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THE CONFLICT OF COURTLY LOVE AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY

IN JOHN GOWER'S CONFESSION AMANTIS

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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INTRODUCTION

THE COFFIN MAKERS:

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE OF A DYING WORLD

Very few critics would venture to say that John Gower was, in any sense, a modern poet. Yet John Gower’s poetry very definitely belongs to that now considerable body of literature which has been created at a time when the security of the world seemed in doubt. When the world itself is threatened by grave calamities and the disintegration of society appears imminent, the poet with vision begins to reshape the old categories and make them relevant to the new chaotic menace. However difficult it may be to pin down the date and historical calamities which triggered the Beowulf, for example, no one will deny that the poem is an attempt to celebrate the death of a bygone era of heroism and to glean from the past the few key virtues upon which a new social order could be established with dignity. In the same literary tradition one might place the striking conclusion to the Peterborough Chronicle or, better yet, Wulfstan’s Sermo Lupi ad Anglos. Wulfstan wrote that magnificent national sermon in the face of doomsday and a firm conviction that the "woruld is on ofste." A man terrified by the thought of death and annihilation is more easily shaken loose from the security of old concepts and brought to an elemental and simplified world view.
Modern literature is full of such apocalyptic utterance, perhaps because man's own capacity to destroy has mushroomed. A figure from modern literature close to Gower in this respect is Father Kapple in *Moby Dick*. Melville says of him that he preaches from the pulpit as from the prow of the world's ship whose office it is to bear the brunt of the great storm and "to preach the Truth to the face of Falsehood." Even the Hemingway hero, however unlike moral Gower, when he lies wounded and dying in some African field or rests bleeding and weary in a hut overlooking a Cuban harbor, rearranges the world-order in terms of simple concepts like victory and defeat. It was the same with John Donne on his supposed death-bed in 1623. He reduced his usually complex world view to ruminations about the unity of mankind in words like "no man is an island," a formula to be taken up by both the modern novelist and the modern mystic.

The fourteenth century can compete with any for the title of Age of Catastrophe. The Black Death in itself was enough to create the climate I have been describing, in which a poet is faced with the task of rebuilding an old order with provisions for a new reality. In his introduction to the *Decameron* Boccaccio forewarns the reader that he is dealing with a work of art constructed out of the ruins, out of the stench of death, by a coffin maker. A new order prevails by necessity because the old order did not take fairly into account a new reality. In the face of universal death, Boccaccio tells us, some people thought asceticism would bring security against the plague, others decided that moderate living was the answer, and still others
followed the path of hedonism. The authority of law, human and divine, was in question, and man was virtually free to do as he pleased. Many men took flight, only to find that the plague followed them. The Decameron itself represents an escape, or at least a new philosophy of quodlibetales; considering the heat of the noonday and the foolishness of activity in the face of such grave danger, the small band of young people ordains that everyone shall do as he pleases.

In addition to the bubonic plague, the fourteenth century also experienced a serious threat to the existence of the Church in the seventy years of papal schism. It is sometimes difficult for the modern man to appreciate the psychological effect this event had on the fourteenth-century Christian. In many ways, I think it would be parallel to the case of the modern child who suddenly has to adjust to the reality of having a new father in the home after the divorce has removed his natural father. The medieval Christian's mode of life was substantially dependent upon the calendar and law of the Church, because he was obliged to fast or to go to church on many more days of the year than the modern Catholic. There were then many more people engaged in Church-supported and Church-regulated activities, even outside of the monasteries and church schools. Just as the federal government today can be found everywhere in our lives, taxing a large portion of all income, employing directly or indirectly far more people than any corporation, and thus holding the entire world in economic dependence, so in the Middle Ages there was no way to separate the welfare of the world from the security of the Church; she
was the world's largest publisher, educator, and even employer. The schism, therefore, represented a particular problem for a poet-philosopher like Gower: how could one reconcile the apparent disintegration of the Church itself with the optimism inherent in the Christian plan of redemption?

Moreover, Gower and his fourteenth-century English contemporaries had another catastrophe to face, the Hundred Years' War. While it was not as devastating an affair as any of our modern wars, it is possible now for Americans to reckon the psychological effects of a small, but long and nagging conflict fought primarily because of the personal needs of the nation's leaders and for economic motives beyond the control of the ordinary citizen. As G. M. Trevelyan points out in his History of England, the dynastic contention of the English kings was merely an excuse for four generations of plundering of the weak by the more powerful and more victory-loving English.¹

But the catalogue of catastrophes which engaged Gower's mind need not be taken from the histories of the century. One need merely examine Gower's poetry itself to see that he was constantly saying the same old things in similar ways, and yet constantly revising his poetry to bring it into consonance with current events and the most recent signs of the decay of the times. A prime example is the Vox Clamantis, substantially revised and reordered as a result of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 because Gower saw that revolt as just another step in the process of cosmic disintegration. John H. Fisher provides ample evidence from the manuscript tradition of the Confessio
Amantis that Gower revised the poem several times to accord with the particular political circumstances of the year. Nevertheless, while he was growing older and the world was (from our objective and historical point of view) recovering from the catastrophes which generated his pessimism, his apocalyptic vision did not pass away; on the contrary, he became more and more doom-conscious with each decade and more assured of the inevitable destruction of the world. At the same time, the forms which served him well in prophesying doom in his earlier years (the three estates and the seven deadly sins in particular) became less settled and less significant in his later work. Thus, in the Confessio, even the seven sins and the three estates are subject to mutability and revolutionary change.

The plague, the schism, the war, and revolution in every area of life helped to make John Gower a prophet of doom and the Confessio Amantis a Jeremiad. Indeed, these calamities brought him so far along the path of reductionism, and his world view became so simplified (in fact dualistic), that he was forced to laugh at and lament his world in one and the same poem. A peculiar kind of self-vision is incorporated into the last poem of Gower's immense trilogy, in that the poet divides his own nature up into what must have been his two "most significant" roles, courtier and counselor. In the Confessio, the conflict between the two roles is a paradigm of the conflict or opposition or division which inheres in the world, both physically and psychologically.

My primary purpose in this dissertation is to investigate the
Confessio Amantis to determine how Gower succeeded or failed in reconciling the contradictions between the Christian and the courtly codes, contradictions inherent in the framework of love-allegory which he adopted as a result of the schizophrenia which I have been describing. This topic is a fresh one because John Gower's Confessio Amantis has been virtually ignored by literary critics.

There are good reasons for this oversight, besides the obvious fact that 35,000 lines of octosyllabic couplets represent a considerable surplus for most readers. One is the oversimplification perpetrated by Macaulay, in his still standard edition of 1901, that the stories are the main thing and "the rest is all machinery."4 Another reason is the difficulty the reader has in moving past the poet's didacticism and moralizing to his artistry in creating a frame for a collection of over 100 stories. Gower accomplished this feat by the anomalous device of having Venus, and especially Genius, advocate both the courtly and the Christian codes. However, as Professor Utley has pointed out in his review of Fisher's study, "Gower's detours at the juncture between love and morality were very deft, and the deftness needs even fuller study than Fisher gives it."5 By approach, therefore, will be three-fold. I plan to study first the conceptual framework, then the concept of love in relation to the conceptual framework, and finally Gower's integration of the stories and digressions into the conceptual framework.

Most critics, following Macaulay, look at only the virtues and vices when they consider the conceptual framework. Macaulay's
"machinery." I intend in Chapter One to show the metaphysical basis upon which Gower builds his whole conceptual frame, primarily through transformations both within the frame story and in the stories themselves. Many of the stories are from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and even the non-Ovidian tales frequently involve transformations. In addition, no scholarship has dealt with the concept of inversion which invests Gower's "up-so-down" world and the mutual contradiction of opposites which the poet so frequently describes with long lists of oxymora.

Chapter two is an extension of the first chapter. Gower's elementary metaphysical notions are closely connected to his cosmology, which is traceable by various terms like *fortune*, *nature*, *kinds*, and *world*. Many critics make passing references to the importance and prevalence of these concepts, but none has worked out Gower's cosmology in satisfactory fashion and made this information dovetail with the rest of the conceptual framework. The final step in the conceptual process is to study Gower's notions of the nature of man and his program for salvation in terms such as *reason*, *will*, *love*, *lust*, *wisdom*, and *virtue*. My purpose in this chapter is to arrive at a definition of love by studying carefully how it is associated with these other important concepts in the poem.

In the first two chapters I am investigating the love-allegory of the poem, to work out what Courthope has called "scholasticism as a framework for fiction." To some extent, my concern for outlining Gower's philosophy contradicts the opinion of other scholars like George G. Fox, who maintain that "Gower's mind is almost completely
non-speculative. However, Gower's juggling of the courtly and Christian codes is frequently accomplished by the clever use of scholastic distinctions and Platonic concepts. Although this dissertation is primarily an internal study of the poem itself, I hope to show the immediate sources of these philosophical notions.

Using these two chapters as a background, I will then study the problem of the conflict of courtly love and Christian morality. W. G. Dodd's discussion of this problem in Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower uses what I consider to be an acceptable procedure, but provides only sketchy evidence. My final chapter involves the careful study of the transitions between the stories and the frame, and especially the application of the stories to the genus/vice and the species/love. In addition it will consider the consistent principle by which Gower deviates both from his sources and from his own plan (i.e., the numerous digressions in the frame story, so often deplored by Gower's literary critics). The unusual mixture of praise and blame which critics have for Gower in this regard is an indication that he is still not fully appreciated or understood. Most critics praise the poet for having the narrative skill to streamline and improve upon his sources; but at the same time they do not see this skill operating in the so-called digressions of the frame story. However, it seems clear that the same skill is operative in reconciling the natural contradictions between the two social-religious systems which Gower presents in the form of a lover's confession.
FOOTNOTES FOR THE INTRODUCTION


3 I am suggesting that the study of George R. Coffman, "John Gower in His Most Significant Role," in Elizabethan Studies... in Honor of George F. Reynolds (Boulder, Colorado: Colorado University Press, 1945) could be extended to show that Gower was a courtier.

4 G. C. Macaulay, The English Works of John Gower, EETS (London: Oxford University Press, 1901), I, x. All citations from the Confessio are taken from Macaulay's text and references hereafter will be found in the text of the dissertation.


CHAPTER I
THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The form-consciousness of the medieval mind has been demonstrated fully by historians of both philosophy and literature. In the business of architectonics, John Gower ranks with Dante as one of the most schematic poets of his age. The Mirour de l'Ommme is a very clear example. There, Gower uses the seven deadly sins and the five daughters of each to construct a perfectly symmetrical thirty-five part poem. In absolutely regular genealogical fashion he proceeds to describe sin's family tree. Critics of the Confessio, in the light of this earlier poem, have tended to gloss over the unevenness of the seven-deadly-sin framework in the Confessio, failing to realize that there is a much broader conceptual framework which governs the whole poem. This framework is based on a metaphysical hylomorphic theory contained explicitly in the Prologue and documented in the stories throughout the poem. The seven deadly sins in the Confessio (actually six, since lechery is not fully treated) do form a convenient overall method of organization; but the framework falls down repeatedly because of the exigencies of the dialogue, which call for redefinitions, digressions, and interruptions. The larger conceptual framework, however, does not disintegrate, but remains constant throughout the poem.
The larger framework is grounded on Gower's metaphysical notions of transformation and opposition. From them are derived Gower's cosmology and his ideas about the nature of man and of man's moral obligations. There can be no doubt that Gower's trilogy and even the Confessio by itself constitute a kind of personal summa moralis; but it would be a treacherous omission to consider the poem apart from the larger framework of knowledge which it sets forth. I hope to show that Gower's philosophy is not entirely consistent with the traditional medieval view, and that Gower was, to some extent, an original thinker in spite of the fact that he was highly eclectic.

Metaphysics in the Confessio

The twentieth-century man who after all learns readily to deal with involved concepts like "the average annual after-tax-dollar advantage" can begin to understand the importance of metaphysics to the medieval scholar by taking one look at any chapter of medieval philosophy or theology. The basic units of exchange there are concepts like essence and existence, potency and act, substance and accident, and matter and form. Practically no discussion in medieval philosophy or theology can be found which does not boil down to these fundamental Aristotelian distinctions. Everyone accepted the hylomorphic view of the universe, although there was plenty of argument about the application of these terms to reality. In particular this was the case in Gower's country and century, when
William of Ockham began to contest the extent to which some of these ideas and their sub-distinctions were valid. His principle of economy—known as Ockham's razor—entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem was employed to eliminate all the unnecessary and unobservable entities which philosophers, mostly scholastic, had created to explain reality. He denied, therefore, the existence of real relations, of time as an absolute (in his scheme it signifies motion only), and so forth. As Frederick Copleston remarks, "his tendency was always toward simplification of our view of the universe."²

Gower also shows a strong tendency toward simplification, but not to the extent that he would eliminate unobservable concepts and deal only with empirical reality. Actually he saw all of the conceptual framework as governed by a very simple plus/minus, good/evil binary system. In this recognition of the real world as a combination of opposites, he belongs to the Platonic tradition. He relies strongly, therefore, on the concepts of matter and form to explain this basic antithetical nature of existence; and the notion of transformation fits quite neatly into this scheme since in the Platonic mode things often turn into their opposites.

The Platonic Tradition

As I have mentioned before, Gower was probably indebted for his style to the School of Chartres, but ultimately the ideas of the poem with regard to transformation and opposition are Platonic or
at least Neo-platonic. The best summary of what I think is Gower's metaphysical-cosmological view appears in Copleston's description of the philosophy of Paracelsus. According to this sixteenth-century Swiss-born alchemist, philosophy is the study of Nature; theology, the study of God. Nature is the self-revelation of God. She was originally present in God; "and the process by which the world is built up is one of differentiation, that is, of the production of distinctions and oppositions. We come to know only in terms of oppositions... The term of the world's development will be the absolute division between good and evil, which will constitute the last judgment."

Paracelsus was in consonance with and probably dependent upon Nicholas of Cusa for the idea that creation is accomplished by differentiation and opposition. Cusanus's theology is based on the idea that God is a "coincidentia oppositorum," "omnia complicans," a synthesis of opposites which is therefore unknowable. It is not my place here to trace the historical development of this idea, but I think a return to the two ultimate sources should help satisfy the reader that Gower occupies an important place in the undercurrent of Platonic doctrine during the Middle Ages.

The first place to be recalled is the seminal text in I Corinthians 15:28 upon which John Scotus Eriugena based his De Divisione Naturae:

Omnia subiecta sunt ei, sine dubio praeter eum qui subiecit ei omnia; Cum autem subiecta fuerint illi omnia, tunc et ipse Filius subiectus erit ei qui subiecit sibi omnia, ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus;
This text might also be taken together with Colossians 1:19ff:

quia in ipso complacuit omnem plenitudinem
inhabitare, et per eum reconciliare omnia
in ipsum, pacificans per sanguinem crucis
eius, sive quae in terris, sive quae in caelis
sunt.

These texts became popular among Neo-platonists because they fit well with the Platonic cosmology set forth in the Timaeus. The Timaeus is one of the few Platonic dialogues fully available to the Middle Ages, probably because it fully accords with the Genesis account and with the Old Testament history in general, including Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue and Daniel's interpretation of it:

The Timaeus is an atypical Platonic dialogue which boils down to a Pythagorean philosopher's explanation of the creation of man and the world using the opposing four elements. In the key passage concerning man, Timaeus describes how God, after he had created the soul of the universe and the gods to inhabit it, turned over to them the business of creation of the rest, telling them "to interweave the mortal with the immortal." Then putting the remains of the elements which he used in fashioning the world-soul at their disposal (the elements were then no longer pure), he fashioned the souls for the stars and for man to be implanted in bodies governed by certain laws of mutation and transformation, and then handed over the creation of these bodies to the lesser gods. The uniting of souls to bodies causes passions and the result is likened by Timaeus to a man who has been tumbled upside-down:
And they did in fact at that time create a very great and mighty movement; uniting with the ever-flowing stream in stirring up and violently shaking the courses of the soul, they completely stopped the revolution of the same by their opposing current . . . these were twisted by them in all sorts of ways, and the circles were broken and disordered in every possible way, so that when they moved they were tumbling to pieces and moved irrationally, at one time in a reverse direction, and then again obliquely, and then upside down, as you might imagine a person who is upside down and has his head leaning upon the ground and his feet up against something in the air, and when he is in such a position, both he and the spectator fancy that the right of either is his left, and the left right. (43d)

It should be noted at this point that only by the use of reason, or the mirror, can a man in such a position see himself, as he is—thus the importance of the mirror in the whole of the medieval speculum tradition, but especially in the poetry of the Charters and the ending of the Confessio Amantis.

The emphasis in the Timaeus is on the deterioration which takes place when the four elements (themselves subject to numerous transformations Timaeus, 49b, c), being mixed and mingled, offset the divine harmony and balance and cause creatures to divide and fall and become confused. In one place Timaeus likens the transitoriness and mutability of the elements to the winnowing process:

By the motion of the vessel, the elements were divided, and like grain winnowed by fans, the close and heavy particles settled in one place . . . (52e)

Although this is a very common metaphor likely to be found anywhere, it does recur in Gower’s Prologue when he is speaking of the divisions of the Roman Empire (1/844) and elsewhere in the poem.
A second significant parallel in the *Timaeus* occurs at the end of the treatise when, after describing the warring nature of man's psychological makeup, Timaeus goes on to speak of the other animals:

Of the men who came into the world, those who were cowards or led unrighteous lives may with reason be supposed to have changed into the nature of women in the second generation. And this was the reason why at that time the gods created in us the desire of sexual intercourse, contriving in man one animated substance, and in woman another, which they formed, respectively, in the following manner. [There follows a lengthy description of how the male and female genitals were formed.] Wherefore also in men the organ of generation becoming rebellious and masterful, like an animal disobedient to reason, and maddened with the sting of lust, seeks to gain absolute sway, and the same is the case with the so-called womb or matrix of women. The animal within them is desirous of procreating children . . . (91)

The cause for this transformation from man to woman (labelled here as cowardice and unrighteousness) is explained earlier by Timaeus when he is speaking of the passions of men, which form a group of opposites like love and hate, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow:

If they conquered these [the passions] they would live righteously, and if they were conquered by them, unrighteously. He who lived well during his appointed time was to return and dwell in his native star, and there he would have a blessed and congenial existence. But if he failed in attaining this, at the second birth he would pass into a woman, and if, when in that state of being, he did not desist from evil, he would continually be changed into some brute who resembled him in the evil nature which he had acquired, and would not cease from his toils and transformations until he helped the revolution of the same and like in him to draw in its train the turbulent mob of later accretions made up of fire and air and water and earth . . . (42b,c)
An important notion here is that of the immortals as transformers. This role in the Middle Ages belonged primarily to Nature. Averroes was the first to speak of Natura naturans and Natura naturata, according to the distinction already cited in Paracelsus and which Gower uses in his first Latin headnote of Book One and throughout the poem, as I shall later show. Natura naturata is the basis for the allegorical figure in the Anticlaudianus of Alanus de Insulis and forms part of the complex figure who appears in Jean de Meun's portion of the Roman de la Rose.

Another document of the Platonic tradition is also significant for the transmission of the ideas of transformation and opposition; it is Proclus's commentary on Plato's Parmenides. The Parmenides itself is of little consequence for my purposes. It is an elaborate logical argument proving that if a statement is true, its contradictory is also true. For example, a thing can be one and many at the same time; therefore, oneness both exists and does not exist, and so forth *ad absurdum*. By a stretch of the imagination, this might be "coincidentia oppositorum" in the noumenal sphere, but actually there is no discussion in the Parmenides of the divisions, transformations, and oppositions of creation.

One reference in the work, however, jogs the associative imagination. Parmenides, who is about to engage in a very long and difficult dissertation, likens himself to Ibycus, the Greek poet:

\[
\text{Parmenides replied, I cannot refuse, although I feel like the old race horse in Ibycus, who trembles at the start of the chariot race, knowing from long experience what is in store.}
\]
for him. The poet compares his own reluctance on finding himself, so late in life, forced into the lists of love . . . (137a)

One cannot but wonder if Gower, familiar with the reference here or somewhere else in classical literature, might not have gotten the idea for his own role in the frame story of the Confessio from the plight of Ibycus.

However, it is Proclus's commentary on the Parmenides which concerns us more directly. This expansion of Plato's dialogue was transmitted to the Western world chiefly through the popular Latin translation by William of Moerbeke, with which Gower most certainly could have come in contact directly, if not indirectly, through the School of Chartres, Dionysius the Areopagite, or John Scotus Eriugena. At any rate, as Klibansky has pointed out, the idea for the "coincidentia oppositorum" comes originally from Proclus's commentary on the Parmenides. "The Latinized Proclus," he says, "was thus of marked influence on the conception of Platonism and gave rise to some fundamental concepts of modern philosophy, such as Cusanus' and Bruno's doctrine of the 'coincidentia oppositorum.'"

With this brief introduction to the Platonic tradition from which Gower was working, it should be profitable to examine the poem itself for evidence of the use of the concepts of transformation and opposition.

Transformation and Opposition

Gower's use of transformations in the stories is readily apparent to those readers familiar with Ovid's Metamorphoses, because no
less than twenty-two of the tales which the confessor tells are ultimately derived from that Latin poem about divinely instigated transformations. No other piece of literature has nearly as many representatives among Gower's tales in the *Confessio*. Although it is possible to assume that the use of transformation in the poem is an accidental by-product of Gower's use of his most familiar and readily available source, still I think the fact that thirty-five of the non-Ovidian stories also contain transformations of one kind or another leads one to suspect that Gower used the *Metamorphoses* out of a conscious desire to present examples of changes of form.

Another way to justify the same conclusion is to study what I will call the key stories. On the basis of length, position in the structure of the books of the poem, and quality of narrative, I would characterize sixteen tales as central to the poem as a whole:

1) Nebuchadnezzar's Dream, 0/585-684
2) The Tale of Florent, 1/1407-1861
3) Nebuchadnezzar's Punishment, 1/2785-3042
4) The Tale of Constance, 2/567-1598
5) Pope Boniface, 2/2803-3084
6) The Tale of Canace and Machaire, 3/143-336
7) The Tale of Rosiphelee, 4/1245-1446
8) The Tale of Iphis and Araxarathen, 4/3515-3684
9) The Tale of Midas, 5/141-332
10) The Tale of Jason and Medea, 5/3247-4229
11) The Tale of Theseus and Ariadne, 5/5231-5495
12) The Tale of Tereus, 5/5551-6047
13) The Tale of Nectanabus, 6/1789-2366
14) Ahab and Micaiah, 7/2527-2694
15) Tarquin and Lucrece, 7/4593-5130

Fourteen of these are transformation stories: five from the Metamorphoses, one from Ovid's Fasti, and eight from a variety of non-Ovidian sources. Only two of the key tales do not involve metamorphosis at all. If one eliminates the minor allusions and insignificant tales merely adduced by Gower in support of other stories or in haste to introduce the larger tales, then the number of tales of transformation is nearly three out of four.

