

Classic Poetry Series

**John Skelton**  
**- poems -**

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# John Skelton(1460 - 1529)

John Skelton possibly born in Diss Norfolk, was an English poet.

## <b>Education</b>

He is said to have been educated at Oxford. He certainly studied at Cambridge, and he is probably the "one Scheklton" mentioned by William Cole as taking his M.A. degree in 1484. In 1490, William Caxton writes of him, in the preface to *The Boke of Eneydos* compyled by Vyrgyle, in terms which prove that he had already won a reputation as a scholar. "But I pray mayster John Skelton," he says, "late created poete laureate in the unyversite of Oxenforde, to oversee and correct this sayd booke ... for him I know for suffycyent to expowne and englysshe every dyffyculte that is therin. For he hath late translated the epystlys of Tulle, and the boke of dyodorus siculus, and diverse other works ... in polysshed and ornate termes craftely ... suppose he hath drunken of Elycons well."

The laureateship referred to was a degree in rhetoric. In 1493 Skelton received the same honour at Cambridge, and also, it is said, at Leuven. He found a patron in the pious and learned countess of Richmond, Henry VII's mother, for whom he wrote *Of Mannes Lyfe the Peregrynacioun*, a translation, now lost, of Guillaume de Deguilleyule's *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*. An elegy "Of the death of the noble prince Kynge Edwarde the forth," included in some of the editions of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, and another (1489) on the death of Henry Percy, fourth earl of Northumberland, are among his earliest poems.

## <b>Poet Laureate</b>

In the last decade of the century he was appointed tutor to Prince Henry (afterwards Henry VIII). He wrote for his pupil a lost *Speculum principis*, and Erasmus, in dedicating an ode to the prince in 1500, speaks of Skelton as "unum Britannicarum literarum lumen ac decus." In 1498 he was successively ordained sub-deacon, deacon and priest. He seems to have been imprisoned in 1502, but no reason is known for his disgrace. (It has been said[by whom?] that he offended Wolsey but this would be impossible if the date is correct, given Wolsey was not yet an influential figure at court - Wolsey's rise began in 1508). Two years later he retired from regular attendance at court to become rector of Diss, a benefice which he retained nominally until his death.

Skelton frequently signed himself "regius orator" and poet-laureate, but there is no record of any emoluments paid in connection with these dignities, although

the Abbé du Resnel, author of *Recherches sur les poètes couronnez*, asserts that he had seen a patent (1513–1514) in which Skelton was appointed poet-laureate to Henry VIII. As rector of Diss he caused great scandal among his parishioners, who thought him, says Anthony Wood, more fit for the stage than for the pew or the pulpit. He was secretly married to a woman who lived in his house, and he had earned the hatred of the Dominican monks by his fierce satire. Consequently he came under the formal censure of Richard Nix, the bishop of the diocese, and appears to have been temporarily suspended. After his death a collection of farcical tales, no doubt chiefly, if not entirely, apocryphal, gathered round his name—*The Merie Tales of Skelton*.

During the rest of the century he figured in the popular imagination as an incorrigible practical joker. His sarcastic wit made him some enemies, among them Sir Christopher Garnesche or Garneys, Alexander Barclay, William Lilly and the French scholar, Robert Gaguin (c. 1425-1502). With Garneys he engaged in a regular "flyting," undertaken, he says, at the king's command, but Skelton's four poems read as if the abuse in them were dictated by genuine anger. Earlier in his career he had found a friend and patron in Cardinal Wolsey, and the dedication to the cardinal of his *Replycacion* is couched in the most flattering terms. But in 1522, when Wolsey in his capacity of legate dissolved convocation at St Paul's, Skelton put in circulation the couplet:

"Gentle Paul, laie doune thy sweard  
For Peter of Westminster hath shaven thy beard."

In *Colyn Cloute* he incidentally attacked Wolsey in a general satire on the clergy, "Speke, Parrot" and "Why come ye nat to Courte?" are direct and fierce invectives against the cardinal who is said to have more than once imprisoned the author. To avoid another arrest Skelton took sanctuary in Westminster Abbey. He was kindly received by the abbot, John Islip, who continued to protect him until his death. The inscription on his tomb in the neighbouring church of St Margaret's described him as *vales pierius*. It is thought that Skelton wrote "Why come ye nat to Courte?" having been inspired by Sir Thomas Spring, a merchant in Suffolk who had fallen out with Wolsey over tax.

### <b>His Works</b>

In his *Garlande of Laurell* Skelton gives a long list of his works, only a few of which are extant. The garland in question was worked for him in silks, gold and pearls by the ladies of the Countess of Surrey at Sheriff Hutton Castle, where he was the guest of the duke of Norfolk. The composition includes complimentary verses to the various ladies concerned, and a good deal of information about

himself. But it is as a satirist that Skelton merits attention. The *Bowge of Court* is directed against the vices and dangers of court life. He had already in his *Boke of the Thre Foles* drawn on Alexander Barclay's version of the *Narrenschijf* of Sebastian Brant, and this more elaborate and imaginative poem belongs to the same class. Skelton, falling into a dream at Harwich, sees a stately ship in the harbour called the "*Bowge of Court*", the owner of which is the "*Dame Saunce Pere*". Her merchandise is Favour; the helmsman Fortune; and the poet, who figures as Drede (modesty), finds on board F'avell (the flatterer), Suspect, Harvy Hafter (the clever thief), Dysdayne, Ryotte, Dyssymuler and Subtylte, who all explain themselves in turn, until at last Drede, who finds they are secretly his enemies, is about to save his life by jumping overboard, when he wakes with a start. Both of these poems are written in the seven-lined Rhyme Royal, a Continental verse-form first used in English by Chaucer, but it is in an irregular metre of his own—known as "*Skeltonics*"—that his most characteristic work was accomplished.

The *Boke of Phyllyp Sparowe*, the lament of Jane Scroop, a schoolgirl in the Benedictine convent of Carrow near Norwich, for her dead bird, was no doubt inspired by Catullus. It is a poem of some 1,400 lines and takes many liberties with the formularies of the church. The digressions are considerable. We learn what a wide reading Jane had in the romances of Charlemagne, of the Round Table, The Four Sons of Aymon and the Trojan cycle. Skelton finds space to give an opinion of Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower and John Lydgate. Whether we can equate this opinion, voiced by the character of Jane, with Skelton's own is contentious. It would appear that he seems fully to have realized Chaucer's value as a master of the English language. Gower's matter was, Jane tells us, "worth gold," but his English she regards as antiquated. The verse in which the poem is written, called from its inventor "*Skeltonical*," is here turned entirely to whimsical use. The lines are usually six-syllabled, but vary in length, and rhyme in groups of two, three, four and even more. It is not far removed from the old alliterative English verse, and well fitted to be chanted by the minstrels who had sung the old ballads. For its comic admixture of Latin Skelton had abundant example in French and Low Latin macaronic verse. He makes frequent use of Latin and French words to carry out his exacting system of frequently recurring rhymes. This breathless, voluble measure was in Skelton's energetic hands an admirable vehicle for invective, but it easily degenerated into doggerel.

By the end of the 16th century he was a "*rude rayling rimer*" (Puttenham, *Arte of English Poesie*), and at the hands of Pope and Warton he fared even worse. His own criticism is a just one:

"For though my ryme be ragged,

Tattered and jagged,  
Rudely rayne beaten,  
Rusty and moughte eaten,  
It hath in it some pyth."

Colyn Cloute represents the average country man who gives his opinions on the state of the church. There is no more scathing indictment of the sins of the clergy before the Reformation. He exposes their greed, their ignorance, the ostentation of the bishops and the common practice of simony, but takes care to explain that his accusations do not include all and that he writes in defence of, not against, the church. He repeatedly hits at Wolsey even in this general satire, but not directly. Speke, Parrot has only been preserved in a fragmentary form, and is exceedingly obscure. It was apparently composed at different times, but in the latter part of the composition he openly attacks Wolsey. In *Why come ye not to Courte?* there is no attempt at disguise. The wonder is not that the author had to seek sanctuary, but that he had any opportunity of doing so. He rails at Wolsey's ostentation, at his almost royal authority, his overbearing manner to suitors high and low, and taunts him with his mean extraction. This scathing invective was not allowed to be printed in the cardinal's lifetime, but it was no doubt widely circulated in manuscript and by repetition. The charge of coarseness regularly brought against Skelton is based chiefly on *The Tunnyng of Elynoare Rummyng*, a realistic description in the same metre of the drunken women who gathered at a well-known ale-house kept by Elynour Rummyng at Leatherhead, not far from the royal palace of Nonsuch.

"Skelton Laureate against the Scottes" is a fierce song of triumph celebrating the victory of Flodden. "Jemmy is ded And closed in led, That was theyr owne Kyng," says the poem; but there was an earlier version written before the news of James IV's death had reached London. This, which is the earliest singly printed ballad in the language, was entitled *A Ballade of the Scottysse Kyng*, and was rescued in 1878 from the wooden covers of a copy of *Huon de Bordeaux*. "Howe the douty Duke of Albany, lyke a cowarde knight" deals with the campaign of 1523, and contains a panegyric of Henry VIII. To this is attached an envoi to Wolsey, but it must surely have been misplaced, for both the satires on the cardinal are of earlier date.

Skelton also wrote three plays, only one of which survives. *Magnificence* is one of the best examples of the morality play. It deals with the same topic as his satires, the evils of ambition; its moral, "how suddenly worldly wealth doth decay," being a favourite one with him. Thomas Warton in his *History of English Poetry* described another piece *Nigramansir*, printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1504, and dealing with simony and the love of money in the church; but no copy is known to exist, and some suspicion has been cast on Warton's statement.

Illustration of the hold Skelton had on the public imagination is supplied from the stage. A play (1600) called *Scogan and Shelton*, by Richard Hathwaye and William Rankins, is mentioned by Henslowe. In Anthony Munday's *Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon*, Skelton acts the part of Friar Tuck, and Ben Jonson in his masque, *The Fortunate Isles*, introduced Skogan and Skelton in like habits as they lived.

Very few of Skelton's productions are dated, and their titles are here necessarily abbreviated. *De Worde* printed the *Bowge of Court* twice. *Divers Batettys and dyties salacious devysed by Master Shelton Laureat, and Shelton Laureate agaynste a comely Coystroune* have no date or printer's name, but are evidently from the press of Richard Pynson, who also printed *Replycacion against certain yang scalers*, dedicated to Wolsey. *The Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell* was printed by Richard Faukes (1523); *Magnificence, A goodly interlude*, probably by John Rastell about 1533, reprinted (1821) for the Roxburghe Club. Hereafter foloweth the *Boke of Phyllyp Sparowe* was printed by Richard Kele (1550?), Robert Toy, Antony Kitson (1560?), Abraham Veale (1570?), John Walley, John Wyght (1560?). Hereafter foloweth certaine bokes compyled by mayster Shelton ... including "Speke, Parrot," "Ware the Hawke," "Elynoure Rumpiynge" and others, was printed by Richard Lant (1550?), John King and Thomas March (1565?), by John Day (1560). Hereafter foloweth a title boke called *Colyn Cloute and Hereafter ... why come ye nat to Courte?* were printed by Richard Kele (1550?) and in numerous subsequent editions. *Pithy, plesaunt and profitable workes of maister Shelton, Poete Laureate. Nowe collected and newly published* was printed in 1568, and reprinted in 1736. A scarce reprint of *Filnour Rummin* by Samuel Rand appeared in 1624.

Five of Skelton's 'Tudor Portraits', including 'The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng' were set to music by Ralph Vaughan Williams in or around 1935. Although he changed the text here and there to suit his music, the sentiments are well expressed. The other four poems are 'My pretty Bess', 'Epitaph of John Jayberd of Diss', 'Jane Scroop (her lament for Philip Sparrow)', and 'Jolly Rutterkin'. The music is rarely performed, although it is immensely funny, and captures the coarseness of Skelton in an inspired way.

See *The Poetical Works of John Shelton; with Notes and some account of the author and his writings*, by the Rev. Alexander Dyce (2 vols., 1843). A selection of his works was edited by WH Williams (London, 1902). See also *Zur Charakteristik John Skeltons* by Dr Arthur Koelbing (Stuttgart, 1904); F Brie, "Skelton Studien" in *Englische Studien*, vol. 38 (Heilbronn, 1877, etc.); A Rey, *Skelton's Satirical Poems...* (Berne, 1899); A Thummel, *Studien über John*

Skelton (Leipzig-Reudnitz, 1905); G Saintsbury, *Hist. of Eng. Prosody* (vol. i, 1906); and A Kolbing in the *Cambridge History of English Literature* (vol. iii, 1909).

### <b>Family Life</b>

John Skelton's lineage is difficult to prove. He was probably related to Sir John Shelton and his children, who also came from Norfolk.[citation needed] Sir John's daughter, Mary Shelton, was a mistress of Henry VIII's during the reign of her cousin, Anne Boleyn. Mary Shelton was the main editor and contributor to the Devonshire MS, a collection of poems written by various members of the court. Interestingly, it is said that several of Skelton's works were inspired by women who were to become mothers to two of Henry VIII's six wives. Lady Elizabeth Boleyn, countess of Wiltshire and Ormonde, was said to be so beautiful that Skelton compared her to Cressida and a popular but unverifiable legend also suggests that several poems were inspired by Margaret Wentworth. Elizabeth was the mother of Queen Anne Boleyn, Henry's second wife; Margaret was the mother of his third, Queen Jane Seymour.

# A Ballad Of The Scottsysse Kyne

Kynge Jamy, Jomy your joye is all go.  
Ye summoned our kynge. Why dyde ye so?  
To you no thyng it dyde accorde  
To sommom our kynge your soverayne lorde.  
A kynge a sommer it is wonder;  
Knowe ye not salte and suger asonder?  
In your somnynage ye were to malaperte,  
and your harolde no thyng experte;  
Ye thought ye dyde it full valyauntolye,  
But not worth thre skyppes of a pye.  
Syr squyer-galyarde ye were to swyfte;  
Your wyll renne before your wytte.  
To be so scornefull to your alye  
Your conseyle was not worth a flye.  
Before the Frensshe kynge, Danes and other  
Ye ought to honour your lorde and brother.  
Trowe ye, Syr James, his noble grace  
For you and your Scottes wolde tourne his face?  
Now ye proude Scottes of Gelawaye  
For your kynge may synge welawaye.  
Now must ye knowe our kynge for your regent,  
Your soverayne lorde and presedent.  
In hym is figured Melchisedeche,  
And ye be desolate as Armeleche.  
He is our noble champyon,  
A kynge anoynted, an ye be non.  
Through your counseyle your fader was slayne;  
Wherfore I fere ye wyll suffre payne.  
And ye proude Scottes of Dunbar,  
Parde ye be his homager  
And suters to his paylyment.  
Ye dyde not your dewty therin,  
Wyerfore ye may it now repent.  
Ye bere yourselfe somewhat to bolde,  
Therefore ye have lost your copyholde.  
Ye be bounde tenauntes to his estate;  
Give up your game, ye playe chek mate;  
For to the castell of Norham  
I understonde to soone ye cam,



For a prysoner therenow ye be  
Eyther to the devyll or the trinite.  
Thanked be saynte Gorge, our ladyes knythe,  
Your pryde is paste, adwe, good nyght,  
Ye have determyned to make a fraye,  
Our kynge than beyng out of the waye;  
But by the power and myght of God  
Ye were beten weth your owne rod.  
By your wanton wyll, syr, at a worde,  
Ye have loste spores, cote armure and sworde.  
Ye had be better to have busked to Huntley Bankes,  
Than in Englonde to playe ony suche pranks;  
But ye had some wyld sede to sowe,  
Therefore ye be layde now full lowe.  
Your power coude no lenger attayne  
Warre with our kynge to meyntayne.  
Of the kynge of Naverne ye may take hede  
How unfortunately he doth now spede;  
In double walles now he dooth drewe.  
That is a kynge without a realme.  
At hym example ye wolde none take;  
Experyence hath brought you in the same brake.  
Of the out yles ye rough foted Scottes  
We have well eased you of the bottes.  
Ye rowe ranke Scottes and dronken Danes  
Of our Englysshe bowes ye have fette your banes.  
It is not syttyng in tour nor towne  
A sumner to were a kynges crowne.  
That noble erle, the Whyte Lyon,  
Your pompe and pryde hath layde a downe.  
His sone the lorde admyrall is full good,  
His swerde hath bathed in the Scottes blode.  
God save kynge Henry and his lordes all  
And sende the Frensshe kynge suche another fall.

Amen, for saynt charyte and God save noble  
Kynge Henry the viij.

John Skelton

# A Lawde And Prayse

[a laude and prayse made for our souereigne lord the kyng.]

The Rose both white and Rede  
In one rose now dothe grow:  
Thus thorow every stede  
Thereof the fame dothe blow:  
Grace the sede did sow.  
England now gaddir flowris  
Exclude now all dolowrs

Noble Henry the eight  
Thy loving souereine lorde  
Of kingis line moost streight  
His titille dothe Recorde:  
In whome dothe wele Acorde  
Alexis yonge of Age  
Adrastus wise and sage:

Astrea Iustice hight  
That from the starry sky  
Shall now com and do Right:  
This hunderd yere scantly  
A man kowd not Aspy  
That Right dwelt vs Among  
And that was the more wrong.

Right shall the foxis chare  
The wolvis the beris also  
That wrowght have moche care  
And browght Englund in wo  
They shall wirry no mo  
Nor wrote the Rosary  
By extort Trechery.

Of this our noble king  
The law they shall not breke  
They shall com to Rekening  
No man for them wil speke:  
The pepil durst not creke

Theire grevis to complaine  
They brought them in soche paine.

Therfor nomore they shall  
The commouns overbace  
That wont wer overall  
Both lorde and knight to face:  
For now the yeris of grace  
And welthe ar com Agayne  
That maketh England faine.

Adonis of Freshe colour  
Of yowthe the godely flour  
Our prince of hih honour  
Our paves our succour  
Our king our Emperour  
Our Priamus of Troy  
Our welth our worldly Ioy.

Vpon vs he doth Reigne  
That makith our hartis glad  
As king moost souereine  
That ever Englund had  
Demure sober and sad  
And Martis lusty knight  
God save him in his Right:

Amen

Bien men souient:

Deo .21. gracias

John Skelton

# A Prayer To The Father Of Heaven

O radiant luminary of light interminable,  
Celestial Father, potent God of might,  
Of heaven and earth O Lord incomparable,  
Of all perfections the essential most perfite !  
O maker of mankind, that formèd day and night,  
Whose power imperial comprehendeth every place :  
Mine heart, my mind, my thought, my whole delight  
Is after this life to see thy glorious face.

Whose magnificence is incomprehensible,  
All arguments of reason which far doth exceed,  
Whose deity doubtless is indivisible,  
From whom all goodness and virtue doth proceed ;  
Of thy support all creatures have need :  
Assist me, good Lord, and grant my of thy grace  
To live to thy pleasure in word, thought, and deed,  
And after this life to see thy glorious face.

John Skelton

# An Elegie On Henry, Fourth Erle Of Northumberlande

Ad dominum properato meum mea pagina Percy,  
Qui Northumbrorum jura paterna gerit.  
Ad nutum celebris tu porna repone leonis,  
Quaeque suo patri tristia justa cano.  
Ast ubi perlegit, dubiam sub mente volutet  
Fortunam, cunceta quae male fida rotat.  
Qui leo sit felix, et Nestoris occupet annos;  
Ad libitum cujus ipse paratus ero.

