

Curial and Guelfa

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Volume 2

Curial and Guelfa. A classic of the Crown of Aragon
Translated into English by Max W. Wheeler

Curial and Guelfa

A classic of the Crown of Aragon

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Max W. Wheeler

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Introduction

Among 15th-century literature in the Romance languages, *Curial and Guelfa* is one of the most successful novels of chivalry. It is a veritable jewel of late medieval European literature and of narrative in Catalan in particular. *Curial* shares a range of features – realism, humanity, believable deeds of chivalry, historical background, allusions to everyday life, elements of humour and parody, variation between literary and popular language – with contemporary French chivalric narratives, such as the *Livre des faits du bon messire Jehan le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut*, the *Livre des faits de Jacques de Lalaing* and *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*, and with the Valencian Joanot Martorell's *Tirant lo Blanc*. In this company, however, *Curial* stands out for the predominance in it of the sentimental component, for a significant incidence of learned elements from Greek and Latin classical culture and from the early fathers of the Christian church, and for its striking stylistic elegance. These learned elements are an indication of fresh humanistic breezes blowing from Italy. In this way the novel unites several cultural currents that converge in western Romance narrative at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance.

The text of *Curial and Guelfa* comes to us anonymously, without title-page, title, or date, in a single manuscript, unknown to scholarship till in 1876 Manuel Milà y Fontanals published in the *Revue des Langues Romanes* a brief informative and critical note together with a transcription of the opening paragraphs of each of the three books the novel consists of. It can be dated around the middle of the 15th century, during the period of Alfonso the Magnanimous's presence in Naples as sovereign (1442–1458).

It was the work's first editor, Antoni Rubió y Lluch (1901), who gave it the title *Curial y Güelfa*, after the names of its two protagonists. These characters are Italians, and Italian, too, is the sentimental framework of a large part of the narrative, though the landscape in which *Curial*'s deeds take place, and from which the majority of the secondary characters come, includes not only Italy, but also Germany, Hungary, the Holy Land, Egypt, Greece, Tunis, and particularly France. The novel reserves a special place for King Peter the Great (1240–1285), monarch of the realms of the Crown of Aragon (Aragon, Catalonia, The

Balearic Islands, and Valencia¹), and, as consort of Constanza of Hohenstaufen, also King of Sicily. Though it expresses hostility to the Angevins, French cultural influence is dominant, and it is on French territory that most of Curial's deeds of chivalry take place.

The efforts devoted to identifying the author have so far produced no positive result. Its first Catalan editors, and the authors of histories of Catalan literature, generally citing its 'national' aspects, presented it as the work of a Catalan author from the dialect region of eastern Catalonia, while its first non-Catalan critics, the Italian Bernardo Sanvisenti and the Castilian Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, both pointed to possible Italian authorship, at least of an original core. However, distinguished lexicographers like Joan Coromines and Germà Colón have pointed out that the choice of vocabulary might indicate a Valencian author. The sources that the author uses and fundamentally recasts are predominantly Italian ones, but as was characteristic of the genre at the time, the vocabulary and expressions relating to chivalry are predominantly French, as are the many references to the world and personages of romances of chivalry. I follow Martí de Riquer (1972: 106) in concluding that 'despite its foreign sources and scenery, particularly Italian, it is a strikingly original work, written with skill, an excellent style, and a good narrative sense'. All these investigations bear witness to its exceptional literary and linguistic value.

Before my new edition (2007) there had been three editions of the original text, that of Rubió previously mentioned (1901), by Ramon Aramon i Serra (1930–33) and by Ramon Miquel y Planas (1932), two translations into Spanish, by Rafael Marquina (1920) and Pere Gimferrer (1982), and one into English by Pamela Waley (1982). In addition Júlia Butinyà has provided an electronic Spanish version (2005), and Maria Àngels Fuster is preparing another. I must now congratulate Éditions Anacharsis on their decision to offer Francophone readers the first translation of *Curial e Güelfa* into French, made with notable skill by Jean-Marie Barberà (2007), a Frenchman of Valencian origin, emeritus professor of the University of Aix-en-Provence, who is also the author of the French translation of *Tirant lo Blanc* (Toulouse, Anacharsis, 2003).

1. In addition to Sicily, mentioned below, the Crown of Aragon included at various times other territories: Montpellier, Sardinia, Corsica, Malta, the Kingdom of Naples, Provence, the Duchy of Neopatria, and the Duchy of Athens.

1. The *Curial* manuscript: the puzzle of its origins and transmission

The codex containing the sole manuscript of *Curial e Güelfa* is held in the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, with the catalogue number Ms. 9750. It contains 224 paper folios (that is, 448 pages). The type of paper, the handwriting, and the language of the text coincide in pointing to a date in the middle of the 15th century. Rubió and Miquel y Planas put the date of composition around 1443, the year of Alfonso the Magnanimous's triumphal entry into the city of Naples, when the king greeted the city as 'Parthenope' just as the author of *Curial* does. At any rate it could not date later than 1462, if we give importance, as Riquer suggests, to the fact that in that year in the order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem the division 'language of Spain' mentioned in *Curial* ceased to exist, being replaced by the two divisions 'language of Aragon' and 'language of Castile'.

The manuscript, not an autograph, represents a complete work, in the sense of containing a properly structured and developed text, from start to finish, but is not quite the definitive version of the novel, since there are a few blank spaces. The novel is divided into three books, each with a prologue, and divided into chapters, or sections, which lack headings.² The scribe left a blank square for the insertion of the initial capital letter of each chapter. The manuscript belongs to the ancient stock of the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, with the original catalogue number Ec-233; however, no bibliographer had noticed its existence until around 1860 when the librarian Agustín Duran brought it to the attention of Manuel Milà y Fontanals.

Despite the lack of documentation of the origin and transmission of the manuscript of *Curial*, no scholar had doubted its authenticity until in 1991, Jaume Riera, a staff member of the Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó in Barcelona became convinced that it was a forgery perpetrated by Milà y Fontanals himself (Riera 1993). This opinion has not been supported by other experts in palaeography and manuscripts (such as Anscari M. Mundó, Francesc Gimeno, Josep Perarnau) who agree in pointing out that features of the text (watermarks of mid 15th-century date, ink with strong iron oxide content, Catalan notary hand, absence of initial capitals, system of abbreviations, etc.) make such a hypothesis unviable. Moreover, the binding of the codex is also of the 15th century, in a Mudéjar style current in Castilian lands, with iron clasps, being either reused or made especially to protect this codex.

Nevertheless, Riera's audacious hypothesis had the virtue of drawing attention to the absence of any direct or indirect reference to the text before 1876. At any rate, the copyist was probably not a Catalan. The text has details such as

2. Chapter numbers and headings in this translation follow those of Ferrando's edition.

sennora ['lady'], and *pennora* ['pledge'] with Spanish spelling conventions, or such as the occasional errors *finçar* for *ficar* ['fasten'] and *assí* for *així* ['thus'], or the occasional appearance of nominal and verbal inflectional endings with *a* (*rodas*, *tengas*) instead of *e* (*rodes* ['wheels'], *tengues* ['have.2SG.SBJV']) in a text where the distinction between unstressed *a* and *e* is regularly maintained, which lead one to believe that it may have been copied by an Aragonese-speaking scribe, possibly at the request of a learned Aragonese or Castilian familiar with Catalan literature. The marginal annotation *corrige* at the start of Book II, the addition at the start of Books II and III of two initial capitals in florid Castilian Gothic style resembling gold work, and the fact that on folios 1 and 13 the beginnings of the first and second gatherings are indicated with *quaderno primero* and *segundo* in Spanish, point to the possibility of the manuscript having been made outside Catalan lands. On the other hand, the notable incidence of Italian elements in the novel and the lack of documentary and literary references to the Iberian peninsula point to a probable origin of the text on Italian territory.

