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Gower's monster

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I cannot strecche up to the hevene
Min hand, ne setten al in evene
This world.

<div align="right">(John Gower, Confessio Amantis 1.1–3)</div>

John Gower starts his *Confessio Amantis* by throwing up his hands in frustration. Although it may not be possible to stretch his hands to heaven and confer order on creation like God, Gower seeks to confer order on his own literary universe. Consequently, Gower's *Confessio Amantis* is a classic example of medieval textual culture, with its encyclopedic, almost architectural structure, complete with Latin summaries and verse headings, redactions of classical and vernacular source material, and systematic moralizations. Its compendious nature and sheer size bring together the idea of literary authority, *auctoritas*, with its Latin root, *augere* (to expand; to increase).[1]

Yet this combination of order and authority has made Gower unsympathetic to some contemporary readers, who regard him as a kind of pernicious dinosaur, one whose lamentations that the world is going to the dogs are not only woefully nostalgic, but also deeply conservative. For these readers, Gower embodies the repressions, prejudices, and unwavering hierarchalism associated with the "alterity" of the Middle Ages: a period that has been conceived of in opposition to the humanist sensibilities of the Renaissance.[2] This Gower celebrates social structure and the status quo: he presents the 1381 rebels as animals, endorses the legitimacy of committing murder while on crusade, and manifests a masculinist acceptance of rape.[3] However, this is only one side of the story. Gower has his supporters as well as his detractors, and more

positive appraisals of Gower call attention to his ethical and philosophical preoccupations, and find his work to offer an urbane psychological sensitivity that is indebted to the vernacular *dits amoreux* of Machaut and Froissart; a sophisticated and coherent exposition of the relationship between ethics in the political sphere and the morality of human love; and a learned and nuanced negotiation, "in the ironic traditions of Ovid, Jean de Meun, and Chaucer," of the competing discourses of ethics and politics, cosmology and theology, and eros.[4]

Whether he is regarded, on the one hand, as a representative of the old guard or, on the other, as a paragon of humanist individualism, the reception of Gower offers an ongoing commentary on the figure of "moral Gower," Chaucer's famous epithet from *Troilus and Criseyde*, weighing and reweighing the reputation for "virtu" and "moralitee" that once earned him a place as one of the "primier poetes of this nacion."[5] The range in critical responses to Gower also reflects the prevailing views of the Middle Ages that motivate medieval studies. As unruly peasants, heterodox dissenters, and Others of various stripes have begun to populate our vision of the medieval, Gower recalls a no-longer-fashionable vision of the Middle Ages as a time of authority and piety. At the same time, however, his humanist and reformist sensibilities provide an occasion for scholars such as James Simpson to critique the structures of periodicity that define the "medieval" in opposition to the Renaissance, a precursor to modernity.[6]

This range reflects the profound division that is fundamental to Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Indeed, Gower takes "divisioun" as the major theme of his Prologue: the "moder of confusion" (Prol. 852), it is the major cause of the world's problems, infecting empires, kings, popes, and the people. This thematic division expresses itself formally, as well. The orderly structures of medieval scholasticism are evinced by Gower's deployment of organizational techniques, from *ordinatio* and *compilatio* to rubrication and gloss, and by the highly controlled environment in which he produced his manuscripts. These structures work against a fascination with narratives of chaos, metamorphosis and monstrosity that make this ostensible orderliness spin out of control, and mock its very pretensions.[7] It expresses itself in the perversity of Genius's moralizations (as, for example, when Pyramus and Thisbe becomes a story about not being late), as well as in the overarching erotic narrative which

works both in tandem and in tension with the text's framing treatment of empire formation.[8]

It has been difficult, therefore, for us to reach a consensus on Gower because his work itself is so divided. With *Confessio Amantis* in English, *Vox Clamantis* in Latin, and *Mirour de l'omme* in Anglo-Norman, Gower's works reflect the polylinguistic vitality and sharp social divisions of late medieval England, with French associated with royalty and the aristocracy; Latin, the language of the church and of higher education; and English, a less prestigious language of the people that was, in Gower's generation, just beginning to come into its own as a literary language.[9] Gower's dividedness is thus a product of England's cultural and linguistic divisions, and of the dynamics of *translatio imperii et studii* – the translation of empire and of learning – that produced them, as England was subject to Roman as well as Norman rule. The multiple acts of translation from Latin and French that are required to produce a text such as the *Confessio*, which Gower dubs "a bok for Engelondes sake" (Prol. 24) are a testament to England's history of conquest. The *Confessio Amantis* is a product of the challenges he faced when he began to compose poetry for king and court in the English vernacular, "in oure englissh" (Prol* 23) as he calls it: a challenge that he took up, as he recalls in his revised version of the Prologue, during a rowing expedition on the Thames.[10]

In *Confessio Amantis*, Gower uses the biblical figure of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, as a figure for England's condition of cultural hybridity. Whereas the confessor, Genius, and the besotted lover, Amans, invoke the traditions of French love poetry and Latin learning, by narrating Nebuchadnezzar's transformation into a monster, along with his apocalyptic dreams and exile into the wilderness, Gower highlights the diverse cultural influences and the important role of translation in medieval English literary culture. As visions of the nightmarish Other and versions of the most private aspects of the self, monsters make a regular appearance in medieval English texts that seek to define cultural or national identities: from *Beowulf* to Mandeville's *Travels*, from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* to the corpus of Arthurian romance. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues, the medieval monster embodies the Lacanian concept of *extimité*: an "intimate alterity" in which terrifying – and terrifyingly proximate – Otherness is made central to the integrity of individual

or collective identity.[11] Neither a terrifying antagonist that needs to be vanquished, nor an uncanny creature in an unsettling encounter, Gower's Nebuchadnezzar is, instead, a figure for the act of translation itself, bringing together the familiar and the strange, and revealing the continuities and conflicts that exist between the civilized human and the barbarian exile.[12] Nebuchadnezzar's metamorphosis provides Gower with a paradigm for addressing his relationship to the literary process of translation: the frightening yet potentially revelatory metamorphic process in which one thing becomes something else, while retaining a vestige of what it once was. In this way, Nebuchadnezzar allows Gower to reveal, and to revel in, the dignity of his own hybridity.

