apostel Jakobus (Sint Jago) by Santiago de Compostela in Spanje.

50 Dit was blykbaar 'n aanduiding van 'n erotiese natuur.

51 'n Geestelike: die betekenisse vloei inmekaar. 'Klerk' is gebruik vir enigeen wat kon lees en skryf, en dit was meestal geestelikes.

52 Gemeentelede.

53 Priesters was daarop geregtig om hul parogiane se tiendes as 'n soort inkomstebelasting in te vorder en omdat hulle daarvan afhanklik was, het hul nie gewoonweg daarvoor "uitgeskel" nie, maar die banvloek oor wederstrewiges uitgespreek.

Is die priester vuil, al is hy afgesonder,
 dan's die leek se roeskleur nouliks te verwonder;
 laat priesters let dat dit 'n goor vertoon is
 as 'n herder smerig en sy skape skoon is.
 Hul hoort te stel in die reinheid van hul lewe
 'n voorbeeld wat hul kudde na kan strewewe.
 Hy het sy sorg aan niemand uitbestee
 en in die modder ploeterende vee
 versaak om in St. Paulus-kerk sy fooie
 te wen deur requiems te sing vir 'n dooie,⁵⁴ 510
 of met 'n gilde hom laat besig hou;
 want, bly hy tuis, sy kudde steeds getrou,
 dan dra 'n wolf sy skape nie dalk weg nie;
 hy was 'n herder, nie 'n gehuurde knek nie.⁵⁵
 Maar alhoewel hy vroom en deugsaam was,
 het hy die sondaar nie met hoon belas;
 sy houding was nie trots of meerderwaardig;
 hy't vriendelik gemaan en was goedaardig.
 Om mense sagkens na die Heer te rig
 deur eie voorbeeld was sy liefdesplig. 520
 Maar het daar enigeen hom teengegaan,
 hoe hoog dié ook al aangeskrewe staan,
 het hy hom skerp berispe soos dit pas.
 Ek dink dat daar geen beter priester was.
 Hy't nie na eer of waardigheid gemik nie,
 of sy gewete na die saak geskik nie,
 maar Christus en Sy twaalf apostels het
 sy leer gevorm en sy lewenswet.

'n LANDMAN⁵⁶ het hom vergesel, sy broer.
 Hy't seker al baie vragte mis vervoer; 530
 'n ware en troue werker wat steeds strewewe
 na 'n rustige en broederlike lewe.
 Hy't God bo alles met sy hele hart
 liefgehad, in vreugde en in smart,
 en daarna ook sy naaste soos homself.
 En hy sou slote grawe, dors en delf
 om Christus wil, en vir 'n arm man,
 sonder betaling, doen als wat hy kan.
 Sy tiendes is geredelik betaal
 van vee en wat hy uit die grond kon haal. 540
 Hy't 'n kiel gedra en 'n merrieperd gery.

Die Meier van 'n landgoed en daarby
 'n Bodel, Proviandier en Meulenaar,
 'n Aflaatkramer en ek was almal daar.

54 In Chaucer se tyd kon meer as vyftig priesters Misse in St Paulus-katedraal se vyf en dertig koorkapelle opdra.

55 Vgl. Johannes 10:12.

56 "Ploughman", 'n arbeider.

Die MEULENAAR was 'n gesette ou,
 met reuse-spierkrag en van growwe bou;
 hy't orals ook party getrek daaruit
 deur die ram by elke stoeigeveg te buit.
 Die dikkerd was so sterk dat hy 'n deur
 maklik van sy skarniere los kon beur, 550
 of op 'n draf verpletter met sy kop.
 Sy baard was rooi, soos 'n sog of vos, en het op
 'n graaf, wat die fatsoen betref, gelyk.
 Op die tippie van sy neus het daar gepryk
 'n vratjie, en 'n bossie hare, rooi
 soos dié van 'n vark se oor, het dit getooi;
 swart was sy neusgate en wyd daarby.
 'n Swaard en beukelaar was aan sy sy;
 sy reuse-mond het soos 'n oond gerek;
 hy was 'n vuiltong en 'n snaterbek 560
 vol aardse grappe. Hy't graan en drie maal wat
 hom toegekom het, stilletjies gevat,
 want hy't 'n goue duim⁵⁷ – hy was so knap.
 Sy jas was blou van kleur en wit die kap.
 'n Speler van die doedelsak was hy,
 en daarmee is ons uittog begelei.

Die PROVIANDIER van 'n regsvereniging⁵⁸
 was onder ons. Niemand sou mee kon ding
 met hom as dit kom by die koop van proviand,
 hetsy op rekening of vir kontant; 570
 hy het sy kans so skrande afgeloer
 dat hy 'n gemaklike bestaan kon voer.
 Nou kyk hoe 'n gawe van die Heer is dit
 as 'n ongeskoolde meer vernuf besit
 as 'n hele hoop geleerde mense wat
 sy dertig meesters was met hulle skat
 van allerhande regsverborgenhede.
 In dié vereniging kon 'n twaalfstal lede
 maklik die landgoed van die rykste heer
 onder hul toesig neem en hom ook leer 580
 hoe om te lewe binne sy inkomste
 en sonder skulde ook, ja, selfs die domste,
 of anders spaarsaam as hy dit verkies;
 hul kon die graafskap deur met hul advies
 van waarde wees as 'n hofsaak dit behoef;
 tog kon die Proviandier hul almal troef.

Die MEIER⁵⁹ wat choleries, oud en skraal was,
 het sy gesig geskeer sodat dit kaal was;
 sy hare kort geknip rondom die oor

57 Die meulenaar se goue duim beteken dalk dat sy duim vir hom goud werd was, want dit was so gevoelig dat dit die gehalte van die graan kon bepaal; anders, en dis meer waarskynlik, is dit 'n ironiese toespeling op die spreekwoord dat 'n eerlike meulenaar 'n goue duim het, m.a.w. daar bestaan nie soiets nie.

58 Een van die "Inns of Court" in Londen wat beheer uitgeoefen het oor die Engelse regsberoep.

59 Die bestuurder van die landgoed van 'n grondeienaar.

en soos 'n priester s'n ook kort van voor; 590
 sy bene was besonder lank en maer
 soos stokkies, want geen kuit kon mens gewaar.
 Sy stal of skuur was altyd in die haak;
 geen ouditeur sou hom ooit baas kon raak.
 Deur net die weerstoestande na te gaan,
 kon hy die opbrengs skat van saad en graan.
 Sy heer se skape, beeste, melkery,
 sy varke, perde, pluimvee, skure kon hy
 ten volle aan sy meier toevertrou,
 wat volgens sy kontrak die boeke hou 600
 sedert sy heer skaars twintigjarig was.
 G'n agterstalligheid het hom gepas.
 G'n voorman, wagter of kneg het ooit by hom
 met lis of skelmstreek verbygekom;
 hul't hom gevrees nog erger as die dood.
 In 'n heiveld het sy huis, wat mooi en groot
 en deur groen bome oorskadu was, gestaan.
 Sy sake het sy heer s'n voorgegaan.
 Hy's ryklik van privaatbesit voorsien
 waarmee hy flink, subtiel sy heer kon dien 610
 met 'n gif of lening van sy eiendom,
 en dank ontvang, of 'n kleed en kap bekom.
 In timmerwerk skep hy nog steeds behae;
 dit was die ambag van sy jonger dae.
 Sy appelskimmelperd het Scot geheet
 en was 'n goeie poon; die opperkleed
 wat hy gedra het was blou van kleur en lank,
 en daarteen het 'n geroeste swaard gehang.
 Uit Norfolk was die heer van wie ek vertel,
 van naby 'n dorp met die naam van Bawdeswell. 620
 Sy kleed, soos 'n monnik s'n, is opgebind,
 en hy't hom agteraan ons stoet bevind.

Die BODEL van 'n biskopshof⁶⁰ was by,
 met 'n vuurrooi gerubyngesig, want hy
 was puiserig. Sy oë was vernou
 en jagser as 'n mossie was dié ou.
 Sy baard was yl, sy winkbroue swart en skurf.
 Geen kind het dit te na aan hom gedurf.
 Kwiksilwer, swawel, loodglit, serussiet,⁶¹
 boraks en wynsteen het min hoop gebied 630
 van 'n salf wat diep genoeg kon dring om sy
 gesig van groot wit bommels te bevry,
 en al die puise van sy wange vat.
 Hy't uie, knoflok, preie liefgehad
 en wyn wat sterk en bloedrooi was veral.

60 Geregsbode van 'n geestelike hof. Leke wat seksuele misstappe begaan het, is voor so 'n hof gedaag. Pleks om hul boetedoening op te lê, het die aartsdeken as verteenwoordiger van die biskop hul dikwels 'n boete laat betaal. Die bodel het op eie houtjie oortreders beboet of hulle gesterk in hul kwaad.

61 Witlood, loodkarbonaat.

Hy praat en skree net soos 'n mens wat mal
 word as hy eers gedrink het van sy wyn,
 en dan het niks gedeug nie as Latyn.
 Hy't 'n paar uitdrukkings steeds gebruik, aanhalings
 aangeleer uit verskeie wetsbepalings; 640
 en dis nie vreemd nie, want dit staan tog vas,
 'n papegaai kan net so maklik as
 die Pous self 'Wouter!' roep, hoor hy dit pal.
 Maar as mens na kon gaan, sou dit ook al
 die kennis wees wat hy daarvan gedra het,
 die '*Questio quid juris?*'⁶² wat hy gevra het.
 'n Gawe bliksem en 'n goedgesinde;
 'n beter kêrel was daar nie te vinde.
 Vir 'n bottel wyn het hy 'n lekker ou
 dit toegelaat om 'n bywyf aan te hou 650
 'n jaar lank, en hom daarna vrygespreek;
 maar dwase het dit gou aan geld ontbreek;
 het hy 'n kêrel in so 'n geval gekry,
 dan het hy daarop aangedring dat hy
 nie die Aartsdeken se banvloek hoef te vrees nie;
 sy siel sou tog nie in sy beursie wees nie,
 en daarin sou die straf wees, het hy vertel:
 'Aartsdekens dink jou beursie is jou hel.'
 Maar ek weet hy het gelieg oor hierdie saak;
 'n vloek behoort 'n booswig bang te maak 660
 want, nes kwytskelding salig maak, verdoem
 die ban wat hul *Significavit*⁶³ noem.
 Dus het hy mag gehad oor die jongmense
 om hulle te verlei; hy't na hul wense
 geluister en hulle van sy raad voorsien.
 Die krans wat op sy kop was, sou kon dien
 as uithangbord vir 'n herberg, dit was so groot,
 en soos 'n skild dra hy 'n ronde brood.

 'n AFLAATKRAMER van Roncevalles⁶⁴ en hy,
 vriende – want soort seek soort – het saam gery, 670
 so pas uit Rome terug – dit volgens hom.
 Hy't hard gesing: 'Kom hierheen, liefling, kom.'
 Die diepe basstem van die Bodel het
 hom harder begelei as 'n trompet.
 Die Aflaatkramer het hare geel soos was
 gehad wat hang soos gladde stringe vlas,
 en klompies-klompies krulle langs sy nek

62 Die vraag is watter deel van die wet?

63 Die bevel tot inhegtenisneming van 'n geëkskommuniseerde.

64 'n Verkoper van aflate. 'n Boetvaardige kon teen betaling die skatkamer van die oorfloedige verdienste van die Verlosser, die Maagd en die Heiliges te baat neem en kwytskelding van tydelike straf ontvang. Aflaatkramers was berug daarvoor dat hulle nie tussen kwytskelding van straf en vergewing van sondes onderskei het nie en verder dat hulle met sogenaamde relikwieë gesmous het. Die aflaatkramer Johannes Tetzl is 'n bekende figuur uit die Protesstantse kerkgeskiedenis. Die oorspronklike klooster van Roncevalles was op die pelgrimsroete na Santiago, maar daar was ook filiale in Frankryk en Engeland. Dié by Charing Cross het kort voor Chaucer se tyd groot berugtheid verwerf vanweë die buitensporige aflaathandel wat van daar af bedryf is.

die punte waarvan tot sy skouers strek,
 maar baie toingrig en yl verspreid.
 Hy't sonder 'n kap gery vir die aardigheid, 680
 hy het dit liewer in sy sak gedra;
 hy dag hy volg die jongste mode na
 met sy klein mussie en sy groot boskaas.
 Sy oë het geblink soos dié van 'n haas.
 'n Pelgrimsteken⁶⁵ was aan sy mus genaai;
 sy sak was voor hom op sy skoot, gelaai
 met aflatbriewe wat vars uit Rome was.
 Sy piepstem het soos 'n bok se blêr gekras;
 geen skeermes het hy aan sy vel gelê nie,
 want hy't geen baard, en sou ook nooit een hê nie;
 hy was 'n reun of merrie na my gis. 690
 Maar tussen Ware en Berwick het hy gewis
 die laaste mededinger kafgeloop;
 want in sy sak het hy 'n kussingsloop –
 Ons Liewe Vrou se sluier volgens hom,
 en 'n brokkie seil wat van die boot sou kom,
 toe Petrus op die see geloop en bang
 geword het en die Here hom moes vang.
 Hy't 'n messingkruis⁶⁶ gehad, versier met stene,
 En in 'n glas 'n hele spul varkbene. 700
 En kom hy met die relikwieë by
 'n arm pastoor wat op die platteland bly,
 dan samel hy meer geld in daar en dan
 as wat dié priester in twee maande kan,
 en so met flikflooi en met skelmstreke
 het hy vir die gek gehou pastoor en leke.
 Maar mens moes hom dit toegee, hy kon regtig
 'n mooi figuur slaan in die kerk en plegtig
 iets uit die Skrif lees of oorlewing,
 maar plegtiger 'n offertorium⁶⁷ sing, 710
 want daarop volg die preek, het hy geweet,
 wanneer sy gladde tong hul sou oorreed
 om hulle silwer af te gee, en dus
 het hy dit uitgesing met mag en lus.

Nou het ek u vertel van al die lede,
 hul stand, getal en drag, asook die rede
 waarom ons almal saam in een party
 in Southwark was by 'n goeie tappery
 genaamd die Wapenrok, naby die Bel.
 Maar nou is dit ook tyd om te vertel 720
 wat daardie eerste aand ons als behaag het
 vandat ons by die herberg opgedaag het,

65 Pelgrimstekens of -insinjes, die bewys, aandenking of amulet van 'n besoek aan 'n besondere pelgrimsoord, was die eerste massaprojekte van die Westerse samelewing voor die boekdrukkuns. Die teken in dié geval was 'n voorstelling van die heilige sweetdoek van Veronica met die afdruk van Christus se gesig (*vera icon*), 'n relikwie wat in Rome gesien kon word.

66 'n Goedkoop kruis gemaak van messing (of latoen), 'n allooi van koper en sink.

67 Dié deel van die Mis wat die preek voorafgaan.

en daarna van ons reis gewag te maak
en wat ons pelgrimstog ook verder raak.
Maar eers moet ek nog sê dat ek vertrou
u sal dit nie as ongepoets beskou
as ek met openhartigheid verslag
sou doen van hulle praatjies en gedrag,
al haal ek hulle einste woorde aan.

Ek meen dat almal tog akkoord sal gaan
dat enigeen wat iets van 'n ander man
wil oorvertel, so goed as wat hy kan,
die juiste woorde moet gebruik, al was
dié onfatsoenlik of hoe onvanpas;
tensy hy alle waarheid gaan verbloem
en dinge veins of hulle anders noem.
Mens moenie skroom nie, al is dit jou broer,
wat jy begin, behoort jy deur te voer.
Christus self het vryelik gepraat,
en in sy woorde skuil daar tog geen kwaad.
Wie hom kan lees, sal sien dat Plato sê:
'Die woord moet op die daad betrekking hê.'
En verder smee ek om vergiffenis
as ek my soms in my relaas vergis,
en die korrekte voorrang nie betoon;
ek is maar dom en u moet dit verskoon.

730

740

Die WAARD van die herberg het ons tuisgemaak,
'n ete voorberei wat in ons smaak
geval het en ons bekere vol geskink
dat ons sy wyn, wat hoofdig was, kon drink.
So treffend was hy en so vriendelik,
hy was beslis vir 'n hofmaarskalk geskik.
Geset was hy, sy oë het geblink;
geen burger uit die kooplui was so flink;
verstandig ook, ervare en welsprekend,
geen manlike hoedanigheid ontbrekend.
En daarbenewens was hy opgewek,
en ná ons ete skeer hy heerlik gek
en praat van vrolikheid en sulke dinge,
ná die vereffening van ons rekening;
en toe sê hy: "Menere, jul is waarlik
besonder welkom, want ek kan beswaarlik
my nou herinner wanneer daar vanjaar
so 'n jolige geselskap bymekaar
in hierdie herberg was as julle hier;
en daarom sou ek jul graag wou plesier,
wis ek net hoe. Maar wag, hier het ek mos
'n plan wat prettig is en niks sal kos.
Jul gaan na Kantelberg – mag God jul seën,
en die martelaar jul alle hulp verleen!
En goed weet ek dat wanneer jul op weg is,
jul met jul grappies en jul stories reg is,

750

760

770

want hoe kan dit mens troos of jou verbly
as jy soos 'n stomme klip die heelpad ry?
En daarom wil ek nou vir julle pret
iets voorstel, soos ek reeds verduidelik het.
En as jul almal hou van my idee,
en julle aan my oordeel oor sal gee,
en elkeen handel volgens ek beslis
wanneer ons môre op die rypad is,
sit ek my kop op 'n blok, by my oorlede
pa se siel, jul's daarmee hoogs tevrede!
Stem saam nou sonder redekaweling.”

780

Wel, hy het daarop nie hoef aan te dring;
ons het dit nie die moeite werd beskou
om ons met 'n lang bespreking op te hou,
en onderwerp ons dadelik aan sy oordeel.

“Wel, mense,” sê hy, “hoor nou tot jul voordeel
Wat ek beoog en moenie krities staan;
hierop kom dit neer, om kort te gaan,
om die tyd te help verdryf, sal elkeen twee
verhale moet vertel – ek bedoel daarmee
op pad na Kantelberg, en daarna weer
nog twee daarby wanneer ons huis toe keer –
van avonture uit vergange dae.

790

En hy in wie s'n almal meer behae
as in ander skep, terselfdertyd
om die sedeles en die vermaaklikheid,
hy sal dan op 'n ete getrakteer
word deur ons almal in dié saal wanneer
ons teruggekeer het van ons pelgrimstog.
En sodat ek jul pret vermeerder nog,
sal ek op eie koste met jul ry
en julle graag as reisgids begelei;
en hy wat oor my uitspraak redeneer,
sal moet betaal wat ons op pad spandeer.
En gaan jul met my voorstelle akkoord,
sê dan niks verder nie, maar gee jul woord,
dat ek als môre vroeg organiseer.”

800

Ons het ingewillig en 'n eed gesweer,
geredelik ook, en by hom aangedring
dat hy sy ingewing ten uitvoer bring,
die taak van goewerneur oor ons aanvaar
asook skeidsregter en beoordelaar,
en die waarde van die feesmaal vas moes stel;
ons sou ons onderwerp aan sy bevel,
laat kom wat wil. Soos een man het ons dus
besluit om by sy oordeel te berus.

810

En daarop is die wyn weer eens gehaal;
ons het gedrink, en daarna sonder draal,
het ons versadig in die bed geklim.

820

Met eerste daglig aan die oosterkim
het die herbergier ons soos 'n haan gewek

en by mekaar gebring om te vertrek,
en ons is op 'n stapgang daarvandaan,
en het tot by St.Thomas-beek gegaan;
Daar het die Waard sy ryperd ingehou,
en gesê: "Nou, mense, ek hoop dat jul onthou
wat julle my beloop het voor ons heenkome.

As aand- en môrepraatjies gaan ooreenkom,
laat ons nou sien wie ons eerste gaan vergas.

830

En soos ek wyn en bier wil drink, vir vas
sal die rebel wat teen my redeneer
die koste dra van wat ons ook spandeer!
Kom trek nou lootjies voor ons verder ry;
en hy begin wat die kortste ene kry.

Heer Ridder," sê hy, "kom trek u een uit
en waag die kans, want dit is my besluit.

Kom u ook nader, mevrou Piores,
en heer Student, kom trek, en doen u bes
om sedigheid en studie opsy te stoot."

840

Wel, binnekort het elkeen klaar geloot,
en om iets van die resultaat te sê:

soos kans, geluk of noodlot dit wou hê,
het die Ridder toe die kortste loot getrek,
en daarvoor was ons bly en opgewek;
en hy moes toe vertel omdat sy woord
gegee is in belofte en akkoord;

dus waartoe sou besware tog gedien het?

En toe die goeie heer dit ingesien het,
het hy, verstandig en gehoorsaam aan

'n belofte uit eie vrye wil gedaan,
gesê: "Voor ek begin, moet julle weet
dat ek die loot in godsnaam welkom heet!
Nou kom ons ry. Ek het 'n storie reg."

850

En daarmee is ons weer eens onderweg,
en hy het vrolik ons begin onthaal
met die voordra van die volgende verhaal.

DIE RIDDER SE VERHAAL

Deel I

Daar was, soos ons uit ou legendes weet,
eens op 'n tyd 'n vors wat Theseus heet. 860

Hy was die heer en heerser van Athene
en as veroweraar was daar nie ene
wat op sy dag met hom kon vergelyk.

Hy het geseëvier oor menige ryk;
deur wysheid en deur ridderdaad het hy
beheer oor die Amasoneland gekry,
in vroeë tyd bekend as Skitia.

Hy's getroud met koningin Hippoluta
en hy het haar met luister en eerbetoon
na sy land teruggebring om daar te woon, 870
asook haar jonger suster, Emilie.

En so, met seëpraal en melodie,
los ek die edele hertog, begelei
deur sy hele leërmag wat met hom ry.

My storie sou langdradig word as ek
al die besonderhede moes verstrek
van hoe die Amasone in 'n slag
moes swig voor Theseus en sy riddermag,
ná 'n felle stryd gevoer is heen en weer
tussen die vroue en die Griekse leër, 880

van die beleëring van Hippoluta,
die skone koningin van Skitia,
van die feesmaal wat hul huweliksdag begroet het,
en die storm wat met hulle koms gewoed het.

Ek sal dit maar vir eers opsy moet stoot.

Die akker wat ek aanvoer, lyk my groot
en swakkerig die osse voor my ploeg;
die res van my relaas is lank genoeg.

Ek wil vir niemand in die wiele ry,
want ander moet hul storiebeurt ook kry, 890
dat ons sien wie ons op ete gaan trakteer;
so, waar ek opgehou het, begin ek weer.

Toe hierdie hertog van wie ek vertel,
naby die stad gekom het, ewentwel,
vol blydschap en in ryke seëpraal,
gewaar hy, toe sy oog tersyde dwaal,
reg langs die pad 'n swartgeklede skaar
vroue wat algar twee-twee agter mekaar
op hulle knieë op sy intog wag.

Hul't so 'n geskreeu laat hoor, so 'n jammerklag, 900
dat daar niemand op dees aarde is, nie een
wat ondervinding het van so 'n geween.

Hul't aangehou met skree tot een sy gang
gestuit het deur sy perd se toom te vang.

‘Wie is jul wat my tuiskoms so versteur
met julle jammerklagte en getreur?
Misgun jul my die eer dat julle dus
skree en te kere gaan?’ vra Theseus.
‘Het iemand jul beledig of gekwel
en is dit iets wat ek dalk reg kan stel? 910
En sê my waarom’s jul in swart geklee.’

Dit was die oudste wat hom antwoord gee
(ná sy geswymel het, kon sy skaars praat,
bejammerenswaardig haar doodsbleek gelaat):
‘My heer, die Lot het u oorwinning en
die roem van die oorwinnaar toegeken;
dit alles kom u toe; ons vra alleen
dat u genadiglik ons hulp verleen.
Erbarm u tog oor ons leed en smart. 920
Heer, ons beroep ons op u edel hart,
dat ’n druppel van u deernis op ons val,
op ons arme klomp wat vroeër een en al
vorstinne en hertoginne was, maar nou
ellendig op genade moet vertrou.
Die wiel van die Fortuin se wenteling
berooft mens van geluksversekering.
Twee weke lank het ons in die godin
van die genade se heiligdom hier in
afwagting van u koms vir u gewag.
Help ons nou, heer, want dit lê in u mag. 930

Ek, arme mens wat nou so roep en rou,
was vroeër koning Kapaneus se vrou.
In Thebe is hy dood. O dag van smaad!
Almal wat u hier sien in rougewaad
en wie se jammerklagte u kan hoor,
het hulle mans in daardie stad verloor
tydens die beleëring daarvan.
En nou, helaas, het Kreon, dié ou man
wat nou oor daardie stad die heerser is,
vervul met woede en bitter twis, 940
uit wrok en ingebore tirannie,
die lyke op ’n hoop laat sleep van dié
wat daar gesneuwel het, en om sy hoon
teenoor ons afgestorwenes te toon,
verhinder hy dat enige verwant
’n liggaam mag begrawe of verbrand,
en laat dit toe dat honde op hul teer.’

Toe sy gepraat het, het hul sonder meer
op die grond geval en bitterlik geween.
‘U moet ons tog met medelye bejeën 950
en laat ons leed u jammerhart deurdring.’

Die goeie ridder het van sy perd gespring.
Dit het vir hom gevoel asof sy hart
wil breek; hy’s so geroer deur hulle smart:
dames van hoë stand nie lank tevore

en nou so troosteloos en moedverlore!
Ná hy hul opgehelp het, het hy goedig
elkeen omhels en hul probeer bemoedig;
as troue ridder het hy 'n eed gesweer
dat hy sy mag sou toon en hulle eer
en aansien wreek op Kreon, die tiran,
en alle Grieke sou gewag maak van
die welverdiende straf wat Kreon aan
die hand van Theseus sou moet ondergaan.

En hy het dadelik, sonder huiwering,
sy krygsbanier vertoon en weggespring
na Thebe met sy ridders aan sy sy.
Hy wou verseg nie Athene binnery,
'n halfdag daar vertoef om uit te rus;
hy't daardie nag nog ver gevorder dus.
En hy't die koningin Hippoluta
en Emilie, haar mooi jong suster, na
Athene toe gestuur om daar te bly.
Daar's niks meer te vertel. Hy't voort gery.

Die bloedrooi beeld van Mars met skild en lans
het in sy wye wit banier geglans,
weerkaats in die omliggende natuur.
En op sy eie gulde vlag's borduur
die Minotourus; in Kreta het hy mos
die volk van daardie wrede dier verlos.

So ry die hertog, die veroweraar,
en, die blom van ridderskap, sy leërskaar,
na Thebe, waar in glorie afgestyg,
'n geskikte veld gekies is vir die kryg.
Om kort te gaan, teen Kreon, koning van
Thebe, het hy geveg, en soos 'n man
en ware ridder't hy hom omgebring
en toe verdryf hy elke volgeling,
en met 'n stormloop neem hy die stad

en sloop toe muur en spar en balk en lat,
en elkeen van die vroue kry toe weer
die beendere van haar afgestorwe heer
om daarmee volgens die gebruik van toe
te handel. Ek verswyg maar liewers hoe
die dames, diep gedompel in die rou,
die oorskot aan die vlamme toevertrou,
hoe Theseus die oorwinnaar hoë eer
bewys het aan die dames toe hul weer
gereed was om van daar af weg te gaan;
ek stip maar net die hoogtepunte aan.

Met Kreon doodgemaak, het Thebe dus
in die mag geval van die dappere Theseus;
hy bring die nag daar op die slagveld deur
en hy't die land verwoes na willekeur.

Die plunderaars het ná die nederlaag
en vlug van die Thebane opgedaag

om haastig dog metodies deur die hoop
lyke te seek ten einde hul te stroop.
En so het dit gebeur dat hulle daar
onder die dooies 'n jong ridderpaar 1010
gevind het, sy aan sy, van bloed deurtrokke,
ryklik geklee in eenderse wapenrokke.
Een heet Arkiet, die ander Palamon.
Hul was so swaar verwond die mense kon
skaars vasstel of hul dood of lewend is,
maar die heroute het hul vergewis
dat volgens hul mondering hulle uit
die koninklike huis van Thebe spruit,
twee vorstelike susterskinders wel.
Die plunderaars het hulle opgetel, 1020
met sorg gedra na Theseus se tent.
Hy het bepaal dat hulle permanent
in Athene in gevangenskap sou bly,
waaruit geen losprys hulle ooit bevry.
Daarna het hy, met alles dus gedaan,
weer met sy leër Athene toe gegaan,
en daar het hy met louere bekroon
sy lewe lank in vreugde en eer gewoon.
Wel, wat bly oor? In lyding en verdriet
is Palamon intussen met Arkiet 1030
vir ewig in 'n toring toegesluit,
en met g'n losprys kom hul ooit daaruit.

Die dae en die jare gaan verby,
tot dit gebeur, een oggend vroeg in Mei,¹
dat Emilie, wat ewe mooi gelyk het
as 'n lelie ooit op sy groen steel gepryk het,
en fraaier nog as Mei se blommeprag
met 'n gelaatskleur ewe lig en sag
as wat 'n roosblaar is, voor dag en dou
reeds op en aangetrek was, volgens ou 1040
gebruik vroeg uit die vere, want die Mei
het geen behoefte aan laatslapery.
Die invloed wat die lente op mense het
is dat dit hulle opjaag uit die bed.
'Staan op,' sê dit, 'ten einde my te huldig.'
Gedagtig aan die eerbetoon verskuldig
het Emilie met ligdag opgestaan.
Sy lyk so vars met nuwe klere aan;
haar blonde hare was gevleg en het
'n el lank oor haar rug gehang, sou ek wed. 1050
In 'n tuintjie het sy op en af geloop
en daar het sy na willekeur 'n hele hoop
blomme gepluk, blomme wit en rooi,
dat sy 'n krans kon vleg om haar hoof te tooi,
en sy't gesing met hemelse bekoring.

1 Ná die lang winter het Europeërs eeu lank die behoefte daaraan gevoel om die koms van die lente te vier. So het die Romeine op 1 Mei die *Floralia* gevier om hulde aan die aardgodin te bring.

Gekluister in die groot soliede toring
 van 'n grou kasteel, vlak by die tuin geleë
 waar Emilie ontspan, was daardie twee
 jong ridders, reeds bekendgestel,
 van wie ek verder heelwat gaan vertel; 1060
 daar het hul in gevangenskap gekwyn.
 Die oggendlug was skoon, die son't geskyn
 toe Palamon, die arme prisonier,
 verlot daartoe verkry van die sipier
 en na 'n kamer in die toring gaan;
 die hele stad was sigbaar daarvandaan
 en die lowerryke tuin waarin die skone
 en lewensblye Emilie haar gewone
 omwandeling gemaak het daardie dag;
 en daar het Palamon sy droewe klag 1070
 aanhoudend uitgestort, dit diep berou
 dat hy die lewenslig ooit moes aanskou,
 terwyl hy in die kamer rondgeloop het.
 Of dit toeval was of die noodlot dit genoop het,
 hy't deur 'n venster met dik traliwerk
 van ysterstawe balke-groot versterk,
 die skone Emilie te sien gekry.
 Hy steier agteruit en 'Aa!' roep hy,
 asof 'n wapensteek sy hart deurdring.

Arkiet het met dié uitroep opgespring. 1080
 'Wat is dit, neef?' vra hy. 'Wat sou tog skort
 dat jy ontsteld raak en so doodsbleek word?
 Wat skree jy so? Wie't jou geaffronteer?
 Aanvaar maar nou, by die liefde van ons Heer,
 ons is gevangenes – dis eenmaal feit;
 Ons moet dié teenspoed aan die noodlot wyt;
 Saturnus se ongunstige aspek
 en stand in 'n konstellasie het dié effek.
 Dit help dus net mooi niks wat ons doen of sê;
 met ons geboorte is dit vasgelê. 1090
 Berus nou maar, want daarop kom dit neer.'

Toe't Palamon aldus gereageer:
 'Glo my, jy het die kluts skoon kwytergemaak,
 my liewe neef, in jou siening van dié saak.
 Dis nie gevangenskap wat my laat ly;
 ek het eerder deur my oë seergekry
 tot in my hart – my doodsteek's dit voorwaar.
 Die skoonheid van 'n dame wat ek daar
 onder in die tuin sien wandel het, Arkiet,
 is die oorsaak van my tranes en verdriet. 1100
 Ek weet nie of sy vrou is of godin,
 maar Venus moet dit wees, dink ek my in.'
 Toe sak hy op sy knieë neer en bid:
 'Venus, in die vorm van 'n vrou het dit
 vir jou behaag om aan my te verskyn,
 'n arme wese wat in wanhoop kwyn;

help ons ontkom uit dié gevangenis,
of as dié lot ons nie beskore is
en ons bestem is om hier te vergaan,
sien tog ons bloedlyn met erbarming aan; 1110
ons is deur tirannie omlaaggebring.’

En toe’t Arkiet ook die omwandeling
van die dame onder in die tuin gesien.
Haar skoonheid het ’n steekwond toegedien.
As Palamon se lyding bitter was,
wat van Arkiet? Nog swaarder was sy las.
Met jammerlike sugte het hy verklaar:
‘Die dartel skoonheid van die vrou wat daar
rondwandel in die tuin oorweldig my,
daarom is ek ’n kind des doods tensy 1120
ek spoedig die genade mag ontvang
om haar te sien; dis al wat ek verlang.’

Toe Palamon Arkiet se woorde hoor,
toe antwoord hy asof hy hom kon moor:
‘Is dit jou erns, of dryf jy die spot?’

‘Ek’s ernstig,’ sê hy, ‘so help my God.
Ek het min lus, verseker ek jou, vir gek.’

Toe’t Palamon sy wenkbroue saamgetrek.
‘Dis nouliks eervol,’ sê hy, ‘indien jy nou
verraderlik gaan optree of ontrou – 1130
dit teenoor iemand, as jou neef gebore,
maar deur ’n hoë eed tot broer geswore;
ons het beloof dat, tot die dood ons skei,
ons albei eerder ’n marteldood sou ly
as dat ons ooit mekaar belemmer of op
liefdesgebied stof in die oë skop;
intendeel, jy moet my te hulp snel, net
soos ek ook teenoor jou die verpligting het.
Jy’t dit gesweer, en ek ook, en ek weet
jy durf g’n woord ontken van daardie eed. 1140

Ek het jou tot vertroueling gemaak,
maar jy het jou verantwoordelikheid versaak,
en nou wil jy ’n dame liefhê al
is ek in diens en liefde haar vasal.
Jy sal nie, valse Arkiet. Nee, ek belet dit.
Ek het haar eerste liefgehad en ek het dit
aan jou slegs as vertroueling vertel,
as een wat my te hulp behoort te snel,
want die feit dat jy ’n ridder is, beteken
immers dat ek op bystand moet kan reken. 1150
Dus kla ek jou met reg van valsheid aan.’

Minagtend het Arkiet hom teengestaan:
‘As iemand vals is, is dit eerder jy.
Ek sê dit reguit, jy is vals verby.
Ek het haar eerste liefgehad as vrou.
Wat kan jy daarop sê, want volgens jou
wis jy nie of sy mens was of godin?’

Jy min haar in religieuse sin;
 my liefde is aards en op 'n mens gerig.

Dus het ek jou ook daaroor ingelig 1160
 as neef en as geswore broer. Maar wat
 daarvan, al het jy eerste liefgehad?
 Jy ken tog die gesegde dat g'n wet
 enige houvas op 'n minnaar het.
 Die liefde is 'n hoër wet voorwaar
 as dié wat mense voorskryf aan mekaar.
 Dis dié dat mensgemaakte wette pal
 voor die noodsaak van die liefde moet verval.
 Mens raak maar net verlief en dan's daar g'n
 verbykomkans, al is dit teen jou sin, 1170
 op 'n weduwee, 'n meisie of 'n vrou.
 Maar eintlik's daar g'n hoop vir my óf jou
 om ooit by hierdie dame in guns te staan.
 Jy weet, maar ek herinner jou daaraan,
 in dié gevangenis moet ons ewig bly,
 waaruit g'n losprys ons ooit sal bevry.
 Ons is soos honde wat baklei oor 'n been:
 hul gaan tekere maar hul wen nie een,
 want 'n valk vlieg daarlangs midde-in die geveg
 en dra dit onder hulle neuse weg. 1180
 In wêreldsake word as norm aanvaar
 dat elkeen vir homself moet sien kom klaar.
 Min haar gerus; ek min haar en ek sal
 haar ewig min – en waarlik dit is al.
 Ons is nou eenmaal vas hier, so laat staan,
 maar as 'n kans dalk kom, gryp mens dit aan.'

Ek kan nie uitwei oor die felle stryd
 wat daar gewoed het, weens gebrek aan tyd;
 ter sake egter: dit gebeur eendag
 (so kort as moontlik hou ek my verslag) 1190
 dat Peiritoös, edele vors sowel
 as Theseus se vriend en metgesel
 van kinsbeen af reeds, na Athene kom
 ten einde daar besoek te bring aan hom,
 soos hy graag gedoen het, want hy't niemand in
 die ganse wêreld so opreg bemin,
 en Theseus was vir hom ook lief gewees,
 soseer, soos ons in ou legendes lees,
 toe één sterf – en dis waar wat ek vertel –
 die ander hom gaan soek het in die hel, 1200
 maar dis genoeg gesê oor hierdie feit.
 Dié Peiritoös het geruime tyd
 al in Athene van Arkiet gehou
 en ná 'n lang gesoebat het hy nou
 daarin geslaag om Theseus om te praat
 om hom uit die gevangenis vry te laat
 sonder betaling van 'n losprys, net
 solank hy steeds op één voorwaarde let –

en wat dit was is maklik om te sê –
 hy het 'n streng vereiste opgelê.
 Die ooreenkoms tussen Theseus en Arkiet
 was dit: hy is verban van grondgebied 1210
 aan Theseus onderdanig; sy hele lewe
 mag hy hom nooit by dag of nag begewe
 op dié terrein en, as hy nalaat om
 vors Theseus se opdrag na te kom,
 dan sou hy met sy lewe daarvoor boet.
 Arkiet het nou g'n keuse nie; hy moet
 sy afskeid neem en huiswaarts keer vandaar
 en lugtig loop – sy nek is in gevaar.
 Hoe groot was nou die lyding van Arkiet!
 Hy voel sy hart oorweldig deur verdriet. 1220
 Hy het geween, geweeklaag, selfs oorweeg,
 as die kans hom voordoen, om selfmoord te pleeg.
 Hy't uitgeroep: 'Wee my geboortedag!
 Nou is gevangenskap 'n wreder slag
 as ooit tevore. Dit was 'n vaevuur,
 maar nou is dit die hel wat ek verduur.
 As Peiritoös nie as vriend vir my
 in die bres getree het, sou ek hier kon bly
 in Theseus se kerker vir altyd,
 nie in ellende nie maar saligheid. 1230
 As ek, haar dienaar, net vir haar kan sien,
 al kan ek nooit haar goeie guns verdien,
 sou dit genoeg beloning wees vir my.
 Nou, Palamon, my liewe neef, 'sê hy,
 'jy tree as die oorwinnaar uit die stryd,
 want jy kan steeds hier bly in saligheid
 in dié gevangenis, dié paradys.
 So't die Fortuin vir jou 'n diens bewys:
 jy mag nog Emilie te siene kry,
 en daarom is dit moontlik, omdat jy 1240
 so knap en dapper is, en byderhand,
 dat jy nog eendag in haar guns beland,
 maar ek's verplig om van haar weg te gaan,
 'n banneling van alle hoop ontdaan,
 en so in onguns dat g'n water of vuur,
 g'n lug of aarde nie, g'n kreatuur
 uit hierdie elemente voortgebring
 tot hulp kan dien of tot bemoediging.
 Ek kan maar sterf in wanhoop en in druk;
 vaarwel dan, lewe, blydschap en geluk! 1250
 Wat kla die mense tog die hele tyd
 oor die fortuin of Gods voorsienigheid
 terwyl dit beter dinge toeberei
 as wat hul ooit uit eie krag kan kry?
 Een mens streef rykdom na, maar daardeur word
 sy tyd deur moord of siekte ingekort;
 'n ander weer wil wegkom uit sy sel,

maar tuis word hy deur knegte neergevel.
Geen end is daar aan die euwels wat ons pla nie;
ons weet nie aldag mooi waarvoor ons vra nie. 1260

Ons is soos een wat dronk is soos 'n muis²
wat alte goed weet êrens het hy 'n huis,
maar nie so seker is van die regte pad,
en as hy daarop kom, dan's dit bra glad.
So's dit met ons gesteld in hierdie lewe;
geluk's die doel waarna ons naartig strew, e,
maar tog verdwaal ons kere sonder tal –
dit moet ons almal bie, en ek veral.
Ek dag mos as ek uit gevangenskap
op een of ander wyse kon ontsnap, 1270
dan sou dit louter vreugde wees, terwyl
ek eintlik weggevoer word van my heil.
As ek jou nie mag sien nie, Emilie,
dan het my lewe nie meer waarde nie.'

Aan die ander kant, toe Palamon besef
Arkiet is weg, het hy sy stem verhef
in so 'n luide weeklag en gekreun
dat die mure van die toring daarvan dreun.
Die boeie wat hy aan sy bene had,
was van sy sout en bitter tranen nat. 1280

'Helaas,' het hy geroep, 'my neef Arkiet,
God weet, dis jy wat die triomf geniet.
Jy loop in Thebe rond net waar jy wil;
aan jou maak al my lyding min verskil.
En oor jy dapper is en slim daarby
kan jy ons volksgenote maklik kry
om kragtig teen Athene op te ruk,
en dus, deur onderhandeling of geluk,
die dame wen, haar neem tot huweliksmaat,
om wie se ontwil ek hier die lewe laat. 1290
As mens ons kanse opweeg, is dit jy,
'n man van aansien, uit die tronk bevry,
wat eerder hoop het op sukses as ek
wat moet kreppeer in hierdie hok van 'n plek.
My lewe lank moet ek hier ween en kla
oor wat ek as gevangene moet verdra
en oor die lyding wat die liefde bring,
want dit verdubbel net die marteling.'

Daar skiet omhoog in hom die vlam van nyd,
omklem sy hart met soveel grimmigheid 1300
dat hy veel bleker as 'n bosboom was
om aan te sien, of koue, dooie as.
Hy roep: 'O, wrede gode, jul bind ons styf
met ewige besluite vas en skryf
op klipsteenharde tafels jul gebod,
ons immer onveranderlike lot.

2 'n Vaste uitdrukking in Middelenegels; in oorsprong, dronk soos 'n muis wat in 'n wynvat geval het en byna verdrink het.

Hoe kan 'n mens dan meer betekenis hê
as 'n skaap wat bewend in die weiveld lê?
Hy moet soos ander diere sterf, maar hy
word nog gevang en toegesluit daarby; 1310
hy moet ook siekte en groot teenspoed duld
en dikwels nog volkome sonder skuld.

Wat is die sin van jul voorsienigheid,
met onskuld wederregtelik in stryd?
En nog iets wat my pla: die mens is tot
morele plig gebonde omdat God
wil hê hy moet hom inhou – dis Sy wil –
maar intussen kan 'n dier sy luste stil;
en ná 'n dier se dood voel hy niks meer,
maar mense moet nog ween en kry nog seer, 1320
al het dit hier op aarde swaar gegaan.
Dis ongetwyfeld hoedat sake staan.
Ek moet dit aan die teoloë laat,
maar in dié wêreld is daar baie kwaad.

Daar's dieuwe en bedrieërs, soos ons weet,
op vrye voet, ten spyte van die leed
wat goeie mense deur hul toedoen ly,
terwyl ek in gevangenskap moet bly
vanweë Saturnus asook Juno wat
ons feitlik uitgeroei het en ons stad 1330
se mure in puin laat lê uit woede en nyd,
en Venus wat my kwel terselfdertyd
met afguns dat Arkiet dalk goed mag vaar.'

Ek laat die onderwerp voorlopig daar
van Palamon vereensaam in sy sel,
want ek wil eers iets oor Arkiet vertel.

Die somer gaan verby en toe, namate
die nagte langer word, het vrygelate
en aangehoudene steeds meer gely.
Ek weet nie watter een die swaarste kry: 1340
aan die een kant Palamon wat veroordeel is
om lewenslank in die gevangenis
met boeie en kettings ingeperk te bly,
aan die ander kant Arkiet wat sterf as hy
uit ballingskap terugkeer, en daarom sal
sy oog nooit weer op sy beminde val.

Verliefdes moet gerus 'n antwoord gee:
wie's beste daaraan toe van hierdie twee?
Die een sien sy beminde elke dag,
maar hy bly toegesluit; die ander mag 1350
weer kom en gaan na hartelus, maar hy
mag sy beminde nooit te siene kry.
Kies julle maar, indien dit moontlik is.
Ek keer nou terug tot my geskiedenis.

Deel II

Arkiet was terug in Thebe en elke dag
val hy in 'n floute neer en roep hy 'Ag',
want sy beminde sien hy nou nooit weer.
Wat sy verdriet betref, kan ek konstateer:
nog nooit was daar 'n enkele kreatuur
in die wêreldrond wat soveel moes verduur. 1360
Hy't kos en drank vermy en snags gewaak
en uitgemergel soos 'n stok geraak,
sy oë diep en aaklig in hul kasse.

Vaal was sy vel, so bleek soos dooie asse;
en eensaam was hy, altyddeur alleen;
hy't nagte lank gekerm en geween,
en as hy sang hoor of 'n instrument,
dan kom daar aan sy jammerklag g'n end.
Sy lewenskragte was so swak, so plat
en so verander ook, dat niemand wat 1370
sy stem gehoor het, sou kon weet dis hy,
en sy gedrag was dié van een wat ly
aan die kwaal wat onder die naam van Eros³ gaan,
maar meer nog as die manie wat ontstaan
in die voorste breinsel as die fantasie
'n oormaat kry van die vog melancholie.
Sy voorkoms en sy geestestoestand was
so heeltemal verward dat dit sou pas
by 'die droewe minnaar'⁴ – dis die heer Arkiet.

Maar hoekom aanhou praat oor sy verdriet? 1380
Hy het die wrede marteling, die wee
en bitter pyn, verdra 'n jaar of twee
in Thebe, in sy tuisstad, soos ek sê,
en toe een nag terwyl hy slapend lê,
kom die gevleuelde god Mercurius
blykbaar na hom en stel Arkiet gerus.

Hy dra sy staf wat met die slaap bedwelm
en oor sy goue lokke was sy helm;
presies dieselfde, het Arkiet gelet,
as toe hy Argos vas laat sluimer het. 1390
'Gaan jy nou na Athene,' het hy verklaar,
'n einde aan jou smart wag vir jou daar.'

Arkiet skrik wakker. Hy spring orent
en sê: 'Ek sal my dadelik daarheen wend.
Ek gee nie om wat die gevolg mag wees
en sal my nie laat afskrik deur die vrees
dat ek sal sterf, solank ek haar kan sien,
die dame wat ek so bemin en dien.'

Met dit gryp hy 'n spieël en merk hoe vaal

3 Die minnekwaal is beskou as 'n siekte, die simptome waarvan hier beskryf word. Dit kon noodlottig wees as die
toevoer van swart gal na die brein manie veroorsaak.

4 Die Iyer lyk na 'n geykte karakter, 'n blote stereotipe.

hy van gelaatskleur was en hoe totaal 1400
 sy voorkoms verander het. En toe het hy
 die blink gedagte in sy kop gekry
 dat met die groot gedaantewisseling
 deur al sy kwellinge teweeggebring
 hy stil-stil kon gaan woon in Athene waar
 niemand hom sou herken nie, kort en klaar,
 en so sien hy sy liefling dag vir dag.
 Haastig verwissel hy sy kleredrag;
 hy't hom as arm werksman voorgestel
 en, met 'n kneg as enigste gesel 1410
 wat alles van sy heer se liefde weet
 en net soos hy as arm man gekleed,
 die kortste pad Athene toe gebaan.
 Daar aangekom, het hy na die paleis gegaan
 en by die poort laat weet hy staan bereid
 vir selfs die laagste vorm van diensbaarheid.
 Om kort te gaan, uiteindelik het hy
 toe by 'n hofbeampte werk gekry,
 iemand in die gevolg van Emilie,
 want deurentyd het hy gelet op wie 1420
 verbonde was aan dié beminde vrou.
 En oor hy jonk was, asook frisgebou,
 'n wakker kêrel, uitermate sterk,
 was hy selfs vir die nederigste werk
 soos brandhout kap en water dra bekwaam.
 'n Jaar of twee lank het hy onder die naam
 van Filostrat 'n kamerkneg se plig
 in die skone Emilie se diens verrig.
 Tot niemand van sy sosiale stand
 was mense half so aangetrokke, want 1430
 hy was so fyn van aard dat die hele hof
 van hom gepraat het met die hoogste lof.
 Hul meen dit is in almal se belang
 as Theseus hom verhef tot hoër rang
 en hom 'n waardiger betrekking bied
 waar sy talente ruimte kan geniet.
 Voor baie lank het sy beleefde spraak
 en goeie dae vir hom naam gemaak
 en het Theseus vir hom die kans gegee 1440
 om as kamerjonker in sy diens te tree,
 en het geld voorsien vir die handhaaf van sy stand,
 benewens inkomste uit sy eie land –
 dié het hy heimlik elke jaar gekry.
 Geen agterdog het dit gewek, want hy
 het eerbaar en omsigtig geld bestee.
 Op hierdie wyse het, in wel en wee,
 drie jaar verbygegaan, en nooit was daar
 vir Theseus een wat hom kon ewenaar.
 In hierdie salige toestand los ek hom
 om weer 'n slag by Palamon te kom. 1450

In donkerte gehul, in 'n gruwelike sterk
gevangenis sewe jaar lank ingeperk,
het Palamon, ellendeling, gekwyn
onder die aanslag van 'n dubbele pyn:
die liefde het so 'n houvas op sy hart
hy wou skoon van sy kop af raak van smart,
en verder was hy nie vir 'n beperkte tyd
gevangene nie, maar in der ewigheid.

Wie't die vermoë om in poësie
sy lyding te vertolk? Ek het dit nie. 1460

Ek gaan so gou ek kan daarby verby.
Na sewe jaar gebeur dit toe in Mei –
dit was die derde van die maand gewees,
soos ons in ou geskrifte hieroor lees,
en of dit toeval of die noodlot was,
want wat bestem is, staan nou eenmaal vas –
dat Palamon met 'n vriend se hulp ontsnap
om middernag uit sy gevangenskap.

In aller yl ontvlug hy uit die stad,
want die sipier't 'n slaapdrank ingehad, 1470

'n mengsel van 'n sekere kruiewyn
met 'n verdowingsmiddel en die fyn
Thebaanse opium; so vas het hy
geslaap dat niemand hom kon wakker kry.

So't hy die kans benut om weg te kom.
Die nag was kort; dit was al byna om;
derhalwe moes hy, voor die ligdag breek,
hom in 'n bos vlak by die pad versteek.

Skoorvoetend het hy deur die bos gesluip
met die bedoeling om daar weg te kruip 1480

en hom daar skuil te hou die hele dag
en later, onder sluier van die nag,
te reis na Thebe waar sy vriendekring
'n mag teen Theseus op die been kon bring.
As hy nie met sy lewe boet nie, sou
hy Emilie wellig kon wen tot vrou –
dié doel het Palamon vooropgestel.

Nou wil ek eers weer van Arkiet vertel:
dié't nie geweet hoe ná aan 'n ramp hy was,
toe loop hy in Fortuin se lokval vas. 1490

Die lewerik, die dagherout, begroet
die helder môrestond met bly gemoed
en vurige Phoibos⁵ klim in felle prag
dat van sy lig die hele ooste lag;
sy strale droog die silwer druppels dou
wat aan die lower hang. Arkiet wat nou
in die vors se diens verhoog is tot die eer
van Theseus se opperkamerheer,
het opgestaan, die blye dag beskou,

5 Apollo, die songod.

en oor hy graag aan Mei sy hulde wou 1500
 betuig en vol verlange was, het hy
 vir sy vermaak die velde in gery.
 Sy perd was lewendig en een of twee
 myl van die hof het hul die bos betree,
 toevallig juis die plek waarvan ek net
 'n rukkie terug vir jul verwittig het.
 Hy wou 'n krans vleg van die lower, want
 Meidoring is daar en wildewingerdplant,
 en hy't dit teen die sonlig uitgeskal:
 'O Meimaand met jou blommeprag en al 1510
 jou lower, welkom, vars en skone Mei.
 Ek hoop om vir my 'n groenigheid te kry.'
 En later het hy lighartig van sy ros
 gespring en langs 'n paadjie in die bos
 toe op en af geloop, waar Palamon
 hom in 'n ruigte skuilhou. Niemand kon
 weet dat hy daar was nie, want hy was bang
 dit sou sy lewe kos as een hom vang.
 Hy wis ook nie die wandelaar's Arkiet –
 hoe sou so iets hom ooit te binne skiet? 1520
 Die spreekwoord's egter ewe waar as oud:
 'Die veld het oë; ore het die woud.'
 Dus moet mens op jou hoede wees, want jy
 sal nooit die onverwagte kan vermy.
 Arkiet had g'n vermoede dat sy maat
 so naby aan hom was. Hy't hom hoor praat,
 want in sy skuilplek sit hy baie stil.
 Arkiet het rondgeloop net waar hy wil.
 Hy het sy liedjie klaar gesing en toe
 diep aan die peins geraak, want dit is hoe 1530
 dit met verliefdes gaan: as jy nog dink
 hul's in die hoogte, het hul bui gesink;
 soos 'n emmer in 'n put gaan dit op en neer.
 Kyk maar hoe ongestadig is die weer
 op 'n Vrydag, wanneer Venus hoogty vier:
 een oomblik skyn die son, dan skielik tier
 die reën. Net so vertroebel sy die gees
 van haar dienaars, wat ook wisselbaar moet wees.
 Selde is Vrydag soos die ander dae.
 Toe hy klaar gesing het, het Arkiet verslae 1540
 begin te sug; hy't sonder meer op die gras
 gaan sit; gewens dat hy nooit gebore was;
 gekla: 'O wrede Juno, hoe lank sal jy
 aanhou teen Thebe en sy mense stry?
 Helaas, hoe is die hoë koningshuis
 van Kadmos en van Amfion vergruis.
 Deur Kadmos is die vesting opgerig,
 die stad van Thebe mettertyd gestig;
 hy was die eerste vors daarvan, en ek
 is ook van koningsbloed, ek stam direk 1550

uit Kadmos en sy vorstelike lyn,
 maar nou het eer en vryheid saam verdwyn:
 ek is verneder tot die bitter smaad
 van diensbetoon aan iemand wat ek haat;
 en Juno doen my nog meer onreg aan
 deurdat ek onder 'n ander naam moet gaan.
 My naam Arkiet was al die jare goed,
 maar nou's ek Filostraat, 'n man van toet.
 O wrede Mars en Juno, julle wraak
 het ons hele koningshuis tot niet gemaak; 1560
 net ek bly oor, en arme Palamon,
 en met aanhouding martel Theseus hom.
 En dit is ook nie al nie, want ek word
 al verder in die ongeluk gestort
 deur die liefdespyle wat my hart deurboor:
 my hele lewe lê die dood my voor.
 Jou oë, Emilie, is my verderf;
 jy is die oorsaak daarvan dat ek sterf.
 Ek sou die ander sorge wat my kwel
 se waarde op minder as 'n dissel stel, 1570
 as ek maar iets kon doen wat jou behaag.'

Toe sak hy in 'n floute daar omlaag,
 maar ná 'n lang beswyming kom hy by.
 Intussen het Palamon gevoel hoe gly
 'n swaardlem deur sy hart, so fel en koud;
 hy ruk van woede en hy voel benoud.
 Toe hy gehoor het wat Arkiet als praat,
 toe storm hy daar uit, met 'n bleek gelaat,
 soos een wat mal word, uit die ruie bos.
 'Arkiet,' roep hy, 'jou lae, sluwe vos, 1580
 nou het ek jou! Jy soek 'n vrou se hart
 en ek verduur vir haar die pyn en smart;
 jy is my bloedverwant en deur 'n eed
 aan my verbonde, soos jy self goed weet,
 en jy't vir hertog Theseus bedrieg
 en loop nou oor jou eie naam en lieg.
 Dis nou 'n doodsaak tussen ons, en jy
 sal die liefde van my Emilie nie kry.
 Sy hoort aan my – of niemand onder die son,
 want ek's jou vyand: ek is Palamon! 1590
 Ek het g'n wapen hier, want ek het pas
 ontsnap uit die plek waar ek gevange was,
 maar ek verseker jou: jy sal voorwaar
 jou lewe of jou liefde moet laat vaar.
 Kies wat jy wil; jy sal my nie ontkom!'

Arkiet het Palamon herken, na hom
 met hoon geluister, briesend soos 'n leeu
 sy swaard getrek, op Palamon geskreu:
 'By God wat in die hemel woon, as jy
 nie siek was nie, versot van minnary, 1600
 en as jy nou 'n wapen by jou had,

dan sou jy nooit uit hierdie bos jou pad
gevind het nie; jy sou hier sterf terstond!
Hier loën ek die ede en verbond
wat ooit bestaan het tussen jou en my.
Volslae gek, die liefde is immers vry:
ek sal haar liefhê; maak maar wat jy wil.
As ridder verkies jy seker om dié geskil
deur middel van 'n tweestryd by te lê.
Nou goed dan. Sonder om iemand iets te sê,

1610

sal ek môre weer na hierdie plek terugkeer
en ek waarborg jou dit op my riddereer,
ek bring vir ons wapenrustings saam, en jy
kan die beste kies, die swakste laat aan my.
Vannag nog sal ek beddegoed na die bos
toe bring, asook voldoende drank en kos.
En as jy my geliefde dame win
en my verslaan in hierdie bos waarin
ek my bevind, sal sy aan jou behoort.'

1620

Toe antwoord Palamon: 'Ek gaan akkoord.'
Met dié verbint'nis wedersyds aanvaar
is hul tot die volgende môre uitmekaar.
O Cupido, van alle liefde ontbloot,
jy duld g'n medeheerser as deelgenoot
van jou gesag. Dis waar wat hul vertel:
'Nóg mag nóg liefde soek 'n metgesel.'

Dit het Arkiet en Palamon ontdek.
Arkiet het dadelik na die stad vertrek.
Die dag daarna met eerste lig het hy
heimlik twee wapenrustings voorberei
wat albei ewe goed was, ewe reg
om gebruik te word vir hulle tweegeveg;
en met dit alles voor hom op sy ros
het hy toe sielalleen gery na die bos.
Op die ooreengekome plek en tyd
het Arkiet en Palamon ontmoet vir die stryd.

1630

Hul't skielik bleek geword, soos 'n jagter wat
in Thracië stelling inneem in 'n pad
wat deur die ruigtes loop; en met sy speer
in sy hand geklem wag op die leeu of beer
en hoor hoe kom die dier hom tegemoet
wat blare en takke afbreek in sy spoed,
en dink: 'Dit is my vyand wat hier kom.
Nou's dit net ek en hy en ek moet hom
hier in dié oopte dood, anders sal hy,
as dinge skeef loop, triomfeer oor my.'

1640

So't dit met hul gegaan: elkeen se kleur
het hom versak toe hul mekaar bespeur.
Hul't nie mekaar gegroet nie; ook g'n woord
gewissel nie aangaande hul akkoord,
maar sonder meer mekaar help voorberei,
asof hul broers was, aan mekaar gewy.

1650

Toe't hul met spiese skerp herhaaldelik
nydige steke na mekaar gemik.
Van Palamon sou mens kon sê het, hy
het met die wreedheid van 'n leeu baklei;
Arkiet weer was 'n tier, hy was so boos.
Hul het mekaar so toegetakel soos
wildevarke doen, skuimend om die snoet.
Hul't aanhou veg, ten spyte van die bloed. 1660
Die ridders en hul stryd eers daar gelaat,
wil ek nou weer van hertog Theseus praat.

So sterk's die Noodlot met die taak belas
om God se raadsbesluite toe te pas,
in Sy alwetendheid voorsien deur Hom,
al het die hele wêreld dalk ooreengekom
op die teenoorgestelde, sál 'n ding
gebeur, al is dit ook so sonderling
dat dit één maal voorval in 'n duisend jaar.
Ons aardse drange stry wel teen mekaar 1670
en neig tot haat of liefde, vrede of stryd,
maar als vloei voort uit Gods voorsienigheid.

Ek dink aan Theseus, 'n man van mag.
Hy het hom so verlustig in die jag;
veral in Meimaand was die hert sy prooi.
Dan vind die oggend hom nie in die kooi,
maar aangetrek, en reg om uit te ry
met horing, honde, here aan sy sy.
Hy het behep geraak met herte jag;
dit was sy hartsbegeerte elke dag 1680
en hy't geesdriftig daarna uitgesien;
hy't nou Diana, newens Mars, gediën.

Die dag was helder, soos reeds aangedui,
toe Theseus, in 'n opgewekte bui,
met sy skone vrou Hippoluta gaan ry
en Emilie, geheel in groen kledy,
'n jaggeseleskap koninklik van styl.
So't Theseus reguit na die bos gepyl;
dit was in die nabyheid van sy woning.
'n Oop plek was die doelwit van die koning. 1690
'n Hert hou in dié bos, so't hy verstaan;
dis hierheen wat dit op die vlug sou slaan.
en dan die stroompie oor en daarna voort;
en hy wou met die honde van dié soort
waarmee hy graag gejag het daarin slaag
om nog sy prooi 'n paar maal op te jaag.
Met skrefie-oë teen die oggendson
sien hy hoedat Arkiet en Palamon
mekaar bestorm soos wildevarke sou;
met swaarde glimmend slaan hul hou op hou, 1700
die ligste waarvan lyk asof dit wel
die trefkrag het om 'n eikeboom te vel,
maar wie die vegters was, wis hy nog nie.

Hy gee sy perd die spore sodat dié
met 'n sprong beland het tussen hulle twee;
hy pluk sy swaard te voorskyn en hy skree:
'Hou op! By Mars die magtige, dit sal
doodsake wees as verdere houe val
in my teenwoordigheid. Watter soort
mense is julle wat hier ongehoord
deelneem aan 'n tweegeveg asof
in 'n strydperk aan die koninklike hof
sonder beampste as beoordelaar?' 1710

Toe't Palamon in aller haas verklaar:
'Ons hoef nie lank hieroor te redeneer,
want ons verdien albei die dood, my heer.
Ons is ellendige gevangenes
vir wie die lewe las en moeite is.
U is regverdig, dus moet u ons geen
genade toon of uitkomkans verleen. 1720

Erbarm u en maak my eerste dood,
maar maak hom daarna ook my deelgenoot;
of maak hom eerste dood, want hierdie man
is niemand anders as Arkiet, verban
deur u self as 'n vyand van u land
en hy verdien die doodstraf aan u hand.
Hy't onderduims na u hof teruggekom
(as ene Filostraat was hy vermom),
en so mislei hy u al jare lank,
en 'n opperkamerheerskap was u dank. 1730

En dis die man wat Emilie wil wen.
Ek moet maar alles liewerste erken,
want ek staan op die drumpel van die dood.
Ek's Palamon, die ellendeling wat snood
ontsnap het uit u tronk, u vyand nou,
brand ek van liefde vir die skone vrou,
u suster Emilie, daartoe bereid
as ek kan sterf in haar teenwoordigheid.
Ek vra u om my met die dood te straf,
maar ek bid dieselfde lot op my makker af;
dat ons beide dit verdien, staan immers vas.' 1740

Die antwoord van die edele hertog was:
'So handel ons die saak hier af terstond.
Jul staan verdoem, en dit uit eie mond,
en ek beaam dit as my laaste woord;
so daar's g'n nodigheid vir die folterkoord.
By Mars die rooie, julle sterf gewis.'

Toe het die koningin uit droefenis
begin te ween, ook Emilie, sowel
as al die ander wat haar vergesel. 1750
Na hulle mening was dit te betreur
dat so iets met die jongmans moes gebeur,
want hul was edeles van hoë stand
en slegs uit liefde het hul twis ontbrand.

By die aansien van hul wonde groot en seer
het al die dames uitgeroep: 'Ag heer,
erbarm u oor ons klomp vrouens swak.'
Hul't op hul blote knieë neergesak,
en sou sy voet gekus het waar hy staan.

Eindelik het sy woede begin taan: 1760

'n edelman's barmhartig van gemoed.
Hoewel hy eers gebewe het verwoed,
tog het hy kort en klaar die daad gepleeg
asook die rede daarvoor heroorweeg.

Sy woede sê dat hulle skuldig is;
sy rede egter soek vergiffenis,
want hy't geredeneer dat elke man
homself sal help in liefde, as hy kan,
of uit 'n tronk ontsnap; buitendien

het dit sy hart verteder om te sien 1770

hoedat die vroue nog aanhoudend skrei;
en in sy edele gemoed het hy
die saak bepeins en aan homself gesê:
'n Heerser moet tog ook genade hê;
hy kan nie net 'n leeu wil wees wat brul
op mense met berou en vrees vervul,
asof hul obstinaat is en hom tart
deur in hul bouse weë te volhard.

Oordeelsvermoë stel 'n vors in staat 1780
om onderskeid te tref in sy beraad
en trots en deemoed anders te hanteer.'

Wel, na 'n rukkie toe sy drif kalmeer,
toe kyk hy op met vriendelike gesig
en hierdie woorde't hy tot hul gerig:
'Die godheid van die liefde – o aardetjie –
wat my betref, wie is sy eweknie?
Hy word belemmer deur geen hindernis;
sy wonders wys ons dat hy goddelik is,
want hy's in staat om, net soos hy begeer,
elkeen se hartsverlange te beheer.

Kyk na dié twee, Arkiet en Palamon, 1790

hul't uit die tronk ontsnap en hulle kon
soos konings daar in Thebe woon en weet
dat ek hul vyand is en my gereed
hou om my vonnis oor hul uit te voer,
maar tog is hulle deur die liefde meegesloer
na hierdie plek om hier hul dood te kry.

Sê my: is dit nie louter gekkerny?

Wie's so 'n sot soos 'n verliefde sot?

Nou by die allerhoogste Here God, 1800

kyk al die bloed! Wat 'n aaklige vertoon!
Dis hoe hul heer, die liefdesgod, hul loon;
dis wat hy om hul diensbetoning gee.
Tog dwing verliefdes om aan die idee
van hul gewaande wysheid vas te klou,

maar die grootste grap van alles is: die vrou
 oor wie dié twee so opgewonde raak,
 word ewe min as ek daardeur geraak,
 want sy't soveel benul van die hele heet
 geskarrel as koekoek of vlakhaas weet. 1810
 Wel, alles moet beproef word, heet en koud,
 en gekke sal ons wees, óf jonk óf oud;
 dit het ek lank gelede ingesien,
 want die liefde't ek ook op my dag gedien,
 en, oor ek kennis dra van liefdesmart
 en weet hoe teister dit 'n mens se hart,
 as iemand self ook dikwels in die strik,
 vergewe ek jul skuld geredelik
 ter wille van my gade se pleidooie
 en dié van my suster, Emilie die mooie. 1820
 En nou moet julle albei plegtig sweer
 dat julle nooit hierna my land sal deer
 of daarteen oorlog voer solank jul leef,
 maar eerder vriendskapsbande na sal streef;
 en ek sien jul oortreding oor die hoof.'
 Hul het dit met 'n dure eed beloof,
 sy grasie en beskerming aorgesmeek.
 Toe het hy hul welwillend aangespreek:
 'Op grond van vorstebloed en rykdom sou
 jul met prinses of koningin kon trou; 1830
 niks kan dit te geleëner tyd belet;
 maar tog moet ek 'n woordjie toevoeg met
 betrekking tot my suster Emilie,
 die oorsaak van jul stryd en jaloesie:
 jul moet verstaan, albei kan haar nie kry nie;
 dit maak nie saak hoe julle daaroor stry nie,
 en of jul daarvan hou of nie, die feit
 bly staan: die een of ander is haar kwyf.
 Met ander woorde, dit kan my nie skeel
 hoe kwaad jul word, jul's eenmaal een te veel. 1840
 Ek gaan jul dus in die posisie stel
 dat elkeen self die lot ontvang wat wel
 vir hom vooruitbestem is; luister dan
 en hoor die strategie wat ek beplan.
 Om die saak nou af te handel: ek begeer –
 en hieroor val daar nie te redeneer –
 dat elkeen gaan na die plek wat hy verlang,
 vrylik, sonder hindernis of dwang,
 om dan na afloop van presies 'n jaar
 elk met 'n honderd ridders bymekaar 1850
 te kom, behoorlik toegerus en reg
 om jul geskil in die strydperk te besleg,
 jul aanspraakreg op haar so te bepaal.
 En ek belowe julle, sonder faal,
 as troue ridder op my woord van eer,
 dat watter een van jul ook triomfeer,

die een wat met sy honderd daarin slaag
óf om sy teëstander weg te jaag
óf in die strydperk dood te maak, aan hom
dien Emilie na regte toe te kom 1860
as skone guns deur die Fortuin bewys.
Die strydperk sal op hierdie plek verrys,
en soos ek hoop dat God my siel sal spaar,
sal ek eerlik optree as beoordelaar.
Al wyse wat jul uit die stryd sal tree,
is as een sterf of hom gevange gee.
Wel, nou is julle met my plan bekend;
laat ons dus hoor hoe voel jul daaromtrent.
Hiermee is my uitspraaklewing klaar.'

Wie't soveel vreugde as Palamon ervaar? 1870
Wie was so opgewonde as Arkiet?
Wie kan beskryf in poësie of lied
hoe groot die blydschap was toe hul aldus
begunstig is deur hertog Theseus?
Toe val hul almal op hul knieë neer
om hul opregte dankbaarheid en eer
aan die koning te betuig. Met bly gemoed
het die twee jong ridders Theseus gegroet;
ná al die jare was hul terug op pad
na Thebe hulle sterk verskanste stad. 1880

Deel III

Ek weet u sou my dit verkwalik as
ek dalk vergeet om al die sorg en las
te noem deur Theseus op die hals gehaal
met die aanlê van 'n strydperk so rojaal
dat nêrens in die wye wêreld daar
'n arena was wat dit kon ewenaar.
Dit was 'n myl in omtrek met 'n groot
klipmuur omring, asook 'n vestingsloot.
In sirkels het sitplekke trapsgewys
tot op 'n hoogte van sestig voet verrys; 1890
dit is op so 'n wyse ingerig:
elkeen't 'n onbelemmerde uitsig.

Wit in die ooste blink 'n marmerpoort
en in die weste een van dieselfde soort.
Om kort te gaan, in die wêreld was geen plek
so noemenswaardig in so 'n klein bestek.
Daar was geen vakman opgelei in die
rekenkunde of geometrie,
geen kunstenaar in skilder of skulptuur
of Theseus het sy onderhoud en huur 1900
betaal sodat hy kon beplan of bou.
Vir offerandes bring en dienste hou
het hy 'n bidkapel met 'n altaar
bokant die oostelike poort aan haar,

Venus, godin van liefde, toegewy;
daarteenoor aan die westekant het hy
met 'n soortgelyke bidplek Mars vereer;
'n wavrag goud het hy daaraan spandeer.
En in 'n toring aan die noordekant
het rooi koraal en wit albasterwand
'n bidkapel versier, ryk om te aanskou,
vir die erediens van Diana gebou,
godin van kuisheid – 'n edele struktuur.

1910

Maar byna het ek vergeet om oor skulptuur
en grootse skilderye te berig,
die vorms van die liggaam en gesig
in elkeen van die tempels uitgestal.

In dié van Venus sien 'n mens veral
die droewe beeld geteken op die mure
van sware sugte, slapelose ure,
die opreg gevoelde trane en die smart,
die brandpyn van verlange in die hart
van almal wat die liefde ondervind;
die ede wat hul aan mekaar verbind;
begeerte, stuitighede, hoop en vreug,
vrygewigheid, verleiding, skoonheid, jeug;
geweld, betowering, falsheid en gevele,
spandabelheid en drukke knoeiery,
en afguns met 'n goudgeel gousblomkrans,
en op haar hand sit 'n koekoek;⁶ en dans
en lied, plesier, musiek en feesgeskal,
geselle van die liefde, waarvan ek al
vertel het of hierna nog sal vertel –
dis als in taferele voorgestel,
en nog veel meer as wat ek kan verklaar,
want waarlik, op een muur te sien was daar
Berg Kithairon, waar Venus graagste woon,
geheel en al as skilderstuk vertoon;
daar was 'n tuin gewy aan die plesier,
waar Ledigheid die werk het van portier.

1920

1930

1940

Daar was Narsissus uit die oue tyd
en Salomo met al sy sottigheid
en Herakles, die wonderbaarlik sterke,
Circe en Medea met hul towerwerke,
en Turnus, om sy woeste mag gedug,
ryk Kreusus wat in slaafse boeie sug.
So sien mens dat nóg wysheid, geld en goed,
nóg lis of skoonheid, krag of heldemoed
in staat is om met Venus mee te ding,
want dié godin kan als ten onder bring,
en dié wat in haar strik gevang is, skree
pure verniet herhaaldelik 'O wee!'
Ek kan met hierdie voorbeelde volstaan

1950

6 Simbolies van owerspel.

of haal geredelik nog duisend aan.

Venus se beeld, 'n glorie vir die oog,
dryf nakend uit 'n wye see omhoog
en sy's bedek, van haar naeltjie na benee,
deur die helder grasgroen branders van die see;
sy't 'n sieter in haar regterhand en deur
'n rosekrans, behaaglik soet van geur
en vars, is haar hoof versier; haar duiwevlug
het daaromheen gefladder in die lug.

1960

Voor haar het Cupido gestaan, haar kind,
met vlerke aan sy skouers; hy was blind,
soos hy dikwels voorgestel word, en hy het
'n boog gedra met pyle skerp en net.

Nou kan ek net so wel ook nog vertel
van alles op die mure voorgestel
in die tempel van die rooi god, Mars die sterke,
want hulle was die ene skilderwerke
soos dié wat die kamers in die gruwelplek,
sy tempelhuis in Thracië, bedek,
want hierdie dorre streek waar water vries,
het Mars bo alle andere verkies.

1970

Ten eerste was daar op die muur vertoon
'n bos waar geen dier hou en geen mens woon,
met bome knoestig, krom, verdor en oud,
en aaklig skerp, gebreekte stukke hout –
daar gaan 'n dreun- of hyggeluid daardeur
asof 'n rukwind al die takke skeur,
en laer, aan die voet van 'n skotigheid,
die tempel van die god gedug in stryd.
Dit was 'n bouwerk van gebrande staal
met 'n lang en eng en aaklige portaal,
en daaruit kom so 'n windvlaag aangedrewe
dat die hele poorthek in sy voeë bewe;
by die deure dring die noordelig se bleek
afskynsel in, want vensters het ontbreek
wat lig kon deurlaat na die binnekant;
die deure was van duursame adamant⁷
en is almal kruis en dwars beslaan met swaar
dik ysterbande, en elke steunpilaar
van die tempel het die dikte van 'n vat
en die stewigheid van ysterwerk gehad.

1980

1990

Daar't ek gesien versinnebeeld Verraad:
sy donker planne voer tot donker daad;
en wrede Toorn met bloedbelope blik;
die sakkeroller en die bleke Skrik;
die skurk wat glimlag met versteekte dolk;
die stal wat brand, die rook 'n groot swart wolk;
moord op 'n man onskuldig in sy bed
en felle Oorlogvoering, wondbesmet,

2000

⁷ 'n Verouderde woord vir diamant wat dui op iets wat baie hard is.

en Twis wat met bebloede mes bedreig;
uit die nare plek het 'n gekrysgestyg.
Op die naat van sy rug lê die selfmoordenaar
met mond wat oophang; die vermoorde daar
het 'n pen deur die slaap; sy bloed het opgedam;
sy hare is saamgekoek daarvan en klam.

En in die heiligdom sit Teespoed
met somber blik en droewige gemoed. 2010

Verskriklik klink die Waansin se gelag;
daar's gruwels en rumoerige gedrag.
In die bosse lê 'n lyk met keel gesny;
'n duisend dood wat aan geen siekte ly;
die buit geplunder deur tiran se hand
uit stede wat verwoes lê, afgebrand.
Vlammend dans daar skepe op die meer;
'n jagter is vermorsel deur 'n beer;
die kok met 'n geskroeiende hand; die kind
in sy wiegie deur 'n wildevark verslind. 2020

Niks wat aan Mars se aandag kan ontsnap:
die voerman deur sy eie wa getrap –
daar lê hy onder die wiel – hy's platgery.
Ook die beroepe aan dié god gewy:
die slagter en barbier⁸ was daar, asmee
die smid wat wapens op sy aambeeld smee;
maar oor dit alles heen, met eer berei,
in 'n toring troon die beeld van Heerskappy
en bokant hom het daar in 'n reguit lyn
'n vlymskerp swaard gehang aan 'n draadjie twyn. 2030

Daar is verbeeld die moord op Julius,
Nero die Grote en Antonius;
al was hul toentertyd nog ongebore
is hulle dood geskilder vantevore,
as voorspooksele van Mars, in daardie prente,
presies net soos die hemelelemente
die lot van mense vaslê voor die tyd:
wie deur die liefde omkom, wie deur nyd.
Baie gevalle uit die outyd kan
wel opgenoem word; dis 'n paar daarvan. 2040

Op 'n strydwa het die beeld van Mars gepryk,
slaggereed, grimmig om na te kyk.
Twee sterrebeelde was daar bo sy hoof,
en hul was, volgens outydse geloof,
bekend as Puella en Rubeus.
Die wapengod is voorgestel aldus:
voor hom was daar 'n rooi-oogwolf op die grond,
hurkend, met stukke mensvlees in sy mond.
Bedrewe die penseel wat Mars se storie
so goed kon uitbeeld in sy skrik en glorie. 2050

Vervolgens wil ek oor die Tempel van

⁸ Die haarsnyer en baardskeerder was ook 'n bloedlater, tandetrekker en chirurg.

Diana die kuise iets vertel, maar dan moet ek my haas om so volledig as ek kan te wees. Van bo tot onder was die jag verbeeld en kuise skugterheid. Daar was die droewige Callisto: sy't Diana kwaad gemaak en die godin het haar van vrou verander in 'n berin, en die leidster aan die hemel agterna; dis al die kennis wat ek daarvan dra. 2060

Ons sien 'n ster is wat haar seun ook was; en daar was Dana, reeds bedek met bas – dis nie Diana die godin, verstaan, maar die dogter van Penneus oor wie dit gaan – en Aktaion: oor hy Diana naak gesien het, is hy tot 'n hert gemaak, en, soos hier voorgestel, is hy toe deur sy eie honde uitmekaargeskeur.

'n Entjie verder is 'n skildery van Atalanta in 'n jagparty met Meleager en ander op die spoor van die wildevark; hy moes boet daarvoor. Daar was so baie stories dat dit nou onmoontlik is om almal te onthou. 2070

Diana het op 'n hert se rug gesit met 'n hele trop jaghonde rondom dit; en onderkant haar voete was 'n maan wat groei, maar wat sou afneem lateraan. Haar standbeeld is in heldergroen geklee en sy't 'n boog en 'n koker pyle asmee. 2080 Haar oë't ver na ondertoe gekyk waar Pluto heers in die donker doderyk; en voor haar was 'n vrou in barensnood, maar oor die kind vertoef het in haar skoot, wend sy haar jammerlik tot die godin: 'Help my, Lucina⁹, beste helperin.' Die skilder het dit alles vorm gegee en moes seker heelwat aan sy verf bestee.

Nou was die perk voltooi; en Theseus wat geen onkoste ontsien het om aldus die tempels en arena reg te kry, was toe dit alles klaar was baie bly. Nou moet ek Theseus eers 'n ruk lank laat om van Arkiet en Palamon te praat. 2090

Die dag het aangebreek dat hulle weer, soos ek gesê het, na Athene keer, elk met 'n honderd ridders slag gereed om die strydperk te betree en, volgens eed, die geskil daar by te lê; so het hul dan teruggekome, elk met 'n honderd man; 2100

⁹ Diana is as beskermster van vroue aangeroep.

en baie is die mening toegedaan
dat sedert hierdie wêreld se ontstaan
daar selde in Gods skepping wyd en syd
soveel van mannemoed en vaardigheid
te vinde was in so 'n klein getal,
want die fleur van ridderskap het een en al,
in die strewe na die roem wat dit sou bring,
gesmeek om in die strydkamp mee te ding,
en met vreugde is party daarvoor gekeur;
want, as daar môre soiets moes gebeur,
in Engeland of waar ook al, dan kan
mens daarvan seker wees dat elke man
van ridderstand en warm bloed ook daar
teenwoordig sou wou wees om die stryd te aanvaar
ter wille van 'n hooggebore vrou.

2110

Dit sou iets wonderliks wees om te aanskou!

So was dit dan met Palamon gesteld:
hy't 'n honderd ridders met hom, elk 'n held.
Party't 'n halsberg en 'n borskuras¹⁰
gedra wat oor 'n ligte wambuis¹¹ pas;
ander kom met pantserplate klaar,
of 'n skild van Pruise, of 'n beukelaar;
party was meer besorg oor beenbeslag
en dra 'n strydbyl of 'n goeiendag¹² –
daar is niks nuuts; als was al vantevore.
So het elk die wapentuig en toebehore
gedra wat hy beskou het as gepas.

2120

Lukurgos, koning van die Thraciërs, was
by Palamon en hy't gevaar getart.

Manlik was sy gesig; sy baard was swart.
Die kykers van sy oë het soos vuur
gegloei met gelerige rooi glasuur.
Soos 'n griffioen¹³ het hy omheen geskou
van onder die stekelruigte van sy brou;
bonkig, breedgeskouerd en gesond,
sterkgespied, met arms lank en rond,
volg hy die mode van sy tuisland na
en staan omhoog in 'n gegilde wa,
in die tuie waarvan vier wit stiere was.

2130

Pleks van 'n wapenrok of 'n kuras
dra hy 'n beer se vel, koolswart en oud,
die kloue daarvan geel geverf soos goud.
Sy el-lang hare is agteroorgekam;
swart soos 'n raaf se vere het dit gevlam;
en op sy kop 'n goue krans so dik
soos 'n man se arm, loodswaar en omstik
met pragtige robyne en diamante;

2140

10 Wapenrusting wat die nek en bors beskerm.

11 Kledingstuk wat van die nek tot die middellyf strek.

12 'n Knots met ysterpunte.

13 Mitiese dier met die lyf van 'n leeu en die kop en vlerke van 'n arend.

en twintig groot wit honde het alkante
van sy strydwa saamgedraf, so groot soos stiere,
om herte en leeus te jag en ander diere; 2150
stewig gemuilband volg hul, en hul goue
halsbande het ringogies vir leitoue.
'n Honderd ridders het hom vergesel,
hul wapens dugtig en hul voorkoms fel.

Emetrius, groot vors van Indië, het,
soos ons kan lees in ou legendes, met
Arkiet gekom. Sy rooibruin strydros was
gepantser; sy skabruk¹⁴ van gouddamas.
Soos Mars, die oorlogsgod, het hy gery.
Sy wapenrok was van Tartaarse sy, 2160
met groot wit përels vasgestik daaraan.

Sy saal van gebrande goud was nuut beslaan;
en sy kort skouermantel was die ene
robyne, vuurblink van rooi edelstene.
Sy krullerige hare was goudgeel
met 'n skynsel van die somerson bedeel.
Sy neus gehaak; sy oë was sitroen;
sy lippe vol; sy velkleur vermiljoen,
met sproete hier en daar oor sy gesig;
party was geel en ander swarterig. 2170

Met 'n leeueblik het hy omheen gestaar,
sy ouderdom so vyf en twintig jaar.
Sy baard was welig en sy stemklank het
herinner aan die skal van 'n trompet.
Hy dra 'n louerkrans wat groen geloof
en prettig om te aanskou was op sy hoof.
Daar het 'n arend op sy hand gesit,
getem vir sy vermaak en liewit.

'n Honderd ridders het hom vergesel
in volle krygsmondering, alhoewel 2180
hul hoofde bloot was, deeglik voorberei.
Hertoë, grawe, konings, glo my vry,
gaan graag met so 'n kavalkade saam
ter wille van die liefde en ridderfaam.
Weerskante net 'n ent van die koning af
het 'n klomp mak leeus en luiperds saam gedraf.
Op hierdie wyse het dié ridders een
en almal in die stad gekom so teen
priemtyd¹⁵ die Sondag. Daar styg hul toe neer.

Toe't hertog Theseus, die edele heer, 2190
hul almal hartlik in sy stad ontvang
en hul gehuisves ooreenkomstig rang;
hy't hul onthaal en hom so ingespan

14 Ryk versierde saalkleed.

15 Priem is die eerste van sewe kerklike getye wanneer kloosterlinge, benewens die Mis, vir aanbidding bymekaargekom het. Priem is tussen ses- en nege-uur in die oggend; dan volg terts tussen nege en twaalf, sekst naastenby twaalfuur, none teen drie-uur in die agtermiddag, vespers teen vyfuur, kompleet om agtuur voor hulle gaan slaap, mette om middernag (daarom word 'korte mette' gemaak!) en loude wanneer die son opkom. By Chaucer beteken priem (soms 'volledig priem') gewoonlik omtrent nege-uur in die oggend.

vir die gerief en eer van elke man
dat mense tot vandag toe glo dat daar
nog niemand was wat hom kon ewenaar.

Die kosbediening en die minstrelsang,
geskenke deur 'n iedere gas ontvang,
die praalvertoon wat daar in die paleis is, 2200
wie hoë of lae plekke toegewys is,
wie die kroon gespan het as die skoonste dame,
wie was in sang en dans die mees bekwame,
wie voer oor liefde die fynste redenasie,
die valke wat daar sit op die stellasië
en watter honde op die vloer gelê het:
dis dinge waarvoor ek tans niks te sê het,
maar eerder oor hoe als afgeloop het, sal
ek nou vertel; so luister een en al.

Die Sondag vir die eerste skemering
toe Palamon die lewerik hoor sing 2210
twee uur voor dagbreek, het hy opgestaan;
hy't met die voël gesing en aangedaan,
met 'n vroom en vrolike gemoed het hy
as pelgrim hom gewend na die plek gewy
aan Cithereë,¹⁶ vir gunsbetoon vermaard,
Venus bedoel ek, verhewe en agtenswaard.
In die uur aan haar gewy¹⁷ het hy gegaan
na haar tempel wat in die arena staan;
daar het hy nederig gekniel en met
'n vol hart hom verootmoedig in gebed. 2220

'O allerhoogste vrou, toon my genade;
Dogter van Jupiter, Vulcanus se gade;
O Venus wat berg Citheron verbly;
jy moes uit liefde vir Adonis ly:
ontferm jou dus oor my bitter smarte
en neem my nederige gebed ter harte.
Helaas, ek het geen woorde om die hel
van foltering te beskrywe wat my kwel,
geen taal om my gevoelens bloot te lê nie.
Ek's so verward, daar val niks meer te sê nie, 2230
maar net: Genade, liewe vrou. Jy weet
wat my gevoelens is, jy sien my leed.
Aanskou my lyding tog met mededoë
en ek sal alles doen in my vermoë
om van vandag af in jou diens te staan
en kuisheid steeds verbete teen te gaan.
Dit is my heil'ge eed, so help my tog.
Ek wil nie oor my krygsverrigting spog;
ek vra nie die oorwinning in die stryd;
dit gaan nie oor die roem of ydelheid, 2240
of wat ook al die mense oor my sê,

16 Venus. Sy is op die eiland Cithera suid van Ciprus uit die golwe gebore.

17 Op 'n Sondag die tweede uur na sonop. Die derde uur is aan Diana gewy en die vierde aan Mars.

maar ek wil Emilie as myne hê,
en ek sal in jou diens die lewe laat.
Maar hoe ek haar kan wen – jy weet wel raad.
Dit traak my min of ek sukses behaal
of anders met my lewe moet betaal,
as ek my geliefde in my arms kan hou.
Mars is nou wel die wapengod, maar jou
vermoëns strek so ver onder die godedom,
as dit jou wil is, sal ek haar bekom.
Jou tempel sal ek al my dae dien
en, waar ek ook mag wees, dit steeds voorsien
van offerandes vir die brandaltaar.
Maar as jy my versoek nie kan aanvaar,
dan vra ek dat my hart môre subiet
deurboor word met 'n spiessteek van Arkiet;
dan as ek dood is, gee ek ook nie om
as hy vir Emilie as vrou bekom.
Die doel en sin van my pleidooi aan jou
is: Gee my my geliefde, liewe vrou.'

2250

2260

Onmiddellik na die sê van dié gebed
het Palamon bedroef maar nougeset
die rite uitgevoer by die altaar;
maar die besonderhede laat ek daar.
Die beeld van Venus het geroer en met
'n teken aangedui dat sy gebed
dié dag verhoor is en, al was die teken
ietwat vertraag, kon hy tog daarop reken.
Hy wis toe sy versoek is toegestaan
en het gou met blydschap na sy huis gegaan.

2270

In die derde onewe uur¹⁸ ná Palamon
se besoek aan Venus se tempel het die son
verrys en Emilie was op die been
en gaan na die tempel van Diana heen.
Die dienaarste wat haar begelei
het vuur vir die altaar gedra, kledy,
wierook en verder ook nog allerhande
bykomstighede vir 'n offerande
soos horings, volgens die gebruik vol mee:
als nodig om Diana eer te gee.
Die tempel was versier met draperie,
en wierook het gewalm. Emilie
het haar gewas met water van 'n wel.
Wat sy als gedoen het, durf ek nie vertel,
behalwe vaagweg, al sou dit bekoor
om die besonderhede aan te hoor.
Dit sou 'n man wat rein is geensins skaad,
maar iets moet mens aan die verbeelding laat.
Op haar gekamde, blonde loshanghare

2280

¹⁸ Die dag en nag is in twaalf ure verdeel, maar omdat die lengte van daglik gewissel het, was die ure ook van wisselende duur.

sit sy 'n krans gevleg van eikeblare, 2290
 en dit het haar besonder goed gestaan.
 Op die altaar steek sy twee vure aan
 en voer haar rites uit (soos ons onder meer
 uit Statius se boek oor Thebe leer).
 Toe die vure brand, het sy bedroef en bleek
 Diana op dié wyse aangespreek:
 'O kuise woudgodin, met 'n oogopslag
 kan jy die hemel, aarde en see betrag;
 vorstin van die donker wyk waar Pluto hou;
 godin van maagde: ek behoort aan jou 2300
 al jare lank; dus ken jy my gemoed.
 Wil my tog teen jou wraak en woede hoed;
 Aktaion het dit duur te staan gekom.
 Kuise godin, jy weet ek hunker om
 my lewe lank 'n maagd te bly. Ek wou
 nog nooit 'n man se liefling wees, of vrou.
 Jy weet ek is nog steeds aan jou gewy:
 'n maagd wat hou van jag en graag daarby
 in die woud rondswerwe; ek wil waarlikwaar 2310
 nie in die huwelik tree of kinders baar.
 Ek soek nie die geselskap van 'n man,
 so help my, liewe dame, want jy kan,
 op grond van die gedaantes wat jy voer.
 En Palamon, so erg deur my ontroer,
 asook Arkiet wat my so vurig min:
 ek vra 'n enkele guns van jou, godin,
 stuur liefde en vrede tussen hulle twee,
 wend hulle liefde van my weg en gee
 dat al die hete drif en liefdesvuur, 2320
 die minnesmarte wat hul tans verduur,
 gedoof mag word, of van my afgelei.
 En as ek hierin nie my sin kan kry
 (dalk is dit so beskik en vasgelê
 dat ek noodwendig een van hul moet hê),
 laat dit hom wees wat die meeste van my hou.
 Godin van louter suiwerheid, aanskou
 die bitter trane wat langs my wange val –
 jy's self 'n maagd – en hoed ons een en al;
 en as ek jou vir my maagd'likheid kan dank,
 dan dien ek jou as maagd my lewe lank.' 2330
 Die vure het hoog gebrand op die altaar
 terwyl sy haar gebed gedoen het, maar
 toe word sy van iets sonderlings bewus:
 een van die vure word meteens geblus
 en laai weer op ná dit 'n ruk lank taan,
 maar met dit het die tweede doodgegaan:
 al knetterend doof dit uit met 'n gesis
 soos brandhout maak wanneer dit vogtig is.
 Toe't sy gesien daar borrel uit die hout
 iets wat soos druppels bloed lyk. Sy't benoud 2340

teruggesteier; uit die veld geslaan
het sy wanhopig aan die huil gegaan.
Sy wis nie wat die sin daarvan kon wees,
maar het gereageer uit louter vrees
en het aanhoudend jammerlik geskree.
Met dit verskyn Diana wat geklee
as jagter was, haar boog in die hand gehou.
'Dogter,' sê sy, 'staak die geweens van jou.
Onder die hoë gode is daar beslis –
en dit staan ook geboekstaaf as gewis –
dat jy met een van hierdie twee sal trou
wat soveel leed en sorg verduur vir jou,
maar watter een mag ek jou nie vertel.
Ek kan nie langer bly nie, dus vaarwel.
Maar voor jy gaan, moet jy na die vure kyk
wat brand op my altaar; daaruit sal blyk
wat vir jou voorlê op die liefdespad.'

2350

Ná sy gepraat het, het die pyle wat
in die godin se koker was getril;
toe't sy verdwyn en alles was weer stil.

2360

Hieroor was Emilie uit die veld geslaan.
'Helaas,' sê sy, 'hoe moet ek dit verstaan?
Ek onderwerp my aan jou sorg, godin,
en jy moet met my handel na jou sin.'
En met dit het die jongvrou sonder meer
van daar af na haar huis toe teruggekeer.

Toe die uur van Mars gevolg het, het Arkiet
die tempel van gedugte Mars subiet
gaan opsoek om 'n offer daar te bring
volgens heidense verordening.
Met droewe maar verhewe stemming het
hy Mars daar aangeroop in die gebed.

2370

'O sterke god, jy word as opperheer
oor die koue streek van Thracië vereer;
en oor die wêreld heen in elke land
het jy die oorlogstuie in die hand;
wat jy ook al beskik, is wat geskied:
aanvaar die power offer wat ek bied.
As die eer my toekom as gevolg van jeug
of ek op grond van sterkte daarvoor deug
om jou te dien en as jou kneg te tel,
erbarm jou oor die smarte wat my kwel
ter wille van dieselfde pyn en vuur
van die begeerte wat jy moes verduur
toe jy die skone Venus wou verlei,
so jonk, so vars, so grasieus was sy.
Jy't dit beklink en sy was in jou mag,
maar toe het sake skeef geloop eendag:
Vulcanus het sy net oor jou gegooi
en daarin vang hy toe sy vrou ook mooi.

2380

Erbarm jou dan oor my bitter smart

2390

ter wille van die lyding in jou hart.
Ek's jonk en onervare, soos jy weet,
en na my mening is my pyn en leed
erger as ander wesens ooit moes ly,
en sy, om wie se ontwil dit my kasty,
dit traak haar min of ek te gronde gaan.
As ek my teëstander nie verslaan,
sal ek verniet op haar genade wag;
tog kan ek niks verrig uit eie krag,
dus soek ek hulp en jou goedgunstigheit.
Ag, here, help my môre in die stryd.
Jy het gevoel hoe woed die vuur in jou
en daardie selfde vuur verteer my nou.
Laat my oorwin; dit skeel my dan nie hoe
verbete ek veg; die glorie kom jou toe.
Jou heil'ge tempel sal ek hoër eer
as ander plekke, en in alles leer
om die krygskuns te bedryf tot jou plesier.
En in jou tempel hang ek my banier
en die wapens van my hele leërskaar,
en tot my sterfdag sal ek sorg dat daar
altyd vure op jou altaar sal bly.
En ek verbind my tot dié eed: ek wy
my baard en my lang lokke wat sover
nog nie die smaad geken het van 'n skêr
of skeermes nie, ek dra dit op aan jou
en ek bly lewenslank aan jou getrou.
Erbarm jou oor my bitter smarte, heer;
en laat my net oorwin; ek vra niks meer.'

2400

2410

2420

Toe Arkiet aan die einde kom van sy gebed
het die ringe aan die tempeldeure met
geweld gerammel; die deure in hul voë
het meegedoen. Arkiet was erg bewoë.
Die vure op die altaar het hoog gebrand
en lig laat val op die verste tempelwand;
soet was die geur wat van die vloer opskiet.
Met hoog verhewe arm het Arkiet
meer wierook op die vuur gegooi, en hy
het ander rites uitgevoer daarby.
Van Mars se harnas kom 'n klingeling
en daardeur het 'n ander klank gedring:
'n stem laat prewelend 'Oorwinning' hoor;
hy't Mars geloof en ook gedank daarvoor.
Met hoop en vreugde en 'n bly gemoed
het Arkiet toe na sy herberg toe gespoed,
bly soos 'n voëltjie oor die sonskyn is.

2430

Onmiddellik was daar hieroor groot getwis
in die hemel tussen Venus, die godin
van liefde, en Mars die sterke, streng van sin,
en Jupiter het in die bres getree
om vrede te herstel tussen dié twee.

2440

Maar toe't die koue, bleek Saturnus met
sy kennis van wat was 'n slinkse set
uit sy ondervinding aan die hand gedoen
en daardeur is die strydendes versoen.
Dis waar wat hulle sê: Daar's baat in jare,
want oud beteken wys asook ervare;
'n oue is stram van been maar nie van rede.

Saturnus het ter wille van die vrede, 2450
al was dit ook met sy natuur in stryd,
dus raad geweet met hul onenigheid.

'My lieue Venus,' spreek dié god haar aan,

'vanweë die wydte van my wentelbaan
het ek meer mag as baie mense dink.
My kom dit toe as een in die see verdrink;
my kom dit toe word iemand aangehou,
word hy verwurg, of opgehang met 'n tou;
ek is aanspreeklik vir rumoer en stryd,
vir gifmoord en vir ontevredenheid;

straf en vergelding deel ek uit wanneer 2460
ek in die teken van die Leeu verkeer;

dis deur my toedoen dat 'n hoë struktuur
ineenstort – sy dit toring, saal of muur –
bo-op die delwer of die timmerman;
dus was die dood van Simson volgens plan;
die dodelike siekte kom van my,
donker verraad en samesweerdery;
my blote blik veroorsaak pestilensie.

Hou op met ween, want dit is my intensie 2470
dat jou ware ridder Palamon, soos jy
vir hom belowe het, die dame kry.

Mars sal sy ridder bystaan, maar dit raak
nou tyd dat jul 'n rukkie vrede maak,
hoewel jul nie van een geaardheid is,
met die gevolg dat jul gedurig twis.

Ek is jou oupa en ek help jou graag.
Hou op met huil, want ek sal jou behaag.'

Nou is ek oor die gode uitgepraat, 2480
oor Mars en Venus en hul doen en laat;
so uitdruklik as ek kan, wil ek nou weer
na die hoogtepunt van my vertelling keer.

Deel IV

Daar was dié dag in Athene groot jolyt
en, as gevolg van Mei se lustigheid,
het mense Maandag vrolik met gesing
en dans en met toernooispel deurgebring
en Venus se hoë diens getrou gebly,
maar hulle wou die dag daarna graag by
die strydperk wees om die groot geveg te aanskou
en dus het alles vroegaand opgehou.

2490

Met dagbreek het 'n groot rumoer begin,
 die getrap van perde en wapengekletter in
 al wat 'n herberg is in dié kontrei;
 op stryd- en ryperd kom hul aangery
 na die paleis, 'n hele ridderskaar.
 Die wonderlikste wapentuig was daar:
 wat ongewoon en kunstig was, vol praal
 van goudsmeewerk, gestikte sy en staal;
 die blink bepantsering van mens en dier,
 en perdetuig en dekkleed ryk versier;
 here op trotse perde, elk voorsien
 van ridders en die knape wat hul dien;
 speerpunte word aan stele aangebring,
 helms gespe, 'n riem deur elke ring
 van skilde geryg; in die ywerige gedrang
 kou elke skuimbekdier sy goue stang;
 en wapensmede wat pal op en af
 met vyle en hamers in hul hande draf;
 leenmans te voet en werksvolk saamgedrom,
 elk met 'n knuppel; en die keteltrom,
 trompette, fluite en klaroengeskal¹⁹
 wat oproep om die vyand aan te val.
 In die paleis loop mense heen en weer,
 hier drie, daar tien, en hulle redeneer
 oor die ridder wat moet wen, soos hulle glo.
 Een sê dis sus, die ander sê dis so;
 een hou van 'Swartbaard', maar ander plaas
 groter vertrouwe in 'Kaalkop' of 'Boskaas'.
 'Hei, daardie ou's 'n wenners, hy lyk so kwaai;
 sy strydbyl weeg goed twintig pond, sou ek raai.'
 So klink dit van die skare wat saamgedrom het
 in die saal lank na die son reeds opgekom het.

2500

2510

2520

Die nagrus van groot Theseus is deur
 die roesemoes en die musiek versteur,
 maar hy het nie sy slaapvertrek verlaat
 tot die twee ridders, in gelyke maat
 vereer, voor hom verskyn het waar hy by
 die venster sit met glorie en heerskappy
 omgewe soos 'n godheid op sy troon.
 Die mense het saamgedrom uit eerbetoon
 of bloot om hom te sien en op sy woord
 en wense ag te slaan met volle akkoord.
 Toe't 'n herout wat 'n podium bestyg het,
 'Hoor nou' geroep tot al die volk geswyg het,
 en toe die skare hul gesprekke staak,
 het hy sy heer se wil bekend gemaak:

2530

'Dit is die hertog se deurdagte wil
 om te verhoed dat edele bloed verspil
 word as gevolg van stryd op lewe en dood

¹⁹ 'n Trompet met 'n deurdringende toon.

in hierdie aangeleentheid; derhalwe stoot 2540
hy nou sy vorige besluit opsy
om verlies van menselewens te vermy.
Op straf van die dood is werptuie van enige aard
in die perk verbode, ook dolk en hellebaard:
niemand mag soiets daarheen stuur of bring;
verder geen kort en skerp-gemaakte kling.²⁰
niemand mag soiets trek of dra aan sy sy.
Niemand mag meer as een maal afgery
kom op 'n opponer met 'n skerppuntspier,
al mag hy hom te voet daarmee verweer. 2550
Uit die saal gelig, moet 'n vyand sonder letsel
algaande teruggedwing word na 'n staketsel²¹
weerskante van die strydperk ingerig:
oorgawe is sy ridderlike plig.
En as die aanvoerder aan enige kant
sneuwel of in gevangenskap beland,
is die wapenspel onmiddellik op 'n end.
Mag God jul almal seën. Tree toe en wend
strydknos en langswaard aan na julle sin.
Dit is ons heer se wens. Laat die stryd begin.' 2560
Die volk het met luidrugtige geskree
bewys van hul tevredenheid gegee:
'Mag die Here so 'n goeie vors behoed;
hy het geen sinnigheid in die stort van bloed!'
Trompetgeskal weerklink en begelei
die ridderskaar wat na die strydperk ry
in optog deur die stad waar elke straat
behang is nie met serge maar brokaat.
Vooraan het Theseus vorstelik gery
met die Thebaanse ridders aan sy sy; 2570
toe kom die koningin en Emilie
en ná hul baie mense, elkeen van wie
se plek bepaal is volgens rang en stand.
Hul't deur die stad getrek; en die anderkant,
waar die strydperk was, is ruim betyds bereik,
want priemtyd het toe nog nie mooi verstryk.²²
Toe Theseus sit, asook Hippolita
en Emilie, en ander dames ook daarna
hul plekke ingeneem het volgens rang,
volg 'n sitplekstormloop deur die gedrang. 2580
Uit die weste onder die poort aan Mars gewy
kom Arkiet met honderd ridders aangery,
betree die strydperk onder 'n rooi banier;
terselfdertyd kom Palamon so fier
van die oostelike poort van Venus aan
met sy geleide onder 'n spierwit vaan.
Al sou mens orals soek op hierdie aarde,

20 Swaard.

21 Palissade waaragter ridders wat *hors de combat* – buite die stryd – was, moes bly.

22 Dit was so teen nege-uur.

waar kry jy magte so gelyk in waarde
en so goed opgewasse teen mekaar?
Dit sou 'n wyse wees wat kon verklaar:
dié een oortref die ander in verband
met dapperheid of ouderdom of stand;
die keuring moes as oordeelkundig tel.

2590

In twee geledere is hul opgestel.
Nou word appèl gehou; geen agterdog
mag daar ontstaan van enige bedrog.
Die poorte word gesluit; die kreet verrys:
Jong ridders moet nou hul stoffasie wys.

Heroute staak hul op en af gery;
trompette en klaroene skal; daar bly
niks meer te sê nie; maar aan elke kant
vat elk sy lans nou vaster in die hand
en gee sy perd die spore; nou sien jy
wie die steekspel ken, wie in die saal kan bly;
ondanks die skild waarteen die lans se skag
versplinter, voel die borsbeen steeds die slag.
Speersplinters spat tot twintig voet bo die aarde
en silwer skitter die getrokke swaarde;
hul kap die helms stukkend, kloof hul oop,
sodat die bloed in sterk rooi strome loop;
swaar knotse word geswaai en bene knak;
hier't een 'n weg deur die menigte gehak;
die sterkste perde struikel, 'n ruiter val;
hier's een nou onder die voet net soos 'n bal;
hier veg 'n man te voet met sy lans se skag,
daar bly 'n perd en ruiter in die slag.

2600

Een deur die lyf gewond word teen sy sin
van die veld gesleep agter die staketsel in;
die reëls bepaal dat hy nou daar moet bly;
'n ander word aan die oorkant afgelei.

2610

'n Pouse het van tyd tot tyd gedien
as blaaskans of om iets te drink miskien.

2620

Die twee Thebane het al keer op keer
mekaar te lyf gegaan en erg beseer,
mekaar ook twee maal uit die saal laat val.
G'n tierwyfie uit Gargafinedal
van haar welp beroof, sou soveel woede kon
belewe as Arkiet jeens Palamon,
gebore uit jaloesie; en daar is g'n
leeu wat vertoorn is in Benmarin
oor hy gejag word of dalk honger ly
wat so verlang om sy prooi se bloed te kry
as Palamon Arkiet se dood begeer.
Jaloerse houe reën op hul helms neer;
aan beide kante was daar strome bloed.

2630

Maar als kom tot 'n end soos alles moet,
en so't Emetrius voordat die son
gesak het, afgestorm op Palamon,

betrokke met Arkiet in 'n worsteling;
die vors se swaard het diep in sy vlees gedring; 2640
sy weerstand tevergeefs, is hy in die greep
van twintig man staketsel toe gesleep.

In 'n poging om Palamon te help is die groot
koning Lykurgos uit die saal gestoot
en Emitrius is, ten spyte van sy gewig,
die lengte van 'n swaard uit die saal gelig
deur 'n laaste hou van Palamon, maar dis
alles verniet oor hy buite aksie is.
Nou kon sy dapper hart hom weinig baat;
hy's in 'n hoek gedryf, ten einde raad, 2650
deur die oorwig teen hom en die reëls van die stryd.

Wie ondervind nou meer droefgeestigheid
as Palamon, verwyder uit die perk?
Toe Theseus die situasie merk,
roep hy die mense toe: 'Hou op met veg!
Die ridderspel is oor, die saak besleg.
My uitspraak is geensins partydig nie:
Arkiet van Thebe het vir Emilie
eerbaar gewen; en dis sy groot geluk.'

Toe't so 'n gejuig uit die skare losgeruk – 2660
dis pure vreugde wat hier duidelik word –
dat die paviljoen dreig om ineen te stort.

Wat kon die skone Venus doen?
Wat moes sy sê? Hoe kon sy haar versoen?
Sy kon net uit frustrasie ween, dis al,
sodat haar trane in die arena val;
sy sê: 'Dié ding strek glad nie tot my eer.'

Saturnus sê: 'Dogter, jy moet kalmeer.
Mars en sy ridder het wel hul sin gekry,
maar jou vertroosting sal nie lank uitbly.' 2670

Trompetters het hul skel musiek laat hoor,
heroute het luid geskree; hul was bekoor
met die sukses deur heer Arkiet ervaar.
Maar hoor my uit, laat die rumoer bedaar,
want daar't iets wonderbaarliks voorgeval.

Sy helm het die woeste Arkiet nou al
verwyder; om sy gesig te wys het hy
die volle lengte van die veld gery,
sy blik op Emilie omhoog gehou
en sy het hom met vriend'likheid beskou 2680
(gewoonlik sal 'n vrou mos guns betoon
aan wie Fortuna met sukses bekroon);
die vreugde oor haar het in hom opgewel.

Maar skielik het 'n Furie²³ uit die hel,
gestuur deur Pluto op Saturnus se wenk,
uit die aarde opgekom; sy strydros swenk
opsy van die skrik en struikel sodat Arkiet,

23 Die Furieë was drie afskuwelike wraakgodinne wat mense tot waansin gedryf het.

wat niks te wagte was, uit die saal uit skiet
en op die grond beland met bloed aan sy kop,
sy bors verbrysel teen die saal se knop. 2690

Daar't hy gelê en sy gesig het swart
geword soos 'n kraai of steenkool soos sy hart
se bloed daar opgedam het. Hul't terstond
met droewe hart hom opgetel van die grond,
na die paleis van Theseus gedra,
uit sy harnas losgesny en hom daarna
so gou as moontlik neergelê in 'n bed.
Hy was heeldyd by sy positiewe en het
gedurigdeur na Emilie bly roep.

Intussen het Theseus en sy hele troep
met groot vertoon en baie vreugde weer
na sy tuiste in Athene teruggekeer. 2700

Ten spyte van die ongeluk wou hy
nie hê dat enigeen verleentheid ly,
en almal was oortuig Arkiet sou wel
met verloop van tyd weer van sy wond herstel,
en daarbenewens was daar groot jolyt,
want niemand het gesnuwel in die stryd,
al was daar sommiges wat kwaai gely het,
soos die man wat 'n speersteek deur sy bors gekry het. 2710

Om wonde te genees of arms te set,
dien hierdie salf of daardie amulet;
salie en ander kruie het hul gebrou
om hulle ledemate te behou.

Die edele hertog het, sover hy kan,
sy troos en eer betoon aan elke man,
en buitelandse gaste het hy rojal,
soos dit betaam, die heelnag lank onthaal.
'n Gevoel van neerlaag druk niemand terneer:
dis net 'n steekspel, 'n toernooi, niks meer; 2720
daar's niemand te verkwalik as een val –
dis immers net 'n ongeluk, dis al –
of sonder dat hy oorgegee het van
die veld verwyder word deur twintig man.

Hy kan hom nouliks weer, hy's manalleen;
aan arm, voet en toon sleep hul hom heen,
sy perd deur mans te voet en opgeskote
seuns van hom verjaag met stampe en stote:
hierin steek daar g'n skande en vir 'n feit
kan dit nie deurgaans vir lafhartigheid. 2730

Om wrok en nyd in toom te hou, is dus
bekend gemaak deur hertog Theseus
dat albei kante ewe goed gevaar het
in die perk, mekaar soos broers geëwenaar het.
Geskenke volgens rang is uitgedeel.
Toe is 'n fees van drie dae lank gereël;
die vorste is vergesel op hulle pad
'n dagreis ver met hul weggaan uit die stad.

Toe't al die mense in die pad geval;
jy hoor net 'Totsiens!' 'Goeiendag!' – dis al. 2740

Ek laat die stryd nou daar sodat ek weer
terug na Arkiet en Palamon kan keer.
Sy borskas opgehewe het die seer
om Arkiet se hart vererger al hoe meer.
Ten spyte van die artsenybedryf
het die gestolde bloed geëtter in sy lyf.
Nog suiglas-bloedlaat nog aaropening
nog kruiebrouesels kon verligting bring.
Die ekspulsiewe animale kragte,²⁴
die natuurlikes se heil, was nie by magte 2750

om die gif te kan verdryf uit sy gestel.
Sy longkanale het begin te swel;
die spiere van sy bors is sonder keer
deur die venyn en kouevuur verteer.
Geen medisyne kon sy liggaam meer
na boontoe of na ondertoe purgeer;
sy bolyf is van binne so verskeur
dat die natuur die heerskappy verbeur;
en kyk, as die natuur eers ophou werk,
is dit: Vaarwel, dokters; dra hom na die kerk. 2760

Arkiet was op die punt van sterwe en het
gevra dat Emilie moes kom en met
haar saam ook Palamon, sy liewe broer;
en toe het hy aldus die woord gevoer:

'My liewe vrou, die weemoed in my hart
kan nie die kleinste breukdeel van my smart
vertolk aan jou wat ek liefhet allermees;
ek laat aan jou die hulde van my gees,
aan jou bo elke ander kreatuur;
nou kan my lewensloop niks langer duur. 2770

Helaas die pyn, helaas die bitter smart
so baie lank om jou ontwil my part;
helaas die dood, helaas my Emilie,
helaas dat ons nooit weer mag saam wees nie;
helaas my hart se koningin, my vrou,
my hartsbegeerte: ek sterf vanweë jou!
Wat lê vir ons voor? Ag wêreld, wat's jou waarde?
Nou met jou liefding, nou in die koue aarde
alleen en sonder enige metgesel.
My soete vyand, Emilie, vaarwel. 2780

Laat my 'n oomblik in jou arms lê
om Gods ontwil, en luister na wat ek sê.

Met Palamon, my neef, het ek in stryd
en bitter wrok geleef geruime tyd;

24 Die Middeleeuse wetenskap onderskei drie soorte liggaamskrag. Die natuurlike liggaamskragte, gesetel in die lewer, voorsien normaalweg die liggaam se stimulus om van gif ontslae te raak, maar die animale kragte van sy brein was nie meer in staat om dit uit te dryf nie. Later verflou sy vitale lewenslewing, gesetel in die hart, met die gevolg dat sy siel sy liggaam verlaat.

ek was jaloers op hom uit liefde vir jou.
Mag die wyse Jupiter my help om nou
op 'n gepaste wyse met my rede
'n liefdesdienaar en sy hoedanighede
vir jou voor te skilder: hy's ridderlik en goed,
wys, nederig, eerbaar en van edel bloed
en hoë stand, want – Jupiter bewaar
my siel van kwaad – sover ek weet is daar
op hierdie oomblik niemand onder die son
wat jou liefde meer verdien as Palamon.
Hy is jou dienaar, sal dit altyd bly,
en as jy ooit besluit op trou, moet jy
tog nie vergeet van Palamon, dié goeie man.'

En met dit het hy stil geword, want van
sy voete het die kilheid van die dood
na boontoe oor sy liggaam opgestoot
tot in sy arms; hy't bewus geraak
hoedat sy lewenskragte hom versaak,
behalwe sy verstand, dit en niks meer,
maar die setel in sy hart was siek en seer
en dit het ook verflou toe die doodsvlaag kil
sy oë dof maak en sy asem stil;

tog kon hy haar nog uitmaak in die newel
en '*Merci, Emilie*'²⁵ het hy geprewel.
Sy siel het toe verhuis, maar ek weet nie waar
dit heen is nie – ek was nog self nie daar,
dus swyg ek liewer; ek's g'n teoloog;
van siele is daar niks in my betoog.
Ek wil geen mening lug oor hul verblyf,
al word dié ook deur teoloë beskryf.
Arkiet is dood. Mag Mars sy siel gelei.
Aan Emilie wil ek nou aandag wy.

Toe't Emilie en Palamon geweene
en Emilie wat by die lyk ineen
gestort het, is deur Theseus weggelei.
Waarom veel tyd bestee aan hoedat sy
bedags en snags gehuil het sonder end?
In so 'n geval is dit tog goed bekend
dat 'n vrou deur haar man ontval haar sal verknies;
maar deur te rou, verwerk sy die verlies
of sy verval in die droefheid van gemis
waarvan 'n treurdood die uiteinde is.

Oneindig was die smart en jammerklag
deur beide oud en jonk betoon dié dag
dwarsdeur die stad met die dood van dié Thebaan:
kind en volwassene was aangedaan;
en sekerlik was daar nie so 'n misbaar
toe Hektor Troje toe gebring is waar
hul hom begrawe het. O ongeluk!

25 Die versugting van die hoofse minnaar dat sy beminde sy lyding moet aanskou en mededoë aan hom betoon.

Wange is gekrap en hare uitgepluk.
Die vroue roep: 'Ag, waarom moes jy sterf?
Jy was ryk genoeg en het Emilie vewerf.'

Daar was geeneen met troos vir Theseus
behalwe sy ou vader Egeus.

Hy was bewus van die onbestendigheid
van die wêreld: op en af die hele tyd, 2840
nou vreugde, dan verdriet, dan vreugde weer,
en kon dit met eksempele²⁶ illustreer.

'Elkeen wat sterf,' sê hy, 'was vantevore
op aarde 'n sekere lewensduur beskore
en so is daar ook niemand wie se lewe
hom nie op een of ander tyd begewe.
'n Hoofweg vol verdriet is ons bestaan
en pelgrims ons wat daarop kom en gaan;
en die dood is aan die einde van ons pad.'
Hy't meer van hierdie aard te sê gehad 2850
ten einde almal aan te moedig om
tot vastigheid in hul verstaan te kom.

Daarna begin vors Theseus aandag wy
aan waar hy 'n geskikte plek vir 'n graf kon kry
vir die goeie Arkiet, en wat als nodig was
sodat dit sy verhewe stand sou pas.
Ná lang oorweging het hy toe bepaal
dat waar die ridderpaar die eerste maal
in die minnstryd getree het teen mekaar,
daar in die soete woud se lower waar 2860
Arkiet soveel verlange moes verduur,
waar hy geweeklaag het oor die liefdesvuur,
daar sou hy nou 'n stapel laat verrys
om die laaste eer aan die minnaar te bewys.
Vir brandhout is daar luidens sy bevel
eeue-oue eike neergevel
en balke berei vir die hoop se onderbou.

Sy dienaars het in alle rigtings gou
te voet, te perd gejaag op sy bevel.
Daarna het Theseus iemand aangestel 2870
om 'n baar te bring wat hy bedek het met
fyn goudbrokaat, die beste wat hy het.
Arkiet is in dieselfde stof geklee;
en wit handskoene is aan hom gegee;
verder's sy hoof gekroon met groen lourier
en in sy hand was daar 'n skerp rapier.
So met gesig ontbloot lê hy op die baar
en Theseus se geweene wou nie bedaar.
Hul't hom met eerste lig gebring na die hal
waar hy gesien kon word deur een en al 2880
en waar dit luid weerklink van die geskrei.

En daar kom Palamon droefgeestig by

26 Vertellings wat as voorbeelde moet dien.

met ruie hare en baard bestrooi met as
en swart kledy wat nat van die trane was,
en, allermeeste wenend, Emilie:
in ellende is sy oortref deur niemand nie.
Om die lykdien deftiger te maak, en dus
sy stad meer waardig ook, het Theseus
drie rosse vir die begrafnisstoet laat haal,
glimmend in hul pantsering van staal
en met die wapen van Arkiet versier:
groot skimmelperde was hul. Op die eerste dier
was 'n wapenkneg wat die skild dra van sy heer;
'n tweede ruiter toon Arkiet se speer
en 'n derde dienaar hou sy Turkse boog
met goue koker en toebehore omhoog.
Droefgeestig op 'n stap het hul gery
al met die pad wat na die bos toe lei.
Die edelste van die Grieke wat daar was
het die baar geskouer en met trae pas
begin te stap, hul oë rooi en nat,
met die hoofweg langs deur die middel van die stad.
Met lanfer was die strate rond bedek,
wat tot die hoogte van die huise strek.

2890

2900

Aan die regterkant was die gryse Egeus
en aan die ander kant weer Theseus,
met vate in hul hande van goud so fyn,
gevul met heuning, melk en bloed en wyn;
ook Palamon, deur vele vergesel,
gevolg deur Emilie so diep gekwel,
en sy't die vuur gedra wat toentertyd
gebruiklik was by 'n kremasieplegtigheid.

2910

Moeite's gedoen om alles reg te kry
vir die diens, 'n groot brandstapel te berei
wat met sy spits tot aan die hemel strek
en arms twintig vadem²⁷ uitgerek –
dis nou te sê: so groot was elke tak.
Eers het hul hope en hope strooi gepak,
maar hoe die bouwerk verder uitgesien het
en watter soorte boom daarvoor gedien het,
soos eik, den, berk, esp, els, huls, iep, populier,
kastanje, linde, esdoring, buks, lourier,
wilg, taksus, hasel, beuk, konoelie, plataan,
of hoedat hul gevel is, daaroor gaan
ek niks vertel nie, of hoe die gode –
nimfe, faune en driades – node
geskarrel het om weg te kom van 'n plek
wat hul ontnem is, waar hul opgewek
tot nou toe kon bestaan in peis en vree;
of hoe die voëls en diere allerweë
toe die bome om hul val in vrees moes vlug;

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²⁷ Vaam, die lengte van die uitgestrekte arms, ongeveer 1.8 meter.

of hoe die grond verras is deur die warm lug
 van sonskyn; of hoe die strooi gepak is dat
 drie maal gekloofde stokke vlam kon vat,
 die vuur deur groen hout en deur spesery
 en juweelbestikte goudbrokaat versprei,
 asook deur blommekranse ryk van kleur,
 asook deur mirre en wierook soet gegeur;
 of hoe Arkiet se lyk daardeur verteer is
 of van die rykdom waarmee hy vereer is; 2940
 of hoedat volgens ou gebruik die brand
 gestig moes word deur Emilie se hand;
 of hoe sy in 'n floute ineengesink het,
 wat sy gesê het, wat sy dalk gedink het;
 watter juwele in die vuur beland het
 toe dit opgelaai en hoog en fel gebrand het;
 of hoe party hul skilde en hul spere
 en ander mense weer selfs van hul klere
 en goue bekere wyn en melk en bloed
 gegooi het in die vuur wat brand verwoed; 2950
 of hoe die Grieke in 'n digte drom
 eers drie maal met geskree na links toe om
 die vuur gery het en toe daarna weer
 met kletterende spere drie maal meer;
 of hoe die vroue drie maal luid geskrei het;
 of hoe hul Emilie na haar huis gelei het;
 of hoe Arkiet verbrand is tot koue as
 of hoe daar heelnag lank 'n lykwaak was
 of hoe die Grieke aan begrafnis spel
 hul toegewy het; ek wil nie vertel 2960
 hoe hul naak geworstel het, gesmeer
 met olie, wie die beste kon presteer;
 ek wil nie eens vertel hoe't hulle aan
 die einde terug Athene toe gegaan;
 dit sou nou beter wees as ek my haas
 en 'n einde maak aan hierdie lang relaas.
 Met die verloop van jare het die pyn
 van die ontvalling mettertd verdwyn
 en het die Grieke afgesien van rou
 en in Athene 'n volksberaad gehou 2970
 vir die beredeneer van sekere sake,
 en onder andere kom daar toe ter sprake
 die sluit van 'n verbond en hul beleid
 rakend Thebaanse onderhorigheid;
 derhalwe het die edele Theseus
 vir Palamon ontbied, en onbewus
 waaroor dit gaan, het dié verskyn in smart
 gedompel en nog steeds geklee in swart,
 maar inderhaas om Theseus te behaag;
 en daarna is ook Emilie gedaag. 2980
 Toe almal sit en dit stil word in die hal
 het Theseus gewag voor hy 'n woord laat val

van wat daar omgaan in sy wyse bors;
Sy oë het hul ingeneem; die vors
het sag gesug en met 'n stroef gelaat
die aangeleentheid ernstig uitgepraat.

'Toe die Oergrond en die Eerste Oorsaak van
die syn²⁸ die liefdesketting smee, was die plan
verhewe, die proses fyn ingestel,
want wat die doel was daarmee wis Hy wel:
die skone liefdesketting is die band
waarmee Hy water, vuur en lug en land
ingesluit het binne vaste perke.

2990

Dié einste Heer en oorsaak van alle werke
het ook 'n vaste duur en daetal
bepaal vir als wat in dié tranedal

tot stand kom, en die grens deur Hom berei,
kan niemand hier benede ooit oorskry,
al kan 'n mens sy lewensduur verkort –
dis iets wat nouliks hoef bewys te word;

3000

ons weet dit immers uit belewenis –
maar ek vermeld graag wat my mening is.
Uit dié wetmatigheid volg dit noodwendig:
die Eerste Oorsaak is ewig en bestendig.
Soos selfs 'n sot kan sien, het elke deel
sy grond en oorsaak in 'n groot geheel,
want die natuur se oorsprong lê nie in
stukkies en brokkies nie; dit het begin
met 'n eenheid wat volmaak was en onsterflik
waaruit dit toe geval het tot bederflik.

3010

En daarom het Hy in sy wyse raad
die wêreld so georden om toe te laat
dat 'n opeenvolging spesifieke dinge
bestaan deur allerlei ontwikkelinge,
maar individueel nie ewigdurend is:
hiervan kan mens jou maklik vergewis.

Dink eerstens aan die voorbeeld van 'n eik,
so traag om volle wasdom te bereik
van dit ontkiem tot hoë ouderdom
voor dit oplaas ook tot 'n einde kom.

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En dan is daar die harde klippe wat
vertrap word deur die mense langs die pad:
hoe hard hul ook al is, sal hul verslyt;
die sterkste stroom verdor ook mettertyd;
ons sien hoe stede kwyn en ondergaan:
daar kom 'n end aan als se voortbestaan.

28 – Die aarde is 'n bol of sfeer wat in sy wentelbaan beweeg. Dit is omring deur ander hemelliggame wat almal hul eie reëlmaat volg. Daarbuite is die uitspansel of firmament met sy vaste sterre. Alles word omring deur die hemel, die onsigbare *primum mobile*, wat die heelal aan die gang hou. God, die oergrond van ons bestaan, is die eerste beweging wat deur Sy wil en liefde die harmonieuse heelal tot stand gebring het en dit steeds onderhou. Die ander sfere benader volmaaktheid, maar die aarde is die verste van God verwyder en, as gevolg van die sondeval, is ons aan die invloed van die maan onderhewig en daarom is ons ondermaanse bestaan ook veranderlik en verganklik.

Met mans en vrouens weet ons vir 'n feit,
hul lewens moet ook een of ander tyd,
óf in hul jeug óf in hul ouderdom,
of hul kneg of koning is, tot 'n einde kom. 3030
Een sterwe in sy bed en een ter see,
'n ander in die veld; so ons betree
dieselfde paadjie en als is om 't ewe:
elke ding sal doodgaan wat nou lewe.

Wie het dit so bestier? Wie anders as
Jupiter wat heer en oorsaak was,
wat alles terugvoer na die bron waaruit
die hele ontwikkelingsgang daarvan ontspruit?
Dis sinneloos dat 'n geskape ding
in opstand kom teen hierdie ordening. 3040

Derhalwe meen ek dis 'n wyse saak
om altyd van die nood 'n deug te maak
en om te aanvaar wat ons nie kan vermy,
veral as dit iets is wat ons almal ly.
Dis net 'n dwaas wat daaroor murmureer
en teen die Albeskikker rebelleer.
Mens kan gewis g'n hoër roem verwerf
as in die fleur van lewenskrag te sterf
terwyl jy seker is van jou goeie naam
en nóg jou vriende nóg jouself beskaam. 3050
'n Vriend sou dit verwelkom inderdaad
indien 'n mens met eer die lewe laat,
as dat jou eer met ouderdom verbleik
en al jou deugde eindelijk van jou wyk.
Voordelig vir 'n man se goeie naam
is dus sy heengaan in die uur van faam.

Dit is halstarrig om hierteen te veg;
so waarom kla ons, waarom voel ons sleg
as die goeie Arkiet in die fleur van ridderskap
uit hierdie kerker van die lewe ontsnap 3060
met plig en eerbaarheid in stand gehou?
Waarom het sy neef en bruid berou
oor sy geluk? Hy was vir hulle lief
en so 'n misgunning sou hom stellig grief,
want dit doen afbreuk aan húl eer en syne
terwyl dit geen verligting bring van pyne.

Wat is die slotsom van my argument?
Ná droefheid moet mens jou tot vreugde wend
en Jupiter vir al sy goedheid eer.
Voor ons hier weggaan, moet ons iets prakseer 3070
en enkel vreugde maak uit dubbele pyn –
oor dit volmaak is, sal dit nimmer kwyn –
en waar die droefheid op sy diepste is,
sal ons 'n aanvang maak met lafenis.

Suster,' sê hy, 'ek is oortuig daarvan,
en ek sê dit met die ondersteuning van
al my raadgewers, dat jy Palamon,

jou ridder, wat als gedoen het wat hy kon
om jou getrou te dien vanaf die tyd
toe jul ontmoet het, in goedgunstigheid
nou moet aanvaar as eggenoot en heer. 3080
Gee my jou hand, want dis wat ek begeer.
Jou vroulike erbarme staan jou goed,
want hy's 'n man van koninklike bloed;
maar ook as hy nie edel was nie, sou
sy jarelange diensbaarheid aan jou
en al sy leed vir hom laat voel het hy't
ten minste aanspraak op jou dankbaarheid;
maar die genade styg bo alle eise.'

Toe spreek hy Palamon aan op dié wyse: 3090
'Ek dink nie dit verg baie praterij
ten einde jou akkoord hierop te kry.
So kom nou, neem jou dame by die hand.'
En tussen hom en haar is toe die band
van die huwelik gesluit ten aansien van
die hele raad en iedere edelman,
en so is Palamon en Emilie
getroud met groot jolyt en melodie.
Mag God hom seën met liefde en genade,
want hy verdien die liefde van sy gade. 3100
Nou's Palamon van elke guns voorsien:
geluk, gesondheid en rykdom bowendien;
en Emilie min hom met innigheid
en hy is immer tot haar diens bereid;
gevolglik het g'n kwaai woord hul ontval
van stryd of jaloesie of wat ook al.

So dis my storie van 'n verliefde paar.
Mag God ons op ons bedevaart bewaar.

Proloog tot die Meulenaar se verhaal

Toe die Ridder aan die end van sy storie kom,
het almal saamgestem in daardie drom 3110
sy vertelling het in hulle smaak geval
en was een wat hulle sou onthou; veral
die hoës was dié mening toegedaan.

Ons Waard het aan die lag en vloek gegaan:
“Die bal is aan die rol, so wat de hel,
wie gaan die volgende verhaal vertel
om die speletjie op dreef te hou? Gedorie,
heer Monnik, kom onthaal ons met ’n storie –
een wat die Ridder s’n kan ewenaar!”

Skoon bleekbesope was die Meulenaar 3120
en hy kon nouliks op sy perd se rug bly sit;
hy sou sy hoed vir niemand afhaal; dit
was eerbetoon wat hy nie wou bewys.
In ’n Pilatus-stem¹ het hy gekrys:
“By Christus arms, beendere en bloed,
ek kan die Ridder deur en deur vergoed,
waaragtig, met ’n oulike verhaal.”

Ons Waard wis dat hy dronk was van die aal
en sê, “Wag eers, Robyn, my liewe maat,
gun ’n beter man geleentheid om te praat. 3130
Wag eers; ons pak die ding behoorlik aan.”

“Nee, allemagtig,” roep hy, “vergeet daarvan;
ek wil my beurt hê of ek’s uit die spel!”

“Nou goed dan,” sê ons Waard, “want, wat de hel,
jy is ’n sot en jou sinne is onklaar.”

“Nou luister almal,” sê die Meulenaar.
“Eers lê ek dié erkent’nis aan jul voor:
ek weet ek’s dronk; aan my stem kan ek dit hoor;
en as my tong my in die steek sou laat,
verkwalik my nie: dis die bier wat praat. 3140

’n Stigtelike storie kry jul nou
aangaande ’n timmerman en dié se vrou;
hy’s horings opgesit deur ’n student.”

Die Meier het geantwoord: “Kry tog end
met al jou gomtor-, dronk vuilpraterij.
Dit is ’n sonde, asook sotterny,
om mans te hoon met dié beswadding
en vroue-eer in die gedrang te bring.
Daar’s baie ander goed om oor te praat.”

Die besope Meulenaar wou dit nie laat. 3150
“Maar Osewoud,” sê hy, “my liewe swaer,
’n ongetroude’s tog g’n horingdraer.²
Dit wil nie sê ek meen dat jý een is.
Daar’s baie goeie vroue, dis gewis:
’n duisend goeies teenoor een wat sleg is;

1 In die misteriespele is Pilatus en Herodes as bombastiese bulderaars voorgestel.

2 ’n Man wat deur sy vrou bedrieg word. Hy word horings opgesit.

tensy jy mal is, weet jy dat ek reg is.
So waarom sou jy nou so warm kry?
Ek het 'n vrou, die Here weet, nes jy,
maar tog, vir al die osse voor my ploeg,
beskou ek dit nie as bewys genoeg
dat ek nou juis soos hulle horings dra. 3160
Ek glo nie so nie, maar ek sal nooit vra,
want 'n getroude man moet hom weerhou
van Gods geheim'nis en dié van sy vrou.
Vind hy in haar die oorfloed van die Heer,
dan het hy mos behoefte aan niks meer.”

Ons praat het niks gehelp nie, aangesien
die kêrel g'n verfyndheid wou ontsien,
maar weggeval het met sy plat verhaal. 3170
Dit spyt my net dat ek dit moet herhaal,
maar opgevoede mense moet 'seblief
nie dink ek doen dit met 'n swak motief;
aan elke storie moet daar immers reg
geskied – of ek reken dit is goed of sleg –
want anderste vervals ek mos my stof.
As iemand egter voel dit is te grof,
moet hy dit oorslaan; daar is baie meer
om uit te kies, geskik vir dame en heer;
daar's lang en kort vertellings wat mens leer
van heiligheid en goeie gedrag en eer. 3180
Verkwalik my nie as u u misgis;
u weet dat die Meulenaar 'n lummel is:
net soos die Meier, en nog 'n paar daarby,
was hy berug vir sy vuilpraterij.
Blameer my nie vir wat ek gaan vertel;
en wees nie stroef nie; dis maar net 'n spell!

DIE MEULENAAR SE VERHAAL

In Oxford was daar vroeër 'n timmerman,
'n ryk ou lummel wat 'n kamer van
sy huis verhuur het aan 'n arm vent,
nie net 'n universiteitstudent 3190
wat die vrye kunste³ bestudeer nie, maar
'n fanatieke sterrewiggelaar.
Deur 'n reeks proefnemings uit te voer, kon hy
'n antwoord op verskeie vrae kry;
byvoorbeeld, hy't bepaal wanneer dit nat
of droog sou wees, en daarbenewens wat
'n mens kon doen ten einde voorbereid
te wees op iedere gebeurlikheid.
Hul't hom genoem 'die fyne Nicholas';
'n losbol en 'n vrouejagter was 3200

3 Die *trivium* (grammatika, retoriek en logika) en die *quadrivium* (meetkunde, rekenkunde, sterrekunde en musiek).

hy, skelm en bedrewe bowendien,
maar skugter soos 'n maagd om aan te sien.

Hy het sy kamer nie met enigeen
gedeel nie; dit was net vir hom alleen,
en dit was fraai versier met kruie soet,
en ewe fraai het hy 'n mens begroet
met geur van soethout en valeriaan.⁴

Sy *Almagest* en astrolabium⁵ staan
op rakke bo sy bed, die algemene
gereedskap van sy kuns, met rekenstene
en boeke klein en groot, en op sy kas,
waaroor 'n growwe rooi bekleedsel was,
lê daar 'n verleidelike salterie⁶

3210

waarmee hy snags met soete melodie
sy kamer laat weerklink as hy sy stem
verhef in *Angelus ad virginem*⁷
en dan die 'Koningslied', dat mense hom loof
en 'n seën afbid op sy strottehoof.

So't dié sjarmante klerk sy tyd bestee
uit eie sak en wat sy vriende hom gee.

3220

Die timmerman was onlangs in die eg
verbind met 'n vrou aan wie hy so geheg
was soos sy lewe; nouliks agtien jaar
was sy, en lewendig daarby. Hy't haar
probeer in toom hou uit jaloerse vrees
om op sy jare 'n horingdraer te wees.
Omdat hy ongeleerd was, wis hy nie
wat Cato⁸ sê oor 'n mens se eweknie
as enigste geskikte eggenoot,

3230

want tussen oud en jonk is die gaping groot.
Maar met die strop reeds om sy nek het hy,
soos ander mense, ook maar swaargekry.

