

SOME OBSERVATIONS  
ON THE DATES AND CIRCUMSTANCES  
OF THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY  
PORTUGUESE AND CASTILIAN TRANSLATIONS  
OF JOHN GOWER'S *CONFESSIO AMANTIS*

In his Introduction to the standard edition of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, G. C. Macaulay states that this literary work was "the earliest English book that made its way beyond the limits of its own language".<sup>1</sup> This reference is to Juan de Cuenca's *Confisyon del amante*, a Castilian prose translation which, according to Cuenca himself, was based on a previous Portuguese version by Robert Payn, an English canon of Lisbon Cathedral:

(E)ste libro es llamado Confisyon del amante, el qual conpuso Juan Goer, natural del rreyno de Ynglaterra. E fue tornado en lenguaje portogues por Rroberto Paym, natural de dicho rreyno, e canonjgo de la çibdad de Lixboa. E despues fue sacado en Lenguaje castellano por Juan de Cuenca, vesjno de la çibdad de Huete...<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>.- G. C. Macaulay, ed., *The Complete works of John Gower* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901) vol. II, The English Works, p. vii. Subsequent quotations of Gower's poem are made to this edition.

<sup>2</sup>.- Juan de Cuenca, trans., *Confisyon del amante*, manuscript g-ii-19 of the Library of the Royal Monastery of El Escorial. Succeeding references to *Confisyon del amante* are from this manuscript.

Moreover, in the prologue to the 'Leal conselheiro' (c.1438), the Portuguese king D. Duarte mentions a *Livro do amante*,<sup>1</sup> and in a catalogue of King Duarte's library there is a book listed under the title of *O Amante*.<sup>2</sup> Some critics maintain that both titles refer to one book which they identify as the lost Portuguese version of *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>3</sup> However, up to now no manuscript of this version has been found, and its very existence has been questioned by other scholars.<sup>4</sup>

The Castilian translation of the poem survives in a single manuscript (g-ii-19) kept in the Library of the Monastery of El Escorial. Unfortunately there is only one edition of the text, today a bibliographical rarity, published in Germany in 1909 under the title of *Confision del amante por Joan Goer*.<sup>5</sup> This edition is far from reliable because of the many errors it contains. It was based on a draft transcription of the Escorial manuscript begun by the German Hispanist Herman Knust, who died in 1889 before finishing his work, and later completed by another German Hispanist, Adolf Birch-Hirschfeld. Its unreliability not only derives from the considerable difficulties that the process of transcription of this particular MS

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<sup>1</sup>.- See Joseph M. Piel, ed., *Leal conselheiro* (Lisboa: Bertrand, 1942), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>.- Ibidem, p. 415; see also João José Alves Dias, ed., *Livro dos conselhos de El-Rei D. Duarte (Livro da Cartuxa)* (Lisboa: ed. Estampa, 1982), pp. 206-8.

<sup>3</sup>.- Cf. J.M. Piel, op. cit., pp. xii and 7; see also F. Costa Marques, ed., *Leal conselheiro e Livro da ensinança de bem cavalgar toda sela* (Coimbra: Coleção literaria Atlantida), pp. 27 and 40.

<sup>4</sup>.- Cf. Lilia Granillo Vázquez, "Anglo-Hispanic Relations in the Late Middle Ages, with Some Special Attention to the Spanish Translation of *Confesio Amantis*", Unp. M. A. diss., University of York, 1980, p. 41.

<sup>5</sup>.- Adolf Birch-Hirschfeld, ed., *Confision del Amante por Joan Goer* (Leipzig: Dr. Seele & Co., 1909).

entails, but also from these German scholars' limited knowledge of medieval Spanish.<sup>1</sup>

Since the publication of Macaulay's *The complete Works of John Gower*, where there are some observations on both the English MS used for the translation and the Escorial MS, the Spanish version of Gower's poem has been the subject of some research.<sup>2</sup> The main issues are related to the circumstances of the presence of *Confessio Amantis* in the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the actual date of the translation.

