

22

J'ai bien sovent oï *parler* d'amour,  
Mais ja devant n'esprovai la nature  
De son estat; mais ore au *present* jour  
Jeo sui cheeuz de soudeine aventure  
5 En la sotie u jeo languis sanz cure.  
Ne sai coment j'en puiss avoir socour,  
Car ma fortune est en ce cas si dure  
Q'ore est ma vie en ris, ore est en plour.

Pour bien penser jeo truiss assetz vigour,  
10 Mais *qant* jeo doi *parler* en ascune hure,  
Le coer me falt de si *tresgrant* paour  
Q'il hoste et tolt la vois et la *parlure*,  
Q'au peine lors si jeo ma regardure  
Porrai tenir a veoir la doulçour  
15 De celle en qui j'ai mis toute ma cure,  
Q'ore est ma vie en ris, ore est en plour.

*Qant* puiss mirer la face et la colour  
De ma *tresdoulce* dame et sa feture,  
Pour regarder en si° *tresbeal* mirour  
20 Jeo sui ravis° de joie oultre mesure,  
Mais tost *apres*, *qant* sui soulein, jeo plure.  
Ma joie ensi se melle de dolour.  
Ne sai *qant* sui dessoubtz ne *qant* dessure,  
Q'ore est ma vie en ris, ore est en plour.

25 A vous, *tresbelle* et bone creature,  
Salvant toutdis l'estat de *vostre* honour,  
Ceo *lettre* envoie; agardetz l'écriture,  
Q'ore est ma vie en ris, ore est en plour.

19 MS ensi

20 Mac ravi

22

°Quite often have I heard talk of love,  
but never before have I experienced the nature  
of that condition; but now, on the present day,  
I am fallen by sudden chance  
5 into the folly° where I languish without cure.  
I don't know how I can have relief,  
°for my fortune in this case is so hard  
that now is my life in laughter, now in tears.°

I find sufficient strength to think well,  
10 °but when at any time I have to speak,  
my heart fails me out of so great a fear  
that it strips and removes voice and speech,  
so that hardly then can I thus hold my gaze  
in order to see the sweetness  
15 of her in whom I have placed all my care,  
so that now is my life in laughter, now in tears.

°When I can gaze at the face and the complexion  
of my sweet lady and her form,  
in looking into so beautiful a mirror  
20 I am ravished with joy beyond measure,  
but soon afterwards, when I am alone, I weep.  
My joy is thus mixed with sadness.°  
I don't know when I am below and when above,  
for now is my life in laughter, now in tears.

25 To you, very beautiful and good creature,  
always with all due regard° for your honor,  
I send this letter. Behold the writing,  
for now is my life in laughter, now in tears.

The appearance here, near the center of 50B, of a poem on the first effects of love and on the persona's speechlessness, in contrast to the repeated, vain attempts to address the lady in 17, 18, and 19, constitutes the most obvious evidence against the presence of any sort of continuous narrative in the ballades as they are presently ordered. Gower draws upon the most completely conventional vocabulary to describe falling in love in this poem: "cheor" (4), "languir" (5), "socour" (6), "ravir" (20), "pleurer" (21), "joie" (22), "dolour" (22), and the two terms, "ris" and "plour," from which he has constructed the balanced phrases of the refrain. In the envoy, the

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*Balade 22*

persona turns to address his lady directly as he does in **14**, offering her the poem in writing to convey what he has been afraid to say aloud. As in the other ballades in which he switches from the third person to the first, Gower again overlays the lyric mode—in which the persona speaks of his lady to an impersonal audience, often of the feelings that he cannot reveal—with the dramatic, in which he addresses her directly, though in writing. Precedent can be found in the small number of poems in which the persona declares that he can reveal his love only in his poem, cited in the commentary to **14** above, and as in Machaut's Chans.Bal. 1.16-24, for instance, the persona's speechlessness becomes part of his message to her as he tells her what he cannot tell her about her effect upon him. In **22**, Gower avoids the dilemma posed in **14**, in which the persona complains that his earlier attempts have just provoked his lady's disdain, yet he fears just as greatly the effect of his silence. Here, the lady has had no apparent notice of the persona's affection, but her rejection is by no means a given. The dramatic context does add another dimension to a common theme; on the other hand, Gower does not introduce here the possibility of another perspective on the persona's condition that has us reading between the lines as in **18** and **19**.

