

**THE MARGINS IN THE  
IBERIAN MANUSCRIPTS  
OF JOHN GOWER'S  
*CONFESSIO AMANTIS*:  
LANGUAGE,  
AUTHORITY AND  
READERSHIP**

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*Abstract*

The pages of the *Confessio Amantis* display an interesting blend of English text and Latin commentary in which the Latin apparatus enhances the vernacular text forming a strongly interrelated entity. The Latin captions and the glosses in the *Confessio* appear in a remarkably regular way in the English manuscripts and the presentation of the elements in the pages follows, in general, a pre-established pattern of marginal and in-column annotations.

However, the Iberian translations of the *Confessio* translated the Latin captions and skipped most of the marginal annotations, leaving behind an integral part of the work that probably came from Gower himself. In a work such as the *Confessio Amantis*, in which bilingualism is central to the text as planned by its author, the absence of all the Latin elements results in an important change in the textual dynamics of the poem. Why did they fail to cross the geographical borders in an era when Latin was *lingua franca*? What does their absence tell us about the origin of the translations and their intended readership?

*Keywords:* John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, Iberian Manuscripts, Latin captions, glosses.

## INTRODUCTION

The *Confessio Amantis* is one of the landmarks of vernacular English poetry in the Late Middle Ages. In the tradition of the collections of exemplary tales that were so popular at that time (with the *Roman de la Rose*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, or Boccaccio's *Decameron*), the *Confessio Amantis* helped establish English as a suitable medium for literature in England. It was the first English work translated into a foreign language. Thus, the Portuguese translation in Madrid, Real Biblioteca MS II-3088, and the Spanish one in Madrid, Escorial Library, MS g-II-19, witness the popularity of the *Confessio* in its time. In this article, I will focus on the dual quality of the *Confessio*, especially on how the Latin *marginalia* were transferred from their original English context into a new Iberian background, and seek to assess the changes they underwent, and whether the Portuguese and Castilian audiences received a different text than their English contemporaries.

The arrival of the *Confessio Amantis* on the Iberian Peninsula seems to have been the result of John of Gaunt's marriage policy: his daughters, Philippa and Catherine, married the Iberian kings João I of the Portuguese House of Avis and Enrique III of the Castilian House of Trastámara. They may have brought the *Confessio* with them when they sailed from Plymouth to Castile in the year 1386. It has been suggested that it was Philippa who encouraged the translation of the poem into Portuguese, but some studies suggest that the translation took place in the first years of Dom Duarte's reign (Facon 2007:82). The only surviving manuscript containing the Portuguese translation, titled *Livro do Amante*, was copied in 1430, and we know that it was Robert Payn, canon in the city of Lisbon but with English origins, who translated the original English text into Portuguese. The manuscript in the Real Biblioteca is not, however, Payn's holograph (Santano Moreno 1989:254).

We do not have definitive information about Robert Payn: his mastery of both English and Portuguese may be a clue to relate him to one of the English merchant families that were established in Lisbon since before the arrival of Philippa to the country (Russell 1961:31), but this is still an unproved theory.

In the Anglo-Portuguese court of João's reign, pious Philippa of Lancaster imported many English habits (Coleman 2002:154). Her son and future king, Dom Duarte, who remained in contact with his English family all his life, mentioned in the prologue to his *Leal Conselheiro* a book called *Livro do Amante* from which he took examples for his own work (Russell 1961:27). This is a consistent testimony of the *Confessio Amantis*' success among the Portuguese royal house; a royal house that, with Philippa, became a scion of the

House of Lancaster, who in turn was the subject of the favourable propaganda present in Gower's works.

The arrival of the *Confessio Amantis* in Castile is less clear: while we may assume that it was brought to the country by Catherine of Lancaster, we only have the version written in the Escorial manuscript, which dates from the end of the fifteenth century. The Castilian *Confysion del Amante* mentions Juan de Cuenca as translator: whether he had learned about the Portuguese *Confessio* on his own, or had been commissioned by the Queen to do so, we do not know, but the translation was made in the city of Huete, though, which was part of Queen Catherine's possessions in Castile, so the Lancastrian connection to the Spanish translation may be sound (Russell 1961:28). Juan de Cuenca did not translate the text from an English original version, but from an unknown exemplar of *Livro do Amante* (Hamm 1978; Santano Moreno 1989; Alvar 1990; Cortijo Ocaña & Correia de Oliveira).

