

# Floris and Blancheflor

As Gertrude Stein said of Oakland, the Middle English romance *Floris and Blancheflor* seemingly has little “there” there. The story lacks any distinct hagiographic meaning, and the main characters are not particularly saintly; both histrionically threaten suicide over lost love, and its protagonist is a non-Christian. The poem has little interest in Saracen-Christian issues or martial heroism, and Floris’s perfunctory conversion at the end receives one line. Despite the exotic and mysterious “wonders of the east” setting, the poem’s characters and sentimental plot border on banal, as no believable peril ever seriously threatens Floris or Blancheflor’s lives. Worse, the poem also forestalls any possible tension by revealing the denouement in the introduction: in brief, a narrative with no conflict, suspense, climax, or resolution is not much of a narrative.

Yet in the medieval mind the faraway east of Arabia and Asia both suggested fantastic adventures and recalled the failure of the crusades. Its popularity as a romance theme possibly also reflected both the desire to create a more comforting fictional history where Christians acted more honorably and succeeded in their aim of redeeming the Holy Lands, as well as the fact that many romance narratives originally had eastern sources. The verbal wordplay between Floris and his hosts or between Clarice and Blancheflor, the tricks and gags of Floris gambling with the porter or being carried in a flower-basket, and the lush, sexual imagery of the emir’s garden all provide festive entertainment.



From *Flore und Blanscheflur*,  
Cod. Pal. Germ. 362, f.173v  
(Konrad Fleck), Heidelberg  
University Library



Moreover, from the time of *Floris and Blancheflor* well into that of *Romeo and Juliet* and after, young love, particularly for an audience which historically did not generally marry as it wished, would have been an attractive theme. This wish-fulfillment is enacted in Floris's transition from childishness to adult love as he progresses toward self-actualization. The text might be usefully read as exploring deeper themes of emotional, moral, and sexual development which might have appealed to a younger audience.

The English *Floris and Blancheflor* survives in four incomplete manuscripts: Auchinleck, Adv. MS 19.2.1 (c. 1330), Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.iv.27.2 (c. 1300), Egerton 2862 (c. 1400), and MS Cotton Vitellius D.iii. (c. 1275). As my basic textual source I use George H. McKnight, *King Horn, Floriz and Blancheflur, The Assumption of Our Lady* (London: EETS, 1866, 1901), and David Laing, *A Penni Worth of Witte: Florice and Blauncheflour: And Other Pieces of Ancient English Poetry* (Edinburgh: Abbotsford Club, 1857), checking against the Auchinleck images where necessary. McKnight refers to Egerton by its former name, Trentham-Sutherland, Staffordshire.

As no English MS preserves the beginning, I use excerpts from *Floire et Blanceflor*, supplied by Édélestand Du Ménil, ed., *Floire et Blanceflor, Poèmes du 13è Siècle* (Paris: 1856), <http://www.archive.org/details/floireetblancefl00floiuoft>, who uses National Library of France (Fonds Français) MS 375, 1447, and 12562 (c. 1200). For the French section I give a separate lineation as I have used text selectively to conform to the English narrative. Following that are lines 1-383 from Egerton with some lines from Cotton and Auchinleck.

F: French (Fonds)

A: Auchinleck

E: Egerton 2862

C: Cambridge Gg.iv.27.2

V: Cotton Vitellius

- F1 Oyez signor tout li amant  
 Cil qui d'amors se vont penant  
 Li chevalier et les puceles  
 Li damoiseil les demoiselles.  
 Se mon conte volez entendre  
 Moult i porrez d'amors aprendre.  
 Cou est du roi Floire l'enfant  
 Et de Blanceflor la vaillant  
 De qui Berte as-grans-piés fu née.
- 10 Puis fu mere Charlemaine  
 Qui puis tint et France et le Maine.  
 Floire son pere que vous di  
 Uns rois payens l'engenuï.  
 Et Blanceflor que tant ama  
 Uns cuens crestiens l'engendra.  
 Floire fut tout nés de payens  
 Et Blanceflor de crestiens.  
 Bauptizier se fist en sa vie  
 Floire por Blanceflor s'amie
- 20 Car en un biau jor furent né  
 Et en une nuit engender.  
 Puisque Floire fu crestiens  
 Li avint grans honors et biens.
- 30 Or sivrai mon proposement  
 Si parlerai avenanment.  
 En une chambre entrai l'autr'ier  
 Un venredi apres mangier  
 Por deporter as demoiselles  
 Don't en la chambre avoit de beles.
- 43 Illoec m'assis por escouter  
 Deus puceles qu'oï parler.  
 Eles estoient doi serors.  
 Ensamble parloient d'amors.  
 L'aisnée d'une amor contoït  
 A sa seror que moult amoït  
 Qui fa ja entre deus enfans
- 50 Bien avoit passé deus cens ans.  
 Mais a un clerc dire l'oït  
 Qui l'avoit léu en escrit.  
 El commença avenanment:
- Listen, lords, and all the lovers  
 Whose hearts have felt suffering,  
 The knights and the women,  
 The young maids, and noble ladies.  
 Whoever wishes to hear my tale  
 Will be able to learn much about love!  
 The story is about the royal child Floris  
 And of Blanchefflor the brave  
 To whom Berta Goosefeet was later born,<sup>142</sup>  
 Herself the mother of Charlemagne,  
 Who later held France and the Maine.  
 Floris, their forefather whom I speak about,  
 Was fathered by a pagan king,  
 And Blanchefflor, who was loved by many,  
 Was fathered by a Christian earl.<sup>143</sup>  
 And so Floris was born to heathens,  
 And Blanchefflor to Christians.  
 Floris had himself baptized during his life  
 Because of the love he had for Blanchefflor,  
 For on one joyful day they were born,  
 And on the same night conceived.  
 Because Floris was later a Christian,  
 He became a king of great honor and  
 Riches. Now to continue with our story,  
 If I might come to speak about it.  
 Not long ago on a Friday  
 I entered a room after supper  
 To have conversation with some ladies  
 Who were having a chat there.  
 There I seated myself to listen  
 To what the two women were saying.  
 They were two sisters;  
 They spoke together about love.  
 The older one told a story  
 Which the younger one enjoyed very much,  
 And it was about two children who had  
 Lived well over two centuries ago.  
 But they had heard it recited by a clerk  
 Who had written it down.  
 The story is pleasant,

142 *Berte as-grans-piés*: Bertrada of Laon (720-783), wife of Pepin the Short and Charlemagne's mother, whose unfortunate nickname possibly refers to misshapen feet. One of the earliest manuscripts of the poem, Paris BN 1447, also has Adenot le Roi's *Berte aus Grans Piés* (c. 1270). For a discussion of the French sources, see Patricia E. Grieve, *Floire and Blanchefflor and the European Romance* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), chapter 1.

143 The ostensibly historical *Blanche Fleur de Laon* (died c. 720) was the daughter of the Merovingian king Dagobert III (699-715) and a Saxon princess.

Or oyez son commencement.  
 Uns rois estoit issus d'Espaigne.  
 De chevaliers ot grant compaignie.  
 En sa nef ot la mer passée.  
 En Galisse fu arivée.  
 Felis ot non si fu payens;  
 60 Mer ot passé sor crestiens  
 Por ou país la praie prendre  
 Et la viles torner en cendre.  
 Un mois entier et quinze dis  
 Sejourna li rois ou país.  
 Ains ne fu jors qu'o sa maisniée  
 Ne féist li rois chevaucée.  
 Viles reuboit avoires praoit  
 Et a ses nes tout conduisoit:  
 De quinze liues el rivache  
 70 Ne remanoit ne bués ne vache  
 Ne castel ne vile en estant:  
 Vilains n'i va son boef querant.  
 Es-vos le país tout destruit.  
 Payen en ont joie et deduit.  
 91 En la compaignie ot un Francois.  
 Chevaliers ert preu et cortois  
 Qui au baron saint Jaque aloit.  
 Une soie fille i menoit  
 Qui a l'Apostle s'ert vouée  
 Ains qu'ele issist de sa contrée  
 Por son mari qui mors estoit  
 De qui remise enceinte estoit.  
 Li chevaliers se veut deffendre.  
 100 Ne chaut a aus de lui vif prendre  
 Ains l'ocient. s'el laissent mort  
 Et sa fille mainent au port.  
 Au roi Felis l'ont presentée  
 Et il l'a forment esgardée:  
 Bien aperçoit a son visage  
 Que ele estoit de haut parage  
 Et dist s'il puet qu'a la roïne  
 Fera present de la meschine  
 Car de tel chose li préa  
 110 Quant il por reuber mer passa.  
 Atant s'en-entrent tout es nes

And so now listen to its beginning.  
 A king came from Spain  
 With a large company of knights.  
 He passed over the sea in his ship  
 And arrived in Galicia.  
 Felix had no faith and so he was pagan;  
 He passed over the sea to Christendom.  
 Wherever he went, he ravaged the land  
 And turned the villages into ashes.  
 For an entire month and a half  
 The king stayed in that country.  
 There was no day in that time when the  
 King did not campaign with his army.  
 He despoiled villages, preying on them,  
 And had everyone driven away.  
 Within the limit of fifteen miles  
 No cattle or oxen remained;  
 No castle or village was standing.  
 Peasants could find no meat.  
 The countryside was totally destroyed,  
 While the pagans rejoiced and celebrated.  
 Among the locals was a Frenchman.  
 He was a knight, virtuous and courteous,  
 On pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint  
 James.<sup>144</sup> He was escorting a woman  
 Who had devoted herself to the apostle  
 And who was from that country.  
 For her husband had died, the man  
 Whose baby she was pregnant with.  
 The knight resolved to defend them,  
 But he was not able to save his life,  
 And the plunderers left him for dead  
 And took his lady to the port.  
 They presented her to King Felix  
 And he carefully observed her,  
 Closely perceiving her appearance  
 And that she was of noble peerage.  
 He said, if it would please the queen,  
 He would make her a slave as a present  
 Since he valued such things  
 When he crossed the sea from plundering.  
 Then all of them boarded,

144 The French version relates that a group of pilgrims en route to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, northern Spain, is attacked and robbed by Felix, a pagan Spanish king. The path, "The Way of Saint James", was one of the most important Christian pilgrimage routes of the Middle Ages. Pilgrimages could be dangerous and Chaucer's entourage to Canterbury is armed with weapons for protection as well as decoration.

Amont traient tres-tout lor tres.  
 Or ont boin vent et bien portent.  
 Si repairent lié et joiant.  
 Il n'orent pas deus jor erré.  
 Qu'en lor païs sont arrive.  
 127 Es-vos le roi en la cite  
 Son barnage a tres-tout mandé.  
 Son eschec lor depart li rois  
 130 Bien largement comme cortois  
 Et por sa part a la roïne  
 Donc de gaaing la meschine.  
 La roïne s'en fait moult liée.  
 En sa chambre l'a envoyée.  
 Sa loi li laisse bien garder.  
 Servir la fait et honorer.  
 O li sovent jue et parole  
 Et francois aprent de s'escole.  
 La meschine ert cortoise et prous.  
 140 Moult se faisoit amer a tous:  
 La roïne moult bien servoit  
 Comme cele cui ele estoit.  
 161 Le jor de le la Pasque-florie  
 Si com le reconte lor vie  
 Vint li terme qu'eles devoient  
 Enfanter cou que pris avoient.  
 Travail orent et paine grant  
 Ains que né fussent li enfant:  
 Valles fu nés de la payene  
 Et meschine ot la crestiène.  
 Li doi enfant quant furent né  
 170 De la feste furent nomé:  
 La crestiène por l'honor  
 De la feste ot nom Blancheflor.  
 Li rois noma son chier fil Floire.  
 Aprende le fist a Montoire.  
 Li pere ama moult son enfant.  
 La mere plus ou autretant.  
 Livré l'ont a la damoisele  
 Por cou qu'ele estoit sage et bele  
 A norrir et a maistroier

And they traveled upstream expertly.  
 They were carried well by the wind  
 So that they returned safely and easily.  
 They had not sailed two days  
 When they arrived in their country.  
 Then the king was in the city  
 And all of his baronage was summoned.  
 The king divided up the booty,  
 Very generously and with courtesy,  
 And as for the queen,  
 She was rewarded with the slave.  
 The queen herself was very happy.  
 The slave was sent to her chamber.  
 She obeyed the queen's rules well,  
 And served and honored her;  
 They often amused themselves and talked  
 And schooled themselves in French.  
 The slave was courteous and virtuous;  
 She was loved by all  
 And was of good service to the queen,  
 Who was also expecting a child.  
 On the day of Palm Sunday,  
 As the story of their life is told,  
 The term came to a close  
 Of this child who was so priceless.  
 Great labor pains came to the mothers  
 And later the children were born:  
 The pagan gave birth to a boy,  
 And the slave had a Christian girl.  
 When the two children were born,  
 They were named for the festival:  
 The Christian, to honor the day,  
 Was named Blancheflor;  
 The king named his dear son Floris;<sup>145</sup>  
 His schooling was taken at Montargis.<sup>146</sup>  
 The father had great love for his child;  
 The mother loved him equally or more.  
 They were entrusted to the slave,  
 For she was wise and beautiful,  
 To raise and to teach,

145 The two children are given “flowery” names—Floris (“Belonging to the flower”) and Blancheflor (“White flower”)—as they are both born on Palm Sunday, also called *Paske Flourie*.

146 *Montoire*: The French MS has Montoro, Spain, near Cordoba. The English MSS have Montargis, France, near Orleans instead. Kooper states that Montargis derives from Odysseus' faithful dog Argos, and suggests that the choice of place name may symbolize Floris' loyalty. *Floris and Blancheflor*, ed. Erik Kooper, *Sentimental and Humorous Romances* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/ekfbfirm.htm>.

