



The Journey of Transcendence: a Boethian Leitmotif for Juan Ruiz's *Libro de buen amor*

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ABSTRACT:

In the *disputación* between the Greek sage and the Roman rogue, arguably the most significant among the many exempla included in Juan Ruiz's *Libro de buen amor* (see coplas 44-70), the author adumbrates an ersatz *moraleja*, which encapsulates a model of transcendence, applicable to the structure of the entire masterpiece. Here I advance the hypothesis that the model in question stems from the trajectory of ascent that, in *De consolacione philosophiae*, Boethius perceives from the level of *praktikê* to that of *theôrêtikê*. Demonstrably, throughout the *Libro* the Boethian leitmotif illustrates, on the one hand, the process of rising above the realm of dissension (mostly caused by inordinate love) and, on the other hand, the quest for an ideal state of cosmic harmony. Thus, in the aforementioned *disputación*, Ruiz sets up an emblematic pattern of the debate, which he repeats, in a theme-and-variation arrangement of sorts, through a number of analogous episodes. These include one *pleito* (the lawsuit, presented in the form of an animal fable involving the wolf and the fox) and two *peleas*: first, a dispute between Sir Love and Ruiz's poetic persona; second, a mock-epic battle between *Carnal* ('Carnival') and *Quaresma* ('Lent'). An analysis of the *pleito* and the *peleas* unveils the modus operandi by which Ruiz asserts the limitations of ratiocination and privileges the skill of interpretive intuition.

RESUMEN:

La disputación entre el sabio de Grecia y el ribaldo de Roma puede considerarse, con sobrada razón, el más significativo entre los exempla incluidos en el *Libro de buen amor* de Juan Ruiz, Arcipreste de Hita. En el memorable pasaje (coplas 44-70), el autor perfila una moraleja «ersatz», que, a su vez, encierra un modelo de transcendencia aplicable a la estructura total de esa obra maestra. En este ensayo se adelanta la hipótesis de que el modelo en cuestión estriba en la trayectoria de ascenso que Boecio, en su *De consolacione philosophiae*, percibe desde el nivel de *praktikê* al de *theôrêtikê*. Se intenta demostrar, en efecto, que, a lo largo del *Libro*, el leitmotiv boeciano ilustra, por un lado, la subida por encima del ámbito del conflicto causado por el amor desordenado y, por otro lado, la búsqueda de un estado ideal de armonía cósmica. Cabe evidenciar, por lo tanto, la manera en que plantea Juan Ruiz un patrón emblemático de debate —el patrón mismo que reitera, con peculiar esquema de tema y variaciones, en una serie de episodios análogos. Estos incluyen el pleito del lobo y la zorra y dos peleas: la primera, un altercado entre el Arcipreste (convertido en personaje) y don Amor; la segunda, una batalla burlesca entre don Carnal y doña Cuaresma. El análisis del pleito y las

peleas revela el modus operandi según el cual Ruiz afirma los límites del raciocinio y privilegia las mañas de la intuición interpretativa.

Visions of World Harmony

Written in the early fourteenth century, the *Libro de buen amor*, a poem of seven thousand two hundred and thirteen verses, distributed into one thousand seven hundred and nine stanzas (mostly monorhymed quatrains), has been attributed to a Spanish author, who goes by the name of Juan Ruiz, alias Arcipreste de Hita.¹ Although the available data amount to precious little even for a rudimentary biography of Juan Ruiz, there can be little doubt as to the author's towering stature as one of the greatest literary figures of all time.² The *Libro* has won, deservedly, high praise and wide acclaim, but, oddly enough, critics are in profound disagreement on such fundamental issues as those that pertain to the cohesiveness of the entire composition and to the problematic ambiguity perceivable in the frequent first-person declarations, proffered by the authorial voice. In fact, the poet's persona engages, more often than not, in sound moralistic didacticism only to undermine or even contradict, in the same breath, the avowed seriousness of his intent and purpose with the tongue-in-cheek tone and downright jocular slant of his presentation. Small wonder that, in view of the shifting ground of the Arcipreste's rhetoric, the *Libro* should provoke, as indeed it has provoked, controversial, often conflicting interpretations among generations of readers. To appreciate the complexity and variety of these interpretations, one need only leaf through the indispensable «*Libro de buen amor*» *Studies* (ed. G.B. Gybbon-Monypenny) and *A Companion to the Libro de buen amor* (ed. Louise M. Haywood and Louise O. Vasvári).

Lest we become overwhelmed by the tide of controversy, we do well in taking to heart the episode provided as a key *exemplum* by Juan Ruiz himself. Such a crucial passage consists of a «disputación» between Greeks and Romans, a curious contest, which, though rife with potential dire consequences of impending disaster, comes, thank Heavens, to a happy, peaceful resolution. In the present essay I argue that the *exemplum* in question challenges the reader to transcend those aspects of indeterminacy that some would find perverse and exasperating in Ruiz's discourse. Juan Ruiz, I submit, foreshadows throughout his primordial «Book» visions of cosmic harmony, inherent in the very ideal of *buen amor* he fervently espouses and expounds upon. Demonstrably, what prevails in the long

1.– Apropos of the *Libro de buen amor*, *copla* is the common designation for the aforementioned four-verse stanza. See the following definition provided by Daly and Zahareas:

...a monorhymed quatrain conventionally used in Spanish narrative, didactic poems. Each line generally has fourteen syllables, usually divided into seven-syllable half lines. Although Juan Ruiz is meticulous about rhymes, he does not follow the *cuaderna vía* rules rigidly; on the contrary, he often uses sixteen-syllable lines. (435)

There are in the *Libro* other types of stanzas pertaining to compositions, which Daly and Zahareas describe as follows:

There are twenty-one lyrics, usually in groups, either scattered among the narrative quatrains or appended at the end; eleven are religious poems and nine have worldly themes. (435)

For the exact verse count see the edition by Giorgio Chiarini.

2.– For the essential orientation on the biography of Juan Ruiz, see Gybbon-Monypenny, *Introducción* 7-16.

run in the reading «by the book» —that is, Juan Ruiz's «Book of Good Love»— is the author's overall optimistic outlook and breathtaking universalist scope.

What more refreshing and inviting prospect of multiculturalism for our troubled times, for the sectarianism rampant in our strife-sticken world? There are, to be sure, seasoned scholars that would not look askance at the holistic, comforting message to be derived from *Libro de buen amor*. Witness, for instance, no other than Leo Spitzer, *médiévaliste extraordinaire*, who, reflecting upon the very *exemplum* we have just referred to, sees in it nothing less than the triumph of

la verdad transcendente a toda aplicación moral práctica (*Non ha mala palabra, si non es a mal tenida*) de que Dios, que ha dado a los hombres (palabras y) gestos para que se entiendan unos a otros, lleva a cabo por encima de los designios de los hombres y a pesar, por decirlo así, de sus equivocaciones, un hecho racional... (105)

Working out his own makeshift moral for the all-important *exemplum*, Spitzer concludes that

Dios puede servirse de la mano del rústico y de las equivocaciones de los sabios para alcanzar sus propios y justos fines. Entraña este pasaje [the *disputación*] la afirmación de la ambigüedad del lenguaje humano, ambigüedad que es, sin embargo, para Dios un medio de manifestar con toda transparencia su voluntad. (105)

Leo Spitzer's insights are, doubtless, inspirational and so are those to be gained from the ground-breaking study (*Recherches sur le Libro de buen amor de Juan Ruiz, Archiprêtre de Hita*) by Félix Lecoy. Both Spitzer and Lecoy, among other superb critics we cannot consider for the time being, provide a solid base for envisaging the *Libro del Arcipreste*, in its coherent, all-encompassing design, as a «divine comedy» of sorts —the sui generis *Divine Comedy* of the fourteenth century. Guided, then, by Juan Ruiz and the likes of Leo Spitzer and Félix Lecoy, we may embark on a journey of Boethian transcendence and —why not?— reassuring *consolatio*.