The most important story in the entire poem is told in the Prologue and is only forty lines long. However, as Fisher and others have pointed out, it links the last book of the Vox Clamantis with the first book of the Confessio--because Gower tells the tale in both places--and it governs the philosophy of the poem as a whole. This biblical story describes the transformation of the world (the verbs used are torne and wende, 1/591) in symbolic fashion. By the use of the microcosmic figure for the macrocosm, the ages of the pagan world are depicted as corresponding to the golden head, silver chest, brass mid-section, steel legs, and feet of clay and steel which belong to the statue seen in a dream by the Babylonian king. The symbolism of the dream is explained first by Daniel and then by Gower himself. In the dream, the statue is finally transformed into powder when God
hurls a stone at it. Gower explains that the five ages of pagan history are Nebuchadnezzar's golden Babylon, the Persian Kingdom under Cyrus, the Greek hegemony under Alexander, Caesar's Roman Empire, and the Carolingian era. In each case, after a glorious start the death of the great leader brought about the dissolution of the glorious kingdom and division prevailed among the people. The division of the body of the statue into legs and the obvious devolution from gold to elemental clay show that the world is reaching its appointed inglorious end and is indeed about to be destroyed:

Thapostel writ unto ous alle  
And seith that upon ous is falle  
Thende of the world; so may we knowe,  
This ymage is nyh overthrowe,  
De whiche this world was signified,  
That whilom was so magnefied,  
And now is old and fieble and vil,  
Full of meschief and of peril,  
And stant divided ek also  
Lich to the feet that were so,  
As I tolde of the Statue above. (0/881-891)

The world, in Gower's eyes at least, has been transformed or almost overthrown and now is nothing more than an old man, weak and base.

This biblical key story is supported by an exemplum drawn from Ovid's *Fasti*, II, 83, wherein Gower wishes (out loud) that the world now had a musician-magician like Arion to transform all the evil to good, to make peace out of hate and reason out of rage, just as Arion used to transform animals which are natural enemies (opposites) into peaceful cohabitants of the world. 10

The first book of the *Confessio* has a very clear and simple two-part structure: 11
Section Number  | Content
---|---

**FIRST PART**

i | Purpose—to tell of love (lines 1-92)

ii | Vision of Venus, introduction of Genius (93-202)

iii | Genius explains modus agendi (203-288)

iv | Sins of seeing and of hearing, two stories apiece (289-574)

v | Hypocrisy, two stories (575-1234)

vi | In obedience and two attendants (1235-1342)

vii | TALE OF FLORENT (1343-1882)

**SECOND PART**

viii | Surquidry, three tales (1883-2398)

ix | Avantance (2399-2680), one tale

x | Vain glory (2681-2784)

xi | NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S PUNISHMENT (2785-3066)

xii | Humility, one tale (3067-3446).

Gower starts the first book by discussing again the purpose of the work—to treat somewhat of lust and somewhat of lore—and giving the vision of Venus and Genius which opens up the dramatic framework to be treated in Chapter Two. Before proceeding into the first deadly sin, Genius decides to discuss the custody of the two most important senses. In connection with seeing and hearing he tells a cluster of four short and simple exempla. The first two are Ovidian and involve transformation (Acteon is changed into a hart and Perseus by divine aid alone barely escapes being transformed into a stone by Gorgon). The second two exempla are non-Ovidian and transformation is not a clear motif except that Aspidis, the snake, wisely avoids the theft of his precious stone, the carbuncle, which would amount to
a transformation of his nature (loss of glory) and Ulysses' men by his wisdom are saved from death, a definite transformation in Gower's eyes, as I shall show later.

Genius then proceeds to describe the first branch of Pride, namely Hypocrisy, with two major tales; both non-Ovidian and yet both demonstrating further kinds of transformation found frequently throughout the poem. In the first tale Mundus disguises himself as the god Anubus in order to sleep with Paulina and help her become pregnant. In the second story, Gower describes the trick of the Trojan horse which brought about the fall of Troy. Both of these devices and both of these outcomes involve the element of transformation: man→god, men→horse, birth, city→ruins. In addition, Gower gives in the story of Mundus and Paulina the first example of his extensive practice of describing human behavior in animal imagery, when he speaks of Mundus as a stalking beast (l.910).

Gower's Tale of Florent is the first key tale in the poem proper. 454 lines long, it stands alone in section vii, the only tale in illustration of Inobedience. It also stands at the approximate half-way point in the first book. It is a story of opposites, youth and old age, day and night, told in a marvelous narrative style worthy to stand by the other treatment in Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale. The crux of the story is the alternative—which grows out of the lady's transformation—of having a beautiful lover and an ugly wife, or vice versa. Chaucer drops the feature of the hag's earlier transformation and changes the alternatives to eliminate the
day/night dichotomy. Without here dealing at length with the relation between the two tales and with their common sources, I think it safe to conclude that Gower chose the tale for the sake of the very features of transformation and opposition in the source which Chaucer, with a different purpose, found superfluous.

The second half of Book One follows the same format as the first half. It treats the last three branches of Pride with a cluster of three tales for Surquidry, a single story for Avantance, and a single key tale for Vain Glory, which is again isolated by itself in section xi. The Tale of Capaneus in the eighth section is from Statius and shows that the punishment for refusing to pray to the gods is to be struck from heaven by fiery thunder and "to pouldre smot" (l/2003), a transformation reminiscent of the key tale of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and of the destruction of the statue by the stone. In the second tale of this cluster, Gower reminds his readers that death itself is a transformation, in a tale entitled The Trump of Death. In this story a wise king sees two very old pilgrims begging at the roadside, and he ministers to them because he sees in them the image of his own divinely-ordained death. The Philosophy behind the story is simply seen in the description of the two old pilgrims:

Ther was of kinde bot a lite,
That thei ne semen fulli dede. (2046-47)

Death, the king explains, is nature's law (2231); a scholastic would call it the divinely instigated natural transformation of all matter. The third tale of the cluster comes from the Roman de la Rose and features the death by suicide of the unfortunate sinner who smites
his own head against a rock. The nymphs bury him and out of his grave grow winterblooming flowers. This tale will prove important for the poet's themes concerning nature and law; but one can also see the transformation into flowers and the emphasis on death which form a part of the present scheme.

The Tale of Alboin and Rosemund is likewise a story of death and punishment by death. Alboin takes the skull of his defeated enemy Gurmond and makes it into a victory cup. At the same time he takes Gurmond's daughter Rosemund to be his queen. The transformation of the skull into the cup comes back to haunt the king, however, when one day in a drunken boast he tells Rosemund what she has been drinking out of. She fitly poisons him in revenge.

The key tale, however, in this second half of Book I, is again about Nebuchadnezzar and another dream, this time of a tree. The story makes a link with the Prologue and brings the entire first book to a climax. It involves both a key transformation and the expression of it in terms of oppositions reminiscent of the Prologue.

And thus was he from his kingdom
Into the wilde Forest drawe,
Wher that the myhti goddes lawe
Thurgh his pouer dede him transforms
Fro man into a bestes forme;
And lich an Oxe under the fot
He graseth, as he nedes mot,
To geten him his lives fode,
Tho thoghte him colde grases goode,
That whilom eet the hote spices,
Thus was he torned fro delices:
The wyn which he was wont to drinke
He tok thanne of the welles brinke
Or of the pet or of the slowh,
It thoghte him thanne good ynowh:
In stede of chambres wel arraised
He was thanne of a buissh wel paied,
The harde ground he lay upon,
For othre pilwes hath he non;
The stormes and the Reines falle,
The wyndes blowe upon him alle,
He was tormented day and nyht,
Such was the hihe goddes nyht,
Til sevne yer an ende toke.  (l/2968-2991)

These lines comprise some of Gower's most powerful poetry and recall to mind the laments in Anglo-Saxon poetry which contrast former grandeur with present ruins. At the end of the story the king repents and is restored to glory in a way which makes us realize that one of the most noble forms of transformation is the ekstasis of a Troilus or a Dante. Whether one is caught up to the stars or reduced to a lower element, getting out of one's nature is often enlightening and salvific, as long as the transformation is not permanent and a return is possible.

The final story in the first book is an exemplum told in connection with the remedy for Pride, Humility. In it the daughter of a simple knight, by the use of wisdom in answering three questions, is elevated (and to that extent transformed) to the rank of earl's daughter and king's wife. It is one of a substantial group of stories where the successful accomplishment of a test produces a reward which involves transformation.

The second book is structurally very simple and unencumbered. It has six sections, one for each branch of Envy and a sixth for the remedy, Charity. The key tales come at the same points in the structure as they did in book one (in connection with the third and fifth sins), and there otherwise is also just one tale per section. Sorrow
for Another's Joy is illustrated by the Ovidian tale of Acis and Galatea. To the Ovidian transformation already in the story (Acis, as a reward after his death, is turned into a well-spring with fresh streams), Gower adds a feature of his own when he describes the envious Polyphemus as "a fyre/Which fleth out of a myhti bowe" (1/150-1). The same sinner is also later described as "a bere" and "a wilde beste." The emphasis in Ovid's tale is on Acis and the change which took place in him; Gower, however, makes Polyphemus (a Cyclops in Ovid) into a quasi-courtier who becomes monstrous in his behavior as a result of the sin.

The key tale in the first half of the second book is another Chaucer analogue, the Tale of Constance. It would be wrong to say that the story is basically a tale of transformation. Nevertheless, there are many conversions to the Christian faith in the story. In addition, letters get altered and thereby the unstable wheel of fortune goes up and down. The theme of the story involves a kind of opposition in that backbiting is seen to bite back. Elda's love turns to hate when it is rejected. Still, the story which follows this tale and is thus directly linked to it by the framework both operates as a commentary on the Constance legend and involves transformations. According to Macaulay, Gower drew upon three different non-Ovidian sources to construct this tale of Demetrius and Perseus. He deliberately manipulates his materials to emphasize the metamorphosis of Perseus into a dog. At the beginning of the story he makes backbiting equivalent to the barking of a dog. Later there is the omen
of the dying dog by which Demetrius knows he will conquer Perseus. And at the end Perseus is described in prison as a dog in a cage. In addition to this transformation, Gower takes pains to show that as a result of Perseus’s animal behavior (with parallels aplenty in Lear), "the lond was torned up so doun" (1/1744). The country was transformed, that is, because the wheel of fortune turned and left the country standing on its head.

The second half of the second book has less evidence of transformation and opposition. In the Tale of Hercules and Deianira transvestism is used as a disguise to avoid revenge; and in the Tale of the False Bachelor a knight is transformed by love into a courageous lion (1/2590), not courageous enough however to keep his false bachelor from usurping his rightful place as spouse of the princess and ruler of Persia. This change of status in society by illegal means, told under the sin of Supplantation, is part of the three-story cluster which shows transformations of the same kind in three different societies. In the last tale of the three (a key tale) Pope Boniface usurps the papacy from Celestine and Gower describes his action in both the poem and the Latin sidenotes as animalistic:

Intrasti ut vulpis,
regnasti ut leo, et
mortuus es ut canis.

By this point it has become quite clear that Gower liked to link his stories together by verbal and dramatic echoes even beyond the unity he created by the conceptual framework. The last story in this book links well with all the rest of the stories in Book Two. It presents the conversion of Constantine as a kind of cleansing from
leprosy. Then it goes on to describe, in an echo of the Prologue, how the Donation of Constantine caused the mingling of the temporal with the spiritual power in the Church and led to the present divisions.

In Book Three Gower's rigid adherence to the original five-part structure begins to break down in the second half of the book where the fourth sin, Contek, is subdivided, and where the discussion of Homicide leads to digressions on lawful self-defense, warfare, and the Crusades.

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<th>Section Number</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>ii</td>
<td>Cheste, four tales (417-842)</td>
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<td>iii</td>
<td>Hate, one story (843-1088)</td>
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<tr>
<td>iv</td>
<td>Contek, under which come Danger, Foolhaste, Suicide, four stories in all; Homicide, lawful as well as unlawful, one story (1089-2250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>Evils of War, one story Crusades, one tale Mercy, the remedy for Wrath, one story (2251-2774).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This obvious disintegration of the organization of the poem persists and, as Donald Schueler has pointed out, gets progressively worse until the structure of the poem completely dissolves. It seems to me that the poem itself is a paradigm of the deterioration of man and his endeavors, and like the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream begins
to crumble and in the end turns to powder. Actually, as Genius gets more and more digressive, most of the stories get more and more political or historical in nature; consequently they are shorter and place less emphasis on transformation and opposition. The key tales, however, keep the themes of transformation and opposition before the reader's mind. I will here curtail the book-by-book discussion of transformations and oppositions in order instead to summarize the data and make a more hasty conclusion.

It is obvious that in talking about transformations I have not been using the term univocally. There are, indeed, several kinds of transformations to be dealt with. By far the greatest number of cases involves changes in position or the Great Chain of Being (I count thirty-seven instances). Most of these are transmutations of men to animals; but Ovid accounts for only half of them. There are four transformations from man to element, four from man to vegetable, two from element to element, and one case of the transformation of a statue to a man.

Parallel to this mobility up and down the chain of being is the social mobility in the Cinderella and Shaggy-dog stories where the humble and wise are raised to high social status and the proud are reduced to servants. There are at least eleven such stories in the Confessio. Furthermore, eight of the stories deal with transformations which involve not substantial but accidental changes. Occasionally these are equivalent to alterations in the scale of being; for example, in two cases a man disguises himself as a god and effectively
achieves his purpose. At least three times transvestism is used as a disguise to achieve some goal. The subject of changes in sex is an important one, not because these changes occur so frequently in the tales, but because they help determine the source of Gower's preoccupation with transformation.

The first occurrence of a sex-change is in reference to Tiresias, who was turned into a woman for killing two snakes in copulation. This crime is described as a sin against nature and he is punished by the gods accordingly. The implication of female inferiority, of course, would be unpopular among modern females—not to mention Alice of Bath. But Gower surely intends it. This example is from Ovid, and a second one occurs also in an Ovidian tale in Book Four. In this case a girl is brought up as a boy to avoid the wrath of her father, and is turned into a man by Cupid when she is betrothed to the beautiful Iante. The final example of sexual transformation is a figurative one given by Gower himself when he says that Sardanapulus was turned into a woman by his lust and did all the things a woman does. In other words, the behavior caused by his sin is described as leaving him lower on the scale of being, just as in dozens of other cases Gower describes the behavior of his sinners with animal imagery. All this is part of the general process of division and confusion which Gower has outlined in the Prologue.

One other important kind of transformation remains to be investigated, that is, the substantial changes between the stages of a man's life. Obviously, in a hundred tales, there are bound to be
numerous births and deaths. The suicides for love in this poem are numerous; so are the deaths inflicted out of punishment for sin. As I have noted before, death has been featured early in Book One as a kind of transformation which the reader should never forget. This is especially true because there are two key tales where a transformation from old age to youth is involved. The first we have already seen in the Tale of Florent. In that story there is actually a cycle where the young maid becomes the old hag and then, having been satisfied with the knight's submission, is allowed to revert to her youth. In the tale of Jason and Medea (5/3247ff) Gower inserts a long description (not at all essential to the main theme of the tale, which is Jason's infidelity) of how Medea restores Jason's father's youth. Gower spends several hundred lines giving in total detail all the magical potions and incantations for regaining youth and then, rather comically, he says at the end, "she did all these things and many others." There are two important points to keep in mind here, Gower's interest in alchemy is partly based on its relationship to transformation of the elements. In the case of his interest in dreams, Gower places special emphasis in the Tale of Ceix and Alceone on the visit to the cave of Sleep, where three figures are found:

The ferste of hem, so as I rede,
Was Morpheus, the whos nature
Is forto take the figure
Of what persone that him liketh,
Whereof that he fulofte entriketh
The lif which slepe schal be nyhte;
And Ithecus that other hihte,
Which hath the vois of every soun,
The chiere and the condicioun
Of every lif, what so it is:
The thridde suiende after this
Is Panthasas, which may transforme
Of every thing the rihte forme,
And change it in an other kinde. (4/3038-3051)

To Gower, knowledge of alchemy and of dreams is definitely a part of
wisdom, a simple matter of recognizing the workings of nature, espe­
cially its transformations.

The second important aspect of the changes in life between youth
and old age is that in the frame story a very significant metamorpho­
sis takes place in Gower himself, the poet-lover. There is something
of a controversy in Gower criticism over the age of the lover in the
poem; some maintain that he is revealed as old only at the end of the
poem and some show that Amans is old from the start. Much of the
argument is based on the assumption that Gower himself was old,
retired, and nearly blind when he wrote the poem. Obviously, the
older Gower actually was, the less his audience needed to be reminded
that he was too old for love. It really matters little, however, be­
cause at the end of the poem Amans, a young lover in his own mind at
least, goes into retirement with the company of Venus's court led by
Eld (Old Age). In that terribly crucial scene in the last book,
Venus anoints Amans in his wounded heart, temples, and reins; then
she presents him with a mirror and bids him look at himself. At
this point, the narrative point of view switches from Venus to Amans:

And forth withal sche tok me tho
A wonder Mirour forto holde,
In which sche bad me to beholde
And taken hiede of that I syhe;
Wherinne anon myn hertes yhe
I caste, and sikh my colour fade,
Myn yhen dymme and al unglade,
Mi chiekes thinne, and al my face
With Elde I myhte se deface,
So riveled and so wo besein,
That ther was nothing full ne plein,
I syh also myn meres hore. (8/2820-2831)

The transformation takes place right before the reader's eyes.

Whether Amans is suddenly old at this point or only comes to realize it all at once in this moment of truth before the mirror, the transformation from youth to old age is dramatically presented in these key lines of the poem. Gower follows them with some moving lines of poetry likening the age of a man to the age of the year:

I made a liknesse of miselve
Unto the sondri Monthes twelve,
Wherof the yeer in his astat
Is mad, and stant upon debat,
That lich til other non accordeth,
For who the times wel recordeth,
And thanne at Marche if he beginne,
Whan that the lusti yeer comth inne,
Til Augst be passed and Septembere,
The myhty youthe he may remembre
In whch the yeer hath his deduit
Of gras, of lef, of flour, of fruit,
Of corn and of the wyny grape.
And afterward the time is schape
To frost, to Snow, to Wind, to Rein,
Til eft that Mars be come ayein:
The Wynter wol no Somer knowe,
The grene lef is overthrowe,
The clothed erthe is thanne bare,
Despuiled is the Somerfare,
That erst was hete is thanne chele. (8/2837-2857)

As I shall show more fully below, there are several references in the poem to indicate that Amans progresses throughout the poem from late summer to autumn and finally here to full cold winter. Furthermore, it is now possible to draw the connection between Gower's philosophy and his poem. The statue of Nebuchadnezzar parallels the lifetime of Amans. Both the microcosm (Amans) and the macrococsm (for which the
statue stands) are in the winter of their days. Life involves, by
natural law, a devolution from gold to clay, from spring to winter,
and from youth to old age. The confusion and division which arise
from sin in the macrocosm are no different in the microcosm; it makes
no sense to pursue a youthful course in an old and feeble world.
This introduction of natural law and fitness is one of the chief ways
by which Gower reconciles and resolves the apparent contradictions
between the courtly and the Christian codes.

Another way whereby Gower achieves the same result is his pre­
sentation of the world and of man as a system of opposites. This is
the basic structure of the whole poem, as I have mentioned before;
but it should now be described more fully as Gower presents it in the
Prologue. It is not difficult to show that the Prologue is a summary
(and I should say a deliberate simplification) of Gower’s opera omnia.
It is a very carefully constructed piece. It has 1088 lines divided
into five sections and fourteen verse paragraphs as follows:

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<th>Lines</th>
<th>Paragraphs</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<td>584</td>
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<td>624</td>
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<td>966</td>
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<td>man—cause of evil</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>1052</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>division and debate in world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1088</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>example of Arion—conciliation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The whole of the Prologue and indeed of the poem must be read with a scorecard showing the opposing teams. For each member of the good team there is a corresponding devil on the other side in strict opposition. The basic dichotomy is announced in lines eighteen and nineteen of the following long passage, which in many ways announces an English Renaissance, albeit a reluctant one, in the same way that Boccaccio's Decameron had already done in Italy.

Bot for men sein, and soth it is,
That who that all of wisdom writ
It dulleth ofte a mannes wit
To him that schal it aldai rede,
For thilke cause, if that ye rede,
I wolde go the middel weie
And wryte a bok betwen the tweie,
Somwhat of lust, somwhat of lore,
That of the lasse or of the more
Som man mai lyke of that I wryte: (0/12-21).

In the course of the next thousand lines, here is how the contraries line up in the first three sections of the Prologue:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>evil--line number</th>
<th>good--line number</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>lust 19</td>
<td>lore 19</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>now 26</td>
<td>whilom 31</td>
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<td></td>
<td>now 56</td>
<td>in olde daies 55</td>
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<td></td>
<td>rest of 74-5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>pley 85*</td>
<td>wisdom 85*</td>
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<tr>
<td>ii</td>
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<td>justice of 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>two-faced</td>
<td>law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ther is no</td>
<td>worship of 103-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>regne 136</td>
<td>nobility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gower says in line 67 that the Prologue will be all wisdom and that the rest (line 74) will be about love, which overthrows many a wise man. Of course, the rest of the poem has plenty of wisdom; but Gower obviously looked on the Prologue as a substantial part of the poem. A Latin note which occurs in most of the manuscripts says, in Macaulay's translation:

The third book [referring to his trilogy] ... marks out the times from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar until now, in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel on the changes of the kingdoms of this world. It treats, also, in accordance with Aristotle, of the matters in which King Alexander was instructed by his discipline, both for the governance of himself and for other ends. But the chief matter of the book
is founded upon love, and the infatuated passions of lovers.

It seems clear from this description of his poem that Gower saw his work as tripartite and that he considered the Tale of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream to be of central importance. Fisher has already proven to my satisfaction that the Confessio has as one of its major purposes the education of a prince, presumably Richard II. This is clear from the second reference in the description just cited. The first part, the history of the world according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream, is a part of a much more general scheme for the education of all the people. The last section of the description, obviously, then refers to the education of the courtly lover and implies no attempt to bring courtesy in line with Christianity. It represents an external view (heavenly or objective, if you wish) of the poem in the fashion of the dichotomy in the Prologue between lust and lore. The Prologue is in a sense a palinode at the beginning.

In the second section of the Prologue Gower begins to apply the dichotomy to the three estates, beginning with the temporal rulers. Here he introduces a second kind of love, cosmic love (Empedoclean love as Fisher would have it) in contrast to hatred. Chivalry is in a decline and peace has turned into war, justice into duplicity, obedience into unbuxomness; each country deceives itself into thinking the war comes from elsewhere. In the next section Gower employs the same theme of good turning into its opposite with regard to the spiritual rule of the Church. As the Latin headnote indicates, a metamorphosis has taken place in the Church as well:
Sic prius ecclesia bina virtute polita
Nunc magis incultâ palæt utrâque viâ.
Pacificam Petri vaginam mucro resumens
Horrút ad Christi verba cruoris iter;
Nunc tamen asiduo gladium de sanguine tinctum
Vibrat avarícia, lege tepente sacra.
Sic lupus est pastor, pater hostis, mors miserator
Predoque largitor, pax et in orbe timor. (p. 10)

The contrasts spelled out here between the past and the present in words such as prius and nunc occur in the Middle English throughout the poem—whilom/now. In addition, the lupus est pastor theme is at the heart of Gower's philosophy. The repetitive style of the Prologue with its hundreds of contrasts between the golden past and the earthen present comes from the School of Chartres and from Latin poets like Alanus de Insulis. Gower converted this element of style into a theme which governs the whole poem. Things are turning into their opposites.

