

VOICE AND MEANING:  
WRITING AUTHORITY IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND AND IBERIA

A Dissertation  
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Cornell University  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
by  
Juan David Sierra  
August 2011

© 2011 Juan David Sierra

VOICE AND MEANING:  
WRITING AUTHORITY IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND AND IBERIA

Juan David Sierra, Ph.D.

Cornell University 2011

My dissertation tells the story of how the separation of voice and meaning in discursive structures became bound up with legitimating the fifteenth-century conquest of non-Christian lands. This is because the possibility of extending secular dominion into lands outside traditional legitimating practices necessitated a new rethinking of the use and discourse of authority. At the center of this change in meaning and voice were the Iberian translations of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* that joined two different modalities of questioning the presentation of authority through writing: a Castilian approach, which disassociated the experience of reading from the verisimilitude of narration, and an English one, which undermined the possibility of speech to communicate truth. This synthesis justified colonialism because it gave sovereigns the means to speak with authority in a place outside universal language and law.

The Iberian and English traditions which influenced Gower's translation into Portuguese, therefore, support the idea that there was a growing disconnect between the power of their ideas and the ways in which they were conveyed. The most disseminated examples of Castilian historiography and English translation separated *what* they meant from *how* they said it. They made spaces for understanding which were outside of communication—spaces which proved that signs could divorce their social uses from their ability to signify while still retaining their ability to change the world. These spaces, in being taken up by the Portuguese translations of Gower's *Confessio*, helped Europe fashion a concept of sovereignty applicable outside the boundaries of Western discourse.

My project, therefore, works as a new comparative study of medieval literatures and of the effects of medieval culture in contemporary discussions of post-colonial agency. It does this first by providing an analysis of legal discourse and the use of metaphors to vindicate colonial authority in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Second, it shows how the cross-cultural interchange of two medieval discursive traditions that are usually read separately—those of Iberia and of England—were synthesized in ways that paralleled this legalistic discourse. The result is the first comparative study of England and Iberian literature as it bears on larger questions of fifteenth-century political agency.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Juan David Sierra was born March 31, 1982 in Bogotá, Colombia. In June 20, 1992, he immigrated to the United States along with his family; nine years later, he was legally naturalized. In 2005, he graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in English. Influenced by the examples of Professors Andrew Cole and Beatrice Hanssen, he decided to pursue graduate studies in Comparative Literature at Cornell University upon immediate completion of his undergraduate degree.

*To Edilma Forero and Elvia Forero de Avila:  
Dominus pascit me nihil mihi deerit*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first thank the several academic authorities whose insights have been essential to this work. My Special Committee, Andrew Galloway, William J. Kennedy, and Timothy Murray, for their hard work and patient eye in deciphering my oft-times labyrinthine prose and thought process. My chair Andrew Galloway has not only been a whetstone to sharpen my mind, but also a mentor and true “auctoritas” whom I have always tried to emulate albeit imperfectly. Along with my chair, my minor committee members have been a source of profound encouragement and inspiration throughout my stay at Cornell. William J. Kennedy has closely guarded my writing and intellect from straying. Tim Murray has carefully looked after my scholarly growth and helped keep my thoughts in perspective. Additionally, I would like to thank Simone Pinet for first directing me to the subject of my dissertation and sparking my curiosity to navigate uncharted lands.

Thanks are further due to my friends and peers for enduring the labor of my thought. Caroline Ferraris-Besso, María Fernanda Negrete Martínez, and Kavita Singh have been a light for me in dark places. Without their help, this dissertation would not have been birthed. Henry Berlin, Beth Bouloukos, Joseph Stevens, and Paloma Yannakakis have sheltered me through harsh winters with unbounded hospitality. My dear friends Milan Allan, Hanh Phuong Nguyen, David Rojas, and Christopher Tucker have, through their support and attention, provided me much needed respite and nepenthe in this seemingly endless journey.

A note of gratitude also goes to the Institute for European Studies, the Office of the Provost, and the Graduate School at Cornell University, for funding the research which made this dissertation possible. Last but certainly not least, I would also like to thank my family, and in particular my mother Gloria Sierra, whose profound wisdom is exceeded only by her love.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Sketch.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Introduction.....	1
I: Colonial Hermeneutics: Infidel Universality and the Writing of Sovereignty.....	13
II: Iberian Gower: Translating Authority.....	75
III: Castile: Stories Without Truth.....	141
IV: England: England: Translation Without Meaning.....	205
Conclusion: The Voice of Colonialism.....	262
Works Cited.....	274

## INTRODUCTION

Although the following is the first comparative study of English and Iberian discursive shifts of authority, it certainly is not the first study of the disassociation of meaning and voice in fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Since Johan Huizinga's study of the courtly art and culture of France and the Low Countries, the late medieval period has been characterized by cultural historians as a time in which social mores and traditional structures of power were disassociated from discursive structures.<sup>1</sup> It has been hard to argue with Huizinga's thesis because, in his words, "the political stage of the kingdoms of Europe was so crowded with fierce and tragic conflicts that the peoples could not help seeing all that regards royalty as a succession of sanguinary and romantic events."<sup>2</sup>

In fact, fourteenth-century Europe witnessed more than its share of "sanguinary and romantic" ways in which homogeneous ideas of authority were separated from traditional discourses and seemed to lack a type of universal meaning. To name a few: the regicides across England, Germany, France, and Castile brought a challenge to the power of the king; the Great Schism severely shook the authority of the Church; the rise of the Turkish infidel and the Wycliffite and Hussite heresies showed that the idea of Christendom was far from unified; the monetary scarcity occasioned by the drying up of Dutch and Belgian gold and silver mines disassociated value from a fixed measure; and the labor and food scarcities brought by the Black Death unsettled the medieval class system and allowed the creation of states of identity beyond the three traditional pillars of medieval society.

---

<sup>1</sup> Edward Peters and Walter P. Simons, "The New Huizinga and the Old Middle Ages," *Speculum* 74.3 (Jul., 1999): 617.

<sup>2</sup> Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: a Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (London: Arnold, 1924) 9.

Given these events, Huizinga's thesis—limited as it is to Burgundian and French courtly art—appears incontestable yet insufficient. We may even wish to speculate, following Eric Auerbach, that the “fatigue and barrenness” of the age was not only directed towards the “royalty” but also culturally generalized towards “the practical organization of life on earth,” in a questioning of the ordering of meaning via any particular over-arching meta-discourse.<sup>3</sup>

To an extent, contemporary scholarship has shied away from Huizinga and Auerbach's epoch-making labels seeking instead to focus on the continuity of the discourses of the late medieval period with those of earlier centuries. Nevertheless, it still has been argued that the medieval discourse on authority experienced deep rifts in its ability to mean as it was pressured by larger decentralization of social and political structures. For example, Richard Firth Green has traced how the legal uses of the word “truth” were affected by a late-fourteenth century turn towards the use of “documentary” and “written” agreements in England as the elite tried to control the flow of information.<sup>4</sup> Janet Coleman and Jesse Gellrich have independently made similar arguments in respect to the thought of William of Ockham and the rise of Wycliffite movements in the de-structuring of traditional epistemic and political sources of authority.<sup>5</sup> Most recently, Katherine Breen has defined the latter part of the century in England as a crisis of “habitus,” where traditional Latinate structures of signification faced societal pressures to adapt to the tastes of an increasingly decentralized and vernacular reading public.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the avowed “generality” of these claims about late medieval discourse, a common denominator has been to see the medieval only via English and particularly French or

---

<sup>3</sup> Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. Fifteenth Anniversary Edition*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) 249.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Language and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) 26, 201.

<sup>5</sup> Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 542; Jesse M. Gellrich, *Discourse and Dominion in the Fourteenth-Century: Oral Contexts of Writing in Politics, Philosophy, and Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) 118.

<sup>6</sup> Katherine Breen, *Imagining an English Reading Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 17.

Italian examples without incorporating analyses from the Iberian Peninsula. Partly, this is a result of the history of medieval scholarship in a mostly Anglo-American academy that, since the 1955 work on the One Hundred Years War by P.E. Russell, has seen only two attempts at analyzing the similarities of discursive and literary structures in England and Iberia: a 2007 essay compilation by María Bullón-Fernández and the 2009 edition of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*.<sup>7</sup> Further, there has been a methodological disconnect between literary analysis and comparatist and theoretical approaches in Iberian medieval studies that, as Oscar Martín and Simone Pinet have argued, has only lately been able to breach the practices of a “Hispanomedievalism” that has long shied away from structural questions in favor of “philological” exactitude and “scientific” claims to authority.<sup>8</sup> Lastly, given Iberia’s proximity to the “infidel” neighbor, both Hispanist and English medievalists have tended to see Iberian literature as a frontier space isolated from the larger disassociations of meaning present in the writing of authority in European discourse.<sup>9</sup>

This is not to say that the arguments about European fourteenth-century cultural decentralization have not made their way into medieval Iberian studies. Following the compendious study of José Antonio Maravall much has been said about the fourteenth-century distancing of discourse from authority in the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>10</sup> For example in reading *El Libro de Buen Amor*, Marina Brownlee and John Dagenais have made similar structuralist arguments, like Breen and Gellrich, about the new indeterminate status of literary structures and

---

<sup>7</sup> See Peter E. Russell, *The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the Time of Edward III and Richard II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955); María Bullón-Fernández ed., *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages, 12th-15th century: Cultural, Literary, and Political exchanges* (New York: Palgrave, 2007); and also, Marina Brownlee, “Intricate Alliances: Early Modern Spain and England,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39.1 (Winter 2009): 1-5.

<sup>8</sup> Oscar Martín and Simone Pinet, “Why Theory?,” *Diacritics*, 36. 3-4 (Fall-Winter, 2006): 3.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Dangler, “Edging Toward Iberia,” *Diacritics*, 36.3-4 (Fall-Winter, 2006): 22-23.

<sup>10</sup> See José Antonio Maravall, *El Concepto de España en la Edad Media*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1981).

reading practices in fourteenth-century Castile.<sup>11</sup> Yet the mutual ignorance by Hispanist and English mediaevalists of the parallel nature of their arguments has prevented a dialogue between these two literary traditions. Thus, despite the notoriousness of the literary consonances between Juan Ruiz's *Libro de Buen Amor* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, there are but a handful of English medievalists who discuss and show an awareness of the complex critical traditions behind the *Libro*. Similarly, the translation of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* in Portuguese and Castilian has caused a small (though growing) number of Hispanists to become acquainted with the background, subject matter, and content of the work.

The breach between Hispanists and English medievalists is all the more surprising given that the greatest examples of this fourteenth-century "crisis" of discourse and authority occurred at the "edges" of Europe: Iberia and England. These two places (more than France, Germany, and Italy) experienced the political, economic, and linguistic separations of meaning and discourse of the fourteenth-century as extreme events. By the end of the fourteenth century, Castile and England both deposed and executed a sitting monarch because of his harm to the public good (Pedro I in 1369 and Richard II in 1399) and installed a new royal line by the "general" will of the people (that of the Trastamarans in Castile and the Lancasters in England). Further, English and Castilian governments, for the first time in their history, established a fluid monetary policy to finance their continuing wars, temporarily ending their reliance on silver and gold respectively. Also, the labor shortages of the Black Plague affected the agrarian and wool exporting economies of England and Spain more than any country, triggering systematic social "revolutions." In England, it was the populism of the Wycliffites in the sermons of John Ball that led to the Peasant's Revolt of 1381, in Castile, that of the anti-Semites in the voice of Fernand

---

<sup>11</sup> See Marina Brownlee, *The Status of the Reading Subject in the "Libro de Buen Amor"* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); and John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing El Libro de Buen Amor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Martínez which led to the Anti-Jewish Pogroms of 1391. Lastly (and more significantly to our present study), these challenges to traditional power structures allowed the retaking of the vernaculars as “scientific” languages by rising nobles or merchants in the relative hesitancy of central structures of power, like the Church, to fill in this gap.

Medievalists have not allowed their methodological differences to inquire further into the similarities of this displacement of authority. This is unfortunate since, as I will primarily argue in this dissertation, it was the joining of these English and Iberian of discursive “crises” of authority that helped fashion the first articulation of fifteenth-century colonial discourse. Particularly, I am referring to the Portuguese efforts to justify authority over the first “infidel” territories encountered beyond the Mediterranean: the Canary Islands. I will argue that the discourse of Dom Duarte I in claiming authority over places beyond “*civili conversatione*” ‘political discourse’ or ‘social communication’ directly paralleled how Iberian and English discourses sought to separate the representation of authority from its meaning.

An analysis of the literary traditions that inform early colonial efforts is justified by the way in which the Portuguese king makes his plea for crusade. Duarte begins to defend his colonial enterprise to the Canaries to Pope Eugene IV by arguing from a poetic and not legal perspective, almost taking his reader on a voyage to these islands at the edge of the world:

*Inter innumeras fere insulas* quas mare circumclaudit, pater beatissime, septem insule adjacentes finitime inuicem in oceano, a meridie Portugalie includuntur, que generali nomine Canarie vulgo appellantur. Has indomiti *silvestres fere hominess* inhabitant, qui nulla religione coagulati, nullis denique legum uinculiis irretiti, civili conversatione neglecta, in paganitate, veluti pecudes, vitam agunt. Iis navale commercium, literarium exercicium, genus aliquod metali numismatis nullum est. Habitacio denique nulla et amictus corporis nullus, set velut quedam perizomata de palmarum foliis aut caprarum pellibus, ad operimentum dumtaxat verendorum circumcingentes, nudi pedes, per aspera, saxosa et abrupta moncium clerime transiliunt et in magnis yatibus et abditis antris terre latitant.

Amidst the *almost uncountable islands* which the sea surrounds, blessed father, seven adjacent islands bordering each other in the ocean are confined by the meridian of Portugal, which are called by a common, general name, of Canaria. *Mostly wild, untamed men* inhabit them; these, not being solidified by religion, at last not tied by the fetters of law, having left behind political discussion, make life in paganism, in the example of animals. To them, any type of naval

commerce, the exercise of letters, and of metal of money is as nothing. In fact, having no home and no cover of the body, but as it were certain girdles from palm leaves or from the skins of goats, only having covering of the genitals surrounding [them], with naked feet, they quickly leap over the rough, rocky, and broken things of the mountains, and they hide in the great chasms and secret dens of the earth [My emphasis].<sup>12</sup>

Even as Duarte seems to generalize the Canarians as lawless savages that must be subdued, his letter itself relies so much upon way to refer to his ideas that it is very difficult to think of the natives as something real. Instead, Duarte's discourse carefully paints a liminal "fere" 'almost' place—filled with "fere" 'almost' animalistic men just as the islands which surround the ocean are "fere" 'almost' innumerable.

Duarte's letter seems structured to make Eugene focus on his use of metaphors rather than on the ideas which they evoke. For example, in construing his first description of the Islands' inhabitants, it is very hard to disassociate the meaning of "fere" as 'almost' with its homonym "fere" 'beastly' in the following phrase "silvestres fere homines" 'almost wild men.' It is even harder to ignore how Duarte, feigning the stance of an eye-witness, describes that the natives dress with goat skins while he poetically has them climb rocks, hills, and mountains with a goat-like dexterity. And more tellingly, the Canarians' freedom from "legum vinculis" 'the fetters of law' is embodied by their very ability to leap over ("transiliunt") chasms, rocks, and cliffs as if they were spirits and not real men hidden in the "abditis antris terre" 'secret dens of the earth.' These metaphors are not simply trying to persuade Eugene that the Canarians are some lawless savages that should be conquered; rather, they are almost asking the Pope to acknowledge that a "first-hand" and legal description of the Islands is nothing more than literary artifice produced for a particular political and discursive end.

Duarte's literary tactics are not only obvious—they also proceed from an experienced literary hand which at the time of forging this letter was putting the finishing touches in its own

---

<sup>12</sup> *Monumenta Henricina*, 6 vols. (Coimbra, 1960-1964) 5.255-256. Unless otherwise noted, all foreign language translations are my own.

literary masterpiece, a manual of advice entitled *Leal Conselheiro*. It is in turning to the *Conselheiro*'s description of metaphors and authority that we can understand the literary undertones and the ideological effectiveness of the beginning of Duarte's letter to Eugene:

Fiz traladar em el algũus certos capitulos doutros livros, por me parecer que faziam declaraçom e ajuda no que screvia. E no compeço d'eles se demostra donde cada ùu é tirado, filhado emesto exemplo daquel autor do Livro do Amante que certas estorias em el screveo de que se filham grandes boos conselhos avisamentos. E conhecendo meu saber pera eto nom suficiente nom hei por empacho seer ajuda de taes ditos e seerem assi compridamente aqui traladados, posto que o seu mui boo e fremoso razoar no per mim scripto faça grande abatimento, porque mais quero aproveitar aos que ovirem, ca encobrir esta minguada maneira de meu screver.

And I made translate in [the *Leal Conselheiro*] some certain chapters of other books because it appeared to me that they declared or aided something of what I wrote. And in the beginning of these citations, it is shown from which source each one was taken, paying close attention to follow the example of the author of the Book of the Lover [*Confessio Amantis*] which certain stories he wrote in it that affix very good counsels and advices. And knowing that my own knowledge for this is not sufficient, I do not hold it as a fault to be helped of such sayings. And they will be here appropriately translated because I wish more to profit those that hear them than hide this lesser manner of my writing since the very good and beautiful way of thinking, which is not written by me, would make great cause for concern.<sup>13</sup>

Literary authority, as Duarte describes it in his *Leal Conselheiro*, is a means of manipulating what one says for the good of one's listeners. Taking his cue from John Gower's "Book of the Lover" or *Confessio Amantis*,<sup>14</sup> Duarte understands the need to cite sources explicitly—to make his reader turn to textual authority—as an important part of literary narration because it allows the reader to "aproveitar" 'profit' from the work and not because it exculpates the writer's purpose. The king sees a profit in having the reader understand the literary exercise of authority because he values the act of writing itself and not simply the conveyance of meaning.

Duarte, of course, tells us only a half-truth in saying that he will carefully reveal the textual traditions of the "boos exemplos" 'good exempla' of his work. Just like his source Gower's *Confessio*, his *Leal Conselheiro* does not explicitly cite all of its major influences. Still,

---

<sup>13</sup> Dom Duarte, *Leal Conselheiro*, ed. Maria Helena Lopes de Castro (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1999) 12.

<sup>14</sup> It has long been clear that Duarte's reference to "do Amante" refers to the *Confessio*. See Bernardo Santano-Moreno Bernardo, "The Fifteenth-Century Portuguese and Castilian Translations of John Gower, 'Confessio Amantis,'" *Manuscripta*, 35 (1991): 23, 29.

the very use of Gower's poem to situate the readerly experience of authority suggests that Duarte sees the act of referencing authority as a literary encounter. Gower's *Confessio*, as Winthrop Wetherbee has argued, cites its tradition but only in such a way that literary authorities are contained in an ongoing dialogue that at times is contradictory, satirical, or even tangential to what they are supposed to claim.<sup>15</sup> In citing "do Amante" as an initial model for the negotiation of literary authority, Duarte shows how the way a text "aproveitar aos que ovirem" 'profit[s] those that hear' has more to do with shaping how a reader encounters a fluid discourse than with supporting how a writer conveys a fixed meaning.

For Duarte textual beginnings have a type of authority through the playful interactions that belies the notion, which P.E. Russell has argued in the first and only study of the rhetoric of his epistles to Eugene, that his "colonial" imagery merely intends to make the reader think of the Canarians as savages.<sup>16</sup> Rather, Duarte's concern with the authorial qualities of metaphorical language, as evidenced in the Incipit to his *Leal Conselheiro*, also makes a point about the use of metaphor in the legal discussion over legal ownership of the Islands. Mainly, that in tackling legal arguments in a realm beyond representation or—as Duarte tells Eugene—beyond a "civil conversation" 'political association,' legal discourse must necessarily tackle its metaphoric basis. The imagery in Duarte's letter tells the Pope that the Portuguese king thinks that indirect qualities of speech, the "fere" and 'almost,' are an appropriate way to represent the authority of "fere" 'beastly' people without any "legum vinculis" 'fetters of law.'

As I will argue in the first chapter of this dissertation, Duarte's focus on the structure of metaphor as the basis for sovereignty was not new to medieval legal discourse—particularly as it

---

<sup>15</sup> See Winthrop Wetherbee, "Genius and Interpretation in the *Confessio Amantis*," *Magister Regis: Studies in Honor of Robert Earl Kaske*, ed. Arthur Groos (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 1986) 241-260.

<sup>16</sup> Peter E. Russell, "El Descubrimiento de las Canarias y el Debate Medieval Acerca de los Derechos de los Principes y los Pueblos Paganos," *Revista de Historia Canaria*, 35.171 (1978): 22.

related to the taking of “infidel” lands. Since the mid fourteenth century, the papal encyclicals of Clement VI, paralleling a “nominalist” philosophical tradition, conceived of authority as a type of absence, as a mere metaphor, in an attempt to disregard secular claims to the possession of infidel lands. This metaphoric strategy attempted to monopolize the discourse of conquest so that only the Pope could claim legitimacy to mediating sovereign claims of “infidel” lands.

Although the theorization of authority as a type of metaphor did not begin with the discussion of who possessed the Canaries, it certainly took a political turn with the defense of “infidel” sovereignty by the Council of Constance in 1415. In the early fifteenth-century, the advent of the English Wycliffite heresy threatened to divest the Church of its temporal power by taking the metaphoric qualities of sovereignty as its foundational argument. Following Wyclif, secular rulers and lay priests alike began to think that if (as the early fourteenth-century “nominalists” had argued) universal ideas were nothing but representation, then political authority was possible only through its representation in the active deeds of the sovereign. According to James Muldoon, this allowed thinkers to claim that the Church, having only jurisdictional authority, could not claim sovereignty to things which kings, prelates, and Christians struggled daily to maintain. Therefore, the seizing of infidel lands via conquest jeopardized the status of the Church as a collective political unit by thinking of sovereignty only as represented usufruct.<sup>17</sup> As this chapter will conclude, to avert this power loss, the Church paradoxically denied that authority could be simply based upon the strength of utterances and yet asserted that the voicing of authority—through the translation of God into human flesh—was necessary for a political understanding.

---

<sup>17</sup> James Muldoon, “John Wyclif and the Rights of the Infidels: The Requerimiento Re-Examined,” *The Americas*, 36.3 (Jan., 1980): 309.

This political context of colonial conquest set the stage for Duarte's metaphorical claim to control of the Islands by making the legal questions about infidelity also address the discursive and consequently literary basis of authority. To maintain the legal basis of his expansion, Duarte had to reinvigorate the idea that there was a need to think of authority as discursive while avoiding the support of the "Wycliffite" view which reduced ideas to metaphoric qualities. In other words, Duarte had to separate his political *use* of metaphors from their ideal *meaning*. As I suggest, Duarte's idea, in which metaphors could justify acting in the world without also changing abstract ideas like authority, mimics one of the central themes of a work with which he was more than acquainted: Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.

Chapter two, therefore, looks at the make up of the English *Confessio Amantis* and at what allowed it to be disseminated in Portugal and Castile. Following Gower's adaptations of the moral stories surrounding the figure of king Nebuchadnezzar, I argue that, in the poem, Gower's aim was to refute a purely metaphoric way of conceiving of authority. Gower cast himself as an "auctor" of a book of tales without an "authorial" message, and in so doing, he showed that authority and discourse could be separate entities. As I will argue, Gower's *Confessio* uses poetic signs without endorsing a particular abstract ideal meaning while still managing to convey what—following Michel Foucault—I call an "author function." Relying almost solely on a distance between ideas and their discursive presentation, the poem sets itself up as a work worth glossing and translating, as indeed it was translated into not one but two other vernacular languages, into Portuguese and Castilian.

Duarte's use of Gower's Iberian translations in a missive justifying his claim to the Canaries also implies that the separation of voice from meaning bore political consequences. In

the last two chapters of this dissertation, I address the political uses of this disconnect by the vernacular traditions of story telling and translation in Iberia and England.

Chapter three begins this analysis by asking, what did it mean to write truth with authority in the Iberian Peninsula? It answers this question by analyzing the Spanish historiographical tradition that was influential to Duarte's own literary background. In particular, I argue that, in an attempt to cope with the challenges to authority brought about by Pedro I's deposition in 1369, Castilian historiography separated the pathos of reading from the authority by which it sought to give credence to history. The texts of major Castilian historians, like Pedro López de Áyala and Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, purposely sought to detach readers from the act of story telling so that a subject's personal projections would not taint the objectivity of the historical events portrayed. This way of writing made narratives objective not because an author could attest to the veracity of their events or because a reader could sympathize with them. Rather, their objective authority was possible simply because their structures could be repeated for any time, place, or person. The result is a disjunction by which temporal events had authenticity when read outside of time, and historical events were veridical only when no one author or reader could relate to them as lived experiences.

Continuing an analysis of this literary "crisis" of authority, chapter four analyzes the disassociation between represented "truth" and authority in an English setting. It finds that this disconnect was most influentially developed not by historians but by the nascent English effort to theorize vernacular translation—a turn which, as Andrew Cole has argued, foreshadowed Duarte's own musings in the subject.<sup>18</sup> By focusing on the translations of John of Trevisa, I argue that the fifteenth-century translation of scientific and political works framed the interpretation of texts as authorial only when these texts were prevented from being denotatively

---

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Cole, "Chaucer's English Lesson," *Speculum*, 77.4 (Oct, 2002): 1130.

understood by readers. Trevisa manufactured a form of authorial exegesis that proceeded by allusion and limited the ability of “everyday” vernacular readers to have access to these Latinate authorities. Trevisa’s translations showed that the exchange of linguistic signs did not necessarily allow vernacular readers to appropriate authorial discourses through “everyday” speech.

The Iberian and English traditions that influenced Gower’s translation into Portuguese therefore support the idea that, at the “edges” of medieval Europe, there was a growing disconnect between the power of ideas and the ways in which they were conveyed. In this manner, the most disseminated examples of Castilian historiography and English translation separated *what* they meant from *how* they said it. They made spaces for understanding that were outside the standard use of rhetorical practices in which voice somehow attempts to manipulate meaning. These spaces proved that signs could divorce their social uses from their ability to signify while still retaining their ability to change the world, and in being taken up by the Portuguese translations of Gower’s *Confessio* and through them by Duarte himself, helped Europe rearticulate the discourse of authority outside the traditional reach of law.

CHAPTER I  
COLONIAL HERMENEUTICS: INFIDEL UNIVERSALITY AND THE WRITING OF  
SOVEREIGNTY

No, but even when the scene is not formalized in this way by an institutional code of positive law that would oblige us to observe this or that rite, there is in all testimony an implication of oath and of law. This extension of the oath's implication may appear extraordinary and abusive, even extravagant, but I believe it to be legitimate, I will even say incontestable. Logically, it obliges one to take any address to another to be a testimony. Each time I speak or manifest something to another, I bear witness to the extent that, even if I neither say nor show the truth, even if, behind the "mask," I am lying, hiding, or betraying, every utterance implies "I am telling you the truth"...And I can always be lying to you.<sup>19</sup> —Jacques Derrida.

Hanc per elementa iurandi pessimam consuetudinem semper habuere Judaei noscuntur sicut prophetalis eos frequenter arguit sermo. Qui iurat aut venerator aut diligit eum per quem iurat...sic et iurare permetterentur in Deum: non quod recte hoc facerent, sed quod melius esset Deo id exhibere, quam daemonibus. Evangelica autem veritas non recipit iuramentum, cum omnis sermo fidelis pro iure iurando sit.

The Jews are always known to have this terrible custom of swearing by the elements as prophetic speech frequently berates them for doing. Whoever swears either worships or loves that by which he swears...and in this they were permitted to swear in [the name of] God: not because they do this rightly, but because it is better to exhibit [worship] to God than to the demons. However, evangelic truth does not approve of swearing because all faithful speech is just as an oath.<sup>20</sup>—Jerome.

As Jerome's Commentary on *Matthew* suggests, Christian exegesis carried political implications because Christianity understands discourse as a type of oath-making. The practices involved in the act of biblical interpretation, then, were inherently ways to shape living practices and not just ways to understand ideas. For example, in his commentary in the *Gospel According to Luke*, Bede writes that, through the interpretative process, God "nos docet verbo auscultare quatenus et nostro illud pectore continue ruminare et alieno ructare sufficimus auditui" "teaches us to listen to his word, that we may constantly substitute it both to ruminate it in our breast and to vomit it for another hearing."<sup>21</sup> When we listen and repeat God's word, we both digest it for our nourishment and present it in another form for the ethical and spiritual growth of another.

---

<sup>19</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul C elan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005) 87.

<sup>20</sup> Jerome "Commentariorum In Evangelium Matthaei Libri Quattuor," *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Ridgewood: Gregg Press, 1965) 40.

<sup>21</sup> Bede, "In Evangelium Lucae exposition," *Corpus Christianorum Series Latinam*, ed. D. Hurst, vol. 120 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1960) 177.

For Bede and for the Christian commentary tradition of which he was a part, the process of textual interpretation structured habit not by pointing the reader to a rule he must follow but by making the ways by which he arrived at the truth a part of his ethical and political life.<sup>22</sup> The oath-making qualities of speech made the process of exegesis into a political praxis.

Closely analyzing this Christian tradition of speech as praxis, this chapter argues that the political usage of Christian exegesis came to a turning point in the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries because the Church, as a political unit, began to re-evaluate the role of metaphoric utterances and exegesis in the conveyance of “truth.” I will argue, that for the Church, this hermeneutic change was most pronounced in its legal justification for the colonization of non-Christian lands. This argument is inseparable from three claims which I will develop throughout this chapter. First, an ontological tenet of Christian exegesis at the turn of the fourteenth century was that concepts and their representation were intrinsically tied. Second, the turn of the fifteenth century assimilated this type of “nominalism” to rearticulate Christendom as a legal and not just as a religious community. Lastly, Popes, canonists, and monarchs closely attended to the literary allusions, connotations, and metaphoric implications of their colonial discourse because they recognized that the exertion of political authority rested upon the metaphoric qualities of their discourse.

In laying out this argument, this chapter will detail the religious and metaphoric logics which allowed the fourteenth-century to conceive of authority discursively. In particular, I will argue that the fourteenth century’s turn to the presence of speech itself as a way to project power allowed Popes and sovereigns to adopt legal traditions through semantic and metaphoric play, instead of relying on explicit legal arguments, to assert Christendom’s right to infidel lands.

---

<sup>22</sup> For examples of this, see Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982) 73; Coleman *Ancient* 143; and Calvin Kendall, “Introduction,” *On Genesis* by Bede, trans. Calvin Kendall. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008) 37.

However, by the fifteenth-century, with the use of the presence of speech by adherents to the Wycliffite heresy, the principles that had justified these legal claims were no longer accepted. In the age of the Two Councils (Constance and Basel 1417-1441), conceiving of authority as a metaphor, particularly in the justification of Christian authority over infidel lands, was anathemized as it threatened to make the power of the Church over temporal matters ephemeral. It is in this impasse—between a fifteenth-century push for exploration and the threat posed by the Wycliffite heresy—that the Church and the European monarchs involved in the process of expansion developed a new type of discourse, one that asserted the authoritative qualities of speech in its pure metaphoric and semantic uses without also undermining the Church’s claim to political power.

#### 1. Law as Representation: The Ontology of Fourteenth-Century Christian Hermeneutics

These three claims rely on one assumption which I find necessary in the following argument: fourteenth and fifteenth-century political and religious commentators, even when attending to “everyday” discourse, were closely aware of the textual logics which I will associate with metaphoric slippage and a focus on the power of speech. This is a difficult argument to make in light of contemporary philosophical criticism about Christianity. This criticism often differentiates what it calls an original Christian ontology, which it readily admits is cognizant of the power making capabilities of speech, versus the normalization of New Testament tenets and logics by disciplinary structures like the Church or the State. Thus, contemporary thinkers return to (what they call) the “original” Christian logic of language to understand the changes of authority brought about by Christianity without also turning to the ways in which this “original” logic was repeated throughout history. For example, Jean-Luc Nancy writes that,

Christianity assumes, in the most radical and explicit fashion, what is at stake in the *alagon*. All the weight—the enormous weight—of religious representation cannot change the fact that the ‘other world’ or the ‘other kingdom’ never was a second world, or even a world-behind-the-

worlds, but the other of the world (*of every world: of all consistency tied up in beings and in communication*), the other than any world.<sup>23</sup>

Although he relies on an explicit close-reading of Christian passages, Nancy, like most contemporary critics, seldom credits the political, philosophical, and ecclesiastical structures, which disseminated this “original” Christian thought through hundreds of years, with an awareness of this representational ontology which favored the power-making attitudes of speech versus its simple representational qualities. It seems that the association of communication as “other worldly,” as foreign to itself, which has allowed Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Giorgio Agamben and others to rediscover the political potential of Christian texts, was ignored by past exegetes simply because of their filiations to disciplinary political and religious structures, which merely sought to normalize the “true” message of Christianity for the benefit of the elite.<sup>24</sup>

Yet even in its departure from traditional Christian exegesis, this return towards an “original” Christian logic to re-examine the authority of universal concepts closely mimics a similar turn during the fourteenth century by scholastic philosophers and thinkers towards the innate philosophical “*virtus sermonis*” ‘force of speech’ of the Bible to reevaluate the problem of authority and its relationship to meaning.<sup>25</sup> As Catarina Dutilh Novaes has argued, through the notion of “*virtus sermonis*” ‘force of speech,’ fourteenth-century exegetes accounted for authoritative statements that literally could be false but, which according Novaes, “are presumably true according to an author’s intention.”<sup>26</sup> For the fourteenth-century, the “*virtus*

---

<sup>23</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, trans. Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant, and Michael B. Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) 10.

<sup>24</sup> For examples of this return to the “original” and “radical” logic of Christianity, see Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); and Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> See William Courtenay, “Force of Words and Figures of Speech: the Crisis over *virtus sermonis* in the Fourteenth Century,” *Franciscan Studies*. 44 (1984): 107-28.

<sup>26</sup> Catarina Dutilh Novaes, “An Intensional Interpretation of Ockham’s Theory of Supposition,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 46.3 (July 2008): 372.

sermonis” was true based upon the presence and effects of speech as an immediate action. This debate on the slippage of meaning, which was inherited from the classical rhetoric that formed the background of Christian exegesis since Jerome, was brought to notoriety—as having political and ethical implications—by the Paris School’s condemnation of the “scientia Occana” ‘Ockhamist knowledge’ in the 1340’s and lasted well throughout the fourteenth century.<sup>27</sup> As Janet Coleman and Jesse Gellrich have recently noted, because of its ability to make semantics the very condition of reality, the Ockhamist or “nominalist” idea—that representational structures could engender abstract truth—reached beyond the speculations of philosophers and into those of poets and politicians.<sup>28</sup>

The result of this turn to the value of the immediacy of speech of the 1340’s was perhaps the most divisive and politically charged discourse in England at the end of the century and shaped what would become known as the Wycliffite heresy. Inspired in part by Ockhamist views on the ability of language to have power in itself, John Wyclif, an English theologian, formulated that biblical authority was an exposition of the literal “virtus sermonis” ‘force of speech’ as understood through an “inspired or rational access to the *intentio auctoris*.”<sup>29</sup> That is, that hermeneutic interpretation by a reader carried in itself a type of authorial force that did not need the structures of the Church to be of spiritual effectiveness.

For Wyclif, the value of scriptural exegesis was not to be determined, as it had for Bede and for the monastic tradition which followed him, through an active “ruminatio” ‘ruminatio’ of interpretations by a set of authorities, but through the immediate experience of the Word of God in the eyes of the believer. As he writes in his *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, “est ergo

---

<sup>27</sup> William J. Courtenay, *Ockham and Ockhamism: Studies in the Dissemination and Impact of his Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 213-216.

<sup>28</sup> See Coleman *Ancient* 531-537 and Gellrich 60-66.

<sup>29</sup> Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 70.

sanctorum sententia, quod verbalis contencio est in doctrina scripture inutilis, cum sensu autoris sit humiliter indagandus...quid igitur valet verbose contendere, quod veritas cristiane fidei non dependet super virtute sermonis nostri?" 'Therefore, the sentence of the Saints is that the strife of words in scriptural doctrine is useless, while the sense of the author must be humbly sought...therefore, what is the value of contending verbosely that the truth of the Christian faith does not depend upon the force of our speech?' Following certain Ockhamist tenets by which representation was privileged as an ontological quality of a concept, Wyclif saw scriptural speech itself as authorial without the need of a system of traditional interpretation to guide a reader to meaning because speech contained meaning in itself.

Although Wyclif's arguments end up validating the force of an "original text," the central logic of his arguments—by valuing representational and not conceptual categories—foreshadows much of twentieth-century post-structuralist debates about the metaphoric foundation of authority. For all its contemporary sophistication, the type of "close reading," which engenders the post-structuralist turn to "original" Christianity, has its roots in Christian attempts to save their own "text" from Jewish and pagan traditions by claiming that the internal logic revealed by interpretation within the New Testament was as sacred as the Old Testament itself. For example, when Jacques Derrida turns to language as a means of understanding a social and political condition because "each time I speak or manifest something to another, I bear witness," he merely repeats how Jerome justified his translation of sacred texts for a community of believers simply because "omnis sermo fidelis pro iure iurando sit" 'all the speech of the faithful is instead of an oath.' Quite the historical breach separates the context of each thinker: Derrida, who analyzes a Jewish poet/philosopher writing during World War II, is not necessarily echoing Jerome, who means to deride Jewish practices through his commentary. However, it is

undeniable that both thinkers are able to analyze law because the idea of law, when encountered through “close reading,” behaves as a linguistic structure; in Jerome’s terms, “sermo” or in Derrida’s, “parole.”

As Wyclif’s efforts imply, the “close reading” associated with the “unconditional” questioning of texts reveals a subjective wish to master and author a concept without having to account for its “proper” accord to fixed tradition of meaning and truth. That is, in averring the fluidity of linguistic meaning to universal concepts, a reader portrays a desire to submit truth to the authority of his own speech. When Jerome defends Christian exegesis against Jewish tradition in saying that “omnis sermo fidelis pro iure iurando sit” ‘all the speech of the faithful is instead of an oath’ and when Wyclif follows suit defending the power of the voice, they both suggest, like Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, that the authority of speech is “an unconditional alienation” from fixed meaning because an individual’s relationship to his being is as if he acted as a sovereign. That is, Jerome, Wyclif, Nancy, and Derrida would agree that an individual’s speech makes truth an experience of being in the world, and not simply that speech operates as the representation of a universal concept.

It may seem difficult to see in Wyclif and Jerome’s support for the sacred status of the literal text Scripture the full unconditional response to meaning and language that is commonly associated with post-structural derivation of authority from metaphoric structures. However, as long as the coming-into-truth of a subject stands for interpretation, the parallels are unavoidable. For example, the “virtus sermonis” ‘force of speech’ was used by the fourteenth-century theologian and “nominalist” William of Woodford to argue, in his first support of Wyclif’s beliefs, that the deconstructive play of meaning was not that different from the “literal” reading of a fixed Scriptural text,

Dico 8, quod sumendo sacram scripturam pro multitudine veritatum in canone bible contentarum vel per textum secundum intencionem auctoris, et simul ponendo quod in illa sacra scriptura omnis veritas continetur tamquam pars in toto, *oportet concedere illam sacram scripturam infinicies in hoc instanti variatam et mutatam, et quod infinicies mutabitur in omni instanti futuro.* Nam in hoc instanti infinite veritates incipient esset infinite desiuiunt esse, et numquam pars auferri poteste a toto sine ipsius mutacione, nec nova adquiret sine eius mutacione.

Eighth, I say that in taking scripture [as] the the multitude of truths contained in the [canon of the Bible] or through the text according to the intention of the author, and in simultaneously postulating that all truth is contained in that sacred scripture, [as much in part as in the whole], *it is necessary to concede that sacred scripture [is] in this instant [of literal interpretation] varied and changed to an infinite extent, and also that it will be infinitely changed in every future instant.* For in this instant infinite truths begin to be and infinite truths cease to be, and a part cannot be deducted from, or new things added to, the whole without its changing [My emphasis].<sup>30</sup>

In the words of Ghosh for Woodford, “it is unacceptable, if the ‘literal’ sense is to retain any genuine autonomy, to claim that ‘faith’ is delimited by it. ‘Truth,’ as he says, is in a state of continuous flux, whereas scripture is not.”<sup>31</sup> Woodford, therefore, finds “all of truth” in the literality of the biblical text, because “sacred scripture” is an infinitely deconstructive text, without a fixed interpretation which a reader can subjectively close-off, and as a result of this infinity, its meaning is eternally fixed. Because the sacred text has no closed subjective meaning, it must be taken literally to account for the infinite fullness, the “virtus sermonis,” of all possible speech. We may even say that the formulaic description of textual deconstruction—for the fourteenth-century “nominalist” turn—is that the authority of Scripture as a text is possible by virtue of its impossibility. That is, the infinity of scriptural interpretations (and of truth itself) guarantees the sacred and infallible status to the reading of scriptural texts as having force in their very immediate presence and not in the history of their subjective interpretations.

## 2. The Authority of Faith: Arguing by Means of Metaphors

As the fourteenth-century return to “virtus sermonis” in theological discourse shows, the questioning of truth within Christian exegesis required a turn to the immediate legislative powers of “sermo” as oath-making, as “fides” ‘faith’ or ‘credit.’ Indeed, the biblical definition of “fides”

---

<sup>30</sup> Qtd. in Ghosh 78. Trans. Kantik Ghosh with some adaptations.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* involves precisely the paradoxical understanding of meaning that characterized Christian speech: “est autem fides sperandorum substantia rerum argumentum non parentum” ‘faith is the substance of things hoped for, the argument of things not seen.’<sup>32</sup> If faith understands “substance” to be hope and evidence to be invisibility, then the closure of meaning through fixed and finite laws would be the mark of infidelity—that is, the ontological need to ground speech as the representation of universals and not as an immediate, deconstructive act of authority. Faith, therefore, helps delineate a Christian community by invoking a particular type of deconstructive textual hermeneutics.

Fourteenth-century Christian discourse then saw fidelity and infidelity more as ontological relationship towards meaning rather than a strict legal distinction. Although we may be tempted to distinguish infidels as those who openly reject Christianity (like Muslims or Jews) versus those who have not heard of it (like pagans), medieval canonists and writers often used the two terms interchangeably only distinguishing between peaceful infidels and those whose actions against Christianity called for a just war. As James Muldoon has noted, this discourse reduced “the world to two types of people, those within the Church [fideles] and those outside of it [infideles]” regardless of their previous acquaintance with Christianity.<sup>33</sup> And, as we will see, between 1344 and 1430, this ontological understanding of infidelity as an individual’s relationship to speech and not necessarily to faith was useful in crafting the first legal justifications of European imperialism and of thinking of the status of authority in places outside the reach of Christian law.

True, the history of Christian colonialism and of the metaphors used to legitimate it certainly does not begin in the fourteenth century, but it does come to a particular turning point

---

<sup>32</sup> Hebrews 11:1. All biblical quotations are to Jerome, “Latin Vulgate,” *The ARTFL Project: Multi-Lingual Bibles* (University of Chicago, Web 10 September 2010).

<sup>33</sup> James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979) 52.

when it began to be appropriated for ventures of discovery and exploration beyond European lands and spaces. The first such point, coinciding with the rise of Ockhamist views on language, came in 1344 when Pope Clement VI granted sovereignty over the recently discovered Canary or Fortunate Islands off the coast of North Africa to the Spanish Prince Luís de la Cerda. Although there were prior explorations to the Canaries in the fourteenth century (notably one recorded by Boccaccio), it was only de la Cerda who first secured a right of crusade through a Papal grant.<sup>34</sup> Almost paralleling the Ockhamist view that, as Brian Tierney argues, “*ius* meant *potestas*” the Papacy was arguing that there was something immediate about its ability to grant a right that gave it power over infidel lands.<sup>35</sup>

The grant, given to a private individual without any legal rights to the archipelago (not even one of conquest), also legally justified the expansion of Christendom. Thus it represents the first time in the history of Western colonialism in which the Church disposed of the authority of infidel peoples, which were known to be non-aggressive and not a possible threat to the Church like the early fifth-century barbarian tribes or Muslims, simply by virtue of their infidelity. Although the Papacy had a long history of relations with “infideles,” its office had been limited to the authorizing the “just” retaliation of Christian interests in front of a hostile infidel neighbor and not with the seizing of their authority via arbitrary fiat. For example, Pope Boniface VII granted two small islands off the Tunisian coast to Roger Doria as spoils of a rightful war against the Moor and not because it claimed absolute right over them although the absolute right of Popes over islands had long been debated by canonists and philosophers. It was only with

---

<sup>34</sup> Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Before Columbus: Exploration and Colonization from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229-1492* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987) 171-172.

<sup>35</sup> Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights* (Grand Rapids: Emory University Press, 1997) 29.

Clement VI's dispensation of the Canary Islands that the question of invading peaceful peoples due to their beliefs was first raised as a possible policy and not just speculated in legal theory.<sup>36</sup>

This does not mean that Clement VI's grant of the Canaries was the first time in which the Church articulated explicitly colonial goals, only that it was the first time in which the rhetoric of colonialism coincided with an ontological justification of conquest. Although the Papacy had authorized the colonization and invasion of Mediterranean Islands in the eleventh century and also of Ireland in the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, it had done so because of the resistance of the natives to the Church and not simply because of their infidelity.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, although the legal and religious reasons of Clement's grant rehearse much of the debate of the legitimacy of infidel sovereignty begun, during the crusades, under Pope Innocent IV in his commentaries to Gregory IX's *Decretales*, they do so by taking up as policy and not as legal argumentation the commentaries of the canonist Hostiensis which had underlied most of this scholastic debate and speculation.<sup>38</sup>

Although Innocent and Hostiensis's discussion on infidel authority overshadowed the legal repercussions of Clement VI's position in respect to infidel lands, the latter did have notable perlocutionary strength as is evidenced by the many contentious reactions to it from his contemporaries. These responses ranged from derision (in Petrarch's mocking of Luís de la Cerda's claim to sovereignty in the *De Vita Solitaria*) to fear (in Adam Murimuth's depiction in his *Continuatio chronicarum* of how the English ambassadors, mistaking the Canary Islands for the British Isles, raced back to tell Edward III that the Pope had removed his sovereignty and

---

<sup>36</sup> Muldoon *Popes* 88-90.

<sup>37</sup> See Luis Weckmann, *Las Bulas Alejandrinas de 1493 y la Teoría Política del Papado Medieval*, (Editorial Jus: Mexico City, 1949) 61-64 and James Muldoon, "The Ties that Bind: Legal Status and Imperial Power," *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*, eds. Ruth Mazo Karras, Joel Kaye, and E. Ann Matter (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008) 60-61.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 18.

given it to another).<sup>39</sup> That these reactions occurred in the absence of any legal or material effects to Clement's grant proves the discursive momentousness of this event since his contemporaries recognized the possibility which the Pope's position implied for the idea of sovereignty even in the absence of material effects, like the actual possession of the Islands by Luís de la Cerda.<sup>40</sup>

Looking closely at Clement's discourse on the disposition of infidel lands we can see why his discourse caused a stir. There is something in it which recalls the turn to the authorial making power of speech that began to be so prominent in the 1340's. This is even the case, when the fundamental reasons which Clement presents for giving de la Cerda sovereignty over the Islands seem inattentive to the rigor of nominalist, scholastic logic—at least explicitly:

Primo sui exercii operatio virtuosa. Secundo nostre fidei et nostri imperii dilatatio copiosa vel gloriosa. Tercio, christiani populi circuncini defensio vigorosa. Quarto acquirendi populi gubernatio et directio fructuosa.

First for the virtuous work of his army; second for the copious or glorious dilatation of our faith and our empire; third, for the vigorous defense of the surrounding Christian peoples; fourth, for the governance and fruitful direction [*directio fructuosa*] of the people who are acquired.<sup>41</sup>

In defending the need for a new sovereign over the recently found Canaries, Clement appears either to define what any prince should do—and so to give no real reason for action—or to bypass the main question generated by his grant: why would one need to create a new office and a new sovereign bloodline (in the person of de la Cerda) to expand and defend Christendom? After all, there were already nations, like Portugal and Spain, who were actively defending Europe from the Muslim threat. If Clement wished to extend the faith, he could have simply

---

<sup>39</sup> Eyda Merediz, *Refracted Images: The Canary Islands Through a New World Lens* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004) 12 and Josephine Waters Bennett, Josephine, "Britain Among the Fortunate Islands," *Studies in Philology*, 53.2 (April 1956): 119.

<sup>40</sup> Muldoon *Popes* 120.

<sup>41</sup> Marcos G. Martínez, "Sermón de Clemente VI Papa acerca de la otorgación del Reino de Canarias a Luis de España," *Revista de Historia Canaria*, 29. 1 (1963-1964): 90. Martínez provides only a transcription of a manuscript containing Clement's sermon. As a result, the Latin text produced has many grammatical inconsistencies. I have transcribed Martínez's text without fixing these inconsistencies. This may lead to some awkward sentences and awkward phrasing, but over all, it is faithful to what we retain of Clement's original terminology and rhetoric.

asked other Christian authorities to defend it or called for a crusade by all Christian nations—there was no logical or legal need to create a king by mere Papal fiat.

However, if we understand the Pope’s discourse as deriving his ideas from the metaphoric weight of scriptural representation, we can clarify the legal tradition that allows him to create an authority of the Canariex *ex nihilo* for the “directio fructuosa” ‘fruitful direction’ of the faith. This we see by analyzing how Clement’s sermon uses Augustine as a justification for Christian expansion to make his reasoning clear:

Dico primo quod concurrat istius Ludovici ymmo imperio exercii operatio virtuosa. Beatus Augustinus V, C. XX/III Dictas diferencias inter bonos principes catholicos et alios, inter ceteros dat istam quod illi dicuntur esse principes qui suam potestatem ad Dei cultum maxime dilatandum [us?] maiestati eius famulatum faciunt. Modo iste licet in regnis Francie et Yspanie multa clareatur gloria, multa sit fretus potentia, tamen hoc totum vult contempnere et suam potentiam Dei familiam facere, et tot labores pro Dei honore et christianitatis *cultum* applicando subire.

I say first that the virtuous activity of the army fully harmonizes with the [purposes of] empire of this Luis. Blessed Augustine in Book V Chap.-24, [among] the aforesaid differences between good catholic princes and others, gives this one: those are said to be princes who make their power subject to his majesty to the great dilatation and *worship* [*cultum*] of God. Even though much glory would now be made to shine in the kingdoms of France and Spain, much power would be supported, nevertheless he [Luis] desires to disdain all and make his power [into] service of God, and applying everything to undergo labors for the honor of God and the *worship* [*cultum*] of Christianity [My emphasis].<sup>42</sup>

In his rationale, Clement explicitly references Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*, but he appropriates its argument equivocally by using Augustine’s metaphors as literal, legal arguments as can be seen by a brief comparison with the *De Civitate* which does not delineate any legal stakes to the meaning of “cultum” ‘worship’ or to its relationship to sovereignty as an ontological state,

Neque enim nos Christianos quosdam imperatores ideo felices dicimus, quia uel diutius imperarunt uel imperantes filios morte placida reliquerunt, uel hostes rei publicae dominaverunt uel inimicos ciues aduersus se insurgentes et cauere et opprimere potuerunt. Haec et alia uitae huius aerumnosae uel munera uel solacia quidam etiam cultores daemonum accipere meruerunt, qui non pertinent ad regnum Dei, quo pertinent isti... Sed felices eos dicimus, si iuste imperant, si inter linguas sublimer honorantium et obsequia nimis humiliter salutantium non extolluntur, et se homines esse meminerunt; si suam potestatem ad *Dei cultum maxime dilatandum* maiestati eius famulam faciunt; si Deum timent diligunt colunt; si plus amant illud regnum, ubi non timent habere consortes; si tardius uindictam, facile ignoscunt; *si eandem uindictam pro necessitate regendae tuendaeque rei publicae, non pro saturandis inimicitarum odiis exerunt.*

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Nor indeed we Christians call certain sovereigns therefore happy, either because they reigned for a long while and left reigning sons after having a placid death, or because they dominated the enemies of the republic and were able to guard against or destroy enemy citizens rising up against them. Even certain worshipers [*cultores*] of demons merited to gain these and other rewards or pleasures of this hard life, which do not pertain to the kingdom of God, in as much as they pertain to this one. But we call happy those, if they rule justly, if they are not praised sublimely by tongues of those honoring them and greeting them excessively humbly with flattery, and if they remember that they are men; if they make their own *power as a servant to his majesty for most greatly spreading the worship of God* [*Dei cultum*]; if they fear God that they dearly worship him; if they love more that kingdom, where they do not fear to have consorts; if they are slow to vengeance, and easily forgive; *if this same vengeance they exert for the ruling and guarding of the republic, and not for satiating the hatred of enemies* [My emphasis].<sup>43</sup>

To Augustine, a virtuous Christian ruler does not concern himself with the acquisition of new territories, as Clement claims, but with the *use* of his office to the worship, the “cultus” of God and the practice of Christian virtues. If we understand “cultus” as an individual form of service and particularly, as Augustine understanding, as a humbling before others, Clement’s discourse seems but to misrepresent Augustine’s arguments about the inner qualities of a monarch in order to advance the militant aims of the medieval Church.

To be fair, Clement’s sermon does not deal with individual rulers per se but with metaphorical entities such as the state and the church—entities which have only a linguistically given body, form, and end. Spain and France, as sovereignties, cannot literally kneel humbly before a God, and yet they cannot be called anything but Christian territories. To subject themselves to God, as Augustine suggests, these sovereignties cannot read the notion of “cultum” literally but metaphorically in accordance with their personas, their incorporated will of their subjects. As he later makes clear, Clement sees the State’s persona as having only one use for its members: to bear the sword for the “*vindictam malefactorum, laudem vero bonorum*” ‘for the vengeance of the evil, but the honor of the good.’<sup>44</sup> To incorporate a “cultum” as a sovereign

---

<sup>43</sup> Augustine, “De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos,” *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Ridgewood: Gregg Press, 1965) 170-171. Book 5. Chapter 24.

<sup>44</sup> Martínez 90.

end, therefore, requires a particular metaphorical use of the sword's disciplinary end for the purposes of worship and not simply a demand for the ethical living of its individual rulers.

With this in mind, Clement's reading of Augustine is impeccable. To properly extend the Christian "cultus," the state must put its form of subjection—the sword—itsself into subjection; it must make its sword not the agent of death but the bringer of life. In the words of Isaiah 2:4, the epitome of proper worship to God will occur when nations "conflabunt gladios suos in vomeres et lanceas suas in falces" 'shall beat their swords into plowshares and lances into pruning hooks.'<sup>45</sup> In Clement's play of language, the metaphorical sword of the state becomes the tiller of Christian worship. Only the sword disseminates the "cultus" of Christianity (in the metaphoric sense of cultivation) via the state apparatus of conquest.

Just as the metaphor of cultivation implies the gathering of fruits, the use of the Christian "cultus" by the State necessarily implies its militant amplification "adquirendi populi gubernatio et directio fructuosa" 'for the government and fruitful direction of the acquired people.' For Clement, Augustine makes clear that the state's swords are the plowshares by which the fruits of the Christian kingdom are to be disseminated. Clement's polemic is nothing short of poetic as it unites two metaphoric readings of the word "cultus" to answer the main question brought about by Clement's previous lapses in logic. Namely, if secular powers—as Clement admits that France and Spain already do—carry the defense and not the amplification of the faith founded in the spiritual union of believers, in the Church, why establish a sovereign for the militant propagation and "directio fructuosa" 'fruitful direction' of spiritual institution? In using a biblical directive metaphorically when applied to a metaphoric institution like the State or the Church, Clement's discourse elegantly responds to this question in two ways. It answers his argumentative foes implicitly, saying that Christianity is by nature propagative and, therefore,

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

that it *needs* new sovereign offices to fulfill its purpose. Further, it explicitly invites them to challenge his reading of Augustine’s “cultus” and so to make the metaphoric process by which his logic is attained the focus of legal argumentation.

Clement’s rhetoric seamlessly then takes a “nominalist” turn by translating the metaphoric play of representation into the legal argumentation of ideas and so deriving the authoritative strength of speech from its semantic uses and not just from its conveyance of ideas. This move is clear in the Incipit to the bulls which Clement sent to European monarchs asking them to acknowledge the legality of de la Cerda’s sovereignty over the Islands and to support his crusade materially:

Vinee Domini Sabahot, cuius nos divina miseratio cultores constituit et custodes non solum custodire, ne malarum bestiarum demoliatur incursibus, sed etiam cultum ampliare ipsius, ut fructus uberiores extensis propaginibus afferat cupientes, illos qui ad cultum ampliandum ipsius vinee, videlicet ecclesie sancte Dei, se operadores exhibent fervidos et devotos libenter, quantum cum Deo possumus, favoribus et honoribus congruis prevenimus.

As much as we are able to with God, we have come with favors and appropriate honors to the vineyard of Sabaoth the Lord of hosts, whose divine mercy constituted us tillers [*cultores*] and custodians, and not only to protect [it], lest it is demolished by the incursions of evil beasts, but also to amplify the same worship [*cultum*], so that it would bear—as riper fruits by extended offshoots—desirous ones who show themselves fervent and freely devout for spreading the cultivation of this vineyard.<sup>46</sup>

The letter’s reference to the “vinee domini sabahot” ‘vineyard of Sabaoth the Lord of hosts’ reads directly from Psalms, “Deus exercituum converte nos et ostende faciem tuam et salvimur vineam de Aegypto tulisti eiecisti gentes et plantasti eam.” ‘God of hosts turn to us and show us your face and we will be saved. From Egypt you carried a vine, you threw out the gentiles/the nations and you planted it.’<sup>47</sup> Clearly, this verse serves to further Clement’s argument that to defend Christendom’s vineyard more shoots should be planted, but here, addressed to other sovereigns already invested in this crusade, it also exerts a subtler purpose. Mainly, the Psalm repeats an argument first conceived in the thirteenth-century by the canonist

---

<sup>46</sup> Qtd. in *Monumenta* 1.215.

<sup>47</sup> Psalms 79: 8-9.

Hostiensis. Hostiensis, commenting on the body of church law that pertained to pagan property during the crusades, argued that the coming of Christ removed all authority from the world's "gentes" 'people' and gave it to the Church and so the Pope could justifiably dispose of any authority over the world.<sup>48</sup> When Clement cites the Psalms to nations engaged in colonial expansion, he does so not only to justify the taking of infidel lands but also the taking of them by one sovereign—by the Pope.

Clement's ability to merge two implicit and explicit meanings within a metaphor puts his detractors in a double bind: either they admit to his request and confirm the Pope's sovereign fiat, or they explicitly assert their own right to extend the Christian cult and thus justify the metaphoric by which he has made his claims. Answering such logic is never easy, and so the king of Portugal Alfonso IV, who was actively engaged in the Canary Islands' exploration and for whom such an absolute Papal fiat would undermine his investment, carefully began his denial of Clement's request for aid in this manner:

Vos quidem dignissimus successor dominicus, cui omni moda cura est christicole gregis et sollicitudo commissa, non solum eum custodire a luporum morsibus, verum etiam ampliari curatis, quod in litteris a vestra sanctitate directis suscepimus, dum ad extirpandos infidelitatis palmites infelices, qui totam terram insularum Fortune inutiliter occupant, et plantandum vineam Dei dilectam, dominum Loudovicum, consanguineum nostrum, principem elegistis.

Certainly, you most worthy lordly successor, to whom the whole care and appointed protection of the flock of Christian-tillers/Christian worshipers [*christicole gregis*] [is given], not only care to guard it from the bites of the wolves, but to amplify the truth, which we understand in the directed letters from your Holiness. You selected us a lord, our blood-kin Lord Luís, to extirpate infelicitous shoots [*infelices palmites*] of infidelity, who uselessly occupy the whole land of the Fortunate Islands, and to plant the dear vineyard of the Lord.<sup>49</sup>

Alfonse's careful reply to Clement does not begin as an explicit rejection of the Pope's request but as an adaptation of the metaphoric tradition of cultivation, which authorized the Pontiff's legal actions, with one of pastoral care of the "christocole gregis" 'the flock of Christian worshipers.' True, to a certain extent, Alfonso is simply repeating a certain Christian affinity of

---

<sup>48</sup> Muldoon *Popes* 16.

<sup>49</sup> *Monumenta* 1.232.

equating pastoral and agrarian imagery and the commonplace use of the term “*christicole gregis*” reflects this. However, in deploying the term “*christicole gregis*,” literally ‘the flock of Christian cultivators,’ alongside pastoral and agrarian imagery, Alfonse is at least aware of Clement’s metaphoric game, and subtly emphasizes the pastoral parts of the Christian metaphoric tradition to advance his own claims of ownership over the Canaries, characterizing “*cultus*” as pastoral care of sheep and not merely the production of fruit in a vineyard.

Thus, in countering Clement’s rhetoric, Alfonse does not cite another legal authority or biblical verse but elaborates an agrarian metaphor via pastoral lines to focus the discussion on the role of spiritual care (and not simply of material expansion) in the need to establish authority:

Sed o quis potest concedere quod non habet? Quis, enim, agnis suis sitientibus aquas in suis prediis ortam ad aliorum usum vicinorum fluere permitat? Nonne caritas ordinata a se incipere debet? Nonne etiam, pater alme necessitates nostras, quas habemus pro defensione et dilatatione fidei orthodoxe, vestre beatitudini nuper per nostros ambaxiatores exposuimus propter quas supplicavimus apostolice sanctitati quatenus dignaretur auxilium impertiri nobis... Quis enim causetur regem petere si non egeat? Habeat igitur nos in hoc vestra sanctitas excusatos, cum impotentia nos excuset.

But oh who can concede that which he does not have? Who indeed, with his lambs thirsting permits the water in his lands to flow to the gardens to the use of the gardens of other neighbors? Should ordained charity not begin from himself? Also, nourishing father, have we not exposed our needs, that we have for the defense and dilation of the orthodox faith, recently through our ambassadors, through which we begged that the Apostolic holiness soon deign to impart help to us...? Thus, let your holiness excuse us when our impotence excuses us.<sup>50</sup>

Importantly, Alfonse does not use Clement’s neglect of his Christian sheep to call his request unjust—he does not need to. The question “*quis potest concedere quod non habet?*” ‘Who can give what he does not have?’ invalidates Clement’s metaphoric derivation of sovereignty by showing its inevitable conclusion: that to conceive of sovereignty as a play of meaning—as representational—one must necessarily inquire into its actual practice and not simply its theoretical possibility.

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 1.233.

If the representational status of sovereignty allows Clement to grant sovereignty over any land simply by virtue of being Vicar of Christ, then two conclusions may follow. Either the Pope's very word, by virtue of its mystical power, can conquer lands so that Alfonso's help in the conquest is really no help at all—and he cannot give it. Or the idea of cultivation is a metaphor for a type of sovereignty, which is only present through real enforcement: if through Alfonso's help Luís de la Cerda gains the Islands, it is Alfonso (and not the Pope) who really has sovereignty over them. In asking for help to solidify his claim to the Canaries, Clement has proven that he has never really had the authority to give the Islands away at all just as a shepherd who cannot feed his sheep really does not have ownership over their welfare.

Clement and Alfonso do more than use metaphors to help readers understand their arguments. Rather, they develop an argument from the types of readings which a metaphor engenders. It is these readings which are then cited as a source of authority. Introducing a pastoral metaphor allows Alfonso not to cite a counter biblical text but, in the manner of Clement, to make an argument by expanding a word's metaphoric value. For example, Alfonso calls the "infelices palmites" 'unproductive shoots' of Christianity in the Canaries in parallel to the "agnis sitientibus" 'thirsting lambs,' of Portugal's Christian subjects. This comparison helps him argue that Portugal needs as much tilling and care as the Canary Islands.

Further, by re-appropriating Clement's agrarian rhetoric, Alfonso implies that the Pope's claim to absolute sovereignty undermines his office as a carer of the Christian flock since he is openly giving that care to another—that is, to have authority over humans is materially to care for them. Consequently, Alfonso asks Clement "Nonne caritas ordinata a se incipere debet" 'Must ordained charity not begin from himself?' Following the Christian directive, to love and care for another implies a care for one's self. If it is true that cultivation also requires pastoral

care, by lapsing in his active care over the Christian flock—that is by not giving Portugal the proper care which it deserves, the Pope holds as much authority by virtue of his “ordinate caritas” ‘ordained charity’ as those “infideles,” who do not care about the “infelices palmites” ‘unproductive shoots’ of their lands, hold over theirs. That is, the Pope’s request is a product of his failure as an active tiller of the Christian flock and not of his active shepherding over it.

By using metaphors, Alfonse both constructs a type of legal rebuttal against the Pope’s position on sovereignty—namely that he has sovereign fiat merely by virtue of his spiritual office—and he defends his presence in the Canaries as legitimate, and so his letter continues:

*Ad quas litteras rescribentes, prout nobis visum extitit, per ordinem cum reverentia, respondemus quod predictarum insularum fuerunt prius nostri regnicole inventores. Nos vero attendentes quod predictae insule nobis plus quam alicui principi propinquiores existant quodque per nos possent comodius subiugari, ad hoc oculos direximus nostre mentis et cogitatum nostrum iam ad effectum perducere cupientes, gentes nostras et naves aliquas illuc misimus, ad illius patrie conditionem explorandum, que, ad dictas insulas accedentes, tam homines quam animalia et res alias, per violentiam occuparunt et ad nostra regnum ingenti gaudio, adportarunt.*

Answering to which letters as it seems to us, not long ago brought forth, we respond (in order and with reverence) that the first founders of the said islands were our own subjects [literally, kingdom dwellers or “regnicole”]. And we considering that the aforesaid islands stand neighboring us more than another kingdom, and that they could be subjugated more completely by us, we directed the eyes and the thought of our mind now desiring to lead to this effect; from whence we, to the proposition of exploring of this country, sent our peoples and other ships, which landing on said islands occupied through violence as much of men as animals and other things, and brought them to our kingdom with great joy.<sup>51</sup>

Alfonse reminds the Pope “cum reverentia” ‘with reverence’ that it was the Portuguese, his “regnicole” ‘his subjects’ and literally ‘tillers of the kingdom’ who first really held the Islands. And he does this by giving physical—but not legal—evidence for Portugal’s dominion: that no other kingdom is as near to them as his own; that he has already begun to till their field occupying the lands “per violentiam” ‘through violence;’ and that he has already brought fruits of the Islands “tam homines quam animalia” ‘as much of men as of animals’ to Portugal.

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 1.232.

This catalogue of colonial conquests is not a legal argument: for the Middle Ages usufruct does not imply legitimate ownership. Collectively, Alfonso's claims do not make a single or complete legal argument to the territory nor do they deny the Pope's rightful claim to adjudicate infidel sovereignty and give it to whomever he chooses. Yet if we start with the idea that Alfonso makes his arguments via the implicit connotations introduced by his metaphors, then all of the actions done by Portugal in respect to the Canaries become a strong case against Rome's interference in the act of discovery. After all, if sovereignty is granted by virtue of the Christian "cultus" 'cultivation' and if a proper "cultor" 'cultivator' of the vine is also tasked with its care over it as if he were a shepherd, then only the custodian who is physically active in the vine's welfare may dispose of it with real authority.

Alfonso's letter replies to Clement simply by following his metaphor of cultivation to its logical narrative end: a proper cultivation is one that is cared for, and so a proper sovereign is one who actively practices the extension of Christianity not just whoever authorizes it. To be sure, this makes Alfonso a more careful reader of Hostiensis than Clement since the idea that the Pope has absolute sovereignty over infidels may be put as a question: why are infidels deprived of authority over their own lands? Well, it is simply because true authority is only found in Christ, and since infidels are, by very definition, unable to represent the Christian faith, they cannot have true authority.<sup>52</sup> Transposing this argument to Clement's metaphor, we can say that if the practice of Christianity is properly represented by means of the sword, then it is those who can be witnessed in bearing the sword—that is those entities actively involved in colonization—who hold sovereignty over infidel territories. By practicing Christian "caritas" 'charity,' the colonizers are faithful representations of Christ's authority. For Alfonso, the sword represents

---

<sup>52</sup> Muldoon *Popes* 19.

more than the metaphorical fulfillment of authority; it literally confers legal authority to the real tiller of the vine—to the secular state whose arm wields the sword which protects the Church.

### 3. “Dominio Translatum est”: Infidel Authority Revisited

Unfortunately, history never provided an occasion to test how Clement would have rebuffed Alfonse’s arguments. Because Luís de la Cerda never reached the Islands and because no real explorations were attempted until the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Church-versus-State dispute over how to determine control of acquired infidel lands was postponed. Things did not change much when Jean Béthencourt reached the Islands again in 1405 as the Church and the secular states involved in the exploration of the Canaries harmoniously extended their jurisdiction without legally defending their absolute right to them. The Iberian monarchs would not demand a legal grant of the Islands even as the turn of the century saw continued expansions into the uninhabited Azores and the Mediterranean coasts of Africa.<sup>53</sup> The Papacy, for its own part, would limit its role to acknowledging the grants given by monarchs to independent colonizers, like Jean Béthencourt and later Alfonso de las Casas.<sup>54</sup>

This type of colonial “out-sourcing” evaded the tough legal questions about the sovereignty of infidel peoples, of secular states, and of the Church because colonizers would pledge allegiance to a larger sponsoring kingdom *after* their possession of the Islands and so operate as princes inheriting fiefdoms already under Christian jurisdiction. These feudal “concessions” were largely an inheritance of the Italian influence in colonization which imported

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 120.

<sup>54</sup> For the Papal grant to Béthencourt, see Benedict XIII’s bull *Apostulatus officium* of 1403 (Ibid. 1.294), and for the one given to de las Casas, see Martin V’s *Sincere devotionis* of 1421 (Ibid. 3.9). Both letters refrained from using the “potestas absoluta” ‘absolute power’ of the Pope as a means to authorize a crusade—either limiting their extent to spiritual dispensations, as in Béthencourt’s case, or merely acknowledging the feudal grants of secular princes to the colonizers, such as that of de las Casas.

this system from their experience along the Mediterranean during the crusades and perfected by the Genoese in the fourteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

The initial privatization of the African and North Atlantic expansion sustained this stalemate for roughly ninety years. Nevertheless, as “infidel” peoples became more wary of European encroachments and as continued financing of European exploration required an increase of state involvement the maintenance of this legal limbo became untenable. As James Muldoon has argued, secular and military institutions increasingly felt impeded by the Church’s claim to absolute spiritual authority over the world. In turn, the expansion of European powers into the Atlantic increasingly undermined the evangelizing efforts of the Church and the presence of its prelates by making natives hostile to European presence.<sup>56</sup> This conflict finally came to a watershed in 1433. An armed raid into the Canaries, led by the Portuguese Henry the Navigator, spurred the ire of the presiding prelate Juan de Baeza when the Prince’s armada unabashedly pillaged the Islands for slaves. Baeza appealed to the Pope Eugene IV for help, calling the Prince’s raid an illegal act of piracy.<sup>57</sup>

The Pontiff’s response was decisive, swift, and seemingly unprecedented. Within months of Baeza’s complaint, Eugene proclaimed that any person, who enslaved, took the property, or hindered the free movement of the Canarians, “excommunicacionis sententiam ipso facto incurrant” ‘would incur the sentence of excommunication ipso facto.’<sup>58</sup> He also attempted to redress the harm done by these raids ordering all Christians to restore enslaved Canarians to their lands immediately (or within fifteen days after receiving the notice) under pain of

---

<sup>55</sup> Charles Verlinden, “Italian Influence in Iberian Colonization,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 33. 2 (May, 1953): 203-204.