Nebuchadnezzar is well known to contemporary audiences because he gives his name to the rogue ship in the recent film, *The Matrix*, in which the unwilling hero, Neo, is transported by Morpheus (in Ovid, the god of sleep). *The Matrix* presents a futuristic image of the computer age in order to mount a critique of postmodern complacency, and the "Nebuchadnezzar" is the vessel from which a small rebel community confronts corporate dystopia. The Wachowski brothers chose the name Nebuchadnezzar because of its associations with apocalyptic change, the conflict between dreams and waking life, and the loss of what is safe and known. Morpheus (played by Lawrence Fishburne) welcomes Neo (played by Keanu Reeves) "to the desert of the real" – a computer-generated simulacrum that has masked the extent to which humans have become slaves to machines.[13] The "Nebuchadnezzar" is the place where Neo learns, through a series of dreams-within-dreams, how technology (along with some excellent martial arts moves) can be used to facilitate community and ethical responsibility, to expand human potential, and, most importantly, to resist an exploitative, technocratic new world order. *The Matrix* implies that the ultimate source for this is not some kind of demonic outsider, but instead the self. In other words, the contrast between endless skyscrapers and countless clones, and the post-nuclear/medieval asceticism of the rebel band on the "Nebuchadnezzar," represents an internalized psychological conflict between our love of technology and passive acceptance of technocracy, and the keen desire for a more authentic, alternative, form of community: something new, something Neo.

As *The Matrix* reveals, Nebuchadnezzar is a creature of contradictions. The historical Nebuchadnezzar made a string of conquests through the Middle East. As Gower puts it, "al the world in thoryent,/ was hoole at his commaundement" (*Confessio Amantis* 1.2789–90).[14] Nebuchadnezzar's conquests, and in particular his siege of Jerusalem, made him a popular figure for worldly pride: Judith, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, as well as Daniel, mention his tremendous military successes and his triumphs as a conqueror. The Prologue to *Confessio Amantis* holds Nebuchadnezzar up as the source for the chaos, division and, most importantly, mutability that wrack the contemporary world: "Hou that this world schal torne and wende" (Prol. 591). Gower proceeds to relate the biblical story of Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic, apocalyptic dream, in which a statue with a golden head, silver chest, bronze belly, iron thighs, and feet made of iron and clay appears, is smashed by a stone which is rolling down a mountain, and dissolves. A powerful visual metaphor for the tales of imperial decline that follow (from the Babylonians to the Persians, to the Greeks, to the Romans, etc.), Nebuchadnezzar's statue is interpreted by Daniel as a prophecy of the eventual downfall of Babylon.

Gower goes on to describe how the world has been weakened, not only by Babylon's imperial power, which Gower describes using words such as "subjeccion" (line 683) and "possessioun" (line 6840), but also, and more importantly, by its subjection to the principle that Babylon represents: conquest and empire-building, followed by inexorable decline:

> . . . All the world in that partie
> To Babiloyne was soubgit
> And hield him stille in such a plit,
> Til that the world began diverse.
> (Prol. 674–5)

As king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar is defined through military achievements that, for Gower, constitute an anticipation of, and analogue to, the impressive successes of Islamic expansion in the Middle Ages.[15] The idea of Nebuchadnezzar as a heathen tyrant and of Babylon as fearsome eastern Other illustrates a kind of biblical proto-Orientalism that defines civilized Christianity against the dangerous Babylon: a discourse that resonates powerfully with current international affairs. However, it is important to recognize the extent to which Gower interprets

Nebuchadnezzar's story as a prophecy of the instability of empire itself, adding to Daniel's interpretation a discussion of recent church history and contemporary English politics. Gower uses the story of Nebuchadnezzar to make a universally applicable point, to address issues that are close to home, thus establishing a common ground instead of demonizing the Other.

Hence, Nebuchadnezzar is a figure for sympathy as well as repudiation: he is not only a heinous unredeemable tyrant but also a flawed, yet educable, man. His prophetic dreams set him apart from other biblical bad guys, placing him in the company of Daniel, Moses and other prophets.[16] In this way, Gower uses Nebuchadnezzar to introduce both the apocalyptic account of macrocosmic decline and division that frames *Confessio Amantis*, and the collection of individual transformations that Genius narrates to Amans throughout. In Book 1, which is devoted to the sin of Pride, Gower relates the story of Nebuchadnezzar's physical metamorphosis into a monster, with eagle's feathers and bird's claws, and his exile to the wilderness, where he eats grass on all fours like an ox. Eventually, Nebuchadnezzar regains his human shape, and emerges from the wilderness a new, humbled man: full of praise and thanks to God for restoring his form.

The story of Nebuchadnezzar's metamorphosis is of a piece with Gower's own fascination with beast transformation: he bestializes the participants of the 1381 Rising in *Vox Clamantis*; gives human sin an animal face in *Mirour de l'omme*; and, of course, narrates a series of Ovidian metamorphoses throughout *Confessio Amantis*. As Caroline Walker Bynum points out, popular tales of physical transformation such as Marie de France's werewolf tale, *Bisclavret*, offered a means of expressing and accounting for widespread experiences of social, political, and individual change.[17] Moreover, the monstrous form into which Nebuchadnezzar is shaped is not only a figure of visual shock and awe – but, like his apocalyptic dream, a figure that demands a reading, an explication, a translation. The word "monster," from the Latin *monstrum*, comes from the root *monere*, to warn (as well as the cognate verb *demonstrare*, to reveal). To show and to warn: *monstrum* was used to translate the Greek word *teras*, which gives us the word *teratology*, or the interpretation of prodigies. As Cohen sums up, "The monster exists only to be read."[18]

