

NOTE ON THE POETIC AND THE EMPIRICAL 'I' IN MEDIEVAL AUTHORS

Professor Stephan Kuttner, who proved—basing himself on V. L. Kennedy—the indebtedness of Pierre de Roissy, Chancellor of Chartres and author of a *Manuale de mysteriis ecclesiae*, to the *Poenitentiale* of Robert of Flamborough, Canon Penitentiary of St. Victor, shows (*Trad.* 2, 497 seq.) that Roissy went so far in his procedure (which we would call today 'literary plagiarism') of incorporating entire sections from Flamborough's work, that he even borrowed from him, *tel quel*, certain autobiographical facts which, in the light of historical evidence, could not possibly apply to himself. For example, when we read in Roissy: 'Ego tamen . . . a duobus parisiensibus episcopis, Odone et Petro, habui ut ubique eorum auctoritate dispensarem . . .,' we must realize that the privilege of dispensation of which he speaks was granted only to Flamborough, just as it was Flamborough alone who transferred to papal authority the case referred to in the words: 'superstitem, ut ordinaretur, ad papam transmisi.' Thus, Roissy is substituting his own ego to that of his source. Kuttner wonders 'how he could easily get away with this,' for 'the disproportion between Peter's true standing and the air of personal experience he affects is particularly striking in those cases which suggest, as they do, the experience and powers of a spiritual director of clerics'—that is, qualifications certainly not possessed by Roissy. The borrowed character of the passage 'Ego tamen . . . a duobus . . .,' according to Kuttner, disposes of a chronological difficulty in the Chancellor's biography (for, if genuine, the passage would have proved that Peter was active in Paris as late as 1208—an assumption contradicted by other known facts).

To the Romance philologist this type of medieval 'plagiarism' is not unknown. A striking example is to be found in the *Espurgatoire S. Patrice* of Marie de France (12th c.), which is an almost textual translation of a *Tractatus de Purgatorio S. Patricii* of the monk H. (only the initial is known) of Saltrey. I shall copy the beginning of Marie's text and that of the *Tractatus* (version *a*), according to the edition of K. Warnke (Halle 1938), who has not failed to note Marie's substitution of her 'I' for that of the monk:

Patri suo preoptato in Christo, domino .H., abbati de Sartis, frater .H., monachorum de Saltreia minimus, cum continua salute, patri filius, obedientie munus.

Iussistis, pater venerande, ut scriptum vobis mitterem, quod de Purgatorio in vestra me retuli audisse presentia. Quod quidem eo libentius aggredior, quo ad id explendum paternitatis vestre iussione instantius compellor. Licet enim utilitatem multorum per me provenire desiderem, non tamen nisi iussus talia presumerem.

Vestram vero minime lateat paternitatem numquam me legisse vel audisse quicquam, unde in timore et amore Dei tantum proficerem.

El nun de Deu, ki od nus seit e ki sa grace nus enveit, vueil en Romanz metre en escrit, si cum li livre le nus dit, en remembrance e en memoire, 'Des Peines de l'Espurgatoire'; qu'a seint Patriz volt Deus mustrer le liu u l'um i deit entrer.

Uns prozdum m'a pieça requis: pur ceo m'en sui ore entremis de metre mei en cel labour pur reverence e pur s'onur, e se lui plest e qu'il le vueille,—qu'en ses bienfaiz tuz jurs m'acueille!—dirai ço que jo'n ai oi. Beals pere, ore entendez ici! Ja seit iço que jeo desir de faire a grant profit venir plusurs genz e els amender e servir Deu plus e duter, ja de ço ne m'entremesisse n'en estuide ne me mesisse, se ne fust pur vostre preiere, ki en mun quer est dulce e chiere. Poi en ai oi e veü; par ço que jeo'n ai entendu ai jo vers Deu greignur amur de Deu servir, mun creatur. Pur quei jo voldrai aovrir ceste escripture e descovrir.

