

33

Au comencer del aun *present* novell,  
Mon corps ove tout le coer a bone estreine  
Jeo done a vous, ma dame, sanz repell,  
Pour le tenir sicom *vostre* demeine.  
5 Ne sai conter les joies qe° jeo meine  
De vous servir, et pour moi guardoner,  
Si plus n'y soit, donetz le regarder.

Ne quier de vous avoir autre Juel  
Fors soulement *vostre* ameisté certaine.  
10 Guardetz vo Nouche, guardetz le *vostre* anel.  
Vo beal semblant m'est joie *sovereine*,  
Q'a mon avis, toute autre chose est veine.  
Et s'il vous plest, ma dame, sanz danger,  
Si plus n'y soit, donetz le regarder.

15 L'en solt toutditz au feste de Noël  
Reprendre joie et hoster toute peine  
Et doner *douns*, mais jeo ne demande el  
De vo noblesce si *noun* q'il vous deigne  
Doner a moi d'amour ascune enseigne  
20 Dont jeo porrai ma fortune esperer.  
Si plus n'y soit, donetz le regarder.

A vous, ma douce dame *treshalteine*,  
Ceste balade vait pour desporter,  
Et pour le *bounté* dont vous estes pleine,  
25 Si plus n'y soit, donetz le regarder.

5 *Mac que*

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*Balade 33*

33

At the beginning of the present new year,  
my body with the entire heart for an auspicious start°  
I give to you, my lady, irrevocably,  
in order to hold as if it were your own.°  
5 I cannot count the joys that I experience  
in serving you, and in order to repay me,  
if nothing else, give me a glance.°

I don't seek to have from you any other jewel  
except for your assured affection° alone.  
10 °Keep your brooch; keep your ring.  
Your beautiful appearance is my sovereign joy,  
for in my opinion, everything else is vain.  
And if you please, my lady, without reluctance,°  
if nothing else, give me a glance.

15 One is always accustomed during the Christmas feast  
to take up joy and to remove all pain  
and to give gifts, but I ask nothing else  
except that out of your nobleness° you deign°  
to give to me some sign of love  
20 from which I might hope for my good fortune.°  
If nothing else, give me a glance.

To you, my sweet exalted lady,  
this ballade goes in order to entertain,°  
and out of the goodness° of which you are full,  
25 if nothing else, give me a glance.

Of Gower's two New Year's poems, 33 is the more conventional in imagery. Like most of the poems cited in the note to 32 above, the holiday is the occasion for gift-giving, and more specifically, for an exchange of gifts, and in most of those addressed to the lady, the persona offers her either his heart (Granson 8.3, Deschamps 412.37) or his body (Deschamps 412.3) or, much more commonly, both (e.g. Granson 69.18-19; Deschamps 496.1, 528.1), just as Gower's does in line 2. In return, he asks for as little as that the lady accept his gift (e.g. Deschamps 496 and 531) or as much as that she return his love (Granson 13). Gower's falls in between, asking that she give him a kindly look, drawing upon another commonplace from earlier lyrics.

In other respects the poem is more typically Gowerian, particularly in the envoy, with its gentle change of register. As the lover addresses it to his lady, the ballade too implicitly

*Balade 33*

becomes part of his "gift" (as also in Dechamps 531.28), and he sends it "pour desporter," in order to amuse or entertain. Even more strongly than in 16, the desire to please reduces the rest of the poem to a mere trope, a kind of exaggerated compliment, and it suggests a shared awareness both of its literariness and its artificiality.

