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**GOWER'S SLOTHFUL AENEAS  
IN BATMAN'S *CHRISTALL GLASSE OF CHRISTIAN REFORMATION***

Although early modern medievalisms have been the subject of considerable interest in recent scholarship, much work remains to be done on the literary reception and influence of John Gower's only major vernacular work, *Confessio Amantis*, in the Tudor era. We can, no doubt, attribute some of the general silence on the *Confessio* to the difficulties of assessing an encyclopedic compendium's literary confluences.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, as a handful of scholars including A.B. Taylor, Richard Hillman, Arnold A. Sanders, and Kenneth Friedenreich have demonstrated, it is sometimes possible to detect traces of the *Confessio* in Tudor literature—even when Gower is not specifically credited as a source.<sup>2</sup> I here investigate one such instance of the *Confessio*'s discernible literary influence that has, to the best of my knowledge, gone previously unremarked: Stephan Batman's reuse of a Dido-and-Aeneas *exemplum in amoris causa* derived from the *Confessio* in his polemically motivated work of 1569, *A Christall Glasse of Christian Reformation*.

Given what we know of Batman's biography, it should come as no surprise to find that this translator and author—who has recently come to the attention of various scholars 'as a figure of some literary and historical interest'—was acquainted with Gower's Middle

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<sup>1</sup> That Tudor audiences, in particular, would have been primed to read the *Confessio* as a divisible, encyclopedic work is persuasively argued in Siân Echard, 'Prettexts: Tables of Contents and the Reading of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', *Medium Aevum* 66 (1997), 270-87.

<sup>2</sup> A.B. Taylor, 'John Gower and "Pyramus and Thisbe"', *N&Q* 54 (2007), 282-83; Richard Hillman, 'Gower's Lucrece: A New Old Source for "The Rape of Lucrece"', *Chaucer Review* 24 (1990), 263-70; Arnold A. Sanders, 'Ruddymane and Canace, Lost and Found: Spenser's Reception of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* 3 and Chaucer's Squire's Tale', in *The Work of Dissimilitude: Essays from the Sixth Citadel Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, eds. David G. Allen and Robert A. White (U. of Delaware Press, 1992), 196-215; and Kenneth Friedenreich, 'Volpone and the *Confessio Amantis*', *South Central Bulletin* 37 (1977), 147-50.

English text.<sup>3</sup> After all, Batman was a man of demonstrable antiquarian predilections: he worked for the illustrious bibliophile (and sometimes biblio-iconoclast) Matthew Parker, and he is known to have been involved in the royally sanctioned book-gathering ventures that would ultimately result in the establishment of the Parker Library in Cambridge.<sup>4</sup> Batman was also a collector in his own right who assembled a personal manuscript collection notable, as A.S.G. Edwards and Simon Horobin observe, for its ‘interest in religious writings in general and Middle English ones in particular’.<sup>5</sup> That such a man, intimately involved in resurrecting the documentary evidence of his nation’s medieval past, would have come into contact with Gower’s poetry (in the form of a manuscript or printed edition or perhaps both) is only to be expected. What *is* somewhat surprising upon reflection, however, is that Batman should chose to incorporate a distinctively Gowerian *exemplum* into a text that is so vehemently political and anti-papist in sentiment, particularly given (Catholic) Gower’s rather ambiguous status among sixteenth-century Protestant reformers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A.S.G. Edwards and Simon Horobin, ‘Further Books Annotated by Stephen Batman’, *The Library* 11 (2010), 227.

<sup>4</sup> It has sometimes been suggested that Batman served as Parker’s household chaplain. In his capacity as Parker’s agent searching for ‘bookes of Antiquitie’ after ‘the religious houses of the Popish were suppressed’, Batman claims to have personally acquired ‘sixe thousand seaven hundred Bookes’ of ‘Divinitie, Astronomie, Historie, Phisicke, and others of sundrye Artes and Sciences’: Batman, *The Doome Warning All Men to the Judgemente* (STC 1582; London, 1581), Cc3r-Cc3v. For a recent and influential account of the Parker circle’s book and manuscript collecting activities and their broader implications, see Jennifer Summit, *Memory’s Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (U. of Chicago Press, 2008), esp. 101-35. Other discussions of Parker’s collecting and editing practises include: W.W. Greg, ‘Books and Bookmen in the Correspondence of Archbishop Parker’, *The Library* 16 (1935-36), 243-79; C. E Wright, ‘The Dispersal of the Monastic Libraries and the Beginning of Anglo-Saxon Studies’, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 1 (1949-53), 208-37; Ronald Harold Fritze, “‘Truth hath lacked witness, tyme wanted light’: The Dispersal of the English Monastic Libraries and Protestant Efforts at Preservation, ca. 1535-1625”, *Journal of Library History* 18 (1983), 274-91. Bruce Dickins, ‘The Making of the Parker Library’, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 6 (1972-76), 19-34; and Benedict Scott Robinson, “‘Darke Speech’: Matthew Parker and the Reforming of History”, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 29 (1998), 1061-83.