Sy vrou was 'n mooi jong ding; haar lyfie, flink
en sag, het aan 'n wesel⁹ s'n laat dink.

Sy dra 'n gordel van gestreepte sy,
en 'n boeselaar,¹⁰ so wit soos môrewei,
bedek haar dye met 'n veelvoud gere;
wit was haar rok, die kraag herhaalde kere
omstik met pikswart sy van die boonste rand
tot die onderste aan binne- en buitekant.

3240

Verder had sy 'n wit hooftooisel ook,
die linte waarvan met haar halskraag strook;
'n breë hareband van sy het hoog
op haar kop gesit. Sy't 'n glinstering in haar oog.

4 Ook balderjan, 'n plant die wortels waarvan vir geneesmiddels gebruik is.

5 *Almagest*, Ptolomeus se werk oor die sterrekunde wat uit die tweede eeu voor Christus dateer. Astrolabium, 'n Arabiese instrument wat by die bestudering van die sterre gebruik is.

6 'n Musiekinstrument soos 'n siter, die snare waarvan gepluk is.

7 Die Engel tot die Maagd, 'n liturgiese gesang.

8 'n Baie gewilde spreukeboek is aan Dionysius Cato (3de of 4de eeu v.C.) toegeskryf.

9 'n Klein pelsdier, rooibrui van kleur met wit bors en buik.

10 'n Voorskoot.

Sy het haar hooggewelfde broue fyn
 uitgedun tot net 'n sleeswart lyn.¹¹
 Haar lieflikheid het mens herinner aan
 'n vroeë peerboom wat vol bloeisels staan,
 en sy was sagter as 'n skaap se wol.
 'n Beurs van leer hang aan haar gordel, vol
 klossies van sy, en met latoen¹² bepêrel. 3250
 Daar's niemand in die hele wye wêreld
 wat so verbeeldingryk is dat hy hom
 so 'n mooi jong ding kan voorstel, so 'n blom.
 Van lewenslus het haar gesig geskyn
 net soos 'n splinternuwe blink floryn,¹³
 en sy't gesing met soveel krag en vuur
 as wat 'n swaeltjie sing bo-op 'n skuur.
 En hoe het sy gehuppel en gejol
 soos 'n lam of kalf wat agter sy ma aan hol. 3260
 Haar mond was soet soos heuningwyn of mee¹⁴ is,
 of 'n appelvoorraad wat in hooi beleë is.
 So flink en vrolik was sy soos 'n vers,
 lank soos 'n mas, en regop soos 'n kers.
 Aan haar lae kraag was daar 'n borsspeld vas,
 enorm soos die knop van 'n rondas.¹⁵
 Haar hooggerygde skoene was té lief.
 Sy was 'n skattebol, 'n hartedief –
 goed om 'n heer se bed vir hom warm te hou
 of vir 'n vrye boer om mee te trou. 3270
 Wel nou, menere, op 'n goeie dag
 toe slaan die fyne Nicholas sy slag;
 toe haar man uithuisig was in Osenev,
 begin hy met haar speel en na haar vry,
 en heimlik tussen die bene gryp hy haar
 (want so vol streke is geleerdes maar)
 en sê: 'Gewis, gee jy my nie my sin
 dan sal ek kwyn van die verhole min.'
 Hy slaan sy hande om haar boude en sê:
 'My liefling, ek wil jou nou dadelik hê,
 anders sal jy, God weet, my dood aanbring.' 3280
 Sy't soos 'n ongetemde perd gespring
 en het haar kop opsy gepluk. 'Nee, moenie,'
 sê sy, 'Ek sal jou wragtig waar nie soen nie.
 Kyk, hou jou hande tuis. Laat staan my, want
 anders skreeu ek netnou moord en brand.
 Hei, Nicholas, waar's jou ordentlikheid?'
 'Verskoon my tog,' gaan hy toe aan die pleit;
 hy't so gepaai, homself so opgedring,
 oplaas gee sy hom die versekering – 3290

11 Sy het haar wenkbroue uitgedun sodat haar voorkop groter kon vertoon, want dis as mooi beskou. 'n Snee is 'n wilde pruim.

12 Geelkoper.

13 'n Muntstuk, oorspronklik van Florence.

14 Drank van gegiste heuning en kruie.

15 Ronde of ovaalvormige skild.

by Thomas het sy ook 'n eed gesweer –
dat sy hom sou plesier net wanneer
hul eendag die geleentheid daartoe kry.

'My man is so vol agterdog,' sê sy,
'Wees tog geduldig en pas goed op vir hom.
Hy slaan my dood as hy iets agterkom.
Ons moet die hele ding goed duister hou.'

'Wees jy gerus,' sê hy, 'ek waarborg jou
alleen 'n swak student is sonder plan
hoe om 'n meulenaar die kroon te span.'
Hul het ooreengekom om met verdrag
te werk te gaan en op hul kans te wag.
Toe't Nicholas, met alles dus gereël,
haar lieste eers 'n slaggie goed gestreel,
haar soet gesoen, en toe sy salterie
weer opgeneem vir nog 'n melodie.

3300

Een feesdag gaan die goeie vrou na die kerk
om haar te wy aan Christus en Sy werk;
op so 'n dag sit sy háár werk opsy
om haar gesig so skoon gewas te kry
dat haar voorkop helder soos die middag skyn.

3310

Nou, by die kerk was daar 'n sakristein¹⁶
wat Absalom geheet het. Sy gesig
was bloesend rooi, sy hare krullerig;
dit het geglans soos goud en het omhoog
gesteek soos 'n waaier in 'n wye boog
weerskante van sy flinke middelpaadjie;
en gansgrys was sy oë. Sy ligblou baadjie
vol fieterjasies het hom goed gestaan,
en daaroor het hy 'n ligte koorkleed aan,
wit soos 'n tak met bloeiselpag getooi;
sy kouse was 'n modieuse rooi,
en op sy skoene was patrone van
kerkvensters uitgestippel – 'n mooi jong man
en deftig uitgevat ook, by die Heer,
bedrewe in bloedlaat, hare sny en skeer,
ook aktes van ooreenkoms en transport
opstel, en twintig soorte dans (sy fort
die jongste Oxford-gier van bene skop
in alle rigtings in die lug in op);
hy het falset gesing uit luide keel,
en daarby op 'n vedeltjie¹⁷ gespeel,
en ewe goed het sy kitaar gedien.
Hy't mense in elke herberg en kantien
in die stad met sy teenwoordigheid vergas,
veral as daar 'n hupse tapster was.
Maar wat sy spraak betref, was hy kieskeurig,
en op die punt van poep, bra punteneurig.

3320

3330

16 Leek verantwoordelik vir die sorg van voorwerpe wat in die erediens gebruik word; by Chaucer 'parisshe clerk,' leek wat sekere pligte tydens die erediens uitgevoer het.

17 Voorganger van die viool.

Ou Absalom was dié dag in sy skik
en het sy wierookvat pal feestelik 3340
oor die dames van die parogie¹⁸ geswaai;
op dié manier kon hy om hul bly draai,
veral ook om die timmerman se vrou,
want dit was salig om haar dop te hou.
Sy was so fyn, so soet en sinlik dat,
was sy 'n muis gewees en hy 'n kat,
sy sommer gou-gou in sy mag sou kom.

Dié sakristein, dié skalkse Absalom,
was so verlief dat hy geen offerande
van 'n vrou aanvaar het nie; dit was 'n skande, 3350
'n onbeleefdheid om hul geld te vat.

Een helder maanligaand het hy in die pad
geval met sy kitaar. Hy het uit pure
verliefdheid deur die nagtelike ure
geen slaap verlang. Met hartstog en jolyt
het hy dus aangestryk en, teen die tyd
dat die dag begin te breek, het hy teenaan
die woning van die meulenaar gestaan,
vlak by die lae vensteropening,
en het saggies en melodieus gesing: 3360
'Nou liewe dame, my pleidooi aan jou
is dat jy my met mededoë aanskou,'
met soete begeleidende akkoorde.
Die timmerman het by aanhoor van dié woorde
wakker geskrik. 'Hei, Alisoen,' sê hy,
'hoor jy hoe Absalom hierbuite by
ons kamervenster sing en te kere gaan?'
En sy't haar man geantwoord, 'Ag, laat staan;
Dit traak my nie, maar, ja, ek hoor vir hom.'

So gaan dit voort. Die skalkse Absalom 3370
het haar van dag tot dag die hof gemaak,
skoon siek geword daarvan, en hy't gewaak
by nag en ook by dag en vir die pret
sy lokke uitgekam. Attensies¹⁹ het
hy haar bewys deur bode en makelaar,
en het hom tot haar diens bereid verklaar;
trillend het hy gesing soos 'n nagtegaal,
haar mee gestuur, piment²⁰ en kruie-aal
en warm wafels en kontant, want sy 3380
sou dit as stadsvrou immers nodig kry.
Party vroumense word gewen met geld,
party met liefde, ander met geweld.
Eenmaal het hy, met vaardigheid bedeel,
Herodes in 'n passiespel gespeel.²¹

18 Gemeente.

19 Blyke van geneentheid by 'n hofmakery.

20 'n Spesery.

21 In die misteriespele is Herodes met bombastiese gebulder gespeel. Met sy falsetstem en kieskeurigheid sou Absalom as Herodes dus 'n gek figuur geslaan het.

Dit help hom niks nie, want die dame was
so danig oor die fyne Nicholas,
hy kon gaan doppies blaas, dié Absalom;
vir al sy moeite het sy net hoon vir hom,
en vir sy erns het sy g'n respek;
sy hou hom net eenvoudig vir die gek. 3390

Dis 'n ware woord wat niemand kan ontken:
'n skelm vryer byderhand moet wen
oor een ver van sy goed; ou Absalom
het erg bedroë daarvan afgekom,
want hy het lank gesukkel, niks gekry;
Klaas Tuisbly het die vroutjie afgevry.

Fyn Nicholas, kom wys nou jou stoffasie,
en los aan Absalom die lamentasie.

Een Saterdag – die timmerman was weer
vir besigheid op Osenev – prakseer 3400
die fyne Nicholas en Alisoen

wat hulle met haar stomme man kon doen
wat so jaloers is; Nicholas sou wel
die een of ander strik vir hom kon stel,
en slaag dit, kry hul albei hulle sin,
want dan kon hulle mos die heelnag in
mekaar se arms lê. Toe't Nicholas
wat nou behoorlik ongeduldig was

ook sonder meer begin om kos en drank –
genoeg om hom te hou vir twee dae lank – 3410
so stil-stil na sy kamer toe te dra;

as Alisoen se man vir haar sou vra
waar hul loseerder was, dan moes sy sê
sy weet nie of hy in sy kamer lê,
sy het hom heeldag met g'n oog gesien,
maar hy sou ongesteld kon wees miskien,
want toe die meisie hom geroep het, was
daar hoegenaamd g'n woord van Nicholas.

So gaan toe daardie Saterdag verby
met Nicholas wat in sy kamer bly 3420

en eet en drink en doen soos hy verlang
tot die dag daarna so teen sonsondergang.
Die lawwe timmerman was skoon verstom
oor Nicholas – wat sou tog skort met hom?
Hy sê: 'Nou by Sint Thomas, ek's bevrees
dat daar groot fout met Nicholas moet wees.
Ek hoop nie hy is onverhoeds oorlede.

Die wêreld is so vol onsekerhede:
'n man vandag begrawe uit die kerk,
het ek gesien, het Maandag nog gewerk. 3430
Gaan boontoe,' sê hy vir die kneg. 'Gaan klop
aan die deur of moker met 'n klip daarop.
Vind uit wat aangaan en kom sê vir my.'

Die kneg draf inderhaas na bo waar hy
'n keel opsit, en soos 'n malmens hamer

hy aan die deur van die student se kamer.
'Hei, Meester Nicholas, wat gaan hier aan?
Jy kan nie heeldag lê en slaap nie, man.'

Maar als verniet; hy hoor g'n enkele klank.

Toe sien hy in die deur se laagste plank
die opening wat gebruik word deur die kat. 3440

Hy buk en tuur na binne deur die gat.

Uiteindelik het hy Nicholas gewaar;
dié sit daar penorent oopmond en staar
soos iemand wat gepla is deur die maan.
Die kneg het haastig na sy baas gegaan
en deel hom oor die man se toestand mee.

Die timmerman dié slaan 'n kruis en skree:

'Sint Frideswide,²² help ons. Ag, hoe min
weet mens wat hou die toekoms vir jou in. 3450

Dié vent is deur sy sterrewikkelary²³
gedompel in 'n floute of raserny;
ek het voor my siel geweet dit gaan gebeur;
mens moet in Gods geheim'nis nie wil speur.

Geseënd is die ongeleerde hoof
wat niks wil weet behalwe sy geloof.²⁴

Dit laat my dink aan die geleerde vent
wat, oë na die sterre toe gewend,
deur die veld gestap het. Hy wou uitvind wat
daar gaan gebeur, toe val hy in 'n gat 3460

wat hy glad nie kon voorsien het nie. Nou by
Sint Thomas,' sê hy, 'dit bekommer my,
die fyne Nicholas wat heeldag leer.

Gaan kry 'n stok, Robyn, dat ek probeer
om dit onder die styl te druk en dan kan jy
die deur oplik en uit sy voeë kry.

Ek is nou net mooi moeg vir die gedoe.'

En met dit gaan hy na die kamer toe.

Die kneg was baie sterk en het die deur,
grendel en al, uit die kosyn gebeur; 3470

met 'n harde slag beland dit op die grond.
Daar was dié Nicholas nog steeds oopmond
met oë omgedop stokstil gesete.

Die timmerman't gedink hy is besete;
hy kry hom aan die skouers beet en hard
pluk hy hom heen en weer en skree verward:

'Hei Nicholas, word wakker! Kyk na my!

Komaan, onthou dat Christus ons bevry!

Mag dié kruisteken dien tot die afwering
van alle kwaad.' Toe prewel hy 'n beswering 3480
in elke rigting, en toe't hy dit herhaal

22 Beskermheilige van Oxford.

23 'n 'Ongeleerde hoof' kry maar swaar met sulke groot woorde. Later praat hy ook van 'Noël se vloed.'

24 Al kennis wat van 'n leek verlang is, was die Aposoliese Geloofsbelydenis, die Tien Gebooie, die Onse Vader en die Wees-gegroet (Ave Maria).

buite op die drumpel 'n vyfde maal:

'Jesus Christus en Sint Benedik,
beskerm hierdie huis genadiglik
teen bese geeste, die wit paternoster.

Waar was jy heen, Sint Peters suster?'

Uiteindelik sê die fyne Nicholas

met 'n groot gesug: 'Helaas, staan dit dan vas
dat als weer moet vergaan, en dit so gou?'

Toe vra die timmerman: 'Hoe sê jy nou?
Jy moet, soos ons wat werk, aan God bly dink.'

3490

Hy antwoord hom: 'Gaan haal vir my iets te drink;
dan kan ek jou vertroulik oor 'n saak
inlig wat jou en my ten naaste raak;
g'n ander siel mag ek daarvan vertel.'

Die timmerman's daar weg, maar hy het snel
met sterk bier teruggekom, 'n reuse-fles
waaruit hul albei hulle dors kon les.

Ná Nicholas die deur bevestig het
en die timmerman laat sit het op die bed,

3500

sê hy: 'My liewe Jan, jy moet hier sweer
dat wat ek jou gaan sê jy op jou eer
aan niemand sal vertel nie, want dit is
ons Here Christus se geheimenis,
en as jy iets verklap, is jy verlore;
want dit is die vergelding jou beskore
dat jy sal mal word as jy iets uitblaker.'

'Nee, by die heil'ge bloed. Mag God, ons Maker,
my hierin bystaan,' sê die simpel vent.

'Al sê ek dit self, ek is daarvoor bekend
dat ek nie babbel nie, so praat maar voort.
G'n sterfing hoor van my 'n enkele woord.'

3510

'Nou, Jan,' sê Nicholas, 'ek huigel nie;
ek het geleer deur die astrologie,
veral deur na die helder maan te tuur,
dat môre, Maandagaand, teen nege-uur
daar 'n sondvloed kom ontsaglik fel
wat Noag s'n vanouds in die skadu stel:
die water sal so oor die aarde staan,
in minder as 'n uur sal als vergaan;
dit sal die mensdom van die aarde vee.'

3520

Die timmerman dié roep: 'My vrou, o wee!
Moet sy verdrink? My arme Alisoen!
Is daar dan niks wat enigeen kan doen?'
so byna deur verslaentheid oorman.

'Wel ja,' sê Nicholas, 'God weet ons kan,
maar slegs as jy jou onderwerp aan my
en jou nie deur jou eie kop laat lei,
want, soos die Bybel sê: daar kan net kwaad
van kom as mens iets aanpak sonder raad.

3530

Maar as jy handel volgens my bevel,
kan ek sonder mas of seil vir haar, sowel

as jou en my, red van 'n waterdood.
Jy't tog gehoor hoe Noag uit sy nood
verlos is toe die Heer hom vantevore
gewaarsku het die wêreld gaan verlore.'

'Ja, lank gelede,' sê die timmerman.

'Jy't tog gehoor," sê Nicholas, 'ook van
die groot gesukkel om uiteindelik sy
dwarstrekkerige vrou²⁵ aan boord te kry?
En daardie dag, kan ek jou waarborg, sou
hy 'n trop swart skape gee indien sy vrou
'n boot gehad het net vir haar alleen.
Ek weet wat jou te doen staan, maar ek meen
die saak eis spoed en daar is glad g'n tyd
vir oponthoud nie of omslagtigheid.

3540

So gou as wat jy moontlik kan, moet jy
vir ons drie bakkerskuipe of -skottels kry,
maar nog 'n ding, kies tog drie grotes uit,
want daarin moet ons vaar soos in 'n skuit,
en kry ook vir ons kos, maar net vir een
dag lank; niks meer is nodig nie, want teen
die dag daarna met priemtyd het die vlak
van die water al 'n hele ent gesak.

3550

Robyn, jul kneg, en die meisie, Jill, moet net
niks hiervan weet nie; ek kan hul nie red,
maar vra nie waarom nie; ek sal gewis
niks openbaar van Gods geheimenis.
Wat kan 'n normale mens nog meer verlang
as ewe veel genade te ontvang
as Noag s'n? Ek sal bepaald jou vrou
kan red as jy jou deel doen. Maak net gou.

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As jy vir my en jou en haar dan drie
geskikte bakke het dan moet jy dié
in die dak ophang dat niemand dalk besef
dat ons voorbereidsels vir 'n sondvloed tref.

As jy gedoen het wat ek jou gesê het,
'n voedselvoorraad vir ons ingelê het,
asook 'n byl om die toue deur te hak,
dat ons kan wegvaar op die watervlak,
en 'n gat gebreek het in die gewel bo

3570

die stal en aan die tuin se kant en so
dit moontlik maak dat ons daar uit kan vaar
wanneer die ergste reëngeweld bedaar,
dan dryf jy vrolik, op my woord van eer,
net soos 'n wyfie-eend al agter haar heer.
Dan sal ek roep: "Haai, Alisoen! Haai Jan!
Wees bly, die vloed is voor lank klaar," en dan
sal jy: "Haai, Meester Nicholas" teruggroet.
"Dagsê. Dit word nou lig. Ek sien jou goed."

3580

25 Die dwarstrekkerige vrou kom in 'n mirakelspel oor die sondvloed voor.

Daarna sal ons soos Noag en sy vrou
as heersers oor die aarde toesig hou.

Maar een ding moet jy baie goed verstaan,
en daarom moet ek jou ook dringend maan:
vanaf die oomblik wat ons drie aan boord
gegaan het daardie nag mag ons geen woord
gesels of rep of roep. Ons moet ons net
na Gods bevel verootmoedig in gebed.

Verder moet julle van mekaar af bly
om alle sweem van sonde te vermy
in denke en daad. Gesê, gedaan,
en mag God gee dat als voorspoedig gaan.
En môrenag as almal slaap, dan kruip
net ons drie elkeen in sy bakkerskuip
en sit en wag op Gods genadedaad.
Toe maak nou gou, want dit is veels te laat
om hieroor uit te wei. Die woord is waar:
Wie 'n wyse stuur, kan heelwat asem spaar.
Jy's nie 'n man wat lering nodig het;
ek smeeek jou dus dat jy ons lewens red.'

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3600

Toe't die verspote timmerman verdwaas
geloop en mompel, 'Wee, o wee! Helaas!
sy vrou in die geheim ook ingelig,
al was sy beter ingelig as hy,
oor die hele opset van die slinkse plan,
maar sy't gemaak asof sy lam is van
die doodsvrees en 'Helaas!' gesê vir hom,
'Haas jou en help ons hierdie lot ontkom.
Ek is jou vrou in liefde en voor die wet:
gaan, liewe man, en help ons lewens red.'

3610

Dis wonderlik hoe sterk emosie is:
'n mens kan doodgaan van benouenis
as jou verbelentheid eers goed op dreef
begin te kom. Die stomme vent die beef,
want hy't hom voorgestel hy sien die vloed
van Noag soos die see se branding woed
en stort oor Alisoen, sy skattebol.
Hy het geweene, geweeklaag, moeitevol
en lank gesug en droewig voorgekom;
hy het gaan soek, 'n bak gekry vir hom
en daarna ook 'n skottel en 'n kuip,
en daarmee het hy na sy huis gesluip,
dit in die dak versteek en toe 'n leer
met eie hand vir elkeen geprakseer,
dat hulle drie deur styl en sporte só
by die kuipe in die balke kom daarbo;
hy't 'n voorraad ook vir elke boot gaan haal
van brood en kaas en 'n kan vol goeie aal,
genoeg vir een dag lank, maar omdat hy
dit alles stilletjies aan boord wou kry,
stuur hy sy kneg en die meisie na die stad,

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na Londen toe, en kry hul uit die pad.
En toe die son die Maandag ondergaan,
sluit hy sy deur maar steek geen kerse aan;
hy't als na wense onder opgeklaar,
en daarna is hul al drie boontoe waar
hul 'n hele paar minute doodstil was.

'Nou, Paternoster, sjuut,' sê Nicholas,
en 'Sjuut,' sê Jan, en 'Sjuut,' sê Alisoen.
Die timmerman het sy aandgebed gedoen;
stil sit en prewel hy gebede aaneen
terwyl hy heelyd luister vir die reën.

3640

Maar uitgeput van al die werk, is hy
deur 'n diepe slaap oorval so om en by
agtuur die aand, miskien 'n ruk daarna.
Hy het gekreun, deur sielestryd gepla,
gesnork ook oor hy ongemaklik was.
Met die leer af ondertoe kruip Nicholas,
gevolg deur Alisoen met ligter tred;
en sonder meer spring hulle in die bed
waar die timmerman gewoonlik lê, en daar
het hulle gerinkink en gebaljaar.
En dis hoe Alisoen en Nicholas
die heelnag met hul dinge besig was
tot die klok gelui het vir die kloosterling
om in die koor die vroeë diens te sing.

3650

Op daardie Maandag was die sakristein,
die smoorverliefde Absalom wat kwyn
van die versotheid, juis in Oseney
waar hy hom met 'n klompie maats vermei,
en ongeërg vra hy 'n bewoner van
die klooster uit na Jan, die timmerman.
Dié neem hom toe opsy, buite die kerk,
en sê: 'Ek weet nie. Hier't hy nie gewerk
van Saterdag af nie. Miskien is hy
gevra om vir ons timmerhout te kry,
want dikwels as die ab hom daarvoor stuur
dan bly hy 'n dag of twee lank by die skuur,
of anders is hy tuis. Ek kan beslis nie
met sekerheid vir jou sê waar die kêrel is nie.'

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3670

Toe raak dié Absalom eers opgewonde,
en dag: 'Ek slaap vannag nie een sekonde,
want by sy huis het ek hom nie gesien
met eerste lig vanmôre of sedertdien.
Teen eerste hanekraai sal ek sekerlik
heel saggies aan sy kamervenster tik,
want dis laag genoeg om by te kom, en dan
sal ek vir Alisoen die omvang van
my liefde meedeel, want met so 'n slag
is 'n soen die minste wat ek kan verwag;
op so 'n bevrediginkie kan ek reken.
My mond die jeuk al heeldag; dis 'n teken

3680

dat daar 'n soenery of meer gaan wees.
Ek het ook laasnag gedroom ek's by 'n fees.
Ek kruip 'n uur of twee lank in die bed,
en dan's ek reg vir wakkerbly en pret.'

Maar toe die haan kraai, was hy uit die kooi,
en het die flinke vryer hom getooi
so netjies as kan kom, en toe eers gou
'n stuk soethout en kardamom²⁶ gekou 3690
vir die lekker ruik; daarna kam hy sy hare.
Met eenbes²⁷ onder die tong om as 't ware
die vrouens aan te moedig, stryk hy aan
na die timmerman se huis waar hy gaan staan
vlak onder die kamervenster, 'n luikgat wat
die kêrel skaars tot by sy borskas vat.

Hy't sag gekug en toe gesê: 'Wat doen
jy heuningkoekie, soetlief Alisoen?
Jy is soos soet kaneel, my voëltjie jy.
Word wakker, liefling, en kom praat met my. 3700
My lyding's iets waarvan jy nie eers weet nie,
of hoedat ek van die liefde loop en sweet nie.
G'n wonder ek's in so 'n benouenis,
ek's soos 'n lam wat agter die tiet aan is.
Waarlik, my skat, my liefdesmart is groot,
soos die tortelduif s'n trou tot in die dood;
'n meisie kan nie minder eet as ek.'

'Weg van die venster af,' sê sy, 'jou gek.
Ek deel verdomp g'n soene uit nie, man.
Ek het 'n ander lief – en wat daarvan? 3710
Jy kom nie naby aan hom nie. Weg is jy,
of ek sal jou nog onder die klippe kry.
Los my nou uit dat ek tot rus kan kom.'

'Helaas, o droewe dag,' sê Absalom,
'vir die ware liefde is dit 'n wrede slag.
Soen my, as ek niks beters kan verwag,
vir die liefde van die Here en van my.'

'En sal jy daarna spore maak?' vra sy.

'Ja seker, liefling,' antwoord Absalom.

'Goed dan. Berei jou voor,' sê sy. 'Ek kom.' 3720

Toe fluister sy vir Nicholas heel sag:
'Bly tjoepstil. Jy gaan jou 'n papie lag.'

Ou Absalom sak op sy knieë neer,
en sê: 'Nou's ek bevoorreg soos 'n heer,
want hierna kom iets beters definitief.
Begunstig my dan, soete voëltjie lief.'

Sy maak die venster haastig oop en maan:
'Toe maak nou gou en kry dit tog gedaan
voordat die bure enigiets vermoed.'

Toe vryf dié Absalom sy lippe goed. 3730
Die nag was pikswart, donker soos die dood

26 'n Geurige, gemmeragtige plant.

27 'n Plant, *Paris quadrifolia*, die blare waarvan op 'n liefdesknoop lyk.

toe sy haar poephol deur die opening stoot,
en so het dit gebeur dat die simpel vent
'n soen plak op haar naakte agterent –
en dit met mening – voor hy agterkom
daar's mos iets fout; hy steier terug verstom,
want hy wis goed 'n vroumens het g'n baard,
maar hy't iets rofs gevoel en lang behaard,
en sê: 'Wat het ek tog gedoen? Ag poe!'

'Hie, hie!' lag sy, en slaan die venster toe,
en Absalom loop weg met droewe pas.

3740

'n Baard! 'n Baard!' sê die fyne Nicholas,
'Nou by Gods *corpus*, dit het goed gegaan.'

Die arme Absalom die hoor dit aan,
en hy het op sy lip gebyt verwoed,
en het gemompel: 'Hiervoor gaan jy boet!'

Sy lippe het hy gevryf, geskuur, gekrap
met stof en sand en saagsels, hooi en lap,
en deurentyd het hy gesê: 'O weel!'

en ook: 'Ek sal my siel aan Satan gee
eerder as afsien van my weerwraak wat
vir my meer werd is as dié hele stad.

3750

Helaas, Helaas, het ek die smaad vermy!'

Van sy warm liefde het niks oorgebly;
ná hy vir haar gesoen het op die ners,
ag hy 'n vroumens minder as waterkers.²⁸

Hy is vir goed verlos van minnekwaal
en het die liefde oor en oor gesmaal.

Huilend soos 'n kind wat straf verduur
het hy oor die straat geloop en afgestuur
op 'n sekere Gerveys, 'n smid, wat allerlei
gereedskap smee wat by die boerdery
benodig word, en toe juis met die taak
besig was om 'n kouter²⁹ skerp te maak.

3760

Hy klop en sê: 'Gerveys, maak oop, toe kom.'

'Hoe nou, wie's daar?' 'Dis ek, dis Absalom.'

'Wat, Absalom, so vroeg? My liewe Here,
wat maak jy hierdie tyd al uit die vere?
Wat skort? Dis 'n mooi jong meisie, sou ek wed,
wat jou so aan die rondkerjakkertjie het;
by Sint Neot, jy weet wat ek bedoel.'

3770

Maar Absalom het glad nie lus gevoel
vir praatjies nie, dus het hy stilgebly,
want ander sake moet sy aandag kry,
waarvan Gerveys niks weet. Hy sê: 'Ag leen
my daardie warm kouter wat daar teen
die skoorsteen staan, want ek wil dit net gou
gebruik en dan weer terugbring, sommerkou.'

Gerveys sê: 'Met plesier. Jy hoef maar net
te vra; al was dit ponde en ek het

3780

²⁸ Bronkors; soort waterplant.

²⁹ Ploegmes wat die grond voor die skaar sny.

dit nie getel nie, sou ek dit vir jou gee,
maar wat der duiwel wil jy maak daarmee?’

Hy antwoord: ‘Laat dit daar; ek sal jou wel
’n ander dag die hele ding vertel.’

Hy’t die kouter aan die koue steel gevat.
Daarmee gewapen, sluip hy oor die pad
en soek die timmerman se huis weer op;
hy’t eers gekug en toe het hy geklop
aan die vensterluik, net soos die eerste keer.

Toe’t Alisoen gesê: ‘Wie’s dit nou weer
wat daarso klop? Dis seker maar ’n dief.’ 3790

‘Nee nee,’ sê hy, ‘God weet, my soete lief,
dit is jou Absalom, my liewe ding.
Ek het iets moois vir jou, ’n goue ring;
dit was my moeder s’n. Ek het dit hier.
Dis baie waardevol en fyn versier.
Gee my een soen en dit is joune, skat.’

Nou, Nicholas het ’n reuse-pis gehad,
was op, en wou verbeter op die grap:
‘Hy sal my gat ook soen voor hy ontsnap.’ 3800
Haastig het hy die venster oopgeruk
en stilletjies sy hol daardeur gedruk
tot by die dye, sy hele fondament.

Toe flikfloo Absalom, die sluwe vent:
‘Waar is jy, voëltjie? Jy moet met my praat.’

Hierop het Nicholas ’n poep gelaat;
so hard soos donderweer het dit weergalm
dat Absalom half verblind was van die walm;
maar hy het met die kouter reggestaan
en het hom daarmee in die hol geslaan; 3810
die nerwe waai die breedte van ’n hand
soos hy hom met die warm yster brand.
Hy dag dat hy beswyk, dit was so seer;
soos ’n besetene gaan hy tekeer
en skree: ‘Help! Water, water om Vaderswill!’

Die timmerman skrik wakker met die skril
geroep van ‘Water’ in sy ore; dag:
‘Dis nou Noël se vloed waarop ek wag!’
Hy het orent gesit en sonder ’n woord
gryp hy die byl en hak hy deur die koord. 3820
Als tuimel inmekaar; sy proviand
het onder met hom in ’n hoop beland,
waar hy bly lê in ’n diep beswymeling.

Toe’t Alisoen en Nicholas opgespring
en moord en brand geskree die strate vol.
Die bure, oud en jonk, het om die dol
ou man kom saamdrom en hom aangestaar,
want bleek en stil lê hy nog heelyd daar;
hy het sy arm met die val gebreek.
Boonop moes hy die skuld dra vir die streek, 3830
want elke enkele ding wat hy wou sê,

het Nicholas en Alisoen weerlê:
Hy's van sy kop af, weet hul te vertel,
en dweep so met 'die sondvloed van Noël';
vanweë sy hersenskimme was hy laf
genoeg om drie groot bakke aan te skaf
en hulle aan die balke op te hang,
en hy het toe in Vadersnaam verlang
dat hul daar in die solder met hom wag.

Die mense het geskater van die lag. 3840
Hul't na die dak gestaar, en al die ou
se pyn en lyding as 'n grap beskou.
Dis net verniet of iemand hom gesteur het
aan sy verduidelikings van wat gebeur het.
Hy is in so 'n mate oordonder dat
hy as mal beskou is deur die hele stad;
onder geleerdes heers eenstemmigheid:
'Die kêrel is beslis 'n varkie kwyt';
en dan het die gelag weer uitgebreek.

Dus is die timmerman se vrou gesteek 3850
en al sy voorsorg kon niks daaraan doen;
en Absalom het haar onderoog gesoen;
en Nicholas het 'n brandmerk in die ring;
mag God ons almal in die hemel bring!

Proloog tot die Meier se verhaal

Na almal goed gelag het oor die doen
en late van Nicholas en Alisoen,
het elkeen iets daaroor te sê gehad,
en meestal is dit goedig opgevat,
en niemand het beswaar gemaak daarteen
behalwe Osewoud die Meier alleen, 3860
want hy was ook 'n timmerman gewees.

Daar was 'n sweem van wrewel in sy gees
en hy't begin te mor: "Ek sou gedorie
vir jou kon terugbetaal het met 'n storie
van 'n trotse meulenaar goed reggesien,
as ek my van vuilpraatjies wou bedien,
maar ek's te oud vir speel; my grastyd oor,
lê daar 'n droë hooityd vir my voor.

Dié witkop is getuienis van my jare;
my hart is ewe skimmel as my hare, 3870
tensy ek soos 'n mispel is: hoe later –
wanneer dit reg is om te eet – hoe kwater,
vrot op die vullis of in strooi gedraai.

Ons ou mans is maar almal so, sou ek raai:
voordat ons rot is, is ons nog nie ryp;
so ons sal hop solank die wêreld pyp.
Een haakplek met die mens se wil is dit:
dat die stengel groen moet wees, hoe wit
die kop ook is – presies net soos 'n prei –
al is ons suf, streef ons na sotterny. 3880

Al kan ons net op ons vermoëns borduur,
in ons geharkte as smeul daar nog vuur.

Vier kooitjies gloei daar nog die hele tyd:
dis eersug, toorn, leuens en gulsigheid,
en dié vier vonkies pas by die ouderdom.

Al word ons ledemate styf en krom,
is die begeerte iets wat ons nooit blus.
Ek's self 'n bok wat nog jong blare lus,
al het reeds menige jaar verbygegaan
sedert die opening van my lewenskraan. 3890

Met die geboorte het die Dood die spon
verwyder dat die wyn by die tapgat kon
uitvloei in 'n jarelange stroom,
maar nou is dit al byna by die boom
en lek die laaste bietjies oor die vat.
Die lawwe tong kan klets en klepper oor wat
verby is, die sondigheid van lank tevoor,
maar vir 'n ouman bly net kindsheid oor."

Ons Waard was met die prekery ontevrede
en val summier die Meier in die rede: 3900
"Al dié spitsvondigheid – wat kan dit baat?
Moet ons die heeldag uit die Bybel praat?
Die duiwel leer 'n meier preek, net soos

hy 'n lapper 'n dokter maak of 'n matroos.
Kyk, daar lê Deptford al. Wat sukkel jy,
want priem is nou al anderhalf uur verby,
en Greenwich ook – daar's vir jou skelms, hoor!¹ –
so dis hoog tyd vir jou om aan te voor."

"Menere," sê die Meier, "ek vertrou
niemand sal my verkwalik as ek nou
die Meulenaar met gelyke munt vergeld.
Mens mag geweld beantwoord met geweld.
Dié dronkaard kom hier met sy storie van
'n geleerde en 'n bedroë timmerman;
dis nou oor ék een is; hy skimp op my.
Met jul verlov sal ek hom daarvoor kry,
in dieselfde lae taal, en nog iets: ek –
die Here hoor my – hoop hy breek sy nek!
Die splinter in my oog sien hy nie mis nie,
so asof daar nie 'n balk in syne is nie."

3910

3920

DIE MEIER SE VERHAAL

Nie ver van Cambridge af is daar 'n gehug
met die naam van Trumpington, waar daar 'n brug
oor 'n stroompie is, met 'n meul aan die waterkant;
vir die waarheid hiervan kan ek my eer verpand.

Daar het 'n meulenaar reeds lank gebly.
So trots en ydel soos 'n pou was hy.
Hy stoei en skiet en vis, maak nette heel,
draai bekers af en het doedelsak gespeel.
Aan sy lyfband hang daar pal 'n kortelas
met 'n lem wat vlymskerp soos 'n swaard s'n was;

3930

'n flinke dolk het hy in sy sak gedra;
niemand sou dit ooit waag om hom te pla;
hy't 'n Sheffield-skeermes in sy kous gehad.
Sy gesig was rond gewees; sy neus was plat;
en kaal sy skedel soos 'n aap se kop.

Hy was 'n regte markplek-moer-jou-op.
Hy sweer as iemand aan hom vat, dan sou
dié malmens dit waaragtig waar berou.

Hy was 'n dief van koring en van meel,
'n sluwe vent, geoefend om te steel.

3940

'Ou Windgat Siemie' noem hul dié kalant.

Hy't 'n vrou gehad – van hoë afkoms, want
sy was die dogter van die dorpspastoor.²

As bruidskat was daar menige konfoor
om Siemie net sover as trou te kry.

Sy's in 'n nonneklooster opgelei;
Siemie't gesê hy sal alleenlik trou
met 'n kuise, ryk, fynopgevoede vrou,

¹ Met 'n glimlag gesê, want Chaucer het op dié stadium in Greenwich gewoon.

² Priesters en kloosterlinge was veronderstel om selibaat te wees; sy was dus buite-egtelik.

want anderste benadeel dit sy stand.
Trots was die vrou soos 'n ekster en astrant. 3950

Dit was 'n lus om hul te sien, dié paar;
op Heiligedae³ loop hy uit voor haar,
sy kap se halsband om sy kop getooi,
met haar op sy hakke, uitgevat in rooi,
'n kleur wat by haar man se kouse pas.
As dame is sy bejeën, en niemand was
so dapper dat, as hy haar sien op straat,
hy sou flankeer of skertsend met haar praat,
tensy hy wil hê dat Siemie hom vermoor,
met dolk of mes of kortelas deurboor. 3960

'n Jaloerse man is gevaarlik – of sy vrou
moet hom altans in daardie lig beskou.
Daar hang 'n luggie aan haar afkoms, maar
haar eiewaan was ongeëwenaar.
Sy was die ene hoon en hovaardy;
'n dame, meen sy, moet afsydig bly,
want, volgens haar, is sy fyn afgerond
deur klooster- en familieagtergrond.

'n Dogter het hul gehad van ongeveer
twintig jaar oud en daarna ook nie meer 3970
behalwe 'n babatjie, 'n mooi jong knaap,
ses maande oud, wat in 'n wiegie slaap.
Die meisiemens, wat fris en lywig was,
se neus was plat, haar oë grys soos glas,
haar borste hoog en rond, haar boude breed;
tog was haar hare mooi, moet julle weet.

Sy was so fyn, die dorpspastoor't beplan
hy maak vir haar die erfgename van
sy roerend goed en vaste eiendom;
hy sorg dus dat g'n vryers by haar kom. 3980
As huweliksmaat vir haar was hy bedag
op 'n man van aansien uit 'n ou geslag.
Dis paslik dat die Heil'ge Kerk se goed
húl toekom van die Heil'ge Kerk se bloed,
en dus het hy sy heil'ge bloed geëer,
al het hy ook die Heil'ge Kerk verteer.

Die meulenaar kon baie maalgeld kry
uit die mout en koring van die hele kontrei,
veral ook omdat daar 'n kollege⁴ staan,
bekend as Solderhal,⁵ wat al sy graan 3990
aan hom moes lewer. Eendag het dit gebeur
dat die proviandier van dié kollege deur
'n kwaal oorval is; almal het gereken
dié siekbed sou beslis sy dood beteken.
Die meulenaar het honderd maal soveel
koring en meel as vantevore gesteel:

3 Kerklike feesdae aan heiliges gewy.

4 Kloosteruniversiteit; uigespreek kol-/lee-zje.

5 King's Hall, later by Trinity College ingelyf. Die oorspronklike betekenis van "solder" was 'n sonverdieping.

eers was dit diefstal met diskresie, maar
nou was hy plein en simpel 'n plunderaar.
Die kollegehoof kon hieroor raas en skel,
dit het die meulenaar g'n wiek⁶ ontstel;
sy onskuld het hy hoog en laag gesweer.

4000

Twee arm jong studente het loseer
by die kollege waarvan ek hier praat.
Balhorig was hul, uit op kattedwaad;
uit pure stuitigheid het hul aaneen
by die hoof geneul hy moes verlof verleen
dat hulle na die meulenaar toe gaan
en toesig hou oor die maal van hulle graan;
hul durf hul koppe op 'n blok sit dat
hy nie 'n koringkorrel sou kon vat,
óf deur geweld óf deur geslepenheid;
uiteindelik was die hoof daartoe bereid.

4010

Die een se naam was Jan, die ander Alein,
albei afkomstig uit dieselfde klein
dorpie bekend as Strother – ek weet nie waar –
ver in die noorde êrens. Toe hul klaar
hul goed gepak het, sit hul 'n sak vol graan
op 'n perd en toe't hul na die meul gegaan;
hul't elk 'n swaard en beukelaar gedra.
Jan ken die pad, hul hoef geeneen te vra.
Daar aangekom, sit hul die sak eers neer;
toe sê Alein: 'Dag, Simon. Liewe Heer!
Hoe gaan dit met jou dogter en jou vrou?'

4020

'Welkom, Alein,' sê Siemie, 'By my trou,
en jy ook, Jan. Wat bring jul hier na my?'

'Simon,' sê Jan, 'Nood breek mos wet, en hy
wat nie 'n kneg het, maak sy eie kos,
tensy hy dwaas is, sê geleerdes mos.
Ons proviandier lê dood op sterwe na,
so vreeslik is die tandpyn wat hom pla.
Ek en Alein is hier dat jy ons graan
kan maal en dan moet ons weer huis toe gaan.
Help ons 'seblief dat ons weer gou kan voort.'

4030

'Ek sal so maak,' sê Siemie, 'op my woord.
Wat wil jul doen terwyl jul vir my wag?'

Jan sê toe: 'By my vader se geslag,
ek sou graag by die tremel⁷ staan en sien
hoe die koring ingaan; ek het nooit voordien
die heen en weer geskommel dopgehou.'

4040

Toe sê Alein: 'Dit is so, by my trou.
Jy weet as ek nou weer hier onder staan,
kan ek kyk hoedat die fyngemaalde graan
in die trog beland. Dis 'n nuwigheid vir my,
want ek is ewe onbekwaam as jy
as dit by die malery van koring kom.'

6 Soort onkruid.

7 Tregter waardeur die graan na die meulstene gelei word.

Die meulenaar kry lag: hul is so dom;
hy dag: 'Wat hulle met dié streek wil sê,
is dat geeneen hul ooit sal uitoorlê,
maar ek wat meulenaar is, sal hul kul,
al het ek van geleerdheid g'n benul. 4050
Hoe meer dié kêrels hulle wat verbeel,
hoe meer sal ek uiteindelik van hul steel;
in plaas van meel sal hul semels huis toe vat,
want, kyk, "Slim vang sy baas" is 'n waarheid wat
ou Wolf destyds geleer het van die perd.⁸
G'n droë dop is hul geleerdheid werd.'

Hy wag sy kans eers af, toe gaan hy uit,
versigtig, steelsgewys, sonder geluid,
en nadat hy goed rondgekyk het, vind 4060
die meulenaar hul perd wat vasgebind
agter die meul staan onder die prieel.
Voetjie vir voetjie kom hy nader, streel
die dier eers liggies, haal sy toom toe af.
Toe die perd gewaar hy's vry, het hy gedraf
na die veen⁹ toe waar daar wilde merries wei;
hy runnik 'Wiehiehie!' en daar gaat hy!

Die meulenaar kom terug, maar sê g'n woord;
hy doen sy werk, maak grappies ensovoort,
tot die koring klaar gemaal is. Toe die meel
in 'n sak gegooi is, gebind is met 'n seel, 4070
gaan Jan na buite om die perd te haal;
hy vind dis weg en maak 'n groot kabaal:
'Help, help! Ons perd is weg. Alein, roer nou
jou litte, man. Kom hiernatoe. Maak gou!
Helaas, ons hoof se ryperd het verdwyn.'

Vergete is meel en koring. Nou't Alein
sy voorsorg en versigtigheid laat vaar
en aan die skree gegaan: 'Waar's hy? Waar?'
Daar kom die meulenaar se vrou ook by;
'Helaas, jul perd is na die veen,' sê sy. 4080
'Hy't agter die wilde merries aangehol;
die een wat hom gebind het, is skoon dol:
so 'n knoopslag kan mos nie 'n hingsperd keer.'

'Alein,' sê Jan, 'by die Passie van ons Heer,
af met jou swaard! Ek haal ook myne af;
Ek kan so vinnig soos 'n reebok draf.
Ons albei sal hy nie ontkom nie. Git,
wat het jy nie die ding in die stal gesit?
Nee magtig man, Alein, jy's darem dwaas!'

Alein en Jan het hulle toe gehaas 4090
in die rigtnig van die veen, die stomme paar,
en toe hul weg was, steel die meulenaar
'n halwe boesel¹⁰ meel uit hulle sak

8 Volgens 'n fabel wou 'n wolf 'n vul koop om dit op te vreet. Hy vra toe vir die merrie hoeveel haar vul kos. Sy sê die prys is op haar agterpoot geskryf. Toe hy dit probeer lees, is hy geskop.

9 Omgewing waar die grond turfagtig is.

en gee dit vir sy vrou om 'n koek te bak.
Hy sê: 'Die twee't klaarblyklik lont geruik,
maar nogtans het ek hulle goed gefnuik,
met al hul boekekennis. Laat hul waai.
Hul lyk kompleet soos kinders wat aspaai.¹¹
So maklik vang hul hom nie, op my eer.'

Die stommerds hardloop heelyd heen en weer 4100
met 'Hanou! Hokaai! Oppas! Suutjies, hoor.
Fluit jy 'n slaggie, dan keer ek hom voor.'
Nou ja, hul het gespook met al hul mag,
maar alles tevergeefs, tot laat die nag;
die dier was vlug, maar hul het na 'n lang
gesukkel hom tog in 'n sloot gevang.

So moeg en mat soos beeste in die reën
kom Jan asook Alein terug van die veen.

'n Vloek,' sê Jan, 'op my geboortedag. 4110
Almal sal ons bespot en vir ons lag.
Ons is ons koring kwyt en almal sal
ons gekke noem: die hoof, ons maats, veral
die meulenaar.' So't Jan heelpad geneul
toe hulle teruggeloop het na die meul,
met hulle Beiaard¹² aan die hand gelei.

Hul het die meulenaar by die vuur gekry,
want dit was nag, te laat vir huis toe gaan,
en daarom klop hul dringend by hom aan
vir kos en onderdak, en was ook klaar
om daarvoor te betaal. Die meulenaar 4120
sê: 'Wat ek het, kan jul 'n deel van kry.
My huis is klein, maar met die kibbelary
wat eie is aan logikastudente
kan julle twintig voet met argumente
verander in 'n myl, so in jul nood
kan jul dié ruimte ook gerus vergroot.'

'Nou by Sint Cuthbert, Simon,' het Jan gesê,
'jy wil maar altyddeur jou grappies hê.
Dis 'n ware woord: Mens neem verlief met wat 4130
jy saamgebring het of wat jy kan vat;
en daarom, liewe gasheer, wil ek pleit
vir spyse en drank en vir herbergsaamheid.
Ons is bereid om daarvoor op te dok;
met leë hand kan mens g'n hawik lok.
Die geld is bysaak. Kyk, ons het dit hier.'

Die meulenaar se dogter het brood en bier
in die dorp gaan haal; intussen braai hy 'n gans,
en bind hul perd – dié't nou g'n wegkomkans –
en in sy eie kamer het hy 'n bed 4140
gemaak met lakens en komberse, net
'n paar tree van sy eie ledekant;

10 'n Boesel is 'n inhoudsmaat, 'n derde van 'n mudsak.

11 Wegkruipertjie speel.

12 'n Komies-heroïese naam uit 'n Franse romanse.

en in dieselfde kamer byderhand
het hulle dogter ook 'n bed gehad;
daar was g'n ander keuse nie omdat
daar in die huis g'n ruimer slaapplek was.
Hul het geëet, gesels, tot laat gebras,
goeie sterk bier gedrink met alle mag,
en kom toe eers tot rus teen middernag.

'n Mens kon sien die meulenaar's geswael:
sy gesig wat eers gegloei het, was nou vaal; 4150
hy hik aanhoudend, deur sy neus praat hy,
soos een wat asma of verkoue kry.

So gaan hy slaap, en met hom gaan sy vrou
wat haar lig en losbol soos 'n ekster hou,
want sy was aangeklam. Die wiegie vat
sy na haar bed se voetenent sodat
sy dit kan skommel en die kind laat drink.
Toe die kruik geledig is, het die dogter flink
na die kamer toe gegaan, want sy was pê,
en toe't Alein, en toe't ook Jan gaan lê; 4160
die hele lot – hul had geen slaapdrank nodig.

Die meulenaar se bras was so oorbodig,
hy't soos 'n perd geproes, ook nie attent
op proesgeluide uit sy agterent;
sy vrou sing kontrabas in dieselfde koor;
mens kon hul op 'n halfmyl afstand hoor;
hul dogter ronk ook saam *par compagnie*.

Alein dié luister na die melodie;
hy por sy maat en sê: 'Jan, slaap jy al?
Het so 'n gesang ooit op jou oor geval? 4170
Dat hul kompleet¹³ op dié wyse sing!

Mag hulle belroos kry as treitering.
Wie het al so 'n aardigheid gehoor?
Die blom van weerwraak lê vir hulle voor.
Daar wag g'n rus vir ons dié hele nag,
maar ons sal sien wie sal die laaste lag,
want, Jan,' sê hy, 'ek gaan verdomp nog daai
meulenaar se dogter proppers naai.

Mens mag verhaal wat ander van jou vat;
daar's 'n regsbeginnsel ten effekte dat 4180
iemand wat enersins 'n onreg ly
andersins bevrediging mag kry.

Ons kom nie daar verby ons koring is weg,
dit gaan die hele dag lank met ons sleg;
daar's niks wat my verliese kan vergoed,
dus neem ek iets wat die skade sal versoet.
Nou, by Gods siel, dit kan nie hoër of laer!

Toe waarsku Jan: 'Alein, jy's in gevaar;
Die kêrel is 'n boef en as hy nou
gaan wakker skrik, sal dit ons erg berou, 4190

13 Die aanddiens, die laaste kerklike gety van die dag.

want hy veroorsaak ons dalk albei pyn.'

'Ek vrees hom minder as 'n vlieg,' sê Alein.

Hy't opgestaan en na haar bed gesluip –
sy't op haar rug gelê – en by haar ingekruip.

So stil het hy beweeg, dit sou al klaar
te laat vir roep wees toe sy hom gewaar,
en hulle's toe verenig, as 't ware.

Sterkte, Alein; van Jan is nou my mare.

Jan het 'n hele ruk lank stil gelê;
hy was gegrief en het by homself gesê:

'Dis nou 'n grap. Hier lê ek soos 'n sot.
Dink net hoe sal hul my hieroor bespot.

My maat het darem iets vir al sy leed,
want hy't die meulenaar se dogter beet;
hy het gewaag en nou het hy 'n nooi,
en ek lê soos 'n vrotsak in die kooi.

As hul dié storie eendag oorvertel,
word ek vir swaap en lafaard uitgeskel.

Laat ek kyk of ek dalk ook geluk kan hê,
want "Wie nie waag nie, wen nie", soos hul sê.'

Hy't opgestaan en op sy tone na
die wiegie toe gegaan en dit gedra
en by sy bed se voetenent geplaas.

Die vrou het opgehou met snork en blaas
en opgestaan, want sy moes eers gaan pis;
maar toe sy terugkom, tas sy die wiegie mis;
sy't orals rondgesoek, maar niks gekry.

'Genade! Dit was byna 'n blaps,' sê sy,
'So hittete was ek in die verkeerde bed;
dit sou 'n neukery beteken het.'

So voel sy na die wiegie met haar hand
totdat sy tastend by die bed beland,
en nooit vermoed daar's iets verkeerd, want aan
die voetenent daarvan het die wieg gestaan.

Dit was so donker, sy was onbewus
sy kruip by 'n student in om te rus;
sy't stil gelê en sou geslaap het, maar
meteens spring die geleerde Jan op haar;
hy het haar flink te lyf gegaan en sy
het jare laas soveel plesier gekry.

Hy't lank en diep gesteek met alle mag.
Die twee het baie pret gehad dié nag,
totdat die haan gekraai het 'n derde keer.

Vroeg in die oggend kon Alein nie meer,
want heelnag lank het hy dit druk gehad.

Hy sê: 'My soete Martie, vaarwel, skat.
Die dag lumier, ek kan nie langer sleur,
maar ek is voortaan, wat ook al gebeur,
aan jou gebonde, immer tot jou diens.'

'My liefing,' antwoord sy, 'gaan nou. Tot siens!
Ek wil jou een ding sê voordat ons skei:

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4240

wanneer jy huis toe gaan by die meul verby,
as jy by die agterdeur 'n slaggie soek,
dan kry jy daar die halweboeselkoek
wat my ma gebak het met die einste meel
wat ek my pa gehelp het om te steel.
En, lief, mag God vir jou bewaar en seën';
en met dit gaan sy byna aan die ween.

Alein staan op en dag: 'Voor die daeraad
moet ek weer 'n slag gaan inkrui by my maat;' 4250
maar loop hom teen die wieg vas onderweg.
'Genugtig,' dag hy, 'nou verdwaal ek sleg;
my kop is dronk van al die werk en waak,
dis dié dat ek my spoor so byster raak.
Aan die wiegie weet ek, ek moet soontoe hou;
hier slaap die meulenaar mos en sy vrou.
Hy loop asof hy twintig duiwels het,
totdat hy kom by die meulenaar se bed:
terwyl hy dink dit is sy maat wat daar
in die bed lê, is dit mooi die meulenaar. 4260

Hy sit sy arm om sy nek en 'Jan,
jou varkkop,' fluister hy, 'word wakker, man,
en hoor net watter sports het ek gehad.
Die meulenaar se dogter, wat ewe plat
op haar rug gelê het, is vannag verdomp
nie minder nie as drie maal goed gepomp,
terwyl jy soos 'n lafaard hier bly lê.'

'Jou bliksem!' roep die meulenaar, 'Hoesê,
verraderlike skobbejak? Ek sweer
ek sal jou hiervoor doodmaak, by ons Heer. 4270
Hoe durf jy smaad en so 'n vernedering
oor my dogter met haar hoë afkoms bring?'

Hy gryp hom aan die gorrel. Alein verset
hom hewig, deel vuishoue uit; een het
hy op die meulenaar se neus geplant,
dat die bloedstroom daarvan op sy bors beland;
met neus en tande stukkend rol hul rond
soos varke in 'n streepsak op die grond;
hul het orent gespring, geval aaneen,
tot die meulenaar gestruikel het oor 'n steen 4280
en agteroor geval het op sy vrou,
wat niks geweet het van die rusie en nou
juis ingesluimer het met Jan, die klerk,
wat haar uitgeput het met die nag se werk.
Maar met die val skrik sy weer wakker en skree:
'Help, ware Kruis van Bromholm!¹⁴ Vader, ek gee
my in U hande oor! Here, hoor my!
Word wakker, Simon. Help, die duiwel smoor my.
My hart's gebroke; ek is byna dood,

14 Naby Bromholm in Norfolk was daar 'n priory wat daarop aanspraak gemaak het dat hulle 'n deel van Christus se kruis besit.

want daar lê een op my kop, een op my skoot. 4290
Help, Siemie, die studente moor mekaar!

Jan's vinnig uit die bed en het vandaar
al met die muur langs na 'n stok getas.
Die vrou't ook opgespring; waar alles was
in die kamer het sy beter as Jan geweet,
en kry die stok wat hy gesoek het beet.
Daar was 'n bietjie lig, 'n glinstering,
want die maan het ingeskyn by 'n opening,
en by dié lig sien sy die twee baklei, 4300
maar wie dit was, kon sy nie onderskei,
totdat sy vaag iets wits te siene kry;

toe sy iets wits gewaar, is dit of sy
die een student se slaapmus kan onthou;
sy kruip al nader en sy mik 'n hou,
en toe sy dink sy slaan Alein oor die kop,
is dit die meulenaar se klapperdop;
met 'Help! Ek sterwe' sak hy inmekaar.
Hul het hom afgeransel en net daar
laat lê terwyl hul aangetrek het om
met hulle perd en meel daar weg te kom; 4310
maar eers het hulle by die meul gaan soek
na hul goedgebakte halweboeselkoek.

So's die verwaande meulenaar betaal:
hy't hulle koring gratis fyngemaal;
hy moes die koste van die ete dra
van Jan en van Alein, asook hul slae;
sy vrou's gestee, sy dogter ook daarby.
Dis wat 'n skelm meulenaar sal kry,
want soos die spreekwoord sê: 'n Man val self
in die put wat hy vir iemand anders delf. 4320
Bedrieërs word bedrieg. Nou mag die Heer
wat hoog in majesteit oor ons regeer
almal behoed in hierdie pelgrimskaar.
My storie is uit. Ek's kiet met die meulenaar.

Proloog tot die Kok se verhaal

In dié verhaal het die Kok hom so vermei
dat hy skoon rugkrapplekker daarvan kry.
“By Christus Passie,” lag hy, “dit was voorwaar
'n goeie slotsom tot die meulenaar
se redenasie rakende losies!

Dit was mos slim ou Salomo se advies:

4330

‘Nooi nie vir enigiemand in jou huis’ –
met nagverblyf is dinge soms nie pluis.
As iemand met 'n gas te lekker strook,
dan wil dié somer orals ingaan ook.
Al die jare het ek Roger Ware geheet
en was ek nooit bewus, die Here weet,
van 'n meulenaar wat so bedroë was;
hul't hom dié nag 'n poets gebak vir vas.

Maar God behoed dat ons dit daar sou laat;
as jul my dit vergun om nou te praat,
dan hoor jul die verhaal van 'n arm man
wat sal vertel so goed as wat hy kan:
'n grappigheid hier uit ons eie oord.”

4340

Ons Waard se antwoord was: “Ek gaan akkoord.

Vertel maar, Roger; sorg net dat dit goed is,
want baie van jou pasteie wat ontbloed is,
is weer 'n tweede maal deur jou verhit
en as vars ware van die hand gesit.
Die vloek van heelwat pelgrims rus op jou:
die pietersielie het hul erg berou
wat as die vulsel vir jou ganse dien,
want in jou winkel is baie vlieë te sien.
Vertel, my liewe Roger, en as ek terg,
moet jy jou tog nie daaroor gaan vererg.”

4350

Toe antwoord hy: “Dis waar wat jy daar sê,
Maar soos die Vlaamse spreekwoord dit wil hê,
'Ware spot is kwade spot' onthou.

En daarom, Harry Bailly, moet jy jou
ook nie vererg as ek 'n storie van
'n herbergier vertel, maar nogtans kan
dit wag tot later; voor ons egter skei,
sal ek gedorie waar vir jou nog kry.”

4360

Hy't opgeruimd gelag, want hy was in
'n goeie bui en het toe as volg begin.

DIE KOK SE VERHAAL

In Londen moes 'n leerkneg vroeër tyd
hom in die leweransierbedryf konfyt.

Hy was vrolik soos 'n goudvink in 'n tuin,
aantreklik, kortgebou en bessiebruin,
en met 'n swier gekam sy donker hare.

In dans was hy bedrewe en ervare.

4370

Sy bynaam, Piet Plesier, het hom goed gepas,
want hy was ewe vol verliefdheid as
'n byekorf gevul met heuning soet.

Hoe salig vir 'n vrou om hom te ontmoet.

By bruiloffeeste was hy altyd tuis
en eerder in die kroeg as die kombuis.

Hoor hy 'n optog buite in die straat,

het hy die winkel inderhaas verlaat
en dan't hy teruggekeer veel later as

hy moeg gedans en uitgekuier was,

4380

'n bende van sy soort om hom geskaar
wat sing en dans en saam met hom baljaar.

Hul't afgespreek dat hul mekaar sou kry

in dié of daardie straat vir dobbelary,

want in die hele Londen was daar geen

leerkneg so bekwaam met die dobbelsteen

as Pietie was, en hy was ook rojaal

met wat hy onopsigtelik uitbetaal.

Sy baas moes die gevolge daarvan ly,

want hy't die geldlaai dikwels leeg gekry;

4390

dit sal 'n sakeman altyd ontgeld

as hy 'n losbolleerkneg het, gesteld

op vroue, dobbel en jolyt, al het

die meester self geen aandeel aan die pret,

want speel en steel is vinkel en koljander

en die instrument¹⁵ kan niks daaraan verander.

Mindergegoede mense se baljaar

en eerlikheid is onvereenigbaar.

Die baas was opgeskeep met hierdie vent,

maar, met sy leertyd byna op 'n end,

4400

ná hy herhaaldelik berispe is

en ook 'n paar keer na die gevangenis

begelei is met musiek,¹⁶ besluit die heer

eendag toe hy sy kasboek kontroleer

dat hy nou op die spreekwoord ag moet slaan,

want 'Een vrot appel steek die ander aan.'

Dis beter smyt mens so 'n appel weg:

dieselfde geld vir 'n goddelose kneg,

want as sy baas hom in sy diens laat bly,

word al die werkers ewe sleg as hy.

4410

15 Die kitaar of vedel wat die leerkneg speel.

16 Oortreders is met musiekbegeleiding tronk toe vervoer om aandag op die skande te vestig.

Die meester het die leerkontrak verbreek,
die kneg verwens en in die pad gesteek;
so het die kêrel sy ontslag gekry,
en kon hy hom voltyds aan ondeug wy.

Nou omdat elke dief 'n maat het wat
hom help om deur te bring als wat hy vat,
afrokkel of van ander mense leen,
het Piet sy beddegoed gestuur na een,
sy boesemvriend, net so versot as hy
op lekker leef en drank en dobbelary;
agter 'n toonbank was sy vrou te sien,
maar op haar rug het sy haar geld verdien.

4420

[Dié verhaal het Chaucer nooit voltooi nie.]

Fragment II

Woorde van die Waard aan die geselskap

Ons Waard bemerk toe dat die son omhoog
'n kwart voltooi het van sy hemelboog
en daarby nog 'n halfuur of iets meer;
hoewel g'n kenner van die sterreleer,
wis hy dit was die agtiende April,
wat die bode is van Mei se lewenswil,
en toe hy merk dat elke skaduwee
en elke boom of voorwerp wat daarmee
verbonde is dieselfde lengte het,
kon hy presies bereken Phoibos met
sy helder glans het reeds bokant die kim
vyf en veertig grade hoog geklim.
Gesien die dag, gesien die breedtegraad,
was dit nou tienuur, na sy ryp beraad.

Meteens het hy sy perd in toom gehou.
"Ho, mense, sê hy, "wees gewaarsku nou,
'n kwart van hierdie dag is al verby
en daarom vra ek, by die Heer en by
Johannes, laat ons nie meer tyd verbeur
as wat ons moet nie, want gedurigdeur
verdwyn dit, nie net as ons slaap in die nag,
maar deur nalatigheid ook helder oordag
soos 'n rivier wat vloei na die vallei
en nooit weer koers terug na die berg sal kry.

Vir Seneca en ander wyses was
verlies van tyd meer onaanvaarbaar as
verlies van skatte. Vee kan jy vervang,
maar tydverlies is mens se ondergang.
Verlore tyd's 'n ewige verlies,
soos wulpse Martatjie se maagdevlies
wat sy verloor het deur losbandigheid.
So laat ons goed gebruik maak van ons tyd.

"Heer Advokaat," sê hy, "die tyd's nou daar
dat u ons iets vertel. U het verklaar,
uit vrye wil, my oordeel en gesag
sal u in hierdie saak as bindend ag.
Betaal u skuld; kom u belofte na
en doen u plig. Dis al wat ek van u vra."

"Nou Waard," sê hy, "*par Dieu*, ek gaan akkoord,
want ek is nie 'n verbreker van my woord.
Beloftes maak mos skuld en ek wil graag
my skuld betaal, sodoende u behaag.
'n Wet wat mens oor ander proklameer,
geld vir die proklameerder eweseer;
dit is ons stelreël, hoor; maar ewentwel
ek het geen storie reg om te vertel,
want, soos ons weet, het Chaucer lank gelede

als reeds vertel – met bra min vaardighede
van taalgebruik, laat staan nog die hantering
van goeie rym en metriese skandering. 50
Al wat 'n storie is, het hy al klaar
in een of ander boek van hom bewaar.
Van minnaars is daar meer by hom te lees
as in die ou geskrif *Heroïdes*,
bepaalde briewe van Ovidius.
Herhaling daarvan is onnodig dus.

In sy jeug was dit oor Ceys en Alkuone;
daarna het hy geskryf oor elke skone
en edele vrou, en dié wat hul bemin het.
Mens kan gaan soek – of dié wat daarin sin het – 60
in *Cupido se Heiligelgende*,¹
want daar is al dié stories mos te vinde.
Daar gaap Lucretia se wonde wyd
en Tisbe s'n, en Dido is bereid
om haar lewe prys te gee vir Aeneas,
en Phillis in 'n boom verander as
gevolg van Demofoon; die droewe tone
van Deianira en van Hermione,
van Ariadne en Hupsipele, 70
die dorre eiland rysend uit die see;
Leander wat verdrink ter wille van
die skone Hero; en Helena dan
in leed verenig met Laodameia,
asook Breseïs; die wreedheid van Medeia
wat haar eie kinders ophang aan die hals
uit wraak op Jason, want sy liefde was vals.
Hy't Hupermnestra en Penelope,
Alcestis ook, met hoë lof beklee,
maar hy't g'n woord van Canasee te sê:
sy't teennatuurlik met haar broer gelê; 80
vir so 'n nare voorbeeld was hy vies
(en al wat ek daarop kan sê, is 'Sies!').
Hy't ook geswyg oor Apollonius
en sy vertelling van Antiochus:
sy eie dogter is deur hom verkrag –
'n vreeslike verhaal – hy't haar met mag
mos teen die grond geslinger. Na ryp beraad
het Chaucer hierdie storie weggelaat;
in sy geskrifte het hy nie kans gesien
om sulke gruweldade op te dien;
en ek verkies ook om hul oor te slaan.
Maar ek moet iets vertel. Hoe nou gedaan? 90
Jul moenie my oor dieselfde kam gaan skeer
as dié Piërides van wie ons leer
in *Metamorfose* van Ovidius,
en moenie dink dat dit my verontrus

1 Ceys en Alkuone kom voor in Chaucer se *Boek van die Hertogin* en 'Cupido se Heiligelgende' verwys na sy *Legende van Goeie Vroue*.

dat ek agternakom met my plein gepraat
in prosa,² en die digkuns aan hom laat.”

So sedig as kan kom, het hy daarna
die volgende vertelling voorgedra.

Proloog tot die Regsgeleerde se verhaal

Hoe pynlik's armoede, met die smart
van honger, dors en koue steeds verbonde. 100
Om ander om hulp te vra, grief mens se hart,
maar nooddruf openbaar geheime wonde:
al stuit dit teen die bors, gaan mens te gronde
as jy verseg om van 'n ander man
te leen of steel of bedel wat jy kan.

Jy pak die skuld op God, vol bitterheid:
Hy't aardse goed so onegaal versprei,
of sondig deur jou naaste te verwyf:
'Hy't als en ek het niks,' sê jy,
'maar toemaar, want sy loon sal hy nog kry 110
wanneer sy boude in die kole braai,
want hy het mos 'n arm man versmaai.'

Slaan op die woorde van die wyse ag:
'Dis beter om te sterf as te krepeer;
selfs van jou buurman kan jy hoon verwag',
want armes kan g'n aanspraak maak op eer.
Benewens dit, het Salomo beweer,
gaan dit voortdurend sleg met 'n arm man.
Vermy dus armoede as jy kan.

As jy arm is, is dit nie net jou broer 120
wat jou sal haat nie; vriende bly ook weg.
O welgestelde kooplui, o so stoer
en so begaafd, vir jul gaan alles reg;
die dobbelsteentjies val vir jul nooit sleg –
daar's pure dubbel sesse in jul beker,
en by die kermis sal jul dans vir seker.

Jul's ywerig vir gewin op see en land;
jul is die bron van elke nuwigheid
en dra vernuftig kennis van die stand
van vele ryke, en weet van vrede en stryd. 130
Al storie wat ek ken is op 'n tyd
deur so 'n persoon aan my vertel, en dít
is dan die storie wat ek voor gaan sit.

2 Die vertelling wat volg is egter nie in prosa nie; miskien was dit Chaucer se oorspronklike bedoeling om die
verhaal van Melibeus aan die Regsgeleerde toe te ken.

DIE REGSGELEERDE SE VERHAAL

Deel I

Daar was in Sirië, so word daar vertel,
'n gilde kooplui, ryk en toegewy;
hul't speserye uitgevoer, sowel
as goudstof en ook mooi gekleurde sy,
en soveel aftrek het hul goed gekry,
dit was so billik en hoog aangeskryf,
dat almal graag met hul wou handel dryf. 140

Party van hierdie kooplui het van hier
na Rome toe gereis; en of dit aan
hul sake gekoppel was of vir plesier
kan ek nie sê nie, maar hul't self gegaan,
nie een gestuur om vir hul in te staan.
Daar't hul losies gevind wat hulle pas
en ook geskik vir hul doeleindes was.

Geruime tyd het hulle in dié stad
nog aangebly, soos hul dit nodig vind,
en so het hulle daagliks dit en dat
verneem oor iemand so betowerend, 150
oor Constans,³ die geliefde koningskind.
Dag in, dag uit het hulle oor en oor
van haar en van haar deugdelikheid gehoor.

Daar was eenstemmigheid oor die dogter van
die Romeinse keiser (mag God hom bewaar):
haar deug en skoonheid het die kroon gespan,
want van die wêreldskepping af was daar
geen vrou gewees wat haar kon ewenaar.
Die Heer behoede haar in roem en eer: 160
sy's waardig om Europa te regeer.

In haar is skoonheid sonder trots, en jeug
sonder losbandigheid of sotterny;
en alles wat sy doen, getuig van deug.
Haar nederigheid's 'n skans teen hovaardy;
'n toonbeeld van die hoflikheid is sy.
Haar hart's 'n tempel van die heiligheid;
haar hand tot milde gawes steeds bereid.

Wat die kooplui daar gehoor het, was als waar –
maar laat ek terugkom op my storie nou. 170
Die laai van hulle skepe was reeds klaar
en hul het die geseënde maagd aanskou;
toe's hulle terug na Sirië en hul ou
bedrywighede waarin hulle ewe
bly en voorspoedig was as vanmelewe.

³ Latyn *Constantia*, standvastigheid.

Die sultan het hul met groot guns bejeën
en, as hul terugkeer het van 'n reis
na 'n vreemde land, het hy hul iedereen
met gasvryheid onthaal in sy paleis
en gretig uitgevra: hul moes hom wys
op nuus uit ander dele en bekoor
met wonders daar gesien of van gehoor.

180

Die kooplui het toe onder meer verhaal
van Constans, 'n volledige verslag
aan hom voorgelê, waaruit hy kon bepaal
hoe edel sy van gees was en gedrag;
gevolglik het die sultan dag en nag
aan haar bly dink, was dit sy hele strewe
om haar te min tot die einde van sy lewe.

Miskien is dit met sy geboorte al
in die sterre opgeteken dat die liefde sy
ondergang sou wees; die lotgeval
van elke mens is vasgelê en hy
behoort dit te kan uitmaak, uitgesprei
in dié groot boek wat ons die hemel noem;
glashelder is die boodskap van sy doem.

190

In die sterrestand was die dood al lank tevore
van Hektor en Achilles ook te lees,
van Caesar en Pompeius, ongebore,
die val van Thebe, die dood van Herakles,
van Simson, Turnus en van Sokrates,
maar ongelukkig is die mens so bot
dat hy maar min begrip het van sy lot.

200

Die sultan het toe sy geheime raad
byeengeroep en hulle meegedeel
dat hy seker was hy sou die lewe laat
tensy dit hom geluk – en hul dit reël –
dat hy Constans wen; en dus het hy beveel
dat hulle hoegenaamd geen moeite spaar,
maar 'n middel vind om sy lewe te bewaar.

210

Die een het dit gesê, die ander dat,
so is die kwessie goed beredeneer;
op subtiele wyse voer hul die debat;
een wou beswering of toorkrag probeer;
uiteindelik kom dit egter hierop neer:
hul kon geen voordeel vind in enige weg
of uitweg nie, behalwe in die eg.

Vanweë al die argumente wat daar
geopper is, was dit 'n ope vraag:
Bied die geloofsverskil dan geen gevaar
indien hul so 'n verbintenis sou waag?
Hul was oortuig geen Christenvors sou graag

220

sy dogter toelaat om in die eg te tree
onder die wet deur Móhammed gegee.

Die sultan sê: “Ek laat my liefster nou
tot Christen doop om so Constans te kry.
Ek moet haar hê. Uit en gedaan. So hou
nou op met redeneer en help vir my
om haar te wen dat ek aan die lewe bly.
Sy het my in haar mag; ek kan nie meer
die afskuwelike minnepyn hanteer.”

230

Dit is onnodig om nog uit te wei.
Deur middel van verdrag en afgesant
en deur bemiddeling van die Pous daarby,
gesteun deur Kerk en adellike stand,
is daar ooreengekom dat hul die land
sou suiwer van Moesliem-afgodery
om dit aan Christus en Sy wet te wy.

Die sultan en die hoë van die land,
sy onderdane ook, moes hul laat doop:
dit was die prys vir die prinses se hand
en daarby ook nog goud – ’n hele hoop;
ek kan nie sê presies wat dit beloop
het nie, maar dis gewaarborg. Liewe vrou,
mag die Here jou in Sy bewaring hou.

240

Daar’s seker mense wat van my verwag
om op die voorbereidings kommentaar
te lewer wat die keiser in sy mag
getref het vir sy dogter Constans, maar
dit is onmoontlik om in net ’n paar
sinsnedes reg te laat geskied aan al
die druk bedrywighede in so ’n geval.

250

Biskoppe en lede van die adelstand,
beroemde ridders, is aangesê, sowel
as talle gewone burgers van die land,
om Constans op die vaart te vergesel.
Aan al die mense is daar ook bevel
gegee om haar aan Christus op te dra,
Sy seën op haar troue en reis te vra.

Die dag het aangebreek vir haar vertrek,
die droefste onheilsdag van haar bestaan.
Nou help dit niks om die afskeid uit te rek;
almal staan gereed om aan boord te gaan;
met bleek gesig en smartlik aangedaan
het Constans haar vir haar uitvaart voorberei,
want daar’t beslis g’n keuse oorgebly.

260

Dis nouliks te verwonder dan dat sy
geween het, want sy gaan na 'n vreemde land,
weg van haar vriende, aan haar toegewy,
en moet haar onderwerp in die huweliksband 270
aan 'n onbekende. Aan die ander kant,
alle vroue weet, so word beweer,
alle mans is goed. Ek sê niks meer.

'Vader,' sê sy, 'jou dogter Constans wat
jy grootgemaak het teer en toegewy,
en liewe Moeder ook, my grootste skat
benewens Christus wat in die hemel bly:
op die liefde van my ouers werp ek my,
want nou's dit tyd dat ek na Sirië gaan
en nooit hierna sal ek jul gade slaan. 280

Gehoorzaam aan jul wil is dit vir my
beskore om na 'n heidenvolk te gaan.
Mag Christus wat ons deur Sy dood bevry
my daarin sterk dat ek, gehoorzaam aan
Sy wil, selfs tot die dood toe pal sal staan.
Dit is 'n vrou se lot om swaar te kry,
en te lewe onder 'n man se heerskappy.'

Hoe droef die rouklag wat gehoor is met
die val van Troje, toe Pirros deur die muur
gedring en Ilium vernietig het, 290
of in Rome wat dit drie maal moes verduur
dat Hannibal oorwin; in daardie uur
van afskeid was die rouklag erger, maar
ten spyte daarvan moes sy land uit vaar.

O *primum mobile*⁴, buitenste sfeer
wat daagliks die heelal, wat in verband
staan daarmee, kil van oos na wes forseer,
teen die natuurlike gang na die ander kant,
sodat die hemelliggame se stand
onheil voorspel het aan die begin van haar reis 300
en Mars sy wrede slag met die troue sou wys,

Want die Ram se skuins opwaartse gang besoek
die mens met teenspoed, omdat Mars, verdring,
na onder neigend, hopeloos uit sy hoek
die donker Skerpioenhuis binnedring
en bese invloed hier te pas moet bring;
en selfs die Maan kan weinig bystand bied,
deur swak konjunksie is haar mag tot niet.

4 Om die middelpunt van die onbeweeglike aarde kring daar nege sfere. In die eerste sewe is die planeete, Maan, Venus, Mercurius, Son, Mars, Jupiter en Saturnus wat elk sy eie baan volg. Die agste sfeer wat stadig van wes na oos beweeg is die sterreruimte. Die buitenste sfeer is die *primum mobile* of eerste beweging wat in sy daaglikse oos na wes omwenteling alles teennatuurlik saamsleur.

Romeinse keiser, in handeling onwys,
is daar g'n astroloog in die hele land 310
wat die regte dag kon vasstel vir 'n reis?
Maak dit dan geensins saak dat die sterrestand
van hoëlui bepaal kan word aan die hand
van 'n aangetekende geboortetyd?
Dis als onkunde en nalatigheid!

Met prag en praal is die skone maar
bedroefde jongvrou na die boot gelei.
'Vaarwel nou, skone Constans,' groet hul haar;
'Mag Jesus Christus met jul wees,' sê sy. 320
Sy't dapper haar gesig in die plooi gekry.
Hier laat ek haar vir eers nou staan
ten einde met my storie voort te gaan.

Die moeder van die sultan, bron van kwaad,
bewus dat dit haar seun se doel was om
die weg van offerrites te verlaat,
beveel haar raad om bymekaar te kom.
Toe sy sien hul't almal om haar saamgedrom
om te hoor wat sy gaan sê, almal attent,
het sy gaan sit en haar tot hul gewend.

'Menere, dis my seun se bouse set, 330
soos jul teen dié tyd seker almal weet,
hy gaan van ons voorvaderlike wet,
in die Koran geboekstaaf deur die profeet,
afvallig raak. Ek sweer 'n heil'ge eed:
hul kan my van die lewe self beroof,
maar nooit sal ek afstand doen van my geloof.

Wat kan ons van dié nuwe gier verwag
behalwe knegskap, bitter pyn en leed?
En eindelijk sal ons in die hel versmag
omdat ons ontrou was aan Gods profeet. 340
Verbind jul nou, menere, tot 'n eed
om als te doen wat ek van julle vra,
en wees verseker van jul heil hierna.'

Hul't trou aan haar belof, 'n eed gesweer
op lewe en op dood, dat elke man
haar by sou staan en ook sy bes probeer
om vir dié doel met ander saam te span;
en dit was toe die aanvang van 'n plan
wat ek hier sal beskryf. Toe het sy haar
bedoelinge soos volg geopenbaar: 350

'Eers word ons kamma tot die doop bekeer,
want koue water doen ons tog g'n kwaad,
en dan sal ek 'n fees organiseer
om die sultan te vergeld vir sy verraad.
Hoe skoon gewas sy vrou se doop haar laat,

daarna sal 'n vont⁵ se water minder as
genoeg wees om die bloed als weg te was.'

O sultansmoeder, wortel van die kwaad!
Virago jy, Semiramis⁶ die tweede!
O bose slang met vroulike gelaat⁷
soos die gebonde slang in die hel benede;
verraderlike vrou, boosaardighede
word in jou uitgebroei; jy's 'n sondenes
wat al wat deug en onskuld is, verpes.

360

O Satan, nydig sedert jy verjaag
is uit die hemel, jy het goed geweet
jy kon deur middel van 'n vrou daarin slaag
om die mens te skend: Eva is oorreed,
tot ons verderf, om van die vrug te eet.
Nou wil jy 'n einde aan dié huwelik maak
en span jy weer 'n vrou in vir die taak.

370

Die sultansmoeder wat ek hier vervloek,
verdaag toe die vergadering van haar raad.
Waarom die storie uitrek? Eendag besoek
sy haar seun, die sultan, want sy wou glo praat
oor haar besluit om Islam te verlaat,
deur 'n priester gedoop te word. Sy was net spyt
dat sy gesloer het so 'n geruime tyd.

Een guns het sy gevra: dit sou 'n eer
wees om 'n fees te hou, want sy wou graag
die Christene onthaal, het sy beweër;
sy wou haar bes doen om hul te behaag.
Die sultan was so dankbaar, hy het laag
en skoon verstom voor haar gekniel. Toe't sy
vir hom gesoen en na haar huis gery.

380

Deel II

Die Christene het na Sirië gevaar;
daar aangekom, het hul aan wal gegaan,
'n groot en luisterryke skaar.
Die sultan het subiet 'n boodskap aan
sy moeder (en aan elke onderdaan)
gestuur en dringend hul laat weet hul moet
ter wille van sy eer sy bruid kom groet.

390

Die ontmoeting daar het feestelik plaasgevind,
Romeine en Siriërs, 'n groot gedrang.
Die sultansmoeder het bly en goedgesind
vir Constans as haar nuwe dogter ontvang,
soos mens by so 'n geleentheid sou verlang.

5 Doopbak.

6 Koningin van Babilon wat haar seun onttroon het.

7 Die gedaante waarin Satan Eva sou verlei het.

Daarna het almal teen 'n statige pas
na 'n stad gery wat 'n entjie verder was.

Selfs die triomf van Caesar, wat so ryk
deur Lucianus aangeprys word, sou 400
in swier en glorie nouliks vergelyk
met die skare wat byeengebring is nou.
Met al haar gul geglimlag egter hou
die skerpioen haar angel opgehef
om met haar dodelike gif te tref.

Voor lank het ook die sultan opgedaag
in koninklike glorie wonderbaar
en dit was duidelik hoe dit hom behaag 410
om Constans te verwelkom. Ek laat dit daar;
ek noem net kernfeite om tyd te spaar.
Wel, met verloop van tyd was niemand lus
vir meer jolyt en toe het hul gaan rus.

Die dag het aangebreek vir die banket,
alreeds vermeld, wat aangebied is deur
die sultansmoeder. Al die Christene het
daarna gestroom, verwonderd rond gespeur
na die lekkernye daar te kus en keur;
die geld daaraan bestee het hul verstom,
maar dit het hulle duur te staan gekom. 420

Hoe skielik gaan ons aardse vreugde oor
in bitter smart. Verdriet vergal die lewe,
want dit skuil agter alles wat bekoor
en is die eindpunt ook van al ons strewe.
Die beste raad is dat 'n mens, verhewe
bo jou geluk, steeds in gedagte hou:
van agter af word jy deur smart geknou.

Om kort te gaan: die sultan en die skaar
van Christene, behalwe Constans, is
aan tafel doodgesteek en uitmekaar 430
gehak in 'n wrede werk van duisternis;
'n heks en haar trawante was gewis
verantwoordelik vir dié vervloekte daad,
want sy wou self bewind voer oor die staat.

Nie een bekeerling tot die Christendom
of een vertroueling van die sultan het, helaas,
betyds aan daardie slagting kon ontkom.
Hul't Constans vasgevang en inderhaas
in 'n boot wat nie 'n roer het nie geplaas.
Hul het gesê sy moet maar sien klaar 440
hoe sy van Sirië na Italië vaar.

Deel van haar bruidskat het hul haar gegee
en kos en klerie het sy op die boot gevind,
en voort het sy gevaar oor die ope see.
O Constans, liefderyk en goedgesind,
jy is die keiser se geliefde kind:
mag jy bewaar word deur die Here God
wat die bestierder is van die mens se lot.

Sy het die teken van die kruis geslaan
en tot die kruis gebid: 'Heilig en goed
is dié altaar van liefde, oor die mens begaan
en vir ons heil bevlek met die Lam se bloed,
waardeur ons vrygekoop is. O behoed
my teen die duiwel; hou my uit sy bereik
wanneer ek in die diepe see beswyk.

450

O segehout, die hulp van dié wat vra,
wat waardig was om die verwonde Heer
en Hemelheerser se gewig te dra,
die reine Lam wat deurboor is deur 'n speer:
u kan die mens teen bouse magte weer
as u geseënde arms oor hul spreid;
help my om rein te leef; beskerm my.'

460

Die Middellandse See het sy toe jaar na jaar
rigtingloos deurkruis, en later het sy
die Marokkaanse kus verby gevaar;
voortdurend moes sy hongerpyne ly,
haar op die uitkoms van die dood berei,
voor die stormsee oplaas haar boot laat strand
op die plek waar sy bestem was om te land.

As een sou vra: 'Maar waarom's sy gespaar
toe almal doodgemaak is by die fees?
Waarom het sy oorleef, en wie was daar
om haar te red?' dan sou my antwoord lees:
'Wie was by Daniël in die kuil gewees,
daar waar sy metgeselle iedereen
deur lees verslind is? Net die Heer alleen.

470

Dit het vir Hom behaag dat Constans dien
as toonbeeld van die daad van Sy hand
waardeur ons Sy groot wondermag kan sien.
Christus gebruik die mens as afgesant
om Sy doel te bereik; ons nietige verstand
kan egter nie die duisternis deurdring
van Sy alwyse voorverordening.

480

Sy is nie doodgemaak by die banket,
maar wie het haar bewaar teen dood ter see?
Wie't Jona uit die vis se maag gered
dat hy uitgespoeg kon word in Nineve?
Dieselfde Heer't Sy volk uitkoms gegee

deur hulle teen die Rooi See te behoed;
hul het daardeur getrek met droë voet. 490

Wie het die geeste van die storm bestraf
toe hulle oor die land en see wou woed
van die noorde, suide, weste, ooste af?
Wie het die land en see en boom behoed?
Net Hy alleen wat mag het oor die vloed
kon haar bedags en snags teen die gevaar
van branders se onstuimigheid bewaar.

Hoe het haar voedselvoorraad nooit gekwyn?
Na meer as drie jaar was daar proviand.
Maria van die Egiptiese woestyn⁸ 500
is in die grot gevoed deur die Heer se hand,
'n wonder, net soos aan die waterkant
toe vyf klein vissies en twee brode moes dien
om vir vyfduisend voedsel te voorsien.

So het sy voortgedryf op die oseaan
totdat haar boot uiteindelik gestrand
het onder 'n slot – die naam het my ontgaan –
ver in die noorde van Northumberland.
Dit het daar vasgeval in die vogtige sand,
onwankelbaar, die duur van 'n hooggety, 510
want dit was God se wil dat sy daar bly.

Die slotvoog⁹ het hom na die strand gehaas
ten einde ondersoek daar in te stel
na die stranding van die boot. Die vrou, verdwaas
van swaarkry, het hy daar gevind, sowel
as al die skatte wat haar vergesel.
Sy het gevra dat hy haar dood moes maak,
dan sou al haar ellende eindelijk staak.

Sy het haar van 'n soort Latyn bedien,
maar hulle kon haar nietemin verstaan. 520
Die slotvoog het rondgekyk, genoeg gesien,
die arme vrou gehelp om aan wal te gaan.
Sy't op haar knieë neergesak en aan
die Here dank gebring; maar sy't beslis
geweier om iets te sê van wie sy is.

Sy het beweer sy is so deurmekaar
gemaak deur die see, sy's haar geheue kwyt.
Die slotvoog en sy vrou was jammer vir haar
en het geween uit mededeelsaamheid,
en sy was vlytig en so diensbereid 530
dat almal wat haar aangesig aanskou het
ook sommer dadelik van haar gehou het.

8 'n Heilige uit die vyfde eeu wat, na 'n sondige jeug, 47 jaar in die woestyn deurgebring het.
9 Kastelein; persoon wat vir die beheer van 'n slot (of kasteel) verantwoordelik is.

Die slotvoog asook Hermengild, sy vrou,
was heidene, soos almal in dié kontrei;
van Constans het sy al hoe meer gehou;
so't Constans baie jare daar gebly
en haar aan trane en gebed gewy
tot sy, deur die genade van die Heer,
vir Hermengild tot Christen kon bekeer.

G'n Christene sou dit gewaag het om
in daardie dele hul geloof in stand
te hou te midde van die heidendom
deur hul heersers ingevoer; swaar was die hand
van die veroweraar op hulle land
en Christen-Kelte, oerbevolking van
Brittanje, is na Wallis uitgeban.

540

Tog het daar enkele Christene oorgebly;
in die geheim het hul gebuig voor God;
hul heersers het geen snuf daarvan gekry.
Drie Christene het naby aan die slot
gewoon; al was dit een van hul se lot
om blind te wees, sonder gesigsvermoë,
tog kon hy goed sien met sy geestesoë.

550

Een helder somerdag het Constans met
die slotvoog en sy vrou na die see gepyl
waar hul as tydverdryf en vir die pret
'n entjie wou gaan stap, miskien 'n myl
of twee en dan weer terugkeer, maar terwyl
hul so op pad was, het hul op dié krom
geboë, blinde bejaarde afgekom.

560

'In die naam van Christus,' roep die blinde Kelt,
'vrou Hermengild, u moet vir my genees!
Toe sy dit hoor, was die dame erg ontsteld,
want sy't gedink haar man sou toornig wees
en haar dalk doodmaak oor sy Christus vrees,
tot Constans haar bemoedig om die werk
van die Heer te doen, as dogter van Sy Kerk.

Die slotvoog was totaal verbouereer
oor wat hy sien. 'Wat gaan hier aan?' roep hy.
'Dit is die Heer se mag,' was haar verweer,
'wat ons van die duiwel en sy mag bevry,'
en treffend het sy haar geloof bely,
sodat die slotvoog voor sonsondergang
oortuig is om dié leer ook aan te hang.

570

Hoewel hy self nie heer van die landstreek was
waar Constans aangetref is op die strand,
het hy dit jare lank bestuur op las
van Aella, koning van Northumberland,
'n wyse vors wat met 'n harde hand

die Skotte teengehou het. Laat ek weer
tog tot die kern van my storie keer. 580

Die duiwel lê op wag om ons te vang:
hy't Constans se volkomenheid gewaar
en was begerig na haar ondergang;
hy het dit dus geplooi dat 'n ridder daar
so smoorverlief raak, so belus op haar,
dat hy dag hy sou die lewe laat as hy
nie daarin slaag om sy sin met haar te kry.

Hy't haar die hof gemaak, maar dit het hom
geensins gebaat: sy laat haar nie verlei,
en dus het hy tot die besluit gekom, 590
hy gaan 'n skanddood vir haar voorberei.
Hy't gewag tot die slotvoog weg is, toe het hy
een donker nag tot in die huis gekruip,
na Hermengild se kamer toe gesluip.

Vermoeid van waak en bid kon Hermengild
en Constans ook nie langer wakker bly.
Deur Satan aangespoor, woes en verwild
gaan die jongman na haar bed en daar het hy
met een veeg Hermengild se keel gesny; 600
die bebloede mes het hy gevat en dit
so in die vlug langs Constans neergesit.

Toe die slotvoog voor lank tuiskom, vergesel
van Aella, koning van die land, vind hy
die liggaam van sy vrou daar, wreed gevel.
Sy hande't hy gewring en hard geskrei;
en daar lê toe die bebloede mes aan die sy
van die arme Constans. Wat kon sy sê, helaas,
want as gevolg van smart was sy verdwaas.

Vors Aella het van dié rampsaligheid 610
verneem en hoedat Constans in 'n skip
op die strand gevind is, die wyse, plek en tyd,
soos reeds in my vertelling aangestip.
Van medelye het sy hart gewip
toe hy die ellende en verdriet aanskou
verduur deur so 'n goeie, sagte vrou.

Soos 'n lam gelei ter slagting het sy daar
onskuldig voor die koningstroon gestaan;
intussen kla die ware moordenaar,
die valse ridder, haar van die misdaad aan, 620
maar almal was die mening toegedaan:
sy's 'n goeie vrou, eenvoudig nie in staat
tot so 'n lae, skandelijke daad.

Die mense daar teenwoordig het beaam,
sy't Hermengild so innig liefgehad dat sy
kwytgessel moes word van alle blaam.
Almal het saamgestem, behalwe hy
wat eintlik skuldig was. Die koning kry
toe snuf in die neus en neem hom voor dit was
gerade om dieper in die saak te tas.

630

Wee, Constans, jy het hier geen kampioen¹⁰
en jy kan self nie toetree tot die stryd;
net Hy, gekruisig om ons te versoen,
wat Satan gebind het – en van daardie tyd
is hy nog steeds gebonde – net Hy's bereid
om jou te help, en sonder Hom word jy,
hoewel onskuldig, tot die dood gelei.

Sy het gekniel en so gebid: 'O Heer
en ewige God, beskermer van Susanna¹¹
teen 'n valse klag, en u ook, rein en teer,
Maria, dogter van die Heilige Anna,
voor U kind sing die engele Hosanna,
as ek onskuldig is, wil u dan my
kampvegter wees, maar so nie, laat my ly.'

640

Wie het nog nooit gesien die bleek gesig
van een wat geen genade kon verkry
en uitgelei word na die strafgerig,
hoedat, te midde van 'n groot gedrang,
sy asvaal kleur hom onderskei, so bang
sy nood, so onontkombaar sy gevaar?
So't Constans doodsbleek om haar heen gestaar.

650

O koninginne wat in welvaart lewe,
prinsesse, dames in die algemeen,
bejammer haar waar sy verlate bewe.
Die dogter van die keiser staan alleen;
by niemand kan sy haar wrede lot beween,
haar koninklike bloed in doodsgevaar.
As mens vriende nodig het, is hul nie daar.

Vors Aella is vervul met mededoë –
want edel harte neig tot jammerkry –
sodat die trane neerloop uit sy oë.
'Gaan haal vir ons 'n Bybel. Gou,' sê hy,
'en as dié ridder 'n eed sal sweer dis sy
wat die moord gepleeg het, sal ek aandag gee
aan die vraag van wie as regter op moet tree.'

660

10 'n Kampioen of kampvegter het as plaasvervanger vir 'n beskuldigde die stryd aangepak.

11 'n Kuise vrou wat volgens die apokriewe toevoeging tot Daniël deur God se hand van valse beskuldiging gered is.

'n Evangelieboek in Kelties is
gebring en daarop het hy toe gesweer
sy's skuldig aan die daad; sy getuienis
was nouliks koud of skielik tref die Heer
se hand sy nekbeen en hy val daar neer
soos 'n klip, dat sy oë uit hul kasse spring
ten aanskoue van die hele vergadering.

670

En almal hoor 'n stem dié oordeel vel:
'In die koning se teenwoordigheid het jy
'n dogter van die Kerk gehoon hoewel
sy onskuldig is. Moet Ek afsydig bly?'
En toe het almal daar, behalwe sy,
verstom gestaan: dié wonderwerk het hul
so met die vrees vir God se wraak gevul.

Groot was die angs en groot ook die berou
onder diegene wat gedink het dat
daar blaam gerus het op die goeie vrou;
die wonderwerk asook die inspraak wat
sy vir die volk gedoen het, het die pad
berei vir die koning en nog baie meer
om hulle tot die Here te bekeer.

680

Die ridder is summier tereggestel
op las van koning Aella vir verraad;
net Constans het haar oor sy dood gekwel;
en toe het Jesus vol genade toegelaat
dat Aella Constans neem tot huweliksmaat:
hy het dié skone, liewe vrou bemin
en God het haar gemaak tot koningin.

690

Die huwelik het, om die waarheid te vertel,
geensins in Donegild se smaak geval:
die koningsmoeder, tirannie en fel,
was so gekant daarteen, sy dag dit sal
haar bouse hart nog breek, en dan veral
omdat sy dit as skandelik beskou
dat hy met so 'n vreemde wese trou.

700

Ek wil nie langer aan die strooi en kaf
van my verhaal bestee as aan die koring;
dus waarom sou ek inligting verskaf
oor die plegtigheid en die disse se bekoring,
wie't die trompet geblaas en wie die horing?
Die somtotaal van wat 'n mens wil weet:
hul dans en sing en speel en drink en eet.

Toe't hul gaan lê; dis immers goed en waar
dat 'n vrou, al is sy ook 'n heil'ge ding,
maar alles snags gelate moet aanvaar
wat daar gedoen word ter bevrediging
van hom wat haar getrou het met 'n ring.

710

Daar is g'n ander uitweg, dus sit sy
haar heiligheid voorlopig maar opsy.

Hy het voor lank 'n kind by haar verwek,
maar moes haar in die sorg van 'n biskop gee
en van sy slotvoog, want hy moes vertrek
na Skotland om teen vyande op te tree.
Die skone Constans, nederig en gedweë,
hoogswanger, het haar in haar kamer stil
onttrek in afwagting van God se wil.

720

Weldra het sy 'n seun gebaar en hom
by die doop die naam Mauritius gegee.
Die slotvoog het 'n boodskapper laat kom;
hy wou met Aella in verbinding tree
om hom per brief die jongste nuus te gee
oor die geboorte, asook oor die gang
van ander sake in die landsbelang.

Dié vent, wat na sy eie voordeel mik,
het na die koningsmoeder toe gery;
hy't haar gegroet en ewe vriendelik
gesê: 'Mevrou, ek's seker u is bly,
in dankbaarheid aan die Here toegewy;
ons koningin het 'n seun en almal hier
deel ongetwyfeld in haar groot plesier.

730

Kyk, hier is 'n verseëelde brief waarmee
ek haastig na die koning toe moet ry;
ek kan hom altyd nóg 'n boodskap gee,
indien u een wil toevertrou aan my.'
'Voorlopig nee,' sê Donegild, 'maar bly
hier oor om uit te rus. Ek sal beslis
môre bekendmaak wat my wense is.'

740

Hy't diep gedrink van beide aal en wyn;
toe is die brief verwyder uit sy kis
terwyl hy lê en snork het soos 'n swyn
en dis meteens vervang met kuns en lis
met een wat kamma van die slotvoog is
wat die bode aan die koning moes bestel
om hom van die geboorte te vertel.

En daarin staan daar dat die koningin
beval is van 'n vreeslike kreatuur,
van voorkoms so afkuwelijk dat g'n
bewoner van die slot dit kon verduur;
die moeder se elfagtige natuur
was die gevolg van bose towerny
en daarom dan het almal haar vermy.

750

Toe hy dit lees, was die koning diep gegrief,
maar hy het niks laat merk van al sy leed.
Hy't self geskryf in antwoord op die brief:
'Noudat ek van Sy Evangelie weet,
sal ek wat Christus stuur, steeds welkom heet;
ek onderwerp my aan die Here God:
wat Hom behaag, aanvaar ek as my lot.

760

Sorg vir die kind, of dit mooi of lelik is,
en vir my vrou, totdat ek huis toe keer,
en as dit God se wil is, gee Hy gewis
vir my 'n erfgenaam wat vir my meer
vreugde besorg.' Maar, ongeag die seer,
oorhandig hy die brief aan die bode wat
dit onverwyld na die slotvoog toe sou vat.

770

O bose boodskapper, jou asem stink,
jou sinne is konfoes. Jou windlawaaie
met suur gesig, wat strompel hink-en-pink,
jy raas en gaan te kere soos 'n gaai¹²
en wat jy dig moet hou, dit word verrai.
As dronkenskap die mode is, bly daar
min hoop oor van vertroulikheid bewaar.

O Donegild, ek het nie die gawe om
jou wreedheid te beskrywe en jou kwaad;
ek gee jou aan die Satan oor: laat hóm
gepaste woorde vind vir jou verraad.
Jy's so onvroulik – nee, jy's inderdaad
so duiwels van geaardheid – jy's nou wel
op aarde, maar jou gees is in die hel.

780

Die bode ry van die koning af en by
die koningsmoeder maak hy weer 'n draai;
oor die herontmoeting was sy baie bly.
Met drank in oorfloed het sy hom gepaai,
met kos in oormaat is sy maag belaaie;
hy't snorkend vas geslaap die heelnag deur
totdat die sonsopgang sy slaap versteur.

790

Sy brief is daardie nag weereens gesteel
en met 'n vervalste brief is dit vervang
waarin daar staan: 'Die slotvoog word beveel
om op te tree soos sy vors van hom verlang
en as hy ongehoorsaam is, word hy gehang.
Hy mag nie Constans in die land laat bly
vir meer as drie dae en 'n kwartgety.

Sit haar in die boot waarmee sy vroeër ons strand
bereik het met haar kind en al haar goed
en stoot dit met geweld weg van die land.

800

¹² 'n Lawaaierige voël.

Laat haar verstaan sy mag hierna g'n voet
op ons bodem sit.' Geen wonder die gemoed
van Constans was verontrus, want Donegild
voer bese planne teen haar in die skild.

Toe die bode in die oggend wakker skrik,
het hy kortpad na die slot gekies waar hy
die brief aan die slotvoog gee. Herhaaldelik
het dié 'Helaas, helaas! O wee!' geskrei
toe hy die inhoud onder oë kry.
'Hoe kan 'n wêreld voortbestaan waarin
die mensdom soveel sondigheid besin?

810

Almagtige God, wat so regverdig is,
hoe kan die mens dit aan U wil gaan wyt
dat straf besoek word aan onskuldiges
terwyl die bese steeds welvarendheid
ten deel val? Constans, ek is tot my spyt
deur plig verbonde tot die beul se taak,
of ek word self in skande doodgemaak.'

Toe't oud en jonk geween toe hul berig
ontvang het van wat hulle vors begeer.
Die vierde dag – doodsbleek was haar gesig –
het sy haar skrede tot die boot gekeer,
want by die Heer se wil lê sy haar neer.
Daar op die strand het sy gebid: 'O God,
wat U my stuur, aanvaar ek as my lot.

820

Die een wat my beskerm het teen blaam
toe ek in julle midde was op land
sal my steeds help; Hy sal my nooit beskaam;
ook op die oop see is Hy byderhand,
want Hy doen altyddeur Sy woord gestand.
Op Christus en Sy Moeder trek ek peil:
hul is vir my tot roer en ook tot seil.'

830

Haar seuntjie in haar arms lê en snik.
'Toemaar, my kleinding,' sê sy, 'ek sal jou
mos nooit laat seerkry nie.' So liefderik
het sy hom in omhelsing vasgehou;
en toe neem sy haar kopdoek af en vou
dit oor sy ogies, en met oë na Bo
wieg sy hom in haar arms, sus hom so.

840

'Ag Moedermaagd,' bid sy, 'dis welbekend
dat die verderf gekom het deur 'n vrou;
dus is die liggaam van u Seun geskend
toe Hy gekruisig is; u't self aanskou
hoedat die bitter pyn Sy hart benou,
en ek verstaan dat die lyding van my hart
nie vergelykbaar is met al u smart.

Hul het u Seun gekruisig voor u oë;
my kindjie leef nog: daar's die onderskeid.
O skone Vrou, ek smeeek om mededoë.
U is ons toevlugsoord, tot hulp bereid,
o helder môrester, die roem van vroulikheid:
ontferm u oor my kindjie in genade,
bron van ontferming vir die noodbelade.

850

Hoe het dié kind sy pa geaffronteer –
van sondedade is hy immers vry –
dat dié wreedaardig nou sy dood begeer?
Ag, liewe slotvoog, wees tog goed vir my
en laat dit toe dat die bloedjie agterbly;
as u uit vrees vir blaam dit nie wil doen,
gee hom, om sy vader se ontwil, 'n soen.'

860

Sy kyk 'n laaste maal terug na die land
en sê, 'Vaarwel, my wrede eggenoot.'
Toe staan sy op en loop al langs die strand,
gevolg deur baie mense, na die boot,
haar kindjie heeltyd aaiend in sy nood.
Sy neem haar afskeid deur 'n kruis te slaan
en vroom van hart het sy aan boord gegaan.

Die boot was goed voorsien van proviand,
ander benodigdhede en so meer,
voldoende daarvan om haar lank in stand
te hou, danksy die voorsorg van die Heer.
Mag God Almagtig sorg vir wind en weer
wanneer sy oor die see se golwe vaar
en, tot sy veilig tuis kom, steeds bewaar.

870

Deel III

Voor lank het Aella hom weereens bevind
terug in sy eie huis, met als vertrouwd.
Onmiddellik vra hy, 'Waar's my vrou en kind?'
Die slotvoog het gevoel sy hart word koud
en hy vertel toe sonder voorbehoud
wat daar gebeur het; ter bevestiging
kon hy die koning se bevelbrief bring.

880

Hy sê: 'Soos u op straf van dood vir my
beveel het, so't ek opgetree, my heer.'
Die bode is gemartel totdat hy
alles beken het en ook sonder meer
vertel het waar hy in die heen en weer
die nagte deurgebring het; dus deur hom
te ondervra, kon hul baie agterkom.

Die handskrif in die brief is uitgeken –
o die venyn van die vervloekte daad –
en toe die koning weet wie't dit gepen,

890

het hy sy moeder, oorsprong van die kwaad,
tereggestel vanweë haar verraad.
Dit was die einde van 'n slegte ou vrou
en niemand in die land het dit berou.

Die sorge egter oor sy vrou en kind
het dag en nag Aella se siel verteer –
hoe kan ek ooit die woorde daarvoor vind?
Maar nou moet ek weereens na Constans keer: 900
in nood en smart het sy vyf jaar en meer
op die oop see rondgedryf voordat die Vader
dit haar gegun het om 'n strand te nader.

Uiteindelik is Constans en haar kind
toe uitgespoel naby 'n ander slot –
die naam is nêrens in my bron te vind.
Verlosser van die mensdom, Here God,
slaan ag op Constans en haar kind se lot:
sy is nou weereens onder heidene en daar,
soos dit sal blyk, is sy in groot gevaar. 910

'n Magdom mense het van die slot gekom
om Constans en die boot ook aan te staar;
en een aand het die slot se hofheer hom
aan haar opgedring. Hy was 'n swendelaar
en 'n renegaat daarby. Nou wou hy haar,
so hou hy vol, as sy beminde hê;
sy moenie dink sy't iets daarop te sê.

Deur dié brutale vent is sy ontstel –
haar kindjie huil en sy huil met hom mee –
maar spoedig het die Maagd te hulp gesnel: 920
'n aanval het 'n worsteling afgegee,
maar skielik val die skobbejak in die see
waar hy verdrink het. So't die Here haar,
Sy troue dogter, onbevlek bewaar.

So gaan dit met onkuisheid: op die end
veroorzaak dit verswakking van die gees,
maar ook die liggaam word daardeur geskend.
Verdriet sal altyd die uiteinde wees
van wellus en die drange van die vlees;
nie net die sondedaad verrinneweer 930
maar die begeerte wat dit stimuleer.

Waar het die swakke vrou die krag gekry
om dié geloofsversaker teen te gaan?
Wel, kyk na Goliat, hoe 'n reus was hy,
maar Dawid het, van wapentuig ontdaan,
die moed gehad om teen hom op te staan
en kalm op te kyk in sy gesig:
hy kon dit slegs in God se mag verrig.

Wie't Judit¹³ ook die krag en moed gegee
om Holofernes in sy tent te dood 940
en so Gods volk te red uit hulle wee?
Ek sê dit om te wys dat in Sy groot
genade God, ter leniging van nood,
kragdadigheid van gees aan mens verleen;
so het Hy Constans ook daarmee geseën.

Die boot het voortgedrywe eindeloos;
die seestraat van Gibraltar vaar dit deur;
soms gaan dit noord, soms suid of oos
of wes, deur die getye meegesleur;
en dag ná moeë dag het sy getreur 950
totdat Christus Moeder, ewig gebenedyd,¹⁴
'n end maak het aan haar swarigheid.

Nou laat ek Constans eers 'n ruk met rus;
oor die Romeinse keiser wil ek praat.
Deur 'n brief uit Sirië het hy bewus
geword van die bloedbad en van al die smaad
sy dogter aangedoen deur die verraad
van die vervloekte sultansmoeder wat
'n diepe wrok teen Christenmense had.

Die keiser het dus sy senator met 960
groot prag en praal asook 'n hele stoet
gesante afgevaardig. Hulle het
daar dae aaneen die Siriërs met bloed
wat vloei en brande wat verwoes laat boet.
Dit was die wraak verorden deur hul heer
en toe het hul na Rome teruggekeer.

Hul't luisterryk na Rome toe gevaar,
met die glorie van oorwinnaars in die stryd;
en toe meteens het hul 'n boot gewaar: 970
aan boord was Constans in verlatenheid.
Hy't niks geweet van haar identiteit
of waarom sy so lyk, en niks kon haar
beweeg om iets daarvan te openbaar.

Hy bring haar toe na Rome waar hy haar
en ook haar seun aan sy gade toevertrou,
en van dié dag af lewe sy toe daar.
Op hierdie wyse red ons Liewe Vrou
vir haar (en vele meer) uit smart en rou.
Sy't jare lank in daardie plek gebly
en haar aan goeie werke toegewy. 980

Hoewel dié hoë dame inderdaad
Constans se tante was, kon sy haar nou
glad nie herken; dit egter daar gelaat,

13 Die verhaal kom in die apokriewe boek Judit voor.

14 Geseënd.

keer ek na Aella terug wat steeds in rou
gedompel was vir sy verlore vrou.
Met Constans sal dit goed gaan, kan ek borg,
in die senator se bekwame sorg.

Nou koning Aella, moedermoordenaar,
het op 'n dag so kwaai berou gekry
dat hy na Rome toe gereis het waar
hy hom in boetedoening neergelê het by
die Pous se wil vir hom, en so het hy
die Heer gesmeek om sy gewetenslas
te lenig en sy sonde weg te was.

990

Deur dienaars wat verblyf moes reël vir hom
het die berig in Rome gou versprei
dat Aella as 'n pelgrim daarheen kom.
Die senator het hom tegemoet gery
met baie bloedverwante aan sy sy:
die doel daarvan was om 'n vors te eer,
maar ook om die eie ek te adverteer.

1000

Met hoflikheid het hierdie edele heer
en koning Aella vir mekaar onthaal,
want elkeen het die ander hoog geëer;
en so het die senator na die saal
van die koning toe gegaan waar daar 'n maal
vir hom voorberei is, en, soos ek verstaan,
het die seun van Constans met hom saamgegaan.

Party meen Constans het versoek dat hy
die kind moes saamneem; of dit wel so was,
kan ek nie sê; maar hoe dit ook al sy,
die kernfeite van die saak staan vas:
die kind was daar en dit het haar gepas;
sy was begerig dat hy daar moes wees,
die vors in die gesig kyk by die fees.

1010

Die koning was verwonderd oor die kind
en vra, 'Maar wie se mooi seun is dit dan?'
aan die senator om meer uit te vind.
Dié antwoord hom: 'By God en by Sint Jan,
hy het 'n ma, maar wie sy pa is, kan
ek u nie sê nie,' en hy deel hom mee
hoe die moeder aangetref is op die see.

1020

'Die Here weet,' sê hy, 'ek het gewis
nog nooit van so 'n vrome vrou gehoor,
getroud of ongetroud, as wat sy is,
onder al die vroue die wêreld oor;
sy sou verkies om deur 'n mes deurboor
te word as sy so sonde kan vermy,
en daar's g'n man wat haar sover sal kry.'

Die ooreenkoms tussen Constans en die kind
was baie groot, so groot as maar kan wees,
en Aella het gedurig ondervind
die beeld van Constans staan hom voor die gees;
deur die ingewing – tussen hoop en vrees –
dat die moeder dalk sy vrou is aangedaan,
het hy haastig van die tafel opgestaan.

1030

‘My verbeelding raak op hol,’ het hy gedink.
‘Aan die eise van die redelikheid gemeet,
moet ek aanvaar sy’t jare terug verdrink,’
maar ’n rukkie later kry die idee hom beet:
‘Miskien het Christus haar – hoe kan ek weet? –
op dieselfde wyse aan my teruggegee
as wat sy vroeër gekom het oor die see.’

1040

Dié agtermiddag het die koning hom
met die senator na sy huis gehaas
om te sien wat van die wonderwerk kon kom.
Die koning is verwelkom; hy neem plaas
en Constans word geroep. Sy was verbaas
en het beslis nie aan die dans gegaan,
want sy kon nouliks op haar voete staan.

1050

Hy sien haar voor hom staan; hy’t haar gegroet
met hofflikheid; toe gaan hy aan ’t skrei:
die eerste oogopslag toe hul ontmoet,
was reeds genoeg; hy wis vervas dis sy.
Strak soos ’n boom het sy van die smart gebly;
haar hart was bot, want sy kon al die leed
wat hy haar aangedoen het nie vergeet.

Sy’t tweemaal flou geval; intussen het
haar man geweene en haar probeer oorreed:
‘Mag God en al Sy Heiliges my red:
ek’s ewe min verantwoordelik vir jou leed
as wat Mauritius is. Hy lyk kompleet
nes jy, dié seun van my, op kleiner skaal;
en as ek lieg, mag die duiwel my kom haal.’

1060

Hul’t lank gehuil en bitter pyn gely
voordat gemoedsrus eindelijk in kon tree,
maar mens moes hul vir hul klagtes jammer kry:
dit bring vermeerdering van sorges mee.
Verskoon my as ek geen beskrywing gee
van al hul lyding nie, want vir my part
het ek alreeds genoeg gesê van smart.

1070

Met Constans eindelijk daarvan bewus
dat Aella nie die bron was van haar pyn
het hul mekaar ’n honderd maal gekus
in die groot vreugde van hul samesyn;
benewens wat hiernamaals sal verskyn,

is soveel saligheid geen mens beskore
wat op die aarde is of was tevore.

Deemoedig was haar bede: sy begeer
dat hy, ter leniging van al haar leed,
haar vader moes versoek om hom die eer
te doen om eendag by hom te kom eet.
Van een ding verder het sy hom oorreed:
hy moes in geen geval aangaande haar
enigiets aan haar vader openbaar.

1080

Party beweer die kind Mauritius
het die boodskap na die keiser toe gebring,
maar Aella was tog baie goed bewus
hoe die Christendom met groot bewondering
die keiser eer; 'n kind was te gering,
en hy sou reken dit was meer gepas
as hy self gaan; en dis dan hoe dit was.

1090

Die keiser het hom dit laat welgeval
om die ete by te woon, soos hy begeer,
maar, na my mening, het sy oë pal
na die kind gedwaal en sy gedagtes weer
na die beelt'nis van sy dogter terug laat keer.
Aella is na sy woonplek terug en daar
maak hy toe alles vir die ete klaar.

Die oggend kom en Aella staan bereid
om met sy vrou die keiser te gaan groet
deur uit te ry met vreugde en jolyt.
Toe sy haar vader langs die pad ontmoet,
toe styg sy af en val daar aan sy voet.
'Vader,' sê sy, 'hoewel ek Constans heet,
wil dit my voorkom u het my vergeet.

1100

Ek is u dogter, Constans,' sê sy hom,
na Sirië weggestuur, en ek het daar
ternouernood 'n wrede lot ontkom;
ek is gedwing om oor die see te vaar
en moes alleen die dood in die oë staar:
stuur my dus nooit weer onder heidenmense,
maar loon my man hier met u goeie wense.'

1110

Die bewoë vreugde kan geen mens verwoord
wat van dié drie by hul ontmoeting straal.
Maar kyk, die dag loop aan en ek behoort
'n einde nou te maak aan my verhaal.
Ek laat hul waar hul aansit vir hul maal
in vrede en duisendvuldig meer verruk
as wat ek ooit in woorde uit kan druk.

1120

Die kind Mauritius is mettertyd
deur die Pous tot keiser van die ryk gekroon,
wat hy regeer het met godvrugtigheid
en aan die Kerk het hy steeds eer betoon,
maar dit tersy: dit sou die moeite loon
om die geskiedenisboeke na te slaan
waar sy prestasies opgeteken staan.

Later van tyd het koning Aella met
die vrome Constans reguit Engeland
toe teruggegaan. In rus en vrede het
hul daar gewoon, maar nie vir lank nie, want
ons aardse vreugde bly geensins in stand:
dit het sy korte dag, dan's dit verby,
so wispelturig soos 'n seegety.

1130

Wie leef 'n enkele dag lank in geluk
onaangeraak deur bitter spyt oor kwaad
of woede of begeerte of bange druk
of nyd of trots of driftigheid of smaad?
Ek sê dit, want ek wil g'n twyfel laat
dat Aella in geluk met Constans net
'n kort ou tydjie saamgelewe het.

1140

Die Dood, wat hoog en laag sy vrugte pluk,
het toe 'n jaar verby is, na ek meen,
vir Aella uit die lewe weggeruk.
In rou het Constans bitterlik geweën.
Nou, mag die Heer sy siel bewaar en seën!
Met Aella in sy graf het Constans weer
uiteindelik na Rome teruggekeer.

Toe sy in Rome kom, toe vind sy daar
haar vriende is gesond en welgemoed.
Haar lotgevalle was nou almal klaar;
en toe sy haar ou vader weer ontmoet,
val sy daar op haar knieë aan sy voet;
met tere trane dog 'n blye klank
het sy God 'n honderdduisend maal gedank.

1150

Hul lewens was aan naastediens gewy
en hulle was voortdurend by mekaar
tot daardie oomblik toe die Dood hul skei.
Uit en gedaan; my storie's klaar.
Mag God, wat vreugde bring na al die swaar,
ons almal wat hier saam op reis is, seën
en in genade steeds Sy hulp verleen. Amen.

1160

[Epiloog by die Regsgeleerde se verhaal¹⁵

Toe kom ons Waard in sy stiebeuels orent
en sê: “Nou, mense, dit was pertinent
en daarbenewens stigtelik, gehoor.
Nou’s dit jou beurt, meneer die Dorpspastoor,
om jou belofte na te kom, gedorie,
en ons aandag af te lei met ’n goeie storie.
Ek weet goed jul geleerdes sal prakseer
om dit te doen, by die beend’re van ons Heer,
so, by Gods waardigheid,” sê hy, “onthaal ons dan.”

1170

Die Dorpspastoor sê: “Wat makeer dié man
dat hy so aanhou om te vloek en raas?”

“Hiert, paap!”¹⁶ antwoord die Waard. “Dis my spesmaas
daar’s ’n reukie van ’n Lollard¹⁷ in die lug.
Nee mense,” sê ons Waard, “ek is bedug
dié vent sal netnou wegval met ’n preek;
dis waarop dié Lollard hier hom voorberei.”

“Nee, by my pa se siel,” antwoord die Skipper, “hy
sal hier g’n preke afsteek en ook nie
met teksverklaring kom of homilie.”¹⁸

1180

Ons glo tog almal in dieselfde Heer,
maar nou wil hy vir ons verbouereer
en onkruid tussen ons goeie koring saai;
en daarom, Waard, wil ek nou vir jou raai
om my maar liewers aan die woord te stel.
Met my verhaal, so vrolik soos ’n bel,
sal ek sorg dat niemand van sy perd af val;
die fisika en regsgeleerdheid sal
ek eenkant laat, asook filosofie:
Latyn het ek maar kwalik onder die knie.”]

1190

15 Hierdie ‘skakel’ kom in dertig handskrifte voor, maar in verskillende posisies. Dit is wel ’n epiloog by die vorige verhaal, maar sluit nie by die volgende vertelling aan nie.

16 ’n Minagtende woord vir ’n priester.

17 Lid van ’n Middeleeuse lekebroederskap, volgeling van Wyclif, wat deur die kerkowerhede as kettters beskou is.

18 Uitlegging van ’n teksvers in ’n preek.

Fragment III

Proloog tot die Vrou van Bath se verhaal

Al was daar g'n geskrif wat dit beaam,
sou ek uit eie ondervinding saam
kon praat oor die getroude lewe met
sy swaarkry, want van ek twaalf jaar oud¹ was, het
ek danksy God, wat nou en ewig lewe,
my vyf maal in die huwelik begewe –
as dit geoorloof is om vyf te vat –
met mans wat goeie hoedanighede had.

Onlangs het iemand teenoor my beweerd
dat Christus, wat maar net 'n enkele keer 10

'n bruilofsfees in Kana bygewoon het,
sodoende, deur sy voorbeeld, aangetoon het
dat ek slegs een maal in die eg mag tree;
en mens moet met die felle woord waarmee
die Godmens die Samaritaanse vrou
by die put berispe het, ook rekening hou:
'Jy het vyf mans gehad en woon nou saam
met ene wat jou man is net in naam.'

Ek weet Hy het dié dag so iets gesê,
maar dis heel moeilik om dit uit te lê. 20

Ek vra my af waarom die vyfde dan
nie ook erkenning toekom as haar man:
watter getal sou dan toelaatbaar wees?
In al my dae het ek nog nooit gelees
van enige besondere limiet.

Deskundiges kan teksverklarings bied,
maar een ding weet ek seker: die gebod
wat sê ons moet vermeerder, kom van God –
dís nou 'n teksvers wat ek goed verstaan; 30

en verder weet ek Hy't my man gemaak
hy moet sy ouers los om my te hê,
maar van getalle het Hy niks gesê,
van bigamie² of van oktogamie,
so mense moenie daarvan kwaadpraat nie.

Wat van die wyse koning Salomo?

Hy het hom nie beperk nie, kan jy glo.

Ek wens ek het die kans gehad om my
ook te verfris, net half so veel soos hy.

Hy is begunstig met 'n gawe wat
g'n ander wese op dees aarde had. 40

Ek waarborg hierdie edele koning het
met elkeen van sy vroue hope pret
die eerste nag en ook daarna bedryf.
Ek is die Here dankbaar vir my vyf

1 Die kerkreg het bepaal dat 'n meisie op twaalf houbaar was, 'n seun op vyftien.

2 In die Middeleeue is die woord op 'n tweede huwelik (na die afsterwe van die oorspronklike eggenoot)
toegepas; oktogamie is die Vrou se spottende verwysing na 'n agste agtereenvolgende huwelik.

en welkom nommer ses as hy verskyn –
ek wil nie in volkome kuisheid kwyn.
So, as die een wat ek nou het eers van
die baan is, trou ek met 'n ander man;
dan mag ek volgens die Apostel trou
met enigeen van wie ek ook al hou. 50
Daar is g'n oneer in die huweliksband;
dis beter om te trou as om te brand.

As mense aanstoot neem, wat traak dit my,
oor bouse Lameg³ se tweewyvery?
'n Heil'ge man was Abram mos gewees
en Jakob ook, soos ek die Bybel lees;
vir meer as twee het hulle kans gesien,
soos ander heil'ge manne bowendien.
Het dit al ooit gebeur dat daar 'n verbod
geplaas is op die huwelik deur God? 60
Waar staan dit in die Bybel? Sê vir my –
of dat ons almal maagdelik moet bly?
Ons weet tog, wanneer die Apostel praat
oor die wenslikheid van die maagdlike staat,
sê hy dit nie by wyse van bevel.
Hy't die maagdelikheid vooropgestel,
maar dis g'n opdrag nie, dit bly by raad.
Hy het dit aan ons eie oordeel oorgelaat.

As God die maagdlike staat gebied,
dan is die huwelik meteens tot niet, 70
want seker, word daar nie meer saad geplant,
dan kom die maagdom ook nie meer tot stand.
Die Apostel kon ook immers niks gelas
wat nie 'n opdrag van sy Meester was.
Die prys is aan die maagdom toegeken;
kom ons hardloop dan, en kyk wie dit kan wen.

Maar dis nie iets wat elkeen sal verlang;
slegs hulle wat genade daartoe ontvang.
Ek weet die Apostel self was selibaat,
maar toe hy oor dié aangeleentheid praat,⁴ 80
en sê hy wens só almal was soos hy,
het hy nie die perk van raadgewing oorskry
en het toegelaat dat ek by wyse van
'n toegewing mag trou; so, as ek dan
met die afsterf van my man die dag hertrou,
kan niemand dit as bigamie beskou.
Hy sê dis goed om nie aan 'n vrou te raak –
dis in die bed; mens moet tog daarteen waak
om vlam en vlas nie bymekaar te bring –
dié illustrasie ter verduideliking. 90
Sy slotsom bly: kuisheid moet beter wees
as dat mens trou uit swakheid van die vlees;
swakheid is dit tensy die man en vrou

3 Genesis 4: 19.

4 Die Vrou se redevoering is gebaseer op I Kor. 7, veral die eerste 8 verse.

hul van geslagsgemeenskap gaan onthou.

Ek gun hul dit: die maagdelike stand
word hoër aangeskryf as die huweliksband.
Hul streef die reinheid na; maar wat my staat
betref, ek hoef nie daarvan goed te praat,
want in 'n huis is alles nie van goud;
daar is ook voorwerpe gemaak van hout,
en tog is hulle bruikbaar vir hul heer.
God roep ons almal anders en Hy't meer
as een genadegawe om uit te stort,
na dié of daardie een begunstig word.

100

Die maagdelikheid's voortreflik en so ook
onthouding wat met geestelikheid strook,
maar Christus, bron van die volkomenheid,
het nie vir almal sonder onderskeid
beveel dat hulle alles moet verkoop,
aan die armes gee en agter Hom aan loop,
maar net vir mense wat volmaak wil lewe,
maar, met verlof, dis regtig nie my strewe.
Ek wil my beste jare daaraan wy
om huweliksbevrediging te kry.

110

Ek vra my af: wat sou die doel kon wees
met ons geslagsorgane? Op 'n mees
kundige wyse is hul gefatsoeneer.
Dis nie om dowe neute kan jy sweer.
Daar's altyd dié wat met die redenasie
vorendag sal kom dat hul vir die purgasie
van urine is, of dat dié goeters daar
is dat ons mans en vrouens uitmekaar
kan ken, en dis ál rede. Moenie glo nie.
Die ondervinding wys dit is nie so nie.
Om geestelikes se gramskap af te koel,
sal ek toegee hulle dien 'n dubbele doel:
om die blaas te ledig en ook vir genot
wat nie teenstrydig is met die gebod –
dis tog die sin wat daardie teks inhou
van 'n man se huweliksplig⁵ teenoor sy vrou.
Hoe sou hy so 'n plig kan doen tensy
deur middel van sy simpel seksgerei?
Dus is die doel daarvan nie net purgasie
van water nie, maar tog ook prokreasie.

120

130

Maar dit is nie te sê dat die besit
van so 'n ding 'n mens verplig om dit
opsluit te gaan gebruik om voort te plant
tot oneer van die maagdelike stand.
Hoewel 'n man, was Christus maagd gewees,
soos ander Heiliges van wie ons lees –
hul't almal kuis gebly die hele tyd.
Ek gun hul graag hul maagdelikheid.

140

5 Vgl. I Kor. 7: 3. In vroeë Engelse vertalings word daar van 'n wedersydse 'skuld' gepraat.

As hulle brood van die fynste meelblom is,
 dan's ons getroudes garsbrood, maar gewis
 van garsbrood het die Here Hom bedien
 om die menigte van voedsel te voorsien.
 Ek neem genoeg met die omstandighede
 wat God vir my bepaal het; ek's tevrede.
 My instrument, 'n gif van Gods genade,
 skenk ek met dieselfde grasie aan my gade. 150
 As ek snoep is daarmee, mag God my kasty!
 My man kan dit in die aand of oggend kry,
 net wanneer hy lus het om sy plig te doen.
 Die man wat ek wil hê, moet immergroen
 my skuldenaar asook my dienaar wees,
 en hy sal sy 'verdrukking vir die vlees'⁶
 solank as wat ons twee getroud is, ly.
 My lewe lank sal ek die mag oor sy
 liggaam behou – self sal hy dit nie hê,
 want soos die Apostel in sy sendbrief sê: 160
 'Manne, julle moet julle vrouens liefhê' – dit
 is 'n uitspraak waarin baie waarheid sit.
 Die Aflaatkramer skrik orent. "Mevrou,"
 sê hy, "u het by Sint Johannes nou
 goed oor dié aangeleentheid uitgewei.
 Ek was juis van plan om vir my 'n vrou te kry;
 maar waarom moet ek dit ontgeld? O nee,
 ek los dit lievers vir 'n jaar of twee!"
 "Nee wag," sê sy, "ek begin nou eers my praatjie;
 voor ek klaar is, moet jy diep drink uit dié vaatjie, 170
 en dit sal nie so lekker smaak soos aal.
 As ek aan die einde kom van my verhaal
 oor al die swaarkry van die getroude lewe –
 in die knepe van dié vak is ek bedrewe,
 want ek het baie maal die sweep geklap –
 dan kan jy kies of jy uit die vat wil tap
 wat ek gaan oopslaan, maar miskien moet jy
 maar lievers op 'n veilige afstand bly,
 deur voorbeelde gewaarsku, 'n hele lys.
 'Iemand deur ander nie tereggewys,
 sal self tereggewysing vir ander wees' – 180
 dis wat 'n mens by Ptolomeus lees,
 soos hy dit in sy *Almagest* gestel het."
 Hy antwoord: "Mevrou, wat u te vertel het,
 moet u gerus vertel; dis my opinie.
 Gaan voort dan – u hoef niemand te ontsien nie –
 sodat ons jong klomp ook u kuns kan leer."
 "Nou goed," sê sy, "as julle dit begeer.
 Maar een ding moet ek nog aan almal stel:
 verkwalik my dit nie as ek vertel 190
 soos dinge my te binne skiet, want pret

6 Vgl. I Kor. 7: 28, maar die swaarkry kom haar mans toe.

is tog al doel wat ek voor oë het.

Nou, here, gaan ek voort met my verhaal.

Sowaar as wat ek hierna wyn en aal
wil drink, die mans met wie ek in die eg
verbind was, drie was goed en twee was sleg.

Die goeies, ryk en oud, het swaargekry
om hul huweliksverpligtings teenoor my
reg na te kom, soos Paulus sê hul moet –
wat ek bedoel snap almal seker goed.

200

As ek daaraan dink, dan word ek dik van die lag,
hoe ek vir hul laat swoeg het nag vir nag!

Dit het my min getraak hoe hul moes ly.

Hul geld en grond is oorgedra aan my;
dit sou nou glad nie meer die moeite loon
om hul te wen met liefde of eerbetoon.

Die Here weet, hul't my so liefgehad
en ek het hul gevoel geringgeskat.

'n Skrandere vrou sal liefde nastreef net
as sy op die oomblik nie 'n minnaar het.

210

Maar met 'n man in die holte van my hand
en na die oordrag van sy akkerland,
getroos ek my g'n moeite nie, tensy
ek daardeur voordeel of genot verkry.

Omdat ek hulle nagte aan die werk gehou het,
sou die getroude lewe hul beslis berou het,
en die prys wat daar by Dunmow toegeken word⁷
vir huweliksvreugde nie deur hul gewen word!

Maar touwys was hul gou – in so 'n mate
dat hul doodgelukkig was en my gelate
iets saamgebring het van die kermis af;
hul was so bly as ek die dag nie blaf –
die Here weet hoe ek op hul geskree het.

220

Hoor nou 'n slaggie hoe ek opgetree het –
al kan ek wyse vroue niks vertel;

jul weet om mans in die ongelyk te stel;
half so oortuigend kan g'n enkele man
lieg en bedrieg as wat 'n vroumens kan.

Dit geld nou nie vir vroue met verstand,
behalwe as hul in die nood beland;

230

'n vrou wat slim is, sal die saak bewimpel,
haar man oortuig die ekster is skoon simpel;⁸
en daarop gee haar diensmeisie die woord
van 'n medepligtige. So raas ek voort:

'Jou simpel sufferd, wat is jou idee?

Waarom's my buurvrou modieus geklee?

Sy word geëer waar sy ook gaan, maar ek

⁷ By Dunmow in Essex is 'n sy spek aan 'n paartjie toegeken wat kon sweer dat hulle nooit gedurende die vorige jaar stry gekry het nie of gewens het dat hul ongetroud was.

⁸ In 'n volksverhaal verklap 'n ekster 'n vrou wat haar man bedrieg. Met behulp van haar diensmeisie word die man egter oortuig dat die voël onsin praat.

moet tuis sit sonder 'n draad om aan te trek.
 Wat boer jy by ons bure? Wat soek jy daar?
 Is sy so mooi of jy so gek na haar? 240
 Wat fluister jy aan ons bediende, vent?
 Los uit jou duiwelstreke! Kry nou end!
 Oor ek 'n vriend het, dink jy daarvan kwaad
 as ek in alle onskuld met hom praat
 of anders bietjie oorstap na sy huis.
 Jy kom hier aan besope soos 'n muis
 en sit en preek vanaf jou bank oor wat
 'n ramp dit is om 'n arm vrou te vat,
 dit kos soveel om haar te onderhou;
 maar kies mens weer 'n welgestelde vrou 250
 van hoë rang, het sy 'n trotse streep
 en sit jy met haar nukke opgeskeep;
 en as sy mooi is, hou jy verder vol,
 'wil al wat skobbejak is met haar lol.
 Hoe hou sy haar ordentlikheid in stand
 as sy beleër word van elke kant?'
 Party't 'n mooi gesig of geld; party
 het weer 'n lyfie wat die mans verlei.
 Party mans vind ons sang of dans begeerlik,
 vir ander's grasie of flirtasie heerlik, 260
 of slanke hande en arms. Jy sê dis hoe
 ons almal saam op pad is duiwel toe.
 Jy sê 'n vestingmuur kan nie bly staan,
 val vyande van alle kante aan.
 En as sy lelik is dan sê jy weer
 dat sy al wat 'n man is, sal begeer
 en stertswaai soos 'n skoothond totdat sy
 vir iemand wat haar ware koop, kan kry.
 Jy meen dat daar geen wyfie-eend so grys is
 dat dit nie op 'n mannetjie aangewys is, 270
 en verder mompel jy as jy gaan lê
 dat 'n vrou wat niemand om die dood wil hê,
 so moeilik is om in bedwang te hou
 en dat g'n wyse man moet dink aan trou –
 nie as hy ooit die hemelryk wil haal.
 Jou lummel, mag 'n felle bliksemstraal
 neerdonder op jou seningrige nek!
 Dan weet jy te vertel: 'n dak wat lek,
 rook in jou oë en 'n vrou wat kyf,
 is dinge wat 'n man uit sy huis uit dryf. 280
 Wat maak 'n ouman tog so vitterig?
 Jy sê ons vrouens hou ons foute dig
 tot ons getroud is, dan word hul bekend –
 dis mos 'n korrelkop se argument!
 Osse en esels, perde en honde kan,
 sê jy, op die proef gestel word voor 'n man
 besluit om hul te koop, asook gerei
 soos komme, skottels, lepels, stoele; daarby

ook potte, klere, rokke; net 'n vrou
 kan mens nie op die proef stel voor jy jou 290
 in die eg verbind het nie – en dan is dit
 dat ons foute uitkom, volgens jou gevit.
 Jy hou ook vol dat dit vir my ontstel
 as jy my nie gedurigdeur vertel
 hoe mooi ek is en altyd na my staar nie,
 my komplimente maak in die openbaar nie,
 geen fees vir my verjaarsdag laat berei nie,
 my nie laat jonk voel en my hart verbly nie,
 as jy dit nalaat om aandag te gee
 aan my kamenier,⁹ en ook nie tyd bestee 300
 aan pa se mense en aangetroudenes –
 dis wat jy sê, aartsleuenaar wat jy is.
 Jy's in jou bol gepik van jaloesie,
 en dit omdat ons leerknapp Jannetjie,
 'n goue krulkop het en graag vir my,
 wanneer ek êrens heengaan, begelei.
 Ek sou hom nie wil hê nie, al val jy
 ook môre dood hier neer; maar sê vir my:
 wat steek jy so jou sleutels vir my weg?
 Op al die goed het ons gelyke reg – 310
 of dink jy dat ek onkapabel is?
 By die Heilige Jakobus, jy's gewis
 nie meester van my liggaam en my goed.
 Dit traak my glad nie hoe jy daarvoor woed,
 Die een of ander is jy kwyd. Ek sweer
 dit help nie dat jy op my spioeneer.
 Jy hou my seker ook graag toegesluit,
 pleks dat jy sê: "My vrou, gaan jy maar uit;
 geniet dit, Alie; jy's 'n goeie vrou;
 op skindertonge sal ek nie vertrou."
 Van 'n man wat ons aldag aan bande lê, 320
 hou ons net niks; ons wil ons vryheid hê.
 Van alle mense ag ek g'n so hoog
 as Ptolomeus, die wyse astroloog,
 want in sy *Almagest* kan mens mos lees:
 'Die hoogste vorm van wysheid moet dit wees
 as mens nie vra aan wie die wêreld hoort.'
 Hy wil te kenne gee met hierdie woord:
 solank jy self genoeg het, wat haper dit
 aan jou hoe goed 'n ander daarin sit? 330
 want, sufferd, jy kan seker wees, vannag
 kry jy soveel van seks as jy vermag.
 Dis net 'n vrek wat weier dat ander by
 sy lantern kers opsteek, want, hemel, hy
 het mos nog ewe veel lig agterna!
 As jy genoeg het, hoef jy nie te kla.
 Jy sê as ons ons opskik met mooi klere

9 'n Dame se vroulike lyfbediende.

en 'ander sulke buitensporighede,¹⁰
dan bring dit glo ons kuisheid in gedrang;
dan vryf jy dit nog in met 'n gesang
oor wat in Paulus opgeteken staan: 340

'Jul vrouens moet jul nie te buite gaan
met vlegsels, pêrels en met ryk kledy,
maar jul moet iets betaamliks dra,' sê hy,
'en dan daarmee gepaard, beskeidenheid
beoefen, asook ingetoënheid.'
Ek haat jou tekste en teksverklarings wat
g'n muggie werd is. Jy sê ek's nes 'n kat:
as mens 'n kat se hare bietjie brand
dan bly die dier gewoonlik binnekant, 350
maar as sy glansig is en sag soos pluus,
dan bly sy nie 'n halfdag binnenshuis,
maar hier teen middernag moet almal hoor
hoe stel sy haar ten toon met kattedoor;
dit wil nou sê as ek mooi klere het,
word ek meteens rondloper en koket.

