

23

- Pour un regard au *primere* acqueintance
Qant jeo la bealté de ma dame vi,
Du coer, du corps, *trestoute* m'obeissance
Lui ai doné, tant sui d'amour ravi.
5 Du destre main jeo l'ai ma foi plevi,
Sur quoi ma dame ad resceu *moun* hommage
Com son servant et son loial ami.
A bone^o heure est qe jeo vi celle ymage.
- Par lui veoir, sanz autre sustenance,
10 Mais qe danger ne me soit anemi,
Il m'est avis de toute ma creance
Q'as toutz les jours jeo viveroie ensi.
Et c'est tout voir qe jeo lui aime si
Qe mieulx voldroie morir en son servage
15 Qe *vivere* ailours mill auns loigntain de li.
A bone heure est qe jeo vi celle ymage.
- De son consail, ceo me dist esperance:
Qe qant ma dame averai long temps servi
Et fait son gré d'onour et de plesance,
20 Lors solonc ceo qe j'averai deservi,
Le reguerdoun me serra de merci,
Q'elle est plusnoble et franche de corage
Qe Maii qant ad la *terre* tout flori.
A bone^o heure est qe jeo vi celle ymage.
- 25 Ceo dit envoie a vous, ma dame, en qui
La gentilesce et le *treshalt* parage
Se monstront,^o dont espoir m'ad rejoï.
A bone^o heure est qe jeo vi celle ymage.

8, 24, 28 *Mac bon*

27 monstront. *On the spelling, see the note to 12.21.*

23

- Because of° a look upon first meeting
when I saw the beauty of my lady,
with heart, with body, ° all my obedience
I gave to her, so much am I overcome by love.
5 With my right hand I promised her my faith,
whereupon° my lady received my homage
as her servant and her loyal *ami*.
It is at an auspicious moment that I saw that image.°
- °By seeing her, without other sustenance,
10 provided that Danger° is not my enemy,
I believe with all of my conviction
that I would live this way forever.
And it is completely true that I love her so much
°that I would rather die in servitude to her
15 than to live a thousand years elsewhere, far from her.
It is at an auspicious moment that I saw that image.
- °Out of its wisdom,° Hope tells me this:
that when I have served my lady for a long time
and done her will regarding both honor and pleasure,
20 then in accordance with what I will have deserved
the reward of mercy will be mine,
for she is more noble° and generous of heart
than May when it has made the whole earth flower.°
It is at an auspicious moment that I saw that image.
- 25 I send this poem to you, my lady, in whom
gentility and very noble birth°
are displayed, for which Hope has gladdened me.
It is at an auspicious moment° that I saw that image.

Like 10 (which it echoes in the refrain and in line 23), 23 is one of the more Machaut-like of Gower's ballades in imagery, in its avoidance of overly figurative language, in its use of personifications, and especially in its consistency of tone, here optimistic and celebratory, lacking the pain and pleading of 10. It strings together, smoothly and unchallengingly, some of the most common motifs to describe the lover's devotion and his hope for reward. Even the envoy, while it turns to address the lady who up to that point is referred to only in the third-person, constitutes a continuation of the poem rather than a stepping aside: it repeats both the

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imagery and the wish from the preceding stanza in such a way that the shift of person is hardly felt. But unlike the more interesting of Gower's ballades, the lady is hardly present even in being addressed, an "ymage," hidden behind the familiar tropes of "service," Danger, and Merci.

This ballade is also unusual for Gower in its self-conscious use of sound. Not only does it employ only two rhymes, but the "vi" of the refrain is echoed in the first and third stanzas by the "-vi" rhymes in lines 2, 4, 5, 18, and 20, and in the second stanza by alliteration, for all but the second line contains an accented syllable beginning with *v*, and by the echoes of "vi" in "avis" (11), "viveroi" (12), and "vivere" (15).