The general appearance of the Spanish manuscript contrasts with that of the Portuguese one: whereas the manuscript from the Real Biblioteca is an elegant yet unpretentious example of a book destined for a socially relevant audience, the Spanish manuscript comes across as a much humbler product. Notwithstanding these material differences, the similarity of the text in both manuscripts implies a careful and faithful translation.<sup>1</sup>

The most remarkable aspect in both manuscripts, which sets them apart from most of the English extant manuscripts, is the nearly total absence of the Latin apparatus that characterizes the English versions of the poem. The lack of *marginalia* in the Iberian manuscripts has its impact not only in the layout of the pages, but also in poem itself, as the original English version possesses a subtle interplay of ideas that flowed from the margins into the text, and vice versa, which is absent in the Iberian translations.

## THE LAYOUT OF THE ENGLISH MANUSCRIPTS

The creation of the Iberian manuscripts of the *Confessio* can be explored in the light of the growing production of books in the vernacular in Late Medieval England: at the end of the fourteenth century, the English works of Gower and Chaucer enjoyed a popularity that had eluded works in the vernacular during the

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<sup>1</sup> For a more in-depth codicological and palaeographical description of the Iberian manuscripts and their scribes, see Herrero, Pérez-Fernández, and Gutiérrez (forthc.).

Middle Ages, as exemplified by high number of extant manuscripts containing them. Central to the success of these works were the scribes who, in the buoyant book market of fourteenth-century London, specialised in the works of Gower and Chaucer (Doyle 1983). The world of the book trade, increasingly present in Medieval Literary studies,<sup>2</sup> was peopled by text writers, writers of the court letters, freelance, and governmental scribes who copied literary manuscripts in London in the late Middle Ages (Mooney 2008:203). Among them was the now famous Adam Pinkhurst, identified by Linne Mooney as the scribe addressed by Chaucer in “Chaucer’s Wordes onto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn.” In Mooney’s opinion, “Adam Pinkhurst offers a model of a scribe who specialized in copying the work of a single author [...] Pinkhurst apparently worked under Chaucer’s direction as secretary or amanuensis [...]” (2006:121).

This collaboration between a scribe and an author does not seem to be unique in the case of Chaucer. Long before Mooney’s discovery, Gower’s revision of manuscripts was connected to his involvement in the copying process. In the *Confessio Amantis*, although there is still controversy about Gower’s alleged supervision of Bodleian Library Ms Fairfax 3 –one of the earliest copies of the *Confessio*– (Doyle & Parkes 1978; Nicholson 1987), the relatively regular mise-en-page of the forty nine extant manuscripts suggests that Gower could have provided the “standard” layout of the poem: two columns of text, forty-six lines per column, the Latin apparatus hierarchically organised in the margins or in the text column, and two miniatures (Pearsall 2004a:80).

The *Confessio Amantis* is a heavily annotated poem, framed by a carefully arranged apparatus of Latin verses, prose commentaries, speech markers, and glosses of diverse function (mainly explanatory and pointing to sources and quotations). The core of this Latin apparatus is relatively unchanged throughout the recensions, and this has prompted scholars to think that the Latin apparatus, as well as the program of illustration and decoration, was prepared by Gower himself (Pearsall 2004b:100). Andrew Galloway goes even further, speculating with the possibility that the glosses were the actual seeds of the English poem, as they seem to be watered-down summaries of the themes appearing in the poem (Galloway 2009:54).

The first noticeable thing in the pages of the *Confessio* manuscripts is how neatly distinguished the English and the Latin elements are in most manuscripts.

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<sup>2</sup> London scribes have recently come to the spotlight with a renewed strength: Paul C. Christianson (1989) carried out an extensive study on London late medieval book trade; Simon Horobin, Linne Mooney, and Estelle Stubbs have carried out an exhaustive research of the scribes working in literary manuscripts at the end of the fourteenth century, which has culminated in *Late Medieval English Scribes* ([www.medievalscribes.com](http://www.medievalscribes.com)), an inestimable tool for those wishing to study late medieval scribes in England.

