VI

L'epistre de Cupide

[*The letter of Cupid*]

'Cupido, vnto whos commandement
The gentil kynrede of goddes on hy — *noble kindred*; *above*
And peple infernal been obedient, — *denizens of hell*
And the mortel folk seruen bisyly, — *earthly*
Of goddesse Sitheree sone oonly, — *Venus*
To all tho þat to our deitee — *those*
Been sogettes, greetynges senden we. — *subjects*

'In general we wole þat yee knowe — *wish you to know*
þat ladyes of honur and reuerence,
And othir gentil wommen, han isowe — *gently born*; *sown*
Swich seed of conpleynte in our audience, — *such*; *hearing*
Of men þat doon hem outrage and offense,
þat it oure eres greeueth for to heere,
So pitous is th'effect of hir mateere. — *pitiful*; *substance*; *complaint*

'And, passyng alle londes, on this yle — *above*; *island*
That clept is Albioun they moost conpleyne. — *called*
They seyn þat ther is croppe and roote of gyle, — *deceit*
So can tho men dissimulen and feyne, — *those*; *dissimulate*
With standyng dropes in hir yen tweyne, — *tears*; *their two eyes*
Whan þat hir herte feelith no distresse,
To blynde wommen with hir doublenesse.

'Hir wordes spoken been so sighyngly,
And with so pitous cheere and contenance, — *pitiful appearance*; *bearing*

That euery wight þat meeneth trewely — *person; is honourably disposed*
Deemeth þat they in herte han swich greuance. — *judges; grief*
They seyn so importable is hir penance, — *intolerable*
þat, but hir lady list to shewe hem grace, — *please*
They right anoon moot steruen in the place. — *forthwith must die*

'"A, lady myn", they seyn, "I yow ensure, — *promise*
Shewe me grace, and I shal euere be,
Whyles my lyf may lasten and endure
To yow as humble in euery degree — *respect*
As possible is, and keepe al thyng secree, — *everything discreet*
As þat yourseluen lykith þat I do, — *it may please you*
And elles moot myn herte breste on two." — *otherwise; may; break in*

'Ful hard is it to knowe a mannes herte, — *very*
For outward may no man the truthe deeme, — *by outward signs; judge*
Whan word out of his mowth may ther noon sterte, — *none; issue*
But it sholde any wight by reson qweeme. — *please*
So is it seid of herte, it wolde seeme. — *from the heart*
O feithful womman, ful of innocence,
Thow art betrayed by fals apparence. — *appearances*

'By procees wommen meeued of pitee, — *in course of time; moved by*
Weenyng al thyng wer as þat tho men seye, — *thinking; everything; those*
Granten hem grace of hir benignitee, — *in their kindness*
For they nat sholden for hir sake deye, — *lest they should; die*
And with good herte sette hem in the weye
Of blisful loue, keepe it if they konne. — *happy; know how to*
Thus othir whyle been the wommen wonne. — *at other times*

'And whan the man the pot hath by the stele, — *handle*
And fully of hir hath possessioun,
With þat womman he keepith nat to dele — *cares; deal*
Aftir, if he may fynden in the toun
Any womman his blynd affeccion
On to bestowe. Foule moot he preeue! — *foully may; prosper*
A man, for al his ooth, is hard to leeue. — *oath; believe*

'And for þat euery fals man hath a make, *friend*
As vnto euery wight is light to knowe, *person*; *easy*
Whan this traitour the womman hath forsake, *left*
He faste him speedith vnto his felowe. *hastens*
Til he be ther his herte is on a lowe. *on fire*
His fals deceit ne may him nat souffyse, *suffice*
But of his treson tellith al the wyse. *way*

'Is this a fair auant, is this honour, *boast*
A man himself to accuse and diffame? *defame*
Now is it good confesse him a traitour, *to confess himself*
And brynge a womman to a sclaundrous name,
And telle how he hir body hath doon shame? (*to*) *her body*
No worsship may he thus to him conquere, *gain for himself*
But ful greet repreef vnto him and here. *reproof*; *her*

'To her, nay, yit was it no repreef, *yet*; *reproof*
For al for pitee was it þat shee wroghte, *did*
But he þat breewid hath al this mescheef, *brewed up*; *misfortune*
þat spak so fair and falsly inward thoghte,
His be the shame, as it by reson oghte, *rightly ought to be*
And vnto her thank perpetuel, *endless*
þat in a neede helpe can so wel. *crisis*

'Althogh þat men, by sleighte and sotiltee, *deceit*; *cunning*
A cely, symple and ignorant womman *innocent*
Betraye, is no wondir, syn the citee *since*
Of Troie, as þat the storie telle can,
Betrayed was thurgh the deceit of man, *through*
And set afyr, and al doun ouerthrowe, *on fire*
And finally destroyed, as men knowe.

'Betrayen men nat remes grete and kynges? *kingdoms*
What wight is þat can shape a remedie *person*; *ordain*
Ageynes false and hid purposid thynges? *secretly planned*
Who can the craft tho castes to espye, *has the skill*; *those plans*
But man whos wil ay reedy is t'applie *always ready*; *apply (itself)*

To thyng þat sovneth into hy falshede? *tends towards; falsehood*
Wommen, bewaar of mennes sleighte, I rede. *deceit; advise*

'And, ferthermore, han the men in vsage *as a custom*
þat wheras they nat likly been to speede, *where; succeed*
Swiche as they been with a double visage *(one) such*
They procuren for to pursue hir neede. *advance their cause*
He preyeth him in his cause proceede,
And largely him qwytith his trauaille. *generously; rewards; work*
Smal witen wommen how men hem assaille. *little know*

'To his felawe anothir wrecche seith, *companion*
"Thow fisshist fair. Shee þat hath thee fyrid, *enflamed*
Is fals and inconstant and hath no feith.
Shee for the rode of folk is so desyrid, *ride; by people*
And as an hors fro day to day is hyrid, *hired*
That whan thow twynnest from hir conpaignie, *depart*
Anothir comth, and blerid is thyn ye. *blinded. . . eye (i.e. deceived)*

