Now voucheth sauf° this day er° it be night — *grant / before*
That I of you the blisful soun may heere,
Or see youre colour, lik the sonne bright,
That of yelownesse hadde nevere peere.° — *equal*
Ye be my life, ye be myn hertes steere,° — *rudder, guide*
Queene of confort and of good compaignye:
Beeth hevy again, or elles moot I die.

Ye purs, that been to me my lives light
And saviour, as in this world down here,
Out of this towne[2] helpe me thurgh your might,
Sith that ye wol nat be my tresorere;° — *treasurer*
For I am shave as neigh as any frere.[3]
But yit I praye unto youre curteisye:
Beeth hevy again, or elles moot I die.

Envoy to Henry IV

O conquerour of Brutus Albioun,[4]
Which that by line° and free eleccioun — *lineage*
Been verray° king, this song to you I sende: — *true*
And ye, that mowen° alle oure harmes amende, — *may*
Have minde upon my supplicacioun.

2. Probably Westminster, where Chaucer had rented a house.
3. Shaved as close as any (tonsured) friar, an expression for being broke.
4. Britain (Albion) was supposed to have been founded by Brutus, the grandson of Aeneas, the founder of Rome.

JOHN GOWER
ca. 1330–1408

Of Gower's life relatively little is known: he was certainly a landowner in Kent, and from about 1377 he seems to have been resident in Southwark, just over the River Thames from the City of London. He had close relations with Chaucer, who sent *Troilus and Criseyde* (ca. 1385) to "moral Gower" for "correction" (5.1856). Indeed, as the co-initiator of a new tradition of English poetry, his reputation throughout the fifteenth century was very nearly on a par with that of Chaucer. He was himself more concerned than Chaucer for his own literary posterity, since he took care that texts of his work would be transmitted in finished, stable form. No contemporary poet matches him for linguistic virtuosity, since Gower wrote in three languages. His main poetic works are as follows: the *Mirour de l'omme* (Mirror of Man) (finished 1376–78), written in Anglo-Norman (the dialect of French spoken in England); the Latin *Vox Clamantis* (Voice of the Crier), written substantially before 1386; and the English *Confessio Amantis* (The Lover's Confession), first published in 1390. The *Mirour* (the last major work written in Anglo-Norman

in England) was addressed primarily to an upper-class audience capable of reading both French and English, while the Latin *Vox* was clearly directed to a highly educated audience. The first version of the *Confessio* was dedicated to Richard II. By the time of the third recension (1392–93), Richard had been replaced by Henry Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV, as the poem's dedicatee. Despite these dedications to specific and powerful readers, Gower in fact addressed the *Confessio* to all educated readers, both men and women.

Vox Clamantis refers to the saint whose name Gower bore, John the Baptist, whom all four gospels refer to as "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness" (Matthew 3.3, Mark 1.3, Luke 3.4, John 1.23) who will prepare the way for the Lord, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 40.3. Gower thus identifies himself with the prophetic voice of John the Baptist as well as the apocalyptic voice of John the Evangelist in the Book of Revelation. In keeping with this posture, the *Mirour* and the *Vox* are examples of estates satire, a genre of satire in which the writer addresses and berates each main occupational grouping of society in turn. (For more information on estates satire, go to "Medieval Estates and Orders" in the NAEL Archive, where there are translations of excerpts from the *Mirour* and *Vox*.) In the *Vox*, for example, Gower vigorously attacks the peasantry for their part in the English Uprising of 1381.

While Gower wrote as moralist and satirist in the *Mirour* and the *Vox*, he changed tack in the *Confessio Amantis*. To be sure, the poem is structured as a moral discourse: the Confessor figure Genius hears the confession of the penitent Amans, as if enacting the procedures of the Church's sacrament of penance (one part of which was a formal, confidential confession to a priest). In seven of the poem's eight books, Genius hears Amans's confession concerning a different Deadly Sin (respectively Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Greed, Gluttony, and Lechery). The very names of penitent and confessor themselves suggest, however, that this is no ordinary confession. For Amans (literally "one who loves") is heard by a "genial" aspect of the psyche, Genius, who is the priest of Venus. Far from condemning Amans for his hopeless subjection to erotic desire, Genius as often as not encourages Amans in his passion, or so it would seem initially. The eighty or so stories Genius tells by way of "correcting" Amans are drawn not from penitential treatises; they are rather, on the whole, drawn from secular, classical sources, and often from the poetry of Ovid, the classical poet of erotic love.

