

THE POETICAL WORKS  
OF  
GEOFFREY CHAUCER

FROM THE TEXT OF  
PROFESSOR SKEAT

VOLUME I

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# THE ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE



## FRAGMENT A

MANY men seyn that in sweveninges  
Ther nis but fables and lesinges ;  
But men may somme swevenes seen,  
Which hardely ne false been,  
But afterward ben apparaunte.  
This may I drawe to waraunte  
An authour, that hight Macrobes,  
That halt not dremes false ne lees,  
But undoth us the avisioun  
That whylom mette king Cipioun.

And who-so sayth, or weneth it be  
A jape, or elles a nycetee  
To wene that dremes after falle,  
Let who-so liste a fool me calle.  
For this trowe I, and say for me,  
That dremes signifiunce be  
Of good and harme to many wightes,  
That dremen in her slepe a-nightes  
Ful many thinges covertly,  
That fallen after al openly.

## THE DREAM

Within my twenty yere of age,  
Whan that Love taketh his corage  
Of yonge folk, I wente sone  
To bedde, as I was wont to done,  
And fast I sleep ; and in sleping,

Me mette swiche a swevening,  
 That lykede me wonders wel;  
 But in that sweven is never a del  
 That it nis afterward befalle,  
 Right as this dreem wol telle us alle.  
 Now this dreem wol I ryme aright,  
 To make your hertes gaye and light;  
 For Love it prayeth, and also  
 Commaundeth me that it be so.  
 And if ther any aske me,  
 Whether that it be he or she,  
 How that this book the which is here  
 Shall hote, that I rede you here;  
 It is the Romance of the Rose,  
 In which al the art of love I close.

The mater fair is of to make;  
 God graunte in gree that she it take  
 For whom that it begonnen is!  
 And that is she that hath, y-wis,  
 So mochel prys; and ther-to she  
 So worthy is biloved be,  
 That she wel oughte, of prys and right,  
 Be cleped Rose of every wight.

That it was May me thoughte tho,  
 It is fyve yere or more ago;  
 That it was May, thus dremed me,  
 In tyme of love and jolitee,  
 That al thing ginneth waxen gay,  
 For ther is neither busk nor hay  
 In May, that it nil shrouded been,  
 And it with newe leves wreen.  
 These wodes eek recoveren grene,  
 That drye in winter been to sene;  
 And th' erthe wexeth proud withalle,  
 For swote dewes that on it falle,  
 And al the pore estat forget  
 In which that winter hadde it set;  
 And than bicometh the ground so proud  
 That it wol have a newe shroud,  
 And maketh so queynt his robe and fayr

That it hath hewes an hundred payr  
Of gras and floures, inde and pers,  
And many hewes ful dyvers :  
That is the robe I mene, y-wis,  
Through which the ground to preisen is.  
The briddes, that han left hir song,  
Whyl they han suffred cold so strong  
In wedres grille, and derk to sighte,  
Ben in May, for the sonne brighte,  
So glade, that they shewe in singing,  
That in hir herte is swich lyking,  
That they mote singen and be light.  
Than doth the nightingale hir might  
To make noyse, and singen blythe.  
Than is blisful, many a sythe,  
The chelaundre and the papingay.  
Than yonge folk entenden ay  
For to ben gay and amorous,  
The tyme is than so savorous.  
Hard is his herte that loveth nought  
In May, whan al this mirth is wrought ;  
Whan he may on these braunches here  
The smale briddes singen clere  
Hir blisful swete song pitous ;  
And in this sesoun delitous,  
Whan love affrayeth alle thing,  
Me thoughte a-night, in my sleping,  
Right in my bed, ful redily,  
That it was by the morowe erly,  
And up I roos, and gan me clothe ;  
Anoon I wissh myn hondes bothe ;  
A sylvre nedle forth I drogh  
Out of an aguiler queynt y-nogh,  
And gan this nedle threde anon ;  
For out of toun me list to gon  
The sowne of briddes for to here,  
That on thise bussches singen clere.  
And in the swete sesoun that leef is,  
With a threde basting my slevis,  
Aloon I wente in my playing,



