

*Essays in Medieval Studies 10*

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**2. The End of Knowledge:  
The Argus Legend and Chaucer  
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In the story of Jupiter and Io in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the guardian Argus, a minor figure, presents a paradoxical image of power and impotence, keenness and sightlessness. Because of his hundred eyes, Argus is a perceiver without peer, but because all hundred eyes are lulled to sleep by Mercury, Argus is also a figure of ridicule, a failure on a grand scale. His deception and his death at Mercury's hands point to the limitations, even the futility, of visual perception as a means of knowledge. Several medieval authors allude to Argus; for some, the guard symbolizes reason, but he also represents a warning against the figurative blindness that comes from relying solely on sensory perceptions. Geoffrey Chaucer makes several references to the Argus legend, depicting Argus as a powerful yet failed perceiver. Just as Argus fails in his vigil and loses Io, the object of his looking, so several of Chaucer's characters fail to see and to understand the women whom they seek to know. Chaucer's use of the legend points to the problematic relation of seeing and knowing, suggesting that perceptual keenness can accompany and even foster the loss of knowledge.

As the story appears in the *Metamorphoses*, Jupiter seduces Io, transforms her into a cow to conceal her from Juno, and gives the cow to Juno in order to allay her jealousy. Juno, in turn, assigns guardianship of the beautiful Io

To Argus--Argus of the hundred eyes,

All watching and on duty round his head,

Save two which took in turn their sleep and rest.

Whichever way he stood he looked at Io,

Io before his eyes behind his back!<sup>1</sup>

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Io is in terror at her transformation; she tries to cry out but can only moo. Argus, a cruel keeper, hobbles Io at night, feeds her poorly, and separates her from her father. Though his surveillance is flawless, Argus finally fails at his task. Mercury, sent by Jupiter to kill Argus, first soothes him with his reed pipes and then lulls him to sleep with a story. Soon Mercury sees

All Argus' eyelids closed and every eye

Vanquished in sleep. He stopped and with his wand,

His magic wand, soothed the tired resting eyes

And sealed their slumber; quick then with his sword

Struck off the nodding head and from the rock

Threw it all bloody, spattering the cliff with gore.

Argus lay dead; so many eyes, so bright

Quenched, and all hundred shrouded in one night. (I.714-21)

The story is in many respects an allegory of loss. Io is lost first to her father, Inachus; then to Jupiter, who must disguise her and give her to Juno; and finally to Argus, who forfeits his life while guarding her. For each of these men, the loss of Io is also in some respect a loss of the familiar, a loss of what he has known.<sup>2</sup> Inachus does not recognize his transformed daughter and knows it is Io only when she spells her name in the dust; then he is driven away. Jupiter, ceding possession of Io to Juno, ceases to know her in the sexual sense. For Argus, Io and her rescuer, Mercury, represent the end of knowledge in two senses. Teleologically, the end of Argus' watch, its purpose, is Io herself; in the historical sense, the end of knowledge is simply Argus' death, the eclipsing of his great perceptual ability.

Argus is assigned the task of guarding Io because he is unsurpassed as a perceiver: what can be known by visual means (and, by extension, by means of the senses), he will know. However, Argus' great visual prowess entails its own limitations, and his triumph is also the source of his defeat. The hundred eyes, which are the means of his knowing, connect him indissolubly with the material world, the world that can be seen. He exerts a raw cunning over that world but lacks insight or foresight. The hundred eyes thus become a source of shame: Argus' death, which is at once terrifying and ignominious, is an unparalleled example of perceptual failure and intellectual shortsightedness.