<sup>56</sup> Muldoon *Popes* 100-120.

<sup>57</sup> *Monumenta* 6.119-120 note 1.

<sup>58</sup> “excommunicacionis sententiam incurere uolumus omnes et singulos qui eosdem canarios baptisatos aut ad baptismum uoluntarie uenientes capere aut uendere uel seruituti subicere attemptabunt” ‘We wish everyone and each person, who will attempt to take or sell or subject to slavery these same baptized Canarians or coming voluntarily to baptism, to incur the sentence of excommunication’ (Ibid 6.122).

excommunication.<sup>59</sup> The Papacy's zealous defense of the Canarians effectively reignited the debate over infidel sovereignty, but, occurring close to a century later, it clearly did so under a different rhetorical logic—one which, as I will argue, because of the heretical threat posed by the arguments of the primacy of “sermo” as a display of power, could not afford to see the exercise of sovereignty as tied to the semantic play of the spoken word.

Even at a first look, Eugene's response suggests that, by 1433, the arguments that Clement had used to justify the disposition of infidel lives were not only legally questionable but also morally reprehensible. Yet, we should not think that this fifteenth century respect for the autonomy of infidel authority was a humanitarian interest for the well-being of individuals. Rather, as the canonist Panormitanus, the “*lucerna juris*” ‘light of the law,’ shows in his fifteenth-century commentary to the *Decretals*, the question of infidel authority was revisited because it addressed a fundamental issue behind the legitimacy of law. Namely this, what provided law itself with legitimacy—the people or the force of the sovereign? As he writes, “*Sed causa existente potest [esse] et supra dixi et est causa legitima favor publicius...et hec procedunt etiam respectu bonorum infidelium nam sine causa nec papa nec imperator potest auferre bona eis*” ‘But it can [be] by the existing cause, as I said above, and the legitimate cause is the public favor [that is the law]...and these things also follow in respect to the goods of the infidels that neither the Pope nor the emperor can take away from them.’<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> “*Et nichilominus universis et singulis eisdem utriusque sexus christifidelibus precipimus et mandamus quatenus, infra quindecim dierum spacium, a die publicacionis presencium...quos seruituti subditos habent, pristine restituant libertati ac totaliter liberos perpetuo esse et, absque aliquarum pecuniarum exactione siue recepcione, abire dimittant; alioquin, lapsis diebus eisdem, excommunicationis sententiam ipso facto incurrant*” ‘And no one, all and each of these same, of either sex, we urge and command, in as long from the day of publication of the present under the space of fifteen days...that they pristinely retribute to liberty and totally make free in perpetuity those [Canarians] whom they have subjected to slavery. They are to be let go without the demand of any money; otherwise, having lapsed these days, let them incur the sentence of of excommunication ipso facto’ (Ibid).

<sup>60</sup> Qtd. in Kenneth Pennington, *The Prince and the Law, 1200-1600* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 223 note 70.

Perhaps, the main change in the Papacy's position towards slavery came from its inability to project itself as a source of homogeneous, absolute authority through the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century. By 1430, the Pope simply could not claim to be the unifying voice of Christianity given that Christendom had been far from unified in the past sixty years. The Great Schism had openly divided the Church by splitting national allegiances to two (and later three) Popes; Europe had been divided in two camps through the French and English war of succession known as the One Hundred Years War; and the teachings of John Wyclif and John Hus had laid the first steps for a Protestant reformation by questioning the Church's very ability to function as a corporal entity. Eugene IV himself had felt the limits to Papal authority that came from this fragmentation, having been compelled to admit the Ecumenical Council of Basel (like his predecessor Martin V had done for the Council of Constance) as his superior in spiritual and temporal matters.

In this environment, the metaphoric reading of the Christian "cultus," through which Clement VI channeled thirteenth-century arguments about sovereignty, would be ineffective as there were real reminders of the limits to Papal power.<sup>61</sup> For it was not one sovereign but two elective bodies, the Council of Constance (1414-1418) and the Council of Basel (1431-1441), which in ending the Schism that had torn Christendom, had succeeded in making the idea of incorporative sovereignty not merely metaphorical but an actual condition of politics. Through what is known as Conciliar Movement, the temporal and spiritual authority of the Church was not metaphorically represented in some individual but embodied in the collective will of the council men. In the words of Antony Black, the canonist communal view on sovereignty "ended

---

<sup>61</sup> Muldoon *Popes* 120.

up (if it had not begun) as a general political norm” by making the Pope’s will subservient to the power of the Church as a corporate entity.<sup>62</sup>

This universality was mimicked in the division of the voting bodies of Christendom into five units, which the Council called, “nations”: the English, the German, the French, the Spanish, and the Italians. It was in front of these elected “nations” and not in front of the Pontiff that the first real debate about the merits of infidel sovereignty occurred, and it was the nations’ resolution that would ultimately temper Eugene’s ban of slavery over the Canaries. This debate, oddly enough, was not triggered by the exploration of the Atlantic but by a complaint from the King of Poland regarding the crusading tactics of the Order of the Teutonic Knights.

On July 7, 1415, the Poles arguing that the Knights’ incursions into their territories unlawfully violated their political sovereignty appealed to the Council of Constance for help.<sup>63</sup> The Polish complaint, produced by the Rector of Jagiellonian University Paulus Vladimiri, claimed that the Teutonic occupation of Polish lands not only furthered the unscrupulous murdering of Polish infidels, preventing the dissemination of Christianity, but that the Order’s crusade was illegal even if it were sanctioned by the Holy Roman Emperor or Pope. The Knights countered that their legal right to crusade proceeded from the infidelity of the Poles, who as idol worshipers, could not have real sovereignty to their territories. As the Knights’ main advocate John Falkenberg said, the Polish—as infidels—were only worthy to be exterminated.<sup>64</sup>

Although the Council did not formally resolve the Polish complaint, the occurrence of such a debate between Vladimiri and Falkenberg clearly showed that things had changed. In the fifteenth century, it was no longer so self-evident that the enunciation of Christian “sermo”

---

<sup>62</sup> Antony Black, “The Conciliar Movement,” *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, ed. J.H. Burns, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 578.

<sup>63</sup> Stanislaus Belch, *Paulus Vladimiri and his Doctrine Concerning International Law and Politics*, 2 vols. (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1965) 1.27-28.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 86-87 and Muldoon *Popes* 112.

‘speech’ could stand for the force of law. As a result, monopolizing the metaphoric value of the Christian “cultus” was no longer sufficient grounds to justify the territorial conquest of infidel territories. This is seen by the legal effects of Paulus Vladimiri’s complaint. It not only precipitated Pope Martin V to investigate the Teutonic Order, but it also set up a discourse which would lead to the condemnation and public burning of his opponent’s (Johan Falkenberg’s) arguments. Vladimiri’s arguments were able to counter the logic which made the Knights’ invasion of Poland (and Clement and Alfonse’s claim over the Canaries) possible—a logic that stemmed back to the thirteenth century: Hostiensis’s belief that the coming of Christ had “translated” sovereignty away from the infidels.<sup>65</sup>

The first two of Vladimiri’s treatises against the Knights, the *Tractatus de Potestate Papae et Imperatoris Respectu Infidelum* and the *Tractatus Opinio Hostiensis*, argued that Hostiensis’s logic of authority allowed for the commission of crimes by Christians.<sup>66</sup> Not mincing terms, Vladimiri reasons that Hostiensis’s commentary is directly causing genocide:

Opinio Hostiensis est, quod in adventu Christi omnis iurisdictio, principatus, honor et dominium *translata fuerunt ab infidelibus ad fideles* et quod hodie non est iurisdictio, nec aliqua potestas, vel dominium apud infideles, cum istorum, sicut dicit ista opinio, sunt funditus incapaces; et impugnandi sunt illi infideles, qui non recognoscunt Romanum imperium. Dicitque tale bellum contra *infideles non recognoscentes* Romanum imperium semper esse iustum et licitum quoad christianos...Unde etiam famosissimus in Italia ille utriusque iuris doctor, Petrus de Anchorano...hanc opinionem improbando, *infert ex ea multas absurditates*, scilicet, quod christiani possent sine peccato furari, subtrahere, rapere, occupare et invadere terras et bona infidelium, qui Ecclesiam Romanam, vel imperium, non recognoscunt, etiam si velint nobiscum pacifice vivere. Et sequitur, *quod haec regula: Peccatum non dimittitur, etc. hic non haberet locum*. Et sequitur, *quod haec prohibitio divinae legis: non furtum facies, non occides, in quibus omnis rapina et omnis violentia prohibetur secundum beatum Augustinum, hic locum non haberet*. Item etiam *lex naturae*, scilicet: Quod tibi non vis fieri, etc., *et multae aliae prohibitiones christianos non ligarent*.

The opinion of Hostiensis is that in the advent of Christ, all the jurisdiction, command, honor, and lordship *were translated from the infidels to the faithful* and that today there is no jurisdiction, nor any other power, or lordship amongst the infidels, with [their own subjects]. As such, this opinion says, they are wholly without power. And *the infidels, who do not recognize* the Roman Empire, must be battled. He also says that such a war against the infidels, who do not recognize the Roman empire, is always just and licit amidst Christians...Whence even another most famous doctor of

---

<sup>65</sup> Belch 1.118-119.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 2.846.

law, Petrus de Anchorano in order to disprove this opinion, brings forth *many absurdities from this opinion*, namely, that Christians can without sin steal, take, rape, occupy, and invade the lands and goods of the infidels, who do not recognize the Roman Church or Empire, even if they purpose to live peacefully with us. And *it follows that this rule*: sin is not diminished, etc. *does not have a place here* [according to Hostiensis]. It follows, *that this prohibition of divine law*: do not steal, do not kill, in which all rape [theft] and violence is prohibited according to blessed Augustine, *here would also not have a place*. Again even *the law of nature*, namely: what you wish not to be done to you, etc., and *many other prohibitions would not bind Christians* [My emphasis].<sup>67</sup>

Vladimiri claims that an act of interpretation, the “*opinio Hostiensis*” ‘opinion of Hostiensis,’ about the “*translatio*” of authority has allowed for slippages of meaning and the creation of “*multas absurditates*” ‘many absurdities’ that in turned have justified “*omnis rapina et violentia*” ‘all the rape and violence’ which the Teutonic Order has perpetrated against the Poles.<sup>68</sup>

It is the reduction of ideas into the semantic play of a voice—like translation, absurdity, and recognition—that makes the understanding of sovereignty as a representation dangerous. For Vladimiri, when Hostiensis uses the “*adventu Christi*” ‘the coming of Christ’ as a justification for denying infidels authority, he does it on the assumption that spiritually and materially “*principatus honor et dominium translata fuerunt*” ‘governance, honor, and lordship were carried over/translated.’ The terms “*translata fuerunt*” ‘they were carried over/translated’ do not merely imply the conferral of ideas of sovereignty but the appropriation of “governance, honor, and lordship” as representational signifiers from one context to another. Vladimiri reads Hostiensis as deriving his ideas of authority from the representative force of Christian speech.

By focusing on the “*adventu Christi*,” Vladimiri sets up Hostiensis’s legal claims as ontological positions. That is, Hostiensis understands the translation of the spiritual idea of God into the human body of Christ as proof that authority—like any signifier—could be translated. Infidels, by denying the possibility of “*faith*,” have not experienced the translation of the Divine

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 2.864-865.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 2.883.

Word into flesh and hence cannot hold authority. In viewing authority as a signifier, Hostiensis is the direct precursor of those who wrongfully usurp infidel lands.

In this, Vladimiri seems to have put his finger in a key aspect of the Christian discourse of colonialism as Clement VI's justification to conquer the Canaries clearly repeats this logic:

Sed maius dubium est de dominio infidelis super infidelem. Et hic tango aliqua conferendo et uidetur quod per auctoritatem aut sententiam, id est Ecclesie, quod plenam potestatem habet potest iuste statui et ordinari quod tale dominium ab eis *tollatur* seu in una regione seu in omnibus, sicut sibi iussum fuerit expedire.

But there is more doubt regarding the sovereignty of infidel over infidel. And this I touch comparing some things, and it seems that through authority or command, that is of the Church, because it has full power, it can justly establish and ordain that such sovereignty from [the infidels] is *removed* in one region or in all, such that it would release the law to itself [My emphasis].<sup>69</sup>

Clement uses the same terminology that Vladimiri imputes to Hostiensis. He argues that authority is something that can be “*tollatur*” ‘taken’ or ‘sublated’ from one place into another as if it was a metaphor that could be recognized differently across contexts. For Clement, the Canaries may be invaded not because infidels hold authority unjustly but because the very principle of “*dominio infidelis super infidelem*” ‘sovereignty of infidel over infidel’ is inconceivable, or what is the same, unrecognizable due to the abstraction of sovereignty as semantic play.

Following this logic, Vladimiri sets up Hostiensis's argument to assume two conditions necessary for all translation. The first is that if authority can be translated, it is so because it points to something, because it signifies. The second is that if authority means something, it only does so for a particular audience which can recognize it. Treating any idea, even sovereignty, as a signifier implies that all concepts merely point (and hence can stand) for other contexts to make sense and that their truth is not absolutely grounded upon a direct relationship of signifier to signified. In emphasizing translation, Hostiensis construes ideas as linguistically based. As such, if one thinks that sovereignty can be *translated*—that it may be removed or reapplied under

---

<sup>69</sup> Martínez 102.

different conditions—one necessarily thinks of it as a set of relations that govern a certain group and not as a quality that all individuals may hold.

From Vladimiri's viewpoint, we can understand why Hostiensis's own works describe divine law both as a type of skill, an "ars artium" 'art of arts' and as a living being—only as embodied sovereignty is law something other than mere writing; it is embodied action:

Sec hec est veritas: *quod ars artium est diuina* lex a qua non est excludenda canonica nec humana. Civilis enim diuina est, quia imperatores ad actiones diuinitus peruenerunt...et quia a uiua lege scilicet imperatore, *quem dominus misit hominibus legem animatam in terris*, et ei ipsas leges subiecit.

But this is truth: *that the "art of arts" is the divine law* from which must not be excluded neither canon or human law. Indeed, civil law is divine law, because the emperors came to divine actions...both because from the living law, namely the emperor, *whom the Lord sent to men as animated law in earth*, and because he subjected to himself these same laws [My emphasis].<sup>70</sup>

Describing law as an "art of arts" in the manner which rhetoricians and poets, Hostiensis makes the case that authority only makes sense if there is a general equivalence between members of a group and not if it arbitrarily means one thing for one individual and something else for another. Law, therefore, is necessarily a type of language which makes sense only through its representation by the action of sovereigns.<sup>71</sup> As such, legitimate authority is not an idea, but it is an open performance by a corporate entity or individual such as the emperor who by being "legem animatam in terris" 'animated law in earth' gives power to the law.<sup>72</sup>

#### 4. Absurd Authority: The Ontology of Metaphoric Sovereignty

Consequently, the war against infidelity "semper esse iustum et licitum quoad christianos" 'is always just and licit amidst Christians' because Christians cannot behave lawfully where there simply is no linguistic recognition of law. To say that infidels lack authority

---

<sup>70</sup> Qtd. in Pennington 52.

<sup>71</sup> It is notable that Hostiensis makes his arguments not by new ideas but by an increase of metaphoric language, so that although he did not champion autocratic Papal power, in Kenneth Pennington's words, his "rich blanket of brightly colored metaphors...seemed to create a patter of limitless papal power" (Ibid. 54).

<sup>72</sup> Brian Tierney, *The Foundations of the Conciliar Theory: The Contribution of the Great Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (New York: Brill, 1998) 139.

is not to say that they are not human or that they are lesser than Christians. Quite the contrary, it is to say that there is no such thing as a fixed idea of the human and that every encounter with a foreign “other” requires its own language and necessarily a type of immediate and individual encounter with the language of the “other” through translation. Infidelity, as an ontological position outside “fides” ‘faith,’ deserves to be treated differently because its being is not dictated by law but by the absolute relation of an individual to the power of his speech.

This is why Vladimiri argues that the problem with reducing authority to translation is that fixed ideals, such as ethical and natural laws, can be simultaneously violated and upheld. If law’s authority is merely a product of its representation—of its embodiment by a sovereign entity or event, then anyone who can embody authority automatically follows the law regardless of his action. For example, a Christian can commit illegal and unnatural acts and still be Christian under the law simply because his speech, above all, is the very process of law making. If the idea of Christianity is inseparable from its representation by Christians, any Christian may kill, steal, and pillage while still acting “sine peccato” ‘without sin’ since to be Christian is to be the embodiment of Christian law.

At first sight, Vladimiri’s conclusion may seem overly simplistic. First, one cannot argue that, by giving the Pope the right to take infidel property, Hostiensis is making a point about Christians in general. Removing the legal rights of criminals does not exonerate citizens from taking their law into their own hands without a mandate. Likewise, it does not follow that the denial of infidel authority, even in a general sense, is a license for the constant persecution of infidels. This much is clear to Hostiensis who denies the power of private individuals (even kings and the Emperor) to declare war on infidelity without the Pope’s license.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Muldoon *Popes* 18.

Still, even if Hostiensis, by virtue of claiming that infidels do not recognize the concept of authority, allows Christians to take their property, it does not follow that such a taking should be done through the violation of Christian law. As Hostiensis writes,

Concedimus tamen quod infideles qui dominium ecclesie recognoscunt sunt ab ecclesia tolerandi...Alios autem infideles in pace degentes: et etiam illos quod servos tenemus non per bellum: non per violentiam aliquam sed tamen per predicationem dici converti debere.

We concede, nevertheless, that the infidels who recognize the sovereignty of the Church must be tolerated...But other infidels now living in peace (and even those whom we hold as slaves) not through war: not through any violence but nevertheless through preaching should be said to be converted.<sup>74</sup>

For Hostiensis, both infidels who understand sovereignty and those who peacefully live side by side with Christians “sunt ab ecclesia tolerandi” ‘must be tolerated by the Church.’ That is, their lives must not be encroached by violence or war because this stands against Christian teaching. Instead, they must be persuaded peaceably to be part of the Christian church. The illegal exercise of authority by zealous Christians does not come from its founding principle. As James Muldoon makes clear, Hostiensis argued that to take the goods of infidels who recognized the true Church was illicit and that Christians “should not use their claim to universal domination as the initial basis for dealings with infidel societies.”<sup>75</sup>

Yet for Vladimiri, as well as for the fourteenth-century colonialist tradition he tackles, Hostiensis’s arguments are not simply legal positions; rather, they are ontological speculations about the nature of authority itself. This ontology sees in Christianity not a mere correction of an individual’s beliefs to some ideal good but a fundamental change of an individual’s physical and spiritual nature. In this, he does not misrepresent Hostiensis’s claims since they mimic a Pauline position about the law in relating the idea of coming from sin “si qua ergo in Christo nova creatura vetera transierunt ecce facta sunt nova” ‘If anyone therefore is in Christ, he is a new

---

<sup>74</sup> Qtd. in Ibid. 167 notes 60, 61.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 17.

creature; the old things passed, and look they are made new,' as an individual's relation to law.<sup>76</sup>

To claim that law is no different than its embodiment is to follow Paul in saying that "iustificatio legis impleteretur in nobis qui non secundum carnem ambulamus sed secundum Spiritum" 'the justification of the law is fulfilled in us, who wonder not according to flesh but according to Spirit.'<sup>77</sup> Closely following Paul, Hostiensis argues that the ontology of sovereignty is inseparable from the ontology of Christianity. Just as Christianity resides in the translation of Word to flesh, authority also resides in the translation of power to action.

It is this Pauline ontology that Vladimiri's arguments indict by denying the translatability of law, and they do so most explicitly at the end of his *De Potestate* when he addresses what Hostiensis can mean by translation:

Translato ergo sacerdotio, per consequens *translata est lex, id est, potestas legis interpretandae*. Et haec connexitas est accessorii et sui principalis, quia lex dependet a sacerdote. Cum autem alii infideles dictam legem non receperunt, nec sacerdotium fuit apud ipsos, non videtur aliud probare dicta allegatio, nisi quod potestas condendae vel interpretandae legis a Iudaeis est translata in Petrum, etc.; non autem dominia, iurisdictiones et possessiones infidelium, quae non huiusmodi lege divina tenentur, sed iure gentium, ut supra dictum est. Quod quidem ius gentium nullam connexitatem habet cum sacerdotio.

[According to Hostiensis] therefore, having translated/handed over the priesthood [from the pagans to the Church], consequently, *the law was translated, that is, the power of interpreting the law*. And this is the connection to the corollary and principal argument [he makes], because the law depends on the priest. Since however other infidels did not receive such a law, nor was the priesthood amidst them, the aforesaid allegation does not seem to prove the other, except that the power of founding or interpreting the law is translated from the Jews into Peter, etc.; not however, infidel dominion, jurisdiction, and possessions, which are not held of this way by divine law, but by the right of peoples, as it is said above. Because this same right of peoples has no connection with the priesthood [My emphasis].<sup>78</sup>

According to Vladimiri, Hostiensis uses the Old Testament to argue that just as the priesthood was translated from the infidels (namely the Jews) to the faithful, so can the law be translated because "potestas legis interpretandae" 'the power of the law to be interpreted' was translated. In other words, Hostiensis argues that law is basically nothing other than its semantic interpretation.

---

<sup>76</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17.

<sup>77</sup> Romans 8:3.

<sup>78</sup> Belch 2.843-844.

Because he reads Hostiensis as making an ontological claim about the nature of law, Vladimiri reads this argument as “*connexitas accessorii et sui principalis*” ‘connection of the corollary and of the principal.’ Thus, he rebuts Hostiensis by emphasizing that “*ius gentium*” ‘the law of peoples’ is not part of the priesthood simply because the being of “*ius*” is not the same as its ability to be interpreted—the being of law is more than its semantic representation. Because the moving of the power of the priesthood from Jews to Christians had nothing to do with other infidels, the only argument which Hostiensis may derive from the Old Testament to support the idea that infidel sovereignty was removed is that the interpretation of divine law itself was transferred to Christian exegesis. Of course, this assumes that law is no different than its interpretation, and as Vladimiri makes clear, this transference has nothing to do with the *universal* ontology of law itself but only with its subjective being. As a result, the “*ius gentium*” ‘the law of nations’ which covers the relationship amongst different peoples should not be affected by their respective fidelity or infidelity.

Otherwise, if we take Hostiensis’s position and argue that the authority of law is dependent upon the ontological change instituted by Christ’s coming—by its translation—then there cannot be a place for authority to mediate universal human relationships. Because Christ’s coming is the support for authority, then law may only govern “*quoad christianos*” ‘in regard to Christians’ just as a language only makes sense amidst those who speak it. In respect to infidelity, which does not have Christian speech, Hostiensis’s arguments mean that there is a place in which law “*non locum habet*” ‘does not have a place.’ By reducing law to interpretation, Hostiensis’s view makes space for a place in which Christians may behave as if they were not bound by Christian law simply because their speech is not interpreted.

Because he understands the authority of law to proceed from its representation, in the speech of the Pope or the Emperor, Hostiensis necessarily constrains law to its contextual meaning. Infidels, who are outside our “dominium,” cannot be treated peaceably as if they were subject to our laws simply because, to him, law is not an ontological universal quality but an ontological (almost ontic) subjective relationship of faith. Paradoxically, it is in respecting their radical difference from the faithful, in respecting their inability to cognize Christian speech, that Christians must act in violence against the infidel Other. For in relation to in-fidelity, the Christian subject does not stand in relation to a universal law but only in relation to the being of an absolute, unknowable and untranslatable “other,” who must not be essentialized as speaking a universal language.

We can see why Vladimiri’s arguments would be particularly influential at a time in which the power of the Papacy was being curtailed by a Council made up of scholars, exegetes, and canonists. By condemning the linguistic basis of authority, Vladimiri effectively prohibits any single individual from embodying the fullness of power and from having a privileged relation outside rational law. If Christians may not licitly take infidel lands by virtue of being Christians, neither can the Pope assume absolute authority of the Church by virtue of being a Pope. In asking, “Can a Christian take infidel property?” Vladimiri is doing nothing more than repeating an old scholastic discussion about the role of Papal infallibility: is the sovereign above the law? Is the enforcer of the law subject to law’s precepts? Is it possible to say, that authority is outside of law or, as Carl Schmitt would reformulate the problem in the twentieth century, that “sovereign is he who decides on the exception”?<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 5.

According to Vladimiri, Hostiensis would answer in the affirmative. By giving absolute power to the Pope merely because he is the Vicar of Christ, Hostiensis makes the representation of authority its necessary and sufficient condition. This reading allows Vladimiri to argue that Hostiensis introduces not only “errores” ‘errors’ but also “multas absurditates” ‘many absurdities,’ not because his logic is wrong, but because his arguments reduce authority to an aporia. Hostiensis himself admits this much when he comments that the Pope may not contravene his own spiritual state of absolute authority. “Alias” ‘Otherwise,’ says Hostiensis, “ei non aufero, etsi uelit mutare quadrata rotundis” ‘I do not deny to him [anything], even if he wishes to change squares into a circle.’<sup>80</sup> It is not that Hostiensis believes that the Pope is some supernatural being who can change the laws of geometry, but that his ability to protect law is possible only as there are no laws above him—except those which maintain his own “fides” ‘faith.’<sup>81</sup> As Kenneth Pennington argues, for Hostiensis, the authority of the Pope and the law it protects are one, so that, like God, he is both law’s necessary and the sufficient cause.<sup>82</sup>

##### 5. Heresy and Representation: Vladimiri’s Defense of Universality

Since sovereignty is a description of an ontological state of a particular group of people—and not of a universal idea—it may only be understood by the concrete actions. I can only uphold my faith to the command “non occides” ‘thou shalt not kill’ by differentiating my being from those who are non-Christians; moreover, I can only treat them as non-Christians by treating them without the protection of law. This means that “multae aliae prohibitiones christianos non ligarent” ‘many other prohibitions do not bind Christians’ simply because Christians, in a literal reading of Paul’s *Epistle to the Corinthians*, are the instantiation of authority itself. The law’s precepts, therefore, are not applicable universally but only through a type of internal

---

<sup>80</sup> Qtd. and trans. in Pennington 60-61, note 87.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 62 note 91.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 74-75.

communicability from which infidels—by virtue of their absolute alterity from the faithful—are hopelessly excluded.

Under Hostiensis’s arguments, the Christian community works as a type of deconstructive state, where the authority of law is guaranteed through the radical difference of one being to another by virtue of speech. As an alternative, Vladimiri’s *Opinio* makes a full defense of the law’s “dominium” ‘authority’ as a universal quality outside ontological distinctions. He argues that sovereignty extends to Christians and non-Christians alike because it is applicable to all of the Lord’s sheep regardless of their subjective relation towards the discourse of grace:

Prima conclusio. Licet infideles non sint de ovili Ecclesiae, omnes tamen sunt oves Christi, sine dubio secundum creationem; Ioannis, x: alias oves habeo, quae non sunt de hoc ovili, scilicet Ecclesiae. Innocentius. Secunda. Verba ad personam Petri prolata voce Dominica, videlicet: *Pasce oves meas, accipienda sunt pro omnibus: fidelibus et infidelibus indistincte*. Et ideo Petri successor debet, non solum pascere, sed etiam eas defendere et, quibus paterna provisione tenetur consulere, non debet impugnare vel laedi permittere nisi causa rationalibus id exposcat. Ratio: quia non debent inde iniuriae procedere unde iura nascuntur; De natis ex libero ventre, c. unico. Innocentius[...]Quinta. *Non licet infidelibus, etiam Romanum imperium non recognoscentibus auferre dominia sua, possessiones, vel iurisdictiones; quia sine peccato et Deo auctore ea possident: qui creavit haec indifferenter propter hominem, quem formavit ad suam imaginem*. Unde: *omnia subiecit sub pedibus eius, oves et boves universas, etc.* Beatus Thomas, Innocentius, et communiter alii.

First conclusion. Let it be granted that the infidels are not from the flock of the Church; nevertheless, all are sheep of Christ, without doubt according to creation. John x: Other sheep I have, which are not from this flock, namely the Church (Innocent.) Second, the words spoken by the Lordly voice to the person of Peter, namely: “*Feed my sheep,*” *must be taken as everyone without distinction: the faithful and the infidel*. And even the successor of Peter should, not only feed, but also defend them, and he is held to care for them with paternal provision; he should not fight or permit them to be hurt unless a rational cause requires it. Reason: because from whence rights are born, there should not come injury; (On births from the free womb, Single Chapter, Innocent) [...] Fifth. *It is not permitted even to the Roman Empire to take the possessions, lordship, or jurisdiction from the non-recognizant infidels; because without sin, they possess these from God as author: who created these things indifferently on account of man, which he formed to his image*. From whence: *he has subjected “all things under his feet, all the sheep and cows, etc.”* (Blessed Thomas, Innocent, and commonly others) [My emphasis].<sup>83</sup>

Following Innocent, Vladimiri reads Jesus’s command to Peter “*pasce oves meas*” ‘feed my sheep’ as a commanding the church to care for all humans, “*fidelibus et infidelibus indistincte*”

---

<sup>83</sup> Belch 2.869-870.

‘faithful and unfaithful indistinctly.’ “Oves” works as an empty signifier—it stands in for the collectivity of human experience and not for the distinguishing characteristics that can set one group of humans apart from another.

Unlike Hostiensis, Vladimiri does not argue that law can be embodied in the actions of one entity, but that coming from a universal idea, it radiates to all of creation without distinction of their relationship to faith. In thinking of “pastoral care” as a specific type of relation owed to the “fides” ‘faithful’ alone, the Church inevitably forsakes the care over a part of the Lord’s flock, those “alias oves” ‘other sheep’ outside the fold of the Church. Consequently, that Jesus tells Peter to care for his sheep does not imply a specific care for them. On the contrary, the idea of a Christian cult is to be taken without *any* metaphoric connotations. God subjects “sub pedibus eius” ‘under his feet’ all things regardless of their being—“oves, boves, etc” ‘sheep, cow, etc’—and so keeps the same rules for everyone. Sovereignty comes in one voice from “Deo auctore” ‘God author’ and as such is a universal idea, a right given “indifferenter propter hominem,” ‘indifferently on account of men’ and without attention to their actions.

God’s absolute sovereignty means that neither a Christian nor an infidel ruler may have a special claim to authority. Similarly, because both Christians and infidels represent a fixed idea, being created “ad suam imaginem” ‘to his image,’ their particular relationship to God has no bearing on the legitimacy of their authority. As Vladimiri states, “quia in rei veritate Domini est terra et plenitudo eius...sed ipse Deus haec omnia subiecit rationali creaturae, propter quam omnia fecit” ‘because the truth of the matter is that the earth is of the Lord and of his plenitudo...but God himself subjected all things to rational creation, because he made all things.’<sup>84</sup> If there is authority on earth, it is because man, as a part of creation, resembles God’s “*imaginem*” and not because a particular community of individuals properly can execute it. As

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 799.

such, claiming that natural authority can be determined by a human's relationship is tantamount to claiming that authority is possible because humanity can mime the deity and not because God's goodness has given it freely to all from the beginning.<sup>85</sup>

Unlike Marsilius of Padua or Dante Alighieri, who limit the Pope's temporal power by thinking of sovereignty as a purely human institution, Vladimiri thinks that it is the universality of authority—its absolute separation from man—that limits an individual's absolute claim to power. This means that there is an absolute authority on earth, namely the Pope who was given the “plenitudo potestatis” ‘plenitude of power’ through Christ's concession to Peter; those who contend otherwise and believe that sovereignty is a social institution are heretics worthy to be burned.<sup>86</sup> But by the same vein, the Pope cannot override the authority of divine and natural law which give to all humans, by their very semblance to the creator, the inalienable right of autonomy and sovereignty over their lands and bodies. In other words, the Pope has authority *de iure* (by right) by his special office as Christ's representative on earth but not *de facto* (by deed) since that authority resides in God alone since the beginning of creation.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> “Ex quo patet, quod ab initio rationalis creaturae non erant in bonis alicuius nisi Dei, et ideo occupanti concedebantur” ‘From this it is clear, that from the beginning rational creatures were not in the good of anything except of God, and for that reason, they were removed from taking possession’ (Ibid. 800).

<sup>86</sup> “Habetur etiam monarchia nova, quae nititur ostendere, quod semper utriusque gladii potestas fuit apud Summum Pontificem: et in Veteri Testamento et in Novo. Fuit et alia monarchia, quam compilavit Dante, poeta Florentinus...quod imperium in nullo dependet a papa. Et propter illum tractatum fuit prope combustionem tamquam haereticus...Item, nititur etiam Marsilium ostendere, quod potestas coactivae, id est per quam vi et armis possit quis cogi, no potest esse apud papam, sed est apud imperatore, etiam quoad spiritualia.” ‘It is also a new monarchy, which [he] strives to show, because, in the Supreme Pontiff, was always the power of either sword: both in the Old Testament and in the New. Another monarchy was that which Dante, the Florentine poet, compiled...that sovereignty in no way depends from the Pope. And because of this, such treatise was worthy of burning as heretical... Also, even Marsilius strives to show that the active power, through which anyone can be forced through strength and arms, cannot be within the Pope, but it is within the Emperor even amidst spiritual things’ (Ibid. 811).

<sup>87</sup> “Papa quatenus est vicarius Christi, habet potestatem et iurisdictionem non tantum super christianos, sed etiam super omnes generaliter infideles, de iure licet non de facto. Ratio: quia Christus eam habuit, Matthei ultimo, *Data est mihi omnis potestas in coelo et in terra*, etc. Et non videretur diligens paterfamilias, nisi super omnes potestatem suo vicario dimisisset.” ‘For as long as the Pope is the Vicar of Christ, he has power and jurisdiction not only over Christians, but also generally over all the infidels; it is permitted to him by right but not by action. Reason: because Christ has jurisdiction, last chapter of Matthew, *Power of all is given to me in heaven and in earth*, etc. And it does not seem that the loving father would scatter power over all unless in the person of his Vicar’ (Ibid. 871).

Against what P.E. Russell and Eyda Merediz have argued, it is not the Aristotelian emphasis on the social and human basis of sovereignty that is invoked by canonists as a successful defence of infidel sovereignty.<sup>88</sup> Although Aristotle has a role to play in Vladimiri's logic, the foundations of his defense of natural rights are thoroughly theological. It is his unequivocal defense of the absolute power of the Church as a sovereign entity that, according to Vladimiri, prevents any Christian sovereign from rightfully claiming authority over the infidels:

Regnum in terris surgit tribus modis. Primo, per voluntatem Dei revelatam... secundo modo, per consensum eorum qui reguntur; tertio modo, per violentiam. Primo modo et secundo modo, regnum est iustum; tertio modo, non. *Secundum primum modum iustificatur potestas papae, postea resumpta a Christo...secundo modo, ex quo tota Ecclesia Catholica et omnium fidelium congregatio in hoc consentit...*Cum igitur non constat imperium super infideles praedictos generaliter esse iustificatum primo aut secundo modo, non potest dici imperatorem aliquam potestatem habere super dictos infideles, sed tantum tertio modo: per violentiam et tyrannidem.

Sovereignty in earth arises in three ways. First, through the revealed will of God...in the second way, through the consent of those who are governed; in the third way, through violence. In the first and second way, sovereignty is just; in the third it is not. *According to the first mode, the power of the Pope is justified, after it is taken from Christ...in the second way, from which the whole Catholic Church and the congregation of all the faithful consents in it...* Since therefore it does not follow that sovereignty over the aforesaid infidels be generally justified in the first or second mode, it cannot be said that the emperor has any power over said infidels, but only through the third mode: through violence and tyranny [My emphasis].<sup>89</sup>

Since authority is just only when given by God or when it is authorized through all those “qui reguntur” ‘who are governed,’ then only the Pope is the true authority on earth since he is the only whom God has ascertained as having power and since he acts by the consent of “tota Ecclesia Catholica et omnium fidelium congregatio” ‘the whole Catholic Church and congregation of all the faithful.’ A secular monarch, on the other hand, may only have power over the infidels through their conquest and so illegitimately through violence and tyranny.

Vladimiri's position, hence, echoes Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* in arguing that *all* claims to authority that proceed from a secular basis are unjust since they do not come originally from right or by divine revelation but from a history of violence and conquest. He writes, “de iure

---

<sup>88</sup> See Russell “El Descubrimiento” 14-15 and Merediz 9-10.

<sup>89</sup> Belch 2.819.

tamen laicus ante aliquam constitutionem numquam habuit potestatem in laicos, sed sola usurpatione... imperium dependet a potestate papae, qui habet utrumque gladium” ‘although [the Emperor] is secular before any constitution by right, he has no power over secular men, but only usurpation. Command depends from the power of the Pope, who holds both swords.’<sup>90</sup> Repeating Augustine’s claim that, outside of divine justice, sovereignty amounts only “latrocinia” ‘robbery,’ Vladimiri argues—almost foreshadowing Nietzsche’s critique of law—that, from the vantage point of history, “right” is merely an institutionalized alibi of centuries of oppression and conquest.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, rightful authority is only possible outside a temporal perspective from an absolute viewpoint which would bind Christians and infidels, “boves et oves” ‘cows and sheep,’ as immediate reflections of one universal idea.

Vladimiri thus uses a very old but effective argument to undermine his opponents: the charge that human institutions are mere representations which dissemble “ideal” truth. This indictment against basing a theory of justice from pure representation is the heart of his formal accusation against the Teutonic Order delivered before the Council of Constance. Its most explicit articulation is found in the Incipit of his polemical *Articuli Contra Cruciferos in Prussia*:

In nomine Domini nostri Iesu Christi. Amen. Quia praesens Generale Constantiense Concilium propter tria principaliter convocatum existit ac etiam in Spiritu Sancto congregatum: primo, ut schisma pestiferum tollatur ab Ecclesia; secundo, ut haereses extirpentur; tertio, pro reformatione Ecclesiae facienda tam in capite quam in membris, duobus aliis non omissis. Quantum ad secundum istorum docet Salvator noster procedere (in Evangelio Matthaei, vii c.) dicens: Attendite a falsis prophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces. Et subdit: a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos; et, post pauca, non potest . . . arba mala bonos fructus facere, etc. *Igitur de fructibus haeresis Prussianae—quae non minor videtur, immo multo maior, horribilior, deterior et damnabilior, quam Wicklephistarum et Hussonistarum, videlicet Fratrum, qui Fratres Hospitalis Sanctae Mariae de domo Teutonicorum Ierosolimitani se appellant, alias de Prussia ponuntur articuli infrascripti.*

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen. Because the present General Council of Constance exists principally convoked and even congregated in the Holy Ghost for three things: first, so that the schisms of pestilences be destroyed from the church; second, so that the heretics be extirpated; third, for the acting reformation of the Church as much in the head as in the members, with the

<sup>90</sup> Belch 2.875.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. and “Remotaque iustitia quia sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia?” ‘And with justice removed, what are kingdoms if not great dens of robbers?’ (Augustine “De civitate” Book 4. Chapter 4.113).

other two not omitted. As much to the second of these, our Savior teaches to advance (in the Evangel of Matthew, chapter 7) saying: “Watch out for the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inside they are rapacious wolves.” And following: “by their fruits, you will know them,” and after a few things, “. . . a bad tree cannot make good fruits, etc.” *Therefore from the fruits of the Prussian heresy—which do not seem small, indeed much greater, more horrible, baser, and more damnable, than those of the Wycliffites and Hussites*, namely of the Brothers, who call themselves the Brothers of the Hospital of Holy Mary of Jerusalem of the House of the Teutronics, otherwise from Prussia, the proceeding articles are put forth [My emphasis].<sup>92</sup>

Vladimiri frames the arguments of his opponents—almost like he frames the secular usurpation of God’s sovereignty—a dissemblance from an absolute idea of truth. In calling the Order false prophets and “wolves in sheep’s clothing,” Vladimiri deploys a common trope associated with heresy—particularly of the heresies associated with Wycliffites and Hussites—that the dissension from orthodoxy was an exercise in hypocritical dissemblance.

At first sight, it would appear Vladimiri’s accusation was simply a superficial way to vilify his enemies, describing their actions as “fructibus haeresis Prussianae” ‘fruits of the Prussian heresy’ for a Council whose object was to extirpate the Wycliffite heresy and the Schism from the Church. This conclusion is intensified by the heavy-handedness of Vladimiri’s polemic, which depicts the Prussian “heresy” as more damnable than that of the “Wicklephistarum et Hussonistarum” ‘of the Wycliffites and Hussites.’ Still, Vladimiri’s choice of metaphors—of “fructibus” ‘fruits’ and of “lupi” ‘wolves’—functions citationally (referring his readers to *Matthew*) without rhetorically telling the Council how to destroy the “bad fruit” or the perils to Christian fold in having a wolf in “sheep’s clothing.” His rhetoric, for all of its metaphoric connotations, is not developed to make an argument—like it is in the letters of Clement or Alfonse—but only seems geared towards associating heresy with dissemblance.

Particularly, Vladimiri’s rhetoric repeats Augustine’s explanation of the heretic as a dissembler. For Augustine, the heretic takes Christianity superficially assuming that it is his denying of the Christian rites which make him a heretic. But the truth is quite the opposite as

---

<sup>92</sup> Belch 2.916-917.

Augustine reminds Vincentius: “Non Sacramenta christiana faciunt te haereticum, *sed prava dissensio*. Non propter malum quod processit ex te, negandum est bonum quod remansit in te, quod malo tuo habes, si non ibi habes unde est bonum quod habes.” ‘It is not [the lack of] Christian sacraments which make you a heretic, but *the evil of dissension*. It is not on account of the evil that comes from you that the good that remains in you must be negated. If you do not have what you have there from where it is good, that you have for your evil.’ [My emphasis]<sup>93</sup> For Augustine, the heretic’s position dissents from the direct presentation of truth and not the mere rejection of customs.

Heresy, like a wolf in sheep’s clothing, confuses evil for the good by assuming that “propter malum...negandum est bonum” ‘because of evil...the good must be negated.’ For Augustine evil is evil, and good is good. Heresy is precisely the erasure of these boundaries through a focus on what is superficial, and in his commentary to the passage which Vladimiri cites from Matthew, he makes this clear:

Rectissime sane quaritur quos fructus nos attendere volverit, quibus cognoscere arborem possimus...multi enim multa pauperibus, non misericordia, sed ambitione largiuntur...Hi ergo non sunt fructus de quibus cognosci arborem monet. Ista enim cum bono animo in veritate fiunt, propriae sunt ovium vestis; cum autem malo in errore, non aliud quam lupos contegunt. Sed non ideo debent oves odisse vestimentum suum, quia plerumque illo se occultant lupi.

Most correctly indeed it is asked which fruits he wishes us to attend, by which we can recognize the tree...for many men bestow to the poor many things, not from mercy, but from ambition. These, therefore, are not the fruits by which he exhorts us to know the tree. Indeed, such things, when they are done from truth, are the proper clothing of sheep; but when they are done in evil error/sin, they hide nothing other than wolves. But the sheep should not hate their clothing since wolves sometimes hide in it.<sup>94</sup>

By faulting through his sin the “vestimentis ovium” ‘sheep’s clothing,’ the heretic implies that, to be sheep, the sheep need their clothing and that all faith is but mere show and superficiality.

---

<sup>93</sup> Augustine, “Epistola 93 Ad Vincentius,” *S. Aurelii Augustini: Opera Omnia, Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Ridgewood: Gregg Press, 1965, Web, [http://www.sant-agostino.it/latino/lettere/lettera\\_094\\_testo.htm](http://www.sant-agostino.it/latino/lettere/lettera_094_testo.htm) 28 January 2011) Ch. 11, Paragraph 46.

<sup>94</sup> Augustine, “De Sermonem Domini in Monte Secundum Matthaeum,” *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Ridgewood: Gregg Press, 1965) 1306.

This, in turn, makes the sheep “*odisse vstimentum suum*” ‘hate their own clothing.’ The heretic, therefore, makes Christianity into a type of outward show and metaphor which turns good to evil and evil to good depending on the circumstances.

Vladimiri’s rhetoric of “*lupi*” ‘wolves’ and “*falsis fructibus*” ‘false fruits’ alludes to the tradition of thinking heresy as a type of metaphor by saying that the Order is heretical—that, following Hostiensis, it makes authority contingent upon a belief in the reality of representation and not upon a universal objective truth.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, Vladimiri is not simply attacking the Order but arguing against the presentation of truth as a metaphor. This is evident in how he reduces the majority of the Order’s crimes to falsification and simulation. He accuses the Teutonic Knights of lying by really holding a private and not religious aim;<sup>96</sup> of falsifying the Papal bulls and imperial mandates to justify an attack on the Poles;<sup>97</sup> of pretending to practice poverty while holding lands and castles;<sup>98</sup> and even of falsifying the value of money by making their own coin.<sup>99</sup> The Order simulates everything: law, land, religious directives, and money. They even

---

<sup>95</sup> Belch 1.692-693.

<sup>96</sup> “*Dictique conventus ipsorum, castra, sive loca, non religiosa sive religiosi, sed profana; non publica, sed privata*” ‘And their said convents, castles, or other places, have no religious [profit] or profit to religious men, but profane [profit]; they are not [made for] the public [good], but for private [gain]’ (Belch 2.925).

<sup>97</sup> “*volentes dicti Fratres, publici et notorii haeretici taliter existentes, per falsitates, per falsaque media aliena dominia isto modo obtinere suamque haeresim huiusmodi alii qualiter colorare, utebantur et utuntur quibusdam litteris privilegiis sive bullis praetensis*” ‘the said willing Brothers, existing heretics publicly and notoriously, through falsities, and through false means, used and now use to obtain foreign lordship in this way and to *color* their heresies of these modes to others by these same pretended letters or papal bulls [My emphasis]’ (Ibid. 2.918).

<sup>98</sup> “*quamvis dicti Fratres, taliter profitentes Deo voveant solemniter prout voveant paupertatem velle se tenere—cui repugnat habere rerum dominium—necnon subiectionem et obedientiam in manibus praestitam aliorum... nihilominus tamen dicti Fratres... non solum tenent et etiam tenuerunt possessiones et terrarium dominia, degenerantes et etiam recedentes a paupertate Deo... sed etiam principantes et dominantes in subditis terrarium et dominiorum*” ‘however said Brothers, in such a way professing to God accordingly vow and would make a vow solemnly to will themselves to hold poverty—for which it is repugnant to hold lordship of things—even less performed subjection and obedience by the hands of others... notwithstanding said Brothers... not only hold and even used to hold possessions and lordship of lands, declining and even withdrawing from the poverty of God... but also governing and lording in subjects of lands and kingdoms’ (Ibid. 2.926-927).

<sup>99</sup> “*quod praedicti Fratres monetam cudentes propriam et cudere facientes, licet iniquam et iniustam... ad tantum ipsam diminuerunt in pondere et valore diminutamque fecerunt quod, ubi prius una marca eisdem monetate... valuit... vix nunc valet dimidium floreni, vel tres partes de uno floreno*” ‘That the aforesaid Brothers, making to beat and beating their own money, which is wrong and unjust... so much that they diminished it in weight

falsify their own name since the label “Brothers of the House of Mary of Jerusalem” does not refer to a real place that exists or had existed in historical memory.<sup>100</sup>

Vladimiri characterizes the Order’s violence towards infidelity, therefore, as the violence of simulation and of metaphoric appearance and hence of heresy:

Item, volentes dicti Fratres *simulatores et hypocritae* publici et notorii realiter existentes prout sunt, tamquam falsi prophetae *sub praefato religiositatis habitu, velut in vestimentis ovium, apparere, ut sic rapacitate lupina intrinsecus palliata possent crudelius in homines desaevire*, prout desaeviunt, saevierunt et saevire taliter consueverunt—in homines licet infideles, quos Deus creavit secundum naturam nobis participes ac proximos.

So willing, the said Brothers, *simulators and notorious and public hypocrites* thus are appearing, as if they were false prophets to appear *under the aforesaid habit of religion, like in the clothing of sheep, so that such inward lupine rapacity cloaked, they can cruelly rage*, just as they rage, and they raged, and thusly they are accustomed to rage—in men namely *infidels, which God created according to nature participant and neighbors to us* [My emphasis].<sup>101</sup>

In accordance with a view on authority that puts it as a product of human and not divine interaction, the Order simulates Christian truth by thinking of it as pure “habitu” ‘habit,’ ‘clothing,’ or ‘custom.’ The Order falsifies their rage as charity. Thus, they crusade in the guise of Christian worship against the infidels whom God created “secundum naturam nobis participes ac proximos” ‘participant and neighbors to us according to nature.’ Like wolves, this desire to dissimulate is given only to men who “desaevire, prout desaeviunt, saevierunt et saevire taliter consueverunt,” ‘raging, soon rage, have raged, and are as such accustomed to rage,’ in the violence of simulation then, now, and in the future—it is proper of men who see “auctoritas” ‘authority’ only as superficial clothing and not as a universal gift from God to humans.

---

and worth and they made inferior so that, where before was worth one Mark of this same money...now is hardly worth half a Florent, or three parts of one Florent’ (Ibid. 2.984).

<sup>100</sup> “Volentesque dicti Fratres in eorum huiusmodi secta religionem aliquam *simulare*, ‘Fratres Hospitalis Ierosolimitani Sanctae Mariae de domo Teutonicorum’ se nominant, nominarunt, et nominare consueverunt, licet *fictae et false*: cum sic erat et fuit—sine et absque eo, quod tale hospitale in rerum natura habeatur vel existate, prout non habetur, nec est, neque fuit, saltem a tanto tempore et per tantum tempus, de quo sit, vel esse possit hominum memoria.” ‘And these willing Brothers in their ways *simulate* another religious sect; they call, they called, and accustom to call themselves ‘Brothers of the Hospital of Holy Mary of Jerusalem of the Teutonic House.’ Let this be *fictitious and false*: since such used to be and was—unless and without it, that such a hospital was held in the nature of things or existence, accordingly it is not had, nor is, nor even was, at least from so much time and through so much time, from which it was or could be made to be in the memory of men [My emphasis]’ (Ibid. 2.920).

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 2.921.

## 6. The Force of Speech Revisited: The Wycliffite Heresy and the Taking of Infidel Lands

Vladimiri's argument against Hostiensis and the Prussians succeeded to such an extent that, in returning to the question about the ownership of the Canaries twenty years later, Italian scholars refused to turn to Falkenberg's use of Hostiensis to justify the legitimacy of a crusade against infidelity.<sup>102</sup> This was in large part because Vladimiri was able to link Hostiensis's arguments against infidelity to that of the heresies "Wicklephistarum et Hussonistarum" 'of the Wycliffites and Hussites.' As we have seen, by framing Hostiensis and the Order's justification of taking infidel lands as one of representation, Vladimiri suggests that what is at the bottom of "the Prussian heresy" is what lies at the heart of Wycliffite and "Ockhamist" discussions of semantics: that an idea, like sovereignty, has no being outside its human representation and that therefore, to misrepresent it is to imply its absence. For Vladimiri, the Order saw a difference between fidelity and infidelity because they thought of authority as representation and so infidels were not made in the image of God but represented his law distinctly from God's true sheep. For Wyclif, a reader could understand scripture directly because there was an immediate authorial value to "virtute sermonis nostri" 'the strength of our speech'—to representation—and hence the immediate and "true" interpretation of Scripture was also the representation of its values.

Although Vladimiri never really elaborates upon this connection, the association of Hostiensis to Wyclif was clear to the fathers at Constance, who seemed to view the Order's argument for the taking of infidel lands as consonant with Wyclif's heresy. This position is best explained by John Rocha in recapitulating the Order's arguments as detailed by Falkenberg:

Et primo pro qualificazione prime, que talies est: Rex Polonorum, cum sit malus presidens, est ydolum et omnes Poloni sunt ydolatre et serviunt ydolo suo Jaghel. Prima distinctio: Dico premittendo duas distinctiones iuxta unum sincathegramma videlicet, cum "et unum cathegramma scilicet, ydolum." Prima distinctio est ista: Quod hec dictio, cum 'potest accipi causaliter vel concomitanter et temporaliter.' Primo modo accipit apostolus ad Hebreos primo, cum ait: Cum sit splendor glorie et figura substance eius etc. sedet ad dexteram maiestatis in excelsis, hoc est:

---

<sup>102</sup> Muldoon *Popes* 119-120.

causa, quare homo Christus sublimatus est ad dexteram maiestatis, est, quia est splendor glorie etc. 2o modo accipitur per Ezechielem I: dicentem: Cum elevarentur animalia, elevabantur pariter et rote. Et hoc habet modus loquendi vulgatus, ut dicendo: Cum Socrates loquitur, Plato currit. Ibi li., cum tenetur temporaliter sive concomitanter et facit propositionem temporalem... *Hec Proposito: Rex Polonorum cum sit malus presidens, etc., si li. cum teneatur causaliter et, ydolum accipiatur primo modo, coincidit in errorem Johannis Wykleff 15. de 45, ubi dicit: Nullus est dominus civilis, nullus est prelatus, nullus est episcopus, dum est in peccato mortali. Patet conclusio, quia, si causa, quare rex Polonorum est, quod sit ydolum, quia est malus presidens, ergo dum aliquis est malus presidens, non est verus dominus, quod est error Wykleff iam dictus.*

And first, for the first qualification, which is: The King of the Poles, as he is an evil lord, is an idol and all the Poles are idol worshipers, and they serve their idol Jaghel. First distinction: I say clearly putting forth two distinctions next to one syntagm, namely ‘and with one cathegramma idol.’ First distinction is this: Because this saying, when ‘it can be taken casually or concomitantly and temporally.’ In the first manner, the apostle takes to the Hebrews at first, when he says: ‘When he is the splendor of glory and shape of substance etc. he sits to the right of the highest majesty, this is: to inquire that the man Christ is raised to the right of the majesty, the cause is because he is in the splendor of glory, etc.’ Second way, it is taken through Ezekiel 1<sup>st</sup>: saying: ‘When animals will have been elevated, they will be elevated equally and rotating.’ And the public has this mode of speaking, as in saying: ‘When Socrates speaks, Plato runs. Ibi li.,’ when it is held temporally or concomitantly and makes a temporal preposition... *This preposition, ‘the King of the Poles as he is an evil lord, etc.’ If it is held casually, and ‘idol’ is taken in the first mode, it coincides in the error of John Wyclif 15 of 45, where it says: No one is a secular lord, no one is a prelate, no one is a pontiff, while he is in mortal sin. The conclusion is obvious because, if the cause, to inquire that the King of the Poles is, which is an idol, because he is an evil lord; therefore, while anyone is an evil lord, he is not a true lord, which is the error of Wyclif already mentioned [My emphasis].*<sup>103</sup>

John Rocha sets the problem up, in seemingly scholastic fashion, as an investigation of using certain terms to warrant a crusade against the Poles. He summarizes Falkenberg’s position as accusing the Polish king of being an idol worshiper and hence unable to have true dominium.

Rocha outlines Falkenberg’s error to proceed from two distinctions. The first has to do with the association of the phrase “ydolum” ‘idol’ with the “malus presidens” ‘evil sitting’ or ‘bad sovereignty’ of the King of the Poles. Rocha takes this “cathegramma” in two ways: “causaliter vel concomitanter et temporaliter” ‘casually or concomitantly and temporally.’ He gives an example of the first manner in Scripture when, in Hebrews, Jesus is described as sitting to the right of God. Here, the act of “presidens” ‘sitting’ describes a property of the being Christ, his splendor and absolute sovereignty—“sitting” therefore necessitates a particular quality of God, namely his power. The second mode is what he describes as a “concomitant” and

<sup>103</sup> *Acta Concilii Constantiensis*, ed. Heinrich Finke (Münster: Regensbergische Buchhandlung, 1896) 363.

“temporal,” or what we may put as a cause and effect. For example, when Ezekiel describes God’s glory sitting in a chariot that moves when the creatures surrounding it move it or when we commonly say that, “cum Socrates loquitur, Plato currit” ‘when Socrates speaks, Plato runs.’

In terms of the idolatry of the Polish king, the first mode implies that there is a causal relationship between being a “malus presidens” ‘evil sovereign’ and an idolater; the second is that his evil sovereignty comes after his exercise of idolatry. It is the first of these modes of speaking that Rocha equates with the “errorem Johannis Wykleff” ‘error of John Wyclif’ because it says that “Nullus est dominus civilis, nullus est prelatatus, nullus est episcopus, dum est in peccato mortali” ‘No one is a secular lord, no one is a prelate, no one is a pontiff, while he is in mortal sin.’ If the Polish king, by virtue of being an “ydolum” ‘idolater,’ has no rightful claim to lordship, then it follows that “dum aliquis est malus presidens, non est verus dominus” ‘while anyone is an evil king, he is not a true lord’ as the quality of being sovereign depends upon a moral state.

The steps behind Rocha’s reasoning are not too explicit, and they require some context to uncover. Following the condemnation of Wyclif by the Council, Rocha diluted the Wycliffite and Hussite idea that lordship was only possible by grace into its bare minimum—that lordship was only grace, or conversely, that there was no sovereignty in sin. The reason behind this is that, for Wyclif, dominion is something which, like love, only comes from God through active communication. As a result, when dominion is conferred by grace, my lordship represents God’s power. To be outside of grace, to represent God improperly, is therefore to be outside of dominion. As Elemér Boreczky summarizes it,

[For Wyclif] ‘medium’ simply means ‘a substance regarded as a means of transmission of a force or effect.’ It has been seen earlier [in his *De Dominio*] that ‘love’ is a force like ‘light,’ which is only experienced through its effect. *It is in the ‘media’ that the formative force of God’s grace is communicated to his dominion, and participation in the media means participation in this interaction.* The sinner confuses media. His ‘intention’ of love and use diverges from a right

angle, as the rays are declined in the 'medium.' This is why '*simulacrum*' may be both representation of right intention or an idol [My emphasis].<sup>104</sup>

Wyclif argues that sovereignty—whether rightfully or wrongfully held—is a simulacrum of God. A sinner, therefore, cannot exercise dominion because he is not properly representing it, because he is outside the realm of faith and simulation altogether.

Rocha, like most of the Council and like Vladimiri, took Wyclif's position at its bare minimum: thinking of sovereignty (an idea held by God) as representative (like human speech) was to argue that divine qualities had a being dependent on human actions. This in turn meant that true sovereignty was by nature impossible for humans because, through original sin, no human could rightfully represent the being of God. If sovereignty is not an idea but an ontological representation of God's grace, then no one could be a lord, a prelate, or a pontiff because, in respect to God, everyone is a sinner.

Because he does not seem to cite Vladimiri, it may be argued that Rocha is not closely following Vladimiri's logic.<sup>105</sup> However, it is hard to make sense of Rocha's arguments without the background of Vladimiri's *Opinio* and *Articuli* particularly when, in the manner of Vladimiri, Rocha describes the taking of infidel lands as a problem of thinking authority as purely semantic:

Principaliter arguitur, quia dato, quod rex Plonorum esset talis, sicut supponitur per confectorem libelli, nichilominus ad hoc, quod licite possent insurgere contra ipsum principes christiani, exigeretur, quod esset notoria talis; alias possent principes insurgere contra quemcumque, dicendo ipsum inimicum esse fidei christiane, hereticum vel ydolatrantem, quod est absurdum.

Principally it is argued, because given, that the king of the Poles would be such [an idolater] as if it is supposed through the makings of libel, as such to this he would be expelled, because licitly the Christian princes can rise against him because such a notoriety; [following this logic however] other times, the princes can rise against anyone, saying that he is an enemy of the Christian faith, heretic, or idolater, which is absurd.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> Elemér Boreczky, *John Wyclif's Discourse on Dominion in Community* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 184-185, note 91.

<sup>105</sup> Stanislaus Belch argues that Rocha was not influenced by Vladimiri because to him "A war to death against any infidels would, therefore, be just in itself" (1.722). Belch's argument forgets Rocha's more profound agreement with Vladimiri that Hostiensis's logic "savored of heresy" (Ibid).

<sup>106</sup> *Acta* 366.

The argument indicts Falkenberg's libelous claims about the Polish king, to be sure, but it also indicts the use of an individual's faith to justify a crusade. Rocha reasons that even if the Polish king's infidelity has "notoria" 'notoriety,' it is improper to justify an act of war based upon the representation of his infidelity alone. This is because Christian princes may licitly rise against anyone by claiming that he is misrepresenting God and that therefore he has no real lordship.

Rocha follows Vladimiri quite closely in saying that Hostiensis's logic would create a place in which Christians may not be bound by law. Allowing an attack on infidelity based in the name of Christ allows other Christian princes to arise "contra quemcumque" 'against whomever' by the mere act of "dicendo ipsum inimicum esse fidei christiane" 'of saying that person is an enemy of the Christian faith.' Basing the rightness, the authority, of an action on its representation—in a direct echo of Vladimiri's argument—"est absurdum" 'is absurd' because it creates a state in which illegal acts may be legal. Just like Hostiensis, Falkenberg's argument introduces a state of illegality because being an "inimicum fidei" 'enemy of the faith' does not grant a human protection under the law. In short, Falkenberg's arguments make law an ontological, subjective space and so "absurdly" create a place where law would not be law.

#### 7. Of Slaves and Metaphors: Papal Authority Reconsidered

Vladimiri's success in equating Hostiensis's logic with Wyclif's heresy helped shape Eugene IV's condemnation of slave practices in the Canary Islands. This is evident in the rhetoric of Eugene's letters regarding the mission of the Canaries. For example, the Incipit to his *Regimini gregis* justifies the Church's introduction of the "meccanicas artes et alios modos vivendis" 'mechanical arts and other modes of life' to the Islands not as an attempt to further the Christian "cultus" but to fulfill the charity and care owed to *all* of the sheep of the Lord's flock:

Eugenius, etc. Universis christifidelibus presentes litteras, inspecturis, salutem. Etc. Regimini gregis dominici, divina disponente clementia, presidentes, curis assiduis angimur et continua meditatione pulsamur ut ad ea, per que nedum ipsius gregis sane oves custodiri, sed etiam morbide

ad ovile Domini induci valeant, fauorabiliter intendamus et, pro eis reducendis ac salubriter a pravorum incurisibus preservandis in Domino quoque paternaliter confouendis, pias adhibeamus nostre partes.

Eugene, etc. To the universal Christian faithful the present letters, which have been inspected, greetings, etc. With divine clemency ordering, we, presiding, are pressed by assiduous cares and we are impelled by continuous meditation to the rule of the Lord's flock so that to these things, through which no less the sheep of this flock are soundly guarded, but even they are able to be lead the sick into the fold of the Lord, we favorably extend and, for them leading them and keeping them from the incursions of distortions also paternally warming them in the Lord, we apply our pious shares.<sup>107</sup>

Eugene's letter uses the pastoral metaphor of custody not to differentiate between faithful and unfaithful as Clement and Alfonse do. Rather, almost following Vladimiri, the Papal shepherding which Eugene's letter describes is one that occurs charitably and without distinction; it is a shepherding owed to every part of the "ovile Domine" 'Lord's flock' irrespective of its health or productivity so that "etiam morbide" 'even the sickly' infidels of the Canary Islands deserve the Pope's protection.

By 1430, the idea of "fides" and "cultus" that had allowed Clement to articulate authority no longer helped one to distinguish Christians from non-Christians. On the contrary, Eugene's paternalism relied on erasing the distinctions which made the Christian community unique. It is in this spirit of equality that, in the same day which he wrote *Regimini gregis*, Eugene issued another letter *Etsi cunctis* that exempted the recent and future converts of the Islands (i.e. all of the natives regardless of their current faith) from the heavy economic levies of those Spanish and French princes who "sibi dominium temporale vendicant" 'claimed [the Island's] temporal dominium to themselves.'<sup>108</sup> This action sought to reach out to the new and future converts by the "bonis exemplis" 'good examples' of charity not because these Canarians were lesser in status compared to their Christians neighbors, but because, as part of Christ's global fold, they

---

<sup>107</sup> *Monumenta* 5.90.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* 5.86.

deserved to be treated “aliorum christicolarum ad instar” ‘according to the image of other Christian-tillers.’<sup>109</sup>

In this universalism, *Etsi cunctis* describes Christian charity without developing an argument from a particular metaphor despite of using pastoral motifs:

Nos igitur illius celestis pastoris qui oves huiusmodi, ut uocem suam audirent et sub vnico pastore vnum ouile fieret, vocare dignatus est, cupientes oues insularum predictarum, ut prefertur, a Domino ad ouile predictum uocatas *ac omnes alias quas uocari contingent in posterum*, quantum nobis ex alto conceditur, ad illud adducere et bonis moribus informare, volumus atque decernimus et auctoritate apostolica statuimus et etiam ordinamus quod, *prefati habitatores earundum insularum iam conuersi et in posterum convertendi* ad fidem catholicam et quicumque alii fideles in eisdem insulis et aliis pro tempore moraturi, tam ecclesie, in decimis et primitiis et aliis, quam temporalibus dominis, in fructibus, redditibus et proventibus ac serviciis et aliis spiritalibus et temporalibus iuribus persolvendis, illos laudabiles et humaniores consuetudines atque mores...servare non debeant.

We therefore, who are worthy to call the sheep of this manner, so that they hear his voice and under one shepherd are made one flock of this celestial shepherd, desiring the sheep of the aforesaid islands, so that it is carried, by the Lord to the aforesaid fold *and also all others which take to be called in the future*, how much by us from on high it is conceded, to lead to that [flock] and to shape/to educate by good customs, we wish and also pronounce and by apostolic authority institute and even ordain that, *the aforesaid inhabitants of these same islands now converted and in the future about to be converted* to the catholic faith and the other faithful whosoever in the same islands and others about to inhabit [them] for the time, do not owe to preserve the honorable and civilizing customs and also habits about to have been released by other spiritual and temporal rights for the returns, products, and also services, such for the church, in the tenths and the firsts and others, as well as for the temporal lords, in fruits [My emphasis].<sup>110</sup>

Eugene uses pastoral and agrarian motifs, like “oves,” “fructibus,” “redditibus,” and yet these are not developed, like they are by Clement or Alfonse, to make an actual legal argument about his authority as a Pope—even as there are certain allusions to his absolute power. The absence of this metaphoric argumentation is all the more noticeable given that *Etsi cunctis* deals solely with legal arguments over tithing and taxation. In protecting the tithes owed to spiritual and temporal lords by the conquered natives, Eugene could claim that the Christian fold yields a particular fruit owed only to the absolute power of the Papacy. As a shepherd of the Lord’s flock, he could claim that, being “oves” ‘sheep,’ the natives must be cared for as living beings; that taxes starve

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid 5.86-87.

them and keep them thirsting without water, that only the care of the Church could rightfully aid them, etc. However, he limits his statement into vaguely drawing an analogy between his role as shepherd and that of Christ as a single, absolute shepherd of the world without ever taking the next step and claiming that parallel to justify his absolute sovereignty over the Canarians.

Why paternalize infidels as sheep if such imagery does not help justify Papal authority over their lives? Turning back to Vladimiri's successful use of pastoral trope to argue against metaphoric play, we can speculate that, after the Council of Constance, imagery could not be taken to develop an idea of authority directly—particularly one of absolute dominion by the Pope. In paternally claiming to protect the Canarians from exploitation “ut uocem suam audirent et sub vnico pastore vnum ouile fieret” ‘so that they hear his voice and under a single shepherd, be made one flock,’ Eugene does not tell us what this flock would look like, what the Lord's voice means to it, or more importantly how a Christian shepherd would govern. Eugene does not operate, like Clement, as an absolute Pope wielding authority through the power of his voice.

Instead, his rhetoric is limited to repeat scriptural formulas to describe the relationship of fidelity to infidelity. Eugene's diction, therefore, is pastoral because it refers the reader to the same passage in *John* which Paulus Vladimiri cites in his *Opinio Hostiensis* to defend the right of infidels to the Papal protection of their property: “alias oves habeo quae non sunt ex hoc ovili et illas oportet me adducere et vocem meam audient et fiet unum ovile unus pastor” ‘other sheep I have which are not from this flock, and to those it is necessary to lead them to me so that they hear my voice; and let there be one flock, and let there be one shepherd.’<sup>111</sup> Eugene repeats, “Pasce oves meas” ‘Feed my sheep,’ to justify the legal basis of his intervention in behalf of the infidels, and not because in comparing humanity to sheep that need guarding or feeding, he is setting himself up (in the manner of Clement) as their sole defender. The pastoral metaphors do

---

<sup>111</sup> John 10:16.

not help us understand how any of these arguments relate to the Pope's position as an absolute sovereign. If anything, by applying pastoral care to *all* of God's creation (whether they have converted or "posterum convertendi" 'are about to be converted in the future'), Eugene removes any exclusively Christian connotations from the pastoral imagery.

Eugene's ambivalence—of using metaphors and not wishing to develop his authority via their argument—is most pronounced when he prohibits the enslavement of the Canarians. This bull known as *Creator Omnium* is a writ of excommunication that effectively reverses Clement's stance on the licitness of expanding Christendom. Echoing Vladimiri's reasoning, Eugene boldly argues that the Canarians have been enslaved because, through *fiction and dissimulation*, they have been alienated from the common liberty given to all humans as direct image of God:

Eugenius, etc. Ad futuram rei memoriam. Creator omnium rerum Deus, ex precipui amoris fervore, ad sui ymaginem et similitudinem humanam formavit naturam et, ut eciam que prothoplausti preuaricatione eterne salutis dispendia incurrerat a perpetue seruitutis iugo eriperet, adueniente temporis plenitudine, de summa celi arce, unigenitum suum filium ad huius seculi infirma misit, ut ex purissima Virgine Maria mortalitatis humane naturam assumeret ac tandem, crucis in ara, sui preciosi sanguinis perfusione, genus humanum uotiuue restitueret libertati.

Eugene, etc. To the future memory of the affair. God Creator of all things, from the special fervor of love, formed human nature to his image and similitude and, so that he would snatch from the yoke of eternal servitude by the deceit/dissimulation of the first author which he attacked any losses of eternal health; coming to the plenitude of time, from the highest arc of the sky, he sent his only son to the low things of this world, so that humanly he assumed the nature of mortality from the most pure Virgin Mary and while, in the sacrifice of the cross, by the perfusion of his precious blood, he in vow restituted humankind to liberty.<sup>112</sup>

Eugene's *Creator omnium* repeats arguments found in Vladimiri's *Opinio Hostiensis* although in a more militant tone. Unapologetically, it argues that the commonality of humanity comes from its direct proximity and resemblance to the "ymaginem et similitudinem" 'image and similitude' of the Creator, who authors not just the well-being of Christians but "omnium rerum," 'of all things.' Taking the image of a human plenitude in the body of his son, this very Creator descended unto the lowest places of this world to restore a universal image distorted by the

---

<sup>112</sup> *Monumenta* 5.119-120.

“prevaricazione” ‘distortion/prevarication/dissimulation’ of our first father, the “prothoplausti,” Adam. In taking human nature (and not form), Christ restored the incorruptibility which Adam’s deceit had clouded and so assured the “libertas” of all humankind.