Ou sot, wat lol jy om my dop te hou?
Selfs Argos met sy honderd oë sou
ondanks sy skerp gesig nie daarin slaag
om dit te doen, tensy dit my behaag; 360
ek sou hom uitoorlê – ek sou gewis.

Jy sê daarby dat daar drie dinge is,
drie dinge wat die ganse aarde pla,
en 'n vierde ook wat niemand kan verdra,
en dan, ou grompot – mag dit jou berou! –
beweer jy dat 'n ongeliefde vrou
onder dié rampe ingesluit moet word.
Kom jy sodanig vergelykings kort
wat jy in jou parabels¹¹ kan vermeld
dat dit die arme vrou pal moet ontgeld? 370

Jy sê 'n vrou se liefde is soos die hel
of dorre grond waar daar g'n water wel,
of anders Griekse vuur¹² – hoe meer dit woed,
hoe meer geneig is dit om voor die voet
alles wat kan ontbrand word te verteer.
Soos ruspers wat 'n boom verrinweer,
vernietig vrouens hulle mans, sê jy;
dít weet diegene wat daaronder ly."

Nou mense, dis hoe ek die saak beklink het
dat my eggenote waarlik waar gedink het 380
hul't hierdie dinge in hul roes beweer,
en Jannetjie asook my niggie sweer
dat dit die waarheid is. Die Here weet,

10 | Tim. 2: 9.

11 Sinnebeeldige vertellings om waarhede tuis te bring; gelykenisse.

12 'n Hoogs ontvlambare en moeilik blusbare mengsel wat in oorlogvoering gebruik is, byvoorbeeld om die vyand se skepe aan die brand te steek.

ek was die oorsaak van veel pyn en leed,
al was hul doodonskuldig die hele tyd;
want ek kon liefd'ryk runnik maar ook byt.
Ek het gekla al rus die blaam op my –
so spring 'n mens jou ondergang soms vry.
Die eerste by die meul kan eerste maal:
deur gou te kla, het ek sukses behaal. 390
Hul maak geredelik apologie
vir dinge wat hul nooit gedoen het nie.

Ek raas: 'Jul loop mos agter meisies aan,'
al is hul sieklik en kan nouliks staan.
Dit het 'n man se eiwaan gepas
dat my liefde vir hom so besitlik was.
As ek rondgeloop het snags, het ek gesê
dat ek die meisies soek by wie hul lê;
dié politiek het baie pret verskaf.
Vernuf het vroue van geboorte af; 400
ek kan goed lieg en huil en spin, want dus
het God die Skepper vroue toegerus.

Op hierdie een ding dan beroem ek my:
oor elk het ek oplaas beheer gekry;
ek kon dit deur geweld of lis prakseer
of deur 'n ewige gemurmureer;
my man't veral gely as ons gaan lê,
dan't ek geskel en hom sy pret ontsê;
wanneer ek voel hy gly sy arm oor my
dan't ek geweier om in die bed te bly. 410
Sy losprys afgespreek, het ek berus,
kon hy sy dinge doen na hartelus.

Derhalwe is ek vry met hierdie raad:
Als is te koop, so neem jou kans te baat;
mens kan g'n hawik lok met leë hand;
ek sal sy lus verduur – en vir kontant
selfs veins dat dit vir my 'n groot genot is,
hoewel ek glad nie op ou vleis versot is –
en dis ook hoekom ek so veel gevit het.

Al sou die Pous self saam met ons gesit het, 420
sou ek hom nie 'n antwoord skuldig bly nie;
hy sou g'n lyfsgenade van my kry nie.
By God almagtig, as ek nou die taak
gehad het om 'n testament te maak,
sou daar g'n enkele woorddebiet oorbly.
Deur my vernuf het ek dit reggekry
dat hulle skerp van sin die stryd versaak het,
want anders sou hul g'n oog toegemaak het.
Al het hul my ook aangegluur so boos
soos 'n woeste leeu, was dit net mooi nutteloos. 430

Dan sê ek: 'Ou man, jy moet 'n slaggie kyk
na Willie, ons skaap, hoe nederig hy lyk.
Kom hier, dat ek jou wang kan soen, want jy
moet nederig en geduldig wees soos hy,

en van 'n onberispelike gees –
 jy hou mos daarvan om uit Job te lees.
 Wees nou maar lydsaam soos jy ander maan,
 want anders sal ons jou moet laat verstaan
 om die vrede te bewaar is die beste plan.

Een van ons twee moet buig; omdat 'n man 440
 met meer verstand bedeel is as 'n vrou,
 ver wag ek dié toegeeflikheid van jou.
 Wat skort met jou? Wat kla jy steen en been?
 Wil jy my koekie hê vir jou alleen?
 Wel, vat dit maar vir jou; kry alles, hoor;
 liewe genade, maar jy's lief daarvoor.
 Dink net, as ek my blommetjie verkoop,
 in watter fraai klerasie sou ek loop,
 maar nee, al is jy so 'n stouterd, hou
 ek dit – die Here hoor my – net vir jou! 450
 Op dié manier het ek hul graag geskel.
 Nou gaan ek van my vierde man vertel.
 My vierde was 'n losbol – dit wil sê
 hy't 'n minnares gehad by wie hy lê;
 maar jonk en sterk en lustig, opgewek
 soos 'n ekster is, en koppig ook was ek
 en het dolgraag op maat van die harp gedans,
 gesing soos 'n nagtegaal as ek die kans
 gehad het vir 'n lekker sopie wyn.

Metullius, berug om sy venyn, 460
 het met 'n stok sy vrou vermoor – dis nou
 oor sy wyn gedrink het, maar was ék sy vrou
 sou hy my nie belet het om te drink,
 en as ek wyn genuttig het dan dink
 ek net aan seks – soos koue hael verwek,
 eers aangeklam, word ek klam op 'n ander plek.
 'n Besope vroumens bied g'n weerstand meer,
 soos elke losbol se ervaring leer.

Ag, hemel toggie, as ek aan die tyd
 weer terugdink van my jeug en joligheid, 470
 dan kittel dit my hart van lekkerkry,
 want tot vandag toe is ek dankieby
 die lewe't soveel vreugde ingehou.
 Hoe jammer dat die ouderdom ons knou,
 met skoonheid wegdoen en met energie;
 maar dis verby nou en dit traak my nie!
 Met die meelblom klaar, bly daar niks oor vir my
 as die beste prys vir die semels te verkry;
 maar nogtans gaan ek my nie daarvoor kwel.
 Nou, laat ek van my vierde man vertel. 480

Wel, soos ek sê, een ding het my gegrief:
 hy was vir ander vrouens al te lief,
 maar, by Judocus, ek het toe uit wraak
 vir hom 'n kruis uit dieselfde hout gemaak –
 en dit nie met my liggaam soos 'n hoer,

maar ek het so vir mans gekoekeloer
 dat hy gebraai het in sy eie vet,
 soos woede en nyd vir hom gemartel het.
 Hy's in die hemel – sy vaevuur
 het ek hom hier op aarde laat verduur. 490
 Die Here weet, hy't pal gesit en kla
 die skoen het so gedruk dat dit hom pla.
 Niemand kon weet, behalwe God en hy,
 hoe swaar het ek die arme vent laat kry.
 Hy's dood toe ek van Jerusalem af kom;
 net binnekant die koor het ek vir hom
 begrawe in 'n graf wat weliswaar
 nie vergelyk met dié wat die kunstenaar
 Appelles eens vir Darius gebou 't. 500
 As syne ook so weeld'rig was dan sou 't
 net geldmors wees. Wel, hy is nou oorlede
 en in sy graf. Die Vader skenk hom vrede.
 Nou sal ek van my vyfde man vertel.
 Mag God die Heer sy siel spaar uit die hel,
 hoewel hy teenoor my hardhandig was –
 dit voel ek nounog aan my ribbekas,
 en sal dit tot my sterwensdag toe voel.
 Hy was 'n ou wat in die bed kon woel,
 en hy't die kuns verstaan om my te vlei
 as hy 'n lekker stukkie koek wou kry. 510
 Al het hy my ook pimpel en pers geslaan,
 my hart het gou weer vir hom oopgegaan.
 Ek dink ek was vir hom die meeste lief,
 want hy was teenoor my bra koud en stief.
 'n Vrou is in dié opsig sonderling,
 want jy kan seker wees as sy 'n ding
 wil hê en dit is moeilik om te kry,
 dan sal sy daarvoor huil en daarvoor stry.
 Verbied ons iets dan sal ons dit begeer,
 maar as dit afgedwing word, vlug ons weer. 520
 Ons stal als uit op ingetoë wyse,
 want baie kopers sorg vir goeie pryse,
 maar goedkoop ware word geringgeag,
 en hierop is die wakker vrou bedag.
 My vyfde man – mag God sy siel behou! –
 het ek uit liefde, nie vir geld, getrou.
 Op Oxford het hy vroeër gestudeer,
 maar dit laat staan en by die huis loseer
 van my besondere vriendin. Sy heet
 ook Alisoen soos ek; sy't meer geweet 530
 wat in my hart omgaan, en meer gehoor
 van my geheime as die dorpspastoor.
 Ek het haar als vertel; so as my man
 gepis het teen 'n muur¹³ of as hy van

13 Met ander woorde, enige kleinigheid.

'n halsmisdaad beskuldig is, dan sou ek haar dit sê, en vir 'n ander vrou en vir my niggie – ek was lief vir haar – aan hulle sou ek alles openbaar en het ook baiemaal, die Here weet; dan het my man gebloos so rooi soos beet uit pure skaamte en verydeling dat hy vir my gesê het van daardie ding. 540

Oudergewoonte het ek rondgeloop een vastyd¹⁴ en gesprekke aangeknoop met al my vriende, want dit maak my bly om te verneem in Maart, April en Mei van skinderpraatjies wat die rondte doen, toe't ek en Jannetjie en Alisoen die dag in die veld gaan stap; my eggenoot was vir die vastyd Londen toe en so't ek rondkejakker om die tyd te kort, om self te sien en ook gesien te word deur ander wat plesier beoog. Hoe sal mens weet waar die geluk jou gaan oorval? Vir my plesier was ek gedurig by 'n optog, nagwaak, preek of trouery; en daarbenewens was ek ingestel op bedevaarte en mirakelspel.¹⁵ 550

In vrolike skarlaken is ek geklee, en mot en wurm het ek g'n kans gegee om my klere te vernietig in die kas, omdat dit altyd aan my liggaam was. 560

Om my storie te hervat: soos reeds vermeld, het ons die dag gewandel in die veld, en ek en die student had so 'n flirtasie dat ek toe later handel uit inspirasie en vir hom sê dat as my man vir my as weduwee sou laat, kan hy my kry. Een ding is seker – in alle nederigheid – ek's altyd vir die huwelik voorbereid en ook vir ander dinge. Ek gee g'n prei om vir die waagmoed van 'n muis as hy 'n enkele vluggat het om weg te kom – as dit misluk, dan is dit klaar met hom. 570

Van ma het ek geleer dié sluwe set: ek beweert dat hy vir my betower het, en ek het ook gedroom, so't ek gesê, dat hy my wou vermoor waar ek daar lê, op die naat van my rug, my bed die ene bloed; ek hoop maar die uiteinde daarvan is goed, 580

14 Die veertigdaagse tyd van onthouding wat uitloop op lydensweek; 'n tyd van selfondersoek en verootmoediging wanneer losbandigheid besonder onvanpas is.

15 Godsdienstige geleenthede kon lig in 'n voorwendsel vir erotise avonture ontaard. 'n Nagwaak of vigilie is 'n diens op die vooraand van 'n heiligedag. Preke is dikwels in die buitelig gehou en was 'n gewilde vermaaklikheid. Vir party deelnemers was 'n pelgrimsreis eerder 'n aangename uitstappie as 'n godsdienstige belewenis. Mirakelspele het oomblike van vroomheid met growwe klug afgewissel.

want bloed beteken goud, so sê hul, maar
dis als versinsel – niks daarvan was waar –
ek volg maar net die opdrag van my ma
hierin soos ook in ander sake na.

Wag, laat ek sien, waar was ek met my storie?

A, nou't ek weer die draad daarvan, gedorie!

Toe my vierde man die dag te sterwe kom,
het ek geweeklaag en geweene vir hom
soos 'n vrou moet doen, want dit is die gebruik,
en my gesig gesluier met my huik;¹⁶
met voorsorg vir die vyfde reeds gemaak
is al die trane egter gou gestaak.

590

My man's die oggend na die kerk gedra
deur al ons bure wat hul rou bekla,
waaronder Jannetjie – hy was ook daar,
en toe ek sien hoe loop hy agter die baar,
kon ek nie help om op te let dat die lyn
van sy been en voet so suiwer was en fyn;
en toe verdwyn my laaste voorbehoud.

600

Hy was, so meen ek, twintig somers oud
en ek 'n vrou van in die veertig, maar
ek bly nou eenmaal bok vir so 'n blaar.¹⁷
Die merk van Venus – tande wyd uiteen –
het meer aantreklikheid aan my verleen.
Die Here weet, ek was maar warm van bloed,
en mooi en jonk en ryk en welgemoed;
en al my mans het my verseker dat
ek die beste dinges op dees aarde had,
want waarlik my gevoelens word bepaal
deur Venus, maar van Mars kry ek my staal:

610

Van Venus kom my wulpsheid en my lus
en Mars het my met taaiheid toegerus.
Gebore onder die Stier, met Mars daarin¹⁸ –
helaas dat dit sondig is om te bemin!
Ek volg maar altyddeur my inklinasie
deur die louter invloed van my konstellasie,
dus kon ek nooit my Venuskamer ontsê
aan 'n gawe kêrel as hy dit wou hê.
Ek dra die merk van Mars op my gelaat
en elders ook, maar dis ietwat privaat.
In liefdesake het ek waarlik waar
my geensins teen diskresie blindgestaar;
ek het gehandel net soos dit my pas:
of hy lank of kort of lig of donker was,
of ryk of arm, hoog of laag – wat sou
dit eintlik saak maak, mits ek van hom hou.

620

16 Mantel.

17 Die bok is beskou as simbolies van wellustigheid. Die Vrou was "gat-toothed" (afgelei van Oudengels *gæat*, *hek*), maar Skeat het dit met *gat*, bok, in verband gebring.

18 Met die Vrou se geboorte was die Stierteken bokant die oostelike horison. Beide Mars en Venus was op daardie tydstip binne hierdie teken van die diereriem. Gevolglik het hul teenstrydige invloede op haar ingewerk: sy was beide genotsugtig en aggressief.

Hoe dit ook sy, nog voor die maand se end
is Jannetjie die vrolike student
en ek getroud met groot plegstatigheid.

Ek het die geld en grond wat mettertyd
my toegeval het aan sy sorg vertrou,
maar later het dit my bitterlik berou,
want as ek iets wou hê, dan sê hy nee.
Eendag het hy my 'n harde hou gegee,
want ek het 'n bladsy uit sy boek geskeur;
nou is ek in die een oor doof daardeur.
Ek was so koppig soos 'n wyfieleeu
en ek het soos 'n hierjy op hom geskreeu,
want ek was nie van plan om op te hou
met rondloop nie, al sweer hy dat ek sou;
dan't hy vir my gepreek en al die ou
stories van Rome vir my voorgehou:
oor hoe Simplicius Gallus weggegaan het
van sy vrou af en haar lewenslank laat staan het,
maar net oor hy vir haar betrap het waar
sy ongesluit by die deur uit staar.

'n Tweede Romein, so het hy my vertel,
het sy vrou verlaat oor sy 'n somerspel¹⁹
durf bygewoon het sonder sy verlof.
En dan gaan soek hy in die Bybel of
hy dalk die teksvers in *Ben Sirag*²⁰ kry
wat 'n man dit absoluut verbied dat hy
sy vrou laat rondrits net soos sy begeer.
Dan het hy hierdie vers geresiteer:

"Die man wat in 'n huis van wilgers bly,
sy blinde perd laat sukkel deur die hei,
of toelaat dat sy vrou as pelgrim ry,
verdien dit mos as hy die doodstraf kry."

Maar dis verniet; ek gee g'n duit vir al
sy stories en gesegdes sonder tal;
ek haat dit om tereggewys te word
deur een wat pal beweer ek skiet te kort –
dit geld vir baie ander mense ook.
Van woede teenoor my het hy gekook,
maar ek sou my geensins onderwerp aan hom.

By Thomas, ek moet sê hoe't dit gekom
dat ek 'n bladsy uit sy boek geskeur het
en my gehoor aan eenkant so verbeur het.

Dié man van my was baie lief gewees
om dag en nag 'n sekere boek te lees,
Valerius en Theofras genaamd;
as hy daarmee sit, dan lag hy onbeskaamd.
Hy't ook 'n boek gehad wat 'n Roomse klerk,
die kardinaal Hieronimus, se werk

19 Die uitbundigheid van Midsomernag.

20 Chaucer verwys baie dikwels na Jesus Ben Sirag, die skrywer van die Ekklesiastikus of die Wysheid van Jesus Sirag, 'n apokriewe (of deuterokanonieke) Bybelboek.

bevat in antwoord op Jovinianus,
 asook geskrifte van Tertullianus,
 Chrissipus, Trotula en Heloïse,
 Paryse abdis, en Salomo ook wie se
 Spreuke tesame met Ovidius
 se *Minnekuns* en vele meer te kus 680
 en keur in een dik boekdeel saam gebind is.
 En dag en nag as daar 'n kans te vind is
 te midde van sy werk, dan neem hy dit
 gretig te baat deur met sy boek te sit.
 Hy't meer geweet omtrent die ganse skaar
 van slegte vroue se dade as wat daar
 oor goeie vroue in die Bybel staan,
 want een ding's seker, dit sal moeilik gaan
 vir 'n geestelike om 'n vrou te prys,
 tensy hy na 'n Heilige verwys, 690
 maar al die ander moet beswadding ly.
 Maar wie't die leeu geskilder?²¹ Sê vir my.
 As dit 'n vrou was wat die ding vertel,
 en nie 'n man, gekluister in 'n sel,
 stel sy die mans se sondes aan die kaak –
 hul's erger as Adamsras ooit reg kan maak.
 Mercurius dié laat hom anders geld
 as Venus – hul's direk teenoorgesteld:
 die kroos van eersgenoemde het die gier
 na kennis, dié van Venus na plesier. 700
 Oor hul teenstrydig is, as een versterk,
 word die invloed van die ander teengewerk,
 en dus as Venus in die Visse staan,
 dan is Mercurius van krag ontdaan,
 en Venus swig weer as Mercurius rys,
 en daarom word g'n vrou deur 'n klerk geprys.
 Wanneer hy oud is en nie mee kan doen,
 dink seks is minder werd as sy ou skoen,
 gaan skryf hy in sy kindsheid dat g'n vrou
 haar ooit by huweliksbeloftes hou! 710

Om terug te keer na hoedat dit gebeur het
 dat ek geslaan is oor ek sy boek geskeur het.
 Een goeie aand toe't Jannetjie, my heer
 en meester, by die vuur gesit en weer
 daaruit gelees, vir eers oor Eva se sonde,
 daardeur's die hele menseras geskonde,
 daarvoor moes Christus met Sy lewe boet,
 die mensdom vrykoop met Sy hartebloed:
 hier word dit duidelik dat die vrou gewis
 die oorsaak van die mens se ellende is. 720
 En dan volg Simson: terwyl hy slaap is sy
 lokke mos deur Delila afgesny;

21 In een van Aesopus se fabels sien 'n leeu 'n skildery van 'n man wat 'n leeu doodmaak. Die leeu se kommentaar hierop is dat die prent anders sou gelyk het as 'n leeu die skilder was.

deur haar verraad het hy sy oë verloor.
 Daarna lees hy, jou waarlik, vir my voor
 van Herakles en Deianira, want
 háár skuld was dit dat hy homself verbrand.
 Toe't hy van al die sonde voorgelees
 veroorsaak deur die vroue van Sokrates.
 Xanthippe het die koos oor hom geledig;
 toe vee hy sy gesig en sê hy sedig 730
 waar hy daar sit, so roerloos soos 'n steen:
 "Nog voor die donder ophou, volg die reën".
 En Pasipha, die Kreetse koningin –
 haar nare storie was reg na sy sin,
 maar – sies vir haar! – ek bly maar liewer stil
 oor haar bose dade en perverse wil.
 En Klytamnestra wat op aandrang van
 haar wellus weggedoen het met haar man –
 in hierdie storie had hy baie sin.
 Toe't hy gelees hoe't Amphiarus in 740
 'n oproer buite Thebes omgekom.
 My man weet te vertel sy vrou het hom
 aan die Grieke uitgelewer, dat sy maar net
 vir 'n goue gespe hul verwittig het
 waar hy hom skuilhou. Daardie dag
 het teenspoed hom by Thebes ingewag.
 Van Livia en Lucilla moes ek hoor,
 want hulle het altwee hulle mans vermoor:
 uit liefde een, die ander een uit haat.
 Livia't haar man vergiftig een aand laat 750
 uit blote nyd, terwyl Lucilla weer
 so erg oor hare was dat sy wou keer
 dat hy aandag aan 'n ander vrou bestee,
 toe't sy vir hom 'n liefdesdrank gegee;
 hy's dood dieselfde nag, dit was so sterk –
 dis hoe 'n vrou haar man se sake werk.
 Verder't 'n sekere man, Latumius,
 gekla teenoor sy makker, Arrius;
 hy sê daar het 'n boom by hom gestaan –
 drie vroue't hul al opgehang daaraan 760
 uit bitterheid van gees. Toe sê sy maat:
 'Dis 'n geseënde boom waarvan jy praat;
 jy moet vir my 'n steggie daarvan breek
 dat ek dit in my vrugteboord kan kweek.'
 Hy lees ook van 'n latere tydperk voor,
 van vrouens wat hul mans in die bed vermoor,
 en met hul minnaars speel hul daar die hoer,
 en die man se lyk lê heelnag op die vloer.
 Een dryf 'n pen deur haar man se brein en maak
 hom so van kant nog voordat hy ontwaak; 770
 en een gee hom iets giftigs om te drink.
 Hy't elke soort beswadding bedink;
 en boonop weet hy meer van spreuke as

daar plante in die wêreld is en gras,
soos: 'Beter is dit dat jy jou woning maak
met 'n leeu of anders met 'n felle draak
as met 'n vrou wat heelyd wil baklei,'
of: 'Beter om op die hoek van 'n dak te bly
as onder in die huis met 'n vrou wat twis,
want omdat hulle sleg en stroom-op is, 780
haat hulle alles wat hul mans van hou.'
Verder het hy gesê: 'Wanneer 'n vrou
se rok geval het, is sy haar skaamte kwyt,'
en: 'n Vrou wat mooi is maar met g'n beleid
is soos 'n goue ring in 'n vark se snoet.'
Wie sou kon raai, ja, wie sou selfs vermoed,
die pyn wat in my hart was en die wee.

Nou, toe ek sien hy kry g'n end daarmee,
maar dwing om heelnag daarmee aan te hou,
vererg ek my en skeur ek baie gou 790
drie blaaië uit die boek en gee hom nog
'n vuishou op die wang, en hy het log
teruggesteier en in die vuur gestort.
Toe het hy briesend soos 'n leeu geword;
hy spring daar op en slaan my teen die kop;
ek het geval en soos 'n dooie op
die vloer bly lê; en toe hy dit gewaar,
het hy geskrik en wou hy vlug van daar,
maar eindelijk het ek weer bygekom.
'Maak jy my dood, jou rower?' vra ek hom; 800
'Het jy dit ter wille van my grond gedoen?
maar voor ek sterf, wil ek jou vir oulaas soen.'

Hy kom toe nader, kniel daar nederig neer
en sê: 'My liewe Alie, by die Heer,
ek maak jou nooit weer seer nie, maar verstaan net
dit was jou skuld dat ek vir jou geslaan het.
Jy moet my tog vergewe, smee ek jou.'
Meteens gee ek hom toe 'n tweede hou
en sê: 'Vat so, jou dief, laat ek my wreek.
Ek kan nie praat nie, want my hart wil breek.' 810

Maar eindelijk ná heelwat smart en wee
het ons in onderhandeling getree:
hy het die teuels toe in my hand geplaas
dat ek voortaan oor huis en grond die baas
kon wees, en ook nog oor sy tong en hand,
en hy moes op die daad sy boek verbrand.
En ná ek so die soewereiniteit
oor hom verseker het deur slim beleid,
en hy gesê het: 'Van vandag af aan
laat ek vir jou, my liewe vrou, begaan; 820
bewaar jou eer en ook my eiendom.'
Toe't daar 'n end aan struweling gekom.
Van Denemarke tot in Indië sou
jy nie 'n paartjie vind wat so getrou

was aan mekaar en so vol vriendelikheid.
Ek bid dat God wat heers in majesteit
genade het op hom om liefdeswil.
Hier's my verhaal, so wees nou almal stil.

Woordewisseling tussen die Bodel en die Frater

Toe hy dit alles hoor toe lag die Frater;
"Mevrou, die Here weet," het hy geskater, 830
dis nou vir jou 'n aanloop tot 'n storie."

Maar hierop roep die Bodel uit: "Gedorie,
Gods arms! dis vermetelheid soos min.
'n Frater steek sy neus ook oral in,
want, mense, 'n frater is nes 'n vlieg wat pal
in mens se sop en in die rede val.
Watse geaanloop is dit met jou, frater?
Loop jy maar aan of draf, maar hou jou snater.
Jy wil ons pret bederf."

"O, dit is hoe
jy daarvoor voel," antwoord die Frater toe; 840
"Nou goed dan, voor ons skei, sal ek nog wel
'n ding of twee van bodels kan vertel
wat almal hierso lekker sal laat skater."

"Ek wens jou in die hel, verdomde frater,"
antwoord die Bodel, "en 'n vloek op my
as ek nie twee of drie verhale inkry
oor fraters voor ons Sittingbourne bereik;
en dit sal jou berou, my vriend, want kyk,
ek kan goed sien jou senuwees is klaar."

Ons Waard roep uit: "Toe kry nou end! Bedaar! 850
en laat die vrou met haar verhaal begin;
jul is soos mense met 'n oormaat in.
Kom, liewe mevrou, gaan gerus u gang."

"Meneer," sê sy, "ek doen soos u verlang,
mits hierdie goeie frater dit ook magtig."

"Gaan voort, mevrou," sê hy, "ek luister aandagtig."

DIE VROU VAN BATH SE VERHAAL

Toe Arthur koning was – en tot vandag
praat Britte van dié tyd met groot ontsag –
was daar nog feë in ons land, en in
die weide het die elwekoningin 860
nog dikwels saamgedans in blye fees;
dit was die ou geloof, het ek gelees.
Ek praat van eeue terug; vandag kan jy
die elwe glad nie meer te siene kry,
want danksy al die goedheid en gebede
van fraters en ander heilige kloosterlede
wat die hele wêreld vol loop, net so dig
soos stof wat wemel in 'n straal se lig,

om elke kamer, saal, vertrek, kombuis
en stad en dorp, gehug, kasteel en huis 870
en plaas met stal en skuur en melkery
te seën, was daar 'n end aan elwery,
en elke vroeëre boerplek van die elf
word nou beset deur die bedelmonnik self,
en soggens vroeg en smiddags laat
loop hy daar al sy prewelgoed en praat
as hy sy rondtes maak as bedelaar.
Vandag is daar vir vrouens g'n gevaar,
want daar's g'n ander inkubus²² as hy
in die diepte van die bos te kry; 880
al wat hy soek is hul ontreiniging.

Die koning se gevolg het 'n jongeling
vol wellus ingesluit wat op 'n dag
teruggekeer het van 'n valkejag
by die rivier, toe dit gebeur het dat
hy 'n jongvrou voor hom opgemerk het wat
moedersielalleen was. Sonder meer
het hy die maagd oorrompel en onteer;
en hierdie wandaad het so erg geskok
en soveel hewige protes ontlok 890
dat Arthur hom ter dood veroordeel het.
Hy sou onthoof geword het volgens wet
(want dit is wat gebeur het toentertyd),
maar die koningin en ander dames pleit
toe so indringend dat die koning hom
moet spaar dat Arthur oplaas besluit het om
sy lewe aan die koningin te gee
en sy kon maak net soos sy wil daarmee.

Sy't Arthur toe bedank en op 'n dag,
toe sy die tyd daarvoor geleë ag, 900
spreek sy die ridder op dié wyse aan:

'Jy's nou van alle sekerheid ontdaan
en daarom bly jou lewe in gevaar.
Vertel my één ding, dan sal ek jou spaar,
en dit is wat 'n vrou bo als begeer.
Pasop as jy jou nek van die swaard wil weer!
As jy my nie onmiddellik kan sê,
dan kan jy een jaar en 'n dag lank hê
om rond te gaan en soek en kyk of jy
'n bevredigende antwoord kan verkry, 910
maar jy moet my belowe dat jy weer
'n jaar van nou af terug sal keer.'

Die ridder sug – dit was 'n sware slag,
maar dit help hom niks, want hy staan in haar mag.
Hy het besluit om 'n swerftog te aanvaar
en terug te kom aan die einde van 'n jaar
met watter antwoord hy kon kry ook al.

22 Nagduiwel; 'n bose gees wat met slapende vroue geslagtelike gemeenskap het.

Hy neem sy afskeid en het in die pad geval.

Hy het gesoek in elke huis en plek
waar hy gehoop het om miskien te ontdek 920
wat dit mag wees wat 'n vrou bo als behaag,
maar nêrens kon hy in sy doelwit slaag:
diegene wat gevra is oor die saak
kon geensins tot eenstemmigheid geraak.

Volgens party is rykdom vrouens se strewe,
ander sê eer, ander 'n lekker lewe;
party meen klere of seks of sommer gou
deur haar man ontval te word en gou weer trou;
ander dat 'n vrou se sterkste drang
is dat 'n man haar vlei en pamperlang. 930
Dis naby aan die waarheid, moet ek erken;
met vleitaal kan 'n man ons maklik wen,
en as hy ons op die hande dra, dan sal
die aandag ons betower, een en al.

Ander meen weer 'n vrou se sterkste drang
is na vryheid om te doen nes sy verlang
en 'n man wat nie oor al haar foute raas nie
maar sê dat sy verstandig is, nie dwaas nie,
want waarlik, as mens in 'n seer gaan krap,
moet jy verwag dat die ander terug sal kap – 940
dis hoe die waarheid mens mos affekteer,
want, hoe vol sonde jy ook is, begeer
jy nogtans mense moet die mening huldig
dat jy verstandig is en doodonskuldig.
Party sê dis die hoogste lof vir 'n vrou
om deur te gaan vir taktvol en getrou,
standvastig in die doel wat sy beoog,
en nie geneig om skinder te gedoog.
Dié snert's geen harksteel werd nie, want 'n vrou
is nie in staat om 'n geheim te hou. 950
Dink maar aan Midas, van wie Ovidius
geskrywe het. Die storie lui aldus.

Twee eselore het aan sy kop gesit
en onder sy lang hare het Midas dit
versigtig weggesteek; hy't sy gebrek
so goed as wat hy kon aldus bedek
van elke mens, behalwe van sy vrou,
want hy't haar liefgehad en ook vertrou,
en dringend het hy haar dit opgelê
dat sy vir niemand iets daarvan moes sê. 960
Sy het gesweer dat niks op aarde haar
daartoe sou bring om so gemeen en naar
te wees dat sy haar man se naam gaan skaad,
en as sy iets sou sê, deel sy die smaad.
Maar sy't gevoel dat sy kon doodgaan, daar
sy dié geheim gedurig moes bewaar;
haar hart het pynlik in haar bors geswel,
so het die woorde in haar opgewel,

wat egter nie vir menseore was;
en dus het sy gehardloop na 'n moeras 970
met 'n brandende begeerte om daar te kom,
en soos 'n roerdomp²³ in die water brom,
haar mond tot teen die oppervlak gebring.

'Verraai my tog nie met jou kabbeling,'
het sy gesê. 'Geen mens kom dit te hore,
net jy alleen: My man het eselore!
Watter verligting! Ek voel beter nou;
dit was onmoontlik om dit in te hou.'
Dit illustreer 'n vroue-eienskap:
vroeër of later word als uitgelap. 980

Die een wat meer wil weet kan maar gerus
die storie nalees by Ovidius.
Nou, toe die ridder oor wie my storie gaan,
besef sy kanse het maar sleg gestaan
om uit te vind wat 'n vrou bo als begeer,
was hy swaarmoedig en sy hart was seer,
maar met sy tyd verstreke moes hy terug –
dit help nie om te talm of te sug.

En toe hy ingedagte huis toe ry
gaan die ridder aan die rand van 'n bos verby 990
waar daar meer as vier en twintig vroue was
wat hy daar oplet, dansend op die gras.

Hy't baie gretig vorentoe getree,
want hy't gehoop hul deel hom dalk iets mee,
maar voordat hy die dansers kon bereik,
het hul verdwyn. Hy't orals rondgekyk,
maar hul was spoorloos weg. Al wat daar was,
was een ou vrou gesete op die gras.
Skreeulelik was die vrou. Die ridder gaan
haar tegemoet; toe het sy opgestaan. 1000
'Heer Ridder,' sê sy, 'hierlangs loop g'n pad,
maar as u nou vir my verwittig wat
dit is wat u kom soek, wie weet kan ek
dalk hulp uit oumensvaardigheid verstrek.'

'My liewe moeder,' sê hy, 'ek's 'n kind
des doods tensy ek 'n oplossing kan vind
op die vraag wat vrouens allermees wil hê;
ek sal u loon as u vir my kan sê.'

'Gee my jou hand,' sê sy. 'Belowe my
dat die eerste ding wat ek jou vra, tensy 1010
dit iets onmoontliks is, jy my sal gee,
dan help ek jou voor donker nog hiermee.'

'Akkoord,' sê die ridder, 'op my woord van eer.'

'Dan,' sê die ouvrou, 'kan ek konstateer
jy's veilig, want die koningin verstrek
beslis dieselfde oplossing as ek.
Gaan maar die allertrotste dame na

23 Reieragtige moerasvoël. Volgens volksgeloof steek hy sy kop onder die water om sy kenmerkende dreungeluid voort te bring.

wat kopdoek of 'n duur hooftooisel dra
en kyk of sy my antwoord kan weerlê.
Maar ons moet vort, so dis genoeg gesê.' 1020
Toe fluister sy die antwoord in sy oor
wat hom tot blydschap en vertrouwe spoor.

By die koningshof gekom, het hy verklaar:
soos hy belowe het, was hy nou daar
met 'n antwoord op die vraag gestel aan hom.

Daar't baie edelvroue saamgedrom
en maagde, en weduwees wat kundig is,
en die koningin, wat self die saak beslis,
om sy antwoord te verneem. Toe's hy gelas
om die kamer te betree waar hulle was. 1030
Eers is die dames stilte opgelê;
toe moes die ridder pront vir hulle sê
wat wens 'n aardse vroumens allermees.

Die ridder het nie stom gestaan soos 'n bees;
Hy't nie op hom laat wag nie, maar het flink
geantwoord met 'n stem wat helder klink:
'In die algemeen gesproke, u majesteit,
hunker 'n vrou na soewereiniteit.
Dis haar begeerte om die kroon te span
oor al wat minnaar is en oor haar man – 1040
oor almal soek 'n vrou die heerskappy.
Maak my maar dood; doen soos u wil met my.'

Toe hul dit hoor, het elke weduwee
en vrou en maagd vir hom gelyk gegee
en het ingestem hy moet sy lewe hou.

Op hierdie oomblik spring orent die vrou
wat die ridder aangetref het op die gras.
'U majesteit,' klink haar woorde dringend, 'as
my bede u goedgunstiglik behaag,
doen aan my reg voordat u hof verdaag. 1050
Ek het dié ridder van advies voorsien
en hy't belowe dat hy my, indien
dit moontlik is, sal gee wat ek hom vra.
Nou eis ek hier: kom jou belofte na
en neem vir my,' sê sy, 'tot huweliksmaat.
Jy weet jy dank jou lewe aan my raad;
as dit onwaar is, sê so onder eed.'

Die ridder antwoord toe: 'Helaas, ek weet
maar al te goed van my versekering,
maar vra my liewers enige ander ding; 1060
neem als wat ek besit, maar laat my vry.'

'Nee,' antwoord sy. 'n Vloek tref jou en my,
want al is ek ook lelik, arm en oud,
verwerp ek al die erts en al die goud
beide bo- en ondergronds te vinde
kry ek jou nie as man en as beminde.'

'Beminde?' sê hy, 'my verdoemenis!
Helaas, vir iemand van my status is

dié ding 'n gruwelike skandelas.'

Dit help hom niks, want die uiteinde was
dat hy g'n keuse had as om te trou
en in die kooi te kruip met dié ou vrou.

1070

As daar diegene is wat my blameer
dat ek nie moeite doen of nie probeer
om te vertel van al die vreugde en pret
wat hulle bruilofsfees gekenmerk het,
dan sou my antwoord daarop bondig wees:
daar was nie vreugde nie en glad g'n fees,
maar smart en somberheid was daar genoeg.
Hul's stilletjies getroud die oggend vroeg;
toe kruip hy soos 'n uil die heeldag weg,
want oor haar lelikheid voel hy bra sleg.

1080

Droefgeestig was die ridder toe hy met
sy vrou gebring is na die huweliksbed;²⁴
hy't rondgerol en kon sy lê nie kry,
die ou vrou steeds glimlaggend aan sy sy.
'My liewe man, is dit,' het sy gevra
'hoe elke ridder hom met sy vrou gedra?
Is dit wat jul by die hof van Arthur leer?
Sien alle ridders so op ander neer?
Ek is tog jou beminde en jou vrou;
ek het gesorg dat jy die lewe hou;
op watter wyse het ek jou gegrief
dat jy my op ons eerste nag so stief
behandel? Soos 'n radelose man
gaan jy te kere. Sê my wat skort en dan
sal ek dit regstel, lê dit in my weg.'

1090

'Dit regstel?' sê die ridder. 'Wee en ag,
dis iets wat niemand reg kan stel, want jy
is so afskuwelik, so oud daarby,
en laaggebore ook, dis moeilik om
nie rond te rol nie en tot rus te kom.
Die Here weet, ek wens my hart wil breek.'

1100

'Is dit,' sê sy, 'wat agter jou onrus steek?'
'Dit is, ja,' antwoord hy, 'en wat daarvan?'
'Ek sou dit kon verander, liewe man,
binne drie dae,' sê sy, 'as ek wou
en as jy mooier met my praat as nou.
Maar aangesien jy praat van adel wat,
volgens jou, ontleen is aan die skat
van voorgeslagte en jóú nou edel maak;
dié arrogansie stel ek aan die kaak.
Soek na die man wat altyd deugsam is –
hy word gekenmerk deur 'n verbintenis
tot edel dade, soveel as wat hy kan –
en sien in hóm die fynste edelman.
Christus wil hê ons adel moet van Hom

1110

24 Dit was gebruikelik dat die gaste aan die einde van die onthaal die getroudes na hul huweliksbed begelei.

en nie van ons gegoede voorouers kom.
Al erf ons ryk van die mense vantevore
en dink ons aan onself as hooggebore, 1120
tog erf ons nooit die goedheid van hul lewe;
daardeur is hul tot adelstand verhewe;
hul voorbeeld spoor ons almal aan
om op dieselfde pad van deug te gaan.

Die Florentynse digter, Dante, praat
oor hierdie aangeleentheid met beraad.
Welluidend is die reëls waar hy betoog:
“Die mens se deug skiet baie min omhoog
deur die takke van ’n stamboom; God alleen
is dit wat adel aan ’n mens verleen”; 1130
want al wat ouers eintlik kan bemaak,
is wêreldsgoed wat lig beskadig raak.

Kyk, almal weet so goed as ek dat as
’n edele inbors ingebore was
in enige familie, al die lede
mos net tot edele bedrywighede,
én in die openbaar én ook privaat,
geneig sou wees, en onbevoeg tot kwaad.

Soek na ’n huis, die donkerste te kry
van hier tot in die Kaukasus, waar jy 1140
’n vuur kan los, die deure sluit en weer
vertrek, en dit sal brand so goed, sou ek sweer,
as wanneer twintigduisend dit aanskou;
Dit sal die eie aard van vuur behou
en brand totdat dit doodgaan mettertyd.

Nou, hieruit kan mens sien dat edelheid
geensins afhanklik is van aardse goed,
want mense doen nie altyd wat hul moet,
soos vuur, oor dit met die geaardheid strook.
God weet, ’n edelman se seun kan ook 1150
soms lae, skandelige dade pleeg;
en hy by wie die adel sterkste weeg
wat hy geerf het van ’n voorgeslag
wat edel was en deugsam, ongeag
of hy self goeie dade doen en reg is
om die voorbeeld na te volg van hul wat weg is,
hy is nie edel, al is hy prins of graaf –
’n skurk se boosheid maak vir hom tot slaaf.

Jou adel is maar net die goeie naam
van jou voorouers, hulle hoë faam, 1160
waaraan jy self geen aandeel het, want jy
kan ware adel net van God verkry.
Dié adel vloei dus uit genade voort
en is nie iets wat by ons status hoort.

Dink maar aan Tullius Hostilius
wat edel was, aldus Valerius:
hy’t bo gebrek gestyg tot hoë eer.
Boëthius en Seneca beweer

dat dit g'n twyfel ly: die doener van edelhede – dié is 'n edelman. 1170

My slotsom, liewe man, is dit: al was my voorgeslagte ook van lae klas, mag ek genade van die Heer verkry om 'n lewe vol van deugsaamheid te lei; dis eers wanneer ek sonde agterlaat dat ek van adel kan begin te praat.

En wat jou klag betref dat ek arm is: die hoë God van ons belydenis het armoede Hom laat welgeval.

Geen man of vrou of kind op aarde sal die soort van lewe wat ons Hemelheer uit vrye wil gekies het, kritiseer. 1180

Eerbaar is die armoede, aldus leer Seneca, waarin 'n mens berus. Ek ag hom ryk wat nie sy lot bekla, al het hy ook g'n hemp wat hy kan dra.

Jy's arm as jy ander gaan beny en jou verknies oor wat jy nie kan kry, maar hy wat niks het en ook niks verwag, is waarlik ryk, al word hy dalk verag. 1190

Die armoede laat 'n lied opwel, soos Juvenalis dit spitsvondig stel: "Die arm man op weg kan dans en sing; hy't niks wat diewe in versoeking bring."

Gebrek's 'n seën, al is dit ongewens: tot groter ywer prikkel dit 'n mens; en dit bevorder wysheid buitendien, soos wie blymoedig dit verdra, kan sien. Al is dit swaar, is dit 'n rykdom wat 'n ander nooit probeer om weg te vat; en as mens nederig is, dan sal dit tot selfkennis strek en kennis ook van God. 1200

Die armoede is 'n bril waardeur 'n mens jou ware vriende kan bespeur. En aangesien gebrek g'n misdryf is, is dit g'n rede tot onsteltenis.

Verder verwyf jy my my ouderdom.

Al kan ek nou nie met sitate kom om dit te staaf, sal vooraanstaandes sê jy moet ontsag vir 'n bejaarde hê, hom "vader" noem, soos hoflikheid vereis – mens sal dit wel uit boeke kan bewys. 1210

Is ek oud en lelik? Dan het jy g'n vrees om op jou dag 'n horingdraer te wees, want lelikheid en ouderdom vrywaar die kuisheid alte dikwels teen gevaar. Maar ek weet wat jy geniet, so ek sal jou al die lekkerkry laat kry waarvan jy hou.

Kyk, nou moet jy 'n keuse maak, sê sy,

'óf dat ek altyd oud en lelik bly,
en nederig en trou steeds daarna streef
jou nooit teleur te stel solank ek leef,
óf dat ek jonk en mooi sal wees, maar dan
moet dit jou nie verbaas as al wat man
is by jou huis kom lê om my te sien,
of my ontmoet op 'n ander plek miskien;
maar kom, dis tyd dat jy jou mening lug.'

Die ridder het diep gedink en swaar gesug,
en eindelijk sy antwoord reggekry.

'Geëerde gade, liewe vrou,' sê hy,
'ek wil dit graag aan jou wyse oordeel laat.
Kies jy die koers wat vir ons die meeste baat
en eer sal inhou. Ek sal my versoen
met die keuse wat jy vir ons albei doen.
Wat jou ook al behaag, bevredig my.'

Sy sê: 'Dus het ek dan die heerskappy,
want ek kan kies en het beheer oor jou?'

Hy antwoord: 'Dis die beste, liewe vrou.'

'Soen my,' sê sy. 'Genoeg geredeneer,
want ek sal vir jou albei wees, ek sweer:
'n vrou wat mooi is en ook goed daarby.
Mag God my straf met dood en raserny
sou ek aan jou nie meer getrou wees as
enige vrou ooit in die wêreld was!
En as ek môre nie so mooi vertoon
as wat 'n koningin is op haar troon,
in watter land ook al, staan dit jou vry
om dan te maak net soos jy wil met my.
Lig die gordyn en kyk wat wag op jou.'

En toe die ridder sien hoe mooi sy vrou
werklik geword het en hoe jonk daarby,
neem hy haar in sy arms, dankiebly;
sy hart oorstrom deur golwe van geluk,
soen hy haar honderdduisend maal verruk.
Sy was gehoorsaam en het elke ding
gedoen wat dien tot sy bevrediging.
Van toe af leef hul saam in volle akkoord.

God skenk ons almal mans van hierdie soort:

jonk en sagmoedig, in die kooi bedrewe,
asook genade om hul te oorlewe.
En mag Hy dié se lewensloop verkort
wat nie deur hulle vrouens regeer wil word,
en dié wat oud en suinig is veral,
mag 'n ware pestilensie hul oorval.

Proloog tot die Frater se verhaal

Die brawe Bedelmonnik het voortdurend
gefrons, in die rigting van die Bodel glurend,
maar uit hoflikheid het hy hom ingehou,
die Bodel voorasnog nie toegesnou.

Toe't hy hom tot die Vrou van Bath gekeer:
"Mevrou, ek wens u seëning van die Heer. 1270

Die sake wat u hier te berde bring,
kom in skolastiese bespiegeling
meermale voor. U het dit straks nie mis,
maar tog, terwyl ons op die reispad is,
is dit beter dat ons lag en skertsend praat,
in godsnaam ou outoriteite laat
aan predikante en aan teoloë.

Maar as dit dien tot almal se genoeë,
dra ek iets grappigs oor 'n bodel voor. 1280
Dog, as 'n mens die naam van bodel hoor,
dan weet jy klaar daar kan niks goeds van kom,
en hierdie stelling sal geeneen verstom:
'n bodel hardloop heelyd heen en weer
en boetes uitdeel vir geslagsverkeer,
en word in donker straatjies voorgelê."

"Wees tog beleefder," het ons Waard gesê,
"want dis wat iemand van u stand betaam.
U wil u nie as rusiemaker skaam.
Vertel jou storie; laat die Bodel staan."

"Nee," sê die Bodel, "laat hom maar begaan, 1290
want, wees verseker, ek is lus vir hom;
so wag maar net tot my gellentheid kom;
as dit my beurt is, sal eh hierdie vent
in gelyke munt betaal, die laaste sent.
Ek sal jul inlig hoe die gladde bek
van 'n bedelmonnik tot sy glorie strek
en waarmee hy hom heeldag besig hou."

"Toe," sê ons Waard. "Hou op. Laat staan dit nou."
En tot die Frater het hy hom gekeer
met: "Kom, vertel gerus, my goeie heer." 1300

DIE FRATER SE VERHAAL

Eens op 'n tyd was daar in my kontrei
'n aartsdeken.¹ 'n Man van naam was hy.
Sy straf is kwistig uitgedeel omrede
'n groot verskeidenheid ontugtighede
aan hekse, kerkberowers en koppelaars,
aan owerspeliges en lasteraars,
aan knoeiers met kontrakte en testamente,
asook minagters van die sakramente

1 Geestelike wat die biskop bystaan.

en dié wat skuldig was aan ander kwaad
 wat ek maar liewers agterweë laat, 1310
 soos woekerrente neem en simonie.²
 Hoereerders het hy graag betrap en dié
 het hy laat les opsê, en baiemaal
 ook mense wat hul tiendes traag betaal,
 want geen oortreder aan die lig gebring
 het geldelike pyne vrygespring.
 Tiendes en offergawes onderbetaal
 het heelwat gramskap op die hals gehaal:
 voor die biskop iets kon doen, dié aartsdeken
 reeds hul besonderhede opgeteken
 en, oor hul onder sy jursdiksie staan,
 was hy bevoeg om hulle aan te maan 1320
 en daarvoor had hy 'n bodel byderhand.
 Daar was g'n sluer kêrel in die land:
 spioene het hom voortdurend ingelig
 van enigiets wat dalk sy nut kon stig;
 'n paar hoereerders wat op vrye voet is,
 verseker hom van baie meer se boetes.
 Al dreig dié Bodel om die piep te kry,
 sal ek vertel van hulle skurkery;
 hul het geen mag oor ons wat een en al
 buite hulle jursdiksie val,³ 1330
 en hul sal nooit die oorhand oor ons kry.
 "Nes die bordele," troef die Bodel. "Jy
 weet hul is ook nie aan ons onderhewig."
 "Bly stil nou," roep ons Waard. "Jy's wederstrewig.
 Gee hom 'n kans om sy storie te vertel.
 Gaan voort, ondanks die Bodel se geskel,
 en laat niks onvermeld nie asseblief."
 Dié bodel, sê die Frater, die valse dief,
 het koppelaars gebruik, steeds byderhand,
 die beste lokaas in die hele land: 1340
 elke geheim het hul aan hom verklap,
 want hulle't al 'n lang pad saamgestap;
 geheime agente – dit was hulle taak;
 en daaruit het hy baie geld gemaak –
 hoeveel presies was sy meester onbekend.
 Sonder 'n lasbrief het hy 'n simpel vent
 gedagvaar en hom met die vrees vir die ban
 so afgedreig dat die hulpelose man
 daar opdok of betaal met kos en bier.
 Soos Judas wat die twaalf as tesourier 1350
 moes dien maar hul beroof het, so was hy:
 sy meester het nie die helfte ooit gekry.
 As ek reg aan hom moet doen, dan sê ek maar:
 hy was 'n bodel, dief en koppelaar.
 Hy't vroue aangehou wat hom sou sê

2 Die koop of verkoop van kerklike ampte of geestelike goedere (Handelinge 8: 9-24).

3 Fraters het onder die owerste van hul orde geresorteer, nie onder die biskop nie.

van elke mansmens wat by hul kom lê:
of dit eerwaarde Rutger was of Huig
of Jan of Rolf – hul sou daarvan getuig;
hul't dus as bondgenote saamgewerk.
Met 'n vervalste lasbrief van die Kerk
dagvaar hy die twee en as hul voor hom staan,
pluk hy die man en sê die vrou kan gaan.
'Om jou ontwil,' sê hy, 'skrap ek dié vrou
hier van my swart lys, vriend, en jy hoef jou
nie meer daaroor te kwel nie, want ek is
jou vriend en hou jou in gedagtenis.'

So kundig was hy in omkopery,
mens sou dit in 'n jaar nie klein kon kry.
So skerp's die sinne van 'n jagtershond,
hy weet of 'n bok gekwes is of gesond:
dié bodel was ook altyd in die kol
met sluwe minnaar, egbreker of snol,
en omdat dit 'n bron was van profyt,
het hy hom daarop toegelê die hele tyd.

En so het dit gebeur een goeie dag
dat hierdie bodel, uit op winsbejag,
met 'n verdigte aanklag teen 'n vrou,
'n weduwee, op pad was, want hy wou
haar plunder. Aan 'n woud se soom sien hy
'n uitgevatte leenman voor hom ry:
hy't 'n boog gehad met pyle skerp en keurig
en die jas wat hy gedra het, was groenkleurig
en op sy kop was daar 'n swartrandhoed.
'Dag,' sê die bodel. 'Meester, wees gegroet.'

'Dieselfde ook aan jou en elke goeie man,'
antwoord die leenman. 'Sê my, wat's jou plan;
het jy nog ver om deur dié woud te ry?'

'Nee,' sê die bodel, 'ek sal netnou by
my bestemming wees. Ek is ter wille van huur
aan my heer verskuldig daarnatoe gestuur.'

'Is jy rentmeester dan?' vra die leenman hom.
Die bodel, deur skaamte oor wat hy was oorkom,
gaan dadelik met die vreemdeling akkoord,
want 'bodel' was 'n skandelige woord.

Die leenman sê: '*Par Dieu*, dan's jy my broer:
deur dieselfde ambag word ons saamgesnoer.
Ek is 'n vreemdeling hier, heel ver van huis,
dus is ek bly ons paaie het gekruis
en ons kan vriende wees, as dit jou pas;
ek het heelwat goud en silwer in my kas –
dis alles joune, jy kan dit maar kry,
kom jy miskien eendag in my kontrei.'

'Wel, dankie,' sê hy, 'op my woord van eer!'
Met 'n handdruk het hul broederskap gesweer,
trou aan mekaar totdat die dood hul skei,
en al geselsend het hul aangery.

Die bodel het een stryk deur gepraat, want soos
'n janfiskaal was hy genadeloos.

Hy't ook oor alles uitgevra. 'Vertel
my waar jou huis is, liewe metgesel,
want ek sal by jou uitval, as ek kan.'

1410

'My tuiste's in die noorde,' sê die man;
dis in 'n verre land, maar ek vertrou
eendag is eendag sien ek tog vir jou;
ek sal aan jou verduidelik voor ons skei,
dat jy presies weet hoe om dit te kry.'

Die bodel sê: 'My broer, terwyl ons dan
hier saam op reis is, beoefenaars van
dieselfde ambag ook, kan jy my wel
'n kunsie leer wat my in staat sal stel
om dalk 'n bietjie ekstra geld te maak;
benader dit nie as 'n gewetensaak,
maar sê my broederlik hoe konkel jy.'

1420

'My broer, in alle eerlikheid,' sê hy,
'om jou die reïne waarheid te verhaal,
die loon waarvoor ek werk is baie skraal;
my heer is streng, verwag van my te veel,
so harde werk vir weinig is my deel
en daarom's ek van sluheid of geweld
van jaar tot jaar afhanklik vir my geld:
ek pers betaling af waar ek ook kom
em maak gebruik van die geleentheid om
onkoste wat ek aangaan te verhaal.'

1430

'Top,' sê die bodel, 'man, jy praat my taal!
Ek buit al wat ek beetkry, want ek's arm,
behalwe wat te swaar is of te warm
en, waarlik, wat in die geheim gebeur
dien nouliks my gewete te versteur;
sonder afpersing kan ek nie bestaan,
so daarmee hoef ek nie te bieg te gaan.
Ek voel geen jammerte en geen berou;
al wat biegvader is, vervloek ek nou.
By God en Sint Jakobus, ek is bly
ons het mekaar ontmoet; maar sê vir my:
wat is jou naam, my liewe broer?' Terstond
speel daar 'n glimlag om sy maat se mond.

1440

'My broer,' sê hy, 'moet ek jou dan vertel?
Ek is 'n duiwel en ek woon in die hel.
Ek ry rond om te sien wat ek los kan slaan,
alles vrywillig aan my afgestaan;
ek is afhanklik van wat ek kan vat.
Met dieselfde doel ry jy die wêreld plat:
om iets te kry, en hóé kan jou niks skeel;
so ry ek ook deur elke wêrelddeel
en, net soos jy, is ek op soek na prooi.'

1450

'Nou aitsa!' sê die bodel, 'dis vir jou mooi.
Ek het gedink dat jy 'n leenman is,

want jy't 'n menslike gestaltenis
presies nes ek; so kan jy my vertel,
het jy 'n vaste vorm in die hel?' 1460

'Van vorm,' antwoord hy, 'is ons daar ontdaan;
maar as ons een wil hê, neem ons dit aan
of ons laat mense dink dat hul iets sien
in die vorm van 'n mens of 'n aap miskien,
of soos 'n engel doen ek my dalk voor.
Dis geensins te verwonder, hoor:
'n goëlaar kul met oëverblindery
en ek het, voor my siel, meer kuns as hy.'

'Maar waarom wissel van gedaante,' wou
die bodel weet, 'eerder as één te hou?' 1470

Toe antwoord hy: 'Ons skik ons na gelang
van wat die beste dien om ons prooi te vang.'

'Maar waarom soveel moeite doen?' vra hy.

Die duiwel sê: 'Daar's redes velerlei;
maar wag nou eers, daar sal geleentheid kom;
die dag is kort en priemtyd is al om,
en ek het nog g'n slag geslaan, laat my
nou toe om aandag aan my werk te wy
en nie meer tyd aan uitleg te bestee.

Al sou ek in besonderhede tree, 1480
is jy te bot, my broer, om te verstaan.

Maar, wat betref die moeite glo gedaan,
partymaal's ons 'n instrument van God,
'n werktuig in Sy hand om Sy gebod
aan mense te besoek, soos Hy gelas,
in watter vorm ook die opdrag pas,
en waarlik ons het hoegenaamd geen mag
as dit teenstrydig is met Sy gesag.
Soms word 'n liggaam in ons mag gestel,
maar daarenteen mag ons die siel nie kwel – 1490

dink maar aan Job en wat hy als moes ly;
soms mag ons albei ewe veel kasty –
met ander woorde, vlees sowel as gees;
en soms weer sal die siel ons teiken wees
en nie die liggaam nie. As dit so val,
is dit tot 'n mens se voordeel, want hy sal
die vreugde van die Heer kan binnegaan,
solank hy ons versoeking weerstaan –
nie dat sy redding ons bedoeling is,
want ons soek eintlik sy verdoemenis. 1500

En soms dien ons 'n mens. Dit was veral
met Dunstan, die aartsbiskop,⁴ die geval;
ekself het die apostels bygestaan.'

'Nou, sê my waarlik,' het die bodel voortgegaan,
'word die liggaam steeds opnuut gesmee
uit die elemente?'⁵ Die duiwel antwoord, 'Nee,

4 Toe 'n duiwel vir Dunstan lastig geval het, het die aartsbiskop hom met 'n vuurwarm knyptang aan die neus gegryp en hom tot diensbaarheid gedwing.

soms is ons hersenskimme; soms verrys
 ons uit 'n dooie liggaam en bewys
 ons redelik, tot gesprek in staat;
 so't Samuel met die towerheks gepraat.⁶ 1510
 Party sal egter sê dis als versin –
 maar met godgeleerdheid meng ek my nie in.
 Dis sonder grappies dat ek jou moet maan:
 jy sal wel uitvind waaruit ons bestaan
 wanneer jy, broer, 'n plek bereik waar jy
 nie nodig het om onderrig te kry;
 uit eie ondervinding sal jy dan
 daarvoor kan uitwei soos 'n volleerde man,
 beter as Vergilius tydens sy
 verblyf op aarde, of Dante, reg kon kry. 1520
 Nou laat ons verder ry; ek is jou maat
 tot jy besluit dat jy my wil verlaat.'
 'Nee,' sê die bodel, 'daar's g'n kans daarvan.
 Ek is 'n leenman, wyd bekend as 'n man
 wat sy woord gestand doen, en in dié geval,
 al was jy Satan self, sou ek nog pal
 staan by die eed van wedersydse trou
 deur jou aan my gesweer, deur my aan jou,
 dat ons mekaar in broederskap sal min;
 en daar ons albei uit is op gewin, 1530
 neem elkeen as sy deel wat hy kan kry,
 want ons wil albei aan die lewe bly.
 As een dalk beter as die ander vaar
 dan deel ons dit gelykop met mekaar.'
 Die duiwel sê: 'Voorwaar, ek gaan akkoord,'
 en hulle ry in kameraadskap voort
 tot aan die buitewyke van 'n stad –
 die bodel was nou juis daarheen op pad –
 waar hul 'n voerman teëkom met 'n wa,
 so vorgelaai met hooi as dit kan dra, 1540
 en dit het in die modder vasgeval.
 Die vent klim onder die perde in en skal:
 'Hait Brok, hait Bles! Los uit al dié gedraal.
 Ek wens die duiwel wil vir jul kom haal,
 met huid en haar verwyder, want jul is
 verdomp niks anders as 'n ergenis.
 Die duiwel vat jul, perde, wa en vrag!'
 Die bodel sê, 'Hier kom 'n ding; maar wag.'
 Asof hy niks gewaar het, kom hy tot by
 die duiwel en vlakby fluister hy: 1550
 'Het jy gehoor, my broer, op my woord van eer.
 Het jy gehoor wat het die vent gesweer?
 So neem dit, neem dit als; hy't jou genooi

5 Volgens die Middeleeuse wetenskap is alles saamgestel uit die vier elemente, water, lug, vuur en aarde. Die elemente is in wye sin geïnterpreteer: water as enige vog of vloeistof, lug enige damp of gas, vuur enige hitte, en aarde enige soliede stof.

6 I Samuel 28.

om beslag te lê op perde, wa en hooi.'

Die duiwel antwoord: 'Nee, ek weier beslis omdat dit geensins sy bedoeling is.

Vra hom as jy nie glo nie, of miskien moet jy 'n rukkie wag om self te sien.'

Die voerman raps sy perde oor die blad; Hul't hard gebeur en toe begin hul vat.

1560

'Hup, hup, my perdjies,' sê hy. 'Mag God jul seën en al Sy skepsels oor die wêreld heen.

My goeie ou skimmel, jy't fluks gewerk; mag God en Sint Eligius jou sterk.

Ag, dankie tog, my wa is uit die slyk.'

'Wel,' sê die duiwel, 'gee jy my gelyk? Sien jy, my liewe broer, wat die kêrel sê, is nie dieselfde as wat hy wil hê.

Kom, laat ons liewers voortgaan met ons reis; hier's niks te buit, dié aanspraak afgewys.

1570

'n Entjie verder keer die bodel hom voor en fluister dringend in sy vriend se oor:

'My broer,' sê hy, 'hier woon 'n ou vrou wat veel eerder met haar lewe boet as dat sy 'n penning uitbetaal; intussen is ek voornemens om twaalf pennings uit te trek of sy kom voor die aartsdeken te staan, al weet ek goed sy het g'n fout begaan.

As jy dink 'n mens kan hierlangs niks verdien, hou my maar dop; jy sal die teendeel sien.'

1580

Die bodel klop daar aan by die weduvrou.

'Kom uit, jou helleveeg,' roep hy. 'Watwou, jy het 'n frater of 'n priester daar alweer.'

'Wie klop daar?' vra die vrou. 'My goeie heer, waarmee kan ek vir u behulpsaam wees?'

'Ek het 'n dagvaarding om voor te lees. Môre moet jy op straf van die ban,' sê hy, 'voor die aartsdeken se hof verskyn waar jy oor sekere sake rekenskap moet gee.'

'Ag, Vader help my,' sê sy. 'Wee o wee!

1590

Hoe nou gemaak? Dis 'n onmoontlikheid, want ek is siek, reeds 'n geruime tyd.

Ek het so 'n steek; die afstand is so groot; as ek só ver loop, beteken dit my dood.

Is daar dalk 'n afskrif van die dokument, heer bodel, dan kan een as my agent verantwoording doen op die getuienis?'

'Ja, ja,' sê hy, 'maar dis botter by die vis: gee my twaalf pennings en ek skeld jou vry, en daarin steek maar weinig baat vir my, my meester maak die wins daaruit, nie ek.

1600

Kom, kom nou, vroumens, want ek wil vertrek.

Dok op twaalf pennings; toe, dan gee ek pad.'

'Twaalf pennings!' roep sy. 'Nee, so waar as wat

Maria my behoed teen alle kwaad,
al sou dit my die hele wêreld baat,
kan ek nie soveel in die hande kry.
U weet ek's arm en nog oud daarby;
betoon genade aan 'n arme ou ambraal.⁷

'Nee,' sê hy, 'mag die duiwel my kom haal
as ek jou aflaai, al gaan jy te gronde.'

'Ek is aandadig,' sê sy, 'aan geen sonde.'

'Betaal,' sê hy, 'of, by Sint Anna, ek sal
jou nuwe pan moet neem in ruil vir al
die geld wat jy my skuld, want ek het mos
te goeder trou die boete afgelos
wat vir egbreuk opgelê is toentertyd.'

'Dit lieg jy,' sê sy. 'By my saligheid,
nog nooit as vrou of weduwee is ek
deur jou in so 'n hofgeding betrek,
en eweneens was ek ook nooit ontrou.
Aan die liederlikste duiwel gee ek jou;
hy kan die pan ook op die koop toe kry!'

En toe die duiwel opmerk hoedat sy
hom op haar knieë vloek, toe vra hy haar:
'Nou moeder Martie, is dit alles waar
wat jy daar sê? Bedoel jy dit opreg?'

Sy sê: 'Die duiwel dra hom spoedig weg
met pan en al, tensy dit hom berou.'

'Nee, daarvoor sien ek glad nie kans nie, ou vrou,'
antwoord die bodel. 'As ek spyt moet hê
oor jou ou goedjies deur my vasgelê,
dan vat ek nou jou rok en al jou klere.'

Die duiwel sê: 'Wat gaan jy so te kere?
Kyk, ek het reg op jou en die pan daarby
en jy moet nog vanaand hel toe met my.
Daar leer jy meer omtrent ons heimlikheid
as 'n hele teologiese fakulteit.'

Die duiwel pak hom beet met hierdie woord
en sleep hom siel en liggaam na dié oord
wat die ware tuiste van 'n bodel is.
Mag God, wat die mens na Sy gelykenis
gemaak het, ons voorts op ons weg bewaak,
en nog van bodels goeie mense maak.

Menere, meer sou ek vertel het as
dié Bodel hier daartoe gewillig was;
hoe't Christus, Paulus en Johannes dit
elk op sy eie wyse uiteengesit,
en ná hul baie ander teoloë
wat met hul woorde harte diep bewoë
laat voel oor die verskrikking van die hel,
al neem dit duisend jaar om te vertel.
Waak dan en bid dat Christus hom ontferm

7 Sieklike mens; sukkelaar.

en ons teen dié vervloekte plek beskerm
en teen die Satan wat ons wil verlei.
Deur 'n Skrifgedeelte word ons voorberei:
'Die leeu lê agter 'n bos; hy's op die loer
ten einde hulpeloses weg te voer.'
Maak seker julle lendene's omgord,
dat Satan nie jul heer en meester word;
hy mag jul nie beproef bokant jul krag,
want Christus, ons kampvegter, hou die wag;
en bid dat bodels van hul bose gang
mag afwyk voor die duiwel hulle vang.

1660

Proloog tot die Bodel se verhaal

Die Frater kom in sy stiebeuels orent,
want hy vererg hom bloedig vir die vent
en, bewend soos 'n blaar aan 'n trilpopulier,
het hy gesê: Ek vra net een ding hier:
jul het geluister hoe dié Frater sleg
van bodels praat; nou's dit niks minder as reg
dat ek geleentheid kry om te vertel.

1670

Hy loop te koop daarmee, hy ken die hel;
dis nouliks te verwonder, want hoe kan jy
'n frater van 'n duiwel onderskei?

Jul't inderdaad gehoor wat hul vertel
van hoe 'n frater eenmaal na die hel
toe weggevoer is in 'n visioen;
en hoe 'n engel hom geleide doen
om hom die straf te wys daar toegedien;
maar tog het hy g'n frater daar gesien,
net ander wat veel lyding moes verdra.

1680

Die frater het die engel toe gevra:

'Sê my, geniet 'n frater die genade
dat hy nie hier moet boet vir sondedade?'

'Nee, daar's miljoene van hul hier,' sê hy,
en hy't hom toe na Satan begelei
in die diepte van die hel. 'Sy stert's so groot,'
sê die engel, 'soos die seil van 'n galjoot.¹
Hei, Satan, lig jou stert op,' sê hy, 'dat
die frater hier in staat is om jou gat
te sien, want dis mos waar die fraters hou.'

1690

In 'n oogwenk, soos 'n swerm bye gou
die korf verlaat, het 'n twintigduisendtal
van hulle opgestyg in die lug en al
swermend het hul elke hoek beset
van die verderf en ewe skielik het
hul almal na die duiwel teruggekeer,
waar hulle in sy hol gekruip het weer.
Die duiwel het sy stert weer oor sy gat
geklap en stil gelê. Die frater wat
genoeg gesien het van die verdoemenis
met al sy leed, deur Gods genade is
sy liggaam weer verenig met sy gees,
maar wakker het hy gebibber van die vrees
by die gedagte aan die bestemming wat
vir alle fraters voorlê: Niek se gat.

1700

Mag God vir jul beskerm teen gevaar –
behalwe die Frater. My proloog is klaar.

1 Soort galei; outydse vaartuig.

DIE BODEL SE VERHAAL

Menere, in Yorkshire is daar sover ek weet
'n veengebied wat Holdernessee heet. 1710

Daar doen 'n mendikant² sy rondtes om
te preek en aan sy bedelgeld te kom.
Oudergewoonte het dié bedelbroer
op 'n goeie dag die woord in 'n kerk gevoer
en by die mense deur sy prediking
in die besonder daarop aangedring
dat hul die Kerk se dienste onderhou
en hulle geld bewillig vir die bou
van kerke wat gewy is tot Gods eer.

Dit moenie gaan aan dié wat geld verteer 1720
of nie benodig nie – 'n traktement³
maak mens met weelde en vertoon bekend,
terwyl 'n frater nooddruf moet verduur.

'n Vriend se siel word uit die vaevuur
gered deur requiems – 'n dertigtal⁴
kort op mekaar se hakke help veral.

Dis nie te sê dat 'n priester wat die Mis
tot een per dag beperk, ligsinnig is.
Verlos die siele,' roep hy, 'doen dit nou!
Hoe aaklig as vleishake en prieme jou
liggaam verskeur terwyl die vlamme laai;
so red hul uit die vuur waarin hul braai.' 1730

Sy storie uit, volg daar as afskeidswoord
sy *Qui cum patre*⁵ en dan gaan hy voort.
Die gemeente bring hul gawes wat hy vat
en daarna val hy dadelik in die pad.
Met bedelsak, beslaande staf en py
onder sy gordel ingestee, loer hy
in elke huis vir meel en kaas en koring.

Sy reismaat het 'n staf, die greep van horing, 1740
skryftafels van ivoor, asook 'n stif,⁶
behoorlik skerpgepoets, en daarmee grif
hy al die name neer, op staande voet,
van dié wat bydraes lewer, geld of goed,
en hy sal dan kan bid vir hul behoud.

'Gee ons 'n skepel koring, rog of mout,
'n offerkoekie, kaas of wat ook al,
'n bietjie handgeld of kollekte sal –
omdat ons nie kieskeurig is – ook dien,
of gee ons van jul sult dan, of miskien 1750
'n stuk materiaal, my liewe dame

2 Bedelmonnik, frater.

3 Vaste bedrag op gereelde tye uitbetaal aan 'n ampsdraer.

4 "Trentals" – Dertig Misse op agtereenvolgende dae wat teen betaling ten bate van 'n gestorwene opgedra is.

5 Slot van 'n preek of liturgiese gebed: "... wat met die Vader en die Heilige Gees leef en regeer in alle ewigheid.'

6 'n Skerpgepoepte stafie waarmee op die wasoppervlak van die tafel geskryf kon word; die stompkant het as uitveër gedien.

en goeie suster – kyk, ek skryf jul name –
of spek of beesvleis kan jul ook verskaf.’
’n Stoere knaap het agter hul aan gedraf,
hul gastehuis se kneg; hy dra ’n sak
waarin die frater al die gawes pak.
Sodra hy buite sig van ’n woning is,
het hy die name goedsmoeds uitgewis
’n oomblikkie tevore neergeskryf:
lieg en bedrieg was immers sy bedryf.

1760

“Dit lieg jy!” het die Frater luid gegil.

“By Christus Moeder,” sê ons Waard, “Bly stil.

Vertel maar verder, Bodel, en moet niks
verswyg nie.” “Ek sal nie,” sê hy, ‘by my siks!’”

So trek die frater verder tot hy by
’n huis kom waar hy meestal meer kon kry
as elders; maar by dié geleentheid het
die huisbaas ongesteld gelê in die bed
en kon nie opstaan nie. Met die intrapslag
sê die frater, ‘*Deus hic*⁷ en goeiedag,
my liewe Thomas,’ op ’n besorgde toon.
‘My goeie vriend, mag die Here jou beloon.
Hoe dikwels het ek op dié einste bankie
heerlike etes geniet – en daarvoor dankie.’
En met dit jaag hy die kat van die bankie af
en, nadat hy van hoed en sak en staf
ontslae was, neem hy gemaklik plaas.

1770

Intussen het sy reismaat hom gehaas
na die herberg in die naaste dorp waar hy
en die gastehuis se kneg losies sou kry.

1780

‘My liewe meester,’ vra die kranke man,
‘hoe gaan dit sedert Maart begin het dan?
Ek het u twee, drie weke laas gesien.’

‘Ek was,’ sê hy, ‘bra besig sedertdien:
ek het ure op my knieë deurgebring
om jou redding te verseker – ons vriendekring⁸
se redding ook. Ek was vandag by die Mis
in julle kerk, waar ek genader is
om, na my swak vermoë, ’n preek te hou.
Ek was nie juis aan die Bybelteks getrou,
waarvan jul leke bitter min verstaan;
daarom bied ek ’n Skrifverklaring aan –
dis wonderlik om tekste uit te lê
want die letter dood, soos ons geleerdes sê –
die strekking daarvan was hul moet gewillig gee,
maar hulle gawes met oorleg bestee.
Ek het jou vrou ook daar gesien. Waar’s sy?’

1790

‘Hier buite in die agterplaas,’ sê hy.

‘Ek reken sy kom sommer netnou weer.’

‘Nou, by Johannes, u is welkom hier, my heer.

1800

7 Mag God hier wees; ’n seën uitgespreek wanneer ’n huis binnegegaan word.

8 Leke soos Thomas en sy vrou wat in ruil vir die fraters se gebede na hul behoeftes omgesien het.

Hoe's dit met u gesteld?' vra sy vir hom.

Die frater het hoflik op die been gekom,
met soen en stywe druk hom opgedring
en mossietjirpgeluide voortgebring.

'My liewe mevrou, dit gaan goed met my,'
was sy antwoord. 'Ek's aan jou diens gewy.
Geloof sy God wat die gewer is van jou
liggaam en siel. Ek het nie nog so 'n vrou
vandag in die kerk gesien nie, glo my vry.'

'God beter al my foute,' antwoord sy;
in elk geval, u's welkom hier voorwaar.'

1810

'Ja dankie, so't ek dit nog steeds ervaar.
Sal jy so vriendelik wees – verskoon my tog
as ek jou ongerief veroorsaak – dog
ek wil 'n ruk alleen met Thomas praat,
want priesters is so traag en hulle laat
dit na om goed te tas in die gewete van
een wat boetvaardig is, maar ek's 'n man
wat preek en baie van Petrus en Paulus weet,
'n visser van mense, met sy net gereed;
dus gee ek Christus wat aan Hom behoort;
my doelwit die verbreiding van Sy Woord.'

1820

'Nou, met verlof, my liewe meester,' sê sy,
'u moet dié man 'n slaggie goed kasty:
hy kriewel van die toorn soos 'n mier,
al het hy alles wat hom kan plesier;
ek maak hom snags toe en ek hou hom warm,
met 'n been oor hom gegooi, of dalk 'n arm;
tog lê en snork hy soos 'n vark in die bed –
dis al genoeg wat ek aan hom het;
ek kan hom geensins meer bevredig nie.'

1830

'Wat hoor ek, Thomas? Thomas, *je vous dis*:
die duiwel woeker hier; ons moet hom keer,
want toorn word verbied deur God die Heer;
ek sal jou aan die tand moet voel hieroor.'

Sy sê: 'Ek moet gaan kosmaak nou, maar voor
ek loop, my heer, wat kan ek vir u kry?'

'A, *je vous dis sans doute, madame*,⁹ sê hy,
'n hoenderlewertjie en daarby bloot
'n enkele snytjie van jou lekker brood,
daarna 'n gebraaide varkkop – maar ek verwag nie
dat jy 'n dier om my ontwil loop slag nie –
dit sal genoeg wees uit jou boerepot;
ek is 'n man van sober eetgenot;
uit die Bybel put ek voedsel vir my siel
terwyl my liggaam so te sê verniel
is deur bereidheid om te waak en bid.
Verkwalik my nie, mevrou, dat ek dit
op vriendelike wyse met jou deel,

1840

9 'Ek sê vir jou sonder twyfel, mevrou.' Die vermoë om Frans te praat was 'n aanduiding van hoë status of geleerdheid.

want van vertroueling is daar nie veel.' 1850

'Nog net een woord,' sê sy, 'voordat u gaan:
 ons het onlangs ons ou kleintjie afgestaan,
 pas nadat u vertrek het uit die stad.'

'Ek het 'n visioen daarvan gehad
 in ons slaapsaal by die klooster,' sê die frater.
 'Dit was 'n halfuur na sy dood, niks later –
 ek gee jou die versekering dis waar –
 dat hy daar voor my oë na die hemel vaar.
 Ons sakristein en siekebroer, getrou
 aan hulle roeping, het dit ook aanskou:
 hul's in die klooster nou al vyftig jaar 1860
 en, met hul jubileumviering¹⁰ klaar,
 word dit hul – dank die Vader – toegestaan
 om sonder toesig een-een uit te gaan.
 Soos een man het die broeders op die been
 gekom, met wange almal natgeween;
 geeneen't gepraat, daar was geen kloosterbel,
 toe die *Te Deum*¹¹ uit ons harte wel;
 daarna het ek 'n dankgebed gedoen
 tot Jesus Christus vir dié visioen,
 want, liewe mense, julle kan my glo,
 wanneer ons bid, vermag ons meer daarbo 1870
 en sien ons meer van Gods geheimenis
 as leke kan, selfs dié wat konings is.
 Ons lewenswyse is sober en armoedig,
 maar leke s'n is weelderig en oorvloedig
 met vieslike genot en drank en spyse,
 maar aardse lus vervul ons met afgryse.
 Lasarus en die ryke – hoe't hul lewens
 verskil, en hulle lone daarbenewens.
 As jy wil bid, vas dan en hou jou rein;
 maak vet jou siel, maar laat jou liggaam kwyn. 1880
 Soos die apostel ons geleer het, is
 klere en kos van min betekenis.
 Fraters se reinheid en gevas bring mee
 dat God gehoor aan hul gebede gee.
 Twee weke lank het Moses dag en nag
 op Sinai gevas, op God gewag,
 voordat die Here hom begunstig het:
 op 'n nugter maag het hy die heil'ge Wet
 ontvang, deur God se hand geskryf op steen.
 Op Horeb het Elia dae aaneen 1890
 hom vastend en diep peinsend voorberei
 om met die hoë God wat ons bevry
 van aangesig tot aangesig te ontmoet.
 Aäron wat die tempel moes behoed
 en toesig hou oor die hele priesterdom
 het sorg gedra dat as hul daarheen kom

10 Voor hulle vyftig jaar lank in die klooster was, kon fraters slegs twee-twee uitgaan.
 11 'n Lofsang tot God.

vir die erediens om vir die volk te bid
hul hoegenaamd nie hulle lip gesit
het aan 'n drank wat hulle dronk kon maak,
want daar moes hul onthoudend bid en waak 1900
of hul sou sterf. Hierop moet jul let,
as iemand ander voorgaan in gebed
dan moet sy lewensloop voorbeeldig wees.

Die Here Jesus het, soos ons kan lees,
deur eie voorbeeld ons leer bid en vas;
daarom is dit vir fraters ook gepas
om ootmoed en onthouding na te strewe,
'n arm, matige en milde lewe,
asook vervolging weens geregtigheid 1910
en kuisheid, medelye, opregte spyt;
gevolglik sal jul insien: ons gebede –
dis dié van mendikante kloosterlede –
eerder as leke s'n, behaag die Here,
want julle eet en drink en gaan te kere.

Die mens is uit die paradys gejaag
oor hy hom oorgegee het aan sy maag,
want voor dié tyd was hy nog maagd gewees.

Maar Thomas, hoor 'n slaggie mooi, ou bees:
vers en kapittel het ek nie byderhand,
maar kyk mens na die wyer teksverband, 1920
dan is dit duidelik dat ons liewe Heer
op fraters sinspeel wanneer Hy ons leer,
“Geseënd is dié wat arm is van gees;”
ook elders in die Bybel kan ons lees
van deugde wat veel meer na ons s'n lyk
as dié van broeders wat met rykdom pryk.
Foei vir hul vraatsigheid en hul vertoon,
en hul onnoselheid verdien net hoon.

Hul toon ooreenkoms met Jovinianus:¹²
hul's walvisvet en waggelend soos 'n swaan is,
en so vol wyn soos 'n bottel weggebêre. 1930

As hulle bid is dit 'n vrome affêre;
Vir 'n siel se heil breek hul 'n wind met Dawid
wanneer hul sing “*cor meum eructavit!*”¹³
Maar wie volg Christus na, loop in Sy lig?
Dis ons wat kuis is, arm, nederig
en daders van die Heer se Woord en nie
net hoorders. Soos 'n hawik opwaarts vlie,
in die hemel opklim, so klim die gebede
van fraters, vlytig, goed en rein van sede, 1940
immer opwaarts in die Heer se oor.
Thomas man, ek sweer jou dit hier voor
by die Heilige wat Ivo heet, was jy
nie onse broeder nie, dan het jy nie gedy:

12 'n Ketterse monnik uit die vierde eeu wat op dié wyse deur Hieronimus uitgekryt is.

13 In Latyn begin Psalm 49 met die woorde ‘Cor meum eructavit verbum bonum,’ My hart het 'n goeie woord gespreek, maar die werkwoord kan ook 'n wind opbreek beteken.

ons bid in ons kapittel¹⁴ dag en nag
dat Christus jou gesondheid stuur en krag
om spoedig weer eens op die been te kom.’

‘God weet,’ sê hy, ‘dis al ’n aardige som
wat ek die afgelope twee, drie jaar
aan al wat frater is betaal het, maar
dis alles sonder spoor van nuttigheid.
Ek’s so te sê die laaste pennie kwyt.
Vaarwel my geld, want nou’s ek skoon bankrot.’

1950

Die frater antwoord: ‘Thomas, jy’s verspot!

“Al wat ’n frater is” is tog oorbodig;
as mens ’n goeie dokter het, benodig
jy mos nie ander dokters in die stad.
Jou onstandvastigheid’s die oorsaak dat
jy agteruit gaan. Dink jy altemit

1960

dat my konvent¹⁵ dan onvoldoende bid?
Thomas, dié grap van jou’s ’n bietjie laf;
jy bly bedlêend want jy skeep ons af.

“Ja, gee maar vir dié klooster ’n aksie graan;
vir daai een kan ek twintig grote afstaan;
ja, gee dié frater ’n stuiwer¹⁶ dat hy trap.”
A nee a, Thomas, dit is glad nie knap,
want wat bly oor van ’n duit in twaalf verdeel?

Dit wat ’n mens besit in sy geheel
is sterker as wanneer jy dit moet versprei.
Thomas, ek’s nie die soort van man wat vlei.

1970

Jy wil ons arbeid alles gratis hê,
maar God, die Heerser van die heelal, sê
die arbeider’s geregtig op sy loon.
Thomas, ek sit nie agter jou geld, ofskoon
die lede van my klooster nougeset
jou by die Here opdra in gebed
en dit kan aanwend vir die bou van kerke.
As jy iets wil leer aangaande goeie werke,
lees hoe die apostel Thomas in Indië met
die bou van kerke God verheerlik het.¹⁷

1980

Hier lê jy toornig in jou bed en raas,
jou drifte deur die duiwel aangeblaas,
en die goeie arme siel op wie jy skree,
dié bly maar onderdadanig en gedweë.
Vir jou eie beswil, Thomas, maan ek jou:
laat staan tog die gestribbel met jou vrou.

Let op die woorde deur Ben Sirag juis
in dié verband gebesig: “In jou huis
moet jy nie soos ’n leeu te kere gaan,
so vreesaanjaend vir ’n onderdaan

1990

14 Byeenkoms van kloosterlinge.

15 Twaalf kloosterlinge en hul owerste het ’n konvent gevorm, in navoging van Christus en sy apostels.

16 ’n Aksie is ’n geringe hoeveelheid; verkleinwoord van aks, ’n agste. Daar was vier stuiwers in ’n pennie en vier pennies in ’n groot.

17 Volgens legende het Thomas ná die kruisiging Indië toe gegaan waar hy duisende bekeer het. Die kerke wat hy gebou het, was gemeentes wat hy tot stand gebring het, eerder as geboue wat hy opgerig het.

dat almal draaie loop om jou te my.”
Thomas, nog een vermaning hoort hierby:
Pasop vir toorn gekoester in jou siel;
pasop die slang; dit sluip deur die gras subtiel
en pik jou wanneer jy dit nie verwag.
Pasop, my seun; slaan op my woorde ag;
daar’s twintigduisend mans wat van die baan is
oor vrouens of bemindes teengegaan is.

Thomas, jy’t ’n goeie sagte vrou,
is dit dan nodig om haar toe te snou?
Daar is geen slang so vol venyn gewis,
as jy op sy stert gaan trap, as ’n vroumens is,
kom sy ’n slaggie in die toorn se mag,
want dan is weerwraak al waarna sy smag.
Die toorn is groot sonde – een van die sewe¹⁸ –

2000

verafsku deur die Heer van alle lewe
en oorsaak dat die mens sy heil verloor,
want almal – tot die domste dorpspastoor –
weet tog dat doodslag uit die toorn spruit;
dit voer ook hoogmoed se bevele uit.

2010

Van die smarte wat dit meebring, kan ek wel
van nou tot môreoggend toe vertel,
en daarom bid ek tot die Here dag en nag
dat Hy geen toornige bedeel met mag.
Dis ’n jammerte, die oorsaak van veel smaad
wanneer ’n heethoof vors word van ’n staat.

By Seneca kan ons die storie vind
van so ’n heerser. Tydens sy bewind
verlaat twee ridders eendag saam die stad;
toe, met ’n wending van Fortuin se rad,¹⁹
kom een van hulle terug, maar nie sy maat.
Hul sleep hom voor die regter op die daad.
“Jy word as moordenaar van jou reisgenoot,”
sê dié, “summier veroordeel tot die dood.”

2020

’n Derde ridder kry toe die bevel
dat hy hom na die galg moet vergesel;
maar toe hul saam op pad was na die plek
wat gebruik word om dié vonnis te voltrek,
kom hul die doodgewaande ridder teen.

Dit sou die beste wees, het hy gemeen,
om albei na die regter terug te vat.

2030

“My heer,” sê hy, “hier is die ridder wat
glo dood sou wees; hier staan hy lewensgroot.”
“Dit maak nie saak nie; jul is almal dood:
jy is ’n kind des doods,” het hy gesê,
want ek het reeds jou vonnis opgelê;
en jy ook, doodgewaande, want jy’s dan
die oorsaak van sy dood; jy, derde man,

18 Die sogenaamde doodsondes: hoogmoed, toorn, afguns, traagheid, gierigheid, gulsigheid en onkuisheid.

19 Die godin Fortuna beskik oor ’n groot wiel wat sy na willekeur draai en so word die mens se lot bepaal.
Eendag is jy bo, die dag daarna is jy weer onder.

sluit by hul aan, want jy't jou plig versaak." 2040
 En so het hy hul aldrie dood laat maak.

Die toornige Kambuses was daarby
 geneig tot boosheid en tot brasery,
 maar eendag loop hy hom in 'n howeling vas
 wat gesteld op deug en goeie sedes was.
 Daar hul alleen was, tree dié man na vore
 en sê: "n Vors wat kwaad doen, gaan verlore,
 en dronkenskap's 'n klad op die reputasie
 veral van een wat heerser is oor 'n nasie. 2050
 Al weet hy nie daarvan nie, word 'n heer
 beloer en afgeluister baie keer.
 Wees matig dus in u gebruik van wyn,
 want dit bring mee dat mens se sinne kwyn
 en dat beheer oor die liggaam in gevaar is."

"Ek sal jou spoedig wys dat die teendeel waar is,"
 sê hy. "Uit eie ondervinding sal
 jy agterkom dis geensins die geval.
 Ek waarborg daar's geen wyn wat my beheer
 oor arm, been of oog kan affekteer." 2060
 Met bose opset het hy aanhou skink;
 hy't nou 'n honderd maal soveel gedrink,
 en toe het hierdie heerser, vuig en laag,
 die seuntjie van die howeling gedaag
 dat hy voor hom moet verskyn onmiddellik.
 Meteens neem hy sy boog in die hand en mik;
 met die boogpees teruggetrek tot by sy oor
 het hy die kind daar met 'n pyl deurboor.
 Hy sê: "Wel, het ek nie 'n vaste hand
 of dink jy daar is fout met my verstand 2070
 of het die wyn my oë aangetas?"

Ek laat dit daar wat die man se antwoord was;
 sy kind was dood; wat kon hy daarop sê?
 Met hoës moet mens in die stof gaan lê;
 hul wil op alles "ja en amen" hoor,
 maar 'n arm mens hoef niemand te bekoor;
 vir hom kan jy berispe oor sy sonde,
 maar 'n ryke nie, al gaan hy ook te gronde.

Kores van Persië het ook verwoed
 sy mag laat geld teenoor die Gyndesvloed 2080
 toe 'n perd daarin verdrink het onderweg
 na Babilon om teen dié stad te veg:
 in so 'n mate het hy dit vernou
 dat dit deurwaad kon word selfs deur 'n vrou.

Kyk, Salomo is weer eens in die kol:
 "Mens moenie met opvlieëndes gaan lol;
 bly weg van driftiges – hul's kort van draad –
 of dit sal jou berou." Dit is sy raad.

Ek smee jou, Thomas, om jou toorn te staak.
 Jy sal vind ek is so reg soos 'n winkelhaak. 2090
 Die duiwel het sy mes teenaan jou hart;

al wat jou toornigheid jou bring is smart.

Bieg liewers al jou sondes by my op.'

'Nee,' sê die sieke. 'By Sint Simon, stop!'

Ek het vandag gebieg by my pastoor;

van al my doen en late het hy gehoor –

geen verdere bieg word van 'n mens vereis,

tensy hy daardeur ootmoed wil bewys.'

'Gee my dan vir my klooster van jou geld.

Sekere mense was mos welgesteld

2100

toe ons moes wurg om die klooster op te bou,

mossels en oesters ons spyse, maar selfs nou

is weinig meer as die fondament gereed

en in ons woonvertrekke is daar, God weet,

nog nie 'n enkele vloerteël op die grond;

vir stene skuld ons boonop veertig pond.

Help ons, om Christus wil, ons sielehoop,
of ons sal al ons boeke moet verkoop.

As ons nie daar was om te preek nie, sou

die wêreld hel toe gaan, en sommer gou.

2110

'n wêreld waarin daar g'n fraters was,

verseker ek jou, my liewe broer, vir vas,

sou een wees wat beroof is van die lig,

want wie kan soos ons werk en onderrig?

En dit is nie van gister die geval;

in die tyd van Elia en Elisa al

was fraters, soos ons uit geskryfte leer,

aan liefdadigheid gewy, dank sy die Heer.²⁰

Ek smee jou, Thomas, om ons by te staan.'

En met dit het hy op sy knieë gegaan.

2120

Die woede het die sieke so ontstel;

hy het gewens die frater's in die hel

met sy afskuwelike huigelary.

'Ek's gretig om jou iets te gee,' sê hy,

'maar dit moet iets wees wat aan my behoort.

Jy reken ons is broers²¹ – dis mos jou woord.'

'Ja,' sê hy, 'ooreenkomstig die oorkonde

wat mevrou het, is ons daartoe verbonde.'

'Voor ek die lewe laat, sal ek aan jou

iets vir jou heil'ge klooster toevertrou;

2130

jy sal dit hier ontvang in jou eie hand.

Belowe my, en doen jou woord gestand,

dat jy dit so gelykop sal verdeel

dat elkeen van die broeders ewe veel

daarvan sal kry. Sweer dit op jou habyt,²²

sonder bedrog, sonder spitsvondigheid.'

'Ek sweer dit by my trou,' het hy gesê,

20 Die Karmeliete het uit die 13de eeu gedateer, maar hulle het beweer dat die orde deur Elia gestig is, want hy het die profete van Baäl op die Karmelberg uitgedelg.

21 Soos hierbo aangedui, was Thomas en sy vrou lede van 'n godsvrugtige vereniging verbonde aan broer Jan se klooster. Sodanige affiliasies is met welgesteldes aangegaan.

22 Die lang opperkleed van 'n kloosterling.

en op die sieke het hy sy hand gelê.
'Jy't my belofte; ek sal dit nie breek.'

'As jy jou hand hier langs my rug af steek
en 'n slaggie deeglik rondtas,' sê die man, 2140
'onder my boude langes sal jy dan
iets vind wat ek weggesteek het net vir jou.'

Die frater dag, 'Hier's my beloning nou,'
en stoot sy hand al nader aan die spleet;
hy dag hy kry die gawe spoedig beet.
Toe die sieke nou die hand van die frater voel
in die omgewing van sy gat rondwoel,
los hy 'n poep reg in die man se palm.
Daar is geen karperd wat met so 'n walm, 2150
met so 'n harde slag, kon poep. Die frater skreeu
en spring opsy soos 'n vertoornde leeu.

'Jou lae lak,' sê hy, 'jy het dit, by die Heer,
aspris gedoen ten einde my te onteer.
As ek my sin kry, sal jy hiervoor boet.'

Toe die man se knegte die geharwar hoor,
kom hulle gou en jaag die frater weg.
Al meer en meer het sy humeur versleg
op pad na sy reisgenoot en hulle goed.
Soos 'n ewer²³ gluur hy om hom heen verwoed; 2160
en op sy tande knersend, stryk hy aan
na waar die woning van die landheer staan.
Dié was 'n man van hoë aansien wat
die ambagsheerlikheid²⁴ van daardie stad
beklee het en hy't by die frater ook
in die bieë gegaan. Sy woede aan 't kook
het die frater ingestorm in die saal
waar die landheer aangesit het vir sy maal.
Skoon sprakeloos van die verslaenheid
kry die frater dit tog uit, 'Gebenedyd.'²⁵ 2170

Die goeie landheer kyk op van sy bord
en sê, 'My lieue broeder Jan, wat skort?
Is jy oorval deur die woud?
Kom sit 'n slag en sê my wat is fout;
ek sal dit regstel, lê dit in my mag.'

Hy sê: 'Ek is geaffronteer vandag:
hier in u grondgebied is ek gehoon,
en selfs die armste dienskneg wat hier woon
sou my gekrenkte eergevoel verstaan
oor die belediging my aangedaan. 2180
Wat my die meeste grief is dat die vent
wat oud en grys is, boonop ons konvent
belaster het – dit is die ergste nog.'

'Nou, meester,' sê die landheer, 'luister tog ...'

'Nie meester nie, maar dienaar, goeie heer,

23 'n Wildevark.

24 Die verantwoordelikheid vir die uitoefening van regspraak in 'n besondere gebied.

25 Mag u geseën wees.

al het die fakulteit my daardie eer
bewys, tog maan die Heer Hy wil nie hê
dat mense vir ons “Meester” of “Rabbi” sê.’

‘Dit maak nie saak nie; laat ons hoor,’ sê hy.

‘My heer, vandag het so ’n gruwel my
sowel as my konvent te beurt geval, 2190
en daarom is *per consequens* ook al
die lede van die Heil’ge Kerk onteer.’

‘U weet wat u te doen staan,’ sê die heer:
biegvaders moet mos nie ontstoke raak;
u is die sout van die aarde, sout met smaak;
vertel ons dus besadig wat dit is,
die bron en oorsaak van u ontsteltenis.’

Toe het die frater alles uitgelê.
Die edelvrou van die huis het niks gesê 2200
terwyl hy besig was met sy relaas,
maar toe hy klaar was, vra sy hom verbaas,
‘Nou, by die Moedermaagd, was daar niks meer?’

‘Niks meer?’ sê hy, ‘Hoe moet ek u interpreteer?’

‘My interpreteer?’ sê sy. ‘Hy’s ’n lae vent
en hy’t iets laags gedoen, en dis die end.
Die oordeel moet mens toevertrou aan God;
die man is siek en daarom’s hy verspot;
ek reken dis ’n soort van raserny.’

‘Nee mevrou,’ sê die frater, glo my vry, 2210
kan ek my op geen ander wyse wreek,
dan sal ek hom beswadder in elke preek.
Dié valse lasteraar wat my beveel
dat ek die onverdeelbare moet deel,
en dit gelykop – mag die duiwel hom haal!’

Die landheer sit soos iemand in ’n dwaal;
hy’t heeltyd oor die vraag getob: ‘Waar kom
’n simpel vent aan die vermoë om
’n frater vas te vat met dié probleem?’

Ek het nog nooit van so ’n ding verneem; 2220
ek dink die duiwel moes hom dit in die oor
geblaas het. So ’n vraag kom nêrens voor
in die *ars metrica*²⁶ as vakgebied.

Watter bewysproses sou moet geskied
om te bepaal dat ewe veel van die klank
deur elk ontvang word – wat nog van die stank?
Die trotse skelm! ’n Vloek op sy gesig!

Ek laat hom, here, oor aan Gods gerig.
Wie’t ooit van so ’n ding gehoor? Nou toe,
elk ’n gelyke deel, maar sê my hoe? 2230

*Impossibilium*²⁷ – dis hoe dit heet.

Hei, skelm vent, die duiwel kry jou beet!
’n Poep is ’n geluid en dié is weer
maar net ’n trilling soos die lug vibreer;

26 Kuns om te meet, rekenkunde, maar met ’n pragtige woordspeling op aars.

27 ’n Onoplosbare probleem soos dié wat in skolastiese onderrig aan die beurt gekom het.

dit neem geleidelik af voor dit verdwyn,
so hoe bepaal 'n blote mens se brein
of almal ewe veel daarvan gekry het?
Een van my dorpers, nè, maar die kêrel het
die eer van my biegvader nie ontsien nie;
hy's seker 'n vartjie kwyt – dis my opinie. 2240
Maar dit is etenstyd; kom sit hier aan
en laat die drommel na die duiwel gaan.'

Die heer se knaap was daar by die buffet
om vir hul voor te sny; gevolglik het
hy elke woord gehoor van die gesprek.
'My heer,' sê hy, 'verskoon my tog maar ek
kan hier in ruil vir materiaal vir 'n kleed
aan dié heer frater uitlê hoe 'n skeet
onder sy broers verdeel kan word, mits hy
nie daaroor sy humeur verloor met my.' 2250

'Top,' sê die heer, 'by God en Sint Johannes,
jy kry jou kleed; verduidelik wat jou plan is.'
'My heer,' sê hy, 'ons wag vir goeie weer,
as daar g'n roering is in die atmosfeer,
en dan laat bring u 'n kar wiel na die saal
met al sy speke – twaalf is die totaal
wat mens gewoonlik kry aan so 'n wiel –
en laat twaalf fraters kom want, by my siel,
'n fraterhuis bestaan uit dertien lede,
en so sal u biegvader hier, omrede 2260
sy waardigheid, die kwota kompleteer.

Met een akkoord kniel hul dan almal neer
rondom die velling en versigtig steek
elkeen sy neus aan die eindpunt van 'n speak,
maar u biegvader hier verdien die eer
dat hy onder die naaf sy neus na boontoe keer;
dan sorg u dat die kêrel hierheen kom;
sy maagvel styf gespanne soos 'n trom,
neem hy sy plek in op die wiel, gereed
met poephol oor die naaf, en los 'n skeet. 2270

So sal ek, by my lewe, almal wel
proefondervindelik tevrede stel
dat na die einde van die speak die klank
geleidelik versprei, so ook die stank;
maar aan u biegvader, hoogerwaarde heer,
oor hy die reg het op besondere eer,
kom toe die eerste gawe van die ruik,
want onder fraters is dit mos gebruik
om vooraanstaandes eerste te bedien,
en hy't dit inderdaad terdeë verdien, 2280
want hy het ons vandag so goed gestig
met sy op-en-wakker preekstoelonderrig –
wat my betref, ek gun hom daarom graag
van 'n hele aantal poepe die eerste vlag,
en hierin volg sy klooster my straks na,

want hy't hom immer kuis en vroom gedra.'

Toe't almal saamgestem – behalwe die frater –
met sy demonstrasie was Kleinjan parater
as Ptolemeus of as Euklides,
en hul't gesê teenwoordigheid van gees
was die rede vir die vent se stuitigheid;
hy was nie dwaas nie – of sy sinne kwyt.
Sy klee sou Kleinjan kry. My storie's klaar.
Hier lê die stad; ons is sommer nou-nou daar.

2290

Fragment IV

Proloog tot die Student se verhaal

Toe sê ons Waard: “Nee, heer Student, watwou!
Jy’s sedig soos ’n pasgetroude vrou
so ingetoë by haar bruilofsfees;
g’n woord was daar vandag van jou gewees.
Jy worstel met ’n ingewikkeldheid,
maar wat sê Salomo? ‘Als op sy tyd!’
Kom, wees ’n slaggie vrolik; stoot opsy
jou meditasie en diepdenkery.

Jy’t ons beloof jy sal ons iets vertel
en iemand wat gaan deelneem aan ’n spel, 10
moet by die reëls daaraan verbonde hou.
Moet tog nie vir ons preek oor skuldberou,
soos fraters in die vastyd doen; daarby
moet jy nie verveel nie; ons wil wakker bly.
Vertel ons een of ander avontuur,
maar sonder ornament of stylfiguur;
breedsprakerigheid is alles goed en wel
as mens iets vir ’n koning moet vertel,
maar wie gebruik maak van gewone taal,
bekoor dié wat hom hoor met sy verhaal.” 20

Met toegeneentheid antwoord die Student:
“Heer Waard, ek handel volgens reglement,
want u voer tydelik oor ons bevel;
ek sal my onder u beskikking stel,
sover dit redelik is. Die storie wat
ek julle gaan vertel, het ek in die stad
van Padua gehoor, die skepping van
’n baie beroemde en geleerde man.
Hy is alreeds oorlede en in sy graf – 30
ek bid dat God hom sielerus verskaf.
Sy naam was Frans Petrarca, gelourier
as digter, het hy Italië versier
met die welsprekendheid van poësie,
net soos Legnano met filosofie
en regsgeleerdheid en nog veel daarby,
maar die Dood kan nie verdra dat ons hier bly
vir langer as ’n oogwink; dus het hy
hul albei weggeneem; dieselfde lot
sal ons ook almal wederveraar per slot. 40

Nou moet ek tot die reeds genoemde heer
van wie die storie kom, weereens terugkeer.
Hy het ’n voorwoord in verhewe taal
gedig as agtergrond vir sy verhaal
waarin hy Piëmont beskryf; daarby
vertel hy van Saluzzo se kontrei
en van die Appenyne wat enorm
na die suide ’n grens van Lombardye vorm;

van Vicoberg in die besonder waar
uit 'n klein fontein die Po ontspring; van daar
stu dit steeds ooswaarts en word mettertyd
'n aansielike rivier wat diep en wyd
verby Aemilia en Ferrara na
Venisië vloei. Dit is te veel gevra
dat ek dit als herhaal en buitendien
is dit nie ter sake nie, tensy miskien
om die toneel te skik, maar sonder draal
vertel ek nou sy eintlike verhaal.

50

DIE STUDENT SE VERHAAL

Aan die koue Vicoberg se voet is daar,
in Italië se westelike dele,
'n vrugbare vallei te vinde waar
'n oorvloed dorpe is, asook kastele,
daterend uit die outyd; verder, vele
vergesigte wat die hart verbly.
Saluzzo is die naan van dié kontrei.

60

'n Markgraaf was die heerser van dié land,
soos sy voorvaders was lank voor sy tyd;
sy onderdane was, wat ook hul stand,
aan hom gehoorsaam en steeds diensbereid,
en, as gevolg, het hy die saligheid
gesmaak om welbemind asook gevrees
deur adel en deur burglary te wees.

70

Wat afkoms aanbetref, was sy geslag
van die deftigste Lombaardse adelstand;
hy was 'n mooi jong man, van volle krag,
vol riddereer en hoflik en galant,
bekwaam ook as regeerder van die land;
tog was hy nie geheel onthef van blaam.
Wouter was dié edelman se naam.

Iets wat ek hom verkwalik, is dat hy
hom nooit wou steur aan wat in die toekoms wag;
aan die genot van die oomblik toegewy,
het hy hom toegelê op valkejag;
op pligte was hy egter min bedag,
veral, en dis die meeste te betreur,
wou hy nie trou nie, wat ook al gebeur.

80

Dié aangeleentheid het sy volk verstom
en eendag stroom hul toe – 'n hele skaar –
om daarvoor 'n onderhoud te voer met hom;
en een wat wys was, of miskien ervare,
of dalk oor hy bekwaam was om 'n nare

onderwerp gevoelig uit te lê,
het hulle verteenwoordig, en hy't gesê:

90

'O, edele markgraaf, u genade is groot
en daarom het ons die vertrouwe en moed
om ons tot u te wend in tyd van nood.
Ons vra u nederig, wees tog so goed
om dit wat ons ervaar as teëspoed
aan u bekend te maak en neig u oor
om die klagte wat ek voorlê aan te hoor.'

Ek is nie méér betrokke by die saak
as al die ander wat hier voor u staan
en as ek nou voor u my buiging maak,
dan is dit oor die gunste my gedaan
wat my verwagting steeds te bowe gaan,
en dit gee my vrymoedigheid veral;
tog moet u doen soos dit u welgeval.

100

Ons het die hoogste agting, goeie heer,
vir u en als deur u tot stand gebring;
ons kan ons nouliks voorstel dat ons meer
te beurt kan val as die bevrediging
wat ons alreeds geniet; daar's net een ding
wat ons pla, en dit is dat u nie wil trou;
daardeur word ons geluk in toom gehou.

110

O buig u nek dan onder die blye juk
wat die eg genoem word – dit is heerskappy:
daaronder gaan u nie as slaaf gebuk.
Gedenk ook, wyse vors, op velerlei
maniere snel ons lewens hier verby;
dit help nie om daaroor te redeneer:
die tyd stap aan en niemand kan dit keer.

Al is u in die fleur van u jeug vandag,
tog kruip die ouderdom so stil soos steen
steeds nader en bedreig die dood se mag
alimmer om elke draai vir iedereen,
want dit het al wat lewe in gemeen;
hoewel ons goed die stelligheid besef,
tog het ons geen idee wanneer dit tref.

120

Ons meen dit goed met u – dit weet u wel;
by u opdragte het ons steeds gehou,
en as u u nou in ons hande stel,
sal ons vir u die allerfynste vrou
van die hoogste stand gaan soek om mee te trou,
sodat ons deur ons keuse hoë eer
nie net aan u sal bring, maar aan die Heer.

130

Bevry ons van die vrees in ons gemoed
deur 'n vrou te vat, want sê nou dit gebeur
dat u lyn sou uitsterf – mag God dit verhoed –
dan kom 'n vreemde en besit daardeur
u erfenis. Hoe sal ons dit betreur;
en daarom smeeek ons u om tog te trou
en moenie uitstel nie, maar doen dit nou.'

140

Hul bedes en hul droewe voorkoms dring
toe in die graaf se simpatieke gees.
'My liewe mense,' sê hy, 'hierdie ding
was nooit een van my voornemens gewees,
want ek waardeer die vryheid allermees –
en dié's maar min in die huwelik te vind;
so ek wat vry was, moet my nou laat bind.

Maar ek kan sien jul is oor my begaan –
soos altyd kan ek op jul wysheid bou –
jul bede word derhalwe toegestaan:
ek gaan akkoord dat ek voor lank sal trou,
maar, wat jul aanbod aanbetref om 'n vrou
vir my te vind, nee, nee, dis van die baan;
ek vra jul mooi: dring tog nie daarop aan.

150

Die hemel weet daar's kinders wat bra min
ooreenkoms toon met hulle ouerpaar,
want goedheid kom van God en lê nie in
hul afkoms uit diegene wat hul baar.
Ek steun op Sy genade en kan voorwaar
my huwelik, my sielerus, my stand
in alles veilig laat in God se hand.

160

So laat gerus die keuse aan my oor –
die verantwoordelikheid kom op my neer –
maar hierdie opdrag hou ek aan jul voor,
nog meer, ek eis dat jul 'n eed moet sweer
dat wie ek ook al kies, jul haar sal eer
in woord en daad, so seker en gewis
asof sy wel 'n koningsdogter is.

En verder moet jul sweer dat julle my
nie sal belemmer of teen my wil beswaar
sal maak nie. Kyk, tot dusver was ek vry,
maar op jul aandrang moet ek dit laat vaar;
dus sal ek kies en ek sal trou met haar.
As jul nie kans sien om akkoord te gaan,
dan moet jul hierdie hele ding laat staan.'

170

Van ganse harte het hul akkoord gegaan –
wat dit betref, was almal eensgesind –
maar hul't gevra dat voor hul daarvandaan

vertrek, hy hom tot 'n datum moes verbind
waarop die seremonie plaas sou vind, 180
want hulle het die heeltyd half gevrees
dat daar miskien geen huwelik sou wees.

Hy het 'n dag bepaal wat hom sou pas
vir die beoogde huwelik, maar hul weer
gemaan dat dit slegs op húl aandrang was.
Om hulle onderdanigheid en eer
te toon, sak hulle op hul knieë neer.
Gerusgestel deur die aanhoor van hul bede,
wend hul toe dankbaar huiswaarts hulle skrede.

Die hofbeamptes het bevel ontvang 190
dat hul 'n huweliksfees vir hom moet reël
en toesien dat dit gaan soos hy verlang;
sy ridders en sy jonkers is beveel
om ander pligte onder hul te deel.
Met ywer het hul aan die werk gespring
om als te doen tot sy bevrediging.

Deel II

Aangrensend aan die pragtige gebou,
toneel van dié bedrywigheid, het daar
'n klompie arm mense uitgehou 200
in 'n mooi geleë dorpie met 'n paar
stuks vee, genoodsaak om te sien kom klaar
met wat hul as gevolg van hulle vlyt
kon wen aan daardie streek se vrugbaarheid.

Een van dié mense het 'n groter las
van armoede as die res gedra:
tog was ons Hemelheer eenmaal 'n gas
in 'n lae koeistal deur Sy groot gena.
Dié arm man't geheet: Janicula;
en hy't 'n dogter skoon om te aanskou:
Griselda was die naam van dié jongvrou. 210

Tel mens die innerlike skoonheid by,
het die son nie op 'n skoner vrou geskyn.
In armoede grootgemaak was sy
bestand teen sinsgenot. Sy het geen wyn
gedrink nie, maar net water uit 'n fontein,
en omdat sy so deugsaam was, was vlyt
eerder haar aandeel as gemaklikheid.

Al was sy jonk, het sy haar goed gedra
en groot standvastigheid geopenbaar.
Met tere liefde het sy haar ou pa 220
versorg, haar spinwiel saamgeneem met haar

wanneer sy na die veld gegaan het waar
dit haar dagtaak was om die skape op te pas;
dis net met slaapyd dat sy ledig was.

En saans wanneer sy huis toe gaan, soek sy
'n groenigheidjie langs die pad om gou
te kerf en kook, 'n ete te berei
om haar ou vader aan die gang te hou,
voor sy haar bed opmaak, so hard en nou;
tot stille aanvaarding altyddeur bereid
van dogterlike verantwoordelikheid.

230

Dié arme skepsel is dikwelks raakgesien
as die markies op pad was om te jag,
maar tog het dit g'n wulpse doel gedien,
hy was nie op losbandigheid bedag;
maar eerder het hy haar met erns betrag
en as hy haar bemerk dan het veral
haar ingetoënheid hom opgeval.

En heimlik het hy haar hoog aangeslaan
ter wille van haar vroulikheid en deug
wat dié van ander ver te bowe gaan,
veral opmerklik ook gesien haar jeug,
en dus het hy hom voorgeneem, verheug,
dat as hy ooit sover sou kom as trou,
hy net vir haar alleen sou vat tot vrou.

240

Die troudag kom al nader; niemand wis
wat het in sy gedagtes omgegaan,
en onder hulle was daar veel gegis
en oor en weer bied hul hul menings aan:
sou hy oplaas sy stuitigheid laat staan
of wou hy dalk die huwelik vermy –
het hy homself en hulle so mislei?

250

Maar teen dié tyd het hy reeds vir Griselda
edelstene fyn in goud geset
en van lasuur ook ringe en borsspelde
laat voorberei. 'n Ander meisie met
dieselfde liggaamsbou as hare het
haar trourok aangepas en elke ding
geskik by 'n huweliksbevestiging,

Die oggend van die dag wat hy bepaal
het as sy troudag was al half verby
en feestelik versier was elke saal
en kamer in die paleis en ry op ry
in spense wag daar elke lekkerny
en elke soort van uitgesoekte dis
wat in Italië te vinde is.

260

Daar kom die markgraaf toe, ryklik getooi,
deur baie here en dames vergesel,
want hulle's na sy huwelik genooi,
en met sy ridders aan sy sy, sowel 270
as musikante wat die rumoer laat swel.
Die hele optog het die kortste pad
na die reeds vermelde dorpie toe gevat.

Griselda't nie geweet dat al dié praal
om haar ontwil was nie en sy het gou
'n emmer water by die put gaan haal
en is haastig huis toe, want die markgraaf sou,
so't die gerug geloop, vandag mos trou
en dan, indien dit moontlik was, wou sy
van al die skouspel iets te siene kry. 280

Sy dag, 'Ek sal hier by ons hut se deur
stelling inneem saam met my vriendinne.
As ek vlytig is, sal ek nie die kans verbeur –
met my huiswerk het ek daarom gou begin –
om dalk 'n oog te slaan op die markiesin
as sy miskien by ons gehug verby
na die kasteel toe vir haar bruilof ry.'

Sy't van die put af teruggekeer sopas
toe kom die markgraaf en hy spreek haar aan;
in 'n os se stal wat langs hul voordeur was, 290
het sy die emmer maar vir eers laat staan;
sy het daar op haar knieë neergegaan
en, onderdanig knielend, het sy stil
gewag om te verneem wat is sy wil.

Bedagsaam en met erns het die heer hom na
die meisie toe gewend op dié manier:
'Griselda, waar's jou vader?' het hy gevra.
Eerbiedig antwoord sy hom sonder swier:
'My heer,' het sy gesê, 'my vader's hier.'
Toe gaan sy binnetoe om sonder draal 300
haar vader vir die markgraaf te gaan haal.

Hy het die ouman aan die hand gevat
en, toe hul eenkant is, toe sê die heer:
'Janicula, dit is onmoontlik dat
ek langer swyg oor wat my hart begeer.
As jy dit toelaat, neem ek sonder meer
jou dogter, wat ook al gebeur, tot vrou
en eggenoot, solank die lewe hou.

Aan jou getrouheid is daar nie te twyfel –
jy is jou lewe lank my onderdaan – 310
ek neem aan dat jy dus nie hoef te weifel;

as iets my aanstaan, staan dit jou ook aan
en hoef ons nouliks daarop in te gaan.
So wat's jou antwoord op my voorstel dat
jy my vandag hier as jou skoonseun vat?'

Dié wending het hom so verbouereer
dat die ouman bewe en bloos; hy was so bang
en so verslae dat hy nouliks meer
kon uitkry as 'My heer, wat u verlang,
is my begeerte ook; so gaan u gang,
want ek is maar te bly, my goeie heer,
om my deur wat u wil te laat regeer.'

320

'Maar nogtans wil ek hê,' sê die markgraaf stil,
'dat ek en jy en sy die ding vandag
hier in jou huis bespreek. Dit is my wil
dat sy self ja moet sê, en ek verwag
dat sy haar onderwerp aan my gesag.
Jy moet getuie wees van ons akkoord;
as jy nie by is nie, sê ek geen woord.'

In die huis het hulle drie ooreengekom
oor huweliksvoorwaardes – iets waarby
ek later terugkom. Mense het saamgedrom
verwonderd om te sien hoe liefderyk sy
haar aan die sorg van haar ou vader wy.
Sy was nog meer verwonderd, want voordien
het sy nog nooit iets soortgelyks gesien.

330

Dis glad nie vreemd dat sy verbysterd was
dat so 'n hooggeplaaste man met haar wou praat;
sy was geensins gewoond aan so 'n gas
en staan verskrik en met 'n bleek gelaat,
maar wat betref die kruks van hul beraad,
hier volg die woorde wat die markgraaf met
die liewe, goeie siel gewissel het:

340

'Griselda,' het hy gesê, 'jy moet verstaan,
dit is die wens van jou vader en van my
dat ek jou neem tot vrou. Ek neem wel aan
dat dit jou pas, maar hierdie trouery
geskied in haas; dus moet ek vra of jy
gewillig is om dadelik ja te sê
of wil jy eers 'n bietjie dinkkans hê?

350

Ek vra van jou dat jy geredelik
in alles aan my wense toe sal gee;
na my goeddunke sal ek als beskik,
en jy berus en neem verlief daarmee;
en as ek "Ja" sou sê, sê jy nie "Nee"

met woorde of met ontevrede frons.
So, sweer dit en my eed verenig ons.'

Toe sy dit hoor, was sy verward en bang
en sy't gesê, 'Ek is die hoë eer
onwaardig; nogtans, wat u ook verlang,
is al wat vir my saak maak; dus, my heer,
sal ek gehoorsaamheid gewillig sweer.
In daad en in gedagte bly ek nou
en selfs tot in die dood aan u getrou.'

360

'Dit is genoeg, Griselda,' sê hy stil
en statig het hy buitetoë gegaan,
gevolg deur haar, en die mense wat gewag
het in die straat het hy aldus gemaan:
'Dit is my vrou, die een wat hierso staan.
Diegene wat my liefhet, moet vir haar
in dieselfde liefde en eerbetoon bewaar.'

370

Hy wou nie hê dat sy met 'n draad van haar
ou klere intrek nie; dus was dit die taak
van sy hofdames om haar dan en daar
eers te verkleë. Dit het nie in hul smaak
geval om haar ou vodde aan te raak,
maar spoedig staan sy daar met 'n mooi jong blos
in splinternuwe klere uitgedos.

Haar hare wat verwaarloos was, is mooi
gekam en delikate vingers het
haar hoof met 'n vars blommekrans getooi,
en elke ryke kledingstuk is met
die allerfynste edelstene beset.
Die mense wat haar ken, was skoon verstom,
so 'n groot verandering het oor haar gekom.

380

Die markgraaf het 'n ring laat voorberei
en daarmee is hul in die eg verbind;
daarna op 'n spierwit perd gesete is sy
te midde van 'n skare, goedgesind
en vrolik, deur die markgraaf begelei
na sy paleis waar die feesvierdery
luidrugtig daardie hele dag weerklink het
totdat die son dié aand oplaas gesink het.

390

Om my vertelling te bespoedig, wens
ek net te sê die nuwe markgravin
was geseën in so 'n mate dat 'n mens
dit nouliks reg kon kry om te besin
dat so 'n dame grootgeword het in
'n nederige hut of 'n os se stal
eerder as in 'n koninklike hal.

Deur almal is sy so bemin en so
gerespekteer dat selfs diegene wat
haar kleintyd reeds geken het, skaars kon glo –
al het hul ook geweet vir seker – dat
dit Janicula se dogter was; debat
oor die misterie van haar identiteit
is uitgeskakel deur die stelligheid. 400

Hoewel sy wondergoed was van haar jeug,
het haar voortreflikhede mettertyd
steeds toegeneem en steeds getuig van deug.
Sy was so agtenswaardig en tot diens bereid,
so gaaf, welsprekend en vol vriendelikheid,
sy het die harte van die volk gewin
en almal wat haar sien, het haar bemin. 410

Dit was nie net die stad Saluzzo waar
almal bekend was met haar goeie naam,
maar van die hele landstreek was dit waar,
as iemand iets gesê het van haar faam,
dan stem sy hoorders almal met hom saam
en omdat baie haar wou gadeslaan,
het baie na Saluzzo toe gegaan. 420

Wouter se huwelik, as laag beskou,
was nogtans koninklik. Dit was vol eer
en het ook veel belofte ingehou.
Hy't in Gods vrede oor sy volk regeer.
Vir wysheid het hul hom gerespekteer,
want hy het ingesien daar's geen verband
tussen 'n mens se deugszaamheid en stand.

Griselda kon haar met haar skerp verstand
aan haar huishoudelike pligte wy,
maar nie net dit nie; sake van die land
het bekwame aandag van dié vrou gekry.
Geen twis of tweedrag of dwarstrekery
was daar in die land wat sy nie kon besweer
en die strydendes tot vrede terug laat keer. 430

Soms was daar onmin onder lede van
die adelstand; dan't sy dit reggestel
in die afwesigheid ook van haar man.
So wel deurdag was die woorde van Griselda,
so billik was die oordeel wat sy vel
dat sy beskou is as beskik tot baat
van mense en oorkoming van die kwaad. 440

Nie lank na hul getroud is, skenk sy aan
'n dogtertjie geboorte. Weliswaar
sou sy 'n seun verkies het, maar haar man
asook haar volk het dit vreugdevol aanvaar;
die eersteling was wel 'n meisie, maar
sy sou 'n seun hê met verloop van tyd;
daar't niks gehaper aan haar vrugbaarheid.

Deel III

Sy het die kind nog aan haar bors gevoed
toe Wouter die idee in sy voorkop kry
(soos nou en dan met mans gebeur) hy moet
haar op die proef stel om te sien of sy
standvastig in haar liefde vir hom bly.
Hy kon nie van die plan ontslae raak
en het haar dus onnodig skrikgemaak.

450

Hy het haar vantevore keer op keer
beproof en goed gevind; watter baat
kon daaruit spruit om haar te wil tempteer?
Daar's dalk diegene wat dit goed sal praat,
maar ék dink dis 'n onbesonne daad
om 'n vrou onnodig op die proef te stel
en haar met vrees en kommernis te kwel.

460

Die markgraaf het die daad soos volg verrig:
een nag kom hy tot by haar ledekant
en sê met strak en sombere gesig,
'Dié dag toe ek jou uit jou lae stand
bevry het en jou opgehef het, want
dit was enkel my behae – ek vertrou,
Griselda, dat jy dit nog goed onthou.

Ek hoop nie dat die waardigheid van nou
jou dalk mislei nie, want wat my betref,
is dit noodsaaklik dat jy moet onthou
ek het jou uit ellende opgehef
tot watter weelde kan jy self besef.
Neem elke woord wat ek jou sê in ag;
daar's niemand wat ons hoor in hierdie nag.

470

Dit was 'n onlangse gebeurtenis
toe jy aangeland het hier in my kasteel
en alhoewel jy vir my dierbaar is,
kan my edellui nie my gevoelens deel;
vir hulle is dit eenmaal een te veel:
hul kan nie onderwerp wees na behore
aan iemand in 'n swak gehug gebore.

480

Veral ná die geboorte van jou kind
is dit hoe los hul praat en sonder vrees.
Ek wens om, soos tevore, eensgesind
en vreedsaam by my volk in guns te wees.
Ek moet omsigtig handel en bedees
die beste doen vir jou kind, nie volgens my
begeerte nie, maar soos my volk my lei.

490

Die Here weet hoe swaar dit is vir my.
Sonder jou medewete wil ek voorwaar
nie optree nie. Ek wil dus hê dat jy
alles wat mag voorval, moet aanvaar;
lewer bewys die lydsaamheid is waar
wat jy belowe het dié dag toe ek jou
uit jou gehug geneem het as my vrou.'

By die aanhoor hiervan bly sy onbewoë
in stem, gesig en houding – gelate, want
sy lyk nie eens gegrief. Met droë oë
sê sy: 'Ek doen my woord aan jou gestand,
my heer; ons is volkome in jou hand.
Of jy dus maak of breek, ek bly geduldig,
want ons is jou gehoorsaamheid verskuldig.

500

Die Here weet, daar's niks op hierdie aarde
wat jy verlang wat nie vir my bekoor,
en so ook is daar niks van enige waarde
wat ek wil hê of vrees om te verloor
behalwe jou alleen. Ek sweer daarvoor:
nóg tyd nóg dood kan iets daaraan verander
of my liefde van jou afwend na 'n ander.

510

Oor hierdie antwoord was die markgraaf bly,
maar hy't die teendeel daarvan voorgegee,
en toe hy wegdraai om van haar te skei,
was sy houding grimmig, sy gesig vol wee.
'n Ruk daarna, toe hy 'n myl of twee
op sy pad gevorder het, stuur hy 'n man
wat op die hoogte was van sy heer se plan.

Nou, hierdie kêrel was 'n soort lakei
en hy het reeds in baie sake van gewig
sy trou bewys. Die markgraaf wis dat hy
geredelik sy vuil werk sou verrig,
genoodsaak deur lojaliteit en plig;
en toe die man sy heer se plan verstaan,
het hy sonder 'n woord na haar kamer toe gegaan.

520

Hy sê: 'Mevrou, u moet my nie blameer
dat ek hier staan op 'n ander se bevel;
u is verstandig en sal weet, 'n heer
se strenge opdrag kan nie uitgestel
of nagelaat word nie, en alhoewel
dit te bejammer is, het ek 'n taak
om uit te voer. Dis die einde van die saak.

530

Ek is beveel om hierdie kind te vat ...'
en hy gryp die kleintjie sonder meegevoel
onder die oë van Griselda wat
dit als verlief moet neem, so asof sy doel
was om die kind meteens te dood, maar koel,
sag soos 'n lam, moet sy dit gade slaan
en haar man se wrede dienskneg laat begaan.

Onheilspellend was sy strak gelaat
en onheil het die laat uur ingehou;
sy reputasie, sy manier van praat
het dit by haar tuisgebring, sy gaan nou
die dood van haar geliefde kind aanskou,
maar sonder sug of traan berus sy stil
en onderdanig in haar man se wil.

540

Maar eind'lik het sy by die man gepleit
met spore van die smart op haar gelaat;
sy't haar beroep op sy goeiehartigheid,
hom nederig gevra om haar toe te laat
om die kind te soen voor hy oorgaan tot die daad.
Toe't sy die kindjie aan haar bors gesus,
geseën en ook liefderyk gekus.

550

Met sagte stem spreek sy haar dogter aan:
'Vaarwel, my kind; ek sien jou nimmermeer.
Die teken van die kruis het ek oor jou geslaan,
die teken van dieselfde Hemelheer
wat aan 'n kruis moes sterf. My kindjie teer,
aan Hom vertrou ek nou jou siel, want jy
moet sterf vannag, en dit vanweë my.'

560

Selfs vir 'n voedster sou dit pynlik wees
om dié toneel te aanskou; hoeveel te meer
kan mens verwag 'n moeder sou met hees
geroep teen so 'n onreg protesteer,
maar sy het haar standvastig bly beheer
en met berusting vir die man gesê:
'Hier, neem jou meisie, soos my heer wil hê.

Gaan nou maar heen en doen wat hy wil hê,
maar nogtans vra ek jou een enkele gawe –
tensy sy opdrag my dié guns ontsê – 570
dat jy die kind se lyk op 'n plek begrawe
waar dit nie verskeur kan word deur diere en rawe.'
Op hierdie bedede antwoord hy geen woord.
Hy't die kleintjie opgetel en is daarmee voort.

Die bode't na sy meester teruggekeer
en hy moes in besonderhede tree,
oor haar gedrag en woorde rapporteer,
en het toe ook die kleintjie afgegegee.
Die markgraaf dra 'n sweem van wroeging mee,
maar nogtans was hy oor sy opset stil, 580
soos heersers is in die uitvoer van hul wil.

Hy het die kneg beveel dat hy die kind
in die geheim met al die teerheid wat
vir hom moontlik is, in windsels toe moet bind
en haar in 'n houder of 'n deken vat
na 'n sekere plek, op die gevaar af dat
hy onthoof sou word as iemand hoor by hom
waarheen hy gaan of waarvandaan hy kom.

As hy in Bologna kom, waar sy suster bly,
die hertogin van Panago, dan moet 590
hy haar volledig inlig en haar vra of sy
in liefde teer die kleintjie op sal voed
op 'n wyse passend by haar hoë bloed,
maar wie se kind dit was, moes altyddeur
geheim gehou word, wat ook al gebeur.

Die bode het sy opdrag uitgevoer.
Dis nodig dat ons weer na die markgraaf kyk,
want hy was nou gedurig op die loer
om te sien of sy vrou in woord of daad laat blyk
sy stel hom enigsins in die ongelyk, 600
maar hy't haar onveranderlik gevind
en teenoor hom steeds goedgesind.

In elke opsig was sy so gelate,
net so blymoedig in haar eie kring,
minsaam, dienswillig in dieselfde mate
as vantevore. Geen verandering
in haar gedrag het teespoed gebring.
Sy het dit egter nooit gepas gevind
om die naam te noem van haar geliefde kind.

Deel IV

Sake het so gestaan vir drie, vier jaar, 610
toe is sy van 'n babatjie beval.
Sy't vir haar man 'n mooi, fris seun gebaar.
Toe Wouter daarvan hoor, het hy en al
sy mense dit van blydschap uitgeskal;
hul't God geloof en Hom die eer gebring
uit dankbaarheid vir hierdie nuweling.

Toe die seuntjie twee jaar oud was en nie meer
aan die bors van sy voedster nie, toe skielik wel
die begeerte in Wouter op om nog 'n keer 620
Griselda se geduld op die proef te stel.
Dit was onnodig om haar so te kwel,
maar 'n man weet mos nie om hom in te hou
as hy getroud is met 'n gedweë vrou.

'Ons huwelik kon my volk nog nooit verdra;
dit weet jy, vrou, en nou's 'n seun gebore,
nou voel hul hul't meer rede om te kla
en dus gaan alles erger as tevore.
Ek kom hul ontevredenheid te hore;
dit pynig my gemoed en breek my hart
met die las van ongeëwenaarde smart. 630

Hul redenasie is dat as ek sterf,
dan sal die bloedlyn van Janicula
die heerskappy as markgraaf oor hul erf;
daar's niemand anders nie. Dis wat hul pla,
en hierin praat die een die ander na.
Ek moet wel ag slaan op hul kommernis,
al bly hul stil as ek teenwoordig is.

Ek wil in vrede lewe as ek kan
en daarom is ek nou daarop bedag
dat ek in die geheim ontslae van 640
my seun raak, soos sy suster daardie nag.
Ek maak reeds voor die tyd hiervan gewag
dat jy jou nie te buite gaan hierna.
Wees net geduldig; dis wat ek jou vra.'

Haar antwoord was: 'Ek kan maar net herhaal
wat ek reeds gesê het: ek negeer verdriet;
solank ek jou behaag, is dit my egaal.
Al moet my kinders ook die lewe inskiet,
berus ek daarby as jy dit gebied.
Ek het niks aan hulle nie, verseker ek jou, 650
behalwe swangerskap en daarna rou.

Jy is ons heer; ons jou eiendom
en daarom vra jy my vergeefs om raad.
Die dag toe ek met jou hierheen gekom
het van my huis af, is my arm gewaad,
asook my wil en vryheid, daar gelaat.
So doen net wat jy wil; ek sal bedees
aan jou besluite onderdanig wees.

En as ek voor die tyd geweet het wat
jy graag wou hê, nog voor jy dit aan my
bekend kon maak, sou ek verseker het dat
ek koel en ferm elke ding wat jy
vir my ten doel stel, afgehandel kry,
en bied my dood jou dalk bevrediging,
sou ek gewillig daardie offer bring,

660

Want niks kan met jou liefde vergelyk
word nie, nie eens die dood.' Toe haar vaste trou
uit die woorde van sy eggenote blyk,
slaan hy sy oë neer, skaam dat sy vrou
in staat was om so lydsaam uit te hou.
Hy't haar verlaat met 'n grimmige gesig,
maar in sy binneste was hy verlig.

670

Weereens het sy skrikwekkende lakei
daar opgedaag en weereens brutaal
haar mooi jong seun verwyder, net soos hy
haar dogter weggevoer het; weereens het sy
geen smart getoon nie, onverstoord gebly.
Sy het die kind geseën en hom gesoen
en so't sy afstand van haar seun gedoen.

Net een guns het sy afgesmeek, indien
hy kon: begrawe haar seuntjie in die grond
sodat sy liggaam, fyn om aan te sien,
nie voedsel word vir gier of wildehond.
G'n dooie woord kom uit die vent se mond;
hy't weggegaan oënskynlik ongeroer,
maar't teer die kind na Bologna weggevoer.

680

Hoe meer hy daaroor nadink, des te meer
was die graaf verwonderd oor haar lydsaamheid.
As hy nie alreeds geweet het dat sy teer
vir die kinders lief was, sou hy dalk bereid
gewees het om te glo dis pure nyd,
'n sluwe of hardvotige natuur
wat dit moontlik maak dat sy soveel verduur.

690

Maar hy het goed geweet, benewens hom
het sy haar kinders bowenal bemin.
Ek wil die dames vra hoedat dit kom
dat die toetsery so aanhou sonder sin;
hoe kan 'n wrede man volhard daarin
om bewyse van sy vrou se trou te eis
wat net sy eie onmenslikheid bewys?

700

Maar daar is mense, as hul eers 'n plan
in die kop het, dan kan hul dit nie laat staan;
hul is so onversetlik soos 'n man
wat, aan 'n paal gebind, nie daarvandaan
kan wegkom nie. So't dit met hom gegaan:
hy het hom voorgeneem dat hy sy vrou
op die proef gaan stel, en het daarmee volgehou.

Hy het haar dopgehou om te bepaal
of sy verandering toon in woord of in
gesindheid teenoor hom, maar andermaal
bevind dat soos sy was in die begin,
so het sy steeds gebly in hart en sin.
Hoe ouer sy geword het, des te meer
het sy hom liefgehad en hom geëer.

710

Dit was asof daar tussen hierdie twee
net één wil was, want as hy iets begeer,
dan was Griselda dit ook eens daarmee.
Goddank hul het so goed geakkordeer,
want, wat haar ook mag kwel, het sy geleer,
'n getroude vrou gaan nooit haar eie gang;
sy vra niks anders as wat haar heer verlang.

720

Gerugte oor Wouter het oral rondgelê:
hul sê oor hy 'n vrou van lae stand
getrou het, wou hy by haar geen kinders hê;
dus maak hy hul in die geheim van kant.
Dis glad nie vreemd die leuen was so blatant,
want dit is nie weerspreek deur 'n enkele woord
wat daarop dui daar was g'n kindermoord.

Sy volk was baie lief vir hom weleer,
maar nou't die skande van sy slegte faam
veroorzaak dat hul almal teen hom keer,
want moordenaar's 'n liederlike naam;
maar hy't aangehou om planne te beraam,
nog steeds volhardend in 'n wrede spel
om sy vrou se lydsaamheid op die proef te stel.

