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Medieval Forms of First-Person Narration: A Potentially Universal Format

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Experience and Poetology in Allegorical Love Autobiographies

An Introduction into the Volume

Abstract. In the high Middle Ages, narratives emerged combining traditional literary forms in a new way: these texts are allegories written in the vernacular, narrated in the first person. This new combination was extremely successful in virtually all European literary cultures; this success was not limited to the Middle Ages, but extended into the Early Modern period in texts such as the *Roman de la Rose*, Dante's *Divina Comedia*, Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de la Vie Humaine*, William Langlands *Pierce Plowman*, and Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre de la mutation de Fortune*. This introductory paper asks whether this narrative pattern is universal for all topics and themes or whether allegorical first-person narratives on courtly love, for example, employ a different narrative structure than religious, philosophical, and political first-person allegorical narratives

In this introduction I'd like to do two different things: first, I'd like to describe how the collaboration on ›Medieval Forms of First-Person Narration: The European Career of a Narrative Form‹ came about and gave rise to the Trilateral Research Conferences, with this volume as the first product of the collaboration. Second, I'd like to address the subject of our first conference, which took place at Villa Vigoni from May 27th to May 30th 2019 and which focused on the possible universality of the narrative format which combines first person and allegory. We discussed what significance we can assign to the topic of love and whether or not this specific

narrative format is thematically universal, remaining more or less the same for the subjects of love, philosophy, politics, and religion.

But of course I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made it possible for us to work together so fruitfully: first of all the German Research Foundation (DFG) along with the Villa Vigoni, as well as my two colleagues and co-applicants, Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet from the University of Sorbonne and Stefano Carrai from the Università di Pisa, and everyone else who has joined the Trilateral Research Conferences group over time.

1. Beginnings of the Collaboration

The idea for the Trilateral Research Conferences developed in the context of my research project, funded by the German Research Foundation from 2017 onwards and entitled ›Ich – Minne – allegorisch. Eine komparatistische Untersuchung mittelhochdeutscher und altfranzösischer allegorischer Minne-Erzählungen in der ersten Person‹ (Beschreibung online). Its subject is the following question: when and how did the literary tradition of narrative in the first person emerge in the vernacular? As scholars of German literature, my collaborator Julia Rüthemann and I aimed to determine which specific forms this first-person narrative took until about 1500 and what distinguished it from other narrative forms. Why is this narrative form used with conspicuous frequency in combination with the dream trope, with allegorical plots (such as the hunt, the journey, and the war) and personifications? Why is it never used in the narration of heroic epics? Why are there – at least in the German-speaking countries in the medieval period – so few first-person narratives which are coherently and consistently narrative throughout? Unlike picaresque novels, the medieval first-person narratives are always discursive as well, meaning they include significant chunks of monolog, dialog, debates, lyrics, letters, and songs. First-person narrative is the narration of speech, and this means narration about knowledge. But obviously it is important to the authors of these

texts to present this knowledge not merely as pure speech, but as narration, and that means that it is both located in the past and temporalized by the fact that it is imparted to the ›I‹ as part of an encounter, or in other words: an experience (cf. Philipowski 2017).

For the purposes of this project, we limited ourselves to allegorical love narratives in the first person, using the example of two Middle High German texts (›Minnelehre‹ by Johann of Constance [around 1300] and the anonymous ›Minneburg‹ [around 1325–50]) and two Old French texts, namely the ›Jugement du Roi de Bohême‹ by Guillaume de Machaut (before 1342) and the ›Roman de la Poire‹ by Thibaut (13th century). In 2017 we organized an international conference in connection with this project, attended by American, British, Canadian and French colleagues.[1] The longer we worked on this topic, the clearer it became that an analysis of the emergence and development of the literary combination of first person and allegory could not be done without including authors such as Petrarch, Boccaccio, and especially Dante. So the Trilateral Research Conferences are the perfect venue for the extension and deepening of our research, which began solely with German literature and was then expanded to include German and French.

In our search for specific forms of first-person narrative in German literature, it was quickly apparent on the one hand that these texts do not constitute their own genre. On the other hand, however, most allegorical narratives in the first person could be repeatedly assigned to the same groups of texts, membership in which is based on characteristics such as the love theme, allegory, dialog scenes, and the dream trope. And in each group, certain texts proved to be virtual prototypes of *Minnereden*, debates, or dream allegories.

Of course, the characteristics that make these groups recognizable are part of more or less clearly defined traditions: the use of the dream trope in the Middle Ages was influenced by the ›Somnium Scipionis‹ (between 54 and 51 BC); the narratively framed dialog with a personification by

Boethius' ›Consolatio Philosophiae‹ (around 523); the use of allegories and personifications with agency and allegories by authors such as Prudentius, Martianus Capella, and Bernhardus Silvestris. In ›De Amore‹ (1186), Andreas Capellanus employed allegories in a courtly context, but his narrative was not yet in the first person or in the vernacular. Alanus ab Insulis employed the first person in ›De planctu Naturae‹, but not the vernacular. About one hundred years later, Raoul de Houdenc combined allegory and the first person in the vernacular in his ›Songe d'Enfer‹ (1215). These narrative traditions created a framework for the vernacular narratives, even beyond the scope of direct derivation.

