
The "Comedieta" of the "Sátira": Dom Pedro de Portugal's "Monkeys in the Margins"

Author(s): Michael Agnew

Source: *MLN*, Vol. 118, No. 2, Hispanic Issue (Mar., 2003), pp. 298-317

Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3252009>

Accessed: 07-10-2019 14:45 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

The Johns Hopkins University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *MLN*

The “Comedieta” of the *Sátira*: Dom Pedro de Portugal’s Monkeys in the Margins



Michael Agnew

The little-studied *Sátira de infelice e felice vida*, by Dom Pedro, Constable of Portugal (c. 1429–1466), unjustly neglected by Hispanomedievalists, offers its readers an ideal opportunity to consider the ambiguous status of the margins of a late medieval text.¹ Originally composed in Portuguese at mid-century (a version now lost) and translated soon thereafter into Spanish by Dom Pedro himself while exiled in Castile, the *Sátira* presents an amusingly ironic view of the process of authoring, staged most strikingly in the voluminous glosses

¹ A handful of exceptions, inspired perhaps by Gerli’s call seventeen years ago for a reassessment of the text, permit some qualification of this general statement. Castro Lingl and Haywood have recently dedicated studies to the *Sátira* comparing it fruitfully to the earliest examples of what can be called sentimental romance. Cortijo’s exhaustive study of sentimental fiction considers the important question of the role of Portuguese writers in the diffusion of sentimental *prosimetrum* (including Gower’s *Confessio amantis*) throughout the Peninsula; Dom Pedro may have been instrumental in this process. Even so (and in part because of the impressively wide-ranging nature of his monograph), Cortijo dedicates only ten pages to the *Sátira*. Rohland de Langbehn’s book-length study logically considers the *Sátira*, but due to the panoramic nature of her essay, she does not subject the text to any sustained analysis. Serés has dealt with the *Sátira* in three articles (all of which share substantially the same material), but his opinion of the text seems rather disparaging. Before this, only Brownlee and Gerli had taken the *Sátira* into serious critical consideration. Symptomatically, though somewhat remarkably (as the editors themselves recognize [vii]), Gwara and Gerli’s recent volume on sentimental fiction betrays a keener interest in the late texts in the tradition; only one of the twelve contributors (Gerli) analyzes an early text at great length. None discusses the *Sátira*. Clearly there is still much to be said about the matter.

which fill the folios of the surviving manuscripts.² Julian Weiss has discussed cogently the auto-exegetical vogue among vernacular authors in fifteenth-century Castile, who sought to confer *auctoritas* on their works by appending erudite glosses to them, a trend popularized by Florentine writers of the previous century (*The Poet's Art* 117–29).³ The *Sátira* falls within this general tendency, certainly, but the way in which the Constable authorizes his text involves a process fraught with contradiction.

Dom Pedro presents himself as an eminent crafter of paradoxes, a stance tropologically allied with contemporary courtly poetry in a sentimental vein, though his paradoxes go well beyond the stereotypical quandaries of the suffering lover who subjects himself to a merciless beloved: he problematizes the very act of authoring a text. The marginal glosses represent the principal locus of his most daring metafictional exploits. Here Dom Pedro ironically asserts his literary authority by means of a parallel undermining: on the one hand of the conventions of courtly love (for example, by juxtaposing his chaste pseudo-autobiography with famous tales of lust in the glosses) and on the other hand of his own claims to encyclopedic erudition—the very authority of his marginalia. The apparently subversive humor of Dom Pedro's glosses, which programmatically preclude their own exegetical utility, reminds one of less “serious” varieties of codicological

² The exact dates of composition are unclear, though the Constable was impressively young when he wrote the *Sátira*. Gascón Vera suggests 1445 as the year *post quem* for the Portuguese version, though the author would have been only sixteen at the time. Most scholars agree that 1449, the year of his exile following the defeat and assassination of his father, Prince Pedro, at Alfarrobeira, is the date *ante quo* for the Portuguese; the Spanish translation would have been carried out between 1449 and 1453. Note also that, according to the Constable's own declarations, only the Spanish text had the complete catalogue of 100 glosses (or 102, depending on how one counts, plus three more in the prefatory letter) (Gascón Vera 80, Cortijo Ocaña 90). For a survey of Dom Pedro's turbulent life at the center of Peninsular politics and culture (in Portugal, in exile in Castile, and as the *rey intruso* of Aragón from 1464 until his death in 1466), see Gascón Vera, *Don Pedro, Condestable de Portugal* (7–74). For manuscript descriptions, see Pedro, Condestável de Portugal, *Obras completas*, pp. x–xvi. The first, prepared for the Constable himself, is dated 1466; the second, at the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, is from 1468. A third manuscript from the last part of the fifteenth century, mentioned in a footnote by Fonseca (xiv) but which he did not use in his edition, has been recently examined and described: Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, sem cota, *olim* E. 1.387. See Philobiblon, BETA MANID 4519 (<<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Philobiblon/BETA/4519.html>>).

³ See also Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* (160–210). Gower's *Confessio amantis*, which Minnis also discusses in the context of self-authorization, may have played a significant role in the development of sentimental romance in the Iberian Peninsula as Cortijo has persuasively argued (Minnis 177–90, Cortijo 63–88).

marginalia, like those studied by Michael Camille in the context of illuminated manuscripts. Despite the problems inherent in extrapolating notions about the visual to the context of the verbal, it is nonetheless tempting here to invoke Camille's assessment of such marginal images as signs that "pretend to avoid meaning, [and] seem to celebrate the flux of 'becoming' rather than being" (9), for the Constable foregrounds in his dubiously informative margins (What really do they mean? How are they in fact relevant to the main text?) the very *processes* of literary creation and interpretation: the writer's doubts as he edits his own text and his creation of new, ambiguous readings through self-exegesis.

