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The Presence of Petrarch in Curial e Güelfa **Patricia J. Boehne**

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THE PRESENCE OF PETRARCH IN *CURIAL E GÜELFA*

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Curial e Güelfa, the transitional novel of chivalry which appeared approximately between 1435-1463 and preceded the publication of *Tirant lo Blanc* by about 30 years, is set in one historical time period, late 13th century, and governed stylistically by another, the Catalan Renaissance. The anonymous author, despite recent attempts to unveil him in a fine study by Espadaler¹ and others, remains cloaked in mystery. His sources, too, have seemed both elusive and at times obvious. He appears to be one of the pronounced followers of Petrarch in Catalan literature.² This line begins with Lorenz Mallol, translator, Bernat Metge, Antoni Canals, translator of Petrarch's *Africa* as *Scipió e Anibal*, about 1407, Benet Garet, a Catalan reared in Naples and known as «il Chariteo», Jordi de Sant Jordi, and many others.³

This study focuses on volume III of *Curial e Güelfa* and the most obvious influences of Petrarch, his coronation and the events surrounding it, leaving aside the Dantesque, Boccaccesque and Virgilian influences of the first two volumes, which indeed merit further study. It is in vol. III that the mystery of authorship reaches its climax. A long and personal introduc-

¹ Espadaler, Anton, *Una reina per a Curial*, Barcelona, Edicions dels Quaderns Crema, 1984.

² A portion of this article was presented at the North American Catalan Society session held at the Modern Language Association meetings, December, 1988.

³ Martí de Riquer, in his several articles on chivalry, particularly in the fourteenth century, *Curial e Güelfa*, *Tirant lo Blanch*, and on Renaissance Catalan Humanism in vol. II of his *Història de la literatura catalana*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1980, 433-470. See also E. H. Wilkins, *Studies in the Life and Works of Petrarch*, Cambridge, Medieval Academy of America, 1955, 280-297 as well as the earlier notable studies of Pagès, Farinelli and Sanvisenti.

tion opens volume III. In it the reader his apologetically told that if the author had studied the Muses in his youth the adventures he is about to relate would seem less awkward. His pen turns red in his hand, he tells the reader, for seeming want of verosimilitude, although the events he will relate indeed took place:

O Curial! ¡E fesses tu aquesta relació, qui ho vist en sompnis, e la mia ploma torna roja en la mia mà, no hagués a escriure lo cas següent, car parla sense testimoni e alguns no-y donaran fe!⁴

It seems that the author is unsure, perhaps ambivalent about his venture into the classical world due to his own piecemeal familiarity with it. From the brief and selective classical citations it would appear that he had not had a classical education, but eagerly absorbed what he had access to later in life, perhaps while living in contact with Italian and Petrarchan influences, perhaps at Naples. The intimate, highly emotional tone of this and other passages in the novel, particularly in vol. III, are quite similar in style and tone to Cicero's letters to his friend Atticus, which Petrarch, the follower of Cicero, emulated in his own familiar letters.

The Catalan speaking world was sufficiently vast, and our author may have traveled widely, on diplomatic, military or mercantile missions, as did Curial. Naples seems to play a critical role. This is, of course, speculation based on his own textual references.

The advent of Aragonese rule in Naples (1442-58) certainly marked a turning point in Neapolitan culture and humanistic endeavors, as pointed out by numerous Italian and European scholars. Mario Santoro⁵ mentions the vitality of the Crown

⁴ All citations will be from *Curial e Güelfa*, Barcelona, Barcino, ed. Aramon i Serra, 1933. This citation: vol. III, 74. The entire coronation episode extends from 72-94 in vol. III.

⁵ *Renaissance Humanism, Foundations, Forms and Legacy*, vol. I, ed. Albert Rabil, Jr., Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988, 296-327.

and court of Aragon and its decisive humanistic role in contrast with the «depressed condition» of Neapolitan culture during the waning of the Angevin regime. The arrival of scholars from other parts of Italy and Europe accelerated cultural blossoming. Santoro refers to the «Neapolitanization» of humanism as a feature of this period, a paralleling of collaborative ties between the monarchy and Neapolitan nobility.⁶

The influences which may have surrounded the author of *Curial e Güelfa* in Naples begin with Alfons el Magnànim himself, whose personal cultural impact was nearly beyond measure. His love of literature, the Classics, and his financial magnanimity to literary and artistic endeavors is legendary. His cult of the book led to the formation of his great library.⁷ The *Aeneid*, so important to Curial's modelling, was available in a rich collection of Virgil manuscripts in the Royal Library, as well as among those owned by nobles and scholars.⁸

Among the Italian scholars at the court of Alfons el Magnànim were Lorenzo Valla and Bartolomeo Facio. Both died in 1457. Among the latter's works are *De viris illustribus*, *De humanae vitae felicitate* and *De excellentia ac praestantia hominis*. This last work extolled the supranatural life, and was subject to debate in Gianozzo Manetti's celebration of earthly life, between 1451 and 57. As Santoro expresses it,

...A great development in Neapolitan humanistic culture: The optimistic concept of the strivings of the human being, who far from being discouraged by the evil and dangers of life, shows his most authentic and innate moral endowments precisely in the struggle in which he is constantly engaged.⁹

⁶ Santoro, *op. cit.*, 296.