730

Sy dogter was beswaarlik twaalf jaar oud
toe 'n boodskapper op pad na Rome was –
met sy bedoelings was hul daar vertrou –
om bulle²⁸ te verkry wat hom goed pas;
daarvolgens sou die Pous vergun dat as
dit mense se gemoedere kalmeer,
hy in die eg kon tree 'n tweede keer.

740

Die vals oorkonde moes verklaar dat hy,
met dispensasie uit die Pous se hand,
toestemming het om van sy vrou te skei;
en daardeur kon die tweedrag tussen land
en heerser bygelê word. Dis die stand
van sake wat hul uit die bul kon leer,
want dit is in geheel gepubliseer.

Soos te verwagte is, het hierdie plan
gewone mense om die bos gelei;
toe Griselda egter kennis kry daarvan,
het bittere smart haar liggaam gekasty.
Toe't sy haar weereens voorgeneem dat sy
al die beproewings wat die Noodlot stuur
ootmoedig en standvastig sou verduur.

750

Al waaraan sy kon dink, was die plesier
van hom, besitter van haar hart en gees,
die ware bron van haar gemoedsrus hier
op aarde. Ek moenie te langdradig wees:
hy't 'n brief geskryf waarin 'n mens kon lees
van wat hy als beoog en dit daarna
in die geheim Bologna toe laat dra.

760

Dis aan die graaf van Panico gerig,
wat getroud was met sy suster, en vra dat hy
die twee pleegkinders nou in volle sig
plegstatig na Saluzzo begelei.
Op een ding dring hy egter aan daarby:
aan niemand wat hom vra oor wie se twee
kinders dit is, moet hy 'n antwoord gee;

770

Net dat die dogter binnekort in die eg
met 'n heer, die markgraaf van Saluzzo, tree.
Aan dié versoek het die graaf voldoen en is weg
op die vasgestelde dag, en met hom mee
'n groot gevolg, in ryk gewaad geklee.
So is die meisie feestelik begelei,
met haar jong broer berede aan haar sy.

28 Dokument deur die pous geskryf en van sy seël voorsien.

Die jongedogter was as bruid getooi
met edelstene wat haar rok versier;
haar broer van sewe jaar was ewe mooi
en vrolik uitgedos op sy manier.
En so, met luister en met feesgevier
het hulle dag na dag hul weg gebaan
ten einde na Saluzzo toe te gaan.

780

Deel V

Intussen het die markgraaf, sodat hy
oortuig daarvan kon wees dat sy vrou nog aan
haar troubelofte gehoorsaam aan hom bly,
met groot meedoënloosheid te werk gegaan
om te sien of sy die vuurproef kon deurstaan.
Op 'n goeie dag sê hy in die openbaar
met 'n brutale stem aldus vir haar:

790

'Ja-nee, ek moet erken dat dit prettig was
om jou as vrou te hê, want jy was goed,
gehoorsaam en getrou, eerder as
vermoënd of van adellike bloed.
Maar een ding wat ek al hoe meer vermoed
is dat my hoë stand vir my verplig
om my na die wens van ander in te rig.

Ek is nie vry soos enige plaasboer wat
sy eie kop kan volg. My volk dring nou
daarop aan dat ek 'n ander vrou moet vat.
Die Pous het ingestem, want hy sê dit sou
help om hul knorrigheid in toom te hou.
En waarlik, daar is nog iets anders wat
ek jou moet sê: My nuwe vrou's op pad.

800

Wees sterk, hoor, en ontruim jou plek vir haar;
en wat betref die bruidskat wat jy my
gebring het, dié sal ek ruimhartig maar
vir jou laat terugneem. Gaan by jou vader bly,
want soos jy weet, die geluk gaan gou verby,
en wat ook al die kans of noodlot stuur,
dit moet mens met gelatenheid verduur.'

810

Met sielskrag antwoord sy: 'My heer, ek weet,
en was daarvan bewus die hele tyd,
dat daar 'n kloof is wat g'n mens kan meet
tussen jou rykdom en my behoefte
en daarom was ek nooit daartoe bereid
om myself as goed genoeg te wil beskou
om jou dienaars te wees – laat staan jou vrou.

En vandat ek gekom het na jou paleis, 820
waar jy vir my veredel het as vrou,
het ek nog nooit deur woord of daad gewys
dat ek myself as meesteres beskou.
Die Here weet, ál rol wat ek ooit wou
vervul is dié van swakke dienaar van
my medemens, en bowenal my man.

Jy het op grond van jou goedhartigheid
my lank met 'n verhewe stand vereer,
wat ek onwaardig was die hele tyd.
Daarvoor bedank ek jou en ook die Heer 830
en bid dat Hy jou dit ten goede keer.
Na my vader sal ek my nou graag begewe
en by hom bly tot die einde van my lewe.

Daar het ek grootgeword van kindsbeen af;
daar sal ek oud word as 'n weduwee
en, rein van liggaam, afdaal in my graf.
Aan jou het ek my maagdelikheid gegee
en het getrou die huwelikspad betree.
Mag God verhoed dat die vrou van so 'n heer
haar ooit sal gee aan iemand anders weer. 840

Wat jou nuwe vrou betref, mag God in Sy
genade jou vreugde en voorspoed skenk. Ek staan
my plek hier in jou huis, waar ek eenmaal bly
en sorgloos was, geredelik af en gaan
ver van die bron van my geluk vandaan.
Dit is jou wil dat ek moet wyk van hier;
ek sal so maak wanneer dit jou plesier.

Jy is gewillig om die bruidskat wat
ek jou gebring het, terug te gee aan my.
Dit was niks moois; hoe goed onthou ek dat 850
dit vodde was, my ellendige kledy;
dit sal moeilik gaan om dit nou weer te kry.
O liewe God, hoe vriend'lik was jou lag
en al jou woorde op ons huweliksdag!

Die spreekwoord sê: "Ou liefde bruis nie meer",
en dit is waar bewys in my geval;
maar ek is inderdaad oortuig, my heer:
te midde van die teenspoed staan ek pal;
ek weet dat, selfs al moet ek sterwe, sal
ek nooit in woord of handeling dit berou 860
dat ek my hele hart gegee het aan jou.

Jy weet ek moes my klere agterlaat
op jou bevel en jy het toe die ou
vodde laat vervang met ryk gewaad.
Dis duid'lik ek het niks gebring vir jou
behalwe naaktheid, maagdelikheid en trou.
En hier gee ek jou klere terug, my heer,
en lê jou trouring ook vir ewig neer.

Die res van jou juwele is veilig in
jou kamer weggebêre, kan ek sweer. 870
Naak het ek in my pa se huis begin
en naak moet ek nou weereens daarheen keer.
Ek lê my graag by al jou wense neer,
maar dis nie jou bedoeling, wil ek hoop,
dat ek sonder 'n hemp uit jou paleis moet loop.

Jy sal jou tog nie aan so 'n skandedaad
wil skuldig maak dat hierdie moederskoot,
waarin jou kinders was, buite op straat
deur die volk gesien word wanneer ek ontbloot
moet huis toe gaan, geheel en al verstoot. 880
Herinner jou, my eie liewe heer,
hoe onwaardig ook, was ek jou vrou weleer.

Beloon my vir die maagd'likheid wat ek
na jou gebring het, maar nie terug kan vra;
gee my in ruil 'n hemp om aan te trek,
soos dié wat ek gewoond was om te dra,
en kom nie jou gewese vrou te na.
En omdat ek jou nie wil irriteer,
sal ek nou afskeid neem van jou, my heer.'

'Die hemp wat jy daar aanhet, kan jy hou 890
en saamneem na jou huis toe,' antwoord hy.
Hy het uit medelye en berou
beswaarlik hierdie woorde uitgekry,
maar het hom weggekeer; en toe het sy
haar uitgetrek en, sonder skoene of hoed,
is sy daar weg, haar vader tegemoet.

Al wenend het die volk agter haar aan
geloop en steeds haar wrede lot bekla,
maar in haar oëwas geen enkele traan
en sy't geswyg. Spoedig het haar pa 900
berig daarvan ontvang en terwyl hy na
haar haas, vervloek hy sy geboorte-uur
toe hy ellende moes begin verduur.

Van meet af het die arme ou man geweet
dat die markgraaf dit nie eerbaar kon bedoel
met hierdie huwelik, en as sy heet
begeerte eers begin om af te koel,
dan sou hy op die duur verleë voel –
hy't hom belaglik voor sy volk gemaak –
en geleentheid soek om van haar ontslae te raak.

910

Hy was bewus, as gevolg van die geraas,
dat sy dogter nader kom. Deur die gedrang
het hy na hul ontmoeting toe gehaas
en menig traan't gebiggel oor sy wang
toe hy probeer om 'n kleed om haar te hang,
maar als verniet: hul's jare terug getroud
en nou was dit verslete, skraps en oud.

So het dan by haar vader vir 'n tyd
dié blom van vroulike geduld gewoon
en nooit het sy, óf in allengheid
óf voor die mense, in woord of blik getoon
dat sy bewus was van die pyn en hoon.
Dit het gelyk asof die herinnering aan
haar hoë stand haar nou geheel ontgaan.

920

En dis g'n wonder, want as markgravin
was sy nie op aanmatiging bedag;
sy was nie lekkerbekkig nie of los van sin;
geen waarde het sy geheg aan aardse prag;
maar sy was steeds geduldig, goed en sag,
verstandig, sonder hovaardy, eerwaardig
en, jeens haar man, standvastig en diensvaardig.

930

Geleerdes het hul monde vol van Job
en sy geduld, want hy was mos 'n man,
en daarom kry hul hom nie uit die kop.
Hul prys nie graag 'n vrou nie, maar mens kan
tog inderdaad verseker wees daarvan,
geen man het meer geduld of groter trou
(tensy dit iets heel nuuts is) as 'n vrou.

Deel VI

Toe die graaf van Panico al nader kom,
het die tyding van sy reis oral versprei
en almal het gehoor dat saam met hom
kom hulle nuwe markgravin gery
met groter prag en heerlikheid daarby
as ooit gesien is deur die hele wye
westelike deel van Lombardye.

940

Die markgraaf het dit als vooruit bepaal
en nou het hy, voor die aankoms van die stoet,
knegte gestuur om Griselda te gaan haal.
Sy het bedees maar met 'n bly gemoed
op sy bevel gekom en hom gegroet; 950
sonder vals verwagtings in haar siel
het sy eerbiedig voor hom neergekniel.

'Griselda,' het hy gesê, 'ek's vasberade
dat alles vlot verloop, want ek verlang
dat almal dié jongvrou, my nuwe gade,
môre feestelik in my huis ontvang;
so ook moet al my gaste, volgens rang
gesete, by bediening van hul spyse
gasvry onthaal word op gepaste wyse.

Wat ek egter kortkom, is 'n geskikte vrou 960
om sorg te dra dat alles reg is as
my kuiermense opdaag; daarom sou
ek graag vir jou met hierdie taak belas;
jy weet uit ondervinding wat my pas.
Jou klere is wel oud en toiïngrig;
al wat ek egter vra is, doen jou plig.'

Sy sê: 'My heer, ek is maar alte bly
om dit te doen; maar daarby sal ek graag
my onvermoeide kragte daaraan wy
om u in voor- of teenspoed te behaag, 970
want in my hart en siel sal ek nooit traag
word om u heil, solank as wat ek leef,
in vaste trou en liefde na te streef.'

En so gesê, het sy aan die werk gespring;
geen moeite ontsien, want tafels moes gedek
en beddens opgemaak word; elke ding
moes op sy plek wees; dienaars is gewek
om gou te speel met iedere vertrek.
Griselda was die hardste werker daar
en een-twee-drie was alles kant en klaar. 980

Teen die middel van die oggend het die stoet
wat die kinders begelei, daar aangekom.
Van oral het nuuskieriges met spoed
voor die paleis in die strate saamgedrom;
oor die grootse skouspel was hul skoon verstom.
Vir die eerste keer prys hul die markgraaf aan:
'Kyk hoe 'n goeie ruil het hy aangegaan.'

Want sy was mooier as wat Griselda was,
so redeneer die mense onder mekaar,
vanweë haar jeug en afkoms hoogs gepas 990

om 'n kroos wat meer aanvaarbaar was te baar.
Hul't ook verwonderd na die seun gestaar.
So 'n indruk het dié twee op hul gelaat,
hul't Wouter se gedrag nou goedgepraat.

O volk, so wispelturig en ontrou,
met elke wind veranderend soos 'n vaan;²⁹
in elke nuwigheid verheug jy jou
en groei en neem weer af net soos die maan;
jou ewige gekletter hou steeds aan.
Jou oordeel is gebrekkig; en dit sou
alleen 'n dwaas wees wat daarop vertrou.

1000

Dit was die mening van die wyses toe
hul sien hoe die gepeupel daar
die hele gedoente aangaap en ook hoe
hul na die rykgekleedes staan en staar,
bereid om 'n nuwe heerserin te aanvaar,
enkel ter wille van die nuwigheid.
So liewers terug na Griselda en haar vlyt.

Sy't onvermoeid gewerk aan elke ding
wat in verband met huweliksfeeste staan,
deur haar ou klere nie van stryk gebring,
al was dié hoe verslete en gedaan.
Met die ander het sy na die poort gegaan,
glimlaggend om die bruid welkom te heet –
en daarna pak die werkkooers haar weer beet.

1010

Met 'n bly gesig het sy die gaste ontvang
en kundig ook, elkeen volgens staat,
so goed dat niemand beter kon verlang
van iemand wat, geklee in arm gewaad,
noggans so verfynd was inderdaad.
Hul was verwonderd, maar hul't haar geprys,
omdat sy so begaafd was en so wys.

1020

Intussen het Griselda die hele tyd
die jongvrou en haar broer lof toegebring,
so hartlik en met soveel vriendelikheid
dat niemand daar teenwoordig mee kon ding
in dié jongmense se verheerliking.
En toe die gaste aansit vir die maal,
roep Wouter haar waar sy besig was in die saal.

'Griselda,' sê hy skertsend, 'wat dink jy
van die skoonheid van my vrou?' Sy sê, 'My heer,
so 'n skone het ek nog nooit gesien soos sy.
Die Here stort Sy seën op haar neer

1030

29 Draaibare toestel wat die rigting van die wind aanwys; draaiende wiek van 'n windmeul.

en skenk ook aan u albei vreugde en eer.
My hoop is dat u huwelik gedy,
so lank as wat u in die lewe bly.

Net een ding wil ek vra – en u ook maan:
u moenie dié jongvrou met folteringe
wil teister nie, soos ek moes ondergaan,
want sy is opgevoed in hoë kringe
en daarom nie gewoon aan sulke dinge;
sy's nie in staat om teenspoed baas te raak
soos een in armoede grootgemaak.'

1040

Toe Wouter so gekonfronteer word met
haar lydsaamheid, en dit hoewel hy haar
meermale alte stief behandel het,
wis hy sy's soos 'n muur, so vas en waar
en in regskenheid onwankelbaar.
Toe kom daar in sy harde hart berou
dat hy twyfel kon gevoel het oor haar trou.

1050

'Griselda, liefste, dis genoeg! Wees nou
nie langer angstig of ontsteld,' roep hy.
'Meer as vir wie ook al het ek vir jou
beproof, sodat ek sekerheid kon kry
van jou onveranderlike trou aan my;
wel, nou, Griselda, weet ek dit is waar.'
En toe, verruk, omhels en soen hy haar.

Sy het hom onbegrypend aangegaap;
sy was soos iemand wat verbouereer,
meteens ontwakend uit 'n diepe slaap,
met moeite tot die werklikheid terugkeer.
'Griselda,' sê hy, 'by die Hemelheer
wat ons verlos het, jy alleen's my vrou;
ek sal ook nooit met iemand anders trou.

1060

Hier is jou dogter, alhoewel jy dag
dat sy my vrou was, en dié jongeling moet
my eendag opvolg; hul's ons nageslag
by jou verwek, jou eie vlees en bloed.
Hul's albei in Bologna opgevoed
in die geheim. Ontvang hul wederom
en sê nie meer, "My kinders het omgekome."

1070

En al diegene wat my wil verwyf
dat ek kwaadwillig was of anders wreed,
moet goed verstaan, my doel die hele tyd
was enkel om jou lydsaamheid te meet.
Dit was ook nooit my doel om my kinders leed
te berokken nie; ek sou vir hul laat haal
sodra ek jou gesindheid kon bepaal.'

Toe sy dit hoor, val sy in 'n floute neer,
van beide vreugde en verdriet bewus, 1080
en later, by haar positiewe weer,
roep sy haar kinders en sy't hul gesus
in haar omhelsing en sy't hul gekus,
aanhoudend, moederlik en liefdevol
terwyl die trane oor haar wange rol.

Hoe roerend was dit om te sien hoe sy
steeds in beswyming wegsink en te hoor
hoedat sy met gedweë stem bely:
'Ek dank jou met my hele hart daarvoor;
ek het my kinders dan tog nie verloor. 1090
As jy my liefhet, is dit my om 't ewe
of ek hier en nou sou sterf of aanhou lewe.

My liewe kinders, jul bedroefde ma
het al die jare onder die waan verkeer
jul's deur die wilde diere weggedra,
maar deur die genade van ons liewe Heer,
het julle goeie vader dit prakseer
dat jul behoue bly, ' en so gesê,
het sy, ineengesak, op die vloer bly lê.

Maar in die val hou sy die kinders vas 1100
in haar omhelsing, beide beetgekry
so stewig dat dit 'n hele gedoente was
om hulle uit haar arms te bevry.
Die mense wat daar was, het so geskrei
uit jammerte dat hul dit skaars kon hou
in die nabyheid van die arme vrou.

Wouter het haar getroos, haar gees kalmeer.
Toe sy bykom, was sy baie verleë, maar
al die teenwoordiges het hard probeer
om so 'n groot bohaai te maak van haar 1110
dat toe haar onstuimige gemoed bedaar,
dit louter vreugde was om hierdie nou
vir ewig saamgesnoerde paar te aanskou.

Toe die dames van die hof hul kans gewaar
het hul haar na 'n kamer begelei;
hul het die growwe hemp gestroop van haar
en dit vervang met 'n goue kleed met ry
op ry juwele en 'n kroon daarby.
Toe't hul haar na die eetsaal terugbring
vir hulle nagelate huldiging. 1120

So kom die droewe dag tot 'n blye slot,
want man en vrou doen alles in hul mag
om dit deur te bring in vreugde en genot
tot die hemel skitter met sy sterreprag;
want almal het gereken hierdie dag
moes heuglik, groots en onvergeetlik wees
in hoër mate as hul huweliksfees.

Baie jare lank het hierdie twee
gelewe in vrede en eenstemmigheid.
Hul dogter het paslik in die eg getree
met een van die rykste heersers van dié tyd,
en die goeie Wouter was daartoe bereid
dat sy vrou se vader aan sy hof kom bly
totdat sy siel oplaas van sy liggaam skei.

1130

Sy seun't hom opgevolg as erfgenaam
toe Wouter nie meer daar was nie, en hy
het ook 'n goeie huwelik aangegaan,
al is sy arme vrou nie gekasty.
(Dis ook maar goed, want mense's nie gebrei
soos hulle was nie.) Maar gee gehoor
aan wat Petrarca self gesê het hieroor:

1140

'Geen vrou moet dink dat ek haar wys wil maak
sy moet Griselda in haar lydsaamheid
probeer nadoen nie; dis 'n onbegonne taak,
al wil sy ook, maar dat ons in 'n tyd
van teenspoed pal moet staan, soos sy bereid
was om te doen.' Dis wat dié verhaal
aan ons wil oordra in verhewe taal.

Want as 'n vroumens soveel trou bewaar
teenoor haar aardse man, hoeveel te meer
moet ons gelate elke ding aanvaar
wat God ons stuur. Natuurlik sal die Heer
ons nooit verlei nie; soos Jakobus leer,
versoek Hy Sy verlostes nie; maar wel
word ons van dag tot dag op die proef gestel.

1150

Hy raps ons met die sweep van teëspoed
en daarom kry ons seer so baiemaal.
Sy doel is enkel om ons op te voed
en geensins om ons wilskrag te bepaal,
want Hy weet goed hoedat ons telkens faal.
Dis vir ons beswil dat ons Sy beleid
aanvaar en leef in onderdanigheid.

1160

Maar, here, nog een woord, dan is ek klaar:
Vandag sou dit moeilik gaan om in 'n stad
Griseldas op te spoor, selfs net 'n paar;
hul goud is so vermeng met koper dat,
al lyk die muntstuk ook hoe blink en glad,
as iemand dit wil buig, gee dit nie mee,
die metaal is so ontaard, dit breek in twee.

Wel nou, ter ere van die liewe Vrou
van Bath se buurt (Mag die Here God vir haar
en al haar geesgenote wat so hou
van heerskappy, in daardie stand bewaar)
en omdat erns jul gemoed verswaar,
gaan ek met opgeruimde hart iets sing
om almal in 'n beter bui te bring.

1170

Chaucer se envooi³⁰

Griselda's dood en haar lankmoedigheid;
niks kan haar in haar verre graf nog skaad,
en daarom sê ek openlik, dis tyd
dat mans besef dit is 'n dwase daad
om 'n vrou op so 'n wyse te tempteer
op soek na een van 'n Griselda se formaat.

1180

O goeie vroue, vol verstandigheid,
laat deemoed julle nie weerhou van praat,
dan word 'n storie nie gehou vir feit
en, twyfelagtig in die hoogste graad,
deur ons geleerdes gedissemineer;
laat Chichevache³¹ maar vrek, die arme vraat.

Volg Eggo na; sy ken geen swygsaamheid
en met 'n antwoord staan sy steeds paraat.
Jul moenie te naïef wees vir die stryd;
gee tog gehoor aan hierdie goeie raad:
staan net op julle reg en neem beheer,
dan kan die hele mensdom daarby baat.

1190

Besliste vrouens, wees steeds slagbereg;
jul is tot meer as 'n kameel³² in staat
en hoef nie in 'n man se stof te byt;
en sagte vroutjies, gee in jul gelaat
die woede van 'n kwaai tierwyfie weer,
en kletter soos 'n windmeul, so kordaat.

1200

30 Kort vers aan die einde van 'n ballade waarin die toehoorders direk aaangespreek word.

31 'n Koei wat volgens 'n oud-Franse fabel net lankmoedige vroue gevreet het, met die gevolg dat dit verskriklik maer was.

32 Die dier met sy groot uithouvermoë, maar met 'n toespeling ook op die gelykluidende woord *camaile*, die wapenrusting se nek- en skouerbekleedsel van ysterringetjies gemaak.

Vrees nie jou man; hy is jou agting kwyt.
Al dra hy ook gepantserde gewaad,
sal jou skerp pyle van welsprekendheid
deur helm dring en ook deur harnasplaat.
Wees vol verdenking; hy sal retireer,
koes soos 'n kwartel, vlugtend voor jou smaad.

En as jy mooi is, wys dit wyd en syd,
stel jou gesig en lyf ten toon op straat;
en as jy lelik is, dan sal spandabelheid
veel vriende wen, en dit doen mens g'n kwaad.
Wees lindeblaartjelig; die lamenteer
en ween en weeklaag aan jou man gelaat.

1210

[Toe hy klaar vertel het, roep ons Waard, "Gedorie,
ek sou geredelik daarvoor betaal
het as my vrou by die huis ook hierdie storie
kon aangehoor het – sommer 'n vat vol aal.
Dit was 'n mees voortreflike verhaal,
Maar ons laat dit liewers daar; dit maak nie saak nie,
want ek wil nie nou moleste staan en maak nie.]³³

³³ Hierdie reëls kom in verskeie betroubare handskrifte voor, maar is blykbaar deur Chaucer geskraap toe hy op die plan afgekom het om deur middel van die mooi weerklank "ween en weeklaag" die Koopman se vertelling by dié van die Student te laat aansluit.

Proloog tot die Koopman se verhaal

“Van ween en weeklaag, jou verwyt en kwel,
soggens en saans, kan niemand my vertel, ”
sê die Koopman toe, “ook baie ander wat
getroud is, sal dit staaf. Ek weet maar dat
dit so is uit my eie belewenis.

Ek het ’n vrou, die ergste wat daar is;
al was die duiwel self haar huweliksmat,
sou sy hom kon bemeester, maar wat baat
vers en kapittel hier uiteengesit
van haar kwaadaardigheid? Sy’s ’n rissiepit!
Daar is ’n hemelsbreë onderskeid
tussen Griselda se groot lydsaamheid
en die weergalose wreedheid van my vrou.
As ek van haar ontslae kon wees, dan sou
ek in die toekoms daardie strik vermy.
Getroude mans het sorg en kwellery –
wie dit nie glo nie, kan maar self probeer;
ek praat die waarheid, op my woord van eer.
Hoewel dit dalk ’n veralgemening is,
is dit ’n feit in vele verbintenis.

1220

1230

A, goeie Waard, ek het ’n korte twee
maande gelede in die eg getree,
maar, waarlikwaar, geen ongetroude man,
selfs een wat met ’n dolk deurboor is, kan
getuig van soveel smarte as wat ek
besonderhede van sou kon verstrekk.
Wat ek nie aangedoen is deur dié vrou!”

“Wel, Koopman,” sê ons Waard, “God seën jou;
in hierdie saak is jy goed onderlê –
miskien wil jy iets verder daarvoor sê?”

1240

“Met graagte,” sê hy, “maar my droewe hart
verhinder dat ek praat oor eie smart.”

DIE KOOPMAN SE VERHAAL

In Lombardye, in die handelstad
van Pavia, was daar ’n ridder wat
welvarend was, hoewel nog ongetroud,
al was hy toe reeds sestig somers oud;
as hy behoefte daaraan het, kon hy
sy soetigheidjies teen betaling kry,
want dit is hoe die sot op straat mos maak.
Maar toe sy sestigste verby is, raak
hy vas oortuig dat hy ’n vrou moet hê –
uit vroomheid of uit kindsheid, wie kan sê –
en dag en nag soek hy ’n eggenoot
en het God gebid dat hy tog voor sy dood
ook iets van die geluksaligheid wat daar

1250

tussen 'n man en vrou is, mag ervaar 1260
en in die heil'ge band mag leef waarin
God man en vrou gesnoer het aan die begin;
hy wou niks weet van enige ander lewe.
Die huwelik's so gerieflik en verhewe,
dit is voorwaar 'n aardse paradys,
na die mening van ons ridder, oud en wys.

So waar as God in die hemel heers, is daar
niks wat die huwelik kan ewenaar;
veral 'n man wat oud is en reeds grys
dié stel 'n gade baie hoog op prys, 1270
verkieslik jonk, aanvallig bowendien,
want sy moet hom van 'n erfgenaam voorsien;
sy hele lewe is 'n vreugdelied,
terwyl die vrygesel kwyn van verdriet
oor teenspoed in die liefde deurentyd –
als kinderspeletjies en stuitigheid.

En dit is geensins te verwonder dat
daar onheil skuil op die vrygesel se pad:
hy bou op sand en vind die grond is sag
juis wanneer hy standvastigheid verwag; 1280

soos 'n voël of wilde dier gaan hy sy gang
in vryheid, sonder enige bedwang,
dog die man wat hom in die huwelik begewe,
voer 'n geruste, ordelike lewe;
gebukkend onder die egtelike juk,
kan hy wel spreek van vreugde en geluk.
Wie is daar meer gehoorsaam as sy vrou?
Wie's so bedagsaam? Wie is so getrou,
in wel en wee sy helper en sy maat?
Laat kom wat wil, sy sal hom nooit verlaat; 1290
haar liefdesdiens is onvermoeid in nood,
al is hy ook bedlêend tot sy dood.

Tog meen party geleerdes dis onwaar,
en Theophrastus is onder hul geskaar.
Wat maak dit egter saak wat hy versin?
'Neem nie 'n vrou in jou huishouding in,'
sê hy, 'as jy besorg is oor jou goed;
'n getroue dienskneg sal dit beter hoed
as jou eie vrou wat daarop aandring dat
sy aanspraak het op die helfte van jou skat; 1300
en as jy siek is, sal jou goeie vriende,
die Here weet, soos jou getroue bediende,
jou beter oppas as jou eie vrou
wat pal haar oog op jou besittings hou.
'n Man wat hom in die getroude lewe stort,
dié loop gevaar om 'n horingdraer te word.'

Vir sulke smadighede staan dié vent
en sy vervloekte boek alombekend.
Maar slaan geen ag op die ydele gepraat
van Theophrastus; luister na my raad: 1310

'n Vrou's 'n ware gawe van die Heer,
want elke ander gawe kan ek sweer,
soos meent en weiland, grond en geld en goed,
is almal gawes van geluk, en spoed
meteens verby soos skadu's op 'n muur,
maar, ek sal reguit praat, 'n vrou sal duur
en deel van jou huishouding bly, miskien
nog heelwat langer as wat jy voorsien.

Die huwelik is 'n sakrament so groot,
'n ongetroude is van hoop ontbloot, 1320
sy lewe's hulpeloos en desolaat –
ek praat van mense in die lekestaat.

Luister na wat ek sê: die vrou's vervas
as hulp geskep om by die man te pas.
Toe die hoë God die dag vir Adam maak
en Hy sien hom daar alleen en poedelnaak,
toe sê Hy uit Sy groot genade: 'Laat
ons nou vir hom 'n hulp maak wat 'n maat
vir hom kan wees' – en Eva was haar naam.
Hieruit kan ons sien en dit beaam: 1330

om 'n man te help en troos, is 'n vrou se taak;
sy is sy paradys en sy vermaak.
Sy's so inskiklik en so deugsaam ook
dat hulle altyd met mekaar sal strook:
een vlees sal hulle wees, al is hul twee,
met net een hart bedeel in wel en wee.

Moeder Maria, hoe's dit moontlik dat
teenspoed die lot kan wees van iemand wat
'n vrou het – ek het regtig g'n idee.
Daar's soveel vreugde tussen hulle twee, 1340
geen tong kan dit verklaar, geen hart verbeel,
want as hy arm is, bring sy haar deel;
sy hou 'n ogie oor sy eiendom;
in als wat hy begeer, behaag sy hom.

As hy eenmaal 'Ja' gesê het, sê sy nie 'Nee.'
'Doen dit,' kan hy sê, en sy weet om op te tree.
O heilsame verordening vol vreugde
en voorspoed en bedeel met alle deugde,
so agtenswaardig en hoog aangeskrewe
dat 'n man wat nie 'n lamsak is sy lewe 1350

lank op sy knieë kan gaan en dankie sê
dat hy bevoorreg is om 'n vrou te hê,
of God te vra of hy 'n vrou kan kry
om tot sy sterfdag toe by hom te bly;
dan het sy lewe sin en sekerheid,
en as hy handel volgens haar beleid,
dan kom hy nooit bedroë daarvan af,
maar kan sy hoof hooghou tot aan die graf,
want vrouens is so wys en so getrou
dat iemand wat 'n vaste koers wil hou, 1360
getroos kan optree soos sy vrou wil hê.

Kyk hoedat Jakob, soos geleerdes sê,
deur sy ma Rebekka in die plan betrek,
met bokvel om sy hande en om sy nek
prakseer het om sy broer se seën te steel.

Kyk hoedat Judit, met vernuf bedeel,
daarin kon slaag om God se volk te red
deur Holofernes dood te maak in sy bed.

En kyk ook hoe Abigajil haar man,
Nabal, gered het deur 'n wyse plan
toe hy sou gesterf het; en Ester, hoedat sy
deur middel van beleid dit reg kon kry
dat Mordegai onder Ahasveros

1370

Gods volk van Haman se venyn verlos.
Die wysgeer Seneca het met reg beweer:
'n beskeie vrou verdien die hoogste eer.
Verduur jou vrou se tong, het Cato aan
die hand gedoen, en laat haar maar begaan;
op stuk van sake onderwerp sy haar.

'n Vroutjie sal jou goed vir jou bewaar;
geween en weeklaag sal van 'n sieke kom
met geen behoedster van sy eiendom.

1380

Gaan liewers soos 'n wyse man te werk:
wees lief vir jou vrou soos Christus vir Sy Kerk;
as jy lief is vir jouself, is jy lief vir haar,
want niemand haat sy eie vlees nie, maar
hy sorg daarvoor, en daarom maak dit sin:
vir sy beswil moet 'n man sy vrou bemin.
Hoe mense ook mag spot en hoon, die eg
bly vir die lekedom die beste weg;
so heg verbind, is man en vrou bestand
teen onheil, altans aan die vrou se kant.

1390

Daarom het Januarie – dis die man
oor wie my storie gaan – op sy oudag dan,
van die heuningsoetheid van die eg bewus,
die saligheid en die volmaakte rus,
sy vriende uitgenooi om hulle van
die opset mee te deel wat hy beplan.

Met sombere gelaat spreek hy hul aan;
'Vriende,' sê hy, 'ek's oud en grys, en staan,
Godweeft, met een been in die graf; dis tyd
dat ek 'n slaggie dink aan my saligheid.

1400

Ek was maar kwistig met die liggaam; nou
het ek, goddank, geleentheid vir berou,
wat ek kan beoefen as getroude man.
Ek trou dus kort voor lank, sodra ek kan,
met 'n mooi jong meisie. Doen my die plesier
en reël dat ek my huweliksdag kan vier.

Ek wil nie wag nie; doen dit dus terstond.
Intussen kyk ek self ook bietjie rond
dat ek spoedig in die huwelik kan tree.

1410

Die feit dat julle baie is, bring mee

dat jul daarin mag slaag om lank voor my
die geskikte lewensmaat vir my te kry.

Maar, liewe vriende, laat ek jul vermaan:

'n ouer dame staan my glad nie aan;

ek soek nie een van meer as twintig jaar.

Ou vis is goed, maar wie wil vleis bewaar?

'n Snoek mag beter as 'n snoekie wees;

kalfsvleis is egter lekkerder as bees.

1420

Om 'n vrou van dertig jaar te vat, is laf –

sy is eenvoudig strooi en boontjiekaf.

God weet hoe dit met weduweetjies gaan:

hul's ou kalante wat die kuns verstaan

om manlief uit te mergel na hartelus;

met so een in jou huis kry jy g'n rus.

As mens baie skole bywoon, word jy skrand:

so ook die vrou wat van eggenoot verander.

Maar 'n jongding kan jy ongetwyfeld leer,

soos warm was in jou hand goed fatsoeneer;

1430

en daarom stel ek dit hier kort en bondig:

ek soek nie 'n ou vrou wat my siel versondig.

En as dit so moes voorval dat ek trou

met iemand wat my nie behaag nie, sou

ek dan my toevlug neem tot owerspel

en reguit na die duiwel gaan in die hel;

by so 'n vrou verwek ek liefs geen kind;

tog is dit beter dat honde my verslind

as dat my goed nadat ek sterf, sou val

in die hande van vreemdes. Hoor dus een en al:

1440

ek is nie kinds nie; ek weet wat trou beteken;

ek weet ook dat daar baie is wat reken

dat hulle weet, maar minder weet as my kneg

waarom 'n man 'n vrou vat in die eg,

die goeie redes waarom mense trou.

As 'n man hom nie in kuisheid kan onthou,

is dit 'n middel om met groot respek

en toegewydheid kinders te verwek;

op hierdie wyse bring hy eer aan God,

eerder as om te soek na eie genot;

1450

ontug word ook vermy, hoewel die paar

hul huwelikspligte nakom aan mekaar;

ook sodat hul in tyd van teespoed

mekaar kan steun, soos broer en suster moet,

aan wedersydse kuisheid toegewy.

Maar laasgenoemde keuse's nie vir my,

want, goddank, ek kan daarop roem: ek's sterk

en toegerus vir alle mannewerk;

ek voel die krag in elke ledemaat,

en ék weet beste waartoe's ek in staat.

1460

Al is ek grys, gaan dit soos 'n boom met my

wat bloeisels dra voordat dit vrugte kry;

van lewenskrag is bloeisels die bewys,

en ek voel sterk, want net my kop is grys;
my hart en ledemate is immergroen,
soos die lourier is, ongeag die seisoen.
Jul weet wat ek beoog, so ek vertrou
jul sal met my begeerte rekening hou.’

Verskeie mense kom toe met verskeie
ou stories vorendag uit vergange tye
wat die huwelik óf veroordeel óf dit eer.
Uiteindelik ná ’n lang geredeneer –
want dis gebruiklik onder vriende dat
so ’n aangeleentheid lei tot veel debat –
loop dit uit op ’n broederlike argument;
as Placebo¹ was een van die broers bekend,
Justinus was sy teëstander weer.

1470

Placebo sê: ‘Januarie, liewe heer,
daar’s nie die minste nodigheid dat jy
van iemand hier teenwoordig raad sou kry,
as dit nie was dat jy geseën is met
groot wysheid en dat dit belet
dat jy ooit optree sonder om ag te slaan
op die spreuk van Salomo waar hy ons maan
om altyd raad te vra, want dis gerade
dat ons nie later spyt het oor ons dade.

1480

Maar, al het Salomo dit aangevoer,
is ek oortuig daarvan, my liewe broer,
soos ek is van my redding, in hierdie saak
is jou eie opinie goed gegrond en raak.

1490

Ek was my lewe lank ’n howeling
en dit het my in aanraking gebring
met vooraanstaande mense van goeie stand;
as dienaar van die hoogstes in die land,
onwaardig soos ek is, had ek die eer,
maar nooit het ek met hul geredeneer
of dit gewaag om hulle teen te gaan.

’n Heer weet meer as ek; daarom staan
ek sterk by sy opinie, of as ek myne
moet lug, kom dit naastenby ooreen met syne.

1500

Iemand wat veronderstel is om
’n hoë raad te gee, moet regtig dom
wees as hy waan dat sy advies van meer
waarde kan wees as die wysheid van sy heer.
Nee, here is geen sotte, en hier vandag
kon ons luister na ’n mening so deurdag,
so vroom en so bekwaam uiteengesit,
dat ek volkome daarmee saamstem, dit
beaam in die geheel. Ek’s seker dat
daar niemand is in hierdie hele stad
of in Italië wat daarop kan
verbeter nie. Christus seën jou plan!

1510

1 Latyn vir “Ek sal behaag.” Justinus kan as “die regverdige” weergegee word.

Dis net 'n man van moed wat dit sou waag
om op sy oudag met 'n mooi jong maagd
in die eg te tree, maar alhoewel jy oud is,
is dit baie duidelik dat jou hart nie koud is.
Die beste raad wat ek vir jou kan gee,
is om volgens jou begeerte op te tree.'

Justinus het die heelyd stilgebly,
maar toe Placebo klaar was, antwoord hy:

1520

'My liewe broer, wees jy nou 'n slag geduldig
en luister na die mening wat ek huldig.

Seneca se spreuke sluit mos in:
"Een wat verstandig is, sal fyn besin
aan wie hy afstand doen van grond en goed";
en as dit nodig is om fyn te let
wie aanspraak op my aardse besittings het,
moet ek meer aandag aan die vraag bestee,
aan wie gaan ek myself vir ewig gee?

Wees tog omsigtig, want ek waarsku jou:
mens kan nie trou vir kinderspeletjies hou
en dit wil aanpak sonder ryp beraad.

1530

'n Mens moet navraag doen, die saak bepraat:

is sy wys en sober of is sy trots en styf;
is sy geneig tot drank of lief vir kyf;
is sy ryk of arm; sal sy jou geld verkwis
of is sy een wat mal agter 'n broek aan is?

Al is dit waar dat nêrens op dees aarde
daar 'n mens of dier bestaan van soveel waaarde
wat kan voldoen aan al jou eise; tog

kan 'n man tevrede wees en daarvoor spog
as hy 'n vrou kan vind in wie gewis
meer goeie as slegte hoedanighede is;
maar so 'n ondersoek verg heelwat tyd.

1540

Ek het baie trane in stille eensaamheid
gestort vanaf my huweliksdag. Daar's dié
wat dit wil hê oor huwelisharmonie;
vir my was daar net koste en verdriet,
pliglewering wat vir my geen vreugde bied.

My bure egter dring steeds aan daarop,
veral die vroue, sommer 'n hele trop:

1550

ek het die trouste vrou wat 'n man kan hê
en die gedweeste ook, word daar gesê,
maar ek weet beste waar die skoen my druk.

Jy moet maar handel volgens eie nuk –
jy's immers oud genoeg – maar wees versigtig,
want so 'n trouery is bra gewigtig,
as dit met 'n mooi jong meisie is veral.

By Hom, die Skepper van die wye heelal,
van die jongste jongman wat vandag hier is,
verg dit groot moeite en vermoeienis

1560

om sy vrou vir homself te hou. Jy sal nie slaag
daarin om haar selfs drie jaar te behaag –

laat staan nog te bevredig – want 'n vrou
stel hoë eise, dit verseker ek jou.

Wees tog nie ontevrede met my raad.'

'Wel,' sê die oue, 'is jy uitgepraat?

Ek gee niks om vir jou Seneca en al
sy sêgoed nie; 'n mandjie groente val
meer in my smaak, en wyser mense as jy –
soos ons so pas gehoor het – stem saam met my.
Placebo, wat's jou mening hieromtrent?'

1570

Hy sê: 'Alleen 'n liederlike vent
sou die huwelik beswadder; dit is wat.'
En dis toe ook die end van die debat,
want almal was dit eens dat hy moet trou
net wanneer dit hom pas en met wie hy wou.

Sy doenigheid en groot verbeeldingskrag
laat allerhande troutonele dag na dag
voor die geestesoog van Januarie speel;
menige mooi gesig en lyfie was ook deel
van wat daar nag vir nag deur sy drome dryf.
Soos iemand wat 'n spieël, goed blinkgevryf,
gaan staanmaak in 'n openbare plek
om daarin die weerkaatsings te ontdek
van wie ook al verbyloop, so't hy ook
in fantasieë met die beeld gespook
van al wat vrou in sy omgewing is.

1580

Hoe hy moes kies, was 'n probleem gewis:
al was een met 'n mooi gesig bedeel,
was daar 'n ander weer wat harte steel
met haar groot erns en groot minsaamheid
wat eerbetoon gewen het wyd en syd;
en een was ryk, maar haar reputasie sleg;
maar tussen spel en erns kry hy dit reg
om eindelijk een te kies wat sy doel sal dien
(en van die res het hy toe afgesien)
op eie gesag en volgens eie opinie,
want die liefde bly maar blind; dit kan nie sien nie.

1590

En as hy snags gaan slaap dan kan hy haar
in sy verbeelding heelyddeur gewaar:
so jonk en mooi, met middellyfie slank,
so vars van voorkoms, met arms fyn en lank,
en so omsigtig en verfynd was sy
en so eg vroulik en bedaard daarby.

1600

Met sy keuse vasgestel, het dit vir hom
as 'n onverbeterlike voorgekom;
met sy besluit gemaak, het hy geglo
dat dit ander aan verstand ontbreek in so
'n mate hul kon geen beswaar aanteken
teen sy keuse nie: of so het hy gereken.

1610

'n Dringende boodskap aan sy vriende vra
hul moet hom die genoeë doen om na
hom toe te kom, en nie nog tyd verspil.

Hy wou hul moeite spaar: om sy ontwil
hoef hul nie meer te reis op soek na 'n bruid;
hy't klaar gekies en sou bly by sy besluit.

Placebo het gekom en al sy vriende;
Toe't Januarie hul versoek dat siende
dat sy beslissing God behaag en dan
ook, volgens hom, die grondslag vorm van
sy toekomstige geluk, hy nie wou hê
dat enigiemand iets daarteen moes sê.

1620

Daar was 'n meisie in die stad, het hy vertel,
bekend vanweë haar skoonheid, alhoewel
sy van 'n lae stand was; maar haar jeug
en skoonheid was genoeg, dus sou sy deug
as vrou vir hom; met haar was hy bereid
om te lewe in gemak en heiligheid.

Hy't God gedank: sy sou syne wees geheel –
met niemand hoef hy sy geluk te deel.

1630

Hy't hul gevra om hom te onderskraag,
want met hul hulp sou hy in sy doelwit slaag,
'want dan,' sê hy 'het ek vrede in my gees;
dan kan daar geen bekommernisse wees,
behalwe een wat my gewete pla
waaroor ek julle almal graag wil vra.'

Hy sê: 'Ek het gehoor in 'n vroeër tyd
vir niemand's daar 'n dubbele saligheid –
op aarde en in die hemel nog daarby;
al sou mens al die doodsondes vermy
en verder ook nog elke twyg en tak.

1640

In die huwelik is daar soveel gemak
en soveel vrede en vreugde bowendien,
dit kwel my op my oudag dat ek miskien
so 'n aangename lewe hier geniet,
so heerlik sonder sorge en verdriet,
dat ek my hemel hier op aarde het.

As die ware hemel duur gekoop word met
ware beproewing en boetvaardigheid,
hoe sal ek dan wat lewe in jolyt
as 'n getroude man ooit heil verwerf,
die ewige lewe in die hemel erf?

1650

Dis die probleem wat my die heeltyd pla;
so los dit vir my op: dis wat ek vra.'

Vir Justinus was dit eenmaal te verspot
en na sy sotheid antwoord hy die sot;
om tyd te spaar het hy ook sonder meer
al die outoriteite geïgnoreer.

Hy sê: 'As daar geen ander hindernis
as dit bestaan, mag God wat magtig is
en vol genade, dinge so bestier vir jou
dat jy voor die Laaste Oliesel² berou

1660

2 Sakrament wat aan 'n sterwende toegedien word wanneer 'n priester hom of haar deur salwing en gebed
genade meedeel.

mag hê oor die getroude lewe wat
kwansuis geen sorge en verdriet bevat;
of, om dit anders te stel, mag God behoed
dat getroudes meer genade om te boet
ontvang as ongetroudes; daarom is
die beste raad wat ek kan gee gewis
dat jy nie moet wanhoop nie, want op die duur
is hierdie vrou dalk nog jou vaevuur,
die gesel in Gods hand vir jou verdriet!
Dan sal jou siel terstond na die hemel skiet
so vinnig soos 'n pyl uit 'n boog uit trek.

1670

Ek reken jy sal gou genoeg ontdek,
die saligheid van die egtelike staat
bestaan eenvoudig nie, en daarom baat
dit niks dat jy jou heil daarvoor verpand,
mits jou genot aan haar nie jou verstand
benewel of jy uit verliefdheid laf
is en aan haar te veel plesier verskaf,
en mits jy jou van ander sonde onthou.
Nou is ek uitgepraat, maar jy moet jou
tog nie ontstel nie; ons kan dit liewers laat,
my liewe broer, en oor iets anders praat.
Die Vrou van Bath het deeglik uitgewei
oor hierdie onderwerp, dit reggekry
om in 'n klein bestek veel te vertel.

1680

Ek wens jou God se seën, en nou vaarwel.
Na hul gegroet het, is hul uit mekaar.

Dit was vir almal duidelik dat daar
niks aan te doen was nie, dus gaan hul voort
met onderhandel; 'n huweliksakkoord
is aangegaan waarvolgens dié jong vrou –
Mei was haar naam – so spoedig moontlik trou
met Januarie. Dit sou 'n oormaat tyd
in beslag neem as ek elke besonderheid
moes noem van transportakte en leenverbond
wat haar besit gegee het van sy grond,
of uitwei oor hoe ryk haar uitset was;
maar oplaas het die dag gekom toe hulle as
'n bruidspaar na die kerk gegaan het waar
die Sakrament hul saambind aan mekaar.

1690

1700

Die priester kom met stola³ om die nek;
hy maan dat sy net wysheid en respek
soos Sara en Rebekka moet betoon;
hy sê gebede op, als doodgewoon;
hy kruis hul; smeeke Gods seën af op hul eg:
só maak 'n vrome rite alles reg.

So's hulle dan getroud met prag en praal;
met vooraanstaande gaste by die onthaal;
op 'n verhoog gesete was dié paar.

1710

³ 'n Lang strook materiaal wat 'n priester by geestelike bedieninge om sy nek dra.

Die huis was vol plesier en gebaljaar,
musiek en allerhande lekkernye,
die beste uit Italië se kontreie;
so fyn die instrumente wat daar staan,
nóg Orpheus nóg Amphion die Thebaan
kon mooier melodieë voortgebring het;
geregte is aangekondig deur 'n trompet
se skal; nóg Joab nóg Thiodamas
toe daar vir Thebe 'n bedreiging was,
was half so hard en duidelik met die sein.
Bacchus was daar en skink vir almal wyn
en Venus het hul vrolik toegelag, want nou
was Januarie haar ridder en hy wou
wys waartoe hy in staat is in die eg –
soos voorheen as haar ongetroude kneg.
Sy hou 'n fakkel omhoog en in die glans
daarvan lei sy die bruidstoet in die dans.
O blye dag! Ek hou dit vir gewis
dat Humen, wat die god van die bruilof is,
nie weet van 'n opgewekter bruidegom.

1720

1730

So, Martianus, hou jou liewer stom:
jy't 'n blye troue beskryf, verwysend na
Mercurius en Philologia –
en hoe't die Muses nie dié dag gesing –
maar nou is jou talente te gering
om reg te laat geskied aan hierdie troue;
as 'n jongding afhaak met 'n gryse oue
gee dit eenvoudig 'n spektakel af.
Beproof dit self en kyk of ek so laf
is dat ek nie die waarheid hieroor praat.

1740

Betowerend was Mei se mooi gelaat
waar sy daar sit, 'n sprokie se heldin;
met soveel stemmigheid het koningin
Ester vir Ahasveros aangekyk.
Ek kan nie mooi verduidelik hoe sy lyk,
maar dit kan ek wel sê: sy het so skoon
soos 'n helder oggend in Meimaand vertoon,
so boordevol van skoonheid en vermaak.

Januarie het verruk geraak
as hy maar net in die rigting kyk van Mei;
hy't hom in sy verbeelding voorberei
om haar dié nag te omhels, en stywer nog
as Paris vir Helena; maar was tog
ook deur gewetenswroeging aangedaan
oor hy haar daardie nag te lyf moes gaan.
Hy dag: 'Ag foeitog, arme kreatuur,
sal jy my hartstog vir jou kan verduur?
Dit is so heet en fel en ek's bevrees
jy sal nie daarteen opgewasse wees;
ek moet dit liefs nie doen met al my mag.
Hoe wens ek dit was nou uiteindelik nag

1750

1760

en dat dit dan vir ewig nag kon bly!
Ag, as die mense net hul loop wil kry.’
Om hulle aan te jaag was gladnie goed,
want hy moes mooi loop sodat hy verhoed
dat sy eer geskaad word deur sy haastigheid.

Toe hul van die tafel opstaan, was dit tyd
om te dans en diep te drink en kruie in
die kamers rond te strooi. Lig van sin
en vreugdevol was elke enkele man
behalwe ’n dienskneg, ene Damian.
Hy’t dikwels vir die ridder voorgesny
en was nou so verruk oor die skone Mei,
die minnepyn het hom amper mal gemaak;
hy het verswak en duiselig geraak,
want in die dans het Venus mos vir hom
’n slaggie met haar fakkel bygekom
en hom so kwaai geskroei hy moes gaan lê.
Voorlopig sal ek niks meer van hom sê;
ek laat hom oor aan trane en gekerm,
tot die skone Mei vir haar oor hom ontferm.

1770

1780

O groot gevaar wat in bedstrooi ontbrand!
O valse dienaar, altyd byderhand
met sy geveinsde diens! O die verraad –
’n slang aan die bors gekoester inderdaad –
maar hoe vermei ’n mens dié wrede lot?

O Januarie, dronk van die genot
van die huwelik, kyk tog hoe Damian
wat aan jou diens verskuldig is, beplan
om jou te onteer, jou lelik in te trek.
Mag jy die vyand onder jou dak ontdek,
want daar’s g’n erger plaag op aarde as juis
dié vyand wat hom skuilhou in jou huis.

1790

Na die kringloop van die son vir daardie dag
voltooi is, kon dié hemelbol nie wag
bo die horison op daardie breedtegraad,
en het die nag sy rowwe, donker gewaad
oor die hemelhemisfeer begin te sprei.
Met dank aan alle kante en ’n bly
gemoed het Januarie se gaste weer
opgewek na hul huise teruggekeer,
waar hulle handel na hul hartelus
voor hulle ter geleëner tyd gaan rus.

1800

’n Ewe haastige Januarie wou
nie langer talm nie, want dit was nou
tyd dat hy gaan lê, maar eers het hy
hippokras, klaretwyn, malvesy⁴
gedrink, en allerhande ander goed
om sy seksdrang te verhoog en hom die moed

1810

4 Hippokras was ’n versterkende drank gemaak van wyn, speserye en suiker; klaretwyn hier is eintlik ‘clarree’, ’n gebreide wyn- en heunigmengsel; malvesy was ’n sterk Italiaanse wit wyn.

te gee vir wat daar voorlê – soos opgedien is
deur die berugte monnik Constantinus
in sy *De Coitu*. 'Help my,' sê hy
vir sy vriende, 'om al die mense hier uit te kry.'
Hul't dit gedoen; toe's 'n heildronk ingestel;
die gordyn is oopgetrek; toe vergesel
hul die bruid na die bed – sy was so strak soos steen –
en daarna het die priester die bed geseën.
Toe't die teenwoordiges vir hul onttrek
en wegbeweeg vanaf die slaapvertrek.

1820

En Januarie het sy skone jong Mei,
sy paradys, sy maat, daar beetgekry;
hy liefkoos haar en soen haar keer op keer
en skuur sy harde baard pal oor haar teer
gesig, die stoppels daarvan soos 'n haai
se vel, dit was so doringskerp en taai,
al was hy glad geskeer op sy manier;
en sê: 'Helaas, dat ek jou moet ontsier,
my liewe vrou, deur jou te lyf te gaan
voor dit tyd is om in die oggend op te staan.
Maar dink daaraan: geen vakman kan gewis
deeglike werk wil doen as hy haastig is,
maar, wat ook al die taak, bly tydsaamheid
die beste welslae bringende beleid.
Dit maak nie saak hoe lank rek ons ons pret,
want ons is tog verenig volgens wet.
Geseënd is die juk wat ons verbind,
want daarin is g'n sondesmet te vind:
mens kan nie sondig met jou huweliksmaat;
met jou eie mes kan jy jou mos nie skaad;
vir ons genietings is ons regsbevoeg.'
Hy't deur die nag tot dagbreek toe geswoeg;
Toe neem hy brood wat geweek is in klaret,
en, penorent gesete op sy bed,
het hy luid en skril gesing, sy vrou gesoen
en allerhande gekke goed gedoen;
so lewenslustig soos 'n vul was hy
en soos 'n ekster s'n sy babbelary;
die slap vel het geflabber in sy nek,
so erg het hy die note uitgerek.

1830

1840

1850

God weet wat Mei gedink het toe sy daar
na hom in sy naghemp en sy slaapmus staar;
met sy seningrige nek het sy liefdespel
minder as 'n boontjiesstoel by haar getel.

'Nou moet ek eers 'n slaggie rus,' sê hy,
'want dis nou dag; my nagwaak is verby.'
Toe sy kop die kussing raak, toe slaap hy vas
totdat dit priem- en opstaantyd vir hom was.
Januarie staan op, maar die skone Mei
het tot die vierde dag in haar kamer gebly,
ooreenkomstig die gebruik; na harde werk

1860

is dit nodig om te rus en aan te sterk,
want sonder rus kan niks en niemand duur –
dié waarheid geld vir iedere kreatuur,
vir mense, wilde diere, voëls en visse.

Terug nou na Damian se bekommernisse.
Dié jongman kwyn, deur verliefdheid aangedaan;
dus wil ek hom op hierdie wyse maan:
'Waarom dink jy, arme Damian?

Beantwoord hierdie knelvraag as jy kan:

1870

Oorweeg jy dit om jou hart te gaan ontbloot
aan iemand wat jou altyd sal verstoot
en boonop sal verrai sodra jy praat?
Mag God jou help – vir jou is dit ál raad.'

So smoorverlief was die arme Damian
dat hy kon beswyk het as gevolg daarvan.

Oor hy dit nie kon uithou, het hy oplaas
besluit om alles op die spel te plaas;

met stilletjies geleende skryfgerei

het hy toe alles opgebieg aan Mei

1880

in die vorm van 'n lied of klaaggedig

aan die hooggeëerde, liewe vrou gerig,

en hy het dié bewoording van sy smart

in 'n beurs van sy gedra naasaan sy hart.

Met noen op hulle troudag het die maan

twee grade in die Stier se huis gestaan,

maar nou het dit na die Kreef toe oorgegely,

terwyl die bruid steeds in haar kamer bly;

want onder adellikes is dit normaal:

'n bruid kom nie vir etes na die saal

1890

tot drie, vier dae ná haar huweliksdag

en daarna sal 'n feesmaal op haar wag.

Die vierde dag, die Hoogmis eers verby,
het Januarie vergesel van Mei

na die saal gegaan om die ete by te woon;

soos 'n somerdag was sy, so vars en skoon;

en toe het dit gebeur dat haar goeie man

weer almeteens onthou van Damian.

Hy sê: 'Dat daar iets fout is, kan ek sien,

want Damian's nie hier om my te dien.

1900

Is hy dan siek dat hy sy pligte loën?'

Die ander knegte daar het hom verskoon
vanweë ongesteldheid; geen ander rede

sou hom weerhou van sy verantwoordelikhede,

want hy was baie gesteld op pligsgetrouheid.

En Januarie sê: 'Ek's regtig spyt.

Hy is 'n goeie dienaar, by my trou!

As hy beswyk, dan sou dit my berou.

Hy is lojaal, omsigtig en verstandig,

'n ware man, vir diens bereid en handig;

1910

van die bestes van sy stand, sou ek kon sê –

so een verdien mos om sukses te hê.

Sodra ons klaar geëet het, gaan ek hom
'n slag besoek, en Mei moet met my kom,
om hom op te beur, soveel as wat ek kan.'

Almal was ingenome met dié plan
wat sprekend was van vriendelikheid en deug
en 'n ongestelde dienaar sou verheug;
hul't dit as 'n verfynde daad beskou.

'My vrou,' sê Januarie, 'wanneer ons nou
met ete klaar is en jy hiervandaan
met jou dienaressie na jou kamer gaan,
loer dan 'n slaggie in by Damian
om hom op te kikker – hy's 'n goeie man –
en sê hy kan besoek verwag van my;
ek moet net eers 'n effe ruskans kry.
Maar moenie draai nie, want ek wag om jou
weer vas in my omhelsing te omvou.'

1920

Toe roep hy die bediende wat belas
met al 'n hofmaarskalk se pligte was
om sy bevele uit te reik vir die dag.
Die skone Mei het nie op haar laat wag;
Sy het reëlreg na Damian gehaas
met haar gevolg; sy't langs sy bed toe plaas
geneem sodat sy hom kon troos na haar
beste vermoë. Toe hy sy kans gewaar,
gee hy geen ander teken as om net
'n lang swaar sug te slaak, en daarna het
hy toe die beurs met die papier waarop
al sy verlangens staan in haar hand gestop.

1930

Hy't sag gefluister: '*Merci*,⁵ liewe vrou,
moet my tog nie verrai nie, smee ek jou;
ek is 'n kind des doods raak dit bekend.'
Sy steek dit in haar boesem; daarna wend
sy haar na haar man toe. Hieroor sê ek niks meer.

1940

So't Mei na Januarie teruggekeer
waar hy op die bed gesit het. Hy't haar beetgekry
en oor en oor gesoen, maar na 'n ruk het hy
vas aan die slaap geraak. Mei't opgestaan
en voorgegee sy het behoefte aan
'n plek waar ons almal nou en dan moet wees;
en daar het sy die briefie deurgelees.
Sy het dit fyn geskeur en dit toe mooi
stilletjies in die privaat gegooi.

1950

Diep ingedagte lê die skone Mei
nou langs ou Januarie, sy aan sy.
Hy snork totdat 'n hoesbui hom wakker maak.
Toe sê hy: 'Stroop jou moedernaak,
want,' sê hy, 'ek wil ons spel hervat,
en jou klere,' sê hy, 'kom net in die pad.'
Sy het gehoorsaam, al was dit teen haar wil,

1960

5 Die minnaar se pleidooi aan sy beminde om hom te begenadig.

maar oor wat gebeur het, bly ek liewers stil,
want preutses wil nie hoor of dit toe wel
vir haar die paradys was of die hel;
ek verswyg dit als en laat hul maar begaan
tot die vesperklok⁶ hul roep om op te staan.

Nou, of dit toeval was of lotsbestuur,
die invloed van die sterre of die natuur,
of dat die konstellasies gunstig was
en, as gevolg daarvan, die uur gepas
geblyk het om 'n vrou daartoe te win
om met 'n liefdesverhouding te begin
(want vir als is daar 'n tyd, soos die Bybel leer),
kan ek nie sê, maar God wat oor als regeer,
weet daar's geen handeling sonder grond;
Hy oordeel als, en ek hou liefs my mond.
Maar dit staan vas: die siekte van Damian
had so 'n indruk op die gemoedsrus van
die arme, simpatieke, skone Mei
dat sy die idee nie uit haar kop kon kry
dat sy hom sou vertrou. 'Dis ewentwel,'
dag sy, 'wie my optrede dalk ontstel,
want ek belowe dat ek niemand in
die hele wêreld meer as hom sal min,
al het hy niks meer as 'n hemp aan sy lyf.'
Deur deernis word 'n edelvrou gedryf.

1970

1980

Hier kan ons sien watter ruimheid van gemoed
'n vrou sal openbaar as sy eers goed
oor die saak besin het, al is daar meer as een
gewetenlose vrou met 'n hart van steen:
as 'n man sou sterwe, gee sy glad nie om,
eerder as dat sy guns betoon aan hom,
en in haar wrede trots is dit om 't ewe
of haar slagoffer sterf en of hy lewe.

1990

Deur diepe jammerte daartoe gedryf,
het Mei met eie hand 'n brief geskryf:
sy verseker hom van haar goedgunstigheid;
al wat ontbreek, is net die plek en tyd
vir die bevrediging van al sy lus:
in die reëlings wat hy tref, sal sy berus.

2000

En eendag toe die kans hom voordoen, wend
sy haar skrede toe na die pasiënt.
Sy steek die brief weg onder sy kussing dat
hy dit op sy gemak kan lees, en daarna vat
sy hom aan die hand om 'n drukkie toe te dien,
maar heimlik sodat niemand dit kan sien;
sy wens hom beterskap en gaan van daar
na Januarie waar hy wag op haar.

⁶ Die klok wat oproep tot vespers, die namiddagdiens.

Die oggend vroeg is Damian uit die vere;
 hy kam sy hare, was, trek aan sy klere; 2010
 doen als om sy geliefde te behaag –
 siekte en sorge is meteens verjaag.
 Voor Januarie het hy gebuig na die grond,
 so onderdanig soos 'n jagter se hond,
 en almal wat hy teenkom, is gevlei
 (die kuns is als, as jy dit reg kan kry),
 sodat die mense hom hoog aangeslaan het
 en hy in Mei se goeie guns gestaan het.
 Hier los ek nou vir Damian andermaal
 om voort te gaan met die draad van my verhaal. 2020

Party geleerdes meen dat sinsgenot
 die wese uitmaak van geluk, en tot
 elke prys het Januarie gestrewe
 om somer baie aangenaam te lewe,
 soos dit betaamlik is en 'n ridder pas.
 Sy huis en als wat hy besit het, was
 sy posisie waardig, soos dié van 'n koning;
 hieronder was daar, grensend aan sy woning,
 'n geslote tuin,⁷ van 'n klipmuur omgewe;
 'n tuin so mooi het ek my hele lewe 2030
 nog nooit gesien nie. Ek glo nie eens die man
 wat roem verwerf het as die skrywer van
 die *Roosroman*⁸ sou die sjarme kon verhaal;
 selfs Priapos, die tuinegod, sou faal
 as hy probeer om die skoonheid te verklaar
 van daardie tuin asook die bron wat daar
 gewel het onder 'n immergroen lourier.

Pluto en Proserpina het hul hier
 met hul hele feëstoet al dikwels kom
 verlustig deur te sing en dans rondom 2040
 die bron, soos ons uit ou verhale sien.
 Vir die bejaarde Januarie dien
 die tuin as so 'n lusoord, toegang is aan
 geen ander mens op aarde toegestaan:
 die silwer sleutel het 'n geheime plekkie,
 en hy kon altyd ingaan by die hekkie
 om hom daar in sy lushof te vermei.

En as hy in die somermaande sy
 verpligting teenoor sy vrou wou nakom, vat
 hy haar na die tuin; daar's hul alleen, en wat 2050
 hy vroeër nie kon regkry in die kooi,
 word nou met welslae in die tuin voltooi.
 So't Januarie met die skone Mei
 hom baie dae aan die pret gewy;

7 Hooglied 4:12, "My beminde is 'n tuin wat toegemaak is, 'n tuin met 'n muur om." In die Middeleeue is die beeld van die geslote tuin op die Maagd Maria toegepas. Dit herinner ook aan Eden wat in Middeleeuse kuns as omhein voorgestel is.

8 In die 13de eeuse *Roman de la Rose*, gedig deur Guillaume de Lorris, wat deur Chaucer in Engels vertaal is, word so 'n lushof van die liefde beskryf.

maar aardse vreugde is bra kort van duur
vir hom en elke ander kreatuur.

O onverwagte swaai van die wankel lot,
soos die valse skerpioen wat ons bespot:
terwyl 'n mooi gesig die prooi bekoor,
word dit deur 'n angel in die stert deurboor
met soete gif in dodelike dosis.

2060

Helaas, dat ons geluk altyd so broos is:
net wanneer ons dink dat als standvastig is,
kom die ommekeer tot ons ontsteltenis.
So's Januarie, wat gedink het hy
word deur die lot begunstig, erg mislei:
berooft van die gesig in albei oë,
voel hy teleurgestel en diep bedroë.

Helaas, want hierdie goeie, gawe man
het skielik blind geword te midde van
die voorspoed en plesier wat hy geniet
en daardeur's hy versonke in verdriet,
en boonop het die vuur van jaloesie
hom ook gedompel in melankolie,
want dalk doen Mei 'n onbesonne ding.
Dis beter as een hul om die lewe bring,
want ná sy dood, soos in sy lewe, kon hy
nie die gedagte veel dat 'n ander haar kry:
getrou soos 'n tortelduif, in swart geklee,
moes sy haar lewe slyt as weduwee.

2070

2080

Maar ná 'n maand of twee het hy begin
om weer sy geestesewewig te herwin,
want hy sien daar's g'n genade as om maar
sy wrede lot gelate te aanvaar;
maar net sy jaloesie het steeds so sterk
en so verterend op hom ingewerk
dat hy nie daarvan kon ontslae raak:
hy was so bang dat Mei hom dalk versaak,
hy kon nie toelaat dat sy kom of staan
of hier- of daar- of waar- ook al heen gaan
as hy nie by is, met sy hand op haar.

2090

Vir die skone Mei was dit regtig baie swaar,
want so verlief op Damian was sy,
dat as sy nie haar sin met hom kon kry,
sou sy die lewe laat omdat haar hart
dit nooit kon uithou nie van soveel smart.

Wat Damian betref, aan die ander kant,
hy was die droefste mens in die hele land;
die dae en die nagte gaan verby
sonder dat hy iets aan die skone Mei
aangaande wat hy voorneem, eens kon fluister
of Januarie het dit afgeluister,
want hy't gedurigdeur 'n hand op haar.

2100

Maar nietemin, deur middel van gebaar
en heen en weer te skryf, het hul 'n akkoord
met mekaar gesmee, sonder 'n enkele woord.
O Januarie, wat sou dit jou baat
al sou jy 'n skip kon sien wat die kaai verlaat?
Wat maak dit saak of mens blind of sienderoë
bedrieg word? Jy's in elk geval bedroë.
Selfs die honderd oë van Argos⁹ was verniet;
al kon hy orals inloer, als bespied,
hy's tog geflous, en so ook ander, al
hou hulle vol dis geensins die geval.
Maar dis genoeg; ek laat maar liewers staan.

2110

Die skone Mei, oor wie my storie gaan,
het 'n afdruk in warm was gevorm van
die sleutel van die hekkie wat haar man
by hom gedra het en gebruik het om
dikwels in sy lushof in te kom,
en Damian het dit skelm nagemaak.
Daar val niks meer te sê oor hierdie saak,
behalwe dat dié sleutel voorspel is
tot 'n wonderbaarlike geskiedenis.

2120

'Liefde soek lis,' het Ovidius beweer,
soos ons van Pirus en Thisbe leer,
hoe uitvoerig en vernuftig ook die set:
dié twee is streng bewaak, maar hulle het
tog deur 'n muur gefluister en oor en weer
akkoord gegaan, trou aan mekaar gesweer.
Nou wie sou ooit gedink het aan so 'n plan?

2130

Terug na my storie. Voor ag dae van
Junie verby is, het dit voorgeval
dat blinde Januarie, wat nou pal
deur Mei gepor is, die begeerte kry
om hom met haar in die lushof te vermei,
en die oggend vroeg druk hy hom aldus uit:
'Staan op, my mooiste liefding, skone bruid,
jy is so mooi, daar's geen gebrek aan jou;
die tortelduif se stem verneem ons nou;
die winter is verby, die reën vervloë;
kom tog na my toe met jou duiwe-oë.
Jou borste is veel heerliker as wyn!
Jy's 'n geslote tuin, met 'n muur omhein;
kom saam met my, my lelieblanke lief.
Jy, my beminde, is my hartedief;
kom ons geniet 'n bietjie liefdespel;
jy's my gekose bruid en metgesel.'¹⁰
Sulke ou wulpse sêgoed raak hy kwyt.

2140

9 'n Reus met 'n honderd oë is beveel om lo in die gedaante van 'n koei te bewaak, maar Hermes het hom doodgemaak en Hera het sy oë op die stert van die pou geplaas.

10 Vergelyk Hooglied 2: 10-14 en 4:12-13a.

Sy wink vir Damian dat dit nou tyd
is dat hy met sy sleutel hul vooruit
moet gaan. Hy het die hekkie oopgesluit
en gou-gou ingeglip, dit so diskreet
dat niemand enigiets daarvan kon weet,
en hy't hom in 'n ruigte skuilgehou. 2150

Stokblinde Januarie, deur sy vrou
aan die hand gelei, en niemand as net hul twee,
het toe die afgeslote tuin betree.

Hy klap die hekkie toe. 'Wel nou,' sê hy,
'my liewe vrou, nou's dit net ek en jy. 2160

Daar's niemand wat so veel vir my beteken,
want, by die Heer wat oor ons heers, ek reken
ek kom eerder deur 'n messteek aan my end,
my liewe vrou, as dat ek jou nou skend.

Die grondslag van my keuse, moet jy onthou,
was enkel en alleen my liefde vir jou,
nie dat ek enigiets daaruit wou kry.

Hoewel ek oud is, en nou blind daarby,
wees tog getrou aan my; dit, waarborg ek,
sal op drie maniere tot jou voordeel strek: 2170

dis Christus liefde en jou eie lof
asook my hele boedel, huis en hof,
wat ek aan jou bemaak; voor môre klaar is,
kan dit aangeteken staan by 'n notaris,
so waar as wat ek my aan God beveel.

Kom, soen my nou om ons verbond te seël.
My jaloesie is nouliks uit te hou:

ek's so behep met die gedagte aan jou
dat as ek aan jou skoonheid dink en dan
die onwelgevallige jare van jou man, 2180

dan kan ek jou geselskap nie verbeur,
al sou ek ook my dood verhaas daardeur.
Ek's so verlief, maar toe, kom soen my nou,
dan stap ons bietjie in die tuin, my vrou.'

Hierop het Mei, wat jonk was en aanvallig
geantwoord op 'n wyse so liefvallig,

maar sy't eers driftig aan die huil gegaan,
vir hom gesê: 'Ek het ook 'n siel waaraan
ek, net soos jy, moet dink, en aan my eer,
asook die blom van vroulikheid so teer 2190

wat ek aan jou gegee het as my pand
toe ons saamgesnoer is in die huweliksband,
en daarom wens ek nou, my liewe heer,
om met jou verlof aldus te reageer:

Ek bid tot God, mag daardie dag nooit breek
waarop ek my familie in die skande steek
of so my goeie naam beswadder deur my trou
aan my eggenoot te breek; en as ek sóú,

maak my op skandelige wyse dood:
stop my in 'n sak, van klere ontbloot, 2200

en gooi my in 'n stroom. Jy moet onthou
ek is g'n slet nie; ek's 'n edelvrou.
Mans is ontrou en dan word hulle maatjies
verwyte toegeslinger; al hul praatjies
van ontrou is net oëverblindery
om die skuld van eie ontrou te vermy.'

En, so gesê, het sy vir Damian daar
waar hy geskuil het in 'n struik, gewaar;
sy't aan die hoes gegaan, met haar hand gewaai
om hom te wys dat hy in 'n boom belaaie
met vrugte moet klim. Hy doen dit baie gou,
want hy't geweet wat voer sy in die mou;
beter as haar man het hy verstaan
wat dui haar tekens en gebare aan,
want in 'n brief het sy gespesifiseer
hoe hy die hele affêre moet hanteer.
In die peerboom los ek nou vir Damian;
intussen wandel Mei rond met haar man.

2210

Blou was die lug en helder was die weer
en Phoibos stuur sy goue strale neer
om elke blom met warmte te verbly;
hy was toe in die Tweeling en naastenby
sy swakste invloed in sy deklinasie
na die Kreef, en Jupiter se eksaltasie.¹¹
Dié helder oggend aan die ander kant
van die tuin was Pluto, koning van feëland,
met baie dames in die gevolg van sy vrou,
Proserpina, wat hom geselskap hou –
sy is van Etna af ontvoer toe sy
eendag in 'n nabygeleë vallei
blomme gepluk het; Pluto het vir haar
in sy aaklige koets mos weggevoer van daar
(die digter Claudianus beskrywe dit) –
dié einste feëkoning het nou gaan sit
op 'n bank gemaak van soosie vars en groen
en't aldus aan sy vrou verslag gedoen:

2220

2230

'My vrou, ek kan vir seker konstateer,
soos ons elke dag uit eie ervaring leer,
'n vrou bedrieg geredelik haar man.
Van hul verraad en feilbaarhede kan
ek honderdduisend voorbeelde ophaal.
O wyse Salomo, groot is die skaal
en omvang van jou rykdom, kennis, eer;
jou woorde is daar vir wie ook al wil leer
as hy die nodige verstand besit.
Van goedheid onder mense sê hy dit:
"Uit duisend mense het ek eindelik een
betroubare man gevind – maar vroue geen"¹² –
aldus 'n koning wat bekend was met

2240

11 Die huis of teken van die diereriem waar 'n planeet sy grootste invloed uitoefen.

12 Prediker 7:8.

al julle vroumensstreke. Ben Sirag het
vroue ook van weinig nut geag. 2250

Ek wens dat belroos en die pes vannag
nog op jul neerdaal. Sien jul hierdie man?
Hy's 'n goeie man, maar deur die toedoen van
sy eie kneg word hy horings opgesit;
oor hy oud en blind is, bewimpel hulle dit.
Kyk daar waar sit die jagse in die boom!
Vanweë my majesteit sal ek nie skroom
om hierdie selfde goeie, blinde ou heer
in staat te stel om weer te sien wanneer 2260
sy vrou vir hom in die skande steek, en hy
sal als ontdek van haar hoereerdery,
tot haar oneer en ander vrouens s'n.'

'O so, nè,' sê sy, 'dit is wat jy in
gedagte het! Wel, by Saturnus sweer
ek dan ek sal vir haar 'n antwoord leer,
en elke ander vrou sal daarby baat;
al word hul ook betrap op heter daad,
sal hulle ewe astant hul verontskuldig
en afkom op die man wat hul beskuldig: 2270
nie een hoof rond te trap met 'n mond vol tande;
al sien 'n man met albei oë skande,
sal ons wat vroue is vir hom trotseer
en ween en sweer, geslepe ons mans blameer,
hul soos 'n klomp onnosel ganse laat lyk.

Ek sal nie voor jou outoriteite wyk.
Al kry dié Salomo van jou, dié Jood,
al wat 'n simpel vrou is onder skoot;
al gee hy voor dat daar g'n goeies bestaan,
is baie 'n ander mening toegedaan: 2280
hul weet van goeies, deugsam en getrou,
soos dié by Christus in die hemel nou:
as martelaars is hulle trou verseël;
en die geskiedenis van Rome deel
ons mee van veel van wie dit eweneens geld.
My goeie heer, wees tog nie so ontsteld.
Wat Salomo wou sê met sy bewering
dat daar g'n goeie vrou is, is die lering
dat as 'n mens na louter goedheid kyk,
kan niks met dié van die Here vergelyk. 2290
Wel, by die ware God, wat maak jy so
'n groot bohai oor hierdie Salomo?
Al het hy ook 'n tempel vir die Heer
gebou, al was hy ryk en hooggeëer,
hy het ook meer as een afgod aanbid –
hoe kon hy 'n erger sonde doen as dit?
Jy wil hom verontskuldig; tog was hy
aan wellus skuldig en afgodery;
en op sy oudag het hy God verloën.
Ter wille van sy vader is guns betoon 2300

aan hom, so lees ons, anders het hy voor
hy hom kom kry, sy koningskap verloor!
Ek gee nie 'n flenter om vir al die kwaad
wat julle teen ons skryf, maar ek moet praat;
ek is 'n vrou per slot van rekening
en daarom kan ek my nie meer bedwing!
As hy vir ons gaan skinderbekke noem,
sal hoflikheid aan my kant nie verbloem
wat ek wil sê oor een wat ons so smaad;
al sny hul al my hare, sal ek praat.'

2310

'Wel, ek gee oor,' sê Pluto, 'so kalmeer
'n slaggie, maar ek het 'n eed gesweer
dat Januarie weer sal sien, mevrou.
Wees seker ek sal my belofte hou;
as koning doen ek steeds my woord gestand.'

'En ek, as koningin van feëland,'
sê sy, 'sal haar 'n antwoord gee gewis.
So kom ons los nou die geredetwis;
ek sal jou nie meer teengaan nie, my heer.'

Nou keer ons terug na Januarie weer:
met Mei maak hy daar in die tuin 'n draai
en sing so vrolik soos 'n papegaai:
'Ek is so lief vir jou, vir niemand meer
as jy nie.' So loop hulle op en neer,
en voor die peerboom kom hul toe te staan
waar Damian hom vrolik en voldaan
skuilhou in die lower, hoog in die lug.

2320

Die skone, liewe Mei het met 'n sug
gesê: 'Ek het 'n steek hier in my sy;
laat kom wat wil, ek moet van die pere kry
wat ek hier in die boom sien hang, en jy moet weet
as ek nie dadelik klein groen peertjies eet,
kan dit my dood beteken, want, my heer,
'n vrou wat in my toestand is, begeer
'n vrug so kwaai, daarsonder is sy klaar.'

2330

'Helaas,' roep hy, 'as ek 'n kneg tog maar
hier byderhand gehad het vir dié taak,
of as ekself nie blind was nie!'

'Dit maak
nie saak nie,' sê sy. 'As jy akkoord sal gaan
om net jou arms om die boom te slaan
(want ek weet maar alte goed jy wantrou my),
dan kan ek tog 'n peer in die hande kry
as ek jou rug gebruik om dit by te kom.'

2340

'Ek sal alles in die werk stel,' sê hy, 'om
vir jou te help, my hartebloed ook gee.'

Hy het gebuk; sy't op sy rug getree,
'n tak gegryp en haar opgetrek in die boom.
Verskoon tog, dames, as ek nou nie skroom
om die kind op sy naam te noem; ek's 'n reguit man.
Sommerso goedsmoeds trek dié Damian

2350

haar hempie op en daar betakel hy haar.

Toe Pluto egter dié wandaad gewaar,
stel hy vir Januarie in staat om weer
te sien, so goed as wat hy kon weleer.
Niemand kon opgewekter wees as hy
om sy gesigsvermoë terug te kry,
maar omdat hy pal oor sy vrou bly tob,
kyk hy onmiddellik in die peerboom op,
waar Damian betrokke was met haar
op 'n wyse wat ek moeilik kan verklaar
sonder om onverfynd te wees. Hy gee
'n harde gil en het so kwaai geskree
soos 'n moeder wie se kind op sterwe lê:
'Help, help! Helaas! Skei uit!' het hy gesê.
'Wat vang jy aan, afskuwelike vrou?'

2360

Sy het geantwoord: 'Wat makeer jou nou?
Jy moet geduldig en verstandig wees!
Ek het jou blinde oë vir jou genees,
want, by my sieleheil, dié goeie raad
het ek gehoor – dis die waarheid wat ek praat –
om jou te laat sien, is daar geen beter plan
as om in boom te worstel met 'n man.
Dis als opreg bedoel, moet jy verstaan.'

2370

'Worstel?' sê hy, 'maar dit het ingegaan.
Mag jul die skanddood sterf wat jul verdien.
Hy't jou geskrop; ek het dit self gesien,
of anders kan hul my maar hang.'

'My raat,'

sê sy toe, 'het jou blykbaar niks gebaat,
want, Godweet, as jy wel kon sien, sou jy
nie hierdie houding inneem teenoor my.
Jy het 'n glimps en nie die volle lig.'

2380

'Ek het,' sê hy, 'gebruik van my gesig:
my oë was nog nooit so goed as nou;
ek het gesien wat maak die vent met jou.'

'Jy is beneweld, liewe man,' sê sy;
'dis die dank wat ek vir jou genesing kry,
oor ek goedgehartig was teenoor my man.'

'Ag toemaar, lief,' sê hy, 'vergeet daarvan.
Kom uit die boom na my, en as ek jou
beledig het, Godweet ek het berou.
Maar, by my pa se siel, ek het vas geglo
ek sien jou hemp is opgetrek na bo
en jy word daar gesteek deur Damian.'

2390

'Wel, glo maar wat jy wil,' sê sy, 'maar 'n man
wat skielik uit die slaap uit wakker skrik,
sien baiemaal 'n ding onduidelik;
hy kan hom deeglik daarvan vergewis
eers wanneer hy volkome wakker is;
en sê maar iemand was lank blind gewees
en ewe skielik word dié man genees,

2400

aanvanklik sien hy met min duidelikheid,
maar dit verbeter met verloop van tyd.
Aan die begin – wees hierop voorberei –
sal jou oë jou nog baie maal mislei.
Wees op jou hoede, by die Heer daarbo,
want dikwels dink 'n man 'n saak staan so;
intussen is dit glad nie die geval.
'n Wandaad spruit uit wanbegrip veral.'

2410

En met dié woorde spring sy uit die boom.
Dié Januarie het, soos in 'n droom,
veel soene en liefkosings uitgedeel,
haar ook 'n slaggie oor die buik gestreel;
en hy't haar daarna huis toe begelei.

Wel, goeie mense, eindelijk is my
vertellinkie oor Januarie klaar.
Mag die Here en Sy Moeder ons bewaar.

Woorde van die Waard aan die geselskap

“Liewe genade!” maak die Waard beswaar,
“mag die Here my van so 'n vrou bewaar.
Kyk, vrouens is so vol bedrieërye;
hul woel en werskaf heeltyd soos bye
om hul mans, die arme stommerds, te bedrieg,
en land en sand word aanmekaar gelieg,
soos duidelik blyk uit die Koopman se verhaal.
My vrou's wel arm, maar sy's trou soos staal;
maar sy't 'n tong aan haar en sy kan vit
en redekawel – 'n regte rissiepit.

2420

Sy het nog baie ander foute, maar
dié onderwerp laat ek nou liewers vaar,
want, onder ons gesê, ek het berou
dat ek gekoppel is aan so 'n vrou.

2430

Ek is nie dwaas genoeg om al haar skete
te noem nie, want sy kom daarvan te wete
sodra een hier teenwoordig dit aan haar
gaan oorvertel. Ek hoef nie te verklaar
wie dit mag wees nie, want 'n vroumens loop
mos graag met sulke snuisterye te koop.
Ek sien nie kans om dit alles uit te lê nie
en daarom sal ek niks meer daarvoor sê nie.”

2440

Fragment V

Proloog tot die Jonker se verhaal

“Kom nader, Jonker, vind u dit nou goed.
Vertel ons van die liefde; ek vermoed
u weet soveel daarvan as wie ook al.”

“Nee, nee,” het hy geantwoord, “maar ek sal
met die grootste graagte iets probeer vertel.
Ek wil my wil geensins teen u s'n stel.
Verskoon my as die juiste woord my faal;
ek meen dit wel; hier dan is my verhaal.”

DIE JONKER SE VERHAAL

Te Tsarev in Tartareland op 'n tyd
was 'n koning teen die Russe in 'n stryd
gewikkel, waarin menig dapper man
gesneuwel het; sy naam was Cambuskan,
en op sy dag was hy so 'n wydvermaarde
aanvoerder dat daar nêrens op dees aarde
'n meer voortreflike te vinde was,
met al die deugde wat by 'n koning pas. 10

Dié vors het aan die godsdiens waarin hy
gebore is, altyd getrou gebly;
en daarby was hy dapper, wys en ryk,
milddadig en regverdig tegelyk; 20
sy woord getrou, eerwaardig en ook goed,
standvastig soos 'n steunpunt van gemoed;
jonk, fris en energiek van gees,
soos 'n ridder-aspirant behoort te wees;
gelukkig was hy, skoon ook van gelaat.
Hy het geleef in koninklike staat,
en niemand anders was aan hom gelyk.

Dié Cambuskan van die Tartareryk
se vrou, Elfeta, het twee seuns gebaar:
die een was Algarsief, en na 'n jaar 30
of wat, 'n tweede, naamlik Cambalo;
daarna 'n dogter – g'n mens kan glo
hoe mooi sy was. Haar naam was Canasee,
maar ek kannie in besonderhede tree:
my taal en my talente skiet te kort
as so 'n verhewendheid beskryf moet word.
My woordeskat is te beperk daarvoor;
alleen 'n redenaar wat met woorde toor,
beskik oor al die stylfigure wat
al haar hoedanighede vas kan vat – 40
en dis nie ek; ek sê maar wat ek kan.

En so het dit gebeur dat Cambuskan,
wat toe reeds twintig jaar lank koning was,

ooreenkomstig sy gebruik, 'n fees gelas
wat op 15 Maart, op sy geboortedag,
gevier sou word, en nuus van hierdie opdrag
is oral in die stad geopenbaar.

Phoibos, die son, was vreugdevol en klaar;
stygend deur die aspek van Mars en sy
warm, droë huis in die Ram het hy
nou naby aan sy hoogste punt gekom.

50

Die weer was mild en heerlik, en alom
verwelkom voëls die veranderde seisoen,
die helder blou van die lug, die vroeë groen,
deur luidkeels hulle minnesang te sing,
asof hul voel hul het beveiliging
nou teen die swaard van winter, koud en fel.

Dié Cambuskan van wie ek hier vertel,
het, vorstelik geklee, op 'n hoë troon
sy hof gehou, met op sy hoof 'n kroon,
en het feesgevier, so plegtig en so ryk
dat niemand met hom sou kon vergelyk.

60

As ek daaraan sou dink om uit te wei,
dan gaan 'n hele somerdag verby.
Dis tog onnodig en kan niemand baat
as ek van die maaltyd en sy gange praat,
oor die eksotiese te kere gaan
van reierkuikens en gebraaide swaan.

In daardie land, volgens getuienisse
deur ridders oorgelewer, was daar disse
destyds geag, maar glad nie na ons smaak.

70

Als te beskryf is 'n onbegonne taak.
Dis nou al nege-uur en daarom wil
ek niemand ophou nie of tyd verspil;
so laat my weer die draad van my storie kry.

Die derde gang van die maal was pas verby;

die koning sit in staatsie manjifiek
en luister na die heerlike musiek
van sy minstrele, toe daar plotseling
'n ridder in die feessaal binnedring
wat op 'n koperperd gesete was,
en in sy hand was daar 'n spieël van glas;
aan sy duim het 'n goue ring die lig gevang
en aan sy sy het 'n blote swaard gehang.

80

Niemand het gepraat nie, maar verstom
het hul gesit en kyk hoe hy nader kom,
al nader aan die koning se verhoog,
halsreikend om te weet wat hy beoog.

Die vreemde ridder wat so skielik op
die toneel was, dra 'n harnas; slegs sy kop
was onbedek. Hy groet die vors, vorstin
en al die edellui gesete in
die eetsaal volgens rang met diepe ontsag
en hoflikheid in woorde en gedrag,

90

dat selfs heer Walewyn,¹ bekend om sy
 galantheid, hom nie kon oortref as hy
 sou teruggekom het uit die feëland.
 Voor die sitplek van die koning neem hy stand;
 met forse stem spreek hy sy boodskap uit,
 geen woord nalatend en geen spraakgeluid 100
 eie aan die sinsbou van sy taal;
 en ter verheldering van sy verhaal,
 voeg hy gebare aan sy woorde toe –
 begaafde redenaars dié weet mos hoe.
 Sy styl en sy welsprekendheid kan ek
 nie namaak nie, dis bo my vuurmaakplek,
 maar ek verstout my om te konstateer
 dat ek die opset weergee, min of meer;
 daarby gesê, as ek my nie vergis.

Die ridder sê: 'My heer, wat koning is 110
 van Indië en Arabië, stuur deur my,
 wat in alles tot u diens staan, volgens sy
 bevel, sy beste wense met dié fees
 en verder, omdat hy nie hier kan wees,
 bring ek dié koperperd – dis sy present –
 wat hom na enige bestemming wend
 en u gedienstig sal vervoer waarheen
 u ook wil gaan in sonskyn of in reën;
 en u sal veilig aankom by die plek
 waar u wil wees, en als in die bestek 120
 van vier-en-twintig uur. Sonder gevaar
 aan u kan hy ook soos 'n adelaar
 van die grond af opstyg en hoog in die lug
 vlieg na die plek toe met u op sy rug.
 Dit maak nie saak as u dalk sou ontspan
 en aan die slaap raak in die saal. En dan,
 deur net 'n draad te wikkel, sal hy weer
 met u na u vertrekpunt toe terugkeer.

Die man wat hom gemaak het, was van nering
 Meganikus, maar hy't ook van beswering 130
 geweet en van die beste sterrestand.

Nou, wat betref die spieël hier in my hand,
 dit is so kragtig, as u daarin kyk
 dan sal u sien as teenspoed óf u ryk
 óf u person bedreig; dit kan beslis
 wie goedgesind en wie vyandig is.
 En bowendien, gestel nou dat 'n vrou
 haar hart graag aan 'n man wil toevertrou,
 sal sy weet as hy haar kul, want sy gewaar
 die nuwe nooi en sy gekonkel daar, 140
 so lewenswaar dat niks verborge bly.
 En nou, ter viering van die jaargety,
 het my heer bevel gegee dat ek die ring

1 'n Ridder van die Ronde Tafel.

asook die spieël vir Canasee moet bring,
u dogter wat geëer word wyd en syd.

Die ring besit weer dié hoedanigheid:
as sy dit aan haar duim dra, of selfs in
haar beursie hou, sal sy meteens die sin
kan uitmaak van die taal van elke soort
gevoëlte, aan watter ras dit ook al hoort. 150
Klinkklaar sal sy die boodskap kan bepaal
en die voël beantwoord in sy eie taal;
sy sal vertrou met alle kruie wees,
begrypend watter wond elk kan genees,
al is dit ook hoe diep of wyd of rou.

Dié blote swaard hier aan my sy gehou
het die vermoë, as mens iemand slaan,
om sy harnas te deurdring, dwarsdeur te gaan,
die dikte van 'n eik. Daarmee gewond, 160
word so 'n gevelde man nooit weer gesond,
tensy mens uit genade die plat kant van
die swaard sy wond laat raak, alleenlik dan
sal dit weer toegroei; dit wil eintlik sê,
as mens die swaard op dieselfde plek laat lê
waar die wond geleë is, genees hy wel.
Dis die reine waarheid wat ek u vertel:
dié wapen sal nooit faal, solank u dit
goed oppas en bewaar in u besit.'

En so gesê, ry hy weer uit die saal 170
en het hy afgestyg in die voorportaal,
waar die perd botstil bly staan het, glimmend soos
die son; daarna't sy ruiter, harnasloos,
die kans gekry om aan te sit vir spyse.
Die swaard en spieël is op gepaste wyse
na die hoë toring toe gedra en daar bewaak
deur 'n wag wat spesifiek vir hierdie taak
gevorm is. Daarna het hul die ring
met plegtigheid na Canasee gebring
waar sy aan tafel by die feesmaal sit.
Ek vertel geen fabel nie; ek waarborg dit; 180
die koperperd staan onbeweeglik vas
asof dit aan die grond gespyker was.
Hul kon dit nie verroer van waar dit staan,
al dra hul windas en katrolle aan;
die kuns was hul eenvoudig onbekend.
Hul't dus g'n verdere poging aangewend
om dit te skuif voor die ridder lateraan
op die gebruiksaanwysings in kon gaan.

Van heinde en ver het verbaasde mense om 190
die perd wat stil bly staan het, saamgedrom.
Die dier was hoog en lank en breed van bors,
so welgevorm en gevolglik fors,
net soos 'n perd van die Lombaardse ras;
als wat 'n perd moet wees; in sy oë was

die glinstering eie aan 'n Apuliër-perd;
want, waarlik, van sy ore tot sy stert
was daar g'n ruimte vir verbetering
wat kuns of die natuur teweeg kon bring.

Onder mekaar het hul oorleg gepleeg
oor hoe 'n koperperd dan kon beweeg. 200

Was dit dalk towerny? het hul gevra.

Elk hou 'n ander mening daarop na,
want soveel hoofde, soveel sinne is daar;
soos 'n swerm bye gons dit aanmekaar;
met vrye teuels aan die verbeeldingskrag
kom al die stokou stories vorendag.

'Dit lyk soos Pegasus,' het een verklaar,
'wat met sy vlerke deur die lug kon vaar,
of dalk die perd van Sinon,² wie se lis
die oorsaak was dat Troje vernietig is, 210
soos mens in ou legendes na kan lees.'

'My hart,' het een gesê, 'bly maar bevrees;
ek's seker daar's gewapendes daarin
wat vas van plan is om ons stad te oorwin.

Ondersoek moet ingestel word, hoor.'

'n Tweede fluister in sy maat se oor:

'Dis pure sinsbedrog wat ons mislei
en kom ooreen met die oëverblindery
wat goëlaars soms by 'n fees prakseer.'

So het hul heen en weer geredeneer, 220
uiting gegee aan al hul stomme vrese,
so tipies van die ongeleerde wese:
as hy iets ingewikkelds nie verstaan,
dan kom hy met sy wanvoorstellings aan.

Party't die spieël bepeins wat weggedra
is na die hoë toring en gevra
hoe sien hul allerhande goed daarin.

Toe't een gesê: 'Dit maak vir my wel sin:
dit hang met die gebruik van hoeke saam
en kundige refleksies. Ek kan beaam 230
dat daar ook so 'n spieël in Rome was.'

Alhazen en Witelo³ kom te pas
en Aristoteles, want vanmelewe
was hul in spieëlkuns en optiek bedrewe;
soos ons uit hul geskrifte agterkom.

En ander weer was oor die swaard verstom
wat alles op dees aarde kon deurboor,
en het van koning Telephus laat hoor
en van Achilles wie se speer 'n wond
kon toedien en dit ewe goed gesond 240
kon maak, op presies dieselfde wyse as
die swaard waarvan daar nou hier sprake was.

2 Die Trojaanse perd.

3 Alhazen, 'n Arabiese geleerde uit die tiende eeu, het 'n boek oor optika geskryf wat deur Witelo, 'n Poolse fisikus uit die dertiende eeu, in Latyn vertaal is.

Hul't dit gehad oor metaal se tempering,
medikamente wat mens by moet bring
en hoe en wanneer word die proses voltrek,
maar dit is alles bo my vuurmaakplek.

Hul het gepraat oor die ring van Canasee;
geen voorwerp was daar ooit van goud gesmee
wat daarmee vergelyk. Moses het glo
die kuns verstaan, en koning Salomo

250

was ook tot sulke vakmanskap in staat.
So't hulle klompies-klompies staan en praat.
Party't gesê dat dit 'n wonder was
dat glas gemaak kon word van varing-as,
al het dit min met varing-as gemeen;
maar oor dit lank bekend is, bied dit geen
aanleiding meer dat mense hul verwonder
en hul bespiegel eerder oor die donder,
oor eb en vloed, oor herfsdraad⁴ en oor mis,
oor vreemde dinge waaroor mens kan gis.

260

So klets hul en probeer dit als ontrafel,
totdat die koning opstaan van die tafel.
Phoibos was toe al oor die meridiaan,
maar Leo was nog besig om op te gaan
en hy was vergesel deur Aldiran.⁵

Toe't die Tartarekoning Cambuskan
uit sy hoë plek aan tafel opgestaan
en hy is deur musiek voorafgegaan
na sy ontvangssaal toe, die blye klanke
aan meer as net een instrument te danke,

270

sodat dit hemels was om aan te hoor.
Venus se kinders dans daar vrolik voor;
in die teken van die Visse was sy omhoog⁶
en sien hul aan met 'n liefderyke oog.

Die koning het toe op sy troon gaan sit.
Die vreemde ridder is ontbied en dit
was hom beskore om met Canasee
te dans. Dit het groot vreugde afgegee
en vrolikheid. Dit sit nie aan my lyf
om die vermaaklikhede te beskryf;
dit verg 'n man van opgewekte gees
om die skilder van dié hoftoneel te wees.

280

Wie sou verslag kon gee van die danspatrone
of die geheime blikke op die skone
en jeugdige gesigte, hul werend teen
die mans wat hul met jaloesie bejeën?
Net Lanseloet,⁷ en hy is in sy graf;
daarom stap ek maar liewers daarvan af.
Ek los hul daar in volgehoue jolyt,

4 Fyn swewende, glinsterende drade deur spinnekoppe gespin.

5 Dit was byna twee-uur namiddag.

6 Waar haar invloed op sy sterkste is.

7 Die ridder van die Ronde Tafel wat op Guinevere verlief geraak het en haar gedien het.

eers onderbreek deur die volgende etenstyd. 290

Die seremoniemeester roep, 'Maak gou en bring die wyn en speserye nou!' Jonkers en knape skarrel om dit te haal; met agtergrondmusiek volg daar die maal. Toe gaan hul tempel toe, soos paslik is, en daarna sit hul weer aan by die dis, en daar het hulle fees gevier tot laat, maar dis onnodig dat ek daarvoor praat, want by 'n koningsfees, soos ons wel weet, is daar oorgenoeg vir almal om te eet, met lekkernye in groot verskeidenheid. 300

Die koning het besluit dit was nou tyd dat hy die koperperd moet gade slaan en hy't met sy gevolg daarheen gegaan.

Groot die verwondering van almal daar, want sedert die beleg van Troje, waar daar ook 'n perd op die spel was, het geen dier vir almal aangegryp op dié manier. Maar eindelik vra die vors die ridder hoe die perd beheer word en die mag daartoe om dit onderdanig aan sy wil te maak. 310

Toe die ridder aan die perd se teuels raak, begin dit dans en trippel, en hy sê, 'My heer, dis maklik om dit uit te lê. As u êrens heen wil ry, gebruik daarvoor 'n geheime draadjie in die perd se oor; wanneer ons twee alleen is, sal ek u wys; u moet ook noem waarheen u graag wil reis, die stad of land; fluister dit vir hom. En as u dan by u bestemming kom, sê hy moet daal en wikkel 'n tweede draad – dit is die grondslag van die apparaat. Dan stryk hy neer, onderdanig aan u wil, en as hy grondgevat het, staan hy stil. Wat mense ook al sê of doen, hul sal hom nie kan wegkry nie, want hy staan pal. 320

As u wil hê hy moet die plek verlaat, geheel verdwyn, dan's dit weer hierdie draad wat hom onsigbaar maak, totdat u weer behoefte daaraan het dat hy terugkeer, dan's hy weer daar. As daar geen derde by is, sal ek u sê hoedat dit reg te kry is. Ek sal dit alles fyn verduidelik, sodat u dag en nag oor die perd beskik.' 330

Die ridder het toe daarop ingegaan en die opgewekte koning het verstaan hoedat 'n mens die koperperd beheer; blymoedig kon hy na sy fees terugkeer. Die toom is weggeneem na die toring waar die koning dit kon bêre en bewaar 340

met al sy kosbaarhede. Die perd het toe
eenvoudig weggeraak; ek weet nie hoe.
Dis al wat ek kan sê; so laat ek dan
die hofhouding van koning Cambuskan
wat saam met hom in vreugde en plesier
feestelik verkeer tot daglumier.

Deel II

Die versorger van die spysvertering, Slaap,
het na hulle toe gekom en met 'n gaap
gesê, 'Die drank, nes harde werk, verg rus,'
en het hul almal goeienag gekus, 350
en hulle ook gemaan, 'Gaan slaap nou eers
omdat die bloed in hierdie ure heers.⁸
Koester die bloed, ten einde gesond te bly.'

Hul het vir hom bedank en op 'n ry
die kans benut om te gaan lê, en vaak
het hulle spoedig aan die slaap geraak.
Van hulle drome sal ek nie vertel
omdat dit kom van dampe wat opwel
van die wyn af en dus geen betekenis het.
Die meeste was teen priem nog in die bed, 360
behalwe Canasee, want sy't as vrou
haar van oormatige drankgebruik weerhou,
en, toe die donker begin daal, het sy
reeds van haar vader toestemming verkry
om te gaan slaap; die volgende oggend wou
sy graag vol lewe wees, nie slap en flou.

Wel, sy het gou geslaap en fris ontwaak,
want soveel vreugde het haar baasgeraak
oor beide spieël en wonderlike ring
dat 'n blos haar bleekheid twintigmaal verdring. 370
In haar vroeë slaap al het sy 'n visioen
gehad van alles wat die spieël kon doen
en daarom het sy haar voor eerste lig
tot haar kamenier,⁹ wat langs haar slaap, gerig
en haar verwittig dat sy op wou staan.

Die kamenier, soos dit met ou vroue gaan,
was snipperig en antwoord haar meteen,
'Waar op dees aarde wil mejuffrou heen?
Dis dou voor dag en almal slaap nog vas.'

'Ek wil nou opstaan,' sê sy, 'want dit pas
my goed om nou 'n entjie te gaan loop.' 380

Bediendes is geroep, 'n hele hoop,
en hul't kom help, goed tien of twaalf was daar.
Toe't Canasee op die been gekom, so klaar

8 Elke ses uur word die mens se gestel deur 'n ander liggaamsvog oorheers, soggens deur geel gal, smiddags swart gal, vroe'nag flegma en laatnag bloed. Gesonde bloed is onontbeerlik vir mens se liggaamlike welsyn.

9 Vroulike lyfbediende van 'n dame.

en vars ook soos die sonnetjie wat juis
vier grade hoog was in die Ram se huis;
hy was niks verder as dit in sy oggendbaan,¹⁰
toe was sy al gereed om uit te gaan.

Sy was lig geklee met 'n oog op die seisoen
en die gemak van die wandeling wat sy doen.
Met hoogstens sewe om haar by te staan,
het sy met 'n voetpad deur die park gegaan.

390

Deur die newel wat daar opstyg, kom dit voor
asof die son vuurrooi en bollig gloor,
maar nogtans was dit so 'n mooi gesig
dat dit elkeen se gemoedstemming verlig,
vanweë die jaargety, die oggendstond
en die kwetterende voëltjies oral rond.
Toe't Canasee beseft dat sy als verstaan
van wat die voëls daar sing, waaroor dit gaan.

400

As mens te lank vat om iets te vertel,
verveel dit almal wat belanggestel
het daarin, en langdradigheid's die rede
dat hulle ophou luister na besonderhede.
Dit kom my voor asof ek ook daarom
voor baie lank ter sake sal moet kom,
en, as ek handel volgens hierdie raad,
dan moet ek nie meer oor die wandeling praat.

Toe Canasee daar loop, sien sy 'n valk
wat in 'n verdorde boom, so wit soos kalk,
in die hoogste takke droewig sit en skrei,
dat haar klagte deur die bos weerklink, en sy
het met haar vlerke haarself so erg verwond
dat haar rooi bloed nou afdrup op die grond.
Sy het geskree, geweeklaag sonder end
en met haar snawel het sy haarself geskend.
Daar's nêrens in die bos of woud 'n dier,
al is dit so wreedaardig soos 'n tier,
wat nie die trane sou voel kom het, as
dit vir 'n ongedierte mootlik was,
deur so 'n treurtoneel gekonfronteer;
'n mens voel medelye des te meer.

410

420

Hoe wens ek dat ek valke kon beskryf,
want waar's daar nog 'n voël so skoon van lyf
en lede, welgevorm ook, asmede
bedeel met al die goeie hoedanighede
wat by 'n voël van hoë afkoms pas,
want 'n edelvalk is wat sy seker was,
van 'n verre land afkomstig. Baie swak
van bloedverlies beswym sy op die tak
en loop gevaar om heeltemal in te gee.

430

Die skone koningsdogter Canasee
had aan haar vinger daardie wonderring

¹⁰ Net na sesuur in die oggend.

met behulp waarvan sy byna elke ding
wat voëls als sê, verstaan en baie maal
kon sy ook antwoord in hul eie taal.
Sy kon die valk se weeklag goed verstaan
en dag dat sy van deernis sou vergaan.

Sy't na die boom geloop vol mededoë
en die voël betrag met trane in haar oë. 440
Sy het haar rokpand voor haar bak gehou,
want sy't geweet dis onvermydelik nou
dat die valk gaan val weens 'n gebrek aan krag;
so't sy 'n hele ruk gestaan en wag.
In valketaal was sy oplaas in staat
om op dié wyse met die voël te praat:

'Wat is die rede dat jy so gekwel
word deur die pyn? Kan jy my dit vertel?'
Dit was die bede van dié goeie vrou. 450
'Is dit uit verlore liefde of uit rou?
want dis gewoonlik een van hierdie twee
wat aanleiding tot groot bedroefdheid gee.
Van 'n ander oorsaak hoef ek nie te praat
omdat dit jy is wat jousef so skaad,
en dit bewys dat bitterheid van gees
die rede vir jou handeling moet wees,
want ek sien g'n skepsel wat gevaar inhou.
Wees tog jousef genadig, smee ek jou,
of sê hoe ek kan help. Ek het nooit voordien
in die hele wêreld 'n dier of voël gesien 460
wat deur eie toedoen so mishandel is.
Ek word gepynig deur jou droefenis
waarmee ek aangedaan simpatiseer.
In godsnaam stryk nou uit die hoogte neer.
Ek is 'n koningsdogter en as ek wis
wat die rede was vir jou ontsteltenis,
dan sou ek alles doen wat ek vermag
om dit uit die weg te ruim, nog voor vannag.
Ek's seker dat die Heer my goedgesind
sal wees en ek sal die regte kruie vind 470
om spoedig al jou wonde te genees.'

Toe het die valk weereens geskrei en mees
bejammerenswaardig na die grond gestort,
waar sy stokstil lê, want sy het flou geword,
tot Canasee haar in haar skoot neem, waar
sy eindelijk bygekom het en, met haar
kragte ingespan, aan Canasee
in valketaal die volgende antwoord gee:

'Dat deernis spoedig kom tot 'n edele hart
en aanklank vind by 'n ander siel se smart 480
is 'n waarheid wat bewys word elke dag
deur ervaring en op ander se gesag,
want 'n edele aard's die bron van edel dade.
Jy't medelye met my skande en skade,

my skone Canasee, vanweë jou
goedhartigheid, waarmee jy as 'n vrou
deur die natuur bedeel is. Ek het nog tyd
voor ek moet gaan van hier en is bereid
om jou van my ellende mee te deel –
nie dat ek waan dat dit my hart kan heel,
maar erkentlik vir die ruimheid van jou gees.
Dalk kan ek ander ook tot voorbeeld wees;
die spreekwoord sê: As mens 'n hondjie tugtig
waar 'n leeu dit kan aanskou, loop dié ook lugtig.
En dis al rede waarom ek aan jou
die storie van my lyding toevertrou.'

490

Terwyl die valk vertel van haar verdriet,
het Canasee se gemoed so vol geskiet
dat sy eers weer haar kalmte moes herwin
voor die valk met haar vertelling kon begin.

'Gebore tussen rotse van marmarsteen,
waar ek ook grootgeword het, het ek geen
idee gehad van teenspoed, want so teer
was my opvoeding, niks het my gedeer
tot die dag toe ek opgestyg het in die blou.

500

Naby aan ons het 'n mannetjiesvalk gehou
wat die bron van adel was – so't dit geskyn.
Ofskoon hy vol bedrog was en venyn,
het hy hom voorgedoen as nederig,
getrou en eerbaar in sy liefdesplig,
en boonop so bedagsaam teenoor my
dat niemand kon vermoed dis veinsery,
so diep gesetel was die kwaad in hom.

510

Soos 'n slang wat tussen blomme al nader kom,
en wagtend om te pik, sy kans gewaar;
op dieselfde wyse het dié huigelaar
plegtig sy hoë hulde aan my gebring,
sy diensbaarheid en elke handeling
kenmerkend van 'n egte liefdesband;
maar soos 'n graf, skoon aan die buitekant,
maar binne vol verrotting, is die verraad
van 'n valse vriend wat uit twee monde praat.

520

Hy het so erg geweeklaag en geskrei
dat net die duiwel kon deurgrond wat hy
beoog het. Oor die jare het die skyn
van minnediens my insig ondermyn
tot ek, te sag en teder van gevoel,
oor ek geen benul gehad het van sy doel,
geglo het hy sou sterf, en ook omrede
ek vas vertrou het op sy dure ede,
my liefde aan hom geskenk het, mits hy beaam
dit sou geen afbreuk doen aan my goeie naam
wat hy ten alle tye hoog moes hou.
Ek het gedink dat ek hom kon vertrou,
en het my hart aan hom verpand (maar net

530

omdat hy alles so bekonkel het);
in ruil daarvoor het ek sy hart aanvaar,
maar die ou gesegde bly nou eenmaal waar:
'n Opregte en 'n dief dink nie gelyk,
want toe hy sien hy gaan sy doel bereik,
te danke daaraan dat hy ewiglik
oor my getroue liefde sou beskik, 540
want ek het hom my hart geskenk soos hy
gesweer het dat hy syne skenk aan my,
toe val die ongedierte aan my voet
met nederige, eerbiedige gemoed,
soveel verrukking ook op sy gesig,
soos iemand in die ban van liefdesplig.
Hy was so ekstasies, ek is seker daar is
niemand nie, nie Jason, ook nie Paris
van die tyd van Lameg af (want hy't begin
met die voorwendsel dat hy twee bemin), 550
nooit sedert Adam nie, ons eerste vader,
was daar een wat sy bedrog sou kon benader,
selfs nie 'n twintigduisendste van sy
bedrewenheid kon toon in veinsery
en dubbelhartigheid, dus vir die taak
onwaardig om sy skoenriem los te maak.
En hoe't hy my bedank! 'n Vrou, hoe wys
ook al, sou dink sy's in die paradys,
so mooi was sy maniere en so sag
en fyn was hy in woorde en gedrag 560
teenoor my betoon die hele tyd.

Vir sy eerbied en sy eerbiedwaardigheid
en sy vermeende trou ook het ek hom
so liefgekry en gedink as pyn ooit kom,
al is dit hoe gering, as ek daarvan weet,
dan kry die dood my hart in sy wurggreep beet.
Dié ding het eindelik so ver gegaan
dat ek sy werktuig was, sy onderdaan,
my wil het opgegaan in syne, al het
my rede steeds oortredinge belet 570
deur die perke van my eer streng op te pas.
Daar's niemand wat vir my so dierbaar was
of ooit sal wees, dit weet die liewe Heer.

Dit het so voortgeduur, 'n jaar of meer,
dat ek gedink het daar's g'n kwaad in hom,
maar toe uiteindelik het dit so gekom
dat die noodlot dit bepaal dat hy van my
en ons vertroude omgewing glo moes skei.
Was ek ongelukkig? Moenie vra nie;
ek het nie die woorde om dit oor te dra nie, 580
maar ek gee jou die vaste versekering
dit het die pyn van die dood by my tuisgebring;
ek was so bedroef omdat hy nie kon bly.

Toe hy die oggend afskeid neem van my,

het hy so sleg gelyk, ek het vermoed
dis ewe swaar vir hom om my te groet –
dit sê sy woorde en sy bleek gelaat.
Ek het my op sy goeie trou verlaat
en sy belofte dat hy terug sou keer
voor baie lank, en dat 'n saak van eer
sy teenwoordigheid vereis, 'n steurnis wat
nie onbekend is langs ons lewenspad;
en dus het ek van die nood 'n deug gemaak;
daar was net mooi niks wat ek kon doen aan die saak.
So goed ek kon, het ek my smart oorkom.
'By Sint Johannes,' sê ek maar vir hom,
ek's joune gansegaar, so wees ook jy
dit wat ek is en dit wat ek sal bly.'

Sy antwoord hierop sê ek liefs nie na;
hy't mooi gepraat, maar hy't hom sleg gedra –
dis die betekenis van die wyse woord:
Een wat wil aansit met die duiwel hoort
'n baie lang lepel vir dié doel te hê.

Die tyd was daar vir afskeid, soos ek sê;
hy't weggevlieg tot hy gekom het waar
hy graag wou wees en, ná hy 'n tyd lank daar
goed uitgerus het, sekerlik die woord
in die herinnering geroep van soort seek soort,
verlangend om 'n slaggie terug te keer
na hoe dit was in die dae van weleer.
Soos 'n voëltjie wat mens aanhou in 'n kou;
hoewel jy dag en nag oor hom toesig hou,
'n bed van strooi voorsien, so sag soos sy,
hom suiker en heuning gee en melk en brood,
op 'n dag los mens die kou per ongeluk oop,
dan word die kosbak onderstebo geloop
in sy begeerte om weg te kom na die bos
wat hy verkies as blyplek, wurms as kos.
Die eie aard was die dryfkrag van sy wil;
sy hoë afkoms maak nou geen verskil.

So't dit met hierdie valk gegaan, want hy
was edel van geboorte, jonk en bly,
beskeie, gul en mooi van liggaamsbou,
maar op 'n dag sien hy 'n wyfiewou;¹¹
hy't op die daad verlief geraak op haar
en sy verbondenheid aan my laat vaar.
Dit was my ondervinding van sy trou
wat hy ewe oorgedra het op die wou,
en so was ek skoon reddeloos verlore.'
Toe het sy hard geskrei en soos tevore
weer flou geval in Canasee se skoot.

Die deernis oor die voël se leed was groot
en Canasee-hul het daarvoor getreur,

11 'n Roofvoël met 'n swak reputasie.

maar nie geweet hoe om haar op te beur.
Toe't Canasee haar na haar huis gebring;
sy't pleisters aangebring ter leniging
van die wonde deur haar snawel toegedien.
Die beste kruie het sy ook voorsien
vir nuwe salwe wat geskik sou wees
om die voël van al haar lyding te genees,
haar gesondheid te herstel. Sy't dag en nag
haar aan dié taak gewy met al haar mag.
Aan haar bed se koppenent het sy 'n kou
gemaak en sy't dit uitgevoer met blou
fluweel, wat vrouetrou simboliseer,
en buite was dit groen, geïllustreer
met prente van ontroue voëls, waaronder
uile en mese, en dan in die besonder,
valkmannetjies, en eksters wat hul hoon
verkondig met 'n tartende vertoon.

640

650

Nou los ek Canasee en die voël wat sy
versorg, en oor die towerring ook bly
ek stil totdat dit tyd is om te ontvou
hoedat die valk se minnaar vol berou
na haar teruggekeer het deur bemiddeling van
prins Cambalo, die seun van Cambuskan.
Maar dis nou tyd dat ek jul iets vertel
van avonture en van stryd, sowel
as groter wonderwerke as wat
die boeke wat gelees kan word bevat.

660

Maar eers doen ek oor die koning self verslag –
hy was 'n groot oorwinnaar op sy dag;
en daarna wil ek praat oor Algarsief –
vir Theodora was hy innig lief;
vir haar was hy ook baiemaal in gevaar,
dog altyd deur die koperperd bewaar;
dan kom ons by Cambalo wat hom met
beide broers in die stryd begewe het
om Canasee te wen. Vir eers niks meer,
maar waar ek ophou, daar begin ek weer.

670

Deel III

Apollo in sy wa klim hoog en dus
kom hy in die huis van slu Mercurius ...

Woorde van die Hereboer en van die Waard

“Wel, Jonker, ek moet waarlik toegee jy’t
jou goed en edel van jou taak gekwyt,”
sê die Hereboer. “Gesien hoe jonk jy is,
was dit ’n gevoelvolle geskiedenis
en ek wens jou veels geluk. Ek meen dat daar
niemand hier is wat as redenaar
jou kan oortref, so jy die lewe hou.
Ek hoop dat jy op jou talent sal bou,
want jou verhaal het ek graag aangehoor.

680

Ek het ’n seun by die huis en ek sweer jou voor,
eerder as getransporteerde grond
met ’n huuropbrengs van jaarliks twintig pond
sou ek wil hê dat hy ook met beraad
optree soos jy, want, waarlik, watter baat
is mens se eiendom as deug ontbreek?
Ek het hom dikwels hieroor aangespreek,
want hy’t g’n erg aan iets wat deugsam is;
hy wil net dobbel en sy geld verkwis
tot daar niks is waarop hy hom kan verlaat.
Hy sal eerder met ’n hofknaap staan en praat
as dat hy met ’n edele verkeer
van wie hy goeie sedes sou kon leer.”

690

“Bog met jou edelheid,” het ons Waard geroep.
“My heer, jy weet tog elkeen in ons groep
moet een of twee vertellings bydra om
sy belofte aan ons almal na te kom.”

“Ek weet dit,” was sy antwoord, “maar ek pleit,
u moet dit nie hou vir vermetelheid
dat ek ’n woordjie wissel met dié man.”

700

“Ja, ja,” sê hy, “maar waar’s jou storie dan?”
“Dit kom, heer Waard, ek onderwerp my aan
u opdrag wat ek geensins teen sal gaan.
Ek kan u die versekering gee dat ek
voldoen, sover as my vermoë strek.
Ek hoop dat my verhaal vir u geval,
dan weet ek dit bevredig een en al.”

Proloog tot die Hereboer se verhaal

Bretagners het in dae van weleer
baie avonture en so meer 710
in die Bretonse taal op rym gebring.
Dié kon hul dan met begeleiding sing
of anders resiteer vir hul plesier.
Ek weet van so 'n rym en wil dit hier
graag oorvertel, so goed as wat ek kan.

Maar, here, ek's 'n ongeleerde man
en daarom vra ek uit die staanspoor dat
jul my verskoon; ek praat maar krom en plat.
Op berg Parnassus het ek nooit gebly
en Cicero nie onder die knie gekry. 720
Van stylfigure om my spraak te kleur
weet ek net mooi niks; al waaraan ek my steur
is die kleureprag van blomme in die wei
of die helder kleure van 'n skildery;
oor retoriese kleure maak ek my g'n kwelling;
maar luister nou, want hier is my vertelling.

DIE HEREBOER SE VERHAAL

In die land Bretanje, wat vroeër as
Armorika bekend gestaan het, was 730
'n heer wat minnediens moes doen voor hy
daaraan kon dink om sy liefde te bely.
Sy beminde was van die mooistes in die land
en daarbenewens van so 'n hoë stand
dat dit lank geduur het voordat hy aan haar
sy verlange, leed en pyn durf openbaar.

Sy deugde en veral sy inskiklikheid
het haar opgeval en sy het mettertyd
in die geheim met hom geakkordeer
om hom te neem as man en ook as heer, 740
want 'n man het mos die oorhand oor sy vrou.

En hy't gesweer hy bly aan haar getrou,
maar met die oog op hul geluk het hy
afstand gedoen van alle heerskappy
wat teen haar sin sou wees, en sonder dwang
belowe hy sou doen wat sy verlang
en verder dat hy geen gesag oor haar
sou voer, geen jaloesie betoon nie, maar
hom altyd soos 'n minnaar sou gedra.

Daar was egter een ding wat hy haar moes vra 750
en dit was soewereiniteit in naam,
dan hoef hy hom as ridder nie te skaam.

Sy't hom bedank en met groot nederigheid
gesê: 'As dit jou hoflike beleid
is om my vrye teuels toe te laat,

dan bid ek dat daar geen getwis of kwaad
ooit deur my toedoen tussen ons ontstaan;
ek gee my erewoord: tot ek graf toe gaan,
bly ek gehoorsaam en getrou,' en dus
het dié verliefdes in mekaar berus. 760

Want waarlik waar, dit staan nou eenmaal vas:
bemindes moet mekaar gehoorsaam as
hul lank in liefde bymekaar wil bly,
want liefde strook mos nie met heerskappy.
As heerssug eers op die toneel verskyn,
dan klap die liefde sy vlerke en verdwyn.
Die liefde is vry, soos alle geestesgoed,
en die vryheidsdrang sit in 'n vrou se bloed;
sy't g'n behoefte aan 'n dwinglandy,
ewe min as mans, so lyk dit my. 770

Die liefde vra verdraagsaamheid van gees,
dan sal mens altyd aan die wenkant wees.
Dis 'n hoë deug, want soos geleerdes meld,
bring dit sukses in gevalle waar geweld
niks sou bereik. Oor elke tweede saak
kan mens nie staan en opgewonde raak.
Leer liefs geduld, want anders, kan ek sweer,
op die ou end sal jy dit gedwonge leer.
Daar's niemand wat nie een of ander tyd
hom skuldig maak aan 'n onbesonnenheid, 780
want konstellasies, toorn, siekte, wyn,
veranderings in liggaamsvogte, pyn
laat mens partymaal swak beslis en spreek.
Jy kan jou nie oor elke kwaad wil wreek.
Die man wat meester oor homself is, streef
na matigheid solank as wat hy leef.
Ter wille van 'n vreedsame bestaan
was die goeie ridder se belofte aan
sy vrou verdraagsaamheid, en sy het hom
beloof dat sy hom nooit te kort sou kom. 790

Hoe wys en nederig is die saak besleg:
Sy't hom geneem tot heer en ook tot kneg,
haar dienskneg in die liefde, maar haar heer
in die huwelik, maar eintlik was hy meer,
want hy was nou haar heer in elke sin:
sy vrou was ook die vrou wat hy bemin;
dus voer hul saam die dubbele heerskappy
van 'n egpaar aan die liefde toegewy.
Daar die ridder so gelukkig was, het hy
sy vrou met hom teruggeneem na sy kontrei; 800
nie ver van Penmarch af was sy hofstede
en daar het hul gewoon in rus en vrede.

Net 'n getroude het die minste benul
van die vreugde wat 'n huwelik vervul,
die gerieflikheid en die gemak daarby.
Hul het 'n jaar of twee lank kommervry

so saamgewoon toe dié ridder hoogbegaam
(Arveragus van Kerru was sy naam)
besluit het hy wil Engeland toe vaar
(wat ook Brittanje heet) ten einde daar 810
na riddereer en wapenroem te strewe,
vir hom die hoogste drang en lus in die lewe,
en daar't hy, sê my bron, twee jaar gebly.

Ek laat Arveragus vir eers opsy
en praat van Dorigeen, sy wederhelf,
wat hom liefgehad het soos die lewe self.

Hy's weg en sy't geweene en diep gesug,
soos edelvroue hul gevoelens lug;
sy lê snags wakker en sy treur en vas 820
oor haar geliefde nie meer by haar was.
Die wêreld was vir haar betekenisloos.
Haar vriende wat vir haar wou troos,
het sonder ophou by haar aangedring
sy sal haarself so om die lewe bring,
en dit vir wat? Hul't hard probeer om haar
te kry om haar bedruktheid te laat vaar.

Dis 'n langsame proses, weet iedereen,
voordat 'n beeldhouer 'n rou stuk steen 830
afbeitel tot 'n menslike figuur,
en so't die troosproses ook lank geduur
voor rede en hoop deur hul gekeperde
geleidelik in haar gestalte kry.
Haar groot bedroefdheid het begin bedaar;
die las daarvan word ook oplaas te swaar.

En boonop het Arveragus geskryf
dit gaan nog goed met hom en sy verblyf
in Engeland was byna op 'n end;
dit het toe ook die wanhoop afgewend. 840

Haar vriende het gemerk haar smart neem af
en, gretig om afleiding te verskaf,
het hulle haar gesmeek om as sy kan,
'n bietjie in hul geselskap te ontspan.
Aan hulle aandrang het sy toegegee,
want sy kon sien dit was 'n goeie idee.

Nou, haar kasteel was naby aan die kus
en sy het dikwels met haar vriende dus
gewandel langs 'n bergpad, hoog en steil,
vanwaar sy sien hoe baie skepe seil 850
in watter koers die skipper ook begeer;
dan word dit aanloop tot ellende weer
en dikwels mymer sy, 'Helaas, is daar
nie een uit al die skepe wat hier vaar
wat my heer na my sal bring? Dan word my hart
meteens genees van al sy bittere smart.'

Soms het sy langs die voetpad afgekyk
in die afgrond voor haar; dan wou sy beswyk
as sy die rotse sien wat grou en swart

uit die see uit opdoem; vrees omklem haar hart; 860
 haar bene het onder haar lam geword
 en net daar het sy inmekaar gestort;
 sy't op die grond na die see gesit en staan
 en met 'n diep gesug het sy verklaar:
 'Ewige Skepper van die see en land,
 U hou dit als deur U bestier in stand;
 hul sê niks wat bestaan is nutteloos,
 maar hierdie rotse, grusaam, swart en boos,
 lyk eerder op die werk van 'n verwoester
 as dié van 'n Godheid wat Sy skepping koester, 870
 wat wys, volmaak en onveranderlik is.
 Het hierdie sinloosheid betekenis,
 want hoe kan sulke goed in enige plek
 tot nut van mense, voëls of diere strek?
 Hul doen g'n goed nie; hulle doen net kwaad.
 Sien U nie, Heer, hoe hul die mensdom skaad?
 'n Honderdduisend mense – en baie is
 al lank vergete – het hul uitgewis;
 die mens is dan die kroon van U skepping, Heer,
 U het hom na U ewebeeld formeer, 880
 U het hom toentertyd tog liefgehad,
 hoe kon U dan 'n middel daarstel wat
 nie meewerk tot sy heil maar tot verderf
 van hom wat stormgeteister daardeur sterf?
 Geleerdes dring met argumente aan
 dat als vir ons beswil is; ek kan niks verstaan
 van hoe hul redenasies plooi en draai,
 maar mag die Here wat die wind laat waai,
 my heer bewaar – dis wat ek konkludeer;
 die geleerdes kan maar verder disputeer, 890
 en mag die Heer, ter wille van my man,
 dié swart gedrogte na die hel verban!
 Vrees vir die rotse laat my hart gaan staan.'
 So't sy gesê met menige bitter traan.
 Haar vriende het gesien dat daardie kus
 'n kwelling vir haar was en glad g'n lus,
 en toe maar liewers daarvan weggebly
 en haar na strome en bronne begelei
 en soortgelyke plekke; vir haar vermaak
 het hul gedans, bakspel¹ gespeel en skaak. 900
 So, op 'n dag in die vroeë oggenduur
 het hul na 'n tuin daarnaby afgestuur.
 Met kos en ander voorraad opgegaar,
 het hul ooreengekom dat hulle daar
 die ganse dag vir hul plesier sou bly.
 Dit was nou juis die sesde dag van Mei,
 die kunstenaar, wat met haar milde reën
 die tuin met prag van blomme en blare seën;

¹ 'n Bordspel met skyfies en dobbelstene; gewild as dobbelspel in die Middeleeue.

daarby was dit deur mensehand versier
 met soveel kundigheid; daar was nêrens hier 910
 op aarde so 'n lushof, behalwe as
 dit altemit die Tuin van Eden was.
 Die fraaie uitsig en die blommegeur
 was genoeg om enigiemand op te beur
 wat ooit gebore is, tensy sy hart
 verower is deur siekte of groot smart.
 Dit was 'n plek vol skoonheid en genot.
 Ná ete dan het almal hulle tot
 dans en sang gewend; net Dorigeen
 het eenkant aangehou met kla en ween, 920
 want nêrens onder al die mense daar
 kon sy hom wat haar man en minnaar was, gewaar.
 Verplig om egter nog 'n ruk te wag,
 het sy toegelaat dat hoop haar leed versag.
 Onder die dansers, met die ander mans,
 het 'n jonker ook voor Dorigeen gedans
 met klere wat so lig en vrolik was
 dat dit volledig by die Meimaand pas;
 in sang en dans 'n ongeëwenaarde
 sedert die grondlegging van ons ou aarde. 930
 As ek hom verder moet beskrywe, dan
 sou ek kon sê hy was 'n mooi jong man
 en flink en sterk, talentvol, ryk en wys,
 deur iedereen bemin en aangeprys.
 Dié jonker het Aurelius geheet.
 Sonder dat Dorigeen iets daarvan weet,
 het hierdie Venusdienaar haar liefgehad
 reeds meer as twee jaar lank, bo alles wat
 op aarde leef, maar nooit het hy aan haar
 'n teken van sy smart geopenbaar; 940
 Hy kon niks anders doen as om die pyn
 so sonder maat te drink uit die fontein.
 Hy was wanhopig, maar hy kon slegs in
 sy liedere, in 'n algemene sin
 daarna verwys, soos dat hy liefde bied,
 maar sy enigste vergoeding was verdriet.
 Oor hierdie onderwerp kon hy ook vele
 treursange dig, leise en rondede,²
 oor hoe hy nie sy smarte durf vertel
 maar pyn verduur soos Furieë in die hel, 950
 hoe hy moet kwyn soos Eggo wat niks van haar
 liefde vir Narsissus kon openbaar.
 Daar was geen ander wyse waarop hy
 uiting kon gee aan die pyn wat hy moet ly.
 Dis wel gebruiklik by 'n dansparty
 vir die jong geslag om na mekaar te vry.
 Hy't soms 'n blik op haar gewerp soos een

2 Beurtsange; die strofes word deur 'n individu gesing en die refrein deur almal saam.

wat om genade pleit, maar Dorigeen
was nie by magte om dit te verstaan.

Maar eendag voor hul uitmekaar sou gaan,
het hulle in gesprek geraak, want hy
was inderdaad haar buurman immers en daarby
'n man van hoë aansien en van eer,
en sy't hom lank geken. Geleidelik
begin hy 'n strekking gee aan hul gesprek
en toe hy meen die regte oomblik's daar,
het hy hom só aan Dorigeen verklaar:

'By God, wat als geskape het, mevrou,
wis ek dit sou jou hart verbly, dan sou
ek wens dat toe jou man, Arveragus,
oorsee gegaan het, ek, Aurelius,
ook weggegaan het en jou nooit weer sien,
want ek weet dis als verniet dat ek jou dien;
al loon vir my is 'n gebroke hart.
Ontferm jou, mevrou, oor my wrede smart;
een woord van jou beteken kwaad of goed.
Ag, was ek dood, begrawe aan jou voet!
Ek kan niks anders sê omtrent my nood.
Genade, lief, of jy begeer my dood.'

Sy kyk hom aan en sê: 'Aurelius,
is dit wat jy verlang en praat jy dus?
Tot nou toe het ek geen idee gehad
wat jou bedoelings was nie, maar noudat
ek weet, sweer ek voor God, bron van my lewe,
ek sal my troubelofte nooit begewe
in woord of daad; ek's 'n getroude vrou
en aan my eggenoot bly ek getrou.
Aanvaar dit, want dis my finale woord.'

Dog agterna gaan sy ligsinnig voort:
'Aurelius, by die hoë Hemelheer,
ek moet jou liefhê – dis wat jy begeer,
en jy lyk so jammerlik as jy dit vra,
en daarom stem ek in en sê ek Ja,
ek sal vir jou bemin dié dag wat jy
hierdie hele Bretonse kus bevry
van rotse en hul verwyder hiervandaan
dat hul nie meer in die weg van skeepvaart staan;
dié dag, dan, wanneer hierdie taak verrig is
en daar geen enkele rotsblok meer in sig is,
op daardie dag sal ek jou liefde aanvaar.
Hier gee ek jou my woord daarop, sowaar.'

Hy vra: 'Is dit dan al genade wat ek kry?'

'Ja, by die Heer my Skepper,' antwoord sy,
'want ek weet goed jy kry dit nooit gedaan.
Laat sulke dwaasheid uit jou kop uit gaan.
Watter vreugde hou die lewe in
vir een wat 'n ander man se vrou bemin,
terwyl dié volmag oor haar liggaam het?'

960

970

980

990

1000

Aurelius het diep gesug en met
'n hart oorweldig deur die pyn en wee
was dit dat hy haar hierdie antwoord gee:
'Dit is onmoontlik; daarom sal ek my
op 'n gruwelike dood moet voorberei,'
en met dié woorde het hy weggegaan. 1010

Daar kom haar ander vriende aan,
wandeland in die tuin na hartelus.
Van wat gebeur het was hul onbewus
en gaan toe weereens aan die speel en dans,
totdat die helder son sy kleureglans
verloor het, deur die kim van lig ontdaan –
dit word mos donker as dit ondergaan.
In 'n opgewekte luim is hul uiteen;
net die arme Aurelius het alleen 1020
en met 'n swaar gemoed huiswaarts gekeer;
hy wis hy kon die dood nie van hom weer.

'n Kilde het sy hart omklem en met
sy hande omhoog het hy daar in gebed
op sy blote knieë neergesak en vervaard
stort hy toe sy gevoelens hemelwaart.
Uit wanhoop het hy g'n benul gehad
van wat hy sê nie, maar met woorde wat
sy sieleleed vertolk het hy hom tot
die gode gerig, veral die Sonnegod: 1030

'Apollo, hemelheer, jy hou in stand
al wat 'n blom en boom is, kruid en plant;
volgens jou deklinasie is hul groen
'n bepaalde tyd lank, hulle groeiseisoen,
al na jou stand verander, laag of hoog.
Heer Phoibos, slaan genadiglik jou oog
op my, ellendeling. Ek's in die nood:
my dame het my uitgelewer aan die dood,
hoewel ek onskuldig is. Ag, hemelheer,
sien in genade op my lyding neer. 1040
My dame uitgesonderd, is daar geeneen
wat my kan help nie, maar net jy alleen.
Ek wil ook noem hoe jy te werk kan gaan
om my in my verknorsing by te staan.

Lucina,³ jou skone suster, is die godin
wat die oseaan beheers as koningin –
hoewel Neptunus god is van die seë,
skik hy hom altyd nederig na haar weë –
sy's begerig, ingevolge haar natuur,
om lewe en lig te vorder van jou vuur
en daarom volg sy jou te alle tye;
so word sy ook gevolg deur die seegetye,
want sy's godin oor al die oseane,
en riviere en strome is ook haar onderdane, 1050

3 Die godin Diana het 'n drievoudige gestalte: sy is Diana, godin van die jag en van kuisheid op aarde, Lucina, die maan (wat beheer uitoefen oor die see se getye) aan die hemel, en Proserpina in die onderwêreld.

en daarom vra ek, doen tog hierdie wonder;
daar's hoegenaamd g'n hoop vir my daarsonder.

As jy in opposisie tot die maan

weer in die teken van die Leeu ingaan,
vra dat jou suster dan 'n springvloed wek
wat die rotse aan die Bretonse kus bedek
tot 'n diepte van vyf vadem ongeveer
en laat dit twee jaar aanhou of nog meer.⁴
Dan kan ek vir my dame sê: "Siedaar,
die rotse's weg; maak jou belofte waar."

1060

Heer Phoibos, doen die wonderwerk vir my:

vra dat die maan nie sneller gaan as jy;
met ander woorde, as jou suster haar
gang by joune aanpas dan is daar
vir daardie twee jaar lank steeds vollemaan
en hou by dag en nag die springvloed aan.
Staan sy my nie op hierdie wyse by,
dat ek beheer oor my beminde kry,
versoek haar dan om die rotse te laat wyk
en wegsink in die ondergrondse ryk,
die donker wêrelddeel waar Pluto hou,
want anders wen ek nooit my liewe vrou.

1070

Blootsvoets sal ek na jou tempel in Delphi gaan.

Heer Phoibos, sien my wange nat betraan;
betoon my 'n bietjie mededoë, heer.'

En met dit val hy in 'n floute neer
en lê 'n ruk lank so in swymeling.

1080

Sy broer, bewus van al sy pyniging,
het hom opgetel en na sy bed gedra.

Van sy lyding laat ek verdere melding na,
die arme drommel. Kyk, dis my om 't ewe
of hy die lewe laat of aanhou lewe.

