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Foreword

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Foreword

In this issue of *Accessus*, volume 6, we are pleased to present a wide diversity of Gower scholarship encapsulated in two articles of great scope. This diversity of approach extends from translation to transliteration, from the premodern to the hypermodern, from matters of identity to the making of poetry, all in keeping with Gower's notion of the relevance of past writings to future audiences. Each article offers invaluable insights on two of Gower's major works less often treated in scholarship: the *Vox Clamantis* and the *Mirour de l'Omme*. Although both poems include an estates satire, the Latin *Vox* concentrates on the political upheaval of its own time, including the Rising of 1381, while the French *Mirour* presents an allegory on vice versus virtue and a meditation on the Virgin Mary. In the scholarship published here, the *Vox Clamantis*, Book V, inspires an in-depth look at the fourteenth-century English commons, and the *Mirour* reveals important clues to Gower's poetic identity.

In the first article, Robert J. Meindl guides the reader through his translation of *Vox Clamantis* V, published on [The Gower Project's Translation Wiki](#) and linked to the article so that the reader can follow along. Thus, this issue produces a traditional *accessus*, enabled by hypertext and the lack of page restrictions made possible on the web. Meindl's "The Community of the Realm: Gower's Account of the Commons in Book V of the *Vox Clamantis*" helpfully explicates the poet's understanding of sociopolitical realities in late fourteenth-century England. In addition, it solves such puzzles as why Gower expands his treatment of those who labor (much beyond the farmers whom he promises to address) to include all secular persons who are below royalty and peers. Concluding that in the *Vox*'s Book V Gower provides "a coherent piece of late fourteenth-century political and sociological analysis," Meindl's commentary allows

Accessus's global audience to view the commons in the way that the poet himself was likely to have perceived them.

The second article, María Bullón-Fernández's "Gower's Queer Poetics in the *Mirour de l'Omme*" expands upon recent gender theories to analyze the French poem's narrator and poetics. She traces the speaker's progress—from rejection of queer courtly narratives to the subtle articulation of a queer voice that embodies both male and female. Bullón-Fernández explores Gower's references to the "hermafoditre" and to indeterminacies in both gender and language. While Meindl's commentary exposes Gower's harshness toward women, especially dowagers, Bullón-Fernández argues that the poet does not default to a masculinized norm but instead shows acceptance of a variety of gendered identities, especially as they are modeled by Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Bullón-Fernández extends the familiar trope of Jesus as Mother to include the Holy Family's queer performance and to show Gower's imitation of them. Of the *Mirour*'s seemingly motionless meditation, she remarks: "The poem's static quality can thus be seen as an attempt to freeze, to keep in place the signifiers knocked loose by the queer."

Both essays provide stimulating threads of conversation that contribute to Gower studies by offering readings that underscore the poet's vocal dexterity, as well as his ability to write in languages and genres of the time. By deploying traditional medieval tropes concerning the estates, poetic voice, and gender identities, this poet also enables us to hear and see something of our own time predicated in his poetry despite its premodern status. *Accessus* remains dedicated to presenting Gower's work as well as other premodern texts in innovative ways and to new audiences around the world.

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