⁷ Mazzatinti, B. *La Bibiliteca dei Re d'Aragona in Napoli*, Rocca S. Casciano, L. Capelli, 1897.

⁸ Santoro, *op. cit.*, 309.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 298-299.

This statement could be the blueprint, the thesis for the story of Curial's life and adventures. The debate recalls the dichotomy of the lives of Petrarch and Gherardo, dealt with in Petrarch's writings repeatedly, particularly in letters and in the *Secretum*, and Curial's relationship with his «spiritual brother», the Sanglier de Vilahir. In fact, Curial's three mountaintop experiences, Mt. Sinaï, Mt. Parnassus, and at el Puig de Nostra Dona bear remarkable similarity to this debate. One must conclude that our author indeed sides with Manetti's thesis as stated above. Each peak symbolizes in turn first the spiritual, secondly the classical, with the third mountaintop as a synthesis. At the Puig de Nostra Dona Curial comes to terms with spirituality and then scholarship. This is followed by a rapid denouement of the novel: the defeat of the Turks by Curial, who calls upon «Senyor Sant Jordi» as he goes into battle, his restoration to the favor of the Marquès de Montferrat, and the Cort de Santa Maria del Puig. Güelfa is finally conquered, and Curial, having overcome amazing obstacles, now rich and famous, has synthesized the ideals of humanistic culture and emerged victorious.

Many references appear to «rediscovered» classical authors, and Boccaccio's *De genealogiae deorum*¹⁰ appears prominently in our author's display of Renaissance erudition. It is likely that the author of *Curial e Güelfa* also would have known Boccaccio's life of Petrarch. Classical topography and characters are much in evidence, but only in a superficial manner; the *topoi*, the ambience, the function of the gods and their world are superimposed on a late medieval personage, Curial, struggling to transform himself into a Renaissance man. In fact, he is only allowed to win Güelfa after his «education» has been completed by instruction in religion (Mt. Sinaï), poetic and military examination and coronation (Mt. Parnassus), and perfection of

¹⁰ I have used *Genealogiae*, 1494, reprinted in *The Renaissance and the Gods*, ed. Stephen Orgel, New York, Garland Publishing, 1976.

poetic science (Puig de Nostra Dona). This Renaissance journey is essential to the evolution and completion of the young Curial.

The introduction to volume III and Curial's adventures at the three peaks of Mt. Sinai in the Holy Land, in Greece at Mount Parnassus at the temple of Apollo and at el Puig de Nostra Dona, site of famous chivalric and poetic jousts in France, are the clearly Renaissance portions of the novel. They are preceded and followed by chivalric activity and tourneys which round out the actions aimed at winning the beautiful Güelfa.

One observes a radical stylistic change from the first two volumes at the very outset of volume III. Here the author speaks in first person, using the vocative, rhetorical questions and exclamations, and «lecturing» in an emotional, declamatory style, recalling Cicero's *Letters to Atticus* and the epistolary style of Petrarch's «familiar letters». Petrarch was translated into Catalan quite early, and was also available in Latin, the source used by Metge for *Valter i Griselda* before 1400. Metge speaks of Petrarch in the 1388 dedicatory introduction to *Història de Valter e Griselda*, «...Petrarca, poeta laureat, en les obres del qual jo he singular afecció». He was widely known to Catalan writers of the late 14th and early 15th century in both languages.¹¹ The reference to Petrarch's coronation is an important testimony that Catalan writers and courtly figures of the day were cognizant of events in Rome and Naples. Metge would be knowledgeable in particular, through his connections at the royal court and in Avignon, where the word had spread of Petrarch's impending coronation since September 1, 1340, the date on which he received offers of poetic coronation from the King of France and from King Robert of Naples.

