

[51]

- Amour de soi est bon en toute guise,
Si resoun le governe et justifie,
Mais autrement, s'il naist de fole emprise,
N'est pas amour, ainz serra dit sotie.
- 5 Avise soi chascuns de sa partie,
Car ma resoun de novell acqueintance
M'ad fait amer d'amour la pluscherie
Virgine et miere, en qui gist ma creance.
- As toutes dames jeo doi moun servise
10 Abandoner *par* droite courtasie
Mais a ma dame pleine de franchise
Pour comparer n'est une en ceste vie.
Qui voet amer ne poet faillir d'amie,
Car *perdurable* amour sanz variance
15 Remaint en luy, com celle° q'est florie
De bien, d'onour, de joie, et de plesance.
- De tout mon coer jeo l'aime et serve et prise,
Et amerai sanz nulle departie,
Par quoi j'espoir d'avoir ma rewardise
20 Pour quelle jeo ma dame ades supplie:
C'est, qant mon corps lerra la compaignie
De m'alme, lors lui deigne en remembrance
D'amour doner a moi le pourpartie
Dont puiss avoir le ciel en heritance.
- 25 O gentile Engleterre, a toi j'escris
Pour remembrer ta joie q'est nouvelle
Que te survient du noble Roi Henris,
Par qui dieus ad redrescé ta querele.
A dieu purceo prient et cil et celle,
30 Q'il de sa *grace* au fort Roi coroné
Doingt peas, honour, joie, et prosperité.

Expliciunt carmina Iohannis Gower que Gallice composita Balades dicuntur.

15 celle. See the note to 2.17.

Balade 51

[51]

Love in itself is good in every guise
if Reason governs and controls° it,
but otherwise, if it is born of foolish intent,
it is not love;° rather will it be called folly.
5 Let everyone take counsel for himself,
for my reason, out of a new attachment,°
has made me love° the most cherished
virgin and mother, in whom lies all my faith.°

°My service to all ladies I must
10 abandon out of true courtesy,
but to my lady, full of noble generosity,°
there is no woman in this life who can compare.°
Whoever wishes to love cannot lack an *amie*,
for everlasting love without inconstancy
15 abides in her, as the one who is adorned
with good, with honor, with joy, and with delight.

With all my heart I love and serve and esteem her,
And I will love her undividedly,°
because of which I hope to have my reward°
20 for which I pray to my lady constantly.
°It is, when my body leaves the company
of my soul, may she then deign° in remembrance
of love to give to me the bequest°
by which I can have heaven as inheritance.°

25 Oh noble England, to you I write
in calling to mind° your newly arrived joy
which comes to you from the noble King Henry,
by whom God has redressed your grievance.°
Therefore let everyone, male and female,° pray to God
30 that He of His grace to the great crowned king
give peace, honor, joy, and prosperity.

Here end the songs of John Gower which, written in French, are called ballades.

Balade 51

The final ballade begins by summarizing the lessons of the two preceding poems: love that is governed by reason is good “en toute guise,” and if it is not governed by reason, then it is not love at all, but rather “sotie,” the condition described in 48. There is some equivocation here: if love by its nature is consistent with reason (the argument of 50 and the basis for the claim in line 4), then it can't be “born of a foolish intent” (line 3) and the condition expressed in line 2 is redundant. That condition is the foundation of all of Gower's moral counsel, however (as in 49), and the necessity of repeating it does not diminish the final affirmation of the possibility of a virtuous human love.

The rest of the poem turns to a different sort of love, one not counted among the “three loves” in 49.8-21 and that is expressly personal for the poet. It is thus not meant to cancel out or even supplant either the moral advice of the two preceding ballades or the exploration of the diversity of experience of love in the main body of the collection. In content, it recalls the final 2500 lines of *MO*, in which the poet, confronting his own sinfulness, turns to Mary for her pity and her aid. In that passage, as he recounts her life with a humble and sincere affection, he uses the language of secular love (including “ami” and “amie”) not for his own relation with Mary but for Mary's with her son (see especially lines 29341-508). Here, the gentle echoes of the earlier ballades sustain the parallelism between the poet's choice and the choice made by more secular lovers, suggesting that his adoration of the Virgin is very much like amatory affection in the ordinary sense, though (stanza 2) much more dependable. Gower is of course not the first poet of his time to write both secular lyrics and devotional poems. See, for just one very notable example, Machaut's vast output of liturgical music and among his lyric poems, *Lais* 15 and 16, in praise of the Virgin.

Unlike the ballades that precede, this final poem bears no number in the manuscript. Whether 50B ever existed as a finished work without it is impossible to say. As it is, so closely tied to those that immediately precede, it was clearly written for the position that it now occupies, and Gower may have thought of it as a kind of signature and epilogue, containing his leave-taking, like the passages with which both *MO* and *CA* conclude, rather than as one of the fifty poems that provide the title contained in the headnote to the collection.

The poem has no envoy because it is itself a conclusion. It is followed in the manuscript by one additional stanza addressed to “gentile Engleterre,” seeking a prayer for their new king. This stanza is separated from the ballade by a space of two blank lines; it is in a different stanza form (seven lines instead of eight); and it uses different rhymes. As Macaulay points out in his note (1:470), it functions as an envoy not to this poem but to the entire collection. Together with the headnote, which also very likely mentioned Henry IV by name, it is the only part of 50B that we can be sure was written after Henry's accession and perhaps even specifically for this manuscript, as Gower gathered together works in honor of the king.