Indeed, it would seem that Dom Pedro has transferred the carnivalesque logic of the marginal baboons and grylluses of illuminated manuscripts to the presumably staid discourse of the explicative gloss, taking advantage of the fact that in the Middle Ages, the margins of a codex admitted both the subversive humor of the illuminator and the center-affirming *auctoritas* of the scholiast. Or, viewed from another standpoint, Dom Pedro has self-consciously placed his text and commentary at variance, merely exploiting the inescapable condition of the traditional gloss, by which—for example, when a Christian glossator euhemeristically accommodates Ovid to an alien cultural context—"meaning [is] imposed upon the text" (Dagenais 35), a form of literary manipulation that Robert Hanning has called in a suitably amusing turn of phrase, "textual harassment." Hanning goes on to point out that "the idea that a gloss manipulates rather than explains its text may seem a particularly modern one, but medieval scholars and satirists were by no means unaware of the possibilities of such textual harassment" (29).⁴ Dom Pedro's awareness seems apparent, as I hope to show; the irony in his case is that he himself does the imposing of whatever "meaning" the glosses might seem to communicate.

The result is an ingenious, hybrid text that entertainingly reveals the author's wit and glorifies his status for his aristocratic audience. The prose paean in the *Sátira*'s longest gloss to one of Dom Pedro's female forebears is thus not at all incongruous in this context, but rather functions as a key step in an otherwise profoundly contradictory text's claim to literary legitimation. The *Sátira* serves a twofold

⁴ Hanning's choice of words, "scholars and satirists," could hardly be less serendipitous in the context of the present discussion, though Dom Pedro probably did not think of *satire* in quite the same sense Hanning seems to be using (see below).

objective: the consecration of Dom Pedro's own genealogy and the affirmation of his skill as author and artificer. In this light, it seems hardly coincidental that Dom Pedro translated the *Sátira* while exiled in Castile and perhaps provided for its circulation among noble readers there, precisely when he was experiencing one of his moments of greatest political insecurity.

The critical neglect of the *Sátira* is representative of negative judgments under which fifteenth-century Castilian letters have long labored and which only periodically receive salutary revision.⁵ To a large degree this may be due to a simplistic application of the view of the late Middle Ages north of the Alps espoused by Johan Huizinga in his *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*—*The Autumn of the Middle Ages* according to the latest English translation's title—which, though dated, continues to enjoy its readership.⁶ In all fairness, one should keep in mind the complexities of Huizinga's work, especially as regards his legitimate criticisms of Burckhardtian analyses of the Renaissance in Italy and Northern Europe and in those aspects of his approach which preclude a progressive (positivistic) view of history and historiography (Peters and Simons 603–04, 618).⁷ Nonetheless, his basic thesis, namely that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries marked a period of decline, merits profound questioning. This is not to suggest that the fifteenth century in general represents the first babblings of an infant Renaissance, a teleological view of history really the inverse of the decadence coin. Rather, it is preferable studiously to avoid the oversimplifications represented by Huizinga's opening line ("When the world was half a thousand years younger, all events had much sharper outlines than now" [1]), stressing instead the complexities of a period, like any other, marked by multiple and often conflicting cultural and socio-political currents. Recognition of the historical specificity of this age will permit a more favorable analysis of texts traditionally disparaged because they have been viewed in comparison

⁵ Recently, see Gerli and Weiss' co-edited volume on literature under the Trastamaras, and especially Gerli's own comments in this regard (171–72).

⁶ Note Peters and Simons' reservations about the new English version in the context of their otherwise admiring essay on the resurgence of interest in Huizinga, "The New Huizinga and the Old Middle Ages."

⁷ Although it is true that Huizinga's analysis "began by doubting Burckhardt's interpretation of the Renaissance" (Krul 377), resulting in a view that held the "Renaissance" in both Italy and the Low Countries to be an extension of medieval culture, Huizinga was also highly indebted to Burckhardt's work in cultural history as a model for his own, as Krul points out (355–58, 373).

with other historical periods, themselves critical constructs. Indeed, the playful complexities of the Constable's text suggest how blurred dividing lines could really be in the fifteenth century.

The principal text, minus the glosses, already draws its readers' attention to the author's wit. The plot is simple but highly ironic. The forlorn lover describes in the first person two amusing allegorical debates, one with his own Discretion, who, rather than offering guidance as a conceptual go-between, attempts to dissuade him from pursuing his beloved. He then spars in a debate with the seven virtues, led by Prudence, who hyperbolically (and imprudently) compares his beloved to the most virtuous Biblical and pagan heroes and heroines, going so far as to claim that those who hear her voice are more content than Seth contemplating Christ in Eden (64–66). After Pity (pitilessly) berates him, the narrator wins the debate with a simple piece of logic: if his beloved were perfect (as Prudence claims), then she would display compassion towards him; since she is cruel, she cannot be perfect. The virtues file away in silence. Our poor narrator realizes his victory has been a paradoxical defeat, since it depends on the theoretical imperfection of his presumably perfect lady (and, of course, to affirm such a thing would fly in the face of the dictates of courtly love). The narrator-protagonist aims to praise while reprimanding.⁸ His chronic indecision pursues him to the last page, where he debates suicide, contemplating a two-edged sword in his hand.

Of course, we know our hero did not end his life, for we find him dedicating this text to his sister Isabel, the queen of Portugal, in a clever epistolary prologue in which he also blurs the lines between praise and blame (Brownlee 109–11). I here conveniently confuse intra- and extradiegetic narrators, but this is part of Dom Pedro's game: though his lengthy scholia are dominated by the encyclopedic authority of the commentator and generally refer to "el autor" in the third person, the subjective first person voice of the main tale's narrator frequently contaminates the margins.