As the *Confessio* progresses, however, Genius increasingly registers the social and political disasters that result from solipsistic pursuit of sexual desire. While never abandoning his "genial" perspective altogether, and while never wishing wholly to repress sexual passion, Genius finally brings Amans around, to the point where Amans reintegrates with the psyche of which he is ideally a part. He finally regains his full identity as "John Gower." This recovery of identity involves a very moving self-recognition scene in the poem's finale, in which an aged Gower recognizes his position as a lover, a citizen, and a Christian. The poem is not only about one individual, however: Gower's sexual governance is linked to political governance of the kingdom. Just as Gower must rule yet recognize the proper demands of his body, so too must the king rule and recognize his kingdom.

Many of Genius's narratives relate stories whose violence entirely overshadows the often pathetic and always hopeless pursuit of Amans for his lady. The narrative of Tereus and Philomela ("Philomene" in Gower's narrative), drawn from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (6.426–676), is one such frightening text. It tells a story of unremitting domestic violence, relating the "greediness" of rape to the larger concept of greed, the sin treated by Genius in Book 5 of the *Confessio*. A husband (Tereus) rapes and cuts out the tongue of his sister-in-law (Philomela); his wife (Procne) and her sister take their vengeance by murdering and cooking the rapist's child (Itys). Philomela's concern is as much for *publication* of the rape as for vengeance: with her excised tongue, she relies on weaving as a means of writing to communicate the terror of her experience, just as, transformed into a chattering bird at the end of the story, she

continues to remind humans of Tereus's disgrace. When Chaucer had recounted the same story in *The Legend of Good Women* (ca. 1386), he omitted the most hair-raising episodes of the Ovidian source. Gower, by contrast, follows the lineaments of Ovid's narrative fairly closely and does not turn aside from the transformation of suffering women into terrible avengers, as Procne (here "Progne") murders and butchers her own child. Nor does he fail to register the horror of rape, as Philomela feels the inescapable weight of Tereus upon her (lines 96–101).

From The Lover's Confession[1]

The Tale of Philomene and Tereus

GENIUS:

Now list,° my Sone, and thou shalt heere, *listen*
So as it hath befalle er° this *before*
In loves cause how that it is
A man to take be° ravine° *seize by / rape*
The preie° that is femeline. *prey*

Ther was a real° noble king, *royal*
And riche of alle worldes thing,
Which of his propre° inheritance *own*
Athenes hadde in governance,
And who so° thenke thereupon, *whoever*
His name was king Pandion.
Two doughtres° hadde he be his wif, *daughters*
The whiche he lovede as his lif;
The firste doughter Progne highte,° *was called*
And the secounde, as she wel mighte,
Was cleped° faire Philomene, *called*
To whom fell after° muchel tene.° *afterward / grief*
The fader of his purveance° *forethought*
His doughter Progne wolde avance° *advance*
And yaf° hire unto marriage *gave*
A worthy king of hye lignage,° *high lineage*
A noble knight eke° of his hond,[2] *also*
So was he kid° in every lond, *known*
Of Trace[3] he highte Tereus;
The clerk Ovide[4] telleth thus.
This Tereus his wif hoom ladde,
A lusty° lif with hire he hadde; *agreeable*
Til it befell upon a tide,° *certain time*
This Progne, as she lay him beside,
Bethoughte hire° how it mighte be *considered*
That she hir suster mighte see,
And to hir lord hir will she saide,
With goodly wordes and him prayde

1. The text is drawn from *The English Works of John Gower*, edited by G. C. Macaulay, Early English Text Society, extra series 81–82 (London: Oxford University Press, 1900–1901).
2. With respect to himself (in addition to his high lineage).
3. Thrace.
4. Gower's source is the Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 4.424–674.

That she to hire mighte g
And if it liked him noght°
That than he wolde himse
Or elles be° some other se
Which mighte hir deere s
And shape° how that they
Hir lord anon° to that he
Yaf his acord, and thus ar
"I wol," he saide, "for thy
The way after thy suster t
Myself, and bring hire, if
And she with that, ther as
Began him in hir armes c
And kist him with hir soft
And saide, "Sire, grant m
And he soone° after was r
And took his leve forto go
In sory° time dide he so.
This Tereus gooth forth
With him and with his fel
By see the righte course h
Into the contree til he car
Wher Philomene was dwe
And of hir suster the tidir
He tolde, and tho° they w
And muchel joy of him th
The fader and the moder
To leve hir doughter were
But if they weren in prese
And natheles at reverence
Of him, that wolde himse
They wolden noght he sh
Of that he prayed, and yi
And she, that wolde nogh
In alle haste made hire ya
Toward hir suster forto fa
With Tereus and forth sh
And he withal his hool er
Whan she was from hir fr
Assoteth° of hir love so,
His yë° myghte he noght
That he ne moste on hire
And with the sighte he ga
And set his owene herte
And fir, whan it to tow° a
To him° anon the strengt
Til with his° hete it be de
The tow ne may noght be
And so that tyrant ravine
Whan that she was in his

