

ABSTRACT

DELAMAR, MAUREEN HARRINGTON. "*Truste ze rapir to lettirs written in þ'is*": A Selection of Middle English Death Lyrics in Translation. (Under the direction of Charlotte Gross.)

This paper discusses themes in Middle English lyrics on death, particularly those of Doomsday, purgatory and the physical aspects of death, and provides interlinear translations of thirteen lyrics about death dating from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries.

“Truste 3e rapir to lettirs written in þ’is”:
A Selection of Middle English Death Lyrics in Translation

by

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DEDICATION

In memory of Norma Harrington Delamar (1914-1998) and Carl Dawson Delamar (1913-1983), who make these questions more than academic.

BIOGRAPHY

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Introduction

The medieval English religious lyric flourished between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. During this period, considerable changes in both official and popular attitudes toward death and the afterlife accompanied significant historical events, both natural and ecclesiastical (such as the advent of purgatory and the arrival of the Black Death), which are necessarily manifested in the lyrics. While any text says something about the writer who produced it, the number and diversity of poets over a span of three centuries increases the likelihood that the attitudes represented in these lyrics are more than their writers' eccentricities. Besides, unlike its more familiar seventeenth-century counterpart, the medieval English religious lyric is not typically about its author's personal feelings; instead, as Rosemary Woolf observes, it is didactic, meditative, non-dramatic, and, as Siegfried Wenzel argues, "closely related to preaching" (4). While the seventeenth-century lyrics are generally short pieces that display their authors' cleverness and finely-tuned aesthetic sensibilities, medieval lyrics are often quite long, and their authors nearly always more concerned with transmitting long-established (if slowly evolving) religious messages than with personal expression.

Many medieval English lyrics are actually translations from Latin lyrics, and while these lyrics undoubtedly betray much about their translators, their choices would probably be invisible to the translators themselves, as they generally credited their sources while remaining anonymous. This practice of anonymous translation suggests that the translators saw their task as an unimaginative rather than a creative one. Certainly, Wenzel's observation that the lyrics were used in sermons and that "until about 1450 sermons were regularly written down in Latin, even when they were without

question preached in the vernacular” (19) suggests that these translations were less deliberate than present-day efforts would be and that the medieval translators believed the essence of a text to be independent of its language.

Over the centuries, these vernacular poets and preachers moved from Latin to Middle English. Woolf’s assertion that “there can . . . never have been a poetry which was more exclusively written in the language of the common people – at least until the fifteenth century” (8) underlines the importance of these lyrics to an understanding of contemporary English thanatology: whether or not they realized it, these medieval poets were not simply transmitting established religious beliefs but developing new ones.

What might be seen as a lack of originality in medieval lyrics, then, would have been seen by contemporaries not as an aesthetic or intellectual flaw but as a sign of authority, for the message was far more important than its vehicle. Perhaps most importantly, although some Middle English religious lyrics are attributed to a particular author, most of the lyrics are genuinely rather than accidentally anonymous. This anonymity is important not because of what information is missing, but because of the self-effacing attitude of the authors – unlike the seventeenth-century lyrics, these lyrics are not about their authors as individuals but about mankind’s relationship with eternity.

“Wenne hi þenche on domes-dai ful sore i me adrede”¹: Death as Sleep

Perhaps the one thing that connects Middle English religious lyrics is the concern with Judgment Day, when all souls would be judged by Christ and sorted into the saved and the damned, although people disagreed about what would happen between death and Judgment Day and whether Judgment Day was a universal or personal date. In any case, many Judgment Day lyrics from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries focus not on

¹ Brown XIII.28a.

Doomsday itself but on the blank period between death and Doomsday, likening death to sleep. The idea of death as sleep is at work in the following thirteenth-century lyric:

Mirie it is while sumer ilast
Merry it is while summer lasts

pið fugheles song,
With birds' song,

oc nu necheð pindes blast
But now draw nigh winter's blast

and peder strong.
And strong weather.

5

Ej! Ej! phat pis nicht is long,
Oh! Oh! but this night is long

And ich pid pel michel wrong
And I with so much wrong

Soregh and murne and fast.
Sorrow and mourn and fast. (Brown XIII.7)

In this lyric, death is depicted as both a long “*nicht*” (“night”) and the “*peder strong*” (“strong weather”) which follows a fleeting “*sumer*” (“summer”). These metaphors illustrate the evolving and often contradictory attitudes toward death in thirteenth-century England; while both “*nicht*” and winter (“*peder strong*” and the ultimate successor of “*sumer*”) are parts of a cycle, there is a certain, undeniable sense of finality in this poem. To an audience anticipating Judgment Day rather than purgatory, death begins a soul’s long sleep before its being assigned to either heaven or hell. Given the uncertainty of how long a soul would sleep before Judgment Day, such a sleep might, indeed, seem final in human terms. It also might well be fraught with nightmares about one’s ultimate destination.

This image of death as sleep is common in Middle English lyrics. In the thirteenth-century lyric, “*Worldes blis*” (see page 29), death is likened to a “*dreri slep*” (“sorrowful sleep,” 18); two centuries later, the dead speaker of “*Ffare well, this world! I take my leve for evere*” (see page 47) asks (rather paradoxically, since he seems to be conscious) that the listener “*Speke softe, . . . for [he is] leyd aslepe*” (“speak softly, for he

is laid asleep,” 15). Apparently this speaker dreads being awakened because he knows he is to face his doom: he cautions the living to “[b]e ware of ane horne” (“beware of a horn”) heralding Judgment Day (21). What is curious about this fifteenth-century lyric is that it seems to be based on both purgatorial and Judgment Day theories: death as sleep suggests a Judgment Day view of death; however, the fact that the dead are speaking to (and, particularly, warning) the living suggests a philosophy of purgatory, both because dormant souls, presumably, cannot speak, and because the ghosts of souls in purgatory were often thought to “reveal to a close kin or friends that they were suffering torments in Purgatory,” generally because of “something not yet completed (such as Masses left unsaid or wills not executed) or because of their sinful life” (Daniell 11-12). This ambivalent lyric illustrates the reality of an evolving Christianity which varies over time and with the individual.

“Ffor my sowle . . . say A pater noster & An Aue”²: The Birth of Purgatory and the Middle English Death Lyric

The official recognition of purgatory by Pope Innocent IV in 1254 marked one of the most significant changes in medieval attitudes toward death. Though its papal sanction is precisely dated, purgatory had, in fact, been something of a theological rumor for centuries. Jacques Le Goff places its inception at “some time between 1170 and 1220” (“The Time of Purgatory” 70); in contrast, at the beginning of the twelfth century, most laymen and Church officials viewed death as a sleep from which everyone would awaken on Judgment Day.

This fundamental change in Church doctrine manifests itself in the Middle English lyric; however, the change is neither sudden nor consistent. Throughout the 259 years during which purgatory officially existed in England (beginning with the papal

² Robbins 126.

sanction in 1254 and ending with Thomas Cranmer's (and Henry VIII's) *King's Book* of 1543, which details the doctrine of the Anglican church), lyrics consistent with both views of the afterlife can be found; however, while one might hope to find a general shift in focus over time, from Judgment Day to purgatory, things are not so simple. Purgatory itself is rarely mentioned in the lyrics, which focus almost exclusively on heaven and hell in their depictions of the afterlife. The doctrine of purgatory is much more complex than a belief in a third possibility for the souls of the dead, however, and many of these doctrinal details *can* be seen in the lyrics.

Christianity's "increasing interest in earthly goods" which, according to Le Goff, accompanied the beginning of purgatory ("The Time of Purgatory" 70), is apparent in many death lyrics. "*Worldes blis*" addresses the transience of these earthly goods, including life itself, by making the common observation that life ends "*with serwen and mid iuel fare*" ("with sorrow and with evil go," 6), with "*wep and mon*" ("weeping and moaning," 10). The only good that endures is the good one does: at death, the soul is alone with only its "*werkes on a hep*" ("works on a heap," 20). Like "*Mirie it is*," "*Worldes blis*" complains that life is short; however, the two lyrics are quite different in what they foresee after life. While "*Mirie it is*" foresees a long "*nicht*," presumably followed by Judgment Day, "*Worldes blis*" reports on an immediate afterlife, devoid of "[a]l *be blis of besse liue*" ("all the joy of this life," 11). And "*Worldes blis*" is, significantly, not a prophecy but an account of things which have, for the speaker, come to pass. "*Worldes blis*" clearly shows the influence of purgatorial doctrine, something not apparent in "*Mirie it is*."

Despite this evident purgatorial slant, “*Worldes blis*” does not mention purgatory directly; indeed, the threat is clearly hell, not purgatory:

ful sore þu mith ben of-gast,
You will be completely terrified of power,

þat hier despendest heite a-mis,
Who spend property foolishly here,

to ben þar-þurew in-to elle cast.
To be thrown into hell. (38-40)

The lyric’s one allusion to purgation, in fact, involves one’s earthly life:

biþinc wel forþi us ics rede,
Think well, therefore, I urge you,

and clanse of ecs misdede,
And cleanse yourself of each sin,

þat crist þe helpe at tine nede . . .
That Christ may help you in your time of need . . . (55-7)

If “*Worldes blis*” bears the imprint of purgatorial doctrine, then, it has not completely broken free of the Judgment Day mentality.

The growing appeal of worldly goods is reflected in the popular *ubi sunt* lyrics. These lyrics recall the better days of the dead (that is, those when they were alive) with regret, asking rhetorically what happened to them. In the following fourteenth-century lyric, the dead man is asked where are his “*roben of fau and of gris*” (“robes of ermine,” 2), thus pointing out the discrepancy between his earthly life and his eternal one, noting that the dead man has “*for-lorin þe Ioye of parais*” (“lost the joy of paradise,” 9):

Nu þu vnseli bodi up-on bere list
Now you , wretched body, lie upon the bier.

Were bet þine robin of fau & of gris?
Where are your robes of ermine?

Suic day hauit i-comin þu changedest hem þris,
Such a day has been that you changed them three times,

þat makit the Heuin herþe þat þu on list,
That made a heaven of the earth on which you lie;

þad rotihin sal so dot þe lef þat honkit on þe ris. 5
That shall rot as does the leaf that hangs on the branch.

þu ete þine mete y-makit in couis,
You ate your food made in cauldrons;

þu lettis þe pore stonðin þrute in forist & in is,
You let the poor stand outside in frost and in ice,

þu noldist not þe bi- þenchen forte ben wis,
You would not think on yourself to be wise:

For- þi, hauistu for-lorin þe Ioye of parais.
For this, you have lost the joy of paradise. (Brown XIII.38)

“*Uere beþ þey biforen vs weren*” recalls several happy and prosperous people who “*wereden gold in heore tressour*” (“wore gold in their hair,” 5), “[*e*]ten and drounken and maden hem glad” (“ate and drank and made themselves merry,” 7), spending their lives “*wiþ gamen*” (“with sport,” 6) and, ultimately, lost “*al þat joye*” (“all that joy,” 16, see page 76). This thirteenth-century lyric suggests purgatory in the lines:

Drehy here, man, þenne, if þou wilt 25
Bear here, man, then, if you will

A luitel pine þat me þe bit,
A little pain that you must suffer,

Wiþdrau þine eyses ofte,
Forego your comforts often,

Þey þi pine be oun-read;
Though your torment be severe;

And þou þenke on þi mede
If you think on your reward

Hit sal þe þinken softe. 30
The pain shall seem less.

Although these lines could refer to hell, the fact it is not just doing good deeds that is encouraged, but suffering for its own sake, suggests purgatory: suffering cleanses the soul. Enduring suffering in life may lessen one’s suffering after death.

Another common theme among the lyrics relating to the transience of life is *memento mori*. The fifteenth-century “*All ye that passe be thys holy place*” is a late but prime example:

*All ye that passe be thys holy place,
All you who pass by this holy place,*

*Both spirituell & temporall of euery degre,
Both spiritual and temporal of every degree,*

*Remembyr your-selfe well duryng tyme & space:
Remember yourself well during time and space:*

*I was as ye are nowe; and as I, ye shalbe.
I was as you are now; and as I, you shall be.*

*Wherfor I beseche you of your benygnite,
Wherefore I beseech you of your benignity,*

5

*ffor the love of Ihesu and hys Mothyr Mare,
For the love of Jesus and his Mother Mary,*

*ffor my sowle to say A pater noster & An Aue.
For my soul to say a *pater noster* and an *ave*. (Robbins 126)*

The audience is urged, “*Remembyr your-selfe well duryng tyme & space: / I was as ye are nowe; and as I, ye shalbe.*” The purpose of this frightening image is to remind the listener (as if he could forget) that his earthly life is not eternal and to motivate him to change his behavior while he has the chance. There is more to this lyric, though. It also reminds the listener of the souls he knows who may be in purgatory and need his prayers: “*I beseche you of your benygnite, / ffor the love of Ihesu and hys Mothyr Mare, / ffor my sowle to say A pater noster & An Aue” (5-7). Here there can be no doubt that the lyricist has purgatory in mind.*

Although “*Worldes blis*” specifically mentions the sins of pride and sloth, its main concern is avarice, which Philippe Ariès defines as the “excessive attachment to *temporalia* or external things, to spouses or worldly friends or material wealth, or to other things that men have loved too much during their lives” (131). This focus on avarice exemplifies what Le Goff notes as “the preeminence of avarice over pride among the

deadly sins,” an attitude which accompanied the emergence of purgatory into Church doctrine (“The Time of Purgatory” 70).

These warnings against avarice and pride take a corporeal form in the decomposition of the body. The common depiction of the rotting body in an earthen grave becomes increasingly grotesque in the medieval English death lyric over the years. The fourteenth-century “*Bysoeth zou in þis ylke lyf*” contains mild references to the grave, noting that the “*body worth wounde in grete oþer here*” (“your body will be wrapped in soil or shroud,” 25, see Appendix A, page 74). One of the earlier lyrics focused on the grave is the thirteenth-century “*Wen þe turuf is þi tuur*” (Brown XIII.30), a simple lyric that conveys what Rosemary Woolf describes as “the smallness and poverty of the grave contrasted with the splendour enjoyed by the dead man when he was alive” (82):

Wen þe turuf is þi tuur,
When your turf is your tower,

& þi put is þi bour,
and your pit is your bower,

Þi wel & þi wite prote
your skin and your white throat

Ssulen wormes to note.
shall belong to the worms.

Wat helpit þe þenne
What will help you then

5

Al þe worilde wne?
all the world’s bliss?

Similarly, the thirteenth-century “*Nu þu vnseli bodi up-on bere list*” warns its listener of the perils of avarice and lack of charity: his “*roben of fau and of gris . . . rotihin shall*” (2-5). This lyric is made more powerful by the fact that it is directed personally at the listener.

This failure of the body begins before death, as detailed in the “Signs of Death” lyrics, identified by Woolf as the “most popular of all Middle English death lyrics” (78) and recalled by Shakespeare in the former Mistress Quickly’s account of Falstaff’s death: “for his nose was as sharp as a pen” (*Henry V* 2.3.16) and she “put [her] hand into the bed and felt [his feet], . . . then [she] felt to his knees, and so up’ard and up’ard, and all was as cold as any stone” (2.3.23-6). The thirteenth-century lyric, “*Wanne mine eyhnen misten,*” a standard medieval catalogue of bodily collapse, serves as a moral reminder that “[w]hanne þe bere is ate gate,” (“when the bier is at the gate”) it will be “*al to late*” (“all too late”) to do the good works that will help a soul after death:

Wanne mine eyhnen misten,
When my eyes mist,

and mine heren sissen,
And my ears cease,

and mi nose koldet,
And my nose grows cold,

and mi tunge ffoldet,
And my tongue folds,

and mi rude slaket,
And my face slackens,

5

And mine lippes blaken,
And my lips blacken,

and mi muþ grennet,
And my mouth grins,

and mi spotel rennet,
And my spittle runs,

and min her riset,
And my hair falls out,

and min herte grisit,
And my heart trembles,

10

and mine honden biuien,
And my hand shakes,

and mine ffet stiuien,
And my feet stiffen,

al to late, al to late,
All too late, all too late,

wanne þe bere ys ate gate.
When the bier is at the gate.