Inexplicably, the *Sátira*'s first modern editor eliminated most of the glosses—numbered over one hundred—considering them minimally

⁸ Significantly, Dom Pedro's own definition of *sátira* encapsulates this paradoxical attitude: "sátira", que quiere dezir reprehensión con ánimo amigable de corregir; e aun este nombre sátira viene de satura, que es loor, e yo a ella primero loando, el femíneo linage propuse loar, a ella amonestando como siervo a señora, a mí reprehendiendo de mi loca thema e desigual tristeza" (5).

pertinent to the narrative. Perhaps his disinterest in perusing marginalia and his inattention to the author's explicit foregrounding of the glosses led Paz y Meliá to consider the *Sátira* frivolous:

Al que busque sólo la amenidad, no puede recomendarse esta obra. Es un texto de erudición, importante para la historia de nuestra literatura y nada más. No pueden interesar a hombres de fines del siglo XIX los exagerados lloriqueos y lamentos de un mancebito de catorce años [...]. (vii)

A century later, Guillermo Serés's studies on the structure and sources for the *Sátira* betray similar impatience with Dom Pedro's voluminous self-glossing. For Serés, the glosses are a poorly disguised plagiarism of Alfonso de Madrigal's encyclopedic *Diez questões vulgares* (based on Boccaccio's *Genealogia Deorum*) adorning an unoriginal exposition of courtly love *topoi* prefaced by a conventional *accessus*. Serés concludes that

Dom Pedro está haciendo, en suma e inevitablemente, una "traslación sincrónica y concordante" de temas, conceptos, códigos y, en suma, de saberes; matizada con la única modalidad de humanismo que le era dado alcanzar. [... E]ste modo de composición es el único resquicio "creativo" a su alcance. ("Ficción" 60)

Serés may be tacitly reacting to Elena Gascón Vera's claim that "Renaissance" elements appear in the *Sátira*, though she still considers it largely "medieval" (98–101), yet in his zeal to reduce the text to clichéd "medieval" forms and themes, Serés nearly forecloses its potential interest to audiences now, indirectly evoking anew Huizinga's thesis.

Contrary to what Serés's analysis might lead one to believe, Dom Pedro demonstrates considerable subtlety in his choice of thematic material, recognizing the failings of compositional modes when they are employed as mere formulas.⁹ Marina Brownlee has most assertively argued that a consideration of the glosses (and their ironies) is imperative in any understanding of the text. Although my analysis depends heavily on similar ideas regarding the generally subversive function of the marginal material, my own reading of the role of the

⁹ Serés' conclusion is more generous in an earlier version of this essay entitled "Don Pedro de Portugal y el Tostado": "Todo ello, paradójicamente, le proporciona al Condestable mayor libertad creativa" (981). For a strongly favorable evaluation of the text's literary merit, though he gives minimal attention to the glosses, see Gerli's "Toward a Reevaluation of the Constable of Portugal's *Sátira de infelice e felice vida*." Weiss has discussed the glosses' entertaining aspects in a study dealing with the wider phenomenon of self-commentary ("*Las ferosas*" 104–06).

glosses deviates from Brownlee's in one important respect: for the Constable, language, though unreliable, is not entirely empty. His ironies serve ultimately to bolster his claims to literary and political legitimacy. Before returning to the apparent resolution of the fundamental quandary posed by Dom Pedro, it would serve to outline the mechanisms by which he seems to undo his own authority, drawing attention especially to the glosses' role as entertaining narratives in his conception of artistic prose.

With good reason one might wonder if Dom Pedro considered the central narrative the principal attraction of his text, given the glosses' diverting qualities, even though—at least superficially—they would seem to have little to do with the “principal” narrative in their digressive description of deities and figures from antiquity, prompted by numerous passing allusions in the main text. In terms of sheer volume, the glosses dominate the central text. The numbered lines of Fonseca's edition allow for a rough estimate of the difference in length: the main tale might occupy about 30 pages of a pocket edition, while the glosses are easily three times as long. Over a third of the manuscript folios have margins completely filled with glosses. On these pages, the glosses occupy over four times the area of the main text. Those folios without glosses give the impression of being truly “naked”—Dom Pedro's own term in his justification for undertaking the commentary (9)—for the main text always occupies the same small space at the folio's center, surrounded by stark white margins. The reader is left with a clear visual impression of the glosses' “weight,” an essential aspect of the aesthetic of the Constable's carefully prepared manuscript. (See fig. 1 for an example from the manuscript Dom Pedro himself owned; modern editions seriously compromise this aesthetic.)¹⁰ Furthermore, the glosses serve as a *creative* space, where Dom Pedro displays conceptual and rhetorical virtuosity.

A closer analysis of the glosses leads one to the conclusion that the Constable composed them not as an unfortunate afterthought or unconvincing show of erudite bravura, but as an integral part of the

¹⁰ For my rough calculations, I assume 35 lines (of the same length as in Fonseca's edition) to a page for a pocket edition. The manuscript owned by Dom Pedro is now in private hands in Barcelona; fig. 1 reproduces fol. 4r. The Biblioteca Nacional ms. 4023, which I have consulted, is a relatively faithful copy of the Barcelona manuscript. My calculations in part are derived from this manuscript, though proportions between the space occupied by the main text and gloss may also be calculated from the page reproduced here: the size of margins is constant except for slight alterations in the dedicatory epistle and the poem.

