

THE DRAMATICS OF THE *MISA DE AMORES*:
PARODY AND DESACRALIZED RITUAL IN THE GESTATION
OF SPANISH RELIGIOUS THEATER OF THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

*EL DRAMATISMO DE LA MISA DE AMORES: PARODIA Y RITO
DESACRALIZADO EN LA GESTACIÓN DEL TEATRO SACRO
ESPAÑOL DEL RENACIMIENTO TEMPRANO*

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Abstract: The paramount role of the mass in the birth of Spanish theater of the late Middle Ages or early Renaissance has been duly recognized by authoritative critics and historians. These scholars, however, have paid little or no attention to the centrality of the Eucharist in the gestation phase of that theater. The present essay is focused on the process of adapting the rite of transubstantiation to a dramatic plot on the way to an eventual transmutation into a full-fledged theatrical representation. At issue here are the only four extant specimens of the so-called *misa de amores* of the fifteenth century. These daring parodies of the Mass include Francisc Moner's most ingenious rendition of the genre. On the basis of Linda Hutcheon's innovative theory, one may envisage a parodic mode that conditions the distinctive traits of a "desacralized" ritual, the very matrix of the transmutation in question.

Key words: allegory; dead-man-talking; desacralized or denatured ritual; God-the-Truth; L. Hutcheon; *misa de amores*; life-text; F. Moner; onomastic symbolism; parody; religious theater; woman-priest.

Resumen: El papel destacado de la misa en el nacimiento del teatro español en la tardía Edad Media o principios del Renacimiento ha sido reconocido debidamente por críticos e historiadores de gran prestigio. Aun así, tales estudiosos no han prestado la debida atención a la centralidad del Sacramento Eucarístico con relación a ese teatro en ciernes. En el presente ensayo, el objeto de estudio es el proceso de adaptación del rito de la transubstantiación a una trama que eventualmente se transmuta en una representación teatral en plena madurez. Se imponen a nuestra consideración los únicos cuatro ejemplares que se conservan de la llamada *misa de amores* del siglo quince. Entre estas atrevidas parodias de la misa se incluye la de Francisc Moner, la versión más ingeniosa del género. A la luz de la teoría innovadora de Linda Hutcheon, se vislumbra la existencia de una modalidad paródica que condiciona las trazas distintivas de un rito "desacralizado", verdadera matriz de la transmutación en cuestión.

Palabras clave: alegoría; Dios-Verdad; L. Hutcheon; *misa de amores*; F. Moner; "el muerto que habla"; mujer-sacerdote; parodia; rito desacralizado; simbolismo onomástico; teatro religioso; texto-vivencia.

SUMMARY

1. The *misa* and kindred parodies in the *cancioneros*.– 2. Points of controversy: comic or otherwise.– 3. The syndrome of parody.– 4. Applied hermeneutics.– 5. Impersonation as an index of desacralization.– 6. Desacralized ritual.– 7. The pulpit and the altar: a plot for the transmuted ritual.– 8. Dead-man-talking.– 9. Mimesis as *Imitatio Christi*.– 10. Conclusion.– 11. Bibliography.

The subject matter of the present essay consists of the transformation of ritual into theater. There is nothing new, of course, in the subject per se. Well known and widely researched is precisely the transformation of that kind, manifested in the evolution from the Dionysian cult to the earliest forms of ancient Greek tragedy¹. What is new is the narrow scope of my study, focused on the origins of Spanish dramatic literature at the dawn of the modern age. Here I invite the reader to engage in an exploration of an uncharted territory. At issue is the discovery of some all-important factors that determine a momentous mutation. By virtue of those factors, the religious ceremony enacted in close vicinity of the altar within the precincts of a church turns into the secularized representation of that ceremony on a stage constructed ad hoc outside those hallowed precincts.

I will attempt to highlight the complex phenomenology that the aforementioned mutation exhibits in some key texts, produced either in the Castilian or the Catalan domain throughout the fifteenth century. It will surprise no one that, in the cultural ambiance concomitant to Spanish Catholicism during this intermediary century –one that straddles the boundaries between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance– the particular ritual inherent in these texts proves to be none other than the Eucharistic service, commonly referred to as “the mass” (*misa* in Spanish). Teeming with surprises is, all the same, the shift from theology to esthetics, from the religious to the secular mode, eminently exemplified by the handful of the extant *misas* or *misas de amores*, so-called –the poems, that is, that present parodic adaptations of that sacrosanct ceremony–. What will soon become apparent is the theory regarding the process of theatricalization I perceive in said *misas* and kindred compositions. Contrary to the impression conveyed by time-honored convention, parody in the *misas* and similar love-centered pieces is strictly of a non-comedic kind. In this I am in full agreement with the radical reinterpretation of parody propounded by Linda Hutcheon in her landmark study on the subject.

¹ See Dorius 1990, p. 862.

Now, enter fra Francesc Moner, a Catalan author of extraordinary talent, who flourished during the 1480s in the cultural circles of Barcelona. Our fra Francesc, who has bequeathed to posterity a bilingual production consisting of an extant miscellaneous collection of seventy-four pieces, regales us with an intriguing *misa de amores*, doubtless the most ingenious rendition of its kind documented to date. Moner's *misa* stands out precisely because it embodies a full-fledged dramatics of what I propose to call "desacralized ritual." It is worth noting that Moner's remarkable composition happens to fulfill to the letter Hutcheon's mimetic principles we have just referred to. Thus, Moner's chef d'oeuvre desacralizes but does not desecrate, parodies but does not mock the primordial model of the Eucharistic service.

In sum, in the pages that ensue from these preliminary remarks, the following issues will be explored: 1) the definition of an hermeneutic approach that stems from Hutcheon's theory on parody; 2) parody's function as a catalyst in the process of desacralization that brings into effect the transition from ritual to theater; 3) the plot generated by the interaction between two allegorical personages—"Experiencia", the sermonizer, and "Mancilla", the primary priest—.

1. THE *MISA* AND KINDRED PARODIES IN THE *CANCIONEROS*

The prominent role of the mass in the origins of Spanish theater is duly acknowledged by Ronald E. Surtz², who borrows from the theories expounded, on a wide European scale, by O.B. Hardison³. These distinguished scholars maintain that the quintessential theatricality of the mass stems from the allegorical interpretation to which Amalarius, the German bishop of the Carolingian era, gave wide currency through his influential commentaries on the Eucharistic liturgy⁴. In their painstaking analysis and by the massive evidence they provide, Hardison and Surtz demonstrate that the Amalarian allegorization involves not only the stylized officiation of the celebrants (priests, deacons, acolytes) but also the lock-step participation of the members of the congregation in the sacred ceremony. It is clear, then, that Amalarius posits a type of allegory as a function of a spectacle that does not change

² Surtz 1979, pp. 35-66.

³ Hardison 1965, pp. 35-79.

⁴ O.B. Hardison provides the following sketch of the career of Amalarius, bishop of Metz (780?-850): "A prominent figure at the courts of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, an ambassador to Constantinople, and a lifelong student of the liturgy, Amalarius wrote two, and perhaps three, interpretations of the Mass. The first is the *Eclogae de ordine Romano* (dated in 814), and the most influential is the *Liber officialis*, which Amalarius saw through three editions between 821 and 835", *ibidem*, p. 37.

the nature per se of a ritualistic observance in keeping with the mystery of transubstantiation⁵. In diametric contrast, the allegory stemming from the texts I will be dealing with presently attests to a radical change in both the pragmatic and doctrinal aspect of the Eucharistic liturgy of the mass. I hope to show that the change has to do with, in the main, the workings of the mode of parody. Here I shall delve into the issues pertaining to that mode as they apply, specifically, to the transition from ritual to theatrical representation. These issues, it is fair to say, do not fall within the purview of either Hardison or Surtz. I shall argue that the mechanics of parody inform a distinctive first phase of that transition in so far as they put into effect a process of distancing that desacralizes but does not desecrate the ritual in question.

The primary texts that come into scrutiny in the course of the present discussion consist of a number of compositions that may be classified, readily, as poems of the type included in the Spanish *cancioneros* –the numerous anthologies, that is, that are identified by that term in the standard histories of Spanish literature of the fifteenth century–⁶. I shall make reference to what I propose to call by the generic term of “misa de amores,” exemplified by the four extant specimens of the parody of the mass by, respectively, Juan de Dueñas, Suero de Ribera, Nicolás Núñez, and, last but not least, fra Francesc Moner⁷. The available manuscript evidence shows that Dueñas’s and Ribera’s compositions exhibit the term “misa” in their titles or rubrics. Núñez’s poem is headed by a long, nondescript rubric. Moner’s *misa* proper is embedded as

⁵ Well aware of the importance duly accorded to the canon of the Mass in Amalarius’s allegorization, Hardison proffers the following explanation: “In the medieval mind the idea of commemoration fused with the doctrine of the Real Presence: if the bread and wine are truly changed at the moment of Consecration into the flesh and blood of the Savior, then Christ must be literally present at every Mass. Allegorical interpretation moved outward from this insight to find dramatic significance in each of the major prayers and ceremonies. Ultimately, every detail of the service was considered symbolic”, *ibidem*, p. 43.