Medieval English authors use Nebuchadnezzar in order to reflect upon the challenges of interpretation and identity-formation raised by England's history of overlapping cultural and linguistic influences. In *Cleanness*, the intensely physical details of Nebuchadnezzar's transformation provide a powerful, visual illustration of his status as outsider, as exile, forming part of a larger, unfolding narrative that highlights the exemplary and regenerative purpose of correct behavior. Nebuchadnezzar's transformation is one in a series of traumatic paradigm shifts: from the old, antediluvian world, to Noah's ark, to the new, dry land and covenant; from the sexual hotbed of Sodom and Gomorrah, to the hills where Lot's daughters do their business, to the new generations that they spawn; from the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem to Babylon and, ultimately, salvation. Nebuchadnezzar earns the wrath of God because of his personal attachment to his empire ("Moȝt never myȝt bot myn make such anoþer," line 1668):[19]

Þus he countes hym a cow þat watz a kyng ryche,
Quyle seuen syþez were ouerseyed, someres I trawe.
By þat mony þik fytherez þryȝt vmbe his lyre,
Þat alle watz dubbed and dyȝt in þe dew of heuen;
Faxe, fyltered and felt, floȝed hym vmbe,
Þat schad fro his schuldres to his schere-wykes,
And twenty-folde twynande hit to his tos raȝt,
Þer mony clyuy as clyde hit clyȝt togeder.
His berde ibrad alle his brest to þe bare vrþe,
His browes bresed as breres aboute his brode chekes;
Holȝe were his yȝen and vnder campe hores,
And al watz gray as þe glede, with ful grymme clawres
Þat were croked and kene as þe kyte paune.
(lines 1685–97)

[Thus he who was a rich king now finds himself a cow. While seven years were passed in summers, I believe, thick feathers grew over his limbs in that time, and all was daubed and drenched in the dew of heaven. Hair, tangled and shaggy, covered him, spreading from his shoulders to his groin. Twenty times around his toes it wrapped, where many burrs like plaster knit it together. His beard covered everything from his breast to the bare earth, his brows bristled like briars about his broad cheeks, hollow were his eyes beneath his shaggy hairs, and

he was as gray as a kite with horrible claws that were as crooked and sharp as a kite's talons.] (translation my own)

Nebuchadnezzar has become the classic medieval wild man: it is as if he has taken on all of the qualities of the wilderness he inhabits. With his feathers and fur, briar and burrs, Nebuchadnezzar's appearance plays into the preoccupation with the tension between wilderness and court, province and town, margin and center that defines the poems of the so-called *Pearl*-poet in British Library MS Cotton Nero a.x. (a manuscript that also contains another great monster-story, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*). In the case of Nebuchadnezzar, it seems, the medium is the message. While he experiences the prophecy of his downfall, translated to him by Daniel, as a physical transformation, the detailed anatomy of his distress renders, in striking detail, Gregory the Great's argument that humans are, essentially, God's monsters, incorporating the nature of the divine, the bestial, the horticultural, and even the lapidary.[20] On the one hand, Nebuchadnezzar's transformation is a form of self-realization, as he has essentially become as beastly and as monstrous as he always was: the poem's intense account of the sacking of Jerusalem underscores his brutality in that regard.[21] This illustrates Daniel's larger argument about the decline of empire. On the other hand, however, his transformation offers a poignant vision of human imperfection. As Allen Frantzen puts it, "the abjected and exalted worlds come together."[22] As this passage highlights the conflict between external form and internal condition, it preserves the intimation of human consciousness: "countes he hym" [he counts himself, he considers himself] a cow, a beast. Paradoxically, despite Nebuchadnezzar's monstrous form, he retains the distinctly human power to name the animals.

For Chaucer, Nebuchadnezzar provides a focus for anxieties concerning the potential failures of language and translation. In the *House of Fame*, Nebuchadnezzar appears in the context of Chaucer's request to Venus to give him access to Helicon's well, so that he might have sufficient words to communicate his dream: to translate it, therefore, from visual images into English:

> Now herkeneth, every maner man
> That Englissh understonde kan,
> And listeneth of my dreme to lere,

For now at erste shul ye here
So sely an avisyoun
That Isaye, ne Scipioun
Ne Kynge Nabugodonosor,
Pharoo, Turnus, ne Elcanor,
Ne mette such a dream as this.
Now faire blisfull, O Cipris,
So be my favour at this tyme!
And ye, me to endite and ryme,
Helpeth, that on Parnaso duelle,
Be Elicon, the clere welle.
(lines 509–22)

Calling for the attention of an English audience, Chaucer uses Neb-
uchadnezzar to address the experience of cultural inbetweenness raised
by the genre of the *House of Fame*: the medieval dream vision. Chaucer
operates within a genre that emerged out of the medieval tradition of
the vernacularized and moralized Ovid, and was popularized by French
poets such as Machaut and Froissart: making an act of multiple linguis-
tic as well as cultural translation, a fusion of classical and vernacular,
high and low. Chaucer's uncertainty here expresses the sense of being
an outsider. Nestled somewhere in the middle of a list of dreamers that
ranges from prophets such as Isaiah, to tyrants such as the Pharaoh and
the mysterious, Arabic-sounding Elcanor in the *Monk's Tale*, Nebuchad-
nezzar is part of a tradition of dreamers whose visions already have been
glossed and understood, unlike Chaucer's dream, which remains subject
to the ambiguities of mediation, translation, and interpretation. In this
passage, Chaucer's uncertainty concerning the possibility of genuine
communication focuses upon the "sely" or blessed quality of his dream:
he brashly suggests that it trumps all others. Yet just a few lines before,
he expresses anxiety that his dream is a mere "fantome and illusion"
(line 493).[23]