One of the most extensive analyses of the Castilian text is Robert W. Hamm's unpublished Ph. D. dissertation.<sup>3</sup> This is a serious attempt to solve many of the questions that arise from the study of Juan de Cuenca's text, Gower's poem and Adolf Birch-Hirschfeld's edition. However, in my opinion Hamm does not find satisfactory answers. He states that the German edition of *Confisyon del amante* contains more than 17,500 errors<sup>4</sup> and that he had to make a new

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<sup>1</sup>.- I have made some comments on this point in "Estudio y edición anotada de la traducción medieval al castellano del 'Libro II' de *Confessio Amantis* de John Gower". Unp. M. A. diss., Universidad de Extremadura, 1985.

<sup>2</sup>.- See Robert F. Yeager, *John Gower Material. A Bibliography through 1979* (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1981); see also Emilio Lorenzo "Una traducción histórica", *ABC*, Sept. 20th, 1984, p. 1.; "Sobre las malas traducciones", *Actas de las Jornadas de Traducción* (Ciudad Real: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1986), pp. 9-18; "La primera traducción del inglés", in *Fidus Interpres. Actas de las Primeras Jornadas de Historia de la Traducción*, ed. Julio-César Santoyo (León: Universidad de León, 1987), pp. 354-66; I have also dealt with this aspect in "Análisis diferencial de *Confessio Amantis* de John Gower y su traducción, *Confisyon del amante* de Juan de Cuenca", unp. Ph. D. diss., Universidad de Extremadura, 1989.

<sup>3</sup>.- Robert Wayne Hamm, "An Analysis of the *Confisyon del Amante*, the Castilian Translation of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*", unp. Ph. D. diss., University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1975.

<sup>4</sup>.- *Ibidem*, p. 208.

transcription of the Escorial MS.<sup>1</sup> Since this transcription has never been published it can only be judged by the textual references he uses in his thesis. But even from these quotations it is obvious that his transcription is far from being a faithful one. Hamm offers two lists of *variants* which go along with the study of the Escorial MS and Birch-Hirschfeld's edition. One of the lists<sup>2</sup> consists of some errors he found in Birch-Hirschfeld's text; however, when he tries to improve this edition he shows that his interpretation of the Castilian MS is not always correct.<sup>3</sup> The other list<sup>4</sup> includes some passages from the Castilian text which are obviously different in content from Gower's original poem. But Hamm's analysis of these deviations from the original -often clearly deliberate on the part of the translators-<sup>5</sup> is rather superficial.

It is obvious that the Castilian MS is not a holograph. The overt presence of at least two different hands, in addition to the numerous corrections and emendations, as well as the existence of some textual lacunae, show that the Escorial MS is not the original of Juan de Cuenca's translation. It is a copy. Moreover, according to C.P. Wagner, "there is some evidence of the influence of an Aragonese scribe".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>.- See Robert Wayne Hamm, "A Critical Evaluation of the *Confisyon del Amante*, the Castilian Translation of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*", *Medium Ævum*, vol. 47, 1 (1978), p. 105, note 6.

<sup>2</sup>.- See R. W. Hamm, "An Analysis of the *Confisyon del Amante* ..." op. cit. , p. 208.

<sup>3</sup>.- See "Análisis diferencial de *Confessio Amantis* de John Gower y su traducción, *Confisyon del amante* de Juan de Cuenca", op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>.- Cf. "List of Substantive Variants", in R. W. Hamm, "An Analysis of the *Confisyon del Amante por Joan Goer* (Leipzig, 1909)", *Romanic Review*, vol. 2 (January-March, 1911), p. 460.

<sup>5</sup>.- See "Análisis diferencial de *Confessio Amantis* ..." , op. cit.

<sup>6</sup>.- Charles Philip Wagner, "Review of A. Birch-Hirschfeld, ed., *Confisyon del Amante por Joan Goer* (Leipzig, 1909)", *Romanic Review*, vol. 2 (January-March, 1911), p. 460.

