

11

Mes sens foreins se pourront bien movoir,
Mais li coers maint en un soul point toutdis,
Et c'est, ma dame, en vous, pour dire voir,
A qui jeo vuill servir en faitz et ditz,
5 Car pour sercher le monde, a *moun* avis,
Vous estes la plusbelle et gracieuse,
Si vous fuissetz un poi plusameroise.

Soubtz ciel n'est uns, maisqu'il vous poet veoir,
Qu'il ne serroit tantost d'amer suspris,
10 Q'en la bealté qe dieus t'ad fait avoir
Sont les vertus si pleinement compris
Qe riens y falt, dont l'en doit doner pris
A vous, ma douce dame glorioise,
Si vous fuissetz un poi plusameroise.

15 Jeo° sui del tout, ma dame, en vo pooir,
Come cil qui sui par droit amour soubgis
De noet et jour pour faire vo voloir,
Et dieus le sciet qe ceo n'est pas envis,
Par quoi jeo quier° vos *graces* et mercis,
20 Car *par* reson vous me serretz pitouse,
Si vous fuissetz un poi plusameroise.

A vous, ma dame, envoie cest escris,
Qe trop *perestes* belle et dangereuse.
Meilour de vous om sciet en null paiis,
25 Si vous fuissetz un poi plusameroise.

15 MS Iieo
19 Mac quiers

11

°My outward senses could° well move about,
°but the heart always remains in just one place,
and that is with you, my lady, to tell the truth,
whom I wish to serve in deeds and words,°
5 for searching throughout the world,° in my opinion,
you are the most beautiful and gracious,
if only you were a little bit more loving.

°Under heaven there is no one, were he to see you,°
who would not be captured at once by love,
10 °for within the beauty that God made you possess
are the virtues so fully contained
°that nothing lacks, for which one should give praise
to you, my sweet glorious lady,
if only you were a little bit more loving.

15 I am completely, my lady, in your power,
as he who is° held subject by true love
by night and day in order to do your wish,
and God knows that this is not begrudgingly,
for which I seek your grace and mercy,
20 for according to reason,° you would take pity on me,
if only you were a little bit more loving.

My lady, I send this writing to you
who° seem very beautiful and distant.°
Nowhere does anyone know one better than you,
25 if only you were a little bit more loving.

In 11, the refrain changes everything. Without the final line in each stanza (try reading it that way), this ballade offers routine, almost parodic flattery of the lady together with a formulaic request for her “grace and mercy,” as in 10, but without either the tone of complaint (10.9) or that of begging (10.20). Instead, three times the refrain breaks in with unanticipated qualification of that praise, and once (in stanza 3) it serves as a final deflation of the persona’s hopes. Addressed as it is to the lady herself, but placed in an “if” clause, it captures at once his fear of displeasing her, his impatience and frustration, and his recognition that she isn’t likely to change. In the cautious, understated way in which it expresses his real wish, moreover, it constitutes in effect a dismissal of the hyperbole of the rest of the poem. Gower unexpectedly

Balade 11

breaks free of inherited conventions here, and he creates a new dramatic pose out of the old language.

His complaint, in itself, is not unprecedented. In Machaut's *Vergier*, the narrator's only qualification in his praise of the lady that he loves is that she is "vers moy trop dure [too harsh towards me]" (106); and Granson has a ballade (38) in which the refrain, "Car trop par est son cuer plein de reffus [because her heart is much too full of scorn]," also serves to qualify the praise of the lady in all of the rest of the poem. In Machaut, *Lou*. 117.32, the persona claims of his lady that "Riens n'i faut fors merci seulement [nothing lacks in her but *merci* alone]"; and in Froissart's "Joli Mois de Mai," we similarly find, "Il ne li faut fors que pité [nothing lacks in her but pity]" (95), a formula that Gower echoes in lines 12-14. These all have less dramatic effect than Gower's poem since they speak about the lady rather than to her. More like Gower's dramatically is a poem in the Pennsylvania manuscript (Mudge 90) that is addressed to the lady and in which the stanzas of even more exuberant praise conclude with the refrain, "Mais qu'il vous plaise à moy amer [provided that it please you (or would it please you) to love me]." But where Granson's persona expresses a condition to his praise that serves almost as a demand, Gower's more poignantly offers an expression of regret for what he wishes for but knows that he cannot have.

- 1-2 This somewhat unusual way of differentiating between the physical body and the heart is illuminated by MO 11815-20, which explains the two "delights" that God provided in creating humans with two natures:

L'un est au corps tout proprement
Qe les cynk sens forainement
Luy font avoir, mais pour cela
Qe l'autre a l'esperit appent,
Ce vient d'asses plus noblement
Dedeins le cuer, u l'alme esta.