Several commentators and allegorizers retell the story of Argus' death, reading Io variously as the soul, as mankind, or as a virgin, spiritually loved by God, who turns to prostitution and to worldly delights.<sup>3</sup> Argus is understood to be the world and its temptations, vain glory, or earthly delight; alternatively, and more positively, Argus is sometimes read as human reason, understanding or skill. Perhaps the legend gained such widespread and varied attention because it accorded with two different, contradictory traditions concerning the

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eye. The image of the eye was frequently employed metaphorically, as in Augustine, to represent inner vision and intellectual clarity. For example, in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, a Christian Briton is "blynd and myghte nat see,/ But it were with thilke eyen of his mynde" (II.551-52) which recognizes Hermengyld's secret faith.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, moral and religious tracts commonly warned that the eye could be a conduit for desires of the flesh. The twelfth-century *Vices and Virtues*, for example, contains a warning against letting one's eyes be "to swiðe gawrinde hider and 3eond [too swiftly staring hither and yond],"<sup>5</sup> and Book Two of the *Ancrene Riwe* contains advice concerning the eye: "alle euel commep of vnwytty lokyng [All evil comes from unwise looking]."<sup>6</sup> The eye's focus on the material can itself bring about a figurative blindness, as when in the *Knight's Tale* Palamon does not know what he is seeing:

...I was hurt right now thurghout myn ye

Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.

Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro

Is cause of al my crying and my wo.

I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,

But Venus is it soothly, as I gesse. (I.1096-1102)

These contradictory images of the eye a metaphor for intellectual and spiritual insight and a vehicle of deception may account for the disparate representations of Argus in medieval commentary, allegory, and literary allusion. In some of these texts his perceptual abilities make him an example of human reason or cleverness, and therefore a sympathetic, though imperfect, figure; in other texts, Argus becomes a gullible figure, an object of ridicule.

## Argus and the Tradition

Among the commentaries praising Argus, associating him with human reason, understanding, or skill, is Boccaccio's *Genealogie deorum gentilium*. Argus is interpreted as representing "the reason, which has always many lights indeed, to guard our safety"; Mercury, his enemy, is "the craft of the coaxing flesh" which "leads the reason into sleep and destroys it."<sup>7</sup> Prelates and bishops were sometimes encouraged to be like Argus in watching their faithful flocks (although, as a proverb had it, "The bishop has a thousand eyes to noye but not half an eye to profit after God's law"). As John Waldeby preached, "Argus with the hundred eyes signifies each prelate, who ought to have eyes in every direction, seeking in advance to avert the perils of those committed to his charge."<sup>8</sup> John Wyclif, who generally eschewed metaphor, also called for the bishop to "watch continually, and be crucified to flesh and world. He should have a thousand eyes, and if he sleeps with one should watch with the others over his flock."<sup>9</sup>

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A different kind of text praising Argus is John Trevisa's translation and commentary on Ralph Higden's *Polychronicon*. Higden acknowledge Argus' cleverness in spying and claiming material goods. The *Polychronicon* compares the English to Argus in their desire for wealth: "in berynge þey beþ menstralles and heraudes, in talkyngre grete spekeres, in etyngre and in drynkynge glotouns...in wynnynges Argi." Trevisa adds the commentary:

Poetes feyneþ oon þat was somtyme al ful of ey3en in eueriche side and heet Argus, so þat this Argus my3te see to fore and byhynde, vpwarde and downward, and al aboute.... he þat is war and wys, and kan see and be war in eueriche side is i-cleped Argus, and ful of y3en as Argus was.... þey beþ ware and seeþ aboute in euery side where wynnyngre may arise.<sup>10</sup>

In this instance, Argus "kan," that is, knows how to, see; he is "war and wys," but only in knowing "where wynnyngre may arise." His knowledge is limited to a material, physical sphere.

