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## Medieval Forms of First-Person Narration: Authorship – Authorization – Authority

(Villa Vigoni Talks III)

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*Julia Rüthemann / Mireille Demaules*

## Authorship, Authorization, and Authority in Medieval First-Person Narratives: Some Introductory Remarks

This multi-author volume takes as its subject medieval first-person poetic narratives, a literary format that came to prominence in the course of the later European Middle Ages (c. 1250-1500), quickly developing into an extensive text family.<sup>1</sup> The papers published here for the first time were presented at a trilateral conference series held at the Villa Vigoni in Italy. Some of the work from these conferences has appeared in two other volumes – the first one focusing on the potential universality of the format (Cerquiglini-Toulet/Philipowski/Sasse 2021) and the second devoted to its chief narratological characteristics (Grimaldi/Lefèvre/Philipowski 2022). This present volume takes up the questions explored during the third conference: How do medieval first-person narratives conceptualize authorship and put it into practice? What kind of authority do they invoke? How do they connect to that authority? What precisely are the processes of authorization involved? To be sure, such questions might be asked of texts in every format, but they are especially crucial to the analysis of first-person narratives because the ›I‹ is by definition implicated in the events narrated or, at the very least, in the narrated world where they unfold. This essential quality of first-person narratives prompts further questions: What is the narrator's relation to the narrative and the text itself, its creation? What do the formal features of the texts tell us about the presence of an authorial 'I', how

does he or she relate to the discursive content, and, perhaps most crucially, what purpose does the text itself come to serve?

The different essays collected here all address these questions within the particular historical context of medieval literary culture, especially its later stages, which witnessed the emergence of the patron/poet model of literary production and the growth of readership. In the Middle Ages more generally, the role of the author, as well as the nature of authorship, considerably differed at the beginning of the period from their modern counterparts, but they were subject to important developments in the Middle Ages as the cultural institutions that have come to dominate modernity began to emerge. At the outset, medieval literary culture was dominated by the principle of authority: »The writings of an *auctor* contained, or possessed, *auctoritas* in the abstract sense of the term, with its strong connotations of veracity and sagacity. In the specific sense, an *auctoritas* was a quotation or an extract from the work of an *auctor*« (Minnis 1988, p. 10; see also Teeuwen 2003, p. 222; Müller 1995, p. 19 f.). Etymologically originating in the verb *augeo/augere*, *auctoritas* or authorship implies ideas of »bringing to life«, »growing« and »expanding« (for further discussion see M. Demaules in this volume).

Zimmermann (2001) usefully traces several steps in the gradual evolution of medieval authorship, especially with regard to ideas of human creativity. Though individual creativity has become a fundamental aspect of modern authorship (undergirding the now assumed property value of texts, which are endowed with copyright protection), as Zimmerman shows, early medieval writing is instead dominated by the notion of collaborative work as a »création continue, collective et anonyme« (p. 10: »continued collective and anonymous creation«; our translation, id. following quotations) in which writers aspired to participate. Even so, if only to a certain extent, individual creativity is present in early medieval literature culture and it becomes more evident over time, as Zimmerman suggests:

À l'intérieur de cette œuvre intervient ensuite le repérage d'une créativité individuelle, créativité arc-boutée sur la tradition ou sur la soumission au modèle, mais perceptible à travers la sélection des emprunts, la personnalisation du discours, la place consentie à l'oralité. [...] À une troisième étape survient l'émergence de l'auteur. Auteur pressenti d'abord, repéré et identifié ensuite, auteur affirmé et énoncé enfin (p. 10).

Within this body of work, individual creativity then becomes tangible, a creativity that is based on tradition or submission to the model, but which is perceptible through the selection of borrowings, the personalization of discourse, and the place given to orality. [...] The third stage is the emergence of the author. The author is first sensed, then located and identified, and finally asserted and enunciated.

In other words, the medieval practice of authorship must be differentiated from the notion of the author, which only begins to emerge as conceptual and textual entity in the course of the medieval period.<sup>2</sup> The most famous self-promoting writers of the late Middle Ages, such luminaries as Christine de Pizan, Guillaume de Machaut, Giovanni Boccaccio, Jean Froissart, Alain Chartier, Dante, Charles d'Orléans, and Geoffrey Chaucer, all experimented with self-conscious I-narrative. In the literature of this period more generally the first-person voice plays a major role in that emergence of the concept of the author as a textual presence across all literary genres<sup>3</sup> and particularly in the text family that is the focus here: allegorical first-person narratives (see also Maupeu 2009; Wolfzettel 2015; Schwarze 2015; Palmer [et al.] 2022). Their form and structure are inspired by Boethius's ›De consolatione philosophiae‹ and Augustine's ›Confessiones‹ (Palmer 2022), but also reflect the poetics of troubadour song and courtly poetry (Zumthor 1975; Huot 1987; Braun 2017; Glauch 2017). In what follows we trace the major lines of how this text family reflects and actualizes authorship through connections to authority, especially in textual representations of acts of authorization.

