

8

D'estable coer, qui nullement se mue,  
S'en ist ades et vole le penser  
Assetz plus tost qe falcon de sa mue.  
Ses Eles sont souhaid et desirer.  
5 En un moment il passera la mer  
A vous, ma dame, u tient la droite voie  
En lieu de moi, tanque jeo vous revoie.

Si mon penser saveroit a sa venue  
A vous, ma douce dame, reconter  
10 Ma volenté, et a sa revenue  
Vostre plaisir a moi aici conter,  
En tout le mond n'eust si bon<sup>o</sup> Messenger,  
Car Centmillfoitz le jour jeo luy envoie  
A vostre court, tanque jeo vous revoie.

15 Mais combien qu'il ne parle, il vous salue  
Depar celui q'est tout le vostre entier,  
Q'a vous servir j'ai fait ma retenue  
Come vostre amant et vostre Chivaler.  
Le pensement qe j'ai de vous plener,  
20 C'est seulement qe mon las coer convoie  
En bon espoir tanque jeo vous revoie.

Ceste balade a vous fait envoyer<sup>o</sup>  
Mon coer, mon corps, ma souveraine joie.  
Tenetz certain qe jeo vous vuill amer  
25 En bon espoir, tanque jeo vous revoie.

12 MS sibon

22 Cross drawn in margin, but no obvious correction.

8

°From a constant heart, which in no way changes,  
constantly issues forth and flies the thought  
much more quickly than a falcon from its mew.  
Its wings are Wish and Desire.

5 In a single moment it will cross the sea  
to you, my lady, to whom° it takes the direct route  
in place of me, until I see you again.

If my thought knew how, upon its arrival,  
to tell you, my sweet lady,  
10 about my wish, and upon its return  
to relate to me your pleasure as well,  
in all the world there would not be so good a messenger,  
for a hundred thousand times a day I send it  
to your court, until I see you again.

15 But though it does not speak, it salutes you  
on the part of him who is entirely yours,  
for I have made my commitment° to serve you  
as your lover and your knight.°  
The abundant° thought that I have of you  
20 is all that guides° my weary heart  
in good hope, until I see you again.

My heart, my body, my sovereign joy,°  
have caused this ballade to be sent to you.  
Hold certain that I wish to love you  
25 in good hope, until I see you again.

Ballade 8 offers one of the best examples of a single sustained metaphor in *50B*. In ballades 3, 6, and 9 it is the heart that travels; here it is the thought that proceeds from the heart (“flying” to the lady, as in 34.25-26). The success of the poem rests not only on the apparent ease with which Gower develops the motif over three stanzas, as he explores what his “messenger” can and cannot do, but also in the briefly stated refrain, starting as only half a line, evolving into a full line only in the last stanza and the envoy; in the reassuring rather than demanding tone with which Gower establishes the existence of a mutual relationship; and in the envoy, as the voyaging thought is replaced by the ballade which the persona’s heart sends to his lady.

Ballade 8 echoes imagery from both 6 and 7: the “penser” that is sent in 8.2 recalls that of 6.15; its wings in 8.4 recall 6.18 and 7.4; the brief refrain, “tanque jeo vous revoie,” repeats what

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*Balade 8*

is said in more words in 6.R; "reconter" (8.9) echoes "conter" (6.19); and the pledge to be the lady's knight repeats the wish expressed in 7.R. The "estable coer" of line 1, on the other hand, may express not only the persona's constancy but also a contrast to the perpetually troubled heart of 7.8-12, just as the single sustained metaphor replaces the scattered imagery of that ballade. The closest affinity to 8, however, may be found in 3, which also sends a "messenger," which also in the meantime derives comfort from hope, and which also, in the refrain, transforms the "message" into the ballade itself.

- 1-2 There is another example of the heart sending forth its thoughts to the lady in Mudge 74.14-16: "C'est mon miroir et par lui vous envoie / Les doux pensers que le mien cuer convoie / Jusques à vous [It (the portrait of the lady) is my mirror, and by means of it, I send you the sweet thoughts that my heart conveys to you]." I don't know of any other good model for Gower's trope. Here, in his references to the "coer pensant [pensive heart]" in 3.9 and 26.20, and in 7.10-11 and 39.17-19, Gower evidently follows Aristotle in thinking of the heart as the seat of thought, at least when it comes to thinking about one's lady.
- 6 *to whom*. On the personal use of "u" see the note to 4<sup>1</sup>.22.
- 17 *commitment*. From Yeager. For "retenue," Macaulay (I:463) offers "'engagement' to follow or serve," no doubt drawing from Godefroy, s.v. "retenue," who cites Deschamps, 493.19. There, as in Granson 78.1847, however, the "retenue" is the "Fait de prendre qqn à son service" [act of taking someone into one's service]" (DMF s.v. "retenue," C.2.c), not the act of entering into service to someone else. Gower uses the term for the service itself in 32.20 ("Fait d'être au service de qqn [fact of being in service to someone]" (DMF, loc cit.; see also MED s.v "retenūe," 2.(a)), and his two uses of the related verb, in 16.20 and 39.10, to refer to those who are "retained." In *MO* we find similar uses of the verb and use of the noun to refer to the body of retainers (e.g. in 2965, 6314, *et al.*; *AND* s.v. "retenue"; DMF, loc.cit., C.2.a; MED, loc.cit., 1.(a)). None of these, however, gives any help with the phrase "faire sa retenue," here and in 15.14. The closest analogy is offered by *Tr* 3.20-21, with reference to marriage: "C'est en amour trop belle retenue / Selonc la loi de seinte eglise due [It is in love a very beautiful *retenue* / according to the law of holy church]." There "retenue" appears to refer to a mutual commitment; in the two lines in question in 50B it appears to refer to the commitment made by the persona to the lady.
- 18 *knight*. See the note to 7.R.
- 19 While "plener" can mean "full, complete" (as in 31.25; *AND* s.v. "plener," 1, 2; DMF s.v. "plenier," A), it does not suggest "fully" in the sense of "exclusively." Here it means instead "copious" or "great" (*AND*, loc.cit., 5; DMF, loc.cit., B).
- 20 *guides*. The most common senses of "convoier" fall generally under either "accompany" or "deliver" (whence Modern English "convey"): see *AND* s.v. "conveer," DMF s.v. "convoyer." But DMF also gives "conduire [conduct, lead]" (loc.cit., A.1) and "Au fig. *convoyer qqc.*'entraîner, amener qqc.' [Figuratively . . . 'to lead, bring something']" (loc.cit, B.2), both with citations from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. MED s.v. "cōnveien," 2.(a) gives "To guide, lead, or take (sb. to a place, etc.); direct the course of (a ship), steer (to a place)," all in a physical sense, with its first citation from CA 8.23. In *MO*, however, the most common use of this verb is to "lead" or "guide" in a moral sense, e.g. in 12898 and 15314, in both of which it is set in opposition to "forsvoier [to go or lead astray]," and that seems very much to be the sense here. Cf. 9.14 and the note.
- 22 "My sovereign joy" might or might not be a vocative here. Gower uses the phrase elsewhere without vocative sense in 9.8 and 44 (the very next poem), 33.11, and *Tr* 18.5, as does Froissart, Lay 9.150; and he uses "soveraine" to refer to the lady in 10.17, 14.1, 24.26, and 39.1, as in, among

many other examples, *T&C* 4.316. The whole phrase occurs as a vocative in Granson 28.6, "ma belle et souveraine joye," and Froissart, Rond. 88.1, "ma joie souverainne."