



**HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS**

**Hugvísindasvið**

**John Gower, Richard II and Henry IV:**

**A Poet and his Kings**

*A Socio-Historical Study of John Gower's Poetry*

*and Late Fourteenth-Century English Politics*

**Ritgerð til M.A.-prófs**

**Grétar Rúnar Skúlason**

**Maí 2012**

Háskóli Íslands

Deild erlendra tungumála, bókmennta og málvísinda

Enska

**John Gower, Richard II and Henry IV:  
A Poet and his Kings**

*A Socio-Historical Study of John Gower's Poetry  
and Late Fourteenth-Century English Politics*

Ritgerð til M.A.-prófs

Grétar Rúnar Skúlason

Kt.: 281260-3409

Leiðbeinendur: Pétur Knútsson, Sif Ríkharðsdóttir og Torfi H. Tulinius

Maí 2012

## **Abstract**

In 1399 King Richard II was deposed by his cousin Henry of Bolingbroke who thereby became Henry IV. This followed a decade of political and personal tension between Richard and Henry and their factions. The trilingual Southwark poet John Gower also had a part to play in the political events of the period. At the outset he honoured King Richard in his poetry but as he grew discontented with Richard's rule of the realm he shifted allegiance and became a strong supporter of Henry. Gower provided Henry and the Lancastrians with poetry of propaganda condemning Richard's reign and justifying Henry's usurpation of 1399. Not only did John Gower serve his kings with his poetry for he also aimed at gaining honour and immortality for himself.

The events that took place in England towards the end of the fourteenth century were a political game of power and dominance. In this game, the various social agents found themselves either in a role of a "pawn" or a "player". In some cases, the roles were reversed and suddenly a player would be forced to become a pawn. This, for instance, was Richard II's fate when he went from being the king of England to being locked up in prison. Pierre Bourdieu's social theory of *fields*, *capital* and *habitus* offers a method for an analysis of the "game" played in society. The findings of the social study indicate that Richard II and Henry IV were mostly competing within the political field, while John Gower's main field was the literary one. Within the fields, they all sought to accumulate, in particular, symbolic capital. Although Henry and Richard shared the same habitus, Gower's background and upbringing (and thus his habitus) were of a different kind.

Richard II, Henry IV and John Gower interchanged between positions of pawns or players at various stages. They each found themselves at a certain point in time in a dominated role, as pawns, and at another on the other end of the spectrum, in dominant positions as players. This is established through a reading of Gower's poetry, a close study of the historical events and an analysis of the social status of and relationships between John Gower, Richard II and Henry IV.

## Útdráttur

Ríkharður II ríkti sem konungur Englands frá 1377 til 1399, þegar Hinrik af Bolingbroke steypiti honum af stóli og tók sjálfur við stjórn ríkisins sem Hinrik IV. Valdaránið árið 1399 var afleiðing mikillar spennu af pólitískum og persónulegum toga. Bræðrasynirnir Ríkharður og Hinrik ásamt fylgismönnum þeirra höfðu eldað grátt silfur saman árin á undan þar sem tekist var á um völd og virðingu. Samtímamaður Ríkharðs og Hinriks var John nokkur Gower, skáld sem orti á þremur mismunandi tungumálum og bjó í Southwark, við sporð Lundúna-brúar. Gower hafði hlutverki að gegna í hinum pólitíska hildarleik. Til að byrja með heiðraði hann Ríkharð konung í ljóðum sínum. Ríkharður olli hins vegar Gower sívaxandi vonbrigðum og svo fór að skáldið hætti stuðningi við konung sinn og varð þess í stað eindreginn stuðningsmaður Hinriks. Gower samdi áróðursljóð fyrir Hinrik og Lancaster-liða þar sem hann fordæmdi óstjórn Ríkharðs og færði rök fyrir nauðsyn þess að Hinrik tæki við stjórnartaumunum 1399. Ljóð Johns Gower innihéldu siðferðilegan boðskap og leiðbeiningar fyrir konung ríkisins. Fyrir Gower vakti hins vegar ekki einungis að veita konungi sínum leiðsögn, heldur ekki síður að leggja grunninn að eigin orðstír og ódauðleika sem ljóðskáld.

Atburðirnir sem áttu sér stað við lok fjórtánda aldarinnar í Englandi voru pólitískt valdatafl. Hinir ólíku þátttakendur í taflinu eru ýmist í hlutverki „peðs“ eða (valdameiri) „leikmanns“. Stöku sinnum verður viðsnúningur á hlutverkum, þannig að leikmaður getur til dæmis skyndilega verið kominn í hlutverk peðs, eða öfugt. Örlög Ríkharðs eru dæmi um þetta, þegar hann fellur af stalli sínum sem konungur Englands og endar æfi sína í fangaklefa. Félagskenningar Pierre Bourdieus um *svið*, *auðmagn* og *habitus* gera kleift að skoða nánar hinn samfélagslega „leik“ (eða „tafl“). Niðurstöður slíkrar rannsóknar gefa til kynna að Ríkharður II og Hinrik IV hafi fyrst og fremst ást við á hinu pólitíska sviði á meðan John Gower athafnaði sig mest á bókmenntasviðinu. Sameiginlegt markmið þeirra allra var að komast yfir sem mest auðmagn, einkum táknrænt. Þó svo Hinrik og Ríkharður hafi búið yfir sama habitus, þá var bakgrunnur og uppeldi (og þar af leiðandi habitus) Gowers af öðrum toga.

Ríkharður II, Hinrik IV og John Gower voru ýmist peð eða leikmenn í samskiptum sín á milli. Hver og einn var á einhverjum tímavarki seldur undir vald annars, sem peð, en síðan snerist taflað við og hinn sami var skyndilega kominn í valdastöðu. Slík niðurstaða fæst með lestri ljóða Gowers í sögulegu samhengi og með rannsókn á félagslegri stöðu og samskiptum Johns Gower, Ríkharðs II og Hinriks IV.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	1
Útdráttur .....	2
Abbreviations .....	4
1 Introduction .....	5
2 History .....	13
2.1 Richard II and Henry IV .....	13
2.2 The Merciless Parliament .....	13
2.3 Richard II and the Dispute with the Londoners in 1392 .....	16
2.4 Henry's Exile and the Deposition of Richard II .....	17
3 John Gower and his Poetry .....	19
3.1 John Gower .....	19
3.2 French .....	21
3.3 Latin .....	24
3.4 English .....	25
3.5 Richard II and the Encounter with John Gower on the Thames .....	27
3.6 Richard II and Gower's <i>Confessio Amantis</i> .....	29
3.7 Henry IV and Gower's <i>Confessio Amantis</i> .....	34
3.8 Henry IV and Gower's <i>In Praise of Peace</i> .....	36
3.9 The Praise of Henry IV and the Condemnation of Richard II in Gower's <i>Cronica Tripertita</i> .....	39
4 Sociology: Fields, Capital and Habitus .....	43
4.1 Fields and Capital .....	43
4.2 Habitus .....	57
5 Pawns and Players .....	60
5.1 Gower vs. Richard .....	60
5.2 Gower vs. Henry .....	61
5.3 Richard vs. Henry .....	63
6 Conclusion .....	65
Bibliography .....	67

### **Abbreviations**

*CA* *Confessio Amantis*

*CT* *The Canterbury Tales*

*MO* *Mirour de l'omme*

*PP* *In Praise of Peace*

*TC* *Troilus and Criseyde*

## 1 Introduction

Fourteenth-century England witnessed significant historical events, such as the Great Plague, with its ensuing shortage of labour, the beginning of the Hundred Years' War with France, the Peasants' Revolt and the deposition of two English kings: King Edward II in 1327 and King Richard II in 1399. This eventful period in the history of England also gave birth to great literature, particularly towards the end of the century, literature which has not ceased to enrich people's lives since its time of writing.

The usurpation of the English throne in 1399 was a decisive moment in a period of tension and struggle for power. The main opposing agents in the 1390s were two closely related members of the royal family, Henry of Bolingbroke, future Henry IV, and his cousin King Richard II. Richard II's reign and deposition are constant subjects of debate amongst scholars and still present an exciting field of study, more than six hundred years later.

The historical events and morals of any period are often subjects of contemporary literature. The Ricardian era, in particular, proves to be extremely rich and important in English literary history. This is the period of Geoffrey Chaucer and the birth of English as an official language and as the language of literature, with Latin and French having dominated as the languages of both literary and official activity up until then. Chaucer was not alone, however, for his contemporaries were William Langland, the Pearl Poet and John Gower. Gower, a Southwark resident, wrote moral and political poetry in three different languages: Latin, French and English. With his poetry, he took an active part in the political game of the fourteenth century where he supported the Lancastrians' deposition of King Richard II. While members of the royal family fought for the governance of England, Gower's poetry promoted peace and lawful and just kingship. Furthermore, with his literary contributions John Gower strategically laid the foundations for his own reputation and immortality.

John Gower's lifetime (c. 1330-1408) saw three kings ruling England: Edward III (1327-77), Richard II (1377-99) and Henry IV (1399-1413). Of these three, Gower most likely personally knew and interacted with the latter two. But precisely how well did the poet know his kings? Of what nature was Gower's relationship with them and what rapport did Henry and Richard have with each other? What did the interactions of these three men mean for the unfolding of events at the time? Historians and biographers offer some answers to these questions. They at least contribute to a better understanding of

the period and the characters involved in the historical events. One of those scholars is Nigel Saul. In addition to numerous articles about the Ricardian era, his account of the life and times of *Richard II*, in a detailed biography of the king published in 1997, is extremely informative and valuable to this study of John Gower, his work, his politics and his kings. Saul depicts Richard as a king who enjoyed considerable goodwill at the beginning of his reign. With time, however, Richard seems to have lost touch with his subjects and to have become increasingly preoccupied with his image as a king. His narcissism (according to Saul) contributed to his gathering around him close friends on whom he lavished favours while depriving important members of his own family of similar treatment, much to their annoyance and jealousy. Even though Richard's relationship and dealings with his cousin Henry were decisive factors in his downfall, Saul claims there were times when there seemed to be an atmosphere of friendship and peaceful rapport between the two, such as in the aftermath of the Merciless Parliament of 1388.<sup>1</sup>

Ian Mortimer does not wholly agree with Saul concerning the two cousins' bond. In his biography of Henry IV: *The Fears of Henry IV: The Life of England's Self-Made King*, published in 2007, he claims that Richard and Henry may have displayed friendship and mutual respect in public, but those feelings never went beneath the surface.<sup>2</sup> Mortimer therefore offers an interesting contrast to Saul's version of fourteenth-century history and shows how there are still unanswered questions concerning this period. Saul's and Mortimer's studies overlap in many ways, which is not surprising since much of both Richard's and Henry's lives revolved around their relationship and struggle. Both biographies give detailed accounts of known historical events while simultaneously making an effort to show the man and character behind the king.

As becomes apparent when contemplating Saul's and Mortimer's books, no version of history is conclusive. Perhaps few periods in history are better examples of how politics and personal interests can shape accounts of what really happened, as the 1390s. Through the centuries, it has commonly been believed that Richard II was a tyrant and Henry IV was a usurper. This version of events has been contested and different arguments have been put forward in recent studies, where it is even claimed that

---

<sup>1</sup> Saul 1997 178-9, 203, 459.

<sup>2</sup> Mortimer 99.



Richard may have been a “victim of spin”. Terry Jones exemplifies a scholar of this view in an essay of 2008, aptly named “Was Richard II a Tyrant? Richard’s Use of the Books of Rules for Princes.” Jones claims that Richard was a monarch who had done his best to “live by the books of rules for princes” in the best interest of his subjects.<sup>1</sup> He furthermore claims that Richard’s supposed tyranny and unpopularity were Henry’s inventions. In *The Times* (UK) on 4 October 2008 (page 13), Jones revisits this subject in an article named “Richard II: Royal Villain or Victim of Spin?” His conclusion is, as in his earlier essay, that Richard was indeed a victim of “spin”. The propaganda offered by Henry came from various sources, according to Jones. Most interestingly for this study, Jones considers John Gower to be an important cog-wheel in the propaganda machine, for it is with Gower that is seen “the full impact of Henry’s spin machine”.<sup>2</sup>

Most studies of John Gower rely, to a great extent, on the works of two scholars: G. C. Macaulay and John H. Fisher. Macaulay edited, annotated and published *The Complete Works of John Gower* in four volumes from 1899 to 1902. Included in *The Complete Works of John Gower* is the *Confessio Amantis* with the three different recensions of the poem displayed side by side, facilitating textual comparison. Macaulay’s massive achievement has provided the foundation for the study of the fourteenth-century poet’s work for scholars ever since its publication. One of those scholars is John Fisher, who in 1964 wrote *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer*, an extensive study of John Gower, his life and literary career along with a study of the themes in Gower’s works and an account of the poet’s alleged friendship with Geoffrey Chaucer. Although little documented evidence exists about John Gower’s background, Fisher concludes that he came from an affluent Kentish family, that he was a landowner and most probably pursued a legal career before retiring in Southwark in the 1370s.<sup>3</sup> Fisher’s findings provide a valuable reference for this study of Gower and his writings, as they have for most studies of Gower ever since their publication almost fifty years ago.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> T. Jones “Was Richard II a Tyrant? Richard’s Use of the Books of Rules for Princes.” 141.

<sup>2</sup> T. Jones “Richard II: Royal Villain or Victim of Spin?”

<sup>3</sup> See section 3.1, pages 19-21 below.

<sup>4</sup> For Gower’s Latin work, Eric Stockton’s English translation of *The Major Latin Works of John Gower* is the main reference for most English speaking scholars ever since its publication in 1962. As for Gower’s French work, the English translation mostly referred to is William Burton Wilson’s translation of *Mirour de l’omme* (*The Mirror of Mankind*), published in 1992.

For the last four decades Gower has been known as one of the “Ricardian Poets”, the others being Chaucer, Langland and the Pearl Poet. It was J. A. Burrow who coined the term “Ricardian Poetry” in a book of the same title in 1971. Although Burrow’s book gives an excellent overview of the most important poetry of the period and the poets’ respective literary styles, it is not, however, a social or historical study. Burrow does not offer a close examination of the historical events and the ongoing political struggle. Nor does he consider what the poets aimed for in terms of personal gain. Thus, in spite of offering a valuable perspective on Ricardian poetry *per se*, Burrow’s book is not strictly relevant to this study. More to its benefit is *John Gower’s Poetic: The Search for a New Arion* in 1990, where Robert F. Yeager suggests that Gower, by paying great attention to smallest details in his poetry, was hoping “to acquire renown through authorship”.<sup>1</sup> This is an important point, for Yeager supports the view that Gower was not only writing didactic poetry for the good of his king and country, for he certainly had his own personal interests in mind as well; he was aiming to become a poet who would be remembered after his death, as will be argued in this study.

John Gower was both a “moral” and a political poet, in the sense that he advocated for just kingship, where the ruler of the realm gave good example by adhering to the law and showing virtuous behaviour. A good king would be one who received his royal prerogative from God and ruled for the benefit of his subjects. This is reflected upon by Russell Peck in 2010, in his essay “The Politics and Psychology of Governance in Gower: Ideas of Kingship and Real Kings”. Peck claims that Gower gradually became disappointed with Richard because of his increasing tyrannical tendencies. He states that Richard distanced himself from good kingship and the moral Gower supposedly had no choice but to join the Lancastrians and support Henry’s accession to the throne.<sup>2</sup> A differing opinion is offered by Ann Astell in her study of *Political Allegory in Late Medieval England* in 1999, for she argues that Gower was first and foremost a supporter of the Lancastrians, also during Richard’s reign.<sup>3</sup> At the core of Astell’s study is an examination of Gower’s relationship with Richard and Henry and the same can be said for Peck’s essay. Similarly, the aim of this study is to analyse the positions and

---

<sup>1</sup> Yeager 1990 45.

<sup>2</sup> Nigel Saul expresses similar views in 2010: “John Gower: Prophet or Turncoat?” Saul states, however, that the main reason for Gower’s disappointment in Richard was “his belief that the king lacked self-discipline and was ruled by will rather than reason, a defect which disqualified him as a dispenser of justice” (2010 96-7).

<sup>3</sup> Astell 74-83.

relationships of John Gower and his two kings: from a historical, literary and sociological perspective.

The sociological aspect of this study includes comparison of Richard's and Henry's social positions and actions as well as of those of John Gower. The aim is to reveal where within the social space our two kings and one poet interacted with each other, what the stakes were and who occupied a dominant or dominated position *vis-à-vis* the others. In order to uncover the social aspect and interaction of our players, I make use of the ideas of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002). Bourdieu's theory centres on the idea of a social space. The agents who are situated within this social space are participants, knowingly or not, in a sort of an ever-on-going game where much depends on dispositions and social circumstances. Key concepts in Bourdieu's theory are "capital", "field" and "habitus".

When social agents within a social space seek to maintain or improve their position within that same space, they aspire to accumulate capital, according to Bourdieu. Some may already have considerable capital from the start while others may be less fortunate. Thus, the participants are not necessarily on equal terms in their competition for capital. Bourdieu proposes three fundamental kinds of capital: economic, cultural and social. Economic capital includes money, property and other assets; cultural capital includes for instance education, arts, literature, music, knowledge and languages; and social capital includes networks and being part of a larger group, such as are found in families, in religious and cultural heritage and in networks like a workplace or political parties. In addition there is symbolic capital which can be accumulated on the basis of and be exchanged for other capital. Types of symbolic capital are reputation, credentials, honour, fame and respect. For instance, a talented and successful musician (possessing cultural capital) is admired and respected for his talents, which in turn could provide him with added economic and social capital.

