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Trop tart a ceo qe jeo desire et proie
Vient ma fortune au point, il m'est avis,
Mais nepourqant mon coer toutdis se ploie,
Parfit, verai, loial, entalentis
5 De vous veoir, qui sui tout vos amis
Si tresentier qe dire ne porroie,
Q'apres° dieu et les saintz de Paradis,
En vous remaint ma soveraine Joie.

De mes deux oels ainçois qe jeo vous voie,
10 Millfoitz le jour mon coer y est tramis
En lieu de moi d'aler la droite voie
Pour visiter et vous et vo paiis,
Et tanqu'il s'est en vo presence mis,
Desir ades l'encoste° et le convoie,
15 Com cil q'est tant de vostre amour suspris
Qe nullement se poet partir en voie.

Discoverir a vous si jeo me doie,
En vous amer sui tielement ravys
Q'au plussovent mon sentement forsvoie.
20 Ne sai si chald ou froid, ou mors ou vifs,
Ou halt ou bass, ou certains ou faillis,
Ou tempre ou tard, ou pres ou loings jeo soie.
Mais en pensant je sui tant esbaubis
Q'il m'est avis sicom jeo songeroie.

25 Pour vous, ma dame, en peine m'esbanoie,
Jeo ris en plour et en santé languis,
Jeue en tristour et en seurté m'esfroie,
Ars en gelée et en chalour fremis.
D'amer puissant, d'amour povere et mendis,
30 Jeo sui tout vostre, et si vous fuissetz moie,
En tout le mond n'eust uns si rejoïs
De ses amours sicom jeo lors serroie.

O tresgentile dame, simple et coie,
Des graces et des vertus replenis,

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Too late does my fortune arrive
at what I desire and pray for, it seems to me,
but nonetheless my heart constantly submits,^o
undivided,^o true, loyal, desirous
5 to see you—I who am fully your *ami*^o
so completely that I could not say,
for after God^o and the saints in paradise,
in you remains my sovereign joy.

10 Before I see you with my two eyes,
a thousand times a day my heart is sent
in place of me to take the direct route
to visit both you and your country,
and until it has set itself in your presence,
Desire constantly accompanies it and escorts^o it,
15 ^oas one who is so captured by your love
that by no means is it able to get away.

^oIf I must disclose myself to you,
in loving you I am so fully enraptured
that most of the time my judgment^o goes astray.
20 I don't know if I'm hot or cold, or dead or alive,
or high or low, or constant or disloyal,^o
or early or late, or near or far.
But while thinking I am so dazed^o
that it seems to me as if I am dreaming.

25 ^oFor you, my lady, I rejoice in pain,
I laugh in tears, and in good health I languish,
I play in sadness, and in safety I take fright,
I burn in frost, and in heat I shiver.^o
Strong and capable of loving, poor and beggarly in love,^o
30 I am completely yours, and if you were mine,
in all the world there would not be anyone as joyful
because of his love as I would be then.

Oh most gentle lady, simple and demure,^o
full of grace and virtue

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35 Lessez venir Merci, jeo vous supploie,
Et demorir tanqu'il m'avera guaris,
Car sanz vous vivre ne suis poestis.^o
Tout sont en vous li bien qe jeo voldroie.
En *vostre* aguard ma fortune est assis.
40 Ceo qe vous plest, de bon grée jeo l'otroie.

La flour des flours plusbelle au droit devis,
Ceste compleignte a vous directe envoie.
Croietz moi, dame, ensi com jeo vous dis,
En vous remaint ma soveraine joie.

7 MS Qa pres

14 MS len coste

37 MS poestes. *Emended for rhyme. Adjective "poestis" occurs three times in MO, in 1222, 7981, and 15368.*

- 35 let Mercy come, I beseech you,
and stay until it has healed me,
for I am not capable° of living without you.
In you are all the good qualities° that I wish for.
My fortune is placed under your control.°
- 40 Whatever pleases you, I grant it with good will.

The most beautiful flower of flowers, to perfection,°
this complaint° I send to you directly.
Believe me, lady, just as I say to you,
in you remains my sovereign joy.

The tenth lyric in 50B is not a ballade at all but a *chanson royale* or *chant royal*, a five-stanza poem with an envoy. (On the form, see Poirion, *Poète et Prince*, pp. 362-66, 369-74.) Though the *chanson royale* was far less popular than either ballade or rondeau, each of the major poets provides examples, which are included in the manuscripts among the poets' works in the other *formes fixes*. The terminology was not always precise: though Deschamps recognizes the *chanson royale* as a five-stanza form in his *Art de Dictier* (*Oeuvres*, 7:281), in the list of rubrics at the beginning of the manuscript of his collected works (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 840), ballades and *chansons royales* are mixed together, and most of the *chansons royales* (e.g. on ff. 103-140^v) are headed "Balade." Gower's inclusion of a *chanson royale* among his "Fifty Ballades" is unusual only when measured against an atypically uniform collection such as 100B, but even there, two of the responses that are attached at the end (numbers 3 and 12) are in five stanzas. Gower's one example follows Machaut's practice of not using a refrain (Deschamps regularly included one), though he repeats the last line of the first stanza in the last line of the envoy. It is exceptional in employing only two rhymes (-oie and -is); Machaut's, Deschamps', and Froissart's *chansons royales* all use three, four, or five.

