

Confessio Amantis
John Gower (ca. 1390)
Bk. 4: "Eneas & Dido"

77	Ayein Lachesce in loues cas I finde hou whilom Eneas Whom Anchises to sone had	With regard to Lachesce ¹ in the matter of love I find how once upon a time Æneas, Whom Anchises had for a son,
80	With gret navye which he lad Fro Troie arriueth at Cartage Wherfor a while his herbergage He took · and it betidde so With hire which was quene tho	With a great navy, which he led From Troy, arrives at Carthage, Where for a time his lodging He took. And it fell out in such a way With her who was then the queen
85	Of the cite his aqueintaunce He wan whos name in remembraunce Is yit and Dido she was hote Which loueth Eneas so hote Vpon the wordes which he seide	Of the city, his acquaintance [with her] He won, [she] whose name in remembrance Is still: Dido she was called, Who loved Æneas so hotly Because of the words he spoke,
90	That al hir herte on him she leide And did al holi what he wolde Bot aftir that as it be sholde ffro thens he gothe toward Itayll Be ship · and there his arriuaill	That she gave him her heart completely And did everything that he wished. But after that, as it was fated, Away from there he went toward Italy By ship, and there his landing
95	Hath take and shope him for to ride But she which may noght long abide The hote peine of loues throwe Anon within a litil throwe A lettre vnto hir kniht hath write	Made, and prepared himself to ride. But she, who may not long abide The hot pain of love's throes, Soon, within a short time, A letter to her knight has written,
100	And dede him pleinli for to wite If he made any tarieng To drecche of his ayeincomig That she ne miht him fele & se	And caused him plainly to understand If he were to dawdle, To delay his return, So that she might not perceive him and see,

¹“Procrastination,” an aspect of the sin of Sloth.

105 She sholde stonde in such degre
As whilom stood a swan tofore
Of that she had hir make lore
ffor sorwe a fether in to hir brain
She shof · and hath hir self slain
As king Menander in a lay
110 The soth hath founde where she lay
Sprantlende with hir wynges tweie
As she which sholde then deie
ffor loue of him which was hir make
And so shal I do for thi sake
115 This quene seid wel I wot
Lo to Enee thus she wrot
With many an other word of pleint
Bot he which had his thoghtes feint
Towardes loue & ful of slouthe
120 His tyme let & that was routhe
ffor she which loueth him tofore
Desireth euer more & more
And whan she sigh him tary so
Hir herte was so full of woo
125 That compleinend manyfold
She hath hir oghne tale tolde
Vnto hir self and thus she spak
Ha who fond euer such a lak
Of slouthe in any worthi kniht
130 Now wot I wel my deth is diht
Thurgh him which shuld ha be my lif
Bot for to stinten al this strif
Thus whan she sigh non other bote

She would be in such a state,
As once stood a swan before
Because she had her mate lost:
For her sorrow, a feather into her brain
She shoved, and slew herself,
As King Menander,² in a lake [or “lai”?],
Has found truly where she lay,
Sprawling with her two wings,
As one who must then die
For love of him who was her mate.
“And so shall I do for thy sake,”
This queen said, “I know for certain.”
Lo, to Æneas, thus she wrote,
With many other words of complaint.
But he, who directed his thoughts only faintly
Towards love and [who] was full of Sloth,
Put off his return, and that was a pity.
For she, who love[d] him before,
Desires [him] ever more and more.
And when she saw him tarry so,
Her heart was so full of woe
That, with manifold complaint,
She has her own tale told,
Unto herself, and thus she spoke:
“Ha! Who ever found such a fault
Of Sloth in any worthy knight?
Now know I well my death is prepared
Through him who should have been my life.”
But, in order to stop all this strife,
Thus, whan she saw no other remedy,

²In Ovid, “Maeander” is the name of the river on whose shores the swan dies; Gower has [intentionally?] misread his source.

135 Riht euen vnto hir herte rote
A naked swerd anon she threst
And thus she gat hir self rest
In remembraunce of alle slowe
 Wherof my sone thou miht knowe
Hou tarieng vpon the nede
140 In loues cause is for to drede
And that hath Dido sore aboght
Whos deth shal euer be bethoght
And euermore if I shal seche
In this matier anothir speche
145 In a cronique I finde write
A tale which is good to wite

Right through to her heart's root,
A naked sword at once she thrust.
And thus she found her rest,
In remembrance of all [who are] slow.
Wherefore, my son, thou might know
How tarrying upon the need
In love's cause is cause of dread.
And that has Dido sorely purchased
Whose death shall for ever be remembered.
And evermore, if I shall seek,
In this matter, another speech,
In a chronicle I find written,
A tale that is good to know...