

A Medical “Middel Weie”: Cerymon’s Interactive Healing in the *Confessio Amantis*

According to Russell Peck’s introduction to the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower believes that through active reading, old tales told in the “middel weie,” (a pathway between the didactic and the entertaining), become “a thing experienced” for the participant that (re-)tests his or her knowledge and memory. In Book 8, Gower reworks the well-established *Apollonius of Tyre*; many critics have commented on this final tale and its theme of lechery. However, the narrative events involving the revivification of Apollonius’ wife, the Princess of Pentapolis, are equally important in that they contextualize remedial knowledge for the reader, while remedying the only positive amorous relationship in the tale—that of Apollonius and his wife. These events begin with the princess’ struggles in childbirth, resulting in her appearance of being “ded in every mannes syhte,” after she gives birth to a daughter while at sea. Apollonius’ careful burial allows the princess’ “dede corps” to be preserved while in an unconscious state, as the specially made coffin is tossed about in the waves. Gower subsequently expands the episode from earlier versions of the tale through the actions of the wise physician, Cerymon, and in so doing, he situates contemporary medical theory in the “middel weie” for his reader while this learned leech attempts the miraculous—bringing the princess back from the dead. When the coffin washes ashore, Cerymon finds her body, and unlike his sources, Gower illustrates how this physician diagnoses, treats, and heals the princess physically and emotionally from her comatose state and trauma. Because Gower further develops this secondary character, expanding on his source material by establishing him as a wise, formally trained doctor, who is a “worthi clerik, a surgien, / And ek a gret phisicien,” the reader, too, joins the ranks of Maister Cerymon’s many disciples, as all “experience” the princess’ healing.