Volume III's introduction deserves a thorough study of

¹¹ Among the available texts are editions by Riquer and Marçal Olivar, *Obres Menors*. Also, A. Vilanova, «La gènesis de *Lo Somni* de Bernat Metge», *BRALB* (1958-1959), 38-39.

sources, some of which has been done by Aramon i Serra.¹² The rhetorical devices mentioned earlier bear a striking similarity to the style employed in general by Petrarch in his *Letters on Familiar Matters*, *Familiarum Rerum Libri*,¹³ particularly in his two letters to Cicero, XXIV, 3 and 4, originally written in 1345. Petrarch's admiration for Cicero, whose *Letters to Atticus* he had discovered, is widely recognized as seminal in his style. Petrarch's *imitatio* of Cicero seems to be present in our author's imitation of Petrarch's style for volume III, similar to the influence of Petrarch on the Marqués de Santillana, author of «La coronación de Mossén Sant Jordi», noted some years ago by Otis Green and others.¹⁴

Following the elaborate and personalized introduction to vol. III, we travel with Curial on his Mediterranean journey. From Genoa to Messina, Naples, Rome, The Holy Land, Thebes, Parnassus, and seven years of captivity on the site of ancient Carthage, very near Tunis. Curial thus passes through the period of testing, a time telescope from modern to ancient to contemporary. He will crown his life and the novel with Güelfa's capitulation at the final tournament at la cort de Santa Maria.

The three peaks mentioned earlier are central to the Renaissance education and development of Curial, and they parallel Petrarch's own life and artistic development in interesting ways. Petrarch's dates, 1304 to 1374, and his coronation in 1341,¹⁵ fall shortly before the lifetime of the

¹² See his introduction to *Curial e Güelfa*, *op. cit.*, and notes in vol. III.

¹³ An excellent English translation is that of Aldo S. Bernardo, *Letters on Familiar Matters, Rerum Familiarum Libri*, Albany, State University of New York Press, and Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1982.

¹⁴ In *Spain and the Western Tradition*, vol. III, Madison, Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965. Riquer also makes reference to this influence in connection with Catalan poetry.

¹⁵ Numerous works give biographical information on Petrarch's life and works. Two scholars who present the greatest detail of life and travels are

author of *Curial e Güelfa*. Petrarch's examination in Naples during his coronation journey would have been a momentous occasion in the memory of nobles and scholars of Naples and in other parts of Italy. Petrarch's poetic inspiration and development in the Vacluse, and our author's pronouncement that Curial is the greatest poet of his time seem to be linked for more than geographical reasons.

Petrarch's father was a Guelph,¹⁶ propapacy, a conservative bourgeois, a white. From 1300-1301 he was the notary to Florence's governing board, the college of Priors. During the following period of unrest he fled to Arezzo, then to Pisa and to Guelph exile. In 1309 the Papacy of Clement V moved to Avignon, which was owned by Charles II of Anjou at Naples. Friends from Genoa helped the family. During the family's exile in Carpentras, the young Petrarch was fortunate to have as his teacher the aging Convenevole da Prato.

Petrarch's brother Gherardo entered the Carthusian monastery at Montrieux after his pilgrimage to the shrine of Ste Baume, reminiscent of the Sanglier de Vilahir. As Bishop tells it:

Gherardo entered the monastery as a novice brother, or oblate. He sat below the choir monks, the priests. His entry into religion deeply moved his brother. Again as on the slopes of Mont Ventoux Petrarch saw Gherardo take the hard straight way to the summit, while he was tempted to find a circuitous path, which turned out to lead gently downward. Once more he had to admire his brother humbly, to recognize his own lack of courageous decision. And since he was above all things a literary man, his distress of spirit found its issue not in action but in literature.¹⁷

Bernardo, mentioned above, and E. H. Wilkins. Morris Bishop's *Petrarch and his World*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1965, gives an excellent overview.

¹⁶ Morris Bishop, *ibid.*, 14-19.

¹⁷ Bishop, *ibid.*, 188-190.

Petrarch's ascent of Mt. Ventoux accompanied by his brother was a key moment in his religious and aesthetic development, as Petrarch himself describes it in another letter, IV, 1. Ecstatic and moved upon reaching the great height, Petrarch reads St. Augustine aloud to his brother as an act of spiritual contemplation. He laments his continuing unhappy relationship with Laura, and the spiritual atmosphere is one of struggle between earthly yearnings, pleasures, and spiritual renunciation of worldliness.

Petrarch cites the legend of twin brothers, merchants sailing on a stormy sea, one of whom founds a Carthusian monastery. His brother, in imitation, builds on a second hill close by. The «bicorn» nature of Petrarch's «summits» appears again in his own coronation oration. The concept of «two, yet of one mind», was dear to Petrarch. Its application here is to the twin peaks of religion and classicism, both aspects of Augustine. The Sanglier de Vilahir's exhortation to penitence and conversion which he preaches to Curial is modeled on Petrarch's interpretation of Augustine to his brother Gherardo, which in turn is based on Augustine's confessions to his disciple Alypius.¹⁸

Augustine is important as a source of literary reform, as the epitome of classical and Christian Antiquity. It is important to our author and to Petrarch that such a «mountain-top» experience precede a classical, humanistic coronation.