The competition for capital takes place within fields which are subordinate to a larger field of power. The social agents seek to gain diverse capital by taking part in various games. Those games are the different fields, or to use Bourdieu's analogy: the social space could be pictured as a room where there are various groups (fields) of card-players and one group might be playing Poker, while another one is playing Bridge.<sup>1</sup> Although they share the same social space, the players are involved in different

---

<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant 98; Tulinius *Skáldið í skriftinni* 148.

activities regulated and dictated by the respective fields. Social agents in a specific field are not restricted to that one field; on the contrary, they most likely belong to numerous fields. Someone like John Gower can belong to the literary field in London, while at the same time having a position within the legal field. The capital he brings along to the respective fields and which he manages to accumulate within those same fields may vary in type and quantity.

The fact that the various social agents act differently derives not only from the respective fields. A decisive factor is also each agent's background and character, which is determined by social class, upbringing and education, and is reflected in the social agent's habitus: "The habitus is precisely this immanent law, *lex insita*, laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing."<sup>1</sup> Habitus "focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being."<sup>2</sup> It is "that which one has acquired"<sup>3</sup> and is inherent in each individual. It includes the social agents' dispositions, which they bring with them to any field where they might have a position. The habitus is a structure which is shaped by past experience and circumstances and it adheres to the rules of a certain social class or group. It is also a structuring structure for it dictates the social agent's reactions, behaviour, opinions, tastes and desires and acts as a regulator on the social behaviour.<sup>4</sup>

Bourdieu's theory of capital, fields and habitus has been successfully applied to various academic fields, including medieval studies. In 2002, Torfi H. Tulinius proposed the application of Bourdieu's ideas to the study of medieval Icelandic society and literature, in an article called "Capital, Field, Illusio. Can Bourdieu's Sociology Help Us Understand the Development of Literature in Medieval Iceland?" His conclusion is that Bourdieu offers useful tools for the examination of poets' social position in medieval Iceland and for shedding light on the complex Icelandic society of chieftains who competed for capital. Furthermore, poetic skills were evidently of value in Iceland at the time and provided magnates like the thirteenth-century poet Snorri Sturluson with symbolic capital.<sup>5</sup> Snorri Sturluson is again at the centre of Kevin J. Wanner's book *Snorri Sturluson and the Edda: The Conversion of Cultural Capital in*

---

<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu 1972 81.

<sup>2</sup> Maton 52.

<sup>3</sup> Bourdieu 1993 quoted in Maton 56.

<sup>4</sup> Bourdieu 1990 53, Maton 51, Tulinius *Skáldið í skrifinni* 132.

<sup>5</sup> Torfi H. Tulinius followed up on the findings put forward in his article of 2002, in 2004 in a book on Snorri Sturluson, entitled *Skáldið í skrifinni: Snorri Sturluson og Egils saga*, where he asks the question whether Snorri Sturluson could be the hitherto unknown author of the Icelandic *Egils saga*.

*Medieval Scandinavia*, published in 2008. Like Tulinius, Wanner uses Bourdieu's ideas in an attempt to show how Snorri Sturluson used poetry to accumulate symbolic capital. He argues that Snorri went to Norway and presented his king with skaldic poetry in order to accumulate symbolic capital. This capital consisted of what Snorri Sturluson's contemporaries termed *sæmd* (honour) and was essential for any successful chieftain in Iceland at the time. The term *sæmd* may not have been familiar to John Gower or his contemporaries. Nevertheless, the symbolic capital Gower was after by writing didactic poetry for his kings was accumulated by means similar to those of Snorri Sturluson.

Although the topic of both Wanner's and Tulinius's studies is mainly Iceland, their work shows how Bourdieu's ideas can be successfully applied to the study of medieval society and literature. This study will draw on Wanner's and Tulinius's analyses of Snorri's manoeuvres in terms of fields, capital and habitus in a close examination of the political tug of war in England towards the end of the fourteenth century. The goal is to question how a poet like John Gower could have a role to play within the political field, while accumulating capital of his own.

I do not claim to be the first to utilise Bourdieu's ideas for the analysis of John Gower and his work. In his *Lordship and Literature* of 2008, Elliot Kendall scrutinises the *Confessio Amantis* and the expression of politics and power in the great household of the late fourteenth century. He focuses his study on the fourteenth-century aristocratic household in England and the various capitals at stake within the aristocratic field, where affiliations with other households and exchange of various kinds were particularly valued.<sup>1</sup> Kendall supports his findings by a close examination of the *Confessio Amantis* using Bourdieu's theory of field, capital and habitus. Thus, Kendall presents a rare example of Bourdieu's ideas' being applied to the examination of John Gower's works and time.<sup>2</sup> The way this study differs from Kendall's analysis is that here the emphasis is on the poet John Gower and his two kings: Richard II and Henry IV. Who were Richard II and Henry IV and what was their relationship? What led to Richard's deposition in 1399? What role did John Gower play in the political events?

---

<sup>1</sup> An arranged marriage is a case in point, where wealth and power could be secured by using women as "household exchange" (Kendall 132-3).

<sup>2</sup> To the aforementioned works by Tulinius, Warren and Kendall we can add Jean-Pierre Genet's *La genèse de l'État moderne: Culture et société politique en Angleterre*, published in 2003. Genet gives a clear overview of the politics and the society in England at the time. What makes his analysis interesting and relevant to this study is his inclusion of an examination of Bourdieu's "fields" with particular emphasis on texts, authors and the production of manuscripts.

I shall start by looking at the historical events and the lives of the principal actors, Richard, Henry and Gower, in an attempt to establish what happened at the end of the fourteenth century in England and why. This is followed by a section where particular attention is paid to the way in which historical events, the kings and kingship are analysed in Gower's poetry and the extent to which his writings carried weight in contemporary politics. In the third main section of this study I use Bourdieu's "tools" for the dissection of the power struggle in England during the last decades of the fourteenth century and how writers like John Gower could be considered players in the political game. What was the capital each player was seeking to accumulate and what were the fields? On what grounds could they claim their capital and what was their habitus? By drawing on the findings of the preceding chapters, the final section of this study aims to establish who was a "player" in the "game" and who was a "pawn". Was there a loser as well as a winner? What did Richard and Henry achieve, respectively, and what did a "moral" poet from Southwark gain from his participation in the game? In this study, I build on what previous scholars have written about Richard II, Henry IV and John Gower, scrutinising their lives, actions and work. By adding to that a close study of Gower's poetry of the period, as well as applying Bourdieu's theory to the findings, I will determine how the game was played and who was a player and who was a pawn in the political contest of the 1390s.

## 2 History

### 2.1 Richard II and Henry IV

Richard II and Henry IV were not only cousins but almost the same age as well. Henry of Bolingbroke,<sup>1</sup> later to be Henry IV, was born c. 3 April 1366 and his cousin, Richard of Bordeaux, later to be Richard II, was born nine months later, on 6 January 1367. Their grandfather was King Edward III, the longest reigning king in fourteenth-century England (1327-1377). Henry was the son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, one of the most powerful and richest men in England. Richard was the son of Edward, the Black Prince, Gaunt's older brother. The Black Prince, the heir apparent, died in 1376.

Although the young cousins were not brought up together, they spent time in each other's company and shared experiences and education, especially after Gaunt placed his son with Richard in the royal household in 1377.<sup>2</sup> On 23 April 1377 the dying King Edward knighted both of his grandsons and, as fate would have it, the cousins were together in Kennington when the news of the death of their grandfather was brought to them on 21 June.<sup>3</sup>

With both his grandfather and father gone, Richard became king of England at the age of 10. He ruled as a minor for twelve years, assisted by a council of his elders which included his uncle John of Gaunt. In 1389 he took full control of the realm and ruled as King Richard II until Henry deposed him on 29 September 1399.

### 2.2 The Merciless Parliament

Richard II's reign was turbulent. In 1387 he was close to being deposed and the following year he suffered a humiliating defeat at the Merciless Parliament. He was forced to suffer a check on his power and finances as well as the loss of his closest friends in council. This chain of events can be said to have started in 1386 with the departure of his uncle, John of Gaunt, for Castile where he had a claim to the throne.<sup>4</sup> Richard was quite distressed at Gaunt's departure, for he had provided stability and

---

<sup>1</sup> It can be difficult to keep track of Henry's various titles: At birth he became Henry of Bolingbroke; 1377 is believed to be the year when he became earl of Derby; in 1397 he became Duke of Hereford; in 1399 he became Duke of Lancaster, at the death of his father, before finally becoming King Henry IV later that same year (Mortimer 469). This study uses the title of Bolingbroke for Henry until he becomes Henry IV. In contrast, King Richard II became Richard of Bordeaux at birth and he was not known by different titles as Henry was, since he became king when only ten years old.

<sup>2</sup> Mortimer 33.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 33-4.

<sup>4</sup> Saul 1997 148-9.

been “the dominant figure in politics after the king” for years.<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, Richard’s domestic troubles seem to coincide with his uncle’s stay abroad, for it was in 1389 that Richard recovered from the aftermath of the Merciless Parliament and regained authority in the realm, the same year Gaunt returned to England. So, it could be assumed that with Gaunt’s departure, the king lost the Lancastrian support of the royal prerogative and instability entered the political scene in England and paved the way for upcoming events.

In November 1387, the Lords Appellant, Gloucester, Arundel, Warwick, Bolingbroke (future Henry IV) and Nottingham<sup>2</sup> presented an appeal against Richard’s friends and councillors.<sup>3</sup> They resented how Richard favoured those closest to him and lavished them with honours and fortune. Robert de Vere was not of as noble family as Gloucester, but enjoyed, for instance, more favour at court and had considerable influence in Essex (De Vere’s and Gloucester’s county), much to Gloucester’s annoyance.<sup>4</sup>

Henry of Bolingbroke’s affiliation to the Lords Appellant may have been the first public display of a serious opposition to his cousin, King Richard II. It is, however, conceivable that Henry may have needed some convincing before joining the other lords in their appeal. Nigel Saul argues that neither of the junior Appellants (Henry of Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham) “joined the coalition out of any particular conviction; each was motivated almost entirely by self-interest”.<sup>5</sup> It may be that the senior Appellants managed to recruit Nottingham and Henry of Bolingbroke due to grievances and jealousy towards their primary rival Robert de Vere. The fact that De Vere was a justice of Chester may have presented a challenge of authority towards Henry in the Lancastrian north-west territory. Moreover, Henry’s situation was perhaps vulnerable at that time due to his father’s absence: Gaunt was abroad and so Henry had the supervision of the family’s domains. Because Robert de Vere was the primary target

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 151.

<sup>2</sup> The five Lords Appellant included originally three senior ones and two younger ones who joined later. The three senior Appellants were Thomas of Woodstock (Earl of Gloucester and Richard’s uncle), Richard FitzAlan (Earl of Arundel) and Thomas de Beauchamp (Earl of Warwick). The two younger Appellants were Henry of Bolingbroke (Earl of Derby, Richard’s cousin and future King Henry IV) and Thomas de Mowbray (Earl of Nottingham) (Mortimer 64, 72; Saul 1997 176).

<sup>3</sup> Saul 1997 176. Those against whom the Lords Appellant appealed were Robert de Vere (Earl of Oxford and Richard’s closest friend), Sir Robert Tresilian (the Lord Chief Justice), Sir Nicholas Brembre (the Lord Mayor of London), Alexander Neville (the Archbishop of York) and Michael de la Pole (Earl of Suffolk, the former Lord Chancellor) (Saul 1997 182-4).

<sup>4</sup> Saul 1997 179.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 181.



of the Lords Appellant, Henry's participation is perhaps understandable, although it has to be said that his involvement in, and dedication to, the Appellants' campaign is not as clear cut or obvious as in the case of the other Lords Appellant, especially the senior ones.<sup>1</sup>

If Henry had any reservations before joining the Lords Appellant, once a member of the group he seems to have taken an active part in its campaign. His contribution to the skirmish at Radcot Bridge on the Thames in December 1387, where the Appellants' army defeated De Vere and his men, was decisive. He then joined the others when they rode to the Tower of London and confronted Richard, where they accused him of misrule and threatened to depose him.<sup>2</sup>

Richard had no choice but to give in to the Lords Appellant and subsequently agree to a trial where five of his closest friends and allies would be tried. The trial started on 3 February 1388 in Westminster and De Vere, de la Pole and Tresilian were all "sentenced to death and to the forfeiture of their lands, and Neville to the loss of his temporalities".<sup>3</sup> Sir Nicholas Brembre was the only one of the defendants who was present at the trial and therefore the only one to hear his sentence in person. He was the last of the five to be tried and was sentenced to death. The Appellants did not stop their proceedings at the conviction of the five accused, for they went on to impeach others close to the king, be they chamber knights or officials, condemning them to death or exile. Included on the list of those executed was Simon Burley, Richard's former tutor. The Appellants' cleansing did not stop until literally the whole of Richard's inner circle had been destroyed.<sup>4</sup>

Richard's power had been crushed. However, the Lords Appellant did not retain their hold of government for long and gradually Richard won back his realm. Nigel Saul and Ian Mortimer disagree as to how successfully Henry and Richard restored their friendship in the aftermath of the Merciless Parliament. Saul claims that Henry "made his way back to royal favour [and a] gift to him from the king of a valuable breastplate marked the growth of a warmer and more intimate relationship between them".<sup>5</sup> Ian Mortimer, however, suggests that the gift of the breastplate may be interpreted as a

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 181-2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 188-9; Mortimer 73-4.

<sup>3</sup> Saul 1997 193.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 192-5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 203.

warning from Richard to Henry and the king would “never forgive him for riding against de Vere, nor for sanctioning the deaths of so many of his friends”.<sup>1</sup> Mortimer furthermore points out that although the cousins would seemingly remain allies in public, where they “wore thin-lipped smiles for the sake of politeness,” they otherwise kept apart “and only came together when Richard needed the support of the Lancastrians”.<sup>2</sup> So, although there may have been tension between Richard and Henry, on the surface things seemed to be relatively calm. Eventually, the king appeared to have strengthened his position and to have the realm under his control at the beginning of the 1390s.

### **2.3 Richard II and the Dispute with the Londoners in 1392**

Richard had survived the Appellants’ assault on his power. He still, however, faced problems, of a purely economic kind. Due to parliament’s reluctance to hand the king money through public taxation, except for specific purposes, Richard and his council were having “cash-flow problems” at the beginning of the 1390s and had to resort “to widespread borrowing”.<sup>3</sup> In 1392, the king’s council asked the mayor and aldermen of London to lend a substantial amount of money to Richard. When the Londoners refused, the king, quite tyrannically, took control of the city which was ruled by a royal warden from June until the middle of September. Only after being forced to pay a fine of £10.000 to the king, were the mayor and the aldermen allowed to regain control of their city. As Saul points out, though the result of this dispute brought Richard the money he needed, yet the whole episode meant that he had lost considerable “popular goodwill in the city”.<sup>4</sup> The king’s loss of support in the city would prove to have a bearing on his position when he was deposed by Henry of Bolingbroke and his followers seven years later.<sup>5</sup>

Richard’s dispute with the Londoners may furthermore have had a significant meaning for John Gower’s relationship with, or at least his opinion of, his king. Gower had many friends and allies in the City of London and he witnessed how they were humiliated by the king during this episode. This may well be the milestone which marks

---

<sup>1</sup> Mortimer 83.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Saul 1997 258.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 259.

<sup>5</sup> Mortimer 181.

Gower's final shift away from Richard, reflected in the removal, around this time, of dedications to the king in the *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>1</sup>

Richard and Henry experienced personal tragedies in their lives shortly after this, when they both suffered the loss of their respective wives. Mary of Bohun, Henry's wife, died on 4 June 1394 and only three days later Richard's wife, Anne of Bohemia, passed away.<sup>2</sup> This was devastating for the two cousins, for it seems they both loved their wives very much, and it seems extraordinary how once again the fate of the two cousins proved to be intertwined. So it would continue to be, since one of the most important events in the last decade of the fourteenth century loomed on the horizon: the deposition of Richard II in 1399, by his cousin Henry of Bolingbroke.

#### **2.4 Henry's Exile and the Deposition of Richard II**

Having gone on a successful campaign in Ireland in 1394-5 followed by a peace treaty with France in 1396, Richard seemed to have gained enough confidence to take on the Lords Appellant again and seek revenge for the defeat at the Merciless Parliament a decade earlier. In July 1397, Richard had the three senior Lords Appellant arrested. Two months later they were tried and found guilty of treason: Arundel was executed and Warwick was exiled, while Gloucester was found guilty posthumously, since he had been murdered in prison, possibly on Richard's orders.<sup>3</sup> In September 1398 Richard banished the two remaining Lords Appellant from the realm, Henry for ten years and Nottingham for life.<sup>4</sup> On 3 October 1398, ten days before Henry left for France, Richard issued letters where he promised that Henry would keep his inheritance if his father, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, passed away while his son was in exile. This promise was soon broken, however, for when Gaunt died on 3 March 1399, Richard decided to revoke the letters he had signed only five months earlier, thus disinheriting Henry and confiscating all the property of the Lancastrians. To add insult to injury, he extended Henry's exile from ten years to life. Thereby, Richard had firmly set in motion the chain of events that would eventually culminate in his deposition later that same year.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Hines, Cohen and Roffey 26. I will discuss the removal of the dedications to Richard in *CA* in more detail in sections 3.4, 3.6 and 3.7 below.

<sup>2</sup> Mortimer 121-2.

<sup>3</sup> Saul 1997 366, 378-9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 401.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 403-4; Mortimer 159-60, 164.

It took only two months before an opportunity came for Henry to strike back. In May 1399, the news of Richard's departure for Ireland reached Paris, where Henry was living in comfort at court as a welcome guest of King Charles VI. Preparations were made for departure and Henry set off and landed in Humber on the east coast of England towards the end of June. What his precise intentions were, when he left France for England, is difficult to ascertain, but Saul argues that most likely Henry was initially only thinking of regaining his Lancastrian inheritance; the thought of a deposition most likely grew with him later that summer and autumn.<sup>1</sup>

Henry gained force and momentum as he made his way south and towards the end of July he had control of central and east parts of England. Richard could not leave Ireland as soon as the news of Henry's landing reached him due to the shortage of ships at his disposal and this proved to be a costly delay. When Richard finally arrived on the west coast of England his situation had become too weak. Henry took Chester in August and shortly after, he captured Richard at Conway near Chester and transported him to London where he had him imprisoned in the Tower around 1 September.