Here, Marie (who can hardly be called a plagiarist since she admits having used an earlier book, 'livre'), purports to have received, herself, the call to write on the experiences of St. Patrick in Purgatory (her *preiere* corresponding to the *jussio* of the monk); in Saltrey's version, the call comes from his superior, the abbot de Sartis, referred to as 'vestra paternitas'; to Marie it comes from an anonymous 'prozdu' whom she addresses as 'beals pere' (and who is evidently likewise an ecclesiastical authority). Again, where the monk had affirmed that nothing he had ever read or heard before was more encouraging to his belief in God than was the narrative of the Knight Owein which had come to him through another monk, Marie says that, although she is translating from a book and has had no personal experience of the events which she narrates ('poi en ai ci e vëu'),¹ still, no book was ever so well able to corroborate her faith in her Creator. And at the conclusion of the prologue the monk's words: 'quam quidem narrationem si bene memini . . .' are echoed by Marie: 'si j'ai bien eü en memoire ço que j'ai oï² en l'estoire.' Finally, at the end of the story, both the monk and Marie name its ultimate source: that is, the monk Gilbert who had heard it from Owein himself and had transmitted it to the monk of Saltrey (Marie calls the latter 'autor', v. 2058). Earlier, in line 297 Marie had insisted on her activity as translator which has consisted in making the Latin text accessible to 'laie gent'.³

Since, then, Marie confesses to a source for her *Espurgatoire*, the reason for her substitution of her 'I' must be sought in another direction than that of plagiarism (naïve or conscious). I submit the theory that, in the Middle Ages, the 'poetic I' had more freedom and more breadth than it has today: at that time the concept of intellectual property did not exist because literature dealt not with the individual but with mankind: the 'ut in pluribus' was an accepted standard. The story of the other-worldly experiences of the Knight Owein in Purgatory belonged to humanity: Marie de France as well as the Monk of Saltrey must feel the call to narrate them—and she, while not dissimulating the fact that she is only a translator, will assert that the call has come to her (too). And we must

¹ I do not quite understand Warnke's statement (p. xvii): 'Daneben spricht sie in eigener Person . . . und weiter in den Übergangsversen 29 und 30.' Marie always speaks 'in eigener Person'; it is we modern philologists alone who are able to discover that in lines 9–24 Marie is ascribing to herself what the Monk of Saltrey had already narrated in the first person. In other words, the reference point of Marie's 'I' remains constant.

² Marie tells us that she has 'heard' the story, whereas we know that she must have read it. Here we have the 'topos of aural transmission', so frequent in the Middle Ages, cf. *Traditio* 2 (1944) 447 n. 32, and *Revista de filología hispánica* 6, 176; 283.

³ One will note that Marie, like so many medieval authors who translate from Latin into the vernacular, speaks of her source as 'li livre' without mentioning the name of the author of the particular book which modern critics have taken pains to discover. The existence of a source was more important for that tradition-bound civilization than was the specification of the particular source. 'Li livre' was an objectively existing entity, unattached to any particular author. Even the place where it might be found was more important than the author's name: Chrestien de Troyes says, in his *Cligès*: 'Ceste estoire trovons escrite / . . . An un des livres de l'aumeire, / Mon seignor saint Peire a Biauwés. / . . . Li livres est mout anciens.' Foerster, *Kristian v. Troyes, Wörterbuch* 59 remarks: 'Es ist allgemein bekannt dass im M.-A. die Erzählungen . . . sich für wahre Geschichten ausgeben, oder doch dafür gehalten wurden, daher denn ihre Verfasser, um das Vertrauen der Leser [zu gewinnen] . . . sich gern auf glaubwürdige Zeugen berufen. . . . Solche Berufungen mögen ja meist erdichtet sein. . . .' The novelistic fiction of a written source (which should testify to the veracity of the author—while his mind is left free to fabulate) requires only an indication of the book's existence: one does not need to know the source of a Source.

assume that the medieval public saw in the 'poetic I' a representative of mankind, that it was interested only in this representative rôle of the poet.

