

28

Dame, u est ore celle naturesce
Que soloit estre en vous? Tiel^o temps jeo vi
Q'il ne vous plest de *vostre* gentilesce
Un soul salutz mander a *vostre* ami.
5 Ne quier de vous *forsque* le coer demi,
Et vous avetz le mien *trestout* entier.
Om voit sovent de petit poi doner.

Les vertus de franchise et de largesce
Jeo sai, ma dame, en vous sont establi,
10 Et vous savetz ma peine et ma destresce,
Dont *par* dolour jeo sui *sempres* faili
En le defalte soul de vo merci,
Q'il ne vous plest un mot a moi mander.
Om voit sovent de petit poi doner.

15 Tout qanque j'ai, ma dame, a vo noblesce
De coer et corps, jeo l'ai doné *parmi*,
Par quoi ne vous desplese, en ma simplesce
De *vostre* amour si jeo demande ensi,
Car cil qui done, il ad doun deservi.
20 Loial servant doit avoir son loer.
Om voit sovent de petit poi doner.

Ma douce dame, qui m'avetz oubli,
Prenetz ceo dit de moi pour remembrer,
Et mandetz moi de vos beals ditz auci,
25 Q'om voit sovent de petit poi doner.

2 *tiel* is severely abraded in the MS and is perhaps deliberately though incompletely erased . Cross drawn in margin. See the note to this line in the commentary.

16 *Y*ai. See the note to this line in the commentary.

28

Lady, where is now that goodly nature^o
that used to be in you? I have seen such times^o
that it doesn't please you out of your kindness
to send a single greeting to your *ami*.

5 I don't seek from you but half a heart,
and you have mine in its entirety.
One often sees from a little, a little given.^o

The virtues of generosity and of largesse
I know, my lady, are fixed in you,
10 and you know my pain and my distress,
from which out of grief I am often weakened
in default only of your mercy,
for it doesn't please you to send a word to me.
One often sees from a little, a little given.

15 Everything I have, my lady, to your nobleness,^o
of heart and body, I have given completely,^o
for which, may it not displease you, in my simpleness,^o
if I thus ask for your love,
for he who gives, he has deserved a gift.^o
20 A loyal servant ought to have his pay.^o
One often sees from a little, a little given.

My sweet lady, who have forgotten me,
take this poem from me as a reminder,
and send me some of your fair words^o as well,
25 for one often sees from a little, a little given.^o

28 offers another version of the persona's claim that the woman that he addresses owes him something in return for his affection, as in 17 and 26. It echoes the motif of the gift of the heart from both (17.11, 26.R). Like 17, it equates his unrequited love with uncompensated service (17.14); and as in 26, there are small hints of a difference in rank (lines 15, 17), and he addresses the poem directly to his lady. It differs from both in the presumed narrative situation: they have a longstanding relationship, one in which she used to be kinder and in which he can claim to be her "ami" (4), and rather than simply failing to respond to him, she has evidently turned away.

In that respect 28 again recalls Machaut's *Lou*. 263, discussed in the commentary to 26 above. But in Machaut's ballade, the woman seeks to persuade the man that she loves that a

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difference in rank matters not in matters of love. Here, as in 26, the persona makes a balder claim for a *quid pro quo* based upon what he claims to have "given," and as in 26, his claim might seem to grow weaker with each repetition of the refrain. The other examples of a similar expression (see the note to line 7 below) confirm the proverbial character of the refrain and indicate that its primary meaning is an encouragement to charity: from the contrast to those who have nothing to give, we should understand it as "one sees from a little, a little given" (that is, even the poor give something) rather than "one sees from a little, little given" (that is, the poor don't give very much and maybe nothing at all). In its first use in this poem, it might suggest a modest lack of presumptuousness in the persona's request. By the fourth instance, however, it sounds more like pleading, and increasingly desperate pleading at that, as "petit" is applied in different specific contexts. In the second stanza, the persona bases his claims not on reason as in 17.10 and 26.27 but on the lady's generous nature, but lines 12-14 suggest that, at least with regard to the persona, she doesn't have very much "merci" at all, and like the persona in 17, he pursues something that doesn't actually exist. In stanza three it is her love that is evidently in short supply, and in the envoy, lines 24-25 suggest that the woman doesn't have that many encouraging words to give. In each case, one can take the "petit" of the refrain as a resigned concession, as a complaint, or as a mixture of both, but it is difficult to see how the woman will be altered by this plea. Perhaps by the end we are meant to feel that, in the repetition of "petit," the persona finds it unpersuasive too.