<sup>5</sup> Edwards and Horobin, 230. It should also be noted that Batman’s interest in Middle English literature is not an interest that seems to have been shared by Parker. On Parker’s apparent disinterest in collecting or preserving late medieval and Early Tudor vernacular literature, see Dickins, 33-34.

<sup>6</sup> Unlike Chaucer, whose character was malleable enough to be remade as a proto-Protestant by Tudor readers, Gower’s sixteenth-century identity, warranted or not, was associated with medieval Catholicism.

Batman's *Christall Glasse*, a work most often remembered for its lavish and emblem-like woodblock illustrations, was published by John Day and fits neatly within the wider catalogue of proscriptive Protestant books (including such titles as John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*) produced by this London stationer during the early Elizabethan era.<sup>7</sup> With its 'manifest shew of all coloured abuses', *A Christall Glasse* aims to describe and establish spiritual orthodoxy and devotional conformity among its readership.<sup>8</sup> Overtly didactic in its orientation, Batman's text provides the reading laity with an instructive 'glasse wherein we may learne godly reformation' and thus 'the better beware' those 'disordred abuses which daily raveth amongst us' (A3r, A2v). The opening sections of *A Christall Glasse* are thus structured around the enumeration and explication of the Seven Deadly Sins, particularly those embodied by the 'popishe Antichrist', his attendant 'rable of false & usuryed powers', and the various accoutrements of Catholic worship (A2r).<sup>9</sup>

Following rather predictable discussions of wrath, lechery, and envy—all illustrated with copious, mostly biblical citations—Batman's treatment of sloth takes a rather

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For general overviews of Gower's Tudor literary reputation, see: Siân Echard, 'Introduction: Gower's Reputation', in *A Companion to Gower*, 1-22; and Neil W. Gilroy-Scott, 'John Gower's Reputation: Literary Allusions from the Early Fifteenth Century to the Time of "Pericles"', *Yearbook of English Studies* 1 (1971), 30-47. As a point of contrast, for sixteenth-century readings of Chaucer as a proto-Protestant, see Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and The Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books, 1473-1557* (Oxford U. Press, 2006), 187-228; John Watkins, "'Wrestling for this World": Wyatt and the Tudor Canonization of Chaucer', in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, ed. Theresa M. Krier (U. Press of Florida, 1998), 21-39; Martha Driver, 'A False Imprint in Chaucer's Workes: Protestant Printers in London (and Zurich?)', *Trivium* 31 (1999), 131-154; and Siobhan Bly, 'From Text to Man: Re-Creating Chaucer in Sixteenth-Century Print Editions', *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 30 (1999), 131-65.

<sup>7</sup> For an argument that the production of these two particular texts, *A Christall Glasse* and *Actes and Monuments*, "may in fact be intertwined," see Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: The Making of John Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'* (Cambridge U. Press, 2011), 195.

<sup>8</sup> Stephan Batman, *A Christall Glasse of Christian Reformation* (STC 1581; London, 1569), A3r. All subsequent references noted parenthetically in text.

<sup>9</sup> Following this explication of the Seven Deadly Sins, the closing segment of Batman's work enumerates the virtues of love, faith, hope, charity, justice, truth, wisdom, and peace (particularly as embodied by Queen Elizabeth I and her national reformed religion).

unexpected turn. That is, his discussion of this vice includes a précis of Dido and Aeneas' classical love affair that is clearly inflected by Middle English literary tradition. In what constitutes one of the work's lengthiest *exempla*, Batman relates:

When *Eneas* came from the siege of *Troy*, hee arived in *Carthage*, there for a tyme to solace hym selfe: and as he walked, the Quene of *Carthage*, whose name was *Dido*, espying the comely personage of *Eneas*, was therwith inflamed. And when they had talked togethers, and sociated them a certaine space, the sayd *Eneas* departed into *Italy*, and there was long tyme absent from the presence of *Dido*, who waxed displeasent at his sloth and forgetfulnes, saying, that the cause of hys absence without spedie returne, would be cause of her death. *Eneas* not regarding the letter that *Dido* sent, but being loth to journey, remayned still in *Italy*. In the meane tyme, *Dido* slue her self: and when *Eneas* knew of her death, then he lamented that he had not come before her death.

(G1v)

Batman is here drawing his material specifically and directly from Gower's vernacular poetry: this discussion of 'the mischiefe and unhappines that ensueth sloth' shares both interpretative and narrative peculiarities with the version of Dido and Aeneas' story related in Book 4 of the *Confessio*.

