

Gower as a Pacifist

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キー・ワード

- 1 John Gower (1325?-1408) 「ジョン・ガワー」
- 2 King Richard II (1367-1400) 「リチャード二世」
- 3 *Confessio Amantis* (c.1390) 『恋する男の告解』
- 4 The Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) 「百年戦争」
- 5 love and peace 「愛と平和」
- 6 Pacifist 「平和主義者」

概要

14世紀のイギリスはあらゆる面で激動の世紀であった。ガワーが生まれて数年後、1337年にフランスとの間に戦争が始まった。この戦は「百年戦争」と呼ばれる。当時、イギリスには十字軍の余燼がまだ燻っていた。また、ローマ教会がローマとアヴィニヨンに分裂し、二人の法王が並立した。14世紀には、イギリスは三度も黒死病に襲われ人口の半分以上が死亡した。物価が高騰し、土地を捨てて逃走するものが多く出た。エドワード王が亡くなり、孫のリチャード二世が僅か十才で即位した。しかし、ガワーの期待は無残にも裏切られたので、彼はヘンリー四世に希望を繋ぎ平和を願って詩を書いた。

H.S. Bennett gives a brief but interesting character sketch of King Edward III, citing the description of Jean Froissart:

Edward III was described by a chronicler as being so refulgent that 'his face shone like the face of a god, so that to see him or to dream of him was to conjure up joyous images,' and Froissart tells us that there had been no king to equal him since Arthur. His great strength, his love of war and of martial pursuits, his easy familiarity with his court, his

delight in opulent displays and magnificence of all kinds made him *primus inter pares*; but, at the same time, his followers from the Black Prince and John of Gaunt downwards exhibited similar characteristics and helped to make the court of Edward III renowned throughout western Europe.¹

The face and warlike character of Edward III is conspicuously emphasized: "his face shone like the face of a god" and he was "a lover of war and of martial pursuits." The former suggests his sensuality and the latter his bellicosity. In this way, Edward III had a distinctive temperament of both Venus and Mars.

Owing to his bellicose disposition, the futile war extending over a long period of time, called the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453), broke out between England and France. After the senile Edward's death in 1377, his grandson, aged ten, became King Richard II. In 1399, contrary to Gower's expectations, Richard was sadly deposed by the act of Parliament and then murdered in the prison. In the same year, Henry of Lancaster ascended to the throne. Gower composed the poem formed of seven decasyllabic lines with all his heart, which is commonly named *To King Henry the Fourth in Praise of Peace* (hereafter abbrev. *PP.*), dedicated to Henry IV:

O worthi noble kyng, Henry the ferthe,
In whom the glade fortune is befalle
The people to governe upon this erthe,
God hath the chose in comfort of ous alle. (*PP.*1-4)

Around 1400, Gower's eyesight and health gradually began to fail and finally ceased writing, as the short Latin poem *Quicquid homo scribat* shows us.²

It is no exaggeration to say that few poets in the fourteenth century took up the problem of virtue and extolled some moral, spiritual, political or social worth of peace so frequently, honestly, and loudly as Gower: "Pes is the

beste above alle erthely thinges" (*PP.* 63), "Pes is the chief of al the worldes welthe" (*PP.* 78), and "Pes is of soule and lif the mannes helthe, Of pestilence and doth the werre aweie" (*PP.* 80-81):

With pes stant every creature in reste;
Withoute pes ther may no lif be glad:
Above alle othre good pes is the beste,
Pes hath himself what werre is al bestad,
The pes is sauf, the werre is evere adrad:
Pes is of alle charite the keie,
Which hath the lif and soule forto weie. (*PP.* 85-91)

Peace is the key of all charity in the humane sense of the word, indeed.