To return to the 'plagiarist' Roissy, his more naïve assimilation of details taken from the biography of another must then be explained by the medieval habit of literary assimilation itself: since, in the Middle Ages, the 'poetic I' enjoyed a freedom from biographic control unknown today, the Chancellor could 'easily get away with' a substitution of rôles whereby he is made to appear as a spiritual director of clerics. And, given the medieval tendency to worship all books, arising from the awe that surrounded the Book of Books, there could be nothing shocking in textual borrowing, provided that this was done for purposes of edification. The conception of literary property could not exist where the Book was addressed to Everyman; what was important in the passages borrowed by Pierre from Robert was the matter of the correct use of the powers of dispensation by Church authorities: the autobiographical touch simply added poignancy to his presentation. It was a trifling matter who the empirical person behind this 'I' actually was.⁴

The most outstanding example of the 'poetic I' in medieval literature is, obviously, to be found in Dante's *Commedia*: after Dante, in the *Vita Nuova*, had given a seemingly autobiographical (but actually ontological) account of the development and course of the feeling of love, accessible to all men, he proceeded, in the *Commedia*, to write the epic of man's exploration of the Beyond; and this Odysseus of the Beyond who says 'I' purports to have undertaken a voyage for which he offers no authentication by evidence transplanted from other sources: he is his only witness. How could the medieval public have accepted as genuine the supposedly eye-witness report (in this poem 'to which Heaven and Earth collaborated') on the supermundane world, unless the 'poetic I' of Dante represented, for this medieval community, the human soul as such with all its capacity to attain to the Beyond and to reach out of space toward its Creator? All the modern misunderstandings on the part of commentators of the 'biographical approach' school are due to their confusion of the 'poetic I' with the empirical or pragmatical 'I' of the poet—who, in the very first lines of his poem, has taken care to present his 'poetic I' as representative of humanity: 'Nel mezzo del cammin di *nostra vita* / *Mi ritrovai* per una selva oscura. . . .' At the same time, however, Dante does not allow us to forget that his empirical personality (his feeling, speaking, gesticulating personality) is also included in this 'I'—as he shows himself, now being jostled along in a procession of devils, now ascending toward Heaven magnetically attracted by the eyes of Beatrice. For the story that Dante had to tell, both aspects of his composite 'I' were necessary: on the one hand, he must transcend the limitations of individuality in order to gain an experience of universal experience; on the other, an individual eye is necessary to perceive and to fix the matter of experience. For, unlike Milton, who was content to write of Heaven and Hell under the dictation of the Muse, Dante attempts to show us a human being actually experiencing the truths of the Beyond. And this personality which Dante the beholder, the experi-

⁴ Henceforth we shall have to revise the wording of such statements about medieval writers as that of B. Maler, *Studia neophilologica* 17, 48; 'nous sommes en présence d'un de ces cas où, en donnant l'apparence de connaître de première main les autorités qu'il cite, Jean de Meun [in the *Roman de la Rose*] ne fait que reproduire des passages empruntés à d'autres' [italics mine].

⁵ This same empirical-universal I is twofold in still another regard: Dante the protagonist is quite distinct from Dante the narrator, who performs the task of retelling (*ridire*) what he has seen; it is this Dante who has included the many details of his personal autobiography (a list of which can be easily found in Toynbee's *Concise Dante Dictionary* s.v. 'Dante').

encer, retains, is in direct correspondence with the personal character of divinity: according to Augustine, it is the personality of God which determines the personal soul of man: only through God's personality has man a personal soul—whose characteristic is its God-seeking quality. Thus Dante in his report of his quest performs artistically the basic endeavor of the Christian: to seek a personal relationship with divinity. And this divinity, when finally apperceived, appears to the individuality of Dante as a divine individual: (*Par.* xxxiii, 124–6) 'O luce eterna que sola in te sidi, / Sola t'intendi e da te intelletta / E intendente te ami ed arridi'—just as, on all the other rungs of the hierarchic ladder, the souls that inhabit the Beyond have retained their personality (if not their earthly flesh). Dante, after all, is only applying to his extraordinary experience in the Beyond the general precept preached by Augustine: 'noli foras ire, in interiore animae habitat veritas': he finds in his own soul the visible shapes of his vision.