5. Unless they should be present.

That she to hire mighte go:
And if it liked him noght° so, *if it did not displease him*
That than he wolde himselve wende,° *go*
Or elles be° some other sende, *by*
Which mighte hir deere suster greete
And shape° how that they mighten meete. *arrange*
Hir lord anon° to that he herde *immediately*
Yaf his acord, and thus answerde:
"I wol," he saide, "for thy sake
The way after thy suster take
Myself, and bring hire, if I may."
And she with that, ther as he lay,
Began him in hir armes clippe,° *embrace*
And kist him with hir softe lippe,
And saide, "Sire, grant mercy."° *thank you*
And he soone° after was redy, *right away*
And took his leve forto go;
In sory° time dide he so. *sorrowful*
This Tereus gooth forth to shipe
With him and with his felaweshipe;
By see the righte course he nam,° *took*
Into the contree til he cam,
Wher Philomene was dwellinge,
And of hir suster the tidinge° *news*
He tolde, and tho° they weren glade, *then*
And muchel joy of him they made.
The fader and the moder bothe
To leve hir doughter weren lothe,
But if they weren in presence[5]
And natheles at reverence° *with due respect*
Of him, that wolde himself travaile,° *take the trouble*
They wolden noght he sholde faile
Of that he prayed, and yive hire leve:
And she, that wolde noght beleve,° *remain*
In alle haste made hire yare° *ready*
Toward hir suster forto fare° *travel*
With Tereus and forth she wente.
And he withal his hool entente,° *mind*
Whan she was from hir frendes go,
Assoteth° of hir love so, *is besotted*
His yë° myghte he noght withholde, *eye*
That he ne moste on hire beholde;[6]
And with the sighte he gan desire,
And set his owene herte on fire;
And fir, whan it to tow° aprocheth, *flax*
To him° anon the strengthe acrocheth,° *it / draws*
Til with his° hete it be devoured, *its*
The tow ne may noght be socoured.° *preserved*
And so that tyrant raviner,
Whan that she was in his power,

5. Unless they should be present.

6. Could not keep from looking at her.

And he therto saugh time and place,
As he that lost hath alle grace,
Foryat he was a wedded man,
And in a rage on hire he ran,
Right as a wolf which takth[7] his preye.
And she began to crye and praye,
"O fader, o mi moder deere,
Now help!" But they ne mighte it heere,
And she was of to litel might
Defense again° so rude° a knight — *against / rough*
To make, whan he was so wood° — *mad*
That he no reson understood,
But held hire under in such wise,
That she ne myghte noght arise,
But lay oppressed and disesed,° — *distressed*
As if a goshawk hadde sesed° — *seized*
A brid° which dorste noght for fere° — *bird / fear*
Remue°: and thus this tyrant there — *escape*
Beraft° hire such thing as men sayn — *deprived*
May neveremore be yolde° again, — *restored*
And that was the virginitee:
Of such ravine it was pitee.
But whan she to hirselven cam,
And of hir meschief heede nam,° — *took heed of her misfortune*
And knew how that she was no maide,
With wofull herte thus she saide:
"O thou of alle men the worste,
Wher was ther evere man that dorste
Do such a dede as thou hast do?
That day shal falle, I hope so,
That I shal telle out al my fille,[8]
And with my speeche I shal fulfille
The wide world in brede° and lengthe. — *breadth*
That° thou hast do to me be strengthe, — *that which*
If I among the peple dwelle,
Unto the peple I shal it telle;
And if I be withinne wall
Of stones closed, than I shal
Unto the stones clepe° and crye, — *call*
And tellen hem thy felonye;
And if I to the woodes wende,
Ther shal I tellen tale and ende,° — *the whole story*
And crye it to the briddes oute,
That they shul heer it al aboute.
For I so loude it shal reherse,° — *repeat*
That my vois shal the hevene perce,° — *pierce*
That it shal soune° in goddes ere. — *resound*
Ha, false man, where is thy fere?° — *fear (of the gods)*
O more cruel than any beste,