Gower sings a song of "Wher is thei now?" "Ubi sunt?" is the opening words of Medieval Latin poems, which conventionally lament the transitory nature of life. Where are the knights or soldiers now who once fought bravely with heathens in the Continent over the sea? After all they fought merely for vain honour or trifling riches. In this way, Gower meditates on the instability of human life, on the pretext of military honour and worldly wealth. He expresses his vanity of temporal affairs, such as "Nothing is certain in this world" and "Today red, tomorrow dead," which is typical of Medieval poems:

For vein honour or for the worldes good
Thei that whilom the stronge werres made,
Wher is thei now? (*PP.* 99-101)

This is a poem in praise of peace in the literal sense of the words.

On the contrary, miserable situations, such as poverty, grief, and misfortune, brought about by war are exposed to the audience in a metaphorical way, such as in "The werre is modir of the wronges alle" (*PP.* 106):

The werre bringth in poverte at hise hieles,
Wherof the comon poeple is sore grieved;
The werre hath set his cart on thilke whieles
Wher that fortune mai nocht be believed.
For whan men wene best to have achieved,
Ful ofte it is al newe to beginne:
The werre hath no thing siker, thogh he winne. (PP.113-19)

Thus Gower urgently entreats Henry IV to prevent an unprofitable and horrible war, and so declares without hesitation that the final end of war is peace, though a king has a right to make war. In the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower employs "pes" 98 times, while he utilizes "werre" 83, "werres" 28, "werred" 1, "werreth" 1, and "werreiour" 3 times respectively.³ As the frequency shows, Gower would refer to not merely peace, but also war, in particular the skepticism about war.

There is no doubt that the aftermath of the Crusades was still lingering on even in Gower's time, as is often mentioned. Unluckily, after several years of Gower's birth, the war occurred, as stated above. When he died in 1408, it was still raging in Europe.

W.P. Ker pointed out that "Gower was sceptical regarding the expeditions that young gentlemen made (Henry of Lancaster among them) 'their bodies to advance,' as Froissart puts it. He does not approve of these 'hastyf rodes':

Somtime in Prus, sometime in Rodes,
And sometime into Tartarie. (4.1630-31)

Especially he refuses to believe that they ought to give advantages in love.

What scholde I winne over the se,

If I mi ladi loste at hom? (4.1664-65)" ⁴

Ethel Street, possibly moved by Ker's sincerity, published the enlightening article entitled "John Gower" in *London Mercury*, in which he asserts that "Gower is a pacifist":

For Gower, innocent of impersonal art, makes heroic efforts to be consistent; one must take him as a man or leave him as an artist. He tries to translate love as French troubadours sang of it into love, the Christian virtue. As a consistent Christian he is a pacifist. He sings his best in

Praise of Pees and in his book on the education of a king extols, only love of the common good and the preservation of peace. Lycurgus seems to be his favourite hero, his indeed was the golden age:

Ther was withoute werre pes,
Withoute envie love stod. (7.2928-29)

and

He, which the comun profit soghte,
The king, his oghne astat ne roghte. (7.3009-10)

It is this unresisting social sense that accounts for so many strange digressions, for his discontent with classical theology and with mediaeval morality:" ⁵

C.S. Lewis also quotes the same passage and then comments about Gower that "he explicitly rejects that part of the code which demands that a lover should be a knight-errant:

And forto slen the hethen alle,
I not what good ther mihte falle,
So mochel blod thogh ther be schad.
This finde I writen, hou Crist bad
That noman other scholde sle.
What scholde I winne over the Se,
If I mi ladi loste at hom? (4.1659- 65)⁶

The familiar passage above, repeatedly quoted by Gowerians, explicitly shows Gower's pacifism, in particular his view of anti-war and, at the same time, leaves a serious but comical impression on us, from which we are made sure that Gower was a cool-headed poet endowed with the equilibrium of earnest and game, as he himself puts it.