Thus Dante must take care to establish his own personality in the *Commedia*: his own figure cannot be less graphically portrayed than are the vigorous shades of Ugolino or Cato or Saint Bernard. It is only for this reason that we find, in this objective work of art, the insertion of autobiographical material (e.g. in *Inf.* xix, cf. *Rom. Review* 34, 249) to an extent unparalleled in the Middle Ages: he must give his figure the embodiment and relief necessary in his system of visualization.⁶ Dante is not interested, poetically, in himself *qua* himself (as Petrarch was to be, and after him, Montaigne and Goethe) but *qua* an example of the generally human capacity for cognizing the supramundane—which can be cognized only by what is most personal in man.⁷ It is only when the quest for the

⁶ Cf. E. Auerbach, *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt* (Berlin 1929) and E. Frank, *Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth* (London-New York 1945). In the progress of this poem, which treats of the gradual perception of the divine, the personal profile of Dante becomes more and more clear-cut. It is well known that, though from the start Dante speaks in the first person, it is not until canto xxx of the Purgatorio that we hear the name 'Dante' pronounced (in the scene where, after Vergil has disappeared, Beatrice is to predict for the poet still new trials and the necessity for deep repentance and spiritual regeneration: repentance being the means by which the Christian can become a genuine personality, cf. Frank 158). It is while the poet is still immersed in his sorrow over Vergil's departure that he suddenly hears the consoling words (which make known to him Beatrice's presence): 'Dante, perchè Virgilio se ne vada, / Non pianger anco, non pianger ancora;' and the poet continues the narrative as follows: 'Quando mi volsi al suon del nome mio, / Che di necessità qui sí registra, / Vidi la donna. . . .' Some commentators, while emphasizing the poetic value of this sudden address to Dante, justify it only as a poetic device (Beatrice, in this way, is calling the attention of the reader to herself, or, perhaps, is emphasizing her close relationship with the poet); others (particularly Torraca) are content to point out that, because of the extraordinary situation, Dante can be excused for infringing on the rhetorical principle that the author should not mention his own name in the narrative. None of them seems to have realized the *dogmatic* value of Beatrice's address to Dante, a value which is underlined by 'di necessità qui sí registra' (and which Torraca fails to sense, in his paraphrase: 'per l'esattezza del racconto'). From the beginning, Dante had been speaking with the 'poetic I'; but now that the principle of repentance is to be presented to him by Beatrice, now that he is to become a true Christian personality, he is addressed by his objective name—as if the supernal powers recognized, thereby, his entrance into this final stage.

⁷ The idea of the accessibility of the divine to man explains the medieval literary device of the vision or dream: the writer who wished to teach some transcendental truth to which man has access could do so by imagining a dreaming or visionary 'I'. The 'fictional I' of modern writers is no doubt an outgrowth of the 'visionary I' of the Middle Ages.—Werfel, in his posthumous book, *Star of the Unborn*, has attempted to rehabilitate the medieval

supramundane can no longer be taken for granted as uniting author and public, that an insistence on the individual 'I' becomes quite simply a matter of the 'empirical I': of (as Proust has lightly characterized the rôle of the modern narrator) 'un monsieur qui raconte et qui dit "je" . . . qui est Je et qui n'est pas toujours moi.'⁸

We can study the play between the poetic and the empirical 'I' in another medieval work, this time with facetious overtones: the graceful, whimsical, self-contradictory *Libro de Buen Amor* of the Archpriest of Hita, Juan Ruiz, a contemporary of Boccaccio. Modern critics as well as older scribes have been shocked by the earthiness of this Spanish Boccaccio in ecclesiastical garb; the scribes, in the titles they gave to the chapters of his work, were the first to interpret the incidents narrated as if they were events that had actually happened to the author: the scribe of MS S, for example, interprets biographically those passages in which the Archpriest invokes God and the Virgin to free him 'desta prison' [= the prison of this life of sin: cf. my article in *Zeitschr. f. rom. Phil.* 54, 237], and is led to imagine that the Archpriest was actually imprisoned (evidently because of his

