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SUSANNAH MARY CHEWNING, ed., *Studies in the Age of Gower: A Festschrift in Honour of R. F. Yeager*. (Publications of the John Gower Society 13.) Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2020. Pp. xiv, 260; black-and-white figures. \$99. ISBN: 978-1-8438-4546-1.

Table of contents available online at <https://boydellandbrewer.com/9781843845461/studies-in-the-age-of-gower/>.

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MARTHA DRIVER, DEREK PEARSALL, and R. F. YEAGER, eds., *John Gower in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books*. (Publications of the John Gower Society 14.) Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2020. Pp. xvii, 303; color and black-and-white figures. \$99. ISBN: 978-1-8438-4553-9.

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John Gower has never been more in demand. Whether as the protagonist of Bruce Holsinger's London noir novels or as the subject of high-caliber research, the trilingual poet has seen a steady rise to the top. The prominence of Gower studies is in no small measure the achievement of R. F. Yeager, who has been pouring his considerable energies and erudition into restoring one of medieval England's leading poets to his rightful place in reception history and scholarship. In this endeavor the Publications of the John Gower Society, a series published under the aegis of Boydell and Brewer, has been tone-setting. Both collections under review here were published in this series as volumes 13 and 14, respectively. And the series continues to be in robust health: at the time of writing, Derek Pearsall and Linne Mooney's long-awaited *Descriptive Catalogue of the English Manuscripts of John Gower's "Confessio Amantis"* has appeared as vol. 15.

The first book under review, *Studies in the Age of Gower: A Festschrift in Honour of R. F. Yeager*, edited by Susannah Mary Chewning, celebrates the work of Yeager himself by bringing together some of the leading lights in the field. Chewning, a former student of Yeager's, has assembled a remarkably even set of fourteen essays on a wide range of Gowerian topics. The opening salvo is delivered by A. S. G. Edwards's compact chapter "Edward Thomas on Gower," which continues Edwards's foray into Victorian and early-twentieth-century scholarship. The subject of this chapter is actually Thomas's two reviews of G. C. Macaulay's edition of *The Complete Works of John Gower*, which was published in four volumes between 1899 and 1902 (both reviews are printed at the end of the chapter). The poet Thomas, it turns out, has more praise for Macaulay's editorial work (an "almost superfluously fine edition" [18]) than for Gower himself, who "smacks of the school" (15) and whose Latin writing stirs the wish (in Thomas) that "he had used English instead" (20). In the second essay, Pearsall turns to the mysterious Sutherland fragment, a probably lost portion of the *Confessio Amantis* that survives only in a poor-quality photocopy. Although the surviving information is insufficient to reconstruct the equally lost manuscript to which the fragment had once belonged, an illuminating by-product of Pearsall's sleuthing is a fuller picture of the Leveson-Gower family's ties to multiple important manuscripts of the poet's work.

Next, Stephanie Batkie and Matthew Irvin turn their attention to Gower's thoughts on idolatry and Incarnational theology in his substantial Latin poems, *Vox clamantis* and *Cronica tripartita*, in which they detect a pragmatic, Aristotelian bent: Gower focuses on Christian rites and practice, assigning a central role to the mediation of poetry. Russell A. Peck treats patriarchal hierarchies in the *Confessio*. Here, the poet emerges as socially conservative, passing up the opportunity to challenge norms and patterns, while casting a negative light on the consequences of willful behavior. This trilingual cluster is closed by Peter Nicholson's thorough essay on Gower's French writings, in particular the cycle known as *Cinkante balades*. Nicholson's Gower is an original French-language poet, capable of negotiating his own path through a landscape inhabited by such towering figures as Machaut, Deschamps, and de Pizan. It is in his

French poetry, Nicholson maintains, that women's voices find their clearest and most powerful expression.

In the following chapter, Martha Driver discusses the program of illuminations in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, MS M 126 that preserves and accentuates Gower's oddities in the manner of a visual marginal commentary. Driver attributes the manuscript to the accomplished commercial scribe Ricardus Franciscus, who is known to have collaborated with notable limners. The two artists in MS M 126, Driver suggests in closing, may have been Flemish expatriates working in England. Andrew Galloway returns to Gower's French writing, to the *Mirour de l'omme*. Galloway's wide-ranging piece touches on several aspects of this narrative poem, before concentrating on Gower's use of Seneca. Although the medieval poet may not have encountered Seneca's works directly, he nevertheless appears to have been Chaucer's source for Senecan material. Gower's Latin *Cronica tripartita* is at the center of David A. Roberts's essay on the poem's contribution to the chronicle tradition. Roberts detects in Gower an accurate historiographer who is willing to question the increasing grip of prose on the chronicle genre. William Rogers gets personal in his chapter on Gower's thoughts on old age that may have their origin in Cicero's *De senectute*. Rogers stops short of proposing that Gower had read Cicero's work—prudently so, given the universal nature of Gower's remarks on the loss of his bodily abilities.