Skelton Laureat Upon the Dolourus Dethe and Muche Lamentable Chaunce of the  
Most Honorable Erle of Northumberlande.

I wayle, I wepe, I sobbe, I sigh ful sore  
The dedely fate, the dolefulle desteny  
Of hym that is gone, alas! without restore,  
Of the bloud royall descending nobelly;  
Whose lordshyp doutles was slayne lamentably  
Thorow treson, ageyn him compassed and wrought,  
Trew to his prince in word, in dede, and thought.

Of heavenly poems, O Clyo, calde by name  
In the colege of Musis goddess hystoriall,  
Adres the to me, whiche am both halt and lame  
In elect uteraunce to make memoryall!  
To the for souccour, to the for helpe I call,  
Mine homely rudnes and dryghnes to expell  
With the freshe waters of Elyconys well.

Of noble actes aunciently enrolde  
Of famous pryncis and lordes of astate,  
Be thy report ar wont to be extold,  
Regestringe trewly every formare date;  
Of thy bountie after the usuall rate  
Kyndell in me suche plenty of thy nobles,  
Thes sorrowfulle dites that I may shew expres.

In sesons past, who hathe h[ea]rde or sene

Of former writing by any presidente  
That vilane hastarddis in their furious tene,  
Fulfilled with malice of froward entente,  
Confetered togeder of commonn concente  
Falsly to slee theyr moste singuler good lord?  
It may be registrede of shamefull recorde.

So noble a man, so valiaunt lord and knyght,  
Fulfilled with honor, as all the world doth ken;  
At his commaundement which had both day and nyght  
Knyghtes and squyers, at every season when  
He calde upon them, as meniall household men;  
Were not these commons uncurteis karlis of kind  
To slo their owne lord? God was not in their mynd.

And were not they to blame, I say also,  
That were aboute him, his owne servants of trust,  
To suffre him slayn of his mortall fo?  
Fled away from hym, let hym ly in the dust;  
They bode not till the reckenynge were discust;  
What shuld I flatter? what shuld I glose or paint?  
Fy, fy for shame, their heartes were to faint.

In England and Fraunce which gretly was redouted,  
Of whom both Flaunders and Scotland stode in drede,  
To whome great estates obeyed and lowted,  
And mayny of rude villayns made hym for to blede;  
Unkyndly they slew him; that holp them oft at nede:  
He was their bulwark, their paves, and their wall,  
Yet shamefully they slew hym; that shame mot them befall!

I say, ye comoners, why we ye so stark mad?  
What frantyk frensy fyll in your brayne?  
Where was your wit and reson ye should have had?  
What wilful foly made yow to ryse agayne  
Your naturall lord? alas, I cannot fayne:  
Ye armyd you with will, and left your wit behynd;  
Well may you be called comones most unkynd.

He was your chefteyne, your shelde, your chef defence,  
Redy to assyst you in every time of nede;  
Your worshyp depended of his excellence;

Alas, ye mad men, to far ye did excede;  
Your hap was unhappy, to ill was your spede:  
What moved you againe him to war or to fyght?  
What alyde you to sle your lord again all ryght?

The ground of his quarel was for his soverain lord,  
The well concerning of all the hole lande,  
Demandyng suche duties as nedes most acord  
To the ryght of his prince, which shold not be withstand;  
For whose cause ye slew him with your owne hand:  
But had his noble men done wel that day,  
Ye had not been able to have sayd him nay.

But ther was fals packing, or els I am begylde;  
How-be-it the mater was evydent and playne,  
For if they had occupied their spere and their shilde,  
This noble man doutles had not bene slayne.  
But men say they wer lynked with a double chaine,  
And held with the comones under a cloke,  
Which kindeled the wild fyr that made all this smoke.

The commons renyed ther taxes to pay,  
Of them demaunded and asked by the kynge;  
With one voice importune they playnly sayd nay;  
They buskt them on a bushment themselfe in baile to bring,  
Againe the kyngs plesure to wrestle or to wring;  
Bluntly as bestis with boste and with crye  
They sayd they forsed not, nor carede not to dy.

The noblenes of the north, this valiant lord and knight,  
As man that was innocent of trechery or traine,  
Pressed forth boldly to withstand the myght,  
And, lyke marciall Hector, he faught them agayne,  
Trustyng in noble men that were with him there;  
Bot al they fled from hym for falshode or fere.

Barones, knyghtes, squiers, one and all,  
Together with servauntes of his famuly,  
Turned their baskis, and let their master fal,  
Of whos [life] they counted not a flye;  
Take up whose wold, for ther they let him ly.  
Alas, his gold, his fee, his annual rent

Upon suche a sort was ille bestowd and spent!

He was enviroind aboute on every syde  
With his enemyes, that we starke made and wode;  
Yet while he stode he gave them woundes wyde;  
Allas for ruth! what thoughe his mynd wer gode,  
His corage manly, yet ther he shed his blode:  
Al left alone, alas, he foughte in vayne!  
For cruelly among them ther he was slayne.

Alas for pite! that Percy thus was spylt,  
The famous Erle of Northumberland;  
Of knyghtly prowes the sword, pomel, and hylt,  
The myghty lyon doutted by se and lande;  
O dolorous chaunce of Fortunes froward hande!  
What man, remembryng howe shamefully he was slaine,  
From bitter weping himself can restrain?

O cruell Mars, thou dedly god of war!  
O dolorous tewisday, dedicate to thy name,  
When thou shoke thy sworde so noble a man to mar!  
O grounde ungracious, unhappy be thy fame,  
Which wert endyed with rede bloud of the same  
Most noble erle! O foule mysuryd ground,  
Whereon he gat his finall dedely wounde!

O Atropos, of the fatall systers iii  
Goddess most cruel unto the lyfe of man,  
All merciles, in the is no pite!  
O homicide, which sleest all that thou can,  
So forcibly upon this erle thou ran,  
That with thy sword, enharpit of mortall drede,  
Thou kit asonder his perfight vitall threde!

My wordes unpullysht be, nakide and playne,  
Of aureat poems they want ellowynynge;  
But by them to knowlege ye may attayne  
Of this lordes dethe and of his murdrynge;  
Which whils he lyvyd had fuyson of every thing,  
Of knights, of squyers, chyf lord of toure and towne,  
Tyll fykkell Fortune began on hym to frowne:



Paregall to dukes, with kynges he might compare,  
Surmounting in honor all eryls he did excede;  
To all countreis aboute hym reporte me I dare;  
Lyke to Eneas benigne in worde and dede,  
Valiant as Hector in every marciall nede,  
Provydent, discrete, circumspect, and wyse,  
Tyll the chaunce ran agayne hym of Fortunes duple dyse.

What nedeth me for to extoll his fame  
With my rude pen enkankered all with rust?  
Whose noble actes show worshiply his name,  
Transendyng far myne homly Muse, that muste  
Yet somewhat wright supprised with herty lust,  
Truly reportyng his right noble estate,  
Immortally whiche is immaculate?

His noble blode never destaynyd was,  
Trew to his prince for to defend his ryght  
Doblenes hatyng fals maters to compas,  
Treytory and treason he banyshyt out of syght,  
With truth to medle was al his holl delyght,  
As all his countrey can testyfy the same:  
To sle suche a lorde, alas, it was great shame.

If the hole quere of the Musis nyne  
In me all onely wer set and comprised,  
Enbrethed with the blast of influence devyne,  
As perfytyly as could be thought or devisyd;  
To me also allthough it were promised  
Of laureat Phebus holy the eloquence,  
All were to lytell for his magnificence.

O yonge lyon, but tender yet of age,  
Grow and encrease, remembre thyne estate;  
God the assyst unto thyn herytage,  
And geve the grace to be more fortunate!  
Agayn rebellyones arme the to make debate;  
And, as the lyone, whiche is of bestes kynges,  
Unto thy subjectes by curteis and benygne.

I pray God sende the prosperous lyfe and long,  
Stable thy mynde constant to be and fast,

Ryght to mayntayn, and to resyst all wronge:  
All flateryng faytors abhor and from the cast;  
Of foule detraction God kepe the from the blast!  
Let double delyng in the have no place,  
And be not lyght of credence in no case.

With hevvy chere, with dolorous hart and mynd,  
Eche man may sorow in his inward thought  
This lordes death, whose pere is hard to fynd,  
Allgif Englund and Fraunce were thorow saught.  
Al kynges, all princes, al dukes, well they ought,  
Both temorall and spiritual, for to complayne  
This noble man, that crewelly was slayne:

More specially barons, and those knyghtes bold,  
And al other gentilmen with him entertenyed  
In fee, as menyall men of his houseold,  
Whom he as lord worshyply mainteyned;  
To sorowful weping they ought to be constreined,  
As oft as they call to theyr remembraunce,  
Of ther good lord the fate and dedely chaunce.

O perlese Prince of heven emperyall!  
That with one word formed al thing of noughte;  
Heven, hell, and erthe obey unto thy call;  
Which to thy resemblaunce wondrously hast wrought  
All mankynd, whom thou full dere hast bought,  
With thy bloud precious our finaunce thou did pay,  
And us redemed from the fendys pray;

To the pray we, as Prince incomparable,  
As thou art of mercy and pyte the well,  
Thou bring unto thy joye eterminable  
The soull of this lorde from all daunger of hell,  
In endles blys with the to byde and dwell  
In thy palace above the orient,  
Where thou art Lord, and God omnipotent.

O quene of mercy, O lady full of grace,  
Mayden most pure, and Goddess moder dere,  
To sorowful hartes chef comfort and solace,  
Of all women O flowre withouten pere!

Pray to thy Son above the sterris clere,  
He to vouchesaf, by thy mediacion,  
To pardon thy servaunt and brynge to salvacion.

In joy triumphant the hevenly yerarchy,  
With all the hole sorte of that glorious place,  
His soull mot receyve into theyr company  
Thorow bounty of Hym that formed all solace:  
Wel of pite, of mercy, and of grace,  
The Father, the Sonn, and the Holy Ghost,  
In Trinite one God of myghtes moste!

John Skelton

# Arectyng My Syght

Arectyng my syght towarde the zodyake,  
The sygnes xii for to beholde a farre,  
When Mars retrogradant reuersyd his bak,  
Lord of the yere in his orbicular,  
Put vp his sworde, for he cowde make no warre,  
And whan Lucina plenaryly did shyne,  
Scorpione ascendynge degrees twyse nyne.

John Skelton

# Colyn Cloute

&lt;i&gt;Quis consurget mecum adversus malignantes ?  
aut quis stabit mecum adversus operantes iniqui-  
tatem ? Nemo, Domine !&lt;/i&gt;

¶ H A T can it auayle  
To dryue forth a snayle,  
Or to make a sayle  
Of an herynges tayle ;  
To ryme or to rayle,  
To wryte or to indyte,  
Eyther for delyte  
Or elles for despyte ;  
Or bokes to compyle  
Of dyuers maner style, 10  
Vyce to reuyle  
And synne to exyle ;  
To teche or to preche,  
As reason wyll reche ?  
Say this, and say that,  
His hed is so fat,  
He wotteth neuer what  
Nor wherof he speketh ;  
He cryeth and he creketh,  
He pryeth and he peketh, 20  
He chydes and he chatters,  
He prates and he patters,  
He clytters and he clatters,  
He medles and he smatters,  
He gloses and he flatters ;  
Or yf he speake playne,  
Than he lacketh brayne,  
He is but a fole ;  
Let hym go to scole,  
On a thre foted stole 30  
That he may downe syt,  
For he lacketh wyt ;  
And yf that he hyt  
The nayle on the hede,  
It standeth in no stede ;

The deuyll, they say, is dede,  
The deuell is dede.

It may well so be,  
Or els they wolde se  
Otherwyse, and fle 40  
From worldly vanyte,  
And foule couetousnesse,  
And other wretchednesse,  
Fyckell falsenesse,  
Varyablenesse,  
With vnstabilnesse.

And if ye stande in doubte  
Who brought this ryme aboute,  
My name is Colyn Cloute.  
I purpose to shake oute 50  
All my connyng bagge,  
Lyke a clerkely hagge ;  
For though my ryme be ragged,  
Tattered and iagged,  
Rudely rayne beaten,  
Rusty and moughte eaten,  
If ye take well therwith,  
It hath in it some pyth.

For, as farre as I can se,  
It is wronge with eche degre : 60  
For the temporalte  
Accuseth the spiritualte ;  
The spirituall agayne  
Dothe grudge and complayne  
Vpon the temporall men :  
Thus eche of other blother  
The tone agayng the tother :  
Alas, they make me shoder !  
For in hoder moder  
The Church is put in faute ; 70  
The prelates ben so haut,  
They say, and loke so hy,  
As though they wolde fly  
Aboue the sterry skye.

Laye men say indede  
How they take no hede  
Theyr sely shepe to fede,

But plucke away and pull  
The fleces of theyr wull,  
Vnethes they leue a locke 80  
Of wull amonges theyr flocke ;  
And as for theyr connyng,  
A glommyng and a mummyng,  
And make therof a iape ;  
They gaspe and they gape  
All to haue promocyon,  
There is theyr deuocyon,  
With money, if it wyll hap,  
To catche the forked cap :  
Forsothe they are so lewd 90  
To say so, all beshrewd !

What trow ye they say more  
Of the bysshoppes lore ?  
How in matters they be rawe,  
They lumber forth the lawe,  
To herken Jacke and Gyll,  
Whan they put vp a byll,  
And iudge it as they wyll,  
For other mennes skyll,  
Expoundyng out theyr clauses, 100  
And leue theyr owne causes :  
In theyr prouynciall cure  
They make but lytell sure,  
And meddels very lyght  
In the Churches ryght ;  
But ire and venire,  
And solfa so alamyre,  
That the premenyre  
Is lyke to be set a fyre  
In theyr iurisdictions 110  
Through temporall afflictions :  
Men say they haue prescriptions  
Agaynst spirituall contradictions,  
Accomptyng them as fycions.

And whyles the heedes do this,  
The remenaunt is amys  
Of the clergy all,  
Bothe great and small.  
I wot neuer how they warke,

But thus the people barke ;# 120  
 And surely thus they say,  
 Bysshoppes, if they may,  
 Small houses wolde kepe,  
 But slumbre forth and slepe,  
 And assay to crepe  
 Within the noble walles  
 Of the kynges halles,  
 To fat theyr bodyes full,  
 Theyr soules lene and dull,  
 And haue full lytell care 130  
 How euyll theyr shepe fare.  
 The temporalyte say playne,  
 How bysshoppes dysdayne  
 Sermons for to make,  
 Or suche laboure to take ;  
 And for to say trouth,  
 A great parte is for slouth,  
 But the greatestt parte  
 Is for they haue but small arte  
 And ryght sklender connyng 140  
 Within theyr heedes wonnyng.  
 But this reason they take  
 How they are able to make  
 With theyr golde and treasure  
 Clerkes out of measure,  
 And yet that is a pleasure.  
 How be it some there be,  
 Almost two or thre,  
 Of that dygnyte,  
 Full worshypfull clerkes, 150  
 As appereth by theyr werkes,  
 Lyke Aaron and Ure,  
 The wolfe from the dore  
 To werryn and to kepe  
 From theyr goostly shepe,  
 And theyr spirituall lammes  
 Sequestred from rammes  
 And from the berded gotes  
 With theyr heery cotes ;  
 Set nought by golde ne grottes, 160  
 Theyr names if I durst tell.



But they are loth to mell,  
And loth to hang the bell  
Aboute the cattes necke,  
For drede to haue a checke ;  
They ar fayne to play deuz decke,  
They ar made for the becke.  
How be it they are good men,  
Moche herted lyke an hen :  
Theyr lessons forgotten they haue 170  
That Becket them gaue :

Thomas manum mittit ad fortia,  
Spernit damna, spernit opprobria,  
Nulla Thomam frangit injuria.  
But nowe euery spirituall father,  
Men say, they had rather  
Spende moche of theyr share  
Than to be combred with care :  
Spende ! nay, nay, but spare ;  
For let se who that dare 180

Sho the mockysse mare ;  
They make her wynche and keke,  
But it is not worth a leke :  
Boldnesse is to seke  
The Churche for to defend.  
Take me as I intende,  
For lothe I am to offende  
In this that I haue pende :  
I tell you as men say ;  
Amende whan ye may, 190

For, usque ad montem Sare,#  
Men say ye can not appare ;  
For some say ye hunte in parkes,  
And hauke on hobby larkes,  
And other wanton warkes,  
Whan the nyght darkes.

What hath lay men to do  
The gray gose for to sho ?  
Lyke houndes of hell,  
They crye and they yell, 200  
Howe that ye sell  
The grace of the Holy Gost :  
Thus they make theyr bost

Through owte euery cost,  
Howe some of you do eate  
In Lenton season fleshe mete,  
Fesauntes, partryche, and cranes ;  
Men call you therfore prophanes ;  
Ye pycke no shrympes nor pranes,  
Saltfysse, stocfysse, nor heryng, 210  
It is not for your werynge ;

Nor in holy Lenton season  
Ye wyll netheyr benes ne peason,  
But ye loke to be let lose  
To a pygge or to a gose,  
Your gorge not endewed  
Without a capon stewed,  
Or a stewed cocke,  
To knowe whate ys a clocke  
Vnder her surfled smocke, 220  
And her wanton wodicocke.

And how whan ye gyue orders  
In your prouinciall borders,  
As at Sitientes,  
Some are insufficientes,  
Some parum sapientes  
Some nihil intelligentes,  
Some valde negligentes,  
Some nullum sensum habentes,  
But bestiall and vntaught ; 230

But whan thei haue ones caught  
Dominus vobiscum by the hede,  
Than renne they in euery stede,  
God wot, with dronken nolles ;  
Yet take they cure of soules,  
And woteth neuer what thei rede,  
Paternoster, Ave, nor Crede ;  
Construe not worth a whystle  
Nether Gospell nor Pystle ;  
Theyr mattyns madly sayde, 240  
Nothyng deuoutly prayde ;  
Theyr lernyng is so small,  
Theyr pryms and houres fall  
And lepe out of theyr lyppes  
Lyke sawdust or drye chyppes.

I speke not nowe of all,  
But the moost parte in generall.  
Of suche vagabundus  
Speketh totus mundus ;  
Howe some synge Lætabundus 250  
At euery ale stake,  
With, welcome hake and make !  
By the brede that God brake,  
I am sorry for your sake.

I speke not of the good wyfe,  
But of theyr apostles lyfe ;  
Cum ipsis vel illis  
Qui manent in villis  
Est uxor vel ancilla,  
Welcome Jacke and Gylla ! 260  
My prety Petronylla,  
And you wyll be stylla,  
You shall haue your wylla.  
Of suche Paternoster pekes  
All the worlde spekes.

In you the faute is supposed,  
For that they are not apposed  
By iust examinacyon  
In connyng and conuersacyon ;  
They haue none instructyon 270  
To make a true constructyon :  
A preest without a letter,  
Without his vertue be gretter,  
Doutlesse were moche better  
Vpon hym for to take  
A mattocke or a rake.  
Alas, for very shame !

Some can not declyne their name ;  
Some can not scarsly rede,  
And yet he wyll not drede 280  
For to kepe a cure,  
And in nothyng is sure ;  
This Dominus vobiscum,  
As wyse as Tom a thrum,  
A chaplayne of trust  
Layth all in the dust.