- 180 Fors seulement de l'alaitier.  
 Une payene l'alaitoit  
 Si com lor lois le commandoit.  
 Moult le norrissoit doucement  
 Et gardoit ententivement  
 Plus que sa fille et ne savoit  
 Lequel des deus plus chier avoit:  
 Onques ne lor sevrá mangier  
 Ne boire fors seul l'alaitier.  
 En un lit tout seul les couchoit.
- 190 Andeus passoit et abevroit.  
 Quant cinq ans orent li enfant  
 Moult furent bel et gent et grant.  
 . . . . .
- 1 E Ne thurst men never in londe  
 After feirer children fonde.  
 Þe Cristen woman fedde hem þoo  
 Ful wel she louyd hem boþ twoo.  
 So longe sche fedde hem in feere  
 þat þey were of elde of seven ȝere.  
 Þe kyng behelde his sone dere  
 And seyde to him on this manere  
 Þat harme it were mucche more
- 10 But his sone were sette to lore  
 On þe book letters to know  
 As men done both hye and lowe.  
 "Feire sone", she seide "þou shalt lerne  
 Lo þat þou do ful ȝerne".  
 Florys answerd with wepyng  
 As he stood byfore þe kyng.  
 Al wepyng seide he  
 "Ne schal not Blancheflour lerne with me?  
 Ne can y noȝt to scole goone
- 20 With-out Blanchefloure", he seide þane.  
 "Ne can y in no scole syng ne rede  
 With-out Blancheflour", he seide.  
 Þe king seide to his soone  
 "She shal lerne for þy love".  
 To scole þey were put  
 Boþ þey were good of wytte.  
 Wonder it was of hur lore  
 And of her love wel þe more.  
 Þe children louyd to-geder soo
- Excepting only their nursing.  
 A pagan woman nursed them  
 As was commanded by their laws.<sup>147</sup>  
 She cared for him with kindness  
 And guarded him attentively just as  
 Much as her daughter, and no one knew  
 Which of the two were dearer to her.  
 They never ate or drank separately,  
 Only excepting their nursing.  
 They slept only in one bed;  
 Together they grew and were raised.<sup>148</sup>  
 When the children were five years old,  
 They were very tall, beautiful, and noble.  
 . . . . .
- No one in the land would ever need  
 To try to find fairer children.  
 The Christian woman cared for them then  
 And loved the two of them very deeply.  
 She raised them together  
 Until they were seven years of age.  
 The king beheld his dear son  
 And said to him on the subject  
 That it would be a great loss  
 Unless his son were sent  
 To study books and to know letters,  
 As men do, both high and low.  
 "Fair son", he said, "you will learn,  
 Now see that you do it very intently".  
 Floris answered in tears,  
 As he stood before the king.  
 As he wept he said,  
 "Blancheflor will not learn with me?  
 I can't go to school  
 Without Blancheflor", he said.  
 I can't read or recite in any school  
 Without Blancheflor", he pleaded.  
 The king said to his son,  
 "Because of your love, she will learn".  
 They were sent to school,  
 And both of them had good wits.  
 It was a wonder to see their studies  
 And their love even more so.  
 The children were so devoted to each other

147 One Spanish version of the story states that the mother's milk transferred the spirit of Christianity to Floris, perhaps explaining such a prohibition (Grieve, 162).

148 *Passoit*: Some MSS seem to have *peissoit*, which suggests "they drank and ate", rather than passing time.

30 Peȝ myȝt never parte a twoo.  
 When þey had v ȝere to scoole goone  
 So wel þey had lerned þoo  
 Inowȝ þey couþ of Latyne  
 And wel wryte on parchemyne.  
 Þe kyng understod þe grete amoure  
 Bytwene his sone and Blanche flour  
 And þouȝt when þey were of age  
 Þat her love wolde noȝt swage.  
 Nor he myȝt noȝt her love withdrawe  
 40 When Florys shuld wyfe after þe lawe.  
 Þe king to þe queene seide þoo  
 And tolde hur of his woo  
 Of his þouȝt and of his care  
 How it wolde of Floreys fare.  
 “Dame”, he seide, “y tel þe my reede.  
 I wyl þat Blaunche flour be do to deede.  
 When þat maide is y-slawe  
 And brouȝt of her lyf dawe  
 As sone as Florys may it under ȝete  
 50 Rathe he wylle hur forȝete.  
 Þan may he wyfe after reede”.  
 Þe queene answerde þen and seide  
 And þouȝt with hur reede  
 Save þe mayde fro þe deede.  
 “Sir”, she seide, “we auȝt to fonde  
 Þat Florens lyf wit menske in londe  
 And þat he lese not his honour  
 For þe mayden Blaunche flour.  
 Who so myȝt þat mayde clene  
 60 Þat she nere brouȝt to deþ bydene  
 Hit were muche more honour  
 Þan slee þat mayde Blanche flour”.  
 Unneþes þe king graunt þat it be soo.  
 “Dame rede us what is to doo”.  
 “Sir we shul oure soone Florys  
 Sende into þe londe of Mountargis.  
 Blythe wyl my suster be  
 Þat is lady of þat contree.  
 And when she woot for whom  
 70 Þat we have sent him us from  
 She wyl doo al hur myȝt

That they could never be parted.  
 When they had gone to school five years,  
 They had learned so well  
 That they knew Latin fluently enough  
 And could write finely on parchment.  
 The king perceived the great affection  
 Between his son and Blancheflour,  
 And worried that when they were of age  
 Their love might not weaken.  
 Nor might he prevent their wishes when  
 Floris could marry according to law.<sup>149</sup>  
 The king spoke to the queen then,  
 And told her of his distress,  
 Of his thoughts and of his worries  
 About how things might go with Floris.  
 “My lady”, he said, “I will tell you my  
 Plans. I want Blancheflour to be put to  
 Death. When that maid is executed,  
 And her life’s days brought to an end,  
 As soon as Floris might discover it  
 He will soon forget her.  
 Then he may marry more advisedly”.  
 The queen answered and spoke,  
 And hoped with her counsel  
 To save the maiden from death,  
 “Sir”, she said, “we ought to ensure  
 That Floris lives with honor in the land,  
 And that he not lose his reputation  
 Because of the maiden Blancheflour.  
 If someone were to take that girl away  
 So that she was not put to death,<sup>150</sup>  
 It would be much more respectable  
 Than to slay that innocent virgin”.  
 Reluctantly, the king granted that it be so.  
 “Madam, advise me what is to be done”.  
 “Sir, we will send our son Floris  
 Into the land of Montargis.  
 My sister, the lady of that country,  
 Will be very pleased.  
 And when she knows the reason  
 We have sent him away from us,  
 She will do all her might,

149 Felix likely worries that his son will take a wife who is not only socially disadvantaged but a Christian, and that when Floris becomes of age the king will have difficulty preventing their marriage.

150 *Nere*: Egerton has *were*, but some editors believe this should be *nere*, i.e. Blancheflour should not be put to death, which makes more contextual sense if the queen is pleading for her (54).

80    Boþ by day and by nyȝt  
       To make hur love so undoo  
       As it had never ben soo.  
       And sir", she seide, "y rede eke  
       Þat þe maydens moder make hur seek.  
       Þat may be þat other resoun  
       For þat ylk enchesoun  
       Þat she may not fro hur moder goo".  
 Now ben þese children swyþ woo  
       Now þey may not goo in fere.  
       Drewryer þinges never noone were!  
       Florys wept byfore þe kyng  
       And seide, "Sir with-out lesyng  
       For my harme out ȝe me sende  
       Now she ne myȝt with me wende.  
       Now we ne mot to-geder goo  
       Al my wele is turned to woo".  
       Þe king seide to his soone aplyȝt  
 90    "Þat sone withynne þis fourtenyȝt  
       Be her moder quykke or deede  
       Sekerly", he him seide  
       "Þat mayde shal come þe too".  
       "Ȝe sir", he seid, "y pray ȝow it be soo.  
       Ȝif þat ȝe me hur sende  
       I rekke never wheder y wende".  
       Þat þe child graunted þe kyng was fayne  
       And him betauȝt his chamburlayne.  
       With muche honoure þey þeder coome  
 100   As fel to a ryche kynges soone.  
       Wel feire him receyvyd þe Duke Orgas  
       Þat king of þat castel was  
       And his aunt wiþ muche honour.  
       But ever he þouȝt on Blanchefloure.  
       Glad and blythe þey ben him withe  
       But for no joy þat he seith  
       Ne myȝt him glade game ne gle  
       For he myȝt not his lyf see.  
       His aunt set him to lore  
 110   Þere as other children wore  
       Boþ maydons and grome  
       To lerne mony þeder coome.  
       Inowȝ he sykes but noȝt he lernes;  
       For Blaunche flour ever he mornes.  
       Yf enyman to him speke  
       Love is on his hert steke.  
       Love is at his hert roote

Both by day and by night,  
 To make their love so distant  
 As if it had never been.  
 And sir", she continued, "I also advise  
 That the maiden's mother feign illness.  
 That can be another reason  
 For the same action,  
 That she may not leave her mother".  
 Now these children were in great sorrow,  
 For they could not go together.  
 There was never a sadder sight!  
 Floris wept before the king  
 And said, "Sir, without a lie,  
 You send me away to my doom  
 If she may not go with me.  
 Now that we cannot be together,  
 All my happiness is turned to despair".  
 The king said to his son in earnest,  
 "Son, within this fortnight,  
 Whether her mother is alive or dead,  
 For sure", he said to him,  
 "That maid will come to you".  
 "Yes, sire", he answered, "I beg of you  
 That it be so. If you send her to me,  
 I don't care at all where I go".  
 With the child's consent, the king was eased  
 And entrusted him to his chamberlain.  
 With much grandeur they traveled forth,  
 As was fitting for a rich king's son.  
 The duke, Orgas, who was lord of that  
 Castle, received him graciously,  
 As did his aunt, with great honor.  
 But he only thought about Blancheflour.  
 They were glad and merry with him,  
 But he could find no joy, nor could games  
 Or entertainments cheer him,  
 For he could not see his sweetheart.  
 His aunt set him to study  
 Where the other children were,  
 Where many came to learn,  
 Both maidens and young men.  
 He sighed enough, but learned nothing;  
 He continually mourned for Blancheflour.  
 If any man spoke to him,  
 Only love stuck to his heart.  
 Love was at his heart's root,



Pat no þing is so soote;  
 Galyngale ne lycorys  
 120 Is not so soote as hur love is  
 Ne nothing ne none other.  
 So much he þenkeþ on Blancheflour  
 Of oo day him þynkeþ þre  
 For he ne may his love see.  
 Pus he abydeth with mucche woo  
 Tyl þe fourtenyzt were goo.  
 When he saw she was nouzt ycoome  
 So mucche sorow he haþ noome  
 Pat he loveth mete ne drynke  
 130 Ne may noone in his body synke.  
 Þe chamberleyne sent þe king to wete  
 His sones state al y-wrete.  
 Þe king ful sone þe waxe to-brake  
 For to wete what it spake.  
 He begynneth to chaunge his moode  
 And wel sone he understode  
 And with wreth he cleped þe queene  
 And tolde hur alle his teene  
 And with wraþ spake and sayde  
 140 “Let do bryng forþ þat mayde!  
 Fro þe body þe heued shal goo!”  
 Þenne was þe quene ful woo.  
 Þan spake þe quene þat good lady  
 “For Goddes love sir mercy!  
 At þe next haven þat here is  
 Per ben chapmen ryche y-wys  
 Marchaundes of Babyloyne ful ryche  
 Þat wol hur bye blethelyche.  
 Than may ze for þat lovely foode  
 150 Have mucche catell and goode.  
 And soo she may fro us be brouzt  
 Soo þat we slee hur nouzt”.  
 Unneþes þe king graunted þis.  
 But forsoþ so it is  
 Þe king let sende after þe burgeise  
 Þat was hende and curtayse  
 And welle selle and bygge couth

And nothing was so sweet;  
 Neither spice nor licorice<sup>151</sup>  
 Was as sweet as her love was,  
 Nor anything of any other flower.  
 He thought so much about Blancheflour  
 That one day seemed like three,  
 For he could not see his love.  
 Thus he waited with great sadness  
 Until the fourteenth night had passed.  
 When he saw she had not come,  
 He was taken by so much grief  
 That he wanted neither food nor drink,  
 And neither would go into his body.  
 The chamberlain sent word to tell the king  
 Of his son's state in writing.  
 The king hurriedly broke the wax,  
 In order to know what the letter said.  
 His mood began to darken,  
 And very soon he understood,  
 And with anger he called the queen,  
 And told her all his vexation,  
 And spoke in wrath and said,  
 “Have that maid sent for!  
 Her head will go from her body!”  
 The queen was very distraught then.  
 The queen, that good lady, answered,  
 “For God's love, sir, have mercy!  
 At the nearest harbor  
 There are rich traders, for sure,  
 Wealthy merchants from Persia,<sup>152</sup>  
 Who will gladly buy her.  
 Then you will have for that lovely girl  
 A great deal of property and goods.  
 And so she will be gotten rid of  
 In such a way that we do not slay her”.  
 Reluctantly, the king granted this.  
 But truly, it happened in that way.  
 The king sent for the agent,  
 Who was able and well-mannered,  
 And knew how to buy and sell well,

151 *Galyngale*: Galingal is an Asian spice related to ginger which would have been very exotic to a medieval English audience. It is commonly used in Thai tom yum soup. *Flower* is not in Egerton, but again makes contextual sense.

152 *Babyloyn*: The ancient city of Babylon was south of Baghdad, but the poet may simply mean a romantic idea of the Middle East in what is now Iraq and Iran. The French MS also has *Babiloine*. Reiss argues that this is *Bab-al-yun*, a district of old Cairo. E. Reiss, “Symbolic Detail in Medieval Narrative: *Floris & Blancheflour*”, *Papers on Language & Literature* 7 (1971): 346. But the land area of the emir's palace complex seems too massive to fit inside a suburb.

And moony langages had in his mouth.  
 Wel sone þat mayde was him betauzt  
 160 An to þe havene was she brouzt.  
 Per have þey for þat maide zolde  
 XX mark of reed golde  
 And a coupe good and ryche;  
 In al þe world was none it lyche.  
 Per was never noone so wel grave.  
 He þat it made was no knave.  
 Per was purtrayd on y weene  
 How Paryse ledde away þe queene.  
 And on þe couerle a-bove  
 170 Purtrayde was þer both her love.  
 And in þe pomel þerone  
 Stood a charbuncle stoone.  
 In þe world was not so depe soler  
 Pat it nold lyzt þe botelere  
 To fylle boþ ale and wyne  
 Of sylver and golde boþ good and fyne.  
 Enneas þe king þat nobel man  
 At Troye in batayle he it wan  
 And brouzt it in-to Lumbardy  
 180 And gaf it his lemman his amy.  
 Þe coupe was stoole fro king Cesar;  
 A þeef out of his tresour hous it bar.  
 And sethe þat ilke same þeef  
 For Blaunchefloure he it zeef  
 For he wyst to wynne suche þree  
 Myzt he hur bryng to his contree.  
 Now þese marchaundes saylen over þe see  
 With þis mayde to her contree.  
 So longe þey han undernome  
 190 Pat to Babyloyne þey ben coome.  
 To þe amyral of Babyloyne  
 Þey solde þat mayde swythe soone.  
 Rath and soone þey were at oone.  
 Þe amyral hur bouzt anoone  
 And gafe for hur as she stood upryzt  
 Sevyne sythes of golde her wyzt  
 For he þouzt without weene  
 Pat faire mayde have to queene.