Throughout the recensions, there is a tendency to set the Latin elements apart from the English text, whether by placing them in the margins, using red ink to write the Latin verses and glosses, or by writing them in a slightly different, more formal script following the tradition of the *littera glossularis*. As a rule, the Latin verses that precede each chapter are inserted in the text column, in red or black ink, with the Latin commentaries in the margins or the text column and the rest of the glosses and speech markers in the margins.

The high number of extant manuscripts bespeaks the success of the *Confessio* in the Late Middle Ages and allows some room for formal and visual deviations from the canon layout: there are manuscripts where the text is presented in only one column; others place the marginal apparatus irregularly; some omit the *marginalia* altogether. The scribes encountered problems when they came to copy the Latin elements, whether because of the format of the text or because they received exemplars with different layouts. This fact may account for the irregularities: some copyists did not trouble with the glosses and eliminated them, others started copying the full apparatus but did not finish, etc. In his article "The Organisation of the Latin Apparatus in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: The Scribes and their Problems," Derek Pearsall depicts the difficulties scribes had to surmount in order to copy the Latin elements and *marginalia* faithfully, and how difficult it was for the copyists to organise all the material around the text. Thus, and in spite of the author's implication in the production of copies and his carefully-constructed page layout, the scribal textual transmission made it difficult to keep Gower's intended *mise-en-page*.

Although some suggest that these glosses are an integral part of the poem – as mentioned above –, the authorship of the explanatory glosses in Gower's poem –especially those in Books V and VII– as well as the annotations dealing with sources and quotations has been called into question; unlike the Latin verses and summaries, their presence in the manuscripts is less widespread in the *Confessio*. This is not surprising, as glosses with similar functions feature in most literary manuscripts of the Late Middle Ages, and constitute one of the most important reading aids.<sup>3</sup> As is the case in most of the scribal tradition, these glosses in Gower's manuscripts have been mostly attributed to the scribes, but ironically as we will see later, these are the only glosses that have survived the jump to the Iberian translations.

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<sup>3</sup> For a classification of reading aids in literary texts, see Grindley (2001). For a classification and discussion of explanatory glosses in *Troilus and Criseyde*, see Boffey (1995), and Pérez-Fernández and Sáez-Hidalgo (2007).

In the *Confessio Amantis*, the Latin elements<sup>4</sup> served the purpose of endowing the vernacular poem with the aura of *auctoritas* traditionally reserved for Latin texts:

The Latin commentary and verses perform the crucial function of linking Gower's vernacular poem with more prestigious models, thereby representing it as authoritative truth. They rather cagily imply in their Latinity a closer relationship with the poet's sources than a study of their texts supports. (Batchelor 1996:9)

This practice was common in the Middle Ages (most famously with the Bible's *glossa ordinaria*): authors like Chaucer and Jean de Meun followed the Boethian tradition of commentary and tried to profit from the *gravitas* of classical authors such as Ovid or Boethius himself (Wetherbee 1991). However, Butterfield is baffled by Gower's reliance on a Latin-only framework, and argues that, unlike the glossators of *Le Roman de la Rose*, "Gower's decision to add a Latin layer to his own authorial compilation ranks as rare and distinctive even in the broader context of European vernacular writing" (Butterfield 2003:94).

While the *gravitas* provided by the Latin apparatus seems to be clear, the complicated structure of the poem, where several narrative levels intertwine (the frame of Amans and Genius, the exemplary tales, the voice of the author at the end of the poem) (Yeager 1987:258-59) results in a "cacophony of potentially authoritative voices" interweaving through the pages (Echard 1998a:239). This seems to be subsided only by Latin which, running through the pattern of voices and ideas as a stabilizing factor (Pearsall 1989), becomes nearly as important as the vernacular text itself.

There is another side to the word "authority" that goes beyond the sophistication provided by Latin; it is Gower's own authority as compiler and author. One of the first questions that comes to mind when one reads the *Confessio* is whether it "is a bilingual work to which a gloss has been added, or else a bilingual work that is constituted by frame, narrative, and gloss together" (Butterfield 2003:81-82). The frame is inherent to the work because it is in the margins where Gower is described as author and compiler, while the glosses themselves point to yet another identity, that of the commentator.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that the *Confessio* moves in an ambiguous territory, where the real nature of the

<sup>4</sup> The role of the Latin apparatus in the *Confessio Amantis* has been widely discussed. See Yeager (1987), Pearsall (1989), Wetherbee (1991), Batchelor (1997), Echard (1998b), Emerson (1999), Coleman (2002), and Butterfield (2003).

