



The centrality of Medea in Gower's 'Tale of Jason and Medea'

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ABSTRACT. Showcasing some examples of Gower's artistic use of form to serve content, this article argues that the formalistic structure of 'The Tale of Jason and Medea' is a rhetorical means deployed by the poet to manage his narrative content and highlight its center. The article introduces Medea as the center of the tale under discussion providing a textual reading of the formalistic structure of the lines that are said by or about Medea. Acknowledging the tale's iambic tetrameter structure and its role in orchestrating the narrative, the article explains how Medea's narrative centrality gets defined syllabically and accentually. The article concludes that the formalistic structure of 'The Tale of Jason and Medea' is not a poetic decoration or part of traditional poetic templates used by Gower unconsciously, but a rhetorical device deployed by the poet to manage the focus of the narrative.

Keywords: *Confessio Amantis*; english literature; middle english poetry; narrative; poetics.

A centralidade de Medeia no 'Conto de Jasão e Medeia' de Gower

RESUMO. Apresentando alguns exemplos do uso artístico da forma por Gower para servir o conteúdo, este artigo argumenta que a estrutura formalista de 'O Conto de Jasão e Medeia' é um meio retórico utilizado pelo poeta para gerir o seu conteúdo narrativo e destacar o seu centro. O artigo apresenta Medeia como centro do conto em discussão, proporcionando uma leitura textual da estrutura formalista dos versos que são ditos por ou sobre Medeia. Reconhecendo a estrutura tetramétrica iâmbica do conto e o seu papel na orquestração da narrativa, o artigo explica como a centralidade narrativa de Medeia é definida silabicamente e acentuadamente. O artigo conclui que a estrutura formalista de 'O Conto de Jasão e Medeia' não é uma decoração poética ou parte de modelos poéticos tradicionais usados inconscientemente por Gower, mas um dispositivo retórico utilizado pelo poeta para gerir o foco da narrativa.

Palavras-chave: *Confessio Amantis*; literatura inglesa; poesia do inglês médio; narrativa; poética.

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Introduction

'The Tale of Jason and Medea' in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* is the Middle English version of a classic myth that is incorporated in several narratives belonging to different cultures, as evident in Hesiod's *Theogony*, Euripides's *Medea*, Apollonius of Rhodes's *Argonautica*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Benoît's *Roman de Troie*, and Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung's *Roman de la Rose*. The tale reports Medea's melancholic adventure with Jason after betraying her father, fleeing from Colchis to Iolcus accompanying Jason, and revenging her unrequited love of Jason by slaughtering her own children by him. The tale provides some other details concerning the adventure of Jason and Medea, but it seems that the aforementioned three actions represent the narrative's climacterics. In each of these three actions, Medea shifts from a state to another. In the first action, she shifts from an obedient daughter-of-King Aeëtes-state to a traitor-of-Colchis-state. In the second, she shifts from a princess-state to a fugitive-state. In the third, she shifts from a normal woman-state to a heroine-state.

These crucial shifts represent, as this paper shows, the cornerstone of Medea's strangeness: her belief that she does not belong anywhere and that nowhere is appropriate for her. Existentially speaking, Medea's multifaceted images

[...] do not coincide or cohere. They unveil various different aspects of strangeness: on one hand, we see that strangeness belongs to the realm of the imaginary while, on the other hand, it is part of the world; or, one may say, the latter has existence, or a more stable existence, while the former does not (Saldukaitytė, 2016, p. 96).

Medea's perplexing strangeness is central to the tale's plot development, which witnesses "[...] some disruption of order, of discourse, a shaking of the established conception of the world and knowledge, going beyond what is familiar, ordinary, and normal" (Saldukaitytė, 2016, p. 96). Thus, this paper explicates Medea's narrative centrality and its influence on the tale's poetic form. The paper provides a textual reading of Medea's value in Gower's tale arguing that the poet deploys several formalistic devices to capture her centrality in the narrative and imitate the unexpectedness of her personality.

Review of related literature

The centrality of Medea in Gower's 'Tale of Jason and Medea' is stressed by a few critics using different approaches and perspectives. In his article titled 'Gower's Narrative Art', Derek Pearsall (1966, p. 482) explains how

Gower concentrates on the love story of Jason and Medea by eschewing all rhetorical elaboration-description of seasons, the sea-journey, the city of Jaconites—and by moving away all the time from stereotypes of epic and romance towards the human situation.