'visionary I'; in his prologue he writes that the 'I' in his own story is 'not a deceptive, novelistic, assumed, fictitious "I", any more than the story itself is a mere offspring of speculative imagination. . . . It happened to me, as I must confess, quite against my will. . . . I was sent out one night as an explorer . . .' (that is to say, he saw in a prophetic vision the world of the far-distant future). The adverse criticism which this book received at the hands of one reviewer (in *The New Yorker*, March 2, 1946), who seemed to object, on principle, to the prophetic visions of a 'historian of the future', makes one wonder why critics seem so seldom to question the device, current in historical fiction, by which the author must pretend to be a 'prophet of the past', assuming to have knowledge not only of situations at which he was not present, but even of the intimate thoughts of characters to which he could not have had direct access, even if he had been present. In both cases, whether the author assume the rôle of 'historian of the future' or of 'prophet of the past', he must depend upon his private vision.—Needless to say, I cannot agree with the statement of C. S. Loomis, who writes (*The Allegory of Love*, p. 118): 'he [the author of the *Roman de la Rose*] practically abolishes the hero, as one of his dramatis personae, by reducing him to the colorless teller of the tale. The whole story is in the first person and we look through the lover's eyes, not at him.' The medieval 'poetic I' is not 'colorless': it was used to give the ring of truth to the fantastic story of rapturous love.

⁸ A civilization in which the poetic 'I' in its representative function is recognized by the public, does not expose its writers to the complications with which Rousseau and Goethe were confronted in writing their autobiographies: when the reader feels entitled to identify the empirical ego of the autobiographical writer, then the latter must resort to subterfuge or else face the most painful exposure. Indeed, even when a modern autobiographer chooses to hide behind the third person, this fictional He is apt to be overshadowed, in the mind of his readers, by the empirical He.—It must be borne in mind that Rousseau's autobiography is a worldly version of the Confessions of Augustine. The Church Father wrote his confessions, as it were, for God, in the presence of God; he directed them to Him who is ever-ready to listen to his sinful children. And the link between this writer of confessions, and God his Confessor, is underlined by a continuous *Thou*, used by Augustine in the numerous prayers and apostrophes throughout his work. Rousseau, who writes about 'moi seul', on the contrary, writes only for his fellow-men—so that his apostrophe: 'j'ai dévoilé mon intérieur tel que tu l'as vu toi-même, Etre Eternel' is pure rhetoric. The disappearance of the literary device of the 'poetic I' entails the disappearance of the 'ever-present Thou'. (A medieval religious poet such as Gonzalo de Berceo was able, quite suddenly, in the midst of a long narrative, to address an apostrophe *a ti*, *Virgo Maria*—evidently because he believed the Virgin to have been present all the time that he was writing down her Miracles.)

licentious poetry) by the Cardinal of Toledo. One must admit, however, that the Archpriest has not made it too easy for his readers to discard entirely the biographical approach, since he makes himself figure repeatedly as a protagonist in his stories—where he often appears in a none too savoury rôle. I would suggest that the Archpriest, in using this self-incriminating procedure, wished to depict that potential sinner which existed in himself, as in all human beings: he reveals himself, not as having committed the sins he describes, but as capable, in his human weakness, of having committed them. Our poet somewhat foreshadows Villon, that much more problematic, wittily self-indulgent, penitent-impenitent sinner of the waning Middle Ages; but his is still the poetic 'I' of the medieval tradition, which speaks in the name of man in general.⁹ The author of the *Libro de Buen Amor* is teaching the 'good love', Christian charity, even though he may often seem to be over-indulgent in his attitude toward sinful man who clings to 'loco amor': this sinfulness he exemplifies by offering himself, in all good humor, as committing in actuality that of which he felt himself to be potentially capable.