⁶ For general information on the widespread readership of the *cancioneros* both in manuscript and printed form, see Deyermond 1971, pp. 178-205, and the indispensable Dutton 1982. J. L. Alborg discusses the literature of the *cancioneros* in a wide cultural context, Alborg 1966, vol. I, pp. 179-218. It is well to bear in mind, also, the following monumental collections: *Cancionero de Juan Alfonso de Baena* 1966, *Cancionero de Estúñiga* 1987, *El cancionero del siglo XV* 1990-1991, *Cancionero general* 2004. The bibliography below, provides the essential bibliographic information for these *cancioneros*. For a general orientation on *cancionero* lyricism, see the studies (listed in the bibliography below) by Beltrán 1988, Fraker 1966, Le Gentil 1949, Weiss 1990, Whinnom 1981, and the numerous essays contained in Gerli, Weiss 1998.

⁷ The primary text of Moner’s *Sepoltura* is found in MS Vaticanus Latinus 4802, ff. 33-33v, and *Obras nuevamente imprimidas assi en prosa como en metro*, Barcelona, Carlos Amorós, 1528, C7v-D7v, see Cocozzella 1991a, vol. I, pp. 65-75. For a critical edition of *Sepoltura*, see Moner 1991, vol. II, pp. 131-194. In the aforementioned introduction to vol. I of Moner’s *Obras castellanas*, Cocozzella provides a sketch of Moner’s life and works: see, especially, *ibidem*, pp. 3-38.

an integral unit within a composition entitled *Sepoltura d'amor*⁸. Jane Yvonne Tillier, who provides a concise and informative commentary on Dueñas's, Ribera's, and Núñez's *misas*, recognizes, also, a fragment by Juan de Tapia⁹. In due time, I shall attempt to highlight the extraordinary significance of Moner's composition, which so far has received little attention from critics at large¹⁰. In addition, I am taking into account some notable parodies of Scriptural passages and devotional literature –such texts as Diego de Valera's *Salmos penitenciales* and *Letanía de Amor*¹¹ or Garcí Sánchez de Badajoz's *Liciones de Job*–. In their parodic nature, these poems are akin to the *misas* under discussion here.¹²

⁸ See Gernert 2009, vol. I, pp. 289-327, for a well-documented history of the parody of the mass in Latin (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), French and Spanish (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries). Gernert does not mention Moner's exemplary piece but provides exhaustive bibliographic data about the other extant *misas* and specifies that Suero de Ribera's composition and Dueñas's counterpart must have been written before 1439 and 1454 respectively, *ibidem*, vol. I, p. 304. For useful biographic information about Ribera, Dueñas, and Tapia see *ibidem*, pp. 304-306. Gernert observes that the three, whom Vendrell de Millás describes as "poetas que brillaron especialmente en la corte de Aragón", "se podrían haber conocido ya antes de 1432 en Castilla, aunque lo más probable es que se encontrasen después de esta fecha en el séquito de Alfonso V", *ibidem*, vol. I, p. 305. For a background on the *misa de amores* and kindred parodies, see, also, Severin 2005, 2013. Severin does not mention Moner's poem either.

⁹ Tillier 2003, p. 569. For each of these *misas* see Dutton 1990-1991, *Catálogo-índice* and the entry for the respective author in the bibliography below. Truly extraordinary is a "lover's mass", written in Middle English. Akin in its formal and thematic aspects to the *misas* under consideration here, the composition is of uncertain authorship, attributed by some to Geoffrey Chaucer, by others to John Lydgate, Forni 2005. For the text of *The Lovers' Mass* see the corresponding entry in the bibliography below. A direct descendant of the Provençal *canso*, the Spanish *canción*, the relatively short lyrical piece, constitutes the predominant but by no means sole component of the *cancionero*, to which it lends its name. In fact, more often than not the *canción* is accompanied by other love-centered, longer pieces, identified by such disparate rubrics as "infierno", "purgatorio", "sepultura", "misa", "batalla", each usually joined to a general designation of their subject matter: dealing with love ("de amor", "de amores") or with lovers ("de los amadores", "de los enamorados"). P. Le Gentil groups and discusses these miscellaneous compositions under the general heading of "Le dit d'amour", Le Gentil 1949, vol. I, pp. 237-293.

¹⁰ A notable exception is P.M. Cátedra, who devotes a seminal commentary to Experiencia's sermon within Moner's *Sepoltura*, see Cátedra 1989, pp. 173-175.

¹¹ Regarding Valera's compositions, to the information provided in the bibliographic entry below, we may add that they are found, also, in *El cancionero del siglo XV* 1990-1991, vol. IV, pp. 197-200.

¹² V. Núñez Rivera goes into an extensive discussion on those compositions by the *cancionero* poets that borrow a model or a prototype from the Scriptures or the Christian liturgy –the Psalms, say, the Lord's Prayer, the Commandments, not to mention the *misas*, *purgatorios*, *infiernos*, and the like– and adapt it to the so-called religion of love, Núñez Rivera 2001, pp. 126-127. The same scholar compiles a representative list of these poems, *ibidem*, pp. 126-127. Gernert goes into a full discussion as to how the Penitential Psalms came to be classified as such in a discreet group; then takes up the distinction between the straightforward rendition and the erotic parody of said Psalms, exemplified, respectively, by the composition of Pero Guillén de Segovia and that of Diego de Valera. See Gernert 2009, vol. I, pp. 218-238. Of special interest is Gernert's edition of the following texts: Garcí Sánchez de Badajoz, *Liciones de Job*, vol. II, pp. 67-81; Diego de Valera, *Salmos Penitenciales*, vol. II, pp. 115-122; the *misas*, respectively, by Suero de Ribera and Juan de Dueñas, vol. II, pp. 155-164; the fragment by Tapia, vol. II, p. 165.

2. POINTS OF CONTROVERSY: COMIC OR OTHERWISE

A practical way of coming to grips with the mechanics of parody is to peruse some key passages culled from the poems we have just listed. Take, for instance, the following stanza addressed to *Deus de amor*, in which Dueñas blithely paganizes the most awesome of Christian mysteries:

Gloria patri, limpio manto
de amores, el qual cobijo
válgame con el tu fijo,
graçia del espíritu santo;
Cupido, Venus y Apolo,
tres personas y vn dios solo:
esto creo y más de tanto¹³.

Not to be overcome, Ribera, on his part, regales us with a startling, if banal, rendition of such formulaic standbys as the confiteor, the gloria, the credo, the sanctus, and, as in the following passage, the Agnus Dei:

Cordero de Dios de Venus
–dezían los desamados–,
tú, que pones los cuidados,
quita los que sean menos,
pues tienes poder mundano,
o señor tan soberano,
*Miserere nobis*¹⁴.

To the type of parody exemplified in these two passages reputable scholars have reacted, far and wide, on impulse and with no regard for even the slight possibility of an innocuous intention behind what might pass as amusing versifying. Emblematic is the reaction of the scrupulous, self-righteous reader –anonymous, to be sure– who was not at all amused and felt no compunction in tearing out the text of Ribera's *misa* bodily from the manuscript in which it was included¹⁵. Some venerable figures –we notice among them the likes of José Amador de los Ríos and Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, the veritable founders of modern literary criticism in Spain– respond

¹³ See Piccus 1960, p. 323. A passage of this nature is still likely to raise the eyebrow of a critic or two. V. Núñez Rivera considers these verses as “el blasfemo gloria de la composición [Dueñas's *Misa*], uno de los textos más irrespetuosos de todo el corpus paródico”, Núñez Rivera 2001, p. 135.

¹⁴ *Cancionero de Estúñiga* 1987, p. 671.

¹⁵ The codex that contains the *Cancionero de Estúñiga* is housed in the Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid (V^o 17-7), Salvador Miguel 1977, pp. 22-23, 26-27). For a full bibliographic description see *ibidem*, pp. 15-45.

with harsh censure and unrestrained fulminations¹⁶. The same poems upon which Amador de los Ríos, Menéndez y Pelayo, and others unload their harsh commentaries are proscribed en masse by Le Gentil in his seminal book and relegated to a chapter entitled *Rhétorique et mauvais goût*¹⁷.

In contrast to these proponents of wholesale condemnation, there are the exponents of a tolerant, if not sympathetic, attitude toward the likes of Dueñas and Ribera¹⁸. Tillier, for instance, puzzles over the absence of “parodic intention”, as she calls it, in Núñez’s *misa* and adumbrates the notion of a reverse parody of sorts that, far from making light of heartfelt piety, ends up asserting the merits of an edifying devotional practice, such as the one associated with the Book of Hours. As Tillier puts it,

[t]he poet [Nicolás Núñez] is ostensibly directing his lady in the devotional use of the Book of Hours (...) Here the poet not only employs the structural form of his source but also appeals to its spiritual and moral content¹⁹.

In much the same vein, Patrick Gallagher, apropos of Garci Sánchez’s *Liciones*, is keen to the poet’s disregard of the “ludicrous effect” that the Oxford Dictionary considers a sine qua non in the definition of parody. Not surprisingly, Gallagher perceives a less-than-parodic slant in Garci Sánchez’s elaboration on a revered Biblical source. Following is Gallagher’s cogent critique of the ingenious piece:

No such burlesque spirit can be said to have prompted Garci Sánchez. On the contrary, it is because he wishes to invest his amatory plight with a special gravity and solemnity that he chooses to accommodate so grave and sonorous a sacred text as the lessons from the Book of Job in the Office of the Dead. The accommodation consists in Garci Sánchez’s addressing his lady where Job addresses God²⁰.

¹⁶ See J. Amador de los Ríos’s comments on Valera’s parodies, Amador de los Ríos 1861-1865, vol. VI, pp. 179-180, and Menéndez y Pelayo’s pronouncements on Garci Sánchez’s *Liciones*, Menéndez Pelayo 1944-1945, vol. III, pp. 141-144.

¹⁷ Le Gentil 1949, vol. I, pp. 185-204. For more data and discussion on this accursed lot of poetry see Piccus 1960, p. 322, n. 2; Cocozzella 1991b, vol. II, pp. 36-45.

