

- Stibourne, and strong, and joly as a pie.  
 How koude I daunce to an harpe smale,  
 And singe, ywis, as any nightingale,  
 Whan I had dronke a draughte of sweete wine!
- 460 Metellius — the foule cherl, the swine,  
 That with a staf biraffe his wif her lif  
 For she drank wine° — thogh I hadde been his wif,  
 He sholde not han daunted me fro drinke!  
 “And after wine on Venus moste I thinke,  
 465 For all so siker as cold engendreth hail,  
 A likerous mouth moste han a likerous tail.  
 In wommen vinolent is no defence.°  
 This knowen lecchours by experience.  
 “But, Lord Crist, whan that it remembreth me  
 470 Upon my youthe and on my jolitee,  
 It tikleth me about mine herte roote.  
 Unto this day it dooth mine herte boote  
 That I have had my world as in my time.°  
 “But age, allas, that all wole envenyme,  
 475 Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith.  
 Lat go. Farewell. The devel go therwith!  
 The flour is goon. There is namoore to telle.  
 The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle.  
 But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde.  
 480 “Now wol I tellen of my fourthe housbonde,  
 I seye. I hadde in herte greet despit  
 That he of any oother had delit.  
 But he was quit. By God and by Seint Joce,  
 I made him of the same wode a croce,°  
 485 Not of my body, in no foul manere,  
 But certainly I made folk swich chiere
- Stubborn / chipper as a magpie*
- surely*
- dissuaded me from drinking  
on sex*
- lecherous*
- right to the heart  
it does my heart good*
- will poison everyone  
robbed me of / vigor  
I let it go  
wheat flour  
bran  
strive to be merry*
- anger*
- repaid*

460–62. **Metellius . . . wine:** Based on a story in *Facta et dicta memorabilia* 6:3 written by the Roman writer Valerius Maximus in the first half of the first century A.D. Metellius clubbed his wife to death for drinking wine.

467. **In wommen . . . defence:** Women who are inebriated have no defenses (against sexual advances).

473. **That I . . . time:** That I lived life to the fullest while I could. For these and the previous four lines, compare *Roman de la Rose*, lines 12932–48.

483–84. **Seint Joce . . . croce:** Saint Judocus was a Breton saint of the seventh century who was perhaps associated with the staff of a pilgrim and with neglect of his wife. There may, in the second line, be a pun on “croce,” for the word can mean both “staff” and “cross.” Alisoun seems to be saying that she can make both a staff to beat her fourth husband with and a cross to crucify him on. Saint Judocus’s bones were brought to Winchester at the start of the tenth century.

- That in his owene grece I made him frye  
 For angre and for verray jalousye.°  
 By God, in erthe I was his purgatorie,  
 490 For which I hope his soule be in glorie.  
 For, God it woot, he sat ful ofte and song  
 Whan that his shoo ful bitterly him wrong.°  
 There was no wight save God and he that wiste,  
 In many wise, how soore I him twiste.  
 495 “He deyde whan I came fro Jerusalem,  
 And lith ygrave under the roode-beem,°  
 Al is his tombe noght so curius  
 As was the sepulcre of him, Darius,  
 Which that Appelles wroghte subtilly.°  
 500 It nis but wast to burye him preciously.  
 Lat him fare well. God yeve his soule reste.  
 He is now in his grave and in his cheste.  
 “Now of my fifthe housbonde wol I telle.  
 God let his soule nevere come in helle.°  
 505 And yet was he to me the mooste shrewe.  
 That feel I on my ribbes all by rewe,  
 And evere shall unto mine ending-day.  
 But in oure bed he was so fresshe and gay,  
 And therwithal so well koude he me glose,  
 510 Whan that he wolde han my bele chose,  
 That thogh he hadde me bet on every bon,  
 He koude winne agayn my love anon.  
 I trowe I loved him best for that he
- suppose his soul is in heaven  
sang (a bitter tune)*
- sorely I tortured him  
back from pilgrimage to*
- Although / elaborate  
tomb  
made so cleverly  
wasteful  
God let  
coffin*
- cruellest, most shrewish  
one after the other*
- talk to me, flatter me*
- bone  
afterwards*

485–88. **Not of . . . jalousye:** I did not actually sleep with other men, but I was so openly friendly with them that he was jealous and angry. I made him fry in his own grease!

492. **Whan that . . . wrong:** When his shoe pinches (wrings) him. The metaphor of a wife as pinching shoe was common (it appears in Plutarch and Walter Map). Chaucer most likely encountered it in section 48 of Jerome’s *Adversus Jovinianum*, with Jerome’s anecdote about a man whose friends found fault with him for having divorced his lovely, chaste, and wealthy wife. The Roman held out his foot and said that the shoe looked new and elegant to others, but only he could say where it pinched. Chaucer refers to a wife as a pinching shoe in E1549–93 (Justinus’s speech in the Merchant’s Tale).

496. **And lith . . . roode-beem:** And lies buried under the crossbeam that often divided the chancel from the nave of the medieval church. That he is buried in the church rather than outside suggests he was a man of some importance.

497–99. **Al is . . . subtilly:** Darius’s tomb was reputed to be unusually fine. Appelles was the craftsman supposed to have built it. As the next line shows, the Wife of Bath’s point is that it would have been wasteful and ostentatious to bury her fourth husband in such a tomb.

504. **God let . . . helle:** Compare line 525. These lines are usually taken to mean that the fifth husband is dead, but there is some disagreement on the point.