49

As bons est bon et a les° mals malvois
Amour, qui des natures est regent,
Mais l'o*m*me, qui de reson ad le pois,
Cil p*ar* reson doit amer bonement,
5   Car qui deinz soi sanz mal penser comp*re*nt
De bon amour la verité pleinere,
Lors est amour d'onour la droite miere.

Bon amour doit son dieu amer ainçois.
Qui son dieu aime il aime verraiment.
10   Si ad de trois amours le p*ri*mer chois.
Et ap*re*s dieu, il doit secondement
Amer son p*ro*esme a soi semblablement.
Car cil q'ensi voet guarder la maniere,
Lors est amour d'onour la droite miere.

15   Le tierce point dont amour ad la vois,
Amour en son endroit ceo nous ap*re*nt:
Soubtz mat*ri*moine de les seintes lois,
Par vie honeste et nonpas autrement.
En ces° trois pointz gist tout l'exp*e*riment
20   De bo*u*n amour, et si j'ensi le quiere,
Lors e*st* amo*ur* d'onour la droite miere.

De bon amour pour prendre avisement,
Jeo vous ai dit la forme et la matiere,
Car quiq*ue* voet amer honestement,
25   Lors est amour d'onour la droite miere.

1   *MS* ales
19   *MS* cest

49

°Good for the good and bad for the wicked
is love, which of natures° is regent,
but man, who has the weight° of reason,
°ought by reason to love properly,
5   °because whoever in himself, without evil thought,° understands
the full truth about good love,
then is love the true mother of honor.

     Good love should love his God first.
He who loves his God, loves truly.
10   Thus he has of three loves the first choice.
And after God, he ought secondly
to love his neighbor similarly to himself.
Because for the one who wishes thus to preserve propriety,°
then is love the true mother of honor.

15   The third point on which love has a voice,°
love teaches us this with regard to itself:°
beneath matrimony according to holy laws,
by virtuous° life, and not otherwise.
In these three points lies all the experience
20   of good love, and if I seek it thus,
then is love the true mother of honor.

     In taking account of good love,°
I have told you the form and the matter,°
because for the one who wishes to love virtuously,
25   then is love the true mother of honor.

    The final three ballades all echo and respond to **48**, offering a corrective, alternative view of love, and they do so in the voice of the poet, the "jeo" or "moi" of **49**.23 and **50**.26 who turns to a different sort of love in **[51]**, speaking to the "vous" in **49**.23 who is the reader rather than the beloved.

    49 begins with a simple ethical proposition that sweeps away all of the contradictions in **48**: "As bons est bon et a les mals malvois / Amours"; and in response to the "errours" of the refrain in **48**, in its own refrain it affirms that, for those who know the "la verité pleinere [the full truth]" (6), love is the true mother of "onour," the rhyme making emphatic the distinction. Not all love, however: the refrain is qualified in each case, restricted to "bon amour [good love]," echoing the "bien amer" of the refrain of **47**, and to loving "bonement [properly]" (4) and

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"honestement [virtuously]"(24). "Good love" is virtuous if and when it is governed by reason (lines 3-4), the quality that sets humans apart from other creatures who also experience "love," and the way in which "bon amour" escapes the "folie" and "sotie" of love of **48**.13 and 23.

This is also the central moral doctrine of both *CA* and *Tr*, though the source of the impulse to love is formulated in slightly different terms in each case. Here in **49**, love rules the "natures," that is, all sentient beings, but humans must also be ruled by reason, and when they are, theirs will be a "good love." In *CA*, instead of "love" governing "natures," it is Nature that is the source of the impulse to love (as also in **34** and **35**), and humans, as opposed to other creatures, must obey both Nature and Reason. As Genius put it near the end of Book 7:

> For God the lawes hath assised
> Als wel to Reson as to Kinde.
> Bot he the bestes wolde binde
> Only to lawes of Nature.
> Bot to the mannes creature,
> God yaf him Reson forth withal,
> Wherof that he Nature schal
> Upon the causes modefie
> That he schal do no lecherie,
> And yit he schal hise lustes have.
> So ben the lawes bothe save,
> And every thing put out of sclandre.
> (7.5372-83)

(See also 3.1194-99.) *Tr* posits instead a distinction between the body and the soul. The body "par naturele experience [by natural experience; i.e. 'naturally']" seeks to engender offspring (**2**.3-4), while reason is the property of the soul (**1**.5-6), and according to the hierarchy established by God, "sur le corps raison ert conestable [reason will be constable over the body]." A poet rather than a philosopher, Gower would probably have felt that these were all just different ways of saying the same thing. In both *CA* and *Tr*, the "love" that is shared by all creatures is provided directly by God; it cannot be avoided, even by humans, but it also retains the dignity that stems from its source, a point on which *Tr* is especially clear (e.g. **2**.13, 19-20, **3**.4-7). Yet it must also be directed according to God's law consistent with reason: Genius acknowledges to Amans throughout the confession that love cannot be controlled, either in its onset or in its outcome, but he also affirms repeatedly that it must be regulated, that is, that the lover's conduct must be governed by reason and moral law. Near the end of *Tr*, Gower offers a slightly different formulation, somewhat closer to that of **49**: "la profession / De vrai amour surmonte les natures / Et fait om vivre au loi de sa reson [the practice of true love overcomes natural inclinations (see the note to line 2 below) and makes man live according to the law of his reason]" (*Tr* **16**.16-18). This "vrai amour" (the same expression occurs in **47**.4) is the "bon amour" of **49**, and in both *Tr* and **49**, it finds its only true expression among humans in virtuous marriage.