Signs of Miscommunication

The reader of the *Libro de buen amor* will have little difficulty recalling the first *exemplum* —first in order of appearance and, arguably, in importance— among many other kindred specimens interspersed throughout the magnum opus.³ The *exemplum* in question, which takes up twenty-seven quatrains (*coplas* 44-70), is generally referred to as the disputation between the Greeks and the Romans. Appropriately, in the standard editions the crucial passage bears the rubric of «la disputación que los griegos e los romanos en uno ovieron» (23).

The *disputación* involves, to borrow Juan Ruiz's own terms, the *dotor de Grecia* ('the wise man from Greece') and the *ribald romano* ('the Roman hoodlum') (46b-c).⁴ The circumstances of such an odd match may be described in few words. The Romans submit to the Greeks a request for a code of laws. The Greeks impose the debate to test whether the

3.— As evidenced in the edition by Giorgio Chiarini, *Libro de buen amor* contains 7213 verses.

4.— I borrow the text and the translation from the edition of Raymond S. Willis (see «Works Cited» below).

Romans are intellectually and culturally fit to receive the laws. These conditions, as we soon find out, are subverted by a clever ruse devised by the Romans. It is not hard to figure out why the *dotor-ribald* confrontation, so deliciously presented by Juan Ruiz, should make a lasting impression on the reader's mind. Relishing, as it becomes apparent, the role of the narrator, the authorial persona exploits to full effect the comical nuances of the tale, derived, in all probability, from a treatise by Francis Accursius (Francesco Accorso), the eminent Florentine jurist of the thirteenth century (Parker 35). Understandably, the hilarious anecdote elicits automatically the peal of a hearty laugh. Imagine the circumstances under which the disputation is conducted. In the absence of a common language, the debaters are compelled to forgo the normal means of communication and resort to a makeshift exchange of hand signals. In view of the absurd situation, the dialogue, not surprisingly, comes to a complete collapse as each disputant fails to understand the other's position and intention.

After recovering from our immediate reaction, we notice a glaring irony: the wise man from Greece proves to be not so wise, after all. Oblivious to the most obvious dictates of prudence and common sense, he takes up a topic which would be extremely difficult —if not altogether impossible— to deal with even under the most favorable conditions. He tries hard, to be sure, as well he might, to concentrate his best efforts on a few straightforward gesticulations. «Mostró sólo un dedo» ('[he] held out one finger') (55b). Then, upon noticing that his companion «mostró luego tres dedos» ('held out three fingers') (56a), the sage «[l]evantóse..., tendió la palma llana, / e assentóse luego...» ('stood up, and held out his open palm, and then he sat down') (57a-b). Plain, simple, and expeditious enough —or so the venerable *dotor* would think! What he intends to dispatch by the waving of his hand is a subject no less daunting than the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Needless to say, the hoodlum does not rise to the occasion. How could he? Far from the rarefied spheres of theological disquisitions, the challenge that the Roman perceives relates exclusively to the mundane matter of devising a way to counteract threats of physical harm. When asked about his interpretation of the Greek's gestures, the fellow from Rome replies:

Díxome que con su dedo que me quebraría el ojo,
 d'esto ove ove grand pesar e tomé grand enojo,
 e respondíl' con saña, con ira e con cordojo
 que yo le quebraría, ante todas las gentes,
 con los dedos los ojos e con el pulgar los dientes. . . . (61b-62b)

(«He said that with his finger he would smash my eye; I was mighty unhappy about this and I got mighty angry, and I answered him with rage, with anger, and with fury, that, right in front of everybody, I would smash his eyes with my two fingers and his teeth with my thumb.») (Trans. Willis 26)

So the joke is on the naive Greek, left with the mistaken impression that the Roman has come to a complete understanding of the lofty verities of the Christian faith.

Problematic Polysemy

The laughter-inducing effect, which lends an unmistakable fetching quality to the story, may well be the only aspect of the *exemplum* about which critics readily agree. It bears pointing out that the easily recognizable comic and entertaining tenor of the piece belies a seriousness of purpose, which the poet himself would not want us to underestimate, let alone disregard entirely. In fact, the poet's persona deems fit to interject a poignant advice to the reader: «La burla que oyeres non la tengas en vil» ('[w]hatever joke you may hear don't despise it') (65a). It does not take long to discern that, as is often the case with *Libro de buen amor*, serious purpose, especially when so ostensibly declared, goes hand in glove with the unusual complexity of the text conceived as multifarious signifier. Apropos of the *disputación* that concerns us here, multifarious signification or polysemy, to use a technical term, is evidenced beyond doubt by the plethora of interpretations the passage is likely to spawn. A rapid assessment of pertinent criticism would validate the Latin proverb, «Tot caput, quot sententia» ('there is an opinion for every head'). It would seem that every student of Juan Ruiz's *Libro* invariably comes up with a different hypothesis or theory regarding the episode of the Greeks and the Romans.

How does one deal with such diversity of commentaries and arguments? Margaret R. Parker, who provides a useful review of some representative samples of these intriguing scholarly disquisitions, leads us to some rather negativistic conclusions. Parker refers, for instance, to Luis Beltrán, who recognizes that, as Parker puts it, «[t]he story suggests many things» (40). Nevertheless, in spite or, perhaps, because of this remarkable suggestiveness, Beltrán goes as far as to assert that «el espectador del *exemplum* se siente al acabar éste próximo a una situación de cero en certeza» ('the spectator of the *exemplum* feels, at the end of the piece, very close to a situation of zero in certitude') (Beltrán 84, qtd. in Parker 40). Similarly, Parker herself, in reaction to the stream of double-talk she imputes to Juan Ruiz's persona, observes that for that very *espectador* singled out by Beltrán, «no control over meaning is possible» (41).

At face value, Beltrán's and Parker's agnosticism is less than constructive. If allowed to run its natural course, it bodes a position of anything-goes relativism or, worse yet, an interpretive cul-de-sac that obviates the need for further analysis. Despite appearances to the contrary, Beltrán and Parker, of course, are not giving up on the whole idea of a methodic exploration. Parker, for her part, is conversant with the fruitful approach of those hispanists like Marina Scordilis Brownlee and Dayle Seidenspinner-Núñez, who, as Parker points out, gauge the bearings for their investigative journey by the coordinates set forth by none other than the redoubtable Arcipreste himself. These coordinates, as extrapolated from Parker's study, are: 1) the «relativity of interpretation,» 2) «the author's intentional polysemy,» and 3) the privileged position that the first *exemplum* «occupies . . . in the author's hermeneutic system» (40).

A Blurring of Boundaries

The «relativity of interpretation» allows the reader or commentator considerable leeway but does warrant the presumption of meaning gone out of control. Indeed, the text of the *disputación* is charged with polysemy, that is, with a surfeit of meaning, which responds to the author's intention and remains under the author's full control. The special role or «the privileged position» indicates a unique link between the *exemplum* and the *Libro de buen amor*: as we will see, the former turns out to be a compendium of the latter. In addition, we will find that the «hermeneutic system,» to which Brownlee also alludes, presupposes an artistic master plan, which the aforementioned *exemplum* adumbrates in more ways than one.

It follows that the reading of the *exemplum* should be guided by those discrete factors that condition the process of contextualization set in operation by Juan Ruiz himself. Let us begin, then, by identifying these factors. The next step will be to observe how they interact with one another. Thirdly, we will investigate these factors and their mutually complementary function for the light they may shed on the moral of the *exemplum*. There is a fundamental question that remains to be answered: Does the Arcipreste expect us to come up with a specific explication for the *moraleja*? Conversely, in keeping with the special makeup of his *Libro*, does the author have in mind a *moraleja* of a special kind, impervious to the ways of conventional hermeneutics? The effort to tackle the issues inherent in this radical question takes us back to the contextualizing factors we have mentioned above.