## 1. Authorization Through Allegory

Several essays in this volume argue that the authorial ›I‹ of our text group is not yet, or at least not yet entirely, in a place of authority. Authority as defined above is either God-given or the result of value proven through time and can only be accessed through the bestowal of divine grace or, by a process of inspiration and authorization. Accordingly, many of the narratives in question put on stage a process of instruction received from allegorical, literary or sometimes historical authorities. The ›I‹ takes part in their authority and thus is legitimized to write poetry about his or her experience. One of the prerequisites for coming into touch with authority seems to be a somewhat diminished position of the ›I‹ (Paxson 1994, p. 93–95, see below), which connects to the time-honored tradition of the humility and conversion topoi: When the author of the German ›Minnelehre‹ (›The Teaching of Love‹, ca. 1300), Johann of Constance, has the aim to transmit the teachings of Love with his text, he must first experience love himself: he tells how he was subdued by Lady Love and her son Cupid leading to his instruction about love in an allegorical dream. Lady Love's shooting of her arrow in the lover's heart at the end of the dream illustrates particularly well that the authorization of the ›I‹ takes place by a sort of ›infection‹ with allegory (Rüthemann 2024, p. 147): After awakening, Lady Love appears as a part of the lover, as an interior voice that guides his actions as a lover, teacher, and poet towards his lady (and audience). In fact, the approaching of the lover and the lady at the core of the narratives in question is reflected in the approaching of allegory and the ›I‹. As Kamath (2012) comments in regard to the prototype of this text family, the ›Romance of the Rose‹, allegory can be considered a characteristic feature of the first-person voice: the ›I‹, split up in various and sometimes intermingled roles as narrator, protagonist or author, can invite an allegorical reading:

The art of the voice in the *Rose* lies in making the identification of the voice the product of interpretation, so each reading of the allegory asks for new investigation of the representational connections of this voice to extradiegetic author and reader roles as well as to the intradiegetic realm and what it conveys (p. 6).

More precisely, allegory and the ›I‹ show a certain reciprocity right from the beginning. Although in the ›Minnelehre‹, Lady Love represents and transmits universal knowledge about love, it's the emotions, thoughts and love experience of the ›I‹ that are represented by allegory and that the reader witnesses; although the ›I‹ suffers Love's shooting, it is his heart that carries the Lady Love's voice; although personification allegories instruct the lover and confer authority to his account of his experience, the lover brings allegory to life at the same time, by dreaming a dream whose events he to some extent controls, and by composing poetry (Philipowski 2013, p. 253).

## 2. Authority, Allegory, and First-Person Voice

At the same time, this gesture of appropriation of allegory implies the potential for a distancing – of the ›I‹ towards self, and toward the authority that allegory confers. To better understand this double movement, this ambiguity, we need to address key features of the first-person voice and analyze how they relate to allegory and authority.

First of all, allegory can help to deal with the problematic nature of the first-person stance. As Dante explains, it is considered idle and inappropriate to speak of oneself except for the case of self-defense or for the aim of teaching someone (Zumthor 1975, p. 177; Philipowski/Rüthemann 2022, p. 9). As allegory is inextricably linked with the ›I‹, the account of allegorical actions and long discursive passages put in the mouth of personification allegories allows the ›I‹ to speak of him- or herself while highlighting the exemplaric dimension of his or her experience in order to show and teach

universal knowledge (Philipowski 2017, see below). In other words, the texts rather activate common narrative patterns and topoi such as conversion, dream or following a pathway of instruction in knowledge that is universally true. Such writing recounts experiences that are shared by a community of poets who have all gone through similar experiences. This exemplarity of experience does not contradict the expression of individual truthfulness that the first-person voice also implies (Zumthor 1972, p. 67; 1984, p. 35; 1990, p. 21–22). As Spearing has shown (2012, p. 14), the first person is primarily a position in a dialogue that anyone can adopt, a position that does not necessarily reference to any individual person, but remains open to everyone. Thus, anyone speaking from that perspective of the ›I‹ in dialogue with allegory can express the truth it conveys. To a certain extent, it correlates with the truth expressed with allegory.