This Incipit claims that liberty is foreign from dissimulation as it is achieved by humanity’s direct equivalence to God. This is in essence Vladimiri’s argument against Hostiensis. Property and political liberty cannot be taken away from the infidels because God “creavit haec indifferenter propter hominem, quem formavit ad suam imaginem” ‘created these things indifferently because of man, which he formed to his own image.’ God created the basic ideas of autonomy, liberty, and sovereignty for all of humanity and not simply for those which worship him. The incipit to *Creator Omnium* largely repeats these claims except for one important difference. It avers, like Hostiensis, that it was God’s act of representation into human form (the “adventu Christi”) and not man’s original resemblance to God from creation that guarantees his universal liberty and autonomy.

God certainly created “libertas” certainly indifferently to all of humanity, but its continuance in earth, after the “prevericacione” ‘distortion’ of the “prothoplastui” ‘the first author’ of mankind is only maintained by the coming into flesh of the second author via the incorruptible body of the “purissima Virgine Maria” ‘purest Virgin Mary.’ *Creator Omnium*, therefore, argues like Hostiensis (and, to a certain extent, like Wycliff) that authority is inevitably representable but that the *type* of representation is not. Through Christ, the representation of authority restores liberty, but through “prothoplausti prevaricazione” ‘the deception/the dissimulation of the first author,’ it guarantees slavery. Both Eugene and Vladimiri argue that Christianity guarantees the universal autonomy for all humans because its divine laws apply to all regardless of differences—because the dissimulation of a human, his metaphoric

mis-presentation, does not affect his “naturam” ‘nature.’ However, only Eugene argues that the “adventu Christi” ‘the coming of Christ’ (and hence the act of representation) maintains this exclusive representation by purifying mankind’s image and maintaining a direct representation of God’s love.

*Creator omnium* wants to have its cake and eat it too. It states that autonomy is given freely by the Creator regardless of actions, but it also implies that only Christ’s sacrifice maintains this liberty. As such, Eugene’s *Creator* is not a defense of humanity’s universal equality but an indictment of a particular type of metaphoric speech—that of dissimulation and distortion. And it is dissimulation which Eugene blames as the cause of the slavery suffered by the Canarians:

Nonnulli christiani, quod dolenter referimus, diversis confictis coloribus et captatis occasionibus, ad prefatas insulas, cum eorum navigiis, manu armata, incedentes, plures inibi, eciam iuxta ipsorum simplicitatem incaute raptos, utriusque sexus homines, nonnullos iam tunc baptismatis unda renatos et alios ex eis, sub spe ac pollicitacione quod eos vellent sacramento baptismatis insignire, eciam quandoque fraudulenter et deceptorie securitatis fide promissa et non servata, secum captivos eciam ad partes cismarinas duxerunt.

Some Christians (sorrowfully we repeat this), having fashioned many colors and having seized opportunities, marching to the aforesaid islands with their ships by means of an armed band, led to schismatic parts from there many captives of either sex, which were taken shamefully heedlessly of their simplicity, some even then reborn by the water of baptism and others from these under the hope and promise that the Christians wished to mark them by the sacrament of baptism, still often having been deceptively and fraudulently promised and not preserved the faith of security.<sup>113</sup>

The Pope “dolenter referimus” ‘sorrowfully repeats’ the actions done by the “diversis confictis coloribus” ‘diverse fictional dissimulations’ of some Christians without distorting their deeds by amplification or paraphrasing them by indirect reference. Eugene, after all, does not want to fall into the same sin as these pirates who, taking the name of Christ to mean something which it was not (namely as a metaphor for slavery and not freedom), enslaved the inhabitants of the Islands despite giving them an oath of security.

---

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 5.121.

In Eugene’s lament over these actions, we can see Vladimiri’s influence over ecclesiastical discourse on sovereignty: there is a definite condemnation of the semantic instability introduced through metaphoric distortion. The Christians, who capture the infidels, behave uncharitably as if they were outside Christian law despite claiming to act to uphold Christian law through promising baptism. The slavery of infidels is possible, therefore, not only through the falsification of a Christian symbol (like baptism) but through the failure of speech to represent reality directly. In other words, the entrance of “coloribus diversis” ‘diverse metaphors’ into the spread of Christianity literally invalidates its “securitatis fide promissa” ‘promise of the security of trust.’

Unlike Vladimiri however, Eugene does not condemn representation as a whole but only metaphoric distortion. Eugene condemns the slavery of the inhabitants by comparing it to the deception introduced by Adam, and like Christ, he seeks to redress this metaphoric dissimulation through this edict of excommunication:

Nos igitur, ad quos pertinet, presertim in premissis et circa ea, peccatorem quemlibet corrigere de peccato, *non volentes ea sub dissimulacione transire ac cupientes*, prout ex debito pastoralis tenemur officii, quantum possumus salubriter providere, ac ipsorum habitatorum et incolarum afflictionibus, pio et paterno, compacientes affectu... universos et singulis eisdem utriusque sexus christifidelibus precipimus et mandamus... omnes et singulos utriusque sexus dictarum insularum olim habitatores, canarios nuncupatos... pristinae restituant libertati ac totaliter liberos perpetuo esse.

We therefore, to those which it pertains, particularly in the aforesaid Islands and their surroundings, in order to rebuke any sinner whatsoever from sin, *not wishing to pass over these things under dissimulation/deception* and desiring (accordingly from the pastoral office we hold) as much as we can healthily provide, compassionate with paternal and pious feeling to afflictions of these inhabitants and natives... decree and command to each and every faithful of either sex... that they wholly retribute each and all once inhabitants of said islands of either sex, called Canarians, to liberty, and in perpetuity; these are to be wholly free [My emphasis].<sup>114</sup>

The Pope’s excommunicates the offenders “non volentes ea sub dissimulacione transire” ‘not wishing these things to pass through dissimulation’—that is, not wishing to commit sovereignty to the power of metaphoric deception. His defense of liberty is, therefore, really a way to restore

---

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. 5.122.

to authority a direct relationship between sign and signified—a relationship restored by the coming of Christ and the representation of the deity into human flesh—and not a defense of the rights of infidels as human beings.

#### 8. Metaphors Vindicated: Towards a New Discourse of Authority

In his dealings with the Canaries, Eugene was dealing with more than the discovery of non-Christian lands. He was carefully navigating a new relationship between metaphors and the expression of authority after the advent of the Wycliffite challenge to the sovereignty of the Church. Otherwise, if we think that Eugene meant to protect the Canarians because of a humanitarian interest, we cannot understand why, within a year of having mounted such a vigorous and multi-pronged defense of their liberty, he rescinded his ban on slavery and even permitted a Portuguese crusade over the Islands and other infidel territories in his *Rex regum*.<sup>115</sup> This bull, granted to Duarte I, within months after he complained about the limitations which the ban on slavery placed on his colonial ventures, would set the foundation for future Roman Pontiffs to dispose of infidel lands.<sup>116</sup>

From the Papacy's abrupt return to Hostiensis's arguments, we can conclude that the real bulwark against the taking of infidel lands and lives was not its fundamental immorality or illegality. Rather, what is obvious from analyzing the rhetoric of Eugene's letters is that, after the Council of Constance, the taking of infidel lands was perceived as furthering a discourse on authority inimical to the legitimacy of the Church. In enslaving infidels simply because they were infidels, Christian rulers affirmed that ecclesiastical and monarchical *dominium* depended on the proper exercise of authority—on its proper representation by a sovereign's actions. As

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 5.270-275.

<sup>116</sup> Muldoon *Popes* 134.

such, the Pope who, lacking the power of the sword, could not properly exercise sovereignty was destined not to have it.

Further, a John Rocha, in expressing the overall mood of the Council of Constance, made painfully clear, the use of Christian representations as the sole grounds for taking lands guaranteed a state of constant war in which an enemy could merely called un-Christian to justify a right of crusade over their lands. To put it in Paulus Vladimiri's formula, if Christian *dominium* only occurs through Christian practice, then there is no place in which a Christian could act un-Christianly and so "multas prohibitiones" 'many prohibitions' would not bind Christians. The attempt to protect infidel lands was thus not a concern for the well-being of their individual lives and bodies. Rather, it was a way of ensuring that new ways of articulating sovereignty would not undermine the legal foundations of the Christian community as a whole.

The regicides in Castile and England; the rise of Wycliffite heresies and regional factionalism within the Roman Empire; and the Great Schism all seemed to confirm the danger of continuing to think sovereignty as a form of representation. If, by playing around with metaphors, a sovereign like Clement or Alfonse could advance a legal argument over lands which cognized no legal precedent, what would prevent anyone from deploying metaphoric interpretation to be the sole requirement for legal authority? How could a universal body, like the Church, govern a community of nations which saw law as deriving from their own social interpretations—from their "virtus sermonis" 'force of speech'? What would be the power of the Pope when sovereigns refused to turn to traditional modes of discourse to understand legal authority? These questions, which had haunted the Church from the unseating of traditional forms of power in the previous century, were resurrected and reified every time a secular

monarch took it upon himself to declare war against infidelity, claiming that his voice alone was a sufficient guarantor of the legitimacy of war and of the seizing of property.

In encountering the Portuguese claims towards the Canary Islands, Eugene IV was caught between a rock and hard place. On the one hand, he could not forsake the universal concept of law and allow the conquest to be based on the un-Christian use of authority against infidels. On the other, he still had to protect the Church's position in the Islands by asserting his authority over them. Thus, Eugene faced the tenuous position of asserting a universal right of all humans to "libertas" while still claiming that this right was only preserved through the coming of Christ. This crisis of the concept of sovereignty is reflected in his rhetoric which repeats the conclusions of Vladimiri (that infidels have authority by right) but uses the premises of Hostiensis (that sovereignty is maintained by Christ's representation) to describe his actions.

Eugene's balancing act did not last. With the rescinding of *Creator omnium*, an impasse was resolved in his mind by the very sovereign who was most affected by his indecision—Duarte I, the King of Portugal.<sup>117</sup> Despite explicit reservations (and outright challenges) by major legal scholars of the time, the Papacy authorized the enslavement of infidels and the continuance of Portugal's crusade over the Islands after the Portuguese King argued for the necessity of an outright crusade.<sup>118</sup> In so doing, Eugene was not only caving to the pressures of an advancing colonial enterprise, but he was also rejecting the very legal foundations which belied the judgment of the Council of Constance concerning infidel lands.

This is all the more visible by an anonymous legal opinion which Eugene explicitly consulted in evaluating Duarte's claim of crusade against infidel lands:

Ad ultimum, de Cruzata, etiam anima diuertat dominus noster: quia eius predecessor Martinus non concessit domino regi Johanni, patri huius, nisi quoad viveret; et hoc fecit cum summa difficultate,

---

<sup>117</sup> *Monumenta* 5.255 note 1.

<sup>118</sup> For a summary of these views, see Muldoon *Popes* 124-128.

et utinam non fuisset factum, nec guerre incepte cum sarracenis, saltem longinquis postquam molesti non erant. *Quia scriptum est, Jo. X: Alias oves habeo que non sunt de hoc ouili, scilicet ecclesie. Et sine distinctione dictum fuit Petro, Jo. ultimo: Pasce oves meas. Successor ergo Petri habet illas pascere et defendere, ergo non impugnari vel ledi permittere...ut latius disputat et concludit in hac sententia Joannes Andree, post Oldradum...et plene notatur per Innocentium et per alios modernos.*

Lastly, regarding the Crusade, let the soul of our Lord turn aside: because his predecessor [Pope] Martin V did not allow to the Lord king João, his [Duarte's] father, except while he lived; and even this, he did this with great difficulty and I wish that it had not been done, nor the war begun with the Sarracens, at least they were not bothered for a long time. *Because it is written, John 10: Other sheep I have which are not from this fold, namely the Church. And without distinction it was [said] to Peter, in the last chapter of John: Feed my sheep.* Therefore, the successor of Peter has to feed and defend the sheep; therefore he should not permit them to be hurt or fought against...such widely Johannes Andreas, following Oldratus, argues and concludes...and fully it is noted through Innocent and *through other modern* [canonists] [My emphasis].<sup>119</sup>

This is the exact reasoning which Vladimiri (a modern canonist) had used in arguing against the Teutonic Knights twenty years before Eugene's dealings with the Canaries. It is the same reasoning which prevented Martin V—under the Council of Constance—to endorse in full João of Portugal's crusade against North Africa. And it is the same reasoning that led Eugene IV initially to protect the Canarians against enslavement, arguing that sovereignty was made “indistincte” ‘indistinctly’ for all humans, faithful and unfaithful alike.

In giving Duarte a bull of crusade, Eugene was not simply trying to temper the inevitability of European expansion as James Muldoon has argued.<sup>120</sup> Quite the contrary, he was openly overturning over two decades of thought about sovereignty, and he was doing it because of the discourse used within Duarte's letter. Somehow, Duarte persuaded the Pope that he could allow a Christian king to take infidel property without jeopardizing the Church's discursive claim to authority—that there was *a modified linguistic structure of voice, which could conceive authority as representation without also jeopardizing the universal idea of authority.* Something in Duarte's discourse suggested to the Pope that, in thinking sovereignty as representation, one

---

<sup>119</sup> *Monumenta* 5.269.

<sup>120</sup> Muldoon *Popes* 130.

could keep universal concepts without lapsing into the Wycliffite heresies and nominalist ideas that—as Jesse Gellrich has argued—challenged the legal foundations of ecclesiastical power.<sup>121</sup>

In the following chapters, I will analyze the discursive structures which guided Duarte's conception of authority as metaphorical yet universal. As I have suggested in the Introduction, these structures came to Duarte via Gower's *Confessio Amantis* whose translation into Portuguese united English and Iberian discourses of sovereignty. This work, as we have seen by looking into the Prologue of Duarte's *Leal Conselheiro*, framed the portrayal of "authority" in Duarte's own literary compositions, and was so valuable that his nobles found it expedient to translate at the colonial outposts of Çeuta off the coast of North Africa during the same year in which Duarte sought a Papal dispensation for his war against infidelity. As we will see, the translation of Gower into Portuguese was not just a dissemination of a literary work but an active joining of English and Iberian strategies for representing authority—strategies which allowed a sovereign to conceive of authority as the veritable force of speech and discourse without doing away with its universal foundation.

---

<sup>121</sup> Gellrich 19-20.

## CHAPTER II

### IBERIAN GOWER: TRANSLATING AUTHORITY

The author's name is not simply an element in a discourse (capable of being either subject or object, of being replaced by a pronoun, and the like)...such a name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others...the fact that several texts have been placed under the same name indicates a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, authentication of some texts by the use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilization.<sup>122</sup>—Michel Foucault.

Hic declarat in primis qualiter ob reuerenciam serenissimi principis domini sui [Regis Anglie Ricardi secundi] totus suus humilis Iohannes Gower, licet graui infirmitate a diu multipliciter fatigatus, huius opusculi labores suscipere non recusauit, sed tanquam fauum ex variis floribus recollectum, presentem libellum ex variis cronicis, historiis, poetarum philosophorumque dictis, quatenus sibi infirmitas permisit, studiosissime compilauit.

Here in first place, he declares how, from reverence to the most noble prince his lord [Richard II, King of England], wholly humble John Gower, having been much fatigued for a long time under a dire sickness, did not recuse from undertaking the labors of this little work, but he zealously compiled in the manner of a honeycomb collected from various flowers, the present little book from various chronicles, histories, and sayings of the poets and philosophers, as much as his infirmity would permit.<sup>123</sup>—“Prologue” *Confessio Amantis*.

What did it mean for Dom Duarte to think of authority following the model that “daquel autor do Livro do Amante” ‘of the author of the Book of the Lover’?<sup>124</sup> How did “Gower” bring a principle of unification to the texts within the *Confessio*? These are particular complex questions because the *Confessio* describes “Iohannes Gower” as a writer who “studiosissime compilauit” ‘zealously compiled’ the works of “poetarum philosophorumque” ‘poets and philosophers’ and not as an “auctor” of “sententiae” ‘morals’ or “fabulae” ‘fables.’ In labeling “do Amante” a book by an “autor,” Duarte seemingly goes beyond what the *Confessio* says of its own writer, describing Gower’s role as more than a simple gatherer of stories. He appears to infer what Michel Foucault calls an “author function” or “a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, [or] authentication of some texts by the use of others” from Gower’s act of compilation.

For Duarte, this would not have proven difficult. As Malcolm Parkes has argued, narrative cohesion and authorial systems of filiation developed from literary practices of

---

<sup>122</sup> Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?,” *The Essential Foucault: Selections from the Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, eds. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (New York: New Press, 2003) 381-382.

<sup>123</sup> John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, 3 vols., ed. Russell Peck, trans. Andrew Galloway (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000) Prologue.34-35.Latin marginalia.

<sup>124</sup> Dom Duarte 12.

“compilatio” and “ordinatio” in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>125</sup> By likening the poem to a “favuum” ‘honey comb,’ this Latin gloss to the *Confessio* apparently situates Gower’s work in well-known “authorial” compilations of classical works and tales for didactic ends, like Brunetto Latini’s *Livres dou Trésor*.<sup>126</sup> Duarte, in describing his own narrative methods, had used this gathering motif, asking interpretive leave to “os leedores deste trautado tevessem a maneira de abelha que, passando per ramos e folhas, nas flores mais custuma de pousar” ‘the readers of this treatise to hold the manner of the bee, which, by-passing leaves and stems, accustoms to rest on the flowers.’<sup>127</sup> From Duarte’s comments about his writing, we can understand that the frame of the *Confessio* as a “compilatio” would not have precluded the king from idealizing an image of the author of “do Amante” to unite the several examples contained in the work.

Still it seems peculiar that neither Duarte nor this Latin gloss to the *Confessio* names Gower as a direct “auctor” whose name would add something external to the text. First, the label “auctor” or “compositor” in the *Confessio* is more distant from “Gower” as opposed to his other works, like the Latin *Vox Clamantis*. This distancing between the “name of the author” and the unifying principle of the *Confessio* is further supported by the position in which the Latin term “auctor” appears in the text—next to the poem’s title and not to the name of its writer:

“Postquam in Prologo tractatum hactenus existit, qualiter hodiernae condicionis diuisio caritatis dileccionem superauit, intendit *auctor ad presens suum libellum, cuius nomen Confessio Amantis nuncupatur*” ‘After he has set forth to this point the treatment in the Prologue of how the division

---

<sup>125</sup> M.B. Parkes, “The Influence of the Concepts of Ordinatio and Compilatio on the Development of the Book,” *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to R.W. Hunt*, eds. J.J.G. Alexander and M.T. Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) 130.

<sup>126</sup> Kurt Olsson, *John Gower and the Structures of Conversion: A Reading of the Confessio Amantis* (Suffolk: St. Edmundsbury’s Press, 1984) 6-7.

<sup>127</sup> Dom Duarte 10.

of today's condition has overcome the love of charity, the *author presently intends to compose his little book, whose name is The Confession of a Lover* [My emphasis].<sup>128</sup>

The Latin gloss, in not naming Gower as an “auctor,” does not mean to construe the writing of the poem as a mere act of copying. However, it does suggest that the *Confessio* and its readers did not think of the name “Gower” as a limiting factor for the “concomitant utilization” of tropes or themes for an idealized or unifying authorial principle beyond the development of the *Confessio* proper. In short, the *Confessio*'s structure deconstructs its author's place as a unifying presence and through its deconstruction is able to fashion itself as a work worth disseminating. As I will argue, Gower's project thinks of writing without its ability to represent any outside discourse to end its own play of meaning. And—as Duarte's anonymous labeling of the poem suggests—the *Confessio*'s disassociation of the abstract “authority” of a writer's persona from a poetic “authorial” language became integral to the dissemination of the *Confessio* and to its reception in the Iberian Peninsula.

### 1. Stylizing “Joan Goer”: Authority as Infirmary in the *Confessio Amantis*

It appears counterintuitive to start from the premise that the *Confessio* divorces the persona of its writer from its concern with “authority.” From the naming of Gower in the gloss to the framing of the work as a confession of sins of love, it seems that *who* Gower is and how he, as an idealized or discordant narrator, relates to his subject matter unifies the *Confessio*'s text as a whole—whether it be through the work's two fictional characters of the poem (the confessing “Genius” or the penitent “Amans”) or through the third person Latin apparatus that frames the poem. This concern with personal authority, as Winthrop Wetherbee and A.J. Minnis have described, seems an integral part of the *Confessio*'s narrative framework which, following Ovid and Boethius, uses the tension between dialoguing personas as a principle to aid in the poem's

---

<sup>128</sup> Gower *Confessio* 1.9.Latin marginalia, trans. Andrew Galloway.

progression.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, as many other scholars have argued since Derek Pearsall's analysis of Gower's narrative art, the problem with finding an "author function" in the *Confessio* is not because the work removes Gower from its development but because it gives him too many roles to inhabit.<sup>130</sup>

Further, as John Hurt Fisher's study of thematic concordance of the works and life of John Gower has made clear, the purely textual qualities of the *Confessio*'s "author function" have not kept the poem's many themes from cohering as if guided by an ideal image of Gower's persona or of a reason for arranging these tales in a dialogue.<sup>131</sup> The tension between the implied fictional and narrative personas within the stated physical commissioning of the work even seems, in Peter Nicholson's words, to help readers distinguish "between the subject of the poem and broader moral and ethical concerns" that seem to perplex the narrative voice in the work.<sup>132</sup> This is because the failure of an idealized persona to conform to a "real" image of the poet helps a reader idealize this dialogue with larger thematic concerns. Consequently, although the name "Gower" is not explicitly guiding our readerly perspective throughout the gathering of stories, according to Kurt Olsson, it is the ability of the *Confessio*'s "discordant 'sentences' not to distance readers from wisdom, but better to ensure their achieving it" that give the work a unity that can be attributed to an idealized "auctoritas."<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> See Winthrop Wetherbee, "Latin Structure and Vernacular Space: Gower, Chaucer and the Boethian Tradition," *Chaucer and Gower: Difference, Mutuality, Exchange*, ed. R.F. Yeager (Victoria: ELS, 1991) 30 and A.J. Minnis "De Vulgari Auctoritate: Chaucer, Gower and Men of Great Authority," *Chaucer and Gower: Difference, Mutuality, Exchange*, ed. R.F. Yeager, ELS Monograph Series. 51. (Victoria: English Literary Studies, 1991) 54.

<sup>130</sup> Ardis Butterfield, "Articulating the Author: Gower and the French Vernacular Codex," *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 Medieval and Early Modern Miscellanies and Anthologies (2003): 81-82.

<sup>131</sup> John H. Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York: New York University Press, 1964) 135.

<sup>132</sup> Peter Nicholson, *Love and Ethics in Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005) 124.

<sup>133</sup> Olsson 14.

From this vantage point, the legibility of an “author function” in the *Confessio* is partly a result of its compilation of Latinate “auctoritas” through a poetic medium. The term “compilatio” itself inherits this discordant yet authorial hermeneutics from the medieval preaching techniques often used fables and exempla as a way to involve audiences in an exposition of scripture.<sup>134</sup> This allusion to medieval preaching allows a type of conflict through which the *Confessio*’s “moral” style counteracts the poetic and fable-like framework with a stable “moral” intent. As a result, the structure of the poem helps create a “carnavalesque” atmosphere, that in Diane Watt’s words, allows “neither [Gower] nor his themes to remain inviolate” and thus subject to the delimitation and of containing different “author functions” for various readerly interests.<sup>135</sup>

Therefore, it is the very use of mythology as a medium of “moral” education that makes the *Confessio*’s audiences project into it an “author function.” In this, the *Confessio* very much conforms to what A.J. Minnis has described as the vernacular adaptation of Latin “auctoritas” to present a unifying narrative principle. In Minnis’s terms,

The belief that the Bible often communicated profound truths in a poetic way came to provide the precedent for mythographers to argue that various profane poets had communicated profound truths in the same way...At Judges 9:8 we are told that the trees set out to elect a king; at Ezekiel 17:3 we read how the eagle with great wings carried away the branch of the cedar. The *poetae*, the inventors of *fabulae*, composed in a similar way; by figments of this kind, they wished truths to be understood.<sup>136</sup>

The common use of poetic myths and fables within authorial texts, like the Bible, set a precedent for poets to ask their readers to mine their works for moral and even metaphysical “truths,” and therefore, for vernacular readers to assume a principle of homogeneity when presented with a “moral” mythology.

---

<sup>134</sup> Richard Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia, and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus florum of Thomas of Ireland* (Toronto: Pontifical institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1979) 61-64.

<sup>135</sup> Diane Watt, *Amoral Gower: Language, Sex, and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) 24.

<sup>136</sup> A.J. Minnis “Literary Theory in Discussions of *Formae Tractandi* by Medieval Theologians,” *New Literary History*, 11.1 (Autumn, 1979): 141.

Yet unlike the Latin mythographers which Minnis catalogues, the *Confessio* does not call itself a ‘compilatio’ mostly to limit the scope of its project but to play with a tropic device to characterize the act of writing. The gloss refers to Gower under a trope of “humilitas,” as a writer who “quatenus sibi infirmitas permisit, studiosissime compilauit” ‘zealously compiled in as much as his infirmity would permit him’ various examples and fables. Even as this statement reflects Gower’s dedication for writing (because he compiles through his own sickness), it also reads as an ironic take on his work—Gower, in his zeal, compiles literally as an infirm, sickly man. Consequently, the narrative attention of *who* guides the voice of the poem thinks of the one person that stands outside of it “Iohannes Gower” in clearly poetic terms. This is not, what Patricia Batchelor and others have called the “dynamic ambiguity” of “auctoritas” behind the *Confessio*’s idea of authority.<sup>137</sup> The gloss’s double-entendre, in defining Gower’s role as a compiler, refuses to make clear whether the writer’s humble “compilatio” should be a principle of admiration or derision. At the very moment in which the poem seeks to say something about authority, its statement turns into a play of meaning of literary tropes on authority and not of Gower’s authority itself.

It is precisely the description of Gower’s infirmity as a limiting “author function” that prevents this gloss from speaking to anything outside a textual play of meaning. Though “infirmitas” is a common way for medieval writers to describe their work, its use is often a way to defer responsibility from a writer to the reader or to his sources. Infirmity prevents the reflection of the productive and philosophical qualities of “auctoritas” long cultivated in the

---

<sup>137</sup> Patricia Batchelor, “Feigned Truth and Exemplary Method in the *Confessio Amantis*,” *Re-visioning Gower*, ed. R.F. Yeager (Asheville: Pegasus Press, 1998) 1, 9.

classical or exegetical tradition, which taking the word from the Latin “augere” ‘to grow,’ conceives of an author as an active producer even when he displays “humilitas” ‘humility.’<sup>138</sup>

Commonly, infirmity is merely the persona of the “scriptor” ‘writer,’ whose humble copying of texts repeats tradition without explicitly adding to it. As Thomas Hoccleve excuses his own gathering of sayings: “Considereth, therof was I noon auctour./I nas in þat cas but a reportour/ Of folks tales. As they sied, I wroot./I nat affirmed it on hem, God woot.”<sup>139</sup> Hoccleve’s infirmity—as well as that of other such “infirm” authors like Ranulf Higden, Geoffrey Chaucer, or Francis Petrarch—certainly does not mean that he is not actively intervening in the narrative or using it to further his independent fame (i.e. that he has a personal responsibility for the narrative). However, it does mean that he wishes his “authorial” intervention to be the result of his own narrative game, and that he wishes to prevent his readers from taking an idealized “authorial” self from his exposition of tales and authors. Similarly, Gower’s infirmity pretends to be non-productive in repeating the “variis floribus” ‘various flowers’ of philosophers, chroniclers, historians, and poets, ironically asking us to judge the “zealousness” of its writer as weakness.

The *Confessio*, however, goes further than Hoccleve in setting poetic authority literally as an “in-firmitas,” a ‘lack of foundation’ which precludes a particular viewpoint—even that of an attentive reader—to guide the play of meaning from outside the text. This is more evident in the one place where “John Gower” is explicitly called the “auctor” of the *Confessio*, the colophon which precedes the table of contents to Juan de Cuenca’s translation, *Confesión del Amante*:

Este libro es llamado Confesión del amante, el qual compuso Joan Goer, natural del reino de Inglatierra, e fue tornado en lenguaje portugués por Ruberto Paym...E después sacado en lenguaje

---

<sup>138</sup> A.J. Minnis, “‘Authorial Intention’ and ‘Literal Sense’ in the Exegetical Theories of Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif: An Essay in the Medieval History of Biblical Hermeneutics,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 75 (1975): 6.

<sup>139</sup> Thomas Hoccleve, *My Compleinte and Other Poems*, ed. Roger Ellis (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001) VII.2.760-763.

castellano por Joan de Cuenca...E declara primeramente en commo, por onra e reverençia del rey Ricardo Segundo, este *auctor* no rehusó el trabajo de aquesta obra, *puesto que* padeçiese en sí grande enfermedad. E, así commo el panar por las avejas de diversas flores es *apañado*, bien así *este mismo auctor de desvariadas estorias*, de corónicas e dichos de poetas e filósofos, con grande studio compiló e fizo aqueste libro, en el prólogo del qual ay estos capitulos siguientes.

This book is called the Confession of the lover, which John Gower, native of England, composed, and which was changed into the Portuguese language by Robert Payn...And after, [it was] brought forth in the Castilian language by John of Cuenca...And it firstly declares how, through honor and reverence of the king Richard II, this *auctor* did not refuse the labor of this work, *since/because* he was suffering a great sickness of his own. And, just as the honeycomb is *gathered/covered* by bees from diverse flowers, in this way *this same auctor of diverse/disordered stories*, of chronicles and sayings of poets and of philosophers, with great zeal compiled and made this book, in the Prologue in which there are the following chapters [My emphasis].<sup>140</sup>

The Castilian translation, most likely taking its lead from a missing Portuguese exemplar, makes two things absolutely clear: first, Gower is an “auctoritas,” and second, he is an “auctoritas” who compiles. In eliding the two roles of compilation and composition, however, the colophon appears to go further than its Latin source in the marginalia to the English *Confessio*: it not only claims that Gower wrote a poem from the work of poets and philosophers, but that he, himself, is the “auctor de desvariadas estorias” ‘author of the various/disordered stories’ contained within it. In short, Cuenca treats “Joan Goer” like the authors of the “disordered” stories that he compiles.

For Cuenca, Gower—although he compiles these stories into one narrative—is no different than his sources. Because “auctoritas” is not found outside a textual function, Cuenca as a translator becomes a type of author by merely gathering this English and Portuguese work into Castilian. This is evidenced by how Cuenca names “Joan Goer” as an author of his translation and also his own source, Robert Payn. This is an unusual move for a medieval text particularly because, although medieval translators sometimes signed their own works, such naming implied both the importance of the work translated and the literary aspirations of the translator, i.e. his wish to delimit meaning through an idealized “author function.” Consequently, in signing a

---

<sup>140</sup> John Gower, *Confesión del Amante*, trans. Juan de Cuenca, ed. Elena Alvar (Madrid: Boletín de la Real Academia Española, 1990) 141.

work, a translator rarely credited prior translators even if he relied on them.<sup>141</sup> For example, although not explicitly quoting his sources, Chaucer notoriously translated Boethius's *Consolacione* not from the Latin proper, but from Jean de Meun's French translation, Nicholas Trevet's glosses, and Remegius, effectively compiling a whole tradition of exegesis yet advancing this compilation as his own interpretation of Boethius.<sup>142</sup>

Juan de Cuenca's translation, however, names both the Castilian and Portuguese translators, although we have no records of the literary aspirations of either Cuenca or Payn. As such, Cuenca's approach implies that the *Confessio* did not necessarily propose "auctoritas" to be thought as an outside limit of meaning. This is further evidenced through the terms which Cuenca uses to translate this Latin marginalia. For example, Cuenca translates the term "favuum recollectum" 'the gathered honey comb' as a "panar apañado" 'a gathered/covered honeycomb.' Through this phrasing, Cuenca portrays Gower's compilation not as the careful arrangement of truth—as Duarte asks his readers—but as the hiding of texts through poetic play. This slippage of meaning between authorial and textual logics is even present when Cuenca translates the Latin depiction of Gower's infirmity: "este auctor no rehusó el trabajo de aquesta obra, *puesto que* padeçiese en sí grande enfermedad" which could mean 'this author did not refuse the labor of this work, since he was suffering a great infirmity of his own' or 'on account of his great infirmity, this author did not refuse the labor of his work.' Just as the Latin "quatenus" 'in as much,' the Castilian "puesto que" 'since' and 'on account for' elides Gower's physical state and the reason why he undertook this "trabajo" 'labor,' ironically crediting his zeal as weakness.

---

<sup>141</sup> J.D. Burnley, "Late Medieval English Translations: Types and Reflections," *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. Roger Ellis (St. Edmunds: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1989) 41.

<sup>142</sup> Tim Machan, "Scribal Role, Authorial Intention, and Chaucer's *Boece*," *The Chaucer Review*, 24.2 (Fall, 1989): 155-156.

## 2. The *Confessio*'s Iberian Reception

However, in describing Gower's Iberian reception, most scholars have ignored these hints that the *Confessio* may have disseminated even without an idealized image of its writers. Because they have assumed that the *Confessio*'s Iberian dissemination necessarily required an interpretation of his project as a whole, critics of Gower have assumed that his work was read in Iberia through an exterior "author function" or thematic idea of what unified his texts. For example, R.F. Yeager has focused on Gower's Lancastrian ties through the literary interests surrounding the immigration of John of Gaunt's daughters into Iberian courts and has argued that their closeness to Chaucer would have allowed Gower's literature to flourish.<sup>143</sup> Joyce Coleman has argued that the Queen of Portugal Philippa of Lancaster was directly involved in the translation project due to her own "pious" literary affinities and familial ties to Chaucer.<sup>144</sup> Antonio Cortijo Ocaña has speculated that Gower's influence in Iberia was felt in the personal taste in the fifteenth-century Iberian courts for courtly romances.<sup>145</sup> These scholars have followed P.E. Russell and John Matthews Manly's assumption that, for Gower's work to be translated in Iberia, it would have appealed to an outside idealization of the author's persona and of the value of the *Confessio* as a completed and united work for his message.<sup>146</sup>

These scholarly assumptions have occurred without sufficient physical evidence of how the *Confessio*'s medieval readers thought of the project as a homogeneous work. The manuscript evidence of Lancastrian ownership, textual variance, and political influence that influenced the

---

<sup>143</sup> R.F. Yeager, "Gower's Lancastrian Affinity: The Iberian Connection," *Viator*, 35 (2004): 499-500.

<sup>144</sup> Joyce Coleman, "Philippa of Lancaster, Queen of Portugal—and Patron of the Gower Translations?," *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages, 12th-15th Century: Cultural, Literary, and Political Changes*, ed. María Bullón-Fernández (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 154.

<sup>145</sup> See Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, "La 'Confessio Amantis' portuguesa en el debate del origen del sentimentalismo ibérico: un posible contexto de recepción," *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval* (Santander, 2000).

<sup>146</sup> John Matthews Manly, "On the Question of the Portuguese Translation of Gower's 'Confessio Amantis,'" *Modern Philology*. 27.4 (May, 1930): 472.

creation of the poem insufficiently explains the material dissemination of the *Confessio* in fifteenth-century England and Iberia.<sup>147</sup> First, there is no evidence that Gower's poem was understood as a complete work by the time it reached the Iberian Peninsula. The Lancastrian-owned versions of the *Confessio* (the so-called "Ricardian recension" from which the Portuguese translation of the *Confessio* was translated) were commissioned and completed after the fifteenth century by Henry IV's heirs and after Phillipa's death in 1415.<sup>148</sup> This means either that Phillipa introduced Gower in an inchoate form or that her progeny copied a work that did not have a stable tradition of dissemination.

Further, as Bernardo Santano Moreno has shown, there are humanistic references in the Castilian and Portuguese versions of the *Confessio* which are impossible before 1433.<sup>149</sup> Since these are well into the dissemination of the work in Portugal, it is very likely that Gower's poem had at least two known textual traditions in the Peninsula—one which was introduced through the influence of Philippa and one which was the result of the copying efforts of the 1430's. Lastly, most of the political allusions included in the *Confessio*'s Latin glosses, which have been used to date the Ricardian content to an early fourteenth-century date, appear to be more the interference by fifteenth-century Lancastrian readers revisiting an unstable text and not evidence of a unified work projecting an ideal authorial persona to a general audience.<sup>150</sup>

Consequently, I do not believe that the physical evidence of the *Confessio*'s dissemination (in Iberia or England) reflects a readerly understanding of the completeness of Gower's project. Quite the contrary, the concurrence of a wide English and Iberian dissemination of the *Confessio* suggests that its narrative structures appealed differently to readers because they

---

<sup>147</sup> Wim Lindeboom, "Rethinking the Recensions of the *Confessio Amantis*," *Viator*, 40.2 (2009): 347-348.

<sup>148</sup> Joel Fredell, "Reading the Dream Miniature in the *Confessio Amantis*," *Medievalia et Humanistica, New Series*, 22 (1995): 63, 79, 82.

<sup>149</sup> Santano Moreno 31.

<sup>150</sup> Lindeboom 344-355.

were actively intervening in the poem's creation. If anything, the timing and placing of Gower's fifteenth-century Iberian and English reception suggests that the experience of the poem's fragmentation was part of its internal structure.

In fact, the most common "unifying" marks of the work across England and Iberia reflect a concern with its audience experience of authority and not with an interpretation of Gower's own thematics. It is no coincidence that most "complete" Ricardian manuscripts have miniatures that date them to Lancastrian owners after 1415 (after the beginning of Henry V's colonial campaign in France), that the sole copy of the Portuguese translation dates the copy to 1430 at the city of Çeuta (after the Portuguese gained this colonial foothold in Africa), that Duarte wrote a manual of exempla in 1437 where he explicitly credited Gower's writing style (after he had successfully vied for control of the Canary Islands), or that the Castilian translation dates to 1454 (at the beginnings of the Castilian "Reconquista" of the Muslim kingdom of Granada). Although we cannot conclusively tie Gower to any of these political moments, we can certainly attribute a correlation to these cultural shifts in the conception of "authority" to the *Confessio's* guarded discursive concerns with specifying its "author function."

For even if these events were merely coincidental to the major dates surrounding the *Confessio's* dissemination, the very fact that Gower's poem was translated across three different cultures implies that its meaning was not read as a culturally situated "author function." The 33,000 line *Confessio* was no small codex to bring across the channel, and given the complexity of its English and Latinate apparatus, it must have proved a very difficult work to translate simply for the mere enjoyment of English nobles in Iberian courts. Further, even if Gower's work was introduced as a whole by the particular literary tastes of immigrant patrons (like Philippa of Lancaster), its subsequent copying and citation in various places (like Africa and

Portugal) and other works of literature (such as Duarte I's *Leal Conselheiro*) suggests that the work's "auctoritas" rested in something besides an interpretation of an ideal theme.<sup>151</sup> No other medieval English or Iberian work written in the vernacular has had the geographical or political reach of Gower's *Confessio*. Gower's work may very well have been the first English work to be copied outside of Europe and certainly one of the first European works to be copied in a colonial outpost. This is evidenced by the scribal colophon to the sole copy of the Portuguese translation to the *Confessio*, MSS Palacio II-3088: "Este lyuro por graça do muy alto Sor./Deus screueo por mandado de dom Fernando de castro o moço na çidade de cepta." "This book by grace of the high Lord God, I wrote by command of Don Fernando de Castro, the younger, in the city of Ceuta [North Africa]."<sup>152</sup>

It was more than Queen Philippa's interest in morality or desire to hear romantic stories that helped the *Confessio* achieve what other Iberian or English cosmopolitan writers (like Geoffrey Chaucer who actually traveled to Castile, France, and Italy) and other vernacular English works in languages more amenable to Iberian readers (like Gower's Latin *Vox Clamantis* and his French *Mirour de l'Omme*) have yet to show: a translation into not one but two Romance tongues.<sup>153</sup> A fact that is proved that John Manly's 1933 and R.F. Yeager's 2003 predictions that Chaucer would be the next English writer translated into an Iberian language have yet to materialize.<sup>154</sup> Given the Lancastrian ties between Iberian and England, the continued absence of any other literary authors bespeaks of the structural place of the *Confessio* beyond literary enjoyment. The correlation between important but distinct political moments in Iberian and

---

<sup>151</sup> Santano Moreno 29-30.

<sup>152</sup> Qtd. in Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, "O Livro do Amante: The Lost Portuguese Translation of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (Madrid, Biblioteca de Palacio, MS II-3088)," *Portuguese Studies* 13 (1997) 3.

<sup>153</sup> R.F. Yeager, for one, has speculated that the *Mirour* and the *Vox* were not translated for Philippa's court because they were not suitable for "ladies' reading" ("Gower's Lancastrian Affinity" 42).

<sup>154</sup> See Manly 472 and R.F. Yeager, "Chaucer Translates the Matter of Spain," *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages, 12th-15th Century: Cultural, Literary, and Political Changes*, ed. María Bullón-Fernández (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 199.

England suggests that the *Confessio* was translatable not because it met audience's desire to hear "moral" or "authorial" ideas metaphorized through poetry, but because it circulated a new way of articulating authority—a way which, as we have seen, was reflected in cultural discourses of the fifteenth century.

To analyze the *Confessio*'s unique take on authority and its wider cultural echoes, I will trace the most recurrent figure and exemplum in Gower's discourse—the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. I will argue that through this figure he *Confessio* put into play a conception of authority that challenged the idea that meaning should be delimited by some outside principle. In particular, Gower's *Confessio* engaged with Jerome's depiction of authority in the *Book of Daniel* to develop how textual play itself could happen without referring to an outside "author function" either in the poet's persona or in a unifying theme. For Gower's poem, the adaptation of the figure of Nebuchadnezzar implied that narrative authority—and by correlation political authority—could operate without being reduced to its effective representation in texts.

### 3. Authority and Deferred Representation: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of Writing

As far as Gower's source is concerned, the fragmentation of authority through the craft writing is certainly present from the beginning of the second chapter of *Daniel*. Jerome's rendition of Nebuchadnezzar's "somnium," his 'dream or vision' starts as if it were an oral narration of universal truth, adopting the "once upon a time" frame of a fable or anecdote:

In anno secundo regni Nabuchodonosor vidit Nabuchodonosor somnium, et conterritus est spiritus eius, et somnium eius fugit ab eo. Praecepit autem rex, ut convocarentur arioli, et magi, et malefici, et Chaldaei: ut indicarent regi somnia sua: qui cum venissent, steterunt coram rege.

In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar saw a dream/vision, and his spirit was afraid, and the dream fled from him. Then, the king commanded so that the soothsayers, magi, and sorcerers, and Chaldeans were convoked: so that they would indicate to the king his dreams: who when they had arrived, stood at the king's chamber.<sup>155</sup>

---

<sup>155</sup> Dan. 2:1-2.

We can understand why Gower would be attracted to this story in constructing a way of writing that could operate without reflecting on an exterior way to limit meaning. After all, the story of Nebuchadnezzar's first dream oddly begins by referencing a real event as narrative time. Despite specifically putting the dream's occurrence "In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar," the story's date, by itself, does not depict the dream as a veridical chronicled event. This is because the first chapter of *The Book of Daniel* claims that Daniel and his friends were only brought before Nebuchadnezzar three years after their capture, and if "in the second year" is to be an accurate depiction of time, then there is an obvious logical leap between the time in which the dream occurred and the time when Daniel could have interpreted it.

To surmount this logical difficulty, Jerome, borrowing from Josephus, provides the reader an alternate timeline in his commentary to this verse: "The Hebrews solve the difficulty [in Daniel's dating] in this way, that the second year refers here to his reign over all the barbarian nations."<sup>156</sup> Complementary interpretations of history are common medieval resolutions to conflicting biblical dates, and *Daniel* is no exception. However, Jerome lists this alternate timeline only as merely possible, without resolutely adopting the dating of the "Hebrews" as his own. This hesitancy to see the dream as reflecting an absolute temporal timeline is even mimicked in his defense of *Daniel's* canonicity in his Prologue to the book:

Porphyry wrote his twelfth book against the prophecy of Daniel, denying that it was composed by the person to whom it is ascribed in its title, but rather by some individual living in Judaea at the time of the Antiochus who was surnamed Epiphanes. He furthermore alleged that "Daniel" did not foretell the future so much as he related the past... But this very attack testifies to Daniel's accuracy. For so striking was the reliability of what the prophet foretold, that he could not appear to unbelievers as a predictor of the future, but rather a narrator of things already past.<sup>157</sup>

In refuting Porphyry, Jerome claims that the certainty of what Daniel predicts has to do with a temporal equivocation between narrative verisimilitude about the future comes and the prophet's

---

<sup>156</sup> Jerome, *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel*, trans. Gleason Archer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1958) 26.

<sup>157</sup> Jerome *Commentary on Daniel* 15-16.

ability to sound like “a narrator of things already past.” The ambiguity of *Daniel’s* rhetoric proves that the real Daniel witnessed events first hand and not that “some individual” disguised past history as future prophecy. As such, accurate dating matters little to Jerome because he sees *Daniel* as a book in which the depiction of time has no fixed rhetorical expectation of time even as time (particularly in the notion of things-to-come) is the book’s central narrative concern.

Jerome, in a sense, admits that *Daniel’s* rhetoric confuses how a reader approaches time even as he claims that the book accurately sets “forth the very time at which [Christ] would come.”<sup>158</sup> In fact, the second chapter of *Daniel*, being a prediction of the passage of human empires and the coming kingdom of God first seen at an ambiguous historical date, exemplifies this tendency to blur temporal expectations yet demand historical accuracy. First, the dream paradoxically happens to the king as an individual at the same time when his individuality is dissolved into universal history. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is only a historical reality as it occurs at a time when history coincided for “all the barbarian nations” of the world—i.e. when his unique experience of time was not his own but that of the generalized human race. Second, since the narration of dream is a narration of the whole of history, it must encompass both the time in which it is narrated and that when it is interpreted, making the events that lead up to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream part of the dream itself.

This is why Jerome describes the dream as an eschatological vision from the historical time of Daniel’s interpretation forward: “either these ‘last days’ are to be reckoned from the time when the dream was revealed to Daniel until the end of the world, or *else at least this inference is to be drawn, that the over-all interpretation of the dream applies to that final end* when the image and statue beheld [in the dream] is to be ground to powder” [My emphasis].<sup>159</sup> To Jerome,

---

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. 30.

Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar are conjoined in a complex time that does not separate the narrative time of interpretation from that of its lived history. Because the dream is a dream about the entirety of time, even the organizing principle of the story's events, its historical date of occurrence, becomes a formal aspect of the narrative, erasing the difference between narration and interpretation.

*Daniel's* second chapter does not describe Nebuchadnezzar's dream of time; it develops his vision *as* time itself through a very allusive process that only grows from this original rhetorical concern *with* time in which the time of interpretation is no different from that of narration: "vidit Nabuchodonosor somnium, et conterritus est spiritus eius, et somnium eius fugit ab eo" 'Nebuchadnezzar saw a dream, and his spirit was terrified, and the dream fled from him.' Once upon a time, Nebuchadnezzar saw a vision of time that made him afraid just as the fleeing of time. The king's experience of a dream of time in itself was the experience of the passing of time. Alluding to the Virgilian "tempus fugit" in the *Georgics*, the narrative instills fear to Nebuchadnezzar through a "memento mori" 'reminder of death.'<sup>160</sup> The fear that comes from the dream's passage is twofold. Firstly, it is a reminder of death in so far as the failure to arrest the dream parallels the failure to pause time. Secondly, it threatens to make historical reality another figural presentation in so far as time is but a dream.

When Nebuchadnezzar attempts to understand the dream outside of its narrative time, his actions work in two levels: literally as a "praeceptum," a 'command' that must be followed on the penalty of death, but also figuratively as a "prae-ceptum," a 'seizing beforehand,' as if the

---

<sup>160</sup> That Virgil's *Georgics* were in the back of Jerome's mind when he translated *Daniel* can be seen in his *Prologus in Danihele Proheta* where, after alluding to the clear "rhetorical flowers" of Quintilian and Cicero, he ventriloquizes Virgil in an exhortation from a Hebrew to finish the hard task of translating the work: "Verum, adhortante me Hebraeo et illud mihi sua lingua crebrius ingerent: 'labor omnia vincit improbus,' [*Georgics* 1.145-146], qui mihi videbar sciolus inter eos, coepi rursus discipulus esse chaldaicus" 'But with a Hebrew exhorting me to throw myself more closely in his language: 'bold work conquers all,' which I saw myself as a mere amateur amongst them, I began again to be a student of Chaldean' (Qtd. in Régis Courtray, *Prophète des Temps Derniers* (Paris: Beauschesne, 2009) 77 note 59).

dream, being time itself, could only be snatched before it passes. Feeling the dream of time flee from him, the king immediately tries to snatch it from without by grasping it with the figural arm of the law. Nevertheless, the grasp of the king's mind, like that of a hand failing to catch something mid-flight, fails to arrest the moment. The biblical narrative implies this in two ways: literally, it has Nebuchadnezzar fail to remember his dream while being confused; figuratively, the king's command merely causes a movement of air by bringing "arioli" 'soothsayers' together, who will only confirm his confusion, by trying to use their mouths to say what the king strictly saw as a vision with his mind's eye.

Strangely, it is this latter figural meaning that, in Jerome's translation, develops the real events of the narrative. According to Jerome, the pagan soothsayers do not fail because they perform pagan spiritual rites; rather, they fail for the same reasons that, for the biblical translator, anyone would fail—they cannot speak that which is purely seen; they cannot arrest witnessed time by merely talking about it. In keeping with the dream's figural connotation, Jerome defines "arioli" as "people who perform a thing by means of words,"<sup>161</sup> and thus suggests that their failure to interpret the king's dream is also the failure of oral interpretation (of the movement of air). *Daniel's* narrative supports his view. Nebuchadnezzar calls his magi not so that they can interpret what his dream means but "ut indicarent regi somnia sua" 'so that they indicate the king his dreams.' Jerome's Latin operates visually in a double register using "indicare" as 'indicate and sign' but also "in-dicare" as 'in-say,' to speak from within. The king's demand is not so much that of hearing an interpretation but of holding the dream vision which passed from within.

Nebuchadnezzar's request, in asking the magi to *say* an exact replica of the king's dream, is impossible because what the king dreamt was, first and foremost, a *vision* and outside the realm of spoken utterance. As Jerome's commentary reminds us, "There remained in the king's

---

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. 24.

heart only a shadow, so to speak, or a mere echo or trace of the dream, with the result that if others should retell it to him, he would be able to recall what he had seen, and they would certainly not be deceiving him with lies.”<sup>162</sup> Through “an echo or a trace,” Nebuchadnezzar’s mind kept the negation of oral speech so that the only way which Jerome could describe the dream is as “a shadow, so to speak,” a dark vision. To follow the king’s command and indicate or speak from within the dream, the soothsayers would then have the impossible requirement to speak by means of images as if their interpretation was not distinct from the king’s own vision.

Not surprisingly, this impossibility of “speaking by means of images” (at least for the “arioli” who are limited to speak by means of words) introduces the same type of terror which frightened the king: reliving the dream requires an interpretation that somehow is none other than the in-saying and very construction of the dream and that therefore cannot grasp it. The fear comes from an interpretative indeterminacy that passes from Nebuchadnezzar to his soothsayers, who now face an impossible choice. Either a) by embodying (“in-dicare” ‘in-saying’) the dream, they explicitly fulfill the king’s demand while implicitly placing themselves above his power to speak—since they can speak by images, or b) by not interpreting his dream, they implicitly defer to his place as primary law giver because they explicitly refuse to do his bidding.

Stuck between Scylla and Charybdis of following their king’s command but of usurping his voice or of refusing to do his bidding out of reverence for his status, the soothsayers try a middle route, asking the king to speak his vision:

Et dixit ad eos rex: Vidi somnium: et mente confusus ignoro quid viderim. Responderuntque Chaldaei regi Syriace: Rex in sempiternum vive: dic somnium servis tuis, et interpretationem eius indicabimus. Et respondens rex ait Chaldaeis: *Sermo recessit a me*: nisi indicaveritis mihi somnium, et coniecturam eius, peribitis vos, et domus vestrae publicabuntur.

And the king said to them: I saw a dream: and having a confused mind, I do not know what I saw. And the Chaldaeans answered to the king in Syriac: King live in eternity: tell your servants the dream, and we will point its interpretation. And the king answering said to the Chaldaeans: *Speech*

---

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. 25.

*has withdrawn from me: unless you indicate to me the dream, and its interpretation, you will perish, and your homes will be confiscated [My emphasis].*<sup>163</sup>

The soothsayers fear that by telling the king his dream, they are effectively acting in his stead, and so they hail the king by humbly saying “King live in eternity”—live throughout time and tell your dream to your servants. The situation warrants no less; after all, the king remembers his dream in some form and so retains a shadow of the “time” that passed him. However, he only knows what he saw as a pure “*somnium*,” as a pure vision untranslatable to oral speech which has withdrawn from him irreparably, “*sermo recessit a me*.” This makes him not know his dream unless he sees it, “*ignoro quid viderim*” ‘I do not know what I saw’ but yet demand an exact replica of what he witnessed in the passing of time.

If the Chaldean prophets only make things happen by means of words, then it is obvious that they cannot in-say Nebuchadnezzar’s dream because his dream, being outside the realm of “*sermo*” ‘speech’ yet still being part of perception—namely sight—cannot be said at all. This forces the Chaldeans to hail Nebuchadnezzar individually, forcing him to accept his vision as his own. Accordingly, they change their language of address, speaking to him in his own tongue “*Syriace*” ‘Syrian’ or as Jerome implies, Babylonian, to try to individualize language to his being and by-pass the pure viscosity of the dream by letting the king speak in his own words.

Even in speaking to the king in Syrian (or as Jerome calls it “Chaldean”), the soothsayers fail to coax the dream from the king, and in this, the events in *Daniel* once again eerily erase the line between interpretative and poetic narratives. As Jerome comments, “Up to this point what we have read has been recounted in Hebrew. From this point on until the vision of the third year of King Balthasar which Daniel saw in Susa, the account is written in Hebrew characters, to be

---

<sup>163</sup> Dan. 2:3-4.

sure, but in the Chaldee language, which he here calls Syriac.”<sup>164</sup> At the precise moment in which Nebuchadnezzar says that speech cannot speak, cannot represent his visual experience—that speech has left its ability to represent an idea, *Daniel* shifts from using speech to narrate ideas—to tell us a story—to reducing the status of text as a marker of *another* text. When Nebuchadnezzar can no longer signify by means of language, *Daniel* can only use language to point to yet another language. The biblical presentation of events, like the dream of the king, becomes purely visual as the Hebrew uses its characters not to mean something when read aloud but to point to another structural system—to Syriac—and so to demand a strict ethics of reading and translation and not of narrative continuity when encountered on the page.

Starting from Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of time, *The Book of Daniel* empties its written Hebrew characters from their oral presence by requiring the reader to understand another language through them—it is as if a text began in English and then continued in Arabic without changing characters. This use of language as merely a marker for another linguistic structure literally makes writing a-personal by removing direct meaning from the function of words, and figuratively it mimicks the king’s refusal to voice his authority by means of “sermo” ‘speech’ by making the authority of his narrative rely on the seeing and not the hearing of narrative. The story does not merely translate Hebrew into Aramaic (one oral way of speaking into another); it changes a Hebrew language that means what it says into an “Aramaic-in-meaning-and-Hebrew-in-look” text. In a close parallel, when the king can no longer speak to signify and when his authority does not guarantee the truth of his narration, the narrative turns into a visual “echo” and “trace,” a literal dream vision of language, which lacks its own identity except as an interpretation.

---

<sup>164</sup> *Commentary on Daniel* 25.

This fitting Babylonian confusion, in which language loses its ability to communicate, exerts a fearful double effect on those “arioli” who try to interpret things “by means of words” within the biblical story. They either directly relate their own language to a fixed meaning, making their speech irrelevant to a state of confusion, or they forsake their ability to communicate, limiting the use of language to indicate the passing-through of time. This choice between obsolence and linguistic play is directly embodied in the narrative by the two options which Nebuchadnezzar presents to his soothsayers: either they take over the king’s role and say his dream, or they can “perire” ‘perish’ or ‘go through’ time (and hence through the king’s own fleeting experience of time) by dying.

For a second time, it is the fear of the passage of time that serves to link interpretation and narrative, and following this “double” motif, Nebuchadnezzar repeats his request:

*Somnium igitur, et interpretationem eius indicate mihi. Responderunt secundo, atque dixerunt: Rex somnium dicat servis suis, et interpretationem illius indicabimus. Respondit rex, et ait: Certe novi quod tempus redimitis, scientes quod recesserit a me sermo.*

Therefore, indicate to me the dream and its interpretation. For the second time, they responded and said: Let the king tell the dream to his servant, and we will indicate its interpretation. The king answered: Certainly, I knew that you redeemed time, knowing that speech has gone from me.<sup>165</sup>

In asking for an interpretation that would also act as a dream, Nebuchadnezzar denies his speech the authority to say what he saw, but in demanding an immediate interpretation by keeping his soothsayers from “redeeming time,” he still asserts his authority to know what he saw. Mindful of this trap, the soothsayers ask the king to put his dream into words so as to not presume to usurp the king’s authority, offering only silence to his demand for speech.

This is not an apt solution for Nebuchadnezzar. The king interprets their silence not as a deferral to his power but as a monopolization of the passage of time—the very passage that, lacking speech, he may no longer control: “tempus redimitis scientes quod recesserit a me

---

<sup>165</sup> Dan. 2:6-8.

sermo” ‘you redeem time knowing that speech has left from me.’ To Nebuchadnezzar, silence becomes a form of negative speech which usurps his right to speak the dream without also bringing the dream to light. To his soothsayers, silence is the only way to interpret the king’s confusion without taking away his authority, and so they excuse it in a gesture of subservience: “Non est homo super terram, qui sermonem tuum, rex, possit implere...exceptis diis, quorum non est cum hominibus *conversatio*” ‘There is no man over the earth, which your speech, oh king, may fill...except the gods, whose *conversation* is not with men’ [My emphasis].<sup>166</sup>

The soothsayers know that to speak the king’s dream is to put themselves above their king. Consequently, they claim that the type of speech, which he wishes to replace his own, is only a divine speech foreign from the everyday “*conversatio*” ‘dialogue’ of temporality. This orthodox and subservient response (of which Jerome approves by claiming that all “secular [temporal] knowledge” concurs with the soothsayers) does not make Nebuchadnezzar happy. Enraged, Nebuchadnezzar orders the death of *all* the wise men in the kingdom. Frustrated by the impossibility of knowledge to go above him, his actions wish to eradicate temporal, secular speech and make all those, who can interpret things by means of words, face the same confusion which the passage of the dream of time left in his mind: the fear of the vanishing of reality through the coming of death or through its confusion into a pure dream.<sup>167</sup>

At this point, where the narrative has literally run out of time and would reduce the entire *Book of Daniel* to silence since, in condemning the magi to death, Nebuchadnezzar has indirectly

---

<sup>166</sup> Dan. 2:10.

<sup>167</sup> Dan. 2:12. That the question of “meaning” was central to *Daniel 2* is highlighted by the amount of exegesis upon the syntactical possibilities of the adjective used to describe Nebuchadnezzar’s state “in anger” that was waged before Jerome and well into the Middle Ages by Jewish philosophers and commentators. See Richard C. Steiner, “Meaninglessness, Meaningfulness, and Super-Meaningfulness in Scripture: An Analysis of the Controversy Surrounding Dan 2:12 in the Middle Ages.” *The Jewish Scholarly Review*. 82.3/4 (Jan-Apr., 1992): 433-435.

set the same fate for Daniel and his friends, the Jewish prophet enters the scene in the nick-of-time and saves the day by doing what neither the king nor the soothsayers can do—let time pass:

Et egressa sententia, sapientes interficiebantur: quaerebanturque Daniel, et socii eius, ut perirent. Tunc Daniel requisivit de lege, atque sententia ab Arioch principe militiae regis, qui egressus fuerat ad interficiendos sapientes Babylonis... Daniel ingressus rogavit regem ut tempus daret sibi ad solutionem indicandam regi... Tunc Danieli mysterium per visionem nocte revelatum est: et benedixit Daniel Deum caeli.

And having gone out this sentence, the wise men were to be killed; and they inquired about Daniel, and his friends, so that they be killed. Then Daniel asked about the law and even about its sentence from Arioch the chief soldier of the king, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon... having entered [before the king], Daniel prayed the king so that he would give him time to find a solution to indicate to the king... Then the mystery, through a vision of the night, was revealed to Daniel: and Daniel blessed the God of heaven.<sup>168</sup>

As a result of this deferral which Arioch, Nebuchadnezzar, and God give to the Jewish prophet, Daniel synthesizes the role of dreamer (king) and interpreter (soothsayer) to be greater than both. Like the Chaldeans, he redeems time to await an interpretation, and like the king, he sees a vision in his sleep. However, unlike both of them, his relationship to time does not arrest it but lets it pass. He defers to the king's orders by asking about his death-sentence from Arioch; he defers to his lack of knowledge by asking for time from the king; and he defers to God by sleeping, like the king, so that in a nightly mystery, he may personally see the dream. His posture, as Jerome interprets it, uses "time, not that he might investigate secret things by clever application of his intellect, but that he might beseech the Lord of Secrets" and so merely waits on the promise of communication of the vision without controlling it through a closure of meaning.<sup>169</sup>

The result is that Daniel, without personally manipulating speech, can do what the narrative has set up as impossible: he simultaneously narrates the dream from within but somehow arrests the king's dream by interpreting it from without. He defers to the king's authority but still manages says what no man on earth may say above the king; and most

---

<sup>168</sup> Dan. 2:13-19.

<sup>169</sup> *Commentary on Daniel* 26.

importantly, *he speaks by means of images*. He accomplishes this by thinking the two sides of a narrative—its literal and figural meanings—as necessarily coterminous. In his interpretation, the passage of time is not a personified oral speech which bears with it the will of its author but the still look of an image which awaits a future interpretation in time, which awaits the allowance of Arioch to bring the prophet before the king, of Nebuchadnezzar to give time for Daniel to dream, and for God to give Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of time to him in a dream. In fact, the linkage of temporal deferral and written authority is seen in the very structure of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream from this point on which is literally interpreted as a statue of many metals that means to allegorize the passage of history (a still depiction of the passage of time) and is figurally represented by purely visual Hebrew characters on the page without direct Hebrew ideas (an arrest of “sermo” ‘speech’ through an image).<sup>170</sup>

As a prophecy, Daniel’s literal representation of time as an image (a statue made up of different metals which represent a prophecy of the growth of the empires of the world and their end) manages to not monopolize the passage of time through speech but to arrest it in a pictorial stillness. As a way of writing, *Daniel’s* figurative embodiment of time through an image (a written story about a dream contained in the visual play of hollow Hebrew characters) arrests time while still inhabiting it. As a result, the narrative makes the reader focus not on its ability to reflect a stable meaning but in its play of resemblances.

In *Daniel*, biblical writing is therefore the writing of the figural and the literal through time. Anticipating Jacques Derrida’s idea of *écriture*, Jerome’s portrayal of the events in *Daniel* simultaneously turns writing into the stillness of time and movement of meaning, a deferral and

---

<sup>170</sup> It is important that Hebrew characters continue to represent Aramaic speech up until the last vision which Daniel saw under the rule of Belshazzar, the king whose rule ended by a disembodied hand writing a strange, unknown language on the wall.

enacting of authority, and the oral presence of speech and visual absence of writing.<sup>171</sup> Jerome's final comment on Nebuchadnezzar's dream vision takes up this three-fold aspect of writing when directly comparing the passage of history to the writing and reading of a visual text:

Let us not marvel, therefore, whenever we see kings and empires succeed one another, for it is by the will of God that they are governed, altered, and terminated. And the cases of individuals are well known to Him who founded all things. He often permits wicked kings to arise in order that they may in their wickedness punish the wicked. *At the same time by indirect suggestion and general discussion he [Daniel] prepares the reader for the fact that the dream Nebuchadnezzar saw was concerned with the change and succession of empires* [My emphasis].<sup>172</sup>

Jerome explicitly compares Daniel's writing strategies to the unfolding of time through history by God. The rise and fall of good kings in history follow the same logic of a written story.

Just as a written text influences a reader to understand its theme by "indirect suggestion and general discussion" (i.e. by foreshadowing and allusion), the fluid movement of good and evil events makes sense in a larger providential history. Just as a reader can cognize a narrative as a still text, God can see the unfolding of history as a single image in which evil kings "arise in order that they may in their wickedness punish the wicked." And just as a text cannot reveal the will of its author, history cannot, in a single moment, show what God's authorial plan is.

Providence proves that God, like Daniel, is a writer and not a speaker in that his authority resides in his absence—in the ability of the passage of history to convey the meaning of God's ultimate plan without explicitly revealing what it means.

---

<sup>171</sup> This is Derrida's famous conceptualization of writing in his essay "Différance": "The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence. Whether we are concerned with the verbal or the written sign, with the monetary sign, or with electoral delegation and political representation, the *circulation of signs defers the moment in which we can encounter the thing itself make it ours, consume or expend it, touch it, see it, intuit its presence*. What I am describing here in order to define it is the classically determined structure of the sign in all the banality of its characteristics - signification as the *différance of temporization*" [My emphasis] (Jacques Derrida, "Différance," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. 3-27), qtd. in *Bibliography of Publications by Jacques Derrida*, ed. Peter Krapp. Web. 10 October 2010).

<sup>172</sup> *Commentary on Daniel* 27.

#### 4. “Oure Tyme among ous”: Gower’s Vision of Writing as Temporality

Jerome’s frame of Nebuchadnezzar, as a reflection on meaning and representation, certainly influences John Gower’s opus. Gower’s Latin *Vox Clamantis* uses the king’s first dream as depicted in the second chapter of *Daniel* to satirize the reign of Richard II; his French *Mirour de l’Omme* uses Nebuchadnezzar’s second dream and descent into madness in *Daniel*’s fourth chapter to comment upon the general movement of history; and finally his English *Confessio Amantis* repeats both dreams and even subtly adopts *Daniel*’s description of writing as deferral within its own literary project in its Prologue:

Of hem that writen ous tofore  
The bokes duelle, and we therfore  
Ben tawht of that was write tho:  
Forthi good is that we also  
In oure tyme among ous hier  
Do wryte of newe som matiere.<sup>173</sup>

With these beginning lines, the *Confessio* authorizes its speech by turning to the past texts of “hem that writen ous tofore” to treat “of new som matiere” for the future.

Through this subject-less beginning of an unknown and faceless “hem” ‘they’ who write, the poem grounds a temporal authority without asserting the agency of an author yet still averring to propagate “good” to a particular group of people. It is the ambiguous wording of the sources of this good as coming from “hem that writen ous tofore,” literally meaning ‘write before us’ and ‘write us into before,’ that sets up writing as a process whose presence not only precedes us but also ‘writes us’ in time as the past. Gower’s writing, in a similar way to that of the second chapter of *Daniel*, makes the present look like the past by emulating a text.

As a result, Gower subtly suggests that an author’s agency is never in fixed state (as if he were imparting a message to one audience) but, like the books which authorize his speech, it is a mode of continuous dwelling in the world—a dialogic exchange between reader and writer that

---

<sup>173</sup> Gower *Confessio* Prologue.1-6.

makes a text reflect but a temporal plane and not a universal message. An author conceives “of newe som matiere” only when he has “ben tawht” by assimilating a past that continues as a future “good.” Authority is temporal through and through in that it makes our concern for speech also be a close concern for the passage of time. Like Nebuchadnezzar’s wish to indicate a fleeing dream, the ability to write for “oure tyme among ous hire” is none other than a collective wish, “our” desire here, to arrest the flow of time.

This projection of an experience as a collective desire, as Anne Middleton has argued, is a common feature of late fourteenth-century Ricardian poetry.<sup>174</sup> However, in Gower’s poem, the narrative’s dwelling upon temporality is best described as an existential and metaphysical concern for “oure tyme among ous hire” and not as Middleton has argued, as a reflection of the poet’s social place in history.<sup>175</sup> For the *Confessio*, it is the “our-ness” of writing—its collective place in our world and daily lives—and not its structural ability to mark time—its ability to fix an idea for generations—that allows one to develop temporal agency. Therefore, the poem initially construes its narrative more like a study of writing itself than as an explicit reflection of the passing events of history.

This is supported by the Prologue’s poetic structure that only allows a reader to access a point in time by paradoxically forfeiting his place in it. The poem claims that an apersonal means of representation, like the writing “of hem,” has being only as a people’s particular language “among ous hire,” and this idea is exemplified in the Latin colophon’s allusion to the dream of Nebuchadnezzar that ends the *Confessio*:

Tercius liber iste Anglico sermone in viii partes diuisus, qui ad instantiam serenissimi principis dicti domini Regis Anglie Ricardi secundi conficitur, secundum Danielis propheciam super huius mundi regnorum mutatione a tempore Regis Nabugodonosor usque nunc tempora distinguit. Tractat eciam secundum Nectanabum et Aristotilem super hiis quibus Rex Alexander tam in sui regimen quam aliter eorum disciplina edoctus fuit. Principalis tamen huius libri materia super

---

<sup>174</sup> Anne Middleton, “The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II,” *Speculum*, 53.1 (January, 1978): 106.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* 104.

amorem et amantum condiciones fundamentum habet. Ubi variarum cronicarum historiarumque sentencie necnon Poetarum Philosophorumque scripturae ad exemplum distinctius inseruntur. Nomenque presentis opusculi *Confessio Amantis* specialiter intitulatur.

By means of English speech divided in eight parts, this third book, which is fashioned at the request of the most famous prince the said lord Richard II King of England, distinguishes the times according to the prophecy of Daniel over the change of the kingdoms of the world from the time of King Nebuchadnezzar until now. Also following Nectanebus and Aristotle, it treats over those things by which King Alexander was taught the rule in his own as much as other disciplines of these. Nevertheless, the principal matter of this book has the foundation over love and the conditions to love. There the various chronicles, histories, and sentences of the poets and philosophers and scripture are grafted distinctly as exempla. And the name of the present small work is specifically entitled *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>176</sup>

According to the colophon, the *Confessio* counts both its narrative time (its eight-book division) and historical time (the “mutacione” ‘change’ of the world) by means of “Anglico sermone” ‘English speech,’ following the structure in “Danielis propheciam” ‘the prophecy of Daniel.’ It explicitly associates the English “conficio” ‘fashioning’ of the *Confessio* with *Daniel*’s confusion of narrative and historical time. Thus, the colophon highlights the *Confessio*’s “Anglico sermone” ‘English speech’ even when (“tamen” ‘nevertheless’) this concern for writing as time has nothing to do with the main theme of love presented in the poem—i.e. when writing, following Daniel, is purely a structural concern.

The colophon ties the *Confessio*’s take on the passage of time in the vernacular with the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and with the political advice to Alexander, and yet it separates this passage from the presentation of the “variarum cronicarum historiarumque sentencie” ‘various chronicles, histories, and sentences’ about love, ethics, and law that make up the content *Confessio*’s eight books. For the colophon, the *Confessio*’s vernacular presentation of temporal passage is different from the majority of the poem’s stories and from its “materia” ‘subject matter.’ This means two things: 1) what a reader can get from the various exempla from Ovid, the bible, and the *Gesta Romanorum* that expound the poem’s “principalis materia” is not the vernacular frame by which the poem expresses its existential concern for writing and 2) the act

---

<sup>176</sup> Gower *Confessio* “The Colophons.”

of compiling and translating Latin exempla “Poetarum Philosophorumque scripturae” ‘of poets, philosophers, and scripture’ into English does not necessarily make the *Confessio* address themes for “our” existential English concern with time as these are merely “inseruntur” ‘grafted’ into the poem’s structure by means of “Anglico sermone” ‘English speech.’