Sympathetic treatments of Argus warn against absorption in worldly pleasures. Waldeby, for example, warns of "the Flesh with its promptings to Lust, which sends to sleep all the eyes of discretion, and so...seizes and cuts off the reason which like a head should direct man."<sup>11</sup> Those who resemble Argus can also be destroyed by eloquence, represented by Mercury. Alexander Neckam's *De naturis rerum*, for example, associates Mercury with eloquence and Argus with fallible understanding: "When anyone gives himself over completely to the exercise of worldly knowledge, eloquence, which is very harmful without wisdom, takes away his understanding... because his eyes... are given over to vain glory."<sup>12</sup> John Gower follows the tradition of commentators who associate Argus with human reason. In his retelling of the tale in *Confessio amantis*, the Confessor explains that the story of Argus

Ensample... was to manye mo,

That mochel Slep doth ofte wo...

Forthi, mi Sone, hold up thin hed,

And let no Slep thin yhe engue,

Bot whanne it is to resoun due. (IV.3353-54, 62-64)[13](#)

Gower presents Argus in a positive light in his exemplum; in this version, Mercury is a thief "al affiled/This Cow to stele" (IV.3332-33). Argus is treated as an exemplar, failing only in that he is "beguiled" by the trickster Mercury (IV.3331).

Although in these examples Argus and those like him are prone to error, he is nonetheless admired for his cunning and visual power and in some cases represents an ideal model of rationality. In other treatments of the legend,

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however, Argus appears to be a fool with the wool pulled over all of his eyes. Comic and antifeminist works depict Argus as easily misled even where perception of the material world is concerned, and they explicitly connect his downfall and the failure of traditionally masculine reason with feminine trickery and deceit. This depiction of Argus as gullible extends back as far as Ovid, who links Argus and deception in the *Amores*: "Argus had a hundred eyes in front and a hundred behind and Love was often able to deceive these." [14](#) *Ars amatoria* specifically associates Argus with feminine deceit: "Though as many should spy upon you as Argus had eyes, you will deceive them, provided only that your will remain strong." [15](#)

Medieval literature continues to associate Argus with female cunning and male delusion. In Jean de Meun's portion of the *Roman de la Rose*, for example, Le Jaloux claims,

nul ne peut estre rescous

qui fame ait, au mien esciant,

tant l'aust gardant ne espiant,

bien ait neïs d'euz un millier!

(No man with a wife, to my knowledge, can be safe [from cuckoldry], no matter how much he may go about to guard her and spy on her, even though he may have a thousand eyes.)[16](#)

La Vieille also refers to Argus and to women's ability to deceive men:

Nus ne peut metre en fame garde,

s'ele meïsmes ne se garde.

Se c'iert Argus qui la gardast

et de ses .c. euz l'esgardast.

(No man can keep watch over a woman if she does not watch over herself. If it were Argus who guarded her and looked at her with his hundred eyes.)[17](#)

The fabliau *La bourgoise d'Orliens* is similar, specifically assigning Argus' cunning to women and his fallibility to men: "Fame a trestout passè Argu,/ Par lor engin sont deceü/ Li sage des le tens Abel (Woman has even surpassed

Argus. By their wiles [engin] they have deceived wise men since the time of Abel)."18 In these examples, Argus is identified with the delusion of men who fall victim to the cleverness of women. Women replace Mercury as the conquerors who overcome the guardian with eloquence (Ovid's text from *Ars amatoria* reads, "Tot licet obseruent, adsit modo certa Voluntas,/ Quot fuerant Argo lumina, verba dabis"; the final phrase means literally, "you will give [someone] words").19

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## Argus and Chaucer

Chaucer is among those medieval writers who use the Argus myth as a means of exploring the theme of intellectual blindness. For him, the Argus legend portrays the limitations of the traditionally rational and masculine power associated with vision. Chaucer's allusions to Argus encompass the positive as well as the negative aspects of the Argus tradition, acknowledging his perceptual skill and his cunning, and yet finally marking him as a failure, one who is defeated by women and by words.20 These double-edged references to Argus sometimes place him at the moment just before decapitation, when he is poised between power and defeat. In the *Knight's Tale*, for example, Arcite dreams of Mercury "[a]s he was whan that Argus took his sleep" (I.1390), just at the moment of loss.