"'Now prike on faste and ryde thy iourneye. *spur; day's travel*
Whyl thow art ther, shee, behynde thy bak, *there (i.e. away)*
So liberal is shee can no wight withseye, *person; refuse*
But qwikly of anothir take a snak, *bite (with sexual overtone)*
For so the wommen faren, al the pak. *behave; pack*
Whoso hem trustith, hangid moot he be! *may*
Ay they desiren chaunge and noueltee." *always*

'Wherof procedith this but of enuye?
For he himself here ne wynne may, *her*
Repreef of here he spekth, and villenye, *reproof; speaks*
As mannes labbyng tonge is wont alway. *blabbing*
Thus sundry men ful often make assay *attempt*
For to destourbe folk in sundry wyse, *disquiet*
For they may nat accheuen hir empryse. *achieve; their undertaking*

'Ful many a man eek wolde for no good, *also; good (purpose)*
þat hath in loue spent his tyme and vsid,
Men wiste his lady his axyng withstood, *knew; opposed his requests*
And þat he wer of his lady refusid, *had been by;*
Or waast and veyn wer al þat he had musid, *wasted; projected*

Wherfore he can no bettre remedie, *knows*
But on his lady shapith him to lie. *against; prepares*

'"Euery womman", he seith, "is light to gete. *easy*
Can noon seyn nay if shee be wel isoght. *entreated*
Whoso may leiser han with hire to trete, *whoever; leisure; deal*
Of his purpos ne shal he faille noght,
But on maddyng he be so deepe broght *unless; madness; deeply*
þat he shende al with open hoomlynesse. *ruin; plain speaking*
þat louen wommen nat, as þat I gesse."

'To sclaundre wommen thus what may profyte, *slander; it profit*
To gentils namly þat hem armen sholde, *gentlmen; especially; themselves*
And in deffense of wommen hem delyte,
As þat the ordre of gentillesse wolde. *due practice; gentility requires*
If þat a man list gentil to be holde, *wishes; a gentleman; reckoned*
Al moot he flee þat is to it contrarie. *must*
A sclaundryng tonge is therto aduersarie. *slandering; opposed to it*

'A foul vice is of tonge to be light, *easy of speech*
For whoso mochil clappith gabbith ofte. *much chatters; lies*
The tonge of man so swift is and so wight *powerful*
þat wan it is areisid vp on lofte, *raised; aloft (i.e. aloud)*
Reson it sueth so slowly and softe *follows*
þat it him neuere ouertake may.
Lord, so the men been trusty at assay! *how; when tested*

'Al be it þat men fynde o womman nyce, *although; one; foolish*
Inconstant, rechelees or variable, *careless; changeable*
Deynous or prowd, fulfillid of malice, *scornful*
Withoute feith or loue and deceyuable, *deceitful*
Sly, qweynte and fals, in al vnthrift coupable, *cunning; malpractice; guilty*
Wikkid and feers and ful of crueltee,
It folwith nat swiche alle wommen be. *follows; such*

'Whan þat the hy God angels fourmed hadde,
Among hem all whethir ther was noon
þat fownden was malicious and badde?
Yis, men wel knowen ther was many oon *a one*
þat for hir pryde fil from heuene anoon. *their; fell; immediately*

Shal man therfore alle angels prowde name? *call*
Nay, he þat that susteneth is to blame. *supports that view*

'Of xii apostles oon a traitour was. *the twelve*
The remanaunt yit goode wer and treewe. *remainder*
Thanne, if it happe men fynden par cas *happen that; by chance*
O womman fals, swich is good for t'escheewe, *one; such; avoid*
And deeme nat þat they been alle vntreewe. *judge*
I see wel mennes owne falsenesse
Hem causith wommen for to truste lesse.

'O, euery man oghte han an herte tendre *loving*
Vnto woman, and deeme hir honurable, *judge*
Whethir his shap be eithir thikke or sclendre, *shape; thick-set*
Or he be badde or good, this is no fable. *fiction*
Euery man woot þat wit hath resonable, *knows; rational*
þat of a womman he descendid is. *from*
Than is it shame spek of hir amis. *to speak ill of her*

'A wikkid tree good fruyt may noon foorth
brynge,
For swich the fruyt is as þat is the tree. *such*
Take heede of whom thow took thy begynnynge.
Lat thy modir be mirour vnto thee.
Honure hir if thow wilt honurid be.
Despyse thow nat hir in no maneere, *way*
Lest þat therthurgh thy wikkidnesse appeere. *through it*

'An old prouerbe seid is in Englissh:
Men seyn þat brid or foul is deshonest, *bird; dishonourable*
Whatso it be, and holden ful cherlissh, *whatever; reckoned most ill-bred*
þat wont is to deffoule his owne nest. *accustomed; defile*
Men to seye of wommen wel it is best, *for men to speak well*
And nat for to despise hem ne depraue,
If þat hem list hir honur keepe and saue. *they wish; their*

'Ladyes eek conpleynen hem on clerkis, *also; scholars*
þat they han maad bookes of hir deffame, *defaming them*
In whiche they lakken wommennes werkis, *find fault with; actions*
And speken of hem greet repreef and shame, *reproof*

And causelees hem yeue a wikkid name. *without cause; give; reputation*
Thus they despysid been on euery syde, *everywhere*
And sclaundred and belowen on ful wyde. *slandered; belied; very widely*

'Tho wikkid bookes maken mencion, *those*
How they betrayeden, in special, *particular*
Adam, Dauid, Sampson and Salomon,
And many oon mo. Who may rehercen al *another more; recite*
The tresoun þat they haue doon and shal?
Who may hir hy malice conprehende? *their; great*
Nat the world, clerkes seyn, it hath noon ende. *say; it (their malice)*

'Ouyde, in his book callid *Remedie*
Of Loue greet repreef of wommen writith, *criticism*
Wherin I trowe he dide greet folie, *believe*
And euery wight þat in swich cas delitith. *man; such a case*
A clerkes custume is whan he endytith *scholar's; writes*
Of wommen, be it prose, rym or vers, *rhyme; verse*
Seyn they be wikke, al knowe he the reuers. *to say; wicked; although; opposite*