þanne y schel fflutte
Then I shall flit

15

Ffrom bedde te fflore,
From bed to floor,

Ffrom fflore to here,
From floor to shroud,

Ffrom here to bere,
From shroud to bier,

Ffrom bere to putte,
From bier to pit,

and te putt ffor-dut.
And the pit shut up.

20

þanne lyd min hus vppe min nose,
Then lies my house upon my nose,

off al þis world ne gyffe ihic a pese.
Of all this world I don't give a pea. (Brown XIII.71)

The fact that this collapse begins before death serves as a frightening connection between mortal and immortal life.

Undoubtedly the most epigrammatic, not to say cryptic, expression of this bodily disintegration in the death lyrics is the fourteenth-century “*Erþe toc of erþe, erþe wyþ woh*”:

Erþe toc of erþe, erþe wyþ woh,
Earth took of earth, earth with wrong,

Erþe oþer erþe to þe erþe droh,
Earth other earth to the earth added,

Erþe leyde erþe in erþene þroh—
Earth laid earth in earthen grave—

þo heuede erþe of erþe erþe ynoh.
Then had earth of earth enough. (Brown XIII.73)

In “a savagely ironic summing up of the end of the avaricious man” (Woolf 85), the puns on “*erthe*” (“earth”) conflate every noun in the poem but “*woh*,” (“woe”) including the human body, man’s wealth, and his grave, making the point that both man’s origin and his destiny are “*erthe*.”

A similar, more scathing (and more direct) attack on man’s avarice and pride is in this fourteenth-century lyric:

Wrecche mon, wy artou proud,
Wretched man, why are you proud,

þat art of herth I-maked?
That are made of earth?

hydyr ne browtestou no schroud,
Hither you brought no shroud,

bot pore þou come & naked.
But poor you came and naked.

Wen þi soule is faren out,
When your soul has gone out,

5

þi body with erthe i-raked,
Your body covered with earth,

þat body þat was so ronk and loud,
That body that was so arrogant and loud,

Of alle men is i-hated.
Is hated by all men. (Brown XIV.133)

Both “*Erthe tok of erthe*” and “*Wrecche mon*” are versions of God’s edict, “dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return” (Gen. 3:19), but “*Wrecche mon*” goes further: man’s corpse is not simply “*erthe*,” but “*so ronk and loud [that] [o]f alle men [it] is i-hated*.” This concern with the decomposition of the body can also be seen in the cadaver tombs which were first seen in England in 1420 (Daniell 184). In both the lyrics and the cadaver tombs, the contrast between the immortal soul (represented in the cadaver tombs by the undecomposed body) and the rotting mortal body is a frightening warning to the living of what their fate will be.

A significant commonplace among these grave lyrics is that the dead person is *alone*. In “*Wrecche mon*,” the corpse is alone because it is rejected by the living; however, this loneliness of the dead is more than the loneliness of the disgusting. In “*Worldes blis*,” the speaker warns, “*ne salt tu hau with þe no fere / but þine werkes on a hep*” (“you shall have no companion but your works on a heap,” 19-20). According to the speaker in “*Bysoeth zou in þis ylke lyf*,” “*þe soule sone shal boe leued . . . [o]f froendes bāre*” (“the soul soon shall be left . . . bare of friends,” 46-7). Companions are part of the earthly goods that a man cannot take with him at death; all the dead person retains, besides his rotting body, are his good works. Although the fifteenth-century “*Nou Bernes, Buirdus, bolde and blyþe*” warns that “*frendes are not ay ifere*” (“friends are not always together”) in the afterlife, it does give comfort to the righteous, saying that “*þat lord that rauzt was on þe Roode, -- / He kepe þi comeli cumpayne*” (“that Lord that was stretched on the Cross – He keeps your Holy company,” see Appendix A, page 75). “*Uuere bep þey biforen vs weren*” gives a slightly different account of this issue, claiming that for “*þat trayling and þat proude hong*” (“that trailing garment and that proud gait,” 12) for whom “*þat wele is comen te weylaway*” (“that prosperity has come to ‘weylaway,’” 15) and who “[*h*]oere paradis hy nomen here,” (“took their paradise here”) “[*a*]nd nou þey lien in helle i-fere” (“now they lie in hell together,” 17-8); however, the comfort that one gets in the assurance that he will have his friends with him in hell is, surely, slight indeed.

The importance of these good works is highlighted in the sixteenth-century “*While þou hast gode & getest gode*,” which notes that a “*sliper good is erthly gode*” (“slippery good is earthly good,” 31), and that man ought to do good with whatever gifts God gives him (see page 86). This lyric actually appeals to man’s selfishness to coax him into doing good works, saying, “*Do gode for thy soule gode*,” (“Do good for your soul’s good”) not God’s; similarly, “*Nou Bernes, Buirdus, bolde and blyþe*” advocates

And lete vr werk vr wordes preue,
And let our work our words prove,

30

So þat no sunne vr soule forfare
So that no sin our soul destroy

Whon þat vr lyf haf taken his leue.
When that our life has taken its leave.

In any event, whatever the motive for good deeds, throughout the lyrics, they are consistently said to be the only good that follows man after his death.

Ironically, in a poem disputing the value of all things temporal, an urgent concern in “*Worldes blis*,” as in “*Mirie it is*,” is man’s lack of time; however, why this lack is urgent is radically different in the two lyrics. “*Mirie it is*” expresses a bitter resignation that this “*mirie*” life ends, and that it is awfully short compared to the “*nicht*” of death that follows; its theme is almost “*carpe diem*,” though, as Woolf notes, “[n]o doubt for all Christians, as for St. Paul, the Epicurean attitude of ‘Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die’ had lost its force in the face of the Resurrection” (70). In contrast, while “*Worldes blis*” is obviously concerned with the fact that this world’s pleasures are fleeting, it is more concerned with the fact that, roughly speaking, the soul who dies with the most good works wins, and so one must work frantically while he can to amass a heap of good works. Of course, this emphasis on good works (as opposed to God’s grace) as a vehicle for salvation was shifting, and while many Christians still cited James’ claim that “faith without works is dead” (2.20), the burgeoning Protestant Church was more likely to cite Ephesians: “For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God; / Not of works, that no man may glory” (2.8-9).

Adding to this sense of urgency is the fact that one “*nost wan*” (“knows not when,” 29) death will come: one must always be ready to be called to account for his life. This theme comes up frequently within the lyrics: in “*Bysoeth zou in þis ylke lyf*,” man is encouraged to be prepared: he “*not when hoenne vâre*” (“knows not when [he will] go hence,” 8). Sudden death was considered particularly horrible in the Middle Ages, “a strange and monstrous thing that nobody dared talk about” (Ariès 11). What

made a sudden death particularly frightening was the fact that a person would die unshriven. This threat was greatest to those who believed in purgatory, as those who died unshriven of venial sins would not go to hell in any case. Without purgatory, his soul would go to heaven on Judgment Day (whether Judgment Day was the day an individual died or at the end of time was debated); with purgatory, he would go to heaven after having been purged of venial sins. Clearly, then, dying unshriven posed new threats with purgatory.

If “*Worldes blis*” manifests an ambivalent attitude toward the afterlife, this ambivalence is resolved in “*Bysoeth zou in þis ylke lyf.*” Like “*Worldes blis*,” this lyric addresses the futility -- and perils -- of avarice:

Mon with sorewe is uurst ybore, 15
Man is first born with sorrow,

And eft wyth sorewe rend and tore,
And after rent and torn with sorrow,

ʒyf he ryth þenþ of hys wâre,
If he thinks directly of his things.

As with “*Worldes blis*,” man will ultimately

Er þou boe brouht to þylke asyse, 31
Ere you are brought to that assize,

On what þou shalt truste þâre.
On what you shall trust there.

What god þou hauest, mon, here ydon
What good you have done here, man

Prest þer þou shalt ounder-uon,
Promptly there you shall receive

Two lines mark this lyric as purgatorial: “[*t*]ofore the deth is betere o dede / [*t*]hen after tene, and more of mede . . .” (37-8). To a Judgment-Day Christian, the question of whether a deed is better before or after death is moot: there are no deeds after death.

Whatever specific images are in the Middle English religious lyrics, they all serve the same purpose: to get the listener to think about his ultimate fate in time to affect it. Often this goal is tacit; however, sometimes it is directly stated. Perhaps the most direct expression of this objective is found in the thirteenth-century lyric “*If man him bithoghte,*” which encourages man to think “*inderlike and ofte*” (“inwardly and often,” 2) about how little separates man from “*pine*” (“torment,” 7):

If man him biðocte
If man thought

inderlike & ofte
Inwardly and often

pu arde is the fore
How hard is the going

fro bedde te flore,
From bed to floor,

Du reuful is te flitte 5
How sorrowful is the flight

fro flore te pitte,
From floor to pit,

fro pitte te pine
From pit to torment

ðat neure sal fine,
That never shall end,

I þene non sinne
I reckon no sin

sulde his herte pinnen. 10
Should win his heart.

Amen. (Brown XIII.13)

This lyric does not need to be long to make its point; indeed, its brevity emphasizes how tenuous the barrier between life and death is.

“*Worldes blis*” warns its audience, “*sali man, nim þar-of kep!*” (“thoughtless man, take heed thereof!” 14): “*þinc, man, forþi wilstu auest mithe, / þat þu þi gulte hier arithe,*” (“think, man, therefore, while you can, / see that you set right your guilt,” 25-6)

“Uuere bep þey biforen vs weren” urges its listeners to *“thenk on him that thereonne gaf / [h]is lif”* for them (“think on Him who thereon gave / His life,” 37-8); here it is similar to a passion lyric, asking its reader to empathize with Christ on the cross. Though the focus in these two lyrics is different, the goal is the same: that the listeners examine their lives and turn away from sin -- or actively do good -- while they have the chance.

Finally, along these lines, *“Nu þu vnseli bodi up-on bere list”* gives an example of someone who waited too long to mend his ways. The speaker admonishes the dead man, saying, *“Thu noldest not thee bithenchen for to ben wis: / [f]orthy, havestu forloren the joye of parais”* (“you would not think on yourself to be wise:/ for this, you have lost the joy of paradise,” 8-9). This chilling and particularly effective lyric assures the listener that there will come a time when it is too late for him to affect his fate and that it may come at any moment.

The increasing belief in purgatory did not, of course, come to pass in a vacuum. The significance of the official recognition of purgatory in 1254 and of the popular belief in purgatory lay in the importance it gave to the individual. “[T]he emergence of the individual” in the twelfth century that R. W. Southern and others observe is consistent with the genesis of purgatory (221). The very existence of purgatory raised the status of the individual in two ways. First, it allowed individuality to continue after death. Although Christianity had always described an afterlife, it was vague about exactly what happened to the individual after his death; although some believed that Judgment Day was the day of the individual’s death (and, thus, not any one day), a more common belief held that the souls of the dead would remain dormant until the end of time, when, on Judgment Day, each soul would be sent to either heaven or hell, based on its earthly life. In this case, Judgment Day was potentially so far off (though no one knew when it would be) that death might feel more like an absolute end to human beings, prompting lyrics like *“Mirie it is.”* With the advent of purgatory, souls were never gone, or even asleep, but simply moved. According to a purgatorial system, hell-bound souls would be sent

immediately to hell, whereas most heaven-bound souls would be sent immediately to purgatory (a few saintly souls might be sent directly to heaven). However horrible the thought of purgatory (let alone hell) might be to contemplate, it is perhaps less awful than the thought of ceasing to be altogether.

One other respect in which purgatory allowed the individual increased significance was in strengthening the connection between the living and the dead. As “an intermediary other world in which some of the dead were subjected to a trial that could be shortened by the prayers, by the spiritual aid, of the living” (Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* 4), purgatory greatly increased the importance of the remembrance of the dead. As a direct result of the belief in purgatory, the dead continued to have some presence on earth. The Middle English religious lyrics, particularly those of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in their illustration of the increasing belief in purgatory are evidence of the growing concern with the individual.

The Translations

In selecting lyrics for translation, I considered several factors, including whether they were already in a glossed edition. R. T. Davies’ *Medieval English Lyrics* and Maxwell S. Luria and Richard L. Hoffman’s *Middle English Lyrics* contain glossed versions of many lyrics and are good places to begin a study of Middle English lyrics, particularly if the reader is uncomfortable with non-Chaucerian Middle English. I tried to select lyrics that cover the widest range of themes relevant to death (see Appendix B for an index of themes). In translation, my goal was to assist the reader in reading the lyrics themselves; toward that end, I chose an interlinear format. One of my aims in the translation was to be as literal as possible (occasionally shifting word order) without introducing errors in connotation; in cases where I chose a non-literal translation, the literal translation is in the margin.

Lyrics from the Thirteenth Century

1. *Leuedi sainte marie, moder and meide,*³
 Lady St. Mary, mother and maid,
- bu pisie me nuþe for ich eom eirede.*
 Direct me now, for I am bewildered.
- vnnut lif to longe ich lede;*
 A useless life too long I led;
- hpanne ich me biþenche pel sore ich me a-drede.*
 When I think about it, I'm bitterly afraid.
- Ich eom i-bunde sore mid pel feole seonne,* 5
 I am woefully bound with many sins,
- mid smale and mid grete, mid pel feole cunne.*
 With small sins and with great ones, with many kinds of sin.
- dai and nicht ich fundie to pendende heonne –*
 Day and night I try to go from here –
- pielde Godd an heuene to hpuechere punne!*
 To whatever kind of bliss God rules in heaven!
- Slep me hað mi lif forstole richt half oðer more;*
 Sleep has swallowed up half my life or more;
- apai! to late ich pas ipar nu hit me reopeð sore,* 10 *lit., too late I was aware*
 Alas! I woke up too late; now I bitterly regret it.
- in slepe ne pende ich endie nocht þech ich slepe euremore;*
 Asleep I expect to go nowhere, though I sleep forever;
- hpao-se lifeð þat pakerur beo, þenþ of mine lore.*
 Whoever lives who is more awake, consider my lessons.
- Al to longe slepð þe mann þat neure nele apakie;*
 The man who sleeps too long will never awaken.
- hpo-se understant pel his ende-dai, pel zeorne he mot spakie*
 He who understands his end day well, eagerly he must hasten
- to donde sunne apei fram him & fele almesse makie,* 15
 To put away sin and make many alms.
- zif him ne schal hpanne he forð-pant his brei-gurdel quakie.*
 If he shall not, when he dies, his loins shall tremble.
- Slep me hað mi lif forstole er ich me bisehe*
 Sleep swallowed up my life before I paid attention.

³ Brown XIII.2.

þat ich þel aʒitte nu bi suhðe of min ehe;
That much I can see now with my eyes;

mi brune her is hpit bicume, ich not for hpucche leihe,
My brown hair has become white— I know not with which dye,

& mi tohte rude iturned al in-to oðre dehe. 20
And my strong face turned completely into another hue.

Ifurn ich habbe isunehed mid porke & mid pord,
Formerly I've sinned with deed and with word,

hpile in mine bedde & hpile atte borde,
While in my bed and while at table,

ofte pin idrunke & selde of þe forde;
Often drunk wine and seldom water;

*lit., of the
ford*

muchel ich habbe ispened, to lite ich habbe an horde.
Much have I spent; too little have I treasured.

Hord þat ich telle is almesse-dede 25
The treasure I speak of is almsdeeds.

ʒieue þe hungrie mete & te nakede ipede,
Give the hungry food and the naked clothes,

rede þe redliese þat is pið-ute rede
Counsel the foolish who are without counsel

luuie god almichti & of him habbe drede.
Love God almighty and fear Him.

Ifurn ich habbe isunezet mid purken & midd muðe
Formerly I have sinned with works and with speech

& mid alle mine lime siððe ich sunehi cuðe, 30
And with all my limbs since I knew how to sin,

& þel feole sunne ido þe me ofþincheð nuðe,
And done many sins of which I think now,

& spo me hadde ifurn ido ʒif hit me crist I-ʒuðe.
And so I had formerly done if Christ would allow it.

