

7

De fin amour c'est le droit et nature°
Qe tant come plus le corps soit eslongée,
Tant plus remaint le coer *pres* a toute hure
Tanqu'il verra ceo qu'il ad désirée.
5 Pou[r]ceo° sachetz, ma *tresbelle* honourée,
De vo paiis qe jeo desire l'estre
Come cil qui tout vo chivaler voet estre.

De la fonteine ensi come l'eaue pure
Tressalt et buile et court aval le préé,
10 Ensi le coer de moi, jeo vous assure,
Pour *vostre* amour demeine sa pensée,
Et c'est toutdits sanz repos travailléé,
De vo paiis qe° jeo desire l'estre
Come cil qui tout vo chivaler voet estre.

15 Sicome l'ivern despuile la verdure
Du beal Jardin tanque *autresfoitz* Estée
L'ait revestu, ensi de sa mesure
Moun coer languist, mais il s'est esperée
Q'encore a vous vendrai joious et lée,
20 De vo paiis qe jeo desire l'estre
Come cil qui tout vo chivaler voet estre.

Sur toutes belles la plus belle née,
Plus ne voldrai le Paradis terrestre
Qe° jeo n'ai plus *vostre* presence amée,
25 Come cil qui tout vo chivaler voet estre.

1 *Cross drawn in margin, but no obvious correction.*

5 *MS Pouceo*

13 *Mac que*

24 *Mac que*

7

It is the law and nature of *fin amour*^o
^othat the further that the body is removed,
the closer remains the heart at all times
until it^o sees what it has desired.

5 Know, therefore, my beautiful honored^o lady,
that I desire to dwell in your country^o
as he who^o wishes fully to be your knight.

^oJust as the pure water of the fountain
leaps and bubbles and rushes down the meadow,
10 just so my heart, I assure you,
carries on its thought because of your love,^o
and it is constantly troubled^o without respite,
for I desire to dwell in your country
as he who wishes fully to be your knight.

15 Just as the winter strips^o the greenery
from the beautiful garden until summer once again
reclathes it, just so in its own way^o
my heart languishes; but it has set its hope^o
that I will come to you again, joyous and happy,
20 for I desire to dwell in your country
as he who wishes fully to be your knight.

Above all fair women the most beautiful born, ^o
^oI would not wish for the terrestrial paradise so much
that I have not wished for your beloved person more,
25 as he who wishes fully to be your knight.

Like its immediate predecessor, ballade 7 uses a refrain of more than a single line except in the envoy, where it is prevented by the rhyme scheme. Here, not only is the refrain emphasized by the *rime riche* on "estre," but it constitutes nearly a separate trope. The poem itself consists of four different motifs, three of which have to do with the heart but which are not otherwise related, and only the last of which, in the envoy, has any real relation to the wish expressed in the refrain. One doesn't usually find such a profusion of imagery in one ballade. It might possibly be taken, like the bubbling fountain of lines 8-9, to represent the turmoil in the persona's feeling; it stands, in any case, in sharp contrast to the artful development of a single image in ballade 8.

Balade 7

The verbal echoes of ballade 6 are neither numerous nor precise: “languist” (7.18), “languis” (6.24); “joious” (7.19), “joie” (6.11); and “vostre presence” (7.24, 6.R). Though not in the same words, the separation of the heart and the desire to see the lady in 7.1-4 recalls 6.18-21 (and in fact ballades 1-3 as well); and the refrain in 7 recalls the wish to serve the lady in 6.12-13. The circumstances are different, however: there is no suggestion in 7 that the persona knows the lady only by reputation, and in line 19 he wishes to come to her again. The refrain introduces the wish to be the lady’s knight that occurs in 50B only here and in ballade 8.

- 1 *fin amour*. Gower uses this expression six times in 50B. In 21.5 and 24.6, it appears to mean nothing other than “pure love,” that is, love that is both unqualified and unsullied. That is the sense in which it appears in Machaut (e.g. in *Lou.* 7.2, 74.4, 91.20, 114.5, 179.2, and 266.22), and also the sense in which Gower uses it, more than a dozen times, in *MO*, in contexts as varied as the love of God (10662), love of one’s neighbor (13576), married love (17248), and Mary’s love for her son (28968). Here, however, and in 37.2, 47.2, and 47.15, “fin amour” seems to suggest a separate species of love, one with its own rules of conduct, more like, as Fisher suggested (pp. 76-77), that espoused by the Provençal poets of *fin’amors* than like the love described by Gower’s closer contemporaries.
- 2-4 Though not elsewhere cited as a “law,” it is common enough for the lyricists of the 14th century to claim that they leave their hearts with their ladies when they themselves cannot be present. In Machaut, see, for example, *Lou.* 14.19-21, 15.1-2, 17.1-4, 21.9-10, 123.2, 165.6-10, 166.7, 171, 216.1-9, 236.1-4, 266.19-20; and in Granson, 24.1-2, 72.25-28, 74.25-26, 67-68, 82, 110; *et al.* Gower uses the motif again in 11.2 and 15.R, and in 25.7 the persona sends his heart, a motif that Gower develops more fully in ballades 3, 6, and 9.
- 4 This passage makes a bit more sense if the “il” refers to the body in line 2 rather than to the heart in line 3. In *Lou.* 165, Machaut too expresses his hope to see his lady again as he leaves his heart behind.
- 5 *honored*. “Honorée” is a commonly applied to the lady in Machaut: see *Lou.* 55.15, 68.6, 73.13, *et al.* See also Deschamps 433.15, 768.5; Froissart, Lay 5.166, Vir. 6.26, *Esp.Am.* 1256; *et al.*
- 6 *to dwell in your country*. More precisely, “the dwelling of your country.” (Macaulay, 1:463: “I desire your country as my dwelling place.” Yeager: “for my home.”) For “l’estre” see *AND* s.v. “estre²,” 2. “lodging place”; *DMF* s.v. “être³,” B. “Demeure, habitation, maison [dwelling, habitation, home].” For the word order see the note to 6.6-7.
- 7 *as he who*. “Com cil qui” might introduce a simile (“like one who”), as in 24.17, or it might introduce a descriptive clause (“as he who”), as it does in 11.16, 26.2, and 36.12, in all three cases modifying the first person subject. Gower does not distinguish between the two different functions as he might have by means of the person of the verb. In 11.16 he uses a first-person verb (“sui”), excluding the possibility of a simile, but in 26.2 and 36.12 he uses a third-person verb (“est”), as he does here, though in all three cases the clause is equally clearly descriptive. For other examples of the same construction see Macaulay’s note to *MO* 27942.
your knight. Criseyde takes Troilus as her knight in *T&C* 3.176, 982 and Palamon becomes Emelye’s knight in *KnT* 3077, but it is harder to find references to the practice among 14th-century lyrics. There is none in Machaut or Granson, and only one in 100B (61.15), in a poem in which it is a knight who is being addressed.
- 8-12 I don’t know of any model for the use of a bubbling fountain as a simile for one’s troubled thoughts.
- 11 *your love*. The “vostre” in “vostre amour” might be either subjective (that is, the “you” is the subject of the implied underlying sentence, “you love me”) as in 28.18 and 31.13, or objective (the “you” is