As for the date of the Escorial MS, José Amador de los Ríos thinks that the text was written towards 1400.<sup>1</sup> His opinion is based on the 1858 catalogue of the Escorial MSS where it is specified that, judging by the characteristics of the handwriting, the text was probably written at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Adolf Birch-Hirschfeld, who also bases his hypothesis on the same catalogue, suggests the same date.<sup>2</sup> Later, another well-known scholar, Julian Zarco Cuevas, in his catalogue of the Castilian MSS of El Escorial, states that it is a mid-fifteenth century text.<sup>3</sup>

Robert W. Hamm also deals with this aspect and makes some interesting observations on the watermarks of MS g-ii-19. In his opinion, these watermarks could be the same as those found in paper manufactured between 1437 and 1542.<sup>4</sup> However, a word of caution is necessary as regards the watermarks found during this period. It is true that around 1437 there was a type of watermark with a motif that vaguely resembles those in MS g-ii-19 -a hand with some kind of flower or star above the third finger. Yet, the design of the watermarks in the Escorial MS is much more elaborate and elegant. They are very much the same as those found in paper manufactured towards 1487 and later. Therefore, it seems reasonable to believe that the paper of MS g-ii-19 was made around the last decades of the fifteenth century. The MS also has six blank folios, three at the beginning and three at the end. There is no doubt that these were added at a much later date -probably when repairing the binding-since, as Hamm says, the quality of this paper differs considerably

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<sup>1</sup>.- José Amador de los Ríos, *Historia crítica de la literatura Española* (Madrid, 1865), vol. VI, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>.- See A. Birch-Hirschfeld, *op. cit.*, p. iii.

<sup>3</sup>.- Cf. Julián Zarco Cuevas, *Catálogo de los manuscritos castellanos de la Real Biblioteca de El Escorial* (Madrid: 1924), p. 169.

<sup>4</sup>.- R. W. Hamm, "An Analysis of the *Confisyon del amante ...*" *op. cit.*, p. 26.

from that of the rest of the MS, and judging from its watermarks, it could be paper of Jesuit manufacture.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with this, Hamm thinks that the date of the Escorial MS could be fixed between 1400 and 1450, because the watermarks that appear around 1437 “create no obstacle to early dating of the manuscript.”<sup>2</sup> Hamm finds further support for this idea in J.E. Keller’s comments on the Escorial MS in a letter addressed to John H. Fisher on September 5th, 1974:

I have reached the conclusion that it is probably a fifteenth century script or one from the late fourteenth century. Beyond that I cannot go... A scribe writing in the late 1300 [’s] probably did not change his handwriting just because he lived on into another century. This particular text resembles several I know that were penned as late as 1450, and the best I can do is state that I think it was written at that time.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the 1977 volume of *Bibliography of Old Spanish Texts*, edited by the Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Spanish, indicates that the Escorial MS is a mid-fifteenth century text;<sup>4</sup> and in the 1984 volume of this *Bibliography* the date of the MS is set somewhat more precisely between 1440 and 1460.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, a careful analysis of the type of handwriting in the Escorial MS reveals that it is the same cursive in use towards the end of the fifteenth century. Therefore, the dates given by the 1984

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<sup>1</sup>.- Ibidem, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>.- Ibidem, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>.- See R. W. Hamm, “An Analysis of the *Confisyon del amante ...*”, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

<sup>4</sup>.- Antonio Cárdenas, Jean Gilkinson, et al., *Bibliography of Old Spanish Texts* (the Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Spanish, 1984), No. 251, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>.- Charles B. Faulhaber, Angel Gómez Moreno, et al., *Bibliography of Old Spanish Texts* (The Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Spanish, 1984), No. 251, p. 18.

volume of the *Bibliography of Old Spanish Texts* seem the most approximate ones; but the year 1460 cannot be considered as a limit, for it is true that there are early sixteenth-century documents written in the same cursive characters as the Escorial MS. This is also corroborated by most of the watermarks analysed by Hamm, even though he did not draw the right conclusions. In addition to all this, in some late fifteenth-century records of the City Council of Huete, I found identical watermarks to those in MS gii-19, and the type of writing was also similar. In consequence, it is reasonable to believe that the date of production of the Escorial MS could be fixed within the last decades of the fifteenth century.