Moder ful of milce, i bidde mi mod pende,
Merciful mother, I pray my heart may change,

laete me steopi mi flesch & mine fo schiende.
Let me restrain my flesh and put my foe to shame

edmodnesse luuie to mine lif-es ende; 35
And love meekness to my life's end;

luue to gode & te mann ic bidde þat tu me sende.

I pray that you send me love for God and man.

Leuedi sainte marie, understond nu seonne mine;
Lady Saint Mary, understand now my sin;

ber min erende pel to deore sune pine,
Bear my errand to your beloved Son,

hpas flech & blod ihalzed is of bred, of pater, of pine,
Whose flesh and blood is hallowed in bread, in water, in wine,

pat us ischulde he eure fram alle helle-pine. **40**
That He may always shield us from hell's torments.

Inne mete & inne drinke ic habbe ibeo ouerdede,
In food and in drink I have been excessive,

& inne pel sittende schon in pruttere ipede;
And worn well-fitting shoes and proud clothes;

hpanne ich ihurde of gode speke ne hedd ich hpat me sede—
When I heard someone speak of God, I didn't heed what he said—

hpan ich hier-of rekeni schal, pel sore me mei drede.
When I shall consider this, I may feel bitter dread.

2. *Wenne hi þenche on domes-dai ful sore i me adrede,⁴*
When I think about Doomsday I am very afraid.

Per scal efter his werrec huc mon fongon mede.
Then shall each man receive his reward according to his works.

Hic habbe criste agult wid þonc & wid dede;
I have wronged Christ with both thought and with deed;

Louered helende, godis sone, wat scal me to rede?
Lord and savior, God's son, what advice should I take?

Pat fuir sal comen in þis world on one sonen-nist, **5**
That fire shall come into this world one night soon,

Firbernen al þis middeherd so crist hit wole disten,
Burn all this earth as Christ will ordain it,

Bopen watir & þed-lond, þe flurs þat beit briste –
Both water and populated land, the flowers that are bright –

Hiheriet bo ure louerd, muchel is his miththe.
Praised be our Lord, great is His might.

Foure engles in þe dairet blouit here bemen,
Four angels in the dawn will blow their horns,

Penne comit ihesus crist his domes forto demeN. **10**

⁴ Brown XIII.28a.

Then Jesus Christ will come to make His judgments.

Ne helpit hit nopinc þenne to wepen ne to remen,
It will help nothing then to weep or to cry out,

To him þat lutel hauet idon þat criste was iqueme.
To the man who has done little to please Christ.

From þat adam was i-wrout þat comet domesday
From the moment Adam was made comes Doomsday.

Monie of þe riche men þat werden fou & gray,
Many of the rich men who wear ermine and gray fur,

Riden uppe steden & uppe palefray,
Ride upon steeds and upon palefrey,

15

Ha sculen atte dome singen weilaway.
They shall at Doomsday sing, "welaway."

Ne sculen heo þer nout fisten wid sceldes ne wid sperre,
They shall not fight there with shields or with spears,

Wid helme ne wid brunie ne wid none gerren;
With helmets or with coat of mail or with any gear;

Ne sal no mon oþeir wid wise worde werreN,
Nor shall any man protect another with wise words,

Bote here almesdeden þat hore herinde sal bereN.
Unless his almsdeeds shall carry intercession for his sin.

20

Ho sculen isen þene kyng þat al þe world wroutte,
He shall see the King who all the world wrought,

& oppe þe suete rode wid stronge pine bocðthe
And upon the sweet Cross with brutal pains bought

Adam & is ofspring, in helle he hem southe –
Adam and his children, in hell He sought them –

To bidden þenne milse to late heo beoit biþouthe.
They will have thought too late to ask for mercy.

He sulen isen þat maiden þat ihesus crist inne kennede,
He shall see the maiden who conceived Jesus Christ,

25

Bi-tuenen hire ermes sueteliche hine wende.
Between her arms she sweetly enfolds Him.

Þe wile þat we misten, to lutel we hire sende;
While we could, we sent her too little;

Þat makede þe worse, so woule he us ablende.
That is Satan's doing, so will he blind us to the truth.

**lit., that
made the
Evil One,**

Per sulen þe riswise ben on godis rist honde,
There shall the righteous be at God's right hand,

**so he will
blind us**

& þe sunfulle sulen ateliche stonden
And the sinful shall stand terrified

30

Wid here sunnes iwriten, þat is muchel sconde.
With their sins written, who are greatly ashamed.

Alle heo sullen hem isen þat liueden in londe.
All shall see them who live on earth.

To þe riswise he spekit wordes suiþe suete:
To the righteous He will speak words swift and sweet:

'Comit heir, mine frents yeure sunnes forte lete
"Come here, my friends, your sins to lose.

Hi mine fadeir huse hou is i-makit sete,
In my father's house you are made a seat,

35

þer-inne sculen engles sueteliche greten.'
Therein angels shall greet you sweetly."

To þe sunfule he spekit so ye mouin iheren:
To the sinful He will speak so you may hear:

'Gooid, ye awariede, wid funden iwere,
"Go, you accursed, go with the fiends,

Into berninde fur; of blisse ye beoit scere
Into burning fire; you are denied bliss

for-þi þat ge oure sunnen ut of þis porild beren.'
Because of the sins that you bear out of this world."

40

Bidde we ure leuedye, suetis alre þinge,
We ask Our Lady, sweetest of all things,

þat heo beore ure herinde to þen heuene kinge,
That she may bear our intercession to heaven's king,

þat for is holie nome & for hire herindinge,
That for His holy name and for her intercession,

þat he ure soule into heoueneriche bringe.
That He may bring our souls into the kingdom of heaven.

3. *þene latemeste dai, wenne we sulen farren*⁵
On the last day, when we shall go

vt of þisse worlde wid pine & wid care,
Out of this world with sorrow and with pain,

⁵ Brown XIII. 29.

Al so we hideir comen naket & bare,
Just as we came here, naked and bare,

& of ure fule sunnen yewen onsuare.
And for our dreadful sins give answer.

For nabbe no mon so mukil, al hit wol a-gon—
For no matter how much a man has, all of it will go—

5

Is lont & is lude, is hus & is hom—
His land and his people, his house and his home—

Pe sorie soule atte dom makit hire mon;
The sorry soul at Doomsday will make its moan;

I-vis ne mai at-blenchen crist ure neuere on.
Indeed, not one of us can avoid Christ's judgment.

Penne seit þe sole wid sorie chere:
Then the soul will say, sadly:

'Awei! Wrechede bodi, nou þou sal to bere,
"Away! Wretched body, now you shall go to the bier,

10

& i sal for þine sunnen hebben fendes to were.
And for your sins I shall have fiends for companions.

Ac wey þat þu euere to monne yscapit were!'
Alas, that you were ever created as man's companion!"

Wenne þen latemeste day deit hauit ibroun,
When the last day will have brought death,

Binimit ure siste, speche, & hure þoutt,
Taken our sight, speech and our thought,

Penne is ure blisse al iturnit to nout,
Then our joy will have turned to nothing,

15

Bote wose godis wille hauit heir iwroun.
Except those who have done God's will here.

Sone so þe soule beoit ifarein vt,
As soon as the soul has gone out,

Me nimit þe licam & prenit in on clut,
I will take up the body and stitch it in a cloth,

þat was heir modi, stronc & suyþe prut,
That which was arrogant here, strong and so proud,

þat was iwouit to weriin so mony veir sroun.
That was wont to wear so many fur garments.

20

Penne liit þe cleyclot cold alse an ston,
Then lies the clay clod cold as a stone,

& þe frent striuit to gripen is won;
And your friend tries to hold onto his fortune;

Þen þe sorie soule makit hire mon,
Then the sorry soul makes its moan,

Alle is frent-men beit iturnit to won.
All his friends are turned to foes.

Nu sal þin halle wid spade ben wrout, **25**
Now shall your house be made with a spade,

& þu sal, wreche, þer-inne ben ibrou;
And you, wretch, shall be brought therein;

Me wole suopen þin hus & bernen þi bout—
Someone will sweep your house and burn your yard—

Alle þine mudirkins sulen bein isout.
All your clothes chests shall be sought.

Þin hus is sone ibuld þer þu salt wonien inne,
The house is soon built where you shall dwell in,

Boþe þe wirst & þe rouf sal ligger uppon þin chinne; **30**
Both the ceiling and roof shall lie upon your chin.

Þenne sulen woremes woniin þe wid-innen,
Then shall worms dwell within you,

Ne salt þu þe nout weriin wid neppe ne wid pinne.
You shall wear nothing with nap or with pin.

Nu sal firrotien þine teit & þine tunke
Now your teeth and your tongue shall rot

& al þat is wid-innen þe – þi liuerre & þi longe
And all that is within you – your liver and your lung

& þi þrote-bolle wid þat þu soncke— **35**
And the Adam's apple with which you sang—

& þu salt ben in putte ful faste bi-þronge.
And you shall be crammed firmly into a pit.

Nou nis offered of þe, þi mei ne þi mouwe,
Now no one is afraid of you, your kinsman or your kinswoman,

Heo weriet þe weden þat heir were þin owene;
He will wear the clothes that once were your own;

& þou, wrecche beli, lists nu ful louwe,
And now, wretched body, you lie low,

ac nulle her neuer on nou, here þonkis, þe icnowen. **40**

But no one here now even recognizes you in his thoughts.

Wer beit nou þine frend, faire þat þe biheten,
Where are your fine friends now, who gave you fair promises,

Ofte þe igretten bi weis & bi streteN?
Who often greeted you in the street?

Nu heo wollet, wrecche, þe alle forleten,
Now all of them will forsake you, wretch,

for nulle hore neuer on nou, hore stonkis, þe imeten.
Because no one will ever willingly meet you now.

Wer boit þine ponewes loue þat þe wereN? 45
Where will your dear riches be that you defend?

Of þine riche weden nou þu ard al scere;
Of your fine clothes now you will be completely deprived;

Bo þu inne þin putte wormis ifere—
Both you and worms together in your pit—

Hit boit sone of þe so þu neuer nerre.
Soon it will be as if you never were.

Wer boit þine disces wid þine suete sonten?
Where will your dishes with sweet servings be?

Wer is þi breit & ale, tunnen & þine stonden? 50
Where is your bread and ale, your tun and barrel?

Nu þu salt to putte to wonien wid þe wonde.
Now you shall go to hell to live with the Devil.

A-wei! Wy nostu er-ware þis vndeir-stonden?
Away! Why didn't you understand this before?

Nou þu hauest, wrecche, hileuid al to longe
Now, wretch, you have left it all too long

To louien þe riste & hatien þe wronge,
To love the right and hate the wrong,

& don sum almes-deden wid þine rist honde, 55
And do some almsdeeds with your right hand,

& bringen us in-to heuene ut of þisse ille londe.
And bring us into heaven out of this foul earth.

Selde wole me for þe messes lete singen,
Seldom will people sing masses for you,

Oþeir in holie chireche makin hei offringe;
Or make offerings in holy church;

Me wole for þin haiste make striuinge,
Men will fight for your property

& puten þe wid-uten of alle þine þincge.
And separate you from all your things.

60

Þe wile þu hedest misten to don at þine pille,
While you had the power to do your will,

Euer þu were abouten us bo forto spillen;
You were always about to destroy us both;

& nou þou salt, wrecche, liggen ful stille,
And now you shall, wretch, lie completely still,

ac ig sal þine gultis abugen ful ille.
But I shall pay horribly for your sins.

Wi noldes þu wid criste maken us isaiste,
Why wouldn't you reconcile us both with Christ,

65

Messen lete singen of þat he þe bitaiste?
Have masses sung of Him who bought you?

Euer þu were abuten to echen þin haiste;
You were forever trying to increase your wealth

For-þi we boet an hende boþe bipaiste.
Because we are both quickly deceived.

Lie, awariede bali, þat neuer þu ne arrise!
Lie, accursed body, that you may never rise again!

Wenne ic þenche þe opon euer me may agrisen;
When I think upon you, may I ever tremble;

70

I sal biueren in vours & chiuerrren in ise,
I shall shiver in furs and shiver in ice,

& ben ipinet for þe on ateliche wyse.
And be tortured because of your terrible ways.

A domes-dai to a bittre bacþe we sule bo nakit,
At Doomsday we shall be taken naked to a bitter bath

Of brimston & of piche wellinde imakit,
God will make of brimstone and boiling pitch.

Þer-inne sathanas þe feind us rent wid is rake,
There Satan the fiend will tear us with his rake,

75

& soþin us wole firsuoleuen þe fundene drake.
And afterwards, the serpent-fiend will devour us.

Þau al þat fur of þis world to-gedere were ibrou,
Though all the fire of this world were brought together,

A-gain þisse hete nere hit rist nout.
Against this heat it is nothing.

Ac we is him aliue þat þer-inne is ibrou!
But woe is him who is brought there alive!

Alle þes ilke pines þou us hauist woucht. **80**
You have confirmed all these torments for us.

Wose seiye þene feind, hu lotliche he boe,
Whoever may see the fiend, how obscene he is,

Hornes on is heuet & hornes on is cnoe,
Horns on his head and horns on his knee,

Nis non þinc on liue of so ateliche bloe;
Nothing alive is so terribly angry;

Wose come hondur his hont ded he moste boe.
Whoever comes under his hand, he must be dead.

He gonet wid is mouþe & staret wid is eyen, **85**
He gapes wide his mouth and stares with his eyes,

Of is neose-þurlis comet stark leyen,
Out of his nostrils comes strong fire,

Pat fur bernit & springit ut at uche breye;
That fire burns and springs out at each breath;

Wose loke him on, for drede he moste deyen.
Whoever looks on him, he must die of fear.

As beit is heye-puttes asse a brupen-leit,
His eye-pits are a brewing caldron,

Pat fur sprinkit þer-of wnderliche reid— **90**
That fire springs from it fearfully red—

Ne mai no mon tellen hu lodliche is þe qued;
No man can tell how foul the devil is;

Wose lokede him on of drede heo were deed.
Whoever looks on him would be dead of fear.

Wite we us from prude & wreþe & from honde,
Let us defend ourselves from pride and anger and from greed,

From yissing & sloucþe þat regnet in londe,
From envy and sloth that rule the earth,

Glotonie & horedom – þes sunnes þu ne fonde **95**
Gluttony and whoredom –these sins you must avoid

If þu uult a domes-dai wid iesu criste þonken.

If you would think to be with Jesus Christ on Doomsday.

Ac nomeliche holde we us ut of horedome,
But namely let us avoid whoredom.

Messes lete we singen & alme don ilome,
Let us have masses sung and alms done often,

& wid holie chireche make we us isome;
And with the holy church let us make peace;

Ponne mou we quemen crist at þe stronke dome.
Then may we please Christ at the Last Judgment.

100

Þe king þat on þe holie treo adammes sunnes bette
The king who on the holy tree bought Adam's sins

For we sculden to heuene sten – o boc so he id sette—
So that we should ascend to heaven – so He set it down in the book—

Fur-yeue us ure sunnes þat nou us ne letten,
Forgive us our sins that now hinder us,

& make us freo for to bein þer of þe fendes nette.
And make us free to escape the fiend's net.

Bidde we ure louerd for is suete miste
We ask Our Lord for His sweet might

105

Pat heo beo heuer ure sceeld from þe voule viste,
That He will always shield us from the foul creature,

& lete us hatiin þat wowe & louien þat riste,
And let us hate what's wrong and love what's right,

& bring us at hure endesid in-to houene liste. AmeN.
And bring us at our ends into heaven's light. Amen.

4. *Worldes blis ne last no throwe,*⁶
This world's joy lasts only a short time.

it went and wit a-wey anon;
It goes away soon.