The reference to Argus in the *Knight's Tale* illustrates the problem of perceptions that have gone awry. Arcite is growing lovesick because of his absence from Emily; he suffers for two years or more, and she remains always before him in his imagination. There is a physiological explanation for Arcite's condition:

And in her geere for al the world he ferde

Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye

Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye,

Engendred of humour malencolik

Biforen, in his celle fantastik. (I.1372-76)

Arcite is suffering from an erotic lovesickness, "the loveris maladye/ Of Hereos," to which young knights and nobles were presumed to be particularly susceptible.21 The "manye" which affects Arcite results from his prolonged focusing on a desirable sense perception; he can think only of the remembered image of Emily and because of his disease, his "imaginative faculty becomes fixated on [this] image."22 Like Argus, Arcite is completely occupied with looking at the female, though in his lovesickness Arcite is obsessed with the image of Emily rather than Emily herself.

Arcite's malady renders him unable to perceive, able only to imagine; his affliction cuts him off even from the world before his eyes. He finds temporary relief through a dream in which Mercury appears and comforts him (I.1384-92), appearing "[a]s he was whan that Argus took his sleep" (I.1390). Mercury's appearance in the dream and his promise that Arcite's woe will end free the lover from his malady. Lovesickness robs Arcite of his speech and reason he goes about "waillynge al the nyght, makyng his mone" (I.1366) but Mercury restores both his words and his power to reason and will. Argus, then, represents the force that imprisons Arcite; with his hundred eyes fixated on a female object, Argus embodies the altered, lovesick state that has made rational behavior impossible for Arcite. Just as Argus focuses on Io, yet finally

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loses her, so Arcite's frenzied imagination dwells unceasingly on the remembered perception of Emily. The allusion to

Argus in the *Knight's Tale* points not only to the intensity of Arcite's longing after Emily but also to its futility.

In the *Merchant's Tale*, Argus is again linked with the futility of perception and the loss of rationality. The comparison of Argus and Januarie, perhaps the dullest of Chaucer's characters, emphasizes the moral and physical failings of both. The story dramatizes their loss of reason or insight as well as of physical sight. "O Januarie," the Merchant sighs,

...what myghte it thee availle,

Thogh thou myghtest se as fer as shippes saille?

For as good is blynd deceyved be

As to be deceyved whan a man may se.

Lo, Argus, which that hadde an hondred yen,

For al that evere he koude poure or pryen,

Yet was he blent, and, God woot, so been mo

That wenen wisly that it be nat so. (IV.2107-14)

The Merchant's reference to Argus recalls the claim of Le Jaloux that "no man with a wife... can be safe, no matter how much he may go about to guard her and spy on her, even though he may have a thousand eyes."<sup>23</sup> Even if Januarie "might see," it would be of no avail, just as Argus failed even though he "koude poure or pryen."<sup>24</sup> Though the Merchant's phrase implies that Januarie and Argus possess theoretically unlimited powers of sight, his allusion marks both Argus and Januarie as powerless and sightless. Argus' loss is thus seen as inevitable despite his visual capacity; he has, indeed, already failed, for the Merchant has enfeebled him in the passive phrase "yet was he blent."

Those who are "blent" nonetheless believe "wisly," with great assurance, that nothing has happened, just as so many of Chaucer's characters think "verrailly that [they] may see" (I.3615). As the proverb indicates (above, IV.2109-10), Januarie is no more deceived in his blindness than he would be if he had sight. Januarie lacks insight throughout the *Merchant's Tale*; his physical disability merely manifests and incorporates a longstanding moral and intellectual dimness. Januarie has lived a life of unrestrained pleasure; he "folwed ay his bodily delyt/ On wommen, ther as was his appetyt" (IV.1249-50). Late in life he experiences the urge to marry, clearly more from "dotage" than "hoolynesse" (IV.1253). He wishes to "knowe of thilke blisful lyf/ That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wyf" (IV.1259-60), but he neither seeks knowledge nor attains it, ignoring all advice except Placebo's.