Thus I, Colyn Cloute,

As I go aboute,  
 And wandrynge as I walke,  
 I here the people talke. 290  
 Men say, for syluer and golde  
 Myters are bought and solde ;  
 There shall no clergy appose  
 A myter nor a crose,  
 But a full purse :  
 A strawe for Goddes curse !  
 What are they the worse ?  
 For a symonyake  
 Is but a hermoniake ;  
 And no more ye make 300  
 Of symony, men say,  
 But a chyldes play.  
 Ouer this, the foresayd laye  
 Reporte howe the Pope may  
 An holy anker call  
 Out of the stony wall,  
 And hym a bysshopp make,  
 If he on hym dare take  
 To kepe so harde a rule,  
 To ryde vpon a mule 310  
 With golde all betrapped,  
 In purple and paule belapped ;  
 Some hatted and some capped,  
 Rychely and warme bewrapped,  
 God wot to theyr great paynes,  
 In rotchettes of fyne Raynes,  
 Whyte as morowes mylke ;  
 Theyr tabertes of fyne silke,  
 Theyr styrops of myxt gold begared ;  
 There may no cost be spared ; 320  
 Theyr moyles golde dothe eate,  
 Theyr neyghbours dye for meate.  
 What care they though Gil sweate,  
 Or Jacke of the Noke ?  
 The pore people they yoke  
 With sommons and citacyons  
 And excommunycacyons,  
 About churches and market :  
 The bysshop on his carpet

At home full softe dothe syt. 330  
 This is a farly fyt,  
 To here the people iangle,  
 Howe warely they wrangle :  
 Alas, why do ye not handle  
 And them all to-mangle ?  
 Full falsely on you they lye,  
 And shamefully you ascrye,  
 And say as vntruely,  
 As the butterflye  
 A man myght saye in mocke 340  
 Ware the# wethercocke  
 Of the steple of Poules ;  
 And thus they hurte theyr soules  
 In sclaundryng you for truthe :  
 Alas, it is great ruthe !  
 Some say ye syt in trones,  
 Lyke prynces aquilonis,  
 And shryne your rotten bones  
 With perles and precyous stones ;  
 But how the commons grones, 350  
 And the people mones  
 For prestes and for lones  
 Lent and neuer payd,  
 But from day to day delayde,  
 The commune welth decayde,  
 Men say ye are tonge tayde,  
 And therof speke nothyng  
 Byt dyssymulyng and glosyng.  
 Wherfore men be supposyng  
 The ye gyue shrewd counsell 360  
 Agaynst the commune well,  
 By poollynge and pyllage  
 In cytyes and vyllage,  
 By taxyng and tollage,  
 Ye make monkes to haue the culerage  
 For couerynge of an olde cottage,  
 That commytted is a collage  
 In the charter of dottage,  
 Tenure par seruyce de sottage,  
 And not par seruyce de socage, 370  
 After olde seygnours,

And the lerning of Lytelton tenours :  
Ye haue so ouerthwarted,  
That good lawes are subuerted,  
And good reason peruerted.

Relygous men are fayne  
For to tourne agayne  
In secula seculorum,  
And to forsake theyr corum,  
And vagabundare per forum, 380  
And take a fyne meritorium,  
Contra regulam morum,  
Aut blacke monachorum,  
Aut canonicorum,  
Aut Bernardinorum,  
Aut crucifixorum,  
And to synge from place to place,  
Lyke apostataas.

And the selfe same game  
Begone ys now with shame 390  
Amongest the sely nonnes :  
My lady nowe she ronnes,  
Dame Sybly our abbesse,  
Dame Dorothe and lady Besse,  
Dame Sare our pryoresse,  
Out of theyr cloyster and quere  
With an heuy chere,  
Must cast vp theyr blacke vayles,  
And set vp theyr fucke sayles,  
To catche wynde with their ventales— 400  
What, Colyne, there thou shales !  
Yet thus with yll hayles  
The lay fee people rayles.

And all the fawte they lay  
On you, prelates, and say  
Ye do them wrong and no ryght  
To put them thus to flyght ;  
No matyns at mydnyght,  
Boke and chalys gone quyte ;  
And plucke awaye the leedes 410  
Eryn ouer theyr heedes,  
And sell away theyr belles,  
And all that they haue elles :

Thus the people telles,  
 Rayles lyke rebelles,  
 Redys shrewdly and spelles,  
 And with foundacyons melles,  
 And talkys lyke tytyuelles,  
 How ye brake the dedes wylles,  
 Turne monasteris into water milles, 420  
 Of an abbay ye make a graunge ;  
 Your workes, they saye, are straunge ;  
 So that theyr founders soules  
 Haue lost theyr beade rolles,  
 The mony for theyr masses  
 Spent amonge wanton lasses ;  
 The Diriges are forgotten ;  
 Theyr founders lye theyr rotten,  
 But where theyr soules dwell,  
 Therwith I wyll not mell. 430  
 What coude the Turke do more  
 With all his false lore,  
 Turke, Sarazyn, or Jew ?  
 I reporte me to you,  
 O mercyfull Jesu,  
 You supporte and rescue,  
 My style for to dyrecte,  
 It may take some effecte !  
 For I abhorre to wryte  
 Howe the lay fee dyspyte 440  
 You prelates, that of ryght  
 Shulde be lanternes of lyght.  
 Ye lyue, they say, in delyte,  
 Drowned in deliciis,  
 In gloria et divitiis,  
 In admirabili honore,  
 In gloria, et splendore  
 Fulgurantis hastæ,  
 Viventes parum caste :  
 Yet swete meate hath soure sauce, 450  
 For after gloria, laus,  
 Chryst by cruelte  
 Was nayled vpon a tre ;  
 He payed a bytter pencyon  
 For mannes redemcyon,

He dranke eysell and gall  
To redeme vs withall ;  
But swete ypocras ye drynke,  
With, Let the cat wynke !  
Iche wot what yche other thynk ; 460  
Howe be it per assimile  
Some men thynke that ye  
Shall haue penalte  
For your iniquyte.

Nota what I say,  
And bere it well away ;  
If it please not theologys,  
It is good for astrologys ;  
For Ptholome tolde me  
The sonne somtyme to be 470  
In Ariete,

Ascendent a degre,#  
Whan Scorpion descendynge,  
Was so then pretendynge  
A fatall fall of one  
That shuld syt on a trone,  
And rule all thynges alone.  
Your teth whet on this bone  
Amongest you euerychone,  
And let Collyn Cloute haue none # 480

Maner of cause to mone :  
Lay salue to your owne sore,  
For els, as I sayd before,  
After gloria, laus,  
May come a soure sauce ;  
Sory therfore am I,  
But trouth can neuer lye.

With language thus poluted  
Holy Churche is bruted  
And shamfully confuted. 490  
My penne nowe wyll I sharpe,  
And wrest vp my harpe  
With sharpe twynkyng trebelles,  
Agaynst all suche rebelles  
That laboure to confounde  
And bryng the Churche to the grounde ;  
As ye may dayly se



How the lay fee  
 Of one affynyte  
 Consent and agre 500  
 Agaynst the Churche to be,  
 And the dygnyte  
 Of the bysshoppes see.  
 And eyther ye be to bad,  
 Or els they ar mad  
 Of this to reporte :  
 But, vnder your supporte,  
 Tyll my dyenge day  
 I shall bothe wryte and say,  
 And ye shall do the same, 510  
 Howe they are to blame  
 You thus to dyffame :  
 For it maketh me sad  
 Howe that people are glad  
 The Churche to depraue ;  
 And some there are that raue,  
 Presumynge on theyr wyt,  
 Whan there is neuer a whyt,  
 To mayntayne argumentes  
 Agaynst the sacramentes. 520  
 Some make epylogacyon  
 Of hyghe predestynacyon ;  
 And of resydeuacyon  
 They make interpretacyon  
 Of an aquarde facyon ;  
 And of the prescience  
 Of dyuyne essence ;  
 And what ipostacis  
 Of Christes manhode is.  
 Suche logyke men wyll chop, 530  
 And in theyr fury hop,  
 When the good ale sop  
 Dothe daunce in theyr fore top ;  
 Bothe women and men,  
 Suche ye may well knowe and ken,  
 That agaynst preesthode  
 Theyr malyce sprede abrode,  
 Raylynge haynously  
 And dysdaynously

Of preestly dygnytes, 540  
 But theyr malygnytes.  
 And some haue a smacke  
 Of Luthers sacke,  
 And a brennyng sparke  
 Of Luthers warke,  
 And are somewhat suspecte  
 In Luthers secte ;  
 And some of them barke,  
 Clatter and carpe  
 Of that heresy arte 550  
 Called Wicleuista,  
 The deuelysshe dogmatista ;  
 And some be Hussyans,  
 And some be Arryans,  
 And some be Pollegians,  
 And make moche varyans  
 Bytwene the clergy  
 And the temporaltye,  
 Howe the Church# hath to mykel,  
 And they haue to lytell, 560  
 And bryng in materialites  
 And qualyfyed qualytes ;  
 Of pluralitytes,  
 Of tryalytes,  
 And of tot quottes,  
 They commune lyke sottes,  
 As commeth to theyr lottes ;  
 Of prebendaries and deanes,  
 Howe some of them gleanes  
 And gathereth vp the store 570  
 For to catche more and more ;  
 Of persons and vycaryes  
 They make many outcryes ;  
 They cannot kepe theyr wyues  
 From them for theyr lyues ;  
 And thus the loselles stryues,  
 And lewdely sayes by Christ  
 Agaynst the sely preest.  
 Alas, and well away,  
 What ayles them thus to say ? 580  
 They mought be better aduysed

Then to be so dysgysed :  
But they haue enterprysed,  
And shamfully surmysed,  
Howe prelacy is solde and bought,  
And come vp of nought ;  
And where the prelates be  
Come of lowe degre,  
And set in maieste  
And spirituall dyngnyte, 590  
Farwell benygnyte,  
Farwell symplicite,  
Farwell humylyte,  
Farwell good charyte !

Ye are so puffed wyth pryde,  
That no man may abyde  
Your hygh and lordely lokes :  
Ye cast vp then your bokes,  
And vertue is forgotten ;  
For then ye wyll be wroken 600  
Of euery lyght quarell,  
And call a lorde a iauell,  
A knyght a knaue ye make ;  
Ye bost, ye face, ye crake,  
And vpon you ye take  
To rule bothe kynge and kayser ;  
And yf ye may haue layser,  
Ye wyll brynge all to nought,  
And that is all your thought :

For the lordes temporall, 610  
Theyr rule is very small,  
Almost nothyng at all.  
Men saye howe ye appall  
The noble blode royall :  
In earnest and in game,  
Ye are the lesse to blame,  
For lordes of noble blode,  
If they well vnderstode  
How connyng myght them auauce,  
They wold pype you another daunce :

But noble men borne 620  
To lerne they haue scorne,  
But hunt and blowe an horne,

Lepe ouer lakes and dykes,  
Set nothyng by polytykes ;  
Therefore ye kepe them bace,  
And mocke them to theyr face :  
This is a pyteous case,  
To you that ouer the whele  
Grete lordes must crouche and knele, 630  
And breke theyr hose at the kne,  
As dayly men may se,  
And to remembraunce call,  
Fortune so turneth the ball  
And ruleth so ouer all,  
That honoure hath a great fall.

Shall I tell you more ? ye, shall.

I am loth to tell all ;  
But the communalte yow call  
Ydolles of Babylon, 640

De terra Zabulon  
De terra Neptalym ;  
For ye loue to go trym,  
Brought vp of poore estate,  
With pryde inordinate,  
Sodaynly vpstarte  
From the donge carte,  
The mattocke and the shule,  
To reygne and to rule ;  
And haue no grace to thynke 650

Howe ye were wonte to drynke  
Of a lether bottell  
With a knauysse stoppell,  
Whan mamockes was your meate,  
With moldy brede to eate ;  
Ye cowde none other gete  
To chewe and to gnawe,  
To fyll therwith your mawe ;  
Loggyng in fayre strawe,  
Couchyng your drousy heddes 660  
Somtyme in lousy beddes.

Alas, this is out of mynde !  
Ye growe nowe out of kynde :  
Many one ye haue vntwynde,  
And made the commons blynde.

But qui se existimat stare,  
Let hym well beware  
Lest that his fote slyp,  
And haue suche a tryp,  
And falle in suche decay, 670  
That all the worlde may say,  
Come downe, in the deuyll way !

Yet, ouer all that,  
Of bysshops they chat,  
That though ye round your hear  
An ynche aboue your ear,  
And haue aures patentes  
And parum intendentas,  
And your tonsors be croppyd,  
Your eares they be stopped ; 680  
For maister Adulator,  
And doctour Assentator,  
And Blandior blandiris,  
With Mentior mentiris,  
They folowe your desyres,  
And so they blere your eyes,  
That ye can not espye  
How the male dothe wrye.

Alas, for Goddes wyll,  
Why syt ye, prelates, styll, 690  
And suffre all this yll ?  
Ye bysshops of estates  
Shulde open the brode gates  
Of your spirituall charge,  
And com forthe at large,  
Lyke lanternes of lyght,  
In the peoples syght,  
In pullpettes awtentyke,  
For the wele publyke  
Of presthode in this case ; 700  
And alwayes to chase  
Suche maner of sysmatykes  
And halfe heretykes,  
That wolde intoxicate,  
That wolde conquinat,  
That wolde contaminate,  
And that wolde vyolate,

And that wolde derogate,  
 And that wolde abrogate  
 The Churchis hygh estates, 710  
 After this maner rates,  
 The which shulde be  
 Both franke and free,  
 And haue theyr lyberte,  
 As of antiquyte  
 It was ratefyed,  
 And also gratifyed,  
 By holy synodalles  
 And bulles papalles,  
 As it is res certa 720  
 Conteyned in Magna Charta.  
 But maister Damyan,  
 Or some other man,  
 That clerkely is and can  
 Well scrypture expounde  
 And hys textes grounde,  
 His benefyce worthe ten pounce,  
 Or skante worth twenty marke,  
 And yet a noble clerke,  
 He must do this werke ; 730  
 As I knowe a parte,  
 Some maisters of arte,  
 Some doctours of lawe,  
 Some lernde in other sawe,  
 As in dyuynyte,  
 That hath no dygnyte  
 But the pore degre  
 Of the vnyuersyte ;  
 Or els frere Frederycke,  
 Or els frere Dominike, 740  
 Or frere Hugulinus,  
 Or frere Augustinus,  
 Or frere Carmelus,  
 That gostly can heale vs ;  
 Or els yf we may  
 Get a frere graye,  
 Or els of the order  
 Vpon Grenewyche border,  
 Called Obseruance,

Or a frere of Fraunce ; 750  
Or else the poore Scot,  
It must come to his lot  
To shote forthe his shot ;  
Or of Babuell besyde Bery,  
To postell vpon a kyry,  
That wolde it shulde be noted  
Howe scripture shulde be coted,  
And so clerkley promoted ;  
And yet the frere doted.

But men sey your awtoryte, 760  
And your noble se,  
And your dygnyte,  
Shulde be imprynted better  
Then all the freres letter ;  
For if ye wolde take payne  
To preche a worde or twayne,  
Though it were neuer so playne,  
With clauses two or thre,  
So as they myght be

Compendyously conueyde, 770  
These wordes shuld be more weyd,  
And better perceyued,  
And thankfullerlye receyued,  
And better shulde remayne  
Amonge the people playne,  
That wold your wordes retayne  
And reherce them agayne,  
Than a thousand thousande other,  
That blaber, barke, and blother,  
And make a Walshmans hose 780  
Of the texte and of the glose.

For protestatyon made,  
That I wyll not wade  
Farther in this broke,  
Nor farther for to loke  
In deuysynge of this boke,  
But answeere that I may  
For my selfe alway,  
Eyther analogice  
Or els categorice, 790  
So that in diuinite

Doctors that lerned be,  
Nor bachelers of that faculte  
That hath taken degre  
In the vniversite,  
Shall not be obiecte at by me.

But doctour Bullatus,  
Parum litteratus,  
Dominus doctoratus  
At the brode gatus, 800

Doctour Daupatus,  
And bacheler bacheleratus,  
Dronken as a mouse,  
At the ale house,  
Taketh his pyllyon and his cap  
At the good ale tap,  
For lacke of good wyne ;  
As wyse as Robyn swyne,  
Vnder a notaryes sygne  
Was made a dyuyne ; 810

As wyse as Waltoms calfe,  
Must preche, a Goddes halfe,  
In the pulpyt solempnely ;  
More mete in the pyllory,  
For, by saynt Hyllary,  
He can nothyng smatter  
Of logyke nor scole matter,  
Neyther syllogisare,  
Nor enthymemare,  
Nor knoweth his elenkes, 820

Nor his predicamens ;  
And yet he wyll mell  
To amend the gospell,  
And wyll preche and tell  
What they do in hell ;  
And he dare not well neuen  
What they do in heuen,  
Nor how farre Temple barre is  
From the seuen starrys.

Nowe wyll I go 830  
And tell of other mo,  
Semper protestando  
De non impugnando



The foure ordores of fryers,  
Though some of them be lyers ;  
As Lymyters at large  
Wyll charge and dyscharge ;  
As many a frere, God wote,  
Preches for his grote,  
Flatteryng for a newe cote 840  
And for to haue his fees ;  
Some to gather chese ;  
Loth they are to lese  
Eyther corne or malte ;  
Somytyme meale and salte,  
Somytyme a bacon flycke,  
That is thre fyngers thycke  
Of larde and of greace,  
Theyr couent to encrease.

I put you out of doute, 850  
This can not be rought aboutw  
But they theyr tonges fyle, And make a plesaunt style  
To Margery and to Maude,  
Howe they haue no fraude ;  
And somtyme they prouoke  
Bothe Gyll and Jacke at Noke  
Their dewtyes to withdrawe,  
That they ought by the lawe  
Theyr curates to content 860

In open tyme and in Lent :  
God wot, they take great payne  
To flatter and to fayne ;  
But it is an olde sayd sawe,  
That nede hath no lawe.  
Some walke aboute in melottes,  
In gray russet and heery cotes ;  
Some wyl neyther golde ne grotes ;  
Some plucke a partrych in remotes,  
And by the barres of her tayle 870  
Wyll knowe a rauen from a rayle,  
A quayle, the raile, and the olde rauen  
Sed libera nos a malo ! Amen.  
And by Dudum, theyr Clementine,  
Agaynst curates they repyne ;  
And say propreli they ar sacerdots,

To shryue, assoyle, and releas  
Dame Margeries soule out of hell :  
But when the freare fell in the well,  
He coud not syng himselfe therout  
But by the helpe of Christyan Clout.

880

Another Clementyne also,#  
How frere Fabian, with other mo,  
Exivit de Paradiso ;  
Whan they agayn theder shal come,  
De hoc petimus consilium :  
And through all the world they go  
With Dirige and Placebo.

But nowe my mynd ye vnderstand,  
For they must take in hande

890

To prech, and to withstande  
Al maner of abiectioons ;  
For bysshops haue protections,  
They say, to do corrections,  
But they haue no affections  
To take the sayd dyrections ;

In such maner of cases,  
Men say, they bere no faces  
To occupye suche places,  
To sowe the sede of graces :

900

Theyr hertes are so faynted,  
And they be so attaynted  
With coueytous and ambycyon,  
And other superstycyon,  
That they be deaf and dum,  
And play scylens and glum,  
Can say nothyng but mum.