'And þat book scolers lerne in hir childhede, *i.e. the Remedia Amoris*
For they of wommen be waar sholde in age, *so that; wary; when old*
And for to loue hem euere been in drede, *to be afraid*
Syn to deceyue is set al hir corage. *since; inclination*
They seyn peril to caste is auantage, *forecast; advantageous*
Namely swich as men han in be trappid, *especially such*
For many a man by wommen han mishappid. *suffered misfortune*

'No charge what so þat the clerkes seyn. *matter; say*
Of al hir wrong wrytyng do we no cure. *their; do not care*
Al hir labour and trauaille is in veyn,
For, betwixt vs and my lady Nature,
Shal nat be souffred, whyl the world may dure, *endured; last*
Clerkes, by hir outrageous tirannye,
Thus vpon wommen kythen hir maistrye. *to show*

'Whilom ful many of hem wer in our cheyne *formerly; very*
Tyd, and lo now, what for vnweeldy age, *tied; impotent*
And for vnlust, may nat to loue atteyne, *lack of appetite; attain*

And seyn þat loue is but verray dotage. *nothing but folly*
Thus, for þat they hemself lakken corage, *(sexual) energy*
They folk excyten by hir wikked sawes, *their; sayings*
For to rebelle ageyn vs and our lawes. *against*

'But maugree hem þat blamen wommen moost, *in spite of*
Swich is the force of oure impressioun *such; onslaught*
þat sodeynly we felle can hir boost *bring to nought; boast*
And al hir wrong ymaginacioun.
It shal nat been in hir ellecciouN, *choice*
The foulest slutte in al a town refuse,
If þat vs list, for al þat they can muse, *we please; for all their plans*

'But hir in herte as brennyngly desyre *burningly*
As thogh shee wer a duchesse or a qweene:
So can we mennes hertes sette on fyre,
And, as vs list, hem sende ioie and teene. *we please; hurt*
They that to wommen been iwhet so keene, *against women; sharpened*
Our sharpe strokes, how sore they smyte,
Shul feele and knowe, and how they kerue and byte. *cut; wound*

'Pardee, this greet clerk, this sotil Ouyde, *by God; clever*
And many anothir, han deceyued be
Of wommen, as it knowen is ful wyde, *by women; very widely*
What, no men more, and þat is greet deyntee. *a great pleasure*
So excellent a clerk as þat was he,
And othir mo þat kowde so wel preche, *many others*
Betrappid wern for aght they kowde teche. *were trapped in spite of anything*

'And trustith wel þat it is no meruaille,
For wommen kneewen pleynly hir entente. *their intention*
They wiste how sotilly they kowde assaille *knew; cunningly*
Hem, and what falshode in herte they mente,
And tho clerkes they in hir daunger hente. *their power; seized*
With o venym anothir was destroyed, *another (poison)*
And thus the clerkes often wer anoyed. *troubled*

'This ladyes ne gentils nathelees *gently born; nevertheless*
Weren nat they þat wroghten in this wyse, *acted; way*

But swiche filthes þat wern vertulees: *such sluts; immoral*
They qwitten thus thise olde clerkes wyse. *repaid*
To clerkes forthy lesse may souffyse *therefore; suffice*
Than to depraue wommen generally, *defame*
For honur shuln they gete noon therby. *none by this means*

'If þat tho men þat louers hem pretende, *those; pretend themselves*
To wommen weren feithful, goode and treewe,
And dredden hem to deceyue and offende, *feared*
Wommen to loue hem wolde nat escheewe, *refuse*
But euery day hath man an herte neewe.
It vpon oon abyde can no whyle. *one (object); remain; time*
What force is it swich oon for to begyle? *matter; such; deceive*

'Men beren eek the wommen vpon honde, *also; accuse the women*
þat lightly, and withouten any peyne, *easily; difficulty*
They wonne been. They can no wight withstonde, *are won; man*
þat his disese list to hem conpleyne. *pleases; to complain of*
They been so freel, they mowe hem nat restreyne, *frail; may*
Bot whoso lykith may hem lightly haue, *pleases; easily*
So been hire hertes esy in to graue. *to make an impression on*

'To maistir Iohn de Meun, as I suppose,
Than it was a lewde occupacioun, *ignorant business*
In makynge of the *Romance of the Rose*:
So many a sly ymaginacioun *cunning plot*
And perils for to rollen vp and doun,
So long procees, so many a sly cautele, *process; trick*
For to deceyue a cely damoisele! *ignorant maiden*

'Nat can we seen ne in our wit conprehende,
þat art and peyne and sotiltee may faille *labour; cunning*
For to conquere, and soone make an ende,
Whan man a feeble place shal assaille,
And soone also to venquisshe a bataille, *overcome (in)*
Of which no wight dar make resistence, *where no man*
Ne herte hath noon to stonden at deffense.

'Than moot it folwen of necessitee, *must*
Syn art askith so greet engyn and peyne, *since*; *requires*; *skill*
A womman to deceuye, what shee be, *whatever*
Of constance they been nat so bareyne *constancy*; *bare*
As þat some of tho sotil clerkes feyne, *those clever*
But they been as þat wommen oghten be,
Sad, constaunt and fulfillid of pitee. *steadfast*; *full*

'How freendly was Medea to Iasoun,
In the conqueryng of the flees of gold. *gaining*; *Golden Fleece*
How falsly quitte he hir affeccion, *repaid*
By whom victorie he gat, as he hath wold. *as he wished*
How may this man for shame be so bold
To falsen hir þat from deeth and shame *play her false*
Him kepte, and gat him so greet prys and name? *reputation*

'Of Troie also the traitour Eneas,
The feithlees man, how hath he him forswore *perjured himself*
To Dydo þat queene of Cartage was,
þat him releeued of his greeues sore!
What gentillesse mighte shee do more *nobility*; *show*
Than shee, with herte vnfeyned, to him kidde, *showed*
And what meschief to hire of it betidde! *misfortune*; *for it*; *befell*