Chaucer associates Nebuchadnezzar with a similar kind of ambiguity
in the *Monk's Tale*. Just as Nebuchadnezzar appears in the middle of
a list of prophets and tyrants in the *House of Fame*, Chaucer's monk
places him in between Hercules and Belshazzar, the hero and the tyrant.
He develops this sense of uncertainty with the inexpressibility *topos*.
First, the Monk complains that Nebuchadnezzar's "myghty trone, the

precious tresor, /The glorious ceptre, and roial magestee . . . with tongue unnethe may discryved be" (*Canterbury Tales* VII.2143–6). He then goes on to explain how, in Babylon, "clerk ne was ther noon,/That wiste to what fyn his dremes sowned" [that could find the meaning of his dreams] (lines 2157–8). For the Monk, Babylon is a land of misunderstandings: Nebuchadnezzar is visited by dreams that he cannot understand, and, on the subject of God, he just does not get it at all: "he wende that God, that sit in magestee/Ne myghte hym nat bireve of his estaat" (lines 2167–8). Ultimately, Nebuchadnezzar's transformation, which turns him into a kind of absurd bird-man ("And lik an egles fetheres wax his heres, / His nayles lyk a briddes clawes were," lines 2175–6), is reversed when God "yaf hym wit." This wit allows the king finally to understand his place in the world and live in fear: "and evere his lyf in feere, / Was he to doon amys or moore trespace" (lines 2178–80).[24]

Nebuchadnezzar's status as a figure for the complex dynamics of cultural translation, and the ambivalence and uncertainties attendant upon the collision between two worlds, is confirmed by the passion with which he is, ultimately, rejected. Following the climactic tearing of the pardon in Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Will the dreamer compares his visions to those of Nebuchadnezzar. He concludes that he has given up on dream interpretation altogether:

Ac I have no sauour in **songewarie** for I se it ofte faille.	**dream interpretation**
Caton and Canonistres coundseillen vs to leue	
To sette sadnesse in Songewarie for *sompnia ne cures*.	**don't pay attention to dreams**
Ac for þe book bible bereþ witnesse	
How Daniel diuined þe dremes of a kyng	
That Nabugodonosor nempneþ þise clerkes –	
Daniel seide, 'sire kyng, þi **sweuene** is to mene	**dream**
That vnkouþe knyȝtes shul come þi kyngdom to cleyne;	
Amonges lower lordes þi lond shal be departed.'	
As Daniel diuined in dede it fel after:	
The kyng lees his lorshipe and lasse men it hadde.	
(VII.154–64)	

With the first "Ac" [but], Will renounces the idea that his crazy dreams can be accorded any meaningful kind of interpretation at all. His frustration emerges out of a dispute concerning translation and interpretation: after the priest has translated the pardon from Latin into English ("For I shal construe ech clause and kenne it thee on English," VII.106), he

declares that it is no pardon at all. This declaration prompts Piers to tear up the pardon, rejecting altogether its message that good works produce salvation. Yet with the second "Ac," Will's reference to Nebuchadnezzar retains his biblical association with "songewarie," or the translation and interpretation of dreams, as well as his identification with paradox and irresolution. First Will gives up on dreaming altogether. He is finished with it. And immediately afterward, Will comes up with a crucial counter-example, supplied by Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, which is that dreams can come true.

Will's rejection of "songewarie" and his subsequent acceptance of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream illustrate the divided, ambivalent nature of the story of Nebuchadnezzar: he is evil yet educable, occupying a place somewhere on the continuum between Isaiah and the Pharaoh (though we do not know quite where). Biblical commentators were not even clear on whether his transformation is meant to be taken as a miracle or a metaphor.[25] Nebuchadnezzar's apocalyptic dream and his movement between registers – linguistic, eschatological, and otherwise – produce a series of acts of interpretation: by Daniel, by himself, and by readers. These acts are echoed and illustrated by his physical transformation, just as, in turn, Nebuchadnezzar's transformation into a beast requires him to make the connection between his physical and his spiritual conditions. His cry is the commentary.

Of course, the word "translation" has both a physical and a linguistic meaning. For example, in response to an ongoing exegetical debate concerning whether Nebuchadnezzar's was a literal or a figurative transformation, Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* insists, "Nabuchadnezzar was really translated into a beast."[26] Gower highlights this crossover in meaning in his discussion of alchemy, when an account of the physical translation of metals into gold by famous alchemists segues into an account of famous literary translators such as Jerome: "Out of Caldee, Arabe and Grek / With gret labour the bokes wise / Translateden" (IV.2657–60). As a word for physical transformation, "translation" is often tied to the idea of improvement. John Lydgate uses it to talk about the transmigration of souls: "The sacred forsaide of Crist ascensioune / Was sometyme prefigurid in Helyes [Elijah's]

translacioune." And Chaucer uses it to describe Griselda's radical transformation from ragged pauper to chic madame in *The Clerk's Tale*: "Unnethe peple hire knew for hire fairnesse / when she translated was in swich richesse" (*The Canterbury Tales* IV.384–5).

While the idea of saints and other religious figures being conveyed rapturously into another sphere gives "translation" an upbeat, revelatory aspect, it also contains negative, downwardly mobile associations that place it within the doom-ridden context of an apocalyptic vision. Gower uses it in his account of the fraudulent election of Pope Boniface: "And that thei loke wel algate,/That non his oghne astat translate /Of holi cherche in no degree/Be fraude ne soubtilite" (II.3043–6). Indeed, medieval literary translations are, more often than not, a movement down the ladder of prestige: from Latin into French, from French into English. The ascendant language is transformed into, absorbed by, its inferior, just as Nebuchadnezzar's human shape and kingly figure shift down to that of a monster. Hence, Gavin Douglas uses it to describe his process of translating the *Aeneid*: "ay word by word to reduce ony thing" (Prol. 410), and Caxton explains the process of translation as: "to reduce it into Englysshe."[27]

Shakespeare's "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated" (III. i. 113–4) from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, brings together both the positive and the negative associations of translation.[28] It creates an ironic juxtaposition between Bottom's ass's head, which recalls Ovid's tale of King Midas, who receives ass's ears in punishment for his bad musical taste, and Bottom's pride of place in Titania's fairy land: a supernatural space where he is treated like a god, or, at the very least, a gentleman. The ambivalent value attached to translation has its root in the biblical story of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar's hometown. According to the Bible, translation first becomes necessary with the collapse of the Tower of Babel, the *fons et origo* of linguistic confusion. The Prologue to the *Confessio Amantis* explains how this tower was built by the proud Nembrot to memorialize his "emprise," specifically, his territorial conquests:

> And over that thurgh Senne it come
> That Nembrot such emprise nom,
> Whan he the Tour Babel on heihte
> Let make as he that wolde feihte
> Ayein the hihe goddes myht

Wherof divided anon ryht
Was the langage in such entente
Ther wist non what other mente,
So that they myhten noght procede.
(Prol. 1017–24)

The collapse of the Tower of Babel, a kind of linguistic analog to the story of the Fall, gives rise to the division of tongues, creating the necessity to interpret between them. The story brings together a narrative of imperialist expansion (and, specifically, of eastern expansion) and anxieties concerning a more general apocalyptic decline, with the individual dynamic of pride and fall. For Gower, the Towel of Babel, like Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the disintegrating statue, illustrates this argument of inevitable deterioration: the world "appeireth" (1.1198), it is always deteriorating, and "men sayn it is now lassed/An wers plyght than it was tho" (Prol. 56–7). But it is in the context of a world that "appeireth" that Gower finds his *métier* as translator and compiler. Daniel's acts of interpretation take place with a sense of desperation: in captivity, under threat of death, and following the destruction of his city. Similarly, Gower, in the face of what he regards as imminent destruction, translates words and texts as desperately as Nebuchadnezzar brays in the wilderness. Thus, if Babylon brings with it the idea of inevitable change and decline, which is the inexorable movement of *translatio imperii*, it also brings with it the need to interpret between the tongues, making communication, and linguistic translation, impossible yet absolutely essential.

Nebuchadnezzar's apocalyptic dream speaks to conquest and cultural domination, as well as to the importance of interpretation. Gower places heavy emphasis upon the role of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar's captive, who is forced to learn the Chaldean language and adopt their practices. Having experienced personally the translation of empire and culture, Daniel is the only one who can expound the meaning of the dream, "when that the wiseste of Caldee, / Ne cowthen wite what it mente" (1.666–7). Nebuchadnezzar's metamorphosis resonates with the experience of exile, the wilderness, and hybridity: each reflects, for Gower, England's status as a site of multiple conquests and cultural influences. While the ambivalent value of translation suits the conflicted status of Nebuchadnezzar as, on the one hand, an image of the beginning of the end, and,

on the other, of human perfectability, as a linguistic process it raises the question of cultural integrity being dismantled, as well as of the possibility of cultural integrity at all. It speaks to a world of flux and change: as Ovid puts it, "nec perit in tot quicquam, mihi credite, mundo / sed variat faciemque novat" [nothing perishes in the whole universe; it does but vary and renew its form].[29] The paradox of translation is the paradox of transformation – of metamorphosis itself – where identity is not a question of rigid distinctions, binaries, and either/or, but instead exists on a continuum where things are never totally lost, but also never fully themselves.

Thus, when Gower enumerates the minutiae of Nebuchadnezzar's transformation – its effect on preferences for food and drink and taste in clothing, and its uncanny replacement of hands with claws, of skin with fur, etc. – he highlights the metamorphic point of divergence between beast and human. By placing contradictory attributes on the same line, Gower anatomizes the relationship between Nebuchadnezzar's present and past conditions and creates his own, syntactic monster:

> Tho thoghte him colde grases goode
> That whilhome eet the hote spices,
> Thus was he torned fro delices:
> The wyn which he was wont to drinke,
> He tok thanne of the welles brinke
> Or of the pet, or of the slowh,
> It thoughte him thanne good ynowh:
> In stede of chambres well arraied,
> He was thanne of a busshe well paied,
> The harde ground he lay upon,
> For othre pilwes hath he non . . .
> In stede of mete, gras and stres
> In stede of handes longe cles,
> In stede of man a bestes lyke
> He syh; and thanne he gan to syke
> For cloth of golde and for perrie
> Which him was wonte to magnefie.
> When he behield his Cote of heres,
> He wepte, and with fulwoful teres
> Up to the hevene he caste his chiere
> Wepende, and thoghte in this manere;
> Thogh be no wordes myghte winne,

> Thus seide his herte, and spake withinne
> (1.2976–3003)

The repetition of "in stede" highlights the tension between his external shape and his internal condition: instead of meat, grass; instead of hands, claws. The word "Cote," which applies to the king's fur, but also recalls his golden garments, enacts this collision of human and bestial form at a lexical level. Gower also suggests that Nebuchadnezzar's monstrous hybridity, half-human, half-beast, brings a concomitant decline in taste: the hard ground suits him fine for a bed, the bushes for his home, grass for food. Yet, at the same time, Nebuchadnezzar is horrified not only by how he has changed physically, but also by how low his tastes have fallen. He has become his worst nightmare: a barbarian. And he shapes his beastly form into a human gesture to express his misery:

> And thogh hym lacke vois and speche,
> He gan up with his feet areche,
> And wailende in his bestly stevene
> He made his pleignte unto the hevene.
> He kneleth in his wise and braieth . . .
> (1.3023–27)

This is Christopher Ricks's favorite part of the *Confessio*. He writes: "'braieth is everything that is still unredeemably animal . . . and yet it is within an air's-breath of being human. (No animal can pray.) You must prick up your ears to make quite sure what word you have heard: prayeth? brayeth?"[30] For Ricks, the poetic texture of this passage justifies the high praise that he gives Gower's "verbal felicities."