For Petrarch, the experience of climbing Mont Ventoux with his brother was an epiphany central to his life and art. Mazzotta¹⁹ and others discuss the influence of Gherardo in the *Bucolicum Carmen* and *Familiarum* X, 3, 4. The poet-humanist on Parnassus is contrasted with the heavenly life of

¹⁸ Giuseppe Mazzotta, «Humanism and Monastic Spirituality in Petrarch», *Stanford Literature Review*, vol. 5, #1-2 (1988), 57-74.

¹⁹ Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Stanford Literature Review*, vol. 5, #1-2, (1988) 57-74.

a monk. Curial on Mt. Sinaï is the parallel of Petrarch on Mont Ventoux. He listens to the pious words of his spiritual brother and mentor, his former rival in combat, the Sanglier de Vilahir. The sermon of the former knight, now a monk, is effective. Curial departs spiritually invigorated, going directly to his own classical coronation.

The culmination of Petrarch's presence is at the core of the novel's most unusual episode. It occurs at the coronation of Curial on Mount Parnassus. Curial is first put to the test in an examination by the Muses and Apollo to judge who was the greater knight of Antiquity, Achilles or Hector. He decides for Hector, and Curial is then crowned by Apollo as the greatest *poet and orator* of his time. This episode is smoothly orchestrated, replete with classical references, and bears a striking similarity to Petrarch's coronation on the Capitoline Hill in Rome, as he relates it in letter IV, 3-8.

Petrarch had been offered the laurel crown as greatest of living poets at the same time by the King of France and by King Robert at Naples. He traveled to the latter, was examined, and was crowned on April 8, 1341. E. H. Wilkins has translated Petrarch's coronation oration, lost for several hundred years and rediscovered by Attilio Hortis in a unique manuscript.²⁰ This document also seems to be a source for our author.

Petrarch had received the laurel crown in 1341 after examination by King Robert of Naples (1309-43). This was approximately, or perhaps exactly, 100 years before the coronation of Curial. The similarity of the entire process, which our anonymous author could have known through Petrarch's own writings, in which the coronation is referred to 31 times,²¹ through Boccaccio or through Neapolitan literary history seems to be a fortuitous opportunity not only to create a striking

²⁰ *Scritti Inediti di Francesco Petrarca*, Trieste, Lloyd, 1874.

²¹ Wilkins, *The Making of the Canzoniere and other Petrarchan Studies*, Rome, 1951, 9.

episode in a novel, but an apotheosis of the poet, of poetry, of Petrarch, and perhaps of a specific individual. Was the author of *Curial e Güelfa* in residence in Naples either before or during the writing of his novel in Catalan? There are no specific references to suggest this other than the cultural exposure of this older author, who came to scholarship and humanism later in life, as he says, speaking of the Muses:

E si yo les hagués en la mia tendra edat servides, ara-m socorrerien e ajudarien com als altres servidors seus, mas yo no curí d'elles ne les coneguí, e per ço elles no curen de mi ne-m conexen. Bé les voldria ara afalagar, mas sabent que riurien e trufarien de mi, elegesch callar.²²

Geography is another factor in common for both our author and Petrarch. Although the novel is written in Catalan, Curial is a Lombard from Monferrat, we are told over the course of the novel. Petrarch's life and works largely take place in what was the easternmost corner of the Empire, adjacent to ancient Lombardy. Much of Curial's and Petrarch's lives take place within the same 600 kilometer radius. At least two *aregni* which are found in Petrarch's unedited writings are concerning a treaty in 1353 and funeral of the Archbishop Mediolanensis, «*Dominus quasi totius Lombardiae*» in 1354.²³

Both Riquer and Espadaler seem to indicate an Urgell connection, our author perhaps as an older soldier who has come to court late in life, with a nostalgia for the House of Urgell and its past potentiality as well as patriotism. Aside from favorable references to German and French knights, our author reserves his praise for four Catalan knights. His lord, the Mar-

²² *Curial e Güelfa*, op. cit., vol. III., 12-13.