And had many languages at his tongue.  
 Very soon the maid was given to him,  
 And she was brought to the harbor.  
 There the traders paid for that maiden  
 Twenty marks of red gold,<sup>153</sup>  
 And a cup, splendid and costly;  
 In all the world there was none like it.  
 There was never one so finely engraved.  
 He who crafted it was no fool.  
 There was a depiction on it, as I am told,  
 Of how Paris led away Queen Helen,  
 And on the lid above it  
 Their love for each other was portrayed.  
 And on the round knob on top  
 Stood a carbuncle stone.  
 In all the world there was no cellar so deep  
 That it would not give light to a butler  
 To pour either ale or wine  
 Into the silver and gold, good and fine.  
 Aeneas the king, that valiant man,  
 Won it at Troy in battle,  
 And brought it to Lombardy,  
 And gave it to his beloved, his Lavinia.<sup>154</sup>  
 The cup was stolen from the caesar;  
 A thief carried it out of his treasure house.  
 And afterward that same thief  
 Gave it in trade for Blancheflour,  
 For he expected to gain such a profit  
 If he could bring her to his country.  
 Now these merchants sailed over the sea  
 With this maid to their land.  
 They journeyed so far  
 Until they arrived in Babylon.  
 Very quickly, they sold the girl  
 To the emir of Babylon.  
 Hastily, they soon agreed on the sale.  
 The emir bought her at once,  
 And paid for her, as she stood upright,  
 Seven times her weight in gold,  
 For he thought, without a doubt,  
 To have that fair maid as queen.

153 *XX mark*: A mark was 2/3 of a pound in England, or 13s 4p. According to the UK National Archives website, 20 marks in today's money would be about US\$10,000 (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/>). As with many romances, this may be as fanciful as paying seven times her weight in gold (196). Arabic numerals were not common in English texts until the spread of printing presses.

154 *Amy*: Lavinia, Aeneas' love and Latinus' daughter in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Among his maydons in his bour  
 200 He hur dide with mucche honour.  
 Now þese merchaundes þat may belete  
 And ben glad of hur byʒete.  
 Now let we of Blauncheflour be  
 And speke of Florys in his contree.  
 Now is þe burgays to þe king coome  
 With þe golde and his garysone  
 And haþ take þe king to wolde  
 Þe selver and þe coupe of golde.  
 They lete make in a chirche  
 210 As swithe feire grave wyrche.  
 And lete ley þer-uppone  
 A new feire peynted stone  
 With letters al aboute wryte  
 With ful mucche worshippe.  
 Who-so couth þe letters rede  
 Þus þey spoken and þus þey seide  
 “Here lyth swete Blaunchefloure  
 Þat Florys lovyd paramoure”.  
 Now Florys haþ undernome  
 220 And to his fader he is coome.  
 In his fader halle he is lyʒt.  
 His fader him grette anoone ryʒt  
 And his moder þe queene also.  
 But unneþes myʒt he þat doo  
 Þat he ne asked where his lemman bee.  
 Nonskyns answeere chargeþ hee.  
 So longe he is forth noome  
 In to chamber he is coome.  
 Þe maydenys moder he asked ryʒt  
 230 “Where is Blauncheflour my swete wyʒt?”  
 “Sir”, she seide, “forsothe ywys  
 I ne woot where she is”.  
 She beþouʒt hur on þat lesyng  
 Þat was ordeyned byfoore þe king.  
 “Þou gabbest me”, he seyde þoo.  
 “Þy gabbyng doþ me mucche woo.  
 Tel me where my leman bel!”  
 Al wepyng seide þenne shee  
 “Sir”, shee seide, “deede”. “Deed?” seide he.  
 240 “Sir”, sche seide, “for sothe ʒee”.  
 “Allas when died þat swete wyʒt?”  
 “Sir withynne þis fourtenyʒt

He had her placed, with great honor,  
 Among the maidens in his harem.  
 Now the merchants left the maid behind,  
 And were pleased with their earnings.  
 Now we will let Blancheflour be,  
 And speak of Floris in his country.  
 The agent returned to the king  
 With the gold and the payment,  
 And remitted the silver and cup of gold  
 For the king to keep.  
 They had a very beautiful grave made  
 In a small chapel,  
 And placed on there  
 A new and finely painted stone,  
 With letters written all about  
 With reverent piety.  
 For whoever could read the letters  
 They spoke thus and read,  
 “Here lies sweet Blancheflour,  
 Who loved Floris with passion”.<sup>155</sup>  
 Now Floris had undertaken his journey,  
 And he came to his father.  
 He dismounted in his father’s hall.  
 He greeted the king right away,  
 And his mother, the queen, as well.  
 But he had scarcely done so  
 When he asked where his beloved was,  
 Not even waiting for any kind of answer.  
 And so he was brought forth  
 Until he arrived in a chamber.  
 He asked the maiden’s mother at once,  
 “Where is Blancheflour, my sweet lass?”  
 “Sir”, she said, “in truth, the fact is that  
 I don’t know where she is”.  
 She was mindful of the deception  
 Which had been ordered by the king.  
 “You’re teasing me”, he replied.  
 “Your gabbing hurts me deeply.  
 Tell me where my sweetheart is!”  
 She then replied, in heavy tears,  
 “Sir”, she said, “she is dead”. “Dead?”,  
 He cried. “Sir”, she said, “in truth, yes”.  
 “Alas! When did that sweet creature die?”  
 “Sir, within this fortnight

155 *That Florys lovyd par amour*: Kooper notes that who loved who is not clear in the ME line, and perhaps the ambiguity intentionally emphasizes that their feelings were mutual.

Þe erth was leide hur aboute  
 And deed she was for thy love".  
 Flores þat was so feire and gent  
 Sownyd þere verament.  
 Þe Cristen woman began to crye  
 To Jhesu Crist and seynt Marye.  
 Þe king and þe queene herde þat crye.  
 250 In to þe chamber þey ronne on hye.  
 And þe queene herde her byforne  
 On sowne þe childe þat she had borne.  
 Þe kinges hert was al in care  
 Þat sawe his sone for love so fare.  
 When he a-wooke and speke moʒt  
 Sore he wept and sore he syʒt  
 And seide to his moder ywys  
 "Lede me þere þat mayde is".  
 Þeder þey him brouʒt on hyʒe  
 260 For care and sorow he wolde dyʒe.  
 As sone as he to þe grave com  
 Sone þere behelde he þen  
 And þe letters began to rede  
 Þat þus speke and þus seide  
 "Here lyth swete Blauncheflour  
 Þat Florys lovyd paramoure".  
 Pre sithes Florys sownydde nouth  
 Ne speke he myʒt not with mouth.  
 As sone as he awoke and speke myʒt  
 270 Sore he wept and sore he syʒt.  
 "Blauncheflour!", he seide "Blauncheflour!  
 So swete a þing was never in boure.  
 Of Blauncheflour is þat y meene  
 For she was come of good kyne".  
 .....  
 V "Vor in worle nes nere non  
 Þine imake of no wimmon.  
 Inouʒ þou cuþest of clergie  
 And of alle curteysie".  
 .....  
 E "Lytel and mucho loveden þe  
 280 For þy goodnesse and þy beaute.  
 ʒif deþ were dalt aryʒt  
 We shuld be deed boþ on oo nyʒt.  
 On oo day borne we were;  
 We shul be ded boþ in feere".

The earth was laid above her,  
 And she was dead for your love".  
 Floris, who was so fair and gentle,  
 Was overcome there, in truth.  
 The Christian woman began to call  
 On Jesus Christ and sainted Mary.  
 The king and queen heard that cry.  
 They ran into the chamber in haste,  
 And the queen saw before her  
 The child that she had bore in a faint.  
 The king's heart was all distraught at  
 Seeing what had happened to his son  
 For love. When he awoke and could speak,  
 He wept and sighed bitterly,  
 And said to his mother in earnest,  
 "Take me to where that maid is".  
 They brought him there in haste,  
 For he was dying of anguish and sorrow.  
 As soon as he came to the grave,  
 He beheld it at once  
 And began to read the letters,  
 So that he spoke and said thus,<sup>156</sup>  
 "Here lies sweet Blancheflour,  
 Who loved Floris with passion".  
 Floris swooned three times  
 Before he could he speak with his mouth.  
 As soon as he awoke and could talk,  
 He wept and sighed bitterly.  
 "Blancheflour!" he said, "Blancheflour!  
 There was never so sweet a thing in any  
 Bower. I mourn for Blancheflour,  
 For she came from the noblest family".  
 .....  
 "There was no one in the world  
 Your equal among women!  
 You were well-learned in faith  
 And in all courtesies".  
 .....  
 "High and low loved you  
 For your goodness and your beauty.  
 If death were dealt out fairly,  
 We would both be dead the same night.  
 We were born on one day;  
 We will both be dead together".

156 *That thus spake*: Floris is reading out loud. It was considered unusual to read silently until the modern era. There is a famous story of St. Augustine's curiosity at seeing Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (d. 397), reading without vocalizing.

“Deeþ!” he seide, “Ful of envye  
And of alle trechorye  
Refte þou hast me my lemman!”  
“For soth”, he seide, “þou art to blame.  
She wolde have levyd and þu noldest  
290 And fayne wolde y dye and þu woldest”.

V “Pilke þat buste best to libbe  
Hem þou stikest under þe ribbe!  
And ȝif þer is eni forlived wrecche  
Þat of is live nouȝt ne recche  
Þat fawe wolde deie for sorewe and elde  
On hem neltou nouȝt bi helde!  
No lengore ich nelle mi lef bileve  
I shulle be mid hyre ere eve!”

E “After deeþ clepe nomore y nylle  
300 But slee my self now y wille!”  
His knyf he braide out of his sheth.  
Him self he wolde have doo to deth  
And to hert he had it smetene  
Ne had his moder it under ȝetene.  
Þen þe queene fel him uppone  
And þe knyf fro him noome.  
She reft him of his lytel knyf  
And savyd þere þe childes lyf.  
Forþ þe queene ranne al wepyng  
310 Tyl she come to þe kyng.  
Þan seide þe good lady  
“For Goddes love sir mercy!  
Of xii children have we noone  
On lyve now but þis oone!  
And better it were she were his make  
Þan he were deed for hur sake”.  
“Dame þou seist soþ”, seide he.  
“Sen it may noone other be  
Lever me were she were his wyf  
320 Þan y lost my sonnes lyf”.  
Of þis word þe quene was fayne  
And to her soone she ran agayne.  
“Floryes soone glad make the.  
þy lef þou schalt on lyve see.  
Florys sone þrouȝ engynne  
Of þy faders reed and myne  
Þis grave let we make  
Leve sone for þy sake.

“Death!” he cried, “Full of envy  
And of all treachery!  
You have robbed me of my beloved!  
Truly”, he said, “you are to blame.  
She would have lived had you not denied it,  
And I would gladly die had you let me!”

“Those who struggle the most to live,  
Them you stab under the rib!  
And if there is any degenerate wretch  
Who cares nothing for his life,  
Who would gladly die for sorrow and age,  
On him you take no hold!  
No longer will I linger in life!  
I shall be beside her before evening!”

“I will no longer call after death  
But will slay myself right now!”  
He drew his knife out of its sheath.  
He would have put himself to death  
And struck at his own heart  
Had his mother not realized it.  
Then the queen fell upon him  
And seized the knife from him.  
She took away his little knife,  
And there she saved the child’s life.  
The queen ran away in tears  
Until she came to the king.  
Then the good lady cried,  
“For God’s love, sir, have mercy!  
From twelve children we have  
None alive now but this one!  
It would be better if she were his wife  
Than for him to be dead for her sake”.  
“Madam, you speak the truth”, he sighed.  
“Since it cannot not be otherwise,  
I would rather she were his wife  
Than to lose my son’s life”.  
With these words the queen was calmed,  
And she ran back to her son.  
“Floris, my son, cheer yourself.  
You will see your sweetheart alive.  
Floris, son, through a trick  
Of your father’s and my design,  
We had this grave made,  
Dear son, for your own sake.

330 Zif þou þat maide forgete woldest  
 After oure reed wyf þou sholdest".  
 Now every worde she haþ him tolde  
 How þat þey þat mayden solde.  
 "Is þis soth my moder dere?"  
 "For soth", she seide, "she is not here".  
 Þe row3 stooone adoune þey leyde  
 And sawe þat was not þe mayde.  
 "Now moder y þink þat y leve may.  
 Ne shal y rest ny3t ne day  
 Ny3t ne day ne no stounde  
 340 Tyl y have my lemmon founde.  
 Hur to seken y woll wende  
 Þau3 it were to þe worldes ende!"  
 To þe king he goþ to take his leve  
 And his fader bade him byleve.  
 "Sir y wyl let for no wynne.  
 Me to bydden it it were grete synne".  
 Þan seid þe king, "Seth it is soo  
 Seþ þou wylt noone other doo  
 Al þat þe nedeþ we shul þe fynde.  
 350 Jhesu þe of care unbynde".  
 "Leve fader", he seide, "y telle þe  
 Al þat þou shalt fynde me.  
 Þou mast me fynde at my devyse  
 Seven horses al of prys  
 And twoo y-charged uppon þe molde  
 Boþ with selver and wyþ golde  
 And two ycharged with monay  
 For to spenden by þe way  
 And þree with clothes ryche  
 360 Þe best of al þe kyngryche.  
 Seven horses and sevyen men  
 And þre knaves without hem  
 And þyne owne chamburlyayne.  
 Pat is a wel nobel swayne;  
 He can us wyssth and reede.  
 As marchaundes we shull us lede".  
 His fader was an hynde king.  
 Þe coupe of golde he dide him bryng

If you had forgotten that girl,  
 You would marry according to our wishes".  
 She told him every word<sup>157</sup>  
 About how they sold that maiden.  
 "Is this the truth, my dear mother?"  
 "In truth", she answered, "she is not here".  
 They laid aside the rough stone  
 And saw that the maid was not there.  
 "Now, mother, I think that I can live.  
 I will not rest night or day,  
 Night, day, or one moment,  
 Until I have found my beloved.  
 I will go to seek her,  
 Even to the ends of the earth!"  
 He went to the king to take his leave,  
 And his father asked him to stay.  
 "Sir, I won't desist for any gain. To  
 Demand that of me would be a great sin".  
 Then the king answered, "Since it is so,  
 Since you will not have it any other way,  
 We will provide you with all you need.  
 May Christ deliver you from distress".<sup>158</sup>  
 "Dear father", he said, "I will tell you  
 All that you will supply me with.  
 You may equip me, at my request,  
 With seven horses, all of prized value,  
 With two loaded, to the earth,  
 With both silver and gold,  
 And two laden with money  
 To spend along the way,  
 And three loaded with rich clothes,  
 The best in all the kingdom.  
 Seven horses and seven men,  
 And three attendants besides them,  
 And your own chamberlain.  
 He is a very dedicated servant;  
 He can both guide and advise us.  
 We will conduct ourselves as merchants".  
 His father was a gracious king.  
 He brought him the cup of gold,

157 *She haþ*: ME narratives often feature narratorial interjections, but the *Floris* poet has an unusual (and confusing) fondness for present and present continuous phrasings, perhaps to build immediacy and energy in the story.