'In our legende of martirs may men fynde,
Whoso þat lykith therin for to rede, *whoever pleases in it*
That ooth noon, ne byheeste, may men bynde. *promise*
Of repreef ne of shame han they no drede. *reproof*
In herte of man conceites treewe arn dede. *thoughts*
The soile is naght; ther may no trouthe growe. *wicked*
To womman is hir vice nat vnknowe. *their*; *unknown*

'Clerkes seyn also ther is no malice
Vnto wommannes crabbid wikkidnesse. *compared to*
O womman, how shalt thow thyself cheuyce, *look after*
Syn men of thee so mochil harm witnesse? *since*; *much evil*
Yee, strah, do foorth, take noon heuynesse. *straw*; *carry on*
Keepe thyn owne, what men clappe or crake, *whatever*; *chatter or croak*
And some of hem shuln smerte, I vndirtake. *suffer*

'Malice of wommen, what is it to drede? *why; to be feared*
They slee no men, destroien no citees. *slay*
They nat oppressen folk, ne ouerlede, *tyrannize over (them)*
Betraye empyres, remes ne duchees, *kingdoms; duchies*
Ne men byreue hir landes ne hir mees, *deprive of their; dwellings*
Folk enpoysone or howses sette on fyre, *poison*
Ne fals contractes maken for noon hyre.

'Trust, parfyt loue and enteer charitee, *perfect; entire*
Feruent wil and entalentid corage *passionate inclination*
To thewes goode as it sit wel to be, *virtues; is fitting*
Han wommen ay of custume and vsage, *practice*
And wel they can a mannes ire asswage *allay*
With softe wordes, discreet and benigne. *kindly*
What they been inward shewith owtward signe.

'Wommannes herte to no creweltee
Enclyned is, but they been charitable,
Pitous, deuout, ful of humilitee, *pitiful*
Shamefast, debonair and amiable, *modest; gentle*
Dreedful and of hir wordes mesurable. *timid; moderate*
What womman thise hath nat, per auenture, *by chance*
Folwyth nothyng the way of hir nature. *not at all*

'Men seyn our firste modir, nathelees, *nevertheless*
Made al mankynde leese his libertee, *lose*
And nakid it of ioie, douteless, *stripped; certainly*
For Goddes heeste disobeied shee, *commandment*
Whan shee presumed to ete of the tree
Which God forbad þat shee nat ete of sholde,
And nad the feend been, no more she wolde. *had not; devil; would have*

'Th'enuyous swellyng þat the feend our fo *growing envy*
Had vnto man in herte for his welthe
Sente a serpent and made hir to go
To deceuye Eeue, and thus was mannes welthe
Byreft him by the feend, right in a stelthe, *stolen from; an act of theft*
The womman nat knowyng of the deceit. *ignorant*
God woot, ful fer was it from hir conceit. *knows; far; thought*

'Wherfore we seyn, this good womman Eeue
Our fadir Adam ne deceyued noght. *forefather*
Ther may no man for a deceit it preeue *prove*
Proprely but if þat shee in hir thoght *unless*
Had it conpassid first or it was wroght, *projected; before*
And, for swich was nat hire impressioun, *intended effect*
Men call it may no deceit, by resoun.

'No wight deceyueth but he it purpose. *person; unless; plans*
The feend this deceit caste, and nothyng shee. *planned; not at all*
Than is it wrong for to deeme or suppose *judge*
þat shee sholde of þat gilt the cause be. *that she was the cause*
Wytith the feend and his be the maugree, *blame; penalty*
And for excusid haue hir innocence, *hold her innocence excused*
Sauf oonly þat shee brak obedience. *except; broke (her vow of)*

'Touchynge which, ful fewe men ther been— *concerning*
Vnnethes any, dar we saufly seye, *scarcely; safely*
Fro day to day, as men mowe wel seen— *may*
But þat the heeste of God they disobeye. *command*
This haue in mynde, sires, we yow preye.
If þat yee be discreet and resonable,
Yee wole hir holde the more excusable. *forgivable*

'And wher men seyn in man is stidfastnesse, *constancy*
And womman is of hir corage vnstable, *heart*
Who may of Adam bere swich witnesse? *such*
Tellith on this, was he nat changeable?
They bothe weren in a cas semblable, *similar case*
Sauf willyngly the feend deceyued Eeue. *except that*
So dide shee nat Adam, by your leeue.

'Yit was þat synne happy to mankynde.
The feend deceyued was, for al his sleighte. *cunning*
For aght he kowde him in his sleightes wynde, *anything (i.e. all that); ensnare*
God, to descharge mankynde of the weighte *discharge*
Of his trespas, cam doun from heuenes heighte,
And flessh and blood he took of a virgyne
And souffred deeth, man to deliure of pyne. *deliver from pain*

'And God, fro whom ther may no thyng hid be,
If he in womman knowe had swich malice — *known; such*
As men of hem recorde in generaltee, — *generally*
Of our lady, of lyf reparatrice, — *she who was restorer*
Nolde han be born. But for þat shee of vice — *would not*
Was voide, and of al vertu wel, he wiste,
Endowid, of hir be born him liste. — *well supplied; he pleased*

'Hir hepid vertu hath swich excellence — *accumulated*
þat al to weyk is mannes facultee — *weak; mind*
To declare it and therfore, in suspense, — *abeyance*
Hir due laude put moot needes be. — *must*
But this we witen verraily, þat shee, — *know truly*
Next God, the best freend is þat to man longith. — *belongs*
The keye of mercy by hir girdil hongith, — *hangs*

'And of mercy hath euery wight swich neede, — *person; such*
þat, cessyng it, farwel the ioie of man! — *in its absence*
Of hir power it is to taken heede. — *due note should be taken*
Shee mercy may, wole, and purchace can. — *obtain*
Displese hir nat. Honureth þat womman,
And othir wommen all for hir sake,
And, but yee do, your sorwe shal awake. — *unless*

'Thow precious gemme, martir Margarete,
Of thy blood dreddist noon effusioun. — *feared no pouring out*
Thy martirdom ne may we nat foryete. — *forget*
O constant womman, in thy passioun — *suffering*
Ouercam the feendes temptacioun, — *(you) overcame*
And many a wight conuerted thy doctryne — *person; teaching*
Vnto the feith of God, holy virgyne.