²³ These, along with the Coronation Oration of Petrarch, are found in the Codice Magliabechiano, Classe IX, N. 133, in *Scritti Inediti di Francesco Petrarca*, Attilio Hortis, Trieste, 1874.

quès de Monferrat, has essentially exiled Curial, who embarked on his journeys and adventures with no national allegiance, obedient only to Güelfa and her brother. Petrarch, as the son of an exiled Guelph, did not obtain a clear political identity until faced with the historic and flattering offer of poetic coronation from Paris and King Robert of Naples.²⁴ He chose to be crowned at Rome, after spending a month with King Robert, who examined him privately on the subject of poetry at Naples. He had traveled to Naples by sea, carrying with him his *Africa*. Young Boccaccio was in Neapolitan court circles at the time, and writes of these events. Petrarch made trips to historico-classical sights near Naples: The cave of the Sybil, the lake of Avernus beneath which Tartarus surely lay, the march of Acheron, Virgil's tomb and tunnel, etc.²⁵

The main account of Petrarch's coronation, according to Wilkins,²⁶ is Petrarch's *Epistola Metrica II, I, Ad Johannem Barrilem*.²⁷ The laurel crown, the dance of the Muses at Apollo's temple, the role of harsh Fortune, which prevented his friend Barrili from attending, the climb up the Capitoline, the praises accorded him:

A crimson blush suffused my face, my spirit was overcome with shame. Such undeserved honors weigh heavily upon my heart. And yet they pleased me too for all pertained to the Sicilian King and not to me. Yet was I judged by his high verdict worthy.²⁸

²⁴ Petrarch, *Epistolarum familiarum*, IV, 4.

²⁵ Bishop, *op. cit.*, 163-167.

²⁶ E. H. Wilkins, *The Making of the Canzoniere and Other Petrarchan Studies*, Rome, 1951, 9-70.

²⁷ Annotated and translated by Thomas Bergin in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later, A Symposium*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures: Symposia, 3, 1975, 56-65. He has used *Francesco Petrarca: Opere a cura de Giovanni Ponte* (Milan, 1968) for the text.

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, 60-61.

Petrarch's *Bucolicum Carmen*,²⁹ a collection of allegorical Eclogues in Latin, is even more similar to Curial's coronation in a number of aspects. Virgil and Homer are mentioned as the poet's preference. The *Aeneid*'s subject is perfect man. The great storm of Aeolus is depicted. In *Curial e Güelfa*, the great storm occurs on the sea after Curial leaves Mount Sinaí, enroute to his coronation at Mount Parnassus, where he will first be examined by Apollo on the topic of poetic and human excellence, specifically relating to Homer and Vergil, Hector and Achilles.

In Petrarch's *Bucolicum Carmen* he relates the myth of Apollo and Daphne written five years after his 1341 coronation. Stupeus explains how he, a shepherd, wandered one day alone through the woods and was amazed by the sweet song he heard on a hill. In a clearing he meets the Muses, speaks wisely at their behest to Daphne, who then crowns him with the laurel wreath. Petrarch, as always, symbolically links the laurel with his beloved Laura. Dedalus' role is accepted by Petrarch as the founder of Apollonian cult in Italy, and Petrarch as the founder of Apollonian cult in Italy, and Petrarch emphasizes Aeneas' landing in Italy and worship at Apollo's temple. Aeneas vowed to raise a temple to Apollo in Rome if he were able to transport the Trojan Gods to Latium. Centuries later Augustus did this, erecting a temple on the Palatine. Petrarch thus connects Troy and Rome, and later in the same Eclogue he connects Florence and Rome. The muses, love, war, the Furies, Hades, gods, heroes, are present. Now Petrarch must emulate Odysseus and heed the siren call of fame: singing of Vergil, Homer, gods and heroes like Orpheus.³⁰ Bernardo calls this the moment at which Petrarch emerges as

²⁹ See Tonino T. Mattucci, *Il Bucolicum Carmen de Francesco Petrarca*, Pisa, Editrice Giardini, 1971. Discussed by Aldo S. Bernardo in *Petrarch, Laura and the Triumphs*, Albany, State University of New York, 1974, 81 ff. He suggests that together with *Fam.* x, 4 this provides the clearest expression of Petrarch's poetics.

³⁰ Thomas Bergin, *Petrarch's Bucolicum Carmen*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1974, 64-65.

...the poet of a new Tusco-Roman civilization whose poetic heritage is shrouded in the magic of classical mythology and especially of the Apollo myth.³¹

In his Coronation Oration, a brief *ars poetica*, Petrarch cites Lactantius, saying that the poet should take things which have really occurred and transform them by means of oblique figures. To invent all that one writes is foolish; one is then a liar rather than poet. Poets have to set forth physical, moral and historical truths under the veil of fictions, and with deliberate obscurity. Reality is a basis for fiction; undisciplined imagination is risky. Bishop feels poetry for him is the transformation of reality by means of a set of symbols. It is a supreme event in literary history, the recognition of poetry as a contemporary art, the beginning of literary Renaissance in Italy, symbol of the revival of classic culture and the consciousness of a new culture beginning to bloom. The Coronation was also a supreme event in Petrarch's life.³²

Literary theory appears more modestly, but with a similar thrust in *Curial e Güelfa*. Before Curial gives his literary judgement, Apollo speaks to Homer, detailing how Homer heeded Apollo himself and the Muses, who had accompanied him during his life:

Volguist mostrar quant senties de la mia sapiència, e usant de la sciència de Baco, poetant, te esforcist scrivint cercar poètiques ficcions e retòriques colors, fingint moltes coses que no foren, donant als uns ço que no era llur, e amagant ço que en los altres públicament fonch conegut; e alçant en alt aquell noble e meravellós estil, ab la ploma has fet meravellar tots los poetes qui après tu són venguts, e pensen que los fets axí com tu has escrit foren passats. Axò mateix ha fet Virgili, gran ans molt major de tots los poetes latins, qui, axí com

³¹ Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura and the Triumphs*, *op. cit.*, 10-11, 81-85.