¹⁸ M. Rosa Lida de Malkiel discusses the evidence of a sympathetic intermingling of the religious and the profane within the parody in question. Besides the “confiada intimidad entre lo humano y lo divino que sustentó tantos siglos de cristiandad”, this distinguished medievalist perceives the concomitant factor of the pessimism generated by the plight of the Jewish converts in Spanish society of the fifteenth century: “el amargo desconcierto que desgarró oscuramente el alma de las últimas generaciones de conversos”, Lida de Malkiel 1946, p. 130.

¹⁹ *Misa de Amores* 1960, p. 569.

²⁰ Gallagher 1968, p. 175.

Significantly, there are scholars, who may be quoted in support of Tillier's and Gallagher's perceptive comments. In a sweeping statement Valentín Núñez Rivera ascribes to the synergy between the erotic and religious experience, evinced in *cancionero*-type poetry, the very qualities of "gravity and solemnity" underscored by Gallagher: *la imbricación erótico-divina de los cancioneros desconoce cualquier tipo de matiz risible*²¹. In view of the differentiating factors that call into question the pigeonholing of various poems in the catchall category of parody, E. Michael Gerli would do away with the categorization altogether. He observes that

lo que encontramos en la lírica del siglo XV no se pueden considerar parodias. Aunque sí son intentos de lucir ingenio poético, estas composiciones eroticorreligiosas no demuestran ni la más mínima nota satírica o escarecedora. El elemento clave que les falta (...) es el humor²².

Needless to say, there are conflicting judgments regarding the type of poetry we have been sampling or referring to in our quick review. In their attempts to come to terms with a significant contingent of the *cancioneros*—these intriguing, invariably audacious renditions of Christian doctrine, liturgical ceremonies, and devotional practices—a number of critics raise fundamental questions that have to do with either the artistic intention behind the poems or their overall effect upon the readership. In concrete terms, those questions may be stated as follows: are the poems to be taken seriously at face value or are they, somehow, the tongue-in-cheek expression of a mocking plan, ridiculing purpose, jocular agenda?

3. THE SYNDROME OF PARODY

At this juncture it is highly instructive to repair to the landmark study in which Linda Hutcheon not only undertakes an enlightening discussion of how parody manifests itself in literature and in the fine arts but also draws precise distinctions as to the crucial points of overlap between parody and other artistic modalities, such as burlesque, travesty, pastiche, plagiarism,

²¹ Núñez Rivera 2001, p. 126.

²² Gerli 1981, p. 67. Gernert poignantly observes that the contemporary readers of the *cancioneros* "muy probablemente no percibirían ninguna intención sacrilega en estas composiciones" —the likes of Diego de Valera's parody of the Psalms and Garcí Sánchez's *Liciones*, Gernert 2009, vol. I, p. 230)–.

satire, among others²³. The breadth and depth of Hutcheon's exposition are evident in the informative introduction to her book-length study²⁴. Hutcheon's remarks include a preliminary definition, which reads as follows:

[W]hat I am calling parody here is not just that ridiculing imitation mentioned in standard dictionary definitions. The challenge to this limitation of its original meaning, as suggested . . . by the etymology and history of the term, is one of the lessons of modern art that must be heeded in any attempt to work out a theory of parody that is adequate to it (...) Parody, therefore, is a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text (...) ²⁵.

Hutcheon's round assertions leave no room for doubt: in her judgment, parody is not a comic genre. Hutcheon, of course, marshals a cogent argument to validate her innovative critical outlook. Her avowed special interest in modern art does not detract in any way from the pertinence and applicability of her definition to Núñez's "Misa" and Garci Sánchez's *Liciones*, works in which the auctorial serious intention has been duly pointed out, as we have seen, by Gallagher, Gernert, and Tillier respectively.

On this occasion, for pragmatic reasons, we may concentrate only on but a few parodic dimensions or modes, which, thanks to Hutcheon's insightful analysis, open our eyes to some admirable specimens of ingenious creativity. One such mode turns out to be a syndrome of sorts, which may be identified by the label "transcontextualization", or "recontextualization", derived from Hutcheon's own descriptions of a number of esthetic processes: *complex forms of transcontextualization and inversion*²⁶, *philosophical, social, and cultural (as well as literary) trans-contextualization*²⁷. The syndrome encompasses a number of symptoms, among which two clearly stand out.

²³ L. Hutcheon devotes an entire chapter to these distinctions; see Hutcheon 1985, pp. 30-49.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 1-29.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 5-6. This definition may be contrasted with the one proffered by J. Hall Martin apropos of the characterization of Calisto, whose name duly appears as one of the protagonists in the title of Fernando de Rojas's *Tragicomedia*. In her analysis of this widely-acclaimed masterpiece of Spanish literature of the fifteenth century, Martin considers Calisto a parody of the courtly lover. Martin's broad definition includes the following statement: "It [parody] is (...) by definition didactic to some extent. Yet it is also humorous. The two elements –didacticism and humor– always coexist in parody, though it is not uncommon for one of these aspects to be so dominant that it may tend to obscure the other. In short, the tone of the parody may vary considerably, from gay mockery to bitter irony", Martin 1972, p. 15. For a full discussion of the stylistic devices of parody at play in the portrait of Calisto, see *ibidem*, pp. 71-134.

²⁶ Hutcheon 1985, p. 15.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

Hutcheon identifies these with the respective terms of *superimposition*²⁸ for the one and *bitextual synthesis* or *bitextual determination* for the other²⁹.

Some passages from Hutcheon's study are worth quoting in full particularly because of the light they shed on the stanzas of the two *misas* quoted above. Following is Hutcheon's gloss about the notion of superimposition:

Both irony and parody operate on two levels –a primary, surface, or foreground; and a secondary, implied, or backgrounded one–. But the latter, in both cases, derives its meaning from the context in which it is found. The final meaning of irony or parody rests on the recognition of the superimposition of these levels³⁰.

4. APPLIED HERMENEUTICS

In the two passages we have quoted, respectively, from the *misa* of Dueñas and that of Ribera we see illustrated the criteria of hermeneutics broached by Hutcheon. In both cases we find the superimposition of the same semiotic levels: we are allowed a glimpse of not only the pagan myth, daringly presented on the surface of the text, but also the Christian Divinity in the textual substratum. Specifically, the two authors entice us with the perception of a palimpsest of sorts. What we take in at first reading is the jarring representation of some emblematic figures of the pagan pantheon: the trio made up of Cupid, Venus, and Apollo, in one case, and the image of the God of Love (Cupid), in the other. The jarring effect is produced, of course, by the semiotic conflation that Dueñas and Ribera bring about: the former between said trio and the Trinity, the latter between the Cupid and the Agnus Dei.

It is well to bear in mind that the technique of superimposition is not, by any means, an exclusive characteristic of Dueñas and Ribera. Other examples may be found in fifteenth-century literature of both the Castilian and the Catalan domain. Diego de San Pedro's *Cárcel de amor*, outstanding example of the *novela sentimental*, exhibits, in a remarkable passage, the interfacing of the portrait of Leriano, the protagonist, vividly depicted at the surface level of the narrative, with the icon of the Man of Sorrows (Ecce Homo), faintly visible in the textual substratum³¹. Before San Pedro, the

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 33, 34.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, respectively, pp. 35, 42.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

³¹ Miguel-Prendes 2004, p. 19. For this extraordinary passage of the see San Pedro 1973, pp. 86-88. A. Deyermond provides an indispensable orientation on the *novela sentimental*, see Deyermond 1993.

Galician author Juan Rodríguez del Padrón, who flourished in the first half of the fifteenth century, developed the esthetic of superimposition into a veritable synergetic bond between the sacred and the profane. In *Siervo libre de amor*, which is generally considered a prototype of the *novela sentimental*, Juan Rodríguez fashions the apotheosis of the lover (Arданlier) into a leitmotif modeled after the cult of Saint James (Santiago de Compostela)³². We may consider, also, stanzas 2 and 3 of Cant 5 by Ausiàs March, the nonpareil Valencian poet of the first half of the fifteenth century. In that stupendous passage (vv. 9-24) we witness another conflation of two images: one in the foreground (the auctorial persona in the guise of the suffering lover); the other in the background (the Divine Lover envisaged as the persecuted Christ)³³. An additional example that may be adduced here consists of a passage from *Libro de buen amor*, the fourteenth-century masterpiece by Juan Ruiz, better known as Arcipreste de Hita. In coplas 1225-1241 of the *Libro*, the description of the splendid pageantry of a parade in honor of the pagan God of Love (Don Amor) is highlighted against the backdrop of repeated references to the Easter celebrations³⁴.

The works we have just listed clearly bear out the lesson that Hutcheon would have us learn. The shining examples of parodic superimposition, masterfully elaborated by Diego de San Pedro, Juan Rodríguez del Padrón, Ausiàs March, Juan Ruiz evince no sign of a “negative judgment” or perverse intention. All of them convey an overall sense of equilibrium that brings to mind, in turn, the pertinence of Ziva Ben-Porat’s definition: *The parodic representations expose the model’s conventions and lay bare its devices through the coexistence of the two codes in the same message*³⁵.

Hutcheon’s definition allows us to advance, at least as a hypothesis, the interpretation that neither Dueñas nor Ribera intends to fabricate—let alone foist upon the reader—a disparaging version of sacrosanct Christian doctrine.

³² Menéndez y Pelayo 1943, vol. II, pp. 21-22; Cocozzella 1981, p. 190; Gilderman 1972, pp. 45-50. For the text see Rodríguez del Padrón 1976 in the bibliography below.