They occupye them so  
With syngyng Placebo,  
They wyll no farther go :

910

They had leuer to please,  
And take their worldly ease,  
Than to take on hande  
Worsshpefully to withstande  
Such temporall warre and bate,  
As nowe is made of late  
Agaynst holy Church estate,  
Or to mayntayne good quarelles.

The lay men call them barrelles  
 Full of glotony 920  
 And of hypocrysy,  
 That counterfaytes and payntes  
 As they were very sayntes :  
 In matters that them lyke  
 They shewe them polytyke,  
 Pretendyng grauyte  
 And sygnyoryte,  
 With all solempnyte,  
 For theyr indempnyte ;  
 For they wyll haue no losse 930  
 Of a peny nor of a crosse  
 Of theyr predyall landes,  
 That cometh to theyr handes,  
 And as farre as they dare set,  
 All is fysshe that cometh to net :  
 Buyldyng royally  
 Theyr mancyons curiously,  
 With turrettes and with toures,  
 With halles and with boures,  
 Stretchyng to the starres, 940  
 With glasse wyndowes and barres ;  
 Hangyng aboute the walles  
 Clothes of golde and palles,  
 Arras of ryche aray,  
 Fresshe as flours in May ;  
 Wyth dame Dyana naked ;  
 Howe lusty Venus quaked,  
 And howe Cupyde shaked  
 His darte, and bent his bowe  
 For to shote a crowe 950  
 At her tyrly tyrlowe ;  
 And howe Parys of Troy  
 Daunced a lege de moy,  
 Made lusty sporte and ioy  
 With dame Helyn the quene ;  
 With suche storyes bydene  
 Their chambres well besene ;  
 With triumphes of Cesar,  
 And of Pompeyus war,  
 Of renowne and of fame 960

By them to get a name :  
Nowe all the worlde stares,  
How they ryde in goodly chares,  
Conueyed by olyphantes,  
With lauryat garlantes,  
And by vnycornes  
With their semely hornes ;  
Vpon these beestes rydyng,  
Naked boyes strydyng,  
With wanton wenches winkyng. 970

Nowe truly, to my thynkyng,  
That is a speculacyon  
And a mete meditacyon  
For prelates of estate,  
Their courage to abate  
From worldly wantonnesse,  
Theyr chambres thus to dresse  
With suche parfettesse  
And all suche holynesse ;  
How be it they let downe fall 980  
Their churches cathedrall.

Squyre, knyght, and lorde,  
Thus the Church remorde ;  
With all temporall people  
They rune agaynst the steple,  
Thus talkyng and tellyng  
How some of you are mellyng ;  
Yet softe and fayre for swellyng,  
Beware of a quenes yellyng.  
It is a besy thyng 990

For one man to rule a kyng  
Alone and make rekenyng,  
To gouerne ouer all  
And rule a realme royall  
By one mannes verrey wyt ;  
Fortune may chaunce to flyt,  
And whan he weneth to syt,  
Yet may he mysse the quysshon :  
For I rede a preposycyon,  
Cum regibus amicare, 1000  
Et omnibus dominari,  
Et supra te pravare ;

Wherefore he hathe good vre  
That can hymselfe assure  
Howe fortune wyll endure.  
For the communalte dothe reporte  
That they haue great wonder  
That ye kepe them so vnder ;  
Yet they meruayle so moche lesse, 1010  
For ye play so at the chesse,  
As they suppose and gesse,  
That some of you but late  
Hath played so checkemate  
With lordes of great estate,  
After suche a rate,  
That they shall mell nor make,  
Nor vpon them take,  
For kynge nor kayser sake,  
But at the playsure of one 1020  
That ruleth the roste alone.

Helas, I say, Helas !  
Howe may this come to passe,  
That a man shall here a masse,  
And not so hardy on his hede,  
To loke on God in forme of brede,  
But that the parysshe clerke  
There vpon must herke,  
And graunt hym at his askyng  
For to se the sacryng ? 1030

And howe may this accorde,  
No man to our souerayne lorde  
So hardy to make sute,  
Nor yet to execute  
His commaundement,  
Without the assent  
Of our presydent,  
Nor to expresse to his person,  
Without your consentatyon  
Graunt hym his lycence 1040  
To preas to his presence,  
Nor to speke to hym secretly,  
Openly nor preuyly,  
Without his presydent be by,  
Or els his substytute

Whom he wyll depute ?  
Neyther erle ne duke  
Permytted ? by saynt Luke,  
And by swete saynt Marke,  
This is a wonderous warke ! 1050

That the people talke this,  
Somewhat there is amysse :  
The deuil cannot stop their mouthes,  
But they wyl talke of such vncouthes,  
All that euer they ken  
Agaynst all spirituall men.

Whether it be wrong or ryght,  
Or els for dyspyght,  
Or howe euer it hap,  
Theyr tonges thus do clap, 1060

And through suche detractyon  
They put you to your actyon ;  
And whether they say trewly  
As they may abyde therby,  
Or els that they do lye,  
Ye knowe better then I.

But nowe debetis scire,  
And groundly audire,  
In your convenire,  
Of this premenire, 1070  
Or els in the myre

They saye they wyll you cast ;  
Therefore stande sure and fast.

Stande sure, and take good fotyng,  
And let be all your motyng,  
Your gasyng and your totyng,  
And your parcyall promotyng  
Of those that stande in your grace ;  
But olde seruantes ye chase,  
And put them out of theyr place. 1080

Make ye no murmuracyon,  
Though I wryte after this facion ;  
Though I, Colin Cloute,  
Among the hole route  
Of you that clerkes be,  
Take nowe vpon me  
Thus copyously to wryte,

I do it for no despyte.  
Wherefore take no dysdayne  
At my style rude and playne ; 1090  
For I rebuke no man  
That vertuous is : why than  
Wreke ye your anger on me ?  
For those that vertuous be  
Haue no cause to say  
That I speke out of the way.

Of no good bysshop speke I,  
Nor good preest I escrye,  
Good frere, nor good chanon,  
Good nonne, nor good canon, 1100  
Good monke, nor good clercke,  
Nor yette of no good werke :

But my recountyng is  
Of them that do amys,  
In speking and rebellyng,  
In hynderyng and dysauaylyng  
Holy Churche, our mother,  
One agaynst another ;  
To vse suche despytyng  
Is all my hole wrytyng ; 1110  
To hynder no man,  
As nere I can,  
For no man haue I named :  
Wherefore sholde I be blamed ?  
Ye ought to be ashamed,  
Agaynst me to be gramed,  
And can tell no cause why,  
But that I wryte trewly.

Then yf any there be  
Of hygh or lowe degre 1120  
Of the spiritualte,  
Or of the temporalte  
That dothe thynke or wene  
That his conscyence be not clene,  
And feleth hymselfe sycke,  
Or touched on the quycke,  
Suche grace God them sende  
Themselfe to amende,  
For I wyll not pretende

Any man to offende. 1130

Wherefore, as thynketh me,  
Great ydeottes they be,  
And lytell grace they haue,  
This treatyse to depraue ;  
Nor wyll here no prechyng,  
Nor no vertuous techyng,  
Nor wyll haue no resytyng  
Of any vertuous wrytyng ;  
Wyll knowe none intellygence  
To refourme theyr neglygence, 1140  
But lyue styll out of of facyon,  
To theyr owne dampnacyon.  
To do shame they haue no shame,  
But they wold no man shulde them blame :  
They haue an euyl name,  
But yet they wyll occupy the same.

With them the worde of God  
Is counted for no rod ;  
They counte it for a raylyng,  
That nothyng is auaylyng ; 1150  
The prechers with euyll hayling :  
Shall they daunt vs prelates,  
That be theyr prymates ?  
Not so hardy on theyr pates !  
Herke, howe the losell prates,  
With a wyde wesaunt !

Auaunt, syr Guy of Gaunt !  
Auaunt, lewde preest, auaunt !  
Auaunt, syr doctour Deuyas !  
Prate of thy matyns and thy masse, 1160  
And let our maters passe :

Howe darest thou, daucocke, mell ?  
Howe darest thou, losell,  
Allygate the gospell  
Agaynst vs of the counsell ?  
Auaunt to the deuyll of hell !  
Take hym, wardeyne of the Flete,  
Set hym fast by the fete !  
I say, lyeutenaunt of the Toure,  
Make this lurdeyne for to loure ; 1170  
Lodge hym in Lytell Ease,



Fede hym with beanes and pease !  
The Kynges Benche or Marshalsy,  
Haue hym thyder by and by !  
The vyllayne precheth openly,  
And declareth our vyllany ;  
And of our fre symplenesse  
He sayes that we are rechelesse,  
And full of wyfulnesse,  
Shameles and mercylesse, 1180  
Incorrigible and insaciate ;  
And after this rate  
Agaynst vs dothe prate.

At Poules Crosse or els where,  
Openly at Westmynstere,  
And Saynt Mary Spyttell,  
They set not by vs a whystell :  
At the Austen fryers  
They count vs for lyers :  
And at Saynt Thomas of Akers 1190

They carpe vs lyke crakers,  
Howe we wyll rule al at wyll  
Without good reason or skylle ;  
And say how that we be  
Full of parcyalyte ;  
And howe at a pronge  
We tourne ryght into wronge,  
Delay causes so longe  
That ryght no man can fonge ;  
They say many matters be born 1200  
By the ryght of a rambes horne.

Is not this a samfull scorne,  
To be teared thus and torne.  
How may we thys indure ?  
Wherfore we make you sure,  
Ye prechers shall be yawde ;  
And some shall be sawde,  
As noble Isaias,  
The holy prophet, was ;  
And some of you shall dye, 1210  
Lyke holy Jeremy ;  
Some hanged, some slayne,  
Some beaten to the brayne ;

And we wyll rule and rayne,  
And our matters mayntayne  
Who dare say there agayne,  
Or who dare dysdayne  
At our pleasure and wyll :  
For, be it good or be it yll,  
As it is, it shall be styll, 1220  
For all master doctour of Cyuyll,  
Or of Diuine, or doctour Dryuyll,  
Let hym cough, rough, or sneuyll ;  
Renne God, renne deuyll,  
Renne who may renne best,  
And let take all the rest !  
We set not a nut shell  
The way to heuen or to hell.

Lo, this is the gyse now a dayes !  
It is to drede, men sayes, 1230  
Lest they be Saduces,  
As they be sayd sayne  
Whiche determyned playne  
We shulde not ryse agayne  
At dredefull domis day ;  
And so it semeth they play,  
Whiche hate to be corrected  
Whan they be infected,  
Nor wyll suffre this boke

By hoke ne by croke 1240  
Prynted for to be,  
For that no man shulde se  
Nor rede in any scrolles  
Of theyr dronken nolles,  
Nor of theyr noddy polles,  
Nor of theyr sely soules,  
Nor of some wytles pates  
Of dyuers great estates,  
As well as other men.

Now to withdrawe my pen, 1250  
And now a whyle to rest,  
Me semeth it for the best.

The forecastell of my shyp  
Shall glyde, and smothely slyp  
Out of the wawes wod

Of the stormy flod ;  
Shote anker, and lye at rode,  
And sayle not farre abrode,  
Tyll the cost be clere,  
And the lode starre appere : 1260  
My shyp nowe wyll I stere  
Towarde the porte salu  
Of our Sauyour Jesu,  
Suche grace that he vs sende,  
To rectyfye and amende  
Thynges that are amys,  
Whan that his pleasure is.

Amen !

In opere imperfecto,  
In opere semper perfecto,  
Et in opere plusquam perfecto ! 1270  
Colinus Cloutus, quanquam mea carmina multis  
Sordescunt stultis, sed puevinate sunt rare cultis,  
Pue vinatis altisem divino flamine flatis.  
Unde meâ refert tanto minus, invida quamvis  
Lingua nocere parat, quia, quanquam rustica canto,  
Undique cantabor tamen et celebrabor ubique,  
Inclita dum maneat gens Anglica. Laurus honoris,  
Quondam regnorum regina et gloria regum,  
Heu, modo marcescit, tabescit, languida torpet !  
Ah pudet, ah miseret ! vetor hic ego pandere plura  
Pro gemitu et lacrimis : præstet peto præmia pæna.\*\*

John Skelton

# Cuncta Licet Cecidisse Putas Discrimina Rerum

Cuncta licet cecidisse putas discrimina rerum,  
Et prius incerta nunc tibi certa manent,  
Consiliis usure meis tamen aspice caute,  
Subdola non fallat te dea fraude sua:  
Saepe solet placido mortales fallere vultu,  
Et cute sub placida tabida saepe dolent;  
Ut quando secura putas et cuncta serena,  
Anguis sub viridi gramine saepe latet.  
Though ye suppose all jeperdys ar paste,  
And all is done that ye lokyd for before,  
Ware yet, I rede you, of Fortunes dowble cast,  
For one fals poynt she is wont to kepe in store,  
And vnder the fell oft festered is the sore:  
That when ye thynke all daunger for to pas,  
Ware of the lesard lyeth lurkyng in the gras.

Qd Skelton, laureat.

John Skelton

## Excerpt From Speke, Parrot

Parotte.

So many morall maters,\* and so lytell vsyd ;  
    So myche newe making,\* and so madd tyme spent ;  
So myche translacion in to Englyshe confused ;  
    So myche nobyll prechyng, and so lytell amendment ;  
    So myche consultacion, almoste to none entente ;  
So myche provision, and so lytell wytte at nede ;—  
Syns Dewcalyons flodde there can no clerkes rede.

So lytyll dyscressyon, and so myche reasonyng ;  
    So myche hardy dardy, and so lytell manlynes ;  
So prodigall expence, and so shamfull reconyng ;  
    So gorgyous garmentes, and so myche wrechydnese ;  
    So myche portlye pride, with pursys penyles  
So myche spent before, and so myche vnpayd behynde ;—  
Syns Dewcalyons flodde there can no clerkes fynde.

So myche forcastyng, and so farre an after dele ;  
    So myche poletyke pratyng, and so lytell stondythe\* in stede ;  
So lytell secretnese, and so myche grete counsell ;  
    So many bolde barons, there hertes as dull as lede ;  
    So many nobyll bodyes vndyr on dawys hedde ;\*  
So royall a kyng as reynythe vppon vs all ;—  
Syns Dewcalions flodde was nevyr sene nor shall.

So many complayntes, and so smalle redresse ;  
    So myche callyng on, and so smalle takyng hede ;  
So myche losse of merchaundyse, and so remedyles ;  
    So lytell care for the comyn weall, and so myche nede ;  
    So myche dow3tfull daunger,\* and so lytell drede ;  
So myche pride of prelattes, so cruell and so kene ;—  
Syns Dewcalyons flodde, I trowe, was nevyr sene.

So many thevys hangyd, and thevys never the lesse ;  
    So myche prisonment ffor matyrs not worthe an hawe ;\*  
So myche papers weryng for ryghte a smalle exesse ;\*  
    So myche pelory pajauntes\* vndyr colower of good lawe ;  
    So myche towrnyng on the cooke stole\* for euery guy gaw ;\*  
So myche mokyng of statutes of array ;—

Syns Dewcalyons flodde was nevyr, I dar sey.

So braynles caluys hedes, so many shepis taylys ;  
So bolde a braggyng bocher,\* and flesshe sold so dere ;  
So many plucte partryches, and so fatte quaylles ;  
So mangye a mastyfe curre, the grete grey houndes pere ; \*  
So bygge a bulke of brow auntlers cabagynd that yere;\*  
So many swannes dede, and so small revell ;  
Syns Dewcalyons flodde, I trow, no man can tell.

So many trusys takyn, and so lytyll perfyete trowthe ;  
So myche bely joye, and so wastefull banketyng ;\*  
So pynchyng and sparyng, and so lytell profyete growthe ;  
So many howgye\* howsys byldyng, and so small howseholding ;  
Suche statutes apon\* diettes, suche pyllyng and pollyng ;\*  
So ys all thyng wrowghte wylfully withowte reson and skylle\* ;—  
Syns Dewcalyons flodde the world was never so yll.

So many vacabondes, so many beggers bolde ;  
So myche decay of monesteries and of relygious places ;  
So hote hatered agaynste the Chyrche, and cheryte so colde ;  
So myche of my lordes grace, and in hym no grace ys ;  
So many holow hartes, and so dowbyll faces ;  
So myche sayntuary brekyng,\* and preuylegidde barrydd ;—  
Syns Dewcalyons flodde was nevyr sene nor lyerd.\*

So myche raggyd ryghte of a rammes horne ;  
So rygorous revelyng<sup>1</sup> in a prelate specially ;  
So bold and so braggyng, and was so baselye borne ;  
So lordlye of hys lokes and so dysdayneslye ;\*  
So fatte a magott, bred of a flesshe flye ;  
Was nevyr suche a ffylty gorgon,\* nor suche an epycure,  
Syn[s] Dewcalyons flodde, I make thé faste and sure.

So myche preuye wachyng in cold wynters nyghtes ;  
So myche serchyng of loselles, and ys hymselfe so lewde ;\*  
So myche coniuacions for elvyshe myday sprettes ;\*  
So many bullys of' pardon puplysshyd\* and shewyd ;  
So myche crossyng and blyssyng, and hym all beshrewde ; \*  
Suche pollaxis and pyllers, suche mvlys trapte with gold ;—  
Sens Dewcalyons flodde in no cronycle ys told.

Dixit, quod Parrot.  
Crescet in immensum me vivo Psittacus iste ;  
Hinc mea dicetur Skeltonidis inclyta fama.  
Quod Skelton Lawryat,  
Orator Regius.  
34.]

John Skelton

# From Colin Clout

What can it avail  
To drive forth a snail,  
Or to make a sail  
Of an herring's tail;  
To rhyme or to rail,  
To write or to indict,  
Either for delight  
Or else for despight;  
Or books to compile  
Of divers manner of style,  
Vice to revile  
And sin to exile;  
To teach or to preach,  
As reason will reach?  
Say this, and say that,  
His head is so fat,  
He wotteth never what  
Nor whereof he speaketh;  
He crieth and he creaketh,  
He prieth and he peeketh,  
He chides and he chatters,  
He prates and he patters,  
He clitters and he clatters,  
He meddles and he smatters,  
He gloses and he flatters;  
Or if he speak plain,  
Then he lacketh brain,  
He is but a fool;  
Let him go to school,  
On a three footed stool  
That he may down sit,  
For he lacketh wit;  
And if that he hit  
The nail on the head,  
It standeth in no stead;  
The devil, they say, is dead,  
The devil is dead.  
It may well so be,  
Or else they would see



Otherwise, and flee  
From worldly vanity,  
And foul covetousness,  
And other wretchedness,  
Fickle falseness,  
Variableness,  
With unstableness.

And if ye stand in doubt  
Who brought this rhyme about,  
My name is Colin Clout.  
I purpose to shake out  
All my connying bag,  
Like a clerkly hag;  
For though my rhyme be ragged,  
Tattered and jagged,  
Rudely rain beaten,  
Rusty and moth eaten,  
If ye take well therewith,  
It hath in it some pith.

John Skelton

# Go, Piteous Heart

GO, pytyous hart, rasyd with dedly wo,  
Persyd with payn, bleding with wondes smart,  
Bewayle thy fortune, with vaynys wan and blo.  
O Fortune vnfrendly, Fortune vnkynde thow art,  
To be so cruell and so ouerthwart,  
To suffer me so carefull to endure,  
That wher I loue best I dare not dyscure !