³² Bishop, *op. cit.*, 169-171.

tu, ha cercades e poetant escrites coses tenyides de color de mentira...³³

The «veil of fictions» is important to our author as well, who stresses its importance and validity by having Apollo himself justify its use in Homer and Virgil.

The classical themes which occur both in Curial's coronation and in Petrarch's works also appear in sonnets 166, 188, 187 and 188. Laura is compared to Aeneas, Achilles, Ulysses, Augustus, Agamemnon and Scipio.³⁴ The lack of copies of the Coronation Oration might argue for the *Bucolicum Carmen, Epistolae Familiarum*, Boccaccio's version in *De vita et moribus domini Francisci Petrarchi de Florentia*, 1348-49, or in his *Geneologia*, and oral accounts of the Coronation from scholars or nobles familiar with the events being available to the author of *Curial e Güelfa*. E. H. Wilkins³⁵ lists 31 instances in Petrarch's own writings referring to poetic, or to his own coronation. Petrarch probably wrote most of his own *Privilegium laureae* prior to the ceremony.³⁶

There were, in fact, other «coronations» known to scholars and literati of the times, and known particularly to our author and to Petrarch. The closest in time to *Curial e Güelfa* was the posthumous *Coronación de Mossén Jorde* about 1425 by the Marqués de Santillana, also in the royal court at Naples. Coronations for literary, especially poetic, merit, and Petrarch's own coronation journey to Naples, 100 years before the writing of *Curial e Güelfa*, may be especially significant.

Petrarch's own teacher, Convenevole da Prato, was «crowned» posthumously. Mussato was crowned in a university ceremony in Padua in 1315. In 1391 Dante was presented with

³³ *Curial e Güelfa*, op. cit., vol. III, 88-89.

³⁴ Also discussed by Bernardo in *Petrarch, Laura and the Triumphs*, op. cit., 36-37.

³⁵ *The Making of the Canzoniere and other*, 9-13.

³⁶ Wilkins, op. cit., 13.

the idea of coronation at the University of Bologna where Petrarch was studying in 1320-26. Dante had wanted coronation in Florence, and was only honored posthumously with graveside rites. His coronation had previously taken place in *Paradiso*, xxiv. Suetonius and Censorinus had both written of the Capitoline Contests. Statius mentions coronations more than once, and he won contests at Naples and Alba. He refers to the laurel crown in both the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*,³⁷ to which the author of *Curial e Güelfa* refers also. Whereas Dante had erred in thinking the crown itself was of myrtle, Petrarch had erred in thinking it to be of laurel, following Statius, an apt play on words for the former. It is of laurel in *Curial e Güelfa*. In ancient Rome it had been of oak, cited by Juvenal. For Mussato's crown laurel, ivy and myrtle were intertwined.³⁸

Wilkins describes the similar medieval university ceremony, the *conventus*, at which the doctorate was conferred. The poetic coronations followed this tradition, which Curial's coronation also resembles; a renewing of classical practice in medieval form. It was a new concept.³⁹

Petrarch read his Coronation Oration in Rome, where he was actually crowned. His examination of three days by King Robert, unable to travel to Rome, had first taken place in Naples. The Coronation Oration,⁴⁰ which Curial's coronation resembles opens with a quote from the Virgil's *Georgics*, III:

Sed me Parnasi deserta per ardua dulcis
raptat amor.

The three themes are the difficulty of the poetic task, the

³⁷ Wilkins, *op. cit.*, 13-19.

³⁸ Wilkins, *op. cit.*, 17-21.

³⁹ Wilkins, *op. cit.*, 22.

⁴⁰ Wilkins, *Studies in the Life and Works of Petrarch*, Cambridge, 1955, 300-313. Also in Hortis, *op. cit.*

allegorical nature of poetry, and the rewards of the task. Petrarch quotes variously Cicero, Claudian, Horace, Juvenal, Lactantius, Lucan, Macrobius, Ovid, Persius, Statius and Virgil. These authors, excepting Persius and Claudius, also appear at Curial's coronation. Boccaccio mentions⁴¹ that King Robert examined Petrarch on Virgil, also the subject of examination for Curial.