2. The argument

In Book I, Curial, a Lombard³ youth of lowly birth, joins the service of the Marquis of Montferrat. Here he is fortunate to rely on the protection of Guelfa, sister of the Marquis and widow of the Duke of Milan, who assigns to him as tutor Melchior de Pandó, her major-domo. The sentimental association between young Curial and Guelfa provokes the tale-telling of two envious old men in the court of Montferrat, with the result that the Marquis finds himself obliged to banish Curial from his court. Having learnt that the Duchess of Austria has been falsely accused of adultery, Curial goes to assist her, accompanied by Jacob of Cleves, and succeeds in defeating her two accusers in judicial combat. In gratitude, her father, the Duke of Bavaria, offers Curial the hand of his second daughter Lachesis, which, though he has fallen in love with her, he declines, on account of the affection he feels for Guelfa. The latter, hearing the news, is overcome with acute jealousy. Curial returns to Montferrat and, with the assistance of three Catalan knights, defeats the Neapolitan knight Boca de Far in a tournament staged by the Marquis. Having returned to Catalonia, the three Catalans are entertained to a welcoming celebration by the King of Aragon, 'Don Pedro'. Book I ends with a fervent eulogy of the king.

3. The author refers to Curial as a Lombard, probably in the general sense of 'northern Italian'. Montferrat is actually in the Piedmont region, rather than Lombardy as currently understood.

In Book II, Curial makes for Melun, near Paris, to take part in a famous tournament organized by the King of France. Guelfa decides to send with him her maid Arta, whom she has call herself Festa. On their way to Melun, Curial, riding as a knight errant, has the opportunity to perform many deeds of chivalry, to meet with four Aragonese knights and to receive a splendid reception in a French convent, home to nuns from the most distinguished noble families of France. In Melun, Curial joins the party of Burgundian and Aragonese knights, who are opposed by French and Breton knights. King Pedro of Aragon also takes part incognito. With Curial's aid, King Pedro and his knights brilliantly vanquish the Duke of Orleans and his knights. The presence of Lachesis again tests Curial's faithfulness in love. At Guelfa's command, Curial remains in Paris, where he achieves further knightly successes, including against the terrifying 'Boar' of Vilahir. But Curial is once again the victim of malicious slander, as a result of which he falls into disrepute not only with the King of France but also with Guelfa who gives credit to the two slanderers from her household. Curial returns to Montferrat in an attempt to clear his name before Guelfa, but she vows not to restore him to her favour until the court meeting in Le Puy-en-Velay seeks mercy on his behalf.

In Book III, Curial pursues acts of penitence in the hope of being restored to grace. He makes a journey to the Holy Land and to the monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, where he again encounters the Boar, now a Franciscan friar. He also visits Mount Parnassus, in Greece, where he has an unusual dream: the Muses make him judge in a literary dispute as to whether Achilles' defeat of Hector in the Trojan War was in accord with the laws of chivalry. On his return he is shipwrecked off the coast of North Africa, and in the company of a Catalan knight, Galceran de Mediona, is sold as a slave. The two are bought by Faraj, a wealthy Tunisian. Faraj's daughter, Qamar, falls in love with Curial, but kills herself due to the impossibility of marrying him, her father having promised her to the King of Tunis. Thanks to the treasure that Qamar has delivered to him, and to diplomatic intervention by the Aragonese ambassador, Curial attains his freedom after seven years of captivity. He returns to Montferrat in disguise, and once more attempts to regain the favour of Guelfa, who recognises him when he sings her the 'elephant song'. She still refuses to pardon him. Discouraged, he returns to the court of the King of France who loads him with honours, but Curial falls victim to extravagance and debauchery. However, he restores his reputation and saves Christendom by leading an army against a Turkish invasion; he regains the favour of the Marquis of Montferrat, and receives many gifts from the Emperor of Constantinople. He goes to the court at Le Puy-en-Velay, where he is victor in the tournament; the King and Queen of France, together with all their court assembled there, beg mercy for him from Guelfa as she demanded. She accepts the fulfilment of her vow and the King presides over the wedding of the two protagonists.

Melchior de Pandó, who throughout has supported Curial, considers his mission accomplished, and, embracing him, declares like Simeon in the New Testament 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.'

3. Literary and linguistic influences

3.1 Latin sources

I mentioned before that, in comparing *Curial* with other contemporary novels of chivalry, one of the most noticeable aspects, in addition to the predominance of the sentimental component, is the presence of numerous learned digressions – the author refers to them as 'poetic fictions' – generally based on Latin sources. Their function is to present Curial not only as an exemplary knight but also as an expert in the humanities, to the degree that Apollo, in one of the mythological visions related in the novel, crowns him with a laurel wreath as 'the best and most valiant among knights and the greatest of all the poets and orators of the present time.' The 'classical' passages in fact derive predominantly from secondary sources such as would have been available to the author in contemporary compendia, for example, Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum gentilium* (*On the Genealogy of the Gods of the Gentiles*) derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, or some other version like Petrus Berchorius's *Ovidius Moralizatus*; or he may have drawn on his reading, not always well digested, of classical Latin authors and commentaries thereon, such as Cicero, Sallust, or Valerius Maximus, or of church fathers, such as Gregory the Great or Prosper of Aquitaine, and from medieval Latin writers such as Fulgentius or Papias. The influence of Petrarch can also be seen, as at the beginning of the prologue when the author, echoing the *De remediis utriusque fortunae* and the *Familiares*, warns the reader of the dangers and sufferings involved in love and the obstacles Fortune puts in its way, and especially in Book III where he imitates the *Oratio* on his coronation as poet laureate. The references to the Trojan war probably go back to the Latin *Historia destructionis Troiae* of the Sicilian Guido de Columnis (Guido delle Colonne), which our author may not have had to hand at the moment of writing the text, as he leaves half a page blank destined for the description of Hector. Critics have identified a considerable number of errors in the treatment of classical mythology, which for the most part may be due not so much to the author as to the sources available to him.

As far as linguistic influence is concerned, the author has a penchant for lexical Latinisms, of the kind already documented in Italian before the mid 15th century, but little used in Catalan before that date, as well as syntactic Latinisms, such as accusative and infinitive constructions, verb-final clauses, or ablative absolutes.

3.2 Italian sources

The author of *Curial* is thoroughly familiar with Italian literature. The source most quoted, often in Italian, is Dante's *Divina commedia*. It is on this work, or on one or more of the several commentaries that it generated throughout the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries, that the author draws for the description of the two protagonists at the tournament of Melun, in imitation of the challenge at Bordeaux between Pedro (Pere) the Great of Aragon – presented as the king who *d'ogni valor portò cinta la corda* – and Charles of Anjou, King of Naples. He also draws on two other works of Dante, the *Vita nuova*, for a version of the vision of the 'eaten heart' and for some sentimental aspects of the plot, and also the *Convivio*.

Boccaccio provides our author with a good deal of material throughout. At the start of Book I he includes the topic of novel IV.1 of the Decameron, the adventures of Guiscardo and Ghismonda. Boccaccio's too is the famous episode of the nuns' hospitality. His *Fiammetta* is also a primary source, some of whose sentimental elements are applied to Guelfa. The theme of Cupid's two arrows appears to be inspired by *Il Filocolo*, a work in which the Roman gods intervene in human affairs, as they do in *Curial*. Manuela Stocchi (1997) has described the technique of adaptation of Boccaccio's material by our anonymous author, who does not limit himself to the linguistically adapted insertion of passages that interest him, as Martorell does in *Tirant lo Blanc*, but deliberately reworks them so as to give them his own stamp.

The main sources for the plot of *Curial* are the *vida*⁴ of the Occitan troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, which provides the framework for *Curial*'s childhood and journeys, and the *vida* of the troubadour Rigaut de Berbezilh, which supplies the episodes of the 'elephant song' and the court of Le Puy-en-Velay. It is not known from which source the author of *Curial* obtained the *vida* of Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, though it may be connected to the troubadour's long residence in Montferrat, however, the version he knew of the life of Rigaut de Berbezilh must derive from *Il Novellino*,⁵ where the elephant song appears attributed to a *messer Alamanno*. This vague attribution, which is found in Italy, but not in Catalan lands, allows the author of *Curial* more readily to assign it to his protagonist. All in all it suggests that he knew the *vidas* of the troubadours via Italian mediation.