The first two stanzas, the last, and the envoy contain a number of direct echoes of ballades 1-3 and 5-8, bringing to a conclusion the web of inter-reference among this first group of poems. The echoes of 4¹, 4², and 5 are fewer and seem almost incidental. The most obvious are these: "jeo desire et proie" (9.1: 3.18); "vient ma fortune au point" (9.2: 1.22, 6.8); "se ploie" (9.3: 3.16); "de vous veoir" (9.4: the same wish implied or expressed in 1.26, 2.26, 6.R, 7.24, and 8.R); "remain" (9.8: 1.R); "sovereine joie" (9.8: 8.23); "millfoitz le jour mon coer y est tramis" (9.9-10: 3.9-10, 23, 6.18-19, 8.13); "en lieu de moi" (9.11: 3.23, 8.7); "la droite voie" (9.11: 8.7); "vo paiis" (9.12: 7.R); "vo presence" (9.13: 6.R, 7.24); "le convoie" (9.14: 8.20); "si vous fuissetz moie" (9.30: 3.5); "simple et coie" (9.33: 3.12); "fleur des fleurs" (9.41: 4¹.22, 6.22); "compleignte" (9.42: 3.3); "croietz moi, dame, ainsi com jeo vous dis" (9.43: 2.7-9, 4¹.12). The last stanza and the envoy bring the poem to a close by reintroducing the theme of Fortune from line 1 and by repeating the final line of the first stanza in the envoy. At the same time, the appeal to Mercy in line 35 is a new theme, not present in 1-8, and it provides the transition to the different emotional world of ballades 10-20 that follow.

Stanzas three and four are the outliers, highly conventional in themselves but bearing little relation to the imagery of the rest of the poem, and it is not impossible to believe that they were

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an afterthought, added for whatever reason to stretch a three-stanza ballade into a five-stanza *chanson royale*.

- 3 *submits*. "Se ploier" ordinarily means "to bend, to turn, to sag" (see *DMF* s.v. "plier," II.A; *AND* s.v. "plier," v.refl., 1, 2). *AND* also gives examples of a more figurative use, "be subject to, obedient to," "to bow down to, humble oneself before" but in all cases followed by a prepositional phrase (e.g. "to submit to something"), as in 25.15. "Submits," "yields," "surrenders," "succumbs" all might work here, but the thought still seems incomplete. Alternatively, this might be another example of the use reflected in 3.16, "my heart strives to see you," with both "se ploie" and "entralentis" (in the next line) completed by "de vous veoir" in line 5, though "de" might not be the preposition that one expects in this context.
- 4 *undivided*. "Parfait" more often signifies "finished, complete, total" than it does "flawless" in Middle French. See *DMF* s.v. "parfait" and *AND* s.v. "parfit," 3, "undivided, loyal," citing a passage in which the reference, as here, is to the heart. Cf. 26.15.
- 5 There is no antecedent for "qui" (which must be first person singular because of "sui") in the preceding clause, and it must be supplied, but the "I" is then left without a predicate, even if (and this is another point of uncertainty) it rather than "mon coer" is meant to be modified by the adjectives in the preceding line. The grammar of this stanza would be considerably simplified if the "qui" were "que" instead: "For I am fully your *ami*." The use of "sui" without the subject pronoun is a bit unusual for Gower, but there are two other examples in this poem, in lines 18 and 37. On "*ami*" see the note to 4¹.7.
- 7 *after God*. The orthodox Gower raises his head, as in 24.26, 26.13, and 31.14.
- 14 *escorts*. Both "encoste" and "convoie" can mean "accompany, escort," but "convoie" can also have the sense of "guide" or "lead" (cf. 8.20 and the note), which may not be inappropriate here. See also 12.14 (for an unusual reflexive form) and 15.5.
- 15-16 The referent of "cil" is not entirely clear (Desire? or the heart?); nor is it clear if this clause is meant to be comparative or descriptive ("like one who" or "as one who?"). If the former, the "it" in line 16 should perhaps be "he." See the note to 7.7.
- 17-22 Compare Machaut, *Lou*. 162.12-16: "Me court seure / Desirs par si grant ardour / Que je n'ay scens ne pooir ne vigour, / Einsois me sens de s'amour si ravis / Que je ne sçay se je sui mors ou vis [Desire overwhelms me with such great ardor that I have neither sense nor power nor strength; instead I feel so enraptured with love that I don't know if I am dead or alive]." Also *Lou*. 162.R: "Que je ne sçay se je sui mors ou vis [that I don't know if I'm dead or alive]." The persona also experiences loss of sense in *Lou*. 3.13-15, 142.12, 151.2, 176.13, *et al*.
- 19 *judgment*. "Sentement" can be "feeling" (*DMF* s.v. "sentement," C.2.), as in Machaut, *Remede* 407-08: "Car qui de sentement ne fait, / Son oeuvre et son chant contrefait [for he who does not compose with feeling falsifies his poem and his song]." But there are also contexts, like this one, where "capacity for judgment" is more appropriate, as in the passage in Christine de Pizan's *Chemin de long estude*, 5448-50, cited in *DMF*, loc.cit., C.1: "empeschier Ne doit mie son sentement Par boire ou mengier gloutement [(the prince) should not impair his judgment by drinking or eating with gluttony]."
- 21 *constant or disloyal*. The implication of "true or false in love" emerges from the juxtaposition of "certein" and "failli." Describing a person's character or behavior, "certein" suggests "steadfast, reliable, trustworthy" (*AND* s.v. "certein," 3), "À qui l'on peut se fier, qui est sûr, digne de confiance [whom one can trust, who is reliable, worthy of confidence]," "fidèle, sincère [faithful, sincere]" (*DMF* s.v. "certain," I.B.1.a, b). Gower uses it again in this sense in 40.4 with reference to a woman who is *not* faithful. "Failli" in such contexts implies the opposite. *AND* s.v. "faillir," "p.p. as

