

- 325 That seith this proverbe in his Almageste,
 "Of alle men his wisdom is the hyeste
 That rekketh nat who hath the world in honde."^o
 By this proverbe thou shalt understonde:
 Have thou ynogh, what thar thee recche or care
- 330 How myrily that othere folkes fare?^o
 For certes, olde dotard, by your leve,
 Ye shul have queynte^o right ynogh at eve.
 He is to greet a nigard that wolde werne
 A man to lighte a candle at his lanterne.^o
- 335 He shall have never the lasse light, pardee.
 Have thou ynogh, thee thar not pleyne thee.^o
 "Thou seyst also that if we make us gay
 With clothing and with precious array
 That it is peril of oure chastitee.
- 340 And yet, with sorwe, thou most enforce thee,
 And seye thise wordes in th'apostles name:
 "In habit maad with chastitee and shame
 Ye wommen shul apparaille you," quod he,
 "And noght in tressed heer and gay perree,
- 345 As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche."^o
 After thy text, ne after thy rubriche,
 I wol not wirche as muchel as a gnat.^o
 "Thou seydest this, that I was like a cat,
 For whoso wolde senge a cattes skin
- 350 Thanne wolde the cat well dwellen in his in,
 And if the cattes skin be slik and gay
 She wol not dwelle in house half a day
 But forth she wole, er any day be dawed,
 To shewe her skin and goon a-caterwawed.

*skinflint / refuse**a threat to
strengthen your control**clothing**jewelry**burn**stay in its house**dawned
caterwauling around*

326–27. **Of alle . . . honde:** The wisest man is the one who does not care who has control or dominion. See note to lines 180–81.

329–30. **Have thou . . . fare:** If you have enough, why do you care how much others have? Read in conjunction with the following lines, the Wife is probably talking about sex here: If I give you all you want, why would you care if others get some too?

332. **queynte:** Pretty little thing. This is one of several euphemisms that the Wife of Bath uses to refer to genitalia: "belle chose," "instrument," "small thing," "candle," "lantern," "tow."

333–34. **He is . . . lanterne:** Compare *Roman de la Rose*, lines 7410–14.

336. **Have thou . . . thee:** As long as you get enough, don't complain if others get some.

342–45. **In habit . . . riche:** For Saint Paul's requirement that women should dress in chaste clothing, see 1 Timothy 2:9.

346–47. **After thy . . . gnat:** I will pay attention neither to your text nor to your title, any more than a gnat would.

- 355 This is to seye, if I be gay, sire shrewe,
 I wol renne out my borel for to shewe.
 "Sire olde fool, what helpeth thee t'espyn?
 Thogh thou preye Argus with his hundred eyen^o
 To be my warde-corps, as he kan best,
- 360 In feith, he shall not kepe me but me lest.
 Yet koude I make his berd, so moot I thee!^o
 "Thou seydest, eek, that there been thinges three
 The whiche thinges troublen all this erthe,
 And that no wight may endure the ferthe.^o
- 365 O leeve sire shrewe, Jhesu shorte thy lif!
 Yet prechestow and seyst an hateful wif
 Yrekened is for oon of thise mischaunces.
 Been there none othere maner resemblances
 That ye may likne your parables to,
- 370 But if a sely wif be oon of tho?^o
 "Thou liknest eek wommenes love to helle,
 To bareyne lond there water may not dwelle.
 Thou liknest it also to wilde fir,
 The moore it brenneth, the moore it hath desir
- 375 To consume every thing that brent wole be.
 "Thou seyest, right as wormes shende a tree,
 Right so a wif destroyeth her housbonde.
 This knowe they that been to wives bonde.^o
 "Lordinges, right thus, as ye have understonde,
- 380 Bar I stifly mine olde housbondes on honde
 That thus they seyden in her dronkenesse.
 And all was fals, but that I took wisse
 On Janekyn and on my nece also.^o
 O Lord, the peyne I dide hem and the wo,

*gaily dressed
fine clothing to show off**warden
unless I want him to**person / fourth
dear sir shrew / shorten
you preach
Reckoned
similarities**compare also
desert land where**destroy a piece of wood
In the same way**accused**pain*

358. **Argus with . . . eyen:** In classical literature, Argus was a monster with one hundred eyes whom Zeus sent to guard Io. Compare *Roman de la Rose*, lines 14381–84, but the ultimate source of the passage is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

361. **Yet koude . . . thee:** Still I could trick him, so may I thrive.

362–64. **Thou seydest . . . ferthe:** Probably an allusion to Proverbs 30:21–23, but see also Ecclesiasticus 26:5–6. Ecclesiasticus, an apocryphal biblical text, is not to be confused with Ecclesiastes.

368–70. **Been there . . . tho:** Can't you think of any other characters for your stories than the poor wife?

378. **wives bonde:** On this note of husbands being "bound" to wives, Alisoun ends the long recital about how she controlled her three old husbands by accusing them of drunkenly accusing her of transgressions. The "lordinges" of the next line are her fellow pilgrims, not her husbands.

382–83. **And all . . . also:** It was all lies, though I got both Jankyn and my niece to verify what I said.