<sup>5</sup> Gower fits Saint Bonaventure's distinction between *auctor*, *compilator*, *commentator*, and (as I will argue later) *scriptor*.

poem is inevitably linked to the notion of Gower's role and also to its nature as a bilingual whole.

The Iberian manuscripts, where bilingualism and the structure attached to it have disappeared, question the extent of Gower's authority/authorship. In a fine statement, Siân Echard writes that "Carmen is the creator of all tongues, and in the end, Latin, English, and French" –and, I might add, Spanish and Portuguese– "share the significative difficulties of all linguistic systems. Far from being the secure source of *auctoritas*, language –all language– is shown to be radically unreliable" (Echard 1998b:9).

The last part of Echard's statement relates directly to the main point of this article: in the double, and even triple, process of translation that the text of the *Confessio* underwent from the English original to its renditions in Portuguese and Spanish, language is a means to construe the meaning of the poem but also a means of subverting it, tearing down the very structure that kept the poem as a multi-faceted entity.

## MISE-EN-PAGE IN THE IBERIAN MANUSCRIPTS

In some of the English manuscripts there is a quadruple boundary line distinguishing the "extratextual" Latin elements from the vernacular text –Latin, the position in the margins, the red ink and the *littera glossularis*. The first, and highest, wall in this metaphorical dam is a linguistic one, that of Latin, as it gives the elements the relevance Gower intended regardless of their position in the page. In the Iberian manuscripts, the translation of nearly all the Latin elements results in the loss of that boundary, thus threatening the carefully designed layers of textual interaction in the *Confessio Amantis*. The line separating the vernacular poem from the apparatus of annotations, now in the vernacular as well, is completely blurred, but when Latin disappears, the rest of the walls arise: Joham Barroso, the scribe of the Portuguese manuscript, exerted a considerable effort trying to maintain the division between elements, and when he could not make use of red ink (in the first chapters of Book I), he imitated the *littera glossularis* to remind the reader that the commentary in question is in another narrative frame.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the prose commentaries that accompany the text in the Iberian versions. In the margins or in the text column of the English manuscripts, these annotations support the English text, enhancing and reinforcing the internal division in chapters and books, and they are the basic

vehicle for the *auctoritas* that Gower pursued. The commentaries lost part of their nature when transferred into the Iberian languages, not only because their claim to *auctoritas* is directly linked to Latin, but also because they became almost mere summaries, losing the exegetical flavour of the originals.

The following example, taken from the Prologue in Fairfax 3, serves to illustrate the different approaches to the commentaries in the English, Portuguese, and Spanish versions of the *Confessio*:

Hic in speciali tractat Confessor cum Amante contra illos, qui de propria formositate presumentes amorem mulieris dedignantur. Et narrat exemplum qualiter cuiusdam Principis filius nomine Narcizus estiuo tempore, cum ipse venacionis causa quendam ceruum solus cum suis canibus exagigaret, in grauem sitim incurrens necessitate compulsus ad bibendum de quodam fonte pronus se inclinavit; vbi ipse faciem suam pulcherrimam in aqua percipiens, putabat se per hoc illam Nimpham, quam Poete Ekko vocant, in flumine coram suis oculis potius conspexisse; de cuius amore confestim laqueatus, vt ipsam ad se de fonte extraheret, pluribus blandiciis adulabatur. Set cum illud perficere nullatenus potuit, pre nimio languore deficiens contra lapides ibidem adiacentes caput exuerberans cerebrum effudit. Et sic de propria pulcritudine qui fuerat presumptuosus, de propria pulcritudine fatuatus interiit. (CA I.2279ff)<sup>6</sup>

The summary in the Portuguese text reads as follows:

Aqui tracta o Confessor com o Amante contra aquelles que, presumindo de sua fermosura, despreçam o amor das molheres, e conta por exenplo o que aconteço a huu príncipe, chamado Narçiso. (*Livro do Amante*, XXXIV.xxiv; in Faccon 2007: 419)

It is an exact translation of the first sentences in the Latin summary, unadulterated by intermediary versions. Robert Payn removed the superficial exegesis and took only the core of the subject matter in each chapter, altering