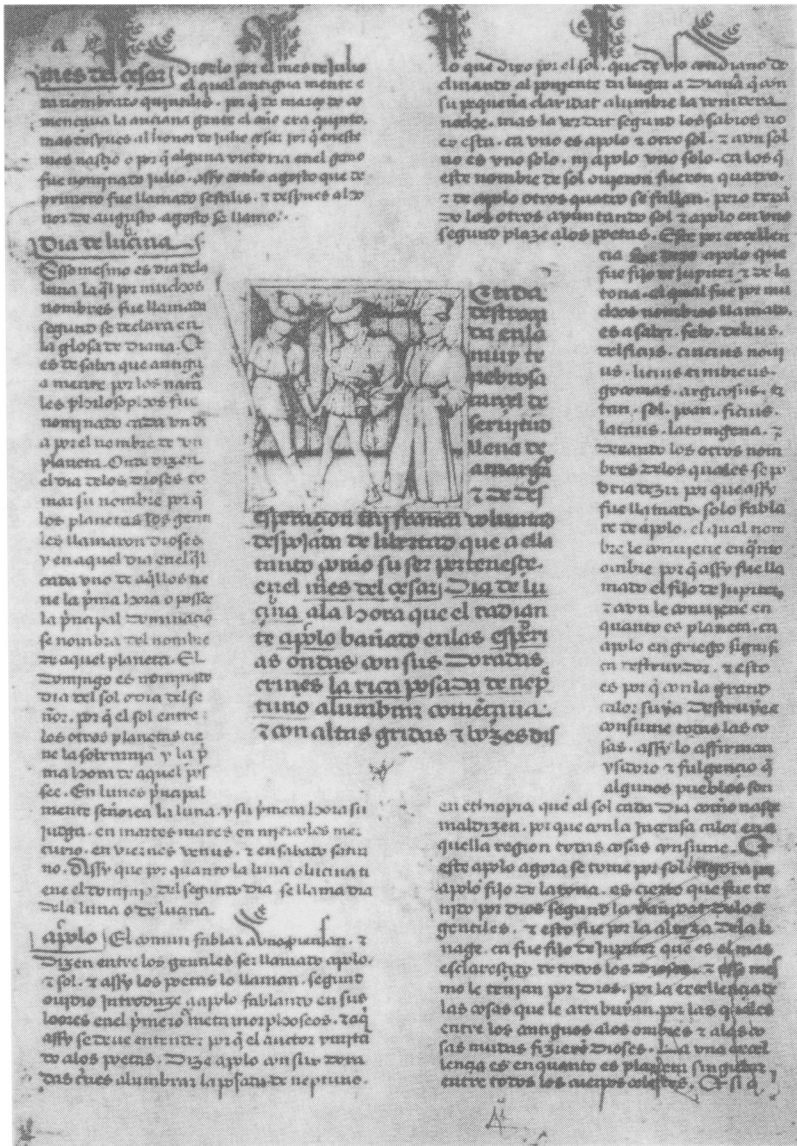


Figure 1. Beginning of the narrative proper of Dom Pedro's *Sátira*. Barcelona manuscript, fol. 4r. Repr. in *Obras completas*, fig. 2.

principal text, so that they paradoxically complement one another in a sort of conflictive dialogue. It is not misguided to suggest, with Serés, that “incluso se diría que éste [the central text] está en función de aquéllas [the glosses] y no vice versa” (“La llamada ficción” 14). Exactly this unexpected turn of events makes the book a surprising and enjoyable read, even when Dom Pedro tests his readers’ patience by concluding his longest glosses with arguments against prolixity (7, 61, 113, 143, etc.). In fact, their volume and verbosity seems to betray anxiety about what Dagenais refers to as an “*aliquid minus*” in the glossed text, a certain missing something compensated for by a “surplus” of commentary (“Glosynge,” in Dagenais’ terminology borrowed from Chaucer):

[Glosses] exist in the ever-deficient realm of *aliquid minus*: a meaning that remains to be worked out, an explanation needed to make the grammatical structure snap into focus [...], a confirmation and authentication that assures meaning. The surplus that is Glosynge is always working toward some plenitude of sense. But as soon as this surplus is added, as soon as the gloss becomes text, the text reverts to a negative charge. Glosynge must begin anew. (38)

The *Sátira*’s first gloss lends support to such a conclusion. In the prologue, before excusing his self-exegesis (the ancients were not in the custom of glossing their own work, yet his seemed “*desnuda e sola*” without them [9–10]) and before expressing his pleasure at compiling the glosses, in sharp contrast to this happy attitude he confesses that, disappointed with his work, he had debated “sacrificing” his principal narrative “al dios Ulcano” (i.e. *Vulcano*) (5). This reference inspires the first gloss, an opportunity for the author to deflate the high-sounding rhetoric of his indecision. Vulcan offers a highly suitable image, being the god of fire and “maestro de todas las artes de aquellos que sus obras en el fuego forjan” (6): presumably Dom Pedro forged his work in his flames of love for his cruel lady, an appropriate association since the connection between Vulcan and the flames of love is made explicit in a later gloss (to Venus [59]).

And yet Vulcan’s gloss wanders off on an apparent tangent to relate two salacious comic tales associated with this god. Dom Pedro goes on to recount the story of Venus’ adulterous love for Mars and her ironsmith husband’s ruse to capture the two in nets and expose them naked before the other gods. Of course, Vulcan thus publicly crowns himself with a pair of cuckold’s horns, which explains in part why the episode was “*materia de grande risa*” (6). The second story is likewise

hardly consonant with the ostensibly serious, sentimental tone of the central tale: Vulcan requests from Jupiter the right to pursue Minerva amorously in payment for his services as ironsmith, but his “quemante desseo” leads to a premature ejaculation by which he engenders, according to Dom Pedro’s version, a motherless son, Erichthonius (6–7). Thus Vulcan, supreme figure for the artist, or more precisely, the artificer, becomes in this gloss a comic figure for the *Sátira*’s ill-starred and indecisive protagonist, impotent in his pursuit of his beloved, and ironically trapped by the snares of his own logic.

These two narratives are preceded by a description of Vulcan’s grotesque physical features, so ugly that his own mother cast him from his crib from the heights of heaven, and the indication that he was raised by monkeys, classic symbols of *luxuria*. The significance of the passing mention of apes in this first, emblematic gloss should not go unheeded. Camille, referring to the apparently meaningless monkeys (and other menagerie) to be found on the margins of illuminated Gothic manuscripts, has discussed the semiotics of such images:

Isidore of Seville, the authority on etymology throughout the Middle Ages, traced the derivation of *simius*, or ape, from *similitudo*, noting that ‘the monkey wants to mimic everything he sees done.’ A beast that was kept as an entertaining toy by jongleurs and as a pet by the nobility, the ape came to signify the dubious status of representation itself, *le singe* being an anagram for *le signe*—the sign. (13)

Or, as he puts it more succinctly in a later passage, “The ape is always a *singe*, a sign dissimulating as something else” (30). One is tempted in this light to reinterpret what Serés has characterized as the Constable’s servile aping of his source texts (principally the bishop-professor Madrigal’s *Diez questões*) as something much more complex—as a rather more self-consciously simian *imitatio*.

The first gloss, though founded on Tostatus’ unassailable authority, in fact deflates the authority of the encyclopedic scholium, preparing his readers for more antics in the margins later in the *Sátira*. After regaling them with these charming but apparently irrelevant stories about Vulcan, the noble glossator frustrates their hope for some sort of explanation and refuses to offer any allegorical interpretations, despite pointing out that these do exist (the ancients’ “poéticos integumentos”), claiming the brevity of the text allegedly allows for no such digression (7), an allegation which later glosses’ prolixity will prove disingenuous. One is simply left with an amusing narrative within the gloss and no exegesis.

