

39

En vous, ma doulce dame souveraine,
Pour remembrer et sercher les vertus,
Si bounté quier et vous en estes° pleine;
Si bealté quier, vous estes au dessus;
5 Si grace quier, vous avetz le surplus;
Que riens y falt de ceo dont char humeine
Doit avoir pris, car c'est tresbien conuz,
Molt est benoit q'ove vous sa vie meine.

Qui vo *persone* en son corage asseine,
10 Trop ad dur coer s'il ne soit retenuz
Pour vous servir come a sa capiteine.
Pour moi le di q'a ceo me sui renduz,
Et si vous ai de rien, dame, offenduz,
Vous me poetz sicom *vostre* demeine
15 Bien chastier, q'en *vostre* amour jeo trieus,
Molt est benoit q'ove vous sa vie meine.

N'est un soul jour de toute la semeine
El quell deinz soi mon coer milfoitz et plus
De vous ne pense; ascune foitz me pleigne,
20 Et c'est qant jeo sui loign; mais qant venuz°
Sui en *presence*, uque vous ai veeuz,
Lors est sur tout ma joie plus certeine.
Ensi de vous ma reson ai concluz:
Molt est benoit q'ove vous sa vie meine.

25 Ma dame, en qui tout bien sont contenuz,
Ceo *lettre* envoie a vo noblesce halteine
Ove Mil et Mil et Mil et Mil salutz.
Molt est benoit q'ove vous sa vie meine.

3 MS enestes
20 Mac quant venuz

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In you, my sweet sovereign lady,
°in calling to mind and seeking out the virtues,°
°if I seek goodness, of that you are full;
if I seek beauty, you are at the summit;
5 if I seek grace, you have an abundance;
for nothing is lacking° of that for which human flesh
ought to have praise, for it is well known,
he is greatly blessed who leads his life with you.

He whom your person° strikes° in his heart
10 has too hard a heart if he is not retained
to serve you as (he would) his captain.°
I say for myself that I have surrendered to that,
and if I have in any way offended you, lady,
you can well punish me as your own,°
15 for in your love° I find,
he is greatly blessed who leads his life with you.

°There is not a single day in the whole week
in which within itself° my heart a thousand times and more
does not think about you. Sometimes I grieve,
20 and it is when I am far away; but when I am come
into your presence, wherever I have seen you,
then above all is my joy more assured.
Thus have I concluded my statement° about you:
he is greatly blessed who leads his life with you.

25 My lady, in whom all good things are contained,
I send this letter to your high nobleness°
with 1000 and 1000 and 1000 and 1000 greetings.°
He is greatly blessed who leads his life with you.

39 is the fourth of the five ballades on the lady's virtues and their effect upon the persona; see the note to 21 above. In stanza one it reprises the beauty-goodness-grace triad from 31, and in its refrain it echoes 31.23. It differs somewhat from the others in describing the woman's emotional effect upon the persona in the third stanza, and in implying, in line 15 and in the refrain, that his affection for her is reciprocated, questions that simply don't arise in the praise of the woman in the other four. It is also set apart by the honorific in line 26. Line 23 might have

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served as the conclusion to the group if they once stood together, though this is not the last of the five as they are presently ordered (see 45 below).

- 2 For the “pour” plus infinitive construction see the note to 11.5.
virtues. As in 38.15, Gower evidently uses “*vertus*” in its most general sense, for “good qualities,” rather than moral virtues in particular.
- 3 The “et [and]” is needed for the meter, but it certainly creates an awkwardness grammatically. Macaulay, in his note to this line (1:468), refers for comparison to 18.7, “Com plus la prie et meinz m’ad entendu,” but it is difficult to see what the two lines have in common. Nor can we translate simply by moving the conjunction (“in calling to mind and seeking out the virtues, *and* if I seek goodness, of that you are full”). Gower frequently inverts a conjunction and a modifying phrase (see the note to 6.6-7), but when he does, it is the main clause that follows the conjunction that is linked to what precedes, not the modifying phrase (“*si bounté quier*”). Lacking any good solution, I have omitted the “et” in the translation.
- 6 *nothing is lacking*. For the formula, see 14.3-4 and the note to 11.12.
- 9 *person*. This is an unusual use of “person(n)e,” but cf. *MO* 1508, 15426, 16010, where “*personne*” evidently signifies “character” or “nature.” See also *MED* s.v. “*persōun(e)*,” 2, “An individual’s physical being, body, appearance,” citing *CA* 2.1098-99, “He tok good hiede of the persone, / And sih sche was a worthi wiht”; as well as *T&C* 2.1267, *LGW* 1067.
strikes. This is one of the more common senses of “*assener*” (*AND* s.v. “*asener*,” 1; *DMF* s.v. “*assener*,” III). Macaulay, in his note (1:468), offers instead, “he who addresses himself to your person,” a much less common use (*DMF*, loc.cit., I.B.1), and certainly less consistent with what follows.
- 11 *captain*. Grammatically, “*capiteine*” might be either masculine or (less commonly) feminine; *DMF* s.v. “*capitaine*,” A.1, lists three citations in the feminine, all from Froissart. Gower makes it feminine in *MO* 2593, but he also uses “*capitein*” in the masculine in *MO* 9836, in addition to other passages in which there is no specific clue to the gender. (All of his 15 uses of the word in either form occur in rhyme position.) Here the feminine grammatical form is also appropriate to the woman’s natural gender.
- 14 *own*. On “*demeine*,” see the note to 33.4. As in that line, if we take this as a simile rather than an equivalence, this should be “as if I were your own.”
- 15 *your love*. The context is less than perfectly clear, but this is perhaps more likely “your love for me” rather than “my love for you.” On the choice, see the note to 7.11 and cf. 38.10.
- 17-19 Another instance of the heart as the seat of thought. See the note to 8.1-2.
- 18 *within itself*. “*Deinz soi*” suggests “secretly, privately,” perhaps echoing 38.9.
- 23 *statement*. In addition to its use to refer to the intellectual faculty and to what is considered “reasonable,” “*reson/raison*” also covered a wide range of meanings that we might group under “reasoning.” *AND* s.v. “*raisun*” provides “argument” (as in 24.21), “opinion, view,” “explanation,” “case,” “speech, discourse” (as in *MO* 350, “*Le deable sa reson commence* [the devil begins his speech]”), and “written work, composition,” among others, several of which would work equally well in the translation, to which we might also add “thoughts” or “reflection.” See also *DMF* s.v. “*raison*.” The punctuation here also presents a choice. The colon that I have placed at the end of this line implies that the refrain is the conclusion that the persona draws from this stanza. If we put a period instead, he offers this stanza as the conclusion to the ballade and perhaps to the entire sequence of five ballades, suggesting that they might once have been in a different order.
- 26 *high nobleness*. Evidently an honorific, as also in 44.24. See the note to 28.15 and *AND* s.v. “*noblesce*,” citing this line, and the note to 13 on the use of rank in 50B.

27 1000 greetings. Cf. 16.27.