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- Fortune, om dist, de sa Roe vire ades.
A mon avis mais il n'est pas ensi,
Car as toutz jours la troeve d'un reles,
Que jeo sai nulle variance en li.
5 Ainz est en mes deseases establi.
En bass me tient, q'a lever ne me lesse.
De mes amours est tout ceo que jeo di:
Ma dolour monte et ma joie descesce.
- 10 *Après la guerre om voit venir la pes;*
Après l'ivern est l'estée beal flori,
Mais mon estat ne voi changer *jammes*
Que jeo d'amour porrai troever merci.
Hé, noble dame, pour quoi est il ensi?
Soubtz *vostre* main gist ma fortune oppresse.
15 Tanq'il vous plest que jeo serrai guari,
Ma dolour monte et ma joie descesce.
- Celle infortune dont Palamedes
Chaoit fist tant q'Agamenon chosi
Fuiſt a l'empire; auci Diomedes,
20 *Par* ceo que Troilus estoit guerpi,
De ses amours la fortune ad saisi:
Du fille au Calcas mesna sa leesce.
Mais endroit moi la fortune est faili:
Ma dolour monte et ma joie descesce.
- 25 Le coer entier avoec ceo *lettre* ci
Envoie a vous, ma dame et ma dieuesce.
Prenetz pité de mon *trespovere* cri:
Ma dolour monte et ma joie descesce.

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- °Fortune, they say, constantly turns her wheel°
But° that isn't so, in my opinion,
°for I always find it in the same position,°
for I don't know any variation in it.
5 Instead it is stuck on my distress.
It holds me down, for it doesn't let me rise.
Everything I say is with regard to my love:
my sadness mounts and my joy decreases.°
- °After war, ones sees come the peace,°
10 after winter is the beautifully flowered spring,°
but I don't ever see my condition change
so that I might find mercy in love.
Oh noble lady,° why is it so?
My fortune lies crushed beneath your hand.
15 Until it pleases you that I be healed,
my sadness mounts and my joy decreases.
- °That misfortune by which Palamedes
fell brought about that Agamemnon
was chosen as ruler.° °Diomedes too,°
20 because Troilus was forsaken,
seized fortune in his love:°
he carried on his joy with the daughter of Calcas.
But as regards myself, fortune is lacking:
my sadness mounts and my joy decreases.
- 25 The entire heart with this letter
I send to you, my lady and my goddess.°
Take pity on my miserable cry:
my sadness mounts and my joy decreases.

The course of love is often linked either to the arbitrariness or to the predictable effects of Fortune, represented by her wheel, in the literature that Gower knew. The fullest narrative exposition of the latter is certainly Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (see in particular 1.837-54 and 4.1-11). Warnings against placing one's trust in Fortune or her gifts, echoing Boethius, are also commonplace, e.g. in Machaut, *Motet 8* or *Remede*, 1113-28. But the moral lesson as applied to love is rarely so simple. While Troilus is disappointed in the outcome of events, certainly we are meant to feel, as he does until he ascends to the eighth sphere, that something truly valuable has

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been lost. In Machaut's *Remede*, the narrator's denunciation of Fortune leads to a lesson from Esperance on a form of love between a man and a woman that is a 'bien de vertu [good of virtue]' rather than a "bien de Fortune [good of Fortune]" (2797-2803), echoing Lady Philosophy's description of friendship in *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, 3, pr.2. And while Fortune is often cited as governing the outcomes of love in *CA*, Genius' lessons for Amans in Books 1-7, like Esperance's, have to do with the lover's conduct rather than with simply eschewing the deceptiveness of love. Lyrics typically take a much more limited view, as seen from the perspective of the unhappy lover. Especially during the earlier part of the century, Fortune is almost invariably personified (without exception in Machaut), and she is typically held to blame for her hostility, her arbitrariness, or her indifference to the lover's cause (e.g. in the woman's lament in 43.15, or in Machaut, *Lou*, 38.11, 56.7, 189.1), but there are only very rare references to her wheel (none in Machaut or Granson), and no allusion at all to the dangers of the downward course that must inevitably follow great happiness.

Gower varies the motif somewhat in this ballade. The persona refers to Fortune's wheel but not because he has suffered, for he hasn't "fallen" and he hasn't experienced any loss. His complaint is that Fortune *hasn't* turned her wheel in his case: he is always stuck at the bottom, and he can't foresee anything that resembles the pleasant outcomes that he describes in stanza two. The persona's implicit expectation that he should be able to benefit from Fortune's changeability is not entirely unprecedented: Esperance offers a similar consolation in *Remede* 2695-97, as does Pandarus, perhaps a bit more ambiguously, in *T&C* 841-54, which, especially in combination with the examples in the following stanza, makes one think that Gower might actually have had Chaucer's poem in mind as he composed this ballade. But the persona's (and Pandarus') hope would have been ridiculed by Lady Philosophy, and his implicit self-deceptiveness might be reinforced by his reference to the lady as his "dieuesce" in line 26, though other lovers have made the same claim without evident irony (see the note to this line). Did Gower intend us to understand that his persona was deluded not just about his prospects with his lady or about the effect of his persistence (as in ballade 19), but about the very value of so transient a phenomenon as human love? If so, this poem is not just unique to *50B* but without any precedent in earlier 14th-century lyrics as far as I know.

The third stanza does little to clarify the issue. The persona cites two examples. Both are offered as evidence that good fortune can follow bad, but in both cases, the bad fortune in someone else's and therefore not really much like winter yielding to spring, and the consolation is strained in any case since there isn't any real reason for the persona to think that he should be more like Agamemnon and Diomedes than like Palamedes and Troilus. The ballade ends, like several others in this section, by setting aside the entire trope around which it is built as the persona describes the poem itself as his "trespovere cri" and transmits it to his lady. Whatever the intended effect here, Gower juxtaposes this poem with ballade 21, which also suggests that the lady is "divine" but for reasons having to do with her character rather than with the persona's obsession with her, and which describes a type of love of which Esperance and Lady Philosophy might well not disapprove.