Thus, despite his affirmations about the illuminating function of the glosses (10), it does not seem to be Dom Pedro's intention to clarify difficult passages. On the contrary, he seems to prefer that his audience enjoy entertaining tales and the striking counterpoint (or polyphony) established between the principal thematic material of the text and that of his narrative glosses, leaving any further exegesis in the hands of his readers. ("[A]s soon as this surplus is added [...], Glosynge must begin anew" [Dagenais 38].) This is the crux of Brownlee's interpretation of the third gloss, which explains Dom Pedro's labeling his work an "Argos" in his prologue (10): Argus, the hundred-eyed guardian sent by jealous Juno to watch over Io (disguised as a heifer by Jupiter who had courted her affections), is killed at the hands of Mercury, after being lulled to sleep by his music. A figure for failed sentinels, Argus is thus hardly a fit metaphor for explicative glosses, of which Dom Pedro is of course well aware, even though he ironically presents the giant as an allegory for prudence (Brownlee 111–15).

Significantly, this gloss alludes to aesthetic concerns as well, part of a programmatic consideration of art and artifice begun already in Vulcan's gloss. The commentaries are here compared to the showy peacock's tail (where Juno placed the dead Argus' eyes). Likewise, Mercury's success depends on his artful music, the heretofore-unheard harmonies of the "non usado instrumento" of the panpipes—appropriately enough, since Juno feared the heifer might be stolen by "sotil ingenio e artifiçioso engano" (11–12).

The text's second longest gloss exhibits similar drollery. What Dom Pedro ironically designates the "breve comedieta de Antioco" fills the margins of three pages (145–49; fols. 50v–51v in ms. B). It is another tale, coincidentally, of a consenting cuckold. The author mentions this young prince in the main text as a model of patient suffering for love's sake, even to the point of death if need be. As the gloss explains, Antiochus had fallen hopelessly in love with his stepmother but preferred to suffer *mal de amor* and death rather than dishonor his father. Were it not for the timely intervention of a wise doctor who recognized the source of Antiochus' ill health, the boy would have pined away, but his father placed paternal before conjugal love and allowed his son to share his sickbed with his stepmother. The most comical element of the scene is the anticlimactic conclusion to the father's prolix lament: the boy initially refuses his offer and faints, and the father thinks his son has expired, but his tears reawaken Antiochus at which point the glossator simply reports that "el amor paternal

vençió la filial vergüena e rescibió el alnado la su madrastra por muger forçosamente” (149). The humorous play on words suggesting rape of the stepson should not escape readers attuned to the stylized and stereotypical reversal of sexual roles in the courtly love tradition, which this base example of reversal starkly parodies.¹¹ Indeed, this mixture of high and low—main text versus gloss—should give us occasion to reconsider the full implications of the text’s title as a *sátira*.¹² In short, though Dom Pedro will call Antiochus a “mártir” (145), as should be clear, the term is hardly appropriate, and in any case Antiochus’ tale is scarcely a suitable analogy for our hero’s suffering in the main narrative.

The story of Antiochus presents us with the clearest case of Dom Pedro’s delight in narrating around the margins, yet it is not unique in its artfulness. The glosses in general are characterized by all manner of rhetorical flourishes: monologues, laments, apostrophes to the characters, to the reader, and even to his own beloved (82, 138), a gesture which further complicates the distinctions between the text’s authorial voices. The Constable makes it explicitly clear in one remarkably short gloss that he considers the marginalia pleasant matter, not for somber, frightful tales: he refuses to discuss Pluto’s infernal realm, promising to direct his pen toward “otras cosas de más gozosa e serena materia” (84).

This gloss to Pluto is only the beginning of a series which can almost be read as a complete narrative along the margins: in the next gloss, Dom Pedro reports that his plans to pass over the underworld were thwarted by the appearance of Cerberus; at the end of Cerberus’ gloss he introduces the material of the next—Pirithous’ descent with Theseus into the underworld in pursuit of Proserpina—which leads to the gloss on Hercules, who freed these two heroes from the jaws of Cerberus; finally, Hercules’ gloss ingeniously leads to the following one, on Cupid, with Dom Pedro’s description of the Greek hero’s defeat by this deity (84–87). The commentary on Cupid, amusingly self-contradictory in its ambiguous treatment of the effects of love (both negative and positive), as Brownlee has pointed out (121–22), itself leads readers to an earlier gloss: after they learn that love is represented as blind because it is irrational, Dom Pedro concludes, “Et aquí sea fyn o cabo de la glosa o ojo de Argos” (91)—that is, the

¹¹ “Recibió [...] forçosamente” also echoes Lucretia’s “consintió forçadamente” in an earlier gloss (101).

¹² Gerli suggests there may even be significant points of contact with the tradition of Menippean satire (110–11).

same Argus who, according to the gloss which appeared in the prologue, ended up fifty times as blind as Cupid himself, an evocation not only of the love struck protagonist's "blindness" but also of his exegetically myopic glosses.

Indeed, the Constable's apparently careful cross-referencing prompts one to scrutinize more closely his methods: the gloss on Phoebus (47) leads readers back to Apollo for more information (16–18); the gloss to Lucina (15–16) asks that they read ahead in Diana's gloss (62–63); and so on. Thus, when they reach the gloss on Mars (138) and are referred to Cupid, where they discover that Cicero lends the greatest authority to the opinion that this deity was Venus' son by the god of war (88), careful readers cannot help but recall an earlier gloss that unequivocally labels Cupid the "inflamado hijo de Bulcán" following, apparently, the less authoritative tradition (40). Since in certain glosses he explicitly solicits his readers' consultation of cross-references, his thinly-concealed contradictions where no cross-reference is mentioned should be understood as one more case of marginal irony (as when in one gloss he claims the ages of man are three while in another he had already asserted they were five, six or seven depending on the authority one consulted). It is clear that his text is not an entirely trustworthy reference source. Who could take him seriously, after all, when he claims that lice were one of the Egyptian plagues and that the others were too numerous to merit mention (143)?