þe langer þat ics it knowe
The longer I know it,

þe lasse ics finde pris þar-on,
The less I find value therein,

for al it is imeind mid care,
For it is all mingled with care,

5

with serwen and mid iuel fare,

⁶ Brown XIII.46.

With sorrow and evil fare,

and atte laste poure and bare
And, at the end, poor and bare,

it lat man, wan it ginth agon.
It abandons man when it begins to go.

al þe blis þis her and þare
All earthly joys

bilochth at ende wep and mon. **10**
Are encompassed by weeping and moaning at the end.

Al þe blis of þese liue
All the joys of this life

þu salt, man, enden ine wep—
You shall, man, end in weeping—

of hus and hom, of child and wiue.
Over house and home, of child and wife.

sali man, nim þar-of kep!
Thoughtless man, take heed thereof!

þu salt al bileuen here **15**
You shall leave behind all

þeite war-of lord þu were;
That you were lord of here;

wan þu list hup-on þe bere
When you lie on the bier

and slapst þat suite dreri slep,
And sleep that dreary sleep,

ne salt tu haue with þe no fere
You shall have no companion

but þine werkes on a hep. **20**
But your works on a heap.

Al sal gon þat man hier houet,
Everything that man has here shall go,

and al it scal bicom to naut;
And it shall come to nought;

he þat hier no gud ne sowet,
He that has sown no good here,

wan othre repen he wrth bikaut.
When others reap their rewards, he will be beguiled.

þinc, man, forþi wiltu aest mithe, 25
Think, man, therefore, while you can,

þat þu þi gulte hier arithe,
See that you set right your guilt

and werche gud bi dai and nithe,
And do good works by day and night,

har þan þu be of liue laut.
Before you are out of life.

þu nost wan crist hure drithe
You don't know when Christ our Lord

þe hosket þat þe hauet bitaut. 30
Will ask for what you have promised.

Man, wi sestu þout and herte
Man, why do you set your thought and heart

o werldes blis þat nout ne last?
On the joys of this world, which won't last?

wi þolstu þat þe softe ismerte
Why do you suffer that which so often hurts you

for þing þat is unstedefast?
For something that is faithless?

þu lickest huni of þorn iwis, 35
You lick honey off a thorn, indeed,

þat seist þi loue o werldos blis
Who set your love on worldly joys.

• • • • •

ful sore þu mith ben of-gast,
You will be completely terrified of power,

þat hier despendest heite a-mis,
Who spend property foolishly here,

to ben þar-þurew in-to elle cast. 40
To be thrown into hell.

þinc, man, war-to crist þe wroute
Think, man, why Christ made you

and do way prede and felthe and mud.
And put away pride and filth and mud.

þinc wu dere he þe boute
Think how dearly He bought you

o rode mid is swete blud;
On the Cross with His sweet blood;

im-self he gaf for þe ine pris,
He gave Himself in exchange for you,

45

to bein þe blis gif þu be wis.
To buy you joy, if you be wise.

bi-þinc þe þan, and up aris
Think, then, and rise up

of senne, and agin werchen gud
From sin, and begin to do good

þar wils time to werchen is,
While you have time to work,

for siker helles þu art wud.
Else you are surely foolish and mad.

50

Scal no gud ben unforiolden,
No good shall go unrewarded,

ne no qued ne wrth unbout;
Nor any evil unpunished;

wan þu list, man, under molden
When you lie, man, underground

þu scalt auen as tu auest wrout,
You shall have what you have done.

biþinc wel forþi us ics rede,
Think well, therefore, I urge you,

55

and clanse of ecs misdede,
And cleanse yourself of each sin,

þat crist þe helpe at tine nede,
That Christ may help you in your time of need,

þat so dere hauet þe bout,
He who has bought us so dearly,

An to euene blisse lede
And led us to heaven's joys,

þat euere last and faillet nout.
Which last forever and never fail.

60

Lyrics from the Fourteenth Century

1. *I wolde witen of sum wys wiht*⁷
I would like to know from some wise person
- Witterly what þis world were:*
Assuredly what this world might be:
- Hit fareþ as a foules fliht,*
It goes as a bird's flight.
- Now is hit henne, now is hit here,*
Now it is there, now it is here.
- Ne be we neuer so mucche of miht,* 5
Nor are we ever so strong,
- Now be we on benche, nou be we on bere;* *lit., on the bench*
Now we are at table, now we are on the bier
- And be we neuer so war and wiht,*
And we are never so vigilant and brave,
- Now be we sek, now beo we fere,*
Now we are sick, now we are healthy,
- Now is on proud wiþ-uten peere,*
Now is one proud without peer,
- Now is þe selue I-set not by;* 10 *lit., set nothing by*
Now is the same not respected;
- And whos wol alle þing hertly here,*
Whoever will hear all things sincerely,
- Þis world fareþ as a Fantasy.*
The world fares as an illusion.
- Þe sonnes cours, we may wel kenne,*
The sun's course, we may well know,
- Aryseþ Est and geþ doun west;*
Rises east and goes down west;
- Þe Ryuers in-to þe séé þei renne,* 15
The rivers, into the sea they run,
- And hit is neuer þe more al-mest;*
And it is almost nevermore;
- Wyndes Rosscheþ her and henne,*
Winds rush here and there,

⁷ Brown XIV.106.

In snou3 and reyn is non arest;
In snow and rain there is no end;

Whon þis wol stunte, ho wot or whenne,
When this will stop, who knows or when,

But only god on grounde grest?
But only God, greatest on earth?

20

Þe eorþe in on is euer prest,
The earth alone is everpresent,

Now bi-dropped, now al druyze;
Now dripping wet, now completely dry;

But vche gome glit forþ as a gest,
But each man glides away as a guest.

Þis world fareþ as a Fantasye.
This world fares as an illusion.

Kunredes come, & kunredes gon,
Families come, and families go,

25

As Ioyneþ generacions;
As generations join;

But alle hee passeþ euerichon,
But they all pass, every one,

For al heor preparacions;
For all their preparations;

Sum are for-3ete clene as bon
Some are forgotten, clean as bone,

A-mong alle maner nacions;
Among people everywhere,

30 *lit., all
manner of
nations*

So schul men þenken vs no-þing on
So shall men think us nothing

Þat nou han þe ocupacions;
Who now have the power;

And alle þeos disputacions
And all these arguments

Idelyche all vs occupye,
Idly occupy us all,

For crist makeþ þe creacions
For Christ makes the creations,

35

And þis world fareþ as a fantasye.
And this world fares as an illusion.

*Whuch is Mon, ho wot, and what,
What is man, who knows, and what,*

*Wheþer þat he be ouzt or nouht?
Whether he is anything or nothing?*

*Of Erþe & Eyr groweþ vp a gnat,
Of earth and air grows up a gnat,*

*And so doþ Mon whon al his souht;
And so does man when all is sought;.*

40

*Pauz mon be waxen gret and fat,
Though man is grown great and fat,*

*Mon melteþ a-wey so deþ a mouht.
Man melts away as does a moth.*

*Monnes miht nis worþ a Mat,
Man's might isn't worth a straw,*

*But nuyzeþ him-self and turneþ to nouht.
But hurts himself and turns to nothing.*

*Ho wot, saue he þat al haþ wrouzt,
Who knows, save He who has made all,*

45

*Wher mon bi-comeþ whon he schal dye?
Where man shall go when he shall die?*

*Ho knoweþ bi dede ouzt bote bi þouzt?
Who knows by experience nothing but by thought?*

*For þis world fareþ as a fantasye.
For this world fares as an illusion.*

*Dyeþ mon, and beestes dye,
Man dies, and beasts die,*

*And al is on Ocasion;
And all is for one reason;*

50

*And alle o deþ bos boþe drye,
And each must suffer one death*

*And han on Incarnacion;
And have one birth;*

*Saue þat men beoþ more sleyze,
Except that men are cleverer,*

*Al is o comparison.
It's all the same thing.*

Ho wot zif monnes soule styze,

55

Who knows if man's soul ascends,

And bestes soules synkep doun?
And animals' souls sink down?

Who knowep Beestes entencioun,
Who knows an animal's heart,

On heor creatour how þei crie,
How it cries toward its creator,

Saue only god þat knowep heore soun?
Save only God, who hears its voice?

For þis world fareþ as a fantasye.
For this world fares as an illusion.

60

Vche secte hopeþ to be saue,
Each sect hopes to be saved,

Baldely bi heore bi-leeue;
Boldly, by its belief;

And vchon vppon God heo craue—
And each one begs God earnestly—

Whi schulde God wiþ hem him greue?
Why should God bother Himself with them?

Vchon trouweþ þat oþur Raue;
Each one believes the other is mad;

65

But alle heo cheoseþ God for cheue,
But all choose God for their Lord,

And hope in God vchone þei haue,
And each puts his hope in God,

And bi heore wit heore worching preue.
And justifies what he does in his own mind.

Pus mony maters men don meue,
Thus, men discuss many things,

Sechen heor wittes hou and why;
Searching their wits for "how" and "why";

70

But Godes Merci vs alle bi-heueþ,
But all of us need God's mercy,

For þis world fareþ as a fantasye.
For this world fares as an illusion.

For þus men stumble & sere heore witte,
For thus men stumble and dry up their wits,

And meueþ maters mony and fele;
And discuss many and sundry problems;

Summe leueþ on him, sum leueþ on hit,
Some believe in Him; some believe in the world,

75

As children leorneþ for to spele.
As children learn to speak.

But non seop non þat a-bit,
But no one sees anyone who remains

Whon stilly dep wol on hym stele.
When silent death will steal up on him.

For he þat hext in heuene sit,
For He who sits high in heaven,

He is þe help and hope of hele;
He is the help and hope of salvation;

80

For wo is ende of worldes wele,—
For woe is the end of this world's joys,—

Vche lyf loke wher þat I lye—
All who live, look where I lie—

Pis world is fals, fikel and frele,
This world is false, fickle and frail,

And fareþ but as a fantasye.
And fares but as an illusion.

Whar-to wilne we forte knowe
Why do we want to know

85

Pe poyntes of Godes priuete?
The least bit of God's secret purpose?

More þen him lustes forte schowe
More than He wants to show

We schulde not knowe in no degre;
We should not know, under any condition;

And Idel bost is forte blowe
And idle boast is uttered forth

*lit.,
blossomed
forth*

A Mayster of diuinite.
A master of divinity.

90

Penk we lyue in eorþe her lowe,
Let us think we live low here in the earth,

And God an heiz in Mageste;
And God on high in majesty;

Of Material Mortualite
With mortality of material things

Medle we & of no more Maistrie.
We meddle, and without control.

Pe more we trace þe Trinite,
The more we explore the Trinity,

95

Pe more we falle in fantasye.
The more we are beguiled.

*lit., fall
into
illusion*

But leue we vre disputisoun,
But let us leave our argument,

And leeue on him þat al haþ wrouzt;
And believe in Him who created everything:

We mowe not preue bi no resoun
We cannot prove by reason

Hou he was born þat al vs bouzt;
How He was born who saved us all;

100 *lit., bought
us all*

But hol in vre entencioun,
But pure in our hearts,

Worschipe we him in herte & þouzt,
Let us worship Him in heart and mind,

For he may turne kuyndes vpsedoun,
For he can turn natures upside down,

Pat alle kuyndes made of nouzt.
Who made everything from nothing.

Whon al vr bokes ben forþ brouht,
When all our books are brought forth,

105

And al vr craft of clergye,
And all our clerical knowledge,

And al vr wittes ben þorw-out sougt,
And all our wits are sought throughout,

3it we fareþ as a fantasye.
Yet we fare as an illusion.

Of fantasye is al vr fare,
Of illusion is all our fare,

Old & zonge and alle i-fere;
Old and young and everyone together;

110

But make we murie & sle care,
But we should make merry and slay care,

And worschipe we god whil we ben here;
And worship God while we are here;

Spende vr good and luytel spare,
Spend our good and spare little,

And vche mon cheries opures cheere.
And each man cherish the other's face.

Penk hou we comen hider al bare,—
Think how we come here utterly naked,—

120

Vr wey wending is in a were—
Our way going is in doubt—

Prey we þe prince þat haf no pere,
Let us pray the Prince who has no peer,

Tac vs hol to his Merci
Take us whole into His mercy

And kepe vr Conscience clere,
And keep our conscience clear,

For þis world is but fantasy.
For this world is but illusion.

125

Bi ensauple men may se,
For example, men may see,

A gret treo grouweþ out of þe grounde;
A great tree grows out of the ground;

No þing a-bated þe eorþe wol be
The earth will not be diminished a bit,

Þauþ hit be huge, gret, and rounde.
Though it be huge, great and round.

Riht þer wol Rooten þe selue tre,
Right there will the same tree rot,

130

Whon elde haf maad his kuynde aswounde;
When age has made its nature feeble;

Þauþ þer weore rote suche þre,
Even if such a tree rotted there,

Þe eorþe wol not encrece a pounce.
The earth would not increase a pound.

Þus waxeþ & wanieþ Mon, hors, & hounde,
Thus waxes and wanes man, horse and hound,

From nouȝt to nouȝt þus henne we hiȝe; 135
 From nothing to nothing, thus hence we go;

And her we stunteþ but a stounde,
 And here we stop but a while,

For þis world is but fantasye.
 For this world is but illusion.

2. *Whi is þe world biloued, þat fals is & vein?*⁸
 Why is the world beloved, that is false and vain?

Siþen þat hise welþis ben vncertein.
 Since its wealths are uncertain.

Al so soone slidiþ his power away
 All too soon its power slips away

as doiþ a brokil pot, þat freisch is and gay.
 Like a brittle pot, that is pretty and new.

Truste ȝe rapir to lettirs written in þ'is, 5
 Trust letters written in the ice rather

þan to þis wrecchid world, þat ful of synne is.
 Than this wretched world, that is full of sin.

It is fals in his biheste, and riȝt disceiueable;
 It is false in its promises, and right deceptive;

it haþ bigilid manie men, it is so vnstable.
 It has beguiled many men, it is so unstable.

It is rapir to bileue þe waginge wynd,
 It is better to believe the wavering wind,

þan þe chaungeable world, þat makip men so blynd. 10
 Than the changeable world that makes men so blind.

Wheþir þou slepe oþere wake, þou schalt fynde it fals,
 Whether you sleep or wake, you'll find it false,

boþe in his bisynnessis & in his lustis als.
 Both in its business and in its pleasures also.

Telle me where is salamon, sumtyme a kinge riche?
 Tell me, where is Solomon, once a rich king? *lit. like*

or sampson in his strenkeþe, to whom was no man liche?
 Or Sampson, to whom no man was peer?

⁸ Brown XIV.134.

Or þe fair man absolon, merueilous in chere,
Or handsome Absalom, with his marvelous face, **15**

or þe duke ionatas, a weel biloued fere?
Or the ruler, Jonatas, a much-loved companion?

Where is bicome cesar, þat lord was of al?
What's become of Caesar, who was lord of all?

or þe riche man cloipid in purpur and in pal?
Or the rich man clothed in purple and in fine cloth?

Telle me where is tullius in eloquence so swete?
Tell me, where is Tullius, in eloquence so sweet?

or aristotil þe filisofre wip his witt so grete?
Or Aristotle the philosopher with his wit so great? **20**

Where ben þese woriþi þat weren here to-foren—
Where are these distinguished men who were here before?

boiþe kingis & bischopis, her power is al loren.
Both kings and bishops, their power is completely lost.

All þese grete princis, wip her power so hize,
All these great, princes, with their power so high,

ben wanischid a-way in twinkeling of an ize.
Are vanished in the twinkling of an eye.

þe ioie of þis wrecchid world is a schort feeste;
The joy of this wretched world is a short feast; **25**

it is likned to a schadewe þat abidiþ leeste;
It is like a shadow that stays but a short while.

And 3it it drawith man from heuene-riche blis,
And yet it draws man away from the joy of heaven

and ofte tyme makip hym to synne & do a-mys.
And often makes him sin and do amiss.