The wife Januarie desires is literally a figment of his imagination; he indulges in "heigh fantasye" as he "inwith his thoght devyse/ Of maydens whiche that dwelten hym bisyde" (IV.1577, 1586-87). His quest for this woman takes place on an irrational level; his perception has all the depth of insight of a

"mirour...in a commune market-place" (IV. 1582-83). Once he obtains a wife, his interest is purely physical: he is "ravysshed in a traunce/ At every tyme he looked on hir face" (IV.1750-51) and he can scarcely wait for his wedding

guests to leave (IV.1764). Once he is made sightless, he tries to keep "hond on hire alway" (IV.2091). Januarie can imagine or fantasize a woman, and even touch May when he cannot see, but "reason can be completely bound by passion"<sup>25</sup> and in this case Januarie's faculties of sense and imagination act without the reason. This lack of reason or insight causes him to endure a stubborn psychological blindness even when his sight is restored. May appeals to Januarie's desire to know "Have pacience and resoun in youre mynde" (IV.2369) and in doing so sweeps away all his perceptions. The "reasonable" thing to do, she tells him, is to believe that he is no cuckold she was merely struggling in the tree. Januarie regains the power of vision, declaring "I saugh it with myne ye" (IV.2378), but because of May's deceit, he reduces his anguished claim to opinion: "me thoughte he dide thee so" (IV.2386).

Januarie thus suffers a double loss. He has lost May, the woman who was to fulfill his desires, to the squire Damyan, and he has lost the power of reason. He also will not be able to trust his perceptions in future May has assured him that there may be some surprising sights in store for him before his vision is again "ysatled" (IV.2405). Januarie, having been "blynd deceyved," is now "deceyved whan a man may se" (IV.2109-10). Like Argus, he is "blent" even when he can "poure," and, as in the antifeminist tradition, he is deceived by a woman. Even when Januarie's physical vision returns, he has no true comprehension; along with Argus, he is so preoccupied with the woman he wishes to see that he loses both sight and insight.

If the Merchant mourns Argus' failure, the Wife of Bath celebrates it. Argus' failure is her freedom, which she claims even in the face of formidable opposition. Her prologue, like the *Roman de la Rose* and *La bourgeoise d'Orliens*, depicts Argus as a cunning and shrewd guardian, but one she could deceive nonetheless. She used to say to her doting, jealous husbands,

Sire olde fool, what helpeth thee to spyen?  
Thogh thou preye Argus with his hundred yen  
To be my warde-cors, as he kan best,  
In feith, he shal nat kepe me but me lest;  
Yet koude I make his berd, so moot I thee! (III.357-61)

The Wife's dismissal of Argus' powers is stronger than that of La Vieille in the *Roman*. La Vieille says that no one, not even Argus, can guard the woman who will not take care of herself, adding that only a fool would bother ("Fos est qui garde tel mesrien").<sup>26</sup> The Wife declares that no one can guard her at all, and, unlike the Merchant, she allows Argus the full complement of his powers. The Merchant says that Argus "was... blent," but the Wife describes Argus at his

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most powerful, before he falls asleep. His ability is acknowledged in the phrase "as he kan best," that is, "as he knows how to do" (III.359). This knowledge is, however, still linked with inevitable defeat: even if you hire this great one, the Wife is saying, you both could be deceived.

The Wife seems confident of Argus' incompetence, as well as her husbands', when she invites him to be her "warde-cors, as he kan best." "Warde-cors," an unusual word, means "bodyguard," but literally "watch-body."<sup>27</sup> In other words, what Argus best knows how to do is to observe the female body. Even so, however, she could still "make his

berd" (III.361). Argus' failure, then, lies both in his means of knowing (the physical sight attained by the hundred eyes) and in what he is limited to know (the physical body). The Wife grants Argus a certain measure of skill as a guardian, but whatever is beyond the body is out of reach; and even the body he can only "watch," never possess. The Wife thus acknowledges the physical, masculine power to see but forestalls the possibility of insight; Argus, or any "ward-cors," can have only a superficial mastery over the woman he observes.