Most significant in this pattern of unreliability is the variable nature of his authorial voice in the glosses. The commentaries begin by referring to Dom Pedro as "el autor," but soon this authoritative distance is jeopardized when the first person narrative voice of the main tale begins to contaminate the glosses (already in the sixth); on several occasions "yo" and "el autor" appear in the same gloss (e.g. 20–23, 50–51, etc.). This contamination is most pronounced when the glossator directs an exclamation to his lady (e.g. 82) or refers to his own amorous passion, as when he claims he will sit nearest Cupid in his court, above even the legendary lover Macías (40). Dom Pedro's playfulness in this regard recalls Boccaccio's laconic *che sono io* "just like me" in the margin of his *Teseida* when he refers in the poem to prisoners of love, breaking down momentarily the illusion of an objectively moralizing glossator (*Teseida delle nozze de Emilia* 96).¹³ Our

¹³ Robert Hollander has discussed this ironic moment in the margins of the *Teseida* in "The Validity of Boccaccio's Self-Exegesis in His *Teseida*" (174). A contemporary

own commentator in the *Sátira* reveals that he suffers the same subjectivity as the protagonist of the main tale, not surprisingly, since one understands them to be the same character after reading the prologue. This is not, however, the only irony. Dom Pedro-as-enamored-glossator will suffer a momentary lapse, when he cannot imagine any rival of Queen Tanaquil in prudence, not even, apparently, his “perfect” lady (105). Or, in the gloss discussing the ages of man, he assumes the voice of an older, wiser relativist, pointing out that the suffering of youth is insignificant alongside the trials of maturity (yet he is writing while still a declared “adolescente”) (23). With a single stroke of the plume—and, significantly, at the very beginning of the text—he has deflated from the margins the rhetoric of the central tale.

And yet this wisdom serves him naught in the gloss to “la Dueña de Valida,” the honorable matron who ends her own life at a respectable old age and who is presented, in glaring contradiction to Christian injunctions against suicide, as a martyr had she not been a pagan (80)! Our wise glossator, in fact, will finally confess that he simply cannot explain everything: “yo no fise esta obreta para colegir ni declarar todas las cosas e dubdas del universo, ca no es quien lo pueda ni sepa faser en pequeña narración” (113). Dom Pedro’s commentaries are indeed a far cry from Dante’s in the *Convivio*: the Florentine poet compares his to the bread of the Eucharist, and his vulgar tongue Christologically “gives itself as commentary” (3–5, 39, 58–59). The Constable prefers instead to warn his audience implicitly in the gloss to Neptune of his unreliability, quoting Jeremiah: “Maledictus homo qui confidit in homine” (20).

One is left on the final pages of the *Sátira* with a profound vision of circularity which encompasses main tale and gloss alike: sun and moon join in an eclipse; the protagonist holds a two-edged sword while his mind and heart debate in perpetual suspense; and a meandering gloss which encircles the margins of two pages does a rather verbose job of explaining the significance of the celestial

translation of the *Teseida* into Castilian survives, though the glosses were omitted, to judge by its modern edition. It is possible the Marqués de Santillana owned this translation as well as a copy of the original (Boccaccio, *La Teseida: traducción* 19–21). Santillana refers to the *Teseida* in texts from the 1430’s (Boccaccio, *La Teseida: traducción* 30), well before his contacts with Dom Pedro. Of course, we cannot know if Boccaccio’s inspired Dom Pedro’s glossing ironies, though clearly he could find a serious model in Santillana himself. I should like to thank Victoria Kirkham for directing my attention to this passage in the *Teseida*.

figure of the Dragon, who wraps himself around the zodiac joining head and tail (171–74).¹⁴ One can legitimately wonder to what end Dom Pedro produced such a carefully crafted display, both conceptually and visually, of apparently empty (self-contradicting) words.

Two partial answers to this quandary present themselves, although, as is to be expected, they offer no simple solution. The first emerges from a gloss which is apparently—and unusually—not ironic; the second derives from Dom Pedro's stance with regard to artistic creation (keeping in mind the wider meaning of *ars* in the fifteenth century, which encompassed “art,” certainly, but also “craft,” “skill,” “cleverness,” “wit,” or even “deceit”).

The text's longest gloss, passed over by the handful of scholars who have studied the *Sátira*, merits closer attention. In the extended poetic passage of the tenth “chapter” (Fonseca's designation), only two glosses appear, the first of which succinctly presents Medea as an example of cruelty. Dom Pedro implicitly contrasts her with the subject of the second gloss, his own great-great-great grandmother Isabel, a descendant of Aragonese royalty and queen of Portugal (and, not so coincidentally, the namesake of his sister, likewise queen of Portugal and addressee of the *Sátira*). Here the Constable offers us his most assertive stance before an established authority, in this case that of the Church to canonize saints: for Dom Pedro will make the daring claim that his ancestor achieved a spiritual status equivalent to sainthood. Adopting the authority of a self-appointed hagiographer, he explains that the queen worked miracles “en la vida, e después de la muerte” and goes on to enumerate six in all, in which she heals various ailing persons, among them a blind girl, a significant detail given the problematic role of sight in the *Sátira* (164–68). Indeed, here it seems that Dom Pedro would have his audience understand that this is the one gloss that escapes the programmatic “blindness” of the rest. The gloss ends with an appeal to the reader (fittingly, he uses *leyente*, a word unmarked for gender):

E a ti, o leyente, suplico que, aunque sepas esta gloriosa rreyna non ser canonisada de la militante iglesia, te sea delante una derecha consideración: que es muchos de aquella ser callados, cuyas animas no de menor dignidad son en la çelestre corte que los por ella canonizados. (168)

¹⁴ Castro Lingl has pointed out also that several late glosses (to Cupid, Apollo and Diana) reinforce the text's circular structure by sending the reader back to glosses earlier in the narrative (95n).

Given the author's antics in so many previous glosses, the reader might legitimately question how she or he is to take seriously this consecratory gesture applied to Dom Pedro's genealogy. Of course, if the reader is his sister, then surely he will receive a sympathetic ear. Yet, for the rest of us, the quandary remains, for we are about to be left as bewildered as the narrator himself, who in the final scene now contemplates suicide.