In to the swerd the cherche keie
Is torned, and the holy bede
Into cursinge . . . (0/272-74)

In the fourth section Gower skips rather quickly over the tumult among the peasants to a discussion of the cause of evil, man's free will, as opposed to the influence of fortune or the constellations.18 This thesis leads Gower to tell the extra-frame story which, I believe, is meant to govern the whole poem, as Gower's own description, cited above, would seem to indicate. The Latin sidenotes (1/663) indicate that the history of the world is a history of mutationes. The changes in the material of the statue are caused by mutations of the elements, and primarily by division and mingling thereof, till finally it comes down to earth and steel, which are discordant elements.
He goes on to add that the case of the world is the case of the individual man.

Division aboven alle
Is thing which makth the world to falle
And evere hath do sith it began.
It may ferst proeve upon a man;
The which, for his complexioun
Is mad upon division
Of cold, of hot, of moist, of drye,
He mot be verray kynde dye:
For the contraire of his astat
Stant evermore in such debat,
Til that o part be overcome,
Ther may no final pes be nome.

The soul and body, he says, are also in debate as a result of the fall of Adam. This passage in the Prologue recalls some of the most powerful of Gower's lines from the Vox Clamantis:

O natura viri, duo que contraria mixta
Continet, amborum nec licet acta sequi!
Bella pudicicie camis mouet ilia voluptas;
Que sibi vult corpus, spiritus illa vetat.
O natura viri, que naturatur eodem,
Quod vitare nequit, nec licet illud agi!
O natura viri, fragilis que vim racionis
Dirimit, et bruti crimen ad instar habet! (5/201-08)

The transitoriness of the world and the weakened condition of man are expressed in endless oxymora, in ups and downs, nows and thens, tome's and wende's throughout Gower's Prologue, in the poem as a whole, and in fact in the entire trilogy.

Conclusion

This lengthy documentation of the concepts of transformation and opposition in the Confessio has been done to substantiate the plausibility of the metaphysical-cosmic view which I have been propounding, but especially to show that behind the basically Aristotelian deadly-
sin schema there lies an essentially neo-platonic world-view not previously noted by literary critics and not strictly in accordance with the mainstream of medieval metaphysics and cosmology. I am in agreement, then, with the basic thesis of Robert K. Jordan in *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1967) that the aesthetic of the medieval poet was based in large part upon a Platonic cosmology derived from the *Timaeus*; however, the passages which I have adduced from that dialogue are never mentioned by Jordan, perhaps because they had little effect on Chaucer. They did, of course, affect the poetry of John Gower considerably.

Gower's temperament and doctrine would not of themselves have led him into the camp of the Chartists; but the events of the century and the vision of doom which the poet had from his very earliest endeavors quite naturally led him to accept the Platonic view of the world as disintegrating, yet according to Christian faith as returning through that disintegration to its source in the Trinity which is Unity. In other words, Gower was led by his active life in the world to recognize the dust and to turn to a mystical view of the world which accorded with his Christian faith. Although his greatest poem seems to be based on an Aristotelian and scholastic moral theology of the virtues, it still sits comfortably in that parallel and subordinate Platonic, mystical tradition which the Renaissance, especially in Italy, soon would exalt.
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER I


3 Copleston, III, 267.

4 Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., The Collected Dialogues of Plato (New York: Pantheon, 1961). Hereafter all references to Plato will be given in the text of the dissertation with the standard reference to sections rather than pages, as in this case 41d.

5 I have not made a thorough search, but I have consulted the obvious indices without result.


7 First of all, Gower probably used medieval moralizations of Ovid rather than Ovid himself. Secondly, the total number of tales in the Confessio varies from critic to critic, depending on what is considered a tale and what an allusion. Some go as high as 140 tales and others as low as 106.

8 The choice of these sixteen tales is undoubtedly subjective. The judgment I have made is based primarily on the assumption that the poem was written in sixteen sections of approximately 2000 lines each.

9 Book VII has twenty-four such tales of fifty lines or less.

10 Gower has a way of presenting stories in support of other stories which is similar to the pattern one might find in a poem like Cleanness where there are three major biblical tales buttressed by several less fully told stories.

11 The early books of the Confessio readily divide in half and seem to reach something of a climax at the midpoint. They all have five sin units and one virtue unit, so that the natural dividing point comes after the third sin.
12 Occasionally Gower puts four such minor exempla together and makes them function as a unit in place of one larger tale, e.g., a cluster of four tales for mislokor and "mishear" forms one complete sermon in Book One.

13 For the purposes of this paper, a major tale is one of substantial length, always more than 100 lines, but on the average about 200 lines.


15 I am paraphrasing lines 4095-6 of Book Five.


17 This trick, as I have already shown, comes from the Platonic tradition.

18 This theme is frequently set forth in the poetry of Alanus de Insulis and the Roman de la Rose.

19 Klubansky in outlining the Platonic tradition in the Middle Ages skips from Chartres to Cusanus without mention of Gower.
CHAPTER II

LOVE: A NEW KIND OF DEFINITION

Nobody knows what Gower, the doctor verboaus, would have said about the technological accomplishment of a computerized concordance to his 35,000 lines of poetry; but anyone attempting to work out definitions of key terms like love and lust has to appreciate it. The widespread availability and use of literary concordances is undoubtedly going to bring about certain new critical techniques. The chief of these, as I see it, is going to be a new kind of definition by association, a kind of literary associogram which could transform Gower and Shakespeare and Milton into Joyce. The next step, in other words, beyond the literary concordance is the literary thesaurus—the words of an entire author or work in relation to other words along with the frequency of their associations. It will be possible to define kinds of relationships—synonymy, antinomy, mere proximity—and to measure their frequency mechanically. The United States Government has already begun to develop a computer program for the production of synopses of its myriad of documents. The substance of this computer program developed by Christine Montgomery is a thesaurus or at least words organized according to their part of speech and the branches of meaning as in a family tree. I have not had the use of such a program (nor for that matter have I had the use of the
entire concordance; see acknowledgements); but I have done my best to develop a technique for rendering such a definition by taking the term love in connection with many other key concepts in the *Confessio*.

When a sociologist makes a sociogram, he asks his subjects to answer a question of choice, "If you were going to work, who would you take with you from our group and who would you exclude?" By technique amounts to asking Gower the same kind of question in the context of a discussion of love; "If you were going to play, John, what words would you choose to take along?" I am, of course, primarily interested in concepts or abstractions. The sociologist takes his positive responses and plots a chart, on which the indications of mutual choice point out the cliques in his group. In addition, if he cleverly asks for negative choices, he can find out where animosities are mutual and where someone is trying unsuccessfully to penetrate a clique. There are cliques in Gower's vocabulary which can be discerned by a similar technique. This kind of investigation shows which debates (mutually exclusive terms) are already settled (dead debates like dead metaphors) and which are growing within the poem. It measures ambivalences in language (especially double entendres) by indicating that sometimes the particular meaning of the word is chosen and sometimes rejected (e.g. Gower's use of the term *pentilesse*). It also measures ambivalence by throwing together otherwise far-flung and unnoticed antagonisms (foolhaste in opposition to sloth, for example). Then there are the advantages of omission. While fortune is an essential concept in Gower's philosophy, there is little evidence for the terms
adversity and prosperity, which are so crucial in contemporary poetry and especially in Chaucer. Then too there are the modern concepts associated with love for which no medieval tags exist (guilt, feelings, orgasm, impotence, etc.). A realization of what is omitted produces insights into our modern preconceptions about the medieval mind or at least Gower's.

Obviously, this quantitative approach has its limitations. If the critic relies entirely on frequency counts, then his judgment about the importance of the concept division will not be satisfactory. Words can have emphasis in the same way that vowels can be long—by quantity and by position. In other words, not all themes and concepts are made explicit in a poem. In addition, where the poet is constructing rhymed couplets, it is essential to discover whether associations are produced merely because of rhyme or whether the rhyme begins a heuristic process, creating an association which the author realized as just and valuable (as is the case with Gower's use of the rhyme of evidence with conscience).

Fortunately, Gower's sin framework allows the reader to see readily the connections his mind makes between the concept of love and the forty-eight different vices and virtues he chooses to discuss. There are, however, at least a hundred other concepts of equal importance which recur time and again when Gower speaks of love. These concepts do not have a traditional arrangement such as the seven sins and their branches, but a careful study of the key concepts will show a kind of hierarchy of terminology. For example, in studying
Petrarch's statements in his letters about poetry, I once discovered that poetry fits into a program of salvation beginning with eloquence, leading to wisdom, which produces virtue, which leads to God. It is very important to uncover such value systems in individual authors and especially in philosophers (literary or otherwise) when they are not made obvious by the design of the work or the labels of chapter headings. It is possible as well that the value system so discovered was beyond the consciousness of the author himself—in the same way that members of a clique might not realize that they all choose each other and exclude the rest. There is also the danger that where no real value system is present the critic may create one. Nevertheless, the potential for such mechanically assisted measurements of word associations is great, especially for literary critics with psychoanalytic tendencies. I have for the moment eschewed this last approach for the sake of establishing first the legitimacy of this technique for literary and philosophical analysis. For this reason I have divided my materials into three basic disciplines—cosmology, psychology, and ethics.

Love as a Cosmic Force

Love in Gower's poetry is a cosmological force. In the Latin lines opening the first book of the Confessio, Gower refers to amor as the mundi Principis. He evidently conceives of love as related to or coterminous with Nature, because he talks of naturatus amor, adapting the Averroistic distinction, already mentioned above, between
God in himself (*Natura naturans*) and God as he reveals himself to us in his creation (*Natura naturata*). Thus to Gower God is love and the world as the manifestation of a loving God is designated as *amor naturatus*. Love is a mixture of opposites, and so is the world. The key terms in association with the concept of love as a world force are *fortune* (wheel, speed, wheel and wo, win and lose, spill, increase and decrease), *nature* (kinde, creature), and *world* (earth, mundus, below the moon). Of these key concepts the chief would seem to be *fortune*.

**Fortune**

The wheel of fortune, thanks to Boethius, was one of the great consolations for the troubled medieval man. By the time the concept reached John Gower and the fourteenth century, however, it had become so commonplace and such a dead metaphor that it is difficult for the modern critic to discern when the concept is really operative and when it simply fills out the poet's lines. When Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Clerk's Tale* designs the physical structure of his poetry to picture the ups and downs of the protagonist's fortunes, then it is safe to say that the Boethian influence is definitely still shaping the events of the poem. But how truly can that be said of the *Confessio Amantis*?

One measure of the importance of fortune is the frequency and distribution of its occurrence throughout Gower's poem. The concept appears well over 100 times by Gower and at least ten separate times
in each of the books of the poem. In the heavy philosophizing of the Prologue it is a central concept in the explication of the sin-and-love pattern developed through the story of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream. Furthermore, it seems clear that after the first two or three references, Gower intends to revitalize the concept with the same kind of innovation which prompted his creation of Genius as the very priestly confessor in Venus's court. Fortune is not an allegorical figure for Gower in this poem; but his characterization of her should stand beside that of his mentors in the school of Chartres.

Fortune has a beautiful ambivalence to Gower which fits well into his style of oppositions and metamorphoses. Fortune can bring well or wo, now this and now that, up and down, rising and falling, speeding and spilling. Gower is very fond of the word spede, which occurs in almost every section of the poem, usually in the confessions where the poet complains that he has no speed.

For the fortune of every chance
After the goddes pourveance
To man it groweth from above,
So that the sped of every love
Is schape there, or it befalle. (6/325)

This passage is typical of the references to fortune which Gower makes passim. It also points up one of the contradictions or at least inconsistencies in his use of the concept. In another place he says that fortune grows out of the man himself. Thus the important question of determinism is another ambivalence which fits well into Gower's dramatic framework. Since fortune governs love (1/43, 69, 97, 2625, 2/29, 3/788, 4/753, 5/888, 4830), Amans is told time and again to wait
patiently for the wheel to turn in his favor, not to try to fight against it (2/2237, 5/2247) or hasten its course (3/1724). Occasionally, however, his despair must be bolstered by a constructiveness, which the confessor supplies by frequent suggestions that the lover's fortunes can be helped along by obedience (1/1859), pity (7/3257), or true love (8/2013). Furthermore, the confessor says that Fortune not only favors the virtuous, but conversely occasionally turns her favor from vices like covetousness (5/2254, 2436), foolhaste (3/1724), and lachesse (4/188). In the section on idleness the confessor takes the opposite tack and urges that Amans avoid procrastination because that merely gives fortune a chance; and once fortune takes over, there is no amending it (4/188). Later he says that fortune follows the man who pursues love (4/366; see also Demophon's bold pursuit of fortune in 4/751). Still later in the tale of the Rape of Lucrece the sinful Tarquin is made to exclaim in a wild fit that fortune favors the bold; and a marginal note calls attention to this maxim "audaces fortuna iuvat" (7/4902).

The confessor also hedges when dealing with the theme of the uncertainty of fortune. Frequently Gower and the confessor protest that no man can know his own fortune; god alone knows it (0/70, 139, 5/4803). Yet, Nebuchadnezzar discovers his fortunes in dreams (2/1792), Apollonius seeks his fortune through a vision in the temple (8/1798), and twice a strong connection between fortune and the stars is established:

This yonge lord [Philip] thanne him [Nectanabus] opposeth,
And axeth if that he supposeth
What doth he schal himselve deic,
He seith, 'Or fortune is amrie
And every sterre hath lost his wone,
Or elles of myn oghne Sone
I schal be slain, I mai noght fle.' (6/2299)

and

Beneth upon this Erthe hire
Of alle thinges the matiere,
As tellen ouz thei that ben lerned,
Of thing above it stant governed,
That is to seyn of the Planetes,
The cheles both and ek the hete,
The chances of the world also,
That we fortune clepon so,
Among the mennes nacion
Al is thurgh constellacion,
Wherof that som man hath the wele,
And som man hath deses ses fele
In love als wel as othre thinges;
The stat of realmes and of kinges
In time of pes, in time of werre
It is conceived of the Sterre: (7/633).

In both of these citations one can find a loophole to escape from the
determinism and allow that one's fortune is secure from knowledge of
the stars. The first statement comes from a story about a magician
and he is the one who professes faith in the knowledge of the stars.
The second statement is followed immediately by a retraction in which
Genius says that this is only what astronomers say, but that god says
that if we are good and wise we need not dread the stars—a mild re-
traction to be sure and followed in turn by a reference to the neces-
sity of the workings of the "lawe original, / Which he hath set in the
natures" (7/658).

The uncertainty of fortune stems, of course, from its mutability,
the fact that it never stands still (0/563, "Fortune stant no while
stille, / So hath ther noman al his ville"; 7/2393, 3/585). Once, how-
ever, the confessor talks of fortune as though it might be static. In speaking of the royal responsibility, he preaches that as the king's fortune goes, so goes the people's. The king is by station on the top of the wheel and if he has pity (7/3253) and chastity (7/4452)—and, one suspects, the other virtues as well—then the wheel will stay still for the entire nation.

It sit to every man livende
To be Pitous, hot non so wel
As to a king, which on the whiel
Fortune hath set aboven alle:
For in a king, if so belsea
That his Pite be ferme and stable,
To al the lond it is vailable  .  .  .
For the Pite of him al one
Kai al the large realme save. (7/3170)

It is difficult to see how this royal stability on the wheel of fortune can be accomplished because Gower never spells out the mechanism. However, his interesting idea about the origin of fortune and its relationship to the common good might explain his position. Twice Gower says that fortune began as a result of overpopulation. Before mankind began to increase so much in population, there were enough goods for all and everything was held in common. Then when the population increased, there was a scarcity of goods and fortune took over and the common profit was lost. There followed immediately wars and avarice and other such wonders (5/6, 7/1992). One supposes that the stable king, however, might through justice and virtue reestablish the golden age of the common profit and dissolve the effects of fortune. Even if this hypothesis does correspond to Gower's intent in these passages, it is still difficult to reconcile this possible
view with the fact that fortune is governed by natural law (2/3250). The reference to the king on the top of the wheel is probably no more than an explicit statement that fortune governs a man's estate (2/3250); for example, gentilesse is defined as the "fortune of riches" (4/2208). The king is by fortune placed on top (7/3173); therefore he is always just about to fall, especially if he cultivates vice instead of virtue.

The confessor's inconsistent use of the theme of fortune begins to bother the lover in Book Six (605), when he uses fortune as an excuse for his own weakness. Of course, one of the strongest statements of the Prologue is that sin, and not fortune, is the cause of man's woes. Amans is here reversing that thesis. His final blow to the doctrine of fortune comes at the very end of the confession when he says, in effect, "I don't know what you mean by fortune. All I know is the results I get and they are purely negative." In the mind of Amans, fortune is what you get at the end (4/1763), and he has gotten positively nothing.

For the most part we have seen how fortune works from without, governing the world (sea and wind, 2/2529, 3/998, 5/7556, 8/600), society (especially in wars and battles, 2/2597, 2610, 3/2442, 4/2179, 6/1517, 7/892), and the life cycle of a man (birth, 5/3251, 4252; love, passim; marriage, 4/474; death, 8/279, 643; inheritance, 7/3431; and estate, 2/3250). In another sense, fortune governs for Gover from within a man; that is, it fits into the microcosm as well. Amans talks of the debate of his heart and wit, along with the fortune and
estate which is inside of him (3/1136). It seems likely that Gower's definition of grace might well be the internal fortune which a man has, the natural law of the dynamic forces of his own microcosm (see 1/1887, 2/2939, and 5/5122). When Gower says in the Prologue that fortune grows out of the man himself, is he not postulating an internal fortune or balance of powers which shapes a person's world? Here is the primary passage on fortune in full:

And natheles yet som men wryte
And sein that fortune is to wyte,
And som men holde opinion
That it is constellacion,
Which causeth al that a man doth:
God wot of bothe which is soth.
The world as of his propre kynde
Was evere untrewe, and as the blynde
Inproprleich he demeth fame,
He blameth that is noght to blame.
And preiseth that is noght to preise:
Thus whan he schal the things peise,
Ther is deceipte in his balance,
And al is that the variance
Of ous, that scholde ous botro avise;
For after that we falle and rise
The world aryst and faith withal,
So that the man is overal
His oghne cause of wel and wo,
That we fortune clepe so
Out of the man himself it groweth. (0/529)

The marginal note which accompanies this passage shows that the merits and demerits of men are, by god's judgment, what cause adversity and prosperity in the world. However, the question here is not the general prosperity, but one's own. Can Amans by a balance of virtues--internal fortune--gain control over his external fortunes, especially in his love affair? It is the question of determinism again, and it seems only safe to say at this point that fortune is primarily for
Gower an external force.

Gower defines several of the vices in terms of external fortune and a man's ability to deal with it. The entire section on Murmur and Complaint (1/1348ff) is based on the premise that certain people complain even of their good fortune (1/57, 69, 80) or of the slow speed with which it arrives (1/30, 1419). This passage makes an excellent link with the Prologue where fortune is cited as a cause of evil coming out of a man. Likewise Supplantation (2/2350) is defined as the changing of places with someone higher on fortune's wheel. In addition, the sections on Covetise and its virtuous counterpart Largesse are both developed in the context of the origin of fortune as the result of overpopulation.

Although references to fortune are scattered throughout all the books and tales of the Confessio, two tales have an unusual number of references. The Tale of Apollonius of Tyre contains many references to fortune because of the incredible ups and downs of his vicissitudes. This tale is about misfortune, and therefore leads directly into the poem's final confession, where Amans complains bitterly that all his fortune is woe. The frame story begins and ends, therefore, with a strong emphasis on the poor lover's fortune.

The tale of Jupiter's two tunns is told after Amans registers a complaint that fortune has not favored him. We have already seen the confessor's strong reply that a lover's speed grows from above. The tale has the dismal fatalism to suggest that Jupiter has a good or a bad fortune for each lover. Amans can only conclude that his is a
bitter cup; and that is Venus's conclusion too in the very last use of the word fortune in the poem:

'Mi goode Sone,' tho quod sche,
'Now at this time I lieve it wel,
So goth the fortune of my whiel;
Forthi mi conseil is thou levo.' (3/2878)

It was not, obviously, the fortune for which Amans deeply yearned.

Fortune, for Gower, is the conventional wheel upon which mortals unknowingly ride to alternating heights and depths, especially in the affairs of love. However, in the body of the poem, Gower uses the conventional association to highlight the problem of free will and determinism by illustrating that fortune can often be prevented, out-run, or even overcome by recourse to such different expedients as the practice of virtue, the use of special knowledge, guile of various kinds, and prayer. Fortune also serves as a link between the macro-cosmic and the microcosmic themes of love and should probably be associated with grace as an internal force issuing from the divine and determining at least partly the workings of the soul. Gower's unusual account of the origin of fortune seems to suggest that fortune in love is necessary to the species which intends to propagate itself—the indiscriminate success of which project would produce the havoc of overpopulation. In the terms of modern economy, fortune in love is a matter of supply and demand. Everybody can't be a winner.

*Nature*

Nature (with the majuscule) as a cosmological force has been a part of western literature throughout the ages. Gower is not at all
consistent in his capitalization of the term, but he does frequently refer to a personification which corresponds fairly closely to the Nature employed by the poets of Chartres. Nature is the demiurge responsible for the physical creation and maintenance of life, especially through procreation in the act of love. The doctrine of Nature as the creative force in the physical world is contained largely in Book Seven, where Gower discusses the four elements within a tradition which goes back to Plato's Timaeus. Nature controls the balance of the four elements in creation, especially in the making of man's personality (7/456, 490), although god is responsible for the soul in man. Nature establishes the kingdom of psychological forces within man, making the stomach, for example, the cook, and other internal organs the other servants of the heart, which is king (7/478—more of this analogy in the next section on microcosmology). Gower, therefore, frequently uses the word nature to refer to the physical and living endowments of a person or living thing not including the soul (e.g., 4/256, 6/812, 7/142).

Nature's work in the composition of the elements makes her the goddess who bestows beauty both in humans (5/2594, 6735, 7/4878) and in the world (5/5916). As the "high maker of nature" she is responsible for pregnancy (2/916, 5/5238, 8/232) and thus closely associated with the divine powers of love which lead to that end, Venus and especially Cupid (3/916, 4/458 "Nature and Cupid accord," and 5/3063). A pattern of narrative emerges here whenever a man and a woman are thrown together in a situation which makes for ready lovemaking.
(e.g., scenes in bed or Adam and Eve in paradise 8/54). It is Cupid and Nature who lead the two first to kiss and then to copulate. For all practical purposes, then, this is Nature's law—sexual opposites attract, make love, and produce beautiful creatures.