This tendency toward self-exposure is not only to be studied in the obvious cases when the author narrates in the first person, or when he interpolates into the conversation a reference to 'el arcipreste' (cf. Trotaconventos' words in st. 1345) as one of the protagonists—cases in which the device chosen by the author seems already crystallized and static: in order to render the genesis of such a device, it is more instructive to turn to passages where it is *in statu nascendi*. For instance, when Doña Cuaresma, the allegorical personification of Lent, sends out a letter of challenge to her adversary, Don Carnal, she couples it with another letter directed to 'all sinners, all archpriests and clerics in love' (st. 1069: 'a todo peccador, a todos los arciprestes e clerigos con amor'); it is clear that even in this passing reference, the author means to include himself as a potential sinner among 'todos los peccadores' (among whom, for some reason, the archpriests are singled out). As a matter of fact, it is to him (to 'I') that the letter comes, at a moment, as he tells us, when he is 'sitting down with *Don Jueves Lardero*.' Now, to reveal himself as eating bacon on the day (the Thursday before Lent) when it is still permitted, does not in the least expose the author personally; it is only the fact of his receiving the letter at all (with its damning address) that could, perhaps, indicate a particular frailty of his own. This is a most subtle way of suggesting the 'potential' sinfulness of the author. We should also remember that, in always choosing the rôle of 'clerigo con amor' for himself, Juan Ruiz is working within an old literary pattern, a traditional medieval genre (already Andreas Capellanus had written: 'quod magis in amore clericus quam laicus est eligendus') which should not be narrowed down to an explicit personal reference.

We also find with Juan Ruiz (as well as with Marie de France) the appropriation of narrative material from other sources, presented as a personal experience. The archpriest incorporates, into his purportedly autobiographical narrative, events taken from a twelfth-century Latin play, *Pamphilus sive de amore*—without attempting, any more than had Marie de France, to conceal his source (st. 891: 'si villania he dicho, haya de

⁹ It is not sufficiently recognized by scholars that Villon's *Grand Testament* is only a pseudo-biographical *cancionero*, comparable to the *Libro de buen amor*, and that to treat it as a biographical document instead of a work of fiction is doing wrong to the work of art. The documents that shed light on Villon's personal life, as unearthed by Longnon and others, have rather beclouded the issue: the protagonist of the *Testaments* speaks with his 'poetic I', and even where there is a partial concordance of established facts of Villon's private life with facts narrated in his artistic work, we are not permitted to use the two sets of facts as interchangeable entities.

vos perdon, / que lo feo de la historia diz / Pánfilo y Nason'). We are asked to believe that it is the archpriest who had a vision in which he conversed with Venus and learned from her how to conquer the rich and noble widow Doña Endrina (the 'vegetal' name [= 'sloe'] is of Juan Ruiz' invention); it is he who, after a conversation with the widow in which she remains non-committal, is forced to resort to the go-between Trotaconventos (this name, another invention of Juan Ruiz, is suggestive of an ecclesiastical background).¹⁰ Moreover, though Trotaconventos, in her parleys with Endrina, always calls her patron by a fictitious name—again 'vegetal': Don Melon de la Huerta (perhaps an allusion to a

