行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫成果報告

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1. Abstract

Studies on *Confessio Amantis* have for the most part been confined to issues of unity and morality of the poem on the one hand and the quality and relevance of individual tales on the other. Despite its contribution to the recuperation of the unity and wholeness of the poem, modern endeavor tends to ignore one central theme in the poem: division and difference. The problem lies mainly in the failure to address the force and significance of the structural design and the crucial issues of rhetoric and translation in the poem. In this study of the *Confessio*, I hope to recast the critical interest onto the rhetorical project and vernacular translation so that we can better understand (1) the complex but crucial aspects of translation involved in the poem; (2) how Gower directed the consciousness of the vernacular sign of his age into strategies of poetic composition; and also (3) the relationship between rhetoric, translation and vernacular poetics in Gower's literary practice in general.

The methodological framework draws on both the medieval theory and practice of rhetoric and translation and some of the recent critical insights. The study first considers the problem of translation and vernacularity in the poem, paying special attention to the theme of vernacular poetic production in the Prologue and the epilogue. This valorization of the poetic project brings us to the question of textual complexities in the poem. The curious presence of Latin apparatus particularly contributes to the complexities of the text. It raises the possibility of inverting the textual/literary status of vernacularity and as such indicates a shift of semiotic awareness. The study then moves on to consider Gower's rhetorical project in the poem. Gower engages in vigorous rhetorical appropriation in his translation and reinvention of the *materia* of classical literary tradition and in Book VII he offers a significant account of rhetoric as public eloquence that can best direct the verbal power to serve an ethical cause. Finally, the study focuses on the concerns of Book VII, which announce this thematic shift from the interest of personal love to the common welfare of political caritas. Book VII disrupts the poem's penitential structure; however, it actually embodies the poem's concern with disruption. This metacritical vantage point allows us to further explore the problem of division in the poem. This vernacular poem not only speaks about division, but also speaks through the historical condition of division. Rather than evading the problem of difference, Gower chooses to engage it. This is truly Gower's enterprise of vernacular translation.

中文摘要

　　本研究計畫旨在探討高爾重要詩作《愛人的告白》中牽涉到的修辭與文學／文化翻譯，以及其與方言詩學之關係。中世紀是國內文學研究中較冷門之領域，而高爾之相關著作更是乏人問津。本計畫即希望透過探討中古英國作家高爾的重要詩作《愛人的告白》，能對國內相關研究的累積與提昇有所貢獻。長久以來，《愛人的告白》的相關研究大多環繞在詩作的統一性和道德議題以及詩中故事的素質與相關性。然而，此一批評傳統卻忽略了詩作結構發展的重要性，也無視於詩中修辭與翻譯之相關課題。職是之故，探討翻譯、修辭與方言性之關聯可幫助我們了解（1）詩作中牽涉之諸多翻譯課題；（2）高爾如何將方言之語言符號意識轉化為詩作之動力與寫作之策略；以及（3）高爾寫作中文學／文化翻譯、方言修辭與詩學之密切關係。

　　本研究之理論架構包含中世紀翻譯與修辭之理論與實踐以及近年之批評發展。準此，本研究先著手討論詩中翻譯與方言性的問題，特別是序言裡對方言詩作的標榜；之後，討論詩中文本的複雜性。特別需要處理的問題是拉丁詩文評註，因為它們透露了反轉方言寫作文本／文學地位的意圖。此外，詩中挪用、重寫古典文學素材也牽涉到修辭與翻譯間之辨證關係，而且高爾更進一步將修辭置於公眾層次，強調其倫理教化與文化傳承的力量。論文最後仔細思考第七卷書的後設思考與批評角色；它表面上雖然中斷、攪亂了詩作既定的結構次序，但事實上卻體現了方言寫作與歷史情境中分裂之問題。本研究計畫即是以此為關懷，探討修辭、文學／文化翻譯與方言詩學之關係。