Still, the colophon does not suffice to describe how Gower’s general writing strategies should be perceived in relationship to its vernacular culture. Taken at face value, the two examples it gives of how a vernacular language concerns itself with time as writing (“secundum Danielis propheciam” ‘according to Daniel’s prophecy’ and the advice given to Alexander) come from Latinate and not vernacular traditions. Secondly, the strict “tamen” ‘nevertheless,’ by which the colophon separates these two episodes from the rest of the *Confessio*’s exempla, seems arguable in a poem whose 33,000 lines constantly introduce uncertainty and not homogeneity. Further, the colophon may not necessarily aim to encapsulate the poem. As Sïan Echard has argued, the Latin apparatus to the *Confessio*, which encompasses the colophon, sets up the poem as a dialogue between reader and writer that varies and evolves its application throughout the text and from one audience to another.<sup>177</sup> Thus, not all of the versions of the *Confessio* contain the same colophon, and its presence in them appears to be tailored to a particular audience and not to one unified vision of the poem’s linguistic structure.<sup>178</sup>

Therefore, we should not simply take the colophon as a neat encapsulation of the *Confessio*’s writing strategies. At worst, as Derek Pearsall and others have suggested, it represents a cursory reading of a complex poem and the demands of an audience more interested

---

<sup>177</sup> Sïan Echard, “With Carmen’s Help: Latin Authorities in the *Confessio Amantis*,” *Studies in Philology*, 95.1 (Winter, 1998): 12.

<sup>178</sup> Sïan Echard, “Last Words: Latin at the End of the *Confessio Amantis*,” *Interstices: Studies in Middle English and Anglo-Latin Texts in Honour of A.G. Rigg*, ed. Richard Firth Green and Linne R. Mooney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 111.

in hearing moral fables in English than in tackling its broad thematic subtleties.<sup>179</sup> At best, in linking Nebuchadnezzar's dreams and the advice to Alexander in Book VII, it portrays the *Confessio* as a compilation of stories tailored for the political and social needs of a particular audience.<sup>180</sup> It seems, then, that what we may conclude about the colophon's labeling of vernacular strategies as coming from "Danielis propheciam" 'the Prophecy of Daniel' should only be a particular interpretation of the *Confessio*'s narrative diversity.

From this viewpoint, the colophon could be read to emphasize *Daniel*'s role in the *Confessio* as a way to understand its larger thematic gestures and not as encapsulating the way the poem's vernacular writing approaches the notion of temporality and authority through *Daniel*'s model. As Russell Peck has argued, *Daniel* helps readers understand "two essential features of [the *Confessio*'s] moral rhetoric: first, the apocalyptic reminder that in keeping with God's well-designed plan, a plan announced in the writings of old, history has something to teach us...second, the psychological inference that by learning from history we can do something about our fallen situation through right use of our wits."<sup>181</sup> According to Peck, *Daniel* encapsulates how the poem's structure works as both a commentary of society and a dialogic engagement between a fictional teller and a fictional reader. As such, the colophon privileges Nebuchadnezzar's dreams not as a way to express some essential concern for vernacular temporality but as an example of the ambiguity created when a reader is confronted with the

---

<sup>179</sup> Derek Pearsall, "Gower's Latin in the *Confessio Amantis*," *Latin and Vernacular Studies in Late-Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. A.J. Minnis, *York Manuscripts Conferences Proceedings*, Series 1 (Cambridge: Brewer Press, 1989) 24-25.

<sup>180</sup> See Joyce Coleman, "Lay Readers of Hard Latin: How Gower May Have Intended the *Confessio Amantis* to be Read," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 24 (2002): 232-234 and Lindeboom 344-345.

<sup>181</sup> Russell A. Peck, "John Gower and the Book of Daniel," *John Gower: Recent Readings. Papers Presented at the Meetings of the John Gower Society at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, 1983-88*, ed. R.F. Yeager (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 1989) 178.

varied presentation of the *Confessio*'s themes, which, for scholars, often can be resolved via an idealization of Gower's exterior "authorial voice."<sup>182</sup>

Yet if Nebuchadnezzar is merely an example of what Michel Foucault calls an "author function"—that is of another contextual delimitation by which Gower conveyed one message to his audience—and if his readers even assumed that the king represented Gower's general "moral" attitude about his work, how did they come to this conclusion? What part of the text would have signaled a reader to attribute to Nebuchadnezzar such a privileged state of encapsulating the poet's entire thematic outlook while ignoring what longer and more amenable tales, like that of Apolonius of Tyre, could say about the *Confessio* as a poem or Gower's authorial role in it? Even more, why does the colophon witness to a reader focus on Nebuchadnezzar when modern readers and critics tend to think that the *Confessio*'s narrative themes are better exemplified and more fully developed in other stories?<sup>183</sup>

These are especially vexing questions when, for Gower's medieval readers, the two episodes described by the colophon literally represent the metonymic image of the *Confessio*. The poem's manuscripts are usually illuminated with either of these stories: with the penitent lover kneeling before Genius like an author of a speculum presenting a book before his king, or with a picture of Nebuchadnezzar dreaming or of his dream vision of the monster of time. The earliest copies of the *Confessio* begin with the passage of *Daniel* as a frontispiece to the poem.<sup>184</sup>

---

<sup>182</sup> For an example of how major scholars use Gower's "authorial voice" to resolve narrative ambiguities, see Russell A. Peck "The Phenomenology of Make Believe in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," *Studies in Philology*, 91.3 (Summer, 1994): 267; R.F. Yeager, "English, Latin, and the Text as Other: The Text as Sign in the Work of John Gower," *Text: Transactions of the Society for Textual Scholarship*, Vol. 3 (New York: Ams Press, 1987) 259-260); and Wetherbee "Genius" 260.

<sup>183</sup> While Nebuchadnezzar has drawn its share of modern critical attention (R.F. Yeager, "The Body Politic and the Politics of Bodies in the Poetry of John Gower," *The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature*, eds. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999) 158), neither it or Book 7—which contains the advice to princes cited in the colophon—have been considered as "interesting" as Gower's other Ovidean stories, like that of "Florien," "Mundus and Paulina," the "Tale of Lucrece," or even the brief example of the musician, "Arion."

<sup>184</sup> Fredell 74.

Further, this image was a common typification of the poem even in less ornate manuscripts.<sup>185</sup> Because Nebuchadnezzar was such a metonymic image of the poem, it could not have simply been *an example* of the poem's larger "moral rhetoric" in the readers' minds as Russell Peck argues. Rather, what the manuscript evidence suggests is that Gower's adaptation of *Daniel* was *the central logic* to the *Confessio* because it was continually repeated across manuscripts regardless of how a particular audience idealized its themes.<sup>186</sup>

##### 5. "Temporalibus error ubique diffunditur": Gowerian Writing of Time

Further, the *Confessio* is not alone in structuring the figure of Nebuchadnezzar as integral to Gower's narrative art. Already in his *Vox Clamantis*, the poet structures a general satire of society by drawing on the "secundum Danielis propheciam" 'the prophecy according to Daniel':

Postquam de singulis gradibus, per quos tam in spiritalibus quam in temporalibus error ubique diffunditur, tractatum hactenus existit, iam secundum puorundam opinionem tractare intendit de pedibus statue, quam Nabugodonosor viderat in sompnis quorum videlicet pedum quedam pars ferreae, quedam fictilis, in figura deterioracionis huius mundi exsisterat, in quam nos ad presens tempus, quod est quodammodo in fine seculi, evidencius devenimus. Et primo ferri significacionem declarabit.

When up until this moment, he brought forth the treatise about the specific steps through which sin has diffused everywhere, in spiritual as in temporal matters, now he intends to treat according to the opinion of others about the feet of the statue, which Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream that showed namely of whose feet certain part was of iron, certain part of clay, in figuration of the deterioration of the world, that is in a certain way in the end of time in which evidently we have come at this present time. And first, he declares the signification of the iron.<sup>187</sup>

At first glance, this summary of Book 7 of the *Vox* supports the general scholarly assumption that an exterior "authorial function" or an idealized theme guides the choice of Nebuchadnezzar as a narrative device. Here, the *Vox* uses *Daniel* to allegorize the "presens tempus" 'present time' as a satire and seems to represent the poet's society through it. This prose frame presents a poet

---

<sup>185</sup> Jeremy Griffiths, "Confessio Amantis: The Poem and Its Pictures," *Gower's Confessio Amantis: Responses and Re-Assessments*, ed. A.J. Minnis (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983) 177.

<sup>186</sup> Although Joel Fredell notes that the Nebuchadnezzar miniatures differed across audiences (74), it is worth noting that it was the Nebuchadnezzar miniature, and not another image from the Prologue, that is consistently readapted for the changing political goals of his audience.

<sup>187</sup> John Gower, "Vox Clamantis," *The Complete Works of John Gower: The Latin Works*, Vol. 4, Ed. G.C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902) 7.1.Latin Prose.

who sees in his world the very eschatological image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. It accordingly labels his description of how “in temporalibus error ubique diffunditur” ‘everywhere sin has diffused in time’ a “tractatus” ‘treatise’ and not a poetic play of language.

A closer look at this prose frame, however, reveals a careful fashioning of poetic structures behind a flat allegory of sin. Taking at its starting point the future, “postquam” ‘finally’ or ‘after which,’ the summary treats the poem itself as the prophetic vision of the future, of the “finally” that its lines should allegorize: “Postquam de singulis gradibus...tratctatum hactenus existit” ‘Finally/After which by means of single steps...thus far the treatise manifests/steps forth.’ The poem comes forth, like the feet of the statue of time, in ‘single steps’ that treat the “in temporalibus error ubique diffunditur,” the scattering of an “error,” a ‘mistake’ but also a ‘wondering of time.’ Through this “erratic” pun, the summary reflects less on the poem’s “explicit” theme (the sins of society) as it does on how its puns can create meaning, and particularly on the metric wondering of the *Vox*’s feet.

This summary frame goes further than an explanation of the Latinate contents of the *Vox*’s poetry. It embodies, through allusion, what the *Vox* should explain. By using metaphoric diction, the summary implicitly makes this “visio” a commentary of the process of writing. The frame describes a world to which “nos ad presens tempus...evidencius devenimus” ‘we, at our present time...evidently have come’ as only a representation, a “figura,” of deterioration and not deterioration itself. The “evident” coming to a “representation” echoes how the bible presents Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a pure vision that must be written and not the development of an interpretation of reality through speech. This explains why this prose frame envisions the poem as a “tractatum,” from the Latin, “tracto, tractare” ‘to drag’ despite using poetic diction. The

word “tractatum” figuratively alludes to the dragging of Nebuchadnezzar’s feet and literally to the dragging of vision in the act of reading poetic feet as writing on the page.

This allusive prosaic frame certainly mimics how its biblical source in *Daniel* tackles Nebuchadnezzar’s “visio.” In the Bible, the events which frame the dream foreshadow what the dream itself narrates. In the *Vox*, the prosaic frame foreshadows how the poetic content would represent the idea of time. The poem, therefore, posits a similar hermetic meditation as the Bible about the very process of representation—the idea of envisioning time through writing—and does not simply present a satire of the poet’s world as if interpreting it from afar:

Quod solet antiquae nuper latirare figura  
Possumus ex nostris verificare malis:  
Quod veteres fusca sompni timere sub umbra  
Iam monstrat casus peruigil ecce nouus  
Nunc caput a statua Nabugod prescinditur auri  
Fictilis et ferri stant duo iamque pedes.

What ancient representation used to hide, recently  
We can from our evils verify  
What the old [used] to fear under the dark shadow of sleep  
Now, look, the new/strange [time] vigilantly demonstrates the fall  
Now, the head of gold is cut from the statue of Nebuchad.  
And now the two feet of clay and iron stand.<sup>188</sup>

Once again, it may seem that the poem is doing little more than an allegory as it claims to “verificare” ‘to verify’ past prophecies in the world around the reader. However, the double-meaning of “veri-ficare” as both to ‘verify’ and literally ‘to make truth’ turns the figures of the past into our present time just as one would make a fiction, a “figura” into a reality.

Just like Jerome’s translation *Daniel*, Gower’s *Vox* uses textual ambiguity to portray a “somnia” as a vision of time, not just a vision of future events but an experience of temporality itself. By proliferating visual images (“fusca” ‘dark,’ “umbra” ‘shadow,’ “monstrat” ‘show,’ “peruigil” ‘watchful,’ and “ecce” ‘look’), the poem literally makes time into a figural look that is experienced from afar and not just the unfolding of events as described by the poet. Aptly, it

---

<sup>188</sup> John Gower “Vox” 7.1.1-6.

describes the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as a "monstrum temporum" as a 'monster of time' which by arresting the flow of time in a "figura" 'shape/likeness' literally is embodying a 'showing of time.' Following Jerome's exposition of the passage, the *Vox* shows how the visuality of writing arrests temporality by making a metaphor of the idea of time the process of narration itself. The decapitated statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is not just a metaphor of a concept but, by its juxtaposition with the poem as a whole, represents the readerly act of looking down to inky "fusca" 'shadows' in parchment to "veri-ficare," to make truth, to interpret a theme, by analyzing poetic "figurae" 'metaphors.'

Consequently, the poem's writing "monstrat;" it both 'points' and 'makes something monstrous,' from a plurality of images, metaphors, rhythms, and phonemes. In the same way, the statue within Nebuchadnezzar's dream points to a future by gathering different metals as a whole object. This type of figuration of the physicality of writing in the *Vox* is a direct reflection of the physicality of the statue in *Daniel*. The exigencies of poetic meter succumb to this figurative game so that the truncation of Nebuchadnezzar's name as "Nabugod" parallels the meaning of the narrative: "Nunc caput a statua Nabugod prescinditur auri" 'now the golden head is cut from the statue of Nebuchad.' Just as the poem describes the statue's decapitated head, so is "Nabugod" decapitated from "Nabugodonor" by meter.

It is the experience of the *Vox*'s page and not an interpretation of some exterior theme that ties this part of the poem together. A purely external idealization of what Gower means—a general interpretation of the poem's themes without a close attention to its visual and material composition—at best introduces uncertainty and contradictions to the poem. For example, taking the prose summary as displaying a theme, we would expect the first poetic lines to describe Nebuchadnezzar's feet. Instead, in its fifth line, the poem addresses the body of the statue

beginning with its head before ever indicating what the statue's "fictilis et ferri pedes" 'clay and iron feet' are. The poem's very diction, hence, would contradict the prose frame, using images that have "heady" senses (such as seeing, thinking, speaking, or decapitation) to describe its themes and not images proper to the feet like the "wondering" present in the prose frame's pun on the word "error."

As Kim Zarins has noted in respect to Book 1's depiction of the Peasant Revolt, this play between what Gower says and how he says it is essential to how the *Vox* guides its reader.<sup>189</sup> In Book 7, the situation is the same. Reading the *Vox*'s use of Nebuchadnezzar without this slippage makes the summary fail in its most basic task of literally indicating what the poem will discuss. However, reading Gower's poem with attention to its physical textual cues reveals something else entirely. The summary not only tells us that the poem will speak about "clay and iron" feet but that will also indicate, or in-say, "fictilis et ferri pedes" 'clay and iron feet,' with "fictilis" meaning not only clay but also alluding to the Latin word "fingo, fingere" 'to fashion and to imagine.'

Writing is therefore a focus of the poem in itself and not as a representation of another meaning. And this is precisely what we get in the poetic play surrounding Nebuchadnezzar's image. Before the metaphor of the *Vox*'s verses could be read as presenting Gower's message, precisely at the physical beginning of poetic time, Book VII of the *Vox* "in-says" Nebuchadnezzar's vision, turning to the fashioned, iron feet in the page: the iron-gall inked, metric feet that slowly line the parchment and are only visible to a reader who encounters the poem by looking at it and not simply by hearing it.

---

<sup>189</sup> Kim Zarins, "From Head to Foot: Syllabic Play and Metamorphosis in Book I of Gower's *Vox Clamantis*," *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium*, ed. R.F. Yeager, *Studies in Medieval Culture*. 46. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2007) 155-156.

## 6. “To Daniel his drem he tolde”: Latin Play and English Directness

In presenting writing as temporal deferral, Gower’s *Vox* clearly echoes the arguments put forth by Jerome’s commentary and translation of the second chapter of *Daniel*. We would expect that, in rendering the episode into English, Gower’s *Confessio* would use similar strategies to convey meaning. Yet this is not the case:

Nabugodonosor slepte,  
A swevene him tok, the which he kepte  
Til on the morwe he was arise,  
For he therof was sore agrise.  
To Daniel his drem he tolde,  
And preide him faire that he wolde  
Arede what it tokne may,  
And seide, Abedde wher I lay,  
Me thoghte I syh upon a stage  
Wher stod a wonder strange ymage.<sup>190</sup>

Gower’s English re-telling of Nebuchadnezzar’s “visio” lacks the textual play that the episode generates in the *Vox* and in Jerome’s reading of *Daniel*. It not only refuses to foreshadow the dream’s contents by means of a detailed framing of events, but it also differs from the biblical account in that it has Nebuchadnezzar remember and orally recite his dream, “the which he kept,” to the prophet in exact detail of what “me thoghte I syh upon a stage.”

This subtle detail substantially changes the narrative’s meaning. It is the inability to “keep” a vision through a personal speech and the necessity of setting it down as physical writing that allows the *Vox* and the *Book of Daniel* to engage in poetic play. Both of these works use allusiveness and foreshadowing to frame what should be a straight-forward allegory into a self-reflection on the production of meaning. On the other hand, the *Confessio* immediately presents the dream as a “strange ymage,” but by having the king narrate his dream as he saw it, the poem does not make the understanding of the narrative’s meaning a question of concern.

---

<sup>190</sup> Gower *Confessio* Prologue.595-604

At first glance, this difference of focus may simply be due to the language of the *Confessio* versus that of the *Vox*. The *Confessio*'s changes to the story may reflect a direct, moral use of the biblical narrative for an English audience whereas the *Vox*, addressing clerical readers familiar with longer literary traditions, seems more closely to parallel biblical structures of signification and play.<sup>191</sup> We can see these differences in Latin versus English styles in comparing the diction of the Latin and English in frames to the Nebuchadnezzar episode:

Prosper et aduersus obliquo tramite versus  
 Immundus mundus decipit omne genus.  
 Mundus in euentu versatur ut alea casu,  
 Quam celer in ludis iactat auara manus.  
 Sicut ymago viri variantur tempora mundi,  
 Statque nichil firmum preter amare deum.

Fortunate and adverse, turning through its mazy trail  
 unclean, disordered world deceives every sort  
 The world is overturned in its outcomes as a die in a toss  
 as quickly as the covetous hand throws at the games  
 Like an image of man do the ages of the world vary  
 and nothing besides the love of God stands firm.<sup>192</sup>

The Latin, echoing the play within the *Vox*, frames Nebuchadnezzar's dream as a vision of the random movement of history, and it uses the "alea casu" 'toss of a die' motif meaningfully to compare the movement of history to the fixed hand of God's love.

In contrast, the adjacent English introduction carries no such poetic overtones even as it frames Nebuchadnezzar's dream alongside similar themes of fortune, history, and providence:

The hye almyhti pourveance,  
 In whos eterne remembrance  
 Fro ferst was every thing present  
 He hath his prophecie sent,  
 In such a wise as thou schalt hierre,  
 Hou that this schal torne and wende.  
 Til it befall to his ende;  
 Whereof the tale telle I schal,  
 In which it is betokned al.<sup>193</sup>

<sup>191</sup> See Coleman "Lay" 234-235 and R.F. Yeager, "'Oure englisshe' and Everyone's Latin: The Fasciculus Morum and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," *South Atlantic Review*, 46.4 (Nov., 1981): 44.

<sup>192</sup> Gower *Confessio* Prologue.v, trans. Andrew Galloway.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.* 1.588-594.

Compared to the Latin frame, the English way of introducing seems to have no subtle meanings or motifs least of all to describe the “almyhti pourveance” which it takes as the guiding principle of history portrayed in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Although the English echoes the Latin’s themes, it does so in such an explicit and overt manner as to imply that the difference in style—from hard Latin to simple English—really has something to do with how Gower uses his language for the different goals of his audience.

Nevertheless, in treating similar themes (such as providence and history), the complexity of the Latin and the simplicity of the English cause each introduction to portray an entirely different message and stance towards the craft of writing in general, particularly in comparison to the prose Latin summary of the episode:

Hic in prologo tractat de Statua illa, quam Rex Nabugodonosor viderat in sompnis, cuius caput aureum, pectus argenteum, venter eneus, tibie ferree pedum vero quedam pars ferrea, quedam fictilis videbatur, sub qua membrorum diuersitate *secundum Danielis exposicionem huius mundi variatio figurabatur*.

Here in the Prologue he discourses about the Statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had seen in dreams, whose head was gold, chest silver, stomach brass, legs iron, but whose feet were some part iron, some part clay, through which diversity of members, *according to Daniel’s exposition the variation of this world is figured* [My emphasis].<sup>194</sup>

The Latin prose summary uses very allusive diction that almost foreshadows the Latin verse frame in a way that mimics how the *Vox* presents Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, and it does so to convey an entirely different idea of the passage of history than what the English presents.

Following the focus of the Latin verses on “changeability” and “representation,” it encapsulates the episode as: “*secundum Danielis exposicionem huius mundi variatio figurabatur*” ‘the changeability of this world is represented according to the exposition of Daniel.’ “Variatio,” as constant change and difference, parallels the Latin verse frame which, in understanding time as a “casu” a variable ‘throw,’ hearkens to the idea of history as “*variatio mundi*” ‘variation of

---

<sup>194</sup> Gower *Confessio* 1.591. Latin Marginalia, trans. Andrew Galloway.

the world' through the figuration of metaphoric play. In contrast, the English says something entirely different seeing history as fixed by the providence of God's mind for whom "fro ferst was every thing present."

The *Confessio*'s Latin frame is an antithetical in comparison to both the presentation and interpretation of the Nebuchadnezzar episode found in the English text. In terms of of presentation, the level of allusive word interchange between the Latin prose summary and Latin verse frame are not paralleled by the English. Even a seeming straightforward phrase like "secundum Danielis" operates doubly as 'according to Daniel' and 'second of Daniel' to simultaneously show how the Latin verse lines poetically present the world as "variatio" in its "second" or "double" rhetorical techniques, like hemistiches, dual rhyming, and puns. The first two lines, "Prosper et aduersus obliquo tramite versus/ Immundus mundus decipit omne genus" 'Fortunate and adverse, turning through its mazy trail/ Unclean, disordered [un-worldly] world deceives every sort,' neatly encapsulate the idea of random variation as an inevitable part of temporality through a double structure. The first two hemistiches rhyme doubly as they clarify Daniel's prophecy: the world's material adversity ("aduersus/mundus") comes from its turning nature ("versus/genus").

This mirroring of Latin summary in the Latin verses also has explicit interpretive repercussions which are absent in the English. In explicitly thematizing Nebuchadnezzar's dream as the reflection of "variatio" 'change,' the Latin summary enacts an "aduersus" 'ante-turning' of the Latinate "versus" 'turns/verses' in which one form of narrative exposition turns against itself. The explicitness of the prose's tone mirrors the implicitness of the verses' syntax and so literally presents itself as ad-versity, as an anti-verse. Further, the Latin verses describe a reversible illusion by none other than a "double play" of language: "immundus mundus decepit omne

genus” ‘unclean, disordered world deceives every origin.’ What ‘deceives every origin’ is not only an “*immundus mundus*” ‘filthy world’ but also an “*in-mundus*” ‘un-worldly world.’ According to the verse frame, the world in being “*versus*” ‘turning/versified’ is not itself a world but only a type of semantic play which vanishes into itself. Through this play, the prose summary’s theme of “*variatio*” is perversely reflected because an “*adversus versus*” ‘ad-verse verse’ conveys a fixed truth: that the world is unreal.

The Latin verses show a world that deceives in the fullest sense of the word: it “*decipit*” ‘falsifies,’ and it “*de-cepit*” ‘takes-from’ or departs without having a basis on a stable meaning, as absolute simulation. This syntax presents a world far more complicated than the “*strange ymage*” which Nebuchadnezzar sees on a stage in the English re-telling of the dream. The world of the Latin verses—a mirror image of an image or a reflection of a representation—literally has its origin taken from it so that it stands as an absolute simulacrum. In the Latin, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream does not merely present a strange or pervert way of looking at an original divine order. Rather, it shows how time is itself a simulacrum that determines any “*eventu*” ‘event’ as an “*alea casu*” ‘another fall’ from nature to be sure but also ‘another metric fall’ of poetic time and meter.

The link of writing to temporal unfolding is highlighted through the textual play that follows the description of an un-worldly world: “*mundus in euentu versatur ut alea casu*” ‘the world is overturned/is versed in its event/coming-from as a die in a toss/in a fall.’ The rhyming of “*eventu*” ‘event’ with “*casu*” ‘fall’ makes the coming of history itself (the “*e-ventu*” ‘coming-from’) a versifying of the world through poetic metaphoric play. By personifying time as the “*avara manus*” ‘greedy hand’ of the die player, who casts his hand at the fall of a dice for pay,

the verse literally ties reality to the versification of a poet whose hand shows the “casus mundi” ‘the fall of the world’ for the rewards of a patron.

With this overarching image of the poet as a dice player, the *Confessio*’s Latin verse and prose show an idea of poetic play that is absolutely absent in the English presentation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream but that clearly has its sources in the *Vox* and Jerome’s commentary on *Daniel*. For like the *Vox*, the Latin frame to the *Confessio* negates the world’s own reality not simply by theorizing its variation as dirtiness but by likening historical temporality to the act of writing and narration—theorizing the world’s variation as un-worldly, as unreal. In describing time as ludic (“quam celer in ludis iactat auara manus” ‘as quickly as the greedy hand throws at game’), the Latin ties history to a continuous play of meaning. Whereas the English tersely makes God the center piece of history, the Latin makes writing itself a centerpiece of its satire of history, perversely describing history as an “ymago viri” ‘image of man’ who is himself an “ymago dei” ‘image of God.’

#### 7. “Cristes word may noght be fable”: Writing without Meaning

As Wim Lindeboom and R.F. Yeager have argued separately, the difference between the English and Latin structures of the *Confessio* seems to imply that the Latin text has mostly writerly and readerly qualities while the English is mostly written for “listeners rather than readers.”<sup>195</sup> This argument assumes that there exists a dialogic relationship between Latin frame and English text which would be directly addressed by the English and implicitly by the Latin. Yet as we have seen, even when the English and Latin address the same themes, they do not seem to speak to one another as much as they seem to address a difference between meaning and its presentation. This relationship of the *Confessio*’s “hard” Latin and “simple” English is one

---

<sup>195</sup> See Lindeboom 326 and Yeager “English” 258.

which, as Patrick Gallacher notes, seems to present the “perennial human desire for perfect verbal communication and the equally persistent realization of its impossibility.”<sup>196</sup>

Therefore, we cannot assign with any certainty the role of “perfect verbal communication” or of its “impossibility” to the interplay between the languages. The Latin apparatus to the *Confessio* does not do away with the idea of effective communication—even if it does complicate matters by not always privileging the seemingly terse narration of the English. Likewise, we cannot surmise that the terse qualities of the English verse—even when they represent simple ideas—reflect a direct presentation of a “moral” theme; for if they did, we would expect them to mimic at least what the Latin summaries directly say about the text, which they do not. This radical disjunction between English and Latin parts of the *Confessio* makes it impossible for us to say alongside Derek Pearsall that, in the dialogue between Latin frame and English verses, Gower’s “moral imagination...operates in an artistically integrated manner” or that Gower’s “meaning *is* the sense” of his writing.<sup>197</sup>

For example, in concluding Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the English narrative not only makes a different argument from its Latin frame but almost argues against even needing such a poetic, allusive way by which to frame a biblical story:

For Crist Himself maketh knowleching  
That no man may togedre serve  
God and the world, bot if he swerve  
Froward that on and stonde unstable;  
And Cristes word may noght be fable.  
The thing so open is at ye.  
It nedeth noght to specefie  
Or speke oght more in this matiere.<sup>198</sup>

---

<sup>196</sup> Patrick Gallacher, *Love, the Word, and Mercury: A reading of John Gower’s Confessio Amantis*, (Abuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975) 25.

<sup>197</sup> Derek Pearsall, “Gower’s Narrative Art,” *PMLA*, 81.7 (December, 1966): 477, 475.

<sup>198</sup> Gower *Confessio* Prologue.860-867.

The English is painfully clear: the ups and downs of historical time, as presented by the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, show that man cannot simultaneously serve an unchanging God and a changing world. Consequently, if one is to portray truth in this world, for example Christ's word, such a truth "may nocht be fable." There is no middle way between representing reality directly and fabling it through poetic play because poetic play introduces the instability of illusion. What the English concludes from Nebuchadnezzar's dream is a rejection of any form of thematic reflection, which in needing interpretation and glossing, must be immediately interpreted by the first glance of an "ye" 'eye.'

The conclusion to Nebuchadnezzar's vision in the Prologue, hence, prevents a reader from understanding "an artistically integrated" vision from the *Confessio* because it criticizes the ability of the work to be interpreted. First, it says that both the marginal glossing and poetic play of the Latin frame is useless when dealing with things that have "truth." Further, it also berates the ability of Gower's English tales to portray truth to his listeners, as these, being surrounded by Latin marginalia, openly declare themselves as the type of tales that are not always open to the "ye" 'eye.' Gower presents the moral of Nebuchadnezzar's dream to be that "truth," like the providence of history, is open and clear. According to the English reading of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, anyone who seeks it must eschew all means of figures, exempla, verse frames, or even summaries as these only prove that what he reads is but a "fable."

The lack of artistic unification explains why the English *Confessio* has Nebuchadnezzar not only speak his dream but also remember it. Nebuchadnezzar knows his dream because, in the *Confessio*, "Cristes truth" is spoken directly and immediately so that any interpreter could perceive it immediately without inquiring too much into its allusions or figural significations. Thus, the English version of Nebuchadnezzar's dream has Daniel interpret the king's dream

immediately, without any revelation from God as if he gathered truth directly from the mouth of the king. This change to the biblical narrative inevitably prevents any artistic and poetic presentation of truth—any fable—from portraying a theme through temporal deferral, through allusion, textual play, puns, etc. It also directly undermines what Jerome sees (and what the *Vox* repeats) as the point of the dream, its temporal focus on the task of writing as it portrays a unified vision of time through “artistic” interpretation.

From this, we can rethink two common scholarly assumptions about the *Confessio*'s vernacular structure. The first assumption we can challenge is that Gower's poem means to express an exterior truth via a Latin “moral” frame. This is because if the Latin gloss—if it is indeed an explanation of what is going on in the poem—cannot direct a reader to the “truth” of the English poem. Given that the English explicitly presents the Latin's poetic play and explication as antithetical to its aims, we cannot think of the two languages as connecting a single authorial message via different means. Conversely, if the English needs a Latin frame to specify what it means, then it cannot provide a “truth” that would need Latin verses and prose summaries to “specify.” By saying that “Cristes word may noght be fable,” the *Confessio*'s language cannot convey meaning through a poetic gesture.

The second assumption we can revisit is that the *Confessio*'s use of Latin or English tailors one message towards different audiences—as if the inclusion of complex Latin phrases was meant to appeal to more “learned” listeners over lay, English-only readers. As is clear from the first lines of the Prologue, the English's text, although certainly more terse and direct than its Latin counterpart, uses just as much textual allusiveness and textual play to convey meaning. Conversely, as we saw by looking at Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the Latin frame does not always complicate or explicate the English text's message, but sometimes presents something entirely

different. Therefore, if there is some unifying principle between Latin frame and English content, we can only say that it comes across as a disjunctive, schizophrenic poetic project.

By reassessing these two scholarly positions, we may however reach one conclusion: the poem's use of Latin and English forms a radical disjunction between meaning and presentation that fulfills the idea that "Cristes word may noght be fable." In this formula, no poetic project can be "truthful" because the writing truth is an un-translatable act. This project does not deny truth but simply its ability to be represented or fabled via poetic play. In using glosses, marginalia, or even direct explanation to compliment its stories, the *Confessio* wishes to present two concurrent forms of aesthetic presentation without referencing an exterior "author function." As James Simpson astutely has noted, the *Confessio* "is effectively a representation of reading remembered," a work by which the conscious separation of meaning from artistic representation pushes the act of reading to reflect upon itself.<sup>199</sup>

#### 8. Nebuchadnezzar's Silence: Separating Authority from Writing

I think that the *Confessio*'s separation of meaning from writing helps explain why it was consistently reproduced, disseminated, and marketable with a seeming unified authorial guidance despite variant channels of scribal reproduction.<sup>200</sup> Gower's *Confessio* was consistently reproduced, with illuminations, Latin verses, prose summaries, colophons, etc., even as these reproductions did not come from one textual tradition, because it was *not* read as a solely English poem but as an authorial and perhaps non-English presentation of authority. Because it *refused* to translate Latin "truth" into vernacular presentation, the poem was understood as a replication of universal authority and so disseminated widely and also as variably as a text like the Bible or

---

<sup>199</sup> James Simpson, "Breaking the Vacuum: Ricardian and Henrician Ovidianism," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 29 (1999): 337.

<sup>200</sup> See M.B. Parkes, "Patterns of Scribal Activity and Revisions of the Text in Early Copies of Works by John Gower," *New Science out of Old Books: Manuscripts and Early Printed Books: Essays in Honour of A.I. Doyle*, eds. Richard Beadle and A.J. Piper (London: Scolar, 1995).

Gratian's *Decretals*. To put it bluntly, Gower's *Confessio* behaved like a Latin text in English habit. It presented "universal" truths by repeating authority of the bible, philosophers, and ancient poets without letting them be corrupted by the localized concerns of vernacular language.

This can be seen in how the *Confessio* returns to *Daniel* in the "Tale of Nebuchadnezzar's Madness." In framing this second and last turn to Nebuchadnezzar, the poem depicts both dream visions as personal fables of morality even as it admits that they are outside its larger thematic discussion on love:

Now herken a tale that is soth:  
Thogh it be noght of loves kinde  
A gret ensample thou schalt finde  
This veine gloire for to fle  
Which is so full of vainité  
Ther was a king that mochel myhte  
Which Nabugodonosor hihte  
Of whom that I spake hier tofore  
Yit in the Bible his name is bore. [My emphasis]<sup>201</sup>

Through its frame, this tale of "vainité" ties the two times Nebuchadnezzar's dreams are mentioned in the *Confessio* as a single narrative even though they do not represent its general focus on "loves kinde." Genius—who is teaching the Lover about pride—explicitly references the Prologue's first exposition of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as his own despite the story's tangential quality to the poem's central subject matter and "noght of loves kinde" and retroactively unites both narratives in *Daniel* as a larger narration which he personally has presented "hier tofore."

By starting from the first person, Genius parallels the representation of Nebuchadnezzar in the fourth chapter of *Daniel* which inserts a personal narration as part of the biblical exposition of the king's second dream: "ego Nabuchodonosor quietus eram in domo mea et florens in palatio meo" "I Nebuchadnezzar was quiet in my house and flourishing in my

---

<sup>201</sup> Gower *Confessio* 1.2773-2789.

palace.’<sup>202</sup> Unlike the first of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams which valorized the ambiguity of writing, the biblical account of this second dream valorizes personal, spoken speech to such a degree that, according to Jerome, the biblical “ego” ‘I’ shows a literal (and perhaps dictated) epistle, “inserted in the volume of the prophet, in order that the book might not afterwards be thought to have been manufactured by some other author, as the accuser [Porphyry] falsely asserts, but the product of Daniel himself.”<sup>203</sup> In other words, it is the presence of Nebuchadnezzar’s voice in the narrative that makes the biblical text true.

Unlike his previous framing of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of time in which the figural and allusive connotations of the story gave it its credibility, Jerome takes an unequivocal stance because the story itself is direct. And in this, he is supported by the narrative itself. The fourth chapter of *Daniel* describes how the king dreams of a tree and hears a voice which declares that, for its pride, the tree will be hewn down and its “manly” heart replaced with a beastly soul. The voice declares that the punishment will continue until such a time in which this manly tree recognizes the power of the true God.

Expectedly, Nebuchadnezzar awakes terrified, but this time he manages to remember his dream and narrate it directly to his chief interpreter, Daniel. In contradistinction to his first interpretation of the king’s dream, the Jewish prophet does not wait to ask God for the answer in a nightly visitation, but immediately interprets it: if the king continues to be proud, he will be humbled and made to act like a beast. Of course, Nebuchadnezzar does not mend his ways, and as a result, his humanly mind leaves him. He begins to eat grass like a beast; his hair grows like the feathers of an eagle, and his nails lengthen so that they look like claws. After seven years of

---

<sup>202</sup> Dan. 4:1.

<sup>203</sup> Jerome *Commentary on Daniel* 46.

punishment, Nebuchadnezzar's human mind returns; he recognizes his fault, and after seeking repentance, God restores his kingdom.<sup>204</sup>

Because of this narrative simplicity, Jerome refuses to read this "visio" 'dream' through the allusive lenses that colored his exposition of Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, and even claims that any allegorical readings of the dream are suspect:

*The narrative is clear indeed and requires but little interpretation.* Because he displeased God, Nebuchadnezzar was turned into a madman... But there are some who claim to understand by the figure of Nebuchadnezzar the hostile power which the Lord speaks of in the Gospel, saying: "I beheld Satan falling from heaven like lightning."... These authorities assert that it was absolutely impossible for a man who was reared in luxury to subsist on hay for seven years and to dwell among wild beasts for seven years without being at all mangled by them. Also they ask how the imperial authority could have been kept waiting for a mere madman, and how so mighty a kingdom could have gone without a king for so long a period... And so they pose all of these questions and offer as their own reply the proposition that since the episode does not stand up as genuine history, the figure of Nebuchadnezzar represents the devil. *To this position we make not the slightest concession; otherwise everything we read in Scripture may appear to be imperfect representations and mere fables.* For once men have lost their reason, who would not perceive them to lead their existence like brutish animals in the open fields and forest regions? And to pass over all other considerations, *since Greek and Roman history offer episodes far more incredible, such as Scylla and the Chimaera, the Hydra and the Centaurs, and the birds and wild beasts and flowers and trees, the stars and the stones into which men are related to have been transformed, what is so remarkable about the execution of such a divine judgment as this for the manifestation of God's power and the humbling of the pride of kings?* [My emphasis]<sup>205</sup>

In a strong departure from the figural interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, Jerome's commentary does not allot similar allegorical and mystical portrayal to this passage in *Daniel*. It instead takes refuge in the stylistic simplicity of the narrative, and in defending the literalness of Nebuchadnezzar's experience, the commentary refuses to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream as even a metaphor of history or an allegory of spiritual events.

Apparently even direct biblical narratives may produce obscure, figural readings, and so Jerome uses his commentary as a way to prevent scripture from sounding like a fable in the hands of allegorical interpreters. Jerome's position suddenly switches from a figural to a literal portrayal of dreams. He even repeats Gower's position in the *Confessio*, "Cristes word may

---

<sup>204</sup> Dan. 4.

<sup>205</sup> Jerome *Commentary on Daniel* 46.

nought be fable,” arguing that if everything in the Bible is to be a play of meaning, biblical truth risks being a play of mere representations or, as he calls them, fables. This position seems strangely arbitrary for someone who, just two chapters before, has theorized God’s providence as a type of allusive story. Jerome, siding away from his previous commentary, says that some types of writing do not need to be glossed because they are not allusive, and yet he provides no distinguishing characteristics for his choice to gloss one of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams as a prophecy and another one as a real event. Even more, his commentary seems to contradict itself as it appeals to fables, which he distinguishes from biblical truth, for defense of this miracle that a king may live so long on just hay and grass and without being missed by his peers. Turning to classical tradition, Jerome argues that if unexplainable transformations occur so much in fables, a king’s mere change into madness and survival in the wilderness—even if it sounds outside the realm of logical plausibility—should not be grounds to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream nor his narrative as an allegory.

Despite this sudden defense of literal reading, there is a consistency to Jerome’s hermeneutics across each of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams. In both, Jerome claims meaning is not subject to personal interpretation of “sermo” ‘speech’ because *the direct representation of truth is a type of impossibility*. In Nebuchadnezzar’s first vision, Jerome argues that representation occurs outside the flow of spoken “sermo” ‘speech’ and so is unable to present meaning directly except through the deferral of a-personal writing. In his second vision, Jerome claims that speech can represent something directly when it represents a paradox or miracle—for example that a king may be absent for seven years and then return to the throne. For Jerome, speech represents meaning directly *only* when it represents miracles because speech, in its immediacy and force, is itself miraculous.

Jerome's position seems like a converse way of saying "Cristes word may nocht be fable"—that meaning, because of its mystical power and immediate presentation of truth, may not be represented directly by common understanding. Because it resembles what the Prologue describes as an explicit character of truth, we would expect Gower's presentation of Nebuchadnezzar's madness to mimic Jerome's position and so repeat a biblical story that emphasizes the inability of truth to be fabled. And to some extent, we get just that: Gower almost transliterates the biblical story, except for one detail. Gower has the king not just to act *like* a wild beast in punishment, but to *turn* into one, particularly into an ox:

And thus was he from his kingdom  
Into the wilde forest drawe,  
Wher that the myhti Goddes lawe  
Thurgh His pouer dede him transforme  
From man into bestes forme.  
And lich an oxe under the fot  
He graseth, as he nedes mot,  
To geten him his lives fode.<sup>206</sup>

Gower uses very subtle diction to portray the change from king to ox. Instead of using the Middle English "transmuwe," a cognate to the Jerome's use of "mutare" to describe the change in Nebuchadnezzar's image, he uses the word "transforme," a favorite of his when rendering Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into English.<sup>207</sup> True, "transforme" has only a slightly stronger meaning of change than "transmuwe" in Middle English and the choice may seem but an accommodation of poetic meter, but Nebuchadnezzar's transformation goes beyond word choice—it replies directly to Jerome's gloss by making the Bible sound like an Ovidean moral fables or story, in which a character is transformed physically into an unnatural beast to portray a moral.

To see the difference the term "transforme" makes, we should compare the *Confessio*'s presentation of Nebuchadnezzar's madness to that of Gower's French *Mirour de L'Omme*:

---

<sup>206</sup> Gower *Confessio* 1.2968-2976.

<sup>207</sup> Yeager *John Gower's Poetic* 115-118.

Du Nabugod ce poet om lire,  
 Qui se vantoit jadyz ensi  
 Qu'il Babiloyne ot establi  
 En gloire de son halt empire:  
 Mais ainz qu'il pot au plain suffire  
 Son grant orguil vanter et dire,  
 Soudainment tout s'esvany,  
 Et *transmua* par le dieu ire  
*Sa forme d'omme en beste pire*  
 Sept auns, ainz qu'il en ot mercy.

Of Nebuchadnezzar one can read  
 That he often was vainglorious of himself  
 Because he had established Babylon  
 In glory of his high empire:  
 But before that he could plainly satisfy  
 His great pride to boast and say,  
 Suddenly everything vanished  
 And *transmuted*, through God's ire,  
*Was his form of man into a low beast*  
 Seven years, until God had mercy on him [My emphasis].<sup>208</sup>

In contradistinction to the *Confessio*, Gower's *Mirour de L'Omme* uses the French cognate "transmua" 'transmuted' (from "transmuer" 'to transmute') for Jerome's "transmutare" and not its synonym "transformer" 'to transform,' and also follows the Bible in not specifying what Nebuchadnezzar's beastly "forme" could be. Even more, the *Mirour* parallels Jerome's moral frame of the episode by contextualizing the episode alongside other biblical tales against vanity—like those of Lucifer and Simon Magus—and hence toning down the Ovidean likenesses and ambiguities which such a tale of transformation could introduce.

Yet Gower's *Confessio* takes an ambiguous Ovidean (and not decidedly biblical) turn in portraying the contrition of a beastly and not of a human Nebuchadnezzar:

And so thenkende he gan doun bowe,  
 And thogh him lacke vois and speche,  
 He gan up with his feet areche,  
 And wailende in his bestly stevene  
 He kneleth in his wise and braieth  
 To seche merci and assaieth  
 His God, which made him nothing strange,  
 Whan that he sih his pride change.<sup>209</sup>

<sup>208</sup> John Gower, "Mirour de l'Omme," *The Complete Works of John Gower: The French Works*, Vol. 4, Ed. G.C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899) 1885-1897.

<sup>209</sup> Gower *Confessio* 1.3022-3030.

By subtly interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's mutation as a transformation, Gower completely changes the tone of the passage. Unlike Jerome's reading, he has Nebuchadnezzar look up to heaven not because he experiences contrition but because, in accord to Christian ritual, he needs to express his repentance openly—and as a beast, he can only do so by raising himself up “with his feet areche.” Instead of raising his hands up to pray, Nebuchadnezzar must raise his feet up to bray. This comical image of a praying ox turns the story into a parody of repentance. It drains the whole episode from the moral weight that Jerome seeks to derive from it, or at best, it retains the moral of tale in the guise of irony—at least from God's perspective, whose hand “made [Nebuchadnezzar] nothing strange.” God now listens “not making strange” ‘not turning askance from’ the king which, through his might, he once “strangely” turned into a braying ox.

Nebuchadnezzar's metamorphosis into an actual ox, which brays and not prays for forgiveness, proves to be a key departure from Jerome's presentation of the biblical story. Jerome's argument that Nebuchadnezzar's change is not simply an Ovidian fable—and hence needs no metaphoric interpretation—rests on the evidence of the human volition required by the king in seeking divine grace and engaging in contrition. According to Jerome, “had [Nebuchadnezzar] not raised his eyes towards heaven, he would not have regained his former intelligence. Moreover, when [Daniel] says that his intelligence returned to him, he shows that [Nebuchadnezzar] had lost *not his outward appearance but only his mind* [My emphasis].”<sup>210</sup> Jerome inserts this gloss because it proves the difference between biblical miracle and mythical narrative: Nebuchadnezzar's pious repentance proves that God granted salvation to a repentant sinner and did not, like an Ovidian fable, change a man into a beast merely for entertainment.

---

<sup>210</sup> Jerome *Commentary on Daniel* 53.

From this perspective, the “Tale of Nebuchadnezzar’s Punishment” is neither a way to present a fixed moral view nor an explication of Genius or the Lover’s psychic state.<sup>211</sup> Rather than emphasize a thematic element, Gower, as Winthrop Wetherbee has argued, mimics Ovid’s representation of Io in Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment to foreground the complex and evanescent relationship of figural presentation to the moral authority truth.<sup>212</sup> In so doing, Gower’s approach closely dialogues with the medieval concern that portraying Nebuchadnezzar’s change as a change in physical appearance dangerously makes the biblical stories sound like mythic fables. This is why Christian commentary followed Jerome in portraying *Daniel*’s description of Nebuchadnezzar’s change as purely figural, because it retained the moral aspect of the narrative. As Peter Comester comments on the passage in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* in the tenth century:

From these it appears, as Epiphanius confirms, that [Nebuchadnezzar] did not suffer a physical transformation, but lost his reason... and was given herbs, which are suitable for human consumption. It seemed to him that he was an ox in front and a lion behind, this being a mystery concerning tyrants that at first they are given to pleasures and, being stubborn, they are subjected [as an ox] to the yoke of Belial; indeed, in the end they kill, destroy and oppress [as a lion].<sup>213</sup>

Comester’s commentary places such an emphasis on the figurality and not reality of Nebuchadnezzar’s transformation because he, like Jerome, believes this “mystery” to have moral weight applicable to everyday reality and not simply fabulous likenesses to myth meant to entertain while it teaches us a biblical truth.

---

<sup>211</sup> For scholarly interpretations of the first view, see Peck “John Gower;” Claire Banchich, “Holy Fear and Poetics,” *On John Gower Essays at the Millennium*, ed. R.F. Yeager (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007) 204; J. Allan Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplarity: Narrative in Chaucer and Gower* (Cambridge: Brewer Press, 2004) 69; and Deanne Williams, “Gower’s Monster,” *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages*, eds. Ananya Jahanra Kabir and Deanne Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 133. For examples of the second view, see Penelope Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar’s Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) 89; Christopher Ricks, “Metamorphosis in Other Words,” *Gower’s Confessio Amantis: Responses And Reassessments*, ed. A.J. Minnis (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983) 32; Gallacher 51-52; and Nicholson 146-147.

<sup>212</sup> Wetherbee “Genius” 257-258.

<sup>213</sup> Qtd. in Anat Tcherikover, “The Fall of Nebuchadnezzar in Romanesque Sculpture (Airvault, Moissac, Bourg-Argental, Foussais),” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 49 (1984): 296.

It is in the moral uncertainty of the narrative that Gower's version of the story proves to be a powerful answer to this traditional reading. The moral which Genius, in his role as a Confessor, draws from this fable is simple yet sufficiently vague to be emptied of meaning: "Forthi, my sone, tak good hiede/So for to lede thi manhiede,/That thou ne be nocht lich a beste."<sup>214</sup> In presenting a tale of a real and not of a figural change, Genius's interpretation only complicates what appears to be a simple story. His simple moral seems to draw more questions than answers about what this tale has to say about "vanité": Does the tale describe "vanité" as beastly? If so, why would Nebuchadnezzar have pride in the shape of a man and inner humility like a braying beast? Moreover, how would being changed into a "beste" be any punishment for a "manhiede" that was lost and forgotten by his "vanité"? Would not Nebuchadnezzar's punishment be simply an expression of his inner nature, and if this was the case, how could his nature change through contrition? How is it possible for a beastly man to reach human contrition? Do beasts think and feel like men? Or if somehow Nebuchadnezzar's human mind stayed, why did he have to bray to gain God's favor? Is this not a tale of "manhiede" in an inner sense, in avoiding the sin of "vanité"? Was it not a beastly braying and not a man-like inner repentance that made God be nothing "strange" to Nebuchadnezzar's plea of forgiveness?

In direct response to Jerome, Genius's moral highlights the complications of representing truth even through fictitious and miraculous occurrences. Gower conceives of literary language—as a paradox or as an interpretation of a paradoxical event—as always necessitating interpretations and so always allowing "Cristes truth" to be fabled and be the source of endless questions, complications, and further commentary. Just as writing can prevent any one single authority from closing a narrative's meaning, it also allows *all* interpretations to be authorial even in "straight-forward" narratives.

---

<sup>214</sup> Gower *Confessio* 1.3043-3045.

For Jerome, God’s truth, authorial truth, is a written truth—deferred from present “sermo” ‘speech’ and made to inhabit a universal system of signs for the benefit of all believers. For the *Confessio*, God’s truth cannot be deferred—as its universality is compromised by the different readings that *all* believers bring to it. “Cristes word may noght be fabled” does not mean that Gower sought to situate “truth” for the individual interpretation of a reader as J. Allan Mitchell has recently suggested.<sup>215</sup> Rather, it means that he understood how any linguistic presentation of truth—even one which like Jerome emphasizes the paradoxical state of all communication—could corrupt its authority.

### 9. Nebuchadnezzar “Transmudado”: Authority *as* another Language

To keep the authority of truth inviolate by readerly interpretations, the *Confessio* sought ways to distance the idea of “truth” from its corruption by everyday language. The Portuguese translation of Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment particularly helps us understand how in seeking to keep “meaning” separate from presentation, Gower succeeded in presenting himself as a type of authority. At the end of the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s madness, the Portuguese translation presents no moral impasse like the English, but, as if it were wishing to follow Jerome’s advice, it reads Gower’s story as a straight-forward warning against pride:

Orafi lho eu te hej mostrado em este enxemplo omal que uem ao que he mal acostumado per ssoberva contra a lei de deus, ao qual nehúu po de seer parçeiro. Porem para bem mentes ao rregimiento de ty medes que nom seias feito semelhante aa besta.

Now son, I have shown you in this example the evil that comes to them who have badly been accustomed, through pride, against God’s law from which no one can be parted. Because of this, pay close attention to your own regiment so that you would not be made similar to a beast.<sup>216</sup>

---

<sup>215</sup> Mitchell 14-15.

<sup>216</sup> Qtd. in Manuela Faccon, *La Fortuna de la Confessio Amantis en la Península Ibérica: Estudio Comparativo de las Traducciones y Edición del MS. Madrid, Real Biblioteca, II-3008 (Prólogo, I, II, III, IV Libros)*,” Diss. (Università degli studi di Verona, Universidad de Zaragoza, 2007) Print 445, Lines 265-270. I reference the Portuguese *O Amante* by page and line number within Faccon’s dissertation.

The difference between the English literary ambiguity and the Portuguese's moral exactitude is seen in their word choice. Although the Portuguese commonly uses "como," 'like' or 'as,' to translate the Middle English "lich," it uses "semelhante" 'similar' to translate "lich a beast."

This choice may seem arbitrary (and perhaps simply synonymous) until we compare the Portuguese to Jerome's Latin description of Nebuchadnezzar's change:

Eadem hora sermo completus est super Nabuchodonosor, et ex hominibus abiectus est, et foenum *ut* bos comedit, et rore caeli corpus eius infectum est: donec capilli eius in *similitudinem* aquilarum crescerent, et unguis eius quasi avium.

In that same time, the speech was fulfilled over Nebuchadnezzar, and he was thrown from men, and *as* an ox he ate grass, and with the dew of heaven was dyed: until his hairs grew in *similitude* of the eagles, and his nails *as if they were* of birds [My emphasis].<sup>217</sup>

Jerome's translation of the episode goes to extra pains to insert indirect speech and comparison to back up his claim that Nebuchadnezzar did not really transform from human into a beast, but that his human actions were wild and unkempt *like* a beast. As he comments, "[Daniel] shows that [the king] had lost not his outward appearance but only his mind."<sup>218</sup>

In rendering, "lich" as "similitudinem" the Portuguese translation restores Jerome's reading and it appears to reconcile Jerome's position with Gower's story. By saying that the king's actions operate "contra a lei de deus" 'against God's law,' the Portuguese translation replicates Jerome's clear conclusion that the narrative is clear indeed and requires but little interpretation. Because he displeased God, Nebuchadnezzar was turned into a madman. In the Portuguese, Genius tells the reader specifically "porem para bem mentes ao rregimiento de ty medes que nom seias feito semelhante aa besta" 'because of this, pay close attention to your own regiment so that *you would not be made similar* to a beast' where as in the English, he has a more ambiguous moral to impart, "Forthi, my sone, tak good hiede/So for to lede thi

---

<sup>217</sup> Dan. 4:30.

<sup>218</sup> Jerome *Commentary on Daniel* 53.

manhiede,/That thou ne be nocht lich a beste” ‘For this my son, listen well so to lead your manhood/self that *you do not be [become or act] like a beast.*’

In fact, the Portuguese translation does away with all of the ambiguities presented by the moral of the English tale. First, Nebuchadnezzar’s change no longer mimics an Ovidian loss of “manhiede” but the disastrous result of stepping outside God’s law. Second, there is no longer a danger to thinking that the king’s contrition is null due to the king’s beastly state. Because the Portuguese translation explicitly links beastliness to sinfulness, Nebuchadnezzar’s contrition represents a human state even if he behaves in the likeness, the similitude, of a beast. Lastly, the Portuguese renders Genius’s ambiguous warning to guard “manhiede” so as to not “be lich a beast” as “feito semelhante aa bestia” ‘made into the likeness of a beast,’ suggesting that pride and not humility is what the story links to beastliness. If one breaks God’s law from which “nehũu po de seer parçeiro” ‘no one can be parted,’ then one should expect to receive a punishment *outside* a common humanity—that is, in the similitude of a beast.

Further, the Portuguese’s return to a more direct moral way to explicate the tale explains why it omits the main change Gower contributes to this biblical story: the imagistic and comical picture of Nebuchadnezzar’s braying repentance, which is translated this way:

E pensando esto cahiu em chãao e pero que lhe mingou a falla, alçou as mãos ao alto em sua bestial maneira e fez seu planto ataa os çeeos. E em su oraçom devotamente demandave senpre merçee ficando em giolhos o melhor que podia.

And thinking this, [the king] fell on the ground, and because speech failed him, he raised his hands above in his beastly form/ability, and he made his plaint/cry towards the heavens, and in his prayer, he devoutly asked always mercy supporting himself in his knees the best that he could.<sup>219</sup>

The abrupt mis-translation of Nebuchadnezzar’s repentance is a result of translating “lich” as “semelhança” ‘similitude’ and not as “commo.” Since the king’s beastly actions come from his

---

<sup>219</sup> Faccon 445, Lines 246-250.

acting in likeness or similitude to a beast and not because his shape is *as* a beast in nature, any mention of his braying and beastly prayer is unnecessary.

The Portuguese translation turns Gower's tale from a parody of moral fables into a direct presentation of morality, and it excises the image of a braying king, lest his contrition be thought of as inhuman or worse as purely comical. Thus in the Portuguese, Nebuchadnezzar does not repent by loudly "wailende" 'wailing' in his beastly voice. Rather very politely, in his "bestial maneira" 'beastly ability,' he raises his "mãos" 'hands' and not clawed feet while he offers "su oraçom" 'his prayer' and "seu planto" 'his complaint' to heaven.

Yet, even in rendering Gower's story as morally direct as its biblical source, the Portuguese translation retains a trace of his take on the Nebuchadnezzar episode if only in slight logical inconsistencies. For example, the Portuguese translates "cahiu em chãao *pero que* lhe minguo a falla, alçou as mãos" 'he fell on the ground *but because* he lacked speech, he raised his hands' [my emphasis] from the English "he gan doun bowe,/And thogh him lacke vois and speche" 'he began to bow/although he lacked voice and speech.' By introducing contrast of kneeling and voice, the English original shows an implied cause and effect. The king is a beast, and, being unable to speak, he must raise his hands to show an outward confession of contrition. In the Portuguese, however, a reader is simply left to wonder why the king lacks speech and why this absence is tied to his praying or what his silence has to do with his kneeling position.

Almost anticipating a reader's questions over its depiction of Nebuchadnezzar's prayer, the Portuguese renders the English description of Nebuchadnezzar's kneeling, "he kneleth in his wise" as "o melhor que podia" 'the best that he could.' The Portuguese suggests that there is a natural awkwardness to Nebuchadnezzar's ability to kneel that explains the extended physical description of the king's kneeling. Of course, the English tells us that the king has a hard time

kneeling simply because he *is* an ox. This is an unacceptable position to the Portuguese text which does not emphasize anything special about Nebuchadnezzar's physical form, and so it must translate the Middle English "wise" 'form' as "maneira" colloquially 'ability' but literally 'form,' to in a sense keep Gower's diction but to accommodate it to a more biblical position.

Why does the Portuguese choose to present Gower's poem this way? Why does it go to such length to erase Gower's rather amusing take on a biblical narrative? After all, the Portuguese translation has been described as "verbo pro verbum" 'word for word' if not always "sensus pro sensum" 'sense for sense,' and so it seems faithfully to reproduce Gower's text save for the deviations introduced by cultural, linguistic, or erroneous interventions.<sup>220</sup> Portraying Nebuchadnezzar as acting like a beast but not literally being one is more than a cultural change: it is direct vindication of the biblical text and hermeneutic tradition which the *Confessio* parodies. We could argue that somehow the Portuguese translator was both having a hard time with the English and trying to adapt this tale for his audience's cultural needs. However, I believe there is a simpler explanation: the Portuguese intentionally manipulated Gower's diction to portray a different meaning from the story altogether. In other words, the translator not only erroneously rendered a text in a different language, but he also wished to *show* that he had altered it from its original.

The major clue for this interpretation is given precisely at the narrative point in which both Jerome and Gower stress their differing takes on the king's transformation. I quote the *Vulgate*, the English *Confessio*, and Portuguese translation together:

Cumque sermo adhuc esset in ore regis, vox de caelo ruit: Tibi dicitur Nabuchodonosor rex: Regnum tuum *transibit* a te, et ab hominibus eiicient te, et cum bestiis et feris erit habitatio tua: *foenum quasi bos comedes*, et septem tempora mutabuntur super te, donec scias quod dominetur Excelsus in regno hominum, et cuicumque voluerit, det illud.

---

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. 77.

While speech was still in the mouth of the king, a voice from heaven came down: To you it was said Nebuchadnezzar king: the rule will be taken from you, and from men, they will throw you, and with the beasts and wild things will be your habitation: *you will eat grass as if you were an ox*, and seven ages will change over you, until you know that the Highest rules in the kingdom of men, and to whomever he wishes, he gives it [My emphasis].<sup>221</sup>

Into the wilde forest drawe,/Wher that the myhti Goddes lawe/Thurgh His pouer dede him  
*transforme*/From man into bestes forme./And *lich an ox* under the fot/  
*He graseth, as he nedes mot,/ To geten him his lives fode*

He was drawn into the wild forest/Where the strength of God's law/Through his power  
*transformed* him/From man into the shape of a beast./And *like an ox on foot,/ He pastured, as he must,/To get his livelihood* [My emphasis].<sup>222</sup>

E fezeo poer em hũa fruestra brava on de foi *trasmudado* de homem em *semelhança de boi*. Que so os pees andava paçendo as hervas *como aquelle que em outra guisa nom achava mantiimento*.

And he was made with power to be drawn into a wild forest where he was *transmuted* from man into the *similitude/appearance of an ox*. So that on his feet he walked pasturing upon the herbs *just like someone which in no other way could be nourished* [My emphasis].<sup>223</sup>

This passage neatly shows that the Portuguese purposely departs from the English in an attempt to make its narrative more conventional. Despite making “a lei de deus” ‘God’s law’ the unifying force of the story’s moral (the reason why the king was turned into a beast), the Portuguese excises “Goddes lawe” from the acting force of Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment, and hence erases what the English describes as God’s perverse or “strange” wish to see a man turn into a beast.

It is the decidedly direct diction of the Portuguese that creates a change in meaning from the English tale. By translating “beste” ‘beast’ as “boi” ‘ox,’ the Portuguese specifies, ahead of time, what type of “beste” Nebuchadnezzar will look like although the English takes over ten lines to make this clear. Further, although the English only once explicitly calls the king’s shape an ox, the Portuguese consistently translates the word “boi” for “beste,” showing that it knows about the English’s focus on the literality of Nebuchadnezzar’s metamorphosis but that it chooses to render it in a more conventional manner. And lastly, whereas the English makes it clear that the king is eating grass, “as he nedes mot” ‘as he must need’ because he is an ox, the

---

<sup>221</sup> Dan. 4:28-29.

<sup>222</sup> Gower *Confessio* 1.2970-2975.

<sup>223</sup> Faccon 443-444, Lines 194-199.

Portuguese claims—alongside Jerome’s *Vulgate*—that Nebuchadnezzar eats grass as “aquelle  
aquelle que em outra guisa” ‘someone who in no other way’ could find sustenance.

Still, we can explain these departures as errors of copying (a scribal “eye skip” of the two  
lines containing “Goddess lawe” and subsequent revision at the final moral) or clarifications of  
sense by an attentive reader (in rendering “beste” more concretely as “boi”). Yet there is one  
change that cannot be explained by error, simplification, or even likeness to the biblical original:  
the choice of “trasmudado” ‘transmuted/ trans-moved’ for the English “transformed” and its  
close similarity in meaning but not in appearance to Jerome’s “transibit” ‘trans-go.’ If the  
Portuguese translators strictly wished to communicate the meaning of change and not the more  
Ovidian echo of physical transformation in their everyday vernacular, they could have simply  
used the more colloquial “mudar” ‘to change/to move’ as they do elsewhere in Book 1 to convey  
a slight change in appearance but not in being.<sup>224</sup> On the other hand, the translators could have  
been trying to render Gower’s “transforme” literally. However, they do not use “transformar”  
‘transform’ as a transliteration of the English “transforme” as they do in the other translations of  
Gower’s Ovidian exempla.<sup>225</sup>

If “trasmudar” was not either a sense to sense or word for word translation, why use it?  
More importantly, what gave the Portuguese translator the idea to use a word so close to  
Jerome’s meaning and close to the way which Gower thinks of Nebuchadnezzar as a parody of  
biblical tradition? After all, “trasmudar” not only manages to keep the moral sense of the

---

<sup>224</sup> This is in fact how the idea of change is set up in the frame preceding the tale of Nebuchadnezzar which  
compares the proud man to a chameleon who “anon his olde guise *change*” for new things (Gower *Confessio*  
1.2696). The Portuguese reads, “*mudar sua guisa velha*” ‘change his old guise’ (Facon 434, Line 25).

<sup>225</sup> For example in the “Tale of Tiresias and the Snakes” where Tiresias is physically transformed into a snake: “And  
for he hath destourbed kind/And was so to nature unkind/Unkindeliche he was *transformed*,/That he which erst a  
man was formed/ Into a womman was forschape” (Gower *Confessio* 3.373-377). The Portuguese reads, “E, por que  
elle quis seer tam desnatural en querer storvar naturalleza, desnaturalmente foi por ello *transformado* en tal guisa que,  
onde for a formado homem, foi logomudado em molher” ‘And because he was so unnatural in wishing to hinder  
nature, he was unnaturally *transformed* in such a way that what was shaped man, was then changed into woman [My  
emphasis]’ (Facon 590, Lines 15-21).

biblical exemplum intact but also keeps a trace of Gower's "weird" interpretation of it. "Transmudar" does this by keeping both Jerome's idea that Nebuchadnezzar's punishment was merely to act like a madman (that is to have, trans-moved his human mind away from his body) and also because it communicates Gower's emphasis on Nebuchadnezzar's absolute transformation (that is to have been transmuted by the act of an alchemist).

I believe that this word occurred to the mind of the Portuguese translators when they came to it by reading the *Confessio*'s Latin frame to this episode as an interpretation of what Gower wrote and not just another part of his project that had to be translated:

Hic ponit Confessor exemplum contra vicium inanis glorie, narrans qualiter Nabugodonosor Rex Caldeorum, cum ipse in omni sue maiestatis gloria celsior extitisset, *deus eius superbiam castigare volens ipsum extra formam hominis in bestiam fenum comedentem transmutavit*. Et sic per septennium penitens, cum ipse potenciosem se agnouit, misertus deus ipsum in sui regni solium retituta sanitate emendatum graciosius collocavit.

Here the Confessor presents an example against the vice of vain glory, relating how Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Chaldeans, when he himself was established very high in all the glory of his majesty, *God, wishing to chastise his pride, transmuted him into a grass-eating beast*. And thus making penance for seven years, when this one acknowledge him to be more powerful, God took pity and graciously placed him again on the soil of his kingdom, freed from blemish and with his health restored [My emphasis].<sup>226</sup>

We can explain the provenance of "transmudar" only if we think that the Portuguese translators were doing more than translating the *Confessio*'s English text—they were also reading its Latin apparatus to help interpret it.

Neither the Portuguese nor the Spanish translations of the *Confessio* reproduce a full copy of the prose Latin frame much less of the Latinate verses that accompany the poem. Yet, that the Latin frame styles the Portuguese approach to the text cannot be doubted. For one, it explains why the translators read the word "boi" 'ox' every time the English describes Nebuchadnezzar's beastly change. The Latin frame—taking its cue from only one part of Jerome's narration—describes a specific the type of "bestiam" 'beast' which Nebuchadnezzar is:

---

<sup>226</sup> Gower *Confessio* 1.2788. Latin Marginalia, trans. Andrew Galloway.

one which eats grass. Further, it makes the idea of God's law central as a moral interpretation of the narrative "deus eius superbiam castigare volens" 'God willing to punish/mend his pride,' and so it makes sense that the idea of law frames the narrative at its end and not during its exposition when Nebuchadnezzar transforms into a beast. The Latin disambiguates how Nebuchadnezzar's sin is against God's law, and does not, like the English, suggest that God's law is the cause for Nebuchadnezzar's monstrous change.

Most importantly, the Portuguese uses a word not found in the English but in the Latin prose frame: "transmutavit" 'he transmuted.' The semantic reach of this word in Portuguese helps explain the difficulties in its translation and also its omission of key passages in the English. The translators, taking the Latin gloss as an interpretation of the English text, understood "transmutavit" as "transmudado" 'transmuted' and as 'trans-moved.' For the Portuguese translations, Nebuchadnezzar was not psychically changed to act like a beast (as Jerome's commentary assumes) or transformed into an ox's shape (as Gower describes), but his mind was moved from one place to another and so Gower's over-the-top repentance described not an outer state but an inner form of contrition. Translating "semehalça" for "lich" helps introduce the *Confessio*'s Latin description of the episode as "formam" and "similitudinem," and so, it helps retain the letter of what Gower says without betraying the spirit of his description.

In short, the translators did more than simply communicate English into Portuguese—they read the Latin frame as an interpretation of the *Confessio* and changed their text accordingly. This implies that the Portuguese translators thought that Gower's English text was not simply a vernacular translation of various stories. For them, the *Confessio* was the type of text that—like the Bible, Gratian's *Decretals*, and Dante's poetry—had to be read with close attention to its gloss. As such, we can surmise that Gower's text circulated with authority in its

own right, at least in Portugal, because to some extent it could portray its concern with writing distinctly from the presentation of its ideas, because it distinguished meaning from representation. This is why the Portuguese translators used the *Confessio*'s Latin frame without translating it. They understood that "Cristes truth," as the *Confessio* was read to portray it, was derived from the inter-relationship of two distinct literary projects and could not simply be represented across languages or even from ideas to writing with ease without changing. Thus, the Portuguese translators used the *Confessio*'s Latin frame only in so far as it confirmed the logic present in Gower's English—a textual logic that did not simply wish to narrate "authorial" truth but which also sought to imbue the process of narration with its own authority.

## CHAPTER III

### CASTILE: STORIES WITHOUT TRUTH

One and the same work can thus be a great book of history and a fine novel. What is surprising is that this interlacing of fiction and history in no way undercuts the project of standing-for belonging to history, but instead helps realize it. . . ancient historians did not hesitate to place in the mouths of their heroes invented discourses, which the documents did not guarantee but only made plausible.<sup>227</sup>—Paul Ricoeur.

Porque algunos que se entremeten de escriuir e notar las antiguedades son ombres de poca vergueña e mas les plaze relatar cosas estrañas e marauillosas que verdaderas e çiertas, creyendo que non sera auida por notable la estoria que non contare cosas muy grandes e graves de creer ansi que sean mas dignas de maravilla que de fe.

Because some that intervene to write and note ancient deeds are men of little shame, and desire more to relate strange and wonderful things than true and certain ones, believing that a story would not be had as notorious if it does not tell of large and hard to believe things so that they would be more worthy of wonder than of faith.<sup>228</sup>—Fernán Pérez de Guzmán.

To think, as Gower’s Portuguese translators do, that ideas can be divorced from narratives, that authority can be derived as a narrative act without reference to an ideal meaning, we must necessarily accept that, even when what we *say* does not refer to something, what we *mean* to say is still communicable. Put in another way, not all stories need to point to concepts to be understood. The easiest way to think of this, as Paul Ricoeur implies, is to turn to early historians and see how their “fictional” stories may tell the same type of truth as objective “empirical” narratives. For example, Fernán Pérez de Guzmán’s “Prologue” to his mid-fifteenth-century work *Generaciones y Semblanzas* clearly interlaces the rhetorical styles of “fiction and history” despite its author’s overt disdain for “maravillas” ‘wonderful stories.’ In writing short biographical sketches of kings and nobles, Guzmán does not give us the objective “fechos” ‘deeds’ for each character. Rather, he paints each life through the stylized “estorias” ‘tales’ even as he reminds us of the need to maintain objectivity through “truthful” narration.