Gower refers to the law of Nature frequently, but especially in situations where the fleshly lusts of nature are at work (7/4211). In the story of Canace and Machaire, the brother and sister who grew up sharing the same bed, Gower makes a special point, in attempting to exonerate them, that they were only following Nature's law (3/157) and that it was Nature who came to their bedroom and taught them to make love (3/175). Likewise, in the subordinate tale of Tiresias who smote the copulating snakes, Gower moralizes that copulation is nature's law (3/355) and nature's lore (3/367, 374) against which Tiresias sinned. Fan, the god of nature, gives man the first lore (5/1041). Nature teaches every man to muse on nature's law (4/484, 3/2224) and this law is said to be parallel to the law of peace (3/2253). The law of beasts—to copulate indiscriminately—is once labeled lechery (7/5375) and by the end of his treatise Gower has begun to maintain, in opposition to the doctrine of the first six books, that man's law is higher than beast's law (7/5375), so that man should be governed by more than his natural appetites. In other words, there are three factors to be taken into account in man's life: god, nature, and law.

The bokes speken of this vice [ingratitude],
And telle hou god of his justice,
Be weie of kinde and ek nature
And every lifissh creature,
This citation raises the question of the relationship between nature and kinde. The word kinde occurs nearly three times as often as nature (roughly 200 to 70), but that is probably attributable to the fact that kinde has other common meanings such as "birth or origin," "natural state or condition," "gender," and "a class or group or division of things." However, in Gower the word seems to be used more often for the manifestation or product of what Nature does in creating the individual than for a force which affects the entire world. Gower says, in Book Seven when he comes to speak of the divided human nature of man, that god "natureth every kinde" (7/393).

Kinde, therefore, is the naturatum, Nature is natura naturala, and god Natura naturans. All three have their laws. The law of kinde is the law within a man, the natural disposition toward certain acts. According to kinde, "a man is meniable to love" (3/391). In youth, especially, kinde "assails the corage with love" (3/153). Kinde's law, likewise given by god, is to multiply (5/6422) and kinde cannot stop "the lustes grene in gentil folk" (4/2309). There is no medicine for something which god has set in the law of kinde (1/31) and therefore such a thing may be called need, that is, "what lif doth after kinde" (3/352). Hence, Cover refers to "fraile kinde" (1/770) because it is weak against the strength of love. It is the nature of humankind to make heterosexual love (4/134, 5/3053), to produce life (5/6422, 7/4210), to love one's children (2/1331), and to save life (3/339). Conversely, certain human activities are antithetical to human kinde:
murder (3/2596), parenticide (6/1775), ingratitude (5/4846), suicide (2/369), feeding on one's own children (5/4846), ripping off one's mother's breasts (3/1920), disturbing the copulation of animals (5/4846), a king's claiming common property for his own (3/2330), loss of wit (7/4297), ungentilesse (4/389), incest (8/2017), adultery (3/1920), and finally lechery (7/4217, 8/2023). The rationale behind the last two items is important. Humankind and bestial kind differ in this respect that man does not need more than one woman "be weie of kind" (7/4217); beasts, however, serve their own kinde (7/516) and so presumably need to love more than one. It is lechery "to lust as doth a beast" (8/2023); but man's faculty of reason instructs him to love one (8/2023), his will being governed "Of reson more than of kinde" (3/1197). In man reason and nature should be in accord (2/3053).

This discussion of kinde as the manifestation in man of the divine creative force has led us prematurely into the macrocosmos; but it has helped to establish the distinction, fairly consistently maintained by Gower, between nature's law manifested in the cosmos, especially in the stars (see Book Seven, lines 1049, 1394, 1411, 1418, and 1492), and the law of kinde which governs the kingdom of a man's heart.

The World

The most important concept in the Prologue by reason of mere quantity is world. Gower uses the term some eighty-eight times, more than he does any other substantive. In the first place, the world
stands in opposition to the Church. In complaining of the Church's decline Gower points out that she has taken on "the worldes swerd" (0/242) and set her positive law to make war "For worldes good." 

Faith should heal the world (0/278); but "hevene is ferr, the world is nyh" (0/261). The Church and Christ's cause should oppose the world (0/293, 311); but it is divided and goes to the other half, i.e. the world (0/395). That is why it is a "woful world" (0/255) and "lusti to serve" (5/1974). Hence, "The worldes wave hath wolnyh dreynt / The Schip which Peter hath to stiere" (5/1070). The Church teaches that "al is bot a chirle feire / This worldes good" (0/454).

The Prologue also has many references to worlds as the ages of man's history (saecula). As I have described above in relating the story of Nebuchadnezzar's statue, Gower sees the ages of man as successive worlds—the old world of the golden age was a period of welthe and so forth (he uses the word world of each age); but now the world is changed overal, love has departed, "the world is al miswent" (0/517). In fact, the world is coming to a quick end (0/859, 883, 887). When the end comes, there will be peace, i.e. joie or juise. If you have been peaceful and loving, then you will win both worldes welthe (in another context this phrase amounts to a girl's maidenhood, 5/5745) and soule helthe (0/1051).

The chief passage in which world is equivalent to age occurs in connection with the important passage on fortune which I have already cited:

The world as of his propre kynde
Was evere untrewe, and as the lynde
Improperly he demeth fame,
He blameth that is nought to blame
And preiseth that is nought to preise:
Thus when he schal the thinges poise,
Ther is deceipte in his balance (0/535).

This passage indicates that the world is like an unfaithful lover,
and so leads one to woe. It is vain (0/560), ever upon debate (0/567),
goes up and down (0/570), and may never last (0/577). "The world
empeireth every day" (0/833) and stands "evere upon eschange" (8/2259).
There is a strong association between the world and an uneven balance
(see the lines above and also 3/14, 5/4547, 7/506, 8/3015) which
Venus controls (8/2374); "Lo, thus blindly the worlde sche diemeth / In loves cause" (8/2385).

The parallels here between love, fortune, and the world are due
to the fact that they are all temporal and mutable. Gower uses the
imagery of wheels, balances, and ships on the stormy sea for love,
for fortune, and for world. He makes Venus, Cupid, and Nature govern-
nors of the transitoriness of those concepts. All of this is done
by implication.

He furthermore very explicitly links love with the world on sev-
eral occasions. Love is princeps mundi (as was shown above) and the
world stands on love and has always stood on it (1/12). Love is the
"king sovereign / Of all the worldes governaunce" (0/186). The pur-
pose of Gower's story of love is for the world to take example by
(1/86). "I can't set the world 'al in ovene,'" Gower begins Book
One, referring to the world of the Prologue which is al misvent, "but
I can talk of love." The beloved is the world to her lover. The
poet refers to his lady as "mi world sted on an other whiel" (1/17).
Macaulay's note on this text declares that the terms *fortune* and *world* are synonymous in this instance. Similar cases occur in 1/1249, 5/3637, and 5/6745. The man who murders brings shame both to love and to the world (3/2200). The world cannot forbear the failure to bear children (4/1496). Intercourse is synonymous with *worldes joy* (7/1901), *weltthe* (5/5745), and *esse* (7/4395). Venus is called the goddess of "worldes lust" (5/1443). Every creature of the world must yield to love (4/1163) and without women to make love there would be "no worldes joie" and "no worldes fame" (7/1901, 1906).

In the Prologue a final thread embracing love and the world is the theme that man determines the state of the world. Man "fortuneth al the worldes chance" (0/524). The word *fortuneth* reminds me of the statement cited earlier that God *natureth* every kind. "Hou that this world schal torne and wende" (0/591), Gower claims before he tells the tale of Nebuchadnezzar, depends on man and his power to love. Man's love or lack of it—division—shapes the world (0/628). Man is "the lasse world," Gower says, quoting St. Gregory (0/947), so that "When this litel world mistorneth, / The grete world al overturneth" (0/957). In other words, the man in love projects on his world the fortunes of his own love affair. If a man is divided in himself, the world he sees is likewise divided. Gower, the poet of the Prologue, is therefore one whose vision is warped by the failure of his love affair. The humor of the whole confession lies in the irony of Gower's thesis that the microcosm determines the macrocosm. Furthermore, the love fortunes of all men evidently are responsible for the
shape of the objective world, as these powerful lines of the Prologue demonstrate:

For first unto the mannes heste
Was every creature ordained,
But afterward it was restreigned:
Thom that he fell, thei fallen eke,
When he waxe sick, thei woxen seke;
For as the man hath passioun
Of sensesse, in comparison
So soffren othere creatures,
Lo, first the heavenly figures,
The Sonne and Monc eclipse the bothe,
And ben with manes some wrothe;
The purest Air for Senne alofte
Wax ben and is corrupt fulofter,
Right now the hyhe wyndes blowe,
And anon after thei ben lowe,
Now clearly and now clier it is:
So ray it proeven wel be this,
A manes Senne is forto hate,
Which waketh the welle to debate.
And for so the proprote
Of every thyng in his degree,
Benethe forth among osw hire
Al stant alische in this matiere:
The Soc now ccbeth, now it flowoth,
The lond now walketh, now it growoth,
Now be the Trees with leaves grene,
Now thei be bare and nothing sene,
Now be the lusti somerFlores,
Now be the stormy wynter shoures,
Now be the daies, now the nyhtes,
So stant ther nothing al upryhtes,
Now it is lyht, now it is dork;
And thus stant al the worldes werk
After the disposicioun
Of man and his condicioun. (0/910-44)

Love as a Passion or Motion of the Heart

It is time then that the little world within a man receive our attention.

Gower's microcosmology is complex and shows some signs of develop-
opment throughout the poem. He seems to subscribe to the Platonic and scholastic tripartite division of the soul into intellect or reason, will, and sensitive appetite; but he uses such a variety of terms to refer to psychological activities that it all gets very confusing at times. Gower's microcosmology is in no way an accurate rendering of Thomistic psychology taught in the schools of Gower's day. According to Aquinas the faculties of the soul are either sensitive or intellective. The sensitive faculties are the five exterior wits (sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell) and the five interior wits (common sense, imagination, instinct, memory, and fantasy); they are faculties of the body-soul compound and disappear at death. The intellective faculties are intellect (or reason) and will; they are faculties of the soul only and remain after death.

The intellect takes hold of things or gains knowledge through the senses or wits. For example, John sees and touches five different blocks; his exterior senses are at work. His fantasy then creates a representation of the several blocks and from this the active intellect abstracts the essence, that is, eliminates the accidental qualities of size, color, shape, and so forth, so that the universal concept of blockness remains. This concept is then impressed on the intellect proper (intellectus possibile) and becomes part of John's memory or understanding of universals. This impression forms an idea and the intellect as a discursive faculty (reason is the apt term here) can begin to make judgments or predications of a practical or speculative nature about blocks (e.g. blocks are fun to bite, one
mustn't throw them, this is block qua block, etc.). Conscience, according to Aquinas, is an act of the intellect as reason, which entails a practical judgment about one's duty.

The will is an appetitive faculty of the soul. It moves or inclines toward objects and goals which are perceived through the intellect as good, or away from objects perceived as evil. It is in turn influenced by the sensitive appetites, which are called concupiscible when the movement is toward something sensed as good (the five wits at work) or irascible when the movement is to overcome a hindrance to something sensed as good. The sensitive appetites are correlative or contraries: love-hate, joy-sorrow, desire-aversion, hope-despair, fear-courage; but also anger (which has no opposite). These appetites or inclinations to move toward or away, have a physical effect on the body which is called passion.

Love, therefore, is also a passion, an undergoing of the appetency toward something sensed as good. According to Aquinas, love is the fundamental passion, that is, it comes first and is the basis or prerequisite for the other passions. Love can be of three kinds, natural, sentient, and intellectual. Reproduction or growth in any living creature is a natural appetite—such a tendency in a man might be called natural love (a tendency to have children). The sentient appetite is based on good sensations and produces a sensual love which stems from the perception of physical beauty. The intellectual appetite is based on knowledge or judgments concerning a thing and produces intellectual love or the fulfillment of a Platonic recogni-
tion of ideal natures. According to Aquinas, love seeks to possess, to bestow benefit on, and to be united with its object.

Love, however, is a simple appetency, whereas desire or concupiscence is a very strong tendency arising in the sensitive appetites of a man. Concupiscence is caused by love and tends toward pleasure and joy. Desire in man for food, drink, and propagation is called natural concupiscence; but a desire for fame, wealth or fashionable clothes, for example, is unnatural or rational concupiscence, also called cupidity. Joy is the passion which comes from the awareness of possessing what is good. Pleasure and delight, for Thomas, are terms properly applied to both animals and men; but joy can only be experienced by men, since it comes of achieving the object of rational concupiscence or desire.

The sensitive appetites can rise into the intellective order and influence the choice of the will and the operations of the intellect. Reason and will, on the other hand, can control the appetites by a political or persuasive power. The will acts in three stages—intention, election, and fruition. It can direct the mind’s attention to other objects. Reason can stir up courage or desire and can allay anger, for example, by thinking of peace. Counsel is an inquiry of the mind instigated by the will into some object of choice, a kind of senate subcommittee looking into appropriations of some kind.

Such was the system of human psychology which the medieval schools taught in Gower’s day. His terminology already seems to be largely at variance with that of Thomas. The key passage in the
Thus, for I stonde in such a wer,
I am, as who seith, out of herre;
And thus upon myself the werre
I bringe, and putte out alle pes,
That I fulooste in such a res
Am very of myn oghne lif,
So that of Contek and of strif
I am belowe and habe answered,
As ye, my fader, now have herd,
I'm herte is wonderly begon
With conseil, wherof witt is on,
Which hath reson in campaigne;
Ayein the whiche stant partie
Will, which hath hope of his acord,
Witt and reson conseilen ofte
That I myn herte scholde softe,
And that I scholde will remue
And put him out of reteneue,
Or elles holde him under fote:
For as they seyn, if that he mote
His oghne reule have upon honde,
Ther schal no witt ben understonde.
Of hope also they tellen this,
That overal, wher that he is,
He set the herte in jeupartie
With vylsinge and with fantasie,
And is noght trewe of that he seith,
So that in him ther is no feith:
Thus with reson and witt avised
Is will and hope aldai despised.
Witt seith that I scholde love
To love, wher ther is no leve
To spede, and will seith therayein
That such an herte is to vilein,
Which dar noght love and til he spede,
Let hope serve at such a node:
He seith ek, where an herte sit
All hol governed upon witt,
He hath this lyves lust forlore.
And thus myn herte is al totore
Of such a Contek as they make;
Bot yit I mai noght will forsake,
That he nys K?ister of my thought,
Or that I speke, or spede noight.

(3/1148-92; the italics are mine)
A second key passage occurs in Book Seven. Gower explains the four complexions of man according to the four elements in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>earth</th>
<th>water</th>
<th>blood</th>
<th>cholera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cold and dry</td>
<td>cold and moist</td>
<td>hot and moist</td>
<td>hot and dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>melancholy</td>
<td>phlegmatic</td>
<td>sanguine</td>
<td>choleric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Losser in love

No will

No myght

| holds a covenant | might | literal way, breaks promises |

(7/393 ff; the schema is mine)

Gower locates the faculties in the parts of the human body. As I mentioned above, all of these parts with their separate humors, Gower says, are in service of the king, which is the human heart:

For as a king in his Empire
Above alle othre is lord and Sire,
So is the herte principal,
To whom reason in special
If yove as for the governance.
And thus nature his pourvence
Hath mad for man to liven hieare;
Bot god, which hath the Soule dier,
Hath formed it in other wise,
That can noman pleini devise;
Bot as the clerkes oes enforme,
That lieth to god it hath a forme,
Thurgh which figure and which likeness
The Soule hath many an hyh noblesse
Appropred to his ogline kinde,
Bot ofte hir mittes be mad blinde
With the help of the italicized words, I hope some of the differences between Aquinas and Gower are already apparent. Aquinas's system is much like Freud's. Reason or understanding is the discursive system of practical moral principles which passes judgment on a man's actions. Will is the ego making those decisions to act and it is in turn strongly influenced from below by the libido, the sensitive appetites which Gower calls lusts. In Gower there is very little room for ego function because the debate is between reason and will which is made synonymous with lust, love, and desire, as well as with the irascible appetites of hope, courage, and anger. When Amans says that his will is master of the situation, he is not referring to the Thomistic concept of the intellective and appetitive faculty, but to a faculty already governed by the lower appetites and therefore a purely appetitive, non-rational faculty. Gower is again reducing things to opposites or contraries, instead of using the more complex
Thomistic system.

At this point it might be well to take each of Gower's principal psychological terms and compare them to the prevailing teaching of the time.

**Reason and Wit**

Reason and wit seem to be slightly different mental faculties in Gower's psychology. In the long passage already cited, reason is said to be in company with wit against will and hope. In a later passage the love-drunkard is said to lose both wit and reason (6/71) and his wit can understand no reason (6/1239). Reason is the discursive faculty for making judgments (moral or otherwise) and wit is the more general faculty for maintaining or remembering them. Hence, Gower several times speaks of wit being forgetful or wayved (3/188, 4/522, 5/50). Wit is also spoken of as deceived or beguiled or as entertaining foolishness (1/541, 4/43, 4/316, 7/4100). Reason, on the other hand, is clearly seen as the faculty for forming judgments (3/1150, 3/1485, 5/4870, 8/2023).

Counsel is closely connected to wit as a supplier of the rational or wise truths from outside the mind. Thus, Nestor's wise counsel stopped a war (3/1776); peace can be had through good counsel "by those who understand reason" (3/1882). In other words, the counsel of others must pass the judgment of reason before it becomes a part of one's wit or understanding. Thus in the frame story Genius is constantly passing his reasoning on to Anius who puts this counsel to
the test of his own reason and experience before he accepts it. Part of the drama and humor of the frame story lies in the frequency with which Amans rejects his master's counsel. When Amans has collected evidence from outside for any one single issue, then he adopts it as a principle of action and it becomes a part of his conscience.

Although the term conscience occurs quite often in the poem, it is not a primary concept because it does not contribute a great deal to the larger concepts such as sin, law, love, and reason. Most of the references to conscience occur perfunctorily in the scrutinies and confessions, whenever denials and excuses are phrased in terms of conscience. Ten occurrences of the term involve descriptions of sinners who follow false, blind, forgetful consciences, which got that way because they were put aside or ignored in some way. Seven times Gower refers to the rule of conscience in a way suggesting that measurement or weight is the key to his understanding of the term. In addition, the word evidence is often used as a rhyme word with conscience and occurs six other times in association with it (that is, with no rhyme). The notion is very strong in Gower that a good conscience should be formed on the basis of evidence. A bad conscience is formed when someone looks away from the effects of his actions, as Thoas did (4/1047) or as we have done in ignoring the evidence of Christ's teaching (3/2541). Knowledge of the vices is therefore the formative evidence for the conscience (1/248). After describing one sin, the confessor remarks, "Hou thou hast herd this evidence, / Thou miht thin ogline conscience / Oppose." (5/2919). The king in the tale of the
King and the Courtly Fool learns about his lack of conscience from the evidence of the fool. In addition, the formation of a good conscience is helped by adding the evidence or ingredient of pity.

When love hits you, however, it matters little how much counsel or conscience you have, because as Amans himself so aptly demonstrates, the lover has lost his wit, his reason, and even the proper functioning of his senses, interior and exterior (1/22, 3/132 wits are blind, 3/7 anger does it here, 4/930 wittes ben dulle, 3/116 unsofte, and 8/2863 after he is cured Amans gathers his wits). Part of the function of the interior wits is to retain or create sense impressions for the active intellect to operate upon. However, if they are dulled or hardened by the passion of love, then they can receive no impressions from the exterior wits and therefore might as well be considered as blind.

Gower's use of the concepts of reason and wit corresponds fairly closely to Thomistic psychology, except that his use of the terms fantasy, memory, and imagination is rather indiscriminate (compare 3/127, 3/1150, 4/383, 5/592, 6/337, 6/693, 8/2189, and 8/2863 with the Summa I, q. 78, a. 4). Gower, however, makes a significant addition to the Thomistic schema by adding the idea of strength in connection with wit (1/25, 2/2269, 1/770). Strength, of course, is an ambivalent term and can refer to the strength of one's love or passion (as we have already seen in the passage on the complexions of man) as well as to the virtue of resisting such passions. Strength in Gower corresponds to the irascible appetites in Aquinas. In the face of any
opposition, the lover needs strength and wit. Strength figures largely in Gower's thematic pattern because in each episode he is trying to create a psychomachia, the heroic proportions of which can be measured in terms of might and strength (see 3/1150, 4/925, 5/2022, 7/393, 1/1402, 1/2285, 2/2269, 3/211, 3/339, 3/1857, 4/257, 4/789, 4/1800).

The word strength can also be used ambiguously in some of these references to raise the question of Gower's potency as a lover. That is clearly the implication of the lines at the end of the poem where Venus tells Gower he is too old to love: "I wot and have it wel conceived, / Now that thi will is good ynowh; / Bot mor behoveth to the plowh, / Wherof the lacketh, as I trowe," (3/2124). I shall return to this question below in the discussion of pain.

Will and Lust

Gower used many different words to account for what Aquinas calls love, desire or concupiscence, and passions or appetites. Gower's favorite word for such things is lust ("somwhat of lust, somwhat of lore"); but he also uses will in the same sense, meaning the lower appetite which gains mastery in the heart and dislodges the heart's best counselor, reason. Will and desire are also equivalent in Gower (see 1/1611 or 5/923). When Gower refers to lustes (using the plural), he usually is rendering Aquinas's passion or appetites. In the Latin marginalia the word passio is used frequently with reference to love and lust. Will, therefore, is not for Gower so much the faculty of
election or choice, but simply the fortress already held by lust or the passions against which all reason and wit must battle. Herein lies the depth of Gower's pessimism and the crucial issue of free will and the inevitability of ignoble love, sin, and sorrow in the human condition. The human society which Gower brings before his readers is, for the most part, degenerate; the poet seldom emphasizes the positive value of love and of free will—in fact, many of the tales are really horror stories about men and gods gone insane with love or sin. The list of psychological perversions in his stories would do justice to the modern theatre.