The ballade describes three forms of "good love." The first two derive from Jesus' response to his interrogation in the temple (Matt. 22:37-39, Mark 12:29-31, Luke 10:27). In *MO* 13537-620, Gower cites Augustine on the "three loves," but these are love of God, love of one's neighbor,

and love of self. The inclusion of virtuous marriage as the third love is evidently unique to Gower, and to this passage. As in *Tr*, Gower attributes the institution of marriage to divine law (a claim that Genius, for all his praise of the benefits of a happy and fruitful marriage in *CA*, never makes). This is the only direct allusion to marriage in *50B*. **4¹**, **4²**, and **5** all use language that is appropriate to marriage, but they do not refer to marriage by name. Like the four ballades on infidelity (**40-43**), indeed like all the poems in the collection, they focus on the personal relationship between the partners rather than on institutions and laws. **49** thus offers the most explicitly moralizing passage in the entire *50B*, but it is also worth noting that, like the more critical view of love in **48**, it has its limits. There is no reference to the sins (such as fornication and adultery) that constitute a breach of the laws of marriage nor to the eschatological framework that underlies both *Tr* and *MO*: the body and soul, the judgment that awaits after death. Rather than a warning against sin, it instead offers an affirmation of love (in its proper form) as a source of good.

1-2   The expression is almost formulaic for Gower. Cf. *MO* 11530: fear of God "As bons est joye, as mals hidour [is joy to the good, horror to the wicked]"; 11827-28: "Car trestous biens qui sont mondeins / Bon sont as bons, mals as vileins [for all possessions that are of this world are good for the good and evil for the base]"; *MO* 15925, also with reference to the proper use of worldly possessions: "As bons est bonne toute chose [everything is good for the good]"; *VC* 7.976, "Est nam leta bonis mors et amara malis [for death is joyful for the good and bitter for the wicked]"; and for a somewhat different proposition, *MO* 25225, with reference to lawyers and judges, "Les bons sont bons, les mals sont mals [the good are good, the wicked are wicked]."

2   *natures*. The plural "natures" is unusual in this context, but it evidently means "created things" (see *DMF* s.v. "nature," B.3.a, "Au plur. . . . choses créées"), viewed for the properties that all creatures have in common, more specifically, without regard to reason, which is the property of humans alone. Gower also uses the word in this sense in *MO* 19909 and *Tr* **2**.19. Cf. also *VC* 5.147 (repeated in "Ecce patet tensus," 15), "Sic amor omne domat, quicquid natura creavit [Thus love overcomes everything that Nature created]." In *Tr* **16**.17, on the other hand, in which "true" love "surmonte les natures," it is tempting to understand "natures" as "natural" characteristics, in this case "natural inclinations." Elsewhere the plural "natures" can refer to humans' two natures, that is, having both body and soul, as in *MO* 11810.

3   *weight*. The use of "pois" to mean a weight as used in a balance scale (*DMF* s.v. "poids," B.III.a) might suggest the image of reason acting as a counterbalance to the force of love.

4, 9   For another example of a redundant subject pronoun see **28**.19.

5, 13, 24   *for the one who*. Three times in this ballade, Gower introduces a conditional clause with an indefinite pronoun. Cf. **47**.4 and see the note to **26**.9 above and Macaulay's note to this line (who translates "when a man within himself," 1:469).

5   *without evil thought*. This formula or some variant of it is used repeatedly in the lyric tradition on which Gower draws. See the note to **21**.8.

13   *propriety*. "Manere" refers to the general way in which one conducts oneself, but most often with favorable connotations, in both French and English. For the range of senses, see the note to **6**.2. For "propriety," which works best here, see *AND* s.v. "manere," 4; *MED* s.v. "maner(e," 5.(b).

15   *voice*. For this figurative use of "voice" see the citations in *DMF* s.v "voix," D; *AND* s.v. "voiz," 6.

16   *with regard to itself*. So Macaulay (glossary s.v. "endroit," 1:504), *DMF* s.v. "endroit," II.B.1.c., "en ce qui concerne qqn." *AND* s.v. "endreit" offers the equally possible "for one's part." Cf. "endroit de," **12**.2.

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18, 24 *virtuous*, *virtuously*. The range of "honeste" is much broader than merely "truthful." See the note to **21**.23.

22   *in taking account of good love*. For the phrase with "pour," see the note to **14**.1; for the word order, see the note to **6**.6-7. Gower uses "avisement" only once elsewhere in French, in *MO* 22772, where those charged with coming up with an answer are given three days "d'avisement." He uses it five times in English; e.g. *CA* 1.3120-21, "The knyht of his ansuere / Goth hom to take avisement." "Avisement" can mean "advice," but Gower also evidently uses it to mean "thought" or "consideration," and that seems to be the sense too in the citations in *AND* s.v. avisement," "prendre avisement de, sur," which offers the definition "to take advice concerning" instead. Other passages listed in *MED* s.v. "avisement," 2.(c) indicate that "taken avisement" could be used without a prepositional modifier, but in this line, especially given Gower's common practice of inverting word order, reading "de bon amour" after "avisement" is completely natural, and doing so doesn't prevent reading the phrase with reference to "la forme et la matiere" as well.

23   *form and matter*. The distinction (and the pairing of the terms) can be traced through medieval philosophy back to Aristotle. Gower also cites it at least five times in *CA*, but without any philosophical precision. Here he means little more than the nature or characteristics of true love.

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