Guzmán’s taste for the “fictional” qualities of truth telling is obvious from what he credits is the narrative style of his histories. Instead of citing the model of biography of Johannes

---

<sup>227</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) 186.

<sup>228</sup> Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, *Generaciones y Semblanzas*, ed. J. Domínguez Bordona (Madrid: La Lectura, 1924) 4.

de Columna's *Mare Historiarum* whose objectivity influenced a greater part of his work, he refers the reader to a tradition that openly mixes "fictional" narration with veridical history—the story of Troy:<sup>229</sup> "Yo tome esta imbençion de Guido de Colupna, aquel que traslado la Estoria Troyana de griego en latin." 'I took this invention from Guido of Colonne, he who translated the Trojan story from Greek into Latin.'<sup>230</sup> Unlike Johannes's *Mare*, Guido de Colonne's *Historiae Troiae* paints the lives of Trojan nobles from a fictional tradition, adapting Benoît de Sainte Maure's poetic epic *Le Roman de Troie* as a history.<sup>231</sup> Although the Middle Ages believed the stories of Troy to be veridical, they were still recognized as possibly fabulous—as narratives that were true because they were sensational and not because they really happened.<sup>232</sup> Guzmán crediting of Guido, as an accurate historian, therefore introduces a seeming conflict of interests. In citing Guido as his source, Guzmán tells us true stories through the fictional style of "maravillas" 'wonders,' although he initially condemns this style because it appeals to an audience's belief that sensational stories could be true simply because they are just as vivid as lived reality.<sup>233</sup>

---

<sup>229</sup> For a discussion of de Columna's influence on Guzmán, see J. Domínguez Bordona, "Introducción," *Generaciones y Semblanzas*, by Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, ed. J. Domínguez Bordona (Madrid: La Lectura, 1924) xxii and Andrea Zinato, "Introduzione," *Mar de Historias, Mar de historias*, by Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, ed. Andrea Zinato (Padova: Unipress, 1999) 18-31.

<sup>230</sup> Pérez de Guzmán *Generaciones* 9.

<sup>231</sup> In her "Introduction" to Guido's *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, Mary Elizabeth Meek particularly draws out the logic of this tradition of historiography: "If one accepts Guido's own explanation of what happens when an historical work is transcribed poetically, i.e., that it appears to be fiction, we can apply the same kind of reasoning in reverse...if a work of fiction which embodies historical truth, like the *Roman de Troie*...is transcribed historically, then it will appear to be history" ("Introduction," *Historia Desructionis Troiae*, by Guido delle Colonne, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974) xviii-xix).

<sup>232</sup> Guido admits the fictionality of the tradition in his own introduction to the *Historia*: "Certain persons, indeed, have already transcribed the truth of this very history, dealing with it lightly as poets do, in fanciful inventions by means of certain fictions, so that what they wrote seemed to their audiences to have recorded not the true things, but the fictitious ones instead" (Ibid. 1, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek).

<sup>233</sup> I disagree with Andrea Zinato's argument that Guzmán reads "maravillas" 'wonders' as unnatural events as Guido himself does not excise these completely from his *Historia*, and even Zinato argues how Guzmán, following Christian doctrine, attributes a verisimilitude to certain miracles (25). In a basic sense, however, Zinato ignores the etymology of "maravilla" from the Latin "mirabilia" 'witnessed things' that Guzmán is obviously alluding to in deriding sensationalistic stories and which is present in the Spanish "mirar" 'to look.'

In this chapter, I will analyze this seeming contradiction in terms of what it suggests for fifteenth-century Castilian historiography. I will argue that Guzmán's simultaneous disdain for and use of "maravillas" is not a contradiction because he manages to separate the act of truth-telling from the circumstances which make it true. Guzmán's writing assumes that true stories are different from "fantastic" narratives, although they are both stylized, because the authority by which the former gain truth could be independent from the personal investment (the appearance of a live witnessing of reality) found in the latter. To put this in other terms, he thinks that what stories *mean* can be communicable outside of what they *say*. The result is a paradoxical way of writing stories outside the contingencies of time and place. For Guzmán, and for the historical tradition which influenced him, histories were true when read outside of the march of time, and events were veridical when no single author or reader can experience them.

### 1. Telling Truth: The Medieval Tradition of "historia"

In thinking this paradox, fifteenth-century Castilian historiography was reassessing seven-hundred-year-old theories about the mimesis in story telling. The most influential of these, found in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologia*, famously subdivides the presentation of truth via narratives in three ways: "historia" 'history or story' (an account of true events that have been), "argumentum" 'argument or proof' (an account of false events that could be), and "fabula" 'tale or narrative' (an account of false events that could not be).<sup>234</sup> These categories were more heuristic approaches to meaning than fast conceptual differences. After all, given the fine line between falsehood and truth that make up medieval and Christian historical lore, it is difficult to think that Isidore or his readers could have given one single example which could fit one of these distinctions without bleeding into another.

---

<sup>234</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etimologias: Edición Bililngüe*, 3 vols., (Madrid: Editorial Catolica, 1982) 1.360.

In the *Etymologiae*, the real use of Isidore's categories is to gesture to the type of personal relations suggested by a reader's immediate encounter with text. It is sense perceptions and not analytical distinctions which are the backbone of how Isidore thinks that truth should be properly presented. Thus, he takes "fabula," coming from the Latin "fando" 'to be speaking,' to be as unreliable as the ephemeral voice and heard rumor, and he argues that "historia," which he reads as coming from the Greek "histôrein," meaning to "videre vel cognoscere" 'to see or to know,' to be as reliable as the immediate witnessing of reality.<sup>235</sup>

A writer's physical, lived nearness to truth provides a stricter understanding of the truth-value within a narrative, and it helps explain why an event like the Trojan War, which is arguably full of the impossible things found in fictional romances and epics, may be considered "historia" in Isidore's framework. The mythical portraits of Helen, Paris, Achilles, and Hector, are "historiae" and not "fabulae" or "argumenta" because Dares, the alleged sole survivor of the fall of Troy, witnessed their deeds which were, later, "in foliis palmarum ab eo conscriptam esse ferunt" 'written in palm leaves by him as they say.'<sup>236</sup> In turn, Aesop's stories are "fabulae" not so much because they have animals speak but because they staged the poets' sayings in dialogues—i.e., they were explicitly fashioned (from the Latin term "fictum") by words. Following Aristotle, Isidore gives experience authority to determine truth and finds mediating narrative only a poor substitute.

Nevertheless, Isidore's reflections on the mimesis of truth in story telling were far from inarguable laws for medieval historiographers. The medieval understanding of verisimilitude in narration, which stretched as far as Jerome's idea of the "vera lex historiae" 'the true law of

---

<sup>235</sup> Ibid. 357, 359. It is difficult to know if Isidore knew that "histôrein" meant "to inquire." On the one hand, the Greek meaning would have implied that "historia" and "fabula" were no different from each other; on the other, Isidore's relation of "videre" 'to see' with "cognoscere" 'to know' suggests that in reading the Greek as judgment he could have merely inferred that knowledge was sight.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid. 359.

history,' emphasized the sense perception of truth *as well as* the type of tradition which this story deployed. This pragmatic emphasis is what the Venerable Bede uses to justify his own *Historia Ecclesiastica* in front of Isidore's stringent categories of verisimilitude.<sup>237</sup> Bede understands that Isidore's emphasis on sense perception makes most medieval histories—including biblical stories—unreliable as most of these are filtered by “fama vulgante” ‘common report’ and do not always come from eye witnesses.<sup>238</sup> To solve this dilemma, Bede relies on a simple schema: he argues that oral tradition can be used if the historian does not personally vouch for the truth of a story and if the cultural precedent for such a tradition is understood.<sup>239</sup> For Bede, a story is true due to its exemplarity—its ability to repeat a respect tradition faithfully independently of its teller's physical eye-witness-like proximity to the truth of events.<sup>240</sup>

It is clear that Guzmán's criticism of stylized and poetic stories, although not explicitly citing Bede, extends his ideas when he refuses to grant personal sense perception a privileged truth-telling status. In the Prologue to *Generaciones*, Guzmán argues that false histories are popular precisely because they circulate “maravillas” ‘wonders,’ which take an ocular and temporal presence that prompt readers to assume their truth without question. This is implied by the etymology of “maravillas” which comes from the Latin “mirabilia” ‘looked at things’ and “mirar” ‘to look at.’ Guzmán basically follows Bede's support for “fama vulgante” ‘common fame’ to its logical conclusion: if most history is already subjective, a writer should not appeal to a particular experience of truth to justify his story but to a more universal approach.<sup>241</sup> The

---

<sup>237</sup> Roger Ray, “Bede's *Vera Lex Historiae*,” *Speculum*, 55.1 (1980): 17.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.* 15.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

<sup>241</sup> This explains why, for Guzmán, Biblical accounts could stand for history at times and as pure allegory at others despite witnessing super natural events—the miracle was seen by a reliable narrator and its witnessing referenced its reality. This so much can be inferred from his commentary on Gregory's *Dialogues*: “Los muchos milagros que en él se cuentan *por testimonio verdadero* de aquel santo doctor el qual apenas cuenta milagro que o él mesmo no lo viese o no gelo relatasen aquellos mesmos que los vieron y tales relatores que ningún omne rrazonable y discreto e

problem with “maravillas” ‘wonders’ is that they fool readers into substituting truth for what is merely subjective experience by making fabulous and poetic descriptions stand for true events.

This also implies that if a reader’s belief in truth can be so easily manipulated by a narrative style, then “estorias” ‘stories’ do more than represent concepts: they also make a type of reality for a reader. Guzmán, therefore, understands “estorias” ‘stories’ in the fullest sense of its Castilian meaning: true histories, fictional stories, and drawn illuminations.<sup>242</sup> To write “estorias” is jointly to manipulate the truth (in the manner of narratives) *and* to present an immediate reality to the senses (in the manner of pictures). Stories both allow us to reflect as well as impose truth on us. Stories tell “la verdat del fecho como paso” ‘the truth of the event as it happened’ but also the possibility to create “fama e renombre a los que non lo meresçieron” ‘fame and renown to those who did not deserve it.’<sup>243</sup>

“Estorias” are able to manipulate a reader’s reality simply because the act of reading already evokes cultural values and emotions in a reader’s mind. This means that the conceptual categories of “historia,” “argumentum,” or “fabula” as truth, possibility, and falsehood are irrelevant because some “truth” is always imminent in any form of narration. This is the underlying reason which allows Guzmán, in an echo of Bede, to condemn false historians who rely on sensory presence to pass falsehoods as truths but care very little about the type of truth they mean to narrate. It is also why he refuses to follow Isidore and claim that truth is guided by a witness’s nearness to an event. Because “estorias” already suggest vivid and life-like images to

---

mucho menos devoto podría contra dezir” ‘The many miracles contained in it are told *through the true witness* of such a holy doctor who only tells the miracles that he himself witnessed or those same witnesses who saw it and such that no reasonable or discreet man (and much less devote man) could gainsay’ (qtd. in Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, *Mar de Historias*, ed. Andrea Zinato. Padova: Unipress, 1999) 25) Guzmán’s focus on a “true witness” directly repeats Bede’s reliance on spoken tradition.

<sup>242</sup> So the famous *Ysopete Ystoriado* is the Illuminated collection of Aesop’s fables; the precedent for this slippage in meaning was already present in Castilian collection of tales, particularly in Juan Manuel’s *El Conde Lucanor* in which drawn miniatures explaining the moral stories are introduced as “estorias.”

<sup>243</sup> Pérez de Guzmán *Generaciones* 5.

their readers without waiting to be assessed for their “truth” value, the true objective nearness of the narrator’s sight to the event, which he allegedly witnesses, is irrelevant.

Guzmán’s indictment of fictional histories is that they privilege the “here and now” when, in telling “maravillas,” they use the feel of real experience to convince readers to accept false events. Of course, Guzmán knows that a historian can also use “maravillas” to depict true things. However, his main concern is that through experience truth as “maravillas” a reader still accepts a “truth” based upon its appearance (upon its affinity to his reality) and not based upon its objectivity—and so deriving truth through “maravillas” necessarily implies a focus on superficial appearances and not objective reality. This is why Guzmán uses his Prologue to both formulate a correct way of writing and a correct way of reading. He knows that it is *how* a reader approaches a text and not *what* he actually gets out of it that determines truth. Accordingly, he describes false historians as “entremetidos” ‘interlopers’ whose wonderful language both stands in between truth and reader interrupting their relationship to history.

If, for Guzmán, “maravillas” stand between truth and a reader by exchanging real facts for the feeling of “looked-at” reality, then we would expect that, by removing the feeling of presence from story-telling, a writer could not only create true stories but also stories which could rely on impossible events (on “fabulae”) to tell truth. As we will see, this is how fifteenth-century Castilian historiography departed from (and improved upon) the medieval story telling tradition that focused not merely in the experience of truth (Isidore) but also on its impersonal reliability (Bede). Particularly, I will argue that Guzmán and his greatest influence (the historian Pedro López deAyala) saw in stylized and fictional ways of telling things—in forms of narration that displaced a reader from his everyday reality—the possibility of removing the “presence” of reality by making reality appear like pure fiction and not tempting a reader to believe in a fiction

by likening to reality. If a reader was not tempted to accept truth simply because, in being vivid and wonderful, it resembled his reality, then a historian could present even subjective experiences with a measure of objectivity.

I will argue that the social setting for these new ways of thinking of history was the Trastamaran Revolution of 1369, and that in evaluating upon its influence, historians used overt fiction as a way to portray the Revolution's events. This was because, in deposing a sovereign and implanting a usurper, the Revolution managed to make the separation of the concept of true authority from the real ways in which this authority was justified into an acceptable experience. In Castile, the removal of a king from power had profound effects—particularly in the creation of narratives—because the thirteenth-century literary achievements of Alfonso X had cast narrative creation and political achievement in the same frame. In Castile, political discourse not only involved the making of a political persona but the fashioning of truth through story telling.

In fact, it is in describing the Revolution that Guzmán and Ayala most clearly display how truth may be represented without appealing to sensory “presence.” They do so in two ways: first, they make the experience of an event independent of its true occurrence; second, they distance a reader's chronological experience of reality from the chronological presentation of truth in history—that is, in their writings a reader cannot understand the passage of time read in history as the passage of time lived in his life. To portray timeless and objective truth, Fernán Pérez de Guzmán and Pedro López de Ayala purposely sought to detach readers from the act of story telling so that a subject's personal projections would not taint the objectivity of the historical events portrayed. This way of writing made narratives “true” not because an author could attest to the veracity of their events, or a reader could sympathize with them, but simply because their structures could be repeated for any time, place, or person.

## 2. Experiencing Truth: Managing the Pathos of Truth Telling

For Guzmán and Ayala, the *pathos* of reading—the ability of a reader to relate his life to the events in a story—became antithetical to the writing of truth. At first sight, this hypothesis appears counterintuitive (at least for Guzmán). Given that *Generaciones y Semblanzas* is a gathering of biographies, we would expect that his stories appeal to a reader or writer’s basic sympathy for actual, living persons. Yet, as we will see, even the most “personal” of Guzmán portraits—that of his immediate influence and famed uncle Pedro López de Ayala—does not immerse the reader in the narrative in order to convey truth. Guzmán’s depiction of Ayala (particularly of his role during the Trastamaran Revolution) tempts us to distrust the entire project of “truth telling” by making it sound like “lisonja” ‘flattery or lies.’ It is this fictional style that allows Guzmán to “fablar estoria” in the fullest sense of the word: ‘to speak’ and ‘to fable history’ so as to force his readers to see the stylistic stakes behind a story telling (by making a life appear like a fable).

A purview of Ayala’s own views on truthful storytelling shows us why Guzmán would be so interested in using his portrait to “fablar estoria” ‘to speak/to fable history.’ It almost appears that, in contradistinction to *Generaciones*, the Prologue to Ayala’s chronicles of the kings of Castile emphasizes the importance of a feeling of “presence” in the writing of truth in history:

La memoria de los omes es muy flaca, e non se puede acordar de todas las cosas que en el tiempo passado acaescieron; por lo qual los sabios antiguos fallaron ciertas letras e arte de escriuir, por que las sciencias e grandes fechos que acescieron en el mundo fuessen escritos e guardados para los omes los saber, e tomar dende buenos exemplos para fazer bien, e se guardar de mal, e se fincassen en rememrança perdurable. E fueron fechos despues libros do tales cosas fueron escritas e guardadas...por ende de aqui adelante yo, Pero López de Ayala, con la ayuda de Dios lo entiendo continuar assi, e lo mas verdadera mente que pudiere, de lo que vi, en lo qual non entiendo si non dezir verdad, otrosi de lo que acaesce en mi edad e en mi tiempo en algunas partidas donde yo non he estado, e lo sopiere por verdadera relacion de sennores e caualleros e otros dignos de fe de quien lo oy, e me dieron dende testimonio, tomandolo con la mayor diligencia que pude.

Men’s memory is very weak and cannot remember all the things that happened in the time past; for this reason, ancient wise men came upon true letters and the art of writing, so that the knowledge and the great deeds that happened in the world would be written and kept for men to

know, and to take from these good examples how to do good, and how to keep from evil, and they would remain in everlasting remembrance. And later books were made where such things were written and kept... for this reason from here forward, I, Pedro López de Ayala, with the help of God, intend to continue in this manner, and as truthfully as I can taking [written notice] with the greatest diligence that I could, from what I saw (of which I do not know but how to tell the truth) or otherwise what happens in my age and in my time in some parts where I have not been (and I knew it to be a true story of lords and knights and others worthy of credit from whom I heard it, and they gave witness of it).<sup>244</sup>

A closer look at Ayala's Prologue, however, shows that it does not differ too much from Guzmán's own position. Although clearly taking Isidore's side in placing such a strong reliance on the "here and now," Ayala's theory still follows Bede in not immediately linking the presence of events to truth but relying on accepted tradition—particularly from "sennores e caualleros e otros dignos de fe" 'lords and knights and others worthy of credit.' This synthesis of Isidore and Bede displaces the primacy of presence in representing the truth of "lo que acaesece" 'what befalls' in stories. Ayala equally values "lo que vi" 'what I saw' and the hearing of things of "donde yo non he estado" 'where I have not been.' As a result, the way a witness comes to understand truth—either by his immediate sight or by another's speech—does not affect his story's truthfulness.

This does not make Ayala naïve to the ways in which a witness could falsify information. In emphasizing that he writes "si non dezir verdad" 'but to tell the truth,' he knows that a subject's perspective could be erroneous and that it is necessary to establish the reliability of his witnesses. It is "fe" 'faith and credit' that creates truth even when there are possible ways to privilege certain experiences of truth over others, i.e. sight versus hearing. By denying the primacy of perspective, Ayala places truth telling to a higher standard: a true story must have both reliable content and solicit readerly faith. A story must not only be a record but a record done, in Ayala's words, "con la mayor diligencia que pude" 'with the greatest diligence that I

---

<sup>244</sup> Pero López de Ayala, *Corónica de Pedro I*, eds. Constance L. Wilkins and Heanon Wilkins (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1985) 1.

could.’ It must record both an accurate perspective and also a method to preserve objectivity and, in turn, readerly trust to the veracity of the narrative.

Ayala’s synthesis of Bede and Isidore, however, takes him further than either because, in focusing on readerly trust and not writerly accuracy, he places the onus of truth in the reader’s hands. As long as there are no privileged ways of telling truth, no one witness—even an assiduous historian—can guarantee the reliability of the events in a story. Rather, Ayala reasons that, to make a story be true, a writer’s intentions must accord to universally true principles which any reader can vouch as true. This is why the ancients used writing to keep their memory, so that humans could retain “*buenos exemplos para fazer bien*” ‘good examples to do the good.’ Writing is not only the product of collective memory but of collective memory in accord to moral goals outside the flow of time.

For Ayala, stories are true as long as they reflect some universal Truth. The Good, as just such a timeless moral marker determined by reason or by God and represented through moral exempla, assures a story’s objectivity—its Truth—and hence its repeatability to any reader. Writing truth, therefore, constructs the “*membrança perdurable*” ‘everlasting remembrance’ not only of an event but also of a particular *way* of representing and experiencing events. This is because stories introduce a type of atemporality that, in describing the past, also imagines what the future will look like by tying events to morals worthy to be emulated. Through the “*arte de escribir*” ‘the craft of writing,’ a writer can imprint his experience beyond the finite memory and shifting generations of man in physically and conceptually according a text to an atemporal plane through the writing of graphemes on a page and representing analytical principles in history.

This is not to say that Ayala writes history with another aim aside from chronicling things which he sees. Shaping a story to match “*buenos exemplos*” ‘good examples’ is not a way to add

meaning to his personal experiences; it is only a means to change its temporality in the eyes of the reader and so to assure its truth. Ayala still thinks of the events in history as worthy to be written regardless of their intrinsic moral worth. In tying the “here and now” of his experiences to an atemporal Good, Ayala attempts to prevent future generations from reading his own chronicles as subjective. Similitude to universal moral principles, therefore, literally keeps a “estoria” “guardada” ‘kept and guarded,’ keeping it from death and guarding it from misinterpretation by future readers.

The goal of a true “estoria” is to universalize events without diluting the specificity of their past—to keep a writer’s temporal experiences intact while still guaranteeing that such experiences would be read as objective by the future. As a result, Ayala formulates the problem of historical truth decidedly as a readerly and not writerly issue. It is a reader’s changing *pathos* across time—his changing feeling on the objectivity of what he read—that must be prevented by linking a writer’s experiences to objective principles, and it is a reader’s ability to forget that must be remedied through the craft of writing. Without readers, history may not be true.

The first hint that Guzmán takes Ayala’s theory of disciplining readership to maintain historical truth at face value comes in *Generaciones y Semblanzas* when he openly writes biographies from “fabulae”—narrative traditions that have been handed down without an actual eye-witness—or as Guzmán labels them, “relatos” ‘re-sayings.’<sup>245</sup> Appropriately enough, *Generaciones* most explicitly makes use of “relatos” when describing the veridical basis for its portrait of Ayala:

Don Pero Lopez de Ayala, chançiller mayor de Castilla, fue un cauallero de grant linaje... Algunos del linaje de Ayala dizen que uienen de un infante de Aragon a quien el rey de Castilla dio el señorío de Ayala, e yo ansi lo falle escrito por don Ferrant Perez de Ayala, padre deste don

---

<sup>245</sup> In fact, one of the requirements that Guzmán places on a proper historian is the absence from the immediate events so that true chroniclers do not write about the kings under which they serve to avoid bias. The work of the historian, then, would always be that of the compiler of sayings and not the immediate witness of events (*Generaciones* 5-6).

Pero López de Ayala, *pero non ley en estorias nin he dello otra çertidumbre*. Fue este don Pero López de Ayala alto de cuerpo, e delgado, e de buena persona; onbre de grant discríõion e abtoridad e de grant conseio, asi de paz commo de guerra. Ouõ grant lugar açerca de los reyes en cuyo tienpo fue, ca, seyendo moço, fue bien quisto del rey don Pedro, e, despues, del rey don Enrique el Segundo fue de su conseio e amado del. El rey don Iohan e el rey don Enrique su fijo fizieron del grande mençion e grande fiança; paso por grandes fechos de Guerra e de paz; fue preso dos uezes, una en la batalla de Najara, otra en Aljubarrota...*fue muy inclinado a las çiencias*, e con esto grant parte del tiempo ocupaua en el leer e estudiar, *non en obras de derecho sinon filosofia e estorias*.

Don Pedro López de Ayala, the high Chancellor of Castile, was a knight of a great lineage... Some from the Ayala lineage say that they come from an infant of Aragon to whom the king of Castile gave lordship of Ayala, and I found written as such by don Ferrant Perez de Ayala, father of this don Pedro López de Ayala, but I have not read this in the histories/stories, *nor do I have of this any other certainty*. This don Pedro López de Ayala was of a tall body, and thin, and of good port; man of great discretion and authority and of great counsel, during peace as during war. He had a great place close to the kings in whose time he was, that, while being a young man, he was well loved of the king Don Pedro, and, later, he was of the council of the king Don Enrique the Second and loved of him. The king Juan and the king don Enrique his son had of him great esteem and great faith; he passed through great acts of war and of peace; he was imprisoned two times, one in the battle of Najera, the other in Aljubarrota...*he was inclined towards the sciences*, and with this the great part of the time he was occupied in reading and studying, *not works of law but philosophy and stories/histories* [My emphasis].<sup>246</sup>

Guzmán's description is decidedly a character portrait, but it is one that occurs without the immediacy of presence (relying on "relatos" 'stories') and moreover is one that invites us to trust it only by granting the historian's uncertainty in front of the facts he narrates.

Notwithstanding Guzmán's uncertainty over the facts of Ayala's life, the laudable description, which *Generaciones* produces of the former Chancellor of Castile's political and literary prowess, is extremely accurate. Politically, Ayala was a force of nature: he was an active player in the council of two kings; he fought in two wars; he was important enough to be ransomed twice; and he served as an ambassador to France during the marriage of Richard II and Isabella that was hoped to put an end to over sixty years of war. As a man of letters, the Chancellor was no less of a "gran omne" 'great man.' Thus, Ayala reignited the translation of Latinate erudition into Castilian after a century of neglect. His translations included Livy's *History of the Romans*, Boccaccio's *Fall of Princes*, *The Morals of Saint Gregory*, Isidore's *De*

---

<sup>246</sup> Ibid. 39-40.

*Summo Bono*, and Guido's *Historiae Troianae*, and parts of Boethius.<sup>247</sup> Further, Ayala authored or (according to Guzmán) “ordeno” ‘ordered’ the story of the recent kings of Castile from Pedro I through Enrique III; he also authored works on hunting and poetry dear to secular interests. Among his books, the Chancellor “fizo un buen libro de la caça, que el fue muy caçador, e otro libro Rimado del Palacio” ‘made a good book of hunting because he was a good hunter, and another book, the Rhyme of the Palace.’<sup>248</sup>

Ayala's versatility is indeed the stuff of legends—or of “maravillas,” and it is clear that a writer with a critical eye for history, even one with close connections to his object, would be skeptical of making so much of one man. There is even a hint that Guzmán underlines the portrait's possible fictionality when he admits that there are parts of Ayala's life of which he (and perhaps no one) can describe with “certidumbre” ‘certainty.’ This proviso admits a data oversight while introducing doubt to Guzmán's own intentions on writing the biography. Our doubts over Ayala's true prowess seem unavoidable given how Guzmán describes their close blood ties, and how, despite voicing uncertainty over the Ayala's descent, he manages to suggest the Chancellor's possible (but not factual) royal lineage.

Moreover, the accurate statements about Ayala's life are drawn into doubt by the fifteenth-century cultural expectations of what a “gran omne” ‘great man’ should accomplish. Guzmán knows this, and he qualifies Ayala's love of letters as a love for stories and philosophy and not for “obras de derecho” ‘works of law.’ This separation and successful development of the life of letters away from a political function is particularly unusual in the fourteenth and

---

<sup>247</sup> For a full biography of Ayala's life and works, see Luis Suarez-Fernández, *El Canciller de Ayala y su Tiempo* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1959) and F. Garcia de Andóin, *El Canciller de Ayala su obra y su tiempo* (Vitoria: Biblioteca Alavesa, 1976).

<sup>248</sup> Pérez de Guzmán *Generaciones* 40-41. I prefer to keep the ambiguity of “ordeno” as ‘ordered,’ which in English connotes both “to command” and “to arrange,” because of the centrality of Ayala as an author but also as a compiler. In Castilian literary tradition, this word also has strong roots in the image of the monarch as an ideal translator, author, and compiler fostered by Alfonso X's literary efforts.

fifteenth centuries. Although most Castilian authors had noble backgrounds, it was relatively uncommon for nobles to be drawn into scholarly vocations and successfully engage in both the “vita activa” ‘active life’ of politics and the “vita contemplativa” ‘contemplative life’ of the Church and learning. However, it was very rare that, in being drawn to scholarly pursuits, a noble could behave as an ideal example of both roles without having one trade-off into the other—or as Guzmán suggest without having his love for letters bleed into his political responsibilities through the application of science into politics as the study of laws or politics.<sup>249</sup>

### 3. Truth in Culture: Managing Readerly Experiences of Reality

To be sure, these narrative hints may be too subtle to introduce readerly doubt into Ayala’s portrait, and the success of Ayala’s political and literary career may suggest that the average fifteenth-century Castilian reader would be able to empathize enough with them to believe his story at face value. A glance at Castilian literary culture may seem to confirm this. Unlike France, Italy, or England (where the political, ruling class seldom created and translated major cultural works), the Iberian Peninsula decidedly linked the growth of social and political capital to that of literary accomplishments. A purview of major Spanish political players and high-ranking politicians from the late-thirteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries easily gives a list of major historians, translators, and poets from Juan Manuel in the fourteenth century, whose daughter would marry the future Enrique II, to Alfonso de Cartagena in the fifteenth century, who served as Bishop of Burgos and ambassador to Juan II.<sup>250</sup>

---

<sup>249</sup> The difference between temporal and contemplative life did not simply mean spiritual versus secular; the idea of “negotium” ‘business’ as the negation of ‘otium’ ‘leisure’ associated with the clergy is as old as Petrarch. For a short study of the tension between the two in the medieval imaginary, see Paul Lombardo, “*Vita Activa and Vita Contemplativa* in Petrarch and Salutati,” *Italica*. 59. 2 (Summer, 1982): 83-92.

<sup>250</sup> To list a few: Sancho IV, king of Castile and writer of a compendia of exempla and a chronicle of Castile; Alfonso XI, king of Castile, and author of a book of hunting and several chronicles; Juan Manuel, infant of Castile, who wrote several political works, chronicles, and a famous compendia of exempla, *El Conde Lucanor*; Juan Ruiz, Archbishop of Hita with his *Libro de Buen Amor*; Alvaro de Luna, regent of Castile wrote a history of virtuous and famous women. Besides these high profile figures, there were many prolific writers who were active and important

Indeed, Castile's unprecedented, early valorization of vernacular literature came from the efforts of the thirteenth-century monarch Alfonso X (known to history as "Alfonso el Sabio" 'Alfonse the Wise') to institute the vernacular as a medium for law and source of erudition. Alfonso standardized Castile's legal code into a single work the *Siete Partidas*, and authored several works of science, poetry, and history in its standardized vernacular. By this dual focus on law and the arts, Alfonso both divested Latin as a place holder of symbolic authority and made what used to be only a poetic language into a means to exert power and control. Alfonso's literary and legal vernacular project, as Elisa Ruiz García has argued, united the image of the legislating "rex agens" 'acting king' and of the thinking "rex scribens" 'writing king'.<sup>251</sup> His confluence of political and literary goals gave Castilian writers and readers a real figure in history with which to empathize, an author in the fullest sense of the term of origin and legitimacy to the vernacular tongue.<sup>252</sup>

Nevertheless, the Alfonsine "rex scribens" and "rex agens" were not the only ways in which fifteenth-century readers understood the conflation of the contemplative and active life. Equally important were the daily encounters with how the two social strata which embodied these principles—the Church and the State—had slowly adopted each other's way of life. Through the fourteenth century, two main cultural developments brought the Church's "contemplative" life away from the monopoly of monasteries and into the secular culture of the

---

members of the nobility such as Diego de Valera, Enrique de Villena, Pedro López de Ayala, Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, and Alfonso de Cartagena.

<sup>251</sup> Elisa Ruiz García, "Rex scribens: discursos de la conflictividad en Castilla (1230-1350)," *La Monarquía como Conflicto en la Corona Castellano-Leonesa*, ed. José Manuel Nieto Soria (Silex: Madrid, 2006) 359-422.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid. 419. According to Ruiz García, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw the role of the "rex scribens" passed on to the nobility. Although there were clerical writers in Castile, these were by no means "auctores" in the reach and scope of their works. The few clerics who authored major works, like Juan Ruiz or Alfonso de Cartagena, could hardly occupy a separate space from the royal sphere. Perhaps the biggest proof of this monopoly of literary authority by the political elite in Castile is the absence of literary or philosophical writing by the rising middle class of aspiring nobles and merchants so prominent elsewhere in Europe, like in England (Chaucer), France (Froissart), and Italy (Boccaccio).

State.<sup>253</sup> The first change was the simultaneous establishment of Castilian as the vernacular grammar of literature, science, and law and the success of the centralized royal bureaucracy over its regional and feudal counterparts.<sup>254</sup> The newly centralized political hierarchy facilitated the diffusion of knowledge amidst local elites through the adoption of one vernacular and one system of knowledge. This central language managed to counteract the use of other vernaculars (i.e., Gascon, Catalan, Leonese, Valencian, Aragonese) and hence facilitated the flow of one culture, that of clerical bureaucrats, into the general daily life of most nobility.<sup>255</sup>

The second change took place with the proliferation of knowledge within everyday urban reach. The fourteenth century saw the opening of universities, not in the countryside or near monasteries, but within the immediate reach of the upper urban classes in Valladolid and Salamanca and also of minor “escuelas urbanas” ‘urban schools’ in Toledo, Cuenca, and Seville.<sup>256</sup> The nearness of the clerisy to the university brought both the arts and the material tools for their production within reach of the urban nobility. The dissemination of the library and scriptorium across Castile’s cities brought secular lords close to the everyday tools of the contemplative life if not to its ideals. This was such a successful way to incorporate the contemplative and active lives that, in its efforts to balance political regional interests, the ambulatory Castilian court consistently returned to the two epicenters of knowledge creation in Spain—Toledo and Valladolid—to exert its legislative duties.

We can deduce that the contemplative life took hold in Iberia in a very physical plane. Nobles did not simply wish to understand and write about abstract ideas but valued the

---

<sup>253</sup> Jose María Monsalvo Antón, *La Baja Edad Media en los Siglos XIV-XV* (Madrid: Sintesis, 2000) 181.

<sup>254</sup> See María Asenjo González, “La Aristocratización Política en Castilla y el Proceso de Participación Urbana (1252-1520),” *La Monarquía como Conflicto en la Corona Castellano-Leonesa*, ed. José Manuel Nieto Soria (Silex: Madrid, 2006) 142-149 and José Manuel Nieto Soria, *Iglesia y Genesis del Estado Moderno en Castilla* (Madrid: Complutense, 1993) 164-171.

<sup>255</sup> Monsalvo Antón 200.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.* 181-183.

technologies used to create them. Indeed as the fifteenth century progressed, the secular nobility began to rival the Church in its ability to hold and disseminate knowledge. At the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century, only famed and powerful nobles, like the Aragonian Arnau de Vilanova, or kings, like Martin el Humano of Aragon and Juan II of Castile, could afford libraries to match ecclesiastical holdings. By the end of the fifteenth, many secular nobles spent a sufficient amount of capital to surpass their clerical counterparts. For example, the wealthy landowner, the Majorcan Miguel Abeyar could brag about owning 471 books whereas Luis de Acuña, who as Bishop of Burgos presided over one of the highest dioceses in Spain, only held 363.<sup>257</sup> This proliferation of knowledge and clerical culture was possible because libraries and scriptoriums were not only symbols of erudition but of political advancement.<sup>258</sup> The entrance of the contemplative life into everyday noble culture was thus physically the product of a de-centering of boundaries by the adoption of knowledge-producing technologies outside exclusively clerical settings.

Given this context, we can say that Guzmán's readers understood the combination of political and literary authority which Ayala embodied in two complementary but parallel lines. The first centralizes two ideals of authority into one body. It assimilates the figural body of linguistic and political authority with one ideal that had its origin in the life of Alfonso X. This is the image which Ayala's virtues appear to typify and which his "uncertain" royal lineage seems to allude. The second way which Guzmán's readers were able to relate Ayala's authority is based on dissemination. Readers can understand Ayala's portrait as real because of the dispersion of

---

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. 191.

<sup>258</sup> Guzmán himself witnesses to this conjunction of values in his *Coplas de vicios y virtudes*: "Sciencia e caualleria/...esta noble compañía/ es muy grande de juntar;/pero junta nin ha par./ nin precio su grant valia" 'Science and chivalry/... this noble company/ is very hard to join;/but there is no equal match,/ nor price of its great value' (qtd. in Luis Fernández Gallardo, "La Biografía como Memoria Estamental: Identidades y Conflictos," *La Monarquía como Conflicto en la Corona Castellano-Leonesa*, ed. José Manuel Nieto Soria (Silex: Madrid, 2006) 453 note 158).

ecclesiastical and political technologies experienced in their every day life, because they were like Ayala.

These two strands cause a paradoxical situation when joined in one portrait: they require that an everyday experience of nobility be visualized as an exclusive ideal of authority. If a fifteenth-century reader valorized a noble for his authorial erudition and political power, he also knew that this is possible because noble culture as a whole had and even encouraged an easier access to knowledge. In other words, a writer's political and literary prowess, although something to be aspired to, was something available to most educated fifteenth-century readers, making Ayala's portrait neither a special nor an everyday depiction but a cultural desire of expressed in a reader's everyday experience.

To put the matter bluntly, in fifteenth-century Castile, the writing of stories by the nobility was a political fad. Guzmán feeds into this popular image by calling the Chancellor a man “de grant discriçion e abtoridad e de grant conseio” ‘of great discernment and authority and of great counsel.’ He imbues Ayala's portrait with clerical “discriçion” ‘discretion’ and political “conseio” ‘counsel.’<sup>259</sup> He thus places Ayala as a proper noble—who embodies political and ecclesiastical ideas fashionably. However, in implying that Ayala's political and literary prowess makes him an “abtoridad” ‘authority,’ he introduces uncertainty to this portrait. A reader sympathizes with Ayala by going back and seeing how “political” and “clerical” lives were a common experience which everyone wanted to emulate, but in so doing, he experiences one major question: why does this figure have a claim to special “abtoridad” ‘authority’ when all that I see in the portrait is my common cultural proclivities? There can only be one answer: either

---

<sup>259</sup> Although I do not wish to speak of the genre biography that emerged in the fifteenth century, it is worth keeping in mind that the default framework for these sketches was the fictional ideal of chivalry even when the sketches displayed important clerical figures far removed from secular interests (Ibid. 488). Guzmán's portrait of Ayala, thus, represents an oddity in advancing both values equally.

Guzmán means to criticize the idea of “abtoridad” by making Ayala a caricature of a cultural imaginary, or he merely reports Ayala’s life as it is and is aware of the marvelous paradox of deriving “abtoridad” from political trends.

I believe that the latter approach is the more likely and that Guzmán attempts to report Ayala’s life as the stuff of legends and “maravillas” for his readers. For one, Guzmán already links Ayala’s lineage to a royal origin, and so helps the reader envision the “here and now” of a time in which to write was to delegate real royal power and not simply to be part of a cultural wish to link both “clerical” and “political” ways of life. The idealized portraits, which Ayala’s description echoes, were commonplace in the fifteenth century. Nobles were described as embodying both clerical “sapientia” ‘wisdom’ and political “fortitudo” ‘strength’ in biographies such as the chronicle of Álvaro de Luna, who conjoins the figure of the valiant knight with that of the prudent and theoretical thinker. This stylization would have prompted a readerly distrust, which Guzmán clearly deployed, in the more laudable ways by which he has Ayala embody both political and clerical ideals.<sup>260</sup>

In fact, Guzmán’s *Generaciones* is overtly critical of this discursive tradition and political fad for erudition, often describing nobles as figures that tragically fail to negotiate both clerical and political cultures. For example, he criticizes King Juan II whose love of poetry is described as effeminizing and damaging to his political rule. Most memorably, he mocks a contemporary writer Enrique de Villena, who in trying to be an erudite noble could not properly function in either culture: “este don Enrique ageno e remoto non solamente a la caualleria mas aun a los negoçios del mundo e al regimiento de su casa...e porque entre las otras çiençias e artes se dio mucho a la estrologia, algunos, burlando, dizian del, que sabia mucho en el çielo e poco en la tierra.” ‘This Don Enrique was alien and remote not only to chivalry but also to the business of

---

<sup>260</sup> Ibid. 466.

the world and to the rule of his house...and because amidst other sciences and arts, he gave himself much to astrology, some, mockingly, said of him, that he knew much of the heavens and little of the earth.<sup>261</sup>

Ayala's portrait in the *Generaciones*, however, is not like any of these critical takes. In the manner of the heroes and knights of the biographical tradition which tied "sapientia" and "fortitudo," Guzmán refuses to give us a true witness of Ayala's origin—or rather, he only gives us a witness of a fabulous origin that is only available *as spoken tradition*, "algunos del linaje de Ayala dizen que uienen de un infante de Aragon" 'some, from the lineage of Ayala, say that they descended from an Infante [crown prince] of Aragon.' This statement does double duty: it sets Ayala's life in a "once upon a time" of unconfirmed reports, and it asks a reader to believe it out of wonder—out of the awe which Ayala's link to the crown of Aragon evokes. Thus Ayala's life has some exemplary value—some fantastical presence—because of his links to a past of renown.

Unlike the Castilian biographical tradition, however, Guzmán makes Ayala's legendary origin explicitly a matter of belief and not an attempt to make the reader believe in its veracity: "non ley en estorias nin he dello otra çertidumbre" 'I did not read of them in stories, nor do I have of them any certitude.' Guzmán basically tells us to believe something which he knows has no objective truth. He relies on a style which he has openly criticized in the Prologue and gives us the tools to discard it by saying that there is no true oral tradition that may vouch for this fabulous claim which only appeals to our awe. This is consistent with his take on the writing of history: truth can be portrayed using fabulous claims, but those fabulous claims must not be taken as truth but as a way to doubt narratives—as distancing writer and reader from the facts they read. It is not that Guzmán's portrait tries to "immortalize great men who were valiant on

---

<sup>261</sup> Pérez de Guzmán *Generaciones* 102.

the battlefield and wise and honorable in the governing of their people.”<sup>262</sup> Quite the contrary, he uses a stylized language to make us doubt the more awe-inspiring parts of Ayala’s portrait and so critically evaluate its truth. Ayala is, therefore, portrayed as an authority because only by such a high standard would a fifteenth-century reader, wishing to inhabit both “political” and “clerical” spheres, become sufficiently estranged from the narrative so as to assure prevent him from deriving its objectivity by associating it to his lived experiences.

#### 4. Experiencing Stories as Reality: Cultural Desires and Authority in Castile

But up to what extent is readerly doubt purposely encouraged in Guzmán’s portrait of Ayala by claiming that the “authorial” synthesis of contemplative and active lives could be historically accurate? After all in Castile, the prominence of clerical culture afforded a model to understand its joining of the political and the clerical as a desire for authority and not just as the following of a fad. Particularly, the fifteenth-century emphasis on humanism as a secular virtue encouraged nobles, like Alfonso de Madrigal and Alfonso de Cartagena, to turn to the language of the Church to display their learning and their “auctoritas.”

The capital spent on acquiring ecclesiastical habit by the nobility is proof of this desire for authority. Even if they were not interested in clerical careers, nobles would go to great labor to acquire the Church’s language, journeying to Paris, Bologne, or Oxford to learn a language that was not regularly taught in Castilian schools.<sup>263</sup> Further, the entrance of Italian humanism

---

<sup>262</sup> Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, *Pen Portraits of Illustrious Castilians*, trans. Marie Gillette and Loretta Zehngut (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2003) xxvi, note 6. I do not deny that *Generaciones* certainly implied a projection of subjective judgment upon history that at times was as laudatory of its object as critical in mimicking an established biographical genre in Castilian historiography (Fernández Gallardo 428). However, Guzmán never claimed to write a history but a “memorial” of personages (Pérez de Guzmán *Generaciones* 8). This strictly means that the use of Guido’s model to make “semblanzas” ‘images’ and ‘representations’ of Spanish nobles has a narrative purpose other than stylistic representation. Guido’s structure, then, is not a laudation of the past as some critics claim but a way to have a memorial in the medieval sense of the use of memory—a mental mechanism reproduced in images and not particular images to be remembered (Rober Folger, *Generaciones y Semblanzas: Memory and Genealogy in Medieval Iberian Historiography* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2003) 101).

<sup>263</sup> Monsalvo Antón 195.

into the Peninsula prompted Castilian writers to think of the “natural” language of the nobility, the vernacular which had been valorized since Alfonso X, as harsh next to the “dulçura” ‘sweetness’ of the Latin tongue.<sup>264</sup> Through the fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries, the noble investment in learning Latin quickly overshadowed the value of a vernacular appropriation of clerical culture and supported Latinate ideals and the monopoly of its ecclesiastical structures at a truly “authorial” level.<sup>265</sup>

But aside from its influence in the desires of the nobility, the Church proved such a figure of authority because it was the only social structure in Castile whose ideal integrity was matched by its material power. Unlike other social niches—like the landed nobility, the rising merchant class, and even the crown—the Church had explicit protections built in Castilian law that protected its material and jurisdictional integrity against changing political conditions.<sup>266</sup> Those who took the “vita contemplativa” as a way of life had legal and material independence that was seldom afforded to their secular counterparts by being allowed their own “fueros” ‘laws’ and economic monopoly on capital and landed estates immune from re-appropriation by any party—even the Crown.<sup>267</sup>

This material independence made the Castilian church an authoritative embodiment of political and contemplative ways of life in two important ways. The first was economic—for example, when land appropriated only for clerical use interfered with the day to day running of the State such as the transit of trade, like sheep herding. Since the Church would not suffer lay business to cross their land without taxation, secular daily life was constantly confronted with the

---

<sup>264</sup> Peter Russell, *Traducciones y Traductores en la Península Ibérica (1400-1500)* (Barcelona: Bellaletra, 1985) 13.

<sup>265</sup> Julio Santoyo “El Siglo XIV. Traducciones y reflexiones sobre la traducción.” *La Traducción en España. Ss xiv-xvi*, ed. Roxana Recio (Leon: Universidad de Leon, 1995) 24.

<sup>266</sup> Nieto Soria 30-31.

<sup>267</sup> Clara Estow, *Pedro the Cruel of Castile* (New York: Brill, 1995) 61-62.

economic impact of an entity which it could not change.<sup>268</sup> Further, amortization laws kept a continuous siphon of secular goods and lands into clerical hands because the Church was allowed not to sell their lands in payments of debts; the ecclesiastical state became virtually immune to regal or political intervention, and its economic homogeneity became an unavoidable experience to any member of the nobility.<sup>269</sup>

The second way in which the Church was a figure of political authority was felt through the presence of the so-called *Orders*. These groups were religious armed forces which, unlike those of feudal lords, had the same income exceptions and landed autonomy of the Church. Their presence was a constant reminder that the culture of the sword was not limited to secular hands. As sitting armies without a crusading purpose, the *Orders* literally usurped the role of a sword bearer from the secular powers.<sup>270</sup> Their constant military readiness, without an explicit Papal directive, made these armies more dangerous than their other European counterparts like the Knights Hospitaller or Knights Templar. Unlike these, the *Orders* were exempted from fealty to a higher power within the Church or explicit crusading purpose by secular law and could be deployed by anyone on the right side of ecclesiastical favor.<sup>271</sup>

Because of the political autonomy of the Church, it was not too “marvelous” to imagine the authority of a secular cleric or a contemplative knight in fifteenth-century Castile. Nobles understood that the Church could authoritatively embody the active and contemplative ideals in what they merely thought of as a trend, and they tailored the symbols of power accordingly. A good example of this secular wish towards clericalization is the relation of the Castilian nobility

---

<sup>268</sup> Nieto Soria 99-104.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid. 106-109.

<sup>270</sup> Estow 63-64.

<sup>271</sup> The kings themselves supported the jurisdiction of such *Orders* beginning with the 1371 Cortes de Toro in which no secular court could intervene with clerical jurisdiction. (Nieto Soria 110). The *Santa Hermandad* ‘Holy Brotherhood’ used by Isabel the Catholic as a police force, for example, relied in its structure and make up from many smaller military orders throughout the fifteenth century (Ibid. 180).

to the mendicant orders like the Franciscans. The Franciscans had such economic and military power that nobles and monarchs, like Enrique II, would attach Franciscan iconography to their armaments as a type of cultural veneration.<sup>272</sup>

What this suggests, however, is that the joining of the contemplative and active lives as a source of political authority in Castile was neither a marvelous fairy tale nor a common experience of every subject. Rather, it was a “maravilla” ‘marvelous’ idea for one group (the secular nobles who were limited to using contemplation for political goals) because of its quotidian reality for another (the learned clerics who, because of their political might, could pursue a contemplative life). Ayala’s portrait, therefore, details his political and clerical prowess as “legendary” because Guzmán’s noble culture would have understood their wish as a form material nearness. We can restate this experience thusly: Guzmán’s readers saw in their everyday encounter with clerico-political authority a tantalizing absence of what they wanted to attain. In painting a “true” but “legendary” figure, Guzmán’s portrait of Ayala was not so much a wonderful fiction but a caricature of reality fitted to the reader’s everyday desires.

This may seem an obvious quality of any “historical” narrative: that it portray an idea while saying something objective about its world. Yet, as Paul Ricoeur makes clear, this type of fictionalization of history is commonly implied when a reader approaches a work and not, as Guzmán shows, explicitly denoted by the historian. This is because the idealization of the “here and now” as history cannot work as 1) a replacement for a reader’s notion of verisimilitude (since this would defeat the point of making a reader buy into a subjective interpretation of reality by replacing reality with what the reader knows to be fiction), and 2) as an explicit reflection of a writer on the craft of writing (since this would make clear to the reader the writer’s intent to filter his subjective experiences as objective reality). In essence, a historian

---

<sup>272</sup> Ibid. 239-243.

cannot tell a reader that he will violate the narrative pact of verisimilitude because a reader would not believe his story as a real event. Guzmán's notion of history, however, does precisely that. It voices a known cultural ideal as a principle for narrative creation when it shows the mix of clerical and political life in an uncertain "legendary" status to what should be a factual account. Consequently, the portrait's rhetoric makes the reader question the *principle* of its narrative construction by openly using culturally situated ideologies as ways to construe a supposedly "objective" history.

#### 5. True Events: the Trastamaran Revolution

This is not to say that Guzmán's *Generaciones y Semblanzas* merely plays readerly expectations against one another without prompting its readers to think of the portraits as historical depiction of events. After all, the people it portrays were known to its readers as influential to their society and, given the closeness of the Castilian court, may have been vividly remembered as family members. Further, because *Generaciones* depicted lives from the recent past, a reader would have more of an incentive to think of Ayala's portrait as depicting a "true" and not a "stylized" access to reality.

In fact, Guzmán makes it clear that the Chancellor's life had a real effect in the reader's culture by contextualizing it with the life of two kings, Pedro I and Enrique II: "Ouo grant lugar açerca de los reyes en cuyo tienpo fue, ca, seyendo moço, fue bien quisto del rey don Pedro, e, despues, del rey don Enrique el Segundo fue de su conseio e amado del" "He had a great place close to the kings in whose time he was, that, while being a young man, he was well loved of the king Don Pedro, and, later, he was of the council of the king Don Enrique the Second and loved by him."<sup>273</sup> This type of contextual dating not only situates Ayala in an "actual" history, but it introduces the first judgment about Ayala's character—that he was a man worthy to be loved.

---

<sup>273</sup> Pérez de Guzmán *Generaciones* 41.

This suggests that, in the portrait, Guzmán wishes to depict a “real” person and not just play on readerly expectations of verisimilitude. If Pedro I and Enrique II esteemed the Chancellor enough to love him, Ayala’s laudable characteristics, no matter how fantastical, should be worth taking at face value.

Nevertheless, there persists a type of stylization evident in Guzmán’s dating of Ayala’s portrait to the reign of two monarchs. First, the signifier “amado” ‘loved’ syntactically bridges the time from one king to another (Pedro to Enrique) and from one point in time of Ayala’s life to the next (from youth to adulthood). This means that Ayala served Pedro I “seyendo moço” ‘being a young man,’ and that he willingly counseled Enrique II as an “older” man.<sup>274</sup> The Chancellor’s service to the kings, therefore, distinguishes the love which he received from Enrique and Pedro implicitly. As a “moço” ‘youth,’ Ayala could not return love to Pedro with the same intensity that, in his maturity, he could give to Enrique.<sup>275</sup>

The use of “amado” ‘loved’ as a syntactic bridge between youth and maturity is not inconsequential. In dividing Ayala’s age and his role in the court from friend to the king to that of advisor, the signifier “amado” silences the real events of Ayala’s life that caused him to be loved. Thus the portrait does not explicitly detail how Ayala deserved Enrique’s favor as an adult man; it does not even say that the Chancellor went on to serve his heirs, Juan I and Enrique III, in his old age as a counselor, knight, and fighter and by their help was ransomed from political

---

<sup>274</sup> For medieval Castile, “moçedad” ‘youth’ lasted well into what we would consider adulthood. As Juan Garcia Castrojeriz in his translation and commentary to Giles of Rome’s *Regimine Principum* notes: “los omnes vienen a su edad complida, que es ser varón, que dura desde los veintiocho fasta los cincuenta annos” ‘men come to their full age, which is to be a mature man, that lasts from twenty eight to fifty’ (See Juan Garcia Castrojeriz, *Glosa Castellana al Regimiento de Príncipes de Egidio Romano*, 3 vols., ed. Juan Beneyto Perez (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1947) 2.199). Ayala would be only two years into his maturity when he switched sides to support Enrique II in 1365.

<sup>275</sup> As shown by Juan Manuel, the standard exemplum for this was Roboam 1 Kings 12:6-11: “falleredes en la Biblia que, por razón que el rey Roboam, fijo del rey Salamón, non quiso creer los consejeros amigos de su padre et créo los sus consejeros mancebos, perdió para siempre...el reino et el señorío del pueblo de Ysrael” ‘You will find in the bible that, because King Roboam, son of Solomon, did not wish to believe the counselors friends of his father and believed his own young counselors, he lost forever...the kingdom and the lordship over the people of Israel’ (Juan Manuel, *Libro Infinito*, ed. Carlos Mota (Madrid: Cátedra, 2003) 155).

imprisonment.<sup>276</sup> In other words, Ayala's age and service reveal his closeness and growing maturity to the service of one monarch via an implicit change, and yet we never learn when or what impelled him to grow closer to Enrique's cause.

In effect, Guzmán removes the details of Ayala's life, which could relate to the experiences of the reader despite using these details to make a point about the Chancellor's life. Ayala's life is therefore timed through silence, hidden away between his "moçedad" 'youth' and his political career as a member of the king's "conseio" 'council.' This silence is significant at least for a reader who saw the love of the two kings as important to the verisimilitude of Ayala's character. For the event which Guzmán's portrait glosses over implicitly is not only an important part of the Chancellor's life but also an important event in the history of Castile: the first deposition of a king by a "popular" movement, namely the Trastamaran Revolution of 1369.

In order to understand how the Trastamaran Revolution registered for readers and how it affected the writing of "true" stories, we need to go into some detail about the cultural discourses which the Trastamaran ascendancy, which Ayala was clearly a part of, put into place. The Revolution receives its name from the Castilian nobility's successful supplanting of Pedro I with the eldest son of his father's mistress—Enrique Trastamara. Although historians disagree on its causes, they all agree that Enrique's success had no ideological or legal precedent in Castile given that Pedro had legitimately held power for close to twenty years and Enrique himself was not the closest kin to the crown. Consequently, removing Pedro from the throne required more than a refashioning of the power structure in Castile; it required a re-conceptualization of the legitimacy of sovereign authority. Because of this, historians have argued that the Trastamaran cause represented a "revolution" in the fullest sense of the term, not only in supplanting one

---

<sup>276</sup> Constance Wilkins and Heanon Wilkins, "Estudio Preliminar," *Corónica de Pedro I*, eds. Constance L. Wilkins and Heanon Wilkins (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1985) vii-viii.

government with another but in changing the cultural discourses surrounding the idea of authority itself.<sup>277</sup>

How this change of political authority also affected the general discourse on authority can be surmised from the ways in which Enrique's supporters convinced the Church and the nobility to topple the sitting king.<sup>278</sup> Trastamaran propaganda portrayed Pedro as both a tyrant—an enemy of the people—and an evil king—an enemy of the faith.<sup>279</sup> This synthesis may seem an inevitable form of vilification, but in the medieval mind, particularly in the Castilian notion of kingship, such joint accusations were uncommon to justify rebellion. For example, a ruler's political failures were often excused as divine providence. In the same manner, his "amoral" actions would be justified as necessary for the state's political well being.

Before Enrique's ascendancy, there simply was no precedent in Castile to think of the sovereign as individually bound to maintain the common good and so able to be deposed if he violated it.<sup>280</sup> For example, the fourteenth-century famed Castilian writer Juan Manuel, although being in open rebellion to Alfonso XI, tells his own son: "Et si por aventura entendiere... que [el rey] es de la manera de los tirannos, comoquier que el rey sea tal, pues el rey es señor natural, dével servir quanto pudiere" "And if by chance [a subject] understands that [the king] is of the manner of tyrants, nevertheless because the king is a natural lord, [a subject] should serve him in as much as he can."<sup>281</sup> The Castilian translation of *De Regimine* given to Pedro I as a crown

---

<sup>277</sup> For a short of these arguments, see Luis Suárez Fernández, *Monarquía Hispana y Revolución Trastamara* (Madrid: Taravilla, 1994).

<sup>278</sup> Julio Valdeon Baroque, *Enrique II de Castilla: La Guerra Civil y La Consolidación del Regimen (1366-1371)* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1966) 90.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. 98-99 and Nieto Soria 44-45.

<sup>280</sup> In Castile, there was no precedent for limiting the power of the sovereign under the auspices of his tyranny as in England or France, particularly because the king derived authority from himself. This is reflected in the coronation of all Castilian kings by their own hands, and more importantly, in the Castilian adaptation of Aristotelian political theory into the vernacular, which unlike England, France, or Italy, used it to justify a more central form of government.

<sup>281</sup> Juan Manuel 141.

prince justifies tyranny in the same light: “Tan bien los malos príncipes como los buenos han el poderío de Dios...Onde podemos decir... que todos los príncipes tan bien los buenos como los malos son ministros de Dios e de la Iglesia, ca de la mano de la Iglesia tienen e toman el cuchillo” ‘The bad princes as well as the good have dominion from God...from which we can say...that all princes the good as well as the bad are ministers of God and of the Church, because from the hand of the Church they hold and take the sword.’<sup>282</sup>

We might think that this type of “religious” support of the sovereign’s tyrannical actions would be counteracted if the monarch was not morally aligned with the Church’s interest. Yet even the Church would suffer the apostasy of a king to prevent anarchy. For example, Augustinus Triumphus—a fervent supporter of Papal power over secular rulers—would defend infidel and apostate rulers’ right to their own land even if they rebelled against the Church thusly: “dominium unius super alterum inter beneficia naturalia computatur... talia beneficia naturae omnibus bonis et malis largiatur, quia solem suum oriri facit super bonos et malos, et pluit super iustos et iniustus.” ‘Amidst the natural goods is reckoned the dominium of one over another...it is bestowed to good and evil such goods of nature, because he makes his sun rise over the good and the evil, and it rains over the just and the unjust.’<sup>283</sup> At worse, the Church’s position was that tyranny and apostasy were forms of divine punishment for the evils of the general populace as Juan Manuel writes in his *Libro Infinito*: “Et quando el pueblo yerra contra Dios et non le sirven como deven, dales Dios reys torticeros et crueles, et codiciosos et complidores de sus voluntades, et desordenados et destroydores del pueblo. Et tales reys como estos non son llamados reys, mas son llamados tirannos.” ‘And when the people errs against God, and does not serve him like they should, God gives them warped and cruel kings, and

---

<sup>282</sup> Garcia Castrojeriz 2.121-123.

<sup>283</sup> Qtd. in Michael Wilks, *The Problem of Sovereignty in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) 415 note 1.

desirous and fulfillers of their own wills, and disordered and destroyers of the people. And such kings, like these, are not called kings, but are called tyrants.<sup>284</sup>

Therefore, the Trastamaran discourse against Pedro was not only novel but it also showed a subtle understanding of this long tradition in not assuming that Pedro's tyranny and apostasy were sufficient grounds to remove him. As the historian Luís Suárez Fernández has argued, the Trastamaran supporters knew channeled Pedro's tyranny and apostasy into a third problem—into the illegitimacy of his brand of authority.<sup>285</sup> The rallying cry of Enrique's supporters synthesized both images of Pedro—as a sinner and as a tyrant—into a third one of him as an *enemy*: “tirano malo *enemigo* de Dios e de la su sancta Madre Iglesia” ‘evil tyrant enemy of God and of his holy Mother Church.’<sup>286</sup>

In Trastamaran discourse, Pedro's evil actions were the embodiment of a form of authority inimical to the very life of the State. For example, the execution of rebellious nobles became specifically the persecution of “hijosdalgos” ‘noble sons,’ and so represented more than murder and despotism but the very peril of ending the state's future by killing its progeny. Pedro's disfavor of older nobles, more than unjust or prideful, was represented as the banishment of the State's very blood by the extermination of entire noble lines. His unpopular taxes were not only attacked as the bypassing of Castile's legislative body, the Cortes, or the refusal of charity to the poor but as a denial of the state's nourishment. Even the most effective accusation against him, his personal favor to Moors and Jews did not suffice as a lone attack against the king but had to be framed as support for Moorish and Jewish “enemies” of the State even when such “enemies” had long safe guarded the state's borders and served as its financiers. Pedro was not

---

<sup>284</sup> Juan Manuel 138.

<sup>285</sup> Suárez Fernández *Monarquía* 25.

<sup>286</sup> See Vicente Álvarez Palenzuela, *Historia de España de la Edad Media* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2002) 670-671 and Valdeon Baroque 96-98.

just labeled a tyrant but “aquel malo destruydor de los regnos” ‘that evil man destroyer of the kingdoms.’ It was the concept of authority which Pedro’s rule represented—a concept characterized by central governance and the equating of the image of the Crown with the effects of power—and not merely his abuse of it that was characterized as evil.<sup>287</sup>

What the Trastamaran’s provided as a solution to Pedro’s absolute evil was a joining of the idea of a good king to his practical policies. This is evidenced by how Trastamaran partisans would remember the Revolution in apocalyptic terms—as a coming of kingdom of heaven in which the good was coterminous with the real.<sup>288</sup> The Trastamaran policies immediately following Pedro’s downfall seem to confirm this desire to unite a single idea of Castile with more “democratic” and “Christian” political practices. To redress the apostasy of Pedro’s alleged love for Jews and Moors, Enrique II impounded Jewish property in Toledo as his first act as monarch, and in celebrating his final victory over Pedro in the 1369 Cortes de Toro, he supported legislation proposed by a large anti-Semitic contingent that wanted to limit Jewish rights and mark their bodies so that they may be segregated from the community.<sup>289</sup> Further, to counteract the former tyranny of the state, Enrique used a system of devolutions, the “mercedes enriquinas” ‘Henriquean favors,’ which empowered the nobility at the expense of the Crown—so that by the end of his regency, the king was economically and militarily weaker than his vassals and, unlike Pedro, wholly subservient to the will of the “people” in so far as the “people” were understood as Christian upper-class subjects.<sup>290</sup>

---

<sup>287</sup> Carlos Estepa Díez Carlos, “Rebelión y rey legítimo en las luchas entre Pedro I y Enrique II,” *Lucha política. Condena y legitimación en la España medieval* (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2004) 56.

<sup>288</sup> For example, in the *Baladro del Sabio Merlin* and the French *Liber ostensor* (Isabelle Rousseau, Isabelle. “La Prophétie comme outil de Légitimation,” *Lucha política. Condena y legitimación en la España medieval* (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2004) 86, 89).

<sup>289</sup> Valdeon Baroque 330.

<sup>290</sup> Enrique’s harshness explains the easy re-acceptance of Pedro by the different metropolitan areas after his brief victory in Nájera, like Burgos, Toledo, and Seville (Ibid. 163 and Estepa Díez 60).

It would be wrong, however, to generalize that the rebels were fully successful in having the general populace (or even themselves) believe that their own salvific take on the Revolution was part of the Crown's agenda. Enrique still openly adopted the same centralizing tactics that had soured the nobility and the church over Pedro's rule. For example, he continued to use non-Christian, middle-class subjects as a counterbalance to ecclesiastical and secular interests at court or at large. Following a long line of Castilian kings preceding Pedro, he refused to banish Jews from his newly created court, and to the chagrin of his supporters, he ordered the Jewish debts incurred during the Revolution to be paid during Castile's war with Portugal.<sup>291</sup> In this, Enrique's policies were a more consistent protection of non-Christian interests than that of his immediate predecessor. Just two years earlier Pedro, the accused "ennobler of Jews and Moors," notoriously sold entire Jewish neighborhoods into slavery as a way of alleviating the financial stress of the Crown without demanding payment from the nobility which supported him.<sup>292</sup>

Given the tenuous balance of power in Castile, these "hypocritical" policies by the Trastamaran usurper were inevitable. Enrique, like most Castilian monarchs, needed the zeal behind religious purism to rally the population to his continuous wars against not only the Muslims but also the multiple European monarchs who bordered his realm and the nobles who, because of Castile's size, could easily deflect from his allegiance. However, because Muslims and Jews were communities directly under his protection and because the Jews particularly provided the liquid capital to finance its wars, the Castilian monarch (like his predecessors and his successors) had a vested interest in looking after their welfare. Enrique was so adept at protecting his interests in infidel communities that his Jewish subjects turned to him to safeguard them from the wave of anti-Semitism which his propaganda against Pedro had inflamed. In the

---

<sup>291</sup> Valdeon Baruque 331.

<sup>292</sup> Estow 173.

words of Moisés ha-Cohen “Nuestras vidas y bienestar dependen de la prosperidad del estado bajo cuyo gobierno vivimos...¿cómo puede un régimen tal ser llamado malo y no un regimen de merced y comprensión?” ‘Our lives and welfare depend on the prosperity of the state under whose government we live...How can such a rule be called evil and not a rule of mercy and understanding?’<sup>293</sup>

From this we can gather that, despite tying an idea of Castile to “Christian” and more “democratic” policies, the discourse which Enrique II was able to disseminate (more than any monarch before him) was a divorcing of the everyday realities of politics from the idealized image of the State’s operation. Despite all his propaganda, the Jew, Moor, Church, and nobility continued to serve as pawns in the king’s attempt to control the State, being the helping friend at one time and the infidel enemy at the other.<sup>294</sup> Whereas prior monarchs had constantly been forced to play a balancing act between Christians and infidels or between the centralizing forces of the State and the feudal nobility, by claiming a type of unified Christian ideal and then failing to deliver on it, Enrique turned necessity into virtue; his rhetoric channeled the increasing resentment of economic and military oppression as symbolic hatred towards the non-Christian Other while his policies, for the most part, continued the status quo in the everyday reality of most Castilians, including that of his closest advisors.<sup>295</sup>

The separation of an ideal of what the king should be and what he could really accomplish decidedly changed the way politics was done in Castile. For instance, the anti-Semitism and anti-tyrannical ideology that Enrique deployed sparked populist movements against the perceived oppression of the Jews as citizens, like their beloved deliverer, took justice

---

<sup>293</sup> Qtd. in José María Monsalvo Antón, *Teoría y evolución de un conflicto social. El antisemitismo en la Corona de Castilla en la Baja Edad Media* (Madrid: Siglo xxi, 1985) 243.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid. 248.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid. 235.

into their own hands. Thus in 1391, the populace began a systematic attack on Jewish communities with the object of conversion or extermination but also with a desire to end the State's harsh taxation; these movements, despite their revolutionary rhetoric, were not geared against the hierarchical structures of the State but against the symbols which the State, in its zeal for change, had demonized. The Pogroms of 1391 were a way of finishing Enrique's revolution without him: a way of ending centralized economic dominance and the figures which were symbolically linked to political liquidity of capital—the Jewish communities.<sup>296</sup>

During his regency, Enrique himself took steps to slow the anti-Semitic zeal and will to self-governance that his rhetoric had inflamed. This can be seen in the censoring of the popular preacher Fernand Martinez: “Nos el Rey fassemos saber a vos Ferrant Martines...quell Aljama de los judíos de la muy noble çibdad de Sevilla se nos enbiaron querellar, e disen que vos que les fassedes mal e dapno e que andades predicando contra ellos...que non ossedes nin vos *entremetiessedes* de judgar pleyto que tañiesse a judío cualquier manera.” “We the king make known to you Ferdinand Martinez...that the Jewish ghetto of the very noble city of Seville, have complained to us, and tell us that you do them harm and evil and that you are preaching against them...[we order] that you do not dare nor *mettle* to judge a matter that harms a Jew in anyway’ [My emphasis].<sup>297</sup> As Enrique's order makes clear by condemning Martínez's “mettling,” the discourses put in motion by the Revolution did more than ignite the masses: they helped separate the praxis of authority away from the traditional ways in which it was justified, allowing common citizens to take the rule of law away from the elite and into their own hands. To put it in

---

<sup>296</sup> This explains why the chronicles refer to the leaders of the violence as “omes rusticos” ‘rustic men’ and why the opportune moment of such uprisings was a lapse in the system of government coupled with an increase of economic hardships for the lower classes (Ibid. 258-261). Such tie of intolerance with class struggles was not unheard of in the late Middle Ages, notably in England in 1381 where popular revolts against taxation also were occasions of violence against immigrants, particularly the Flemish.

<sup>297</sup> Qtd. in Ibid. 246.

other words, the Revolution created a space by which a subject could act as if he was a king and yet not take over the role of the king. Enrique's discourse allowed his populace to believe that the symbol of authority was not necessarily grounded in its proper exercise.

The silence surrounding the Revolution's role in Ayala's portrait now becomes clear: the Revolution had disconnected the symbol of authority from its praxis, and in turn, it had created a space in which "authority" need not be voiced through traditional discourse. As a consequence, if Ayala had "abtoridad," Guzmán need not show it through accurate "relatos" 'tales' of the Chancellor's actions but by making the reader disconnect the image of Ayala from his real self. Guzmán, taking up the Trastamaran discourse that defined the events of 1369, placed the Chancellor's most life changing experiences under erasure, because the reader's idea of "authority" relied on disassociating the representation of events from their objective reality.

#### 6. True Feelings: Apathy and Experience

From this it is not entirely clear that the Revolution's political discourse had such a direct influence over fifteenth-century literary discourse and over Guzmán's writing strategies. In fact, Guzmán's silence over the tumultuous change of power in 1369 could be nothing other than simply self-interested survival. Given the precarious state of his political exile, it would not have been wise for him to recall the last Revolution and deposition of a monarch. Further, although the change in power certainly meant something for the nobility, clergy, and populace who lost their lives and that of their king in it, it is not clear that such an emotion could be translated as a writing strategy eighty years later. Politicians will be politicians—even if they are medieval Christian politicians—and their failure or success in carrying out the "revolutionary" wishes of the populace which put them in power should not be considered a reflection of their impact to posterity.