- 1-6 Granson has two poems that refer to the first effects of love, **62**, a ballade which refers in lines 19-21 to the mixed joy and pain, and a "complainte" in the *Livre Messire Ode* in which the persona speaks, as here, of the "folie" into which he has fallen (78.2347) and of his lack of hope of any "secours" (78.2356).
- 5 *folly*. "Sotie" occurs three times in *50B*, here and in **48.23** and **51.4**. There are another 20 or so uses of "sot" or its derivatives in *MO*, and when there is enough context to allow an inference, these refer either to self-deceptive and thus self-destructive behavior (as in *MO* 1155, 1159, 5422 *et al.*) or to easy deception by others (as in the description of the ignorant cuckold in 8017 and 8841, the only reference to "sot amour," or in the warning against believing the promises of an adulteress in 8962), and it is three times conjoined to "nyce [silly, foolish]" or "nyceté [silliness, foolishness]" in 16090, 17430, and 17837. It does not therefore seem in itself to bear a moral connotation, though of course in *MO* it occurs with reference to behavior of which Gower disapproves. The same would be true of the use of "sotie" in the heading to *Tr* (with reference to the subject of *CA*) and in *Tr* **15.3**, referring to Tristram and Lancelot. Here too it appears to suggest only foolishness. In similar contexts, both Machaut and Granson use "fol" or its derivatives rather than "sot" or "sotie," which Gower uses with reference to love only in **48.13** and **51.3**, the same two poems in which "sotie" recurs. See further the notes to **48.23** and **51.4** below.
- 7-8 Cf. *Tr* **15.16-17**: "As uns est blanche, as uns fortune est noire. /Amour se torne trop diversement. / Ore est en joie, ore est en purgatoire [To some it's white, to some fortune is black. Love is transformed quite variously. Now it's in joy, now it's in purgatory]." Patch, *Fortuna*, p. 55 notes that the "now . . . now . . ." formula frequently occurs with reference to Fortune, citing, among others, *MO* 22154-56 and *CA* Prol.569-70, to which we can add, among many others, *CA* 8.1736-38: "Fro this day forth fortune hath sworn / To sette him upward on the whiel; / So goth the world, now wo, now wel." The formula also occurs with reference to the effects of love, as in Machaut, *Remede* 875-81.
- 8 The collocation of joy and sorrow is commonplace, usually in the context of one succeeding the other, as in the passages cited in the note to **2.8**. Here and in line 22 they are equal parts of the experience of love, as, for instance, in Machaut, *Lou.*, 3.1-2, "me doy pleindre et loer / D'Amour qui m'a mis en joie et en plour [I must reprove and praise Love, which has put me in joy and in weeping]."

*Balade 22*

- 10-12 When the persona is tongue-tied, it is most often out of a fear of rejection, as in Machaut, *Lou* 1.11-13, 2.12-13, 3.23-24; *Remede* 545-68; Froissart, *Can.Roy.* 2.48-50, *Bal.* 36.16-18, *Rond.* 26; and Granson, 75.178-80. Less common is his mere incapacity in the lady's presence, as in Machaut, *Lou.* 19.4-5; 124.5-6, in which the persona is overcome by his lady's beauty; and Chans.*Bal.* 1.16-24; and in Froissart, *Can.Roy.* 1.29-33, which claims that a true lover is so overcome with pleasure in his lady's presence that he cannot speak. See also Amans' confessions to Pusillanimity and Forgetfulness in *CA* 4.358-62 and 569-93.
- 17-19 Lost in translation here is the repetition of the root *mir-* in "mirer [to see]" (see the note to 12.17) and "mirour [mirror]" (see the note to 21.25). In line 19, a "mirour," in its most literal sense, is something that one looks into, but in the praise of the lady, the sense of "model, paragon" may also be present. So too may the "miroërs perilleus [perilous mirror]" in *RR* 1569 ff. (Chaucer, *Romaunt*, 1601 ff.), the fountain of Narcissus in which the narrator sees two crystal stones (the lady's eyes?) and in which he first sees the reflection of the rosebush and the rose. "Whoso loketh in that mirroure, / Ther may nothyng ben his socour / That he ne shall there sen somthyng / That shal hym lede into lovyng" (*Romaunt* 1605-8).
- 23 For the effects of love cf. 9.20-22, particularly "halt ou bass," 21.
- 26 *with all due regard.* For "salvant" see the note to 17.2.