J.A.W. Bennett makes much of Gower's peace as an admirable virtue:

For Gower peace is a very positive virtue, identified with the heavenly *Visio Pacis* in the Conclusion and in the tale of the Three Questions (i.3275ff.), in which the Virgin Mary's humility is named as the virtue that 'bodeth' peace. Amans is remarkable in his reluctance to spill heathen blood, urging dominical precept and practical reasons:⁷

Winthrop Wetherbee makes an interesting comment concerning chivalry:

Chivalry is in effect the villain of the *Confessio*, at odds with Genius's teaching in virtually every area. Chivalric education, as illustrated by the tale of Orestes and the young Achilles, is a schooling in violent and anti-feminism, and while Genius repeatedly condemns rape, several of his tales of chivalry implicitly condone or simply ignore sexual brutality. Others set chivalric values in an adversary relation to the nascent institutions of

civil law and parliamentary government, a perspective that recalls the *Knight's Tale* and constitutes Gower's equivalent to the themes of the *Oresteia* or Homer's shield of Achilles.⁸

Genius exhorts Amans to go on an expedition in order to win a lady's grace in love:

There as these men of Armes be,
Somtime over the grete Se:
So that be londe and ek be Schipe
He mot travaile for worschipe
And make manye hastyf rodes,
Somtime in Prus, somtime in Rodes,
And somtime into Tartarie;
So that these heraldz on him crie,
'Valiant, valiant, lo, wher he goth!'
And thanne he yifth hem gold and cloth,
So that his fame mihte springe,
And to his ladi Ere bringe
Som tidinge of his worthinesse; (4.1625-37)

(I was thinking, my son, of the deeds of arms that men did in former times for love's sake. He who seeks grace in love must not spare his travail. He must ride sometimes in Pruce and sometimes in Tartary, so that the heralds may cry after him, 'Valiant, Valiant!' and his fame may come to his lady's ear. This is the thing I mean. Confess, if thou hast been idle in this.)⁹

Through the heralds' cries of "Valiant, valiant, lo, wher he goth!," Gower makes fun of the military campaigns against Moslems or the Hundred Years' War on the Continent, such as "Somtime in Prus, somtime in Rodes. And somtime into Tartarie," which is vaguely reminiscent of the expedition of the Knight port-

rayed in the General Prologue to the R.A. Peck says:

“Genius exhorts Amans to be a powerful knight in arms, thereby winning his lady’s praise and perhaps more. Amans responds by applying the lore against war he had learned in Book III. Christ said that no man should slay another. This is true, he says, even when applied to heathen and enemies of the faith:

A Sarazin if I sle schal,
I sle the Soule forth withal. (4.1679–80)

One reason not to go to war in foreign crusades is that Christ put no blessing on such aggression. The other is that Amans is not about to wander off to foreign lands leaving his lady behind:

What scholde I winne over the Se
If I mi ladi loste at hom? (4.1664–65)”¹⁰

Amans is not a man who is under Genius’s thumb and moves as a puppet. Sometimes he says no. As Ker says, “the dialogue between the Confessor and the Lover about chivalrous adventures beyond sea, and their value, is not one-sided, but a fair debate between two different standards of virtue.”¹¹

Genius tells Amans that it is effective to go on an expedition in order to win a lady’s grace, against whose argument Amans makes a quick retort:

My fader ye, and evere was:
For as me thenketh trewely
That every man doth mor than I
As of this point, and if so is
That I have oght so don er this,

It is so litel of accompte,
As who seith, it mai nocht amonte
To winne of love his lusti yifte.
For this I telle you in schrifte,
That me were levere hir love winne
Than Kaire and al that is ther inne:
And forto slen the hethen alle,
I not what good ther mihte falle,
So mochel blod thogh ther be schad.
This finde I writen, hou Crist bad
That noman other scholde sle.
What scholde I winne over the Se,
If I mi ladi loste at hom?
Bot passe thei the salte fom,
To whom Crist bad thei scholden preche
To all the world and his feith teche:
Bot now thei rucken in here nest
And resten as hem liketh best
In all the swetnesse of delices.
Thus thei defenden ous the vices,
And sitte hemselven al amidde;
To slen and feihten thei ous bidde
Hem whom thei scholde, as the bok seith,
Converten unto Cristes feith.
Bot hierof have I gret mervaile,
Hou thei wol bidde me travaile:
A Sarazin if I sle schal,
I sle the Soule forth withal,
And that was nevere Cristes lore.
Bot nou ho ther, I seie nomore. (4.1648-82)