Pearsall suggests that Gower integrates Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and the *Roman de Troie* of Benoit de Sainte-Maure concerning the story of Jason and Medea to create a trumpet through which he can tackle the manners of fourteenth-century English society with impunity. That trumpet cannot articulate any logic or hold agency unless Medea is centered to it, considering that "[...] it is Medea who, with womanly practicality, arouses Jason to thoughts of the danger he is in, and, after the briefing, there follows a long and touching farewell scene" (Pearsall, 1966, p. 482).

From a different perspective, Martha S. Nussbaum (1997) views the image of Medea throughout history as a representation of the background needed to define humans' sense of order. Nussbaum (1997, p. 17) explains, "In confronting Medea, we confront our deepest feelings and realize that behind the delicate order we have sought to impose upon our worlds lurks chaos". This is probably due to the fact that Medea in the different Greek and Roman sources as well as in Gower's *Confessio* is not depicted as a normal woman. She is not part of "[...] the anonymous mass of normal and rational nonentities [...]", but a heroine who "[...] has the courage to say 'no'" (Heiney, 1955, p. 331). Complicating a similar view, Cecelia A. E. Luschnig (2006) attributes Medea's centrality in the classic sources of Gower's tale to her god-agent status in terms of ancient mythology. Luschnig (2006, p. 38) writes, "[...] what happens to oath-breakers is that their family is wiped out. Medea will speed the gods' will by making Jason childless". This suggests that Gower's portrait of Medea while emphasizing her revenge action is to warn the *Confessio*'s audience against committing any act of oath-breaking.

In the same vein, Siobhan McElduff (2012, p. 196) notes that "Gower concentrates upon Jason's and Medea's love story, choosing to eschew elaborate descriptions of the journey of the Argonauts to spend an increased amount of time on their initial love and relationship". By so doing, Gower does not limit the value of Medea to the context of a husband-wife love relationship, but points to her allegorical role in expressing the political and moral viewpoint of the *Confessio*:

The disastrous end of Jason's and Medea's relationship serves, then, both a moral and a political function: Richard II sees what might come of betraying his people and Gower's audience also see the costs of treating women as disposable once their usefulness is past (McElduff, 2012, p. 197).

Adopting a similar perspective, Matthew W. Irvin (2014) points to Medea's centrality in Gower's 'Tale of Jason and Medea' by reading the narrative as a piece on "[...] the divinity of love [...]" where "[...] Gower emphasizes the validity of the marriage's oaths even while describing it as clearly pagan, in which the gods to which they swear are false idols" (Irvin, 2014, p. 224). The several crucial events and actions related to Peleus and his plot to get rid of Jason by sending him to Colchis, for example, are made marginal in comparison to the actions conducted by Medea concerning her love affair with Jason. Thus, the tale, for Irvin, is about Jason's perjury represented by his betrayal of Medea, which implies that it is through Medea that Jason gets contextualized and defined. Irvin (2014, p. 225) writes that "Medea is revealed in her full agency and power: she can call upon Hecata, ride about on a chariot pulled by dragons, make herself invisible, lift great weight, perform powerful magic both with and without herbs, and change shape". She is the one who controls her own world including Jason through "[...] the terrifying power of female, feminized, and feminizing desire" (Irvin, 2014, p. 225).

In a more recent study of Medea's centrality in Gower's tale, Curtis Runstedler (2020, p. 6) argues that "[...] while Gower most likely did not intend for this story to be read as alchemical [...]", it is feasible to think that "Jason represents the aspiring alchemical adept, the Golden Fleece is the final product of his transmutation,

and Medea is his alchemical master” (Runstedler, 2020, p. 14). Runstedler views Medea as the alchemical master who has the ability to make the best use of any available elements to fulfill her plans and reach her ends. Simultaneously, he acknowledges Jason’s expertise in Medea’s craft without denouncing Medea’s superiority to Jason in that regard. Likewise, Marta Villalba-Lázaro (2023, p. 38) writes, “[...] as a semi-goddess Medea is always accompanied by the barbarian gory gods, like Taurus, Mars and the infanticidal Saturn, who exert the divine justice that rules that oath-breaker Jason must be punished and sentenced to live without descendence”. Medea is ranked superior to other humans around her; therefore, her actions should be judged “[...] in the esoteric context of the classical divine realm, in which she belongs” (Villalba-Lázaro, 2023, p. 38). This potentially explains why wherever Medea appears in the *Confessio*, then “[...] there is something ‘unusual, weird, peculiar’. In each case, there is a putting into question of our aesthetical sensibilities, moral norms or practices, and epistemological knowledge” (Saldukaitytė, 2016, p. 96).

