

42

- Semblables sont la fortune et les dées
Au fals amant qant il d'amour s'aqueinte.
Sa loialté pleine est des falsetés.
Plustost deçoit qant il se fait plusqueinte.
5 A toi le di q'as trahi femme meinte.
Ceo q'as mespris restorer ne poetz,
Et pourcella, de ta falsine atteinte,
Si tu voldras briser l'estrein, brisetz.
- Trop tard conu m'est ceo qe fait avetz,
10 Qe m'as hosté de toi par tiele empeinte
Qe jammais jour ne serrai retournetz
Pour obeir n'a toi n'a ta constreignte.^o
Hé, fals amis, com ta parole est feinte!
Les viels promesses toutes sont quassetz.
15 Trop as en toi la gentilesce exteinte.
Si tu voldras briser l'estrein, brisetz.
- O tu, mirour des mutabilitées,
Des fals amantz en toi l'image est peinte.
Tes sens se muent en subtilitées.
20 Sil q'ensi fait n'ad pas la vie seinte.
Tu as d'errour^o la conscience enceinte,
Dont fraude et malengin sont engendrez.
Tu as vers moi ta loialté si freinte.
Si tu voldras briser l'estrein, brisetz.
- 25 En les malvois malice n'est restreignte.
Tu n'en serras de ta part escusez.
As toutz amantz jeo fais ceste compleignte.
Si tu voldras briser l'estrein, brisetz.

12 MS constregnte

21 Mac derrouer. See the note to this line in the commentary.

42

- Fortune° and dice are similar
to the false lover when he becomes involved with° love.
His loyalty is full of falsity.°
When he makes himself most amiable,° instead he deceives.
- 5 I say this to you who have betrayed many a woman.
What you have stolen you cannot restore,°
and for that reason, convicted° of your falsehood,°
if you want to break it off, go ahead.°
- 10 Too late did I realize what you have done,
that you pushed me away from yourself with such a blow°
that never will I be returned°
in order to submit either to you or to your constraint.°
Oh false *ami*, how your word is deceitful!
All the old promises are broken.°
- 15 You have fully extinguished nobility in yourself.°
If you want to break it off, go ahead.
- Oh you, mirror of mutability,°
in you is painted the image of false lovers.
°Your thoughts turn into plans for deceit.°
- 20 He who does so does not have a holy life.
°You have impregnated Conscience with Error,
from which are engendered Fraud and Trickery.
Thus have you broken your loyalty to me.
If you want to break it off, go ahead.
- 25 In the wicked evil is not restrained.°
For your part, you will not be excused.°
To all lovers I make this complaint.°
If you want to break it off, go ahead.

42 and 43 take a much more personal view of betrayal than 41. In each, the woman has much more to say about her own experience and its effect upon her and also more to say in condemnation of her former lover, and the refrain addresses the poem to him rather than to other women. Each, though, also borrows much of her language from moral poetry, placing her personal betrayal into a much broader ethical context. 42, like 41, begins with a general moral observation rather than with a personal address, though it very quickly turns to denouncing one particular man. As in 41, much of the diction is more familiar from *MO* than it is from other

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lyrics. "Falsine [‘falsehood]” (42.7), "atteinte [convicted]” (42.7), "subtiltitées [deceit]” (42.19) and "malice” (42.25) occur nowhere else in *50B*, and "malvois [wicked]” (42.25) occurs only here and in two of the final poems (in 49.1 and 50.19). None of these forms part of the common vocabulary of the lyrics, but all are very common in *MO*. The woman also adopts some of *MO*'s rhetorical devices. Gower uses an exclamation beginning with "Hé” (line 13) once earlier in *50B*, in 20.13, but he does so more than 150 times in *MO*, most often introducing an apostrophe and usually expressing impatience and exasperation as the narrator goes on to blame in strongest terms either a sinner or a sin. In addition, when she exclaims, "Trop as en toi la gentilesece exteinte” (42.15) or "Tu n'en serras de ta part escusez” (42.26), the woman echoes similar passages in *MO* with reference to sinners of many sorts. And when she says "Sil q'ensi fait n'ad pas la vie seinte” (42.20), while she doesn't echo any particular passage in *MO*, she expresses the presumption of conduct that underlies all of Gower's observations on his contemporaries in that poem, and she holds the man to a higher moral and ethical standard than in any earlier poetry of love.

The clearest signature of *MO*, however, may be the allegorical passage in lines 21-22, which recalls not just the opening of *MO*, in which the devil engenders Death upon his own daughter, Sin, and Death, in turn, engenders the Seven Deadly Sins upon his mother (205-76), but also a passage in Gower's description of the two-headed monster of the contemporary papacy:

Mais ore qui voet garde prendre,
Verra comment Orguil engendre
D'Envie en fornicacioun
Le monstre de dampnacioun.
(*MO* 18820-23)

[But now anyone who wishes to take notice will see how Pride, in
fornication, engenders upon Envy the monster of damnation.]