The truthfulness potentially attributed to the first-person voice entails an autobiographical structure in what is told and said (Hamburger 1968, p. 246): the ›I‹-narrator can usually be equated not only with the protagonist, taking part in the action or at least is part of the narrated world, but also with the author. As De Looze has suggested (1997), the discourse in these works is usually a form of pseudo-autobiography. These texts prove to be highly literary and self-reflexive from the outset, constantly keeping present a poetic dimension of the action, tending to an ›authorbiographical‹ gesture (Glauch 2017, p. 314)<sup>4</sup> which means that the story they tell puts the poetic process and the poetic power of the ›I‹ at the center. To some extent, such stories shift the action and events to the level of language, semiotic processes, and, as a result, allegory (Rüthemann 2024, p. 151).

In this poetic experience, the status of allegory or the dream trope, however, is not entirely clear. Allegory and the dream trope being closely intertwined with the ›I‹ can point to a certain idea of reality and universal truth working through them and affecting the ›I‹ (Göller 1990, p. 53; Köbele 2021, p. 33–34; see also below). In other words: the poetic experience is the bearer of a truth, and is thus ›real‹ in that sense. At the same time, the close,

even existential relationship of the ›I‹ to allegory can be used to remodel the position of the ›I‹, transgressing and refusing authority, if not undermining it; such a movement of the narrative often takes on a distinctively ironic undertone. This very positioning that principally takes place on the discursive level could be considered a deliberate act, indicating a growing control over the text and a poetic authority in the making – even if it implies cutting off the branch on which one stands, to stay with the image of Pierre Sala's ›Livre d'Amour‹ on the cover of this volume.

The question of truthfulness is addressed by **Barton Palmer** in his essay on Machaut. In ›Le Voir Dit‹ (1364), Machaut particularly investigates the ambivalences towards truth expressed by means of the dream topos. According to Palmer, it is significant that the narrator, after recounting his dream,

affirms that the dream is fact, but then admits he does not know if the reader can believe it. Is the ›I‹ of the text here wondering if the reader or listener believes in the revelatory value of dreams? Or is the ›I‹ eager to know if the reader can invest belief in the dream as an element of the story? Or is the ›I‹ interested in learning if the reader can believe in the dream as part of the sequence of events here presented as referencing an actual experience of the historical character and author, Guillaume de Machaut? (p. 264)

By questioning the reality of the dream, Machaut strengthens his own authorial position. Interestingly, as **Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet** shows in her paper (see below), Machaut no longer needs to incorporate allegory in his text to do so.

### 3. Poetics of Referencing

Many literary works analyzed in this volume illustrate the first-person voice's overlapping with allegorical characters. However, the ›I‹ may also be associated with individual names and individual traits. In fact, the narrative levels that usually distinguish the narrator, the protagonist, and the



author tend to be blurred as does the temporal distinction between past, present and future. This blurring and shifting in referencing may also operate on an intertextual level, between several texts of an author's oeuvre or between (medially) different versions of a text and be partly due to external attributions. Even if this blending of voices and diegetic boundaries does not initially have to be an expression of distancing and even fictionalization but rather of authorization, the texts attest to the (acquisition of) poetical power and self-awareness of the ›I‹ allowing him or her to play with the referencing of his voice.

An interesting case of pseudo-autobiographical writing, explored in this volume by **Richard Trachsler**, is the Latin ›De Vetula‹, attributed to Richard de Fournival and translated as ›La Vieille‹ by Jean Le Fèvre de Ressons before 1376. The author and authority Ovid appears to be the ›I-narrator‹, relating his conversion from a life focused on carnal pleasures to study, Virgin Mary and God. Both texts attest to a particularly original form of intertextuality as a »Anschlußkommunikation« (»continued communication«, Lieb/Strohschneider 2005, p. 127) (see also below) that fully exploits the openness of the ›I‹ to reappropriation, identified with one of the most famous authors. In the French adaptation, the ›I‹ moreover refers to its author Jean Le Fèvre. The ›I‹'s openness in referencing is underlined by the fact that the text itself remains stable throughout these translation processes, as R. Trachsler points out. To a certain extent, the famous author fades into the ›I‹ and its story. His authority is transferred and yet completely transformed, with a potentially humorous twist: »Il fallait l'auteur de l'›Ars amatoria‹, des ›Remedia amoris‹, etc. pour dire plausiblement l'échec de l'amour humain et amorcer efficacement le virage vers Dieu« (p. 36: »It took the author of ›Ars amatoria‹, ›Remedia amoris‹, etc. to plausibly express the failure of human love and effectively initiate the turn towards God«).