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<sup>6</sup> “Here in particular the Confessor discourses with the Lover against those who, presuming on their own beauty, disdain the love of a woman. And he narrates an instructive example about how a son of a certain prince, Narcissus by name, during the springtime, when hunting alone with his hounds he pursued a certain stag, and running with severe thirst, compelled by necessity to drink from a certain stream, he lowered himself flat to the ground. There, perceiving in the water his own most beautiful face, he thought instead that he was regarding that nymph whom poets call Echo, in the river before his eyes. Instantly snared by love of her, in order that he might draw her out from the stream he wooed her with many seductions. But when he could not at all achieve that, growing weak from too great an illness, he struck his head against stones lying around in that same place, pouring out his brains. And thus he who had been presumptuous about his own beauty died infatuated by his own beauty.” All quotations of the English version of the *Confessio Amantis* (as well as the Latin translations) are taken from Peck (2000-2004).



Gower's original aim to *auctoritas* through a linguistic device. So far, it is impossible to identify the moment when this mutation took place: Robert Payn might have received an exemplar already subjected to the loss of the captions, or perhaps it was he who decided to abbreviate Gower's self-commentary, but the result is a less authoritative summary –though no doubt a more efficient one, as it encapsulates the essence of the tale without dragging on.

The same summary is greatly reduced in the Spanish manuscript:

De lo que acaesçio a Narçiso, e de su muerte. (*Confysion del Amante* XXXII)<sup>7</sup>

No doubt, Siân Echard is correct in her analysis of the result of this type of abbreviation in summaries: “Relying on the English –and, more specifically, the English *stories* rather than their frame– he tends to de-emphasize exemplification as an aspect of the *Confessio*” (Echard 1997:274). This is obviously the case with the Spanish rendering of the Latin introductory passages. The brief commentary before the “Tale of Narcissus” completely dispenses with the narrative frame comprising Genius and Amans, thus breaking the structure and de-emphasizing Gower's role as commentator and author. On the other hand, it must be noted that its presence disrupts the reading in a much less noticeable way, supporting the finite structure of the tales, thus becoming an extended *ordinatio*.

This leads us to consider one of the major textual innovations in the Portuguese manuscript: the Spanish index inserted at the beginning of the codex. This table of contents is still an enigma that could be at the core of the *Confessio*'s textual transmission in the Iberian Peninsula. On the one hand, it is striking that the Portuguese text should be preceded by an index written in Spanish. On the other hand, the pages do not coincide with those in the Portuguese part of the manuscript, but the entries in the Portuguese table are very similar to the commentaries inserted in the text of the Spanish codex.

There are more clues in book VI of the Spanish manuscript: before the finding of the Portuguese copy, Wayne Hamm stated that “the Castilian simply fails to label a Book VI” (1978:102). The Spanish manuscript mixes up Books VI and VII, and it is remarkable that the Spanish table of contents in the Portuguese manuscript, which in general follows quite closely the headlines written in the Spanish poem, does not display Book VI in the same way as it does the rest of the books: there is a partially trimmed attempt to indicate the pass from Book V to Book VI, but the aspect of letters “v” and “r” marks the work of a different hand. Without the appropriate codicological data about the folios containing the index, I can only venture that the Portuguese table of

<sup>7</sup> All quotations from the *Confysion del Amante* are taken from Alvar (1990).

contents was initially made for another, Spanish, manuscript, and was later added to the Portuguese manuscript for unknown reasons; this would account for the use of Spanish, for the faulty pagination, for the differences in the treatment of headlines, and even for the soap recipe. This would, in turn, suggest that there was at least another Spanish exemplar of the *Confessio*, now lost.<sup>8</sup>

The index in the Escorial manuscript is another, very different issue. While the captions in the Portuguese text are the most faithful ones to the Latin original, the Spanish index, though accurate in the first sentences of each one, goes on into more original readings. It is also in this index where we find the mention of Robert Payn and Juan de Cuenca, and where the reader first meets John Gower. The following commentary in the margins of the Prologue (or written in red in the column, depending on the manuscript) is extremely important because it is Gower's way of affirming his role as author and compiler:

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 reollectum, presentem libellum ex variis cronicis, historiis, poetarum philosophorumque dictis, quatenus sibi infirmitas permisit, studiosissime compilauit.<sup>9</sup> (*CA* Prol. \*34–\*35)

This mention is moved from the margin in the Prologue to the English version to the column in the index in the Castilian manuscript:

E declara primeramente en cómmo por onra e reverençia del rey Ricardo segundo, este auctor no rehusó el trabajo de aquesta obra puesto que padeçiese en sí grande enfermedad. (*Confysion del Amante*, Prol.)