7. Gower frequently contracts the third-person present singular of verbs (takth = taketh).

8. I.e., have my fill of telling, tell all.

How hast thou holden thy b
Which thou unto my suster
O thou, which alle love ung
And art ensample of alle un
Now wolde God my suster k
Of thin untrouthe, how tha
And he than as a lion wo
With his unhappy handes s
Hire caughte be the tresses
With which he bond ther b
That was a fieble° deed of a
And to the grounde anon hi
And out he clippeth also fas
Hir tonge with a paire of sh
So what with blood and wh
Out of hir yë and of hir mo
He made hir faire face unc
She lay swounende° unto th
Ther was unnethes° any bre
But yit whan he hir tonge r
A litel part therof belefte,°
But she with al no word ma
But chitre° as a brid jargou
And natheles that woode h
Hir body hent° up fro the g
And sente hire ther as be h
She sholde abide in prison
For everemo: but now take
What after fell of this misd
Whan al this meschief w
This Tereus, that foule him
Unto his contree hoom he
And whan he com his palei
His wif al redy ther him ke
Whan he hire sih,° anon h
And that he dide for deceit
For she began to axe° him
"Wher is my suster?" And h
That she was deed; and Pr
As she that was a woful wi
And stood between hir dee
Of that she herde such tidi
But for she sih° hir lord we
She wende° noght but alle
And hadde wel the more r
The perles weren tho forsa
To hire,[9] and blake clothes
As she that was gentil and
In worshipe° of hir sustres
She made a riche entereme

9. I.e., she gave up jewelry.

How hast thou holden thy biheste° *promise*
Which thou unto my suster madest?
O thou, which alle love ungladest,
And art ensample of alle untrewe,
Now wolde God my suster knewe,
Of thin untrouthe, how that it stood!"
And he than as a lion wood° *mad*
With his unhappy handes stronge
Hire caughte be the tresses longe,
With which he bond ther bothe hir armes—
That was a fieble° deed of armes— *feeble, cowardly*
And to the grounde anon hire caste,
And out he clippeth also faste
Hir tonge with a paire of sheres,° *shears*
So what with blood and what with teres
Out of hir yë and of hir mouth,
He made hir faire face uncouth:° *unfamiliar, distorted*
She lay swounende° unto the deeth, *fainting*
Ther was unnethes° any breeth; *scarcely*
But yit whan he hir tonge refte,
A litel part therof belefte,° *was left*
But she with al no word may soune,° *utter*
But chitre° as a brid jargoune.° *twitter / chatters*
And natheles that woode hound
Hir body hent° up fro the ground, *seized*
And sente hire ther as be his wille
She sholde abide in prison stille
For everemo: but now take heede
What after fell of this misdeede.
Whan al this meschief was befalle,
This Tereus, that foule him falle,
Unto his contree hoom he tye;° *traveled*
And whan he com his paleis nye,
His wif al redy ther him kepte.° *awaited*
Whan he hire sih,° anon he wepte, *saw*
And that he dide for deceite,
For she began to axe° him streite,° *ask / directly*
"Wher is my suster?" And he saide
That she was deed; and Progne abraide,° *started violently*
As she that was a woful wif,° *woman*
And stood between hir deeth and lif,
Of that she herde such tidinge:
But for she sih° hir lord wepinge, *saw*
She wende° noght but alle trouthe, *thought*
And hadde wel the more routhe.° *pity*
The perles weren tho forsake
To hire,[9] and blake clothes take;
As she that was gentil and kinde,
In worshipe° of hir sustres minde° *respect / memory*
She made a riche enterement,° *funeral*

9. I.e., she gave up jewelry.

against / rough
mad

distressed
seized
bird / fear
escape
deprived
restored

ed of her misfortune

breadth
that which

call

the whole story

repeat
pierce
resound
fear (of the gods)

ing, tell all.