One there is, and euer one shalbe,  
For whose sake my hart is sore dyseasyd ;  
For whose loue, welcom dysease to me !  
I am content so all partys be pleasyd :  
Yet, and God wold, I wold my payne were easyd !  
But Fortune enforsyth me so carefully to endure,  
That where I loue best I dare not dyscure.

John Skelton

# Knowledge, Acquayntance, Resort, Fauour With Grace

Knolledge, acquayntance, resort, fauour with grace;  
Delyte, desyre, respyte wyth lyberte;  
Corage wyth lust, conuenient tyme and space;  
Dysdayns, dystres, exylyd cruelte;  
Wordys well set with good habylte;  
Demure demenaunce, womanly of porte;  
Transendyng plesure, surmountyng all dysporte;

Allectuary arrectyd to redres  
These feuerous axys, the dedely wo and payne  
Of thoughtfull hertys plungyd in dystres;  
Refresshyng myndys the Aprell shoure of rayne;  
Conduite of comforte, and well most souerayne;  
Herber enverduryd, contynuall fressh and grene;  
Of lusty somer the passyng goodly quene;

The topas rych and precyouse in vertew;  
Your ruddys wyth ruddy rubys may compare;  
Saphyre of sadnes, enuayned wyth indy blew;  
The pullyshed perle youre whytenes doth declare;  
Dyamand poyntyd to rase oute hartly care;  
Geyne surfetous suspecte the emeraud commendable;  
Relucent smaragd, obiecte imcomperable;

Encleryd myrroure and perspectyue most bryght,  
Illumynyd wyth feturys far passyng my reporte;  
Radyent Esperus, star of the cloudy nyght,  
Lode star to lyght these louers to theyr porte,  
Gayne dangerous stormys theyr anker of supporte,  
Theyr sayll of solace most comfortably clad,  
Whych to behold makyth heuy hartys glad:

Remorse haue I of youre most goodlyhod,  
Of youre behauoure curtes and benynge,  
Of your bownte and of youre womanhod,  
Which makyth my hart oft to lepe and sprynge,  
And to remember many a praty thyng;  
But absens, alas, wyth tremelyng fere and drede  
Abashyth me, albeit I haue no nede.

You I assure, absens is my fo,  
My dedely wo, my paynfull heuynes;  
And if ye lyst to know the cause why so,  
Open myne hart, beholde my mynde expres:  
I wold ye coud ! then shuld ye se, mastres,  
How there nys thyng that I couet so fayne  
As to embrace you in myne armys twayne.

Nothyng yerthly to me more desyrous  
Than to beholde youre bewteouse countenance:  
But, hatefull absens, to me so enuyous,  
Though thou withdraw me from her by long dystaunce,  
Yet shall she neuer oute of remembraunce;  
For I haue grauyd her wythin the secret wall  
Of my trew hart, to loue her best of all!

Qd Skelton, laureat.

John Skelton

# Mannerly Margery Milk And Ale

Ay, beshrew you! By my fay,  
These wanton clerks be nice alway!  
Avaunt, avaunt, my popinjay!  
What, will ye do nothing but play?  
Tilly, vally, straw, let be I say!  
Gup, Christian Clout, gup, Jack of the Vale!  
With Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale.

By God, ye be a pretty pode,  
And I love you an whole cart-load.  
Straw, James Foder, ye play the fode,  
I am no hackney for your rod:  
Go watch a bull, your back is broad!  
Gup, Christian Clout, gup, Jack of the Vale!  
With Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale.

Ywis ye deal uncourteously;  
What, would ye frumple me? Now fy!  
What, and ye shall be my pigesnye?  
By Christ, ye shall not, no hardely:  
I will not be japed bodily!  
Gup, Christian Clout, gup, Jack of the Vale!  
With Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale.

Walk forth your way, ye cost me nought;  
Now I have found what I have sought:  
The best cheap flesh that ever I bought.  
Yet, for His love that all hath wrought,  
Wed me, or else I die for thought.  
Gup, Christian Clout, your breath is stale!  
Go, Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale!  
Gup, Christina Clout, gup, Jack of the Vale!  
With Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale.

John Skelton

# My Darling Dear, My Daisy Flower

WITH lullay, lullay, like a child,  
Thou sleepèst too long, thou art beguiled!  
'My darling dear, my daisy flower,  
Let me,' quoth he, 'lie in your lap.'  
'Lie still,' quoth she, 'my paramour,  
Lie still hardily<sup>1</sup>, and take a nap.'  
His head was heavy, such was his hap,  
All drowsy, dreaming, drowned in sleep,  
That of his love he took no keep,  
With hey, lullay, etc.

With ba, ba, ba, and bas, bas, bas!  
She cherished him both cheek and chin  
That he wist never where he was;  
He had forgotten all deadly sin!  
He wanted wit her love to win:  
He trusted her payment and lost all his pay;  
She left him sleeping and stale<sup>2</sup> away,  
With hey, lullay, etc.

The rivers rough, the waters wan;  
She sparèd not to wet her feet.  
She waded over, she found a man  
That halsèd<sup>3</sup> her heartily and kissed her sweet;  
Thus after her cold she caught a heat.  
'My lief,<sup>4</sup>' she said, 'rowteth<sup>5</sup> in his bed;  
Iwys<sup>6</sup> he hath an heavy head,'  
With hey, lullay, etc.

What dreamest thou, drunkard, drowsy pate?  
Thy lust and liking is from thee gone;  
Thou blinkard blowboll<sup>7</sup>, thou wakèst too late;  
Behold thou liest, luggard, alone!  
Well may thou sigh, well may thou groan,  
To deal with her so cowardly.  
Ywis, pole-hatchet,<sup>8</sup> she blearèd thine eye!

John Skelton

# Of All Nacyons Vnder The Heuyn

[Skelton Laureate agaynste a comely Coystrowne that curyowsly chawntyd And curryshly cowntred, And madly in hys Musykkys mokkyshly made, Agaynste the .ix. Musys of polytyke Poems & Poettys matryculat.]

[Of all nacyons vnder the heuyn]

Of all nacyons vnder the heuyn.  
These frantyke foolys I hate most of all.  
For though they stumble in the synnys seuyn.  
In peuyshnes yet they snapper and fall.  
Which men the .viii. dedly syn call.  
This peuysh proud thys prendergest.  
When he is well yet can he not rest.

A swete suger-lofe & sowre bayardys-bun.  
Be sumdele lyke in forme & shap.  
The one for a duke the other for dun.  
A maunchet for morell thereon to snap.  
Hys hart is to hy to haue any hap.  
But for in his gamvt carp that he can.  
Lo Iak wold be a Ientylman

Wyth hey trolly loly lo whip here Iak.  
Alumbek sodyldym syllorym ben.  
Curyowsly he can both counter & knak  
Of Martyn swart & all hys mery men.  
Lord how perkyn is proud of hys Pohen.  
But ask wher he fyndyth among hys monacordys.  
An holy-water clarke a ruler of lordys.

He can not fynd it in rule nor in space.  
He solfyth to haute hys Trybyll is to hy.  
He braggyth of hys byrth that borne was full bace  
Hys musyk withoute mesure to sharp is hys my  
He trymmyth in hys tenor to counter pyrdewy.  
Hys dyscant is besy it is withoute a mene.  
To fat is hys fantsy hys wyt is to lene.

He lumbryth on a lewde lewte roty bully Ioyse.  
Rumbyll downe tumbyll downe hey go now now.  
He fumblyth in hys fyngeryng an vgly good noyse.  
It semyth the sobbyng of an old sow.  
He wold be made moch of & he wyst how.  
Wele sped In spyndels and turnyng of tauellys.  
A bungler a brawler a pyker of quarellys.

Comely he clappyth a payre of clauycordys.  
He whystelyth so swetely he makyth me to swete.  
His descant is dashed full of dyscordes  
A red angry man but easy to intrete.  
An vssher of the hall fayn wold I get.  
To poynte this proude page a place and a rome  
For Iak wold be a Ientylman that late was a grome

Iak wold Iet and yet Iyll sayd nay.  
He counteth in his countenance to checke with the best.  
A malaperte medler that pryeth for his pray  
In a dysh dare he rush at the rypest.  
Dremyng in dumpys to wrangyll & to wrest.  
He fyndeth a proporcyon in his prycke-songe.  
To drynk at a draught a larg & a long

Nay iape not with hym he is no small fole  
It is a solempne syre and a solayne.  
For lordes and ladyes lerne at his scole  
He techyth them so wysely to solf and to fayne.  
That neyther they synge wel prycke-songe nor playne  
Thys docter deuyas commensyd in a cart.  
A master a mynstrell a fydler a farte

What though ye can cownter Custodi nos.  
As well it becomyth yow a parysh towne-Clarke.  
To syng Sospitati dedit Egros.  
Yet bere ye not to bold to braule ne to bark.  
At me, that medeled nothyng with youre wark.  
Correct fyrst thy-self, walk & be nought.  
Deme what thou lyst thou knowyst not my thought.

A prouerbe of old say well or be styll.  
Ye are to vnhappy occasyons to fynde.



Uppon me to clater or els to say yll.  
Now haue I shewyd you part of your proud mynde  
Take thys in worth the best is behynde.  
Wryten at Croydon by Crowland in the Clay.  
On Candelmas euyn the Kalendas of May.

John Skelton

# The Auncient Acquaintance, Madam, Betwen Vs Twayn

The auncient acquaintance, madam, betwen vs twayn,  
The famylyaryte, the formal dalyaunce,  
Causyth me that I can not myself refrayne  
But that I must wryte for my plesaunt pastaunce:  
Remembryng your passyng goodly countenaunce,  
Your goodly port, your bewteous visage,  
Ye may be countyd comfort of all corage.

Of all your feturs fauorable to make tru discripcion,  
I am insuffycient to make such enterpryse;  
For thus dare I say, without [con]tradiccyon,  
That dame Menolope was neuer half so wyse:  
Yet so it is that a rumer begynneth for to ryse,  
How in good horsmen ye set your hole delyght,  
And haue forgotten your old trew louyng knyght.

Wyth bound and rebound, bounsyngly take vp  
Hys jentyll curtoyl, and set nowght by small naggys!  
Spur vp at the hynder gyrth, with Gup, morell, gup!  
With, Jayst ye, jenet of Spayne, for your tayll waggys!  
Ye cast all your corage vppon such courtly haggys.  
Haue in sergeaunt ferroure, myne horse behynd is bare;  
He rydeth well the horse, but he rydeth better the mare.

Ware, ware, the mare wynsyth wyth her wanton hele!  
She kykyth with her kalkyns and keylyth with a clenche;  
She goyth wyde behynde, and hewyth neuer a dele:  
Ware gallyng in the widders, ware of that wrenche!  
It is perlous for a horseman to dyg in the trenche.  
Thus greuyth your husband, that ryght jentyll knyght,  
And so with youre seruantys he fersly doth fyght.

So fersly he fytyth, his mynde is so fell,  
That he dryuyth them doune with dyntes on ther day wach;  
He bresyth theyr braynpannyes and makyth them to swell,  
Theyre browys all to-brokyn, such clappys they cach;  
Whose jalawsy malycyous makyth them to lepe the hach;

By theyr conusaunce knowing how they serue a wily py:  
Ask all your neybouris whether that I ly.

It can be no counsell that is cryed at the cros:  
&nbsp; &nbsp; For youre jentyll husband sorowfull am I;  
How be it, he is not furst hath had a los:  
Aduertysyng you, madame, to warke more secretly,  
Let not all the world make an owtcry;  
Play fayre play, madame, and loke ye play clene,  
Or ells with gret shame your game wylbe sene.

Qd Skelton, laureat.

John Skelton

# The Book Of Phillip Sparrow

Pla ce bo,  
Who is there, who?  
Di le xi,  
Dame Margery;  
Fa, re, my, my,  
Wherefore and why, why?  
For the sowle of Philip Sparowe,  
That was late slayn at Carowe,  
Among the Nones Blake,  
For that swete soules sake,  
And for all sparowes soules,  
Set in our bederolles,  
Pater noster qui,  
With an Ave Mari,  
And with the corner of a Crede,  
The more shalbe your mede.

Whan I remembre agayn  
How mi Philyp was slayn,  
Never halfe the payne  
Was betwene you twayne,  
Pyramus and Thesbe,  
As than befell to me:  
I wept and I wayled,  
The tearys downe hayled;  
But nothings it avayled  
To call Phylp agayne,  
Whom Gyb our cat hath slayne.

Gib, I saye, our cat,  
Worroyd her on that  
Which I loved best:  
It can not be exprest  
My sorowfull hevynesse,  
But all without redresse;  
For within that stounde,  
Halfe slumbrynge, in a swounde  
I fell downe to the grounde.

Unneth I kest myne eyes  
Towarde the cloudy skyes:  
But whan I dyd beholde  
My sparrow dead and colde,  
No creatuer but that wolde  
Have rewed upon me,  
To behold and se  
What hevynesse dyd me pange;  
Wherewith my handes I wrange,  
That my senaws cracked,  
As though I had ben racked,  
So payned and so strayned,  
That no lyfe wellnye remayned.

I syghed and I sobbed,  
For that I was robbed  
Of my sparowes lyfe.  
O mayden, wydow, and wyfe,  
Of what estate ye be,  
Of hye or lowe degre,  
Great sorowe than ye myght se,  
And lerne to wepe at me!  
Such paynes dyd me frete,  
That myne hert dyd bete,  
My vysage pale and dead,  
Wanne, and blewe as lead;  
The panges of hatefull death  
Wellnye had stopped my breath.  
Heu, heu, me,  
That I am wo for the!  
Ad Dominum, cum tribularer, clamavi:  
Of God nothyng els crave I  
But Phyllypes soule to kepe  
From the marees deepe  
Of Acherontes well,  
That is a flode of hell;  
And from the great Pluto,  
The prynce of endles wo;  
And from foule Alecto,  
With vysage blacke and blo;  
And from Medusa, that mare,  
That lyke a fende doth stare;

And from Megeras edders,  
For rufflynge of Phillips fethers,  
And from her fyry sparklynges,  
For burnynge of his wynges;  
And from the smokes sowre  
Of Proserpinas bowre;  
And from the dennes darke,  
Wher Cerberus doth barke,  
Whom Theseus dyd afraye,  
Whom Hercules dyd outraye,  
As famous poetes say;  
From that hell-hounde,  
That lyeth in cheynes bounde,  
With gastly hedes thre,  
To Jupyter pray we  
That Phyllyp preserved may be!  
Amen, say ye with me!

Do mi nus,  
Helpe nowe, swete Jesus!  
Levavi oculos meos in montes:  
Wolde God I had Zenophontes,  
Or Socrates the wyse  
To shew me their devyse,  
Moderatly to take  
This sorrow that I make  
For Phyllyp Sparowes sake!  
So fervently I shake,  
I fele my body quake;  
So urgently I am brought  
Into carefull thought.  
Like Andromach, Hectors wyfe,  
Was wery of her lyfe,  
Whan she had lost her joye,  
Noble Hector of Troye;  
In lyke maner also  
Encreaseth my dedly wo,  
For my sparowe is go.

It was so prety a fole,  
It wold syt on a stole,  
And lerned after my scole

For to kepe his cut,  
With, "Phyllyp, kepe your cut!"

It had a velvet cap,  
And wold syt upon my lap,  
And seke after small wormes,  
And somtyme white bred crommes;  
And many tymes and ofte  
Betwene my brestes softe  
It wolde lye and rest;  
It was propre and prest.

Somtyme he wolde gaspe  
Whan he sawe a waspe;  
A fly or a gnat,  
He wolde flye at that;  
And prytely he wold pant  
Whan he saw an ant;  
Lord, how he wolde pry  
After the butterfly!  
Lorde, how he wolde hop  
After the gressop!  
And whan I sayd, "Phyp! Phyp!"  
Than he wold lepe and skyp,  
And take me by the lyp.  
Alas, it wyll me slo,  
That Phyllyp is gone me fro!

John Skelton

# The Bowge Of Courte

In Autumpne whan the sonne in vyrgyne  
By radyante hete enryped hath our corne  
Whan luna full of mutabylyte  
As Emperes the dyademe hath worne  
Of our pole artyke smyllynge halfe in scorne  
At our foly and our vnstedfastnesse  
The tyme whan Mars to werre hym dyd dres

I callynge to mynde the great auctoryte  
Of poetes olde whyche full craftely  
Under as couerte termes as coude be  
Can touche a troughte and cloke it subtylly  
Wyth fresshe vtteraunce full sentencyously  
Dyuerse in style some spared not vyce to wrythe  
Some of moralyte nobly dyde endyte

Wherby I rede theyr renome and theyr fame  
Maye neuer dye bute euermore endure  
I was sore moued to a force the same  
But Ignoraunce full soone dyde me dyscure  
And shewed that in this arte I was not sure  
For to Illumyne she sayde I was to dulle  
Auysynge me my penne awaye to pulle

And not to wrythe/ for he so wyll atteyne  
Excedynge farther than his connyng is  
His hede maye be harde but feble is his brayne  
Yet haue I knowen suche er this  
But of reproche surely he maye not mys  
That clymmeth hyer than he may fotyng haue  
What and he slyde downe who shall hym saue

Thus vp & down my mynde was drawen & cast  
That I ne wyste what to do was beste  
Soo sore enwered that I was at the laste  
Enforced to slepe and for to take some reste  
And to lye downe as soone as I me dreste  
At harwyche porte slumbryng as I laye  
In myne hostes house called powers keye



Me thoughte I sawe a shyppe goodly of sayle  
Come saylynge forth into that hauen brood  
Her takelynge ryche and of hye apparayle  
She kyste an anker and there she laye at rode  
Marchauntes her borded to see what she had lode  
Therein they founde Royall marchaundyse  
Fraghted with plesure of what ye coude deuyse

But than I thoughte I wolde not dwell behynde  
Amonge all other I put myselfe in prece  
Than there coude I none aquentaunce fynde  
There was moche noyse anone one cryed cese  
Sharpely commaundyng eche man holde hys pece  
Maysters he sayde the shyp that ye here see  
The bowge of courte it hyghte for certeynte

The awnner therof is lady of estate  
Whoos name to tell is dame saunce pere  
Her marchaundyse is ryche and fortunate  
But who wyll haue it muste paye therfore dere  
This Royall chaffre that is shyped here  
Is called fauore to stonde in her good grace  
Than sholde ye see there pressynge in a pace

Of one and other that wolde this lady see  
Whiche sat behynde a traues of sylke fyne  
Of golde of tessew the fynest that myghte be  
In a trone whiche fer clerer dyde shyne  
Than Phebus in his spere celestyne  
Whoos beaute honoure goodly porte  
I haue to lytyll connyng to reporte

But of eche thyng there as I toke hede  
Amonge all other was wrytten in her trone  
In golde letters this worde whiche I dyde rede  
Garder le fortune que est mauelz et bone  
And as I stode redyng this verse myselfe allone  
Her chyef gentywoman daunger by her name  
Gaued me a taunte and sayde I was to blame

To be so pette to prese so proudly vppe

She sayde she trowed that I had eten sause  
She asked yf euer I dranke of saucys cuppe  
And I than softly answered to that clause  
That so to saye. I had gyuen her no cause  
Than asked she me Syr so god the spede  
What is thy name and I sayde it was drede

What mouyd the quod she hydder to come  
Forsoth quod I to bye some of youre ware  
And with that worde on me she gaue a glome  
With browes bente and gan on me to stare  
Full daynnously and fro me she dyde fare  
Leuyng me stondyng as a mased man  
To whome there came another gentywoman

Desyre her name was and so she me tolde  
Sayenge to me broder be of good chere  
Abasshe you not but hardely be bolde  
Auaunce yourselfe to aproche and come nere  
What though our chaffer be neuer so dere  
Yet I auyse you to speke for ony drede  
Who spareth to speke in fayth he spareth to spede

Maystres quod I. I haue none aquentaunce  
That wyll for me be medyatoure and mene  
And this another I haue but smale substaunce  
Pece quod Desyre ye speke not worth a bene  
Yf ye haue not in fayth I wyll you lene  
A precyous Iewell no rycher in this londe  
Bone auenture haue here now in your honde

Shyfte now therwith let see as ye can  
In bowge of courte cheuysaunce to make  
For I dare saye that there nys erthly man  
But an he can bone auenture take  
There can no fauour nor frendshyp hym forsake  
Bone auenture may brynge you in suche case  
That ye shall stonde in fauoure and in grace

But of one thyng I werne you er I goo  
She that styreth the shyp make her your frende  
Maystres quod I. I praye you tell me why soo

And how I maye that waye & meanes fynde  
Forsothe quod she howeuer blowe the wynde  
Fortune gydeth and ruleth all oure shyppe  
Whome she hateth shall ouer the seeboorde skyp

Whome she loueth of all plesyre is ryche  
Whyles she laugheth and hath luste for to playe  
Whome she hateth she casteth in the dyche  
For whan she frouneth she thynketh to make a fray  
She cheryssheth him and hym she cassethe a waye  
Alas quod I how myghte I haue her sure  
In fayth quod she by bone auenture

Thus in a rowe of martchauntes a grete route  
Suwed to fortune that she wold be theyre frynde  
They thronge in fast and flocked her aboute  
And I with them prayed her to haue in mynde  
She promysed to vs all she wolde be kynde  
Of bowge of court she asketh what we wold haue  
And we asked fauoure/ and fauour she vs gaue

Thus endeth the prologue. And begynneth the bowge of Courte breuely  
compyled.