But this is precisely my point: how is it possible to expect political events to be remembered (or forgotten) without a regard to their real impact? How could a king who did not deliver on his promises for symbolic unification, a king who had to bribe most of the nobility into supporting his cause with favors that never materialized, be able to secure not only his ascent to the throne but the continuation of his lineage in it? How could Enrique, not once but twice, muster noble support to end Pedro's reign and ward off another dispute to his authority from outside pretenders?<sup>298</sup> If Castilian kings simply appropriated moral and religious narratives for their purposes, if this was just the order of business, up to what extent was a moral crusade really ever believable by the Castilian nobility in the fourteenth century or legible by its posterity in the fifteenth, and what gave them any assurances that Enrique II was not simply another tyrant lauded by historians of his era but vilified by those that came after him?<sup>299</sup>

I suggest that these questions did not occur to Guzmán's readers because the success of Enrique's revolution in the minds of the Castilian nobility was also a success of *apathy* to authority in the fullest sense of the word: a lack of immediate affect to the events associated with authority or to the *pathos* of its dominant symbolic expectations. In short, Castilian culture had internalized that the symbols of authority did not need to be backed up by the actions of the authority that they represented. Despite all the propaganda, the secular and clerical audiences, whose posterity would remember the Trastamaran Revolution, knew that the unprecedented change in monarchs was the working of politics as usual.

Still if the accession of Enrique II to the throne happened in a culture that could be described as apathetic, we may wonder why this "revolution" would be so hidden in Guzmán's

---

<sup>298</sup> Valdeon Baroque 247.

<sup>299</sup> These questions require a further look at the political history of Castile, and, in particular, its parallel in England in the reign of Henry IV who managed to deploy a similar rhetoric of apathy to legitimate his authority. See Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

portrait of Ayala so as to be passed over in silence. Why are there traces of this Revolution if its political impact was meaningless? Did Guzmán's readers look at the change in monarchs apathetically, not deeming worth remembrance something as large as a civil war? Or did his readers have such an unconscious anxiety over the event that Guzmán actively sought to erase it from written history?

Given that Guzmán writes at a time when the Trastamaran line faces possible extinction by the political ineptness of Juan II and Enrique IV and that his own relationship to the Crown was precarious, it would seem that the anxiety and not apathy is what keeps the Revolution's place in Ayala's life in silence. This is proved by the implicit favoring of the Trastamaran cause in Guzmán's portrait in describing the quality of love exhibited by Ayala to Enrique and his descendants. We know that Ayala's love by one king implies his treason to another, but Guzmán passes this fact in silence. Even more, he fails to mention that Ayala's treason came with a price—his imprisonment by Pedro when Enrique's forces were provisionally defeated in Nájera.

Once again, Guzmán's writerly persona is at odds with how he proceeds to write history. In the Prologue to the *Generaciones*, he criticizes those who write the life of monarchs or nobles while these powerful men live and those who without surety of events make history look more fabulous to advance their own cause. In fact, this is his most poignant attack against the author of the popular *Corónica Sarrasina*, and why he claims that the authors of "maravillas" must be punished when they appeal to sense perception to falsify events: "Ca si por falsar un contrato de pequena contia de moneda meresçe el escriuano grant pena, quanto mas el coronista que falsifica los notables e memorables fechos" "That if to make false a contract of a small coin, the scribe deserves a great punishment, how much more the chronicler who falsifies notable and

memorable deeds.<sup>300</sup> Guzmán reasons that, just as a counterfeit contract harms the general value of contracts even if it has no value, falsifying memorable deeds in order to save face devalues the authority of truth for the general reader independently of the small benefit it may give to the writer by, say, preventing a king from exiling him for stating the harsh realities of his rule.<sup>301</sup>

Although Guzmán's Prologue, once again, makes us doubt the transparency of his own historical rhetoric, its more immediate effect, when paired with Ayala's portrait, is to criticize how the Chancellor completed his task as a historian. In the portrait, Guzmán makes it clear that Ayala had something to do with both Pedro and Enrique and that his chronicles were written under the kings that so closely affected his life. If Ayala authored his histories and if such histories depicted such a tumultuous change, we would expect that this "gran omne" 'great man' is worthy to be punished as were the false counterfeiters of marvelous histories that Guzmán berates so much simply because he catered to the love of one liege in the writing of truth.

Guzmán nevertheless provides a way for us to exculpate his uncle and greatest influence. According to Guzmán, the Chancellor does not engage in the "fazer" 'doing' or "escribir" 'writing' of history. Instead, Guzmán uses a word which commonly describes the royal authorship of chronicles to describe Ayala's writing strategies: "ordeno" 'ordered and shaped.' Guzmán writes that Ayala "ordeno la estoria de Castilla desde el rey don Pedro" 'ordered the story of Castile since the king Don Pedro.' The most immediate analogue for Guzmán's phrasing is how Alfonso X describes his "royal" involvement in construing the *General Estoria*:

El rey faze un libro, no porque l'él escriba con sus manos, mas porque compone las rezones d'él, e las emienda et yegua e enderesça, e muestra la manera de cómo se deven fazer, e de sí escrívelas qui él manda... Otrossí quando dezimos 'el rey faze un palacio,' o alguna obra, non es dicho porque lo él fiziesse con sus manos, mas porquel' mando fazer.

The king makes a book, not because he writes it with his hands, but because he composes the reasons in it, and he emends them and arrives and straightens them, and shows how they should be

---

<sup>300</sup> Pérez de Guzmán *Generaciones* 4.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.* 4-5.

done, and from himself, whom he commands writes it...Also, when we say 'a king makes a palace,' or any work, it is not because he made it with his hands but because he commanded it made.<sup>302</sup>

According to Guzmán, Ayala fashioned historical truth by the will of his authority, but he did not record it or bring it to be by his own labors. In other words, he is not a writer of history. Like a king, he is the ideal and not material cause of the story's creation. The Chancellor, in his role as a writer of a chronicle, has authored a chronicle without physically writing it and so may still write "true" things even if his contextual circumstances could make him biased.

Guzmán's description of Ayala's royal-like authorship is not what we may consider proof of cultural apathy. Guzmán knows and seems to imply that Ayala was responsible in the shaping of a particular historic image of Castile. This was proved by the histories of the Revolution which circulated in the fifteenth century. Ayala's *Corónica del Rey Don Pedro*, although the most disseminated version of the Revolution, was not the only recognized version of the events even by Ayala's admission.<sup>303</sup> Further, there was a sufficient textual tradition for Guzmán to judge that Ayala's chronicle was not the closest one to what occurred because chronicles more favorable to Pedro than the Trastamaran version forwarded by Ayala, such as the Bishop of Jaen's *Corónica verdadera* and the anonymous *Crónica del despensero*, circulated well into the fifteenth century.<sup>304</sup> Lastly, the text of Ayala's chronicle itself was an amalgam of these sources, being compiled from "romanceros," or versified stories, about Pedro particularly *El Romancero del Rey don Pedro* and the *Cuarta Crónica General*.<sup>305</sup>

Ayala's prejudice in shaping history for a particular end was clear to Guzmán and anyone of his readers, and it is this knowledge and general doubt against the Chancellor's historical

---

<sup>302</sup> Qtd. in Ruiz García 372.

<sup>303</sup> López de Ayala *Corónica* 1.

<sup>304</sup> Estepa Díez 44-45

<sup>305</sup> For a full list of Ayala's "not-so-historical" sources and their dissemination beyond the fourteenth century, see William Entwistle, "The 'Romancero del Rey Don Pedro' in Ayala and the 'Cuarta Crónica General.'" *Modern Language Review*. 25.3 (July, 1930).

efforts that, in fact, that Guzmán counts on in creating his portrait. In saying that Ayala is a man of authority, Guzmán knows that he asks two contradictory demands of his readers: to think of Ayala as a reliable source of history according to his Prologue, but to keep him at a distance as a possible “lisonjero” ‘flatterer’ because of his vested interest in the reputation of the Trastamaran monarchs, whom he counseled and loved. Once again, the everyday realities of Ayala’s life (as an active player in the ascension of Enrique) contradict the image that Guzmán leaves us of him (as a man who, like a king, depicts the truth of what he saw). These conflicting expectations result in the suspension of the affect to what we may believe is the “real” Ayala, but paradoxically they give us a truer experience of what being Ayala entailed. They show the concept of conflict itself—a conflict inevitable for a historian who was faced with the task of writing truthful stories without angering his benefactors.

In presenting conflicting readerly expectations of Ayala’s authority, Guzmán produces more than a portrait or set of historical characteristics; he produces a fictional presence by manipulating the real emotion of confusion as a mark of Ayala’s character. This shows a type of radical *empathy* in which the writer literally has his narrative embody the persona of Ayala by making us question the events which he narrates in the same manner that the Chancellor would. Guzmán paints the life of a historian who objectively sought to narrate the story of a deeply troubling event under the watchful eye of a monarch and under full knowledge of his own complicity in the death of a king who also loved him. This parallels Guzmán’s own role as a writer questioning his own objectivity by introducing readerly doubt and distancing our emotional connection to the facts that we read.

The mimicry of conflicting expectations means to replicate Ayala’s subjective circumstance and so appears as an immediate witnessing of history. However, it does so—in the

manner of Enrique's revolutionary discourse—by distancing what we read from what we expect. In portraying his own difficulties in representing Ayala's real world and his ideal portrait, Guzmán embodies the conflict of the Chancellor's role as a historian caught between Church and State, between history and propaganda, between a sovereign and his usurper. This intervention cannot avoid a personal investment of a reader's position to the object of analysis and so sympathy for the truth depicted in the act of the depiction itself as if the reader could remember, through Guzmán's style, how Ayala lived, wrote, and precariously but successfully negotiated political exigencies in his quest to "order" a history of Castile.<sup>306</sup>

Guzmán's description engenders sympathy—an immediate relation—towards the way which Ayala encountered the world by generating apathy or distance through the reader's questioning of his form of historical narration. A reader sees in Guzmán's conflicting statements about the writing of history, the same type of conflict that Ayala had to deal with under Trastamaran discourse; he sees the impossibility of depicting truth while dealing with everyday reality. However, he does so by distancing his immediate readerly experiences from the way he portrays events. Ayala's character embodies clerical and political virtues, but because he is an "abtoridad," his embodiment only seems like a the stuff of legends; he is said to influence the past by serving two kings but the details of his influence are glossed over in silence. In the same way in which Trastamaran discourse separates an idea of authority from its lived reality, no "witnessed" detail can help us have an idea of who Ayala was.

---

<sup>306</sup> As Robert Folger puts it in exporting the concept of *memoria* present in Guido's *Historia* in Guzmán's crafting of *semblanza*: "it is clear to realize that *semblanzas* are potentially instrumental in establishing a commemorative co-presence between the subjects of the *semblanzas* and the readership...The noblemen portrayed in *Generaciones* are exclusively acquaintances of the author's, some of them his relatives. Pérez de Guzmán writes *semblanzas* on the occasion of their death, organizing them in the form of a register of concise entries which typically end with an *obit* formula. As a matter of fact, *Generaciones* is an obituary of sorts...The biographical facet of *Generaciones*, then, is not, as scholarship has it, the writing of memorable life stories or psychological portraits, but the re-presentation of important personalities of his times 'as if they were alive'"(114-115).

## 7. Past Truth: Experiencing Time in Ayala's *Corónica del Rey Don Pedro*

Guzmán's portrait immerses the reader in what Ayala must have lived through in the past by altering how he experiences truth in the present. This means that his writing manipulates a readerly experience of time. Guzmán's narrative art parallels the Castilian discourse on authority following the Trastamaran Revolution because it distances symbolic expectations from real events, and we can see this discourse at work most clearly in the most popular account of this event: Pedro López de Ayala's chronicles of Castile, and in particular, the account of the Revolution in his *Corónica del Rey Don Pedro*.

Unlike what its name suggests, López de Ayala's *Corónicas* were not united into a progressive narrative of the Spanish kings from Pedro I to Enrique III.<sup>307</sup> The manuscript evidence shows that Ayala's approach to his chronicles was much more episodic, depicting time periods without thinking of a unified timeline so that the lives of the kings did not act like chapters in a book but as separate concurrent perspectives of Castile's history.<sup>308</sup> In this manner, the chronicles do not always start with a king's birth or his ascendancy to power. Rather, they overlap the telling of the rule of a monarch with that of another. For example, Enrique II is crowned king and referred to as king in the chronicle of Pedro I and not in that of his own name.<sup>309</sup>

Since the *Corónicas* maintain a personalized description of events, this approach has the surreal effect of making a limited narrator appear in two places at once. During the height of the Trastamaran war, Ayala appears to move between warring camps of Pedro and Enrique as if he was not part of the history which he so personally depicts. The consistent march of time coupled

---

<sup>307</sup> Germán Orduna, *El Arte Narrativo y Poético del Canciller Ayala* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1998) 184.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.* 157.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

with the emphasis on Ayala's first-person-like perspective presents a paradox: diachronically, it structures a series of concurrent histories omnisciently; synchronically, it undermines their "witnessed" quality by showing events that were beyond the sight of any one credible witness.

This tension heightens when Ayala describes the turning events of the Trastamaran Revolution. Although Ayala cannot give a faithful account of the events as witnessed in Pedro's camp as he, like many of the nobles he could call to verify the narrative, abandoned Pedro's side to favor the Trastamaran cause, he does not even feign verisimilitude by claiming that any other "faithful stories," from knights or lords, could verify his narrative. Instead, he foregrounds Pedro's defeat by recording events in a first-hand fashion, as if he was actively witnessing.<sup>310</sup> In contrast, when Ayala's role as a unique witness may justify a first-hand tone in narrating the events of the Revolution, he tends to rely on tropic devices (particularly that of the "mirror of princes" and the "interpreted prophecy) to make his first-hand narrative sound fictional.

For example, after the Battle of Nájera, Pedro managed briefly to regain the Castilian throne with the help of the Black Prince expelling Enrique who, after a year of power, lacked the power of the Free Companies to defend his interests. Ayala, who, along with the majority of the nobility, switched to support Enrique, became a prisoner of war in Pedro's camp; in this position, he could have plausibly provided an eye witness account of the events following Pedro's victory.<sup>311</sup> In recording the event, however, his *Corónica* eschews any personal investment from the narrator giving us what appears like a fictional account. According to Ayala, immediately after Enrique's defeat at Nájera, Pedro sends a letter to a Moorish wise man, named Benaharin, reporting the victory of his forces and the rebirth of the kingdom. In reply, the Muslim sage sends nothing less than a *speculum principum*, a mirror of princes. This epistolary manual

---

<sup>310</sup> Michel Garcia, *Obra y Personalidad del Canciller Ayala*, Estudios, Vol. 18 (Madrid: Alhambra, 1983) 44.

<sup>311</sup> For Ayala's place during the war, see Germán Orduna, "Introducción," *Rimado de Palacio*, by Pedro López de Ayala, Ed. German Orduna (Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1987) 17.

explains how Pedro should rule his kingdom and, like any member of the genre, comes complete with theoretical ruminations on sovereign rule, short illustrative fables, analogies, and exempla that the ruler may follow. Particularly, these advices are ways for Benaharin to tell Pedro that a king should temper justice with mercy when treating with his subjects.

Although this letter is clearly fictional (after all, who would believe that Benaharin really sent a complete manual on ruling upon Pedro's initial victory over Enrique II?), Ayala claims that he translated Benaharin's letter and not that he summarized it or that he derived its maxims from thinking about history. In so doing, he situates his intervention in parallel to the popular *Secretum Secretorum*, a fictional letter of Aristotle to Alexander on the secrets of ruling, translated from Arabic to Latin by John of Tripoli to his liege. As John of Tripoli prefaces his work:

When then I was with you in Antioch and this most precious pearl of philosophy was discovered, it pleased Your Lordship that it be translated from the Arabic language into Latin... I have translated with great labor and clear prose from Arabic idiomatically into Latin... this book that is not found among the Latins and but rarely among the Arabs, to your great glory and honor. The most expert prince of philosophers, Aristotle, composed this book at the request of Alexander, his pupil, who asked that he come to him and faithfully reveal to him the secret of certain arts... Aristotle was not able to come because of his old age and the heaviness of his body... Wishing to satisfy the emperor and also to safeguard the secrets of these arts, he spoke in enigmas and figurative locutions, teaching extrinsically the philosophical doctrine pertaining to kingship.<sup>312</sup>

Although the *Secretum Secretorum* is not the only *speculum*, its form is by far the most disseminated, and, as far as Ayala, it is the closest analogue to his pseudo-letter from Benaharin. In its Prologue, John of Tripoli becomes a translator of hidden knowledge which Aristotle wrote in a letter because—just like Ayala has Benaharin narrate—he had engagements that kept him from personally advising his liege.

---

<sup>312</sup> Qtd. in Steven Williams, *The Secret of Secrets*. Trans. Steven Williams (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003) 364.

Of course, Ayala's "translation" certainly gives verisimilitude to his history by adjoining a "first-hand" document to the narrative. However, his frame to the epistle is too much of a trope of political *specula* to be taken at face value by any reader versed in political discourse:

Asi fue que el rey don Pedro despues que la pelea de Najara fue vençida, enbio sus cartas a vn moro de Granada de quien el fiaua, e era su amigo, e era grant sabidor e grand filosofo e consegero del rey de Granada, el qual auia nonbre Benaharin, en que le fizo saber commo auia vençido en pelea a sus enemigos, e commo estaua ya en su regno muy aconpanado de muchas gentes nobles e estrannas que le vinieron ayudar. E el moro, despues que resçibio las cartas del rey, enbiole respuesta con castigos çiertos e buenos, de la qual el treslado es este: Las gracias sean dadas a Dios... Sabed que yo soy en parte del Andalozia, faziendo saber a alas gentes el vuestro poder... que si vos de tal commo yo de demandades que cunpla los vuestros complimientos commo a tal commo a vos pertenesçe, seria a mi muy graue sin alguna dubda de mas que non son en mi, nin puedo aver apartamiento para estudiar e muchos otros negoçios que me enbargan.

It was in this manner that the king Don Pedro after the fight of Najera was won, sent his letters to a moor of Granada, whom he relied on, and he was his friend, and he was a great wise man and philosopher and councilor to the king of Granada., whose name was Benaharin, to whom he made known how he had conquered in a war with his enemies, and how he was now in his kingdom accompanied of many great noble and foreign people who came to aid him. And the Moor, after he received the letters of the king, sent him an answer with true and good examples, of which the translation is this: Thanks be to God... you should know that I am in Andalusia, letting people know your power... that if I, just as you demand, come to fulfill my honor to you, just as you deserve, it would be too grave without casting a great doubt to those who are not of my part, nor could I take leave to study and do other business that press me.<sup>313</sup>

If the letter was not thought to be tropic and hence not real, it would be hard to see it as a proper letter for Enrique or his supporters to read since it contradicts the Trastamaran depiction of Muslims as enemies of the State. Ayala's *speculum* exemplifies Benaharin's role as a wise advisor whose "castigos çiertos e buenos" 'true and good teachings' should be heeded by anyone. The infidel Benaharin does not advise incorrectly or in an "un-Christian" manner. Quite the contrary, the narrator says that, because Pedro "no se allego a las cosas en ella contenidas" 'did not approach the things in contained in it,' he fared much worse in the coming conflict.

The letter's tropic gestures, however, do not mean that it was read as a way of representing the historical political maxims which Pedro had ignored, i.e. Benaharin was not simply a mouthpiece of Trastamaran grievances. For example, Benaharin counsels Pedro to

---

<sup>313</sup> López de Ayala *Corónica* 174-175.

continue his alliance with the Muslims as it is a gift of God and bane against his enemies, suggesting that Muslims are necessary to the welfare of the Castilian State.<sup>314</sup> Further,

Benaharin blames the nobles themselves with the same rhetoric they used against Pedro:

bien sabedes que los christianos fizieron contra vos vergonnosa cosa que sea suma obra de dezir e fazer, en guisa que non se puedan lauar, sy non despues de grand tienpo, e non la ouieron de fazer por mengua de vuestra fidalguia, nin por vos non seer pertenesçiente a sennorio real...se catan e se veen por pecadores non por manera de los penitençiar, ca non pueden seer conosçidos los del vuestro estado real syn ellos, pues sennor obrad contra ellos el reues de las maneras por que vos aborresçieron.

You know well that the Christians did a shameful deed against you, that would be grave thing to say and do, in a way that cannot be washed, if not after the passage of great time, and they did not do it because of a lack of your honor, nor because kingly lordship did not belong to you...they now know and see themselves as sinners, not in order to punish them, because the nobles of your household cannot be known without them, therefore, Lord act to them in an opposite manner of how they have detested you.<sup>315</sup>

In this “good” and “true” advice, Benaharin explicitly turns Enrique’s attack against Pedro. He links infidelity with tyranny against the Trastamaran cause: “fizieron contra vos vergonnosa cosa que sea suma obra de dezir e fazer” ‘they did against you a shameful thing that would be the worst thing to say and do.’ This judgment may seem ironic in Benaharin’s mouth, but his arguments against the legal basis of the nobles’ attack (that there was nothing in Pedro’s royal character or management of the realm that merited the uprising), coupled with the moral and theoretical exempla he puts forth regarding governance, make a solid case why in betraying Pedro the Trastamaran nobles should “se veen por pecadores” ‘see themselves as sinners.’

However, the wide dissemination of Ayala’s *Corónicas* in Trastamaran Castile means that Benaharin’s role as an infidel wise man was not inimical to the interests of Enrique’s successors. Therefore, the letter’s origin from a Muslim wise man has more to do with a common way of supporting a tradition of wisdom literature than with attempting to convince the reader of

---

<sup>314</sup> “Sabed que el que oy demandere pelea con vos, veyendo vuestra bien querencia con los moros, vuestros vezinos, e auiedo quanta gente e noble tenedes, sería vençido con ayuda de Dios...Pues agradeçed a Dios por ello e guardad esta cosa e esta grand amistad.” ‘And know that whoever today would ask to fight you, seeing your good friendship with the Moors, your neighbors, and having so many people and noble that you have, would be conquered with the help of God... Therefore, thank God for that and keep this thing and this great friendship’ (Ibid).

<sup>315</sup> Ibid. 176.

a particular truth via the habit of moral authority. Indeed, the Muslim foundations of exemplary discourse were particularly influential in the Iberian Peninsula as compendia of advice, like the *Calila e Dimna*, *Baarlam e Josafat*, *Disciplina Clericalis*, and the *Sendebär*, were directly credited to literary tradition of the al-Andalus.

For the educated Castilian noble, the tropic use of the Arab “wise man” would not only make Benaharin’s letter a proper portrayal of political theory but it would also help to distance the real context of Ayala’s life from the contents of the letter. This, however, means that Benaharin’s advice would not comment upon Pedro’s particular policies but on his failure to follow universal rules about governance, and in turn, it would divorce his removal of power from the active involvement of the Trastamaran cause. Because the tropic device of the *speculum* simply allowed Ayala to authorize his statements about governing, its inclusion in the chronicle effectively removes the contextual cues that make this a unique moment in history—deposing a monarch from the throne because of his enmity towards the State’s well-being.

Therefore, it is hard to assume both that Benaharin’s *speculum* conveys Ayala’s personal perspective on the events of the Revolution and also that it helps his audience justify their actions via an “authorial” philosophical intervention. On the one hand, if Pedro serves as a historical example of what Ayala’s audience should not do, then he does so because that audience can recognize explicit historical criticism in Ayala’s letter—a criticism which the letter explicitly contextualizes against the Trastamaran nobles who sinned against the king. On the other hand, if the *speculum* serves as a general way in which Pedro or Enrique need to behave toward their subjects, then one loses the historical specificity of Pedro’s fall—the condemnation of his lack of attention to the precepts within Benaharin’s letter. As a result, this fictional *speculum* simultaneously asks Ayala’s readers to divorce themselves from history (so as to not be

condemned by the moral precepts advanced in the letter) and to insert themselves into history (so as to relate to the narrative to their involvement of an evil monarch from the throne).

#### 8. Reading without Time: Portraying Truth in History

To a Trastamaran reader, the events depicted in Ayala's chronicle simply could not have a direct historical relationship to its moral meaning. That is, their complexity made it difficult to read in them a "moral" of the unfolding of history. Following the Prologue to the *Corónica*, this fictional letter appears to be true only in relating to universal ideals—to an atemporal plane—and not from reflecting the personal, lived experiences of its teller. Yet following the narrator's way of presenting events in a personal viewpoint, these universal ideals are presented as if they occurred to someone in sometime. As such, the only way to read Benaharin's letter following Ayala's guidelines is in the most rudimentary level without interpreting it generally as a traditional *speculum* or specifically as an account of history. In essence, Benaharin's letter must be read as an actual letter delivered to the king at a particular time regardless of how stylized and fictional it appears.

If we think of this clearly fictional letter as part of true history, what becomes apparent is that the time when Pedro receives the letter is more important than its message: after his victory at Nájera and before his final defeat at Montiel. These two battles (Nájera, where Pedro, with English help, took back his throne after fleeing the advance of Enrique's mercenaries, and Montiel, where Enrique and the French attacked a weak Pedro without his English allies) coincide with the rise and fall of the king and allow the letter to introduce dramatic irony to the chronicle. By the battle of Nájera, the reader knows that Pedro has run out of time to govern his country well, and therefore, that this letter arrived a little too late to have any effect on his policies or to reverse the cruelty of the policies outlined through most of the chronicle.

The tropic devices of the *speculum* help highlight the letter's un-timeliness because, by tradition, *specula* were directed not to a *rex* but to a *princeps*, to a youth still in the process of education. As Giles of Rome wrote in the *speculum* translated by Fray Juan García de Castrojeriz for a young Pedro, kings had to be educated in their infancy because “en esta edad de la ninnez toman los omnes para en su vida cuáles han de ser, buenos o malos, ca si buenas costumbres tomaren serán siempre buenos, e si malas, serán siempre malos” ‘in this age of childhood, men take what they will be in their life, good or evil; that if they take good customs, they will always be good, and if they take bad ones, they will always be evil.’<sup>316</sup> The narrative itself intensifies the sense of un-timeliness in the way it introduces Benaharin’s advice: Pedro does not ask for help, and if his news of the battle to the Moor had implicitly required it, Benaharin’s letter is a product of the mistiming of the monarch who sent his letters of joy to the wise man at a time in which he could not personally come to counsel him.

The idea of missed time even suffuses the main analogy which Benaharin’s *speculum* uses to differentiate legitimate sovereignty from illegitimate tyranny, a short exemplary fable in which Benaharin likens a king to a shepherd:

E la manera del rey con sus gentes es semejada al pastor con su ganado. Sabida cosa es el uso del pastor con su ganado, la grannd piedad que ha en el que anda a buscar la major agua e el buen pasto, e la grannd guarda de los contrarios, assi commo los lobos, trasquilar la lana desque apega, e ordenan la leche en manera que non faga danno a la vbre, nin apesgue sus carnes, nin fanbriente sus fijos. E dixo un omne a su vezino: Fulano, tu cordero leuo un lobo, e eche en pos el, e tomegelo. E dixole: Que es del, o do esta? E dixole: Degollelo e comilo. E dixole: Tu e el lobo vno sodes. E si el pastor usa desta guisa con el ganado, e lieva mala vida o se dexa de seer pastor, quanto mas deue seer el rey con los sus subditos e naturales?

And the manner of the king with his peoples is similar to the shepherd with his flock. A wise thing is the use of the shepherd with his flock, the great piety which he has in that he goes to seek the best water and the good grass, and the great care against those contrary to it—like the wolves—to take away the fleece once it starts clumping, and to milk them so that their udders will not hurt, nor damage their flesh, nor make their children hungry. And a man said to his neighbor: Neighbor, a wolf took your lamb, and I went after him, and I took him. And the other said: What happened to [the lamb], or where is it? And he said: I killed him and ate him. And the other said: You and the

---

<sup>316</sup> Garcia Castrojeriz 2.147.

wolf are one. And if the shepherd acts this way with his flock, and has a bad life or stops being their shepherd, how much should the king be with those who are his subjects and naturals.<sup>317</sup>

The exemplum's analogy is pretty clear: a shepherd profits from his flock's health just as the king should profit from his own subjects. This is because the king's subjects, like the shepherd's sheep, should be fleeced and milked only when the excess of their production harms their body by staying upon them for too long—when they require deliverance from the passage of time.

In this role, the king's actions parallel that of a time keeper, who acts to harvest the community only when it needs to be relieved of its surplus. If the king or the shepherd were to act otherwise, if their actions were to be mistimed by fleecing the lambs too soon or milking their udders too late, then they would harm their flock and behave like predators—in this case, like wolves. The short fable highlights how time makes all the difference by having the shepherd come a little too late to save the life of the lamb from the wolf but exactly on time (right after eating the dead lamb) to embody the tyrannical wolf in the eyes of his neighbor. The label “wolf” changes depending on the passage of time, and it is only when the reader understands that predatory actions cause a change in being (from shepherd to wolf) outside a proper unfolding of time that the name of the wolf becomes a true descriptor of reality.

Ayala's exemplary time is an odd construction: it not only acts through time—telling us the actions that take place—but also outside of it—soliciting us to extrapolate some truth outside these events. Unlike historical time which occurs to its subjects without memory of birth or death (and which Ayala's *Corónicas* mimic by starting *in medias res*), Ayala's exemplum explicitly evokes or “remembers” its authoritative origin in the form of a type of repeated saying: “e dixo un omne” ‘and a man said’ and sees its narrative and universal end in the form of a moral, “E si el pastor usa desta guisa... quanto mas deue seer el rey con los sus subditos e naturales” ‘and if

---

<sup>317</sup> López de Ayala *Corónica* 175-176

the shepherd operates in this way...how much more should the king be with his subjects and naturals.’ By telling us beginning and end, Ayala’s time tells us what real time cannot—and as a result, it disturbs the expected unfolding of events within a temporal, first-hand chronicle.

In the verisimilar representation of continuous historical time within a chronicle, this exemplum would always be outside of time. It would always occur as an event but as an event impossible as historical accident, as the “ventus” ‘the unseen arrival’ of “ventura” ‘chance’ common to the experience of unfolding history. This is because, although the exemplum’s circumstances merit anecdotal narration, the details within it are dictated by its always-foreseen moral resolution. In having an explicit universal end, Ayala’s exemplum makes his chronicle fail to mimic the one thing that a reader assumes when reading a history, the one thing which the act of reading has in common with the unfolding of chronological time: the unfolding of events as a constant march without a necessary beginning or end.

It is the universal message—that a king can be a predator—in a chronological setting—in the likening of Pedro’s failure at ruling—which makes the exemplum un-timely in the fullest sense of the term: outside of time (universal) and out of its time (ahistorical). And this is un-timeliness is what makes this clearly fictional narrative universally true. Even granting the innate indeterminacy of grammar within any narrated story, Ayala’s example directly conveys meaning vis-à-vis a fixed ideal without subjective appropriation. In the fable, the main thrust of the tale, “tu cordero levo un lobo,” must always signify ‘a wolf took your lamb’ and not the opposite but syntactically possible ‘your lamb took a wolf’ because the one thing which makes the exemplum a-temporal, the moral—that in eating the lamb the shepherd turns into a wolf—depends on the predatory likeness of a shepherd to a wolf and not to a lamb. Thus, reading is disciplined not to the content inside the narrative but to its form. True, Ayala’s readers could always reinterpret the

details of his text, but this exemplum operates, as an event worth repeating, only when its meaning operates outside the march of the reader's time and within universal truth, making the experience of continuous narration itself seem untimely.

This atemporality fixes a necessary meaning to the text that a reader's contingent interpretation, which depends upon the perception of a continuous flow of words upon a page, cannot obfuscate. Ayala's exemplum does not depend on readerly desire to find meaning in a small place within a narrative—it does not need the powerful to read themselves as wolves or the weak to empathize with the sheep. Further, it can do without a cultural context to convey its message. It does not need his audience to think of themselves as either the victims of Pedro's carnage or the wolves of their people, or even to think of wolves as evil and lambs as good. Rather, the only thing which Ayala's exemplum needs to be legible and to be true is for the reader to understand that the basic change introduced from shepherd to wolf will be explained within exemplary time—that in time—the exemplum will reveal its true end.

This temporal disjunction has a surprising effect on how experienced truth may be depicted objectively as a history. In his *Corónica*, Ayala elicits empathy by personalizing the narrator with a limited readerly perspective and tying the way in which we read events to the “true” ways in which a reader experiences them in time—continuously and without a necessary beginning, end, or reason to be. Even when he portrays two concurrent events (as when his chronicle goes back and forth between the camps of Enrique and Pedro without advancing the time of the narrative), there is a basic understanding that the form by which the deeds take place resembles an act of personal witness in a “here and now,” which reflects how, in everyday experience, events come one after another without a universal arrangement or reason to be.

This exemplum introduces a clear departure from this strategy at a key point in the narrative. For contemporary readers, Ayala is a reliable medieval historian because in his chronicles, he attempts to mimic our experience of the change of reality with the passing of time—an experience that only ties the rising of the sun with the advent of a new day by accident and not by some preconceived ideal. Ayala’s exemplum, which by its very nature demands that its narrative order be governed by necessity and not by context, hence alienates the reader from the expectation of accident even as it uses events, places, and things that can be readily recognized in the reader’s historical and immediate world. Ayala’s exemplum makes pathos untimely—outside of time—since it shows how a reader can experience a crucial event in history without its unfolding in time. If this exemplum merely addressed a reader in his particular historical place, it would act like an anecdote knowingly dependant upon its social context. However, through abstraction from continuous time, it allows a reader to be apathetic to the narrative’s social context by making him read something that does not mimic how he perceives reality in his life.

The result is that Ayala gets to have his cake (write down his own subjective experiences about an event) and eat it too (express clearly subjective and bias experiences as objective and “true” history). In Ayala’s exemplum, the reader needs to understand both Pedro’s historical place and the ideal markers of the narrative for Ayala to be able to successfully blame the monarch for not following Benaharin’s advice. However, the reader must also understand these two signifiers outside the continuity of history for his message not only to be felicitous (so that he does not feel morally condemned by Benaharin) but also to be true (so that he could recognize it as an event that happened in the real world).

To do these two things, Ayala's readers, following the advice of the exemplum, must remove the experience of continuous time from their pathos of reality. They must draw their connectedness to the narrative and its universal import without thinking that these events were possible because of the flow of history. In essence, they must imagine another way of narrating events without temporal continuity. To give the authority of truth to his *speculum*, Ayala addresses the time he lives in (when Benaharin calls the nobles sinners, he ironically uses rhetoric used by Enrique against Pedro), but he also makes it true by deploying general diachronic tropes to make his advice authorial (Benaharin must be a Moor writing a letter because *specula* in Castile had Arabic epistolary origins). In a way, Ayala's exemplum tells its readers that Pedro's fall happened by necessity but that its necessity occurred independently from the historical particularities surrounding his fall. Or like the short fable implies, the shepherd becomes a wolf—the king becomes a tyrant—by eating his lamb in narrative time and not outside of it.

This logic allows a reader to empathize with kings, shepherds, wolves, and sheep outside the pathos of chronological time. It allows Ayala's readers to use signifiers without being part of their history of signification; it gives them the ability to comment on an event without being made complicit with its past. Thus, a Trastamaran partisan, like Ayala, can call himself an active sinner against king and country while at the same time producing a history that would justify his own treason against Pedro because he does not see his sins against the Crown as occurring in history. Under exemplary license, partisan history can be "objectively narrated" not as the uncritical projection of a point of view into the world, but as the critical divorcing of these experiences from the temporal flow that ties them together in the real world, making a reader *apathetic* to their temporal presentation—as an ongoing linear mimicry of his experience of

reading—while still *sympathetic* to the feelings which they evoke—to the real events which happened in history despite their placement in a particular narrative.

### 9. Truth without Stories: The Objectivity of Stylized Narration

Ayala does not insert the fictional speculum to explain history but tailors the whole of his historical narrative around this one exemplum. According to Ayala's Prologue, it is through an exemplary moment—through its assured repetition in posterity—by which individual testimony and experience acquires truth. This is more obvious when Ayala interferes in a non-exemplary manner at another point in the chronological timeline, in the final battle between Pedro and Enrique in Montiel.

This more ideological intervention, a revelation of a prophecy written once again by the wise Moor Benaharin in a letter, has a specific temporality in the flow of historical time that conjoins its tropic and idealized presentation as if it were a real part of history:

Estando el rey don Pedro en Seuilla, aparejandosse para partir dende por yr a acorrer a Toledo, vn moro que dizian Benaharin, que era grand sabidor, e filosofho, e priuado del rey de Granada; del qual deximos suso que le auia enbiado otra carta, quando el rey don Pedro torno de Vayona, e vençio la batalla de Najara; e asi agora este mesmo moro, desque sopo que partio el rey don Pedro de Seuilla para acorrer a Toledo, e penso que auia de pelear, enbiole otra carta, de la qual el tenor es este... Pedisteme que por industria del mi saber, con grand diligencia e acucia de grand estudio, otrossi por manera de grand seso que en mi fallauas en tus negoçios, que te fiziesse saber en qual manera podras palapar por verdadero saber vn dicho de profeçia, el qual dizes que fue fallado entre los libros e profeçias que dizes que hizo Merlin, del qual las sus palabras, por los terminos que lo yo reçibi son estas que siguen.

While the King Don Pedro was in Seville, making ready to leave from there to help Toledo, a Moor who they called Benaharin, who was a great wise man, and philosopher, and private of the king of Granada; of which we said had sent another letter, when the king Don Pedro turned to Vayona, and when he won the battle of Najera; and now this same Moor, since he knew that the king left from Seville to help Toledo, and he thought that the king would fight, he sent him another letter, of which the subject matter contained is the following... You asked me that for the work of my knowledge, with great diligence and acuity of great study and zeal, or otherwise because of the great wisdom that you have found in me, in your works, that I should let you know in what form you could test the truthful knowing of a saying of a prophecy, which you say was found amidst the books and prophecies that you say Merlin made, which his words, by the terms that I received them, are the following.<sup>318</sup>

---

<sup>318</sup> Ibid. 191.

The letter which Benaharin writes arrives moments before Pedro's final defeat at the hands of Enrique in Montiel. Unlike his previous letter, this time Benaharin writes under explicit request by Pedro, and apparently, delivers his message in a timely manner before the king heads out to war. The letter arrives at the "nick of time," and with all the tools that can warn him of impending danger and hence the ability to escape the fate that awaits him.

The way in which the prophecy fits the narrative, however, does not quite convey truth in the same manner as the previous exemplum even when there is an explicit correlation between its tropic devises and the historical moment which this moment represents. In containing another trope in medieval literature, a prophecy by a notorious soothsayer—Merlin the Mage—the style of the letter matches the expectations of Ayala's readers. The source of the letter—from a pagan but not infidel wise man—does not conflict with the Trastamaran vilification of Pedro as a tyrant "ennobler of Jews and Moors" but affirms the providential quality of Enrique's conquest.<sup>319</sup> In fact, the letter confirms the necessity of this vilification: the pre-Christian narrator, as if through a providential command from God predicts Pedro's death while the infidel translator (as Ayala this time does not claim to intervene on the change from Arabic to Castilian but leaves the letter's complete authorship in Benaharin's hand) attempts to change the course of history by warning Pedro of the danger. Unlike the *speculum*, this prophecy explicitly confirms the providential narrative of Enrique's rightful role as heir of Castile in the ears of Ayala's audience without creating a conflict between the context of an event and the expectations of an authorial tropic device.

Yet, it is the confluence between historical expectations and authorial tropes that makes Benaharin's second letter fail as a true example of the genre of a prophecy. True, the prophecy within it follows the basic format of historical prophecies since Geoffrey of Monmouth in which

---

<sup>319</sup> Rousseau 91.

extraordinary images of beasts and cryptic places are given so that the translator could interpret their place with historical event. Like a good historian, Benaharin glosses each of Merlin's images, a gluttonous eagle that scourges the whole land, loses its wings and feathers, and eventually is killed in a forest, and he predicts their historical place: the eagle is Pedro, its gluttony is Pedro's tyranny, the feathers are his people which leave his side, and the forest is an ancient name for the place where the Pedro is about to do battle.

This seems like a clear and cut case of what will happen to the king if he goes forward with his battle, but in a prophecy, all images must be glossed, and Benaharin stops short unable to interpret the last image—the death of the eagle:

E por que el postrimero seso, en que faze conclusion del ençerramiento e de la muerte, seria antes adeuinança, que non alcançamiento de saber, lo qual en todo buen saber deue seer repoyado, dexa su esplanaçion a aquel en quien es el poderio, que lo tal reserua en sus secretos, e tu ventura que la quiera Dios guiar...E yo fablo contigo segund lo que entendi sobre ello, mas non por otra çertidunbre que pudiesse yo afirmar, pero si en la tu corte ay omnes justos e sabidores, de quien las tales cosas non se encubre, sometome a la mejor corrobçion del saber.

And because the last knowledge, in which it concludes about the captivity and the death [of the eagle], it would be only a guess [divination] than a discovery based on wisdom, from which all type of good knowledge should be supported; leave the explanation of this for he who has the power, that such things he keeps as secrets, and your fate that God may guide it...And I speak with you according with what I understood about that, but not by any other certitude that I could affirm, but if, in your court, there are just and wise men, of who such things are not hidden, I will submit my self to the better correction of reason.<sup>320</sup>

Benaharin, this time, does not have all the answers although, as a mouthpiece for the providential nature of Enrique's ascendancy, we would expect that he would. He not only refuses to gloss the whole prophecy—excusing himself because he does not want to say something that may not be true—but asks the king to rely on men from his own court to finish glossing these sayings. The convention of glossing every image in a prophecy then has a double effect in the chronicle. First, it uses an infidel figure to mislead the king into thinking that death may itself not be death, that it could be something else. Second, it puts the responsibility of the unfortunate series of events

---

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. 194.

surrounding Pedro's fall on the hands of his advisors—in the hands of the nobility who, like the infidel, were blind to God's providential plan by supporting a tyrant king until the end.

Unfortunately for Pedro and unexpectedly for the prophetic trope which Ayala utilizes, sometimes a cigar is just a cigar, and this time the image of death in the prophecy is just death (and not a trope nor a symbol of his failure as a king)—something missed by all the nobles who supported Pedro and by his Moorish advisor. This obvious mistake ultimately puts the responsibility of his death not in the sin of rebellion by the Trastamaran usurpers, but in Pedro's character as king who did not keep "omnes justos e sabidores" 'just and wise men' in his counsel and so confirms the Trastamaran propaganda which tied Pedro's inefficacies as a ruler to his spiritual failure.

This is not a way to typologize history. Ayala's ending prophecy, which mimics those found at the end of *El Baladro del Sabio Merlin*, does not as Isabelle Rousseau claims, "bien évidemment reconnaître Henri dans cette figure providentielle" 'very evidently recognize Enrique II in this providential figure' by contextualizing the details of Pedro's fall with temporal events.<sup>321</sup> In the *Corónica*, historical events need not merely be seen as providential to be legitimated; they need only be equated with a form of temporal reading to be true. Accordingly, Ayala does not think the eagle represents a real quality of Pedro's reign, but borrows the image from an exemplum in Saint Gregory's *Homilies* in which Gregory likens an image in Micah 1:16 of a gluttonous eagle loosing its feathers as it falls from grace to the fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>322</sup> Enrique II's life may have had providential qualities given the eschatological discourse of the fifteenth century from which Guzmán reads Ayala's history, but it certainly did not possess these

---

<sup>321</sup> Rousseau 94.

<sup>322</sup> Joaquín Gimeno Casaldueiro, "La profecía medieval en la literatura castellana y su relación con las corrientes proféticas europeas," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispana* 20.1 (1971): 83.

at the time in which Ayala was writing his chronicles.<sup>323</sup> In Ayala's eyes, the prophecy—long divorced from its historical origins in Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*—only represents a traditional narrative frame to history, a way of depicting the fall of a monarch in line with a temporal unfolding of events and not with any real likenesses to them.<sup>324</sup>

As a result, Benaharin's prophecy, unlike his *speculum*, ideally intersects the theoretical prescriptions of a narrative genre to the specific demands of a historical moment towards an audience. In its pages, Ayala's readers can find an implicit justification for their actions, and if they choose to believe it, even a historical blunder in part of Pedro's ability to read. The *speculum* contained in Benaharin's first letter, however, is not so successful coming a little too late, or a little too early to allow Pedro to approach its message and any of the audience to derive an "I told you so" mentality towards the fallen king's inability to follow counsel. On the other hand, the prophecy, which arrives just in time, ties Pedro's final defeat by associating his blunders with the continuity of time and even legitimates his actions in bringing about his fall.

This distancing of personal narration is a way of assuring the verisimilitude of the narrative. For example, by removing a personal authorial intervention at the moment of Enrique's defeat by Pedro's forces in Nájera—at the very moment in which a Trastamaran historian would have to admit a non-providence in his liege's ascendancy and yet have to portray his own witnessing of the event—Ayala not only saves face as a noble but as a historian. He shows how a prophecy, a speculation of time, explicitly projects an ideology and how a *speculum*, a description outside of time, only narrates the events as they happened, or rather, the feeling of events as they were. In Nájera, Ayala's refuses to use his first-hand witnessing to shape Enrique's temporary defeat as a providential victory of the good later confirmed at

---

<sup>323</sup> Ibid. 85-86.

<sup>324</sup> William Entwistle, "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Spanish Literature," *The Modern Language Review*, 17.4 (October, 1922): 390.

Montiel. Instead, the Chancellor delegates his personal perspective in an exemplum—in a place in which his viewpoints would retain their authority by being linked to a universal “truths.”

Ayala’s, thus, sets a precedent that Guzmán follows. Just as Ayala distances the personal view point from the facts he narrated in his exemplum, Guzmán does not see the persona of the Chancellor present in the temporal unfolding of the Revolution, or rather, he knows Ayala’s involvement in it, but he recognizes it as a personal silence, as a way in which this exemplary figure of authority removes his pathos of history from his “truthful” depiction of it. Guzmán decides to represent Ayala’s life in accord to universal but not experienced truth. The failure of Ayala to be an exemplary knight or man of letters, then, represents the failure of any personal narrative to project the experience of lived history. This allows Guzmán’s description of Ayala to retain an air of verisimilitude without sounding like a legend or a direct witnessing of events.

For Castilian historiographers, apathy is therefore a way of representing reality without the pathos of the contexts which surround their subjective experience, without the accidents introduced by the passage of time. Apathy as type of authorial narration at least partly explains the Trastamaran detachment of the figure of authority—of the representation of sovereignty—from the ready exercise of his power in reality: the ready use of images in the Trastamaran propaganda were knowingly impossible for the daily experience of a king’s rule because to some extent ideal authority did not rely on the living out of its symbolic expectations. Apathy, however, does not fully explain why historians would seek to separate authority from its representation in reality—it does not answer why a writer would use stories, tropes, and fables without trying to evoke a reader’s social context.

As the examples of the very “verisimilar” works of history of Guzmán and Ayala show, exemplary signs trained a reader in a-temporality, in a way of expecting meaning outside the

habit of temporal, narrative unfolding. Because these chronicles unhinged their similitude to the passage of time, they gave a reader the ability to think reality without equating it with his lived experiences. These exemplary narratives taught a reader how to internalize events outside of temporal progression. We can therefore speculate that Castilian historians taught their readers to divorce the authority of a message from their real surroundings (to have an apathy for everyday experience) so that the legitimacy of authority (the sympathy for its day-to-day actions) could be maintained.

If authority was only to be authorized through direct representation, through making a reader believe that his experience of reality was an experience of truth, the type of mystification of Trastamaran discourse could have happened in a different way. In his *Corónica*, Ayala could have had the *speculum* written by Benaharin as a concluding moral of Pedro's life, as the first type of history which the young king received, even as a type of moral to get from the events in history. In other words, he could have used Benaharin directly as a mouthpiece for Trastamaran propaganda without affecting the timing of the narrative just as he did with the prophetic letter. Instead, he chose to let this fictional *speculum* affect the whole movement of the chronicle, making the timing of its delivery—the very thing that hinted at its fictionality—the focus of its role in the narrative.

Consequently, Ayala's divorce of truth from discourse has less to do with protecting an image of authority but with maintaining a praxis associated with its unfolding. Because it was mistimed, Benaharin's letter could not effectively teach Pedro (or even Enrique) how to rule in a time of crisis. What the *speculum* could do was to authorize Ayala's perspective on the Revolution: to make his view point of history true by tying them to a moral truth. Guzmán does a similar move: he criticizes the grounds of his own historical practices, the tension between trust-

worthy history and stylized fabulous narratives, so that the subjectivity of his own position would not undermine what he tells us. Thus, he does not depict Ayala as an exemplary figure or as a sum of the events in his life. Rather, he creates a portrait which revolves around a particular tension. This tension, in which we as readers mistrust our historians, he tells us is a necessary and proper way of narrating a “true” history.

Why divorce a concept from its depiction to protect a way of conceiving truth? Why adopt a different form of reading to protect “truth” from the contingencies brought about by reading? In essence, what our study in Castilian story-telling leaves unanswered is what the benefit of keeping the translation of truth from the everyday experiences of a reader was? To answer this question, our next chapter will turn away from Castile to a culture which appropriately enough was paralleling the Iberian Peninsula in its own “revolution.” For it was in the fourteenth century that the English not only deposed their king from the throne, but, following Enrique’s model, claimed to install their new government—which had no legitimacy—from the abstract idea of its popular election. In England, Henry Bolingbroke and his Lancastrian bretheren followed Enrique Trastamara in deposing their still living king, relying in the same type of distance between propaganda, lived actuality, and the discourse of sovereignty which had allowed Enrique to attain power.

This is certainly not a cause and effect situation. Although Bolingbroke had an awareness of Trastamaran politics from his father’s own pretension to the Castilian throne, as far as we know, he never sought to mimic Castilian political systems of authority and representation. Nevertheless, there was a connection between English and Castilian discourse on authority—a connection that saw in discourse not a way to bring a reader closer to authority but to create a narrative distance by which authority could be maintained. To understand this connection, we

will turn to the act of translation within an English setting and inquire into the discourse of authority as a way of creating political identity. In particular, we will study how the most prolific translator of English at the turn of the century—the Cornish Vicar of Berkeley, John of Trevisa—understood authority as divorced from the presentation of “everyday” reality.

## CHAPTER IV

### ENGLAND: TRANSLATIONS WITHOUT MEANING

“For every translation of a work at a specific point in the history of language represents, with respect to a specific aspect of its content, translation into all other languages. Thus translation transplants the original into an—ironically—more ultimate linguistic domain, since it cannot be displaced from it by any further translation, but only raised into it anew and in other parts”<sup>325</sup>—Walter Benjamin.

“For to make þis translacion cleer and pleyn to be knowe and vnderstond, in som place Y schal sette word vor word and actyue vor actyue and passyue vor passyue arewe ryzt as a stondeþ withoute chaungyng of þe ordere of wordes. But yn som place Y mot change þe rewe and þe ordre of wordes. . . . Bote vor al such chaungyng, þe menyng schal stonde and nozt be ychanged”<sup>326</sup>—John of Trevisa.

It is commonly thought that translation is possible because, ideally, people wish to *say* what they *mean*—that what they say could be said in some perfect setting. The basic premise, as Walter Benjamin explains it, is that signs can be exchanged across languages because meaning and linguistic structures are intrinsically related into an “ultimate linguistic domain.” Therefore, it is difficult to think that I could translate a text, like John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, by not tying its linguistic syntax to meaning—that translation would be possible when what I mean *is not* what I say in the same manner that I could narrate history without meaning to represent truth through signs. Taking a quick glance at John of Trevisa’s prefatory letter to Ranulf Higden’s *Polychronicon*, we would think that Benjamin’s reflections had some basis in the medieval understanding of translation. In his efforts to make a “cleer and pleyn” translation, Trevisa claims that he will sometimes “sette word vor word and actyue vor actyue” from Latin to English or, at others, “change þe rewe and þe ordre of wordes.” Trevisa’s statements suggest that an ideal “cleer and pleyn” use of language directly ties “menyng” to syntax and “truth” to signs.

From this Prologue, Trevisa’s attitude towards translation seems governed by its relationship to rhetoric. His description of literal translation as “word vor word” repeats the

---

<sup>325</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Translator’s Task,” *TTR: traduction, terminologie, redaction*, trans. Steven Rendall 10. 2 (1997): 158.

<sup>326</sup> Qtd. in Ronald Waldron, “Trevisa’s Original Prefaces On Translation: A Critical Edition,” *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, eds. Edward Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph Wittig (Suffolk: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1988) 294.

common Ciceronian formula of “non verbum pro verbum” that came down to the Middle Ages via patristic exegesis.<sup>327</sup> The Ciceronian view on translation “genus omne verborum vimque servavi” ‘to preserve the general style and force of words’ emphasized the adaptation of meaning into situated rhetorical models by not taking the literal rendering of “verba” ‘words’ as the goal of translation.<sup>328</sup> According to Rita Copeland, this earlier rhetorical model substantially differs from the long line of patristic commentary that, since Augustine and Jerome, adapted a “non verbum pro verbum” translation to promote “a theory of direct conservation of textual meaning without the impediment of linguistic multiplicity.”<sup>329</sup> For Copeland, patristic exegesis is unfaithful to linguistic syntax for the benefit of a unified, transcendent meaning whereas Ciceronian rhetoric’s non-literal translation thinks of meaning as culturally situated. By emphasizing the quotidian fluidity of language, Trevisa appears to follow a Ciceronian model in reinterpreting meaning as the result of “cleer and pleyn” vernacular.

A closer look at Trevisa’s argument for translation, however, complicates the extent to which his focus on rhetoric can be said to contribute to how he expects his audience to reappropriate “menyng.” It is the syntax of Latin (and not necessarily the meaning), in translating “actyue vor actyue and passyue vor passyue,” that Trevisa tries to replicate to help a reader “knowe and vnderstond” a translation. This is quite a departure from how Jerome and Cicero view translation since, for them, the goal of linguistic exchange is to preserve meaning and not a “verbum pro verbum” likeness to the original.<sup>330</sup> In contrast, Trevisa almost apologizes for taking Latinate syntax liberally, claiming that “bote vor al such chaungyng, þe menyng schal stonde and no3t be ychanged”—that his changes in word order should be excused since they will

---

<sup>327</sup> Rita Copeland, “The Fortunes of ‘Non Verbum Pro Verbum’ or *Why Jerome Is Not a Ciceronian*,” *The Medieval Translator: Theory and Practice in the Middle Ages*, ed. Rogers Ellis (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989) 19-20.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.* 18-19.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.* 29.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.* 25.

not affect the “standing” of meaning. Thinking that changing syntax across languages could change meaning implies that Trevisa does not conceive of meaning as the denotative understanding of ideas by a “clear” order of words and, as a result, that syntax has as its role more than the portrayal of thought.

In this chapter, I will argue that Trevisa’s diction prevents meaning from being denotatively understood through vernacular syntax despite the “cleer and pleyn” language of his translations. His approach to translation manufactures a form of exegesis that proceeds by allusion and undermines the ability of writing to present truth for the vernacular language of his audience. He does this by making his use of “everyday” or “cleer and pleyn” English cater only to audiences proficient in Latinate learning. This type of writing has two important effects. First, it preserves Latinate traditions in an environment that favors vernacular speech while keeping English-only speakers from assimilating Latin thought into their culture. Second, it makes the intercultural change from Latin to English by-pass the communication of ideas through the use of signs alone. As I will argue, the wide cultural dissemination of Trevisa’s translations proves that their effectiveness do not depend on their ability to communicate knowledge directly and openly to vernacular-only speakers but rather in their ability to remind and evoke knowledge in a way that is far more socially enclosed than scholarship usually suggests.

### 1. Everyday “Menyng”: Interpreting English Clarity

As we have discussed in respect to Castilian historiography, medieval writers could divorce basic readerly behaviors, like the common association of reading with the unfolding of time, from a reader’s experience of reality because they did not always think that the role of a text was to represent abstract thought. For fourteenth and fifteenth-century England, the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Middle English Dictionary* record a similar cultural behavior around

the idea of “menyng,” which in its various uses suggests far more than the understanding of an abstract concept or idea. The term also signifies “to remember,” “to advance forward,” “to advise,” “to mention,” and “to be understood.”<sup>331</sup> From this, we can extrapolate that the Middle English idea of meaning, even when it refers to “cleer and pleyn menyng,” indicates physical, psychological, phatic, and even argumentative roles that ask readers to do more than represent ideas through language but to think their being-in-the-world through linguistic syntax.

A “cleer and pleyn” exposition of “menyng” does not just imply the representation of ideas via linguistic syntax to the average English reader. The history of the word implies that “menyngful” translations in English could have denied a reader access to a concept as long as they placed the reader in a social relationship to his language. In the words of D.C. Greetham, to understand Trevisa’s relationship to “menyng,” we must distinguish what appears as the “self-effacing” qualities of his translations—the parts where ideas seem intrinsically related to syntax—from the ways in which “the movement of texts from one language to another” need to be traced as more than the communication of concepts.<sup>332</sup> In other words, to understand Trevisa’s use of “menyng” we must question Trevisa’s “clarity”—particularly, the history of Trevisa as a translator who seemingly sought to render Latinate learning for the everyday understanding of vernacular speakers.

Because English “menyng” is not just the negotiation of word and concept, we cannot simply think that Trevisa’s translations follow a vernacular concern, in the words of Rita Copeland, with how “*interpretatio* informs both uses of *translatio*, as interlingual paraphrase and metaphor” and so take the change of English to Latin to merely be the interpretation of ideas by

---

<sup>331</sup> See “Mean v.1,” Def. Etymology, *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Web. 21 September 2010) and “Menen v.1,” Def. 3, 4, 5, 6, *Middle English Dictionary* (Web. 21 September 2010).

<sup>332</sup> D.C. Greetham, “Models for the Textual Transmission of Translation: The Case of John Trevisa,” *Studies in Bibliography*, 37 (1984): 133.

other means.<sup>333</sup> Instead, we must re-evaluate and reconsider the extent to which we think that Trevisa's translations, in the words of Traugott Lawler, wish to be "intelligible, idiomatic, and accurate" ways of portraying concepts for his vernacular audiences.<sup>334</sup> To be sure, critics like D.C. Greetham, A.S.G. Edwards, H.K. Kim, and Ronald Waldron have already noted that the more Trevisa's texts explicate the "substance" of their Latin originals, the less they appear to negotiate the movement from Latin to English in a quotidian and "average" language for their readers.<sup>335</sup> This is in part why the first detailed study of Trevisa's translations, which was conducted by Traugott Lawler, analyzed their ability to convey meaning clearly through their idiomatic "failure" rather than successes at rendering Latinate concepts for the "average educated" English reader.<sup>336</sup>

Nevertheless, the general scholarly consensus does not think that the awkwardness and foreignness of Trevisa's English is a basic quality of his translating tactics. Instead, scholars tend to interpret the not-so-clear passages in Trevisa's works as the inevitable errors of a translator who, like all translators, must decide between stylistic ease of his English and fidelity to his Latinate content.<sup>337</sup> Trevisa's texts are thus depicted as both legible to an audience and faithful to their content only when the "everyday clarity" of their English portrays an accurate concept in an ideal, linguistic space. In Ronald Waldron's words, Trevisa's "faithful translation proceeds

---

<sup>333</sup> Rita Copeland, "Rhetoric and Vernacular Translation," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 9 (1989): 42.

<sup>334</sup> Traugott Lawler, "On the Properties of John Trevisa's Major Translations," *Viator*, 14 (1983): 268.

<sup>335</sup> D.C. Greetham mostly describes the English in Trevisa's translations as full of neologisms or transliterations, which scribes learn to understand imperfectly ("Models" 147-148). A.S.G. Edwards lists the *Rolls Series* 1865 edition of the *Polychronicon* as well as H.K. Kim's version of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* to support a similar conclusion about Trevisa's awkward use of English (A.S.G. Edwards, "John Trevisa," *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, ed. A.S.G. Edwards (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984) 139-140). Ronald Waldron takes a more extreme approach, "In lexical usage, the 'thew and sinew' of the language is so much in evidence that one is at times tempted to think of him as a linguistic purist, and I suppose he was in the sense that he often seems to avoid an English cognate of a word in his Latin source, even if one was already current in the language [... but] he is not averse to well-established French loan words" (Ronald Waldron, "John Trevisa and the Use of English," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 74 (1988): 189).

<sup>336</sup> Lawler 288.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.* 270.

not directly from surface structure to surface structure but to a semantic deep structure and back to surface structure” because he sees himself as “a ‘mene’ between oppositions created by the difference of language.”<sup>338</sup>

This way of thinking of clarity as merely a medium between ideas and language focuses on how Trevisa’s language expresses meaning while taking for granted how it actually thinks of “menyng.” As a result, the relationship between, what Copeland calls, “translation” and “interpretation” has generally been taken to be an ideal linguistic plane. For example, the first detailed study on Trevisa ignores the contexts of “anthropology, linguistics, communications, information theory, logic” in favor of a “commonsense” way of negotiating what Trevisa understood as meaning.<sup>339</sup> Further, even more historicist approaches have taken this ideal communicative plane as the underlying ways of adjudicating the efficacy of Trevisa’s translation, whose “gradual development of a style of translation” as determined by contemporary ideas of common sense are said to provide a key awareness of fourteenth-century “spoken English.”<sup>340</sup>

The few meta-discursive reflections on translation that remain from medieval English commentators appear to justify this critical consensus that thinks of Trevisa’s translations as mostly preoccupied in the transmission of meaning. In comparing everyday English “nakedness” to ornate Latinate “subtilitas” ‘subtlety,’ vernacular commentators often set up the practice of translation through idealized dichotomies of signs to signifieds.<sup>341</sup> Taking these meta-discursive

---

<sup>338</sup> Waldron “John Trevisa” 187, 154.

<sup>339</sup> Notably, Lawler unabashedly supports the theoretical framework of this approach because, “by a broader definition Trevisa’s audience includes those who still read him today—people, that is, like me; and therefore in applying what I think of as commonsense standards of judgment...I am in fact applying a ‘sociolinguistic’ standard” (Lawler 287-288 note 23).

<sup>340</sup> See Waldron “John Trevisa” 188, 198 and David Fowler, *The Life and Times of John Trevisa, Medieval Scholar*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995) 157.

<sup>341</sup> For an analysis of this dichotomy, see Sheila Delany, *The Naked Text: Chaucer’s “Legend of Good Women,”* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

reflections at face value, a critic could argue that medieval vernacular “authors were arguing for an English that represented the knowledge of bodily experience” as presence so that the vernacular stood for the immediacy of meaning of ideas and not the extensive ornateness of linguistic play.<sup>342</sup> This argument carries some strength particularly because English texts, unlike their French, Italian, and Spanish counterparts, are not usually glossed in either Latin or the vernacular.<sup>343</sup> As A. J. Minnis argues, this suggests that vernacular authors were encouraged to write in a “clear and cogent vernacular style which finds no difficulty in rendering difficult concepts in idiomatic English” without the reliance on allusive and connotative Latinate textual traditions.<sup>344</sup> Therefore, Middle English discursive reflections could be read at face value because English-only audiences generally would not be familiar with the Latinate idea of glossing and counter-glossing as a textual practice and would not expect a text to mean more than what the author thought. To quote Rita Copeland, the tradition of Latinate “learned commentary [constitutes] a precedent out of which vernacular *enarratio* develops” into its own interpretative authority, that is into its own English ability to voice meaning.<sup>345</sup>

Even more, Trevisa’s practices appear to support the general position that vernacular translations were a way of educating readers directly. For one, Trevisa, more than any other English writer, uses signed interlineal glosses to comment upon the texts he translates and so takes on the role of a direct fountain of meaning to his vernacular audiences. His comments vary in nature, but commonly, they explain things that appear foreign to his readers—from the meaning of the word “laborinth” to Gregory’s misguided assumptions about Aristotle’s death.<sup>346</sup>

---

<sup>342</sup> Susan Kirtley, “Medieval Diglossia and Modern Academic Discourse,” *Rhetoric Review*, 26. 3 (2007): 255.

<sup>343</sup> A.J. Minnis, “Absent Glosses: A Crisis of Vernacular Commentary in Late-Medieval England?” *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 20 (2003): 5.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>345</sup> Copeland “Rhetoric” 52. Also see A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>346</sup> Fowler *The Life* 181, 186.

Trevisa's asides give us a world in which a translator saw his task as pedagogical simply because his audience needed to be taught concepts that were no longer accessible to them. Hence, it makes sense to argue that, to bring works of science, law, and history to English-only audiences, one would necessarily turn to the "everyday" English most accessible to vernacular speakers.<sup>347</sup>

## 2. "Everyday" English: Construing Vernacular Authority

Trevisa's reflections on translation, in the prefatory "Epistola" to the *Polychronicon*, appear to amplify the scholarly claim that fourteenth-century writers construed English as a pedagogical language. In fact, this claim about the pedagogic availability of fourteenth-century English has been read as the main message of the "most frequently quoted passage in all of Trevisa's writings," a gloss in the *Polychronicon* that describes the diffusion of the vernacular at the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>348</sup> In it, Trevisa comments upon a gloss by Higden that bemoans the prevalence of French as a mode of social advancement in England. Trevisa's late-century commentary updates Higden's mid-fourteenth-century perspective describing a world in which French has taken a back seat to English because of the hard work of Cornish grammarians. This gloss, hence, positions Trevisa's own translations as important because 1) it shows that people were more familiar with English in the fourteenth century and that, as a result, 2) English finally was becoming the language of learning and advancement.

It is not surprising that Trevisa's gloss is read as proof that Middle English was an interpretative tool in the dissemination of Latinate learning in the fourteenth century. First, by commenting on a part of Higden's text in which the chronicler reminisces about the status of education in the 1340's, Trevisa helps his reader situate a specific historical time which would otherwise be foreign to him—i.e. Trevisa's commentary educates his reader in the world as it

---

<sup>347</sup> Lawler 288.

<sup>348</sup> Fowler *The Life* 183.

before 1385. Second, the contents of this commentary (the prevalence of an English readership which does not know French or Latin) justify Trevisa's posture in using "everyday" English to explain ideas. Therefore, although most of Trevisa's readers were fluent in French and learned in Latin, it is natural to assume that vernacular translations were possible because of a rising, literate class educated mostly in English just as Trevisa's comment claims.<sup>349</sup>

This gloss, however, seems too opportune for Trevisa's career as a translator to be taken to describe the proliferation of the vernacular accurately, and there are hints that suggest that Trevisa's claims may be only a type of posturing. Just as Higden appears to comment upon English identity through history, Trevisa's commentary "self-consciously" takes vernacular linguistic proficiency as a mark of national identity.<sup>350</sup> Consequently, Trevisa's gloss continues the gestures in favor of "everyday" speech given by the prefatory "Epistola" to the *Polychronicon* and does not simply aim to teach the reader about vernacular proficiency. This doubt heightens when we consider the absence of any reflection about the status of the vernacular from his other translations, like Giles of Rome's *De Regimine Principum* and Bartholomeus Anglicanus's *De Proprietaribus Rebus*, whose treatment of language and politics would have merited a "factual" commentary on the state of England.

Still, the *Polychronicon* may seem like the one "commonsense" place where Trevisa could personally write about the proficiency of vernacular learning. His ruminations on English seem but to follow a logical connection of content to a reader—from Higden's commentary of the state of the vernacular in the past (1340's) to Trevisa's description of its role in the present (1380's). Higden spends a greater part of his chronicle thinking about what it is to write for an

---

<sup>349</sup> Ibid. 184.

<sup>350</sup> See Andrew Galloway, "Latin England," *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*, ed. Kathy Lavezzo (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

English people, and we would expect a writer with a pedagogical intent of explaining a foreign concept to a reader to situate his comments in a way that could be readily accessible.

Even so, it is hard to ignore the clear “authorial” gestures in Trevisa’s commentary. For example, there is the matter of the stylistic similarities that link the commentary signed “Trevisa” to the one signed by the letter “R” of Ranulfus Higden. In signing his name, Trevisa not only claims originality of what he says but asks the reader to compare one voice to another. As Andrew Galloway has noted, this differentiation has its roots in Vincent de Beauvais’s attempt to authorize a compiler’s voice in front of textual tradition.<sup>351</sup> The stylistic roots of the change from “Trevisa” to “R” should give us pause before taking Trevisa’s gloss at face value, particularly considering the extraordinary claims made by the gloss itself:

*Trevisa*: Dis manere [of speaking French instead of English] was moche yused tofore þe furst morey and ys seythe somdel ychaunged, ffor John Cornwall a mayster of gramere chaynged þe lore in gramer scole and construction of Freynsch into Englysh, and Richard Pencrych lirned þat manere-techyng of hym and oþer men of Pencryth. So þat now, þe yer of oure lord a þousond þre hundre foure score and five, of þe seconde kyng Richard after þe conquete nyne, in al þe gramer scoles of Engelond childern leueþ Frensche and construeþ an Englysch.<sup>352</sup>

Despite its appearance of portraying only the facts, this commentary is clearly an exercise in hyperbole. It argues that, due to the work of one grammar teacher and of the influence of his young pupils, Cornwall has now initiated a cultural movement that has “now” influenced children throughout England to “leueþ Frensche and construeþ an Englysch” as if a) English was commonly experienced as a unified tongue and b) French was no longer spoken or even a necessary part of English culture.

Both Trevisa and his readers knew that the fourteenth-century use of English was far from a unified “national” phenomenon. For one, Trevisa’s translations do not reflect the dialect

---

<sup>351</sup> See Galloway “Latin” 50 and Andrew Galloway, “Chaucer’s *Legend of Lucrece* and the Critique of Ideology in Fourteenth-Century England,” *ELH*, 60. 4 (1993): 823.

<sup>352</sup> Ranulfus Higden, *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis; together with the English translations of John Trevisa and of an unknown writer of the fifteenth century*, ed. Churchill Babington, 9 vols (London, 1865) 2. 161.

of the “Cornish” grammarians responsible but the common way of writing English in Oxford and London.<sup>353</sup> These dialects, in turn, were proliferated by a small part of the literate classes, the clerical bureaucracy, as part of literary and not vernacular language, and so would have reflected a very limited experience of English to his readers.<sup>354</sup> Even Trevisa’s most immediate readers, his patrons of the Berkeley household, would have known the exaggeration of this nationwide “leaving” of French for English by merely looking up at the ceiling of the family chapel and reading the French, biblical inscriptions on it.<sup>355</sup>

Trevisa’s commentary, hence, filters reality through a traditional, authorial gesture more than it attempts to educate a readership. In referencing specific geographic locales, particular learning strategies, and even proper names—all important material details that would require a material witness—Trevisa appeals to the medieval understanding of experiential verisimilitude that stems back to Isidore and Aristotle. As we have seen in the last chapter, the preference of immediate experience over that of tradition in determining the truth was a way to adjudicate between witnessed and narrative historical writings. Because Higden explicitly situates history as emerging from narrative and not direct witnesses, Trevisa’s “first-hand” commentary clearly attempts to set the translator as a higher authority than his source, who is seen as merely relying on spoken and written tales to write his history.

The parallel between the content and the structure of Trevisa’s commentary leaves little doubt that Trevisa is concerned with authorial gesturing. This is because Trevisa’s role as a commentator and vernacular educator mimics that of the grammar teacher responsible for this drastic change in the vernacular, John of Cornwall. First, Trevisa could already lay claim to the name “John of Cornwall” as he was himself a John born in Cornwall, and he might have

---

<sup>353</sup> Waldron “John Trevisa” 185.

<sup>354</sup> See John H. Fisher, “Chancery and the Emergence of Standard Written English,” *Speculum*, 5.4 (Oct., 1977).