The different views articulated by critics regarding Medea’s centrality in ‘The Tale of Jason and Medea’ emphasize “[...] [the] logics of divine justice found in classical mythology” (Villalba-Lázaro, 2023, p. 38) or “[...] [the woman’s] romantic impulse, placing the emphasis on unrequited love” (Villalba-Lázaro, 2023, p. 45). Critics explicate how classic and medieval poets including Gower adopt certain content-oriented strategies to center Medea in the narrative; nevertheless, none of them contemplate the formalistic environment created by poets to reflect Medea’s uniqueness and aura of strangeness. Thus, the following section illuminates how Gower reflects the unusual personality and value of Medea using various formalistic devices, such as syntax, meters, and diction. The section provides some textual pieces of evidence on the formalistic difference resulting from the appearance of Medea in the narrative, which implies that Gower merges form represented by his lines’ formalistic structure and content represented by plot and theme in a way that reflects his poetic principle saying that “[...] the meaning is the sense” (Pearsall, 1966, p. 475).

Discussion

From its inception, ‘The Tale of Jason and Medea’ in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* gets contextualized formalistically and historically. The tale begins with a couplet made of two iambic eight-syllable lines: “In Grece whilom was a king, / Of whom the fame and knowleching” (Gower, 1980, V, 3247-48). The couplet sets the scene by naming ‘Grece’ as the place of actions and by introducing ‘a king’ known by his great reputation and knowledge as the first figure to consider in the story of Medea. The lines are written in plain English using a clear syntactic structure with no complex words to contemplate. The first line consists of a complete sentence with a subject (a king), a past-tense verb ‘to-be’ (was), a prepositional phrase (in Grece), and an adverb (whilom). These parts constitute a simple sentence that provides a complete piece of information that reads easily. The second line of the couplet complements the topic of the first line. It provides extra information about the ‘king’ mentioned in the first line without using any complex syntactic structure or diction. It says that that king of Greece is related in a way to both fame and knowledge. The relationship between that king and the two concepts aforementioned is explicated in the second couplet, which consists of two iambic eight-syllable lines: “Beleveth yit, and Peleus / He hihte; bot it fell him thus” (Gower, 1980, V, 3249-50). The king’s fame and knowledge are still known. They constitute a heritage that is hard to ignore. Then the rest of the couplet reports the king’s name, that is Peleus, while pointing to something that has happened to him.

The couplet has no complex syntactic structures or hard words to highlight, as if the poet is trying to familiarize the king mentioned in the couplet to his audience or to set that king in the background of the narrative marginalizing him in favor of centering another figure that is about to appear in the narrative. Gower’s use of simple language here is remarkable, considering that “[...] rhetoric was the most fundamental, the most ingrained, in medieval culture” (Zarins, 2017, p. 37). Is it possible that Gower does not integrate some complex syntactic structures in this scene due to his potential lack of such a skill or talent? According to Georgiana Donavin (2020, p. 4),

Gower recovers a benevolent rhetoric of enchantment from classical theories on a reiterative plain style and an Augustinian concept of the Word. While conjurors and orators might intone compelling phrases for good or for ill, the truth plainly and repeatedly stated works a persuasive magic for both the individual and the common good.

This implies that Gower does not lack the skill or talent to integrate any rhetorical or stylistic devices to complicate the narrative, but he sometimes uses simple language to articulate ‘truth plainly’. Critics confirm

that “[...] language clearly plays a significant role as it constructs what it narrates – Semantically, pragmatically and stylistically’ and can facilitate the narrator to make the ordinary, strange” (Brandford, 2019, p. 65). Therefore, the use of plain language in the first two couplets of ‘The Tale of Jason and Medea’ is not pointless. It is a rhetorical technique that reflects the definitive nature of the lines’ content, a technique that functions later as the discerning criterion of the lines that display *strange* figures or actions.

