

2

- L'ivern s'en vait et l'estée vient flori;
De froid en chald le temps se muera;
L'oisel, q'ainçois° avoit perdu soun ny,
Le renouvelle, u q'il s'esjoiera.°
5 De mes amours ensi le monde va.°
Par tiel espoir je me conforte ades,
Et vous, ma dame, croietz bien cela:
Quant dolour vait, les° joies vienont pres.
- Ma douce dame, ensi come jeo vous di,
10 Saver poetz coment moun coer esta,
Le quel vous serve et long temps ad servi,
Tant com jeo vive et toutditz servira.
Remembretz vous, ma dame, pour cela
Q'a moun voloir ne vous lerrai jammes.
15 Ensi com dieus le voet, ensi serra.
Quant dolour vait, les joies vienont pres.
- Le jour qe j'ai de vous nouvelle° oï,
Il m'est avis qe rien me grievera.
Porceo, ma chiere dame, jeo vous pri,
20 Par vo message, quant il vous plerra,
Mandetx a moi qe bon vous semblera
Du quoi moun coer se poet tenir en pes,
Et pensetz, dame, de ceo q'ai dit pieça:
Quant dolour vait, les joies vienont pres.
- 25 O noble dame, a vous ce lettre irra,
Et quant dieu plest, jeo vous verrai apres.
Par cest escrit il vous remembrera:
Quant dolour vait, les joies vienont pres.

3 Mac qu'ainçois

4 MS ses joiera

5 MS de va over erasure. Cross drawn in margin.

8 MS les over erasure. Cross drawn in margin.

17 The abbreviation stroke (a line through the ascenders of the double L) occurs three times in 50B. Here and in 38.23 (hostelle), the –e is not required for the meter, but in [51].15 (celle), it is.

2

°Winter departs and summer arrives in flower;
the weather will change from cold to hot;
the bird, which earlier had lost its nest,
rebuilds it, wherein it will take delight.
5 So too goes the world of my love.°
In such a hope I constantly take comfort,°
and you, my lady, believe this well:°
when sorrow departs, joys draw near.°

10 My sweet lady, just as I say to you,
you can understand how my heart stands,
which serves you and has served for a long time,
and will serve you always, as long as I live.
Remember, my lady, for that reason
that I will never leave you by my own will.
15 Just as God wishes it, so will it be.
When sorrow departs, joys draw near.

°The day that I have heard news of you,
it seems to me that nothing will trouble me.
Therefore, my dear lady, I beseech you,
20 by your messenger, when it pleases you,
send to me whatever seems good to you
with which my heart can remain in peace,
and think, lady, of what I said long ago:
when sorrow departs, joys draw near.

25 O noble lady,° to you this letter will go,
and when it pleases God, I will see you afterwards.
By this writing you will be reminded:
when sorrow departs, joys draw near.

Ballade 2 could almost be three separate poems. Each stanza treats a different conventional theme: the hope that is offered by the changing of the seasons, the lover's profession of loyalty, and his wish to hear of his lady if he cannot see her. They are united by the recurrence of the refrain, but perhaps more importantly by a tentativeness of expression that seems to undercut its ostensible message and that may be the most interesting thing about this poem. The tone is set in the middle of the opening stanza, in which the confident assertion of line 5—"De mes amours ensi le monde va"—is immediately qualified in line 6, "Par tiel espoir je me conforte

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ades." It's only a hope; it's born of the persona's need for reassurance; and this admission colors his insistence that the lady should put faith in the optimistic formula that he offers in the refrain.