³³ Cocozzella 1995, pp. 429-430. For the text of Cant 5 see March 1979-1982, vol. I, p. 150.

³⁴ Arcipreste de Hita 1988, pp. 363-367; Cocozzella 2009, pp. 125-127. Some leading authorities on *Libro de buen amor* have long recognized the parodic dimension of Juan Ruiz’s “Easter parade”. After compiling a long list of sources stretching as far back as Ovid’s *Amores* (1.2.23-52), F. Lecoy refines his judgment and adds: “Le cortège que nous décrit Juan Ruiz n’est pas un cortège triomphal, c’est une parodie de procession liturgique, et probablement même de la procession la plus ancienne du rite chrétien, la procession des Rameaux. L’Amour rentrant dans ses États, s’est le Christ arrivant à Jérusalem, aux acclamations d’une foule enthousiaste”, Lecoy 1938, p. 261. G. B. Gybbon-Monypenny, editor of the *Libro* concludes, on his part, his erudite commentary on *copla* 1225 with the following astute observation: “En el fondo, como da a entender Juan Ruiz en 1225a, son las procesiones del Domingo de la Resurrección las que se parodian”, see Arcipreste de Hita 1988, p. 364.

³⁵ Qtd. in Hutcheon 1985, p. 49.

Hutcheon's theory invites us to consider the possibility that Dueñas, by installing the Trinitarian pattern in a pagan context, actually asserts his belief *—esto creo y más de tanto—* in a Divinity that transcends cultural boundaries. Similarly, it may be said that Ribera, by projecting the Agnus icon onto the relationship between Venus and Cupid, does nothing more nor less than confirm his adherence to the universality of the faith he has imbibed with his mother's milk³⁶. We will have to wait and see if the analysis of further texts validates our hypothetical interpretation of a parodic intention in line with Hutcheon's principles of "transcontextualization" and "bitextual determination".

5. IMPERSONATION AS AN INDEX OF DESACRALIZATION

So far we have adduced evidence that, despite the judgment of a number of authoritative critics to the contrary, brings to light a parodic mode non-detrimental to matters of religion —especially those pertaining to dogma and liturgy—. Before we delve into the main thesis of our discussion —the theatrics inherent in the parody of the *misa* proper— let us take a preliminary step in our analysis by focusing on a critical issue adumbrated by one of the authors we have mentioned already. In his *misa* Núñez completely secularizes the pious meditation on the Book of Hours. Typical is the following passage pertaining to the Hour of Prime:

A *Prima* quando amanesce,
rezá la *Salve Regina*,
aquella que os hizo digna
del valer que más meresce
y de mi mal diciplina.
Y, rezada, os retraé
a contemplar en mi fe,
sin oír nuevas consejas,
que quien oye a malas viejas
nunca llora sin porqué. (vv. 41-50)³⁷

At first reading, one may notice that here the *Salve Regina* is lifted out of the original devotional milieu and transposed to the context of the cult

³⁶ Another non-detrimental interpretation of the two *misas* may be stated as follows: Dueñas attempts to fathom the awe-inspiring presence of the Trinity by envisaging the sublime mystery at two different levels; Ribera proposes an enhanced meditation on the image of the Agnus Dei by transposing or —to use Hutcheon's terminology— transcontextualizing its sphere of reference into the realm of pagan religion.

³⁷ *Cancionero general* 2004, pp. 151-152.

of Eros. Thus, by an uncanny maneuver on the part of the author, the sacred text becomes a vehicle for the furtherance of the relationship between the lover (himself) and the *amada*. Núñez employs with oblique subtlety the mechanics of transference, adaptation, and secularization.

At play here is what may well prove to be a primary dimension of Núñez's artistry. The poet works out an esthetic of substitution and, above all, impersonation. In his wistful imagination the auctorial persona envisages the lady in the role of a channeling agent. He entreats her to meditate profoundly at every step in such a way as to condition herself to requite the lover's own devotion toward her. Thus, the beloved becomes, at least from the lover's perspective, a mediatrix that ensures the efficacy of the devotional practice. The lover faithfully expects that the merits attained by the beloved's prayerful and conscientious observance of her pious duties will redound, ultimately, to his own benefit—that is, the enhancement of his own spiritual life—. The point not to be missed is that in Núñez's ingenious stanza the ladylove ends up mirroring the role of the Virgin Mary. To put it succinctly: Núñez adopts skillfully the classic paradigm of superimposing the profane upon the sacred—specifically: the image of the ladylove upon that of the Holy Virgin—. In so doing, the poet assigns to the *amada* one of the roles of the “Mater Misericordiae” (Mother of Mercy), primarily emblazoned in the “Salve Regina.” As result, the *amada* is portrayed as an impersonator of the Virgin; and the impersonation hinges on a characterization modeled after the office of the mediatrix par excellence in the world view of a sizeable sector of the worldwide community of Christians.

Núñez reveals some extraordinary implications of the phenomenology of impersonation. Even more revealing are the implications a close study allows us to discover in fra Francesc Moner's aforementioned *Sepoltura d'amor*, arguably the most complex composition of its kind³⁸. The complexity and suggestiveness of this *Sepoltura* is foreshadowed by a surprising conceit that captivates our attention from the very start. The protagonist—that is, the auctorial persona in the guise of a first-person narrator—portrays himself as a first-hand observer of the ceremonies that take place immediately after his own death. The mass that the protagonist witnesses is, then, of the type that

³⁸ For an extensive commentary on Moner's *Sepoltura*, see Cocozzella 1991b, vol. II, pp. 25-71. Moner flourished in Barcelona during the two decades immediately following the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile in 1469. Moner is one of a group of fifteenth-century writers from Barcelona and Valencia that became proficient in not only their native Catalan but also Castilian, a language that during Moner's lifetime attained dominance throughout the Iberian Peninsula. For Moner's bilingualism, see Cocozzella 1987, pp. 21-24; Deyermund 1998, pp. 149-152; Ganges Garriga 1992, pp. 166-187. For a biographical sketch of Moner see Cocozzella 1970, pp. 9-28; 1991, pp. 3-38.

normally constitutes the main part of the funeral service. It is, simply put, a funeral mass.³⁹

The interior of the church is awash with light. The bells are ringing in full swing. Here is how Moner, in stanza XV (vv. 164-177), marks with vivid details the beginning of the solemn ceremony:

La yglesia llena de lumbre,
 las campanas a gran pryssa,
 son salidas
 Esperiencia y la Costumbre
 y Manzilla, por la missa
 ya vestidas,
 con gestos de manssedumbre.
 Y todas tres a la par
 en ell altar de Verdad
 pobrezico,
 escomiençan confessar
 a la Verdad l'amistad,
 y baxico,
 en esta forma rezar.⁴⁰

It may come as a surprise that Moner should start his “mass” in such a festive rather than somber mode as one may have expected for the occasion of the lover’s death. The unexpected emphasis that Moner brings to bear on sensory appeal and emotional uplift sets this memorable passage in obvious relief and signals the inception of some crucial developments in Moner’s aesthetics of drama and theater. There are significant aspects that jump to our attention even at first reading. Witness, for instance, the feminization of not only the priesthood, as evinced in the three celebrants, but also the Divinity, represented as Lady Truth, as indicated by the feminine nouns –*Verdad* in Castilian, *Veritat* in Catalan– in some of Moner’s major works⁴¹.

Since circumstances do not allow us to expatiate on the wide variety of pertinent issues, we will strive for conciseness and concentrate on the indices of impersonation –a subject we have touched upon already–. A close reading makes us realize that Mancilla takes pride of place among the three celebrants and stands out as a fair match for Núñez’s characterization of his

³⁹ Moner’s *missa* encompasses stanzas XV-LVI (vv. 164-750) of the *Sepoltura* proper, arranged in 57 stanzas. With few exceptions, which we need not go into here, the stanzas of 14 verses are of the type commonly known as *cobla de pie quebrado*, a combination of eight-syllable and four-syllable verses (*octosílabos* and *tetrassílabos*). In *Sepoltura*, the *cobla* in question exhibits the following rhyme scheme: a(8) b(8) c(4) a(8) b(8) c(4) a(8) / d(8) e(8) f(4) d(8) e(8) f(4) d(8).

⁴⁰ Moner 1991, vol. II, p. 137.

⁴¹ “Verdad” appears in *La noche* and *Sepoltura*; “Veritat”, in *Bendir de dones*.

ladylove. Comparative analysis brings to light an engrossing interplay of versions and counter-versions stemming from two age-old topoi: 1) *la belle dame sans merci*, and 2) *la donna angelicata*. Each stanza we have quoted, respectively, from Núñez's and Moner's poem holds in store, at the deepest textual stratum, a field, which may be called "onomastic symbolism," rife with semiotic implications. Amidst the iridescence of signification lies ensconced the French term "merci" in full regalia as poetic logos, integrated, needless to say, into the complete title of the ultra-famous poem by Alain Chartier (*La belle dame sans merci*)⁴². Within the semiotic context evoked by Núñez's imagination, the denotation and connotation encapsulated in the logos of *merci*, conditioned by a literary tradition of long standing, beckon the reader in their deafening silence. Núñez, of course, capitalizes on said tradition, which alerts the reader to the interaction, "devoutly to be wished," between the *merci* notoriously denied by the French *belle dame* and the *misericordia* to be procured only if implored from the very high places indicated in the *Salve Regina* and if duly assimilated by the obdurate *amada*. We may deduce, then, that Núñez arrives at an intuition of the ultimate analogy between divine *misericordia* and human *merci* as signified, respectively, by the Latin and the French term.