Then again, according to the temporal structure of the *Sátira*, one should recall that the epistolary prologue *follows* the final scene in time (that is, Dom Pedro writes the prologue last, and he makes us explicitly aware of this order of events). In the prologue lies a fuller answer to the problem. Ultimately, the witty glosses should turn one's attention to the author and his craft; the prologue accomplishes this even more assertively, precisely by means of its ironic meditation on author and audience, on the process of composition, dedication and reading. (As a text with its own commentary, the *Sátira* also contains its own reading, no matter how exegetically unsatisfactory.) Dom Pedro is obsessed with art and artifice, as the lengthiest glosses that deal with this theme attest (e.g. Vulcan, Argus and Mercury, Apollo, Minerva, and even negative examples, such as the sorceress Medea or the cruel King Bursiris' court sculptor Perillus, crafter of the instrument of torture with which his own life is taken [26]). He insistently refers to his hand, from the gloss to Sulla (30), to the last major gloss (173). Indeed, the gloss to Queen Isabel, which ends with an apostrophe to the reader, begins with the author urging his own hand to write with renewed joy (164). In this context, Minerva's gloss takes on special significance: the Constable evokes her double aspect as goddess not only of "sciência o arte"—knowledge or (speculative) arts—but also of all *manual* crafts (60–61). Yet these simple gestures calling attention to his poetic craft are not without irony, since apostrophe implies absence and lack of control: Dom Pedro must apply his rhetorical gifts to spur even his own hand. A similar apparent lack of control is suggested by his hand's trembling before describing Sulla's crimes (30) or its being "forced" to explain the significance of astrological references in the last long gloss—"fue forçado a la mi diestra explicar"—a significant choice of words recalling the ironic conclusion to Antiochus' *comedieta* (173).

The carefully crafted ambiguity of Dom Pedro's passively active hand parallels other ambiguities in the glosses: Apollo is both destroyer and healer, bringer of light and false prophet bearing obscure language (16–18); Vulcan is the butt of jokes and the mighty

ironsmith who engenders a motherless son; Dom Pedro is at the age of frivolous love and also at an age “poderosa para engendrar” (21). In the prologue, the Constable debates whether to burn his manuscript as a tribute to Vulcan or save it, ornamenting it with glosses as a tribute to his sister and to his genealogy. He refers to this debate as a “labyrinth,” whose “salida [...] dubdosa e quasi difiçil” (according to the gloss) serves as a suitable emblem for the text itself. Another gloss that refers to Daedalus’ magnum opus adds a further dimension to this comparison: it is the first of the seven marvels of the world (124). In this sense, rather than a negative symbol for discursive dead ends, the labyrinth signifies the height of artistic creation.

Only when we recognize the polyvalence of the labyrinth do we comprehend how Dom Pedro can daringly suggest that a humble gloss might (Christologically?) aspire to the sublime (168).¹⁵ His dedication of the text to his sister (and her namesake), however tinged by irony, signifies, as it were, Dom Pedro’s triumph over trite literary convention. In this light, Antiochus’ entertainingly impertinent *comedieta* on the margins parallels the more serious celestial comedy of the Queen of Portugal.¹⁶ The *Sátira*, in short, is an elaborate exaltation of Dom Pedro’s skill as artificer of paradox, and

¹⁵ He does not make this claim directly, but apologizes to his great-great-great grandmother if the gloss dedicated to her should not attain the “grado sublime”; Dom Pedro’s syntax does not exclude this possibility, evidently. Dagenais, citing Leo Spitzer, has pointed out the Christological model for medieval hermeneutic practice: “The very idea that the coming of Christ ‘fulfills’ the historical events recounted in the Old Testament founds the model of ‘surplus’ or ‘gloss.’ Christ is the gloss who acts out the events already contained, in potential, in the Old Testament. He adds the ‘surplus’ to their *aliquid minus*” (39). Of course, no human-originated gloss can so thoroughly “fill” the space left by that missing “something.” If the Constable’s main text reflects “anxieties of nomination,” the glosses in the margin would seem to reflect a no less significant anxiety about the empty spaces (both literal and metaphorical) of the text.

¹⁶ In his definition of *comedia* as a happy end to a trial-filled beginning (following a tradition he may have known through commentaries on Dante) the Marqués de Santillana offers the apparently compatible examples of Terence and Dante: worldly, pagan comedy and celestial, Christian comedy (168). That Dom Pedro was familiar with contemporary definitions of *comedia* is suggested by his discussion of *sátira* in the prologue, an explanation most likely derived ultimately from the commentary on the *Divine Comedy* by Benvenuto da Imola, a version of which was known in Castile among the literate circles the Constable would have frequented. One could press the issue further, affirming the generic *ambiguity* of the text, given its contradictory title. Is it a satire (*sátira*)? Is it a tragedy (*infeliz vida*)? Is it a comedy (*feliz vida*)? All three? The exact order of the adjectives in the title is significantly ambiguous, for in both the Madrid and Barcelona MSS, the title is given as *Sátira de infelice e felice vida* in the prefatory epistle, while in the *incipit* of the main text, the order appears reversed: *Sátira de felice e infelice vida*.

as such it aspires (paradoxically) to be an un-ironic consecratory tribute to his forebears: an assertion, finally, of his own privileged status in peninsular politics in the face of adversity, for he completes the *Sátira* while exiled in Castile—while on the margins of Portuguese politics. Dom Pedro's antics do not subvert nihilistically, but serve to foreground his wit, upholding his pretensions to literary (and, by extension, political) authority, a lesson not unlike those to be found in Camille's discussion of seemingly subversive marginalia that actually reaffirm a hegemonic order (43–47, 143–46).