Like Batman's *Christall Glasse*, Gower's earlier *Confessio* was structured according to the Seven Deadly Sins—though the focus in Gower's medieval poem of consolation was, of course, on the systemic exploration of these vices in relation to courtly love conventions.<sup>10</sup> Book 4, dedicated to the sin of sloth, sets the tone for what is to come by opening with the Latin declaration:

*Dicunt accidiam fore nutricem viciorum,  
Torpet et in cunctis tarda que lenta bonis:  
Que fieri possent hodie transfert piger in cras,  
Furatoque prius ostia claudit equo.  
Poscenti tardo negat emolumenta Cupido,  
Set Venus in celeri ludit amore viri*

[They say that Sloth is the nurse of the vices, and, tardy and sluggish, it is also torpid in all good matters. What might be done today it transfers, indolent, to tomorrow, and

<sup>10</sup> Gower also explores the Seven Deadly Sins more generally in his French-language *Mirour de l'Homme*.

after the horse is stolen it closes the doors. Cupid denies his rewards to the one asking tardily, but Venus plays at merry love for one who is prompt.]<sup>11</sup>

To illustrate the first of *de speciebus Accidie*, Gower, just as Batman later would, relies upon the ‘old ensample’ of Dido and Aeneas (4.75). Audiences well-versed in the city-founding logic of Vergil’s *Aeneid* might expect this *exemplum* to turn towards Aeneas’ neglect of *fatum* whilst the Trojan hero was whiling away his time in Dido’s embrace.<sup>12</sup> However, Gower has a vastly different intention. As a Latin marginal note indicates, ‘*Hic ponit Confessor exemplum contra istos qui in amoris causa tardantes delinquent*’ [Here the Confessor presents an instructive example against those who are delinquent in the cause of love by tarrying]. Thus, in order to make Aeneas better fit among those ‘*qui in amoris causa tardantes delinquent*’, Gower is forced to modify both the chronology of and circumstances surrounding the Trojan exile’s relationship with Dido.

Gower’s rendition of the story begins as expected: ‘With gret navie, which he ladde / Fro Troie’, Aeneas ‘aryveth at Cartage, / Wher for a while his herbergage / He tok’ (4.80-83). Though ‘Dido...was hote, / Which loveth Eneas so hote’, nonetheless, the hero later departs from her Libyan kingdom (4.87-88). Although, at this early point in the tale, the scant details that Gower provides about Dido and Aeneas’ affair are still too generic to be traced back to any one particular source, a clear reference to Ovid’s *Heroides* 7 (Dido’s epistle to Aeneas) appears just after Aeneas has left Carthage, travelling on ‘toward Ytaile / Be schipe’ (4.93-94). At this narrative juncture, Gower depicts Dido ‘which mai nocht longe

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<sup>11</sup> John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. Russell A. Peck, Latin trans. Andrew Galloway, 3 vols. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000-04). All subsequent parenthetical references to the *Confessio* refer to this edition, and I have used Galloway’s English translations for Gower’s Latin passages.

<sup>12</sup> As Kathryn L. Lynch puts it, ‘Gower’s presentation of the tale confuses Ovidian narrative with Virgilian moralization, thus shifting the tale’s moral focus by renaming Aeneas’s treachery “lachesce,” Any competent reader would have known that when moralists called Aeneas slothful, it was for hesitating to pursue his true destiny, not for neglecting passion or courtesy to Dido’: *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form* (Stanford U. Press, 1988), 179.

abide / The hote peine of loves throwe' in the act of writing a 'lettre unto hir kniht' (4.96.99). This decision to narrate the circumstances surrounding Dido's Ovidian act of writing is a move that was similarly taken by Chaucer in both *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women*. However, Gower's tale diverges both from these vernacular analogues and its apparent classical sources in its redaction of the well-known Ovidian missive's content.

When the various Chaucerian and Ovidian Didos write their respective letters to Aeneas, he has already definitively abandoned both Carthage and its reigning Queen; once the hero sets off to pursue his Italian destiny, there is no indication in either Ovid or Chaucer (or in Vergil's *Aeneid*, for that matter) that he harbours any intention of returning to Dido again. In sharp contrast, Gower's Aeneas, who looks far more like Ovid's Demophoon than the hero of the *Aeneid* or the addressee of *Heroides* 7, has obviously promised to return to his Carthaginian ladylove at an unspecified future date—apparently once he has taken care of his bothersome Italian business. The *Confessio*'s brief paraphrase of Dido's letter clearly establishes that Aeneas' crime lies in his slow 'ageincomynge' rather than his categorical abandonment of a former lover. Thus, à la Ovid's Phyllis, Dido's suicide is motivated by her lover's tardiness rather than his intention to permanently forsake her. This point is emphasized both in Gower's Middle English text and an accompanying Latin gloss:

[Dido] dede him plainly for to wite,  
 If he made eny tariinge,  
 To drecche of his ageincomynge,  
 That sche ne mihte him fiele and se,  
 Sche scholde stonde in such degré  
 As whilom stod a swan tofore,  
 Of that sche hadde hire make lore;  
 For sorwe a fethere into hire brain  
 She schof and hath hireselve slain:  
 As king Menander in a lay  
 The sothe hath founde, wher sche lay  
 Sprantlende with hire wynges tweie,  
 As sche which scholde thanne deie

For love of him which was hire make.