## THE POETICAL WORKS

The smale foules song harkning ;  
 That peyned hem ful many a payre  
 To singe on bowes blosmed fayre.  
 Jolif and gay, ful of gladnesse,  
 Toward a river I gan me dresse,  
 That I herde renne faste by ;  
 For fairer playing non saugh I  
 Than playen me by that riveer,  
 For from an hille that stood ther neer  
 Cam down the streem ful stif and bold.  
 Cleer was the water, and as cold  
 As any welle is, sooth to seyne ;  
 And somdel lasse it was than Seine,  
 But it was straighter wel away.  
 And never saugh I, er that day,  
 The water that so wel lyked me ;  
 And wonder glad was I to see  
 That lusty place, and that riveer ;  
 And with that water that ran so cleer  
 My face I wissh. Tho saugh I wel  
 The botme paved everydel  
 With gravel, ful of stones shene.  
 The medewe softe, swote, and grene,  
 Beet right on the water-syde.  
 Ful cleer was than the morow-tyde,  
 And ful attempre, out of drede.  
 Tho gan I walke through the mede,  
 Dounward ay in my pleying,  
 The river-syde costeying.

## THE GARDEN

And whan I had a whyle goon,  
 I saugh a GARDIN right anoon,  
 Ful long and brood, and everydel  
 Enclos it was, and walled wel,  
 With hye walles embatailled,  
 Portrayed without, and wel entailed  
 With many riche portraitures ;  
 And bothe images and peyntures  
 Gan I biholde bisily.

And I wol telle you, redily,  
Of thilke images the semblaunce,  
As fer as I have remembraunce.

## HATE

A-midde saugh I HATE stonde,  
That for hir wrathe, ire, and onde,  
Semed to been a moveresse,  
An angry wight, a chideresse ;  
And ful of gyle, and fel corage,  
By semblaunt was that ilke image.  
And she was no-thing wel arrayed,  
But lyk a wood womman afrayed ;  
Y-frounced foule was hir visage,  
And grenning for dispitous rage ;  
Hir nose snorted up for tene.  
Ful hidous was she for to sene,  
Ful foul and rusty was she, this.  
Hir heed y-writhen was, y-wis,  
Ful grimly with a greet towayle.

## FELONYE

An image of another entayle,  
A lift half, was hir faste by :  
Hir name above hir heed saugh I,  
And she was called FELONYE.

## VILANYE

Another image, that VILANYE  
Y-cleped was, saugh I and fond  
Upon the walle on hir right hond.  
Vilanye was lyk somdel  
That other image ; and, trusteth wel,  
She semed a wikked creature.  
By countenaunce, in portrayture,  
She semed be ful despitous,  
And eek ful proud and outrageous.  
Wel coude he peynte, I undertake,  
That swiche image coude make.  
Ful foul and cherlish semed she,

And eek vilaynous for to be,  
And litel coude of norture,  
To worshiþe any creature.

### COVEITYSE

And next was peynted COVEITYSE,  
That eggeth folk, in many gyse,  
To take and yeve right nought ageyn,  
And grete tresours up to leyn.  
And that is she that for usure  
Leneth to many a creature  
The lasse for the more winning,  
So coveitous is her brenning.  
And that is she, for penyes fele,  
That techeth for to robbe and stele  
These theves, and these smale harlotes ;  
And that is routhe, for by hir throtes  
Ful many oon hangeth at the laste.  
She maketh folk compasse and caste  
To taken other folkes thing,  
Through robberie, or miscounting.  
And that is she that maketh trechoures ;  
And she that maketh false pledoures,  
That with hir termes and hir domes  
Doon maydens, children, and eek gromes  
Hir heritage to forgo.  
Ful croked were hir hondes two ;  
For Coveityse is ever wood  
To grypen other folkes good.  
Coveityse, for hir winning,  
Ful leef hath other mennes thing.

### AVARICE

Another image set saugh I  
Next Coveityse faste by,  
And she was cleped AVARICE.  
Ful foul in peynting was that vice ;  
Ful sad and caytif was she eek,  
And al-so grene as any leek.

