

38

- Sicom la fine piere D'aïamand  
De sa nature attrait le ferr au soi,  
Ma dame, ensi vo douls regard plesant  
*Par* fine force attrait le coer de moi.  
5 N'est pas en mon poair, qant jeo vous voi,  
Qe ne vous aime oultre mesure ensi  
Qe j'ai pour vous toute autre chose oubli.
- Soubtz ciel n'est oill, maisq'il vous soit voiant,  
Qu'il n'ait le coer tantost deinz son recoi  
10 Suspris de *vostre* amour et suspirant.  
De tout le monde si jeo fuisse Roi,  
Trop fuist petit, me semble, en bone foi,  
Pour vous amer, car jeo sui tant ravi  
Qe j'ai pour vous toute autre chose oubli.
- 15 Toutes vertus en vous sont apparant  
Qe nature<sup>o</sup> poet doner de sa loi,  
Et dieus vous ad doné le remenant  
Des bones mours; *par* quoi tresbien le croi  
Qe jeo ne puiss amer meilour de toi.  
20 *Vostre* bealté m'ad tielement saisi  
Qe j'ai pour vous toute autre chose oubli.
- D'omble esperit, sicom jeo faire doi,  
U toute *grace* son *hostelle*<sup>o</sup> ad basti.  
Ceo *lettre* envoie ove si *tresfin* otroi  
25 Qe j'ai pour vous toute autre chose oubli.

16 nature: tur *written over erasure*. Cross drawn in margin.

23 *hostelle*. See the note to 2.17.

38

- °Just as the precious° lodestone°  
by its nature attracts iron to itself,  
my lady, so does your sweet pleasant appearance°  
out of pure force° attract my heart.
- 5 °It isn't in my power, when I see you,  
that I not love you so immoderately  
that for you I have forgotten everything else.
- °Under heaven there is no eye, should it see you,°  
that it doesn't at once have the heart privately°  
10 overtaken by love of you,° and sighing.  
°If I were king of the entire world  
it would be too little, it seems to me, in good faith,  
in order to love you, for I am so overcome  
that for you I have forgotten everything else.
- 15 °In you are evident all the good qualities  
that Nature is able to give according to her law,  
and God has given you the rest  
of the moral virtues, for which I well believe  
that I cannot love one better than you.°
- 20 Your beauty has seized me to such a degree  
that for you I have forgotten everything else.
- With humble spirit, just as I ought to do,  
where all grace has established its dwelling  
I send this letter with such perfect° submission°  
25 that for you I have forgotten everything else.

38 and 39 are the third and fourth of the five ballades devoted to the lady's virtues (see the note to 21 above). One can only speculate on the reasons for their present arrangement. 38 introduces a different view of Nature from that in the seasonal poems, 32-37. Together, 38 and 39 offer an interlude between the generally unhappy poems that precede and the four poems on infidelity that follow (40-43), establishing (along with 44-48, which return to a happier view of love) a kind of dialogue in anticipation of the reconciliation offered in the final group of ballades. Though not as obviously as either 31 or 39.3-5, 38 also invokes, in lines 15-23, the triad of the lady's beauty, goodness, and grace and their effect upon the persona in inspiring love. It is most closely linked to 45, the last of the five poems in this group, in the two different "stones"

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*Balade 38*

with which each poem begins (45.1-4) and in the reference to the gifts that the lady has been given by both God and Nature (45.18-19).

- 1-2 Proverbial. Hassel A58 (citing, among many others, *MO* 18343-44), Whiting A39. To lines 1-4 compare Machaut, *Remede*, 295-98:

Et son tres doulz plaisant regart  
 Atraioit mon cuer de sa part  
 Tout aussi, par son doulz attrait,  
 Com l'aymant le fer attrait.

[And her sweet pleasant appearance attracted my heart just as, by its gentle attraction, a loadstone attracts iron.]

- 1 *precious*. The range of “fin” is very broad. Here it might mean simply “pure” (*AND* s.v. “fin<sup>2</sup>,” 1; *DMF* s.v. “fin,” adj, II.A.1.a), but with reference to stones, it may also imply “precious” and “costly” (*DMF*, loc.cit., II.A.1.b). Cf. lines 4 and 24 below.

*lodestone*. Macaulay prints “la fine pierre Daiamand” (and in *MO* 18343 “la pere daiamant”) without an apostrophe, but the word for the naturally occurring mineral with magnetic properties is “aimant” (*DMF* s.v. “aimant”; *AND* s.v. “adamant”). It occurs either without an article or with one (as in the passage quoted from Machaut above), and after “pierre,” the *d* is the contraction of “de”: “pierre d’aiamand.” “Aimant” is related etymologically to the word for diamond, and the lodestone was even sometimes attributed with the quality of hardness, as in Machaut *Lou.* 254.9 “Cuer de marbre couronné d’aymant [heart of marble crowned with ‘aymant’]” and Froissart, *Rond.* 38. Even so, Machaut at least appears to have been aware that these were two different substances: *Lou.* 254 concludes (line 52) with a reference to the “cuer plus dur qu’un dyamant [heart harder than a diamond],” and in *Chans.Bal.* 31.1-3 he writes, “Plus dure qu’un dyamant / Ne que pierre d’aymant / Est vo durté [harder than a diamond or a ‘pierre d’aymant’ is your hard-heartedness].” *MO* 12463-67 is more problematic:

Semblable auci je la diffine  
 Au pierre dyamant tresfine,  
 Q’en orr seoir est dedaignouse,  
 De la richesse se decline  
 Et est au povre ferr encline.

