

After that hervest inned had his sheves...: Transcript

Nicholas Perkins [*in Middle English, reading from the poem by Thomas Hoccleve, lines 1-91*]:

After that hervest inned had his sheves,
And that the broun sesoun of Mihelmesse
Was come, and gan the trees robbe of her leves,
That grene had bene and in lusty freisshenesse,
And them into colour of yelownesse
Had dyen and doun throwen undirfoote,
That chaunge sanke into min herte roote.

For freshely brought it to my remembraunce
That stablenes in this worlde is there none;
Ther is nothing but chaunge and variaunce.
Howe welthi a man be or wel begoon,
Endure it shal not; he shal it forgoon.
Deeth underfote shal him thrist adowne –
That is every wightes conclusioun.

Wiche for to weyve is in no mannes might,
How riche he be, stronge, lusty, freissh and gay.
And in the ende of Novembar, upon a night,
Sighinge sore, as I in my bed lay,
For this and other thoughts wiche many a day
Byforne I tooke, sleep cam noon in myn ye,
So vexid me the thoughtfull maladye.

I see well, sythen I with sicknes last
Was scourged, cloudy hath bene the favoure
That shone on me full bright in times past;
The sunne abated, and the derke showre
Hilded doun right on me, and in languor
Me made swime, so that my spirite
To live no lust had, ne no delite.

The greef aboute myn herte so sore swal
And bolned evere to and to so sore
That nedis oute I muste therwithal.
I thoughte I nolde kepe it cloos no more,
Ne lete it in me for to eelde and hore,
And for to preve I cam of a womman,
I braste oute on the morwe and thus bigan:

Here endith my prolog and folwith my compleinte.

Almighty God, as likethe his goodnes,
Visitethe folke alday, as men may se,
With lose of good and bodily sikenesse,
And amonge othar, he forgat not me:
Witnes uppon the wild infirmyte
Wich that I had, as many a man well knewe,
And whiche me owt of my silfe cast and threw.

It was so knowen to the peple and kouthe
That counsell was it none, ne not be might.
How it with me stode was in every mannes mowthe,
And that full sore my fryndis affright;
They for myn helpe pilgrimages hight,
And soughte hem, somme on hors and somme on foote,
God yelde it hem, to gete me my bote.

But althoughe the substaunce of my memory
Wente to pley as for a certayne space,
Yet the Lorde of vertew, the Kinge of glory,
Of his highe might and his benygne grace
Made it to returne into the place
Whennes it cam; wiche at all hallwemesse
Was five yeere, neither more ne lesse.

And evere sithen, thanked be God oure Lord
Of his good reconsiliacioun,
My wit and I have bene of suche acord
As we were or the alteracioun
Of it was, but by my savacioun,
Sith that time have I be sore sette on fire
And lived in greet torment and martire.

For though that my wit were hoom come agayne,
Men wolde it not so undirstond or take.
With me to dele hadden they disdayne:
A riotous persone I was and forsake.
Min olde frindshipe was all overshake.
No wight with me list make daliaunce.
The worlde me made a straunge countinaunce,

Which that mine herte sore gan torment,
For ofte whan I in Westminster Halle,
And eke in London amonge the prees went,
I sy the chere abaten and apalle
Of hem that weren wonte me for to calle
To companie: her heed they caste awry
When I them mette, as they not me sy.

As seide is in the sauter, might I sey:
'They that me sy, fledden away fro me'.
Forgeten I was al oute of minde away,
As he that dede was from hertis cherte.
To a lost vessell lickened might I be,
For many a wight aboute me dwellinge
Herd I me blame and putte in dispreisinge.

Thus spake manie oone and seide by me:
'Although from him his siknesse savage
Withdrawne and passed as for a time be,
Resorte it wole, namely in suche age
As he is of.' – and thanne my visage
Bigan to glowe for the woo and fere;

Tho wordis, hem unwar, cam to min ere.