After we had analyzed the field of Middle High German secular allegorical love narratives in the first person, for a more systematic approach[2] we divided them into the following groups:[3]

(1) courtly love speeches (*Minnereden*[4]), meaning texts that cannot be sung and were generally transmitted as collections of discursive texts about love, as dialogs or conversations between characters who may be but are not necessarily allegorical. These *Minnereden* are often narratively framed (and they were subject to our analysis only if this was the case), but even then in most cases they are more discursive than narrative, because they consist predominantly of lamentation, dialog, and description. This is one reason why their status within the narrative field is highly unclear and controversial (Achnitz 2014). They often begin with the ›I‹ walking to an idyllic place where he either participates in or eavesdrops on a conversation. What takes place within a *Minnerede* is highly variable: the action can be reduced to the conversation with a personification or a non-allegorical character, but a *Minnerede* can also contain an extensive adventurous plot including many allegorical characters, a quest, a battle, a hunt, and so on. It can be very short and comprise only 300 verses, but exceptional cases like the ›Minneburg‹ can extend to the length of a whole novel. For some researchers this makes it questionable whether texts such as the ›Minneburg‹ are to be considered *Minnereden* at all.

An important subgroup of the *Minnereden* is dialogs and debates[5] which are narratively framed and can therefore be counted among the narrative texts.[6] Some of the texts share a common feature in court-of-law scenes in which a judgment is passed in matters of love, generally by allegorical characters and personifications. The ›I‹ in these cases can be summoned as the defendant or accused, or may attend a court case as a witness. At times he may be requested to issue a decree as well. It is a matter of controversy whether the court-of-law trope in itself is allegorical or not.

(2) Another subgroup is the dream allegories (like the ›Minnelehre‹ of Johann of Constance), which narrate how an ›I‹, generally himself suffering in love, dreams of an encounter with the beloved or with personifications of love, Venus, Amor, or Cupid. In a certain way, dream allegories can be placed along a spectrum between autobiographies (which I'll return to below) and *Minnereden*. They can be much longer than *Minnereden* (which tend to be rather short), but their employment of the dream trope means that the story being narrated, unlike the autobiographies, takes place in a space of unreality.

(3) There is only one Middle High German courtly love autobiography: the ›Frauendienst‹, written by Ulrich of Liechtenstein in 1255, a text which also encompasses 57 songs by the author, also transmitted in the famous Heidelberger Liederhandschrift (Digitalisat) along with some letters. Interestingly, Ulrich does not employ any personifications in his text, except that he (as the experiencing I) disguises himself as Lady Venus to participate in a jousting. But he acts in an allegorical manner – for example, when he is literally elevated by his beloved lady (who pulls him up into her bedroom) or is imprisoned. Whether the text is allegorical or not is therefore inconclusive and not easy to answer (Bleumer 2010, p. 366, among others).

In the course of our work, however, it became increasingly clear that, regardless of the prototypical texts at their core, these text groups not only

had permeable boundaries vis-à-vis each other; thematically they were also part of a much broader context. For example, the allegorical *Minnereden* are part of the tradition of allegorical ›Reden‹ or speeches, which can take not only love, but also social classes or the seven liberal arts as their subject. In literary texts, court hearings are held not only in matters of love, but also regarding other issues, as in Konrad's of Würzburg ›Klage der Kunst‹ (1257/58), in which the personification of art laments the fact that she has been badly treated and lays claim to her right to greater appreciation. And the dream allegories share many characteristics with the allegorical literature of visions, which includes prominent and broadly transmitted texts such as ›Visio Philiberti‹ (12th century) and ›Pèlerinage de la vie humaine‹ (1330–31).

This meant that in addition to the allegorical love narratives in the first person which we had originally focused on, we gradually realized that clerical and philosophical texts, texts giving voice to social criticism, and others required our attention. But we especially found that the German allegorical narratives in the first person (regardless of whether they were secular or clerical, fictional or factual texts) could not be categorized within a framework that included only Middle High German literature. Ulrich's of Liechtenstein ›Frauendienst‹, for example, is considered (and is) unique in the history of German literature (see, for example, Glauch 2017; Martschini 2013; Bleumer 2010).[7] However, if we widen our perspective to include French literature, courtly love autobiographies with inserted letters and songs are not at all uncommon.[8] We do not need to claim that Ulrich's ›Frauendienst‹, Dante's ›Vita Nuova‹ (1292–95), Tibaut's ›Roman de la Poire‹, and Guillaume de Machaut's ›Voir Dit‹ (around 1364) are related to one another by derivation to recognize the obvious: they make up a series of texts and are connected by virtue of their structure,[9] even if they emerged without knowledge of each other and in different languages.[10] We discovered that formal similarities such as this were evi-

dent in all of our allegorical narratives in the first person. Below are just a few examples in various languages:

(a) Alongside the courtly love speeches we can categorize the French *dits*. Of course the *dit* is not the same as the German *Minnereden*, but it is comparable in many respects: like the *Minnereden*, the *dit* is »en effet, a rapport au vers, en ce que tous deux travaillent sur le discontinu, sur le rythme. Les traités en prose [...] ne relèvent pas du genre du *dit*« (Cerquiglini 1988, p. 91). Like the *Minnereden*, the *dit* is didactic. And both the *Minnerede* and the *dit* can be either purely discursive texts in the present tense or narrative texts in the past. Jacqueline Cerquiglini has defined three characteristics of *dits* that are elementary:

> a- Le *dit* joue avec la discontinuité.[11]
> b- Le *dit* relève d'une énonciation en *je* (*je* qu'il représente dans le texte) et d'un temps: le présent, même s'il peut enchâsser un récit au passé.
> c- Ce *je* est celui du clerc-écrivain. Le *dit* enseigne. (Cerquiglini 1988, p. 87).