So yvel hewed was hir colour,  
Hir semed have lived in langour.  
She was lyk thing for hungre deed,  
That ladde hir lyf only by breed  
Kneden with eisel strong and egre;  
And therto she was lene and megre.  
And she was clad ful povrely,  
Al in an old torn courtepy,  
As she were al with dogges torn;  
And bothe bihinde and eek biforn  
Clouted was she beggarly.  
A mantel heng hir faste by,  
Upon a perche, weyke and smalle;  
A burnet cote heng therwithalle,  
Furred with no menivere,  
But with a furre rough of here,  
Of lambe-skinnes hevy and blake;  
It was ful old, I undertake.  
For Avarice to clothe hir wel  
Ne hasteth hir, never a del;  
For certeynly it were hir loth  
To weren ofte that ilke cloth;  
And if it were forwered, she  
Wolde have ful greet necessitee  
Of clothing, er she boughte hir newe,  
Al were it bad of wolle and hewe.  
This Avarice held in hir hande  
A purs, that heng down by a bande;  
And that she hidde and bond so stronge,  
Men must abyde wonder longe  
Out of that purs er ther come ought,  
For that ne cometh not in hir thought;  
It was not, certein, hir entente  
That fro that purs a peny wente.

## ENVYE

And by that image, nygh y-nough,  
Was peynt ENVYE, that never lough,  
Nor never wel in herte ferde  
But-if she outhur saugh or herde

Som greet mischaunce, or greet disese.  
No-thing may so moch hir plese  
As mischef and misaventure ;  
Or whan she seeth discomfiture  
On any worthy man to falle,  
Than lyketh hir ful wel withalle.  
She is ful glad in hir corage,  
If she see any greet lineage  
Be brought to nought in shamful wyse.  
And if a man in honour ryse,  
Or by his witte, or by prowesse,  
Of that hath she gret hevinesse ;  
For, trusteth wel, she goth nigh wood  
When any chaunce happeth good.  
Envye is of swich crueltee,  
That feith ne trouthe holdeth she  
To freend ne felawe, bad or good.  
Ne she hath kin noon of hir blood,  
That she nis ful hir enemy ;  
She nolde, I dar seyn hardely,  
Hir owne fader ferde wel.  
And sore abyeth she everydel  
Hir malice, and hir maltalent :  
For she is in so greet turment  
And hath such wo, whan folk doth good,  
That nigh she melteth for pure wood ;  
Hir herte kerveth and to-breketh  
That god the peple wel awreketh.  
Envye, y-wis, shal never lette  
Som blame upon the folk to sette.  
I trowe that if Envye, y-wis,  
Knewe the beste man that is  
On this syde or biyond the see,  
Yit somewhat lakken him wolde she.  
And if he were so hende and wys,  
That she ne mighte al abate his prys,  
Yit wolde she blame his worthinesse,  
Or by hir wordes make it lesse.  
I saugh Envye, in that peynting,  
Hadde a wonderful loking ;

For she ne loked but awry,  
Or overthwart, al baggingly.  
And she hadde eek a foul usage ;  
She mighte loke in no visage  
Of man or womman forth-right pleyn,  
But shette oon yë for disdeyn ;  
So for envye brenned she  
Whan she mighte any man y-see,  
That fair, or worthy were, or wys,  
Or elles stood in folkes prys.

## SOROWE

SOROWE was peynted next Envye  
Upon that walle of masonrye.  
But wel was seen in hir colour  
That she hadde lived in langour ;  
Hir semed havē the Jaunyce.  
Nought half so pale was Avaryce,  
Nor no-thing lyk, as of lenesse ;  
For sorowe, thought, and greet distresse,  
That she hadde suffred day and night  
Made hir ful yelwe, and no-thing bright,  
Ful fade, pale, and megre also.  
Was never wight yit half so wo  
As that hir semed for to be,  
Nor so fulfilled of ire as she.  
I trowe that no wight mighte hir plese,  
Nor do that thing that mighte hir ese ;  
Nor she ne wolde hir sorowe slake,  
Nor comfort noon unto hir take ;  
So depe was hir wo bigonnen,  
And eek hir herte in angre ronnen,  
A sorowful thing wel semed she.  
Nor she hadde no-thing slowe be  
For to forcracchen al hir face,  
And for to rende in many place  
Hir clothes, and for to tere hir swire,  
And she that was fulfilled of ire ;  
And al to-torn lay eek hir here  
Aboute hir shuldres, here and there,

As she that hadde it al to-rent  
 For angre and for maltalent.  
 And eek I telle you certeynly  
 How that she weep ful tenderly.  
 In world nis wight so hard of herte  
 That hadde seen hir sorowes smerte,  
 That nolde have had of hir pitee,  
 So wo-bigoon a thing was she.  
 She al to-dasshte hir-self for wo,  
 And smoot togider hir handes two.  
 To sorwe was she ful ententyf,  
 That woful recchelees caityf;  
 Hir roughthe litel of pleying,  
 Or of clipping or of kissing;  
 For who-so sorweful is in herte  
 Him liste not to pleye ne sterte,  
 Nor for to daunsen, ne to singe,  
 Ne may his herte in temper bringe  
 To make joye on even or morowe;  
 For joye is contraire unto sorowe.