For she fond non amendement° *betterment*
To sighen or to sobbe more:
So was ther guile under gore.[1]
Now leve we this king and queene,
And torne again to Philomene,
As I began to tellen erst.° *before*
Whan she cam into prison ferst,
It thoghte° a kinges doughter straunge *seemed to*
To maken so sodein a chaunge
Fro welthe unto so greet a wo;
And she began to thenke tho,
Thogh she be mouthe nothing prayde,
Withinne hir herte thus she saide:
"O thou, almighty Jupiter,
That hye sits and lookest fer,
Thou suffrest many a wrong doinge,
And yit it is noght thy willinge.
To thee ther may nothing been hid,
Thou woost how it is me betid:
I wolde I hadde noght be bore,° *born*
For thanne I hadde noght forlore° *lost*
My speeche and my virginitee.
But, goode lord, al is in thee,
Whan thou therof wolt do° vengeance *wish to do*
And shape my deliverance."
And evere among this lady wepte,
And thoghte that she nevere kepte° *cared*
To been a worldes womman more,
And that she wisheth everemore.
But ofte unto hir suster deere
Hir herte spekth in this manere,
And saide, "Ha, Suster, if ye knewe
Of myn estat, ye wolde rewe,
I trowe,° and my deliverance *believe*
Ye wolde shape, and do vengeance
On him that is so fals a man:
And natheles, so as I can,
I wol you sende some tokeninge,° *token*
Whereof ye shul have knowlechinge
Of thing I woot, that shal you lothe,° *make sick*
The which you toucheth and me bothe."
And tho withinne a while als tit° *as quickly*
She waf° a cloth of silk al whit *wove*
With lettres and ymagerye,
In which was al the felonye
Which Tereus to hire hath do;
And lappede° it togidre tho *wrapped*
And sette hir signet° therupon *seal*
And sende it unto Progne anon.

1. I.e., deceit under cover. "Gore" is a kind of cloak; the expression is probably proverbial for "deception."

The messager which forth
What it amounteth° is nog
And natheles to Progne h
And prively takth hire the
And wente again right as
The court of him non hee
Whan Progne of Philon
She wolde knowe how tha
And openeth that the mar
And woot therby what hat
And what meschief ther is
In swoune° tho she gan d
And eft° aroos and gan to
And eft she takth the clot
Beheld the lettres and thy
But atte laste, "Of such o
She sayth, "weeping is no
And swerth, if that she liv
It shal be venged otherwis
And with that she gan hir
How ferst she mighte unt
Hir suster, that noman wi
But only they that were sw
It sholde knowe, and shoc
That Tereus nothing it wi
And yit right as hirselven
Hir suster was delivered s
Out of prison, and be the
To Progne she was brogh
Whan ech of other had
In chambre, ther they we
They maden many a pitou
But Progne most of sorwe
Which sih° hir suster pal
And speecheles and desh
Of that she hadde be defl
And eke upon hir lord sh
Of that he so untrewely w
And hadde his espousaile
She makth a vow it shal b
And with that word she k
Weeping in greet devocio
Unto Cupide and to Venu
She prayde, and saide tha
"O ye, to whom nothing a
Of love may, for every he
Ye knowe, as ye that beer
The god and goddesse of
Ye witen wel that evere y
With al my will and al m
Sith ferst ye shoopen me
That I lay with my lord a

The messager which forth it bar,
What it amounteth° is noght war;
And natheles to Progne he goth
And prively takth hire the cloth,
And wente again right as he cam,
The court of him non heede nam.
Whan Progne of Philomene herde,
She wolde knowe how that it ferde,
And openeth that the man hath broght,
And woot therby what hath be wroght
And what meschief ther is befalle.
In swoune° tho she gan doun falle,
And eft° aroos and gan to stonde,
And eft she takth the cloth on honde,
Beheld the lettres and thymages;
But atte laste, "Of such outrages,"
She sayth, "weeping is noght the boote,"°
And swerth, if that she live moote,
It shal be venged otherwise.
And with that she gan hire avise°
How ferst she mighte unto hire winne°
Hir suster, that noman withinne,
But only they that were swore,°
It sholde knowe, and shoop° therefore
That Tereus nothing it wiste;°
And yit right as hirselven liste,°
Hir suster was delivered soone
Out of prison, and be the moone
To Progne she was broght be nighte.
Whan ech of other hadde a sighte,
In chambre, ther they were al one,
They maden many a pitous mone;°
But Progne most of sorwe made,
Which sih° hir suster pale and fade°
And speecheles and deshonoured,
Of that she hadde be defloured;
And eke upon hir lord she thoughte,
Of that he so untrewely wroghte
And hadde his espousaile broke.
She makth a vow it shal be wroke,°
And with that word she kneleth doun
Weeping in greet devocioun:
Unto Cupide and to Venus
She prayde, and saide thanne thus:
"O ye, to whom nothing asterte°
Of love may, for every herte
Ye knowe, as ye that been above
The god and goddesse of love;
Ye witen wel that evere yit
With al my will and al my wit,
Sith ferst ye shoopen me to wedde,
That I lay with my lord abedde,