Arveragus, van ridderskap die blom,
het roemryk en gesond huis toe gekom,
met baie ander, ewe ridderlik.

O, nou is Dorigeen weer in haar skik:

1090

haar forse man lê in haar arms weer,
haar brawe ridder en beskermheer.

Hy het haar liefgehad soos sy eie wese
en is geensins van stryk gebring deur vrese
dat iemand iets in sy afwesigheid
oor liefde kon gesê het. Vol jolyt
het hy nie aan sulke goed gedink nie, maar
met danse en toernooi vermaak hy haar.

In vreugde en geluk laat ek hom dus
om terug te keer na die arme Aurelius.

1100

Dié stomme siel het twee jaar lank en meer

⁴ Wanneer die son en die maan op dieselfde hoogte bo die ewenaar is en die son in die Leeu op sy sterkste is. As die maan se wentelbaan dan soos dié van die son 'n jaar lank duur en hulle twee jaar lank in hierdie verhouding tot mekaar bly, dan sal die springvloed net so lank aanhou.

in siekte en bitter lyding gekrepeer
voor hy oplaas weer op die been kon kom.
In al dié tyd was daar geen troos vir hom
behalwe van sy broer, 'n geleerde man,
wat wis van sy probleem en die pyn daarvan.
Aan niemand anders, dit moet julle weet,
het hy 'n woord durf rep van al sy leed.
Hy't als verberg: Pamphilus het nie sy
geheime liefde vir Galathea bely.

1110

Sy bors was heel, beskou van die buitekant,
maar 'n vlymskerp pyl het in sy hart gebrand
en, soos ons weet, word so 'n verborge wond
nie maklik sonder groot gevaar gesond,
tensy 'n arts die pylskag by kan kom.

Sy broer het, diep bedroef, getreur oor hom,
maar op 'n dag val dit hom skielik by:

as 'n student in Orleans het hy
(geneig, soos alle jong studente is,
om af te reken met geheimenis

1120

en gretig om in elke holte en hoek
na sonderlinge studies te wil soek)
'n boek oor die natuurmagie⁵ gewaar
wat 'n vriend toevallig op sy lessenaar
laat lê het. Hierdie kêrel was nou wel
'n regstudent, maar het belanggestel
in allerhande ander vakke as
dié waarvoor hy daar ingeskrewe was.

Die skrywer het breedvoerig ingegaan
op die ag-en-twintig huise van die maan
en sulke sotterny wat ons vandag
van minder waarde as 'n vlieg sou ag,
want ons vertrou in wat die Kerk ons leer
verhoed dat sinsbedrog ons kan beseer.

1130

Toe hy onthou van die boek oor towerny
het sy hart begin rinkink, hy was so bly.

Hy dag: 'Nou sal dit net 'n rukkie wees
dan is my broer van al sy pyn genees,
want ek is seker dat mens kunste kry
wat gebruik kan word vir oëverblindery,
die wondermiddels van die goëlaar.

1140

Ek het baie maal gehoor van feeste waar
die mense in die saal teenwoordig waan
hul sien 'n bootjie op die oseaan
en die bemanning roei daar op en af;
of anders kom 'n kwaai leeu aangedraf;
soms sien hul blomme in 'n wei of bos
en soms 'n wingerdstok met 'n druiwetros;
soms sal 'n slot van steen en kalk verskyn,

⁵ Natuurmagie was die gebruikmaking van kennis aangaande natuurverskynsels ten einde mag te bekom, terwyl nekromansie, die verbode swartkuns, bese geeste opgeroep het.

maar dit kan ewe skielik weer verdwyn;
in elk geval, so kom dit almal voor. 1150

En daarom meen ek, as ek op die spoor
kan kom in Orleans van 'n student
nog met die huise van die maan bekend
of dalk 'n ander soort bedrieëry,
dan kan my broer nog sy geliefde kry,
want so 'n geleerde laat deur louter skyn
die rotse langs die kus almal verdwyn,
hul is eenvoudig eensklaps nie meer daar nie
en dan is daar vir skeepvaart geen gevaar nie. 1160
Sê nou die illusie duur 'n week of twee,
dan's dit die einde van my broer se wee,
want sy sal dan haar woord aan hom moet hou
of met die skande sit van haar ontrou.

Maar daar's g'n nodigheid vir 'n lang relaas.
Hy het hom na sy broer se bed gehaas
en hy het hom oortuig dat hul moes gaan
na Orleans. Die sieke het opgestaan
en is so gou as moontlik met hom vort
in die verwagting om genees te word. 1170

Hul was maar net 'n entjie van dié stad,
'n halfmyl ver, toe hulle langs die pad
'n jong geleerde, sielalleen, ontmoet.
Beleefd het hy hul in Latyn gegroet
en toe gesê – en dit het hul verstom –
'Ek weet wat is die doel waarmee jul kom,'
en voor hul nog 'n voet versit op pad,
vertel hy wat hul in gedagte had.

Die broer vra uit oor dié en daardie student
uit sy tyd in Orleans aan hom bekend, 1180
maar hy moes hoor dat almal tot sy spyt
oorlede is, reeds 'n geruime tyd.

Aurelius het afgestyg en snel
die towenaar na sy huis toe vergesel
waar hulle tuis kon voel. Daar was beslis
ook geen gebrek aan als wat lekker is;
nooit in sy lewe was Aurelius
van so 'n goed voorsiene huis bewus.

Voor hul aangesit het, het die towenaar
bosse en parke aan hom geopenbaar 1190
waarin daar wild was, herte met gewei,⁶
veel groter as wat 'n mens normaalweg kry;
'n honderd van hulle is gedood deur honde
en ander lê en bloei uit felle wonde.
Toe die herte wegdoof, sien hy 'n mooi rivier
op die oewers waarvan menige valkenier⁷
met hawike 'n magdom reiers vang,
en toe 'n toernooi in volle gang;

6 Vertakte horings van herte en ander Europese boksoorte.

7 Iemand wat valke vir die jag gebruik.

en daarna ondervind hy groot genoeë,
want sy geliefde dans daar voor sy oë – 1200
so't dit geskyn – en hy self doen ook mee.

Maar toe die meester meen die tyd's geleë,
klap hy sy hande saam en met dit was
die hele towerskouspel afgelas.
Hul het dit alles sit en gadeslaan
sonder om 'n tree uit die huis te gaan;
net hulle drie was in sy boekery
en daar het hul die hele tyd gebly.

Die meester roep sy kneg en wou van hom weet:
'Hoe lyk dit, is ons ete al gereed? 1210
Ek meen 'n uur's verstreke sedert my
bevel dat jy ons kos moet voorberei.
Toe't dié twee here saam met my gegaan
na my slaapvertrek waar al my boeke staan.'

Sy antwoord was: 'Dis alles reg, meneer.
Ek kan dit nou bedien; nes u begeer.'

'Kom ons gaan aansit,' sê hy. 'Eet met lus.
Verliefdes moet tog ook 'n slaggie rus.'

Ná ete het hul die loon begin beding
wat die meester toekom vir die verwydering 1220
van die Bretonse rotsgevaar, summier
van die Gironde- tot die Seinerivier.
Besware't hy geopper en betoog
hy't minstens 'n duisend pond daarvoor beoog,
en selfs vir dié bedrag was hy teësinnig.

'Ag nee wat, man. Watwou 'n duisend pond!
Ek sou beslis die wye wêreldrond
vir jou wou gee, het dit aan my behoort.
Hier is my hand daarop; ek gaan akkoord. 1230
Nee, ek betaal geredelik dié som,
maar sorg net dat daar geen vertraging kom,
dat ons môre op die laatste terug kan keer.'

'Goed,' sê die man, 'jy het my woord van eer.'

Aurelius het gaan slaap met 'n bly gemoed;
vir die verandering was sy nagrus soet.
Vermoeienis en hoop op goeie geluk
het sy bedroefde hart verlig van druk.

Met daglumier het hulle opgestaan
sodat hul gou Bretagne toe kon gaan, 1240
en so't Aurelius en die towenaar
saam aangekom by hul bestemming waar
hul afgestyg het, en onthou dié reis
was in Desember met sy ryp en ys.
Phoibos het oud geword, en soos latoen
was sy voorkoms nou, nie meer soos goud geboen
wanneer die somerson op sy warmste skyn.
Met sy deklinasie in die Steenbok,⁸ kwyn

8 Die wintersonstilstand.

sy glorie egter, word sy strale flou.
 In tuine is die plantegroei geknou 1250
 deur felle ryp, met hael en reën gepaard.
 By die vuur sit Janus met sy dubbele baard⁹
 en uit sy buffelhoring drink hy wyn;
 op die tafel wag die vleis van wildeswyn.
 'Die blye Kerstyd's hier,' roep elke man.
 Aurelius doen alles wat hy kan
 om die meester te verwelkom en te eer
 en smee hom dat hy tog sy bes probeer
 om hom vry te stel van gruwelike smart,
 of met 'n swaard deurboor hy nog sy hart. 1260
 Die towenaar het jammer vir hom gevoel
 en dag en nag hom toegelê op sy doel
 om te bepaal wanneer die oomblik mees
 geleë vir sy handeling sou wees.
 Deur skyn of deur bedrog, dit weet ek nie –
 ek ken geen terme uit die astrologie –
 moes sy en al die ander mense waan
 dat die rotse weggevoer is daarvandaan
 of onder die bodem van die see gesink het.
 Toe die towenaar 'n goeie tyd bedink het 1270
 vir sy gekonkel of gekskeerdery,
 die duiwelskunste waarmee hy verlei,
 slaan hy Tabele van Toledo na,
 soos onlangs aangepas vir Orleans,
 om die stand van die planeet vas te stel
 in hul wentelbaan oor 'n enkele jaar, sowel
 as 'n hele aantal jare, sodat hy dan
 die wortel¹⁰ kon bepaal en hul afstand van
 die hemelewnaar en die hoek daarmee, 1280
 soos deur sy astrolabium aangegee,
 en dus kon hy met 'n verhoudingskaal
 die wenteling van 'n planeet bepaal.
 Vanaf die vaste punt van die Ram se kop
 in die neënde hemelsfeer let hy daarop
 hoe ver Alnath beweeg het; dit beteken
 hy kon dit alles op 'n haar bereken.
 Toe hy wis wat was die maan se eerste huis,
 was dit maklik om die res ook uit te pluis:
 die opgangstye van die maan dui aan
 waar kom dit in die diereriem te staan
 en bygevolg wis hy watter huis dit was 1290
 wat die beste by sy onderneming pas.
 Hy was ook bekend met al die operasies
 gebruiklik voorheen onder heidennasies
 om mense op 'n verkeerde spoor te bring

9 Die god na wie Januarie genoem is. Hy het twee gesigte gehad – en dus ook twee baarde – en kon vorentoe en agtertoe kyk.

10 Die sleutel tot die tabel; die gegewene op grond waarvan die verdere berekenings gedoen word.

en daarom kon hy sonder huiwering
die illusie handhaaf vir 'n week of twee
dat die rotse almal weg was uit die see.

Aurelius, vol vertwyfeling – gaan hy
die dame wen of gaan hy skade ly? –
het dag en nag gewag vir 'n wonderwerk,
maar toe hy die voldonge feit bemerk,
die rotse is weg, toe het hy dan en daar
op sy knieë neergesak voor die towenaar
en hy't gesê: 'Ek, arme ellendeling,
moet jou (en Venus ook) die eer toebing
dat julle my verlos het uit my leed.'

1300

Toe gaan hy na die tempel waar hy weet
dat Dorigeen sou wees. Die geleentheid het
hom voorgedoen en toe't Aurelius met
'n nederige maar wankelbare gemoed
die geliefde hooggeëerde aldus gegroet:

1310

'My ware dame,' sê die droewe man,
'wat ek ag en ook bemin so goed ek kan
en geensins wil mishag, ek het soveel pyn
om jou ontwil gely dat ek daarvan kwyn
en dreig om dood te val hier aan jou voet.
Ek sou liefs geswyg het oor my swaar gemoed,
maar stilbly voer my in die sterwensnood;
onskuldig's ek veroordeel tot die dood.
Al sou my dood jou dalk min skeel, onthou
dit sal veroorsaak word deur jou ontrou.
By die Heer wat in die hemel heers, besin
en moenie my vermoor oor ek jou min.

1320

Jy weet wat jy belowe het, mevrou –
nie dat ek op my regte wil vertrou,
maar op jou genade alleen – op 'n sekere plek
in 'n sekere tuin het jy beloof dat ek
deur jou bemin sou word – die Hemelheer
is my getuie, jy het dit gesweer –
bo elke ander man; dit was jou eed.
Ek is jou liefde onwaardig, maar jy weet
dit is jou eer, mevrou, waaroor dit gaan
eerder as my gewensde voortbestaan.
Ek het jou opdrag uitgevoer en jy
kan self gaan kyk as jy sekerheid wil kry.
Doen wat jy wil, maar onthou jou woord aan my.
In die tuin sal jy my dood of lewend kry.
Hoewel jy oor my noodlot kan beslis,
is die rotse almal weg. Dis hoe dit is.'

1330

Hy't weggegaan en sy't verstom bly staan
met wange heeltemal van kleur ontdaan;
sy't nooit kon dink dat so 'n strik vir haar wag.
'Helaas dat dit moes voorval,' was haar klag.
'Wie sou kon glo aan die verwerkliking
van so 'n verskriklike, onaardse ding?

1340

Dis immers teen die gang van die natuur.
 Huiswaarts keer die arme kreatuur,
 al strompelend, want sy was so verslae.
 Twee dae lank het sy haar lot bekla;
 dit was skokkend om te sien hoe sy pal beswym,
 maar niemand het gedeel in haar geheim. 1350
 Oor haar man uitstedig was, was sy verplig
 om haar droewe weeklag tot haarself te rig.
 Sy gee toe met terneergedrukte hart
 op hierdie wyse uiting aan haar smart:
 'Fortuna, dit is jou wat ek belas;
 ek sit hier onverwags in jou ketting vas
 en al manier wat ek ontsnap uit die nood
 is deur verlies van eer of deur my dood
 en as die keuse lê tussen dié twee,
 dan sal ek liewerste my lewe gee 1360
 as dat oneer my liggaam sou beskaam
 of ontrou afbreuk doen aan my goeie naam.
 Alleenlik deur die dood ontkom ek nou.
 Is dit nie so dat menige goeie vrou
 en menige maagd haar lewe prys moes gee
 ten einde nie met haar liggaam te oortree?
 Daar's talle voorbeelde wat dit beaam.
 Die Dertig Tiranne, mense van slegte faam,
 het nadat Phidon om die lewe gebring
 is by 'n Atheense fees daarop aangedring 1370
 dat sy dogters aangekeer moes word en naak
 voor hul moes dans vir hulle vuil vermaak
 op die plaveisel waar die plasse bloed
 van hul vermoorde pa hul oë begroet.
 Die verskrikte dogters het, soos ons kan lees,
 verlies van hulle maagdelikheid gevrees
 en daarom het hul in 'n put gespring;
 hul sou hul liewer om die lewe bring.
 So't die Messeniërs in elke hoek
 van Sparta ook na vyftig maagde laat soek 1380
 met die doel om wellus te beoefen, maar
 nie 'n enkele vrou uit daardie hele skaar
 het nie gesterwe nie; hul het verkies
 om te sterf met 'n goeie wil bó die verlies
 van hulle maagdom en hul eer daarby.
 So, waarom sou ek dan die dood vermy?
 Daar's die tiran, ou Aristocledes
 wat versot was op die maagd Stumphalides.
 Hy het haar vader doodgemaak en sy
 het na die tempel toe gevlug, gewy 1390
 aan die godin Diana waar sy aan
 haar beeld geklou het; sy't nooit daarvandaan
 gewyk nie en niemand het haar weg kon trek
 tot sy vermoor is op die einste plek.

As maagde soveel afsku daaraan het
dat mans se loopse luste hul besmet,
moet 'n getroude vrou ook des te meer
die lewe minder op prys stel as haar eer.

Wat sal ons sê van Hasdrubal se vrou?
Sy't by Carthago nie aan die lewe geklou; 1400

toe sy sien die Romeine is op die stad se muur,
spring sy met al haar kinders in die vuur;
sy het haar liewers in die dood gestort
as dat sy deur 'n soldaat verkrag sou word.

Het nie Lucretia haarself gedood
in Rome ná Tarquinius haar skoot
besoedel het? Sy wis sy sou haar skaam
om te bly lewe sonder haar goeie naam.

Die sewe maagde van Milete het
uit vrees selfmoord gepleeg om te belet 1410
dat Galliërs hul verkrag; dit was die rede.

'n Duisend stories se besonderhede
sou ek nog kon aangehaal het as ek wou.
Toe Abradates dood is, het sy vrou
haarself ook doodgemaak en haar lewensbloed
in sy diep wonde laat loop met dié afskeidsgroet,
"Van een ding is ek nou ten minste seker:
ek val nie meer ten prooi van die egbreker."

Wat baat die opnoem van nog meer gevalle,
want selfmoord is verkies deur groot getalle, 1420

want hulle het besoedeling gehaat?
Ek reken ek moet ook die lewe laat,
want ek ontsnap besoedeling aldus.

Ek sal getrou wees aan Arveragus
of selfmoord pleeg, soos die dogters van ***
Demotion, vir besoedeling bevrees.

O, Scedalus, dis droewig om te lees
van jou dogters se oorlye, een en al
slagoffers van 'n dergelike geval.

Nog droewer as dit was 'n Thebaanse maagd: 1430

sy't teen haar wil vir Nicanor behaag
en moes toe met haar dood daarvoor betaal.

So ook 'n tweede jongvrou se verhaal:
sy's deur 'n Masedoniër bevlek;
haar dood die offer wat dié skande dek.

Die weduwee van Niceratus het
op dieselfde wyse haarself bevry van smet.

Die minnares van Alkibiades
het, trou aan hom, nie vir haar dood gevrees, 1440

want sy sou hom nie onbegrawe laat;
Alkestis ook: haar trou was sonder maat.

Wat van die kuisheid van Penelopeia
waarvan Homeros skryf in die *Odusseia*?

En toe Protesilaos in die slag
om Troje sneuwel, nie 'n enkele dag
daarna wou sy Laodamia lewe.
Dieselfde staan van Portia geskrewe:
sy kon nie sonder Brutus voortleef, want
sy het haar hele wese aan hom verpand. 1450
Artemisia se volmaakte trou
word selfs deur die barbaar in eer gehou.
O, Teuta, koningin, jou kuisheid mag
as spieël dien vir die vroulike geslag;
dieselfde geld daarby vir Bilia,
vir Rhodogune en Valeria.'

Twee dae lank het Dorigeen haar nood
bekla terwyl sy uitsien na haar dood.
Die derde dag toe kom Arveragus
weer tuis en was onmiddellik ongerus. 1460
Hy vra haar: 'Waarom huil jy, Dorigeen?'
en toe gaan sy eers werklik aan die ween.
'Helaas dat ek ooit gebore is, my heer,
sê sy. 'Ek het dit gesê en dat gesweer',
en sy vertel hom als van die begin,
maar om dit nou te herhaal, maak glad geen sin.
Toe het haar eggenoot met 'n kalm gesig
dié sagte wederwoord tot haar gerig:
'Is daar dalk nog iets anders, Dorigeen?'

'Nee, nee,' roep sy, 'God weet net dit alleen;
dis oorgenoeg, al is dit God se wil.' 1470

'Kom, vrou,' sê hy, 'laat dit wat stil is stil.
Miskien kan ons als in die reine skik;
maar jou woord sal jy moet hou – dis duidelik.
Sowaar as wat ek op Gods heil vertrou,
ter wille van my liefde vir jou, my vrou,
kan hulle my maar met 'n mes kom steek
eerder as dat jy ooit jou woord sou breek.
Die hoogste eis aan ons is "Bly getrou" –
nou't hy gehuil – 'en dus besweer ek jou
om te doen soos ek beveel op straf van dood. 1480
Rep nooit solank jy leef iets van jou nood
en wat daar als gebeur het aan enigeen –
ek sal my pyn verduur – en jy moet geen
aanduiding gee jy's treurig of benoud
dat niemand weet of raai daar is iets fout.'

Hy roep twee van sy dienaars en vertel
hul dat hul Dorigeen moet vergesel
en veilig bring tot by 'n sekere plek.
Hul't hom gegroet en daarvandaan vertrek, 1490
al wis hul nie wat hy eintlik wou bereik,
want hy't aan niemand iets daarvan laat blyk.

Party van jul sal dalk ontstoke vra,
'Maar is die man dan van die maan gepla
dat hy sy vrou so blootstel aan gevaar?'
Maar wag, ek maak nou eers my storie klaar;
miskien verloop dit verder tot haar voordeel.
So, luister eers en dan kan julle oordeel.

Aurelius, die jonker wat liefallig
was teenoor Dorigeen, het juis toevallig 1500
vir haar nou teëgekome, haastig op pad,
in een van die drukste strate van die stad
wat na die tuin toe lei, die lushof waar
hy die gewraakte belofte gekry het van haar.
Dit was die doelwit van Aurelius,
want hy't haar dopgehou en was bewus
daarvan as sy ooit van haar huis af gaan.
Hul het mekaar ontmoet – en laat maar staan
of dit toeval was of lot – en hy was bly
en vra waarheen sy gaan; daarop het sy 1510
geroep soos een nie by haar positiewe:
'Ek gaan na die tuin in opdrag van my liewe
meester wat sê dat ek my woord moet hou.'

Aurelius het haar verstom aanskou,
oorweldig deur bejammering vir haar
en al die ellende hier geopenbaar
en vir Arveragus, die edele heer,
wat haar verplig het om haar woord van eer
gestand te doen, want hy kon nie verdra
dat sy dit breek nie. Die jonker was verslae. 1520
Hy wou graag doen wat reg is; dit was dus
noodsaaklik dat hy afsien van sy lus
en nie vir goeie wil en edelmoed
met 'n onverfynde handeling vergoed.
Hy het haar daarom aangespreek aldus:

'Mevrou, sê vir jou heer Arveragus
dat ek sy edelheid jeens jou waardeer
en dat ek ook begrip het vir jou seer:
omdat jy nie jou woord moes breek aan my,
was hy bereid om skandesmart te ly. 1530
Aan ewige gemis gee ek my oor
om nie jul liefde vir mekaar te smoor.
Hiermee, mevrou, skeld ek jou nou vry
van enige belofte wat aan my
gemaak is vanaf jou geboortedag,
en ek belowe dat ek nooit gewag
sal maak van 'n eed deur jou aan my gesweer
wat hoe ook al mag strek tot jou oneer,
en dit is dan ook my vaarwel aan jou,
die allerbeste en getrouste vrou.' 1540
Beloftes kom 'n vrou soms duur te staan;
so't dit, wis hy, met Dorigeen gegaan.

Wat edele gedrag betref, voorwaar
'n jonker kan 'n ridder ewenaar.

In dankbaarheid val sy op haar knieë neer
en daarna het sy na haar huis gekeer
en sy't dit alles aan haar man bely,
en hy was, soos 'n mens kan dink, so bly
dat dit swaar sou val om sy vreugde te beskryf;
en my storie het genoeg reeds om die lyf.

1550

Arveragus en Dorigee, sy vrou,
het voortgeleef in groot geluk en trou
en tussen hulle was daar nooit onmin;
hy't haar behandel soos 'n koningin
en sy was lewenslank aan hom getrou.
Wel, dis genoeg van hierdie man en vrou.

Aurelius het gesien hoeveel verlore is
en het die dag vervloek toe hy gebore is.
'Ek het die geleerde man belowe – o wee! –
dat ek vir hom 'n duisend pond sou gee,'
het hy geroep. 'Hoe kan ek dit prakseer?
Dis duidelik ek's totaal geruïneer.

1560

Ek sal alles moet verkoop en van bedelary
afhanklik wees. Hier kan ek ook nie bly
of ek berokken my familie skade.

Maar altemit betoon hy my genade.
Wat as ek jaarliks op 'n sekere dag
aan hom oorbetal 'n vasgestelde bedrag?
Vir sy edelmoed sou ek hom dank betoon
en my gegewe woord sou ek nooit verloën.'

1570

Hy't na sy kis gegaan en met 'n swaar
gemoed vyfhonderd pond se goud vandaar
geneem om die geleerde te vergoed
en hom te smEEK om tog uit edelmoed
uitstel te gee vir die betaling van die res.

'Meester,' het hy gesê, 'ek doen my bes
om my woord te hou en het nog nooit gefaal,
verseker ek u, om my skulde te betaal.

Ek sal my pligte nakom, al moet ek
om gunste en gawes vra om dit te dek.

1580

As u my op sekuriteit nou twee
of drie jaar langer dié vergunning gee,
dan sal ek regkom; daarsonder moet
ek egter afstand doen van al my goed.'

Die astroloog het alles aangehoor
en daarop antwoord hy toe onverstoer:

'Was ek dan nie getrou aan ons akkoord?'

'Ja,' antwoord hy, 'ek kon reken op u woord.'

'En het jy nie die verlangde vrou gekry?'

'Nee, nee,' sê hy bedroef, met 'n sug daarby.

1590

'Waarby kom dit dan? Wat's die rede?'

Toe het Aurelius al die omstandighede
aan hom uitgelê – maar dit maak geen sin

om weer van vooraf daarmee te begin.

Hy sê: 'Omdat die ridder edel was,
sou hy liewers doodgaan in ellende as
dat Dorigeen ontrou word aan haar eed.'

En toe beskryf hy ook die vrou se leed:
'Die belofte het haar gebring in die verderf
en sy sou liever op die plek wou sterf,
in alle onskuld vasgevang in 'n eed,
want sy het niks van towerny geweet.

1600

As gevolg hiervan het ek haar jammer gekry
en ewe gul as die ridder haar na my
gestuur het, het ek haar weer terug laat gaan.
Wel, daarmee was dit als ook uit en gedaan.'

Die geleerde sê: 'My vriend, jul het albei waar
en edel opgetree teenoor mekaar.

Jy is 'n jonker en 'n ridder hy;
met God se hulp kan 'n geleerde sy
gedrag dermate orden dat dit ook
met julle edelmoedigheid sal strook.

1610

Die duisend pond skeld ek jou nou hier kwyd,
asof jy nooit bestaan het voor dié tyd
of altemit geen kennis van my had.

My heer, ek sal g'n duit neem van jou skat;
vir moeite en kundigheid soek ek g'n goud.
Wat jy betaal het vir my onderhoud
is oorgenoeg. Vaarwel; dit gaan jou goed.'
Hy't op sy perd gespring en weg gespoed.

1620

My vraag aan julle almal: Sê my wie
was die edelmoedigste van hierdie drie?
Vertel my voor ons vorder op ons pad.
My storie's klaar; nou volg net die debat.

Fragment VI

DIE DOKTER SE VERHAAL

Eenmaal was daar, dit volgens Livius,
'n ridder met die naam Virginius,
volmaak in waardigheid en edelmoed
en ryk aan vriende en aan aardse goed.

'n Enkele dogter het sy vrou gebaar;
hul het geen kind gehad nie buiten haar.

Sy was so pragtig, so word daar vertel,
dat sy ander mense in die skadu stel;
dit het gelyk of die Natuur probeer

om 'n volmaakte beeltenis te formeer,
asof sy daarmee sê: 'Kyk, ek, Natuur,
graveer en skilder so 'n mensfiguur

10

net wanneer ek wil. Wie kan dieselfde doen?

Pigmalion nie, hoe hy ook kap en boen
of hak en verf. En dit is als verniet

dat Zeuksis en Appeles smee en giet;
nóg deur 'n skildery, nóg deur skulptuur
kon hul 'n gelykenis maak soos die Natuur.

Die Skepper van die wêreld het vir my

Sy afgesant gemaak; dit staan my vry
om alle aardse wesens na my lus

20

te vorm en verf, want onder my berus
elke ondermaanse kreatuur,

dog vir my werk kry ek g'n loon of huur.

Ek vereenselwig my ten volle met my Heer
en het haar mooi gemaak om Hom te eer,

en verder geld dit elke kreatuur

met betrekking tot hul kleur en hul postuur.'

So dink ek sou Natuur haar saak gestel het.

Hierdie meisie nou van wie ek vertel het

30

wat so beeldskoon was, was 'n kind van veertien jaar.

Groot kundigheid word daar geopenbaar

in die koloriet¹ van elke aardse ding:

wit dien vir 'n lelie se beskildering,

rooi vir 'n roos; so is dié edele kind

voor haar geboorte reeds gepas getint.

Phoibos het haar goue hare ook

geverf sodat dit met sy strale strook.

Haar skoonheid was hoog aangeskrewe, maar

haar deugszaamheid was ongeëwenaar;

40

sy't elke goeie hoedanigheid gehad

wat oordeelkundiges van waarde skat.

Kuis van liggaam en van gees was sy

en sy het dus in maagdelikheid gedy:

sy was bedees, deemoedig en beskeie,

1 Die kunstige aanwending van kleure.

stil en lankmoedig ook te alle tye;
 sy was matig in gedrag en kleredrag,
 omsigtig in haar antwoorde en sag.
 So wys soos Pallas² het sy geen gesprek
 met grandiose spogger deurspek 50
 om skrande voor te kom; sy het vertrou
 op reguit taal, betaamlik vir 'n vrou.
 Sy't haar nie aangestel nie; in haar spraak
 bemerk 'n mens net deug en goeie smaak.
 As maagd was sy heel skaam, maar tog was sy
 bestendig en sy't aan die gang gebly
 om die gevaar van luiheid af te weer.
 Vir Bacchus het sy nooit erken as heer,
 want wyn en jeug laat mens se luste woed
 soos 'n vuur deur olie of deur vet gevoed. 60
 Dikwels het sy uit deugzaamheid gemaak
 asof sy siek voel om so weg te raak
 uit geselskap wat oorhel na sotterny
 van drinkgelag, banket of dansparty
 waar mense in koketterie verval.
 Dis sulke dinge, weet ons een en al,
 wat kinders vroegryp en vrypostig maak
 en dis beslis 'n netelige saak,
 want as hul eendag groot is, leer hul gou
 genoeg om hulle lyf astant te hou 70
 en so's hul flink na skaamteloosheid op pad.
 Verkwalik my nie, goewernantes wat
 in jul middel jare verantwoordelik is
 vir die sorg van dogters van welvarendes,
 as ek jul daarop wys daar is twee redes
 waarom jul toesig het oor hulle sedes:
 óf omdat jul jul kuisheid goed bewaar het
 óf omdat jul uit swakheid dit laat vaar het
 en dus is julle met die dans bekend,
 hoewel nou van die passies afgewend. 80
 Versuim dus nie, ter wille van die Heer,
 om hulle onvermoeid die deug te leer.
 Wie's vir 'n wildbewaarder so gepas
 as een wat op sy dag 'n wilddief was?
 Lê julle daarop toe om hulle goed
 teen onwewoeglikhede te behoed.
 Jul moet geen boosheid deur die vingers sien;
 dis hoe 'n mens verdoemenis verdien,
 want dan is jul verraaiers en jul werk
 dien om jongmense in hul kwaad te sterk. 90
 Slaan ag op wat ek sê en weet: verraad
 gepleeg teen onskuld is die laagste daad.
 En ouers ook, dis jul verantwoordelikheid
 om sorg te dra dat daar die hele tyd

2 Pallas Athena, godin van die wysheid.

behoorlike toesig is oor die gedrag
van kinders onderworpe aan jul gesag.
Pasop dat hulle nie te gronde gaan.
Stel steeds 'n goeie voorbeeld en vermaan
hul op die regte tyd, want as jul faal,
sal julle duur vir die versuim betaal. 100

As 'n herder hom nie aan sy skape steur,
word hulle deur 'n wilde dier verskeur.
Met hierdie voorbeeld sal ek nou volstaan,
want ek moet met my storie verder gaan.

Nou hierdie maagd dan kon haarself bewaak;
g'n goewernante was nodig vir dié taak.
Soos in 'n boek, so kon mens in haar lewe
die woorde en dade aflees wat die strewe
behoort te wees van iedere goeie vrou.
As wys en deugsaam is sy alom beskou; 110
gevolglik was sy spoedig wyd en syd
bekend vir skoonheid en regskenheid,
en later is sy deur die hele land
vir deug geloof, maar nie deur Afguns, want
dié is bedroef oor ander se geluk
en bly daarvoor as smarte hulle druk –
so teken Augustinus dit reeds aan.

Dié maagd het eendag na die stad gegaan
na 'n tempel toe met haar geliefde ma;
dis immers hoe 'n meisie haar gedra. 120
In daardie dae was daar 'n regter wat
bewind gevoer het oor die hele stad.
Dit het gebeur dat die regter haar gewaar
toe sy verbyloop; hy't haar aangestaar,
noulettend getakseer; hy was verstom
oor sy so mooi was; sy hart het binne-in hom
begin tekere gaan; hy't rondgetas
na 'n plan om haar vas te trek. Sy begeerte was:
'Laat kom wat wil, dié meisie wil ek hê.'

Toe het die duiwel self vir hom gesê 130
hoe hy deur middel van 'n slentery
spoedig die meisie vir sy doel kon kry,
want hy was seker daarvan dat geen geld
hiervoor sou baat nie, net so min geweld.
Sy was so ryk aan vriende en daarby
dermate aan die kuisheid toegewy,
hy't goed geweet hy kon haar nooit beweeg
om met haar liggaam sondigheid te pleeg.
Ná lang beraad het hy 'n lae vent
na hom laat kom, in daardie stad bekend 140
daarvoor dat hy skelm was en ook brutaal.

Vertroulik het die regter sy verhaal
aan die kêrel oorgedra, maar onder eed
dat niemand anders iets daarvan mag weet;
dit sou sy lewe kos, rep hy 'n woord.

Toe dié nou ingestem het tot die akkoord,
was die regter in sy skik en het dit getoon
deur die skurk met ryk geskenke te beloon.

Die geslepe sameswering (waarvan ek
al die besonderhede sal verstrek) 150

vir die bevrediging van 'n bose man
se wellus, dit is als haarfyn beplan
voor hy huis toe is, dié skelm Claudius.
Daarna't die valse regter Appius
(so't hy geheet, want laat daar geen onklarheid
hieroor wees nie, dis die reïne waarheid
of, in elk geval, die hoofinhoud daarvan),
dié Appius sê ek, het hom ingespan
om sy plesier nog gouer na te ja.

En so het dit gebeur, nie lank daarna, 160
dat hierdie valse regter van my verhaal
sy plek geneem het in die regbanksaal
om soos gebruiklik vonnisse te vel;
toe kom die lae niksnuts ingesnel
en roep: 'Ek moet vir u petisioneer
om aan my reg te laat geskied, my heer.
My klag is teen Virginius en as
hy skuld probeer ontken, kan ek vervas
dit als bewys en ook getuies bring
ter bevestiging van my beskuldiging.' 170

Die regter antwoord: 'Ek kan geen beskeid
op jou aanklag gee in sy afwesigheid.
Laat hom ontbied. Ek sal die saak verhoor
en vonnis vel; g'n onreg kom hier voor.'

Virginius kom toe voor die hof te staan;
daar hoor hy die vervloekte klagskrif aan.
Die aantygings daarin kom hierop neer:
'As dit die hof behaag, my goeie heer,
verklaar u arme dienaar Claudius 180

dat 'n hooggeplaaste, ene Virginius,
nieteenstaande reg en geregtigheid
en al my protesteerdery ten spyt,
'n diensmaagd uit my huis gesteel het een nag
en wederregtelik aanhou in sy mag.
Sy was nog jonk, en as u dit begeer,
dan kan ek baie getuies bring, my heer.
Dis nie sy dogter nie, wat hy ook sê.
Ek dring daarop aan: ek wil my diensmaagd hê.
Dus het ek my tot u regbank gewend.'
Dit was die strekking van die dokument. 190

Virginius het die kêrel aangestaar,
maar voordat hy sy onskuld kon verklaar
of met sy erewoord hom kon verweer
of baie getuies bring wat sou kon sweer
dat hy belas was met 'n valse klag,
het die bose regter sonder om te wag

vir 'n antwoord daarop van Virginius
sy oordeel oor hom uitgespreek aldus:

'My beslissing in dié saak is: hierdie ou
se diensmaagd word onwettig aangehou. 200
Gaan haal haar dus en ek sal sorg vir haar
tot sy teregkom by haar eienaar.'

Toe die goeie ridder, dié Virginius,
deur die vonnis van die valse Appius
gedwing is om sy dogter te oorhandig
aan die regter wat begeer het om losbandig
met haar te wees, het hy huis toe gegaan
en haar ontbied om voor hom te kom staan.
Doodsbleek was sy gesig toe hy sien hoe sy
haar nederig op sy woorde voorberei. 210
Met vaderhart deurboor deur mededoë,
hou hy hom steeds sy vaste doel voor oë.

'Virginia,' sê hy, 'twee weë is vir jou oop
en op die een of ander moet jy loop:
dis skande of die dood. Ag, wat het jy
dan ooit gedoen om so 'n dood te ly
deur 'n mes se steek of swaard se slag gedaan?
O, liewe dogter, sin van my bestaan,
met soveel vreugde grootgemaak,
my liefde het dag en nag oor jou gewaak. 220
Jy is die laaste droefheid van my lewe,
asook die grootste blydschap my gegewe.
Juweel van kuisheid, hoor met gelatenheid:
jou dood is nou vir my 'n noodsaaklikheid.
Dis liefde, geensins haat, wat dit berei
en deernis sal jou hoof van jou liggaam skei.
Hoe wens ek Appius het jou nooit aanskou,
want hy't dié vonnis uitgespreek oor jou;
en toe't hy alles aan haar meegedeel –
om dit nou te herhaal, sou net verveel. 230

'Genade, Vader,' roep sy aangedaan
en sy't haar arms om sy nek geslaan,
soos sy baiemaal gedoen het voor dié dag.
Haar oë skiet vol trane en sy sê sag:
'O, goeie Vader, moet ek sterwe dan?
Is daar g'n hoop vir my, g'n ander plan?'

'Nee, hoegenaamd nie,' sê hy, 'tot my spyt.'

'Dan, Vader,' sê sy, 'gee my 'n bietjie tyd
dat ek my dood 'n ruk lank kan beween,
want Jefta het sy dogter 'n kans verleen 240
om voor haar dood haar noodlot te bekla.³
Die Here weet sy't ook geen skuld gedra
behalwe dat sy eerste was om hom
op 'n mooi manier te groet toe hy huis toe kom.'
En met dit val sy in 'n floute neer,

3 Rigters 11: 30-40.

maar later het sy daaruit teruggekeer;
sy't opgestaan en sê toe, 'Vader, ek
loof God daarvoor, ek sterwe onbevlek.
Gee my die dood voor ek my hoof te skaam;
doen soos u wil met my in God se naam.'

250

En met dié woorde het sy hom gemaan
dat hy tog sagkens met sy swaard moes slaan;
toe val sy weereens in beswyming neer.
Haar vader, hart en wil deur smart verteer,
kap toe haar kop af, kry die hare beet
en dra dit na die regter waar hy weet
dat hy hom in die regbanksaal sal kry.
Toe die regter hierdie gruwel sien, het hy
bevel gegee hul moet hom sonder meer
na die galg toe neem. Maar toe, gemotiveer
deur medelye met Virginius, het
'n skare ingestorm om hom te red.

260

Die saak het hul vervul met agterdog,
want nie net was die aanklag vergesog,
maar dit is ondersteun deur Appius.
Van sy bedorwenheid was hul bewus
en dus het hul gerebelleer teen hom
en hy het in die tronk tereggekom
waar hy selfmoord gepleeg het. Claudius,
die skelm handlanger van Appius,
sou aan 'n hoë boom gehang het as
Virginius toe nie vir hom jammer was
en voorgestel het dis 'n beter plan
om die skobbejak vir ewig te verban.
Die res is opgehang, die laaste man
wat saamgewerk het aan die infame plan.

270

Hier sien ons straf volg op die sonde;
Gods toorn laat ook niemand ongeskonde,
van watter stand ook al, en niemand weet
hoe fel die wurm van gewete vreet
vanweë 'n bose daad, al dink 'n man
miskien net God en hy self weet daarvan.
Of jy 'n leek of 'n geestelike is,
sal die doodsrees op jou afkom, dis gewis.
En daarom bied ek hierdie wyse raad:
Verlaat die sonde voor dit jou verlaat.⁴

280

⁴ Dis te laat om berou te hê oor jou sonde as jy nie meer in staat is om die sonde te doen nie.

Woorde van die Waard

Ons Waard begin toe vreeslik vloek en raas.
'Nou, goeie God,' het hy geroep, 'Helaas,
so 'n valse regter en gemene vent!
Die skandelikste dood die mens bekend 290
kom sulke regters en hul helpers toe.
Maar sy's onskuldig dood. Kyk nou net hoe
'n prys sy vir haar skoonheid moes betaal.
Dis wat ek sê, mens sien mos baiemaal,
die gawes van geluk en die natuur
bring mee die dood van menige kreatuur.
Haar skoonheid was haar dood, sou ek kon sê,
en dié so jammerlik haar opgelê.
Die gawes wat ek noem, strek, na my oordeel,
meer dikwels tot jou kwaad as tot jou voordeel. 300
Maar tog, my goeie heer, dit was gewis
'n mees hartroerende geskiedenis.
Ag foei – maar dis verby; laat dit maar daar.
Heer Arts, ek bid dat God jou mag bewaar
tesame met jou kose en pisglase,
jou panaseë en jou hipokrasse,⁵
en jou stroopmengsels ook, die laaste een,
mag God en onse Liewe Vrou hul seën.
Jy's op my woord van eer 'n ware man,
nes 'n prelaat, by die Heilige Ronjan. 310
Is dit nie waar nie? Ek's maar 'n leek, verstaan,
maar ek weet my hart is nou so aangedaan
dat ek skoon siek is van die palpitasie.
By corpus beendere⁶, drink ek nie 'n glasie
tonikum of varsgebroude aal nie
of hoor ek nie 'n vrolike verhaal nie,
sal ek beswyk aan die bejammering.
Vriend Aflaatkramer,' het hy aangedring,
'vertel nou vir ons iets wat grappig is.'
'Ja, by die Heilige Ronjan beslis,' 320
het dié gesê, 'maar eers lê ek besoek
by hierdie herberg af vir bier en koek.'
Maar dadelik het die deftiges gekree:
'Laat hom geen smerigheid vertel nie. Nee!
Vertel ons iets waaruit daar baat te put is.
Ons sou graag luister as dit tot ons nut is.'
'Nou goed dan,' antwoord hy, 'terwyl ek drink,
sal ek aan iets ordentliks probeer dink.'

5 Versterkmiddels.

6 Hy verwar twee veskillende ede, 'By corpus Domini' (By die Heer se liggaam) en 'By Christus se beendere.'

Proloog tot die Aflaatkramer se verhaal

"Gierigheid is die wortel van die kwaad." 1 Tim 6.10

Menere, as ek 'n preek moet hou, sê hy,
dan laat ek dit met swier en krag uitdy, 330
so vol en rond as wat die klokkespel is;
ek ken van buite wat daar te vertel is.
My teksvers bly steeds wat dit altyd was:
Radix malorum est cupiditas.

Eers waarvandaan ek kom, vertel ek hulle,
en haal te voorskyn elkeen van my bulle.
Veiligheidshalwe volg dan die vertoning
van my patent, bekragtig deur die koning,
sodat ek nie deur priester of deur klerk
belemmer word in Christus heil'ge werk. 340
Daarna vertel ek al my vroom verhale;
bulle van Pouse en van kardinale,
van patriarge¹ en biskoppe laat ek
hul sien, en 'n paar Latynse woorde praat ek,
om dus my preek te sier en wie dit hoor
tot groter toegewydheid aan te spoor.
En dan word al my kassies uitgestal,
gestop met bene en lappies sonder tal –
kamma relikwieë iedereen.

Daarbenewens het ek die skouerbeen 350
van 'n heil'ge Jood se skaap, in brons geset.
'Vriende,' sê ek, 'hierop moet jul let:
as hierdie been net in 'n put gegooi is,
en daar 'n koei of kalf, 'n os of ooi is
wat swel van adders vreet of van hul pik,
was dan sy tong daarin en dadelik
sal daardie dier genees. Daarby, menere,
van uitslag, brandsiekte en alle sere
sal elke skaap herstel wat julle bring
om by die put te drink. En nog 'n ding: 360
indien die boer eenmaal 'n week self gaan
en vastend daarvan drink voordat die haan
gekraai het, sal sy beeste beter teel
(dus het die Jood ons vadere meegedeel)
en als wat hy besit vermeerder wees.

En, here, dit kan jaloesie genees;
al sou 'n man verwoed van afguns raak,
as hy sy sop met hierdie water maak,
is al sy argwaan teen sy vrou op 'n end,
al is hy met haar streke goed bekend, 370
en selfs 'n drietal priesters haar bedien.
En hier is nou 'n handskoen, soos jul sien.
Trek enigiemand hierdie handskoen aan,

¹ Biskoppe van vroeë sentra van die Kerk, in die besonder Antiochië, Aleksandrië en Konstantinopel, wat in rang net na die Pous gevolg het.

sal daar 'n vermeerdering van al die graan –
koring of hawer – wat hy saai, geskied,
solank hy 'n groot of penning aan my bied.

Maar, goeie vriende, ek waarsku jul vir vas:

Is hier dalk iemand in dié kerk belas
met sondeskuld wat so afskuwelik is
dat hy te skaam is vir belydenis, 380

is hier 'n vrou, hoe jonk of oud ook al,
wat haar man 'n horingdraer maak, dan sal
hul nóg die mag nóg die genade hê
om offers voor my relikwieë neer te lê.

Dié wat onskuldig is aan so 'n skande,
bring in Gods naam na vore 'n offerande
en ek sal absolusie gee aan hulle,
kragtens die volmag daartoe in my bulle.'

Dis met dié lis dat ek van ek begin het
elke jaar 'n honderd mark ge'in het. 390

Soos 'n priester staan ek in my preekstoel daar
en wag dat die gemeente moet bedaar.

Dan preek ek soos 'n mens maar selde hoor
en hou 'n honderd wolhaarstories voor.

Ek rek my nek uit lank en moeitevul
en oos en wes staan ek en knikkebol
net soos 'n duif wat op 'n skuur gaan sit.
So snel beweeg my hande en tong dat dit
'n ware lus is, slaan 'n mens dit gade.

Slegs oor die hebsug en verwante kwade
handel my preek om hulle oor te haal
om hulle penninge aan my te betaal,
want dis my doel alleen om geld te maak,
en glad nie om hul sondes baas te raak. 400

Dit traak my nie wat van hul siele word;
as hul begrawe is, kan dié maar vort.

Daar's baie preke wat tog net gehou
word met 'n bouse doel, kan jul vertrou;
party wat wil behaag, party wat vlei
om deur geveinsdheid voordeel te verkry; 410
party dien ydelheid, en ander haat.

En as daar iemand is wat ek wil skaad,
dan klap die sweepslag van my tong oor hom,
waar hy daar sit, sodat hy nie ontkom
aan die belasting wat ek op dié rig
wat kwaad teen my of teen my broeders stig;
want alhoewel ek nie sy naam vermeld,
weet almal nogtans wie my aanval geld
deur aanwysings en wenke bygehaal.

Dus word ons teëstanders uitbetaal. 420

Heilig en waarheidsliewend sogenaamd
spu ek my vroom venyn uit onbeskaamd.

Nou, kort te gaan, so stel ek my beleid:
ek preek alleenlik uit geldgierigheid.

Dus bly my teksvers wat dit altyd was:

Radix malorum est cupiditas,

en daarom stel ek hebsug aan die kaak
want dis die fout wat my ten naaste raak.

Maar alhoewel ek daaraan skuldig is,
wen ek wel ander tot ontsteltenis

430

oor hulle hebsug en tot diep berou.

Tog is dit nie wat ek voor oë hou;

ek preek alleenlik uit geldgierigheid.

Maar dis genoeg gesê oor hierdie feit.

Dan gee ek hul 'n hele spul verslae
en sedelessies uit vergange dae,

want ongeletterdes moet stories hê
wat hulle kan onthou en na kan sê.

Wat, dink jul dat ek armoede sou

aanvaar as ek 'n goeie preek kan hou

en daardeur goud en silwer kan ontvang?

Nee, nee, in so iets stel ek geen belang.

My preek en bedel baat in alle lande

en dus sal ek nie arbei met my hande

of mandjies weef om so 'n bestaan te maak,

want bedel is 'n produktiewer taak.

Ek aap nie die apostels na nie, daar

ek kaas en koring, geld en wol vergaar,

al word dit deur die armste kneg gegee

of deur die dorp se armste weduwee,

hoewel haar kinders van die honger kwyn.

Nee kyk, ek het behoefte aan my wyn

en aan 'n lekker nooi op elke plek.

Maar hoor, menere, in 'n kort bestek,

jul wens is dat ek julle iets verhaal,

en noudat ek 'n tapsel donker aal

gedrink het, hoop ek dat ek jul iets sal

vertel wat in jul smaak behoort te val,

want al is ek 'n bouse man, beskik

ek oor 'n verhaal, en dié so stigtelik,

dat ek graag daarvoor preek vir die gewin.

Wel, stil nou almal en ek sal begin.

440

450

460

DIE AFLAATKRAMER SE VERHAAL

In Vlaandere was 'n groep jongmans weleer

wat elke soort losbandigheid prakseer

as oproermakers en as dobbelare,

en hul't met harpe, luite en kitare

in kroeë en bordele dag en nag

gedans, geëet, gedrink met alle mag;

en bring die duiwel so hul offerande

daar in sy eie tempel deur die skande

van hul vervloekte buitensporighede;

470

so kras en lasterlik was hulle ede,
dis grusaam om te hoor hoe skeur hul daar
ons Liewe Heer se liggaam uitmekaar –
asof deur Jode nie genoeg geskonde –
en hulle lag nog oor mekaar se sonde.

Dan kom die danseressies, fyn en net,
die koppelaarsters en die sangers met
hul harpe, jong verkoopsters van eetware,
soos vrugte en lekkergoed, amptenare
van die duiwel self wat wellus hoog laat brand,
want wellus is aan gulsigheid verwant;
die heil'ge Skrif bevestig ook dié feit:
in dronkenskap is daar losbandigheid.

480

Dink net hoe teennatuurlik Lot by sy
dogters gelê het; hy was so dronk dat hy
nie eens geweet het hy's daaraan aandadig.

Herodes het, toe hy deur wyn versadig
gesit het aan sy tafel by 'n fees,
bevel gegee, soos ons dit na kan lees,
om die Doper in sy onskuld dood te maak,
en Seneca was ongetwyfeld raak:
van geen verskil kon hy hom vergewis
tussen 'n man wat van sy kop af is
en een wat pal in dronkenskap verkeer,
maar net as malheid iemand affekteer,
dit ietwat langer duur as laasgenoemde.
O gulsigheid, die velerlei verdoemde!
O eerste oorsaak van vernietiging,
deur jou is ons verderf teweeggebring,
tot Christus ons weer deur sy bloed verlos het
van die dure prys wat dit die mens gekos het,
want, kort te gaan, dit is alleen daardeur
dat ons die hele wêreld moes verbeur.

490

Adam ons vader en sy vrou is as
gevolg van hierdie sonde tot hul las
en droefheid uit die Paradys verdryf;
toe hy gevas het, so staan daar geskryf,
kon hy die Paradys geniet, maar toe
hy die verbode boom se vrug eers proe,
is hy tot pyn en leed daar uitgeja.

500

O gulsigheid, ons mag jou wel bekla!
Ag, wis 'n man maar hoeveel kwale uit
sy onbesadigdheid en vraatsug spruit,
dan sou hy matiger in sy dieet
wees wanneer hy gaan aansit om te eet.
Helaas, o mond so teer en keel so kort,
in ooste, weste, noorde, suide word
geswoeg in aarde, lug en water om
keurige kos vir vrates te bekom.

510

Paulus stel dit op mees bekwame wyse:
'Spyse is vir die maag, die maag vir spyse,

520

maar God sal albei tog verwoes,' sê hy.
Helaas, dit is iets smerigs, glo my vry,
om van so iets te praat, maar erger is dit
as iemand soveel wyn drink, rooi en wit,
dat hy dus deur die oordaad ongelaak
sy keelgat tot 'n kleinhuisie gaan maak.

Die Apostel Paulus sê met diep berou:

'Ek het dit dikwels reeds genoem, en nou
herhaal ek onder trane: Wie losbandig
wandel is teenoor Christus kruis vyandig;
hul einde is die verderf, hul god die buik.'

O buik, o pens, o sak met slegte ruik,
gestop met mis en met verrottingstanke!
Van albei ente kom onsuiwer klanke.

Hoe 'n arbeid en onkoste verg jou lus!
Hoe stamp en sif en maal die koks om dus
substansie te verander in aksident,²
die aandrang van jou luste af te wend.

Die hardste bene word skoon fyn gekap
om murg daaruit te kry, want niks ontsnap
hul aandag wat die keel soet af kan gly;

van blare, wortels, bas se spesery
word daar pikante souse aangemaak
sodat die kos nog lekkerder kan smaak.

Die mens is dood te midde van die lewe
wat hom in dié losbandigheid begewe.

'n Spotter is die wyn, en dronkheid is
so vol ellende en geredetwis.

O dronkaard, jou gesig's mismak, en suur
jou asem, jou omhelsings word verduur
met walging; deur jou neus rol daar 'n geknor

asof jy heelyd 'Simson, Simson' mor;
maar hy't g'n wyn gedrink nie, by die Heer.

Soos 'n gesteeke vark val jy die heelyd neer;
waardebegrip is jy skoon kwyt, onklaar
is ook jou tong, want dronkenskap's voorwaar

die graf van mens se oordeel en verstand.
Iemand wat in die drank se mag beland,
kan geen geheim bewaar, ek waarborg dit.

Onthou jul dus van beide rooi en wit,
veral die sterk wit wyn van Lepe³ wat
verkoop word in die ooste van die stad,

want dis die wyn wat mos byeen kan vloei,
aardig genoeg, met dié wat naby groei,⁴
en dan, so hoofdig is die eindproduk,

2 Die wese te verander in voorkoms; speelse aanwending van die metafisiese terminologie wat gebruik is in die skolastiese debat tussen die Realiste en die Nominaliste (en om die transsubstansieleer onder woorde te bring).

3 'n Dorp in Spanje in die nabyheid van Cadix.

4 Wat werklik gebeur is dat wynhandelaars goedkoop Spaanse wyn (van Lepe) by die duur Franse wyn (van Bordeaux) gooi.

as iemand net drie glase daarvan sluk,
terwyl hy waan hy is in Londen tuis,
het hy alreeds na Spanje toe verhuis,
nie na Bordeaux of La Rochelle nie maar
na Lepe – en dis ‘Simson, Simson’ daar.

570

Maar nog iets dien genoem te word, menere:
die daade en oorwinnings deur die Here
se almag uitgevoer en opgeteken
in die Ou Testament, was, soos ek reken,
slegs deur onthouding en gebed gewees;
jul kan dit in die Bybel na gaan lees.

Kyk hoe't Atilla die veroweraar in
skande gesterwe toe sy neus begin
bloei het toe hy sy roes aan 't uitslaap was;
gematigdheid sou 'n leier beter pas.
En dan, oorweeg ook hierbenewens wel
die opdrag wat gegee is aan Lemuel –
nie Samuel nie, maar Lemuel is vermaan –
kyk in die Bybel waar uitdruklik staan:
'Gee wyn aan niemand wat moet oordeel vel nie.'
Maar hieroor wil ek nou nie meer vertel nie.

580

Ek het oor gulsigheid goed uitgewei;
nou waarsku ek jul ook teen dobbelary.
Dobbel is mos die moeder van bedrieg,
verdoemlik meineed pleeg, en ook van lieg,
van lastering teen Christus, en geweld,
en die verkwisting van jou tyd en geld;
dit is 'n klad en kan jou naam net skend,
raak jy eenmaal as dobbelaar bekend.
Hoe hoër ook die stand van so 'n persoon,
hoe eerder sal sy medemens hom hoon.
Die prins wat dobbel sal sy goeie naam
spoedig verbeur, want hy is onbekwaam –
so word daar algemeen geredeneer –
om sake te behartig of beheer.

590

Met eerbetoon is Chilon afgevaardig
as die gesant van Sparta, wys en waardig,
wat met Korinthe 'n verbond moes sluit.
Toe hy daar kom, toe val dit juis so uit
dat hy die leiers van die hoogste stand
aantref met dobbelstene in die hand.
So gou as moontlik het hy daarvandaan
weer stillietjies na sy land teruggegaan,
en het gesê: 'Ek sal nie eer versaak
of so my eie naam tot skande maak
deur jul met dobbelaars te gaan verbind.
Jul sal 'n ander afgesant moet vind,
want ek sou, eerlik waar, veel liever sterf
as dat ek so 'n bondgenoot moet werf.
Ek wil geen aandeel hê aan 'n traktaat
wat dobbelaars verenig met 'n staat

600

610

wat glorieryk is om sy eerbaarheid.’
Dus het die wyse hom daarvan gekwyt. 620
In die geskiedenis staan dit ook geskrewe
hoedat die heer van Parthië, mees bedrewe,
twee goue steentjies aan Demetrius
gestuur het, skimpend op sy dobellus,
en daarmee aangetoon dat hy sy mag
en faam van nul en gener waarde ag.
Daar's ander dinge wat gedoen kan word,
geskikter om 'n prins se tyd te kort.

Nou wil ek iets oor valse ede sê
en laster - soos deur kenners uitgelê. 630
Godslastering is 'n gruwel, en benede
kritiek selfs is die sweer van valse ede.
Matteus is my getuie dat die Heer
gesê het ons mag hoegenaamd nie sweer;
veral in Jeremia ook staan daar:

‘Jul moet die waarheid praat teenoor mekaar
en sweer in reg en in geregtigheid’;
maar ydel ede sal 'n vloek verbeid.
Slaan ag daarop hoedat die Here God,
soos ons kan sien uit die tweede groot gebod⁵ 640
in die eerste tafel van Sy hoë wet,
die ydel aanroep van Sy naam belet.

Let op hoe Hy ons dit verbied nog voor
ons iets van moord en ander sondes hoor;
Dís die volgorde wat gebruik is dan –
wie die gebooie ken, sal die waarheid kan
bevestig van als wat ek hier vertel.

En nog iets wil ek somer pront-uit stel:
van die huis van hom wat uitermate sweer,
sal geensins wyk die toorn van die Heer 650
‘By Sy spykers en Sy dierb're hart, en by
die Bloed van Christus in die Hales-abdy,⁶
jy't vyf en drie, en sewe is my hasard;⁷
by God se arms, ek deurboor jou hart
met hierdie dolk as jy probeer bedrieg’ –
dit is die dobbelsteen se oes: gelieg,
gekul en woede, moord. Hou op met sweer
ter wille van die liefde van ons Heer,
want Hy't vir ons gesterf. Maar wag nou, dat
ek eers weer my vertelling kan hervat. 660

Die drie losbandiges wat ek bedui het,
het lank voordat die klok vir priem gelui het
reeds in 'n herberg sit en drink, toe hoor
hul hoe 'n handklokkie gelui word voor

5 Vroeër is die eerste twee gebooie as een gereken en die totaal op tien gebring deur die begeer van die naaste se vrou van sy (ander) besittings te skei.

6 By Hales in Gloucestershire is 'n buis vertoon met bloed wat onsigbaar was vir diegene wat in 'n staat van doodsonde was.

7 Kans, geluk; ook die naam van 'n dobbelspel, die 'shooting craps' van die Verenigde State, waar sewe nog steeds die hoogste gooi is.

'n lyk na die begraafplaas onderweg.
Wel, een van hulle roep toe vir die kneg.
'Gaan gou-gou,' sê hy, 'om vir hul te vra
wie se lyk dit is wat hul daar dra;
en sorg dat jy sy naam reg rapporteer.'

Dié sê: 'Dit is nie nodig nie, meneer,
want twee uur voor jul koms was daar gepraat.
Hy was 'n vriend van julle inderdaad,
maar gisternag toe hy op 'n bank sy roes
hier uitgeslaap het, is hy meteens verwoes
deur 'n sluipdief as die Dood bekend, wat voor
die voet die mense in ons land vermoor.
Hy het sy spies diep in sy hart gesteek
en weggegaan, sy swye onverbreek.
Hy't duisende gedood al in dié plaag;
en ek sou sê, meneer, voor mens dit waag
om met so 'n vyand deurmekaar te raak,
jy goed moet nadink oor die hele saak;
wees pal gereed, mens weet nooit wanneer lê
hy jou dalk voor, het my ma altyd gesê.'

670

680

'Ja, by Maria,' roep die herbergier,
'die kind het reg. 'n Myl of wat van hier
is 'n groterige dorp waar hy vanjaar
die laaste man, vrou, kind en kneg wat daar
was, doodgemaak het. Hy moet daar naby woon.
Gereedheid vir hom sou die moeite loon,
want wie weet wat hy in die mou mag voer.'

690

'Hoe nou? Gods arms,' roep die drinkebroer,
'as hy so gevaarlik is om teë te kom,
sal ek op straat en voetpad soek na hom –
ek sweer dit hier by God se heil'ge bene!
Nou luister kêrels, ons drie is altyd ene,
as elkeen nou sy hand omhoog wil hou,
dan sweer ons almal broederskap en trou,
en die verraaiër Dood wat ander moor,
sal ons drie, by Gods waardigheid, nog voor
die dag verby is van die gras af maak.'

700

Tot dié ooreenkoms het hul toe geraak
dat hul sou lewe en sterwe vir mekaar
asof hul eie broers is, en vandaar
is hulle weg in woede en dronkenskap
en het in die rigting van die dorp gestap,
waarvan die herbergier vir hul vertel het;
en deur hul gruwelike vloek en skel het
hul Christus liggaam uitmekaar geskeur –
die Dood sou dood as hul hom eers bespeur.

710

Hul het nog skaars 'n halfmyl ver gestap
toe hulle aankom by 'n oorklimtrap
waar 'n ou en arm man vir hul ontmoet
en hul op nederige wyse groet.
'Menere,' sê hy, 'mag God met u sy.'

Deur die brutaalste van die drie word hy egter beantwoord: 'Jou verdomde ou gek, wat's jy so toegewikkel tot jou nek? Wat draai jy nog? Jy's afgeleef en klaar.'

Die ou man het hom eers stip aangestaar en toe gesê: 'Al sou ek hiervandaan deur dorp en stad en tot in Indië gaan, sou ek niemand raakloop wat bereid is om sy jeug te wissel vir my ouderdom; en dus moet ek my ouderdom verduur totdat die Here vir my uitkoms stuur.

Nie eens die Dood wil my om die lewe bring, dus loop ek, rustelose banneling, en met my staf klop ek steeds op die aarde, die ingang tot my moeder, smekend: "Waarde moeder, laat my inkom! Kyk hoe verval ek, vlees en bloed en vel! Ag, wanneer sal my beendere kan rus? Die klerekis, moeder, wat só lank in my kamer is, sou ek alte graag in ruil gee vir 'n ou haarstofdoodskleed om my toe te vou." Maar sy weerhou wat ek van haar begeer, en daarom lyk ek bleek en uitgeteer.

Maar, here, dit strek glad nie tot u lof om sommer sonder rede onbeskof teenoor so 'n bejaarde man te wees, want in die Skrif kan u tog duidelik lees hoe eerbiedwaardig is die ouderdom, en daarom wil ek u nou aanraai om nie 'n oumens leed te wil berokken, ewe min as wat u self, as u lank lewe, vernederinge sou wil ondergaan; en God sy met u waar u ook al gaan, want nou moet ek weer eens my reis aanvaar.'

'Nee, wag nou,' sê die tweede dobbelaar, 'Jy moenie dink jy kom so maklik los. Die Here hoor my, jy het netnou mos gepraat van die verraaier Dood wat dwing om al ons vriende hierlangs om te bring. Jy's wragtig sy spioen. Kom sê my nou: waar kry ons hom, of dit sal jou berou. By God en by die Heil'ge Sakrament, ek sweer jy's kop in een mus met die vent om ons jong klomp te moor, jou huigelaar!'

'Menere,' sê hy, 'as u werklik waar die Dood wil vind, volg dan maar net dié pad se kronkelinge deur die bos totdat u by 'n boom kom – daar't ek hom sien wag; teen hom sal al u grootpraat niks vermag. By daardie eikeboom sal u hom kry. En mag die Here wat die mens bevry

720

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750

760

vir u bewaar en ook tot inkeer bring.’

Die drie losbandiges het sito omgespring
en na die boom genael, en daar verstom
voor goed agt skepels⁸ goud te staan gekom, 770
floryne rond en nuut gemunt en geel.
Nou’t hul gesoek na die Dood hul nie geskeel;
hul was so ingenome met die skat,
so pragtig het die goud geglinster dat
hul sonder meer gaan sit het op die grond.

Toe sê die ergste van die skurke pront:
‘Luister nou, kêrels, alhoewel ek hou
van grappies maak, is ek ’n wakker ou.
Daar die geluk ons so bevoordeel het,
kan ons vooruitsien na genot en pret 780
en korte mette maak met hierdie skat.

Gods waardigheid! Wie sou gedink het dat
dit vandag so voor die wind met ons sou gaan?
As ons die goud kan wegdra hiervandaan
na my huis of na een van julle s'n
dan sal die goeie tyd vir ons begin.

Kyk niemand twyfel tog dit is ons skat nie,
maar net oordag sal ons dit nie kan vat nie,
want hulle kan ons dalk as diewe vang,
dan word ons oor ons eie goud gehang. 790

Nee, vir die nag sal ons dit moet beplan,
so slu en so versigtig as ons kan,
en daarom moet ons, myns insiens, besluit
dat ons gaan loot en sien hoe val dit uit;
die een wat die kortste strooitjie trek, moet dan
na die stad toe draf, so gou as wat hy kan,
om heimlik brood en wyn vir ons te kry,
terwyl die ander twee wat agterbly
ons goud bewaak, en as dié ou hom roer,
sal ons die skat vannag nog kan vervoer 800
na watter plek ons ook al mag besin.’

Een van die drietal hou die strooitjies in
sy vuis vir hulle lootjiestrekkery;
die jongste het die kortste een gekry
en stryk voort in die rigting van die stad.
Maar nouliks was hul kameraad op pad,
toe volg die verdere planne opgewonde:
‘Kyk, maat, ons twee is mos tot trou verbonde;
ek sê jou iets wat tot jou voordeel dien.

Ons makker is nou weg, soos jy kan sien, 810
en ons het so ’n oorvloed goud waarvan
daar mooi ’n derde is vir elke man;
maar sê nou maar ek kan die ding so reël
dat ons dit tussen net ons twee moet deel –
is dit dan nie ’n weldaad jou gedaan nie?’

⁸ Inhoudsmaat vir droë stowwe; ongeveer 2½ emmers.

Die ander antwoord: 'Ja, maar ek verstaan nie.
Hy weet tog dat die goud hier by ons lê.
Wat sal ons doen? Wat sal ons vir hom sê?'

Die eerste skurk sê: 'Kan jy 'n geheim bewaar?
In weinig woorde sal ek jou verklaar
hoe ons moet handel om dit reg te kry.'

Die ander sê: 'Ek gaan akkoord, en jy
kan op my reken. Jy't my erewoord.'

'Kyk ons is twee,' gaan die eerste booswig voort,
'en twee is sterker as 'n enkeling.

Wag tot hy houtgerus is, dan bespring
jy hom asof jy met hom speel, en voor
hy hom kom kry, sal ek sy hart deurboor;
sorg jy dat jy hom ook toetakel met
jou dolk terwyl jul stoei uit pure pret;

en dan, my maat, het ons twee ewe veel,
want ons sal al die goud gelykop deel;
dan kan ons al ons bouse luste stil
en boonop dobbel net soveel ons wil.'

Dus gaan die twee oor die beplande moord
van daardie derde skobbejak akkoord.
Intussen het die jongste skelm op
sy pad om kos te haal, heelyd getob
oor die skoonheid van die nuwe blink floryne.

'Ag Here,' dag hy, 'was dit tog maar myne,
was ek alleen die eienaar daarvan,
dan was daar op Gods aarde nie 'n man
gelukkiger as ek nie!' Dus oplaas
het Satan hom dit in die oor geblaas
dat 'n gif te koop was wat dit moontlik maak
om van die ander twee ontslae te raak.

Die duiwel't volmag oor sy siel verkry
omdat hy so 'n bouse lewe lei,
want hy was vas van plan om sonder spoor
van skuldgevoel sy makkers te vermoor.

Met hierdie doel voor oë het hy hom
gehaas totdat hy by 'n apteker kom;
hy't hom vir een of ander gif gevra
geskik vir rotte wat hom vreeslik pla,
en vir 'n roofdier, volgens hy beweert het,
wat op die hoenders op sy werf geteer het;
dit was hoog tyd om af te reken met
dierasies wat hom snags geplunder het.

'Hier is 'n gifsoort,' antwoord die apteker,
'die Here hoor my, ek kan jou verseker,
dit is so dodelik, so virulent,
daar is geen aardse kreatuur bekend
wat nie die lewe sal verlaat terstond
kry hy 'n titsel hiervan in die mond;
al is dit minder as 'n koringgraan,
dis onvermydelik dat hy dood sal gaan,

en gouer as wat 'n mens 'n myl kan loop.'

Dié godverlate skobbejak die koop
'n dosie van die gif en draf daarmee
na iemand in 'n straat naby geleë.

870

Hy't drie groot fesse by die man geleen
en het die gif in twee gegooi, maar een
het hy apart gehou; uit hierdie fles
sou hy met al die swoeg sy dors kon les
vannag as hy die goud daar weg moet kry.

Die deugniet – mag die duiwel hom kasty –
met wyn het hy die fesse vol laat tap,
en toe't hy na sy maters teruggestap.

Maar waarom in besonderhede tree?

Presies soos hul beplan het, het die twee
toe ook gedoen, hom daar en dan vermoor,
en toe dit klaar was, stel een ewe voor:

880

'Kom sit en drink vol vreugde en jolyt;
ons kan hom later in 'n gat in smyt.'

En met dat hy dit sê, gebeur dit dat
hy juis 'n fles waarin die gif was vat.

Hy drink daaruit en gee dit vir sy maat,
en toe beswyk hul albei op die daad.

Daar's waarlik niks in die verhandeling
van Avicenna oor vergiftiging

890

wat ewe naer is as die pyn en nood
gely deur dié twee skurke met hul dood;
en dus het albei moordenaars en hul vrind
wat hul met gif wou moor, die dood gevind.

O allerskandelikste sondedaad!

O gruwel van moorddadige verraad!
van vraatsug, wellus, dobbel en gesweer,
godslastering wat Christus naam onteer
met ede uit gewoonte en hovaardy!

Helaas, o mens, hoe kan dit wees dat jy
so koud van hart is en so sonder trou
teenoor jou Heer en Heiland wat vir jou
gemaak en vrygekoop het deur Sy bloed?

900

En nou, geliefdes, mag God jul behoed
teen sonde en veral geldgierigheid.

My heil'ge aflaat baat vir wie bereid
is om 'n goue of silwer munt te bring,
of dalk 'n borsspeld, lepel, selfs 'n ring.

Buig julle hoofde voor die heil'ge bul!

Kom nader, liewe dames, en ek vul
jul name dadelik in op hierdie rol

910

van die gesaligdes as julle wol
ten offer bring; daartoe het ek gesag –
dan is jul skoon en rein soos op die dag
van jul geboorte. Dis my predikasie.

Mag Jesus tot jul sieleheil die grasia
aan jul verleen van sy vergiffenis,

want ek gee toe dat dit die beste is.

Net een ding verder: hierdie sak, my liewe
vriende, is vol relieke en aflaatbriewe, 920

so goed soos eniges in Engeland,
wat ek ontvang het uit die Pous se hand.
As iemand hier uit toewyding verlang
om iets te gee, kwytskelding te ontvang,
kan hy na vore tree, hier kniel voor my
om nederig my aflaat te verkry –
of koop een sommer vir die hele pad
wat julle kan hernu van stad tot stad,
solank daar ook voortdurende herhaling
van 'n goue of silwer munt is ter betaling. 930

Dit is vir almal hier 'n besondere eer
dat 'n aflaatkramer jul kan absolveer,
en dit so 'n bekwame ook, want as mens deur
die land rondry kan enigiets gebeur.
Wie weet, jou perd laat jou dalk in die steek
en jy beland op die grond, jou nek gebreek.
Kyk hoe voordelig is dit dat ek by
jul aangesluit het, saam met julle ry,
en byderhand is met vergiffenis
vir hoog of laag as jul op sterwe is. 940

Die Waard sal eerste aan die beurt moet kom:
die sonde het die grootste mag oor hom.
Tree vorentoe, Heer Waard, kom boete doen
en jy kan al my relikwieë soen
vir net 'n klein bedrag. Toe, waar's jou geld?'

'Nee, om die dood nie,' roep die Waard ontsteld.
'As ek dit doen, mag Christus my vervloek!
Kry jy jou sin dan soen ek jou ou broek
as een relikwie van die vroeë Kerk,
al dra dit nog jou agterent se merk! 950
Nou by die kruis van Sint Helena, sou
ek liever jou ballas in my hand wil hou
as al die relikwieë wat jy het;
sny hulle af en ek sal hul laat set
in 'n vark se drol.' Die Aflaatkramer staan
en staar hom sprakeloos van woede aan.

'Wel,' sê ons Waard, 'ek sal nie eens probeer
om met so 'n man soos jy die gek te skeer;
jy is waaragtig waar te liggeraak.'

Maar toe hy sien hoe almal hul vermaak,
het die goeie Ridder tussenbei gekom: 960
'Toe mense, dis genoeg. Los nou vir hom.
Heer Aflaatkramer, laat u woede staan,
en u, heer Waard, as goeie vriend vermaan
ek u: omhels mekaar en lê dit by;
heer Aflaatkramer, hou u nie opsy;
kom laat ons lag en skerts soos flussies nog.'

Daarna hervat ons toe ons pelgrimstog.

Fragment VII

DIE SKIPPER SE VERHAAL

In St Denis, ten noorde van Parys,
was daar 'n koopman, ryk en dus glo wys;
sy vrou was heelwat mooier as die meeste
en was gesellig en versot op feeste –
iets wat mens meer uit die sak uit jaag as al
die aandag wat hul dalk te beurt mag val
by hul partytjies met die valse skyn
van vriendelikheid, wat ewe gou verdwyn
as skadu's wat verbygaan op 'n muur,
maar die een wat moet betaal, bekom dit suur. 10

Al is dit om sy eie waardigheid
moet die man, die arme drommel, steeds bereid
wees om vir elke sieraad, elke rok,
waarin sy vrou kerjaker op te dok,
en as hy nie die geld het om te gee,
of dalk verseg om soveel te bestee
aan wat hy as uitspattigheid bejeën,
moet iemand anders instaan, en dié leen
miskien vir haar die geld – daar skuil gevaar.

Dié koopman was 'n groot huiseienaar 20
en baie gaste het hulself genooi,
want hy was gasvry en sy vrou was mooi.
Dit was iets wonderliks – maar hoor my uit.

Sy gaste het 'n monnik ingesluit;
hy was aantreklik en daarby voorbarig;
wat ouderdom betref, so dertigjarig.
Vanaf die eerste kennismaking al
was hulle vriende en het die monnik pal
besoek daar afgelê. Hy was so tuis
as net 'n vriend kan wees in 'n vriend se huis. 30

Geboortig uit dieselfde dorp het hul
gevoel dat hul meer rede het om gul
teenoor mekaar te wees, daarop te roem,
en die monnik het sy gasheer 'neef' genoem.
Dit het die koopman in sy skik laat lag,
so bly daaroor soos 'n voëltjie oor die dag.
Hy was verheug tot in sy hart se grond
oor hulle ewigdurende verbond;
en hul't mekaar die versekering gegee
hul vriendskapsband is lewenslank gesmee. 40

Dié broeder Jan het vrylik uitgedeel
as hy by hulle kuier, en deur veel
onkoste aan te gaan het hy genot
verskaf aan almal, van diensknegte tot
die huisheer self; ooreenkomstig hulle stand
het hulle elkeen uit sy milde hand
'n mooi toepaslike geskenk ontvang,

en daarom het hul na sy koms verlang
soos voëls wat uitsien na die daeraad;
maar dis genoeg – ons kan dit daarby laat. 50

Nou, op 'n dag begin die sakeman
sy voorbereidings tref, want hy beplan
om Brugge toe te reis, daartoe genoop
deurdat hy handelsware moet gaan koop,
en daarom is 'n boodskapper gelas
om na Parys te gaan, waar die klooster was,
en die monnik te verwittig dat hy gou
moes oorkom na die koopman en sy vrou 60
'n dag of twee lank voor die sakereis.

Die edele monnik na wie ek hier verwys
kon van die klooster weggaan enige tyd,
nie net vanweë sy omsigtigheid;
die verpligting is ook aan hom toevertrou
om toesig oor hul plaasopbrengs te hou;
dus kon hy hom na St Denis begeef.
Wie ooit so welkom as ons liewe neef,
die broeder Jan met al sy hofgebruike.
Oudergewoonte bring hy saam twee kruike, 70
een vol vernasie, een vol malvesy,¹
met verder voëlwild vir die pot daarby.
Ek los hul om plesier en kos en drank
so saam-saam te geniet twee dae lank.

Die derde dag het die koopman opgestaan
met die wete dat hy volle aandag aan
sy werk moet wy. Hy's boontoe met die trap
na sy kantoor ten einde rekenskap
te doen van hoedat sy finansies staan,
uitgawes vir die jaar goed na te gaan, 80
en te sien hoe's dit met sy profyt gesteld.

Sy baie boeke en sy sakke geld
lê voor hom op die tafel byderhand,
want hy was ryk aan bates en kontant
en daarom sluit hy sy kantoor se deur,
want hy wou nie hê dat enigeen hom steur
terwyl hy aan sy rekenings werk, en dit
het hom tot priemtyd oor was daar laat sit.

Ook broeder Jan was vroeg al uit die bed;
hy't in die tuin gaan stap en prewelend het 90
hy daar sy godsdiensoefening gehou.
En na die tuin kom ook die goeie vrou;
ligvoets loop sy en toe sy naby kom,
soos baie maal tevore, groet sy hom.

Daar was 'n meisie by haar, 'n skone kind,
wat onderworpe was aan haar bewind
en wat sy daarom nog voor stok kon kry.
'My liewe heer, my goeie neef,' sê sy,

1 Italiaanse wyn, een rooi, die ander wit.

'wat skort dat jy al op is, dit so vroeg?'
 Hy antwoord: 'Niggie, vyf uur is genoeg 100
 vir enigeen om om te slaap in 'n nag,
 tensy ons praat van iemand sonder krag,
 soos 'n getroude man wat lê en bewe
 soos 'n opgejaagde haas van honde omgewe
 en te paniekbevange om weg te breek.
 Maar, liewe niggie, waarom's jy so bleek?
 Dit lyk my daardie goeie man van jou
 het so met jou gewerskaf dat jy nou
 behoefte daaraan het om te gaan lê.'
 Hy't uitgebars van die lag toe hy dit sê, 110
 maar het ook gebloos by dié gewaagde idee.
 Die skone vroutjie skud haar kop van nee;
 'Die Here weet, my liewe neef,' sê sy,
 'dis glad nie hoedat sake staan met my.
 Voor God, die gewer van my siel en vlees,
 daar kan g'n vrou in die ganse Frankryk wees
 met minder behae in dié sottespel.
 "Helaas" roep, ween en weeklaag kan ek wel
 dat ek ooit gebore is, maar tog is daar
 niemand aan wie ek my kan openbaar. 120
 Miskien moet ek na 'n ander land toe gaan
 of dalk my hand aan eie lewe slaan;
 ek's so verwar en heeltemal van stryk.'
 Die monnik het die vrou stip aangekyk.
 'Helaas, my nig,' sê hy, 'mag God verhoed
 dat jy jou as gevolg van 'n swaar gemoed
 om die lewe bring. Sê my wat jou ontstig;
 miskien kan ek jou leed en pyn verlig
 met raad of hulp; so deel my alles mee,
 want dit sal mos geheim bly tussen ons twee. 130
 Op my brevier² sweer ek 'n eed aan jou
 dat niks wat jy aan my mag toevertrou
 aan 'n ander oorvertel sal word deur my.'
 'Ek wil dieselfde eed aflê,' sê sy.
 'Al sou hul my verskeur, dit sweer ek hier
 voor God aan jou, dit ook op jou brevier,
 al sou ek daarvoor in die hel moet vaar,
 dat ek geen woord sal openbaar,
 nie omdat ek familie is van jou,
 maar oor jy 'n vriend is en ek jou vertrou.' 140
 Hul't dit gesweer en toe mekaar gekus
 en oor en weer gebieg na hartelus.
 'Had ek,' het sy gesê, 'voldoende tyd –
 maar dit ontbreek my nou hier voor ontbyt –
 sou ek kon vertel die storie van die lewe
 wat ek gelei het van ek my begewe
 het in die eg – al gaan dit oor jou neef.'

2 Priester se gebedeboek

'Nee,' sê die monnik, 'so die Here leef,
 hy's net so min my neef as hierdie blaar
 wat jy aan die boom sien hang. Ek sê dit maar, 150
 by St Denis, die skutspatroom van die Franse,
 want dit beteken daar is veel meer kanse
 dat ek gereeld vir jou te siene kry,
 want jy's die allerliefste vrou vir my.
 Dit sweer ek op my monnikswyding nou.
 Vertel my wat jou pla, maar maak net gou;
 as jou man na onder kom, is ons kans verby.'

'My soetste lief, my broeder Jan,' sê sy,
 'ek wens dat ek dit eerder kon verbloem,
 maar dit help eenvoudig niks, ek moet dit noem: 160
 vanaf die aarde se grondlegging aan
 was daar nog nooit 'n vrou met 'n slegter man.
 As vrou is ek mos nie veronderstel
 om ander oor ons huwelik te vertel –
 wat in die bed gebeur of waar ook al.
 God gee dat ek geen woord daarvoor laat val.
 Hul sê 'n vrou moet stilbly oor haar heer,
 want wat sy sê kan dalk vir hom kleiner,
 maar een ding kan ek darem by jou bieg: 170
 dié man van my tel minder as 'n vlieg
 wat my betref, en dis sy suinigheid
 wat ek hom, God weet, die meeste moet verwyf.
 Dit lê mos in die aard van ons geslag
 dat ons ses dinge van 'n man verwag:
 benewens intelligent en onbevrees,
 moet hy ook welaf en vrygewig wees,
 onderdanig aan sy vrou en fiks te bed.
 Kyk, by die Heer, gestorwe om ons te red,
 nou Sondag moet ek 'n honderd frank teruggee
 wat ek gebruik het om my mooi te klee 180
 ter wille van my man, of ek's verlore.
 Dit sou vir my beter wees was ek ongebore
 as dat ek skande moet verduur daarom,
 en as my man hiervan te wete kom,
 dan's ek in die sop; so leen my dié bedrag,
 of daar sal groot probleme op my wag.
 My broeder Jan, leen my 'n honderd frank
 en ek sal nie tekort skiet in my dank;
 en as jy my behulpsaam is hiermee,
 sal ek, as dit tyd is om dit terug te gee, 190
 jou graag vergoed op enige manier
 wat jy bedink wat strek tot jou plesier.
 Die Here straf my as ek dit nie doen
 so swaar soos die verraaiër Ganeloen.'

Die grasiëuse monnik antwoord haar:
 'My liewe vrou, ek het begrip voorwaar
 vir die penarie waarin jy verkeer
 en dus beloof ek, op my woord van eer,

net sodra jou man in Vlaandere is,
 verlos ek jou uit die bekommernis, 200
 want ek sal terugkom met 'n honderd frank.'
 En met dit gryp hy haar toe aan die flank.
 Hul't styf omhels en oor en weer gesoen;
 toe sê hy: 'Gaan nou stilletjies en doen
 als wat jy hoef te doen vir ons ontbyt,
 want volgens my uurwyser³ is dit tyd.
 So, weg is jy – en wees getrou aan my.'
 'Die Here gee dat ek mag wees,' sê sy.
 So vrolik soos 'n ekster gaan die vrou
 na die kombuis, beveel die koks, 'Maak gou. 210
 Toe, kom nou. Sit 'n ete vir ons voor';
 toe boontoe na haar man in sy kantoor
 en klop daar aan, steeds ewe opgewek.
Qui là? roep hy. 'By Petrus,' sê sy, 'ek.
 Wanneer kom jy eet? Hoe lank gaan jy
 nog sit en sukkel met optellery,
 met boekhou en met soortgelyke dinge?
 Dis duiwelswerk al hierdie rekeninge.
 Het jy dan nie genoeg van God gekry?
 Kom ondertoe en sit jou geld opsy. 220
 Skaam jy jou nie om broeder Jan te los;
 hy moet maar sien kom klaar so sonder kos?
 Laat ons 'n Mis aanhoor en dan gaan eet.'
 'Nee, vrou,' het hy gesê hy, 'jy dien te weet
 hoe ingewikkeld handelsake is.
 By God en by Sint Ivo, daar's gewis
 skaars twee uit twaalf wat hul welvarendheid
 in stand kan hou tot hulle aftreetyd.
 Ons moet ons vrolik voordoën, die skyn bewaar,
 ons sake altyd dighou, omdat daar 230
 geen ander uitweg is behalwe om
 met vakansie van skuldeisers weg te kom;
 dan gee ons haastig pad en moet ons van
 'n pelgrimsreis gebruik maak om te ontspan,
 Daarom is dit nodig dat ek met
 omsigtigheid op als wat aangaan let,
 want ons kan nooit onsekerheid ontsnap;
 dis die essensie van ons koopmanskap.
 Na Vlaandere moet ek môreoggend dan
 en ek sal terugkom net so gou ek kan; 240
 ek vra dat jy intussen, liewe vrou,
 jou teenoor almal onderdanig hou.
 Wees maar versigtig met ons eiendom;
 as jy goed huishou, hoort jy uit te kom
 met wat jy het, mits jy jou net nie aan
 spandabele gedrag te buite gaan;
 aan kos en klere het jy geen gebrek

3 Klein sonwyser wat aan die pols gedra kon word.

en jy't geld genoeg om onkoste te dek.'

En met dit sluit hy sy kantoor se deur
en gaan hy ondertoe sonder gesleur.

250

Hul't gou 'n Mis gehoor; toe inderhaas
neem hulle vir die oggendete plaas
en, ondanks die gejaagdheid van die maal,
is die monnik met groot gasvryheid onthaal.

Na ete sit broer Jan sy arm om
die koopman vir 'n woord opsy met hom.
'Ou neef, jy gaan na Brugge toe; dis goed.
Mag God jou op die pad daarheen behoed,
Sint Augustinus jou ook leiding gee.

260

'n Matige dieet's 'n goeie idee
wanneer 'n mens op reis is, des te meer
as jy te kampe het met warm weer.
Die hegte vriendskap tussen ons bring mee
dat ek jou heel vrymoedig raad kan gee,
en as daar dalk iets is, groot of gering,
wat ek kan doen om jou plesier te bring,
by dag of nag, wat in my mag sou lê,
dan doen ek dit, presies net soos jy sê.

Net een ding egter, voor jy gaan op reis:
daar is 'n guns wat jy my kan bewys.

270

Leen my 'n honderd frank 'n week of twee.
Ek het dit nodig om 'n paar stuks vee
te koop vir 'n boerd'ry wat aan ons behoort –
hoe wens ek dit was joune, op my woord!
As die termyn verstryk, dan sal ek sonder faal
die som onmiddellik aan jou terugbetaal.
Ons kan dit alles dig hou, wil ek hoop,
want ek moet nog vanaand die vee gaan koop.
My liewe neef, vaarwel en hartlik dank
vir jou gasvryheid betoon met spys en drank.'

280

En hierop het die goeie handelsman
aldus geantwoord: 'Liewe neef, broer Jan,
wat jy versoek het, is 'n kleinigheid;
my geld en ware sonder onderskeid
is alles joune; neem wat ek jou bied;
ek wil nie hê dat jy te kort moet skiet.

Net een ding – jy verstaan tog goed genoeg:
vir sakelui is hulle geld 'n ploeg.

As hulle geld het, kan hul nog meer kry;
daarsonder is die lewe 'n sukkelary.

290

Gee dit dus terug so gou as wat jy kan,
maar wees verseker, ek gun jou dit tot dan.'

Die koopman het die geld gou bo gaan haal
en stil-stil aan die monnik oorbetal;
so niemand op dees aarde wis daarvan,
buiten die koopman self en broeder Jan;
en hul't gesellig saam verkeer totdat
die monnik na sy klooster koers moes vat.

Die dag daarna het die koopman in die pad
geval na Vlaandere met 'n leerknapp wat 300
as gids gedien het. Hul't welgemoed
in Brugge aangekom waar hy met spoed
sake kon doen, goed koop en lenings kry,
maar hom nie gesteur aan dans of dobbelary.
In elke opsig het hy, kort en klaar,
soos 'n koopman opgetree. Ek laat dit daar.

Die Sondag ná die koopman weg is van
sy huis af kom die monnik, broeder Jan,
daar aan met vars geskeerde baard en kroon,
en nie 'n enkele dienskneg wat daar woon 310
was nie verheug oor dié besoeker wat
nou weer na hul gekom het uit die stad;
en, kort te gaan, het hy en die goeie vrou
geredelik ooreengekom sy sou
op die naat van haar rug lê vir die honderd frank
in broeder Jan se omhelsing heelnag lank.
Nouliks gesê of dis dan ook gedaan,
en dit het heelnag heerlijk dol gegaan.
Die dag daarna maak hy hom uit die voet
met 'n flink en opgewekte afskeidsgroet, 320
want niemand in die huis of in die stad
het die minste agterdog teen hom gehad.
Hy't na sy klooster of waar ook al gegaan,
en daar kan ek die vent vir eers laat staan.

Die jaarmark op 'n end, kon die koopman weer
na St Denis en na sy huis toe keer;
sy tuiskoms is gevier, maar hy't berig
die pryse was so hoog dat hy verplig
was om gebruik te maak van 'n skuldbewys
vir twintig duisend krone; dit vereis 330
dat hy om dié bedrag te dek nou na
Parys moes gaan om vriende daar te vra
dat hul hom franke leen, benewens dit
wat hy met hom saam kon neem uit eie besit.

Toe die koopman aangekom het in Parys
het hy uit vriendskap en as eerbewys
onmiddellik na broeder Jan gegaan.
Sy doel was geensins om vir 'n lening aan
te klop of terugbetaling van sy geld,
maar om te vra hoe's dit met hom gesteld 340
en self te sien, en hom ook mee te deel
oor sy handelsreis, soos vriende in die reël
geneig is om te doen as hul ontmoet.
Die monnik het hom gul en bly gegroet;
met vreugde het hy gehoor hoe gunstig sy
transaksies was, sy goederekopery;
nou was hy aangewese op krediet
voordat hy weer gemoedrus kon geniet.

Toe antwoord broeder Jan: 'Ek's bly jy's terug

met so 'n geslaagde sending agter die rug, 350
en as ek ryk was, sou ek sonder faal
twintig duisend krone aan jou betaal,
want dit was sommer nou die dag dat jy
so vriendelik was om geld te leen aan my –
ek kan jou nie genoeg daarvoor bedank;
maar ek het daardie einste honderd frank
by jou huis en ten aanskoue van jou vrou
op die tafel neergesit. Sy sal onthou,
of ek sal haar geheue moet verfris.
Maar nou moet jy my tog verskoon; ek is 360
nou haastig, want ons ab het my bevel
gegee ek moet hom êrens vergesel.
Sê groete aan mevrou, my niggie soet,
en totsiens, neef, totdat ons weer ontmoet.¹

Die koopman, wat omsigtig was en wys,
het krediet bekom en met kontant in Parys
die Lombarde⁴ afbetaal, en so het hy
sy skulderkentnis van hul teruggekry.
Vandaar na huis, so bly soos 'n papegaai,
want hy't geweet sy sake staan nou fraai: 370
op hierdie reis, sy onkostas ten spyt,
kon hy reken op 'n duisend frank profyt.

Soos altyd het sy vrou hom by die hek
reeds ingewag, sy was so opgewek,
en hul't die nag verkwansel in jolyt,
want hy was ryk en al sy skulde kwyt.

Met dagbreek het die koopman weer van voor
sy vrou omhels, met soene haas versmoor,
haar met hernude krag te lyf gegaan,
totdat sy roep, 'Dis nou genoeg! Laat staan!' 380
Maar sy het nogtans lustig saam baljaar.
Toe hulle klaarkry, het die koopman haar
aldus berispe: 'Kyk, my liewe vrou,
jy moet dit weet: ek's nogal kwaad vir jou
en weet jy waarom? Laat ek jou vertel:
in groot verleentheid het jy my gestel
by broeder Jan, wat tog nie reg is.
Jy moes vir my gesê het, voor ek weg is,
hy het die honderd frank vir jou gegee –
nogal kontant. Hy was bra ongeneë 390
toe ek die kwessie van krediet met hom
bespreek. Ek kon dit dadelik agterkom
aan sy gesig, al was ek nie van plan
om enigiets te vra van broeder Jan.
Ek moet jou mooi versoek dat jy nooit weer
soiets gaan doen nie, want as ek 'n keer
van die huis af weg is en 'n skuldenaar

4 Die grootste deel van die Europese geldhandel is deur die Lombarde van Italië behartig.

betaal sy skulde, dan loop ek gevaar
dat ek hom aanspreek oor vereffening.’

Sy vrou, geensins verleë of van stryk gebring, 400

het pront geantwoord: ‘Watter leuenaar is
dié broeder Jan, dié neef van jou, gewis.

Wat neuk die kêrel, die ellendeling –
hy wil dit my nou glo te binne bring.

Nou goed en wel, hy het my geld gegee,
maar ek dag dat die bedoeling was daarmee
dat ek my mooi maak, want op dié manier
bevorder hy jou eer en my plesier;

ons het hom immers hier al menigmaal
ter wille van verwantskap gul onthaal. 410

Maar as ek in die dikkedensie⁵ is,
kan ek jou nou van een ding vergewis:

as ek jou skuld, dan is dit tot jou baat;
vir die betaalslag is ek steeds paraat,
so bietjies-bietjies elke dag, en as
ek faal, dan kom jou kerfstok snags te pas,
want skuld maak mos belofte in dié geval.

Die geld’s bestee aan klere – dit is al;
ek het dit nie verkwis nie, by die Heer,
maar goed gebruik, alleenlik tot jou eer. 420

So los jou knorrigheid in God se naam
en kom ons lag en speel ’n bietjie saam;
ek bied jou aan ’n lyfie jonk en mooi;
al plek wat ek betaal, is in die kooi!

Vergeef dit my, my eie mannelief,
en draai ’n slaggie om; wees nie so stief.’

Die koopman het gou ingesien dat dit
hom net mooi niks help om op haar te vit;
gedane sake het geen keer gehad.

‘Nou toe dan, ek vergewe jou, my skat, 430
maar wees tog meer versigtig met my geld
en minder op uitspattigheid gesteld.’

My storie’s uit. Solank die lewe hou,
mag ons op dié ou kerfstok bly vertrou.

Woorde van die Waard aan die Skipper en die Prioeres

“Puik!” roep die Waard, “By *corpus Dominus*,
mag jy nog baie seil al langs die kus,
maar jou monnik, goeie Skeepskaptein, mag hy
sommer ’n duisend slegte jare ly.

Dis nou voorwaar ’n grap; ek wil dit hê:
dié kerkman het die koopman uitoorlê, 440
en nie net hom nie, hom en sy vrou.

Mens moet ’n monnik uit jou huis uit hou.

⁵ In die moeilikheid.

Maar dis tot daarna toe. Nou moet ons bepaal wie aan die beurt kom om ons te onthaal.”

Toe ewe outyds soos ’n maagd het hy sy aandag aan die Prioeres gewy:

“Met u verlof, mevrou, wil ek dit waag om u te vra of dit u sal behaag om nou aan die beurt te kom, iets te vertel, mits dit, natuurlik, u nie sal ontstel.”

“Met graagte,” het die Prioeres laat hoor, en toe dra sy die volgende storie voor.

450

Proloog tot die Prioeres se verhaal

O, Heer, ons Heer, hoe lieflik is u roem
in hierdie ganse aarde rond versprei,
want, nie net word u grote lof genoem
deur die man van hoë aansien nie, sê sy,
maar U't dit ook uit kindermond berei,
dat selfs die baba wat die bors nog suig,
partymaal van u heerlikheid getuig.

Derhalwe sal ek my beywer om,
na my vermoë, iets te sê geskik
tot eer van U en die wit lelieblom
wat U gebaar het, ewig maagdelik;
nie dat ek na haar meerdere eer wil mik,
want sy is eer en (naas haar Seun) altyd
die bron van guns en van ons saligheid.

460

O Moedermaagd, wat altyd maagd sal wees!
O bos wat brand voor Moses, onverteer!
wat deur u nederigheid die Heil'ge Gees
na ons gebring het, dalend van die Heer,
deur wie se krag u hart geillumineer,
ontvange is die Wysheid van die Vader,
mag my verhaal u waardigheid benader.

470

O Liewe Vrou, geen tong kan dit vermag
om aan u mildheid reg te laat geskied,
u luister, diepe nederigheid en krag.
Want somtyds, voordat ons nog tot u bid,
is u reeds daar en bewerkstellig dit
dat ons deur u gebede lig verkry
om ons tot by u liewe Seun te lei.

480

Te swak is my vermoë, Koningin,
om u groot waardigheid te kan verklaar –
my kragte is vir so 'n las te min;
dit gaan met my soos met 'n kind wat maar
twaalf maande oud is, nog 'n stotteraar,
en daarom bid ek dat u aan die lied
wat ek van u gaan sing, self leiding bied.

DIE PRIORES SE VERHAAL⁶

Daar was te midde van 'n Christenstad
in Asië 'n Jodebuurt, maar net
in stand gehou deur die landheerser wat
hul vuil gewoeker wou benuttig het, 490
al was dit ook die gruwelikste smet;
en deur die strate kon mens vrylik gaan,
want hul't weerskante onversper gestaan.

'n Skooltjie was daar aan die verste kant
van hierdie Jodebuurt geleë, waar
Christenkinders skoolgegaan het, want
dit bied hul onderrig van jaar tot jaar
in lesse wat gebruiklik was aldaar,
met ander woorde leer hul lees en sang, 500
na kinderjare se gewone gang.

Onder die kinders was 'n knaap van sewe,
'n jong skoliertjie, seun van 'n weduwee.
Hy het hom daagliks na die skool begewe,
en kom hy 'n beeld van Christus Moeder teë,
dan neem hy op sy weg geen verder tree,
maar kniel daar neer en sê, soos hy geleer is,
Ave Maria,⁷ waardeur sy vereer is.

Dus het die weduwee haar seun gemaan
om Christus dierb're Moeder, ons Liewe Vrou,
altyd te aanbid. Dit het hom nooit ontgaan, 510
want in sy onskuld leer 'n kind iets gou.
Maar altyd as ek hieraan dink, onthou
ek hoe Sint Niclaas⁸ ook van kleins af net
in lof van Christus hom verlustig het.

Terwyl die kind so met sy leesboek sit
daar in die skool, het hy die klank gehoor
van *Alma Redemptoris*⁹ omdat dit
ge oefen word deur kinders in die koor.
Hy kruip so na as wat hy durf en voor 520
te danig lank het hy die wysie en
die woorde van die eerste vers geken.

6 Hierdie vroom verhaal is vol van die rassehaat teen die Jode wat die Middeleeuse Christendom gekenmerk het. Hulle is afgesonder in Jodebuurte (ghetto's), swaar belas, vervolgd, vermoor en toe, byna 'n eeu voor Chaucer se tyd deur Eduard I uit Engeland verdryf (en eers weer deur Cromwell toegelaat om terug te keer). Hierdie optrede is op godsdienstige gronde geregverdig: die Jode was, volgens die destydse algemene opvatting, nie net vir Jesus se dood verantwoordelik nie, maar sou ook Christenkinders ontvoer en vermoor het. Chaucer het bes moontlik nie self Jode geken nie. As hy 'n onskuldige verteller was, is ons post-Holocaust nie meer onskuldige toehoorders nie.

7 Wees gegroet, Maria; die bekendste loflied aan die Maagd.

8 St Nicolaas van Myra, beskermheilige van kinders en toonbeeld van goedhartigheid; vervorm tot Sinterklaas wat in Amerika Santa Claus geword het..

9 O, liefderyke Moeder van die Verlosser, 'n liturgiese gesang.

Hy was so jonk en onervare nog
dat hy geen sin uit die Latyn kon haal,
maar hy't 'n vriend eendag gesmeek om tog
vir hom die lied se woorde te vertaal,
want hulle sing dit dan so baie maal.
Hy het aanhoudend by hom aangedring
op blote knieë om verduideliking.

Toe sê sy vriend wat ouer was as hy:
'Sover ek weet op ander se gesag,
is dit ons edele Liewe Vrou gewy
om haar te loof en om te bid vir krag
en vir haar bystand op ons sterwensdag.
Dit is ook al wat ek weet daaromtrent –
ek leer musiek; Latyn's my onbekend.'

530

Die bloedjie vra: 'En is die lied tot eer
van Christus Moeder opgestel? Dan sal
ek werklik waar my uiterste probeer
om dit voor Kersdag nog geheel en al
te ken, al sou hul my dalk skel en pal
ook slaan omdat my leeswerk nog nie klaar is.
Ek sal dit leer, daar dit tot die lof van haar is.'

540

Sy maat het dit toe stilletjies op weg
van skool van dag tot dag vir hom geleer
tot hy dit ken en vol vertrouwe reg
van die begin tot einde nootvas, teer
kon sing met skool toe gaan en huiswaarts keer.
Dus klink dit deur sy keel twee maal per dag,
want hy het Christus Moeder hooggeag.

550

Die seuntjie het, soos ek gesê het al,
terwyl hy deur die Jodebuurt se strate
geloop het, dit gesing en uitgeskal:
'O, *Alma Redemptoris*,' uitgelate,
want Christus Moeder het in so 'n mate
met soetheid reeds sy hart deurboor dat hy
haar lof nie agterweë kon laat bly.

Satan, die slang, ons eerste vyand wat
sy wespenes in Jodeharte bou,
roep uit gebelg: 'Helaas, o Jode, dat
jul so iets as betaamlik kan beskou!
Dié kind loop rond net waar hy wil en hou
jul vir 'n bespotting, want wat hy daar sing
is vir jul godsdiens 'n belediging.'

560

Van toe af het die Jode saamgespan,
want hul't die stomme kind se dood verlang;
hul het 'n moordenaar gehuur, 'n man
wat hom verskuil het in 'n donker gang.
En toe die kind daarlangs verbykom, vang
die lae Jood hom stewig, sny verblyd
sy keel; en het hom toe in 'n put gesmyt.

570

'n Kleinhuisie se sinkput was dit waar
die Jode hulle derms gaan ontlas.
Vervloekte volk Herodesse, spruit daar
dan voordeel daaruit dat jul nydig was?
want 'Moord bly nie verborge', dit staan vas,
veral waar God Sy meerdere eer beoog.
Bloed roep oor jul vervloekte daad omhoog.

O martelaar, verseël tot maagdelikheid!
(het die Piores gesê) nou kan jy sing
en die wit Hemellam volg deurentyd,
van wie Johannes toe hy 'n banneling
op Patmos was, geskryf het: 'Almal bring
Hom lof van nuwe liederes toe as rein
van liggaam hulle voor dié Lam verskyn.'

580

Die arme weduwee bly op en wag
vir haar klein kindjie, maar hy't nie gekom.
En dus het sy, met aanbreek van die dag,
met bleek gesig vol vrees en samedrom
van kwelgedagtes, gaan op soek na hom,
totdat sy eind'lik uitgevind het dat
hy laas gesien is in die Jodestad.

590

Met moedersmart wat brand het sy gegaan
en soos een half verwese na haar kind
gesoek in elke plek waar sy die waan
gekoester het dat sy hom dalk sou vind,
en Christus Moeder teer en welgesind
steeds aangeroop. En toe oplaas het sy
probeer om hom onder die Jodevolk te kry.

Erbarmlik het sy elke Jood wat sy
daar raakgeloop het, so gesmeek, gebid
om tog te sê, is hy daarlangs verby?
Hul antwoord, 'Nee'. Na 'n rukkiet Jesus dit
uit sy genade in haar kop gesit,
juis toe sy naby aan die sinkput kom,
waar hy gegooi is, om te roep na hom.

600

O God Almagtig, wie se lof verklaar
word deur onskuldiges, ons sien U mag
hierin dat dié robyn, dié martelaar,

610

en edelsteen van kuisheid, dié smarag,
waar hy daar lê met keel gesny die dag
luid *Alma Redemptoris* begin sing het,
sodat dit deur die hele plek gedring het.

Die Christene het almal saamgedrom
om voor die wonderwerk verbaas te staan,
en gou het hulle die provoos¹⁰ laat kom,
en hy het onverwyld daarheen gegaan.
Hy het aan Christus, Hemelvors, en aan
sy Moeder, Glorie van die mensdom, eer
gebring, en toe die Jode aan laat keer.

620

Met roerende gejammer neem en dra
hul toe die kind wat steeds sy lied bly sing
en het hom in plegtige prosesie na
'n munster¹¹ wat daar naby was, gebring.
Die mense kon sy moeder nouliks dwing
om van die baar te skei, waar sy maar pal,
'n tweede Ragel, in 'n floute val.

Toe't die provoos onmiddellik elke Jood
wat medepligtig was aan daardie daad
gestraf met foltering en skandedood,
want hy't nie sulke boosheid toegelaat;
'Aan boosheid word gemeet gelyke maat.'
Dat hul gehang moes word, het hy beveel,
ná wilde perde hul eers vierendeel.

630

Intussen lê die kind voor die altaar
terwyl die ab en monnike die Mis
gesing het, maar toe hulle daarmee klaar
was, wou hul haastig die begrafenis
voltrek, dog toe die kind besprinkel is,
word hy bewus van die gewyde water
en sing 'O, *Alma Redemptoris Mater*.'

640

Die ab (soos alle monnike óf is
óf hóórt te wees), 'n toegewyde heer,
smeek toe die kind om 'n belydenis
en sê: 'O liewe kindjie, ek besweer
jou by die Heilige Drie-eenheid, leer
my hoedat jy nog aan die sing kan bly
al is jou keel oënskynlik afgesny.'

'My nek is tot die nekbeen afgesny,
en volgens elke wet van die natuur
behoort ek lankal dood te wees,' sê hy,
'maar Jesus Christus, staan daar in Skriftuur,

650

10 Persoon wat met die handhawing van orde belas is; magistraat.
11 Kloosterkerk.

het dit beskik dat sy lof voort sal duur,
en tot sy Moeder se verheerliking
kan ek dié lofsang luid en helder sing.

Na my vermoë het ek altyd die Bron
van goedheid, Christus Moeder soet, gemin,
en toe ek heen moes gaan, het sy gekom
en my dit opgedra dat ek ook in
my sterwensuur nog hierdie lied moet sing;
en toe ek aan haar wens voldoen, voel dit
asof sy op my tong 'n pêrel¹² sit.

660

Dus sing ek, soos ek moet, die lofsang wat
die goeie en geseënde Maagd vereer,
tot een die pêrel van my tong af vat;
want sy het my daarná aldus geleer:
“My kindjie, ek sal jou kom haal wanneer
dié pêrel van jou tong geneem is. Raak nie
onrustig, want ek sal jou nie versaak nie”.

Die heil'ge ab het vorentoe getree,
hy trek sy tong uit, vat die pêrel heen;
en sagkens het die kind die gees gegee.
En toe die ab die wonder sien, toe ween
hy dat sy trane biggel soos die reën,
en hy het neergeval net waar hy was
en stil gelê, asof gebonde vas.

670

Die monnike ootmoedig hul ook daar,
prys Christus Liewe Moeder en hul ween;
toe staan hul op en dra die martelaar
vanaf die baar waar hy gelê het heen
en in 'n graf van reinwit marmarsteen
sluit hul sy liggaampie. Mag ons ook kom
waar hy nou is om daar te wees met hom.

680

O jonge Huig van Lincoln,¹³ wat ook deur
vervloekte Jode doodgemaak is, soos
bekend is (dit het onlangs nog gebeur),
bid u ook vir ons mense swak en boos,
dat God in sy genade eindeloos,
oor ons genade mag vermenigvuldig,
slegs om Maria Moedermaagd te huldig.

690

Amen.

12 Die presiese betekenis is onduidelik: 'n graankorrel, 'n saadhuisie soos kardamom as reiniger of keelmiddel,
'n kraaltjie van 'n rosekrans of 'n pêrel wat die Maagd simboliseer.

13 Volgens legende is hy in 1255 deur Jode vermoor.

Die Waard se opgeruimde woorde aan Chaucer

Toe ons na dié verhaal geluister het,
het ons 'n hele ruk lank stil gebly,
maar toe begin die Waard weer met sy pret
en kyk hy vir die eerste maal na my;
hy spreek my aan met: "Hoeke man is jy?
Dink jy miskien jou perd sal 'n haas opjaag
en ry jy daarom met jou oë omlaag?"

Kom nader en wees 'n slaggie opgewek.
Gee hom plek, menere, laat ons hom beskou:
Hy's net so stewig in die lyf as ek;
dis nou die soort van pop wat elke vrou
dolgraag in haar omhelsing wil omvou!
Daar is 'n trek van die elf aan sy gelaat,
en dit is hoekom hy met niemand praat.

700

Maar nou is dit jou beurt om weg te val
met 'n storie, liefs een wat ons amuseer."
Ek sê: "Verkwalik my dit nie, maar al
waaraan ek nou kan dink is 'n rym geleer
toe ek jonk was; kan ek dit maar resiteer?"
"Dis goed," sê hy, "dra dit maar vir ons voor.
Ek kan sommer sien ons gaan iets kosteliks hoor."

710

CHAUCER SE VERHAAL VAN HEER TOPAAS¹

Kom luister toe met al jul mag,
op troos of op plesier bedag,
na 'n vrolike relaas
aangaande 'n ridder goed en sag
in toernament sowel as slag –
sy naam was heer Topaas.

Hy is gebore in die land
van Vlaandere ver anderkant
die see, te Popering.
Sy vader was van hoë stand,
hy was die vors van daardie land
deur God se ordening.

720

Sy aangesig was sonder plooi,
en sy gelaatskleur bleek soos strooi,
sy lippe soos granaat,
sy wange was skarlakenrooi

¹ 'n Parodie van die metriese romanse, die ontspanningslektuur van die veertiende eeu.

en verder was sy neus ook mooi –
dis die waarheid wat ek praat.

Sy baard en hare van saffraan²
golf byna tot sy gordel aan;
in Brugge is sy broek gekoop;
sy stewels was van kordewaan,³
sy kleed was fyn en ek verstaan
dit kos 'n hele hoop.

730

Hy't die gevreesde hert ge jag
en ander wild ook ingewag,
'n hawik op sy hand;
sy boogskiet was 'n ware prag
en hy't as stoeier veel vermag⁴
dwarsdeur die hele land.

740

So baie vroue het gekwyn
alleen by nag van minnepyn
(Wat maak hul uit die bed?)
maar hy was altyd kuis en rein
en soeter as 'n braam wat klein
en donker bessies het.

Eendag het dit so uitgeval –
ek stel dit helder soos kristal –
dat heer Topaas wou ry.
Hy kry sy skimmel uit die stal
en spring daarop met lans en al,
'n langswaard aan sy sy.

750

Hy't deur die skone bos gery –
daarin is baie wild te kry:
die ree en haas is daar.
Terwyl hy hulle spore sny,
was daar 'n nare ding wat hy
so byna wederveraar.

Die kruie het daar ruig gestaan,
soos soethout en valeriaan,
asook grasangelier,
muskaat⁵ wat in 'n koffer gaan
en verder staan dit almal aan
in vars of verskaalde bier.

760

2 'n Plant waarvan geel kleurstof gemaak word.

3 Sagte Spaanse leer.

4 Die hoër klasse het met valke ge jag; die gebruik van pyl en boog was tot die lae stand beperk; en stoei was beslis nie 'n ridderlike tydverdryf nie.

5 Neut wat as spesery gebruik word.

Die voëltjies sing daar twiet-twiet-twiet,
die sperwer en die klein parkiet –
dis 'n vreugde om aan te hoor –
die lyster dié sing ook sy lied,
asook die bosduif op 'n spriet –
'n helder, luide koor.

770

Hy raak daar in 'n duiseling
toe hy die lyster so hoor sing,
hy ry soos een verwoed.
Sy perd het hy so voortgedwing
dat mens sy flanke uit kon wring,
hul was die ene bloed.

Oor heer Topaas nou doodmoeg was
van die gery oor sagte gras,
so kragtig en so stoer,
staak hy vir eers sy snelle pas
en hy verlig sy perd se las
en gee hom 'n bietjie voer.

780

'Moeder Maria, staan my by.
Wat laat die liefde my so ly?
Dit behandel my te wreed.
Ek droom die heelnag lank,' sê hy,
'dat 'n elwekoningin hier by my
kom inkruip onder my kleed.

Haar sal ek liefhê, want gewis
g'n vrou in die wye wêreld is
so geskik vir my om te min
soos sy;
in ander vroue't ek geen sin,
ek gaan soek die elwekoningin;
oor berg en dal sal ek ry.'

790

Toe spring hy in die saal meteen
en hy't gejaag oor stok en steen
ter wille van haar hand,
en hy is later so ver heen,
hy het op 'n verlate veen
oplaas die feëland
gevind.
In daardie land was daar nie een
wat onse dapper ridder teen
sou staan nie, vrou of kind.

800

Totdat 'n reus, heer Olifant,
hom dreigend aangespreek het, want
'n gevaarlike vent was hy.

Hy sê: 'By my god, Termagant,⁶ 810
tensy jy padgee uit my land
maak ek die perd wat jy ry
nog vrek.

Die Feëkoningin dié woon
met harp- en fluit- en sitertoon
in hierdie einste plek.'

Die ridder sê: 'Mag ek gedy,
ek sal jou môre weer hier kry,
ek het g'n harnas nou,
maar wag tot môre dan sal jy 820
omrede hierdie lans van my
dit bitterlik berou.

Ek sal
jou maag deurboor, want glo my vry,
nog voor die dag beslag kan kry,
bring ek jou tot 'n val.'

Toe't heer Topaas gou teruggeval
terwyl die reus se slinger pal
klippe op hom laat reën,
maar hy't ontkom geheel en al 830
deur die edelheid wat hy uitstal
en God se ryke seën.

Maar luister voort na my verhaal,
so vrolik soos 'n nagtegaal,
dan sal ek meld hoedat
Topaas hom knaend in die saal
bevind het en toe andermaal
gekom het in die stad.

Hy gee sy dienaars daar bevel
om hom op te beur met lied en spel, 840
want hy's verbind tot stryd.
'n Driekop-reus het hom gekwel –
dié moet hy dood vir 'n dame wel
en haar goedgunstigheid.

'Kom al die sangers van my saal,
vertellers, jul moet my onthaal,
terwyl ek voorberei,
Ek hoor met graagte 'n verhaal,
van 'n koning of 'n kardinaal,
of aan 'n pous gewy.' 850

Hul bring vir hom die soetste wyn,
en daarna het ook mee⁷ verskyn,

6 'n Afgod wat volgens die Kruisvaarders deur die Sarasene aanbid is.

7 'n Drank gemaak van gegiste heuning met kruie gegeur.

lekkernye om te eet,
soos gemmerkoekies, o so fyn,
en verder soethout en komyn⁸
en die beste suikerbeet.

Sy kleredrag was uitgesoek:
naas sy bleek vel 'n hemp en broek
van die fynste linnegoed,
en daaroor't hy 'n akotoen⁹
en maliekolder¹⁰ aangedoen
om 'n doodsteek te verhoed;

860

En oor dit als sy harnas sterk
wat tipies was van Jodewerk,¹¹
dit was so hard en heg;
sy wapenrok was bo-oor dit,
van bo tot onder leliewit,
en daarin sou hy veg.

Sy skild was louter goud; daarop
pryk daar 'n wildevark se kop
en 'n karbonkelsteen.
'Hier's brood en bier: ek sweer daarop,'
sê hy, 'Ek sal die reus nog klop,
al sterf ek ook meteen.'

870

Van pantserleer sy beenharnas;
in 'n ivoorgeves het sy swaard gepas,
sy helm was van latoen;
sy saal van walvisbeen verras
asook sy teuels so glansend as
wat son of maan kan doen.

880

Sy speer was van 'n fyn sipres
en daarmee kon hy dodelik kwes,
want dit was skerp daarby.
Sy skimmelperd was appelblou
en dit het statig soos 'n pou
op 'n stadige stap gery,
so flink.

Dis nou die einde van my sang,
maar nogtans, as jul meer verlang,
kan ek aan nog iets dink.

890

8 Aromatiese saad wat as spesery gebruik word.

9 Gewatteerde baadjie wat onder die harnas gedra is.

10 Harnas van ysterringetjies gemaak.

11 In die Middeleeue was die Jode bekend as vaardige wapensmede.

Deel II

Toe, goeie mense, om liefdeswil,
bly net 'n rukkie langer stil
en luister na my storie
van ridderdade en van stryd
van minnediens en hoflikheid
en voortgesette glorie.

Van Bevis maak hul 'n bohaai,
van jonker Horn en ridder Guy
en ook van Ipotis,
van Libeus en Pleindamour,
maar heer Topaas is almal voor;
dis hy wat bobaas is.

900

Hy sit mooi wydsbeen op sy perd
en, soos 'n vonkie uit die herd,
so vlieg hy oor die veld.
Op sy helm pryk daar 'n kasteel,
en daarin steek 'n leliesteel.
God hoede onse held.

Dié ridder het graag uitgery,
want binnenshuis wou hy nie bly;
hy slaap gehul in 'n kleed,
met 'n helm wat sy kussing was,
terwyl sy strydros malse gras
daar naby staan en vreet.

910

Topaas het by fonteine, nes
heer Parsival, sy dors geles,
so mooi in sy mondering.
Toe op 'n dag ...

Hier onderbreek die Waard Chaucer se verhaal

"Dis nou genoeg hiervan om hemelswil,"
val die Waard my in die rede, "Bly tog stil!
Die Here weet ek is nou net mooi moeg
vir die louter onsin wat jy oor 'n boeg
hier kwytraak, so kry end met resiteer.
Jou storie maak 'n mens se ore seer;
dis seker wat hul meen met rym'lary."

920

Ek antwoord hom toe: "Waarom pik op my?
Dis die beste storie wat ek ken, maar nou
word ek beveel om daarmee op te hou."

"Nou goed," sê hy, "ek stel dit rond en pront:
jou versiesmaak is somer pure stront!
Al wat jy regkry is om tyd te mors
en daarom word jou beurt summier geskors,

930

tensy jy dalk 'n ou geskiedenis
kan oorvertel – mits dit in prosa is –
iets stigteliks of iets wat ons behaag."

"Ja, liewe wêreld," sê ek, "alte graag!

Daar's iets in prosa wat ek kan vertel
wat julle seker sal tevrede stel,
of julle is eenvoudig obstinaat;
dit is 'n storie propvol goeie raad;
daar's meer as een vertolking daarvan glo:
die een vertel dit sus, die ander so.

940

So is dit ook met die lydensgeskiedenis
wat in elke Evangelie anders is,
maar alhoewel die een verskil van die ander,
in dié of daardie opsig, tog verander
dit niks aan die kern van die saak nie, daar
hul almal ewe akkuraat is, ewe waar.

Die een sê minder en die ander meer
oor die bittere lyding van ons liewe Heer,
maar al vertel elk op sy eie manier
is die strekking nog dieselfde in al vier.

950

Nou daarom smee ek jul, menere, ook
as my vertelling nie volkome strook
met die storie wat jul ken nie; sê nou dat
ek meer gebruik van spreuke maak as wat
jul sou verwag in hierdie klein traktaat,
tot sterking van die indruk wat dit laat;

en as ek nie dieselfde woorde besig
as jul gehoor het, moet niemand hier aanwesig
my dit verkwalik nie; want jul sal min
verskil vind in die algemene sin
van die oorspronklike verhaal en dié
wat nou gaan volg as my vertellinkie.
Gevolgtlik vra ek jul nou: Hoor my uit
en moet my tog nie in my voordrag stuit."

960

DIE VERHAAL VAN MELIBEUS

'n Magtige en ryk jong man met die naam van Melibeus het by sy vrou Prudentia 'n dogter gehad aan wie hul die naam Sophia gegee het.

Op 'n dag het dit gebeur dat hy vir sy plesier veld in gery het. Hy het sy vrou en sy dogter by die huis gelos waar die deure stewig op slot was. Drie ou vyande het dit bemerk. Hulle het lere teen die mure van die huis opgestel en dit so deur die vensters binnegedring. Hulle het sy vrou geslaan en sy dogter gruwelik gewond in vyf liggaamsdele, naamlik haar voete, hande, ore, neus en mond. Hulle het haar vir dood laat lê en die wyk geneem.

Toe Melibeus terugkeer na sy huis en en al die onheil sien, het hy soos 'n besetene sy klere geskeur en aan die skree en huil gegaan.

Prudentia, sy vrou, het so ver as wat sy durf, probeer om hom te kry om op te hou met huil, maar hoe meer sy probeer het, hoe meer het sy geweene toegeneem.

Dié goeie vrou Prudentia het 'n uitspraak van Ovidius in sy *Remedia amoris* in herinnering geroep: “'n Dwaas probeer 'n moeder weerhou van ween by die dood van haar kind, maar wanneer sy met verloop van tyd uitgeweene is, moet mens alles in jou vermoë doen om haar met mooi woorde te troos en haar sover te kry dat sy ophou huil.” Daarom het dié goeie vrou hom 'n tyd lank laat skree en huil, maar toe sy die oomblik geleë ag, sê sy vir hom: ‘Ag, my heer, hoekom maak jy jou belaglik? Want, waarlik, dis nie gepas vir 'n wyse man om hom dit so aan te trek nie. Met Gods genade sal jou dogter genees en aan die dood ontkom. En al was sy nou dood, sou dit nie reg wees dat jy jou vanweë haar dood vernietig nie. Seneca sê: “'n Wyse moet hom nie laat ontstig deur die dood van sy kinders nie; hy moet dit in lydsaamheid verduur, net soos hy ook sy eie dood aanvaardend afwag.”

985

Melibeus was met sy antwoord reg en sê: ‘Hoe kan enigeen wat soveel rede het om te ween, afsien daarvan? Ons Here Jesus Christus het dan self geweene by die dood van Lasarus, Sy vriend.’

Prudentia antwoord: ‘Ek sê nie dat matige geweene nie geregverdig is wanneer iemand bedroef is nie; onder bedroefdes is mens dit eerder te wagte. So skryf die apostel Paulus aan die Romeine, “Wees bly saam met dié wat bly is en treur saam met dié wat treur.” Maar terwyl 'n matige geweene geregverdig is, geld dit nie vir 'n oordadige geskrei nie. Die gepaste mate van geweene moet bepaal word, soos Seneca ons leer: “As 'n vriend sou sterf,” sê hy, “moet jou oë nie te nat wees van die trane nie, maar ook nie te droog nie; trane kan opwel in jou oë, maar moenie hulle laat val nie. As jy 'n vriend verloor, moet jy hard probeer om 'n nuwe vriend te vind; dis verstandiger as dat jy ween vir een wat weg is, want daarin is geen baat nie.” As jy jou deur wysheid laat rig, sal jy verdriet uit jou hart verdryf. Onthou die woorde van Ben Sirag: “'n Vrolike hart bevorder jou gesondheid totdat jy oud is, maar 'n bedroefde hart laat die gebeente verdor.” Hy sê ook dat baie verslaan is deur droefheid van gees. En Salomo wys ons daarop dat soos 'n mot 'n kleed beskadig en 'n wurmpie 'n boom beskadig, so ook beskadig sorg die mens se hart. Daarom moet ons die dood van ons kinders, ewe-as die verlies van aardse besittings, lydsaam verdra. Onthou die geduldige Job. Toe hy sy kinders en sy aardse goed verloor het en allerhande liggaamlike leed moes verduur, toe't hy gesê: “Die Here het gegee en die Here het weggeneem; volgens Sy wil het Hy met my gehandel; geseënd is die naam van die Here.”

1000

Hierop het Melibeus sy vrou Prudentia soos volg geantwoord: ‘Dis alles goed en wel, maar, waarlik, my hart is so oorweldig deur die smart dat ek nie weet wat om te doen nie.’ Prudentia sê: ‘Roep dan al jou ware vriende en wyse familieledes bymekaar, lê die saak aan hulle uit, luister na hul raad, en laat jou lei deur hulle

mening. Salomo sê immers: “Doen niks sonder om onderleg te pleeg nie en dan, as jy besluit het, sal dit jou nooit berou nie.”

Handelend volgens Prudentia se raad het Melibeus toe 'n groot menigte bymekaar laat kom, waaronder chirurg, artse, oumense en jongmense, asook van sy voormalige vyande wat skynbaar met hom versoen was en in sy liefde en guns herstel is. Daar was ook van sy bure by wat hom eerder uit vrees as uit liefde eer bewys, soos meermale gebeur. Slinkse vleiers het hul opwagting gemaak, asook bekwame regsgeleerdes. 1006

Toe almal bymekaar is, het Melibeus op bedroefde wyse vir hulle vertel wat gebeur het. Uit sy manier van praat het dit geklink asof hy 'n vreeslike wrok koester, gretig was om hom op sy vyande te wreek en op die punt staan om die stryd aan te knoop; maar tog eers hulle raad wou vra. Met die instemming van die wyses onder hulle het 'n chirurg op die been gekom en Melibeus aldus aangespreek: ‘My heer, dit is die wese van ons beroep dat ons die beste doen wat ons kan vir wie ook al ons dienste benodig en dat ons geen pasiënt leed aandoen nie. So gebeur dit baiekeer dat twee mense wat mekaar verwond het deur een en dieselfde chirurg behandel word. Ons is dus uiteraard gekant daarteen om oorlogvoering aan te moedig of teenpartye te ondersteun. Maar, waarlik, wat die genesing van u dogter betref, alhoewel sy doodsgevaarlik verwond is, sal ons ons dag en nag beywer om haar, so die Here wil, so gou as moontlik weer heel en gesond te kry.’ 1015

Die artse het op so te sê dieselfde manier geantwoord, behalwe dat hulle daaraan toegevoeg het dat net soos kwale deur hul teendeel genees word, so moet mens vrede bevorder deur oorlog te voer.

Sy nydige bure, sy geveinsde vriende wat skynbaar met hom versoen was en sy vleiers het gemaak asof hul huil en het dinge vererger deur Melibeus hoog aan te prys om sy mag, sy vermoëndheid en sy rykdom terwyl hul die mag van sy vyande versmaai en daarop aandrang dat hy wraak moet neem en met die stryd moet begin.

Toe staan 'n wyse regsgeleerde op en, met instemming van die ander wyses daar teenwoordig, sê hy: ‘Menere, dit waaroor ons hier bymekaar is, is 'n gewigtige en baie ernstige saak, vanweë die kwaad en onreg wat reeds gepleeg is en vanweë die groot skade wat in die toekoms daaruit kan spruit. 'n Mens moet ook die groot rykdom en mag van beide partye in ag neem en versigtig wees om nie 'n verkeerde besluit te neem nie. Daarom, Melibeus, is ons mening soos volg. Ons raai u aan om terstond alles in die werk te stel om uself te beskerm deur nooit sonder 'n uitkyk of 'n lyfwag te wees om u veiligheid te verseker nie. Verder moet u genoeg wagte aanstel om beide u persoon en u huis te beskerm. Ons glo egter nie dat dit raadsaam sou wees om so gou die stryd aan te knoop of nou reeds wraak te wil neem nie. Ons vra tyd en kalmte om die saak deeglik te oorweeg. Die spreekwoord sê mos: “Oordeel gou, kry gou berou.” 'n Regter geld as wys as hy spoedig 'n saak deurgrond maar op sy tyd tot 'n oordeel kom. Alhoewel alle uitstel mishaag, tog moet mens voldoende redelike uitstel nie verfoei as dit kom by die vel van 'n oordeel of die sug na wraak nie. Dit het ons Here Jesus Christus deur Sy voorbeeld aan ons getoon. Toe hul die owerspelige vrou na hom gebring het om te vra wat met haar gedoen moet word, het Hy goed geweet wat Sy antwoord sou wees, maar tog het Hy nie onmiddellik geantwoord nie. Hy wou nog eers oorweeg en het tweemaal op die grond geskryf. Daarom vra ons geleentheid om eers te oorweeg en daarna sal ons u van bruikbare raad bedien.’ 1034

Op spring die jongmense toe meteens, want die meeste van hulle het die wyse ou man verag. Hul begin te raas en sê dat net soos mens yster moet smee terwyl dit warm is, so moet mens ook onregte wreek terwyl hul vars en nuut is, en luidkeels skree hul toe, ‘Te wapen, te wapen!’

Een van die oues staan op en beduie met 'n handgebaar dat hulle moet stilbly en na hom moet luister. 'Menere,' sê hy, 'daar's baie wat "Te wapen, te wapen!" roep, wat min benul het van wat oorlog beteken. Aan die begin van 'n oorlog is daar 'n ingang so groot dat almal kan ingaan net wanneer hul wil en gemaklik die oorlog kan vind, maar waarop dit sal uitloop, is heeltemal 'n ander saak, want as 'n oorlog eers begin, is daar baie nog ongeboore kinders wat as gevolg daarvan jonk sal sterf of in nood sal lewe en in ellende sal sterwe. Voor mens met enige oorlog begin, moet jy dus deeglik beraadslaag en versigtig oorweeg.'

En toe dié ouman nog sy relaas met argumente wou versterk, het byna almal gelyk op die been gekom om hom in die rede te val en herhaaldelik te versoek om nou end te kry. Dit is mos so: as iemand preek vir dié wat nie sy woorde wil hoor nie, dan sal sy preek 'n ergenis wees. Ben Sirag sê: "'n Lied in die tyd van rou is iets ergeliks;" dit wil sê dis ewe sinneloos om met mense te praat wat daardeur vererg word as wat dit is om te sing vir mense wat ween. En toe dié wyse man sien dat hy geen gehoor het nie, het hy verleë maar weer gaan sit. Soos Salomo sê: "Moenie daarop aandring om te praat as niemand luister nie." 'Ek kan sien,' sê die wyse ou man, 'dat die spreekwoord waar is dat daar 'n tekort aan goeie raad is wanneer mens dit die meeste nodig het.'

In sy raadsvergadering het Melibeus baie mense gehad wat hom in die geheim een ding in die oor gefluister het maar in die openbaar met 'n ander storie vorendag gekom het.

1049

Toe Melibeus verneem dat die meeste van sy raadgewers dit eens was dat hy oorlog moet voer, het hy dadelik met hulle raad saamgestem en hulle besluit bekragtig. Maar toe Prudentia sien hoe haar man hom voorberei om hom op sy vyande te wreek en oorlog gaan aanknoop, het sy haar kans afgewag om nederig vir hom te sê: 'My heer, ek smeeek jou so ernstig as wat ek durf en kan om nie oorhaastig te wees nie. Op grond van al my dienste, hoor my tog aan. Kyk, Petrus Alfonsus sê: "As iemand jou goed of kwaad aandoen, moet jy jou nie haas om hom terug te betaal nie, want jou vriend kan wag en jou vyand sal langer in vrees lewe." En die spreekwoorde getuig: "Hy haas hom goed wat wys genoeg is om te wag" en "Hoe meer haas, hoe minder spoed."

Toe antwoord Melibeus sy vrou: 'Ek is nie van plan om volgens jou raad op te tree nie, en dit om verskeie redes. Almal sal my beslis vir 'n gek hou as ek op jou raad dinge gaan verander wat deur soveel wyses bepaal en bevestig is. Ten tweede reken ek dat alle vroue sleg is; nie een is goed nie. Dis dié dat Salomo sê: "Ek het uit duisend mense een betroubare man gevind, maar so 'n vrou kon ek nie vind nie." En dan nog, as ek my deur jou raad laat lei, sal dit lyk asof ek jou die heerskappy oor my gegee het, en mag God dit verhoed! Ben Sirag sê: "As 'n vrou die oorhand voer, gaan sy haar man teë" en Salomo sê: "Solank as wat jy lewe, moet jy nie jou vrou of jou kind of jou vriend mag oor jou gee nie. Dis beter dat jou kinders jou moet vra as hulle iets nodig het as dat jy moet kyk na die hande van jou kinders." Ek moet ook handel volgens my eie raad, want as ek na joune handel dan is dit volstrek die geval dat my doel, wat verborge moet bly totdat dit tyd is om dit te openbaar, nie meer verborge sal wees nie. [Daar staan geskrewe dat die gebabbel van vroue niks kan verberg nie behalwe dit wat hulle nie weet nie. Daarbenewens voer die filosoof aan dat as daar van slegte raad sprake is, vrouens mans die loef afsteek. Om hierdie redes is dit onvanpas dat ek jou raad aanvaar.]'

1063

Toe Prudentia minsaam en geduldig geluister het na alles wat haar man te sê gehad het, het sy verlof gevra om te praat en hom aldus aangespreek: 'My heer, jou eerste rede is maklik uit die weg geruim. Dit is nie dwaasheid om af te sien van jou doel as die omstandighede verander nie of as sake anders voorkom as vantevore.'

En al het jy ook gesweer om 'n onderneming uit te voer en jy het goeie rede om dit nie te doen nie, maak dit jou nie tot 'n leuenaar of 'n eedbreker nie. Die Boek sê immers: “Die wyse is geen leuenaar as hy van plan verander nie.” En al word jou onderneming deur 'n groot menigte bepaal en ondersteun, is daar geen verpligting op jou om dit uit te voer as jy nie wil nie. Die waarheid en nut van dinge lê eerder by min mense wat wys en verstandig is as by die menigte wat oor iets skree en te kere gaan. So 'n menigte is nie te respekteer nie. Wat jou tweede rede betref, wanneer jy aanvoer dat alle vroue sleg is – met permissie gesê – dit beteken dat jy op alle vroue neersien en “Wie op almal neersien, mishag almal,” so staan daar mos. Seneca sê ook: “Een wat wysheid begeer, moet niemand geringskat nie. Hy moet geredelik sy kennis oordra sonder aanmatiging of hoogmoed en as daar iets is wat hy nie weet nie, moet hy nie skaam wees om dit te leer en by sy minderes navraag te doen nie.” En dis maklik om te bewys dat daar baie goeie vroue is. Ons Here Jesus Christus sou bepaald nie neergedaal het om uit 'n vrou gebore te word as alle vroue sleg was nie. En daarna het Hy, juis vanweë die groot goedheid wat daar in vroue is, ná Sy opstanding eerder aan 'n vrou verskyn as aan sy apostels. En hoewel Salomo sê dat hy nooit 'n goeie vrou gevind het nie, wil dit nog nie sê dat alle vroue sleg is nie. Al het hy nie een gevind nie, het baie ander mans goeie, betroubare vroue gevind. Of miskien het Salomo daarmee bedoel dat hy geen vrou van opperste goedheid gevind het nie, want in daardie sin is net God goed, soos Hy self in die Evangelie getuig. Daar is immers geen skepsel wat so goed is dat daar nie iets ontbreek van die volmaaktheid van God sy Skepper nie. Die derde rede wat jy aanvoer, is dat as jy jou laat lei deur my raad dan sal dit lyk asof jy my mag en heerskappy oor jou gegee het. Maar, my heer, dis tog nie so nie. As dit die geval was dat iemand slegs raad kan kry van een wat mag en heerskappy oor hom het, sou raadgewing nie 'n algemene verskynsel gewees het nie. Iemand wat raad gevra het oor iets het nog steeds die vrye keuse of hy daarvolgens gaan handel of nie. Jou vierde rede is dat die gebabbel van vroue slegs dié dinge verberg wat hulle nie weet nie – of anders gestel: dit wat sy weet, kan 'n vrou nie geheim hou nie. Hierdie woorde is egter van toepassing op vroue wat babbelaars is, slegte vroue, van wie daar gesê word dat drie dinge 'n man uit sy huis verdryf, naamlik rook, 'n dak wat lek en slegte vroue. In dié verband sê Salomo, “Dit is beter om in 'n woestyn te woon as by 'n slegte vrou.” En, met permissie, dis nie ek nie. My stilswyendheid, my geduld en my vermoë om waar nodig dinge stil te hou, is al oor en oor bewys. En wat jou vyfde rede betref, dat vrouens mans die loef afsteek in die gee van slegte raad: die Here weet, dit hou nie stand nie. Jy het immers raad gevra om 'n slegte ding te doen. En as jy iets slegs wil doen en jou vrou weerhou jou van jou bouse doel en met redelikheid en goeie raad oorwin sy jou, dien sy eerder geloof as geblameer te word. In dié sin moet die filosoof verstaan word as hy dit stel: “As daar van slegte raad sprake is, steek vrouens mans die loef af.” En aangesien jy met alle vroue en hul redenering fout wil vind, sal ek aan die hand van talle voorbeelde bewys dat baie vroue goed was, en is, en dat hul raad verstandig en nuttig is. Daar is ook mans wat beweer 'n vrou se raad is óf te duur óf waardeloos. Maar al is baie vroue sleg en hul raad van alle heil en nut ontbloot, tog het mans menige goeie vrou gevind wat in raadgewing met wysheid en takt bedeel was. Deur die goeie raad van sy moeder Rebekka het Jakob die seën van sy vader Isaak en die heerskappy oor sy broers gewen. Deur haar goeie raad het Judit die stad Betoel, waar sy gewoon het, uit die wurggreep van Holofernes bevry toe hy dit beleër het en dit wou vernietig. Abigajil het Nabal, haar man, uit die hande van Dawid bevry toe dié hom wou doodmaak; met haar verstandigheid en goeie raad het sy die koning se woede laat bedaar. Ester se goeie raad het die moed van Gods volk aangevuur tydens die bewind van Ahasveros. Van die

voortreflikheid van die goeie raad van vele ander vroue kan baie mans getuig. Toe die Here ons voorvader Adam geskep het, het Hy gesê: “Dit is nie goed dat hy alleen is nie. Ek sal vir hom ’n hulp maak wat by hom pas.” Hieruit blyk dit dat as ’n vrou nie goed was nie en haar raad nie bekwaam en nuttig nie, die Here haar nooit sou gemaak het nie en haar nooit die man se hulp sou genoem het nie, maar eerder sy ondergang. ’n Geleerde het dit in twee reëls saamgevat: “Wat is beter as goud? Jaspis. Wat is beter as jaspis? Wysheid. En wat is beter as wysheid? ’n Vrou. En wat is beter as ’n goeie vrou? Niks nie.” Daar is nog baie beweegredes om te aanvaar dat vroue goed is en hul raad deugsam en nuttig, en as jy my raad sal vertrou, sal ek jou dogter heel en gesond aan jou terugbesorg. Soveel sal ek vir jou doen dat dit tot jou eer sal strek.’