What distinguishes the *Minnereden* from the *dit* is that the *Minnereden* focus thematically on love, while the *dits* vary thematically: »Le *dit* ne se définit donc pas par sa matière mais par la manière dont les éléments qui le composent sont mis en présence« (Cerquiglini 1988, p. 86). So the text type which corresponds more closely to the *Minnerede* in terms of theme better is the *dit amoureux* (see Blank 1970, among others). Another distinction is that some of the *Minnereden* are written in the third person, while for the *dit* the first person is an elementary characteristic: »Le *dit* enseigne. Cet enseignement [...] est le fait d'un *je*, le *je* du poète, le clerc. C'est ce *je* qui, par l'écriture, fait tenir ensemble les divisions du *dit*, c'est ce *je* qui met ces pièces en perspective« (Cerquiglini 1988, p. 93). But one of the most important differences is that the word *dit* – derived from *veritatem dicere* – lays claim to stating the truth, which is not the case for the *Minnereden*.

(b) Similarities are especially evident in the case of the dialog/debate texts: at the heart of this group of related texts is the juxtaposition of dia-

log and allegory, which can be traced back to Boethius' ›Consolatio Philosophiae‹. This combination itself can be combined with the dream or vision trope. The dialog has a specialized text type in the court-of-law narrative,[12] which is often (although not always) allegorical in nature, as in the ›Cort d'Amor‹ (end of the 12th century), Machaut's ›Jugement du Roi de Navarre‹ (1349), the ›Minneburg‹, Hermann's von Sachsenheim ›Mörin‹ (1453), and ›Des Spiegels Abenteuer‹ (around 1452).

(c) The next group is the dream or vision allegories, which were very popular and some of which were broadly transmitted and especially numerous. Within this group there is much more translation than in all the other text groups. This is exemplified by texts such as the ›Visio Sancti Pauli‹ (late 12th century), a text that was translated from Greek into Latin and from Latin into many vernacular languages, and Guillaume de Deguileville's ›Pèlerinage de la vie humaine‹, which was written in the vernacular and translated not only into many other vernacular languages such as Dutch, English, German, and Spanish, but also into Latin (see Kablitz, Peters 2014, among others). The dream or vision allegories can be distinguished from dialogs featured in dreams because their focus tends to be more on the first-person narrator's traveling or journey from station to station and less on the static dialog with an interlocutor. One could possibly even consider them a kind of allegorical travel literature. Early examples of vernacular dream or vision allegories are Raoul's de Houdenc ›Songe d'Enfer‹ and Brunetto Latino's (1220–1294) ›Il Tesoretto‹ (around 1263–66). The ›Visio Philiberti‹ and Guillaume's de Deguileville ›Pèlerinage de la vie humaine‹ are vision allegories which were especially broadly transmitted; William Langland's ›Piers Plowman‹ (end of 1370/1390) was influential as well. The difference between dream and vision is anything but clearly delineated. But the dream – unlike the vision – is anchored in nothing but the dreamer himself.[13] In general, one can say that the visionary, unlike the dreamer, is a traveler. He journeys through a strange world both as a representative of humanity as a whole and as

someone who (later) has the authority to teach, because he has experienced something exceptional: »The visionary speaks before the public as a teacher, as a teacher taught by God, of course, but still as an authority saying ›I‹«.[14] The dreamer is not a traveler, but a visitor to an allegorical inner world which is also exemplary. However, he generally visits this world with a purpose of his own, usually his own love, and the world he visits is usually less extensive in spatial terms. Individual cases such as Boccaccio's ›Amorosa Visione‹ (around 1342), however, are less clearly defined; they blend dream, vision, teachings, and courtship in a complicated manner.

(d) Especially in French literature, but in Italian literary culture as well, there is – as mentioned above – a series of courtly love autobiographies. They are given different names depending on how their status as fictional texts is assessed. Laurence de Looze suggested the concept of pseudo-autobiography (de Looze 1997).[15] Mireille Demaules (1988), in reference to Zumthor, has suggested »fictional autobiographies« as a defined term. Sonja Glauch avoids placing these texts along the spectrum between fictionality and factuality, calling them »stylized autobiographies«:

> Nennen wir diese Texte vielleicht stilisierte Autobiographien, um dem Grad an narrativer Formung Rechnung zu tragen, der höher ist, als es das neuzeitliche Verständnis des Autobiographischen ohne weiteres zuläßt. ›Stilisierte‹ Autobiographien sind jedoch nicht dasselbe wie fiktionale Autobiographien. Zu erinnern wäre daran, daß Autobiographien immer und grundsätzlich nur von einer *persona* handeln, die der Verfasser auf sich selbst bezogen wissen will. (Glauch 2017, p. 314)[16]

These fictional, pseudo- or stylized autobiographies include a longer biographical section leading up to the subject, and thus they are generally not introduced by a dream. In this literary type, there is a greater predominance of narrative than in speeches. But even these texts do not consist of narrative throughout; rather, the narration is often interrupted by letters, songs, lyrics, monologs, and conversations. The ›I‹ often appears in the role of an author, addressing and reflecting upon the process of producing

the text and as a rule also confidently giving his own name. Often he is recognized by other characters in his role as author, and his poetic authority is acknowledged.

To conclude: our somewhat arbitrary comparative analysis including a few French, Italian, and English texts confirmed the existence of the groups which we had already observed within our German texts, as well as the realization that the contours of these groups are not clearly defined.