Drede

The sayle is vp fortune ruleth our helme  
We wante no wynde to passe now ouerall  
Fauoure we haue toughther than ony elme  
That wyll abyde and neuer frome vs fall  
But vnder hony oftetyme lyeth bytter gall  
For as methoughte in our shyppe I dyde see  
Full subtyll persones in nombre foure and thre

The fyrste was Fauell full of flattery  
Wyth fables false that well coude fayne a tale  
The seconde was Suspecte whiche that dayly  
Mysdempte eche man with face deedly & pale  
And Haruy hafter that well coude picke a male  
With other foure of theyr affynyte  
Dysdayne. Ryotte. Dyssymuler. Subtylte.

Fortune theyr frende with whome oft she dyde daunce  
They coude not faile thei thought they were so sure  
And oftentymes I wolde myselfe auance  
With them to make solace and pleasure  
But my dysporte they coude not well endure  
They sayde they hated for to dele with Drede  
Than Fauell gan wyth fayre speche me to fede

Fauell.

Noothynge erthely that I wonder so sore  
As of your connyng that is so excellent  
Deynte to haue with vs suche one in store  
So vertuously that hath his dayes spente  
Fortune to you gyftes of grace hath lente  
Loo what it is a man to haue connyng  
All erthly tresoure it is surmountyng

Ye be an apte man as ony can be founde  
To dwell with vs & serue my ladyes grace  
Ye be to her yea worth a thousande pounce  
I herde her speke of you within shorte space  
Whan there were dyuerse that sore dyde you manace  
And though I say it I was myselfe your frende  
For here be dyuerse to you that be vnkynde

But this one thyng ye maye be sure of me  
For by that lorde that bought dere all mankynde  
I can not flater I muste be playne to the  
And ye nede ought man shewe to me your mynde  
For ye haue me whome faythfull ye shall fynde  
Whyles I haue ought by god thou shalt not lacke  
And yf nede be a bolde worde I dare cracke

Nay naye be sure whyles I am on your syde  
Ye maye not fall truste me ye maye not fayle  
Ye stonde in faouere and fortune is your gyde  
And as she wyll so shall our grete shyppe sayle  
Thyse lewde cokwattes shall neuermore preuayle  
Ageynste you hardely therefore be not afrayde  
Farewell tyll soone but no worde that I sayde

Drede.

Than thanked I hym for his grete gentylnes  
But as methoughte he ware on hym a cloke  
That lyled was with doubtfull doublenes  
Methoughte of wordes that he had full a poke  
His stomak stuffed oftetyms dyde reboke  
Suspicyon methoughte mette hym at a brayde  
And I drewe nere to herke what they two sayde

In fayth quod suspecte) spake drede no worde of me  
Why what than wylte thou lete men to speke  
He sayth he can not well accorde with the  
Twyst quod suspecte) goo playe hym I ne reke  
By cryste quod fauell drede is soleyne freke  
What lete vs holde him vp man for a whyle  
Ye soo quod suspecte) he maye vs bothe begyle

And whan he came walkynge soberly  
Wyth whom/ and /ha/ and with a croked loke  
Methoughte his hede was full of gelousy  
His eyen rollynge his hondes faste they quoke  
And to me warde the strayte waye he toke  
God spede broder to me quod he than  
And thus to talke with me he began

Suspicyon

Ye remembre the gentyman ryghte nowe  
That commaunde with you methought a praty space  
Beware of him for I make god auowe  
He wyll begyle you and speke fayre to your face  
Ye neuer dwelte in suche another place  
For here is none that dare well other truste  
But I wolde telle you a thyng and I durste

Spake he a fayth no worde to you of me  
I wote and he dyde ye wolde me telle  
I haue a faouere to you wherof it be  
That I muste shewe you moche of my counselle  
But I wonder what the deuyll of helle  
He sayde of me whan he with you dyde talke

By myne auyse vse not with him to walke

The soueraynst thyng that ony man maye haue  
Is lytyll to saye/ and moche to here and see  
For but I trusted you so god me saue  
I wolde noothyng so playne be  
To you oonly methynke I durste shryue me  
For now am I plenarely dysposed  
To shewe you thynges that may not be disclosed

Drede

Than I assured hym my fydelyte  
His counseyle secrete neuer to dyscure  
Yf he coude fynde in herte to truste me  
Els I prayed hym with all my besy cure  
To kepe it hymselfe for than he myghte be sure  
That noo man erthly coude hym bewreye  
Whyles of his mynde it were lockte with the keye

By god quod he this and thus it is  
And of his mynde he shewed me all and some  
Farewell quod he we wyll talke more of this  
Soo he departed there he wolde be come  
I dare not speke I promysed to be dome  
But as I stode musynge in my mynde  
Haruy hafter came lepyng lyghte as lynde

Upon his breste he bare a versyngeboxe  
His throte was clere and lustely coude fayne  
Methoughte his gowne was all furred wyth foxe  
And euer he sange/ sythe I am nothyng playne  
To kepe him frome pykyng it was a grete payne  
He gased on me with his gotyshe berde  
Whan I loked on hym my purse was half aferde

Heruy hafter.

Syr god you saue why loke ye so sadde  
What thyng is that I maye do for you  
A wonder thyng that ye waxe not madde

For and I studye sholde as ye doo nowe  
My wytte wolde waste I make god auowe  
Tell me your mynde methynke ye make a verse  
I coude it skan and ye wolde it reherse

But to the poynte shortely to procede  
Where hathe your dwellynge ben er ye cam here  
For as I trowe I haue sene you indede  
Er this whan that ye made me Royall chere  
Holde vp the helme loke vp & lete god stere  
I wolde be mery what wynde that euer blowe  
Heue & how rombelow row the bote norman rowe

Prynces of youghte can ye synge by rote  
Or shall I sayle wyth you a felashyp assaye  
For on the booke I can not synge a note  
Wolde to god it wolde please you some daye  
A baladeboke before me for to laye  
And lerne me to synge Re my fa sol  
And whan I fayle bobbe me on the noll

Loo what is to you a pleasure grete  
To haue that connyng & wayes that ye haue  
By goddis soule I wonder how ye gete  
Soo greate pleasyre or who to you it gaue  
Syr pardone me I am an homely knaue  
To be with you thus perte and thus bolde  
But ye be welcome to our housholde

And I dare saye there is no man hereInne  
But wolde be glad of your company  
I wyste neuer man that so soone coude wynne  
The faouere that ye haue with my lady  
I praye to god that it maye neuer dy  
It is your fortune for to haue that grace  
As I be saued it is a wonder case

For as for me I serued here many a daye  
And yet vnneth I can haue my lyuyng  
But I requyre you no worde that I saye  
For and I knowe ony erthly thyng  
That is agayne you ye shall haue wetyng

And ye be welcome syr so god me saue  
I hope hereafter a frende of you to haue

Drede.

Wyth that as he departed soo fro me  
Anone ther mette with him as methoughte  
A man/ but wonderly besene was he  
He loked hawte he sette eche man at noughte  
His gawdy garment with scornys was all wrought  
With Indygnacyon lyned was his hode  
He frowned as he wolde swere by cockes blode

He bote the lyppe he loked passynge coye  
His face was belymmed as byes had him stounge  
It was no tyme with him to Iape nor toye  
Enuye hathe wasted hys lyuer and his lounge  
Hatred by the herte so had hym wrounge  
That he loked pale as asshes to my syghte  
Dysdayne I wene this comerous carkes hyghte

To heruy hafter than he spake of me  
And I drewe nere to harke what they two sayde  
Now quod Dysdayne as I shall saued be  
I haue grete scorne & am ryghte euyll apayed  
Than quod Heruy why arte thou so dysmayde  
By cryste quod he for it is shame to saye  
To see Iohan dawes that came but yesterdaye

How he is now taken in conceyte  
This doctour dawcocke Drede I wene he hyghte  
By goddis bones but yf we haue som sleyte  
It is lyke he wyll stonde in our lyghte  
By god quod Heruy & it so happen myghte  
Lete vs therfore shortely at a worde  
Fynde some mene to caste him ouer the borde

By him that me boughte than quod Dysdayne  
I wonder sore he is in such conceyte  
Turde quod Hafter I wyll the nothyng layne  
There muste for hym be layde some prety beyte  
We tweyne I trowe be not withoute dysceyte



Fyrste pycke a quarell & fall oute with hym then  
And soo outface hym with a carde of ten

Forthwith he made on me a prowde assawte  
With scornfull loke meuyd all in moode  
He wente aboute to take me in a fawte  
He frounde he stared he stamped where he stoode  
I loked on hym I wende he had be woode  
He set the arme proudly vnder the syde  
And in this wyse he gan with me to chyde

Disdayne.

Remembrest thou what thou sayd yesternyght  
Wylt thou abyde by the wordes agayne  
By god I haue of the now grete dyspyte  
I shall the angre ones in euery vayne  
It is greate scorne to see suche an hayne  
As thou arte one that cam but yesterdaye  
With vs olde seruauntes such maysters to playe

I tell the I am of countenance  
What weneste I were. I trowe thou knowe not me  
By goddis woundes but for dysplesaunce  
Of my querell soone wolde I venged be  
But no force I shall ones mete with the  
Come whan it wyll oppose the I shall  
Whatsomeuer auenture therof fall

Trowest thou dreuyll I saye thou gawdy knaue  
That I haue deynte to see the cherysshed thus  
By goddis syde my sworde thy berde shall shaue  
Well ones thou shalte be chermed I wus  
Naye strawe for tales thou shalte not rule vs  
We be thy betters and so thou shalte vs take  
Or we shall the oute of thy clothes shake

Drede.

Wyth that came Ryotte russhynge all atones  
A rusty gallande to ragged and to rente  
And on the borde he whyrled a payre of bones

Quater treye dewes he clatered as he wente  
Nowe haue at all by saynte Thomas of kente  
And euer he threwe & kyst I wote nere what  
His here was growen thoroweoute his hat

Thenne I behelde how he dysgysed was  
His hede was heuy for watchynge ouernyghte  
His eyen blereed his face shone lyke a glas  
His gowne so shorte that it ne couer myghte  
His rumpe he wente so all for somer lyghte  
His hose was garded wyth a lyste of grene  
Yet at the knee they were broken I wene

His cote was checked with patches rede & blewe  
Of kyrkeby kendall was his shorte demye  
And ay he sange in fayth decon thou crewe  
His elbowe bare he ware his gere so nye  
His nose a droppyng his lyppes were full drye  
And by his syde his whynarde & his pouche  
The deuyll myghte daunce therin for ony crowche

Counter he coude (O lux) vpon a potte  
An eestrychefedder of a capons tayle  
He set vp fresshely vpon his hat a lofte  
What reuellroute quod he and gan to rayle  
How ofte he hadde hit Ienet on the tayle  
Of felyce fetewse and lytell prety cate  
How ofte he knocked at her klyckedgate

What sholde I tell more of his rebaudrye  
I was ashamed so to here hym prate  
He had no pleasure but in harlotrye  
Ay quod he in the deuylls date  
What arte thou I sawe the nowe but late  
Forsothe quod I in this courte I dwell nowe  
Welcome quod Ryote I make god auowe

Ryote.

And syr in fayth why comste not vs amonge  
To make the mery as other felowes done  
Thou muste swere and stare man aldaye longe

And wake all nyghte and slepe tyll it be none  
Thou mayste not studye or muse on the mone  
This worlde is nothyng but ete drynke & slepe  
And thus with vs good company to kepe

Plucke vp thyne herte vpon a mery pyne  
And lete us laugh a placke or tweyne at nale  
What the deuyll man myrthe was neuer one  
What loo man see here of dyce a bale  
A brydelyngecaste for that is in thy male  
Now haue at all that lyeth vpon the burde  
Fye on this dyce they be not worth a turde

Haue at the hasarde or at the dosen browne  
Or els I pas a peny to a pounde  
Now wolde to god thou wolde leye money downe  
Lorde how that I wolde caste it full rounde  
Ay in my pouche a buckell I haue founde  
The armes of calyce I haue no coyne nor crosse  
I am not happy I renne ay on the losse

Now renne muste I to the stewys syde  
To wete yf malkyn my lemman haue gete oughte  
I lete her to hyre that men maye on her ryde  
Her harnes easy ferre and nere is soughte  
By goddis sydes syns I her thyder broughte  
She hath gote me more money with her tayle  
Than hath some shyppe that into bordews sayle

Had I as good an hors as she is a mare  
I durste auenture to Iourney thorough Fraunce  
Who rydeth on her he nedeth not to care  
For she is trussed for to breke a launce  
It is a curtel that well can wynche & praunce  
To her wyll I nowe all my pouerte lege  
And tyll I come haue here is myne hat to plege

Drede

Gone is this knaue this rybaude foule & leude  
He ran as fast as euer that he myghte  
Unthryftynes in hym may well be shewed

For whome tyborne groneth both daye and nyghte  
And as I stode and kyste asyde my syghte  
Dysdayne I sawe with Dyssymulacyon  
Standynge in sadde comunicacion

But there was poyntyng & noddynge with his hede  
And many wordes sayde in secrete wyse  
They wandred ay and stode styll in no stede  
Methoughte alwaye Dyscymular dyde deuyse  
Me passynge sore myne herte than gan aryse  
I dempte & drede theyr talkynge was not good  
Anone dyscymular came where I stode

Than in his hode I sawe there faces tweyne  
That one was lene & lyke a pyned goost  
That other loked as he wolde me haue slayne  
And to mewarde as he gan for to coost  
Whan that he was euen at me almoost  
I sawe a knyfe hyd in his one sleue  
Wheron was wryten this worde myscheue

And in his other sleue methought I sawe  
A spone of golde full of hony swete  
To fede a fole and for to preye a dawye  
And on that sleue these wordes were wrete  
A false abstracte cometh from a fals concrete  
His hode was syde his cope was roset graye  
Thyse were the wordes he to me dyde saye

Dyssymulation

How do ye mayster ye loke so soberly  
As I be saued at the dredefull daye  
It is a perylous vyce this enuy  
Alas a connyng man ne dwelle maye  
In no place well but foles with hym fraye  
But as for that connyng hath no foo  
Saue hym that nought can/ scrypture sayth soo.

I knowe your vertu and your lytterkture  
By that lytel connyng that I haue  
Ye be malygned sore I you ensure

But ye haue crafte yourselfe alwaye to saue  
It is grete scorne to se a mysproude knaue  
With a clerke that connyng is to prate  
Lete them go lowse them in the deuylls date

For allbeit that this longe not to me  
Yet on my backe I bere suche lewde delynge  
Ryghte now I spake with one I trowe I see  
But what a strawe I maye not tell allthyng  
By god I saye there is a grete hertebrennyng  
Betwene the persone ye wote of you  
Alas I coude not dele so with a Iew

I wolde eche man were as playne as I  
It is a worlde I saye to here of some  
I hate this faynyng fye vpon it fye  
A man can not wote where to become  
I wys I coude tell but humlery home  
I dare not speke we be so layde awayte  
For all our courte is full of dysceyte

Now by saynte fraunceys that holy man & frere  
I hate this wayes agayne you that they take  
Were I as you I wolde ryde them full nere  
And by my trouthe but yf an ende they make  
Yet wyll I saye some wordes for your sake  
That shall them angre I holde thereon a grote  
For some shall wene be hanged by the throte

I haue a stoppyngoyster in my poke  
Truste me and yf it come to a nede  
But I am lothe for to reyse a smoke  
Yf ye coude be otherwyse agrede  
And so I wolde it were so god me spede  
For this maye brede to a confusyon  
Withoute god make a good conclusyon

Naye see where yonder stondest the teder man  
A flateryng knaue & false he is god wote  
The dreuyll stondest to herken and he can  
It were more thryft he boughte him a newe cote  
It wyll not be/ his purse is not on flote

All that he wereth it is borrowed ware  
His wytte is thynne his hode is thredebare

More coude I saye but what this is ynowe  
Adewe tyll soone we shall speke more of this  
Ye muste be ruled as I shall tell you howe  
Amendis maye be of that is now a mys  
And I am your syr so haue I blys  
In euery poynte that I can do or saye  
Gyue me your honde farewell & haue good daye

Drede

Sodaynly as he departed me fro  
Came pressynge in one in a wonder araye  
Er I was ware behynde me he sayde bo  
Thenne I astonyed of that sodeyne fraye  
Sterte all at ones I lyked nothyng his playe  
For yf I had not quyckely fledde the touche  
He had plucte oute the nobles of my pouche

He was trussed in a garmente strayte  
I haue not sene suche anothers page  
For he coude well vpon a casket wayte  
His hode all pounsed and garded lyke a cage  
Lyghte lymefynger he toke none other wage  
Harken quod he loo here myne honde in thyne  
To vs welcome thou arte by saynte Quyntyne

Disceyte.

But by that lorde that is one two and thre  
I haue an errande to rounde in your ere  
He tolde me so by god ye maye truste me  
Parde remembre whan ye were there  
There I wynked on you/ wote ye not where  
In (A) loco I mene iuxta (B)  
Woo is hym that is blynde and maye not see

But to here the subtylte and the craftte  
As I shall tell you yf ye wyll harke agayne  
And whan I sawe the horsons wolde you hafte

To holde myne honde by god I had grete payne  
For forthwyth there I had him slayne  
But that I drede mordre wolde come oute  
Who deleth with shrewes hath nede to loke aboute

Drede.