4. The 13th-century brief fictionalized biographies of troubadours are known as *vidas* 'lives'.

5. A 13th-century collection of 100 tales; *messer Alamanno* sings the elephant song in tale LXIV.

Besides these major sources one may mention some minor ones, such as the *Fiorita* of Armannino of Bologna, and possibly the *Febusso e Breusso*, both otherwise little known in Catalan lands. One may also observe several parallels between *Curial* and the Italian tradition of the tale of *Paris and Viana*, in details like the allusion to the star Diana, the practice of taking letters of exchange when embarking on a long journey, or the seclusion of the female protagonist in response to disappointment in love.

It has often been claimed, without convincing evidence, that the Catalan chronicles of Bernat Desclot and Ramon Muntaner provided the author of *Curial* with numerous narrative elements. What is clear, rather, as I have pointed out elsewhere (1997, 2004), is that elements as important in the novel as the version of the episode of the Duchess of Austria falsely accused of adultery, the combat at Melun, and several details connected with the confrontation between Pedro of Aragon and Charles of Anjou, and concerning the Catalan presence in Tunis, come from Italian sources, either historical or literary (especially Boccaccio). Specifically, the presentation of the episode of the Duchess of Austria is not only different from the legend of the Empress of Germany falsely accused of adultery given by Desclot, and the version of the combat at Melun different from the relation both Desclot and Muntaner give of the challenge at Bordeaux, but furthermore the *Curial* versions derive from a 15th-century elaboration of the former legend, of central European origin, and from a version of the challenge to be found in pro-Ghibelline Italian chronicles of the 14th century. Similarly, the representation in *Curial* of the figure of the King 'Don Pedro' appears in terms very similar to those in the same Italian chronicles, or even in the pro-Guelph ones such as that of the Florentine Giovanni Villani, deriving essentially from the *Divina commedia* and its Latin commentaries. Likewise the 'gross historical error' – in Rubió y Lluch's words – that the author of *Curial* commits in stating that the eldest of King Pedro's sons 'was called Don Alfonso and died before his father' – that is to say, prince Alfonso, who in fact succeeded him and reigned as Alfonso III of Aragon (1285–1291) – is merely the result of his having relied on the *Ottimo commento* (c. 1333), attributed to the Florentine Andrea Lancia, according to whom '*donno Anfriso ...morì giovanetto*' ['Don Alfonso died young'] and '*[la] morte il tolse di mezzo, sì che non succedette nel regno*' ['death overtook him so that he did not succeed to the throne']; or he may have used the *Commento* (c. 1383–85) of Francesco da Buti, who speaks of '*lo giovanetto che retro a lui sede, cio è don Alfonso, suo figliuolo, lo quale morì giovane innanzi che fusse re*' ['the young man sitting behind him, his son, Don Alfonso, who died young before becoming king'], or a similar version. Muntaner's account of Don Pedro's heirs is quite different: 'the said Prince Pere [= Pedro] had many children, of whom four males – namely, Prince Anfós [= Alfonso], Prince Jacme, Prince Frederic,

and Prince Pere – and two females survived Queen Constança and their father the king'. The names of the knights who accompany King Pedro at the combat of Melun have no relation, except for Blasco d'Alagon, to those mentioned in the chronicles of Desclot and Muntaner, but closely resemble those of several of the knights who fought at Ponza (1435). Inasmuch as the author of *Curial* commits a historical error in making Conradin the son of Emperor Frederic II, when in fact he was his grandson, as Desclot's chronicle explains, it is because Boccaccio does likewise in Giornata II of the *Decameron*, his direct source. The presence in *Curial* of Arrighetto Capete – historically Corrado Capece, absent from Desclot's and from Muntaner's account – must be attributed to the same source or to the numerous Italian pro-Ghibelline chronicles, which present him as a hero of the Hohenstaufen cause.

The variants of proper names – *Ostalriche* (Austria), *Perugia*, *Arrigueto Capete* (for Capece), *Guismunda*, *Pandolfo*, *Paulino*, *Andria de Nigro*, *Ambrosino de Spindola*, *Ansaldo*, etc. – are overwhelmingly Italian. Italian, too, or specifically Tuscan, is the use of the definite article *la* before Italian female personal names such as *la Güelfa* or *l'Arta*, but not before the names of non-Italian women, such as the Bavarian *Laquesis* ['Lachesis']. There are a good number of lexical Italianisms such as *duello* 'duel', *fontana* 'spring', *lontana* 'distant', *semblea* 'assembly', *sorella* 'sister'. Less obvious Italianisms are words which, while having a Catalan pedigree, are rare in original Catalan texts of the 15th century, while being frequent in texts translated from or influenced by Italian, such as *aquistar* [It. *acquistare*] 'acquire', *catiu* [It. *cattivo*] 'bad', *pensosa* 'pensive'. Likewise one may observe several idioms and syntactic patterns revealing the influence of contemporary Italian.

3.3 French sources

French literary sources, though present throughout, are especially noticeable in Book II of *Curial*. They are to be seen in the reuse of episodes, descriptions and proper names taken from romances of the Breton cycle, and from narratives of chivalry, whether in prose or in verse. From *Lancelot*, which is perhaps the most widely exploited source, come, for example, episodes like the attempted seizure of Arta in accord with the '*mala costuma d'albines*' [Fr. *mauvaise coutume* 'wicked practice']. The other major Arthurian source is *Tristan*. The description of the sweet sounds and gentle fragrances that Curial and his companions experience as they awake from the dream on Parnassus seems to be inspired by a similar description in *L'estoire du Saint Graal*. The choice of Melun as the site of the great tournament is inspired by the famous siege of 1420. The majority of the knights

who fight against or alongside Curial have French names or nicknames, even though they are of various national origins (for example, Bertrand du Chastel, Jacques de Montbrun, Parrot de Saint-Leydier, Harrich de Fonteynes, Guillaume de Roam [‘Rouen’], *le Sanglier* [‘the Boar’] of Vilahir). Also French, in the broad sense, are the noble nuns, whose names would be familiar to contemporary readers (Yolande le Meingre, Gillette de Berry, Violant de Lesparre, Isabelle de Bar, Blanche de Bretagne, Catherine d’Orleans, Mathe d’Armagnac, Beatrice de Foix), who offer hospitality to Curial on his journey to France from Montferrat. The author must have known of the anonymous *Livre des faits du bon messire Jehan le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut*, which relates the heroic deeds of this personage (1364–1421), marshal of France, and governor of Genoa, as he has Yolande le Meingre tell us that she had two brothers: ‘One is Jehan le Meingre, who is also called Boucicaut, and the other is Robin le Meingre, and both are knights of good renown’. It is uncertain if our author was familiar with *Le petit Jehan de Saintré* (completed by 1448 at the latest), whose plot is parallel in many respects to that of Book I of *Curial*, as will be explained below.

French influence is marked in vocabulary and phraseology, no doubt in tribute to the prestige of French chivalric literature. Eloquent evidence of this is the fact that many mottoes or expressions are cited in French: ‘*Coment pourra mon pauvre cuer pourter la grant dolour que li faut a souffrir?*’, ‘*Ami sans amie*’, ‘*Ans anvie que pitié*’, ‘*Laissez-les aller!*’. Several common words are borrowed, more or less Catalanized, and personal names, such as those of the heralds Bon Pensier and Bonté, and the author borrows the royal epithet ‘*tres excellent*’. The author even attempts to offer philological guidance to the reader in the following way: ‘In this book mention is made of “knights errant”, although “errant” is used incorrectly, because one should say “travelling”: *erre* is a French word that means “way”, and *errer* means “to travel”’. Some idioms and constructions that are unnatural in Catalan can be imputed to extensive reading of French sources.

