

6

La fame et la *treshalte* renommée  
Du sens, beauté, manere, et gentilesce  
Qe l'en m'ad dit sovent et recontée  
De vous, ma noble dame, a *grant* leesce  
5 M'ad *trespécié* l'oreille et est impresse  
Dedeinz le coer, *par* quoi mon oill desire  
Vostre presence au fin qe jeo remire.

Si fortune ait ensi *determinée*  
Qe jeo porrai veoir vo *grant* noblesce,  
10 Vo *grant* valour, dont tant bien sont *parlée*,  
Lors en serra ma joie plus expresse,  
Car pour service faire a *vostre* haltesse  
J'ai *grant* voloir, *par* quoi mon oill desire  
Vostre presence au fin qe jeo remire.

15 Mais le penser plesant ymaginée,  
Jesqes a tant qe jeo le lieu adesce  
U vous serretz, m'ad ensi adescée  
Qe *par* souhaid milfoitz le jour jeo lesse  
Moun<sup>o</sup> coer aler, q'a vous conter ne cesse  
20 Le bon amour *par* quoi moun oill desire  
Vostre presence au fin qe<sup>o</sup> jeo remire.

Sur toutes flours la flour, et la Princesse  
De tout honour, et des toutz mals le mire,  
Pour vo bealté jeo languis en destresce,  
25 Vostre presence au fin qe jeo remire.

19 Mac mon

21 Mac que

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*Balade 6*

6

°The fame and the most high renown  
for sense, beauty, moderation,° and kindness  
that one has often told me about and recounted  
concerning you, my noble lady,° with great joy  
5 has pierced my ear° and is imprinted  
within my heart,° for which my eye desires  
°your presence, so that I might see° you in person.

If Fortune had so determined  
that I could see your great nobility,°  
10 your great worth, about which so much good is said,  
then my joy would be more manifest,  
for to do service to your highness°  
I have great wish, for which my eye desires  
your presence, so that I might see you in person.

15 But the pleasing imagined thought,  
until I reach the place  
where you will be, has so guided me  
that in wish, a thousand times a day I let  
my heart travel,° which doesn't cease to tell you  
20 of the good love° for which my eye desires  
your presence, so that I might see you in person.

Above all flowers the flower,° and the princess°  
of all honor, and the doctor for all pains,  
for your beauty I languish in distress  
25 so that I might see you in person.

Ballade 6 returns to the imagery and diction of 3, so precisely that 4<sup>1</sup>, 4<sup>2</sup>, and 5 appear almost as an interruption, and the correspondences are as close as those that link the three preceding ballades to one another. The opening, “la treshalte renomée . . . m’ad trespercié l’oreille” (6.1-5) directly recalls “la renomée dont j’ai l’oreille pleine” (3.8); “vo grant valour” (6.10) echoes “de vo valour” (3.9); “a vostre haltesse” (6.12) echoes somewhat more faintly “a dame si halteigne” (3.15); “le penser . . . m’ad ensi adrescée” (6.15-17) does not use the same language but it evokes the same image as “moun coer pensant . . . me meine” (3.9-10); “milfoitz le jour jeo lesse / Mon coer aler” (6.18-19) cannot help but recall “moun coer pensant envoie / Milfoitz le jour” (3.9-10); the heart speaks in both “mon coer . . . a vous conter ne cesse / Le bon amour” (6.19-20) and “ceo lettre vous apporte / Q’en vous amer moun coer dist toute voie” (3.23-24); and both

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personae languish (6.24 and 3.2). The latter is a commonplace, as is praise of the lady's worth, but the other correspondences tie these two poems to each other more closely than to any other of the *Balades*.

But there is a difference as well, for in 6, the persona addresses a lady that he knows only by reputation and that he has never seen; his wish is not for the fulfillment of his desire for her, as in 3, but only that he might look upon her. This is not a common motif in the lyrics, but it is not unknown. Deschamps defends falling in love by reputation alone in 627. He also has a rondeau that begins "Cil qui onques encore ne vous vit / Vous aime fort et desire voir [he who still has not seen you loves you strongly and wishes to see you]" (635.1-2), citing, like Gower, "les biens que chascun de vous dit [the good things that everyone says about you]" (635.5); and a virelai in which the persona has come to see a woman with whom he has fallen in love on the basis only of her "renommée [renew]" (746.2). A somewhat similar situation arises at the beginning of Machaut's *Voir Dit*, when the young woman who has never met the narrator writes to him in a rondeau that she loves him "pour les biens que de vous dit / Tout li mondes communement [because of all the good things that the whole world says about you]" (210-11), for which "a son gre pas ne vit / Quant veoir ne vous puet souvent [she does not live as she wishes when she cannot see you often]" (206-7). The narrator replies in three virelais in which he describes his own affection for this woman whom he has not yet seen (969-1169). These latter three poems also appear among Machaut's collected lyrics (Chans.Bal. 34, 35, and 36), and in the posthumous manuscript that serves as the basis for Chichmaref's edition, they are accompanied by a ballade that begins "Dame, comment que n'aie pas veü / Vo gentil corps [Lady, although I haven't seen your noble self]" (*Lou.* 274). See also *T&C* 5.164-65 (Diomedes speaking); "For I have herd er this of many a wight, / Hath loved thyng he nevere saigh his lyve."

