

29

Par droite cause et *par* nécessité
Q'est sanz feintise, honeste, et resonable,
M'ai *par* un temps de vous, dame, eslongé,
Dont *par* reson jeo serroie excusable,
5 Mais fame, q'est *par* les paiis volable,
De vo corous me dist nouvelle ades.
Si m'ad apris, et jeo le croi sanz fable,
Q'est d'amour loigns est de desease *pres*.

Si vous, ma dame, scieussetz ma pensé,
10 Q'a vous servir remaint toutditz estable,
Ne serrai point sanz cause refusé,
Car jeo vous tiens si bone et merciable
Que jeo, q'a vous sui toutditz serviçable
Et de mon grée ne vuill *partir jammes*,
15 Vo *grace averai*; et c'est tout veritable,
Q'est d'amour loigns est de desease *pres*.

Le fait de l'*omme* est en la volenté,
Car qui bien voet *par* droit est commendable,
Et pourcella, ma *tresbelle* honourée,
20 Hostetz corous et soietz amiable.
Si riens ai fait q'a vous n'est pas greable,
De vo merci m'en donetz un reles,
Q'ore a l'essai la chose est bien provable,
Q'est d'amour loigns est de desease *pres*.

25 Ma *graciouse* dame et honourable,
Ceste balade a vous pour sercher pes
Envoie; car jeo sui assetz creable,
Q'est d'amour loigns est de desease *pres*.

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For a rightful cause and out of necessity
that is without pretense, honest, and reasonable,
I have taken leave of you for a while, my lady,
for which by reason I would be worthy of being excused,
5 but Fame,^o which flies about the world,
constantly tells me news of your anger.
Thus it has taught me, and I believe it truly,
that he^o who is far from love is near to distress.^o

If you, my lady, knew my thought,
10 which always remains steadfast to serve you,
I would not be rejected without cause,
for I hold you to be so good and merciful
that I, who am always ready to serve you
and never wish to part by my own will,
15 would have your grace; and it is completely true,
that he who is far from love is near to distress.

A man's character^o is in his will,
for he who wishes well is by right commendable,
and for that reason, my honored beauty,
20 set aside anger and be amiable.
^oIf I have done anything that is not pleasing to you,
grant me a pardon out of your mercy,^o
for now, at the test, the thing is easily proved,
that he who is far from love is near to distress.

25 My gracious and honorable lady,
this ballade to you, in order to seek peace,
I send, for I believe it well,^o
that he who is far from love is near to distress.

29 invokes a new situation, in which the persona seeks to excuse himself for his (in his mind) blameless absence, though we never learn precisely what the cause is. The pains of separation are a common theme in the lyrics (as in 1-3, 7-9 above). Here the persona's distress, however, is caused less by the separation itself than by his lady's anger, a type of misunderstanding that is not unknown in earlier lyrics (see the note to lines 21-22 below) but that is more typical of the *dits amoureux* and that occurs more than once, for instance, in Machaut's *Voir Dit*, and like most of Gower's ballades, this one arises out of a specific dramatic

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moment rather than describing to an impersonal audience the persona's general state of feeling. In some ways his situation is the opposite of that described in 25, in which, equally conventionally, the man has separated himself temporarily in order to preserve the lady's reputation. That poem is about the persona's sorrow, which he presumably shares with his beloved; this one is more concerned with his reassurance of her; and except for the rhyme, the refrain of each might actually be more appropriate for the other. Especially here in 29, the refrain and the stanzas seem to be pulling in somewhat different directions. Gower tries to bridge them with an affirmation of the credibility of the refrain in the second to last line of each stanza, but it isn't smooth. In poems like these, one wonders whether the narrative event or the well crafted refrain came first in Gower's mind during the process of composition.

The choice of *-able* for the rhyme isn't just tedious; it results in a number of awkwardnesses that I have not tried to preserve in the translation.

- 5 *Fame*. Yeager has "Rumor," not a bad choice though the persona clearly accepts the report to be true. In English too, Gower uses "fame" for truthful reports rather than dubious ones; cf. CA 8.238, 1338, *et al.* As here, Fame "flies" in CA 2.382 *vv.* 4, 3.2107-8. Gower uses "fame" in a different sense, conjoined with "renown," in 3.1.
- 8 With its balanced but opposing phrases, the refrain has a proverbial character, and while one can find examples of a similar sentiment, the wording itself is different in each case. See, for instance, Machaut, *Lou.* 243.7-8, "Et s'elle m'est lonteine, / Toute dolour sera de moy prochine [and if she's far from me, every sorrow will be close to me]." Only the last whole line serves as the refrain to this poem. One of the persona's concerns is the effects of the separation upon his lady's affections: "Qu'amy changier fait longue demourée [for a long absence causes an *ami* to change]," he notes (243.18), a line that itself appears proverbial; see Hassell D25, with six of eight citations from Machaut. (Hassell cross references Whiting S307, "Out of Sight, out of mind.") See also Granson 77.287-88: "Et bien cognois qu'amour lointaine / Est de douleur rente certainne [And I know well that love from afar / is a sure payment of sorrow]," without the opposition between "far" and "near."
The "Q" in this line seems to function both as the conjunction "qe [that]" and as the pronoun "qi [who, whoever]." For other instances in which Gower elides "Qi" with a following vowel see lines 2, 10, and 13, 30.7, 31.9 *et al.*
- 17 *character*. Something more than "act" or "deed" is implied here. Cf. DMF s.v. "fait," III.A, "Ce qui concerne qqn, la situation de qqn, son état, son cas [what concerns someone, someone's situation, one's state, one's circumstance]."
- 21-22 Similar apologies can be found, e.g., in 39.13-15, Machaut, *Lou.* 43.1-2, 66.1-2, 155.11-12; Froissart, *Esp.Am.* 1274-75; and Granson 72.83-84, 78.892-93.
- 22 Cf. MO 21766-66, "Porrons du nostre creatour / avoir reless de sa mercy [we can from our creator / have a pardon out of his mercy]."
- 27 More precisely, "I am credulous enough." See AND s.v. "creable," 3; Godefroy s.v. "creable." Yeager gives "because I am sufficiently ready to believe."