158 *Jhesu thee of care unbynde*: To have the king entrust his son to Christ is either a mistake or another example of the period slipshod depiction of non-Christians. Felix's faith is ambiguous as the text never explicitly says that he is Muslim and the descriptor 'pagan' (French line 59) could mean any non-Christian or pre-Christian belief. The parents show particular respect for Blancheflor in placing her mock-burial in a *chirche* (209).

Pat ilke self coupe of golde  
 370 Pat was Blancheflour for zolde.  
 "Have þis soone", seide þe king  
 "Herewith þou may þat swete þing  
 Wynne so may betyde  
 Blancheflour with þe white syde  
 Blancheflour þat faire may".  
 Þe king let sadel a palfrey  
 Þe oone half so white so mylke  
 And þat other reed so sylk.  
 .....  
 A I ne kan telle you nowt  
 380 How richeliche þe sadel was wrount.  
 Þe arsouns were gold pur and fin  
 Stones of vertu set þerin  
 Bigon abouten wiȝ orfreis.  
 Þe quen was hende and curteis.  
 3he cast her hond to hire fingre  
 And drouȝ þerof a riche ringe.  
 "Have nou sone here þis ring.  
 While þou hit hast doute þe no þing  
 Ne fir þe brenne ne drenchen in se;  
 390 Ne iren ne stel schal derie þe.  
 And be hit erli and be hit late  
 To þi wille þou schalt have whate".  
 Weping þai departed nouþe  
 And kiste hem wiȝ softe mouþe.  
 Þai made for him non oþer chere  
 Þan þai seȝe him ligge on bere.  
 Nou forht þai nime wiȝ alle main  
 Himself and his chaumberlain.  
 So longe þai han undernome  
 400 To þe havene þai bez icome  
 Þer Blancheflour lai aniȝt.  
 Richeliche þai were idiȝt.  
 Þe louerd of þe hous was wel hende;  
 Þe child he sette next his hende  
 In þe alþrest fairest sete.  
 Gladliche þai dronke and ete  
 Al þat þerinne were.  
 Al þai made glade chere  
 And ete and dronke echon wiȝ oþer

The same golden cup itself  
 That had been traded for Blancheflour.  
 "Take this, son", said the king,  
 "With it you might win back  
 That sweet girl, if it may so happen,  
 Blancheflour with the light complexion,<sup>159</sup>  
 Blancheflour, that fair maid".  
 The king had a palfrey saddled,  
 With one side as white as milk,  
 And the other as red as silk.  
 .....  
 I cannot begin to describe  
 How richly the saddle was made.  
 The saddlebows were gold, pure and fine,  
 With stones of quality set inside,  
 Surrounded about with gold embroidery.  
 The queen was graceful and courteous.  
 She put her hand to her finger  
 And drew off a magnificent ring.  
 "Take this ring here now, son.  
 While you have it, fear nothing. You will  
 Not burn in fire, or drown in the sea;  
 Neither iron nor steel will harm you.  
 Whether it be sooner or later,  
 You will have what is your will".  
 They parted then in tears,  
 And kissed each other softly.  
 They behaved for him no differently than  
 If they saw him lying on a funeral bier.  
 Now he and his chamberlain  
 Went forth with all their strength.  
 They traveled for a long time  
 Until they came to the harbor  
 Where Blancheflour had slept at night.  
 They were provided for lavishly.  
 The lord of the house was very hospitable;  
 He sat the young man next to him,  
 In the finest of all seats.  
 All those who were in there  
 Ate and drank happily.  
 They all made a cheerful mood  
 And ate and drank with each other,

159 *White syde*: A puzzling line. Kooper has *side*, suggesting a light aspect, where Bennett and Smithers render *syde* as long or flowing, i.e. blonde hair. The medieval sense that light hair or skin complexion was purer or more beautiful is evidently operant here, as Blancheflour is the daughter of a Saxon noble. See also Walter C. Curry, *The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty* (Baltimore: J.H. Furst, 1916), 11-21 and 80-86.

410 Ac Florice þouʒte al anoþer.  
 Ete ne drinke miʒte he nouʒt  
 On Blancheflour was al his þouʒt.  
 Þe leuedi of þe hous underʒat  
 Hou þis child mourning sat  
 And seide here louerd wiʒ stille dreme  
 “Sire”, ʒe saide, “nimstou no ʒeme  
 How þis child mourning sit?  
 Mete and drink he forʒit.  
 Litel he eteʒ and lasse he drinkeʒ.  
 420 He nis no marchaunt as me þinkeʒ”.  
 To Florice þan spak ʒhe  
 “Child ful of mourning I þe se  
 Þus far herinne þis ender dai  
 Blancheflour þat faire mai.  
 Herinne was þat maiden bowʒt  
 And over þe se ʒhe was ibrowʒt.  
 Herinne þai bouʒte þat maden swete  
 And wille here eft selle to biʒete.  
 To Babiloyne þai wille hire bring  
 430 And selle hire to kaiser oþer to king.  
 Þou art ilich here of alle þinge  
 Of semblant and of mourning  
 But þou art a man and ʒhe is a maide”!  
 Þous þe wif to Florice saide.  
 Þo Florice herde his lemman nevene  
 So bliþe he was of þat stevene  
 Þat his herte bigan al liʒt.  
 A coupe of gold he let fulle riʒt.  
 “Dame”, he saide, “þis hail is þin  
 440 Boþe þe gold and þe win  
 Boþe þe gold and þe win eke  
 For þou of mi lemman speke!  
 On hir I þout for here I siʒt.  
 And wist ich wher hire finde miʒt  
 Ne scholde no weder me assoine  
 Þat I ne schal here seche at Babiloine”.  
 Florice rest him þere al niʒt.  
 Amorewe whanne hit was dai-liʒt  
 He dide him in þe salte flod.  
 450 Wind and weder he hadde ful god.  
 To þe mariners he ʒaf largeliche  
 Þat brouʒten him over bleþeliche

But Floris’ thoughts were all elsewhere.  
 He could not eat or drink,  
 For all his thoughts were on Blancheflour.  
 The lady of the house noticed  
 How this child sat mourning,  
 And said to her lord in a low voice,  
 “Sir”, she said, “haven’t you noticed  
 How this boy sits so gloomily?  
 He takes no notice of food and drink.  
 He eats little and drinks less.  
 It seems to me he is no merchant”.  
 She then said to Floris,  
 “Child, I see you are full of mourning,<sup>160</sup>  
 The same way that Blancheflour,  
 That fair maid, sat here the other day.  
 That girl was delivered here  
 And was sold over the sea.  
 Here they bought that sweet maiden,  
 And they will trade her again for a profit.  
 They will take her to Babylon,  
 And will sell her to a caesar or a king.  
 How alike you are to her in every way,  
 In your appearance and mood, except  
 That you are a man and she is a maid”!  
 This is what the wife spoke to Floris.  
 When Floris heard his lover’s name,  
 He was so glad to hear that sound  
 That his heart was all lit up.  
 He had the cup of gold filled straightaway.  
 “Madam”, he said, “this toast is yours,  
 Both the gold and the wine—  
 Both the gold and the wine as well,  
 For you spoke of my beloved!  
 For her I thought, for her I sighed.  
 And now I know where I might find her.  
 No bad weather will hinder me  
 From seeking her in Babylon!”  
 Floris rested there all night.  
 In the morning, when it was daylight,  
 He set out on the salty sea.  
 He had favorable wind and weather.  
 He paid the sailors liberally,  
 Who gladly brought him across

160 *Child* may formally denote a knight-in-training, but Floris is an eastern prince and is nowhere mentioned as becoming a knight. The poet is likely sentimentally emphasizing his youth.



To þe londe þar he wold lende  
 For þai founden him so hende.  
 Sone so Florice com to londe  
 Wel yerne he þanked Godes sonde  
 To þe lond þer his lemman is;  
 Him þouzte he was in Paradis.  
 Wel sone men Florice tidinges told  
 460 Þe amerail wolde feste hold  
 And kinges an dukes to him come scholde  
 Al þat of him holde wolde  
 For to honure his hezhe feste  
 And also for to heren his heste.  
 Þo Florice herde þis tiding  
 Þan gan him glade in alle þing  
 And in his herte þouzte he  
 Þat he wolde at þat feste be  
 For wel he hopede in þe halle  
 470 His leman sen among hem alle.  
 So longe Florice haþ undernome  
 To a fair cite he is icome.  
 Wel faire men haþ his in inome  
 Ase men scholde to a kinges sone  
 At a palais was non him iliche.  
 Þe louerd of þe hous was wel riche  
 And god inow him com to honde  
 Boþe bi water and be londe.  
 Florice ne sparede for no fe  
 480 Inow þat þere ne scholde be  
 Of fissc of flessch of tendre bred  
 Boþe of whit win and of red.  
 Þe louerd hadde ben wel wide;  
 Þe child he sette bi his side  
 In þe alþerferste sete.  
 Gladliche þai dronke and ete.  
 Ac Florice et an drank riht nowt  
 On Blauncheflour was al his þouzt.  
 Þan bispak þe bourgeis  
 490 Þat hende was fre and curteys  
 “Child me þinkkez swithe wel  
 Þi þout is mochel on þi catel”.  
 “Nai on mi catel is hit nowt  
 On oþer þink is al my þouzt.  
 Mi þouzt is on alle wise  
 Mochel on mi marchaundise

To the land where he wished to go,  
 For they found him so gracious.  
 As soon as Floris came ashore,  
 He fervently thanked God for bringing him  
 To the land where his beloved was;  
 It seemed to him he was in Paradise.  
 Very soon men told Floris the news that  
 The emir planned to hold a feast, and all  
 The kings and dukes were to come to him,  
 All that held land from him,  
 To honor his high feast  
 And also to hear his commands.  
 When Floris heard this report,  
 He was cheered in every way,  
 And in his heart he resolved  
 That he would be at that feast,  
 For he was confident he would see  
 His lover among them all in the hall.  
 Floris undertook his journey  
 Until he came to a fair city.  
 Men lodged him comfortably,  
 As one should for a king's son,  
 In a palatial house—there were none like it.  
 The master of the inn was prosperous,  
 And gold in plenty came into his hand,  
 Both by water and by land.  
 Floris did not spare any expense,  
 Lest there should not be enough  
 Of fish, of meat, of soft bread,  
 Or of wine, both white and red.  
 The lord was wise in the world's ways;  
 He set the youth by his side,  
 In the best seat of all.  
 They ate and drank happily.  
 But Floris ate and drank almost nothing;  
 All of his thoughts were on Blancheflour.  
 Then the master, a gracious man,  
 Noble and courteous, spoke,  
 “Young man, it seems clear to me  
 Your mind is very much on your goods”.  
 “No, not at all on my property.  
 My thoughts are all on something else.  
 My mind in every way  
 Is on recovering my merchandise.<sup>161</sup>

161 Egerton 2862 MS has *For to fynde my marchaundise* (464).

And zit þat is mi meste wo  
 3if ich hit finde and schal forgo".  
 Panne spak þe louerd of þat inne  
 500 "Pous sat þis oþer dai herinne  
 Pat faire maide Blauncheflour.  
 Boþe in halle and ek in bour  
 Evere 3he made mourning chere  
 And biment Florice here leve fere.  
 Joie ne blisse ne hadde 3he none  
 Ac on Florice was al here mone".  
 Florice het nime a coppe of silver whi3t  
 And a mantel of scarlet  
 Ipaned al wi3 meniuer  
 510 And 3af his hostesse þer.  
 "Have þis", he saide, "to þine honour  
 And þou hit mi3te þonke Blauncheflour!  
 Stolen 3he was out mine countreie  
 Here ich here seche bi þe waie.  
 He mi3te make min herte glad  
 Þat coupe me telle whider 3he was lad".  
 "Child to Babiloyne 3he his ibrou3t  
 And ameral hire had ibou3t.  
 He 3af for hire ase 3he stod upri3t  
 520 Seven sithes of gold here wi3t!  
 For hire faired and for hire schere  
 Þe ameral hire bou3te so dere  
 For he þenke3 wi3outen wene  
 Þat faire mai to haven to quene.  
 Amang oþer maidenes in his tour  
 He haþ hire ido wi3 mochel honour".  
 Nou Florice rest him þere al ni3t.  
 On morewe whan hit was dai-li3t  
 He aros up in þe moreweninge  
 530 And 3af his hoste an hondred schillinge  
 To his hoste and to hes hostesse  
 And nam his leve and gan hem kesse.  
 And 3erne he haþ his ostesse bisou3t  
 Pat 3he him helpe 3if 3he mou3t  
 Hou he mi3te wi3 sum ginne  
 Þe faire maiden to him awinne.

And it will be my greatest sorrow  
 If I find it and must lose it".  
 Then the master of that inn mused,  
 "It's the same way that Blancheflour,  
 That fair maid, sat here the other day  
 Both in the hall and in her room.  
 She always had a look of mourning and  
 Grieved for 'Floris,' her dear companion.<sup>162</sup>  
 She had no joy or ease,  
 But all her pining was for Floris".  
 Floris ordered a cup of white silver brought,  
 And a cloak of scarlet,  
 All lined with fur,  
 And gave it to his host there.  
 "Have this", he said, "for your honor,  
 And you may thank Blancheflour for it!  
 She was stolen from my country,  
 And I seek her here by these roads.  
 The man would make my heart glad  
 Who could tell me where she was taken".  
 "Child, she has been brought to Babylon,  
 And the emir has bought her.  
 He paid for her, as she stood upright,  
 Seven times her weight in gold!  
 For her beauty and her bearing  
 The emir has paid so dearly for her,  
 For he thinks, beyond a doubt,  
 To have that fair maid as queen.  
 He has placed her with great honor  
 Among the other maidens in his tower".  
 Then Floris rested there all night.  
 In the morning when it was daylight,  
 He rose up early  
 And gave his host a hundred shillings,<sup>163</sup>  
 To him and to his hostess,  
 And took his leave and kissed them.  
 And he earnestly asked his hostess  
 If she would help him, if she could,<sup>164</sup>  
 How he might with some ruse  
 Win the fair maiden for himself.

162 The innkeeper may not know Floris's name until he reveals himself, as he refers to Blancheflor's lover in third person.

163 *An hondred schillinge*: about £2590 or \$US4000 in modern money (UK National Archives), rather an expensive hotel bill but in keeping with Floris' aristocratic refinement. The sentiment also emphasizes by extension Blancheflor's value to Floris. See also line 744.

164 Auchinleck seems to use feminine pronouns here, but the following dialogue refers to a sworn brother. Possibly the master of the house answers for the lady.