3.4 Occitan sources

The literary sources of Occitan origin all seem to reach our author at second hand, either through Italian, as in the case of the *vida* of Rigaut de Berbezilh known through *Il Novellino*, and possibly also of the *vida* of Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, or through French. Lexical Occitanisms, and Occitan toponyms (such as *Gout*, or *Agout* [Fr. *Agout*], *Montbrun*, *Orenge* [Occ. *Aurenja*, Fr. *Orange*], *Saut* [Fr. *Sault*]), are probably derived in this way also. From the *vida* of Raimbaut d’Aurenja we learn that with his Lombard wife this troubadour had two daughters who married the lord of Agout and the lord of Les Baux, Prince of Orange. And from the

life of Raimbaut de Vaqueiras we learn that this troubadour, who was initially in the service of the Prince of Orange, spent the greater part of his life at the court of Montferrat. The inclusion of such place names in *Curial* is thus not fortuitous. Neither is the mention of the knight Guillaume de la Tour, a version of the name of Guilhem de la Tor, a troubadour closely associated with Lombardy.

3.5 Catalan sources

In a passage in *Curial* the author states: 'I propose to follow the usage of those Catalans who translated the books about Tristram and Lancelot from French into Catalan'. From this one might suppose that the author had access to the Catalan versions of Tristram and Yseult, and Lancelot and Guinevere, and possibly other tales of the Arthurian cycle that are alluded to, such as *Paris e Viana*, *Fronchino e Brisona*; however, according to Miquel y Planas (1932:540) 'we must conclude that the author of *Curial* did not know our texts and that his allusions go back to French and Italian originals he was familiar with; unless it be that such mention of legendary characters is merely a literary topos.'

I do not believe either that, in mentioning 'intrepid feats of arms ... written in many important and reliable books by various great and learned doctors' the author of *Curial* meant to refer to the chronicles of Desclot and Muntaner. It would be hard for an author to base himself on Desclot or Muntaner and then express a contrary view to that of those chronicles in the treatment of themes like the Duchess of Austria, the combat at Melun, the ancestry of Conradin, the death of Prince Alfonso, the presentation of Pedro the Great and Charles of Anjou, or in the designation of King *Pere* and his sons *Alfons* and *Jacme* as 'Don Pedro', 'Don Alfonso' and 'Don Jayme'. An author from 15th-century Catalonia with the slightest familiarity with the history of the Crown of Aragon could never have written such historical nonsense, or used in respect of royal titles, at least of those before the reign of Pere el Cerimoniós, forms so contrary to tradition.

For the most part, the author of *Curial* attempts to make the names of his characters appropriate to the language of their countries. But there are times when, maybe intentionally, he Catalanizes them, as in the form *Corralí* (= Conradin(o)), or as when he renders Dante's epithet '*figlio di Pietro Bernardone*' (that is, Saint Francis of Assisi) as *fill de Pere Bernadó*, or even in the case of the surname *Pandó*, if we suppose that the author took inspiration from one of the numerous Neapolitans of the period with the surname Pandone. I have mentioned previously the author's use of the definite article *la* before names like *Güelfa* and *Andrea* which has more to do with contemporary Italian practice than with Catalan practice, where such usage applied only to women of low social status.

3.6 Aragonese and Castilian sources

The author of *Curial* expresses considerable respect and affection for Aragon. Not only is he familiar with some of its unusual traditions and customs, but he assigns prominent roles to the four Aragonese knights present at Melun, and especially to Aznar d'Atrosillo, Curial's companion in arms. The novel also shows evidence of the author's contact with Castilian literature. Among pairs of lovers are included Amadis and Oriana, which implies familiarity with the original version of *Amadís de Gaula*, and, among the names of rivals in love, the character Qamar includes Madreselva and Artemisia, protagonists of the *Carta de Madreselva a Mauseol* of Juan Rodríguez del Padrón, secretary of Cardinal Juan de Cervantes (1382–1453), who resided in Italy during the sessions of the ecumenical council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence (1431–1445). The author of *Curial* may have exploited other works of the same author, who probably wrote the above work and other similar ones while in Italy. Such works were diffused among Spanish literature-lovers at the Naples court of Alfonso the Magnanimous, as is evident from their use by Joanot Martorell in *Tirant lo Blanc*, though, insofar as the *Carta de Madreselva* is concerned, with a difference that is worth noting concerning the philological propensities of the author of *Curial*: whereas Martorell copies the name as *Madresilva*, the author of *Curial* adapts it to Catalan as *Mareselva*.

The Castilian and Aragonese influence is more evident lexically in forms such as *empenyar* ('to pledge', Catalan *empenyorar*), *mentira* ('lie', Catalan *mentida*), *sombra* ('shadow', Catalan *ombra*), or in words or constructions rare in mid-15th-century Catalan, even if to be found in those parts of Catalonia and Valencia closest to Aragon.

4. Literary distinctiveness

At the time of *Curial's* first publication (1901), the editor, Rubió y Lluch, was struck by the fact that, while *Tirant lo Blanc* is 'inspired by the *matière de Bretagne*', and thus with a predominance of chivalric elements, *Curial e Güelfa* is 'warmed by Italian influence', with a predominance of sentimental elements. As a result, *Curial* is, for Rubió, not exactly either a novel of chivalry or a sentimental novel, in the Byzantine style made popular in the Renaissance. It is rather a narrative of 'composite character', in which the author seems to have intended 'to experiment with all the forms': 'the novel of adventures, the novel of chivalry, the sentimental novel, even the Moorish novel'. But the element that is most distinctive, in the context of the chivalric literature of the period, in addition to its sentimental aspect, is explicit already in the introduction: 'its realistic and

humane character, and even more its historical and national stamp, in which it is unique'. The realistic note is detectable even in Book III, so loaded with 'poetic fictions'. Thus, in the episode of Curial's dream on Mount Parnassus, before his judgement in the case opposing Dictys and Dares to Homer, 'the author, with a certain mocking malice, excuses himself on the grounds that what he is about to relate is a dream', and 'sensitive to Dante's wise advice concerning *quel ver c'ha faccia di menzogna*' he exclaims that 'the pen now turns red for shame in my hand ... for what it recounts has no witness and some will not give it credit'. Curial resembles Amadis and other knights errant only 'in the exaggerated power of his sword', but deeds of arms are only one episodic feature in the narrative as a whole. Curial always behaves as a human being, concerned for the necessities of life, to the extent that he does not undertake a voyage without being 'well provided with money and letters of exchange'. For Rubió, the Catalan-ness of *Curial* is shown not only in the exaltation of King Peter the Great, but also in the collaboration between our protagonist and Catalan knights. Rubió's analysis has been essentially repeated, although with a great variety of emphases, by all of *Curial's* critics to the present day. Anfós Par (1928) spells out that 'the author is imbued with national sense, not so much of Catalonia, but of the Crown of Aragon', while noting that 'it is in Castilian [better: Aragonese] form that he mentions the names of our kings'.

Studies subsequent to Miquel y Planas' accurate and well annotated edition and Aramon's edition, from those of Aramon himself and Pere Bohigas to the more recent studies of Lola Badia, Albert Hauf, Anton Espadaler, Júlia Butinyà, Jaume Turró, Xavier Gómez, Montserrat Piera, and many more younger scholars, have diligently focussed on other aspects of the novel, such as the role of humour and parody, its narrative structure, the treatment of love, its authorship, or its sources. Martí de Riquer has researched with insight the historical background of its characters. The sentimental plot, giving unity to an apparently diverse set of elements, revolves round the tension between ordered love – that of Curial and Guelfa, the lover who embodies reason and security – and spontaneous love – that of Curial and Lachesis, the lover who embodies seduction and sensuality. In this game of love, Curial takes on a relatively submissive and conformist role. He has no alternative if he wishes to achieve his goals. For this reason, the dénouement of the sentimental plot could not but be the triumph of convention. Curial, born in 'poverty', sees the crowning of his 'labours' in a marriage that secures for him the 'principality of Orange'; that is, entry to the nobility through the combined effect of Guelfa's protection and his own merits, a rise that is a faithful reflection of the social changes of the period. The price is renunciation of Lachesis's seductions. Guelfa accepts matrimony with one who has sufficiently purged the errors he has committed, and thereby has made himself worthy to join her rank. She

institutionalizes in this way 'the natural appetites of the flesh, which continually troubled her and goaded her unceasingly'. In fact, in the novel the prime movers in initiatives and expressions of love are women, an aspect visible even in the Muslim context of Tunis, where Qamar, despite the final renunciation, embodies sexual desire and the wish for liberation from social bonds. Melchior de Pandó guides from the shadows the whole process of Curial's purification. It is through him and through the allegories that often accompany the actions of the various characters that the didactic purpose of the work is intermittently made explicit, a purpose which remains within the strict moral conventions dominant at the time. This didactic purpose should not make us lose sight of the goal of entertainment that succeeds in a novel characterized by a great variety of situations and numerous hints of parody.