‘And so schal I do for thi sake,’

This qweene seide, ‘wel I wot.’

(4.100-15)

*Et narrat qualiter Dido Regina Cartaginis Eneam ab incendiis Troie fugituum in amorem suum gauisa suscepit: qui cum postea in partes Ytalie a Cartagine bellaturum se transtulit, nimiamque ibidem moram faciens tempus reditus sui ad Didonem vltra modum tardauit, ipsa intollerabili dolore concussa sui cordis intima mortali gladio transfodit.*

[And he narrates how Dido the Queen of Carthage, rejoicing, wrapped in her love Eneas fleeing from the fires of Troy. When he afterwards betook himself from Carthage to battles in the regions of Italy and, making there too great a delay, unreasonably extended the time of his return to Dido, she, stricken by an unbearable sorrow, stabbed the innermost regions of her heart with a lethal sword.]

‘Ha, was fond evere such a lak / Of Slowthe in eny worthi kniht?’, Gower’s impatient Dido asks herself just before thrusting a ‘naked swerd’ into ‘hire herte rote’ (4.118-19, 134-35).

The crime of love committed by Gower’s Aeneas is not, then, one of simple abandonment but of inefficiency and ‘time lette’ (4.120). In short, he is a romantic dawdler.

Returning to Batman’s inventory of sins in *A Christall Glasse*, it is clear that he follows Gower’s earlier tale by likewise positing Dido’s unhappy end as the tragic consequence of Aeneas’ ‘sloth and forgetfulnes’ in love. In making this somewhat strained and distinctly non-Vergilian argument, we see Batman closely adopting the narrative outline and chronology supplied by Gower’s earlier *exemplum*. Like Gower’s Dido, Batman’s Dido is also a character who clearly (and non-classically) anticipates the ‘spedie returne’ of her Trojan paramour after his departure for Italy. Also like her Gowerian model, the eager queen resorts to sending a quasi-Ovidian epistle of warning, presumably reminding her ‘long tyme absent’ lover of his obligations and threatening suicide should he fail to quickly come back to her. Obviously, Gower’s Venus, the love-priest Genius, and his cupidinous interlocutor Amans have no place in Batman’s polemical work, so the absence of the *Confessio*’s



expository frame makes Batman's neo-Gowerian interpretation of Aeneas' romantic sloth all the more perplexing. The peculiarity of Batman's literary borrowing from Gower's late medieval psychomachia becomes clearer if we look to the broader context of *A Christall Glasse*'s discussion of sloth. Batman identifies this vice as being primarily a physical species of 'rest and idlenes' (particularly as represented by those prone to 'long sleeping'). Nonetheless, he also acknowledges the existence of an 'inward sloth or sluggishness', linked to Christian piety; this spiritual sloth, however, seems to encompass only those situations 'when a man by desire of worldly goods and promotions, cleane forgetteth his creator, and remembreth more the goods of this world, then the life to come' (F3v). That the *exemplum* of slothful Aeneas, guilty essentially of violating courtly love conventions, does not comfortably fit into either of these interpretative categories offered up by Batman is clear. We are left, then, with more questions than answers. What was Batman doing when he drew upon the *Confessio*'s late fourteenth-century tales to incorporate an unambiguously Gowerian textual snippet—strained interpretation and all—into his own *Christall Glasse*? And what does it mean to press a recognizable Middle English *exemplum in amoris causa* into the service of a new Protestant message?<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> My concluding questions echo those posed by A.S.G. Edwards about Batman's annotations of another Catholic text. Noting that 'his treatment of the *Book of Privy Counselling*, both in terms of his annotations to his exemplar and the text that is presented in his own transcription, afford[s] a rare opportunity to assess the relationship between an Elizabethan Anglican of reformist temper and a medieval, mystical Catholic work', Edwards goes on to ask: 'What are Batman's motives here? Is he concerned with the scholarly elucidation of the text for a contemporary audience? Or is he engaged in some more polemic understanding? To what degree does ideology affect editing in its basic aspects of annotation and commentary?': 'Editing and Ideology: Stephen Batman and the *Book of Privy Counselling*', in *Chaucer in Perspective: Middle English Essays in Honour of Norman Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Lester (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 272.