After these observations on the extant manuscript of the Castilian version of *Confessio Amantis*, the next step is to determine the date of the translation with as much precision as possible. It is important to know this particular fact because of its relevance when undertaking a thorough comparative analysis of the source language text and the Castilian version. So far most of the information we have about Juan de Cuenca is contained in the preface to *Confisyon del amante*. On the other hand, as has been pointed out, there is no reference to the date or the purpose of the translation in the Escorial MS. Therefore, only a close textual analysis, together with an examination of the possible historical circumstances related to the transmission of Gower's poem to the Iberian Peninsula, could shed some light on these issues.

In taking up the question of the transmission of *Confessio Amantis* to the Iberian Peninsula, all the hypotheses refer to the relationships of the English, Portuguese and Castilian royal families during the last decades of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth.

H. R. Patch<sup>1</sup> thinks that *Confessio Amantis* could have arrived in Castile through Catherine of Lancaster, John of Gaunt's daughter and wife of Enrique III of Castile. He also suggests that Chaucer, whose friendship with Gower is well known, could have had something to do with the transmission of Gower's book to the Castilian Court. Patch draws attention to that possibility because of the marriage of the Duke of Lancaster to Katharine Swynford, Chaucer's sister-in-law. Yet, as this scholar also notes, it is difficult to find out whether Lancaster had any interest in literature.<sup>2</sup> In any case, the fact is that *Confessio Amantis* was addressed to one of the members of the Lancaster family, the Earl of Derby, later Henry IV:

Explicit iste liber, qui transeat, obsecro liber  
Ut sine liuore vigeat lectoris in ore.  
Qui sedet in scannis celi det ut ista Iohannis  
Perpetuis annis stet pagina grata Britannis.  
Derbi Comiti, recolumn quem laude periti,  
Vade liber purus, sub eo requiesce futurus.<sup>3</sup>

Another critic, J. M. Manly,<sup>4</sup> considers that *Confessio Amantis* could have been brought to the Iberian Peninsula through Portugal, since John of Gaunt's other daughter, Philippa of Lancaster, was married to the Portuguese king João I.

R. W. Hamm puts forward a hypothesis which attempts to explain not only the way Gower's poem reached the Iberian Peninsula, but

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<sup>1</sup>.- Howard Rollin Patch, *On Reading Chaucer* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>.- Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup>.- See G. C. Macaulay, op. cit., vol. II, p. 478.

<sup>4</sup>.- John Matthews Manly, "On the Question of the Portuguese Translation of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*", *Modern Philology*, vol. 27 (1930), p. 472.

also the reason for a double translation. He assumes that *Confessio Amantis* was probably sent to both Catherine and Philippa of Lancaster, who would have ordered a translation as a present for their husbands. Therefore “João would have needed a Portuguese book [and] Henry a Castilian”.<sup>1</sup>

In my opinion, Hamm’s explanation of the presence of Gower’s poem in Portugal and Castile, its translation and purpose, though convincing, is nevertheless misleading. According to him, it would be justifiable to think that both translations were finished by the beginning of the fifteenth century, and that the source text was a copy of the 1390 recension of *Confessio Amantis*. The fact that the Spanish version includes the original reference to Richard II and the eulogy to Chaucer, eliminated from the 1393 recension,<sup>2</sup> would seem to corroborate Patch, Manly or Hamm’s hypotheses.

Most critical opinions, therefore, agree on fixing the date of the translation towards 1400. This has been the traditionally accepted date, despite the fact that all the scholars mentioned in this paper have not accounted for the earliest critical reference to *Confisyon del amante* that I have been able to find. In 1788, Francisco Pérez Bayer, in his edition of Nicolás Antonio’s *Bibliotheca Hispana Vetus* (first published in 1672), categorically states that *Confisyon del amante* was completed *circa 1404*:

Ioannem de Cuenca Optensem (de Huete) auctorem versionis  
Hispanicae operis Ioannis Goer Angli cui titulus: *La Confession*

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<sup>1</sup>.- R. W. Hamm, “An Analysis of the *Confisyon del amante* ...” op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>.- See G. C. Macaulay, op. cit., p. clxviii.