It must be admitted that the majority of critics of our text, at least until the 1980s, have set a low value on, or even considered superfluous, all the 'allegorical and mythological paraphernalia' – as Riquer puts it – that starts at the end of Book II, in which Fortune and the Misfortunes attain a notable role in the narrative. Certainly, one misses in these sections the spontaneity found in episodes like that of the nuns who give hospitality to Curial, with their uninhibited tongues, and in the charming dialogues of love between Curial and Qamar in the Tunis countryside, with a colloquial style worlds apart from the rhetorical frigidity of the protagonist's various dream visions. It is only in recent decades that the role of this 'paraphernalia' in the narrative discourse has come to be positively valued, and its cultural models and sources have been researched, with attention being drawn to what is introduced innovatively by an author still medieval, but touched by humanism. A knight, at the period of *Curial* and for the author of *Curial*, is unimaginable without the acquisition of *sapientia*, a theme which is preached in Book III. In consequence, Curial is described not only as the 'best and most valiant' knight, but also as a 'man of science who never abandons study'. The introduction of 'poetic fictions' – bait for the potential reader dazzled by humanism – completes the detailed landscape of contemporary European social life and intellectual debate that is *Curial e Güelfa*. The great enigma of its authorship remains unsolved; identification of the author would help to orient the interpretation of not a few puzzles in the text.

Meanwhile, we can enjoy a narrative that is captivating and enjoyable, written not only with fine literary sensitivity, but also using rich and varied resources of language that the author has worked on with precision. It is true that at times, as Par remarked, the artificial effects of polishing are too evident, and they rob certain sections of freshness and spontaneity. Even so, the author provides splendid dialogues and rich descriptions, flavoured with a priceless colloquial language that may well reflect features of the author's own speech.

5. Linguistic originality

As mentioned above, both Milà y Fontanals and Rubió y Lluch insisted on the Catalan origins of the author of *Curial e Güelfa* without remarking that, at the beginning of Book I, the expression ‘in Catalonia,’ inserted into the blank following ‘A long time ago, as I have read, there lived ...’ appears to contradict the statements in the novel on the ‘Lombard’ origin, specifically Montferrat, of the protagonist. Rubió published it with the subtitle ‘Catalan novel of the fifteenth century’. But this is not the conclusion of the earliest non-Catalan writers to discuss the work. Sanvisenti (1905: 106) adduced cultural criteria to demonstrate the linguistic ‘Italian-ness’ of the ‘original *Curial*’. Menéndez y Pelayo (1905: 250) hypothesized that ‘its origin may lie in a short love story, written in Italian’, and concluded: ‘the impression *Curial* leaves is of a foreign work adapted by a Catalan, rather than a work originally conceived in Catalonia’.

Catalan writers on *Curial* have generally done no more than repeat the arguments of Rubió y Lluch, considering that he had left its ‘Catalan origin well established’. Thus, for Miquel y Planas (1932), the author is a Catalan because ‘as such he speaks of our country and its institutions, and includes in his narrative not only Catalan characters of historical significance, but also others who seem to belong among the ranks of his personal acquaintance’. More cautious is the position of Giuseppe Sansone (1963: 214), who believes that the question of the original language of *Curial* ‘is insoluble at present, depending as it does purely on judgement of internal elements that do not provide sufficient or necessary support, so that every opinion is doomed to remain in the sphere of the hypothetical’. Antoni Comas (1968: 104) suggested that the work could have been ‘composed originally in Catalan or Italian’. More recently the Italian Olimpio Musso (1991: 47) has taken up again with new arguments the proposal of Sanvisenti, to conclude, overconfidently, that *Curial* is a ‘literal translation of an original written in a language other than Catalan’, which must be ‘old Italian’. Such was not the view of Anfós Par (1928: 85), for whom the ‘generally classical flavour’ of the Catalan in *Curial* corresponds to the ‘relative purity of the [language of the] second quarter of the 15th century’. All this points to the desirability of a detailed linguistic investigation of the language of *Curial*, updating Par’s important contribution, so as to throw more light on this question.

The Italian elements in *Curial* mentioned previously are so numerous (explicit and implicit sources, place names and personal names, features of vocabulary and syntax, plot type) that we should not ignore the suggestion of Menéndez y Pelayo. However, there is one argument that makes the hypothesis of a translation from Italian less probable: the author displays an excellent mastery of Catalan, both as regards the chancery register and literary language in general and as concerns

the possibilities of expressive variation according to place and status. Indeed, many of the formulas used even in the dialogues reflect the habits of chancery prose, particularly in the learned preambles of royal correspondence from the chancery. The use of archaizing forms and constructions displays the author's evident familiarity with a literary language more like that of the late 14th century than that of the mid 15th, while the inclusion of many neologisms not previously recorded in the major works of Catalan literature, though present in Italian, confirms the author's intimate knowledge of Italian culture. He was also up to date with Catalan lexical innovations which he uses in alternation with more traditional synonyms. The author's delight in incorporating morphological, syntactic and lexical features of other languages seems to reflect a fully conscious and deliberate intention rather than inevitable interferences from his linguistic environment. With respect to the literary sources so far identified, it is clear that the author adapts and recreates, rather than simply translating. Finally the alternation of certain synonyms and lexical variants that may already have had regional connotations suggests that the author lived somewhere where Catalan speakers from a wide diversity of regional origins came together; such a place, in the middle of the 15th century, would have to be one of the prestigious court or university centres in Italy, supplied with good libraries, such as Rome, Florence, Pisa, Siena, Ferrara, or particularly Naples. Moreover, the author's ready use of words or idioms common to two or more Western Romance languages, but absent or rare in the Catalan of the time, strengthens the impression that the author must have worked in a multilingual environment. In this light, I believe we can adopt Sansone's view that in *Curial* 'the work of a translator is very doubtful'.

For Rubió y Lluch (1901), the Catalan, rather than Valencian, origin of the author of *Curial*, cannot have been beyond question, when he argues so emphatically that 'the novel being so patriotic and partial, I believe its anonymous author must have been Catalan. The names of the characters that are not foreign are almost all Catalan, not Valencian'. Furthermore, the language of the novel, he says, 'shows no Valencianisms and tends more to forms in *a* than in *e*', that is, Rubió detects a tendency to confuse the unstressed vowels *a* and *e*, which is characteristic of eastern Catalan, not Valencian, and says that 'a Valencian of the 15th century would not for the world have called his language "Catalan"'. Anfós Par (1928) not only insists on the eastern Catalan dialect character of the text, but in connection with the occurrence of the expression '*lenguatge cathala*', decrees that 'such an appellation excludes the possibility of the author's being Valencian'. However, he differs from Rubió y Lluch in stating that *Curial* 'achieves the highest level of perfection in the orthography of our language', with a 'solid regularity in the graphic representation of the phonemes inherited from Latin'. In 1953 Jordi Rubió i Balaguer limited himself to stating that the author 'must have been Catalan and not Valencian'. For

Joan Ruiz i Calonja, 'it is quite clear that the author of *Curial e Güelfa* was from Catalonia, from the eastern dialect region'. Pere Bohigas (1976) was inclined to think that 'the author was from Catalonia, inasmuch as the knights that surround the King of Aragon are Catalan and Aragonese, and it seems to me that if there had been Valencians, the author would have said so'. Anton Espadaler (1984) notes that the name *Honorada* of the Lombard Curial's mother is 'perfectly Barcelonès', and 'in no way' accepts the hypothesis of Valencian authorship of *Curial* 'for linguistic reasons', particularly in the light of the work's 'controlled prose and neglect of Valencians'. For Sansone (1963), the author's geographical origin 'is a problem destined to remain unsolved in the current state of knowledge'.