For example, personifications may appear in the dialogs or debates such as Guillaume's de Machaut ›Jugement du Roi de Bohême‹ or Jean Froissart's ›Joli Buisson de Jeunesse‹ (1373), but there are also dialogs and debates which do not make use of personifications as Ulrich's of Liechtenstein ›Frauenbuch‹ (1257), Heinzelin's of Constance ›Von dem Ritter und dem Pfaffen‹ (not earlier than middle of 1350), Christine's de Pizan ›Livre du Debat de Deux Amants‹ (1400) and Alain Chartier's ›Livre des quatre dames‹ (1415/1418). And some allegorical debates, regardless whether they include personifications or not, are framed by a dream trope, while others, which are otherwise very similar in respect of their narrative structure, are not. Debates without the dream trope include Ulrich's ›Frauenbuch‹, Guillaume's ›Jugement du Roi de Bohême‹, Alain Chartier's ›La Belle Dame sans Merci‹ (1385–1430/46) and ›Livre des quatre dames‹, Hermann's von Sachsenheim ›Das Schleiertüchlein‹ (1453/58). Debates incorporating the dream trope are Boccaccio's ›Il Corbaccio‹ (1355), Chaucer's ›Book of the Duchess‹/›The Deth of Blaunche‹ (1368), Bernat Metge's ›Lo Somni‹ (1396/98), in which the ›I‹ dreams that the spirit of his deceased benefactor, John I of Aragon, visits him at night accompanied by the mythological Tiresias and Orpheus to discuss with him questions of the immortality of the soul, the Holy Church, the vices of women, and illegitimate love. Most journeys to the afterlife include the name of the author, most likely because the author received exclusive knowledge from a journey to this realm, but there are also exceptions to this rule, such as the ›Visio Philiberti‹.

2. Family Resemblances

In the course of this project, in order to do justice to these complicated findings, we jettisoned the concept of genres or text types in favor of the more flexible model of groups of related texts or family resemblances,[17] which is even more suited to the texts we are examining than the technical term ›format‹ we used in the proposal. Within families of texts, the individual members – meaning texts – are characterized by a variety of features such as use of the vernacular, naming of the author, the ›I‹ in the role of the author, allegoricity, love as a topic, the dream or vision trope, incorporation of letters, lyrics or songs in the text, etc. The core features of the family of texts which are the subject of our Trilateral Research Conferences are the use of the vernacular, narration in the first person, and allegoricity. Allegorical texts in Latin which employ the first person – such as John Gower's ›Visio Anglie‹ (1381) – would thus be assigned to a different family. The same would apply to heterodiegetic, allegorical texts in the vernacular, such as the anonymous ›Court d'Amour‹ (before 1300, maybe late 12th century). Within the related group of texts consisting of allegorical first-person narratives in the vernacular, there are members including and excluding the dream trope, the naming of the author, court-of-law scenes, and the wide variety of themes that can be focused on. Each text can belong to several text families, and these families are interrelated by virtue of these shared members. This means there are no firm boundaries dividing the families as there are for genres. This model of groups of related texts does justice to the fact that there are unmistakably clusters of texts which belong together based on their successful and fruitful combination of characteristics, but that these clusters have permeable boundaries. It is not evident – but also not necessary to define – exactly where the boundary of a family of texts lies. The ›Voir Dit‹, for example, could be counted both among the family of autobiographical texts and the family of *dits*.

If we employ this model, it remains an open question how we should interpret the relationship between the relatively consistent occurrence of

many combinations of characteristics such as the combination of the first person and allegoricity (with the exception of debates, which can be first-person narratives without personifications) on the one hand, and the relative variability of other characteristics such as the combination of the first-person narrative form and the dream trope in *dits* and debates on the other hand. Why is it an exception if a vernacular love autobiography is not allegorical (or if the allegoricity is very much reduced as in the case of Boccaccio's ›Fiammetta‹ [1343])? And what does this say about this text? Does the ›Fiammetta‹ belong to our family at all? After all, the text is exceptional in more than one respect: not only is its narrator female, so that the identification with her author Boccaccio is obviously impossible, but furthermore in her case it's not the poetic achievement and refinement of the author-narrator that stand at the center of the narration as in Thibaut's ›Roman de la Poire‹, Nicole's de Margival ›Dit de la Panthère‹ (circa 1290), Machaut's ›Voir Dit‹ (1364) and Jean Froissart's ›Prison Amoureuse‹ (1371/1372), but her decline caused by the drama of her passions, which consume and destroy her bit by bit. Fiammetta is not a poet using her passion as an inspiration to compose; she becomes a victim of her uncontrolled emotions instead.

Our first conference was devoted to the question of the role that the topic of love plays in the text family. Are allegorical texts in the first person with love as a topic distinguishable from other allegorical texts in the first person? Are there systematic differences between narrations about love and other topics, such as religion, philosophy, or politics? What role does the love theme play in the narrative structure? Does love as a topic matter in any narrative sense?

3. The Theme of Love

At first glance, there are not many reasons for love as a subject to enjoy special status. The first-person narrative form could be considered a strategy for imparting knowledge to an ›I‹ by means of narration. An author tells a story about how the ›I‹ encounters the personification of Nature, or – as in Bernat Metge's ›*Llibre de Fortuna i Prudència*‹, written around 1381 – of Fortuna and Prudence, or admires the visual representation of the seven liberal arts, or is instructed on the role of poverty or fertility during a conversation. Abstract knowledge about topics such as the seven liberal arts is thus made into part of an experience, meaning an event which is anchored in time and space, and as such in the biography of the ›I‹. Isn't love simply one of many possible subjects about which knowledge exists, comparable to knowledge about Nature, Fortune, the seven liberal arts, and the soul?