The short Latin lyric "De Lucis Scrutino" is the sole focus of Natalie Grinnell's chapter, in which Gower's "ecology of light" emerges, perhaps best described as a moral chiaroscuro, a figurative and optical interplay of light and dark that simultaneously represents physical and ethical forces. Michael P. Kuczynski treats Gower's views of priests. Here too Gower is a social conservative: he wants individuals to reform their ethical conduct rather than recommend institutional overhaul. Next, Roger A. Ladd examines the relationship between Gower's treatment of the Tale of Apollonius of Tyre in the *Confessio* and Shakespeare's adaptation of Gower's version as *Pericles*. Ladd reads Shakespeare's play as informed dissent from Gower, with the audience understood as being complicit in this departure from the earlier poet. Brian W. Gastle's chapter takes up Yeager's view that Gower was not a lawyer but possessed a "lawyerly habit of mind" (204), tracing the poet's own legal troubles in Southwark and his views on incarceration. In the final chapter, Richard Firth Green, using the "Tale of Rosiphilee" in the *Confessio*, offers the sobering proposition that Gower's recensions of the *Confessio* were not motivated by the wish to please different rulers but were attempts to guard against the predations of scribes and copyists.

The volume is concluded by the editor's personal remarks on Yeager, followed by a bibliography of Yeager's publications.

The second collection under review is *John Gower in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books*, edited by Martha Driver, Derek Pearsall, and R. F. Yeager. The essays in this volume began their life as papers given at the joint Fourth International Congress of the John Gower Society and the fifteenth biennial conference of the Early Book Society, held in Durham, UK, in July 2017. Divided into two parts, "In Manuscript" and "In Print," this impressive volume starts with an important essay by Wendy Scase on *litteratim*, that is, loss-less copying by John Gower's scribes. The celebrated care with which a group of scribes copied a cluster of *Confessio* manuscripts has invited speculation about Gower's involvement in scribal supervision. Scase, however, suggests that the scribes in question were not so much responding to Gower's language as developing effective strategies to encode and render his meter. Next, Stephanie Batkie deconstructs ideas of "moral" Gower in his major Latin works, while shedding further light on the complex temporal relationship between the *Vox* and the *Cronica*. Robert Epstein, in turn, challenges the implied evolutionary trajectory of Gower's politics across the recensions of the *Confessio*. Instead, Epstein argues that Gower's Ricardian and Lancastrian personae are part of a consistent political theory. Karla Taylor's essay demonstrates how "The Tale of Two Coffers" in the *Confessio* explores the poet's views of kingship, with Gower all the while drawing a firm line between his position and views espoused by Wycliffite writers.

Geography, an unusual topic in Gower studies, forms the subject of Amanda J. Gerber's essay. Gerber shows that the different conceptual strategies of the *Vox* and the *Confessio* ultimately rely on Gower's interest in understanding the significance of geography for a literary sense of history. Tamara Pérez-Fernández sheds light on the Iberian branch of the *Confessio*, clarifying the fate and bespoke transformations of the original Latin apparatus in the Castilian and Portuguese translations. In his close reading of the Trentham manuscript (London, British Library, Additional MS 59495) as politically informed, David Watt adds the Papal Schism to Gower's awareness in further proof that the poet's macro-political understanding was more developed than that of most of his contemporaries. Margaret Connolly concludes the first part of the book with a plea for scholars to reconsider Gower as the author of "Passe forth thou pilgrim" (NIMEV 2737), attributed to Gower by John Shirley.

Part 2, "In Print," opens with a sequence of four essays that assign a significant role to William Caxton's 1483 edition of the *Confessio*. First, Siân Echard's chapter bridges the transition from manuscript to print by showing how these two different technologies produced comparable decisions in the layout and pragmatics of the text. Aditi Nafde inverts this sequence in her essay on Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 51, a manuscript that emulates Caxton's printed text in an attempt to bask in the glory of the new technology. The fortuitous acquisition of a copy of Caxton's 1483 *Confessio* by the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, is the topic of Brian W. Gastle's chapter, while Julia Boffey considers Thomas Berthelette's 1532 edition of the *Confessio* a milestone achievement and a deliberate attempt to promote Gower's authorship and, hence, reputation. In her essay Yoshiko Kobayashi notes that William Thynne's decision to include Gower's "In Praise of Piece" in his 1532 Chaucer edition marks a transformative moment in Gower's reception history. The volume is rounded off by A. S. G. Edwards's assessment of G. C. Macaulay, Gower's resourceful modern editor. In this essay, which was given as a plenary lecture at the Durham congress, Edwards offers an important—and considerably overdue—appraisal of Macaulay's monumental editorial achievement.

Collectively as well as individually, the two volumes under discussion testify to Gower's reputation as a poet whose work continues to attract remarkably erudite, accomplished, and perceptive scholarship.

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RUTH HARWOOD CLINE, *The Congregation of Tiron: Monastic Contributions to Trade and Communication in Twelfth-Century France and Britain*. (Spirituality and Monasticism, East and West.) Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2019. Pp. xiv, 211; black-and-white figures. £79. ISBN: 978-1-6418-9358-9.
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Ruth Cline's *The Congregation of Tiron* is the third volume to address the history of this still under-studied international order, following Bernard Beck's 1998 *Saint Bernard de Tiron* and Kathleen Thompson's 2014 *The Monks of Tiron*. While Beck focused on Bernard, and Thompson on Tiron's development and its place in twelfth-century religious reform, Cline's focus is on Tiron's contributions to trade and communication within France and between France and Britain.

A reformed Benedictine community founded 1109–14 by Bernard of Abbeville, the Tironensian order grew rapidly over the twelfth century to include more than 150 dependent abbeys, priories, and churches across France and the British Isles. Cline's first chapter situates Tiron within the context of monastic reform. Cline uses the evidence of Tiron's twelfth-century cartulary, but she also relies upon Geoffrey Grossus's *Vita Bernardi*, and regards it as a reliable source for Tiron's history. Where we have independent confirmation, Geoffrey is to be trusted, but it is

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