<p>.....</p> <p>C Pann sede þe burgeis      Þat was hende and curtais      At Babilloine atte frume      540 To one brigge þu schalt cume.      .....</p> <p>E A burgeis þou findest ate frome.      His paleis is ate brigges ende.      Curteis man he his and hende.      We beþ wed-breþren and trewþe ipliȝt      He þe can wissen and reden ariȝt.      Þou schalt beren him a ring      Fram miselve to tokning      Þat he þe helpe in eche helve      So hit were bifalle miselve”.      550 Florice tok þe ring and nam his leve      For þere no leng wolde he bileve.      Bi þat hit was undren heghȝ      Þe brigge he was swiþe negȝ.      When he was to þe brigge icome      Þe burges he fond ate frome      Stondend on a marbel ston.      Fair man and hende he was on.      Þe burgeis was ihote Darye;      Florice him grette swiþe faire      560 And haþ him þe ring irawt      And wel faire him bitawt.      Þourgh tokning of þat ilke ring      Florice hadde þer god gestning      Of fichss of flessch of tendre bred      Boþe of whit win and of red.      Ac evere Florice siȝte ful cold      And Darys gan him bihold.      “Leve child what mai þe be      Þous carfoul ase I þe se?      570 I wene þou nart nowt al fer      Þat þou makest þous doelful cher      Oþer þe likeȝ nowt þin in?”      Nou Florice answered him      “Ȝis sire bi Godes hore      So god I ne hadde ȝore!      God late me bide þilke dai</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>Then the master spoke,      Who was so gracious and courteous,      Right at the limits of Babylon,      You will come to a bridge,      .....</p> <p>And you will see a townsman right away.<sup>165</sup>      His mansion is at the bridge’s end.      He is a gracious and gentle man.      We are sworn brothers pledged by oath,      And he can advise and guide you rightly.      You will give him a ring,      From myself as a token,      And he will help you in every way      As if it had happened to me”.      Floris took the ring and made his goodbye,      For he would not stay any longer.      By the time it was high noon      He was very near the bridge.      When he came to the bridge,      The first thing he saw was the townsman,      Standing on a marble stone.      He was a fair and gracious man.      The burgess was named Dary;      Floris greeted him courteously      And handed him the ring      And entrusted it to him in good faith.      Through the token of that ring      Floris had a good welcome there      Of fish, of meat, of soft bread,      And wine, both white and red.      But Floris continually sighed distractedly,      And Dary looked on him.      “Dear boy, what is the matter,      To be as sorrowful as I see you?      I guess you are not feeling well      So that you have such a doleful look,      Or do you not like your lodgings?”      Then Floris answered him,      “Not so, sir, by God’s mercy,<sup>166</sup>      I never had so good a one before!      May God let me see the day</p>
--	--

165 *Burgeis*: Technically a burgess was a citizen with full rights, but the nuance is that of a successful middle-class businessman or tradesman in a town (thus the modern *bourgeois*).

166 *Ȝis, sire*: The tendency of PDE with negative questions, so frustrating for many learners of English, is to say ‘no’, i.e. I disagree with what you said, rather than ‘yes’, i.e. I do like the lodgings. At least here, ME does the latter.

Pat ich þe zelde mai.  
 Ac I þenke in alle wise  
 Upon min owen marchaundise  
 580 Wherefore ich am hider come  
 Lest I ne finde hit nowt ate frome.  
 And zit is þat mi meste wo  
 3if ich hit finde and sschal forgo”.  
 “Child woldest þou tel me þi gref  
 To helpe þe me were ful lef”.  
 Nou everich word he haþ him told  
 Hou þe maide was fram him sold  
 And hou he was of Speyne a kinges sone  
 And for hir love þider icome  
 590 For to fonde wiȝ som ginne  
 Pat faire maide to biwinne.  
 Daris now þat child bihalt  
 And for a fol he him halt.  
 “Child”, he seiȝ, “I se hou goȝ.  
 Iwis þou ȝernest þin owen deȝ!  
 Þ’ameral haþ to his justening  
 Oþer half hondred of riche king.  
 Pat alþerrichest kyng  
 Ne dorste biginne swich a þing.  
 600 For miȝte þe ameral hit underȝete  
 Sone þou were of live quite.  
 Abouten Babiloine wiȝouten wene  
 Dureþ sexti longe milen and tene!  
 And ate walle þar beþ ate  
 Seven siþe twenti ȝate!  
 Twenti tours þer beȝ inne  
 Pat everich dai cheping is inne.  
 Nis no dai þourg þe ȝer  
 Pat scheþing nis þerinne plener.  
 610 An hondred toures also þerto  
 Beȝ in þe borewe and somdel mo.  
 Pat alderest feblest tour  
 Wolde kepe an emperour  
 To comen al þer wiȝinne  
 Noiþer wiȝ strengȝe ne wiȝ ginne!  
 And þei alle þe men þat beþ ibore  
 Adden hit up here deth iswhore  
 Þai scholde winne þe mai so sone  
 As fram þe hevene heȝ þe sonne and mone!  
 620 And in þe bourh amide þerȝt

That I may repay you.  
 But I am thinking in every way  
 About my own property,  
 Which is why I have come here,  
 Lest I not find it at all.  
 And yet it will be my greatest sorrow  
 If I find it and must lose it”.  
 “Child, if you would tell me your heart,  
 I would be very pleased to help you”.  
 Then he told him every word,  
 How the maid was sold from him  
 And how he was a king’s son from Spain,  
 Who had come here for love of her,  
 In order to devise some stratagem  
 To win that fair maid.  
 Dary looked on the boy then  
 And took him for a fool.  
 “Boy”, he said, “I know how it will go.  
 For sure, you seek your own death!  
 The emir’s invited to his tournament  
 Over fifty rich kings.<sup>167</sup>  
 The most powerful king among them  
 Would not dare attempt such a thing.  
 For if the emir discovered it,  
 You would soon lose your life.  
 Around Babylon, without a doubt,  
 It’s sixty long miles and ten more!  
 And on the walls there are gates—  
 Seven times twenty!  
 There are twenty towers inside  
 Where there is trading every day.  
 There isn’t a day throughout the year  
 That the markets aren’t going strong.  
 There’s a hundred towers to go with them  
 In the district, and several more.  
 The weakest tower of them  
 Would keep an emperor  
 From coming inside there,  
 Whatever strength or ingenuity they had!  
 Even if all the men who’ve been born  
 Swore to fight to their death,  
 They would just as soon win the maid  
 As win the sun and moon from the heavens!  
 And in the castle, right in the middle,

167 *Other half hondred*: Another confusing expression which Kooper interprets as “half of a second hundred”, 150 in total.

Per stant a riche tour I þe aplytȝ;  
 A zousang taisen he his heiȝe  
 Wo so it bihalt wit fer and negȝene.  
 And an hondres taises he is wid  
 And imaked wiȝ mochel prid  
 Of lim and of marbel ston.  
 In Cristiente nis swich non.  
 And þe mortar is maked so wel  
 Ne mai no mail hit breke wiȝ no stel.  
 630 And þe pomel above þe led  
 Is iwrouȝ wiȝ so moche red  
 Þat men ne þorfen aniȝt berne  
 Neiþer torche ne lanterne.  
 Swich a pomel was never bigonne!  
 Hit schineȝ aniȝt so adai doþ þe sonne.  
 Nou beþ þer inne þat riche toure  
 Four and twenty maidenes boure.  
 So wel were þat ilke man  
 Þat miȝte wonen in þat an!  
 640 Now þourȝ him nevere ful iwis  
 Willen after more blisse.  
 Nou beþ þe seriaunts in þe stage  
 To seruen þe maidenes of parage.  
 Ne mai no seriaunt be þerinne  
 Þat in his brech bereþ þet ginne  
 Neiþer bi dai ne bi niȝt  
 But he be ase capoun diȝt!  
 And at þe gate is a gateward.  
 He nis no fol ne no coward.  
 650 Ȝif þer comeȝ ani man  
 Wiȝinne þat ilche barbican  
 But hit be bi his leue  
 He wille him boþe bete and reve.  
 Þe porter is proud wiȝalle.  
 Everich dai he goþ in palle.  
 And þe ameraill is so wonder a gome  
 Þat everich ȝer hit is his wone  
 To chesen him a newe wif.  
 And whan he a newe wif underfo  
 660 He knaweȝ hou hit schal be do.  
 Panne scholle men fechche doun of þe stage  
 Alle þe maidenes of parage

There is a splendid tower, I assure you;  
 Its height is a thousand fathoms tall  
 To whoever beholds it, near or far.  
 And it is a hundred fathoms wide,  
 And built with extravagant pride,  
 Of lime and marble stone.  
 There is nothing like it in Christendom.  
 And the mortar is so well-built  
 That no man could break it with any steel.  
 And the globe on top of the roof  
 Was created with so much skill  
 That men do not need to burn at night  
 Either a torch or a lantern.  
 Such a globe was never made before!  
 It shines at night like the sun by day.  
 Inside that rich tower there is  
 A chamber for twenty-four maidens.  
 The man would be doing well  
 Who could live in that place!  
 He would never need, for sure,  
 To ask for more bliss.  
 There are servants on the upper floor  
 To serve the maidens of high birth.  
 No servant may go in there  
 Who has his manhood in his pants,<sup>168</sup>  
 Neither by day or by night,  
 Unless he is fixed like a rooster!  
 And at the entrance is a gatekeeper.  
 He is no fool or coward.  
 If any man enters  
 Within that same fortress  
 Unless by his permission,  
 He will both beat and emasculate him.  
 The porter is proud, to add.  
 Every day he walks in fine clothes.  
 And the emir is so incredible a man  
 That every year it is his custom  
 To choose himself a new wife.<sup>169</sup>  
 And when he takes a new wife,  
 He knows how it will be done.  
 Then men will fetch down from upstairs  
 All the maidens of high birth

168 *That in his brech bereth the ginne*: An amusing euphemism: 'Who has the engine in his pants'. A *capon* (647) is a castrated rooster. Eunuchs were indispensable for guarding harems in fiction.

169 In the French version the emir repudiates and executes his ex-wives annually, making Blanche-flor like Scheherezade in *One Thousand and One Nights*. But the English text does not state this clearly. See the note to 1223.

And brenge hem into on orchard  
 Þe fairest of all middelhard.  
 Þer is foulen song;  
 Men miȝte libben þer among!  
 Aboute þe orchard goþ a wal.  
 Þe werste ston is cristal!  
 Þer man mai sen on þe ston  
 670 Mochel of þis werldes wisdom.  
 And a welle þer springeȝ inne  
 Þat is wrowt wiȝ mochel ginne.  
 Þe welle is of mochel pris;  
 Þe strem com fram Paradis!  
 Þe gravel in þe grounde of precieuse stone  
 And of vertu iwisch echone  
 Of saphires and of sardoines  
 Of oneches and of calsidoines.  
 Nou is þe waie of so mochel eye  
 680 Ȝif þer comeȝ ani maiden þat is forleie  
 And hi bowe to þe grounde  
 For to waschen here honde  
 Þe water wille ȝelle als hit ware wod  
 And bicomme on hire so red so blod.  
 Wich maiden þe water fareȝ on so  
 Hi schal sone be fordo.  
 And þilke þat beþ maidenen clene  
 Þai mai hem wassche of þe rene.  
 Þe water wille erne stille and cler  
 690 Nelle hit hem make no daunger.  
 At þe welle-heued þer stant a tre  
 Þe fairest þat mai in erthe be.  
 Hit is icleped þe tre of love  
 For floures and blosmes beþ ever above.  
 .....  
 C So sone so þe olde beoþ idon  
 Þer springeþ niwe riȝt anon  
 .....  
 A And þilke þat clene maidenen be  
 Men schal hem bringe under þat tre  
 And wich-so falleȝ on þat ferste flour  
 700 Hi schal ben chosen quen wiȝ honour.  
 And ȝif þer ani maiden is  
 Þat þamerail halt of mest pris  
 Þe flour schal on here be went  
 Þourh art and þourh enchantement.

And bring them into the orchard,  
 The fairest one on all earth.  
 There are the songs of birds;  
 A man might live long there!  
 Around the orchard there is a wall.  
 The cheapest stone is crystal!  
 A man might read on the stone  
 Much of this world's wisdom.<sup>170</sup>  
 And a well springs in there  
 Which was crafted with great ingenuity.  
 The well is of great majesty;  
 The stream comes from Paradise!  
 The gravel in the ground is precious stones,  
 And each one has special virtues—  
 Sapphires and sardonyx stone,  
 Onyx and clear quartz.  
 The well is held in such awe that  
 If any maid nears it who is not a virgin,  
 And she bows to the ground  
 In order to wash her hands,  
 The water will cry out as if it were mad  
 And turn on her as red as blood.  
 Whichever maiden the water reacts so with  
 Will soon be put to death.  
 But those maidens who are pure  
 May wash themselves from the stream.  
 The water will run still and clear  
 And will give them no danger.  
 At the head of the well there is a tree,  
 The fairest that might be on earth.  
 They call it the Tree of Love,  
 As flowers and blossoms are always about.  
 .....  
 As soon as an old one falls down,  
 A new one springs up at once.  
 .....  
 And for those who are pure maidens,  
 Men will bring them under the tree,  
 And whoever the flower falls on  
 Will be chosen queen with honor.  
 And if there is any maiden  
 Whom the emir thinks the most worthy,  
 The flower will be steered toward her  
 Through artifice and enchantment.

170 The observer might see the mason's craftsmanship and attention, or as Kooper suggests, the lines are literal: sage texts are inscribed on the stones.