The most prestigious lexicographers of Catalan, however, have taken a different view. In 1954, Joan Coromines presented *Curial* as a 'Catalan novel, written around 1450, whose vocabulary seems to suggest a Valencian author'; and in 1973 [1976] Germà Colón found in the lexical choices in *Curial* 'sufficient basis to suppose that *Curial* was written by a Valencian'. Colón drove the point home further in 1985, affirming, in the light of the consistent presence of certain Valencian vocabulary preferences that 'there are many signs pointing to the novel's having been written by a Valencian', although there does not exist 'conclusive proof'. And indeed, the preference, in some cases absolute, for graphic variants with *a* rather than *e*, like *anvides* 'in vain', *jagant* 'giant', *llauger* 'light', *malair* 'to curse', *sancer* 'whole', in a text such as *Curial* characterized in general by maintenance of the distinction between unstressed *a* and *e*, immediately suggests an author from Valencia or Western Catalonia. And if we examine carefully the vocabulary of *Curial*, we find forms, variants and senses hardly attested in Catalonia in the mid 15th century, or at best only exceptionally and nearly always in texts from the far west or south-west. That the author of *Curial* is well aware of dialect diversity within Catalan is clearly shown by his use of synonym pairs, in which alongside a learned or more general term he offers a typically Valencian alternative: *alqueries e cases de les ortes* 'farmhouses', *pantà o marjal* 'swamp', *or colat o regalat* 'liquid gold', *cullereta o ranapeix* 'tadpole'. But what is most striking about the use of Valencian lexical preferences in *Curial* is that the proportion is higher even than we see in known Valencian texts of the period. Thus in the case of the word *plegar* 'to arrive', absent from literary texts from Catalonia and rare in non-literary ones, that the author of *Curial* uses alongside the more widespread synonyms *arribar* and *atènyer*, the percentage of use is higher than it is in *Tirant lo Blanc*, in Jaume Roig's *Spill*, or in Isabel de Villena's *Vita Christi*. As far as dialect origin is concerned, the absence from *Curial* of a good number of lexical choices favoured in eastern Catalonia, compared with the presence of Valencian synonyms, must be significant. There are, then, more than enough reasons to conclude that the author of *Curial* may have been Valencian.

6. The historical context

6.1 The historical setting

Although with some anachronisms, the historical events evoked in *Curial* are situated during the lifetime of Peter the Great (1240–1285) as prince and as King of Aragon (1276–1285), and his opponent Charles of Anjou, King of Naples (1254–1285). Specifically, the historical events related in the novel begin after the death of Manfred, King of Sicily, (1266) and before the death of Conradin (1268), as we are told that Conradin is the reigning monarch when Curial arrives in Sicily; they end with the challenge of Bordeaux (1283), reflected in the novel in the combat of Melun. These events coincide in chronology with a large part of the reign of William VII, Marquis of Montferrat (1253–1292).

Among the historical personages of the time who appear in *Curial*, Prince Enrique of Castile stands out, located in the novel in Tunis, where, in fact, between 1260 and 1266, and between 1291 and 1294, he was in the service of the King of Tunis. Other characters in the novel, all of them knights, namely, Asbert de Mediona, Pere de Montcada, Ramon Folch de Cardona, Blasco d'Alagon, and Pere Cornell, bear the name of real people of the time. Galceran de Mediona is identified in the text as the son of Asbert de Mediona, who was Captain of Syracuse in 1282, and ambassador to the Sultan of Morocco Abu Yaqub a decade later. More frequently, though, the period is evoked with personal names resembling real ones, as is the case with Ponç d'Orcau, Dalmau and Roger d'Oluja, Johan Martinez de Luna, Johan Ximenez d'Urrea, Aznar d'Atrosillo, Jacme Perpunter or Faraj.

The principal anachronism concerns Curial's time in Tunis, in that if, according to the novel, some eight years pass between the combat at Melun and Curial's release in Tunis, the year of his release should be 1291, a date well after the end of the reign of Peter the Great, though coinciding with the beginning of Enrique of Castile's second period in Tunis. However, the story is after all fictional, and the concern of the author was not so much the accuracy of the historical facts inserted as the plausibility of a particular historical setting. The plausibility is such that we can hardly fail to notice the intention of the author to recreate the historical confrontation between Pedro of Aragon and Charles of Anjou, which must have reminded the likely reader of the novel of many parallels with the political situation in Naples after the death of Queen Joanna II (1435).

6.2 The contemporary historical context

One of the strategies the anonymous author employs in the service of verisimilitude is that of including in the novel names of persons associated with the period of composition. One such is Guillaume du Chastel, a famous historical Breton knight, who died in 1404, one of whose brothers, TanneGuy du Chastel, had fought in Valencia in 1407, before King Martin the Humane, against knights such as Pere de Montcada (whose name also appears in *Curial*). Also among the names that seek to evoke the current time, either literally or approximately, are those of the noble nuns who give *Curial* hospitality in their convent.

Similarly, the mention in a favourable context of ‘Raimonde de Gout, daughter of the Lord of Sault’ would have reminded potential readers of the novel of a real individual, Foulques III d’Agout, son of Ramon d’Agout, chamberlain of King René, who resided in Naples while the king reigned there (1435–1442). Foulques III was related to the family of Les Baux of Provence, Princes of Orange. One branch of the Baux installed themselves in Naples under the Angevins, where they Italianized their name as *Del Balzo*, while retaining the arms of Orange. The author of *Curial* extracted the reference to Orange from the biography of the troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, but we should not ignore the possibility that he had contemporary circumstances in mind also: Francesco del Balzo (1410–1482), Duke of Andria, member of the Sacro Regio Consiglio, a devout man of letters, was one of the great supporters of Alfonso the Magnanimous, and was well steeped in Catalan culture. Such a personage might well provide the profile for a dedicatee of *Curial*. His daughter, Antonia del Balzo, was, by the way, the lady who, in 1500, obtained for Isabella d’Este, Marchioness of Mantua, a copy of *Tirant lo Blanc*, so that she could have it translated into Italian.

7. Portrait of the author

Rubió y Lluç (1901) considered that the author of *Curial* must have been ‘one of the servants in the administration of the Aragonese King [Alfonso the Magnanimous] in Naples’. Anfós Par (1928) claimed that the location of the author’s ‘literary education’ (though not of his birth), with his ‘vast erudition’, had to be ‘an important centre of cultural education, such as Barcelona or Vic’. Aramon (1930) took a similar view, affirming that the ‘his place of education, if not of birth’ must be in eastern Catalonia, but he added that he was inclined to suppose ‘with many reservations’ that the author ‘made some visits abroad that put him in possession of that culture he was fond of displaying’. Miquel y Planas (1932) believed that to