Another point of similarity is in the humor which appears at both solemn coronations. Perhaps the most curious reactions in all of *Curial e Güelfa* are those of Curial's men, who chide and laugh at him as he returns from Mount Sinai, similar to Moses' descent with the tablets and the reaction of his people:

E, entrat en la sua galera, anvides parlava, e los jòvens reyen d'ell dients:—O, quin beguí! O, com és santa persona nostramo!—. «E motejàvan-lo tots. En manera que, dins pochs dies, oblidades les amonestacions del Sanglier, tornà tal com era d'abans.»⁴²

Curial is ridiculed in a most realistic way, mocked for his transformation in the spiritual world. His men are cruelly disrespectful. Again, after his ascent of Mount Parnassus, from which his disciples fled in fear, Curial advances alone, Christlike, to the holy temple of Apollo. At the conclusion of his coronation his paralyzed men awaken, blinded by the brightness, and discover Curial, asleep and wearing the laurel crown. It bore the judgement:

Millor e pus valent entre los cavallers, e major de tots los poetes e oradors qui vuy són.⁴³

⁴¹ Wilkins, *The Making of the Canzoniere*, 53.

⁴² *Curial e Güelfa*, vol. III, 44.

⁴³ This and the following quotes are from *Curial e Güelfa*, vol. III, 44 and 92-94.

Curial's men tried repeatedly to question and rouse him:

...emperò ell no responia, ans stava com encantat, e mirave's entorn, e no sabia què li havia esdevengut, ni gosava parlar, sinó que's metia les mans al cap, e no sabia si aquells gentils hòmens havían trufat d'ell, e com a foll, li haguessen mès aquell xapellet al cap; e, recordant-se del sompni, maravellava's de si mateix, e no sabia ço que li havia esdevengut.

His men question him, chiding and yet amazed; he takes the crown from his head, reads it, and says:

Per què'm havets envergonyit? Só embriach? O! Per què-us traets escarn de mi?

The men swear they did not create the crown, nor could any human hands, nor are they mocking him. Curial is extremely weak, and has to be helped back to the ship, which will set a course for Genoa. This episode leads directly into Curial's African adventure with Camar in the mold of Aeneas and Dido and essential to the outcome of the novel.

Petrarch was also a victim of the ridicule to which our crowned hero is subjected. Wilkins, Hortis and others⁴⁴ describe the disrespect and ridicule to which Petrarch was subjected at his coronation in Rome. In a letter he received in 1343 or 1344 Petrarch's coronation was sharply attacked. His defensive response is *epistola metrica* II, 10, which indicates that he was the object of laughter and ridicule, undeserving, insignificant, etc.⁴⁵ Perhaps our author had heard of the scurrilous tricks Petrarch purportedly suffered, and his public mocking in Rome

⁴⁴ Wilkins, *The Making of the Canzoniere*, 67. Attilio Hortis refers to earthy accounts in his «La Laurea di Petrarca», 1-42 in *Scritti Inediti di Francesco Petrarca*, Trieste, Lloyd, 1874.

⁴⁵ See Wilkins, *ibid.*, 67-68 for a detailed discussion.

at the time of his coronation.⁴⁶ During the examination and judgement Curial himself feels ridiculously small, «quasi nan» and unworthy.

In his Coronation Oration Petrarch mentions that the ceremony had not been held for over 1,200 years. He speaks of the setting for Apollo's temple in ancient times, quoting Virgil and Lucan. In Book II of the *Aeneid* the altar is situated under an open sky, an ancient laurel tree overhanging it. In Book III, Petrarch quotes Virgil: «*Phoebique sacerdos / vittis et sacra redimitis tempora lauro*», in Wilkins's translation: A priest of Apollo, his brows bound with fillets and the sacred laurel.⁴⁷ The setting is identical for Curial.

Petrarch's description of the laurel's effect opens the door to the literary device of the dream, and offers the reader of *Curial e Güelfa* a clear explanation for Curial's sleep/waking and the sequence of events:

There remain three properties possessed by the laurel that cannot be passed over in silence. The first is this, that when a person who is asleep is touched with laurel his dreams come true. Which makes it singularly appropriate for poets, who are said to be wont to sleep upon Parnassus, as Persius has it: «*Nec in bicipiti somniasse Parnaso*» and the rest. This is said covertly to show that truth is contained in poetic writings which to the foolish seem to be but dreams—the poet's head being wreathed with the leaves that make dreams come true. It is appropriate in another respect also, for in so far as it promises foreknowledge of the future it is fitting for Apollo as the god of prophecy—whence, I shall say presently, he is feigned to have loved the laurel tree. Accordingly, since Apollo was held to be the god of poets, it is no wonder that deserving poets were crowned with the leafage of their own god, whom they regarded as their sustaining helper, whom they called the god of genius.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Hortis, *op. cit.*, in his «La Laurea di Petrarca», 14-42 mentions details of these, truth or legend.