<sup>355</sup> Fowler *The Life* 184.

presumably been one of those young Cornish boys, who learned grammar in the mid-fourteenth century under the famed grammar master and also continued such a change by teaching grammar classes of his own in Oxford.<sup>356</sup> Although Trevisa's target audience may have ignored these similarities, the way that Trevisa's translation claims a pedagogical stance, in not only

---

<sup>356</sup> Trevisa's claim of John of Cornwall's prowess as a teacher at the center a fourteenth-century Cornish grammar revolution demands some attention because this detail has been taken as proof that the gloss is but an amalgam of "personal observations" of Trevisa's world and not stylistic conventions of his authorial aspirations (Fowler *The Life* 49, 182). As W.H. Stevenson has argued, there is proof that a Ioannis Cornubiensis was "magister" 'teacher' in Oxford at Merton's College from 1344 to 1349 which would correspond to the time of the "furst morey," 'the first Death' or Plague (W.H. Stevenson, "The Introduction of English as the Vehicle of Instruction in English Schools," *An English Miscellany Presented to Dr. Furnivall in Honour of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901) 421-429). Further, the Oxford Bodleian Library houses a fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Speculum grammaticale*, a manual for learning Latin which, although a bit advanced, explains verb and grammatical Latin constructions through English terminology authored by a "Jo. dictus 'de Cornubia'" (A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957) 490). The proximity of these two facts, coupled with Trevisa's description, has led to a support of Trevisa's claim and (in extreme cases) as proof of his key role in "saving" the English language (Peter Ellis, *The Cornish language and its literature* (London: Routledge, 1974) 49-51). I would only like to point out the tautology of this argumentation: the only proof that Trevisa knew John of Cornwall goes back to Trevisa himself, and even Stevenson speculates as much in stating that he had to be aware of Cornwall or Penrych "for the provincial spirit was very strong amongst Oxford students" (Stevenson 422). Trevisa may well be a reliable witness even if he was just seven when we have the last record of John of Cornwall in Oxford. After all, Cornwall may have left a twenty-year old legacy in Oxford despite only being a grammar teacher. Still, it is important that Higden, writing in the 1360's does not comment upon Cornwall's "reformist" developments given that scholars have also documented the increased use of the "secular" English and French in such Latin settings as the monasteries which were home to him (M. Legge, "The French Language and the English Cloister," *Medieval Studies Presented to Rose Graham* (Oxford: University Press, 1950) 146-162). Nevertheless, the faultiness of the scholarly claim is not the arguable closeness of Trevisa to Cornwall, but the inability of his vernacular "revival" to have any effectiveness since the glosses of grammatical treatises written c. 1340 (around his tenure as a scholar) are only in Latin and French (David Thomson, "The Oxford Grammar Masters Revisited," *Mediaeval Studies*. 45 (1983): 308). Prior to Henry V's use of the vernacular in the mid-fifteenth century, there simply was no need to standardize English formally. To try to articulate as David Thomson and others have done, that "Cornwall introduced the use of English as a language of grammatical instruction at Oxford" (Ibid. 308) given the absolute lack of manuscript evidence is to prove either a) the real failure of John Cornwall's early "reform" efforts or b) that the author of the *Speculum grammaticale* was not the Oxfordian Cornwall. Given Trevisa's close concern for English identity, I believe a projection of grandeur to a Cornish country-man would suit better his "provincial spirit" than the actual success of Cornwall's efforts—albeit with a sense of irony since Trevisa uses the French word "morey" and not English "deth" to date Cornwall's grammarian revolution. Further, it is not unlikely that the author of the *Speculum grammaticale*, given the wide dissemination of Trevisa's *Polychronicon*, would himself take up the name John Cornwall from Trevisa's description just as others picked up the name Chaucer or Piers Plowman to author vernacular poetry. I do not agree with David Thomson's dating of the *Speculum* as a copy of an earlier 1340 text. First, no text of the *Speculum* survives from the fourteenth century. Secondly, the statutes of the disciplining of English use in Oxford, which Thomson uses to date the *Speculum*, predated its formation for more than fifty years, and they do not reflect new policies against the use of English in Oxford—as if Cornwall was responsible—but traditional expectations of a pupil's behavior (Graham Pollard, "The Oldest Statute Book of the University," *Bodleian Library Record*, 8.2 (1968) 78). Still, even if the real Cornwall managed to leave his imprint in the development of the vernacular, it is worthwhile to remember that all of the scholarship stems from a circular presupposition of using Trevisa's own description to prove the veracity of what he says, using someone vested in authorizing his tradition to date back the "beginning of a tradition of grammatical texts" to the middle of the fourteenth century (Cole 1161).

exchanging “word vor word” but also explaining “menyng,” betrays his “witnessing” of vernacular change as a pedagogical posture. He, like Cornwall, teaches English through his translations.

By taking such a “small” role as a grammar teacher, however, Trevisa does not so much wish to mimic John of Cornwall as he does Higden, who famously calls himself a dwarfish chronicler standing on the shoulders of giants. Higden says that he is a pedagogical chronicler who writes not only to teach history to dwarfish “minores” ‘minors’ (or, as Trevisa translates, “songelynes”) but also, in the manner of Ayala, to discipline “maiores” ‘higher men’ by giving them examples to follow:

Sed etiam de fragmentis cophinorum, quae superfuerunt prandentibus, minutias recolligens, quippiam adjiciam laboribus auctorum, nanus residens in humeris giganteis, unde non solum minores ad rudimentum sed et majores ad exercitium provocentur.

But also gathering little things from the fragments of the baskets, which overflow to hungering men, I would add something to the labors of authors, like a dwarf sitting in the shoulders of giants, from which not only to little ones are called to the beginning but also older ones to discipline.<sup>357</sup>

Although Trevisa does not call himself a “nanus” ‘dwarf,’ he certainly measures the influence of a text by the shape of his audience. By comparing himself to John of Cornwall, he implies that he has taught “maiores,” the men who read his translations, as “minores” or “songelynes” who must be educated in concepts foreign to a dwarfish English grammar.

Like Higden, who, in the words of Andrew Galloway, “personally responds and critiques historical authorities,” Trevisa writes in response to a tradition about a linguistic project, namely that of translation, and about how that linguistic project is a type of authorial discourse of its own.<sup>358</sup> Unlike Higden, however, he does so without the explicit aid of tradition in the more “dwarfish” position of a mere vocabulary teacher, and in so doing, he amplifies the importance of his response to his predecessors. Trevisa does not have to shield himself with the “humeris”

---

<sup>357</sup> Higden *Polychronicon* 1.15.

<sup>358</sup> Galloway “Latin” 48.

‘shoulders’ of famed historians. Instead, he assumes the habit of the lowest of all medieval “docendi” ‘teachers,’ the grammarian to defend his vernacular project personally.

If Higden outlines an English identity by being a small compiler of stories, Trevisa accomplishes the creation of an English tongue by merely exchanging words. This parallel serves to magnify his role as a translator above that of the historian. Through his commentaries, Trevisa does not just discipline the secular “maiores” of the nobility, but he also teaches them as incipient “minores” in Latinate knowledge. Trevisa’s readers are implicitly personified dwarves since their knowledge of concepts, their mind’s reach, is much less developed than their vernacular fluency, their experience and age in a language. What is more, because Higden has an equal discrepancy between his vernacular language and his conceptual knowledge, he is a type of “nanus” ‘dwarf’ that not only must be “learned” into English by being translated but must be “learned,” as in taught a thing or two, about the national subjects—like the status of vernacular proficiency—that his Latin text no longer masters.

Trevisa’s translation supersedes historical narration because it creates, it witnesses, and it writes a language outside all possible limits of time and measure. Higden claims to add but a little to a long tradition, a dwarfish chronicle on top of countless previous histories. Trevisa, on the other hand, teaches and disseminates vernacular proficiency where there was but only the inchoate work of Cornish grammarians. The incommensurability of such a work—in which a translator is great because of the smallness of his size—is proved by how “Trevisa” voices the passage of time. In this way, Trevisa describes the non-vernacular past which Higden inhabits as measured by the coming of the great giant namely Christ (“þe yer of oure lord”), and the vernacular present, for which he is responsible, as measured by the dwarfish “zongelyn” Richard

II (“þe seconde kyng Richard after þe conqueste”).<sup>359</sup> In Trevisa’s frame, Higden’s narration of time, no matter how popular, could never match how Cornish men taught England how to “construeþ an Englysch” and to make identity from the nothingness of current times.

Ironically, Trevisa’s authorial gesture for an English vernacular is only legible from the stand point of Latinate learning and not by reading his English at face value. Nevertheless, even if his pedagogical “style” is merely a posture, we cannot deduce that, in using Latinate tradition, Trevisa thinks of his vernacular syntax as anything more than a way to clarify concepts. Indeed, this gloss can be explained, like the majority of Trevisa’s signed interventions, as the teaching of a concept: it intervenes to comment upon a social phenomenon, and it expands a foreign concept to the average vernacular reader.<sup>360</sup> These two functions of commentary explicitly use “menyng” in a very restrictive sense as a concept. The signifier “Trevisa” (even if it stylistically addresses a Latinate tradition of “R”) can work as a direct, useful, and pedagogical source of information for a vernacular audience unschooled in history and general clerical training.

It thus appears impossible to deny the common scholarly perspective that reads Trevisa as “committed to writing in order to transmit and retain meaning,” particularly when his use of English appears so “intelligible and accurate, yet suitably idiomatic.”<sup>361</sup> Still, our analysis shows that, from the standpoint of the “average educated reader,” there are no real syntactic markers that would help differentiate at what point Trevisa’s comments leave aside what Ralph Hanna has called “literary shaping” to portray more directly “a real relationship” of signs to concepts.<sup>362</sup> Therefore, we should be wary to accept at face value that Trevisa’s readership would be able to

---

<sup>359</sup> For the motif of the “young” and “dwarfish” Richard II in poetic satire, see George Coffman, “John Gower, Mentor for Royalty: Richard II,” *PMLA*, 69 (1954): 953-964.

<sup>360</sup> Charles Briggs, *Giles of Rome’s De Regimine Principum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 81.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.* 77-79.

<sup>362</sup> Ralph Hanna, “Sir Thomas Berkeley III and his Patronage,” *Speculum*, 64. 4 (October 1989): 892.

differentiate between his informative and stylistic gestures based upon context, as the scholarly reception of his work has done up to present.<sup>363</sup>

The problem then becomes one of meaning versus syntax. If Trevisa and “Trevisa” have two different purposes (with the former representing the translator who explicates concepts and the latter foiling a Latinate textual tradition) up to what extent can we simply assume that Trevisa’s idiomatic “clarity” has a purely communicative purpose? What allows us to continue to think that Trevisa’s use of English to convey “menyng” was understood as direct? How do we understand the difference between Trevisa the translator and “Trevisa” the signature without intruding with what Ronald Waldron calls “our twentieth-century intuitions of clarity and of word order”?<sup>364</sup> One thing is clear; thinking of translation as interpretation cannot help us negotiate the parts of Trevisa’s interventions that are “almost lyrical” or “often vigorous, onomatopoeic” versus those in which, in D.C. Greetham’s words, “the principle of auctorial fidelity”—the principle that a writer says what he means—prevents us from thinking that Trevisa meant to do more than clearly convey concepts for his audience.<sup>365</sup>

In fact, reevaluating the difference between Trevisa as a translator and “Trevisa” as an authorial gesture requires us to formulate two basic questions about the role of translation and

---

<sup>363</sup> See M.C. Seymour “Introduction,” *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa’s Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*, by John Trevisa, 3 vols, eds. Seymour, M.C. et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) vi.

<sup>364</sup> Waldron “John Trevisa” 191.

<sup>365</sup> See Fowler *The Life* 143; Berte Kinkade, *The English Translations of Higden’s Polychronicon* (Edwards Brothers: Urbana, 1934) 8; and Greetham “Models” 149. Of these, I would like to quote D.C. Greetham’s take in this problem as it shows the obvious scholarly double-speak on this aspect of Trevisa’s translations. In first reflecting upon a comment upon the color of Ethiopians, whom Trevisa describes as being “rosteþ and tosteþ” by the sun, Greetham writes, “are we then to assume that the principle of auctorial fidelity [which we have seen in Trevisa] must put this fascinating little doublet down to scribal fancy, for it is no longer bound by even loose rules of translation... Should we perhaps assume that the Latin is at fault... Certainly, any editor with a sense of humour would be loath to sacrifice the marvelously idiosyncratic comment, which is present in all English MSS; but not only is rhyme reinforcement very unusual in the standard Trevisa doublet, so is this humour we are so anxious to preserve... Textual criticism must become aesthetic criticism at points like this, and the theoretical models will retreat.” Greetham later recants this arbitrary distinction between “aesthetic” and “theoretical models” of translation, which allowed him and most criticism to project a modern standard of “clarity” on the text (D.C. Greetham, “Uncoupled or How I Lost My Author(s),” *Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation*. 3.1 (2008): 46).

authority in fifteenth-century England. The first, how does Trevisa say what he means? Or to put it more specifically, what occurs when an English writer differentiates a commentary on a text by means of a personalized signature? The second, how are Trevisa's works legible? What makes a "Trevisa" commentary a personal intervention and not a filtering or pedagogical interpretation of the facts in a text? These questions will be the focus of the following discussion on the material conditions which bridge Trevisa's "menyng" for fifteenth-century readers.

### 3. Textual "Menyng": English Commentary and Latin Textuality

It is clear that Trevisa knew that broad textual traditions (and not simply the ideal communication of concepts via signs) shaped how languages conveyed meaning. In his faculties as Vicar of Berkeley, he did more than just render one work from Latin into English—he made entire fields of knowledge available in English. Besides his 1387 work on Ranulfus Higden's *Polychronicon*, he completed Bartholomeus Anglicanus's *De Proprietaribus Rerum* c.1398/99 and undertook the translation of Aegedius Romanus's *De Regimine Principum* soon after.<sup>366</sup> Spanning history, science, and politics, these three volumes embody the bulk of late medieval clerical learning. Further, before his work at Berkeley, Trevisa also authored translations that tackled the textuality of language by being closely connected to the Oxford project to translate the Bible into English.<sup>367</sup>

Although all of these works negotiate textual traditions, it is only by looking at his translation of Giles of Rome's *De Regimine* that we can differentiate between Trevisa as an explicator and "Trevisa" as a foil for a textual tradition. This is because, although—like many medieval genres—works on political advice constantly gesture towards textual traditions, at

---

<sup>366</sup> The completion date of Trevisa's translation of *De Regimine* is subject to debate. See Charles Briggs and David Fowler, "Preface," *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De Regimine Principum of Aegidius Romanus*, by John Trevisa, eds. David Fowler, Charles Briggs, Paul Remley (New York: Garland, 1997) x.

<sup>367</sup> David Fowler, "John Trevisa and the English Bible," *Modern Philology*, 58. 2 (Nov., 1960): 81-98.

some point their tenets could have had a practical application for a set of readers—if only as advice on how to rule their realm.<sup>368</sup> As a result, a work of advice—particularly advice about the praxis of authority—is an ideal place to distinguish how a writer explains meaning to his audience from how he sets up his persona from a textual tradition, and so Trevisa’s translation of *De Regimine Principum* can help us distinguish how Trevisa, as an instructor, was different from “Trevisa” as a foil of Latinate tradition.

As a textual object, Trevisa’s translation also provides a unique starting point of analysis. *On the Governance of Kings and Princes* is not only the sole English translation of Giles of Rome’s popular thirteenth-century *De Regimine Principum*, but it is also the lone exemplar of Trevisa’s translation, surviving in MSS Oxford Bodleian Library Digby 233.<sup>369</sup> Compounding to this uniqueness, this translation is one of his least annotated, with only three glosses addressing but one idea in the whole work: the meaning of political deliberation or “concilium” ‘counsel’ or ‘advice.’<sup>370</sup> Further, unlike his interventions in other major works like *Polychronicon* and *De Proprietaribus Rerum*, the glosses of *On the Governance* do not directly engage the work’s guiding subject, and they stylistically differ in scope, syntax, and diction from those that accompany Trevisa’s other translations.<sup>371</sup>

An excellent example of how *On the Governance*’s glosses differ from those in the rest of Trevisa’s translations is found in the work’s longest gloss. In it, Trevisa explains a tangential example from geometry that Giles uses to distinguish political “concilium” from other forms of deliberation. Although geometry is a rather abstract way for Giles to explain “concilium”

---

<sup>368</sup> See Lester Kruger Born, “The Perfect Prince,” *Speculum*, 3. 4 (Oct., 1928): 470-504.

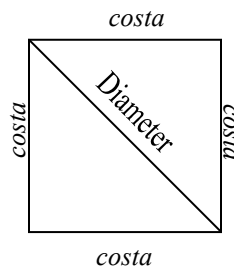
<sup>369</sup> Briggs *Giles* 82.

<sup>370</sup> Fiona Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 70.

<sup>371</sup> Kinkade 7.

‘advice’ and would justify Trevisa’s explanation, it is still surprising to see Trevisa devote his longest intervention to such a tangential example and not to the more central part of the treatise:

[Text] First, al þyng þat is immutable and may not change is out of oure consaile. For we taken consaile for to be reweled in oure dedes and nedes and for to voide euel and for to haue good. Þan þynges þat may not ben voided and þynges þat may not be changed falleþ not vnder counsaile. Þerfore, iii Ethicorum, it is iseid þat of euere lastyng þynges and of þynges þat may not change no man axe þe consaile, for no man axeþ consaile of þe dyiameter þat may not be imeete by þe costa noþer of oþer things þat may not change. *Trevisa*: for þe menyng herof it is to wetyng þat in quadrate liche long and brood ben foure lynes liche longe. And þe foure sides þerof and eche of thilke foure side lynes is icleped costa. And a lyne idrawe in lengþe fro þe oo cornere of þe quadrate to anoþer corner in þe oþer side is icleped dyiameter, and þat diameter is lenger þan costa. And it may not be knowe in nombrarie in what proporcioun þe dyiameter is longere þan costa.<sup>372</sup>



This is one of the clearest places, in all of his oeuvre, where we can rightly question the didactic clarity of Trevisa’s asides and as a result the stylistic directness of his translations. For even as Trevisa explains the technical terms “costa” and “dyiameter,” his text fails to tell us what these mean in respect to Giles’s argument: he does not tell us how advice can or cannot be directed towards necessary objects, and he does not tell us why this relationship is unchanging. Trevisa’s gloss may even need its own commentary particularly as it uses other possibly foreign mathematical terms to his vernacular audience, like “proporcioun,” “quadrate,” and “nombraire,” to explain this mathematical concept. Further, if this aside does not mean to teach geometry but merely explain an abstract point, it seems like a superfluous way of explaining Giles’s passing reference to geometry particularly when there are other tactics for medieval translators to quickly

---

<sup>372</sup> John Trevisa, *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa’s Middle English Translation of the De Regimine Principum of Aegidius Romanus*, eds. David Fowler, Charles Briggs, Paul Remley (New York: Garland, 1997) 352.

explain a concept, such as in-textual definitions or doublets, without devoting an entire signed gloss to a passing definition.<sup>373</sup>

We could blame the awkwardness of Trevisa's intervention on the abstractness of Giles's geometric exemplum. After all, Giles's digression is not one that, as elsewhere, works "as relevant support of explanatory example" of his political argument or that, advances his points by way of analogy.<sup>374</sup> From Trevisa's long commentary, we can infer that the level of abstraction in Giles's example even prevents it from articulating its political claims. Thus, whatever explicative failures can be found in Trevisa's long aside, we can attribute them to the tenor of translating something so tangential while still wishing to explain a concept to the reader. The original tangent of Giles's work would then explain why *On the Governance* does not incorporate what "costa" and "dyiameter" mean so that the reader could understand a concept. Trevisa's translation formulates the original example in a way that needs a tangential elaboration, and so it faithfully parallels its stylistic place in *De Regimine* while teaching a Latinate concept to his vernacular audience.

Still we should not be quick to attribute Trevisa's short-comings to his original text particularly given the brevity by which Giles introduces this abstract example:

Et que mutationis non subiacent sub consilio non cadunt. Ideo dicitur iii. Ethicorum. quia de eternis id est immutabilibus nullus consiliatur. Nullus enim quaerit consilium de diametro si est commensurabilis coste vel de quo cumque immutabili.

And of those [things] which are not adjoined of change, they do not fall under counsel. Therefore, in the Third Book of the *Ethics*, it is said that this is because no one takes counsel about

---

<sup>373</sup> In-textual definitions were deviations from the original which a medieval translator would use to explain a foreign word; for instance, when Trevisa translates the definition "Parapsis": "Parapsis is a square vessel wip foure sydes y-liche," adding "foure sydes y-liche" to explain what a "square" is (John Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*, 3 vols, eds. Seymour, M.C. et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 2.1378). Doublets are when a translator would use two vernacular words to represent a Latin term such as "rosteþ and tosteþ" for the Latin "torrere" 'to roast' (Greetham "Models" 147-149).

<sup>374</sup> See Janet Coleman, "Some Relations in the Study of Aristotle," *Political Thought and the Realities Power in the Middle Ages* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1998) 148-147 and Briggs *Giles* 116.

immutable and eternal things. Indeed no one seeks counsel about the diameter, if it is commensurable to the side or about any immutable thing whatsoever.<sup>375</sup>

A quick glance at Giles's original shows it to be quite different from Trevisa's translation—in length and emphasis. Trevisa draws out the example not only in his commentary but also in the translation itself. Giles, on the other hand, appears to use it as if in passing without really caring whether or not the geometric analogy helps further his argument.

This syntax may suggest a difference in each work's target audience. Giles, writing for a thirteenth-century Latin readership with access to a scholastic knowledge base, would not need to have this geometric example elaborated. On the other hand, Trevisa, writing presumably to vernacular speakers, would feel prompted to teach basic geometric concepts to the point of creating lengthy, tangential asides. Linguistic proficiency, however, only represents a part of an audience's knowledge base. While it seems plausible to think that an English audience would not know Latinate learning, it is harder to assume that Latin audiences would have understood scholastic thinking. In explicitly dedicating his work to a young Phillip the Fair, Giles would have faced the same conceptual difficulties, as Trevisa does, in teaching geometry to an audience interested mostly in political and legal advice and the same questions about the relevance of an aside on geometry in a place where he should be elaborating upon the idea of political advice.

If we are to understand how tangential Trevisa and Giles's explanations looked to their respective audiences, we should therefore look first at how an audience would have understood the origins of the geometric aside itself by turning to their citations—namely, Aristotle's *Ethics*: “ideo dicitur iii. Ethicorum” “Perfore, iii Ethicorum, it is iseid þat.” Explicit authorial citation was not always a common writing practice in medieval translations. In fact, both Trevisa and Giles inconsistently cite passages from their sources even when such citations would aid a

---

<sup>375</sup> Aegedius Romanus, *De Regimine Principum* (Venetiis: Simon Bevilaqua, 1498) Book 3. Part 2. Chapter 16.

reader's understanding or when they are literally quoting from another source. For example, they elide citations altogether; they sometimes amend the citation to passage; or at times they (and especially Trevisa) argue against, re-paraphrase, or simply omit sources at will.<sup>376</sup>

In the same manner, the concordance of a citation by two different authors is also common across medieval texts. However, in repeating a source's citation, a writer would have done more than just copy from the original; he would have pointed a reader to the possibility of a shared textual tradition. Otherwise, if a writer would have taken Giles's citation to be wrong, he would have listed another source for the quotation. In particular, "iii Ethicorum" 'third of the *Ethics*' tells us that both Trevisa and Giles wished their readers to know that this discussion of political advice came from an Aristotelian provenance, and it is not far into Book III of the *Ethics* that we see why:

As for Deliberation, do people deliberate about everything—are all things possible objects of deliberation—, or are there some things about which deliberation is impossible? The term 'object of deliberation' presumably must not be taken to include things about which a fool or a madman might deliberate, but to mean what a sensible person would deliberate about. Well then, nobody deliberates about things eternal such as the order of the universe, or the incommensurability of the diagonal and the side, of a square.<sup>377</sup>

Even though an appeal to geometry, from the viewpoint of readership, seems tangential to a discussion on "concilium," Giles and Trevisa focus on it simply because it comes from Aristotle, and Aristotle was a central theorist of medieval political thinking which any "learned" vernacular or Latin reader would have recognized.

Nevertheless, Giles and Trevisa's fidelity in quoting Aristotle appears to hamper the way in which this example could articulate political advice for an audience whose main interest for reading the work was practical. From Aristotle's passage, the text derives the very syntactical structure of its argument even when its goal (in addressing a particular ruler) differs in scope and

---

<sup>376</sup> Briggs and Fowler "Preface" xiv.

<sup>377</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1982) Book 3. Chapter 3. Section 1.

purpose from the generalized logical meditation on the term “concilium.” Following Aristotle, Giles’s text raises the question of what “deliberation” means in terms of immutability. It claims that “no one,” within the context of rational thought, would deliberate about immutable things simply because this is outside the definition of deliberation, and then, it gives brief example about a type of object that would make deliberation irrational: “the incommensurability of the diagonal and the side.” Trevisa’s translation does no different, and in fact, is more faithful to Aristotle as it adds the additional comment that the geometric concept involved—the incommensurability of the diagonal and the side—refers to a particular geometric figure, to a square.

It is easy to see why Aristotle’s example introduced obscurity into Giles’s own project. In delineating a philosophical basis for politics, the *Ethics* uses a geometrical example to differ the idea of deliberation from a broader one of cogitation. However, *De Regimine* has no use for this speculation since its stated object is not to provide a theoretical reflection on mental processes but to document practical teachings so that a ruler may learn how to govern. Because *De Regimine* simply repeats Aristotle without structuring his example into a larger discussion about political deliberation, this citation lacks the argumentative value that it finds in Aristotle’s *Ethics*. As a result, this analogy does not help us gain a clear picture of what “concilium” is or even an understanding of what immutability entails; instead, we merely hear a traditional way of speaking about an idea: the Aristotelian presentation of a concept of advice.

True, in repeating Aristotle, Giles and Trevisa are not simply slaves to textual tradition. Medieval readers knew that the citation of authorities did not lend truth to an argument—as if any learned medieval reader really needed to be assured that geometry is immutable by quoting Aristotle. The example’s Aristotelian provenance may have been a necessary condition for its

citation (i.e. Giles or Trevisa would have not cited simply any authority), but it was certainly far from sufficient. If this were the case, citing Aristotle would have been enough to assure a reader that the scope of “concilium” did not include immutable, eternal concepts, and no abstract aside, regardless of its length, would be required to explicate this point.

Giles and Trevisa’s citation of “iii Ethicorum,” therefore, does more than assure a reader of an argument’s verisimilitude: it also records this example’s history. Through detailing such a non-sequitur, a reader may look back at the provenance of “concilium” in “iii Ethicorum” and, in glancing back, see how “concilium” may work with other discursive traditions that have Aristotelian ethics as their base. This geometric aside, then, clarifies the material habitat (the proximity to other texts) of “concilium” as a repeated text but not necessarily its conceptual meaning (its proximity to an idea) as political advice. Through the exact and extensive reference to Aristotle, a reader is not simply told what immutability or counsel are; he is told how to find a detailed discussion on them by searching the Third Book of the *Ethics*, and he is shown how to locate similar discussions by looking for the literal framing of this geometric exemplum.

To draw a modern analogy, this form of tangential yet detailed repetition behaves like the seemingly arbitrary exercises by which a court decision cites its precedent. In following case citation to the letter, judges do not simply defer to tradition (as if precedent were the only means to argue a case). Their citations also are not assurances of argumentative validity (as if no one would question their logic by citing prior decisions). No, judges follow such minute and (at times) even tangential writing processes because these aid future readers in relating their decision to a wider space of law, arguments, and syntax beyond the limits of a particular case. Citing legal precedent makes a judge’s decision be more than an arbitrary interpretation of events just as an explicit citation makes Giles’s example be more than interpretation of what political

advice is. In short, citation makes a given example universal. Citation is a way for anyone in any place to delineate a sign's habitat and understand how two different signs can follow a given utterance, regardless of their argumentative import.

#### 4. Didactic Style: The Textual Habitats of Medieval Pedagogy

If a pedagogical clarification of mathematics were the goal of this tangential geometric aside (and of its Aristotelian citation), Giles and Trevisa would have based their gesture in a wider textual tradition. For a medieval text, this would have meant that the example could have not been elaborated simply as an aside to *De Regimine's* discussion on politics. As Aristotle's own use of geometry to discuss ethics implies, mathematical exempla were seldom detailed in isolation. Rather, they were often elaborated in conjunction to other fields of inquiry like morality, religion, or metaphysics. In fact, following classical tradition, the teaching of geometry occurred in the Middle Ages via two avenues: its repetition of principles in larger philosophical, theological, and other scientific works (like those of Boethius and Euclid) and through practical application in the work of masons, surveyors, and engineers. For example, Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa*, would compare the relationship of sin to the soul to the infinite divisibility of a line.<sup>378</sup> Similarly, medieval masons would understand geometric Euclidean axioms via non-mathematical algorithms in their manuals of practical geometry.<sup>379</sup>

Geometry (although cognized as an exclusive science) was habitually taught in a non-systematic manner, so that the learning of mathematic and geometric concepts took place outside disciplinary boundaries.<sup>380</sup> For example, the standard text for teaching geometry was not a text for only mathematical learning or even an encyclopedia, but Boethius's translation of Euclid's

---

<sup>378</sup> Paul Tummers, "Geometry and Theology in the XIIIth century: An example of their interrelation as found in the Ms. Admont 442. The influence of William of Auxerre?" *Vivarium*, 18. 2 (1980): 118.

<sup>379</sup> Ron Shelby, "The Geometrical knowledge of Medieval Master Masons," *Speculum*, 47. 3 (Jul., 1972): 410.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid. 398-399. For a history of the use mathematics in other disciplines, see J.E. Murdoch, *Rationes mathematicae; un aspect du rapport des mathématiques et de la philosophie au Moyen Age* (Paris: Université de Paris, 1962).

geometry in treatises devoted to other things like his *De Musica* and his *De Institutione Arithmetica*.<sup>381</sup> Even more, Boethius’s original gathering of geometrical concepts was a florilegium of fragments of Euclid and Roman land surveying practices—this type of conjoined didactic presentation of concepts readily gave the impression that geometry was a subject of application and not merely deductive speculation.<sup>382</sup>

In fact, Trevisa actively translated texts in this tradition. For example, his translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus’s *De Proprietaribus Rerum* tackled Bartholomaeus’s use of geometrical definitions as spiritual or moral allegories, as in the definition of the triangle:

The triangle is a figure wiþ þre corneres þat ben euene as moche as tweie euene corneres. *What is an euene cornere, it is determined in anoþer place. Þe soule of lyf, þat haþ þre virtues of gendryng, of norischynge, and of wexinge, is ylikened to þe triangle, þat is þe first of figures of gemetry. For þe soule of lyf is þe firste of alle soules and haþ in itself þre manere virtues.* Among cornered figures þe triangle is the firste. For he is solid, long, and brode. Þefore euerich figure wiþ corneres, as þe quadrangle and fyue-cornered figure, conteyneþ as many triangles as þer beþ lynes ydrawe fro corner to corner, as it fareþ in quadrangle, þat conteyneþ tweye triangles if oon lyne is ydrawe from oon corner to þe contrary cornere in þis wise [figure], and conteyneþ foure triangles if anoþer lyne is ydrawe from anoþer corner to þe contrary corner in þis wise [figure]. And so in alle othere figures. For he conteyneþ as many triangles as þay haueþ corneres, as þe quadrangle conteyneþ foure triangles if tweye lynes beþ ydrawe and streccheþ fro tweye corneres to þe contrary corneres. And by lynes ydrawe, the fyue-cornered figure conteyneþ fyue triangles, and þe sixe-cornered figure sixe, and þe seuen-cornered figure seuene, and so of þe oþre, as Boys [seith] libro ii. arsmetriche capitulo vi. [My emphasis]<sup>383</sup>

This allegorical rumination is a standard way of teaching geometric problems. Bartholomaeus construes a triangle through a metaphysical and moral speculation, and a moral lesson as a geometric proof although the explicit goal of his encyclopedic entry is to define a triangle.

Despite the relative complexity of this argument and its possibility to confuse a reader, Trevisa faithfully (and almost word for word) translates Bartholomaeus. He even refuses to intervene with an explicative aside at points in which the text leaves a central point undeveloped—like the silence over what “euene cornere” means. This “word for word” fidelity

<sup>381</sup> Tummers 112.

<sup>382</sup> Evgeny Zaitzev, “The Meaning of Early Medieval Geometry,” *Isis*, 90.3 (Sept., 1999): 524.

<sup>383</sup> Trevisa *On the Properties* 2.1370.

is maintained although knowing the definition of a right angle is central to Bartholomaeus's figuration of a triangle's corner as the soul and although the text itself leaves an opening for a commentator to explain the concept to his readers—"what is an euene cornere, it is determined in another place."

Trevisa holds back from disturbing the text with an extensive abstract aside on the meaning of a right angle not because he does not know what an "euene cornere" is but because his source's mathematical and moral allegory inhabited the traditional way of teaching mathematical concepts as applied knowledge. This pedagogic tradition weighs so much on the text that Bartholomaeus (and here Trevisa dutifully follows suit) claims to maintain the exact terminology of his source at the risk of introducing a reader to unknown mathematical concepts, such as a right angle. If either Bartholomaeus or Trevisa were to introduce short aside to clarify the meaning of "angle," they would have severed the fluidity of the theological argument. As such, the text would have not been a pedagogical exercise since it did not clarify mathematics concurrently with a parallel allegory in another field.<sup>384</sup>

Turning to *On the Governance*, we could speculate that Trevisa's lengthy aside about geometry, despite its awkwardness, could be an attempt to tie the explanation of a mathematical concept to a political one. Assuming that Trevisa's vernacular translations reached an unlearned and not simply a scholarly audience, his aside would work in concurrent mathematical and political levels to bring a reader to broader conceptual understanding. In general, this would seem to tie well with the image that Trevisa developed his commentaries as material explication of concepts for vernacular audiences. As Fiona Somerset has argued, Trevisa's asides portray more than a linguistic clarification of facts. Rather, in requiring a reader to access a wider

---

<sup>384</sup> Edith Sylla, "Thomas Bradwardine's *De Continuo* and the Structure of Fourteenth-Century Learning," *Texts and Contexts in Ancient and Medieval Science: Studies on the Occasion of John E. Murdoch's Seventieth Birthday*, eds. Edith Sylla and Michael McVaugh (New York: Brill, 1997) 186.

tradition via a citation, they attempt to empower laymen by allowing them to lay hold of Latinate traditions of explication.<sup>385</sup>

We can see a glimpse of this type of political and linguistic project in Trevisa's original reflections about the task of the translator. In his single original work, a dialogue preceding the *Polychronicon*, a character called *Dominus* (or "Lord") argues against one called *Clericus* (or "Clerk") vindicating the need to commission English translations. *Dominus*'s main argument is that vernacular translations of Latin work not only teach facts but to teach the process of thought:

*Clericus*: Panne hy þat ynderstondeþ no Latyn mowe axe and be informed and y taust of ham þat vnderstondeþ Latyn. *Dominus*: Pou spekst wonderlych, vor þe lewed man wot nozt what a scholde axe, and namelych of lore of dedes þat come neuere in hys muynde, noþer wot comynlych of whom a scholde axe. Also nozt al men þat vnderstondeþ Latyn habbeþ such bokes to informe lewed men. Also some konneþ nozt and som wol nozt and some mowe nozt a whyle; and so hyt nedeþ to haue an Englysch translacion.<sup>386</sup>

*Dominus* argues that one translates facts into English not just because people need to access information in Latin but because they need to use this information effectively. Men, after all, can ask what they do not know how to say. However not knowing an entire textual tradition, they do not know how, to whom, or about what they should inquire. For the *Dominus*, an English translation is not simply performative act (a promised exchange of information) but a felicitous performative act (a successful use of information by an audience) in that it teaches to vernacular readers a larger textual tradition. According to Somerset, the emphasis on pedagogy implies that the *Dominus* and perhaps Trevisa (or his patron Sir Thomas Berkeley) believe that translation empowers an audience by giving to "the poor, the stupid, the old, and those without leisure—the whole lay population it seems—" access to Latinate thinking.<sup>387</sup>

Still, given Trevisa's less than obvious relationship to his texts, I do not think that we should understand the character *Dominus* as the mouthpiece for Trevisa or Berkeley's thought on

---

<sup>385</sup> Somerset 93.

<sup>386</sup> Qtd. in Waldron "Trevisa's Original" 291.

<sup>387</sup> Somerset 65.

translation as Somerset implies.<sup>388</sup> This is because, for a good deal before Trevisa started translating Latin works into English, compilations and translations into Latin were thought as ways to spread knowledge even when their audience was limited exclusively to the Latinate clerisy. For example, Petrus Alphonsus justifies the crafting of his Latin *Disciplina Clericalis*, a manual for the teaching of discipline to the clerisy, by the same arguments that *Dominus* berates the exclusivity of *Clericus*'s arguments against vernacular translation:

Quia igitur me licet peccatorem Deus multimoda vestire dignatus est sapientia, ne lucerna mihi credita sub modio tecta lateat, eodem spiritu instigante ad multorum utilitatem hunc librum componere admonitus sum. . . Deus igitur in hoc opusculo mihi sit in auxilium, qui me librum hunc componere et in latinum transferre compulit.

Because therefore God permits me, sinner, the multifarious wisdom that was worthy to dress—lest the light to me entrusted under a vessel hidden be concealed—in this same instigating spirit to the use of many, I am admonished to compose this book. . . Let God, who compelled me to compose and drove me to translate this book into Latin, therefore be a help to me in this little work.<sup>389</sup>

For Petrus, the point of any translation is to disseminate knowledge following God's wish.

Because translation was already part of a clerical tradition, it is not true that, as Somerset claims, “any ‘English translacion’ any ‘translacion’ to the laity, carries with it, for clerics the threat of a kind of disendowment.”<sup>390</sup> Quite the contrary, translation was what gave the impetus for clerics to write and translate works into Latin in the first place “ne lucerna mihi credita sub modio tecta lateat” ‘lest the light given to me under a bushel be hidden;’ the goal of Latinate translation—even when removed from the everyday language of the vernacular—was a clerical motif of knowledge dissemination and of pedagogy.

Therefore, *Dominus*'s emphasis on the performative felicity of translation for a lay audience ironically has its most immediate parallel in the Latinate preaching he berates. This same clerical tradition had already addressed the main reason why, according to *Dominus*, a man

---

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Petrus Alphonsus, *Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae*, 38. 4 (1911): 1.

<sup>390</sup> Somerset 93.

needs direct access to knowledge—that is, so he would know how to ask for information, how to think, how to be curious. For example, Ranulf Higden in his *Ars Componendi* makes curiosity the key to any type of Latin exposition of the text, writing:

It is expedient for the preacher, as long as this is inoffensive to God, that from the start he render his audience willing and attentive listeners and concerned about following the argument... This method is also effective when the cause of some obscure saying is pointed out. So if why the eye is not a fixed color is discussed, the answer is because, if it were, it would perceive only one hue—the color of the eye itself—and there ought to be as many perceptions as colors. This saying can be applied to sinners, especially the avaricious and deceitful who, in that they are fixed in opposition, do not perceive the operation of God’s word.<sup>391</sup>

True, not knowing Latin may prevent a layman from not knowing what he “scholde axe,” but the Latinate clerical tradition had already incorporated and encouraged curiosity in its preaching. By starting from a difficult observation—like the discussion of eye color—Higden advises preachers to encourage their audience to question through the orthodox exposition of biblical truth. Thus, in wishing to give to a lay audience the tools to think, the *Dominus* incorporates an important precept of Latinate biblical exposition, namely curiosity.

In both of these examples, Latinate translation and exposition think of clarity as a trope even though they explain their concepts—of pedagogy and curiosity—through less than clear terms by alluding to biblical passages or scientific discussions. As a result, we cannot say that “clarity” and pedagogical exposition is simply Trevisa’s way of bringing knowledge closer to his audience’s hands away from Latinate means of exposition. We can say that there is some irony in how *Dominus* deploys these very Latinate arguments against the Latin tradition, which engendered them, by arguing that knowledge is only achieved for English readers once the need for a Latin teacher is removed. This sets up a contradiction. In *Dominus*’s formulation, English can teach ideas because its speakers have legitimate linguistic tools to articulate Latinate concepts, such as “costa,” in their own terms. However, English translations are needed because

---

<sup>391</sup> Ranulfus Higden, *Ars Componendi Sermones*, trans. Margaret Jennings (Peeters: Paris, 2003) 49.

English *does not have legitimacy as a learned language* that can teach men the questions they “sholde axe” from their Latin teachers.

### 5a. Latinate Vernacularity: The Limits of Translating Meaning in English

Taking the *Dominus* at his word leads us to conclude that English can paradoxically provide what it seeks to attain: namely, a legitimate linguistic tradition in the conveyance of new information. This desire may have been merely a symptom of the social value of English at the end of the fourteenth century. Not being disseminated into political and clerical structures of power, English had no real “authority” of its own and often re-appropriated Latinate traditions for non-Latinate ends.<sup>392</sup> As Andrew Cole has argued, fourteenth-century English translation works in a type of textual economy which, in claiming foreign and domestic literary traditions, also begets a debt to them.<sup>393</sup> The *Dominus*’s position is not so much contradictory but a paradoxical quality of translation which, in Jacques Derrida’s formula, seeks to posit its own “law, duty, and debt” even if its debt to an original tradition “can no longer be discharged.”<sup>394</sup>

This aspect of English translation becomes all the more evident by comparing it to other fourteenth-century translation efforts outside of England. For example, Nicole Oresme, who undertook the translation of major works of Aristotle in French for Charles V, provides glossaries and lexicons aside from extensive textual glosses, with an eye for French as a self-generating syntax and not an implicit debt system.<sup>395</sup> By comparison, Trevisa’s translations think of English as a fragile language needing other systems of thought to be defended. While Oresme proudly exclaims that “les choses pesantes et de grande auctorité sunt delectables et agreables

---

<sup>392</sup> Rita Copeland, “Toward a Social Genealogy of Translation Theory: Classical Property Law and Lollard Property Reform,” *The Medieval Translator*, Vol.4, eds. Roger Ellis and Ruth Evans (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1994) 173-183.

<sup>393</sup> Cole 1131.

<sup>394</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel,” *Difference in Translation*, ed. J. F. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) 207.

<sup>395</sup> Albert Douglas Menut, “Introduction to Oresme’s Version.” “Maistre Nicole Oresme Le Livre de Politiques d’Aristote.” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*. 60.6 (1970): 28.

as gens ou le language de leur païs” “things which are grave and of great authority are delectable and agreeable to people in the language of their own country,”<sup>396</sup> Trevisa’s *Dominus* defensively asks “Þanne what haþ Englysch trespassed þat hyt myzt nozt be translated into Englysch?”<sup>397</sup> As Somerset argues, this defensiveness allows *Dominus* to voice the paradoxical desire “to speak at once like a pope and a parishioner,” a desire to valorize immediate everyday language by disseminating universal knowledge accredited to another linguistic tradition.<sup>398</sup>

Still, if this logic drives Trevisa’s translation strategies, we would expect *On the Governance* to teach its readers concepts explicitly as if it were explaining a concept but to repeat traditional ways of articulating knowledge implicitly as if it was solely responsible for the concepts which they understood. In other words, Trevisa’s aside would follow the medieval pedagogical tradition even without articulating its debt to it explicitly. At first sight, Trevisa’s lengthy aside on the relationship of “dyiameter” and “costa” appears to do just that. It defines the terms which Giles neglects quite clearly and even attempts to contextualize those which it must introduce—through a diagram—to teach how this geometric relationship works. The intent for pedagogical clarity may be witnessed in that, unlike Giles, Trevisa defines the relationship of a “dyiameter” and a “costa” through an actual figure, a “quadrate,” which he defines as made up of four lines: “and eche of thilke foure side lynes is icleped costa. And a lyne idraw in lengþe from þe oo cornere of þe quadrate to anoþer corner in þe oþer side is icleped diameter.” If we liken Trevisa’s comment and translation to Bartholomaeus’s definition of a triangle, then we can see that he tries to appropriate a pedagogical tradition of concurrent explanations as if it were his own by giving a concrete example in everyday vernacular terms to educate the reader.

---

<sup>396</sup> Nicole Oresme, “Le Livre de Politiques d’Aristote.” “Maistre Nicole Oresme Le Livre de Politiques d’Aristote,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 60. 6 (1970): 44.

<sup>397</sup> Qtd. in Waldron “Trevisa’s Original” 292.

<sup>398</sup> Somerset 100.

In this frame, the terms “dyiameter” and “costa,” along with the drawn quadrangle would reflect a desire to appropriate Latinate pedagogical traditions in vernacular terms. In this manner, Trevisa’s tangential geometric lesson could not only define abstract terminology, but it would also follow the medieval pedagogical tradition in helping a reader understand the geometric relationship through algorithmic, and not deductive, steps.<sup>399</sup> The drawing, as well as the lengthy aside and definition of terms, could have at least an immediate purpose of coming to the conclusion how “it may not be knowe in nombrarie in what proporcioun þe dyiameter is longere þan costa.” Thus, the text could not only dispel all lexical doubts about what a figure “fourre lynes liche longe” looks like but even provide a short geometrical lesson.

That Trevisa’s debt to other textual traditions could conflict with his pedagogical purpose, however, does not fully account for the tangential qualities of his commentary. After all, Trevisa does not simply define “costa” as any type of side in a figure—just as Giles does—but he follows Aristotle more closely and calls “costa” the side of a “quadrate.” True, we can argue that Trevisa knew that Giles had this particular shame in mind or that Trevisa merely wished to find a figure to make his point concrete. Nevertheless, the context that occasions Trevisa’s aside, “for no man axeþ consaille of þe dyiameter þat may not be imeete by þe costa,” does not require that we think of square to understand this passage—only that we understand how a diameter may not be measured by the side. Trevisa’s additions, therefore, do not simply teach a concept but also cite, what Katherine Breen calls a textual habitat—in this case an Aristotelian allusion—without really furthering our conceptual understanding. Assuming that Trevisa’s vernacular translation merely appropriates Latinate traditions, like Breen argues, however, does not answer why Trevisa chose to supplement his pedagogical intent with a foreign

---

<sup>399</sup> Shelby 395.

textual tradition. Further, it leaves unanswered why a “cleer and pleyn” translation would insert a geometrical lesson at the end of a work of politics.

In fact, it is Trevisa’s very concrete use of a square (and of its drawing) to explain what he says that appears to confuse what his comment explicitly means to define, namely that *pe dyiameter...may not be imeete by pe costa.*” Although it is possible to see how this statement may be true for a circle or for a figure without a proportional number of sides, in the square—as any student of trigonometry knows—a diagonal may be proportionally measured by knowing any one of its sides. This fact is not difficult to intuit by seeing the congruency of the sides in Trevisa’s drawn figure. Further, as Trevisa’s translation of Bartholomaeus shows, the division of a square by a “diameter” shows that a square is made up of four triangles and that there is a special relationship with the sides of figures that had “*euene corneres.*”

For Trevisa’s vernacular audience, these difficulties would have been compounded based upon their knowledge of geometry. Proving that the side of a square may not be known by the length of its diameter as shown by dividing the square into two congruent triangles would be understood as false by the average vernacular reader. Outside of the university, geometry spread through the trigonometric science of “*euene*” corners, which was applied to architectural and surveying necessities. For a vernacular audience, these common practices required an understanding that the sides of a square were proportional to its diagonal through the very type of algorithmic derivations which Trevisa was using to prove his conclusion.<sup>400</sup> Although we cannot assume that Trevisa’s readers knew these relationships, at least one of his possible (and most important) readers, his patron Thomas Berkeley, would have used such algorithmic methods in

---

<sup>400</sup> Shelby 417.

his daily surveying practices and would have found Trevisa's explanation if not out-right wrong, at least far from a useful pedagogical way of explaining with which he came in daily contact.<sup>401</sup>

If Trevisa meant to appropriate a Latinate tradition of pedagogy implicitly for the benefits of his audience, why would he go out of his way to teach a concept in an erroneous way? Why would he risk being discredited as a man of knowledge and authority by his target audience by introducing something which was counter-intuitive to their understanding of mathematics? Further, if this lengthy aside revealed his own limits as a scholar, why would he invest so much work in it? Why define an equal sided figure labeled with four "costa" and a "dyiameter" and then claim that there is no way to establish their proportional length?

After all, a reader can see four equal sides, so why would it prove difficult to think that if these be "imeete" 'measured,' he could arrive at the measure of a diagonal through proportions? One explanation is that Trevisa's glosses do not really attempt to define concepts accurately but merely mean to highlight the subject matter which they surround. In Somerset's words,

Two of these annotations are as purely informational as any of those in *De Proprietatibus rerum*: on 143v Trevisa explains the meaning of 'dyiameter' and 'costa' (that is, side) with the aid of a diagram, while on 144v he explains the meaning of 'speculabilia' and contrasts it with 'agibilia.' But there is more to these two glosses than that. They appear in the midst of Giles's exposition on 'consaile,' the second of four powers involved in ruling a city, and are themselves counsel for counselors: they explain (*even if Trevisa does get it slightly wrong*) two topics on which it is neither advisable nor necessary for a 'consaile' to offer 'consaile' [My emphasis].<sup>402</sup>

Yet, what would be the purpose of using "slightly wrong" comments to highlight that 'consaile' is neither advisable nor necessary when thinking of geometric or scientific ideas? Certainly, Trevisa's mathematical mistakes would have called the reader to attention—just as much as the drawing, the lengthy explanation, and the odd choice for a gloss; however, the argumentative pay-off—that "consaile" is not geometry or parts of nature—would be minimal since in telling us what council is not, Trevisa most certainly does not tell us what it actually is.

---

<sup>401</sup> On Berkeley's experience with surveying, see Hanna "Sir Thomas" 885-886.

<sup>402</sup> Somerset 76-77.

Given that his explanation would be perceived wrong at face value, we are left to wonder what, if any, were the pedagogical qualities of Trevisa's translations for a vernacular audience? If Trevisa's gloss portrays accurate and legible concepts, then his audience would have understood his commentary as more than a translation. After all, in taking "imeete" as "measured," Trevisa's gloss could not be legible in a strictly vernacular setting, and as such, its use of translation would not be limited to teaching vernacular speakers Latinate concepts.

#### 5b. Latinate Vernacularity: Translation as a Textual Habitat

In this gloss, I believe that Trevisa hints that vernacular-only speakers were not his target audience by referring to the measuring of a square's sides through the conjunction of "proporcioun" and "nombraire." Not only were these two terms of French origin, but in the lay knowledge of geometry, it would not be standard practice to think of "proporciouns" as numerically quantified. The presentation of geometry, through numerical figures, was not widely used in Europe until the introduction of analytical geometry by René Descartes. Medieval practical and scholastic manuals of geometry used non-numerical ways of measurement—arcs for instance were constructed by conjoining circles and not by measuring a line and an angle.<sup>403</sup> There were two main reasons for the medieval preference for algorithmic pedagogy: the first was the inter-disciplinary application of geometry; the second was the difficulty by most vernacular speakers to understand Arabic or Latin numerals. By tying "proporcioun" to a "nombraire," Trevisa's gloss, despite its use of quotidian English, would have juxtaposed two quotidian concepts about measurement in a less than quotidian manner.

Trevisa's commentary, therefore, alienates his audiences from more than a mathematical concept—it also distances them from the algorithmic habitat by which a side could be said to be un-measurable, "non-imeete" by "proporcioun" and "nombraire." To put it otherwise, Trevisa's

---

<sup>403</sup> Shelby 413-414.

terms allude to an idea foreign to vernacular understanding of geometry, namely the Latinate idea of incommensurability. The incommensurability of the hypotenuse of a square to its sides, its ability to “not be imete,” although counterintuitive from a perspective which thinks of lines as quantifiable, was accepted as an exemplary geometrical proof in scholastic thought. This is because, to Aristotelian philosophy, numbers were understood as both rational and natural integers. Since the diameter of a quadrangle was derived by squaring the length of a side, the ratio of the sides to their diagonal could never be expressed as a whole, integer, i.e. by the term “nombre.” Aristotle’s proof, which basically shows that rational numerical proportions could lead to irrational results, was so famous in scholastic thought that it elicited not only extensive scholarly commentary, but it also merited its own philosophical treatise even though it represented but a simple exercise in basic trigonometry.<sup>404</sup>

In fact, the proof was so popular that it was commonly repeated by mathematicians regardless of its utility. For example, one of the most famous doctors of Trevisa’s Oxfordian *alma mater* Thomas Bradwardine took up this proof in the Third Part of his *Geometria Speculativa* not because of its centrality to geometry or even because it was helpful in teaching theories of proportion. Rather, he took it up simply because of its “exemplarity”:

Tertia conclusio: Dyiameter Quadrati ad latus eiusdem est proportio irrationalis. Estque omnis dyiameter sue coste assimeter. Ista patet ex premissa, quoniam proportio lateris quadrati ad dyametrum non est sicut proportio numeri ad numerum. Hoc probo, quoniam dyiameter est medio proportionale inter extrema dubple proportionis, ut ostendam. Sed in numeris impossibile est invenire numerum proportionaliter medium inter numerum duplum et subduplum. Ergo dyiameter ad costam non est proportio secundum habitudinem numeri ad numerum. Assumptum probo sic. [...] Istud exemplum est famosum in philosophia, et ideo declarationi eius plus insisto.

Third Conclusion: The diameter of a Square to its side is an irrational Ratio [proportion]. And every diameter is asymmetric with its side. This is evident from the preceding conclusion, because the ratio [proportion] of the side of a square to the diameter is not as the ratio [proportion] of a number to a number. I prove this because the diameter is the proportional mean between extremes of a double ratio, as I shall show. But in numbers it is impossible to find a middle number proportionally between a double number and a half of that number. Therefore the diameter to the

---

<sup>404</sup> Tummers 129-131.

side is not a ratio according to the habitat/custom of number to number. I prove this assumption thus [...] This example is famous in philosophy, and therefore I pursue its exposition further.<sup>405</sup>

Bradwardine does not turn to this geometric example to teach a concept or to prove a theorem. No, he uses this example because it is clearly exemplary—because it has a tradition “in philosophia” ‘in philosophy’ based upon a “habitudinem numeri ad numerum” ‘the habit of number to number.’ Bradwardine’s proof does not further his own arguments or help him clarify a point; rather, it strictly is a way to situate his own thinking in a wider Latinate tradition of Aristotelian refutation and thought.

Like Bradwardine, Trevisa devotes so much time in proving something that at first sight may seem counterintuitive and tangential simply because he is following a traditional repetition of this example. Therefore, just as Bradwardine ends his proof as “hoc probo quoniam proportio lateris quadrati ad dyametrum non est sicut proportio numeri ad numerum” ‘therefore here I prove that the proportion of the side of a square to its diameter as such is not a proportion of number to number,’ Trevisa ends his gloss as “and it may not be knowe in nombrarie in what proporcioun þe dyameter is longere þan costa.” Both mathematician and translator explain a seemingly tangential discussion because they seek to situate the habitat of their language in Latinate tradition and not because they wish to express a concept.

Further, despite having a broader vocabulary to speak about proportions and numbers in terms of integers, whole numbers, rational numbers, etc. and despite addressing a learned audience, Bradwardine concludes his geometric proof with the ambiguous Latin term “numerum” ‘number.’ He does so not because his audience would not know that “numerum” could also refer to irrational “numeri” but because this proof was traditionally referred to in this manner. Similarly, Trevisa does not translate “incomensurable” as “imeete” because he finds it

---

<sup>405</sup> Thomas Bradwardine, *Geometria Speculativa*, Trans. George Molland (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1989) 100-103. My translation.

difficult to transliterate and then define the term. Instead, he translates “incomensurable” into “imeete” because this type of translation literally repeats the textual traditions surrounding the term “incomensurable.” This explains why Trevisa goes beyond Giles and adds the term “quadrate” to his commentary. Like Bardwardine, Trevisa does not have a narrow conception of numbers nor does he believe that this geometric proof needs exact terminology to be understood. Rather, he uses the word “quadrate” to allude to the Aristotelian tradition of interpreting the proportion of “numeri ad numerum” ‘of number to number’ although such a tradition would be illegible to vernacular ears.

In preferring a sign’s habitat over its ability to convey an idea, Trevisa employs quotidian English terms in non-quotidian uses. When he explains that the side of a square is not “imeete” by its diagonal, he does not wish his readers to think that a square’s diameter “is not measured” by its sides but, rather, that it is “incommensurable” with them. Trevisa’s English does not translate a Latin concept into English idiom but tries to fit an English concept into a Latinate word. His commentary, therefore, works against Copeland and Somerset’s idea that, by translating, one can disseminate knowledge across unbridgeable linguistic traditions. Trevisa’s translation uses signs in their lexical habitat and not in their conceptual meanings. He does not do this to render Latinate concepts in idiomatic or palpable English but to inhabit the Aristotelian origin of this proof with exactitude and accuracy. Through this “literal translation,” Trevisa not only manages to give us a true geometrical axiom, but he manages to do so in a way which makes English a suitable language for expressing it without diluting its original Latinate syntax.

Trevisa’s “literal translation” has no concern with teaching a Latinate concept to a vernacular audience or in using signs to convey an ideal “menyng.” If Trevisa means what he writes, he would not only provide an incorrect explanation of a concept, but also, in providing a

clearly wrong commentary, he would show that Latinate translations did not bring any new knowledge into vernacular culture. If the word “imeete” is merely the idiomatic past-participle of measure, the geometrical example would become illogical to the average “educated” vernacular speaker. The practice of geometry would allow anyone to measure the diagonal of a square by an algorithmic deduction of the measurements of its sides. Trevisa’s all-too-literal and less-than-vernacular translations, hence, usurps the English language from vernacular quotidian understanding for the exclusive use of clerical readers by using a highly scholastic “exemplum famosum” ‘famous example’ with solely secular syntax without rendering it legible for audiences ignorant of Latinate reading traditions.

I am not saying, as Katherine Breen following Fiona Somerset suggests, that Trevisa translates to synthesize Latinate and vernacular cultures in one language. I am, however, arguing that his translations do not present English as a viable alternative to Latinate textuality. The glosses in Trevisa’s *On the Governance of Kings and Princes* inhabit “meaning” only when we think that their audience was not the vernacular-only, secular nobility but the Latin and vernacularly learned, clericy. The *Dominus*’s desire “to haue an Englysch translacion,” in stressing pedagogy, does not reflect the position of Trevisa the translator but that of “Trevisa” as a foil for Latinate textuality. Although the figural “Trevisa” may have voiced a pedagogical concern, the need to have an “Englysch translacion” for Trevisa the writer meant to literally bear Latin texts as English, to carry English through Latin signifying traditions, without necessarily addressing vernacular audiences.

#### 6. Vernacular Reading: The Style of a “Trevisa” Translation

Still it is difficult to think that Trevisa’s use of English does not *mean* what it *says* at some level for vernacular speakers. This is because what we know of Thomas Berkeley’s life

suggests that he requested Trevisa's translations to increase his cultural capital amidst the English-speaking nobility.<sup>406</sup> Aside from Berkeley's possible patronage, we can say very little about the actual readers of *On the Governance*, and even less from what we know of its lone manuscript, Oxford Bodleian Digby 233. Still, we can say this: unlike his translations of the *Polychronicon* and *De Proprietaribus Rerum*, *On the Governance of Kings and Princes* did not proliferate even given the popularity of Giles's Latin text and that of the "mirror for princes" genre to which it belonged.<sup>407</sup> The vogue of Giles's work amidst the nobility—the king's uncle alone had a French and Latin copy—and the overwhelming success of Lord Berkeley's dissemination of Trevisa's other works have made the limited circulation of *On the Governance* in England a mystery.<sup>408</sup>

Notwithstanding, there have been a few theories that try to account for the limited proliferation of Trevisa's work. Each seriously questions the extent to which we may use *On the Governance* to theorize about the type of readings of Latinate authority in vernacular syntax which we are claiming that the text engendered. The first is that Thomas Hoccleve's tremendously popular *Regement of Princes*, a vernacular mirror for princes that was often confused with Giles's own work, would have prevented a wide-reading of Trevisa's translation.<sup>409</sup> The second is that the type of advice contained in Giles's work would have benefited Berkeley particularly due to his role in the deposition of Richard II, most thoroughly, by being kept secret and so designated as a particular message for one noble.<sup>410</sup>

---

<sup>406</sup> Hanna "Sir Thomas" 915.

<sup>407</sup> Aside from Digby 233, there are no manuscripts which prove that Trevisa's translation of *De Regimine* was known to anyone beyond the confines of the Berkeley household (Briggs *Giles* 82). Only until 1454 is there a mention of another English language copy by an inventory of the goods of Sir Thomas Charlton (Charles Briggs, "MS Digby 233 and the Patronage of John Trevisa's *De Regimine Principum*," *English Manuscript Studies*, vol. 7 (London: British Library, 1998) 261).

<sup>408</sup> Ibid. 262 and Hanna "Sir Thomas" 910.

<sup>409</sup> Hanna "Sir Thomas" 913, note 84.

<sup>410</sup> Fowler *The Life* 190 and Somerset 78.

I believe both of these alternatives are untenable. As regards the first, the dissemination of Giles's work in European culture makes it difficult to argue that Thomas Hoccleve's *Regement* would have limited the scope of Trevisa's translation. For one, medieval readers do not seem to have compartmentalized their reading as if when they read a political work they would not read another—even if it was the same work. Thus, *De Regimine* was copied in 350 manuscripts even when its source, the more popular *Secretum Secretorum*, was disseminated in over 600 Latin copies alone.<sup>411</sup> Further, noble households often possessed different copies of the *Secretum* or *De Regimine*, and it would be difficult to say why the presence of one translation would preclude the proliferation of another in a different circle. This was certainly true in France where the continued dissemination of Henry de Gauchy's translation certainly did not prevent the creation of the translations of Jean Golein or of Gilles Deschamp.<sup>412</sup>

The second alternative, that political events made the suppression of the vernacular version of *De Regimine* expedient, ignores that *De Regimine* presented no polemical or heterodox political advice. As a result, the English translation of *De Regimine* would not be necessarily tied with political dissidence any more than the several vernacular versions of the *Secretum Secretorum*, which, because they contained works of alchemy, certainly could be read as heretical. As Charles Briggs has argued the popularity of Giles came less from his presentation of unique political advice but from his ability to compile several forms of advice authoritatively.<sup>413</sup> The wide dissemination of *De Regimine* across Europe (and certainly in more politically charged environments than fifteenth-century England) suggests that a popular work

---

<sup>411</sup> Briggs *Giles* 20-21.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.* 20.

could give its owner the ability to spread his prestige across the laity as a learned man even if political circumstances made such advice politically precarious.<sup>414</sup>

The popularity of *De Regimine* and that of Trevisa's other major translations makes it hard to understand why Digby 233, as a translation of a popular work by a popular translator, was of such low demand to result not only in a unique translation of Giles but an unfinished example.<sup>415</sup> In fact, the several inconsistencies of rubrication, colophons, and spatial arrangement along with a marginal scribal annotation "ut corrigitur" 'it is to be corrected' suggested to Ralph Hanna the work's lack of consecutive construction by Trevisa.<sup>416</sup> Further investigations, by D.C. Fowler and Charles Briggs, have suggested not only a poor scribal construction but also the possibility that this work was an unfinished exemplar and that, because it was unfinished, it was not widely disseminated.<sup>417</sup> Through a physical analysis of Digby 233, scholarship concluded that even Trevisa may have not seen the final product, as the textual rift between writer and patrons (the Berkeley household), evident through Digby's construction, suggests that neither text nor manuscript were finished within his lifetime.<sup>418</sup>

---

<sup>414</sup> Ibid. 77 and Hanna "Sir Thomas" 915.

<sup>415</sup> The manuscript itself has long been known to be a compilation of distinct translation efforts—one of *De Regimine* by "Trevisa" and one of Vegetius's *De Res Militaris* by "a worshipful [ ] toun" who explicitly addressed the work to Berkeley in October 31, 1408 (Briggs "MS Digby 233" 250). The appearance of direct involvement by Berkeley and Trevisa was provisionally supported by Digby's artwork, which includes two lavish frontispieces for the beginning of the first two books of *De Regimine* (f.1 and f.62), lavish borders, and a distinctive swan badge (Ibid. 249 and Kathleen Scott, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles*, vol. 6 (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1996) figs. 150-152), as well as by the recurrence of the corrector's hand in other Berkeley manuscripts (Briggs "MS Digby 233" 253). Kathleen Scott's recently finished work on Gothic manuscripts suggests not only that the artwork of the manuscript was not exclusively English (reflecting unusual French motifs in the frontispiece gestures of the nobles), but that due to its enormous size, it was most likely ordered for "a prince of the realm, either Henry IV or his son, Henry, Prince of Wales" (Vol.2 Cat.No. 35).

<sup>416</sup> Hanna "Sir Thomas" 897 note 47.

<sup>417</sup> Fowler *The Life* 192 and Briggs "MS Digby 233" 257.

<sup>418</sup> A.S.G Edwards was the first to suggest this, citing the end of Digby 233 which puts the completion of the translation in 1408, six years after Trevisa's death (139). Although Fowler and Hanna have both argued on social grounds that *On the Governance* had to be left unfinished (although begun) within Trevisa's lifetime (Fowler *The Life* 191; Hanna "Sir Thomas" 899), the codicological work of Briggs and Scott has confirmed Edwards's suspicion. Briggs argues that the extensive scribal revisions on the translation, the effective lapse of three years after the death of Trevisa, and Lord Berkeley's lack of leisure to secure the dissemination of his favorite translator's work, as he had for his other two major translations, show that "had Berkeley a finished Trevisan autograph in his possession

This has led one of the modern editors Charles F. Briggs of *On the Governance* to argue that the work was not copied from a completed edition but from “Trevisa’s own working copy” (i.e. from his annotations). The exemplar’s shortcomings would reflect not those of scribes intending to replicate but to compile a finished work from a draft of a final product. According to Briggs, the scribes of Digby 233 were “saddled with the difficult task of not only reconstructing the text in accordance with what they could surmise was Trevisa’s final intention...but of doing so on the same parchment leaves that were destined to be bound into their patron’s elegant book of politics and war.”<sup>419</sup> Digby 233, therefore, reflects the creation of a draft into a “final” finished copy and not simply a replication of a complete exemplar. Since neither Trevisa nor his final text guided the construction of Digby 233, the signature “Trevisa” evidences how a group of scribes understood a Trevisa-text to be read especially when amongst the multiple departures of the text from Giles’s translation, only three of these are annotated.

More than rendering *De Regimine* into English, *On the Governance* preserves a particular type of translation—a translation recognized as coming from an idea of who “Trevisa,” as an ideal translator, was. To use another modern analogy, Digby 233 more closely mimics an adaptation of a “Shakespeare” play rather than that of *Romeo and Juliet*. In the latter, the text’s meaning is preserved via interpretation of its content—via what one director wishes to convey. In the former, the text is interpreted through the image which has made it famous—via what the general culture assumes “Shakespeare” to signify. Thus, appending the metonym “Shakespeare” to a play would mean more to a given audience than titling it *Measure for Measure* or

---

prior to 1405, it is reasonable to assume he would have made an exemplar available to his business and political acquaintances in London...and in the absence of Hoccleve’s more modish alternative, chances are he would have succeeded”(Giles 258). The simplest answer is that Trevisa had not only died before Digby 233 was finished but also before his own translation was completed (Giles 259). Scott’s observations that Digby 233 was illuminated by artists acquainted with French styles originating from the Benedictine houses and the colophon year of 1408 as coinciding with the coming of age of Henry IV’s son, the future Henry V, and outside the Berkeley-Trevisa patronage relationship of the late fourteenth century (Vol.2 Cat.No. 35).

<sup>419</sup> Briggs Giles 88.

*Coriolanus*. The scribal use of “Trevisa” in Digby 233 works in the same manner. It is not the actual proficiency of Trevisa as translator that works on an audience but the effects of his authorial replication in culture. As such, the compilers of *On the Governance* sign the translation as a “Trevisa” creation not because they owe fidelity to the text’s content but because they owe a fidelity to the cultural image and fame of its translator.

Seeing “Trevisa”’s metonymic value as a signature helps us understand the lack of dissemination of this English translation of a very popular Latin work. Although *De Regimine* and literature of princely advice were widely popular in late medieval culture, it is doubtful that “Trevisa” could entice a wide readership for an unfinished exemplar, with a public already used to receiving finished “Trevisa” translations of Higden and Bartholomaeus. Particular Shakespeare performances have a lesser following than their metonymic dispersal in culture, even as they are responsible for how society construes the idea of “Shakespeare.” In the same way, *On the Governance*, reflecting only the unfinished projection of a metonym, would have found but a small niche on the wider dissemination of “Trevisa” within English culture.

#### 7. Vernacular Writing: Disseminating a “Trevisa” Translation

This means that the metonymic value of “Trevisa” depended on reading practices his work engendered and not on the content of his translations. There was more to a “Trevisa” translation than the rendering of Latinate content in English. Digby 233’s scribes knew that the glosses in *On the Governance* did not directly represent the wishes of an authoritative text or writer as the text they possessed was but an incomplete draft. Nevertheless, they signed them “Trevisa” because they cognized in them *a habitual use of signs* associated with that name: the usurpation of vernacular language for the benefits of a Latinate-speaking culture.

Within the glosses of *On the Governance*, the scribes read the learned exposition of Aristotelian geometry, ethics, and science. From this, they inferred the work of a man who was not shy of using his extensive knowledge to chide, compliment, or expand upon his texts as he commonly does in the *Polychronicon*. For example, in arguing against one of Higden's sources:

*Trevisa*: It is wonder that Gregory telleth so mad a maggle tale of so worthy a prince of philosophers as Aristotle was. Why telleth he not how Aristotle declareth the matter of the ebbing and flowing of the sea? Why telleth he not how it is written in the book of the Apple how Aristotle died and held an apple in his hand and had comfort of the smell, and taught his scholars how they should live and come to God, and be with God without end. And at last his hand began to quake, and the apple fell down of his hand, and his face wax all wan, and so Aristotle yielded up the ghost and died.<sup>420</sup>

In this gloss, Trevisa answers Gregory's Latin Aristotle story—of an unworthy death—against one from explicit Jewish and Arabic origins, known as *De Pomo*. Trevisa's gloss repeats not only the main story line but the scholarly address of this pseudo-Aristotelian work to its readers:

quem librum cum non inveniretur inter cristianos, quoniam eum in ebrayco legimus translatum de arabico in hebreum, sanitate rehabilitata ad eruditionem multorum et de hebraea lingua transtulim in latinam in quo a compilatore quedam recitailia insertuntur.

which book when it is not found amidst Christians, thus we read it translated in Hebrew from Arabic into Hebrew, having [our] health rehabilitated, we translated from the Hebrew tongue for the erudition of many into Latin in which certain recitations were inserted by the compiler.<sup>421</sup>

“Sanitate rehabilitata ad eruditionem multorum” ‘Having our health rehabilitated to the erudition of many’ might as well be an interpretation of Trevisa's role as a compiler and translator of Aristotelian role who attempts to rehabilitate Aristotle against Gregory's “maggle” tale. In the same manner, through its presence *On the Governance* and elsewhere, the metonym “Trevisa” reinvigorated and made the vernacular a possible language of erudition—of rehabilitation of Latin traditions—for those scholars who could understand the use of very complex Latin references within everyday English.