- the object: "I love you"), as in 9.15, 25.27, and 38.10. (Less certain are 39.15 and 46.3.) Here the context leans towards the objective: "because of my love for you."
- 12 *troubled*. "To trouble, to torment, to torture" are common meanings for "travailler" in the French of Gower's time (see *AND* s.v. "travailler," 1, 5; *DMF* s.v. "travailler," A.1, 2), evidently less common for the cognate verb in Middle English (*MED* s.v. "travailen," 4.b.), but see *CA* 4.377, "As he whom love schal travaile," and 5.395-96, "And evere his hunger after more / Travaileth him aliche sore."
- 15 *strips*. "Despouiller" is commonly used, among other senses, to mean "to undress," setting up the metaphor continued in line 17 with "revestu." See *DMV* s.v. "despouiller," A.1.a; *AND* s.v. "depoiller," 1.
- 17 *in its own way*. "Mesure," in both Middle French and Middle English, ordinarily refers either to actual measurement (as in 34.3) or by extension, to moderation (as in 13.5), neither of which works well either here or in 12.18, "n'acorde pas, mas dame, a vo mesure." Gower uses "a/en sa mesure" at least two dozen times in *MO*. *DMF* does not recognize the phrase, though for "mesure" it does offer (s.v. "mesure," B.4) "Disposition, arrangement, façon [disposition, arrangement, manner or fashion]." *AND* lists the phrase (s.v. "mesure¹") and translates it "to the best of one's abilities," citing *MO* 6676 and 10710. There are passages in *MO* which evidently require a more general sense, however; e.g. 23883, which speaks of knights who were "de simplese en sa mesure [of simplicity in nature or character]." That seems to be the sense in 12.18 as well: "does not accord, my lady, with your character." In this line, "according to its nature" might work; I translate "in its own way" better to sustain the comparison to the changing seasons in the garden.
- 18 *has set its hope*. The reflexive use of "esperer" is quite unusual. It is not attested in *DMF* and there are no other instances in Gower, but *AND* (s.v. "esperer") offers "(s') **esperer de, en**, to place one's hope, trust, in," with two citations, one from the 13th century and one from the 14th.
- 22 Another common formula from the lyrics. Cf. (just for examples) Granson 36.R, "tresbelle et bonne née"; 46.1, "des belles la plus belle"; and 74.83, "la plus belle née."
- 23-24 In his notes to *VC* 1.135 and to this line, Macaulay notes that this is a common type of expression for Gower in all three of his languages, citing four other passages in *VC* 1 plus *CA* 1.718-21, 1259-63, and 1319-22, *MO* 18589, and *50B* 18.8-9, and in his note to the latter he also cites 30.8-13. As he observes, "Usually the 'plus [more]' of the second clause answers to some such word as 'tel [so, such]' in the first." The "tel" is missing here; there is another "plus" instead, as in *CA* 1.1259-63, where one also finds a comparative ("betre"). The result is not strictly logical, and it is difficult to get both instances of "plus" into the translation. In the translation offered here, I have replaced the first "plus" by "so much." One alternative is simply to omit the second "plus": "I would not wish for the terrestrial paradise more than I have wished for your beloved person."

But that is not the only issue in these lines. For the translation of "vostre presence" as "your person" or simply as "you," see the note to 26.1. In line 24, I have taken "amée" as an adjective (see *AND* s.v. "amer¹," pp. as a.; *DMF* s.v. "aimer," IV.A), though I can find no precise parallel elsewhere, and I have supplied "wished" by implication from the preceding line, though again such a construction would be rather unusual for Gower. If one takes "ai amée" as the verb in this line instead, one gets "I would not wish for the terrestrial paradise so much that I have not loved you more" or "I would not wish for the terrestrial paradise more than I have loved you."

In sum, the sentiment is much clearer in this pair of lines than is the grammar.