But it is more than simply a poetic *tour-de-force*. This slippage between human and beast illustrates the conundrum of *translatio imperii et studii* itself. Nebuchadnezzar's bray recalls the old story of the Greek construction of Persian barbarism: according to the Greeks, the Persians were without language because they spoke no Greek; their utterances, which sounded to the Greeks like meaningless babble, *barbarbarbar*, produced the idea of the *barbarian*.[31] The bray also contributes to an ongoing discussion concerning the English vernacular. Thomas Warton recalls this discussion when he writes, in 1774, "If Chaucer had not existed, the compositions of John Gower, the next poet in succession, would alone have been sufficient to rescue the reigns of Edward III and Richard II

from the imputation of barbarism."[32] As Warton suggests, medieval English culture struggled under the specter of the barbarous: an anxiety which dates from the Roman occupation, when the island was judged an uncivilized wasteland.[33] Britain's mythical Trojan ancestor, Brutus, supplied the island with its name, Britain, as well as with an irresistible pun on "brute" that can be found in texts ranging from Laȝamon's *Brut* to Caxton's description of his native tongue as "brode and rude."[34] As Gower himself concedes, "This once used to be called the island of Brut . . . the people of this land are wild."[35] Yet Nebuchadnezzar's barbarous babble speaks directly to God, who rewards him for his honesty by returning him to human form: "in a twinklinge of a lok / His mannes forme ayein he tok, / And was reformed to the regne" (lines 3033–5). Indeed, as John of Trevisa contends: "rude words and boystous percen the herte of the herer to the inrest poynte, and planten ther the sentence of thynges" [rude and crude words pierce the heart of the listener to the inmost point, and plant there the true meaning of things].[36] The rude barbarian is uniquely capable of getting to the heart of the matter.

We find, therefore, an allegory for Gower's own poetic enterprise in the story of Nebuchadnezzar. When Gower segues from the apocalyptic discourse and political analyses of the Prologue into the personal, amatory woes of Amans in the *Confessio Amantis*, he makes a generic move from prophecy, political treatise, and estates satire to dream vision and *ars amatoria*. With this shift in gears, however, the *Confessio Amantis* reveals itself to be as hybrid, generically, as Nebuchadnezzar is physically. Whereas each of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* represents a different generic form (saint's life, romance, fabliau, etc.), Gower defines his literary form as a whole through the interpenetration of genres. The parade of hybrids that begins with Nebuchadnezzar includes the Sirens, like women above the navel, and fishes beneath (1.484ff); and the Gorgons, with their gruesome snake-hair (1.402ff), illustrating the extent to which Gower is creating a kind of literary monster. These hybrid forms also provide an image of Gower's labors as author, translator, and encyclopedist, as he brings together texts from a variety of different worlds – the classical and the vernacular, the ancient and the contemporary – and chooses the English language, which is, itself, a hybrid, as the appropriate medium. They allow Gower to trace the roots of larger political problems that preoccupy him in the Prologue back to the individual:

> If a man were
> Mad altogether of o matiere
> Withouten interrupcioun
> There scholde no corrupcioun
> Engender upon that unite.
> (Prol. 983–7)

His wistful fantasy of bodily integrity is countered with tales of Gorgons, Sirens, and Midas with his ass's ears (v.153ff).

Nebuchadnezzar's metamorphosis thus speaks to the process of literary and cultural translation. A text or a culture is made into something different, yet it retains an aspect of its former self, just as the monstrous Nebuchadnezzar retains a sufficient amount of his human consciousness to be made miserable by his monstrous shape. This dynamic extends into the realm of erotic love, when the Petrarchan tropes of love-longing that describe Amans' pain bleed into the biblical topography of spiritual exile:

> For I was forther fro my love,
> That erthe is frome the heven above,
> And for to speke of any spede,
> So wyste I me none other rede,
> But as it were a man forsake,
> Unto the wood my way gan take.
> (Prol. 105–10)

The lovesick Amans is in both the wood of the dream vision and the wasteland of Nebuchadnezzar's exile: Gower puns on "wood" as a topographical signifier, and as a psychological state of madness (which, in Middle English, is "wod"). As Genius explains, Amans' passion has the potential of transforming him into a beast. The melancholy endemic to lovesickness, for example, transforms the plaintive cries of a lover into the lowing of a bull:

> The ferst of hem Malencolie
> Is cleped, which in compaignie
> An hundred times in an houre
> Wol as an angri beste loure,
> And noman wot the cause why.
> (III.27–31)

Amans admits that his erotic frustrations have this effect: like those who sin seven times daily, "So bere I forth an angri snoute/Ful manye times in a yer" (III.125–9). Even worse, little costumes and capers designed to display himself to his lover make Amans "lich unto the Camelion" (I.2696–8). This motif of physical translation is extended in the series of Ovidian metamorphoses that Genius relates as he anatomizes the sins of love. These include Acteon, turned into a stag (I.136ff); Ceyx and Alcyone, who turn into kingfishers (IV.2928ff); and Calistona, transformed into a bear (VI.6228ff). Ultimately, like Nebuchadnezzar, Amans finds himself on the ground, casting up his eyes piteously to the heavens:

> So hard me was that ilke throwe
> That ofte sythes overthrowe,
> To grounde I was withoute brethe.
> And ever I wisshed after dethe,
> Whan I out of my peyne awoke
> And caste up many a pitous loke,
> Unto the hevene, and sayde thus.
> (I.117–23)

Gower brings home the parallel between Nebuchadnezzar and Amans when Genius interrupts Amans' weeping and wailing: Amans is startled, or, in Middle English, "abrayde" (line 154).

As a spiteful despot cum humble penitent, as a prophetic dreamer, gifted with foreknowledge of the apocalypse, and as a lamenting beast in the wilderness, Nebuchadnezzar is a figure for juxtaposition and the swift shifting of gears. He represents collisions between empires as well as between modes of existence: animal, human, and divine. As he moves between three conditions – the bestial, the human, and the prophetic – he brings a number of different worlds into contact: Babylon and Jerusalem; the city and the wasteland; the lap of luxury and a life of abjection. He also personally experiences the jarring confrontation between the dream life and the waking life; the state of the villain and that of the penitent; the experience of ignorance and of spiritual bliss. The story of Nebuchadnezzar suggests how we can be, simultaneously, one thing *and* the other: a paradigm that defeats the kind of binaries

that distinguish East from West, civilized from barbarian, self from Other. Nebuchadnezzar is both/and as opposed to either/or: a tasteless barbarian and an expansionist conqueror; an ignoramus and a visionary; a king and a monster; a human and a beast. He at once embodies the binaries, and transcends the conflict between them.