(Yea, my father, and ever was. I know not what good may come of slaying the heahen, and I should have little gain from passing over the sea, if in the meantime I lost my lady at home. Let them pass the sea whom Christ commanded to preach his faith to all the world; but now they sit at ease and bid us slay those whom they should convert. If I slay a Saracen, I slay body and soul both, and that was never Christ's lore.)¹²

Genius utters definitely that it is a sin to slay a man, even if he is a pagan. This is Gower's firm belief as well.

"The Priest's advocacy of prowess in arms as a way to win his lady's heart cuts no ice with him at all," as Derek Pearsall puts it.¹³ Interesting enough, Genius responds to the question of Amans's lawful homicide. He answers that it is lawful to defend his house and land with his own hand in wartime for his country's sake. What is noteworthy here is his succinct statement that, "as the law stands, he shall slay/ If he can find no better way." The only condition that slaying is allowed is confined to the case where "he can find no better way":

And over this for his contre (Pagna pro patria)
In time of werre a man is fre
Himself, his hous and ek his lond
Defende with his oghne hond,
And slen, if that he mai no bet,
After the lawe which is set. (3.2235-40)

(And further: for his country's sake,/ In time of war, a man shall make/
His own defence of house and land/ (and of himself) with his own hand;/
And, as the law stands, he shall slay/ If he can find no better way.)¹⁴

Now, fader, thanne I you beseche

Of hem that dedly werres seche
In worldes cause and scheden blod,
If such an homicide is good.
Mi Sone, upon thi question
The trowthe of myn opinion,
Als ferforth as my wit arecheth
And as the pleine lawe techeth,
I woll thee telle in evidence,
To rewle with thi conscience. (3.2241-50)

(My father, I pray you tell me if it is possible without sin to slay a man. Yea, my son, in sondry wise. The judge commits sin if he spares to slay those who deserve death by the law. Moreover a man may defend his house and his land in war, and slay if no better may be. I beseech you, father, to tell me whether those that seek war in a worldly cause, and shed blood, do well.)¹⁵

Genius summarizes the evil of war in Latin, which Echard and Fanger put into English:¹⁶

Quod creat ipse deus, necat hoc homicida creatum,
Vltor et humano sanguine spargit humum.
Vt pecoris sic est hominis cruor, heu, modo fusus,
Victa iacet pietas, et furor vrget opus.
Angelus `In terra pax' dixit, et vltima Cristi
Verba sonant pacem, quam modo guerra fugat. (3.v.1-6)

(What God creates the murderer destroys, And vengeful strews the soil with human blood--Men's blood, alas, now shed like cattle's blood. With pity conquered, furor moves our deeds. `Peace on earth' the angel said; and Peace, Christ's ultimatum, war now puts to flight.)¹⁷

Gower has referred to the evil of war in the *Vox Clamantis*. Echard and Fanger note “Vt pecoris ... iacet pietas” and translate Latin into English:

Vt pecoris sic est hominis fusus modo sanguis,
Victa iacet pietas, et sinit ista deus. (VC. VII, 1209-10)
(Men’s blood now has been shed as cattle’s blood;
Pity lies conquered, and these things God permits.)¹⁸

Furthermore they comment:

Vox.I, 899, where the same phrase is used to describe the actions of the monstrous rabble. Note that *pietas* and *furor* really mean more than just “pity” and “furor”; Gower seems to be using these words in the Virgilian sense: *pietas* is Aeneas’s virtue, and has implications of self-restraint, responsibility, and dutiful attention to the divine will, while *furor* is Dido’s vice, and connotes all the opposite qualities. It is the responsibility of *pietas* to exert control over *furor*. See e.g. *Aeneid* 1.148-53.¹⁹

Genius tells an emotional speech about the evil and worthlessness of war, ranging from line 2251 to 2362 as follows. For convenience’ sake, let us quote the summary made by Macaulay:

God has forbidden homicide, and when God’s Son was born, his angels proclaimed peace to the man of good will. Therefore by the law of charity there should be no war, and nature also commends peace. War consorts with pestilence and famine and brings every kind of evil upon the earth. I know not what reward he deserves who brings in such things; and if he do it to gain heaven’s grace, he shall surely fail. Since wars are so evil in God’s sight, it is a marvel what ails men that they cannot establish peace. Sin, I trow,

is the cause, and the wages of sin is death. Covetousness first brought in war, and among the Greeks Arcadia alone was free from war, because it was barren and poor. Yet it is a wonder that a worthy king or lord will claim that to which he has no right. Nature and law both are against it, but Wit is here oppressed by Will, and some cause is feigned to deceive the world. Thou mayest take an example of this, how men excuse their wrong-doing, and how the poor and the rich are alike in the lust for gain.²⁰

There is an amusing dialogue about the quantitative difference between an emperor and a thief, which is exchanged between Alexander and the Pirate, or a sea-rover. A tyrant who slayed lots of people and burnt their houses is praised as a captain, while on the other hand a rascal who did not do enormous damage is called as a thief, just as is described by Chaucer's *Manciple's Tale*. There is no qualitative difference between them. Let us quote Macaulay's summary:

(A sea-rover was brought before Alexander and accused of his misdeeds. He replied, 'I have a heart like thine, and if I had the power, I would do as thou dost. But since I am the leader of a few men only, I am called a thief, while thou with thy great armies art called an Emperor. Rich and poor are not weighed evenly in the balance.' The king approved his boldness and retained him in his service.

Thus they who are set on destruction are all of one accord, captain and company alike. When reason is put aside, man follows rapine like a bird of prey, and all the world may not suffice for his desires. Alexander overran the whole earth and died miserably, when he thought himself most secure. Lo, what profit it is to slay men for covetousness, as if they were beasts.

Beware, my son, of slaying.)²¹

Genius tells the story of wars and death of Alexander, in which Amans asks Genius whether it is lawful to slay the Saracen, who is "an Arab and, by exten-

sion, a Mohammedan or Moslem, with reference to the Crusades," as the *OED* defines it:

Mi fader, understonde it is,
That ye have seid; bot over this
I prai you tell me nay or yee,
To passe over the grete See
To werre and sle the Sarazin,
Is that the lawe?

Sone myn,
To preche and soffre for the feith,
That have I herd the gospell seith;
Bot forto slee, that hiere I nocht.
Crist with his oghne deth hath boght
Alle othre men, and made hem fre,
In tokne of parfit charite;
And after that he tawhte himselve,
Whan he was ded, these othre tuelve
Of hise Apostles wente aboute
The holi feith to prechen oute,
Wherof the deth in sondri place
Thei soffre, and so god of his grace

The feith of Crist hath mad aryse: (3.2485-503)

(My father, I hve understood All you have said; but fain I would Have one
more answer, yes or no: Is it the law that men may go Across the Middle
Sea to fight And slay the Saracen?)

I cite The Gospel, son, wherein I read That men may preach and men may
bleed For Holy Faith; I find not 'slay.' That Christ, with His own death,
should pay For all of us, and set us free, Is token of pure charity; And

having taught, and being dead, He sent Apostles in His stead—Twelve who should go the world around And preach the Faith on foreign ground (Whereby, in each his destined place, They died); and so, by Heaven's grace, The Faith of Christ had strength to rise: But if they had done otherwise, And made it at excuse to kill, The faith had been uncertain still.)²²

As everybody knows well, Genius offers a doubt through Amans's rhetorical question whether it is lawful to go abroad to fight against the Arabs and slay them.

Next he tells Amans about the guilt of homicide, quoting the crucifixion of Christ:

(Is it lawful, my father, to pass over the sea to war against the Saracen?