*del amante*, circa annum MCCCCIV. Habetur versio in Bibliotheca Escorialensi Lit G. plut. ii. n. 19 [ sic ].<sup>1</sup>

However, despite the apparent coherence of the hypotheses already mentioned, there are grounds for questioning their validity, as has been recently pointed out by Emilio Lorenzo, member of the Real Academia de la Lengua Española.<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, it is within the text of the Castilian version, and not only in its external circumstances, where the answers are to be found.

In the first paragraph of the preface to his translation, Juan de Cuenca makes a statement that has been completely overlooked up to now, though it contains an invaluable key for establishing a time limit before which the Castilian translation could never have been made: Cuenca identifies himself as “vesjno de la çibdad de Huete” -“an inhabitant of the city of Huete”-. But Huete, today a small town in the province of Cuenca, was granted the privilege of *çibdad* (city) by the Castilian king Juan II (son of Enrique III and Catherine of Lancaster) at the request of his falconer, Pero Carrillo, also from Huete, on the 26th of July, 1428.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, Juan de Cuenca could not have

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<sup>1</sup>.- Nicolás Antonio, *Bibliotheca Hispana Vetus*, ed. Francisco Pérez Bayer (Madrid: 1788), p. 203. There is an earlier reference to *Confisyon del amante*, it appears in MS K. I. 23, fol. 134, the 1576 inventory of books transferred by King Felipe II to the Escorial library. In this inventory, the royal compiler simply wrote: “Confession del amante, compuesto por Iuan Gozi Ingles Traducido en portugues, y después en castellano por Iuan de Cuenca vezino de Huete”.

<sup>2</sup>.- Emilio Lorenzo, “La primera traducción del inglés”, op. cit., p. 356.

<sup>3</sup>.- The charter containing the royal privilege conferred to Huete is kept in very good condition in the local archives of this town. This is the transcription I have made of this document signed by king Juan II of Castile on 26th July, 1428: “Don Iohan, por la graçia de Dios Rey de Castilla, de Leon, de toledo, de Galisia, de Seuilla, de Cordoua, de Murçia, de Iahen, del Algarbe, de Algezira; et sennor de Visscaya e de Molina. Porque muy propia cosa es a los [ rreyes e ]\* prinçipes fazer graçias e merçedes a las villas e lugares de sus reynos e sennorios, e a los sus subditos e naturales dellas, mayormente quando entienden que son dignos e bien mereçientes de las dichas merçedes. Por ende, yo entiendo esto, e

referred to Huete as a *çibdad* (city) before the date when this document was issued, that is, 1428. This of course rules out the hypotheses which maintain that Juan de Cuenca's translation had been completed by 1400. For the same reason, Hamm's thesis can no longer be sustained, since it was mainly based on the traditionally