- 1 *because of.* "Pour" might also be "in exchange for," suggesting that the lady has given the persona a friendly glance. In all other appearances of "reg(u)ard" in 50B (in 12.7, 12.19, 19.13, 38.3) as also of "regardure" in 12.12 and "regarder" as a noun in 33.R, it is the lady looking at the persona rather than v.v. But lines 2 and 9 suggest that in this case it is the persona's sight of his lady that has done him in, as in 22.17-20, which line 1 appears to echo. The choice here — who is seeing whom — is similar to the difference between the subjective and objective uses of "vostre"; see the note to 7.11. For a different use of "regard" see 38.3.
- 3 *with heart, with body.* For the collocation see the note to 5.26. The other uses of similar phrases suggest that here they modify "gave" rather than the alternative, "all my obedience of heart, of body."
- 6 *whereupon.* AND s.v. "sur²," 14.
- 8 Earlier lyric lovers recall the moment of their first falling in love, either happily, as in Machaut, *Lou.* 7.19-20, "Certes bien doy amer l'eure et le jour / Que je senti l'amoureuse pointure [Surely should I love the hour and the day that I felt the sting of love]," or unhappily, as in *Lou.* 53, Granson 53. *auspicious moment.* On the merging of "heure [hour]" and "eur [luck, good fortune]," see 10.4 and the note.
image. See the note to 15.25-28. Here the primary meaning of "ymage" seems to be the woman's appearance, more specifically her face (DMF s.v. "image," I.B.1, 2), but the common use of "ymage" as an object of veneration (DMF, loc.cit., II.A) may also be present. See 15.25-28 and the note.
- 9-12 Earlier lovers frequently allude to their love as their "sustenance" (Granson 17.13, 24.20, 68.36; Machaut *Lou.* 7.13) or even their "norriture [food]" (Machaut *Lou.* 7.13, 25.22), without necessarily implying, however, that they require no other food, as Gower does here. Cf. 47.1-2 and the fuller, less optimistic use of the image of feeding in 16.
- 10 *Danger.* On the personification see the note to 12.8.
- 14-15 "I prefer X (something less desirable) with my lady to Y (something more desirable) without her" is a very common formula, another version of which appears in 27.R. For examples, see Machaut *Lou.* 9.R, 94.18-19, 138.15-18, 158.5-6, 8-13, 184.22-23. There are also no fewer than eleven variations on the formula in Granson.
- 17-23 When Esperance appears to the narrator in Machaut's *Remede*, she encourages him, among her other reassurances, to think that his lady, replete with so many virtues, cannot be without Pity, "Franchise [Generosity]," or the other traits of character that will aid his cause (1671-83). Similar confidence in the lady's good nature appears, for instance, in Machaut, *Lou.* 4.15-20 and 20.14-16, while in *Lou.* 88.9-10 and 109.19-25, the persona expresses a simple hope in his ultimate reward. Such confidence is, of course, the opposite of the persona's protest that his lady's behavior is inconsistent with her character, as in 12.17-18 and 28.1-4, 8-10, or that he has not gotten what he deserves for his long service, as in 17.

- 17 *wisdom*. AND s.v. "conseil," 1; DMF s.v. "conseil," I.D.3.
- 22 *noble*. "Noble" by itself might refer only to a quality of character (see the note to 2.25), but as in 6 and 13, it is here conjoined with a more specific allusion to the lady's rank in lines 25-27 and carries the implication that her character is a function of her rank.
- 23 Cf. the invocation of May as a measure of the lady's beauty in 10.22 and 15.17-18. I don't know of any model for the use of May as an image of generosity of heart.
- 26 *very noble birth*. "Parage" refers to rank at birth, especially in expressions such as "de haut parage" and "de bas parage," and in some contexts, such as this one, it also implies qualities of character associated with that rank. See DMF s.v. "Parage¹." AND s.v. "parage," 3 includes this passage as one of three citations under the definition "quality of nobility, i.e. courtesy, generosity etc.," but neither of the other two citations suggest that "parage" in this sense could be used with reference to someone who was not of noble birth. This is perhaps the clearest example in 50B of a poem addressed to a woman of the nobility. See the note to 2.25.