1111

Hierop sê Melibeus toe: ‘Ek kan sien dat Salomo se woorde waar is: “Vriendelike woorde is soos ’n heuningkoek: soet vir die siel en ’n genesing vir die gebeente.” Omdat jou woorde soet is en omdat ek jou wysheid en trou beproef het, sal ek my in alle opsigte deur jou raad laat lei.’

‘My heer,’ sê Prudentia, ‘in daardie geval sal ek jou meedeel hoe jy te werk moet gaan in die keuse van raadgewers. Eerstens, moet jy voor alles nederig tot God bid dat Hy jou raadgewer sal wees en moet jy jou so gedra dat Hy jou raad en troos sal verleen, soos Hy Tobias,¹² sy seun, geleer het: “Loof die Here God te alle tye en vra hom om jou weë reguit te maak en jou voornemens voorspoedig te maak.” Jakobus skryf ook: “As een van julle wysheid kortkom, laat hom dit van die Here bid.” Dan moet jy met jouself beraadslaag, jouself afvra wat tot jou voordeel strek. Drie dinge wat goeie raad in die weg staan, moet egter uit jou hart verban word: toorn, gierigheid en oorhaastigheid.

1122

Daar is baie redes waarom een wat met homself beraadslaag sonder toorn moet wees. Iemand wat toornig is, dink altyd dat hy dinge mag doen wat hy nie mag doen nie. So ’n persoon kan nie goed oordeel nie en as hy nie kan oordeel nie, kan hy ook nie goeie raad formuleer nie. Verder, soos Seneca ons daarop wys, praat een wat kwaad is sonder beraad en sy onbesonne woorde moedig ander tot toorn en woede aan. Gierigheid moet ook uit jou hart verdryf word, want, soos die apostel sê, is dit die wortel van alle kwaad. Glo my, ’n gierige mens kan nie oordeel nie en al waaraan hy kan dink, is hoe hy in sy gierige doel kan slaag, ’n doel wat hy nooit bereik nie, want hoe meer hy het, hoe meer wil hy hê. Oorhaastigheid moet jy ook verban, want ’n goeie oordeel kan nooit die gevolg van ’n skielike ingewing wees nie; dit vereis dat ’n mens oorweeg en heroorweeg. Soos ek vroeër gesê het: “Oordeel gou, kry gou berou.” Mens se geestesgesteldheid is nie altyd dieselfde nie; soms lyk ’n handeling vir jou goed, maar by ’n ander geleentheid dink jy die teendeel.

1138

Wanneer jy met jouself beraadslaag het en ná deeglike bepeinsing besluit het wat vir jou die beste voorkom, raai ek jou aan om dit geheim te hou. Openbaar jou voorneme aan niemand nie, tensy jy oortuig is dat sodanige openbaring vir jou bevorderlik sal wees. Ben Sirag sê immers: “Moenie ’n geheim of jou dwaasheid aan vriend of vyand openbaar nie, want hulle sal in jou teenwoordigheid na jou luister en aandag en ondersteuning gee, maar agteraf sal hulle jou verag.” ’n Ander skrywer sê weer: “Dis moeilik om iemand te vind wat ’n geheim kan bewaar.” Ons lees ook: “Hou jou geheim in jou eie hart, dan hou jy dit gevangene; as jy dit aan iemand anders openbaar, dan het hy jou in sy mag.” Daarom is dit beter om jou voorneme in jou eie hart te bewaar as dat jy iemand aan wie jy dit toevertrou het, moet vra om dit stil te hou. Seneca sê: “As jy nie jou eie planne stil kan hou nie, waar kom jy aan die reg om dit van ’n ander te verwag?” Maar as jy regtig dink dat die openbaring van

12 In die apokriewe Bybelboek Tobias.

jou voorneme vir jou bevorderlik sal wees, dan moet jy op dié manier te werk gaan. Moenie laat blyk of jy vrede of oorlog of dit of dat verkies nie of aantoon wat jou begeerte of bedoeling is nie, want jy kan seker wees dat diegene wat vooraanstaandes van raad bedien, vleiers is en eerder mooi woorde sal praat wat in hul heer se kraam pas as opregte woorde wat hom sal baat. Daarom sê hulle dat 'n ryke selde op goeie raad kan reken, behalwe sy eie.

Daarna moet jy oor jou vriende en jou vyande nadink. Wat die vriende betref, moet jy jou afvra wie van hulle die getrouste, die wysste, die oudste en die mees beproefde raadgewers is. Dis hulle wat jy, indien nodig, om raad moet vra. Eers moet jy jou beroep op vriende wat aan jou getrou is. Soos Salomo sê: "Olie en reukwerk verbly die hart, net so die aangenaamheid van 'n vriend vanweë welgemeende raad." Hy sê ook: "Niks kan met 'n getroue vriend vergelyk nie. Hy is sonder prys en onmeetbaar in sy voortrefflikheid," en verder: "'n Getroue vriend is 'n sterk beskutting; wie hom vind, het 'n skat gevind." Dan moet jy oorweeg of jou getroue vriende ook wys en verstandig is. Daar is geskryf: "Gee gehoor en luister na die woorde van wyse manne." Om dieselfde rede moet jou raadgewers vriende ryp van jare wees wat al oor baie aangeleenthede geraadpleeg is en bewonder word vir hul goeie raad. Die Bybel sê: "By grysaards is wysheid, en in lengte van dae is verstand." Cicero sê: "Groot dinge word nie verrig deur krag of deur liggaamlike vaardigheid nie, maar deur goeie raad, menslike gesag en kennis, en dié drie verswak nie met die jare nie; intendeel, hulle word al sterker en vermeerder van dag tot dag." As algemene reël moet geld dat jy net 'n paar van jou spesiale vriende as raadgewers gebruik, want Salomo sê: "Laat die mense wat in vrede met jou leef, baie wees, maar laat slegs een uit 'n duisend jou raadsman wees." Al maak jy aanvanklik jou voornemens aan slegs 'n paar bekend, is dit miskien later nodig om dit aan meer te openbaar. Jou raadgewers moet egter altyd oor die drie genoemde hoedanighede beskik; hulle moet getrou, wys en oud in ervaring wees. En moenie altyd net op een raadgewer staatmaak nie; soms het mens meer nodig, want soos Salomo sê: "In die veelheid van raadgewers is daar redding." 1172

Noudat ek gepraat het oor wie se raad 'n mens kan volg, wil ek ook iets sê oor wie se raad 'n mens moet vermy. Eerstens moet jy die raad van dwase vermy, want soos Salomo sê: "Moenie na die raad van 'n dwaas luister nie, want hy kan slegs op grond van sy eie wil en begeerte raad gee." Volgens een geleerde is dit die wese van 'n dwaas dat hy maklik kwaad vind in ander en maklik goedheid in homself. Jy moet ook die raad van alle vleiers vermy, want hulle is daarop uit om te flikflooi, eerder as die waarheid te praat. Daarom sê Cicero: "Van al die euwels wat vriendskap belemmer, is vleiere die ergste" en daarom is dit nodig om vleiers bowenal te sku en te vrees. Daar staan geskryf: "Mens moet die soet woorde vrees van diegene wat jou met vleiere prys en daarvan vlug, eerder as die skerp woorde van 'n vriend wat die waarheid praat." Salomo sê: "'n Man wat sy naaste vlei, spreit 'n net uit vir onskuldiges" en ook: "Hy wat soet en gladde woorde tot sy vriend spreek, stel 'n strik om hom te vang." Daarom sê Cicero: "Luister nie na vleiers en slaan geen ag op hulle woorde nie," en Cato waarsku: "Jy doen verstandig om op te pas vir woorde vol soetheid en genot." So ook moet jy die raad verwerp van voormalige vyande wat nou met jou versoen is. Daar staan geskryf dat niemand in veiligheid na 'n gewese vyand se guns terugkeer nie en Aesopus vermaan ons ook om nie mense met wie ons op een of ander tyd in stryd of vyandskap verkeer het in ons vertrou te neem nie. Seneca voer die rede hiervoor aan: "Dit is onmoontlik," sê hy, "dat waar 'n langdurige brand gewoed het, daar geen warmte oorbly nie." En daarom sê Salomo: "Moet nooit 'n vyand vertrou nie," want al het hy met jou versoen, en buig hy sy hoof in geveinsde nederigheid, is hy nie te vertrou nie. Sy nederigheid is geveins in sy eie

belang; dis nie uit liefde vir jou nie, want hy meen dat so 'n vertoon, eerder as rusie of oorlogvoering, hom die oorhand oor jou sal besorg. Petrus Alfonsus sê: "Sluit nooit vriendskap met voormalige vyande nie, want as jy hulle goed doen, vergeld hul die goed met kwaad." Vermoeg ook die raad van dienaars wat hoë agting vir jou het, want dit kan wees dat hul meer uit vrees as uit liefde praat. Daarom het 'n wysgeer dit so gestel: "Daar is niemand wat totaal getrou kan wees aan een wat hy vrees nie," en Cicero wys daarop dat geen keiser so magtig is dat sy heerskappy lank sal duur nie, tensy sy volk meer liefde as vrees vir hom het. Jy moet ook die raad vermoeg van mense wat lief is vir drank, want hulle kan geen geheim bewaar nie; soos Salomo sê: "Daar is geen geheimhouding waar dronkenskap heers nie." Wees ook versigtig vir die raad van mense wat jou onder vier oë een ding aanraai en in die openbaar iets anders. Cassiodorus noem dit 'n soort slenter om jou te benadeel as iemand in die openbaar oënskynlik een ding doen terwyl hy in die geheim die teendeel uitrig. Jy moet ook die raad van slegte mense wantrou, want die Bybel sê: "Die raadgeving van die goddelose is vol bedrog." En Dawid sê: "Welgeluksalig is die man wat nie wandel in die raad van die goddelose nie." Die raad van jongmense moet ook vermoeg word, want dit ontbreek aan rypheid. 1199

Wel, my heer, noudat ek vir jou vertel het wie se raad jy kan aannem en volg, wil ek ook vir jou verduidelik hoe 'n mens raadgeving volgens die leer van Seneca kan beoordeel. Baie faktore dien in aanmerking geneem te word. Eerstens, by die oorweging van jou voorneme waarvoor jy raad verlang, moet die waarheid altyd vertel en in ag geneem word; met ander woorde, wees eerlik in jou uitleg, want iemand wat vals is, kan nie goeie raad verwag in 'n saak waarvoor hy lieg nie. Daarna moet jy oorweeg of dit wat jy op aandrang van jou raadgevers beplan, redelik is; ook of dit in jou vermoë lê en of die meerderheid dit daarvoor eens is of nie. Dan moet jy oorweeg wat die moontlike gevolge van hul raad is, soos haat, vrede, oorlog, genade, voordeel of skade en baie ander moontlikhede. Hieruit moet jy die beste kies en die res moet jy verwerp. Dan moet jy jou afvra wat die wortel van die raad is en watter vrugte dit kan afwerp. Alle oorsake moet in ag geneem word. Wanneer jy dan die raad op dié wyse ondersoek het en vasgestel het watter keuse die beste en voordeligste is en dit deur baie ou en wyse mense beaam is, dan moet jy oorweeg of jy dit ten uitvoer kan bring en 'n goeie resultaat kan bereik. Dit is immers onredelik om met iets te begin wat mens nie na behore kan afhandel nie of om 'n las op jou te neem wat jy nie kan dra nie. Die spreekwoord lui: "Te veel aangepak, te gou uitgesak," en Cato sê: "Probeer om dit te doen waartoe jy in staat is, sodat die las jou nie in so 'n mate bedruk dat jy gedwing word om af te sien van iets waaraan jy begin het nie." As daar by jou twyfel is of jy iets kan uitvoer of nie, dan is dit beter om te laat staan as om te begin. Petrus Alfonsus sê: "As jy die mag het om iets te doen wat jou later sal berou, dan is 'nee' beter as 'ja'." Daarmee bedoel hy dat dit in so 'n geval beter is om te swyg as om te praat. So, moenie iets aanpak as dit jou later sal berou nie en ook nie as jy dit nie kan volvoer nie. En agterna, nadat jy goed oorweeg het en weet dat jy jou besluit kan deursit, dan moet jy met vasberadenheid tot die einde daarby hou. 1222

Nou is dit redelik en die geleë tyd dat ek jou daarop wys wanneer en waarom jy jou besluit sonder blaam kan verander. 'n Mens kan beslis sy doel en voorneme verander as die rede daarvoor verander of as 'n nuwe rede hom voordoen. Die reël is dat nuwe omstandighede heroorweging noodsaak, want soos Seneca sê: "As jou vyand van jou besluit te hore kom, verander dan jou besluit." Jy kan ook jou voorneme verander as jy agterkom dat dit as gevolg van vergissing of enige ander oorsaak tot leed of skade aanleiding kan gee, of as die raad oneerlik was of uit oneerlikheid gespruit het. Die wet bevestig dat oneerlike beloftes van geen krag is

nie. So ook besluite wat onmoontlik is om uit te voer of nie met reg uitgevoer kan word nie. As algemene reël geld dat enige beslissing wat so sterk bevestig word dat dit nie verander kan word nie, watter omstandighede hul ook al voordoën, 'n slegte beslissing is.'

Toe Melibeus die lering van sy vrou aangehoor het, antwoord hy haar soos volg: 'My vrou,' het hy gesê, 'tot dusver het jy my goed en gepas onderrig oor hoe ek oor die algemeen te werk kan gaan om raadgewers te kies of te verwerp. Nou sal ek egter bly wees as jy vir my in die besonder kan sê hoe die raadgewers wat ek in die huidige situasie gekies het, jou geval of vir jou voorkom.'

'My heer,' sê sy, 'ek vra in alle nederigheid dat jy jou tog nie versit teen my redevoering nie en dat dit jou nie moet ontstel as ek dinge sê wat jou mishag nie. Die Here weet ek sê dit vir jou beswil, jou eer en jou voordeel, in die vertroue dat jy uit goedheid dit met geduld sal aanvaar. Glo my, in hierdie geval kan die raad wat jy ontvang het streng gesproke nie raad genoem word nie, maar slegs 'n aandrang tot dwaasheid. Dit kom deurdat jy op verskeie maniere gefouteer het.'

Om mee te begin het jy verkeerd te werk gegaan by die byeenroep van jou raadgewers. Jy moes eers 'n paar ingeroep het, dan sou jy, indien nodig, die saak later aan meer kon voorgelê het. Maar nee, jy het uit die staanspoor 'n magdom mense byeengebring wat vervelig en vermoeiend was om na te luister. En in plaas daarvan dat jy slegs ou, wyse en vertroude vriende laat kom het, het jy vreemdes, jongmense, valse vleiers, voormalige vyande en mense wat jou sonder liefde eerbiedig, ingeroep. Dit was ook 'n fout om toorn, hebsug en oorhaastigheid by die beraadslaging in te voer, want dié drie dinge is strydig met eerlike en voordelige beraadslaging. Nóg in jouself, nóg in jou raadgewers is dié drie eers uit die weg geruim, soos moes gebeur het. Verder was dit 'n fout om jou raadgewers te laat agterkom dat jy geneig was om deur onmiddellike oorlogvoering wraak te neem. Uit jou woorde het hulle geweet wat jou bedoeling was en hulle het hul woorde dus na jou wil, eerder as jou beswil, geskik. Dan was dit ook 'n fout om die indruk te skep dat hulle raad voldoende was, terwyl die erns en dringendheid van die saak eintlik meer raadgewers en meer oorweging vereis het. Dit was ook 'n fout om nie jou besluit na behore te ondersoek nie. Jy het ook geen onderskeid getref tussen raadgewers wat jou ware vriende is en ander wat geveins het nie. Pleks dat jy die woorde van jou ou, wyse en vertroude vriende ter harte geneem het, het jy 'n hutspot van almal se woorde gemaak en jou deur 'n meerderheid van stemme laat lei. Jy weet tog goed dat daar meer dwase as verstandiges is en daarom is dit so dat by groot vergaderings waar meer ag geslaan word op getalle as op die wysheid van enkelinge, dwase altyd die oorhand kry.'

1260

Melibeus antwoord toe: 'Ek gee toe dat ek gefouteer het, maar aangesien jy netnou gesê het dat iemand wat in sekere omstandighede en met goeie rede sy raadgewers verander nie te blameer nie, is ek bereid om my raadgewers na jou lering te verander, want die spreekwoord sê: "Dis menslik om te sondig, maar dis die werk van die duiwel om in sonde te volhard."'

Hierop het Prudentia soos volg geantwoord: 'Gaan weer die raad wat jy gegee is na en kyk wie die redelikste was en jou die beste raad gegee het. Laat ons begin met die chirurg en die artse wat die eerste aan die woord gekom het. Ek sou sê dat hulle na behore verstandig gepraat het toe hulle beweer het dat dit 'n deel uitmaak van hul beroep om almal se eer en voordeel na te streef en niemand kwaad te doen nie; en om alles in hul vermoë te doen om diegene in hul sorg te genees. En omdat hulle wys en verstandig gepraat het, raai ek aan dat hulle ryklik beloon moet word. Dan sal hulle ook meer aandag aan die genesing van jou dogter bestee, want die feit dat hulle jou vriende is, beteken nog nie dat jy kan verwag dat hulle hul

dienste gratis moet gee nie. Beloon hulle liewers en toon jou vrygewigheid. En wat betref die voorstel deur die artse aan die hand gedoen dat 'n kwaal deur sy teendeel bestry kan word, sou ek graag wil hoor hoe jy dit verstaan en wat jou mening is daaromtrent.'

1280

'Ek verstaan dit so,' sê Melibeus. 'As iemand my teenwerk, dan dien hy ook deur my teengewerk te word. As iemand my benadeel en kwaad aandoen, dan moet ek hom benadeel en kwaad aandoen, want so bestry 'n mens teenkanting met teenkanting.'

'Ag tog,' sê Prudentia, 'hoe geneig is 'n mens tot sy eie wil en plesier. Die woorde van die artse moet beslis nie so vertolk word nie. Boosheid is nie die teendeel van boosheid nie, of wraak van wraak of onreg van onreg nie; hulle is aan mekaar gelyk. Wraak word nooit genees deur wraak of onreg deur onreg nie; die een vermeerder en versterk net die ander. Wat die artse bedoel het, is dat goed en kwaad teenoor mekaar staan, soos vrede en oorlog, wraak en lydsaamheid, rusie en eensgesindheid, en nog vele meer. Dus kan boosheid slegs deur goedheid bestry word, rusie deur eensgesindheid, oorlog deur vrede, en so meer. Hiermee stem die apostel Paulus saam, wanneer hy sê: "Vergeld niemand kwaad vir kwaad of skeldwoorde vir skeldwoorde nie, maar doen goed aan hom wat jou benadeel en seën hom wat jou vervolg." En op baie ander plekke beveel hy vrede en eensgesindheid aan. Nou wil ek met jou praat oor die raad van die regsgeleerdes en die wyses wat dit eens was dat jy bowenal alles in die werk moet stel om jouself te beveilig en jou huis te beskerm, en verder dat jy met oorlog en omsigtigheid moet optree. Wat die beveiliging van jou persoon betref, iemand wat hom vir oorlog voorberei, moet altyd nederig en opreg bid dat Jesus Christus hom in Sy groot genade in Sy beskerming sal neem en sy bystand in nood sal wees, want in hierdie wêreld is daar niemand wat homself kan beveilig sonder die beskerming van ons Here Jesus Christus nie. Hiermee gaan Dawid akkoord as hy sê: "As die Here die stad nie bewaar nie, tervergeefs waak die wagter dan." Jy moet die beskerming van jou persoon aan jou beproefde en vertroude vriende toevertrou en hulle hulp inroep, want soos Cato sê: "As jy hulp nodig het, vra jou vriende, want niemand is so 'n goeie heelmeester as 'n ware vriend nie." Vervolgens moet jy vreemdes en leuenaars vermy en op jou hoede wees as jy in hul geselskap is. Petrus Alfonsus sê: "Moenie langs die pad kennis aanknoop met iemand wat voorheen aan jou onbekend was nie. En as so iemand sonder jou instemming jou reisgenoot word, vra dan subtiel uit na sy opvattinge en sy lewenswandel en versin 'n storie oor waarheen jy gaan; sê jy is op pad na 'n ander plek as dié waarheen jy werklik gaan; en as hy 'n spies in sy hand het, bly dan aan sy regterkant, en as hy 'n swaard dra, hou dan links van hom." Hou jou afsydig van sulke mense en vermy hulle raad. Beskerm jouself ook deur nie verwaand jou krag te oorskat en gevolglik die krag van jou vyand te onderskat nie, want elke wyse man vrees sy vyand. Dis dié dat Salomo sê: "Gelukkig is die man wat gedurigdeur vrees, maar hy wat hom in verwaandheid verhard, sal in die onheil val." Jy moet ook gedurig lig loop vir hinderlae en allerhande spioenasie. Seneca sê: "Die wyse man wat onheil vrees, vermy die onheil, en hy wat gevare ontwyk, kom nie in gevaar nie." Ovidius sê: "'n Klein wesel kan 'n groot stier en 'n wilde hert tot 'n val bring," en verder lees ons: "'n Klein dorinkie kan 'n groot koning baie seer maak en 'n hond kan afreken met 'n wildevark." Dit wil egter nie sê dat jy so lafhartig moet wees dat jy vrees waar daar niks te vrese is nie. Daar staan geskryf: "Party mense is gretig om ander te mislei, maar hulle is bang om self mislei te word." Tog moet jy vergiftiging vrees en die geselskap van spotters vermy, want daar staan: "Moenie met spotters omgaan nie en sku hulle woorde soos gif."

1330

Wat jou wyse raadgewers se tweede punt betref, dat jy jou huis deeglik moet beskerm, sou ek graag wil weet hoe jy dit verstaan en wat jou mening daaromtrent is.'

Melibeus antwoord toe: 'Ek verstaan dit so dat ek my huis moet versterk met torings, soos dié wat kastele en baie ander vestings het, met bolwerk en geskut. So kan ek myself en my huis beveilig en beskerm, en my vyande sal vrees om te naby daaraan te kom.'

Prudentia antwoord: 'Versterking deur middel van torings en bolwerk kom soms uit hoogmoed voort. Dit kos ook baie geld en baie moeite en as dit alles klaar is, is dit van min waarde tensy dit deur troue, beproefde en wyse vriende bewaak word. Die beste beskerming wat 'n mens kan hê, is dat jou onderdane en jou bure jou liefhet. Daarom sê Cicero: "Een soort vesting wat niemand kan oorweldig of oorwin nie is 'n heer wat geliefd is deur sy volk."¹³⁴⁰

Wat die derde punt betref, die mening van jou ou en wyse raadgewers dat jy nie skielik en oorhaastig moet optree nie, maar jou eers met groot sorg en omsigtigheid moet voorsien en voorberei, glo ek dat dit goeie, wyse raad is. Cicero sê immers: "In elke gevaar moet jy jou sorgvuldig voorberei voor jy tot handeling oorgaan." En daarom is dit my mening dat jy jou eers moet voorberei voordat jy jou in wraak, oorlog, stryd en bewapening begewe, en dat jy dit dan as 'n voorbedagte handeling ten uitvoer moet bring. Cicero sê: "Lang voorbereiding vir 'n veldslag lei tot 'n spoedige oorwinning," en Cassiodorus meen dat verdediging effektiewer is as dit deur lang beplanning vooraf gegaan word.

Maar kom ons praat nou oor die raad wat gegee is deur diegene wat jou eer maar nie liefhet nie, gewese vyande wat met jou versoen is, vleiërs wat jou onder vier oë een ding aanraai, maar die teendeel in die openbaar, asook die jongmense wat jou aangemoedig het om jou te wreek en onmiddellik oorlog te maak. Soos ek voorheen gesê het, was dit 'n groot fout om die raad van sulke mense te vra en om die redes wat ek genoem het, is hulle ongeskik om as jou raadgewers te dien. Maar om op die punt te kom. Jy moet volgens die leer van Cicero handel. Die waarheid van die saak en die raad wat jou aangebied is, behoef geen diepgaande ondersoek nie, want dis welbekend wie jou die onreg en skandelike daad aangedoen het, hoeveel van hulle daar was en hoe hulle te werk gegaan het. Verder vermeld Cicero 'n aspek wat hy "instemming" noem. Wie was dit en watter soort mense is dit en hoeveel van hulle is daar wat ingestem het met jou oorhaastige besluit om wraak te neem, en sodoende jou vyande gesteun het? Dis welbekend wie hulle was en nie een is jou vriend nie. Maar ons moet ook kyk na diegene wat by jou as goeie vriende tel, want hoewel jy magtig en ryk is, is jy tog alleen. Al kind wat jy het, is jou dogter. Jy het geen broers of eie neefs of ander bloedverwante wat 'n vyand daarvan sou weerhou om jou voor die gereg te daag of jou liggaamlik aan te val nie. Bowendien sal jou rykdom eendag onder vele verdeel word en die bietjie wat elkeen kry, sal min aansporing bied om jou dood te wreek. In teenstelling daarmee het jy drie vyande wat baie kinders, neefs en ander familieleden het. Al maak jy twee of drie van hulle dood, bly daar oorgenoeg oor om op jou wraak te neem en jou dood te maak. Al is jou familie standvastiger as jou vyande s'n, is hulle maar verlangsa familie, terwyl jou vyande s'n nader aan hulle verwant is; hulle situasie is dus voordeliger as joune. As ons ons nou verder afvra of die raad om onmiddellik wraak te neem redelik was, dan weet jy vir seker dat die antwoord Nee is. Volgens reg en rede kan niemand op iemand anders wraak neem nie behalwe 'n regter wat daartoe gemagtig is om spoedig of weloorwoë op te tree, na gelang van die geregtelike omstandighede. Met betrekking tot wat Cicero instemming noem, moet mens ook vra of jou mag en krag instem met jou wil en jou raadgewers se wil, en weereens weet jy dat dit nie die

geval is nie. Om eerlik te wees, ons mag alleenlik dit doen wat ons met reg kan doen, en ons kan nie met reg op eie gesag wraak neem nie. Vermoë stem dus nie in tot begeerte nie en die twee kom geensins ooreen nie.

Laat ons ook die derde punt ondersoek, wat Cicero “konsekwent” noem. Dit beteken dat die wraak wat jy wil neem allerhande gevolge inhou, want daarop volg verdere wraak, gevaar, oorlog en ander onheile sonder tal waarvan ons op dié stadium onbewus is. 1389

Cicero se vierde punt, wat hy “produsent” noem, is dat die onreg wat jou aangedoen is die produk is van jou vyande se haat en dat wraak daarop geneem verdere wraak, groot ellende en verkwisting van rykdom tot gevolg sal voortbring.

Met betrekking tot Cicero se laaste punt, wat hy “oorsake” noem, moet jy verstaan dat die onreg wat jy gely het sekere oorsake het. Geleerdes onderskei *Oriens* en *Efficiens*, oftewel *Causa longinqua* en *Causa propinqua*, met ander woorde, die verre oorsaak en die onmiddellike oorsaak. Die verre oorsaak is God Almagtig wat die oorsaak van alle dinge is; die onmiddellike oorsaak is jou drie vyande. Die toevallige oorsaak was haat en die materiële oorsaak is die vyf wonde van jou dogter. Die formele oorsaak is die manier waarop hulle te werk gegaan het deur lere te bring waarmee hulle deur jou vensters kon klim. Die finale oorsaak was die aanslag op jou dogter se lewe, waarin geen eienskap hul weerhou het nie. As ek ’n mening moet waag oor watter einde op hulle wag of wat oplaas met hulle sal gebeur, dan veronderstel ek dat dit sleg vir hulle sal afloop, want die Wetboek sê: “Selde of slegs met groot moeite word ’n saak wat sleg begin tot ’n goeie slot gevoer.”

As iemand my sou vra waarom God toegelaat het dat dié mense jou leed aangedoen het, val dit my waarlik swaar om daarop ’n antwoord te gee. Die Apostel sê dat die kennis en die oordele van die Here God diep en onnaspeurlik is. Tog glo ek op grond van sekere veronderstellings en aannames dat God wat die wese van geregtigheid en regverdigheid is, vir regverdige en redelike doeleindes toegelaat het dat dit gebeur. 1409

Jou naam is Melibeus, wat beteken “’n Man wat heuning drink.” Jy het soveel van die heuning van aardse rykdom, genot en eer gedrink dat jy Jesus Christus jou Skepper vergeet het; jy het Hom nie na behore eer en ontsag betoon nie. Jy het ook nie ag geslaan op die woorde van Ovidius, waar hy sê: “Agter die heuning, wat goed doen aan ons liggame, skuil die gif wat ons siele vernietig.” Salomo sê ook: “As jy heuning vind, eet tot jy genoeg het, want as jy oormatig eet, sal jy dit uitspoeg” en arm en nooddruftig word. Miskien is jy in Christus se onguns en het Hy Sy gesig en sy genadige oor van jou weggekeer en toegelaat dat jy gestraf word in ooreenstemming met die aard van jou oortreding. Die mens het drie vyande: die vlees, die duiwel en die wêreld. Jy het hulle toegelaat om jou siel binne te dring deur die vensters van jou liggaam. Jy het jou nie genoeg geweer teen hul aanslae en versoekings nie, met die gevolg dat hulle jou siel op vyf plekke verwond het. Dit wil sê dat doodsonde jou hart deur die vyf sintuie binnegedring het. Op dieselfde wyse het ons Here Christus gewil en toegelaat dat jou drie vyande jou huis deur die vensters binnegedring het en jou dogter op genoemde wyse verwond het.’ 1426

‘Ek kan sien,’ sê Melibeus, ‘dat jy moeite doen om my te oortuig dat ek my nie op my vyande moet wreek nie deur my te wys op die gevare en onheile wat op sodanige wraak kan volg. Maar as mens sou let op al die gevare en onheile wat wraak tot gevolg kan hê, dan sou niemand ooit wraak neem nie, en dit sou jammer wees, want dis juis vergelding wat slegte mense van goeies skei, en wat mense wat kwaad beoog daarvan laat afsien omdat hul bestraffing vrees.’

[Prudentia antwoord toe: ‘Ek gee toe dat weerwraak veel slegs en veel goeds

tot gevolg het, maar wraak kom nie almal toe nie, maar slegs die regters wat bevoeg is om teen kwaaddoeners op te tree.] En bowendien, net soos 'n gewone mens sondig deur wraak te neem op iemand anders, so sondig 'n regter deur nie wraak te neem op iemand wat dit verdien nie. Seneca sê immers: “Dis 'n goeie heer wat bose mense bestraf,” en Cassiodorus sê: “'n Man vrees om kwaad te doen as hy weet dat dit regters en heersers mishaag.” 'n Ander skrywer sê weer: “Regters wat vrees om reg te laat geskied, maak mense kwaaddoeners,” en in Paulus se brief aan die Romeine lees ons dat regters die swaard nie tervergeefs dra nie, maar om slegte mense en kwaaddoeners te straf en goeie mense te beskerm. As jy jou dan op jou vyande wil wreek, behoort jy jou tot 'n bevoegde regter te wend en hy sal hul straf soos die wet verorden en vereis.’

‘A,’ sê Melibeus, ‘hierdie wraak beval my glad nie. Fortuna het my van kleins af gekoester en veilig deur baie moeilikhede gebring. Laat my haar nou op die proef stel in die vertroue dat sy my met Gods hulp in staat sal stel om my te wreek vir die skande my aangedoen.’ 1446

‘Luister na my raad,’ sê Prudentia, ‘en moenie Fortuna op enige wyse op die proef stel nie. Jy moet jou ook nie voor haar neerbuig nie, want soos Seneca sê: “Dwaashede wat vertrouend op Fortuna gedoen word, kom nooit tot 'n goeie einde nie,” en verder ook: “Hoe helderder Fortuna blink, hoe brosser en gouer gebreek is sy.” Moenie op haar vertrou nie, want sy is nie standvastig nie en wanneer jy sekerste van haar bystand is, sal sy jou in die steek laat en jou bedrieg. En dié dat jy sê dat sy jou van kleins af opgepas het, is al hoe meer rede om haar en haar wysheid te wantrou, want Seneca sê: “Fortuna koester 'n man om 'n groot gek van hom te maak.” Jy wil wraak hê, maar die wettige vergelding deur 'n regter verkry, staan jou nie aan nie, terwyl die wraak wat in vertroue op Fortuna geneem word, gevaarlik en onseker is. Daar bly dus net een uitweg vir jou oor en dit is om jou toevlug te neem tot die een Opperregter wat alle onregte en wandade vergeld. Hy sal jou wreek, want soos Hy self getuig: “My kom die wraak toe. Ek sal vergeld.”’

Melibeus antwoord: ‘As ek nie wraak neem vir die kwaad wat mense my aangedoen het nie, is dit 'n uitnodiging vir hulle en vir ander ook om my verdere kwaad aan te doen. Daar staan immers: “As jy jou nie vir 'n ou onreg wreek nie, vra jy jou teenstanderes vir 'n nuwe onreg.” As gevolg van my lankmoedigheid sal hulle my soveel kwaad aandoen dat ek nie sal kan uithou nie en as gevolg sal ek geringgeskat word. Want hulle sê mos: “Te veel lyding bring mee dat dinge gebeur wat nie verduur kan word nie.”’ 1466

‘Ek gee toe,’ sê Prudentia, ‘dat te veel geduld nie goed is nie. Maar dit wil nie sê dat elkeen wat 'n onreg ly, hom daarvoor moet wreek nie, want dis 'n saak vir die regters om kwaad te bestraf. Dis dan ook tot die regters dat die gesaghebbendes wat jy so-ewe aangehaal het, hulle rig. As hulle te veel booshede ongestraf laat bly, dan is dit nie soseer 'n uitnodiging om kwaad te doen nie, maar eerder 'n oproep. 'n Wyse het gesê: “Die regter wat die kwaaddoener nie bestraf nie, beveel hom om kwaad te doen.” As regters en gesaghebbendes te veel booswigte in hulle land duld, kan dié later van tyd die oorhand kry en die owerhede vervang en hulle hul gesag ontnem.

Maar kom ons veronderstel nou dat dit jou veroorloof is om wraak te neem. Tog het jy nie die mag om dit op die oomblik te doen nie. As jy kyk na die mag van jou teenstanders, sal jy sien dat, soos ek verduidelik het, hulle in baie opsigte sterker is as jy. Daarom is dit beter dat jy voorlopig geduld beoefen. Jy weet ook goed wat hulle sê: “Dis malligheid om te baklei met iemand wat sterker is as jy; dis gevaarlik om te baklei met een wat net so sterk is as jy; en dis bespotlik om te baklei met een wat swakker is as jy.” Daarom sê Salomo: “Dit is 'n eer vir 'n man om van twis weg

te bly.” As iemand wat magtiger is as jy jou kwaad aandoen, moet jy probeer om jou pyn te stil, eerder as om wraak te wil neem. Seneca sê: “Hy wat ’n sterke aandurf, stel homself in groot gevaar” en Cato leer: “As iemand van ’n hoër stand of groter mag jou versondig, laat dit daar, want ’n ander dag kan hy jou weer help.” Al het jy beide die mag en die reg om jou te wreek, is daar nogtans baie redes om jou daarvan te weerhou en liewers geduld te beoefen. Eerstens moet jy jou eie foute in aanmerking neem as gevolg waarvan God toegelaat het dat die rampspoed jou tref. Soos die digter sê: “Ons moet die ramp wat oor ons kom geduldig dra, al meen ons ook dat dit onverdiend is.” Gregorius sê: “As ons oorweeg hoe baie foute en sondes ons het, dan kom ons pyne en beproewinge soveel minder voor en hoe ernstiger ons ons sondes opneem, hoe verdraagliker is ons pyn.” ’n Mens moet ook sy hart in nederigheid neig na die lyding van ons Here Jesus Christus, soos Petrus in sy sendbrief skryf: “Jesus Christus het vir ons gely en het vir ons ’n voorbeeld nagelaat, sodat ons sy voetspore kan navolg. Hy het geen sonde gedoen nie en in Sy mond is geen bedrog gevind nie. Toe Hy uigeskel is, het Hy nie terug uitgeskel nie; en toe Hy geslaan is, het Hy nie gedreig nie.” Die groot geduld wat die Heiliges wat nou in die Paradys is getoon het toe hulle skuldeloos verdrukking verduur het, moet ook vir ons as aansporing tot lydsaamheid dien. Verder moet ons geduld probeer beoefen aangesien die beproewinge van hierdie wêreld van korte duur is en gou verbygaan, terwyl die geluk wat ons nastreef deur geduld onder verdrukking ewigdurend is. Soos die Apostel sê: “Die vreugde van die Here is ’n alles oortreffende ewige gewig van heerlikheid.” Glo vas en vertrou daarop dat hy wat nie geduld beoefen nie, nie goed opgevoed en onderwys is nie. Op een plek sê Salomo: “’n Mens se wysheid word geken aan sy geduld” en op ’n ander: “Die lankmoedige is groot van verstand en beoefen selfbeheersing.” Dieselfde Salomo sê: “’n Driftige man verwek twis, maar die lankmoedige laat ’n geskil bedaar” en “Die lankmoedige is beter as ’n held; en hy wat sy gees beheers, is een wat deur sy mag ’n stad inneem.” Jakobus beaam dan ook dat die lydsaamheid ’n groot deug is wat tot volkomenheid lei.’ 1517

‘Ja-nee,’ sê Melibeus, ‘geduld is seker ’n groot deug vir iemand wat volkomenheid nastreef, maar volkomenheid is nie elkeen se voorland nie en ek tel nie onder die volmaaktes nie, want my hart sal g’n rus vind voor ek my gewreek het nie. My vyande het groot gevaar trotseer toe hulle my kwaad aangedoen het, maar dit het hulle nie van koers gebring nie. Mense moet my dan ook nie verkwalik as ek bereid is om ’n geringe gevaar te trotseer ten einde my op hulle te wreek nie, al is dit ook oordadig om ’n wandaad met ’n wandaad te vergeld.’

‘Dis uit eiesinnigheid dat jy so praat,’ sê Prudentia. ‘Dis geensins geregverdig om jou deur oordad of wandaad te wreek nie. Cassidorus sê: “Iemand wat hom met ’n wandaad wreek doen net soveel kwaad as wat hom aangedoen is.” Vergelding moet altyd geregverdig wees, volgens reg en nie deur oordad of wandaad nie. As jy ’n teenstander op ’n ander manier weerstaan as wat toelaatbaar is, dan sondig jy. Daarom sê Seneca: “’n Mens moet nooit kwaad met kwaad vergeld nie.” As jy beweer dat dit geregverdig is om jou met geweld teen geweld te verweer, of met geveg teen geveg, dan veronderstel dit immers dat die vergelding onmiddellik en sonder tussenpose, uitstel of vertraging op die wandaad volg, as selfverdediging dus, en nie as weerwraak nie. Sodanige selfverdediging moet met matigheid geskied sodat niemand jou agterna van onredelike oordad of wandaad kan beskuldig nie. In elk geval, jy weet alte goed dat jy nie nou selfverdediging beoog nie maar wraak, en daarom neig jy nie daartoe om gematig op te tree nie. Dis dié dat ek geduld bepleit, want Salomo sê: “Hy wat ongeduldig is, sal daarvoor boet.”’

‘Ek gee toe,’ sê Melibeus, ‘dat dit so is in die geval van een wat hom opwen oor iets wat hom nie aangaan nie, al ly hy as gevolg daarvan. Die wet beaam dan

ook dat iemand skuldig is as hy inmeng in sake wat hom nie angaan nie, en Salomo sê: “Hy wat hom vererg oor iets wat hom nie aangaan nie, is soos een wat ’n hond wat verbyloop aan die ore gryp.” Dis redelik om te verwag dat iemand wat ’n vreemde hond aan die ore gryp, gebyt sal word; dis net so redelik dat iemand wat hom inmeng met dinge wat hom nie raak nie, daarvoor sal boet. Maar in hierdie geval is my pyn en lyding iets wat my ten naaste raak. Daarom is dit nouliks te verwonder dat ek kwaad en ongeduldig is. Ek kan ook nie insien hoekom ek daarvoor sal boet as ek my wreek nie, want ek is ryker en magtiger as my vyande. Jy weet tog dat die hele wêreld deur geld en groot besit beheer word, en Salomo sê immers dat geld alles verskaf.’

1550

Toe Prudentia hoor dat haar man oor sy rykdom spog en die mag van sy vyande minag, sê sy: ‘Ja, my heer, jy is nou wel ryk en magtig en jou rykdom is vir jou van groot waarde omdat jy dit goed bekom en goed benut het. Soos ’n mens se liggaam nie kan lewe sonder ’n siel nie, net so min kan dit sonder aardse goed bestaan. Rykdom stel ’n mens in staat om belangrike vriende te wen. Soos Pamphilus sê: “As ’n beeswagter se dogter ryk is, kan sy vir haar ’n man uit ’n duisend vryers kies. Nie een sal haar weier of versaak nie.” Hy sê ook: “As jy regtig gelukkig, dit wil sê regtig ryk is, sal jy geen gebrek aan vriende en metgeselle hê nie; maar as die geluk jou versaak en jy arm word, dan is vriendskap en geselskap op ’n end en is jy alleen of daar bly vir jou net die geselskap van armes oor.” En verder sê hy: “Gebore slawe en lyfeienes word deur rykdom tot eer en adeldom verhef.” Rykdom bring veel goeds mee, maar armoede is die oorsaak van baie kwaad. Daarom noem Cassidorus armoede die moeder van verval, oftewel die moeder van agteruitgang en rampspoed, en Petrus Alfonsus sê: “Een van die grootste teenspoede op aarde is wanneer ’n man wat vry is vanweë afkoms of geboorte as gevolg van armoede sy vyand se aalmoese moet eet.” In een van sy boeke sê pous Innocentius iets soortgelyks. Hy sê: “Hoe treurig en ongelukkig is die toestand van die arme bedelaar: as hy nie bedel nie, dan sterf hy van die honger en as hy bedel, sterf hy van die skaamte. En tog het hy geen keuse nie: hy moet eenvoudig bedel.” Daarom sê Ben Sirag: “Dit is beter om te sterwe as om so arm te wees” en “Dit is beter om te sterwe as om so te moet lewe.” Om hierdie redes, en om ander wat ek kan noem, is rykdom ’n seën vir dié wat dit goed bekom en goed benut. Gevolglik wil ek iets sê oor die gepaste gedrag by die verwerwing en besteding van rykdom. 1575

Rykdom moet sonder drang, deur goeie geleenthede te baat te neem, geleidelik en sonder oorhaastigheid verwerf word. Iemand wat te gretig is om ryk te word, gee hom gemaklik aan diefstal en ander euwels oor. Daarom sê Salomo: “Hy wat haastig is om ryk te word, sal nie ongestraf bly nie” en “Goed wat gou verkry is, sal gou verminder, maar dit wat bietjies-bietjies byeengebring is, word altyd meer.” Rykdom moet deur jou vernuf en arbeid tot jou voordeel verwerf word, sonder om kwaad te doen of ’n ander te benadeel, want die wet bepaal dat niemand hom mag verryk deur iemand anders te benadeel nie. Dit is wat die natuur, ooreenkomstig wat redelik is, bepaal. Cicero sê: “Geen sorg of doodsangs of enige ander gebeurlikheid is so teennatuurlik as dat ’n mens sy voordeel ten koste van ’n ander verbeter nie. En al kry die grotes en die magtiges van hierdie wêreld hul rykdom makliker as jy, moet jy nie te traag of te lui wees om jou voordeel te soek nie, want ledigheid moet ten alle koste vermy word.” Ben Sirag sê: “Ledigheid vermeerder die kwaad” en Salomo leer: “Wie sy land bewerk, het volop brood; maar hy wat ledig is en nietighede najaag, het armoede volop.” Vir ’n luiaard is daar geen geskikte tyd om sy voordeel te soek nie, want soos ’n digter dit gestel het: in die winter is dit te koud en in die somer te warm. Daarom sê Cato: “Wees waaksaam en nie geneig tot te veel slaap nie, want rus veroorsaak en bevorder vele ondeugde.” Hieraan voeg

Hieronimus toe: “Doen goeie dade sodat ons vyand die duiwel jou nie ledig vind nie.” Dis oor die duiwel nie graag vir iemand wat hom met goeie dade besig hou in sy diens neem nie.

1596

In die verkryging van rykdom moet 'n mens ledigheid vermy. As jy dit eers deur vernuf en arbeid verkry het, moet jy dit op so 'n manier gebruik dat mense jou nie as vrekking of gierig beskou nie, maar ook nie as spandabel nie, want beide inhaligheid en kwistigheid is afkeurenswaardig. Daarom sê Cato: “Wend jou rykdom op so 'n wyse aan dat niemand rede het om jou suinig te noem nie, want dis 'n groot skande vir 'n mens om 'n vol beursie te hê maar 'n leë hart.” Daaraan voeg hy toe: “Dit wat jy het, moet met matigheid bestee word.” Mense wat kwistig te kere gaan en als wat hul het, deurbring, smee planne om beslag te lê op ander se goed. Aan die een kant moet jy gierigheid vermy; aan die ander moet jy jou besittings so bestee dat mense jou nie daarvan beskuldig dat jy dit begrawe hou nie; jy moet dit onder jou beheer en tot jou beskikking hê. 'n Wyse laak die gierigaard en pas dié siening toe: “Waarom sou 'n man sy besittings begrawe terwyl hy self sterflik is? Want in hierdie aardse lewe lê die dood vir ons almal voor.” En waarom sou hy so geheg raak aan sy goed dat hy eenvoudig nie daarvan afstand kan doen nie, hoewel hy voor sy siel weet, of behoort te weet, dat hy by sy dood niks daarvan kan saamneem nie. Augustinus sê: “'n Gierigaard kan met die hel vergelyk word: hoe meer hy verorber, hoe meer wil hy hê.” Net so min as wat jy 'n vrek of 'n gierigaard genoem wil word, net so min moet jy jou so gedra dat jy 'n verkwister genoem word. Daarom sê Cicero: “Jou besittings moenie so weggebêre of weggesteek word dat dit nie meer tot die beskikking van medelye en goedhartigheid is nie.” Dit wil sê dat mens 'n deel daarvan aan behoeftiges moet afstaan, “maar jou besittings moet ook nie allemansgoed wees nie.” By die verwerwing en benutting van jou rykdom, moet 'n mens drie dinge voor oë hou: die Here God, jou gewete en jou goeie naam. Met God in jou hart sal jy niks ter wille van rykdom doen wat jou Skepper op enige manier mishag nie. Soos Salomo sê: “Liewer 'n bietjie in die vrees van die Here, as 'n groot skat en onrus daarby.” En die Psalmdigter sê: “Die bietjie van die regverdige is beter as die rykdom van baie goddeloses.” Die Apostel sê: “Daar is niks op aarde wat ons soveel vreugde verskaf as die goeie getuigenis van ons gewete nie.” En Ben Sirag sê: “Rykdom is goed as dit sonder ongeregtheid is.” Derdens moet jy alles in jou vermoë doen om te verseker dat jou goeie naam nie in die gedrang kom nie, want Ben Sirag sê: “Vrees vir 'n naam, want dit vergesel jou meer as duisende skatte.” Niemand kan as edel geld as hy nie daarna strewer om sy goeie naam te behou nie. Cassiodorus sê dat dit kenmerkend van 'n edele inbors is as 'n man 'n goeie naam liefhet en begeer. Daarom sê Augustinus: “Twee dinge is wenslik en noodsaaklik: 'n goeie gewete en 'n goeie reputasie, 'n goeie gewete in jou binneste en 'n goeie reputasie na buite. Iemand wat in so 'n mate op sy goeie gewete steun dat hy onaangenaam is en gevolglik sy goeie naam verbeur, is 'n gevoelose lummel.”

‘My heer, dis vir my duidelik dat jy op jou rykdom steun om oorlog te maak. Ek wil jou egter aanraai om nie die stryd aan te knoop op grond van jou rykdom nie, want jou middele sal nooit voldoende wees nie. 'n Wyse het gesê: “Een wat vasberade is om oorlog te voer, het nooit genoeg nie. Hoe meer hy het, hoe meer moet hy bestee om eer en oorwinning te behaal.” Salomo sê ook: “Hoe meer 'n man het, hoe meer sal hom help om dit te verteer.” Dit mag wel wees dat jy met jou rykdom 'n groot leër op die been kan bring, maar dit is nie reg of goed om oorlog te maak as jy op 'n ander manier tot jou eer en voordeel vrede kan verseker nie. Hier op aarde word oorwinnings nie deur die grootheid van 'n leër of deur dapperheid behaal nie, maar deur die wil en daad van ons Here God Almagtig. Toe Judas die

Makkabeër, die Here se stryder, met sy geringe leërmag te staan gekom het voor 'n vyand wat hulle in getalle en mag oortref het, het hy hulle aangemoedig deur te sê: "Dit is ewe maklik vir die Here om 'n oorwinning deur baie of deur min te gee; want dit hang nie saam met die grootheid van die leërmag nie, maar sterkte kom van die Hemel." 'n Mens kan nie seker wees dat hy waardig is om te oorwin nie, [net so min as wat hy verseker kan wees dat hy Gods liefde waardig is], soos Salomo sê. Daarom moet mens vrees om 'n oorlog te begin. Ook omdat veldslae veel gevare inhou en 'n man van aansien net so maklik as 'n nietige kan sneuwel, soos daar in II Samuel staan: "Dis onvoorspelbaar wat op 'n slagveld gaan voorval. Dit gebeur nou maar eenmaal so dat mense sneuwel." Omdat oorloë gevaarlik is, moet mens hul liefs so ver moontlik vermy, want, soos Ben Sirag sê, "Hy wat gevaar liefhet, sal daarin vergaan."

1671

Hierop antwoord Melibeus toe: 'Uit jou bekwame woorde en redenasies is dit vir my duidelik, Prudentia, dat oorlog jou glad nie aanstaan nie. Maar ek het nog nie jou mening gehoor van wat my in dié noodsituasie te doen staan nie.'

'Ek raai jou aan,' sê sy, 'om met jou vyande te onderhandel en vrede te maak, want soos Seneca dit stel: "Deur eendrag en vrede vermeerder die kleinste rykdom, maar deur twis en onenigheid gaan groot rykdom tot niet." Eenheid en vrede is onder die belangrikste dinge in die wêreld en daarom het ons Here Jesus Christus Sy volgelingen gemaak: "Salig is diegene wat vrede liefhet en dit bevorder; hulle sal kinders van God genoem word."

'A,' roep Melibeus, 'nou sien ek jy gee niks om vir my eer en reputasie nie. Jy weet tog goed dat dit my vyande is wat met hul bose daad dié twis en onenigheid aan die gang gesit het en hulle kom vra nie vrede of versoening nie. Wil jy nou hê dat ek my moet verneder, voor hulle kruip en om genade smee? Dit sou my nie tot eer strek nie. Hul sê mos "Goed bekend is sleg geëerd"; wel, oormatige nederigheid en deemoed lei tot dieselfde gevolg.'

Toe lyk dit asof Prudentia haar vererg en sy sê: 'Ek gee net soveel om vir jou eer en voordeel as vir my eie en ek het dit nog altyd gedoen. Nóg jy nóg iemand anders kan die teendeel aanvoer. As ek sê dat jy vrede en versoening moet nastreef, dan vergis ek my nie en praat ek nie verkeerd nie, want 'n wyse het gesê: "Laat die tweedrag by 'n ander begin en die versoening by jouself," en die Psalmidger sê: "Wyk af van wat verkeerd is, en doen wat goed is; soek die vrede en jaag dit na." Ek sê ook nie dat jy jou vyande om vrede moet versoek eerder as dat hulle jou daarom moet versoek nie, want ek weet jy is te hardvogtig om dit om my ontwil te doen. Dis soos Salomo sê: "Hy wat sy hart verhard, sal in die onheil val."

Melibeus sê toe: 'Jy moet jou asseblief nie vererg oor wat ek sê nie, want jy weet dat ek goeie rede het om kwaad te wees, en iemand wat toornig is, weet nie altyd so mooi wat hy doen of sê nie. Daarom is daar gesê: "Uit 'n vertroebelde oog kan mens nie goed sien nie." Sê wat jy wil en gee my die raad wat jy verlang, want ek is bereid om daarvolgens te handel. En as jy my berispe vanweë my dwaasheid, bemin en prys ek jou des te meer, want Salomo sê: "Hy wat iemand tereg wys, sal agterna meer guns vind as hy wat vlel."

1705

Prudentia sê: 'As ek my skynbaar vererg, is dit enkel om jou ontwil, want Ben Sirag sê: "Hy wat 'n dwaas vanweë sy dwaasheid berispe en vererg voorkom, doen meer goed as een wat hom ondersteun, sy wangedrag aanprys en oor sy verspotheid lag" en 'n entjie verder, "Dis 'n droefgeestige gesig wat die dwaas oorreed om af te sien van die kwaad en 'n beter lewe te verlang."

Toe sê Melibeus: 'Ek kan nie al die goeie argumente wat jy voorgelê het weerspreek nie. Vertel my kortliks wat jou raad en wens is en ek is gereed om dit uit te voer.'

1712

Toe het Prudentia haar hele begeerte aan hom geopenbaar en gesê: 'Ek raai jou bowenal aan om vrede te sluit tussen God en jou en om jou te versoen met Hom en Sy genade. Soos ek vir jou gesê het, het God toegelaat dat jy hierdie ramp en beproewing vanweë jou sondes ly. As jy maak soos ek jou sê, sal God jou teenstanders na jou stuur en hulle aan jou voete laat val, gereed om na jou wil en jou bevel te handel. Salomo sê immers: "As die Here behae het in die weë van 'n man, dan laat Hy selfs sy vyande in vrede met hom lewe." Daarom vra ek dat ek heimlik met jou teenstanders mag praat sodat hulle nie sal weet dat dit in ooreenstemming met jou wil en met jou goedkeuring geskied nie. En as ek dan weet wat hulle wil en bedoeling is, dan kan ek jou beter van raad bedien.'

'My vrou,' sê hy, 'handel na jou goeddunke. Ek stel my geheel en al onder jou leiding en bestuur.'

Toe Prudentia haar man se goedgesindheid bemerk, het sy diep nagedink hoe sy die uiterse nood tot 'n goeie einde kon bring. En toe sy die tyd geleë ag, het sy die teenstanders in die geheim na haar laat kom en met wysheid vir hulle gewys hoeveel goeds uit vrede kan voortvloei en watter kwaad en groot gevaar oorlog meebring; Sy het hul vriendelik gemaan om berou te betoon oor die pyn en leed wat hulle Melibeus, haar heer, asook haar en haar dogter aangedoen het. 1732

Toe hulle haar treffende woorde aanhoor, was hulle verras en verheug; dit was vir hulle soos 'n wonderwerk. 'Mevrou,' het hul gesê, 'u het vir ons die seën van goedheid getoon waarvan Dawid praat, want die versoening wat ons geensins waardig is nie, tensy ons dit met groot berou en ootmoed afsmeek, dit het u in u groot goedheid, aan ons voorgelê. Nou sien ons hoe waar die wysheid en kundigheid van Ben Sirag is, want hy sê: "Soet woorde vermeerder vriende en maak bose mense sag en gedwee." Ons onderwerp ons saak en ons optrede graag aan u goeie wil en is bereid om in opdrag van ons heer Melibeus te handel. En daarom, liewe, goeie vrou, bid en smee ons u in alle nederigheid dat dit u in u groot goedheid sal behaag om u weldadige woorde in daade te omskep. Ons weet en erken dat ons heer Melibeus in so 'n mate geaffronteer het dat ons nie by magte is om dit goed te maak nie. Daarom verbind ons ons en ons vriende om ooreenkomstig sy wil en bevel te handel. Maar miskien koester hy vanweë ons wandaad so 'n wrok en woede teenoor ons dat hy 'n straf aan ons oplê wat ons vermoëns te bowe gaan. Daarom doen ons 'n beroep op u vroulike mededoë om ons in hierdie krisis by te staan sodat ons nie as gevolg van ons dwaasheid onterf of vernietig word nie.' 1740

'Dis 'n netelige saak,' sê Prudentia toe, 'vir 'n man om hom geheel-en-al oor te lewer aan die oordeel, mag en beskikking van sy vyande. Ben Sirag waarsku dan ook: "Luister na my, vorste van die volk en owerstes van die vergadering; neig julle ore. Solank as wat jy lewe moet jy geen seun of vrou of vriend of broer mag oor jou gee nie." As dit vir 'n broer of 'n vriend geld, hoeveel te meer geld dit nie vir 'n vyand nie. Nogtans raai ek u aan om nie my heer te wantrou nie, want ek weet vir seker dat hy vriendelik, saggeard, ruimhartig en hoflik is en nie belus op geld of goed nie. Daar is niks op aarde wat hy begeer nie, behalwe sy eer en goeie naam. Ek is ook vas oortuig dat hy in hierdie noodtoestand niks sal doen sonder my raad nie. En ek sal so te werk gaan in hierdie saak dat u, deur die genade van God, met ons versoen sal word.'

Toe sê hulle uit een mond: 'Geëerde vrou, ons onderwerp ons en ons besittings ten volle aan u wil en oordeel en is gereed om op enige dag wat u mag bepaal te kom en ons belofte en verbond in so 'n mate te verstewig dat u wil en dié van heer Melibeus sal geskied.' 1764

Hierop het Prudentia hulle weer stil-stil huis toe gestuur en na haar heer teruggekeer en vir hom vertel dat sy sy teenstanders berouvol gevind het, dat hulle

hul sondes en oortredinge nederig beken en bereid is om daarvoor te boet, maar dat hul sy genade en mededoë afbid.

Melibeus sê toe: 'Iemand wat nie probeer om sy sonde te verontskuldig nie, maar dit erken, berou daarvoor betoon en om mededoë vra, is waardig om vergiffenis en genade te ontvang. Seneca sê: "Waar daar skuldbelydenis is, is daar kwytskelding en vergiffenis, want bekentenis grens aan onskuld," en op 'n ander plek sê hy: "Hy wat hom oor sy sonde skaam en dit bely, verdien genade." Daarom stem ek in tot vrede, maar ek dink nie dat ek dit sonder die instemming en goedkeuring van ons vriende moet sluit nie.'

Prudentia was baie bly en sê: 'Jy het reg geantwoord, my heer. Dit was hulle raad, instemming en goedkeuring wat jou aangespoor het tot wraak en oorlogvoering en daarom behoort jy nie sonder hulle raad versoening en vrede aan te hang nie. Die wetsbepaling lui: "In die verloop van sake is dit goed dat iets ongedaan gemaak word deur diegene deur wie dit gedaan is.'

1783

Toe het Prudentia onmiddellik boodskappers na hul familielede en hul vertroude en wyse vriende gestuur sodat sy hulle in die teenwoordigheid van Melibeus van al hierdie dinge kon verwittig en hulle raad kon vra in hierdie netelige saak. Nadat hul vriende die aangeleentheid met groot erns en omsigtigheid ondersoek het, het hulle eenstemmig rus en vrede aanbeveel en dat Melibeus sy teenstanders goedgunstig moet ontvang en vergewe en begenadig.

Toe Prudentia die besluit van Melibeus gehoor het, asook die raad van hul vriende wat met haar wil en bedoeling saamgestem het, was sy baie bly en sy het gesê: 'Die spreekwoord lui "Van uitstel kom afstel"; dus moet mens nie tot môre oorlaat iets wat jy vandag nog kan doen nie. Dus raai ek jou aan om wyse boodskappers na jou teenstanders te stuur om hulle in jou naam bekend te maak dat as hulle oor vrede en eensgesindheid wil onderhandel, hulle sonder versuim na ons toe moet kom.' En dit het toe gebeur. En toe die boetvaardige oortreders die boodskappers aangehoor het, was hulle vreugdevol en het hulle ootmoedig, vriendelik en hoflik geantwoord en dadelik die boodskappers na Melibeus vergesel.

Hulle het van hul ware vriende saamgeneem om vir hulle borg te staan. Toe hulle in die teenwoordigheid van Melibeus te staan kom, rig hy hierdie woorde tot hulle: 'Sake staan so. Sonder oorsaak of rede het julle my, asook my vrou Prudentia en my dogter groot leed en onreg aangedoen. Julle het my huis gewelddadig binnegedring en so 'n wandaad gepleeg dat almal weet dat jul die doodstraf verdien. En daarom wil ek van julle weet of julle die straf en vergelding vir dié wandaad aan my en aan my vrou Prudentia oorlaat of nie.'

Hierop het die wysste onder hulle namens al drie geantwoord: 'My heer, ons weet dat ons onwaardig is om in die hof van so 'n edele en agtenswaardige heer te verskyn. Ons het so erg gesondig en u so gruwelik te na gekom dat ons inderdaad die dood verdien. Maar tog het ons, op grond van die goedheid en mildheid wat die hele wêreld aan u toereken, hierheen gekom om ons op u barmhartigheid en voortreflikheid te beroep. Ons onderwerp ons ten volle aan u, maar smee dat u in genadige mededoë ons diepe berou en onderdanigheid in aanmerking sal neem en ons gruwelike gedrag sal vergewe, want, hoe verfoeilik en verwerplik ons oortreding teen u was, ons is nogtans bewus hoe ver die goedheid van u ruim guns en genade die boosheid van ons wandaad oortref.'

1826

Toe het Melibeus hul vriendelik van die grond af opgerig en hul verbintnisse en dié van hul borge in ontvangs geneem en 'n dag bepaal wanneer hul weer voor hom moes verskyn om sy oordeel en vonnis aan te hoor. Daarna het elkeen na sy huis teruggekeer.

Toe sy haar kans gewaar, vra Prudentia vir Melibeus watter vergelding hy

beoog.

‘Dit is my voorneme,’ antwoord hy, ‘om al hul besittings verbeurd te verklaar en hul vir altyd te verban.’

Prudentia maak toe beswaar: ‘Dit sou egter ’n wrede en uiters onredelike vonnis wees. Jy is ryk genoeg en het geen behoefte aan ander se goed nie. Op dié manier kan jy alte maklik ’n naam vir gierigheid kry en dis iets onaangenaams wat ’n goeie man moet vermy. Die Apostel sê: “Gierigheid is die wortel van alle kwaad.” Daarom is dit beter vir jou om van jou eie besittings te verloor as om van hulle s’n te vat, want dis verkiesliker om met eer te verloor as om met oneer te wen. Elkeen moet hom daarop toelê om ’n goeie naam te kry. Hy moet hom ook inspan om dit te behou, maar daarbenewens moet dit sy sorg wees om iets te doen om dit daagliks te hernu, want daar staan geskrewe: “’n Mens se ou reputasie gaan gou verby tensy dit hernu en herbevestig word.” En wat die vebanning van jou teenstanders betref, dit kom my onredelik en onregmatig voor, gesien in die lig van die feit dat hulle jou mag oor hulle gegee het. Daar staan geskrewe: “Hy wat misbruik maak van die mag wat aan hom gegee is, verdien om die voorreg te verloor.” En al kan jy dié straf volgens wet en reg oplê, wat ek betwyfel, sal jy dit dalk nie kan uitvoer nie, en dan sal dit net ’n voortsetting van die stryd tot gevolg hê. As jy verlang om geëer te word, moet jy met groter welwillendheid oordeel; dit wil sê, jou oordeel en jou vonnis moet genadiger wees. Daar staan: “Hy wat met die grootste welwillendheid beveel, word die geredelikste gehoorsaam.” Daarom is my pleidooi dat jy jou hart probeer oorwin. Seneca sê: “Hy wat sy eie hart oorwin, is ’n dubbele oorwinnaar.” En Cicero sê: “In ’n groot heer is niks so prysenswaardig as dat hy gematig, milddadig en vatbaar vir oortuiging is nie.” Ek smee jou ook om af te sien van weerwraak, sodat jou goeie naam behoue kan bly, mense jou met reg om jou genade en mededoë sal kan prys, en jy agterna geen spyt hoef te hê nie. Seneca sê: “Dis ’n armsalige oorwinnaar wat sy oorwinning moet berou.” Daarom vra ek, laat genade in jou hart setel, sodat God Almagtig jou by die Laaste Oordeel ook genadig mag wees, want Jakobus sê: “Die oordeel sal onbarmhartig wees oor diegene wat geen barmhartigheid bewys het nie.”

1869

Toe Melibeus die sterk argumente en redenasies en die wyse voorligting van Prudentia aangehoor het, het sy hart na haar wil begin neig en voor lank het hy ingestem met haar raad en sy dank betuig aan God uit wie alle deug en goedheid voortgaan vir so ’n oordeelkundige vrou. En die dag toe sy teenstanders weer voor hom moes verskyn, het hy mooi met hulle gepraat en gesê: “Alhowel jul in hoogmoed en verwaandheid, onbedagsaamheid en onkunde oortree het en vir my kwaad aangedoen het, slaan ek desondanks ag op jul groot nederigheid, jul spyt en die berou wat julle betoon, en dit alles beweeg my om aan julle genade te verleen. Julle vind dus guns in my oë en ek vergewe jul volledig alle wangedrag, smaad en benadeling teenoor my en dié wat ek liehet, in die vertrou dat God in Sy eindelose goedheid ons in die uur van ons dood ook al ons oortredings teenoor Hom sal vergewe. Want dit is ongetwyfeld so dat as ons spyt het en berou betoon oor ons sondes voor die aangesig van ons Here God, Hy in genade ons sondes sal vergewe en ons Sy oneindige saligheid sal laat binnegaan. Amen.’

Proloog tot die Monnik se verhaal

Toe ek aan die einde van my storie kom
oor Melibeus en dié vrou van hom, 1890

toe sê ons Waard: “Nou, as opregte man
sweer ek dié eed by corpus Madrian:¹
ek sou graag afstand doen van ’n vat vol aal
as Godelief, my vrou, ook dié verhaal
kon aangehoor het. Watter goeie beskeid:
Prudentia en haar lankmoedigheid!
By Gods gebeente, as ek ’n kneg kasty,
dan is sy dadelik met ’n knuppel by
en skreeu: ‘Slaan dood die honde, iedereen!
Breek hulle rûe, elke bot en been!’ 1900

En as ’n buurman dit sou nalaat om
in die kerk vir haar te buig, of anders dom
genoeg is en haar affronteer, dan storm
sy huis toe en haar woede is enorm.
Sy gil: ‘Jou valse lafaard, wreek jou vrou!
By Gods genade, gee my daai mes van jou
en vat vir jou my spinrok en gaan spin!’
Van vroeg tot laat sal sy met die ding begin:
‘Helaas,’ sê sy dan, ‘dis my droewe lot,
ek is getroud met ’n papbroek of ’n sot; 1910
deur almal rondgestoot, is hy te sleg
om op te kom vir sy arme vrou se reg.’

So gaan dit maar; as ek nie wil baklei,
moet ek maar liewers uit haar pad uit bly.
Wat sy verwag is dat ek onbevrees,
so wild soos ’n verwoede leeu moet wees.
Eendag maak sy my nog ’n moordenaar
en los my dan om self te sien kom klaar.
Ek kan gevaarlik wees met ’n mes in die hand,
al is ek eenmaal nie teen haar bestand; 1920
want sy is mansgenoeg om op te tree
teen enigiemand wat haar aanstoot gee.
Maar kom ons laat dié onderwerp opsy.

Heer Monnik,” sê hy, “wees ’n slaggie bly.
Ons is al amper in Rochester en nou
is dit jou beurt om ons te onderhou.
Ry vorentoe. Bederf tog nie ons pret.
Verwittig ons nou eers watter naam jy het.
Hoe moet ’n mens jou aanspreek; as heer Jan,
heer Thomas altemit of heer Alban? 1930
Uit watter klooster kom jy? Laat ons hoor.
Jou vel is glad en goed versorg; dis oor
jy goed gevoed is, waar dit ook mag wees.
Jy lyk nie soos ’n boeteling of gees.
Jy is ’n hooggeplaaste, na die skyn,

¹ By die liggaam van ’n denkbeeldige heilige.

'n keldermeester of 'n sakristein,
want waarlik waar, dis duidelik soos die dag,
in die klooster is jy 'n man van groot gesag,
nie 'n novise² of 'n gewone broer,
maar een bekwaam om daar gesag te voer. 1940
Maar daarby ook 'n man van vlees en bloed;
van voorkoms, welgeskape, fris en goed.

My bede is dat God die man vergewe
wat jou oorreed het tot die kloosterlewe!
Jy kon 'n knap teelhaan³ gewees het as
die geleentheid daartoe jou beskore was
om, luidens aangename Skrifvertolking,
ook by te dra tot die aarde se bevolking.
Helaas dat jy 'n koorkap dra, want as 1950
ek Pous was, dan sou ek vir jou gelas –
en nie net jou nie, elke stoere man

wat rondloop met 'n geskeerde harsingpan –
om 'n vrou te vat. Die wêreld gaan te gronde,
omdat die Kerk beslag lê op gesonde
voortplanters en ons arme leke ly:
van 'n powere boom sal mens swak vrugte kry,
en daarom is ons kinders sonder fut,
vir vermenigvuldiging van weinig nut.

Dis dié dat vroue hul tot fraters wend,
want hulle bied 'n beter paaient 1960
aan Venus as dit waartoe 'n leek in staat is;
hul't immers g'n behoefte aan valse bates.
Maar moenie kwaad wees oor ek grappies maak,
al is 'n mens se grappies soms ook raak.”

Die Monnik het als goedig aangehoor
en toe gesê: “Ek dra ook graag iets voor,
selfs twee of drie vertellinge gewis,
solank as wat die strekking stigtelik is.
As julle wil, dan kan ek my bepaal 1970
by Eduard die Belyer se verhaal
of ek kan my tot 'n paar tragedies wend –
met naastenby 'n honderd is ek bekend.

'n Tragedie, sê geleerdes, is 'n storie
waaruit ons leer van die verlore glorie
van mense wat uit welvaart, mag en eer
geval het en dit alles moes ontbeer
en hulle dae in ellende slyt.
Van heksameters word daar meestentyds
gebruik gemaak – dit is 'n versreël wat 1980
sesvoetig is – al is dit ook so dat
party in prosa is, of 'n ander maat
word aangewend. My uitleg daargelaat.

Ek wil nou graag vertel, maar moet van meet
verskoning vra as ek nie altyd weet

2 Iemand wat 'n proeftyd (of novisiaat) in 'n klooster uitdien voordat hy of sy daarin opgeneem word.
3 'n Haan wat goeie eienskappe het en geskik is om vir teeldoelindes gebruik te word.

presies hoe volg die mense op mekaar,
die pouse, keisers, konings; ek loop gevaar
om sake te verwar en nie te hou
by wat daar in boeke staan, want ek vertrou
op my geheue; dus as ek fouteer,
moet julle maar my onkunde blameer.”

1990

DIE MONNIK SE VERHAAL

In die styl van die Tragedie wil ek die lot
bekla van hul wat uit 'n hoë stand
so diep geval het dat geen middel tot
herstel vir hul beskikbaar was nie, want
met die Fortuin eers teen 'n mens gekant,
kan jy die verdere verloop nie keer:
om voorspoed te vertrou is arrogant,
soos hierdie ware ou gevalle ons leer.

LUCIFER

Eerstens van Lucifer, wat nie 'n man
was nie maar 'n engel, sal ek nou vertel.
Ofskoon die noodlot nie 'n engel kan
benadeel nie, tog is hy ewentwel
uit die hoogte neergewerp tot in die hel.
O Lucifer, die helderste van al
die engele, vir jou's daar geen herstel
uit die ellende van jou sondeval.

2000

ADAM

Daar's Adam: sonder sondesmet is hy
deur God se hand gemaak in die veld waar nou
Damaskus staan, en aan sy heerskappy
is die hele Paradystuin toevertrou,
met een boom uitgesonder. Van toe tot nou
het niemand hoër heerlijkheid verwerf,
maar deur sy wandaad het hy als verbrou
en arbeid, onheil en die hel geërf.

2010

SIMSON

Daar's Simson. Sy geboorte's voorberei
deur die boodskap van 'n engel voor die tyd
en hy's aan God Almagtig toegewy;
solank as hy kon sien, vol heerlijkheid,
want daar was nooit 'n ander man soos hy;
sy sterkte en sy dapperheid was groot;
maar aan sy vrou is sy geheim bely,
en dit was toe die oorsaak van sy dood.

2020

Met blote hand het Simson, man van mag,
'n leeu verskeur waarop hy langs die pad
afgekom het op sy huweliksdag,
want hy't geen wapen byderhand gehad.
Sy vrou het so aan hom getorring dat
sy sy geheim ontdek het, want sy wou
hom aan die vyand oorgee; toe't sy glad
vir hom versaa, met 'n ander man getrou.

2030

Driehonderd jakkalse – want hy was kwaad –
het hy gevang; toe het hy fakkels aan
hul sterte vasgebind, hul losgelaat
dat hulle deur die ongesnyde graan,
die wingerde en die olywe gaan;
hy steek op dié manier als aan die brand.
'n Duisend Filistyne het hy verslaan
met net 'n eselskakebeen in die hand.

Nou, nadat hy hul doodgemaak het, is
hy deur die dors oorweldig en het hy
God aangeroop in sy ontsteltenis:
'Ontferm U, Heer; U sien hoedat ek ly.
As U uitkoms stuur, kan ek behoue bly.'
Toe het 'n stroom uit die kakebeen gewel.
Hy het gedrink daarvan, genoeg gekry.
God het gehelp, soos Rigters ons vertel.

2040

In Gasa het hy in die middel van die nag,
ten spyte van die Filistyne wat
hom voorgelê het, deur sy louter krag
die poorte losgeruk van daardie stad
en hulle op sy skouers weggevat
na 'n bergtop toe waar almal dit kon sien.
Was hy nie deur Delila afgemat,
sou hy weergaloos gewees het sedertdien.

2050

Hy het sy lippe aan geen drank gesit,
geen skeermes het sy hare aangeraak;
die engelboodskapper se opdrag dit,
want anders het sy sterkte hom versaa.
En Simson, hy wat twintig jaar die taak
gehad het om oor Israel te regeer,
was diep bedroef toe hy die ontdekking maak:
'n vroumens het sy ondergang prakseer.

2060

Delila was sy liefing; hy maak vir haar
toe die geheim van sy sterkte deelgenoot,
maar sy't dit aan die vyand openbaar.
Hy lê en slaap, sy kop rus op haar skoot;
sy sny sy vlegsels af en toe, ontbloot
van sterkte, is hy stewig vasgebind

en het die Filistyne hom met groot
verrukking weggevoer en hom verblind.

2070

Nou het hul al sy hare afgesny
en dus daarin geslaag om hom te bind;
nou moet hy vir die vyand maal waar hy
hom as gevangene in 'n grot bevind.
O edele Simson, sterkste mensekind,
eertydse rigter, groots en luisterryk,
jy kan wel ween, want jy is blind
en al die glorie het van jou gewyk.

Hoor nou die lot van die ellendeling.
Sy vyande het mos 'n fees berei:
in 'n stampvol tempel het hul hom gedwing
om hulle te vermaak met sotterny,
maar toe sy gees weer opgevlam het, kry
hy twee pilare beet en ruk en stoot
tot die gebou ineenstort; so is hy
toe saam met al die Filistyne dood.

2080

Dis nou te sê dat die prinse iedereen,
asook 'n verdere drieduisendtal
van die volk, gesterf het onder hope steen.
Aangaande Simson self is dit nou al
wat ek te sê het. Hierdie storie sal
'n man oortuig om sy vrou niks te vertel
wat hy geheim wil hou nie; in so 'n geval
sit hy sy lyf en lewe op die spel.

2090

HERAKLES

Van dié veroweraar se hoë faam
spreek Herakles se heldedade luid,
want in sy fleur was hy tot als bekwaam,
getooi in 'n verwurgte leeu se huid:
Hy't die sentoure⁴ in hul trots gestuit
en ook nog die harpye,⁵ wreed en fel;
hy't die goue appels van die draak gebuit
en Kerebos verwyder uit die hel.

2100

Hy't die wrede Busiris gedood en gestaan
en kyk hoe sy perd hom opvreet, vlees en been,
en die vurige gifslang het hy ook verslaan.
In sy stryd met Archeloôs het hy een
van sy horings gebreek, en in 'n grot van steen
Cakus verwoes; die sterk reus Anteus
en die wildevark's verdelg deur hom alleen.
Lank het die hemel op sy skouer gerus.

2110

⁴ Wesens met die bolyf van 'n mens en die onderlyf van 'n perd.
⁵ Mitiese monster soos 'n groot voël met die bolyf van 'n vrou.

Niemand het ooit, vanaf die begin van die tyd,
soveel monsters in sy mag gekry.
Vanweë sy sterkte en vrygewigheid
was sy roem oor die wye wêreld heen versprei.
Hy't elke streek besoek waar hy heerskappy
gevoer het; hy was ongeëwenaar;
en die uiteindes van die aarde het hy,
sê Tropheus, gemerk met 'n pilaar.

Nou, die geliefde van dié edele held
was Deianira, frisser as die Mei;
van haar het hy, soos die geleerdes meld,
'n gawe nuwe hemp present gekry.
Maar watter ramspoed het dit begelei,
want dis in die geheim met gif deurweek
wat na 'n halwe dag begin afskei
en stukke van sy liggaam af laat breek.

2120

Daar is diegene wat haar nie blameer,
want ene Nessius het dit gemaak,
maar hoe hul ook al daaroor redeneer,
feit is: die hemp het aan sy vel geraak
met 'n wrede gifstof wat sy liggaam blaak,
en oor hy nie die gifdood wou verduur
en niks kon doen sodat die lyding staak,
het hy sy liggaam oorgegee aan vuur.

2130

So't dit met Herakles die held gegaan.
Wie kan geluk vertrou die hele tyd?
Die man wat deur die drukte 'n weg wil baan,
kom dikwels tot 'n val onvoorbereid.
Selfkennis bly die hoogste kundigheid.
Fortuna, op jou ondergang bedag,
sal jou bekoor en steeds haar kans verbeid
om toe te slaan as jy dit nie verwag.

2140

NEBUKADNESAR

Watter tong sou reg kon laat geskied
aan die mag van die heerskappy, die ryke skat,
die heersersepter oor die ruim gebied
van Nebukadnesar? Tweemaal het hy die stad
Jerusalem oorwin en elke vat
verwyder, vroeër tot die diens van God
gewy, na Babel toe, sy hoofstad wat
'n setel was van glorie en genot.

2150

Die skoonste van die seuns van Israël
se koningshuis het hy eers laat kastreer
en toe't hy hul verslaaf. Nou, Daniël
was onder hul: 'n jongman wat oor meer
wysheid beskik as enige Chaldeër.
Die drome van die koning wat niemand daar
onder sy wyses kon interpreteer
kon Daniël maklik uitlê en verklaar.

Die verwaande koning het 'n beeld van goud
laat oprig, sestig el hoog en sewe wyd,
en toe het hy beveel dat jonk en oud
hul neer moes buig in onderdanigheid,
en dié wat weier, was hul lewe kwyd:
vir hul't 'n vuuroond wat fel brand gewag,
maar Daniël en sy maats was nie bereid
om in te stem tot sulke wangedrag.

2160

Hovaardig het die koning nie besef
dat God die Heer wat troon in majesteit
hom van sy hoë status sou onthef;
maar skielik was hy sy vermoëns kwyd.
Hy dag dat hy 'n wilde dier was: hy't
in die ope rondgedwaal en soos 'n bees
het hy hooi geëet, en 'n geruime tyd
was hy blootgestel aan wind en weer gewees.

2170

Soos die vere van 'n arend was sy hare,
sy naels het lank geword soos 'n voël se klou,
maar God het hom verlos ná 'n aantal jare
en weer sy rede aan hom toevertrou.
Toe het hy God gedank met diep berou
en daarna weggebly van bose dade
en verder sondes. Tot sy sterfdag sou
die Heer se mag hom bybly – en genade.

2180

BALTASAR

Sy seun, wat die naam gedra het Baltasar,
het hom opgevolg as draer van die kroon.
Hy kon nie insien hy is in gevaar
en was hoogmoedig, strewend na vertoon;
met beelddiens het hy die Heer gehoon.
Sy stand was veilig – so't hy hom verbeel,

maar deur Fortuna's hy gepluk van die troon
en plotseling is sy koninkryk verdeel.

2190

Eendag het hy 'n fees laat voorberei
vir sy edellui. Te midde van die jolyt
het hy luid uitgeroep: 'Gaan haal vir my
die vate wat my vader in die tyd
van sy triomf gebuit het in die stryd
teen Israel uit die Joodse heiligdom;
laat ons die gode loof met dankbaarheid
dat eer ons vaders en onself toekom.'

Uit hierdie heil'ge vate het sy vrou,
bywywe en lede van die adelstand
met wyn hul dors geles en aangehou
met drink totdat die koning na die wand
gekyk het waar hy sien hoedat 'n hand
daaroor beweeg; 'n sug ruk deur sy lyf;
hy staar en bewe skrikbevange, want
'Mene, Tekel, Peres' staan daar geskryf.

2200

Geen wyse in die hele land kon sê
waarop dit dui, die sin interpreteer,
maar Daniël het dit spoedig uitgelê:
'U vader is deur God bedeel met eer
en glorie, rykdom, mag en nog veel meer,
maar hy was trots en het nie God gevrees,
en daarom was die weerwraak van die Heer
die ontneming van sy heerskappy gewees.

2210

Deur mense is hy verstoot sodat hy met
die esels moes gaan bly in wind en weer,
en soos 'n dier van gras gelewe het,
tot hy weer deur genade en rede leer
dat dit die Hemelvors is wat regeer
oor elke staat en elke mensekind;
toe't God in mededoë nog 'n keer
sy ou gestalte herstel en sy bewind.

2220

U is sy seun en weet dis alles waar,
maar omdat u verwaand is, net soos hy,
kom u teen God in opstand en verklaar
u vyandskap: uit die vate aan Hom gewy
drink u, u vrou, u hoere nog daarby,
verlustig u in allerhande wyn
en skandelik hou u aan afgodery
wat u sal loon met gruwelike pyn.

2230

Die woorde “Mene, Tekel, Peres” deur
die hand geskryf, is deur die Heer beskik:
te lig bevind, moet u die reg verbeur
om te regeer; verdeeldheid is ’n strik
wat Medes en Perse na u kroon laat mik.’
Dié Baltasar’s vermoor dieselfde nag
en Darius het wederregtelik
hom opgevolg in koninklike mag.

Menere, neem ’n les hieruit te baat:
In heerskappy is daar geen sekerheid.
Wanneer Fortuna eers ’n mens verlaat,
verloor jy ryk en rykdom terselfdertyd
en raak jy gou al wat ’n vriend is kwyt.
Die vriende wat ’n mens in voorspoed wen,
versaak jou maklik, want dié spreekwoord’s feit:
“In bitter nood leer jy jou vriende ken.”

2240

ZENOBIA

Omtrent Zenobia die koningin
van Palmira se hoë faam verklaar
die Persiërs dat sy bedrewe in
die krygkuns was en ongeëwenaar
in deug en die trotsering van gevaar.
Zenobia was van koninklike bloed
en sy was nie die mooiste vrou nie, maar
haar liggaamsbou was onteenseglik goed.

2250

Van kindsbeen af het sy nie juis ’n oog
gehad vir vrouewerk; sy’t haar vermei
in die bos waar, toegerus met pyl en boog,
sy baie herte onder skoot kon kry;
sy’t soms een ingehaal, so vlug was sy.
Toe sy ouer was, is leeus en luiperds deur
haar doodgemaak, en as sy een kon kry,
dan het sy ook ’n beer kaalhand verskeur.

2260

Sy’t diere uit hul lêplek opgejaag,
in die berge rondgeloop die hele nag;
as sy wou slaap, dit onder ’n bos gewaag.
Sy kon met ’n jongman stoei met alle mag
en hom oorwin, ten spyte van sy krag;
g’n uitdaging het sy verby laat gaan;
en, oor sy heilig was op haar gesag,
haar maagdelikheid aan niemand afgestaan.

2270

Na lang getalm het sy tog die raad
van vriende aanvaar, haar in die eg begewe
met ’n vooraanstaande man, prins Odenaat.
Opmerkzaam was dat sy beskouings ewe

sonderling as hare was, ook sy strewe,
maar toe hul saamgevoeg is, het hul in
volstreckte vreugde en geluk gelewe
want hulle het mekaar intens bemin.

Net een ding uitgesonderd. Kort en klaar:
hy mag nie met haar slaap meer as een nag;
dit was alleen haar doel om 'n kind te baar
ter wille van die komende geslag;
en, blyk dit daarna dat sy nie verwag,
dan het sy toegelaat dat hy maar weer –
mits hy verstaan dis net 'n enkele slag –
sy sin kry met haar en maar weer probeer.

2280

En as sy vind sy's in die ander tyd
laat sy nie toe dat hy haar bed weer deel
vir veertig dae nie; dan's sy bereid
dat hy nog 'n slag die liefdespel kom speel.
Sy opgewondenheid kon haar nie skeel;
hy kry niks meer van haar, want sy't beweer
dat dit skandalig is om seksueel
om enige ander rede te verkeer.

2290

Sy het twee seuns by Odenaat gehad
en hul in eer en wysheid opgevoed.
Maar terug na my verhaal: ek's seker dat
daar niemand was soos sy – so welgemoed,
so mild, maar nie spandabel met haar goed,
so wys, so hoflik en van soveel waarde
en vasberade in stryd en teespoed –
nie nog so 'n vrou op hierdie ganse aarde.

2300

Onbeskryflik was die prag en praal
van haar klerasie en haar eetgerei;
goud en juwele het haar kledy laat straal.
Al was die jag haar groot liefhebbery,
het sy vreemde tale onder die knie gekry
en as sy kans kry, het dit haar verheug
dat sy uit boeke kon verneem hoe sy
haar lewe kon laat rugsteun deur die deug.

2310

Ek kan wel konstateer, om kort te gaan,
haar eggenoot was ewe gedug as sy;
magtige state is deur hul verslaan
in die Ooste, asook stede op 'n ry,
onderworpe aan Romeinse heerskappy.
So deeglik was dié twee se krygsbestuur,
hul vyande kon nooit die oorhand kry.
Tot Odenaat se dood het dit geduur.

Iemand wat meer wil weet omtrent haar stryd
teen koning Sapor, ander ook daarby, 2320
hoe alles afgeloop het, watter beleid
aanleiding was tot al die vegtery,
die onheil en die leed wat sy moes ly,
beleër en deur vyande verslaan,
kan die storie in Petrarca lees, want hy
het dit goed uitgelê, soos ek verstaan.

Toe Odenaat gesterf het, het sy gade
self oor die ryk regeer met ferme hand;
sy het geveg – en dit met geen genade;
gevolglik was geen prins, geen streek of land 2330
teen haar verwoede magsvertoon bestand;
hul kon haar oppermag geensins bestry
en het hul onderwerp in leenverband,
dat sy haar aandag aan die jag kon wy.

Die keiser Claudius en, voor sy tyd,
die keiser Galiën was bang vir haar;
geen Siriër of Armeniër sou die stryd
aandurf; geen Arabier of Egiptenaar
het ooit die moed daarvoor geopenbaar, 2340
want sy sou hulle eiehandig om
die lewe bring, of hulle leërskaar
sou vlugtend in 'n groot verknorsing kom.

Haar seuns was koninklik geklee: so pas
dit erfgename van die ryk, veral
van hulle vader. Hul name in Persies was
Hermano en Timolaos. Maar sal
Fortuna nie haar heuning meng met gal?
Die koningin se voorspoed het verdwyn,
want sy is deur die noodlot tot 'n val
gebring en tot ellende en bitter pyn, 2350

Want toe Aurelianus kort daarna
aan die bewind van sake in Rome staan,
wou hy graag wraak neem op Zenobia.
Sy legioene het teen haar gegaan;
sy en haar kinders het op die vlug geslaan,
maar hulle is gevang deur die Romeinse leër;
dié het hul land oorwin en daarvandaan
met hul gekettingdes teruggekeer.

Die groot Romein Aurelianus het
'n massa buit met hom teruggebring, 2360
waaronder haar goue koets, juweelbeset.
Voor in sy seëtog is sy gedwing
om haar plek te neem, deur jillendes omring.
Sy't 'n kroon gedra, soos by haar status pas,

en verder goue kettings, string op string,
en klere wat bestik met stene was.

Helaas, Fortuna: sy wat op 'n tyd
die lewensloop van konings kon vergal,
is nou 'n blote skouspel. In die stryd
was sy die een wat 'n helm dra, en pal
het sy die sterkste vestings aangeval.
Haar hoof sal sy nou met 'n kopdoek dos,
en plaas van die geblomde septer sal
sy 'n spinstaf dra en daarmee werk vir haar kos.

2370

PEDRO, KONING VAN SPANJE

Glorie van Spanje, Pedro, hooggeag
en deur die lot verhef tot hoë stand,
dit is gepas dat ons met jammerklag
jou dood betreur. Jou broer't jou uit die land
gedryf en later het sy vals gesant
jou tydens 'n beleg na 'n tent gelei,
dat jou broer jou kon vermoor met eie hand
om so jou ryk en rykdom te verkry.

2380

'n Veld van sneeu met 'n sabel adelaar
op 'n gelymde tak gevang van keel
soos 'n kool wat brand, dui op die moordenaar,
en 'Bose nes' het in die skuld gedeel:
geen Olivier soos Karel s'n, geheel
aan trou gewy was hy nie; maar veeleer
'n Ganelon, sy eerbaarheid verspeel,
wat soiets teen sy koning kon prakseer.⁶

2390

PIERRE, KONING VAN SIPRUS

Groot Pierre van Siprus, jy't dit reggekry
om Aleksandrië deur jou krygsbeleid
te oorwin en baie heidene daarby,
en daarom het jou leenmans uit pure nyd,
alleen vanweë jou voortreflikheid,
jou in jou bed vermoor. Deur 'n wenteling
van Fortuna se wiel word, tot ons spyt,
'n man van aansien so omlaaggebring.

⁶ Pedro is verraai deur Bertrand du Guesclin op wie se silwer wapenskild daar 'n swart tweekoppige adelaar op 'n rooi balk was. Althowel die Afrikaanse heraldiek gewone kleurbenamings gebruik, lewe die middeleeuse terme, soor sabel vir swart en keel vir rooi, in ander tale, o.a. in Nederlands, voort. Du Guesclin is bygestaan deur sy neef, Sir Oliver Mauny, wie se van in Oudfrans op 'bose nes' klink. Hierdie Olivier het anders gehandel as Olivier, die held van die *Chanson de Roland* (die Rolandslied), maar eerder soos Ganelon wat Karel die Grote aan die More uitgelewer het.

BARNABO VAN LOMBARDYE

Dit sou geen sin maak handhaaf ek die swye
oor groot Barnabo, burggraaf van Milaan,
god van genot en gesel van Lombardye.
U het so hoog geklim as mens kan gaan
toe een in dubbele verwantskap aan
uself, as broerskind en skoonseun daarby,
vir u in sy gevangenis dood laat slaan,
maar hoe of hoekom is my onbekend.

2400

UGOLINO, GRAAF VAN PISA

Uit deernis kan geen mensetong vertel
van die hongerdood deur Ugolino gely.
By Pisa staan die toring met die sel
waar hy toegesluit is. Met die graaf was sy
drie kindertjies, die oudste om en by
die vyf jaar oud. Fortuna, in hierdie kou
het wrede mense dit oor die hart gekry
om sulke fyn jong voëltjies aan te hou.

2410

Daar sou hy sterwe, want Rogier,
biskop van Pisa, het 'n eed gesweer,
'n valse aanklag wat die volk summier
in so 'n mate opgesweep het teen dié heer,
hul't hom, soos ek gesê het, aangekeer.
Sy kos was min en ook so sleg daarby,
al het hul van die honger gekrepeer,
was dit maar moeilik om dit af te kry.

2420

Eendag het dit gebeur dat die prisonier
die tyd dat hul sy kos gewoonlik bring,
hoor hoe die toringhek deur die sipier
gesluit word. Dit het tot hom deurgedring
hy word hier oorgelaat aan die marteling
van 'n hongerdood. Hoewel hy niks gesê het,
kon hy die bitter trane nie bedwing
dat so 'n lyding vir hom voorgelê het.

2430

Sy jongste wat maar drie was, vra vir hom:
'Vader, jy huil; wat is dit dan met jou?
En wanneer sal hul met ons ete kom?
Is daar geen korsie waaraan ek kan kou?
Deur honger word ek uit die slaap gehou.
Ek wens ek kon vir ewig slaap. Ag Heer,
dan voel ek nie die nare pyn soos nou.
Daar's niks wat ek soos 'n stukkie brood begeer.'

So het die kleintjie dag na dag geween
en eindelijk, rustend op sy pa se skoot, 2440
gesê: 'Vaarwel nou, Vader; ek moet heen,'
sy pa gesoen, en spoedig was hy dood.
Die vader was bedroef; sy pyn was groot,
en hy het sy twee arms begin byt,
geroep: 'Helaas, Fortuna, aanskou my nood
wat ek alles aan jou valse wiel moet wyt.'

Toe hulle sien hoe hy sy arms byt, toe dag
sy kinders dis van honger, nie van wee,
en hulle roep hom toe: 'Nee, Vader, wag.
Neem lieverste ons vlees; voed jou daarmee. 2450
Neem dit van ons; jy't dit aan ons gegee.
Versadig jou.' Dit was hul woorde aan
hul vader; daarna, binne 'n dag of twee,
het hulle in sy arms doodgegaan.

Dus het die noodlot klaargespeel met hom:
ten spyte van vergange mag en praal,
het Ugolino in wanhoop omgekom.
Genoeg van hierdie tragiese verhaal;
wie dit wil lees op uitgebreider skaal, 2460
sal dit by die groot digter Dante kry,
want hy het in die Italiaanse taal
volledig oor die storie uitgewei.

NERO

'n Bose man was Nero en sy lus
het ewe fel as 'n duiwel s'n gebrand
(dus die betroubare Suetonius);
tog was die wye wêreld in sy hand.
Orals het hy gesoek in elke land
saffiere, pêrels en robyne om
sy klere daarmee te laat skitter, want
edelgesteentes was so mooi vir hom. 2470

Daar was nog nooit tevore of daarna
'n trotser koning, meer gesteld op prag:
'n kledingstuk 'n enkele keer gedra
het hy daarna as uitgedien verag.
Vir visvang in die Tiber – as hy die dag
dit graag wou doen – was daar van gouddraad nette.
Fortuna het hom vriendelik togelag
en sy begeertes was so goed as wette.

Rome het hy verbrand vir sy plesier,
die senatore afgemaak op 'n dag 2480
net om te hoor hoe hulle skreeu en gier,
sy broer vermoor, sy suster ook verkrag,

sy moeder met verskriklike gedrag
behandel deur haar liggaam oop te sny
oor hy wou sien waar hy ontvang is. Ag,
dat iemand so iets oor sy hart kon kry!

Geen enkele traan het die gesig ontlok;
hy't net gesê: 'Sy was 'n skone vrou.'
Mens staan verwonderd dat hy sonder skok
sy ma se dooie skoonheid kon aanskou. 2490
Toe sê hy: 'Bring die wyn.' En hy't dit gou
geledig en geen blyk gegee van smart.
Word wreedheid nog deur mag in stand gehou,
dan dring die gif diep in 'n mens se hart.

'n Leraar het die keiser in sy jeug
gehad vir kennis en moraliteit;
dié was 'n ware sinnebeeld van deug –
as die kroniek nie lieg nie – in sy tyd.
Gedurende sy minderjarigheid
is die jonge Nero so goed voorberei 2500
dat dit lank geduur het voor die wrede nyd
en tirannie 'n vat op hom kon kry.

Vir die goeie leraar, Seneca, wat hier
ter sprake is, het Nero groot ontsag
gekoester, want hy't op 'n mooi manier
sy heer tereggewys. 'n Keiser moet ag
slaan op die deug en boosheid met alle mag
vermy,' het hy gemaan. Sy raad was goed,
maar hy't sy polse in die bad eendag
gesny en so sy lewe ingeboet. 2510

In sy jeug het Nero Seneca vereer
deur altyd vir sy meester op te staan,
maar later was dit 'n grief wat hom verteer
en het die wrokgevoelens nooit getaan.
Die wyse Seneca't geen fout begaan
toe hy, in plaas van erger marteling,
sy hand dus aan sy eie lewe slaan
So't Nero sy liewe meester omgebring.

Fortuna het vanweë sy hovaardy
later haar steun onttrek aan Nero, want 2520
hy was wel sterk, maar sterker nog was sy.
Sy dag: 'Dit was groot dwaasheid aan my kant
om so 'n bose man so lank in stand
te hou in die keiseramp en daarom sal
ek hom van sy troon af pluk met ruwe hand;
ek sal hom onverhoeds bring tot 'n val.'

Een nag toe kom die volk in opstand teen sy wanbestuur. Toe hy dit agterkom, toe't hy uit sy paleis gevlug; alleen het hy gaan aanklop waar hy hulp verwag, maar gehamer en geroep het niks vermag, want deure is teen hom gegrendel. Oplaas besef hy dis gevaarlike gedrag wat hy moet staak, en hy't hom weggehaas.

2530

Die mense hardloop roepend hot en haar; met sy eie ore hoor hy hul geskrei: 'Waar's Nero nou, die valse moordenaar?' Sy vrees het hom gedryf tot raserny en smeekgebede, nouliks uitgekry, dat sy gode hom moes help, maar als verniet. Ten einde raad en vreesbevange het hy 'n tuin betree wat hom dalk skuilplek bied.

2540

Daar kom hy af op twee kleinboere wat hurkend by 'n vuur hul warm hou; met groot gesoebat smeeke hy hulle dat hul sy kop vir hom moes afkap, want hy wou verhoed dat iemand ná sy dood verbrou deur sy liggaam dalk te skend; toe hy sy hand egter aan eie lewe slaan, beskou Fortuna dit as uiters amusant.

2550

HOLOFERNES

Geen vors se veldheer het so baie lande as Holofernes onderwerp; soveel gespog met magsvertoon op allerhande gebiede as hy. Deur ydelheid gestreel, het hy hom ook met soveel mag bedeel, want, liefderyk deur die Fortuin gekus en aan die neus gelei, kon niks hom skeel tot hy sy kop verloor – skoon onbewus.

Hy't die mag gehad om mense te beroof van vryheid en besittings, maar nog meer, hy het sy mag laat geld oor hul geloof. 'Nebukadnesar's god,' het hy beweer en niemand mag 'n ander godheid eer, en orals moes hul doen soos hy gelas behalwe in Betoel, 'n stad beleër, waar Eliakim hoëpriester was.

2560

Nou watter end kon Holofernes hê? Te midde van sy leër het hy een nag besope in sy skuurgroot tent gelê op die naat van sy rug. Ten spyte van sy mag

2570

het Judit, blote vrou, daar met een slag
van sy eie swaard sy kop van sy lyf gekap
en daarmee in die hand het sy toe sag
die tent verlaat en terug na haar stad gestap.

DIE ROEMRYKE KONING ANTIOCHUS

Dis nouliks nodig om die mag te meld
van Antiochus en sy majesteit;
hy was berug vir dade van geweld;
'n verwaande heerser by uitnemendheid.
Lees maar in Makkabeërs⁷ van die nyd
en grootpraat wat die volkere verstom het
en waarom hy, oplaas sy voorspoed kwyt,
ellendig in die bergland omgekom het.

2580

Fortuna het hom in sy trots verhoog,
maar sy vermetelheid het hom laat dwaal
dat hy kon uitreik na die hemelboog,
die hoë berge weeg soos in 'n skaal,
die hooggety beveel dat dit moet daal;
maar bowenal het hy Gods volk gehaat –
hy dag Gods wraak sou hom nooit agterhaal –
en hy't hul oorgegee aan pyn en smaad.

2590

En oor Nikanor en Timotheus
so deeglik afgeransel is, het hy
nog hatiger as ooit geword en dus
sy strydwa vir die reis laat voorberei
na Jerusalem; dié stad sou daarvoor ly
dat hy verneder is, het hy gesweer.
Hy sou dit omskep in 'n woesteny,
maar spoedig is sy planne gefrustreer.

Die Here't hom bestraf, want allerhande
vreeslike pyne het hom aangetas
van 'n onbekende kwaal in sy ingewande.
Ondraaglik was sy lyding, maar dit was
as goddelike oordeel heel van pas,
want hy't graag pyn aan ander toegedien;
maar ondanks hierdie gruwelike las
het hy nie van sy oormoed afgesien.

2600

Sy leër was op gereedheidsgrondslag, maar
nog voor hy hom kom kry, het die Here al
sy hoogmoed en sy grootpraat laat bedaar:
hy't met 'n harde slag van sy wa geval.
Beserings aan sy liggaam sonder tal
het hom verhinder om te loop of ry;

2610

⁷ 'n Apokriewe Bybelboek.

hul moes hom op 'n draagstoel rondra pal
vanweë pyne in sy rug en sy.

Gods oordeel oor hom was so gruwelik
dat aaklige wurms rondkruip in sy vlees
en boonop was sy stank afskuwelik;
sy dienaars wat hom altyd by moes wees
om hom op te pas, kon mettertyd die mees
onaangename reuk nie meer verduur;
hy moes beken in bitter pyn en vrees:
God is die Heer van elke kreatuur.

2620

Die nare stank van sy karkas daarna
was so afstootlik vir sy hele leër
dat niemand gewillig was om hom te dra.
'n Oorlas vir homself en erg beseer
het hy teen 'n verre berg sy dood begeer.
'n Gepaste oordeel is oor hom gevel,
want deur sy toedoen is soveel onteer:
deur smart oorweldig en deur pyn gekwel.

2630

ALEKSANDER

Met die verhaal van Aleksander is
talle bekend; almal met verstand
ken minstens deel van sy geskiedenis.
Om kort te gaan, hy het oor menige land
geseëvier; aan die ander kant,
is vrede afgesmeek vanweë sy faam,
want waar hy gaan, tot aan die verste strand,
het hy die trots van mens en dier beskaam.

Geen vergelyking sou aanvaarbaar wees
tussen hom en 'n ander veroweraar:
die hele wêreld het vir hom gevrees;
hy was in elke opsig mild en waar,
bedeel met gawes ongeëwenaar;
hy was 'n leeu: so moedig en so sterk,
was dit nie vir vroue en wyn, sou daar
g'n end gewees het aan sy wil en werk.

2640

Hoe loof ek hom deur die daade te vermeld
van Darius en honderdduisend meer:
wat koning was of hertog, graaf of held,
maar wat deur hom oorwin is; hy't presteer
deur oral oor verowerdes te regeer,
en dus maak dit g'n sin om uit te wei
oor sy voortreflikheid en riddereer,
want al dié lof sou onvoldoende bly.

2650

Volgens Makkabeërs was dié kind

van die Macedoniër Philippus, voor hom
die Griekse koning, twaalf jaar aan bewind.
O goeie, edele Aleksander, waarom
het so 'n ongeluk jou oorgekom?
Deur jou eie mense is jy gif ingegee.
Jy't ses gegooi; Fortuna stamp dit om
om een te word, en is in haar skik daarmee.

2660

Waar kry ek trane vir my jammerklag
oor inbors en grootmoedigheid oorwin?
Die hele wêreldrond was in sy mag,
maar dit was na sy mening nog te min,
so ryk was hy van gees, so hoog van sin.
Waar kry ek woorde vir my aanklag teen
valse Fortuna en die gif: begin
en oorsaak van veel lyding en geween?

2670

JULIUS CAESAR

Deur harde werk en moed en skrandeheid
het die veroweraar Julius sy stand
verhoog tot koninklike majesteit,
die weste onderwerp, by see en land,
en deur verdrag of deur sy sterke hand
oorwonne lande skatplig laat betaal,
maar later was die lot teen hom gekant
al het hy ook die keiseramp behaal.

In Thessalië moes groot Caesar stry
teen sy vrou se pa, Pompeius, wat beheer
gehad het oor die hele ruitery
tot waar die son die ooste illumineer.
Almal is doodgemaak of aangekeer
deur sy vernuf, behalwe dié wat na
Pompeius toe gevlug het. So't sy leer
die Ooste oorwin; en Fortuna het bygedra.

2680

Laat my Pompeius in my klaaglied meld:
hoe dié Romeinse veldheer wat ontsnap
het ná die slag verby was van die veld;
sy kop is deur 'n verraaier afgekap,
en dié't daarmee na Julius aangestap,
wat hom sou huldig – so't hy hom verbeel.
So het Fortuna die nalatenskap
van Pompeius as veroweraar gesteel.

2690

Met louere gekroon het Julius
in seëpraal na Rome teruggekeer,
maar mettertyd het Brutus Cassius,⁸

⁸ Brutus en Cassius as dieselfde persoon beskou is 'n tipiese Middeleeuse vergissing.

deur afguns van sy roem gemotiveer,
in die geheim met ander saamgesweer
teen Julius; hul lê hom listig voor, 2700
volgens die plan deur hulle geprakseer,
en met hul dolke het hul hom deurboor.
Hy't eendag na die Kapitoel gegaan,
soos hy gewoon was om te doen, en daar
val Brutus, valse vriend, hom aan
en ander ook, in haat met hom geskaar,
steek hom met dolke in die openbaar.
Onder die houe het Julius net een keer
of dalk twee keer gekreun – en dat dit waar
is, kan ons uit geskiedenisboeke leer. 2710

So edel was dié Julius se hart
en so gesteld was hy op waardige gedrag
dat hy, ondanks sy pyn en smart,
sy mantel om sy heupe trek, bedag
op die ontbloting dalk van sy geslag;
terwyl hy lê op sterwe en goed weet
dat die einde onafwendbaar op hom wag,
het hy nie van welvoeglikheid vergeet.

U kan u verder tot Lucanus wend,
Suetonius en Valerius, want 2720
hul het die storie van begin tot end.
Fortuna, aan die veroweraars se kant,
se houding het verander in teëstand;
niemand durf haar guns te lank vertrou;
mens moet liefsvaakzaam wees in dié verband,
dié voorbeelde as waarskuwings beskou.

KREUSUS

Ryk Kreusus, vors van Lidië op 'n tyd,
vir wie selfs Sirius lugtig was, beland
aan die toppunt van sy trots in die moeilikheid:
sy teëstanders wou hom juis verbrand 2730
toe die vlamme deur die reën geblus word, want
die hemele het oopgegaan; so't hy ontkom;
maar wat leer iemand met so min verstand,
want vir die galg berei die noodlot hom.

Oor hy ontkom het, wou hy sonder meer
hom vir 'n nuwe oorlog voorberei;
dit was Fortuna, so het hy geredeneer,
wat die reën gestuur het om hom te bevry,
dus sou g'n vyand hom ooit onderkry;
en verder het hy 'n droom gehad een nag 2740
wat hom so trots laat voel het en so bly
dat hy van toe af steeds na weerwraak smag.

Hy het gedroom hy's in 'n boom omhoog,
waar Jupiter sy rug was en sy sy
en Phoibos reg staan om hom af te droog
met 'n spierwit handdoek. Uit pure hovaardy
vra hy sy dogter wat toevallig by
hom staan of sy vir hom kan sê
wat dit beteken, want hy wis dat sy
dit sou kon doen. So't sy dit uitgelê:

2750

'Die boom dui op die galg,' verduidelik sy,
'en Jupiter sal sneeu- en reënweer wees,
en Phoibos met sy handdoek uitgesprei,
is die son se strale. Vader, ek's bevrees
dat hulle jou gaan hang, dan word jou vlees
deur die reën gewas en deur die son gedroog.'
Suiwer is die waarskuwing voor sy gees
geroep deur sy dogter Phania se betoog.

Kreusus die trotse koning's opgehang;
sy koninklike roem kon hom niks baat.
Tragedie volg maar steeds dieselfde gang:
so word die trotse koninklike staat
op onverwagte wyse pal geskaad
deurdat Fortuna ons met hou op hou
bestraf; so kom 'n wolk oor haar gelaat
juis dié momemt dat mens op haar vertrou.

2760

Hier onderbreek die Ridder die Monnik se verhaal.

'Ho,' roep die Ridder, 'goeie heer, kry klaar!
Ons het genoeg daarvan gehoor, voorwaar;
meer as genoeg, want vir die meeste mense
is stories van ellende teen hul wense.
Wat my betref, dit maak my skoon bedruk
as ek verneem van mense wat geluk
geken het en dan val op dié manier.
Aan die ander kant, is dit 'n groot plesier
om te hoor van een wat van 'n lae vlak
af boontoe klim na welstand en gemak
en hom kan handhaaf in dié omstandighede.
So 'n vertelling stel 'n mens tevrede;
met 'n lekker hart kan mens dit oorvertel.'

2770

Ons Waard sê: 'By Sint Paulus-klokkespel,
u het gelyk. Dié Monnik is goed gebek
omtrent Fortuna met 'n wolk bedek
of wat ook al, en dis "Tragedie" dan,
maar, liewe hemel, watter waarde kan
dit hê om nou te sit en lamenteer
oor wat verby is. Mens se hart kry seer

2780

van so 'n stywe vrag swaarmoedigheid.
 Vir die opskort van jou beurt is dit hoog tyd,
 want jou vervelige relaas het minder
 voordeel vir ons geselskap as 'n vlinder, 2790
 omdat dit ons g'n aangenaamheid bied,
 en dus, heer Monnik, oftewel heer Piet,
 moet jy liefs aan 'n ander storie dink.
 Dis net danksy die vrolike geklink
 van die klokkies aan jou toom dat ek wakker bly
 of ek het lankal uit my saal gegly,
 hieronder in die slyk tereggekome.
 Dan was jou storie, by Gods heiligdom,
 alles verniet, want ouens wat geleerd is,
 bevestig dat dit sinloos en verkeerd is 2800
 vir iemand om 'n rede af te steek
 hoewel dit hom aan 'n gehoor ontbreek.
 Ek is 'n goeie luisteraar beslis,
 solank die voordrag nie vervelig is.
 So laat ons liefs 'n jagvertelling hoor.'
 'Nee,' sê die Monnik, 'ek't g'n lus daarvoor.
 Laat iemand anders maar vertel; ek's klaar.'
 Toe het ons Waard op sy rowwe wyse, maar
 tog goedig, vir die Nonnepriester aan
 die beurt gestel. 'Kom hiernatoe, heer Jan. 2810
 Vertel ons iets wat ons harte sal verbly.
 Wees opgewek, hoewel jy 'n ou knol ry.
 Solank 'n perd sy pote op kan tel,
 maak dit maar weinig saak, al is hy vel
 en bene, mits sy ruiters vrolik is.'
 'Ja-nee,' sé dié, 'ek sal vrolik wees gewis.'
 En met die doel om nie teleur te stel,
 het hy weggeval en dié verhaal vertel.
 Dit was die bydrae van dié gawe man,
 die Nonnepriester, goeie Broeder Jan. 2820

DIE NONNEPRIESTER SE VERHAAL

Daar het 'n ou en arm weduwee
eens in 'n landhuisie gewoon, geleë
te midde van 'n boomgroep in 'n dal.
Sy het vanaf die dag toe sy ontval
is deur haar man, berustend in
eenvoudigheid geleef, want ewe min
was haar inkomste as haar eiendom.
Deur spaarsaamheid kon sy genoeg bekom
om haar en haar twee dogters te onderhou;
net drie groot sôe had die weduvrou,
drie koeie en 'n skaap wat Mollie heet.
Die kamer waar sy karige maaltye eet
en haar slaapkamer was die ene roet.
Pikante souse het haar nie gevoed
of ander lekkernye haar verheug;
want wat sy kon bekostig, het gedeug.
Sy's nie gekwel deur oorversadiging;
'n matige dieet met oefening
en sielsrus het haar kragte opgebou.
Haar lus vir dans is deur geen jig weerhou
en geen beroerte het haar kop laat pyn;
was dit nou wit of rooi, sy drink geen wyn.
Van lig en donker was haar dis voorsien –
melk en bruin brood, dié't haar goed gedien,
en soms 'n eier of twee met spek daarby,
want 'n melkboerin, sou mens kon sê, was sy.

2830

2840

Sy't 'n werf gehad, met pale omhein en met
'n droë sloot daaromheen, en daarin het
sy 'n haan, wat Kantekleer heet, aangehou.
Op watter kraaier kon mens so vertrou!
Die soetheid van sy stem het jou laat dink
aan orrelspel wat deur die kerk weerklink.
Presieser kom die kraai vanuit sy hok
as enige abdyhorlosie of -klok.
Die wentelings van die hemelewenaar
in daardie dorp het instink geopenbaar,
en elke vyftien grade, op die uur,
het hy gekraai, en dus was hy sekuur.
Rooi soos koraal sy kam, en van kantele
voorsien soos dié op mure van kastele.
Swart was sy snawel, soos git het dit geskitter;
soos lasuriet sy bene en tone, en witter
sy toonnaels as 'n lelie. Goud wat gevryf is,
was nie so blink as die vere aan sy lyf is.

2850

2860

En onder toesig van dié edele haan
het sewe hene tot sy diens gestaan:
sy susters en sy minnaresse ook,
en hul't in kleur volmaak met hom gestrook;
en dié met die mooiste kleure om haar strot

dra die naam van skone mevrou Pertelot. 2870
Hoflik was sy, verstandig en bevallig,
gesellig, met maniertjies so liefvallig
dat vandat sy maar net 'n week oud was
sy Kantekleer se hart verbasend vas
gevang en in haar liggaam heg gebind het.
O die geluk wat hy in haar gevind het!
En watter vreugde was dit om die soet
akkoord te hoor as hul die dag begroet
met saamsing van 'My liefling het weggegaan',
want toentertyd, soos ek die ding verstaan, 2880
kon voëls en diere almal sing en praat.

En so het dit gebeur een daeraad
toe Kantekleer in die huisie sit op sy
stellasie met sy vroue op 'n ry
(die skone Pertelot was langsaan hom),
begin hy ewe skielik kreun en grom
soos een wat in 'n droom geteister word:
en Pertelot roep uit ontsteld: 'Wat skort,
my liefste, waarom maak jy so 'n geraas?
Toe kom nou, jy is deur die slaap verdwaas 2890
en weet nie wat jy doen nie. Skaam vir jou!'

Toe't hy geantwoord en gesê: 'Mevrou,
ek hoop jy sal my dit tog maar vergewe.
Die Here weet, ek het nooit so 'n skok belewe
as in my droom. Ek het nog die bewerasie.
God bied 'n uitkoms uit my konsternasie
en hou my liggaam uit gevangenskap!
Ek droom terwyl ek op en af gestap
het buite in ons kamp, sien ek 'n dier 2900
wat lyk na 'n hond, en hy wou my summier
bestorm sodat hy my kon verskeur.
So tussen rooi en geel was hy van kleur
behalwe sy ore en sy stert se kwas
wat, anders as sy liggaam, pikswart was:
sy oë het gegluur, smal was sy snoet –
as ek net aan hom dink dan stol my bloed –
g'n wonder dié gedrog het my benou.'

'Ag foei, jou lafaard,' sê sy, 'jy het nou
my liefde en bewondering verloor.
Helaas! In godsnaam sweer ek jou dit voor 2910
dat ek 'n lafaard glad nie lief kan hê nie.
Hoewel 'n vrou dit nie gewoonlik sê nie,
verlang ons nogtans mans wat dapper is,
verstandig, mild, betroubaar, en gewis
g'n vrek of dwaas wat graag groot praat,
maar afgeskrik word, kom dit by die daad.
Die Vader weet hoe jy dit reg kan kry
om – aan jou liefling nogal – te bely
dat jy voorwaar so vreesbevange was!
Waar is die moed wat by jou bakbaard pas? 2920

Hoe kan 'n droom so 'n houvas op jou kry?
Drome is ydelhede, glo my vry.
Hul word veroorsaak deur versadiging;
deur dampe dikwels of oormeestering
van die gestel deur 'n bepaalde liggaamsvog;
en hierdie droom van jou, verskoon my tog,
moes ongetwyfeld aangebring word deur
'n oormaat rooi choleriese humeur
en dit laat mense in hul drome vlug
vir vuur en pyle vlamme deur die lug, 2930
dierasies rooi wat dreig om hul te byt,
vir honde groot en klein, en bloedige stryd;
te veel melancholie-humeur bring mee,
aan die ander kant, dat 'n slaper angstig skree
omdat hy deur swart bere of bulle gepla word,
of anders deur swart duiwels weggedra word.
Van ander vogte kan ek ook vertel
wat mense vreeslik in hul slaap ontstel,
maar ek hoef nouliks daarvoor uit te wei.
Kyk, Cato sê – en 'n wyse man was hy – 2940
“Heg geen waarde aan drome”. Toe meneer,
sê sy, ‘ons vlieg nou van die balke neer,
dan neem jy 'n laksatief in hemelsnaam;
dis die beste raad wat ek jou kan beraam:
purgasie is wat ek vir jou aanbeveel
van te veel gal – die swart sowel as geel.
En sodat jy jou tyd nie nog verkwis,
omdat daar hierlangs geen apteker is,
sal ek jou van die kruie gou vertel
wat jou gesondheid spoedig sal herstel. 2950
Dié soorte sal ek in ons werf kan kry
wat die eienskap het om jou te bevry
van vogte en purgeer van alle kwaad.
Onthou net, hierop dui jou rooi gelaat,
jou temperament's choleries, daarom sal
jy op die son se hoogte let veral
dat dit jou nie betrap vol hete vog,
want, ek sou daarop wed, gebeur dit tog
sal jy 'n kouekoors opdoen, of waarlik
die derdedaagse koors – baie gevaarlik. 2960
Vir spysvertering neem jy 'n dag of twee
net wurmpies: om opelyf te gee
sentourbos, wolfsmelk, duiwelskerwel dan,
en nieskruid wat hier groei, die bessies van
die slee, sowel as kapperboom wat hier is,
en hondsdraf ook waarmee ons werf versier is.
Jy kan dit oral oppik sonder las.
Wees vrolik, man: onthou jou edel ras!
En vrees g'n droom. Maar wag, ek sê niks meer.’
‘Mevrou,’ sê hy, ‘ek dank jou vir jou leer. 2970
Maar alhoewel heer Cato, wat jy noem

as een op wie se wysheid almal roem,
gesê het dat 'n mens g'n droom moet vrees,
kan mens, God weet, in baie ou boeke lees –
geskryf deur manne wat veel meer gesag
besit as Cato, glo my vry, vermag –
dat die teendeel van dié uitspraak eintlik waar is,
'n slotsom wat deur menige mens ervaar is.
Drome is wel gewigtig, want hul bied
tekens van beide vreugde en verdriet
wat ingryp op ons aardse situasie.
Maar dit behoef ook geen lang redenasie,
want dit word bewaarheid in belewenis.

2980

Een van die grootste skrywers wat daar is,
vertel: Twee kêrels het eens, aangedaan
deur vroomheid, op 'n bedevaart gegaan,
toe hul toevallig by 'n stad gekom het
waar 'n hele magdom mense saamgedrom het
en aan losies was daar so 'n kwaai tekort
dat g'n landhuisie eens gevind kon word
waar hulle albei onderdak kon kry,
en daarom moes hul noodgedwonge skei,
hul van die beste skuiling maar bedien
wat die stad se herbergiers hul kon voorsien,
en wat dit ook al was met dank aanvaar.
Die een het ver in 'n agterplaas waar daar
'n stal was, by die osse hom neergelê;
die ander tref, soos toeval dit wou hê,
of noodlot, onder wie se dwang ons staan,
'n redelike slaapgeleentheid aan.

2990

3000

En dus het dit gebeur dat lank voor dag
die een wat in sy bed gedroom het, dag
dat hy die angskreet van sy maat kon hoor,
wat roep: “Helaas, vannag gaan ek vermoor
word waar ek slaap in 'n osstal op die werf.
Help my nou, liewe broer, of ek sal sterf!
Kom dadelik na my toe!” roep sy makker.

Die kêrel skrik paniekbevange wakker,
maar toe hy eers behoorlik wakker is,
draai hy hom om sonder bekommernis;
drome was ydelhede volgens hom.
Nog drie maal het dieselfde droom gekom:
die derde keer toe is sy maat self by,
so dag hy. “Nou is ek gedood,” sê hy.
“Kyk ek is bloedig, wyd en diep gewond.
Staan jy nou vroeg op in die oggendstond,
en by die westelike stadspoort is
'n wa te vinde volgelaai met mis
waarin my lyk versteek is. Sonder meer
moet jy derhalwe daardie wa laat keer.
My geld was wel die oorsaak van die daad.”

3010

3020

En hy het jammerlik met bleek gelaat

al die besonderhede uitgelê.

Die droom's bewaarheid nes sy maat hom sê,
want hy het vroeg die oggend opgestaan
en na sy maat se herberg toe gegaan,
hy't by die osstal op die werf gekom,
en daar begin te soek en roep na hom,
maar dadelik verskyn die herbergier
en sê: "Meneer, jou vriend is nie meer hier,
want hy's met sonop uit die stad reeds vort."

3030

Die man begin nou agterdochtig word:
sy drome het hy skielik weer onthou,
en sonder verder uitstel gaan hy gou
na die westelike hek van daardie stad
waar hy 'n wa ook vind, skynbaar op pad
om 'n veld te gaan bemes, en dit was net
presies soos die dooie man beskrywe het.
Toe het hy dadelik alarm gemaak
en aangedring op straf en wraak:

3040

"My vriend's vannag vermoor. Sy liggaam is
in hierdie wa, gapend en styf in die mis.
Ek beroep my op die magistrate wat
beheer behoort te voer oor hierdie stad.
Help nou! Helaas, hier lê my broer vermoor."
Die verhaal sou hier kon eindig: wat bly oor?
Die mense het toegestroom en toe hul klaar
die wa omver gegooi het, vind hul daar
die pas vermoorde man versteek in die mis.

Geseënde Heer wat so regverdig is
en so getrou, U sien geen moord verby nie:
dus sê ons "Moord kan nie verborge bly nie".
Moord is so snood en gruwelik in stryd
met God se rede en geregtigheid,
verheimliking daarvan gedoog Hy nie:
al bly dit ook bedek 'n jaar of drie,
verborge bly moord nie – kyk, dit staan vas.

3050

Gou het die magistrate wat daar was
die voerman toe vir pyniging weggevat;
die herbergier's ook uitgereg totdat
hul gretig was om alles te vertel
en toe's hul aan die galg tereggestel.

3060

Hieruit sien ons mens moet wel drome vrees.
Ek het ook in die einste boek gelees,
en nogal in die volgende hoofstuk, hoor
(so moenie dink ek hou verdigsels voor):
Twee mans wou oor die see vaar lank gelede
na 'n verre land, om een of ander rede,
maar hul's belemmer deur 'n teenwind wat
hul toe verplig om oor te bly in 'n stad,
pragtig geleë aan die waterkant.
Maar toe een aand verander die weerstoestand
en waai die wind net mooi in die regte rigting.

3070

Dus gaan hul slaap met vreugde en verligting,
 want in die oggend vroeg sou hul kon seil.
 Maar een van hul het daardie nag terwyl
 hy lê en slaap 'n vreemde ding ervaar.
 Teen dagbreek droom hy dat hy 'n man gewaar
 wat skielik by sy bed kom staan, en by
 hom aandring dat hy in daardie plek moet bly, 3080
 en sê: "As jy jou nie hierby gaan neerlê,
 sal jy verdrink: dis al wat ek kan sê."
 Die man word wakker en vertel sy maat
 en smee hom dat hul nie die stad verlaat,
 maar hulle reisplan uitstel vir 'n dag.
 Sy vriend wat langs hom lê, begin toe lag
 en het net kwaai met hom die spot gedryf.
 "Geen droom," sê hy, "sou my die skrik op die lyf
 kon jaag, en dan my sake ook belet.
 Dis die beskouing wat ek van drome het, 3090
 want dis net ydelheid en sinsbedrog;
 mense droom pal van uile, ape en nog
 'n hele magdom ander onsinnighede
 wat nooit sal wees, of was in die verlede.
 Maar as jy dan nou regtig hier wil bly
 en dus die baat versuim van die gety,
 God weet ek's jammer, maar dit gaan jou goed,"
 en hy's daar weg met dit as afskeidsgroet.
 Maar voor die helfte van sy seereis klaar was –
 ek weet nie hoe, of watter teenspoed daar was – 3100
 toe het 'n spleet in die skip se kiel verskyn,
 en skip en man het in die diep verdwyn
 in sig van ander skepe digteby
 wat saam geseil het op die hooggety.
 Derhalwe, skone mevrou Pertelot, my skat,
 kan ons uit dié gevalle aflei dat
 'n mens op drome ag behoort te slaan,
 want, soos ek reeds geredeneer het, staan
 dit immers vas dat mens hul wel moet vrees.
 In die lewe van Cenhelm het ek gelees – 3110
 die seun van Cenwulf, wat die koning was
 van Mercië – hoedat Cenhelm pas
 voor hy vermoor is, ook 'n droom ervaar het
 wat in 'n beeld sy moord geopenbaar het.
 Sy goewernante het dit vertolk en sê
 dat hy hom aan verraad nie bloot moes lê,
 maar hy was toe maar sewe jaar oud, en dus
 het dié waarskuwing hom nie verontrus,
 so heilig was sy denke. Liewe land,
 ek sou gewilliglik my hemp verpand 3120
 as jy ook dié legende bestudeer.
 En, mevrou Pertelot, dis op my eer,
 Macrobius, wat skryf oor Scipio
 se visioen in Afrika, het geglo

aan drome, en was die mening toegedaan
dat hul op dinge in die toekoms slaan.

En bowendien moet jy gerus die boek
van Daniël in die Bybel ondersoek:
was drome ydelhede volgens hom?

Lees ook van Josef en jy sal agterkom
drome is soms – ek sê nie altyddeur –
voortekens van 'n ding wat gaan gebeur.

3130

Farao, koning van Egipte, met
dié heer se bakker en sy skinker het
die uitwerking van drome goed gesien.

Talle verhale uit die geskiedenis dien
om aan te dui dat drome steeds verras.

Het Kreusus wat die Lidiese koning was,
dan nie gedroom hy't in 'n boom gesit? –
dat hy gehang sou word beteken dit.

3140

En dan was daar Andromage, die vrou
van Hektor, wat gedroom het dat hy sou
gedood word as hy deelneem aan die slag
wat daar gelewer is, nogal die dag
daarna – dit droom sy als die nag tevore –
en waarsku hom sy lewe is verlore
as hy nie luister nie; maar hy't gegaan
en is toe deur Achilleus verslaan.

Maar dis te lank om nou vertel te word
en dis al byna dag en ek moet vort.

3150

Ten slotte, laat my net nog dit ook sê:
hieruit voortspruitende weet ek daar lê
vir my gevare voor en ongeriewe
maar ek het geen geloof aan laksatiewe,
ek weet uit ondervinding hul's venynig.
Nee wag, ek laat my nie so goedsmoeds pynig.

Ons hou nou hiermee op en praat van pret,
want, mevrou Pertelot, die Here het
my hierin so begunstig inderdaad,
as ek die skoonheid sien van jou gelaat,
die kringe van skarlaken om jou oë,
dan is my angstigheid meteens vervloë.

3160

Want net so seker as *In Principio*,
*mulier est hominis confusio*⁹ –
mevrou, die spreuk het dié betekenis
dat 'n vrou 'n man se troos en vreugde is –
wanneer ek snags jou donserige sy
hier langs my voel, al kan ek jou nie ry –
ons wankelrige slaapstok is al rede –
dan voel ek so voldaan en stil tevrede
en kan ek droom en visioen trotseer.'

3170

En daarop vlieg hy van die stellasio neer
(want dit was dag), asook sy henneskaar,

9 Die vrou is die man se ondergang.

en met 'n kloek roep hy hul bymekaar
want hy't 'n saadjie op die werf gekry.
Nie meer benoud, maar vorstelik was hy;
hy't vlerkgesleep en nog voor die priemgety
vir Pertelot goed twintig keer gery.
Hy lyk nou soos 'n leeu, hy is so straf:
en op sy tone stap hy op en af,
goed grond te vat hom nie verwerdigend.
Hy het gekloek as hy 'n saadjie vind,
en dan kom al sy henne aangenael.
Hier, soos 'n prins wat heerlik hom onthaal
in sy paleis, sal ek Kantekleer laat staan,
en stip nou eers sy wedervaring aan.

3180

Met Maart, die maand waarin die wêreld sy
begin gehad het en die mens daarby
deur God geskape is, alreeds volslae
en afloop van nog twee-en-dertig dae,
toe Kantekleer so pronkerig heen en weer,
sy sewe henne om hom heen, marsjeer
en hy 'n blik op die helder son geslaan het,
wat in die teken van die Stier gebaan het
'n ietsie meer as een-en-twintig grade,
toe weet hy, met instink alleen te rade,
dis nege-uur, en kraai met bly geskal.
'Die son,' sê hy, 'is in die hemel al
een-en-veertig grade hoog, en hoor,
my liefste mevrou Pertelot, die koor
van opgewekte voëls – hul sang is puik –
en kyk hoe vars die blommetjies ontluik!
Ek voel so opgeruimd en so voldaan.'

3190

3200

Maar skielik het die ramspoed toegeslaan,
want blydschap eindig altyd in verdriet:
God weet dat wêreldsvreugdes gou verskiet!
Iemand in die welsprekendheid bedrewe
sou dit kon boekstaaf as 'n hoog verhewe
en onteenseglike merkwaardigheid.
Laat elke wyse luister want ek's bereid
my lewe vir dié storie in te boet,
want dis so waar soos dié van Lanseloet,
die ridder wat vroumense so hoog eer.
Maar ek moet tot my onderwerp terugkeer.

3210

'n Sluwe en beginsellose vos
met koolswart merke, wat drie jaar in die bos
gehou het, breek, soos dit juis moes gebeur,
in daardie einste nag die heining deur
na die kamp waar Kantekleer die Skone met
sy henne hul so graag begewe het,
en in 'n bedding blomkool het hy gewag
tot ongeveer die middel van die dag,
geduldig hurkend, loerend na 'n kans
om Kantekleer te pak, soos moordenaars tans

3220

hul ook verberg om mense dood te slaan.

O valse moordenaar wat op roof uitgaan!

O nuwe Iskariot of Ganelon!¹⁰

O valse Griekse huigelaar Sinon,¹¹

want hy't die val van Troje geprakseer!

Vervloek sy daardie môre, Kantekleer,

3230

toe jy so neergevlieg het sonder kwelling

al het jou droom 'n deeglike voorspelling

van al die onheil van die dag gebied.

Maar weet God iets vooruit, móét dit geskied

volgens die mening van party studente,

wat inderdaad ook al die argumente

wat woed oor hierdie saak, kon uitgelê het,

als wat skolastici daaroor te sê het,

want honderdduisend het daaroor gestry,

3240

maar ek kan nie die kaf van die koring skei

soos Augustinus, daardie vrome man,

Boethius, of Bradwardine¹² dit kan:

of God se raadsbesluite ons beperk

tot die verwesenliking van Sy werk,

en of ons vrye wil ons na gelang

van die gebeurlikhede onder dwang

van Sy voorwete tog 'n keuse laat,

al is dit voorbekend in God se Raad,

en of Sy alwetendheid ons noodsaak in

alleenlik 'n kondisionele sin.

3250

Sulke probleme gaan my geensins aan.

Soos jul kan hoor, vertel ek van 'n haan

wat aan sy vrou se raad gehoor gegee het

en, tot sy spyt, dié dag die werf betree het

net ná die droom wat ek alreeds genoem het.

Dis vroueraad wat menigmaal verdoem het,

dit het ons eerste onheil aangebring

en Adam uit die Paradys gedwing

waar hy gemaklik was en opgewek.

Ons laat dit liewers daar, want dalk word ek

3260

deur een wat aanstoot neem nog geblameer

dat ek die raad van vroumense kleiner,

en dis maar grappies. Lees die deskundiges

en sien wat hulle dunk oor vroue is.

Dis mos die haan se woorde, nie my eie –

ek maak my skuldig aan geen vitterye.

Genoeglik in die sand lê Pertelot,

delend met har susters die genot

van stof- en sonbad. Kantekleer, haar man,

sing vroliker as wat 'n meermin kan

3270

(die *Physiologus*¹³ deel ons immers mee

10 (Of Ganeloen) het Karel die Grote se leër by Roncesvalles aan die More verrai.

11 Hy het die Trojane oorreed om die houtperd te aanvaar.

12 Die drie standpunte wat volg, verteenwoordig die sienswyses van hierdie drie gesaghebbendes op die gebied van predestinasie en die vrye wil.

hoe goed en vrolik sing hul in die see),
en dus het dit gebeur dat toe hy daar
tussen die kool 'n skoenlapper gewaar,
hy van die vos wat skuil bewus geraak het
en al sy kraailus hom meteens versaak het,
maar hy het gou opsygespring met 'n bange
'kok-kok' geluid soos een van vrees bevange,
want instinkmatig vlug 'n dier wat sy
teëvoeter raakloop, al sou hy
dit teengekom het vir die eerste keer. 3280

En toe hy hom daar sien, wou Kantekleer
gevlug het, maar gou roep die vos: 'Helaas,
my goeie heer, en waarheen is die haas?
Ek is jou vriend, dus wat is daar te vrees?
Sou ek nie erger as 'n monster wees,
het ek jou nadeel in die mou gevoer nie?
Ek het nie u geheime kom beloer nie.
Ek het gekom – dis al verduideliking –
omdat ek graag wou hoor hoedat jy sing: 3290
want waarlikwaar jy het 'n stem so skoon
soos 'n engel het wat in die hemel woon,
en jy't meer musikaliteit as wat
Boethius of wie ook al ooit had.

Jou goeie vader (mag die Heer hom seën)
en ook jou moeder het my met guns bejeën,
kom opsoek ook, tot my bevrediging:
ek wens dat jy my so 'n besoek wou bring.
Maar dit moet ek jou sê, van sang gepraat,
mag ek verblind word as ek inderdaad 3300
benewens jou, 'n sanger so bevoeg
gehoor het as jou vader smôrens vroeg,
want hy't met lus gesing, verseker ek jou.