Outstanding among these is the interfacing among different sciences or realms of knowledge. There is a blurring of the borderlines that divide the domains of law, theology, and ethics. We come to appreciate how cleverly the narrator of the *disputación* episode shifts from the first to the second of the three disciplines we have just listed. The key is the word «leyes,» which indicates the object of the petition that the Romans lodge before the Greek authorities. The term is prominent in the very exordium of the narrative, as may be surmised from the following two verses:

Assí fue que romanos las leyes non avían,
e fuéronlas demandar a griegos que las tenían. (47a-b)

('Once upon a time the Romans had no laws, and they went to ask for them from the Greeks who did have them. [Trans. Willis 23])

Sheer semantics, then, determine the legal content of the debate. At the same time, the notion of «leyes,» by a certain degree of ambivalence inherent in its connotation, suggests an association with the Torah and, thus, foreshadows the discourse of the theologian. In the final analysis, the actual slide from legal to theological issues is brought about by the *dotor's* choice. Judging from *el griego's* declaration, aside from his mistaken perception, there can be no doubt as to what the discussion is, or should be, all about:

Yo le dixé que es un Dios; el romano que era
Uno en tres Personas, e tal señal feziera. (59c-d)

('I said that that there is one God; the Roman said He was One in Three Persons, and made a sign to that effect.' [Tans. Willis 27])

We are tempted to add: «El que anda por lana sale trasquilado.» The famous Spanish proverb, however, is not entirely appropriate here. The Roman, we would observe by translating the proverb, «is looking for wool and gets a good sheering» —that is, he obtains much more than he expects or deserves. The hoodlum and the people he represents ask for laws and get not only the laws but also a theologic bonus in return. Thus the proverbial sheering does not come at the expense of the Romans; on the contrary, it redounds to their great benefit, even as the outcome of the debate underscores how ridiculously distorted the learned man's perception and perspective can be. As for the Romans, if we may be allowed to quote another proverb, we would say that «they have their cake and eat it, too.»

The intercommunication we have profiled so far between law and theology attains full significance as a counterpoint of sorts for an analogous phenomenon: Juan Ruiz, we begin to realize, has been paving the way for a process of drawing together two additional spheres —those that pertain, respectively, to ethics and esthetics. Here the dynamics of intercommunication evolves into a kind of radical integration of two entities into one compound. This is to say that the ethical and esthetic strains become interwoven into a polysemous text.

At first reading we find little or no ambivalence in the telling of the tale. The *yo* of the author keeps up a moralizing tone in unison with that serious purpose that has been pointed out above. One sure way the author's moralizing alter ego safeguards the ethical frame of the story is by the numerous pieces of advice he addresses directly to the reader. Following are some representative samples: «[e]ntiende bien mis dichos e piensa la sentencia» ('[u]nderstand my words correctly and ponder their meaning' [trans. Willis 23]) (46a); «entiende bien mi libro» ('understand my book well' [trans. Willis 27]) (64d); «la manera del libro entiéndela sutil» ('the nature of the book must be understood by you as subtle' [trans. Willis 29]) (65b); «lo que buen amor dize con razón te lo pruevo» ('what good love says, I will prove to you with good reasoning' [trans. Willis 29]) (66d); [l]as de buen amor son razones encobiertas» ('[t]he utterances of good love are veiled' [trans. Willis 29]) (68a).

This ethical rhetoric, bolstered by the persistent moralizing, didactic, admonitory voice, reaches a level of saturation. At this level, that rhetoric, though sustained by the same authorial voice, merges into a different mode —a mode that may be described, appropriately, as esthetic. We witness, then, within the role exemplified by the poetic voice, a process which begins as a transition from the ethical to the esthetic dimension but ends up as a merging of the two into the polysemous text we have discerned above. The critical moment in this transition and merger is found in stanza 69, in which the extensive series of reflections that the author's persona proffers on the *exemplum* (see stanzas 64-9) comes to a head immediately before the *yo* changes its identity completely and abruptly: its being becomes that of the *Libro* itself. The author's voice vanishes totally and is replaced by the following extraordinary affirmation: «De todos instrumentos yo, libro, só pariente» (70a).

But, before delving into the prodigious copla 70, we must look back at the preceding one. It bears quoting stanza 69 and Willis's translation in full:

Do cuidares que miente dize mayor verdad;
 en las coplas pintadas yaze grand fealdad;
 dicha buena o mala por puntos la juzgad;
 las coplas con los puntos load o denostad.

(‘Where you think it [the book] is telling lies, it is speaking the greatest truth; in the bright-colored stanza is where great ugliness lies; judge a statement to be complimentary or derogatory, point by point [with hairsplitting reasoning]; praise or condemn the stanzas for their points [musical notes]: [Trans. Willis 29])

For the purpose of the present discussion we need only focus on the semantics and concomitant function of the word «puntos,» which, as we can plainly see, is used twice in the passage: respectively in 69e and 69d. Willis serves as an excellent guide for us as he captures the sharp distinction in the function of the term in reference to first an intellectual pursuit and second an artistic skill. Upon close reading we may perceive in this double referentiality a complementary tension between ratiocination («hairsplitting reasoning,» as Willis puts it) and intuition (specifically the ability to hit automatically the correct musical note). What is dramatized in these verses is the discovery of a middle ground: a space in which the *modus operandi* of the scientist or scholar converges with that of the artist. Does Juan Ruiz consider one *modus* more important than the other? Does the Arcipreste privilege one over the other through the presentation of the *disputación* between the Greeks and the Romans? We will analyze the momentous stanza 70 in an effort to come up with an answer to these questions.

Boethius’s Model

There is nothing conventional about the signification and function of *copla* 70. What is revealing about this impressive quatrain is that it replaces the ordinary *moraleja*. Thus, it becomes emblematic of one of the most striking features of the art of Juan Ruiz. Here, as in numerous similar cases, the author discards the usual pithy, precise, conclusive statement that a reader would expect as the normal recapping of an *exemplum*. Instead, Ruiz sets into motion basic functions that come to bear upon the structure or composition of the entire *Libro*. Specifically, in *copla* 70 we find out how the miscegenation of the intellectual and intuitive faculties plays out to generate another all-important contextualizing factor. This may be identified as the élan of transcendence, which, it is safe to assume, operates in harmony with the kindred dynamics already discussed apropos of the intercommunication among various disciplines, such as law, theology, ethics, esthetics.

In order to appreciate how the symbiosis among *exemplum*, surrogate *moraleja*, and the essential design of the *Libro* comes into effect, it is well to take a look at stanza 70. Following is its complete text:

De todos instrumentos yo, libro, só pariente:
 bien o mal, cuál puntares, tal diré, ciertamente;
 cuál tú dezir quesieres, y faz punto e tente;
 si puntarme sopieres siempre me abrás en miente.

(I, this book, am akin to all instruments of music: according as you point [play music] well or badly, so, most assuredly, will I speak; in whatever way you choose to speak, make a point [stop] there and hold fast; if you know how to point me [pluck my strings], you will always hold me in mind. [Trans. Willis 29])

In these verses two terms stand out as ambivalent signifiers. These, in turn, correlate with the integration of intellectual and intuitive faculties into the seminal dyad, manifested, as we have seen, in stanza 69. The terms are «instrumentes» (variant of «instrumentos») and «puntares,» each of which, in the light of the context, may be taken in two different senses. «Instrumentes» relates, concurrently, not only to the means or knowhow by which to carry out a reasoned argument but also to the device by which to produce a musical composition. The same hybrid combination of intellect and intuition is involved in the verb «puntares,» which is semantically linked, as is the noun «puntos» in stanza 69, on the one hand, to judgment by «hairsplitting reasoning,» and, on the other hand, to artistic, that is musical performance.