Stanza two contains another admission, that whatever the (unspecified) circumstances that separate them, the outcome is up to God (line 15), who is perhaps rather less predictable than the changing of the seasons, a concession that is repeated in the envoy in line 26. It also seems that the persona is less than fully confident in his lady's good regard. His insistence upon his long service may sound less like a reassurance for her than like a plea for what he feels that he deserves. In stanza three he turns to her for reassurance, for the comfort that he claims to take from the changing of the seasons in stanza one. The very form of his plea—"que bon vous semblera"—contains a cautiousness that suggests that he is not at all certain that he will get what he wants or that it will be promptly granted. As in so many earlier lyrics, moreover, he appears focused exclusively on his own situation and feelings, not on his lady's. This would be a very different poem if he referred in line 5 to "nos amours [our love]" rather than just "mine," and the lack of any specific reference, either to her sorrow or even to the circumstances that separate them, imparts a certain hollowness to his insistence that she remember that joy (is it really theirs, or just his?) comes after sorrow.

Or perhaps we read too much between the lines. Hope is often the only consolation for the persona in contemporary lyrics, and neither the claim of long service nor the formality of the persona's request in stanza three is in itself extraordinary. The gap between wish and circumstance may be inherent in the conventions that Gower adopted, and the dissonance that we detect may simply be due to Gower's awkward attempt to adopt a conventional lover's plea to a direct written address to the lady. But if Gower was as aware of the limitations of the lover's rhetoric as some of his other poems imply and if the effects are calculated, then he has given us here an affecting portrait of an unsure and unconvincing lover.

1-5 Genius uses a similar analogy to encourage Amans in CA 5.7823-34, as Pandarus does Troilus in T&C 3.1062 (see also 3.351-57). See Whiting W372, "After Winter follows May," where the other citations, apart from T&C 3.1062, all come from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. (There appears to be no equivalent in Hassell.) In every other instance in 50B in which the persona compares his condition in love to the changing of the seasons (in 7.15-18, 20.10, 32.1-14, 36.1-14, and 37.22-23), he identifies his feelings with winter rather than with spring.

5 *So goes the world of my love*. "Ensi le monde va [so goes the world]" is proverbial, both in French (e.g. Granson 18.10) and in English (see Hassell M163; Whiting W665, citing CA 8.1738, "So goth the world, now wo, now wel," and T&C 5.1434), and the world is often cited as a place of instability, the realm of Fortune; but it is difficult to find any precedent for the use of "monde" (literally "world") to mean "the ensemble of circumstances or activities in a particular domain," as I have taken it here, in French. The closest parallels are in Middle English, and they are not exact, but they are close to home. MED s.v. "world," 4(b) offers "circumstances or conditions obtaining within the earthly realm or mundane sphere, the way of things; also, a particular or present state of affairs; (someone's) fortunes, circumstances, or condition," and among the passages they cite are CA Prol. 382-83 ("Every clerk his herte leith / To kepe his world in special"), 1.178 ("Mi world stod on an other whiel"), and 5.3635-37 ("Sche...was thurgh nome / With love, and so fer overcome / That al hir world on him sche sette"). There are ten other passages in CA in which "world" is preceded by a possessive pronoun. Macaulay offers "fortune" in his glossary to the English works (3:648), perhaps

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with these passages in mind. None of these (and none of the citations in *MED*) is followed by a restrictive qualifier (“world of my love”), however, and so we might have to translate instead, “with regard to my love, so too goes the world.”

love. Eight times in *50B*, Gower uses the form “amours” preceded by either “mes [my]” or “ses [his, her],” here and in 3.18, 9.32, 15.3, 20.7, 20.21, 25.R, and 41.16, without being required by rhyme, as in other instances in which Gower evidently resorts to an older *cas sujet* form for the singular, even when not in subject position (see the note to 1.20-21 above). In all these cases, the reference is to a specific person’s condition of being in love. Elsewhere, Gower uses the singular form “amour,” e.g. when Love is personified (10.15 *et al.*; earlier poets used the spelling “Amours” for the personification [see the note in *DMF* s.v. “amour¹,” B.1.b]); when love is referred to more generally, e.g. in expressions such as “bon amour” (6.20 *et al.*) or “fin amour” (7.1 *et al.*); or when it is the affection offered by one person to another (the two instances of “mon amour,” 34.12 and 37.5, and the several of “vostre amour” [see the note to 7.11]); and all other instances of “amours” are clearly plural (24.9, 40R, 49.10). In form, “mes” or “ses amours” might be singular or plural, but in none of the instances listed does it imply having more than a single “love.” See, for instance, 25.R: “Car qui bien aime ses amours tard oblie [For he who loves well late forgets his love],” where plural “loves” is obviously excluded. I have translated all these in the singular.