Camille's point, however, that "Marginal art is about the anxiety of nomination and the problem of signifying nothing in order to give birth to meaning at the center" (48) would require some elaboration in the case of the *Sátira*. Besides the obvious point that Camille is referring to visual and not verbal signifiers (though the distinction is less important than might seem immediately apparent, given Isidore's etymology for *simius*), at the center of Dom Pedro's pages we find a self-defeating text, one whose meaning (Praise of the beloved? Blame?) is unresolved. Furthermore, the margins as scholia should in principal be a further source of *meaning*, reiterating or elaborating that of the glossed text. They, too, however, consistently frustrate our readerly expectations in the *Sátira*. The "anxiety of nomination" is perceivable both at the center and at the edges of the text. Thus, the "center" of Dom Pedro's text ironically lies elsewhere, in the affirmation of the sanctity of his genealogy and a reaffirmation of his threatened political authority in the face of exile. And, in any case, even if Dom Pedro has been marginalized politically when he completes the *Sátira*, he remains a member of the aristocracy, firmly ensconced in one of the principal centers of power in the Middle Ages, rubbing shoulders with the likes of Íñigo López de Mendoza, Marqués de Santillana. (Only this way could the Catalans, in their rebellion against Juan II of Aragon, consider the Constable a viable candidate for the Crown of Aragon, as they did when they named him king in 1464.)¹⁷

The Constable's highly complex text is not an outmoded relic of medieval aesthetics and a bad show of superficial erudition. On the contrary, it is ingenious, witty, and innovative (if only for its adoption

¹⁷ The hybridity of Dom Pedro's aristocratic text would hardly have surprised Camille: "The concoction of hybrids, mingling different registers and genres, seems to have been both a verbal and a visual fashion for élite audiences" (13).

of aspects of the new modality of sentimental prose and its undoing of the same). It is precisely the ambiguous status of the glosses in the *Sátira*, which simultaneously speak from the authoritative center of encyclopedic knowledge and from the potentially destabilizing edges of the manuscript, that makes it such a fascinating object of study. The *Sátira* is an eloquent testimony on a small scale of the literary achievements of the fifteenth century, which need not be viewed as the decadent conclusion to past aesthetics or tentative hints at future glories but as worthy creations in their own right.

Columbia University

WORKS CITED

- Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Teseida delle nozze de Emilia*. Ed. Alberto Limentani. Milan: Mondadori, 1992.
- . *La Teseida: traducción castellana del siglo XV*. Ed. Victoria Campo and Marcial Rubio Árbuez. *Medievalia hispánica* 2. Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1996.
- Brownlee, Marina Scordilis. *The Severed Word: Ovid's Heroides and the Novela Sentimental*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990.
- Camille, Michael. *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*. London: Reaktion Books, 1992.
- Castro Lingl, Vera. "The Constable of Portugal's *Sátira de infelice e felice vida*: A Reworking of Rodríguez del Padrón's *Siervo libre de amor*." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 32 (1997): 75–100.
- Cortijo Ocaña, Antonio. *La evolución genérica de la ficción sentimental de los siglos XV y XVI*. Colección Tàmesis Serie A: Monografías 184. London: Tamesis, 2001.
- Dagenais, John. *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the Libro de buen amor*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994.
- Dante Alighieri. *Convivio*. Ed. Franca Brambilla Ageno. 3 vols. Florence: Le Lettere, 1995.
- Gascón Vera, Elena. *Don Pedro, Condestable de Portugal*. Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1979.
- Gerli, E. Michael. "Toward a Reevaluation of the Constable of Portugal's *Sátira de infelice e felice vida*." *Hispanic Studies in Honor of Alan D. Deyermond*. Ed. John S. Miletich. Madison: HSMS, 1986.
- , and Julian Weiss, eds. *Poetry at Court in Trastamaran Spain: From the Cancionero de Baena to the Cancionero General*. Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1998.
- Gwara, Joseph J. and E. Michael Gerli, eds. *Studies on the Spanish Sentimental Romance, 1440–1550*. Colección Tàmesis Serie A: Monografías 168. London: Tamesis, 1997.
- Hanning, Robert W. "'I Shal Finde It in a Maner Glose': Versions of Textual Harassment in Medieval Literature." *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*. Ed. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Schichtman. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987.
- Haywood, Louise M. "'La escura selva': Allegory in Early Sentimental Romance." *Hispanic Review* 68 (2000): 415–28.

- . "Narrative and Structural Strategies in Early Sentimental Romance." *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 25 (2000): 11–24.
- Hollander, Robert. "The Validity of Boccaccio's Self-Exegesis in His *Teseida*." *Medievalia et Humanistica* ns 8 (1977): 163–83.
- Huizinga, Johan. *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*. Trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996.
- Krul, Wessel. "In the Mirror of van Eyck: Johan Huizinga's *Autumn of the Middle Ages*." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (1997): 353–84.
- Marqués de Santillana. *Comedieta de Ponça*. Ed. Maxim P. A. M. Kerkhof. Madrid: Cátedra, 1986.
- Minnis, A. J. *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*. 2nd ed. Aldershot: Scholar P, 1988.
- Paz y Meliá, Antonio, ed. *Opúsculos literarios de los siglos XIV a XVI*. Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles 29. Madrid, 1892.
- Pedro, Condestável de Portugal. *Obras completas*. Ed. Luís Adão da Fonseca. Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian, 1975.
- . *Sátira de infelice e felice vida*. Ms. 4023. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.
- Peters, Edward, and Walter P. Simons. "The New Huizinga and the Old Middle Ages." *Speculum* 74 (1999): 587–620.
- PhiloBiblon. Ed. Charles B. Faulhaber. 18 Nov. 2002. U of California. 5 Dec. 2002 <<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/PhiloBiblon/phhm.html>>.
- Rohland de Langbehn, Regula. *La unidad genérica de la novela sentimental española de los siglos XV y XVI*. Papers of the Medieval Hispanic Research Seminar 17. London: Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary and Westfield College, 1999.
- Serés, Guillermo. "Don Pedro de Portugal y el Tostado." *Actas del III Congreso de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval: Salamanca, 3 al 6 de octubre de 1989*. Ed. María Isabel Toro Pascua. Salamanca: Biblioteca Española del Siglo XV, 1994. 975–82.
- . "Ficción sentimental y humanismo: la *Sátira* de Don Pedro de Portugal." *Bulletin Hispanique* 93 (1991): 31–60.
- . "La llamada ficción sentimental y el humanismo vernáculo del siglo XV: un ejemplo." *Insula* 651 (2001): 12–14.
- Weiss, Julian. "Las hermosas e peregrinas ystorias: sobre la glosa ornamental cuatrocentista." *Revista de literatura medieval* 2 (1990): 103–12.
- . *The Poet's Art: Literary Theory in Castile, c. 1400–60*. Medium Aevum Monographs, ns, 14. Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 1990.