'But vndirstondith, we commende hir noght
By encheson of hir virginitee. — *reason*
Trustith right wel, it cam nat in our thoght,
For ay we werreie ageyn chastitee, — *always; war; against*
And euere shal, but, this leeueth wel yee, — *believe this well*
Hir louyng herte and constant to hir lay, — *faith*
Dryue out of remembrance we nat may.

'In any book also wher can yee fynde
þat of the wirkes, or the deeth or lyf
Of Ihesu spekth or makith any mynde, *speaks; calls at all to mind*
þat wommen him forsook for wo or stryf?
Wher was ther any wight so ententyf *person; attentive*
Abouten him as wommen? Perdee, noon. *by heavens*
Th'apostles him forsooken euerichoon. *all*

'Wommen forsook him noght, for al the feith
Of holy chirche in womman lefte oonly. *remained; (one) woman alone*
This is no lees, for thus holy writ seith. *lie*
Looke, and yee shuln so fynde it, hardily. *we may swear*
And therfore it may preeued be therby, *proved by this*
That in womman regneth al the constaunce, *constancy*
And in man is al chaunge and variaunce. *variation*

'Now holdith this for ferme and for no lye, *as a truth*
þat this treewe and iust commendacioun
Of wommen is nat told for flaterie,
Ne to cause hem pryde or elacioun, *vainglory*
But oonly, lo, for this entencioun,
To yeue hem corage of perseuerance *encouragement*
In vertu and hir honur to enhaunce.

'The more vertu, the lasse is the pryde. *(the) virtue; less*
Vertu so noble is and worthy in kynde, *(her) nature*
þat vice and shee may nat in feere abyde. *together*
Shee puttith vice cleene out of mynde.
Shee fleeth from him, shee leueth him behynde.
O womman, þat of vertu art hostesse,
Greet is thyn honur and thy worthynesse.

'Than thus we wolen conclude and deffyne: *bring our dispute to end*
We yow commaunde, our ministres echoon, *each one*
þat reedy been to our heestes enclyne, *commands; (to) submit*
þat of tho men vntreewe, our rebel foon, *against those; foes*
Yee do punisshement, and þat anoon. *immediately*
Voide hem our court and banisshe hem for euere, *expel them from*
So þat therynne they ne come neuere.

'Fulfillid be it, cessyng al delay. *without any*
Looke ther be noon excusacion. *excuse*
Writen in th'eir the lusty monthe of May, *pleasant*
In our paleys, wher many a milion
Of louers treewe han habitacion,
The yeer of grace ioieful and iocounde, *pleasant*
Millesimo CCCC and secounde.' *1402*

Explicit epistula Cupidinis. *here ends the letter of Cupid*

Notes

For fuller comment on Hoccleve's version of the witty parody by Christine de Pizan of anti-feminist commonplaces, see Fleming 1971, Fenster and Erler 1990 (the former responsible for Christine's text, the latter for Hoccleve's), Ellis 1996. The relation of Hoccleve's to Christine's work has occasioned much debate: Hoccleve provides the precedent for this debate (cf. Introduction pp. 9, 40 and *Series* 2.772n.) by declaring that, whereas some gentlewomen have read it as a satire on women, any satire belongs to his source, and that his identification with the female position has led him to write 'conpleynyngly' in support of women. For a sixteenth-century copy of four stanzas from the work, probably from the version included by Thynne in his 1532 edition of Chaucer's works, see Muir 1944–7: 278–9 (his numbers 43–4, 48), and brief comment in Burrow 1999: 807. For possibly relevant comment on the ways in which Lancastrian texts generally present women, see Strohm 1998: 161.

1–8 Hoccleve follows Christine in giving Cupid, as a king (of Love) the appropriate royal style for the letter he is directing to his loyal servants. On the conventions of such a letter, and the wider context of such letters, see Fenster and Erler 1990: 167–8.

10 On Hoccleve's changes to Christine's presentation of women, see Ellis 1996. In Hoccleve gentle birth characterizes both the women (10, 260) and their lovers (135, 138).

16 Here and at the end of the work (476) Hoccleve adapts Christine's time (1399) and place (France) to his own time (1402) and place ('Albion': in S2 'Britane'). The bad reputation of Englishmen as lovers will become a commonplace later in the century, in the writings of Malory and Caxton. What Venuti (1995) calls the 'domestication' of translation is also seen in Hoccleve's explicit use of an English proverb (183).

24 This line has an echo of Chaucer: cf. *Troilus* 3.1147–8. The lover who offers to die to prove his faith (35) also has parallels in *Troilus*.

26ff. The elements of orthodox religion appropriated by courtly love, or *fin amor*, include 'penance' (26), humility (32) and the need for grace (27, 30). Other elements include secrecy (33, broken by the boastful lover at 63), 'daunger' (257n.), and, for loyal women betrayed by faithless lovers, a form of martyrdom (316n.).

41–2 Although this figure appears in Christine, Hoccleve gives it a distinctive slant by invoking a Chaucerian model, the innocent heroines of the *Legend*, moved by pity (72) to grant favour, and addressed directly by the narrator in an attempt to put them on their guard (41–2, 91, cf. *LGW* 1254, 2559). Similarly, like the heroes of the *Legend*, Hoccleve's male figures are presented more negatively and more simply than Christine's (cf. 54, 59, 62–3).

50 This, Hoccleve's version of Christine's 'quant ainsi les ont enveloppees' (Fr. 106)[when they have thus entrapped them], is both more vigorous and—paradoxically, given the translation's emphasis on noble women—more domestic than the French. See further comment, Introduction p. 38.