If there was doubt before, it became clear that Henry was in fact thinking of deposing his cousin as king of England shortly after their arrival in London at the beginning of September. He was, however, aware of the fact that there might be legal complications concerning the right to the inheritance of the throne and his claim to accession.<sup>2</sup> Having done all he could to make his case as watertight as possible, the deed was finally done on 29 September 1399 when Richard II was deposed and formally replaced by Henry IV on 13 October.<sup>3</sup>

The last decades of fourteenth-century England were a period of tension. The historical events, from the Merciless Parliament in 1388 to the deposition of Richard II in 1399 by his cousin, Henry IV, portray an on-going struggle for power, both within the political realm and within the royal family itself. Richard seemed wary of the Lancastrians and his ever-growing paranoia in the 1390s, which comes across almost as a premonition of events that would come to pass, certainly must have contributed to his ever increasing inclination to absolutism and tyranny.

---

<sup>1</sup> Saul 1997 406.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 418.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 421.

### 3 John Gower and his Poetry

#### 3.1 John Gower

John Gower was born in c. 1330 and died in October 1408. As John H. Fisher points out, the name “John Gower” was not uncommon in fourteenth-century England and this has made it particularly difficult to ascertain Gower’s origin.<sup>1</sup> Fisher and others who have tried to establish where John Gower originates from have had little evidence to go by and have based their conclusions mainly on the various coats of arms linked to the name Gower. These coats of arms have suggested that he was raised in Kent, where he has been linked to a certain Robert Gower of Brabourne, Kent.<sup>2</sup> An epitaph on Gower’s tomb in Southwark Cathedral, states that he is born during Edward III’s reign, which started in 1327. The year 1330 is the one generally given for his birth, although that specific year cannot be confirmed.<sup>3</sup> John Gower appears to have received a good education as can be inferred by the fact that he had three languages in his command as well as extensive knowledge of classical literature. This suggests a noble family background, as Robert Gower’s family of Kentish gentry could have provided.

In addition to the ambiguity surrounding his origin, it has been impossible to state with certitude anything concerning Gower’s professional life before he dedicated himself to the writing of poetry. It has been suggested that he was educated as a lawyer and hints in his poetry, along with his apparently substantial knowledge of the law, support that theory. If this is so, he would most probably have sought education at the Inns of Court in London, near Chancery Lane, where it has been suggested he met Chaucer for the first time.<sup>4</sup> Other indications of his participation in professional life are transactions in purchasing land and real estate, at least in London, Kent, Norfolk and Suffolk. The first datable transactions took place in the 1360s and the documents concerning these property purchases are in fact the earliest factual records of John Gower’s life.<sup>5</sup>

John Gower was certainly not the only poet at the time and there is for instance little doubt that he and Geoffrey Chaucer knew each other. Examples of their connection through literature can be found in Chaucer’s greeting to Gower in *Troilus*

---

<sup>1</sup> Fisher 1964 37.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 37-46.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 52-4, 57-8.

and *Criseyde* and Gower did likewise for Chaucer in the first version of the *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>1</sup> It has furthermore been suggested that they confided in each other regarding ideas for their poetry and submitted drafts of their writing to each other for comments and critique. Gower's relationship with Chaucer was also on a more mundane professional level. When Chaucer had to go to Italy for four months in May 1378 he confided his power of attorney to John Gower and to a lawyer by the name of Richard Forester.<sup>2</sup> It has been suggested that Gower's friendship with Chaucer must have gone sour later, based on the fact that Gower removed his dedication to Chaucer in the second recension of the *Confessio Amantis*. Some critics claim there may, for instance, have been a political disagreement between the two while others have argued that there is no evidence to support any speculations of a rift in their relationship.<sup>3</sup>

Establishing to what extent Gower actually ever knew King Richard is problematic, due to lack of evidence. It is, however, known as a fact that the poet received as a gift a livery collar bearing the Lancastrian Esses from Henry of Bolingbroke in 1393.<sup>4</sup> A proof of this gift can be found in Henry's own documents, where the "papers record the expense of replacing a collar for one Richard d'Ancaster because of a collar given to Gower".<sup>5</sup> There is thus evidence of the poet's amicable rapport with Henry, already in the early 1390s.

In 1398, John Gower married, in his lodgings at Southwark, a certain Agnes Groundolf and there is no trace of a previous marriage although at this point he was in his sixties. Perhaps this was a marriage of convenience, in the sense that he needed someone to take care of him, as he stated in a letter to Bishop Arundel that he was "old,

---

<sup>1</sup> *TC* 153; *CA* VIII 2941\*. A note on the use of an asterisk (\*\*) in academic studies of the *Confessio Amantis*: The convention has it that instead of referring to specific manuscripts (such as the "MS Fairfax 3" stored in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, Macaulay's main source for his edition of *CA* in 1900 (Pearsall 2004 76, 93)) scholars refer to the three different recensions of the text of *CA*, as represented in close to fifty extant manuscripts. Macaulay (Gower 1900 and 1901) provides the text in its entirety with the different versions of the text displayed together, making comparison of the recensions accessible. The asterisk indicates the first recension of *CA*, which includes dedications to King Richard II and Chaucer (removed in subsequent recensions).

<sup>2</sup> Fisher 1964 32-3, 61.

<sup>3</sup> Epstein (57) claims Gower was angry with Chaucer for being a "mouthpiece" for Richard and that made him remove the dedication from *CA*. Fisher (1964 33-4, 119-20) is not convinced of a rift in the two poets' friendship, pointing out that even though Chaucer may have remained loyal to Richard longer than Gower did, there was nothing to actually confirm a political disagreement between the two. Macaulay (xxvi), however, suggests that Chaucer may have been offended when Gower removed the dedication to him from *CA* and that caused the rift, although he points out that there is not sufficient proof of this.

<sup>4</sup> Coleman 105; Fisher 1992 1171; Hines Cohen and Roffey 26. See Mortimer 384-7 for speculations about the significance of the Esses in the Lancastrian collar.

<sup>5</sup> Hines, Cohen and Roffey 26.

blind, sick and wretched”.<sup>1</sup> Agnes Groundolf remained with Gower until his death and he made sure in his will that she could lead a comfortable life after he had passed on.<sup>2</sup>

John Gower died in October 1408. Ironically, the most extensive evidence of his life is to be found in his will. He had arranged in detail his funeral and the funeral prayers as well as the bequests left for his wife, hospitals, asylums and the Church.<sup>3</sup> Gower’s tomb can be found today in Southwark Cathedral, on the site of St Mary Overie Priory Church, and has the poet lying on his back in a red gown. He is wearing a Lancastrian collar of Esses as well as “a pendant jewel in the form of a swan, a motif adopted by Henry from 1380, reflecting his connection with an idealised Knight of the Swan through his marriage to Mary de Bohun”.<sup>4</sup> As a pillow he has his three major works: *Mirour de l’omme*, *Vox Clamantis* and *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>5</sup>

John Gower composed poetry in three different languages: French, Latin and English. In each language he wrote one major work in addition to various shorter ones. Before writing in English for the first time, he had already composed poetry in the other two languages and it appears he started his literary career in French.

### 3.2 French

Gower’s French poetry consists of two collections of ballades, *Cinkante Balades* and *Un traitié selonc les auctours pour essampler les amantz marietz*, as well as the major work *Mirour de l’omme*. Yeager states that it is impossible “to establish an unequivocal chronology for [Gower’s] French poems” and it seems “that Gower composed in French throughout his life”.<sup>6</sup> It is, for instance, not entirely clear when the *Cinkante Balades* were written. Some scholars argue that they were composed at the beginning of Gower’s literary career (before 1380, even as early as 1350) while others want to date them to the beginning of Henry IV’s reign, around 1400.<sup>7</sup> They could have been written at intervals, over an extended period, and the majority could be from Gower’s earliest days as a poet, while others are obviously from a later date since they are specific to Henry IV and his kingship. The *Cinkante Balades* are only to be found in one extant

---

<sup>1</sup> Fisher 1964 65; Hines, Cohen and Roffey 27.

<sup>2</sup> Fisher 1964 58, 65-7; Hines, Cohen and Roffey 27.

<sup>3</sup> Fisher 1964 67; Hines, Cohen and Roffey 27.

<sup>4</sup> Coleman 105-6; Hines, Cohen and Roffey 26.

<sup>5</sup> Hines, Cohen and Roffey 36-40.

<sup>6</sup> Yeager 2004 137.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 137, 145-6; Fisher 1964 71-2; Yeager 2010 310.

manuscript, which is clearly from Gower's last years at the earliest, which makes the dating of the actual composition particularly problematic.<sup>1</sup>

The *Cinkante Balades* are not fifty, as the title of the collection might suggest, but rather fifty-four. Almost all of the ballades are composed in the standard ballade form, which comprises three stanzas with identical rhymes and an envoy.<sup>2</sup> As Yeager points out, a remarkable feature of the *Cinkante Balades* is that the individual poems constitute a "narrative unity", where the narrators are a male lover, whose voice is mostly heard, and his lady.<sup>3</sup> The story of the *Cinkante Balades* is one of lovers who go through emotions and surmount obstacles on their way to a happy ending where true love can only be fulfilled by marriage. By this, it could be concluded that Gower sounded "moral" from the outset and that he may have intended for all his poetry to be didactic.

*Un traitié selonc les auctours pour essampler les amantz marietz* carries with it a moral message in the same vein as the *Cinkante Balades* does and is no less didactic. In this instance the lesson is not for lovers, who should seal their relationship by marriage, but rather for married couples and how they are to preserve their relationship and honour God. It has not been as difficult to date the *Traitié* as the *Cinkante Balades* and it is believed that Gower composed it in or around 1397, shortly before his marriage with Agnes Groundolf in 1398.<sup>4</sup> The fact that the *Traitié* exists in thirteen known manuscripts indicates that it was possibly Gower's most popular work written in French, since the *Cinkante Balades* and the *Mirour de l'omme* have, so far, only been found in one extant manuscript. The *Traitié* was frequently appended to the *Confessio Amantis* with the message that having described the foolishness of a disoriented lover it was time for a lesson in how to behave in marriage.<sup>5</sup> There are nine extant manuscripts of the two coupled together, with further two manuscripts where the *Traitié* is appended to *Vox Clamantis*. In the thirteenth manuscript (Trentham MS) the poem appears by itself.

Again, Gower employs the ballade form, with the *Traitié* being made up of eighteen ballades where each ballade includes three stanzas of seven lines. Unlike the

---

<sup>1</sup> Yeager 2004 145.

<sup>2</sup> There are two poems which do not adhere to the standard form: ballade IX has five stanzas and an envoy and ballade XXXII lacks an envoy, see Yeager 2004 145.

<sup>3</sup> "Gower assembles the story of a love affair out of the individual poems. The *Cinkante Balades* has a narrative unity, even a chronology, traceable through references to feast days and seasonal changes over the course of two or three years" (Yeager 2004 146).

<sup>4</sup> Yeager 2004 149.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 148-9.



*Cinkante Balades*, however, there are no envoys in the *Traitié*. Another feature of note, is that the *Traitié* contains marginal commentaries in prose Latin (a feature also to be found in the *Confessio Amantis*, for instance), where the plot or meaning of some words in a particular stanza are explained. Unlike the *Cinkante Balades*, the *Traitié* does not have a narrative structure. Rather than being a narrative unit, it is structured as an argument where Gower states his case rhetorically, giving arguments in order to make his point without any poetic effect and without allegories and metaphors. Though there might be a difference of technique, the theme is the same as before: “the problem of how to accommodate human love and divine law.”<sup>1</sup>

Gower’s major work written in French is the *Mirour de l’omme*. It is believed that he may have started writing it in 1360, at a moment when the English court was predominantly French, so the circumstances for French poetry were favourable at the start of its composition.<sup>2</sup> By 1377, at the time of Edward III’s death, Gower seems to have finished his major work in French.<sup>3</sup> However, after Edward’s death the English court grew “less and less French” and the *Mirour de l’omme* was left “linguistically without an audience”.<sup>4</sup> The *Mirour de l’omme* eventually became the first instalment of Gower’s trilogy of major poems.<sup>5</sup>

Although it was known (from his tomb, for instance) that Gower had composed the *Mirour de l’omme* it was lost to the world for centuries. In 1895 G. C. Macaulay discovered the poem in a manuscript in Cambridge.<sup>6</sup> Some leaves are missing, so of the original 34000 lines 29945 have survived in the extant manuscript.<sup>7</sup> The *Mirour de l’omme* contains stanzas of twelve octosyllabic lines which Yeager points out have a pattern similar to Hélinant de Froidmont’s *Vers de la Mort*.<sup>8</sup>

Those familiar with Milton’s *Paradise Lost* will recognise the subject of the *Mirour de l’omme*, beginning with Lucifer’s fall from grace and the ensuing creation of Sin, Death and their progeny.<sup>9</sup> The poem is divided into three parts, where the first part describes how vices and virtues came into existence, the second part describes how

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 144.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson xv-xvi.

<sup>4</sup> Yeager 2004 145.

<sup>5</sup> The other two major poems were the *Vox Clamantis* in Latin and the *Confessio Amantis* in English.

<sup>6</sup> Cambridge University Library Additional MS 3035. This is the only extant manuscript containing the *Mirour de l’omme*.

<sup>7</sup> Yeager 2004 139-40.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 139.

<sup>9</sup> Fisher 1964 164.

vices gain victory over virtues when they manage to corrupt Man, and in particular the various estates (including the Church, the aristocracy and the workers) and the third part offers salvation for the sinning man by showing the way towards the Holy Virgin. So the *Mirour de l'omme* is essentially a poem about the battle between good and evil, where evil seems to prevail until Man realises that he can be saved by prayer devoted to the Holy Virgin.

### 3.3 Latin

The *Vox Clamantis* is one of Gower's three major works, the one written in Latin and is situated chronologically between the other two, composed after the French *Mirour de l'omme* and before the English *Confessio Amantis*. It exists in eleven manuscripts, which is admittedly more than the single extant manuscript of the *Mirour de l'omme*, but less than those of the *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>1</sup> The *Vox Clamantis* is written in unrhymed elegiac couplets and is 10265 lines and therefore shorter than both the *Mirour de l'omme* and the *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>2</sup> Gower began the composition shortly after he had finished the *Mirour de l'omme*, in 1378, first writing books II-VII and finishing them before the Peasants' Revolt in 1381, then adding book I where he gives an account of the revolt. The *Vox Clamantis* is essentially a critique of the three estates, where Gower condemns their vices and unethical behaviour. This estate satire is not altogether unlike the one he had already put forth in the *Mirour de l'omme*. Those belonging to the three estates and thus being on the receiving end of Gower's criticism include in large proportion clerics (which Fisher believes points to a predominantly clerical audience, an argument perhaps substantiated by the fact that the poem is written in Latin ),<sup>3</sup> as well as knights, peasants, merchants, artisans, lawyers and the king. Gower's condemnation of the peasants and their revolt in 1381 in book I is strikingly forceful, perhaps because he witnessed it in person and was so horrified at what he saw that he describes it as a personal nightmare.

Gower intended his *Cronica Tripertita* as a sequel to the *Vox Clamantis*, to which it has been appended in at least four extant manuscripts. The *Cronica Tripertita* is written in c. 1400, at the beginning of Henry IV's reign. Macaulay concluded that the *Vox Clamantis* and the *Cronica Tripertita* formed "a unified commentary on the tragic

---

<sup>1</sup> Rigg and Moore 153, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 156; Stockton 11.

<sup>3</sup> Fisher 1964 106.

course of Richard's rule from 1381 to 1400, with a prologue (the *Visio*), a midpoint (the Epistle), and an epilogue (the *Cronica*)".<sup>1</sup> The *Cronica Tripertita* is quite explicit in the way it condemns Richard II and his reign and hails Henry as a hero and the saviour of the nation. It is 1062 lines long and is written in leonine hexameter.<sup>2</sup> It is possibly the last work Gower composed before losing his sight in 1400 and has been found in six extant manuscripts.<sup>3</sup> The first part describes events in 1387-8 and offers a grim description of the bad rule of Richard II and how the kingdom was torn between warring factions, culminating in the Merciless Parliament. The second part gives an account of events as they happened in 1397, when Richard obtains his revenge on those he had to bow to at the Merciless Parliament a decade earlier. In the third and last part of the *Cronica Tripertita* an account of Richard's last year as a ruling king is offered to the audience. This includes a description of Henry's exile and return to England and how he, taking advantage of Richard's expedition to Ireland, deposed Richard and became Henry IV in 1399. The poem ends with the description of Richard's death in prison, shortly after Henry's coronation.

In addition to the *Vox Clamantis* and the *Cronica Tripertita*, Gower wrote almost twenty shorter poems in Latin. Although it is difficult to ascertain the exact dates of composition of the various poems, it is believed that Gower composed them during the last years of his life. They bear evidence of the author's desire to experiment with rhyme and metre and are therefore technically and stylistically diverse. Gower's shorter Latin poems are, however, not exclusively an experiment in style or poetics, for they also shed light on events taking place at the beginning of Henry IV's reign. The historical context is thus important when reading the poems and they add to the information offered in Gower's previous work. *Rex celi deus* and *De lucis scrutinio* are two poems which can be named as examples, a tribute to Henry IV and a condemnation of society, respectively.

### 3.4 English

Gower's last of his three major poems was the *Confessio Amantis*, written in the latter half of the 1380s and likely finished in 1390. It is similar in length to the *Mirour de*

---

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay quoted in Fisher 1964 114.

<sup>2</sup> Stockton 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 36-7.