The emphasis is on the very real malady of love or lust as bestiality (1/976, 3/20, 3/240, 3/382, 3/859, 3/2589, 2595, 4/2309, 5/5630, 5677, 7/5372, and 8/2023), as raging insanity (1/2/20, 153, 6/923, 1274), and as deathful (1/20, 3/290, 3/1430, 4/5536). While the Christian concept of divine grace could easily be developed to balance the pessimism of disease with the optimism of salvation, Gower restricts his use of the term grace to the rewards of lust (1/51, 693, 1313, 4/389, 1617, 3250, etc.), the favors that a lady can give or Cupid can bestow (4/484, 4/712, 1731, 3505), and especially the final grace of submission in bed (5/3463 and 8/2036). The use of the term grace in close proximity to the word pain is also indicative of Gower's pessimism. In Aquinas, as I have shown above, pain or sorrow is the opposite of joy. These are the passions of possession of good and evil. Of course, in the poetry of courtly love joy has always been synonymous with orgasm or full possession of
the beloved. Pain by contrast would be total rejection. Gower is constantly remarking that love brings well and woe, joy and sorrow; but when he says that love brings pain, he seems quite often to be attaching a second meaning to the word, corresponding to the male sexual organ. This association is probably based on the similarity of sound between the Latin penis and the English pain. Gower makes such a pun in the Vox Clamantis, "Non Amor in penis est par pene Talionis" (Vox 5/159); and Eric Stockton remarks in the footnote to his translation that "there is an obvious and obscene pun" in the line. What makes the double meaning most likely, in my opinion, is Gower's age and the epithets which are sometimes attached to the word which otherwise do not really belong there unless the penis is what Gower is referring to: "veful pein" (3/913 and 3/1361), "thilke fyri peine" (8/2963), and "ydel peine" (3/2413). "Of every lust thende is a peine," Gower says at the end of his confession (8/2096) and still later Genius remarks, "Tor thogh thou nyhtest love atteigne, / Yit were it bot an ydel poine, / Whan that thou art noght sufficent" (8/2418).

The two references in Book Eight are especially compelling because they occur exactly at the point when Amans is being told to give up love because he is too old to reach a climax. Throughout the Confessio Gower is working to show that lust is peculiar to youth (3/153, 1471, 2/450, 4/1568, 5/2543, 6/1366). Characters in the love stories are almost always young and lusty. Although most often youth is mentioned simply as an excuse for folly, Gower's poetry seldom allows for lusty love in old age.
Further ..., as the poem progresses, the notion of the sinfulness of lust increases. At first lust is wonderful, an inevitable cosmic force by which the world neweth itself and by which nature and kinde are well served. The note of playfulness is fairly well established (4/454, 3/383, 4/2675, 5/6786, 4290, 5/3265) and the sympathetic treatment of Amans produces a careful balance of feeling between amusement and aversion. But then, in the discussion of the body and the soul in Book Seven, the word flesh is introduced and thereafter lust is frequently coupled with the terms fleshly and worldly to denote a strictly forbidden and by-hell-fire-punishable lechery (see 7/4395, 4434, 4544, 4393).

When Amans has been cleansed of his lusts at the end, Venus tells him to abide by his reason because love "taketh litel hiede / Of olde men upon the nedc, / When that the lustes ben aweie." (8/2915). This passage forms a link between all the passages where Gower seems to approve of lover's folly in youth with the few key passages where Gower speaks of need as a law unto itself:

nedes mot that nede schal \(3/339\)
node hath no lawe \(4/1157\)
Men sen that nede hath no lawe \(8/75\).

In the first citation Gower is establishing a strong connection between the strength of nature's bidding to reproduce and the idea of need. In the second Amans is speaking of his personal desire for his lady. In the third, Genius is arguing that incest was necessary
for Adam and Eve to propagate the species. In the concept of need, Gower is emphasizing the natural appetite of Aquinas, an inclination toward what accords with one's nature and which one has without any knowledge either from the senses or from the intellect. Just as a plant grows and reproduces without knowledge from the senses or the intellect because it has neither of those two faculties, so a man loves a woman according to the same necessary law.

Love as a Virtue

Occasionally Gower considers love as a virtue, in fact, as the chief of all the virtues:

For love above alle othre [vertu moral] is hod,
Which hath the vertus forto lede,
Of al that unto mannes dede
Belongeth . . .

(4/232).

The marginal note accompanying this text remarks, "Nota de amore caritatis, ubi dicit, Qui non diliget, monet in morte." In this sense, however, the poet seldom uses the term love. He is more fond of Charite, by which he designates the virtue of love, as opposed to love as a cosmic force or natural passion of the soul.

Charity is introduced at only four different points in the Confessio. In the Prologue, Gower spends several hundred lines inveighing against the Church. In the golden age, charity and peace prevailed (0/110), but now the Church preaches but does not practice it (0/144, 902, 318) because its clerks neglect their mission of sowing peace between kings and instead preach deadly wars (0/902, see also
3/2496) and make controversies over positive law (0/257). Thus, when the end of the world comes, peace and accord will vacate the world, hate will increase, and all charity will cease (0/1035). The word love is used five times in the Prologue to devote the amor caritatis which brings peace to the world. Gower says first that "love is fallen into discord" (0/121) and that "love is from the world departed, / So stant the pes unevene parted" (0/170). Then he says that love needs to be reconciled again to the world and to become the "king sovereign / Of al the worldes governaunce" (0/183). Later he remarks that there is division in England "thurgh lacke of love" (0/892) and a few lines later fondly wishes that the lords and commons of England would put away melancholy, seek peace, and set themselves in love (0/1058). In Book Eight the rule of charity is invoked as a remedy for division in the land (8/3003); that is, if we had charity, our land would be at peace.

The second group of references to charity occurs in Book Three, when Gower treats of war and homicide. The law of charity says that "Ther schal no dedly werre be" (3/2251). Christ's death is a token of perfect charity (3/2496). We preach charity while killing others to baptize them (3/2496); but homicide is opposed to the natural law and war is opposed to charity (3/2504). Hence, charity with relation to war and national security is a diplomatic virtue which sees to it that peace reigns in the land.

The third major entry of charity is in a section devoted to it as the virtue which remedies envy. In this section of Book Two the
lover learns that Charity is the mother of rity (2/3173, see also 7/3167), the reward for which is grace (2/3332, 3502). It is the virtue sovereign (2/3506) which helps a man in both worlds, secular and religious (7/3498). Envy and pride keep a man from charity. Hence, charity in this context is the social virtue which disposes a man to get along in the world.

The most important reference to charity, however, comes at the very end. Gower concludes his poem by spelling out the glories of heavenly love as opposed to the earthly variety. Love "of charite confirmed" (8/3164) is the highest good. But there is something to be said for earthly love or lust as long as you have the strength for it:

> Ki Muse doth me forto wite
> That it is to me for the beste
> Fro this day forth to take reste,
> That I nomore of love make,
> But he which hath of love his make
> It sit him wel to singe and daunce,
> And do to love his entendance
> In songs bothe and in sayinges
> After the lust of his playinges,
> For he hath that he volde have:
> But where a man schal love crave
> And faile, it stent al otherwise. (8/3070*)

This passage is one of Gower's revisions; the original text presents a strong contrast:

> . . . That y nomore of love make,
> Which many an herte hath overtake,
> And ovrturnyd as the hynde
> Fro reson in to lawe of kynde;
> Wher as the wisdom goth answe
> And can nought se the ryhte wele
> How to governe his ogene estate . . . (8 3143).

A careful look at the two different endings which Gower made for his book shows that one of them looks down on earthly love as very insec-
cure (we miss the smile from Troilus) and the other lauds it for as long as one can "make" it, suggesting that after earthly love fails we try the heavenly love which never does. Hence, charity for Gower is of three different kinds: a political or national virtue, equivalent to peace, a social virtue, and heavenly love. Gower associates the word love with the first kind five times in the Prologue and once in the text of the poem (1/1118, the Greeks send peaceful symbols to the Trojans "Be weie of love"). This is the Empedoclean love of which Fisher makes so much. The poet never associates love with the second species of charity, except in the digression on gentilesse in Book Four, where in treating of almsgiving he stops to define love as a moral virtue (see the text quoted at the outset of this discussion). The third species of charity occurs only in the last few lines where love appears six times in eleven lines. But love as the theological virtue infused by God's grace into the soul takes shape nowhere else in the poem. From this evidence one must conclude that love as a virtue is not an important part of the thematic pattern of the poem.

However, love as a moral virtue is often associated with wisdom. Like charity, wisdom is a primary concept in the Prologue which seldom occurs in the body of the poem. Of course, Gower promises us that it will not, and he very nearly keeps his promise. Occasionally he refers to wisdom as helpless to temper the measure of love (1/23, 40) and to speak of the opposition of lover's folly or na"tiq to wisdom (1/130, 2320). Both in quantity and position these references are insufficient to gain our attention. However, there are a few references
in the poem itself to a wisdom that is peculiar to love. In Book One when Genius is describing his intention to speak of virtues and vices, he says that knowledge of love and love’s service is a part of wisdom (1/270). Later he says that Rosiphelee was slow in "loves lore" and would not listen to the tales which teach love (4/1402). At another point, Genius refers to "the hige weie of loves lore" (5/3066) meaning the way that lovers make love; and although in the context the heroine loses her maidenhood and the loss is lamented, this wisdom peculiar to love has a valuable counterpart, the lore "Of alle hem that trewe be" (5/4661).

In essence, the wisdom of the lover is to temper love with law, to love truly, to have an honest love in marriage. This wisdom does not come easily, and in fact Philomene’s definition of love makes it sound impossible "a woful blisse / A wisdom which can noman wisse" (5/5994). Indeed at the end of the vision Gower confesses that his will has not been moved by Genius’s wise teaching (8/2189). A little later before he is cured, however, he sees the company of Elde with David, Solomon, Sampson, Virgil, Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and Ovid; and he remarks that "love is swete" to reclaim such wise men. At that point the wisdom of love’s lore begins to be attractive to him and he is ready for repentence and heavenly love.

Wisdom has a stronger connection with the concept of law than with the concept of love. In fact, as Fisher has shown quite thoroughly, the concept of law forms an essential part in the whole trilogy as well as in the major themes of the Confessio. There seems to be
little point here in going over that common ground, except to go more
deeply into the subordinate concepts which support Gower's themes on
law.

Throughout the poem, then, Gower constantly speaks in terms of
laws, governance, rules, and tempered measures. Love is not to ex­
ceed measure, it is often out of rule, lacks governance, and could
never be tempered. The lover listens to no law, knows no measure,
cannot govern himself. The number of references of this kind is too
great to list without tedium and they are very uniform indeed. The
terms of course refer to the mastery which reason is supposed to exer­
cise over the will, but because of love's rage that mastery is exer­
cised by the passions. In such a case Gower is wont to say that love
has no law, although he does frequently refer to the law of love,
which is variously to give and spend, or not to do violence to a girl
in the woods, or to multiply and fill the earth. Gower often supports
this barrage of concepts about governance with the classical metaphor
of the ship at sea which the governor steers through the winds and
tempestuous waves.

When Gower discusses love in terms of governance, he is develop­
ing the notion of love as a political virtue (governing the actions
of one society towards another), closely related to the problems of
justice and its opposite malice, war and peace, pity and cruelty or
tyranny, meed and vengeance. On the other hand, Gower also sees love
as a social virtue governing the manners and behavior of individuals
with respect to one another. Gower outlines three kinds of love re-
relationships—the love of paramours, honest love in marriage, and lechery or comun love. These three kinds of love are meant to correspond roughly to the three estates because Gower associates lechery with villainy and the love of paramours with gentility.

Truth and guile are important concepts associated by Gower with love as a social virtue. The true lover loves only one person; the false lover is a lecher who always has to have a new love or have comun lovers. The word comun is closely associated with lechery and guile. Even though it might be said that "Thei speden that ben most untrewe" (1/1201), Genius teaches that guile, like all other sins, recoils upon itself, and you just can't "engin love by sleyhte ne be guile" (5/4570). This is the case because the truth can never be hidden for long (3/205, 5/4597). Thus fortune is said to favor the true lover (8/2013) in the final analysis. There is also a strong connection between true love and manhood or womanhood. The courtly lover is supposed to travail in arms as a proof of his manhood. Failure to do so makes him fearful or wommanys. Women love worthiness in a man and it is foolish to trade the worthiness of manhood for womanhood (7/4240). Much more can be said of love by way of this kind of definition which depends heavily on the concepts most frequently associated with love.

But what of the unique occurrences, the associations with love which occur only once? One of these speaks of love's miracle (4/522). The association would be more striking if it did not appear obvious that Gower was simply reaching here for a rhyme word for obstacle.
However, this unique association occurs in the section on pusillanimity and if Gower is already to be considered as too old to have a heart big enough for love, then perhaps the implication is that it will take a miracle for him to make love. A second unique occurrence is in the phrase "melled love" (7/4897). Macaulay provides the gloss for melled as mingled; but since the term is used in this context of the lust of a rapist, the translation hardly seems strong enough. A third unique occurrence is not so difficult to explain. Gower wants to say that love won by evil means will get you in the end; so he writes, "thus whan love is evele wonne, / Fulofte it comth to repentaile" (5/6783). I am sure that there are many other unique associations which I have overlooked; but the study of these few demonstrates the value of being able to locate these hapax legomena.

Conclusion

There is no way to end a chapter like this one. The evidence will always be partial because there will always be other important concepts associated with the concepts already discussed. For example, Gower associates fair speech with truth; and danger is obviously related to honesty in love. It would be profitable to study the relationship between love and grace, gentilesse, law, pity, and play. The relationship between law and reason should be explored to see if Gower concurs with Aquinas that "law is an ordinance of reason" and that reason is "the rule or measure of human acts."12
In addition, it is virtually impossible to organize a discussion of this kind so that all the interrelationships are succinctly and fully stated. One reader of this chapter fondly wished for an index to all the citations. This is the problem which the computer can help solve. I took sixty pages of citations on love and then combed through them twenty times to find the relationships to the twenty other concepts which I have presented in this chapter. The computer upon request could have presented me all the conjoint references with texts fully printed out. Furthermore, any given complex of terms (e.g., love, law, and nature; or Venus, commun, love, and lust) could be identified in this manner. For the sake of brevity, I have not tried to state explicitly all the relationships; instead I have relied on the reader's ear to catch the connections between the concepts other than love.

On the basis of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, then, love might well be defined as a cosmic force which in the world at large is coterminous with Nature as the revelation of the divine being and parallel to fortune and world in its uncertain and unknowable mutability, but which in the little world of a man's heart produces the capture of the heart by will, hope, and lust; the banishment of reason, wit, counsel, and conscience; and the blinding of the interior and exterior wits. This concept of love is extremely pessimistic because it practically eliminates the possibility of a man's either accomplishing or overcoming love through knowledge, virtuous acts, or grace. Although the poem is full of contradictions and ambivalences, Gower's concept of love is on the whole not very Christian at all, but rather fatalistic.
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER II

1. I have chosen to italicize words used as words or concepts; but I have made no special indication for words translated from Latin and corresponding to technical theological or philosophical terms. In addition, I have followed the capitalization which is most frequent in Gower; hence, I generally use Nature with a capital N for the cosmic force and god with a small g for either the pagan or the Christian deity. However, when I am paraphrasing a particular Gower text, I use what he uses in that text.

2. I received information about this procedure from a lecture which Miss Montgomery delivered at Ohio State University in the summer of 1970. She is presently associated with Bell Laboratories.

3. The notion of love as a classical god or goddess—Venus or Cupid and at times Jupiter—supports this cosmological definition. Venus has her wheel, Cupid his arrows, and Jupiter his tuns (cups). Each of the three divine forces exercises the same potential influence for opposite and capricious results, good and evil fortune in love.

4. A subordinate tale, as I define it later in section two of Chapter III, is one told after another for the purpose of making the same point, perhaps even more forcefully.

5. These correspond to definitions provided in the OED.

6. This memory retains ideas, whereas the interior wit, also called memory, retains sense impressions.

7. I have taken this summary of Thomistic psychology from the Summa Theologica I and I-II. The English terminology of my summary is based largely on Paul J. Glenn's A Tour of the Summa (St. Louis: Herder, 1960).

I am not sure that I am reading this line (8/2036) correctly.


In a similar context in Book Three Gower says that hate suffers neither love nor peace (3/847); but it is impossible to tell whether he means personal peace or national (world) peace as he does in the Prologue when he remarks of the last age that love is "falle into discord" (0/121). At any rate, this first instance of charity clearly indicates a political virtue whereby peace between nations and the Church can be accomplished.

See Glenn, p. 166 for Summa I-II, q. 90, a. 1.
CHAPTER III
THE GOTHIC ENCYCLOPEDIA OF LOVE

As dangerous as it may seem to yoke literary criticism with that of the other arts, I think it is profitable to speak, as Panofsky does, of analogy in the arts. There is a method of composition, rooted in the biblical and Platonic tradition, which makes the encyclopedic poem, the cathedral, and the summa beneficiaries of the same culturally-conditioned scheme. Panofsky wisely limits his argument in Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism\(^1\) to a relatively small geographical area and a brief era; but some of the implications of his argument can safely be extended to include the late scholastic era and northeastern Europe.

Those who espouse the literary-architectural analogy are fond of demonstrating that the medieval cathedral was indeed considered to be a book, in fact, an encyclopedia which was intended to teach the illiterate.\(^2\) It had the didactic quality of the sermon and required little learning on the part of the ordinary audience of commoners, middle classes, and aristocracy. Although it is clear that much of the content of the encyclopedia of the cathedral was too remote, too minute, or too unilluminated to reach the eye of everyman in the audience, the cathedral jambs, floors, tympana, and the entire structure itself were readily apparent. Although much of the cathedral lore was visible, it was not always immediately intelligible. Hence, it
required a gloss, perhaps by tour guides such as we have today; but more probably in a series of sermons and lectures one could hear the full lesson as designed by the abbot, architect, or sculptor.\(^3\)

However, the full lesson was, by necessity, long and involved. The sheer massiveness and height of the gothic cathedral is equalled by the massiveness and length of the scholastic *summa* and in our case by Gower's gothic poem on love.\(^4\) One of the great differences between Chaucer and Gower is the latter's willingness to continue with the same scheme, in spite of repetition and similarity of approach, and the former's inability to complete a slightly worn-out scheme.

Variety of form was not the spice of Gower's life, nor of St. Thomas's for that matter. It is difficult to read straight through the *Summa Theologica* and equally as tedious to perdure large portions of the *Confessio Amantis* or the *Vox Clamantis*. But who can look at all of Chartres in a day?

I see a basic similarity of structure in the *summa*, the cathedral, and the *Confessio Amantis* which corresponds to what Panofsky calls the three requirements of the *summa*:

1) totality (sufficient enumeration),

2) arrangement according to a system of homologous parts and parts of parts (sufficient articulation),

3) distinctness and deductive cogency (sufficient interrelation).\(^5\)

All of this was enhanced in Aquinas by means of *similitudines*, *parallelismus membrorum*, and rhyme. As Panofsky points out, a *summa* is a unity divided into parts, the parts are divided into numerous
questions (usually about 100 or so), the questions into articles (on the average eight to ten per question), and the articles are each developed according to the scheme of *videtur quod, sed contra,* and *respondeo dicendum quod.* This last part of the scheme embodies the principle of "the acceptance and ultimate reconciliation of contradictory possibilities."6

The Vertical Structure

While Panofsky has adequately (in my estimation) shown the parallels in architecture of this *modus operandi,* I think the same can be done for Gower's lengthy collection of tales, the *Confessio Amantis.* What Macaulay, Dodd, and others have called the "machinery" of the poem (with a note of dismissal for all but the tales themselves) corresponds to the gothic-scholastic method. An encyclopedia is a book which one reads in partes. Although there is rhyme and reason to the east and west portals of Chartres, it is expected that one will look at just one portal at a time. One might eventually study the entire summa, but normally the scholar will turn to a specific question (the existence of God, the nature of virtue, the question whether in Christ there were two wills or one). The organization of the whole *summa* is, for reference sake, very detailed and rigid, as I have already described.

In Gower's poem the framework of the seven deadly sins provides the level of primary parts. The branches, servants, and antidotes of those seven sins provide the second level of partition. The scheme
for each sin is rigorously established in the first books and main-
tained throughout the poem, though it is occasionally upset by digres-
sions and impromptu debates arising out of the dramatic dialogue of
the frame story. This scheme, however, proceeds basically as follows:

SIN:

1) introduction of the sin and its place in
   the larger scheme of the seven deadly sins

2) definition of the sin in genere and in
   specie, i.e., in amoris causa.

3) scrutiny of the penitent

CONFESSION:

4) denials or admissions of the lover

EXEMPLUM:

5) pre-application of the moral of the tale

6) the tale

7) post-application of the moral of the tale

8) response of the lover, usually perfunctory

9) = 1) transition to the next sin unit

The mechanical nature of this scheme is apparent in the last item,
which in most instances is identical to the first, thereby constituting
a loop, which Gower uses no less than forty-eight times. Like a me-
chanical subroutine in a computer program, this scheme forms a loop
through which all the data which Gower could gather on love and other
matters is filtered, operated upon, and transformed for the reader.

Furthermore, each of these eight subdivisions is also fairly
rigidly informed by the logical exigencies of its own situation. It
is important at this point to examine the workings of each smallest part of the structure in order to discover how Gower was using the Christian and the courtly codes. In doing so, it will be necessary to make a close study of the junctures at which the poet is constantly and designedly having to compare the two systems.

The first of those junctures occurs in the definition of each sin, the second part of the scheme where the pattern calls for a distinction between the sin in genere (or simpliciter) and the sin in causa amoris (or secundum amorem). In slightly more than half the cases (19 of 36) Gower makes this distinction very clearly and marks it off by using separate paragraphs. In these cases the poet is setting up the basic expectation that the two systems work independently and in contrast. He is in effect reinforcing the dichotomy in the Prologue between lust and lore. This is most often the case when the presentations simpliciter and secundum quid are very straightforward and distinct indeed, without any mixture of the two patterns and without any overriding imagery. Frequently, however, Gower diverges from the clear-cut dichotomy and offers a confusing mixture of lust and lore. He does this occasionally by simply omitting the usual formulae which mark the distinction, but very often simply by jumping back and forth in one paragraph from the general universe to the universe of love.

In some instances the poet uses a string of words in the general definition which apply by double meanings to the cause of love.

And for that he is such an holde,
Dame Avarice him hath withholde,
As he which is the principal
Outward, for he is overal
A pourveor and an aspie.
For riht as of an hungri Pie  
The storve bestes ben awaited,  
Riht so is Covoitise afaite  
To loke where he mai pourchace,  
For be his wille he wolde embrace  
Al that this wyde world beclippeth;  
Bot evere he somwhat overhippeth,  
That he ne mai noght al fulfille  
The lustes of his gredi wille.  

For other examples of the same technique, one might consult the definitions under Inobedience, Vain Glory, False Semblance, Chiding, and Robbery.