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otrosi por faser bien e merçed a la mi villa de Huepte, el al[caide]\* del castillo, alguasiles, rregidores, caualleros, escuderos e omnes buenos, e vesinos e moradores de la dicha villa e de su tierra. et por quanto me lo suplico e pidio por merçed Pero Carrillo de Huepte, mi falconero mayor et mi guarda mayor de la dicha villa e de su tierra, et mi alcali mayor de las alçadas de la dicha villa. Et entendiendo que cunple asi a mi seruiçio, por çiertas e ligitimas causas que a ello [ me mouieron, commo ] de mi çierta çiencia e poderio Real e deliberada voluntad, es mi merçed de faser e costituyr e estableçer, et por esta mi carta, e con ella, fago e costituyo e establezco çibdat la dicha villa de Huepte; et quiero e mando que de aqui adelante para sienpre jamas sea llamada la çibdat de Huepte, et que non sea llamada villa. Et que aya e gose en quanto çibdat, et asi commo çibdat, de todas las onrras, e libertades que han e de que gosar e deuen auer e gosar qualquier o qualesquier de las otras çibdades de los mis rregnos e sennorios por ser çibdades commo dicho es. Sobre lo qual mando a los infantes, duques, condes, rricos omnes, maestros de las ordenes, priores, e a los del mi Consejo e oydores de la mi Audiencia, et al mi justicia mayor, et a los alcalles e alguasiles, e notarios, e otros justicias e ofiçiales qualesquier de la mi Casa, e Corte, e Chançilleria; et a los a los otros alcalles e alguasiles, rregidores, caualleros, escuderos e omnes buenos de todas las çibdades e villas e lugares de los mis rregnos e sennorios, et a qualquier o qualesquier dellos que guarden e fagan guardar a la dicha mi çibdad de Huepte todas las cosas susodichas, e çadi una dellas, segund que mejor e mas conplidamente; e guarden e deuen guardar a cada vna de las otras çibdades de los mis rregnos e sennorios en quanto çibdades commo dicho es. Et que les non vayan, nin pasen, nin consientan yr nin pasar contra ello, nin contra parte dello por gelo quebrantar, nin menguar en todo nin en parte, nin en cosa alguna dello; sobre lo qual mando al mi chançeller e notarios, et a los otros is ofiçiales que estan a la tabla de los mis sellos, que den, e libren, e pasen, e sellen a la dicha mi çibdad de Huepte mi carta e preuillejo lo mas firme e bastante que les conpliere e menester ouiere en esta rrason. Por tal manera que ella sea çibdad en agora e de aqui adelante para sienpre jamas. Et asi llamada et avida, gose e pueda gosar de dichas prehemencias, e prerrogativas, e honrras, e libertades, et de todas las otras cosas susodichas et de çadi vna dellas, bien e conplidamente commo dicho es. Et los vnos et los otros non fagan ende de por alguna manera so pena de la mi merçed, et de dies mill maravedis a cada vno para la mi Camara. Et esto mande dar esta mi carta firmada de mi nonbre e sellada con mi sello. Dada en Tordesillas, Salvador JhesuChristo de mill e quatroçientos e veynte e ocho annos. Yo el dottor Fernando Dias de Toledo, oydor e referendario del Rey, e su relator e secretario, la fise escreuir por su mandado. Yo el Rey”

\*Illegible in the original.

accepted dates for the translation; and obviously, the Castilian text could never have been written as a present for Enrique III, who died in 1406. However, on the question of the possible arrival of *Confessio Amantis* in Portugal through Philippa of Lancaster, Manly or Hamm's hypotheses could be perfectly acceptable.

As for the date of Robert Payn's Portuguese version, most critics tend to believe that it could be fixed during João I's reign and in Philippa of Lancaster's lifetime. This is also J. M. Piel's opinion, based on some statements by King Duarte in the prologue to his *Leal conselheiro*.<sup>1</sup> In it, the Portuguese king says that he "ordered the translation of certain chapters from other books, for they would help him in his writings".<sup>2</sup> He also expresses his intention to cite his literary authorities, following the example of the author of the *Livro do amante* (the book of the lover), where as D. Duarte says, "truthful stories and good advice could be found". These are his words:

filhando em esto exemplo daquel autor do *Livro do Amante* que certas estorias em el screveo de que se filham grandes boos conselhos e avisamentos.<sup>3</sup>

J. M. Piel, in his edition of the *Leal conselheiro*, affirms that the book mentioned by D. Duarte is in fact *Confessio Amantis*, and that it was translated into Portuguese at the request of king João I:

*Livro do Amante*. Trata-se da "Confessio Amantis", do inglês John Gower (+ 1408), célebre poema alegórico traduzido para português a instancias de D. João I pelo cónego da igreja de Lisboa Roberto

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<sup>1</sup>.- See Joseph M. Piel, ed., op. cit., note 1, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>.- "fiz tralladar en el alguus certos capitollas doutros livros, por me parecer que faziam decaraçom e ajuda no que screvia" (Joseph M. Piel, ed., op. cit., p. 6).

<sup>3</sup>.- Ibidem, p. 7.

Payn. A versão portuguesa, que parece estar perdida, figura no catálogo dos livros de D. Duarte sob o título de “O Amante”. Desta versão fez-se uma tradução castelhana, conservada no manuscrito g-ii-19 do Escorial, cf. Amador de los Ríos, VI, 46.<sup>1</sup>

From D. Duarte’s brief description of the subject matter of this *Livro do amante* -no doubt a book of didactic and moral content-, and his overt intention to cite the sources of his inspiration -a common practice in John Gower at a time when such an attitude was not the norm-, it seems likely that the book alluded to may well be *Confessio Amantis*. Nevertheless, Piel does not bring forward any evidence to support the idea that the translation was made during King João I’s reign.