*l'omme*, or 33444 lines, and consists of a prologue and eight books. It is written in Middle English verse and the rhyme scheme is octosyllabic rhyming couplets.<sup>1</sup>

The *Confessio Amantis* is structured as a dialogue, mostly between a lover, Amans, and his confessor, Genius, with a part of the dialogue taking place between the poet and Venus. The lover's confession becomes a framework for Gower's allegorical and didactic poetry and moral message where Genius shows Amans the way through stories of either exemplary behaviour or condemnable actions. The stories are borrowed from various sources, classical and biblical, and some of the stories and motifs are perhaps as familiar to modern readers as they were to medieval audiences. The motif of a confession and the dream allegory were well known at the time and could have been borrowed, as Fisher argues, from sources such as the French thirteenth century poem *Le Roman de la Rose*.<sup>2</sup>

Gower states in the beginning of the *Confessio Amantis* that he has decided to write it in "oure englissch,"<sup>3</sup> for he wants his poem to be instructive and entertaining; "so that by mixing 'lust' with 'lore' his readers may more easily be instructed."<sup>4</sup> Yeager has argued that Gower may, for instance, have believed that writing a poem in the vernacular would be such a novelty in itself that it would "offer that 'lust' necessary to hold a reader's attention while the 'lore' sinks in".<sup>5</sup> While the poem is indeed written almost entirely in English, it is not entirely void of Latin. Gower includes interspersed short passages of Latin verse, as well as Latin marginal commentaries. This he perhaps chose to do to lend the poem an air of authority and weight. Yeager points out that this kind of mixture of the vernacular and Latin, with the majority of the poem in English and the smaller part in Latin, was not common practice, although there were known examples of alternation between prose and poetry, even in different languages, in previous texts.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Burrow 2004 249; Pearsall 2004 93-4; Yeager 2010 486.

<sup>2</sup> Fisher 1964 218; Lorris.

<sup>3</sup> *CA* Prol. 23.

<sup>4</sup> "Somwhat of lust, somewhat of lore" is how Gower declares he will write the *Confessio Amantis*, in line 19 in the prologue. Yeager 1981 41.

<sup>5</sup> Yeager 1981 43.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 43-4. Yeager mentions, for instance, Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, where prose and poetry alternate in the same language. Another example he gives is *Fasciculus Morum*, a 14th century sermon handbook where English and Latin alternate, but the bulk of the text is in Latin with English insertions. The exact method of writing an English text with Latin insertions is different from previous works and therefore a novelty by Gower.

The *Confessio Amantis* was arguably Gower's most popular poem amongst his contemporaries and certainly it has, more than any of his other works, made his name in subsequent centuries. The poem survives in 48 extant manuscripts,<sup>1</sup> which is considerably more than can be said of his French and Latin major poems. Of particular note is the fact that there are three different recensions of the manuscript. The first recension includes the account of Gower's meeting Richard II by chance on the royal barge on the Thames, where the king commissions the poet to write him a poem in English.<sup>2</sup> It also includes a dedicatory comment to Chaucer at the end of the poem, in book eight. In the second recension, which was done in 1391 or 1392, the dedication to Richard is removed while one to Henry of Derby, future Henry IV, is included. This has been taken as a sign of Gower's shift in allegiance, with his gradual inclination to the Lancastrian cause, due to his disappointment with Richard's rule.<sup>3</sup> In the second recension, the dedication to Chaucer has furthermore been removed and, as I have already mentioned (on page 20), some scholars believe this proves there was a rift in Gower's friendship with Chaucer, while others are not convinced that was the case.<sup>4</sup> The third and final recension was done by Gower in 1393 and does only include minor changes from the preceding recension.

Another work in English worthy of note is *In Praise of Peace*, which is a shorter poem composed for King Henry IV in c. 1400. It contains "385 lines arranged in fifty-five rime royal stanzas (ABABBCC), preceded by a dedication in Latin to Henry IV, rhyming AAAABBB".<sup>5</sup> The poem is Lancastrian propaganda as well as a didactic message. In it Gower hails Henry as a king and praises Christ for having put him as king of England in place of Richard. At the same time, he advises Henry to be a just and fair king (a message Gower has conveyed to the king of the country before, in his earlier works like the *Confessio Amantis*) and above all to strive for peace and not fall victim to futility by conducting unnecessary warfare.

### 3.5 Richard II and the Encounter with John Gower on the Thames

Gower addresses his kings directly in some of his poetry, providing them with moral counsel. Furthermore, he states his loyalty to them indirectly, tells of his encounters

---

<sup>1</sup> Pearsall 2004 94.

<sup>2</sup> See section 3.5 below.

<sup>3</sup> Fisher 1964 35; Macaulay xxi-ii; Hines, Cohen and Roffey 26; Epstein 46.

<sup>4</sup> Fisher 1964 33-4, 119-20; Echard 2004 7; Epstein 57; Astell 81. See also note 3 on page 20 above.

<sup>5</sup> Yeager 2010 486.

with them and praises or condemns them for their qualities and deeds, or lack thereof. The *Confessio Amantis*, the *Cronica Tripertita* and *In Praise of Peace* all offer examples of the different ways Gower addresses his kings.

The first example is in the prologue to the first recension of the *Confessio Amantis*, where Gower accredits the poem's genesis to King Richard II, who had asked him to write "Som newe thing".<sup>1</sup> This supposedly happened during Gower's chance encounter with Richard on one of his crossings of the river Thames:

I thenke and have it understonde,  
 As it bifel upon a tyde,  
 As thing which scholde tho betyde, --  
 Under the toun of newe Troye,  
 Which tok of Brut his ferste joye,  
 In Temse whan it was flowende  
 As I be bote cam rowende,  
 So as fortune hir tyme sette,  
 My liege lord par chaunce I mette ;  
 And so befel, as I cam nyh,  
 Out of my bot, whan he me syh,  
 He bad me come in to his barge.  
 And whan I was with him at large,  
 Amonges othre thinges seid  
 He hath this charge upon me leid,  
 And bad me doo my besynesse  
 That to his hihe worthinesse  
 Som newe thing I scholde boke,  
 That he himself it mihte loke  
 After the forme of my writyng.  
 And thus upon his comandynge  
 Myn herte is wel the more glad  
 To write so as he me bad ;  
 And eek my fere is wel the lasse

---

<sup>1</sup> CA Prol. 51\*.

That non envye schal compasse  
 Withoute a resonable wite  
 To feyne and blame that I write.<sup>1</sup>

On seeing Gower rowing in his boat on the river, Richard invites the poet to join him on the royal barge. They seem to have an extended conversation where, “Amonges other thinges seid”,<sup>2</sup> the king expresses his wish for Gower to write a new poem. Gower is more than happy to fulfil the king’s wish: “Myn herte is wel the more glad / To write so as he me bad”.<sup>3</sup>

Gower’s account in the prologue to the first recension of the *Confessio Amantis* is the only documented source of the poet’s meeting with Richard. The fact that it is not supported anywhere else in contemporary sources has understandably given rise to speculation on the part of Gower scholars, with questions raised whether this meeting on the Thames really took place or not, or whether it was perhaps a mere poetic invention of Gower’s.<sup>4</sup> The fact remains that by this account Gower is associating himself with the king in a clear and precise manner. This could be intended to honour Richard, by associating him with literature and implying his patronage thereof, as well as to honour Gower by associating him with the person of the highest power in the realm.

### 3.6 Richard II and Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*

In addition to telling of the encounter with Richard II on the Thames, the prologue to the first recension contains a personal dedication to Richard with the poet’s pledge of allegiance:

A bok for king Richardes sake,  
 To whom belongeth my ligeance

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. Prol. 34-60\*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Prol. 47\*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Prol. 55-6\*.

<sup>4</sup> Joyce Coleman is one of the scholars who believe there is strong evidence to support Gower’s story as authentic (106). Hines, Cohen and Roffey claim the story to be believable to the extent that it at least “represents a relationship of royal notice and patronage which was accepted by the poet some time in the middle to later 1380s” (26). Frank Grady is one of the sceptics and believes we should not take “it as empirically true, however much we might want to” (10). These are representative of the various different views, concerning the authenticity of the episode on the Thames in the prologue to the first recension of *CA*.

With al myn hertes obeissance  
 In al that evere a liege man  
 Unto his king may doon or can<sup>1</sup>

Gower certainly confirms his loyalty to his sovereign in strong terms here. Thus, at the time of writing, he appears to give King Richard his full respect and support.

A further demonstration of Gower's subservience to Richard is to be found in Book VIII (*Liber Octavus*) of the first recension of *Confessio Amantis*, when the poet prays for God to watch over Richard while at the same time he lauds his virtues as a king:

Upon mi bare knees I preye,  
 That he my worthi king conveye,  
 Richard by name the Secounde,  
 In whom hath evere yit be founde  
 Justice medled with pite,  
 Largesce forth with charite.<sup>2</sup>

Gower is prepared to go down on his knees and pray for his king, who is endowed with essential virtues, such as justice, pity, generosity and charity. Later Gower adds that Richard deserves respect and obeisance from his subjects: "So ben we alle wel beholde / To do service and obeysaunce / To him".<sup>3</sup> The final dedication to Richard comes when Gower, towards the end, presents the poem to his king: "This povere bok heer I presente / Unto his hihe worthinesse".<sup>4</sup>

Judging by the above examples, there seems at first sight to be no reason to doubt that John Gower was a loyal subject and devoted supporter of Richard II at the time of writing the first recension of the *Confessio Amantis*. Richard seems to live up to Gower's ideals of a king at that point, being just and merciful and a model for his subjects by his ethical and virtuous behaviour; a king who deserves to be prayed for and obeyed. How does this picture, which Gower draws up of Richard, fit in with contemporary events and Richard's actual rule at the time of writing of the *Confessio*

---

<sup>1</sup> CA Prol. 24-8\*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. VIII 2985-90\*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. VIII 3020-2\*.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. VIII 3050-1\*.



*Amantis*? One aspect that could offer a clue is a consideration of the dating of the first recension of Gower's poem.

As is often the case with manuscripts from the Middle Ages, a dating of the composition of the *Confessio Amantis* is not as straightforward as could be hoped for, although it has to be conceded that difficulties in dating the poem first really arise when considering the second and third recensions. There are no extant contemporary manuscripts of the poem, the oldest ones dating back to the beginning of the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> It is generally assumed that the *Confessio Amantis* was written during the last years of the 1380s, with the appearance of the first recension in 1390. This is based on notes in the manuscripts themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Not all scholars, however, are entirely convinced that 1390 is the correct date. Ann Astell, for instance, has proposed a later date for the completion of the first recension. She argues that it cannot have been finished before 1392, based on Gower's reference to Arion and that he must have had the idea for that reference from "the historical appearance of a real dolphin in London during Yuletide 1391-92".<sup>3</sup> Astell does not contest, as some scholars however do, the traditional dating of the last recension of 1392-3. Accepting the date for the third recension as a fact, she concludes that "[t]he dolphin episode in London, however, urges a very different dating and interpretation" of the first recension.<sup>4</sup> The major implication of this statement would be, as Astell rightly points out, that there was perhaps not such a shift in Gower's allegiance as scholars have hitherto proposed, at least not as early as has been suggested.<sup>5</sup> Although there are differing views on the dating of the second and third recensions of the *Confessio Amantis*, few scholars seem to share Astell's unconventional analysis relating to the first recension.

Macaulay wrote in 1900 that "we have no reason to doubt" that the *Confessio Amantis* was finished in 1390.<sup>6</sup> As evidence, Macaulay points to a marginal note in manuscripts containing the first and second recensions: "Anno domini Millesimo CCC° Nonagesimo."<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Macaulay also suggests that the first recension most likely

---

<sup>1</sup> Fisher 1964 116; Saul 2010 88.

<sup>2</sup> Fisher 1964 116; Saul 2010 87.

<sup>3</sup> Astell 77.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 79.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Macaulay xxi.

<sup>7</sup> CA Prol. 331.

was not finished at a much later date, either. This he supports by pointing out “that in the final recension this date is omitted” for it was “inappropriate for a later edition”.<sup>1</sup> Most scholars following in the footsteps of Macaulay have accepted his interpretation concerning the first recension.

A conventional story of events could therefore be one where Richard II commissions Gower to write a poem in the vernacular when they meet in 1386 and the poet concludes the *Confessio Amantis* in 1390, with the second recension of the manuscript appearing within a year and the third and last recension in 1393. Generally, scholars writing of the *Confessio Amantis* have considered this timeline to be the most likely one. However, if Astell might feel she was on her own, in her view concerning the first recension, the same cannot be said with reference to the subsequent revisions of the *Confessio Amantis*, the second and the third recensions.

The debate about the dating of the revisions of the *Confessio Amantis* has been lively and still is. It has focused on those revisions and whether they were written during Richard II’s reign or if they were made after his deposition and death. Based on the text of the manuscripts themselves, the most commonly accepted version concerning the dates of completion of the second and third recensions is the following: The second recension was finalised shortly (possibly only months) after the first one:<sup>2</sup> “Hic in anno quarto decimo Regis Ricardi orat pro statu regni.”<sup>3</sup> This marginal note, in Latin, in the eighth book of the *Confessio Amantis* states that the second recension is made in the fourteenth year of Richard’s reign, which was from 22 June 1390 to 22 June a year later. Thus, taking the marginal note in the epilogue of the *Confessio Amantis* as factual, the second recension had to have been finalised no later than 21 June 1391.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, it has been possible to establish when the third recension was made, based on an authorial note in Latin in the margin of the Prologue of the *Confessio Amantis*:<sup>5</sup> “Hic in principio declarat qualiter in anno Regis Ricardi secundi sexto decimo Iohannes Gower presentem libellum composuit et finaliter compleuit.”<sup>6</sup> Here, the possible date is set in a range from one to three years after the second recension (depending on where within the years of reign we place the respective dates) in Richard

---

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay xxii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; Saul 2010 87.

<sup>3</sup> CA VIII 2973 margin.

<sup>4</sup> Fisher 1964 117-18; Macaulay xxii; Saul 2010 87.

<sup>5</sup> CA Prol. 25 margin. Fisher 1964 117-18.

<sup>6</sup> CA Prol. 25 margin.

II's sixteenth year of reign, which lasted from 22 June 1392 to 21 June 1393.<sup>1</sup> Before going on to consider the implications of the different dates, it is worth taking a look at what constituted the changes in the text.

The changes contained in the second recension are most importantly found in the epilogue (Book VIII), where a prayer for England replaces a prayer for King Richard and the dedication to Chaucer is removed.<sup>2</sup> The changes in evidence in the third recension consist of the removal of the account of the meeting aboard the royal barge on the Thames with the subsequent commission from Richard to Gower. Furthermore, the dedication to Richard in the prologue is substituted with one to Henry:

This bok, upon amendment  
To stonde at his commandement,  
With whom myn herte is of accord,  
I sende unto myn oghne lord,  
Which of Lancastre is Henri named<sup>3</sup>

In fact, it seems Gower strove to erase Richard from the *Confessio Amantis* and replace him with Henry, where appropriate.<sup>4</sup>

It seems fair, at this point, to mention that although there appears to be a clear shift of allegiance from Richard II to Henry, a dedication to “Derbeie Comiti”<sup>5</sup> is to be found already in the first recension and this indicates that allegiance to Henry would not have had to exclude loyalty to Richard, as Macaulay points out.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Gower's shift of loyalty seems increasingly obvious with each recension of the *Confessio Amantis*.

Although few argue with the fact that John Gower shifted allegiance at the beginning of the last decade of the fourteenth century, it has proved more difficult to ascertain the reasons behind that shift. And then there are those, like Terry Jones, who argue that Gower could not possibly have revised his poem, in the way he did, during Richard's reign and therefore the revisions must have occurred after 1399.<sup>7</sup> This

---

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay xxiii; Saul 2010 87.

<sup>2</sup> CA VIII 2941\*; Fisher 1964 117; Macaulay xxii. See also page 20 above.

<sup>3</sup> CA Prol. 83-7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Prol. 24\*; Fisher 1964 121; Macaulay xxii-iii; Pearsall 2004 93-4.

<sup>5</sup> CA VIII 3177.

<sup>6</sup> Macaulay xxiii.

<sup>7</sup> T. Jones “Richard II: Royal Villain or Victim of Spin?”

argument certainly changes considerably the whole perspective on the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower, Richard and Henry, especially if we add to that the view that perhaps Henry put pressure on his poets “to whitewash his regime”.<sup>1</sup> Some believe it is even conceivable that the alterations were the work of scribes, rather than of Gower himself.<sup>2</sup> A single conclusive answer to the above speculations will likely never be obtained, giving rise to even further studies of the matter. The fact remains, however, that changes were made. That, and Gower’s shift of allegiance as expressed in his poetry, is most important for this study.

### 3.7 Henry IV and Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*

When John Gower removed the dedications to Richard II from the *Confessio Amantis* in the second and third recensions of the manuscript, along with the passage containing the account of the poet’s encounter with his king on the Thames, he did not replace them with identical passages dedicated to Henry of Derby, later King Henry IV, nor anyone else. As was demonstrated in the previous section (3.6), this is not to say that Gower does not contribute the *Confessio Amantis* in any sense to Henry. This he certainly does, albeit, admittedly, not as extensively as to his king at the time.

In the revised Prologue to *Confessio Amantis*, the most explicit dedication to Henry is in the actual text of the poem, towards the end of the altered section:

And in this wyse I thenke trete  
Towardes hem that now be grete,  
Betwen the vertu and the vice  
Which longeth unto this office.  
Bot for my wittes ben to smale  
To tellen every man his tale,  
This bok, upon amendment  
To stonde at his commandement,  
With whom myn herte is of accord,  
I sende unto myn oghne lord,  
Which of Lancastre is Henri named :  
The hyhe god him hath proclamed

<sup>1</sup> T. Jones “Was Richard II a Tyrant?” 156.

<sup>2</sup> Pearsall 2004 93.