Pous he cheseþ þourȝ þe flour  
 .....  
 C Alle weneþ hit schulle beo Blanche flour  
 .....  
 A Þre sithes Florice swouned nouþe  
 Er he miȝte speke wiȝ mouþe.  
 Sone he awok and speke miȝt  
 710 Sore he wep and sore he siȝt.  
 “Darie”, he saide, “ich worht ded  
 But ich have of þe help and red”.  
 “Leve child ful wel I se  
 Þat þou wilt to deþe te.  
 Þe beste red þat I can  
 Oþer red I ne can  
 Wende tomorewe to þe tour  
 Ase þou were a god ginour  
 And nim in þin hond squir and scantiloun  
 720 Als þai þou were a masoun.  
 Bihold þe tour up and down.  
 Þe porter is coluard and feloun.  
 Wel sone he wil come to þe  
 And aske what mister man þou be  
 And ber upon þe felonie  
 And saie þou art comen þe tour asprie.  
 Pou schalt answeren him swetelich  
 And speke to him wel mildelich  
 .....  
 C And seie þert icome fram ferren londe  
 730 For to seche and for to fonde,  
 If mi lif so longe ilast,  
 To makie atur after þis cast,  
 In þine londe at frume  
 Whanne þu ert hom icume.  
 Whane he þe hireþ speke so hendeliche,  
 And ansuerie so sueteliche,  
 .....  
 A Wel sone he wil com þe ner  
 And bidde þe plaien at þe schecker.  
 To plaien he wil be wel fous  
 740 And to winnen of þin wel covetious.  
 When þou art to þe schecker brouȝt  
 Wiȝouten pans ne plai þou nowt.  
 Þou schalt have redi mitte

Thus he chooses through the petal,  
 .....  
 And all expect it will be Blancheflor”.  
 .....  
 Floris fell faint three times then  
 Before he could speak with his tongue.  
 As soon as he came to and could talk,  
 He wept sorely, and sighed bitterly.  
 “Dary”, he said, “I will be finished  
 Unless I have your help and advice”.  
 “Dear child, I can see full well  
 That you are walking to your death.  
 The best guidance I know,  
 For I know no other course!–  
 Is to go tomorrow to the tower  
 As though you were an expert engineer,  
 And carry in your hand a square and ruler,  
 As though you were a stonemason.  
 Examine the tower up and down.  
 The porter is a scoundrel and a criminal.  
 Very soon he will come up to you  
 And ask what kind of craftsman you are,  
 And accuse you of some offense  
 And claim you came to spy on the tower.  
 You will answer him pleasantly  
 And speak to him gently,  
 .....  
 And explain that you’ve come from a  
 Foreign land to seek and to learn,  
 If your life might last so long,  
 How to make a tower like it  
 In your own land at once  
 When you have come home.  
 When he hears you talk so grandly,  
 And answer so smoothly,  
 .....  
 Right away he will come near you  
 And invite you to play checkers.<sup>171</sup>  
 He will be very keen to play,  
 And greedily intent on beating you.  
 When you are brought to the board,  
 You can’t play without any money.  
 You will have ready at hand

171 The medieval English played backgammon and other board games but checkers was not commonly played until later centuries. As with the chess match in Stanzaic *Guy of Warwick*, such games would have had an exotic eastern atmosphere to them.

Britti mark under þi slitte.  
 And ʒif he winne ouʒt al þin  
 Al leue þou hit wiʒ him  
 And ʒif þou winne ouʒt of his  
 Pou lete þerof ful litel pris.  
 Wel ʒerne he wille þe bidde and praie  
 750 Þat þou come amorewe and plaie.  
 Pou schalt sigge þou wilt so  
 And nim wiʒ þe amorewe swich two.  
 And ever þou schalt in þin owen wolde  
 Þi gode cop wiʒ he atholde  
 Þat ilke self coppe of golde  
 Þat was for Blanche flour iʒolde.  
 Þe þridde dai bere wiʒ þe an hondred pond  
 And þi coppe al hol and sond.  
 ʒif him markes and pans fale  
 760 Of þi mone tel þou no tale.  
 Wel ʒerne he þe wille bidde and praie  
 Þat þou legge þi coupe to plaie.  
 Pou schalt answeren him ate first  
 No lenger plaie þou ne list.  
 Wel moche he wil for þi coupe bede  
 ʒif he miʒte þe better spede.  
 Pou schalt bleþelich ʒiven hit him  
 Þai hit be gold pur and fin  
 And sai, “Me þinkeʒ hit wel bisemeʒ te  
 770 Þai hit were worʒ swiche þre”.  
 Sai also þe ne faille non  
 Gold ne selver ne riche won.  
 And he wil þanne so mochel love þe  
 Þat þou hit schalt boþe ihere and see  
 Þat he wil falle to þi fot  
 And bicom e þi man ʒif he mot.  
 His manred þou schalt afonge  
 And þe trewþe of his honde.  
 ʒif þou miʒt þous his love winne  
 780 He mai þe help wiʒ som ginne”.  
 Nou also Florice haþ iwrowt  
 Also Darie him haþ itawt  
 Þat þourgh his gold and his garsome  
 Þe porter is his man bicom e.  
 “Nou”, quap Florice, “þou art mi man  
 And al mi trest is þe upan.  
 Nou þou miʒt wel eþe

Thirty marks in your pocket.  
 And if he wins anything from you,  
 Be sure to give it to him.  
 And if you win anything from him,  
 Do not make too much of it.  
 He will eagerly ask you and insist  
 That you come back the next day and play.  
 You will say that you will,  
 And take twice as much with you.  
 And you will always keep  
 At hand your fine cup,  
 That very same cup of gold  
 Which was given for Blanche flour.  
 On the third day take a hundred pounds<sup>172</sup>  
 With you, and your cup, safe and sound.  
 Give him marks and plenty of pennies,  
 And do not keep count of your money.  
 He will eagerly ask and insist  
 That you stake your cup in the game.  
 You will at first answer him  
 That you don't feel like playing any longer.  
 He will make a high offer for your cup,  
 If he might have more luck for doing so.  
 You will give it to him cheerfully,  
 Even if it is gold, pure and fine,  
 And say, “To me it suits you well,  
 Even if it were worth three times as much”.  
 Say also that you are not short of anything,  
 Gold or silver or fine goods.  
 And then he will love you so much,  
 And you will both hear and see it,  
 That he will fall to your feet  
 And become your man, if he may.  
 You will receive his homage,  
 And an oath of loyalty from his hand.  
 If you might win him over so,  
 He might help you with some stratagem”.  
 Then Floris arranged things  
 Just as Dary instructed him to,  
 So that through his gold and treasure  
 The porter became his man.  
 “Now”, said Floris, “you are my man,  
 And all my trust is in you.  
 Now you can easily

172 *An hondred pond*: Enormous stakes, US\$75,000 in modern money (UK National Archives), though Floris is ‘gambling’ for Blanche flour.



Arede me fram þe deþe”.  
 And everich word he haþ him told  
 790 Hou Blancheflour was fram him sold  
 And hou he was of Spaine a kynges sone  
 And for hire love þider icome  
 To fonde wiȝ som ginne  
 Þe maiden aȝen to him winne.  
 Þe porter þat herde and sore siȝte  
 “Ich am bitraied þourȝ riȝte.  
 Þourȝ þi catel ich am bitraid  
 And of mi lif ich am desmaid!  
 Nou ich wot child hou hit geþ.  
 800 For þe ich drede to þolie deþ!  
 And nabeles ich ne schal þe nevere faile mo  
 Per whiles I mai ride or go.  
 Þi foreward ich wil helden alle  
 Whatso wille bitide or falle.  
 Wende þou hom into þin in  
 Whiles I þink of som ginne.  
 Bitwene þis and þe þridde dai  
 Don ich wille þat I mai”.  
 Florice spak and wep among.  
 810 Pat ilche terme him þouȝte wel long.  
 Þe porter þouȝte what to rede.  
 He let floures gaderen in þe mede.  
 He wiste hit was þe maidenes wille  
 Two coupon he let of floures fille.  
 Pat was þe rede þat he þouȝt þo:  
 Florice in þat o coupe do.  
 Tweie gegges þe coupe bere  
 So hevi charged þat wroþ þai were.  
 Þai bad God ȝif him evel fin  
 820 Pat so mani floures dede þerin!  
 Þider þat þai weren ibede  
 Ne were þai nowt ariȝt birede  
 Acc þai turned in hire left hond  
 Blanchefloures bour an hond.  
 To Clarice bour þe coupe þai bere  
 Wiȝ þe floures þat þerinne were.  
 Þere þe coupe þai sette adoun  
 And ȝaf him here malisoun  
 Pat so fele floures hem brouȝte on honde.  
 830 Þai wenten forht and leten þe coppe stonde.  
 Clarice to þe coppe com and wolde  
 Þe floures handleden and biholde.  
 Florisse wende hit hadde ben his swet wiȝt;

Protect me from death”.  
 And he told him every word  
 How Blancheflour was sold from him,  
 And how he was a prince of Spain  
 Who had come here for her love,  
 To try with some ploy  
 To win the maiden back to him.  
 The porter listened and sighed sorely,  
 “I have been tricked in full.  
 Through your possessions I am ensnared,  
 And I am in despair for my life!  
 Now I know, boy, how things stand.  
 For you I dread to suffer death!  
 But nonetheless, I will never fail you,  
 As long as I can ride or walk.  
 I will hold your conditions in full,  
 Whatever happens or comes.  
 Go back home to your inn  
 While I think of some plan.  
 Between now and the third day  
 I will do what I can”.  
 Floris at times spoke and wept,  
 Thinking the time very long.  
 The porter decided what to do.  
 He had flowers gathered from the meadow.  
 Thinking it would be to the maiden’s liking,  
 He had two baskets of flowers filled.  
 And this was the ruse he thought of then:  
 Floris was put into one basket.  
 Two young women carried the basket,  
 Who were annoyed by the heavy weight.  
 They asked God to give a nasty end  
 To whoever put so many flowers in there!  
 When they were ordered to go up,  
 They were not directed correctly,  
 And so they turned to their left,  
 Bypassing Blancheflour’s room.  
 They carried the basket to Clarice’s bower  
 With the flowers that were inside.  
 There they set the basket down  
 And muttered their curses on him  
 Who put together so many flowers.  
 They went out and left the basket standing.  
 Clarice went to the basket, wanting  
 To handle and look at the flowers.  
 Floris thought it was his sweet lass;

In þe coupe he stod upriȝt  
 And þe maide al for drede  
 Bigan to schrichen an to grede.  
 Po he seghȝ hit nas nowth he  
 Into þe coupe he stirte aȝe  
 And held him bitraied al clene.  
 840 Of his deȝ he ne ȝaf nowt a bene.  
 Per come to Clarice maidenes lepe  
 Bi ten be twenti in one hepe  
 And askede what here were  
 Pat hi makede so loude bere.  
 Clarice hire understod anonriȝt  
 Pat hit was Blauncheflour þat swete wiȝt  
 For here boures neȝ were  
 And selden þat þai neren ifere  
 And aiþer of oþer counseil þai wiste  
 850 And michel aiþer to oþer triste.  
 Hii ȝaf hire maidenes answe re anon  
 Pat into boure þai sscholden gon.  
 “To þis coupe ich cam and wolde  
 Þe floures handli and biholde.  
 Ac er ich hit ever wiste  
 A boterfleȝe toȝain me fluste.  
 Ich was sor adrad of þan  
 Pat sschrichen and greden I bigan”.  
 Þe maidenes hadde þerof gle  
 860 And turnede aȝen and let Clarisse be.  
 So sone so þe madenes weren agon  
 To Blauncheflours bour Clarice wente anon  
 And saide leyende to Blauncheflour:  
 “Wiltou sen a ful fair flour  
 Swiche a flour þat þe schal like  
 Have þou sen hit a lite?”  
 “Avoy dameisele”, quap Blauncheflour  
 “To scorne me is litel honour”.  
 .....  
 C “Ho þat lueþ par amur  
 870 And haþ þerof joye mai lue flures”.  
 .....  
 A “Ich ihere Clarice wiȝoute gabbe  
 Þe ameral wil me to wive habbe.  
 Ac þilke dai schal never be

He stood upright in the basket,  
 And the maid, out of fright,  
 Began to shriek and cry out.  
 When he saw that it was not his beloved,  
 He jumped back into the basket,  
 Thinking himself betrayed in full.  
 He didn't count his life worth a bean.<sup>173</sup>  
 Maidens came rushing to Clarice,  
 By ten and twenty, in one crowd,  
 And asked her what was the matter  
 That made her carry on so.  
 Clarice realized right away that it was  
 Meant for Blauncheflour, that sweet girl,  
 For their rooms were near each other  
 And they were seldom not together,  
 So that they knew each other's secrets  
 And had deep trust in each other.  
 After a moment she told the maidens  
 That they should return to their rooms.  
 “I came to this basket, wanting  
 To handle the flowers and look at them.  
 But before I knew what was happening  
 A butterfly darted out toward me.  
 I was so terribly startled by it  
 That I began to shriek and cry”.  
 The maidens had some laughter over it  
 And went back out, and left Clarice alone.  
 As soon as the maidens were gone,  
 Clarice went at once to Blauncheflour's room  
 And said laughing to Blauncheflour,  
 “Would you like to see a very nice flower?  
 It's a flower that you will like,  
 After you have seen it a little while”.  
 “Stop it, girl”, said Blauncheflour.  
 “There's little honor in teasing me”.  
 .....  
 “She who marries for love and has joy for it  
 Can take pleasure in flowers”.  
 .....  
 I'm hearing, Clarice, it's no idle gab,  
 That the emir will take me as his wife.  
 But that day will never come

173 *Of his deth he ne gaf nowt a bene*: Egerton 2862 has *lyf*. ME often uses straw, berry, or oyster in such expressions to mean something almost worthless. PDE might use ‘plugged nickel’ or an obscenity. I take the translation from Taylor, who lists several related phrases. A.B. Taylor, *Floris and Blauncheflor: A Middle English Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927), note to line 878.

Pat men schal atwite me  
 Pat ischal ben of love untrewē  
 Ne chaungi love for non newe  
 For no love ne for non eie  
 So doþ Floris in his contreie.  
 Nou I schal swete Florice misse  
 880 Schal non oþer of me have blisse”.  
 Clarice stant and bihalt þat reuþe  
 And þe treunesse of þis treuþe.  
 Leiþande sche saide to Blanche flour  
 “Com nou se þat ilche flour!”  
 To þe coupe þai zeden þo.  
 Wel blisful was Florisse þo  
 For he had iherd al þis.  
 Out of þe coupe he stirte iwis.  
 Blanche flour chaungede hewe;  
 890 Wel sone aiþer oþer knewe.  
 Wiþouten speche togidere þai lepe  
 Þat clepte and keste and eke wepe.  
 Hire cussing laste a mile  
 And þat hem þouþte litel while.  
 Clarice bihalt al þis  
 Here contenance and here bliss  
 And leiþende saide to Blanche flour  
 “Felawe knouestou ouþt þis flour?  
 Litel er noldest þou hit se  
 900 And nou þou ne miþt hit lete fro þe.  
 He moste conne wel mochel of art  
 Þat þou woldest zif þerof ani part!”  
 Boþe þise swete þinges for blis  
 Falleþ down here fet to kis  
 And crieþ hire merci al weping  
 Þat þhe hem biwraie nowt to þe king  
 To þe king þat þhe hem nowt biwreie  
 Wherþourgh þai were siker to deye.  
 Þo spak Clarice to Blanche flour  
 910 Wordes ful of fin amour  
 “Ne doute you nammore wiþalle  
 Þan to miself hit hadde bifalle.  
 White þhe wel witerli  
 Þat hele ich wille youre boþer druri”.  
 To on bedde þhe haþ hem ibrowt  
 Pat was of silk and sendal wrougt.  
 Þai sette hem þere wel softe adoun

When men will condemn me  
 For being untrue in love, nor will I  
 Change my heart for someone new,  
 For anyone’s love, or for anyone else,  
 Just as Floris would not in his country.  
 Now that I will lose sweet Floris,  
 No one else will have joy from me”.  
 Clarice stood and beheld that sorrow,  
 And the faithfulness of her pledge.  
 Then, laughing, she said to Blanche flour,  
 “Come now and see that same flower!”  
 They went to the basket.  
 Floris was overjoyed,  
 For he had overheard all this.  
 He sprang out of the basket, in truth.  
 Blanche flour changed her color;  
 At once they recognized each other.  
 Without words they leaped together  
 And embraced and kissed and wept as well.  
 Their kissing lasted the time to walk a mile,  
 Though it seemed to them too short  
 A while. Clarice saw all this,  
 Their emotions and their joy,  
 And said to Blanche flour laughing,  
 “Sister, do you know this flower?  
 A little earlier you would not see it,  
 And now you can’t let it go from you.  
 He must know a lot of tricks  
 For you to give him any part of yourself!”  
 Both of these sweet things, in their joy,  
 Fell down to kiss her feet  
 And to beg for her mercy, in tears,  
 That she would say nothing to the king,  
 That she would not betray them to him,  
 For which they would be sure to die.  
 Clarice then spoke to Blanche flour  
 Words full of kind love,  
 “Have no more fear about all this  
 Than if it had happened to me.  
 You can be certain and be sure  
 That I will conceal your lovesickness”.<sup>174</sup>  
 She brought them to a bed  
 Which was crafted of fine silk and linen.  
 They laid themselves down quietly,

174 *Hele ich wille youre boþer druri*: Kooper suggests that heal here means, “I will cure your lovesickness”, but also gives a second meaning of heal as ME *helen*, hide or conceal, which is what Clarice does. The poet may mean another pun here.