- 2 *for an auspicious start.* No translation is going to catch all of the implications of this line. Depending on context, "estreine" could be used in three different senses: "luck or fortune" (good or bad), the sense in which Gower uses it in 14.20 (*DMF* s.v. "estrenne," A; *AND* s.v. "estraise," 1); "a gift, especially a New Year's gift" (*DMF*, loc.cit., B; *AND*, loc.cit., 2); or "a start or beginning" (*DMF*, loc.cit., C; *AND*, loc.cit., 3). Not surprisingly, the noun or the related verb "estrainer" (*AND*) / "estrenner" (*DMF*) occurs frequently in New Year's Day poems, but usually only with direct reference to the giving of gifts, e.g. in Garençières Bal. 4.1 or Deschamps 412.9. Among earlier poets, only Granson seems to be aware of the possibility of mixing the senses, as one offers a gift as an expression of hope for good fortune as the year begins. He entitles one of his poems (69) "L'Estraine du jour de l'an [The New Year's Gift]," and in the third line the persona offers his lady "Bonne aventure et bonne estraine [good luck and good fortune or a good beginning]." In his "Complainte de l'an nouvel [New Year's Complaint]" (70), he uses the verb "estrenner" in line 14 to mean "to give as a gift," and in line 17 "la bonne estraine [the good "estraise"]" can mean both "the lucky gift" and "good fortune." Here in Gower's ballade, "a bone estreine" invokes the habit of giving "estreines [gifts]" on New Year's day, but it also suggests "auspiciously" or "with the hope of good fortune" (*DMF*, loc.cit., A.1.b). My effort captures part of this, but not all.
- 4 *your own.* "Demeine" might be a noun meaning simply "possession" or "domain" (*AND* s.v. "demeine<sup>1</sup>," s., 2, 3, 4; *DMF* s.v. "domaine," B, C.1), but in Anglo-Norman (though not evidently in continental French) it could also be used, in conjunction with a possession pronoun and often another noun, as an adjective corresponding to Modern English "own" (*AND*, loc.cit., a., 1). Macaulay lists it as such in his glossary, citing three convincing examples from *MO* (12180, 17568, and 27983).
- 7 *give me a glance.* One might translate more loosely as "look my way." "Le regarder" is the sweet look from the lady that the persona in the lyrics conventionally seeks; see the note to 12.7. The use of the infinitive in place of the noun "reg(u)ard" (as in 12.7, 19.13, and 38.3) or "reguardure" (as in 12.12) is unusual, but *DMF* s.v. "regarder," I.A.5 provides four examples, all from fourteenth-century love-poetry, including Froissart, Lay 5.210, and Garençières, Bal. 8.18, to which we can add Machaut, *Lou.* 185.6 and Granson 72.101. Gower similarly uses the infinitive "comencer" in place of the more common noun in line 1 above.
- 10-12 "Fy on the bagges in the kiste [chest]!" Amans exclaims; "I hadde ynogh, if I hire kiste" (*CA* 5.83-84). I don't know of any examples in earlier lyrics in which the lady's affection is weighed against mere material possessions, but it is a common theme in Book 5 of *CA*, e.g. in 5.85-92, 2534-68, 2849-52, 4729-39.
- 9 *assured affection.* This is the same request that the persona makes in the refrain to 10. See the note to 10.7.
- 13 *reluctance.* On the range of meaning of "danger" see the note to 12.8.
- 18 *out of your nobleness.* This might instead be "I ask nothing else of your nobleness" in which "nobleness" is an honorific, rather like "your highness," a possibility that is supported by the use of "treshalteine" in line 22, but the allusion to a difference in rank is far less clear than in 28.15 and elsewhere. See the note to that line.

*deign*. The impersonal use of “deigner,” here, in 51.22, in *MO* 10435, and in Machaut, *Lou.* 143.15 and 147.18, is not recorded in either *AND* s.v. “deigner” or *DMF* s.v. “daigner.” For the more common usage, see 12.11, 19.13, 36.20.

- 20 *hope for my good fortune*. By itself, “esperer ma fortune” might well be ambiguous, since “esperer” could be used for the anticipation of negative outcomes as well as good ones (see *DMF* s.v. “esperer,” A.3), and since one’s fortune might very well be either good or bad. But the more common use of the verb is “to hope” as in Modern French, and as in both Modern French and in Modern English, “fortune” could be used without modifier for “good fortune” and even “riches” (*DMF*, s.v. “fortune,” B.1.c, d). In this case, context rules.
- 23 *entertain*. Gower uses the same verb in the “Second Dedicatory Ballade” (*Works* 1:336-37), line 27, “Por desporter vo noble Court roial [in order to entertain your royal court],” and also in the (now defective) prose heading to 50B, where the object is also presumably Henry IV and his court.
- 24 *goodness*. “Bonté” echoes the praise of the lady in 31.9-16 and the hope expressed in 32.17. It anticipates more precisely 39.3.