Ful of knythode and alle grace.  
 So woll I now this werk embrace  
 With hol trust and with hol believe ;  
 God grante I mot it wel achieve.<sup>1</sup>

Here the tone has clearly changed from the first recension, for instead of words of admiration and allegiance to King Richard II, Gower now expresses words of loyalty to his “oghne lord, / Which of Lancastre is Henri named”.<sup>2</sup> Not only has Henry replaced Richard as Gower’s lord, for the poet’s sympathy and views are in total harmony with those of Henry: “With whom myn herte is of accord.”<sup>3</sup> And although Henry might not be king yet, he seems to have the qualities for he is “Ful of knythode and alle grace” and has been “proclamed” by “The hyhe god”.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned dedication to Henry, in lines 77-92 of the revised Prologue, there is also a marginal note in Latin towards lines 22-31.<sup>5</sup> This note, in addition to giving the year of the recension as 1393 (and thus confirming the recension as the third one) further suggests Gower’s shift of loyalty towards Henry:

Hic in principio declarat qualiter in anno Regis Ricardi secundi sexto decimo Iohannes Gower presentem libellum composuit et finaliter compleuit, quem strenuissimo domino suo domino Henrico de Lancastria tunc Derbeie Comiti cum omni reuerencia specialiter destinavit.<sup>6</sup>

[Here at the beginning it states how in the sixteenth year of King Richard II John Gower composed and completed the present book, which he intended especially for his most vigorous lord the lord Henry of Lancaster, then earl of Derby, with all reverence.]<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> CA Prol. 77-92.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Prol. 86-7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Prol. 85.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Prol. 88-9.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Prol. 22-31 *margin*.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Prol. 22-31 *margin*.

<sup>7</sup> Trans. Astell 82.

So, Richard is only mentioned in order to date the writing of the recension and the dedication goes to Gower's "most vigorous lord the lord Henry of Lancaster, then earl of Derby, with all reverence".

The third example of an explicit dedication to Henry can be found towards the very end of the poem, in Book VIII, and is written in Latin: "Derbeie Comiti, recolunt quem laude periti, / Vade liber purus, sub eo requiesce futures."<sup>1</sup> Astell's English translation goes as follows: "Go, dear book, to the Count of Derby, well considered by those versed in praise; upon him rest your future."<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, as has already been noted (on page 33), this dedication was not inserted in a later recension, for it is there already in manuscripts containing the first recension of the *Confessio Amantis*. Thus, in the first recension we have Gower devoted to King Richard while at the same time he dedicates his book to Henry. A possible explanation is that while he dedicated the poem to his king, he dedicated the copy of the book he presented to Henry to its recipient. It is known that Gower presented a copy of the *Confessio Amantis* to Henry in 1393.<sup>3</sup>

From the above, it can be concluded that the dedication to Henry at the end of the poem is of a different kind from those that appeared in later recensions, in the revised Prologue, as it dedicates the copy of the book, rather than the poem, to Henry. Furthermore, and more importantly for this study, it can be inferred that the dedications to Henry in the second and third recensions of the *Confessio Amantis* indicate the poet's growing loyalty for a new lord, although they are not as extensive as those in the first recension to Richard.

### 3.8 Henry IV and Gower's *In Praise of Peace*

The references and dedications to Henry in the *Confessio Amantis* may not be many or elaborate. As I will illustrate shortly, however, Gower's growing allegiance to Henry finds fuller expression in later poems. The poet's other English work, *In Praise of Peace*, is a case in point.

*In Praise of Peace* is a poem of 385 lines which is probably written during Henry IV's first year as a king and is dedicated to him in its entirety. It names Henry explicitly on three occasions in the poem in addition to already having mentioned him in the Latin version of the first verse, preceding the main body of the poem: "Electus Cristi, pie Rex

---

<sup>1</sup> CA VIII 3177-8.

<sup>2</sup> Trans. Astell 80.

<sup>3</sup> Astell 80.

Henrice, fuisti”;<sup>1</sup> “O WORTHI noble kyng, Henry the ferthe”;<sup>2</sup> “Bot evere y hope of King Henries grace”;<sup>3</sup> and “My worthi liege lord, Henri be name”.<sup>4</sup>

It can be said that *In Praise of Peace* is focused on three themes: the poet’s message of peace for the new king, the poet’s praise of his lord with the accompanying display of affection and loyalty and, finally, the poet’s justification of Richard’s deposition where Gower seeks to convince the audience that Henry is the rightful heir to the throne.

In the poem, Gower gives Henry his advice: “Mi liege lord, tak hiede of that y seie”<sup>5</sup> and to preserve peace is an important part of that moral message: “pes is good for every king to have : / The fortune of the werre is evere unknowe.”<sup>6</sup> Gower speaks even more plainly, later on, when he makes a direct plea to Henry: “My worthi liege lord, Henri be name, / [...] yive ous pes, which longe hath be debated.”<sup>7</sup> Peace is good: “With pes stant every creature in reste ; / Withoute pes ther may no lif be glad : / Above alle othre good pes is the beste.”<sup>8</sup> The poet even gives hints of how to achieve peace and sustain it, by being full of charity and pity while at the same time upholding the law: “Kep charite an draugh pite to honde, / Maintene lawe, and so the pes schal stonde.”<sup>9</sup>

Gower’s praise for Henry is abundant in *In Praise of Peace* as is clear from the very first verse:

O WORTHI noble kyng, Henry the ferthe,  
 In whom the glade fortune is befall  
 The people to governe upon this erthe,  
 God hath the chose in comfort of ous alle :  
 The worschipe of this lond, which was doun falle,  
 Now stant upriht thurgh grace of thi goodnesse,  
 Which every man is holde forto blesse.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *PP*: Latin verse preceding the English poem, line 1.

<sup>2</sup> *PP* 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 272.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 358.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 82.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 289-90.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 358-63.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 85-7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 384-5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 1-7.

This is in contrast to the brief dedications to Henry in the *Confessio Amantis* and is perhaps an indication of how Gower has entirely joined the Lancastrian side. Not only is Henry “noble”, but his people are blessed by the “glade fortune” to be governed by him, for God has selected Henry for the “comfort” of all the subjects. However, Gower does not stop at this, for he goes to considerable lengths in justifying the 1399 usurpation and, in case anyone had doubts, puts forth arguments for Henry as being the rightful king of England.

Furthermore, Gower points out that Henry is appointed by God: “And more than god may no man justifie.”<sup>1</sup> This, says Gower to Henry, proves that “Thi title is knowe uppon thin ancestrie, / The londes folk hath ek thy riht affemed ; / So stant thi regne of god and man confermed”.<sup>2</sup> If there still were anyone questioning Henry as a rightful king of England, then Gower kills off that last spark of doubt by pointing out that Henry is a “kyng enoight”.<sup>3</sup>

If there were those who, notwithstanding Gower’s propaganda, were not prepared to swear unconditional allegiance to Henry IV, Gower was certainly not one of them, as he makes crystal clear towards the end of the poem:

I, Gower, which am al thi liege man,  
This lettre unto thin excellence y sende,  
As y which evere unto my lives ende  
Wol prairie for the stat of thi persone  
In worschipe of thi sceptre and of thi throne.<sup>4</sup>

This display of commitment and loyalty surpasses anything Gower ever wrote for Henry IV’s predecessor, Richard II. John Gower proved to be a strong advocate for the Lancastrian cause and he would continue writing propaganda in support of King Henry IV and in defence of the deposition of Richard II in 1399.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 12-14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 274.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 374-8.



### 3.9 The Praise of Henry IV and the Condemnation of Richard II in Gower's *Cronica Tripertita*

The *Cronica Tripertita* is most likely written in, or around, 1400 and is perhaps Gower's most significant work in terms of propaganda for Henry IV and as a justification for the usurpation of the throne in 1399. Fisher has stated that “[t]he *Cronica* is Lancastrian propaganda under the guise of history”.<sup>1</sup>

Already in the preface to the *Cronica Tripertita*, the tone is set for the poem and it is made clear whose version of events is being advocated as the preferable one: “[God] cast the hateful Richard from his throne and He decided upon the glorious elevation of the pious Henry, who was a man most pleasing in the estimation of all.”<sup>2</sup> If it can be deemed that Gower had given proof of having renounced loyalty to Richard in favour of Henry in his English poem *In Praise of Peace*, it may be said that it seems hard to believe that he ever had any inclinations of loyalty to Richard in the first place, in view of what the poet expresses in the *Cronica Tripertita*.

In the first part of the *Cronica Tripertita*, the scene is set for the Merciless Parliament by depicting Richard as someone who had to be dealt with, for the good of the people. The “turbulent Richard” was the reason why “the land went into a decline” and “[t]he people which he did not rule well therefore revolted”, but “the unfortunate King Richard persisted in his malice from bad to worse, not fearing the rod of God”.<sup>3</sup> However, Gower did not blame solely Richard, for he “caused the principles of older men to be rejected” and “absorbed the poisonous counsels of brash youths”.<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately for England, according to the poet, the Lords Appellant intervened and put a check on Richard at the Merciless Parliament. All of the Lords Appellant are favourably treated by Gower in his poem with Henry getting a distinguished mention as “the most valiant Earl of Derby”.<sup>5</sup> The Merciless Parliament is deemed, by Gower, to be a success where the Lords Appellant “consolidated the realm, strengthened the law, and routed corrupt practices”.<sup>6</sup> The Lords Appellant “withdrew with praise” and “[a]ll the

---

<sup>1</sup> Fisher 1964 109.

<sup>2</sup> *CT* Pref. 289 (trans. Stockton).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* I 290.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* I 291.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* I 297.

public commended and celebrated their good deeds in song, everywhere speaking and singing of these matters with praise”.<sup>1</sup>

What happened a decade later, in 1397, is the subject of the second part of the *Cronica Tripertita*. In Gower's words, what happened that year is a sad story of “hellish deeds” which he tells “[w]ith choking sobs and [his] face pale with tears”.<sup>2</sup> How Richard gets his revenge on the Appellants who humiliated him at the Merciless Parliament is, in Gower's version, a story of a “false, two-faced King”, a “wicked villain, hiding like a fox after a lamb” and who, eventually “revealed, quicker than lightning, the hatred which had long lain hidden in his heart”.<sup>3</sup> This second part of the *Cronica Tripertita* recounts the grim events of 1397 in minute details, albeit from a Lancastrian point of view, with descriptions of the fate of the various condemned men and Richard II firmly established as a heartless and hateful tyrant. However, this part of the poem does not speak much of Henry, who is reserved for the third, and last, section.

The *Cronica Tripertita* is, undeniably, quite preoccupied with Richard II, his reign and his cruel and tyrannical nature. Richard had to be deposed, according to Gower, and the poet did his best to present arguments to the effect that it had to be precisely Henry who should succeed Richard as king, although he was not unequivocally next in the royal lineage.<sup>4</sup> The third part of the *Cronica Tripertita* tells how Richard sent Henry into exile and then disinherited him when his father, John of Gaunt, died. Henry, however, triumphantly returned and deposed Richard to the absolute joy of all, or that is how Gower interprets it at least.

It was malice and envy which caused Richard to exile Henry, a “spotless man”: “King Richard, being full of utter malice and because of sheer envy, cast into exile the most valiant Lord Henry, the then Earl of Derby and son and heir of the Duke of Lancaster, in order to destroy him.”<sup>5</sup> Henry “had committed no offense” and, being noble, he “bravely transported himself with steadfast spirit to the realms of France”.<sup>6</sup>

When Richard disinherits Henry and then goes to Ireland, Henry seizes the opportunity and returns to England where “almost the entire country offered itself for

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. I 297-8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. II 299.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. II 299-300.

<sup>4</sup> Saul 1997 396-7.

<sup>5</sup> *CT* III 314.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

the service of the noble Duke”.<sup>1</sup> The praise for Henry is absolute and Gower states that “[w]hen his native land knew that the Duke had returned safe, everybody ran to him, rejoicing everywhere” and even the “city of London was rejoicing and singing the Duke’s praises [...] blessing the deeds of the great and powerful victor”.<sup>2</sup>

Gower states that Richard “completely renounced his title to the Crown, in a valid and binding way”.<sup>3</sup> Thereby, the poet lays the foundation for his justification of Henry’s usurpation of the throne; in fact he immediately declares that “[b]ecause of this, the noble Henry was elected to become king, with all the people shouting in his praise”.<sup>4</sup>

Gower goes to lengths in underlining how Henry became king not least because all the people wanted him as their sovereign: “all the people sprang up and rejoiced in their hearts” and Henry “was crowned amid complete joy on a festival day” and it was a “happy occasion” with “sacred, blessed hours” where “people sang in their hearts and broke out into ringing speech”.<sup>5</sup> Nothing is spared in Gower’s description of the absolute joy of the English people at Henry’s coronation.<sup>6</sup>

And in case the audience is still not convinced of Henry’s right to rule, Gower points out that “God predestined him to whom He gave the title to reign as King and to deal justly towards his realms”.<sup>7</sup> Not only God justifies Henry’s rightful claim to the throne, according to Gower, for he can also provide proof that everything had been done in a proper and legal way:

Why he was crowned is approved by threefold right: he conquered the realm, and because of this, right is clearly on his side; he succeeded as heir to the kingdom and has not abdicated from it; in addition, he was chosen by the people and thus firmly established. In order that there might be agreement, no legal measure was omitted. Everything was in accord, and gave solemn promise of Henry’s rights.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. III 316.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. III 316, 319.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. III 320.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. III 321.

<sup>6</sup> Carlson 208; Yeager 2010 481-2.

<sup>7</sup> *CT* III 321.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. III 321.

Had Gower been a defence lawyer before a jury, he could not have given a better speech to present arguments for his client's case and those lines are a sort of an "icing on the cake" in Gower's praise of Henry, his king. It seems no wonder that King Henry rewarded his poet, such as with two pipes of Gascon wine annually, in return for such excellent poetry.<sup>1</sup> Gower is, to judge by the *Cronica Tripertita*, undeniably a cog-wheel in the Lancastrian propaganda machine following the usurpation in 1399, and possibly an important one at that.

---

<sup>1</sup> Coleman 105; Hines Cohen and Roffey 26.

## 4 Sociology: Fields, Capital and Habitus

### 4.1 Fields and Capital

Bourdieu recommends a three-step analysis when studying fields:

First, one must analyze the position of the field *vis-à-vis* the field of power. [...] Second, one must map out the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions [...]. And, third, one must analyze the habitus of agents.<sup>1</sup>

First of all, the fields where the game of power was played towards the end of the fourteenth century in England have to be established. Which were the fields where Richard II and Henry of Lancaster, as social agents, competed for capital, and what did the respective capital consist of? Did John Gower share any fields with his two kings and what capital was he after?

Any king's prerogative, as well as duty, is to govern his kingdom. Governance is ultimately about power; it is a game of submission; a playing field of social agents who seek to control and others who are subjected to being controlled. The governance of a state, such as the English one in the fourteenth century, would take place within the political field. The social agents possessing the most capital within that field find themselves in a dominant position, not only within that same political field, but within the whole state. The political field is therefore in essence a field of power within the social space, substantially dominating and influencing other fields.

During his reign, King Richard II was the most powerful social agent within the political field. His power was handed to him, for the symbolic capital the king possessed and gave him his superior position within the political field came to a large extent from his hereditary right to the throne: "the maintenance of the symbolic order [was ensured] by regulating the circulation of symbolic capital between the generations."<sup>2</sup> The king's power was undisputed, for hereditary monarchy was thought to be the best form of government and this view was echoed, for instance, by Giles of

---

<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu & Wacquant 104-5.

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu 2000 244.

Rome in his *De regimine principum*.<sup>1</sup> However, neither Richard nor Henry, grandsons of King Edward III, was the heir apparent to the English crown at birth. Richard only became next in line at the death of his father, the Black Prince, in 1376.

It seems that the Black Prince had worries concerning the succession, for he made both his father, the king, and his brother, John of Gaunt, promise him on his deathbed that they would recognise Richard's hereditary right and that they would protect him.<sup>2</sup> This they did and it meant that John of Gaunt admitted that the Lancastrians did not have any claim to the throne, at least not with Richard still around. Richard's right was confirmed in parliament shortly after the Black Prince's death. What was not resolved at the death of the Black Prince, however, was what would happen if Richard died or, as happened, lost the crown without having produced an heir. The question on that matter is at the centre of the unfolding of events in 1399, when Henry acquired the ultimate symbolic capital by having the crown placed on his head.<sup>3</sup> With the crown, Henry also asserted the hereditary right, which is immediately in evidence in the fact that his son, Henry of Monmouth, ruled as Henry V from 1413 to 1422. But on what was Henry's claim to the throne based? On what grounds could he state that he was the rightful heir to the throne once Richard was out of the way?

To answer this, it is necessary to go back to the year 1377. On Edward III's deathbed, his son, John of Gaunt, persuaded his father to make a will where he confirmed that the throne of England could only be inherited by male descendants. This meant that Gaunt would be next in line after Richard and that in turn put Henry in line after his father. As Mortimer points out, this must have been known to Henry and surely made his claim to the throne clear in his mind and furthermore indicated that his claim was legal, once Richard was gone.<sup>4</sup> This turn of events meant that the Lancastrians and Henry had accumulated considerable symbolic capital and posed a real threat to Richard's position within the political field.

Richard was aware of this threat and, as Mortimer demonstrates, he seems to have gone to considerable lengths to put a check on Henry's power and possibilities of succession. He never intended to give Henry any chance of succeeding him,

---

<sup>1</sup> Briggs 62.

<sup>2</sup> Mortimer 31.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 32.

notwithstanding Gaunt's numerous pleas to that effect, as ultimately became clear when the king sent his cousin into exile in 1398:

[John of Gaunt] had often petitioned Richard in council to recognise Henry as his heir, but Richard had always fobbed him off with some excuse. Now everything was laid bare. Richard never meant to acknowledge Henry, rather he intended to get rid of him; and he did not care if he had to commit a gross injustice to do so.<sup>1</sup>

Richard is playing the power game and his opponents might be justified in claiming that he plays "dirty". He has no intention of surrendering any of his capital to Henry if he can help it, for he is well aware that the main threat to his power lies with his cousin.