As if he were bent upon taking up the challenge posed by Núñez or the likes of Núñez, Moner develops the analogy to an impressive degree of elaboration. First, he completely disengages the *amada* from the office of mediatrix, mimicked in the conventional rendition of parody. The disengagement involves, on the one hand, divesting the ladylove of the powers appertaining to that office and, on the other hand, vesting those powers in a personage of Moner's own invention, whom the author calls Mancilla. The second phase in the development of the *merci/misericordia* analogy manifests Moner's allegory in the process of its gestation. Since the earliest manifestation of the process we recognize that at this stage the principles of onomastic semiotics come into full swing. Mancilla, we now realize, embodies the qualities of "lástima" (pity) and "compasión" (compassion), which her very

⁴² Moner, who lived in France for two years (around 1479-1481) in his late teens and learned the language of that country, may well have been familiar with Chartier's emblematic poem. A special connection between Moner and the celebrated piece of French medieval literature is indicated by the role of protagonist that a certain Fra Francesc Oliver plays in Moner's prose work that bears the title, precisely, of *L'ànima d'Oliver (The Ghost of Oliver)*. According to Rubió 1953, p. 874; Riquer 1964, vol. III, pp. 112-114, this Oliver is, in all probability, the translator of *La belle dame sans merci* into Catalan. It is worth noting that Oliver acquired a dubious distinction after committing suicide for his unrequited love of his own *belle dame sans merci*, the Comtessa de Luna (Violant Lluïsa de Mur), a noble lady of the highest rank, *ibidem*, vol. III, pp. 109-116.

name eminently signifies⁴³. Evidently, Moner allegorizes in Mancilla those very qualities that, as we have seen, the afflicted lover in Núñez's *misa* finds sorely lacking in the *amada* and, thus, yearns to elicit from her disposition toward him.

As we probe a step further into the evolution of Moner's allegory, we advance to a third phase of the author's imaginative handling of the procedure we have identified as analogy. At the outset we encounter another example of superimposition. If we hark back to the method of illustration based on the notion of the palimpsest, we will be able to discern in the textual substratum the presence of the topos mentioned above –the figure, that is, of the *donna angelicata*, the ideal of womanhood envisaged by the poets of the *dolce stil nuovo*–. We may be thinking, specifically, of Dante's Beatrice or Petrarch's Laura. The analogue of the *donna* stares us in the face on the surface of Moner's text. It is, of course, none other than Mancilla.

Now we begin to apprehend the wide scope of Moner's analogy. The notion of personified *merci/mancilla* on the one side of the equation and, on the other, the office of a priest are melded together by the wondrous powers of the metaphor into a living entity: *Merci/Mancilla* = Priest. What Moner demonstrates in his representation of Mancilla is the insightful expansion of the metaphor into an allegory in accordance with Quintilian's principle of *continua metaphora*⁴⁴. This means that in his allegory Moner exploits to a full extent the sacerdotal stature and role attained by Mancilla. In her priestly ministrations Mancilla soars to the highest level in the Great Chain of Being –precisely the level of the Divine–. In view of the principles of onomastic symbolism, we see that Mancilla comes in touch with Divine Mercy, the Divine attribute kindred, *mutatis mutandis*, to the qualities of pity and compassion that provide the priestess with her allegorical *raison d'être* in the first place. Within the spiritual realm of Moner's *misa*, Mancilla is, indeed, the chief purveyor of God's mercy.

We may deduce, then, that Mancilla borrows from the Virgin Mary the privileged position as intermediary agent and intercessor par excellence. Also, Moner's representation allows us to envisage the Mancilla-Priest compound as a "pontifex" in the etymological and radical sense of "bridge-maker". Indeed, Mancilla makes of herself a bridge between God –or, to

⁴³ For unquestionable evidence of the dominance of these two meanings see "manzilla" in "Glosario", *Cancionero general* 2004, vol. V, p. 291).

⁴⁴ Quintilian, *Institutiones oratoriae* 11.2.46. Qtd. in Archer 1983, p. 170. In his study of Ausiàs March's allegory, Robert Archer sheds light on some quintessential aspects of that author's esthetic –aspects that we cannot go into here, eminently pertinent though they are to Moner's art of analogy–.

be exact God-the-Truth (Verdad)— and humankind. In addition, Mancilla’s hieratic functions assume the powers of the *donna angelicata* in the journey of transcendence from the woes of passionate love to the blissful state of the Beatific Vision.

6. DESACRALIZED RITUAL

In order to proceed beyond the preliminary remarks, we need to take into account the esthetic of what may be called the strategy of desacralized ritual. For an illustration of this process of desacralization, particularly relevant is Mancilla’s own version of the standard sections of the Mass. Take, for instance the following passage (stanza XVII), which exemplifies Mancilla’s special rendition of the Requiem:

La confesión acabada,
 luego por réquiem Manzilla
 començó:
 –O Verdad, nuestra abogada,
 no le falte honrrada silla,
 pues bivió
 en tu fe santa alabada;
 tu lumbre alumbre su fama,
 y tu bondad favorezca
 su querella;
 a quyen tal brasa derrama,
 haz, Señora, que padescas
 dentro en ella
 y, d’allý, venga en la llama—. (vv. 192-205)⁴⁵

At first reading the passage impresses us for the absence of any self-evident link with the wording of the original prayer: *requiem aeternam dona ei[s], Domine*. Typical of this passage as, for that matter, of Moner’s entire *misa*, is the omission of direct quotations from the Latin text. A faint reminiscence of *lux perpetua luceat ei(s)* is perceivable in *tu lumbre alumbre su fama*. But, what a difference between “su fama”, the object of Mancilla’s invocation, and its counterpart, “requiem aeternam”, in the Latin Mass! The considerable distance between Moner’s Requiem and its Latin model needs no special commentary. One detail, however, should not pass unnoticed. Mancilla adds a dreadful spin to the crucial image of *lumbre*. *Lumbre*, faithful translation of *lux*, mutates into the ominous *brasa* (burning coal) as the priestess alludes

⁴⁵ Moner 1991, vol. II, p. 138.

to some generic evildoer, who revels in turning the coal poignantly mentioned into a wild fire spreading far and wide. Moner challenges the reader to come up with an appropriate interpretation for the cluster of metaphors (*lumbre, brasa, llama*) that Mancilla leaves unspecified. No challenge, to be sure, is posed by the curse leveled by the priestess at that nondescript evildoer, for whom she wishes nothing better than a horrid death in the midst of the raging flame: *y, d'allý, venga en la llama.*

Needless to say, the curse runs counter to the salvific intention that governs the organic makeup of the mass. What saves the day in Moner's case is the aplomb with which the author allows his Mass to assimilate his daring distortions. Somehow, Moner manages to keep under the radar screen, so to speak, the details of the type that, in circumstances we have indicated already as pertaining to writers like Dueñas, Ribera, Núñez, would have met, no doubt, the strident repudiation of scandalized critics of many stripes. Judging from the textual evidence we have just analyzed, we may safely hypothesize that Moner honed his technique of not only avoiding adverse criticism but also forestalling charges of mishandling or violating the Church's most venerable canons of worship.

That same evidence allows us to advance beyond the hypothesis to the recognition that Moner has fashioned an esthetic based on a process that may be defined as "desacralization" or "de-ritualization". There is no doubt that Moner sets his *misa* apart from the protocol of the original mass. In so doing, Moner delves into a phenomenology of what may be labeled "denatured ritual." Thus, Moner's artistic enterprise becomes impervious to the criticism and charges mentioned above simply because in Moner's denatured *misa* there is little ritual left to criticize. Here I propose an esthetic analogue for the physical or chemical phenomenon denoted, primarily, by the process of denaturing. An explanation for the analogy I envisage is not hard to come by. Overall formalism and specific formulaic textuality constitute the natural attributes of the mass. Moner, as we have seen, casts off most of these attributes and retains only the skeletal infrastructure of the Eucharistic liturgy. The innovation signaled by Moner's denatured *misa* cannot be overestimated.

Now we may proceed with the exploration of Moner's progress toward the creation of a full-fledged theatrical performance. What we are going to face, presently, is a multiple operation, which involves the conversion of the *vis dramatica* into action, the shaping of the action into a plot, the transmutation of a plot into playacting.

7. THE PULPIT AND THE ALTAR: A PLOT FOR THE TRANSMUTED RITUAL

A salient feature of Moner's *misa* is, as we have seen, Mancilla's hieratic ministry, which challenges us to meditate on the transmutation of the "quality of mercy", to borrow a phrase from Portia's speech in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*⁴⁶. Making her appearance, as does Mancilla, in a garb traditionally restricted to men, Portia is herself a priest of sorts as, not unlike Mancilla, she bridges the gap between the human and the divine sphere. Poignantly, Portia tops her speech with a *sententia*, which may well apply, mutatis mutandis, to Mancilla's enterprise: *And earthly power doth then show likest God's / When mercy seasons justice*⁴⁷.

Mancilla, no doubt, bears witness to some profound insights into the wide semiotic gamut encompassed within the concept signified by her very name. This notwithstanding, Mancilla's sapiential orientation derives not from her speech but from her interaction with the other allegorical personages. Here we will focus on the paramount coordination between Mancilla's performance and that of Experiencia, her co-celebrant. The interaction and coordination in question serve as the matrix of dramatic action –the action that is shaped into a plot–.