At this juncture it is useful to adduce by way of hypothesis, the notion of a subtext which may account for the complexity of both *copla* 70 and the *exemplum* it stands for. The hypothesis hinges on traces of a model derived from none other than Boethius's *De consolacione philosophiae*, that most influential monument of medieval Latin literature. One significant index of Boethian influence may be seen in that overall hortatory tone, which, according to eminent scholars, harks as far back as Aristotle (Crabbe 238, Walsh xxxi). Following is P. G. Walsh's explanation as to how Boethius adapts to his own purpose that consolatory principle of Aristotelian vintage:

Thus the *Consolation* is consolation in the wider sense of philosophical protreptic or exhortation—not in the Aristotelian sense of a protreptic to philosophy to satisfy that intellectual curiosity by which 'all men by nature desire to know,' but 'a protreptic towards God,' a philosophical exhortation with a specifically religious message. (xxxii)

We will see that, as one would expect, Ruiz develops his distinctive version of the protreptic or exhortation in line not with Aristotle but with Boethius. Inseparable from the general attitude of exhortation is another Boethian feature, which, as will be shown, also becomes grist for Juan Ruiz's artistic mill. It consists of an uplifting experience of transcendence of the same type as the one mentioned above in conjunction with the moralizing intention and overarching design, evinced in the *disputación* and in the *Libro* as a whole. The transcendence that brings out the Boethian qualities in Juan Ruiz's artistry proves to be, in effect, a primary trajectory of ascent, represented by the figure of the ladder embroidered on the robe of Lady Philosophy and the two letters of the Greek alphabet, namely the pi (π) and the theta (θ), also embroidered on that garment (*De consolacione* I, pr. 1). According to Anna Crabbe, the placement of the pi and the theta respectively below and above said ladder symbolizes the rise from the level of *praktikê* to that of *theôrêtikê*. In *De consolacione*, the symbolic rise, to quote directly from Crabbe's explanation, «recurs frequently» and «is reflected in the general movement of the work as the vicissitudes of politics and the material world are left behind and the argument turns more positively to a pursuit of knowledge and enlightenment» (243-4).

It behooves us to reflect on the hypothesis that has been advanced here. Now we can appreciate the two processes that Juan Ruiz unfolds before our eyes. The hindsight permits us to contemplate a synthesis at two levels: one pertains to the conjoining of law and theology on a societal or universal scale; the other corresponds to the conjugation of ethics and esthetics within the confines of an individual existence. By bringing Boethius's model to bear upon this macrocosm/microcosm interplay, we may delve into some implications of Juan Ruiz's own version of the rise from *praktikê* to that of *theôrêtikê*. We may anticipate, for the time being, the salient facets of our investigation. This will lead us to a series of fundamental questions. What is the Arcipreste's rendition of the individual's quest for the *Summum Bonum*? This is the same as to ask, How does Juan Ruiz deal with the leitmotif of *De consolacione*? Other queries that come to mind may be formulated from the purview of society in general. Let us take, for instance, a crisis that, as in the situation of the Greeks and the Romans, verges on not only a disagreement between two disputants but also a disastrous conflict between two nations. How does this particular aspect of the *exemplum* reverberate throughout the global orchestration of the *Libro de buen amor*? How does Juan Ruiz's fashioning of a happy denouement for the conflict fit in with the world view so wondrously displayed in Boethius's *De consolacione*?

This line of questioning is liable to exhaust us before we would exhaust it. So, let us proceed straightaway to the analysis of some key manifestations of Boethius's model in the *Libro de buen amor*.

Compendium of a Boethian Master Plan

Yet one more look at the polysemous content of *copla* 70 and we are well on the way toward illustrating how the *exemplum* of the Greeks and the Romans epitomizes the design of the *Libro de buen amor*. Not to be underestimated here is the notion of transcendence, the Boethian origin of which we have just proposed. One detail merits special consideration from the start. It consists of the word «instrumentes», which we have focused upon in our previous commentary. Now we can enhance the specificity of our explication by taking into account not just two but actually three possible connotations of that term. One of them happens to be quite risqué. The other two may be described, respectively, as legal and artistic or musical. The risqué spin implicit in the *copla* is well in keeping with the double entendre that Juan Ruiz is known to practice so skillfully in such passages as the parody of the canonical hours (*coplas* 372-87). In this Chaucerian or Boccaccian divertissement we find *estormentos* (375c) and *instrumentos* (384b) to which glossators by and large associate sexual nuances. It is not farfetched, therefore, to coax out of the *instrumentes* of *copla* 70 an allusion to a sexual organ that has to do with *puntar*, easily construed as *apuntar* ('to point at'). As for the legal and musical acceptations mentioned above, we will defer to G. B. Gybbon-Monypenny, who, in his edition of *Libro de buen amor*, acknowledges L. Jenaro MacLennan's interpretation of *instrumentes* as «documentos legales, como en la c. 355» in conjunction with *puntar* in the sense of «'puntuar,' es decir, 'analizar correctamente'» (Gybbon-Monypenny 123). At the same time, Gybbon-Monypenny tacitly accepts the ambivalence of Ruiz's key term by concluding:

La metáfora musical parece clara: el lector sacará del libro la «música» que corresponda a sus capacidades como intérprete... El sentido general de la cuarteta no cambia, y ambas interpretaciones son posibles, desde luego. Pero la metáfora musical parece más viva. (123)

The threefold track of meaning derived from *copla* 70 may be translated into the Boethian system. The *copla* allows us to envisage an ascent from the *praktikê* of the sexual act to the *theôrêtikê* of musical harmony. In Boethian terms the ascent may be called a powerful though understated aspiration toward the attainment of the sublime. It is well to bear in mind that the aspiration and the concomitant movement of transcendence do not expire in *copla* 70. On the contrary, to use a Wagnerian metaphor, the stanza sounds out the essential notes of what, at least on the one occasion that will be described presently, Juan Ruiz develops as a major motif of his grand poetic orchestration. Juan Ruiz's full-fledged development of the leitmotif of transcendence extends for a long stretch of 398 stanzas (*coplas* 181-579).

This sizeable section turns out to be another *disputación* introduced by the following rubric: «De cómo el Amor vino al Arcipreste e de la pelea que con él ovo el dicho Arcipreste» ('How Love came to the Archpriest, and the dispute the said Archpriest had with him' [trans. Willis 57]). It is, then, a debate between the Arcipreste's poetic persona and Sir Love (*don Amor*), an unlikely representation of the god of pagan mythology. The *pelea* (to use the term derived from the rubric) is divided into two parts. In the first (*coplas* 181-422) the Arcipreste qua protagonist delivers a lengthy invective against *don Amor*; in the second (*coplas* 423-579), *don Amor*, in sharp contrast to the belligerent attitude of his interlocutor, responds in a sedate manner. In his diatribe the Arcipreste accuses his formidable opponent of being the cause of all evil and, to substantiate his charge, embarks on a disquisition on the seven capital sins. As he takes up each of these one by one, inculcating Love at every turn, the clergyman does not confine himself to the cut-and-dry exposition of sound Christian doctrine. Rather, he supplements each item of his treatise with an *exemplum*, which functions as a vivid illustration of the vicious aspect of the human conduct under consideration. As we proceed to part II of the *pelea*, we find that *don Amor* vies with the Arcipreste in marshaling for his own purpose and dissenting argument the very same rhetorical strategy that the Arcipreste employs so deftly. In other words, the speaker in part II is just as adroit as is his contender in part I in blending ratiocination with painterly depiction through the use of the anecdote.

Enough said of this splendid manifestation of the dialectic of the *pelea*. We cannot dwell on the dialectic per se because the primary purpose of our discussion is to show how the Boethian model described above is developed in the protracted episode we have just reviewed. Since both disputants use the same technique albeit from contending sides, we need concentrate on the speech of only one of them in an effort to arrive at a critical judgment that applies to them both. Let us observe, then, how the Boethian perspective implicit in *copla* 70 and in the *exemplum* to which it is appended, becomes manifest in the discourse of the Arcipreste, which, as has been pointed out, occupies part I or *coplas* 181-422.