One aspect of Richard II's capital in particular is an interesting and important one: namely the symbolic capital invested in the royal prerogative coming from God. It is God who could be considered the only agent governing Richard, for it was he who gave the king the divine right to rule; it was he who gave the anointed king the royal prerogative. This birthright to rule, given to the king by God, is clear in the mind of medieval men as can be seen in various writings intended for the teaching of princely conduct, such as by John of Salisbury (c. 1120-1180): "God glories that He has found a man after His own heart, and when He has exalted him to the pinnacle of kingly power, promises to him kingship everlasting in the line of his sons who shall succeed him."<sup>2</sup> Richard is aware of the significance of the anointment and the symbolic capital it entails and it is in his interest to further enhance his connection to God and thus increase his symbolic capital as a ruler. This is manifested in various ways. A noteworthy example of how Richard wanted his image to be linked to divine providence is his portrait, which he commanded in the 1390s and is on display in Westminster Abbey.<sup>3</sup> It is clearly symbolic, since it depicts Richard as a Christ figure, giving him a spiritual or divine appearance. The portrait underlines his image as an anointed ruler of the realm with the royal prerogative deriving from God. The holy image given in the portrait gives Richard significant symbolic capital and very likely that was the king's intention.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 158.

<sup>2</sup> Salisbury 49.

<sup>3</sup> "Portraits of Richard II."

The fact that the king was anointed was of utmost significance and, without doubt, contributed to Henry's dilemma after the usurpation, when he had to convince his people that he had a right to govern, even though he was not really anointed. This is one of the reasons he had Gower in his employment as a poet producing propaganda to justify his claim to the throne; poetry intended to accumulate, or at least maintain, Henry's symbolic capital. Gower did not disappoint his lord, as is exemplified in his description of Henry's return from exile in 1399, when the duke, upon touching English ground again, "worshipped God on bended knee, and first prayed with devotions of sincere intent, with palms outstretched to heaven, that he might win the palm of victory".<sup>1</sup> In this short passage from the *Cronica Tripertita* are demonstrated the elements providing Henry with his possibilities of accumulating enough symbolic capital to have a realistic chance of countering Richard's capital contained in his divine right to rule: namely Christian faith intertwined with heroism and knighthood. Indeed, it may be said that Henry had, over time, acquired considerable symbolic capital of the divine kind through heroism and knighthood, especially when his crusades are considered. Henry reached the pinnacle of his accomplishment as a knight by a feat few English kings (and certainly not Richard) had done: going on a pilgrimage across Europe to Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> The amount of symbolic capital accumulated by Henry on this journey has to be considered nothing short of enormous. As Mortimer points out: "[H]aving been in the Holy City [Henry] had achieved a status which could never be taken away from him. It made him more than just a prince among men."<sup>3</sup> It can therefore be argued that although Richard was the anointed king and therefore possessed the kind of symbolic capital no-one else did, Henry went a long way towards matching his cousin in this respect or at least gave substance to his later claim to the throne.

The possibility of accumulating symbolic capital by going to Jerusalem was based on the chivalric ideal of the crusades of previous centuries (especially the twelfth) where the aim was to recover the Holy Sepulchre. The crusades were therefore a mixture of the divine and the heroic: "The conquest of Jerusalem could not but present itself to the mind as a work of piety and of heroism – that is to say, of chivalry."<sup>4</sup> This is

---

<sup>1</sup> CT III 316.

<sup>2</sup> Henry's pilgrimage to Jerusalem was not his first crusade. He had been to Lithuania in 1390, where he fought alongside the marshal of Prussia against the king of Lithuania (Mortimer 94-8).

<sup>3</sup> Mortimer 112.

<sup>4</sup> Huizinga 92.



in support of the theory that “Medieval thought” was above all focused on “the Christian faith” and (especially amongst the nobility) “the idea of chivalry”.<sup>1</sup> The notion of chivalry and what it meant to be a knight is furthermore expressed in poetry of the period, such as Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*:

A KNYGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,  
That fro the tyme that he first bigan  
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,  
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.  
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,  
And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,  
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,  
And evere honoured for his worthynesse<sup>2</sup>

So, being a knight, and thereby earning honour and respect, meant loving chivalry, showing virtuous behaviour and displaying no fear while fighting for his lord.

The notion of chivalry and of the heroic Christian knight was evidently significant and “never so formalized and so precise as in the last years of Richard II”.<sup>3</sup> The story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, written by an unknown poet in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, is another shining example.<sup>4</sup> Sir Gawain is one of King Arthur’s knights of the Round Table, who represent the ideal and foundation for the concept of knighthood and knightly virtues.<sup>5</sup> Towards the middle of the fourteenth century Edward III, desiring to emulate King Arthur, had founded “an order of knights, made up of himself and his sons and the bravest and noblest knights in England and other countries too. There would be forty of them in all and they would be called the Knights of the Blue Garter.”<sup>6</sup> Richard and Henry, together, were eventually knighted by their

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales: General Prologue* 43-50.

<sup>3</sup> Mathew 114.

<sup>4</sup> The poet is believed to be the same as composed the poem “Pearl”, hence the name “The Pearl Poet”: Greenblatt 160.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Sir Thomas Malory’s *Morte Darthur*.

<sup>6</sup> Turville-Petre 79.

grandfather, the founder of the order, and became themselves knights of the Garter in April 1377.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to his successful crusades, another aspect of Henry as a formidable knight was his outstanding skill as a jousting champion. This gave him added symbolic capital in the form of fame and respect.<sup>2</sup> Henry lived up to the image of the quintessential knight, as described by the French historian Jacques Le Goff: “hunting, war and tournaments were his passions”.<sup>3</sup> While Henry accumulated symbolic capital through his knighthood and jousting on home-soil and abroad, Richard may have hunted as well, but war and tournaments did not seem to appeal to him: “Richard revealed himself to be unwilling to practice the art of war [and] never took part in tournaments at any time in his career, [...] Henry, in stunning contrast, stands out as one of the most remarkable exponents of the joust the English royal family ever produced.”<sup>4</sup> Since jousting and military skills were of value for anyone seeking to accumulate capital in the political field, it is surprising how Richard resisted living up to his name as a knight of the Garter. Perhaps Richard believed himself to be secure as an anointed king and therefore would not need to go out to accumulate capital through knighthood? Richard may have been justified in his presumption since, as Bourdieu points out (citing Norbert Elias), “the nobleman remains a nobleman even if he is a mediocre fencer (whereas the best of fencers does not become a nobleman)”.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, having all the qualities of a knight would not suffice to claim the throne: it remained firmly in the hands of the “mediocre” fencer Richard II, by hereditary and divine right, notwithstanding Henry’s endeavours. In addition, Richard may have considered himself to possess sufficient social capital in order to hold securely onto the throne.

Belonging to a noble household in the fourteenth century, such as the Lancastrians and obviously the royal court, carried with it considerable social capital. A noble household always belonged to a network of households of nobility and power, where each household benefited from the affiliation. Admittedly, the affiliation also came with certain obligations. This was especially important in times of unrest and was often

---

<sup>1</sup> Mortimer 33.

<sup>2</sup> A shining example of Henry’s performance as a jousting champion is his participation in one of the most famous jousts of the entire Middle Ages in St Inglevert in France in 1389 when he rode successfully against famous French knights (Mortimer 85-9).

<sup>3</sup> Le Goff 1988 355.

<sup>4</sup> Mortimer 36.

<sup>5</sup> Bourdieu 2000 36.

manifested during the 1390s, as in skirmishes on the Scottish border and in Wales. Henry's social capital in terms of noble affiliation was to his clear advantage when he returned to England in 1399 and gathered forces on his journey across England during the summer, before forcing Richard to capitulate in August.

In some respects, it can be argued that Henry may have enjoyed more social capital than his royal cousin. Firstly, there is no doubt that in terms of family, Henry possessed more capital, particularly concerning children. Richard never produced an heir, which undoubtedly caused him distress in addition to making him vulnerable *vis-à-vis* Henry in terms of succession to the throne. Henry, by contrast, fathered six children, of whom all survived infancy except the first one, Edward who was born and died in April 1382. His second son, Henry of Monmouth, future King Henry V, was born in 1386.

Since being of noble birth and belonging to the field of nobility by right had considerable meaning in terms of social capital, according to those already agents within the field, the difficulties facing those who came from outside and entered the field of nobility, with the purpose of accumulating social capital, could be insurmountable. This is demonstrated in the case of Robert de Vere who, in spite of being one of King Richard's closest friends, was not of noble pedigree and thus lacked initial capital within the field of nobility. Through his friendship with the king, he managed to gain symbolic capital with the titles and honours Richard bestowed on him. Socially, however, his capital was less secure and he was up against a network of nobles who were jealous of his symbolic capital, which they believed he had gained undeservedly through his affiliation with court and king. The inevitable clash of agents within the field of nobility, de Vere versus the Lords Appellant, climaxed at the Merciless Parliament and with the subsequent death of de Vere in 1388. This is but one example of the game that is played when the stakes are high. Established agents within a field remonstrate and react when threatened by an outside agent who starts to accumulate capital at their expense.

One way to maintain and accumulate social and symbolic capital within the field of nobility was through marriage. As Elliot Kendall points out, women were effectively considered and functioned as objects of "household exchange" and with marriage came "wealth and power".<sup>1</sup> This was, for instance, the case in both of Richard's marriages, first with Anne of Bohemia in 1382 and then with Isabella, the six year old daughter of

---

<sup>1</sup> Kendall 132-3.

the French king in 1395. Of special interest is Richard's marriage to the very young princess of France, where it seems both Richard and King Charles VI of France were aiming to increase their symbolic capital by strengthening the bond between the two countries, where the ultimate goal was peace.<sup>1</sup> Not only is Richard a case in point, for Henry also married twice, aiming to accumulate capital. Henry was first married to Mary of Bohun in 1381, daughter of the Earl of Hereford, who brought him considerable fortune, and then to Joan of Navarre, the daughter of Charles the Bad, king of Navarre, in 1403.<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the respective economic capital of the two cousins, Richard and Henry, it is clear that they enjoyed an aristocratic life. Two different patterns emerge however, to judge from historians who have written the kings' biographies, Nigel Saul in the case of Richard and Ian Mortimer in the case of Henry. Richard seems to have had some trouble financing his household, repeatedly having to go begging to parliament for funds to maintain his court as well as the expenses of war. Increased and repeated taxation caused unrest within the kingdom and was the main contributing factor to the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. Parliament's patience was not endless and in 1386 Richard even had to bear the humiliation of having the accounts of his household put under parliamentary surveillance.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, there are numerous accounts of Henry, during Richard's reign, seemingly not having to worry about finances at all. The Lancastrian household was extremely rich and John of Gaunt provided Henry with necessary funds when needed, for instance when he went on his crusades which cost a fortune. Henry may therefore be considered to have been at an advantage when economic capital is considered. The determining factor was, however, seemingly the difference in symbolic capital, deriving largely from social capital, although some of it may have stemmed from economic sources as well. Yet another kind of capital deserves mention and it provides the most direct point of contact between the kings and John Gower: cultural capital.

Cultural capital is defined in three distinct forms, according to Bourdieu: firstly in the "embodied" state which includes "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body," such as language proficiency and musical skills; secondly in the "objectified" state, in cultural products of substance, such as books, paintings, manuscripts and pieces of art;

---

<sup>1</sup> Saul 1997 87-94, 226-30.

<sup>2</sup> Mortimer 39, 245-8.

<sup>3</sup> Saul 1997 161.

and thirdly in the “institutionalised” state, in the form of university diplomas for instance.<sup>1</sup> Keeping this categorisation in mind, it becomes immediately apparent that the education of a member of the royal family provides a foundation for his or her cultural capital (as well as shaping his or her habitus<sup>2</sup>), if not in the institutionalised state then at least in the embodied state. Linguistic proficiency would be a case in point.

Within the royal family and the nobility, cultural capital pertaining to the command of various languages would be considerable in comparison with that found in lower classes, amongst peasants for instance. In addition to the learning and command of the foreign languages Latin and French, a difference in the vocabulary in the vernacular can be supposed as well. The knowledge of other languages, besides the vernacular, furthermore, gave access to literature and learning and thus provided added power and cultural capital. Henry and Richard were both in possession of a considerable amount of this kind of cultural capital; they were well educated and well read.<sup>3</sup>

What about the literary field?<sup>4</sup> According to Bourdieu, the literary field is in a “dominated position” *vis-à-vis* the field of power.<sup>5</sup> It is “traversed by the necessity of the fields which encompass [it]: the need for profit, whether economic or political.”<sup>6</sup> The literary field can therefore apparently be of profit to the political field. Were Richard and Henry agents within the literary field and what then was their interest? What did they gain; what was their capital? Admittedly, the king is a patron of the arts, including literature, and possesses the greatest economic and symbolic capital. He is furthermore in a position to hand out symbolic capital in the form of honour.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the king is the governing agent of the literary field and poets like John Gower, Geoffrey Chaucer and William Langland depend on his will and governing. The king can use his power to have a poet imprisoned or even killed if he composes something not to his liking. He can also use his power to give a poet economic capital such as an allowance of some kind, thereby acting as a patron of the arts. He can, furthermore, give him symbolic capital such as recognition and thus fame and honour.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu 1986 47.

<sup>2</sup> See section 4.2 below.

<sup>3</sup> The education of Richard and Henry is further considered in section 4.2 (habitus) below.

<sup>4</sup> A typical description of the literary field, according to Genet, would be a market (*marché*) where authors produce their works, then there are those who are patrons of the production and finally there are those who acquire the end-product to satisfy their needs or desires (277).

<sup>5</sup> Bourdieu 1995 215.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 216.

<sup>7</sup> Tulinus *Skáldið í skriftinni* 153.

By contrast, when considering the cultural and literary fields, the poets are in possession of a different kind of capital. They may even, in some respects, be in possession of more symbolic and cultural capital than the king. A poet is even in a position to present the king with symbolic capital. He can return a favour by providing his sovereign with poetry of praise and propaganda which serves the king's political purposes.<sup>1</sup> He can also write didactic messages directed to the king and intended for a better governance of the realm.

Consequently it seems possible for both agents, the king on the one hand and the poets on the other hand to be simultaneously dominant and dominating, within the same field depending on the capital in question. When the king acts as a patron and supports the poets or commands work written by them, he is exercising his power as the main political agent and thereby the political field presides over the literary field. The agents of the political field can also seriously diminish the capital belonging to the poets within the literary field, for instance if the king or his council restrict the poets' freedom of expression or dictate them to write propaganda. Once within the literary field, however, the poets can be considered to be in a stronger position if only their ability to write poetry is considered, for thereby they possess the largest portion of capital.

Tangible products of the literary field are books and manuscripts, which are cultural capital in the objectified state which Henry certainly cherished and Richard probably did as well, although there is less evidence for that. Henry and his wife, Mary of Bohun, are known to have received precious books as wedding-presents and there are records of a copy of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, with a dedication from the poet, in Henry's personal library.<sup>2</sup> Henry is not the only important person known to have had the pleasure to receive a copy of Gower's poetry: Thomas of Arundel is another; interestingly also a Lancastrian.<sup>3</sup>

While books and manuscripts signify objectified cultural capital for members of the nobility, it is similarly evidence of the poet's cultural and symbolic capital. John Gower, as a poet, is in possession of both embodied and objectified cultural capital by having composed the poetry and owning it materially. He then accumulates further capital by

---

<sup>1</sup> Tulinius (*Skáldið í skriftinni* 143) and Wanner (57) show how this can apply to Icelandic poets and their Norwegian king. Their conclusions are relevant to the English court and poets.

<sup>2</sup> Mortimer 40-1, 46.

<sup>3</sup> There are records of Gower sending Thomas of Arundel (then bishop of Ely and later Archbishop of Canterbury and one of the Lords Appellant) the All Souls manuscript of the *Vox Clamantis* in 1373 and in 1400 he supposedly sent him another copy of *Vox Clamantis* with a personal letter: Fisher 1964 65, 105-6.

being able to give away his work and manuscripts to persons of power and significance. This capital is symbolic, especially within the literary field, but also within the political field, for Gower certainly was an agent within that same political field if only for his poetry of propaganda after Henry's succession in 1399.

If it is true that the Lancastrians provided Gower with cultural capital, the same can be said regarding the accumulation of social, and further symbolic, capital. The offering of manuscripts and dedications to Henry in Gower's poetry are manifestations of the relationship the poet enjoyed with the Lancastrians and therefore proof of social capital. Further evidence is Henry's offering of the livery collar with the Lancastrian Esses in 1393 to Gower.<sup>1</sup> Fisher moreover speculates whether it was because of Gower's allegiance to Henry that four of his friends in December 1397 had to make "Thomas Caudre, canon of the priory of St. Mary Overeys in Southwark" promise "that he would do or procure no harm to John Gower".<sup>2</sup> Those four men were "John Frenche, Peter Blake, and Thomas Gandre, all of London, and Robert Markle, serjeant of arms. [...] Thomas Gandre was a 'purser' or 'pouchmaker' with a shop near London Bridge and Robert Markle an official with the London Corporation or Parliament".<sup>3</sup> Whether these men were sent by Henry or other Lancastrians, or not, remains to be proven. If that was not the case, then this is at least an indication of Gower's social capital in the sense that it shows he had friends of influence who were ready to intervene on his behalf when the need arose.

John Gower may not have been an agent with particular significance in the political field, where Richard and Henry duelled during the 1390s, but there is no denying he was a social agent of some measure in the literary field. His aim was not to gain economic capital within that field, for he produced much poetry without apparently receiving any patronage worth mentioning. What Gower had and the two kings possessed to a lesser degree, was cultural capital in the form of linguistic and particularly poetic skills. This is where Gower seeks to accumulate capital within the political field, by delivering a message in poetry. The power of the discourse, of the word, seems to have been known and respected by Gower's contemporaries. By instructing the ruler of the realm in conduct and telling him he should be just, virtuous, law-abiding and peace-loving, Gower was exerting his influence on the government of

---

<sup>1</sup> Fisher 1964 68. See also section 3.1, page 20 above.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

the country, accumulating symbolic capital by making himself influential and respected. When he then goes on to write the Lancastrians' version of events that led to and followed the usurpation in 1399, he becomes an even more important player within the political field: he has accumulated additional symbolic capital.