In envisioning the spectacle of Mancilla and Experiencia, what we notice at first glance is the two areas of the stage they delimit by their very presence: while Mancilla remains at or near the altar, Experiencia stakes her position on the pulpit. The situation on stage determines for each a distinctive nature of playacting. Thus, Mancilla, self-collected and solemn, plies her function as sacerdotal in the strict, holistic sense of the term. Bent on demonstration and ebullient oratory, Experiencia, on her part, acts out her duty as preacher par excellence.

Experiencia's confrontational sermonizing calls for some comment especially in view of the attention it has received from a medievalist as distinguished as Pedro Manuel Cátedra⁴⁸. Cátedra associates Experiencia's ideology with what he calls "pensamiento naturalista universitario" –that is, the philosophical current that capitalizes on the definition of love as the instinctive drive, indispensable for the preservation of the species⁴⁹. In fact, the two preliminary sections of Experiencia's sermon –the pithy statement of the theme (vv. 324-330) and the précis of the first part, which the preacher describes, not surprisingly, as an explication of the theme

⁴⁶ Act. IV, Scene I, vv. 184-197.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, Act. IV, Scene I, vv. 196-197.

⁴⁸ Cátedra 1989, pp. 173-175.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

(*del tema declarativa* [v. 338]) (vv. 345-358)— contain such key terms as *humana inclinación* (v. 324), *el byen de su intention* (v. 330), *Natura* (v. 345), *inclinacion / necessaria y convenible, / deleytable* (vv. 355-358), which make evident, according to Cátedra, allegorical Experiencia's association with the flesh-and-blood exponents of that "pensamiento naturalista". These include Alfonso Fernández de Madrigal, better known as El Tostado, Luis de Lucena, and Francesc Alegre⁵⁰.

Before proceeding with the discussion of Experiencia's sermon, it is well to look beyond Cátedra's persistent focus on Experiencia's ratiocination per se. Let us bear in mind that Experiencia's argumentation fits within an esthetic rather than an ideological master plan. What I hope will become evident presently is the dovetailing of Experiencia's rhetorical exercise with the esthetic macro-structure of Moner's denatured *misa*. And, as I hope to show, Moner's esthetic is, it bears repeating, essentially theatrical.

We will observe, for a start, the extraordinary length of the sermon, which comprises 378 verses (stanzas XXVI-LII, vv. 317-694), that is 63% of the *misa* proper of 597 verses. Evidently, Moner invests the sermon/homily with a special function, which I am investigating here. Cátedra provides a key to the comprehension of the sense and strategies of Experiencia's

⁵⁰ P. M. Cátedra sketches out a background for Experiencia's pivotal notion of "humana inclinación" in the *Libro de buen amor* by Juan Ruiz, alias Arcipreste de Hita, and in the anonymous *Tratado de cómo al hombre es necesario amar*. Cátedra, of course, deals with other significant manifestations of that background in other signal works, such as Madrigal's *Breviloquio de amor y amición*, Lucena's *Repetición de amores*, and, closer to home from Moner's standpoint, Alegre's *Sermón de amor*. For the relevance of the "naturalismo propuesto para Juan Ruiz," see Cátedra 1989, pp. 41-46. The crucial passage is *Libro de buen amor*, coplas 71-76, Arcipreste de Hita 1988, pp. 123-124. Cátedra highlights the content and provides the essential data pertaining to the *Tratado de cómo al hombre es necesario amar*, Cátedra 1989, pp. 113-125. He demurs at the attribution of the *Tratado* to El Tostado, *ibidem*, p. 114. As for the dating of the influential treatise, he only commits himself to the year 1496 as a "terminus ad quem", *ibidem*, p. 125, n. 265. He undertakes a meticulous analysis of El Tostado's *Breviloquio*, which he dates between 1432 and 1437, *ibidem*, p. 23. A striking example of El Tostado's eclecticism, kindred to Experiencia's ideological orientation, is evidenced in the fifth chapter of *Breviloquio*, where we notice, in Cátedra's words, "la fusión de la delectación y la conveniencia en su ámbito de natura", *ibidem*, p. 31. For further explication of that chapter see *ibidem*, pp. 31-32. Analogous to Experiencia's notion of "humana inclinación" is the crucial issue of the *vis generativa*, also addressed in *Breviloquio*. In exploring a probable link between *Libro de buen amor* and *Breviloquio*, Cátedra notes that "en el grado de superioridad de la *vis generativa* se comprenderá naturalmente que el varón quiera «aver juntamiento con fembra plazentera» [*Libro de buen amor* 71d], porque, como interpreta el Tostado, nos movemos animales y hombres espoleados por el «aguñón de delectación»", *ibidem*, p. 52. Evidently, Cátedra's observation is applicable verbatim to Experiencia's exposition. Additional points of affinity that shed light on the makeup of Experiencia's homily are unveiled, as may be expected, in Cátedra's astute probing into the text and context of both Lucena's *Repetición* and Alegre's *Sermón*, see *ibidem*, pp. 126-141, and 162-172, respectively. Cátedra estimates Alegre's piece to have been written between 1473 and 1479, *ibidem*, p. 164. As for the composition of Lucena's treatise, Cátedra can only allude to a wide span from 1480 to 1497, *ibidem*, p. 140, n. 307.

argumentation. Time and again, in *Amor y pedagogía* Catedra explicates samples of what he calls *la falacia dialéctica consciente*⁵¹, *la casuística del absoluto poder de amor*⁵², *falsas argucias argumentativas*⁵³. These and similar labels designate the less than logical reasoning marshaled by Experiencia and kindred *tratadistas* in order to meet two main objectives: first, the assertion of the connatural goodness of love (*la bondad consustancial del amor*, as Catedra puts it)⁵⁴; second, the encomiastic portrait of the devoted lover (the auctorial persona) that invariably turns out to be an exemplary, albeit naïve, sufferer –a *mártir de amor*, in other words. On the strength of Catedra’s insightful explication we will be able to make out the manner in which Experiencia’s own *argucias* shape the plot of the *misa*.

In the first part of the sermon (stanzas XXVI-XXXIII, vv. 317-472), which constitutes the most intellectual portion of Experiencia’s argument, we find compelling evidence of a faltering logic. After taking stock of a principle we have referred to already –the *inclinación / necesaria y conveniente* (vv. 355-6) emanating from *Natura* (v. 345)– Experiencia sets up a premise for an argument *a fortiori de cómo al hombre es necesario amar*. The premise is, to be sure, an axiomatic assertion of sound Scholastic doctrine. Referring to the soul’s exercise of free choice, Experiencia states:

La bondad y la maldad
son los dos hytos en quyen
ell’atina,
mas la noble voluntad,
syempre so color de byen,
determina
qu’es un tino de bondad. (vv. 422-428)⁵⁵

Here we detect unmistakable echoes of Aquinas’s concept of *appetitus intellectivus: objectum appetitus intellectivi, qui voluntas dicitur, est bonum secundum communem boni rationem. Nec potest esse aliquis appetitus, nisi boni*⁵⁶. Not so sound, however, or clear, for that matter, is the congeries of fragmented thoughts that Experiencia aggregates to her premise. In fact, Experiencia’s oratorical construct readily brings to mind the aforementioned strains of sophistry and specious rhetoric diagnosed by Catedra. Whether

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 120.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 121.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 169.

⁵⁴ The assertion is reminiscent of one of Hugo of Saint Victor’s famous dicta, which Catedra paraphrases as “el mal está en amar mal, no en amar precisamente”, *ibidem*, p. 32.

⁵⁵ Moner 1991, vol. II, p. 146.

⁵⁶ *Summa Theologiae*, I^a, 59.4c.

purposefully or not, *Experiencia* is heedless of such elemental distinctions, handed down by age-old tradition, as the one between natural and unbridled *cupiditas*. Despite its high rank and prestigious position, the *noble voluntad*, mentioned in the passage we have just quoted, is not immune from the devastating effects of pernicious habits. Tradition and common sense dictate that the vitiated will nurtures vitiated love. Not unlike Alegre, Lucena, and cohorts, *Experiencia* envisages the wide spectrum of the phenomenology of eros from the perspective of the cause rather than the effect. The cause upon which *Experiencia* bases her argument is the innate goodness of love –*buen amor*, to borrow El Arcipreste de Hita’s terminology–. *Experiencia* is aware that *mal amor* per se does not exist: it is a contradiction in terms. This datum blurs her vision of a glaring reality: the deleterious effects that unfavorable circumstances bring to bear on *buen amor* –the transformation, that is, of *buen amor* (love that is good by nature) into *amor malo* (love gone bad by the influence of inordinate passion)–.

In short, *Experiencia* easily slips into the pitfall inherent in the position that abides by the irresistible power of love. As she reaches the conclusion of the philosophical section of her sermon, she cavalierly skirts the moral issue altogether. Particularly revealing is the following declaration:

Assí que aquel qu’ enamora,
la razón por la qual ama
le dispensa (...). (vv. 429-431)⁵⁷

These words attest to the clever twist of the “*técnica de exculpación*” (strategy of exculpation) that *Cátedra* detects in the *Tratado de cómo al hombre es necesario amar*⁵⁸. Highly ironic and misleading is the term *razón* adduced in the passage. The truth of the matter is that the lovesick individual does not pay attention to the guidance of reason. Equally misleading is *Experiencia*’s use of the term “*dispensa*”. Obviously, reason cannot absolve anyone from the culpability incurred in exercising the faculty of free will. In addition, the good intention, also mentioned in *Experiencia*’s conclusion –see *el byen de su intención* (v. 436)– does not imply, as *Experiencia* claims, exonerating the lover from the responsibility of a ruinous choice prompted by passion run amuck.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Moner 1991, vol. II, p. 147.