The straightforwardness of Gower’s language in the first two couplets under discussion is reflected in meters. The couplets are set in almost regular iamb. The first line in the first couplet, “In Grece whilom was a king, / Of whom the fame and knowleching”, has the following iambic structure: (in/Grece, whi/lom, was/a/king)¹, and the second line has a similar structure: (Of/whom, the/fame, and/know, lech/ing). Regarding the third foot of the first line, it is anapestic², a metrical substitution of the iamb that is used in English to form ‘natural’ rhythm and sometimes to rhyme with the iamb (Finch, 2005, p. 4-11). However, I believe that Gower relies on the iamb due to its appropriateness to host whatever metrical substitutions or stylistic experiments desired by the poet. As Marina Tarlinskaja (1997, p. 60-61) says, “[...] [iambic] meters accept a wide variety of line types that differ in the number of stresses, the length of unstressed syllabic intervals between adjacent stresses, and the rhythmical configurations of words that may fill the lines”.

Moreover, it is the iamb that enables Gower to manage the tempo of the tale’s initial lines quoted above considering their heavy use of short, monosyllabic words, such as the auxiliaries and prepositions that are likely to be unstressed and the nouns and verbs that are usually get stressed in everyday language. The content familiarity of the tale’s first two couplets does not demand distinguishing the language used to narrate that content in any way; consequently, the poet deploys the iamb of everyday English to craft such lines. Emphasizing the iamb’s appropriateness to report normal events and actions, Simon Lancaster (2022, p. 148) writes,

[...] [the iamb] connects not just with our heartbeat but with our breathing as well. So the sentences which are written in this form connect subconsciously with the rhythm we live by from the moment we’re born until the second we die. It is the rhythm of our life.

This principle applies to the many lines of ‘The Tale of Jason and Medea’ except the ones related to Medea’s actions and words. Before Medea’s appearance in the narrative as the princess daughter of King Aeëtes, Gower’s lines flow smoothly without complicating any structures or using any sophisticated diction. From line (3247) until line (3406) of Gower’s tale, the iamb –substituted sometimes by trochees and anapests– expressively orchestrates the metrical structure of the narrative’s octosyllabic couplets while maintaining each couplet’s exact rhyme. Gower writes,

With manye merthes thei despente,
Til nyht was come, and tho thei wente,
Echon of other tok his leve,
Whan thei no lengere myhten leve.
I not hou Jason that nyht slep,
Bot wel I wot that of the schep,
For which he cam into that yle,
He thoghte bot a litel whyle; (Gower, 1980, V, 3399-3406).

These eight lines are divided into four couplets, each of which consists of sixteen syllables divided into two octosyllabic lines united by an exact rhyme. In each octosyllabic line, the iamb is the musical template that integrates the four unstressed syllables with the other four stressed syllables. The first line in the excerpt, for instance, reads thus: (With/ma, nye/mer, thes/thei, de/spente); the second line reads thus: (Til/nyht, was/come, and/tho, thei/wente). The penultimate line in the excerpt reads thus: (For/which, he/cam, in/to, that/yle); the final line reads thus: (He, thoghte/bot, a/li, tel/whyle). The first line of the couplet is iambic tetrameter while the second seems to be a headless line that lacks the unstressed initial syllable before ‘He’, which is followed by a trochee and two iambs. Nevertheless, the accentual-syllabic regularity of this couplet and the one discussed before is unquestionable, and their syntactic clarity is unquestionable as well, a formalistic structure that points to the clarity of the couplets’ narrative content.

The moment Medea appears in the narrative, the lines become confusing syllabically and accentually. Directly after the excerpt quoted above, Gower writes, “Al was Medea that he thoghte, / So that in many a

¹ When the scansion is described, as in this example, the syllables are separated by a slash (/) while a comma is used to separate feet. This applies throughout the paper.

² The foot under discussion can be scanned in a different way if the word ‘Grece’ at the beginning of the line is read as two syllables, something impossible in Modern English but probable in Middle English. In such a case scenario, the line smoothly runs as an iamb thus: (In/Gre, ce/whi, lom/was, a/king).

wise he soghte" (Gower, 1980, V, 3407-8). This couplet maintains its exact rhyme, but its scansion is harder than it may seem. If the first two syllables in the first line are read as a regular iamb, then the first syllable of the noun 'Medea' should get unstressed, which does not cope with the English tradition of stressing names of people. If they are read as two unstressed syllables of an anapest, then there will be a problem in the scansion of the verb 'thoghte'. If not, then there are several metrical probabilities to consider: Is it a headless line? Does the line start with an anapest and close with a dactylic? Is it a nine or eight-syllable line, in case 'Al' is the stressed syllable of a headless iamb? We cannot talk with any level of certainty about the syllabic-accentual structure of this line, a state of metrical confusion that reflects the confusing mental state of Jason who cannot avoid thinking of Medea all the time.