62 i.e. it isn't enough for him to have betrayed the woman; he has to tell his friend about it (and so break his earlier promise of secrecy).

65 The man accuses himself (or exposes himself unwittingly: Fensler and Erler 1990: 168 n. 7, 206n. to l. 65) by exposing his own falseness.

82 *the deceit of man*: Sinon.

94–5 The use of a go-between is not found in Christine, but has overtones of Chaucer's *Troilus*, which most clearly implies the two-faced nature of the go-between in the invocation to Janus (*Troilus* II.77).

100, 103, 106, 110 These and other animal metaphors (e.g. 184) are not found in Christine. (For comments on those in 102, 106, see Fensler and Erler 1990). Hoccleve uses those in 103 and 110 to good effect, contrasting the lover, departing on horseback (106), with the faithless woman who allows herself to be hired out and ridden like a horse (102–3).

105 See Fensler and Erler 1990 for a parallel to this line in Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale* (*CT* I.4049).

131 'unless he is made so deeply mad'. In H2 'he' has been added above the line; as first copied, without it, the text shared S2's reading: 'but be made so deeply mad'.

141 Cf. 127, where women were 'light' to win over.

144 The sense must be that the tongue is so quick in the utterance (i.e. 'wan it is areisid vp on lofte') of falsehood or the rationalizing of the speaker's appetites that the promptings of reason are left behind (reading 'on lofte' as parallel to 'on highte'; cf. II.172). Mitchell 1968: 23 and Fensler and Erler 1990: 208 find *double entendre* in the stanza, presumably in the words 'areisid vp on lofte… softe', which, if present, depends on the commonplace use of the tongue as a bawdy euphemism for the penis (e.g. Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* I.ii).

148–54 Much of this stanza translates Christine closely (Fr. 185–92), with the exception of 'feers', which may, by homonym substitution (cf. I.13n.), be Hoccleve's version of Christine's 'fieres' (proud).

162–3 Not in Christine, and derived (so Fensler and Erler 1990: 208) from Chaucer's *Canon's Yeoman's Tale* (*CT* VIII.1001–5). See also Ellis 1996: n. 22.

171–2 The scribe of T found these lines odd enough to emend the male pronominal reference to female.

176 Cf. Matt. 7.17, *Series* 1.204n. For a parallel with Chaucer's *Legend* (2394–5), see Fensler and Erler 1990: 208.

178–82 Cf. Exod. 20.12 (also cited *Regement* 569–70), Prov. 1.8, 6.20.

179 *mirour*: part of material added by Hoccleve to Christine, this is a recurring image in his work (cf. Torti 1991). See also II.330, *Series* 2.409, 608, 646, 5.76, *Regement* 690; and, from the translations (the image added by Hoccleve in each instance), IV.96, *Series* 3.697, 727, 4.295, 455, 5.637. See also variant readings at V.35 and *Series* 2.67. The figure exists as an element of the narrative in *Series* 1.157, 162.

183 For comment on this proverbial figure, see Fensler and Erler 1990: 208.

189 The Fr. shows that 'hir' refers to the men; it could, of course, refer to the women whose honour men, in this poem, regularly betray (so that in preserving women's honour men, at the same time, preserve their own).

191 *books of hir diffame*: on the anti-feminist literature to which Christine is objecting, see Fenster and Erler 1990, Fleming 1971 and Miller 1977. Named figures include Ovid (204–5, 246) and Jean de Meun (281–3), author, with Guillaume de Lorris, of the enormously influential *Roman de la rose*. Christine attacked the latter in her contribution to the celebrated *Querelle de la rose*: for a modern printing and discussion, see Fenster and Erler 1990. In making the God of Love a literary censor Christine may have been influenced by Chaucer's presentation of the God of Love in the *Legend*, since the latter attacks the poet-translator Chaucer for translating the *Romance of the Rose*.

197 *wikkid bookes*: not so named by Christine ('en vers dient', 267), and probably deriving from *The Prologue to the Wife of Bath's Tale*, abbreviated *ProlWBT* (*CT* III.685), where, however, not the authors of the books, as here, but their subject matter ('wives') is so named. Given that Christine herself may have

used *ProlWBT* similarly (Ellis 1996, cf. 225–31n. below), this rewriting of an anti-feminist commonplace shows Hoccleve more deeply responsive to Christine's ironies than is usually the case.

199 These Old Testament figures regularly appear as men deceived by women. See *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 2416–17 (Burrow 1977 contains the lines and provides a note), and fuller comment in Fenster's n. to *Epistre* 267–70 (Fenster and Erler 1990: 84).

202–3 The non-holograph MSS offer a reading which might have been Hoccleve's original: at all events, it preserves an ambiguity in the referent of the pronoun 'it' (203)—the world? women?—slightly better than the version in the holograph.

204 i.e. the *Remedia Amoris*.

209 The distinction between 'rym' and 'vers' Hoccleve owes to Christine (261). It does not appear to signify for him as much as that between prose and verse: cf. II.247, *Series* 3.977, 4.930.

215 *they*: H2 has an interlinear gloss 'scilicet libri' (i.e. books like Ovid's *Remedia*, above 204, 211).

221 The relation between Love and Nature, a parody of that between God and Nature—for Chaucer's presentation of Nature as 'vicaire of the almyghty Lord' cf. *CT* VI.19–26, *Parlement of Foules* 379–81—is given clearest expression in the *Roman de la rose* (cf. Benson 1988: 999, n. to *PF* 303).

225–31 These lines, translating Christine (Fr. 493–504), have a striking parallel in Chaucer (*ProlWBT*, *CT* III.707–10).

233 *impressioun*: so Fr. Chaucer uses the word tellingly, though not only, in fabliau contexts (*CT* I.3613, IV.1978, cf. IV.2178).

257 *daunger*: a property of the courtly heroine, variously defined 'standoffishness', 'disdain', 'hesitation'.