⁵⁸ *Cátedra* 1989, p. 117.

⁵⁹ In view of the overall semiotic framework of onomastic symbolism, there is a corollary to be derived from our meditation on *Experiencia*’s role. What is quite clear is that *Experiencia* is not –nor should be expected to be– a champion of sound ratiocination. After all, *Experiencia* is not *Razón* (“Lady Reason”), also known as *Rahó* in her Catalan avatar. Poignantly, *Razón/Rahó* is notably absent in *Sepultura*, even though her presence is quite prominent in three other

Let us reflect on a crucial juncture in the unfolding text of Moner's *misa*. We have just witnessed Experiencia's frustration in touching on the major issues to be integrated into a theory on the nature of love. Also, we have become aware of Experiencia's loose-jointed argumentation, unconvincing conclusion, and unsuccessful plan of exculpation. What needs to be pointed out is that, with all its fallacies shared with the various treatises reviewed by Cátedra, Experiencia's sermon constitutes, warts and all, suitable grist for Moner's artistic mill. In the final analysis, precisely because of its dysfunctional ratiocination and flawed argumentation, said sermon reveals itself as catalyst of dramatic action, fully functional in the unfolding of the plot. Fully operational in the creative integration of Experiencia's sermon into the grand design of *Sepoltura* is the role of Experiencia as the eponymous allegorization of the human entity it represents. In other words, the principle of the aforementioned onomastic symbolism is radically at play in that role. Experiencia, as the personage identified by a proper noun, can rely only on the workaday reality marked by the homonymous signifier: the common noun "experiencia."

The deficiencies evinced in Part I of Experiencia's sermon call for a complementary factor, which, in fact, manifests itself, quite dramatically in Part II (*expositiva / del vangelio*) (vv. 341-2). After a glaring exhibition of a less than stellar argumentation, Experiencia, throughout Part II (vv. 443-638), shifts into a discourse that manifests, palpably, an emotive rather than intellectual tenor. Part II is presented as a homiletic expansion of the pseudo-scriptural text, chanted by Experiencia during the ceremonies leading to her stepping up to the pulpit (vv. 251-289). The text constitutes the "gospel" that Moner has fashioned for the occasion. The expansion confronts head-on some rather thorny issues. These pertain to the precarious condition of the typical young man that unwisely lavishes his loyalty and affections on a woman, whose character he has neglected to put to a rigorous test beforehand: "[q] uyen ama d'amor leal / a muger que no ha provado" (vv. 251-252). With the zeal of one who revisits a venerable *Urtext*, Experiencia transfers the tone of embittered reproach she has already voiced in that chanted "gospel" unto a lengthy diatribe, leveled at the foibles and capricious behavior she smugly attributes to the *inmensa mayoría* of the daughters of Eve.

major works by Moner –namely, *Bendir de dones*, *La noche*, *Obra en metro*– and is no less important in *L'ànima d'Oliver*, where her role is appropriated by the protagonist, the ghostly individual referred to in the title. In effect, Experiencia's performance validates an insight that confers to the plot of *Sepoltura* a characteristically a-rational or para-rational spin. The spin is worthy of special attention as it may well constitute the high mark of Moner's innovating, not to say revolutionary approach to the shaping of a theatrical plot. For the text of Moner's works listed in this note, see "Bibliography" below.

In short, Experiencia confronts us with a firsthand experience of the limits of the type of sermonizing that relies entirely on the powers of reason. Lady Reason with her entourage of intellect, logic, and logocentrism –let alone the legerdemain of sophistry– cannot regain for us a *blissful seat*, to use John Milton’s expression⁶⁰; nor can she restore for us a state of grace. More successful Experiencia has been with the ways of emotion –especially with the mode of catharsis as a therapy of purging off the poisonous morbidity of passionate love–.

In Part III of Experiencia’s sermon, Moner’s *misa* is adapted to a plot that has reached a high degree of dramatic intensity and theatrical action. To put it differently, this is a critical moment in the interaction between Experiencia and Mancilla. From a panoramic perspective, the former’s rhetoric of ratiocination that shifts into a passionate verve of a cathartic nature gives way to the latter’s performance at the highest level of religious practice. Mancilla’s operation –spiritual, sacerdotal, devotional of a sublime order– rises to a lofty sphere within the realm of the liturgy. We are beginning to see, then, the intriguing signs of a contrastive complementarity between two kinds of playacting: on the one side, expansive oratory; on the other, self-composed officiation.

8. DEAD-MAN-TALKING

Let us take a look at a fully theatricalized presentation of a crucial episode that occurs at the beginning of Moner’s *Sepoltura*, When the narrative proper begins –*En un campo de crueza / mi cuerpo muerto ha caído / de través. / Vino por él Gentileza, / púsolo encima estendido / d’un pavés / que l’enprestó la Simpleza* (vv. 78-84)⁶¹– the first-person speaker absents himself from the visual field. Evidently, the narrator’s voice becomes a voice-over. At this moment we are struck by a spate of activities, which create the eyeful of a spectacle. In the section of the stage that represents the aforementioned “campo”, Gentileza stretches out the “cuerpo muerto” on a shield of sizable length⁶². In the meanwhile Mancilla, at the head of a funeral cortege, comes out of some hidden area inside the church (“Salió de dentro” [v. 88]). As the latter group proceeds to meet Gentileza and her charge, Mancilla intones a chant by which she welcomes “the body” to the sacred precinct –*Ven,*

⁶⁰ Milton 1957, book I, v. 5.

⁶¹ Moner 1991, vol. II, p. 134.

⁶² Gentileza –in the company, we presume, of her entourage– attends to the task of transporting the body over to one of the church’s chapels.

cuerpo que no bivías (v. 92) (...) ; *Ven, cuerpo sin alma vivo* (99)– and, while weeping profusely, decries not only the lover’s untimely death and lifelong suffering but also the ladylove’s cruelty. The voice-over account does not fail to set in relief, by a special audio impact, the stagey effect of the key episodes: the transportation of the auctorial body over to the chapel (vv. 85-87), the construction of the impressive tomb (vv. 138-146), the burial of the body (vv. 147-163).

And now we are ready for the first manifestation of the leitmotif that has to do with the redemption of the true lover –that is, the lover qua devotee of God-the-Truth–. While in the chapel-mausoleum, Gentileza and Mancilla act out, conspicuously, their profound grief in a routine of chants and lamentations. Their expression in words and ceremonial sway is orchestrated as a veritable dirge, steeped in emotion, though quite free of ostentatious mannerism. The dirge comes to a head in a curious incident, which turns out to be emblematic of the entire composition. Mancilla notices a piece of paper lumped up and lodged in the mouth of the dead lover, Moner’s alter ego. After she manages to take the paper out, the priestess notices inscribed in it a text of three verses, which she proceeds to read aloud:

Con todo, Muerte, me pesas,
que si tal vida durara,
major culpa me matara. (vv. 127-129)⁶³

The epigrammatic –and enigmatic!– passage resounds, paradoxically, as the voice of the dead man. The body, who has never been really alive –the “*cuerpo que no bivías*” or the “*cuerpo sin alma vivo*” already referred to– speaks, perhaps for the first time, loud and bold. The three verses constitute one example of series invested with unmistakable structural significance. Because of the intriguing phenomenon it reflects, the leitmotif may be labeled “dead-man-talking”. The symbolism itself ensconced in the episode would oblige us to ponder in wonderment the efficacy of Mancilla’s operation. By virtue of her sacerdotal office, Mancilla is able to revitalize the logos recovered, poignantly, from a dead man’s lips.

There are some other manifestations of “dead-man-talking” that we need not go into for the purpose of the present discussion⁶⁴. There is, however, a powerful statement of the leitmotif that we must not leave unnoticed. It occurs during the *misa* proper at an opportune moment –that of the Offertory–

⁶³ Moner 1991, vol. II, p. 136.

⁶⁴ See the two inscriptions: one on the protagonist’s tomb (vv. 144-146), and the other on the neck of the ostrich sculpted on that tomb (vv. 161-163).

in which two allegorical personages –namely, *Firmeza* (Steadfastness) and *Baldón* (Injury)– bring forth as the object of that ceremony that the first-person narrator designates as *esta canción / qu’el muerto, quando bivía / sin plazer, / la hizo de su passion* (vv. 300-303)⁶⁵. What *Firmeza* and *Baldón* offer, then, is one of Moner’s poems that is treated as an integral part of the composition even though it differs from the other stanzas in rhyme scheme and the absence of the *pie quebrado*. Thus the *canción* becomes stanza XXV, which because of its unique features and singular function deserves to be quoted in full. The text of stanza XXV is as follows:

¡Ay del byen que mal me haze,
mi grave dulce tristeza!
Quanto la pena me plaze,
el desconcyerto me pesa.
¡Amor, dolor comportar,
haver por byen vuestro no,
jamás nadye como yo (...)!
¡Mas nunca vos suppe amar,
ny vos sabéys ultrajar!
Vuestro tratar me deshaze
porque passa de crueza:
ser vos la causa me plaze,
mas la manera me pesa. (vv. 304-316)⁶⁶

Mancilla’s intervention coincides with *Experiencia*’s reprise of the climactic statement of the leitmotif. The statement triggers an esthetic process fraught with profound meta-textual implications. Mancilla’s hieratic powers concretize the process into a radical metamorphosis of the text and, concurrently, determines a momentous shift in the plot. The powerful impact of this meta-textual phenomenology becomes manifest in stanza XLIX, which, as we have just seen, marks the beginning of Part III of *Experiencia*’s sermon. The stanza opens with a remarkable octosyllable: *L’ystoria de quien muryó* (v. 639). The verse is supercharged with signification as it demarcates the ultimate phase of an evolution from lyrical intensity (the *canción* of the Offertory) to the substance and substantiality of *historia*. In the context of the *misa* the latter term brings to mind the notion of a story, a narrated exemplum, reminiscent of an evangelical parable. *Canción* and *historia* may be taken, then, as indices of, respectively, the inception and completion of the momentous shift we have just alluded to. Thus, the plot of *Sepoltura* is enriched by the fruition of a poetic logos that oscillates according to the inception/completion polarity we have come to appreciate so far.