There, the accusation of fornication adds insult to the condemnation of those in the church who are responsible for the schism. In the ballade, the entire image has a rather more literal and more potent resonance in the woman's condemnation of a seducer.

- 1 *Fortune*. Fortune isn't unknown among earlier lyrics or in *50B*. When not personified, "fortune" most commonly means simply "situation" or "circumstances," for better or for worse (e.g. in 9.2, 39, 14.4, 16.22). Personified, she may be the agent that guides events and determines outcomes (as in 1.22, 6.8). This is the first instance in *50B* in which Gower invokes the personification as an image of arbitrariness and deception (the other occurs in 43.15, also spoken by a woman), and the only time he likens her to dice. In *MO*, Fortune also sometimes appears merely as an agent, but she also commonly represents the instability and impermanence of the world in general, especially in comparison to heaven, one of the sustaining themes of Gower's moral argument. Gower uses dice three times as an image of her arbitrariness (*MO* 11599-601, 22024-25, and 22101-03). *MO* displays no interest, however, in fortunes (or Fortune) in love. *CA* makes greater use of fortune and Fortune in all senses, and the dice image also appears several times to represent the arbitrariness of events (Prol. 584 vv. 3, 4.1778-79, 5.2436-37; see also VC 2.347). With reference to love, Fortune and dice are cited in *CA* in discussions of the unpredictability of love's rewards (1.39-57, 3.786-88, 3.1723-24, 4.365-69, 8.2013-15). Only in this ballade is the deceptiveness of Fortune cited in the context of a discussion of love, and only with reference to false lovers, not to love in general.

- 2 *becomes involved with*. An apt translation, borrowed from Yeager, because “s’aqueinter de” is more commonly used with a personal object, and it can be used in contexts in which it means “to enter into a love relationship with”; *DMF* s.v. “accointer,” II.A.1.b.
- 3 *falsity*. “Falsetés” in one of the moral terms employed in this poem that also occurs in earlier lyrics, sometimes as the opposite to “loiauté” or in the phrase “sans (nulle) fausseté,” e.g. in Machaut, *Lou.* 8.18, 48.23, 166.15, *et al.* Among its other uses in *MO*, “Falseté” is personified in line 6508.
- 4 *amiable*. *DMF* s.v. “cointe,” I.B.1. In his glossary, Macaulay provides “agreeable,” but also “cunning,” another common usage (*DMF*, *loc. cit.*, I.A.1), shading off, in both Anglo-Norman and Middle English, into “devious, deceitful” (*AND* s.v. “cointe,” 2; *MED* s.v. “queint(e),” 1(c)), as in *MO* 26032 *et al.* The overtones of the latter meaning are perhaps not irrelevant here. (Gower uses the same pair of rhyme words in very much the same context in *CA* 4.2313-14, but without any implication of deceptiveness.)
- 6 *you cannot restore*. Gower uses similar expressions with reference to the loss of virginity in *MO* 948-90 and *CA* 5.6207-11.
- 7 *convicted*. Everything about the context suggests that “atteinte” should modify the man who is being denounced, and “convicted” (as supplied by Macaulay in his glossary, 1:482) is well attested in both French and English: *AND* s.v. “atteindre,” pp. as a., 2; *MED* s.v. “atteinen,” 4. A verb derived from the past participle (*MED* “atteinten”) survives in the rare Modern English verb “attaint.” The feminine form, “atteinte,” where the context demands the masculine is not all that unusual for Gower, and it is required by the rhyme with “meinte.” Gower uses the same word in conjunction with “falsine” but in a different sense in *MO* 26029, “Dieus voit bien la falsine atteinte [God sees well the falsehood committed].”
- falsehood*. This is the only occurrence of “falsine” in *50B*. It occurs 32 times in *MO*, though not with reference to falsehood in love, and in *Tr* 13.11, with reference to the Pharaoh’s seduction of Sarrai.
- 8 *if you want to break it off, go ahead*. More precisely, “if you want to break the straw, break.” The switch to the formal form in “brisetz” is required by the rhyme, and it is quite common in Gower. There must be dozens of examples in *MO*; e.g. “Evesque, par tes faitz primer / Ton poeple duissetz essampler [Bishop, you should teach your people first by your actions]” (19069-70). For the unexpected use of a singular verb form, see 16.26.
- “Estrein” is a straw: *AND* s.v. “estrein”; *DMF* s.v. “estrain.” “To break the straw” (in the form “rompre le festu”) meant to end a relationship, either friendly or commercial: *DMF* s.v. “fétu,” A.2.c, with two citations from Machaut (*Navarre* 3004-05, *Voir Dit* 7578-79); see also Granson, 12.7, Hassell F61. The modern equivalent, “rompre la paille,” occurs in Molière’s *Dépit amoureux*, IV.4, 1440-1442, and it is still recognized by older speakers of Modern French with the same meaning.
- 10 *with such a blow*. This is the common meaning of “empeinte,” but here and in *Tr*. 4.17, Gower may mean no more than “in such a way.”
- 11 *returned*. The passive voice is a bit odd here, and I haven’t tried to smooth it out. “Retourner” could have all of the senses of Modern English “return” plus many of those of “turn.” See *DMF* s.v. “retourner.”
- 12 *constraint*. Cf. 15.9 and 27.8, in which “constreignte” is used with reference to Love’s or the lady’s “rule” or “governance;” and cf. 45.11, *MO* 10662-63, 18305, and Machaut *Lou.* 228.1, in all of which the verb “constreindre” is used with reference to the compulsion to love.
- 14 *All the old promises are broken*. In combination with line 6, this line may well have been understood as referring to a promise of marriage. See *MO* 8681-88, in which a seducer falsely promises marriage in order to win a young woman’s consent.
- 15 *You have completely extinguished nobility in yourself*. There are two similar passages in *MO*. With regard to “Tendresce,” who is too delicate for any labor, “Trop est en luy nature exteinte [Nature is

