

Short Poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

This edition is intended for students just beginning to read Chaucer and does not reflect any single manuscript reading (it combines readings from the Benson and Fisher editions). Glossed words are in bold. The letter *ē* indicates that an unstressed *e* should be pronounced. The letter *é* indicates that *e* should be pronounced with French stress.

Merciles Beauté

A Triple Roundel

I

Your **yēn** two wol slee me sodenly;
I may the beautéé of **hem** not sustenē,
So woundeth hit throughout my hertē kenē.

eyes
them

And **but** your word **wol helen** hastily
My hertēs woundē, while that hit is grenē,
Your yēn two wol slee me sodenly;
I may the beautéé of hem not sustenē.

unless will heal

Upon my **trouthe** I sey you feithfully
That ye **ben** of my lyf and deeth the quenē;
For with my deeth the trouthē shal be senē.
Your yēn two wol slee me sodenly;
I may the beautéé of hem not sustenē,
So woundeth it throughout my hertē kenē.

faith
are

II

So hath your beautéé fro your hertē **chacēd**
Pitéé, that me **ne** availeth not to **pleynē**;
For **Daunger halt** your mercy in his cheynē.

chased
not complain
scorn holds

Giltles my deeth thus **han** ye me purchacēd;
I sey you **sooth**, me **nedeth** not to feynē;
So hath your beautéé fro your hertē chacēd
Pitéé, that me ne availeth not to pleynē.

have
truth [it] needs

Allas, that Nature hath in you compassēd
So greet beautéé, that no man may atteynē
To mercy, though he **stervē** for the peynē.
So hath your beautéé fro your hertē chacēd
Pitéé, that me ne availeth not to pleynē.
For Daunger halt your mercy in his cheynē.

die

III

Sin I fro Love escapēd am so fat,
I never thenk to **ben** in his prison lenē;
Sin I am free, I counte him not a benē.

since
be

He may answer, and seyē this and that;
I do no fors, I spekē right as I menē.

Sin I fro Love escapēd am so fat
I never thenk to ben in his prison lenē.

Love hath my name **ystrike** out of his **sclat**,
And he is **strike** out of my bokēs **clenē**
For evermo; ther is non other **menē**.

struck slate
struck completely
course

Sin I fro Love escapēd am so fat
I never thenk to ben in his prison lenē.
Sin I am free, I counte him not a benē.

Explicit

Latin: "it ends"

To Rosemounde

Madame, ye **ben** of allë beautë shrynë
As fer as cercled is the **mapamoundë**;¹
For as the cristal glorious ye shynë,
And lykë ruby ben your chekës roundë.
Therwith ye ben so mery and so iocoundë
That at a revel whan that I see you dauncë,
It is an oynement unto my woundë,
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliauncë.

are
world map

jocund

For thogh I wepe of terës ful a **tynë**,
Yet may that wo myn hertë nat confoundë;
Your **semy** voys that ye so small out **twynë**
Maketh my thoght in **ioy** and blys **haboundë**.
So curtaysly I go, wyth lovë boundë,
That to my self I sey, in my penauncë,
“Suffyseth me to lovë you, Rosëmoundë,
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliauncë.”

tub

small twist
joy abound

Nas never **pyk** walwed in galauntynë²
As I in lovë am walwed and ywoundë;
For whych ful ofte I of my self devynë
That I am **trewë** Tristam³ the secoundë.
My lovë may not **refreydë** nor **affoundë**;
I **brenne ay** in an amorousë plesauncë.
Do what you **lyst**, I wyl your thral be foundë,
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliauncë.

was not pike

faithful
chill founder
burn always
wish

TREGENTIL

CHAUCER

French: “very gentle”

1 From Latin *mappa mundi*.

2. “There was never a pike [large fish] wallowed in galantine [wine] sauce”.

3. Refers to the famous lover of Iseult in courtly literature.

Gentillesse

The firstë stok, fader of gentilessë—
What man that claymeth gentil for to be
Must folowe his trace, and all his wittës **dressë**
Vertu to **sewe**, and vicës for to fle.
For unto vertu **longeth** dignitée,
And nought the revers, **savëly** dar I demë,
Al were he **mytrë**, coroune, or diademë.

direct
follow
belongs
safely
although wear mitre

This firstë stok was full of **rightwisnessë**,
Trewë of his word, sobrë, **pitous**, and free,
Clene of his **gost**, and lovëd besinessë,
Ayeinst the vyce of slouthe, in honestée;
And **but** his heir love vertu as did he,
He is noght gentil, thogh he richë semë,
Al were he **mytrë**, coroune, or diademë.

righteousness
compassionate
pure spirit

unless

Vycë may well be heir to old richessë,
But ther may no man, as men may well see,
Bequethe his heir his vertuous noblessë
(That is **appropried** unto no degré
But to the firstë fader in magestée,
That maketh his heyres **hem** that him **quemë**),
Al were he **mytrë**, coroune, or diademë.

appropriated

them please

Explicit

Chaucer's words unto Adam, his owene sciveyn

Adam **sciveyn**, if ever it thee bifallë
Boëce¹ or Troylus² for to wryten **newë**,
Under thy long lokkës thow most have the **scallë**³
But after my **makyng** thow wrytë morë **trewë**!
So ofte a daye I **mot** thy werk renewë
It to correcte and **ekë** to **rubbe** and scrapë;
And al is thorough thy negligence and **rapë**!

scribe
Boethius anew
scale
unless poetry faithfully
must
also rub out
haste

1. Chaucer's translation of Boethius' *De consolation philosophiae*.
2. Chaucer's poem *Troilus and Criseyde*.
3. A skin disease.