means

faint
again

remedy

consider
get

sworn (to silence)
arranged
knew
desired

moaning

saw / wan

avenged

escapes

betterment

before

seemed to

born
lost

wish to do

cared

believe

token

make sick

as quickly
wove

wrapped
seal

probably proverbial for

I have be trewe in my degree,
And evere thoghte forto be,
And nevere love in other place,
But al only the king of Trace,
Which is my lord and I his wif.
But now allas this wofull strif!
That I him thus againward° finde — *on the contrary*
The most untrewe and most unkinde° — *unnatural*
That evere in lady armes lay.
And wel I woot that he ne may
Amende his wrong, it is so greet;
For he to litel of me leet,° — *prized*
Whan he myn owne suster took,
And me that am his wif forsook."
Lo, thus to Venus and Cupide
She prayed, and furthermore she cryde
Unto Appollo the higheste,
And saide, "O mighty god of reste,
Thou do vengeance of this debat.
My suster and al hir estat
Thou woost, and how she hath forlore° — *lost*
Hir maidenhood, and I therfore
In al the world shal bere a blame
Of that my suster hath a shame,
That Tereus to hire I sente:
And wel thou woost that myn entente
Was al for worship and for goode.
O lord, that yifst° the lives foode — *gives*
To every wight, I pray thee here
Thes wofull sustres that been here,
And let us noght to thee been lothe;° — *hateful*
We been thyn owne wommen bothe."
Thus plaineth Progne and axeth wreche,° — *vengeance*
And thogh hir suster lacke speeche,
To him that alle thinges woot
Hir sorwe is noght the lasse hoot:° — *hot*
But he that thanne had herd hem two,
Him oughte have sorwed everemo
For sorwe which was hem betweene.
With signes plaineth Philomene,
And Progne sayth, "It shal be wreke,° — *avenged*
That al the world therof shal speke."
And Progne tho° siknesse feineth, — *then*
Wherof unto hir lord she plaineth,
And prayth she most hir chambres keepe,
And as hire liketh wake and sleepe.
And he hire granteth to be so;
And thus togidre been they two,
That wolde him but a litel good.
Now herk herafter how it stood
Of wofull auntres° that befelle: — *chances*
Thes sustres, that been bothe felle°— — *fiercely cunning*

And that was noght on hem
But onliche on° the greete w
Which Tereus hem hadde d
They shoopen forto venge h
This Tereus be Progne hi
A sone hath, which as his li
He loveth, and Ithis he high
His moder wiste wel she mi
Do Tereus no more grief
Than slee this child, which
Thus she, that was, as who
Of wo, which hath hir overl
Withoute insighte of moder
Foryat pitee and loste dreed
And in hir chambre prively
This child withouten noise
She slou° and hewe° him al
And after with diverse spice
The flessh, whan that it wa
She takth, and makth there
With which the fader at his
Was served, til he hadde hi
That he ne wiste how it sto
But thus his owene flessh a
Himself devoureth again ki
As he that was tofore unkin
And thanne, er that he wer
For that he sholde been ag
To shewen him the child w
This Philomene took the h
Between two dishes, and a
Tho comen forth the sustr
And setten it upon the bor
And Progne tho began the
And saide, "O werste of all
Of conscience whom no pr
May stere,° lo, what thou h
Lo, here been now we sust
O raviner, lo here thy preie
With whom so falsliche on
Thou hast thy tyrannye w
Lo, now it is somdel abogh
And bet° it shal, for of thi
The world shal evere singe
In remembrance of thy de
For thou to love hast do su
That it shal nevere be fory
With that he sterte up fro
And shoof° the bord unto
And caughte a swerd anon
That they sholde of his ha
And they unto the goddes