¹⁰ When I say 'Trotaconventos', I am well-aware of the problem of identity involved in this name. I have shown earlier (*Zeitschr. f. Rom. Phil.* 54, 237) that the character Trotaconventos (as well as some of the other characters of the *Libro del buen amor*) is endowed only secondarily with individuality: in the Pamphilus episode, she grows, as it were, out of the sentence: 'busqué trotaconventos' ('I looked for a go-between'), and for the rest of the episode, she bears this designation as a proper name. In the adventure immediately following, where again a go-between is involved, we find once more the words 'busqué trotaconventos'—the last word is printed by Cejador y Frauca with a capital letter, and is interpreted by Mme Lida, in her edition, as a proper name referring to the same character with whom Juan Ruiz had acquainted us in the Pamphilus episode. This would seem to be contradicted, however, by stanza 919, in which the woman is referred to as 'esta vieja, por nombre ha Urraca'. Are Urraca and the individual named Trotaconventos the same? If so, why should Juan Ruiz find it necessary, as he does, to describe her again, in the next episode? (It is true that she is described in the identical terms used of Trotaconventos [937-8 = 699-700], but this description is purely generic: in both cases the go-between is 'one of those women who . . .') And this repetition is deliberate, and due to no slip of memory, as is shown by Juan Ruiz' words (st. 938): '*otrosi ya vos dize qu'estas tales buhonas . . .*'). On the other hand, one could argue in favor of identifying Urraca with Trotaconventos, because of the fact that Juan Ruiz contrasts Urraca, not with her immediate predecessor, Trotaconventos, but with a certain Ferrand Garcia, a male go-between of a still earlier episode, who had proved to be a cheat; but then we could also wonder, if Urraca is Trotaconventos, why this contrast was not offered when we first met Trotaconventos (unless we may assume an indiscriminate juxtaposition of episodes dating from different periods of composition). Juan Ruiz makes the confusion even worse by playing with the possibility of giving Urraca more than forty ill-sounding epithets, which are all rejected by the 'vieja' in favor of 'Buen Amor'. The same problem of identity arises later on when, after several more adventures, in the first of which appears a go-between known only as 'una vieja', we witness again the appearance (beyond the shadow of a doubt) of Trotaconventos; after faithfully serving Juan Ruiz in new adventures, she meets a premature death, whereupon he composes a lengthy invocation to 'La Muerte', and implores divine pardon for the sins of the dead woman, whom he refers to consistently as Trotaconventos. But in the epitaph, in which, from her grave, she is allowed to address the passer-by, she begins with the words: 'Urraca soy'.

What is the key to this conflict of identities? Perhaps that (with the possible exception of the 'vieja') we have had, all along, to do with only one woman, 'Trotaconventos' being a generic proper name, of professional derivation, while 'Urraca' is the personal proper name: the name of that individual who, while temporarily submerged in her office, survives in death. But it is the generic name, the generic nature of this sinful woman, which the poet would put in relief. For it is the type which is eternal—susceptible of bearing many names like the fox (st. 927), and eternally significant of human *cupiditas* (and this basic *cupiditas* of man explains also the somewhat static character of the whole *Libro*, which offers over and over again the same basic situation of light adventure, slightly varied every time).

rotund ecclesiastic¹¹)—Doña Endrina herself at one moment (st. 845) speaks of 'mi amor de Fyta' (the Old Spanish form of *Hita*).¹² Thus it would seem that his identity is fixed beyond question—until, with no warning to the reader, Don Melon and 'I' part company: Don Melon, with a newly-acquired independent personality of his own, is joined in wedlock with Doña Endrina (st. 891: 'Doña Endrina y don Melon en uno casados son'), obviously an impossibility for an ecclesiastic; while the poetic 'I' (the Pamphilus theme now concluded) goes on to fresh adventures (in some of which Trotaconventos again intervenes in his behalf): with various mountain girls, with a nun (who remains true to her vows), and with a Moorish maiden—all of which offer so many literary themes and pretexts for the introduction of lyrical poetry. (Menéndez Pidal has called the *Libro de Buen Amor* a cancionero strung on an autobiographical thread; I would add that the autobiographical matter is determined by the need to illustrate the various lyrical genres.¹³)

As if to forewarn his modern critics, the poet writes at the end of the Pamphilus episode (st. 909): 'Entiende bien mi historia . . . dijela por te dar enjemplo, no porque a mi avino.' In other words, the archpriest is insisting on the poetic 'I', the didactic 'I' of the medieval author. That he could reveal himself so often as a sinful protagonist of his stories (though in a hide-and-seek fashion) is due to his basic conviction, playfully maintained, of the solidarity of humanity in the weakness of the flesh; at the same time, the author is reminding the public ('por te dar enjemplo'), for their own benefit, of this solidarity: his 'de me fabula narratur' can also be read as 'de te fabula . . .' (we remember that in the Old French mystery play, *Jeu d'Adam*, the devil walks down from the stage and through the pit, thus taking the public into his potential realm). And Juan Ruiz could expect this moral to be extracted by his audience (he could 'get away' with' his coquettish autobiographical game) because, in the Middle Ages, as we have said, the habit of confusing the empiric with the poetic 'I' was in general unknown.