Economic capital seems to have been something Gower did not have to worry much about for he seems to have been affluent and there is no indication that the ever wrote in order to make a living. With the writing of poetry, he seems to have been aiming for the ultimate symbolic capital: immortality. He intended to let his work carry his name through the ages, much as the works of Ovid, Virgil and other classical authors Gower knew so well had kept the names of their authors alive. This desire for immortality is also apparent where Gower uses his economic capital in order to acquire symbolic capital by bequeathing chalices, vestments and other contributions to churches, hospitals and leper houses in order to have an exquisite burial place in his chapel in Southwark and to be remembered in prayer by the Church and patients.<sup>1</sup>

When Gower enters the literary field already a middle-aged man, he may not have had much symbolic capital in the beginning, in the form of respect by his audience, remembrance or recognition of his peers, but he certainly makes up for that by writing volumes of poetry in French, Latin and English. So, his skill in playing the game of the literary field is not to be doubted.

Gower, as already mentioned above, possessed objectified cultural capital in the form of written poetry and manuscripts. Furthermore, he seems (especially after his retirement in the 1370s) to be in possession of time, which Bourdieu argues is of great value when accumulating embodied cultural capital.<sup>2</sup> Le Goff has shown that time was especially esteemed in the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the fifteenth century it was increasingly becoming the valued property of man, whereas it had before that solely belonged to God. Time should be used properly and every day should be organised carefully so that not "a single hour" was wasted.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, having time to attend to the writing of poetry is of worth in Gower's time; it is cultural capital of sorts which in turn allows the poet to accumulate more cultural capital of the embodied and objectified state as well as symbolic and, presumably, social capital.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu 1986 48.

<sup>3</sup> Le Goff 1980 51-2.



Gower's social capital is more difficult to establish than that of the two kings, Richard and Henry. In what concerns family, only speculations point to his Kentish background.<sup>1</sup> He had no children and there is only evidence of one marriage.<sup>2</sup> There is no evidence of family ties providing Gower with any social capital. He may, however, have accumulated social capital within the confines of Southwark and in the city of London, as might be indicated by the fact that Gower lodged in the priory of St Mary Overie in Southwark and that he bequeathed money to churches and hospitals in Southwark and London.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the witnesses to his will might give further indication of his social ties, for amongst them were a certain Sir Arnold Savage of the Savage family who "owned an 'inn' or city residence near London Bridge in 1391-92" and a John Burton who was a clerk in the Chancery.<sup>4</sup> Fisher suggests that others present may have represented "residents of Southwark, lay and ecclesiastical, among whom [Gower] passed his last years".<sup>5</sup> Arnold Savage may have represented merchants or entrepreneurs with whom Gower had business and possibly befriended and John Burton may have been, as Fisher suggests, a representative of Gower's "Chancery professional associates".<sup>6</sup>

There is no actual proof of Gower being a lawyer or even earning any living within the field of law. There are, all the same, indications of various kinds which all point in the same direction: that John Gower may have been a lawyer or worked in a court of law and at least he can be said to have shown profound knowledge of the law in his works. The fact that Chaucer asked Gower and Richard Forester to take care of his office while he went away in 1378<sup>7</sup> has been taken as an indication of Gower's legal background.<sup>8</sup> This is but one example, with others being sections in his poetry where he either refers to himself as a legal practitioner or shows extended knowledge of the law or even writes in legal terms. One of those sections is from the *Mirour de l'omme*: "I am not a cleric clothed in scarlet and blue, but I have worn only striped sleeves –I know little Latin and little French."<sup>9</sup> The striped sleeves suggest a legal profession, as Fisher

---

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Fisher 1964 37-54.

<sup>2</sup> Fisher 1964 64-5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 66; See also section 1.3, page 21 above.

<sup>4</sup> Fisher 1964 66-7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid 67.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> See section 3.1, page 20 above.

<sup>8</sup> Fisher 1964 61.

<sup>9</sup> *MO* 21772-5.

argues: “in the light of four mid-15th-century illuminations of the courts at Westminster, [...] all of the court officials except judges and registrars wear “rayed” gowns.”<sup>1</sup> All this suggests that Gower was a social agent within the field of law. It is, however, difficult to establish how much social and symbolic capital he accumulated there, due to lack of evidence concerning his participation within the field of law. On the other hand, any legal knowledge would have made him better equipped for taking part in other fields, such as the literary field and, prior to that, the field of business.

Gower’s transactions in real estate and possession of land make him a social agent in the field of business. Due to his affluent background and family ties he possessed economic capital which he successfully increased during his participation within the field of business, before retiring in the 1370s. Notwithstanding the fact that the prominent kind of capital within the field of business is economic, symbolic and social capitals are at stake as well. The respect that a landowner has, and can gain, attributes to his symbolic capital and the affiliations built with transactions attribute to the accumulation of social capital. There are no indications that John Gower was anything but a successful businessman, an astute social agent within the field of business. Therefore it is interesting to note that instead of deciding to go on with his business transactions and acquire even more capital within the field, Gower seems to decide to put an end to his participation in the field of business when he retires. He shifts his allegiance from the field of business to the literary field. It is altogether conceivable that his former participation in the field of business may later have had considerable bearing on his view of Richard’s actions in 1392 when he manhandled the merchants of London, people who could have been fellow social agents with Gower within the field of business.

Strong indications are that Gower belonged to an upper-middle or even upper class; affluent, but not aristocratic. He did not belong to the same social class as his two kings, Richard and Henry, and was therefore not a social agent in the same field of nobility. Furthermore, with the next section of this study in mind, Gower cannot be considered to possess the same habitus as Richard and Henry.

---

<sup>1</sup> Fisher 1964 55.

## 4.2 Habitus

Richard and Henry were cousins and members of the royal family. Therefore they were certainly members of the same social class, the nobility, and shared social environment, education and upbringing. Economic, social and cultural capital was something neither of them had to worry about in their youth and the two cousins would have access to and receive the same training in courtly behaviour and education in the broadest sense.

As was customary, the boys had private tutors who taught them not only to read and write but also how to behave in public and at table as well as how to dress and speak. The study of languages was of importance, where Latin, French and English each had their place.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, there was emphasis on music, literature, poetry, singing and dancing. The mastery of physical skills was moreover required and riding, fencing and hunting were taught from an early age.<sup>2</sup> It is safe to assume that Richard and Henry both underwent the same training and education, described above. Therefore it is inevitable to assume that there was not much to distinguish them in terms of habitus. This is important to keep in mind when considering their clashes later in life, where they would compete as equals for the highest place of honour, the most valuable symbolic capital, in the realm.<sup>3</sup>

It is worthwhile taking a closer look at how the two cousins' tutors taught their pupils to appreciate what it meant to be of princely pedigree, for it is a part of their habitus and has a bearing on their attitude and behaviour later on. It is, for instance, known for a fact that Simon Burley, Richard's tutor, owned a copy of Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*, a book in the teachings of courtly and princely behaviour wherein the emphasis is on the royal prerogative. Scholars have pointed to this fact and convincingly argued for it being a major influence on Richard's ideas of kingship and his belief in the total obedience of his subjects as a consequence of his royal prerogative.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore inevitable to consider the *De regimine principum* as one of the contributing factors to Richard's habitus mirrored in his actions later in life and also

---

<sup>1</sup> "The educated classes put three different languages to common use – English, French and Latin" (Rigg and Moore 154). According to Saul, Richard "would probably have been instructed mostly in French or English", although the main language of instruction "should have been Latin" (1997 14). Richard was born in Bordeaux and his "first tongue was French" while he also "learned English in boyhood, for all of the aristocracy were English-speakers by this period" (Saul 1997 13). Mortimer notes that Henry's "writing exists today in three languages: English, Latin and French" (29).

<sup>2</sup> Saul 1997 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 40, 42, 44-6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 16; Briggs 61-2.

reflected on in Gower's writings.<sup>1</sup> Whether Henry's tutor, Hugh Herle, may have acquainted him with Giles of Rome's writings while teaching him to read and write is not known. Since, however, the *De regimine principum* represented contemporary ideas of kingship and princely behaviour it seems far-fetched to assume that Henry was not as familiar with Giles of Rome's writings as Richard was.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the rules of princes, young men of the royal family had to learn how to wield arms and what being a knight entailed. Knighthood and titles were bestowed upon the cousins from a young age and this was very much a part of their habitus. The fact that Henry proved to be a great jousting champion and a successful crusader makes for an interesting comparison with Richard. Whereas Richard had no considerable victories in battle to his credit, Henry on the other hand was skilled with weapons and victorious in battle.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that Richard and Henry are educated in arts, literature and languages makes for a point of contact with contemporary writers and poets, like John Gower. Although Gower may not have been raised in the same social surroundings as the two royal cousins, he most likely did not lack anything in his upbringing. Coming from an affluent background he seems to have received a good education where he acquired his linguistic and poetic skills. These skills are part of his habitus and they are tools which Gower uses to acquire capital within fields such as the literary field. Added to this is the legal education he seemingly acquired later and any legal knowledge or practice would have attributed to his habitus.

The fact that Gower lived in Southwark raises an interesting question concerning his habitus: did he see himself as a Londoner or as an outsider, being able to comment on events and politics from a perspective different from that belonging to Londoners

---

<sup>1</sup> Gower was without a doubt familiar with Giles of Rome's writings and he agrees with him in advocating the royal prerogative and the necessity of the king's subjects' obedience. Gower's message, however, is also one of prudence on the part of the king, where he must be careful to be fair and set a good example by adhering to the law and behave in a virtuous manner.

<sup>2</sup> It is likely that Richard and Henry read the *De regimine* in a French translation of the original Latin text, "since it was in this form that the political classes of fourteenth-century England would most likely have encountered Giles's treaty" (Fletcher 68, note 40). Furthermore, it is known that the copy owned by Burley, Richard's tutor, was in French (Briggs 61-2). It cannot be excluded that Richard and Henry came across the Latin version, for "[s]everal [...] English lay readers were familiar with the Latin original" and owned copies, including members of the nobility close to the Lancastrians and the royal family (Briggs 76). It is, however, extremely unlikely that either Richard or Henry studied John Trevisa's English translation of the *De regimine*. Trevisa is thought to have translated the *De regimine* in 1388-92 and the circulation of the translation was constricted during the 1390s (Briggs 84).

<sup>3</sup> Mortimer 267-73.

who lived in the City? What seems safe to conclude, is that he most probably saw himself as an outsider in relation to Westminster, which was still a town separate from London and Southwark respectively, at the end of the fourteenth century. Living in Southwark, at St Mary Overie, is significant for Gower's habitus in another aspect as well, for it emphasises his religious side. So do the facts (already stated on pages 21 and 54) that he lives within a religious site and that when he dies, he bequeaths a large part of his wealth to neighbouring chapels. Gower's habitus is also shown to contain this religious element when his works are read.

It can be concluded that the respective habitus of Richard II and Henry IV were almost identical and John Gower may have had some traits in common with the royal cousins while in other, and perhaps most, respects he differed from them. It is particularly in the literary and linguistic education and appreciation of poetry that the three players share traits of their respective habitus. Furthermore, legal education and knowledge was likely a shared feature as well.

As a result of the study of the social agents, their habitus and their position within the respective fields, an interesting question arises, whether any of these three players ever was in a dominant position within any of the fields, in relation to the others at any given time. And if so, who was being dominated by whom and, furthermore, did the situation ever change over time with a consequential reversal of roles? Who was a "pawn" and who was a "player" in the game; how and when?

## 5 Pawns and Players

*He'll see by his grave  
On the stone that remains  
Carved next to his name  
His epitaph plain:  
Only a pawn in their game.<sup>1</sup>*

### 5.1 Gower vs. Richard

Interesting points surface when a look is taken at the *Confessio Amantis* and an attempt made to determine the nature of Gower's relationship with his king Richard II. On the one hand it can be argued that Richard was the player with Gower as the pawn. On the other hand it can also be said that Gower assumed the role of the player with Richard being the pawn, especially when the text and the changes Gower made to it are considered.

Assuming the encounter between Gower and Richard II on the river Thames actually took place, the king is the player in that scene. Gower is the pawn, for he is the king's subject and Richard honours him by asking him to write him a poem. Richard has the greater capital *vis-à-vis* power and is therefore in a dominant position to Gower, as he would be to almost anybody in the realm at that point in time.

This relationship, where Gower is the pawn to Richard the player, is further in evidence in the poem Gower writes, the *Confessio Amantis*. In it, the poet praises Richard and attributes to him all the virtues and qualities that a king could and should have. In addition to this, Gower dedicates the poem to his king and tells of the encounter aboard the royal barge where Richard asked for the poem to be written.<sup>2</sup>

Besides what is detailed in the *Confessio Amantis*, the events of 1392 could possibly offer another instance where Richard would be a player with Gower a pawn. When Richard forces the Londoners to give him money against their will,<sup>3</sup> it is not far-fetched to think that this would have made Gower angry, for he would have considered it unfair and as an attack on himself and his friends and acquaintances; an attack on his social capital.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bob Dylan 1964 "Only A Pawn In Their Game".

<sup>2</sup> See section 3.5, pages 28-9 above.

<sup>3</sup> See section 2.3, page 16 above.

A reversal of roles, with Gower as a player and Richard as a pawn, can be claimed to be found in both the *Confessio Amantis* and the *Cronica Tripertita*. In the *Confessio Amantis* Richard has to suffer having his dedication and praise removed in later recensions of the poem and he also has to accept guidelines of behaviour for a king from a poet. In the *Cronica Tripertita* the condemnation of Richard by Gower is such that he cannot be considered anything else but a pawn to the poet's player.

By removing the tale of the encounter on board the royal barge, Gower is expressly taking back the honour bestowed on Richard previously where he was seen as the patron of literature asking personally for a poem being written in a specific way. This can easily be understood as a blow, so here Richard is in the role of the victim; he is the pawn to Gower the player. Lightning strikes twice, for Gower also removes all the abundant praise of Richard as a ruler from the poem, so again the player makes his position clear to the pawn.

Another point to consider is of a milder kind, so to speak. The *Confessio Amantis* contains a didactic message for the ruler; instructions on how to rule the realm by being just, law-abiding, virtuous and setting an example for the subjects. Gower writes those instructions in kingship without explicitly mentioning Richard in particular, so these instructions he did not have to alter when he eliminated other references to Richard. They therefore remain equally valid for Henry as they did for his predecessor. It is clear, however, that the poet assumes the role of an old wise man giving moral instructions to someone younger, be he a king or not, and therefore he puts himself on a pedestal and becomes the player to the pawn the king.

In the *Cronica Tripertita* the position of the poet and the fallen king, Richard II, is quite unbalanced and one-directional. Gower is the player who has nothing but condemnation and harsh words for Richard, who has to suffer being vilified without the possibility of answering back. Richard is the helpless pawn in this situation and even if he wanted to, he cannot do anything to contest the Lancastrian version of history that is being offered in Gower's poem.

## **5.2 Gower vs. Henry**

Although Henry is not as prominent in the first recension of the *Confessio Amantis* as Richard is, he is all the same present in the text and assumes the role of a player from the outset. Gower is favourable towards him and even offers him dedications, such as at

the end of the prologue.<sup>1</sup> Henry's position as a player gains strength when all references to Richard are removed, for although Gower does not actually replace the praise of Richard with a similar one of Henry, the initial dedications to Henry remain in the subsequent recensions of the poem. Gower serves Henry's interests by showing him due respect and the poet willingly finds himself in a subservient position to Henry the player.

*In Praise of Peace* offers an even stronger view of Henry as a player. He is praised by Gower and his claim to the throne is justified in every way possible: it was the work and will of God and the subjects happily received Henry as their new king. This is reiterated and put forth in even stronger terms in the *Cronica Tripertita*, where Henry is presented as a saviour whom no-one could deny the right to rule. Henry's position as a player is further strengthened by the depiction of Richard as a tyrant who had to be replaced. Gower is here undeniably a pawn to Henry the player, for he provides him with a political tool in the form of a poem presenting a monolithic version of historical events. Wanner's conclusion concerning Icelandic medieval court-poetry can easily be applied to Gower's poetry for Henry: "the primary functions of skaldic court-poetry were to praise, commemorate, and legitimize patrons."<sup>2</sup> Gower certainly does all those things and provides Henry with considerable symbolic capital in so doing. It seems more likely than not that Gower was a willing pawn in this situation, although it can probably never be determined as a fact. Perhaps Gower was in a situation where he had no choice, thus being an absolute pawn in the game of the throne?

In the relationship between Gower and Henry, as it can be perceived in Gower's poetry, the poet assumes the role of a player first and foremost when he gives the ruler instructions in kingship. In the *Confessio Amantis* he advocates for a just king who treats his subjects with fairness. The king should be law-abiding as well as upholding the law amongst the people. He should furthermore set an example of virtuous behaviour and strive for love and peace.

This last point is further stressed in *In Praise of Peace* where Gower emphasises the importance of peace for the realm and how the king should make peace his first priority. This is interesting to consider with reference to Henry's successes on the battlefield. Henry was certainly more successful in battle than Richard and all indications are that

---

<sup>1</sup> CA VIII 3177-8.

<sup>2</sup> Wanner 64.



whereas Richard laboriously worked for treaties with the French, Henry seemed more willing to resolve disputes by arms. Especially in this context does *In Praise of Peace* earn Gower the status of a player when he speaks to the king in order to make him assume politics of peace.