- 6 This line makes clear that line 5 is the expression of the persona’s own optimistic—and therefore possibly misplaced—hope rather than an affirmation.
- 7 Grammatically, exactly as in English, this line might be a vocative followed by an imperative or a simple declarative. The ambiguity might reflect the same wavering between confidence and hope as in lines 5-6, but circumstantially the imperative appears to be called for, and it is echoed structurally in lines 10, 13, 21, and 23.
- 8 The collocation of joy and sorrow (or their synonyms) is proverbial: see Hassell C330, D47, J20, J23, P193; Whiting B52, J61, S507. It is also very common in poetry: see Machaut, *Lou* 1.23, 3.2, 3.16, 23R, 34R, 69.1-2, 246R, 261.19; see also *T&C* 1.952 (“And also joie is next the fyn of sorwe”), KnT CT I.2841, MLT CT II.424, and NPT CT VII.3205. Gower uses the device twice more, in 20.R and 43.R, in each case reversing the hopeful implication of this line, as he does also in *MO* 28597-99: “De la proverbe me sovient, / Q’om dist que molt sovent avient / Apres grant joye grant dolour [I recall the proverb that says that very often great sorrow comes after great joy].” Cf. also 22.R, 22.22. *joys draw near*. This might instead be “joys come soon,” which suggests somewhat more strongly that they can be counted on. *AND* s.v. “pres¹” provides three citations in which the word is used in a temporal sense, in sentences meaning “the time is near,” “death is near,” and “the spring is near”; and in Gower’s use it is hard not to hear “après [afterwards]” in the background. I chose “draws near” to sustain the metaphor introduced with “dolour vait,” but the equivocation between joys “approaching” and “arriving” may be another part of a calculated lack of certainty in this poem.
- 17-22 The persona’s plea for a response is virtually unprecedented in fourteenth-century lyrics because so rarely do the poets think of their poems as an actual direct address. The persona might express a wish to hear from his lady, as in Deschamps 605.1-2: “Toute joye est descendue sur my,/ Quant j’ay oy de ma dame nouvelle [all joy falls upon me when I have heard tidings from my lady],” but not in the form of a direct request. I know of none in Machaut (in his lyrics (that is, as opposed, for instance, to the narrative portions of *Voir Dit*), only one, in passing, in Granson (78.458), and one in Deschamps (433), which is immediately followed by the lady’s reply in 434. But see 28 below, in which such a plea is the motivation for the entire poem. (Amans expresses his joy at hearing news about his lady in *CA* 1.2750-67.)
- 25 *noble lady*. Gower uses the phrase “noble dame” three times in *50B*, here and in 6.4 and 20.13. Just as in Modern English and Modern French, “noble” might refer either to aristocratic rank or to a

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quality of character. Without reference to a person, as in 24.15 and 46.10, "noble" appears to have no reference to rank, but the "noble port [noble bearing]" of the man addressed in 46.16 is a little more ambiguous. The three other references to the woman as "noble" in 50B, on the other hand, are all conjoined with other more specific allusions to her rank. (See the notes to 6.4 and 23.25-27 and the commentary to 13.) If the word order, "noble dame," in the vocative, is enough to suggest that the ladies 2 and in 20 are also of the nobility, then these two ballades count with the others in 50B that are addressed to a woman of the aristocracy. See further the note to 6.9 on "noblesce" and Gower's use of "vo noblesce" as an honorific in 28.15 *et al.* Such references to rank are very rare in fourteenth-century French poetry. Equally rare is the epithet "noble dame." It appears in none of Machaut's or Granson's lyrics, and only once in Deschamps', as far as I know, in the envoy to 1577.