- a.," 3, gives "faithless, disloyal," and *DMF* s.v. "failli" gives "Lâche, perfide, traître [cowardly, deceitful, treacherous]," citing Machaut, *Remede* 2028, with reference to those who are banished from Love's court, and with citations from Machaut, Deschamps, and Chartier for the phrase "coeur failli" where the context is disloyalty in love.
- 23 *dazed*. "Esbaubis," was evidently uncommon and it may have been restricted to continental use. It receives only one citation in *DMF* s.v. "ébaubi" and no entry at all in *AND* (as noted by Merrilees and Pagan, p. 130). The related verb "abaubir" receives a longer entry in *DMF*, including citations from Froissart, and Gower uses the form "abaubis [confused]" in *MO* 25761, but despite Gower's use, this spelling too gets no entry in *AND*.
- 25-32 Oxymora of this sort are one of the staples of medieval descriptions on love. See 3.1-4, 13.2, 24, and 47.24, and especially 48, and the notes to 48.10 (for line 27), 48.11 (for line 21), 48.13 (for line 26), and 48.16 (for line 22).
- 28 Cf. Machaut, *Lou*. 147.6: "Trambler sans froit et sans chalour suer [shiver without cold and sweat without heat]."
- 29 Cf. Machaut, *Bal.Not.* 5.1: "Riches d'amour et mendians d'amie [rich in love and destitute of *amie*]." 33 *simple and demure*. See the note to 3.12.
- 37 *capable*. This is an unusual use of "poestis." *DMF* s.v. "poesteif" translates only as "puissant, fort [powerful, strong]." *AND* s.v. "poestif" similarly gives "powerful, mighty," but it also provides three citations under "(ester) poestif de (+ inf.)," which it translates as "(to be) able to." Neither dictionary, however, has any citations of the adjective followed by an infinitive without the "de." 38 *good qualities*. A common use of "biens" in 50B; see 13.12, 14.2, 31.25, 39.25, *et al.*
- 39 *under your control*. "Aguard" most literally means "regard" (cf. Gower's use of the related verb in 22.27), but especially in legal or administrative contexts it has senses that extend to "consideration," "judgment," "control," or "decision" (as in 25.20); see *AND* s.v. "agard," *DMF* s.v. "égard." For the phrase "ester a l'agard de," *AND*, loc.cit, offers "to be, remain at the mercy, disposal of," which would also work well in this line.
- 41 *to perfection*. "A . . . devis" is a common expression in Machaut, especially after a word for beauty. See the citations in *DMF* s.v. "devis," B.3. Gower adapts and amplifies the expression "flour des flours"; see the note to 4¹.22.
- 42 *complaint* may refer both to the content of the poem and to the poem itself, as in 43.26 and possibly in 42.27 as well. "Complainte" was a common label especially for longer lyric poems in the 14th century. It was not a fixed genre metrically: seven of Machaut's nine "complaintes" are in rhyming couplets, and the other two use different stanza forms. But I don't know of any other instance in which a ballade or *chanson royale* is labeled a "complainte" either in the heading or in the poem itself. On the use of the related verb see the note to 41.5-6.