Love can indeed be treated as a subject of knowledge, as is shown by texts such as ›La Fonteinne amoureuse‹ (around 1361) by Machaut and Chaucer's ›Book of the Duchess‹, in which the ›I‹ holds a conversation with a knight who is mourning his deceased lady, and Hermann's von Sachsenheim ›Schleiertüchlein‹, which has a similar plot. The topic of these texts, which belong to the branch of texts centered on a dialog or debate, is love, but the first-person narrator here is only an interlocutor, a witness, an observer, and occasionally a judge. In these cases, any other subject could often replace love in the conversation.

3.1. The ›I‹ as a Lover – Autobiographical Love

But how should we view texts in which the ›I‹ himself loves and is a lover?[18] It is obvious that in this case we are dealing with another branch of the family, not with the dialog or debate text type but with *Minnereden*, *dits*, dream allegories, and autobiographical texts. Narratives about one's own love, or narratives by the ›I‹ as a lover, are – or at least can be – dif-

ferent from and can extend beyond the unfolding and imparting of knowledge.[19] Love in these cases is not only a subject of knowledge and discourse, but part of one's own biography; it is knowledge embedded within a time span, in the lifetime of the ›I‹. The more important the role of time is in the text, the more likely it is that the text is autobiographical. And if we consider how the experience of love is presented in these kinds of texts, we can observe that with very few exceptions it is connected with poetological reflections, or in other words with the creation of poetry and literature.

This vivid and intense experience is found only in cases in which the ›I‹ tells of his own love, and only in cases which – like the examples I've just named – are autobiographically narrated. By autobiographical I mean that they encompass a longer time span than merely a single situation and that they narrate a series of experiences which result from one another. Even if texts such as the ›Roman de la Poire‹ are difficult to categorize because the events they narrate (such as the submission of the ›I‹ to Amor, his journey to Paris, his giving his heart to the lady) are so strongly allegorical that they can hardly be plotted on a timeline, it is nevertheless the case that most autobiographies are distinguishable from texts which narrate the clearly delineated situativity of a dialog or a court-of-law scene. This is why the ›I‹ can receive the commandment to write down what he has encountered at the end of debates, *Minnereden*, and dialogs. But this commandment makes the ›I‹ a mouthpiece of the knowledge that was produced by the dialog.[20] His role in a *Minnerede* or debate is not that of a poet composing lyrics and songs as in the autobiographical texts, but that of the intellectual and recipient, mediator and imparter of knowledge. The product of his literary activity is a debate or a dialog, not poetry. Yet in his ›Klage der Kunst‹ Konrad of Würzburg utilized exactly this type of text to demonstrate his poetic mastery. However, a crucial point is that he does so by using personifications and allegories for his debate.

If we are looking for something unique in the use of the love theme, it might be the element of true poetological reflection, meaning that the ›I‹ and lover not only writes down at the end what he has encountered, seen, and heard (as he does in many dialogs and debates), but that in texts which narrate his experiences as a lover, the process of literary creation is an essential part of the plot structure itself. This is the case only in love autobiographies, and only they include lyrical insertions of poetological reflection.

3.2. Poetology

In the courtly love autobiographies, however, it is not only the case that experience becomes poetry; rather, the narrator in these texts is part of a highly complex reciprocal situation in which language and experience bring each other forth. Love, admiration, and desire produce language in the form of poetry, and poetry brings love, admiration, and desire into existence. These texts not only impart knowledge about love; they also represent a cycle of mutual creation, in which the narrator, poetry, the lady, love, and the author are all included. In the ›Dit de la Panthère‹, it is the lady who becomes the symbol of language, of the ability and authority to speak;[21] language takes the form of the panther's sweet breath. In Huot's view,

> the relationship between dreamer and lady is, to a large extent, governed by the model of text and reader: with the God of Love's help, he reads the panther as an image of his lady; in his dream, she reads the dit that Venus has provided. In the second part, their interaction is that of lyric dialogue. This dialogue, however, takes place within the narrator's imagination; it is made possible by the construction of the lyric compendium, itself a function of writing. (Huot 1987, p. 207)

The movement of the panther's inhaling and exhaling breath very accurately reflects the mutual creative cycle involving the narrator, poetry, the lady, love, and the author in the love autobiographies. An initial indication that poetological reflection is essential to the structure of courtly love

autobiographies are the numerous lyrical and discursive text elements. These text elements – lyrics, letters, and songs – are often, as Maureen Barry McCann Boulton has remarked in respect of inserted songs simultaneously authenticating and impersonal:

> These songs were treated by the characters in their romances as sincere expressions of love, and when the characters appropriated them, they invested them with their own personal meaning. [...] Furthermore, in the *dits amoureux*, and especially the pseudo-autobiographical ones, the songs formed part of the authenticating material; they served, as in the ›Voir Dit‹, to prove the truth of the narrative. At the same time, because the songs were theoretically impersonal, characters could sing them in social contexts and invest them with hidden meanings. (Barry McCann Boulton 1993, p. 278)[22]

The relationship between the inserted text and its narrative context can vary greatly and depends very much on aspects such as authorship, literary form, and insertional technique.

Jacqueline Cerquiglini has distinguished three types of insertions (Cerquiglini 1977, in the form of a chart on pages 10–12): The first type, mainly texts from the thirteenth century, in which »Le JE des pièces lyriques se donne comme le JE indifférencié de la poésie lyrique. JE LYRIQUE ≠ JE NARRATION«. For the author this means: »L'auteur des pièces lyriques est différent de l'auteur du texte [...]«. In the second type, texts from the fourtheenth century, »Le JE des pièces lyriques se donne comme un JE individué et est identique à celui du narrateur. JE LYRIQUE = JE NARRATION«. This means: »L'auteur des pièces lyriques est le même que celui de la narration (ou est une variante de cet auteur). Passage à l'autobiographie fictive«. The third type in Cerquiglini's chart includes Froissart's ›Méliador‹. In this type, »Le JE des pièces lyriques se donne comme le JE indifférencié de la poésie lyrique. JE LYRIQUE ≠ JE NARRATION« (all quotations from the chart on page 10).