⁶⁵ Moner 1991, vol. II, p. 142.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, vol. II, p. 142.

9. MIMESIS AS *IMITATIO CHRISTI*

In the four stanzas (nos. XLIX-LII) that make up the “*historia prosequitiva*” Moner would have us appreciate, also, the breadth and depth of the radical textual metamorphosis adumbrated previously in our discussion. What comes into view here is a veritable tour de force that combines the operations of concretization and individuation at the service of an overall epiphany of subjectivity. Here subjectivity is gauged by the exemplarity – *amor y firmeza / y fe tanta* (647-648)– of a lover, who suffered heroically, enduring magnanimously abuse from the ladylove –*una tal, una escogida* (v. 655) and utter persecution from slanderers⁶⁷. It will not be difficult to make out, in this iconic self-portrait of the auctorial persona as an exemplary sufferer, the embodiment of a *vivencia*, which, in the final analysis turns out to be the existential correlative of an entire life. This icon-*vivencia* correlative may be encapsulated into the notion of a “life-text,” the crowning achievement of Moner’s artistry.

There is one further step on the complex operation involved in *Experiencia*’s shaping of the plot. Let us remember that the “life-text” here proposed is the “*historia prosequitiva*.” Upon close inspection we discover that the “*historia*” is presented, in turn, not only as an expansion of the *canción* of the Offertory but also as a form of the Gospel especially devised and adapted to the structure of the *misa* within *Sepultura*. It follows that, as Moner’s adaptation of the Gospel, the “*historia prosequitiva*” is conceived as the analogue –a human counterpart, so to speak– of Sacred Scripture. Now let us look even closer. The workings of a primordial mimesis are implicit –we discover– in the analogy that strikes our attention. Moreover, the mimesis that *Experiencia* capitalizes upon is redolent of a quintessential *imitatio Christi*. Still, Moner does not cease to challenge our intuitive faculties. Inherent in this bold feat of mimesis or *imitatio* is a poetics of conflation, suggestively illustrated by the literary trope of *superposición*, of the type discussed, as we have seen by Hutcheon. We may deduce that the “gospel” fashioned in *Experiencia*’s “*historia prosequitiva*” is superimposed upon or conflated with the Gospel of The New Testament (the Christian Bible). To put it in metaphorical terms, we may think of a graft of the former onto the latter. The result is a para-sacramental phenomenon: the human lover –Moner’s persona,

⁶⁷ In the *editio princeps* of Moner’s works (published in 1528), the epigraph affixed to *Bendir de dones*, the longest among Moner’s poems written in Catalan, makes reference to a specific incident in which the author was a victim of calumny. The epigraph reads as follows: “Obra de Moner en lengua catalana, feta per escusar-se de una culpa que un cert cavaller y unes senyores, absent Moner de la dama que servia, lo avien falçament inculpate”, Moner 1970, p. 179.

say—partakes of the *vivencia* of his divine counterpart. We may surmise that the para-sacramental quality of Experiencia’s rendition of the Gospel stems from a Scriptural subtext consisting of such passages as *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth much fruit (...)*⁶⁸ and *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him*⁶⁹.

It may be argued, then, that the Scriptural subtext accounts for the *raison d’être* of the ersatz transubstantiation that, as we have indicated, takes place in Moner’s *misa*. Against the backdrop of an awesome ritual (that of the traditional transubstantiation of bread and wine), Moner ideates a *sui generis imitatio Christi*, through which he allows us to envisage the wondrous metamorphosis of the faithful lover into a *mártir de amor*. What we envisage is a *de facto* canonization, inherent in the contrast that, at the end of her sermon, Experiencia draws between *él*, the persona of the defunct poet (“[I]a muerte Moner nos priva” [v. 682]), and *ella* (“la dama” [v. 683]):

Ella, hermosa y esquiva,
 él, de firme y transportado,
 no ternán
 ygal ninguno que viva. (vv. 684-687)⁷⁰

10. CONCLUSION

A number of poems, typical of the Spanish *cancioneros* of the fifteenth century, provide ample evidence of a strain of parody focused on the Christian liturgy in general and the mass in particular. Here I have attempted to show that a study of these prominent examples of liturgical parody warrants a new approach to the origins of Spanish religious theater of the early Renaissance. The argumentation laid out in my essay borrows from Linda Hutcheon’s innovative theory suggestive insights into such esthetic techniques as the ones that Hutcheon labels “superimposition” and “transcontextualization”.

The radical issues raised in Hutcheon’s landmark study encompass the modes of impersonation that become paramount in two outstanding compositions: the *misa de amores* by, respectively, Nicolás Núñez and Francesc Moner. Of special significance is the role that Núñez assigns to his ladylove and the characterization that Moner devises for two female

⁶⁸ John 15, 5.

⁶⁹ John 6, 15.

⁷⁰ Moner 1991, vol. II, p. 156. For an extensive discussion of the motif of “canonization” see Cocozzella 1981; Gilderman 1972.

celebrants, Mancilla and Experiencia. Comparative analysis reveals that in Mancilla Moner allegorizes the virtues that Núñez envisages partly in his idealization of the *amada* as *donna angelicata* in the tradition of *dolce stil nuovo*, partly in his veneration of the Virgin Mary as Mater Misericordiae in the spirit of age-old devotional practice. It bears pointing out that, beyond the reaches of Núñez's ingenious artistry, Moner's esthetic of allegorization brings into play the complex dramatics inherent in the interaction between Mancilla, the priest, and Experiencia, the sermonizer.

Moner's crowning achievement resides in carrying the parodic process to its ultimate consequences. The *misas* by authors like Juan de Dueñas and Suero de Ribera illustrate, within that process, an early phase that remains close –much too close– to the spirit of the Christian worship, upon which the parody is modeled. As might have been predicted, the poetic ventures of Dueñas, Ribera, and cohorts ended up offending the piety of many readers and provoked wholesale rebuke and indignation. In diametric contrast, Moner's *misa* eludes such adverse reception because, as one may reasonably hypothesize, the author manages to interpose a considerable distance between the straightforward Christian liturgy and the parodied version stemming from that mode of worship. As for the overall effect of Moner's strategy of distancing, that author fashions a ritual *sui generis* that sheds off the sacred aura pertaining to the original religious ceremony –specifically, the ceremony of the Mass–. From the sacrosanct formalistic protocol Moner derives the residual format of what may be called “desacralized” or “denatured” ritual.

By harking back to the key factors of “transcontextualization” and “superimposition” identified by Hutcheon, we can now recognize two all-important aspects of Moner's dramatization of the mass: on the one hand, Moner carries to full term, so to speak, the embryonic phase of the parody profiled in the *misas* and kindred compositions by the aforementioned Dueñas, and Ribera, and, to add some other representative names to the list, Garcí Sánchez de Badajoz, and Diego de Valera; on the other hand, Moner highlights the dramatic aspects of the metaphysics and theology of the *imitatio Christi*. Thus, Moner blazes a trail toward a type of theater stemming from a special kind of sacramentality: a desacralized or secularized residue of the original rite of transubstantiation.

What is the lesson to be learned from Moner's *misa de amores*? At the end of our study we see that Hutcheon's theory is well conceived: parody need not include the comic slant and mocking intention of satire. The basic distinction between parody and satire bears out the intuition of a number of critics –Patrick Gallagher, E. Michael Gerli, Folke Gernert, María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, Valentín Núñez Rivera, Jane Yvonne Tillier, among others– regarding the serious purpose of the handful of parodic *misas* and

similar pieces that still intrigue the reader of our day and age. We readily grant Moner's uncanny talent for avoiding the charges of desecration and blasphemy leveled at many other parodists. This notwithstanding, Moner poem is distinguishable not for the author's evasive strategies nor for his manipulation of the intrinsic characteristics of the genre but, rather, for his exploitation of those characteristics in the elaboration of an ingenious master plan. What we have discovered in that master plan is the deft fashioning of a plot generated by the dramatic dynamism of two factors: a) the impersonation through allegory; b) the complex interaction of two key allegorical roles – those of *Experiencia* and *Mancilla*–.

In sum, what becomes evident is the dramatics fashioned by Moner is a process of desacralization or denaturing of the primary ritual of the Mass. The process reflects, in turn, a phenomenology of secularization that culminates in what may be appropriately called ersatz sacramentality. In other words, Moner reduces the awesome mystery of transubstantiation to a manageable level of secularization that makes the mystery eminently adaptable to a full-fledged theatrical performance and spectacle. Consequently, Moner bequeaths to posterity a message of optimism and hope –a message emblazoned in what we have called the “life-text”, the literary correlative of the *vivencia* of the true lover–. Moner, after all, believes in the redeemability if not perfectibility of the lover's condition and that belief is confirmed by a wholehearted reliance on the salvific efficacy of the residual sacramentality he unveils with prodigious poetic insight. What remains to be investigated is the theatrical form by virtue of which Moner displays how the lover's is redeemed and sanctified in accordance with what for the author were the latest trends of a venerable tradition of faithful religious devotion and enthusiastic piety.

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