- fully extinguished in her]" (5304); and in praise of the monks of former times who obeyed their rule, "De ceaux envie fuist exteinte [in them envy was extinguished]" (21122).
- 17 *mirror of mutability*. Cf. "mirour d'onour," 21.25 and note.
- 19 This is another case in which the meaning is clearer than the translation. "Sens" here is clearly not "senses" (as in 11.1) but some aspect of the mental faculty, though the plural is a little puzzling. In the singular, "sens" might mean "mind," "intellect," or "wisdom" (*AND* s.v. "sen¹," 2, 3; *DMF* s.v. "sens," II.A), all with positive implications, which justifies "se muent." *AND*, loc.cit., gives "thoughts, mind" for the plural, and though it provides only one citation, "thoughts" seems to work best here.
- plans for deceit*. This is the only appearance of "subtilité" or any of its cognates in 50B. The word might have either positive or negative connotations; see *DMF* s.v. "subtilité." In *MO*, however, Gower uses "soubtil," the adjective, "soubtilement," the adverb, "soubtiler," the verb, and "soubtilité," the noun (which he personifies as one of the servants of "Coveitise" in lines 6373-86), all in completely negative contexts. "Soubtilement" might well be translated as "deviously" or "underhandedly." In the singular, the noun suggests "deviousness" or "clever deceit." In the two uses in the plural (in 3644 and 9801) it refers to plans for or acts of deceit, which I have adopted for the translation here.
- 21-22 This is not how Macaulay prints this passage. He treats "derrour" as a single word with no capitalization, and in his glossary entry for "derrour" he cross-references "derere," "behind," which makes little sense in context. The form "derrour," moreover, does not occur anywhere else in Gower or in any of the citations in *AND* s.v. "derere" or *DMF* s.v. "derriere." Surely this must be "d'Errorr" instead, as I have translated it. While "enceinte" a common adjective for "pregnant," the underlying verb, "enceindre," is evidently rarely used in this sense (*DMF* s.v. "enceindre²" gives only a single citation), and more commonly means "to surround or enclose" (*DMF*, loc.cit.; *AND* s.v. "enceindre"); but cf. *MO* 17933-34, distinguishing the married woman from a woman who practices continence, "L'une est de l'omme grosse et pleine, / L'autre est de dieu enceinte au pitz [one is by man pregnant and full, the other is impregnated in the breast by God]"; and 21121, speaking of the monks of former times, "Par ceaux fuist nulle femme enceinte [by them was no woman made pregnant]." In *Tr* 4.10, "Si l'espousaile est d'avarice enceinte [if the marriage is *enceinte* by avarice]," "surrounded" might possibly be the sense, but "impregnated" (as translated by Yeager) makes the image much more graphic. See also Deschamps 477.22, a line in which the grammar is clearer than the sense: "Prains de la mort qui m'a pour lui enceinte [Pregnant with death which has impregnated me for him]." Perhaps this should be "l'amor [love]" instead?
- 25 *the wicked evil is not restrained*. This is the first occurrence of "malvois" in 50B; it reappears in 49.1 and 50.19, in moralizing contexts. It also appears in the refrain to *Tr* 12. This is the only occurrence of "malice." Both are very common in *MO*, "malvois" appearing over 100 times and "malice" nearly 50.
- 26 *you will not be excused*. There are at least a dozen similar expressions in *MO*, e.g. "Serras tu d'orgueil excusez, / Qant dois repondre au loy divine? / Je croi que noun [will you be excused of pride when you have to answer to the divine law? I think not]" (20477-79); "Ne sai reson dont excuser / T'en puiss [I don't know any way you can excuse yourself]" (22126-27); "Ne say un soul visconte, qui / Qant a ce point s'excusera [I don't know a single viscount who will be excused on this point]" (24848-49).
- 27 *complaint*. The betrayed women in both 42 and in 43 (line 26) refer to their "compleignte," which can be either the content of their poem or the poem itself; see the note to 9.42. Both the betrayed man and the betrayed woman in the two preceding poems employ the related verb (40.7, 41.6).