Similarly, Medea's influence on Jason's thoughts is reflected in the metrical structure of the second line of the same couplet, "So that in many a wise he soghte". The first two feet in this line are iambic, the third is anapestic, and the fourth is either trochaic or iambic with a secondary stress on 'he'. Syllabically speaking, the line is not tetrameter, a deviation from the line's syllabic regularity in favor of highlighting Jason's readiness to break any rules to get Medea at any cost. This explains why the couplet following the one already discussed directly reports Jason's 'witt wakende' for thinking of Medea: "His witt wakende er it was day, / Som time yee, som time nay" (Gower, 1980, V, 3409-3410). The lines are not regular syllabically or accentually. The first line starts with an iamb, but its second foot is a trochee, which is perhaps a way to stress the irregularity of Jason's sleep due to Medea's influence. The second line contains only six syllables that are hard for scansion: Are they three iambic or trochaic, or two dactylic or anapestic feet? Either way, the accentual confusion of the lines sharpened by the lines' shortness potentially reflects Jason's 'yee-nay' fluctuation and pain of loss, which is all caused by Medea.

This atmosphere of formalistic confusion appears in several other lines related to Medea. After depicting Jason's confusion resulting from his love of Medea, the poet narrator says,

Medea riht the same wise,
Til dai cam that sche moste arise,
Lay and bethoughte hire al the nyht,
Hou sche that noble worthi kniht
Be eny weie mihte wedde.
And wel sche wiste, if he ne spedde
Of thing which he hadde undertake,
Sche mihte hirself no porpos take; (Gower, 1980, V, 3421-3428).

The excerpt talks about Medea's love of Jason emphasizing her determination to get him by any means, which explains why she does not hesitate later to betray her father as well as Colchis in favor of Jason. However, we are not told anything so far about Medea's plan to help Jason in his quest for the golden Fleece; therefore, the poet deploys the formalistic structure of these lines to reflect the woman's uncontrollable and unpredictable conduct. In the first line quoted above, which contains seven syllables, the tetrameter rhythm of the whole tale is abandoned. In the second, third, and fourth lines, it gets restored. In the fifth, which contains only six syllables, the tale's tetrameter rhythm gets completely lost while the last three lines restore the tale's tetrameter structure. The shift from tetrameter to other rhythms reflects Medea's shift from a state or mood to another unexpectedly. Before Jason's arrival, Medea is an obedient princess to her father and a loyal citizen of Colchis. After seeing Jason, she is ready to sacrifice her obedience to her father and loyalty to her country: "Be eny weie mihte wedde" (Gower, 1980, V, 3425).

Getting the opportunity to meet Jason and tell him about her love of him, Medea follows her desire ignoring any perilous consequences. The narrative runs thus,

Thei hadden bothe what thei wolde.
And thanne of leisir sche him tolde,
And gan fro point to point enforme
Of his bataile and al the forme,
Which as he scholde finde there,
Whan he to th'yle come were (Gower, 1980, V, 3499-3504).

This excerpt is a mixture of six-syllable, seven-syllable, and eight-syllable lines. The first line consisting of six syllables points to a very short meeting between Medea and Jason where they have enjoyed each other. The shortness of the meeting is reflected through the minimized number of syllables in the line, considering

that that shortness does not avoid Medea from satisfying her desire sufficiently. The narrative does not say this directly; rather, it is the metrical regularity of the second line of the first couplet as well as the entire second couplet that reflects the woman's restoring of her equilibrium and consciousness of what she is doing. The woman starts telling Jason of the traps on his way to the Golden Fleece emphasizing that he 'scholde' find such traps set as she has already reported. In this scene, the poet shifts from an eight-syllable line, (Of/his, bat/aile, and/al, the/forme), to a six-syllable line, (Which/as, he/scholde, finde/there), in an attempt to potentially reflect the woman's emotional and patriotic disequilibrium. She is no more her father's obedient daughter, but Jason's desirous beloved: "That al hir world on him sche sette" (Gower, 1980, V, 3637).