("One [delight] belongs to the body, which the five senses provide to it externally, but the other belongs to the spirit. It comes rather more nobly within the heart, where the soul resides.")

See also the references to the "sens foreins [outward senses]" in MO 10565 and 16585-96. Here too the senses are linked "externally" to the physical and corporeal (that which can move about) as opposed to the internal, the realm of the heart, the seat of the soul or (in this poem) of the emotions. *AND*, s.v. "foreign" provides one 13th-century citation for "sens foreins" meaning "physical senses." *DMF*, s.v. "forain," A.2, has several citations for "Externe (p. rapport au corps) [external (with relation to the body)]," "Externe, purement physique [external, purely physical]," but none with specific reference to the senses.

- 1 *could*. On the use of what appears to be a future tense form for the conditional see the note in the Introduction, pp. 21-22.
- 2-3 On the motif of leaving the heart behind see the note to 7.2-4.
- 4 *deeds and words*. Proverbial: Hassell F16, Whiting W642. The order is reversed in the two languages. Machaut was particularly fond of the expression (see *Lou*. 24.3, 47.6, 57.3, 88.R, *et al.*), but examples among other writers, in both languages, are far too numerous to count. Cf. 26.13 and (for contrast) 40.3-4.
- 5 *searching throughout the world*. Elsewhere (in 14.1, 22.19, 24.9. *et al.*), Gower uses "pour" plus infinitive very much like Modern French "en" plus present participle, to introduce a verbal

modifier of the subject of the main verb. Here, as in 34.17 and 45.8, the structure is somewhat looser since the implicit subject lacks, and it resembles one use of "forto" in ME, e.g. in CA Prol.31, "As forto speke of tyme ago," or CT GP 73, "for to tellen yow of his array," both cited in MED s.v. "forto," 3(b). For a different use of "pour" before infinitives resembling the use of "forto" after certain other verbs, see the note to 4².4.

- 8-9 The hypothetical onlooker who cannot resist being captured by love may be another lyric formula. See, for instance, Granson 36.7-8, 65.13-16, 70.34-36, 74.129-36, 76.223-24. See also 38.8-10, 39.9-11, and CA 2.2023-27:

Is non so wys that scholde asterte,
Bot he were lustles in his herte,
Forwhy and he my ladi sihe,
Hir visage and hir goodlych yhe,
Bot he hire lovede, er he wente.

- 8 *were he to see you*. From Yeager. See the note to 10.5
- 10-11 These lines echo the formulaic collocation of "beauté" and "bonté"; see the note to 4¹.11.
- 12-14 *nothing lacks*. Gower reprises the formula in 14.3-4 and 39.6-7, but without the qualification expressed here in the refrain. The formula appears with a similar qualification in 17.26. Macaulay punctuates these lines differently, putting a semicolon after "falt," turning "dont" into a conjunction (Yeager: "thus") instead of a relative. With relative "dont," the construction is still ambiguous. The comma (which of course is modern) makes the "dont" refer to the entire preceding proposition. Without it, the translation might be "nothing lacks of that for which one should give you praise," as in 14.3 and 39.6-7, but in both those instances, Gower uses "de ce dont" instead of "dont" alone.
- 16 The first-person verb ("sui") is impossible to render in translation. On the possibilities offered by "com cil qui" see the note to 7.7.
- 20 In the *Roman de la rose*, Reason is hostile to love, but the persona's appeal to reason in support of his claim to pity appears entirely without irony here. (Later in 50B [49.3-4, 50R, 51.2], reason is invoked as the proper guide of true love.) For the present line cf. Machaut, *Lou*. 197.9-10 (a woman speaking): "Car Raisons vuet, s'il aime sans folour / et sans partir, qu'il en soit remeris [for Reason wishes, if he loves without folly and undividedly, that he be rewarded]"; and Motet 15, in which "Raison" is allied with "Franchise, Grace et Pité" (line 27) against "Cruauté," "Refus [rejection]," and "Dangiers" (lines 28-35).
- 23 *who*. This "qe" might be a conjunction instead "for you seem very beautiful and distant," though the causative seems to make less sense. Gower elsewhere uses "qe" in subject position, as in 5.17 *et al. distant*. Gower uses "dangereuse" only here and in 48.13, where it means "perilous." In 30, he juxtaposes the two different general senses of "danger," with reference to the lady's standoffishness and to the dangers of such activities as seafaring. Here only the former is in play, but there is still a considerable range in meaning, from "reserved" to "disdainful." I chose "distant" as a neutral middle ground. This envoy provides a link and transition to the next ballade. On "Danger," see the note to 12.8.