And as he rounded thus in myne ere  
Of false collusyon confetryd by assente  
Methoughte I see lewde felawes here and there  
Came for to slee me of mortall entente  
And as they came the shypborde faste I hente  
And thoughte to lepe/ and euen with that woke  
Caughte penne and ynke & wroth this lytyll boke

I wolde therwith no man were myscontente  
Besechyng you that shall it see or rede  
In euery poynte to be indyfferente  
Syth all in substaunce of slumbryng doth procede  
I wyll not saye it is mater indede  
But yet oftyme suche dremes be founde trewe  
Now constrewe ye what is the resydewe

John Skelton

# The Bowge Of Courte

□

In Autumpne, whan the sonne in vyrgyne  
By radyante hete enryped hath our corne,  
Whan Luna, full of mutabylyte,  
As Emperes the dyademe hath worne  
Of our pole artyke, smylynge halfe in scorne  
At our foly and our unstedfastnesse,  
The tyme whan Mars to werre hym dyde dres,

pole artyke: Arcturus of the Corona Borealis  
I, callynge to mynde the great auctoryte  
Of poetes olde, whyche full craftely  
Under as coverte termes as coude be,  
Can touche a troughte and cloke it subtylly  
Wyth fresshe utteraunce full sentencyonsly,  
Dyverse in style, some spared not vyce to wrythe,  
Some of moralyte nobly dyde endyte,

Wherby I rede theyr renome and theyr fame  
Maye never dye bute evermore endure.  
I was sore moved to a force the same,  
But Ignoraunce full soone dyde me dyscure  
And shewed that in this arte I was not sure,  
For to illumyne she sayde I was to dulle,  
Avysynge me my penne awaye to pulle

And not to wrythe, for he so wyll atteyne,  
Excedynge ferther than his connyng is,  
His hede maye be harde, but feble is his brayne!  
Yet have I knowen suche er this;  
But of reproche surely he maye not mys  
That clymmeth hyer than he may fotyng have;  
What and he slyde downe, who shall hym save?

Thus up and down my mynde was drawn and cast  
That I ne wyste what to do was beste;  
Soo sore enwered that I was, at the laste,  
Enforced to slepe and for to take some reste,  
And to lye downe as soone as I me dreste.



At Harwyche Porte, slumbrynge as I laye  
In myne hostes house, called Powers Keye,

Me thoughte I sawe a shyppe, goodly of sayle,  
Come saylyng forth into that haven brood,  
Her takelynge ryche and of hye apparayle;  
She kyste an anker and there she laye at rode.  
Marchauntes her borded to see what she had lode.  
Therein they founde Royall marchaundyse,  
Fraghted with plesure of what ye coude devyse.

But than I thoughte I wolde not dwell behynde,  
Amonge all other I put myselfe in prece.  
Than there coude I none aquentaunce fynde;  
There was moche noyse, anone one cryed, cese!  
Sharpely commaundyng eche man holde hys pece.  
Maysters, he sayde, the shyp that ye here see,  
The Bowge of Courte it hyghte for certeynte;

The awnner thereof is lady of estate,  
Whoos name to tell is Dame Saunce Pere.  
Her marchaundyse is ryche and fortunate,  
But who wyll have it muste paye therfore dere;  
This royall chaffre that is shyped here  
Is called favore-to-stonde-in-her-good-grace.  
Than sholde ye see there pressyng in a pace

Of one and other that wolde this lady see,  
Whiche sat behynde a traves of sylke fyne,  
Of golde of tessew the fynest that myghte be,  
In a trone whiche fer clerer dyde shyne  
Than Phebus in his spere celestyne,  
Whoos beaute, honoure, goodly porte,  
I have to lytyll connyng to reporte.

But of eche thyng there as I take hede,  
Among all other was wrytten in her trone  
In golde letters, this worde, whiche I dyde rede:  
Garder le fortune que est mauelz et bone.  
And as I stode redyng this verse myselfe allone,  
Her chyef gentywoman, daunger by her name,  
Gave me a taunte, and sayde I was to blame

To he so pette to prese so proudly uppe.  
She sayde she trowed that I had eten sause;  
She asked yf ever I dranke of saucys cuppe.  
And I than softly answered to that clause,  
That, so to saye, I had gyven her no cause.  
Than asked she me, Syr, so God the spede,  
What is thy name? and I sayde it was Drede.

What movyd the, quod she, hydder to come?  
Forsoth, quod I, to bye some of youre ware.  
And with that worde on me she gave a glome  
With browes bente and gan on me to stare  
Full daynnously, and fro me she dyde fare,  
Levyng me stondyng as a mased man,  
To whome there came another gentywoman.

Desyre her name was, and so she me tolde,  
Sayenge to me, Broder, be of good chere,  
Abasshe you not, but hardely be bolde,  
Avaunce your selfe to aproche and come nere.  
What though our chaffer he never so dere,  
Yet I avyse you to speke for ony drede;  
Who spareth to speke, in fayth, he spareth to spede.

Maystres, quod I, I have none aquentaunce  
That wyll for me be medyatoure and mene;  
And this an other, I have but smale substaunce.  
Pece, quod Desyre, ye speke not worth a bene!  
Yf ye have not, in fayth, I wyll you lene  
A precyous jewell, no rycher in this londe:  
Bone aventure have here now in your honde.

Shyfte now therwith, let see, as ye can,  
In Bowge of Courte chevysaunce to make;  
For I dare saye that there nys erthly man  
But, and he can Bone aventure take,  
There can no favour nor frendshyp hym forsake.  
Bone aventure may bryng you in suche case  
That ye shall stonde in favoure and in grace.

But of one thyng I werne you er I goo:

She that styreth the shyp, make her your frende.  
Maystres, quod I, I praye you tell me why soo,  
And how I maye that waye and meanes fynde.  
Forsothe, quod she, how ever blowe the wynde,  
Fortune gydeth and ruleth all oure shyppe.  
Whome she hateth shall over the see boorde skyp.

□

Whome she loveth, of all plesyre is ryche  
Whyles she laugheth and hath luste for to playe,  
Whome she hateth she casteth in the dyche,  
For whan she fronneth, she thynketh to make a fray;  
She cheryssheth him, and hym she casseth awaye.  
Alas, quod I, how myghte I have her sure?  
In fayth, quod she, by bone aventure.

□ □

Thus in a rowe of martchauntes a grete route  
Suwed to Fortune that she would be theyre frynde.  
They thronge in fast and flocked her aboute,  
And I with them prayed her to have in mynde.  
She promysed to us all she wolde be kynde;  
Of Bowge of Court she asketh what we wold have,  
And we asked favoure, and favour she us gave. ¶

Thus endeth the prologue; and begynneth  
the Bowge of Courte brevely compyled.

DREDE

THE sayle is up, Fortune ruleth our helme,  
We wante no wynde to passe now over all;  
Favoure we have toughther than ony elme,  
That wyll abyde and never frome us fall.  
But under hony ofte tyme lyeth bytter gall,  
For as me thoughte in our shyppe I dyde see  
Full subtyll persones in nombre foure and thre.

The fyrste was Favell, full of flatery,  
Wyth fables false, that well coude fayne a tale;  
The seconde was Suspecte whiche that dayly  
Mysdempte eche man, with face deedly and pale;

And Harvy Hafter, that well coude picke a male;  
With other foure of theyr affynyte:  
Dysdayne, Ryotte, Dyssymuler, Subtylte.

Fortune theyr frende with whome oft she dyde daunce:  
They coude not faile, thei thought, they were so sure.  
And oftentymes I wolde myselfe avaunce  
With them to make solace and pleasure;  
But my dysporte they coude not well endure;  
They sayde they hated for to dele with Drede.  
Than Favell gan wyth fayre speche me to fede.□

#### FAVELL

Noo thyng erthely that I wonder so sore  
As of your connyng that is so excellent;  
Deynte to have with us suche one in store,  
So vertuously that hath his dayes spente.  
Fortune to you gyftes of grace hath lente:  
Loo, what it is a man to have connyng!  
All erthly tresoure it is surmountyng.

Ye be an apte man, as ony can be founde,  
To dwell with us and serve my ladyes grace.  
Ye be to her, yea, worth a thousande pounce;  
I herde her speke of you within shorte space,  
Whan there were dyverse that sore dyde you manace.  
And though I say it I was myselfe your frende,  
For here be dyverse to you that be unkynde.  
But this one thyng ye maye be sure of me,  
For by that lorde that bought dere all mankynde,  
I can not flater, I muste be playne to the.  
And ye nede ought, man, shewe to me your mynde,  
For ye have me whome faythfull ye shall fynde;  
Whyles I have ought, by God, thou shalt not lacke,  
And yf nede be, a bolde worde I dare cracke.

Nay, naye, be sure, whyles I am on your syde  
Ye maye not fall, truste me, ye maye not fayle.  
Ye stonde in favoure and Fortune is your gyde,  
And as she wyll so shall our grete shyppe sayle.  
Thyse lewde cok wattes shall nevermore prevayle

Ageynste you hardely; therefore be not afrayde,  
Farewell tyll soone, but no worde that I sayde.□

## DREDE

Than thanked I hym for his grete gentylnes,  
But as me thoughte he ware on hym a cloke  
That lyled was with doubtfuII doublenes.  
Me thoughte of wordes that he had full a poke,  
His stomak stuffed ofte tymes dyde reboke.  
Suspicyon, me thoughte, mette hym at a brayde,  
And I drewe nere to herke what they two sayde.

In fayth, quod Suspecte, spake Drede no worde of me?  
Why, what than? wylte thou lete men to speke?  
He sayth he can not well accorde with the.  
Twyst, quod Suspecte, goo playe, hym I ne reke!  
By Cryste, quod Favell, Drede is soleyne freke.  
What, lete us holde him up, man, for a whyle.  
Ye, soo, quod Suspecte, he maye us bothe begyle.

And whan he came walkynge soberly,  
Wyth 'Whom' and 'Ha' and with a croked loke,  
Me thoughte his hede was full of gelousy,  
His eyen rollynge, his hondes faste they quoke;  
And to mewarde the strayte waye he toke.  
God spede, broder, to me quod he than,  
And thus to talke with me he began:□

Ye remembre the gentylman ryghte nowe  
That commaunde with you, me thought, a praty space?  
Beware of him, for I make God avowe,  
He wyll begyle you and speke fayre to your face.  
Ye never dwelte in suche an other place,  
For here is none that dare well other truste;  
But I wolde telle you a thyng, and I durste.

Spake he, a fayth, no worde to you of me?  
I wote and he dyde ye wolde me telle.  
I have a favoure to you, wherof it be  
That I muste shewe you moche of my counselle;  
But I wonder what the devyll of helle

He sayde of me, whan he with you dyde talke;  
By myne avyse use not with him to walke.

The soveraynst thyng that ony man maye have  
Is lytyll to saye and moche to here and see;  
For but I trusted you so God me save,  
I wolde noo thyng so playne be.  
To you oonly, me thynke, I durste shryve me,  
For now am I plenarely dysposed  
To shewe you thynges that may not be disclosed.□

#### DREDE

Than I assured hym my fydelyte,  
His counseyle secrete never to dyscure,  
Yf he coude fynde in herte to truste me.  
Els I prayed hym with all my besy cure  
To kepe it hymselfe, for than he myghte be sure  
That noo man erthly coude hym bewreie.  
Whyles of his mynde it were lockte with the keye.

By God, quod he, this and thus it is,  
And of his mynde he shewed me all and some.  
Fare well, quod he, we wyll talke more of this.  
Soo he departed there he wolde be come.  
I dare not speke, I promysed to be dome.  
But as I stode musynge in my mynde,  
Harvy Hafter came lepyng, lyghte as lynde.

Upon his breste he bare a versynge boxe;  
His throte was clere and lustely coude fayne;  
Me thoughte his gowne was all furred wyth foxe;  
And ever he sange, Sythe I am no thyng playne.  
To kepe him frome pykyng, it was a grete payne;  
He gased on me with his gotyshe berde;  
Whan I loked on hym, my purse was half aferde.□

#### HERVY HAFTER

Syr, God you save, why loke you so sadde?  
VWhat thyng is that I maye do for you?

A wonder thyng that ye waxe not madde.  
For and I studye sholde as ye doo nowe,  
My wytte wolde waste, I make God avowe.  
Tell me your mynde, me thynke ye make a verse,  
I coude it skan and ye wolde it reherse.

But to the poynte shortely to procede,  
Where hathe your dwellynge ben, er ye cam here?  
For as I trowe, I have sene you in dede  
Er this, whan that ye made me royall chere.  
Holde up the helme, loke up and lete God stere:  
I wolde be mery that wynde that ever blowe,  
Heve and how, rombellow, Row the bote, Norman, rowe!

Prynces of youghte can ye synge by rote?  
Or Shall I sayle wyth you a felashyp assaye?  
For on the booke I can not synge a note,  
Wolde to God it wolde please you some daye  
A balade boke before me for to laye,  
And leme me to synge Re my fa sol!  
And whan I fayle bobbe me on the noll.

Loo, what is to you a pleasure grete  
To have that connyng and wayes that ye have;  
By Goddis soule, I wonder how ye gete  
Soo greate pleasyre or who to you it gave.  
Syr, pardone me, I am an homely knave  
To be with you thus perte and thus bolde;  
But ye be welcome to our housholde.

□

And I dare saye there is no man hereinne  
But wolde be glad of your company:  
I wyste never man that so soone coude wyne  
The favoure that ye have with my lady.  
I praye to God that it maye never dy;  
It is your fortune for to have that grace,  
As I be saved, it is a wonder case.

For as for me, I served here many a daye,  
And yet unneth I can have my lyvyng—  
But I requyre you no worde that I saye.  
For, and I knowe ony erthly thyng

That is agayne you, ye shall have wetynge;  
And ye be welcome, syr, so God me save,  
I hope here after a frende of you to have.□

## DREDE

Wyth that, as he departed soo fro me,  
Anone ther mette with him, as me thoughte,  
A man, but wonderly besene was he:  
He loked hawte, he sette eche man at noughte,  
His gawdy garment with scornys was all wrought;  
With Indygnacyon lyned was his hode;  
He frowned as he wolde swere by Cockes blode.

He bote the lyppe, he loked passynge coye,  
His face was belymmed as byes had him stounge;  
It was no tyme with him to jape nor toye.  
Envye hathe wasted his lyver and his lounge,  
Hatred by the herte so had hym wrounge  
That he loked pale as asshes to my syghte;  
Dysdayne, I wene, this comerous carkes hyghte.

To Hervy Hafter than he spake of me,  
And I drewe nere to harke what they two sayde.  
Now, quod Dysdayne, as I shall saved be,  
I have grete scorne and am ryghte evyll apayed.  
Than, quod Hervy, why arte thou so dysmayde?  
By Cryste, quod he, for it is shame to saye,  
To see Johan Dawes that came but yesterdaye

How he is now taken in conceyte,  
This Doctour Dawcocke, Drede, I wene he hyghte.  
By Goddis bones, but yf we have som sleyte,  
It is lyke he wyll stonde in our lyghte.  
By God, quod Hervy, and it so happen myghte.  
Lete us therfore shortely at a worde  
Fynde some mene to caste him over the borde.

By him that me boughte, than quod Dysdayne,  
I wonder sore he is in suche cenceyte.  
Turde, quod Hafter, I wyll the nothyng fayne,  
There muste for hym be layde some prety beyte.



We tweyne, I trowe, be not withoute dysceyte:  
Fyrste pycke a quarell and fall oute with hym then,  
And soo outface hym with a carde of ten.

Forthwith he made on me a prowde assawte,  
With scornfull loke meuyd all in moode.  
He wente aboute to take me in a fawte;  
He frounde, he stared, he stamped where he stooode.  
I loked on hym, I wende he had be woode.  
He set the arme proudly under the syde,  
And in this wyse he gan with me to chyde.□

#### DISDAYNE

Remembrest thou what thou sayd yesternyght?  
Wylt thou abyde by the wordes agayne?  
By God, I have of the now grete dyspyte;  
I shall the angre ones in every vayne.  
It is greate scorne to see suche an hayne  
As thou arte, one that cam but yesterdaye,  
With us olde servauntes such maysters to playe.

I tell the I am of countenance;  
What weneste I were? I trowe thou knowe not me.  
By Goddis woundes but for dysplesaunce  
Of my querell soone wolde I venged be.  
But, no force, I shall ones mete with the;  
Come whan it wyll, oppose the I shall,  
Whatsomever aventure therof fall.

Trowest thou, drevyll, I saye, thou gawdy knave,  
That I have deynste to see the cherysshed thus?  
By Goddis syde, my sworde thy berde shall shave!  
Well, ones thou shalte be chermed, I wus.  
Naye, strawe for tales, thou shalte not rule us,  
We be thy betters and so thou shalte us take,  
Or we shall the oute of thy clothes shake!□

#### DREDE

Wyth that came Ryotte russhynge all at ones,  
A rusty gallande, to ragged and to rente,  
And on the borde he whyrled a payre of bones;  
Quater treye dewes, he clatered as he wente:  
Now have at all, by Saynte Thomas of Kente.  
And ever he threwe, and kyst I wote nere what,  
His here was growen thorowe oute his hat.

cast I never knew what  
Thenne I behelde how he dysgysed was,  
His hede was hevy for watchynge overnyghte,  
His eyen blereed, his face shone lyke a glas,  
His gowne so shorte that it ne cover myghte  
His rumpe, he wente so all for somer lyghte;  
His hose was garded wyth a lyste of grene,  
Yet at the knee they were broken, I wene.

somer lyghte: dressed for summer. lyste: strip  
His cote was checked with patches rede and blewe,  
Of Kyrkeby Kendall was his shorte demye;  
And ay he sange, In fayth, Decon, thou crewe.  
His elbowe bare, he ware his gere so nye,  
His nose ynge, his lyppes were full drye,  
And by his syde his whynarde and his pouche,  
The Devyll myghte daunce therin for ony crowche.

Counter he coude (O lux) upon a potte,  
An eestryche fedder of a capons taylor  
He set up fresshely upon his hat alofte;  
What, revell route, quod he, and gan to rayle  
How ofte he hadde hit Jenet on the taylor,  
Of Felyce fetewse and lytell prety Cate,  
How ofte he knocked at her klycked gate.

What sholde I tell more of his rebaudrye?  
I was ashamed so to here hym prate,  
He had no pleasure but in harlotrye.  
Ay, quod he, in the devylles date,  
What arte thou? I sawe the nowe but late.  
Forsothe, quod I, in this courte I dwell nowe.  
Welcome, quod Ryote, I make God avowe.□

## RYOTE

And, syr, in fayth, why comste not us amonge  
To make the mery, as other felowes done?  
Thou muste swere and stare, man, aldaye longe,  
And wake all nyghte and slepe tyll it be none;  
Thou mayste not studye or muse on the mone.  
This worlde is nothyng but ete, drynke and slepe,  
And thus with us good company to kepe.

Plucke up thyne herte upon a mery pyne,  
And lete us laugh a placke or tweyne at nale;  
What the devyll, man, myrthe was never one.  
What, loo, man, see here of dyce a bale;  
A brydelynge caste for that is in thy male!  
Now have at all that lyeth upon the burde,  
Fye on this dyce, they be not worth a turde!

Have at the hasarde or at the dosen browne,  
Or els I pas a peny to a pounde;  
Now wolde to God thou wolde leye money downe!  
Lorde, how that I wolde caste it full rounde!  
Ay, in my pouche a buckell I have founde,  
The armes of Calyce, I have no coyne nor crosse,  
I am not happy, I renne ay on the losse!