The key to a definition of the general plan of the Arcipreste's discourse lies in the Boethian journey from *praktikê* to *theôrêtikê*. Tracing our steps along this journey we discover a text of many layers —five to be exact— each of which marks a rising level of

knowledge and awareness. In effect, such a multi-tiered text embodies an epistemological process ranging from first-hand observation of the workday world to a well-defined and forcefully-stated position on the ethics of love. Let us see how the five textual layers reflect distinct phases in the discourse of the Arcipreste. We may conceive, in broad outline, a five-step ladder patterned after the figure depicted in *De consolacione philosophiae*. Following is a summary illustrating how the Arcipreste, in his *pelea* with don Amor, goes up, metaphorically speaking, the rungs of that ladder. First, he begins by coming to terms with the various cases of sinful behavior observable in the everyday world. Second, he classifies these concrete events into specific categories, seven in all, which are illustrated by a corresponding *exemplum*. Third, he abstracts from his exposition a theoretical explication, aimed at distinguishing one category from another. Fourth, the Arcipreste goes a step further in his act of abstraction and synthesizes the seven categories into one. As a result, the capital sins become syncretized into a «mother sin,» called «codicia.» As he stands on the fifth and last «rung» of the Boethian ladder, the personage whom we now easily recognize as the author's alter ego, contemplates, not without a considerable degree of self-satisfaction, his doctrinal stronghold and relies upon it in defiance of his opponent.

In a synoptic illustration we could show the foregoing five steps or levels in an ascending order as follows:

- 1) concrete cases observable in the workaday world;
- 2) the exempla illustrating the seven capital sins;
- 3) the ethical theory relative to those sins;
- 4) the conflating of the sins into «codicia» or, to use the Latin term, «cupiditas;»
- 5) the strategic posturing from the vantage point of sound Christian doctrine.

Buen Amor and Amor Malo

Juan Ruiz's disputatious avatar may well take pride —and that he certainly does!— in his accomplished blending of ratiocination and rhetorical skill. He allows himself to be supercilious and contemptuous in his offhand dismissal of his wrongly-underestimated fellow contender. This is how he rests his case:

Porque de muchas dueñas malquerido sería,
e mucho garçón loco de mí porfarçaría,
por tanto non te digo el diezmo que podría;
pues cállate e callemos. ¡Amor, vete tu vía! (422a-d)

(Because I would be disliked by many ladies, and many a wild young fellow would revile me, I therefore do not tell you one-tenth of what I could; so hold your tongue and let us be silent. Love go your way!) (Willis, trans. 119)

There is much irony in such a cavalier attitude that flies in the face of the Christian scheme of things, in which, of course, the Arcipreste professes an abiding faith. Irony aside, the fact remains that the Arcipreste is tempting the gods, literally! It will surprise no one, then, with the probable exception of the Arcipreste, that he should meet his comeuppance in the ensuing speech of don Amor.

The foregoing observations raise issues certainly worth the pursuit. A sound method of analysis, nevertheless, dictates that we go no further before taking stock of our own progress in meeting the challenge that Juan Ruiz, qua author and commentator, launches to his readers. How effectively are we learning to play our musical instrument? After getting past the ersatz *moraleja* contained in *copla* 70, are we getting close, or least closer, to that «buen amor» that the authorial persona tantalizingly holds up to our attention as the primary object of our quest? We are ruminating, still, on that wry comment expressed in v. 68a: «las de buen amor son razones encobiertas» ('the utterances of good love are veiled' [trans. Willis 28]). And the lesson we have learned comes up as a series of corollaries to the moralizer's tour de force we have just witnessed on sin-infested human conduct.

At the same time that moralizing authority has put us to the test —a test based on how well we can read between the lines. And, reading between the lines, we are struck by the realization that the argument put before us by the Arcipreste is one that unfolds by way of contrast. We may ask, What is the subject treated in that argument? Obviously it is not «buen amor» and cannot be «mal amor» because, in accordance with time-honored Augustinian principle that underlies Christian doctrine and the Arcipreste's personal belief, such a notion would be an absurdity. Love, as Augustine teaches, is good by its very nature. Ergo, the only love there is turns out to be «buen amor.» If «mal amor» is out of the question, the only logical and ontological alternative is «amor malo,» that is, love that has gone bad or vitiated love. Contextualizing all this within the Arcipreste's argumentation in the aforementioned *pelea*, we come to the conclusion that, although the Arcipreste's paramount aim is, as he repeatedly avers, the attainment of «buen amor,» his immediate concern is the avoidance of «amor malo.» It makes perfect sense that el Arcipreste should identify pernicious love primarily with *cobdicia*, the synthesis, as has been pointed out, of all seven deadly sins. As Félix Lecoy and other scholars rightly observe, when el Arcipreste states, categorically, '[d]e todos los pecados es raíz la Cobdicia» ('the root of all sins is Covetousness' [trans. Willis 66]) (218a), he is quoting directly from Saint Paul's dictum: «Radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas» (1 Tim. 6.10) (Lecoy 175, Chiarini 46, Joset 85).

Evidently, the orthodoxy of the Arcipreste's notion of «amor malo» is beyond question. One wonders, incidentally, if throughout the *Libro* Juan Ruiz ever expresses himself, through any of his personages, as precisely and eloquently about «buen amor» as he does with respect to perverted love. The answer would have to be that he does not, and the reason for that answer would have to be sought by reading between the lines. What we come up with is an implicit corollary to such a declaration of ethical principles as the one the Arcipreste advances, so proficiently, in the *pelea*. The stark reality that stares us in the face is that the *Libro* does not deal in a straightforward manner with the subject of «buen amor» simply because such a subject is impossible to investigate, let alone define, if not through a profound and elaborate disquisition on the ultimate epiphany of love and that epiphany, in keeping with Augustinian and Boethian logic, can only reside in the *Summum Bonum*. This is to say that a treatment of «buen amor» would encompass, inevitably, the subject of the Trinity.

The present train of reflections may well shed light on the motive behind the decision of the *dotor de Grecia* to choose precisely the daunting topic of the Triune God for the *dis-*

putación. It is tempting, no doubt, to turn back to that episode and read it «between the lines.» There are, nevertheless, other aspects of Juan Ruiz's art of indirection that call for immediate attention.

Unsettled Disputes / Deadlocked Dialogue

As we ponder, in retrospect, the *pelea* episode, we are struck not only by the contrast between «buen amor» and «amor malo» but also by other corollaries that come into view especially from the perspective of the Arcipreste's presentation. First we may consider, as one implication that becomes apparent, a wholesale condemnation of «amor malo.» The reprobative tone that informs the speech of the Arcipreste is quite consistent with the Boethian model. We may recall the resounding rebuke that, at the very beginning of Boethius's masterpiece, Lady Philosophy levels at the Muses of Poetry, whom she holds responsible for her pupil's deplorable condition. Eminently significant is the following excerpt from Boethius's description of the incident.

At the sight of the Muses of Poetry at my bedside dictating words to accompany my tears, she [Philosophy] became angry.

'Who,' she demanded, her piercing eyes alight with fire, 'has allowed these hysterical sluts to approach this sick man's bedside? They have no medicine to ease his pains, only sweetened poisons to make them worse. These are the very women who kill the rich and fruitful harvest of Reason with the barren thorns of Passion. They habituate men to their sickness of mind instead of curing them. . . . Sirens is a better name for you and your deadly enticements: be gone, and leave him for my own Muses to heal and cure.' (36)

We would add here some particularly instructive comments that Anna Crabbe dedicates to this very passage:

This stately lady's reaction to the sight of the Muses dictating lugubrious elegy to her favourite pupil is a violent one. She is in no doubt as to the harm they can effect, increasing sickness, accustoming the mind to its illness rather than healing it. Now these 'stagey whores,' these literary and lethal Sirens 'usque in exitium dulces' have dared to seduce one brought up in her own mysteries, not just a common 'profanus.' Out they must go, and out they do go, sadder than ever and covered in blushes, leaving Philosophy to get down to diagnosis and cure with the help of her own personal muses. (249)

The readers of *Libro de buen amor* would readily agree that Lady Philosophy's harsh words of reprimand can be easily reconciled with the Arcipreste's impassioned denunciation of don Amor. Isn't the god as much culpable as are those «hysterical sluts» excoriated by the formidable lady for the worst possible effects of lovesickness on a young man's physical, mental, and spiritual constitution?