suppose that 'the author of *Curial* spent some periods in Italia would be to offer a reasonable explanation for his literary Italianism'. Manuel de Montoliu (1961) considered that he must have been a Catalan 'familiarized by long residence in Italy with the atmosphere, literary tastes and customs of that country'. Martí de Riquer (1964) suggests a Catalan who, in his youth might have visited Montferrat, the home of the mother of the unfortunate pretender to the throne of Aragon, Jaume d'Urgell, and in mature years might have nostalgically poured into *Curial* his memories of the Montferrat court. For Antoni Comas (1968) the author could have been a Catalan or an Italian who 'perhaps intended to foster, in Italy, a trend of opinion favourable to the cause of the house of Aragon'. Pamela Waley (1976) proposed to identify the author as Ramon de Perellós, on the grounds of his family's connections with the Duchy of Burgundy, a friendly state both in historical reality and in the fictional world of the novel. I myself suggested in 1980 that, if the author was a Valencian official in the Neapolitan court of Alfonso the Magnanimous, one of the best placed literary candidates was the royal secretary Joan Olzina, though I would not maintain that hypothesis now. Pere Balanyà (1980) inclined towards a cleric connected with King Alfonso, probably Alfons de Borja. Anton Espadaler (1984) originally put his money on an author originating from 'a dialect zone transitional between eastern and western Catalan, with predominance of eastern features', and an opponent of Alfonso and a nostalgic supporter of Jaume d'Urgell who might have dedicated the work to Queen Maria of Castile. More recently he has linked the author with the circle of Hug Roger III (1451–1491), Count of Pallars Sobirà, at the time of the civil war between Joan II of Aragon and the Catalan Generalitat. Júlia Butinyà (1999), by contrast, is convinced of the authorship of Mossèn Gras. For Musso (1991) he would be a 'Tuscan author'. This diversity of positions makes clear the difficulty of answering the question, but it should not prevent future researchers from formulating new well-argued hypotheses of authorship, if only for the richness of perspectives they open and the intellectual stimuli they provoke.

In the novel there are several clues to suppose that the author is concealed behind the figure of Melchior de Pandó, a surname that on two occasions surfaces as Pandolfo. The two surnames Pandone and Pandolfo, were current in 15th-century Naples, and liable to confusion so that, in one case, Camillo Pandone, a court official of John of Anjou, is documented as 'Pandolfo'. If this were so, the author would be a man of about fifty, with excellent command of Catalan and Italian, fully integrated into Italian cultural life, a reader of Catalan and French literature of chivalry, with knowledge of Latin and with philological inclinations, able to understand Castilian, having close contacts with mercantile circles and more or less detailed information about northern Italy, a defender of the Aragonese cause, and insofar as the concept is applicable in the 15th century, a Ghibelline

supporter with Franciscan sympathies, the latter characteristic being shared with his admired Dante.

In the light of the considerations I have been spelling out, there are good reasons to believe the author of *Curial* may have been a person present at, or associated with, the Neapolitan court of Alfonso the Magnanimous, a native speaker of Catalan, probably of Valencian origin, resident in Italy for most of his life and knowledgeable about its political, ecclesiastical and cultural circumstances, who put into *Curial* the fruits of his preferred reading, and in mature years, could reflect with satisfaction, like the old priest Simeon, that he had lived to see his dream fulfilled: the Aragonese dynasty on the throne of Naples and reconciled with the papacy.

8. Parallels and connections with *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*

We know that Antoine de la Sale (c. 1388–1464) dedicated *L'histoire et plaisante chronique du Petit Jehan de Saintré et de la jeune Dame des Belles Cousines* to John of Anjou, Duke of Calabria, while he was his tutor (1435–1448). Now the anonymous author of *Curial*, who also dedicated his work to a great lord whose name has not come down to us, may possibly have known of that work, inasmuch as *Curial*, especially Book I, shows many parallels with the themes of *Saintré*. It is even possible that the two authors were acquainted with each other, as Antoine de la Sale spent at least two periods residing in Naples, between about 1420 and 1427, in the service of Louis III of Anjou, and again between 1438 and 1442, in the service of René of Anjou, while the latter reigned there *de facto*. The setting of both novels is primarily Italian, at a period when Naples, which in the 13th and 14th centuries had formed one kingdom with the county of Provence, was in dispute between René of Anjou, Count of Provence (1435–1480), and Alfonso the Magnanimous (1442–1458), in a context of political, ideological and military conflict between the two parties.

La Dame des Belles Cousines de France, also a widow, behaves towards Jehan de Saintré, whom she met when he was thirteen years old, like Guelfa does towards Curial: she has him educated, gives him money, and requires of him secrecy and faithfulness in love. Trained in arms and letters, Saintré leaves the court and heads for the lands of the King of Aragon, in a parallel manner to Curial's heading for the lands of the King of France. In Barcelona he achieves great feats fighting with fictional knights who bear plausible names, such as Guerau de Cervelló, Frederic de Luna, and Francesc de Montcada, among others. Afterwards he covers himself with glory fighting against the Turks in Germany, and his fame reaches the French court, where he is greatly celebrated, just as Curial is in Book III. The two plots diverge, though, in that while Curial obtains recognition from Guelfa and marries

her, Saintr  learns, on his return to his own country, that the Dame des Belles Cousines has accepted the love of an abbot. Saintr  gives the abbot a beating, and at the point of slapping the Dame, refrains from doing so in consideration of the benefits she granted him in other times, but not without proclaiming to the court her infidelity in love, and, in consequence, his own refusal to serve her.

There is an abundant critical literature on *Saintr * which considers it a *roman   clef*, though with very diverse interpretations. The thread of the argument, the setting, the style and the date of *Curial* and *Saintr * are so close that it is not too bold to ask whether one was a response to the other. We should have some clue if, just as we know the dedicatee of *Saintr *, we knew the name of the person to whom *Curial* is intended to be dedicated, who obviously would be a partisan of the Aragonese cause. In *Saintr *, could the degradation of the *belle dame sans merci*, a lecherous widow – symbol of the corrupt hierarchical Church among the *fideli d'amore*, so numerous in Italy, Provence, and France – represent Antoine de la Sale's revenge on a papacy that has betrayed the cause of Anjou by recognizing Alfonso as King of Naples? Is Guelfa, a widow who succeeds in retaining her virtue, the response to the Dame des Belles Cousines?

9. A work of entertainment with an overt political message

It is obvious that a novel is not the most suitable means of making political propaganda. Nevertheless, historiography in the Middle Ages was one of the principal tools of political propaganda, and we must not forget that the author of *Curial* sought to give historical plausibility to his fictional narrative. For that reason, if we situate *Curial* in Italy at the time of Alfonso the Magnanimous and accept that its author showed a decided preference for the Aragonese cause, he could hardly be indifferent to a political issue of great salience: the claims of Ren  of Anjou and of Alfonso the Magnanimous to the throne of Naples on the death without heir of Joanna II in 1435, and hence the confrontation between the partisans of the Angevin and Aragonese causes, reproducing in the 15th century the parallel conflict of the 13th, between the Guelphs, supporting the papacy, and the Ghibellines, supporting the Holy Roman Empire.

Even though today some elements justifying the possible political intention of the anonymous author may escape us, I believe the ones we see are obvious and numerous enough that we should consider it seriously. Comas had already drawn attention to it (1968: 104–105) in suggesting that ‘if we accept that the work's origin is in the court of Alfonso the Magnanimous, we may be able to relate it to this monarch's claim to the Duchy of Milan, against the view of the Holy See’ and suspect that the author's intention was to create ‘in Italy, a climate of opinion

favourable to the cause of the house of Aragon. In the light of these suppositions, it would make some sense to bring up to date the actions of King Peter the Great, the king of the Sicilian Vespers, and the anti-French climate of the novel would receive some justification. Not only that, but the very name of the female protagonist, Guelfa, and the intermittent contrast of Peter the Great with Charles of Anjou, the papacy's candidate for the thrones of Naples and Sicily, would justify the consideration that the author had a 'more concretely defined goal' than merely that of offering Peter the Great as the 'supreme example of knighthood that medieval Europe could offer'. Balanyà (1980: 53) takes the same line and wonders 'whether, after all, Curial might be the personification of Catalonia, and Guelfa that of the papacy or the Church'. I think neither of them is far from the mark provided we substitute Naples for the Duchy of Milan, and the Crown of Aragon for Catalonia. Moreover, we should remember that in the 13th century the ancestral representatives of the Guelphs were the Dukes of Bavaria, and that in the novel Lachesis, the rival in love of Guelfa, who ends up marrying the heir to the French throne, is also the daughter of the Duke of Bavaria.