關鍵詞：高爾、《愛人的告白》、翻譯、修辭、方言性

2. **Background and Purpose**

　　There have been two major related controversies over John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: (1) whether the poem has unity; and (2) whether Gower yokes together disparate materials of love on the one hand and moral and political themes on the other. In the introduction to his edition of Gower's works which has remained the basis for the study of the *Confessio* since its appearance in 1901, G. C. Macaulay, while acknowledging the work's importance as a collection of tales, does not give much credit to its other contents: he dismisses the Prologue, and registers a classic disquiet about the poem's many digressions and about the difficulties posed by the role of Genius (1901: xix). In *The Allegory of Love*, C. S. Lewis begins with a critical practice to view the poem as a whole. Recognizing Gower's artistry, he defends the attempt to combine love and morality and praises the way in which

Gower has made the diversity of his material cohere (1936: 198-222).   Subsequent critical attention has been placed on the moral issues in the poem.   In his representative work (1964), John H. Fisher regards Gower's most significant role as an advocate of moral responsibility.   For Fisher, the poem is the culmination of Gower's ethical plan to preach to his countrymen on their moral and social duties. Two decades later, A. J. Minnis reiterates Lewis's approach, arguing that Gower's materials are not incompatible and it is a unified work as a whole: "For Gower, the virtues of the good lover were indistinguishable from those of the good man" (1983: 1).

More recently, Rita Copeland vigorously addresses the problems of rhetoric and vernacular translation in the poem (1991: 202-20), while R. F. Yeager explores the poem's complexities as a heterogeneous text (1993: 203-16).   Larry Scanlon (1994) has also challenged the modernist antithesis of poetry and morality, emphasizing Gower's interest in moralizing as a form of poetry.   By calling attention to the important issue of lay authority, Scanlon suggests that the poem is a rhetorical project as Gower is searching and self-conscious about poetic language.

Here in Taiwan, Middle English Literature is a much ignored field.   Even in the case of a major poem by a major poet like Gower, a formal, substantial study is still lacking.   Decades ago, Prof. Yuan-Shu Yen 顏元叔 provided a brief account of the poem.   However, he is more interested in the quality of the individual tales than the significance of the whole project (1983: 729-43).   Though there might have been some other sporadic studies of the poem, as far as my knowledge goes, no major critical pursuit is available.   As a result, the significance of the *Confessio* as a powerful reflection of Middle English vernacular poetics is not adequately investigated.

The study, while strengthening local scholarship on the *Confessio*, tries to connect it to the critical development on the international scene.   In so doing, it further pursues some recent critical insights into Gower's poetic project.   Studies on the poem have for the most part been confined to issues of unity and morality of the poem and the quality and relevance of individual tales.   Despite its contribution to the understanding of the design of the poem as a whole, modern endeavor to recuperate the unity and wholeness of the poem tends to ignore one central theme in the poem: division and difference.   The problem lies mainly in the failure to address the force and significance (rather than unity) of the structural design and the crucial issues of rhetoric and translation in the poem.   In this study of the *Confessio*, therefore, I hope to recast the critical interest onto the rhetorical project and vernacular translation so that we can better understand (1) the complex but crucial aspects of translation involved in the poem; (2) how Gower directed the

consciousness of the vernacular sign of his age into strategies of poetic composition; and also (3) the relationship between rhetoric, literary/cultural translation and vernacular poetics in Gower's literary practice in general.

3. Results and Discussion

The study first considers the problem of translation and vernacularity in the poem. Gower's decision to write in the English vernacular is rather significant since he was the last major English practitioner of Latin and Anglo-Norman verse. The Prologue begins with an affirmation of his own poetic project in the midst of a profound sense of historicity. Granted that writing has the power to convey authority from the past to the present, Gower foregrounds the exemplary authority of the new vernacular tradition itself, and the importance of its powers of transmission. This acute sense of historicity, together with its new form of authority, powerfully illustrates Gower's employment of the medieval device of linguistic and cultural translation that legitimizes the new prominence of the vernacular to give authority to London and England. The Prologue ends with another valorization of poetry by invoking the power of Arion, and the epilogue further echoes the theme of vernacular poetic production.