Gower's handling of Nebuchadnezzar moves between the heinous Other of apocalyptic discourse, and the endlessly mutable, interpretative (and interpreting) self of the medieval dream vision. In this way, it addresses the questions posed by *translatio imperii et studii*: whereas a view of the world through the lens of empire produces a divided vision of the world in which Nebuchadnezzar is a heathen tyrant, the cultural translations that emerge in his story undermine difference, as they proceed in the hope of mutual understanding. This binary speaks to the paradoxes of postcoloniality, which negotiates and renegotiates the dialectics of purity and hybridity. This dichotomy between the self/Other binary and the hybrid continues to motivate postcolonial theory: the true choice, it seems, is not between East and West, colonizer and colonized, and self and Other, but instead between a mentality of unassimilable cultural difference and multicultural diversity and cosmopolitanism. Gower's alienated, ambivalent, yet compelling Nebuchadnezzar offers an alternative to these dichotomies that is monstrously resistant to classification: both. It speaks, as well, to medieval studies, where the jury remains out on whether the "medieval" is fundamentally Other, in which case it is the task of medieval studies to recover its various alterities, or if it is, instead, a source of continuity, however mediated (or mutated), and therefore a vision, and a version, of ourselves. And it speaks to the reception of Gower, as medievalists have failed to reach a consensus on whether he is a dead white male or a tolerant humanist. Gower's ambiguity as translator and author, moreover, confirms Homi Bhabha's thoughts on cultural translation: "that it is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the inbetween – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture."[37] In this respect, then, it is the unassimilable Gower who conveys a most accurate vision of the Middle Ages. At the same time that translation functions as an act of negotiation between languages and cultures, it highlights foreignness, difference, and slippage. However, as F. Scott Fitzgerald famously observed, "the true test of a first-rate mind is to hold two contradictory

ideas at the same time."[38] As the *Matrix Reloaded* depicts the destruction of the "Nebuchadnezzar," revealing its futility as a vehicle for redemption, we are reminded that Nebuchadnezzar was also the name of a US army division in Iraq, and that the story of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, continues to offer a powerful pretext.

NOTES

Douglas Gray, Helen Cooper, and Malcolm Parkes encouraged my interest in Gower long ago: this chapter is dedicated to them, with thanks. Comments and suggestions from Terry Goldie, Seth Lerer, and Simon Palfrey contributed to this project in important ways, as did valuable feedback from James Simpson and the Cambridge Medieval Seminar. A Huntington Library fellowship made completing this chapter a pleasure.

1. See Malcolm Parkes, "The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book," in *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), 25–70.

2. See Hans Robert Jauss, "The Alterity and Modernity of Medieval Literature," *New Literary History* 10 (1979): 181–227. See also the words of the scholar H. A. Taine on Gower: "et quel style! Si long, si plat, si interminable traîné dans les redites." Quoted in John Hurt Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 2.

3. See Paul Strohm, "Form and Social Statement in *Confessio Amantis* and *The Canterbury Tales*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 1 (1979): 17–41; Winthrop Wetherbee, "John Gower," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 590; Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and, in particular, his chapter on Gower entitled "Insurgency Remembered," 193–254; Carolyn Dinshaw, "Rivalry, Rape and Manhood: Gower and Chaucer," in *Chaucer and Gower: Difference, Mutuality, Exchange*, ed. R. F. Yeager (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1991), 130–52.

  On Gower's response to the Rising, see David Aers, "'Vox Populi' and the Literature of 1381," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, and Janet Coleman, *English Literature in History, 1350–1400* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 126–56.

4. See John Burrow, "The Portrayal of Amans in *Confessio Amantis*," in *Gower's Confessio Amantis: Responses and Reassessments*, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), 5–24 at 9; Alastair Minnis, "Moral Gower and Medieval Literary Theory," in *Gower's Confessio Amantis*, 50–78 at 57; James Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's Anticlaudianus and John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 134–6.

  Minnis places Gower within a medieval conception of authorship as commentary, critique, and ethical prod, and sees him as assimilating "Ovidian ethics to the

Christian scheme of the Seven Deadly Sins with the concomitant emphasis on the universal nature of moral standards" (57). By contrast, for Simpson, Gower is not so much a coherent assimilator as a poet of "deeply planted structural incongruities" that mean that there is "no reliable authority figure from within the text" (138).

On Gower's debt to the *dits amoreux* see also Nicolette Zeeman, "The Verse of Courtly Love in the Framing Narrative of the *Confessio Amantis*," *Medium Aevum* 60 (1991): 222–40.

5. See *Troilus and Criseyde* v.1856, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), all references to Chaucer are to this edition; Thomas Hoccleve, *Regement of Princes, and Fourteen Poems*, ed. F. J. Furnivall (EETS ES 72, London: Oxford University Press, 1887), 72; James I of Scotland, *The Kingis Quair*, ed. A. Lawson (London: Oxford University Press, 1910), 100; George Ashby, *Active Policy of a Prince*, ed. M. Bateson (EETS ES 76, London: Oxford University Press, 1899), 13.

On Gower's literary reputation, see N. 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, and Derek Pearsall, "The Gower Tradition," in *Gower's Confessio Amantis*, ed. Minnis, 179–98. On Shakespeare's use of Gower as a figure for authority see my "Papa Don't Preach: The Power of Prolixity in *Pericles*," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 71 (2002): 595–622.

6. See James Simpson's discussions of Gower, in *The Oxford English Literary History*, vol. II: *Reform and Cultural Revolution, 1350–1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and *Sciences and the Self*.

7. On the production of Gower's manuscripts see Malcolm Parkes, "Patterns of Scribal Activity and Revisions of the Text in Early Copies of Works by John Gower," in *New Science Out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, ed. Richard Beadle and A. J. Piper (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), 81–121.

8. For Simpson, the text is "driven by the iterative force of desire, which seeks refuge from the relentlessness of history by fragmenting it" (*Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 140).

9. On the post-Conquest linguistic situation, see Richard Foster Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language: A Survey of Opinions concerning the Vernacular from the Introduction of Printing to the Restoration* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953); see also Deanne Williams, *The French Fetish from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

10. This is at a time when aristocratic and royal readers tended to have only French and Latin works in their collections; see Janet Coleman, *Medieval Readers and Writers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 18 ff.