The Wife demonstrates the inadequacy of physical mastery even as she allows Argus a certain measure of visual ability. As Mercury frees Io with the power of his eloquence, so she vanquishes her opponent with her verbal and rhetorical skill. She hides her body even as she flaunts her sexuality, using euphemisms to conceal herself: "if I wolde selle my *bele chose*," she used to tell her husbands, "I koude walke as fressh as is a rose" (III.447-48). She continues to use euphemism in addressing the pilgrims: "And trewely, as myne housbondes tolde me,/ I hadde the beste *quoniam* myghte be" (III.607-608). In this way the Wife "gives words," the advice of the *Ars amatoria*, that will defeat the most assiduous seeker after the body; her eloquence triumphs over even the superior bodyguard. Thus, though she describes Argus at the height of his powers, her praise serves only to dismiss him; she can still "make his berd" whenever she likes.

In *Troilus and Criseyde* we find another reference to Argus' defeat. As the lovers debate what to do concerning Criseyde's being sent to the Greek camp, Troilus counsels flight:

Youre fader is in sleight as Argus eyed;  
For al be that his moeble is hym biraft,  
His olde sleighte is yet so with hym laft  
Ye shal nat blende hym for youre wommanhede,  
Ne feyne aright; and that is al my drede. (4.1459-63)

Troilus sees Criseyde's father, Calkas, as possessing Argus' "sleighte." He fears Calkas' power, and specifically doubts Criseyde's ability to deceive someone who is "in sleight as Argus eyed." Criseyde, however, characterizes Calkas as greedy and gullible. Calkas is old and therefore avaricious, so Criseyde will

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return to Troy on the pretext of obtaining gold for him: "Desir of gold shal...his soule blende" (4.1399). Failing that, she will use persuasion to make him think "[h]e hath not wel the goddes understonde" (4.1405). She will have two weapons against her Argus-like father, an appeal to his greed and her own eloquence.

Criseyde assures Troilus that she is "naught so nyce a wight/ That I ne kan ymaginen a wey/ To come ayeyn..." (4.1625-27). Her attitude is similar to that of the Wife of Bath, following Ovid and Jean de Meun, in the succeeding lines: "For who may holde a thing that wol away?/ My fader naught, for al his queynte pley!" (4.1628-29). Though Argus' name has been mentioned only once, and obliquely, Criseyde's speeches reiterate the notion that Argus is fallible. She knows how to counter Argus' power, as Dame Alice and May can do; she will dazzle him with another desired object or delude him by inducing doubts about his soothsaying.

For Chaucer, Argus typifies a common failing among men: as Argus stares after Io but finally loses her and his life, so do many of Chaucer's males fail to truly perceive, that is, to comprehend, the women they seek. This is true of those specifically paired with Argus, such as Januarie and the Wife's old husbands, and of others as well. The Miller's John thinks "verraily that he may see/ Noees flood come walwyng as the see/ To drenchen Alisoun" (I.3615-17); Troilus mistakes a "fare-carte" for Criseyde and exclaims "I se hire! Yond she is!" (5.1158, 1162); the Clerk's Walter wonders whether "he myghte se...that [Grisilde]/ Were chaunged; but he nevere hire koude fynde/ But evere in oon ylike sad and kynde" (IV.599-602). Each has focused his attention on a woman, confident of perceiving "verraily," but each is in error, distracted by imagination, memory, or superficial appearances. Their very ability to "poure and pryen" undermines the possibility of knowledge. It would seem that the Argive gaze would be dominant, even omniscient (or, as we might say today, panoptical), but the imagination misleads, and empirical evidence frustrates; its perceptual power is finally without knowledge.