En sodat hy die hoogste noot kon hou,
het hy hom so geweldig ingespan,
sy oë slaan toe en op die punte van
sy tone het hy gestaan en hy't sy nek,
wat lank en smal was, langer uitgerek.
Iemand van soveel skrandeheid was hy
dat daar geen ander was in die kontrei 3310
wat hom in sang of wysheid na kon strewe.
In die *Burnellus*¹⁴ het ek vanmelewe
gelees hoedat 'n haan hom knap gewreek het
op die seun van 'n priester wat sy been gebreek het
toe hy jonk en stuitig was, en toe daardeur
sy kans op 'n benefisie¹⁵ moes verbeur:
maar tussen daardie haan se slimighede

13 'n Baie gewilde geskrif met allerhande wonderbaarlike inligting oor die dierewêreld.

14 *Burnellus seu Speculum Stultorum*, 'n gedig uit die twaalfde eeu, waarin vertel word van die seun van 'n priester wat 'n haan se been gebreek het deur 'n klip daarna te gooi. Uit wraak kraai die haan toe nie op die oggend van sy priesterwyding nie. Hy kom toe laat en moet sy voorregte verbeur.

15 Betaalde kerklike amp.

en die wysheid en oorleg van jou oorlede
vader is daar 'n hemelsbreë verskil.

Toe sing nou tog, meneer, om liefdeswil
en laat ons sien of jy hom na kan maak.'

3320

Toe't Kantekleer aan 't vlerke klap geraak,
want hy was van verraad skoon onbewus,
sodanig deur dié vleiery gesus.

(Helaas, o edeles, daar's baie vleiery
in u hofhoudings, baie vals verleiers
wat deur hul kruiperigheid u meer geval,
glo my, as wie die waarheid praat ooit sal.
Lees wat Ben Sirag sê oor vleiery,
dan sal u die bedrog daarvan vermy.)

3330

Wel, Kantekleer staan op sy tone, trek
sy oë op 'n skrefie, rek sy nek,
en hy begin met groot genoeë sing.
En toe't die vos, Russeel,¹⁶ gou opgespring;
hy gryp sy gorrel en kies rigting na
die bos met Kantekleer op sy rug gedra,
want voorasnog jaag niemand agter hom nie.

O Noodlot, wat ons nimmer kan ontkom nie!
Helaas dat Kantekleer van die balke neer is!

Helaas dat drome deur sy vrou trotseer is!
En dat die ramp op 'n Vrydag¹⁷ hoogty vier.

3340

O Venus, wat godin is van plesier,
hoe kan jy een wat jou bewonder het,
en wat hy kon, gedoen het in diens van pret
eerder as dat hy wou vermenigvuldig,
laat sterwe op die dag aan jou gehuldig?

Galfredus van Vinsauf,¹⁸ leermeester, O,
u't die dood van edele koning Richard so
betreur toe hy getref is deur 'n pyl,
had ek maar u verhewe denke en styl,
sou ek Vrydag ook soos u met hoon belas
(daar dit die sterfdag van die koning was),
my bekwaamheid toon deur reg te laat geskied
aan Kantekleer se nooddruf en verdriet.

3350

Daar's sekerlik nie so 'n jammerklag
gehoor van die vroue tydens die beslag
van Ilion toe Pyrrhus met sy swaard
getrokke Priamos gryp aan die baard
en (aldus die *Aeniës*) doodgesteek het,
as wat daar van die hene losgebreek het
toe hulle sien wat is Kantekleer se lot.

3360

Maar hard bo almal uit gil Pertelot,

16 Russeel beteken 'Rooie' en in die *Roman de Renard* is dit die naam van een van Reinaart se seuns. Daar is moontlik ook 'n toespeling op Sir John Russell, 'n figuur uit die eietydse geskiedenis.

17 Vrydag, aan Venus gewy, was 'n ongeluksdag. Die verdrywing uit Eden, die sondvloed, Judas se verraad en die kruisiging, sowel as die verwonding van Richard I sou almal op 'n Vrydag plaasgevind het.

18 Die skrywer van *Nova Poetria*, 'n handleiding oor die verskillende digsoorte, elk toegelig met 'n model. 'n Treurdig op die dood van Richard I dien as voorbeeld van die elegiese genre.

veel harder as die vrou van Hasdrubal
gedoen het toe haar man in die hande val
van die Romeine wat Carthago brand,
en rasend van die smart sy toe haar hand
aan haar lewe slaan deur in die vuur te stort
om vasberade daar verbrand te word.

Die arme henne ween bedroefder as
die vroue van die senatore was

3370

toe hulle mans gesterf het aan die hand
van Nero wat die stad van Rome brand –
dus het hy hul onskuldig doodgemaak.

Ek sal nou weer eens terugkom op die saak.

Toe die weduwee en haar twee dogters al
die henne so hoor gier en weeklaag, val
hul by die deure uit en sien die vos
wat hardloop in die rigting van die bos,
en op sy rug het hy die arme haan.

Toe skree hul hard, 'Help, help! Keer voor! Komaan!

3380

'n Vos, 'n vos!' en sit hom agterna

en 'n magdom mans wat almal stokke dra,

en Kol, ons hond, en Talbot en Gerland,

en Martjie met 'n spinrok in haar hand,

en koei en kalf, die varke sit ook af,

doodbang vir die honde se geblaf

en die mans en vrouens se geskree daarby;

hul hardloop dat hul daarvan seer moes kry.

Hul het geskree soos duiwels in die hel.

Of hul vermoor word, krysvandie eende skel;

3390

bevrees vlieg al die ganse in die lug;

die swerm bye't uit die korf gevlug,

want so afskuwelik was die lawaai.

Jack Straw en sy gespuis¹⁹ het nie so kwaai

rumoer gemaak toe hulle in die stad

die Vlaminge kom doodmaak het, as wat

daar dié dag losgebreek het oor die stroper.

Hul bring trompette saam van been en koper,

van hout en horing waarin hulle blaas

en boonop dit, skree hulle en hul raas,

3400

dat mens sou dink die hemele gaan val.

En nou, menere, luister een en al,

en hoor hoe die Geluk skielik die hoop

en trots van sy teenstander mis laat loop!

Die haan wat op die vos se rug nog lê,

het ondanks al sy vrees aan hom gesê:

'As ek in u posisie was, meneer,

sou ek hul nou waaragtig waar tempteer

en roep: "Verwaande lummels, laat my staan,

jul kan maar almal na die duiwel gaan!

3410

Ek het die bos se rand bereik en sal

19 Hulle het hul tydens 'n opstand in 1381 op die ongewilde Vlaamse wewers in Londen gewreek.

die haan nou hou, al maak jul wat ook al.
Glo my ek gaan hom opeet op die daad.”

Die vos se antwoord was, ‘Dis goeie raad.’
Maar net toe hy sy mond oopmaak, ontsnap
die haan daaruit, besonder gou en knap,
en haastig vlieg hy in ’n boom se mik.
Die vos sien hy is weg en vriendelik
roep hy: ‘Helaas, o Kantekleer, dit was
’n onreg wat ek jou gedoen het so pas
deudat ek jou die skrik op die lyf geja het
toe ek jou gegryp en uit die werf gedra het.
Maar tog was daar geen boosheid op die spel,
en as jy afkom, sal ek jou vertel
wat ek bedoel het, en ek sal nie lieg nie.’

3420

‘Nee wag,’ sê hy, ‘ek laat my nie bedrieg nie.
Ek vloek ons albei, maar myself nog meer,
as jy my nou gaan vang ’n tweede keer:
jou vleiry sal my nie daartoe bring
dat ek hierna met oë toe sal sing,
want hy wat oë toemaak wanneer hy
behoort te sien, God laat hom nie gedy.’

3430

‘Nee,’ sê die vos, ‘God laat liefs hóm in die steek
wat dit aan selfbeheersing so ontbreek
dat hy gaan babbel op ’n stilblytyd.’

Dis die gevolg van onbesonnenheid,
nalatig wees, en vleiry vertrou.

Maar jul wat dié verhaal vir ’n gekheid hou
oor ’n vos, of anders oor ’n hen en haan,
laat tog die sedeles jul nie ontgaan,
want soos die apostel Paulus self beweer,
dien als wat daar geskryf is tot ons leer.
Neem dus die koring, laat die kaf maar lê.

3440

Nou, goeie God, soos die Here Jesus sê,
as dit U wil is, maak ons goed en wen
ons tot U Hemelse geluk. Amen.

Epiloog by die Nonnepriester se verhaal²⁰

Ons Waard roep: ‘Watter kokkedoor’s²¹ dié pater!
’n Seën op jou boude en jou knaters!
Dit was ’n puik verhaal van Kantekleer.
As jy nie selibaat was, goeie heer,
sou jy self ’n maljan onder die hoenders wees.
Jy’t ’n gesonde liggaam en gesonde gees,
maar meer as sewe sou vir jou bedien –
veel eerder sewe gemaal met sewentien.
Kyk net die spierkrag waaroor hy beskik;
hy’t ’n breë borskas en sy nek is dik.

3450

²⁰ Hierdie reëls kom in tien minder belangrike handskrifte voor en is waarskynlik deur Chaucer gekanselleer.

²¹ Groot meneer, uit die Frans *coq d'or*, goue haan, ’n gepaste beskrywing van die priester wat Chaucer later vir die monnik gebruik het.

Hy beskou die wêreld met 'n arendsoog
en hoef nie sy gelaatskleur te verhoog
met rooisel ingevoer uit Portugal.
Wel, jou verhaal het in ons smaak geval.'
En toe het hy, soos ek nou sal vertel,
vir iemand anders aan die woord gestel.]

3460

Fragment VIII

Proloog tot die Tweede Non se verhaal

Die dienaar en die voedster van die kwaad
is te vermy. Ek praat van Ledigheid,
die deurwag wat Genotsug binnelaat;
ons moet haar teenwig inspan in die stryd,
want met 'n deugsame bedrywigheid
kan ons verhoed dat Satan ons verlei
en deur ons luiheid mag oor ons verkry.

Hy wag sy kans af om ons te verstrik
in sy net met sluwe toutjies sonder tal,
en voor mens jou kom kry, het die stommerik,
in die strik getrap, die ledige veral, 10
wat nie eers agterkom sy's in die val
totdat die duiwel haar aan die bors beetkry.
So, ledigheid moet ons met erns vermy.

Ons ledigheid is pure vrotsigheid
waaruit niks goeds of heilsaams te verwag
is nie; dit sou ons reeds beaam as feit
al neem ons enkel hierdie lewe in ag.
Al ons niksdoenery staan in die mag
van die Luiheid: want met slaap en drink en eet, 20
verteer ons wat bereik is deur gesweet.

Ek wil graag sulke ledigheid bestry,
want dis die oorsaak van soveel ellende,
dus het ek dié vertaling voorberei
aangaande u glorieryke en bekende
lewe en passie uit die *Goue Legende*:¹
u wat 'n kroon van rose en lelies² dra,
u, martelaar en maagd, Cecilia.

1 'n Versameling lewensverhale van Heiliges.

2 Simbole van martelaarskap en reinheid.

Die Invokasie van Maria

U wat die blom van alle maagde is,
van wie Bernardus graag geskrywe het: 30
tot u, vertrooster van ellendiges,
voor ek begin, kom ek nou in gebed
dat ek reg doen aan u diensmaagd sonder smet;
deur haar verdienste is die vyand verslaan,
soos in haar *vita*³ opgeteken staan.

U Maagd en Moeder, dogter van u Seun,
bron van die goedheid wat die mens vergewe,
in wie God self gewoon het tot ons steun:
u's nederig, maar nogtans hoog verhewe 40
en so veredelend van ons aardse lewe
dat God die Vader dit geensins versmaad
dat Hy Sy Seun gestuur het in ons gewaad.

In die klooster van u skoot is vorm gegee
aan ewige liefde en vrede in mensevlees;
daar is die Heer van hemel en aarde en see,
wat deur Sy skepping ewig geprys sal wees,
in 'n onbevleete Maagd ontvang deur die Gees:
u't die Skepper as geskapene gebaar
en rein u maagdelike staat bewaar.

In u is heerlikheid verenig met 50
genade, mildheid, mededoë so vry
dat u, die son van alle deug, nie net
diegene bystaan wat u naam bely;
nog voordat ons kan vra, is u reeds by
en onverdiend is u begunstiging,
die balsem van genesing wat u bring.

Salige Maagd, so skoon om te aanskou,
ek's 'n banneling in hierdie plek van gal.
Gedagtig aan wat die Kananese vrou
gesê het, dat hondjies die krummels eet wat val 60
van die heer se tafel, vra ek vergifnis al
is ek as Evaskind van heil ontdaan:
dis in geloof dat ek hier voor u staan.

En oor geloof niks sonder werke baat,
gun my die kans om so te werk dat ek
die duisternis van die verderf verlaat.
O skone Vrou met Gods genade oordek,
wees u my voorspraak in die hoë plek,
daar waar hul sonder ophou sing 'Hosanna' –
O Christus Moeder, liewe dogter van Anna. 70

3 Lewensbeskrywing van 'n martelaar.

Stort oor my siel die weldaad van u lig,
want ek is deur liggaamlikheid gevange
en gaan gebukkend onder die gewig
van aardse luste en my vals verlange.
O toevlugsoord en redding in die bange
nood van dié wat smart en sorg ly,
ek moet my taak begin, so staan my by.

Tog rig ek dié versoek aan iedereen
wat dié vertelling lees: ek het nie probeer
om dit op te smuk nie, aangesien ek meen
ek gee maar net die sin en woorde weer
van iemand wat dié Heilige vereer;
ek volg 'n ander se vertelling na:
verbeter dus maar enigiets wat pla.

80

Vertolking van die naam Cecilia⁴

Eers wil ek graag die betekenis bepaal van die naam Cecilia, want die Latyn sou ons as 'Hemellelie' kan vertaal, wat 'n verwysing na haar kuisheid skyn; of dalk dui wit op eer, groen op 'n rein gewete, die soete geur op goeie faam, en dus is 'lelie' 'n gepaste naam.

90

Die sin kan verder 'Pad vir blindes' wees vanweë die voorbeeld van haar goeie leer. Ons kan Cecilia ook, het ek gelees, as 'n soort van samestelling interpreteer: op 'Hemel' en op 'Lea' kom dit neer, waar hemel dui op heilige gedagte en Lea op haar onverfloude kragte.

Dan kan ons ook Cecilia vertaal as 'Vry van blindheid' want iedereen kan die lig van wysheid sien, die deug wat straal; of die skitterende maagd se naam's ontleen aan 'hemel' en 'laos' – begrippe wat byeen gebring word as 'Hemel vir die volk', 'n sterk voorstelling van wyse en goeie liefdeswerk.

100

Want 'laos' is die Griekse woord vir volk en, net soos mense aan die hemelboog die son en maan sien en die sterrewolk, so bring die maagd ook voor ons geestesoog die grootsheid van geloof wat hemelhoog verhewe met volkomendheid van kennis en skitterende deug deur haar gewen is.

110

Geleerdes het van die hemelsfere vermeld hul's snel en rond en vlammend soos 'n vuur; so is dit met Cecilia gesteld: sy's snel en deeglik, draaiend uur na uur in naastediens; sy's rond, volmaak, sekuur in haar volharding; en sy vlam voorwaar van liefdeswerke. So's haar naam verklaar.

⁴ Belaglike etimologieë kom meermale in heiligelegendes voor.

DIE TWEEDE NON SE VERHAAL

Cecilia was van adellike bloed
en sy is, soos haar *vita* duid'lik maak,
in die geloof van Christus opgevoed;
die Evangelie het sy nooit versaaak
en't nooit in die gebed vermoeid geraak.
In vrees en liefde het sy tot God gepleit
dat Hy die wag hou oor haar maagdelikheid. 120

Nou, toe die tyd kom dat sy met 'n man
moes trou, was dit 'n jongeling gewees
en hy't die naam gedra Valerian;
en, oor sy nederig was en vroom van gees,
het sy ten tye van die huweliksfees,
haar naaktheid met 'n harekleed bedek,
onder haar goue bruidsrok aangetrek. 130

Toe die orrel speel, hef sy 'n loflied tot
die Hemelheer en spreek hom aldus aan:
'Bewaar my liggaam en my siel, o God,
in reinheid dat ek nie te gronde gaan.'
Sy't twee of drie maal weekliks aangedaan
haar vastend verootmoedig in gebed
tot Hom wat aan die kruis gesterwe het. 140

Toe dit nag geword het en sy moes gaan lê,
soos dit van haar verwag is, met haar man,
toe het sy stilletjies vir hom gesê:
'My goeie en geliefde Valerian,
as jy wil hoor wat my geheim is, kan
ek dit met graagte aan jou bekend maak, maar
jy sal moet sweer om dit nooit te openbaar.'

Valerian het haar belowe dat
dit by hom veilig was, want nimmermeer
kom 'n ander dit te wete, al maak hy wat. 150
Cecilia het bely, toe hy dit sweer:
'Ek het 'n engel wat my liefhet, meer
as enige ander wese en dag en nag
hou hy goedertieren oor my liggaam wag.

As hy sou agterkom, maak daarop staat,
dat jy onkuis is, vleeslik met my verkeer,
dan sou jy in jou jeug die lewe laat,
want hy sou jou daar doodslaan sonder meer,
maar as jy my met reine liefde eer,
dan sal hy jou ook liefhê om jou deugde
en jou deelagtig maak aan glorie en vreugde.' 160

Valerian het onderdanig aan
Gods wil geantwoord: 'Ek wil jou vertrou.
Laat my die engel sien, hom gade slaan;
as dit 'n ware engel is, dan hou
ek stip by jou wense, maar ek waarsku jou,
as dit sou blyk jy't iemand anders lief,
sal ek hom en jou met hierdie swaard deurkief.'

Toe sê Cecilia: 'As jy dit verlang,
sal jy die engel self te siene kry,
mits jy in Christus glo en die doop ontvang.
Gaan na die Via Appia; naastenby
drie myl uit die stad, waar die armes bly;
dié mense moet jy opsoek en dan sê
jy aan hulle wat ek in jou mond sal lê.

170

Sê dat Cecilia jou gestuur het om
die goeie ou Urbanus naderby
te bring, en met 'n geheime opdrag kom.
As jy vir Sint Urbanus sien, moet jy
vir hom vertel wat jy gehoor het van my.
Jy sal, deur hom gesuiwer van die kwaad,
die engel sien, voor jy die plek verlaat.'

180

Valerian het na die plek gegaan
en net soos dit aan hom verduidelik is,
tref hy die vrome ou Urbanus aan,
verskuil in die grafte van die Heiliges.
Hy het hom van sy sending vergewis
en toe Urbanus sy goeie doel besef,
het hy vreugdevol sy hande omhoog gehef.

Met trane in sy oë het hy gepraat:
'O Here Jesus Christus, U's voorwaar
ons herder en die saaiër van die saad
van kuisheid: wil U nou die vrug aanvaar
waarvan U self die saad gesaai het in haar;
so sonder lis en vlytig soos 'n by
en altyd tot U diens bereid is sy.

190

Hier's haar pasgetroude man wat nou die dag
'n felle leeu was, maar gehoorsaam aan
haar wense het hy na U gekom, so sag
as wat 'n lam is.' Toe ewe skielik staan
'n ou man daar met spierwit klere aan.
Vlak voor Valerian verskyn hy en
hy't in sy hand 'n boek in goud geopen.

200

Valerian het flou geval van vrees,
maar die ander rig hom op die been
dat hy die woorde in die boek kan lees:

'Een Heer en God en een geloof alleen,
een heil'ge doop, een Vader van elkeen,
alomteenwoordig, heerser oor als wat lewe.'
Al hierdie woorde was in goud geskrewe.

210

Toe hy klaar gelees het, sê die man:
'Glo jy die ding of nie? Sê Ja of Nee.'
'Van ganser harte,' sê Valerian,
'en daar is niemand, volgens my idee,
wat nie die waarheid daarvan sou toegee.'
Met dit verdwyn die oue – hy wis nie waar –
en pous Urbanus doop hom toe net daar.

By sy tuiskoms tref Valerian sy vrou
in die geselskap van 'n engel aan,
en dié't twee kranse in sy hand gehou:
een het uit rose, een uit lelies bestaan.
Cecilia kry een; met die ander gaan
hy Valerian tegemoet en bied dit hom,
Cecilia se troue bruidegom.

220

'Bewaar dié kranse met die loutering
van siel en liggaam altyddeur.
Ek het hul uit die Paradys gebring:
hul varsheid sal hul daarom nooit verbeur,
verseker ek julle, of hul soete geur,
en niemand sal hul met 'n oog kan sien
tensy hy boosheid haat en kuisheid dien.

230

En jy, Valerian, oor jy so gul
op goeie raad gereageer het, kan
jy my iets vra en ek sal dit vervul.'
'Ek het 'n broer,' antwoord Valerian,
'wat ek liever het as enige ander man;
skenk hom genade dat hy net soos ek
deur insig ook die wysheid mag ontdek.'

Die engel sê: 'Dit sal God behaaglik wees
en met die palm van die martelaar
sal jul albei aansit by Sy hemelfees.'
En skielik is die broer, Tiburt, ook daar;
hy word die soete blommegeur gewaar
wat van die rose en die lelies spreit
en dit was iets wat hy nie klein kon kry.

240

Hy sê: 'Wat is die oorsprong van die soet
lelie- en roosaroma dié tyd van die jaar
wat my reeds met die intrapslag begroet?
'n Ruiker in my arms sou skaars verklaar
hoe die geur hier in dié kamer hang so swaar.

250

Die soete reuk het my so diep deurdring,
ek ervaar 'n hele gemoedsverandering.'

Valerian sê: 'Twee kranse in ons besit
is tans nog vir jou oë onsigbaar, maar
hul straal met 'n helder glans van rooi en wit.
Deur my gebed kon jy hul reuk ervaar;
jy sal hul ook kan sien as jy dit wat waar
is aanhang, liewe broer, jou sonder meer
tot die regsinnigheid van die geloof bekeer.'

Toe sê Tiburt: 'Hoor ek jou reg of is
dit als 'n droom waarin ek hier verkeer?'
'Tot nou toe was ons in 'n droom gewis,'
antwoord Valerian, 'maar nou nie meer;
ons bewoon die waarheid nou die eerste keer.'
Tiburt vra hom: 'Maar hoe't jy dit ervaar?'
Toe antwoord hy: 'Ek sal dit openbaar.

260

Die waarheid kom van 'n engel van die Heer,
wat jy sal sien, mits jy jou voorberei
om rein te leef, afgode af te sweer.'
(Ambrosius het juis ook in een van sy
geskrifte oor die kranse uitgewei;
hierdie geëerde leraar van die Kerk
het dit te sê gehad oor die wonderwerk:

270

'Na 'n martelaar se palm reikend het
Cecilia deur genade dié weg kon gaan,
die wêreld versakend, ook haar huweliksbed –
daarvan getuig Tiburt en Valerian
se bekering ook; aan hul't God toegestaan
twee segekranse van blomme soet en skoon;
Hy't 'n engel gestuur om hul daarmee te kroon.

280

Sy het die mans na saligheid gelei:
so kon die wêreld leer van die ryke loon
van kuisheid aan 'n hoër diens gewy.)
So het Cecilia vir Tiburt getoon
dat hy afgode as sinneloos moes hoon,
want hul is stom en doof ook bowendien;
sy't hom gemaan om van hul af te sien.

'Wie dit nie glo nie is niks meer as 'n dier,'
beken Tiburt, en toe hy aldus praat,
soen sy hom op die bors met groot plesier
oor hy hom op die wysheid kon verlaat.
'Van nou af neem ek jou tot kameraad.'
Met hierdie woorde het sy hom gegroet,
dié seënryke vrou, geliefd en goed.

290

En sy vervolg: 'Die liefde van Christus het my
jou broer se vrou gemaak; op dieselfde grond,
omdat jy afsien van afgodery,
aanvaar ek jou as kameraad terstond.
Gaan met jou broer; in die water van die vont
sal jy gereinig word; dan sal jy in staat
wees om die engel te aanskou van wie ons praat.'

300

Toe sê Tiburt: 'Nee, wag 'n bietjie, broer.
Sê eers waarheen ek gaan? Wat is jou plan?'
Valerian roep: 'Waarheen sou ek jou voer?
Ek vat jou saam na pous Urbanus, man.'
'Urbanus? Maar my broer Valerian,
dit sou 'n wonderwerk vereis as jy
vir my regtig na Urbanus toe gaan lei!

Praat jy van Urbanus – tog nie hy nie! –
wat oor en oor ter dood veroordeel is,
maar altyd wegkruip waar g'n mens hom kry nie
en nie sy kop durf wys nie? As hul wis
hoe hulle hom kon vang met al sy lis,
dan sou hul hom verbrand – en ons daarby
as hul vir ons in sy geselskap kry.

310

Terwyl ons na die hemel uitreik, want
dis daar waar die Godheid ontoeganklik woon,
word ons hier op die aardse vlak verbrand.'
Cecilia antwoord op 'n flinke toon:
'My liewe broer, mens sou dit wel verskoon
as iemand vrees om sy lewe neer te lê
omdat hy meen hy sal g'n ander hê,

320

Maar 'n beter lewe wag in 'n ander oord,
en dit is onverganklik; geen getraande
gelaat is daar nie, weet ons uit Gods Woord,
geopenbaar in die Seun deur wie die bestaande
wêreld geskep is, en deur die Gees uitgaande
van die Vader is alle wesens redelik
met siele wat onsterflik is verkwik.

Deur middel van sy woorde en werke op aarde
het die Seun van God aan ons geopenbaar
ons erf 'n lewe van veel hoër waarde.'
Toe sê Tiburt: 'My liewe suster, maar
ek het gehoor dat jy soiets verklaar
soos: "Daar is net één God en ware Heer,"
hoe kan jy nou oor drie wil redeneer?'

330

'Ek sal dit uittê,' sê sy. 'Nes ons praat
van drie vermoëns in dieselfde brein,
naamlik geheue, fantasie, beraad,

kan ons die werk van drie Persone omlyn
gesetel in die Goddelike Syn.’
En toe het sy met erns vir hom gepreek
oor die koms van Christus en Sy lydensweek,

Met talle grepe van wat Hy moes ly,
deurdat die Seun van God genoodsaak was
om mens te wees om die mensdom te bevry
van sy dodelike smart- en sondelas:
dit bring sy alles in haar preek te pas;
en toe’t Tiburt met vroomheid aangedaan
saam met sy broer na die heil’ge Pous gegaan.

Urbanus het met dankbare gemoed
hom onderrig en vir die doop berei
en hom as ridder van die Heer gegroet;
en daarna was Tiburt so toegewy,
hy kon die engel pal te siene kry
te midde van tyd en ruimte. En die Heer
het alles toegestaan wat hy begeer.

Dit sou moeilik gaan om ’n lys van al die dade
wat die Heer vir hul verrig het te verstrek,
maar daar’s na hul gesoek en, tot hul skade,
is hul deur dienaars van die gereg ontdek
en gedagvaar voor Almachius, die prefek,
wat hul ondervra het. Toe hy hul doel verstaan,
moes hulle na ’n beeld van Jupiter gaan.

Hy sê: ‘Die een wat nie wil offer sal
onthoof word: dis my vonnis kort en klaar.’
Die martelaars het in die mag geval
van ene Maximus, ’n amptenaar
van die prefek en sy geregsdienaar,
maar hy is só deur meegevoel ontroer,
hy ween toe hy die Heiliges wegvoer.

Toe Maximus geluister het na hul leer,
verkry hy van die beule magtiging,
hy sou hul verder by sy huis takseer;
maar, voor die aand, danksy hul prediking,
is Maximus en sy familiekring
en die beule ook van hul dwalinge bekeer
en hul het voortaan God alleen geëer.

Toe dit donker word, toe kom Cecilia met
priesters om hul te doop daar op die daad;
en later toe die oggend skemer, het
sy baie ernstig met die broers gepraat:
‘Geliefde Christen-strydgenote, laat

die werke van die duisternis nou staan
en gord die wapens van die daglig aan.

Jul het die stryd gestry, die doel bereik,
gelowig het jul end-uit volgehou.
Ontvang die lewenskroon wat nooit verbleik
van die Ware Regter; Hy is te vertrou
en wat jul waardig was, gee Hy jul nou.’
Haar woorde uit, is hul gebring na waar
hul ’n offer sou moes wy by die altaar.

390

Maar toe hul aangekom het by dié plek
en iets moes eet van daardie offerfees
of wierook sprinkel, weier hul volstrek;
hul val daar op hul knieë neer, bedees
in houding maar standvastig in hul gees.
Albei se koppe is afgekap net daar;
hul siele het na die Here opgevaar.

Toe’t Maximus wat als gesien het, verklaar
met trane biggelend oor sy gesig,
hy’t gesien dat hulle siele opwaarts vaar
met engele van helderheid en lig,
en vele is bekeer deur sy berig;
gevolglik het Almachius vir hom
so erg laat gesel, hy het omgekom.

400

Toe neem Cecilia sy liggaam heen,
begrawe hom langs Tiburt en Valerian
heimlik in haar grafstee onder ’n steen;
en daarop het Almachius elke man
van sy wag gelas om haar te vang om dan
in sy teenwoordigheid die eer te bewys
aan Jupiter wat sy bevel vereis.

410

Maar hulle is bekeer deur haar wyse leer;
hul het geglo en het dit uitgekryt
onder bitter trane keer op keer:
‘Christus, Gods Seun, is sonder onderskeid
aan God gelyk wat betref sy goddelikheid:
dit bely ons met Sy diensmaagd, rein en goed;
dit glo ons vas al moet ons daarvoor boet.’

420

Almachius het beveel Cecilia
moet gebring word: hy wou haar onder oë kry.
Hy het haar op dié wyse ondervra:
‘Sê my, watter soort vrou is jy?’ vra hy.
‘Van geboorte is ek ’n edelvrou,’ sê sy.
‘Ek vra jou eintlik oor jou geloof, hoewel
ek besef dat dit jou in gevaar kan stel.’

‘Dis ’n swak begin aan jou ondersoek as jy
twee antwoorde op ’n enkele vraag verwag;
dis die handelswyse van ’n dwaas,’ sê sy. 430
Almachius probeer toe nog ’n slag:
‘Van waar af kom dit dat jy so onsag
op my vrae antwoord?’ ‘Van waar?’ roep sy verbete,
‘van ongeveinsde geloof en ’n skoon gewete.’

Almachius vra: ‘Is jy daarop bedag
hoeveel mag ek het?’ Sy antwoord dadelik:
‘Ek hoef g’n vrees te voel vir al jou mag;
die mag waaroor ’n blote mens beskik,
is soos ’n blaas vol wind: ’n ligte prik
van ’n naald se punt is nodig en subiet 440
gaan al sy opgeblase trots tot niet.’

Hy sê: ‘Op ’n dwars manier het jy begin
en jy volhard in wederstrewigheid.
Jy moet tog weet ons prinse het besin
en dis hul afgekondigde beleid
dat Christene die gevolge sal verbeid
deur met hul wanvoorstellings voort te gaan,
maar straf sal vryspring as hul dit laat staan.’

Sy sê: ‘Jul prinse en edeles het dit mis
as julle ons tot misdadigers verklaar, 450
want dit is julle wet wat simpel is.
Jul weet maar alte goed dit is onwaar,
maar desondanks verkeer ons in gevaar,
van allerhande gruwels aangekla,
maar net oor ons die naam van Christus dra.

Van die mag van daardie naam is ons bewus
en daarom bly ons ewig trou aan Hom.’
‘Die keuse is joune,’ sê Almachius:
‘Bring ’n offer en versaak die Christendom,
as jy dit doen, kan jy nog die straf ontkom.’ 460
Toe’t die salige, skone maagd aan die lag gegaan
en spreek die regter op hierdie wyse aan:

‘Jy stel jousef in sotheid aan die kaak
deur te sê dat ek my onskuld moet laat vaar,
myself tot ’n misdadiger moet maak.
Kyk hoe verspot is hy: voor almal staar
hy soos ’n malmens, praat ook deurmekaar.’
‘Ellendeling, ek sien jy’t g’n idee
van hoeveel mag ek het,’ het hy geskree.

‘Aan my’t ons prinse, magtig en verhewe, 470
beide die mag en die gesag verleen
sodat ek kan beslis oor dood en lewe.

Hoe durf jy jou verwaand nou opruk teen daardie gesag?' 'Ek was standvastig alleen,' sê sy, 'want ons verafsku onomwonde verwaandheid as 'n ernstige sonde.

As jy die waarheid kan verdra, dan sal ek nou oortuigend in die openbaar bewys 'n infame leuen het jou ontval. Jy sê jou prinse is die bron van waar jou mag oor dood en lewe voortspruit, maar jy't mag alleen om die dood teweeg te bring; jy het geen ander mag of magtiging.

480

Jou prinse het jou 'n dienaar van die dood gemaak; as jy iets magtiger beweer, dan lieg jy mos: jou mag is nie so groot.' Hy roep: 'Laat staan jou bars geredeneer en bring ons gode 'n offer sonder meer. Deur jou affronte laat ek my nie pla; as filosoof kan ek dit lig verdra.

490

Maar daar is iets wat ek nie sal verdra en dit is wat jy van ons gode sê.' 'Jy's dom verby,' antwoord Cecilia. 'Op elke punt wat jy gestel wil hê, het elke woord jou domheid blootgelê en aangetoon dat daar beslis g'n slegter beampte is of onbekwamer regter.

Jou uiterlike oë baat jou min as jy hul ignoreer; wat almal sien ooglopend steen is, wil verander in 'n godheid wat jy kan vereer en dien. Ek raai jou aan, betas dit, want miskien sal dit aan jou gevoel wel duidelik blyk 'n steen te wees wat jy siende blind na kyk.

500

Dit sou 'n skande wees as mense jou bespot en oor jou sotterny vir jou sou hoon, want almal weet tog dat die Here God, die Almagtige, hoog in die hemel woon, terwyl dié afgodsbeelde duidelik toon dat hulle nie hulself of jou kan baat: jy kan jou nie 'n duit op hul verlaat.'

510

Op soortgelyke wyse het sy uitgevaar tot hy verwoed geraak het en beveel dat hul haar na haar huis moes neem en daar in 'n vlammebad verbrand. Dis so gereël:

hul het haar liggaam in 'n bad⁵ verseël;
daaronder het hul toe 'n vuur gebou
en het dit dag en nag aan die gang gehou.

Die lange nag en ook die dag daarna,
ten spyte van die felheid van die vuur 520
wat die bad verhit het, het Cecilia
heel koel gebly en glad geen pyn verduur,
maar tog moes sy daar sterf. Almachius stuur
in die wellus van sy hunkering na wraak
'n booswig daarheen om haar dood te maak.

Drie houe teen die nek het die moordenaar
haar toegedien, maar dit nie reggekry
om haar kop behoorlik af te kap nie, maar
die wet het toe bepaal dat die pyn vermy
moes word van 'n vierde poging; dus is hy 530
genoodsaak om met alles half gedaan
so onverrigter sake weg te gaan.

Dood op sterwe na het die moordenaar
haar so laat lê, haar nek half afgesny.
Sorgvuldig het die Christenmense daar
die bloed gestelp met doeke; drie dae was sy
nog in die lewe en sy't erg gely,
maar steeds het sy oor die geloof gepreek
en haar bekeerlinge moed ingesprek.

Al haar besittings het Cecilia 540
aan Urbanus nagelaat en sy't gesê:
'Ek het die Here net een ding gevra:
dat ek slegs drie dae meer sou nodig hê
om die sorg van hierdie siele u op te lê
en u te vra om daarna om te sien
dat my huis vir ewig as 'n kerk sal dien.'

Stil-stil het St Urbanus saam met sy
diakens haar liggaam daarvandaan gedra,
'n graf by die ander Heiliges berei.
Haar huis is deur Urbanus opgedra 550
en heet die Kerk van St Cecilia;
van toe af word die Here daar
geëer met haar, Sy maagd en martelaar.

5 Die oorspronklike bedoeling was waardkynlik 'n Romeinse badhuis wat van onder verhit is, maar in
Middelleeuse ikonografie word Cecilia naak in 'n reuse-kookpot uitgebeeld waaronder 'n groot vuur brand.

Proloog tot die Kanunnikskneg se verhaal

Deel I

Aan die einde van Cecilia se verhaal,
skaars vyf myl verder, is ons ingehaal
by Boughton, naby Blean se bos geleë,
deur 'n man geheel in swart gewaad geklee,
maar 'n wit koorhemp het hy daaronder aan.
Sy appelskimmel was omtrent gedaan;
die dier het so gesweet, 'n mens sou sweer 560
hy het dit aangespoor drie myl of meer.
En ook die perd waarop sy dienaar ry
sweet so dat dit nouliks aan die gang kon bly;
sy hele borskas was met skuim bedek
sodat hy lyk soos 'n ekster wit gevlek.
Oor sy perd se kruis was daar 'n dubbele sak
waarin hy bra min klere sou kon pak;
soos iemand wat 'n somerreis beplan.
Ek het my afgevra watter soort man
hy sou kon wees, maar toe het ek bemerk 570
sy kap is aan sy mantel vasgewerk
en daaruit het ek afgelei hy moet
'n soort kanunnik¹ wees. Ek sien sy hoed
het agter hom gehang aan 'n koordjie af,
want hy het nie gery op 'n stap of draf,
maar soos 'n malmens op 'n stywe galop.
'n Klisblaar het hy gehad waarmee hy sy kop
kon afkoel en die sweet uit sy oë hou.
Dit was 'n lus om te sien hoe sweet die ou!
Dit drup van hom soos een wat weebbaar en ook 580
muurkruid in 'n distileerkolf stook.
En toe hy by ons kom, het hy geroep:
'Die Here seën dié opgewekte groep!
Ek het my perd behoorlik uitgebuit
sodat ek my by julle aan kan sluit,
want ek ry baie graag met julle saam.'
Dié heer se kneg was ewe aangenaam.
Hy het gesê: 'Vanmôre vroeg het ek
u almal van u herberg sien vertrek.
Ek het my heer en meester ingelig, 590
want hy is op vermaaklikheid gerig
en wou u daarom dolgraag vergesel.'
'Goed,' sê ons Waard, 'ek's bly jy't hom vertel,
want hy's begaafd, sover as ek kan sien,
spitsvondig, lewenslustig bowendien.
Dis my opinie altans. Miskien kan hy

¹ Kanunnik, met die klem op die tweede lettergreep, of domheer, 'n priester aan 'n katedraal of ander groot kerk verbonde. Reguliere kanunnike het gehoorsaam aan 'n kloosterreël saamgewoon, in teenstelling met hul sekuliere ampsgenote wat ongekleusterd was.

die harte van ons pelgrimgroep verbly
deur een of twee verhale voor te dra.’

‘Van wie praat u? My meester? Ja, o, ja;
hy weet genoeg van grappiesmakery,’
sê hy, ‘meer as genoeg, en, glo my vry,
as u vir hom so goed geken het as ek,
dan sou die kundigheid en die bestek
van sy bedrywighede u verstom.

600

Die ondernemings wat hy al op hom
geneem het – niemand hier’s in staat daartoe,
tensy hy self vir jul gewys het hoe.

Al ry hy onder jul so doodgewoon,
as jul hom eenmaal ken, sal dit jul loon
en, eers met hom bevriend, sal jul nie graag
sy vriendskap wil verloor nie; daarop waag
ek al my geld en goed. Hy is voorwaar
iemand wat geestesvermoëns openbaar
en heel besondere hoedanighede.’

610

‘Maar sê my,’ val ons Waard hom in die rede,
‘is hy ’n klerk of nie? Wat is sy werk?’

‘Nee,’ antwoord hy, ‘hy’s beter as ’n klerk.
In weinig woorde maak ek iets omtrent
my heer se vaardigheid aan u bekend.

620

Van sulke diep geheim’nisse weet hy –
maar my kennis is beperk, moet ek bely,
al is ek sy handlanger. In elk geval,
my meester is daartoe in staat om al
die pad wat ons na Kantelberg moet ry
eers op te breek en daarna te plavei
met silwer of goud; hy is so vaardig.’

Toe ons Waard dit hoor, toe raak hy verontwaardig.

‘Hoe is dit moontlik,’ vra hy, ‘dat jou heer
wat so verstandig is, na jy beweer,
en daarom eer verdien – maar, liewe land!
sy onverskilligheid gaan my verstand
te bowe – hoe kan mens een agting gee
wat so min aandag aan homself bestee?
Sy mantel is so toiïngrig, dit sou
nie reën of koue van sy lyf af hou.
Waarom is jou heer so slordig as
hy beter kan bekostig, meer gepas
vir een met al die goeie hoedanighede
wat jy genoem het? Sê my, wat’s die rede.’

630

‘Wel,’ sê die Kneg, ‘waarom vra u my?’

640

Die Vader weet, my heer sal nooit gedy.
(Ek kan nie daarop sweer nie; daarom sou
dit beter wees om dit geheim te hou.)
In sy eie belang is hy té slim, meen ek,
en alle oormaat, sê geleerdes, strek
vir ons ten kwade. In hierdie opsig sou
’n mens hom eerder as dom en dwaas beskou.

As iemand te veel kennis het van 'n saak,
loop hy gevaar om misbruik daarvan te maak;
en dis hoe sake staan in sy geval. 650
God skenk hom dus genade. Maar dis al.'

'Ja,' sê ons Waard, 'dis alles goed en wel,
maar ek gaan aandring dat jy ons vertel
waarmee hy hom besig hou, in hemelsnaam,
as hy so kundig is en so bekwaam.
En waar woon julle? Kom, sê vir my.'

'In die agterbuurte van 'n stad,' sê hy,
'skuilend in donker hoek of blinde gang,
tussen diewe en rowers vasgevang;
in daardie vreesaanjaende gespuis 660
se lêplek, daar's ons noodgedwonge tuis.
Dis die bestaan wat ons moet voer, my heer.'

'Maar sê my,' vra ons Waard, 'nog een ding meer:
waarom is jou gesig dan so verbleik?'

'By Petrus,' sê hy, 'dis 'n vloek, want kyk,
ek staan die heeldag lank en blaas in die vuur
en dit verkleur 'n mens se vel op die duur.
Ek kyk nie in spieëls; ek's besig met die taak
om mineraalmutasie² baas te raak. 670

Ons ploeter voort en tuur in die fornuis;
wat ons begeer, kry ons nie uitgepluis –
dit loop gedurig op mislukking uit.
Ons het al baie mense uitgebuit
deur goud van hul te leen, 'n pond of meer,
tot tien of twaalf, want ons het steeds beweër
ons kan hul geld verdubbel – vir elke pond
op die minste twee betaal. Dis ongegrond,
maar ons hoop dat ons dit eendag sal prakseer,
solank as wat ons aanhou met probeer.
Maar ag, die kuns lê nog in die verskiet. 680
Ons haal dit net nie in nie; skoon verniet
ons ede, want dit glip ver van ons af
en eindelijk bring dit mens tot die bedelstaf.'

Terwyl die Kneg so babbel, kom die heer
Kanunnik nader, want hy het begeer
om als te hoor. Die man was vol argwaan
en het vermoed dit het oor hom gegaan.
Soos Cato sê, 'n skuldige dié kom
tot die oortuiging almal praat oor hom.
Dus het hy nader aan sy kneg gery 690
dat hy al sy aandag aan die vent kon wy.
En toe het hy hom tot sy kneg gewend
en hom toegesnou: 'Hou nou jou mond! Kry end!
want anders sal ek jou daarvoor laat boet.
Jy beswadder my hier voor die hele stoet

2 Die groot doel en dryfveer van die alchemiste se wetenskapsbeoefening was multiplisering, die verandering van onedele metale in silwer of goud deur middel van 'n eliksir, die sogenaamde steen van die wyses.

en blaker dinge uit wat jy dig moet hou.'

'Toe, gaan maar voort,' sê ons Waard, 'en moenie jou laat afskrik oor hy dreigemente versin.'

'Ek sal nie,' sê die Kneg, 'al weet ek min.'

Toe die Kanunnik sien die gort is gaar, 700
sy kneg gaan sy geheime openbaar,
toe't hy uit skaamte van hul weggejaag.

'Ha!' sê die Kneg, 'nou kan ek jul behaag;
noudat hy weg is, kan ek als vertel,
als wat ek weet, en mag die duiwel hom kwel.

Dis nou die einde van my diens aan hom,
al sou hy met 'n goeie aanbod kom.

Mag smart en skande hom oorval, want hy
het my in dié petalje ingewy.

Dit is my erns, op my woord van eer; 710
ek voel dit diep, wat wie ook al beweer.

Ten spyte van die teenspoed, pyn en smart,
al die geswoeg en my bedroefde hart,
kon ek nooit die houvas van dié ding ontsnap.

Ek wens ek het meer verstaan van die wetenskap
dat ek al die elemente uit kon lê;

tog kan ek julle deelsgewyse iets sê.

My heer is weg en daarom's ek gereed
om alles te vertel waarvan ek weet.

Deel II

By dié kanunnik was ek sewe jaar, 720
maar in sy diens het ek nie goed gevaar;
daardeur't ek als wat ek besit verloor,
soos baie ander ook, die Here hoor.

Eens op 'n tyd was ek vrolik en opgewek,
in modieuse klere aangetrek;
met 'n ou kous oor my kop loop ek nou rond.

My gesig was vroeër rosig en gesond,
maar dit is asvaal en onooglik nou.

Wie die wetenskap beoefen, sal dit berou.

My oë traan aaneen vanweë besering; 730
dis die gevolg van multiplisering.

Die glibberige kuns het my kaalgepluk;
ek het niks oor nie en ek gaan gebuk
onder 'n skuldlas, want die goud wat ek
geleen het, sal ek nooit in die bestek
van 'n enkele leeftyd kan terugbetaal.

Laat almal voordeel uit my ervaring haal.

As iemand hom tot hierdie kunste wend,
dan is sy welvaart spoedig op 'n end

en agterna sal hy, so help my God, 740
as platsak geld en boonop as 'n sot,
en wanneer hy, danksy sy sotterny,
sy eie besittings kwyt is, dan sal hy

vir ander aanspoor om vir hul te haas
en hulle goed ook op die spel te plaas;
as hulp en troos beskou 'n skelm dit
as ander ook in die verknorsing sit –
so't 'n geleerde man dit uitgelê.

Dit daar gelaat. Van my werk sal ek iets sê.

Wanneer ons in ons werkplek doenig is
met ons duiwelskunste, dan klink ons gewis
geleerd, so aardig is ons brabbeltaal.

750

Ek blaas die vuur aan tot my asem faal.
Ek sal nie alles noem wat ons gebruik
of sê hoeveel van wat gaan in die kruik –
vyf onse silwer, of anders ses miskien,
of 'n ander hoeveelheid wat ons beter dien.

Wat baat dit maak ek al die goed bekend,
soos beenkool, ystervylsels, operment?³

Dit word dan alles in 'n vysel tot
poeier gemaal en in 'n erdepot

760

sal dit teregkom, waar ons net genoeg
sout en peper by die mengsel voeg;
en alles word bedek met 'n helm van glas.
Ek swyg oor ander stowwe wat daar was
en hoe ons pot en helm met klei besmeer
om die verlies van gas daaruit te keer;
van die brandstof wat net smeul tot die felle vuur;
van die angs en sorge wat ons moet verduur
as ons ingrediënte sublimeer;

770

die amalgamasie en die kalsineer⁴
van ruwe kwik, mercurium genaamd.

Ondanks ons voorsorg word ons hoop beskaam.

Ons gesublimeerde kwik en operment,
ons fyngestamppte loodglit, ook bekend
as protoksied, noukeurig uitgemeet;
dit help ons net mooi niks, moet julle weet,
al styg die gasse hemelwaarts, bevry
van die vaste stowwe wat as neerslag bly.

Dit kan ons egter g'n oplossing bied;
ons moeite en ons werk is als verniet,
en al die geld, verdomp! wat ons daaraan
bestee het, is verlore; als na die maan!

780

Daar's nog veel meer wat ek sou kon verklap
oor die beoefening van ons wetenskap,
hoewel ek alles nie so haarfyn kan
verantwoord – ek's 'n ongeleerde man.
Ek kan hul ook nie orden, dis verniet,
en ek noem maar dié wat my te binne skiet:

3 Verbinding van swael en arseen as geel verfstof gebruik.

4 Die alchemistiese prosesse sluit in sublimering, die omsetting van 'n vaste stof tot 'n gas of 'n damp (gees); distillering, reiniging deur verdamping; kalsinering, verhitting van anorganiese stof tot 'n hoë temperatuur om dit tot oksides te omvorm; fermentasie, gisting, dikwels versnel deur die toevoeging van mis; sementering, die digmaak van houers wat ontploffings tot gevolg gehad het; en sitronasie, verkryging van 'n geel kleur.

Armeense klei, boraks en kopergroen, 790
vate van elke vorm en fatsoen,
byvoorbeeld urinale, kolwe en kruike.
Vir distillering en vir ander gebruike
staan alambiek⁵ en smeltkroes steeds paraat,
maar niks is daar wat ons in die minste baat.
Ek noem maar net 'n paar, en dan veral
rooi kleurmiddels en 'n bees se gal,
swael, arseen en salmiak;⁶ daar is
ook heelwat kruie van betekenis,
maanvaring, lewerkruid, valeriaan 800
en ander waarby ek ook stil kon staan.
Ons lampe hou ons dag en nag aan die brand,
want dalk kom daar 'n oplossing tot stand;
ons oonde brand ook pal vir kalsinering.
Daar's wit kleurmiddels vir albifisering,
kryt, ongebluste kalk, eiwit en mis,
verskeie poeiers, as en klei en pis,
bewaste sakkies, salpeter, swawelsuur
en hout- asook houtskoolgestookte vuur,
tartarsout, loogsout en soutpreparaat, 810
stof in gebrande en gestolde staat,
perde- of mensehare gemeng met klei,
aluin, wort,⁷ suurdeeg, realgar⁸ daarby,
en wynsteen ook, middels tot absorbering
van grondstowwe en dan inkorporering,
die silwer blootgestel aan sitronasie,
die sementering en die fermentasie,
matryse en proeflepels, ensovoort.

Ek noem in hul volgorde, soos dit hoort,
vier vlugtige substansies en nog meer 820
sewe metale op – so't ek geleer.
Kwiksilwer staan bo-aan die vlugtiges,
daarna kom operment, die derde is
dan salmiak, en swawel nommer vier.
Vervolgens lys ek die metale hier:
goud kan vir Sol en silwer vir die Maan,
yster vir Mars, kwik vir Mercurius staan,
lood is Saturnus, Jupiter is tin
en koper Venus, van liefde die godin.

Wie meester van dié duiwelskuns wil word, 830
sal vind sy middele skiet steeds te kort,
want elke pennie wat hy daaraan wy,
is na die maan, hy sal dit nooit terugkry.
As jy die naam van stommerik begeer,
staan dit jou vry om alchemie te leer,

5 Toestel vir distillering.

6 'n Verbinding van chloor met ammoniak.

7 Moutaftreksel.

8 Rooi arseen of rooi operment, arseendisulfide, gebruik as 'n kleurstof.

en as jy geld het wat jy wil verkwis,
 kom meld jou aan en word 'n alchemis.
 Jy reken daar is dié wat vroeër of later
 dit klein sal kry, 'n monnik of 'n frater,
 'n priester of kannunik dalk. O nee! 840
 Al sou dié dag en nag sy tyd bestee
 aan boeke oor dié kuns, dis als verniet;
 min hoop kan dit 'n ongeleerde bied
 om die ingewikkeldhede baas te raak.
 Laat staan, want dis 'n onbegonne taak.
 Of hul geletterd is of ongeleer,
 op die ou end kom dit op dieselfde neer:
 dis vinkel en koljander: albei sou,
 as dit by transmutasie kom, heel gou
 moet toegee dat hul nooit solank hul lewe 850
 sukses sal kan behaal in hulle strewe.

Maar wag, ek het vergeet om op te som
 die bytvloeistowwe, vylsels, maniere om
 verharding en versagting reg te kry,
 ook oliesoorte, reinigers daarby
 en smeltmetaal; as ek dit als onthul,
 sou dit beslis 'n lywige boekdeel vul.
 Dit is dus beter om dit daar te laat
 en eers 'n slag te rus van al die praat,
 want ek het reeds genoeg daarvan vertel 860
 om bese geeste op te wek uit die hel.

Nee kyk, die steen van die wyses, soos hul sê
 'elikser',⁹ soek ons; as ons dit kon hê,
 het ons meteen ook sekerheid, maar ek sweer
 by God wat in die hemel oor ons regeer,
 ten spyte van ons vernuf en werk en tyd,
 bly ons die vliedende elikser kwyt.
 In die soeke daarna het ons veel verloor;
 'n mens sou mal kan word daarvan, maar voor
 jy sover kom, kruip die hoop weer in jou hart 870
 in die verwagting dat, ondanks die smart,
 die steen oplaas uitkoms vir jou sal bring;
 dog hierdie hoop is wrede pyniging.
 Dis 'n soektog sonder einde, glo my vry.
 Deur toekomsthoop word mense so mislei
 dat hul afstand doen van als wat hul besit,
 maar die soek duur voort en nooit versadig dit.
 Vir die soekers word dit weldra bittersoet;
 al het hul later één stuk linnegoed
 om hul in toe te wikkel snags en 'n kled 880
 vir hul gebruik bedags, is hul gereed
 om dit ook op sukses te wil verwed;
 so hou hul aan totdat hul niks meer het.
 Waar hul ook gaan, sal mens wel kennis kry

9 Uit die Arabiese al-iksir, die poeier; ook tinktuur.

weens die swawelstank wat hulle begelei.
Hul ruik soos bokke, sodat almal weet
van hul teenwoordigheid; die geur's so heet
en geitig ook dat ander hul sowaar
op 'n afstand van 'n myl al kan gewaar.
Deur hulle reuk en slonsige kledy 890
is hierdie mense dus te onderskei.
As jy een van hulle heimlik sou uitvra
oor die toiïngrige klere wat hy dra,
dan fluister hy in jou oor dat dit nodig is,
want as hy herken word as 'n alchemis,
sal dit vanweë sy kuns sy lewe kos –
so lei hul simpel mense om die bos.
Genoeg! laat my tot my vertelling keer.
Voordat die pot te vuur gaan, sal my heer –
en niemand anders – verskeie soorte metaal 900
vermeng, die hoeveelhede deur hom bepaal
(noudat hy weg is, kan ek vrylik praat),
want hy is immers slim en akkuraat,
of daarvoor't hy altans die reputasie.
Tog raak hy somtyds in 'n konsternasie.
Waarby kom dit? Wel, dikwels bars die pot
en dan is dit koebaai die hele lot!
Die mengsel is so plofbaar, dis verniet
of die mure van ons huis weerstand kan bied,
want hulle's nie gemaak van kalk en steen 910
en daarom gaan die slag dwarsdeur hul heen.
Deel van die mengsel sak weg in die grond –
en as gevolg verloor ons menige pond –
party beland op die vloer en lê verstrooid
of skiet die dak in. Al is die duiwel nooit
liggaamlik sigbaar nie, nogtans is hy
bepaald teenwoordig met dié lollery!
En in die hel, waar hy heerser is en baas,
is daar nie soveel woede, wee, geraas
as wanneer die pot ontplof, want almal daar 920
is liggeraak en hul blameer mekaar.

Een sê: 'Die aanlê van die vuur was swak;
'n tweede wil die skuld op die blaasbalk pak
(en ek raak benoud, want aanblaas is my werk).
'n Derde sê: 'Ag, bog! dit was te sterk,
want dit was nie bekwaam gereguleer.'
'n Vierde sê: 'Hou op met argumenteer;
die vuur is nie gemaak met beukehout.
Dit en niks anders, kêrels, was die fout.'
Wie se skuld dit was? Ek het g'n idee, 930
maar ek weet dit het groot rusie afgegee.

'Wel, daar's niks aan te doen nie,' sê my heer;
'ek sal maar meer versigtig wees 'n volgende keer.
Bes moontlik was daar 'n kraak in die pot gewees.
Nou toe! Wat staan jul almal so bedees.

Vee alles soos gewoonlik bymekaar.
Kom, wees vol goeie moed, al gaan dit swaar.'

Nou vee ons al die rommel op 'n hoop
en op die vloer sprei ons 'n seildoek oop;
daarna sal alles in 'n sif beland 940
vir fyn beoordeling van die restant.

'Haai, kyk,' sê iemand, hier's 'n stukkie oor;
dis darem iets; ons het nie áls verloor.
Al het ons sake misgeloop dié keer;
op 'n ander dag miskien geluk dit weer.
Mens moet bereid wees om 'n kans te waag.
'n Koopman sal nie altyd daarin slaag
om goeie geluk te hê nie; op 'n dag
verswelg 'n stormsee sy hele vrag;
op 'n ander dag weer kom dit veilig aan.' 950

'Ja,' sal my heer dan sê, 'ek moet voortaan
'n meer geslaagde reis vir ons skip prakseer;
as dit weer so afloop, kan jul my blameer.
Dié keer't daar iets gekort; ek weet vir vas.'

Weer dring een aan dat die vuur te warm was.
Te warm of te koud, een ding's gewis:
wat ons ook doen, dit loop gedurig mis.
Ons slaag nie in ons doel nie, maar, menere,
ons gaan steeds soos besetenes te kere. 960
En as ons saam is, dan is ek bevrees
dat elkeen skyn 'n Salomo te wees.

Mens moenie dink dat als wat skitter goud is –
dis 'n spreekwoord wat al baie oud is.
Op dieselfde wyse kan 'n appel wat
begeerlik voorkom, vrotterigheid bevat.
Dis hoe dit ook met ons gesteld is: hy
wat die wysste skyn te wees, is by
die Heer, van digterby beskou, die domste,
en hy wat eerlik skyn te wees, die kromste.
En iedereen sal toegee dat dit waar is 970
teen die tyd dat ek met my vertelling klaar is.

DIE KANUNNIKSKNEG SE VERHAAL

Van 'n heer kanunnik-regulier gaan ek
vertel wat 'n hele stad met die omtrek
van antieke Rome, Troje, Ninevé
en Aleksandrië, plus nog een of twee
met al sy swendelary sou kon besmet.
G'n skrywer op dees aarde, wil ek wed,
kan hom beskryf, al had hy 'n duisend jaar;
in valsheid was hy ongeëwenaar.
So ingewikkeld was sy redenasies, 980
versier met soveel slinkse fieterjasies;
met sy gladde tong was hy daartoe in staat
om enigeen 'n gat in die kop te praat,

tensy dié net so 'n duiwel was soos hy.
Hy het al baie om die bos gelei
en sal daarmee aanhou so lank as wat hy lewe.
Tog is daar dié wat hul myle ver begewe
ten einde hom te sien, met hom te praat,
onkundig van sy gruwelike kwaad.
Gun my die kans om daarvan te vertel;
ek sal dit alles aan die orde stel.

990

Eerwaarde here, wees verseker dat
ek nie u reputasie wil beklad
omdat ek oor 'n geestelike uitwei,
want skobbejakke sal mens orals kry,
en God verhoed dat 'n hele broederskap
daarvoor moet boet oor één lid skeef gaan trap.
Dis nie my doel om almal sleg te sê,
maar net om wat verkeerd is by te lê.
My vertelling's nie tot u alleen gerig,
maar tot baie ander, want u weet allig
dat onder die twaalf apostels van ons Heer
daar net die een verraaiër was, nie meer.
Mens kan die res nie gaan verantwoordelik hou
wat onskuldig was. Dieselfde beginsel sou
in dié geval ook geld. Een ding's gewis:
as daar 'n Judas in u klooster is,
verwyder hom vroegtydig, glo my vry,
as u verlies en skade wil vermy.
Neem my nie kwalik as ek reguit praat,
maar luister goed, en neem dit als te baat.

1000

1010

In Londen was daar eens 'n annuaar;¹⁰
hy't in dié stad gewoon reeds menige jaar
en hom so vriendelik en diensbaar getoon
dat die die vrou van die losieshuis waar hy woon
vir hom voorsien van beide klere en kos,
al was hy altyd deftig uitgedos;
dus het hy altyd geld genoeg gehad.
Wel, hoor nou hoe dit uitgeval het dat
'n slu kanunnik deur sy konkeling
dié arme priester tot 'n val kon bring.

1020

Die bedrieglike kanunnik het 'n keer
die priester opgesoek waar hy loseer
en dringend gepleit dat die priester tog vir hom
tydelik uithelp met 'n sekere som.
'Leen my 'n goue mark,' het hy gesê,
'en binne drie dae sal u dit weer hê;
en net die dag daarna, as ek u faal,
kan u my aan die galghout laat betaal.'

Die priester gee hom dit toe sonder meer
en nadat hy bedank is keer op keer,
het ons kanunnik weggegaan, maar vlug

1030

¹⁰ 'n Priester wat sy geld verdien het deur misse op te dra vir die sieleheil van van gestorwenes elke jaar op hul sterfdatum.

op die derde dag gee hy die geld aan hom terug.
Nou, hieroor was die priester skoon verstom
en met groot vreugde sê hy toe vir hom:
'Wel, liewe wêreld, ek het niks daarteen
om twee, drie nobels aan 'n man te leen,
of selfs nog meer as hy dit nodig het,
solank hy sy verpligtings nougeset
gaan nakom en so stip is bowendien.
Dis 'n plesier om so een reg te sien.

1040

Toe't die kanunnik ewe vroom
geroep: 'Ontrou? Ek sou nie daaraan droom
om nie my woord gestand te doen vanaf
vandag tot ek moet afdaal in my graf.
Die Vader hoor my, ek is te vertrou;
daaraan kan u soos aan die *Credo* hou.
Ek moet die Here daarvoor dank, want geen
persoon het ooit vir my 'n bedrag geleen
en agterna bedroef daaroor gewees.

1050

Daar is geen tinsel valsheid in my gees.
Vir die vriendelikheid, meneer, aan my betoon,
is dit my begeerte om u te beloon,
'n iets van my geheime kennis hier
ten toon te stel, en as dit u plesier
en u miskien begerig is om meer
daarvan te weet, dan sal ek u graag leer
hoedat die alchemie die mens kan dien.
Kyk goed; met u eie oë sal u sien
watter wonder ek verrig voordat ek gaan.'

1060

'Regtig?' sê die priester, 'Nou toe, komaan!
want, by Maria, dis wat ek wens beslis.'

Hy antwoord: 'As dit u begeerte is,
dan sal ek die geleentheid graag verskaf.'

So smeer die skurk hom aan die priester af,
want opgedronge dienste stink voorwaar,
soos 'n ou, bekende spreekwoord ook verklaar.
Dit sal ook spoedig blyk uit die gedrag
van dié kanunnik wat, dik van die lag,
sy kans sien nader kom om die stomme vent
in die ongeluk te bring. Die duiwel prent
dié valse knoeiery in sy gemoed.

1070

Mag God ons teen so 'n huigelaar behoed!

Die priester't niks geweet van die man
met wie hy hier te doen het en hy't ook van
die onheil wat hom inwag, niks vermoed.
As hebsug mens verblind, dan moet jy boet
vir jou onskuldigheid; daardeur's jou vat
op jou situasie so benewel dat
jy geen idee het wat dié vos beplan
en jy sal ook nie weg kan kom daarvan.

1080

So, armsalige, om gouer by
jou ondergang te kom, veroorloof my

om alles uit te lê, sover ek kan:
die ongeëwenaarde dwaasheid van
jou eie handeling en dan daarby
jou teenvoeter se bouse swendelary.

Heer Waard, dink u miskien ek skinder nou
oor my kanunnik? By ons Liewe Vrou,
ek praat van iemand anders wat veel meer
kunsgrepe in die mou voer as my heer. 1090
Hy't al soveel mense om die bos gelei,
dit put my uit om daarvoor uit te wei;
as ek net dink aan al die kullery,
dan wil my wange 'n blos van skaamte kry –
wel, hulle sal in elk geval probeer;
want kleur is daar in my gelaat nie meer.
Vanweë al die dampe afgeskei
in ons pogings om die elikser te kry,
is my gesig nou asvaal en verweer. 1100
Maar hoor wat het die skelm gepraakseer.

'Meneer,' sê hy vir die priester, 'laat u kneg
vir ons kwik gaan haal, maar doen dit reëlreg,
so twee, drie onse¹¹ is genoeg, en gou
daarna sal u iets wonderliks aanskou,
iets waarvan u nog nooit getuie was.'

Die priester sê, 'Ek sal,' en hy gelas
sy dienaar om kwiksilwer te gaan haal.
Dié doen dit toe ook sonder om te draal.
In 'n ommesientjie het hy teruggekom
en hy't kwiksilwer saamgebring met hom; 1110
hy't dit oorhandig; die kanunnik weer
lê dit heel saggies en sorgvuldig neer
en sê toe vir die kneg, 'Dra houtskool aan
sodat ek dadelik aan die werk kan gaan.'

Toe die kool gehaal is en dit lê gereed,
diep die kanunnik eensklaps uit sy kleed
'n kroesie op en wys die priester dit.
'Sien u dié toestel?' sê hy. 'Kyk ek sit
dit in u hande; u kan self daarin 1120
'n ons kwiksilwer gooi, en so begin
in die naam van Christus nou u leerdery.
Daar is min mense, dit moet ek bely,
aan wie ek ooit soveel sou openbaar,
want u sal sien en eerstehands ervaar
hoedat ek dié kwiksilwer gaan verdig
en dan verander voor u aangesig
in goeie silwer, net so fyn gewis
as wat die munte in ons beursies is,
en verder sal ek dit ook smeebaar maak. 1130
As ek vir u lieg, stel my dan aan die kaak
as swendelaar. Hier is 'n poeier. Hoewel

11 'n Ons is 'n sestiende deel van die gewig van 'n pond. Drie onse is omtrent 85 gram.

dit baie geld gekos het, nogtans stel
dit my in staat om my belofte aan u te hou:
iets wonderbaarliks gaan u hier aanskou.

Stuur nou u dienaar weg en sluit die deur;
hy mag nie by wees wanneer dit gebeur;
dis 'n groot geheim en niemand anders mag
die handelswyse wat ons volg betrag.'
Dié opdrag's uitgevoer: met die dienaar uit, 1140
is die kamerdeur onmiddellik gesluit.
Toe die kanunnik sien dis na sy sin,
toe kon hul met die alchemie begin.

Die priester het die kroes geneem en dit,
soos hy beveel is, op die vuur gesit
en die vlamme ook met mening aangeblaas.
Toe't die kanunnik poeier – my spesmaas
is dat dit kalk of glas was – ingegooi.
Wat dit eintlik was, dit weet ek nie so mooi,
want dit was pure oëverblindery 1150
om die verspote priester te mislei.
Toe sê hy vir die priester om hom te haas
en al die houtskool op die kroes te plaas.
'As vriendskapsblyk laat ek u toe, my heer,
om als wat ons gebruik self te hanteer.'

'Baie dankie,' sê die priester alte bly,
maar terwyl hy volle aandag daaraan wy
om die kool, soos hy beveel is, reg te pak,
het die kanunnik, valse, lae lak,
'n houtskoolblok van beuk waarin 'n gat 1160
kunstig gemaak is, uit sy kleed gevat;
daarin was silwervylsels, 'n ons-gewig,
versteek en daarna is die opening dig
verseël met 'n prop van was. Natuurlik is
dit voor die tyd gemaak en toe met lis
aan sy persoon versteek, met meer gerei
waarvan ek later melding maak in my
vertelling; dié't hy met hom saamgebring
vir sy skelmstreke se bevordering.

Dit was met 'n bose doel dat hy verskyn het 1170
en hy't daarin geslaag voor hy verdwyn het.
Ek voel skoon duiselig as ek daarvan praat.
As ek hom kon laat boet vir al die kwaad,
maar ek weet nie hoe, want hy's nou hier, dan daar,
steeds aan die gang en onberekenbaar.

Maar, hoor nou die verloop van sy swend'lary:
die reeds genoemde houtskoolblok het hy
heimlik in sy hand versteek gehou;
die priester, besig met sy stapelbou,
wis niks daarvan. Skynbaar nie gediend 1180
met dié se vordering, sê hy: 'Wag, my vriend,
u kry dit nie mooi reg nie. Laat my toe
om 'n slag te help dat u kan insien hoe

die kool behoort gepak te word. Nou by Egidius, ek kan sien hoe warm u kry; ag foei, kyk hoe die sweet van u af tap; hierso, vee u gesig af met dié lap.'

En terwyl die priester daarmee besig was, kom die geleentheid hom perfek te pas en plaas die skelm sý stuk kool sekuur in die middel van die stapel; toe't hy die vuur goed aangeblaas totdat die kole gloei.

1190

Hy sê: 'Ons hoef ons glad nie te vermoei, want als sal spoedig klaar wees, kan u wed; so kom ons sit en maak 'n bietjie pret.'

Toe die kool van die kanunnik heeltemal aan die brand is, het die silwer uitgeval en vanselfsprekend het dit in die kroes tereggekom, net soos dit immers moes, want hy't dit mos direk daarbo geplaas.

1200

Die priester't niks daarvan geweet, helaas! hy dag die kole's almal ewe goed; hy't hoegenaamd g'n kullery vermoed. Toe die kanunnik sien dis als gedaan, sê hy: 'Staan op en kom hier langs my staan. 'n Gietvorm het u seker nie? Toemaar, met behulp van kalksteen kom ons ewe goed klaar. Gaan haal 'n stuk kalksteen; ek sal prakseer om 'n gietvorm vir ons gebruik te fatsoeneer.

En bring vir ons terselfdertyd 'n kom of 'n bak vol water. Dit sal u verstom hoe ons sake intussen vlot. Maar dis my doel, u moet g'n agterdog of twyfel voel of die idee kry als is dalk nie pluis, en daarom gaan ek saam met u van huis en nie één oomblik laat u my alleen.'

1210

Hul het die deur gesluit en is toe heen; hul het die sleutel saamgeneem en vlug die goed gekry; toe kom hul albei terug met die water en die kalk, maar, wag! dit baat ons niks dat ek veel langer hieroor praat.

1220

Die uitgeslape vent het sonder meer 'n gietvorm van die kalk gefatsoeneer. Hy't so te werk gegaan: hy't uit sy mou 'n stafie silwer uitgehaal – dit sou nie meer as 'n ons geweeg het. Die gietvorm het hy met dieselfde afmetings as die staaf gesny, maar hy't dit gedoen met die kuns van 'n goëlaar sodat die priester niks daarvan gewaar: die staaf het ongesiens uit sy mou verskyn en ongesiens terug in sy mou verdwyn. Die smeltsel uit die vuur het hy gegiet in die voorbereide vorm en dit subiet in die waterbak gegooi om af te koel.

1230

Hy sê toe vir die priester: 'Toe, kom voel hier in die water rond, sien wat u kry. Dit sal silwer wees – dit kan g'n twyfel ly!' Natuurlik sou dit silwer wees, die ou bog, want dit was daar as gevolg van sy bedrog!

Die priester steek sy hand in, haal 'n stuk fyn silwer uit en straal van die geluk toe hy sien dis waar. 'Nou mag die Heer u seën, Sy Moeder en die Heiliges iedereen, en as u sou gewillig wees om my in hierdie edele kunste in te wy, mag hulle my vervloek as ek nalaat om my diensverpligting aan u na te kom en aldus in my dankbetuiging faal.'

'Wel,' antwoord hy, 'ek sal dit als herhaal, dan kan u seker wees u't goed gesien en goed verstaan en dat u dit, indien dit nodig is, 'n ander dag in my afwesigheid ook maklik reg kan kry. Kom ons vat 'n tweede ons kwiksilwer en dan handel ons volkome volgens plan soos met die eerste ons, dié wat ons nou in die vorm van 'n silwerstaaf aanskou.'

Die priester het hom daarop toegelê om als wat die kanunnik vir hom sê reg uit te voer; hy't die vlamme aangemoedig, gretig om sy welvaart te bespoedig; intussen het die skurk hom voorberei om die priester 'n tweede maal om die bos te lei. Asof vir die aardigheid het hy 'n staf in sy hand gehou, maar dit was hol vanaf die punt waar 'n prop van was gemaak, verhoed dat die silwervylsels, daarin ewe goed as voorheen in sy houtskoolblok versteek, uit die staf uit val voor die regte tyd aanbreek.

Terwyl die priester doenig was met die vuur, het die kanunnik op hom afgestuur en poeier in die kroes gestrooi soos hy voorheen gedoen het. Mag die duiwel hom kasty – die verdiende loon vir sy kwaaddoenery, want hy was uiters vals in woord en daad. Hy't met die staf, sy geheime apparaat, die kole rondgekarring in die kroes tot die was gesmelt het, soos dit immers moes in daardie hitte, en soos 'n mens kan dink, het die silwer uitgeloopt en gou gesink en onder in die kroes tereggekome – als onverbeterlik, om op te som.

Die priester is dus 'n tweede maal gefnuik; hy was te liggelowig om lont te ruik. Ek kan geen woorde vind om sy geluk,

sy kinderlike vreugde, uit te druk.

Hy sou sy siel en liggaam gee as hy toegang tot dié geheimenis kon kry.

‘Ek is ’n arm man,’ sê die skurk vir hom,
‘maar slim genoeg, soos u sal agterkom.
Daar kom nog meer. Het u enige koper?’ vra hy toe. Die priester antwoord huiwerig, ‘Ja.’
‘Gaan liewers vir ons koop,’ sê hy. ‘Loop nou; ons tyd raak min, so maak ‘seblief tog gou.’

1290

Hy’s vort en het met die koper teruggekeer; hy’t dit oorhandig en die meester het weer ’n ons mooi afgeweeg. Dis hopeloos: my tong is nie in staat om te sê hoe boos en hoe gewetenloos, hoe vol verraad die valsaard was. Ek kan nie daarvoor praat.

1300

So gaaf en vriendelik het hy voorgekom, maar hy was ’n regte duiwel vir dié wat hom beter geken het. Ag, ek voel skoon sat as ek daaraan dink, maar dis nodig dat ek almal waarsku teen sy slegtighede; dus moet ek van hom praat; dis al rede.

Hy het die koper in die kroes gesit en toe die priester aangesê om dit op die vuur te plaas, daarna gebuk maar weer die vlamme aan te blaas. Soos laaste keer word poeier ingegooi – als bogtery daarop gemik om die priester te mislei. Die gesmelte koper in die gietvorm het in die water afgekoel. Toe voel hy met sy hand in die water rond, maar in sy mou was ’n silwerstaaf versteek en dié’t hy nou soos vantevore skelm uit laat val.

1310

Die priester egter was geheel-en-al onkundig dat dit op die bodem was.

1320

Toe’t die kanunnik wat in die water tas die koper opgeraap en sonder dat die priester agterkom, dit weggevat uit die waterbak; hy’t dit met vaardigheid van hom versteek gehou die hele tyd. Toe’t die kanunnik hom gul toegevoeg: ‘Nee maggies, man, ek het jou nou genoeg gehelp; nou’s dit jou beurt: kom help vir my. Steek in jou hand en sien wat jy kan kry.’

Die priester het die silwer uitgevis; toe volg die voorstel van die alchemis: ‘Sê nou ons gaan met dié drie stawe na die een of ander goudsmid en ons vra of dit dalk waarde het, want ek sal sweer dat dit louter silwer is, en op my eer, dis iets wat baie gou bewys kan word.’

1330

Met dié drie stawe is hul toe ook vort

na 'n goudsmid om die monsters te beproef
met vuur en met sy hamer. Wel, ek hoef
nouliks te sê, hy het dit eg verklaar. 1340

Wie kon die swaap se vreugde ewenaar?
Geen voëltjie in die oggendskemering,
geen nagtegaal wat bly Meimaand besing,
geen vrou wat haar verheug in sang en dans,
geen ridder wat met dapper daad sy kans
gaan waag om sy beminde te oortuig
om hom met guns te aanskou; niemand juig
met soveel vreugde as dié priester voel
noudat hy waan hy's naby aan sy doel.

Met 'n opgewonde stem het hy gesê: 1350
'Ek moet nou eenmaal die formule hê.
By die Here God wat ons Verlosser is,
wat u ook mag vra, betaal ek u gewis.'

Toe antwoord die kanunnik: 'Ja, maar let
daarop dat dit baie duur is. Sien, dis net
ek en 'n Engelse frater wat daarvan weet.'

'Dit maak nie saak nie,' sê hy, 'ek's gereed
om op te dok; sê my dus wat dit kos.'

'Dis baie duur,' sê hy, 'soos ek jou mos
gewaarsku het, maar as jy dit eenmaal 1360
wil hê, dan kan jy veertig pond betaal;
en, was dit nie vir jou vriendskap nie, dan sou
dit meer gewees het, by ons Liewe Vrou.'

Die priester het die veertig pond gaan haal
en hy het dit in nobels oorbetaal
aan die kanunnik, sonder die minste benul
dat die skobbejak hom van 'n kant af kul.

'Heer priester,' het dié gesê, 'ek soek g'n eer
vanweë my kennis, dus sal ek dit waardeer
as jy dit als 'n slaggie donker hou, 1370
want as my magte rugbaar word, dan sou
almal so afgunstig wees op my
en al my vaardighede so beny
dat ek die spit dalk afbyt deur geweld.'

'Dit mag nie wees nie,' roep die priester ontsteld.
Dit sou my dryf tot raserny, Nee, nee,
ek sal geredelik my alles gee
as ek u kan beskerm teen dié gevaar.'

'Wel, dankie,' antwoord hy, 'vir dié gebaar
van jou welwillendheid, en nou, vaarwel.' 1380

Hy is toe vort en, om dit so te stel,
het die priester die kanunnik sedertdien
en tot vandag toe met g'n oog gesien.
En toe hy reken dis nou tyd vir hom
om die prosedure toe te pas, toe kom
hy agter die formule is van nul
en gener waarde, hy's klinklaar gekul.
Dit dan was die skelm se ou laai:

hy't armsaliges so verformfaai.

Deur al die eeue was die mensdom so
behep met goud, dis moeilik om te glo
dat daar iets oorbly van die mooi metaal;
daarby gesê, is die goudmaakkuns fataal,
want die middele daarvoor benodig word
die vernaamste oorsaak van 'n goudtekort.

1390

Die alchemiste praat so 'n duister taal,
niemand kan die betekenis agterhaal
vanweë ontoereikende verstand.

Soos gaaie¹² kletter hulle land en sand
aanmekaar en hulle skep behae in
vakterme, maar verongeluk nietemin.

1400

As mens ryk is, is dit maklik om te leer
hoe jy jou als tot niks kan transmuteer.

Dis nou 'n rare dobbelspel waarmee
'n mens sy welstand kan omskep in wee,
wat die grootste, swaarste beursie leeg laat loop
en kwaai verwensings op jou kop laat hoop
van dié wat geld gewaag het op die spel.

As een gebrand is, sou mens veronderstel,
hy's bang vir die vuur. Een wat daarmee speel,
moet dit laat staan. Dis wat ek aanbeveel
voor hy als verloor. Kyk, doen dit liever laat
as nooit, want nooit's te lank om mens te baat.

1410

Dit wat jy naarstig soek, sal jy nooit vind.
Jy is soos Beiaard, die ou perd wat blind
voortstropel oor hy immer hoopvol is;
hy loop hom vas teen elke hindernis
in stede daarvan dat hy dit vermy:

so gaan dit met die transmuteerdery.

As die twee oë in jou kop niks baat,
moet jy jou op jou geestesoog verlaat,
want alhoewel jy waan jou oë's oop,
word jy in 'n ommesientjie kaalgestroop
van elke duit in jou besit. Ek raai
jou aan om die vuur te blus voor dit oplaai.

1420

Wat ek bedoel is, los die alchemie,
want dit strek nooit tot mens se voordeel nie,
en dus wil ek vir oulaas duidelik maak
wat filosowe sê oor hierdie saak.

Arnoldus de Villanova sê in sy
Rosarium dat niemand dit reg sal kry
om ooit kwiksilwer te verstol indien
hy hom nie van sy broederstof bedien
wat swawel is. Soos Hermes, vader van
filosofie, dit reeds gestel het, kan
die draak nie doodgemaak word nie tensy
sy dood bewerk word deur sy broer, want hy

1430

12 'n Gaai is 'n voël wat bekend is om die geraas wat dit maak.

het die draak beskou as kwik, terwyl die broer op swawel dui, want laasgenoemde voer hy terug na Sol wat goud is, kwik na die Maan, wat ons dan as die oorsprong moet verstaan van silwer. En daarom het hy volgehou – en aangedring ons kan daarop vertrou – niemand moet hom met die wetenskap inlaat tensy hy weet waarvan die wysgeer praat en die betekenis daarvan verstaan, want so nie, is hy van verstand ontdaan. Van al die groot geheimenisse is dié kuns die opperste geheimenisse.

'n Volgeling van Plato het op 'n keer hom tot sy meester met dié vraag gekeer (Ons lees dit in sy *Senior* en ons kan berus in die betroubaarheid daarvan): 'Sê my die naam van die geheime steen van die wyses.' Plato antwoord hom meteen: 'Bring my Titanus.' 'Wat is dit dan?' vra die man. 'Dieselfde as Magnasia,' gee Plato antwoord. 'My heer, u uitspraak dus verklaar *ignotum per ignocius*.¹³ Wat is Magnasia in elk geval?'

'Dit is 'n vloeistof saamgestel uit al vier elemente,' antwoord Plato hom. 'Maar wat is die formule? Waaruit kom die samestelling voort?' sê my 'seblief.' 'Nee, nee,' sê Plato, 'dit sal ek definitief nie doen nie. Filosowe's deur 'n eed verbind om niemand daarvan te laat weet en dit in geen geskrif te boek te stel. Dit is so kosbaar dat ons Gods bevel gehoorsaam deur die geheim'nis te bewaar. Dis Hy alleen wat dit mag openbaar deur wie dit Hom behaag te inspireer, maar ander weg te wys. Ek sê niks meer.

My slotsom is: as God vir ons beveel om kennis van die steen nie mee te deel aan ons volgelingen nie, dan's dit uit en klaar en moet 'n mens die soeke liefsvaak laat vaar. Een wat die Heer sy teëstander maak en onderdanigheid aan Hom versaaak deur te handel teen Sy wil, sal nooit gedy, al word sy lewe aan die kuns gewy.'

Wel, dis die end. My storie's afgehandel. God sterk die goeie in sy lewenswandel.

13 Iets duisters deur iets nog duisterder.

Fragment IX

Proloog tot die Proviandier se verhaal

Bob-up-and-down's¹ 'n plek wat pal verskyn
die laaste entjie pad en pal verdwyn
as mens na Kantelberg toe gaan, vlak by
die Bos van Blean. Daar het die Waard met sy
dinge begin. "Ons wa het vasgeval.
Wie kry hom uit die modder?" het hy geskal.
"Maak wakker ons agterryer en verhoed
dat diewe hom beroof van geld en goed.
Kyk daar hoe dut hy in die saal; hy sal
warempel netnou van sy perd af val.
Is dit die Kok van Londen? Wat de hel,
hy ken die reëls; hy moet ons iets vertel,
al weet ek voor my siel dit sal net mooi
so min beteken as 'n hophie hooi.
Word wakker, kêrel, hoe's jy dan so moeg
dat jy indommel in die oggend vroeg?
Het die vlooië jou getreiter of het jy
heelnag met 'n snol aan die pen gery?
Is dit hoekom jy nie jou kop kan lig?

Die Kok, met lewelose, bleek gesig,
antwoord die Waard: "Mag die Here my bewaar:
ek weet nie waarom nie, maar ek voel so swaar
dat ek met alle mag wil slaap; dit skyn
aantrekliker te wees as 'n gelling² wyn."

"Wel," sê die Proviandier, "as dit, heer Kok,
vir jou sal help en geen beswaar uitlok
van ander saam met ons op bedevaart,
met vriendelike verlov ook van ons Waard,
neem ek voorlopig jou verpligting oor.
Jou bleek gesig kom my bra aaklig voor,
jou oë lyk ook glasig en jou asem
het 'n suur en hoogs onaangename wasem:
'n swak kondisie – dis wat dit beteken.
Vir vleitaal moet dié vent nie op my reken.
Kyk net hoe gaap hy, die besope sot,
asof hy ons wil insluk, die hele lot!
Man, maak jou snater toe, voor die duiwel dalk
sy hoef daarin kom steek om dit oop te spalk,
want jou asem infekteer ons een en al.
Jy stink soos 'n vark; mag onheil jou oorval!
Dié dapper kêrel moet mens gadeslaan,
want sommer netnou steek hy na die vaan;³
hy's net mooi reg vir waagspel en vir roem,

1 As gevolg van die heuwelagtige terrein kan die dorpie Harbledown soms vanaf die pad gesien word, soms nie.

2 Inhoudsmaat vir vloeistof; omtrent 5 liter.

3 'n Volksvermaak; die deelnemer storm met 'n lans op 'n draaiende vaan af en moet die sak sand wat die teenwig daarvan vorm probeer vermy.

want hy is aapdronk,⁴ soos die mense dit noem – en so ’n persoon vind tot ’n strooitjie aardig.”

Die Kok was so verwoed en verontwaardig hy kon nie praat nie, maar hy ruk so rond dat hy onverwags beland het op die grond waar hy bly lê het totdat hulle hom gehelp het om weer op die been te kom: dis vir jou lepellekkerruiterskap!⁵ Daar volg ’n groot gesukkel om die slap en logge liggaam in die saal te kry, met stampe en stote en geroep daarby en die gebruik van breinkrag en van spier.

Toe sê die Waard vir die Proviandier: “Die kêrel is besope – dit staan vas – en wat ook al die oorsaak daarvan was, of hy wyn gedrink het, ou of nuwe aal, hy’s nie in staat om nou vir ons ’n verhaal uiteen te sit nie. Deur sy neus praat hy en hy snork soos iemand wat verkoue kry. Hy het ’n swaar taak voor hom as sy knol, met hom daarby, nie in die modder gaan rol, en as hy weer sou tuimel uit die saal, het ons ons hande vol om andermaal sy swaar, besope liggaam te verplaas. Vergeet van hom; ons wag op jou relaas. Net een ding: moenie onbesonne wees en dink jy kan hom die leviëte lees: hy sal jou voorlê en sy kans afwag om met jou af te reken ’n ander dag; miskien vind hy ’n foutjie hier en daar in jou boeke, en dis moeilik te verklaar, want eintlik lyk dit na oneerlikheid.”

“Nee,” sê die Proviandier, “dit sou my spyt as hy my eendag in ’n strik laat loop; ek sou veel liewerste sy merrie koop as dat dié kêrel met my rusie maak; ek wil dit graag verhoed en daarom staak ek my gekorswel, want dis wat dit was. En weet jy wat? Hier het ek ’n kalbas met goeie, beleë wyn daarin, so wag ’n bietjie, dan sal almal lekker lag: ek sal die Kok ’n slukkie daarvan gee; as ek dit aanbied, sê hy beslis nie Nee.” En hy het reg gehad; dis hoe dit was: die Kok het diep gedrink uit die kalbas, wat glad nie nodig was nie, want, verstaan,

4 Glo die derde graad van besopenheid: skaapdronk (onskadelik), leudronk (bakleierig), aapdronk (verspot), varkdronk (vieslik). Die proviandier beweer dat die kok aapdronk is en dat alles vir hom snaaks is, maar dit maak hom so kwaad dat hy van sy perd af val en in die modder beland soos mens van een wat varkdronk is kan verwag.

5 Die ruiterskap van iemand wat in ’n kombuis staan en lepels lek.

teen dié tyd het hy al heelwat weggeslaan.
Toe hy dit teruggee, merk ons een en al
die wyn het heerlik in sy smaak geval;
hy't dank betuig ook na sy beste vermoë.

Toe lag ons Waard. Met trane in sy oë
sê hy: "Ek sien dat dit gerade is
as mens op reis gaan om 'n lafenis
met jou saam te dra: geskille word besleg;
dit maak opeens die hele wêreld reg!"
Geseënd is jou naam, o Bacchus, jy
kan erns verander in gekskeerdery,
en dus verdien jy dank en hoë eer.
Maar dis genoeg van my geredeneer;
onthaal ons met jou storie, Proviandier."
"Nou goed," sê hy, "ek doen dit met plesier."

DIE PROVIANDIER SE VERHAAL

Phoibos was, soos ou geskrifte noem,
vroeër 'n aardbewoner en het roem
verwerf as ridder by uitnemendheid
asook die beste skutter van sy tyd;
dus het hy Piton, die gevreesde draak,
wat in die son gelê en slaap het, doodgemaak;
en baie ander heldedade met sy boog
verrig, so lees ons, het sy faam verhoog.
Hy was 'n meester van elke instrument
en in sy sang had hy ook ewe veel talent;
selfs Amphion, die vors van Thebe wat
deur sang die bouheer was van daardie stad,
'n vermaarde sanger, kon nie naastenby
so helder en so lieflik sing soos hy.
Verder was hy die mooiste man gewis
in sy eie tyd en menseheugenis;
om hom te wil beskryf het weinig waarde,
want hy was weergaloos op hierdie aarde;
en daarby was hy edel van gemoed,
in alles eerbaar en volkome goed.
En hierdie Phoibos nou, 'n ware blom
as dit by ridderdeug en mildheid kom,
het altyd 'n boog gedra vir sy plesier
en ter herinnering daaraan hoe die dier
deur hom vernietig is, soos ons kan lees.

Nou in sy huis was daar 'n kou gewees
en jare lank al huisves dit 'n kraai
wat hy leer praat het soos 'n papegaai.
Die voël was wit net soos 'n spierwit swaan
en as hy praat, het die kraai die kuns verstaan
om iemand na te maak wat iets verhaal,
en nêrens was daar ooit 'n nagtegaal

wat 'n honderdduisendste so mooi as hy
kon sing, en hy was opgewek daarby.

Phoibos het in sy huis 'n vrou gehad:
dié was sy allergrootste aardse skat,
en dag en nag doen hy als in sy vermoë
ter bevordering van haar eer en haar genoeë;
net een ding: jaloesie het hom laat waan
dat hy die heelyd wag oor haar moes staan.
Om dalk gekul te word, was sy groot vrees,
soos dit maar altyd in so 'n geval sal wees,
maar dis vergeefse moeite: 'n goeie vrou,
in daad en denke aan haar man getrou,
behoort mens nie met argwaan te bespied
en as sy sleg is, is dit als verniet –
jy kan haar dophou, maar dit sal niks baat;
die ou deskundiges bied ons dié raad
dat wie ook al 'n vroumens wil bewaak
hom besig hou met 'n onbegonne taak.

Maar laat my nogmaals tot my storie keer:
die goeie Phoibos het sy bes probeer
om haar plesier te gee, want hy't gereken
dat sy gedrag en deugde sou beteken
hy word nooit uit haar goeie guns verjaag,
maar God weet dat mens nooit daarin sal slaag
om die neigings teen te gaan wat die natuur
ingeplant het in 'n kreatuur.

Neem maar 'n voël: jy sit hom in 'n kou
waar jy alles moontlik doen om hom skoon te hou,
jy vertroetel hom, gee hom te eet en drink
al die lekkernye waaraan jy kan dink,
maar al is daardie kou gemaak van goud
en so aantreklik as kan kom, die woud –
al is dit ook in koue stormweer –
bly vir 'n voël nog twintigduisend keer
verkiesliker. Daar sal hy wurms vreet
en allerhande sulke goed, maar weet:
die vryheid sal 'n voël gedurig lok
en eindelijk sal hy wegkom uit sy hok.

Of neem 'n kat: jy maak sy bed van sy
en voer hom melk met sagte vleis daarby,
maar op die daad, as hy 'n muis gewaar,
dan sal hy melk en vleis net so laat vaar
en al die lekkernye in die huis,
want nou's sy eetlus toegespits op muis.
Hier sien ons hoedat lus die oorhand kry
en hoedat redelikheid daaronder ly.

Van net so 'n lae aard is 'n wolvin:
wanneer sy bronstig is, kry sy haar sin
met tot die wildste, slegste dier wat daar
te vinde is, want nou wil sy net paar.

Ek skimp geensins op vroue nie. Dis net

oor mans en hul ontrou wat ek dit het,
want 'n man is jags, sy seksdrang word gestil
met 'n lae tipe vrou net wanneer hy wil;
dit maak nie saak hoe lieflik is sy vrou,
hoe sag is haar geaardheid, hoe getrou.
Die vlees is so versot op nuwighede,
dit bly nie lank met enigiets tevrede
wat in die teken staan van eerbaarheid.

Dié goeie Phoibos, al sy deug ten spyt,
is tog gekul, al wis hy niks daarvan,
want sy vrou was deurmekaar met 'n ander man,
'n nikswerd vent wat vergeleke met
haar eie man g'n eer of aansien het.
Dis jammer, maar so gaan dit maar,
en trane en verdriet is wat dit baar.
En so het dit gebeur, as Phoibos hom
elders bevind, laat sy haar vryer kom.
Haar vryer? Dis 'n plat manier van praat.
Verskoon my, maar ek weet geen ander raad.
Dit is tog waar wat die wyse Plato sê:
'Die woord moet op die daad betrekking hê.'
As mens iets oorvertel, moet daar akkoord
wees tussen handeling en juiste woord.
Ek's 'n doodgewone man en daarom wil
ek dit rondborstig stel: daar's g'n verskil
tussen 'n dame van die hoogste stand
as sy haar liggaam skandelik verpand
en 'n laaggebore vrou, as dit alleen –
gestel hul het dié sondigheid gemeen –
dat die hooggeplaaste heer die daad verbloem,
die betrokke dame sy 'beminde' noem,
terwyl 'n vrou wat arm is of gering
belas word met 'n naam soos 'stuk' of 'ding.'
Hoewel die name wissel, word hul ewe
laagliggend in 'n man se bed belewe.

Daar's ook's bra min verskil tussen 'n tiran
en 'n arme voëlvryverklaarde man
of selfs 'n dief: die een is nes die ander.
So is dit uitgelê aan Aleksander:
'n tiran met leërmagte aan sy kant
het die vermoë om deur moord en brand
almal wat in sy pad kom af te maai
en groot verwoesting om hom heen te saai,
en daarom noem ons hom 'veroweraar';
maar 'n voëlvryverklaarde wat net 'n paar
aanhangers het en minder kwaad bedryf
of skade doen, word weer as 'dief' beskryf.
Omdat ek nie op boekgeleerdheid roem
sal ek nie 'n klomp outoriteite noem,
maar sonder meer my storie verder voer.

Op die vrou se wenk het die vryer nie gesloer

en daar bevredig hul hul luste gou.
Die wit kraai in sy hok het als aanskou
en nie 'n dooie woord gesê nie, maar met
dat Phoibos teruggekome het huis toe, het
die kraai 'Koekoek, koekoek, koekoek'⁶ gesing.

'Wel, voël,' sê Phoibos, 'watse verwelkoming
is dit miskien? Gewoonlik groet jy my
met opgewekte sang wat my hart verbly
by die aanhoor van jou stem. Wat sing jy daar?'

'Nee,' sê die voël, 'dit is vanpas voorwaar,
want, Phoibos, al jou voordele ten spyt,
jou hoë afkoms, jou aansienlikheid,
jou sang en jou musiek, al hou jy dop
met alle mag, word jy sand in die oë geskop
deur 'n man van toet, somer 'n nikswerd ou,
een van g'n aansien vergeleke met jou.
Die Here hoor my, hy't haar oop en bloot
waar ek toegekyk het op jou bed gestoot.'

Wat dien nog meer gesê te word? Die kraai
het pront vertel hoe't sy haar man verraai
en skande aangedoen deur haar gedrag,
bewyse aangevoer en nog 'n slag
herhaal hy't dit gesien met eie oë.

Toe't Phoibos eenkant toe gegaan, bewoë
het hy gevoel asof sy hart wil breek.
Hy't sy boog gespan, 'n pyl daarin gesteeke,
uit woede toe sy vrou net daar gevel;
so't dit gebeur; daar's niks meer te vertel.
Uit smart het hy geen instrument gespaar:
sy harp en salterie, luit en kitaar
is met sy boog en pyle als gebreek,
en daarna't hy die kraai so aangespreek:

'Verraaiet met die tong van 'n skerpioen,'
het hy geroep, 'Jy't my dié ding laat doen!
Was ek maar dood! Was ek liefs nooit gebore!
O lieue, lieue vrou, my uitverkore
juweel van sinsgenot, getroue maat,
nou lê jy dood met koue, bleek gelaat,
en heeltemal onskuldig, dis vir vas.
O hand oorhaastig wat die dader was!
O onbesonne drif, versteurde gees
wat nydig op 'n onskuldige kon wees!
Wantrou wat van valse argwaan brand,
waar was jou wysheid? Waar was jou verstand?
'n Mens moet waak teen roekelose dade
en liggelowigheid so onberade;
'n mens moet ook nie driftig optree voor
jy weet waaroor dit gaan nie. Dink goed daaroor
sodat jy nie, deur agterdog gedwing,

⁶ Die koekoek lê eiers in 'n ander voël se nes; vandaar die Engelse woord *cuckold*.

jou oorgee aan vertoornde handeling.
Oorhaastigheid het duisende laat sterf
of anders afgestort in die verderf.
Uit smart wil ek my om die lewe bring.'

Toe sê hy vir die kraai: 'Ellendeling,
ek gaan jou vir jou leuens nou terugbetaal.
Jy't mos so mooi gesing soos 'n nagtegaal,
wel nou's jou sang, jou valse dief, daarmee heen,
en daardie spierwit vere, iedere een;
solank jy leef sal jy ook nooit weer praat:
dis hoe ek my sal wreek op jou verraad.
Jy en jou kroos is voortaan swart van kleur
en die soetheid van jou stem het jy verbeur,
maar altyd voor 'n storm sal jy kras
as teken dat dit deur jóú toedoen was.'
Meteens het hy die kraai daar neergedruk
en elke enkele wit veer uitgepluk;
hy't hom swart gemaak; sy spraakvermoë kwyt
asook sy sang, is die kraai daar uitgesmyt
na buite toe – na die duiwel vir my part –
en daarom dan is kraaie almal swart.

Die sedeles wat ons hieruit kan leer:
mens moet versigtig wees en jou tong beheer;
nooit as te nimmer moet jy vir iemand sê
'n ander man het by sy vrou gelê;
met dodelike venyn sal hy jou haat.
Geleerdes sê dis Salomo se raad
'n mens moet oppas en jou mond bewaar,
maar vers en kapittel kan ek nie verklaar;
dog een ding weet ek; my ma't my aangeraai:
'My seun, in hemelsnaam, onthou die kraai!
Bewaar jou mond, dan sal jy jou vriend bewaar.
Meer as die duiwel is die tong 'n gevaar:
deur 'n kruis te slaan, kan jy 'n duiwel weer.
In eindelose goedheid het die Heer
'n mens se tong met tande en lippe omsluit,
want anders glip die lawwe woorde uit.
My seun, deur te veel praat is baie al,
soos geleerdes ons vertel, gebring tot 'n val;
aan die ander kant word geeneen ooit geskaad
deur min of met bedagsaamheid te praat.
Die begeerte om te praat moet mens bedwing,
behalwe wanneer jy jou hulde bring
aan God in erediens of as jy bid.
Die eerste deug wat ons moet leer is dit:
jy moet jou mond bewaak, jou tong beheer;
dis iets wat kinders reeds van kleins af leer.
My seun, te veel en onbesonne praat,
as minder woorde ewe goed sal baat
lei net tot moeilikheid, en nou verbonde
aan baie woorde is ook baie sonde.

'n Roekelose tong herinner my
aan 'n getrokke swaard wat hak en sny,
'n arm van 'n man se liggaam rukkend,
so sny 'n tong, my seun, 'n vriendskap stukkend.
'n Babbelaar's 'n gruwel voor die Heer.
Lees Salomo, so wys en so geëer,
lees Dawid se Psalms en Seneca!
In plaas van praat, dien net 'n knik vir "Ja"
en maak asof jy doof is as jy hoor
'n windlawaaï stel iets gevaarlik voor.
Die Vlaamse spreekwoord's ongetwyfeld waar:
Hoe minder praat, hoe groter rus is daar.
As jy g'n kwaad gespreek het, dan spring jy
ook die verdraaiing van jou woorde vry;
maar wat jy wel gesê het, dit bly staan
en nooit daarna maak jy dit ongedaan;
gerepte woorde is onherroeplik uit
en in hul gang kan niemand hulle stuit;
jy word die slaaf van die een wat jy vertrou het
met woorde waaroor jy te laat berou het.
My seun, wees nooit die eerste met die nuus;
hoe waar dit ook al is – dis g'n ekskuus.
Onthou die kraai in elke handeling,
dat praat jou nooit in die verknorsing bring.'

Fragment X

Proloog tot die Dorpspastoor se verhaal

Aan die einde van die Proviandier se verhaal
merk ek die son het reeds so laag gedaal
van die meridiaan dat die hoek wat dit maak
nou hoogstens nege en twintig grade raak.
Dit moes so vieruur wees, het ek geweet,
omdat my skaduwee nou elf voet meet
vergeleke met die ses voet, min of meer,
wat ek eintlik lank is; daarom kom dit neer
op 'n getalverhouding elf tot ses.

Die Maan was boonop nou in die gewes
van Libra bo die hemelewenaar, 10
toe ons die rand van 'n dorp bereik het waar
ons Waard op die bekende wyse weer
gesorg het vir die leiding en beheer
van ons vrolike geselskap. Aldus het hy
ons aangespreek: "Net een vertelling bly
nog oor. Jul het jul na my wil geskik,
en stories uit elke stand het ons verkwik.
Ons is nou byna aan die einde van
my opgelegde taak. God seën die man 20
van wie ons nou 'n laaste streek gaan hoor.

Heer Priester," sê hy, "Wat is jy? Pastoor
of hulppastoor dalk? Kom vertel.
Maar wat ook al, bederf tog nie ons spel.
Ons het gehoor van al die ander hier;
dis nou jou beurt om te sorg vir ons plesier.
As ek so na jou kyk, kom dit my voor
jy sal wel iets gewigtigs op kan toor.
Vertel ons nou 'n fabel op ons weg."

Toe's die Pastoor ook met sy antwoord reg: 30
"n Fabel vra jy? Daarvoor't ek g'n lus;
Die apostel Paulus maan Timotheüs:
'Jy moet die valse leraars nie vertrou
wat hulle graag met fabels besig hou.'
Waarom sou ek onkruid in my land
eerder as koring saai uit volle hand?
As jul gewillig is om dit te hoor,
dan dra ek iets wat kuis en goed is voor;
as jul wil aandag gee, dan sal ek graag
jul met veroorloofde genot behaag, 40
waardeur ons hulde aan die Here bring.

Maar jul moet weet, ek is 'n suiderling:
ek kan nie 'rum, ram, ruf'¹ allitereer;

¹ Toespeling op die allitererende poësie wat kenmerkend van die Oud-Engelse tydperk was en in Chaucer se tyd nog in dele van Engeland in swang was.

met rym vaar ek niks beter, by die Heer,
en, met verlov, sal julle dus van my
'n prettige verhaal in prosa kry
om ons vermaaklikheid goed af te rond.
Ek bid dat Christus my in hart en mond
sal toerus dat ek jul die weg kan wys
van daardie glorieryke pelgrimsreis
met die hemelse Jerusalem as doel.
As julle wel daartoe geneë voel,
begin ek my vertelling op die daad,
maar dit veronderstel jul ryp beraad.

50

En nog 'n ding: ek sal in my betragting
onder voorbehoud moet redeneer uit agting
vir die teoloë, want ek's ongeleer.
Ek gee die gees en nie die letter weer,
maar ek is van my swakhede bewus,
so as ek dwaal, berispe my gerus."

60

Ons gaan geredelik toe daarmee akkoord;
ons het gemeen dis soos dit immers hoort
dat ons met stigtelike woorde sluit,
en ons sou hom derhalwe geensins stuit.

Ons Waard was segsman vir ons hele groep.
"So moet 'n mond mos praat!" het hy geroep.
"Sê wat jy wil; ons luister met plesier."
En daarna gaan hy verder op dié manier:
"Laat ons nou jou betragting hoor, maar vlug,
want kyk waar sit die son al in die lug.
Wees stigtelik, maar wees beknopt daarby
en mag die Heer jou help om dit reg te kry."

70

DIE DORSPASTOOR SE VERHAAL

Ons liewe Hemelheer wil nie hê dat enigeen verlore moet gaan nie, maar eerder dat alle mense tot kennis van Hom en van die geseënde ewige lewe moet kom. Daarom vermaan Hy ons deur die profeet Jeremia: 'Staan by die kruispaaie en kyk, en vra na die ou paaie. Vra watter pad die beste is en loop daarop, dan sal julle rus vir jul siele vind.' Daar is baie geestelike paaie wat mense na ons Here Jesus Christus en Sy Glorieryk toe lei. Een van die belangrikstes en geskikstes vir die man of vrou wat deur die sonde afgedwaal het van die pad wat na die hemelse Jerusalem lei, is die weg van Penitensie. Aangaande hierdie pad moet mense gretig wees om te luister en van ganser harte daarna uit te vra; sodat hulle kan weet wat Penitensie is, waarom dit so heet, hoeveel soorte handeling dit behels, wat daarby pas en waardeur dit belemmer word.

Ambrosius sê dat Penitensie die mens se berou is oor die kwaad wat hy gedoen het en sy begeerte om niks meer te doen waaroor hy berou hoef te hê nie. 'n Ander geleerde sê: 'Penitensie is die geween van iemand wat jammer is oor sy sonde en dit bitterlik berou dat hy verkeerd gedoen het.' Penitensie is in sekere omstandighede die ware berou van iemand wat smart en ander pyn verduur vanweë sy skuld. Ten einde waarlik berou te hê, moet 'n mens eerstens spyt wees oor die sondes wat hy gedoen het, en hy moet hom van harte voorneem om dit mondeling

te bely, daarvoor boete te doen, hom nooit weer aan iets skuldig te maak wat hy agterna moet beween nie, en in goeie werke te volhard; want anders kan sy berou hom niks baat nie. Isidorus sê: 'Dis 'n spotter en 'n leuenaar en geen boetvaardige wat onmiddellik weer 'n ding gaan doen waaroor hy berou moet hê.' Om te ween sonder om jou sonde te laat staan, kan 'n mens niks baat nie. Maar nogtans is dit te hope dat hoe dikwels 'n mens ook al val, hy deur Penitensie kan opstaan as hy daartoe die genade het. Maar dit lewer probleme op. Gregorius sê immers: 'n Mens kan nouliks opstaan uit sy sonde as hy gebuk gaan onder die las van slegte gewoonte.' En daarom beskou die Heilige Kerk boetvaardiges wat hul sonde laat staan voordat die sonde hulle laat staan as seker van hul saligmaking. En as iemand sondig maar in sy laaste oomblikke berou het, dan vertrou die Heilige Kerk dat hy vanweë sy berou deur die genade van Jesus Christus salig sal word. Maar kies lievers die veilige pad.

Noudat ek verduidelik het wat Penitensie is, moet u die drie situasies verstaan waarin dit voorkom. Die eerste is as 'n mens gedoop word nadat hy gesondig het. Augustinus sê: 'Tensy jy boetvaardig is oor jou ou sondige lewe, kan jy nie met jou nuwe, rein lewe begin nie.' As iemand gedoop sou word sonder berou oor sy ou skuld, ontvang hy wel die teken van die Doopsel, maar nie die genadegawe en sondevergifnis nie, totdat hy waarlik boetvaardig is. Die tweede geval is dié van iemand wat hom nadat hy gedoop is aan 'n doodsonde skuldig maak. Die derde is dié van mense wat ná hul doop hul dag na dag aan pekelsondes skuldig maak. In dié verband sê Augustinus dat die Penitensie van goeie, nederige mense daaglikse penitensie is.

100

Daar is drie soorte Penitensie: openbare, algemene en geheime penitensie. Openbare Penitensie is wanneer iemand tydens Vastyd uit die kerk geban word weens kindermoord of iets dergeliks of as iemand openlik gesondig het en daar openlik daarvoor gepraat word en die Heilige Kerk die sondaar verplig om in die openbaar boete te doen. Algemene Penitensie is dié wat priesters in sekere gevalle oplê, byvoorbeeld om lig geklee of kaalvoet op bedevaart te gaan. Geheime Penitensie is boetedoening vir die daaglikse sondes wat ons in die geheim gepleeg het, in die geheim opgebieg het en in die geheim kwytskel is.

Nou moet mens ook weet wat paslik en noodsaaklik is vir ware en volmaakte Penitensie. Dit omvat: boetvaardigheid van hart, bekentenis met die mond en boetedoening. Johannes Chrysostomos sê: 'Penitensie verplig 'n mens tot die gedweë aanvaarding van opgelegde straf, boetvaardigheid van hart, skuldbelydenis met die mond en boetedoening in alle nederigheid.' Dit is vrugdraende Penitensie oor die genotsugtige denke, roekelose spreke en slegte, sondige dade waarmee ons die toorn van die Here wek. Teenoor hierdie bese skuld staan die Penitensie soos 'n boom.

Hierdie boom is gewortel in boetvaardigheid, verborge in die hart van een wat berou het, soos 'n boom se wortels in die aarde verborge is. Uit hierdie wortel ontspruit 'n stam wat die takke en blare van belydenis en die vrugte van boetedoening dra. Christus sê in Sy Evangelie: 'Dra vrugte wat by die berou pas,' want dis aan sy vrugte wat 'n boom geken word, nie aan die wortels wat in die mensehart verborge is of aan die takke of blare van belydenis nie. Dis dié dat ons Here Jesus sê: 'Aan hul vrugte sal hulle geken word.'

Uit hierdie wortel ontspruit ook 'n saad van genade, die moeder van sekerheid, en hierdie saad is bitter en skerp. Die genade van hierdie saad ontkiem uit God deur ons te herinner aan die oordeelsdag en die pyne van die hel. Dis dié dat Salomo sê dat die vrees van die Here 'n mens van sy sonde laat wyk. Die skerpte van dié saad is die liefde van God en die verlange na ewige geluksaligheid.

Dit trek die mens se hart na God en laat hom sy sonde haat. Niks is immers vir 'n kind lekkerder as die melk van sy voedster nie en niks is aakliker as dié melk met ander voedsel vermeng. So ook die sondaar wat sy sonde liefhet: vir hom is dit die soetste ding op aarde; maar as hy eers die Here Jesus Christus bestendig liefhet en die ewige lewe verlang, dan is daar niks wat vir hom so aaklig is nie. Die wet van God is waarlik die liefde van God, waarvoor Dawid getuig: 'Ek het u wet lief en ek haat die bose.' Hy wat die Here liefhet, onderhou Sy wet en Sy woord. 125

Dis hierdie boom wat Daniël in die gees gesien het toe hy Nebukadneser se droom uitgelê het en hom aangeraai het om met sy sondes te breek. Penitensie is die boom van die lewe vir diegene wat hul oortredinge bely en laat staan, want volgens Salomo sal hulle genade ontvang.

In hierdie Penitensie of berou moet mens vier dinge onderskei: wat dit is, wat 'n mens daartoe bring, hoe dit tot openbaring kom en van watter baat dit vir die siel is.

Die saak staan so. Berou is die ware smart wat 'n mens in sy hart voel oor sy sondes met die vaste voorneme om hulle te bely, boete te doen en nooit weer te sondig nie. Aangaande hierdie smart sê Bernardus: 'Dit moet swaar en pynlik wees en skerp en vlymend in die hart.' Die smart is skerp omdat die mens teen sy Heer en Skepper gesondig het, en skerper omdat dit sy Hemelse Vader is teen wie hy gesondig het, en nog skerper omdat dit teen die Een is wat hom vrygekoop het met Sy kosbare bloed, wat ons van die boeie van die sonde verlos het, van die wreedheid van die duiwel en die pyne van die hel.

Daar is ses oorwegings wat ons tot berou lei. Ten eerste moet 'n mens bewus word van sy sonde. Dit moet egter geen aangename gevoel wees nie, maar groot skaamte en skuldgevoel. Job wys daarop dat die sondaar sy eie ondergang bewerkstellig, en daarom sê Hiskia: 'Ek sal my hele lewe lank swaarkry vanweë die bitterheid van my siel.' En God self sê in Openbaring: 'Onthou waarvandaan jy geval het,' want voordat jy gesondig het was jy 'n kind van God en 'n lidmaat van Sy Koninkryk, maar deur jou sonde het jy 'n slaaf geword, onrein, 'n lidmaat van die duiwel, 'n hater van die engele, 'n skande vir die Heilige Kerk, voedsel vir die valse slang, en ewige brandstof vir die hellevuur; en des te meer onrein en afskuwelik omdat jy herhaaldelik oortree soos 'n hond wat na sy braaksel toe terugkeer. Jy is nog onreiner omdat jy voortgaan in die sonde, 'n gewoonte daarvan maak, as gevolg waarvan jy vrot is in die sonde soos 'n dier in sy drek.

As mens so daarvoor dink, dan skaam jy jou vir jou sonde en skep jy geen behae daarin nie; soos God deur Sy profeet Esegïël sê: 'Julle sal julle optrede in herinnering roep en 'n weersin in juisself kry.' Sonde is voorwaar die weg wat na die hel voer.

Die tweede oorweging wat 'n mens daartoe hoort te bring dat hy die sonde afwys, is dit waarop Petrus ons wys: 'Elkeen wat sonde doen, is 'n slaaf van die sonde.' Die sonde bring 'n mens tot groot slawerny. Daarom sê Esegïël: 'Treurend gaan ek voort en ek verag myself.' Ja, en dis reg dat 'n mens die sonde verag en hom uit die bose mag daarvan bevry. In dié verband sê Seneca: 'Al wis ek dat nóg God nóg mens daarvan te wete sou kom, sou ek dit benede my ag om te sondig' en verder ook: 'Ek is vir beter dinge gebore as om 'n slaaf van my liggaam te wees of my liggaam tot slaaf te maak.' Niemand kan 'n onreiner slaaf van sy liggaam maak as om dit aan die sonde uit te lewer nie. Hoe laag hy ook al is, sal dit hom nog laer maak. Hoe hoër die stand waaruit iemand val, hoe meer van 'n slaaf is hy, vuil en verfoeilik voor God en die wêreld. O goeie God, ons moet wel die sonde verag, want daardeur word een wat vry was 'n verslaafde. Daarom sê Augustinus: 'As jy op jou diensknege neersien oor hy sondig, sien dan op juisself neer as jy sou sonde doen.' 50

Let op jou waarde dat jy nie jousef onteer nie. Ons behoort dit benede ons te ag om aan sonde verslaaf te raak en ons deeglik te skaam dat hoewel God ons in Sy eindelose goedheid in so 'n hoë posisie gestel het, ons met verstand, liggaamskrag, gesondheid, skoonheid en voorspoed bedeel het en met Sy hartebloed vrygekoop het van die dood, ons so teennatuurlik, in weerwil van Sy goedertierenheid, Hom versaak en sodoende ons eie siele te vernietig. Jul skone vrouens moet die spreuk van Salomo onthou: 'Die skoonheid van 'n vrou sonder oordeel is soos 'n goue ring aan 'n vark se snoet.' Soos 'n vark wat in 'n mishoop wroet, so wroet haar skoonheid in die stinkende mishoop van die sonde. 156

Die derde oorweging wat ons tot berou moet beweeg, is vrees vir die oordeelsdag en die vreeslike pyne van die hel. Hiëronimus sê: 'Elke keer as ek die oordeelsdag in herinnering roep, dan sidder ek. Wanneer ek eet of drink of wat ook al doen, dan is dit asof ek pal die basuin hoor skal: "Staan op julle dooies en kom na die oordeel." O goeie God, ons moet wel die oordeel vrees, want daar sal ons almal, soos Paulus sê, 'voor die regterstoel van Christus moet verskyn.' Dit sal 'n groot vergadering sonder enige afwesiges wees, want geen verskoning of verontskuldiging sal baat nie. Nie net sal 'n oordeel oor ons sondes gevel word nie, maar al ons werke sal geopenbaar word. Soos Bernardus dit stel, 'Pleidooie sal niks help nie en vernuf net so min; ons sal rekenskap moet gee van elke ydele woord.' Daar sal ons met 'n Regter te doen kry wat nie mislei of omgekoop kan word nie, want al ons gedagtes is aan Hom bekend en, soos Salomo sê: 'Die toorn van die Heer sal niemand spaar nie, nie ter wille van gesmeek of betaling nie.' Op die oordeelsdag is daar dus geen hoop op ontkoming nie. Daarom sê Anselmus: 'Die sondige mens sal in daardie oomblik in groot angs verkeer, want die streng en toornige Regter sal omhoog troon en onder Hom sal die vreeslike put van die hel gaap om diegene te vernietig wat sondes moet beken wat oop en bloot is voor God en elke kreatuur. Aan die linkerkant sal meer duiwels wees as wat die hart kan bedink om die sondige siele te martel en na die pyn van die hel te sleep. Binne-in hulle sal hul gewetes knaag en buite hulle sal die hele wêreld in ligte laaie staan. Waarheen kan die ellendige sondaar dan vlug om weg te kruip? Hy sal beslis nie kan wegkruip nie, maar moet na vore tree en hom vertoon.' Soos Hiëronimus sê: 'Die aarde sal hom uitwerp, so ook die see en die lug wat vol weerlig en donderslae sal wees.'

As enigeen hierdie dinge in gedagte hou, glo ek dat sy sonde hom geen plesier sal verskaf nie, maar eerder groot verdriet uit vrees vir die hellesmart. Daarom sê Job teenoor God: 'Gee vir my uitstel sodat ek kan ween en weeklaag voordat ek moet weggaan na die stikdonker land toe en nooit terugkeer nie, na die land van onbehaaglikheid wat in diep duisternis gehul is, waar die skaduwee van die dood is en niks georden is nie, en waar die aaklige angs vir ewig duur.'

Hier sien ons hoe Job om uitstel vra sodat hy sy sondes kan beween, want een dag se uitstel is meer werd as die wêreld se rykdom, want 'n mens kan jou skuld teenoor God delg deur berou en nie deur rykdom nie. Daarom vra hy God vir uitstel sodat hy sy oortredings kan betreur. Al die verdriet wat mense sedert die begin van die wêreld ondervind het, is immers niks in vergelyking met die verdriet van die hel nie. Daarom noem Job die hel die land van die donker nag: 'land' omdat dit standvastig is en voortduur; 'stikdonker' omdat daar in die hel niks ligs is nie. Die donker lig van die ewig brandende vuur afkomstig laat 'n mens al die smarte van die hel ondergaan deur die verskriklike duiwels wat hom treiter aan hom te toon. 'In diep duisternis gehul' dui daarop dat God nie in die hel te sien is nie, want om Hom te sien, is die ewige lewe. 'Diep duisternis' is die sondes deur die ellendige mens gepleeg wat verhinder dat hy die aangesig van God kan sien, soos 'n donker wolk

wat tussen ons en die son kom. 'Land van onbehaaglikheid' omdat daar drie dinge ontbreek waaroor mense in hierdie aardse lewe beskik, naamlik eer, plesier en rykdom.

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In teenstelling met eer, ken die hel skande en verwarring. Die agting wat een teenoor 'n ander betoon, word eer genoem, maar in die hel is daar geen eer of agting nie. Dáár word ewe min agting teenoor 'n koning betoon as teenoor 'n kneg. Daarom sê God deur die profeet Jeremia: "Diegene wat my minag, sal ek minag." Hoë heerskappy word ook eer genoem, maar in die hel word niemand bedien nie – behalwe met skade en kwelling. Groot waardigheid en hoogheid word ook eer genoem, maar in die hel word almal deur duiwels vertrap. God sê: 'Afskuwelike duiwels sal kom en gaan oor die hoofde van die verdoemdes.' Hoe hoër hulle in hierdie lewe was, hoe laer sal hul verdruk word in die hel.

In teenstelling met die rykdom van hierdie wêreld, sal hulle die ellende van armoede ken, en hiedie armoede bestaan uit vier dinge. Dit sal hul aan besittings ontbreek. In verband hiermee sê Dawid: 'Rykes wat hulle harte op wêreldsgoed gestel het, slaap die slaap van die dood en in hulle hande is daar niks van al hulle skatte nie.' Verder bestaan die ellende van die hel uit 'n gebrek aan spysie en drank, want soos God deur Moses sê: 'Ek sal hongerpyn op hulle afbring. Ek sal roofdiere op hulle afstuur en giftige slange. Slanggif sal hul drank wees en wrede addergif hul spysie.' Hulle ellende is ook 'n gebrek aan klere. Naak van liggaam sal hulle wees, slegs bedek deur die vuur waarin hulle brand en ander verdorwenheid; naak ook van siel, ontbloot van alle deug wat die bedekking van die siel is. Waar's hulle mooi mantels nou, hulle sagte lakens en keurige hemde? Hulle lê, volgens Jesaja 'tussen die maaiers en is oortrek van die wurms.' Laastens bestaan hul ellende uit 'n gebrek aan vriende. Niemand is arm wat goeie vriende het nie, maar in die hel is daar geen vriende nie. Nóg God nóg enige kreatuur sal vir hulle tot vriend wees en hulle sal mekaar met dodelike afsku haat. 'Seuns en dogters sal teen hul ouers in opstand kom, huismense teen huismense en hulle sal mekaar uitskel en verafsku,' soos God deur Miga sê. Liefderyke kinders wat voorheen so lief was vir mekaar, sou mekaar nou opeet as hulle kon. Hoe kan mense mekaar liefhê in die hellepyn as hulle mekaar in die welsyn van die lewe gehaat het? Hul vleeslike liefde was immers dodelike haat, want soos Dawid sê, 'Wie boosheid liefhet, haat sy eie siel,' en iemand wat sy eie siel haat, kan geensins 'n ander liefhê nie. Daarom is daar in die hel geen vertroosting of vriendskap nie, want hoe meer vleeslike verwante daar in die hel saam is, hoe meer gevloek, geskel en dodelike haat is daar onder hulle.

In die hel is daar ook 'n gebrek aan alle moontlike plesier, wat verskaf word deur die vyf sintuie, naamlik gesig, gehoor, reuk, smaak en gevoel. In die hel sal hul duisternis en rook sien wat hul oë laat traan; en hulle sal geweene en die gekners van tande hoor. Hul neusgate sal met stank gevul wees en, soos Jesaja sê, sal die smaak in hul mond galbitter wees. Hul liggame sal geheel-en-al bedek wees met 'vuur wat nie geblus word nie en wurms wat nie vrek nie,' soos God by monde van Jesaja sê. As een dalk dink dat hy sterf van die pyn en so die pyn ontkom, sal hy die waarheid van Job se woorde agterkom: 'In daardie plek is die skaduwee van die dood.' 'n Skaduwee is soos die ding waarvan dit 'n skaduwee is, maar dis nie die ding self nie. So is dit met die pyn van die hel: vanweë die afskuwelike lyding is dit soos die dood. Dit pynig 'n mens sodat jy dink die dood moet kom; tog kom dit nie, want soos Gregorius dit stel, 'Vir die ellendinge sal daar 'n dood sonder die dood wees, 'n einde sonder end en begeerte sonder bevrediging. Hul dood sal vir ewig duur, hul einde sal steeds opnuut begin en hul begeerte sal nooit ophou nie.' Daarom sê Johannes dan ook: 'Hulle sal die dood soek en dit nie vind nie; hulle sal verlang om te sterwe, maar die dood sal hulle ontwyk.'

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Verder is daar volgens Job geen orde of reëlmaat in die hel nie. Hoewel God alles ordelik geskep het en niks sonder reëlmaat nie, sodat elke ding georden en getel is, tog is die verdoemdes buite orde en in wanorde. Soos Dawid sê: 'God maak die vrugbare grond brak oor die slegte daade van dié wat daar woon;' vir hulle het water geen vog, lug geen verfrissing en vuur geen lig nie. Basilius sê: 'Die gebrand van vuur op die aarde sal God aan die verdoemdes in die hel gee, maar die lig en die helderheid daarvan sal Hy aan Sy kinders in die hemel gee,' soos 'n goeie man vleis vir sy kinders gee maar bene vir die honde.

Sodat daar geen hoop op uitkoms kan wees nie, sê Job ook oplaas dat 'afgryse en aaklige angs daar eindeloos voortduur.' Afgryse is verskriklike vrees oor iets wat voorlê en hierdie angs heers vir ewig in die harte van die verdoemdes. Daar is sewe redes waarom hulle alle hoop kwyt is. Eerstens sal God wat hulle Regter is, geen genade aan hulle betoon nie; hulle kan nóg Hom nóg een van Sy Heiliges behaag; hulle het geen losprys om te betaal nie; hulle het geen stem om Hom aan te spreek nie; hulle kan nie die pyn ontvlug nie; en daar is geen goedheid in hulle wat hulle kan toon om hul van die pyn te verlos nie. Salomo sê tereg: 'Wanneer 'n slegte mens sterf, verdwyn alle hoop.' As iemand die hellepyn dus goed verstaan en daarmee rekening hou dat dit hom vanweë sy sondes toekom, sal hy gewis meer geneig wees om te sug en te ween as om te sing en te speel. Soos Salomo sê: 'Hy wat weet watter pyn vir sonde verorden en bestem is, het rede om te treur,' en volgens Augustinus laat hierdie wysheid 'n mens weeklaag in sy hart. 230

Die vierde oorweging wat 'n mens tot berou moet beweeg, is die smartvolle herinnering aan die goeie wat hy hier op aarde nagelaat het om te doen, asook die goeie wat hy verbeur het. Die goeie wat verbeur is, is die goeie werke wat hy gedoen het voordat hy in doodsonde verval het, asook sy goeie werke terwyl hy die sonde dien. Die goeie werke wat hy gedoen het voor hy in sonde verval het, is ingekort, verdof en lamgelê deur herhaalde gesondig; terwyl die ander goeie werke, dié wat hy gedoen het terwyl hy in doodsonde was, heeltemal dood is met betrekking tot die ewige lewe. Eersgenoemde goeie daade kan nooit weer herwek word sonder opregte berou nie. Daarom sê God by monde van Esegïël: 'As iemand wat altyd my wil gedoen het, ophou om dit te doen en onreg pleeg en die afskuwelike dinge doen wat die goddelose doen, sal hy nie bly lewe nie.' Van sy goeie werke sal niks oorbly nie, want hy sal sterf in sy sonde. Hieroor sê Gregorius: 'Ons moet verstaan dat as ons doodsondes doen, dan help dit ons niks om die goeie werke wat ons vantevore gedoen het in herinnering te roep nie.' As ons doodsonde doen, kan ons geen vertroude stel in goeie werke van voorheen om ons die ewige lewe in die hemel te laat beërwe nie. Goeie werke kom terug en help om ons tot die ewige lewe te bring as ons boetvaardig is, maar goeie werke wat gedoen is terwyl ons in doodsonde verkeer, kan nooit weer herleef nie. Iets wat nooit lewe gehad het, kan immers nie weer lewendig gemaak word nie. Maar al baat hulle nie om die ewige lewe te wen nie, tog help hulle om die pyne van die hel in te kort, om aardse rykdom te bekom of omdat God daardeur die hart van die sondaar eerder sal verlig en oplig sodat hy tot boetvaardigheid kom. Hulle help ook om 'n mens gewoon te maak daaraan om goeie werke te doen, met die gevolg dat die duiwel minder houvas op sy siel kry. Die genadige Here Jesus Christus verlang nie dat enige goeie werk verlore gaan nie, maar dat dit ons tog in 'n mate moet baat. Omdat goeie werke wat in 'n goeie lewe gedoen is, egter totaal tot niet gaan as gevolg van daaropvolgende sonde en goeie werke wat in 'n staat van doodsonde gedoen is, duidelik dood is met betrekking tot die ewige lewe, is dit gepas dat die mens wat geen goeie werke doen nie die nuwe Franse liedjie sing, '*J'ai tout perdu mon temps*

*et mon labour.*² Waarlik, die sonde beroof 'n mens van sy natuurlike goedheid sowel as die goedheid van die genade. Die werking van die genade van die Heilige Gees is soos 'n vuur wat nooit ledig is nie. 'n Vuur gaan dood sodra dit ophou werk, so faal genade ook sodra dit ophou werk. Dan verloor die sondaar die goedheid van die glorie wat slegs die goeies toekom wat arbei en werk. Dan is daar rede tot spyt, dat 'n wese wat sy hele lewe, dit wat hy reeds daarvan gehad het en dit wat nog vir hom voorlê, aan God te danke het, geen goedheid besit om sy skuld te betaal teenoor God aan wie hy alles verskuldig is nie. Dit staan immers vas: 'Hy sal rekenskap gee,' soos Bernardus sê, 'van al die goeie dinge wat in hierdie aardse lewe aan hom gegee is en hoe hy dit benut het; in so 'n mate dat daar geen haar van sy hoof verlore sal gaan en geen oomblik van sy tyd waarvoor hy nie rekenskap sal moet gee nie.'

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Die vyfde oorweging wat ons tot berou behoort te beweeg, is die gedagtenis aan die Passie van ons Here Jesus Christus wat Hy vir ons sondes gely het. Bernardus sê: 'Solank ek lewe sal ek onthou wat Sy prediking vir Christus gekos het, die afmatting van Sy werk, die versoeking toe Hy gevas het, die lang ure wat Hy gewaak het in gebed, die tranes wat Hy gestort het oor goeie mense vir wie Hy jammer gekry het, die lae, skaamtelose, vieslike goed wat mense teenoor Hom kwytgeraak het, hul smerige gespoeg in Sy gesig, die houe wat aan Hom uitgedeel is, die gemene klagtes en beledigings wat Hom toegeslinger is, die spykers waarmee Hy aan die kruishout vasgenaël is, en al die ander lyding wat Hy vir my sonde en geensins ter wille van Sy eie skuld moes verduur.'

Verstaan goed dat as gevolg van ons sonde elke soort orde en verordening onderstebo gekeer word. God en rede en gevoel en die liggaam is so georden dat daar heerskappy van God oor die rede is, van die rede oor gevoel, en van gevoel oor die liggaam, maar wanneer 'n mens sondig, word hierdie hele orde omvergewerp. Omdat die rede sy regmatige ondergeskiktheid en gehoorsaamheid aan God opsê, verloor dit die heerskappy oor die gevoel asook die liggaam. Dit gebeur deurdat die gevoel in opstand kom teen die rede en die rede dus die heerskappy oor gevoel en die liggaam verbeur. Soos die rede teen God rebelleer, so rebelleer die gevoel en die liggaam ook teen die rede. Dis hierdie wanorde en opstandigheid waarvoor ons Here Jesus Christus met Sy kosbare liggaam betaal het, want omdat die rede teen God rebelleer, verdien die mens om te ly en te sterwe. Dit is wat ons Here Jesus Christus in ons plek gedoen het toe Hy verloën is deur Sy dissipels, in hegtenis geneem is en geboei is, sodat die bloed, volgens Augustinus uit elkeen van Sy vingernaels gebars het. En verder, omdat die rede wat die gevoel kan beheer dit nie wil doen nie, verdien die mens om beskaam te word; en dit is wat ons Here Jesus Christus in ons plek gely het toe daar in Sy gesig gespoeg is. En nog meer, omdat die ellendige menslike liggaam teen beide rede en gevoel rebelleer, verdien dit die dood. En dit het ons Here Jesus Christus vir ons aan die kruis gely toe geen deel van Sy liggaam groot pyn en bitter lyding gespaar gebly het nie. Dit alles het Jesus Christus gely, wat geen kwaad gedoen het nie, en daarom kan met reg van Hom gesê word: 'Ek moes te veel verduur wat ek nooit verdien het nie; ek is te veel gefolter vir skande wat die mens toekom.' En die sondaar kan met Bernardus sê: 'Vervloek is die bitterheid van my sonde wat soveel bitter lyding tot gevolg gehad het.'

Die wanordelikheid van ons boosheid neem verskillende vorms aan en dienoreenkomstig is verskillende soorte lyding vir Jesus Christus verorden. Die sondige mensiesiel word deur die duiwel verraai as gevolg van die sondige verlange

2 Ek het my tyd en arbeid verspil.

na wêreldse welvaart en bespot deur bedrog wanneer dit aardse genot kies; tog word dit gemartel deur sy afkeur aan teenspoed en gehoon deur sy verslaafdheid aan sonde, en oplaas om die lewe gebring. Vanweë hierdie wanordelikheid van die sondige mens is Jesus Christus eers verraai. Toe het hulle Hom gebind, wat gekom het om ons te verlos van sonde en pyn. Toe het hulle Hom gehoon, wat in alles en deur alles geëer moes gewees het. Toe het hulle op afskuwelike wyse gespoeg in Sy gesig, wat die hele mensdom moes verlang het om te aanskou en waarna die engele graag kyk. Toe het hulle Hom gegees, wat geen sonde gedoen het nie. En eindelijk het hulle Hom gekruisig en om die lewe gebring. So is die woord van die profeet Jesaja vervul: 'Oor ons oortredings is Hy deurboor, oor ons sondes is Hy verbrysel.' Aangesien Jesus Christus dan al die pyne van ons boosheid op Hom geneem het, behoort sondige mense erg te ween en weeklaag dat die Seun van die Hemelheer ter wille van hulle sondes al dié lyding moes verduur. 282

Die sesde beweegrede tot berou is die hoop op drie dinge, naamlik sondevergifnis, die genade om goed te doen en die hemelse glorie waarmee God ons goeie werke beloon. Omdat Jesus Christus ons hierdie gawes uit Sy ruimhartigheid en soewereine goedheid skenk, word Hy *Jesus Nazarenus rex Judearum* genoem. *Jesus* beteken 'verlosser' of 'verlossing' waardeur die mens op sondevergifnis, of bevryding van die sonde, kan hoop. Daarom het die engel aan Josef gesê: 'Jy moet Hom Jesus noem, want Hy sal Sy volk van hul sondes verlos.' En Petrus sê: 'Daar is geen ander naam op die aarde aan die mense gegee waardeur God wil dat ons verlos moet word nie.'

Nazarenus beteken 'in die blom' en dit bied hoop dat Hy wat die mens se sondes vergewe, hom ook die genadegawe sal skenk om goed te doen. 'n Blom is die hoop op die vrug wat kom en sondevergifnis is die hoop op die genade om goed te doen. Jesus sê dan ook: 'Kyk, ek staan by die deur van jou hart en ek klop. As iemand my stem hoor en die deur oopmaak, sal ek hom sondevergifnis skenk. Deur my genade sal ek by hom ingaan en saam met hom die feesmaal hou' – want die goeie werke wat hy doen, is die voedsel wat God gee – 'en hy saam met my,' want hy sal die groot vreugde smaak wat ek aan hom sal gee. Op grond van sy boetvaardigheidswerke kan 'n mens dus hoop dat God hom die Koninkryk sal gee wat in die Evangelie aan hom belowe is.

Nou moet mens begryp wat die aard van berou moet wees. Ek wil beklemtoon dat dit algeheel en totaal moet wees. Met ander woorde, 'n mens moet opreg berou hê oor al die sondes wat hy met begeerlikheid bedink het, want begeerte is baie gevaarlik. Wanneer mense sondig, is daar twee soorte instemming tot die sonde. Die eerste, instemming van die gevoel, is wanneer iemand die versoeking voel om te sondig en lank genot put uit die gedagte aan die sonde; sy rede sê vir hom dat dit 'n sonde teen die wet van God is, maar tog hou dit nie sy vieslike genot en begeerte in toom nie, hoewel hy goed weet dat dit teen die eer van God indruis. Al stem die rede nie tot enige sondige handeling in nie, beweer sommige geleerdes dat so 'n dralende begeerte, hoe gering ook al, uiters gevaarlik is. 'n Mens moet veral berou hê oor enige begeerte strydig met die wet van God waartoe sy rede ingestem het, want sodanige instemming is ongetwyfeld doodsonde. Daar is immers geen doodsonde wat nie as 'n gedagte begin het en toe 'n begeerte geword het en toe as gevolg van instemming 'n handeling nie. Daar is baie mense wat nooit berou voel oor sulke gedagtes en begeertes nie en hulle dus nie opbieg nie, maar net die handeling van groot uiterlike sondes. Sulke bese begeertes en gedagtes kan dus as slinkse verleiers van die verdoemdes beskryf word. 299

Wat nog meer is, 'n mens moet berou hê oor sy sondige woorde ewenas sy

sondige daad. Dit baat mos niks om berou te hê oor een spesifieke sonde en nie oor al die ander nie, of oor al jou ander sondes en nie oor een in die besonder nie. Waarlik God Almagtig is geheel-en-al goed en daarom vergewe Hy alles of geheel-en-al niks. Augustinus sê: 'Ek weet vir seker dat God die vyand is van elke sonde.' Hoe kan iemand wat net op een sonde ag slaan, dan vir al die ander vergifnis ontvang?