In an attempt to assign an approximate date to the Portuguese translation, P. E. Russell considers two possibilities: “either *before* 1399 or *after* 1415”; and he adds:

I incline, if only tentatively, towards the latter hypothesis [ ... ] it is rather unlikely that Robert Payn, in view of his nationality and his close contacts with Philippa herself, would have translated Gower’s favourable remarks about Richard II between 1399 and Philippa’s own death in 1415 [ ... ] Certainly after Henry V’s rehabilitation of Richard II’s memory (1413) there was no reason for an Englishman living in Portugal to be embarrassed about reproducing Gower’s favorable references to the deposed English king.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>.- Ibidem.

<sup>2</sup>.- P. E. Russell, “Robert Payn and Juan de Cuenca, Translators of the *Confessio Amantis*”, *Medium Ævum*, vol. 30, 1 (1961), pp. 31-32.

There is no doubt that Russell's reasoning is more convincing than Piel's and the previous critics, but it still remains only conjectural.

The Castilian text, however, provides some key information which, in my opinion, is decisive in order to fix the date of the Portuguese translation within a reasonable period of time. I refer to a very exact monetary parity between the currencies of two different countries, and it can be found in the "Tale of the King and his Steward's Wife" (Vv. 2643-2858). In this *exemplum* Gower writes:

The king him bad upon the nede  
That take an hundred pounds he scholde,  
And yive it where that he wolde  
(v. 2718-20)

But in the Castilian version, these lines are translated as

el rrey le dixo que tomase seys çientas coronas e las diese donde  
quisiese ... (f. 216 v. b.)

In this brief fragment, an exclusive element of the society in which *Confessio Amantis* was conceived is replaced by another element belonging to one of the recipient cultures. It is the equivalence given by the translator between the English *an hundred pounds* and the *seys çientas coronas* (six hundred *coronas*) in the Castilian version. Nevertheless, as far as the *coronas* (crowns) mentioned in Juan de Cuenca's text are concerned, a careful study is necessary.

From the Castilian passage quoted above, it would be easy to assume that the *coronas* mentioned by Cuenca are either a Castilian monetary unit of his time or some kind of fractional currency. But it is well known that towards the end of the Middle Ages there were no Castilian coins of such a denomination.

On the contrary, the term *corôa* (*corona*, crown) was used in Portugal, but it did not designate any specific type of coinage;<sup>1</sup> either *corôa* or *dobra* were terms used to express the amount of 120 Portuguese *reaes* during D. Duarte's reign (1433-1438). The *corôa*, therefore, was a Portuguese monetary concept conceived to facilitate monetary equivalences in mercantile activities with foreign countries, including of course with England. Since during the Middle Ages foreign gold and silver coins circulated as freely as the national ones, it became necessary to determine some form of exchange rate which, at the same time, would protect the national currency.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, and in view of the devaluation of the Portuguese monetary unit, João I tried to elaborate a series of regulations; but these ordinances were never enforced.<sup>3</sup>

This was the reason why D. Duarte had to assign an invariable value to the foreign gold and silver coins that were in circulation in Portugal.

From these observations on the Portuguese *corôas* (*coronas*), the first obvious conclusion that can be drawn is that the monetary equivalence given in Cuenca's text can only be explained by the fact that the Castilian translator literally followed Robert Payn's Portuguese version.

However, this explanation is also the key to another important conclusion in relation to the date of the Portuguese translation. From D. Duarte's ordinances on the value of foreign currency,<sup>4</sup> we know

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<sup>1</sup>.- See Antonio de Sousa Silva Costa Lobo, *Historia da sociedade em Portugal no século XV e outros estudos históricos* (Lisboa: Cooperativa Editora, Historia Critica, 1979), note 1, p. 367.

<sup>2</sup>.- Ibidem, p. 362.

<sup>3</sup>.- Ibidem, pp. 362-3.