And that was noght on hem along,° *natural*
But onliche on° the greete wrong *on account of*
Which Tereus hem hadde do—
They shoopen forto venge hem tho.
This Tereus be Progne his wif
A sone hath, which as his lif
He loveth, and Ithis he highte:
His moder wiste wel she mighte
Do Tereus no more grief
Than slee this child, which was so lief.° *dear*
Thus she, that was, as who sayth, mad
Of wo, which hath hir overlad,° *overborne*
Withoute insighte of moderheede
Foryat pitee and loste dreede,
And in hir chambre prively
This child withouten noise or cry
She slou° and hewe° him al to pieces. *slew / cut*
And after with diverse spices
The flessh, whan that it was tohewe,° *all cut up*
She takth, and makth therof a sewe,° *stew*
With which the fader at his mete° *meal*
Was served, til he hadde him ete;
That he ne wiste how it stood,
But thus his owene flessh and blood
Himself devoureth again kinde,° *contrary to nature*
As he that was tofore unkinde.
And thanne, er that he were arise,
For that he sholde been agrise,° *horrified*
To shewen him the child was deed,
This Philomene took the heed
Between two dishes, and al wrothe° *angry*
Tho comen forth the sustres bothe,
And setten it upon the bord.
And Progne tho began the word,
And saide, "O werste of alle wicke,
Of conscience whom no pricke
May stere,° lo, what thou hast do! *disturb*
Lo, here been now we sustres two;
O raviner, lo here thy preie,° *prey*
With whom so falsliche on the waye
Thou hast thy tyrannye wroght.
Lo, now it is somdel aboght,° *somewhat repaid*
And bet° it shal, for of thi deede *better*
The world shal evere singe and rede
In remembrance of thy defame:
For thou to love hast do such shame,
That it shal nevere be foryete."
With that he sterte up fro the mete,
And shoof° the bord unto the floor, *pushed*
And caughte a swerd anon and swoor
That they sholde of his handes dye
And they unto the goddess crye

on the contrary
unnatural

prized

lost

gives

hateful

vengeance

hot

avenged

then

chances
fiercely cunning

Begunne with so loude a stevene,° *voice*
That they were herd unto the hevene;
And in a twinklinge of an yë
The goddes, that the meschief syë,
Hir formes chaungen alle three.
Echoon of hem in his degree
Was torned into briddes kinde;
Diverseliche as men may finde,
After thestat that they were inne,
Hir formes were set atwinne.[2]
And as it telleth in the tale,
The ferst into a nightingale
Was shape, and that was Philomene,
Which in the winter is noght sene,
For thanne been the leves falle
And naked been the bushes alle.
For after that she was a brid,
Hir will was evere to been hid,
And forto dwelle in privee place,
Than noman sholde seen hir face
For shame which may noght be lassed,° *diminished*
Of thing that was tofore passed,
Whan that she loste hir maidenhede:
For evere upon hir wommanhede,
Thogh that the goddes wolde hire chaunge,
She thenkth, and is the more straunge,
And halt hire cloos[3] the winters day.
But whan the winter gooth away,
And that Nature the goddesse
Wole of hir owene free° largesse *generous*
With herbes and with flowres bothe
The feldes and the medwes° clothe *meadows*
And eke the woodes and the greves° *groves*
Been heled° al with greene leves, *covered*
So that a brid hire hide may,
Between Averil° and March and May, *April*
She that the winter held hire cloos,
For pure shame and noght aroos,
Whan that she seeth the bowes thikke,
And that ther is no bare stikke,
But al is hid with leves greene,
To woode comth this Philomene
And makth hir ferste yeres flight;
Wher as she singeth day and night,
And in hir song al openly
She makth hir plainte and sayth, "O why,
O why ne were I yit a maide?"° *virgin*
For so these olde wise saide,
Which understooden what she mente,

2. I.e., their forms as birds differed from one another as they had in their human estate or condition.
3. Keeps herself concealed.

Hir notes been of such e
And eke they saide how i
She makth greet joye an
And sayth, "Ha, now I a
Ha, now my face may be
Though I have lost my n
Shal noman see my chee
Thus medleth° she with
And with hir sorwe mirt
So that of loves maladye
She makth diverse melo
And sayth love is a wofu
A wisdom which can no
A lusty° fevere, a wound
This note she reherseth
To hem, whiche underst
Now have I of this night
Which erst was cleped
Told al that evere I wold
Bothe of hir forme and
Wherof men may the st
And of hir suster Prog
How she was torned° ou
Into a swalwe° swift of
Which eke in winter lit
Ther as she may nothin
But whan the world is w
And comen is the some
Than fleth she forth an
And chitreth out in hir
What falshood is in ma
And telleth in a maner
Of Tereus spousebreech
She wol noght in the w
For she wolde openliche
And eke for that she wa
Among the folk she co
To do these wives unde
The falshood of hir hou
That they of hem be wa
For ther been many unt
Thus been the sustres
And been toward the m
That they ne wole of p
Unto no mannes hand
For evere it dwelleth in
Of that they founde a
And that was false Tere
If such oon be amonge
I noot,° but his condici
Men sayn in every regi
Withinne toune and ek