In her paper on the German ›Die Mörin‹ (1453) by Hermann von Sachsenheim, **Barbara Sasse** observes that the text repeatedly but ambivalently connects the traditionally exemplaric and anonymous narrating ›I‹ to the existential author Hermann von Sachsenheim. At times, the narrator shows the characteristic openness and anonymity of the exemplaric lover, but sometimes, he or other characters speaking about him evoke more individual traits, especially concerning his knighthood and geographical background. Some passages contain explicit references to his authorship which becomes part of the story: In the context of the story, a reference to one of his other literary works helps the ›I‹ to escape a grotesque trial. In the epilogue, the author is evoked in the third person. At the same time, some of his individual traits are emphasized. B. Sasse illustrates that printed woodcuts in the 1512 print edition of ›Die Mörin‹ continue to display such complex referencing. The title page identifies Hermann as author – however, a woodcut print in the epilogue section remains unclear about his identity due to the blank depiction of a coat of arms. This contrasts with the detailed heraldic description within the epilog in the manuscript, but also indicates a greater restraint – compared to Hermann of Sachsenheim himself – to the editor’s historical attribution of the text.

**Fabienne Pomel** examines to what extent proper names introduced in French first-person narratives by Raoul de Houdenc (›Le Songe d’Enfer‹, 1214–5 ou 1225?), Rutebeuf (›La Leçon sur Hypocrisie et Humilité‹, 1261), and Martin Le Franc (›La Complainte du livre du Champion des Dames a maistre Martin le Franc son acteur‹, 1451), are used to create fictionalized, satirical author *personae*. The name functions as metalepsis between the narrative frame and the story told, »apte à relier le récit-cadre et le récit enchâssé, et à jeter des ponts entre les mondes extra- et intradiégétiques« (p. 68: »able to link the framework narrative and the embedded narrative, and to build bridges between extra- and intradiegetic worlds«).<sup>5</sup> Narratologically speaking, these instances and the diegetical levels linked to them, frequently appear blurred. The tension between the ›I‹ as operator of an

autobiographic account and the ›I‹ considered as purely exemplaric entity without referentiality expressed through ambiguous referencing is enhanced through such ironical and satirical settings.<sup>6</sup> According to F. Pomel, in the ›Songe d'enfer‹

le ›je‹ se met en scène et se projette dans des rôles apparemment dévalorisés ou disqualifiants pour dire paradoxalement et impunément une ambition d'écrivain sur le mode de l'autodérision ludique, dans la distance autorisée par le songe. (p. 68)

the ›I‹ stages and projects itself into apparently devalued or disqualifying roles, paradoxically and with impunity expressing a writer's ambition in the mode of playful self-mockery, in the distance authorized by the dream.

This again illustrates the ambivalence in the relationship of the ›I‹ to himself or herself as well as to an allegorically conveyed authority. It becomes a vehicle for the expression of poetical power.

#### 4. Shifts in Authority, Shifts in Allegory

The texts in question refer to various types of authority and stage subtle forms of authorial expression being in motion and sometimes contradictory. This dynamic relation towards authority is reflected by shifts in allegorical structures, concepts, and references. **Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet**'s paper examines such shiftings with regard to two connected narratives by Guillaume de Machaut. Through intertextual mirroring games, the different facets of Guillaume de Machaut's *persona* are built up over the course of his work. He evolves from a young, inexperienced poet in ›Le Remède de Fortune‹ (c. 1341) to the peak of his art two decades later in ›Le Voir Dit‹ (1364). On the one hand, the comparison carried out by J. Cerquiglini-Toulet reveals a constant: whether young or old, the narrator always presents himself as a lover; on the other, there are also variables and permutations: whereas youth and the position as a pupil characterize the

narrator in the earlier text, these features shift to the lady in the second. In fact, subject to the lady and to Hope, from whom he receives instruction on Love and Fortune in ›Le Remède de Fortune‹, Machaut has become a master in ›Le Voir Dit‹, who initiates the beloved lady into his art. J. Cerquiglini-Toulet shows that while Machaut has recourse to allegory in his ›Remède de Fortune‹ written in his younger age, in his ›Voir Dit‹, written as an old man, he no longer needs allegory to be authorized: ›Le poète dans le ›Voir Dit‹ n’a plus besoin d’allégories pour s’autoriser. Il est le maître« (p. 146f.: ›The poet in the ›Voir Dit‹ no longer needs allegories to authorize himself. He is the master«). Machaut’s authority comes from his poetic experience that he alludes to by an intertextual and self-referential mirroring of his former works that have already established him as an author and as an authority.