This valorization of the vernacular poetry brings us to the question of textual complexities in the poem. In the first place, Gower gives this English work a Latin title, "Confessio Amantis," which is itself a combination of the clerical tradition and vernacular discourse. The curious presence of Latin apparatus in the poem not only provides the "low" English poem with some learned polish, but also raises the possibility of inverting the textual/literary status of vernacularity and as such indicates a shift of semiotic awareness.

The problems of translation and vernacularity are also related to Gower's rhetorical project in the poem. The text embodies an exegetical system in the form of the interpretive ministrations of Genius, who has been integrated into the vernacular world and participates in the forces and aspirations of vernacular poetry by rearticulating the classical learned tradition in a more accessible form. As the classical tales are "translated" in Gower's reinvention of the material of literary tradition through this exegetical structure, they are abbreviated, amplified, and transformed so as to fit into their new textual purpose; as a result, the text obtains differences from its sources. Gower's vernacular translation of the classical tales therefore turns out to be vigorous rhetorical appropriation, whereby its own authority is asserted.

Gower's significant account of the place of rhetoric among the arts in Book VII further underscores what he engages in throughout the poem. Rhetoric is defined in

almost entirely political terms.   The use of plain style reflects a view of rhetoric that defines the use of language as a moral issue that calls for a correspondence between word and truth and between word and deed.   If there is more power in human language than in all other earthly things, that power must be put into greatest use; and the best vehicle to effect this goal is the vernacular, which appeals to all common people.   This enactment of rhetoric in the poem invokes the crucial project of cultural transmission in which learning and knowledge are transferred from the few to the many, from the learned language to the vernacular tongue.   The *Confessio* is therefore a rhetorical text, tracing a thematic move from the interest of personal love to the common welfare of political caritas, to the realm of ethical edification, cultural transmission and vernacular translation.

The crucial locus in which this thematic shift is announced and demonstrated is Book VII.   As an account of Aristotle's education of Alexander, Book VII disrupts the poem's penitential structure.   Critics have regarded this intrusion as a typical failure in artistic control on Gower's part.   However, it actually embodies the poem's concern with linguistic and historical disruption and, more importantly, serves as the structural and thematic key to the entire poem.

With this metacritical vantage point, we can further explore the problem of "division" in the poem.   Besides the exemplary narratives that sometimes challenge the authority of the penitential discourse, there are inconsistencies among morals, between Latin and English, and even between a story's tenor and its moral.   More obviously, a taste for the lurid that includes all kinds of violence and brutality unsettles the moralizing attempt itself.   The poem not only speaks about division, but as a vernacular text, speaks through the historical condition of division.   Even as Gower's text invokes the ideal of continuity and undertakes the project of cultural recuperation, it embodies the very process of rupture and mutability that it denounces. Rather than evading the problem of difference, Gower chooses to engage it.   This is truly Gower's enterprise of vernacular translation.

4. Self-Assessment

The problematics of vernacular translation in Gower's literary project turns out to be much more complicated and intricate than the time and energy a one-year research project can afford to tackle.   As a result, the study can only focus on some major issues demonstrated in the *Confessio*, without probing into the rich array of translation theory and practice in Gower's time or the various aspects of translation entailed by the many individual tales.   Although it is impossible to take the many tales in the poem into careful consideration, this does not pose serious problems, for the main interest of this project is not in the study of the individual tales themselves, but rather

in the rhetorical project and the force of vernacular translation manifested in the poem. Even so, this study has already pointed to a very fruitful and crucial direction that future projects can pursue, and it has also made follow-up studies possible and necessary.

The second problem has much to do with a lack of supporting "software" in the research environment.　Since the resources regarding medieval studies here in Taiwan are far from satisfactory, I have encountered some difficulties collecting the necessary research materials, not to mention the frustrating fact that many important books are already out of print.　To overcome this major obstacle and to improve the future research environment, extra funding on the acquisition of books and international interlibrary loan are especially necessary.

As a whole, I believe this research project is a success.　Part of the results of this project was already presented at the Third Annual Medieval Conference held by the Fu Jen University on March 21-22, 2002.　Besides the acquisition of related studies and research materials from abroad on my part, in the process the research assistant could also apply the research skills and methodology involved in this project to his own research and thesis writing.

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