Calle no þing þin owen þerfore, þat þou maist her lese;
Call nothing your own therefore, that you may lose here;

þat þe world hap lent þee, eft he wolde it cese.
What the world has lent you, soon it will seize. **30**

Sette þin herte in heuen aboue, & þenke what ioie is þere,
Set your heart on heaven above, and think what joy is there,

& þus to dispise þe world, I rede þat þou lere.
And so I advise that you learn to despise the world.

Pou þat art but wormes mete, poudir, & dust,
You who are but worms' meat, powder and dust,

to enhaunce þi silf in pride, sette not þi lust.
Don't set your heart on making yourself proud,

For þou woost not to-day þat þou schalt lyue to-morewe;
For you don't know today that you'll live tomorrow; 35

Perfore do þou euere weel, & þanne schalt þou not sorewe.
Therefore, always do good and then you shall not be sorry.

It were ful ioiful & swete lordschip to haue
It would be very joyful and sweet to have lordship

if so þat lordschip myzite a man fro deef saue;
If that lordship could save a man from death;

But for as miche a man muste die at þe laste,
But since every man must die at the last,

it is no worschip, but a charge, lordschip to taste.
It is no honor, but a burden, to taste lordship. 40

Lyrics from the Fifteenth Century

1. *From þe tyme þat we were bore*⁹
From the time we were born

Oure zouþe passeþ fro day to day,
Our youth passes from day to day,

And age encreaseþ more and more;
And age increases more and more;

And so doþ yt nowe, þe soþ to say.
And so it does now, to tell the truth.

At euery oure a poynte ys lore,
At every hour a moment is lost, 5

So fast goþ owre zouþ a-weye,
So quickly goes our youth away,

And zouþ wylle come azen no more,
And youth will come again no more,

But age wylle make vs boþ blake and graye.
But age will make us both black and gray.

Perfor takeþ hede, boþ nyzte and day,
Therefore take heed, both night and day,

howe faste oure zouþ doþ aswage;
How fast our youth does pass away; 10

⁹ Brown XV.148.

And, boþ ʒoungē and olde, lete vs praye
And, both young and old, let us pray

Þat god send pacyence in oure olde age.
That God send us patience in our old age.

Age wylle take from vs oure myzte,
Age will take from us our strength,

Þat in oure ʒouþ to vs was lente,
That in our youth to us was lent,

And eke þe clernes of oure syzte,
And also the clarity of our sight,

15

And oure herynge schal be feynte.
And our hearing shall be faint.

Þan schul we be heuy, þat ere were lyzte,
Then shall we be heavy, who before were light,

By-cause þat ʒoungþe ys from vs wente;
Because that youth is gone from us;

And þan wol men do vs no ryzte,
And then people will do us no good deeds,

But al contrarye to oure entente;
But all contrary to our request;

20

And sykenes wol do vs grete turment,
And sickness will do us great torment,

Whom deēþ wol send on hys message—
Whom death will send with his message—

*lit.,
correction*

fforsop þe beste amendement
Truly the best thing for it

Is pacyence þan in oure olde age.
Is patience then in our old age.

Oure body wol yche, oure bonys wol ake,
Our body will ache, our bones will ache,

25

Owre owne flesshe wol be oure foo,
Our own flesh will be our foe,

Oure hede, oure handys, þan wol schake
Our head, our hands then will shake

Owre legges wol trymble whan we goo,
our legs will tremble when we walk,

*lit., will
dry as
does a
stake*

Oure bonys wol drye as doþ a stake,

Our bones will be dry as kindling,

And in oure body we schulle be woo,
And in our body we shall be tormented,

30

Oure nose, oure chekes, wol wex al blake,
Our nose, our cheeks, will grow completely black,

And oure glad chere wol vade vs fro;
And our glad face will fade from us;

And whan oure teep ben goon also,
And when our teeth are gone also,

Oure tunge schalle lese hys fayre langage.
Our tongue shall lose its pretty speech.

Prey we for vs self and oper moo,
Let us pray for ourselves and others more,

35

Pat god send vs pacyence in oure old age.
That God send us patience in our old age.

Oure frendys þat schul loue vs beste,
Our friends who shall love us best,

þan wol þei haue vs but in hate;
Then will they have for us only hatred;

In frendshipes is noon oper truste,
In friendship is no other trust,

And þerfor ben we y-ware to late—
And therefore we are aware of it too late—

40

þan may we synge of had-y-wyste—
Then may we sing of “had-I-known”—

Oure feynte frendes han vs for-sake.
Our false friends will have forsaken us.

And also we schullen goo vnkyste,
And also we shall go unkissed,

Boþ at þe dore and at þe gate,
Both at the door and at the gate,

ffor al þe chere þat we can make.
For all the cheer that we can make.

45

þan ys no ioye of oure vysage,
Then no joy is in our face,

Whanne oure bewte schal a-slake—
When our beauty shall fade—

God send vs pes in oure old age!
 God, send us peace in our old age!

We schullen be so angrye, euermore
 We shall be so angry, evermore

We wold be a-wreke of euery wronge; **50**
 We would be avenged of every wrong;

þan sume wold scorne vs þerfore,
 Then some will scorn us for that ,

And sume wold sey we lyue to longe.
 And some will say we live too long.

Oure sorowe wol sytte vs þan so sore,
 Then our sorrow will sit on us so sorely

Oure stomake wol no mete fonge.
 Our stomach will hold no food.

And euery day, more and more, **55**
 And every day, more and more,

Of sorowe and care schal be oure songe.
 Our song shall be of sorrow and care.

But whan we were boh hole and stronge
 But when we were both healthy and strong

We were to wylde and wold outerage.
 We were too wild and intemperate.

And þerfor lete vs pray a-monge,
 And therefore let us pray at the same time,

þat god send vs pacyence in oure old age. **60**
 That God send us patience in our old age.

For þan wole no þing us availe
 For then nothing will help us

but oure bedis and oure crucche,
 But our beads and our crutch,

for wordli welþe wole fade & faile,
 For worldly wealth will fade and fail,

And þerfore truste we it not to myche;
 And therefore let us not trust in it too much.

& þan wole sjuknes us assaile **65**
 And then sickness will assault us

Til it haþ made us lijk a wrecche,

Until it has made us wretched,

& þan may we do no greet traueile
And then we can't do any great work

But summtyme grone, & sumtyme grucche,
But sometimes groan and sometimes grouch,

And sumtyme clawe for scabbe & icche
And sometimes claw at scabs and itches

Whanne age haf us at his auauntage.
When age has us at its advantage.

70

Who-so lyueþ long schal be such;
Whoever lives long shall be this way.

God sende us paciens in oure olde age!]
God, send us patience in our old age!

Al þat we haue lyued here
All that we have lived here

It ys but a dreme y-mete,
It is but a dream we've dreamed,

ffor nowe yt ys, as yt neuer were.
For now it is as it never was.

75

And so ys yt þat ys to comynge zit—
And so it is that is yet to come—

And faste we drawen to oure beere—
And quickly we draw to our bier—

In sorowe and drede we schullen be sette.
In sorrow and fear we shall be set.

Of olde men þe younge may leere,
From old men the young may learn,

And zit fewe þer ben þat don bet,
And yet there are few who do better,

80

ffor þe fende haf cauþte hem in hys nette,
For the fiend has caught them in his net,

And hold hem faste in hys bondage
And holds them fast in his bondage

ffor þei schulden not dyspyse her wytte,
For the young should not scorn the advice of the old,

To haue pacyence in her old age.
To have patience in their old age.

þan schul we se þat wordly blysse 85
Then shall we see that worldly bliss

Is but þinge of vanyte,
Is but a thing of vanity,

And yt makeþ men to do a-mys
And makes men sin and do amiss

þat ben in welþe and grete bewte;
Who are rich and beautiful;

And þerfor, lord, good ryzt yt ys
And therefore, Lord, it is right

Wip oure owne stafe chastysed to be. 90
For us to be chastened with our own staff.

Lord, zeue vs grace to þenke on þis,
Lord, give us the grace to think about this

As þou bouztteste vs alle vppon a tree;
As You bought us all upon a tree;

And þat we may in charyte
And that we may, in charity,

Welle passe, ouer þis passage,
Move well over this passage,

In-to the blysse þat euer schal be 95
Into the bliss that ever shall be

Whan we ben passed oure old age. A-M-E-N.
When we have passed our old age. AMEN.

2. *Ffare well, this world! I take my leue for euere,*¹⁰
Farewell, this world! I take my leave forever,

I am arested to apere at goddes face.
I am summoned to appear before God's face.

O myghtyfull god, þu knowest that I had leuere
Oh, mighty God, You know that I had rather

Than all this world, to haue oone houre space
Than all this world, to have one hour's space

To make a-sythe for all my grete trespace. 5
To make amends for all my great sins.

My hert, alas! is brokyne for that sorowe,
My heart, alas! Is broken for that sorrow,

¹⁰ Brown XV.149.

Som be this day that shall not be to-morrow
Some are here today who shall not be tomorrow

This lyfe, I see, is but a cheyre feyre;
This life, I see, is but a cherry fair.

All thynghis passene and so most I algate.
All things pass, and so must I, in any case.

To-day I sat full ryall in a cheyere,
Today I sat completely royal on a throne,

10

Tyll sotell deth knokyd at my gate,
Until subtle death knocked at my gate,

And on-avysed he seyde to me, chek-mate!
And, without warning, he said to me, "Checkmate!"

lo! how sotell he maketh a devors—
Lo! How cleverly he makes a divorce—

**i.e.,
between
body and
soul**

And wormys to fede, he hath here leyde my cors.
And, to feed worms, he has laid my body here.

Speke softte, ye folk, for I am leyde aslepe!
Speak softly, you people, for I am laid asleep!

15

I haue my dreame, in trust is moche treson.
I have my dream, in trust is much treason.

ffram dethes hold feyne wold I make a lepe,
From death's hold I would hardly make a leap,

But my wysdom is turnyd into feble resoun:
But my wisdom has turned to senility:

I see this worldis joye lastith but a season.
I see that this world's joy lasts but a season.

Wold to god, I had remembyrd me be-forne!
I wish to God I had remembered that before!

20

I sey no more but be ware of ane horne!
I'll say no more except beware of the horn!

**i.e., of
Judgment
Day**

This febyll world, so fals and so vnstable,
This feeble world, so false and so unstable,

Promoteth his louers for a lytell while,
Promotes its lovers for a little while,

But at the last he yeveth hem a bable
But at the last, it gives them a bauble

Whene his peynted trowth is tordned in-to gile.
When its painted truth is turned into guile.

25

Experyence cawsith me þe trowth to compile,
Experience causes me to piece together the truth,

Thynkyng this, to late alas! that I began,
Thinking too late, alas! that I began this,

For foly & hope disseyveth many a man.
For folly and hope deceive many a man.

Farewell, my frendis! the tide abidith no man:
Farewell, my friends! The tide waits for no man:

I moste departe hens & so shall ye,
I must leave from here, and so shall you,

30

But in this passage the beste song þat I can
But in this passage the best song that I know

Is Requiem Eternam – I pray God grant it me!
Is “Eternal Rest” – I pray God grant it to me!

Whan I haue endid all myn aduersite,
When I have ended all my troubles,

Graunte me in paradise to haue a mancyon,
Grant me a mansion in paradise,

That shede his blode for my redempcion.
He who shed His blood for my redemption.

35

Beati mortui qui in domino morivntur
Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.

Humiliatus sum vermis.
I am brought low with the worms.

3. *Man, hef in mynd & mend þi mys,¹¹*
Man, remember and correct your faults,

quhill þow art heir in lyf lyffand;
While you are alive here;

and think apone þis warldis blys,
And think about this world’s joys,

sa oft-syis is variand.
So often unreliable.

for fortonis quheill is ay turnand,
For Fortune’s wheel is always turning,

5

quhil to weil and quhil to wa,
Now to weal and now to woe,

¹¹ Brown XV.156.

quhill owp, quhil downe, I onderstand.
Now up, now down, I understand.

Memor esto nouissima.
Remember the last things.

Thow seis þi sampil euerilk day,
You see your warning every day,

and þov tak heid withoutyn les, **10**
And you take heed without harm,

quhow sone þat yowt may pas away,
How soon you may pass away,

for bald hector and achilles
For bold Hector and Achilles

and alex', þe prowde in pres,
And Alexander, the proud in battle,

hes tane þare leif & mony ma,
Have taken their leave, and many more,

þat ded hes drawyne one-til his des. **15**
Whom death has drawn onto his stage.

memor esto nouissima.
Remember the last things.

Pidder þow com nakit and bayr,
You come here naked and bare,

As bannyst man of kyth & kyne;
As one banished from kith and kin;

so þe behuffis hyne to fayr,
So you must go hence,

for al þe ryches þow ma wyne **20**
For all the riches you may win.

Is na defens, be craft na gyne,
There is no defense, by skill or device,

þat ma defend þe fra þi fa,
That can defend you from your foe,

bot cherite be þe within.
Unless charity is within you.

memor esto nouissima.
Remember the last things.

Pis day thocht þow were hail & feyr, **25**

This day, though you were hale and fair,

as bern baldast, ore kyng with crowne,
As boldest knight, or king with crown,

Pe morne þow may be brocht one beyr
In the morning you may be brought on bier

for al þi castalis, towre & towne.
For all your castles and all your possessions.

Pai may nocht al mak þi ransone
Together they cannot make your ransom

fra ded becumin þat is so thra— **30**
From death, that is so fierce—

Pow art his pra, but radempsiene.
You are his prey unless redeemed.

memor esto nouissima.
Remember the last things.

Quhen þow art ded & laid in layme,
When you are dead and laid in clay,

and þi ribbis ar þi ruf tre,
And your ribs are your roof,

þow art þan brocht to þi lang hayme— **35**
You are then brought to your final home—

adew al warldis dignite!
Goodbye to all the world's dignity!

than is to lait forswicht, think me,
Then, it seems to me, it truly is too late,

quhen wormys gnawys þe to & fra,
When worms gnaw you to and fro.

now mynd þi mys in al degre.
Now mind your sins in all degree.

memor esto nouissima. **40**
Remember the last things.

Sen it is sa þat þow man fair,
Since it is so that you must go,

and knawys nocht þe wayis rycht
And know not the right way

Owt of þis warld withoutyn mare,
Out of this world unmarred,

quheper to hel or hewyne so brycht,
Whether to hell or heaven so bright,

þow pray to hyme most is of mycht
Pray to Him who is most mighty

45

þat he þe fra þe dewillis ta,
That He take you from the devils

and schild þe fra þe fendis plycht.
And shield you from the fiend's peril.

memor esto nouissima.
Remember the last things.

4. *Miseremini mei, ye that ben my ffryndys,*¹²
Pity me, you who be my friends,

This world hath enformyd me fforto falle.
This world has taught me to fall.

How myzte I endure when euery thinge endes;
How might I go on when everything ends;

What creature ys made to be eternall?
What creature is made to be eternal?

Now ys there no help butt pray ffore my sowll!
Now is there no help but to pray for my soul!

5

Thus Edward seyth, for latt I was kyng;
Thus Edward says, for lately I was king;

xxiiijⁱ yeres I reynynd this ymperiall,
Twenty-three years I reigned imperial,

Som men to plesoure, and som men nott to lykyng.
To some men's liking and not to others'.

fforgefnes I aske fore my nyse doying,
I ask forgiveness for my foolishness,

What A-vaylyþe it yov to be my foo?
What good does it do you to be my foe?

10

I may nott Resiste nor Amend your compleynyng,
I cannot resist your complaints nor make amends for them,

Quia ecce nunc in puluere dormio.
Because behold: now I sleep in the dust.

I ly now in mowlde as it ys naturall,
I lie now in mold, as it is natural,

i.e.,
Edward
IV, lived
1442-83,
reigned
1461-70
and 1471-
83.
Edward
was the
father of
the ill-
fated
“Princes
in the
Tower.”

¹² Brown XV.159.

ffore erthe vnto erthe hath his Reuerture;
For earth must revert to earth;

What ordeyned god to be terrestyall
What God ordained to be earthly

15

Wyth Recourse off ertly nature.
With passage of its earthly nature.