The *Cronica Tripertita* does not really portray Gower as a player *vis-à-vis* Henry, for that the message is too favourable towards the king and in fact perhaps suspiciously favourable. Gower is entirely a pawn at the service of the Lancastrian cause and while his effort goes into writing the history of the last decade of the fourteenth century by condemning Richard and hailing Henry, he loses credibility as an independent poet writing what is on his mind. He really does not convince as a player in the *Cronica Tripertita*; he appears as the pawn all the way through.

### 5.3 Richard vs. Henry

Although Richard and Henry, as cousins in the royal family, had the same habitus their symbolic capital was unequal and different in nature. The fact that Richard had the hereditary right to become king of England, and his cousin did not, gave him superiority and thereby put him in a position of a player while Henry would have been a pawn. Richard became king because he was anointed; he had the law of God behind him as well as the law of men, so taking away the crown would be opposed on all fronts.

Notwithstanding Richard's prerogative, Henry makes attempts at reversing the roles, by accumulating symbolic capital at the expense of the king, such as at the Merciless Parliament in 1387-8. Richard resists Henry's attempts and remains in the role of the main player until 1399.

The dramatic event which occurs at the beginning of 1399 when Richard banishes Henry after his dispute with the duke of Norfolk is a turning-point in the balance of power.<sup>1</sup> Henry is entirely at the mercy of his king and cousin, not being able to claim any leverage as a player in the unfolding of events; there is only one player dictating the fate of those involved and that is King Richard II. When Richard then goes even further and confiscates all the Lancastrian property (thereby breaking the promise he had given to Henry that it would be his when he returned from exile), as well as extending Henry's exile to life, he makes decisions that lead to the tilting of the scales forever.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mortimer 157-8.

When Henry learns that he has nothing left, he realises that he has either to accept his fate or act. By deciding to return to England, breaking the exile and going against the law, Henry rejects the role of the pawn and decides to claim the role of the player in his relationship with his cousin, Richard. Gradually, as Henry moves south from Humber and his campaign gains momentum, the reversal of roles materialises and culminates in the total defeat of Richard at the hands of his cousin and in the ensuing deposition.

Henry manages to gain sufficient support on his campaign to depose his cousin and if Gower's account of events is accurate that support was widespread. Thus he convinces the people (or at least the nobility) to join him in breaking the law of God and men by dethroning an anointed king who ruled by hereditary right. This was of course justified by Richard's supposed tyranny and misrule of the kingdom. To put this into Bourdieu's terms: Henry manages to convince that he should be handed the absolute symbolic capital, contained in the rule of the realm. Ultimately, it is Henry who enjoys the role of the player and Richard's downgrade to the role of a pawn is absolute when the most probable cause of his death is considered: Richard was thrown into a dungeon and supposedly left there to starve to death.

## 6 Conclusion

The political game in England towards the end of the fourteenth century was fiercely played. A game of power and dominance was at the centre of events where on occasions the various social agents would assume the role of a pawn while on some other occasions that same agent might be a player. This is in evidence in Richard's and Henry's relationship, where Richard is the dominating player with Henry being the pawn for most of the 1390s until we witness a reversal of roles in 1399. John Gower is for the most part in the role of the pawn, although he attempts through his poetry to influence his king, whom he lectures with a moral message of an elder.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of fields, capital and habitus allows us to establish the players' roles and aims, where we can determine that Richard II and Henry IV were mainly competing within the field of politics while John Gower's main field was the literary one. John Gower and his two kings shared their interest in accumulating cultural and symbolic capital but their habitus and fields were not entirely the same though they may have overlapped in some instances.

Richard was the rightful heir to the throne and became king at a young age, after both his father and grand-father passed away. Henry of Lancaster was a constant threat to Richard who feared he might be deposed by his cousin, and the fact that Richard never produced an heir, whereas Henry had many children, only added to Richard's predicament. Finally, Henry ended Richard II's reign in 1399 and became Henry IV, king of England as well as the father of Henry of Monmouth, future Henry V. The Lancastrians had triumphed over King Richard's tyranny.

John Gower had a part to play in the political events of the 1390s, through his poetry. First he honoured his king, Richard II, in the late 1380s by dedicating his major poem, the *Confessio Amantis*, to him. Later he turned his back on Richard, where the turning-point may have been Richard's confrontation with Gower's friends and allies in the City of London in 1392. John Gower was a friend of the Lancastrians and became a staunch supporter of Henry, resulting in his writing propaganda poetry in which he condemned Richard's reign and justified his usurpation by Henry in 1399. John Gower, however, did not only seek to exert influence on and serve the rulers of England, for at the same time he strategically laid the foundations for his own legacy, where he ultimately hoped for immortality, not least by his poetry. In this he has somewhat

succeeded, although he has had to content with remaining in the shadow of his friend and contemporary, Geoffrey Chaucer.

Kópavogur, 24 April 2012

Grétar Skúlason

## Bibliography

- Ackerman, Robert W. "Middle English Literature to 1400." *The Medieval Literature of Western Europe : A Review of Research, Mainly 1930-1960*. Ed. John H. Fisher. New York: New York UP, 1966. 73-123. Print.
- Astell, Ann W. *Political Allegory in Late Medieval England*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell UP, 1999. Print.
- Bean, J.M.W. "Plague, Population and Economic Decline in England in the Later Middle Ages." *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1963): 423-37. *JStor*. Web. 11 Jun. 2011.
- Boschetti, Anna. "Bourdieu's Work on Literature: Contexts, Stakes and Perspectives." *Theory, Culture & Society*. Vol. 23, No. 6 (2006): 135-55. *SAGE*. Web. 19 Jan. 2012.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Forms of Capital." *Education: Culture, economy, and society* Ed. A. H. Halsey. New York: Oxford UP, 1986. 46-58. Print.
- . *The Logic of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. 1980. Cambridge: Polity, 1990. Print.
- . *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. 1972. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977. Print.
- . *Pascalian Meditations*. Trans. Richard Nice. 1997. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2000. Print.
- . *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. 1992. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1995. Print.
- . *Sociology in Question*. Trans. Richard Nice. 1980. London: Sage, 1993. Print.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Loïc J.D. Wacquant. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity, 1992. Print.
- Bowers, John M. "Rival Poets: Gower's Confessio and Chaucer's Legend of Good Women." *John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation and Tradition*. Ed. Elisabeth Dutton. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010. 276-87. Print.

- Briggs, Charles F. *Giles of Rome's De Regimine Principum: Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University, c. 1275 – c. 1525*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.
- Brown, A.L. *The Governance of Late Medieval England 1272-1461*. London: Edward Arnold, 1989. Print.
- Burrow, J.A. "Gower's Poetic Styles." *A Companion to Gower*. Ed. Siân Echar. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer. 2004. 239-50. Print.
- . *Medieval Writers and their Work: Middle English Literature 1100-1500*. 2nd ed. 1982. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- . *Ricardian Poetry: Chaucer, Gower, Langland and the 'Gawain' Poet*. London: Penguin, 1971. Print.
- Carlson, David R. "Gower on Henry IV's Rule: The Endings of the 'Cronica Tripertita' and its Texts." *Traditio: Studies in Ancient and Medieval History, Thought and Religion*. Vol. 62 (2007): 207-36. *ProQuest*. Web. 6 Mar. 2012.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. In *The Riverside Chaucer*. 3rd ed. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987. 23-328. Print.
- . *Troilus and Criseyde*. Ed. and trans. Barry Windeatt. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. Print.
- Coleman, Joyce. "'A bok for king Richardes sake': Royal Patronage, the Confessio and the Legend of Women." *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium*. Ed. R. F. Yeager. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007. 104-23. Print.
- Crossley, Nick. "Social class." *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Ed. Michael Grenfell. Durham: Acumen, 2011. 87-99. Print.
- Digital Scriptorium*. Columbia University Libraries, 1997. Web.
- Dubois, Jacques, Meaghan Emery and Pamela Sing. "Pierre Bourdieu and Literature." *SubStance*. Vol. 29, No. 3, Issue 93: Special Issue: Pierre Bourdieu (2000): 84-102. *JStor*. Web. 19 Jan. 2012.

- Dutton, Elisabeth, ed. *John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation and Tradition*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010. Print.
- Dylan, Bob. "Only a Pawn In Their Game." *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. Columbia, 1964. LP.
- Echard, Siân, ed. *A Companion to Gower*. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer. 2004. Print.
- Echard, Siân. "Introduction." *A Companion to Gower*. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer. 2004. 1-22. Print.
- . "John Gower." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*. Vol. 2. Ed. David Scott Kastan. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. 447-50. Print.
- . *The John Gower Page*. University of Vancouver, n.d. Web.
- Epstein, Robert. "London, Southwark, Westminster: Gower's Urban Contexts." *A Companion to Gower*. Ed. Siân Echard. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer. 2004. 43-60. Print.
- Fisher, John H. *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer*. New York: New York UP, 1964. Print.
- . "A Language Policy for Lancastrian England." *PMLA*. 107.5 (Oct. 1992): 1168-80. *JStor*. Web. 15 Dec. 2011.
- Fletcher Christopher. *Richard II: Manhood, Youth, and Politics 1377-99*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.
- Fryde, E.B. "600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Great Revolt; June, 1381" *History Today*. 31.7 (1981): 48. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 13 Sep. 2011.
- Galloway, Andrew, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011. Print.
- . *Medieval Literature and Culture*. London: Continuum, 2006. Print.
- Gastle, Brian. "Gower's Business: Artistic Production of Cultural Capital and The Tale of Florent". *John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation and Tradition*. Ed. Elisabeth Dutton. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010. 182-95. Print.

- Genet, Jean-Philippe. *La genèse de l'État moderne: Culture et société politique en Angleterre*. Paris: PU de France, 2003. Print.
- Giles of Rome. *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De Regimine Principum of Aegidius Romanus*. c. 1287. Eds. David C. Fowler, Charles F. Briggs, Paul G. Remley. Garland Medieval Texts. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.
- Goodman, Anthony. *A History of England from Edward II to James I*. London: Longman, 1977. Print.
- . "John of Gaunt." *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1985 Harlaxton Symposium*. Ed. W.M. Ormrod. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1986. 67-87. Print.
- Gower, John. *The Complete Works of John Gower*. Ed. G.C. Macaulay. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1901. Print.
- . *The English Works of John Gower*. Ed. G.C. Macaulay. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1900. Print.
- . *The Major Latin Works of John Gower*. Ed. and trans. Eric W. Stockton. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1962. Print.
- . *John Gower: The Minor Latin Works*. Ed. and trans. R. F. Yeager. *River Campus Libraries*. University of Rochester. Web. 29 Jan. 2012.
- . *Mirour de l'omme: (The Mirror of Mankind)*. Trans. William Burton Wilson. East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1992. Print.
- The Gower Project*. WordPress, 2010. Web.
- Grady, Frank. "Gower's Boat, Richard's Barge, and the True Story of the Confessio Amantis: Text and Gloss." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 44 No. 1 (2002): 1-15. *Project MUSE*. Johns Hopkins UP. Web. 5 Nov. 2011.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Vol. I. 8th ed. 1962. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. Print.



- Grenfell, Michael. "Biography of Bourdieu." *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Ed. Michael Grenfell. Durham: Acumen, 2011. 11-25. Print.
- . "Interest." *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Ed. Michael Grenfell. Durham: Acumen, 2011. 153-70. Print.
- . "Methodological principles." *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Ed. Michael Grenfell. Durham: Acumen, 2011. 219-27. Print.
- Grenfell, Michael, ed. *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Durham: Acumen, 2011. Print.
- Grieve, Alastair. *RoyalList Online: A Royal Genealogy Database*. RoyalList Online. 2002. Web. 9 Jan. 2012.
- Guðmundsson, Gestur. "Viðhald félagslegrar mismununar í menntakerfi og menningu: Kenningar Pierres Bourdieu." *Félagsfræði menntunar: Kenningar, hugtök, rannsóknir og sögulegt samhengi*. Reykjavík: Skrudda 2008. 69-107. Print.
- Hatcher, John. *Plague, Population and the English Economy 1348-1530*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Education, 1977. Print.
- Hines, John, Nathalie Cohen and Simon Roffey. "Iohannes Gower, Armiger, Poeta: Records and Memorials of his Life and Death." *A Companion to Gower*. Ed. Siân Echard. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004. 23-41. Print.
- Huizinga, J. *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. 1924. London: Penguin Books, 1990. Print.
- International John Gower Society Web Site*. Western Carolina University, 1 July 2006. Web.
- "John Gower." *Luminarium: Anthology of English Literature*. Anniina Jokinen, 16 October 2002. Web.
- Jones, Dan. "The Peasants' Revolt." *History Today*. 59.6 (2009): 33-9. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. Web. 13 Sep. 2011.
- Jones, Terry. "Richard II: Royal Villain or Victim of Spin?" *The Times, London (UK)*. 4 Oct. 2008: 13. *ProQuest*. Web. 15 Nov. 2011.

- . "Was Richard II a Tyrant? Richard's Use of the Books of Rules for Princes." *Fourteenth Century England: 5*. Ed. Nigel Saul. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2008. 130-60. Print.
- Keen, Maurice. *England in the Later Middle Ages*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1973. Print.
- Kendall, Elliot. *Lordship and Literature: John Gower and the Politics of the Great Household*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008. Print.
- Le Goff, Jacques. *Medieval Civilization*. Trans. Julia Barrow. 1964. Oxford : Blackwell, 1988. Print.
- . *Time, Work & Culture in the Middle Ages*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. 1977. Chicago and London: The U of Chicago Press, 1980. Print.
- Lorris, Guillaume de and Jean de Meun. *Le Roman de la Rose*. Ca. 1230. Ed. Armand Strubel. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1984. Print.
- Macaulay, G.C., ed. "Introduction." *The English Works of John Gower*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1900. vii-clxxv. Print.
- Malory, Sir Thomas. *Morte Darthur*. In *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 1962. Vol. I. 8th ed. Ed, Stephen Greenblatt. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 439-56. Print.
- Mathew, Gervase. *The Court of Richard II*. London: John Murray, 1968. Print.
- Maton, Karl. "Habitus." *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Ed. Michael Grenfell. Durham: Acumen, 2011. 49-65. Print.
- Moore, Robert. "Capital." *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Ed. Michael Grenfell. Durham: Acumen, 2011. 101-117. Print.
- Mortimer, Ian. *The Fears of Henry IV: The Life of England's Self-Made King*. London: Vintage, 2007. Print.
- Pearsall, Derek. "The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower's Works." *A Companion to Gower*. Ed. Siân Echard. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer. 2004. 73-97. Print.

- Peck, Russell A. "The Politics and Psychology of Governance in Gower: Ideas of Kingship and Real Kings." *A Companion to Gower*. Ed. Siân Echard. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004. 215-38. Print.
- "Portraits of Richard II." *Richard II's Treasure*. Institute of Historical Research and Royal Holloway University of London, 2007. Web. 24 Mar. 2012.
- Rigg, A. G. and Edward S. Moore. "The Latin Works: Politics, Lament, and Praise." *A Companion to Gower*. Ed. Siân Echard. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004. 153-64. Print.
- Robbins, Derek. "Theory of Practice." *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Ed. Michael Grenfell. Durham: Acumen, 2011. 27-40. Print.
- Salisbury, John of. *The Statesman's Book of John of Salisbury*. Ed. and trans. John Dickinson. New York: Russell & Russell, 1963. Print.
- Saul, Nigel. "Britain 1400". *History Today*. 50.7 (2000): 38-46. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 13 Sep. 2011.
- . "John Gower: Prophet or Turncoat?" *John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation and Tradition*. Ed. Elisabeth Dutton. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010. 85-97. Print.
- . *Richard II*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1997. Print.
- Saunders, Corinne, ed. *A Companion to Medieval Poetry*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2010. Print.
- . *A Concise Companion to Chaucer*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. Print.
- Scanlon, Larry, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature 1100-1500*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.
- Schmidt, Michael. *Lives of the Poets*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998. Print.
- Simpson, James. *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's "Anticlaudianus" and John Gower's "Confessio Amantis"*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. Print.

- Southwark Cathedral*. Southwark Cathedral, 2011. Web.
- Southwark Cathedral: The Authorized Guide*. 2002. London: The Dean and Chapter of Southwark Cathedral, 2006. Print.
- Stockton, Eric W. "Introduction." *The Major Latin Works of John Gower*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1962. 3-46. Print.
- Thomson, Patricia. "Field." *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Ed. Michael Grenfell. Durham: Acumen, 2011. 67-81. Print.
- Townsend, David. "Medieval Anglo-Latin Literature." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*. Vol. 3. Ed. David Scott Kastan. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. 443-7. Print.
- Tulinius, Torfi. "Capital, Field, Illusio. Can Bourdieu's Sociology Help Us Understand the Development of Literature in Medieval Iceland?" *Sagas & societies – International Conference at Borgarnes, Iceland, September 5.-9. 2002*. UB Tübingen, 2004. PDF file.
- . *Skáldið í skriftinni*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag og ReykjavíkAkademían, 2004. Print.
- Turville-Petre, Thorlac. *Reading Middle English Literature*. Malde, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Print.
- Urban, Malte, ed. *John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009. Print.
- Wanner, Kevin J. *Snorri Sturluson and the Edda: The Conversion of Cultural Capital in Medieval Scandinavia*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2008. Print.
- Wickert, Maria. *Studies in John Gower*. Trans. R. J. Meindl. 1953. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1981. Print.
- Wilson, William Burton. "Introduction." *Mirour de l'omme: (The Mirror of Mankind)*. East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1992. xv-xxvii. Print.

- Yeager, R. F. "'Oure englisshē' and Everyone's Latin: The Fasciculus Morum and Gower's Confessio Amantis." *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Nov. 1981): 41-53. *JStor*. Web. 26 Sep. 2011.
- . "John Gower's French." *A Companion to Gower*. Ed. Siân Echard. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer. 2004. 137-51. Print.
- . *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for a New Arion*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990. Print.
- . "The Poetry of John Gower." *A Companion to Medieval Poetry*. Ed. Corinne Saunders. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2010. 476-95. Print.
- Yeager, R. F, ed. *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007. Print.