Although, at the level of the story, the songs and letters serve the purposes of love and courtship, it is obvious that they are also part of the poetological discourse. Barry McCann Boulton has written of them: »alle-

gorical *dits* such as the *Amoureuse Prise* and the *Panthère d'Amors* [are texts] where the narrative is an elaboration of the themes of the poetry, [...]«. (Barry McCann Boulton 1993, p. 285).

In individual texts such as the second part of Ulrich's of Liechtenstein ›Frauendienst‹, the second half of Johann's of Constance ›Minnelehre‹, Machaut's ›Voir Dit‹, and Froissart's ›Paradis d'Amour‹ (1361/62), almost the entire plot consists of the composing, sending, copying, reading, amorous interpretation, and aesthetic assessment of the correspondence in the form of letters and songs. This is simultaneously a message, an instruction, and poetry, and takes place at many levels in the ›Prison amoureuse‹, because in this case the first-person lover makes his communication with the lady the subject of the correspondence with his admirer, fellow sufferer, and pupil under the pseudonym ›Rose‹. Their poetological reflections include negotiation regarding how love can be the inspiration for songs and poetry, in the same way the autobiographies generally view themselves as part of a literary courtship: the texts owe their existence to the author's love. They tell the story of this love, and their aim is to earn, to initiate, or to deepen the love of the lady to whom the autobiography is dedicated. This is true although the one serves as a foundation of the other: in the ›Voir Dit‹ the poetic texts composed by the ›I‹ excite the love of Tout Belle even before the author meets her, and her love, which is granted to the ›I‹ because of his poetic mastery, grants the aged, lame, and artistically exhausted ›I‹ fresh powers of creation and inspiration, which are revealed and manifested within the ›Voir Dit‹ itself. Poetry and experience are interlaced here in the sense that experience becomes poetry and literature gives linguistic shape to the experience, but poetry always precedes every described experience, and this experience can only take place within the framework of the possible as defined by literature:

> Das Ich führt [im ›Voir Dit‹] alle Spielarten von Gläubigkeit und Leichtgläubigkeit vor. Es zeigt damit auch, daß nicht nur die Liebeslyrik ein Kunstprodukt ist, sondern genauso seine Liebe. Sichtbar wird also ein gegenseiti-

> ges Bedingungsverhältnis von Liebe, Sprache und Dichtung, und zumal wird sichtbar die Subjektivität, mit der ein Ich diesem Bedingungsverhältnis einen Nährboden gibt. (Glauch 2017, p. 323)

Just as poetry and experience reciprocally bring each other forth, in some love autobiographies the knowledge that the ›I‹ has received in an allegorical dream world extends into his waking life. For example, the ›Minnelehre‹ tells how the ›I‹, an unhappy lover, meets Cupid and *Frau Minne* in a dream and is instructed by them in the art of love. Following Minne's advice, the ›I‹ composes exemplary letters of courtship which soon yield a rendezvous with the beloved. *Minne*, who in the dream had promised to be ever-present in the heart of the lover, advises the ›I‹ to assert his will with regard to the lady; his self-confident conduct finally leads him to his goal, so that the ›I‹ is able to present his report as tried-and-true instruction to young men. With its dream within a dream, the ›Dit de la Panthère‹ also multiplies the possible references and relationships of the wisdom received in the dream. However, due to the fact that this knowledge of the world is located in the realm of allegories and dreams, and the knowledge received from allegorical characters in the dream is confirmed and proven to be true in the waking world, the contrast between allegorical and non-allegorical worlds and between the dreaming and the waking world is relativized and minimized. The allegorical dream world is not separate from the waking world, but is only another perspective of it:

> Ainsi la rencontre avec la dame rejoue-t-elle la rencontre avec la belle panthère. Curieusement, c'est donc le rêve qui fournit le matériau à la réalité et non l'inverse. Ce qui se donne comme réel et véridique se combine dans les machineries du songe et dans les subtilités du chant. On le voit, de même que l'opposition vrai/faux est dépassée, la tension réel/fictif perd tout sens. (Demaules 1988, p. 301).

So we can identify a strong tendency towards poetological reflection in autobiographical texts – i.e. in first-person narratives. Significantly, all of the autobiographical texts which include lyrical insertions deal with court-

ly love. If we study the list of narrative works containing lyric insertions in Maureen Barry McCann Boulton's Book on the Song in the Story (Barry McCann Boulton 1993, Appendix I: List of Narrative Works Containing Lyric Insertions, p. 295–297) we see immediately that among the nearly seventy texts listed there are only very few that are not thematically dedicated to love. Among these interesting exceptions are the ›Continuations of the Roman des Sept Sages‹ (late 12th century and beginning of the 13th century) and the ›Pèlerinage de l'ame‹ by Guillaume de Deguileville (around 1355) with »4 chansons; 1 complainte, all in the same meter as the narrative«.[23] Of course much further research has to be done to yield a more detailed differentiation of the lyrical insertions on this list and especially to answer the question of how to explain the exceptions. But in any case, it is obvious that lyrical insertions are special and particular to narratives about love.