Ballade 6 is one of eight or nine poems in 50B that are evidently addressed to an aristocratic woman, as evidenced by the epithets "ma noble dame" in line 4 and "vostre haltesse" in line 12. The allusion to her "grant noblesce" in line 9 and the reference to her as the "princesse / de tout honour" in lines 22-23 complement the address, though in the second case evidently more metaphorically than literally. (See the notes to these lines.) The reference to the lady's high rank is actually quite unusual in fourteenth-century poetry; even more unusual is a poem like 13, in which the difference between the persona's rank and the lady's provides a major theme, and Gower may be drawing upon an earlier tradition of French and Provençal lyric in which such motifs were common. See also 2.25, 20.13, 26.3, 28.15, 39.26, and 44.24, and for a more ambiguous case, 33.18, 23.

In ballades 6 and 7, Gower experiments with a refrain of more than a single line, though in each case, the alternating rhyme of the envoy (*bcbc*) makes it impossible to repeat both lines of the closing couplet of the stanza (which rhyme *cc*). Refrains of more than a single line are not unusual, but two full lines (as in 7) are more common than a line and a half (as in 6). For one example of the latter, see Machaut, *Lou.* 270.

- 1-2 Each of the qualities listed here is also attributed far more than once to the ladies that are the object of praise in earlier lyrics. Precisely the same five occur in Pandarus' description of his niece in *T&C* 1.880-82: "For of good name and wisdom and manere / She hath ynough, and ek of gentillesse. / If she be fayr, thow woost thyself, I gesse."

### Balade 6

- 2 *moderation*. In the lyrics, unmodified, “man(i)ere” most often means “composure” when it applies to the man, e.g. in Machaut, *Lou.* 3.12-13, “biauté et grant douçour / Me font perdre sens, maniere et vigour [beauty and great sweetness make me loose sense, *maniere*, and strength]” and in Froissart, Lay 1.126, a sense recognized by *DMF* in the phrase “perdre maniere” (s.v. “manière,” I.A.2.d). With reference to a woman, it more often suggests a quality of character than a passing form of behavior, e.g. “Celle en qui maint sens, maniere et raison [she in whom reside sense, *maniere*, and reason]” (Machaut, *Lou.* 36.10). *AND* cites this line from Gower’s ballade in defining “manere” as “good manners, propriety” (s.v. “manere,” 4). *MED* also gives “proper conduct, good manners” (s.v. “manere,” 5), citing the line from *T&C* quoted in the note above. *DMF* provides no definition equivalent to “proper conduct, good manners,” but it gives an abundance of citations for “Juste mesure dans la conduite, le comportement [proper measure in conduct, behavior],” “modération” (I.A.4), a sense also recognized by *AND* (loc.cit.) and by *MED* (loc.cit., 8), citing *CA* 7.2132-33, “Be this ensample a king mai lere / That forto yive is in manere,” and 7.4344, “Forthi to love is in manere.” “Manere” appears in *MO* 11749-96 as the companion of “Discrecioun,” one of the five daughters of “Humilité,” where it seems to incorporate both “propriety, good conduct” and “moderation” (“Trop halt ne vole a desmesure, / Auci ne trop en bass descent [it doesn’t fly too high in excess, nor does it descend too low],” 11792-93). That combination of moderation as the basis of good conduct appears to work well in this line too as well as in Pandarus’ description of Criseyde. See also 49.13.
- 4 *my noble lady*. By itself, the address to “ma noble dame” may or may not refer to her social rank, but conjoined with “a vostre haltesse” in line 12, the reference to her rank appears clear. See the note to 2.25.
- 5 *pierced my ear*. Though both *AND* and *DMF* (s.v. “percer”) list other figurative uses of this verb, neither provides examples either of “piercing the ear” or of “piercing heaven” (as in 18.15-16), but see *MED* s.v. “pērcen,” 5(a), “To get through to (heaven), achieve communication with, have an effect in; ~ *eres*, engage the attention (of sb., of God),” citing, among other later examples, *CA* 4.3029-30, “Fulofte hir wordes sche reherceth, / Er sche his slepi Eres perceth.” “Pierce the ear” occurs again in 44.10 and (in a different context) in 18.5-6. The evidence suggests that this is an English expression that Gower has adopted into French.
- 5-6 *imprinted within my heart*. Machaut uses the same expression, with “empreint(e)” rather than “impreste,” in *Lou.* 172.4, 191.2, 218.11. Amans offers a gloomy variation in *CA* 1.553-58: “Min herte is growen into Ston, / So that my lady therupon / Hath such a priente of love grave, / That I can noght miselve save.”
- 7 The final line of the envoy (line 25) illustrates Gower’s occasional Latinate habit, in both his English and his French, of moving an adverbial expression or an object (here, “vostre presence”) to a position before the conjunction or pronoun with which the clause would ordinarily begin (“au fin qe”). For other examples see 7.6, 7.8, 9.9, 9.17, *et al.*, and Macaulay’s notes to 20.2, *CA* Prol. 155, and *MO* 415. In the stanzas, where the refrain includes the preceding half line, it appears that “vostre presence” serves first of all as the object of “desire,” but if it is so exclusively, then “remire” is left without an object. One might solve the problem by emending “jeo” to “jel” or “jeol” (a contraction of *je(o)+le*; see *AND* s.v. “jo”), but Gower is not known to have used the contraction elsewhere, and it would be both unnecessary and ungrammatical in line 25. Macaulay, taking the entire clause of the final line of the stanza as a quasi-object for “desire,” suggests “‘wherefore mine eye hath desire, to the end that I may see again your presence,’ i.e. desire to see, &c.” This is a brave solution, and some bravery is obviously called for. I suggest instead taking “vostre presence” as the object of both verbs, in what is admittedly a very unusual example of zeugma: “my eye desires your presence, so that I might see your presence.”