[I declare it (Humility) similar to the pure “pierre dyamant,” which disdains to be set in gold; it turns away from riches and inclines to poor iron.]

Macaulay notes that Gower here seems to confuse the diamond with the lodestone (1:lxix, 1:468). Despite the spelling, one has to believe that Gower has the lodestone in mind for there is no reason to think that a diamond might scorn to be set in gold. Gower cites the diamond as an example of hardness in 18.23.

- 3 *appearance*. All other uses of “regard” in *50B* refer either to the lady’s glance at the persona or the persona’s viewing the lady; see the notes to 12.7 and 23.1. The former seems to be the sense in the passage from Machaut quoted in the note to lines 1-2 above, and it is supported by *CA* 5.4493, 4540-41, in which Amans is overcome by “o lokinge of hire [his lady’s] yë.” But “regard” (like Modern English “look”) can also mean “Aspect, apparence de qqn ou de qqc. [aspect, appearance of someone or something]” (*DMF* s.v. “regard,” I.B.2.a), which works much better with the comparison to the lodestone and with lines 5, 8, and 20.
- 4 *pure force*. See the note to 31.5. Here “force” perhaps suggests “strength” or “compulsion” rather than “necessity.”

- 5-6 The placement of a negative subordinate clause within a negative main clause, here, in lines 8-10, and in 39.17-19, resembles the “ne . . . ne plus” construction that Macaulay notes is common in Gower; see the note to 7.23-24 above. Machaut has at least one similar example (*Lou.* 46.11-13):
- Qu'en monde n'a si dure creature,  
S'elle savoit quels mauz j'ay a sentir,  
Qui grant pité n'eüst de moy veir.
- [That in the world there is not so harsh a creature, if she knew what pains I must endure, who would not have great pity upon seeing me.]
- 8-10 The awkwardness of these lines (the uncertain antecedent for “il [it]”, the mixture of past and present participles) is also present in the French.
- 8 *should it see you.* On “maisq(u)e” see the note to 10.5. This line recalls two passages in *MO*, 9376, “maisq'il les voie,” and 14778, “maisque la voie,” in which the context strongly suggests the more definite “once it sees it or them,” a translation that would also work well here.
- 9 *privately.* “Recoi,” most literally, refers to a private or enclosed place, but it is not likely that Gower is thinking of the thoracic cavity here. “En recoi” meaning “secretly, privately” is well attested; see *DMF* s.v. “recoi,” B.2, and *MO* 7506, 23300, “Ou en apert ou en recoy [either openly or privately]”; and Gower also uses “en/deinz son recoy” evidently with the same meaning, e.g. in *MO* 15227, 16385, and *Tr* 18.15.
- 10 *love of you.* A clear instance of the objective use of “vostre.” See the note to 7.11.
- 11-13 The intensity of the persona's feeling is more evident in these lines than is his logic. Gower makes a better use of similar expressions in 41.18-19, 26.14-15, and 44.5-6.
- 15-18 In 13.11, the persona credits Nature alone with what he admires in his lady. Here it is God and Nature together. That they join to create the perfect woman is a common motif; see Machaut, *Lou.* 8.R, 267.18, 270.5, Deschamps 496.3, Froissart, Lay 3.198, Mudge 41.R, and Granson 38.1, the second of Granson's “Cinq balades ensuivans” (see the note to 21 above). In none of these are their roles distinguished, but in *MO* 17353-64, Gower explains that God rather than Nature is responsible for providing the moral virtues (17355) and “bonnes mours” (17361). Here in line 15, “vertus” must be “good qualities” more generally (as also in 39.2-5, where they are enumerated), since the moral virtues are provided by God in the following lines. One would like to put a comma after “remanent” and to take “des bonnes mours” as an appositive: “and God has given you the rest, the moral virtues,” but the use of “des” as a plural indefinite article as in Modern French is not well attested in Middle French, and I find no examples in 50*B*. “Remenant de,” on the other hand, is a common phrase; see *DMF* s.v. “remanent,” A.1. With regard to the distinction that he is making, Gower may mean something like “and God has given you the rest of what constitutes moral behavior.”
- 19 *you.* Gower slips an informal second-person pronoun (“toi”) into the same stanza in which he as four times uses the more formal “vous” and “vostre.” One has to believe that he had to do so for the rhyme. This is his only inconsistent use of the pronouns in 50*B*; elsewhere (in 4<sup>2</sup>, 41-43), where the informal form appears, it does so throughout. Unexpected verb forms are a bit more common; see 4<sup>1</sup>.24, 16.26, 34.27, and 42.R.
- 24 *perfect.* The broadest range of “fin” seems to be invoked here, including “pure,” “refined,” “complete,” and “certain” as well as “perfect” (see *AND*, *DMF* s.v. “fin”), together with an allusion to “fin amour” (as in 37.2).
- submission.* The ordinary meaning of “otroi” is something that is granted or given, as the verb “octroyer” means “to grant”; see *AND* s.v. “otrei”; *DMF* s.v. “octroi,” esp. A.1, “[Lang. de l'amour] ‘Fait d'accorder son amour, faveur [Language of love] act of granting one's love, favor,’” with numerous citations from Machaut. That sense will not work here. Based on context, I take it instead

to be the noun form of the reflexive verb “s’octroyer” which Gower uses in 15.13, 25.27, meaning “to submit”. Se *DMF* s.v “octroyer,” A.3, “S’octroyer à qqn . . . [Lang de l’amour] ‘S’abandonner, se livrer, se consacrer, se dévouer à qqn’ [Language of love] abandon oneself, surrender, consecrate oneself, devote oneself to someone”), with 10 citations, all from Machaut.