The works of Alain Chartier represent a special case among the group of texts in question. **Sylvie Lefèvre** finds in Chartier’s ›Livre des quatre dames‹ (1416?, ›Book of the Four Ladies‹) that what is striking ›dans la posture de *l’acteur* chez Chartier, c’est son refus d’un certain statut auctorial, à partir du moment surtout où il parle en amoureux« (p. 167: ›in Chartier’s *actor*’s posture, it is his refusal of a certain auctorial status, especially from the moment he speaks as a lover«). Rarely does he sign texts with his name. Could this indicate a deliberate refusal of an authorial status which his contemporaries, in contrast, frequently display, and thus even be considered a new form of auctorial gesture? It is significant then that in his ›Livre des quatre dames‹ he does not resort to allegory, usually the expression of a higher truth and authority speaking through a diminished self. Instead, he attributes ›une autorité morale en matière chevaleresque« (p. 156: ›a moral authority on chivalric matters«) to the four ladies, who might be seen to some extent as placeholders for the authorial figure of allegory. The images in Chartier’s ›Livre des quatre dames‹ confirm what the text has put on stage – the author’s iconographic understatement and deliberate refusal of an authorial status.

**Laetitia Tabard** explores the legitimacy of allegory to establish authority and express subjectivity in Chartier's ›Le Livre de l'Esperance‹ (1428, ›The Book of Hope‹). According to her, Chartier's texts attest to a specific approach to allegory involving not simply abstract ideas or common categories. They rather become ›des catégories propres à leur auteur, inventées *ad hoc* [...]‹ (p. 201: ›categories specific to their author, invented *ad hoc* [...]). Instead of being considered, or even dismissed as fantasmagorical, allegorical creation allows Chartier to organize, understand and codify interior life. His deliberate choice to include or not to include allegory can thus be seen as a ›positionnement philosophique‹ (ibid.: a ›philosophical positioning‹), which entails a ›vision de la psyché‹ (ibid.: ›vision of the psyche‹) of its own. At the same time, the subjectivity expressed by these new forms of allegory retains an exemplary dimension, since the author appears in the exemplary figure of the *deuillant* who is in the process of reconstruction and healing.

We also find significant shifts between the ›author-I‹, allegory and in particular the conception of love in texts written by female authors, as **Julia Rüthemann** suggests in her paper on the writings of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century beguine Hadewijch of Antwerp and early 15<sup>th</sup>-century author Christine de Pizan. These shifts reveal a gendered systematics between the three elements. Christine adopts allegorical first-person narratives about love but looks for other ways to present herself as an author in this type of text: She shows a certain distance towards the implication of herself in the story and to the allegory of love: in some cases, the female ›I‹ is absent from the story, and the text focuses on the discourse of the God of love; in others, she is present as a protagonist and does not seek to woo a lover through her text but expresses sorrow, only alluding to allegory. Christine may also highlight the love stories of others. However, if she establishes an allegorical framework while filling all three functions of the ›I‹ and being present as author, narrator and protagonist, she brings to the fore subjects other than love,

and these relate instead to her individual path as a female writer and intellectual. The authorial systematics seem to be more strongly gendered in courtly literature than in spousal mysticism. Contrary to Christine, the female mystic Hadewijch of Antwerp expresses agency in love and is authorized by her love experience to write about it in her visions. The conception of a feminine soul as spouse of God may have facilitated Hadewijch's appropriation of the first-person stance and agency in love. The shift in gender of the ›I‹ goes along with a shift in the scope of allegory and of love, both of which have a religious nature.

## 5. Reference to the Past and Conversion: The Fallible and Vulnerable ›Author-I‹

Most of the works analyzed in this volume reveal a strong focus on subjectivity, understood as the whole of the inner life, animated by feelings, emotions and mental processes leading to knowledge and creation. However, some of them combine this quest also with spiritual and religious aspirations. A tension may then arise between the profane poetic vocation of a (male) ›I‹, stimulated by love and the pleasures of sexuality, and the demands of salvific knowledge. In the most extreme cases, this tension leads to a conversion that forces the ›I‹ to renounce the active life and the pleasures of love in favor of a contemplative life entirely turned towards knowledge and salvation. This radical change in intellectual and spiritual life is brought about by a critical retrospective view of the narrator's past, which highlights his fallibility at the expense of his authority. Failure becomes the precondition for conversion and the transformation of authority. In their respective contributions, **Robert Fajen** and **Richard Trachsler** look specifically at stories that recount a frustrating or unhappy love affair, coupled with an existential crisis, experienced by the author-narrator in mid-life. The disappointment of love leads him to renounce the trivialities of love, and to choose a contemplative life, entirely turned towards study

and adherence to a sincere faith preaching disgust with the world. This is the price of salvation. At the same time, they reflect on the poet's mission and the validity of love poetry in relation to religious meditation and poetry.