Euyre ffor-to lyve who may be swre?
Who can be sure he will live forever?

What is hit to trust the mutabilite
What is it to trust the mutability

Off this world whan no thyng may endure?
Of this world, when nothing can endure?

I am now gon wych latt was in prosperite,
I am now gone who lately was in prosperity,

20

To presumen there vpon hit ys butt vanite –
To presume upon it is but vanity—

No sertayne butt a chery fere full of woo—
No certainty but a cherry fair full of woe—

Reynyd I nott latt in greet felicite?
Reigned I not lately in great happiness?

Et ecce nunc in puluere dormio.
And behold: now I sleep in the dust.

Where was in my lyff such one as I
Where in my life was one such as I

25

Whiles my fortune had here continuaunce?
While my Fortune had its continuance here?

Grauntyd nott sho to me the vyctorie,
Did she not grant me the victory

In ynglond to Reygne and to contrybute fraunce?
To reign in England and to levy tribute on France?

Sho tok me by the hond and led me the daunce,
She took me by the hand and led me to the dance,

And with hure sewerger lyppus on me she smylyd;
And with her sugar lips she smiled on me;

30

And for here dyssemblande countenaunce
And of her lying face

I coud nott be ware tyll I was begylyd.

I could not be aware until I was beguiled.

Owt off this lond sho hath me exyld,
Out of this land she has exiled me,

Whan I was lothest hens for to goo
When I was most loath to go hence.

And I in age, as who seyth, butt a child,
And I in age, as they say, but a child,

35 i.e., aged
41.

Ecce nunc in puluere dormio.
Behold: now I sleep in the dust.

I se well they lyve that dowbyll my yerys;
I easily see they live who double my years;

Thus this world delyth with me as hit lyst,
Thus this world deals with me as it likes,

And hath me made, to yov that byn my perys,
And has made me, to you who are my peers,

Example to take euyre off had-I-wyst.
An example forever of “had-I-known.”

40

I stored hucches, cofers and chyst
I stored money chests and coffers

With tresore takyng off my commynalte—
With treasure taken from my commoners—

ffore there tresore that I toke there prayers I myst—
For their treasure that I took their prayers I missed—

Now whom I be-sech with pore humylyte
Now I beseech them with poor humility

Off forgefnesse, off me to haue pite.
Of forgiveness, to have pity on me.

45

I was youre kyng and kepte yow from youre foo;
I was your king and kept you from your foe;

I wold a-mend, butt now hit woll nott bee,
I would make amends, but now it will not be,

Quia ecce nunc in puluere dormio.
Because behold: now I sleep in the dust.

I had Inogthe, I hylt nott me content,
I had enough; I was not content,

With-outt Remembraunce that I schuld dy,
Without remembering that I should die,

50

More to encesse was myne entent.
My goal was to get more.

Beyng nott warre who schuld occupy,
Being not aware who should occupy it,

I mad the towre strong, butt I wyst nott why,
I made the tower strong, but I knew not why,

Nore to whom I purchaced tatersall;
Nor from whom I purchased Tatters hall;

I amendyd dovere one the mowntayne hy,
I recovered Dover on the high mountain,

55

And provokyd london to fortifye þer wall
And persuaded London to fortify its wall

I made notynghame a place Ryall,
I made Nottingham a royal place,

Wynsore and etton & many odur moo,
Windsor and Eton and many more others,

Westmynster & eltham – yit went I from all,
Westminster and Eltham— yet I went fromthem all,

Quia ecce nunc in puluere dormio.
Because behold: now I sleep in the dust.

60

Where is my gret conquest & vycory?
Where is my great conquest and victory?

Where be my Rentis & my Ryall aray?
Where are my rents and my royal array?

Where be my coursors & my horsys so hy?
Where are my coursers and my horses so high?

Where is my grett plesure, solas & play?
Where is my great pleasure, joy and play?

As vanite to nouzte all ys gon away.
As vanity to nought all is gone away.

65

Lidy besse, for me long may ye call,
Lady Bess, long may you call for me,

**i.e.,
Edward's
wife,
Elizabeth
Woodville**

Whe be departyd vntyll domus day!
Who is departed until Doomsday!

I lovyd you, lady, my souerayne ouerall.
I loved you, lady, my sovereign overall.

Where be my byldyngis & my castellis Ryall?
Where are my buildings and my royal castles?

Butt Wynsore off them I haue noo moo
 Except **Windsor**, I haue none of them anymore

70

And off etton ther prayers perpetuall,
 And from Eton its perpetual prayers,

Quia ecce nunc in puluere dormio.
 Because behold: now I sleep in the dust.

Whi schuld ye be prowde & presume so hy?
 Why should you be proud and presume so high?

Sent Barnard doth þer-off nobly trete,
 Saint Bernard does speak nobly thereof,

Seyng a man ys butt a sake of stercory
 Saying a man is but a sack of shit

75

And schall Retorne to wormys mette.
 And shall return to worms' meat.

What cam off Alysander the grett?
 What became of Alexander the Great

And of strong samson who can tell?
 And strong Sampson, who can tell?

Were nott wormys ordeynyd þer fleshe for to frett?
 Weren't worms ordained to chew their flesh?

And Salamon, that off wytt was the well,
 And Solomon, who was the well of wisdom,

80

And absolon, proferyd his here forto sell—
 And Absalom, who proffered his hair to sell—

ffor all his beavtes wormys hym ette also.
 For all his beauties, the worms ate him, too.

And I, latte Edward, that dyd excelle,
 And I, late Edward, who did excel,

Ecce nunc in puluere dormio.
 Behold: now I sleep in the dust.

I haue pleyd my pagent & now am I past,
 I haue played my pageant and now I am past,

85

I wyll þat ye wytt I was off no grett elde.
 I want you to know I was of no great age.

Butt all thing consumeth att the last,
 But all things are consumed at the last.

Whan deth apperith lost ys the feld.

**i.e.,
 Edward is
 buried at
 St.
 George's
 Chapel,
 Windsor**

When death appears, the field is lost.

Sith this world no lenger vp-held
Since this world no longer held

Mo, conservyd to me my place.
More, kept for me my final place.

90

In manus tuas, domine, my spryte vp I yeld;
Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit;

Humbley I be-sech the off thy grace!
Humbly I beseech you of your grace!

And ye, corteys commyners, with your hert vnbrace
And you, courteous commoners, remove your hearts' armor

*lit., with
your
heart
unbrace*

Benyngly to pray for me also,
Kindly to pray for me also,

As I forsayd, your kyng I was,
As I said before, I was your king,

95

Et ecce nunc in puluere dormio.
And behold: now I sleep in the dust.

5.

Thynk, man, qware-off thou art wrought,¹³
Think, man, of what you're made,

Pat art so wlonk in wede;
You who wear such proud clothes;

Thynk hou þou art hedyr brought,
Think how you are brought here

& of thyn end take hede.
And of your end take heed.

Thynk hou dere god has þe bought,
Think how dearly God has bought you

5

With blysfyl blode to blede;
With holy blood to bleed;

Thynk for his gylt was it noght,
Think: it wasn't for His guilt

bot, man, for þi mys-dede.
But, man, for your misdeed.

With an .O. & and .I., thynk on hym, .I. rede,
In the blink of an eye, think on him, I urge,

*The origin
of this*

¹³ Brown XV.163.

Pat wrought þis werld to þi be-howe, & heuen to þi mede.
Who made this world for your duty, and heaven for your reward.

Thynk, man, inwardly on þis,
Think, man, inwardly on this,

& be þou noght vn-kynde;
And be you not unkind;

Thynk & forfet noght þat blys,
Think, and forfeit not that joy,

þat made es ffor man-kynde;
That is made for mankind;

Thynk qwat þou has don a-myss
Think what you have done amiss

Syn þou hadyst mannys mynde;
Since you had a man's mind;

Thynk þis werld þat wryched es
Think this world that is wretched

will wan o-way als wynde.
Will wane away as wind.

With an .O. & an .I., thynk & þou sall ffynde,
In the blink of an eye, think and you shall find,

Iff þou rekenes ridily, þou ert fful ferre be-hynde.
If you reckon honestly, you're very far behind.

Thynk we wrichid wormys ar,
Think we are wretched worms,

& lette no syn þe schend;
And let no sin destroy you.

Thynk þat þou was born ful bare,
Think that you were born naked,

so sal þou hen wend;
So shall you go hence;

Thynk to be ar þat þou fare,
Think to be that before you go,

þi selff þi soule frend;
Yourself your soul's friend;

Thynk & trayst off na man mare
Think, and trust no man more

þan of þi oughen hend.

10 phrase is not known, but Joseph E. Grennen argues that it refers to the eschatological phrase *in ictu oculi* (“in the blink of an eye”)

15

20

25

Than your own hand.

With an .O. & an .I., do so or þou wend,
In the blink of an eye, do so before you die,

Þat þou may fynd it efftirward, qware þou sal longest lend. **30**
That you may find it afterward, where you shall go longest.

Thynk how dede cummys sudanly,
Think how death comes suddenly,

als þou may se all-day;
As you may see every day;

Thynk & be noght ferd for-thy,
Think, and be not afraid therefore,

bot be wel war all-way;
But be well aware always;

Thynk & rewyl þe rythwysly, **35**
Think and live righteously

or þat þou clyng in clay;
Before you're clad in clay.

Thynk on crist & cry mercy,
Think on Christ and cry, "Mercy!"

amend þe qwyle þou may.
Make amends while you can.

With an .o. & an .I., think qwat .I. þe say,
In the blink of an eye, think about what I say to you.

thynk þis lyf is lyghly lost, þe tothir lastys ay. **40**
Think this life is lightly lost; the other lasts forever.

Thynk þis werld is wondirfful,
Think this world is wonderful

& þat is gret Meruayll;
And that is a great marvel;

Thynk þou may noght stand a pull,
Think that you can't stand a trial,

qwen dede þe wil asayll;
When death assails you.

Thynk þi mekyl muk & mull **45**
Think yourself a lot of shit and dust.

Pen may þe noght a-wayll;
Then you won't be able to help yourself;

Thynk þou wendys qwedyr god wull,
Think that you'll go wherever God wills,

To rist or to trauayll.
To joy or torment.

With an .o. & an I., þer may na-thyng a-wayle,
In the blink of an eye, there nothing can help,

Þat here has wroght wrangwysly, him-self to wrathir-hayle. **50**
Whoever has done wrong, to his own destruction.

Thynk & dred noght for to dy,
Think, and dread not dying,

syn þou sall nedis þer-to;
Since you shall need to do it;

Thynk þat ded is opynly
Think that death is plainly

ende off werdes wo;
The end of fate's woe.

Thynk als so, bot if þou dy, **55**
Think also, that, unless you die,

to god may þou noght go;
You may not go to God;

Thynk & hald þe payed þer-by,
Think and be happy with it,

þou may noght ffle þer-fro.
You can't flee from it.

With an .O. & an .I., þan thynk me it is so,
In the blink of an eye, then it seems to me it is so,

Þat ded sal be þi sawl frend, & erthly lyff þi ffo. **60**
That death shall be your soul's friend, and earthly life, your foe.

Thynk þat þou ert ded always
Think that you are always dead

qwyllis þat þou dwellis here;
While you dwell here;

Thynk þi lyff be-gynnys ay,
Think your eternal life begins

qwen þou ert layd apon a bere;
When you are laid upon a bier;

Thynk & serue þat prince to pay, **65**
Think and serve that Prince of Peace,

þe kyng of kyng, þat hass na pere;
The King of Kings, who has no peer,

Thynk I rede, bothe nyth & day,
Think, I urge, both night and day,

on hym þat boght þe so dere.
About Him who bought you so dearly.

With an .O. and an .I., thynk qwat I þe lere,
In the blink of an eye, think about what I've taught you,

Iff þou wil þat solace se þer seyntis syttes sere.
If you want the joy see where sundry saints sit

70

Amen.
Amen.

6. *Lord, what is thys world wele!*¹⁴
Lord, what is this world's bliss?

Rychesse, reule, and ryche Aray,
Riches, power and fine clothes,

Alday to spende and not to spele,
All day to spend and not to save,

Wel sone were-it and wastyth away.
Very soon it wears and wastes away.

Whan plente may no longer pay
When plenty may no longer pay

5

What wyghte wole wythe hym Abyde?
What man will stay with him?

A drede-ful man, bothe nyghte and day,
An anxious man, both night and day,

Wyth heuye hert hys hede must hyde.
With heavy heart must hide his head.

Al is for defaute of grace
All is for lack of grace

That god grucchyth oure gouernaunce;
That God complains about our self-control;

10

Whan mesure may not medyl in place
When moderation cannot take part in place

Good reule is oute of remembraunce.
Good behavior is forgotten.

¹⁴ Brown XV.172.

What is to man mor greuaunce
What is more dreadful to man

Than sodeynly fro manhode falle?
Than suddenly to fall from manhood?

In pride is sympyl preueaunce
In pride is simple provision

15

Ther pouerte is steward of halle.
Where poverty is steward of the hall.

But who that can in somer sesoun
But he who can in summer season

Gader or grype or þat he grynde,
Gather or grasp before he grinds,

In wyntour tyme by wey of resoun
In wintertime, it stands to reason

Shuld not be ferre be-hynde.
Should not be far behind.

20

ffor þer þat mesure is in mynde
For wherever moderation is kept in mind

Good reule may not longe fayle;
Good behavior will not long fail;

it is no crafte to be to kynde,
It is no virtue to be too kind,

ffor scoryng on þe countre-tayle.
To those who owe you money.

*lit., for
tallying in
the reply*

But wele and worship with welfare,
But happiness and honor with prosperity,

25

Moche waste and lytyl wynne,
Much waste and little gain,

Wel sone bryngyth an housold bare
Very soon make a household bare

Wyth large spendyng wyth-outen and inne.
With heavy spending without and in.

Thanne be a-vysed or þu be-gynne
Then be advised before you start

That þu haue no nede to pleyne;
That you have no need to lament;

30

Se what estate þu stonde inne

See what condition you stand in

for pouerte is a preuy peyne.
For poverty is a secret pain.

Thogh þu haue helpe and hope of truste
Though you have help and hope of trust

Of lordys and ladyes wyth þer plesaunce,
Of lords and ladies with their pleasures,

Yet be ware of had-I-wyste,
Yet beware of "had-I-known"

35

for envy makyth new dystaunce.
For envy makes new strifes.

In pryde and pouerte is gret penaunce
In pride and poverty is great penance

And yet is daunger most dysese;
And yet is obligation most troublesome;

Per is commorus enquentaunce
There is annoying acquaintance

Wen neyþer of them may odyr plese.
When neither of them can please the other.

40

But had-I-wyst comyth euer to late
But "had-I-known" comes ever too late

Whan þer lackyth bothe lok and ky;
When there lacks both lock and key;

What nede is it to spare the yate,
What need is there to fasten the gate,

þer no thyng is lefte in the wey?
Where nothing is left inside?

Wyth a penylese purse to pley,
With a penniless purse to amuse,

45

lete se, who can þe pepyl plese;
Let's see who can please the people;

Summe man had as lef dey,
Some men had as leave die,

As longe to lyue in suche dysese.
As long to live in such hardship.

A bare berde wyl sone be shaue
A bare beard will soon be shaved

Per no here is lefte Aboute; 50
Where no hair is left about;

I mene be hym that myche wold haue
I mean by him who would have much

And is not ellys but pore and proude,
And is nought else but poor and proud,

But redy to ryot in euery route,
But ready to riot in every crowd

To ley to wedde bothe potte and panne.
To pawn both pot and pan.

Whan the fere is clene blowen oute 55
When the fire is clean blown out

Where shal we go dyne thanne?
Where shall we dine then?

What nede is it to delue depe
What need is it to delve deep

Whan þer is no sede to sowe?
When there is no seed to sow?