And Clarice drowȝ þe courtyrn roun.  
 Þo bigan þai to clippe and kisse  
 920 And made joie and mochele blisse.  
 Florice ferste speke bigan  
 And saide, “Louerd þat madest man  
 Þe I þanke Godes sone.  
 Nou al mi care ich have overcome.  
 And nou ich have mi lef ifounde  
 Of al mi kare ich am unbounde”.  
 Nou haþ aiþer oþer itold  
 Of mani a car foul cold  
 And of mani pine stronge  
 930 Þat þai han ben atwo so longe.  
 Clarice hem seruede al to wille  
 Boþe dernelich and stille  
 But so ne miȝte ȝhe hem longe iwite  
 Þat hit ne sscholde ben underȝete.  
 Nou hadde þe ameraill swiche a wone  
 Þat everi dai þer scholde come  
 Þre maidenes ut of hire boure  
 To serven him up in þe toure  
 Wiȝ water and cloþ and bacyn  
 940 For to wasschen his hondes in.  
 Þe þridde scholde bringge combe and mirour  
 To serven him wiȝ gret honour.  
 And þai þai seruede him never so faire  
 Amorewen scholde anoþer paire.  
 And mest was woned into þe tour  
 Þerto Clarice and Blancheflour.  
 So long him seruede þe maidenes route  
 Þat hire service was comen aboute.  
 On þe morewen þat þider com Florice  
 950 Hit fel to Blancheflour and to Clarice.  
 Clarice so wel hire mote bitide  
 Aros up in þe morewentide  
 And clepede after Blancheflour  
 To wende wiȝ here into þe tour.  
 Blancheflour saide, “Icham comende”.  
 Ac here answeere was al slepende.  
 Clarice in þe wai is nome  
 And wende þat Blancheflour had come.  
 Sone so Clarice com in þe tour  
 960 Þe ameral asked after Blancheflour.  
 “Sire”, ȝhe saide anonriȝt

And Clarice drew the curtain round.  
 Then they began to embrace and kiss,  
 And had joy and great pleasure.  
 Floris first began to speak  
 And said, “Lord, who made man,  
 I thank you, God’s son.  
 For now I have overcome all my troubles.  
 And now that I have found my beloved,  
 I am delivered from all my pains”.  
 Then each told the other  
 About many hardships, foul and cold,  
 And about many strong torments  
 Because they had been apart so long.  
 Clarice served them to their liking,  
 Both discreetly and quietly,  
 But she could not hide them for long  
 Without it being discovered.  
 For the emir had such a custom  
 That every day two maidens  
 Had to come out of their rooms<sup>175</sup>  
 To serve him up in the tower,  
 With water and a cloth and basin  
 For him to wash his hands in.  
 The other was to bring a comb and mirror  
 To serve him with great honor.  
 And though he was never served so fairly,  
 The next morning another pair had to go.  
 And the two who went to the tower most  
 Often were Clarice and Blancheflour.  
 The rest of the maidens had served him  
 So that their turn to serve was coming up.  
 In the morning after Floris came  
 It fell to Blancheflour and Clarice.  
 Clarice, the best of fortune to her,  
 Rose up in the morning  
 And called for Blancheflour  
 To go with her into the tower.  
 Blancheflour said, “I’m coming!”  
 But her answer was half-asleep.  
 Clarice made her way,  
 Thinking that Blancheflour was following.  
 As soon as Clarice arrived in the tower  
 The emir asked about Blancheflour.  
 “Sire”, she answered at once,

175 *Pre*: But a third maiden is never mentioned. Egerton and Cambridge have *twoo/tuo*, which matches better with *paire* (944).

“Ȝhe had iwaked al þis niȝt  
 And ikneled and iloke  
 And irad upon hire boke  
 And bad to God here oreisoun  
 Þat He þe ȝive His benisoun  
 And þe helde longe alive.  
 Nou sche slepeþ also swiþe  
 Blauncheflour þat maiden swete  
 970 Þat hii ne mai nowt comen ȝhete”.  
 “Certe”, said þe kyng  
 “Nou is hi a swete þing.  
 Wel auȝte ich here ȝerne to wive  
 Whenne ȝhe bit so for mi live”.  
 Anoper dai Clarice arist  
 And haþ Blauncheflour atwist  
 Whi hi made so longe demoere.  
 “Aris up and go we ifere”.  
 Blauncheflour saide, “I come anan”.  
 980 And Florice he klippe bigan  
 And felle aslepe on þise wise.  
 And after hem gan sore agrise.  
 Clarice to þe piler cam.  
 Þe bacyn of gold ȝhe nam  
 And had icleped after Blauncheflour  
 To wende wiȝ here into þe tour.  
 Ȝhe ne answerede nei ne yo  
 Þo wende Clarice ȝhe ware ago.  
 Sone so Clarice com into þe tour  
 990 Þe ameral asked after Blauncheflour  
 Whi and wharfore ȝhe ne come  
 As hi was woned to done.  
 “Ȝhe was arisen ar ich were.  
 Ich wende here haven ifonden here.  
 “What ne is ȝhe nowt icomen ȝit?”  
 “Nou ȝhe me douteȝ al to lit!”  
 Forht he clepeþ his chaumberleyn  
 And bit him wende wiȝ alle main  
 And wite wi þat ȝhe ne come  
 1000 As hi was wone bifore to done.  
 Þe chaumberleyn had undernome  
 Into hir bour he is icome.  
 And stant bifore hire bed  
 And find þar twai neb to neb

“She has been awake all the night,  
 And knelt, and watched,  
 And read her book,  
 And made her prayers to God  
 That He would give His blessing to you  
 And keep you alive long.  
 Now she is sleeping so soundly,  
 That sweet maid, Blauncheflour,  
 That she is not able to come yet”.  
 “For certain”, said the king,  
 “She is a sweet thing!  
 I should very much want to marry her,  
 When she prays for my life so”.  
 Another day came and Clarice arose  
 And asked Blauncheflour scoldingly  
 Why she made such a long delay.  
 “Get up, and we will go together”.  
 Blauncheflour said, “I’m coming soon”.  
 But Floris pulled her close  
 And they fell asleep in this way.  
 Afterwards it would bring them terror.  
 Clarice came to the doorway.  
 She took the basin of gold  
 And called for Blauncheflour  
 To go with her into the tower.  
 She did not answer yes or no, and so  
 Clarice thought she had already gone.  
 As soon as Clarice arrived in the tower,  
 The emir asked about Blauncheflour,  
 And why she did not come  
 As she used to do.  
 “What, she did not come yet?  
 She was up before I was.  
 I thought that I would find her here”.  
 “Now she fears me all too little!”<sup>176</sup>  
 He called his chamberlain forth,  
 And ordered him to go with all his might  
 And find out why she did not come  
 As she was used to doing before.  
 The chamberlain made his way  
 And arrived in her bedroom.  
 He stood before her bed  
 To find two there, face to face,

176 It makes more sense that the emir is saying this. No ME romance MS has quotation punctuation, but in Egerton Clarice does not speak and the line is clearly the emir’s.

Neb to neb an mouþ to mouþ.  
 Wel sone was þat sorewe coup!  
 Into þe tour up he steiȝ  
 And saide his louerd þat he seiȝ.  
 Þe ameral het his swerd him bring;  
 1010 I-witen he wolde of þat þinge!  
 Forht he nimȝ wiȝ alle mayn  
 Himself and his chaumberlayn  
 Til þaie come þar þai two laie.  
 Ȝit was þe slep fast in hire eye.  
 Þe ameral het hire cloþes keste  
 A litel bineþen here breste.  
 Þan seȝ he wel sone anon  
 Þat on was a man þat oþer a womman.  
 He quok for anguisse þer he stod.  
 1020 Hem to quelle was his mod.  
 He him biþouȝte ar he wolde hem quelle  
 What þai were þai sscholde him telle  
 And siþen he þouȝte hem of dawe don.  
 Þe children awoken under þon.  
 Þai segh þe swerd over hem idrawe  
 Adrad þai ben to ben islawe.  
 Þo bispak þe ameral bold  
 Wordes þat scholde sone bi told  
 "Sai me now þou bel ami  
 1030 Who made þe so hardi  
 For to come into mi tour  
 To ligge þer bi Blanche flour?  
 To wroþerhale ware ye bore  
 Ȝe schollen þolie deþ þerfore".  
 Þanne saide Florice to Blanche flour  
 "Of oure lif nis non socour!"  
 And mercy þai cride on him so swithe  
 Þat he ȝaf hem respit of here live  
 Til he hadde after his barenage sent  
 1040 To awreken him þourȝȝ jugement.  
 Up he bad hem sitte boþe  
 And don on oþer cloþes  
 And siþþe he let hem binde fast  
 And into prisoun hem he cast  
 Til he had after his barenage sent  
 To wreken him þourȝȝ jugement.  
 What helpeȝ hit longe tale to sschewe?  
 Ich wille ȝou telle at wordes fewe.  
 Nou al his baronage had undernome  
 1050 And to þe amerail ȝhe beþ icome.

Body to body, and mouth to mouth.  
 Very soon the disaster was known!  
 He rushed into the tower  
 And told his lord all that he had seen.  
 The emir ordered him to bring his sword;  
 He would find out about this affair!  
 He came forth with all his might,  
 Himself and his chamberlain,  
 Until they arrived where the two lay,  
 With the sleep still in their eyes.  
 The emir had the covers thrown down  
 A little beneath their chests.  
 Then he saw very quickly that one  
 Was a man and the other a woman.  
 He quaked with anguish where he stood.  
 It was his urge to execute them. He  
 Thought to himself, before he killed them,  
 They should tell him who they were,  
 And later he would put them to death.  
 The couple awoke in the meantime.  
 They saw the sword drawn over them,  
 And were in terror of being slain.  
 Then the bold emir thundered  
 Words that demanded a prompt answer,  
 "Tell me now, my pretty lover,  
 Who made you so brave  
 To come into my tower  
 And lie there by Blanche flour?  
 You were born for ill fortune,  
 And you will suffer death for it".  
 Then Floris said to Blanche flour,  
 "There is no hope for our lives!"  
 They cried to him for mercy so intently  
 That he gave their lives reprieve  
 Until he could send for his barons  
 To avenge himself through judgment.  
 He ordered them both to sit up  
 And put on their clothes,  
 And then he had them bound fast  
 And cast them into prison  
 Until he could send for his baronage  
 To avenge himself through a verdict.  
 What good is it to tell a long tale?  
 I will tell you in a few words.  
 Now all his barons had arrived,  
 And came to the emir.

His halle þat was heiȝe ibult  
 Of kynges and dukes was ifult.  
 He stod up among hem alle  
 Bi semblaunt swiþe wroþt wiȝalle.  
 He saide, "Lordingges of mochel honour  
 Ȝe han herd speken of Blauncheflour  
 Hou ich hire bouȝt dere apliȝt  
 For seven sithes hire wiȝt of gold.  
 For hire faired and hire chere  
 1060 Iich hire bouȝte allinge so dere  
 For ich þouȝte wiȝouten wene  
 Hire have ihad to mi quene.  
 Bifore hire bed miself I com  
 And fond bi hire an naked grom.  
 Þo þai were me so wroþe  
 I þouȝte to han iqueld hem boþe!  
 Iich was so wroȝ and so wod  
 And ȝit ich wiȝdrouȝ mi mod.  
 Fort ich have after ȝou isent  
 1070 To awreke me þourȝ jugement.  
 Nou ye witen hou hit is agon  
 Awreke me swiþe of mi fon!"  
 Þo spak a king of on lond  
 "We han iherd þis schame and schonde  
 Ac er we hem to deye wreke  
 We scholle heren þo children speke  
 What þai wil speke and sigge  
 Ȝif þai ouȝt aȝein wil allegge.  
 Hit ner nowt riȝt jugement  
 1080 Wiȝouten ansuere to acouplement".  
 .....  
 C Þe king of Nubie sede þo,  
 "For soþ, ne schal hit noȝt go so.  
 Hit is riȝt þurez alle þing  
 Felons inome hond habbing,  
 For to suffre jugement  
 Biþute ansuere oþer acupement".  
 .....  
 A After þe children nou men sendeȝ  
 Hem to brenne fur men tendeȝ.  
 Twaie Sarazins forþ hem bringeȝ  
 1090 Toward here deþ sore wepinge.  
 Dreri were þis schildren two

His hall, which was built high,  
 Was filled with kings and dukes.  
 He stood up among them all,  
 With his expression one of great anger.  
 He said, "High honorable lords,  
 You have heard Blancheflour spoken about,  
 How I bought her dearly and rightfully  
 For seven times her weight in gold.  
 For her fairness and her beauty,  
 I bought her in full at such expense,  
 For I thought, without a doubt,  
 To have her as my queen.  
 I stood myself in front of her bed  
 And found with her a naked youth.  
 At the time they were so hateful to me  
 That I wanted to kill them both!  
 I was so enraged and so crazed,  
 And yet I held back my emotions.  
 On that basis I have sent for you,  
 To avenge me through your decision.  
 Now that you know how it happened,  
 Avenge me swiftly on my foes!"  
 Then a king of one land spoke up,  
 "We have heard this shame and disgrace.  
 But before we condemn them to death,  
 We will hear the children speak  
 Whatever they wish to say, to see  
 If they have anything as a defense.  
 It would not be a just deliberation  
 Without an answer to the accusation".  
 .....  
 The King of Nubia spoke up then,<sup>177</sup>  
 "In truth, it should not go that way.  
 It is right, in all cases,  
 That felons caught red-handed in theft  
 Should suffer their judgment without  
 Defense against the accusation".  
 .....  
 After this, men sent for the children,  
 Intending for them to burn in fire.  
 Two Saracens brought them forth  
 Toward their death, as they wept bitterly.  
 The two lovers were inconsolable,

177 *De king of Nubie*: The king of Egypt's objection in Cambridge MS that the two forfeit their right to a defense because they are caught in the act explains why Floris and Blancheflour are not permitted to speak, though it does not conform to Islamic legal codes, which require that defendants have a right to answer to accusations.