Helped by Medea, Jason gets the Golden Fleece and departs with her back to Iolcus (Gower, 1980, V, 3695-3956). The lines that report this part of the tale are iambic tetrameter, with a few exceptions, considering that the syllabic-accentual regularity of such lines reflects the fact that things go as planned. In Greece, Medea feels happy for being beside Jason all the time and for having enough time to practice her sorcery. Lynn Shuttters (2013, p. 57) writes, "Despite brief allusions to the tragic endings that befall a few of these lovers, as a whole they represent a Golden Age of pagan love, characterized by beauty, music, games, and joy". The formalistic structure of Gower's lines reflects this state beautifully,

Thus it befell upon a nyht,
Whan ther was noght bot sterreliht,
Sche was vanysst riht as hir liste,
That no wyht bot himself it wiste, (Gower, 1980, V, 3957-3960).

This excerpt is regular syllabically and accentually. It has no missing or extra syllables in terms of tetrameter lines, a structure that echoes, as I believe, the atmosphere Medea is enjoying at Greece. She behaves as Jason's lady no more, no less.

After celebrating Medea's carefree happiness in about sixty-five lines (Gower, 1980, V, 3957-4022), the poet narrator introduces Eson, Jason's father, who is about to get rejuvenated by Medea: "Before the gates of Eson / Hir char sche let awai to gon" (Gower, 1980, V, 4023-24). Although the first line here has seven syllables, the couplet's formalistic clarity and regularity are hard to ignore. Why not? Medea is about to practice sorcery in which she is very talented. The poet highlights the woman's talent by centering her to the scene through the anaphora of the 'sche' pronoun and its derivatives (Gower, 1980, V, 4023-4098). In the closing couplet of this part, for instance, the poet narrator says, "Bot tho sche ran so up and down, / Sche made many a wonder soun" (Gower, 1980, V, 4097-98). The couplet is hard for scansion, especially its second line; nevertheless, it is obvious that the repetition of the 'sche' pronoun mitigates the couplet's accentual irregularity. Whether the first foot in the second line is an iamb, trochee, or spondee, the 'sche' pronoun maintains its own centrality in the narrative.

However, the narrative continues reporting Medea's remarkable deeds in Greece until Jason interrupts the woman's peace and joy by his catastrophic treason of her. Gower writes,

Bot whanne he scholde of riht fulfille
The trouthe, which to hire afore
He hadde in th'yle of Colchos swore,
Tho was Medea most deceived (Gower, 1980, V, 4190-93).

Jason here is introduced as an oath-breaker who fails to keep or fulfill his promises. The sudden happening of this event potentially causes the syllabic-accentual irregularity of the lines. While the first line is regular syllabically and accentually, the second is not. It has seven syllables, and the relative clause after the caesura, 'which to hire afore', is hard to fit the iambic structure of the tale. Also, the third line is irregular, as it has nine syllables, and its second foot seems either as an anapest, 'in th'yle', or something else. The fourth line is syllabically regular, accentually irregular. It has three trochees followed by an iamb. The dominance of the trochee at the cost of the iamb, which resembles "[...] our heartbeat [...] and] our breathing" (Lancaster, 2022, p. 148), is not pointless. It rather reflects the perilous atmosphere of what is happening: Medea shifts from being Jason's desirous lady into being his bloody enemy.

As the enemy of Jason, Medea sends a poisonous dress to Creusa, Jason's bride, without triggering any suspicions and cautions. The syllabic-accentual structure of the lines reporting this action shows that Medea behaves in a very organized way, as if she does not mind Jason's new marriage. The narrative flows thus,

Medea with hire art hath wrought
 Of cloth of gold a mantel riche,
 Which semeth worth a kinges riche,
 And that was unto Creusa sent
 In name of gifte and of present (Gower, 1980, V, 4200-4).

Medea here sends the poisonous dress to Creusa in an attempt to revenge Jason's treason. She seems fully conscious of what she is doing, and her plan is about to achieve its desired goal. The first line in the excerpt is syllabically regular, but it is accentually irregular with two trochees at the beginning followed by two iambs. Using the noun 'Medea' as the line's initial is the reason of the trochaic rhythm in the first half of the line while using the pronoun 'hire' at the middle of the line is the reason of the iambic rhythm of the second half of the line. This metrical structure implies that Medea is the center of actions and the organizer of their tempo. Thus, her absence from the second, third, and fourth lines enables the lines' rhythm to maintain its iambic tetrameter regularity. In the fifth line, the trochaic rhythm of the last foot attaches more weight to Medea's Trojan-horse-like technique represented by the word 'present'.