⁴⁷ Wilkins, *Studies in the Life and Works*, *op. cit.*, 310.

⁴⁸ Petrarch then relates Apollos' love for Daphne, mentioning Uguic-

Indeed, the entire theme of *Curial e Güelfa*, stated in the «proemi» which opens volume I and is restated at the close of volume III seems to be a paraphrase of the stated theme of Petrarch's coronation oration, «Sed me Parnasi deserta per ardua dulcis raptat amor». In Wilkins's translation, «But a sweet longing urges me upward over the lonely slopes of Parnassus», a quote from Virgil's *Georgics* (III, 291-2).

Wilkins considers Petrarch's Coronation Oration, which is a passionate and learned discourse on poetry, its function and reward, to illustrate more clearly than any other existing document the gradual transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. It is fitting that our author, moving from the late Middle Ages of vols. I and II, should have his protagonist ascend to the bright light of Apollo and the Renaissance via this speech and true life event of Petrarch. There are numerous references used by the author of *Curial e Güelfa* similar to the Coronation Oration; the threatening presence of the Erynnnes, the blows of Fortune, which recalls the opening lines as well as the conclusion of the novel:

[O] quant és gran lo perill, quantes són les sollicituts e les congoxes a aquells qui's treballen en amor! Car, posat que alguns amats de la fortuna, après de infinits infortunis, sien arribats al port per ells desijat, tants emperò són aquells qui rahonablement se'n dolen, que anvides pusch creure que entre mil desaventurats se'n tròpia un que hage amenada la sua causa a gloriosa fi.⁴⁹

E aquell qui era cavaller nat en pobre casa, favorit de la Fortuna après de infinits infortunis, per les sues virtuts, a les quals nulls temps defall loch, e axí mateix per Amor, qui és molt pus poderosa dea que la Fortuna, e nulls temps se era partida d'ell ne'l havia desamparat, ans con-

cione of Pisa, a 12th century lexicographer who wrote that *daphne* in Greek and *laurus* have the same meaning, as found in *Metamorphoses*, I. Wilkins, *Studies in the Life*, op. cit., 311.

⁴⁹ *Curial e Güelfa*, vol. I, 19.

tínuament contra la Fortuna e Infortunis guerrejant, vencent aquells, l'avia sostengut, no obstant los assalts secrets de la iniqua e porfídiosa Enveja, fonch remuntat en tal manera, que lo valent e virtuós cavaller, en un jorn, per sos mèrits, obtengué principat e muller.⁵⁰

The presence of Apollo, the muses and the theme of Fortune's role are identical in *Curial e Güelfa*. They are best told by Petrarch:

How hard and inexorable fortune has been to me, with what labors she has oppressed me from my youth up, how many blows I have endured from her, God knows, and they also know who have been my close companions... Everyone, to be sure, who has made the trial of the poetic task knows what impediments are placed in his way by the bitterness of fortune.⁵¹

With *Curial's* coronation we have been fortunate to witness in Catalan letters the revival of an ancient and classical reverence for literature and poetry. *Curial's* coronation is an homage not only to the classics, but to the wonderful blending of academic ceremony and Renaissance spirit. Without Petrarch's coronation, it is doubtful *Curial* would have been so exalted. Without his coronation, «aquell qui era cavaller, nat en pobre casa», could not have obtained *Güelfa*. For Petrarch, the honor bestowed was an acceptance, an acknowledgement, that the exiled son of a Guelph was most deserving of the highest praise.

Petrarch is certainly one of several writers of this era to influence our anonymous author. He has used other contemporary events and writings for important source material, such as the chivalric biography of Jean Le Meingre dit Boucicaut by Froissart.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Curial e Güelfa*, Vol. III, 249.

⁵¹ Wilkins, *Studies in the Life and Works of Petrarch*, 302.

⁵² See Boehne, *The Renaissance Catalan Novel*, Boston, G. K. Hall,

Curial e Güelfa may have evolved as it was being written, particularly since our author seems to have discovered Petrarch as he was beginning vol. III. Whether from instruction or inspiration, from tutors or autodidactics, from Avignon to Naples and Ifriquiya, he seems to have imbibed the spirit of Renaissance Classicism as distilled by Petrarch.

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1989, and J. La Fèvre, «Chroniques de J. de Lalain par Chastéllain» in *Collection des chroniques nationales françaises*, ed. J. A. Buchon, Paris, 1825, and for Jean le Meingre dit Boucicaut, *Le livre des cent ballades*, Paris, Fermin Didot et cie, 1905.