<sup>4</sup>.- Ibidem, p. 420; see also João José Alves Dias, *op. cit.*

that in 1433, the Portuguese king fixed a value of 245 Portuguese *reaes* for the English *gold noble*. Since this coin was 1/3 of an English pound, one pound was worth 735 *reaes*. At the same time, the Portuguese monetary concept used in commercial transactions, the *corôa*, had been assigned a value of 120 *reaes* by D. Duarte. Therefore, the value of one English pound was 6'125 *corôas*, or, in other words, 100 pounds were worth 612'5 *corôas*.

The monetary equivalence transmitted through Juan de Cuenca's text (*an hundred pounds = seys çientas coronas*) is so close to these calculations that, in my opinion, there is no doubt that Robert Payn's translation was written after 1433 and before 1438, the years of D. Duarte's short reign and most intense literary activity.

Similarly, there is no contradiction between these dates and the years in which it is known that Robert Payn lived in Portugal. P. E. Russell first found the name of the Anglo-Portuguese translator on a list of the personnel in Philippa of Lancaster's service (c. 1402),<sup>1</sup> with an indication that his salary was 1650 Portuguese *llybras*. Although Payn's occupation was not specified on the list, it is clear that at that time he was not a member of the clergy, for these were included in different group. Russell also found Robert Payn's name in a document of the lease of a house dated in Lisbon on the 25th of November, 1430.<sup>2</sup> No other reference has been found to Robert Payn, but as Russell demonstrates in his article, it is obvious that Payn stayed in Portugal after Philippa of Lancaster's death, settled there, and probably remained in close contact with the royal family. Thus, it is very likely that D. Duarte, in view of Payn's position as a canon -no doubt a man of some learning with knowledge of both English and

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<sup>1</sup>.- Cf. P. E. Russell, op. cit., p. 28; see also *Monumenta Henricina* (Coimbra: 1960), vol. 1, pp. 280-93

<sup>2</sup>.- P. E. Russell, op. cit., p. 29. P. E. Russell, op. cit., p. 29.

Portuguese-, decided to ask him to translate *Confessio Amantis*, a book that had probably been part of the royal library since the time of Queen Philippa.

There is one point which still remains unsolved; the transmission of Gower's poem to Castile and its translation into Castilian. In order to find an answer, it would be necessary to take into consideration the relationships between Juan II of Castile and D. Duarte. From the chronicles of the Castilian king<sup>1</sup> and also from some of the extant letters D. Duarte sent to Juan II,<sup>2</sup> it is clear that their friendship was not only based on their family ties (they were cousins), but that they also shared a common interest in literature and in translation, and no doubt there was an exchange of opinions and of books between the two kings. There is some evidence in this respect. Such evidence I take to be, for example, the translations that Bishop Alfonso de Cartagena (1384-1456) made for both D. Duarte and the Castilian king. Alfonso de Cartagena translated the five books of Seneca for Juan II,<sup>3</sup> and Cicero's book of Rhetoric for D. Duarte.<sup>4</sup> In the same way, there is a strong probability that Juan de Cuenca translated *Confessio amantis* from the Portuguese version at the request of Juan II. Since Cuenca's version was written after 1428, it is plausible to assume that this translation was also the result of the cultural activities carried out by D. Duarte and Juan II, and therefore, it is very likely that it was written at some time between 1433 and 1438.

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<sup>1</sup>.- Cf. Juan Mata Carriazo, ed., *Crónicas del halconero de Juan II, Pedro Carrillo de Huete* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S. A., 1946).

<sup>2</sup>.- See João Alves Dias, op. cit., pp. 90-1.

<sup>3</sup>.- This translation was published in Antwerp in 1548.

<sup>4</sup>.- This is the *incipit* to this translation: "Libro de marchio tulio çiferon q se llama de la Retorica. trasladado de latin en romançe por el muy reuerendo don alfonso de cartajena obpo de burgos a ynstançia del muy esclareçido prinçipe don eduarte de portugal".

*Bernardo Santano Moreno*

At a time when most translations were of works of the Latin and Greek cultural traditions, it is a remarkable fact that John Gower's English poem was translated into two different languages almost simultaneously. It is clear evidence of the recognition Gower had received beyond the borders of his own country and his own language.

Bernardo Santano Moreno  
University of Extremadura - Cáceres

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