My son, Christ bade men preach and suffer for the faith. He made all men free by his own death, and his apostles after him preached and suffered death: but if they had wished to spread the faith by the sword, it would never have prevailed. We see that since the time when the Church took the sword in hand, a great part of that which was won has been lost to Christ's faith. Be well advised then always ere thou slay. Homicide stands now even in the Church itself; and when the well of pity is thus defouled with blood, others do not hesitate to make war and to slay. We see murder now upon the earth as in the days when men bought and sold sins.)²³

Many wars have been made hitherto in the name of Christ, but "that which was won has been lost to Christ's faith."

As stated above, Gower was a poet and moralizer who sincerely loves peace and intensely hated war. Ethel Street's impressive statement that "as a consistent Christian Gower is a pacifist" hits the mark.

On August 6, 1945, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and lots of citizens were killed. A certain textbook tells us about the disaster:

During World War II, the *Enola Gay*, a modified Boeing B-29 bomber, dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, at 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945. It was piloted by Col. Paul W. Tibbets, Jr. of Miami, Florida. The bombardier was Maj. Thomas W. Ferebee of Mocksville, North Carolina. Bomb designer Capt. William S. Parsons was aboard as an observer.

Three days later, another B-29 called *Bock's Car* dropped a second bomb on Nagasaki, Japan. The Japanese surrendered unconditionally on August 15, which confirmed the American belief that a costly and bloody invasion of Japan could be avoided at Japanese expense.

The *Enola Gay* is currently undergoing restoration at the National Air and Space Museum's Silver Hill, Maryland, facility. *Bock's Car* is on display at the U.S. Air Force Museum, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio.²⁴

Is it really true that "the atomic bombs could avoid a costly and bloody invasion of Japan by Japanese expense?"

Gower makes me remember that Michio Masui, professor emeritus at Hiroshima University, used to talk about the importance of peace in class. Genius, an *alter ego* of Gower, acts as a lover of peace, not war. Gower, a man of firm belief, admonishes us to avoid battle, combat or war of any kind.

Notes

1 Bennett, H.S., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947; rpt.1961), p.7.

2 Macaulay, G.C. (ed.), *The Complete Works of John Gower: The Latin Works*, in which the phrases indicating Gower's blindness, such as "sum quia cecus ego," "Hoc ego, vir cecus," and "viuens ego cecus" are found.

- 3 Pickles, J.D. and J.L. Dawson (eds.), *A Concordance to John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (D.S. Brewer, 1987).
- 4 Ker, W.P., "John Gower, Poet," *Quarterly Review*, 197(1903), p.452.
- 5 Lewis, C.S., *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford University Press, 1936; rpt.1946),p.215.
- 6 Street, Ethel, "John Gower," *London Mercury*, 24(1931), 232.
- 7 Bennett, J.A.W., *Middle English Literature*, vol.1, pt.2, ed. and compl. by D. Gray (Oxford, 1986), pp.425-26.
- 8 Wetherbee, Winthrop, *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.602.
- 9 Macaulay, *The English Works*, lx.
- 10 Peck, R.A., *Kingship and Common Profit in Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p.91.
- 11 Ker, op.cit., p.452.
- 12 Macaulay, op.cit., lx.
- 13 Pearsall, Derek, *Gower and Lydgate* (Longmans, 1969), p.14.
- 14 Tiller, Terrence (tr.), *John Gower: Confessio Amantis [Lover's Shrift]* (Penguin Books, 1969), p.144.
- 15 Macaulay, op.cit., liv.
- 16 Echard, S. and C. Fanger, *The Latin Verses in the Confessio Amantis: An Annotated Translation* (East Lansing Colleagues Press, 1991), p.46.
- 17 Echard, op.cit., p.47.
- 18 Echard, op.cit., p.46.
- 19 Echard, op.cit., p.47.
- 20 Macaulay, op.cit., liv.
- 21 Macaulay, op.cit., liv.-lv.
- 22 Tiller, op.cit., p.147.
- 23 Macaulay, op.cit., lv.
- 24 *The Handy Science Answer Book* (1997), ed. by the science and Technology Department of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.