There can be little doubt that the Arcipreste slants his remarks toward the indictment of the one who, in his view, unleashes the savage powers of *aegritudo amoris* — the same love-caused ailment to which John Livingstone Lowe dedicates a masterful study. At the same time, the general slant of the Arcipreste's *pelea* unveils some rather severe shortcom-

ings of the intellect as a function of reason's proficiency in settling an argument. There are learned explicators who diagnose symptoms of those shortcomings in Boethius's characterization of Philosophy as an embodiment of reason. P. G. Walsh for one states that:

One need not assume that Boethius personally subscribes to every doctrine propounded by Philosophy; one scholar goes so far as to argue that he charts Philosophy's entire consolation as a fruitless contest of opposing arguments. (xxvii)

In Juan Ruiz's *Libro* there is plenty of evidence that the method of reason, even when employed as deftly as it is by Philosophy in *De consolazione*, is liable to lead to utter frustration and to «a fruitless contest of opposing arguments.» This disconcerting outcome is depicted, dramatically, in the animal fable that the Arcipreste adduces at the highpoint of the *pelea* in order to illustrate the devastating effects of the sin of sloth. The *exemplum* (coplas 421-71) is clearly identified by the following epigraph: «Aquí fabla del pleito quél lobo e la raposa ovieron ante Don Ximio, alcalde de Bugía» ('Here it tells of the lawsuit that the wolf and the fox had before Sir Ape, magistrate from Bougie' [trans. Willis 92-3]). Despite the consummate expertise of the attorneys involved, the litigation meticulously recorded in this masterly parody of judicial proceedings remains hopelessly deadlocked. Neither the plaintiff (the wolf) nor the defendant (the fox) wins the case.⁵

After scanning the three episodes that deal with the spirited confrontation of two dissenting sides, the reader is alerted to the presence of a pattern of parallelisms. There is a *pleito* (between the wolf and the fox), set within a *pelea* (between the Arcipreste and don Amor), framed, in turn, by the coordinates of the *disputación* (between the *dotor* and the *ribaldo*). Inured by the practice of reading between the lines, we take notice of a technique of reiteration, which produces the effect of a resonance —the resonance of a leitmotif. The type of stalemate that is presented in the *pleito* is repeated in the *pelea* and in the *disputación*. In each instance the dialogue founders or comes to a standstill, and the final judgment of resolution is left in abeyance. In the *disputación* and the *pelea* the parallelism is corroborated by a detail of special significance. If we juxtapose the two couples of protagonists —the *dotor* and the *ribaldo* on the one side and the Arcipreste and don Amor on the other— we catch a glimpse of a striking resemblance in the respective role of the *dotor* and the Arcipreste. In both, an attitude of smug self-assurance that verges on arrogance is held in ridicule by the persona of the moralizer both in the case of the *dotor* and, by extension, in that of the Arcipreste as well. In complete agreement with the explication provided by María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, Margaret Parker regards the depiction of the *dotor de Grecia* as «an example of the common medieval motif of the humiliation of the learned by the simple» (39). The same may be said of the way the Arcipreste is portrayed in the *pelea*. The parallelism to be kept in mind resides in the utter failure of both the *dotor* and the Arcipreste in communicating with each respective rival, let alone convincing him. The parallelism is accentuated, also, by the characterization of both the *ribaldo* and don Amor as representatives of Roman culture and the attending institutions of the pagan way of life.

What we are learning is that, in the long run, reason turns out to be a loser in the context of the *Libro de buen amor*. Juan Ruiz, time and again, entices the reader to move

5.— For a full discussion of the fable see Lecoy 129-30.

a step further along a hermeneutic path directed toward superseding reason or the intellect by means of a higher faculty. We must look for a way to avoid the impasse in which, as demonstrated by the *pleito*, the *pelea*, and the *disputación*, the method of ratiocination will abandon and fail us sooner or later.

The Cycle of Timelessness

The heading of yet another episode of *Libro de buen amor* (*coplas* 1067-1210) —«De la pelea que ovo Don Carnal con la Quaresma» ('The Battle that Lord Meatseason had with Dame Lent' [trans. Willis 294])— announces the occurrence of the leitmotif we have already commented upon. The occurrence turns out to be memorable by all accounts. Since Juan Ruiz repeats the key word already used to identify, as we have seen, another outstanding passage, we will assign to the episode of Carnal and Quaresma the label of *Pelea 2*. Critics have described *Pelea 2* as an eminent example of the mock epic. It consists of an allegorical battle, which Juan Ruiz, true to form, orchestrates on a grand scale to depict the clash between two formidable contenders. These impersonate, as their names indicate, two contrary determinants of human conduct: on the one side, the unrestrained gratification of the senses and, on the other, the severe chastisement of the flesh through abstinence and mortification. The leitmotif depends on not only the presentation of a newly-conceived *pelea* but also the new version of an ambivalent denouement. In *Pelea 2* the stalemate dramatized in the previous analogous episodes is transformed into an ingenious counterbalancing of victory and defeat so that, at the end of the day, each rival can reasonably claim to have prevailed over the other. At first, after a strenuous encounter in the field of battle, Quaresma inflicts a resounding defeat on Carnal (*coplas* 1067-1127). Not much later, however, Carnal recovers from the crisis and manages to make a triumphant return as a veritable emperor accompanied by another figure of superhuman stature:

Vigilia era de Pasqua, abril cerca pasado;
 el sol era salido, por el mundo rayado;
 fue por toda la tierra grand roído sonado
 de dos emperadores que al mundo an llegado. (1210a-d)

('It was Holy Saturday, April was almost over; the sun was up, its rays spreading over the world; through all the earth a great report sounded of two emperors who had come to the world' [trans. Willis 330]).

After the description of this impressive scene, the narrator is quick to add: «Estos emperadores Amor e Carnal eran» (1211a) ('These emperors were Love and Meatseason') (Willis, trans. 330). Amor and Carnal make for an awesome alliance, indeed!

So, we muse in wonderment at the dazzling spectacle of this epic combat between two mighty foes. We peruse, also, the extensive commentaries on the passage by such eminent critics as Félix Lecoy (244-52) and Luis Beltrán (280-301). At the end, we are still urged by the challenge posed way back in stanza 70. We still feel the proddings voiced by the Arcipreste through his moralizing persona, who pushes rationalization to the limit in the Boethian journey from *praktikê* to *theôrêtikê* and then stresses reliance on the skill of reading between the lines. Now, as we contemplate, admiringly, the unresolved and, in

the final analysis, unresolvable conflict between Carnal and Quaresma, we sense more than ever the high premium that the persona of the Arcipreste puts on the interpretive powers of intuition.

An insightful commentary by Lecoy takes us very close to the goal of an intuitive hermeneutics. In the course of his meticulous review of *Pelea 2*, Lecoy observes that:

Nous aurions à faire à une sorte de représentation sacrée, mais burlesque, qui aurait tiré son inspiration, no point d'un texte scripturaire, mais d'un détail du rite, idée première à laquelle ont pu venir s'amalgamer les sourvenirs et les survivances de traditions plus anciennnes même que la règle chrétienne. Nul n'ingnore qu'encore aujourd'hui, nos fêtes de carnaval présentent le reflet de coutumes dont l'origine échappe à la lumière de l'histoire. (246)

(‘What we are dealing with is a kind of sacred representation, albeit of a burlesque nature, that in all probability derived its inspiration not from a Scriptural text but from a particular aspect of a ritual. Within this primordial notion of ritual a convergence may well have taken place between reminiscences and actual surviving manifestations of traditions more ancient even than the Christian protocol. One would hardly deny that even today our Mardi Gras festivities reflect customs the origins of which elude the light of history.’[My translation])

What Lecoy invites us to contemplate is a suggestive amalgamation of religious or quasi-religious ritual and the nebulous, vast expanses of prehistoric times. By exercising an intuitive hermeneutics of his own, Lecoy has taken us to the frontier between time and timelessness. One step further and we will cross over into the mysterious realm of the myth. Meanwhile, by following in the footsteps of the illustrious French critic, we have advanced to a higher level in our flight of transcendence à la Boethius. At this level we acquire a new contemplative perspective on the open-ended alternation of victory and vanquishment on the part of Carnal and Quaresma. Such alternation designates a dimension of timelessness, which attains its full existential correlative in the liturgical cycle. The cycle, in turn, betokens a high degree of syncretization by which the essential practice of both Christian and pre-Christian religions evolves into a common communal expression. Our meditation comes to rest on some intimations of an eternal return. At the same time it brings into focus the notion of a primordial commonality that is the wellspring of all religious ritual. These intimations and concomitant notion of universality call for further investigation.