1-6 The opening stanza contains Gower's fullest personification of Fortune in *50B* and his only reference to her wheel. Fortune personified also occurs in 1.22, 6.8, 10.8, 43.15, and *Tr* 15.15, but

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Gower more commonly uses "fortune" to mean "situation" or "circumstances," for better or for worse, as in line 14 (cf. 9.2 and 39), or more specifically "good fortune," as in lines 21 and 23 (cf. 33.20).

- 1 *turns her wheel*. The "de" is problematic and should perhaps be omitted. "Virer" normally takes a simple object (see both *AND* and *DMF* s.v. "virer"), as in *MO* 10942: "[Fortune] Soudainement sa roe vire." "De" is also unnecessary metrically. As Macaulay notes (1:465), "roe" is treated as two syllables in *MO* 10942, as also in 22043 and in Machaut, *Remede*, 2557, but it must be counted as monosyllabic if "de" is included. (Gower's only two other uses of "roe," in *MO* 21984 and 22101, are not helpful since in each case it is followed by a word beginning with a vowel.) "Virer" itself is not as common as "tourner" in this context. Gower uses "virer" only here, in the passage cited in *MO*, and in *MO* 28061, in a different context, in the reflexive.
- 2 On the position of "mais [but]" see Macaulay's note (1:465) and the note to 6.6-7 above.
- 3-6 The pronouns here are uncertain, since it is not entirely clear when he is talking about Fortune and when about her wheel. For "it" one might well read "her" or "she" instead.
- 3 *position*. Gower normally uses "reles" to mean either "delay," especially in the phrase "sanz (nul) reles," as in *MO* 2421 *et al.* (*DMF* s.v. "relais," C; *AND* s.v. "relès," 3), or "release, remission," as in 29.22 (*AND*, loc.cit., 1). Neither works here. "Relais" was also used with reference to horses and dogs posted along a route or hunting path to substitute for those that have become fatigued (*DMF*, loc.cit., B.1), from which we get "relay race." In Middle English, "relai" could be used for the hounds used in relay (as in *BD* 462), or for "the place where the hounds are posted" (*MED* s.v. "relai," with the earliest citations from c.1410). Lacking any better solution, I take "reles" in this line too to refer to positions or stages on a route or path, more specifically the position of Fortune's wheel.
- 8 On the common collocation of joy and sorrow see the note to 2.8. The refrain to this ballade is in effect the reverse of that of 2, "Quant dolour vait, les joies vienont pres [when sorrow departs, joys draw near]." It seems to borrow the vocabulary of the wheel with its rising and falling, but in fact it is a quite different image, more appropriate, say, to a balance scale or to the two buckets in a well (as in the description of Fortune in Machaut, *Remede* 969-75), since in what is only superficially a paradox, the rise and fall are simultaneous and indeed mutual conditions.
mounts. "Monter" might be used both for increase in height (suited the metaphor of the wheel) and increase in quantity (the persona's sadness), but "descesce" refers to a decrease in quantity alone (*AND* s.v. "decrestre").
- 9-12 Amans makes a similar complaint (using two of the same analogies) in his "Supplication" in *CA* 8.2259-65.
- 9 Proverbial. Hassell G59, "Après grant guerre grant paix," citing this passage and one other.
- 10 For other similar lines see 2.1 and the accompanying note.
- 13 This ballade may count among the small number in *50B* addressed to a woman of noble rank. See the note to 2.25.
- 17-22 Lists of her victims were commonplace in the descriptions of Fortune (see the examples listed by Patch, *Fortuna*, pp. 70-71). Here the narrator's intention is the opposite, to align himself with those who have benefitted from another's fall, consistent with his expectations of Fortune in the rest of the poem.
- 17-19 Benoit tells how after Agamemnon resigned command of the Greeks, Palamedes was chosen as his successor (*Roman de Troie*, 16859-17030), but after Palamedes was slain by Paris (18833-40), Agamemnon was again chosen as leader on the advice of Nestor (19035-75). Guido recounts the same events more briefly in *Historia*, Books 22 and 25. I owe the reference to Guido (which led me to Benoit) to a personal communication from R.F. Yeager.

- 19 *as ruler*. More precisely, "for rule, command." AND s.v. "empire," 1, 3; DMF s.v. "empire¹," C.
- 19-22 Gower uses Diomedes as an example of Supplantation in CA 2.2456-58, and he cites the story again in 5.7597-7602 and 8.2531-35. In all three cases he refers to Criseyde by name. This is the only passage in which he identifies her as the daughter of Calcas.
- 21 *seized fortune in his love*. I can find no other examples of the phrase "saisir la fortune." One might be tempted to translate "seized his chance; i.e., seized his opportunity," but such a use of "fortune" is not recorded. One might compare, however, "qui la fortune essaie [who tries his fortune]" in 27.11 (see the note). Perhaps something more like "took advantage of his good fortune" comes closer to the sense here.
- 26 *my goddess*. Cf. Machaut, *Lou.* 255.1: "Mon cuer, m'amour, ma deesse, m'amie [my heart, my love, my goddess, my amie];" *Voir Dit* 2686, 3580; Granson 78.386, 905, *et al.* In three of Machaut's *dits*, the narrator refers to the lady as his "dieu terrien [earthly god]": *Remede* 146; *Font.Am.* 1012; *Voir Dit* 1760, 5139.