Verder moet berou uiters besorg en beangs wees, dan sal God die sondaar genadig wees. 'Toe ek wou vergaan, het ek aan die Here gedink; en my gebed het by Hom gekom.' Berou moet ook voortdurend wees en 'n mens moet hom van harte voorneem om sy sondes op te bieg en sy lewenswandel te verbeter. Terwyl berou voortduur, kan 'n mens op vergifnis hoop; en hieruit spruit 'n haat vir die sonde wat jou in staat stel om die sonde met alle mag te bekamp, in jouself en ook in ander. Dis dié dat Dawid sê: 'Julle wat die Here liefhet, moet haat wat sleg is.' Waarlik, om God lief te hê, is om dit lief te hê wat Hy liefhet en dit te haat wat Hy haat.

Die laaste ding wat 'n mens aangaande berou moet verstaan, is wat dit baat. Ek wil beweer dat dit 'n mens soms van die sonde verlos. Dawid sê: 'Ek het gesê (met ander woorde: Dit was my vaste bedoeling) ek wil my oortredinge bely, en U, Here, het my sonde vergewe.' Net soos berou onvoldoende is sonder die vaste voorneme om te bieg as daar die geleentheid is om dit te doen, net so min is bieg en genoegdoening van waarde sonder berou. Berou vernietig die kerker van die hel, dit maak die kragte van die duiwels swak en futloos, dit herstel die gawes van die Heilige Gees en al die deugde, dit reinig die siel van sonde en bevry dit van die pyn van die hel, die geselskap van die duiwel en verslaafdeid aan kwaad, en dit bring dit terug na geestelike goedheid en die geselskap en gemeenskap van die Heilige Kerk. Verder maak dit hom wat vroeër 'n kind van die toorn was 'n seun van die genade, soos ons in die Heilige Skrif kan lees. Daarom is dit 'n verstandige mens wat hom hierdie dinge erns maak, want hy sal sy lewe lank nooit geneig wees tot sonde nie, maar sy liggaam en sy hele hart in die diens van Jesus Christus stel en so aan Hom eer bewys. Waarlik ons liewe Heer Jesus Christus het ons so genadiglik in weerwil van ons dwaasheid gespaar; as Hy nie medelye gehad het met ons siele nie, sou ons voorwaar 'n treurige deuntjie moes sing.

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Die tweede deel van Penitensie

Die tweede deel van Penitensie is die bieg, wat 'n teken van berou is.

Nou moet u verstaan wat die bieg is, of dit nodig is of nie en wat met ware skuldbekentenis saamgaan.

Bieg is die ware openbaring van sondes aan 'n priester; 'ware' omdat 'n mens sover moontlik al die omstandighede van sy sonde moet bely. Alles moet uitkom; niks mag verskoon of verdoesel word nie en daar mag nie op goeie werke geroem word nie. Dit is ook nodig om te verstaan vanwaar ons sondes kom, hoe hulle toeneem en wat hulle wese is.

Oor die herkoms van die sonde sê Paulus: 'Deur een mens het die sonde in die wêreld gekom en deur die sonde die dood, en so het die dood tot al die mense deurgedring, omdat almal gesondig het.' Hierdie mens deur wie die sonde in die wêreld gekom het, was Adam wat die gebooi van God verbreek het. Daarom het hy wat so magtig was dat hy nie sou gesterf het nie een geword wat moet sterf, of hy wil of nie, en so ook al sy nakomelinge in hierdie wêreld wat in hom gesondig het. Let op dat Adam en Eva in die staat van onskuld naak was in die Paradys, maar hulle was nie skaam nie. Toe het die slang wat listiger was as al die ander diere wat die Here gemaak het vir die vrou gevra: 'Waarom het God gesê julle mag van geen

boom in die tuin eet nie?’ Die vrou het geantwoord: ‘Ons mag eet van die vrugte van die bome in die tuin. God het net gesê ons mag nie eet van die vrugte van die boom in die middel van die tuin nie en ons mag dit nie aanraak nie, want dan sterf ons.’ Toe sê die slang vir die vrou: ‘Nee, nee, julle sal nie sterf nie, maar God weet dat jul oë sal oopgaan die dag as julle van daardie boom eet en dan sal julle soos God wees deur goed en kwaad te ken.’ Toe sien die vrou dat die boom se vrugte goed is om te eet en mooi om na te kyk. Sy het van die vrugte gepluk en geëet en ook vir haar man gegee, en hy het geëet. Hulle oë het oopgegaan en hulle het besef dat hulle naak is. Toe werk hulle vyeblare aanmekaar en hang dit om vir klere. 330

Hier sien ons dat die eerste aansporing tot doodsonde van die duiwel gekom het in die gedaante van die slang. Daarna volg die begeerlikheid van die vlees, hier versinnebeeld deur Eva; dan die instemming van die rede, verteenwoordig deur Adam. Verstaan dit goed: hoewel die duiwel vir Eva – dit wil sê die vlees – verlei het en die vlees begeerte gevoel het vir die skoonheid van die verbode vrug, het die staat van onskuld voortbestaan totdat die rede, versinnebeeld deur Adam, tot die eet van die vrug ingestem het. Van hierdie Adam kom die erfsonde, want na die vlees stam ons almal van hom af en is ons almal sy verdorwenheid deelagtig. Die oomblik wat die siel in ons liggaam geplant word, word dit deur die erfsonde besmet en dit wat aanvanklik slegs die pyn van vleeslike begeerlikheid was, word beide pyn en sonde. Daarom sou ons almal as kinders van die toorn en ewige verdoemenis gebore gewees het, as dit nie vir die Doopsel was wat die sondeskuld van ons wegneem nie, maar die pyn bly in ons agter as versoeking en dié pyn staan bekend as begeerlikheid. Wanneer hierdie begeerlikheid in ’n mens misplaas of wanordelik is, veroorsaak dit dat hy begeer om vleeslik te sondig as gevolg van sy oë wat op die aardse gerig is en ook dat hy hoë aansien wil geniet vanweë sy hooghartigheid.

Die eerste soort begeerlikheid, dié van vleeslike lus, is die wet van ons ledemate. Dié is regmatig geskape volgens die juiste oordeel van God, maar omdat die mens ongehoorsaam is aan God sy Heer, daarom is die vlees ongehoorsaam aan hom en word dit die aansporing en geleentheid tot sonde. Omdat die mens die begeerlikheid in hom rondra, is dit onmoontlik dat hy nie soms die versoeking sal voel en in sy vlees verlei word om te sondig nie. Solank hy leef, sal dit die geval wees; die drang kan wel swakker word deur die doop en deur die genadegawe van God in Penitensie, maar dit sal nooit geheel verdwyn nie en hy sal nooit ophou om te sondig nie, tensy hy afgekoel word deur siekte of een of ander magiese handeling of deur iets kouds wat hy drink. Die apostel Paulus sê: ‘Wat die vlees begeer, is in stryd met wat die gees wil, en wat die gees wil, is in stryd met wat die vlees begeer. Hierdie twee staan lynreg teenoor mekaar, en daarom kan julle nie doen wat julle graag wil nie.’ Ten spyte van al sy beproewinge – ‘op die oop see, bedags en snags in groot gevaar en in groot pyn; op land, honger en dors, koud en sonder bedekking, en een maal byna doodgestenig’ – het dié apostel uitgeroep: ‘Ek, ellendige mens! Wie sal my verlos van hierdie liggaam van die dood?’ En Hiëronimus wat lank in die woestyn geleef het, waar sy enigste geselskap wilde diere was, sy enigste voedsel plante en water en sy enigste bed die kaal grond, sodat sy vel swart soos ’n Ethiopiër s'n was van die hitte en hy byna omgekom het van die koue, dié Heilige het nogtans bely: ‘My hele liggaam het gekook van die wellus.’ So weet ek vir seker dat mense wat beweer dat hulle geen vleeslike versoeking ondervind nie, dit heeltmal mis het. Jakobus stel dit so: ‘Elkeen word versoek deur sy eie begeerlikheid wat hom aanlok en saamsleep.’ Dit wil sê dat elkeen van ons die moontlikheid om deur vleeslike lus verlei te word in ons rondra. Dis dan ook dié dat Johannes sê: ‘As ons beweer dat ons nie sonde het nie, bedrieg ons onself en is die waarheid nie in ons nie.’

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Vervolgens moet u ook verstaan hoedat die sonde groei of toeneem in 'n mens. Oor die teelaarde, die vleeslike begeerlikheid, het ek reeds gepraat. Nou kom die duiwel se voorstel, sy blaasbalk waarmee hy die vuur van begeerlikheid aanblaas. 'n Mens begin oorweeg of hy volgens die duiwel se voorstel sal handel of nie. As hy weerstand bied en die eerste aanlokking van sy vlees en die duiwel afwys, dan is dit g'n sonde nie; as hy dit nie doen nie, voel hy spoedig 'n vlam van begeerte. Nou moet hy oppas en 'n wag oor homself stel, want anders sal hy kort voor lank instem tot sonde, en dan gaan hy tot die daad oor, sodra die geleentheid hom voordoen. Hoor wat sê Moses van die duiwel: 'Die vyand sê, "Ek sal die mens agtervolg en inhaal met 'n bese voorstel; ek sal hom vang met die aansporing tot sonde; ek sal my buit uitsoek deur middel van oorweging, en my sin kry deur middel van begeerte; ek sal my swaard trek deur sy instemming" – want net soos 'n swaard iets middeldeer sny, so sny instemming tot sonde die mems van God af – "en dan sal my hand hom verslaan deur die sonde wat hy doen." So sê die Satan.' Voorwaar, dan is 'n mens heeltemal dood in sy siel. Die sonde word voltrek deur versoeking, begeerlikheid en instemming, en dit heet feitelike sonde.

Daar is twee soorte sonde: pekelsonde en doodsonde. As 'n mens enigiets in die skepping liever het as Jesus Christus, ons Skepper, dan is dit 'n doodsonde. Pekelsonde is as ons Jesus Christus minder liefhet as wat ons Hom behoort lief te hê. Pekelsondes is inderdaad baie gevaarlik, want hulle verminder algaande die liefde wat ons aan God verskuldig is. As 'n mens homself met baie sodanige sondes belas, al raak hy soms van hulle ontslae deur die bieg, veroorsaak hulle maklik 'n afname in sy liefde vir Jesus Christus, en so gaan pekelsonde gou in doodsonde oor. Waarlik, hoe meer 'n mens sy siel met pekelsondes belas, hoe meer geneig is hy om in doodsonde te verval. Ons moet dus nie nalatig wees om ons van hulle te onthef nie, want, soos die spreekwoord sê, baie kleintjies maak 'n grote.

Hier is nou 'n illustrasie. 'n Groot brander kom soms met soveel geweld dat dit 'n skip laat sink, maar dieselfde skade kan aangerig word deur druppels water wat deur 'n klein krakie in die romp insypel en in die skeepsruim opdam, as die bemanning so nalatig sou wees dat hulle nie betyds daarvan ontslae raak nie. Hoewel daar 'n verskil is in die rede hoekom die skip vergaan, vergaan dit nogtans. So gaan dit partykeer ook met doodsonde en lastige pekelsondes wat so vermenigvuldig dat iemand se liefde vir wêreldsgoed, wat die oorsaak van sy pekelsondes is, later net so groot of nog groter word as sy liefde vir God. Daarom is die liefde vir alles wat nie met God verband hou of in hoofsaak vir God gedoen word nie, al het mens dit minder lief as God, al klaar 'n pekelsonde; en doodsonde as dit ewe veel of meer weeg in sy hart as sy liefde vir God. 'Doodsonde,' aldus Augustinus, 'is wanneer 'n mens sy hart afwend van God wat die ware, soewereine, onveranderlike goedheid is om dit aan iets te gee wat verander en verbygaan.' En voorwaar, dit is alles behalwe God in die hemel, want as 'n mens sy liefde wat hy met sy hele hart aan God verskuldig is, aan iets in die skepping gaan gee, dan beroof hy God van daardie deel van sy liefde. Hy sondig deurdadig dat hy 'n skuldenaar aan God is wat nie al sy skuld, dit is sy liefde, betaal nie.

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Ná hierdie algemene oorsig van wat pekelsonde is, is dit gepas dat ek nog spesifiek praat oor sondes wat baie mense miskien nie as sondes beskou nie, en dus nie opbieg nie, alhoewel hulle tog sondes is. Waarlik, soos die geleerdes skryf, elke keer as 'n mens meer eet of drink as wat vir die onderhoud van sy liggaam nodig is, sondig hy; ook as hy meer praat as wat nodig is; ook as hy nie met erbarming luister na die klagtes van die armes nie; ook as hy gesond is en hy weier sonder regverdiging om saam met ander te vas; ook as hy meer slaap as wat nodig is, en ook om dié rede laat kom vir kerk of vir 'n liefdadigheidswerk; ook as hy met sy

vrou gemeenskap het sonder die oorheersende begeerte om voort te plant tot eer van God, of om sy huwelikspelig aan haar na te kom; ook as hy weier om siekes of gevangenes te besoek, al kan hy dit doen; ook as hy vrou of kind of enige aardse ding meer liefhet as wat redelik is; ook as hy vlei en witvoetjie soek ten einde iets te verkry; ook as hy aalmoese vir die armes verminder of weerhou; ook as hy sy kos met meer kieskeurigheid voorberei as wat nodig is, of dit haastig of gulsig eet; ook as hy verspottighede by die kerk of tydens die erediens praat, of as hy ydelhede, dwaashede of booshede kwytraak, want hy sal op die oordeelsdag rekenskap moet gee; ook as hy onderneem om dinge te doen wat hy nie kan doen nie; ook as hy deur onbedagsaamheid of dwaasheid sy naaste beskinder of beledig; ook as hy bose agterdog koester oor iets waarvan hy eintlik g'n ware kennis dra nie: al hierdie dinge en tallose meer is sondes, volgens Augustinus.

Hoewel geen sterfling alle pekelsondes kan vermy, moet hy hom tog bedwing ter wille van sy brandende liefde vir ons Here Jesus Christus. Deur gebed en bieg en ander goeie werke kan hy hom in so 'n mate bedwing dat hulle min skade doen. Augustinus sê: 'As iemand God op so 'n wyse liefhet dat alles wat hy doen uit liefde vir God gedoen word, waarlik uit liefde vir Hom, sal hy gloei van Gods liefde.' Kyk, hoe min verskil 'n waterdruppel maak wat op 'n fornuis val; net so min verskil sal 'n pekelsonde maak aan 'n mens wat volmaak is in die liefde van Jesus Christus. Mense word ook in staat gestel om pekelsondes te verwerp deur op 'n waardige wyse die kosbare Liggaam van Jesus Christus te ontvang, deur die gebruik van wywater, deur die gee van aalmoese, deur die algemene belydenis of die *Confiteor* tydens die Mis en kompleete; deur die seën te ontvang van biskoppe en priesters, en deur ander goeie werke.

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Die sewe doodsondes

Nou is dit nodig om oor die sewe doodsondes of hoofsondes te praat. Hulle draf almal saam in een tuig, maar elk op sy eie manier. Hulle is hoofsondes, want hulle is die aanvoerders en die oorsaak van alle ander sondes. Onderliggend aan hierdie sewe sondes is die hoogmoed, die algemene wortel van alle kwaad. Uit hierdie wortel groei verskeie takke, naamlik toorn, afguns, traagheid, gierigheid of hebsug (wat eintlik dieselfde is), gulsigheid en onkuisheid. En elkeen van hierdie hoofsondes het takke en twygies, soos ek in die volgende hoofstukke sal uiteensit.

Aangaande hoogmoed

Hoewel niemand al die vertakkinge van die hoogmoed kan tel en al die kwaad wat daaruit voortspruit kan opsom nie, wil ek tog 'n paar van hulle noem. Daar is ongehoorsaamheid, gespog, huigelary, hooghartigheid, aanmatiging, skaamteloosheid, vermetelheid, verwaandheid, trots, beterweterigheid, weerspannigheid, oormoed, eersug, halstarrigheid, opgeblasenheid en nog baie meer.

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Ongehoorsaam is die man wat kwaadwillig die gebooe van God, die owerhede en sy geestelike vader verontagsaam. 'n Spogger is een wat grootpraat oor die kwaad of die goed deur hom gedaan. 'n Huigelaar is iemand wat dit wat hy is verberg en voorgee om te wees wat hy nie is nie. 'n Hooghartige sien neer op sy naaste, dit wil sê sy mede-Christene, of minag wat hy behoort te doen. Aanmatigend is iemand wat hom goeie hoedanighede toe-eien waaroor hy nie beskik nie of meen dat hy na reg oor hulle behoort te beskik, of glo dat hy is wat hy nie is nie. Skaamteloos is hy wat in sy hoogmoed hom nie skaam oor sy sondes nie. Vermetel

is die persoon wat hom verlustig in die kwaad wat hy gedoen het. Verwaand is iemand wat in sy eie oordeel beter as ander is in eiewaarde, intelligensie, redenasie en gedrag. Trots is iemand wat geen betere of gelyke kan aanvaar nie. 'n Beterweter kan nie op sy foute gewys word nie; hy sal hom willens en wetens teen die waarheid verset en sy dwaasheid boonop verdedig. Weerspanning is die persoon wat uit verontwaardiging gekant is teen elke gesag wat oor hom gestel is. Oormoedig is hy wat iets onderneem wat hy nie behoort te doen nie of nie mag doen nie. Eersugtig is iemand wat die eer weerhou wat 'n ander toekom of wag dat ander aan hom eer moet bewys. 'n Halstarrige persoon verdedig sy dwaasheid en vertrou te veel op sy eie verstand. Een wat opgeblase is, pronk oor sy aardse hoogheid en beroem hom op sy wêreldse staat. 'n Babbelaar is een wat te veel te sê het; hy kletter soos 'n meule en let nie op sy woorde nie.

Daar is ook 'n soort geheime hoogmoed van iemand wat wag dat hy gegroet word voordat hy groet, al is hy miskien minder eerbiedwaardig as die ander persoon, of hy verwag of verlang om die hoogste sitplek te hê, of om voor te stap in 'n optog, of om eerste die vredegroet te ontvang,³ bewierook te word of 'n offergawe op te neem na die altaar, en so meer. Dit is miskien strydig met sy pligte, maar hy is hooghartig daarop gesteld om in die teenwoordigheid van ander verhoog en vereer te word.

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Daar is twee soorte hoogmoed, dié wat binne-in 'n mens se hart is en dié daarbuite. Dié sake waarvoor ek reeds gepraat het en nog baie meer waarvoor ek nie gepraat het nie, resorteer onder die eerste hoof, ander soorte onder die tweede. Die een soort is egter 'n teken van die ander, soos 'n vrolike uithangbord buite 'n herberg 'n teken is van die goeie wyn in die kelder. Dit blyk uit baie dinge, soos spraak, gedrag en skandelige vertoon in kleredrag. As daar geen sonde in kleredrag steek nie, sou Christus geen opmerking gemaak het oor die klere van die ryk man in die Evangelie nie. Gregorius sê dat duur klere sondig is vanweë die hoë koste, die weelderigheid, die modieusheid en die buitensporigheid daarvan, asook vanweë die oordadigheid of die skraptheid daarvan. Helaas dat mense in ons tyd nie die sondigheid van duur klere kan insien nie, veral dé wat te oordadig of te skrap is.

Oordadigheid maak klere duur en dus word mense daardeur benadeel. Dit behels nie net borduurwerk, die spoggerige gekeep van some of die garnering daarvan met dekoratiewe lussies, die golwende volante en vertikale strepe, die plooië en omboorsels en soortgelyke verkwisting van materiaal uit ydelheid nie; daar is ook nog afsetting met kosbare bont, uitgesnyde ontwerpe en geknipte splete; en dan nog verder die onnodige lengte van die klede van mans en vrouens te perd of te voet wat sleep deur modder en mis. Deur so 'n gesleep raak 'n kledingstuk verslyt en vertrap, verrot deur die slik, pleks dat hulle dit vir die armes gee wat gevolglik groot gebrek moet ly. Hoe meer materiaal verkwis word, hoe meer kos dit vanweë skaarste, en al sou hulle sulke toingryge klere vir die armes gee, sou dit onvanpas vir hulle sosiale stand wees en boonop onvoldoende om hul teen ongure weer te beskerm.

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Aan die ander kant is dit nodig om iets oor die aaklige en onwelvoeglike skraptheid van kledingstukke te sê, soos kort mantels of baadjies wat met bese bedoelings skaars mense se skaamdele bedek. Party toon helaas die knobbel van hul geslag, afskuwelik geswolle asof hulle aan 'n breuk ly, in die kruis van hul broek, en hul boude lyk soos die agterent van 'n bobbejaanwyfie met vollemaan. As

³ I Pet 5:14 "Groet mekaar met 'n soen van Christelike liefde." Tydens die Middeleeuse Mis het die priester 'n "pakstafel" of "vredeskusbordjie", 'n ryklik versierde paneel, gesoen en dit daarna aan die gemeentede gegee wat dit om die beurt gesoen het. Tans word die vredegroet gewoonlik met 'n handdruk of omhelsing oorgedra.

hul broekspye tweekleurig is, die een kant wit en die ander kant rooi, dan lyk dit asof die helfte van hul geslagsorgane afgeslag is. En as hul ander kleure gebruik, soos wit en swart, wit en blou of swart en rooi, dan lyk dit weer asof die helfte van hul geslagsorgane aangetas is deur belroos, kanker of 'n ander kwaal. En hul agterwêreld is afskuwelik om te aanskou. Die vieslike liggaamsdeel wat hul vir ontlasting gebruik, word trots ten toon gestel in weerwil van welvoeglikheid, die welvoeglikheid wat Jesus Christus en Sy vriende in hul lewens nagestreef het.

Wat betref die buitensporige wyse waarop vroue hul tooi: die Here weet, hoewel party se gesigte kuis en aanvallig lyk, dui hul manier van aantrek op losbandigheid en hoogmoed. Ek wil nie te kenne gee dat dit onvanpas is vir 'n man of vrou om fatsoenlik aan te trek nie, maar ek hou vol dat oordad en oordrewe skrapshheid beslis laakbaar is.

Die sonde van opskik en oormaat kom ook aan die lig met betrekking tot perde. Te veel keurige perde word byvoorbeeld vir plesier aangehou, perde wat mooi, vet en duur is, en te veel slegte knegte vir hul versorging, en dan ook nog allerlei fyn uitrusting: saals, stalkombers, halters en teuels bedek met waardevolle ornamente, stawe en plate van goud en silwer. Dis waarom God by monde van Sagaria sê dat Hy die ruiters van sulke perde op die vlug sal jaag, want sulke mense slaan min ag op hoe die Seun van God op 'n donkie gery het met die armsalige klere van Sy dissipels as enigste bedekking; en ons lees nêrens dat Hy op enige ander dier gery het nie. Ek praat oor die sonde van oordad en nie oor redelike kleredrag volgens die eise van welvoeglikheid nie.

Hoogmoed word ook vertoon deur diegene wat uit trots oor hul hoë stand of amp baie onderhoriges aanhou wat weinig of geen nut dien nie, boosaardig is en mense benadeel. Sulke hooggeplaastes verkoop hul heerlikheid aan die duiwel in die hel deur die boosaardigheid van hul hofhoudings in stand te hou. Maar daar is ook mense van lae stand soos herbergiers wat hul werkers aanmoedig om gaste op allerhande bedrieglike maniere te besteel. Sulke mense is vlieë wat agter die heuning aan is of honde agter aas. Hulle misbruik hul gesag, en van hulle sê Dawid: 'Mag die dood hulle oorval! Mag hulle onverwags neerdaal na die doderyk, want in hulle huise en harte heers daar boosheid.' Soos God Sy seën laat daal het op Laban deur middel van Jakob en op Farao deur middel van Josef, so sal Hy Sy vloek laat neerdaal op gesagvoerders wat die boosheid van hul dienaars steun, tensy hulle hul bekeer.

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Die hoogmoed van die tafel kom ook dikwels voor, want rykes word na 'n feesmaal genooi terwyl armes weggewys en verstoot word. Daar is 'n oormaat kos en drank, allerhande pasteie en gestoofde vleis in geverfde bakke versier met brandende papierkantele en allerhande ander verspottighede. Daar bied kosbare vaatwerk en fyn musiek verleiding tot sinsgenot, 'n sonde wat die mens se hart van ons Here Jesus Christus wegluk; en dié genot kan so groot wees dat 'n mens maklik in doodsonde verval. Dit is die soort dinge wat uit hoogmoed voortspruit, en as dit die gevolg is van kwade bedoelings, vooruit bedink of beplan, of van gewoonte, dan is dit ongetwyfeld doodsonde. As dit egter die gevolg van 'n skielike en onbedagte swakheid is en ewe skielik weer verdwyn, dan bly dit ernstige sonde, maar ek glo nie dat dit doodsonde is nie.

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Nou kan iemand vra waaruit hoogmoed stam en ontspruit. My antwoord is dat dit soms ontstaan uit gawes van die natuur, soms uit gawes van die geluk en soms uit genadegawes. Gawes van die natuur behels gawes van die liggaam en gawes van die gees. Liggaamlike gawes is gesondheid, krag, behendigheid, skoonheid, edel afkoms en vryheid. Geestelike gawes is skrandtheid, goeie begrip, vindingrykheid, aangebore deug en goeie geheue. Gawes van die geluk is rykdom,

status en aansien. Genadegawes weer is, onder andere, kennis, die vermoë om geestelike probleme die hoof te bied, goedheid, deugdelike oorpeinsing en die mag om versoekings te weerstaan. Dit sou groot dwaasheid wees as iemand op enige van dié gawes sou roem.

Soms is gawes van die natuur ewe veel tot ons nadeel as tot ons voordeel. Liggaamlike gesondheid gaan gou verby en is dikwels die oorsaak van siekte van die gees, want, God weet, die vlees is strydig met die gees. Hoe gesonder die liggaam dus, hoe groter gevaar loop ons om te val. Om te roem op liggaamskrag is ewe dwaas, want die vlees staan lynreg teenoor die gees; hoe sterker die liggaam, hoe slegter is die siel daaraan toe. Daarbenewens het liggaamskrag en wêreldse moed al baie mense in gevaar en ongeluk gedompel. Dit is ook groot dwaasheid om te roem op edel afkoms, want dikwels ontnem edelheid van liggaam mense hul edelheid van gees; buitendien is ons almal kinders van een vader en moeder en almal, ryk en arm, van nature een in verrotting en bedorwenheid. Net een soort adel is prysenswaardig: dié wat 'n mens se gees met deug en goeie sedes beklee en hom 'n kind van die Here maak. Glo my, 'as die sonde jou in sy mag het, is jy sy slaaf.'

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Die algemene tekens van hierdie adel is die vermyding van kwaad, losbandigheid en sondediens in woord, daad en houding; die nastreef van deug, goeie gedrag, kuisheid en vrygewigheid – maar binne perke, want oordad is dwaasheid en sonde. Nog sodanige tekens is dat 'n mens die goedheid van ander teenoor jou onthou en milddadig teenoor onderhoriges optree. Soos Seneca sê: 'Niks is meer gepas vir 'n man van hoë stand as goedgustigheid en mededoë nie. Daarom kies die bye 'n by sonder angel as hulle koning.' Iemand met 'n edel hart sal hom ook beywer om hoë deugde te bereik.

Dit is verregaande dwaasheid vir 'n mens om op gawes van die genade te roem, want genadegawes wat veronderstel was om goedheid en heil te bevorder, dien dan tot onheil en ondergang, soos Gregorius sê. Verder is iemand wat op gawes van die geluk roem, 'n groot gek, want een wat in die oggend 'n groot heer was, kan voor die aand 'n slaaf en ellendeling wees. Soms is 'n mens se rykdom die oorsaak van sy dood. Soms stuur plesier op 'n ernstige en noodlottige siekte af. Soms is hoë aansien vals en wispelturig; vandag prys mense jou en môre bring hulle jou tot 'n val. God weet dat die begeerte om aangeprys te word baie ywersugtiges se dood beteken het.

Middel teen die sonde van hoogmoed

Die middel teen hoogmoed is nederigheid. Dit is 'n deug waardeur 'n mens ware kennis van homself bekom en nie 'n hoë waarde op homself en sy verdienste stel nie, maar sy swakheid steeds voor oë hou. Daar is nederigheid van hart, nederigheid van mond en nederigheid van werk. Die eerste soort nederigheid van hart is dat 'n mens hom onwaardig ag voor God; die tweede is dat hy geen ander mens verag nie; die derde is dat dit hom nie raak as ander hom as onwaardig beskou nie; en die vierde is dat vernedering geen smart meebring nie. Nederigheid van mond behels beskeidenheid, 'n nederige manier van praat, die erkenning met eie mond dat 'n mens is soos hy hom in sy hart beskou, en die aanprys van ander se goedheid sonder enige voorbehoud. Nederigheid van werk is ook vierledig: dat 'n mens ander eerste stel, dat hy die laagste plek kies, dat hy graag goeie raad aanvaar en dat hy blymoedig in die diens staan van sy meerderes of dié wat oor hom gestel is. Alles wat ek genoem het, verg groot nederigheid.

483

Aangaande afguns

Voorts wil ek oor die gruwelike sonde van afguns praat. Die wysgeer beskryf dit as 'verdriet oor 'n ander se welvaart' en Augustinus as 'verdriet oor iemand anders se welsyn en blydschap oor sy leed.' Hierdie gruwelike sonde is reëlreg teen die Heilige Gees. Mens sou kon sê dat alle sondes strydig is met die Heilige Gees, maar goedheid is kenmerkend van die Heilige Gees en afguns van die bose, daarom is dit in die besonder gekant teen die weldadigheid van die Gees.

Daar is twee soorte boosheid. Die een is verharding van die hart in die kwaad of blindheid van die vlees, as gevolg waarvan 'n mens nie besef dat hy sondig nie, of nie omgee nie, en dis 'n hardheid van die duiwel. Die ander is as iemand die waarheid bestry, hoewel hy weet dat dit die waarheid is; of hy bestry die genade wat God aan sy naaste geskenk het. Dit alles uit afguns.

In dié sin is afguns seker die ergste sonde wat daar bestaan. Ander sondes is gewoonlik teen een deug gemik, maar afguns is teen alle deugde en goedheid gemik, want dit is spyt oor die seëninge wat 'n naaste geniet, en so verskil dit van alle ander sondes. Daar is nouliks 'n sonde wat nie een of ander plesier meebring nie, behalwe afguns wat slegs wroeging en smart meebring.

Die eerste soort afguns is verdriet oor die goeie dinge en die voorspoed wat 'n ander beleef. Voorspoed is 'n natuurlike beweegrede tot vreugde; daarom is afguns teennatuurlik.

Die tweede soort afguns is blydschap oor 'n ander se leed. Dit is iets duiwels, want die duiwel verlustig hom in mense se leed.

Uit hierdie twee soorte afguns kom verkleining voort. Hierdie sonde is ook van verskeie soorte. Party mense prys 'n naaste met 'n kwade bedoeling, want daar kom altyd 'n lelke stertjie by, 'n 'maar' wat meer afkeur te kenne gee as al die lof wat dit voorafgegaan het. Dan is daar die goeie man wat iets met 'n goeie bedoeling doen of sê, maar dan keer die verkleineerder dit onderstebo om sy bose doel te dien. Of hy doen te kort aan die naaste se goedheid. Dan ook as mense iemand aanprys, sal die verkleineerder sê, 'Ja, maar so-en-so is 'n beter man as hy.' Of hy stem geesdriftig in en is 'n gretige toehoorder wanneer iemand sleggesê word. Dis beslis 'n groot sonde en neem in ernstigheid toe in verhouding tot die bose opset van die verkleineerder.

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Dan is daar gekla of gemurmureer; soms uit ongeduld teenoor God en soms uit ongeduld teenoor die medemens. Dis teenoor God as 'n mens kla oor die hellepyn, of oor armoede, of verlies van eiendom, of reën of onweer; of dat dit goed gaan met slegte mense of sleg met goeies. Dis alles dinge wat 'n mens gelate moet aanvaar, want dit kom voort uit die regverdige oordeel en bestier van God. Soms is gekla die gevolg van gierigheid, soos toe Judas gekla het toe Maria kosbare salf oor die hoof van ons Here Jesus Christus uitgestort het. Dis soos iemand wat kla oor 'n goeie ding wat hy self gedoen het of wat ander met hul eie besittings gedoen het. Soms is gekla die gevolg van hoogmoed, soos toe Simon die Fariseër gekla het toe Maria Magdalena na Jesus Christus gekom het en aan Sy voete om haar sondes geweet het. En soms is gekla die gevolg van afguns; wanneer die geheime skande van iemand bekend gemaak word of 'n valse aanklag teen hom gebring word.

Gekla kom dikwels onder dienaars voor wanneer hulle meester hul gelas om iets wettigs te doen. Hulle kan hul nie openlik teen die bevel vernet nie en dus sal hulle hom agteraf slegsê en uit pure wrok kerm en kla. So 'n gekla staan bekend as 'die duiwel se Onse Vader.' Die duiwel ken natuurlik g'n Onse Vader nie, maar dis wat mense dit noem.

Soms is gekla die gevolg van toorn of verborge haat wat wrok in die hart

voed, soos ek sal aandui. Dit lei tot verbittering, wat veroorsaak dat 'n naaste se goeie daade vir jou bitter en onsmaklik is. Dan volg twis, wat elke soort vriendskap verbreek; dan minagting van die naaste, hoe goed hy ook al doen; dan beskuldiging, wanneer mense na geleentheid soek om hul naaste kwaad aan te doen, soos die duiwel wat ons dag en nag voorlê om ons te vernietig. En hierop volg kwaadwilligheid, waardeur 'n mens sy naaste agteraf sal benadeel as hy maar kan, en as hy nie kan nie, sal sy bedorwe wil nie daarvan terugdeins om sy huis in die geheim af te brand, sy vee te vergiftig of soortgelyke dinge te doen nie. 514

Middel teen die sonde van afguns

Die eerste middel teen afguns is dat ons God bo alles moet liefhê en ons naaste soos onself; want waarlik dié twee gaan saam. Jou naaste beteken jou broer, want ons het een vader en een moeder na die vlees, naamlik Adam en Eva, en een vader na die gees, naamlik God wat in die hemel is.

Dit is ons plig om ons naaste lief te hê en alles goeds toe te wens, en daarom sê God, 'Jy moet jou naaste liefhê soos jouself,' met ander woorde tot heil van beide liggaam en siel. Dit beteken om hom lief te hê ook in woorde en in heilsame vermaning en tugtiging, om hom te midde van sy sorgte te vertroos en van ganser harte vir hom te bid. Ons moet ons naaste so liefhê dat ons goed doen aan hom, soos ons graag wil hê dat ander aan ons moet doen. Dit bring mee dat hy geen kwaad berokken word deur 'n bose woord, of deur die besering van sy liggaam, sy besittings of sy siel, of deur die uitlokking van 'n slegte voorbeeld nie. Jy mag nie sy vrou begeer nie, of enigiets wat aan hom behoort nie.

Verstaan ook dat 'naaste' 'n vyand insluit. Ingevolge Gods gebod moet ons ons vyande liefhê, soos ons 'n vriend in die Here liefhet. Ja, jy moet jou vyand om Gods wil en kragtens Sy verordening liefhê. As dit reg was om 'n vyand te haat, sou God ons wat Sy vyande was, voorwaar nie in Sy liefde aanvaar het nie. Drie soorte kwaad wat 'n vyand ons aandoen, moet op drie wyses vergeld word. Haat en wrok moet met liefde beantwoord word; geskel en lelike woorde met gebed; en slegte daade met goedheid. Christus sê immers: 'Julle moet julle vyande liefhê, en julle moet bid vir dié wat vir julle slegsê en vervolg; en doen goed aan dié wat vir julle haat.' Kyk, dis hoe ons Here Jesus Christus ons beveel om teenoor ons vyande op te tree. Ons vriende het ons van nature lief, maar ons vyande het meer behoefte aan ons liefde as ons vriende, en dis aan dié wat meer behoeftig is dat ons eerder moet goed doen. Dit doen ons ter gedagtenis aan die liefde van Jesus Christus, wat Sy lewe vir Sy vyande gegee het. En omdat hierdie liefde pynliker is om te volvoer, daarom is die verdienste daarvan ook groter. Dus verydel die liefde vir ons vyande die gif van die duiwel, want hoewel hy uit die veld geslaan word deur nederigheid, is dit liefde vir die vyand wat hom 'n dodelike wond toedien. So is liefde die medisyne wat die gif van die afguns uit die menslike hart verdryf.

Die soorte liefde waarvan ek praat, sal ek later op terugkom.

531

Aangaande toorn

Voorts wil ek die sonde van toorn beskryf. Iemand wat afgunstig jeens sy naaste is, sal spoedig 'n rede vind vir toorn in woord of daad teenoor dié naaste. Verder spruit toorn nie net uit afguns nie, maar ook uit hoogmoed, want die hoogmoedige sowel as die afgunstige is baie gou toornig.

Volgens Augustinus is toorn die bose begeerte om deur woord of daad wraak te neem, en volgens die wysgeer is dit die warm bloed wat opstoot in die mens se

hart en veroorsaak dat hy kwaad wil doen aan 'n persoon wat hy haat. Die mens se hart word inderdaad so ontstel deur die verhitting en beweging van sy bloed dat hy die oordeel van sy rede kwytraak.

Daar is twee soorte toorn: een goed en een sleg. Goeie toorn is ywer vir dit wat goed is, wat 'n mens kwaad laat word oor dit wat verkeerd is en teen dit wat verkeerd is; daarom sê 'n wyse man dat 'die toorn nie sal uitbly nie.' Hierdie toorn word gekenmerk deur ontferming; dit is toorn sonder bitterheid, gerig nie op die mens nie, maar op die wandaad van die mens; dis dié dat Dawid sê: 'Wees kwaad, maar moenie sondig nie.'

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Slegte toorn is van twee soorte: eerstens, skielike of haastige woede sonder die goedkeuring of instemming van die rede. Omdat die rede nie daartoe instem nie, is dit 'n pekelsonde.

Die tweede soort is baie kwaadaardig, want dit kom voort uit 'n boosheid van die hart wat moedswillig en met voorbedagte rade is, met die kwade wil om wraak te neem en met die instemming van die rede; en dit is voorwaar 'n doodsonde. Hierdie toorn is God so onwelgevallig dat dit Sy woning versteur en die Heilige Gees uit 'n mens se siel verdryf en die beeld van God geskend en vernietig word; dit wil sê Sy beeld – die deug in die mens se siel – word vervang deur die beeld van die duiwel; so steel die duiwel die mens van God, sy regmatige heer. Dié soort woede is die duiwel welgevallig, want dis sy fornuis gestook met die hellevuur. Want waarlik, net soos vuur meer mag het om aardse goed te vernietig as enige ander element, so het toorn ook groot mag om die geestelike te vernietig. Kyk hoe 'n vuurtjie wat nog net smeul in gloeiende kole, byna versmoor deur as, skielik weer kan opvlam as dit met swael in aanraking kom; so vlam toorn steeds weer op in verbinding met die hoogmoed wat skuil in die mens se hart. Vuur kom nie van nêrens nie; dit moet eers van nature teenwoordig wees voordat dit kan ontvlam, soos 'n mens dit met staal uit vuursteen kan haal. En as hoogmoed dikwels die oorsaak is dat toorn ontvlam, dan is dit wrok wat dit aan die gang hou. Isidorus sê dat daar 'n soort boom is, as 'n mens met die hout daarvan vuurmaak en die kole met as bedek, dan sal dit 'n jaar of langer brand. So is dit ook met wrok gesteld: as dit eers in 'n mens se hart ontbrand, kan dit van een Paasfees tot die volgende⁴ voortduur, indien nie langer nie. Terwyl dit die geval is, is so iemand beslis baie ver van die genade van God af.

In die duiwel se fornuis smee drie skurke saam: hoogmoed wat die vuur gedurig aanblaas en laat oplaai met geskel en bouse woorde; afguns wat met 'n lang tang van voortdurende wrok die warm yster teen die mens se hart druk; en weerspanning of twis en stryd wat die hamerhoue van bouse verwyte toedien. Hierdie vervloekte sonde is ongetwyfeld nadelig, beide vir die mens self en vir sy naaste, want byna al die kwaad wat iemand sy naaste aandoen, spruit uit toorn. Buitensporige woede gehoorsaam al die duiwel se bevele; dit ontsien nie Christus of Sy liewe Moeder nie. In buitensporige woede en toorn – helaas, helaas! – is daar baie mense wat soms boosaardig voel teenoor Christus en al Sy Heiliges. Is dit nie 'n vervloekte sonde nie? Ja, dit is. Helaas, dit ontnem 'n mens sy rede, sy verstand en sy fyn geestelike lewe wat sy siel behoort te bewaar. Dit ontnem God ook Sy regmatige heerskappy oor die mens, sy siel en sy naasteliefde. Dit is gedurig in stryd met die waarheid; dit beroof die mens van gemoedsrus en ondermyn sy siel.

560

Uit toorn spruit dié stinkende lote: haat, wat opgekropte woede is; onenigheid, wat veroorsaak dat iemand 'n vriend wat hy al lank liefhet, versmaak; en dan kom stryd en elke soort kwaad wat hy sy naaste se liggaam of besittings aandoen; asook allerhande soorte doodslag, party geestelik en party liggaamlik. Daar is verskeie

4 Die verpligte jaarlikse bieë het gewoonlik voor Paasfees plaasgevind.

vorms van geestelike doodslag. eerstens haat, want Johannes sê, 'Elkeen wat sy broer haat, is 'n moordenaar.' Beskinding van die naaste is ook moorddadig; soos Salomo van kwaadsprekers sê: 'Hulle het twee swaarde om hul naaste mee dood te maak.' Om jou naaste sy goeie naam te ontnem is ewe sleg as om hom sy lewe te ontnem. Dis ook 'n soort doodslag om slegte, bedrieglike raad te gee, byvoorbeeld dat onregmatige heffings of belastings ingestel moet word. Hieroor sê Salomo: 'n Brullende leeu, 'n beer wat wil rondstorm, so is 'n goddelose regeerder,' wat belonings of huur of 'n dienaar se loon terughou of verminder, wat 'n woekeraar is, of wat aalmoese aan die armes weier. Daarom sê die wyse: 'Voed die man wat vergaan van die honger'; as jy hom nie voed nie, maak jy hom dood. Al hierdie dinge is doodsondes.

Liggaamlike doodslag is as jy iemand doodmaak met jou tong of op 'n ander wyse; as jy byvoorbeeld opdrag gee dat iemand doodgemaak moet word of aanraai dat hy doodgemaak word.

570

Daar is vier soorte doodslag. Eerstens kry ons geregtelike doodslag. Dit is wanneer 'n regter 'n skuldige ter dood veroordeel. Hy moet egter versigtig wees dat sy oordeel regverdig is, nie uit lus vir bloedvergieting nie, maar ter handhawing van die wet. 'n Tweede soort doodslag is noodgedwonge, soos wanneer 'n persoon iemand uit selfverweer doodmaak, omdat daar geen ander manier vir hom oop staan om sy eie lewe te behou nie. As hy egter kan ontkom sonder om sy teëstander te dood, maar hy doen dit tog, dan sondig hy en moet hy boete doen soos vir 'n doodsonde. Verder, as 'n persoon per toeval of per ongeluk 'n pyl skiet of 'n klip gooi wat iemand doodmaak, is hy 'n moordenaar. Ook as 'n vrou uit agtelosigheid haar kindjie doodlê, is dit moord en 'n doodsonde. Ook as 'n man die verwekking van 'n baba verhinder en 'n vrou óf onvrugbaar maak deur vir haar giftige kruie in te gee óf haar baba doodmaak deur middel van iets wat sy moet drink of 'n voorwerp wat in haar skaamdele gesteek word, of as hy hom aan 'n onnatuurlike sonde skuldig maak as gevolg waarvan hy of sy saad op 'n wyse of in 'n plek laat stort sodat 'n kind nie verwek kan word nie, of as 'n vrou reeds bevrug is en haarself en die kind beseer, dan is dit moord. Wat sal ons sê van vroue wat uit vrees vir wêreldse skande hul kinders die lewe ontnem? Dit is voorwaar 'n gruwelike moord. Dit is ook moord as 'n man uit wellus met 'n vrou verkeer en haar ongeboore kind sterf, of as hy haar moedswillig slaan en sy haar kind verloor. Dis alles moord en gruwelike doodsondes.

Daar is baie ander sondes van woord en daad en gedagte wat uit toorn spruit, soos wanneer iemand God beskuldig of blameer vir iets waarvoor hy self verantwoordelik is, of God en al Sy Heiliges versmaad soos vervloekte dobbelaars geneig is om te doen. Hierdie verderflike sonde doen mense as hulle in die geheim sleg dink van God en Sy Heiliges; en ook as hulle die Sakrament van die Altaar nie eerbiedig nie. Dis 'n sonde wat so groot is dat dit nouliks vergewe kan word, maar die genade van God gaan Sy ander werke te bowe; dit is so groot en Hy is so goed.

Uit toorn kom heftige woede voort, soos wanneer iemand tydens die biegs streng vermaan word dat hy sy sonde moet laat staan en hy word kwaad en antwoord smadelik en driftig en verdedig of verontskuldig sy sonde as swakheid van die vlees, of hy hou vol dat hy deur slegte maters beïnvloed is om dit te doen, of die duiwel het hom verlei, of dat dit vanweë sy jeug was, of hy sê dat hy so 'n driftige geaardheid het dat hy hom nie kan inhou nie, of dit sal sy lot wees tot op 'n sekere ouderdom, of hy het dit geërf van sy voorvaders, of soortgelyke goed. Mense wat so redeneer, wikkels hulself so toe in die sonde dat hulle nooit daar uitkom nie, want niemand wat sy sondes doelbewus verskoon, kan daarvan verlos word nie. Eers moet hy dit ootmoedig bely.

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Dan kom ons by vloektaal, wat reëlreg in stryd met God se gebod is. Dit spruit dikwels voort uit toorn. God sê: 'Jy mag die naam van die Here jou God nie misbruik of ydelik gebruik nie' en Jesus Christus sê by monde van Matteus: 'Ek sê vir julle: 'Moet glad nie 'n eed aflê nie, nie by die hemel nie, want dit is die troon van God; nie by die aarde nie, want dit is die rusplek van Sy voete; nie by Jerusalem nie, want dit is die stad van die groot koning. Jy moet ook nie jou kop op die spel plaas as jy 'n eed aflê nie, want jy kan nie een haar wit of swart maak nie. Laat julle "ja" eenvoudig "ja" wees en julle "nee", "nee". Wat meer gesê word as dit, kom van die Bose.' Moet, om Christus wil, nie so sondig deur Christus na siel, hart, beendere en liggaam uitmekaar te skeur nie. Dit lyk asof julle dink die vervloekte Jode het die kosbare liggaam van Christus nie genoeg verskeur nie; nou wil julle hom nog meer doen. As die gereg jou verplig om 'n eed te sweer, dan moet jy jou na die wet van die Here rig, soos dit in Jeremia 4 uigelê word: 'Sweer in waarheid, in reg en in geregtigheid.' Met ander woorde, mens moet na die waarheid sweer. Elke leuen is teen Christus, want Hy is die waarheid. Onthou ook, 'Die een wat sweer en wat te alle tye die naam van die Here in herinnering roep, die plaag sal nie van sy huis wyk nie.' 'n Mens moet sweer voor die gereg wanneer 'n regter jou verplig om die waarheid onder eed te bevestig. 'n Mens moet nie uit afguns sweer nie, of om voordeel daaruit te trek of om beloon te word nie, maar ter wille van geregtigheid en om daarvan te getuig tot eer van God en tot hulp van sy mede-Christen.

Elkeen wat God se naam ydelik gebruik of met sy mond valse getuienis aflê of die naam van Christus onteer deurdat hy 'n Christen genoem word hoewel sy optrede in stryd is met Christus se wandel en leer, misbruik die naam van God. Kyk wat sê Petrus in Handeling 4: 'Daar is geen ander naam op die aarde aan die mense gegee waardeur God wil dat ons verlos moet word nie' behalwe die naam van Jesus Christus. Let op hoe kosbaar die naam van Christus is, want Paulus sê in Filippense 2 dat 'in die naam van Jesus elkeen wat in die hemel en op die aarde en onder die aarde is, die knie sal buig.' Dit is so hoog en eerbiedwaardig dat die vervloekte duiwel in die hel sidder by die aanhoor daarvan. Dit wil voorkom asof mense wat so vreeslik by Sy geseënde naam sweer Christus nog meer verag as die vervloekte Jode of selfs die duiwel wat darem nog sidder as hy dit hoor.

Tensy dit regmatig gedoen word, is sweer ten strengste verbode, en nog erger is meened, veral as dit geen doel dien nie. 600

Wat kan ons sê van iemand wat behae daarin skep om te sweer en dit as edel of manlik beskou om growwe ede te sweer? En wat van hom wat uit pure gewoonte voortdurend growwe ede sweer, al is die aanleiding daartoe g'n strooi werd nie? Dis beslis 'n aaklige sonde. Om ligvaardig 'n eed af te lê sonder beraad is ook 'n sonde.

Maar kom ons kyk nou na die gruwelike misbruik van die Here se naam by beswering en die oproep van geeste, soos valse towenaars of nekromante doen oor bakke water, by 'n helder swaard, binne 'n magiese kring, oor 'n vuur of op die skouerbeen van 'n skaap. Al wat ek kan sê, is dat hul gruwelik en verderflik handel teenoor Christus en die hele geloof van die Heilige Kerk.

Wat kan ons sê van mense wat aan waarsêery glo, hetsy deur middel van die vlug van voëls, die geluide van voëls of diere, die lot of die oproep van geeste, drome, die geknars van skarniere of barste in mure, of die geknaag van rotte, en dergelike verspottighede. Dit alles is verbode deur God en die Heilige Kerk. Daarom rus 'n vloek op mense wat in sulke onsin glo, tot hul tot inkeer kom. As amulette teen wonde of siekte van mens of dier enige uitwerking het, dan is dit miskien oor God dit toelaat sodat mense meer geloof in Sy naam sal hê en meer eerbied daarvoor sal betoon.

Nou wil ek praat oor leuentaal, wat meestal bestaan uit 'n valse gebruik van woorde met die bedoeling om die naaste te mislei. Daar is leuens waaruit niemand baat nie en dan is daar leuens wat tot een se gemak of voordeel en tot 'n ander se ongemak of nadeel strek. Een soort leuen dien om 'n mens se lewe of sy besittings te red; 'n ander ontstaan uit behae in gelieg, sodat 'n persoon lang stories aanmekaar ryg en hulle opsmuk met allerhande besonderhede, hoewel die hele ding in sy grond onwaar is. Party leuens spruit uit 'n mens se begeerte om sy woord gestand te doen; party uit roekeloosheid sonder oorleg, en so aan.

Nou wil ek iets sê oor die sonde van vleiery, wat nie spontaan kom nie, maar uit vrees of gierigheid. Vleiery is meestal misplaaste lof. Vleiers is die duiwel se oppassers wat sy kinders voed met die melk van hul geflikflooi. Met reg sê Salomo: 'Vleiery is erger as verkleining.' Verkleining kan nog 'n hoogmoedige tot groter nederigheid stem omdat hy vrees om afgehaal te word, maar vleiery maak 'n man geswolle in sy hart en houding. Vleiers is die duiwel se towenaars, want hul laat 'n mens dink dat hy is wat hy nie is nie. Hulle is soos Judas, want hul bedrieg 'n mens om hom aan sy vyand, die duiwel, uit te lewer. Vleiers is die duiwel se kapelane wat gedurig sy *Placebo* sing. Ek reken vleiery onder die sondes van die toorn, want dikwels as een persoon kwaad is vir 'n ander, dan sal hy iemand vlei om sy steun te wen in die geskil.

Kom ons praat nou oor die vervloeking wat voortkom uit die vertoornde hart. Vervloeking het allerhande kwade gevolge. Soos Paulus sê, sal vervloekers geen deel kry aan die koninkryk van God nie.

630

Dikwels beland vervloekings weer op die hoof van die een wat hul uitgespreek het, soos 'n voël wat na sy nes terugkeer. Bowenal moet niemand sy kinders vervloek en hulle sodoende in die duiwel se mag gee nie. Dis 'n groot gevaar en 'n groot sonde.

Laat ons nou praat oor skeltaal en verwyte wat diep wonde veroorsaak in die menslike hart en die some van vriendskap ontrafel. Dis waarlik moeilik vir 'n mens om hom weer te versoen met iemand wat hom openlik verwyte, belaster en beswadder het. Dis 'n gruwelike sonde, soos Christus in Sy Evangelie sê. Kyk hoe mense mekaar verwyte met verwysing na 'n liggaamsgebrek of -kwaal, soos 'melaatse' of 'boggelrug' of anders na een of ander sonde. As jy iemand 'n kwaal verwyte, verwyte jy Jesus Christus, want 'n kwaal kom deur die regverdige bestier en beskikking van God, of dit melaatsheid of verminking of siekte is. En as jy hom liefdeloos sy sonde verwyte, 'Jou hoereerder' of 'Jou dronkaard' ensovoorts, dan pas dit in die duiwel se kraam, want hy verlustig hom gedurig in die mens se sondes. Verwyte kom uit 'n bouse hart, want 'wat die hart van vol is, loop die mond van oor.' As jy dit wil verstaan, moet jy besef dat wie ook al 'n ander tereg wys, self moet oppas vir vermaning en verwyte. As hy dit nie doen nie, kan hy maklik 'n vuur van toorn of woede aansteek, pleks van dit te blus, en dalk die persoon se dood veroorsaak eerder as hom met liefde te berispe. Soos Salomo sê, 'Sagtheid van tong is 'n lewensboom,' dit wil sê 'n boom van die geestelike lewe, en 'n onbeheerste tong dood die gees van beide die een wat vermaan en die een wat vermaan word. Hoor wat Augustinus sê: 'Niks is so eie aan 'n duiwelskind as gedurige stryery nie,' en Paulus sê: 'n Dienaar van die Here moenie rusie maak nie.' Hoewel alle geredekawel sleg is, is dit veral onbetaamlik tussen 'n man en vrou, want dan is daar nooit vrede nie. Daarom sê Salomo: 'Die gedrup uit 'n dak wat lek op 'n reëndag, so is 'n vrou wat aanhou kyf.' 'n Man wat in 'n huis is wat op baie plekke lek, kan dit op een plek vermy, maar dan drup dit op 'n ander plek weer op hom. So gaan dit met 'n twissieke vrou: as sy haar man nie op een plek uitskel nie, dan doen sy dit op 'n ander. Dis dié dat Salomo sê: 'Liewer 'n stukkie droë brood met vrede daarby as 'n huis vol kos met 'n getwis daarby.' Paulus sê in Kolossense 3: 'Vrouens, wees julle

mans onderdanig soos dit pas by mense wat in die Here glo, en mans, julle moet julle vrouens liefhê.’

634

Voorts praat ons oor minagting, wat ’n lelike sonde is, wanneer iemand vanweë sy goeie dae geminag word. Minagters gedra hulle soos die vieslike padda wat nie die soet geur van die wingerd wat blom, kan verdra nie. Hulle is die duiwel se maters, want hulle is bly as hy wen en treurig as hy verloor. Hulle is die vyande van Jesus Christus, want hulle haat wat Hy liefhet, naamlik die verlossing van siele.

Kom ons praat nou oor slegte raad. Hy wat slegte raad gee, is ’n verraaiër, want hy bedrieg iemand wat hom vertrou, soos Agitofel met Absalom gemaak het. Maar dis die een wat die slegte raad gee wat die eerste skade ly, want soos ’n wyse man gesê het: ‘Iemand wat ’n ander leed wil aandoen, val self in die strik en so doen hy homself leed aan.’ Daarom moet mens nie raad aanvaar van mense wat vals is of kwaad of moedswillig of hebsugtig of wêrelds in hul berading nie.

Nou kom die sonde van mense wat tweedrag saai. Dis ’n sonde wat Christus uit-en-uit haat, en g’n wonder nie, want Hy het gesterf om eensgesindheid te bewerkstellig. Hul doen Christus groter skande aan as dié wat Hom gekruisig het, want God het vriendskap tussen mense lief, meer as wat Hy sy eie liggaam liefhet. Dié het Hy immers ter wille van daardie eensgesindheid gegee. Daarom is hulle soos die duiwel wat gedurig tweedrag veroorsaak.

Dan is daar die sonde van die dubbele tong, soos wanneer daar mooi gepraat word in mense se teenwoordigheid, maar lelik agter hul rug; of hul maak asof hulle met goeie bedoelings praat of maar net skerts of speel, maar intussen het hul kwade bedoelings.

Dan volg die beskaming van goeie raad, as gevolg waarvan iemand belaster word en moet sukkel om die skade weer reggestel te kry.

Dan is daar bedreiging, wat opsigtelike dwaasheid is, want iemand wat dikwels dreig, kom meestal met meer dreigemente vorendag as wat hy ooit kan uitvoer.

Dan is daar ydel woorde wat nóg die spreker nóg die hoorder baat; hulle is nodeloos en nie gerig op enige voordeel nie. Hoewel ydel woorde soms ’n pekelsonde is, moet mens hul lievers vermy, want ons sal op die oordeelsdag van hulle moet rekenskap gee. Daar is egter ’n ydel geredeneer wat geensins onskuldig is nie. Hiervan sê Salomo: ‘Baie praat lei tot onverstandige woorde.’ En toe die wysgeer gevra is hoe om mense te behaag, was sy antwoord: ‘Doen baie goeie dae en praat min ydel woorde.’

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En dan volg die sonde van gekskeerdery wat deur die duiwel se bobbejane bedryf word. Hulle laat mense lag met hulle manewales, soos mense oor bobbejaanstreke lag. Paulus verbied sulke sotterny. Net soos deugsame en heilige woorde diegene vertroos wat in Christus se diens arbei, so vertroos bose woorde en die verspote toertjies van grapmakers dié wat werk in die diens van die duiwel.

Middel teen die sonde van toorn

Die middel teen toorn is ’n deug wat deemoed of sagmoedigheid genoem word; asook ’n ander deug, naamlik geduld of lankmoedigheid.

Deemoed betuel en beperk die onstuimigheid in die mens se hart sodat dit nie losbars in woede nie. Lankmoedigheid verduur gelate al die onaangenaamhede en ongeregthede wat mense mekaar aandoen. Hiëronimus sê dat deemoed niemand kwaad berokken nie en van niemand kwaad spreek nie; en geen kwaad wat mense doen of praat, sal dit teen die rede in laat driftig word nie. Partymaal is dié deug aangebore, want soos die wysgeer sê, “n Mens is ’n redelike wese, van

nature sagmoedig en ontvanklik vir die goeie; maar wanneer deemoed die vrug van genade is, dan is dit hom nog waardiger.'

Geduld is nog 'n middel teen toorn. Dis 'n deug wat almal se goedheid met vriendelikheid ervaar en nie vertoorn raak oor aangedane kwaad nie. Die wysgeer sê dat geduld die deug is wat al die pyn van teenspoed en kwetsende woorde gelate aanvaar. Hierdie deug maak 'n mens soos God; soos Christus sê, maak dit hom Sy eie liewe kind. Hierdie deug verydel jou vyand, en daarom sê die wyse: 'As jy jou vyand wil verstaan, leer om te verduur.'

662

Verstaan goed dat 'n mens uiterlik vier soorte swaarkry moet verduur, waarvoor vier soorte geduld nodig is.

Die eerste is as gevolg van bese woorde. Dit het Jesus Christus sonder klagte verduur toe die Jode Hom oor en oor verag en gesmaad het. Verdra dit met lydsaamheid, want die wyse sê: 'Wanneer 'n verstandige man 'n saak maak teen 'n dwaas, raak die dwaas opgewonde en beledigend, en kom daar nie vrede nie.'

Die tweede soort swaarkry kom as gevolg van skade aan jou eiendom. Dit het Christus geduldig verduur toe Hy van sy klere beroof is wat alles was wat Hy op hierdie aarde besit het.

Die derde is as 'n mens liggaamlike pyn ly. Dit het Christus geduldig in Sy Passie verduur.

Die vierde is harde arbeid wat op ons afgedwing word. Mense wat hul knegte te hard laat werk of op die verkeerde tyd, soos op Heiligedae, doen groot sonde. Dit ook het Christus geduldig verduur en vir ons lydsaamheid geleer toe Sy geseënde skouer die las gedra het van die kruis waaraan Hy 'n wrede dood moes sterf. Hieruit kan mens lydsaamheid leer, want dis beslis nie net Christene wat geduldig is ter wille van die liefde van Christus en die beloning van die ewige lewe nie; die heidene uit die voor-Christelike tyd het dié deug ook aanbeveel en dit beoefen.

Daar was eenmaal 'n leermeester wat sy leerling wou straf oor 'n groot oortreding waarvoor hy baie kwaad was. Hy kry toe 'n stok om die kind mee te slaan. Toe die kind die stok sien, sê hy: 'Wat gaan u doen?' 'Ek gaan jou slaan,' sê die meester, 'om jou te straf.' 'Maar dan,' sê die kind, 'moet u eers uself straf, want u het alle geduld verloor oor die misstap van 'n kind.' 'Jy het reg,' beken die meester onder trane. 'Kom, neem die stok, my liewe seun, en straf my oor my ongeduld.'

Geduld lei tot gehoorsaamheid, waardeur 'n mens hom onderwerp aan Christus en aan almal aan wie hy in Christus onderdanig is. Volmaakte gehoorsaamheid is wanneer alle verpligtinge blymoedig, onverwyld en heelhartig nagekom word. Algemeen gestel, beteken gehoorsaamheid die uitvoer van die voorskrifte van God en die owerhede aan wie in alle billikheid gehoorsaamheid verskuldig is.

Aangaande traagheid

Na afguns en toorn wil ek nou oor die sonde van traagheid praat. Terwyl afguns die mens se hart verblind en toorn hom in verwarring bring, maak traagheid hom bot en nukkerig en prikkelbaar. Afguns en toorn lei tot verbittering, die bron van traagheid wat die hart die geneentheid tot alles goeds ontnem. Traagheid is die onrus van die beswaarde gemoed; Augustinus sê dit is ergelikheid ten opsigte van die goeie en behae in die bese. Dit is beslis 'n verdoemlike sonde, want dit veronreg Jesus Christus deurdat dit hom die pligsgetroue diens ontnem wat Hom toekom. Traagheid word gekenmerk deur ergelikheid, wrewel, laksheid, verskonings, ledigheid en teësin. Dis dié dat daar geskryf staan: 'Daar rus 'n vloek op elkeen wat traag is om die werk te doen wat die Here hom gegee het.'

Traagheid is die vyand van elkeen van die drie menslike state. Daar is die staat van onskuld waarin Adam was voor die sondeval; in hierdie staat was hy gebonde tot die werk van die lof en aanbidding van God. In die sondestaat weer is die mens gebonde tot die werk van gebed tot God dat Hy sy sondes sal vergewe en hom die genade sal gee om uit die sonde op te staan. En in die genadestaat is ons gebonde tot die werke van Penitensie. Traagheid is die teenoorgestelde en die vyand van al hierdie dinge, want van bedrywigheid hou traagheid glad nie. Die liederlike sonde van traagheid is ook 'n groot vyand van ons liggaamlike welstand, want dit maak geen voorsiening vir ons daaglikse behoeftes nie; dit verkwansel en verspil en verwoes alle aardse goed as gevolg van onverskilligheid. 685

Verder is traagheid te vermy omdat dit soos die verdoemdes in die hel is: hulle is so vasgevang dat hulle nóg goed kan doen nóg goed kan dink. Traagheid bring mee dat 'n mens lous word en dit verhinder hom om enigiets goeds te doen, 'n toestand wat God verafsku, soos Johannes sê.

Een soort traagheid is luiheid. Dit kan geen swaarkry of Penitensie verdra nie omdat dit te teer en tengerig is. Daarom sê Salomo: 'Een wat hom slap hou in sy werk en een wat alles afbreek, is tweelingbroers.' Om dié verderflike luiheid te bekamp, moet 'n mens hom inspan om goeie werke te doen en op 'n manlike en deugsame wyse die geneentheid om goed te doen verwerf, gedagtig daaraan dat ons Here Jesus Christus elke goeie daad, hoe gering ook al, beloon. Die gewoonte van harde werk is iets goeds, want, soos Bernardus sê, gee dit die arbeider sterk arms en harde spiere, terwyl luiheid jou 690

swak en slap maak. Dan is daar die vrees om met goeie werke te begin, want, soos Gregorius verklaar, lyk dit vir iemand wat tot dié sonde geneig is na so 'n groot onderneming om goeie werke aan te pak dat hy hom gaan wysmaak dat die omstandighede van die goeie so pynlik is en so swaar om te verdra dat hy maar lievers geen goeie werke moet doen nie.

Dan is daar wanhoop, wat ongeloof aan die genade van God is. Soms ontstaan dit uit oormatige verdriet en soms uit oormatige vrees, wanneer iemand hom inbeeld dat hy soveel sonde gedoen het dat dit hom nie sal baat om berou te hê en hom van die sonde af te wend nie. As gevolg van hierdie wanhoop gee hy homself aan allerhande sondes oor, soos Augustinus sê. As hierdie verskriklike toestand tot die dood voortduur, noem ons dit sonde teen die Heilige Gees. Dié afskuwelike sonde is so gevaarlik dat daar vir die wanhopige geen wandaad is wat hy huiwer om te pleeg nie, soos ons uit die geval van Judas leer. Bo alle sondes uit is dit die sonde wat Christus die meeste mishaag en hom die meeste teengaan. Waarlik hy wat wanhoop, is soos 'n lafhartige, ruggraatlose vegter wat onnodig die stryd gewonne gee. Helaas, helaas, sy lafhartigheid is ewe onnodig as sy wanhoop. Waarlik, die genade van God is steeds ter beskikking van die boetvaardige, ongeag sy verdienste. Ag, dat mense tog maar onthou dat Christus in Lukas 15 vir ons die versekering gee: 'Daar sal in die hemel blydschap wees oor een sondaar wat hom bekeer, eerder as oor nege en negentig mense wat reg doen en nie bekering nodig het nie.' Kyk verder in dieselfde Evangelie na die vreugde en die feesmaal van die goeie man toe sy verlore seun berouvol na hom teruggekeer het. En onthou wat daar in Lukas 23 staan, hoe die misdadiger wat langs Jesus Christus gekruisig is vir hom gesê het: 'Dink aan my wanneer u in u koninkryk kom,' waarop Jesus geantwoord het: 'Ek verseker jou: vandag sal jy met my in die paradys wees.' Danksy die lyding en die dood van Christus is daar beslis geen sonde so verskriklik dat berou dit nie ongedaan kan maak nie. Waarom sou 'n mens dan wanhoop waar Sy genade so voorhande en so oorvloedig is? Vra daarvoor en ontvang dit.

Dan is daar dooierigheid, 'n loom gesluimer as gevolg van luiheid, wat 'n

mens na liggaam en siel uitput en versuf. Die oggend is geen tyd om te slaap nie, tensy daar een of ander noodzaak is. Die oggend is juis geskik vir 'n mens om te bid, om aan God te dink, om God te eer en om aalmoese te gee aan die armes wat eerste in die naam van Christus aanklop. Salomo sê dan ook: 'Hy wat in die oggend ontwaak en my soek, sal my vind.'

710

Dan is daar nalatigheid of onverskilligheid wat eenvoudig nie omgee nie. As onkunde die bron van alle kwaad is, dan word dit versterk deur onverskilligheid. As gevolg van onverskilligheid, traak dit die een wat iets moet doen nie of hy dit goed of sleg doen nie. Hierteenoor moet ons let op wat die wyse sê: 'Hy wat God vrees, laat nie na om te doen wat hy moet doen nie.' En hy wat God liefhet, doen sy bes om God deur sy werke te behaag en wy hom met al sy mag daaraan toe om goed te doen.

Dan is daar ledigheid, die poort tot alle kwaad. 'n Ledige man is 'n vesting sonder mure; die duiwels kan dit van enige kant af binnekom of van alle kante op hom skiet aangesien hy weerloos is teen verleiding. Ledigheid is die riool van alle bose en slegte gedagtes en van alle twis, beuselagtighede en smerigheid. Die hemel is gegee aan dié wat arbei en nie aan lediges nie. Dawid sê dan ook dat dié wat nie saam met ander mense werk nie, ook nie saam met hulle gepla sal word nie. Hulle sal dus nie in die vaevuur gelouter word nie, want tensy hulle berou betoon, sal hulle deur die duiwel in die hel gefolter word.

Dan is daar die sonde wat traagheid van gees genoem word, soos wanneer iemand te laat is of te lank talm voordat hy hom tot God bekeer. Dit is beslis 'n groot dwaasheid. Dit is soos iemand wat in 'n sloot val en nie daaruit kan kom nie. Uit hierdie kwaad kom valse hoop voort, die verwagting van 'n lang lewe, iets waarvan mense meermale bedroë afkom.

Dan is daar die vadsigheid van iemand wat met iets goeds begin, maar dit dan meteens laat staan; soos diegene wat iemand leiding moet gee, maar sodra hulle met teenkating of probleme te kampe het, gee hulle geen verdere aandag aan hom nie. Dis nou die nuwe soort herder wat toesien dat die skape na die wolf in die doringbos hardloop, en ten spyte van die verantwoordelikheid wat op hom rus, niks daaromtrent doen nie. Dit lei tot armoede en verwoesting van geestelike sowel as aardse goed. En dan ontstaan 'n soort kilte wat die hele hart bevries.

721

Dan kom daar gebrek aan toewyding, waardeur 'n mens so verblind raak, soos Bernardus sê, en so 'n matheid hom lam lê dat hy nie in die kerk kan lees of sing nie, niks godsdienstigs kan hoor of bepeins nie, en nie met sy hande enige goeie werk kan aanpak nie, of dit kom vir hom leeg en sinloos voor. Dan word hy traag en slaperig; hy word gou kwaad en is geneig tot haat en afguns. Spoedig volg die sonde van triestigheid of droefheid uit wêreldse oorwegings, en dit, sê Paulus, bring die dood. Verdriet voer tot die dood van siel en liggaam, want dit maak 'n mens moeg vir die lewe. Daarom kan sorg dikwels 'n mens se lewe verkort, nog voordat dit tot 'n natuurlike einde kom.

Middel teen die sonde van traagheid

Teenoor die vreeslike sonde van traagheid en sy vertakkinge staan die deug van moedigheid of sterkte, 'n geestesgesteldheid wat 'n mens in staat stel om dit wat skadelik is te verag. Hierdie deug is so stoer en lewenskragtig dat dit doeltreffende weerstand en beskerming kan bied teen groot gevare en kan veg teen die aanvalle van die duiwel. Dit verhef en versterk die siel, net soos traagheid dit verlaag en verswak. Moedigheid verdra geduldig al die nodige ontberings.

Daar is baie soorte moedigheid. Die eerste is grootmoedigheid of grootheid

van gees. Waarlik, dit verg grootheid van gees om traagheid die hoof te bied, anders sal dit jou siel met sondige droefheid oorrumpel en met wanhoop vernietig. Hierdie deug laat mense uit vrye wil en met volle begrip groot en moeilike take onderneem. En omdat die duiwel eerder van geslepenheid en misleiding as van krag gebruik maak om die mens te beveg, moet 'n mens hom met vernuf en rede en oordeelkundigheid weerstaan.

Dan is daar die deugde van geloof en hoop in God en Sy Heiliges wat 'n mens in staat stel om die goeie werke te volvoer wat hy onderneem het om te doen. Daar is ook versekerdheid, die geloofsvertroue waardeur hy nie enige toekomstige las in verband met die goeie werke waarmee hy begin het, hoef te vrees nie.

Dan is daar rykheid van gees, wanneer 'n mens groot en goeie werke verrig het. Dit is tog die doel waarmee ons goeie werke doen, want die verrigting daarvan bring 'n ryke beloning.

Dan is daar standvastigheid of bestendigheid van gees. Dit moet 'n plek in mens se hart hê deur 'n vaste geloof, en ook in sy woord, gedrag, stemming en daad.

Daar is ook nog ander spesifieke middels teen traagheid. Dit behels verskeie goeie werke, bewustheid van die pyne van die hel en die geluksaligheid van die hemel en vertroue in die genade van die Heilige Gees, en gee 'n mens die krag om sy goeie voornemens uit te voer.

Aangaande gierigheid

Na afguns wil ek praat oor gierigheid of hebsug, waarvan Paulus in Timoteus 6 sê dat dit 'n wortel van allerlei kwaad is. Wanneer die mens se hart verwar en verontrus raak, en die siel die vertroosting van God kwyt is, dan soek hy vergeefse troos in aardse goed.

740

Volgens Augustinus is gierigheid 'n drang in die hart na aardse besittings. Party beskryf dit as 'n gulsigheid om aardse goed te bekom waarvan niks aan behoefdiges gegee word nie. Begryp goed dat gierigheid nie net op grond en goed betrekking het nie, maar soms ook op kennis en roem; in allerhande oormatigheid skuil gierigheid en hebsug.

Die verskil tussen gierigheid en hebsug is dit: gierigheid is die begeerte na dinge wat 'n mens nie het nie; hebsug is die hou en terughou van wat 'n mens reeds het, sonder dat dit geregverdig is. Gierigheid is beslis 'n verdoemlike sonde, want orals in die Heilige Skrif word dit vervloek en afgewys as 'n kwaad, want dit veronreg Jesus Christus. Dit beroof Hom van die liefde wat mense Hom verskuldig is en keer dit strydig met die rede om sodat die gierige meer hoop op sy besittings vestig as op die Here en meer aandag aan die behoud van sy skatte wy as aan die diens van Jesus Christus. Daarom sê Paulus in Efesiërs 5 dat gierigheid afgodery is.

Al verskil tussen 'n afgodedienaar en 'n gierigaard is dat die afgodedienaar miskien net een of twee afgode het, terwyl die gierigaard baie het, want elke geldstuk in sy koffer is 'n afgod. Die sonde van afgodery is die eerste ding wat God in die Tien Gebooe verbied het, soos ons uit Eksodus 20 kan sien: 'Jy mag naas my geen ander gode hê nie en jy mag nie vir jou 'n beeld maak nie.' Die gierigaard wat geld vooropstel, is 'n afgodedienaar vanweë die vervloekte sonde van gierigheid.

Hebsug lei tot 'n harde heerskappy, waar mense verdruk word deur belastings, tolgelde en vervoerregte, meer as wat reg en billik is. Sulke gesagvoerders lê ook boetes op wat eerder afpersings genoem kan word. Party

rentmeesters hou vol dat dié boetes en gedwonge betalings deur horiges⁵ regmatig is op grond daarvan dat 'n horige geen eiendomsreg het nie en alles aan sy heer behoort. Maar 'n heer wat sy horiges dinge ontnem wat hy nie vir hulle gegee het nie, doen beslis kwaad (Augustinus, *Die Stad van God IX*). Die oorsaak van alle knegskap kan teruggevoer word na die sonde (Genesis 9). Dit is die sonde wat knegskap tot stand gebring het, nie die natuur nie. Daarom moet here nie te veel roem in hulle heerskappy nie, aangesien hulle nie van nature here is oor hulle horiges nie, maar as gevolg van sonde. En verder, as die wet bepaal dat die aardse goed van horiges aan hul here behoort, dan moet dit so verstaan word, dat dit die keiser toekom sodat hy hul reg daarop kan handhaaf, nie dat dit van hulle geroof kan word nie. Daarom sê Seneca: "n Verstandige heer leef goedgunstig met sy dienaars saam." Diegene wat horiges genoem word, is Gods volk, want die nederiges is Christus se vriende, vertrouelinge van die Heer. 760

Onthou ook dat horiges uit dieselfde saad stam as here; die een kan ook ewe goed verlos word as die ander. Dieselfde dood wat die horige wegneem, neem ook die heer. Daarom is my raad dit: Doen aan jou horige soos jy wil hê dat jou heer aan jou sou doen as jy in sy plek was. Elke sondaar is 'n kneg van die sonde. Die heer moet dus so optree dat sy knegte hom liefhet, eerder as dat hul hom vrees. In alle redelikheid is daar stand op stand en 'n mens moet sy plig nakom in die stand waarin hy hom bevind, maar die verdrukking en veragting van ondergeskiktes kan nie goedgepraat word nie.

Verstaan ook goed dat veroweraars en tiranne dikwels mense verslaaf wat uit net sulke koninklike bloed as hulle is. Sodanige knegskap was onbekend voordat Noag gesê het dat sy seun Gam as gevolg van sy sonde 'n slaaf in diens van sy broers sou wees.

Wat moet ons sê van diegene wat die Heilige Kerk plunder en beroof? Die swaard wat iemand ontvang wanneer hy tot ridder geslaan word, dui daarop dat hy die Heilige Kerk moet beskerm, nie dit beroof nie, want die een wat dit beroof, pleeg verraad teenoor Christus. Augustinus sê: 'Dis die wolwe van die duiwel wat Jesus Christus se skape doodbyt.' Hulle is inderdaad erger as wolwe, want as 'n wolf dik is, hou hy op om skape dood te byt. Dit doen die plundersaars van die Heilige Kerk se goed egter nie; hulle hou nooit op met hulle geplunder nie.

Soos ek reeds gesê het: sonde was die grondoorsaak van knegskap en aangesien die hele wêreld toentertyd in sonde verkeer het, is die hele wêreld ook in knegskap gedompel. Maar toe die tyd van genade aangebreek het, het God verorden dat party van hoër stand en rang sou wees en party van laer en dat elk na stand en rang gedien moes word. In sommige lande is slawe wat hul tot die Christelike geloof bekeer het dan ook vrygestel, en heer en kneg is wedersyds tot diens verbind. Die Pous noem homself dienaar van die dienaars van God; maar omdat die waardigheid van die Heilige Kerk moontlik nie tot stand kon gekom het en die algemene belang dus bewaar kon gewees het nie, asmede rus en vrede op aarde, daarom het God verorden dat party hoër en ander laer sou wees. So het heerskappy tot stand gekom: sodat heersers hul onderdaniges redelikerwys na die beste van hul vermoë kon bewaar, bewaak en beskerm, en nie om hulle te vernietig of skade te berokken nie. Tensy hulle tot inkeer kom, sal sulke here wat soos wolwe is en wederregtelik, bandeloos en ongenadig die besittings van arm mense verslind, in dieselfde mate die genade van Jesus Christus ontvang as wat hulle dit aan die armes uitgemeet het.

Dan is daar gekul onder handelaars. Daar is meer as een soort handelsware:

⁵ 'n Halfvrye wat aan 'n heer onderworpe is.

die tasbare teenoor die geestelike, en dié wat eerlik en wettig teenoor dié wat oneerlik en onwettig verhandel word. Die wettige en eerlike verhandeling van tasbare ware kom voor wanneer God dit so beskik het dat 'n ryk of 'n land voldoende vir sy eie behoeftes het en uit sy oorvloed 'n armer land te hulp kom. Daarom moet daar handelaars wees wat goedere van een land na 'n ander vervoer. Aan die ander kant is handel wat met oneerlikheid, bedrog, troueloosheid, leuens en valse ede bedryf word, vervloek en verderflik.

Die handel in geestesgoedere word simonie genoem. Dit verwys na die begeerte om die geestelike te wil koop, met ander woorde dit wat op die heiligdom van God en die sieleheil betrekking het. As iemand sy bes doen om hierdie begeerte uit te voer, al het dit geen uitwerking nie, is dit 'n doodsonde, en as hy georden word, druis dit teen die kerkreg in. Simonie heet na Simon die Townenaar, wat aardse goed wou gebruik om die genadegawe te koop wat God deur die Heilige Gees aan Petrus en die apostels geskenk het. Daarom word beide die koper en die verkoper van geestesgawes simoniste genoem, ongeag of dit deur middel van betaling of invloed bewerkstellig word of deur vriende afgepleit word – aardse vriende, insluitende familieleden, of geestelike vriende. As hulle vir 'n benefisie smee vir iemand wat onwaardig en onbevoeg is en hy aanvaar dit, dan is dit simonie; as hy waardig en bevoeg is, is dit nie. Dan is daar mans en vrouens wat die bevordering van iemand bepleit bloot ter wille van hul verderflike vleeslike liefde vir die betrokke persoon; dis growwe simonie. 'n Diens waarvoor 'n geestelike beloning gegee word, moet eerbaar van aard wees, anders is die beloning onvanpas. Daar moet geen onderhandeling wees nie en die ontvanger moet dit waardig wees. Soos pous Damasus sê: 'Al die sondes van die wêreld is soos niks in vergelyking met hierdie sonde nie.' Dis die grootste sonde wat bestaan, na dié van Lucifer en die Antichris. Dis immers deur hierdie sonde dat God Sy Kerk verloor en die siele wat Hy vrygekoop het met Sy kosbare bloed, deurdat gemeentes aan die sorg van onwaardiges oorgedra word. Diewe word aangestel wat die siele van Jesus Christus steel en Sy erfenis vernietig. Vanweë onwaardige priesters en pastore het onkundige mense minder eerbied vir die sakramente van die Heilige Kerk. Sulke plunderaars van gemeentes jaag die kinders van Christus uit die Kerk uit en maak die duiwel se eie seun daar tuis. Diegene wat siele soos lammers behoort te bewaak, verkoop hulle aan die wolf wat op hulle teer. Daarom sal sodaniges nooit die lammerweiding van die hemelse geluk deelagtig word nie.

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Volgende aan die beurt is dobbelary en alles wat daarmee saamgaan, soos bakspel en loterye wat lei tot bedrog, valse ede, verwensings, allerhande soorte diefstal, die lastering en ontkenning van God, haat jeens die naaste, spandabelheid en tydsverkwisting, en soms selfs moord. Solank hulle in hul liefhebberij volhard, spring dobbelaars beslis nie groot sonde vry nie.

Gierigheid bring leuens, diefstal, valse getuienis en meineed voort. Dis alles groot sondes en, soos ek reeds gesê het, lynreg in stryd met die gebooie van God. Valse getuienis is in woord en daad. In woord is dit om 'n naaste sy goeie naam of sy besittings of erfposisie deur leuentaal te ontnem wanneer jy vanweë toorn, gewin of afguns valse getuienis teen hom aflê of hom deur middel van valse getuienis beskuldig of verontskuldig of jouself op dié wyse van blaam onthef.

Pasop, julle aanklaers en notaris. Deur valse getuienis is Susanna en vele meer in groot pyn en smart gedompel.

Die sonde van diefstal is ook uitdruklik teen Gods gebod, of dit liggaamlik of geestelik is. Liggaamlike diefstal is wanneer jy jou naaste sy besittings teen sy sin ontnem deur geweld, geslepenheid of valse mate, of hom beroof deur listig valse aantygings teen hom in te bring, of iets van hom leen met die bedoeling om dit nie

terug te gee nie, en so aan. Geestelike diefstal is heiligskennis, oftewel die beskadiging van dit wat heilig is of aan Christus gewy is. Enige bose sonde wat in 'n heilige plek soos 'n kerk of 'n kerkhof gedoen word, kan as heiligskennis beskou word; so ook gewelddadigheid in dergelike plekke; so ook die ontneming van regte wat die Heilige Kerk toekom. Om kort te gaan, dit is heiligskennis om 'n heilige ding uit 'n heilige plek te neem, of 'n onheilige ding uit 'n heilige plek, of 'n heilige ding uit 'n onheilige plek.

802

Middel teen die sonde van die gierigheid

Die middel teen gierigheid is barmhartigheid en milddadige medelye. Dit is die geval omdat 'n gierigaard geen barmhartigheid of medelye teenoor 'n behoeftige vertoon nie, want hy verlustig hom in die behoud van sy goed en nie in die redding of verligting van sy broer nie. Daarom praat ek eerstens oor barmhartigheid. Die wysgeer sê dat barmhartigheid 'n deug is as gevolg waarvan 'n mens se hart geroer word deur ander se nood. Op barmhartigheid volg medelye in die uitvoer van liefdadige optrede. Ons word daartoe beweeg deur die barmhartigheid van Jesus Christus wat Homself vir ons sondeskuld gegee het, uit mededoë gesterf het, ons erfsonde vergewe het, ons uit die hellepyn vrygekoop het, die lyding van die vaevuur deur Penitensie verminder het en ons die genade gegee het om goed te doen en oplaas die hemelse geluksaligheid te beërwe. Barmhartigheid bestaan daarin dat 'n mens leen en gee, vergewe en kwytstel, dat jy bewoë voel oor jou mede-Christen se onheil en medelye met hom het, maar ook dat jy bestraf waar dit nodig is.

'n Tweede middel teen gierigheid is redelike vrygewigheid. Hier moet 'n mens egter die genade van Christus in ag neem, sy aardse rykdom asook die onverganklike rykdom wat Christus ons gegee het; hy moet die dood voor oë hou, al weet hy nie wanneer, waar of hoe hy dit sal teenkom nie, en onthou dat hy alles sal verloor behalwe wat hy aan goeie werke bestee het. Omdat party mense oordadig is, moet dwase vrygewigheid vermy word. Sodanige vrygewigheid staan gelyk aan verkwisting. 'n Dwase vrygewige gee nie sy goed nie; hy verloor dit. Iemand wat gee uit ydel roem, byvoorbeeld aan sangers of aan mense wat sy glorie rugbaar moet maak, doen sonde; hy doen nie goeie werke nie. Voorwaar, iemand wat gee ten einde sonde na te jaag, raak op 'n skandelige manier sy eiendom kwyt. Hy is soos 'n perd wat vuil water drink, eerder as water uit 'n helder bron. En dié wat gee wanneer hulle nie moet gee nie, aan hulle kom die vloek toe wat Christus op die oordeelsdag oor die verdoemdes sal uitspreek.

Aangaande gulsigheid

Na gierigheid kom gulsigheid, wat ook nadruklik teen die wet van God is. Gulsigheid is die oordadige lus om te eet of te drink, sowel as voorsiening in 'n buitensporige eet- of drinklus. Hierdie sonde het die hele wêreld bederf, soos ons uit Adam en Eva se sonde weet. Let ook op wat die apostel Paulus daaroor sê: 'Ek het dit dikwels vir julle gesê en tot my verdriet moet ek dit nou herhaal: daar is baie wat as die vyande van die kruis van Christus lewe. Die verderf is hulle einde; die maag is hulle god; hulle skande is hulle trots; hulle is aardsgesind.' Hy wat verslaaf is aan dié sonde, kan dit nie weerstaan nie. Hy staan in diens van alle kwaad, want hy maak hom tuis in die duiwel se skatkamer.

Hierdie sonde het baie aspekte. Die eerste is dronkenskap, die aaklige graf van die menslike rede, want een wat dronk is, is sy rede kwyt en dit is doodsonde.

As iemand egter ongewoond is aan sterk drank, of hy weet miskien nie hoe sterk dit is nie, of hy is swakhoofdig, of hy het dalk hard gewerk en gevolglik te veel gedrink en meteens vind dat hy in drank se strik geloop het, is dit 'n pekelsonde, nie 'n doodsonde nie.

Die tweede aspek van gulsigheid is dat 'n mens se gees in die war raak, want dronkenskap ontnem hom sy oordeelsvermoë. Die derde aspek is dat 'n mens sy kos verslind, pleks dat hy dit ordentlik eet. Die vierde is dat 'n oormaat kos die ewewig van sy liggaamsvogte versteur. Die vyfde is vergeetagtigheid as gevolg van te veel drank, sodat mense soms teen die oggend vergeet wat hul die vorige aand gedoen het.

Volgens Gregorius is daar ook ander indelings van gulsigheid. Die eerste is om te eet voor dit tyd vir eet is. Die tweede is om té kieskeurig te wees oor die gehalte van kos en drank. Die derde is om te veel in te neem. Die vierde is fiemies, wanneer groot aandag aan die voorkoms van die kos gewy word. Die vyfde is om gulsig te eet. Dit dan is die vyf vingers van die duiwel se hand waarmee hy ons tot die sonde lok.

831

Middel teen die sonde van gulsigheid

Die middel teen gulsigheid is onthouding, soos Galenus sê. Maar onthouding wat bloot ter wille van liggaamlike gesondheid is, wen vir ons geen verdienste nie. Augustinus leer dat dit met lydsaamheid ter wille van die deug beoefen moet word. 'Onthouding,' sê hy, 'help 'n mens min tensy hy die regte gesindheid openbaar, onderskraag deur lydsaamheid en naasteliefde, en dit om Gods ontwil beoefen, in die hoop op hemelse geluksaligheid.'

Gepaard met onthouding gaan selfbeheersing, wat altyd die middeweg nastreef, skaamte, wat alle onbetaamlikheid vermy, vergenoegdheid, wat geen behoefte het aan ryk kos of drank nie en niks omgee vir die uitspattige voorbereiding van maaltye nie, matigheid, wat met die rede buitensporige eetlus in toom hou, nugterheid, wat drankgebruik beperk, en vlyt, wat die plesier inkort om lank en gemaklik aan tafel te wil sit, sodat daar mense is wat staan en eet om minder genotsugtig te wees.

Aangaande onkuisheid

Na gulsigheid kom onkuisheid. Dis twee sondes wat so nou verwant is dat hul soms onafskeidelik is. God weet hoe hierdie sonde Hom mishaag. Hy het self gesê, 'Jy mag nie egbreuk pleeg nie' en onder die ou bedeling swaar strafmaatreëls daarvoor opgelê. As 'n slavin in hierdie sonde betrap is, moes sy met stokke doodgeslaan word, as dit 'n vrou van hoë stand was, moes sy gestenig word, as dit die dogter van 'n priester was, moes sy verbrand word: so sê die wet. Vanweë die onkuisheid het God die hele wêreld tydens die sondvloed laat verdrink en daarna het hy vyf stede met weerlig laat verbrand en in die hel laat sink.

Laat ons nou praat oor die walglike sonde wat egbreuk genoem word, ongeag of een of albei die skuldiges getroud is. Johannes sê dat egbrekers hulle in die hel sal bevind in 'n poel wat met vuur en swael brand: vuur vir hul wellus en swael vir die stank van hul smerige daad. Die verbreking van die Huweliksakrament is iets afskuweliks, want God self het dit in die paradys ingestel en dit is deur Jesus Christus bevestig, soos ons in die Evangelie volgens Matteus lees: 'Daarom sal 'n man sy vader en moeder verlaat en sy vrou aankleef en hulle twee sal een vlees wees.' Dié sakrament versinnebeeld die hegte band tussen Christus en die Heilige

Kerk. Verder het God nie net egbreuk in daad verbied nie; hy het ook beveel dat jy nie jou naaste se vrou mag begeer nie. 'In hierdie gebod,' sê Augustinus, 'word elke soort onkuise begeerte verbied.' Hoor ook wat Matteus sê: 'Elkeen wat na 'n vrou kyk en haar begeer, het reeds in sy hart met haar egbreuk gepleeg.' Hier sien ons dat nie net die daad sondig is nie, maar ook die begeerte om dit te pleeg. 841

Hierdie vervloekte sonde doen onberekenbare skade aan diegene wat dit beoefen, veral aan hul siele wat tot die wandaad en sy straf van die ewige dood gedryf word. Dit doen ook groot skade aan die liggaam, want dit droog jou uit, verrinnweer jou en beskaam jou. Dit maak jou bloed tot 'n offerande aan die duiwel in die hel en veroorsaak dat jy al jou besittings deurbring. Dis 'n skande as 'n man als wat hy het aan 'n vrou verkwis, en 'n nog groter skande as 'n vrou ter wille van dié vieslikheid al haar goed aan 'n man bestee. Soos die profeet dan ook sê, ontnem hierdie sonde 'n man en vrou hul goeie naam en alle eer, terwyl dit die duiwel veel plesier verskaf, want so wen hy die grootste deel van die wêreld. Soos 'n koopman wat die meeste behae skeep in sake wat die grootste wins afwerp, so verlustig die duiwel hom veral in hierdie smerigheid.

Dit is die tweede hand met sy vyf vingers waarmee die duiwel mense na liederlikheid lok. Die eerste vinger is die verspote gekyk van dwase mans en dwase vrouens. Dis dodelik soos die giftige aanblik van die basilisk,⁶ want die lus van die oë volg op die lus van die hart. Die tweede vinger is die sondige gevat op 'n lelike manier. Dis dié dat Salomo sê: 'Hy wat met 'n vrou lol en haar betas, is soos een wat 'n skerpioen aangryp. Dit sal hom steek en onmiddellik doodmaak. En hy wat warm pik aanraak, dit sal sy vingers besoedel.' Die derde vinger is vuil taal wat soos 'n vuur is en spoedig die hart sal brand. Die vierde is soenery, want net 'n groot dwaas sal die mond van 'n brandende oond of 'n fornuis soen en dis 'n groter dwaas wat oneerbaar soen, want die mond wat hy soen, is dié van die hel. 'n Jagse ou sufferd wat met alle mag wil soen, al is hy skaars daartoe in staat om net 'n pikkie in te kry, laat 'n mens dink aan 'n hond, want as 'n hond by 'n roos of 'n ander struik kom, al wil hy nie pis nie, lig hy nogtans sy poot en maak asof hy pis. En hoewel baie mans dink dat hulle nie sondig as hul wellustig met hul eie vrouens verkeer nie, is dit 'n valse siening van die saak. God weet, 'n man kan homself doodsteek met sy eie mes en hom dronk drink uit sy eie vat. Waarlik as 'n man sy vrou of sy kind of enige aardse ding bo God liefhet, dan is dit 'n afgod en hy 'n afgodedienaar. 'n Man moet sy vrou op 'n oordeelkundige, beskeie en matige wyse liefhê, dan is sy soos 'n suster vir hom. Die vyfde vinger van die duiwel se hand is die vieslike daad van die wellus. 860

Die duiwel steek die vyf vingers van die gulsigheid in 'n mens se ingewande in en met die vyf vingers van onkuisheid gryp hy hom aan sy geslagsdele om hom in die fornuis van die hel te smyt, waar die vuur en die wurms vir ewig duur, waar daar geween en geweeklaag is, skerp honger en dors en die wreedheid van die duiwels wat hom sonder verposing en sonder einde vertrap.

Onkuisheid het, soos ek reeds vermeld het, verskeie vorms. Daar is ontug tussen 'n man en 'n vrou wat nie getroud is nie. Dis 'n doodsonde en dis teen-natuurlik. Ook ons rede sê vir ons dat dit doodsonde is, want God het onkuisheid verbied. Die apostel Paulus maak dit duidelik dat niemand wat hom aan doodsonde skuldig maak die koninkryk van God sal beërwe nie.

Nog 'n sonde van die onkuisheid is om 'n maagd haar maagdelikheid te beroof. Hy wat dit doen, werp haar neer uit die hoogste posisie wat ons in hierdie lewe kan beklee en ontnem haar die kosbare vrug wat die Boek 'die

⁶ 'n Fabelagtige dier met die liggaam van 'n draak en die kop van 'n haan wat so giftig is dat selfs sy aanblik 'n mens kan doodmaak.

honderdvoudige vrug'⁷ noem. Ek weet nie hoe om dit anders te vertaal nie; in Latyn is dit *centissimus fructus*. Hy wat dit doen, doen haar meer skade en skande aan as wat enigeen kan bereken. Hy is soos diere in die veld wat deur 'n omheining breek en skade aanrig wat nooit weer herstel nie. 'n Maagdevlies kan immers ewe min herstel as wat 'n arm wat van die liggaam afgekap is weer kan aangroei. Ek weet sy kan deur Penitensie genade ontvang, maar sy sal nooit weer ongeskonde wees nie.

Al het ek reeds heelwat oor egbreuk gesê, is dit goed dat ek op nog meer gevare wys sodat dié afskuwelike sonde vermy kan word.

Die betekenis van die Latynse woord is 'om 'n ander man se bed te nader',⁸ as gevolg waarvan hulle wat vantevore een vlees was hul liggame aan ander oorgee. Uit hierdie sonde vloei, soos die wyse sê, baie kwaad voort. Eerstens troubreuk, en getrouheid is tog 'n sleutel tot die Christelike geloof. As mense nie hul woord gestand doen nie, word hul belydenis bar en vrugteloos.

Tweedens is dié sonde 'n soort diefstal, want diefstal is om iemand iets teen sy wil te ontnem. Dis die liederlikste soort diefstal wat daar bestaan wanneer 'n vrou haar liggaam van haar man steel en dit vir 'n minnaar gee dat hy haar kan bevlek, en haar siel van Christus steel en dit vir die duiwel gee. Dis 'n erger diefstal as om by 'n kerk in te breek en die Miskelk te steel, want egbrekers breek geestelik in God se tempel in en steel die vat van die genade, naamlik die liggaam en gees, en daarvoor sal God hul straf, soos Paulus sê. Oor hierdie diefstal het Josef benoud geraak, en toe sy eienaar se vrou hom wou verlei, het hy gesê: 'Meneer het alles wat hy besit onder my sorg geplaas. Hy het niks van my teruggehou nie, behalwe vir u, want u is sy vrou. Hoe kan ek so 'n verkeerde ding doen? Ek sal mos teen hom en teen God sondig. Mag God dit verhoed!' Helaas, waar kry mens vandag sulke trou?

Derdens is daar die losbandigheid waarmee hulle die wet van God verbreek en Christus, die grondlegger van die Huwelik, onteer. Omdat die Sakrament van die huwelik so edel en so waardig is, is dit 'n groot sonde om dit te verbreek. God het dit immers in die paradys ingestel, in die staat van onskuld, sodat die mensdom kon vermeerder tot die diens van God. Dit maak dié sonde nog erger. Egbreuk kan lei tot valse erfgename wat onregmatig op ander se nalatenskap beslag lê. Daarom sit Christus hulle uit die koninkryk van die hemel wat net deur goeie mense beërwe word. Egbreuk kan ook daartoe lei dat mense onwetend met bloedverwante trou of verkeer: dit gebeur veral met skurke wat in bordele boer, soos mense wat saam-saam in 'n gemakhuis sit om hulle te ontlas.

885

En wat van koppelaars wat van prostitusie leef en 'n deel van die betaling afpers – soms van 'n eie vrou of kind. Beslis 'n vervloekte sonde.

Dis dan ook nie verniet dat egbreuk in die Tien Gebooie tussen diefstal en moord staan nie, want dis die grootste diefstal wat bestaan: die diefstal van liggaam en siel. En dis ook soos moord, want dit sny en breek die een vlees wat mense geword het middeldeur. Daarom het dit volgens die ou wet die doodstraf verdien. Die wet van Jesus Christus is egter 'n wet van barmhartigheid en toe 'n vrou op owerspel betrap is en gestenig moes word, soos die Jode ooreenkomstig hul wet wou hê, het Jesus Christus vir haar gesê: 'Gaan en moet van nou af nie meer sonde doen nie.' Egbreuk sal vergeld word met die pyne van die hel, tensy Penitensie dit verhoed.

Daar is nog baie meer aspekte van dié sonde. Een is as een of albei geestelikes is; of as iemand lid van 'n godsdienstige orde is, soos diaken, subdiaken, priester of hospitaalbroeder. Hoe hoër die orde, hoe groter die sonde. Wat hierdie

7 Na aanleiding van Mattheus 13:8 is die huwelikstaat, weduweeskap en maagdelikheid met dertig-, sestig- en honderdvoudige opbrengs vergelyk.

8 Onjuiste etimologie van *adulterium*, die Latynse woord vir egbreuk.

sonde nog vererger, is die verbreking van die belofte van kuisheid wat hul tydens hul ordening aflê. Heilige Ordening is iets kosbaars uit die skathuis van God; dit is Sy spesiale merk en seël om te toon dat geordendes met Hom verbind is in kuisheid, die hoogste lewenswyse. Hulle is spesiaal toegewy aan God, Sy eie huisgenote. As hulle doodsonde doen, is hulle dus verraaiers van God en van Sy volk, want hul lewe ten koste van die volk ten einde vir die volk te bid, maar as hul verraaiers is, is hul gebede van geen nut vir die volk nie. Vanweë die waardigheid van hul amp is priesters engele, maar Paulus wys daarop dat Satan hom voordoen as 'n engel van die lig. Die priester wat hom met doodsonde besighou, kan vergelyk word met 'n engel van die duisternis wat hom voordoen as 'n engel van die lig. Hy lyk soos die een, maar is inderdaad die ander. Sulke priesters is soos die seuns van Eli wat, soos ons in Konings lees, seuns van Belial was, dit wil sê van die duiwel. Belial beteken 'sonder regter' en dis hoe dit met hulle toegaan; hul reken dat hul vry is en geen regter het nie, net soos 'n gemeenskaplike bul vry is om enige koei wat hy wil te dek. Soos daardie een bul genoeg is vir 'n hele dorp, so is 'n slegte priester genoeg om 'n hele parogie of streek te benadeel. Sulke priesters weet nie wat bediening beteken nie en hulle ken nie vir God nie. Soos die Bybel sê, was hulle nie tevrede met die gekookte vleis wat hulle aangebied is nie en het hulle die rou vleis met geweld geneem. So is slegte priesters vandag ook ontevrede met die gebraaide of gekookte vleis waarmee die volk hul in groot eerbied wil voed; in plaas daarvan wil hulle die rou vleis van hul parogiane se vroue en dogters hê. Vrouens wat instem tot sulke aaklige gedrag doen Christus, die Heilige Kerk, alle Heiliges en alle siele groot onreg aan, want van hulle almal word die een geroof wat Christus en die Heilige Kerk moet dien en vir Christen-siele moet bid. Daarom staan sulke priesters en hul liefies wat instem tot hul losbandigheid onder die vloek van die Kerk, tot hul tot inkeer kom.

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'n Ander soort egbreuk kom voor, soos Hiëronimus sê, wanneer 'n egpaar vir niks anders omgee as hul liggaamlike genot nie; die feit dat hul getroud is, maak alles goed. Oor sulke mense het die duiwel mag, soos die engel Rafael aan die jongman Tobias gesê het, want hul geslagsgemeenskap sluit Jesus Christus uit hul harte en lewer hulle oor aan vieslike wellus.

Nog 'n soort egbreuk is gemeenskap met bloedverwante of aangetroude familie of met een met wie iemand se vader of 'n familielid ontug gepleeg het. Dié sonde maak mense soos honde vir wie verwantskap g'n saak maak nie. Verwantskap is tweërlei, geestelik en vleeslik. Geestelik het te doene met die peetouers, want hy wat 'n kind verwek, is sy vleeslike vader, terwyl die peetpa sy geestelike vader is. Daarom kan 'n vrou net so min met haar peetouers se seun gemeenskap hê as met haar eie bloedbroer.

Dan is daar die teennatuurlike sonde waaroor 'n mens nouliks wil praat of skryf, maar wat die Heilige Skrif nietemin openlik vermeld. Mans en vrouens bedryf dit om verskillende redes en op verskillende maniere. Hoewel die Heilige Skrif dit oor dié skandelijkhede het, word die Skrif nie daardeur onteer nie, ewe min as die son omdat dit op 'n mishoop skyn.

Nog 'n sonde wat met onkuisheid verband hou, besoek beide onskuldiges en slegte mense in hul slaap. Dit word selfbevlekking genoem en het vier oorsake. Soms is dit as gevolg van liggaamlike siekte omdat die liggaamsvogte te geil en oorvloedig is; soms is dit 'n swakheid, 'n onvermoë om mens in te hou, soos geneeshere getuig; soms is dit die gevolg van te veel kos en drank; en soms is dit die vieslike gedagtes wat in 'n mens se kop bly hang wanneer hy gaan slaap – en dit spring nie die smet van sonde vry nie. Daarom is dit nodig om behoedsaam te wees dat 'n mens nie in skandelijke sonde verval nie.

Middel teen die sonde van onkuisheid

Die middel teen onkuisheid is reinheid en onthouding, wat die onbeheerste drange wat uit vleeslike luste ontstaan in toom hou. Dit word 'n mens as groot verdienste toegereken as hy hom nie laat meevoer deur die ontvlamde ywer van dié vieslike sonde nie. Dit gebeur deur kuisheid in die huwelik en kuisheid in weduweeskap.

Die huwelik is die geoorloofde vereniging van 'n man en 'n vrou wat deur die kragvolle werking van die Sakrament saamgesnoer word in 'n band wat lewenslank nie verbreek mag word nie. Soos die Bybel sê, is dit 'n groot Sakrament, want God het dit in die Paradys ingestel en dit het Hom behaag om self uit 'n huwelik gebore te word. Hy het ook die huwelik geheilig deur 'n bruilof by te woon waar Hy water in wyn verander het, die eerste wonderteken wat Hy op aarde in die teenwoordigheid van Sy dissipels gedoen het. Die ware gevolg van die huwelik is dat dit die seksdaad reinig en die Heilige Kerk van 'n goeie nageslag voorsien, want dit is die doel van die huwelik. Dit verander ook 'n doodsonde in 'n pekelsonde as dit tussen getroudes bedryf word en maak hul harte sowel as hul liggame een. Dit is die ware huwelik wat God nog voor die sondeval ingestel het toe die natuurwet nog sy regmatige plek in die Paradys beklee het, en dit is verorden dat een man een vrou sou hê en een vrou een man, soos Augustinus met baie bewyse aanvoer.

Ten eerste versinnebeeld die huwelik die verbond tussen Christus en Sy Kerk. Ten tweede is die man die hoof van die vrou, altans dis wat hy volgens God se wet veronderstel is om te wees. As 'n vrou dan meer as een man gehad het, sou sy meer as een hoof hê, en dit sou 'n gruwel voor God wees. Ook sou 'n vrou nooit meer as een man gelyktydig kon bevredig nie. Daar sou ook nooit rus en vrede wees nie, want elkeen sou sy eie behoeftes hê. Verder sou 'n man nie weet watter kind syne is nie, en dus sou daar onsekerheid oor sy erfgenaam wees. 'n Vrou wat deur meer as een man gedeel word, sou ook minder liefde ontvang.

'n Man moet hom met geduld en eerbied teenoor sy vrou gedra, soos Christus betoon het toe Hy die eerste vrou gemaak het. Hy het haar nie uit Adam se kop gemaak nie, want dan sou sy op te veel heerskappy aanspraak kon maak. As 'n vrou die bewind voer, skep dit groot verwarring. Geen voorbeelde is nodig nie; ons weet dit uit daaglikse ondervinding. Dan het God ook nie die vrou uit Adam se voet gemaak nie, want sy moenie te laag geag word nie. God het die vrou uit Adam se ribbebeen gemaak, dat sy vir hom 'n metgesel kon wees. 'n Man se gedrag teenoor sy vrou moet deur waarheid, getrouheid en liefde gekenmerk word. Soos Paulus sê, moet hy sy vrou liefhê soos Christus die Heilige Kerk liefgehad het, in so 'n mate dat Hy Sy lewe daarvoor afgelê het. Dis wat 'n man, indien nodig, ook vir sy vrou moet doen.

929

Van Petrus leer ons hoe 'n vrou haar aan haar man moet onderwerp: eerstens in gehoorsaamheid. Volgens die wet is 'n getroude vrou onbevoeg om 'n eed te sweer of getuienis af te lê sonder die toestemming van haar man, want hy is haar heer; altans dis wat hy volgens rede behoort te wees.

Sy moet hom ook in alle deugsaamheid dien en stemmig in haar voorkoms wees. Ek weet dat 'n vrou haar man graag wil behaag, maar dit moenie deur uiterlike vertoon wees nie. Hiëronimus sê dat vrouens wat hulle in sy en kosbare purper klee, hul nie in Jesus Christus klee nie. Kyk wat sê Johannes in dié verband. Gregorius sê ook: 'Dis pure ydelheid om kosbare klere te dra sodat mense 'n hoë dunk van jou sal hê.' Dis 'n groot dwaasheid as 'n vrou uiterlik mooi is maar innerlik vuil. 'n Vrou behoort beskeie te wees in haar voorkoms, gedrag en gesprekvoering, terughoudend in woord en daad. Bo alle aardse goed moet sy haar man met haar hele hart liefhê en hom liggaamlik trou wees. En dit is ook 'n man se plig teenoor sy

vrou. Omdat 'n vrou geheel-en-al aan haar man behoort, moet haar hart ook aan hom behoort, anders is hul huwelik nie volmaak nie.

Daar is verskeie redes waarom 'n man en 'n vrou hul in die vlees mag verenig. Die eerste is hulle voorneme om kinders te verwek wat God sal dien. Dit is inderdaad die einddoel van die huwelik. Die tweede is dat hulle hul huwelikspelig teenoor mekaar kan nakom, want hul besik nie oor hul eie liggame nie. Die derde is om onkuisheid en ontug te vermy. Maar 'n vierde is doodsonde.

Die eerste rede is verdienstelik; die tweede ook, want 'n vrou wat haar huwelikspelig teenoor haar man nakom, hoewel sy niks daarvan hou nie, besit luidens die wet die verdienstelikheid van kuisheid. Die derde is 'n pekelsonde, maar regtig, die smet van sonde is nouliks vry te spring as gevolg van ons bedorwenheid en van plesier. Die vierde is wanneer mense seksueel verkeer bloot uit liggaamlike liefde en nie ter wille van die bovermelde redes nie, maar net om hul brandende lus te bevredig, maak nie saak hoe dikwels nie. Dit is beslis 'n doodsonde, maar tog is daar mense wat dit nog meer probeer doen as wat hul wellus op aandring. 943

Naas kuisheid in die huwelik is daar die kuisheid van reine weduweeskap wat die omhelsing van 'n man vermy en na die omhelsing van Jesus Christus verlang. Dit geld vir vrouens wat afstand gedoen het van hul mans en ook vir vrouens wat onkuis was maar deur Penitensie verlos is. As 'n vrou met die toestemming van haar man haar kuisheid kan bewaar en hom nooit aanleiding gee om te sondig nie, wen sy daardeur groot verdienste. So 'n vrou moet rein van hart sowel as van liggaam en gedagte wees, beskeie in haar voorkoms en gedrag en matig in wat sy eet en drink en sê en doen. Dan is sy die fles van Maria Magdalena waaruit die Heilige Kerk deurtrek word met 'n soete geur.

Die derde soort kuisheid is dié van maagdelikheid. Dit vereis heiligheid van hart en reinheid van liggaam. So een is die bruid van Christus en haar lewe is dié van die engele. Sy is die glorie van die wêreld en op 'n gelyke vlak met die martelaars; sy dra in haar dit wat geen tong kan vertel en geen hart kan bedink nie. Maagdelikheid het immers ons Here Jesus Christus gebaar, wat self ook maagdelik was.

Nog 'n middel teen onkuisheid is om alles weg te neem wat daartoe aanleiding kan gee, soos ledigheid en 'n geëet en gedrink. As 'n pot te kwaai kook, is dit 'n goeie plan om dit van die vuur af te neem.

Verder moet 'n mens liefes die geselskap vermy van diegene wat jou in die versoeking bring, want al weerstaan jy die daad, is die versoeking nogtans groot. As jy 'n kers teen 'n muur sit, sal die muur nou wel nie aan die brand raak nie, maar dit sal swart geskroei word deur die vlam. Niemand durf op sy eie volmaaktheid vertrou nie, tensy hy sterker is as Simson, heliger as Dawid en wyser as Salomo.

Noudat ek die sewe doodsondes met party van hul vertakkinge na die beste van my vermoë uitgelê het, sowel as die middels wat teen hulle aangewend kan word, sou ek oor die tien gebooe gepraat het, as ek maar kon. Sulke hoë leer laat ek egter aan die teoloë. Tog hoop ek van harte dat ek tog elke enkele gebod in my verhandeling aangeroe het. 952

Die tweede deel van Penitensie

Soos ek aan die begin gesê het, is die tweede deel van Penitensie mondelinge sondebelydenis, en sonde is volgens Augustinus 'elke woord en daad wat mense teen die wet van Christus in verlang; en dit behels sondes van die hart en mond en daad, deur middel van die vyf sintuie, naamlik gesig, gehoor, reuk, smaak en gevoel.'

Vervolgens is dit nodig om te weet watter omstandighede elke sonde in hoë mate vererger. Mens moet jou afvra wie dit is wat die sonde doen: of dit 'n man of 'n vrou is, jonk of oud, hooggebore of horig, vry of in knegskap, gesond of siek, getroud of ongetroud, gekluister of 'n sekulier, wys of dwaas, 'n geestelike of 'n leek, of die sondaar aan jou verwant is, vleeslik of geestelik, of een van jou familieledede met hom of haar gesondig het, en nog baie ander vrae.

Nog 'n oorweging: of egbreuk of ontug gepleeg is of nie, bloedskande of nie, met 'n maagd of nie, in die vorm van manslag of nie, as 'n afskuwelike groot sonde of 'n ligte sonde; en hoe lank daarin volhard is.

Dan ook nog die plek waar die sonde gedoen is: in iemand anders se huis of in jou eie, in die oop veld of in 'n kerk of 'n kerkhof, en of die kerk gewy is of nie. As 'n kerk gewy is en 'n man of vrou veroorsaak dat saad daar gestort word, in die verloop van sonde of verleiding, dan lê die gebou onder interdik tot dit deur die biskop herwy word. 'n Interdik rus ook op 'n priester wat hom aan so 'n gruwel skuldig maak: solank hy lewe, mag hy nooit weer die Mis opdra nie, en as hy dit sou doen, verval hy in doodsonde elke keer wat hy dit doen.

'n Vierde oorweging is deur watter tussengangers of bemiddelaars die verleiding en die instemming om in die kwaad mee te doen plaasgevind het, want daar is baie armsalige drommels wat ter wille van die geselskap hel toe sal gaan. Daarom is diegene wat ander aanmoedig tot sonde en diegene wat instem tot sonde medepligtiges wat ook die verdoemenis van die sondaar deelagtig sal wees.

Die vyfde oorweging is hoe dikwels daar gesondig is, of dit moedswillig was en hoeveel keer die sondaar reeds geval het. Iemand wat herhaaldelik in sonde verval, verag die genade van God, vererger sy sonde, is ondankbaar teenoor Christus, word al swakker om die sonde te weerstaan, sondig makliker, staan stadiger uit die sonde op, en raak al teësniger om sy gewete te lig, veral teenoor sy biegvader. Mense wat pal in hul ou dwaashede verval, is dus geneig om hul ou biegvaders heeltemal te versak of anders om op verskillende plekke in die biege te gaan. Sodanige verdeelde skuldbelydenis verdien egter nie God se genade nie.

Die sesde oorweging is waarom 'n persoon sondig, as gevolg van watter versoeking; of die versoeking sy eie skuld is en of hy deur iemand anders verlei is; of hy gewelddadig met 'n vrou sondig of met haar instemming; of die vrou teen haar wil gedwing is of nie. Dit moet die vrou bely: of dit uit hebsug was of uit armoede, of dit deur haar toedoen was of nie, en al sulke omstandighede.

Die sewende is hoe 'n man die sonde gedoen het, of as dit 'n vrou is, hoe dit gekom het dat sy toegelaat het dat dit aan haar gedoen word. 'n Man moet reguit en in besonderhede opbieg: of hy met 'n bordeelvrou gesondig het of nie, of dit met heilige tye gedoen is of nie, of dit 'n vastyd was of nie, of dit voor sy biege plaasgevind het of daarna; en as hy dus miskien die opgelegde boetedoening veronagsaam het; met wie se hulp en raad hy opgetree het, of toorkuns of geslepenheid gebruik is – alles moet uit.

Al die omstandighede, groot of klein, rus swaar op die gewete. Die priester, wat jou regter is, moet ook deeglik ingelig wees sodat hy in staat is om nadat jy berou getoon het, die regte boete op te lê. Verstaan dit goed: as 'n mens eers sy doop deur sonde bevuil het, is die enigste pad na saligmaking dié van Penitensie, biege en boetedoening, die eerste twee as 'n biegvader beskikbaar is om sy biege op te neem en hom absolusie te skenk en al drie as sy lewensloop voldoende tyd laat vir genoegdoening.

981

Voorts moet ons sien en oorweeg dat daar vier vereistes is vir 'n opregte en vrugdraende sondebelydenis. Ten eerste moet dit uit berouvolle bitterheid van hart kom, soos koning Hiskia teenoor God gesê het: 'Ek sal my hele lewe lank swaarkry

vanweë die bitterheid van my siel.' Hierdie bitterheid het vyf kenmerke. Die eerste is dat die biegteling hom moet skaam oor sy sonde en dit nie verberg of verdoesel nie, want hy het teen God oortree en sy siel bevlek. Augustinus sê: 'Die hart ly vanweë skaamte vir sy sonde.' Daarom is een wat hom diep skaam, waardig om groot genade van God te ontvang. Van so 'n aard was die belydenis van die tollenaar wat selfs nie sy oë na die hemel wou ophef nie, want dis teen die Hemelheer dat hy gesondig het; deur sy skaamtegevoel het hy onmiddellik genade van God ontvang. Volgens Augustinus is dit skaamtevolle mense wat die naaste aan vergifnis en kwytskelding staan.

'n Tweede kenmerk is nederigheid by die biegteling. Petrus sê: 'Onderwerp julle in nederigheid aan die kragtige hand van God.' Sy hand is kragtig in die biegteling waar Hy mens se sondes vergewe, iets wat net Hy kan doen. Hierdie nederigheid moet innerlik sowel as uiterlik wees. Net soos die boetvaardige in sy hart nederig voor God is, so moet sy liggaam ook uiterlike nederigheid toon teenoor die priester wat die plaasbekteler van God is. Omdat Christus oppermagtig is en die priester die tussenganger en bemiddelaar tussen Christus en die sondaar is en die sondaar die allerminste is, mag hy onder geen omstandighede ewe hoog as sy biegteling sit nie; intendeel, tensy hy deur siekte verhinder word, moet hy voor hom of aan sy voete kniel, want vir die biegteling is dit nie belangrik wie daar sit nie, maar in wie se plek hy daar sit. As 'n knegt wat sy heer 'n onreg aangedoen het en kom om genade af te smeek en vrede te maak sommer langs sy heer gaan sit, sou hy as voorbarig beskou word en onwaardig om spoedig vergifnis of genade te ontvang.

Die derde kenmerk is dat mens se biegteling vol tranes moet wees as jy daartoe in staat is, maar al kan jy geen uiterlike tranes stort nie, kan jy nogtans in jou hart ween. So was Petrus se skuldbelydenis, want nadat hy Jesus Christus verloën het, het hy buitentoe gegaan en bitterlik geween. Die vierde kenmerk is dat mens nie uit skaamte moet nalaat om te biegtel nie. So was die belydenis van Maria Magdalena wat nie deur 'n skaamtegevoel voor al die mense by die feesmaal verhinder is om na ons Here toe te gaan en haar sondeskuld aan Hom te bely nie. 996

Die vyfde kenmerk is dat 'n man of vrou gehoorsaam moet wees en die boetedoening wat vir hul sondes opgelê word, moet aanvaar, net soos Jesus Christus ter wille van die mens se sondes gehoorsaam was tot die dood toe.

Die tweede vereiste vir 'n opregte biegteling is dat dit spoedig moet plaasvind. As 'n mens 'n dodelike wond het en hy versuim om dit te laat behandel, sal dit al erger word en hom in groter gevaar bring, en boonop sal die wond ook moeiliker genees. So gaan dit ook met 'n sonde wat lank ongebiegtel bly. Daar's inderdaad baie redes waarom 'n mens spoedig sy sondes moet bely, soos vrees vir die dood, want die dood kom skielik op ons af en ons kan glad nie seker wees wanneer of waar dit sal wees nie; ook omdat volharding in een sonde ons in 'n ander betrek; omdat hoe langer ons talm hoe verder raak ons van Christus verwyder; en omdat as ons tot ons sterfdag wil wag, ons nouliks sal kan biegtel of ons sondes in herinnering roep of berou oor hulle hê as gevolg van die benoudheid van die doodsbed. En iemand wat sy hele lewe nie na Jesus Christus se stem geluister het nie, en Hom dan oplaas aanroep, sal dalk nie verhoor word nie.

Tog is daar beperkings op die spoed waarna ek hier verwys. 'n Mens se biegteling moet voorbedag en weloorwoë wees, want slegte spoed bring weinig wins; om vergifnis te verkry moet 'n mens al sy sondes opbiegtel, of dit om hoogmoed gaan of afguns of wat ook al, met al die soorte en omstandighede. Hy moet 'n deeglike begrip hê van die aantal en omvang van sy sondes, en hoe lank hy gesondig het. Hy moet berou oor sy sondes hê en die vaste voorneme om deur die genade van God nooit weer in sonde te verval nie. Hy moet vir homself vrees en waghou oor homself

sodat hy die geleentheid vermy tot sondes wat vir hom aantreklik is.

Sondes moet aan een man gebieg word, nie 'n bietjie hier en 'n bietjie daar om uit skaamte of vrees die biege op te deel nie: dit verwurg net 'n mens se siel. Waarlik, Jesus Christus is volmaak goed; in Hom is geen onvolkomendheid nie, en daarom vergewe Hy ons geheel-en-al of anders geheel-en-al nie. Ek bedoel nie dat as mens vir 'n spesifieke sonde na 'n penitensiaris⁹ verwys is jy verplig is om die res van jou sondes, waarvoor jy reeds van jou pastoor absolusie ontvang het, aan hom te biege nie, tensy jy dit uit nederigheid wil doen: dis nie verdeling van die biege nie. As ek van verdeling van die biege praat, bedoel ek ook nie dat as jy jou pastoor se toestemming het om op watter plek ook al aan 'n verstandige en eersame priester te biege, dit nie 'n goeie ding sou wees om al jou sondes aan hom te bely nie. Geen smet moet oorbly, geen sonde onbely, sover jou geheue strek nie. As jy aan jou eie priester biege, noem al jou sondes op sedert jy laas gebieg het, so is daar geen bese bedoeling om die biege te verdeel nie.

Opregte biege stel sekere vereistes. Ten eerste, moet jy uit vrye wil biege en nie daartoe gedwing word deur die skaamte wat mense jou laat voel of deur siekte of iets dergelyks nie. Dit maak sin dat hy wat uit vrye wil oortree, uit vrye wil sy oortreding moet bely. Dit moet deur niemand anders as hy genoem word nie en hy moet dit nie verswyg of ontken nie of kwaad word vir die priester wat hom vermaan om op te hou met sondig nie.

Ten tweede, moet die biege kerkregtelik wees, dit wil sê die biegeteling en die priester wat sy biege aanhoor, moet waarlik in die geloof van die Heilige Kerk staan en dat 'n mens nie soos Kain of Judas aan die genade van Jesus Christus moet wanhoop nie. Verder moet hy homself van sy oortreding beskuldig en nie iemand anders nie; hy moet homself en sy eie kwaadaardigheid vir sy sonde blameer en verwyt en nie iemand anders nie. Maar tog as 'n ander aanleiding gegee het tot die sonde of hom uitgelok het om dit te doen of as sy sonde vererger word as gevolg van 'n ander se aandeel of as hy alleenlik behoorlik kan biege as hy die persoon met wie hy gesondig het betrek, dan mag hy dit doen, mits dit vasstaan dat hy nie die ander persoon wil belaster nie, maar net sy eie bekentenis wil verhelder. 1018

In die biege mag jy geen leuens vertel nie, deur byvoorbeeld uit nederigheid sondes te bely waaraan jy jou nooit skuldig gemaak het nie. Augustinus sê: 'As jy uit nederigheid leuens vertel oor jouself, beland jy daardeur in die sonde al het jy nie voor dit gesondig nie.' Tensy jy skielik stom word, moet jy jou sonde self met jou eie mond bely, en nie per brief nie; jy het die sonde self begaan, jy moet die skande self dra. Jy mag nie jou biege met mooi woorde opsmuk om jou sonde te verdoesel nie, want dan bedrieg jy jouself, nie die priester nie. Jy moet alles ronduit vertel, hoe smerig en afskuwelik dit ook al mag wees. Jy moet biege by 'n priester wat oorleg is en goeie raad kan gee; jy moenie uit ydelheid of geveinsdheid biege of om enige ander rede as die vrees van Jesus Christus en die heil van jou siel nie. Jy moenie na 'n priester toe hardloop om lighartig oor jou sondes te praat soos iemand wat 'n grap of 'n storie vertel nie; intendeel, jy moet met welbedagte raad en 'n vroom gemoed in die biege gaan. Biege dikwels. As jy dikwels val, kan jy ook dikwels deur skuldbelydenis opstaan. Al bely jy meer as een keer 'n sonde waarvoor jy reeds gebieg het, wen dit verdienste. Soos Augustinus sê, jy sal makliker verlossing en genade van God ontvang, met betrekking tot die sonde sowel as die straf. En kerkreg skryf voor dat jy ten minste een maal per jaar kommunie ontvang, want een maal per jaar word alles deur die biege weer nuut gemaak.

Nou het ek oor die ware biege, die tweede deel van Penitensie, vertel.

⁹ 'n Geestelike belas met die oplegging van boetes vir 'gereserveerde sondes', d.i. sondes wat alleen deur 'n biskop of die pous vergewe kon word.

Die derde deel van Penitensie

Die derde deel van Penitensie is boetedoening wat merendeels boetvaardigheidswerke en liggaamlike pyn behels.

Daar is drie soorte boetvaardigheidswerke: hartgrondige berou waardeur 'n mens homself aan God offer; mededoë met jou naaste se oortredinge; en die voorsiening van goeie raad en vertroosting, geestelik en materieel, om in ander se behoeftes te voorsien, en veral in hul liggaamlike onderhoud. Onder die dinge wat mense nodig het, tel kos, klere, beskutting, vriendelike raad en besoeke as hulle siek of in gevangenskap is en dat hul dooie liggaam begrawe word. As jy nie 'n behoefte self kan besoek nie, moet jy hom deur middel van jou boodskappe en gawes bemoedig. In die algemeen is dit die werke van liefdadigheid van diegene wat oor aardse goed of vermoë in raadgewing beskik. Van sulke werke sal jy op die oordeelsdag hoor.

1033

Liefdadigheid moet uit jou eie besittings bewys word, spoedig en, indien moontlik, in die geheim. As jy dit egter nie in die geheim kan doen nie, moet jy nie daarom versuim om dit te doen nie, al sien mense dit, want dit word nie vir wêreldse goedkeuring gedoen nie, maar alleenlik ter wille van dié van Jesus Christus. Soos Matteus in hoofstuk 5 getuig: "n Stad wat op 'n berg lê, kan nie weggesteek word nie; ook steek mens nie 'n lamp op en sit dit onder 'n emmer nie maar op 'n lampstaander, en dit gee lig vir almal in die huis. Laat julle lig so voor die mense skyn, dat hulle julle goeie werke kan sien en julle Vader wat in die hemel is, verheerlik.'

Die liggaamlike pyn wat hier ter sprake is, behels gebede, nagwake, vas en die deugsame uitleg van die gebed.

Gebed is die erbarmlike begeerte van die hart wat hom tot God wend, wat dan tot uitdrukking kom in woorde wat vra dat die kwaad afgeweer mag word en dat geestelike, duursame gawes, maar soms ook aardse gawes, verkry mag word. Uit alle gebede is die *Onse Vader* 'n gebed waarin Jesus Christus die meeste saamgevat het. Daar is drie redes waarom hierdie gebed voorrang en besondere waardigheid geniet: omdat Jesus Christus dit self gemaak het; omdat dit so kort is dat dit maklik geleer en onthou kan word en daarom meer dikwels gebid kan word, want niemand kan vermoeid raak met die opsê daarvan nie, en niemand het 'n verskoning om dit nie te leer nie; en dan ook omdat dit alle goeie gebede insluit. Ek laat die uitleg van hierdie gebed, wat so voortreflik en so waardig is, aan die teoloë oor; daar's net een ding wat ek wil sê: wanneer jy bid dat God jou sondes vergewe, soos jy ook diegene vergewe wat teen jou gesondig het, moet jy oppas dat jy nie in 'n staat van onwelwillendheid teenoor jou naaste is nie. Die gebruik van hierdie heilige gebed wis ook pekelsondes uit en daarom is dit so van pas by die Penitensie.

'n Mens moet opreg bid in waaragtige geloof, ordelik, ingetoë en met toewyding, met die eie wil steeds ondergeskik aan wat God wil. Daar moet met groot nederigheid gebid word, met reinheid van hart en op 'n stigtelike wyse wat geen aanstoot aan ander sal gee nie. Gebed moet ook met liefdadigheidswerke aangevul word. Verder is gebed 'n bolwerk teen sondes van die siel, want, soos Hiëronimus sê: 'Vas help ons die sondes van die vlees vermy, bid die sondes van die siel.'

Vigilies of nagwake is ook 'n vorm van liggaamlike boetedoening, want Jesus Christus sê: 'Waak en bid dat julle nie in versoeking kom nie.' Om te vas beteken dat jy jou weerhou van eet en drink, van wêreldse vermaak en van doodsonde, want al jou kragte word ingespan om doodsonde te vermy. Dis iets wat God ons opgelê het en vier gesteldhede gaan daarmee saam: milddadigheid teenoor die armes, blymoedigheid van gees, 'n afwesigheid van enige kwaadheid, wrewel of gekla

omdat daar gevas word en matigheid sodat mens nie ontydig eet of te lank aan tafel bly sit nie.

Liggaamlike boetedoening behels ook studie en onderrig, deur middel van die gesproke en geskrewe woord en ook van voorbeeld. Verder sluit dit in die dra van 'n haarkleed, stramyn¹⁰ of 'n maliekolder op die blote lyf, en soortgelyke selfkastyding om Christus wil. Maar pas op dat sulke tugtiging van die vlees nie jou hart verbitter of jou kwaad of wrewelig maak nie, want dis beter om 'n haarkleed weg te gooi as om die tere liefde van Jesus Christus weg te gooi. Daarom sê Paulus: 'Beklee julle dan as die uitverkore volk van God wat Hy baie liefhet met innerlike ontferming, goedertierenheid, nederigheid, sagmoedigheid en verdraagsaamheid,' want dit behaag God meer as 'n haarkleed of 'n maliekolder.

Daar is ook die boetedoening van slaan op jou bors, geseling met 'n roede, gekniel, beproewinge en die gelate aanvaarding van onregte wat jou aangedoen is, sowel as van siektes en die verlies van aardse goed, van vrou of kind of vriende. ¹⁰⁵⁶

Voorts is dit nodig om te begryp wat boetedoening kan verhinder, naamlik vrees, skaamte, hoop en wanhoop of vertwyfeling. Vrees laat 'n mens dink dat hy nie die boetedoening sal kan verdra nie. Daarteenoor moet hy besef dat die liggaamlike bestraffing wat hy ondergaan lig en van korte duur is in vergelyking met die hellepyn wat so fel en langdurig is dat dit geen einde ken nie.

Dan is daar die skaamte wat by die bieg gevoel word, veral deur geveinsdes wat wil voorgee dat hulle so volmaak is dit hulle niks het om op te bieg nie. Daarteenoor moet 'n mens daaraan dink dat as hy hom nie geskaam het om slegte dinge te doen nie, hy hom beslis nie hoef te skaam om goeie dinge te doen soos in die bieg te gaan nie. Hy moet ook in gedagte hou dat al ons denke en daade aan God bekend is en dat niks vir Hom verborge bly nie. Mens moet die skaamte onthou wat op die oordeelsdag oor diegene sal kom wat in hierdie lewe nie berouvol was en hulle sondes gebieg het nie. Dan sal elke wese in die hemel, op die aarde en in die hel alles oop en bloot sien wat hulle in hierdie wêreld probeer wegsteek het.

Een soort hoop van dié wat nalatig of traag is om hul sondes te bely, is dat hulle nog lank sal lewe en baie rykdom vir hulle plesier sal bekom en dan op 'n later stadium hul sondes kan bely; hulle meen daar sal wel tyd genoeg wees daarvoor. 'n Ander soort valse hoop is oormoedige vertrouwe op die genade van Christus. Teenoor dié mistasting staan die onsekerheid van die lewe en die verganklikheid van al ons rykdom, wat verbygaan soos skaduwees teen 'n muur. Gregorius wys daarop dat dit deel van die groot regverdighed van God is dat die pyn nooit sal wyk van hulle wat nie uit eie beweging die sonde wou laat staan nie maar steeds daarin volhard het; hul voortdurende sonde uit vrye wil sal voortdurende lyding tot gevolg hê.

Daar is ook twee soorte wanhoop: wanhoop aan die genade van Christus en wanhoop daaraan om in goedheid vol te hou. Eersgenoemde ontstaan as iemand dink dat hy so erg en so dikwels gesondig het of so lank reeds in sonde volhard het dat hy nie verlos kan word nie. Teenoor dié vervloekte wanhoop moet ons altyd onthou dat die lyding van Jesus Christus sterker is om ons te bevry as wat die sonde is om ons te bind. Ons moet onthou dat so dikwels as wat ons in sonde verval, ons weer deur Penitensie kan opstaan, en al het ons lank in sonde volhard, tog is die genade van Christus altyd gereed om ons in liefde te ontvang. Teenoor die wanhoop aan volhouding in die goeie moet ons onthou dat dit die swakheid van die duiwel is dat hy niks kan doen nie tensy ons hom dit toelaat; ook dat ons krag kan ontleen, as dit ons wil is, aan die bystand van God en Sy hele Heilige Kerk en aan die beskerming van die engele.

10 Rowwe wolweefsel.

Volgens die woord van Jesus Christus is die vrug van boetedoening die ewige geluksaligheid van die hemel, waar vreugde geen teenoorgestelde wee of smart ken nie, waar al die onheile van hierdie lewe iets van die verlede is, waar ons geborge is teen die pyn van die hel, waar 'n vreugdevolle menigte hulle in mekaar se vreugde verlustig, waar die menslike liggaam, voorheen so vuil en donker, helderder as die son is, waar die liggaam, voorheen so swak en sieklik en sterflik, onsterflik is en so sterk en heel dat niks dit kan benadeel nie, waar daar geen honger of dors of koue is nie, maar elke siel vervul word met die volmaakte kennis van God.

Hierdie salige ryk is te bekom deur geestelike armoede, die glorie van nederigheid, die vreugdevolheid van honger en dors, die rus van arbeid en die lewe deur die dood van hulle wat vir die sonde dood is.

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Afskeidswoorde van die Skrywer

Nou vra ek almal wat hierdie traktaatjie aanhoor of dit lees dat as hulle iets daarin vind wat hulle behaag, hulle daarvoor dank moet bring aan ons Here Jesus Christus, die bron van alle wysheid en goedheid.

As daar egter iets is wat hulle mishaag, dan vra ek hulle om dit aan my gebrekkige kennis te wyt en nie aan my wil nie, want ek sou dit graag beter wou gestel het, wis ek net hoe. Soos die Bybel sê: 'Alles wat geskryf is, is nuttig tot lering', en dit is ook my doel.

En daarom smee ek u ootmoedig om vir my te bid dat Christus Hom oor my ontferm en my sondes vergewe, en veral my vertalings en geskifte vol wêreldse ydelheid, wat ek hierby herroep, naamlik *Troilus en Cressida*, *Die Huis van Faam*, *Die Legende van Goeie Vroue*, *Die Boek van die Hertogin*, *Die Voëlparlement*, *Die Pelgrimsverhale* – altans dié wat tot sonde neig – *Die Boek van die Leeu*, en menige ander boek waaraan ek nie nou kan dink nie, sowel as menige lied en menige wulpse vers; dat Christus my in Sy groot genade dié sonde sal vergewe.

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Maar vir die vertaling van Boethius se *De Consolatione*, vir Heilige-legendes en vir stigtelike en gewyde lektuur dank ek ons Here Jesus Christus en Sy seënryke Moeder en al die Heilliges in die hemel, en ek smee hulle dat hulle my die genade sal skenk om my sondes te beween en die verlossing van my siel na te streef van nou tot op my sterwensdag, en dat hulle my in hierdie lewe met die genadegawe tot ware berou, skuldbelydenis en boetedoening sal bedeel, sodat ek in die oordeelsdag behoue mag bly, deur die goedertierenheid van Hom wat Koning van konings en Priester van alle priesters is, wat met die Vader en die Heilige Gees leef en regeer, een God tot in alle ewigheid.

Hier eindig die boek
van die Pelgrimsverhale
gedig deur Geoffrey Chaucer
op wie se siel
mag God genade hê.