---

<sup>420</sup> Qtd. in Fowler *The Life* 186, trans. David Fowler.

<sup>421</sup> Qtd. in Lynn Thorndike, “The Latin Pseudo-Aristotle and Medieval Occult Science,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 21.2 (April, 1922): 237.

Trevisa's translations were not disseminated under the metonym of "Trevisa" to teach concepts to lay readers. Rather, his commentaries show a writer catering to a very learned audience interested in more than pedagogic understanding. "Trevisa," as a metonymic English embodiment of a Latinate tradition of Ranulfus Higden, Bartholomeous Anglicus, and Giles of Rome, appeals to the gate keepers of English writing: those bureaucratic clerics through whom the accurate dissemination of learning, the literacy of the nobility, and the "canonizing" of an English corpus was accomplished. "Trevisa" directed its lore to the clerical members of the bureaucracy who, as John H. Fisher has argued, were responsible for the emergence of a standard dialect and the dissemination of English literary works as competitors to Latinate and French traditions.<sup>422</sup> And Trevisa was not alone Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Gower's *Confessio Amantis* lay wholly within the hands of a group of scribes, who were more than passive receptors, but also creators of a national corpus of literature.<sup>423</sup>

Hence, by bearing Trevisa's signature, *On the Governance* assured both its performative felicity (its ability to convey a "learned" message) and possibility of its continued demand (its mark of Latinate authority). Through the former, "Trevisa," as a signature, taught its readers how to "construe an Englysh" from a usurpation of Latin tradition into quotidian English signs following the pattern of its Latinate English glosses. Through the latter, it taught them how to recognize this type of English as "authorial" English. Trevisa's signature—alongside the geometric lesson found in Digby 233—works less as a way to communicate signs along a conceptual value and more as a signal of the "eruditionem" 'erudition' present within a specific compilation.

---

<sup>422</sup> Fisher "Chancery" 887.

<sup>423</sup> For a full study of this culture see John H. Fisher, "A Language Policy for Medieval England," *PMLA*, 107. 5 (Oct., 1992) and Eric Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (College Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 2001).

“Trevisa”—following the tradition used by Giles in his *De Regimine* and Higden in the *Polychronicon*—introduces a reader to a habitat of a text and not to its overt meaning. This makes the signing of a tangential geometric example more politically useful than the teaching of a concept of governance because it helps one form an identity through a particular linguistic articulation. As Ralph Hanna has argued, the gesture to textual habitats presents a fifteenth-century “difficulty of translation” not because the “conversion of a text from one language to another necessarily misrepresents its source text” but because the tactics involved in translating continually brought to mind political questions about readership, authorship, and linguistic identity.<sup>424</sup> By teaching a reader how to use English through another tradition, how to emulate Latin speech within English language, “Trevisa” effectively helped preserve a counter-Latinate culture within the very heart of a rising, vernacular tradition. This type of double-speak (by which a language would overtly not say what it should mean) could preserve the habitat of its signs by forsaking their conceptual use and so keep a linguistic tradition (Latin) from being diluted it into a rising syntax (English).

In his original dialogue between *Dominus* and *Clericus* found in the *Polychronicon*, Trevisa makes his strongest argument for the cultural preservation of Latin textual traditions in vernacular syntax through this type of authorial, Latinate gesturing. This claim seems counterintuitive because, at first sight, the dialogue does quite the opposite, seemingly arguing that English translations are valuable because of their pedagogic use and not because they keep Latinate traditions from vernacular appropriation. In fact, the *Dominus* openly defends vernacular translation as a cure for the universal incommunicability after the fall of Babel:

*Dominus*: Septhe þat babyl was ybuld men spekeþ dyuers tonges so þat dyuers men buþ straunge to oþer and knoweþ nozt of here speche. Speche ys nozt yknowe bote 3if hyt be lurned. Commyn lurnyng of speche ys by huyryng. And so always deaf ys alwey dombe, vor he may nozt hure

---

<sup>424</sup> Ralph Hanna, “The Difficulty of Ricardian Prose Translation: The Case of the Lollards,” *MLQ*, 51.3 (1990): 325.

speche vor to lurne. So men of ser contrayes and londes þat habbeþ dyuers speches zef noþer of ham haþ lurned oþeres speches, neyþer of ham wot what oþer meneþ þey hy meete and haue greet neode of informacion and of lore, of talking and of speche. Be þeo neode neuer so gret neyþer of ham vnderstondeþ oþeres speche no moore þan gaglyng of geese. For iangle þe on neuere so vaste þe oþer ys neuere þe wiser þey a schrewe hym in stude of good morowe. Þis ys a gret meschef þat volweþ now mankuynde; bote God of hys mercy and grace haþ ordeynd double remedy. On ys þat som man lurneþ and knoweþ meny dyuers speches. And so, bytwene strange men of þe whoche noþer vnderstondeþ oþeres speches, such a man may be mene and and telle eyþer what þoþer wol mene. Be oþere remedy is þat on langage ys ylurned, yvsed and yknowe in meny nacyons and londes. Þarfore Latyn ys ylurned yknowe and yvsed specialych a þys half Grees in al þe nacions and londes of Europa.<sup>425</sup>

A closer look at this monologue, however, shows how the *Dominus*, the secular advocate for vernacular English literacy, mounts the strongest defense for the universality of Latinate culture as a way not simply to guarantee equality of knowledge by all people but also their political and ethnic cogency. In *Dominus*'s words, there are two remedies for the inability for communication occasioned by this plurality of languages: the learning of multiple tongues by some men or the learning of one tongue by all men. Although *Dominus* cannot provide an example of men who would be "mene" between others and "telle eyþer what þoþer wol mene," he does come up with an example of the second remedy of a universal tongue in turning to Latin. As a language of learning, Latin serves as God's second remedy for mankind's sin in creating the tower of "babyl" and so forsaking not just universal speech (by the dispersal of tongues) but universal brotherhood (through the creation of nation).

Still, this monologue seems to defend a type of pure linguistic space, which Walter Benjamin calls the ground of all translation, and not necessarily Latinate learning until the concluding lines of *Dominus*'s opening monologue: "Þarvore Ich woulde haue þeus bokes of cronyks translated out of Latyn ynto Englysch, for þe mo men scholde hem vnderstonde and haue þereof konnyng, informacion and lore."<sup>426</sup> Despite having said that the two remedies for plurality are reductionary (either to have a few men who know all languages or one language

<sup>425</sup> Qtd. in Waldron "Trevisa's Original" 289-290.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid. 290.

known by all men), *Dominus* concludes that universal “konnyng” ‘learning’ is better attained through *two* languages—English and Latin—because it allows “mo men” to access a given idea. This conclusion paradoxically supports the post-Babylonian linguistic state, which the *Dominus* calls “gaglyng of geese.” It assumes that plurality of “speche” is the solution to the plurality of ignorance by not making vernacular speakers learn one language but making one language conform to the views of the common masses.

In this form of reasoning, *Dominus* perversely joins divine power with secular power. He makes God’s remedy for division, the ability to translate across languages, his tool for reinstating God’s punishment, a Babylonian linguistic polity. The irony, however, is deeper than first appears. In berating the language of the Church, *Dominus*’s defense stands close to a literal scriptural understanding of language and voice as theorized by Paul’s *First Epistle to the Corinthians*:

et vos per linguam nisi manifestum sermonem dederitis quomodo scietur id quod dicitur eritis enim in aera loquentes tam multa ut puta genera linguarum sunt in mundo et nihil sine voce est. *si ergo nesciero virtutem vocis ero ei cui loquor barbarus et qui loquitur mihi barbarus.*

And you, unless you give manifest speech through language in which way would it be known what it is said? Indeed, you will be speakers in air as there are so many known kinds of tongues in the world, and none are without voice. *Therefore, if I ignore the force of the voice, I will be to him to whom I speak a barbarian, and he who speaks will be a barbarian to me* [My emphasis].<sup>427</sup>

Like the *Dominus* who first authorizes English via irrational force, Paul situates the sovereign power of language within its forceful being-in-the-world—through the “virtutem vocis” ‘force of the voice.’ For Paul, diverse tongues are only made dumb or, in his words barbarian to each other, through the absence of a lordly and forceful voice, of a sovereign force, which in keeping their absolute equality makes them “aera loquentes” ‘speakers in air’ without power or understanding, or as *Dominus* puts it, a mere “gaglyng of geese” caused by men who in their plurality of voices are “buþ straunge [or barbarians] to [each] oþer.”

---

<sup>427</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:7-11.

*Dominus*'s arguments repeat Paul's arguments implicitly. For *Dominus*, as for Paul, "sermo" or "speche" is material through and through so that understanding depends on hearing, "always deaf ys alwey dombe." From this physical characterization of "sermo," *Dominus* does not argue that tongues should be abolished but they should proliferate in the mouths of new individuals. Paul solves the confusion brought about by speaking a plurality of divine tongues within the Church by asking that "qui loquitur lingua" 'he who speaks in tongues' should "oret ut interpretetur" 'pray so that it is interpreted.'<sup>428</sup> Similarly, *Dominus* does not wish to silence vernacular tongues through universal understanding of one tongue (he is not advocating that the Church teach its sermons exclusively in English) but merely wishes to allow for the ability of "speche" to be "ylurned, yvsed and yknowe in meny nacyons and londes." That is, he wishes for the force of speech to be present in all tongues. For both Paul and the *Dominus*, the barbarism of linguistic plurality is not resolved via translation into multiple languages but by introducing "on langage" that can teach "meny nacyons" with the voice of authority.

#### 8. The Force of "Speche": Translation without Mediation

The *Dominus* never considers that one can close the communicative gap amidst individuals by teaching one language, like standardized English to all the populace of England. Nor does he follow Oresme in arguing that translation is necessary for making concepts more "agreeable" to the general populace. Similarly, Paul rejects the idea of having the Church speak one "sermo" 'speech' above others even if he does prefer there to be prophetic understanding coupled with a multiplicity of "linguae" 'tongues': "volo autem omnes vos loqui linguis magis autem prophetare nam maior est qui prophetat quam qui loquitur linguis nisi si forte ut interpretetur ut ecclesia aedificationem accipiat" 'however, I wish either all of you to speak with

---

<sup>428</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:13.

tongues or to prophesy; for greater is he that prophesies than he who speaks with tongue lest perhaps it is interpreted so that it is taken for the edification by the Church.<sup>429</sup>

Both Paul and the *Dominus* propose to order the multiplicity of language outside its communicative qualities through what the pedagogic strength of a voice, “speche ys nozt yknowe bote zif hyt be lurned.” In Paul’s case, this is a prophetic voice that teaches to the gentiles by witnessing to a united community of Christians:

in lege scriptum est quoniam in aliis linguis et labiis aliis loquar populo huic et nec sic exaudient me dicit Dominus. itaque linguae in signum sunt non fidelibus sed infidelibus propheta autem non infidelibus sed fidelibus. si ergo conveniat universa ecclesia in unum et omnes linguis loquantur intrent autem idiotae aut infideles nonne dicent quod insanitis si autem omnes prophetent intret autem quis infidelis vel idiota convincitur ab omnibus diiudicatur ab omnibus.

In the law it is written, I will speak to these people in other tongues and other lips, and for such they will not hear me, said the Lord. And therefore, tongues are not a sign to the faithful but to the unfaithful. Prophecy, however, is not to the unfaithful but to the faithful. If therefore the whole church agrees/convenes in one, and all speak with tongues, however, would the idiots/the deaf/unlearned or the infidels entering not say that you go mad? *But if all prophesy, and there enters anyone of the infidels or an idiot/deaf/unlearned he is judged by all* [My emphasis].<sup>430</sup>

In the *Dominus*’s case, translation is “nedeful” because learning requires a voicing and preaching for the community of “Englyschmen”:

Also þe gospel and prophecy and þe ryzt fey of holy churche mot be tauzt and ypreched to Englyschmen þat conneþ no Latyn. Þanne þe gospel and prophecy and þe ryzt fey of holy cherche mot be told ham an Englysch, and þat ys nozt ydo bote by Englysche translacion. *Vor such Englysch prechyng ys verrey Englysch translacion, and such Englysch prechyng ys good and nedeful; þanne Englysche translacion ys good and nedefol* [My emphasis].<sup>431</sup>

Paul thinks of prophetic speech as a sufficient witness of God’s power because the “idiotae”, the ‘dumb’ can be judged immediately by the unified power of the voice of the Church. *Dominus* argues the same for translation saying that “Englyschmen” can only learn “þe gospel and prophecy and þe ryzt fey of holy churche” in the language that is closest to them, English. This is why *Dominus* argues that the teaching of the faith in the vernacular “ys verrey Englysch translacion”—that there is no difference between linguistic change and linguistic pedagogy.

---

<sup>429</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:5.

<sup>430</sup> 1 Corinthians 14: 21-24.

<sup>431</sup> Qtd. in Waldron, “Trevisa’s Original” 292-293.

Prophecy and English, then, affect the “idiotae” or the “dumbe” not by conveying a message correctly but by imbuing a community of speakers with the authority of one forceful “voice.”

Paul and *Dominus* think that the power of language does not come from its ability to be understood but through its immediacy to speakers. Consequently, language is not predicated on learning, but learning on language. In Trevisa’s words, one “may nozt hure speche vor to lurne,” and in Paul’s, “et vos per linguam nisi manifestum sermonem dederitis quomodo scietur id quod dicitur” ‘unless you give manifest speech through language in which way would it be known what it is said?’ Language impels learning, and without hearing immediate linguistic structures, it is impossible to understand anything: “commyn lurnyng of speche ys by huyryng. And *so always deef ys alwey dombe*, vor he may nozt hure speche vor to lurne.”

*Dominus*’s conclusion, although literally in accord with Scripture, is not necessarily that of the Christian tradition that grew from Paul’s letters. The orthodox position, following Thomas Aquinas’s commentary to 1 Corinthians 14, is entirely different:

*Contra:* Idem est loqui linguis et loqui litteraliter quantum ad idiotas; cum ergo omnes loquantur litteraliter in Ecclesia, quia omnia dicuntur in Latino, videtur quod similiter sit insania... Dicendum est ad hoc, quod ideo erat insania in primitiva Ecclesia, quia erant rudes in ritu ecclesiastico, unde nesciebant quae fiebant ibi, nisi exponeretur eis. Modo vero omnes sunt instructi; unde licet in Latino omnia dicantur, sciunt tamen illud quod fit in Ecclesia.

*Question:* It is the same to speak in tongues and to speak literally so far as concerns the unlearned/idiotas; when therefore all speak in the church, because everything is said in Latin, it seems that this will be a similar insanity. [*Answer*]: It should be said to this that there was insanity in the primitive Church because they were unskilled in the ecclesiastical ritual, while they ignored which things they trusted unless it was expounded to them. All are taught in a true way whence it is permissible to say all things in Latin, all nevertheless know what happens in the church.<sup>432</sup>

In his commentary, Aquinas argues that the Latin liturgical service by itself is enough to convince the unfaithful by the universality which lies behind its practices. In other words, there are things besides language that are able to teach the faithful God’s message—like the liturgy

---

<sup>432</sup> Thomas Aquinas, “Sancti Thomae de Aquino Super I Epistolam B. Pauli ad Corinthios lectura a capite XI ad caput XVI reportatio vulgate,” *Corpus Thomisticum*, ed. 1953 <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/c1v.html#87673> (Web 10 October, 2010) Super I Corinthios. Lectio 5.

and common practice. It is not important that a parishioner know Latin simply because “modo vero omnes sunt instructi” ‘all are taught by means of the true manner’—that is, the Church’s customs replicate the same knowledge that a parishioner would get by understanding its Latin language and there is no particular benefit from the “virtus sermonis” ‘strength of the voice’ because God’s grace is ideal and not physical.

In interpreting Paul, Aquinas raises similar questions regarding the absence of the vernacular in pedagogical and liturgical practices as *Dominus*: are there universal customs? How do people learn Scripture? How does language convey teachings? However, unlike *Dominus*, Aquinas situates Paul in a historical time in which there was no Church or a universal habitat for Christian teachings:

Sed quare non dantur benedictiones in vulgari, ut intelligantur a populo, et conforment se magis eis? Dicendum est quod hoc forte fuit in Ecclesia primitiva, sed postquam fideles instructi sunt et sciunt quae audiunt in communi officio, fiunt benedictiones in Latino.

But why are blessings not given in the vernacular, so that they would be understood by the populace, and so that they conform themselves more to it? Answer: It must be said that this perhaps was in the primitive Church, but afterwards the faithful were instructed, and they know that the blessings which they hear in the common office are made in Latin.<sup>433</sup>

Aquinas couches his arguments in terms of learning, but he reasons that, because the meaning of Latin services is generally understood and because language is used for this general understanding, Latin must continue to be used not to render the gospel’s message intelligible but because of its authoritative use in instruction. Blessings are said not for the knowledge of an idea of God but for the experience of piety. Instruction has a Latin face which would be sacrificed if one could give “benedictiones in vulgari” ‘blessings in the vernacular,’ and thus introduce the possibility of variance into an otherwise “communi officio” ‘common office.’

*Dominus* follows a similar logic except through an English perspective by saying that in the liturgical service “such Englysch prechyng ys verrey Englysch translacion.” Again, the worry

---

<sup>433</sup> Aquinas Super 1 Corinthios. Lectio 3.

is that the word of God has a particular textual habitat that must be preserved for its successful reception by listeners. However, *Dominus* takes a different stance by saying that English liturgy is preferable to Latin liturgy simply because it is made by and for “Englyschmen” as “translacion.” That is, language has a force worth preserving because of it has an immediate force for its practitioners as coming and being from them, and not necessarily because it helps them understand universal concepts.

*Dominus* argues that, for God’s “speche” to have authority, it would have to be understood outside mediation—that its practitioners would have to embody “menyng” as an authoritative habitat of customs near-at-hand to them. As we have seen in the first chapter, *Dominus*’s arguments reflect how John Wycliff’s arguments on textual and political authority invoked Paul literally to reduce the strength of divine language not to conceptual interpretation but to immediate understanding:

Quid igitur valet verbose contendere, quod veritas cristiane fidei non dependet super *virtute sermonis* nostri? Modica enim nulla est in sermone sophistico. Ideo soleo dicere, quod quelibet pars scripture sacre est vera de virtute sermonis divini, que quidem virtus est verbum dei ac eius virtus et sapiencia incarnata, de quo dicit eadem sapiencia Joh. Decimo septimo: *sermo tuus veritas est.*

What therefore does it value verbosely to contend, that the truth of Christian faith does not depend over the strength of our speech? Indeed, there is no prudent thing in sophistic speech. Therefore, I accustom to say that any part of scripture is sacred from the truth of the strength of the divine speech, which the same strength is the word of God and his incarnate strength and wisdom, from which it says in the seventeenth chapter of John by this same wisdom: *your word is truth.*<sup>434</sup>

Wycliff, like *Dominus*, takes Paul’s words at face value. He argues that the power of truth comes directly from the power of speech, “*virtus sermonis*,” and not from the way in which the Bible interprets it to accord to universal reason. As such, he concludes that it is silly to argue that “*veritas cristiane fidei non dependet super virtute sermonis nostri*” ‘the truth of Christian faith does not depend over the strength of *our* speech.’ If truth and speech are the same, then those who speak it with “*virtus*” ‘strength’ are the direct voice of truth and their meaning need not be

---

<sup>434</sup> Qtd. in Minnis “Authorial” 26.

debated nor their words thoroughly analyzed. In *Dominus*'s words, "always deaf ys alwey dombe;" he that has no strength of voice, has no access to truth or "lerning."

The dialogue between *Dominus* and *Clericus* about translation—like Trevisa's general attitude towards translation—is therefore not one over the necessity of conveying ideas to a general populace. Rather, it is an ontological defense of language as immediate force—as useful without communicating concepts. As Margery Baxter has argued, the emphasis on the immediacy of language has a political aim in England: it justifies the creation of communities (particularly Wycliffite adherents) outside traditional textual habitats by empowering the receivers and speakers of a language without the need for the intermediary of the Church to interpret their meaning. She writes,

In this interpretation, Lollard reading is governed by the same rules as Lollard ownership or dominion: it comes only by grace, *not by grammar and Donatus*...*At such a level of theological abstraction, language is but the empty and dead covering of an unmistakable supernal presence which is not read but almost speaks itself directly to those with ears to hear* [My emphasis].<sup>435</sup>

For Trevisa, this is precisely what legitimates *Dominus*'s arguments for English translation. Inhabiting the very force of "speche," the "virtutis sermonis," *Dominus* refuses to cite his Pauline sources explicitly. Instead, he appropriates their language and arguments into his own terminology—as if they were his but also as if they did not need an exegetical tradition to be understood. In so doing, he obviates the mediating role of a Latin tradition by appropriating scriptural references directly for his own purposes. *Dominus* argues without a tradition and without logical steps, vindicating translation without citing a single "auctor" and even mocking *Clericus* when he turns to authorities to them for support. *Dominus*'s speech makes him truly a "dominus" 'lord' of his own language, without having any debt to tradition or a mediating

---

<sup>435</sup> Qtd. in Hanna "The Difficult of Ricardian Prose" 337

concept—his language is true simply because it is his, because it has immediacy without referring to meaning and by the simple power of a voice without the mediation of meaning.

Trevisa's take on translation works much in the same way. It reinforces language without allowing its interlocutors to divine a direct meaning from it. Trevisa does not, therefore, translate so that his readers could access a wider tradition and so that they could themselves have access to the "grammar of Donatus." Rather, he translates to give immediacy to a Latin tradition for the benefit of clerical readers. These, while using the English language, could portray a wide knowledge base without the mediation of Latinate meaning and so speak anew with authority. The result is an "authoritative" language seemingly without foundation. This language merely portrays the habit of interpretive tradition without the mediating level of reflection and abstraction that would have alienated the gestures of authority from the nearness of the vernacular tongue. This language relies on "virtus sermonis" 'force of speech' to create a space for a community who wished to speak outside traditional structures of representation.

## CONCLUSION:

### THE VOICE OF COLONIALISM

*Dominus*'s association of political authority with a post-Babylonian plurality of voices fittingly concludes this dissertation's discussion about the ability of speech to gather "authorial" force without referring to meaning. The Tower of Babel, after all, is the one place where syntactic utterances were possible without meaning because human tongues were bereft of intelligibility by God's intervention. Further, for medieval historiography, the building of the Tower marks the first time where this confusion of tongues specifically speaks of the creation of "auctoritas," by describing the story of Nimrod, the first earthly tyrant.

Babylon, as the epicenter of both vernacular language and sovereignty, underlies Trevisa's understanding of the political stakes of translation. As *Dominus* makes clear in the first line of the dialogue, translation necessarily negotiates "strangeness" within a polity: "Seþthe þat babyl was ybuld men spekeþ dyuers tonges so þat dyuers men buþ straunge to oþer and knoweþ nozt of here speche."<sup>436</sup> For Trevisa, in particular, translation allows readers to create such a political unit not because it helps them communicate to one another but because it helps them retain gestures of authority across languages. This is in part why *Dominus*'s arguments, like Trevisa's translations, are explicitly "straunge" to everyday vernacular understanding—they require more than a rudimentary understanding of his words to comprehend. Although the biblical account of Babel to which he directly alludes provides no direct link between the beginning of sovereignty and the confusion of men's tongues, Trevisa's couching of the story before the flood in a discussion by a Lord on the political importance of translation implicitly hearkens to a Latinate historical tradition. This tradition has its roots in the *Antiquitates Judaicae* of Flavius Josephus, whose long history of the world accords with other general histories like

---

<sup>436</sup> Qtd. in Waldron "Trevisa's Original" 289.

Justin's *Epitome of the Philippic History* in situating the building of Babylon and the beginning of language with the beginning of sovereign states.

To the biblical tradition Josephus adds that, after the flood, Noah's posterity was ordered by God to multiply and people the earth; however, humankind doubted God's intentions and rebelled against the deity that had once flooded the earth:

Nay, they added to this their disobedience to the Divine will, the suspicion that they were therefore ordered to send out separate colonies, that, being divided asunder, they might the more easily be oppressed. Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! And that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers!<sup>437</sup>

According to Josephus, God's command to populate the earth made humans suspicious that, having once drowned their ancestors, God now wished to divide and oppress them. Fearing that dispersal would allow them to be more easily enslaved by the divine will, humans established the first tyrant to build "a tower too high for the waters to reach" and so escape the divine command to colonize the earth.

The creation of Babylon as the first sovereign state is a brave (but foolish) stand against oppression and the spread of colonial dissemination. Through it, mankind sought to unite under one nation and one tongue that could withstand God's punishment and the threat of linguistic and political dispersal across the globe. Hence, the beginning of sovereignty is the beginning of freedom from divine Providence and of time with the building of one Tower for the memory of posterity. The Tower of Babel works both as a form of writing—in vividly reminding all future generations that mankind was united under one will with the force of their own hands—and as a

---

<sup>437</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston (Cirencester: Echo Library, 2006) 9.

unifying principle that, by encapsulating all of humanity under one name and sovereign boundary, would prevent its colonial dispersal into the world.

By standing against the divine will and the passage of time, Babel is the first exemplary chronicle of mankind. Just as Ayala says that chronicles “guardan” ‘keep’ and ‘guard’ against the passage of time and the coming of evil by making that events “fincassen en remembrança perdurable” ‘would be affixed in perpetual memory,’ the Tower sought to preserve man’s name in perpetuity against the threat of the elements and so separate man’s name from his world:

Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God, and they built a tower, neither sparing any pains nor being in any degree negligent about the work: and, by reason of the multitude of hands employed in it, it grew very high, sooner than anyone could expect; but the thickness of it was so great, and it was so strongly built, that thereby its great height seemed, upon the view to be less than it really was. It was built of burnt brick, cemented together with mortar, made of bitumen that it might not be able to admit water.<sup>438</sup>

Like Ayala’s use of exemplary time, the structure separates mankind from his temporal experience of the world by manipulating man’s affect towards authority—his expectation of how authority should manifest in daily life. The Tower, standing outside of time, grows “sooner than anyone could expect;” and being outside the realm of experience it appears to be “less than it really was.” The distancing of human beings from their environment, thus, simultaneously upholds sympathy for the labor of creating a Tower and apathy to the looming power of God which surrounds them. In making a structure design to stand outside the ravages of time, humanity under the guidance of Nimrod forcefully separates the experience of living in the world from the universal preservation of their name.

Using parts of the world—earth and clay—to separate one from its real effects—to make a structure that “might not be able to admit water”—surreally foreshadows the separation of meaning from speech that will come from God’s punishment. The hands of men use nature

---

<sup>438</sup> Ibid. 10.

outside “natural” attributes, openly manipulating their former home to prevent the entrance of the waters in it. That is, they use the tools of God to exert a type of authority over other men—through figures like Nimrod—yet their actions are those of open affront to the divine will. In essence, human beings distinguish their place from the world by taking God’s place as creators without wishing to transmit the experience of a Divine Will to one another.

In creating the Tower, these early humans write a type of fiction of God’s authority, which thinks that sovereignty could be placed upon the earth without a colonial imperative; a fiction that, although repeating God’s creative gestures, does not seek to replace him as an oppressive or disseminating force. As a consequence, when God descends from the heavens to see their works, he does not destroy humanity once again but merely foils their “mad” designs:

When God saw that they acted so madly, he did not resolve to destroy them utterly, since they were not grown wiser by the destruction of the former sinners; but he caused a tumult among them by producing in them diverse languages, and causing that through the multitude of those languages, they should not be able to understand one another. . . . The Sibyl also makes mention of this tower, and of the confusion of language, when she says thus: “When all the men were of one language, some of them built a high tower, as if they would thereby ascend up to heaven, but the gods sent storms of wind and overthrew the tower, and gave every one his peculiar language; and for this reason it was that the city was called Babylon.”<sup>439</sup>

For Josephus, God produces diverse languages because humanity’s sin does not warrant yet another type of destruction. In other words, the presence of multiple languages is not a witness to the effective challenge of mankind to the divine purpose—the sinners had “not grown wiser” by the destruction of their brethren and posed no risk to God’s power. Rather, the multiplicity of tongues is the direct exertion of God’s authority to cause tumult even against the unification of man, and as such, it is an explicit portrayal of the greater strength of the divine power.

Whereas man presents his authority through unification, through a purposeful gathering of hands to arrest time, God presents his authority through dispersal and confusion. Following Josephus, we may even wish to repeat alongside John Gower that “Cristes word may noight be

---

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

fable”—as in reading the Sibyl’s myth we can see that the universality of the divine will is unable to be fashioned through human representation. The hubris behind the building of Babel above all points to a misunderstanding of the divine authority—to the unwise thinking that God’s authority comes from a unity that could be represented in one man and not through the silence of dispersal. When Nimrod builds Babel, he directs his anger towards God’s oppression while misunderstanding the nature of his sovereignty. He does this in two ways. First, he fashions one building (and one polity) which would bind all humans to one another in a joint project—against the divine command to multiply. Second, he attempts to make humanity resemble one image and one tower whereas the divine will operates in inexpressible silence and confusion.

However, as Gower’s own involvement with Babylonian imagery has shown, the hubris behind speaking for God is not simply an ethical directive—it is above all an articulation of a political moment. A quick glance at the story of Babel in *Genesis* shows how Josephus uses the figure of Nimrod to translate what is a problem of identity into explicit political terms:

Erat autem terra labii unius et sermonum eorundem. Cumque proficiscerentur de oriente invenerunt campum in terra Sennaar et habitaverunt in eo. *Dixitque alter ad proximum suum venite faciamus lateres et coquamus eos igni habueruntque lateres pro saxis et bitumen pro cemento. Et dixerunt venite faciamus nobis civitatem et turrem cuius culmen pertingat ad caelum et celebremus nomen nostrum antequam dividamur in universas terras. Descendit autem Dominus ut videret civitatem et turrem quam aedificabant filii Adam. Et dixit ecce unus est populus et unum labium omnibus coeperuntque hoc facere nec desistent a cogitationibus suis donec eas opere compleant. Venite igitur descendamus et confundamus ibi linguam eorum ut non audiat unusquisque vocem proximi sui. Atque ita divisit eos Dominus ex illo loco in universas terras et cessaverunt aedificare civitatem et idcirco vocatum est nomen eius Babel quia ibi confusum est labium universae terrae et inde dispersit eos Dominus super faciem cunctarum regionum.*

However the earth was of one tongue and of the same speech. And when they set out from the Orient, they found a field in the land of Shinaar and they lived in it. And *the other said to his neighbor*, come let us make bricks, and let us bake them by fire, and they had bricks for stones and pitch for cement. And they said come, let us make a city and tower for us of which the top touches to the heaven, and let us celebrate our name before we are divided in all the lands. However the Lord descended so as to see the city and tower which the sons of Adam were building. And he said, look at that, *the people is one, and [they have] one language for all*, and they have begun to make this, and they will not desist from their thoughts until they complete these works. Therefore, come, let us go down and confuse their tongues there *so that no one hears the voice of his neighbor*. And so the Lord divided them from this place into all the lands, and they ceased to build the city, and therefore, its name is called Babel, because there the tongue of the whole earth was

confused, and from there, the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the regions [My emphasis].<sup>440</sup>

The Tower of Babel was built when “dixitque alter ad proximum suum” ‘another spoke to his neighbor’ or before one man was “straunge to oþer”—at a time when my proximity to my neighbor’s speech prevented me from seeing him as an “other” to myself.

It is this state that God, almost fearing the strength of mankind’s unity, wishes to prevent by making men strangers to each other. In the biblical narration, he prevents the building of the Tower not—as is generally believed and as Josephus interprets in transposing a Greek myth to a biblical episode—by making each builder speak in a different tongue.<sup>441</sup> Rather, God confounds the ability of language to speak with one meaning, effectively silencing human speech:

“confundamus ibi linguam eorum ut non audiat unusquisque vocem proximi sui” ‘let us confuse their tongue there so that no one hears the voice of his neighbor.’ God’s solution for the hubris displayed by the unification of humanity is not to make many tongues, but rather, it is to make their one “vocem” ‘voice’ a voice of confusion foreign to the ear of the other.

Because the confusion that separated each human from his neighbor results in their dispersal across the globe, the creation of alterity essentially results in colonialism. Being unable to build one polity alongside a neighbor fundamentally alienates each human from another and allows the objectification of others. This is what Josephus’s *Antiquitates* concludes as it uses the myth of Babel to describe the colonization of the world by man and of one man by another:

After this they were dispersed abroad, on account of their languages, and went out by colonies everywhere, and each colony took possession of that land which they light upon, and unto which God led them; so that the whole continent was filled with them, both the inland and the maritime countries. There were some also who passed over the sea in ships, and inhabited the islands; and some of those nations do still retain the denominations which were given them by their first founders; but some have lost them also, and some have only admitted certain changes in them, that they might be the more intelligible to the inhabitants. And they were the Greeks who became the authors of such mutations. For when in after-ages they grew potent, they claimed to themselves the glory of antiquity; giving names to the nations that sounded well (in Greek) that they might be

---

<sup>440</sup> Genesis 11:1-9.

<sup>441</sup> Flavius Josephus 10.

better understood among themselves; and setting agreeable forms of government over them, as if they were a people derived from themselves.<sup>442</sup>

The multiplicity of tongues allows men not only to leave building a single Tower for the expanse of the world but also to take “possession of that land which they light upon.” That is, the strangeness from one another causes humans to give unique names to the lands they inhabit simply because they inhabit them and not because they rightfully own them. In other words, without universal meaning as a way to communicate with my neighbor, the creation of polities must privilege the syntactic “denomination” of my identity—the immediate force of the voice—as a way to retain my name upon the earth and their power over the land they find.

After Babel, humans are “intelligible” to one another not by representing one image but by mutating their voice into that of the other. It is this use of language that allows the extension of the first human empire—that of the Greeks. According to Josephus, the Greeks were able to grow potent by authoring certain “mutations” to their original speech by which they could give “names to the nations that sounded well (in Greek) that they might be better understood among themselves” so as to make others believe that they were a people “derived from themselves.” Thus, the Greeks were able to sound as if they were the first nations, as if all other tongues came from their original peoples, and by “claiming to themselves the glory of antiquity,” (we may even say in the same manner that Trevisa uses English to appropriate Latinate authority) they were able to set “agreeable” governments upon their people and upon their neighbors.

In the figure of Babel, the “virtus sermonis” ‘force of speech’ associated with vernacular plurality not only reflects Trevisa’s authorial gesturing but it also mimics the broader discourse of authority in fourteenth and fifteenth-century justifications of colonial expansion. I have argued that the success of fifteenth-century colonial discourses came from a fundamental disassociation

---

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

between meaning and representation, in which “authority” was conceived as a type of metaphor to justify access to areas beyond legal control. As the discourse of the Papacy from Clement VI to Eugene IV conceived of it, authority was the mere ability to represent—and not some sort of universal idea subject to interpretation and discussion. Paralleling how Josephus says the Greeks conquered others, the efforts of Portugal to pressure the Papacy for a bull of crusade against the Canarians were based upon the authorial qualities of discourse, its ability to make communities without referring to a particular tradition, not to conquer barbarians but “neighbors” without a voice and speech.

This is more than a fortuitous parallel; the linkage of Babylonian confusion to colonial discourse of the Canaries can be seen in how the earliest account of their conquest, the chronicle known as *Le Canarien*, describes the bringing of Christianity to the Islands’ inhabitants. In this part of the chronicle, preserved in British Library MS Egerton 2709, Pierre Bontier and Jean Verrier recount the sermon given by the colonizers upon baptism of the native “infideles.” The sermon briefly details the history of the world until the death of Jesus without many details, except a noticeably detailed account of the Tower of Babel:

Et quant ilz virent que ilz fuernet monteplioie grant nombre un nomme nemroch voullit regner par force et sasamblèrent tous en un champ nomme le champ de la naar et ordonnerent du commimi a comprendre les trois parties du monde et que ceulx qui estoient descendus de *Sem lamee fiilz noe tendroient l’afe et ceulx qui estoient descenduz de cam lautre filz noe tendroient europe et iaffet le meanne tendroite afrique*. mais ainfois quil fe departiffent eulx commencerent une tour ci grant et si forte laquelle ilz vouldrent quelle venift iufque auciel *en perpetuelle memoyre deulx* et dieu qui vit que euls ne ceffervient point leur ourage leur confondit leur langagez en tell maniere *que lun nen tendit la voiz de lautre*. Et la furent faiz premierement tous les languages qui aujourduy sont par toute le monde.

And when they saw that they were multiplied in a great number, a man Nimroch [Nimrod’ wished to reign through force and he gathered all in one field called the field of Naar, and they commonly ordered to attain the three parts of the world, and those who were descended *from Shem, the most loved Son of Noah, should have Asia, and those who were descended from Ham should have Europe, and Japheth, the low one, should have Africa*, but before they departed, they started a Tower so great and so strong which they wished could come close to heaven *in perpetual memory of them*. And God, who saw that they did not leave at all their work, he confounded their tongues

in such a manner that *one could not understand the voice of the other*. And there were first made all the languages which today are throughout the world [My emphasis].<sup>443</sup>

Given how Josephus traces colonialism to God's destruction of the Tower, we can see why Bontier and Verrier expound upon this episode. In it, the Bible gives an account of why the Canarians came to live in these Islands isolated from the rest of humankind by culture and language (they were dispersed there after the fall of Babel) once God confused their language so that "lun nen tendit la voiz de lautre" 'one could not understand the voice of the other.'

In emphasizing the political possibilities of separating meaning from representation, Bontier and Verrier's narrative mimics the English and Iberian discourses of authority which made possible the translation of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* in the Iberian Peninsula. As this dissertation has suggested, the writing strategies of the monarch who allowed the Papacy to rethink its policy on colonial expansion, the Portuguese king Dom Duarte, strongly relied on discursive tactics of the author of "do Amante" in their portrayal of authority. The poetic craft in Gower's *Confessio* portrayed authority without dependence on representation and, through this separation, it created a vernacular work with universal authority. As a result, Gower's work became more than a poem translated across languages; it also became a way of speaking and of representing discourse worth being copied in the first colonial outposts of the Portuguese empire.

Due to its "Babylonian" concern with the question of metaphoric representation and the question of political sovereignty, I believe that the *Confessio*'s English and Iberian roots represent an integral piece of the puzzle in understanding the discourse of authority of fifteenth-century colonialism. This is particularly true because the English concern for the immediacy of speech birthed by John Wyclif (and present in Trevisa's translations and Gower's English

---

<sup>443</sup> Pierre Bontier and Jean Verrier, '*LE CANARIEN: A History of the Conquest of the Canary Islands by Gadifer de la Sale et Jehan de Bethencourt, cheualiers nez du royaume de France, in 1402-1404*, Egerton Ms. 2709 (British Library, London) f. 23.

narratives) parallels similar concerns in the Iberian Peninsula regarding the nature of story-telling and authority within fifteenth-century Castilian historians and the Portuguese translations of Gower's *Confessio*. Because of these parallel ways of separating voice from meaning, the dissertation argues that if Gower's English works were translated into Castilian and Portuguese, such translation shows how an Anglo-Iberian discourse rethought the foundations of sovereignty in the fifteenth century.

This, of course, does not mean that we can encapsulate these parallel threads of authority, sovereignty, metaphoricity, truth, colonial discourse, and temporality into one blanket narrative that has as its basis the repetition of "Babylonian" imagery across multiple genres, authors, and audiences. For even if there was a close historical and textual filiation to the various episodes analyzed in this dissertation, even if I could prove that Duarte and Eugene had Gower's Iberian translations in mind through their correspondence, our analysis would generate further questions. For example, what is the relationship of a general English understanding of the "virtus sermonis" to Gower's poetic? How did Gower's Iberian translators (or their patrons) understand the various literary heritages which informed the idea of authority in the Iberian Peninsula? And more importantly, how did Duarte apply the strategies, which he adopted from Gower's discourse, into the making of a political and colonial persona? These (and others) remain, but this study has provided sufficient grounds to consider the conjunction of English and Iberian discourses as central to tensions of authority in the fifteenth century.

Nevertheless these questions show that there is no one single interpretive key to the nature of fifteenth-century colonial discourse. Something keenly reflected in the way in which this dissertation provides distinct kaleidoscopic views of the fifteenth-century disseminal ontology of authority as seen through an Anglo-Iberian prism—a prism that distinctly

demonstrates that the separation of voice and meaning has political repercussions. Indeed, it is this type of Babylonian plurality—through which authority is expressed without meaning—that forms the background to each of the dissertation’s chapters, and which can prove a helpful guide to understanding how the dissertation’s narrative matters as a history of thought.

In the first chapter, the competing ideas of universal meaning versus disseminal voices are shown to be the background for the fifteenth-century discussions of colonialism and sovereignty. In the second chapter, it is the failure of Nimrod’s descendant—Nebuchadnezzar—to arrest universal meaning through the play of representation that forms the background for Gower’s poetic, and it is Gower’s highlighting of this failure that makes his work appear as more than vernacular adaptations of classical stories. The third chapter analyzes the effects of “universal” authority as disassociation of a reader’s expectations of reality from the expounding of truth, and it explores the Babylonian notion of what it means to have an a-temporal voice, what it means to arrest a name in perpetuity, in the context of Castilian historiography. Lastly, with Trevisa we return to the question of how authority could be expressed through vernacular language without reducing meaning to representation; that is, how an immediate voice could be preserved across different cultures.

More than presenting a unified vision of fifteenth-century discourse on authority, this dissertation tells the episodic story of the infidelity of voice to meaning. The main character of this story is Voice, which across many guises (legal treatises, epistles, histories, translations, poems) constantly seeks to divest itself from the heritage of Meaning. It does this through the process of Writing by making its being dependent on a type of perpetual temporality that does not wait for readers or writers to be effective. Through Writing, Voice finds a perfect way to be unfaithful to Meaning because it does not have to point to something to be uttered by others.

Writing allows Voice to seem universal while really inhabiting particular subjectivities. Voice, following a type of Babylonian dispersal, disseminates across the world; it uses the pure syntactic qualities of Writing, to claim different forms of authority (literary, legal, and veridical), and through its lack of foundation, it reaches places without Meaning to claim them as its own.

## WORKS CITED

- Acta Concilii Constanciensis*. Ed. Heinrich Finke. Münster: Regensbergische Buchhandlung, 1896.
- Aegidius Romanus. *De Regimine Principum*. Venetiis: Simon Bevilaqua, 1498.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Trans. Patricia Dailey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Álvarez Palenzuela, Vicente. *Historia de España de la Edad Media*. Barcelona: Ariel, 2002.
- Aquinas, Thomas. "Sancti Thomae de Aquino Super I Epistolam B. Pauli ad Corinthios lectura a capite XI ad caput XVI reportatio vulgate." *Corpus Thomisticum*. Ed. 1953. <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/c1v.html#87673> Web. 10 October, 2010.
- Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1982.
- Asenjo González, María. "La Aristocracización Política en Castilla y el Proceso de Participación Urbana (1252-1520)." *La Monarquía como Conflicto en la Corona Castellano-Leonesa*. Ed. José Manuel Nieto Soria. Silex: Madrid, 2006.
- Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. Fifteenth Anniversary Edition*. Trans. Willard Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Augustine. "De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos." *Patrologia Latina*. Ed. J.P. Migne. Ridgewood: Gregg Press, 1965.
- . "De Sermone Domini in Monte Secundum Matthaeum." Ed. J.P. Migne. *Patrologia Latina*. Ridgewood: Gregg Press, 1965.
- . "Epistola 93 Ad Vincentius." *S. Aurelii Augustini: Opera Omnia. Patrologia Latina*. Ed. J.P. Migne. Ridgewood: Gregg Press, 1965. Web. [http://www.sant-agostino.it/latino/lettere/lettera\\_094\\_testo.htm](http://www.sant-agostino.it/latino/lettere/lettera_094_testo.htm). 28 January 2011.
- Badiou, Alain. *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*. Trans. Ray Brassier. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Banchich, Claire. "Holy Fear and Poetics." *On John Gower Essays at the Millenium*. Ed. R.F. Yeager. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007.
- Batchelor, Patricia. "Feigned Truth and Exemplary Method in the *Confessio Amantis*." *Re-visioning Gower*. Ed. R.F. Yeager. Asheville: Pegasus Press, 1998. 1-15.
- Bede. "In Evangelium Lucae expositio." *Corpus Christianorum Series Latinam*. Ed. D. Hurst. Vol. 120. Turnhout: Brepols, 1960.

- Belch, Stanislaus. *Paulus Vladimiri and his Doctrine Concerning International Law and Politics*. 2 vols. The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1965.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Translator's Task." Trans. Steven Rendall. *TTR: traduction, terminologie, redaction*. 10. 2 (1997): 151-165.
- Black, Antony. "The Conciliar Movement." *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*. Ed. J.H. Burns. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. 573-587.
- Boreczky, Elemér. *John Wyclif's Discourse on Dominion in Community*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Bontier, Pierre and Jean Verrier. '*LE CANARIEN*': *A History of the Conquest of the Canary Islands by Gadifer de la Sale et Jehan de Bethencourt, cheualiers nez du royaume de France, in 1402-1404*. Egerton Ms. 2709. British Library, London.
- Bradwardine, Thomas. *Geometria Speculativa*. Trans. George Molland. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1989.
- Breen, Katherine. *Imagining an English Reading Public*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Briggs, Charles. *Giles of Rome's De Regimine Principum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- . "MS Digby 233 and the Patronage of John Trevisa's *De Regimine Principum*." *English Manuscript Studies*. Vol. 7. London: British Library, 1998.
- Briggs, Charles and David Fowler. "Preface." *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De Regimine Principum of Aegidius Romanus*. By John Trevisa. Eds. David Fowler, Charles Briggs, Paul Remley. New York: Garland, 1997.
- Brownlee, Marina. "Intricate Alliances: Early Modern Spain and England." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*. 39.1 (Winter 2009): 1-5.
- . *The Status of the Reading Subject in the "Libro de Buen Amor"*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Búillon-Fernández, María. Ed. *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages, 12th-15th century: Cultural, Literary, and Political exchanges*. New York: Palgrave, 2007.
- Burnley, J.D. "Late Medieval English Translations: Types and Reflections." *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*. Ed. Roger Ellis. St. Edmunds: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1989. 37-53.

- Butterfield, Ardis. "Articulating the Author: Gower and the French Vernacular Codex." *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 33. Medieval and Early Modern Miscellanies and Anthologies (2003): 80-96.
- Coffman, George. "John Gower, Mentor for Royalty: Richard II." *PMLA* 69 (1954): 953-964.
- Cole, Andrew. "Chaucer's English Lesson." *Speculum*. 77.4 (Oct, 2002): 1128-1167.
- Coleman, Janet. *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . "Some Relations in the Study of Aristotle." *Political Thought and the Realities Power in the Middle Ages*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1998. 127-158.
- Coleman, Joyce. "Lay Readers of Hard Latin: How Gower May Have Intended the *Confessio Amantis* to be Read." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*. 24 (2002): 209-35.
- . "Philippa of Lancaster, Queen of Portugal—and Patron of the Gower Translations?" *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages, 12th-15th Century: Cultural, Literary, and Political Changes*. Ed. María Bullón-Fernández. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 135-65.
- Copeland, Rita. "The Fortunes of 'Non Verbum Pro Verbum' or *Why Jerome Is Not a Ciceronian*." *The Medieval Translator: Theory and Practice in the Middle Ages*. Ed. Rogers Ellis. Cambridge: Brewer, 1989.
- . "Rhetoric and Vernacular Translation." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 9 (1989): 41-75.
- . "Toward a Social Genealogy of Translation Theory: Classical Property Law and Lollard Property Reform." *The Medieval Translator*. Vol.4. Eds. Roger Ellis and Ruth Evans. Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1994. 173-183.
- Cortijo Ocaña, Antonio. "La 'Confessio Amantis' portuguesa en el debate del origen del sentimentalismo ibérico: un posible contexto de recepción." *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval*. (Santander, 2000): 583-601.
- . "O Livro do Amante: The Lost Portuguese Translation of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (Madrid, Biblioteca de Palacio, MS II-3088)." *Portuguese Studies*. 13 (1997): 1-6.
- Courtenay, William J. "Force of Words and Figures of Speech: the Crisis over *virtus sermonis* in the Fourteenth Century." *Franciscan Studies*. 44 (1984): 107-128.
- . *Ockham and Ockhamism: Studies in the Dissemination and Impact of his Thought*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Courtray, Régis. *Prophète des Temps Derniers*. Paris: Beauschesne, 2009.

- Dagenais, John. *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing El Libro de Buen Amor*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Dangler, Jean. "Edging Toward Iberia." *Diacritics*. 36.3-4. (Fall-Winter, 2006): 12-26.
- Dom Duarte. *Leal Conselheiro*. Ed. Maria Helena Lopes de Castro. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1999.
- Delany, Sheila. *The Naked Text: Chaucer's "Legend of Good Women."* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Des Tours de Babel." *Difference in Translation*. Ed. J. F. Graham. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985. 191-225.
- . "Différance." *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. 3-27. Qtd. in *Bibliography of Publications by Jacques Derrida*. Ed. Peter Krapp. Web. 10 October 2010.
- . *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul C elan*. Ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.
- Doob, Penelope. *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
- Dom Duarte, *Leal Conselheiro*. Ed. Maria Helena Lopes de Castro. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1999.
- Dom nguez Bordona, J. "Introducci n." *Generaciones y Semblanzas*. By Fern n P rez de Guzm n. Ed. J. Dom nguez Bordona. Madrid: La Lectura, 1924.
- Dutilh Novaes, Catarina. "An Intensional Interpretation of Ockham's Theory of Supposition." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. 46.3 (July 2008): 365-393.
- Echard, S an. "With Carmen's Help: Latin Authorities in the *Confessio Amantis*." *Studies in Philology*. 95.1 (Winter, 1998): 1-40.
- . "Last Words: Latin at the End of the *Confessio Amantis*." *Interstices: Studies in Middle English and Anglo-Latin Texts in Honour of A.G. Rigg*. Ed. Richard Firth Green and Linne R. Mooney. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. 99-121.
- Edwards, A.S.G. "John Trevisa." *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*. Ed. A.S.G. Edwards. Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984. 133-146.
- Ellis, Peter. *The Cornish language and its literature*. London: Routledge, 1974.

- Emden, A.B. *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.
- Entwistle, William. "The 'Romancero del Rey Don Pedro' in Ayala and the 'Cuarta Crónica General.'" *Modern Language Review*. 25.3 (July, 1930): 306-326.
- . "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Spanish Literature." *The Modern Language Review*. 17.4 (October, 1922).
- Estepa Díez, Carlos. "Rebelión y rey legítimo en las luchas entre Pedro I y Enrique II." *Lucha política. Condena y legitimación en la España medieval*. Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2004.
- Estow, Clara. *Pedro the Cruel of Castile*. New York: Brill, 1995.
- Facon, Manuela. *La Fortuna de la Confessio Amantis en la Península Ibérica: Estudio Comparativo de las Traducciones y Edición del MS. Madrid, Real Bibliotca, II-3008 (Prólogo, I, II, III, IV Libros)*. Diss. Università degli studi di Verona. Universidad de Zaragoza, 2007. Print.
- Fernández Gallardo, Luis. "La Biografía como Memoria Estamental: Identidades y Conflictos." *La Monarquía como Conflicto en la Corona Castellano-Leonesa*. Ed. José Manuel Nieto Soria. Silex: Madrid, 2006.
- Fernández-Armesto, Felipe. *Before Columbus: Exploration and Colonization from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229-1492*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987.
- Fisher, John H. "A Language Policy for Medieval England." *PMLA*. 107. 5 (Oct., 1992): 1160-1180.
- . "Chancery and the Emergence of Standard Written English." *Speculum*. 5.4 (Oct., 1977): 870-899.
- . *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer*. New York: New York University Press, 1964.
- Flavius Josephus. *The Antiquities of the Jews*. Trans. William Whiston. Cirencester: Echo Library, 2006.
- Folger, Robert. *Generaciones y Semblanzas: Memory and Genealogy in Medieval Iberian Historiography*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2003.
- Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" *The Essential Foucault: Selections from the Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. Eds. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose. New York: New Press, 2003. 377-391.

- Fowler, David. *The Life and Times of John Trevisa, Medieval Scholar*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995.
- . "John Trevisa and the English Bible." *Modern Philology*. 58. 2 (Nov., 1960): 81-98.
- Fredell, Joel. "Reading the Dream Miniature in the *Confessio Amantis*." *Medievalia et Humanistica, New Series*. 22 (1995): 61-93.
- Gallacher, Patrick. *Love, the Word, and Mercury: A reading of John Gower's Confessio Amantis*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975.
- Galloway, Andrew. "Chaucer's *Legend of Lucrece* and the Critique of Ideology in Fourteenth-Century England." *ELH*. 60. 4 (1993): 813-832.
- . "Latin England." *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*. Ed. Kathy Lavezzo. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004. 41-86.
- Garcia, Michel. *Obra y Personalidad del Canciller Ayala*. Estudios. Vol. 18. Madrid: Alhambra, 1983.
- Garcia de Andóin, F. *El Canciller de Ayala su obra y su tiempo*. Vitoria: Biblioteca Alavesa, 1976.
- Garcia Castrojeriz, Juan. *Glosa Castellana al Regimiento de Príncipes de Egidio Romano*. 3 vols. Ed. Juan Beneyto Perez. Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1947.
- Gellrich, Jesse M. *Discourse and Dominion in the Fourteenth-Century: Oral Contexts of Writing in Politics, Philosophy, and Poetry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Ghosh, Kantik. *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and Interpretation of Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Gimeno Casalduero, Joaquín. "La profecía medieval en la literatura castellana y su relación con las corrientes proféticas europeas." *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispana*. 20.1 (1971).
- Gower, John. *Confessio Amantis*. 3 vols. Ed. Russell Peck. Trans. Andrew Galloway. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000.
- . *Confesión del Amante*. Trans. Juan de Cuenca. Ed. Elena Alvar. Madrid: Boletín de la Real Academia Española, 1990.
- . "Mirour de l'Omme." *The Complete Works of John Gower: The Latin Works*. Vol. 4 Ed. G.C. Macaulay. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899.
- . "Vox Clamantis." *The Complete Works of John Gower: The Latin Works*. Vol. 4 Ed. G.C. Macaulay. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902.

- Green, Richard Firth. *A Crisis of Truth: Language and Law in Ricardian England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Greetham, D.C. "Models for the Textual Transmission of Translation: The Case of John Trevisa." *Studies in Bibliography*. 37 (1984): 131-155.
- . "Uncoupled or How I Lost My Author(s)." *Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation*. 3.1 (2008): 44-55.
- Griffiths, Jeremy. "Confessio Amantis: The Poem and Its Pictures." *Gower's Confessio Amantis: Responses and Re-Assessments*. Ed. A.J. Minnis. Cambridge: Brewer, 1983. 163-178.
- Guido delle Colonne, *Historia Desruccionis Troiae*. Trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974.
- Hanna, Ralph. "The Difficulty of Ricardian Prose Translation: The Case of the Lollards." *MLQ*. 51.3 (1990): 319-340.
- . "Sir Thomas Berkeley III and his Patronage." *Speculum*. 64. 4 (October 1989): 878-896.
- Higden, Ranulfus. *Ars Componendi Sermones*. Trans. Margaret Jennings. Peeters: Paris, 2003.
- . *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis; together with the English translations of John Trevisa and of an unknown writer of the fifteenth century*. Ed. Churchill Babington. 9 vols. London, 1865.
- Hoccleve, Thomas. *My Compleinte and Other Poems*. Ed. Roger Ellis. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001.
- Huizinga, Johan. *The Waning of the Middle Ages: a Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. London: Arnold, 1924.
- Isidore of Seville, *Etimologias: Edición Bililngüe*. 3 vols. Madrid: Editorial Catolica, 1982.
- Jerome. "Commentariorum In Evangelium Matthaee Libri Quattuor." *Patrologia Latina*. Ed. J.P. Migne. Ridgewood: Gregg Press, 1965.
- . *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel*. Trans. Gleason Archer. Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1958.
- . "Latin Vulgate." *The ARTFL Project: Multi-Lingual Bibles*. University of Chicago. Web. 10 September 2010.
- Juan Manuel. *Libro Infinito*. Ed. Carlos Mota. Madrid: Cátedra, 2003.
- Kendall, Calvin. "Introduction." *On Genesis*. By Bede. Trans. Calvin Kendall. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008.

- Kinkade, Berte. *The English Translations of Higden's Polychronicon*. Edwards Brothers: Urbana, 1934.
- Kirtley, Susan "Medieval Diglossia and Modern Academic Discourse." *Rhetoric Review*. 26. 3 (2007): 253-267.
- Knapp, Eric. *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England*. College Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 2001.
- Kruger Born, Lester. "The Perfect Prince." *Speculum*. 3. 4 (Oct., 1928): 470-504.
- Lawler, Traugott. "On the Properties of John Trevisa's Major Translations." *Viator*. 14 (1983): 267-288.
- Leclercq, Jean. *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*. New York: Fordham University Press 1982.
- Legge, M. "The French Language and the English Cloister." *Medieval Studies Presented to Rose Graham*. Oxford: University Press, 1950. 146-162.
- Lindeboom, Wim. "Rethinking the Recensions of the *Confessio Amantis*." *Viator*. 40.2 (2009): 319-348.
- Lombardo, Paul. "Vita Activa and Vita Contemplativa in Petrarch and Salutati." *Italica*. 59. 2 (Summer, 1982): 83-92.
- López de Ayala, Pero. *Corónica de Pedro I*. Eds. Constance L. Wilkins and Heanon Wilkins. Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1985.
- . *Rimado de Palacio*. Ed. German Orduna. Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1987.
- Machan, Tim. "Scribal Role, Authorial Intention, and Chaucer's *Boece*." *The Chaucer Review*. 24.2 (Fall, 1989): 150-162.
- Manly, John Matthews. "On the Question of the Portuguese Translation of Gower's 'Confessio Amantis.'" *Modern Philology*. 27.4 (May, 1930): 467-472.
- Maravall, José Antonio. *El Concepto de España en la Edad Media*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1981.
- Martín, Oscar and Simone Pinet. "Why Theory?" *Diacritics*. 36. 3-4 (Fall-Winter, 2006): 3-6.
- Martínez, Marcos G. "Sermón de Clemente VI Papa acerca de la otorgación del Reino de Canarias a Luis de España." *Revista de Historia Canaria*. 29. 1. (1963-1964): 88-111.

- “Mean v.1.” Def. Etymology. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. (Web. 21 September 2010).
- Meek, Mary Elizabeth. “Introduction.” *Historia Desruccionis Troiae*. By Guido delle Colonne. Trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974.
- “Menen v.1” Def. 3, 4, 5, 6. *Middle English Dictionary*. (Web. 21 September 2010).
- Menut, Albert Douglas. “Introduction to Oresme’s Version.” “Maistre Nicole Oresme Le Livre de Politiques d’Aristote.” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*. 60.6 (1970): 5-43.
- Merediz, Eyda. *Refracted Images: The Canary Islands Through a New World Lens*. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004.
- Middleton, Anne. “The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II.” *Speculum*. 53.1 (January, 1978): 94-114.
- Minnis, A.J. “Absent Glosses: A Crisis of Vernacular Commentary in Late-Medieval England?” *Essays in Medieval Studies*. 20 (2003): 1-17.
- . “‘Authorial Intention’ and ‘Literal Sense’ in the Exegetical Theories of Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif: An Essay in the Medieval History of Biblical Hermeneutics.” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*. 75 (1975): 1-31.
- . “De Vulgari Auctoritate: Chaucer, Gower and Men of Great Authority.” *Chaucer and Gower: Difference, Mutuality, Exchange*. Ed. R.F. Yeager. ELS Monograph Series. Vol. 51. Victoria: English Literary Studies, 1991. 36-74.
- . “Literary Theory in Discussions of *Formae Tractandi* by Medieval Theologians.” *New Literary History*. 11.1 (Autumn, 1979): 133-145.
- . *Medieval Theory of Authorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Mitchell, J. Allan. *Ethics and Exemplarity: Narrative in Chaucer and Gower*. Cambridge: Brewer Press, 2004.
- Monumenta Henricina*. 6 vols. Coimbra, 1960-1964.
- Monsalvo Antón, José Maria. *La Baja Edad Media en los Siglos XIV-XV*. Madrid: Sintesis, 2000.
- . *Teoría y evolución de un conflicto social. El antisemitismo en la Corona de Castilla en la Baja Edad Media*. Madrid: Siglo xxi, 1985.
- Muldoon, James. “John Wyclif and the Rights of the Infidels: The Requerimiento Re-Examined.” *The Americas*. 36.3 (Jan., 1980): 301-316.

- . *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979.
- . "The Ties that Bind: Legal Status and Imperial Power." *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*. Eds. Ruth Mazo Karras, Joel Kaye, and E. Ann Matter. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. 57-68.
- Murdoch, J.E. *Rationes mathematicae; un aspect du rapport des mathématiques et de la philosophie au Moyen Age*. Paris: Université de Paris, 1962.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*. Trans. Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant, and Michael B. Smith. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.
- Nicholson, Peter. *Love and Ethics in Gower's Confessio Amantis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.
- Nieto Soria, José Manuel. *Iglesia y Genesis del Estado Moderno en Castilla*. Madrid: Complutense, 1993.
- Olsson, Kurt. *John Gower and the Structures of Conversion: A Reading of the Confessio Amantis*. Suffolk: St. Edmundsbury's Press, 1984.
- Orduna, Germán. *El Arte Narrativo y Poético del Canciller Ayala*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1998.
- . "Introducción." *Rimado de Palacio*. By Pedro López de Ayala. Ed. German Orduna. Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1987.
- Oresme, Nicole "Le Livre de Politiques d'Aristote." "Maistre Nicole Oresme Le Livre de Politiques d'Aristote." *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*. 60. 6 (1970).
- Parkes, M.B. "The Influence of the Concepts of Ordinatio and Compilatio on the Development of the Book." *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to R.W. Hunt*. Eds. J.J.G. Alexander and M.T. Gibson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- . "Patterns of Scribal Activity and Revisions of the Text in Early Copies of Works by John Gower." *New Science out of Old Books: Manuscripts and Early Printed Books: Essays in Honour of A.I. Doyle*. Eds. Richard Beadle and A.J. Piper. London: Scolar, 1995. 81-12.
- Pearsall, Derek. "Gower's Latin in the *Confessio Amantis*." *Latin and Vernacular Studies in Late-Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*. Ed. A.J. Minnis. *York Manuscripts Conferences Proceedings*, Series. 1. Cambridge: Brewer Press, 1989. 13-25.
- . "Gower's Narrative Art." *PMLA*. 81.7 (December, 1966): 475-484.

- Peck, Russell A. "John Gower and the Book of Daniel." *John Gower: Recent Readings. Papers Presented at the Meetings of the John Gower Society at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, 1983-88*. Ed. R.F. Yeager. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 1989. 159-187.
- . "The Phenomenology of Make Believe in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*." *Studies in Philology*. 91.3 (Summer, 1994): 250-269.
- Pennington, Kenneth. *The Prince and the Law, 1200-1600*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Pérez de Guzmán, Fernán. *Generaciones y Semblanzas*. Ed. J. Domínguez Bordona. Madrid: La Lectura, 1924.
- . *Mar de historias*. Ed. Andrea Zinato. Padova: Unipress, 1999.
- . *Pen Portraits of Illustrious Castilians*. Trans. Marie Gillette and Loretta Zehngut. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2003.
- Peters, Edward and Walter P. Simons. "The New Huizinga and the Old Middle Ages." *Speculum*. 74.3. (Jul., 1999): 587-620.
- Petrus Alphonsus. *Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicæ*. 38. 4 (1911)
- Pollard, Graham "The Oldest Statute Book of the University." *Bodleian Library Record*. 8.2 (1968).
- Ray, Roger. "Bede's *Vera Lex Historiae*." *Speculum*. 55.1 (1980): 1-21.
- Ricks, Christopher. "Metamorphosis in Other Words." *Gower's Confessio Amantis: Responses And Reassessments*. Ed. A.J. Minnis. Cambridge: Brewer, 1983. 25-49.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Vol. 3. Trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Rouse Richard and Mary A. Rouse. *Preachers, Florilegia, and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus florum of Thomas of Ireland*. Toronto: Pontifical institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1979.
- Rousseau, Isabelle. "La Prophétie comme outil de Légitimation." *Lucha política. Condena y legitimación en la España medieval*. Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2004.
- Ruiz García, Elisa. "Rex scribens: discursos de la conflictividad en Castilla (1230-1350)." *La Monarquía como Conflicto en la Corona Castellano-Leonesa*. Ed. José Manuel Nieto Soria. Silex: Madrid, 2006. 359-422.

- Russell, Peter E. "El Descubrimiento de las Canarias y el Debate Medieval Acerca de los Derechos de los Principes y los Pueblos Paganos." *Revista de Historia Canaria*. 35.171 (1978): 9-32.
- . *The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the Time of Edward III and Richard II*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.
- . *Traducciones y Traductores en la Península Ibérica (1400-1500)*. Barcelona: Bellalitra, 1985.
- Santano Moreno, Bernardo. "The Fifteenth-Century Portuguese and Castilian Translations of John Gower, 'Confessio Amantis.'" *Manuscripta*. 35 (1991): 23-34.
- Santoyo, Julío. "El Siglo XIV. Traducciones y reflexiones sobre la traducción." *La Traducción en España. Ss xiv-xvi*. Ed. Roxana Recio. Leon: Universidad de Leon, 1995.
- Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Trans. George Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Scott, Kathleen *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles*. Vol. 6. London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1996.
- Seymour, M.C. "Introduction." *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*. By John Trevisa. 3 vols. Eds. Seymour, M.C. et al. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- Shelby, Ron. "The Geometrical knowledge of Medieval Master Masons." *Speculum*. 47. 3 (Jul., 1972): 395-421.
- Simpson, James. "Breaking the Vacuum: Ricardian and Henrician Ovidianism." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*. 29 (1999): 325-355.
- Somerset, Fiona. *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Steiner, Richard C. "Meaninglessness, Meaningfulness, and Super-Meaningfulness in Scripture: An Analysis of the Controversy Surrounding Dan 2:12 in the Middle Ages." *The Jewish Scholarly Review*. 82.3/4 (Jan-Apr., 1992): 431-449.
- Stevenson, W.H. "The Introduction of English as the Vehicle of Instruction in English Schools." *An English Miscellany Presented to Dr. Furnivall in Honour of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901. 421-429.
- Strohm, Paul. *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

- Suarez-Fernández, Luis. *El Canciller de Ayala y su Tiempo*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1959.
- . *Monarquía Hispana y Revolución Trastámara*. Madrid: Taravilla, 1994.
- Sylla, Edith. "Thomas Bradwardine's *De Continuo* and the Structure of Fourteenth-Century Learning." *Texts and Contexts in Ancient and Medieval Science: Studies on the Occasion of John E. Murdoch's Seventieth Birthday*. Eds. Edith Sylla and Michael McVaugh. New York: Brill, 1997. 148-186.
- Tcherikover, Anat. "The Fall of Nebuchadnezzar in Romanesque Sculpture (Airvault, Moissac, Bourg-Argental, Foussais)." *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*. 49 (1984): 288-300.
- Thomson, David. "The Oxford Grammar Masters Revisited." *Mediaeval Studies*. 45 (1983).
- Thorndike, Lynn. "The Latin Pseudo-Aristotle and Medieval Occult Science." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*. 21.2 (April, 1922): 229-258.
- Tierney, Brian. *The Foundations of the Conciliar Theory: The Contribution of the Great Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism*. New York: Brill, 1998.
- . *The Idea of Natural Rights*. Grand Rapids: Emory University Press, 1997.
- Trevisa, John. *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De Regimine Principum of Aegidius Romanus*. Eds. David Fowler, Charles Briggs, Paul Remley. New York: Garland, 1997.
- . *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*. 3 vols. Eds. Seymour, M.C. et al. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- Tummers, Paul. "Geometry and Theology in the XIIIth century: An example of their interrelation as found in the Ms. Admont 442. The influence of William of Auxerre?" *Vivarium*. 18. 2 (1980): 112-142.
- Valdeon Baruque, Julio. *Enrique II de Castilla: La Guerra Civil y La Consolidación del Régimen (1366-1371)*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1966.
- Verlinden, Charles. "Italian Influence in Iberian Colonization." *The Hispanic American Historical Review*. 33. 2 (May, 1953): 199-211.
- Waldron, Ronald. "John Trevisa and the Use of English." *Proceedings of the British Academy*. 74 (1988): 171-201.
- . "Trevisa's Original Prefaces On Translation: A Critical Edition." *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*. Eds. Edward Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph Wittig. Suffolk: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1988. 285-299.

- Waters Bennett, Josephine. "Britain Among the Fortunate Islands." *Studies in Philology*. 53.2 (April 1956): 114-140.
- Watt, Diane. *Amoral Gower: Language, Sex, and Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- Weckmann, Luis. *Las Bulas Alejandrinas de 1493 y la Teoría Política del Papado Medieval*. Editorial Jus: Mexico City, 1949.
- Wetherbee, Winthrop. "Genius and Interpretation in the *Confessio Amantis*." *Magister Regis: Studies in Honor of Robert Earl Kaske*. Ed. Arthur Groos. Bronx: Fordham University Press, 1986. 241-260.
- . "Latin Structure and Vernacular Space: Gower, Chaucer and the Boethian Tradition." *Chaucer and Gower: Difference, Mutuality, Exchange*. Ed. R.F. Yeager. Victoria: ELS, 1991. 7-35.
- Wilkins, Constance and Heanon Wilkins. "Estudio Preliminar." *Corónica de Pedro I*. Eds. Constance L. Wilkins and Heanon Wilkins. Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1985.
- Wilks, Michael. *The Problem of Sovereignty in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963.
- Williams, Deanne. "Gower's Monster." *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages*. Eds. Ananya Jahanra Kabir and Deanne Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 127-150.
- Williams, Steven. *The Secret of Secrets*. Trans. Steven Williams. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.
- Yeager, R. F. "Chaucer Translates the Matter of Spain." *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages, 12th-15th Century: Cultural, Literary, and Political Changes*. Ed. Bullón-Fernández, María. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 189-214.
- . "English, Latin, and the Text as Other: The Text as Sign in the Work of John Gower." *Text: Transactions of the Society for Textual Scholarship*. Vol. 3. New York: Ams Press, 1987. 251-267.
- . "Gower's Lancastrian Affinity: The Iberian Connection." *Viator*. 35 (2004): 483-515.
- . *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for a New Arion*. Suffolk: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1990.
- . "'Oure englisshe' and Everyone's Latin: The Fasciculus Morum and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*." *South Atlantic Review*. 46.4 (Nov., 1981): 41-53.

- . "The Body Politic and the Politics of Bodies in the Poetry of John Gower." *The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature*. Eds. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti. Cambridge: Brewer, 1999. 145-166.
- Zaitzev, Evgeny. "The Meaning of Early Medieval Geometry." *Isis*. 90.3 (Sept., 1999): 522-533.
- Zarins, Kim. "From Head to Foot: Syllabic Play and Metamorphosis in Book I of Gower's *Vox Clamantis*." *On John Gower: Essays at the Millenium*. Ed. R.F. Yeager. *Studies in Medieval Culture*. 46. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2007. 144-160.
- Zinato, Andrea. "Introduzione." *Mar de historias*. By Fernán Pérez de Guzmán. Ed. Andrea Zinato. Padova: Unipress, 1999.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003.