**R. Fajen** studies the process leading to such a conversion in ›Corbaccio‹ written by Boccaccio between 1355 and 1366 and ›Le Joli Buisson de Jeunesse‹ composed by Froissart in 1373. Indeed, similarities emerge between the two texts. Having already reached a maturity that he likens to the onset of old age, the narrator recounts a dream that leads to a retrospective judgment of his love life, and, on awakening, he chooses to renounce the pleasures of love and devote himself to the Virgin Mary. In ›Corbaccio‹, the narrator has a dream encounter with the dead husband of the woman he has fallen in love with, and who has just rejected him. The dream is filled with the misogynistic diatribes of the deceased, supposed to shield the poet from the yoke of love. But R. Fajen, in glossing the title ›Corbaccio‹, which he interprets as »une auto-parodie *bestiale* – comique et extrême – du nom de Boccaccio« (p. 54: »a *bestial* self-parody – comic and extreme – of the name Boccaccio«), casts doubt on the sincerity of the conversion. He also shows the ambiguity of Froissart's conversion. Remembering his past loves, Froissart rediscovers in a dream the lady he once loved, and with her the gaiety and lyrical inspiration of his youth. On awakening, he realizes the futility of his dream, and, in a conversion, he returns to reality and the present time, choosing to devote himself to contemplative life and turning his vows and his poetry to the Virgin Mary. However, the author-narrator's former life remains preserved as a space-time of play, carefreeness and poetry. Finally, these two works, according to R. Fajen, come together to express the ambiguity and fragility of a conversion imposed by a forced renunciation of love.

The stakes involved in conversion can go beyond individual experience, particularly when it concerns an ancient authority, that of Ovid, whose pseudo-autobiographical episode in the ›De Vetula‹ and ›La Vieille‹

**R. Trachsler** examines (see also above). The aim of this story is to legitimize Ovid by christianizing him thus endowing him with a new spiritual authority. The author of ›The Art of Love‹ recounts how he was fooled by the former nursemaid of the lady he coveted, who took her place in the bed where he thought he would find her. Twenty years later, although he makes up for his frustration by finally spending a night with the woman he should have loved in the past, the expected happiness fades and he is plagued by self-doubt. Giving up on physical love, he turns resolutely to his studies and to God. The story, as in Froissart's *dit*, ends with a poem to the Virgin, giving religious lyricism an authority now denied to love poetry. The old Ovid, the erotic poet as well as the pagan philosopher, is thus erased before being reborn as a Christian. But this process of Christianization involves the ironic annihilation of his virility.

The ›I‹ of these stories is subjected to the passage of time, to the loss of love and pleasures; he does not set himself up as a figure of triumphant authority or sovereignty, but on the contrary insists on the fragility and vulnerability that he shares with all human beings. In love, confronted with the powerful mystery of the woman he desires, the poet reveals his weakness, as well as his fear of his lack of seduction, of *aphanisis*, and ultimately of death. The failure of human love experienced by our authors is, however, transcended, at the cost of immense effort, by the quest for God and salvation, or sublimated by poetic writing that preserves the imaginative memory of love or opens itself up to religious celebration. In some cases, the conversion motivated by this vulnerability of the ›I‹ can be questioned by a poetic presence that implicitly or ironically upholds the value of erotic love and worldly poetry, opening a space of ambiguity.



## 6. Intertextuality and Historicity

Intertextual references to other works, authors, or famous literary characters play a crucial role in the text family in question to evoke a specific poetic and narrative universe and allow the poets to participate in a literary authority. However, many of the later texts do not restrict themselves to the literary dimension, but increasingly make references to the political and social sphere (Wolfzettel 2015, p. 284) – reflecting general developments in medieval art and society. Historicity increasingly seizes the ›I‹ itself as shown by **Barton Palmer** in his essay on Machaut. The implication of the truthfulness ascribed to the first-person discourse in relation to the making of poetry is the key topic in Machaut's ›Le Voir Dit‹ and develops decisively with him:

This ›I‹ presents himself not only as an element of the text requiring a limited investment of belief (in the manner of all fiction), but which also, in this case implicitly, claims to refer to extratextual truth, specifically to the existential author, his experiences, including those of textmaking (p. 265).

Intertextuality here refers to an author's own work and thereby is able to create a reality of its own. The case of Machaut specifically illustrates that authorship in the late medieval period attests not only to an increasing complexity but also involves more of such references to real life and individual features.<sup>7</sup>

Another kind of reality is evoked in the literary works of Domenico Calvalca (1270–1342), examined by **Matthias Bürgel**. He traces Calvacca's authorial presence and demonstrates that Calvacca not only includes cross-references to his own works, but also makes recognizable a coherent literary corpus and deliberate use of technical terminology concerning his activity as a translator of Latin texts. Furthermore, Calvacca's voice as an author becomes tangible in specific formulations that are not only taken from contemporary scientific and rhetoric literature, but also found in Dante's and

Boccaccio's prose. However, instead of highlighting the exclusiveness of literature, Calvaca according to M. Bürgel, refers to »a concrete factual experience and hence to the everyday reality of his audience« (p. 273), trying to establish a sort of empirical authority that creates a proximity between him and his audience.