From their two polar vantage points, Dante and Juan Ruiz preach the *ordo caritatis* by introducing their personalities into their poems; the one by showing how man can

¹¹ It is true that, in the self-portrait which the archpriest has inserted into his poem (st. 1486-9: Trotaconventos describes the archpriest to one of his loves), emphasis is laid on the strong and virile traits of the protagonist, not on his 'rotundity': if we were to trust the realistic veracity of Trotaconventos' portrait (but notice the absence in it of any suggestion of tonsure!), it would not concord with the picture evoked by the name of Juan Ruiz' avatar, 'Don Melon'.—Perhaps these seemingly contradictory descriptions are deliberately introduced in order to blur the individual features of the author-protagonist (an anticipation, as it were, of the modern photographic technique of superimposed portraits which annihilate each other): that he is meant to appear only as a composite type is suggested by the stanza (1321) in which Trotaconventos addresses him as 'Don Polo'—where we have, not *polo* = 'pole' (the pole around which her thoughts circle, as Cejador y Frauca would have it) but simply a variant form of *Pablo*, that most common Spanish name, in the meaning 'fulano': 'Mr. Somebody'. [*Melón* could also mean 'stupid' as it does in modern popular Spanish.]

¹² *Fyta* is in the rhyme, so that there is no possibility of assuming a textual alteration—and surely none of assuming 'forgetfulness' on the part of the author, as the commentator Cejador y Frauca would have it.

¹³ How else could we explain the fact that Juan Ruiz purports to have had adventures, one after the other, with different *serranas*? Surely this was because the author wished to present a bouquet of *serranillas*.

have access to 'l'amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle,' the other by throwing light on the basic weakness of man who is prone to forget the ideal of *buen amor*.¹⁴

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¹⁴ The Spanish Boccaccio, Juan Ruiz, differs from his Italian contemporary (with whom he has in common the interest for all things human: 'Provar todas las cosas, el apóstol lo manda') in that, with him, the weaknesses of the flesh are seen by a humble and charitable soul which knows of its own potential sinfulness, whereas, in the *Decameron*, the pageant of worldliness develops before the impersonally amused eye of a sophisticated social group that seeks to be distracted from the atrocities of the plague by the narration of *novelle*. Boccaccio introduces a 'frame of society' whereby the anarchic material of the narrative is bound together, whereas, for Juan Ruiz, the 'frame' was only his own God-seeking soul ('escoge el alma el buen amor que es de Dios'). The replacement in literature of the 'poetic I' by the 'They' of society is an important step in the secularization of the Occidental mind.

After having written this article, I received, through the kindness of Professor Werner Krauss (Marburg) an offprint of an article of his in *Zeitschr. f. rom. Phil.* (the year of publication unfortunately does not appear in the offprint) in which he points out the basic deterministic attitude of Juan Ruiz ('die Anerkennung der kreatürlichen und gottgewollten Bedingtheit, die unlösbare Verstrickung durch die irdische Liebe') which requires, as a logical complement, the belief that the only possible counteraction against the weakness of human nature is divine grace—hence, the openness of Juan Ruiz to all human experiences and his continuous moralization ('Das Leben ist ein fortgesetztes Experimentieren und insofern auch ein fortgesetztes Moralisieren'). Krauss touches upon the problem of the 'poetic I' when he describes 'das Widerspiel der Selbsterlebnisse und eines sich verlierenden Ich, das nur noch Sinnträger des *exemplo* ist und zuweilen an den Rand des epischen Geschehens als eine blosse Zuschauerfigur gedrückt wird.' I should like to modify slightly the wording about 'an "I" that looses itself and is pushed to the periphery by the epic narrative': in my opinion, there is in Juan Ruiz' work an everpresent 'I', ever ready to include itself in the experimenting and moralizing narrative because of the author's very belief in the 'Kreatürlichkeit' of man, and in the necessary recourse to Grace. Juan Ruiz' personality appears and disappears in his poem, just as does that of his sinful *Trotaconventos*. Are not both ever-present types of misdirected *buen amor*?

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