Hir notes been of such entente.° *meaning*
And eke they saide how in hir song
She makth greet joye and mirthe among,
And sayth, "Ha, now I am a brid,
Ha, now my face may been hid:
Though I have lost my maidenhede,
Shal noman see my cheekes rede."
Thus medleth° she with joye wo *mixes*
And with hir sorwe mirthe also,
So that of loves maladye
She makth diverse melodye,
And sayth love is a wofull blisse,
A wisdom which can noman wisse,° *instruct*
A lusty° fevere, a wounde softe: *healthy*
This note she reherseth ofte
To hem, whiche understonde hir tale.
Now have I of this nightingale,
Which erst was cleped Philomene,
Told al that evere I wolde mene,
Bothe of hir forme and of hir note,
Wherof men may the storye note.° *remember*
And of hir suster Progne I finde,
How she was torned° out of kinde *transformed*
Into a swalwe° swift of winge, *swallow*
Which eke in winter lith swouninge,° *lies fainting*
Ther as she may nothing be sene:
But whan the world is woxe° greene *grown*
And comen is the somertide,
Than fleth she forth and ginth° to chide, *begins*
And chitreth out in hir langage
What falshood is in marriage,
And telleth in a maner speeche
Of Tereus spousebreeche.° *adultery*
She wol noght in the woodes dwelle,
For she wolde openliche telle;
And eke for that she was a spouse,
Among the folk she comth to house,
To do these wives understonde
The falshood of hir housbonde,
That they of hem be war also,
For ther been many untrewe of tho.° *those*
Thus been the sustres briddes bothe,
And been toward the men so lothe,
That they ne wole of pure shame
Unto no mannes hand be tame;
For evere it dwelleth in hir minde
Of that they founde a man unkinde,
And that was false Tereus.
If such oon be amonges us
I noot,° but his condicioun *do not know*
Men sayn in every regioun
Withinne toune and eke withoute

Now regneth communliche aboute.
And natheles in remembrance
I wol declare what vengeance
The goddess hadden him ordained,
Of that the sustres hadden plained:
For anon after he was chaunged
And from his owene kinde straunged,° *estranged*
A lappewinge made he was,
And thus he hoppeth on the gras,
And on his heed ther stant upright
A creste in tokne he was a knight;
And yit unto this day men sayth,
A lappewinge hath lore° his faith *lost*
And is the brid falseste of alle.
Bewar my sone, er thee so falle;
For if thou be of such covine,° *treachery*
To get of love be ravine
Thy lust,° it may thee falle thus, *desire*
As it befell of Tereus.

AMANS:
My fader, goddes forebode!° *forbid*
Me were levere be fortrode° *trodden*
With wilde hors and be todrawe,° *drawn*
Er I again love and his lawe
Dide any thing or loude or stille,
Which were noght my lady wille.
Men sayn that every love hath drede;
So folweth it that I hire drede,
For I hire love, and who so dredeth,
To plese his love and serve him needeth.
Thus may ye knowen be this skile° *argument*
That no ravine doon I wille
Again hir will be such a waye;
But while I live, I wol obeye
Abidinge on hir courtesye,
If any mercy wolde hir plye.° *persuade*
Forthy, my fader, as of this
I woot noght I have doon amis:
But furthermore I you beseeche,
Some other point that ye me teche
And axeth forth, if ther be ought,° *anything*
That I may be the bettre taught.

1390

THO

"Debate is now noon bit
one "Thomas," in li
(1419–20), telling his readers
text as a whole, however, tells
mental instability and more
acknowledges that he had a n
ing fully recovered, he remain
by their distrust, in fact, that

The real Thomas Hoccleve
Hoccleve's poetry. Hoccleve w
of the Privy Seal. In addition
high order, notably the *Regen*
1419–21), a compilation of wh
sional poems, both subtle pe
official policy. He seems to h
The detailed evidence for th
might be relevant that Hoccle

Hoccleve represents himsel
able ways. He is English poet
ated urban bureaucrat, intellec
alienated from his work (fo
underpaid and paid late, if p
alienated from his patrons.
friends.

Being thought less than f
tricky challenge for both a hu
an author. Staying away from
to avoid suspicion merely pr
suspicion: Thomas's friends v
ably surmises, think him "fa
(line 182). Out in public he
voices of those commenting
physical mannerisms; but h
retreats to his mirror and sea
of instability that he might re
or alone with his mirror ima
bounced back and forth by
imagination" (line 380), what
say about him, his public ima
is to the "social media" conc
fifteenth-century London. M
books of consolation is the
that anchor identity in God,
So ends *My Complaint*, but
Thomas never gets to the en
and besides, his apparent ac