**Mireille Demaules** examines the subtleties of authority that George Chastelain explores in ›The Temple of Boccaccio‹ (1463–5): by means of the dream trope Chastelain places himself in the continuity of Boccaccio's ›De Casibus Virorum Illustrium‹, an authority in terms of poetry and historiography. The dream also allows the ›I‹ to withdraw and remain in the background, in order to formulate a critical lesson addressed to its patroness Marguerite d'Anjou. According to M. Demaules, this effacement of the author-narrator »tient à la nature du texte qui s'apparente au genre du songe politique, si prolifique à la fin du Moyen Âge« (p. 305: »is due to the nature of the text, which is similar to the genre of the political dream, so prolific in the late Middle Ages«). And yet, the metaphor of the temple contributes to the development of his position and authority as a historiographer himself who surpasses time:

l'historiographe, protégé par la fiction du songe, s'autorise à lui [Marguerite d'Anjou] inculquer une leçon de morale politique. Face au pouvoir temporel qui agit par la violence s'affirme donc indirectement l'autorité de l'historiographe, faiseur de gloire et juge plein de sagesse des actions humaines (p. 312).

the historiographer, protected by the fiction of the dream, has the right to teach her a lesson in political morality. In the face of temporal power, which acts through violence, the authority of the historiographer is indirectly asserted, as a glory-maker and wise judge of human actions.

The shift to a more social and political dimension is also a theme in **Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet's** paper on Machaut, who by means of reference to a character from a popular board game of the time includes teachings on good behaviour in society:

L'utilisation de la figure du *Roi qui ne ment* pour faire passer un enseignement montre que le problème se déplace du ›Remede de Fortune‹ au ›Voir Dit‹ d'un enjeu essentiellement amoureux à un enjeu qui est aussi social et politique. [...] Le poète adresse d'abord au *Roi qui ne ment* une série de conseils de conduite et de bon gouvernement, comme dans un miroir des Princes (p. 149).

The use of the figure of the *King who does not lie* to convey a lesson shows that the problem has shifted from the ›Remede de Fortune‹ to the ›Voir Dit‹, from an essentially amorous issue to one that is also social and political. [...] The poet begins by giving the *King who does not lie* a series of advice on conduct and good government, as if in a mirror for Princes.

In line with recent research, **Sylvie Lefèvre** confirms a similar tendency towards the political in Chartier's ›Livre des quatre dames‹:

Dans les dernières décennies [...] on a de plus en plus tendu à rapprocher ce qui était séparé comme deux pans dans l'œuvre de Chartier: l'un d'inspiration amoureuse et personnelle, l'autre d'inspiration politique et morale (p. 156).

In recent decades [...] there has been a growing tendency to bring together what were separated as two parts of Chartier's work: one of loving and personal inspiration, the other of political and moral inspiration.

Specifically in the later Middle Ages, we can also observe an inverted movement: the transgression of literary discourse into real life and the »use of courtly fiction as an authority« (p. 322) in certain texts on warfare and on politics, as shown by **Sarah Delale**. She examines challenge letters written by the seneschal Jean III de Werchin (1374–1415) to his potential opponents illustrating that these writings clearly refer to literary authorities and courtly models of the knights of the Round Table and of a man fighting for his lady's honor. His poetical works, a first-person narrative intitled ›Le Songe de la barge‹ (1404) and an exchange of balads with his squire, resulted in Werchin's official function as a poet at court where he »had to organise and judge at least one literary contest every year, and he could be solicited to judge love cases« (p. 325). Sarah Delale considers these transgressions between literary discourse and courtly matters as a reflexion of

the social development of the chivalric class and knightly communities at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, literature and especially first-person narration contribute to building up an identity in real-life and, through the lens of poetry, shape reality.

The literary format proves to be extraordinarily adaptable for the inclusion of various discourses that change over time, as well as for the reflection of poets on their own role. The creative potential of this text family lies in the way the texts deal with literary motifs and traditions, and in particular how they apply, reinterpret and transform allegorical forms. With regard to allegorically conveyed authority, the texts turn out to be dynamic, complex and ambivalent; as a reflection of these dynamics, the ›I‹ is able to speak of him- or herself, in an oscillating movement between submission and vulnerability on the one side and poetic authorization and empowerment on the other. Later texts of the family reveal that poets increasingly investigate the literary cosmos built by their predecessors or by themselves in their own precedent works, having become a literary reality of their own.