258 For the best reading of this line, that women use one poison (their deceiving of the scholars, 247) to drive out (destroy) another (the scholars' attempts to deceive them, 254–6), see Skeat's n. (D1D3 found the line problematical, and replaced 'venym' by the easier reading 'women'.)

266 Since Hoccleve does not use the word 'worship' elsewhere in this text, and does use 'honour' regularly (9, 63, 170, 180, 189, 418, 455), the *H reading appears to be scribal.

281 Tr1 glosses this line 'id est autour of þe *Romans of* þe *Roos*'.

299 *feyne*: TTr1 read 'seyn', which is closer to Christine's phrase ('comme aucuns dit', 406), but the stronger version common to the other non-holograph MSS and to H2 must be Hoccleve's. (Rhymes in '-eyn' are particularly prone to variation in the MSS.)

302 *Medea* provides a possible further link between Christine and Chaucer's *Legend*, since she and Dido (311) both occur in the *Legend*, and its official pro-feminist agenda leads to a similar rewriting of her and Dido's stories so as to exonerate the women's characters and blacken the men's, much as in Christine's work.

316 This addition by Hoccleve presumably refers to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* (so Skeat's n.), a work commissioned by the God of Love to commemorate women faithful in love to the point of self-inflicted death: hence its title, 'Legend', which usually refers to a saint's life (cf. Benson 1988: 842, n. to *CT* I.3141). The death of such women counts as a sort of martyrdom.

323 T glosses (later hand) 'fæminae malitia'.

327 In context, this line recalls the envoy of the *Clerk's Tale*, abbreviated *ClT*, which similarly encourages women to break out of the mould created for them by pro-feminist writing and run true to anti-feminist type (*CT* IV.1177–212).

341 Cf. Prudence, the heroine of Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee*, who similarly assuages her husband Melibee's wrath. Parallels exist in other texts: see Strohm 1992: 95–119.

351 Tr1 glosses 'id est Eua'.

360 On the serpent as feminine in medieval inconography, see Benson 1988: 860 (n. to *CT* II.360–1), Ross 1940: 294 and *Series* 5.159n.

359–62 The *H rhymes wealth/health/stealth are used again by Hoccleve in *Series* 4.877–80.

393 An echo of the traditional medieval view of the 'happy sin' (*felix culpa*) which brought about the birth of Christ: see Skeat's n.

398 The birth of Christ of a virgin is often advanced as the clinching argument against the anti-feminist position: cf. the Middle English 'The Thrush and the Nightingale' (Dickins and Wilson 1951).

407–10 A possible echo of Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* (*CT* VII.460, 475, 481–2).

417 *may, wole, and … can*: on a possible Trinitarian echo in this formulation, see *Series* 1.108n. below.

421–7 Various reasons have been advanced, none entirely satisfactory (cf. Fenster and Erler 1990: 163 and n. to l. 421), for this addition by Hoccleve to Christine's text. On St Margaret, see the *Legenda Aurea* of James of Varaggio; her legend was translated by Hoccleve's near-contemporary Bokenham. Her inclusion here involves the speaker in a hasty qualification in the next stanza, and thus serves to undermine his authority somewhat after the manner of the Prologue to Chaucer's *Legend.*

426 *doctryne*: Erler reads 'edifying example') Fenster and Erler 1990: 211).

431–2 Tr1 glosses 'id est Cupide'.

434 *out of remembrance*: a dash between the words 'of' and 'remembrance' in the holograph might imply a missing possessive. Most copies read 'my' (cf. Introduction p. 17); Erler emends, on authority of usage elsewhere in H2, to 'our' (Fenster and Erler 1990: 198).

439 *Ententyf* (Fr. 566 'entalente') may glance at Chaucer's use of the word in a similarly ironic context in the *Merchant's Tale*, abbreviated *MerchT* (*CT* IV.1288).

441 Cf. Matt. 26.56.

442–4 Women are prominent as witnesses of the Passion and, subsequently, of the Resurrection. For Christine and for most of her contemporaries it was the Virgin Mary, who appears in the Gospel accounts of the Passion and Resurrection only in John 19.26–7, who embodied *par excellence* the faith of the Church (cf. 443, where Fr. 571 reads 'toute la foy remaint en une femme'; Tr1 glosses this line 'id est in oure ladye Marye'); cf. Ross 1940: 322.1–12 and n. According to the ps.-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi* she was the first to greet Christ after the Resurrection; for the recently founded Brigittine Order, Mary headed the nascent Church between the Resurrection and Pentecost (Ellis 1984: 27); closer parallels exist with Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (Sargent 1992: 193) and the anonymous *Speculum Devotorum* (Hogg 1973–4: 307), both noted by Selman 1998: 177.

Appendix 4

Additional notes on the textual relations of the non-holograph copies of the 'Conpleynte paramont', 'L'epistre de Cupide' and the *Series*.

I. 'Conpleynte paramont'

For general comment on textual relations of copies of the *Pilgrimage*, see Burrow 1994: 240–1 [52–3] and McGerr 1990: c–cv. Copies of the *Pilgrimage* are: MSS London British Library Additional 34193 (Ad3), Egerton 615 (Eg); Cambridge Gonville and Caius College 124/61 (G), University Library Kk.i.7 (U2); Hatfield House MS Cecil 270 (H); Melbourne, Victoria State Library 096/G94 (M); New York, Public Library MS Spencer 19 (N); Oxford Bodleian Library Bodley 770 (B3), Corpus Christi College 237 (Co), University College 181 (Un).

Two main subgroups exist of this text, as noted by McGerr: they are EgGMNU2 and Ad3B3CoHUn.

The extent of the variations within individual manuscripts—proportionately greater than for any of the other texts here edited—may suggest not only the popularity of the text, a popularity owed in some measure to the text from which it came and to which, in translation, it was returned, but also the challenges with which Hoccleve's translation presented the scribes.

The first six stanzas, missing from H1, are edited from the copy in Eg, though Eg is in error at I.18 (shared with GMNU2) and I.37 (shared with MN).