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Notes

1. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville (New York, 1986), Book 1, lines 625-29 (pp. 19-20). Further references given by book and line number to this translation.
2. Io's own loss seems to be the greatest, but as her story continues, she flees to Egypt, regains her original form and, as the goddess Isis, is worshipped by the Egyptians for the learning she brings them. See Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York, 1982), pp. 76-77.
3. *Ovide moralise*, ed. Cornelius de Boer, 5 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1966-68), 1: 142-47.
4. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Man of Law's Tale*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen.

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- ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, 1987), II.551-52 (p. 95). Further references to Chaucer's works will be indicated by fragment or book number and line number in the text.
5. *Vices and Virtues*, ed. F. Holthausen, 2 vols., Early English Text Society, O.S. 89, 159 (Oxford, 1888; repr. 1967), 1: 133.
  6. *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwe*, ed. A. C. Baugh (Oxford, 1959), p. 2.
  7. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium libri*, ed. Vincent Romano (Bari, 1951), p. 358; qtd. by Patrick J. Gallacher, *Love, the Word, and Mercury* (Albuquerque, 1975), p. 73.
  8. John Waldeby's sermon on "Carnal Delectation" is quoted by G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, 2d rev. ed. (Oxford, 1966), p. 186.
  9. John Wyclif, *De veritate sacrae scripturae*, ii.258, qtd. by Herbert B. Workman, *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1926; repr. Hamden, CT, 1966), 2: 108.
  10. Ranulphi Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. Churchill Babington. *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, no. 41, part 2 (London, 1869), pp. 170-71.
  11. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, pp. 186-87.
  12. Alexander Neckam, *De naturis rerum*, ed. T. Wright. *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, no. 34 (London, 1863), p. 91; qtd. by Gallacher, *Love*, p. 73.
  13. John Gower, *Complete Works*, ed. G. C. Macaulay (Oxford, 1901; repr. 1968), p. 391. Future references will be indicated by book and line number in the text.
  14. Ovid, *Amores*, 3.4.19-20, qtd. in Richard L. Hoffman, *Ovid and the Canterbury Tales* (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 142.
  15. Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, 3.616-18, qtd. in Hoffman, *Ovid*, p. 131.
  16. Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, lines 9102-05, ed. Felix Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris, 1965-70), 2: 27-28; *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Charles Dahlberg (Hanover, N. H., 1983), p. 165.
  17. de Lorris and de Meun, *Roman*, lines 14351-54 (Lecoy, 2: 187); trans. Dahlberg, *Romance*, p. 246.
  18. Anatole de Montaiglon and Gaston Raynaud, *Recueil general des fabliaux*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1872-90), 1: 120. Translation from Stephen Barney's note on *Troilus* 4:1459, in Benson, ed., *Riverside*, p. 1049.
  19. Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, 3.617-18.
  20. There are two other references to Argus in Chaucer's works. One is to the builder of Jason's ship Argo (*The Legend of Good Women*, 1453); the other seems to be an error for Albus, the inventor of Arabic numerals (*The Book of the Duchess*, 435).

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21. Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and its Commentaries* (Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 46-47.
22. Wack, *Lovesickness*, p. 56.
23. Dahlberg, *Romance*, p. 165.
24. The association of careful searching ("poure or pryen") with a failed outcome appears also in Chaucer's *Canon's Yeoman's Prologue*. The would-be alchemists "blondren evere and pouren in the fir,/ And for al that we faille of oure desir" (VIII.670-71).
25. Simon Kemp, *Medieval Psychology* (New York, 1990), p. 84.

26. de Lorris and de Meun, *Roman*, line 14364 (Lecoy, 2: 187).

27. Perhaps Chaucer had thought of the French "garde de corps" because of the numerous appearances of "garde" in his probable source, *Roman* 14351-64 (Lecoy, 2: 187). The term appears in some form six times within fourteen lines.