Finally, the texts in question stage the profane author's difficult conquest of a form of social and intellectual power, in the face of religious and political authorities, as well as the cultural prestige of his or her illustrious predecessors. Therefore, they also address the general position of the poet and the author in medieval society. This idea, emerging from several contributions, seems to be particularly true for Chartier, Christine de Pizan, Chastelain and Jean de Werchin. To a certain extent, the texts allow us to participate in the historical emergence of the author and the author's historical reality in the making, through poetry that can be considered an imaginary and yet real projection of what is to come.

## Notes

- 1 The term ›text family‹ is used to designate a group of texts that cannot be assigned to a single literary genre or text type, such as the German *Minnerede* or the French *dit amoureux*, dream allegory, debate, or autobiographical first-person narrative. Rather, the texts examined can be grouped into cross-genre text families based on certain characteristics like the dream trope, allegory, first-person narration, the love theme, etc. (see Glauch/Philipowski 2017, p. 11).
- 2 As Zimmermann (2001, p. 11) points out: »l’auteur s’efface derrière l’auctoritas« (›the author disappears behind the *auctoritas*‹).
- 3 In lyrical poetry and particularly in prologues or epilogues, as in Roswitha of Gandersheim’s dramas or heterodiegetic narratives like Marie de France’s *Lais*, or Arthurian romances, with a specifically richly developed author-narrator in Wolfram’s ›Parzival‹, to name a few examples.
- 4 De Looze (1997, p. 5–7) makes out a shift from authority to the concept of author in pseudo-autobiography. Glauch (2010, p. 168) differs first-person character narratives from first-person author narratives that prepare later developments in the 16th and 17th century: »So differenziert sich mittelalterliches Ich-Erzählen, bei dem die Begriffe Autobiographie und Pseudo-Autobiographie sich meist nicht gegeneinander ausspielen lassen, in zwei Qualitäten aus, bei denen diese Differenz anwendbar wird. Seit dem 16. Jahrhundert gibt es Ich-Romane, die die fiktive Lebensgeschichte eines fiktiven Autors sind. Das sind Pseudo-Autobiographien, die ihren Status als literarische Fiktion teils offen zu Markte tragen, teils aber auch mit der Bereitschaft des Lesepublikums spielen, sie als ›echte‹ Autobiographien zu verstehen. Seit dem 15. und 16. Jahrhundert gibt es im Kontrast dazu auch ›echte‹ Autobiographien in der Volkssprache« (›In this way, medieval first-person narration, in which the terms autobiography and pseudo-autobiography usually cannot be played off against each other, differentiates into two qualities to which this difference becomes applicable. Since the 16th century, there have been first-person novels that are the fictional life story of a fictional author. These are pseudo-autobiographies that either openly advertise their status as literary fiction or play with the willingness of the reading public to understand them as ›real‹ autobiographies. In contrast to this, ›real‹ autobiographies in the vernacular have existed since the 15th and 16th centuries‹). Concerning the ›I-narrator‹, authenticity is not yet thought of as an opposition to fictionality: »Ein erzählendes Ich zu fingieren, gelingt in der abendländischen Erzählkultur erst signifikant später als die Fiktion eines erlebenden Ich« (ibid. p. 174: »In

Western narrative culture, the fiction of a narrating ›I‹ succeeds only significantly later than the fiction of an experiencing ›I‹ («).

5 Metaleptical structures are a central feature of these texts and are particularly evident in the relationship between the ›I‹ and allegory, see Rossi (2020); Philipowski/Rüthemann (2022); Schneider (2022).

6 See Glauch (2022) on the question whether the narratological concept of ›unreliability‹ of the narrator can be applied to medieval first-person narratives.

7 Zimmermann precisely identifies the moment when authors begin to assert themselves: »c'est l'avènement de la signature, correspondant au premier humanisme et à l'émergence d'une nouvelle figure d'intellectuel, à la fois créateur et propriétaire d'une œuvre unique sur laquelle il conserve des droits. Il est sans doute inopportun de mettre cette revendication de propriété littéraire ou de responsabilité juridico-pénale en relation avec la récurrente ›émergence de l'individu‹, régulièrement repérée à chaque siècle, ou presque, de l'histoire, mais on doit constater qu'intervient à ce stade une individualisation de l'œuvre comme de l'auteur« (2001, p. 14: »it is the advent of the signature, corresponding to the first humanism and the emergence of a new figure of intellectual, both creator and owner of a unique work over which he retains rights. It's probably inappropriate to relate this claim to literary property or legal-criminal liability to the recurrent ›emergence of the individual‹, regularly identified in almost every century of history, but it must be said that at this stage, both the work and the author are individualized«).

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