Prospect of Transcendent Catholicity

The symbolic circle implicit in the liturgical cycle of Carnal and Quaresma attains an explicit —one might say visual— manifestation in the pictorial description that the author's persona in the guise of narrator provides apropos of the splendid tent of don Amor (*coplas* 1265-1301). The description marks the climax of the minute account of the sumptuous cortege and related events that make up the festive reception of don Amor.⁶ The

6.— Following is Lecoy's tripartite outline of what he calls «un triomphe de l'Amour» (252):

Il s'étend de la strophe 1220 à la strophe 1314 et on y distingue immédiatement trois parties essentielles: un

tent, that narrator tells us, is richly decorated. Its interior is made up of panels exhibiting the figures of twelve youths, distributed in groups of three. The youths, who are shown as engaged in distinct agricultural labors, represent, we eventually learn, the months of the year. The reader of *Libro de buen amor* is taken, then, from one temporal cycle to another: the religious calendar (the liturgy manifested in the battle of Carnal and Quaresma) shifts into its secular counterpart (the recurrence of the activities of the four seasons). The shape itself of the tent in conjunction with the configuration of the allegorical figures underscores a significant transition in the plot of the *Libro* from linear to circular time.

The impact of that transition attains its full effect when integrated into the grand theatrics of the communal glorification of don Amor on Easter Sunday. What is striking about this extraordinary event is the recounting of it in terms of a complete amalgamation of Christian and pagan motifs. Lecoy and a number of other scholars are fully aware of the hybrid nature of this grand *mise en scène*. After compiling a long list of sources stretching as far back as Ovid's *Amores* (1.2.23-52), Lecoy refines his judgment and adds:

Le cortège que nous décrit Juan Ruiz n'est pas un cortège triomphal, c'est une parodie de procession liturgique, et probablement même de la procession la plus ancienne du rite chrétien, la procession des Rameaux. L'Amour rentrant dans ses Etats, s'est le Christ arrivant à Jérusalem, aux acclamations d'une foule enthousiaste. (261)

(The cortege described by Juan Ruiz is not a triumphal cortege. It is, rather, a parody of a liturgical procession, in all probability the oldest procession of the Christian ritual, that is, the procession of Palm Sunday. Sir Love, who makes a reentry into his domain, is Christ who enters Jerusalem among the acclamations of an enthusiastic crowd. [My translation])

Characteristically, these acclamations incorporate expressions in Latin from the Psalms and the «Te Deum» (Lecoy 261).

There can be no doubt as to the hybrid nature we have just referred to. The narrator himself, who, after shifting into the first person addresses don Amor with some entreating words that sound very much like a prayer, does not lose cognizance of the holy occasion paramount in the Christian calendar. In *copla* 1261, which deserves to be quoted here in full, that cognizance operates at a deep subliminal and subtextual level. Let us read the revealing stanza:

«Señor, tú me oviste, de pequeño, criado;
el bien, si algo sé, de ti me fue mostrado;
de ti fue apercebido, de ti fue castigado:
en esta santa fiesta sey de mí oſpedado.»

«Lord, you brought me up from a child; what is good, if I know anything at all, was taught me by you; by you I was instructed, and by you I was given admonition: on this sacred feast day, allow yourself to be my guest.» (Trans. Willis 342)

cortège proprement dit, on plus exactement une procession allant à la rencontre du Dieu (1225-1241) —une discussion sur la question de savoir qui hébergera un hôte si puissant (1247-1258)— enfin, la description de la tente de l'Amour, car ce dernier refuse l'hospitalité qu'on lui offre et préfère installer son propre campement (1264-1302). (252-3)

The telltale expression «esta santa fiesta» leaves no doubt as to the speaker's foremost allegiance: to the love, that is, proclaimed by sound Christian catechism and duly acknowledged by that same persona, who starts out a long narrative with the verse «Día era muy santo de la Pasqua Mayor» (*copla* 1225a) ('It was the most holy day of Easter Sunday') (Willis, trans. 334). The narrator's very obiter dicta —«Día era muy santo de la Pasqua Mayor» and «esta santa fiesta,» among others that may be culled from the telling of the story— bespeak a referentiality not simply to a run-of-the-mill holiday but to a «holy day» in the full etymological and religious sense of the term. We may well perceive in all this signs of an authorial intention, which have not escaped the attention of critics such as Gybbon-Monypenny. The illustrious editor of the *Libro* concludes his erudite commentary on *copla* 1225 with the following astute observation: «En el fondo, como da a entender Juan Ruiz en 1225a, son las procesiones del Domingo de la Resurrección las que se parodian» (Notes 364).

In the light of the foregoing considerations we are left to ponder two radical notions —namely, the subtextual strategies (the obiter dicta already mentioned) and the symbolism of circularity (the cycles of the liturgy and the seasons). We face, in other words, two clues of enormous potential for opening up a window, widely, on the wondrous panorama of what may be called, for want of a better term, Juan Ruiz's vision of ecumenicism and catholicity. Terms like these may be useful in reflecting what must be Juan Ruiz's crowning achievement —that of transcending the parochial scope of monoculturalism and, more significantly, the stifling confinement of denominational or sectarian religiosity. From that window, we begin to descry the salient features of Juan Ruiz's transcendental multiculturalism. Strictly from an esthetic perspective we begin to perceive in a new light the distinctive facets that some prominent scholars have pointed out in the «art of Juan Ruiz,» to borrow the words from the title of a seminal study by Anthony N. Zahareas. Doubtless, there is a lesson to be learned from adhering to Juan Ruiz's adaptation of the Boethian brand of the upward movement toward contemplation. What we learn, I would submit, resides in the proposition that Juan Ruiz relies primarily on an overall dynamics of integration. Consequently, such stylistic modalities as the ambivalent signifier or ironic foreshortening, underscored by Zahareas and Otis H. Green in *Libro de buen amor*, should not be taken as deconstructive factors, symptomatic of an author's curious and perverse refusal to make a commitment to coherent meaning and cohesive structure. In particular, in his deft handling of irony, Juan Ruiz foreshadows Cervantes's paradox of affirmation through negation. Juan Ruiz affirms the orthodoxy and preeminence of Christian doctrine by, seemingly, undermining it through a contrast and amalgamation with contrary or even inimical tenets. In much the same fashion Cervantes, centuries later, would assert the ideals of chivalry, paradoxically, by mocking them, that is by feigning to diminish them through the ridiculous conduct of his inimitable knight-errant par excellence. One would have to agree, then, that in Juan Ruiz as in Cervantes irony has lost most of its caustic quality. Specifically, in *Libro de buen amor*, the ideal prevails despite the shadowlands that Juan Ruiz's impersonation of Everyman is bound to live through while in bondage in the domain of *amor malo*, identifiable by the allegorical garb of don Amor.

In sum, Juan Ruiz marshals his literary resources to provide us with a holistic and optimistic world view consonant with Christian principles. In an effort to illustrate this

assertion we must make another excursion, if ever short, to the ubiquitous and yet hard to reach locus of the famous *disputación* —notable or notorious as the case may be— that broached our present discussion.