We can conclude that within the family branch of texts consisting of the allegorical first-person narratives about love, there is a small group of texts which is characterized by the presentation of love as a subject of knowledge,[24] and in which love is additionally experienced by the narrator himself. In these texts, the emphasis is simultaneously on lamentation, courtship, descriptions of the narrator's own feelings, and on instruction and the transmission of wisdom, based on what is described as the individual love of the ›I‹, which is at the same time simply love, *ars amatoria* – the art of loving.

In Kevin Brownlee's view, the reasons for this are to be found in the text family's beginnings, namely the combination of first-person narration in the vernacular, the courtly love theme, and allegory in the ›Roman de la Rose‹:

> Guillaume's prologue conflates the first-person lover of courtly lyric with the first-person narrator of courtly romance. Before Guillaume's *Rose*, these two personae – indeed, the two genres – had been mutually exclusive: the clerkly romance narrator was not a lover; the lyric lover was not a clerkly narrator. Guillaume's brilliant structural innovation involves a new kind of ›autobio-

> graphical‹ discourse. [...] An important result of this conflation is that the experience of the first-person narrator-protagonist seems to acquire a universal validity: his particular story functions simultaneously as an amatory treatise [...]. (Brownlee 2001, p. 89–90).

But there are also other arguments for this overlapping between the subjective and the general or universal that Sonja Glauch calls the double nature of courtly love: the fact that courtly love literature is always addressed to the lady and to the courtly public at the same time reflects the double identity of the ›I‹ as a lover and a poet. This leads to an overlap between first-person subjectivity and the exemplarity of the everyman in his utterances.[25] A. C. Spearing describes the paradox of »what might be termed a ›subjectless subjectivity‹ [...]« (Viereck Gibbs Kamath 2012, p. 6, footnote 17 referring to A. C. Spearing 2005). In Spearing's view, »the narrating ›I‹ is not constituted as a self or a character at all, but is merely a function of the process of narration« (Spearing 2005, p. 154).

Admittedly, the ›I‹ is a lover in many dialogs and speeches as well. But a characteristic of the fictional autobiographies is that, unlike the dialogs and speeches, they tell of love within a longer story. Time – the passing of time, temporal expansion – in these texts is a truly essential aspect of the love experience being described. This temporal dimension makes a story out of the courtship and the love of the ›I‹. And the story an ›I‹ tells of his own love – regardless how stylized – is an autobiographical text.

Notes

1 The results of this conference will be published in a volume with the title ›Allegory and the Poetic Self: First-Person Narration in Late Medieval Literature‹, in collaboration with Barton R. Palmer and Julia Rüthemann. Florida University Press 2020.

2 It must never be forgotten how different all these texts are, even if they seem to share many characteristics.

3 By doing so we could take into account the results of an introduction to a volume of collected articles with a similar subject, edited by Sonja Glauch and myself: Glauch/Philipowski 2017, p. 1–61.

4 For an overview of the German *Minnereden*, see Handbuch Minnereden 2012 and the still relevant Glier 1971 and Ziegeler 1985.

5 Regarding problems of definition see (among others) Black 2010, p. 1735: »Its forms range from lyric poems to debate occurring within narrative verse«.

6 Where in the following the terms ›dialog‹ and ›debate‹ are used, what is meant is not a pure dialog or debate, but a narrative text dominated by an incorporated dialog or debate scene. It is unclear how much narrative a debate is allowed to contain and still be considered a debate. The most recent anthology of debates, including Latin, Occitan, Catalan, Spanish, Galician-Portuguese, French, Italian, Middle High German, and English debates, comprises both narratively framed and unframed debates and dialogs: *Das Streitgedicht im Mittelalter*, 2019.

7 In his article on fictionality, Chinca discusses connections between the ›Frauendienst‹ and *vidas* and *razos*, and also to a genre called the *roman à chanson*, which, at least to my knowledge, does not exist. The texts which Chinca assigns to this genre seem to belong more to the tradition of the *dit*. Chinca 2010, especially p. 309–314.

8 Barry McCann Boulton (1993) assembled a three-page list of literary works in French which include lyric insertions (Appendix I: List of Narrative Works Containing Lyric Insertions, p. 295–297).

9 There are even some autobiographies which seem to share the narrative structure of the ›Frauendienst‹: »At the end of our period, however, it is the lyric poetry that overcomes the narrative. The ›Livre Messire Ode‹ and the ›Duc des Vrais Amants‹, for example, both end in a series of lyric poems that continue to advance the plot line. These works represented graphically the breakdown of the courtly narrative, for the plot failed to reach a successful conclusion, but ended without producing any change in the situation of the lo-vers«. Barry McCann Boulton 1993, p. 280.

10 Glauch analyzed the similarities between the German ›Frauendienst‹, the ›Voir Dit‹ and Dantes ›Vita Nuova‹ in her essay Versuch über einen minnelyrischen Ursprung des Autobiographischen (Guillaume de Machaut, Dante, Ulrich von Liechtenstein), in: Glauch 2017, p. 327–342. Sketches of such analyses have been made by Haferland 2000, p. 268 et seq. and Ruh 1979, p. 160–183, among others.

11 »Despite the concentration of the different roles (narrator, poet, lover, hero) into a single persona, the dit itself is characterized by discontinuity. The narrative line is interrupted by lyrics, by dreams, sometimes by letters and occasionally by other dits. The diverse parts of a single composition are not always in accord and create an effect reminiscent of the layered voices in a polyphonic song«. Barry McCann Boulton 1993, p. 182.

