

46

En resemblance d'aigle, qui surmonte
Toute autre oisel pour voler au dessure,
Tresdoulz amis, *vostre* amour tant amonte
Sur toutz amantz, *par* quoi jeo vous assure
5 De bien amer, sauf toutdis la mesure
De mon honour, le quell jeo garderai.
Si parler n'ose, ades jeo penserai.

Par les paiis la fame vole et conte
Coment *prouesce* est tout° en *vostre* cure,
10 Et *qant* jeo puiss oïr si noble conte
De vo valour, jeo met toute ma cure
A mon poair dont *vostre* honour procure.
Mais pour les gentz *tresbien* m'aviserai.
Si parler n'ose, ades jeo penserai.

15 Entre nous dames, *qant* mettons a la compte
Vo noble port et vo *fieri*° estature,
Lors en deviens° un poi rugge pour honte,
Mais jeo le torne ensi *par* envoisure
Q'aparcevoir nulls° poet la couverture.
20 *Par* tiel colour en joie jeo m'esmai.
Si parler n'ose, ades jeo penserai.

A vous, q'avetz d'onour celle aventure
Qe vos valours toutz passent a l'essai,
Droitiz est q'amour vous rende sa droiture.
25 Si parler n'ose, ades jeo penserai.

9 *Mac* toute

16 *MS* Larger than normal space after *fieri*; initial *e* of *estature* may be in a later hand. No clear evidence of an erasure, and no cross in margin.

17 *MS* *endeviens*

19 *Mac* null

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°Similar to an eagle, which surmounts
all other birds in flying up above,
sweet friend, your love° rises just as much
above all lovers, because of which I promise you
5 to love well, saving always the measure
of my honor,° which I will preserve.
If I don't dare speak, I will think constantly.°

Fame flies throughout the lands, and tells
how prowess is entirely in your possession,
10 and when I can hear so noble a tale
of your valor, I direct all my effort,
within my power, to obtain your honor,
but because of the people, I take very good care.
If I don't dare speak, I will think constantly.

15 Among us ladies, when we take stock
of your noble bearing and your powerful° stature,
then I become a little red with shame,
But I turn it aside° with jesting in such a way
that no one can perceive the dissembling.
20 By such a pretense,° in joy I am dismayed.
If I don't dare speak, I will think constantly.

To you, who out of honor have this fate,
that your worth surpasses all at the test,
it is right that love give you its due.°
25 If I don't dare speak, I will think constantly.

Like her counterpart in 44, the woman in 46 describes her love for a man of extraordinary worth, but the poem achieves a much greater emotional depth because of the dramatic situation created by the ballade itself. It is one of three ballades in 50B (with 37 and 40) that are not explicitly sent to the person that they ostensibly address, and as the refrain insists, it is directly concerned with the woman's inability to express her feelings openly, including to her beloved. In the third stanza, she touchingly describes how she must conceal her pleasure when she hears the other women praise the man whom she addresses in the poem. There is no precedent for her situation in the lyrics that I know of, but it may well recall the scene in which Criseyde secretly smiles as she hears Troilus praised by her dinner companions (*T&C* 2.1583-96). In the first stanza, however, the only contextual reference for her silence is the promise that she makes in

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lines 4-6, which evidently therefore goes unspoken; and in stanza two, her silence encompasses all of the admiration for the man that she wishes that she could express but cannot while under the gaze of others. In the envoy, it is her belief that the man deserves so to be loved that, according to the refrain, must go unsaid. Though she does not say so explicitly — and this is consistent with the other constraints upon her expression — it becomes clear that her implicit wish, and thus the entire ballade, is spoken to the man only in the woman's own mind, and the final instance of the refrain thus conveys in powerful terms both her timidity and her resolution.

Such an address has some precedent, though none that is either as engaging or as convincing as in Gower's poem. Machaut's *Comp. 2*, spoken by a woman to an impersonal audience, describes how neither she nor the man she loves is able to openly express their love to one another. More pertinently, in Deschamps 589 (a *virelai*), a woman addresses a man who is going abroad, hoping for his quick return because she has never disclosed her love to him; and in Deschamps 768, a man tells a woman what "a vous n'a nul dire ne l'oseroye [I would not dare tell to you or anyone]." In both of Deschamps' poems, it is clear that the message is not meant actually to be delivered; and in fact, since the circumstances of delivery are always left inexplicit, in the vast majority of earlier poems in which the persona complains of unrequited love, we seem to be overhearing his most private thoughts, even when in the form of an address to his lady. In the vast majority of his ballades, on the other hand, Gower chose to incorporate the dramatic circumstance of the address by means of the envoy. He chose the more purely lyric mode only in poems in which the lack of communication is itself part of the circumstance with which the poem is concerned, but where in 37 and 40, the woman who is addressed cares not to listen, in 46 the female persona dares not speak. As noted in the Introduction, 46 is the mirror image of a poem like 22, in which the persona uses the occasion of his written address to tell the lady what he has not been able to say to her in person. Where 22 gives expression to that which cannot be spoken, 46 is a poem about its own silence.

- 1-2 Cf. MO 10789-92: "La vertu q'est en contempler / Gregoire le fait ressembler / Al aigle blanc qui s'esvertue / Sur tous oiseaux en halt voler [The power that lies in meditation Gregory likens to the white eagle, which strives to fly high above all birds]."
- 3 *your love*. As pointed out in the note to 7.11, Gower uses "vostre amour" to mean both "your love [for me]" and "[my] love for you." Clear instances of the latter usage are found in 9.15, 25.27, and 38.10. Here the sense is ambiguous but lines 4-5 suggest that the entire stanza is about the woman's love for the man.
- 5-6 Cf. 22.26: "Salvant toutdis l'estat de vostre honour," as also noted by Macaulay (1:469).
- 7 The idea is common, if never expressed so succinctly. See Hassell P114, "On se tait, mais on n'y pense pas moins [One is silent, but one doesn't think about it less]," with, among others, five citations from Froissart.
- 16 *powerful*. *AND* s.v. "fer²," 6.
- 18 *turn it aside*. In this context one expects "destorner," but see the figurative uses listed in *DMF* s.v. "tourner," II.B.
- 20 *pretense*. "Colour" can commonly mean "pretense" or even "deception," both in French (*AND* s.v. "colur¹," 8; *DMF* s.v. "couleur," B.II.c) and in Middle English (*MED* s.v. "cōlour," 5b; cf. *WBP CT* III.399, "Under that colour hadde I many a myrthe"), but it also, of course, has a primary literal meaning which is relevant to the woman's blushing in line 17.

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- 24 *its due*. "Droiture" is used broadly for what is right, and more specifically, it can refer to what one is owed or what one is entitled to. See *AND* s.v. "dreiture," 5; *DMF* s.v. "droiture," B, citing Machaut, *Remede* 2021-23, "Amours . . . Scet bien paier as amans leur droiture [Love . . . knows well how to pay lovers their due]," and *Lou.* 175.11-12, "[je] ren toudis à Amours la droiture / Que je li doy: c'est amer loyaument [I pay to Love the duty that I owe it: that is to love loyally]." The "sa [its]" is a bit puzzling, however; one would expect "vo [your]" or perhaps "la {definite article}" instead.