Indeed, there are reasons to believe that the author of *Curial* used the work to promote in his readers an attitude favourable to the Aragonese cause, parallel to the attempt in Neapolitan dynastic historiography to justify the claim of Alfonso the Magnanimous to southern Italy, against the pretensions of René of Anjou, initially supported by the papacy. So in the novel Guelfa's name suggests the Church, or more exactly the papacy, which claimed the right to nominate the candidate to the throne of Naples, as it had previously done with respect to Sicily. The author of *Curial*, presenting the knightly joust between Curial and the Neapolitan Boca de Far as a personal confrontation, 'knowing that both burned with flames kindled at the same fire', that is, that they were rivals to obtain Guelfa's goodwill, appears to suggest the struggle between the Aragonese and Angevin parties for the legitimacy that only the Church could accord. In contrast, Lachesis, the Fate that rules men's destiny, would be a personification of the fickle Queen Joanna II of Naples.

The pardon that Guelfa grants to Curial, after years of trial, may represent the recognition by Pope Eugenius IV of the claim of Alfonso. At any rate, it would have been evident for *Curial's* contemporaries that Alfonso's victory (1442) over René of Anjou reproduced the situation in 1282–83, when Peter the Great was victorious over Charles of Anjou. If the author is concealed behind Melchior de Pandó, we may see, in the satisfaction with which, at the end of the novel, he takes his leave of Curial after his marriage to Guelfa, an expression of the fulfilment of the political ideals of Dante, with whom he is in such sympathy: the resolution of the conflict between Guelphs and Ghibellines, or, transferring the situation to the 15th century, the new harmony between the papacy and the Crown of Aragon. It seems plausible that the author – apparently a loyal son of the Church, as Dante

was – should have made use of analogies between history and fiction with propaganda purposes: defending the cause of Alfonso the Magnanimous (Curial), while promoting the necessity of obtaining the consent of Rome (Guelfa) to possession of the throne of Naples (Orange).

Now we may wonder about possible reasons for the choice of Montferrat that would provoke in the reader of *Curial* some relevant association of ideas. Musso (1991) successfully demonstrated the great parallelism between the Montferrat contemporary with Peter the Great, the historical hero of the novel, and the Montferrat of the mid 15th century. The Marquis of Montferrat, William VII, known as ‘the Great’ (1253–92), son of Boniface II, was fourteen years old (1257) when he married Elisabeth of Gloucester, while his thirteen-year-old sister, Alasina, married the lord of Milan in the same year. In the novel, Guelfa marries the lord of Milan at the age of thirteen, and his sister Andrea marries the Marquis of Montferrat, ‘a young bachelor’, perhaps no more than fourteen years old. And in twelfth-century Montferrat, the troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras falls in love with Beatrice, sister of the Marquis Boniface I (according to the troubadour biography; in reality, Beatrice was the marquis’s daughter). This sentimental tale is the core of the *Curial* plot, and may have been conflated with the memory of the relation between Alasina and the lord of Milan in the folk memory of Montferrat. Many of the troubadours who were in the service of the Marquises of Montferrat were *poveri cavalieri*, just as Curial is. William VII was accustomed to visit Casale, in his role as *capitaneus* of the *commune* of Casale, and in the novel the town is portrayed as one of the seats of the marquises. Finally, Musso notes, in connection with the *terminus post quem* for the novel proposed by Espadaler, 1445, in which year Alba returned to Montferrat, that this criterion is irrelevant if the author had in mind the period of William VII, as Alba, place of residence of the marquises of Montferrat according to the novel, became part of Montferrat territory in 1282.

Further arguments can be added to Musso’s. One of the most pertinent facts in seeking to explain the choice of Montferrat in the novel, and thereby the anti-Angevin purpose of the author of *Curial*, is that the citizens of Alba, who were vassals of Charles of Anjou, surrendered the city to the Marquis of Montferrat, much as, shortly afterwards, the Sicilians rebelled against the same Charles of Anjou, offering the crown of Sicily to Peter the Great. There is yet another reason, related to the Guelph-Angevin conflict, for choosing Montferrat, which at the time of writing the novel was ruled by John IV Palaeologus (1445–1464): the anti-Angevin position taken by the Palaeologi. Inasmuch as Curial is the great defender of the King of Aragon, his deeds must have reminded potential readers of the novel of the quasi-legendary figure of the Neapolitan John of Procida, the great

hero of the Sicilian Vespers in the service of Peter the Great, who appealed to the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus (1261–1282) seeking financial support for his Sicilian enterprise. The names *Festa* and *Vengeance* borne by Curial's maid and herald might also remind the reader of the Sicilian Vespers, which were initially called *la festa* by the Sicilians, whose rebel cry was 'Vengeance'. Contemporaries of *Curial* familiar with the Guelph-Ghibelline conflict would be aware that, shortly after the installation of the Palaeologi in Montferrat (1330), specifically in 1345, Marquis John II Palaeologus, grandson of Emperor Michael VII, put an end to Angevin domination in Piedmont, while at the same period the Principality of Orange became free of the Anjous of Provence. In the novel, Curial leaves Montferrat, and at the end, as reward for his deeds, receives the Principality of Orange. With the author of *Curial's* propagandist objectives, the choice of Montferrat, which expelled the Angevins from Piedmont (evoking Sicily expelling the Angevins from the island), and of the Principality of Orange, which freed itself from the Angevins (evoking the Naples freed from René of Anjou by the King of Aragon), must have been clearly identifiable by the novel's potential audience. Surely someone like Francesco del Balzo would have well understood the political message distilled from *Curial*.

Antoni Ferrando
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Translator's note

In the translation of the text of *Curial and Guelfa* into English I have drawn both inspiration and many specific solutions from the pioneering translation of Pamela Waley (1982). In compiling the explanatory footnotes I have made some use of those in Barberà's French translation (2007); I am also very grateful to Antoni Ferrando for comments and advice relating to the notes. I have slightly shortened Antoni Ferrando's introduction to the novel, suppressing some linguistic examples. Finally, I would like to thank Vicent Martines for having invited me to undertake what has proved to be a rewarding task which has served to increase my admiration for the work and its unknown author.

Max Wheeler
Oldlands, Sussex
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Book One

[1.0 PROLOGUE]

How great is the danger, how many are the anxieties and cares of those who strive in love! Even though some, favoured by Fortune, after countless mishaps reach the haven they desire, yet so many are there who have a justified grievance against her that I can scarcely believe that among a thousand unfortunates more than one may be found to have brought his cause to a glorious conclusion. If the case that is presented below is judiciously considered, though there will be many who say that they would wish their own love to take a similar course, yet, knowing the certainty of the suffering that this bitter sweetness is full of, and the uncertainty whether the outcome will be favourable or unfavourable, they should take great care to avoid setting out on this amorous, or rather, dolorous, path. Thus I shall relate to you with what cost a gentle knight and a noble lady loved each other, and how, with great trials and suffering, and afflicted by many misfortunes, after a long while they achieved the reward of their endeavours.

[1.1 CURIAL ENTERS THE SERVICE OF THE MARQUIS OF MONTFERRAT]

A long time ago, as I have read, there lived in ... a gentleman called ...¹, better endowed with wisdom and the good will of his fellow men than with those goods which Fortune entrusts to men for practical use, for he was master only of a lowly house. With his wife, a most beautiful lady named Honorada, he lived unencumbered by worldly affairs, modestly and honourably; but always the couple strove to win grace of their merciful Redeemer, and applied more continual diligence to this matter than to any other. Although when they were young they had no children, in their maturity God decided to console them, and so gave them a son, whom they named Curial,² a child who from his very earliest years was fairer than any other. His father and mother were so happy with him, as they had yearned for

1. Gaps in the manuscript.

2. From the Latin *curialis* 'courtly'.