In the cases where Gower mixes the generic and specific definitions there are still marginal Latin notes which say that the subject is treated first in general and then in love's cause (e.g. the marginalia for Inobedience and Vain Glory). In the marginal note describing Inobedience, the author (presumably Gower) uses the distinction simpliciter and in curia Cupidinis. Since the introduction (namely, part one of the eight-part scheme) often presents the sin in terms of its courtly office (secretary, steward, etc.), this distinction is not unnatural. It shows, however, the necessity for reconciliation of disparities (not strictly speaking contradictions) between the court of Venus and the court of Satan, between the pagan authority and the anti-Christian one. There is something inherently good or honest in the former system which is not necessarily present in the court of the seven deadly sins. In other words, Gower is playing up the relativity of the concept of sin in the same way that Aquinas frequently does when he reconciles two schools of thought with a distinction simpliciter et secundum quid. For example, Aquinas demonstrates the relativity of the concept of amor when he raises the question whether love can be
suitably divided into the love of friendship and the love of concupiscence. In the respondeo he writes:

_Sicut enim ens simpliciter est quod habet esse, ens autem secundum quid quod est in alio; ita bonum, quod convertitur cum ente, simpliciter quidem est quod ipsum habet bonitatem; quod autem est bonum alterius, est bonum secundum quid._ Et per consequens amor quo amatur aliquid ut ei sit bonum, est amor simpliciter; amor autem quo amatur aliquid ut sit bonum alterius est amor secundum quid._

(I-II, q. 26, a. 4)

The question is resolved on the basis of the _simpliciter/secundum quid_ distinction, which is applicable first to all being, then to all good. But love is a desire for good; ergo, the distinction applies to love.

The use of the _simpliciter/secundum quid_ distinction implies disparity because whenever a concept or principle is working _in genere_ and _in specie_ identically, there is no reason to apply the distinction. Gower is constantly reminding his readers that there are two disparate systems here; but at the same time he is having fun juggling them around, at times making them accord very neatly (especially in the entire book on Envy and the section on Covetise) and at times stretching the distinction to its outer limits (e.g., Forgetfulness, Stealth, and Sacrilege). Occasionally he even eschews making the distinction when it is obviously irrelevant to the character of Amans and of courtly lovers in general (e.g., in the section on Homicide there is no discussion or tale of a lover's killing for love). I shall say more later about the significance of the _simpliciter/secundum quid_ distinction. At this point it will be better to pursue the investigation of the eight-part scheme of Gower's sin units.

The confessions of the lover already discussed in the previous
chapter usually involve applications of scholastic distinctions or other forms of casuistry. The normal situation is that Amans denies that he is guilty (more of a lamentation than a convincing denial in most cases) and then (often in a new paragraph) offers an exception ("bot," "unless," or "in hy heart : : not in deed"). The few confessions which Amans can make are to such minor triumphs of courtly love that they usually draw the kind of ironic comment from the Confessor which indicates that perhaps the priest of Venus has had far greater experience and success himself. For example, after Amans in his longest confession enlarges for seven pages on his love-delights, Genius replies:

Mi Sone, I understonde wel
That thou hast told hier everydel,
And as me thenketh be thi tale,
It ben delices wonder smale . . . (6/951-54)

The comic nature of this kind of interplay is a very good antidote for the heavy moralizing of the remainder, and at the same time frequently shows a great deal of sympathy for the courtly system in order to counterbalance the occasionally rigid Christian stance of the confessor.

The form of the narration is also patterned in each tale. The structure of each of the Canterbury Tales or of each novella of Boccaccio's Decameron when compared reveals a great variety of complex narrative patterns involving invocations, descriptions, dialogues, debates, addresses to the reader or audience, inversions of the natural order, satires or reversals of the readers expectations, and digressions into or intrusions of intellectual or philosophical materials; Furthermore, in Chaucer and Boccaccio one finds a great variety of
characters, occupations, and estates. Gower's stories, however, are structurally much more uniform and involve fewer subtleties and complexities. His character selection is much more limited and his narratives follow a set form with a set proportion of parts.

Almost without exception, Gower begins each tale (or sequence of tales) with a paragraph providing the moral framework for the story. This preface to the tale is usually ten to twenty lines long and begins with "Mi Sone." The meat of the paragraph usually involves the explanation of how the tale is applicable (to love or in genere), and supplies a series of aphorisms such as "Deceive love in no degree," or "obedience in love availeth," or "avanterie is to despise." This group of preapplications of the moral of the tale is then closed by a formula such as "of this point a tale I telle," "whereof I finde ensample," or "to telle a tale thereupon."

The next paragraph begins the story, usually with a formula such as "I rede a tale," "It fell be olde daies thus," or "Ther was whilom." This first paragraph of the story is normally used for introducing the characters and the setting for the narrative. The time and place are mentioned and the characters are brought in, usually by the tag of their state in life (a wife, a king, a duke), and then named. Immediately after the naming, Gower commonly tacks on a very short description of the person's characteristic nature, usually in the superlative. The second character is then introduced in the same manner and a third character too, if there is one—Gower seldom has more than three characters. In the love stories, the next step is to explain in formula
fashion that the two inevitably fell in love by Cupid’s or Venus’s power (they lost their reason, it was nature’s doing, love is blind, etc.) This preliminary complication of the tale is sometimes set off in a paragraph, but it is usually a part of the characterization and a graver complication is introduced in the second paragraph.

At the end of the description of the problem of the story (or at the beginning of the next paragraph), Gower often pulls up short and says, in effect, but look now what happened, in formulae of this kind: "Now listen to the treachery," "Bot blind Venus turned her wheel as I shall tell," "Bot lest now such a felonie," and "Now lest and herknewful cas." These formulae establish the frame of reference for the moral judgment which the tale is supposed to demonstrate. It says in effect, "Here comes the sin." In a majority of the substantial tales (that is, tales of 100 lines or more), this description of the treachery or mistake of the character(s) is given a paragraph of its own and comes at the midpoint in the story. It is followed by (what Gower always considers to be) the inevitable discovery of the deed by the other character, the world at large, or the divine menagerie. Nine times out of ten, frequently in a separate paragraph, Gower then establishes the penalty, the unhappy result which, as I have already noted, often involves a transformation, death, or suicide.

At any point in this generalized narrative scheme Gower will feel free to point up the moral by short aphoristic statements or even by phrases or adjectives (usually harping back to the framework sin or his definition of it) such as "in his foolhaste," "burning with envy." While interruptions of this kind are frequent, Gower seldom breaks the
strictly narrative form of the tale to enlarge descriptions or to present dialogue. In fact, he almost never uses dialogue to let the reader discover the events and subtleties of the tale for himself. On the contrary, dialogue is reserved for the fuller descriptions of indvidious plots, for the formulation and answering of key questions in a tale (exceptionally long stories have more dialogue); but most often for the cries, tears, and supplications of a woman wronged or forlorn or otherwise wanting to complain and register her guilt feelings.

Again, Gower, as I have already mentioned, is often attracted to the conflicts or stark oppositions in his tales. As a result, one of his favorite narrative techniques is to spell out the paradoxical nature of the complications of his story in terms of opposition—bitter/sweet, etc. This frequently takes place in the short moral endings with which he usually concludes the last paragraph of the tale itself.

Each tale (or sequence of tales) is then followed by a short paragraph (normally five to ten lines long; and very frequently eight), which often begins "Forthi, mi Sone" or "Lo thus my Sone." This paragraph of post-application of the exemplum sometimes differs from the pre-application and supplies an adjustment of the tale to the framework which does not occur naturally or logically and which has not been explained in the pre-application. Normally, however, the two applications fit well and correspond directly. In outline form, therefore, most of Gower's tales have the following pattern:
In tracing the narrative pattern of Gower's sub-sins, I have been using formula, content, and paragraphing as criteria; but there is a fourth element which plays a very important part in making Gower's simple pattern of organization readily visible— the Latin marginalia. Because of these marginalia, the Confessio Amantis has a very practical value; it serves as a tool for preachers looking for stories on specific sins and designed especially for lovers. The margins contain several different kinds of notes. They indicate the change of speakers in the frame story and usually the nature of the dialogue (opponit Confessor, respondet Amans, Confessio Amantis). The marginalia also indicate the sins and subsins under discussion and are used to indicate

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<tr>
<th>paragraph</th>
<th>content</th>
<th>typical formulae</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>preapplication of the tale, aphorisms on love and the sin</td>
<td>opening, &quot;Mi Sone&quot; closing, &quot;to telle a tale thereupon&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>setting, characterization, and love relationships simply defined</td>
<td>opening, &quot;Ther was whilom&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>complication of the plot, the sin committed, discovery of the crime</td>
<td>opening, &quot;Now listen to the treachery&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>penalty</td>
<td>opening, &quot;Forthi, mi Sone&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>post-application of the exemplum</td>
<td>opening, &quot;Forthi, mi Sone&quot;</td>
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the beginning of each exemplum (hic ponit confessor exemplum . . .). They indicate whether a definition or an exemplum is given simpliciter or in causa amoris. They provide plot outlines for the tales and a formulation of its application which is usually quite consistent with the text of the poem. When the story is long (1000 lines or more as in the tales of Florent, Constance, and Apollonius), this plot outline is spread throughout the story; but normally it occurs at the beginning of the tale in full. When the poem gets patently digressive, the Latin margins supply a digest of the digression: "De fide Christiana . . ." or "Nota, Hic contra istos qui iam lollardi dicuntur." Sometimes in the midst of these digressions a piece of ancient lore will be briefly labelled by its author with an abbreviated summary: "Iacobus. Fides sine operibus mortua est" or "Salomon. Pecunie obediant omnia." or "Seneca. Judex qui parcit ulcisci, multos improbos facit." The end of each tale is normally marked by a "Confessor" in the margin (opposite the "Forthi" or "Lo thus" formula) to show that Genius is back to the point of the confession and the narrative is thus concluded.

The purpose of describing these notes in full is merely to accentuate the encyclopedic nature of the poem, that is to say, that the framework of the sins, the formulaic pattern of organization, and the marginal notes operate as a kind of thumb index to this huge work, making it easy for the reader to take it up at any point to edify (or amuse) himself.

In addition, the poem has all three of Panofsky's requirements of the summa: totality (the Prologue establishes that without question), arrangement according to homologous parts and parts of parts (the
eight-part pattern which I have just described belies the case), and cogency (namely, the pattern of thematic interweaving already discussed in the second chapter).

The basic confessional pattern of instruction, confession, and exemplification does in effect parallel the videtur quod, sed contra, and respondeo format, although the very humble and submissive character of Amans seldom makes of this form anything but the mildest of disputations. However, the gothic-scholastic parallel is mostly in the vertical structure of parts and divisions of parts, and divisions of divisions. At the same time, this mammoth vertical structure lends itself quite readily to a horizontal network of themes on love, morality, law, kingship, etc., which have been discussed earlier. If one looks merely at the framework of sins and the rigorously applied formalism of the subdivisions of the sins, one will fail to see the artistry of working three or more literary dimensions simultaneously.

Panofsky does not have a discussion of the relation between the distinction simpliciter/secundum quid to any artistic or architectural development; but I think it answers in Gower to what Panofsky calls the "ACCEPTANCE AND ULTIMATE RECONCILIATION OF CONTRADICTORY POSSIBILITIES" or, in a word, to the principle of concordantia. Gower is an Abelard, writing a Sic et Non, reconciling the authorities (Christian and pagan) primarily on the subject of love. His method is scholastic in that he presents the videtur quod through the definitions and tales told strictly in genere, the sed contra through the definitions and tales in causa amoris and the lover's confessions, and finally the
respondeo through the applications of the tales. Panofsky writes of the scheme of the *summa*, "Of two apparently contradictory motifs, both of them sanctioned by authority, one could not simply be rejected in favor of the other. They had to be worked through to the limit and they had ultimately to be reconciled with one of St. Ambrose." Panofsky earlier makes an even stronger case of concordance when he mentions conflicting texts of the Bible.

The school of Chartres to which Gower was indebted was animated by this desire to concord or reconcile the pagan and Christian systems, especially as embodied in the *Timaeus* and *Genesis*. That is why in the poets of Chartres there are so many allegorical-mythical figures (e.g., Nature) who bridge the cosmology-gap between the Greek and Judaeo-Christian worlds. Genius in the *Confessio Amantis* embodies both worlds and represents the authority of both the court of Venus and Christ's court. Amans likewise is the humble servant of Cupid and yet in his *via dolorosa* a very studious Christian pilgrim. Even the poem as a whole shows this same dialectical method of concordance. The Prologue represents a very firm presentation of the contradictions in the lust-lore dichotomy, and amounts to a *videtur quod*. The confessional part of the allegorical frame story produces a counter-statement of sorts between the two systems which amounts to a *sed contra*. Finally, the resolution of the frame story--and even the epilogue which follows it anticlimactically, as C. S. Lewis has shown--not only answers the quest of Amans, but also reconciles the *amor Dei* and the *amor cupiditatis* in the way of a respondeo dicendum quod by suggesting
that there is a time for love (youth) when the good of creation is served by the sexual drive, reasonably and honestly governed.

This is the "common sense" approach which Dodd refers to in his discussion of courtly love and Christian morality. Dodd's study, *Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower* is much simpler than mine and smacks a little of a priori reasoning. Dodd sees the problem in terms of the courtly sins versus the Christian ones. He says that all the Christian sins are to be shunned by the courtly lover, but that some of them correspond to courtly virtues. In other words, Dodd anticipates conflicts whenever certain courtly virtues might be considered Christian sins. He then proceeds down the sin framework from Pride and its branches to Gluttony and Incest, concluding that Gower (or Genius) "is in accord with the courtly love ideas in condemning six of the deadly sins." In the whole of the framework he espies only seven points of conflict between the two sin systems:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Sin</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Vain Glory</td>
<td>(Genius forbids caroling, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Melancholy</td>
<td>(story of incest contradicts section of Book VIII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Pusillanimitiy</td>
<td>(the courtly lover is supposed to fear to speak to his lady)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Contek and Homicide</td>
<td>(courtly love speaks of martyrdom for Venus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Jealousy</td>
<td>(considered inevitable in courtly love)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Gluttony</td>
<td>(entire book is Christian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Lechery</td>
<td>(avoids confrontation on the point of lechery).</td>
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Dodd's view of the confessor is that, except for a few lapses into the hard-line Christian doctrine, he demonstrates a common sense
approach to courtly love. Dodd tends to play down or even eliminate Gower's humor and artistry in presenting two contradictory systems at once and in deliberately bypassing some of the real points of conflict. Furthermore, Dodd's conclusions are based almost entirely on the story applications made by Genius; however, the refined structure which I have already described for each sin unit affords Gower many other opportunities for juxtaposing the two sin systems. In addition, Dodd's approach is purely on the abstract level of virtues and vices as such; he ignores the subtleties of the personalities in the frame story which Gower took great pains to maintain throughout the poem with a vigor that surely exceeds Boccaccio's frame story and I would say, even Chaucer's. If it is intelligent to study Chaucer's marriage group in terms of the interplay of characters telling the stories, it should likewise be significant in the context of Gower's confession of this fault that Genius answers with this tale. Unfortunately, Dodd considers the personality and conflict of codes in the one character of Genius only and ignores the entire dramatic context, including the audience of the poem.

It is my view that Gower arrives at Dodd's common-sense approach only at the end of the poem; it is not a doctrine set forth from the beginning. What is set forth weakly from the beginning is the argument of disparity and mixture. There are constant alternations from Christian to courtly codes in every phase of the pattern which I have described, not just in the seven areas which Dodd outlines. He has simply detected within the poem the points of gravest and most visible
conflict—namely, points where the pagan system is intolerant of the Christian. He might just as well have cited examples of courtly love doctrine which are intolerant of Christian teaching, as for example Gower's teaching on incest in the story of Canace and Nachaire. In this beautifully told story, the incestuous love of a brother and sister is fully and compassionately exonerated by the Confessor—in spite of the fact that later (in the last book) Genius spends several pages condemning incest as a grievous sin. In this case of incest and in most of the other cases where some conflict is apparent in one part of the poem, there are other allusions to the same conflict and other reconciliations to be found, if one looks diligently.

The imperfection of Gower's attempt at concordance is readily apparent. This imperfection shows up in every juncture of the framework and the eight-part pattern, but especially in the applications of the stories.

**The Application of the Tales**

Although for the most part the stories are applicable to the sin framework, they frequently have nothing whatsoever to do with the confession of the lover. At times the lover's confession is purely negative, but the confessor tells his story anyway. Frequently the lover could use a love story, but instead gets a long barrage of stories in genre and has to beg for one in love's cause. Sometimes the story in love's cause precedes the general story and to a degree changes the emphasis of the previous tale. It is not uncommon for the preapplication of the story to be altered significantly in the post-application or in
the application of a second or third tale to the same point. What might pass here for the poet's or the confessor's ineptitude, therefore, I would characterize as an artistic procedure for mingling and mixing the contraries inherent in the subject matter.

The best way to document this mingling of the conflicting elements of the two codes is to speak in terms of sin/virtue units or sermons. Although I would not argue that the Confessio consists of a series of sermones ad status as Maria Wickert has done for the Vox Clamantis, I still think that readers of Patience and Purity (poems usually attributed to the Gawain-poet) will recognize the sin units in Gower as analogous to these homiletic poems, which take a cluster of related biblical tales and wind them around a group of themes related to a single vice or virtue. Of course, the tone of the Confessio is not that of the oratorical or pulpit style; nevertheless, I think that the straightforward narrative for which Gower is praised is more exactly the style of the exemplum as part of a poetic sermon. It is a didactic style of narrative perfectly suited to the genre and very much comparable in its economy to the narratives in the alliterative didactic poetry of the century which was coming from the Northwest Midlands. The biggest difference between the sin/virtue units of the Confessio and the sin unit of a poem like Purity is plurality. Gower is weaving together nearly fifty units and the applicability of his tales need not be nearly so accurate since they can apply to life in genere, to love in specie, vertically to the sin or confession, and horizontally to the current theme, previous themes, or even new ones.

Nevertheless, it frequently happens that, like its alliterative
poetic counterpart, Gower's sin unit often uses subordinate exempla to buttress a key tale, either by way of introduction or by way of conclusion. In both cases, the other tale(s) serves the purpose of focusing the reader's attention on the theme which is common to both tales. This device of subordination has the effect of stripping away the frills and entertainment of the first story; it is a form of indirect application of the moral of the tale. It also has the force of accumulation and objectivity, a force which begins to compel assent on the part of the audience because the moral is applicable in another setting. A good example of this technique of subordination is the unit of Envy on Detraction. The key tale of Constance is told first. It is supposed to illustrate the thesis that backbiting bites back; but large portions of the story are irrelevant and disproportionate. To extract them would ruin the story and to leave the story unbuttressed would be to risk a failure in the moral application. Gower, therefore, proceeds immediately to tell a second, shorter tale on the same subject. It is a tale told in genere (as opposed to the courtly or at least love theme of Constance); but that hardly matters since it is meant to focus attention on the evils of backbiting in the key story.

However, in measuring the applicability of Gower's tales, one should start at the beginning. Genius begins his confession with an examination on the custody of the senses, choosing seeing and hearing as representative and leaving out, as is occasionally his wont, the more problematic sense of touch. In this initial instance the tales are told as part of the definition and prior to the confession.
are four stories, two per sense, and all four are short exempla without any real love plots. The tale of Acteon is told "in loves kinde," but no real love is involved; Acteon merely fails to turn his eyes away from the naked Diana. All four tales are brought together by a central point of reference, the heart. Misloke and misheare affect the heart and heart's wit adversely. Because the stories are unreal to Amans—no love is involved—a sense of the hopelessness of his situation is heightened by this initial, very ascetic approach.

"Betre is to winke than to loke" (1/384; Tale of Acteon)

"Cast noght thin yhe upon Meduse" (1/438; Perseus and Medusa)

"Take of fol delit no kepe" (1/442; Perseus and Medusa)

The confessor's approach causes a complete breakdown of the lover's spirit and focusses on the necessity of confessing in terms of love's joys and griefs with respect to the heart. At the end of the fourth tale (Ulysses and the Sirens) Genius tells Amans that his love now exceeds measure and is painful because he did not guard his senses and allowed his heart's wit to be won by foolishness. In the frame of reference of the Prologue, Amans has lost wisdom (Perseus's shield) and governance (Ulysses's virtue); his love is folly, lust, and disaster.

At this point in the confession there is only one sympathetic note in the confessor's hard line, the idea of excess. Otherwise, our lover has been told to "shut it down," "cool it" completely; not only "go and sin no more" but "get thee to a nunnery." Sympathy for the courtly lover comes more fully in the lover's confession, which is whole-hearted, spontaneous, and in imaginative fashion a fine reworking of
the exempla materials, with a very strong tone of hopelessness:

Mi fader, ye, I am beknowe,
I have hem [his eyes] cast upon Meduse,
Therof I may me noght excuse:
Min herte is growen into Ston,
So that i t y  lady therupon
Hath such a priente of love grave,
That I can noght miselve save. (1/550-56)

These lines say in effect that repression is hopeless because love is chiseled into his heart. The image of the stone heart is a direct challenge to the divine healing power to do to Amans what he did to Nebuchadnezzar. The confession, therefore, opens with very much of a stark contrast between courtly love and Christian virtue. The priest of Venus is much more priestly than venereal, although he does use classical literature rather than the obvious biblical exempla. "The courtly lover despairs of salvation even though he admits his guilt and recognizes that he is "topulled."

The first sin unit deals with Hypocrisy and begins a change in tone from love as strictly a vice to love as inevitable and permissible, if truthful. One theme of the tale of Mundus and Paulina is "To love is every herte fre." (1/752). This tale of a wife who is deceived into going to bed with another man is not applicable to the species of love-hypocrisy which Genius has defined, namely, feigning sickness. Amans confesses sympathetically that he does not need to feign it; he is sick. The tale is unnecessary in terms of the confession, but it carries on a great many other themes and poetic ploys. The tale is actually more a tale of a wife's gullibility than a lover's treachery; and the punishment in the tale, so crucial in all of Gower's stories,
is greater for the priests, who are the lover's accomplices since they have betrayed a special trust, than for the lover. Their sin has little to do with hypocrisy. The subordinate tale of the Trojan Horse brings the discussion of hypocrisy back in line by offering a parallel case of deception by religion. Interestingly enough, this question of doing evil in the name of or by calling it religion is akin to the whole problem of this study. It raises the question of the sincerity of those who would elevate vice (the courtly code) by making it seem Christian and virtuous and elevating.

In the next sin/virtue unit the poet gets closer yet to the courtly love code with the poem's first key tale of a purely courtly love situation, upholding the virtue of obedience and assigning the due recompense of sexual fulfillment (Tale of Florent). Genius argues that obedience may help the lover's fortunes "and sette him in his lust above." Genius in this line begins to show his own appreciation of the lover's position (I take the word above literally of the lover's position in bed, as well as on the wheel of fortune). He supplies practically no discussion of the generic vice and no subordinate tale. Instead, this tale answers quite fully to Amans's confession of the conventional disobediences of the courtly lover (refusal to be still and to seek another). The story is beautifully told and the sin/virtue unit attains remarkable cohesiveness. The Gower whom critics find very digressive and irresistibly didactic is here eschewing the possibility of developing important general themes on law and order, the duties of the commons, and the responsibility of the king. It should also be apparent at this point that Gower mixes up his tales, not only from
genus to species, but also from vice to virtue, from courtly to Christian perspective, from classical to Arthurian and later to his contemporary European narratives. He is also constantly adjusting the length of the tales. He does employ these other features with as much variety as his contemporary tale collectors, Chaucer and Boccaccio, in spite of the fact that he uses a very simple pattern of narrative and the same meter throughout.