## ELDE

ELDE was peynted after this,  
 That shorter was a foot, y-wis,  
 Than she was wont in her yonghede.  
 Unnethe hir-self she mighte fede;  
 So feble and eek so old was she  
 That faded was al hir beautee.  
 Ful salowe was waxen hir colour,  
 Hir heed for-hoor was, whyt as flour.  
 Y-wis, gret qualm ne were it noon,  
 Ne sinne, although hir lyf were gon.  
 Al woxen was hir body unwelde,  
 And drye, and dwyned al for elde.  
 A foul forwelked thing was she  
 That whylom round and softe had be.  
 Hir eres shoken fast withalle,  
 As from her heed they wolde falle.  
 Hir face frounced and forpyned,  
 And bothe hir hondes lorn, fordwyned.

So old she was that she ne wente  
A foot, but it were by potente.

## TIME

The Tyme, that passeth night and day,  
And resteles travayleth ay,  
And steleth from us so prively,  
That to us semeth sikerly  
That it in oon point dwelleth ever,  
And certes, it ne resteth never,  
But goth so faste, and passeth ay,  
That ther nis man that thinke may  
What tyme that now present is :  
Asketh at these clerkes this ;  
For er men thinke it redily,  
Three tymes been y-passed by.  
The tyme, that may not sojourne,  
But goth, and never may retourne,  
As water that doun renneth ay,  
But never drope retourne may ;  
Ther may no-thing as tyme endure,  
Metal, nor erthely creature ;  
For alle thing it fret, and shal :  
The tyme eek, that chaungeth al,  
And al doth waxe and fostred be,  
And alle thing distroyeth he :  
The tyme, that eldeth our auncessours  
And eldeth kinges and emperours,  
And that us alle shal overcomen  
Er that deeth us shal have nomen :  
The tyme, that hath al in welde  
To elden folk, had maad hir elde  
So inly, that, to my witing,  
She mighte helpe hir-self no-thing,  
But turned ageyn unto childhede ;  
She had no-thing hir-self to lede,  
Ne wit ne pith inwith hir holde  
More than a child of two yeer olde.  
But natheles, I trowe that she  
Was fair sumtyme, and fresh to see,



Whan she was in hir rightful age :  
 But she was past al that passage  
 And was a doted thing bicommen.  
 A furred cope on had she nomen ;  
 Wel had she clad hir-self and warm,  
 For cold mighte elles doon hir harm.  
 These olde folk have alwey colde,  
 Hir kind is swiche, whan they ben olde.

## POPE-HOLY

Another thing was doon ther write,  
 That semede lyk an ipocrite,  
 And it was cleped POPE-HOLY.  
 That ilke is she that prively  
 Ne spareth never a wikked dede,  
 Whan men of hir taken non hede ;  
 And maketh hir outward precious,  
 With pale visage and pitous,  
 And semeth a simple creature ;  
 But ther nis no misaventure  
 That she ne thenketh in hir corage.  
 Ful lyk to hir was that image,  
 That maked was lyk hir semblaunce.  
 She was ful simple of countenance,  
 And she was clothed and eek shod,  
 As she were, for the love of god,  
 Yolden to religioun,  
 Swich semed hir devocioun.  
 A sauter held she faste in honde,  
 And bisily she gan to fonde  
 To make many a feynt prayere  
 To god, and to his seyntes dere.  
 Ne she was gay, fresh, ne jolyf,  
 But semed be ful ententyf  
 To gode werkes, and to faire,  
 And therto she had on an haire.  
 Ne certes, she was fat no-thing,  
 But semed wery for fasting ;  
 Of colour pale and deed was she.  
 From hir the gate shal werned be