- 1 *goodly nature*. So was "naturesce" used, though the word was evidently not very common in Gower's time. Gower employs it only here and in 44.18. It appears also to be an Anglo-Norman term: all of the citations in *AND*, *DMF*, and Godefroy (all s.v. "naturesse") are from English sources. The early 14th-century Anglo-Norman author Nicole Bozon, better known for his *Contes moralisés*, wrote a verse "Tretis de denaturesse"; British Library MS Add. 46919 (olim Phillipps 8336), ff. 49v-50 (Dean and Boulton, no. 145). "Denaturesse [unkindness, ingratitude]" is also cited only from English sources in *AND* s.v. "denaturesce," *DMF* s.v. "denaturesse." It appears to be equally uncommon, but one wonders if Gower's "unkindeschipe" (e.g. in *CA* 5. 5202, 5207) is a calque on the Anglo-Norman word. All but one later citation in *MED* s.v. "unkindeshippe" are from *CA*.
- 2 *I have seen such times*. Macaulay punctuates this line differently, placing "tiels temps jeo vi" within the same clause as the first half of line 2 and placing the question mark at the end of line 4. He may be right, but the resulting construction is awkward at best. For "tiel," Macaulay's glossary includes "many a one," and we might therefore have "where is now that goodly nature that used to be in you many a time I saw." Macaulay may, however, have had in mind not this line but instead passages like *MO* 9493, "Et tiele y a q'en sa vielexce / Devient d'amour la sorceresse," where Gower is clearly thinking of a type rather than a particular individual and where one might therefore translate "And there is many a one who in old age become a sorceress of love." The use of the noun "temps" adverbially (that is, without a preceding preposition) is perhaps less striking than the omission of the relative ("many a time *that* I saw"). But the result perhaps makes better sense than the translation that I offer. Grammatically, "tiel . . . q[e]" is unexceptional, and making "tiel temps" the object of "vi" eliminates the need both for a preposition and for a relative, but the past tense of "vi" confuses the time scheme a bit: in the past tense, "vi [saw]" should refer to the earlier friendly times rather than the current chillier ones, and I have by glossed over the problem by translating "vi" as "have seen." The third alternative is to treat the entire clause as parenthetical: "(I saw such

times"); but that leaves the "q" in the next line hanging. The abrasion of "tiel" in the manuscript and the cross in the margin might indicate some uncertainty both about what was written and about what was intended, and we might therefore be trying to make sense of a corrupted passage.

7 The sense of this line is best clarified by two similar passages in *MO*. In the discussion of "Almosne [Almsgiving]," Gower urges everyone to give according to his means. A rich man will give more; "du petit un poy dorra [from a little, one will give a little]" (*MO* 15499); and the one with nothing will give his "bon vouloir . . . Pour l'amour dieu et de ses seintz [good will . . . for the love of God and of His saints]" (15500-04). He makes the point again later in the same section: "Du petit poy serra donné / Du nient l'en dorra volenté [from a little, a little will be given; from nothing one will give good will]" (*MO* 15817-18). One of Machaut's ballades begins with a very similar statement:

De petit po, de niant volenté,
De moult assés doit penre, ce m'est vis,
Chascuns amans de s'amie en bon gré.

[From a little, a little; from nothing, good will; from much a great deal ought each lover receive from his *amie* with pleasure, it seems to me.]

(*Bal.not.* 20.1-3)

(The speaker is a woman who has been abandoned by the man she loves.) The expression is proverbial. See Morawski 539, 540; and Hassell P139, citing in addition to these passages a similar line from Philippe de Mézières' *Songe du vieil pèlerin* (1386-89), also cited in *DMF* s.v. "peu," I.B.1.b. *DMF* s.v. "donner," I.A.1.g cites another example, "Qui a peu peu donne [who has little gives little]," from *Les Enfances de Doon de Mayence* (c.1450-1500). See also Whiting L401, "Of a Little one gives a little," with one anonymous citation from c.1450; and VC 2, Prol. 63: "Non miser est talis, aliquid qui non dare possit," trans. Stockton, "There is no one so poor that he cannot give something."