<sup>8</sup> There are eight quires in MS g-II-19 that stand out among the rest: whereas the rest of the book was copied with a brown ink and no red, those eight quires, comprising fols. 135r-231r, were written in black and red ink (there are instances of red ink up to fol. 242v.) We can find crude pencil decorations in some initials, and the general appearance is different from the rest of the codex, which might suggest that those quires were written at another, later time, or that they were intended for another manuscript but were instead inserted here. See Herrero, Pérez-Fernández and Gutiérrez (forthc.).

<sup>9</sup> “Here he declares particularly how, because of reverence of the most serene prince, his lord king of England Richard II, his own and humble John Gower, although long wearied in many ways by grave illness, did not refuse to take up the labors of this little work, but instead has most zealously compiled the present little book from various chronicles, histories, and sayings of poets and philosophers, like a honeycomb gathered from various flowers, to the extent that his infirmity allowed him.”

A reader who skipped the index in the Escorial manuscript would not find Gower's name until the end of the book. Some of the clues to the text remain hidden for those who disregard the table of contents, thus making the index a key element for the comprehension of the whole poem. The table of contents is not a mere reading aid; it is a place where the *Confessio's* purpose comes together. It is the absolute opposite of the table of contents in the Portuguese manuscript. The inclusion of the author's name at the front of the index in the Spanish manuscript is a clear sign of the scribe's intentions: this table of contents was to be read, not to be skipped. That could be the reason why the commentaries are rendered longer and more complete in the index than before each chapter. Judging by the faithful transfer of most of the elements in the Portuguese version to the Spanish manuscript, we can suggest that this layout came from the Portuguese exemplar from which Juan de Cuenca copied his poem. Unfortunately, the manuscript in the Real Biblioteca has lost the first pages, keeping us from discovering if this particular layout was there from the start or was an idea of the Spanish copyist of the Escorial manuscript.

Nevertheless, it is very revealing that the very few Latin elements that survived the translation in the Portuguese manuscript are Latin proverbs that entered the *Confessio's* textual tradition as marginal annotations. There are two examples of this in Book V:

Seneca si rres tue t[ibi] non sufficient fac ut rebus tuis suficias.<sup>10</sup> (*CA* V.7735ff.)

Lucas omny habenty dabytur.<sup>11</sup> (*CA* V.7719ff.)

They are not in the margin, but they are clearly differentiated from the rest of the text by being written in red. They appear in a part of the poem where the scribes, both in England and in the Iberian Peninsula, seem to have taken pains to copy the marginal glosses that are generally absent in the rest of the book.

Of the three manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis* in the British Library, Egerton 1991 (recension one) and Harley 3869 (recension three) contain numerous explanatory glosses relating to Roman gods in Book V, whereas Additional MS 12043 (recension two) contain none. These types of glosses are very typical in other works of English poetry of the Late Middle Ages, especially Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Cryseide*. Joham Barroso followed the example of Egerton and Harley in the Real Biblioteca manuscript, but instead of writing the glosses in the margins, he inserted them in the text column in red. As a result, these annotations interrupt the proper reading of the text, disrupting the narrative.

<sup>10</sup> "Seneca: If your goods are not sufficient for you, see that you suffice for your goods."

<sup>11</sup> "Luke: To whoever has, it will be given."

Barroso was not so careful copying other types of glosses: the *marginalia* pointing to sources and quotations, with only a few exceptions, again, in Book V, did not survive in the Portuguese rendition of the poem:

Apostolus. Regem honorificate.<sup>12</sup> (CA Prol.152-53)

Salomon. Omnia fac cum consilio.<sup>13</sup> (CA Prol.156 ff.)

These appeals to classic authorities in the Prologue enhance the English verse and give Gower the credibility he was searching for, but they are lost in the Iberian translations. One of the most interesting points in this analysis of the Latin *marginalia* in the Iberian manuscripts is the apparent double standard followed during the process of textual transmission. The explanatory glosses were seen as a kind of disposable element, with some copyists subscribing to their use and many others obliterating them from the textual tradition. This has been seen as a sign that these glosses may be scribal.