Pentecostal Optimism

Let us revisit, however briefly, the notion of ersatz *moraleja*. Let us remind ourselves that Juan Ruiz does not rely on the conventional resolution of the stock-in-trade *exemplum* because his aims extend beyond the reaches of the tried-and-true method of ratiocination with its accouterments of logic, rhetoric, and oratory. Instead, he puts great stock on the intuitive powers of human intelligence. By now we should begin to see that, by his unconditional privileging of intuition, Juan Ruiz not only asserts, self-consciously and self-assuredly, an appreciation of the role of a poet —that is, of an artist or creator— but also leaves open the possibility of an esthetic and, consequently, a hermeneutic of illumination or even divine inspiration.

But before any further attempt to fathom the depths of Juan Ruiz's meditation or scale the heights of his soaring intuition, some recapping remarks are in order regarding the fundamental issues that have been brought forth here. The recap entails reassessing the crux of the controversy illustrated in the episode of the Greeks and the Romans. The debate revolves around two pivotal points, worthy of attention as they still raise questions to be taken into account in rounding out an argument or in wrapping up, if only tentatively, a preliminary theory on the central theme and overall structure of *Libro de buen amor*. It is easy to see that one of the questions has to do with the *dotor's* choosing of the Trinity as the primary topic of the dispute. The other question relates to the unexplored implications of the term «leyes,» which, needless to say, lies at the core of the request submitted by the Romans to the Greeks.

As for the Trinity, it may be said that the topic, an obvious correlative of the concept of the *Summum Bonum*, signals the ultimate goal of the Boethian quest —the ascent, that is, to the Beatific Vision. Also, in direct correlation with the primordial dynamics of emanation from and attraction toward the *Summum Bonum* in accordance with the principle of *bonum diffusivum sui*, the Augustinian notion of the Triune God undergirds, at the metaphysical level of existence, what *buen amor* really is. There is mounting evidence, then, that, by the allusion to the Trinity at such an early stage of his *Libro*, Juan Ruiz is providing an indispensable guideline for the reader who, sooner or later, must come to apprehend —to the extent that the human mind can ever apprehend— the reality of love in its ample manifestation ranging from the sensual to the spiritual.

All this leads us to the second question, which, as has been indicated, centers on the implications of Juan Ruiz's usage of the term «leyes» in the *disputación*. The context that Ruiz clearly establishes between discord and harmony, between conflict and peaceful co-existence is quite clear and the appropriateness of «leyes» in that context requires no explication. Obviously, the anecdote illustrates the dramatic transition from a situation rife with the tension of an impending conflict between two very different peoples (the Greeks and the Romans) to a *modus vivendi* in which that palpable tension is dissipated

by an unexpected coup of bravado and good luck. We must rise, nevertheless, yet one more time to the challenge posed by the Arcipreste's moralizing persona: «la manera del libro entiéndela sutil» (*copla* 65b). It will surprise no one that the authorial voice should be prodding us along to exercise our ingenuity and seek complementary, relevant signification beyond the precincts of the obvious. In view of the semiotic interfacing that has already been pointed out between law and theology, it would not be far-fetched to propose a reading of the *disputación* from a Biblical perspective. The felicitous denouement of a confrontation —that of the «vellaco romano» and the «dotor de Grecia»— that, at first blush, looms ominous, calls to mind the scene of Pentecost (Acts 2.1-13), in which a miraculous intercommunication is brought to effect despite or, perhaps, because of the factionalism inherent in the very nature of diverse, fractious, human discourse. It is hard to imagine that the impressive, far-reaching exemplarity embedded in the Pentecostal archetype would escape the notice of an author like Juan Ruiz, who on many an occasion shows a remarkable familiarity with the Bible. Besides the archetype, Juan Ruiz may have found relevant a concrete detail perceivable in the age-old tradition that comes to a head in the phenomenon of Christian Pentecost. It appears that the homonymous counterpart in the Jewish liturgy was also known as the «feast of the joy of the Law» (Schaff 226). As Philip Schaff, the noted church historian, explains:

It was the «feast of harvest,» or «of the first fruits,» and also (according to rabbinical tradition) the anniversary celebration of the Sinaitic legislation, which is supposed to have taken place on the fiftieth day after the Exodus from the land of bondage. (226)

The association between the law and Pentecost in Jewish tradition is undeniable. We may ask whether a reminiscence of an association such as this may have come to bear upon Juan Ruiz's integration of «leyes» into his own polysemous elaboration of the Pentecostal archetype.

The universal harmony of Pentecost implies, naturally, a sharp contrast with the far-and-wide discord emblemized by the Tower of Babel (Gen. 10-11); and that implication is part and parcel, also, of Juan Ruiz's intriguing pitting of *vellaco* against *dotor*. Throughout the ages scores of theologians and other scholars of many persuasions and disciplines have delved into the Babel/Pentecost antithesis.⁷ As Hugo Grotius, the eminent Dutch jurist of the seventeenth century, puts it in an incisive *sententia*: «Poena linguarum dispersit homines, donum linguarum dispersos in unum populum collegit» ('the curse of languages dispersed the human race; the gift of languages gathered that scattered lot into one people') (qtd. in Schaff 233, n. 1). Juan Ruiz, of course, would find no fault with the epigram. We may safely assume, however, that Ruiz would be inclined to translate Grotius's historical past tense into a prophetic future. In the spirit of the «transcendent catholicity» he so fervently champions, it follows that Ruiz would accept, wholeheartedly, a mystical interpretation, which, in Schaff's words, «regards the Pentecostal Gift of Tongues in some way as a counterpart of the Confusion of Tongues, either as a temporary restoration of the original language of Paradise, or as a prophetic anticipation of the language of

7.— For a learned discussion of the various issues —glossolalia included— related to Pentecost, see Schaff's extensive notation (234-45).

heaven in which all languages are united» (238, n. 3, par. d). By the same token we may deduce that Juan Ruiz would not endorse the monolithic position as the one reflected in the following gloss by the same Philip Schaff:

Whichever view we take of this peculiar feature of the Pentecostal glossolalia, in this diversified application to the cosmopolitan multitude of spectators, it was a symbolical anticipation and prophetic announcement of the universality of the Christian religion, which was to be proclaimed in all languages of the earth and to unite all nations in one kingdom of Christ. The humility and love of the church united what the pride and hatred of Babel had scattered. In this scene we may say that the Pentecostal harmony of tongues was the counterpart of the Babylonian confusion of tongues. (332-3)

The reader of *Libro de buen amor* cannot but acknowledge that Juan Ruiz has a great deal to say about cosmopolitanism, universalism, symbolism, and we may add multiculturalism to Schaff's list. These terms are well in accord with the Arcipreste's prophetic vision—a consummation, to paraphrase the bard, devoutly, nay, enthusiastically to be wished. That same reader, however, cannot afford to lose sight of the lesson or two to be learned straight from the Arcipreste's condemnation, leveled, sermonistically or otherwise, at the strident, often arrogant, militancy bred of the hubris of the intellect. One is tempted to meditate upon what mechanism of his gentle, humoristic irony Ruiz would set in operation lest an institution might feel so smug «in humility and love» in the face of the devastating effects of «the pride and hatred [that] Babel had scattered.»

Conclusion

This Biblical background comes to bear upon Juan Ruiz's vision of *amor* as *bueno* by its very nature—a reflection, that is, of the *Summum Bonum*, which, according to its quality of *diffusivum sui*, characteristically propagates Itself. In the light of the *exemplum* of the Greeks and the Romans, the dialectic between Babel and Pentecost generates a dynamic of transcendence from chaos to harmony on an individual and universal scale. Of special interest is the application of that dynamic to the sublimation of the psychological conflict (the *psychomachia*) brought about by the passion of *eros* run amuck. Ultimately, Juan Ruiz charts the course of a hermeneutics that privileges reading of his *libro* as an intuitive process and, as such, a highly creative enterprise. The Arcipreste's authorial persona is intent upon demonstrating that intuitive reading empowers the individual reader not only to rise above the malignancy engendered by the vitiation of *buen amor* but also to achieve a state of grace, which leads to a soulful communion with fellow human beings and with God.

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