Executing her plot against Creusa without showing any sense of hesitation, guilt, remorse, or disequilibrium, Medea turns to the other target of her revenge, her own children by Jason. The poet narrator says,

Tho cam Medea to Jason
 With bothe his sones on hire hond,
 And seide, 'O thou of every lond
 The moste untrew creature,
 Lo, this schal be thi forfeiture' (Gower, 1980, V, 4210-14).

The formalistic structure of the first, second, and third lines does not reflect any unexpected events or actions to take place, leave aside the trochaic rhythm assigned to Medea wherever she appears. It is very natural that Medea meets Jason, as a wife meets her husband. However, the fourth line is distinguished syllabically and accentually. It has six syllables divided into two iambs and a trochee. It seems that Medea is not willing to debate with Jason anymore; therefore, her sound pitch is high, as evident in the closing trochaic foot of the fourth line as well as the initial trochaic foot of the fifth line. Thus, Jason says no word in response to Medea; rather, he is depicted watching her slaughtering his own sons. He tries to kill her in revenge of that, "Bot farewel, sche was ago" (Gower, 1980, V, 4218).

Final considerations

'The Tale of Jason and Medea' showcases how Gower deploys certain formalistic devices to manage the emphasis of his narrative content. He creatively borrows his tale from different classical sources by deconstructing the story found in such sources into fragments and then blending their 'narration' and 'focalization' in a way that contributes to the *Confessio*'s theme (Zuraikat & Rawashdeh, 2019). Noteworthy here is that "[...] narration is the telling of a story in a way that simultaneously respects the needs and enlists the co-operation of its audience [...]" while focalization is the "[...] submission of (potentially limitless) narrative information to a perspectival filter" (Herman, 2007, p. 94). Thus, it is nonsensical to read Gower's 'Tale of Jason and Medea' as a translation of Euripides' or Ovid's version of the story, for instance. Medea in Euripides' narrative is a ruthless avenger while she is an agent of Truth in Gower's narrative. Considering that the main moralism of Gower's 'Tale of Jason and Medea' is to warn people against perjury represented by oath-breaking, it is hard to think of Gower's Medea as an avenger. She is rather a heroine whose moral value stems from her determination to punish Jason for committing perjury.

Thus, Medea is the center of Gower's narrative, and her image is chiseled in a way that highlights her human as well as mythical identity. She is introduced as an obedient daughter, a passionate beloved, a faithful wife, a careful mother, a skillful sorceress, and an opponent of perjury. She is the center of the narrative and its source of dynamism, as stressed by the formalistic templates used by Gower to depict Medea and quote her. When quoting Medea's blameful speech with Jason towards the end of the tale, the poet narrator uses his lines' syllabic-accentual structure to reflect the woman's anger and persistence to shorten her final encounter with "The moste untrew creature" (Gower, 1980, V, 4213). The line's syllabic-accentual shortness is a reflection of the speaker's unwillingness to talk anymore to her addressee. This reading gains much plausibility when the syllabic-accentual structure of the lines following Medea's talk gets considered. The poet narrator reports: "With that sche bothe his sones slouh / Before his yhe, and he outdrouh" (Gower, 1980,

V, 4215-16). Against the formalistic irregularity that contaminates Medea's speech with Jason, this couplet, which is said by the narrator, restores the tale's formalistic regularity wittily. I believe the poet is stressing the narrative content-form centrality of Medea by regularizing the narrator's lines syllabically and accentually. In the last two couplets of the tale, the narrator says,

Unto Pallas the court above,
Wher as sche pleigneth upon love,
As sche that was with that goddesse,
And he was left in gret destresse (Gower, 1980, V, 4219-22).

Each line in this excerpt has eight syllables that flow iambically, except when Medea appears in the second line. Such regularity reflects the difference -in the narrative value- between the narrator and Medea in favor of the latter. Whenever Medea appears, a formalistic difference is more likely to occur. Accordingly, the formalistic structure of 'The Tale of Jason and Medea' is not a poetic decoration or part of traditional poetic templates used by Gower unconsciously, but a rhetorical device deployed by the poet to manage the focus of the narrative.

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