Nou aiþer biwepeþ oþeres wo.  
 Florice saide to Blauncheflour  
 “Of oure lif nis non socour.  
 3if manken hit þoli miȝt  
 Twies ischolde die wiȝ riȝt  
 One for miself anoþer for þe  
 For þis deþ þou hast for me”.  
 Blauncheflour saide aȝen þo  
 1100 “Þe gelt is min of oure boþer wo!”  
 Florice drow forþ þe ring  
 Þat his moder him ȝaf at his parting.  
 “Have nou þis ring lemman min.  
 Þou ne schalt nowt die whiles hit is þin”.  
 Blauncheflour saide þo  
 “So ne schal hit never go  
 Þat þis ring schal ared me.  
 Ne mai ihc no deþ on þe se”.  
 Florice þe ring here arauȝt  
 1110 And hi him aȝein hit bitauȝt.  
 On hire he had þe ring iþrast  
 And hi hit haueȝ awai ikast.  
 A duk hit seȝ and beȝgh to grounde  
 An was glad þat ring he founde.  
 On þis maner þe children come  
 Weping to þe fur and to hire dome  
 Bifore al þat folk þai ware ibrowt.  
 Dreri was hire boþer þouȝt  
 Þer nas non so sterne man  
 1120 Þat þise children loked upan  
 Þat þai ne wolde alle ful fawe  
 Here jugement have wiȝdrawe  
 And wiȝ grete garisoun hem begge  
 3if þai dorste speke oþer sigge.  
 For Florice was so fair a yongling  
 And Blauncheflour so swete a þing.  
 Of men and wimmen þat beþ nouþe  
 Þat gon and riden and spekeþ wiȝ mouþe  
 Beþ non so fair in hire gladnesse  
 1130 Als þai ware in hire sorewenesse.  
 No man ne knewe hem þat hem was wo  
 Bi semblaunt þat þai made þo  
 But bi þe teres þat þai schadde  
 And fillen adoun bi here nebbe.  
 Þe ameral was so wroþ and wod  
 Þat he ne miȝt wiȝdraw his mod.  
 He bad binde þe children faste

As each wept for the other's grief.  
 Floris said to Blanchefour,  
 “For our lives there is no hope.  
 If it were possible for a human being,  
 I would rightfully die twice,  
 Once for myself, a second time for you,  
 For your death is because of me”.  
 Blancheflour then answered,  
 “The guilt is mine for both our woe!”  
 Floris drew off the ring  
 That his mother gave him at their parting.  
 “Take this ring, my beloved.  
 You will not die while it is yours”.  
 Blancheflour replied,  
 “It will never happen so  
 That this ring will save me.  
 I will not see you put to death”.  
 Floris handed the ring to her,  
 And she passed it back to him.  
 He thrust the ring on her,  
 And she flung it away.  
 A duke saw it and bent to the ground,  
 And was glad to find that ring.  
 In this manner the children came weeping,  
 To the fire and to their doom,  
 As they were brought before all the people.  
 Both of them seemed so pitiable  
 That there was no man so stern  
 Who looked upon these children  
 Who did not wish fervently  
 To see their judgment withdrawn,  
 And to buy them with a great ransom if  
 They might only dare speak out or protest.  
 For Floris was so fair a young man,  
 And Blancheflour was so sweet a thing.  
 Of men and women who live now,  
 That walk and ride and speak with mouths,  
 None are so fair in their happiness  
 As those two were in their sorrow.  
 No man could see that they were full of  
 Grief by the bearing that they had  
 Except by the tears that they shed  
 Which fell down their faces.  
 The emir was so furious and livid  
 That he could not control his temper.  
 He ordered the couple bound fast



Into þe fir he bad hem caste.  
 Pilke duk þat þe gold ryng hadde  
 1140 Nou to speke rewþe he hadde.  
 Fain he wolde hem helpe to live  
 And tolde hou þai for þe ring strive.  
 Þe ameral het hem aȝen clepe  
 For he wolde þo schildren speke.  
 He askede Florice what he hete  
 And he told him swiȝe skete  
 “Sire”, he saide, “ȝif hit were þi wille  
 Þou ne auȝtest nowt þis maiden spille  
 Ac sire let aquelle me  
 1150 And lat þat maiden alive be”.  
 Blauncheflour saide þo  
 “Þe gilt is min of oure boþer wo”.  
 And þe ameral saide þo  
 “Iwis ye schulle die bo!  
 Wiȝ wreche ich wille me awreke.  
 Ȝe ne scholle nevere go no speke!”  
 His swerd he braid out of his sscheþe  
 Þe children for to do to deþe  
 And Blauncheflour pult forþ hire swire  
 1160 And Florice gan hire aȝein tire.  
 “Ich am a man ich schal go bifore.  
 Þou ne auȝtest nouȝt mi deȝ acore”.  
 Florice forht his swire pulte  
 And Blauncheflour aȝein hit brutte.  
 Al þat iseȝen þis  
 Perfore sori weren iwis  
 And saide “driȝer may we be  
 Bi swiche children swich rewþe se!”  
 Þ’ameral wroþ þai he were  
 1170 Boþe him chaungege mod and chere  
 For aiþer for oþer wolde die  
 And he segh so mani a weping eȝe.  
 And for he hadde so mochel loved þe mai  
 Weping he turned his heued awai  
 And his swerd hit fil to grounde.  
 He ne miȝte hit helde in þat stounde.  
 Pilke duk þat þe ring found  
 Wiȝ þ’ameral spak and round  
 And ful wel þerwiȝ he spedde  
 1180 Þe children þerwiȝ fram deþe he redde.  
 “Sire”, he saide, “hit is litel pris  
 Þise children to slen iwis.  
 Hit is þe wel more worsschipe

And thrown into the fire.  
 The same duke who found the gold ring  
 Was now moved by compassion to speak.  
 He was eager to help them to live and  
 Explained how they argued over the ring.  
 The emir had them called back,  
 For he wanted the two to speak.  
 He asked Floris what his name was,  
 And he told him very promptly,  
 “Sire”, he said, “if it should be your will,  
 You ought not to let this maiden die  
 But, sire, to let me be executed,  
 And let the maiden go alive”.  
 Blancheflour then protested,  
 “The guilt is mine for both of our troubles”.  
 The emir then thundered,  
 “For certain, both of you will die!  
 I will avenge myself with anger.  
 You will never walk or speak again!”  
 He drew his sword out of its sheath  
 To put the couple to death,  
 And Blancheflour thrust forth her neck,  
 And Floris pulled her back.  
 “I am a man, I will go before you.  
 You should not suffer my death”.  
 Floris presented his neck forth  
 And Blancheflour drew it back.  
 All who saw this  
 Were remorseful for it, I know,  
 And said, “It is too much sadness  
 To see these youngsters in such anguish!”  
 The emir, as angry as he was,  
 Changed both his mood and his expression,  
 For each was ready to die for the other,  
 And he saw so many weeping eyes. And  
 Because he had loved the maid so much,  
 He turned his head away in tears  
 And let his sword fell to the ground.  
 He could not hold it at that moment.  
 The duke who had found the ring  
 Spoke and whispered with the emir,  
 And fared successfully for it,  
 For he saved the couple from death.  
 “Sire”, he said, “there is little praise  
 In slaying these children, for sure.  
 It would be much more admirable

Florice conseile þat þou wite  
 Who him tawʒte þilke gin  
 For to come þi tour wiʒin  
 And who þat him brouʒte þar  
 Þe bet of oþer þou miʒt be war”.  
 Þan saide þameraile to Florice þo  
 1190 “Tel me who þe tauʒte herto”.  
 “Þat”, quað Florice, “ne schal I nevere do  
 But ʒif hit ben forʒiven also  
 Þat þe gin me tauʒte þerto.  
 Arst ne schal hit never be do”.  
 Alle þai praied þerfore iwis;  
 Þe ameral graunted þis.  
 Nou everi word Florice haþ him told  
 Hou þe made was fram him sold  
 And hou he was of Speyne a kyngges sone  
 1200 For hire love þider icome  
 To fonden wiʒ som gin  
 Þat faire maiden for to win;  
 And hou þourgh his gold and his garisoun  
 Þe porter was his man bicom  
 And hou he was in þe coupe ibore.  
 And alle þis oþer lowen þerfore.  
 Nou þe amerail wel him mote bitide  
 Florice he sette next his side  
 And made him stonde þer upriʒt  
 1210 And haþ idubbed him to kniʒt  
 And bad he scholde wiʒ him be  
 Wiʒ þe formast of his mene.  
 Florice fallet to his fet  
 And bit him ʒif him his lef so swet.  
 Þe ameral ʒaf him his lemman.  
 Alle þe oþere him þanked þan.  
 To one chirche he let hem bringge  
 And wedde here wiʒ here owene ringge.  
 Nou boþe þis children alle for bliss  
 1220 Fil þe amerales fet to kis.  
 And þourgh conseil of Blancheflour  
 Clarice was fet doun of þe tour  
 And þe amerale here wedded to quene.  
 Þere was feste swiþe breme

For you to know Floris' confidante,  
 Who showed him the trick  
 To come inside your tower,  
 And who brought him there,  
 So that you might be more aware of others”.  
 Then the emir said to Floris,  
 “Tell me who taught you to do this”.  
 “That”, replied Floris, “I will never do,  
 Unless there is also forgiveness  
 For him who taught me the trick.  
 Before that it will never be done”.  
 All there pleaded for this, for sure;  
 The emir granted it.  
 Then Floris told him every detail,  
 How the maid was sold from him,  
 And how he was a king's son from Spain,  
 Who had come for the sake of her love  
 To try with some plan  
 To win that fair maiden;  
 And how through his gold and treasures,  
 The porter had become his man,  
 And how he was carried in the basket.  
 All the others laughed over this.  
 Now the emir, may he fare well,  
 Set Floris by his side  
 And made him stand there upright,  
 And dubbed him a knight,  
 And asked if he would stay with him  
 With the leaders of his retinue.  
 Floris fell to his feet and begged him  
 To give him his love so sweet.  
 The emir granted him his beloved.  
 All the others thanked the emir.  
 He had them ushered to a temple,<sup>178</sup>  
 And they were wedded with their own ring.  
 Now both of these children, all for bliss,  
 Fell at the emir's feet to kiss them,  
 And through Blancheflour's counsel,  
 Clarice was fetched down from the tower,  
 And the emir wedded her as his queen.<sup>179</sup>  
 There was a feast so sumptuous

178 *Chirche*: the Saracens are unlikely to have churches for just such an occasion. OF had variations on *moschea*, but the MED gives the first recorded use of *musket/moseak* in ME only much later in Mandeville's *Travels*, around 1400. The poet likely means 'place of worship' generically.

179 The French poet stresses that the emir gives up his practice of annually repudiating his wives for Clarice (Taylor, note to 1279, his lineation).

I ne can nowt tellen þe sonde  
 Ac þe richest feste in londe.  
 Nas hit nowt longe after þan  
 Þat Florice tidinge ne cam  
 Þat his fader þe kyng was ded.  
 1230 And al þe barnage 3af him red  
 Þat he scholde wenden hom  
 And underfongen his kyndom.  
 At ameral he nom his leve  
 And he him bad wi3 him bileve.  
 Panne bispak þe ameral  
 “3if þou wilt do Florice bi mi conseil  
 Dwelle here and wend nowt hom.  
 Ich wille þe 3iven a kyngdom  
 Also longe and also brod  
 1240 Als evere 3it þi fader bod”.  
 “I nel bileve for no winne.  
 To bidde me hit were sinne”.  
 .....  
 C And to hire he haþ izolde  
 Twenti pond of ride golde.  
 And to Daris þat him so ta3te,  
 Twenti pund he ara3te.  
 And alle þat for him duden eidel,  
 He 3eld here while suþe wel.  
 .....  
 A Þai bitau3t þe amerail oure Dri3t  
 1250 And þai com hom whan þai mi3t;  
 And let croune him to king  
 And hire to quene þat swete þing  
 And underfeng Cristendom of prestes honde  
 And þonkede God of alle His sonde.  
 Nou ben þai boþe ded  
 Crist of Hevene heure soules led.  
 Nou is þis tale browt to þ’ende  
 Of Florice and of his lemman hende  
 How after bale hem com bote.  
 1260 So wil oure Louerd þat ous mote  
 Amen sigge3 also  
 And ich schal helpe 3ou þerto.

1263 Explicit

That I cannot describe all the courses,  
 But it was the richest feast in the land.  
 It was not long after then  
 That the news came to Floris  
 That his father the king was dead.  
 All of the baronage gave him advice  
 That he should go home  
 And take charge of his kingdom.  
 He took his leave of the emir,  
 Who asked him to stay with him.  
 Then the emir said,  
 “Floris, if you will follow my wishes,  
 Stay here, and do not go home.  
 I will give you a kingdom  
 As long and broad as well  
 As anything your father offered”.  
 “I won’t stay for any such joys.  
 To require me to would be a sin”.  
 .....  
 To Clarice he gave in thanks  
 Twenty pounds of red gold,  
 And to Dary, who had helped him,  
 He also bestowed twenty pounds.  
 And anyone who did anything for him  
 He also rewarded well after.  
 .....  
 They commended the emir to our Lord,  
 And they came home as soon as they could;  
 And Floris was crowned king,  
 And she as queen, that sweet creature.  
 And he received baptism by priests’ hands,  
 And thanked God for all His works.  
 Now they are both dead,  
 Their souls led by Christ to Heaven.  
 Now this tale is brought to the end,  
 Of Floris and his fair sweetheart,  
 How after their troubles came relief.  
 So that our Lord may do the same for us,  
 Say ‘Amen’ as well,  
 And I will join you in it.

The End