VI. 'L'epistre de Cupide'

Non-holograph copies are: MSS Cambridge Trinity College R.3.20 (Tr1) and University Library Ff.i.6 (U); Durham, University Library Cosin V.ii.13 (D3); Edinburgh National Library of Scotland, Advocates' MS 1.1.6 (Ba); Oxford Bodleian Library Bodley 638 (B2), Digby 181 (D1), Fairfax 16 (F), Selden B.24 (S2), and Tanner 346 (T).

The MSS divide into one main subgroup, B2D1D3FTU, and three other copies, Tr1 (by Shirley) and the sixteenth-century copies BaS2 and 1532 edition of Chaucer's works by Thynne (Th).

The main subgroup is established by its reordering of Hoccleve's text, as noted above p. 15. Doyle earlier noted this feature in the, as yet unpublished, catalogue entry (revised by A.J. Piper) for D3. B2D3T and the incomplete copies in D1U arrange the poem in large blocks as follows: stanzas 1–19, 30–9, 50–9, 20–9, 40–9, 60–8 (D1 wants stanzas 1–10, U stanzas 29, 40–9, 60–8), which suggests that their archetype had ten stanzas per leaf, with a blank final leaf, and swapped the third and fourth bifolia of the quire of eight leaves on which the text was copied (the fourth bifolium must have been reversed). F distorts the order still more, but since it shares with the other MSS their combinations of 17–19 and 30–6, 57–9 and 20–6, 37–9 and 50–6, 27–9 and 40–9, it can also be seen as deriving from the archetype of B2D1D3TU, and not, as I earlier thought (1996: 43), an exercise of independent editorial function by the scribe. The break in the sense between stanzas 59 and 60 in all MSS of this group establishes that this order cannot be authorial: see further Boffey and Thompson 1989: 281.

The copies which depend directly on Hoccleve's original, because they share the ordering of the stanzas in the holograph, introduce numerous erroneous readings, and individually represent worse witnesses to the original than the MSS of the previously-noted group. S2 suppresses the sowing metaphor of VI.10–11, swaps 'deynous or proud' (VI.150) with 'sly, qweynte and fals' (VI.152), and reads 'but ȝit þe fend that ageyn stoden wold' for VI.357. Tr1 reads 'who þat hem truste þe, ofte gyled shal he be' for VI.111. Ba omits VI.397, and reads 'bewar wemen of thair fikilnesse', 'is blissit of God to quhon sone belongith', and 'thou luver trew thow madin mansueit' for VI.327, 412, 423. Fox and Ringler 1980: xxxvii, xli claim that Ba depends on the Thynne edition; since Ba does not always follow Thynne into error (e.g. VI.440 H2Ba perdee] Th proued) it is likely that both descend independently from a common original in which the errors first appeared. Th appears to have closest links with B2D1FT, though it cannot have been based on any of them.

The archetype of the main subgroup of MSS must also have swapped stanzas 61–2 and 63–4. All but one of the six MSS of the subgroup share this rearrangement: the relevant material is missing in the sixth MS, U. This change makes for an easier chronological progression from the Virgin Mary (60, 63–4) to St Margaret (61–2). On the face of it, and given the major reordering of Hoccleve's text found in these MSS, one might have supposed that this reordering of the text originated with the scribe of the common ancestor of the group. Now, Ba and the linked Thynne edition, which in all other respects follow the arrange-

ment of the stanzas in H2, also contain this distinctive ordering of the stanzas (i.e. 60, 63–4, 61–2). Possibly therefore Hoccleve himself was responsible for the rearrangement: in which case the version in H2 would represent an accidental miscopying by Hoccleve of his own text, or an instance of Hoccleve having second thoughts about its ordering. Since, however, Ba/Th share a number of other variants with MSS in this group (see apparatus), their witness is possibly compromised, and their agreement over the rearranged stanzas would not then signify for the establishment of Hoccleve's original version.

VII. The *Series*

Non-holograph manuscript copies of the *Series* are as follows: of the complete work, Coventry City Record Office 325 (C); Oxford Bodleian Library Bodley 221 (B), Laud Misc. 735 (L), Selden Supra 53 (S); New Haven Yale University 493 (Y); of the *Gesta* narratives, London British Library Royal 17 D vi (R) and Oxford Bodleian Library Digby 185 (D2) and Eng.poet.d.4 (E); and of the Suso, R and London British Library Harley 172 (Ha1).

Two principal subgroups exist: BLY (links between B and L were noted by Seymour 1981: 132, cf. Burrow 1999: xxii–xxiii, who notes that LY were copied by the same scribe) and CD2R. Burrow 1999 argues for three independent witnesses to what I have called *H: S, C and the ancestor of BLY.

BLY are linked by their mangling of VII.4.117–18 and 815–16, omission of VII.4.848–54, and shared errors at VII.2.81 (see n.) and VII.3.544; they also share the reading 'nuncio [S responsio] ymaginis' in their marginal note to VII.4.337. Each has unique readings which mean it cannot have served as exemplar for either of the others. B has several unique readings: it rewrites VII.3.461–2, VII.4.561/3, VII.587–8 to produce new rhymes (right/wight, fynde/kynde, man/se non can), and loses the rhyme at VII.3.699 by transposing 'a whyle' and 'abyde'. L has errors of haplography in the moralization to the first *Gesta* narrative. Y loses VII.1.326.

CD2R are similarly linked in error at VII.3.88–91, VII.3.432 (see above p. 23), VII.5.305–6, and (CR only) VII.4.302/304, 363–4, 377, 408, 417, 678, 831. CD2R share readings with D at VII.3.182, 432, the latter an error, and CR with D at VII.3.565, VII.4.194, but if their common ancestor were copied from D, which is possible, it must have been a poor copy. Additionally, C mistransposes VII.4.661–2, and R wants VII.4.564, with a space for correction. Ha2 rewrites the first words of VII.4.211 ('take heede by an arowe'), and offers 'blynde' for 'blyue' at VII.4.392.

S belongs to neither of these principal subgroups, and has fewer errors, though these include errors of haplography in the prose moralisations of the

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