12 See the article by Peters (1972) who points to the crucial role of the Netherlands in the transmission of the *Minnehöfe* from France to Germany (see p. 124–125). She argues that in Germany the court-of-law narratives were, unlike in France, unknown in the form of *joc partit* or partimen. Germany received them only later, in the 14th century, and in the context of (mostly allegorical) *Minnereden*: »Während in Frankreich beide Formen der *cour d'amour* voll ausgebildet sind, ist in Deutschland das Auftreten des Minnehofthemas und damit die Vorliebe des Publikums für minnekasuistische Probleme an das Aufkommen der Minnereden und an das literarische Motiv des Minnegerichts im 14. Jh. gebunden«, p. 129.

13 This is also emphasized by Baumgartner in respect of the ›Roman de la Rose‹: »this dreamer/narrator appears first, if not solely, in the form of the Lover and claims no other source of existence, no other source for his writing, than a dream of love. It is therefore no accident that both rubrics and critical tradition, though not the poem itself or its characters, designate as ›Lover‹ that being who is not allegorical but who, through the mediation of the dream and of the irreality that it authorizes, can combine the fiction of an individual experience with that of an experience presented as essential, atemporal, and independent of any referent«. Baumgartner 1992, p. 25–26.

14 Vollmann 1998, p. 385. »Der Visionär tritt als Lehrender vor die Öffentlichkeit, als ein von Gott belehrter Lehrer, gewiß, aber doch als Autorität, die ›Ich‹ sagt«. Vollmann is referring here to the Latin visionary literature.

15 Huot (1987) also uses this term on page 203 in footnote 29.

16 Glauch continues: »Eine fiktive Autobiographie oder ein Roman in autobiographischer Form ist dagegen etwas anderes als die Erschaffung einer *persona* des Autors: nämlich eine Erzählung, die durch ausreichend klare Signale kundgibt, daß sie n i c h t auf die Person des Autors zu beziehen ist«. Ibid., p. 314, emphasis in the original.

17 For the application of the concept of family resemblances to literary theory, see, among others, Hempfer 2010 and Fishelov 1991.

18 It should be noted that many of Christine's de Pizan texts are an exception to this distinction: »Christine de Pizan, on the other hand, writing mainly for the next generation, used the traditional form conservatively while rejecting its assumptions. She produced works that combined elements of both the romance and the *dit* traditions. She worked in the narrative voice of the *dit amoureux*, but created new personas for it. Consequently, even when speaking in the first person, she did not tell her own story, but someone else's. Unlike the early romances, Christine's works presented no tension between song and story. Nor did she treat the ideals of her lovers ironically«. Barry McCann Boulton 1993, p. 277.

19 »That much of Nicole's source material seems to be drawn from the standard encyclopedic tradition indicates that at least one purpose of Nicole's network of citations was to root the ›Panthère‹ within this broader literary and epistemic framework«. Zingesser 2012, p. 304.

20 Neumeister also confirms that the production and presentation of knowledge is especially essential to the debate: »Von besonderem Interesse für die Konstitution von Wissen sind bekanntlich die altprovenzalischen und altfranzösischen Streitgedichte«. Neumeister 2009, p. 199.

21 »We could [...] say that the protagonist's experience of gazing upon the colors of the panther and marveling at her sweet breath figures the experience that Richard's narrator offered to his lady, whom he hoped would gaze at the pictures, listen to the words, and so fall in love with him. By transposing these qualities into the figure of the lady, Nicole suggests, like Jean de Meun, an association of text and lady«. Huot 1987, p. 198. And: »What is represented in the dit is the writer's relationship with his own textual creation, with which he interacts variously as clerkly narrator, lyric poet, and protagonist«. Huot 1987, p. 207.

22 Huot also remarkes with respect to the ›Panthère‹ that »At once lyrical autobiography and ars poetica, the concluding section of the ›Panthère‹ embraces literariness and lyricism«. Huot 1987, p. 203.

23 Barry McCann Boulton 1993, p. 296. In the Dictionnaire des lettres Française – Le moyen Age, the article on Guillaume de Deguileville provides information about two manuscripts of the ›Pèlerinage de Vie humaine‹ which include »une série de 11 poèmes latins en l'honneur de Dieu, Marie, l'ange garien et divers saints (dont Benoît)«. p. 616. Nivergelt and Viereck Gibbs Kamath (2013) wrote of »a lyric present in *PA* and *PJC*«, p. 4.

24 Courtly love is always an art and something the lover can practice only if he possesses adequate knowledge. In respect of the *fin amor* of the troubadours, Neumeister termed this a »performative knowledge.« Neumeister 2009, p. 195.

25 »Wohlbekannt sind ja die Konsequenzen aus der erwähnten fundamentalen Doppelnatur der mittelalterlichen höfischen Liebesdichtung: ihre doppelte Adressierung an die Dame und die Öffentlichkeit ist gleichbedeutend mit der doppelten Identität des sprechenden Ichs als Liebender und als Dichter sowie dessen doppeltem Streben nach individueller Wahrhaftigkeit des Ausdrucks und gewinnender Gestaltung poetischer Wiedergebrauchsrede. Daraus resultiert eine ständige Überlagerung von Ich-Subjektivität und Jedermann-Exemplarität«. Glauch 2017, p. 320. This view is in fact shared by Huot: »At the same time, although the lady is addressed in the lyrical insertions and in the dits, the frame narrative is addressed to a general audience«. Huot 1987, p. 205, and Barry McCann Boulton 1993: »Another problem arose from the ambiguity inherent in lyric poetry: the songs were both private and social; the love affair was to be secret, but was celebrated in public song. Writers using lyric insertions recognized this ambiguity and exploited it in various ways in their works«. Boulton 1993, p. 273.

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