11. See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture, (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–25 at 4, and, for further elaboration, his *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

12. The classic study of medieval translation is Rita Copland's *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See especially her discussion of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (202–20) in which she demonstrates the distance of the translations from their original sources.

13. As Slavoj Zizek contends, this simulacrum supplies a metaphor for the insular dream world of the contemporary West, which, decadent, prosperous, and technologically prodigious, aches for, at the same time that it is terrified by, a calamitous interruption. See Slavoj Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: 5 Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London: Verso, 2002).

14. See *The English Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macaulay (EETS ES 81, 82, London: Oxford University Press, 1900, reprinted 1969). All references to this text will be to this edition.

15. On Islam and Christian apocalypticism, see R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962): "It was not difficult for them to find in Islam and its founder the signs of a sinister conspiracy against Christianity. They thought they saw in all its details – and they knew very few – that total negation of Christianity which would mark the contrivances of Antichrist" (24).

16. Emile Mâle provides an image of Nebuchadnezzar with Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Moses – from Nôtre Dame la Grande in Poitiers – see *L'Art religieux du XIIe siècle en France* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1928), 143–4. Penelope Reed Doob suggests that it comes from the iconography of the Ordo Prophetarum. See *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 75.

17. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001).

18. See Cohen, "Monster Culture," 4. Other useful treatments of the monstrous in medieval art and culture include John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981) and Jean Céard, *La Nature et les prodiges* (Traveaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 158, Geneva: Librarie Droz, 1977).

19. *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript* ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (London: Edward Arnold, 1978).

20. "Together with the angelic hosts, man possesses the wisdom whereby he knows that God is the supreme creator in the world. Man feels, hears, tastes, sees and walks; hence man possesses a kind of animal nature. Man also grows in height together with the trees; and by virtue of his special quality he possesses existence in the manner of stones." See Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, ed. Marci Adraien (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979).

This is one of Gower's favorite concepts. He uses it in the Prologue of the *Confessio Amantis*:

> For men of Soule resonable
> Is to an Angel resemblable,
> And lich to beste he hath fielinge.

And lich to trees he hath growinge;
The stones ben and so is he:
(Prol. 949–53)

He makes this point also in *Mirour de l'omme* (26,869) and in *Vox Clamantis* (VII.viii.639).

21. See Bynum's discussion of Lycaeon in *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 169.

22. Allen Frantzen, "The Disclosure of Sodomy in *Cleanness*," *PMLA* III (1996): 451–64 at 461.

23. Note also the ambiguity of the word "sely" that Chaucer uses to describe the dream. It means "blessed" and "good" as well as "happy," and its more modern significance, "hapless" or "silly."

24. This idea of Nebuchadnezzar's educability is picked up in *The Parson's Tale*, as well: "This tree saugh the prophete Daniel in spirit upon the avysioun of the king Nabugodonosor, whan he conseiled hym to do penitence. /Penaunce is the tree of lyf to hem that it receyven, and he that holdeth hym in verray penitence is blessed, after the sentence of Saloman" (x. 126–7).

25. One of the questions that dominates exegetical discussion of Nebuchadnezzar is, of course, whether his is a literal or a figurative metamorphosis. See Bynum's discussion of Gervais of Tilbury, in *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 85.

26. Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: Henry Cripps, 1632), I.II.

27. See *Virgil's Aeneid Translated into Scottish Verse by Gavin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld*, ed. David F. C. Coldwell, vol. II (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1957), 14, and Caxton, Prologue to the *Eneydos*, in *Caxton's Own Prose*, ed. N. F. Blake (London: André Deutsch, 1973), 79.

28. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Peter Holland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

29. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller (The Loeb Classical Library, London: William Heinemann and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), xv.254–5.

30. See Christopher Ricks, "Metamorphosis in Other Words," in *Gower's Confessio Amantis*, ed. Minnis, 24–49 at 31–2.

31. On classical ideas of barbarism see V. Y. Mudimbe, "The Power of the Greek Paradigm," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 92 (1993): 361–85.

32. See Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry*, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Tegg, 1824), vol. II, 305. Leland writes: "Let us then bear with whatever is infelicitous in Gower, and set him forth as the first 'polisher' of the native tongue. For before his time, the English language lay uncultivated and almost entirely unformed. There was no one who could write any work elegantly in the vernacular worthy of a reader" (*Script. Brit.* 1.414, cited in Simpson, *Oxford Literary History*, 25).

33. On the discourse of English barbarism from the Roman perspective, see Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

34. Cf. "this simple and rude English"; "this rude English"; "this rude and symple English" (among many others) in *Caxton's Own Prose*, ed. Blake, 99, 134. Gower participates in this tradition in the Latin verse that opens the *Confessio Amantis*:

> Torpor, ebes sensus, scola parva labor minimusque
> Causant quo minimus ipse minora canam:
> Qua tamen Engisti lingua canit Insula Bruti
> Anglica Carmente metra iuvante loquar.
> Ossibus ergo carens que conterit ossa loquelis
> Absit, et interpres stet procul oro malus.
>
> [Dull wit, slight schooling, labor less
> Make slight the themes I, least of poets, sing,
> Let me, in Hengist's tongue, in Brut's isle sung,
> With Carmen's help tell forth my English verse.
> Far hence the boneless one whose speech grinds bones
> Far hence be he who reads my verses ill.]

    trans. Siân Echard and Clare Fanger, *The Latin Verses in Gower's Confessio Amantis: An Annotated Translation* (East Lansing: Colleagues Press, 1991).

35. *Vox Clamantis* in *The Major Latin Works of John Gower* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), Book I, ch. 20. Gower goes on to observe: "They are fair of form but see, by nature, they have more cruel fierceness than wolves . . . Yet I do not think there is a worthier people under the sun if there were mutual love among them."

36. See *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Medieval Literary Theory, 1280–1520*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1999), 327.

37. Homi Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory," in *The Location of Culture*, 30.

38. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up* (New York: New Directions, 1945).