Speech markers, which in the margins of the English manuscripts bring to the fore the dialogic nature of Amans and Genius's exchanges, are placed in the text columns of the Portuguese manuscript. Still, they are highlighted in the text by the use of the red ink also used in the chapter summaries, creating a boundary for these elements in replacement of the lost boundaries (linguistic and positional) that separated them in the original.

The speech markers enter into the text in the Portuguese version, but only traces of them are left in the Spanish one: the names of the characters disappear, and the lines are only broken by a terse point or a single, tiny line, but they have left the imprint of what their purpose was. Their transmuted nature is paradoxical: that the reader could identify these traces was a sign of an attentive reading of the text, whereas the speech markers were, in origin and maybe in opposition to Gower's primary intention, a helpful element for the audience but also a way of distracting the reader from the text. The dialogic nature of the *Confessio*, mentioned above, is diluted in favour of a more content-driven approach in the *Confysion*.

The complete range of summaries that appear before every chapter contrasts with the unexplained absence of the Latin verses, even more incomprehensible when we take into account that the Latin verses appear regularly in the vast majority of the English manuscripts of the *Confessio*. How can we explain the silence in the Iberian renditions? The reason may lie in the difficult nature of the verses: perhaps Robert Payn was not sufficiently versed in Latin to attempt the translation of the deliberately obscure verses. Another

<sup>12</sup> "The Apostle: 'Honor the king'."

<sup>13</sup> "Solomon: 'Do all things with counsel'."

possibility points to the person who commissioned the translation: if he or she could not read Latin, Robert Payn would have been required to translate all the Latin elements, though this alone would not suffice to explain the absence of the poems. Perhaps the safest theory is that the verses had been excised from the poem before the translation, in the English exemplar, now lost, that Robert Payn received.

## CONCLUSION

How did the Iberian manuscripts challenge Gower's authority as established in the English manuscripts? How did the Iberian manuscripts keep, or otherwise change, the structure of the narrative and which were the consequences? Did the Iberian audience of the *Confessio* receive a different poem?

As we have seen, Gower's frame of authority in the *Confessio* has three different aspects: Gower as author, Gower as compiler, and Gower as commentator. But, if we take into account his control over the manuscript layout, Gower could even be considered a *scriptor*, as he constructed the mise-en-page when working with his scribes, probably in his own scriptorium at the Priory of St. Mary Overy in Southwark (Mooney 2006:121). All these aspects have been challenged in the Iberian manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis*. First because, without the invocation of John Gower in the Prologue, the reader is left ignorant of the author of the work –unless the reader makes use of the table of contents–, and thus this outer frame of the narrative does not work as it does in the English original. Additionally, Gower's role as commentator is hindered by the continuous cutting and rewriting of his Latin commentaries at the hands of the Iberian scribes. Therefore the sense of *auctoritas* provided by the Latin apparatus in the English manuscripts is diminished here, so the poem does not mean the same for the Spanish and Portuguese readers, who are forced to wards different readings of the poem. Bilingualism, which was one of the central points of attention and one of the main elements of the textual construction of meaning in the English versions, is virtually non-existent in the Spanish and Portuguese versions.

The role of Gower as a compiler is reinforced, though, because the material is seen as a compilation of exemplary tales suitable for the nobility and higher classes of the time. With the introduction of the table of contents as an integral and important part of the text (especially in the Castilian copy), the structure of the whole work changes: there is no need for exhaustive commentaries before

each chapter, because the key facts are revealed in the index. The barely-there speech markers also provide a different kind of reading experience, one from which an attentive reader could profit. The narrative is not interfered with to such an extent.

The *Confessio's* Iberian audience, inherently similar in social status to their English contemporaries, received a different poem due to its lack of Latin as a literary and intellectual element but also because of the changes that the removal of *marginalia* caused in the “main text.” The Spanish readers of manuscript g-II-19 needed to make an extra effort to appreciate the structure and the internal relationships of the poem as intended by Gower, whereas the Portuguese audience of II-3088 read a book that, for all its elegant layout and faithful translation, left behind (probably consciously) the tradition of Boethian commentary in Latin which was so important to Gower. The translation of the Latin passages entailed the vernacularization of the text and the de facto naturalization of Gower’s *Confessio* into its new Iberian context.

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