- 2 *controls*. This is a different sense of “justifier” from the reflexive use in 48.R. See *AND* s.v. “justifier,” 3. One might also translate “keeps it just.” The verb might also mean something like “authorize”; *DMF* s.v. “justifier,” II.A.2, “Légitimer.”
- 4 *it is not love*. Gower uses a similar rhetorical strategy, claiming a particular narrowly restricted meaning for authentic “love,” in *Tr* 17.3-4, with reference to a man taking a mistress: “Mais qant li tierce d'amour se comune, / Non est amour; ainz serra dit barguain [but when a third one shares in love, it isn't love; rather it will be called bargaining]”; and *Tr* 18.7, “N'est pas amant qui son amour

Balade 51

mesguie [he isn't a lover who misgoverns his love]." See also *MO* 9394, with reference to a man who pursues women indiscriminately, "Ne sciet q'amour plus signefie [he no longer knows what love means]"; and *VC* 7.160, with reference to the prevalence of adultery among the nobility, "dicitur illud 'amor' [*that is called 'love'*]."

- 6 *attachment*. "Acquaintance" is something less casual than Modern English "acquaintance." See *AND* s.v. "acuintance," *DMF* s.v. "accointance." On the related verb see the note to 42.2.
- 7 *love*. More precisely, "love with *amour*." Yeager instead attaches "d'amour" to "la plus cherie," and he translates, "the one most cherished by love." He may be right. Preserving the word order, I read "aimer d'amour," though I have not found any other examples of this phrase in Middle French that don't also have a modifier for "amour." See *DMF* s.v. "amour," A.1.a, A.2.a, B.1.d, B.2.a, B.3.a, which provides examples such as "aimer d'amour parfaicte [to love with a complete love]" or "aimer de grant amour [to love with a great love]," but cf. Froissart, *Rond.* 11.1-2, "Plus liement ne poet le temps passer / Coers . . . que d'amer par amours [The heart cannot pass the time more happily than to love *par amours*]." In the Modern French expression "aimer d'amour," "d'amour" can mark the distinction, when such a distinction is necessary, between "being in love" with someone and merely "loving" him or her. Here Gower may be implying instead a different choice, that between *agape* and *eros*, between the type of love that is shared between God and his creation (and that would be appropriate for Mary) and that shared between a man and a woman, and to be invoking the latter in order to characterize his love for the Virgin. It is a daring move, but consistent with his use of language borrowed from the lyrics in the lines that follow.
- 8 *faith*. "Creance" might be "faith" or "belief," and to reserve such to the Virgin might seem to exclude other more important objects of Christian worship. Gower uses the same word with reference to "creance d'amour" in 4¹.22-23.
- 9-10 This is a common way of expressing devotion to a single lady. Cf. 5.2, 34.6-7.
- 11 *generosity*. Like the ladies in 23.22 and 28.8, among many others.
- 12 *there is no woman in this life who can compare*. More precisely, "there is no woman in this life to be compared to my lady." This is evidently another instance in which Gower uses "pour" rather than "a" where in English one might find "for to"; see the note to 4².4. For the use of "comparer" in negative sentences in a passive sense or in the sense of "measure up to," see *DMF* s.v. "comparer¹," B.2.b and *AND* s.v. "comparer¹," v.n., with one 12th-century citation, "As baruns de la vile ne pot nul cumparer [none can be compared to the barons of the city]." The uniqueness of the lady is a common claim. See for example 21.17-19.
- 18 *undividedly*. This might also be "unceasingly" or "unreservedly." On the range of meanings of "sanz departie" see the note to 4². In all of its senses, it is another common expression of devotion in earlier lyrics, just as all of the key words in the preceding 5 lines are commonly used in the lyrics to express either the persona's praise of his lady or his own wish.
- 19 *reward*. This is Gower's only use of "rewardise," though he also uses "reward" and "rewardi" in *MO* 16313 and 15611. The "w" marks it as an Anglo-Norman form, though it gets no listing in *AND*. The closest is "rewerdoner," listed as an alternate spelling of the verb "reguerduner [to reward, repay]." Lyric lovers often plea for the reward that they feel that they have deserved, but the more common terms are "guardon" (as in 17.5) and "guardoner" (33.6).
- 21-22 One might expect the soul to leave the body rather than *vice versa*.
- 22 *may she then deign*. On the impersonal use of the verb see the note to 33.18.
- 23 *the bequest*. Gower uses "pourpartie" in its more general sense of "share, portion" or even "possession" (perhaps under the influence of "propriété") in *MO* 16034, 22308, *CA* 1.406, 5.7000, 7.1072; *AND* s.v. "purpartie"; *MED* s.v. "purpartī(e)," (b). But *MED* also lists as definition (a) "A share or division of property, esp. land, due to a person by inheritance; a portion of inherited

property," citing CA 5.1691. This is evidently an English legal term; it does not appear in *DMF* or Godefroy, and I have chosen it for the translation based on the reference to inheritance in the next line. The choice of words is interesting, of course, because the person who dies normally makes the bequest (and passes on the inheritance) rather than receives it. The line can still be read in two ways. The word order creates a strong bond between "remembrance" and "d'amour," but because of Gower's common inversions of word order, this might also be "pourpartie d'amour," "bequest (or share) of love." Perhaps this is another case in which we should be aware of both possibilities.

24 In *Tr* 1.15-16, the soul "avera le ciel en heritage [will inherit heaven]."

26 *in calling to mind*. On the construction, see the note to 11.5. The alternative, "in order to call to mind," makes rather less sense in context.

28 *grievance*. *AND* s.v. "querele," 2; *DMF* s.v. "querelle," B.1.

29 *everyone, male and female*. More precisely, "both he and she." Yeager: "one and all."