Now renne muste I to the stewys syde,  
To wete yf Malkyn, my lemman, have gete oughte:  
I lete her to hyre that men maye on her ryde,  
Her harnes easy ferre and nere is soughte.  
By Goddis sydes, syns I her thyder broughte,  
She hath gote me more money with her tayle  
Than hath some shyppe that into Bordews sayle.

Had I as good an hors as she is a mare,  
I durste aventure to journey thorugh Fraunce;  
Who rydeth on her, he nedeth not to care,  
For she is trussed for to breke a launce.  
It is a curtel that well can wynche and prauce;  
To her wyll I nowe all my poverte lege.  
And tyll I come have, here is myne hat to plege.□

## DREDE

Gone is this knave, this rybaude foule and leude;  
He ran as fast as ever that he myghte.  
Unthryftynes in hym may well be shewed,  
For whome Tyborne groneth both daye and nyghte.  
And as I stode and kyste asyde my syghte,  
Dysdayne I sawe with Dyssymulacyon,  
Standynge in sadde comunicacion.

But there was poyntyng and noddynge with the hede,  
And many wordes sayde in secrete wyse;  
They wandred ay and stode styll in no stede.  
Me thoughte, alwaye Dyscymular dyde devyse;  
Me, passynge sore, myne herte than gan aryse,  
I dempte and drede theyr talkynge was not good.  
Anone Dyscymular came where I stode.

Than in his hode I sawe there faces tweyne,  
That one was lene and lyke a pyned goost,  
That other loked as he wolde me have slayne.  
And to mewarde as he gan for to coost,  
Whan that he was even at me almoost,  
I sawe a knyfe hyd in his one sIeve,  
Wheron was wryten this worde, myscheve.

And in his other sleve, me thought I sawe  
A spone of golde, full of hony swete,  
To fede a fole, and for to preye a dawe.  
And on that sleve these wordes were wrete,  
A false abstracte cometh from a fals concrete.  
His hode was syde, his cope was roset graye,  
Thyse were the wordes he to me dyde saye:□

## DYSSYMULATION

How do ye, mayster? Ye loke so soberly,  
As I be saved at the dredefull daye,  
It is a perylous vyce, this envy.  
Alas, a connyng man ne dwelle maye  
In no place well, but foles with hym fraye.

But as for that, connyng hath no foo  
Save hym that nought can: scripture sayth soo.

I knowe your vertu and your lytterkture  
By that lytel connyng that I have;  
Ye be malygned sore, I you ensure  
But ye have crafte your selfe alwaye to save.  
It is grete scorne to se a mysproude knave  
With a clerke that connyng is to prate:  
Lete them go lowse them, in the devylles date.

For allbeit that this longe not to me,  
Yet on my backe I bere suche lewde delynge;  
Ryghte now I spake with one, I trowe, I see—  
But, what, a strawe! I maye not tell all thyng.  
By God, I saye, there is grete herte brennyng  
Betwene the persone ye wote of, you—  
Alas, I coude not dele so with a Jew!

is not my business  
I wolde eche man were as playne as I,  
It is a worlde, I saye, to here of some;  
I hate this faynyng, fye upon it, fye!  
A man can not wote where to become;  
I wys I coude tell—but humlery, home,  
I dare not speke, we be so layde awayte,  
For all our courte is full of dysceyte.

Now, by Saynte Fraunceys, that holy man and frer  
I hate this wayes agayne you that they take!  
Were I as you, I wolde ryde them full nere,  
And by my trouthe but yf an ende they make,  
Yet wyll I saye some wordes for your sake  
That shall them angre, I holde thereon a grote,  
For some shall wene be hanged by the throte.

I bet money on it  
I have a stoppyng oyster in my poke,  
Truste me and yf it come to a nede;  
But I am lothe for to reyse a smoke,  
Yf ye coude be otherwyse agrede;  
And so I wolde it were, so God me spede,

For this maye brede to a confusyon,  
Withoute God make a good conclusyon.

Naye, see where yonder stondest the teder man,  
A flaterynge knave and false he is, God wote;  
The drevyll stondest to herken and he can.  
It were more thryft he boughte him a newe cote;  
It wyll not be, his purse is not on flote.  
All that he wereth it is borrowed ware,  
His wytte is thynne, his hode is threde-bare.

More coude I saye, but what this is ynowe;  
Adewe tyll soone, we shall speke more of this.  
Ye muste be ruled as I shall tell you howe,  
Amendis maye be of that is now amys.  
And I am your, syr, so have I blys,  
In every poynte that I can do or saye.  
Gyve me your honde, fare well and have good daye.□

#### DREDE

Sodaynly, as he departed me fro,  
Came pressynge in one in a wonder araye;  
Er I was ware, behynde me he sayde Bo!  
Thenne I, astonyed of that sodeyne fraye,  
Sterte all at ones. I lyked no thyng his playe,  
For yf I had not quyckely fledde the touche,  
He had plucte oute the nobles of my pouche.

He was trussed in a garmente strayte  
(I have not sene suche anothers page)  
For he coude well upon a casket wayte,  
His hode all pounsed and garded lyke a cage.  
Lyghte lyme fynger, he toke none other wage.  
Harken, quod he, loo here myne honde in thyne,  
To us welcome thou arte, by Saynte Quyntyne.□

#### DISCEYTE

But by that Lorde that is one, two and thre,  
I have an errande to rounde in your ere.  
He tolde me so, by God, ye maye truste me.

Parde, remembre whan ye were there,  
There I wynked on you, wote ye not where?  
In (A) loco, I mene juxta (B),  
Woo is hym that is blynde and maye not see!

But to here the subtylte and the crafte,  
As I shall tell you, yf ye wyll harke agayne:  
And whan I sawe the horsons wolde you hafte,  
To holde myne honde, by God, I had grete payne;  
For forthwyth there I had him slayne,  
But that I drede mordre wolde come oute;  
Who deleth with shrewes hath nede to loke aboute.□

#### DREDE

And as he rounded thus in myne ere  
Of false collusyon confetryd by assente,  
Me thoughte I see lewde felawes here and there  
Game for to slee me of mortall entente.  
And as they came, the shyphorde faste I hente,  
And thoughte to lepe, and even with that woke,  
Caughte penne and ynke, and wroth this lytyll boke.

I wolde therwith no man were myscontente,  
Besechyng you that shall it see or rede,  
In every poynte to be indyfferente,  
Syth all in substaunce of slumbryng doth procede.  
I wyll not saye it is mater in dede,  
But yet oftyme suche dremes be founde trewe;  
Now constrewe ye what is the resydewe.

John Skelton

# The Tunning Of Elenor Rumming

Tell you I chyll,  
If that ye wyll  
A whyle be styll,  
Of a comely gyll  
That dwelt on a hyll:  
But she is not gryll,  
For she is somewhat sage  
And well worne in age;  
For her vysage  
It would aswage  
A mannes courage.

Her lothely lere  
Is nothyng clere,  
But ugly of chere,  
Droupy and drowsy,  
Scurvy and lowsy;  
Her face all bowsy,  
Comely crynkled,  
Woundersly wrynkled,  
Lyke a rost pygges eare,  
Brystled wyth here.

Her lewde lypes twayne,  
They slaver, men sayne,  
Lyke a ropy rayne,  
A gummy glayre:  
She is ugly fayre;  
Her nose somdele hoked,  
And camously croked,  
Never stoppyng,  
But ever droppyng;  
Her skynne lose and slacke,  
Grained lyke a sacke;  
With a croked backe.

Her eyen gowndy  
Are full unsowndy,  
For they are blered;



And she gray hered;  
Jawed lyke a jetty;  
A man would have pytty  
To se how she is gumbed,  
Fyngered and thumbed,  
Gently joynted,  
Gresed and annoynted  
Up to the knockles;  
The bones of her huckels  
Lyke as they were with buckels  
Togyther made fast:  
Her youth is farre past:  
Foted lyke a plane,  
Legged lyke a crane;  
And yet she wyll jet,  
Lyke a jollyvet,  
In her furred flocket,  
And gray russet rocket,  
With symper the cocket.  
Her huke of Lyncole grene,  
It had ben hers, I wene,  
More then fourty yere;  
And so doth it apere,  
For the grene bare thredes  
Loke lyke sere wedes,  
Wyddered lyke hay,  
The woll worne away;  
And yet I dare saye  
She thynketh herselfe gaye  
Upon the holy daye,  
Whan she doth her aray,  
And gyrdeth in her gytes  
Stytched and pranked with pletes;  
Her kyrtel Brystow red,  
With clothes upon her hed  
That wey a sowe of led,  
Wrythen in wonder wyse,  
After the Sarasyns gyse  
With a whym wham,  
Knyt with a trym tram,  
Upon her brayne pan,  
Lyke an Egyptian,

Capped about:  
When she goeth out  
Herselfe for to shewe,  
She dryveth downe the dewe  
Wyth a payre of heles  
As brode as two wheles;  
She hobbles as a gose  
With her blanket hose  
Over the falowe;  
Her shone smered wyth talowe,  
Gresed upon dyrt  
That baudeth her skyrt.

Primus passus

And this comely dame,  
I understande, her name  
Is Elynour Rummynge,  
At home in her wonnynge;  
And as men say  
She dwelt in Sothray,  
In a certayne stede  
Bysyde Lederhede.  
She is a tonnysh gyb;  
The devyll and she be syb.

But to make up my tale,  
She breweth nobby ale,  
And maketh therof port sale  
To travellars, to tynkers,  
To sweters, to swynkers,  
And all good ale drynkers,  
That wyll nothyng spare,  
But drynke tyll they stare  
And brynge themselfe bare,  
With, "Now away the mare,  
And let us sley care,  
As wyse as an hare!"

Come who so wyll  
To Elynour on the hyll,

Wyth, "Fyll the cup, fyll,"  
And syt there by styll,  
Erly and late:  
Thyther cometh Kate,  
Cysly, and Sare,  
With theyr legges bare,  
And also theyr fete,  
Hardely, full unswete;  
Wyth theyr heles dagged,  
Theyr kyrtelles all to-jagged,  
Theyr smockes all to-ragged,  
Wyth titters and tatters,  
Brynge dysshes and platters,  
Wyth all theyr myght runnyng  
To Elynour Rummyng,  
To have of her tunnyng:  
She leneth them on the same.  
And thus begynneth the game.

Instede of coyne and monny,  
Some brynge her a conny,  
And some a pot with honny,  
Some a salt, and some a spone,  
Some theyr hose, some theyr shone;  
Some ran a good trot  
With a skellet or a pot;  
Some fyll theyr pot full  
Of good Lemster woll:  
An huswyfe of trust,  
Whan she is athrust,  
Suche a webbe can spyn,  
Her thryft is full thyn.

Some go streyght thyder,  
Be it slaty or slyder;  
They holde the hye waye,  
They care not what men say,  
Be that as be maye;  
Some, lothe to be espyde,  
Start in at the backe syde,  
Over the hedge and pale,  
And all for the good ale.

Some renne tyll they swete,  
Brynge wyth them malte or whete,  
And dame Elynour entrete  
To byrle them of the best.

Than cometh an other gest;  
She swered by the rode of rest,  
Her lypes are so drye,  
Without drynke she must dye;  
Therefore fyll it by and by,  
And have here a pecke of ry.

Anone cometh another,  
As drye as the other,  
And wyth her doth brynge  
Mele, salte, or other thyng,  
Her harvest gyrdle, her weddyng ryng,  
To pay for her scot  
As cometh to her lot.  
Som bryngeth her husbandes hood,  
Because the ale is good;  
Another brought her his cap  
To offer to the ale-tap,  
Wyth flaxe and wyth towe;  
And some brought sowre dowe;  
Wyth, "Hey, and wyth, Howe,  
Syt we downe a-rowe,  
And drynke tyll we blowe,  
And pype tyrly tyrlowe!"

Some layde to pledge  
Theyr hatchet and theyr wedge,  
Theyr hekell and theyr rele,  
Theyr rocke, theyr spynnyng whele;  
And some went so narrowe,  
They layde to pledge theyr wharrowe,  
Theyr rybskyn and theyr spyndell,  
Theyr nedell and theyr thymbell:  
Here was scant thryft  
Whan they made suche shyft

Theyr thrust was so great,  
They asked never for mete,  
But drynke, styll drynke,  
"And let the cat wynke,  
Let us washe our gommies  
From the drye crommes!"

But some than sat ryght sad  
That nothyng had  
There of theyre awne,  
Neyther gelt nor pawne;  
Suche were there menny  
That had not a penny,  
But, whan they should walke,  
Were fayne wyth a chalke  
To score on the balke,  
Or score on the taylor:  
God gyve it yll hayle!  
For my fyngers ytche;  
I have wrytten to mytche  
Of this mad mummyng  
Of Elynour Rummyng:  
Thus endeth the gest  
Of this worthy fest!

Quod Skelton, Laureat.

John Skelton

# To Mistress Isabell Pennell

By Saint Mary, my lady,  
Your mammy and your dady  
Brought forth a goodly baby !  
    My maiden Isabel,  
Reflaring rosabell,  
The flagrant camamell,  
    The ruddy rosary,  
The sovereign rosemary,  
The pretty strawberry,  
    The columbine, the nepte,  
The jelloffer well set,  
The proper violet ;  
    Ennewöd your colowre  
Is like the daisy flower  
After the April shower ;  
    Star of the morrow gray,  
The blossom on the spray,  
The freshest flower of May :  
    Maidenly demure,  
Of womanhood the lure ;  
Wherefore I make you sure  
    It were an heavenly health,  
It were and endless wealth,  
A life for God himself,  
    To hear this nightingale  
Among the birdës smale  
Warbeling in the vale,—  
Dug, dug, jug, jug,  
Good year and good luck,  
With chuck, chuck, chuck, chuck !

John Skelton







## To Mistress Margery Wentworth -2

With margerain gentle,  
The flower of goodlihead,  
Embroidered the mantle  
Is of your maidenhead.  
Plainly I cannot glose;  
Ye be, as I divine,  
The pretty primrose,  
The goodly columbine.

Benign, courteous, and meek,  
With wordes well devised;  
In you, who list to seek,  
Be virtues well comprised.  
With margerain gentle,  
The flower of goodlihead,  
Embroidered the mantle  
Is of your maidenhead.

John Skelton

# Vppon A Deedmans Hed

[Skelton Laureat vppon a deedmans hed that was sent to hym from an honorable Ientyll-woman for a token Deuysyd this gostly medytacyon in Englysh Couenable in sentence Comendable, Lamentable, Lacrymable, Profytable for the soule.]

Youre vgly tokyn.  
My mynd hath brokyn.  
From worldly lust.  
For I haue dyscust.  
We ar but dust.  
And dy we must.

It is generall.  
To be mortall.  
I haue well espyde.  
No man may hym hyde.  
From deth holow-eyed.  
With synnews wyderyd.  
With bonys shyderyd.  
With hys worme-etyn maw.  
And hys gastly Iaw.  
Gaspyng asyde.  
Nakyd of hyde.  
Neyther flesh nor fell.

Then by my counsell.  
Loke that ye spell.  
Well thys gospels.  
For wher-so we dwell.  
Deth wyll vs quell.  
And with vs mell.

For all oure pamperde paunchys.  
Ther may no fraunchys.  
Nor worldly blys.  
Redeme vs from this.  
Oure days be datyd.  
To be chek-matyd.  
With drawttys of deth.  
Stoppynge oure breth.

Oure eyen synkyng.  
Oure bodys stynkyng.  
Oure gummys grynnnyng.  
Oure soulys brynnnyng.  
To whom then shall we sew.  
For to haue rescew.  
But to swete Iesu.  
On vs then for to rew.

O goodly chyld.  
Of Mary mylde.  
Then be oure shyld.  
That we be not exlyd.  
To the dyne dale.  
Of boteles bale. Nor to the lake.  
Of fendys blake.

But graunt vs grace.  
To se thy face.  
And to purchace.  
Thyne heuenly place.  
And thy palace.  
Full of solace.  
Aboue the sky.  
That is so hy.  
Eternally.  
To beholde and se.  
The Trynyte.

Amen.

John Skelton

# Why Were Ye Calliope Embrowdered With Letters Of Golde ?

CALLIOPE,  
As ye may se,  
Regent is she  
    Of poetes al,  
Whiche gaue to me  
The high degre  
Laureat to be  
    Of fame royall ;  
Whose name enrolde  
With silke and golde  
I dare be bolde  
    Thus for to were.  
Of her I holde  
And her householde ;  
Though I waxe olde  
    And somdele sere,  
Yet is she fayne,  
Voyde of disdayn,  
Me to retayn  
    Her seruiture :  
With her certayne  
I wyll remayne  
As my souerayne  
    Moost of pleasure,  
Maulqre touz malheureux.

John Skelton

## With Lullay, Lullay

With lullay, lullay, like a child,  
Thou sleepest too long, thou art beguiled!  
"My darling dear, my daisy flower,  
Let me," quoth he, "lie in your lap."  
"Lie still," quoth she, "my paramour,  
Lie still hardily, and take a nap."  
His head was heavy, such was his hap,  
All drowsy, dreaming, drowned in sleep,  
That of his love he took no keep,  
With hey, lullay, etc.

With ba, ba, ba, and bas, bas, bas!  
She cherished him both cheek and chin  
That he wist never where he was;  
He had forgotten all deadly sin!  
He wanted wit her love to win:  
He trusted her payment and lost all his pay;  
She left him sleeping and stale away,  
With hey, lullay, etc.

The rivers rough, the waters wan;  
She spar&egrave;d not to wet her feet.  
She waded over, she found a man  
That halsed her heartily and kissed her sweet;  
Thus after her cold she caught a heat.  
"My lief, she said, 'rowteth in his bed;  
Iwys he hath an heavy head,"  
With hey, lullay, etc.

What dreamest thou, drunkard, drowsy pate?  
Thy lust and liking is from thee gone;  
Thou blinkard blowboll, thou wakest too late;  
Behold thou liest, luggard, alone!  
Well may thou sigh, well may thou groan,  
To deal with her so cowardly.  
Ywis, pole-hatchet, she bleared thine eye!

Quoth Skelton Laureate.



# Womanhod Wanton Ye Want

Womanhod wanton ye want.  
Youre medelyng mastres is manerles.  
Plente of yll of goodnes skant.  
Ye rayll at ryot recheles.  
To prayse youre porte it is nedeles.  
For all your draffe yet and your dreggys.  
As well borne as ye full oft-tyme beggys.

Why so koy and full of skorne.  
Myne horse is sold I wene you say.  
My new furryd gowne when it is worne.  
Put vp youre purs ye shall non pay.  
By Crede I trust to se the day.  
As proud a pohen as ye sprede.  
Of me and other ye may haue nede.

Though angelyk be youre smylyng.  
Yet is youre tong an adders tayle.  
Full lyke a Scorpyon styngyng.  
All those by whom ye haue auayle.  
Good mastres Anne there ye do shayle.  
What prate ye praty pyggys-ny.  
I truste to quyte you or I dy.

Youre key is mete for euery lok.  
Youre key is comen & hangyth owte.  
Youre key is redy we nede not knok.  
Nor stand long wrestyng there-aboute.  
Of youre doregate ye haue no doute.  
But one thyng is that ye be lewde.  
Holde youre tong now all be shrewde.

To mastres Anne that farly swete.  
That wonnes at the key in temmys strete.

John Skelton