In the next sin/virtue unit the poet takes advantage of the balance inherent in his genus-species distinction to unload some considerable doctrine with the story of the Trump of Death. Thereafter, at the request of Amans, he tells a tale of love-presumption (a tale about Narcissus from the Roman de la Rose) which actually fits both codes, although cupiditas emerges clearly as the paradigmatic vice. In the fourth unit there is only one tale (Alboin and Rosemund), which Gower very cleverly uses to mingle both worlds and both doctrines in one cup. The tale shows in general that boasting of valor in arms is foolish and destructive, in this case of a marital or love-relationship. In the sins thus far discussed there is no inherent (a priori) difficulty. The courtly lover is supposed to be humble (one of Lewis's four characteristic notes of courtly love is humility) and any attempt to vault himself on his own merits or by his own protestation to a position of favor will have an undesirable effect.

However, with the final sin unit under Pride there is some intrinsic difficulty, as Dodd has indicated by his puzzlement. Gower concludes the branches of Pride with Vain Glory (a change from the order
in the Mirour where Vain Glory is second) and a description of the vain-glorious lover as one who thinks that no death is coming and that his joy (orgasm) is endless. He also describes this sinful lover as one who following the fashion of the court sings, dances, and dresses in order to appear more courageous and dashing than he is and to thereby take advantage of the women at court. With characteristic and comical self-effacement Amans (don't forget he is Gower, the poet) has to confess that he has tried all those things but

Thus was my gloire vein beset
Of all the joie that I made, (1/2736-7)

Dodd is worried that the priest is being very hard on the lover, but I see the passage as the quite frequent case of the poet's altering the definition of the sin to make the confession delightful to the reader. The length of the confession and the dead seriousness of Amans's legitimate sorrow at his failure to win his lady are both indicators that Gower is intent on the frame story at this point, more than on the two codes.

Furthermore, as I have been showing, there is a constant but balanced flow of material in support of both codes and Gower is here returning to the Prologue wisdom and the story of Nebuchadnezzar's Metamorphosis into an Ox which is told in genere and which links the first book with the Prologue tale of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of the Statue. This tale has no real application to love, to the confession, or to courtly fashion and frivolity. In other words, it is just as significant to say that Genius is at times pornographic or at least boldly descriptive in some of his language, just as the Roman de la
Rose is; logically, the fact that Amans at times accepts his Christian limitations would also have to be documented as proof that his character is not consistent. What shows Gower's intent and power is the poet's clever jockeying back and forth from juxtaposing the simple hard lines of both codes, to occasionally mingling them perfectly so that it is impossible to detect any opposition. There are a thousand junctures in this first book alone where both Genius and Amans demonstrate their attitudes toward the two codes.\(^\text{12}\) The actual pattern or flow of the evidence is more important than any one incongruity or equivalence.

It seems unnecessary to continue documenting this ebb and flow and slack throughout all eight books. The basic structure of each book calls for a remedy at the end, and therefore Christian doctrine and wisdom usually have a tendency to get the last word. The *respondeo dicendum quod*, therefore, occurs frequently at the end of each book and again at the end of the entire poem. Furthermore, as the poem progresses, there is an increasing tendency on the part of Genius to get more digressive and encyclopedic. But at the same time Genius continues to foster the cause of Venus with great vigor and occasional low-comic wit. Amans, of course, up until the very end where he is transformed, persists as the enthusiastic though sometimes antagonized courtly lover, who more than occasionally is susceptible to and in fact eager for doctrinal instruction. He gets considerably impatient at times with the longwindedness of Genius, falls asleep during the very lengthy seventh book, and eventually cuts short the confession itself before the confessor has really gotten started on the subject of
lechery. When the confession comes to an end, the two characters in
the frame story are holding in check each other's passion—Aman's pas­sion for love and Genius's passion for lore.

The Digressions of Genius

It is Genius's passion for lore which accounts in part for many
of the digressions in the poem; but I think that these same digressions
are planned parts of the poem and not just a sprinkling of encyclopedic
knowledge for the edification of Gower's literate audience. The di­gres­sive passages are always clearly marked by marginal notes', so that
there can be little doubt that they do serve an encyclopedic purpose;
however, for the reader of the entire sin/virtue unit or more especial­ly of the entire book, these digressions are often ways of focussing
on a horizontal theme in the way that the subordinate tales often
serve to make the vertical framework more unified. It seems odd, to
me, that critics speak of Gower's digressiveness in this poem when all
of his other poetry is so compact and when his chief claim to excel­lence in the Confessio is his narrative simplicity and unity.

In order to settle this question, one does well to define terms.
For my purposes, a digression is an introduction of extraneous matter
within, or overloading of, the eight-part pattern which has already
been outlined. As I have noted above, the instances of Gower's digres­sion from that pattern are relatively few, and they usually correspond
to points of emphasis for important themes. Furthermore, nearly every
one is prompted by Aman's himself and stems from his characteristic
curiosity and from some of his very real concerns.
In Book I there are no real digressions. Three marginal notes label the form of the three estates which is employed in the unusually lengthy description of Hypocrisy in genere; but if this amounts to a digression, then it shows that Gower is linking the same mode of development from the Prologue, the *Vox Clamantis*, and the *Mirour de l'Omme*. He never again spells out the three estates in describing a sin; but this initial sin carries that embellishment as a suggestion of what might be done with any of the sins. At the end of the second book Gower becomes slightly digressive when he starts to moralize on the Boniface story. One marginal note summarizes the tale at the end (a unique instance of such a marginal technique) and a pair of notes calls attention to the decline in the Church as a result of the simony described in the story of Boniface's supplantation of Celestine as Pope. One might argue that this reference, indeed the whole tale, may not be appropriate to a lover's confession; but actually in terms of the Prologue and the development of parallels in the three estates, any discussion of the decay of the Church is symbolic of the decay in man as the result of sin and becomes perfectly legitimate or natural subject matter for the poem.

In the middle of the next tale, which undoubtedly is meant to buttress the Boniface story, a single word occurs in the margin marking the following lines with a "Nota":

For every man his oghne wone  
After the lust of his assay  
The vice or vertu chese may,  
Thus stonden alle men franchised,
Bot in astat thei ben divised;
To some worschipe and richesse,
To some povertie and distresse,
On lordeth and an other serveth;
Bot yit as every man deserveth
The world yifth noght his yiftes hire. (2/3260-69)

The thrust of the lines is simply that man does not choose his estate, whereas every man can choose either virtue or vice. The note does not especially mark a digression (these lines are part of a long speech), but it does link the other marginal notes in the book to the concept of the three estates. Another less significant deviation from the pattern occurs in the preapplication of the tale of Deianira and Nessus, which the confessor tells under the sin of False-Semblance. For thirty lines he digresses on the false-seeming of Lombards and their system of Fa-crere (make-believe credit). The analogy is apt enough for the story in which Nessus gives a shirt for curing infidelity, but the shirt turns out to be a booty trap. I see no other way in which this digression can be reconciled with the whole of the poem or with the other digressions.

However, the first really substantial digression occurs at the end of Book III, where Amans introduces the figure Danger. The regular pattern breaks down badly and thus the confession gets very much involved, in the questions first of lawful homicide, then of wartime killing, and finally of the crusades. In a section on Contek and Homocide addressed to a medieval courtly audience, these are not irrelevant issues. They link forcefully with Gower's pacifism as expressed in the Prologue and they introduce a curious disagreement
between the two parties of the confession which later prompts further outbreaks and digressions. There is no marginal note at the point where Homicide is discussed as the fifth species of Wrath, but there is a word "Nota" at the lines where such a note belongs:

\[\ldots\ \text{and do nothing be myht} \]
\[\text{Which mai be do be love and riht. (3/1859)}\]

A second note of the same variety marks a similar judgment about the uselessness of forcing baptism on pagans through warfare (3/2505). This tripartite digression at the end of Book III is still very well integrated into the dialogue of the confession and all three are marked by two or more marginal notes explaining the content of the discussion. Now, all of these homicidal subjects can be seen as the result of the adaptation of the confessor to the introduction of Danger into the dialogue.

The poet has a delicate problem here. It is not very genteel to scrutinize the lover about his possible bloody fights and murders for love. The poet skirts the issue by having Amans confess to a desire for suicide (that is in accord with courtly love emotion) and then by introducing in the lover’s confession the allegorical figure Danger, whom Amans confesses he would like to slay. The interest in homicide in the frame story is thus reinforced while at the same time Gower is reinforcing the Prologue themes about peace and war, mercy (pity) and anger. The addition of the material on the Crusades is definitely related because it shows the corruption of the ideals of the Church—now no longer a secondary theme considering the discussion above—and also allows for an interesting comment by Amans on the stupidity
of a lover's Lanceloting—it all over the world when he can get away with sitting at home with his lady. Lack of prowess, of course, on the part of the normal fourteenth-century courtier is a serious matter, as another digression will show. However, here the digression provides comic entertainment and not much real learning.

The degree of integration of Gower's digressions becomes more apparent in Book IV. Under a discussion of idleness the confessor gets around to idleness in arms, which can cause a lover's failure to win a lady's approval. The penitent and the confessor have their second in a series of heavy debates. This debate, like the last, is on the issue of prowess. There are notae in the margin on both the lover's and the confessor's arguments. In fact, at this point in the poem Amans switches roles and begins to teach Genius a little about courtly love, adducing in his defense an exemplum about Achilles. Genius counters with several tales of prowess, a discussion of the virtue of Gentilesse, and finally a long section of lore about labor, in which he includes a list of important laborers (scholars) in the arts and sciences, a short treatise on alchemy and the philosopher's stones, and a discussion of prime figures in language and letters which concludes with a reference to Ovid.

The purpose of this protracted teaching is to show that LABOR is part of the natural order, not just for women in childbirth, but for men. It is all part of the theology of man in exile from the Garden. The discussion is apt as a demonstration of the positive value of "the world of work" and the negative value of unemployment. The choice of
laborers is interesting, because for the most part they involve literary figures or persons involved in occult science. Like Yeats, Gower was eager to demonstrate that literature requires labor. Obviously, since the penitent is a poet, the digression is well suited to his occupation and thus the confessor concludes it with the mention of Ovid, thereby returning the confession to matters of love. The reason for the alchemical materials in this digression becomes more apparent in Book V. A hint of it occurs in this book at the slightly digressive point where, in speaking of Somnolence, the confessor tells a story and adds a few details about dreams. It gradually becomes clear that dreams, magic, and astronomy, as tools of the lover, are a central issue of the poem.

Before going on to the next digression, I have a curious digression of my own. The Latin note which graces the margin at the beginning of Book V and a similar note at the beginning of Book VI indicate very subtly that Gower (or whoever is responsible for the marginal notation) was aware that the pattern of sins and the pattern within each sin unit was obviously not being carried out faithfully and that in effect the confession was getting further and further from the topic. Both notes, unlike the notes which begin Books I through IV and read something like "Hic in . . . libro tractat (or loquitur) de speciebus," have instead "Hic . . . intendit . . . ." Furthermore, almost invariably when the sin framework is expanded to engulf another sin or virtue (e.g., Obstinacy is related to Despondency, but not a species of Sloth; Jealousy is parallel to and discussed under Avarice,
but not strictly speaking a species of the sin\textsuperscript{13}, a Latin note can be found in the margin. To some extent, therefore, this juggling of the five-part subsin scheme represents an intentional digression, at least in the eyes of the author of the marginalia.

Book V has three important digressions. The first is a rather long one on the gods of pagan, Jewish, and Christian faith. It begins at the prompting of Amans immediately after the story of Vulcan and Venus, a typically inapplicable tale which is told for cuckolded husbands and not for Amans. The lover, perhaps feeling quite strongly the pain of love and the irrelevancy of Genius's teaching, meekly asks where all these gods come from when there is only one God. The challenge which he hurls at the confessor is central to the whole conflict of the codes. He is saying in effect that Genius is speaking two different lines, the pagan and the Christian. The bias of the question is the presumption that Genius is a monotheist. When Genius then proceeds to slight his own Venus (there is a consistent tendency on his part to slight the Venereal), Amans does his best to bring the discussion back on course and link the digression with the Vulcan and Venus tale.

One purpose of this discussion, therefore, is to provide a dictionary of the gods for the sake of interpreting all the stories told about them.\textsuperscript{14} The Latin marginal note marking this digression makes it clear that Gower intended his readers to use it as a dictionary of this kind:
The description of the gods is patterned after the characterizations in the tales themselves. In many cases it amounts to little more than the name, origin, occupation, and characteristic vice. The incestuous relations of the gods are repeatedly noted and, as Peck has pointed out, incest is shown to be the cause of Cupid's blindness. I think that incest is indeed an important concept in this poem because Genius keeps harping on it, but not because it is the paradigm of lechery, as Peck would have it. This digression is an important example, too, of the ability of Genius to provide a very strictly Christian moral instruction and then nearly erase the entire impact of it by providing some scatological material at the end. For, when Amans calls his attention to the fact that he has overlooked his own Venus and Cupid, Genius does a thorough job of characterizing them as anti-Christian and then adds, going beyond the request of Amans, a description of the Greek gods, their sins, and the parts of the body to which they correspond. This digression within a digression is obviously a serviceable parallel to the status of Nebuchadnezzar and another way to schematize the seven deadly sins; however, ending the digression with Venus in the crotch goes beyond instruction to the kind of ironic undercutting for which Chaucer is so justly famous.
And Venus thurgh the Lecherie, 
For which that thei hire deifie, 
Sche kept al doun the remenant 
To thilke office apourtenant. (5/1493-96)

The second digression in Book V probably goes unnoticed by most readers because it comes in the middle of the story of Jason and Medea. However, according to my definition of a digression as any substantial deviation from the eight-part pattern, this middle section of the story is digressive. It describes the concoction of Medea for transforming Jason's old father into a youth but otherwise has nothing to do with the story. It does, however, like all of Gower's digressions, have much to do with the rest of the poem. As I have shown above, this transformation parallels Amans's metamorphosis in the frame story. It continues the highlighting of the theme of magic and alchemy which we have seen in other digressions. Furthermore, this section of the story is marked by a note in the margin which indicates its importance; and yet the rest of the very long tale is not summarized in the margins as is the case with the three other long tales (Florent, Constance, and Apollonius). The author of the marginal notes is probably holding back here in order to set off this one important note about magic and alchemy. It is the only story which has such an internal note. Only two other tales contain any notes in the margin besides the introductory one. The story of Midas has "Salomon, Pecunie obediunt omnia" (5/236-7) and the story of Ulysses and Telegonus has two similar short quotations, one attributed to Horace and one from Bernardus. Unlike these short quotations, the
note in the story of Jason and Medea offers an important piece of
cyclopedic lore:

Nota quibus medicamentis Esonem senectute decrep-
itum ad sue iuventutis adolescenciam prudens Medea
reduxit. (5/3957-60)

The final digression in Book V is on virginity and follows a
discussion of the sin of robbing a girl of her maidenhead. Genius
decides to enter a tale in commendation of virginity, a not very Vener-
0al thing to do. Amans responds that such a policy would end the work
of Nature and exterminate the human race (5/6419). Again their roles
are reversed. Amans is saying here what Genius has already said a
doenz times and is showing the confessor again that he is veering from
his path. This digression is a short one and might be considered mere-
ly as another related virtue unit, except that Virgtnity does not fit
as a remedy for Avarice. It does fit, however, into the pattern of
digressions which we have been studying.

In Book VI there is a very unusual digression which, following the
pattern of reversal of roles, puts the stole on Amans. Most readers
would again overlook this departure, especially if they ignore the
rationale of the marginal notations. Love-delicacy is the topic and
Amans is confessing initially that he has no such guilt, except a few
small lusts. Genius primes him to go on and Amans proceeds to outline
his discussion in one paragraph and then to follow the outline, speak-
ing first of the delights of seeing (a marginal note reads, Nota qua-
liter visus in amore se continet delicatus). This paragraph lasts for
eighty lines and then a second begins on the delights of hearing (Qua-liter auris in amore delectatur, the note reads). In the next paragraph Amans discusses his delights of thought (one expects a marginal note here, but for some reason it comes two paragraphs later, Qualiter cogitatus impressiones letitie ymaginatiuas cordibus inserit amantum.), which include references to listening to romances and other tales. They show quite clearly that the stories in the Confessio are probably working no conversion in Amans, but actually form a part of his world of love-delights. The next paragraph of this long speech is a summary of his treatise on love-delicacy and is marked in the margin by the word "Amans," in the same way that the post-application of the tales are marked by the word "Confessor." Similarly, the formula for those post-applications is also used in reverse, "Lo thus, mi fader . . . " (6/899). Not only is the form reversed here, but the discussion of love-delights parallels the confessor's opening remarks about the custody of the senses and shows how Gower balances the hard-line Christian doctrine at a later point with the same material from a courtly love perspective.

At the end of Book VI Gower digresses from Gluttony to speak of Sorcery and Witchcraft, a subject which he has been digressing on from the start. This discussion in the sin-unit form involves the key tale of Nectanabus. It would be difficult to find a tale more representative of the numerous themes and ploys of the Confessio and more central to the poem as a whole. Nectanabus, of course, is a magician and related to Alexander. The whole of Book VII is prompted by Amans's
desire to be distracted from pain, but also by his interest in both Alexander and magic. The whole of Book VII is not solely a **speculum regale**. If you look at the number of lines per branch of knowledge, it becomes apparent that rhetoric and practic receive very short shrift (if I may revitalize the cliche) compared to theoric. Moreover, theoric is dominated almost entirely by the four elements, astronomy, magic stones, and the list of the great astronomers (1200 lines for this; the entire tree of theoric knowledge is completed in only 1445 lines). Then Genius moves on to the five points of policy (undoubtedly this part is essential to the **speculum regale**) and returns to the basic pattern of the sin/virtue units, except that he relies heavily on a multiple-exempla pattern of very short stories which consist of almost nothing but allusions. It should be clear that the five points of policy not only are useful for a king, but also bear heavily as well on the central themes of the poem. It is absurd to say, as Fisher does,\(^1\) that justice (the third point of policy) is the key point among the five. That is only the case if one views the entire poem as essentially a **Königsspiegel**, but obviously all the points are important for different themes and contexts. Chastity at the end accords well with the previous digression on Virginity in Book V and also returns the frame story to dead center before the final book.

Gower's digressions, then, function so well in the poem that it is inaccurate to call them digressions. They flow quite naturally from the loquacious character of Genius—although some of them come in the
tales themselves and some occur in the confessions of Amans. All of the digressions correspond to some request or apparent need of Amans. Furthermore, the digressions are often consecutive and build upon each other in the same way that themes are reiterated throughout the poem. The content of the digressions is also indicative of the poet's desire to present both courtly and Christian lore. For the courtly lover Genius provides digressions on love's crafts: magic, alchemy, and astronomy. He also digresses on the delights of love and the necessity for prowess and travail on the part of the knight. For the Christian he has digressions on the pagan and Christian gods, virginity, and the education of the prince (which includes hints helpful for any man). There is every reason to believe that Gower planned his digressions.

Gower's Use of His Sources

Enough of Gower's so-called digressions. There is one other factor in the composition of this poem which bears on the problem of the conflict of codes, namely, the author's consistent principle of selection and adaptation of his sources. An initial indication, however, must be given about how thoroughly dependent on his sources Gower actually is. When George G. Fox studied Gower's scientific learning in The Mediaeval Sciences in the Works of John Gower (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), his conclusion was that Gower was no philosopher, that he simply threw down information from whatever
source was available, whether he understood it or not. A quick look at H. C. Mainzer's "A Study of the Sources of the Confessio Amantis of John Gower" (Oxford Dissertation, 1967) shows that not only the more than one hundred stories, but also almost every piece of encyclopedic learning down to the lists of famous lovers and the associations of the gods of Greece with the parts of the body, can be traced to a well-known and readily available source. If you consider the basic eight-part pattern, there is hardly a section of it which is not very strongly affected by source material or some poetic genre. The definition of the sin in genere, the lover's complaint in confession, the moralizations in the stories, the tales themselves, and most of the digressions are in a sense moveable pieces. Gower's originality lies in the definition in love's cause, the transitions between the parts, the frame story and confessional dialogue, and especially the selection, adaptation, and application of the tales.

It would obviously be incorrect to say that Gower merely threw his stories and other components together without being selective, simply because many of the stories and digressions do not fit the sin framework. The range of sources which Gower had at his disposal shows that he had a large knowledge and a very large library for his day. The Confessio draws from a list of over fifty works (see Mainzer's list of titles which "Gower could have used" \(^{18}\)), classical, patristic, and medieval. The amount of material which he uses is not nearly a tenth of what he might have taken from the sources which he definitely did use. He, therefore, was being very selective. One can easily see
that he preferred tales with aristocratic, non-Christian settings and with a certain touch of relevance to contemporary social and psychological phenomena. He was not choosing tales because of their suitability to the sin framework, because otherwise he might well have taken more familiar and more telling tales from the Bible (e.g., the story of Susanna instead of the tale of Acteon). Even if he meant to favor non-biblical tales, he often tells a story only slightly applicable to the sin, when he has in reserve another tale which he uses as a subordinate or buttressing tale, as I have shown above. At times he tells a tale under one sin which seems to be more applicable to another.

It seems to me, without having made a thorough study of the tales and their sources, that Gower's stories more often than not are selected and adapted for the sake of the horizontal than for the vertical. They more frequently keep alive the thematic network than the sin framework.

In addition, with regard to the conflict of courtly love and Christian morality, Gower reveals a definite desire to mingle and confuse the two codes.

Attempting to determine which sources Gower used for any particular story is an enormously difficult problem. Mainzer's study is only a beginning toward this task: and seldom shows fully convincing evidence for Gower's direct use of any one source. It is Gower's fault and the fault of the Middle Ages. Gower seldom seems to use a single source for a story; often he seems to have three to six versions of a given tale either before him or in his memory. A good example is the Ovidian material. Mainzer shows that Gower used five different medie-
val moralizations of Ovid and suggests that the poet also had access to medieval texts of Ovid himself. In the twelve stories where Gower is using the matter of Troy, he works from both Benoit’s *Roman de Troie* and Guido’s *Historia Troiana*. Macaulay’s fairly extensive notes on Gower’s use of these two sources do not reveal any pattern of selection of details.

For the most part, it can only be said that Gower usually abbreviated the stories he was borrowing and preferred the more emotional style of Benoit to the more detached style of Guido. This tendency to abbreviate and perhaps, too, the fact that he often worked from memory caused Gower to reproduce only the plot of many stories. Then, too, for many of his tales (about thirty) no source has yet been discovered. Unfortunately, therefore, as far as scholarship has reached in determining Gower’s sources, there are only a few fully told tales which seem to come from a particular medieval known source available to Gower. One is the Tale of Florent, the adaptation of which I have already discussed as an example of a tale of transformation. A second is the tale of Jason and Medea, the three parts of which have fairly well-defined single sources. Gower’s adaptation of the three parts of this tale was mentioned earlier in connection with Gower’s principle of digression.