In reading the line, one mustn't be distracted by the common Modern French expression "un petit peu," which does not occur, according to Rey, *Dict.Hist.* s.v. "peu," before the 16th century.

15 *to your nobleness*. "Noblesse" might be a quality of character, as in 6.9, but here and in 39.26 and 44.24, it is evidently used as a title and a form of address. (33.18 offers an ambiguous case.) The honorific is recognized by *AND* s.v. "noblesce" (citing 39.26) but not by *DMF* s.v. "noblesse," suggesting that this is an Anglo-Norman usage. It also occurs in contemporary English: see *MED* s.v. "nōbles(se)," 1.(c), citing as its first example Chaucer's Mel CT VII.2926. See also the notes to 2.25 (on "noble"), to 6.12 (on "haltesse") to 26.3 (on "excellence"), and to 13.

16 The "l" in "l'ai" is grammatically redundant, but it preserves the meter by preventing the elision of "jeo" and "ai." There is a similar construction in 41.16-17 in which the expressed object also occurs in initial position but in which the redundant object pronoun ("les") provides a needed syllable. *completely*. "Parmi" as an adverb ordinarily means "right through, throughout," the first two senses that Macaulay gives in his glossary. See *AND* s.v. "parmi," *DMF* s.v. "parmi," II. Macaulay also provides "completely, utterly," a sense not recorded in the dictionaries but well supported by numerous examples in *MO*, e.g. at 818, 1628 *et al.*

17 *simpleness*. "Simplese," like "noblesce," with which it is set in opposition by the rhyme, might also be a quality of character, the simplicity or candor with which the persona makes his request, or a confirmation of his inferiority and thus his lower rank. See *DMF* s.v. "simplese," B, C; and *MED* s.v. "simplese," (c), "lowliness, low rank; unworthiness," citing CA 1.2099. In CA 1.2099-2100 and 2.2819-20, Gower uses the same rhyming pair.

19 This line has the appearance of a proverbial saying (and is the first of three such lines in succession), but I haven't found it recorded elsewhere in this form. Cf. Morawski no. 1077, "Li dons est perdu qui n'est reconeü[s] [the gift that is not acknowledged is wasted]."

- 20 A common proverbial expression, for which there are several variants. See Hassell S80 (“Qui bien sert bon loyer attend [he who serves well expects good pay]”), S84 (“De tel service tel loyer [from such service, such reward]”; Whiting S157 (“A good Servant must have good wages”), S168 (“Service [Labor] asks meed [reward]”, citing *CA* 4.2023-24, 7.2110, 8.2012); *DMF* s.v. “service,” under the “Proverbes” tab (“Qui bon service fait bon guerdon en attend [he who performs good service expects a good reward]”).
- 24 *words*. “Ditz” could be “poems,” as in the preceding line, but not necessarily. Gower uses “dit” in this sense in 23.25 and in *MO* 27340 (“les fols ditz d’amours [the foolish poems of love].” But the more general meaning, “word” or “saying,” is far more common, for instance in the expression “faitz et ditz [deeds and words]” (11.4, or in the singular, in 24.19, 26.13) and elsewhere (17.22, the first “Dedicatory Ballade,” *Works* 1:335, line 19), and in many different contexts in *MO*, e.g. at 1753 (“les ditz des sages [the sayings of the wise]”) and 27626 (“les ditz que l’angle lour apporte [the words that the angel brings to them]”), and it appears to be the default meaning. If “ditz” in this line refers specifically to “poems,” it introduces a narrative situation like that in Machaut’s *Voir Dit*, in which the narrator and his beloved indeed exchange ballades and other lyrics with one another, but lacking any such context, it seems more likely that the persona merely expresses the same wish as in lines 4 and 13 or as in 2.20-21, not excluding, of course, the possibility that the “words” that she sends be in rhymed rather than unrhymed form.
- 25 Setting aside the ballades in which there is only a half-line refrain or no refrain at all, this is the only instance in *50B* which the final line is not identical in all three stanzas and the envoy. The “Q[e]” in this final instance is not really necessary though it does make sense, and one can imagine that it was introduced accidentally at some point in the copying because of the similarity between Q and O.