Þe pot is esy for to kepe
The pot is easy to maintain

Per þe fatte is ouer-blowe. 60
Where the fat is blown away.

neþer for the kyte nor for the crowe,
Neither for the kite nor for the crow,

Encombyr not þyn owne neste;
Encumber not your own nest,

To myche bende wyl breke the bowe,
Too much bending will break the bow

Whan þe game is alþer beste.
When the game is best of all.

Ensample men may se alday— 65
Examples men may see all day—

Yet kepe I no man de-fame—
Yet I take care to defame no man—

Hye housold and grete array
High household and fine clothes

ys lordys lyf and ladyis game;
Are lords' life and ladies' game;

Whan gladness growyth into grame
 When gladness grows into grimness

And thanne for nede begge and borowe,
 And then of necessity to beg and borrow,

70

Per pryde is be-fore and after shame,
 There pride is before and after shame ,

ffro solace into sodeyne sorowe.
 From joy into sudden sorrow.

And that is hevy for to here
 And that is sad to hear

Of hym alwey that man hath be,
 Of someone who has always been a man

And may no lenger make good chere.
 And can no longer smile.

75

By my trouth, it is gret pite!
 By my word, it is a great pity!

Yet shuld worshyp know and se
 Yet should honor know and see

And help hevy herte at nede,
 And help a heavy heart in need,

Lest he falle in þat same degre
 Lest he fall into that same condition

For happis is euer worse than drede.
 For mishaps are always worse than fear.

80

He that is bothe chek and mate
 He who is both "check" and "mate"

It is ful heuy to restore;
 It is very hard to restore;

Whan al is go it is to late
 When all is gone, it is too late

To weshe and wepe after more.
 To wish and weep after more.

Than be Avysed well before,
 Then be advised well before

85

That the fyrst draughte be weel drawe,
 That the first draught be well drawn,

for whan the game is lore

For when the game is lost

By part is not worthe an hawe.
Your part is not worth a straw.

Now he that worshyp wol haue
Now he who will have honor

And leue after hys degre,
And live according to his condition

90

In manhod his state to saue
In manhood to save his state

God graunte hym here prosperite!
God grant him prosperity here!

Plesaunce, pouer & plente,
Happiness, power and wealth,

Wythe al honest ordinaunce,
With all honest preparation,

Pis wolle seruice you bothe and me,
This will serve both you and me

95

To be ensample of good gouernaunce.
To be an example of good self-control.

7. *As I walkyd vppone a day*¹⁵
As I walked one day

To take þe aere off feld and flowre,
To take the air in fields of flowers

In a mery morenyng off may
On a cheery morning of May

When fflowrys were ffull off swete flauowre,
When the flowers were full and sweet,

I hurd one say, 'O god verray,
I heard someone say, "Oh God,

5

How longe shall I dure yn my dolour!
How long shall I last in this sorrow?"

And one his kneys he began to pray:
And on his knees he began to pray:

'Now, good god, send me thy succour,
"Now, God, send me your comfort,

Maryes sone, most off honour,

¹⁵ Brown XV.178.

Mary's most honored Son,

Thatt ryche and poore may ponyche and plese. 10
Who can punish and please both rich and poor.

Now geve me lyfe yn my langour,
Now give me life in my sickness,

And yeve vs lycence to lyfe yn ese.'
And give us license to live in ease."

To lyfe yn ese and his lawys to kepe,
To live in comfort and to keep His laws,

Grawnt me, god, yn blysse so bryght;
Grant me, God, in in such bright bliss;

And withyn þat cabone lett vs neuer crepe 15
And let us never creep within that cabin

Ther as lucifer lyeth, I-lok withowt eny lyght.
Where Lucifer lives, locked without any light.

My dedly wowndis ere derne and depe,
My deadly wounds are secret and deep,

I haue no place to represe þem aryght
I have no place to bottle them up

And smertynge wyll nott suffer me to slepe
And the pain won't let me sleep

Tyll a leche with dewte haue them dyght. 20
Until a doctor has given me something for them.

Hitt most be a curate, a crownyd wyght,
It must be a priest, a crowned man,

*lit., a
tonsured
(or
clerical)
man*

Þatt knew the querely off bene & pese;
Who knows the ways of prayer and peace;

And els thes medicynys haue no myght
Or else these medicines have no power

To geve vs lycence to lyve yn ese.
To give us license to live in ease.

A wykkyd wownde that hath me walt 25
An evil wound that has marked me

And traveld my body fro top to þe too,
And afflicted my body from head to toe,

This wykkid wordyll hit is I-calt
It is called "this wicked world"

Thatt hath many a blayne bothe blak & blo.
And has many a sore both black and blue.

Hitt hath me hurt and made me halt,
It has hurt me and made me stumble,

My hert, my hondys, my hed also,
My heart, my hands, my head also,

30

Nere I had be baptisyd yn watyr and salt
Had I never been baptized in water and salt

Thatt fervent ffester wold nevyr me fro.
That sore would never leave me.

Thatt lech þat lyssyd lazer and moo,
May that doctor who cured Lazarus, and, more,

David and daniel off ther disese,
David and Daniel of their diseases

Amend þes wondis thatt doth me this woo,
Heal these wounds that put me through this misery,

35

And geve me lycence to lyve yn ese.
And give me license to live in comfort.

This wownd is noryssher off wowndis sevyn:
This wound nourishes seven wounds:

Superbia he is the principall—
Superbia is the main one—

Pride pertely yn english stevyn—
“Pride,” in plain English—

He is more bitter þan venyn or gall.
It is more bitter than venom or gall.

40

To hym I haue had lechis a-levyn
I have had eleven doctors for it,

And þey haue geve medycyns all;
And they have all given medicines;

Butt þe soveraynest medicyn vndyr hevyn
But the best medicine under heaven

Hit growith yn grownd noþer yn wall—
It grows nowhere—

Humilitas I hurd a lech hit call—
I heard a doctor call it “humility”—

45

Had I hym þan I were att ese.
If I had it I’d be comfortable.

God, send hit me thatt am syke thrall,
 God, send it to me, who is sick

And geve vs lycence to lyve yn ese.
 And give us license to live in comfort.

Ira is the second wownd,
 The second wound is wrath.

He ramagith sore both raw and rede;
 It rages sore, both raw and red.

50

All my cors he doith confownd,
 All my body it does stun,

So sore he swellith yn hert and hed.
 It swells so painfully in my heart and head.

I know none herbe thatt growith yn grownd,
 I know of no herb that grows in the ground,

Nothir no corsiff, will qwinch his quede;
 Nor any acid that will soothe its pain;

Butt louage with-yn a litill stownde
 But within a little time, love

55

will make hym dry and wex all dedde.
 Will dry and kill it.

God, yeve me grace to sow sum lovage sede
 God, give me grace to sow some loving seed

Patt yn my gardyn may rote areyse,
 That might take root in my garden,

& els, as seker as men etyth brede,
 Or else, as sure as men eat bread,

shall we neuer haue lycence to lyve yn ese.
 We shall never have license to live in peace.

60

Inuidia the third wownd is,
 The third wound is envy,

A gritter gnawer þan ffelone or gowte;
 Which eats at a man worse than boils or gout;

A is a wykkid wownd I-wis,
 It is a wicked wound indeed;

Þer he hath pour to reyse and rowte.
 It rages and bellows.

The kynde off the wownde for soth is þis,

65

It is, in truth, the kind of wound

To brenne the brest withyn and without;
To burn the breast inside and out;

I askyd a leche how I myght me lys,
I asked a doctor how I might cure it.

He toke me charitas I-knytt yn a clowte.
He took me charity knitted in a cloth.

He bade me bawme me þer-with all a-bowte,
He told me me to use it all over as a balm

And than he wold begynne to water and wese;
And it would begin to wash the wound. **70**

And þen sone after, without any dowte,
And then, soon after, undoubtedly,

Thow shalt haue licence to lyve yn ese.
I should have license to live in ease.

Auaricia is an horribill sore,
Greed is a horrible sore.

He doth me dere both nyght and day;
It tempts me sorely both night and day.

ffor evyr he covetith more and more
It always wants more and more **75**

Off plastris than I purvay may.
Plasters than I can get.

I askid a mastir off ffysyke lore,
I asked a doctor

How I myght make hyme dry and vanysch away.
How I could make it dry and disappear.

Elemosina was a gentyll herbe þer-for,
“Alms” was a gentle herb for that,

I-wis one þe best þat evyr he say;
Indeed, one of the best he ever saw: **80**

Take and a-noynte hym ther-with evyr when þou may,
“Annoint the wound with it whenever you can,

And thinke how requiem yn thy rent shall sese,
And think how your deadly wound shall heal,

And then sone aftyr with-yn a short day,
And then soon after, within a day,

Thow shalt haue lycence to lyve yn ese.
You shall have license to live in peace.”

Accidia is a sowkyng blayne,
Sloth is a sucking wound.

85

He bollith and bladderith with-yn my bowre;
It swells like a bladder within my room

And makith me ffaynt both flessch and vayne,
And makes me faint, both flesh and blood,

And kepith me yn cowch like a cowchour.
And keeps me in bed like an invalid.

I hurde off an herbe patt shold lyse patt payne,
I heard of an herb that should lessen that pain.

Men seith hitt berith a dowbyll flour:
Men say it bears a double flower:

90

Vigilate & orate. Vse well tho twayne,
Vigilance and prayer. Use those two well,

And hitt shall be-nyme the thi dolour,
And they shall numb your sorrow,

As siker as bred is made off flowre.
As sure as bread is made of flour.

Smyll ham yn seson with pi nese,
Smell it in season with your nose,

And the swetnes off thatt swete savoure
And its sweetness of that sweet savour

95

Shall geve the lycence to lyve yn ese.
Shall give you license to live in peace.

Gula is a grevys gall,
Gluttony is a terrible disease.

He rayvith my rest one my bed;
It ravishes my bedrest

And straynyth my stomake strayte with-all,
And strains my stomach

With many a fest when I am full fed.
I am fully fed with many a feast.

100

I walow and weyd as a worme yn a wall
I toss and turn as a worm in a wall

I may nott slepe tyll I haue shamely shed.
I cannot sleep until I have purged myself disgracefully.

*Now mercy, lord, on þe I call,
Now, have mercy, Lord; I call on you*

*Thatt for vs lett his brest be bled.
Who let your breast be bled for us.*

A leche hath led his hed to wed **105**
A doctor has promised

Patt he wylll make me a playster þatt shall me plese
That he will make me a plaster of abstinence

Off abstinencia, & I hym hed
That will please me, if I obey him,

Shold geve me license to lyve yn ese.
Should give me license to live in ease.

Luxuria is a lither mormale,
Lust is an inflamed sore.

A mercy! lorde, full of pyte, **110**
Oh mercy! Lord, full of pity,

My brokyll body he bryngith yn bale,
It torments my weak body

And ffrayeth my sowle yn frayalte.
And frays my feeble soul.

Sum tyme a surgeryn told me a tale,
Once a surgeon told me a tale.

This was þe lesson þatt he lerid me:
This was the lesson he taught me:

The rote off an herbe I shold vpp hale, **120**
I should uproot an herb

That clerkis callith castitas fre.
That clerks call chastity.

'Pound hym and temper hym with penitence,
"Pound it and temper it with penitence,

When þe rebaude will on þe rese,
When the rascal falls on you,

Drayne hym & drynke hym with confessioun,
Drain it and drink it with confession.

Than shalt thou haue lycense to lyve yn ese.' **125**
Then you shall live in peace."

And othir iij herbis ther beth also

And there are seven other herbs

Pat shall save þis sorys, þey shall neuer swell:
That shall save these sorrows; they shall never swell:

The ffirst is cordis contricio,
The first is heart's contrition,

Pat wasshith the wowndis as doith as well;
That washes the wounds as does a well;

The second is oris confessio,
The second is oral confession,

130

Patt wyll nott suffyr no ded flessch dwell;
That won't let any mortified flesh remain;

Operis satisfactio
The third is works' satisfaction,

Patt soveray[n] sanatyfe sothly to tell.
That sovereign sanctifier.

Now, lord, as thow madyst hevyn, erth and hell,
Now, Lord, as You made heaven, earth, and hell,

Geve vs grace hym to serue and plese,
Give us grace to serve and please You,

135

And with-yn his gloryus blysse thatt we all may dwell,
That we may all live within Your glorious bliss,

And geve vs there licence to lyve yn ese.
And give us license to live in peace.

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APPENDIX A. Lyrics mentioned that are not among the translations

1. *Uere beþ þey biforen vs weren,*¹⁶ 13th
century
Where are they who were before us,
- Houndes ladden and hauekes beren*
[Who] led hounds and carried hawks,
- And hadden feld and wode?*
And owned fields and woods?
- þe riche leuedies in hoere bour,*
The rich ladies in their chambers,
- þat wereden gold in hoere tressour,* 5
Who wore gold in their hair,
- Wif hoere brizte rode;*
With their bright faces;
- Eten and drounken and maden hem glad;*
[They] ate and drank and made themselves merry;
- Hoere lif was al wif gamen I-lad,*
Their lives were spent in sport,
- Men keneleden hem biforen,*
Men knelt before them,
- þey beren hem well swiþe heye –* 10
They carried themselves so proudly –
- And in a twinkling of on eye*
And in the twinkling of an eye
- Hoere soules weren forloren.*
Their souls were lost.
- Were is þat lawing and þat song,*
Where is that laughter and that song,
- þat trayling and þat proude zong,*
Those trailing garments and that proud gait,
- þo hauekes and þo houndes?* 15
Those hawks and those hounds?
- Al þat ioye is went away,*
All that joy has gone away,
- þat wele is comen te weylaway,*
That prosperity has come to “weylaway,”

¹⁶ Brown XIII.48.

To manie harde stoundes.
To many hard times.

Hoere paradys hy nomen here,
They took their paradise here,

And nou þey lien in helle i-fere, **20**
And now they lie in hell together,

þe fuir hit brennes heuere.
The fire, it burns forever.

Long is ay and long is ho,
Long is “ay!” and long is “oh!”

Long is wy and long is wo—
Long is “alas!” and long is “woe!”—

þennes ne comeþ þey neuere.
From thence they will never come.

Drezy here, man, þenne, if þou wilt **25**
Bear here, man, then, if you will

A luitel pine þat me þe bit,
A little pain that you must suffer,

Wipdrau þine eyses ofte,
Forego your comforts often,

Þey þi pine be oun-rede;
Though your torment be severe;

And þou þenke on þi mede
If you think on your reward

Hit sal þe þinken softe. **30**
The pain shall seem less.

If þat fend, þat foule þing,
If that fiend, that foul thing,

þorou wikke roun, þorou fals egging,
Through wicked counsel, through false temptation,

Neþere þe haueþ I-cast,
Has cast you down,

Oup and be god chaunpioun!
Up, and be a good champion!

Stond, ne fal namore adoun **35**
Stand, fall down no more

For a luytel blast.
At a little blast of wind.

þou tak þe rode to þi staf,
Take the Cross as your staff,

And þenk on him þat þereonne ʒaf
And think on Him who thereon gave

His lif þat wes so lef.
His life that was so dear.

He hit ʒaf for þe, þou ʒelde hit him 40
He gave it for you; you yield it to him

Aʒein his fo; þat staf þou nim
Against his foe; take that staff

And wrek him of þat þef.
And avenge him of that thief.

Of riʒtte bileue, þou nim þat sheld,
Take that shield of right belief,

þe wiles þat þou best in þat feld
While you are in that field

þin hond to strenkþen fonde, 45
Try to strengthen your hand,

And kep þy fo wiþ staues ord,
And keep your foe at staff's point,

And do þat traytre seien þat word.
And make that traitor say that word.

Biget þat mvrrie londe,
Win that happy land,

Þere-inne is day wiþ-outen niʒt,
Therein is day without night,

Wiþ-outen ende strenkþe and miʒt, 50
Without end strength and might,

And wreche of euerich fo,
And vengeance of every foe;

Mid god him-selwen eche lif,
With God Himself eternal life,

And pes and rest wiþoute strif,
And peace and rest without strife,

Wele wiþ-outen wo.
Prosperity without woe.