Another tale seemingly adapted from a singular source is the finely told story of Achilles and Deidamia which Gower takes from Book I of Statius’s *Achilleid*. Mainzer shows that this source was undoubtedly readily available to Gower since it formed part of the basic library used in the schools of his day. Gower demonstrates his superb
craftsmanship in reducing Statius's 990 lines to 130 of his own couplets. He slightly reconstructs the plot and suppresses a great deal of the passages relevant to the Trojan War and to the psychological struggle of Achilles, who in Statius's account is going through an identity crisis, trying to discover his manhood and being delayed by his mother and his own passion from the ultimate proof of masculinity, the glories of warfare. Gower also submerges the heroic by omitting all of the Homeric similes which form a major part of Statius's narrative.

The rearrangement of the basic details of the plot seems to accomplish the task of whitewashing the protagonist. Gower says only that Achilles was obeying his mother when she had him disguise himself as a woman; and when Achilles and Deidamia were put together in the same bedchamber, the poet remarks that Nature took over: one kiss led to another, just as in the case of Canace and Machaire. The whole treatment in Gower's tale is very sympathetic to the love affair; but the source tale shows that Achilles questioned his mother from the start and only consented to her plan because he saw Deidamia and the other maidens dancing in a grove. In this scene, which Gower omits altogether, Statius describes the young Achilles as one gone wild among the girls. In another key scene omitted by Gower Statius shows how Achilles actually rapes Deidamia during a feast. The story in Statius is actually one of a boy's first passionate, lustful love; but Gower has transformed it into one which reveals that the sin of feigning will produce a grave penalty such as offspring like Pirrus.
In other words, treachery is rewarded by treachery.

Deidamia is also whitewashed in Gower's version because in Statius her suspicions and knowledge of the situation are fully described. She is referred to as "improba virgo" in Statius because she is compliant with the design of Thetis to keep Achilles from the battlefield. At the end of the tale she is shown weeping at Achilles' departure for battle, almost in the same fashion that Dido complained of Aeneas's destined departure for the great work of founding the Roman Empire. Gower suppresses this dimension of the story, however, in favor of a more courtly characterization and narrative.

There is some evidence that Gower may have had another version of this tale, despite Mainzer's conclusion to the contrary, because Gower has Protheus, the astronomer and learned clerk, reveal the whereabouts of Achilles in the Greek parliament. Statius records that Calchas, the prophet, did the trick. It seems quite likely to me that Gower was altering the content of this tale for his own purposes, which I have described above in connection with his other digressions on magic, astronomy, and sorcery. Just as he implants the alchemical digression in the story of Jason and Medea, Gower takes this opportunity to substitute for prophecy the secret knowledge of the sciences. This story is just another case in point that Genius is working both ends to the middle. At times he takes the pagan story and uses it with full force to support the most vigorous element of the Christian code of sexual morality (e.g., the Tale of Acteon) and at times, as in this tale of Achilles and Deidamia, he completely exonerates the pagan
hero and tells the tale in the fashion of courtly love.

I feel that if more were known about Gower's sources and if more careful study of the other more complex tales were done, this same conclusion could be reached with more conviction. There can be little doubt that the intentions of the author in terms of courtly and Christian codes would definitely be revealed in a more thorough study of how he adapts his sources to his scheme.

Conclusion

Gower's adaptation to the scheme which we have been studying in this chapter is very rigid and formal. Only the fact that he is attempting to carry on so many different schemes at once makes the total cathedral of his work so impressive. The difficulty for the modern reader in appreciating the spectre has been spelled out by many. What untrained modern can fully appreciate the Latin dialectic of Aquinas? The splendor and diversity of the *summa* are concealed for most readers under the monotonous cloak of formalism. The same can be said for Gower's encyclopedia of love. The modern reader sees "machinery," a moral system, and digressions. The medieval and the renaissance man saw great wealth and ingenuity. The media have changed and only Chartres, the more visible and sensible manifestation of the medieval mind, still attracts the attention of modern men.

The fascination for me in this study is to see Gower at great pains to solve the problem with the problem, to eliminate one sin by another, to achieve peace by war, to defeat bureaucracy by a firmer com-
mitment to monarchy, to replace ignorance and irrationality with medie-
val learning. In recognizing the contradictions in all the spheres of
human life, but especially in the practical, social, and moral spheres,
Gower came to grips with all the elements for a solution to the problem.
But at the same time he applied the solution of the encyclopedia, which
in many ways was the problem. The medieval learned man of the fourteenth
century had gotten out of touch with reality because the goose quill
"had put an end to talk," as McLuhan describes it. The goose quill
"gave architecture and towns . . . roads and armies, bureaucracy."20
There is ample evidence that the medieval man did have his ears open;
but McLuhan is right that the balance between the kinds of communication
was substantially disturbed and the contradictions of life seemed sub-
stantially more obtrusive to a mind like Gower's which was so very lit-
eral and form-conscious, which virtually shut off the eyes and ears to
every other form of experience except the learned disquisition, the
Bible, and literature.
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER III


2 Emile Mâle speaks of the didactic nature of the cathedral and often refers to it as a book in his work *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Harper Torch., 1958). However, the deepest impression I have of the cathedral as a book comes from a lecture which I heard in February, 1971 at a conference on the medieval artist and the expectations of his audience. The lecture was delivered by Professor Harry Bober of New York University's Institute of Fine Arts.

3 Professor Bober documented that such tours did exist.

4 I am limiting myself in this discussion to the Confessio, but clearly the *Divina Commedia* and the *Roman de la Rose* share to some degree the qualities I describe as characteristic of the gothic cathedral.

5 Panofsky, p. 31.

6 Panofsky, p. 64.

7 Panofsky, p. 64.

8 Panofsky, p. 69.


10 Maria Wickert, *Studien zu Gower* (Köln: Kölnner Universitäts Verlag, 1953).

11 For example, he could use the Susanna story for mislok or the story of Eve for "mishear."

12 Nevertheless, Fisher still holds that Book I is not on love.

13 See the marginal notes on page 394 (Obstinacy), 414 (Jealousy), 121 (Virginity), and 161 (Largitas).
A comparable modern critical tool of great value is Zelma B. Leonhard's "Gower's Treatment of Classical Mythology in the *Confessio Amantis*" (Diss. Northwestern, 1944).


The progression here is from the head to the tongue to the throat to the shoulders and arms to the breast to the gall to the stomach to the womb to the remenant. The word remenant is one of those which I suspect carries double meaning throughout the poem.


Mainzer, p. 335.

Mainzer, p. 228.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROJECTIONS

In this dissertation I have demonstrated three different features of the composition of the *Confessio Amantis*. In the first place, I have shown that a major theme of the poem and an essential notion in Gower's philosophy is that everything has an opposite into which it may be transformed. The concepts of transformation and opposition borrowed from the Platonic tradition found in the *Timaeus* and echoed in the poets associated with the school of Chartres can be traced in many of the tales and in the frame story as well. Much more could be done to study the influence of Ovid, especially of the *Metamorphoses*, on the literature of the Middle Ages. The concepts of transformation and opposition are part of the larger themes of mutability and contempt for the world which have already been studied in the history of ideas.

In the second chapter I have described the rest of Gower's conceptual framework by concentrating on defining love and love themes in terms of twenty of the most important concepts in the poem. The result is a picture of the elaborate horizontal network of themes which Gower is weaving in and out of the vertical structure of the seven deadly sins and their branches. The definition of love which derives from that study is decidedly attuned to the courtly love tradition. There is no mention of *amor amicitiae* or *amor Dei*, and very little mention of *amor*
caritatis. Love is seen primarily as a cosmic force functioning in
the macrocosm as the counterpart of *Natura naturata* and ruling the mutable world—a mixture of opposites—according to the emblem of fortune, the revolving wheel; love functions in the microcosm as a natural internal force which rules the heart, banishing reason and her allies (wit, counsel, conscience, and the wits) and establishing will and hope in their place. Except for the last ten lines of the poem, love for Gower is an earthly love, neither good nor bad in itself. It comes inevitably upon a man and works its will against man's feeble strength. However, when governed by reason, it is called honest—or faithful—love (usually found in marriage) or true love (the love of one paramour); when reason is banished and more than one person is loved or new loves are constantly sought, then it is bestial or fleshly or worldly lust.

The technique of producing a literary thesaurus of a particular work is only crudely exhibited in this chapter. However, I suspect that with computerized concordances of Chaucer, the *Roman de la Rose*, and the *Confessio* in the making, very soon the kind of literary associogram which I have only begun here will become available and be found quite valuable as a tool of research. It will help produce accurate studies of the interrelationships between various important concepts and in a sense personify those concepts so that they become actors in a drama, usually psychomachic as John V. Fleming points out in *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 106. In effect, such a study would help transform (in our imaginations) Gower's heavily abstract and philosoph-
tactical treatise into an allegory like the *Roman de la Rose* or the *Faerie Queene*. The influence of Gower on Spenser has been studied only in the case of a few details of borrowing, but not with respect to the overall conceptual scheme. A literary thesaurus of the *Faerie Queene* would probably look as much like John Gower's *Confessio* as any other piece of literature.

The value of these first two chapters for directly solving the problem of the conflict of the two codes is minimal. The system of oppositions which Gower rests on so heavily in his metaphysics and cosmology certainly establishes the possibility of mingling conflicting codes and of transforming one system into the other by a kind of transvestism of language. This can be accomplished in two ways or by two different ironies; the two systems can be described in the language of religion or they can be described in the language of obscenity. Gower does both; and many of his contemporaries and his literary ancestors did as well. The definition of love which derived from this second chapter shows that in speaking of love, Gower is working primarily in the courtly love tradition.

It is in close study of the vertical structure, however, that one comes to grips with Gower's mingling of the two codes. I have found his technique to be remarkably similar to that of Aquinas in constructing the *Summa*. The reconciliation of opposite or contradictory arguments in the pattern of the *videtur, sed contra, respondeo dicendum quod*, what Panofsky calls *concordantia*, is what characterizes Gower's technique best. Gower indicates in an early version of the poem that
King Richard II commissioned him to write the *Confessio* (0/42*). Chances are good that the king expressed the desire that moral Gower give courtly love a fair chance, and thus Gower constructed a frame story which identifies himself with the courtly lover and used a vertical structure in a dramatic setting of the confessional which allowed him to speak from both sides and to undercut what both sides had to say. The result, I would say, is a remarkable achievement in a style not unlike other great poems of the period, including the *Roman de la Rose* and *Troilus and Criseyde*. 

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Beichner, Paul E., C.S.C. "Gower's Use of Aurora in Vox Clamantis," Spec., 30 (Oct. 1955), 582-95. (Shows mosaic technique and Gower's dependence on Peter Riga for lists and interpretations; Beichner has also recently edited the Aurora.)

Bennett, J. A. W. "Gower's 'Honeste Love,'" in Patterns of Love and Courtesy: Essays in Memory of C. S. Lewis, ed. John Lawlor. Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1966. (Shows the importance of chaste marriage in Gower's doctrine; an important article.)


Byrne, Mary of the Incarnation, Sister. "The Tradition of the Nun in Medieval England," Diss. Catholic Univ., 1932. (Talks about Genius as the director of the convent in Alanus de Insulis.)
Callan, Norman, "Thyne Owne Book: A Note on Chaucer, Gower, and Ovid," RES, 22 (Oct., 1946), 269-81. (Compares Chaucer and Gower on the basis of Pyramus and Thisbe story, use of Ovide Moralise, and the use of Ovid directly; an important article on Gower's narrative art.)

Casson, Leslie F., "Studies in the Diction of the Confessio Amantis," E. Studien, 69 (1934), 184-207. (Claims that Gower is a more daring innovator than Chaucer; shows aureate diction, French and Old English borrowings, use of compounds of contrast and likeness.)


Chapin, D. F., "Theme and Structure in Gower's Confessio Amantis," Diss., Toronto, 1964. (I was unable to get a film of this work.)


Coffman, George R., "John Gower in His Most Significant Role," Elizabethan Studies . . . in Honor of George F. Reynolds, Boulder: Colorado Univ. Press, 1945, (Gower as social critic and moralist; Confessio as summa moralis.)

---, "John Gower, Mentor for Royalty: Richard II," PMLA, 69 (Sept., 1954), 953-64. (Compares Gower's literary work with historical documents; treats the relation of love, wisdom, and virtue; sees the Confessio as Königsspiegel.)

Colvile, Kenneth N., Fame's Twilight: Studies of Nine Ken of Letters, London: P. Allan and Co., 1923. (Compares Chaucer and Gower; May vs Autumn.)

Comtois, Cecilie D., "Rhetoric in Gower's Speculum Meditantis," Diss., Fordham, 1953. (Traces the speculum tradition; shows ample use of the rhetorical figures.)


Daniels, R. Balfour, "Figures of Rhetoric in John Gower's English Works," Diss, Yale, 1934. (Claims that Gower knew the rhetoric of Poetria Nova and especially fond of using rhetorical colors.)

---. "Rhetoric in Gower's To Henry the Fourth in Praise of Peace," SP, 32 (1935), 62-73. (For Gower, poetical = rhetorical.)

Davison, Herbert M. "John Gower's Use in the Confessio Amantis of the Narrative Material of Ovid," MA Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1940. (Gives the history of Ovid's influence before Gower; shows Gower's use of Ovid in forty of 106 fully-told tales.)


Dodd, William George. Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower. Boston: Ginn and Co., 1913. (One small chapter on Gower gives the frame story plot, classifies the audience according to the lovers addressed in Gower's ballades, analyzes the three characters for courtly love tenets, goes through each sin and branch to study courtly-love and Christian-morality conflicts, and argues that Gower's treatment of love is conventional.)

Dulak, Robert E. "Gower's Tale of Constance," No, 198 (Sept, 1953), 368-9. (Source study showing Gower's intention to portray three kinds of baptism in the story about Constance.)

Dwyer, J. B., S.J. "Gower's Mirour and its French Sources: a Reexamination of Evidence," SP, 98 (1951), 482-505. (Argues against some of Fowler's generalizations and shows partial source for the Mirour is the Somme des Vices et Vertues.)


Fahrenberg, F. "Zur Sprache der Confessio Amantis," Archiv, 89 (1892), 392. (Primarily rhyme analysis.)

Ferguson, Arthur B. The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance. Durham: Duke University Press, 1965. (Sees Gower's work as a treatise on man's state and the spiritual life; sees Gower and Langland as negative, unconstructive policy-makers; compares also to Wyclif.)

Fisher, John H. "A Calendar of Documents Relating to the Life of John Gower the Poet," JEGP, 57 (1959), 1-23. (A list of all the significant records without any assessment.)


Fison, Peter. "The Poet in John Gower," EIC, 8 (1958), 16-26. (Stresses non-political purpose of the Confessio and the psychological aspects of the poem worked out in concrete terms; praises the effectiveness of the form in which Gower tells his tales.)


-----, "Gower's Mirour de l'Homme und Chaucers Prolog," Anglia, 24 (1901), 437-503. (Compares social conditions in two poems.)


Fowler, R. Elfreda, Une Source francaise des Poèmes de Gower. Paris: 1905. (Treats the vices and virtues.)
Fox, George G. The Mediaeval Sciences in the Works of John Gower, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931. (After studies of nature, fortune, cosmos, astrology, drama, alchemy, and magic, concludes that Gower was non-speculative and encyclopedic.)

Gallacher, Patrick J. "The Structural Uses of the Theme of Speech in John Gower's Confessio Amantis," Diss, Illinois, 1967. (Sees three dialogues going on at once; classifies four kinds of stories based on the kind of dialogue.)

Garnett, Richard. English Literature: An Illustrated Record, 4 vols, London: Macmillan, 1903. (Has some important illustrations.)

Garrett, Robert Max. "Cleopatra the Martyr and Her Sisters," JEGP, 22 (1923), 64-74. (Compares the Confessio with the Legend of Good Women.)


Gilbert, Allan H. "Notes on the Influence of the Secretum Secretorum," Spec., 3 (1928), 84-98. (Source for the seventh book of the Confessio; Gower had two different versions of the whole of the Secretum Secretorum.)


-----, Confessio Amantis, tr. Terence Tiller, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963. (Also available in Penguin Classics; a good selection which still preserves the frame story.)


-----, Selections from John Gower, ed. J. A. W. Bennett, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968. (The introduction has a critical bias and the selection of tales is not always satisfactory.)
Hagman, Lynn W. "A Study of Gower's Cinkante Balades." Diss. Detroit, 1968. (Deals with structure, sequence, imagery, philosophical attitudes, and concepts.)

Hamilton, George L. "Notes on Gower," MLN, 19 (1904), 52-3. (The source for Confessio 5/6498 and Mirour 23449 is Jacques de Vitry.)

-----. "Some Sources of the Seventh Book of Gower's Confessio Amantis," MP, 9 (1911), 323-46. (Gower is indebted to Secretum Secretorum in both Latin and French versions.)

-----. "Studies in the Sources of Gower," JEGP, 26 (1927), 491-520. (Deals with Hercules, Nectanabus, and Alexander sources in French and Latin versions of Barlaam and Josaphat and in the Alexander Legend.)

Hazelton, Richard Marquand. "Two Texts of the Disticha Catonis and Its Commentary, with Special Reference to Chaucer, Langland, and Gower," Diss. Rutgers, 1956. (Provides two glossed texts and shows how Cato's wisdom is integrated into medieval Christian thought; not much directly pertaining to Gower.)


Knowlton, E. G. "The Allegorical Figure Genius." Classical Phil., 15 (1920), 380-84. (Gower's Genius in light of the traditional figure from Alanus de Insulis and Jean de Meun.)

-----. "Genius as an Allegorical Figure," MLN, 39 (1924), 89.

Lawlor, John. "On Romanticism in the Confessio Amantis," in Patterns of Love and Courtesy: Essays in Memory of C. S. Lewis, ed. John Lawlor. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966. (Gower is romantic in that he no longer believes in the ancient Pantheon; yet he shows interest in it.)


Leonhard, Zelma B. "Gower's Treatment of Classical Mythology in the Confessio Amantis." Diss. Northwestern, 1944. (An onomasticon of over 300 names of deities, persons, and places used by Gower; gives frequency, probable source, and general discussion of Gower's art.)


-----. The Discarded Image. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964. (Genius material.)

-----. Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965. (Contains a chapter on Genius.)

The Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors, ed. Charles W. Moulton. Buffalo: Moulton Publishing Co., 1901-5. (Gives a selection of criticism from Gower himself to nineteenth-century; gives references in poetry and letters from Troilus to Pope.)

Lücke, Emil G. Das Leben der Constance bei Trivet, Gower und Chaucer. Diss. Leipzig, 1891. See also Anglia, 14 (1891), 77-122, 147-185.


Meindl, Robert James. "A New Reading of John Gower's Confessio Amantis." Diss. Tulane, 1965. (Shows the progress of the dialogue as a war between philosophies and personalities, going from the City of the World to the City of God; sees the stories as confounding the priest of Venus.)


Murphy, James Jerome. "Chaucer, Gower, and the English Rhetorical Tradition." Diss. Stanford, 1957. (Denies the existence of evidence for an English rhetorical tradition; the English only followed foreign models; Gower and Chaucer displayed no technical knowledge of rhetoric beyond grammar school level.)

---. "John Gower's Confessio Amantis and the First Discussion of Rhetoric in the English Language," PQ, 41 (1962), 401-11. (A summary of the dissertation with emphasis on Gower's treatise on rhetoric in Book VII; sees the Confessio as a series of exempla collected by an eclectic who knew nothing of his subject.)

Naunin, Traugott. Der Einfluss der mittelalterlichen Rhetorik auf Chaucers Dichtung. Bonn, 1929. (Ancient rhetoric was taught in medieval schools and Chaucer is the first to pick it up in England; Gower, however, shows little acquaintance with rhetoric.)

Neville, Marie E. "The Vulgate and Gower's Confessio Amantis." Diss. Ohio State, 1950. (Source and style study.)


---. "Gower's Narrative Art," PHI, 81 (Dec. 1966), 475-484. (A key critical article; shows success of the poet in his verse, narrative frame, and stories; ample discussion of love and Ovid, Chaucer and Gower.)


Raymo, Robert R. "Gower's Vox Clamantis and the Speculum Stultorum," MLN, 70 (May 1955), 315-320. (Close analysis of Gower's use of narrative material and large quotations out of context.)

-----. "Vox Clamantis, IV, 12," MLN, 71 (Feb. 1956), 82-3. (Same.)


Schueler, Donald Gustave. "The Age of the Lover in Gower's Confessio Amantis," Med. Aev., 36 (1967), 152-58. (The agedness of the author is shown throughout the poem: contrary to Dodd and Lewis, argues that changes in courtly love convention are not arbitrary.)

-----. "A Critical Evaluation of John Gower's Confessio Amantis," Diss. Louisiana State, 1962. (Gower as encyclopedic author of medievalia; treats the basic critical problems of structure, narrative and poetic art, definition of love, ethical content, and purpose.)

-----. "Some Comments on the Structure of John Gower's Confessio Amantis," in Explorations of Literature, ed. Rima D. Reck, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966. (Explains the deterioration of the geometric form of the poem on the basis of the characterization of Amans and Genius as well as on Gower's desire to preserve the naturalness of the dialogue; deals with the digressions to some extent.)

Seaton, Ethel. "Le Songe Verte: Its Occasion of Writing and Its Author," Med. Aev., 19 (1950), 1-12. (Claims that this French dream-vision lover's conversion by Venus from black to green clothes refers to Richard's loss of Anne in 1394 and subsequent marriage to Isabelle; argues that Gower is the most likely author of such a poem.)


---. Ein Lexicographisches Experiment. Hamburg, 1905. See also Archiv, 116 (1906), III.


Stillwell, Gardiner. "Chaucer's Eagles and Their Choice on February 14," JEGP, 53 (Oct. 1954), 556-561. (Describes tradition of Valentine love poems; uses Gower's ballades 34 and 35.)

---. "John Gower and the Last Years of Edward III," SP, 45 (July 1948), 454-72. (On Gower's hostility to Lancastrian party and other political evidence in the Mirour; cites references to Edward's mistress and contrast to Confessio 7/1783.)


Thorpe, Lewis. "A Source for the Confessio Amantis," MLR, 43 (April 1948), 175-81. (Story of the False Bachelor from Le Roman de Marques de Rome.)


Todd, Henry John. Illustration of the Lives and Writings of Gower and Chaucer. London: C. and J. Rivington, 1810. (Mostly extracts from poetry with a few facsimiles of Miss.)


Walz, Gotthard, Das Sprichwort bei Gower mit Besonderem Hinweis auf Quellen und Parallelen. Diss. Munich, 1905.


Wickert, Maria, Studien zu Gower. Köln: Kölner Universitäts Verlag, 1953. (Mostly a study of the Vox, but also has sections on Gower's cosmology, narrative art, and the education of a prince.)

Williams, Lynn F., "The Gods of Love in Ancient and Medieval Literature as Background of John Gower's Confessio Amantis. Diss. Columbia, 1968. (Traces the tradition of the gods of love in medieval literature; Amans is too old to reproduce; treats symbolism, caritas versus cupiditas.)