*see*. The *re-* in "remire" (here, in 1.26, and 13.8) does not indicate repeated action ("see you again") any more than the *re-* in Modern French "regarder." See *AND* s.v. "remirer"; *DMF* s.v. "remirer." For contrast, cf. "revoie" in 8.R.

*see you in person*. For "see your presence" (following Yeager), here and in 15.7. On the use of "vostre presence" to mean "your person" or simply "you," see 7.24 and the note to 26.17.

9 *nobility*. Like "noble" (see the note to line 4, above), "noblesce" might refer either to rank or to a quality of character. (See *DMF* s.v. "noblesse"; *AND* s.v. "noblesce"; *MED* s.v. "nōbles(se).") Here, in conjunction with "valour" in line 10, it appears to be the latter, though "a vostre haltesse" in line 12 does suggest that the poem is addressed to a person of high rank, and Gower uses "noblesce" as an honorific in 28.15, 39.26, 44.24, and perhaps in 33.18 as well. See the notes to these lines.

12 *your highness*. This is the only occurrence of "haltesse" in 50*B*, and in line 22 occurs the only instance of "princesse." The latter is a common appellation in the lyrics, but as noted below, it does not necessarily indicate a lady's actual rank. With "vostre haltesse," on the other hand, Gower may well imagine his persona addressing a member of the highest aristocracy. *AND* (s.v. "haltesce," 5 and under the phrase "vostre haltesce") provides citations indicating such a use of the honorific before and during Gower's time, though the first citation for such a use in *DMF* (s.v. "hautesse," B.3) dates from 1450. See also *MED* s.v. "heighnes(se)," 2(c), for which the earliest citation of the honorific "thyn Hynesse" is 1406.

19 On the heart traveling, see the note to 3.9-10.

20 *good love*. This is the first instance of the expression "bon amour" in 50*B*. Here and in 25.25, it is difficult to say that it means any more than "true love," though in 31.R and in the three uses in 49, it takes on greater moral weight, something more like "virtuous love." The range of the fifteen or so uses of "bon amour" in *MO* is equally broad, from "true friendship" (3510, the appearance assumed by Falssemblant) to the love that sustains a marriage (17249) to Mary's love for God (27865-76). Cf. the notes on "droit amour" in 4<sup>1</sup>.3 and "fin amour" in 7.1.

22 *the flower*. See the note to 4<sup>1</sup>.22.

*princess*. This is the only reference to a "princesse" in 50*B*, but Gower is not the only poet of his time so to designate the lady who is the subject or the addressee of a lyric. Granson refers numerous times to his "princesse," resulting in a long discussion among modern critics of which real princess might have served as his muse (see Granson, *Poems*, pp. 34-36). Normand R. Cartier, "Oton de Grandson et sa princesse," *Romania* 85 (1964), 1-16 traces the use of the epithet, in Granson and the several other poets that he cites, to the common appeal to the "Prince" in the envoy of many fourteenth-century poems and to the motif of the lover's feudal service to his lady, with an even longer history, arguing that the label may not indicate the lady's real social rank at all. In Gower's poem, the title is consistent with the references to "ma noble dame" and "vostre haltesse" in lines 4 and 12, but as "la princesse de tout honour," her realm, on the basis of this line at least, is evidently more abstract than real. Cf. Deschamps' "Noble dame, princesse de vertu" (1577.25), also cited above in the note to 2.25.