Mayden moder, heuene quene, 55

Maiden mother, heaven's queen,

pou mizt and const and owest to bene
You might and can and ought to be

Oure sheld azein þe fende;
Our shield against the fiend;

Help ous sunne for to flen,
Help us to flee sin,

þat we moten þi sone I-seen
That we may see your Son

In ioye wiþ-outen hende. Amen.
In joy without end. Amen.

60

2.

Bysoeth zou in þis ylke lyf¹⁷
Provide in this life

Of lyflode in þat oþer lyf.
Sustenance in that other life.

Soethþe mon shal hoenne wende
Because man shall go hence

And nede dézen at þen ende,
And must die at the end,

And wonyen he not whare,
And dwell he knows not where,

5

God ys þat he trusse hys pak
It is good that he tie up his pack

And tymliche pute hys stor in sak
And quickly put his things in a sack

þat not when hoenne váre.
Who knows not when to go hence.

Oeuch mon þenche uor to spede
Let each man think to prosper

þat he ne loese þe grete mede
So he doesn't lose the great reward

10

þat god ous dythte zâre.
That God prepared for us long ago.

þys lyfnys bote sorewe away,
This life is nothing but constant sorrow,

Ounneþe ys mon glad-uol o day,

¹⁷ Brown XIV.23.

14th
century,
by Friar
William
Herebert

Scarcely is man happy a day,

vor sorewe and toene and káre;
For sorrow and misery and care;

Mon wyth sorewe is uurst ybore,
Man is first born with sorrow,

15

And eft wyth sorewe rend and tore,
And after rent and torn with sorrow,

zyf he ryth þencþ of hys wáre,
If he thinks directly of his things.

Oeuch mon þenche uor to spede
Let each man think to prosper

þat he ne loese þe grete mede
So he doesn't lose the great reward

þat god ous dythte záre.
That God prepared for us long ago.

20

What ys lordshype and heynesse,
What is lordship and high rank,

What helpth katel and rychesse?
What help possessions and riches?

Gold and soeluer away shal uáre,
Gold and silver shall go away,

þy gost shal wonye þou ne wost nout where,
Your ghost shall dwell you know not where,

þy body worth wounde in grete oþer here,
Your body will be wrapped in soil or shroud –

25

Of oþer þyng þou worst al báre.
Of other things you will be completely bare.

Oeuch mon þenche uor to spede
Let each man think to prosper

þat he ne loese þe grete mede
So he doesn't lose the great reward

þat god ous dythte záre.
That God prepared for us long ago.

By-þench, mon, zoerne on oeuche wyse
Think, man, earnestly, in each way

30

Er þou boe brouht to þylke asyse,
Ere you are brought to that assize,

On what þou shalt truste þáre.
On what you shall trust there.

What god þou hauest, mon, here ydon
What good you have done here, man,

Prest þer þou shalt ounder-uon,
Promptly there you shall receive

Elles euer þou worst in káre. 35
Else ever you decline in sorrow.

Oeuch mon þenche uor to spede
Let each man think to prosper

þat he ne loese þe grete mede
So he doesn't lose the great reward

þat god ous dythte záre.
That God prepared for us long ago.

Boe mon zong oþer boe he old,
Be man young or be he old,

Non so strong ne wel y-told 40
None so strong nor well-regarded

þat hoennes ne mot fare.
That must not go hence.

Deth is hud, mon, in þy gloue,
Death is hidden, man, in your glove,

Wyth derne dunt þat shal he proue
With a secret blow that shall he prove

and smyte þou nost wháre.
And smite you know not where.

Oeuch mon þenche uor to spede 45
Let each man think to prosper

þat he ne loese þe grete mede
So he doesn't lose the great reward

þat god ous dythte záre.
That God prepared for us long ago.

To-uore þe deth ys betere o dede
Before death, one deed is better

þen after téne, and more of mede,
Than ten after, and of more value,

and more quenbeth kare: 50
And quenches more sorrow:

Boe monnes wyttes hym byreued,
When man's wits are taken from him,

Hys eyen blynd, hys eren deued,
His eyes blinded, his ears deafened,

þe cofres bóeth al bare.
The coffers will be all bare.

Oeuch mon þenche uor to spede
Let each man think to prosper

þat he ne loese þe grete mede
So he doesn't lose the great reward

55

þat god ous dythte zâre.
That God prepared for us long ago.

Boe þe gost urom body reued,
Be the ghost from the body taken,

þe bernes sone shulle boen sheued,
The barns soon shall be emptied,

Ne shal me noþyng spâre,
No one shall be spared,

Boe þe body wyth groeth byweued,
Be the body with earth enveloped,

60

þe soule sone shal boe leued,
The soul soon shall be left,

Alas! Of froendes bâre.
Alas! Bare of friends.

Oeuch mon þenche uor to spede
Let each man think to prosper

þat he ne loese þe grete mede
So he doesn't lose the great reward

þat god ous dygthte zâre.
That God prepared for us long ago.

65

3. *Nou Bernes, Buirdus, bolde and blyþe,*¹⁸
Now gentlemen, ladies, bold and blithe,

14th
century

To blessen ow her nou am I bounde;
To bless you here now am I bound;

I þonke zou alle a þousend siþe,
I thank you all a thousand times,

¹⁸ Brown XIV.97.

And prei god saue zou hol and sounde;
And pray God save you hale and sound;

Wher-euer ze go, on gras or grounde,
Wherever you go, on grass or ground,

5

He ow gouerne with-ouen greue.
He governs you without grief.

For frendschiþe þat I here haue founde,
For friendship that I here have found,

A-zeyn mi wille I take mi leue.
Against my will I take my leave.

For frendschiþe & for ziftes goode,
For friendship and for gifts good,

For Mete & Drinke so gret plente,
For meat and drink so plentiful,

10

þat lord þat rauzt was on þe Roode,
That Lord that was stretched on the Cross,

He kepe þi comeli cumpayne;
He keeps your holy company;

On see or lond wher þat ze be,
On sea or land where that you be,

He gouerne ow wiþ-ouen greue.
He governs you without grief.

So good disport ze han mad me,
So good disport you have made me,

15

Azein my wille I take my leue.
Against my will I take my leave.

Azein mi wille al-þauz I wende,
Against my will although I go,

I may not al-wey dwellen here;
I may not always dwell here;

For eueri þing schal haue an ende,
For everything shall have an end,

And frendes are not ay i-ferre;
And friends are not always together;

20

Be we neuer so lef and dere,
Be we never so cherished and dear,

Out of þis world al schul we meue;

Out of this world we shall all move;

And whon we buske vn-to vr bere,
And when we go unto our bier,

Azeyn vr wille we take vr leue.
Against our will we take our leave.

And wende we schulle, I wot neuer whenne, 25
And go we shall, I know never when,

Ne whoderward þat we schul fare;
Nor where that we shall go;

But endeles blisse or ay to brenne,
But endless bliss or always to burn,

To eueri mon is zarked zare.
To every man is made ready.

For-þi I rede vch mon be-ware,
Therefore I advise each man beware,

And lete vr werk vr wordes preue, 30
And let our work our words prove,

So þat no sunne vr soule forfare
So that no sin our soul destroy

Whon þat vr lyf hap taken his leue.
When our life has taken its leave.

Whon þat vr lyf his leue hap lauht,
When our life its leave has taken,

Vr bodi lith bounden bi þe wowe,
Our body lies bound by the wall,

Vr riches alle from vs ben raft, 35
Our riches all from us have been taken,

In clottes colde vr cors is þrowe.
In cold clods our body is thrown.

Wher are þi frendes ho wol þe knowe?
Where are your friends who will know you?

Let seo ho wol þi soule releue.
Let's see who will relieve your soul.

I rede þe, mon, ar þou ly lowe,
I urge you, man, before you lie low,

Beo redi ay to take þi leue. 40
Be ready always to take your leave.

Be redi ay, what-euer bi-falle,
Be ready always, whatever befalls,

Al sodeynli lest þou be kiht;
Lest you be summoned suddenly;

þou wost neuer whonne þi lord wol calle,
You never know when your Lord will call,

Loke þat þi laumpe beo brennynge briht;
Look that your lamp is burning brightly;

For leue me wel, but þou haue liht,
For believe me well, unless you have light,

45

Riht foule þi lord wol þe repreue,
Harshly the Lord will reproach you,

And fleme þe fer out of his siht,
And banish you far out of his sight,

For al to late þou toke þi leue.
For all too late you took your leave.

Nou god þat was in Bethleem bore,
Now God that was in Bethlehem born,

He ziue vs grace to serue him so
[May] He give us grace to serve him so

50

þat we mai come his face to-fore,
That we may come before his face,

Out of þis world whon we schul go;
Out of this world when we shall go;

And for to amende þat we mis-do,
And to amend what we misdo,

In Clei or þat we clynge and cleue,
Before we cling and cleave in clay,

And mak us euene wiþ frend and fo,
And make us even with friend and foe,

55

And in good tyme to take vr leue.
And in good time to take our leave.

Nou haueþ good dai, gode men alle,
Now have good day, good men all,

Haueþ good dai, zonge and olde,
Have good day, young and old,

Haueþ good day, boþe grete and smalle,
Have good day, both great and small,

And graunt-Merci a housend folde!
And hearty thanks a thousand fold!

60

zif euere I mi3te, ful fayn I wolde,
If ever I might, full fain I would,

Don ou3t þat weore vn-to 3ow leue;
Do ought that were unto you dear;

Crist kepe ow out of cares colde,
Christ keep you out of care's cold,

For nou is tyme to take my leue.
For now is time to take my leave.

4. *While þou hast gode & getest gode,*¹⁹
While you have goods and get goods,

for gode þou mi3t be holde;
For goods you might be respected;

Who hap no gode, he can no gode—
Whoever has no goods, he can do no good—

a gode man so me tolde.
A good man told me so.

Hit is no3t gode for no gode
It is not good for no good

5

of gode forto be bolde;
Of good for to be bold;

But þi gode to god be gode
Unless your goods to God be good,

þi gode wil fail & folde.
Your goods will fail and fold.

Wiþ an .v. & an .I. gode wil come & goo,
With a "U" and an "I" good will come and go,

but þi godes grounde be gode, þi gode wil worche þe woo.
Unless your goods' foundation be good, your goods will bring you woe.

10

That is gode þat doth man gode
That is good which does man good

When he goth to þe grave;
When he goes to the grave;

Oþer gode was neuer gode,
Other goods were never good,

The word
"gode"
puns
through-
out on
"good,"
"goods"
and
"God."

¹⁹ Brown XV.189.

but gode þat wil man save.
Except good that will save man.

ʒif þi gode while þou hast gode,
Give your goods while you have goods,

15

gode þan miʒt þou crave;
Goods then you might crave;

Ffor hit is gode to worche gode
For it is good to do good works,

for god þat doth hit have.
For God who does have [good].

With an .v. & an .I. gode is gode to wisse,
With a “U” and an “I,” good is good to desire,

for with gode þou might be gode, & bygge hevene blisse.
For with good you might be good, and buy heaven’s bliss.

20

To doo gode god ʒaf þe gode,
To do good God gave you goods,

for þi gode & noʒt hisse;
For your good and not His;

Doo gode for þi sowle gode,
Fo good for your soul’s good,

& þat is gode ywisse;
And that is good indeed;

If þou hast gode & dost no gode,
If you have good and do no good,

25

þat gode is gon amisse;
That good is gone amiss;

for evil gode is cleped gode,
For evil good is called good

for wham man left his blisse.
For which man left his bliss.

Wiþ an .v. & an .I. gode is þat gode doth,
With a “U” and an “I,” good is that which does good,

oþer gode was neuer gode for certeyn & forsooth.
Other goods were never good for certain and forsooth.

30

A sliper gode is erthli gode,
A slippery good is earthly good,

for þat gode wil away;

For that good will go away;

goddis gode is euer gode,
God's good is always good,

& oþer gode is fay;
And other good is fatal;

ken þi gode & know þi gode 35
Know your God and know your good

& doo gode wel alway;
And do great good always;

for hit is gode to worch gode
For it is good to do good works

for gode þat lasteth ay.
For good that lasts forever.

With an .v. & an .I. in gode is gode ende,
With a "V" & an "I," in good is a good end,

for al is gode which endeis gode & þerto Crist vs sende. 40
For all is good which ends well, and thereto Christ sends us.

Amen.

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- sloth:** “*Worldes blis ne last no throwe,*” 29
- solace:** “*Lord, what is thys world wele,*” 61
- soul to body:** “*If man him biðocte,*” 12; “*Nu þu vnseli bodi up-on bere list,*” 6; “*Þene latemeste dai, wenne we sulen farren,*” 23
- temporality:** “*I Wolde witen of sum wys wiht,*” 33; “*Nou Bernes, Buirdus, bolde and blyþe,*” 82; “*Worldes blis ne last no throwe,*” 29
- thought, word and deed:** “*As I walkyd vppone a day,*” 66
- thoughtlessness:** “*If man him biðocte,*” 12; “*Thynk, man, qware-off thou art wrought,*” 57
- time as space:** “*Ffare well, this world! I take my leve for euere,*” 47
- too late:** “*Leuedi sainte marie, moder and meide,*” 19; “*Wenne hi þenche on domes-dai ful sore I me adrede,*” 21
- transience:** see temporality
- ubi sunt:** “*Miseremini mei, ye that ben my ffryndys,*” 52; “*Þene latemeste dai, wenne we sulen farren,*” 23; “*Uere beþ þey biforen vs weren,*” 76; “*Whi is þe world biloued, þat fals is & vein,*” 40
- urgency:** “*Bysoeth zou in þis ylke lyf,*” 79; “*Ffare well, this world! I take my leve for euere,*” 47; “*Lord, what is thys world wele,*” 61; “*Man, hef in mynd & mend þi mys,*” 49; “*Mirie it is while sumer ilast,*” 3; “*Nou Bernes, Buirdus, bolde and blyþe,*” 82; “*Thynk, man, qware-off thou art wrought,*” 57; “*Wenne hi þenche on domes-dai ful sore I me adrede,*” 21; “*Worldes blis ne last no throwe,*” 29
- vanity:** “*Miseremini mei, ye that ben my ffryndys,*” 52
- venial sins:** “*Man, hef in mynd & mend þi mys,*” 49
- vigilance:** “*As I walkyd vppone a day,*” 66
- warning:** “*Lord, what is thys world wele,*” 61; “*Miseremini mei, ye that ben my ffryndys,*” 52; “*Thynk, man, qware-off thou art wrought,*” 57
- waste:** see prodigality
- winter:** “*Mirie it is while sumer ilast*” 3
- world’s bliss:** “*Bysoeth zou in þis ylke lyf,*” 79; “*Ffare well, this world! I take my leve for euere,*” 47; “*From þe tyme þat we were bore,*” 42; “*Wanne mine eyhnen misten,*” 8; “*Whi is þe world biloued, þat fals is & vein,*” 40
- worldly goods:** “*Wanne mine eyhnen misten,*” 8
- worms:** “*Erþe toc of erþe, erþe wyþ woh,*” 9; “*Man, hef in mynd & mend þi mys,*” 49; “*Miseremini mei, ye that ben my ffryndys,*” 52; “*Þene latemeste dai, wenne we sulen farren,*” 23; “*Thynk, man, qware-off thou art wrought,*” 57; “*Uere beþ þey biforen vs weren,*” 76; “*Wen þe turuf is þi tuur,*” 8; “*Whi is þe world biloued, þat fals is & vein,*” 40
- worms’ meat:** “*Erþe toc of erþe, erþe wyþ woh,*” 9; “*Man, hef in mynd & mend þi mys,*” 49; “*Miseremini mei, ye that ben my ffryndys,*” 52; “*Þene latemeste dai, wenne we sulen farren,*” 23; “*Wen þe turuf is þi tuur,*” 8; “*Whi is þe world biloued, þat fals is & vein,*” 40
- wrath:** “*As I walkyd vppone a day,*” 66; “*From þe tyme þat we were bore,*” 42